500
CLASSIC
FAIRY TALES

BOOK CENTER

500 ETERNAL MASTERPIECES OF FAIRY TALES VOL: 2

VARIOUS AUTHORS

CONTENTS

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5. James Baldwin

6. Aleksander Chodzko

7. Thomas Frederick Crane

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12. Peter Henry Emerson

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14. William Henry Frost

15. William Elliot Griffis

16. Grace James

17. Mite Kremnitz

18. Edmund Leamy

19. Charles Perrault

20. William Shedden Ralston

21. Klara Agnes Stroebe

22. Oscar Wilde

1. ANONYMOUS

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Arabian Nights
2. The Story of the Merchant and the Genius
3. The Story of the First Old Man and of the Hind
4. The Story of the Second Old Man, and the Two Black Dogs
5. The Story of the Fisherman
6. The Story of the Greek King and the Physician Douban
7. The Story of the Husband and the Parrot
8. The Story of the Vizir Who Was Punished
9. The Story of the Young King of the Black Isles
10. The Story of the Three Calenders, Sons of Kings, and of Five Ladies of Bagdad
11. The Story of the First Calender, Son of a King
12. The Story of the Second Calender, Son of a King
13. The Story of the Envious Man and of Him Who Was Envied
14. The Story of the Third Calender, Son of a King
15. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor
16. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The First Voyage
17. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Second Voyage
18. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Third Voyage
19. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Fourth Voyage
20. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Fifth Voyage
21. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Sixth Voyage
22. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Seventh and Final Voyage
23. The Little Hunchback
24. The Story of the Barber’s Fifth Brother
25. The Story of the Barber’s Sixth Brother
26. The Adventures of Prince Camaralzaman and the Princess Badoura

27. Noureddin and the Fair Persian
28. Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp
29. The Adventures of Haroun-al-Raschid, Caliph of Bagdad
30. The Story of the Blind Baba-Abdalla
31. The Story of Sidi-Nouman
32. The Story of Ali Cogia, Merchant of Bagdad
33. The Enchanted Horse
34. The Story of the Two Sisters Who Were Jealous of Their Younger Sister
35. Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky

PREFACE

ANONYMOUS

The first English edition of *The Thousand and One Nights* was published in 1706 and introduced English readers to the now-familiar tales of Sinbad the Sailor and Aladdin. The framing device of the whole collection is Scheherazade, a king's bride who tells a series of tales to save herself from execution. Included in several of the stories are the characters themselves telling their own story, so it features a story-within-a-story.

The manuscripts of the tales date back to the 1300's, and one of the earliest fragments was discovered by a scholar named Nabia Abbott in 1948. When folklorist Andrew Lang had a version published in 1898, he named it *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*. In the introduction of this edition, Lang writes about how his own books of fairy tales (The Color Fairy book series) feature tales for children, but *The Thousand and One Nights* was more for adults, with events supposed to be set 786-808 A.D. His own version is translated from a French edition by Antoine Galland.

The Thousand and One Nights include not only fairy tales, but also fables, romances, farces, legends, and parables.

Contents

1. The Arabian Nights

2. The Story of the Merchant and the Genius

3. The Story of the First Old Man and of the Hind

4. The Story of the Second Old Man, and the Two Black Dogs

5. The Story of the Fisherman

6. The Story of the Greek King and the Physician Douban

7. The Story of the Husband and the Parrot

8. The Story of the Vizir Who Was Punished

9. The Story of the Young King of the Black Isles

10. The Story of the Three Calenders, Sons of Kings, and of Five Ladies of Bagdad

11. The Story of the First Calender, Son of a King

12. The Story of the Second Calender, Son of a King

13. The Story of the Envious Man and of Him Who Was Envied

14. The Story of the Third Calender, Son of a King

15. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor

16. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The First Voyage

17. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Second Voyage

18. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Third Voyage

19. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Fourth Voyage

20. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Fifth Voyage

21. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Sixth Voyage

22. The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor: The Seventh and Final Voyage

23. The Little Hunchback

24. The Story of the Barber's Fifth Brother

25. The Story of the Barber's Sixth Brother

26. The Adventures of Prince Camaralzaman and the Princess Badoura

27. Noureddin and the Fair Persian

28. Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp

29. The Adventures of Haroun-al-Raschid, Caliph of Bagdad

30. The Story of the Blind Baba-Abdalla

31. The Story of Sidi-Nouman

32. The Story of Ali Cogia, Merchant of Bagdad

34. The Enchanted Horse

35. The Story of the Two Sisters Who Were Jealous of Their Younger Sister

36. Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky

1

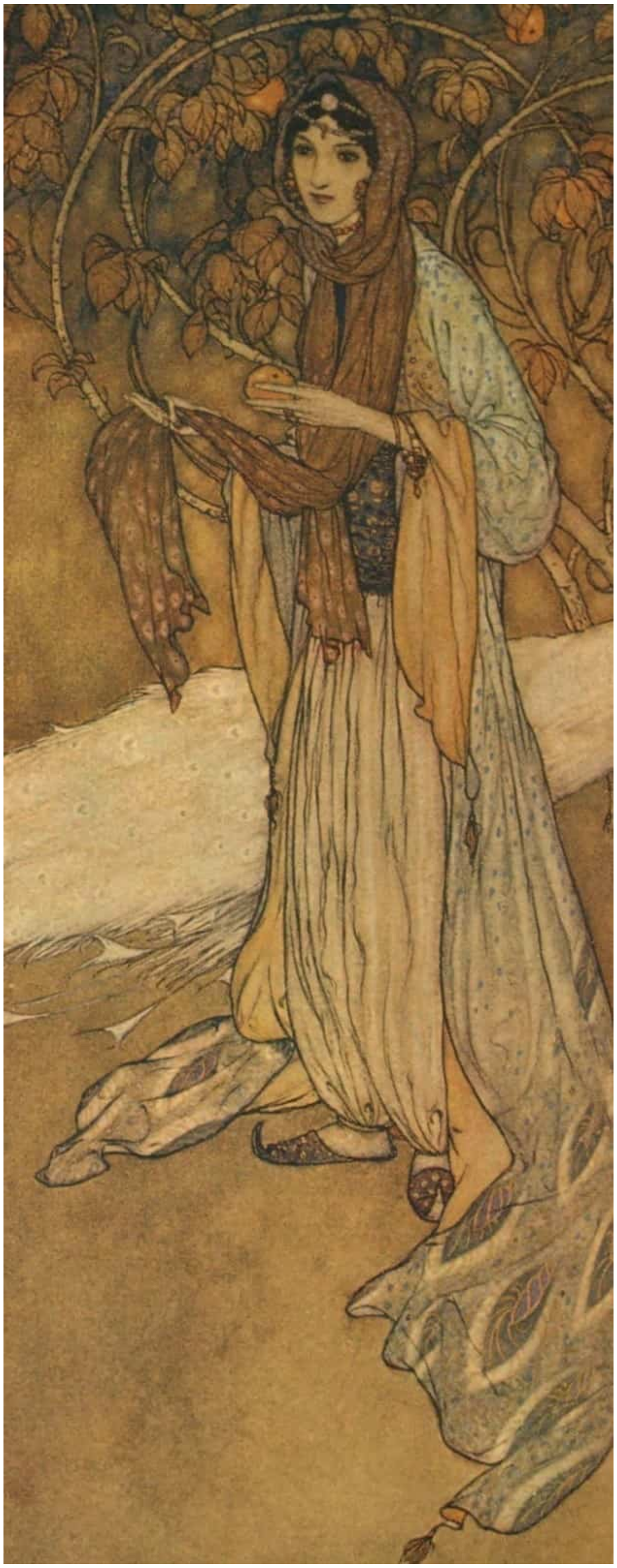
THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

In the chronicles of the ancient dynasty of the Sassanidae, who reigned for about four hundred years, from Persia to the borders of China, beyond the great river Ganges itself, we read the praises of one of the kings of this race, who was said to be the best monarch of his time. His subjects loved him, and his neighbors feared him, and when he died, he left his kingdom in a more prosperous and powerful condition than any king had done before him.

The two sons who survived him loved each other tenderly, and it was a real grief to the elder, Schahriar, that the laws of the empire forbade him to share his dominions with his brother Schahzeman. Indeed, after ten years, during which this state of things had not ceased to trouble him, Schahriar cut off the country of Great Tartary from the Persian Empire and made his brother king.

Now the Sultan Schahriar had a wife whom he loved more than all the world, and his greatest happiness was to surround her with splendor, and to give her the finest dresses and the most beautiful jewels. It was therefore with the deepest shame and sorrow that he accidentally discovered, after several years, that she had deceived him completely, and her whole conduct turned out to have been so bad, that he felt himself obliged to carry out the law of the land, and order the grand-vizir to put her to death. The blow was so heavy that his mind almost gave way, and he declared that he was quite sure that at bottom all women were as wicked as the sultana, if you could only find them out, and that the fewer the world contained the better. So every evening he married a fresh wife and had her strangled the following morning before the grand-vizir, whose duty it was to provide these unhappy brides for the Sultan. The poor man fulfilled his task with reluctance, but there was no escape, and every day saw a girl married and a wife dead.

This behavior caused the greatest horror in the town, where nothing was heard but cries and lamentations. In one house was a father weeping for the loss of his daughter, in another, perhaps, a mother trembling for the fate of her child; and instead of the blessings that had formerly been heaped on the Sultan’s head, the air was now full of curses.



“Her father had given her the best masters in philosophy, medicine, history and the fine arts, and besides all this, her beauty excelled that of any girl in the kingdom of Persia.” Illustration by Edmund Dulac. Published in Stories from the Arabian Nights(1907) by Laurence Housman, Hodder and Stoughton.

The grand-vizir himself was the father of two daughters, of whom the elder was called Scheherazade, and the younger Dinarzade. Dinarzade had no particular gifts to distinguish her from other girls, but her sister was clever and courageous in the highest degree. Her father had given her the best masters in philosophy, medicine, history and the fine arts, and besides all this, her beauty excelled that of any girl in the kingdom of Persia.

One day, when the grand-vizir was talking to his eldest daughter, who was his delight and pride, Scheherazade said to him, “Father, I have a favor to ask of you. Will you grant it to me?”

“I can refuse you nothing,” replied he, “that is just and reasonable.”

“Then listen,” said Scheherazade. “I am determined to stop this barbarous practice of the Sultan’s, and to deliver the girls and mothers from the awful fate that hangs over them.”

“It would be an excellent thing to do,” returned the grand-vizir, “but how do you propose to accomplish it?”

“My father,” answered Scheherazade, “it is you who have to provide the Sultan daily with a fresh wife, and I implore you, by all the affection you bear me, to allow the honor to fall upon me.”

“Have you lost your senses?” cried the grand-vizir, starting back in horror. “What has put such a thing into your head? You ought to know by this time what it means to be the sultan’s bride!”

“Yes, my father, I know it well,” replied she, “and I am not afraid to think of it. If I fail, my death will be a glorious one, and if I succeed I shall have done a great service to my country.”

“It is of no use,” said the grand-vizir, “I shall never consent. If the Sultan was to order me to plunge a dagger in your heart, I should have to obey. What a task for a father! Ah, if you do not fear death, fear at any rate the anguish you would cause me.”

“Once again, my father,” said Scheherazade, “will you grant me what I ask?”

“What, are you still so obstinate?” exclaimed the grand-vizir. “Why are you so resolved upon your own ruin?”

But the maiden absolutely refused to attend to her father’s words, and at length, in despair, the grand-vizir was obliged to give way, and went sadly to the palace to tell the Sultan that the following evening he would bring him Scheherazade.

The Sultan received this news with the greatest astonishment.

“How have you made up your mind,” he asked, “to sacrifice your own daughter to me?”

“Sire,” answered the grand-vizir, “it is her own wish. Even the sad fate that awaits her could not hold her back.”

“Let there be no mistake, vizir,” said the Sultan. “Remember, you will have to take her life yourself. If you refuse, I swear that your head shall pay forfeit.”

“Sire,” returned the vizir. “Whatever the cost, I will obey you. Though a father, I am also your subject.” So the Sultan told the grand-vizir he might bring his daughter as soon as he liked.

The vizir took back this news to Scheherazade, who received it as if it had been the most pleasant thing in the world. She thanked her father warmly for yielding to her wishes, and, seeing him still bowed down with grief, told him that she hoped he would never repent having allowed her to marry the Sultan. Then she went to prepare herself for the marriage, and begged that her sister Dinarzade should be sent for to speak to her.

When they were alone, Scheherazade addressed her thus:

“My dear sister; I want your help in a very important affair. My father is going to take me to the palace to celebrate my marriage with the Sultan. When his Highness receives me, I shall beg him, as a last favour, to let you sleep in our chamber, so that I may have your company during the last night I am alive. If, as I hope, he grants me my wish, be sure that you wake me an hour before the dawn, and speak to me in these words: ‘My sister, if you are not asleep, I beg you, before the sun rises, to tell me one of your charming stories.’ Then I shall begin, and I hope by this means to deliver the people from the terror that reigns over them.”

Dinarzade replied that she would do with pleasure what her sister wished.

When the usual hour arrived the grand-vizir conducted Scheherazade to the palace, and left her alone with the Sultan, who bade her raise her veil and was amazed at her beauty. But seeing her eyes full of tears, he asked what was the matter. “Sire,” replied Scheherazade, “I have a sister who loves me as tenderly as I love her. Grant me the favour of allowing her to sleep this night in the same room, as it is the last we shall be together.” Schahriar consented to Scheherazade’s petition and Dinarzade was sent for.

An hour before daybreak Dinarzade awoke, and exclaimed, as she had promised, “My dear sister, if you are not asleep, tell me I pray you, before the sun rises, one of your charming stories. It is the last time that I shall have the pleasure of hearing you.”

Scheherazade did not answer her sister, but turned to the Sultan. “Will your highness permit me to do as my sister asks?” said she.

“Willingly,” he answered. So Scheherazade began.

[NOTE: Scheherazade tells a series of 33 tales after the tale “The Arabian Nights.” The first tale is “The Story of the Merchant and the Genius”.]

2

THE STORY OF THE MERCHANT AND THE GENIUS

Sire, there was once upon a time a merchant who possessed great wealth, in land and merchandise, as well as in ready money. He was obliged from time to time to take journeys to arrange his affairs. One day, having to go a long way from home, he mounted his horse, taking with him a small wallet in which he had put a few biscuits and dates, because he had to pass through the desert where no food was to be got. He arrived without any mishap, and, having finished his business, set out on his return. On the fourth day of his journey, the heat of the sun being very great, he turned out of his road to rest under some trees. He found at the foot of a large walnut-tree a fountain of clear and running water. He dismounted, fastened his horse to a branch of the tree, and sat by the fountain, after having taken from his wallet some of his dates and biscuits. When he had finished this frugal meal he washed his face and hands in the fountain.

When he was thus employed he saw an enormous genius, white with rage, coming towards him, with a scimitar in his hand.

“Arise,” he cried in a terrible voice, “and let me kill you as you have killed my son!”

As he uttered these words he gave a frightful yell. The merchant, quite as much terrified at the hideous face of the monster as at his words, answered him tremblingly, “Alas, good sir, what can I have done to you to deserve death?”

“I shall kill you,” repeated the genius, “as you have killed my son.”

“But,” said the merchant, “how can I have killed your son? I do not know him, and I have never even seen him.”

“When you arrived here did you not sit down on the ground?” asked the genius, “and did you not take some dates from your wallet, and whilst eating them did not you throw the stones about?”

“Yes,” said the merchant, “I certainly did so.”

“Then,” said the genius, “I tell you you have killed my son, for whilst you were throwing about the stones, my son passed by, and one of them struck him in the eye and killed him. So I shall kill you.”

“Ah, sir, forgive me!” cried the merchant.

“I will have no mercy on you,” answered the genius.

“But I killed your son quite unintentionally, so I implore you to spare my life.”

“No,” said the genius, “I shall kill you as you killed my son,” and so saying, he seized the merchant by the arm, threw him on the ground, and lifted his sabre to cut off his head.

The merchant, protesting his innocence, bewailed his wife and children, and tried pitifully to avert his fate. The genius, with his raised scimitar, waited till he had finished, but was not in the least touched.

Scheherazade, at this point, seeing that it was day, and knowing that the Sultan always rose very early to attend the council, stopped speaking.

“Indeed, sister,” said Dinarzade, “this is a wonderful story.”

“The rest is still more wonderful,” replied Scheherazade, “and you would say so, if the sultan would allow me to live another day, and would give me leave to tell it to you the next night.”

Schahriar, who had been listening to Scheherazade with pleasure, said to himself, “I will wait till to-morrow; I can always have her killed when I have heard the end of her story.”

All this time the grand-vizir was in a terrible state of anxiety. But he was much delighted when he saw the Sultan enter the council-chamber without giving the terrible command that he was expecting.

The next morning, before the day broke, Dinarzade said to her sister, “Dear sister, if you are awake I pray you to go on with your story.”

The Sultan did not wait for Scheherazade to ask his leave. “Finish,” said he, “the story of the genius and the merchant. I am curious to hear the end.”

So Scheherazade went on with the story. This happened every morning. The Sultana told a story, and the Sultan let her live to finish it.

When the merchant saw that the genius was determined to cut off his head, he said: “One word more, I entreat you. Grant me a little delay; just a short time to go home and bid my wife and children farewell, and to make my will. When I have done this I will come back here, and you shall kill me.”

“But,” said the genius, “if I grant you the delay you ask, I am afraid that you will not come back.”

“I give you my word of honor,” answered the merchant, “that I will come back without fail.”

“How long do you require?” asked the genius.

“I ask you for a year’s grace,” replied the merchant. “I promise you that to-morrow twelvemonth, I shall be waiting under these trees to give myself up to you.”

On this the genius left him near the fountain and disappeared.

The merchant, having recovered from his fright, mounted his horse and went on his road.

When he arrived home his wife and children received him with the greatest joy. But instead of embracing them he began to weep so bitterly that they soon guessed that something terrible was the matter.

“Tell us, I pray you,” said his wife, “what has happened.”

“Alas!” answered her husband, “I have only a year to live.”

Then he told them what had passed between him and the genius, and how he had given his word to return at the end of a year to be killed. When they heard this sad news they were in despair, and wept much.

The next day the merchant began to settle his affairs, and first of all to pay his debts. He gave presents to his friends, and large alms to the poor. He set his slaves at liberty, and provided for his wife and children. The year soon passed away, and he was obliged to depart. When he tried to say good-bye he was quite overcome with grief, and with difficulty tore himself away. At length he reached the place where he had first seen the genius, on the very day that he had appointed. He dismounted, and sat down at the edge of the fountain, where he awaited the genius in terrible suspense.

Whilst he was thus waiting an old man leading a hind came towards him. They greeted one another, and then the old man said to him, “May I ask, brother, what brought you to this desert place, where there are so many evil genii about? To see these beautiful trees one would imagine it was inhabited, but it is a dangerous place to stop long in.”

The merchant told the old man why he was obliged to come there. He listened in astonishment.

“This is a most marvelous affair. I should like to be a witness of your interview with the genius.” So saying he sat down by the merchant.

While they were talking another old man came up, followed by two black dogs. He greeted them, and asked what they were doing in this place. The old man who was leading the hind told him the adventure of the merchant and the genius. The second old man had not sooner heard the story than he, too, decided to stay there to see what would happen. He sat down by the others, and was talking, when a third old man arrived. He asked why the merchant who was with them looked so sad. They told him the story, and he also resolved to see what would pass between the genius and the merchant, so waited with the rest.

They soon saw in the distance a thick smoke, like a cloud of dust. This smoke came nearer and nearer, and then, all at once, it vanished, and they saw the genius, who, without speaking to them, approached the merchant, sword in hand, and, taking him by the arm, said, “Get up and let me kill you as you killed my son.”

The merchant and the three old men began to weep and groan.

Then the old man leading the hind threw himself at the monster’s feet and said, “O Prince of the Genii, I beg of you to stay your fury and to listen to me. I am going to tell you my story and that of the hind I have with me, and if you find it more marvelous than that of the merchant whom you are about to kill, I hope that you will do away with a third part of his punishment?”

The genius considered some time, and then he said, “Very well, I agree to this.”

3

THE STORY OF THE FIRST OLD MAN AND OF THE HIND

I am now going to begin my story (said the old man), so please attend.

This hind that you see with me is my wife. We have no children of our own, therefore I adopted the son of a favorite slave, and determined to make him my heir.

My wife, however, took a great dislike to both mother and child, which she concealed from me till too late. When my adopted son was about ten years old I was obliged to go on a journey. Before I went I entrusted to my wife's keeping both the mother and child, and begged her to take care of them during my absence, which lasted a whole year. During this time she studied magic in order to carry out her wicked scheme. When she had learnt enough she took my son into a distant place and changed him into a calf. Then she gave him to my steward, and told him to look after a calf she had bought. She also changed the slave into a cow, which she sent to my steward.

When I returned I inquired after my slave and the child. "Your slave is dead," she said, "and as for your son, I have not seen him for two months, and I do not know where he is."

I was grieved to hear of my slave's death, but as my son had only disappeared, I thought I should soon find him. Eight months, however, passed, and still no tidings of him; then the feast of Bairam came.

To celebrate it I ordered my steward to bring me a very fat cow to sacrifice. He did so. The cow that he brought was my unfortunate slave. I bound her, but just as I was about to kill her she began to low most piteously, and I saw that her eyes were streaming with tears. It seemed to me most extraordinary, and, feeling a movement of pity, I ordered the steward to lead her away and bring another. My wife, who was present, scoffed at my compassion, which made her malice of no avail. “What are you doing?” she cried. “Kill this cow. It is the best we have to sacrifice.”

To please her, I tried again, but again the animal’s lows and tears disarmed me.

“Take her away,” I said to the steward, “and kill her; I cannot.”

The steward killed her, but on skinning her found that she was nothing but bones, although she appeared so fat. I was vexed.

“Keep her for yourself,” I said to the steward, “and if you have a fat calf, bring that in her stead.”

In a short time he brought a very fat calf, which, although I did not know it, was my son. It tried hard to break its cord and come to me. It threw itself at my feet, with its head on the ground, as if it wished to excite my pity, and to beg me not to take away its life.

I was even more surprised and touched at this action than I had been at the tears of the cow.

“Go,” I said to the steward, “take back this calf, take great care of it, and bring me another in its place instantly.”

As soon as my wife heard me speak this she at once cried out, “What are you doing, husband? Do not sacrifice any calf but this.”

“Wife,” I answered, “I will not sacrifice this calf,” and in spite of all her remonstrances, I remained firm.

I had another calf killed; this one was led away. The next day the steward asked to speak to me in private.

“I have come,” he said, “to tell you some news which I think you will like to hear. I have a daughter who knows magic. Yesterday, when I was leading back the calf which you refused to sacrifice, I noticed that she smiled, and then directly afterwards began to cry. I asked her why she did so.”

“Father,” she answered, “this calf is the son of our master. I smile with joy at seeing him still alive, and I weep to think of his mother, who was sacrificed yesterday as a cow. These changes have been wrought by our master’s wife, who hated the mother and son.”

“At these words, of Genius,” continued the old man, “I leave you to imagine my astonishment. I went immediately with the steward to speak with his daughter myself. First of all I went to the stable to see my son, and he replied in his dumb way to all my caresses. When the steward’s daughter came I asked her if she could change my son back to his proper shape.”

“Yes, I can,” she replied, “on two conditions. One is that you will give him to me for a husband, and the other is that you will let me punish the woman who changed him into a calf.”

“To the first condition,” I answered, “I agree with all my heart, and I will give you an ample dowry. To the second I also agree, I only beg you to spare her life.”

“That I will do,” she replied; “I will treat her as she treated your son.”

Then she took a vessel of water and pronounced over it some words I did not understand; then, on throwing the water over him, he became immediately a young man once more.

“My son, my dear son,” I exclaimed, kissing him in a transport of joy. “This kind maiden has rescued you from a terrible enchantment, and I am sure that out of gratitude you will marry her.”

He consented joyfully, but before they were married, the young girl changed my wife into a hind, and it is she whom you see before you. I wished her to have this form rather than a stranger one, so that we could see her in the family without repugnance.

Since then my son has become a widower and has gone travelling. I am now going in search of him, and not wishing to confide my wife to the care of other people, I am taking her with me. Is this not a most marvelous tale?

“It is indeed,” said the genius, “and because of it I grant to you the third part of the punishment of this merchant.”

When the first old man had finished his story, the second, who was leading the two black dogs, said to the genius, “I am going to tell you what happened to me, and I am sure that you will find my story even more astonishing than the one to which you have just been listening. But when I have related it, will you grant me also the third part of the merchant’s punishment?”

“Yes,” replied the genius, “provided that your story surpasses that of the hind.”

With this agreement the second old man began in this way.

4

THE STORY OF THE SECOND OLD MAN, AND THE TWO BLACK DOGS

Great prince of the genii, you must know that we are three brothers–these two black dogs and myself. Our father died, leaving us each a thousand sequins. With this sum we all three took up the same profession, and became merchants. A short time after we had opened our shops, my eldest brother, one of these two dogs, resolved to travel in foreign countries for the sake of merchandise. With this intention he sold all he had and bought merchandise suitable to the voyages he was about to make. He set out, and was away a whole year. At the end of this time a beggar came to my shop. “Good-day,” I said. “Good-day,” he answered; “is it possible that you do not recognise me?” Then I looked at him closely and saw he was my brother. I made him come into my house, and asked him how he had fared in his enterprise.

“Do not question me,” he replied, “see me, you see all I have. It would but renew my trouble to tell of all the misfortunes that have befallen me in a year, and have brought me to this state.”

I shut up my shop, paid him every attention, taking him to the bath, giving him my most beautiful robes. I examined my accounts, and found that I had doubled my capital–that is, that I now possessed two thousand sequins. I gave my brother half, saying: “Now, brother, you can forget your losses.” He accepted them with joy, and we lived together as we had before.

Some time afterwards my second brother wished also to sell his business and travel. My eldest brother and I did all we could to dissuade him, but it was of no use. He joined a caravan and set out. He came back at the end of a year in the same state as his elder brother. I took care of him, and as I had a thousand sequins to spare I gave them to him, and he re-opened his shop.

One day, my two brothers came to me to propose that we should make a journey and trade. At first I refused to go. “You travelled,” I said, “and what did you gain?” But they came to me repeatedly, and after having held out for five years I at last gave way. But when they had made their preparation, and they began to buy the merchandise we needed, they found they had spent every piece of the thousand sequins I had given them. I did not reproach them. I divided my six thousand sequins with them, giving a thousand to each and keeping one for myself, and the other three I buried in a corner of my house. We bought merchandise, loaded a vessel with it, and set forth with a favorable wind.

After two months’ sailing we arrived at a seaport, where we disembarked and did a great trade. Then we bought the merchandise of the country, and were just going to sail once more, when I was stopped on the shore by a beautiful though poorly dressed woman. She came up to me, kissed my hand, and implored me to marry her, and take her on board. At first I refused, but she begged so hard and promised to be such a good wife to me, that at last I consented. I got her some beautiful dresses, and after having married her, we embarked and set sail. During the voyage, I discovered so many good qualities in my wife that I began to love her more and more. But my brothers began to be jealous of my prosperity, and set to work to plot against my life. One night when we were sleeping they threw my wife and myself into the sea. My wife, however, was a fairy, and so she did not let me drown, but transported me to an island. When the day dawned, she said to me, “When I saw you on the sea-shore I took a great fancy to you, and wished to try your good nature, so I presented myself in the disguise you saw. Now I have rewarded you by saving your life. But I am very angry with your brothers, and I shall not rest till I have taken their lives.”

I thanked the fairy for all that she had done for me, but I begged her not to kill my brothers.

I appeased her wrath, and in a moment she transported me from the island where we were to the roof of my house, and she disappeared a moment afterwards. I went down, and opened the doors, and dug up the three thousand sequins which I had buried. I went to the place where my shop was, opened it, and received from my fellow-merchants congratulations on my return. When I went home, I saw two black dogs who came to meet me with sorrowful faces. I was much astonished, but the fairy who reappeared said to me,

“Do not be surprised to see these dogs; they are your two brothers. I have condemned them to remain for ten years in these shapes.” Then having told me where I could hear news of her, she vanished.

The ten years are nearly passed, and I am on the road to find her. As in passing I met this merchant and the old man with the hind, I stayed with them.

This is my history, O prince of genii! Do you not think it is a most marvellous one?

“Yes, indeed,” replied the genius, “and I will give up to you the third of the merchant’s punishment.”

Then the third old man made the genius the same request as the other two had done, and the genius promised him the last third of the merchant’s punishment if his story surpassed both the others.

So he told his story to the genius, but I cannot tell you what it was, as I do not know.

But I do know that it was even more marvellous than either of the others, so that the genius was astonished, and said to the third old man, “I will give up to you the third part of the merchant’s punishment. He ought to thank all three of you for having interested yourselves in his favour. But for you, he would be here no longer.”

So saying, he disappeared, to the great joy of the company. The merchant did not fail to thank his friends, and then each went on his way. The merchant returned to his wife and children, and passed the rest of his days happily with them.

“But, sire,” added Scheherazade, “however beautiful are the stories I have just told you, they cannot compare with the story of the Fisherman.”

5

THE STORY OF THE FISHERMAN

Sire, there was once upon a time a fisherman so old and so poor that he could scarcely manage to support his wife and three children. He went every day to fish very early, and each day he made a rule not to throw his nets more than four times. He started out one morning by moonlight and came to the seashore. He undressed and threw his nets, and as he was drawing them towards the bank he felt a great weight. He though he had caught a large fish, and he felt very pleased. But a moment afterwards, seeing that instead of a fish he only had in his nets the carcass of an ass, he was much disappointed.

Vexed with having such a bad haul, when he had mended his nets, which the carcass of the ass had broken in several places, he threw them a second time. In drawing them in he again felt a great weight, so that he thought they were full of fish. But he only found a large basket full of rubbish. He was much annoyed.

“O Fortune,” he cried, “do not trifle thus with me, a poor fisherman, who can hardly support his family!”

So saying, he threw away the rubbish, and after having washed his nets clean of the dirt, he threw them for the third time. But he only drew in stones, shells, and mud. He was almost in despair.

Then he threw his nets for the fourth time. When he thought he had a fish he drew them in with a great deal of trouble. There was no fish, however, he found a yellow pot, which by its weight seemed full of something, and he noticed that it was fastened and sealed with lead, with the impression of a seal. He was delighted. “I will sell it to the founder,” he said; “with the money I shall get for it, I shall buy a measure of wheat.”

He examined the jar on all sides; he shook it to see if it would rattle. But he heard nothing, and so, judging from the impression of the seal and the lid, he thought there must be something precious inside. To find out, he took his knife, and with a little trouble he opened it. He turned it upside down, but nothing came out, which surprised him very much. He set it in front of him, and whilst he was looking at it attentively, such a thick smoke came out that he had to step back a pace or two. This smoke rose up to the clouds, and stretching over the sea and the shore, formed a thick mist, which caused the fisherman much astonishment. When all the smoke was out of the jar it gathered itself together, and became a thick mass in which appeared a genius, twice as large as the largest giant. When he saw such a terrible-looking monster, the fisherman would like to have run away, but he trembled so with fright that he could not move a step.

“Great king of the genie,” cried the monster, “I will never again disobey you!”

At these words the fisherman took courage.

“What is this you are saying, great genius? Tell me your history and how you came to be shut up in that vase.”

At this, the genius looked at the fisherman haughtily. “Speak to me more civilly,” he said, “before I kill you.”

“Alas! why should you kill me?” cried the fisherman. “I have just freed you; have you already forgotten that?”

“No,” answered the genius; “but that will not prevent me from killing you; and I am only going to grant you one favor, and that is to choose the manner of your death.”

“But what have I done to you?” asked the fisherman.

“I cannot treat you in any other way,” said the genius, “and if you would know why, listen to my story.

“I rebelled against the king of the genii. To punish me, he shut me up in this vase of copper, and he put on the leaden cover his seal, which is enchantment enough to prevent my coming out. Then he had the vase thrown into the sea. During the first period of my captivity I vowed that if anyone should free me before a hundred years were passed, I would make him rich even after his death. But that century passed, and no one freed me. In the second century I vowed that I would give all the treasures in the world to my deliverer; but he never came.

“In the third, I promised to make him a king, to be always near him, and to grant him three wishes every day; but that century passed away as the other two had done, and I remained in the same plight. At last I grew angry at being captive for so long, and I vowed that if anyone would release me, I would kill him at once, and would only allow him to choose in what manner he should die. So you see, as you have freed me today, choose in what way you will die.”

The fisherman was very unhappy. “What an unlucky man I am to have freed you! I beg you to spare my life.”

“I have told you,” said the genius, “that it is impossible. Choose quickly; you are wasting time.”

The fisherman began to devise a plot.

“Since I must die,” he said, “before I choose the manner of my death, I conjure you on your honor to tell me if you really were in that vase?”

“Yes, I was,” answered the genius.

“I really cannot believe it,” said the fisherman. “That vase could not hold even your feet and how could your whole body go in? I cannot believe it unless I see you get in.”

Then the genius began to change himself into smoke, which, as before, spread over the sea and the shore, and which, then collecting itself together, began to go back into the vase slowly and evenly till there was nothing left outside. Then a voice came from the vase which said to the fisherman, “Well, unbelieving fisherman, here I am in the vase; do you believe me now?”

The fisherman instead of answering took the lid of lead and shut it down quickly on the vase.

“Now, O genius,” he cried, “ask pardon of me, and choose by what death you will die! But no, it will be better if I throw you into the sea whence I drew you out, and I will build a house on the shore to warn fishermen who come to cast their nets here, against fishing up such a wicked genius as you are, who vows to kill the man who frees you.”

At these words the genius did all he could to get out, but he could not, because of the enchantment of the lid.

Then he tried to get out by cunning.

“If you will take off the cover,” he said, “I will repay you.”

“No,” answered the fisherman, “if I trust myself to you I am afraid you will treat me as a certain Greek king treated the physician Douban. Listen, and I will tell you.”

6

THE STORY OF THE GREEK KING AND THE PHYSICIAN DOUBAN

In the country of Zouman, in Persia, there lived a Greek king. This king was a leper, and all his doctors had been unable to cure him, when a very clever physician came to his court.

He was very learned in all languages, and knew a great deal about herbs and medicines.

As soon as he was told of the king's illness he put on his best robe and presented himself before the king. "Sire," said he, "I know that no physician has been able to cure your majesty, but if you will follow my instructions, I will promise to cure you without any medicines or outward application."

The king listened to this proposal.

"If you are clever enough to do this," he said, "I promise to make you and your descendants rich for ever."

The physician went to his house and made a polo club, the handle of which he hollowed out, and put in it the drug he wished to use. Then he made a ball, and with these things he went the next day to the king.

He told him that he wished him to play at polo. Accordingly the king mounted his horse and went into the place where he played. There the physician approached him with the bat he had made, saying, "Take this, sire, and strike the ball till you feel your hand and whole body in a glow. When the remedy that is in the handle of the club is warmed by your hand it will penetrate throughout your body. The you must return to your palace, bathe, and go to sleep, and when you awake to-morrow morning you will be cured."

The king took the club and urged his horse after the ball which he had thrown. He struck it, and then it was hit back by the courtiers who were playing with him. When he felt very hot he stopped playing, and went back to the palace, went into the bath, and did all that the physician had said. The next day when he arose he found, to his great joy and astonishment, that he was completely cured. When he entered his audience-chamber all his courtiers, who were eager to see if the wonderful cure had been effected, were overwhelmed with joy.

The physician Douban entered the hall and bowed low to the ground. The king, seeing him, called him, made him sit by his side, and showed him every mark of honor.

That evening he gave him a long and rich robe of state, and presented him with two thousand sequins. The following day he continued to load him with favors.

Now the king had a grand-vizir who was avaricious, and envious, and a very bad man. He grew extremely jealous of the physician, and determined to bring about his ruin.

In order to do this he asked to speak in private with the king, saying that he had a most important communication to make.

"What is it?" asked the king.

"Sire," answered the grand-vizir, "it is most dangerous for a monarch to confide in a man whose faithfulness is not proved. You do not know that this physician is not a traitor come here to assassinate you."

"I am sure," said the king, "that this man is the most faithful and virtuous of men. If he wished to take my life, why did he cure me? Cease to speak against him. I see what it is, you are jealous of him; but do not think that I can be turned against him. I remember well what a vizir said to King

Sindbad, his master, to prevent him from putting the prince, his son, to death."

What the Greek king said excited the vizir's curiosity, and he said to him, "Sire, I beg your majesty to have the condescension to tell me what the vizir said to King Sindbad."

"This vizir," he replied, "told King Sindbad that one ought not believe everything that a mother-in-law says, and told him this story."

7

THE STORY OF THE HUSBAND AND THE PARROT

A good man had a beautiful wife, whom he loved passionately, and never left if possible. One day, when he was obliged by important business to go away from her, he went to a place where all kinds of birds are sold and bought a parrot. This parrot not only spoke well, but it had the gift of telling all that had been done before it. He brought it home in a cage, and asked his wife to put it in her room, and take great care of it while he was away. Then he departed. On his return he asked the parrot what had happened during his absence, and the parrot told him some things which made him scold his wife.

She thought that one of her slaves must have been telling tales of her, but they told her it was the parrot, and she resolved to revenge herself on him.

When her husband next went away for one day, she told on slave to turn under the bird’s cage a hand-mill; another to throw water down from above the cage, and a third to take a mirror and turn it in front of its eyes, from left to right by the light of a candle. The slaves did this for part of the night, and did it very well.

The next day when the husband came back he asked the parrot what he had seen. The bird replied, “My good master, the lightning, thunder and rain disturbed me so much all night long, that I cannot tell you what I have suffered.”

The husband, who knew that it had neither rained nor thundered in the night, was convinced that the parrot was not speaking the truth, so he took him out of the cage and threw him so roughly on the ground that he killed him. Nevertheless he was sorry afterwards, for he found that the parrot had spoken the truth.

“When the Greek king,” said the fisherman to the genius, “had finished the story of the parrot, he added to the vizir, “And so, vizir, I shall not listen to you, and I shall take care of the physician, in case I repent as the husband did when he had killed the parrot.”

But the vizir was determined. “Sire,” he replied, “the death of the parrot was nothing. But when it is a question of the life of a king it is better to sacrifice the innocent than save the guilty. It is no uncertain thing, however. The physician, Douban, wishes to assassinate you. My zeal prompts me to disclose this to your Majesty. If I am wrong, I deserve to be punished as a vizir was once punished.”

“What had the vizir done,” said the Greek king, “to merit the punishment?”

“I will tell your Majesty, if you will do me the honour to listen,” answered the vizir.”

8

THE STORY OF THE VIZIR WHO WAS PUNISHED

There was once upon a time a king who had a son who was very fond of hunting. He often allowed him to indulge in this pastime, but he had ordered his grand-vizir always to go with him, and to never to lose sight of him. One day the huntsman roused a stag, and the prince, thinking that the vizir was behind, gave chase, and rode so hard that he found himself alone. He stopped, and having lost sight of it, he turned to rejoin the vizir, who had not been careful enough to follow him. But he lost his way. Whilst he was trying to find it, he saw on the side of the road a beautiful lady who was crying bitterly. He drew his horse's rein, and asked her who she was and what she was doing in this place, and if she needed help.

"I am the daughter of an Indian king," she answered, "and whilst riding in the country I fell asleep and tumbled off. My horse has run away, and I do not know what has become of him."

The young prince had pity on her, and offered to take her behind him, which he did. As they passed by a ruined building the lady dismounted and went in. The prince also dismounted and followed her. To his great surprise, he heard her saying to some one inside, "Rejoice my children; I am bringing you a nice fat youth."

And other voices replied, “Where is he, mamma, that we may eat him at once, as we are very hungry?”

The prince at once saw the danger he was in. He now knew that the lady who said she was the daughter of an Indian king was an ogress, who lived in desolate places, and who by a thousand wiles surprised and devoured passers-by. He was terrified, and threw himself on his horse.

The pretend princess appeared at this moment, and seeing that she had lost her prey, she said to him, “Do not be afraid. What do you want?”

“I am lost,” he answered, “and I am looking for the road.”

“Keep straight on,” said the ogress, “and you will find it.”

The prince could hardly believe his ears, and rode off as hard as he could. He found his way, and arrived safe and sound at his father’s house, where he told him of the danger he had run because of the grand-vizir’s carelessness. The king was very angry, and had him strangled immediately.

“Sire,” went on the vizir to the Greek king, “to return to the physician, Douban. If you do not take care, you will repent of having trusted him. Who knows what this remedy, with which he has cured you, may not in time have a bad effect on you?”

The Greek king was naturally very weak, and did not perceive the wicked intention of his vizir, nor was he firm enough to keep to his first resolution.

“Well, vizir,” he said, “you are right. Perhaps he did come to take my life. He might do it by the mere smell of one of his drugs. I must see what can be done.”

“The best means, sire, to put your life in security, is to send for him at once, and to cut off his head directly he comes,” said the vizir.

“I really think,” replied the king, “that will be the best way.”

He then ordered one of his ministers to fetch the physician, who came at once.

“I have had you sent for,” said the king, “in order to free myself from you by taking your life.”

The physician was beyond measure astonished when he heard he was to die.

“What crimes have I committed, your majesty?”

“I have learnt,” replied the king, “that you are a spy, and intend to kill me. But I will be first, and kill you. Strike,” he added to an executioner who was by, “and rid me of this assassin.”

At this cruel order the physician threw himself on his knees. “Spare my life,” he cried, “and yours will be spared.”

The fisherman stopped here to say to the genius: “You see what passed between the Greek king and the physician has just passed between us two. The Greek king,” he went on, “had no mercy on him, and the executioner bound his eyes.”

All those present begged for his life, but in vain.

The physician on his knees, and bound, said to the king: “At least let me put my affairs in order, and leave my books to persons who will make good use of them. There is one which I should like to present to your majesty. It is very precious, and ought to be kept carefully in your treasury. It contains many curious things the chief being that when you cut off my head, if your majesty will turn to the sixth leaf, and read the third line of the left-hand page, my head will answer all the questions you like to ask it.”

The king, eager to see such a wonderful thing, put off his execution to the next day, and sent him under a strong guard to his house. There the physician put his affairs in order, and the next day there was a great crowd assembled in the hall to see his death, and the doings after it. The physician went up to the foot of the throne with a large book in his hand.

He carried a basin, on which he spread the covering of the book, and presenting it to the king, said: “Sire, take this book, and when my head is cut off, let it be placed in the basin on the covering of this book; as soon as it is there, the blood will cease to flow. Then open the book, and my head will answer your questions. But, sire, I beg for your mercy, for I am innocent."

"Your prayers are useless, and if it were only to hear your head speak when you are dead, you should die."

So saying, he took the book from the physician's hands, and ordered the executioner to do his duty.

The head was so cleverly cut off that it fell into the basin, and directly the blood ceased to flow. Then, to the great astonishment of the king, the eyes opened, and the head said, "Your majesty, open the book." The king did so, and finding that the first leaf stuck against the second, he put his finger in his mouth, to turn it more easily. He did the same thing till he reached the sixth page, and not seeing any writing on it, "Physician," he said, "there is no writing."

"Turn over a few more pages," answered the head. The king went on turning, still putting his finger in his mouth, till the poison in which each page was dipped took effect. His sight failed him, and he fell at the foot of his throne.

When the physician's head saw that the poison had taken effect, and that the king had only a few more minutes to live, "Tyrant," it cried, "see how cruelty and injustice are punished."

Scarcely had it uttered these words than the king died, and the head lost also the little life that had remained in it.

That is the end of the story of the Greek king, and now let us return to the fisherman and the genius.

"If the Greek king," said the fisherman, "had spared the physician, he would not have thus died. The same thing applies to you. Now I am going to throw you into the sea."

"My friend," said the genius, "do not do such a cruel thing. Do not treat me as Imma treated Ateca."

“What did Imma do to Ateca?” asked the fisherman.

“Do you think I can tell you while I am shut up in here?” replied the genius. “Let me out, and I will make you rich.”

The hope of being no longer poor made the fisherman give way.

“If you will give me your promise to do this, I will open the lid. I do not think you will dare to break your word.”

The genius promised, and the fisherman lifted the lid. He came out at once in smoke, and then, having resumed his proper form, the first thing he did was to kick the vase into the sea. This frightened the fisherman, but the genius laughed and said, “Do not be afraid; I only did it to frighten you, and to show you that I intend to keep my word; take your nets and follow me.”

He began to walk in front of the fisherman, who followed him with some misgivings. They passed in front of the town, and went up a mountain and then down into a great plain, where there was a large lake lying between four hills.

When they reached the lake, the genius said to the fisherman, “Throw your nets and catch fish.”

The fisherman did as he was told, hoping for a good catch, as he saw plenty of fish. What was his astonishment at seeing that there were four quite different kinds, some white, some red, some blue, and some yellow. He caught four, one of each color. As he had never seen any fish like these before, he admired them very much, and he was very pleased to think how much money he would get for them.

“Take these fish and carry them to the Sultan, who will give you more money for them than you have ever had in your life. You can come every day to fish in this lake, but be careful not to throw your nets more than once every day, otherwise some harm will happen to you. If you follow my advice carefully you will find it good.”

Saying these words, he struck his foot against the ground, which opened, and when he had disappeared, it closed immediately.

The fisherman resolved to obey the genius exactly, so he did not cast his nets a second time, but walked into the town to sell his fish at the palace.

When the Sultan saw the fish he was much astonished. He looked at them one after the other, and when he had admired them long enough, “Take these fish,” he said to his first vizir, “and given them to the clever cook the Emperor of the Greeks sent me. I think they must be as good as they are beautiful.”

The vizir took them himself to the cook, saying, “Here are four fish that have been brought to the Sultan. He wants you to cook them.”

Then he went back to the Sultan, who told him to give the fisherman four hundred gold pieces. The fisherman, who had never before possessed such a large sum of money at once, could hardly believe his good fortune. He at once relieved the needs of his family, and made good use of it.

But now we must return to the kitchen, which we shall find in great confusion. The cook, when she had cleaned the fish, put them in a pan with some oil to fry them. When she thought them cooked enough on one side, she turned them on the other. But scarcely had she done so when the walls of the kitchen opened, and there came out a young and beautiful damsel. She was dressed in an Egyptian dress of flowered satin, and she wore earrings, and a necklace of white pearls, and bracelets of gold set with rubies, and she held a wand of myrtle in her hand.

She went up to the pan, to the great astonishment of the cook, who stood motionless at the sight of her. She struck one of the fish with her rod, “Fish, fish,” said she, “are you doing your duty?” The fish answered nothing, and then she repeated her question, whereupon they all raised their heads together and answered very distinctly, “Yes, yes. If you reckon, we reckon. If you pay your debts, we pay ours. If you fly, we conquer, and we are content.”

When they had spoken the girl upset the pan, and entered the opening in the wall, which at once closed, and appeared the same as before.

When the cook had recovered from her fright she lifted up the fish which had fallen into the ashes, but she found them as black as cinders, and not fit to serve up to the Sultan. She began to cry.

“Alas! what shall I say to the Sultan? He will be so angry with me, and I know he will not believe me!”

Whilst she was crying the grand-vizir came in and asked if the fish were ready. She told him all that had happened, and he was much surprised. He sent at once for the fisherman, and when he came said to him, “Fisherman, bring me four more fish like you have brought already, for an accident has happened to them so that they cannot be served up to the Sultan.”

The fisherman did not say what the genius had told him, but he excused himself from bringing them that day on account of the length of the way, and he promised to bring them next day.

In the night he went to the lake, cast his nets, and on drawing them in found four fish, which were like the others, each of a different colour.

He went back at once and carried them to the grand-vizir as he had promised.

He then took them to the kitchen and shut himself up with the cook, who began to cook them as she had done the four others on the previous day. When she was about to turn them on the other side, the wall opened, the damsel appeared, addressed the same words to the fish, received the same answer, and then overturned the pan and disappeared.

The grand-vizir was filled with astonishment. “I shall tell the Sultan all that has happened,” said he. And he did so.

The Sultan was very much astounded, and wished to see this marvel for himself. So he sent for the fisherman, and asked him to procure four more fish. The fisherman asked for three days, which were granted, and he then cast his nets in the lake, and again caught four different colored fish. The sultan was delighted to see he had got them, and gave him again four hundred gold pieces.

As soon as the Sultan had the fish he had them carried to his room with all that was needed to cook them.

Then he shut himself up with the grand-vizir, who began to prepare them and cook them. When they were done on one side he turned them over on the other.

Then the wall of the room opened, but instead of the maiden a slave came out. He was enormously tall, and carried a large green stick with which he touched the fish, saying in a terrible voice, “Fish, fish, are you doing your duty?”

To these words the fish lifting up their heads replied, “Yes, yes. If you reckon, we reckon. If you pay your debts, we pay ours. If you fly, we conquer, and are content.”

The slave overturned the pan in the middle of the room, and the fish were turned to cinders. Then he stepped proudly back into the wall, which closed round him.

“After having seen this,” said the Sultan, “I cannot rest. These fish signify some mystery I must clear up.”

He sent for the fisherman. “Fisherman,” he said, “the fish you have brought us have caused me some anxiety. Where did you get them from?”

“Sire,” he answered, “I got them from a lake which lies in the middle of four hills beyond yonder mountains.”

“Do you know this lake?” asked the Sultan of the grand-vizir.

“No; though I have hunted many times round that mountain, I have never heard of it,” said the vizir.

As the fisherman said it was only three hours’ journey away, the sultan ordered his whole court to mount and ride thither, and the fisherman led them.

They climbed the mountain, and then, on the other side, saw the lake as the fisherman had described. The water was so clear that they could see the four kinds of fish swimming about in it. They looked at them for some time, and then the Sultan ordered them to make a camp by the edge of the water.

When night came the Sultan called his vizir, and said to him, “I have resolved to clear up this mystery. I am going out alone, and do you stay here in my tent, and when my ministers come tomorrow, say I am not well, and cannot see them. Do this each day till I return.”

The grand-vizir tried to persuade the Sultan not to go, but in vain. The Sultan took off his state robe and put on his sword, and when he saw all was quiet in the camp he set forth alone.

He climbed one of the hills, and then crossed the great plain, till, just as the sun rose, he beheld far in front of him a large building. When he came near to it he saw it was a splendid palace of beautiful black polished marble, covered with steel as smooth as a mirror.

He went to the gate, which stood half open, and went in, as nobody came when he knocked. He passed through a magnificent courtyard and still saw no one, though he called aloud several times.

He entered large halls where the carpets were of silk, the lounges and sofas covered with tapestry from Mecca, and the hangings of the most beautiful Indian stuffs of gold and silver. Then he found himself in a splendid room, with a fountain supported by golden lions. The water out of the lions’ mouths turned into diamonds and pearls, and the leaping water almost touched a most beautifully-painted dome. The palace was surrounded on three sides by magnificent gardens, little lakes, and woods. Birds sang in the trees, which were netted over to keep them always there.

Still the Sultan saw no one, till he heard a plaintive cry, and a voice which said, “Oh that I could die, for I am too unhappy to wish to live any longer!”

The Sultan looked round to discover who it was who thus bemoaned his fate, and at last saw a handsome young man, richly clothed, who was sitting on a throne raised slightly from the ground. His face was very sad.

The sultan approached him and bowed to him. The young man bent his head very low, but did not rise.

“Sire,” he said to the Sultan, “I cannot rise and do you the reverence that I am sure should be paid to you.”

“Sir,” answered the Sultan, “I am sure you have a good reason for not doing so, and having heard your cry of distress, I am come to offer you my help. Whose is this palace, and why is it thus empty?”

Instead of answering the young man lifted up his robe, and showed the Sultan that, from the waist downwards, he was a block of black marble.

The Sultan was horrified, and begged the young man to tell him his story.

“Willingly, I will tell you my sad history,” said the young man.

9

THE STORY OF THE YOUNG KING OF THE BLACK ISLES

You must know, sire, that my father was Mahmoud, the king of this country, the Black Isles, so called from the four little mountains which were once islands, while the capital was the place where now the great lake lies. My story will tell you how these changes came about.

My father died when he was sixty-six, and I succeeded him. I married my cousin, whom I loved tenderly, and I thought she loved me too.

But one afternoon, when I was half asleep, and was being fanned by two of her maids, I heard one say to the other, “What a pity it is that our mistress no longer loves our master! I believe she would like to kill him if she could, for she is an enchantress.”

I soon found by watching that they were right, and when I mortally wounded a favourite slave of hers for a great crime, she begged that she might build a palace in the garden, where she wept and bewailed him for two years.

At last I begged her to cease grieving for him, for although he could not speak or move, by her enchantments she just kept him alive. She turned upon me in a rage, and said over me some magic words, and I instantly became as you see me now, half man and half marble.

Then this wicked enchantress changed the capital, which was a very populous and flourishing city, into the lake and desert plain you saw. The fish of four colours which are in it are the different races who lived in the town; the four hills are the four islands which give the name to my kingdom. All this the enchantress told me to add to my troubles. And this is not all. Every day she comes and beats me with a whip of buffalo hide.

When the young king had finished his sad story he burst once more into tears, and the Sultan was much moved.

"Tell me," he cried, "where is this wicked woman, and where is the miserable object of her affection, whom she just manages to keep alive?"

"Where she lives I do not know," answered the unhappy prince, "but she goes every day at sunrise to see if the slave can yet speak to her, after she has beaten me."

"Unfortunate king," said the Sultan, "I will do what I can to avenge you."

So he consulted with the young king over the best way to bring this about, and they agreed their plan should be put in effect the next day. The Sultan then rested, and the young king gave himself up to happy hopes of release. The next day the Sultan arose, and then went to the palace in the garden where the black slave was. He drew his sword and destroyed the little life that remained in him, and then threw the body down a well. He then lay down on the couch where the slave had been, and waited for the enchantress.

She went first to the young king, whom she beat with a hundred blows.

Then she came to the room where she thought her wounded slave was, but where the Sultan really lay.

She came near his couch and said, "Are you better to-day, my dear slave? Speak but one word to me."

"How can I be better," answered the Sultan, imitating the language of the Ethiopians, "when I can never sleep for the cries and groans of your husband?”

“What joy to hear you speak!” answered the queen. “Do you wish him to regain his proper shape?”

“Yes,” said the Sultan; “hasten to set him at liberty, so that I may no longer hear his cries.”

The queen at once went out and took a cup of water, and said over it some words that made it boil as if it were on the fire. Then she threw it over the prince, who at once regained his own form. He was filled with joy, but the enchantress said, “Hasten away from this place and never come back, lest I kill you.”

So he hid himself to see the end of the Sultan’s plan.

The enchantress went back to the Palace of Tears and said, “Now I have done what you wished.”

“What you have done,” said the Sultan, “is not enough to cure me. Every day at midnight all the people whom you have changed into fish lift their heads out of the lake and cry for vengeance. Go quickly, and give them their proper shape.”

The enchantress hurried away and said some words over the lake.

The fish then became men, women, and children, and the houses and shops were once more filled. The Sultan’s suite, who had encamped by the lake, were not a little astonished to see themselves in the middle of a large and beautiful town.

As soon as she had disenchanted it the queen went back to the palace.

“Are you quite well now?” she said.

“Come near,” said the Sultan. “Nearer still.”

She obeyed. Then he sprang up, and with one blow of his sword he cut her in two.

Then he went and found the prince.

“Rejoice,” he said, “your cruel enemy is dead.”

The prince thanked him again and again.

“And now,” said the Sultan. “I will go back to my capital, which I am glad to find is so near yours.”

“So near mine!” said the King of the Black Isles.

“Do you know it is a whole year’s journey from here? You came here in a few hours because it was enchanted. But I will accompany you on your journey.”

“It will give me much pleasure if you will escort me,” said the Sultan, “and as I have no children, I will make you my heir.”

The Sultan and the prince set out together, the Sultan laden with rich presents from the King of the Black Isles.

The day after he reached his capital the Sultan assembled his court and told them all that had befallen him, and told them how he intended to adopt the young king as his heir.

Then he gave each man presents in proportion to his rank.

As for the fisherman, as he was the first cause of the deliverance of the young prince, the Sultan gave him much money, and made him and his family happy for the rest of their days.

10

THE STORY OF THE THREE CALENDERS, SONS OF KINGS, AND OF FIVE LADIES OF BAGDAD

In the reign of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, there lived at Bagdad a porter who, in spite of his humble calling, was an intelligent and sensible man. One morning he was sitting in his usual place with his basket before him, waiting to be hired, when a tall young lady, covered with a long muslin veil, came up to him and said, “Pick up your basket and follow me.” The porter, who was greatly pleased by her appearance and voice, jumped up at once, poised his basket on his head, and accompanied the lady, saying to himself as he went, “Oh, happy day! Oh, lucky meeting!”

The lady soon stopped before a closed door, at which she knocked. It was opened by an old man with a long white beard, to whom the lady held out money without speaking. The old man, who seemed to understand what she wanted, vanished into the house, and returned bringing a large jar of wine, which the porter placed in his basket. Then the lady signed to him to follow, and they went their way.

The next place she stopped at was a fruit and flower shop, and here she bought a large quantity of apples, apricots, peaches, and other things, with lilies, jasmine, and all sorts of sweet-smelling plants. From this shop she went to a butcher’s, a grocer’s, and a poulterer’s, till at last the porter exclaimed in despair, “My good lady, if you had only told me you were going to buy enough provisions to stock a town, I would have brought a horse, or rather a camel." The lady laughed, and told him she had not finished yet, but after choosing various kinds of scents and spices from a druggist's store, she halted before a magnificent palace, at the door of which she knocked gently. The porteress who opened it was of such beauty that the eyes of the man were quite dazzled, and he was the more astonished as he saw clearly that she was no slave. The lady who had led him hither stood watching him with amusement, till the porteress exclaimed, "Why don't you come in, my sister? This poor man is so heavily weighed down that he is ready to drop."

When they were both inside the door was fastened, and they all three entered a large court, surrounded by an open-work gallery. At one end of the court was a platform, and on the platform stood an amber throne supported by four ebony columns, garnished with pearls and diamonds. In the middle of the court stood a marble basin filled with water from the mouth of a golden lion.

The porter looked about him, noticing and admiring everything; but his attention was specially attracted by a third lady sitting on the throne, who was even more beautiful than the other two. By the respect shown to her by the others, he judged that she must be the eldest, and in this he was right. This lady's name was Zobeida, the porteress was Sadie, and the housekeeper was Amina. At a word from Zobeida, Sadie and Amina took the basket from the porter, who was glad enough to be relieved from its weight; and when it was emptied, paid him handsomely for its use. But instead of taking up his basket and going away, the man still lingered, till Zobeida inquired what he was waiting for, and if he expected more money. "Oh, madam," returned he, "you have already given me too much, and I fear I may have been guilty of rudeness in not taking my departure at once. But, if you will pardon my saying so, I was lost in astonishment at seeing such beautiful ladies by themselves. A company of women without men is, however, as dull as a company of men without women.” And after telling some stories to prove his point, he ended by entreating them to let him stay and make a fourth at their dinner.

The ladies were rather amused at the man’s assurances and after some discussion it was agreed that he should be allowed to stay, as his society might prove entertaining. “But listen, friend,” said Zobeida, “if we grant your request, it is only on condition that you behave with the utmost politeness, and that you keep the secret of our way of living, which chance has revealed to you.” Then they all sat down to table, which had been covered by Amina with the dishes she had bought.

After the first few mouthfuls Amina poured some wine into a golden cup. She first drank herself, according to the Arab custom, and then filled it for her sisters. When it came to the porter’s turn he kissed Amina’s hand, and sang a song, which he composed at the moment in praise of the wine. The three ladies were pleased with the song, and then sang themselves, so that the repast was a merry one, and lasted much longer than usual.

At length, seeing that the sun was about to set, Sadia said to the porter, “Rise and go; it is now time for us to separate.”

“Oh, madam,” replied he, “how can you desire me to quit you in the state in which I am? Between the wine I have drunk, and the pleasure of seeing you, I should never find the way to my house. Let me remain here till morning, and when I have recovered my senses I will go when you like.”

“Let him stay,” said Amina, who had before proved herself his friend. “It is only just, as he has given us so much amusement.”

“If you wish it, my sister,” replied Zobeida; “but if he does, I must make a new condition. Porter,” she continued, turning to him, “if you remain, you must promise to ask no questions about anything you may see. If you do, you may perhaps hear what you don’t like.”

This being settled, Amina brought in supper, and lit up the hall with a number of sweet smelling tapers. They then sat down again at the table, and began with fresh appetites to eat, drink, sing, and recite verses. In fact, they were all enjoying themselves mightily when they heard a knock at the outer door, which Sadie rose to open. She soon returned saying that three Calenders, all blind in the right eye, and all with their heads, faces, and eyebrows clean shaved, begged for admittance, as they were newly arrived in Bagdad, and night had already fallen. “They seem to have pleasant manners,” she added, “but you have no idea how funny they look. I am sure we should find their company diverting.”

Zobeida and Amina made some difficulty about admitting the new comers, and Sadie knew the reason of their hesitation. But she urged the matter so strongly that Zobeida was at last forced to consent. “Bring them in, then,” said she, “but make them understand that they are not to make remarks about what does not concern them, and be sure to make them read the inscription over the door.” For on the door was written in letters of gold, “Whoso meddles in affairs that are no business of his, will hear truths that will not please him.”

The three Calenders bowed low on entering, and thanked the ladies for their kindness and hospitality. The ladies replied with words of welcome, and they were all about to seat themselves when the eyes of the Calenders fell on the porter, whose dress was not so very unlike their own, though he still wore all the hair that nature had given him. “This,” said one of them, “is apparently one of our Arab brothers, who has rebelled against our ruler.”

The porter, although half asleep from the wine he had drunk, heard the words, and without moving cried angrily to the Calender, “Sit down and mind your own business. Did you not read the inscription over the door? Everybody is not obliged to live in the same way.”

“Do not be so angry, my good man,” replied the Calender; “we should be very sorry to displease you;” so the quarrel was smoothed over, and supper began in good earnest. When the Calenders had satisfied their hunger, they offered to play to their hostesses, if there were any instruments in the house. The ladies were delighted at the idea, and Sadie went to see what she could find, returning in a few moments laden with two different kinds of flutes and a tambourine. Each Calender took the one he preferred, and began to play a well-known air, while the ladies sang the words of the song. These words were the gayest and liveliest possible, and every now and then the singers had to stop to indulge the laughter which almost choked them. In the midst of all their noise, a knock was heard at the door.

Now early that evening the Caliph secretly left the palace, accompanied by his grand-vizir, Giafar, and Mesrour, chief of the eunuchs, all three wearing the dresses of merchants. Passing down the street, the Caliph had been attracted by the music of instruments and the sound of laughter, and had ordered his vizir to go and knock at the door of the house, as he wished to enter. The vizir replied that the ladies who lived there seemed to be entertaining their friends, and he thought his master would do well not to intrude on them; but the Caliph had taken it into his head to see for himself, and insisted on being obeyed.

The knock was answered by Sadie, with a taper in her hand, and the vizir, who was surprised at her beauty, bowed low before her, and said respectfully, “Madam, we are three merchants who have lately arrived from Moussoul, and, owing to a misadventure which befel us this very night, only reached our inn to find that the doors were closed to us till to-morrow morning. Not knowing what to do, we wandered in the streets till we happened to pass your house, when, seeing lights and hearing the sound of voices, we resolved to ask you to give us shelter till the dawn. If you will grant us this favour, we will, with your permission, do all in our power to help you spend the time pleasantly.”

Sadie answered the merchant that she must first consult her sisters; and after having talked over the matter with them, she returned to tell him that he and his two friends would be welcome to join their company. They entered and bowed politely to the ladies and their guests. Then Zobeida, as the mistress, came forward and said gravely, “You are welcome here, but I hope you will allow me to beg one thing of you–have as many eyes as you like, but no tongues; and ask no questions about anything you see, however strange it may appear to you.”

“Madam,” returned the vizir, “you shall be obeyed. We have quite enough to please and interest us without troubling ourselves about that with which we have no concern.” Then they all sat down, and drank to the health of the new comers.

While the vizir, Giafar, was talking to the ladies the Caliph was occupied in wondering who they could be, and why the three Calenders had each lost his right eye. He was burning to inquire the reason of it all, but was silenced by Zobeida’s request, so he tried to rouse himself and to take his part in the conversation, which was very lively, the subject of discussion being the many different sorts of pleasures that there were in the world. After some time the Calenders got up and performed some curious dances, which delighted the rest of the company.

When they had finished Zobeida rose from her seat, and, taking Amina by the hand, she said to her, “My sister, our friends will excuse us if we seem to forget their presence and fulfil our nightly task.” Amina understood her sister’s meaning, and collecting the dishes, glasses, and musical instruments, she carried them away, while Sadie swept the hall and put everything in order. Having done this she begged the Calenders to sit on a sofa on one side of the room, and the Caliph and his friends to place themselves opposite. As to the porter, she requested him to come and help her and her sister.

Shortly after Amina entered carrying a seat, which she put down in the middle of the empty space. She next went over to the door of a closet and signed to the porter to follow her. He did so, and soon reappeared leading two black dogs by a chain, which he brought into the centre of the hall. Zobeida then got up from her seat between the Calenders and the Caliph and walked slowly across to where the porter stood with the dogs. “We must do our duty,” she said with a deep sigh, pushing back her sleeves, and, taking a whip from Sadie, she said to the man, “Take one of those dogs to my sister Amina and give me the other.”

The porter did as he was bid, but as he led the dog to Zobeida it uttered piercing howls, and gazed up at her with looks of entreaty. But Zobeida took no notice, and whipped the dog till she was out of breath. She then took the chain from the porter, and, raising the dog on its hind legs, they looked into each other’s eyes sorrowfully till tears began to fall from both. Then Zobeida took her handkerchief and wiped the dog’s eyes tenderly, after which she kissed it, then, putting the chain into the porter’s hand she said, “Take it back to the closet and bring me the other.”

The same ceremony was gone through with the second dog, and all the while the whole company looked on with astonishment. The Caliph in particular could hardly contain himself, and made signs to the vizir to ask what it all meant. But the vizir pretended not to see, and turned his head away.

Zobeida remained for some time in the middle of the room, till at last Sadie went up to her and begged her to sit down, as she also had her part to play. At these words Amina fetched a lute from a case of yellow satin and gave it to Sadie, who sang several songs to its accompaniment. When she was tired she said to Amina, “My sister, I can do no more; come, I pray you, and take my place.”

Amina struck a few chords and then broke into a song, which she sang with so much ardour that she was quite overcome, and sank gasping on a pile of cushions, tearing open her dress as she did so to give herself some air. To the amazement of all present, her neck, instead of being as smooth and white as her face, was a mass of scars.

The Calenders and the Caliph looked at each other, and whispered together, unheard by Zobeida and Sadie, who were tending their fainting sister.

“What does it all mean?’ asked the Caliph.

“We know no more than you,” said the Calender to whom he had spoken.

“What! You do not belong to the house?”

“My lord,” answered all the Calenders together, “we came here for the first time an hour before you.”

They then turned to the porter to see if he could explain the mystery, but the porter was no wiser than they were themselves. At length the Caliph could contain his curiosity no longer, and declared that he would compel the ladies to tell them the meaning of their strange conduct. The vizir, foreseeing what would happen, implored him to remember the condition their hostesses had imposed, and added in a whisper that if his Highness would only wait till morning he could as Caliph summon the ladies to appear before him. But the Caliph, who was not accustomed to be contradicted, rejected this advice, and it was resolved after a little more talking that the question should be put by the porter. Suddenly Zobeida turned round, and seeing their excitement she said, “What is the matter–what are you all discussing so earnestly?”

“Madam,” answered the porter, “these gentlemen entreat you to explain to them why you should first whip the dogs and then cry over them, and also how it happens that the fainting lady is covered with scars. They have requested me, Madam, to be their mouthpiece.”

“Is it true, gentlemen,” asked Zobeida, drawing herself up, “that you have charged this man to put me that question?”

“It is,” they all replied, except Giafar, who was silent.

“Is this,” continued Zobeida, growing more angry every moment, “is this the return you make for the hospitality I have shown you? Have you forgotten the one condition on which you were allowed to enter the house? Come quickly," she added, clapping her hands three times, and the words were hardly uttered when seven black slaves, each armed with a sabre, burst in and stood over the seven men, throwing them on the ground, and preparing themselves, on a sign from their mistress, to cut off their heads.

The seven culprits all thought their last hour had come, and the Caliph repented bitterly that he had not taken the vizir's advice. But they made up their minds to die bravely, all except the porter, who loudly inquired of Zobeida why he was to suffer for other people's faults, and declared that these misfortunes would never have happened if it had not been for the Calenders, who always brought ill-luck. He ended by imploring Zobeida not to confound the innocent with the guilty and to spare his life.

In spite of her anger, there was something so comic in the groans of the porter that Zobeida could not refrain from laughing. But putting him aside she addressed the others a second time, saying, "Answer me; who are you? Unless you tell me truly you have not another moment to live. I can hardly think you are men of any position, whatever country you belong to. If you were, you would have had more consideration for us."

The Caliph, who was naturally very impatient, suffered far more than either of the others at feeling that his life was at the mercy of a justly offended lady, but when he heard her question he began to breathe more freely, for he was convinced that she had only to learn his name and rank for all danger to be over. So he whispered hastily to the vizir, who was next to him, to reveal their secret. But the vizir, wiser than his master, wished to conceal from the public the affront they had received, and merely answered, "After all, we have only got what we deserved."

Meanwhile Zobeida had turned to the three Calenders and inquired if, as they were all blind, they were brothers.

"No, madam," replied one, "we are no blood relations at all, only brothers by our mode of life."

“And you,” she asked, addressing another, “were you born blind of one eye?”

“No, madam,” returned he, “I became blind through a most surprising adventure, such as probably has never happened to anybody. After that I shaved my head and eyebrows and put on the dress in which you see me now.”

Zobeida put the same question to the other two Calenders, and received the same answer.

“But,” added the third, “it may interest you, madam, to know that we are not men of low birth, but are all three sons of kings, and of kings, too, whom the world holds in high esteem.”

At these words Zobeida’s anger cooled down, and she turned to her slaves and said, “You can give them a little more liberty, but do not leave the hall. Those that will tell us their histories and their reasons for coming here shall be allowed to leave unhurt; those who refuse–” And she paused, but in a moment the porter, who understood that he had only to relate his story to set himself free from this terrible danger, immediately broke in,

“Madam, you know already how I came here, and what I have to say will soon be told. Your sister found me this morning in the place where I always stand waiting to be hired. She bade me follow her to various shops, and when my basket was quite full we returned to this house, when you had the goodness to permit me to remain, for which I shall be eternally grateful. That is my story.”

He looked anxiously to Zobeida, who nodded her head and said, “You can go; and take care we never meet again.”

“Oh, madam,” cried the porter, “let me stay yet a little while. It is not just that the others should have heard my story and that I should not hear theirs,” and without waiting for permission he seated himself on the end of the sofa occupied by the ladies, whilst the rest crouched on the carpet, and the slaves stood against the wall.

Then one of the Calenders, addressing himself to Zobeida as the principal lady, began his story.

11

THE STORY OF THE FIRST CALENDER, SON OF A KING

In order, madam, to explain how I came to lose my right eye, and to wear the dress of a Calender, you must first know that I am the son of a king. My father's only brother reigned over the neighbouring country, and had two children, a daughter and a son, who were of the same age as myself.

As I grew up, and was allowed more liberty, I went every year to pay a visit to my uncle's court, and usually stayed there about two months. In this way my cousin and I became very intimate, and were much attached to each other. The very last time I saw him he seemed more delighted to see me than ever, and gave a great feast in my honour. When we had finished eating, he said to me, "My cousin, you would never guess what I have been doing since your last visit to us! Directly after your departure I set a number of men to work on a building after my own design. It is now completed, and ready to be lived in. I should like to show it to you, but you must first swear two things: to be faithful to me, and to keep my secret."

Of course I did not dream of refusing him anything he asked, and gave the promise without the least hesitation. He then bade me wait an instant, and vanished, returning in a few moments with a richly dressed lady of great beauty, but as he did not tell me her name, I thought it was better not to inquire. We all three sat down to table and amused ourselves with talking of all sorts of indifferent things, and with drinking each other's health. Suddenly the prince said to me, "Cousin, we have no time to lose; be so kind as to conduct this lady to a certain spot, where you will find a dome-like tomb, newly built. You cannot mistake it. Go in, both of you, and wait till I come. I shall not be long."

As I had promised I prepared to do as I was told, and giving my hand to the lady, I escorted her, by the light of the moon, to the place of which the prince had spoken. We had barely reached it when he joined us himself, carrying a small vessel of water, a pickaxe, and a little bag containing plaster.

With the pickaxe he at once began to destroy the empty sepulchre in the middle of the tomb. One by one he took the stones and piled them up in a corner. When he had knocked down the whole sepulchre he proceeded to dig at the earth, and beneath where the sepulchre had been I saw a trap-door. He raised the door and I caught sight of the top of a spiral staircase; then he said, turning to the lady, "Madam, this is the way that will lead you down to the spot which I told you of."

The lady did not answer, but silently descended the staircase, the prince following her. At the top, however, he looked at me. "My cousin," he exclaimed, "I do not know how to thank you for your kindness. Farewell."

"What do you mean?" I cried. "I don't understand."

"No matter," he replied, "go back by the path that you came."

He would say no more, and, greatly puzzled, I returned to my room in the palace and went to bed. When I woke, and considered my adventure, I thought that I must have been dreaming, and sent a servant to ask if the prince was dressed and could see me. But on hearing that he had not slept at home I was much alarmed, and hastened to the cemetery, where, unluckily, the tombs were all so alike that I could not discover which was the one I was in search of, though I spent four days in looking for it.

You must know that all this time the king, my uncle, was absent on a hunting expedition, and as no one knew when he would be back, I at last decided to return home, leaving the ministers to make my excuses. I longed to tell them what had become of the prince, about whose fate they felt the most dreadful anxiety, but the oath I had sworn kept me silent.

On my arrival at my father's capital, I was astonished to find a large detachment of guards drawn up before the gate of the palace; they surrounded me directly I entered. I asked the officers in command the reason of this strange behaviour, and was horrified to learn that the army had mutinied and put to death the king, my father, and had placed the grand-vizir on the throne. Further, that by his orders I was placed under arrest.

Now this rebel vizir had hated me from my boy-hood, because once, when shooting at a bird with a bow, I had shot out his eye by accident. Of course I not only sent a servant at once to offer him my regrets and apologies, but I made them in person. It was all of no use. He cherished an undying hatred towards me, and lost no occasion of showing it. Having once got me in his power I felt he could show no mercy, and I was right. Mad with triumph and fury he came to me in my prison and tore out my right eye. That is how I lost it.

My persecutor, however, did not stop here. He shut me up in a large case and ordered his executioner to carry me into a desert place, to cut off my head, and then to abandon my body to the birds of prey. The case, with me inside it, was accordingly placed on a horse, and the executioner, accompanied by another man, rode into the country until they found a spot suitable for the purpose. But their hearts were not so hard as they seemed, and my tears and prayers made them waver.

"Forsake the kingdom instantly," said the executioner at last, "and take care never to come back, for you will not only lose your head, but make us lose ours.” I thanked him gratefully, and tried to console myself for the loss of my eye by thinking of the other misfortunes I had escaped.

After all I had gone through, and my fear of being recognised by some enemy, I could only travel very slowly and cautiously, generally resting in some out-of-the-way place by day, and walking as far as I was able by night, but at length I arrived in the kingdom of my uncle, of whose protection I was sure.

I found him in great trouble about the disappearance of his son, who had, he said, vanished without leaving a trace; but his own grief did not prevent him sharing mine. We mingled our tears, for the loss of one was the loss of the other, and then I made up my mind that it was my duty to break the solemn oath I had sworn to the prince. I therefore lost no time in telling my uncle everything I knew, and I observed that even before I had ended his sorrow appeared to be lightened a little.

“My dear nephew,” he said, “your story gives me some hope. I was aware that my son was building a tomb, and I think I can find the spot. But as he wished to keep the matter secret, let us go alone and seek the place ourselves.”

He then bade me disguise myself, and we both slipped out of a garden door which opened on to the cemetery. It did not take long for us to arrive at the scene of the prince’s disappearance, or to discover the tomb I had sought so vainly before. We entered it, and found the trap-door which led to the staircase, but we had great difficulty in raising it, because the prince had fastened it down underneath with the plaster he had brought with him.

My uncle went first, and I followed him. When we reached the bottom of the stairs we stepped into a sort of ante-room, filled with such a dense smoke that it was hardly possible to see anything. However, we passed through the smoke into a large chamber, which at first seemed quite empty. The room was brilliantly lighted, and in another moment we perceived a sort of platform at one end, on which were the bodies of the prince and a lady, both half-burned, as if they had been dragged out of a fire before it had quite consumed them.

This horrible sight turned me faint, but, to my surprise, my uncle did not show so much surprise as anger.

“I knew,” he said, “that my son was tenderly attached to this lady, whom it was impossible he should ever marry. I tried to turn his thoughts, and presented to him the most beautiful princesses, but he cared for none of them, and, as you see, they have now been united by a horrible death in an underground tomb.” But, as he spoke, his anger melted into tears, and again I wept with him.

When he recovered himself he drew me to him. “My dear nephew,” he said, embracing me, “you have come to me to take his place, and I will do my best to forget that I ever had a son who could act in so wicked a manner.” Then he turned and went up the stairs.

We reached the palace without anyone having noticed our absence, when, shortly after, a clashing of drums, and cymbals, and the blare of trumpets burst upon our astonished ears. At the same time a thick cloud of dust on the horizon told of the approach of a great army. My heart sank when I perceived that the commander was the vizir who had dethroned my father, and was come to seize the kingdom of my uncle.

The capital was utterly unprepared to stand a siege, and seeing that resistance was useless, at once opened its gates. My uncle fought hard for his life, but was soon overpowered, and when he fell I managed to escape through a secret passage, and took refuge with an officer whom I knew I could trust.

Persecuted by ill-fortune, and stricken with grief, there seemed to be only one means of safety left to me. I shaved my beard and my eyebrows, and put on the dress of a calender, in which it was easy for me to travel without being known. I avoided the towns till I reached the kingdom of the famous and powerful Caliph, Haroun-al-Raschid, when I had no further reason to fear my enemies. It was my intention to come to Bagdad and to throw myself at the feet of his Highness, who would, I felt certain, be touched by my sad story, and would grant me, besides, his help and protection.

After a journey which lasted some months I arrived at length at the gates of this city. It was sunset, and I paused for a little to look about me, and to decide which way to turn my steps. I was still debating on this subject when I was joined by this other calender, who stopped to greet me. “You, like me, appear to be a stranger,” I said. He replied that I was right, and before he could say more the third calender came up. He, also, was newly arrived in Bagdad, and being brothers in misfortune, we resolved to cast in our lots together, and to share whatever fate might have in store.

By this time it had grown late, and we did not know where to spend the night. But our lucky star having guided us to this door, we took the liberty of knocking and of asking for shelter, which was given to us at once with the best grace in the world.

This, madam, is my story.

“I am satisfied,” replied Zobeida; “you can go when you like.”

The calender, however, begged leave to stay and to hear the histories of his two friends and of the three other persons of the company, which he was allowed to do.

12

THE STORY OF THE SECOND CALENDER, SON OF A KING

"Madam," said the young man, addressing Zobeida, "if you wish to know how I lost my right eye, I shall have to tell you the story of my whole life."

I was scarcely more than a baby, when the king my father, finding me unusually quick and clever for my age, turned his thoughts to my education. I was taught first to read and write, and then to learn the Koran, which is the basis of our holy religion, and the better to understand it, I read with my tutors the ablest commentators on its teaching, and committed to memory all the traditions respecting the Prophet, which have been gathered from the mouth of those who were his friends. I also learnt history, and was instructed in poetry, versification, geography, chronology, and in all the outdoor exercises in which every prince should excel. But what I liked best of all was writing Arabic characters, and in this I soon surpassed my masters, and gained a reputation in this branch of knowledge that reached as far as India itself.

Now the Sultan of the Indies, curious to see a young prince with such strange tastes, sent an ambassador to my father, laden with rich presents, and a warm invitation to visit his court. My father, who was deeply anxious to secure the friendship of so powerful a monarch, and held besides that a little travel would greatly improve my manners and open my mind, accepted gladly, and in a short time I had set out for India with the ambassador, attended only by a small suite on account of the length of the journey, and the badness of the roads. However, as was my duty, I took with me ten camels, laden with rich presents for the Sultan.

We had been travelling for about a month, when one day we saw a cloud of dust moving swiftly towards us; and as soon as it came near, we found that the dust concealed a band of fifty robbers. Our men barely numbered half, and as we were also hampered by the camels, there was no use in fighting, so we tried to overawe them by informing them who we were, and whither we were going. The robbers, however, only laughed, and declared that was none of their business, and, without more words, attacked us brutally. I defended myself to the last, wounded though I was, but at length, seeing that resistance was hopeless, and that the ambassador and all our followers were made prisoners, I put spurs to my horse and rode away as fast as I could, till the poor beast fell dead from a wound in his side. I managed to jump off without any injury, and looked about to see if I was pursued. But for the moment I was safe, for, as I imagined, the robbers were all engaged in quarreling over their booty.

I found myself in a country that was quite new to me, and dared not return to the main road lest I should again fall into the hands of the robbers. Luckily my wound was only a slight one, and after binding it up as well as I could, I walked on for the rest of the day, till I reached a cave at the foot of a mountain, where I passed the night in peace, making my supper off some fruits I had gathered on the way.

I wandered about for a whole month without knowing where I was going, till at length I found myself on the outskirts of a beautiful city, watered by winding streams, which enjoyed an eternal spring. My delight at the prospect of mixing once more with human beings was somewhat damped at the thought of the miserable object I must seem. My face and hands had been burned nearly black; my clothes were all in rags, and my shoes were in such a state that I had been forced to abandon them altogether.

I entered the town, and stopped at a tailor’s shop to inquire where I was. The man saw I was better than my condition, and begged me to sit down, and in return I told him my whole story. The tailor listened with attention, but his reply, instead of giving me consolation, only increased my trouble.

“Beware,” he said, “of telling any one what you have told me, for the prince who governs the kingdom is your father’s greatest enemy, and he will be rejoiced to find you in his power.”

I thanked the tailor for his counsel, and said I would do whatever he advised; then, being very hungry, I gladly ate of the food he put before me, and accepted his offer of a lodging in his house.

In a few days I had quite recovered from the hardships I had undergone, and then the tailor, knowing that it was the custom for the princes of our religion to learn a trade or profession so as to provide for themselves in times of ill-fortune, inquired if there was anything I could do for my living. I replied that I had been educated as a grammarian and a poet, but that my great gift was writing.

“All that is of no use here,” said the tailor. “Take my advice, put on a short coat, and as you seem hardy and strong, go into the woods and cut firewood, which you will sell in the streets. By this means you will earn your living, and be able to wait till better times come. The hatchet and the cord shall be my present.”

This counsel was very distasteful to me, but I thought I could not do otherwise than adopt it. So the next morning I set out with a company of poor wood-cutters, to whom the tailor had introduced me. Even on the first day I cut enough wood to sell for a tolerable sum, and very soon I became more expert, and had made enough money to repay the tailor all he had lent me.

I had been a wood-cutter for more than a year, when one day I wandered further into the forest than I had ever done before, and reached a delicious green glade, where I began to cut wood. I was hacking at the root of a tree, when I beheld an iron ring fastened to a trapdoor of the same metal. I soon cleared away the earth, and pulling up the door, found a staircase, which I hastily made up my mind to go down, carrying my hatchet with me by way of protection. When I reached the bottom I discovered that I was in a huge palace, as brilliantly lighted as any palace above ground that I had ever seen, with a long gallery supported by pillars of jasper, ornamented with capitals of gold. Down this gallery a lady came to meet me, of such beauty that I forgot everything else, and thought only of her.

To save her all the trouble possible, I hastened towards her, and bowed low.

“Who are you? Who are you?” she said. “A man or a genius?”

“A man, madam,” I replied; “I have nothing to do with genii.”

“By what accident do you come here?” she asked again with a sigh. “I have been in this place now for five and twenty years, and you are the first man who has visited me.”

Emboldened by her beauty and gentleness, I ventured to reply, “Before, madam, I answer your question, allow me to say how grateful I am for this meeting, which is not only a consolation to me in my own heavy sorrow, but may perhaps enable me to render your lot happier,” and then I told her who I was, and how I had come there.

“Alas, prince,” she said, with a deeper sigh than before, “you have guessed rightly in supposing me an unwilling prisoner in this gorgeous place. I am the daughter of the king of the Ebony Isle, of whose fame you surely must have heard. At my father’s desire I was married to a prince who was my own cousin; but on my very wedding day, I was snatched up by a genius, and brought here in a faint. For a long while I did nothing but weep, and would not suffer the genius to come near me; but time teaches us submission, and I have now got accustomed to his presence, and if clothes and jewels could content me, I have them in plenty. Every tenth day, for five and twenty years, I have received a visit from him, but in case I should need his help at any other time, I have only to touch a talisman that stands at the entrance of my chamber. It wants still five days to his next visit, and I hope that during that time you will do me the honour to be my guest."

I was too much dazzled by her beauty to dream of refusing her offer, and accordingly the princess had me conducted to the bath, and a rich dress befitting my rank was provided for me. Then a feast of the most delicate dishes was served in a room hung with embroidered Indian fabrics.

Next day, when we were at dinner, I could maintain my patience no longer, and implored the princess to break her bonds, and return with me to the world which was lighted by the sun.

"What you ask is impossible," she answered; "but stay here with me instead, and we can be happy, and all you will have to do is to betake yourself to the forest every tenth day, when I am expecting my master the genius. He is very jealous, as you know, and will not suffer a man to come near me."

"Princess," I replied, "I see it is only fear of the genius that makes you act like this. For myself, I dread him so little that I mean to break his talisman in pieces! Awful though you think him, he shall feel the weight of my arm, and I herewith take a solemn vow to stamp out the whole race."

The princess, who realized the consequences of such audacity, entreated me not to touch the talisman. "If you do, it will be the ruin of both of us," said she; "I know genii much better than you." But the wine I had drunk had confused my brain; I gave one kick to the talisman, and it fell into a thousand pieces.

Hardly had my foot touched the talisman when the air became as dark as night, a fearful noise was heard, and the palace shook to its very foundations. In an instant I was sobered, and understood what I had done. “Princess!” I cried, “what is happening?”

“Alas!” she exclaimed, forgetting all her own terrors in anxiety for me, “fly, or you are lost.”

I followed her advice and dashed up the staircase, leaving my hatchet behind me. But I was too late. The palace opened and the genius appeared, who, turning angrily to the princess, asked indignantly,

“What is the matter, that you have sent for me like this?”

“A pain in my heart,” she replied hastily, “obliged me to seek the aid of this little bottle. Feeling faint, I slipped and fell against the talisman, which broke. That is really all.”

“You are an impudent liar!” cried the genius. “How did this hatchet and those shoes get here?”

“I never saw them before,” she answered, “and you came in such a hurry that you may have picked them up on the road without knowing it.” To this the genius only replied by insults and blows. I could hear the shrieks and groans of the princess, and having by this time taken off my rich garments and put on those in which I had arrived the previous day, I lifted the trap, found myself once more in the forest, and returned to my friend the tailor, with a light load of wood and a heart full of shame and sorrow.

The tailor, who had been uneasy at my long absence, was, delighted to see me; but I kept silence about my adventure, and as soon as possible retired to my room to lament in secret over my folly. While I was thus indulging my grief my host entered, and said, “There is an old man downstairs who has brought your hatchet and slippers, which he picked up on the road, and now restores to you, as he found out from one of your comrades where you lived. You had better come down and speak to him yourself.” At this speech I changed color, and my legs trembled under me. The tailor noticed my confusion, and was just going to inquire the reason when the door of the room opened, and the old man appeared, carrying with him my hatchet and shoes.

"I am a genius," he said, "the son of the daughter of Eblis, prince of the genii. Is not this hatchet yours, and these shoes?" Without waiting for an answer–which, indeed, I could hardly have given him, so great was my fright–he seized hold of me, and darted up into the air with the quickness of lightning, and then, with equal swiftness, dropped down towards the earth. When he touched the ground, he rapped it with his foot; it opened, and we found ourselves in the enchanted palace, in the presence of the beautiful princess of the Ebony Isle. But how different she looked from what she was when I had last seen her, for she was lying stretched on the ground covered with blood, and weeping bitterly.

"Traitor!" cried the genius, "is not this man your lover?"

She lifted up her eyes slowly, and looked sadly at me. "I never saw him before," she answered slowly. "I do not know who he is."

"What!" exclaimed the genius, "you owe all your sufferings to him, and yet you dare to say he is a stranger to you!"

"But if he really is a stranger to me," she replied, "why should I tell a lie and cause his death?"

"Very well," said the genius, drawing his sword, "take this, and cut off his head."

"Alas," answered the princess, "I am too weak even to hold the sabre. And supposing that I had the strength, why should I put an innocent man to death?"

"You condemn yourself by your refusal," said the genius; then turning to me, he added, "and you, do you not know her?"

"How should I?" I replied, resolved to imitate the princess in her fidelity. "How should I, when I never saw her before?"

"Cut her head off," then, "if she is a stranger to you, and I shall believe you are speaking the truth, and will set you at liberty."

“Certainly,” I answered, taking the saber in my hands, and making a sign to the princess to fear nothing, as it was my own life that I was about to sacrifice, and not hers. But the look of gratitude she gave me shook my courage, and I flung the saber to the earth.

“I should not deserve to live,” I said to the genius, “if I were such a coward as to slay a lady who is not only unknown to me, but who is at this moment half dead herself. Do with me as you will–I am in your power–but I refuse to obey your cruel command.”

“I see,” said the genius, “that you have both made up your minds to brave me, but I will give you a sample of what you may expect.” So saying, with one sweep of his saber he cut off a hand of the princess, who was just able to lift the other to wave me an eternal farewell. Then I lost consciousness for several minutes.

When I came to myself I implored the genius to keep me no longer in this state of suspense, but to lose no time in putting an end to my sufferings. The genius, however, paid no attention to my prayers, but said sternly, “That is the way in which a genius treats the woman who has betrayed him. If I chose, I could kill you also; but I will be merciful, and content myself with changing you into a dog, an ass, a lion, or a bird–whichever you prefer.”

I caught eagerly at these words, as giving me a faint hope of softening his wrath. “O genius!” I cried, “as you wish to spare my life, be generous, and spare it altogether. Grant my prayer, and pardon my crime, as the best man in the whole world forgave his neighbor who was eaten up with envy of him.” Contrary to my hopes, the genius seemed interested in my words, and said he would like to hear the story of the two neighbors; and as I think, madam, it may please you, I will tell it to you also.

13

THE STORY OF THE ENVIOUS MAN AND OF HIM WHO WAS ENVIED

In a town of moderate size, two men lived in neighboring houses; but they had not been there very long before one man took such a hatred of the other, and envied him so bitterly, that the poor man determined to find another home, hoping that when they no longer met every day his enemy would forget all about him. So he sold his house and the little furniture it contained, and moved into the capital of the country, which was luckily at no great distance. About half a mile from this city he bought a nice little place, with a large garden and a fair-sized court, in the center of which stood an old well.

In order to live a quieter life, the good man put on the robe of a dervish, and divided his house into a quantity of small cells, where he soon established a number of other dervishes. The fame of his virtue gradually spread abroad, and many people, including several of the highest quality, came to visit him and ask his prayers.

Of course it was not long before his reputation reached the ears of the man who envied him, and this wicked wretch resolved never to rest till he had in some way worked ill to the dervish whom he hated. So he left his house and his business to look after themselves, and betook himself to the new dervish monastery, where he was welcomed by the founder with all the warmth imaginable. The excuse he gave for his appearance was that he had come to consult the chief of the dervishes on a private matter of great importance. “What I have to say must not be overheard,” he whispered; “command, I beg of you, that your dervishes retire into their cells, as night is approaching, and meet me in the court.”

The dervish did as he was asked without delay, and directly they were alone together the envious man began to tell a long story, edging, as they walked to and fro, always nearer to the well, and when they were quite close, he seized the dervish and dropped him in. He then ran off triumphantly, without having been seen by anyone, and congratulating himself that the object of his hatred was dead, and would trouble him no more.

But in this he was mistaken! The old well had long been inhabited (unknown to mere human beings) by a set of fairies and genii, who caught the dervish as he fell, so that he received no hurt. The dervish himself could see nothing, but he took for granted that something strange had happened, or he must certainly have been dashed against the side of the well and been killed. He lay quite still, and in a moment he heard a voice saying, “Can you guess whom this man is that we have saved from death?”

“No,” replied several other voices.

And the first speaker answered, “I will tell you. This man, from pure goodness of heart, forsook the town where he lived and came to dwell here, in the hope of curing one of his neighbors of the envy he felt towards him. But his character soon won him the esteem of all, and the envious man’s hatred grew, till he came here with the deliberate intention of causing his death. And this he would have done, without our help, the very day before the Sultan has arranged to visit this holy dervish, and to entreat his prayers for the princess, his daughter.”

“But what is the matter with the princess that she needs the dervish’s prayers?” asked another voice.

“She has fallen into the power of the genius Maimoum, the son of Dimdim,” replied the first voice. “But it would be quite simple for this holy chief of the dervishes to cure her if he only knew! In his convent there is a black cat which has a tiny white tip to its tail. Now to cure the princess the dervish must pull out seven of these white hairs, burn three, and with their smoke perfume the head of the princess. This will deliver her so completely that Maimoum, the son of Dimdim, will never dare to approach her again.”

The fairies and genii ceased talking, but the dervish did not forget a word of all they had said; and when morning came he perceived a place in the side of the well which was broken, and where he could easily climb out.

The dervishes, who could not imagine what had become of him, were enchanted at his reappearance. He told them of the attempt on his life made by his guest of the previous day, and then retired into his cell. He was soon joined here by the black cat of which the voice had spoken, who came as usual to say good-morning to his master. He took him on his knee and seized the opportunity to pull seven white hairs out of his tail, and put them on one side till they were needed.

The sun had not long risen before the Sultan, who was anxious to leave nothing undone that might deliver the princess, arrived with a large suite at the gate of the monastery, and was received by the dervishes with profound respect. The Sultan lost no time in declaring the object of his visit, and leading the chief of the dervishes aside, he said to him, “Noble scheik, you have guessed perhaps what I have come to ask you?”

“Yes, sire,” answered the dervish; “if I am not mistaken, it is the illness of the princess which has procured me this honour.”

“You are right,” returned the Sultan, “and you will give me fresh life if you can by your prayers deliver my daughter from the strange malady that has taken possession of her.”

“Let your highness command her to come here, and I will see what I can do.”

The Sultan, full of hope, sent orders at once that the princess was to set out as soon as possible, accompanied by her usual staff of attendants. When she arrived, she was so thickly veiled that the dervish could not see her face, but he desired a brazier to be held over her head, and laid the seven hairs on the burning coals. The instant they were consumed, terrific cries were heard, but no one could tell from whom they proceeded. Only the dervish guessed that they were uttered by Maimoum the son of Dimdim, who felt the princess escaping him.

All this time she had seemed unconscious of what she was doing, but now she raised her hand to her veil and uncovered her face. “Where am I?” she said in a bewildered manner; “and how did I get here?”

The Sultan was so delighted to hear these words that he not only embraced his daughter, but kissed the hand of the dervish. Then, turning to his attendants who stood round, he said to them, “What reward shall I give to the man who has restored me my daughter?”

They all replied with one accord that he deserved the hand of the princess.

“That is my own opinion,” said he, “and from this moment I declare him to be my son-in-law.”

Shortly after these events, the grand-vizir died, and his post was given to the dervish. But he did not hold it for long, for the Sultan fell a victim to an attack of illness, and as he had no sons, the soldiers and priests declared the dervish heir to the throne, to the great joy of all the people.

One day, when the dervish, who had now become Sultan, was making a royal progress with his court, he perceived the envious man standing in the crowd. He made a sign to one of his vizirs, and whispered in his ear, “Fetch me that man who is standing out there, but take great care not to frighten him.” The vizir obeyed, and when the envious man was brought before the Sultan, the monarch said to him, “My friend, I am delighted to see you again.” Then turning to an officer, he added, “Give him a thousand pieces of gold out of my treasury, and twenty waggon-loads of merchandise out of my private stores, and let an escort of soldiers accompany him home.” He then took leave of the envious man, and went on his way.

Now when I had ended my story, I proceeded to show the genius how to apply it to himself. “O genius,” I said, “you see that this Sultan was not content with merely forgiving the envious man for the attempt on his life; he heaped rewards and riches upon him.”

But the genius had made up his mind, and could not be softened. “Do not imagine that you are going to escape so easily,” he said. “All I can do is to give you bare life; you will have to learn what happens to people who interfere with me.”

As he spoke he seized me violently by the arm; the roof of the palace opened to make way for us, and we mounted up so high into the air that the earth looked like a little cloud. Then, as before, he came down with the swiftness of lightning, and we touched the ground on a mountain top.

Then he stooped and gathered a handful of earth, and murmured some words over it, after which he threw the earth in my face, saying as he did so, “Quit the form of a man, and assume that of a monkey.” This done, he vanished, and I was in the likeness of an ape, and in a country I had never seen before.

However there was no use in stopping where I was, so I came down the mountain and found myself in a flat plain which was bounded by the sea. I travelled towards it, and was pleased to see a vessel moored about half a mile from shore. There were no waves, so I broke off the branch of a tree, and dragging it down to the water’s edge, sat across it, while, using two sticks for oars, I rowed myself towards the ship.

The deck was full of people, who watched my progress with interest, but when I seized a rope and swung myself on board, I found that I had only escaped death at the hands of the genius to perish by those of the sailors, lest I should bring ill-luck to the vessel and the merchants. “Throw him into the sea!” cried one. “Knock him on the head with a hammer,” exclaimed another. “Let me shoot him with an arrow,” said a third; and certainly somebody would have had his way if I had not flung myself at the captain’s feet and grasped tight hold of his dress. He appeared touched by my action and patted my head, and declared that he would take me under his protection, and that no one should do me any harm.

At the end of about fifty days we cast anchor before a large town, and the ship was immediately surrounded by a multitude of small boats filled with people, who had come either to meet their friends or from simple curiosity. Among others, one boat contained several officials, who asked to see the merchants on board, and informed them that they had been sent by the Sultan in token of welcome, and to beg them each to write a few lines on a roll of paper. “In order to explain this strange request,” continued the officers, “it is necessary that you should know that the grand-vizir, lately dead, was celebrated for his beautiful handwriting, and the Sultan is anxious to find a similar talent in his successor. Hitherto the search has been a failure, but his Highness has not yet given up hope.”

One after another the merchants set down a few lines upon the roll, and when they had all finished, I came forward, and snatched the paper from the man who held it. At first they all thought I was going to throw it into the sea, but they were quieted when they saw I held it with great care, and great was their surprise when I made signs that I too wished to write something.

“Let him do it if he wants to,” said the captain. “If he only makes a mess of the paper, you may be sure I will punish him for it. But if, as I hope, he really can write, for he is the cleverest monkey I ever saw, I will adopt him as my son. The one I lost had not nearly so much sense!”

No more was said, and I took the pen and wrote the six sorts of writing in use among the Arabs, and each sort contained an original verse or couplet, in praise of the Sultan. And not only did my handwriting completely eclipse that of the merchants, but it is hardly too much to say that none so beautiful had ever before been seen in that country. When I had ended the officials took the roll and returned to the Sultan.

As soon as the monarch saw my writing he did not so much as look at the samples of the merchants, but desired his officials to take the finest and most richly caparisoned horse in his stables, together with the most magnificent dress they could procure, and to put it on the person who had written those lines, and bring him to court.

The officials began to laugh when they heard the Sultan's command, but as soon as they could speak they said, "Deign, your highness, to excuse our mirth, but those lines were not written by a man but by a monkey."

"A monkey!" exclaimed the Sultan.

"Yes, sire," answered the officials. "They were written by a monkey in our presence."

"Then bring me the monkey," he replied, "as fast as you can."

The Sultan's officials returned to the ship and showed the royal order to the captain.

"He is the master," said the good man, and desired that I should be sent for.

Then they put on me the gorgeous robe and rowed me to land, where I was placed on the horse and led to the palace. Here the Sultan was awaiting me in great state surrounded by his court.

All the way along the streets I had been the object of curiosity to a vast crowd, which had filled every doorway and every window, and it was admist their shouts and cheers that I was ushered into the presence of the Sultan.

I approached the throne on which he was seated and made him three low bows, then prostrated myself at his feet to the surprise of everyone, who could not understand how it was possible that a monkey should be able to distinguish a Sultan from other people, and to pay him the respect due to his rank. However, excepting the usual speech, I omitted none of the common forms attending a royal audience.

When it was over the Sultan dismissed all the court, keeping with him only the chief of the eunuchs and a little slave. He then passed into another room and ordered food to be brought, making signs to me to sit at table with him and eat. I rose from my seat, kissed the ground, and took my place at the table, eating, as you may suppose, with care and in moderation.

Before the dishes were removed I made signs that writing materials, which stood in one corner of the room, should be laid in front of me. I then took a peach and wrote on it some verses in praise of the Sultan, who was speechless with astonishment; but when I did the same thing on a glass from which I had drunk he murmured to himself, “Why, a man who could do as much would be cleverer than any other man, and this is only a monkey!”

Supper being over chessmen were brought, and the Sultan signed to me to know if I would play with him. I kissed the ground and laid my hand on my head to show that I was ready to show myself worthy of the honour. He beat me the first game, but I won the second and third, and seeing that this did not quite please I dashed off a verse by way of consolation.

The Sultan was so enchanted with all the talents of which I had given proof that he wished me to exhibit some of them to other people. So turning to the chief of the eunuchs he said, “Go and beg my daughter, Queen of Beauty, to come here. I will show her something she has never seen before.”

The chief of the eunuchs bowed and left the room, ushering in a few moments later the princess, Queen of Beauty. Her face was uncovered, but the moment she set foot in the room she threw her veil over her head. “Sire,” she said to her father, “what can you be thinking of to summon me like this into the presence of a man?”

“I do not understand you,” replied the Sultan. “There is nobody here but the eunuch, who is your own servant, the little slave, and myself, yet you cover yourself with your veil and reproach me for having sent for you, as if I had committed a crime.”

“Sire,” answered the princess, “I am right and you are wrong. This monkey is really no monkey at all, but a young prince who has been turned into a monkey by the wicked spells of a genius, son of the daughter of Eblis.”

As will be imagined, these words took the Sultan by surprise, and he looked at me to see how I should take the statement of the princess. As I was unable to speak, I placed my hand on my head to show that it was true.

“But how do you know this, my daughter?” asked he.

“Sire,” replied Queen of Beauty, “the old lady who took care of me in my childhood was an accomplished magician, and she taught me seventy rules of her art, by means of which I could, in the twinkling of an eye, transplant your capital into the middle of the ocean. Her art likewise teaches me to recognize at first sight all persons who are enchanted, and tells me by whom the spell was wrought.”

“My daughter,” said the Sultan, “I really had no idea you were so clever.”

“Sire,” replied the princess, “there are many out-of-the-way things it is as well to know, but one should never boast of them.”

“Well,” asked the Sultan, “can you tell me what must be done to disenchant the young prince?”

“Certainly; and I can do it.”

“Then restore him to his former shape,” cried the Sultan. “You could give me no greater pleasure, for I wish to make him my grand-vizir, and to give him to you for your husband.”

“As your Highness pleases,” replied the princess.

Queen of Beauty rose and went to her chamber, from which she fetched a knife with some Hebrew words engraven on the blade. She then desired the Sultan, the chief of the eunuchs, the little slave, and myself to descend into a secret court of the palace, and placed us beneath a gallery which ran all round, she herself standing in the centre of the court. Here she traced a large circle and in it wrote several words in Arab characters.

When the circle and the writing were finished she stood in the middle of it and repeated some verses from the Koran. Slowly the air grew dark, and we felt as if the earth was about to crumble away, and our fright was by no means diminished at seeing the genius, son of the daughter of Eblis, suddenly appear under the form of a colossal lion.

“Dog,” cried the princess when she first caught sight of him, “you think to strike terror into me by daring to present yourself before me in this hideous shape.”

“And you,” retorted the lion, “have not feared to break our treaty that engaged solemnly we should never interfere with each other.”

“Accursed genius!” exclaimed the princess, “it is you by whom that treaty was first broken.”

“I will teach you how to give me so much trouble,” said the lion, and opening his huge mouth he advanced to swallow her. But the princess expected something of the sort and was on her guard. She bounded on one side, and seizing one of the hairs of his mane repeated two or three words over it. In an instant it became a sword, and with a sharp blow she cut the lion’s body into two pieces. These pieces vanished no one knew where, and only the lion’s head remained, which was at once changed into a scorpion. Quick as thought the princess assumed the form of a serpent and gave battle to the scorpion, who, finding he was getting the worst of it, turned himself into an eagle and took flight. But in a moment the serpent had become an eagle more powerful still, who soared up in the air and after him, and then we lost sight of them both.

We all remained where we were quaking with anxiety, when the ground opened in front of us and a black and white cat leapt out, its hair standing on end, and miauing frightfully. At its heels was a wolf, who had almost seized it, when the cat changed itself into a worm, and, piercing the skin of a pomegranate which had tumbled from a tree, hid itself in the fruit. The pomegranate swelled till it grew as large as a pumpkin, and raised itself on to the roof of the gallery, from which it fell into the court and was broken into bits. While this was taking place the wolf, who had transformed himself into a cock, began to swallow the seed of the pomegranate as fast as he could. When all were gone he flew towards us, flapping his wings as if to ask if we saw any more, when suddenly his eye fell on one which lay on the bank of the little canal that flowed through the court; he hastened towards it, but before he could touch it the seed rolled into the canal and became a fish. The cock flung himself in after the fish and took the shape of a pike, and for two hours they chased each other up and down under the water, uttering horrible cries, but we could see nothing. At length they rose from the water in their proper forms, but darting such flames of fire from their mouths that we dreaded lest the palace should catch fire. Soon, however, we had much greater cause for alarm, as the genius, having shaken off the princess, flew towards us. Our fate would have been sealed if the princess, seeing our danger, had not attracted the attention of the genius to herself. As it was, the Sultan’s beard was singed and his face scorched, the chief of the eunuchs was burned to a cinder, while a spark deprived me of the sight of one eye. Both I and the Sultan had given up all hope of a rescue, when there was a shout of “Victory, victory!” from the princess, and the genius lay at her feet a great heap of ashes.

Exhausted though she was, the princess at once ordered the little slave, who alone was uninjured, to bring her a cup of water, which she took in her hand. First repeating some magic words over it, she dashed it into my face saying, “If you are only a monkey by enchantment, resume the form of the man you were before.” In an instant I stood before her the same man I had formerly been, though having lost the sight of one eye.

I was about to fall on my knees and thank the princess but she did not give me time. Turning to the Sultan, her father, she said, “Sire, I have gained the battle, but it has cost me dear. The fire has penetrated to my heart, and I have only a few moments to live. This would not have happened if I had only noticed the last pomegranate seed and eaten it like the rest. It was the last struggle of the genius, and up to that time I was quite safe. But having let this chance slip I was forced to resort to fire, and in spite of all his experience I showed the genius that I knew more than he did. He is dead and in ashes, but my own death is approaching fast.” “My daughter,” cried the Sultan, “how sad is my condition! I am only surprised I am alive at all! The eunuch is consumed by the flames, and the prince whom you have delivered has lost the sight of one eye.” He could say no more, for sobs choked his voice, and we all wept together.

Suddenly the princess shrieked, “I burn, I burn!” and death came to free her from her torments.

I have no words, madam, to tell you of my feelings at this terrible sight. I would rather have remained a monkey all my life than let my benefactress perish in this shocking manner. As for the Sultan, he was quite inconsolable, and his subjects, who had dearly loved the princess, shared his grief. For seven days the whole nation mourned, and then the ashes of the princess were buried with great pomp, and a superb tomb was raised over her.

As soon as the Sultan recovered from the severe illness which had seized him after the death of the princess he sent for me and plainly, though politely, informed me that my presence would always remind him of his loss, and he begged that I would instantly quit his kingdom, and on pain of death never return to it. I was, of course, bound to obey, and not knowing what was to become of me I shaved my beard and eyebrows and put on the dress of a calender. After wandering aimlessly through several countries, I resolved to come to Bagdad and request an audience of the Commander of the Faithful.

And that, madam, is my story.

The other Calender then told his story.

14

THE STORY OF THE THIRD CALENDER, SON OF A KING

My story, said the Third Calender, is quite different from those of my two friends. It was fate that deprived them of the sight of their right eyes, but mine was lost by my own folly.

My name is Agib, and I am the son of a king called Cassib, who reigned over a large kingdom, which had for its capital one of the finest seaport towns in the world.

When I succeeded to my father's throne my first care was to visit the provinces on the mainland, and then to sail to the numerous islands which lay off the shore, in order to gain the hearts of my subjects. These voyages gave me such a taste for sailing that I soon determined to explore more distant seas, and commanded a fleet of large ships to be got ready without delay. When they were properly fitted out I embarked on my expedition.

For forty days wind and weather were all in our favor, but the next night a terrific storm arose, which blew us hither and thither for ten days, till the pilot confessed that he had quite lost his bearings. Accordingly a sailor was sent up to the masthead to try to catch a sight of land, and reported that nothing was to be seen but the sea and sky, except a huge mass of blackness that lay astern.

On hearing this the pilot grew white, and, beating his breast, he cried, "Oh, sir, we are lost, lost!" till the ship's crew trembled at they knew not what. When he had recovered himself a little, and was able to explain the cause of his terror, he replied, in answer to my question, that we had drifted far out of our course, and that the following day about noon we should come near that mass of darkness, which, said he, is nothing but the famous Black Mountain. This mountain is composed of adamant, which attracts to itself all the iron and nails in your ship; and as we are helplessly drawn nearer, the force of attraction will become so great that the iron and nails will fall out of the ships and cling to the mountain, and the ships will sink to the bottom with all that are in them. This it is that causes the side of the mountain towards the sea to appear of such a dense blackness.

As may be supposed–continued the pilot–the mountain sides are very rugged, but on the summit stands a brass dome supported on pillars, and bearing on top the figure of a brass horse, with a rider on his back. This rider wears a breastplate of lead, on which strange signs and figures are engraved, and it is said that as long as this statue remains on the dome, vessels will never cease to perish at the foot of the mountain.

So saying, the pilot began to weep afresh, and the crew, fearing their last hour had come, made their wills, each one in favor of his fellow.

At noon next day, as the pilot had foretold, we were so near to the Black Mountain that we saw all the nails and iron fly out of the ships and dash themselves against the mountain with a horrible noise. A moment after the vessels fell asunder and sank, the crews with them. I alone managed to grasp a floating plank, and was driven ashore by the wind, without even a scratch. What was my joy on finding myself at the bottom of some steps which led straight up the mountain, for there was not another inch to the right or the left where a man could set his foot. And, indeed, even the steps themselves were so narrow and so steep that, if the lightest breeze had arisen, I should certainly have been blown into the sea.

When I reached the top I found the brass dome and the statue exactly as the pilot had described, but was too wearied with all I had gone through to do more than glance at them, and, flinging myself under the dome, was asleep in an instant. In my dreams an old man appeared to me and said, “Hearken, Agib! As soon as thou art awake dig up the ground underfoot, and thou shalt find a bow of brass and three arrows of lead. Shoot the arrows at the statue, and the rider shall tumble into the sea, but the horse will fall down by thy side, and thou shalt bury him in the place from which thou tookest the bow and arrows. This being done the sea will rise and cover the mountain, and on it thou wilt perceive the figure of a metal man seated in a boat, having an oar in each hand. Step on board and let him conduct thee; but if thou would behold thy kingdom again, see that thou take not the name of Allah into thy mouth.”

Having uttered these words the vision left me, and I woke, much comforted. I sprang up and drew the bow and arrows out of the ground, and with the third shot the horseman fell with a great crash into the sea, which instantly began to rise, so rapidly, that I had hardly time to bury the horse before the boat approached me. I stepped silently in and sat down, and the metal man pushed off, and rowed without stopping for nine days, after which land appeared on the horizon. I was so overcome with joy at this sight that I forgot all the old man had told me, and cried out, “Allah be praised! Allah be praised!”

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when the boat and man sank from beneath me, and left me floating on the surface. All that day and the next night I swam and floated alternately, making as well as I could for the land which was nearest to me. At last my strength began to fail, and I gave myself up for lost, when the wind suddenly rose, and a huge wave cast me on a flat shore. Then, placing myself in safety, I hastily spread my clothes out to dry in the sun, and flung myself on the warm ground to rest.

Next morning I dressed myself and began to look about me. There seemed to be no one but myself on the island, which was covered with fruit trees and watered with streams, but seemed a long distance from the mainland which I hoped to reach. Before, however, I had time to feel cast down, I saw a ship making directly for the island, and not knowing whether it would contain friends or foes, I hid myself in the thick branches of a tree.

The sailors ran the ship into a creek, where ten slaves landed, carrying spades and pickaxes. In the middle of the island they stopped, and after digging some time, lifted up what seemed to be a trapdoor. They then returned to the vessel two or three times for furniture and provisions, and finally were accompanied by an old man, leading a handsome boy of fourteen or fifteen years of age. They all disappeared down the trapdoor, and after remaining below for a few minutes came up again, but without the boy, and let down the trapdoor, covering it with earth as before. This done, they entered the ship and set sail.

As soon as they were out of sight, I came down from my tree, and went to the place where the boy had been buried. I dug up the earth till I reached a large stone with a ring in the centre. This, when removed, disclosed a flight of stone steps which led to a large room richly furnished and lighted by tapers. On a pile of cushions, covered with tapestry, sat the boy. He looked up, startled and frightened at the sight of a stranger in such a place, and to soothe his fears, I at once spoke: “Be not alarmed, sir, whoever you may be. I am a king, and the son of a king, and will do you no hurt. On the contrary, perhaps I have been sent here to deliver you out of this tomb, where you have been buried alive.”

Hearing my words, the young man recovered himself, and when I had ended, he said, “The reasons, Prince, that have caused me to be buried in this place are so strange that they cannot but surprise you. My father is a rich merchant, owning much land and many ships, and has great dealings in precious stones, but he never ceased mourning that he had no child to inherit his wealth.

“At length one day he dreamed that the following year a son would be born to him, and when this actually happened, he consulted all the wise men in the kingdom as to the future of the infant. One and all they said the same thing. I was to live happily till I was fifteen, when a terrible danger awaited me, which I should hardly escape. If, however, I should succeed in doing so, I should live to a great old age. And, they added, when the statue of the brass horse on the top of the mountain of adamant is thrown into the sea by Agib, the son of Cassib, then beware, for fifty days later your son shall fall by his hand!

"This prophecy struck the heart of my father with such woe, that he never got over it, but that did not prevent him from attending carefully to my education till I attained, a short time ago, my fifteenth birthday. It was only yesterday that the news reached him that ten days previously the statue of brass had been thrown into the sea, and he at once set about hiding me in this underground chamber, which was built for the purpose, promising to fetch me out when the forty days have passed. For myself, I have no fears, as Prince Agib is not likely to come here to look for me."

I listened to his story with an inward laugh as to the absurdity of my ever wishing to cause the death of this harmless boy, whom I hastened to assure of my friendship and even of my protection; begging him, in return, to convey me in his father's ship to my own country. I need hardly say that I took special care not to inform him that I was the Agib whom he dreaded.

The day passed in conversation on various subjects, and I found him a youth of ready wit and of some learning. I took on myself the duties of a servant, held the basin and water for him when he washed, prepared the dinner and set it on the table. He soon grew to love me, and for thirty-nine days we spent as pleasant an existence as could be expected underground.

The morning of the fortieth dawned, and the young man when he woke gave thanks in an outburst of joy that the danger was passed. "My father may be here at any moment," said he, "so make me, I pray you, a bath of hot water, that I may bathe, and change my clothes, and be ready to receive him."

So I fetched the water as he asked, and washed and rubbed him, after which he lay down again and slept a little. When he opened his eyes for the second time, he begged me to bring him a melon and some sugar, that he might eat and refresh himself.

I soon chose a fine melon out of those which remained, but could find no knife to cut it with. “Look in the cornice over my head,” said he, “and I think you will see one.” It was so high above me, that I had some difficulty in reaching it, and catching my foot in the covering of the bed, I slipped, and fell right upon the young man, the knife going straight into his heart.

At this awful sight I shrieked aloud in my grief and pain. I threw myself on the ground and rent my clothes and tore my hair with sorrow. Then, fearing to be punished as his murderer by the unhappy father, I raised the great stone which blocked the staircase, and quitting the underground chamber, made everything fast as before.

Scarcely had I finished when, looking out to sea, I saw the vessel heading for the island, and, feeling that it would be useless for me to protest my innocence, I again concealed myself among the branches of a tree that grew near by.

The old man and his slaves pushed off in a boat directly the ship touched land, and walked quickly towards the entrance to the underground chamber; but when they were near enough to see that the earth had been disturbed, they paused and changed colour. In silence they all went down and called to the youth by name; then for a moment I heard no more. Suddenly a fearful scream rent the air, and the next instant the slaves came up the steps, carrying with them the body of the old man, who had fainted from sorrow! Laying him down at the foot of the tree in which I had taken shelter, they did their best to recover him, but it took a long while. When at last he revived, they left him to dig a grave, and then laying the young man’s body in it, they threw in the earth.

This ended, the slaves brought up all the furniture that remained below, and put it on the vessel, and breaking some boughs to weave a litter, they laid the old man on it, and carried him to the ship, which spread its sails and stood out to sea.

So once more I was quite alone, and for a whole month I walked daily over the island, seeking for some chance of escape. At length one day it struck me that my prison had grown much larger, and that the mainland seemed to be nearer. My heart beat at this thought, which was almost too good to be true. I watched a little longer: there was no doubt about it, and soon there was only a tiny stream for me to cross.

Even when I was safe on the other side I had a long distance to go on the mud and sand before I reached dry ground, and very tired I was, when far in front of me I caught sight of a castle of red copper, which, at first sight, I took to be a fire. I made all the haste I could, and after some miles of hard walking stood before it, and gazed at it in astonishment, for it seemed to me the most wonderful building I had ever beheld. While I was still staring at it, there came towards me a tall old man, accompanied by ten young men, all handsome, and all blind of the right eye.

Now in its way, the spectacle of ten men walking together, all blind of the right eye, is as uncommon as that of a copper castle, and I was turning over in my mind what could be the meaning of this strange fact, when they greeted me warmly, and inquired what had brought me there. I replied that my story was somewhat long, but that if they would take the trouble to sit down, I should be happy to tell it them. When I had finished, the young men begged that I would go with them to the castle, and I joyfully accepted their offer. We passed through what seemed to me an endless number of rooms, and came at length into a large hall, furnished with ten small blue sofas for the ten young men, which served as beds as well as chairs, and with another sofa in the middle for the old man. As none of the sofas could hold more than one person, they bade me place myself on the carpet, and to ask no questions about anything I should see.

After a little while the old man rose and brought in supper, which I ate heartily, for I was very hungry. Then one of the young men begged me to repeat my story, which had struck them all with astonishment, and when I had ended, the old man was bidden to “do his duty,” as it was late, and they wished to go to bed. At these words he rose, and went to a closet, from which he brought out ten basins, all covered with blue stuff. He set one before each of the young men, together with a lighted taper.

When the covers were taken off the basins, I saw they were filled with ashes, coal-dust, and lamp-black. The young men mixed these all together, and smeared the whole over their heads and faces. They then wept and beat their breasts, crying, “This is the fruit of idleness, and of our wicked lives.”

This ceremony lasted nearly the whole night, and when it stopped they washed themselves carefully, and put on fresh clothes, and lay down to sleep.

All this while I had refrained from questions, though my curiosity almost seemed to burn a hole in me, but the following day, when we went out to walk, I said to them, “Gentlemen, I must disobey your wishes, for I can keep silence no more. You do not appear to lack wit, yet you do such actions as none but madmen could be capable of. Whatever befalls me I cannot forbear asking, `Why you daub your faces with black, and how it is you are all blind of one eye?’” But they only answered that such questions were none of my business, and that I should do well to hold my peace.

During that day we spoke of other things, but when night came, and the same ceremony was repeated, I implored them most earnestly to let me know the meaning of it all.

“It is for your own sake,” replied one of the young men, “that we have not granted your request, and to preserve you from our unfortunate fate. If, however, you wish to share our destiny we will delay no longer.”

I answered that whatever might be the consequence I wished to have my curiosity satisfied, and that I would take the result on my own head. He then assured me that, even when I had lost my eye, I should be unable to remain with them, as their number was complete, and could not be added to. But to this I replied that, though I should be grieved to part company with such honest gentlemen, I would not be turned from my resolution on that account.

On hearing my determination my ten hosts then took a sheep and killed it, and handed me a knife, which they said I should by-and-by find useful. "We must sew you into this sheep-skin," said they, "and then leave you. A fowl of monstrous size, called a roc, will appear in the air, taking you to be a sheep. He will snatch you up and carry you into the sky, but be not alarmed, for he will bring you safely down and lay you on the top of a mountain. When you are on the ground cut the skin with the knife and throw it off. As soon as the roc sees you he will fly away from fear, but you must walk on till you come to a castle covered with plates of gold, studded with jewels. Enter boldly at the gate, which always stands open, but do not ask us to tell you what we saw or what befell us there, for that you will learn for yourself. This only we may say, that it cost us each our right eye, and has imposed upon us our nightly penance."

After the young gentlemen had been at the trouble of sewing the sheep-skin on me they left me, and retired to the hall. In a few minutes the roc appeared, and bore me off to the top of the mountain in his huge claws as lightly as if I had been a feather, for this great white bird is so strong that he has been known to carry even an elephant to his nest in the hills.

The moment my feet touched the ground I took out my knife and cut the threads that bound me, and the sight of me in my proper clothes so alarmed the roc that he spread his wings and flew away. Then I set out to seek the castle.

I found it after wandering about for half a day, and never could I have imagined anything so glorious. The gate led into a square court, into which opened a hundred doors, ninety-nine of them being of rare woods and one of gold. Through each of these doors I caught glimpses of splendid gardens or of rich storehouses.

Entering one of the doors which was standing open I found myself in a vast hall where forty young ladies, magnificently dressed, and of perfect beauty, were reclining. As soon as they saw me they rose and uttered words of welcome, and even forced me to take possession of a seat that was higher than their own, though my proper place was at their feet. Not content with this, one brought me splendid garments, while another filled a basin with scented water and poured it over my hands, and the rest busied themselves with preparing refreshments. After I had eaten and drunk of the most delicate food and rarest wines, the ladies crowded round me and begged me to tell them all my adventures.

By the time I had finished night had fallen, and the ladies lighted up the castle with such a prodigious quantity of tapers that even day could hardly have been brighter. We then sat down to a supper of dried fruits and sweetmeats, after which some sang and others danced. I was so well amused that I did not notice how the time was passing, but at length one of the ladies approached and informed me it was midnight, and that, as I must be tired, she would conduct me to the room that had been prepared for me. Then, bidding me good-night, I was left to sleep.

I spent the next thirty-nine days in much the same way as the first, but at the close of that time the ladies appeared (as was their custom) in my room one morning to inquire how I had slept, and instead of looking cheerful and smiling they were in floods of tears. “Prince,” said they, “we must leave you, and never was it so hard to part from any of our friends. Most likely we shall never see you again, but if you have sufficient self-command perhaps we may yet look forward to a meeting.”

“Ladies,” I replied, “what is the meaning of these strange words–I pray you to tell me?”

“Know then,” answered one of them, “that we are all princesses–each a king’s daughter. We live in this castle together, in the way that you have seen, but at the end of every year secret duties call us away for the space of forty days. The time has now come; but before we depart, we will leave you our keys, so that you may not lack entertainment during our absence. But one thing we would ask of you. The Golden Door, alone, forbear to open, as you value your own peace, and the happiness of your life. That door once unlocked, we must bid you farewell for ever.”

Weeping, I assured them of my prudence, and after embracing me tenderly, they went their ways.

Every day I opened two or three fresh doors, each of which contained behind it so many curious things that I had no chance of feeling dull, much as I regretted the absence of the ladies. Sometimes it was an orchard, whose fruit far exceeded in bigness any that grew in my father’s garden. Sometimes it was a court planted with roses, jessamine, daffodils, hyacinths and anemones, and a thousand other flowers of which I did not know the names. Or again, it would be an aviary, fitted with all kinds of singing birds, or a treasury heaped up with precious stones; but whatever I might see, all was perfect of its own sort.

Thirty-nine days passed away more rapidly than I could have conceived possible, and the following morning the princesses were to return to the castle. But alas! I had explored every corner, save only the room that was shut in by the Golden Door, and I had no longer anything to amuse myself with. I stood before the forbidden place for some time, gazing at its beauty; then a happy inspiration struck me, that because I unlocked the door it was not necessary that I should enter the chamber. It would be enough for me to stand outside and view whatever hidden wonders might be therein.

Thus arguing against my own conscience, I turned the key, when a smell rushed out that, pleasant though it was, overcame me completely, and I fell fainting across the threshold. Instead of being warned by this accident, directly I came to myself I went for a few moments into the air to shake of the effects of the perfume, and then entered boldly. I found myself in a large, vaulted room, lighted by tapers, scented with aloes and ambergris, standing in golden candle-sticks, whilst gold and silver lamps hung from the ceiling.

Though objects of rare workmanship lay heaped around me, I paid them scant attention, so much was I struck by a great black horse which stood in one corner, the handsomest and best-shaped animal I had ever seen. His saddle and bridle were of massive gold, curiously wrought; one side of his trough was filled with clean barley and sesame, and the other with rose water. I led the animal into the open air, and then jumped on his back, shaking the reins as I did so, but as he never stirred, I touched him lightly with a switch I had picked up in his stable. No sooner did he feel the stroke, than he spread his wings (which I had not perceived before), and flew up with me straight into the sky. When he had reached a prodigious height, he next darted back to earth, and alighted on the terrace belonging to a castle, shaking me violently out of the saddle as he did so, and giving me such a blow with his tail, that he knocked out my right eye.

Half-stunned as I was with all that had happened to me, I rose to my feet, thinking as I did so of what had befallen the ten young men, and watching the horse which was soaring into the clouds. I left the terrace and wandered on till I came to a hall, which I knew to have been the one from which the roc had taken me, by the ten blue sofas against the wall.

The ten young men were not present when I first entered, but came in soon after, accompanied by the old man. They greeted me kindly, and bewailed my misfortune, though, indeed, they had expected nothing less. “All that has happened to you,” they said, “we also have undergone, and we should be enjoying the same happiness still, had we not opened the Golden Door while the princesses were absent. You have been no wiser than we, and have suffered the same punishment. We would gladly receive you among us, to perform such penance as we do, but we have already told you that this is impossible. Depart, therefore, from hence and go to the Court of Bagdad, where you shall meet with him that can decide your destiny." They told me the way I was to travel, and I left them.

On the road I caused my beard and eyebrows to be shaved, and put on a Calender's habit. I have had a long journey, but arrived this evening in the city, where I met my brother Calenders at the gate, being strangers like myself. We wondered much at one another, to see we were all blind of the same eye, but we had no leisure to discourse at length of our common calamities. We had only so much time as to come hither to implore those favors which you have been generously pleased to grant us.

He finished, and it was Zobeida's turn to speak: "Go wherever you please," she said, addressing all three. "I pardon you all, but you must depart immediately out of this house."

15

THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR

In the times of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid there lived in Bagdad a poor porter named Hindbad, who on a very hot day was sent to carry a heavy load from one end of the city to the other. Before he had accomplished half the distance he was so tired that, finding himself in a quiet street where the pavement was sprinkled with rose water, and a cool breeze was blowing, he set his burden upon the ground, and sat down to rest in the shade of a grand house. Very soon he decided that he could not have chosen a pleasanter place; a delicious perfume of aloes wood and pastilles came from the open windows and mingled with the scent of the rose water which steamed up from the hot pavement. Within the palace he heard some music, as of many instruments cunningly played, and the melodious warble of nightingales and other birds, and by this, and the appetizing smell of many dainty dishes of which he presently became aware, he judged that feasting and merry making were going on. He wondered who lived in this magnificent house which he had never seen before, the street in which it stood being one which he seldom had occasion to pass. To satisfy his curiosity he went up to some splendidly dressed servants who stood at the door, and asked one of them the name of the master of the mansion.

“What,” replied he, “do you live in Bagdad, and not know that here lives the noble Sindbad the Sailor, that famous traveler who sailed over every sea upon which the sun shines?”

The porter, who had often heard people speak of the immense wealth of Sindbad, could not help feeling envious of one whose lot seemed to be as happy as his own was miserable. Casting his eyes up to the sky he exclaimed aloud,

“Consider, Mighty Creator of all things, the differences between Sindbad’s life and mine. Every day I suffer a thousand hardships and misfortunes, and have hard work to get even enough bad barley bread to keep myself and my family alive, while the lucky Sindbad spends money right and left and lives upon the fat of the land! What has he done that you should give him this pleasant life–what have I done to deserve so hard a fate?”

So saying he stamped upon the ground like one beside himself with misery and despair. Just at this moment a servant came out of the palace, and taking him by the arm said, “Come with me, the noble Sindbad, my master, wishes to speak to you.”

Hindbad was not a little surprised at this summons, and feared that his unguarded words might have drawn upon him the displeasure of Sindbad, so he tried to excuse himself upon the pretext that he could not leave the burden which had been entrusted to him in the street. However the lackey promised him that it should be taken care of, and urged him to obey the call so pressingly that at last the porter was obliged to yield.

He followed the servant into a vast room, where a great company was seated round a table covered with all sorts of delicacies. In the place of honor sat a tall, grave man whose long white beard gave him a venerable air. Behind his chair stood a crowd of attendants eager to minister to his wants. This was the famous Sindbad himself. The porter, more than ever alarmed at the sight of so much magnificence, tremblingly saluted the noble company. Sindbad, making a sign to him to approach, caused him to be seated at his right hand, and himself heaped choice morsels upon his plate, and poured out for him a draught of excellent wine, and presently, when the banquet drew to a close, spoke to him familiarly, asking his name and occupation.

“My lord,” replied the porter, “I am called Hindbad.”

“I am glad to see you here,” continued Sindbad. “And I will answer for the rest of the company that they are equally pleased, but I wish you to tell me what it was that you said just now in the street.” For Sindbad, passing by the open window before the feast began, had heard his complaint and therefore had sent for him.

At this question Hindbad was covered with confusion, and hanging down his head, replied, “My lord, I confess that, overcome by weariness and ill-humor, I uttered indiscreet words, which I pray you to pardon me.”

“Oh!” replied Sindbad, “do not imagine that I am so unjust as to blame you. On the contrary, I understand your situation and can pity you. Only you appear to be mistaken about me, and I wish to set you right. You doubtless imagine that I have acquired all the wealth and luxury that you see me enjoy without difficulty or danger, but this is far indeed from being the case. I have only reached this happy state after having for years suffered every possible kind of toil and danger.

“Yes, my noble friends,” he continued, addressing the company, “I assure you that my adventures have been strange enough to deter even the most avaricious men from seeking wealth by traversing the seas. Since you have, perhaps, heard but confused accounts of my seven voyages, and the dangers and wonders that I have met with by sea and land, I will now give you a full and true account of them, which I think you will be well pleased to hear.”

As Sindbad was relating his adventures chiefly on account of the porter, he ordered, before beginning his tale, that the burden which had been left in the street should be carried by some of his own servants to the place for which Hindbad had set out at first, while he remained to listen to the story.

16

THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR: THE FIRST VOYAGE

I had inherited considerable wealth from my parents, and being young and foolish I at first squandered it recklessly upon every kind of pleasure, but presently, finding that riches speedily take to themselves wings if managed as badly as I was managing mine, and remembering also that to be old and poor is misery indeed, I began to bethink me of how I could make the best of what still remained to me. I sold all my household goods by public auction, and joined a company of merchants who traded by sea, embarking with them at Balsora in a ship which we had fitted out between us.

We set sail and took our course towards the East Indies by the Persian Gulf, having the coast of Persia upon our left hand and upon our right the shores of Arabia Felix. I was at first much troubled by the uneasy motion of the vessel, but speedily recovered my health, and since that hour have been no more plagued by sea-sickness.

From time to time we landed at various islands, where we sold or exchanged our merchandise, and one day, when the wind dropped suddenly, we found ourselves becalmed close to a small island like a green meadow, which only rose slightly above the surface of the water. Our sails were furled, and the captain gave permission to all who wished to land for a while and amuse themselves. I was among the number, but when after strolling about for some time we lighted a fire and sat down to enjoy the repast which we had brought with us, we were startled by a sudden and violent trembling of the island, while at the same moment those left upon the ship set up an outcry bidding us come on board for our lives, since what we had taken for an island was nothing but the back of a sleeping whale. Those who were nearest to the boat threw themselves into it, others sprang into the sea, but before I could save myself the whale plunged suddenly into the depths of the ocean, leaving me clinging to a piece of the wood which we had brought to make our fire. Meanwhile a breeze had sprung up, and in the confusion that ensued on board our vessel in hoisting the sails and taking up those who were in the boat and clinging to its sides, no one missed me and I was left at the mercy of the waves. All that day I floated up and down, now beaten this way, now that, and when night fell I despaired for my life; but, weary and spent as I was, I clung to my frail support, and great was my joy when the morning light showed me that I had drifted against an island.

The cliffs were high and steep, but luckily for me some tree-roots protruded in places, and by their aid I climbed up at last, and stretched myself upon the turf at the top, where I lay, more dead than alive, till the sun was high in the heavens. By that time I was very hungry, but after some searching I came upon some eatable herbs, and a spring of clear water, and much refreshed I set out to explore the island. Presently I reached a great plain where a grazing horse was tethered, and as I stood looking at it I heard voices talking apparently underground, and in a moment a man appeared who asked me how I came upon the island. I told him my adventures, and heard in return that he was one of the grooms of Mihrage, the king of the island, and that each year they came to feed their master’s horses in this plain. He took me to a cave where his companions were assembled, and when I had eaten of the food they set before me, they bade me think myself fortunate to have come upon them when I did, since they were going back to their master on the morrow, and without their aid I could certainly never have found my way to the inhabited part of the island.

Early the next morning we accordingly set out, and when we reached the capital I was graciously received by the king, to whom I related my adventures, upon which he ordered that I should be well cared for and provided with such things as I needed. Being a merchant I sought out men of my own profession, and particularly those who came from foreign countries, as I hoped in this way to hear news from Bagdad, and find out some means of returning thither, for the capital was situated upon the sea-shore, and visited by vessels from all parts of the world. In the meantime I heard many curious things, and answered many questions concerning my own country, for I talked willingly with all who came to me. Also to while away the time of waiting I explored a little island named Cassel, which belonged to King Mihrage, and which was supposed to be inhabited by a spirit named Deggial. Indeed, the sailors assured me that often at night the playing of timbals could be heard upon it. However, I saw nothing strange upon my voyage, saving some fish that were full two hundred cubits long, but were fortunately more in dread of us than even we were of them, and fled from us if we did but strike upon a board to frighten them. Other fishes there were only a cubit long which had heads like owls.

One day after my return, as I went down to the quay, I saw a ship which had just cast anchor, and was discharging her cargo, while the merchants to whom it belonged were busily directing the removal of it to their warehouses. Drawing nearer I presently noticed that my own name was marked upon some of the packages, and after having carefully examined them, I felt sure that they were indeed those which I had put on board our ship at Balsora. I then recognized the captain of the vessel, but as I was certain that he believed me to be dead, I went up to him and asked who owned the packages that I was looking at.

“There was on board my ship,” he replied, “a merchant of Bagdad named Sindbad. One day he and several of my other passengers landed upon what we supposed to be an island, but which was really an enormous whale floating asleep upon the waves. No sooner did it feel upon its back the heat of the fire which had been kindled, than it plunged into the depths of the sea. Several of the people who were upon it perished in the waters, and among others this unlucky Sindbad. This merchandise is his, but I have resolved to dispose of it for the benefit of his family if I should ever chance to meet with them.”

“Captain,” said I, “I am that Sindbad whom you believe to be dead, and these are my possessions!”

When the captain heard these words he cried out in amazement, “Lackaday! and what is the world coming to? In these days there is not an honest man to be met with. Did I not with my own eyes see Sindbad drown, and now you have the audacity to tell me that you are he! I should have taken you to be a just man, and yet for the sake of obtaining that which does not belong to you, you are ready to invent this horrible falsehood.”

“Have patience, and do me the favor to hear my story,” said I.

“Speak then,” replied the captain, “I’m all attention.”

So I told him of my escape and of my fortunate meeting with the king’s grooms, and how kindly I had been received at the palace. Very soon I began to see that I had made some impression upon him, and after the arrival of some of the other merchants, who showed great joy at once more seeing me alive, he declared that he also recognized me.

Throwing himself upon my neck he exclaimed, “Heaven be praised that you have escaped from so great a danger. As to your goods, I pray you take them, and dispose of them as you please.” I thanked him, and praised his honesty, begging him to accept several bales of merchandise in token of my gratitude, but he would take nothing. Of the choicest of my goods I prepared a present for King Mihrage, who was at first amazed, having known that I had lost my all. However, when I had explained to him how my bales had been miraculously restored to me, he graciously accepted my gifts, and in return gave me many valuable things. I then took leave of him, and exchanging my merchandise for sandal and aloes wood, camphor, nutmegs, cloves, pepper, and ginger, I embarked upon the same vessel and traded so successfully upon our homeward voyage that I arrived in Balsora with about one hundred thousand sequins. My family received me with as much joy as I felt upon seeing them once more. I bought land and slaves, and built a great house in which I resolved to live happily, and in the enjoyment of all the pleasures of life to forget my past sufferings.

Here Sindbad paused, and commanded the musicians to play again, while the feasting continued until evening. When the time came for the porter to depart, Sindbad gave him a purse containing one hundred sequins, saying, “Take this, Hindbad, and go home, but to-morrow come again and you shall hear more of my adventures.”

The porter retired quite overcome by so much generosity, and you may imagine that he was well received at home, where his wife and children thanked their lucky stars that he had found such a benefactor.

The next day Hindbad, dressed in his best, returned to the voyager’s house, and was received with open arms. As soon as all the guests had arrived the banquet began as before, and when they had feasted long and merrily, Sindbad addressed them thus:

“My friends, I beg that you will give me your attention while I relate the adventures of my second voyage, which you will find even more astonishing than the first.”

17

THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR: THE SECOND VOYAGE

I had resolved, as you know, on my return from my first voyage, to spend the rest of my days quietly in Bagdad, but very soon I grew tired of such an idle life and longed once more to find myself upon the sea.

I procured, therefore, such goods as were suitable for the places I intended to visit, and embarked for the second time in a good ship with other merchants whom I knew to be honorable men. We went from island to island, often making excellent bargains, until one day we landed at a spot which, though covered with fruit trees and abounding in springs of excellent water, appeared to possess neither houses nor people. While my companions wandered here and there gathering flowers and fruit I sat down in a shady place, and, having heartily enjoyed the provisions and the wine I had brought with me, I fell asleep, lulled by the murmur of a clear brook which flowed close by.

How long I slept I know not, but when I opened my eyes and started to my feet I perceived with horror that I was alone and that the ship was gone. I rushed to and fro like one distracted, uttering cries of despair, and when from the shore, I saw the vessel under full sail just disappearing upon the horizon, I wished bitterly enough that I had been content to stay at home in safety. But since wishes could do me no good, I presently took courage and looked about me for a means of escape. When I had climbed a tall tree I first of all directed my anxious glances towards the sea; but, finding nothing hopeful there, I turned landward, and my curiosity was excited by a huge dazzling white object, so far off that I could not make out what it might be.

Descending from the tree I hastily collected what remained of my provisions and set off as fast as I could go towards it. As I drew near it seemed to me to be a white ball of immense size and height, and when I could touch it, I found it marvelously smooth and soft. As it was impossible to climb it–for it presented no foot-hold–I walked round about it seeking some opening, but there was none. I counted, however, that it was at least fifty paces round. By this time the sun was near setting, but quite suddenly it fell dark, something like a huge black cloud came swiftly over me, and I saw with amazement that it was a bird of extraordinary size which was hovering near. Then I remembered that I had often heard the sailors speak of a wonderful bird called a roc, and it occurred to me that the white object which had so puzzled me must be its egg.

Sure enough the bird settled slowly down upon it, covering it with its wings to keep it warm, and I cowered close beside the egg in such a position that one of the bird’s feet, which was as large as the trunk of a tree, was just in front of me. Taking off my turban I bound myself securely to it with the linen in the hope that the roc, when it took flight next morning, would bear me away with it from the desolate island. And this was precisely what did happen. As soon as the dawn appeared the bird rose into the air carrying me up and up till I could no longer see the earth, and then suddenly it descended so swiftly that I almost lost consciousness. When I became aware that the roc had settled and that I was once again upon solid ground, I hastily unbound my turban from its foot and freed myself, and that not a moment too soon; for the bird, pouncing upon a huge snake, killed it with a few blows from its powerful beak, and seizing it up rose into the air once more and soon disappeared from my view. When I had looked about me I began to doubt if I had gained anything by quitting the desolate island.

The valley in which I found myself was deep and narrow, and surrounded by mountains which towered into the clouds, and were so steep and rocky that there was no way of climbing up their sides. As I wandered about, seeking anxiously for some means of escaping from this trap, I observed that the ground was strewed with diamonds, some of them of an astonishing size. This sight gave me great pleasure, but my delight was speedily damped when I saw also numbers of horrible snakes so long and so large that the smallest of them could have swallowed an elephant with ease. Fortunately for me they seemed to hide in caverns of the rocks by day, and only came out by night, probably because of their enemy the roc.

All day long I wandered up and down the valley, and when it grew dusk, I crept into a little cave, and having blocked up the entrance to it with a stone, I ate part of my little store of food and lay down to sleep, but all through the night the serpents crawled to and fro, hissing horribly, so that I could scarcely close my eyes for terror. I was thankful when the morning light appeared, and when I judged by the silence that the serpents had retreated to their dens I came trembling out of my cave and wandered up and down the valley once more, kicking the diamonds contemptuously out of my path, for I felt that they were indeed vain things to a man in my situation. At last, overcome with weariness, I sat down upon a rock, but I had hardly closed my eyes when I was startled by something which fell to the ground with a thud close beside me.

It was a huge piece of fresh meat, and as I stared at it, several more pieces rolled over the cliffs in different places. I had always thought that the stories the sailors told of the famous valley of diamonds, and of the cunning way which some merchants had devised for getting at the precious stones, were mere travellers’ tales invented to give pleasure to the hearers, but now I perceived that they were surely true. These merchants came to the valley at the time when the eagles, which keep their aeries in the rocks, had hatched their young. The merchants then threw great lumps of meat into the valley. These, falling with so much force upon the diamonds, were sure to take up some of the precious stones with them, when the eagles pounced upon the meat and carried it off to their nests to feed their hungry broods. Then the merchants, scaring away the parent birds with shouts and outcries, would secure their treasures. Until this moment I had looked upon the valley as my grave, for I had seen no possibility of getting out of it alive, but now I took courage and began to devise a means of escape. I began by picking up all the largest diamonds I could find and storing them carefully in the leather wallet which had held my provisions; this I tied securely to my belt. I then chose the piece of meat which seemed most suited to my purpose, and with the aid of my turban bound it firmly to my back; this done I laid down upon my face and awaited the coming of the eagles. I soon heard the flapping of their mighty wings above me, and had the satisfaction of feeling one of them seize upon my piece of meat, and me with it, and rise slowly towards his nest, into which he presently dropped me. Luckily for me the merchants were on the watch, and setting up their usual outcries they rushed to the nest scaring away the eagle. Their amazement was great when they discovered me, and also their disappointment, and with one accord they fell to abusing me for having robbed them of their usual profit. Addressing myself to the one who seemed most aggrieved, I said: “I am sure, if you knew all that I have suffered, you would show more kindness towards me, and as for diamonds, I have enough here of the very best for you and me and all your company.” So saying I showed them to him. The others all crowded round me, wondering at my adventures and admiring the device by which I had escaped from the valley, and when they had led me to their camp and examined my diamonds, they assured me that in all the years that they had carried on their trade they had seen no stones to be compared with them for size and beauty.

I found that each merchant chose a particular nest, and took his chance of what he might find in it. So I begged the one who owned the nest to which I had been carried to take as much as he would of my treasure, but he contented himself with one stone, and that by no means the largest, assuring me that with such a gem his fortune was made, and he need toil no more. I stayed with the merchants several days, and then as they were journeying homewards I gladly accompanied them. Our way lay across high mountains infested with frightful serpents, but we had the good luck to escape them and came at last to the seashore. Thence we sailed to the isle of Rohat where the camphor trees grow to such a size that a hundred men could shelter under one of them with ease. The sap flows from an incision made high up in the tree into a vessel hung there to receive it, and soon hardens into the substance called camphor, but the tree itself withers up and dies when it has been so treated.

In this same island we saw the rhinoceros, an animal which is smaller than the elephant and larger than the buffalo. It has one horn about a cubit long which is solid, but has a furrow from the base to the tip. Upon it is traced in white lines the figure of a man. The rhinoceros fights with the elephant, and transfixing him with his horn carries him off upon his head, but becoming blinded with the blood of his enemy, he falls helpless to the ground, and then comes the roc, and clutches them both up in his talons and takes them to feed his young. This doubtless astonishes you, but if you do not believe my tale go to Rohat and see for yourself. For fear of wearying you I pass over in silence many other wonderful things which we saw in this island. Before we left I exchanged one of my diamonds for much goodly merchandise by which I profited greatly on our homeward way. At last we reached Balsora, whence I hastened to Bagdad, where my first action was to bestow large sums of money upon the poor, after which I settled down to enjoy tranquilly the riches I had gained with so much toil and pain.

Having thus related the adventures of his second voyage, Sindbad again bestowed a hundred sequins upon Hindbad, inviting him to come again on the following day and hear how he fared upon his third voyage. The other guests also departed to their homes, but all returned at the same hour next day, including the porter, whose former life of hard work and poverty had already begun to seem to him like a bad dream. Again, after the feast was over did Sindbad claim the attention of his guests and began the account of his third voyage.

18

THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR: THE THIRD VOYAGE

After a very short time the pleasant easy life I led made me quite forget the perils of my two voyages. Moreover, as I was still in the prime of life, it pleased me better to be up and doing. So once more providing myself with the rarest and choicest merchandise of Bagdad, I conveyed it to Balsora, and set sail with other merchants of my acquaintance for distant lands. We had touched at many ports and made much profit, when one day upon the open sea we were caught by a terrible wind which blew us completely out of our reckoning, and lasting for several days finally drove us into harbour on a strange island.

“I would rather have come to anchor anywhere than here,” quoth our captain. “This island and all adjoining it are inhabited by hairy savages, who are certain to attack us, and whatever these dwarfs may do we dare not resist, since they swarm like locusts, and if one of them is killed the rest will fall upon us, and speedily make an end of us.”

These words caused great consternation among all the ship’s company, and only too soon we were to find out that the captain spoke truly. There appeared a vast multitude of hideous savages, not more than two feet high and covered with reddish fur. Throwing themselves into the waves they surrounded our vessel. Chattering meanwhile in a language we could not understand, and clutching at ropes and gangways, they swarmed up the ship’s side with such speed and agility that they almost seemed to fly.

You may imagine the rage and terror that seized us as we watched them, neither daring to hinder them nor able to speak a word to deter them from their purpose, whatever it might be. Of this we were not left long in doubt. Hoisting the sails, and cutting the cable of the anchor, they sailed our vessel to an island which lay a little further off, where they drove us ashore; then taking possession of her, they made off to the place from which they had come, leaving us helpless upon a shore avoided with horror by all mariners for a reason which you will soon learn.

Turning away from the sea we wandered miserably inland, finding as we went various herbs and fruits which we ate, feeling that we might as well live as long as possible though we had no hope of escape. Presently we saw in the far distance what seemed to us to be a splendid palace, towards which we turned our weary steps, but when we reached it we saw that it was a castle, lofty, and strongly built. Pushing back the heavy ebony doors we entered the courtyard, but upon the threshold of the great hall beyond it we paused, frozen with horror, at the sight which greeted us. On one side lay a huge pile of bones–human bones, and on the other numberless spits for roasting! Overcome with despair we sank trembling to the ground, and lay there without speech or motion. The sun was setting when a loud noise aroused us, the door of the hall was violently burst open and a horrible giant entered. He was as tall as a palm tree, and perfectly black, and had one eye, which flamed like a burning coal in the middle of his forehead. His teeth were long and sharp and grinned horribly, while his lower lip hung down upon his chest, and he had ears like elephant’s ears, which covered his shoulders, and nails like the claws of some fierce bird.

At this terrible sight our senses left us and we lay like dead men. When at last we came to ourselves the giant sat examining us attentively with his fearful eye. Presently when he had looked at us enough he came towards us, and stretching out his hand took me by the back of the neck, turning me this way and that, but feeling that I was mere skin and bone he set me down again and went on to the next, whom he treated in the same fashion; at last he came to the captain, and finding him the fattest of us all, he took him up in one hand and stuck him upon a spit and proceeded to kindle a huge fire at which he presently roasted him. After the giant had supped he lay down to sleep, snoring like the loudest thunder, while we lay shivering with horror the whole night through, and when day broke he awoke and went out, leaving us in the castle.

When we believed him to be really gone we started up bemoaning our horrible fate, until the hall echoed with our despairing cries. Though we were many and our enemy was alone it did not occur to us to kill him, and indeed we should have found that a hard task, even if we had thought of it, and no plan could we devise to deliver ourselves. So at last, submitting to our sad fate, we spent the day in wandering up and down the island eating such fruits as we could find, and when night came we returned to the castle, having sought in vain for any other place of shelter. At sunset the giant returned, supped upon one of our unhappy comrades, slept and snored till dawn, and then left us as before. Our condition seemed to us so frightful that several of my companions thought it would be better to leap from the cliffs and perish in the waves at once, rather than await so miserable an end; but I had a plan of escape which I now unfolded to them, and which they at once agreed to attempt.

“Listen, my brothers,” I added. “You know that plenty of driftwood lies along the shore. Let us make several rafts, and carry them to a suitable place. If our plot succeeds, we can wait patiently for the chance of some passing ship which would rescue us from this fatal island. If it fails, we must quickly take to our rafts; frail as they are, we have more chance of saving our lives with them than we have if we remain here.”

All agreed with me, and we spent the day in building rafts, each capable of carrying three persons. At nightfall we returned to the castle, and very soon in came the giant, and one more of our number was sacrificed. But the time of our vengeance was at hand! As soon as he had finished his horrible repast he lay down to sleep as before, and when we heard him begin to snore I, and nine of the boldest of my comrades, rose softly, and took each a spit, which we made red-hot in the fire, and then at a given signal we plunged it with one accord into the giant's eye, completely blinding him. Uttering a terrible cry, he sprang to his feet clutching in all directions to try to seize one of us, but we had all fled different ways as soon as the deed was done, and thrown ourselves flat upon the ground in corners where he was not likely to touch us with his feet.

After a vain search he fumbled about till he found the door, and fled out of it howling frightfully. As for us, when he was gone we made haste to leave the fatal castle, and, stationing ourselves beside our rafts, we waited to see what would happen. Our idea was that if, when the sun rose, we saw nothing of the giant, and no longer heard his howls, which still came faintly through the darkness, growing more and more distant, we should conclude that he was dead, and that we might safely stay upon the island and need not risk our lives upon the frail rafts. But alas! morning light showed us our enemy approaching us, supported on either hand by two giants nearly as large and fearful as himself, while a crowd of others followed close upon their heels. Hesitating no longer we clambered upon our rafts and rowed with all our might out to sea. The giants, seeing their prey escaping them, seized up huge pieces of rock, and wading into the water hurled them after us with such good aim that all the rafts except the one I was upon were swamped, and their luckless crews drowned, without our being able to do anything to help them. Indeed I and my two companions had all we could do to keep our own raft beyond the reach of the giants, but by dint of hard rowing we at last gained the open sea. Here we were at the mercy of the winds and waves, which tossed us to and fro all that day and night, but the next morning we found ourselves near an island, upon which we gladly landed.

There we found delicious fruits, and having satisfied our hunger we presently lay down to rest upon the shore. Suddenly we were aroused by a loud rustling noise, and starting up, saw that it was caused by an immense snake which was gliding towards us over the sand. So swiftly it came that it had seized one of my comrades before he had time to fly, and in spite of his cries and struggles speedily crushed the life out of him in its mighty coils and proceeded to swallow him. By this time my other companion and I were running for our lives to some place where we might hope to be safe from this new horror, and seeing a tall tree we climbed up into it, having first provided ourselves with a store of fruit off the surrounding bushes. When night came I fell asleep, but only to be awakened once more by the terrible snake, which after hissing horribly round the tree at last reared itself up against it, and finding my sleeping comrade who was perched just below me, it swallowed him also, and crawled away leaving me half dead with terror.

When the sun rose I crept down from the tree with hardly a hope of escaping the dreadful fate which had over-taken my comrades; but life is sweet, and I determined to do all I could to save myself. All day long I toiled with frantic haste and collected quantities of dry brushwood, reeds and thorns, which I bound with faggots, and making a circle of them under my tree I piled them firmly one upon another until I had a kind of tent in which I crouched like a mouse in a hole when she sees the cat coming. You may imagine what a fearful night I passed, for the snake returned eager to devour me, and glided round and round my frail shelter seeking an entrance. Every moment I feared that it would succeed in pushing aside some of the faggots, but happily for me they held together, and when it grew light my enemy retired, baffled and hungry, to his den. As for me I was more dead than alive! Shaking with fright and half suffocated by the poisonous breath of the monster, I came out of my tent and crawled down to the sea, feeling that it would be better to plunge from the cliffs and end my life at once than pass such another night of horror. But to my joy and relief I saw a ship sailing by, and by shouting wildly and waving my turban I managed to attract the attention of her crew.

A boat was sent to rescue me, and very soon I found myself on board surrounded by a wondering crowd of sailors and merchants eager to know by what chance I found myself in that desolate island. After I had told my story they regaled me with the choicest food the ship afforded, and the captain, seeing that I was in rags, generously bestowed upon me one of his own coats. After sailing about for some time and touching at many ports we came at last to the island of Salahat, where sandal wood grows in great abundance. Here we anchored, and as I stood watching the merchants disembarking their goods and preparing to sell or exchange them, the captain came up to me and said,

“I have here, brother, some merchandise belonging to a passenger of mine who is dead. Will you do me the favour to trade with it, and when I meet with his heirs I shall be able to give them the money, though it will be only just that you shall have a portion for your trouble.”

I consented gladly, for I did not like standing by idle. Whereupon he pointed the bales out to me, and sent for the person whose duty it was to keep a list of the goods that were upon the ship. When this man came he asked in what name the merchandise was to be registered.

“In the name of Sindbad the Sailor,” replied the captain.

At this I was greatly surprised, but looking carefully at him I recognised him to be the captain of the ship upon which I had made my second voyage, though he had altered much since that time. As for him, believing me to be dead it was no wonder that he had not recognised me.

“So, captain,” said I, “the merchant who owned those bales was called Sindbad?”

“Yes,” he replied. “He was so named. He belonged to Bagdad, and joined my ship at Balsora, but by mischance he was left behind upon a desert island where we had landed to fill up our water-casks, and it was not until four hours later that he was missed. By that time the wind had freshened, and it was impossible to put back for him.”

“You suppose him to have perished then?” said I.

“Alas! yes,” he answered.

“Why, captain!” I cried, “look well at me. I am that Sindbad who fell asleep upon the island and awoke to find himself abandoned!”

The captain stared at me in amazement, but was presently convinced that I was indeed speaking the truth, and rejoiced greatly at my escape.

“I am glad to have that piece of carelessness off my conscience at any rate,” said he. “Now take your goods, and the profit I have made for you upon them, and may you prosper in future.”

I took them gratefully, and as we went from one island to another I laid in stores of cloves, cinnamon, and other spices. In one place I saw a tortoise which was twenty cubits long and as many broad, also a fish that was like a cow and had skin so thick that it was used to make shields. Another I saw that was like a camel in shape and color. So by degrees we came back to Balsora, and I returned to Bagdad with so much money that I could not myself count it, besides treasures without end. I gave largely to the poor, and bought much land to add to what I already possessed, and thus ended my third voyage.

When Sindbad had finished his story he gave another hundred sequins to Hindbad, who then departed with the other guests, but next day when they had all reassembled, and the banquet was ended, their host continued his adventures.

19

THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR: THE FOURTH VOYAGE

Rich and happy as I was after my third voyage, I could not make up my mind to stay at home altogether. My love of trading, and the pleasure I took in anything that was new and strange, made me set my affairs in order, and begin my journey through some of the Persian provinces, having first sent off stores of goods to await my coming in the different places I intended to visit. I took ship at a distant seaport, and for some time all went well, but at last, being caught in a violent hurricane, our vessel became a total wreck in spite of all our worthy captain could do to save her, and many of our company perished in the waves. I, with a few others, had the good fortune to be washed ashore clinging to pieces of the wreck, for the storm had driven us near an island, and scrambling up beyond the reach of the waves we threw ourselves down quite exhausted, to wait for morning.

At daylight we wandered inland, and soon saw some huts, to which we directed our steps. As we drew near their black inhabitants swarmed out in great numbers and surrounded us, and we were led to their houses, and as it were divided among our captors. I with five others was taken into a hut, where we were made to sit upon the ground, and certain herbs were given to us, which the blacks made signs to us to eat. Observing that they themselves did not touch them, I was careful only to pretend to taste my portion; but my companions, being very hungry, rashly ate up all that was set before them, and very soon I had the horror of seeing them become perfectly mad. Though they chattered incessantly I could not understand a word they said, nor did they heed when I spoke to them.

The savages now produced large bowls full of rice prepared with coconut oil, of which my crazy comrades ate eagerly, but I only tasted a few grains, understanding clearly that the object of our captors was to fatten us speedily for their own eating, and this was exactly what happened. My unlucky companions having lost their reason, felt neither anxiety nor fear, and ate greedily all that was offered them. So they were soon fat and there was an end of them, but I grew leaner day by day, for I ate but little, and even that little did me no good by reason of my fear of what lay before me. However, as I was so far from being a tempting morsel, I was allowed to wander about freely, and one day, when all the blacks had gone off upon some expedition leaving only an old man to guard me, I managed to escape from him and plunged into the forest, running faster the more he cried to me to come back, until I had completely distanced him.

For seven days I hurried on, resting only when the darkness stopped me, and living chiefly upon coconuts, which afforded me both meat and drink, and on the eighth day I reached the seashore and saw a party of white men gathering pepper, which grew abundantly all about. Reassured by the nature of their occupation, I advanced towards them and they greeted me in Arabic, asking who I was and whence I came. My delight was great on hearing this familiar speech, and I willingly satisfied their curiosity, telling them how I had been shipwrecked, and captured by the blacks. “But these savages devour men!” said they. “How did you escape?” I repeated to them what I have just told you, at which they were mightily astonished. I stayed with them until they had collected as much pepper as they wished, and then they took me back to their own country and presented me to their king, by whom I was hospitably received. To him also I had to relate my adventures, which surprised him much, and when I had finished he ordered that I should be supplied with food and raiment and treated with consideration.

The island on which I found myself was full of people, and abounded in all sorts of desirable things, and a great deal of traffic went on in the capital, where I soon began to feel at home and contented. Moreover, the king treated me with special favor, and in consequence of this everyone, whether at the court or in the town, sought to make life pleasant to me. One thing I remarked which I thought very strange; this was that, from the greatest to the least, all men rode their horses without bridle or stirrups. I one day presumed to ask his majesty why he did not use them, to which he replied, “You speak to me of things of which I have never before heard!”

This gave me an idea. I found a clever workman, and made him cut out under my direction the foundation of a saddle, which I wadded and covered with choice leather, adorning it with rich gold embroidery. I then got a locksmith to make me a bit and a pair of spurs after a pattern that I drew for him, and when all these things were completed I presented them to the king and showed him how to use them. When I had saddled one of his horses he mounted it and rode about quite delighted with the novelty, and to show his gratitude he rewarded me with large gifts. After this I had to make saddles for all the principal officers of the king’s household, and as they all gave me rich presents I soon became very wealthy and quite an important person in the city.

One day the king sent for me and said, “Sindbad, I am going to ask a favor of you. Both I and my subjects esteem you, and wish you to end your days among us. Therefore I desire that you will marry a rich and beautiful lady whom I will find for you, and think no more of your own country.”

As the king’s will was law I accepted the charming bride he presented to me, and lived happily with her. Nevertheless I had every intention of escaping at the first opportunity, and going back to Bagdad. Things were thus going prosperously with me when it happened that the wife of one of my neighbors, with whom I had struck up quite a friendship, fell ill, and presently died. I went to his house to offer my consolations, and found him in the depths of woe.

“Heaven preserve you,” said I, “and send you a long life!”

“Alas!” he replied, “what is the good of saying that when I have but an hour left to live!”

“Come, come!” said I, “surely it is not so bad as all that. I trust that you may be spared to me for many years.”

“I hope,” answered he, “that your life may be long, but as for me, all is finished. I have set my house in order, and to-day I shall be buried with my wife. This has been the law upon our island from the earliest ages–the living husband goes to the grave with his dead wife, the living wife with her dead husband. So did our fathers, and so must we do. The law changes not, and all must submit to it!”

As he spoke the friends and relations of the unhappy pair began to assemble. The body, decked in rich robes and sparkling with jewels, was laid upon an open bier, and the procession started, taking its way to a high mountain at some distance from the city, the wretched husband, clothed from head to foot in a black mantle, following mournfully.

When the place of interment was reached the corpse was lowered, just as it was, into a deep pit. Then the husband, bidding farewell to all his friends, stretched himself upon another bier, upon which were laid seven little loaves of bread and a pitcher of water, and he also was let down-down-down to the depths of the horrible cavern, and then a stone was laid over the opening, and the melancholy company wended its way back to the city.

You may imagine that I was no unmoved spectator of these proceedings; to all the others it was a thing to which they had been accustomed from their youth up; but I was so horrified that I could not help telling the king how it struck me.

“Sire,” I said, “I am more astonished than I can express to you at the strange custom which exists in your dominions of burying the living with the dead. In all my travels I have never before met with so cruel and horrible a law.”

“What would you have, Sindbad?” he replied. “It is the law for everybody. I myself should be buried with the Queen if she were the first to die.”

“But, your Majesty,” said I, “dare I ask if this law applies to foreigners also?”

“Why, yes,” replied the king smiling, in what I could but consider a very heartless manner, “they are no exception to the rule if they have married in the country.”

When I heard this I went home much cast down, and from that time forward my mind was never easy. If only my wife’s little finger ached I fancied she was going to die, and sure enough before very long she fell really ill and in a few days breathed her last. My dismay was great, for it seemed to me that to be buried alive was even a worse fate than to be devoured by cannibals, nevertheless there was no escape. The body of my wife, arrayed in her richest robes and decked with all her jewels, was laid upon the bier. I followed it, and after me came a great procession, headed by the king and all his nobles, and in this order we reached the fatal mountain, which was one of a lofty chain bordering the sea.

Here I made one more frantic effort to excite the pity of the king and those who stood by, hoping to save myself even at this last moment, but it was of no avail. No one spoke to me, they even appeared to hasten over their dreadful task, and I speedily found myself descending into the gloomy pit, with my seven loaves and pitcher of water beside me. Almost before I reached the bottom the stone was rolled into its place above my head, and I was left to my fate. A feeble ray of light shone into the cavern through some chink, and when I had the courage to look about me I could see that I was in a vast vault, bestrewn with bones and bodies of the dead. I even fancied that I heard the expiring sighs of those who, like myself, had come into this dismal place alive. All in vain did I shriek aloud with rage and despair, reproaching myself for the love of gain and adventure which had brought me to such a pass, but at length, growing calmer, I took up my bread and water, and wrapping my face in my mantle I groped my way towards the end of the cavern, where the air was fresher.

Here I lived in darkness and misery until my provisions were exhausted, but just as I was nearly dead from starvation the rock was rolled away overhead and I saw that a bier was being lowered into the cavern, and that the corpse upon it was a man. In a moment my mind was made up, the woman who followed had nothing to expect but a lingering death; I should be doing her a service if I shortened her misery. Therefore when she descended, already insensible from terror, I was ready armed with a huge bone, one blow from which left her dead, and I secured the bread and water which gave me a hope of life. Several times did I have recourse to this desperate expedient, and I know not how long I had been a prisoner when one day I fancied that I heard something near me, which breathed loudly.

Turning to the place from which the sound came I dimly saw a shadowy form which fled at my movement, squeezing itself through a cranny in the wall. I pursued it as fast as I could, and found myself in a narrow crack among the rocks, along which I was just able to force my way. I followed it for what seemed to me many miles, and at last saw before me a glimmer of light which grew clearer every moment until I emerged upon the sea shore with a joy which I cannot describe. When I was sure that I was not dreaming, I realized that it was doubtless some little animal which had found its way into the cavern from the sea, and when disturbed had fled, showing me a means of escape which I could never have discovered for myself. I hastily surveyed my surroundings, and saw that I was safe from all pursuit from the town.

The mountains sloped sheer down to the sea, and there was no road across them. Being assured of this I returned to the cavern, and amassed a rich treasure of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and jewels of all kinds which strewed the ground. These I made up into bales, and stored them into a safe place upon the beach, and then waited hopefully for the passing of a ship. I had looked out for two days, however, before a single sail appeared, so it was with much delight that I at last saw a vessel not very far from the shore, and by waving my arms and uttering loud cries succeeded in attracting the attention of her crew. A boat was sent off to me, and in answer to the questions of the sailors as to how I came to be in such a plight, I replied that I had been shipwrecked two days before, but had managed to scramble ashore with the bales which I pointed out to them. Luckily for me they believed my story, and without even looking at the place where they found me, took up my bundles, and rowed me back to the ship.

Once on board, I soon saw that the captain was too much occupied with the difficulties of navigation to pay much heed to me, though he generously made me welcome, and would not even accept the jewels with which I offered to pay my passage. Our voyage was prosperous, and after visiting many lands, and collecting in each place great store of goodly merchandise, I found myself at last in Bagdad once more with unheard of riches of every description. Again I gave large sums of money to the poor, and enriched all the mosques in the city, after which I gave myself up to my friends and relations, with whom I passed my time in feasting and merriment.

Here Sindbad paused, and all his hearers declared that the adventures of his fourth voyage had pleased them better than anything they had heard before. They then took their leave, followed by Hindbad, who had once more received a hundred sequins, and with the rest had been bidden to return next day for the story of the fifth voyage.

When the time came all were in their places, and when they had eaten and drunk of all that was set before them Sindbad began his tale.

20

THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR: THE FIFTH VOYAGE

Not even all that I had gone through could make me contented with a quiet life. I soon wearied of its pleasures, and longed for change and adventure. Therefore I set out once more, but this time in a ship of my own, which I built and fitted out at the nearest seaport. I wished to be able to call at whatever port I chose, taking my own time; but as I did not intend carrying enough goods for a full cargo, I invited several merchants of different nations to join me. We set sail with the first favorable wind, and after a long voyage upon the open seas we landed upon an unknown island which proved to be uninhabited. We determined, however, to explore it, but had not gone far when we found a roc's egg, as large as the one I had seen before and evidently very nearly hatched, for the beak of the young bird had already pierced the shell. In spite of all I could say to deter them, the merchants who were with me fell upon it with their hatchets, breaking the shell, and killing the young roc. Then lighting a fire upon the ground they hacked morsels from the bird, and proceeded to roast them while I stood by aghast.

Scarcely had they finished their ill-omened meal, when the air above us was darkened by two mighty shadows. The captain of my ship, knowing by experience what this meant, cried out to us that the parent birds were coming, and urged us to get on board with all speed. This we did, and the sails were hoisted, but before we had made any way the rocs reached their despoiled nest and hovered about it, uttering frightful cries when they discovered the mangled remains of their young one. For a moment we lost sight of them, and were flattering ourselves that we had escaped, when they reappeared and soared into the air directly over our vessel, and we saw that each held in its claws an immense rock ready to crush us. There was a moment of breathless suspense, then one bird loosed its hold and the huge block of stone hurtled through the air, but thanks to the presence of mind of the helmsman, who turned our ship violently in another direction, it fell into the sea close beside us, cleaving it asunder till we could nearly see the bottom. We had hardly time to draw a breath of relief before the other rock fell with a mighty crash right in the midst of our luckless vessel, smashing it into a thousand fragments, and crushing, or hurling into the sea, passengers and crew. I myself went down with the rest, but had the good fortune to rise unhurt, and by holding on to a piece of driftwood with one hand and swimming with the other I kept myself afloat and was presently washed up by the tide on to an island. Its shores were steep and rocky, but I scrambled up safely and threw myself down to rest upon the green turf.

When I had somewhat recovered I began to examine the spot in which I found myself, and truly it seemed to me that I had reached a garden of delights. There were trees everywhere, and they were laden with flowers and fruit, while a crystal stream wandered in and out under their shadow. When night came I slept sweetly in a cozy nook, though the remembrance that I was alone in a strange land made me sometimes start up and look around me in alarm, and then I wished heartily that I had stayed at home at ease. However, the morning sunlight restored my courage, and I once more wandered among the trees, but always with some anxiety as to what I might see next. I had penetrated some distance into the island when I saw an old man bent and feeble sitting upon the river bank, and at first I took him to be some ship-wrecked mariner like myself. Going up to him I greeted him in a friendly way, but he only nodded his head at me in reply. I then asked what he did there, and he made signs to me that he wished to get across the river to gather some fruit, and seemed to beg me to carry him on my back. Pitying his age and feebleness, I took him up, and wading across the stream I bent down that he might more easily reach the bank, and bade him get down. But instead of allowing himself to be set upon his feet (even now it makes me laugh to think of it!), this creature who had seemed to me so decrepit leaped nimbly upon my shoulders, and hooking his legs round my neck gripped me so tightly that I was well-nigh choked, and so overcome with terror that I fell insensible to the ground. When I recovered my enemy was still in his place, though he had released his hold enough to allow me breathing space, and seeing me revive he prodded me adroitly first with one foot and then with the other, until I was forced to get up and stagger about with him under the trees while he gathered and ate the choicest fruits. This went on all day, and even at night, when I threw myself down half dead with weariness, the terrible old man held on tight to my neck, nor did he fail to greet the first glimmer of morning light by drumming upon me with his heels, until I perforce awoke and resumed my dreary march with rage and bitterness in my heart.

It happened one day that I passed a tree under which lay several dry gourds, and catching one up I amused myself with scooping out its contents and pressing into it the juice of several bunches of grapes which hung from every bush. When it was full I left it propped in the fork of a tree, and a few days later, carrying the hateful old man that way, I snatched at my gourd as I passed it and had the satisfaction of a draught of excellent wine so good and refreshing that I even forgot my detestable burden, and began to sing and caper.

The old monster was not slow to perceive the effect which my draught had produced and that I carried him more lightly than usual, so he stretched out his skinny hand and seizing the gourd first tasted its contents cautiously, then drained them to the very last drop. The wine was strong and the gourd capacious, so he also began to sing after a fashion, and soon I had the delight of feeling the iron grip of his goblin legs unclasp, and with one vigorous effort I threw him to the ground, from which he never moved again. I was so rejoiced to have at last got rid of this uncanny old man that I ran leaping and bounding down to the sea shore, where, by the greatest good luck, I met with some mariners who had anchored off the island to enjoy the delicious fruits, and to renew their supply of water.

They heard the story of my escape with amazement, saying, “You fell into the hands of the Old Man of the Sea, and it is a mercy that he did not strangle you as he has everyone else upon whose shoulders he has managed to perch himself. This island is well known as the scene of his evil deeds, and no merchant or sailor who lands upon it cares to stray far away from his comrades.” After we had talked for a while they took me back with them on board their ship, where the captain received me kindly, and we soon set sail, and after several days reached a large and prosperous-looking town where all the houses were built of stone. Here we anchored, and one of the merchants, who had been very friendly to me on the way, took me ashore with him and showed me a lodging set apart for strange merchants. He then provided me with a large sack, and pointed out to me a party of others equipped in like manner.

“Go with them,” said he, “and do as they do, but beware of losing sight of them, for if you strayed your life would be in danger.”

With that he supplied me with provisions, and bade me farewell, and I set out with my new companions. I soon learnt that the object of our expedition was to fill our sacks with coconuts, but when at length I saw the trees and noted their immense height and the slippery smoothness of their slender trunks, I did not at all understand how we were to do it. The crowns of the cocoa-palms were all alive with monkeys, big and little, which skipped from one to the other with surprising agility, seeming to be curious about us and disturbed at our appearance, and I was at first surprised when my companions after collecting stones began to throw them at the lively creatures, which seemed to me quite harmless. But very soon I saw the reason of it and joined them heartily, for the monkeys, annoyed and wishing to pay us back in our own coin, began to tear the nuts from the trees and cast them at us with angry and spiteful gestures, so that after very little labor our sacks were filled with the fruit which we could not otherwise have obtained.

As soon as we had as many as we could carry we went back to the town, where my friend bought my share and advised me to continue the same occupation until I had earned money enough to carry me to my own country. This I did, and before long had amassed a considerable sum. Just then I heard that there was a trading ship ready to sail, and taking leave of my friend I went on board, carrying with me a goodly store of coconuts; and we sailed first to the islands where pepper grows, then to Comari where the best aloes wood is found, and where men drink no wine by an unalterable law. Here I exchanged my nuts for pepper and good aloes wood, and went a-fishing for pearls with some of the other merchants, and my divers were so lucky that very soon I had an immense number, and those very large and perfect. With all these treasures I came joyfully back to Bagdad, where I disposed of them for large sums of money, of which I did not fail as before to give the tenth part to the poor, and after that I rested from my labors and comforted myself with all the pleasures that my riches could give me.

Having thus ended his story, Sindbad ordered that one hundred sequins should be given to Hindbad, and the guests then withdrew; but after the next day’s feast he began the account of his sixth voyage as follows.

21

THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR: THE SIXTH VOYAGE

It must be a marvel to you how, after having five times met with shipwreck and unheard of perils, I could again tempt fortune and risk fresh trouble. I am even surprised myself when I look back, but evidently it was my fate to rove, and after a year of repose I prepared to make a sixth voyage, regardless of the entreaties of my friends and relations, who did all they could to keep me at home. Instead of going by the Persian Gulf, I traveled a considerable way overland, and finally embarked from a distant Indian port with a captain who meant to make a long voyage. And truly he did so, for we fell in with stormy weather which drove us completely out of our course, so that for many days neither captain nor pilot knew where we were, nor where we were going. When they did at last discover our position we had small ground for rejoicing, for the captain, casting his turban upon the deck and tearing his beard, declared that we were in the most dangerous spot upon the whole wide sea, and had been caught by a current which was at that minute sweeping us to destruction. It was too true! In spite of all the sailors could do we were driven with frightful rapidity towards the foot of a mountain, which rose sheer out of the sea, and our vessel was dashed to pieces upon the rocks at its base, not, however, until we had managed to scramble on shore, carrying with us the most precious of our possessions. When we had done this the captain said to us:

“Now we are here we may as well begin to dig our graves at once, since from this fatal spot no shipwrecked mariner has ever returned.”

This speech discouraged us much, and we began to lament over our sad fate.

The mountain formed the seaward boundary of a large island, and the narrow strip of rocky shore upon which we stood was strewn with the wreckage of a thousand gallant ships, while the bones of the luckless mariners shone white in the sunshine, and we shuddered to think how soon our own would be added to the heap. All around, too, lay vast quantities of the costliest merchandise, and treasures were heaped in every cranny of the rocks, but all these things only added to the desolation of the scene. It struck me as a very strange thing that a river of clear fresh water, which gushed out from the mountain not far from where we stood, instead of flowing into the sea as rivers generally do, turned off sharply, and flowed out of sight under a natural archway of rock, and when I went to examine it more closely I found that inside the cave the walls were thick with diamonds, and rubies, and masses of crystal, and the floor was strewn with ambergris. Here, then, upon this desolate shore we abandoned ourselves to our fate, for there was no possibility of scaling the mountain, and if a ship had appeared it could only have shared our doom. The first thing our captain did was to divide equally among us all the food we possessed, and then the length of each man’s life depended on the time he could make his portion last. I myself could live upon very little.

Nevertheless, by the time I had buried the last of my companions my stock of provisions was so small that I hardly thought I should live long enough to dig my own grave, which I set about doing, while I regretted bitterly the roving disposition which was always bringing me into such straits, and thought longingly of all the comfort and luxury that I had left.

But luckily for me the fancy took me to stand once more beside the river where it plunged out of sight in the depths of the cavern, and as I did so an idea struck me. This river which hid itself underground doubtless emerged again at some distant spot. Why should I not build a raft and trust myself to its swiftly flowing waters? If I perished before I could reach the light of day once more I should be no worse off than I was now, for death stared me in the face, while there was always the possibility that, as I was born under a lucky star, I might find myself safe and sound in some desirable land.

I decided at any rate to risk it, and speedily built myself a stout raft of drift-wood with strong cords, of which enough and to spare lay strewn upon the beach. I then made up many packages of rubies, emeralds, rock crystal, ambergris, and precious stuffs, and bound them upon my raft, being careful to preserve the balance, and then I seated myself upon it, having two small oars that I had fashioned laid ready to my hand, and loosed the cord which held it to the bank. Once out in the current my raft flew swiftly under the gloomy archway, and I found myself in total darkness, carried smoothly forward by the rapid river. On I went as it seemed to me for many nights and days. Once the channel became so small that I had a narrow escape of being crushed against the rocky roof, and after that I took the precaution of lying flat upon my precious bales. Though I only ate what was absolutely necessary to keep myself alive, the inevitable moment came when, after swallowing my last morsel of food, I began to wonder if I must after all die of hunger. Then, worn out with anxiety and fatigue, I fell into a deep sleep, and when I again opened my eyes I was once more in the light of day; a beautiful country lay before me, and my raft, which was tied to the river bank, was surrounded by friendly looking black men. I rose and saluted them, and they spoke to me in return, but I could not understand a word of their language. Feeling perfectly bewildered by my sudden return to life and light, I murmured to myself in Arabic, “Close your eyes, and while you are asleep, Heaven will change your fortune from evil to good.”

One of the natives, who understood this tongue, then came forward saying:

“My brother, be not surprised to see us; this is our land, and as we came to get water from the river we noticed your raft floating down it, and one of us swam out and brought you to the shore. We have waited for your awakening; tell us now whence you come and where you were going by that dangerous way?”

I replied that nothing would please me better than to tell them, but that I was starving, and would fain eat something first. I was soon supplied with all I needed, and having satisfied my hunger I told them faithfully all that had befallen me. They were lost in wonder at my tale when it was interpreted to them, and said that adventures so surprising must be related to their king only by the man to whom they had happened. So, procuring a horse, they mounted me upon it, and we set out, followed by several strong men carrying my raft just as it was upon their shoulders. In this order we marched into the city of Serendib, where the natives presented me to their king, whom I saluted in the Indian fashion, prostrating myself at his feet and kissing the ground; but the monarch bade me rise and sit beside him, asking first what was my name.

“I am Sindbad,” I replied, “whom men call `the Sailor,’ for I have voyaged much upon many seas.”

“And how come you here?” asked the king.

I told my story, concealing nothing, and his surprise and delight were so great that he ordered my adventures to be written in letters of gold and laid up in the archives of his kingdom.

Presently my raft was brought in and the bales opened in his presence, and the king declared that in all his treasury there were no such rubies and emeralds as those which lay in great heaps before him. Seeing that he looked at them with interest, I ventured to say that I myself and all that I had were at his disposal, but he answered me smiling:

“Nay, Sindbad. Heaven forbid that I should covet your riches; I will rather add to them, for I desire that you shall not leave my kingdom without some tokens of my good will.” He then commanded his officers to provide me with a suitable lodging at his expense, and sent slaves to wait upon me and carry my raft and my bales to my new dwelling place. You may imagine that I praised his generosity and gave him grateful thanks, nor did I fail to present myself daily in his audience chamber, and for the rest of my time I amused myself in seeing all that was most worthy of attention in the city. The island of Serendib being situated on the equinoctial line, the days and nights there are of equal length. The chief city is placed at the end of a beautiful valley, formed by the highest mountain in the world, which is in the middle of the island. I had the curiosity to ascend to its very summit, for this was the place to which Adam was banished out of Paradise. Here are found rubies and many precious things, and rare plants grow abundantly, with cedar trees and cocoa palms. On the seashore and at the mouths of the rivers the divers seek for pearls, and in some valleys diamonds are plentiful. After many days I petitioned the king that I might return to my own country, to which he graciously consented. Moreover, he loaded me with rich gifts, and when I went to take leave of him he entrusted me with a royal present and a letter to the Commander of the Faithful, our sovereign lord, saying, “I pray you give these to the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, and assure him of my friendship.”

I accepted the charge respectfully, and soon embarked upon the vessel which the king himself had chosen for me. The king’s letter was written in blue characters upon a rare and precious skin of yellowish color, and these were the words of it: “The King of the Indies, before whom walk a thousand elephants, who lives in a palace, of which the roof blazes with a hundred thousand rubies, and whose treasure house contains twenty thousand diamond crowns, to the Caliph Haroun al Raschid sends greeting. Though the offering we present to you is unworthy of your notice, we pray you to accept it as a mark of the esteem and friendship which we cherish for you, and of which we gladly send you this token, and we ask of you a like regard if you deem us worthy of it. Adieu, brother."

The present consisted of a vase carved from a single ruby, six inches high and as thick as my finger; this was filled with the choicest pearls, large, and of perfect shape and luster; secondly, a huge snake skin, with scales as large as a sequin, which would preserve from sickness those who slept upon it. Then quantities of aloes wood, camphor, and pistachio-nuts; and lastly, a beautiful slave girl, whose robes glittered with precious stones.

After a long and prosperous voyage we landed at Balsora, and I made haste to reach Bagdad, and taking the king's letter I presented myself at the palace gate, followed by the beautiful slave, and various members of my own family, bearing the treasure.

As soon as I had declared my errand I was conducted into the presence of the Caliph, to whom, after I had made my obeisance, I gave the letter and the king's gift, and when he had examined them he demanded of me whether the Prince of Serendib was really as rich and powerful as he claimed to be.

"Commander of the Faithful," I replied, again bowing humbly before him, "I can assure your Majesty that he has in no way exaggerated his wealth and grandeur. Nothing can equal the magnificence of his palace. When he goes abroad his throne is prepared upon the back of an elephant, and on either side of him ride his ministers, his favourites, and courtiers. On his elephant's neck sits an officer, his golden lance in his hand, and behind him stands another bearing a pillar of gold, at the top of which is an emerald as long as my hand. A thousand men in cloth of gold, mounted upon richly caparisoned elephants, go before him, and as the procession moves onward the officer who guides his elephant cries aloud, `Behold the mighty monarch, the powerful and valiant Sultan of the Indies, whose palace is covered with a hundred thousand rubies, who possesses twenty thousand diamond crowns. Behold a monarch greater than Solomon and Mihrage in all their glory!’”

“Then the one who stands behind the throne answers: ‘This king, so great and powerful, must die, must die, must die!’”

“And the first takes up the chant again, `All praise to Him who lives for evermore.’”

“Further, my lord, in Serendib no judge is needed, for to the king himself his people come for justice.”

The Caliph was well satisfied with my report.

“From the king’s letter,” said he, “I judged that he was a wise man. It seems that he is worthy of his people, and his people of him.”

So saying he dismissed me with rich presents, and I returned in peace to my own house.

When Sindbad had done speaking his guests withdrew, Hindbad having first received a hundred sequins, but all returned next day to hear the story of the seventh voyage, Sindbad thus began.

22

THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR: THE SEVENTH AND FINAL VOYAGE

After my sixth voyage I was quite determined that I would go to sea no more. I was now of an age to appreciate a quiet life, and I had run risks enough. I only wished to end my days in peace. One day, however, when I was entertaining a number of my friends, I was told that an officer of the Caliph wished to speak to me, and when he was admitted he bade me follow him into the presence of Haroun al Raschid, which I accordingly did. After I had saluted him, the Caliph said:

“I have sent for you, Sindbad, because I need your services. I have chosen you to bear a letter and a gift to the King of Serendib in return for his message of friendship.”

The Caliph’s commandment fell upon me like a thunderbolt.

“Commander of the Faithful,” I answered, “I am ready to do all that your Majesty commands, but I humbly pray you to remember that I am utterly disheartened by the unheard of sufferings I have undergone. Indeed, I have made a vow never again to leave Bagdad.”

With this I gave him a long account of some of my strangest adventures, to which he listened patiently.

“I admit,” said he, “that you have indeed had some extraordinary experiences, but I do not see why they should hinder you from doing as I wish. You have only to go straight to Serendib and give my message, then you are free to come back and do as you will. But go you must; my honor and dignity demand it.”

Seeing that there was no help for it, I declared myself willing to obey; and the Caliph, delighted at having got his own way, gave me a thousand sequins for the expenses of the voyage. I was soon ready to start, and taking the letter and the present I embarked at Balsora, and sailed quickly and safely to Serendib. Here, when I had disclosed my errand, I was well received, and brought into the presence of the king, who greeted me with joy.

“Welcome, Sindbad,” he cried. “I have thought of you often, and rejoice to see you once more.”

After thanking him for the honor that he did me, I displayed the Caliph’s gifts. First a bed with complete hangings all cloth of gold, which cost a thousand sequins, and another like to it of crimson stuff. Fifty robes of rich embroidery, a hundred of the finest white linen from Cairo, Suez, Cufa, and Alexandria. Then more beds of different fashion, and an agate vase carved with the figure of a man aiming an arrow at a lion, and finally a costly table, which had once belonged to King Solomon. The King of Serendib received with satisfaction the assurance of the Caliph’s friendliness toward him, and now my task being accomplished I was anxious to depart, but it was some time before the king would think of letting me go. At last, however, he dismissed me with many presents, and I lost no time in going on board a ship, which sailed at once, and for four days all went well. On the fifth day we had the misfortune to fall in with pirates, who seized our vessel, killing all who resisted, and making prisoners of those who were prudent enough to submit at once, of whom I was one. When they had despoiled us of all we possessed, they forced us to put on vile raiment, and sailing to a distant island there sold us for slaves. I fell into the hands of a rich merchant, who took me home with him, and clothed and fed me well, and after some days sent for me and questioned me as to what I could do.

I answered that I was a rich merchant who had been captured by pirates, and therefore I knew no trade.

“Tell me,” said he, “can you shoot with a bow?”

I replied that this had been one of the pastimes of my youth, and that doubtless with practice my skill would come back to me.

Upon this he provided me with a bow and arrows, and mounting me with him upon his own elephant took the way to a vast forest which lay far from the town. When we had reached the wildest part of it we stopped, and my master said to me: “This forest swarms with elephants. Hide yourself in this great tree, and shoot at all that pass you. When you have succeeded in killing one come and tell me.”

So saying he gave me a supply of food, and returned to the town, and I perched myself high up in the tree and kept watch. That night I saw nothing, but just after sunrise the next morning a large herd of elephants came crashing and trampling by. I lost no time in letting fly several arrows, and at last one of the great animals fell to the ground dead, and the others retreated, leaving me free to come down from my hiding place and run back to tell my master of my success, for which I was praised and regaled with good things. Then we went back to the forest together and dug a mighty trench in which we buried the elephant I had killed, in order that when it became a skeleton my master might return and secure its tusks.

For two months I hunted thus, and no day passed without my securing, an elephant. Of course I did not always station myself in the same tree, but sometimes in one place, sometimes in another. One morning as I watched the coming of the elephants I was surprised to see that, instead of passing the tree I was in, as they usually did, they paused, and completely surrounded it, trumpeting horribly, and shaking the very ground with their heavy tread, and when I saw that their eyes were fixed upon me I was terrified, and my arrows dropped from my trembling hand. I had indeed good reason for my terror when, an instant later, the largest of the animals wound his trunk round the stem of my tree, and with one mighty effort tore it up by the roots, bringing me to the ground entangled in its branches. I thought now that my last hour was surely come; but the huge creature, picking me up gently enough, set me upon its back, where I clung more dead than alive, and followed by the whole herd turned and crashed off into the dense forest. It seemed to me a long time before I was once more set upon my feet by the elephant, and I stood as if in a dream watching the herd, which turned and trampled off in another direction, and were soon hidden in the dense underwood. Then, recovering myself, I looked about me, and found that I was standing upon the side of a great hill, strewn as far as I could see on either hand with bones and tusks of elephants. “This then must be the elephants’ burying place,” I said to myself, “and they must have brought me here that I might cease to persecute them, seeing that I want nothing but their tusks, and here lie more than I could carry away in a lifetime.”

Whereupon I turned and made for the city as fast as I could go, not seeing a single elephant by the way, which convinced me that they had retired deeper into the forest to leave the way open to the Ivory Hill, and I did not know how sufficiently to admire their sagacity. After a day and a night I reached my master’s house, and was received by him with joyful surprise.

“Ah! poor Sindbad,” he cried, “I was wondering what could have become of you. When I went to the forest I found the tree newly uprooted, and the arrows lying beside it, and I feared I should never see you again. Pray tell me how you escaped death.”

I soon satisfied his curiosity, and the next day we went together to the Ivory Hill, and he was overjoyed to find that I had told him nothing but the truth. When we had loaded our elephant with as many tusks as it could carry and were on our way back to the city, he said:

"My brother–since I can no longer treat as a slave one who has enriched me thus–take your liberty and may Heaven prosper you. I will no longer conceal from you that these wild elephants have killed numbers of our slaves every year. No matter what good advice we gave them, they were caught sooner or later. You alone have escaped the wiles of these animals, therefore you must be under the special protection of Heaven. Now through you the whole town will be enriched without further loss of life, therefore you shall not only receive your liberty, but I will also bestow a fortune upon you."

To which I replied, "Master, I thank you, and wish you all prosperity. For myself I only ask liberty to return to my own country."

"It is well," he answered, "the monsoon will soon bring the ivory ships hither, then I will send you on your way with somewhat to pay your passage."

So I stayed with him till the time of the monsoon, and every day we added to our store of ivory till all his ware-houses were overflowing with it. By this time the other merchants knew the secret, but there was enough and to spare for all. When the ships at last arrived my master himself chose the one in which I was to sail, and put on board for me a great store of choice provisions, also ivory in abundance, and all the costliest curiosities of the country, for which I could not thank him enough, and so we parted. I left the ship at the first port we came to, not feeling at ease upon the sea after all that had happened to me by reason of it, and having disposed of my ivory for much gold, and bought many rare and costly presents, I loaded my pack animals, and joined a caravan of merchants. Our journey was long and tedious, but I bore it patiently, reflecting that at least I had not to fear tempests, nor pirates, nor serpents, nor any of the other perils from which I had suffered before, and at length we reached Bagdad. My first care was to present myself before the Caliph, and give him an account of my embassy. He assured me that my long absence had disquieted him much, but he had nevertheless hoped for the best. As to my adventure among the elephants he heard it with amazement, declaring that he could not have believed it had not my truthfulness been well known to him.

By his orders this story and the others I had told him were written by his scribes in letters of gold, and laid up among his treasures. I took my leave of him, well satisfied with the honors and rewards he bestowed upon me; and since that time I have rested from my labors, and given myself up wholly to my family and my friends.

Thus Sindbad ended the story of his seventh and last voyage, and turning to Hindbad he added:

“Well, my friend, and what do you think now? Have you ever heard of anyone who has suffered more, or had more narrow escapes than I have? Is it not just that I should now enjoy a life of ease and tranquility?”

Hindbad drew near, and kissing his hand respectfully, replied, “Sir, you have indeed known fearful perils; my troubles have been nothing compared to yours. Moreover, the generous use you make of your wealth proves that you deserve it. May you live long and happily in the enjoyment in it.”

Sindbad then gave him a hundred sequins, and hence-forward counted him among his friends; also he caused him to give up his profession as a porter, and to eat daily at his table that he might all his life remember Sindbad the Sailor.

23

THE LITTLE HUNCHBACK

In the kingdom of Kashgar, which is, as everybody knows, situated on the frontiers of Great Tartary, there lived long ago a tailor and his wife who loved each other very much. One day, when the tailor was hard at work, a little hunchback came and sat at the entrance of the shop, and began to sing and play his tambourine. The tailor was amused with the antics of the fellow, and thought he would take him home to entertain his wife. The hunchback having agreed to his proposal, the tailor closed his shop and they set off together.

When they reached the house, they found the table ready laid for supper, and in a very few minutes all three were sitting before a beautiful fish which the tailor's wife had cooked with her own hands. But unluckily, the hunchback happened to swallow a large bone, and, in spite of all the tailor and his wife could do to help him, died of suffocation in an instant. Besides being very sorry for the poor man, the tailor and his wife were very much frightened on their own account, for if the police came to hear of it, the worthy couple ran the risk of being thrown into prison for willful murder.

In order to prevent this dreadful calamity they both set about inventing some plan which would throw suspicion on some one else, and at last they made up their minds that they could do no better than select a Jewish doctor who lived close by as the author of the crime. So the tailor picked up the hunchback by his head while his wife took his feet and carried him to the doctor’s house. Then they knocked at the door, which opened straight on to a steep staircase. A servant soon appeared, feeling her way down the dark staircase and inquired what they wanted.

“Tell your master,” said the tailor, “that we have brought a very sick man for him to cure; and,” he added, holding out some money, “give him this in advance, so that he may not feel he is wasting his time.” The servant remounted the stairs to give the message to the doctor, and the moment she was out of sight the tailor and his wife carried the body swiftly after her, propped it up at the top of the staircase, and ran home as fast as their legs could carry them.

Now the doctor was so delighted at the news of a patient (for he was young, and had not many of them), that he was transported with joy.

“Get a light,” he called to the servant, “and follow me as fast as you can!” and rushing out of his room he ran towards the staircase. There he nearly fell over the body of the hunchback, and without knowing what it was gave it such a kick that it rolled right to the bottom, and very nearly dragged the doctor after it. “A light! A light!” he cried again, and when it was brought and he saw what he had done, he was almost beside himself with terror.

“Holy Moses!” he exclaimed, “why did I not wait for the light? I have killed the sick man whom they brought me; and if the sacred Ass of Esdras does not come to my aid I am lost! It will not be long before I am led to jail as a murderer.”

Agitated though he was, and with reason, the doctor did not forget to shut the house door, lest some passers-by might chance to see what had happened. He then took up the corpse and carried it into his wife’s room, nearly driving her crazy with fright.

“It is all over with us!” she wailed, “if we cannot find some means of getting the body out of the house. Once let the sun rise and we can hide it no longer! How were you driven to commit such a terrible crime?”

“Never mind that,” returned the doctor, “the thing is to find a way out of it.”

For a long while the doctor and his wife continued to turn over in their minds a way of escape, but could not find any that seemed good enough. At last the doctor gave it up altogether and resigned himself to bear the penalty of his misfortune.

But his wife, who had twice his brains, suddenly exclaimed, “I have thought of something! Let us carry the body on the roof of the house and lower it down the chimney of our neighbor the Muslim.” Now this Muslim was employed by the Sultan, and furnished his table with oil and butter. Part of his house was occupied by a great storeroom, which rats and mice enjoyed visiting.

The doctor jumped at his wife’s plan, and they took up the hunchback, and passing cords under his armpits, they let him down into the purveyor’s bedroom so gently that he really seemed to be leaning against the wall. When they felt he was touching the ground, they drew up the cords and left him.

Scarcely had they got back to their own house when the purveyor entered his room. He had spent the evening at a wedding feast, and had a lantern in his hand. In the dim light it cast he was astonished to see a man standing in his chimney, but being naturally courageous he seized a stick and made straight for the supposed thief. “Ah!” he cried, “so it is you, and not the rats and mice, who steal my butter. I’ll take care that you don’t want to come back!”

So saying he struck him several hard blows. The corpse fell on the floor, but the man only redoubled his blows, till at length it occurred to him it was odd that the thief should lie so still and make no resistance. Then, finding he was quite dead, a cold fear took possession of him. “Wretch that I am,” said he, “I have murdered a man. Ah, my revenge has gone too far. Without the help of Allah I am undone! Cursed be the goods which have led me to my ruin.” And already he felt the rope round his neck.

But when he had got over the first shock he began to think of some way out of the difficulty, and seizing the hunchback in his arms, he carried him out into the street, and leaning him against the wall of a shop he stole back to his own house, without once looking behind him.

A few minutes before the sun rose, a rich Christian merchant, who supplied the palace with all sorts of necessaries, left his house, after a night of feasting, to go to the bath. Though he was very drunk, he was yet sober enough to know that the dawn was at hand, and that all good Mussulmen would shortly be going to prayer. So he hastened his steps lest he should meet some one on his way to the mosque, who, seeing his condition, would send him to prison as a drunkard. In his haste he jostled against the hunchback, who fell heavily upon him, and the merchant, thinking he was being attacked by a thief, knocked him down with one blow of his fist. He then called loudly for help, beating the fallen man all the while.

The chief policeman of the quarter came running up, and found a Christian ill-treating a Muslim “What are you doing?” he asked indignantly.

“He tried to rob me,” replied the merchant, “and very nearly choked me.”

“Well, you have had your revenge,” said the man, catching hold of his arm. “Come, be off with you!”

As he spoke, he held out his hand to the hunchback to help him up, but the hunchback never moved. “Oho!” he went on, looking closer, “so this is the way a Christian has the impudence to treat a Muslim!” and seizing the merchant in a firm grasp he took him to the inspector of police, who threw him into prison till the judge should be out of bed and ready to attend to his case. All this brought the merchant to his senses, but the more he thought of it the less he could understand how the hunchback could have died merely from the blows he had received.

The merchant was still pondering on this subject when he was summoned before the chief of police and questioned about his crime, which he could not deny. As the hunchback was one of the Sultan's private jesters, the chief of police resolved to defer sentence of death until he had consulted his master. He went to the palace to demand an audience, and told his story to the Sultan, who only answered,

"There is no pardon for a Christian who kills a Muslim. Do your duty."

So the chief of police ordered a gallows to be erected, and sent criers to proclaim in every street in the city that a Christian was to be hanged that day for having killed a Muslim.

When all was ready the merchant was brought from prison and led to the foot of the gallows. The executioner knotted the cord firmly round the unfortunate man's neck and was just about to swing him into the air, when the Sultan's purveyor dashed through the crowd, and cried, panting, to the hangman,

"Stop, stop, don't be in such a hurry. It was not he who did the murder, it was I."

The chief of police, who was present to see that everything was in order, put several questions to the purveyor, who told him the whole story of the death of the hunchback, and how he had carried the body to the place where it had been found by the Christian merchant.

"You are going," he said to the chief of police, "to kill an innocent man, for it is impossible that he should have murdered a creature who was dead already. It is bad enough for me to have slain a Muslim without having it on my conscience that a Christian who is guiltless should suffer through my fault."

Now the purveyor's speech had been made in a loud voice, and was heard by all the crowd, and even if he had wished it, the chief of police could not have escaped setting the merchant free.

“Loose the cords from the Christian’s neck,” he commanded, turning to the executioner, “and hang this man in his place, seeing that by his own confession he is the murderer.”

The hangman did as he was bid, and was tying the cord firmly, when he was stopped by the voice of the Jewish doctor beseeching him to pause, for he had something very important to say. When he had fought his way through the crowd and reached the chief of police.

“Worshipful sir,” he began, “this Muslim whom you desire to hang is unworthy of death; I alone am guilty. Last night a man and a woman who were strangers to me knocked at my door, bringing with them a patient for me to cure. The servant opened it, but having no light was hardly able to make out their faces, though she readily agreed to wake me and to hand me the fee for my services. While she was telling me her story they seem to have carried the sick man to the top of the staircase and then left him there. I jumped up in a hurry without waiting for a lantern, and in the darkness I fell against something, which tumbled headlong down the stairs and never stopped till it reached the bottom.

When I examined the body I found it was quite dead, and the corpse was that of a hunchback Muslim. Terrified at what we had done, my wife and I took the body on the roof and let it down the chimney of our neighbor the purveyor, whom you were just about to hang. The purveyor, finding him in his room, naturally thought he was a thief, and struck him such a blow that the man fell down and lay motionless on the floor. Stooping to examine him, and finding him stone dead, the purveyor supposed that the man had died from the blow he had received; but of course this was a mistake, as you will see from my account, and I only am the murderer; and although I am innocent of any wish to commit a crime, I must suffer for it all the same, or else have the blood of two Musselmans on my conscience. Therefore send away this man, I pray you, and let me take his place, as it is I who am guilty.”

On hearing the declaration of the Jewish doctor, the chief of police commanded that he should be led to the gallows, and the Sultan’s purveyor go free. The cord was placed round the Jew’s neck, and his feet had already ceased to touch the ground when the voice of the tailor was heard beseeching the executioner to pause one moment and to listen to what he had to say.

“Oh, my lord,” he cried, turning to the chief of police, “how nearly have you caused the death of three innocent people! But if you will only have the patience to listen to my tale, you shall know who is the real culprit. If some one has to suffer, it must be me! Yesterday, at dusk, I was working in my shop with a light heart when the little hunchback, who was more than half drunk, came and sat in the doorway. He sang me several songs, and then I invited him to finish the evening at my house. He accepted my invitation, and we went away together. At supper I helped him to a slice of fish, but in eating it a bone stuck in his throat, and in spite of all we could do, he died in a few minutes. We felt deeply sorry for his death, but fearing lest we should be held responsible, we carried the corpse to the house of the Jewish doctor. I knocked, and desired the servant to beg her master to come down as fast as possible and see a sick man whom we had brought for him to cure; and in order to hasten his movements I placed a piece of money in her hand as the doctor’s fee. Directly she had disappeared I dragged the body to the top of the stairs, and then hurried away with my wife back to our house. In descending the stairs the doctor accidentally knocked over the corpse, and finding him dead believed that he himself was the murderer. But now you know the truth set him free, and let me die in his stead.”

The chief of police and the crowd of spectators were lost in astonishment at the strange events to which the death of the hunchback had given rise.

“Loosen the Jewish doctor,” said he to the hangman, “and string up the tailor instead, since he has made confession of his crime. Really, one cannot deny that this is a very singular story, and it deserves to be written in letters of gold.”

The executioner speedily untied the knots which confined the doctor, and was passing the cord round the neck of the tailor, when the Sultan of Kashgar, who had missed his jester, happened to make inquiry of his officers as to what had become of him.

“Sire,” replied they, “the hunchback having drunk more than was good for him, escaped from the palace and was seen wandering about the town, where this morning he was found dead. A man was arrested for having caused his death, and held in custody till a gallows was erected. At the moment that he was about to suffer punishment, first one man arrived, and then another, each accusing themselves of the murder, and this went on for a long time, and at the present instant the chief of police is engaged in questioning a man who declares that he alone is the true assassin.”

The Sultan of Kashgar no sooner heard these words than he ordered an usher to go to the chief of police and to bring all the persons concerned in the hunchback’s death, together with the corpse, that he wished to see once again. The usher hastened on his errand, but was only just in time, for the tailor was positively swinging in the air, when his voice fell upon the silence of the crowd, commanding the hangman to cut down the body. The hangman, recognising the usher as one of the king’s servants, cut down the tailor, and the usher, seeing the man was safe, sought the chief of police and gave him the Sultan’s message. Accordingly, the chief of police at once set out for the palace, taking with him the tailor, the doctor, the purveyor, and the merchant, who bore the dead hunchback on their shoulders.

When the procession reached the palace the chief of police prostrated himself at the feet of the Sultan, and related all that he knew of the matter. The Sultan was so much struck by the circumstances that he ordered his private historian to write down an exact account of what had passed, so that in the years to come the miraculous escape of the four men who had thought themselves murderers might never be forgotten.

The Sultan asked everybody concerned in the hunchback’s affair to tell him their stories. Among others was a prating barber, whose tale of one of his brothers follows.

24

THE STORY OF THE BARBER’S FIFTH BROTHER

As long as our father lived, Alnaschar was very idle. Instead of working for his bread, he was not ashamed to ask for it every evening, and to support himself next day on what he had received the night before. When our father died, worn out by age, he only left seven hundred silver drachmas to be divided among us, which made one hundred for each son. Alnaschar, who had never possessed so much money in his life, was quite puzzled to know what to do with it. After reflecting upon the matter for some time he decided to lay it out on glasses, bottles, and things of that sort, which he would buy from a wholesale merchant. Having bought his stock he next proceeded to look out for a small shop in a good position, where he sat down at the open door, his wares being piled up in an uncovered basket in front of him, waiting for a customer among the passers-by.

In this attitude he remained seated, his eyes fixed on the basket, but his thoughts far away. Unknown to himself, he began to talk out loud, and a tailor, whose shop was next door to his, heard quite plainly what he was saying.

“This basket,” said Alnaschar to himself, “has cost me a hundred drachmas–all that I possess in the world. Now in selling the contents piece by piece I shall turn two hundred, and these hundreds I shall again lay out in glass, which will produce four hundred. By this means I shall in course of time make four thousand drachmas, which will easily double themselves. When I have got ten thousand, I will give up the glass trade and become a jeweler, and devote all my time to trading in pearls, diamonds, and other precious stones. At last, having all the wealth that heart can desire, I will buy a beautiful country house, with horses and slaves, and then I will lead a merry life and entertain my friends. At my feasts I will send for musicians and dancers from the neighboring town to amuse my guests.

In spite of my riches I shall not, however, give up trade till I have amassed a capital of a hundred thousand drachmas, when, having become a man of much consideration, I shall request the hand of the grand-vizir's daughter, taking care to inform the worthy father that I have heard favorable reports of her beauty and wit, and that I will pay down on our wedding day 3 thousand gold pieces. Should the vizir refuse my proposal, which after all, is hardly to be expected, I will seize him by the beard and drag him to my house."

When I shall have married his daughter, I will give her ten of the best eunuchs that can be found for her service. Then I shall put on my most gorgeous robes, and mounted on a horse with a saddle of fine gold, and its trappings blazing with diamonds, followed by a train of slaves, I shall present myself at the house of the grand-vizir, the people casting down their eyes and bowing low as I pass along. At the foot of the grand-vizir's staircase I shall dismount, and while my servants stand in a row to right and left, I shall ascend the stairs, at the head of which the grand-vizir will be waiting to receive me. He will then embrace me as his son-in-law, and giving me his seat will place himself below me. This being done (as I have every reason to expect), two of my servants will enter, each bearing a purse containing a thousand pieces of gold. One of these I shall present to him saying, "Here are the thousand gold pieces that I offered for your daughter's hand, and here," I shall continue, holding out the second purse, "are another thousand to show you that I am a man who is better than his word.” After hearing of such generosity the world will talk of nothing else.

I shall return home with the same pomp as I set out, and my wife will send an officer to compliment me on my visit to her father, and I shall confer on the officer the honour of a rich dress and a handsome gift. Should she send one to me I shall refuse it and dismiss the bearer. I shall never allow my wife to leave her rooms on any pretext whatever without my permission, and my visits to her will be marked by all the ceremony calculated to inspire respect. No establishment will be better ordered than mine, and I shall take care always to be dressed in a manner suitable to my position. In the evening, when we retire to our apartments, I shall sit in the place of honour, where I shall assume a grand demeanour and speak little, gazing straight before me, and when my wife, lovely as the full moon, stands humbly in front of my chair I shall pretend not to see her. Then her women will say to me, “Respected lord and master, your wife and slave is before you waiting to be noticed. She is mortified that you never deign to look her way; she is tired of standing so long. Beg her, we pray you, to be seated.” Of course I shall give no signs of even hearing this speech, which will vex them mightily. They will throw themselves at my feet with lamentations, and at length I will raise my head and throw a careless glance at her, then I shall go back to my former attitude. The women will think that I am displeased at my wife’s dress and will lead her away to put on a finer one, and I on my side shall replace the one I am wearing with another yet more splendid. They will then return to the charge, but this time it will take much longer before they persuade me even to look at my wife. It is as well to begin on my wedding-day as I mean to go on for the rest of our lives.

The next day she will complain to her mother of the way she has been treated, which will fill my heart with joy. Her mother will come to seek me, and, kissing my hands with respect, will say, “My lord” (for she could not dare to risk my anger by using the familiar title of “son-in-law”), “My lord, do not, I implore you, refuse to look upon my daughter or to approach her. She only lives to please you, and loves you with all her soul." But I shall pay no more heed to my mother-in-law's words than I did to those of the women. Again she will beseech me to listen to her entreaties, throwing herself this time at my feet, but all to no purpose. Then, putting a glass of wine into my wife's hand, she will say to her, "There, present that to him yourself, he cannot have the cruelty to reject anything offered by so beautiful a hand," and my wife will take it and offer it to me trembling with tears in her eyes, but I shall look in the other direction. This will cause her to weep still more, and she will hold out the glass crying, "Adorable husband, never shall I cease my prayers till you have done me the favor to drink." Sick of her importunity, these words will goad me to fury. I shall dart an angry look at her and give her a sharp blow on the cheek, at the same time giving her a kick so violent that she will stagger across the room and fall on to the sofa.

"My brother," pursued the barber, "was so much absorbed in his dreams that he actually did give a kick with his foot, which unluckily hit the basket of glass. It fell into the street and was instantly broken into a thousand pieces."

His neighbor the tailor, who had been listening to his visions, broke into a loud fit of laughter as he saw this sight.

"Wretched man!" he cried, "You ought to die of shame at behaving so to a young wife who has done nothing to you. You must be a brute for her tears and prayers not to touch your heart. If I were the grand-vizir I would order you a hundred blows from a bullock whip, and would have you led round the town accompanied by a herald who should proclaim your crimes."

The accident, so fatal to all his profits, had restored my brother to his senses, and seeing that the mischief had been caused by his own insufferable pride, he rent his clothes and tore his hair, and lamented himself so loudly that the passers-by stopped to listen. It was a Friday, so these were more numerous than usual. Some pitied Alnaschar, others only laughed at him, but the vanity which had gone to his head had disappeared with his basket of glass, and he was loudly bewailing his folly when a lady, evidently a person of consideration, rode by on a mule. She stopped and inquired what was the matter, and why the man wept. They told her that he was a poor man who had laid out all his money on this basket of glass, which was now broken. On hearing the cause of these loud wails the lady turned to her attendant and said to him, “Give him whatever you have got with you.” The man obeyed, and placed in my brother’s hands a purse containing five hundred pieces of gold. Alnaschar almost died of joy on receiving it. He blessed the lady a thousand times, and, shutting up his shop where he had no longer anything to do, he returned home.

He was still absorbed in contemplating his good fortune, when a knock came to his door, and on opening it he found an old woman standing outside.

“My son,” she said, “I have a favour to ask of you. It is the hour of prayer and I have not yet washed myself. Let me, I beg you, enter your house, and give me water.”

My brother, although the old woman was a stranger to him, did not hesitate to do as she wished. He gave her a vessel of water and then went back to his place and his thoughts, and with his mind busy over his last adventure, he put his gold into a long and narrow purse, which he could easily carry in his belt. During this time the old woman was busy over her prayers, and when she had finished she came and prostrated herself twice before my brother, and then rising called down endless blessings on his head. Observing her shabby clothes, my brother thought that her gratitude was in reality a hint that he should give her some money to buy some new ones, so he held out two pieces of gold. The old woman started back in surprise as if she had received an insult. “Good heavens!” she exclaimed, “what is the meaning of this? Is it possible that you take me, my lord, for one of those miserable creatures who force their way into houses to beg for alms? Take back your money. I am thankful to say I do not need it, for I belong to a beautiful lady who is very rich and gives me everything I want.”

My brother was not clever enough to detect that the old woman had merely refused the two pieces of money he had offered her in order to get more, but he inquired if she could procure him the pleasure of seeing this lady.

“Willingly,” she replied; “and she will be charmed to marry you, and to make you the master of all her wealth. So pick up your money and follow me.”

Delighted at the thought that he had found so easily both a fortune and a beautiful wife, my brother asked no more questions, but concealing his purse, with the money the lady had given him, in the folds of his dress, he set out joyfully with his guide.

They walked for some distance till the old woman stopped at a large house, where she knocked. The door was opened by a young Greek slave, and the old woman led my brother across a well-paved court into a well-furnished hall. Here she left him to inform her mistress of his presence, and as the day was hot he flung himself on a pile of cushions and took off his heavy turban. In a few minutes there entered a lady, and my brother perceived at the first glance that she was even more beautiful and more richly dressed than he had expected. He rose from his seat, but the lady signed to him to sit down again and placed herself beside him.

After the usual compliments had passed between them she said, “We are not comfortable here, let us go into another room,” and passing into a smaller chamber, apparently communicating with no other, she continued to talk to him for some time. Then rising hastily she left him, saying, “Stay where you are, I will come back in a moment.”

He waited as he was told, but instead of the lady there entered a huge black slave with a sword in his hand. Approaching my brother with an angry countenance he exclaimed, “What business have you here?” His voice and manner were so terrific that Alnaschar had not strength to reply, and allowed his gold to be taken from him, and even sabre cuts to be inflicted on him without making any resistance. As soon as he was let go, he sank on the ground powerless to move, though he still had possession of his senses. Thinking he was dead, the black ordered the Greek slave to bring him some salt, and between them they rubbed it into his wounds, thus giving him acute agony, though he had the presence of mind to give no sign of life. They then left him, and their place was taken by the old woman, who dragged him to a trapdoor and threw him down into a vault filled with the bodies of murdered men.

At first the violence of his fall caused him to lose consciousness, but luckily the salt which had been rubbed into his wounds had by its smarting preserved his life, and little by little he regained his strength. At the end of two days, he lifted the trapdoor during the night and hid himself in the courtyard till daybreak, when he saw the old woman leave the house in search of more prey. Luckily she did not observe him, and when she was out of sight, he stole from this nest of assassins and took refuge in my house.

I dressed his wounds and tended him carefully, and when a month had passed, he was as well as ever. His one thought was how to seek revenge on that wicked old hag, and for this purpose he had a purse made large enough to contain five hundred gold pieces, but filled it instead with bits of glass. This he tied round him with his sash, and, disguising himself as an old woman, he took a saber, which he hid under his dress.

One morning as he was hobbling through the streets he met his old enemy prowling to see if she could find anyone to decoy. He went up to her and, imitating the voice of a woman, he said, “Do you happen to have a pair of scales you could lend me? I have just come from Persia and have brought with me five hundred gold pieces, and I am anxious to see if they are the proper weight."

"Good woman," replied the old hag, "you could not have asked anyone better. My son is a money-changer, and if you will follow me he will weigh them for you himself. Only we must be quick or he will have gone to his shop." So saying she led the way to the same house as before, and the door was opened by the same Greek slave.

Again my brother was left in the hall, and the pretend son appeared under as the black slave. "Miserable crone," he said to my brother, "get up and come with me," and turned to lead the way to the place of murder. Alnaschar rose too, and drawing the sabre from under his dress dealt the black such a blow on his neck that his head was severed from his body. My brother picked up the head with one hand, and seizing the body with the other dragged it to the vault, when he threw it in and sent the head after it.

The Greek slave, supposing that all had passed as usual, shortly arrived with the basin of salt, but when she beheld Alnaschar with the saber in his hand, she let the basin fall and turned to run. My brother, however, was too quick for her, and in another instant her head was rolling from her shoulders. The noise brought the old woman running to see what was the matter, and he seized her before she had time to escape. "Wretch!" he cried, "do you know me?"

"Who are you, my lord?" she replied, trembling all over. "I have never seen you before."

"I am he whose house you entered to offer your hypocritical prayers. Don't you remember now?"

She flung herself on her knees to implore mercy, but he cut her in four pieces.

There remained only the lady, who was quite ignorant of all that was taking place around her. He sought her through the house, and when at last he found her, she nearly fainted with terror at the sight of him. She begged hard for life, which he was generous enough to give her, but he bade her to tell him how she had got into partnership with the abominable creatures he had just put to death.

"I was once," replied she, "the wife of an honest merchant, and that old woman, whose wickedness I did not know, used occasionally to visit me. 'Madam,' she said to me one day, 'we have a grand wedding at our house today. If you would do us the honor to be present, I am sure you would enjoy yourself.' I allowed myself to be persuaded, put on my richest dress, and took a purse with a hundred pieces of gold. Once inside the doors, I was kept by force by that dreadful black, and it is now three years that I have been here, to my great grief."

"That horrible black must have amassed great wealth," remarked my brother.

"Such wealth," returned she, "that if you succeed in carrying it all away, it will make you rich for ever. Come and let us see how much there is."

She led Alnaschar into a chamber filled with coffers packed with gold, which he gazed at with an admiration he was powerless to conceal. "Go," she said, "and bring men to carry them away."

My brother did not wait to be told twice, and hurried out into the streets, where he soon collected ten men. They all came back to the house, but what was his surprise to find the door open, and the room with the chests of gold quite empty. The lady had been cleverer than himself, and had made the best use of her time. However, he tried to console himself by removing all the beautiful furniture, which more than made up for the five hundred gold pieces he had lost.

Unluckily, on leaving the house, he forgot to lock the door, and the neighbors, finding the place empty, informed the police, who next morning arrested Alnaschar as a thief. My brother tried to bribe them to let him off, but far from listening to him they tied his hands, and forced him to walk between them to the presence of the judge. When they had explained to the official the cause of complaint, he asked Alnaschar where he had obtained all the furniture that he had taken to his house the day before.

“Sir,” replied Alnaschar, “I am ready to tell you the whole story, but give, I pray you, your word, that I shall run no risk of punishment.”

“That I promise,” said the judge. So my brother began at the beginning and related all his adventures, and how he had avenged himself on those who had betrayed him. As to the furniture, he entreated the judge at least to allow him to keep part to make up for the five hundred pieces of gold which had been stolen from him.

The judge, however, would say nothing about this, and lost no time in sending men to fetch away all that Alnaschar had taken from the house. When everything had been moved and placed under his roof, he ordered my brother to leave the town and never more to enter it on peril of his life, fearing that if he returned he might seek justice from the Caliph. Alnaschar obeyed, and was on his way to a neighboring city when he fell in with a band of robbers, who stripped him of his clothes and left him naked by the roadside. Hearing of his plight, I hurried after him to console him for his misfortunes, and to dress him in my best robe. I then brought him back disguised, under cover of night, to my house, where I have since given him all the care I bestow on my other brothers.

25

THE STORY OF THE BARBER’S SIXTH BROTHER

There now remains for me to relate to you the story of my sixth brother, whose name was Schacabac. Like the rest of us, he inherited a hundred silver drachmas from our father, which he thought was a large fortune, but through ill-luck, he soon lost it all, and was driven to beg. As he had a smooth tongue and good manners, he really did very well in his new profession, and he devoted himself specially to making friends with the servants in big houses, so as to gain access to their masters.

One day he was passing a splendid mansion, with a crowd of servants lounging in the courtyard. He thought that from the appearance of the house, it might yield him a rich harvest, so he entered and inquired to whom it belonged.

“My good man, where do you come from?” replied the servant. “Can’t you see for yourself that it can belong to nobody but a Barmecide?” for the Barmecides were famed for their liberality and generosity. My brother, hearing this, asked the porters, of whom there were several, if they would give him alms. They did not refuse, but told him politely to go in, and speak to the master himself.

My brother thanked them for their courtesy and entered the building, which was so large that it took him some time to reach the apartments of the Barmecide. At last, in a room richly decorated with paintings, he saw an old man with a long white beard, sitting on a sofa, who received him with such kindness that my brother was emboldened to make his petition.

“My lord,” he said, “you behold in me a poor man who only lives by the help of persons as rich and as generous as you.”

Before he could proceed further, he was stopped by the astonishment shown by the Barmecide. “Is it possible,” he cried, “that while I am in Bagdad, a man like you should be starving? That is a state of things that must at once be put an end to! Never shall it be said that I have abandoned you, and I am sure that you, on your part, will never abandon me.”

“My lord,” answered my brother, “I swear that I have not broken my fast this whole day.”

“What, you are dying of hunger?” exclaimed the Barmecide. “Here, slave; bring water, that we may wash our hands before meat!” No slave appeared, but my brother remarked that the Barmecide did not fail to rub his hands as if the water had been poured over them.

Then he said to my brother, “Why don’t you wash your hands too?” and Schacabac, supposing that it was a joke on the part of the Barmecide (though he could see none himself), drew near, and imitated his motion.

When the Barmecide had done rubbing his hands, he raised his voice, and cried, “Set food before us at once, we are very hungry.” No food was brought, but the Barmecide pretended to help himself from a dish, and carry a morsel to his mouth, saying as he did so, “Eat, my friend, eat, I ask. Help yourself as freely as if you were at home! For a starving man, you seem to have a very small appetite.”

“Excuse me, my lord,” replied Schacabac, imitating his gestures as before, “I really am not losing time, and I do full justice to the repast.”

“How do you like this bread?” asked the Barmecide. “I find it particularly good myself.”

“Oh, my lord,” answered my brother, who beheld neither meat nor bread, “never have I tasted anything so delicious.”

“Eat as much as you want,” said the Barmecide. “I bought the woman who makes it for five hundred pieces of gold, so that I might never be without it.”

After ordering a variety of dishes (which never came) to be placed on the table, and discussing the merits of each one, the Barmecide declared that having dined so well, they would now proceed to take their wine. To this my brother at first objected, declaring that it was forbidden; but on the Barmecide insisting that it was out of the question that he should drink by himself, he consented to take a little. The Barmecide, however, pretended to fill their glasses so often, that my brother feigned that the wine had gone into his head, and struck the Barmecide such a blow on the head, that he fell to the ground. Indeed, he raised his hand to strike him a second time, when the Barmecide cried out that he was mad, upon which my brother controlled himself, and apologized and protested that it was all the fault of the wine he had drunk. At this the Barmecide, instead of being angry, began to laugh, and embraced him heartily. “I have long been seeking,” he exclaimed, “a man of your description, and henceforth my house shall be yours. You have had the good grace to fall in with my humor, and to pretend to eat and to drink when nothing was there. Now you shall be rewarded by a really good supper.”

Then he clapped his hands, and all the dishes were brought that they had tasted in imagination before and during the repast, slaves sang and played on various instruments. All the while Schacabac was treated by the Barmecide as a familiar friend, and dressed in a garment out of his own wardrobe.

Twenty years passed by, and my brother was still living with the Barmecide, looking after his house, and managing his affairs. At the end of that time his generous benefactor died without heirs, so all his possessions went to the prince. They even despoiled my brother of those that rightly belonged to him, and he, now as poor as he had ever been in his life, decided to cast in his lot with a caravan of pilgrims who were on their way to Mecca. Unluckily, the caravan was attacked and pillaged by the Bedouins, and the pilgrims were taken prisoners. My brother became the slave of a man who beat him daily, hoping to drive him to offer a ransom, although, as Schacabac pointed out, it was quite useless trouble, as his relations were as poor as himself. At length the Bedouin grew tired of tormenting, and sent him on a camel to the top of a high barren mountain, where he left him to take his chance. A passing caravan, on its way to Bagdad, told me where he was to be found, and I hurried to his rescue, and brought him in a deplorable condition back to the town.

“This,”–continued the barber,–“is the tale I related to the Caliph, who, when I had finished, burst into fits of laughter.

“Well, were you called `the Silent,’” said he; “no name was ever better deserved. But for reasons of my own, which it is not necessary to mention, I desire you to leave the town, and never to come back.”

“I had of course no choice but to obey, and traveled about for several years until I heard of the death of the Caliph, when I hastily returned to Bagdad, only to find that all my brothers were dead. It was at this time that I rendered to the young cripple the important service of which you have heard, and for which, as you know, he showed such profound ingratitude, that he preferred rather to leave Bagdad than to run the risk of seeing me. I sought him long from place to place, but it was only today, when I expected it least, that I came across him, as much irritated with me as ever”– So saying the tailor went on to relate the story of the lame man and the barber, which has already been told.

“When the barber,” he continued, “had finished his tale, we came to the conclusion that the young man had been right, when he had accused him of being a great chatterbox. However, we wished to keep him with us, and share our feast, and we remained at table till the hour of afternoon prayer. Then the company broke up, and I went back to work in my shop.

“It was during this interval that the little hunchback, half drunk already, presented himself before me, singing and playing on his drum. I took him home, to amuse my wife, and she invited him to supper. While eating some fish, a bone got into his throat, and in spite of all we could do, he died shortly. It was all so sudden that we lost our heads, and in order to divert suspicion from ourselves, we carried the body to the house of a Jewish physician. He placed it in the chamber of the purveyor, and the purveyor propped it up in the street, where it was thought to have been killed by the merchant.

“This, Sire, is the story which I was obliged to tell to satisfy your highness. It is now for you to say if we deserve mercy or punishment; life or death?”

The Sultan of Kashgar listened with an air of pleasure which filled the tailor and his friends with hope. “I must confess,” he exclaimed, “that I am much more interested in the stories of the barber and his brothers, and of the lame man, than in that of my own jester. But before I allow you all four to return to your own homes, and have the corpse of the hunchback properly buried, I should like to see this barber who has earned your pardon. And as he is in this town, let an usher go with you at once in search of him.”

The usher and the tailor soon returned, bringing with them an old man who must have been at least ninety years of age. “O Silent One,” said the Sultan, “I am told that you know many strange stories. Will you tell some of them to me?”

“Never mind my stories for the present,” replied the barber, “but will your Highness graciously be pleased to explain why this Jew, this Christian, and this Muslim, as well as this dead body, are all here?”

“What business is that of yours?” asked the Sultan with a smile; but seeing that the barber had some reasons for his question, he commanded that the tale of the hunchback should be told him.

“It is certainly most surprising,” cried he, when he had heard it all, “but I should like to examine the body.” He then knelt down, and took the head on his knees, looking at it attentively. Suddenly he burst into such loud laughter that he fell right backwards, and when he had recovered himself enough to speak, he turned to the Sultan. “The man is no more dead than I am,” he said; “watch me.” As he spoke he drew a small case of medicines from his pocket and rubbed the neck of the hunchback with some ointment made of balsam. Next he opened the dead man’s mouth, and by the help of a pair of pincers drew the bone from his throat. At this the hunchback sneezed, stretched himself and opened his eyes.

The Sultan and all those who saw this operation did not know which to admire most, the constitution of the hunchback who had apparently been dead for a whole night and most of one day, or the skill of the barber, whom everyone now began to look upon as a great man. His Highness desired that the history of the hunchback should be written down, and placed in the archives beside that of the barber, so that they might be associated in people’s minds to the end of time. And he did not stop there; for in order to wipe out the memory of what they had undergone, he commanded that the tailor, the doctor, the purveyor and the merchant, should each be clothed in his presence with a robe from his own wardrobe before they returned home. As for the barber, he bestowed on him a large pension, and kept him near his own person.

26

THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE CAMARALZAMAN AND THE PRINCESS BADOURA

Some twenty days' sail from the coast of Persia lies the isle of the children of Khaledan. The island is divided into several provinces, in each of which are large flourishing towns, and the whole forms an important kingdom. It was governed in former days by a king named Schahzaman, who, with good right, considered himself one of the most peaceful, prosperous, and fortunate monarchs on the earth. In fact, he had but one grievance, which was that none of his four wives had given him an heir.

This distressed him so greatly that one day he confided his grief to the grand-vizir, who, being a wise counselor, said: "Such matters are indeed beyond human aid. Allah alone can grant your desire, and I should advise you, sire, to send large gifts to those holy men who spend their lives in prayer, and to beg for their intercessions. Who knows whether their petitions may not be answered!"

The king took his vizir's advice, and the result of so many prayers for an heir to the throne was that a son was born to him the following year.

Schahzaman sent noble gifts as thank offerings to all the mosques and religious houses, and great rejoicings were celebrated in honor of the birth of the little prince, who was so beautiful that he was named Camaralzaman, or "Moon of the Century."

Prince Camaralzaman was brought up with extreme care by an excellent governor and all the cleverest teachers, and he did such credit to them that when he was grown up, a more charming and accomplished young man was not to be found. Whilst he was still a youth the king, his father, who loved him dearly, had some thoughts of abdicating in his favour. As usual, he talked over his plans with his grand-vizir, who, though he did not approve the idea, would not state all his objections.

“Sire,” he replied, “the prince is still very young for the cares of state. Your Majesty fears his growing idle and careless, and doubtless you are right. But how would it be if he were first to marry? This would attach him to his home, and your Majesty might give him a share in your counsels, so that he might gradually learn how to wear a crown, which you can give up to him whenever you find him capable of wearing it.”

The vizir’s advice once more struck the king as being good, and he sent for his son, who lost no time in obeying the summons, and standing respectfully with downcast eyes before the king asked for his commands.

“I have sent for you,” said the king, “to say that I wish you to marry. What do you think about it?”

The prince was so much overcome by these words that he remained silent for some time. At length he said: “Sire, I beg you to pardon me if I am unable to reply as you might wish. I certainly did not expect such a proposal as I am still so young, and I confess that the idea of marrying is very distasteful to me. Possibly I may not always be in this mind, but I certainly feel that it will require some time to induce me to take the step which your Majesty desires.”

This answer greatly distressed the king, who was sincerely grieved by his objection to marriage. However, he would not have recourse to extreme measures, so he said: “I do not wish to force you; I will give you time to reflect, but remember that such a step is necessary, for a prince such as you who will some day be called to rule over a great kingdom.”

From this time Prince Camaralzaman was admitted to the royal council, and the king showed him every mark of favor.

At the end of a year the king took his son aside, and said: “Well, my son, have you changed your mind on the subject of marriage, or do you still refuse to obey my wish?”

The prince was less surprised, but no less firm than on the former occasion, and begged his father not to press the subject, adding that it was quite useless to urge him any longer.

This answer much distressed the king, who again confided his trouble to his vizir.

“I have followed your advice,” he said; “but Camaralzaman declines to marry, and is more obstinate than ever.”

“Sire,” replied the vizir, “much is gained by patience, and your Majesty might regret any violence. Why not wait another year and then inform the Prince in the midst of the assembled council that the good of the state demands his marriage? He cannot possibly refuse again before so distinguished an assemblage, and in our immediate presence.”

The Sultan ardently desired to see his son married at once, but he yielded to the vizir’s arguments and decided to wait. He then visited the prince’s mother, and after telling her of his disappointment and of the further respite he had given his son, he added: “I know that Camaralzaman confides more in you than he does in me. Pray speak very seriously to him on this subject, and make him realize that he will most seriously displease me if he remains obstinate, and that he will certainly regret the measures I shall be obliged to take to enforce my will.”

So the first time the Sultana Fatima saw her son she told him she had heard of his refusal to marry, adding how distressed she felt that he should have vexed his father so much. She asked what reasons he could have for his objections to obey.

“Madam,” replied the prince, “I make no doubt that there are as many good, virtuous, sweet, and amiable women as there are others very much the reverse. Would that all were like you! But what revolts me is the idea of marrying a woman without knowing anything at all about her. My father will ask the hand of the daughter of some neighboring sovereign, who will give his consent to our union. Be she fair or frightful, clever or stupid, good or bad, I must marry her, and am left no choice in the matter. How am I to know that she will not be proud, passionate, contemptuous, and recklessly extravagant, or that her disposition will in any way suit mine?”

“But, my son,” urged Fatima, “you surely do not wish to be the last of a race which has reigned so long and so gloriously over this kingdom?”

“Madam,” said the prince, “I have no wish to survive the king, my father, but should I do so I will try to reign in such a manner as may be considered worthy of my predecessors.”

These and similar conversations proved to the Sultan how useless it was to argue with his son, and the year elapsed without bringing any change in the prince’s ideas.

At length a day came when the Sultan summoned him before the council, and there informed him that not only his own wishes but the good of the empire demanded his marriage, and desired him to give his answer before the assembled ministers.

At this Camaralzaman grew so angry and spoke with so much heat that the king, naturally irritated at being opposed by his son in full council, ordered the prince to be arrested and locked up in an old tower, where he had nothing but a very little furniture, a few books, and a single slave to wait on him.

Camaralzaman, pleased to be free to enjoy his books, showed himself very indifferent to his sentence.

When night came, he washed himself, performed his devotions, and, having read some pages of the Koran, lay down on a couch, without putting out the light near him, and was soon asleep.

Now there was a deep well in the tower in which Prince Camaralzaman was imprisoned, and this well was a favorite resort of the fairy Maimoune, daughter of Damriat, chief of a legion of genii. Towards midnight Maimoune floated lightly up from the well, intending, according to her usual habit, to roam about the upper world as a curiosity or accident might prompt.

The light in the prince's room surprised her, and without disturbing the slave, who slept across the threshold, she entered the room, and approaching the bed was still more astonished to find it occupied.

The prince lay with his face half hidden by the coverlet. Maimoune lifted it a little and beheld the most beautiful youth she had ever seen.

"What a marvel of beauty he must be when his eyes are open!" she thought. "What can he have done to deserve to be treated like this?"

She could not weary gazing at Camaralzaman, but at length, having softly kissed his brow and each cheek, she replaced the coverlet and resumed her flight through the air.

As she entered the middle region she heard the sound of great wings coming towards her, and shortly met one of the race of bad genii. This genie, whose name was Danhasch, recognized Maimoune with terror, for he knew the supremacy which her goodness gave her over him. He would gladly have avoided her altogether, but they were so near that he must either be prepared to fight or yield to her, so he at once addressed her in a conciliatory tone:

"Good Maimoune, swear to me by Allah to do me no harm, and on my side, I will promise not to injure you."

"Accursed genie!" replied Maimoune, "what harm can you do me? But I will grant your power and give the promise you ask. And now tell me what you have seen and done to-night."

“Fair lady,” said Danhasch, “you meet me at the right moment to hear something really interesting. I must tell you that I come from the furthest end of China, which is one of the largest and most powerful kingdoms in the world. The present king has one only daughter, who is so perfectly lovely that neither you, nor I, nor any other creature could find adequate terms in which to describe her marvellous charms. You must therefore picture to yourself the most perfect features, joined to a brilliant and delicate complexion, and an enchanting expression, and even then imagination will fall short of the reality.

“The king, her father, has carefully shielded this treasure from the vulgar gaze, and has taken every precaution to keep her from the sight of everyone except the happy mortal he may choose to be her husband. But in order to give her variety in her confinement he has built her seven palaces such as have never been seen before. The first palace is entirely composed of rock crystal, the second of bronze, the third of fine steel, the fourth of another and more precious species of bronze, the fifth of touchstone, the sixth of silver, and the seventh of solid gold. They are all most sumptuously furnished, whilst the gardens surrounding them are laid out with exquisite taste. In fact, neither trouble nor cost has been spared to make this retreat agreeable to the princess. The report of her wonderful beauty has spread far and wide, and many powerful kings have sent embassies to ask her hand in marriage. The king has always received these embassies graciously, but says that he will never oblige the princess to marry against her will, and as she regularly declines each fresh proposal, the envoys have had to leave as disappointed in the result of their missions as they were gratified by their magnificent receptions.”

“Sire,” said the princess to her father, “you wish me to marry, and I know you desire to please me, for which I am very grateful. But, indeed, I have no inclination to change my state, for where could I find so happy a life amidst so many beautiful and delightful surroundings? I feel that I could never be as happy with any husband as I am here, and I beg you not to press one on me."

"At last an embassy came from a king, so rich and powerful that the King of China felt constrained to urge this suit on his daughter. He told her how important such an alliance would be, and pressed her to consent. In fact, he pressed her so persistently that the princess at length lost her temper and quite forgot the respect due to her father. "Sire," cried she angrily, "do not speak further of this or any other marriage or I will plunge this dagger in my breast and so escape from all these importunities."

"The king of China was extremely indignant with his daughter and replied: "You have lost your senses and you must be treated accordingly." So he had her shut in one set of rooms in one of her palaces, and only allowed her ten old women, of whom her nurse was the head, to wait on her and keep her company. He next sent letters to all the kings who had sued for the princess's hand, begging they would think of her no longer, as she was quite insane, and he desired his various envoys to make it known that anyone who could cure her should have her to wife.

"Fair Maimoune," continued Danhasch, "this is the present state of affairs. I never pass a day without going to gaze on this incomparable beauty, and I am sure that if you would only accompany me you would think the sight well worth the trouble, and own that you never saw such loveliness before."

The fairy only answered with a peal of laughter, and when at length she had control of her voice she cried, "Oh, come, you are making game of me! I thought you had something really interesting to tell me instead of raving about some unknown damsel. What would you say if you could see the prince I have just been looking at and whose beauty is really transcendent? That is something worth talking about, you would certainly quite lose your head."

“Charming Maimoune,” asked Danhasch, “may I inquire who and what is the prince of whom you speak?”

“Know,” replied Maimoune, “that he is in much the same case as your princess. The king, his father, wanted to force him to marry, and on the prince’s refusal to obey he has been imprisoned in an old tower where I have just seen him.”

“I don’t like to contradict a lady,” said Danhasch, “but you must really permit me to doubt any mortal being as beautiful as my princess.”

“Hold your tongue,” cried Maimoune. “I repeat that is impossible.”

“Well, I don’t wish to seem obstinate,” replied Danhasch, “the best plan to test the truth of what I say will be for you to let me take you to see the princess for yourself.”

“There is no need for that,” retorted Maimoune; “we can satisfy ourselves in another way. Bring your princess here and lay her down beside my prince. We can then compare them at leisure, and decide which is in the right.”

Danhasch readily consented, and after having the tower where the prince was confined pointed out to him, and making a wager with Maimoune as to the result of the comparison, he flew off to China to fetch the princess.

In an incredibly short time Danhasch returned, bearing the sleeping princess. Maimoune led him to the prince’s room, and the rival beauty was placed beside him.

When the prince and princess lay thus side by side, an animated dispute as to their respective charms arose between the fairy and the genius. Danhasch began by saying:

“Now you see that my princess is more beautiful than your prince. Can you doubt any longer?”

“Doubt! Of course I do!” exclaimed Maimoune. “Why, you must be blind not to see how much my prince excels your princess. I do not deny that your princess is very handsome, but only look and you must own that I am in the right.”

“There is no need for me to look longer,” said Danhasch, “my first impression will remain the same; but of course, charming Maimoune, I am ready to yield to you if you insist on it.”

“By no means,” replied Maimoune. “I have no idea of being under any obligation to an accursed genius like you. I refer the matter to an umpire, and shall expect you to submit to his verdict.”

Danhasch readily agreed, and on Maimoune striking the floor with her foot it opened, and a hideous, hump-backed, lame, squinting genius, with six horns on his head, hands like claws, emerged. As soon as he beheld Maimoune he threw himself at her feet and asked her commands.

“Rise, Caschcasch,” said she. “I summoned you to judge between me and Danhasch. Glance at that couch, and say without any partiality whether you think the youth or the maiden lying there the more beautiful.”

Caschcasch looked at the prince and princess with every token of surprise and admiration. At length, having gazed long without being able to come to a decision, he said

“Madam, I must confess that I should deceive you were I to declare one to be handsomer than the other. There seems to me only one way in which to decide the matter, and that is to wake one after the other and judge which of them expresses the greater admiration for the other.”

This advice pleased Maimoune and Danhasch, and the fairy at once transformed herself into the shape of a gnat and settling on Camaralzaman’s throat stung him so sharply that he awoke. As he did so his eyes fell on the Princess of China. Surprised at finding a lady so near him, he raised himself on one arm to look at her. The youth and beauty of the princess at once awoke a feeling to which his heart had as yet been a stranger, and he could not restrain his delight.

“What loveliness! What charms! Oh, my heart, my soul!” he exclaimed, as he kissed her forehead, her eyes and mouth in a way which would certainly have roused her had not the genie’s enchantments kept her asleep.

“How, fair lady!” he cried, “you do not wake at the signs of Camaralzaman’s love? Be you who you may, he is not unworthy of you.”

It then suddenly occurred to him, that perhaps this was the bride his father had destined for him, and that the King had probably had her placed in this room in order to see how far Camaralzaman’s aversion to marriage would withstand her charms.

“At all events,” he thought, “I will take this ring as a remembrance of her.”

So saying, he drew off a fine ring which the princess wore on her finger, and replaced it by one of his own. After which he lay down again and was soon fast asleep.

Then Danhasch, in his turn, took the form of a gnat and bit the princess on her lip.

She started up, and was not a little amazed at seeing a young man beside her. From surprise, she soon passed to admiration, and then to delight on perceiving how handsome and fascinating he was.

“Why,” cried she, “was it you my father wished me to marry? How unlucky that I did not know sooner! I should not have made him so angry. But wake up! Wake up! For I know I shall love you with all my heart.”

So saying, she shook Camaralzaman so violently that nothing but the spells of Maimoune could have prevented his waking.

“Oh!” cried the princess. “Why are you so drowsy?” So saying, she took his hand and noticed her own ring on his finger, which made her wonder still more. But as he still remained in a profound slumber, she pressed a kiss on his cheek and soon fell fast asleep too.

Then Maimoune turning to the genie said: “Well, are you satisfied that my prince surpasses your princess? Another time pray believe me when I assert anything.”

Then turning to Caschcasch: “My thanks to you, and now do you and Danhasch bear the princess back to her own home.”

The two genii hastened to obey, and Maimoune returned to her well.

On waking next morning the first thing Prince Camaralzaman did was to look round for the lovely lady he had seen at night, and the next to question the slave who waited on him about her. But the slave persisted so strongly that he knew nothing of any lady, and still less of how she got into the tower, that the prince lost all patience, and after giving him a good beating tied a rope round him and ducked him in the well till the unfortunate man cried out that he would tell everything. Then the prince drew him up all dripping wet, but the slave begged leave to change his clothes first, and as soon as the prince consented hurried off just as he was to the palace. Here he found the king talking to the grand-vizir of all the anxiety his son had caused him. The slave was admitted at once and cried:

“Alas, Sire! I bring sad news to your Majesty. There can be no doubt that the prince has completely lost his senses. He declares that he saw a lady sleeping on his couch last night, and the state you see me in proves how violent contradiction makes him.” He then gave a minute account of all the prince had said and done.

The king, much moved, begged the vizir to examine into this new misfortune, and the latter at once went to the tower, where he found the prince quietly reading a book. After the first exchange of greetings the vizir said:

“I feel really very angry with your slave for alarming his Majesty by the news he brought him.”

“What news?” asked the prince.

“Ah!” replied the vizir, “something absurd, I feel sure, seeing how I find you.”

“Most likely,” said the prince; “but now that you are here I am glad of the opportunity to ask you where is the lady who slept in this room last night?”

The grand-vizir felt beside himself at this question.

“Prince!” he exclaimed, “how would it be possible for any man, much less a woman, to enter this room at night without walking over your slave on the threshold? Pray consider the matter, and you will realize that you have been deeply impressed by some dream.”

But the prince angrily insisted on knowing who and where the lady was, and was not to be persuaded by all the vizir’s protestations to the contrary that the plot had not been one of his making. At last, losing patience, he seized the vizir by the beard and loaded him with blows.

“Stop, Prince,” cried the unhappy vizir, “stay and hear what I have to say.”

The prince, whose arm was getting tired, paused.

“I confess, Prince,” said the vizir, “that there is some foundation for what you say. But you know well that a minister has to carry out his master’s orders. Allow me to go and to take to the king any message you may choose to send.”

“Very well,” said the prince; “then go and tell him that I consent to marry the lady whom he sent or brought here last night. Be quick and bring me back his answer.”

The vizir bowed to the ground and hastened to leave the room and tower.

“Well,” asked the king as soon as he appeared, “and how did you find my son?”

“Alas, sire,” was the reply, “the slave’s report is only too true!”

He then gave an exact account of his interview with Camaralzaman and of the prince’s fury when told that it was not possible for any lady to have entered his room, and of the treatment he himself had received. The king, much distressed, determined to clear up the matter himself, and, ordering the vizir to follow him, set out to visit his son.

The prince received his father with profound respect, and the king, making him sit beside him, asked him several questions, to which Camaralzaman replied with much good sense. At last the king said: “My son, pray tell me about the lady who, it is said, was in your room last night.”

“Sire,” replied the prince, “pray do not increase my distress in this matter, but rather make me happy by giving her to me in marriage. However much I may have objected to matrimony formerly, the sight of this lovely girl has overcome all my prejudices, and I will gratefully receive her from your hands.”

The king was almost speechless on hearing his son, but after a time assured him most solemnly that he knew nothing whatever about the lady in question, and had not connived at her appearance. He then desired the prince to relate the whole story to him.

Camaralzaman did so at great length, showed the ring, and implored his father to help to find the bride he so ardently desired.

“After all you tell me,” remarked the king, “I can no longer doubt your word; but how and whence the lady came, or why she should have stayed so short a time I cannot imagine. The whole affair is indeed mysterious. Come, my dear son, let us wait together for happier days.”

So saying the king took Camaralzaman by the hand and led him back to the palace, where the prince took to his bed and gave himself up to despair, and the king shutting himself up with his son entirely neglected the affairs of state.

The prime minister, who was the only person admitted, felt it his duty at last to tell the king how much the court and all the people complained of his seclusion, and how bad it was for the nation. He urged the sultan to remove with the prince to a lovely little island close by, whence he could easily attend public audiences, and where the charming scenery and fine air would do the invalid so much good as to enable him to bear his father’s occasional absence.

The king approved the plan, and as soon as the castle on the island could be prepared for their reception he and the prince arrived there, Schahzaman never leaving his son except for the prescribed public audiences twice a week.

Whilst all this was happening in the capital of Schahzaman the two genii had carefully borne the Princess of China back to her own palace and replaced her in bed. On waking next morning she first turned from one side to another and then, finding herself alone, called loudly for her women.

“Tell me,” she cried, “where is the young man I love so dearly, and who slept near me last night?”

“Princess,” exclaimed the nurse, “we cannot tell what you allude to without more explanation.”

“Why,” continued the princess, “the most charming and beautiful young man lay sleeping beside me last night. I did my utmost to wake him, but in vain.”

“Your Royal Highness wishes to make game of us,” said the nurse. “Is it your pleasure to rise?”

“I am quite in earnest,” persisted the princess, “and I want to know where he is.”

“But, Princess,” expostulated the nurse, “we left you quite alone last night, and we have seen no one enter your room since then.”

At this the princess lost all patience, and taking the nurse by her hair she boxed her ears soundly, crying out: “You shall tell me, you old witch, or I’ll kill you.”

The nurse had no little trouble in escaping, and hurried off to the queen, to whom she related the whole story with tears in her eyes.

“You see, madam,” she concluded, “that the princess must be out of her mind. If only you will come and see her, you will be able to judge for yourself.”

The queen hurried to her daughter’s apartments, and after tenderly embracing her, asked her why she had treated her nurse so badly.

“Madam,” said the princess, “I perceive that your Majesty wishes to make game of me, but I can assure you that I will never marry anyone except the charming young man whom I saw last night. You must know where he is, so pray send for him.”

The queen was much surprised by these words, but when she declared that she knew nothing whatever of the matter the princess lost all respect, and answered that if she were not allowed to marry as she wished she should kill herself, and it was in vain that the queen tried to pacify her and bring her to reason.

The king himself came to hear the rights of the matter, but the princess only persisted in her story, and as a proof showed the ring on her finger. The king hardly knew what to make of it all, but ended by thinking that his daughter was more crazy than ever, and without further argument he had her placed in still closer confinement, with only her nurse to wait on her and a powerful guard to keep the door.

Then he assembled his council, and having told them the sad state of things, added: “If any of you can succeed in curing the princess, I will give her to him in marriage, and he shall be my heir.”

An elderly emir present, fired with the desire to possess a young and lovely wife and to rule over a great kingdom, offered to try the magic arts with which he was acquainted.

“You are welcome to try,” said the king, “but I make one condition, which is, that should you fail you will lose your life.”

The emir accepted the condition, and the king led him to the princess, who, veiling her face, remarked, “I am surprised, sire, that you should bring an unknown man into my presence.”

“You need not be shocked,” said the king; “this is one of my emirs who asks your hand in marriage.”

“Sire,” replied the princess, “this is not the one you gave me before and whose ring I wear. Permit me to say that I can accept no other.”

The emir, who had expected to hear the princess talk nonsense, finding how calm and reasonable she was, assured the king that he could not venture to undertake a cure, but placed his head at his Majesty’s disposal, on which the justly irritated monarch promptly had it cut off.

This was the first of many suitors for the princess whose inability to cure her cost them their lives.

Now it happened that after things had been going on in this way for some time the nurse’s son Marzavan returned from his travels. He had been in many countries and learnt many things, including astrology. Needless to say that one of the first things his mother told him was the sad condition of the princess, his foster sister. Marzavan asked if she could not manage to let him see the princess without the king’s knowledge.

After some consideration his mother consented, and even persuaded the eunuch on guard to make no objection to Marzavan’s entering the royal apartment.

The princess was delighted to see her foster brother again, and after some conversation she confided to him all her history and the cause of her imprisonment.

Marzavan listened with downcast eyes and the utmost attention. When she had finished speaking he said,

“If what you tell me, Princess, is indeed the case, I do not despair of finding comfort for you. Take patience yet a little longer. I will set out at once to explore other countries, and when you hear of my return be sure that he for whom you sigh is not far off.” So saying, he took his leave and started next morning on his travels.

Marzavan journeyed from city to city and from one island and province to another, and wherever he went he heard people talk of the strange story of the Princess Badoura, as the Princess of China was named.

After four months he reached a large populous seaport town named Torf, and here he heard no more of the Princess Badoura but a great deal of Prince Camaralzaman, who was reported ill, and whose story sounded very similar to that of the Princess Badoura.

Marzavan was rejoiced, and set out at once for Prince Camaralzaman’s residence. The ship on which he embarked had a prosperous voyage till she got within sight of the capital of King Schahzaman, but when just about to enter the harbour she suddenly struck on a rock, and foundered within sight of the palace where the prince was living with his father and the grand-vizir.

Marzavan, who swam well, threw himself into the sea and managed to land close to the palace, where he was kindly received, and after having a change of clothing given him was brought before the grand-vizir. The vizir was at once attracted by the young man’s superior air and intelligent conversation, and perceiving that he had gained much experience in the course of his travels, he said, “Ah, how I wish you had learnt some secret which might enable you to cure a malady which has plunged this court into affliction for some time past!”

Marzavan replied that if he knew what the illness was he might possibly be able to suggest a remedy, on which the vizir related to him the whole history of Prince Camaralzaman.

On hearing this Marzavan rejoiced inwardly, for he felt sure that he had at last discovered the object of the Princess Badoura’s infatuation. However, he said nothing, but begged to be allowed to see the prince.

On entering the royal apartment the first thing which struck him was the prince himself, who lay stretched out on his bed with his eyes closed. The king sat near him, but, without paying any regard to his presence, Marzavan exclaimed, “Heavens! what a striking likeness!” And, indeed, there was a good deal of resemblance between the features of Camaralzaman and those of the Princess of China.

These words caused the prince to open his eyes with languid curiosity, and Marzavan seized this moment to pay him his compliments, contriving at the same time to express the condition of the Princess of China in terms unintelligible, indeed, to the Sultan and his vizir, but which left the prince in no doubt that his visitor could give him some welcome information.

The prince begged his father to allow him the favour of a private interview with Marzavan, and the king was only too pleased to find his son taking an interest in anyone or anything. As soon as they were left alone Marzavan told the prince the story of the Princess Badoura and her sufferings, adding, “I am convinced that you alone can cure her; but before starting on so long a journey you must be well and strong, so do your best to recover as quickly as may be.”

These words produced a great effect on the prince, who was so much cheered by the hopes held out that he declared he felt able to get up and be dressed. The king was overjoyed at the result of Marzavan’s interview, and ordered public rejoicings in honor of the prince’s recovery.

Before long the prince was quite restored to his original state of health, and as soon as he felt himself really strong he took Marzavan aside and said:

“Now is the time to perform your promise. I am so impatient to see my beloved princess once more that I am sure I shall fall ill again if we do not start soon. The one obstacle is my father’s tender care of me, for, as you may have noticed, he cannot bear me out of his sight.”

“Prince,” replied Marzavan, “I have already thought over the matter, and this is what seems to me the best plan. You have not been out of doors since my arrival. Ask the king’s permission to go with me for two or three days’ hunting, and when he has given leave order two good horses to be held ready for each of us. Leave all the rest to me.”

Next day the prince seized a favourable opportunity for making his request, and the king gladly granted it on condition that only one night should be spent out for fear of too great fatigue after such a long illness.

Next morning Prince Camaralzaman and Marzavan were off betimes, attended by two grooms leading the two extra horses. They hunted a little by the way, but took care to get as far from the towns as possible. At nightfall they reached an inn, where they supped and slept till midnight. Then Marzavan awoke and roused the prince without disturbing anyone else. He begged the prince to give him the coat he had been wearing and to put on another which they had brought with them. They mounted their second horses, and Marzavan led one of the grooms' horses by the bridle.

By daybreak our travellers found themselves where four cross roads met in the middle of the forest. Here Marzavan begged the prince to wait for him, and leading the groom's horse into a dense part of the wood he cut its throat, dipped the prince's coat in its blood, and having rejoined the prince threw the coat on the ground where the roads parted.

In answer to Camaralzaman's inquiries as to the reason for this, Marzavan replied that the only chance they had of continuing their journey was to divert attention by creating the idea of the prince's death. "Your father will doubtless be plunged in the deepest grief," he went on, "but his joy at your return will be all the greater."

The prince and his companion now continued their journey by land and sea, and as they had brought plenty of money to defray their expenses they met with no needless delays. At length they reached the capital of China, where they spent three days in a suitable lodging to recover from their fatigues.

During this time Marzavan had an astrologer's dress prepared for the prince. They then went to the baths, after which the prince put on the astrologer's robe and was conducted within sight of the king's palace by

Marzavan, who left him there and went to consult his mother, the princess's nurse.

Meantime the prince, according to Marzavan's instructions, advanced close to the palace gates and there proclaimed aloud:

"I am an astrologer and I come to restore health to the Princess Badoura, daughter of the high and mighty King of China, on the conditions laid down by His Majesty of marrying her should I succeed, or of losing my life if I fail."

It was some little time since anyone had presented himself to run the terrible risk involved in attempting to cure the princess, and a crowd soon gathered round the prince. On perceiving his youth, good looks, and distinguished bearing, everyone felt pity for him.

"What are you thinking of, sir," exclaimed some; "why expose yourself to certain death? Are not the heads you see exposed on the town wall sufficient warning? For mercy's sake give up this mad idea and retire whilst you can."

But the prince remained firm, and only repeated his cry with greater assurance, to the horror of the crowd.

"He is resolved to die!" they cried; "may heaven have pity on him!"

Camaralzaman now called out for the third time, and at last the grand-vizir himself came out and fetched him in.

The prime minister led the prince to the king, who was much struck by the noble air of this new adventurer, and felt such pity for the fate so evidently in store for him, that he tried to persuade the young man to renounce his project.

But Camaralzaman politely yet firmly persisted in his intentions, and at length the king desired the eunuch who had the guard of the princess's apartments to conduct the astrologer to her presence.

The eunuch led the way through long passages, and Camaralzaman followed rapidly, in haste to reach the object of his desires. At last they came to a large hall which was the ante-room to the princess's chamber, and here Camaralzaman said to the eunuch:

"Now you shall choose. Shall I cure the princess in her own presence, or shall I do it from here without seeing her?"

The eunuch, who had expressed many contemptuous doubts as they came along of the newcomer's powers, was much surprised and said:

"If you really can cure, it is immaterial when you do it. Your fame will be equally great."

"Very well," replied the prince: "then, impatient though I am to see the princess, I will effect the cure where I stand, the better to convince you of my power." He accordingly drew out his writing case and wrote as follows–"Adorable princess! The enamoured Camaralzaman has never forgotten the moment when, contemplating your sleeping beauty, he gave you his heart. As he was at that time deprived of the happiness of conversing with you, he ventured to give you his ring as a token of his love, and to take yours in exchange, which he now encloses in this letter. Should you deign to return it to him he will be the happiest of mortals, if not he will cheerfully resign himself to death, seeing he does so for love of you. He awaits your reply in your ante-room."

Having finished this note the prince carefully enclosed the ring in it without letting the eunuch see it, and gave him the letter, saying:

"Take this to your mistress, my friend, and if on reading it and seeing its contents she is not instantly cured, you may call me an impudent impostor."

The eunuch at once passed into the princess's room, and handing her the letter said:

"Madam, a new astrologer has arrived, who declares that you will be cured as soon as you have read this letter and seen what it contains."

The princess took the note and opened it with languid indifference. But no sooner did she see her ring than, barely glancing at the writing, she rose hastily and with one bound reached the doorway and pushed back the hangings. Here she and the prince recognised each other, and in a moment they were locked in each other’s arms, where they tenderly embraced, wondering how they came to meet at last after so long a separation. The nurse, who had hastened after her charge, drew them back to the inner room, where the princess restored her ring to Camaralzaman.

“Take it back,” she said, “I could not keep it without returning yours to you, and I am resolved to wear that as long as I live.”

Meantime the eunuch had hastened back to the king. “Sire,” he cried, “all the former doctors and astrologers were mere quacks. This man has cured the princess without even seeing her.” He then told all to the king, who, overjoyed, hastened to his daughter’s apartments, where, after embracing her, he placed her hand in that of the prince, saying:

“Happy stranger, I keep my promise, and give you my daughter to wife, be you who you may. But, if I am not much mistaken, your condition is above what you appear to be.”

The prince thanked the king in the warmest and most respectful terms, and added: “As regards my person, your Majesty has rightly guessed that I am not an astrologer. It is but a disguise which I assumed in order to merit your illustrious alliance. I am myself a prince, my name is Camaralzaman, and my father is Schahzaman, King of the Isles of the Children of Khaledan.” He then told his whole history, including the extraordinary manner of his first seeing and loving the Princess Badoura.

When he had finished the king exclaimed: “So remarkable a story must not be lost to posterity. It shall be inscribed in the archives of my kingdom and published everywhere abroad.”

The wedding took place next day amidst great pomp and rejoicings. Marzavan was not forgotten, but was given a lucrative post at court, with a promise of further advancement.

The prince and princess were now entirely happy, and months slipped by unconsciously in the enjoyment of each other’s society.

One night, however, Prince Camaralzaman dreamt that he saw his father lying at the point of death, and saying: “Alas! my son whom I loved so tenderly, has deserted me and is now causing my death.”

The prince woke with such a groan as to startle the princess, who asked what was the matter.

“Ah!” cried the prince, “at this very moment my father is perhaps no more!” and he told his dream.

The princess said but little at the time, but next morning she went to the king, and kissing his hand said:

“I have a favour to ask of your Majesty, and I beg you to believe that it is in no way prompted by my husband. It is that you will allow us both to visit my father-in-law King Schahzaman.”

Sorry though the king felt at the idea of parting with his daughter, he felt her request to be so reasonable that he could not refuse it, and made but one condition, which was that she should only spend one year at the court of King Schahzaman, suggesting that in future the young couple should visit their respective parents alternately.

The princess brought this good news to her husband, who thanked her tenderly for this fresh proof of her affection.

All preparations for the journey were now pressed forwards, and when all was ready the king accompanied the travellers for some days, after which he took an affectionate leave of his daughter, and charging the prince to take every care of her, returned to his capital.

The prince and princess journeyed on, and at the end of a month reached a huge meadow interspersed with clumps of big trees which cast a most pleasant shade. As the heat was great, Camaralzaman thought it well to encamp in this cool spot. Accordingly the tents were pitched, and the princess entering hers whilst the prince was giving his further orders, removed her girdle, which she placed beside her, and desiring her women to leave her, lay down and was soon asleep.

When the camp was all in order the prince entered the tent and, seeing the princess asleep, he sat down near her without speaking. His eyes fell on the girdle which, he took up, and whilst inspecting the precious stones set in it he noticed a little pouch sewn to the girdle and fastened by a loop. He touched it and felt something hard within. Curious as to what this might be, he opened the pouch and found a cornelian engraved with various figures and strange characters.

“This cornelian must be something very precious,” thought he, “or my wife would not wear it on her person with so much care.”

In truth it was a talisman which the Queen of China had given her daughter, telling her it would ensure her happiness as long as she carried it about her.

The better to examine the stone the prince stepped to the open doorway of the tent. As he stood there holding it in the open palm of his hand, a bird suddenly swooped down, picked the stone up in its beak and flew away with it.

Imagine the prince’s dismay at losing a thing by which his wife evidently set such store!

The bird having secured its prey flew off some yards and alighted on the ground, holding the talisman it its beak. Prince Camaralzaman advanced, hoping the bird would drop it, but as soon as he approached the thief fluttered on a little further still. He continued his pursuit till the bird suddenly swallowed the stone and took a longer flight than before. The prince then hoped to kill it with a stone, but the more hotly he pursued the further flew the bird.

In this fashion he was led on by hill and dale through the entire day, and when night came the tiresome creature roosted on the top of a very high tree where it could rest in safety.

The prince in despair at all his useless trouble began to think whether he had better return to the camp. “But,” thought he, “how shall I find my way back? Must I go up hill or down? I should certainly lose my way in the dark, even if my strength held out.” Overwhelmed by hunger, thirst, fatigue and sleep, he ended by spending the night at the foot of the tree.

Next morning Camaralzaman woke up before the bird left its perch, and no sooner did it take flight than he followed it again with as little success as the previous day, only stopping to eat some herbs and fruit he found by the way. In this fashion he spent ten days, following the bird all day and spending the night at the foot of a tree, whilst it roosted on the topmost bough. On the eleventh day the bird and the prince reached a large town, and as soon as they were close to its walls the bird took a sudden and higher flight and was shortly completely out of sight, whilst Camaralzaman felt in despair at having to give up all hopes of ever recovering the talisman of the Princess Badoura.

Much cast down, he entered the town, which was built near the sea and had a fine harbour. He walked about the streets for a long time, not knowing where to go, but at length as he walked near the seashore he found a garden door open and walked in.

The gardener, a good old man, who was at work, happened to look up, and, seeing a stranger, whom he recognised by his dress as a Mussulman, he told him to come in at once and to shut the door.

Camaralzaman did as he was bid, and inquired why this precaution was taken.

“Because,” said the gardener, “I see that you are a stranger and a Mussulman, and this town is almost entirely inhabited by idolaters, who hate and persecute all of our faith. It seems almost a miracle that has led you to this house, and I am indeed glad that you have found a place of safety.”

Camaralzaman warmly thanked the kind old man for offering him shelter, and was about to say more, but the gardener interrupted him with:

"Leave compliments alone. You are weary and must be hungry. Come in, eat, and rest." So saying he led the prince into his cottage, and after satisfying his hunger begged to learn the cause of his arrival.

Camaralzaman told him all without disguise, and ended by inquiring the shortest way to his father's capital. "For," added he, "if I tried to rejoin the princess, how should I find her after eleven days' separation. Perhaps, indeed, she may be no longer alive!" At this terrible thought he burst into tears.

The gardener informed Camaralzaman that they were quite a year's land journey to any Mahomedan country, but that there was a much shorter route by sea to the Ebony Island, from whence the Isles of the Children of Khaledan could be easily reached, and that a ship sailed once a year for the Ebony Island by which he might get so far as his very home.

"If only you had arrived a few days sooner," he said, "you might have embarked at once. As it is you must now wait till next year, but if you care to stay with me I offer you my house, such as it is, with all my heart."

Prince Camaralzaman thought himself lucky to find some place of refuge, and gladly accepted the gardener's offer. He spent his days working in the garden, and his nights thinking of and sighing for his beloved wife.

Let us now see what had become during this time of the Princess Badoura.

On first waking she was much surprised not to find the prince near her. She called her women and asked if they knew where he was, and whilst they were telling her that they had seen him enter the tent, but had not noticed his leaving it, she took up her belt and perceived that the little pouch was open and the talisman gone.

She at once concluded that her husband had taken it and would shortly bring it back. She waited for him till evening rather impatiently, and wondering what could have kept him from her so long. When night came without him she felt in despair and abused the talisman and its maker roundly. In spite of her grief and anxiety however, she did not lose her presence of mind, but decided on a courageous, though very unusual step.

Only the princess and her women knew of Camaralzaman’s disappearance, for the rest of the party were sleeping or resting in their tents. Fearing some treason should the truth be known, she ordered her women not to say a word which would give rise to any suspicion, and proceeded to change her dress for one of her husband’s, to whom, as has been already said, she bore a strong likeness.

In this disguise she looked so like the prince that when she gave orders next morning to break up the camp and continue the journey no one suspected the change. She made one of her women enter her litter, whilst she herself mounted on horseback and the march began.

After a protracted journey by land and sea the princess, still under the name and disguise of Prince Camaralzaman, arrived at the capital of the Ebony Island whose king was named Armanos.

No sooner did the king hear that the ship which was just in port had on board the son of his old friend and ally than he hurried to meet the supposed prince, and had him and his retinue brought to the palace, where they were lodged and entertained sumptuously.

After three days, finding that his guest, to whom he had taken a great fancy, talked of continuing his journey, King Armanos said to him:

“Prince, I am now an old man, and unfortunately I have no son to whom to leave my kingdom. It has pleased Heaven to give me only one daughter, who possesses such great beauty and charm that I could only give her to a prince as highly born and as accomplished as yourself. Instead, therefore, of returning to your own country, take my daughter and my crown and stay with us. I shall feel that I have a worthy successor, and shall cheerfully retire from the fatigues of government.”

The king’s offer was naturally rather embarrassing to the Princess Badoura. She felt that it was equally impossible to confess that she had deceived him, or to refuse the marriage on which he had set his heart; a refusal which might turn all his kindness to hatred and persecution.

All things considered, she decided to accept, and after a few moments silence said with a blush, which the king attributed to modesty:

“Sire, I feel so great an obligation for the good opinion your Majesty has expressed for my person and of the honour you do me, that, though I am quite unworthy of it, I dare not refuse. But, sire, I can only accept such an alliance if you give me your promise to assist me with your counsels.”

The marriage being thus arranged, the ceremony was fixed for the following day, and the princess employed the intervening time in informing the officers of her suite of what had happened, assuring them that the Princess Badoura had given her full consent to the marriage. She also told her women, and bade them keep her secret well.

King Armanos, delighted with the success of his plans, lost no time in assembling his court and council, to whom he presented his successor, and placing his future son-in-law on the throne made everyone do homage and take oaths of allegiance to the new king.

At night the whole town was filled with rejoicings, and with much pomp the Princess Haiatelnefous (this was the name of the king’s daughter) was conducted to the palace of the Princess Badoura.

Now Badoura had thought much of the difficulties of her first interview with King Armanos’ daughter, and she felt the only thing to do was at once to take her into her confidence.

Accordingly, as soon as they were alone she took Haiatelnefous by the hand and said:

“Princess, I have a secret to tell you, and must throw myself on your mercy. I am not Prince Camaralzaman, but a princess like yourself and his wife, and I beg you to listen to my story, then I am sure you will forgive my imposture, in consideration of my sufferings.”

She then related her whole history, and at its close Haiatelnefous embraced her warmly, and assured her of her entire sympathy and affection.

The two princesses now planned out their future action, and agreed to combine to keep up the deception and to let Badoura continue to play a man's part until such time as there might be news of the real Camaralzaman.

Whilst these things were passing in the Ebony Island Prince Camaralzaman continued to find shelter in the gardeners cottage in the town of the idolaters.

Early one morning the gardener said to the prince:

"To-day is a public holiday, and the people of the town not only do not work themselves but forbid others to do so. You had better therefore take a good rest whilst I go to see some friends, and as the time is near for the arrival of the ship of which I told you I will make inquiries about it, and try to bespeak a passage for you." He then put on his best clothes and went out, leaving the prince, who strolled into the garden and was soon lost in thoughts of his dear wife and their sad separation.

As he walked up and down he was suddenly disturbed in his reverie by the noise two large birds were making in a tree.

Camaralzaman stood still and looked up, and saw that the birds were fighting so savagely with beaks and claws that before long one fell dead to the ground, whilst the conqueror spread his wings and flew away. Almost immediately two other larger birds, who had been watching the duel, flew up and alighted, one at the head and the other at the feet of the dead bird. They stood there some time sadly shaking their heads, and then dug up a grave with their claws in which they buried him.

As soon as they had filled in the grave the two flew off, and ere long returned, bringing with them the murderer, whom they held, one by a wing and the other by a leg, with their beaks, screaming and struggling with rage and terror. But they held tight, and having brought him to his victim's grave, they proceeded to kill him, after which they tore open his body, scattered the inside and once more flew away.

The prince, who had watched the whole scene with much interest, now drew near the spot where it happened, and glancing at the dead bird he noticed something red lying near which had evidently fallen out of its inside. He picked it up, and what was his surprise when he recognised the Princess Badoura’s talisman which had been the cause of many misfortunes. It would be impossible to describe his joy; he kissed the talisman repeatedly, wrapped it up, and carefully tied it round his arm. For the first time since his separation from the princess he had a good night, and next morning he was up at day-break and went cheerfully to ask what work he should do.

The gardener told him to cut down an old fruit tree which had quite died away, and Camaralzaman took an axe and fell to vigorously. As he was hacking at one of the roots the axe struck on something hard. On pushing away the earth he discovered a large slab of bronze, under which was disclosed a staircase with ten steps. He went down them and found himself in a roomy kind of cave in which stood fifty large bronze jars, each with a cover on it. The prince uncovered one after another, and found them all filled with gold dust. Delighted with his discovery he left the cave, replaced the slab, and having finished cutting down the tree waited for the gardener’s return.

The gardener had heard the night before that the ship about which he was inquiring would start ere long, but the exact date not being yet known he had been told to return next day for further information. He had gone therefore to inquire, and came back with good news beaming in his face.

“My son,” said he, “rejoice and hold yourself ready to start in three days’ time. The ship is to set sail, and I have arranged all about your passage with the captain.

“You could not bring me better news,” replied Camaralzaman, “and in return I have something pleasant to tell you. Follow me and see the good fortune which has befallen you.”

He then led the gardener to the cave, and having shown him the treasure stored up there, said how happy it made him that Heaven should in this way reward his kind host’s many virtues and compensate him for the privations of many years.

“What do you mean?” asked the gardener. “Do you imagine that I should appropriate this treasure? It is yours, and I have no right whatever to it. For the last eighty years I have dug up the ground here without discovering anything. It is clear that these riches are intended for you, and they are much more needed by a prince like yourself than by an old man like me, who am near my end and require nothing. This treasure comes just at the right time, when you are about to return to your own country, where you will make good use of it.”

But the prince would not hear of this suggestion, and finally after much discussion they agreed to divide the gold. When this was done the gardener said:

“My son, the great thing now is to arrange how you can best carry off this treasure as secretly as possible for fear of losing it. There are no olives in the Ebony Island, and those imported from here fetch a high price. As you know, I have a good stock of the olives which grew in this garden. Now you must take fifty jars, fill each half full of gold dust and fill them up with the olives. We will then have them taken on board ship when you embark.”

The prince took this advice, and spent the rest of the day filling the fifty jars, and fearing lest the precious talisman might slip from his arm and be lost again, he took the precaution of putting it in one of the jars, on which he made a mark so as to be able to recognise it. When night came the jars were all ready, and the prince and his host went to bed.

Whether in consequence of his great age, or of the fatigues and excitement of the previous day, I do not know, but the gardener passed a very bad night. He was worse next day, and by the morning of the third day was dangerously ill. At daybreak the ship's captain and some of his sailors knocked at the garden door and asked for the passenger who was to embark.

"I am he," said Camaralzaman, who had opened the door. "The gardener who took my passage is ill and cannot see you, but please come in and take these jars of olives and my bag, and I will follow as soon as I have taken leave of him."

The sailors did as he asked, and the captain before leaving charged Camaralzaman to lose no time, as the wind was fair, and he wished to set sail at once.

As soon as they were gone the prince returned to the cottage to bid farewell to his old friend, and to thank him once more for all his kindness. But the old man was at his last gasp, and had barely murmured his confession of faith when he expired.

Camaralzaman was obliged to stay and pay him the last offices, so having dug a grave in the garden he wrapped the kind old man up and buried him. He then locked the door, gave up the key to the owner of the garden, and hurried to the quay only to hear that the ship had sailed long ago, after waiting three hours for him.

It may well be believed that the prince felt in despair at this fresh misfortune, which obliged him to spend another year in a strange and distasteful country. Moreover, he had once more lost the Princess Badoura's talisman, which he feared he might never see again. There was nothing left for him but to hire the garden as the old man had done, and to live on in the cottage. As he could not well cultivate the garden by himself, he engaged a lad to help him, and to secure the rest of the treasure he put the remaining gold dust into fifty more jars, filling them up with olives so as to have them ready for transport.

Whilst the prince was settling down to this second year of toil and privation, the ship made a rapid voyage and arrived safely at the Ebony Island.

As the palace of the new king, or rather of the Princess Badoura, overlooked the harbour, she saw the ship entering it and asked what vessel it was coming in so gaily decked with flags, and was told that it was a ship from the Island of the Idolaters which yearly brought rich merchandise.

The princess, ever on the look out for any chance of news of her beloved husband, went down to the harbour attended by some officers of the court, and arrived just as the captain was landing. She sent for him and asked many questions as to his country, voyage, what passengers he had, and what his vessel was laden with. The captain answered all her questions, and said that his passengers consisted entirely of traders who brought rich stuffs from various countries, fine muslins, precious stones, musk, amber, spices, drugs, olives, and many other things.

As soon as he mentioned olives, the princess, who was very partial to them, exclaimed:

“I will take all you have on board. Have them unloaded and we will make our bargain at once, and tell the other merchants to let me see all their best wares before showing them to other people.”

“Sire,” replied the captain, “I have on board fifty very large pots of olives. They belong to a merchant who was left behind, as in spite of waiting for him he delayed so long that I was obliged to set sail without him.”

“Never mind,” said the princess, “unload them all the same, and we will arrange the price.”

The captain accordingly sent his boat off to the ship and it soon returned laden with the fifty pots of olives. The princess asked what they might be worth.

“Sire,” replied the captain, “the merchant is very poor. Your Majesty will not overpay him if you give him a thousand pieces of silver.”

“In order to satisfy him and as he is so poor,” said the princess, “I will order a thousand pieces of gold to be given you, which you will be sure to remit to him.”

So saying she gave orders for the payment and returned to the palace, having the jars carried before her. When evening came the Princess Badoura retired to the inner part of the palace, and going to the apartments of the Princess Haiatelnefous she had the fifty jars of olives brought to her. She opened one to let her friend taste the olives and to taste them herself, but great was her surprise when, on pouring some into a dish, she found them all powdered with gold dust. “What an adventure! how extraordinary!” she cried. Then she had the other jars opened, and was more and more surprised to find the olives in each jar mixed with gold dust.

But when at length her talisman was discovered in one of the jars her emotion was so great that she fainted away. The Princess Haiatelnefous and her women hastened to restore her, and as soon as she recovered consciousness she covered the precious talisman with kisses.

Then, dismissing the attendants, she said to her friend:

“You will have guessed, my dear, that it was the sight of this talisman which has moved me so deeply. This was the cause of my separation from my dear husband, and now, I am convinced, it will be the means of our reunion.”

As soon as it was light next day the Princess Badoura sent for the captain, and made further inquiries about the merchant who owned the olive jars she had bought.

In reply the captain told her all he knew of the place where the young man lived, and how, after engaging his passage, he came to be left behind.

“If that is the case,” said the princess, “you must set sail at once and go back for him. He is a debtor of mine and must be brought here at once, or I will confiscate all your merchandise. I shall now give orders to have all the warehouses where your cargo is placed under the royal seal, and they will only be opened when you have brought me the man I ask for. Go at once and obey my orders.”

The captain had no choice but to do as he was bid, so hastily provisioning his ship he started that same evening on his return voyage.

When, after a rapid passage, he gained sight of the Island of Idolaters, he judged it better not to enter the harbour, but casting anchor at some distance he embarked at night in a small boat with six active sailors and landed near Camaralzaman’s cottage.

The prince was not asleep, and as he lay awake moaning over all the sad events which had separated him from his wife, he thought he heard a knock at the garden door. He went to open it, and was immediately seized by the captain and sailors, who without a word of explanation forcibly bore him off to the boat, which took them back to the ship without loss of time. No sooner were they on board than they weighed anchor and set sail.

Camaralzaman, who had kept silence till then, now asked the captain (whom he had recognised) the reason for this abduction.

“Are you not a debtor of the King of the Ebony Island?” asked the captain.

“I? Why, I never even heard of him before, and never set foot in his kingdom!” was the answer.

“Well, you must know better than I,” said the captain. “You will soon see him now, and meantime be content where you are and have patience.”

The return voyage was as prosperous as the former one, and though it was night when the ship entered the harbour, the captain lost no time in landing with his passenger, whom he conducted to the palace, where he begged an audience with the king.

Directly the Princess Badoura saw the prince she recognised him in spite of his shabby clothes. She longed to throw herself on his neck, but restrained herself, feeling it was better for them both that she should play her part a little longer. She therefore desired one of her officers to take care of him and to treat him well. Next she ordered another officer to remove the seals from the warehouse, whilst she presented the captain with a costly diamond, and told him to keep the thousand pieces of gold paid for the olives, as she would arrange matters with the merchant himself.

She then returned to her private apartments, where she told the Princess Haiatelnefous all that had happened, as well as her plans for the future, and begged her assistance, which her friend readily promised.

Next morning she ordered the prince to be taken to the bath and clothed in a manner suitable to an emir or governor of a province. He was then introduced to the council, where his good looks and grand air drew the attention of all on him.

Princess Badoura, delighted to see him looking himself once more, turned to the other emirs, saying:

“My lords, I introduce to you a new colleague, Camaralzaman, whom I have known on my travels and who, I can assure you, you will find well deserves your regard and admiration.”

Camaralzaman was much surprised at hearing the king–whom he never suspected of being a woman in disguise–asserting their acquaintance, for he felt sure he had never seen her before. However he received all the praises bestowed on him with becoming modesty, and prostrating himself, said:

“Sire, I cannot find words in which to thank your Majesty for the great honour conferred on me. I can but assure you that I will do all in my power to prove myself worthy of it.”

On leaving the council the prince was conducted to a splendid house which had been prepared for him, where he found a full establishment and well-filled stables at his orders. On entering his study his steward presented him with a coffer filled with gold pieces for his current expenses. He felt more and more puzzled by such good fortune, and little guessed that the Princess of China was the cause of it.

After a few days the Princess Badoura promoted Camaralzaman to the post of grand treasurer, an office which he filled with so much integrity and benevolence as to win universal esteem.

He would now have thought himself the happiest of men had it not been for that separation which he never ceased to bewail. He had no clue to the mystery of his present position, for the princess, out of compliment to the old king, had taken his name, and was generally known as King Armanos the younger, few people remembering that on her first arrival she went by another name.

At length the princess felt that the time had come to put an end to her own and the prince's suspense, and having arranged all her plans with the Princess Haiatelnefous, she informed Camaralzaman that she wished his advice on some important business, and, to avoid being disturbed, desired him to come to the palace that evening.

The prince was punctual, and was received in the private apartment, when, having ordered her attendants to withdraw, the princess took from a small box the talisman, and, handing it to Camaralzaman, said: "Not long ago an astrologer gave me this talisman. As you are universally well informed, you can perhaps tell me what is its use."

Camaralzaman took the talisman and, holding it to the light, cried with surprise, "Sire, you ask me the use of this talisman. Alas! hitherto it has been only a source of misfortune to me, being the cause of my separation from the one I love best on earth. The story is so sad and strange that I am sure your Majesty will be touched by it if you will permit me to tell it you."

"I will hear it some other time," replied the princess. "Meanwhile I fancy it is not quite unknown to me. Wait here for me. I will return shortly."

So saying she retired to another room, where she hastily changed her masculine attire for that of a woman, and, after putting on the girdle she wore the day they parted, returned to Camaralzaman.

The prince recognised her at once, and, embracing her with the utmost tenderness, cried, “Ah, how can I thank the king for this delightful surprise?”

“Do not expect ever to see the king again,” said the princess, as she wiped the tears of joy from her eyes, “in me you see the king. Let us sit down, and I will tell you all about it.”

She then gave a full account of all her adventures since their parting, and dwelt much on the charms and noble disposition of the Princess Haiatelnefous, to whose friendly assistance she owed so much. When she had done she asked to hear the prince’s story, and in this manner they spent most of the night.

Next morning the princess resumed her woman’s clothes, and as soon as she was ready she desired the chief eunuch to beg King Armanos to come to her apartments.

When the king arrived great was his surprise at finding a strange lady in company of the grand treasurer who had no actual right to enter the private apartment. Seating himself he asked for the king.

“Sire,” said the princess, “yesterday I was the king, to-day I am only the Princess of China and wife to the real Prince Camaralzaman, son of King Schahzaman, and I trust that when your Majesty shall have heard our story you will not condemn the innocent deception I have been obliged to practise.”

The king consented to listen, and did so with marked surprise.

At the close of her narrative the princess said, “Sire, as our religion allows a man to have more than one wife, I would beg your Majesty to give your daughter, the Princess Haiatelnefous, in marriage to Prince Camaralzaman. I gladly yield to her the precedence and title of Queen in recognition of the debt of gratitude which I owe her.”

King Armanos heard the princess with surprise and admiration, then, turning to Camaralzaman, he said, “My son, as your wife, the Princess Badoura (whom I have hitherto looked on as my son-in-law), consents to share your hand and affections with my daughter, I have only to ask if this marriage is agreeable to you, and if you will consent to accept the crown which the Princess Badoura deserves to wear all her life, but which she prefers to resign for love of you.”

“Sire,” replied Camaralzaman, “I can refuse your Majesty nothing.”

Accordingly Camaralzaman was duly proclaimed king, and as duly married with all pomp to the Princess Haiatelnefous, with whose beauty, talents, and affections he had every reason to be pleased.

The two queens lived in true sisterly harmony together, and after a time, each presented King Camaralzaman with a son, whose births were celebrated throughout the kingdom with the utmost rejoicing.

27

NOUREDDIN AND THE FAIR PERSIAN

Balsora was the capital of a kingdom long tributary to the caliph. During the time of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid the king of Balsora, who was his cousin, was called Zinebi. Not thinking one vizir enough for the administration of his estates he had two, named Khacan and Saouy.

Khacan was kind, generous, and liberal, and took pleasure in obliging, as far as in him lay, those who had business with him. Throughout the entire kingdom there was no one who did not esteem and praise him as he deserved.

Saouy was quite a different character, and repelled everyone with whom he came in contact; he was always gloomy, and, in spite of his great riches, so miserly that he denied himself even the necessaries of life. What made him particularly detested was the great aversion he had to Khacan, of whom he never ceased to speak evil to the king.

One day, while the king amused himself talking with his two vizirs and other members of the council, the conversation turned on female slaves. While some declared that it sufficed for a slave to be beautiful, others, and Khacan was among the number, maintained that beauty alone was not enough, but that it must be accompanied by wit, wisdom, modesty, and, if possible, knowledge.

The king not only declared himself to be of this opinion, but charged Khacan to procure him a slave who should fulfil all these conditions. Saouy, who had been of the opposite side, and was jealous of the honour done to Khacan, said, “Sire, it will be very difficult to find a slave as accomplished as your Majesty desires, and, if she is to be found, she will be cheap if she cost less than 10,000 gold pieces.”

“Saouy,” answered the king, “you seem to find that a very great sum. For you it may be so, but not for me.”

And forthwith he ordered his grand treasurer, who was present, to send 10,000 gold pieces to Khacan for the purchase of the slave.

As soon, then, as Khacan returned home he sent for the dealers in female slaves, and charged them directly they had found such a one as he described to inform him. They promised to do their utmost, and not a day passed that they did not bring a slave for his inspection but none were found without some defect.

At length, early one morning, while Khacan was on his way to the king’s palace, a dealer, throwing himself in his way, announced eagerly that a Persian merchant, arrived late the previous evening, had a slave to sell whose wit and wisdom were equal to her incomparable beauty.

Khacan, overjoyed at this news, gave orders that the slave should be brought for his inspection on his return from the palace. The dealer appearing at the appointed hour, Khacan found the slave beautiful beyond his expectations, and immediately gave her the name of “The Fair Persian.”

Being a man of great wisdom and learning, he perceived in the short conversation he had with her that he would seek in vain another slave to surpass her in any of the qualities required by the king, and therefore asked the dealer what price the merchant put upon her.

“Sir,” was the answer, “for less than 10,000 gold pieces he will not let her go; he declares that, what with masters for her instruction, and for bodily exercises, not to speak of clothing and nourishment, he has already spent that sum upon her. She is in every way fit to be the slave of a king; she plays every musical instrument, she sings, she dances, she makes verses, in fact there is no accomplishment in which she does not excel."

Khacan, who was better able to judge of her merits than the dealer, wishing to bring the matter to a conclusion, sent for the merchant, and said to him, "It is not for myself that I wish to buy your slave, but for the king. Her price, however, is too high."

"Sir," replied the merchant, "I should esteem it an honor to present her to his Majesty, did I become a merchant to do such a thing. I ask no more than the sum it has cost me to make her such as she is."

Khacan, not wishing to bargain, immediately had the sum counted out, and given to the merchant, who before withdrawing said:

"Sir, as she is destined for the king, I would have you observe that she is extremely tired with the long journey, and before presenting her to his Majesty, you would do well to keep her a fortnight in your own house, and to see that a little care is bestowed upon her. The sun has tanned her complexion, but when she has been two or three times to the bath, and is fittingly dressed, you will see how much her beauty will be increased."

Khacan thanked the merchant for his advice, and determined to follow it. He gave the beautiful Persian an apartment near to that of his wife, whom he charged to treat her as befitting a lady destined for the king, and to order for her the most magnificent garments.

Before bidding adieu to the fair Persian, he said to her: "No happiness can be greater than what I have procured for you; judge for yourself, you now belong to the king. I have, however, to warn you of one thing. I have a son, who, though not wanting in sense, is young, foolish, and headstrong, and I charge you to keep him at a distance."

The Persian thanked him for his advice, and promised to profit by it.

Noureddin–for so the vizir's son was named–went freely in and out of his mother's apartments. He was young, well-made and agreeable, and had the gift of charming all with whom he came in contact. As soon as he saw the beautiful Persian, though aware that she was destined for the king, he let himself be carried away by her charms, and was determined at once to use every means in his power to retain her for himself. The Persian was equally captivated by Noureddin, and said to herself: “The vizir does me too great honor in buying me for the king. I should esteem myself very happy if he would give me to his son.”

Noureddin availed himself of every opportunity to gaze upon her beauty, to talk and laugh with her, and never would have left her side if his mother had not forced him.

Some time having elapsed, on account of the long journey, since the beautiful Persian had been to the bath, five or six days after her purchase, the vizir’s wife gave orders that the bath should be heated for her, and that her own female slaves should attend her there, and afterwards should array her in a magnificent dress that had been prepared for her.

Her bathing completed, the beautiful Persian came to present herself to the vizir’s wife, who hardly recognized her, so greatly was her beauty increased. Kissing her hand, the beautiful slave said: “Madam, I do not know how you find me in this dress that you have had prepared for me; your women assure me that it suits me so well that they hardly knew me. If it is the truth they tell me, and not flattery, it is to you I owe the transformation.”

“My daughter,” answered the vizir’s wife, “they do not flatter you. I myself hardly recognised you. The improvement is not due to the dress alone, but largely to the beautifying effects of the bath. I am so struck by its results, that I would try it on myself.”

Acting forthwith on this decision she ordered two little slaves during her absence to watch over the beautiful Persian, and not to allow Noureddin to enter should he come.

She had no sooner gone than he arrived, and not finding his mother in her apartment, would have sought her in that of the Persian. The two little slaves barred the entrance, saying that his mother had given orders that he was not to be admitted. Taking each by an arm, he put them out of the anteroom, and shut the door. Then they rushed to the bath, informing their mistress with shrieks and tears that Noureddin had driven them away by force and gone in.

This news caused great consternation to the lady, who, dressing herself as quickly as possible, hastened to the apartment of the fair Persian, to find that Noureddin had already gone out. Much astonished to see the vizir's wife enter in tears, the Persian asked what misfortune had happened.

"What!" exclaimed the lady, "you ask me that, knowing that my son Noureddin has been alone with you?"

"But, madam," inquired the Persian, "what harm is there in that?"

"How! Has my husband not told you that you are destined for the king?"

"Certainly, but Noureddin has just been to tell me that his father has changed his mind and has bestowed me upon him. I believed him, and so great is my affection for Noureddin that I would willingly pass my life with him."

"Would to heaven," exclaimed the wife of the vizir, "that what you say were true; but Noureddin has deceived you, and his father will sacrifice him in vengeance for the wrong he has done."

So saying, she wept bitterly, and all her slaves wept with her.

Khacan, entering shortly after this, was much astonished to find his wife and her slaves in tears, and the beautiful Persian greatly perturbed. He inquired the cause, but for some time no answer was forthcoming. When his wife was at length sufficiently calm to inform him of what had happened, his rage and mortification knew no bounds. Wringing his hands and rending his beard, he exclaimed:

“Wretched son! You destroy not only your but your father. The king will shed not only thy blood but mine.” His wife tried to console him, saying: “Do not torment thyself. With the sale of my jewels, I will obtain 10,000 gold pieces, and with this sum you will buy another slave.”

“Do not suppose,” replied her husband, “that it is the loss of the money that affects me. My honor is at stake, and that is more precious to me than all my wealth. You know that Saouy is my mortal enemy. He will relate all this to the king, and you will see the consequences that will ensue.”

“My lord,” said his wife, “I am quite aware of Saouy’s baseness, and that he is capable of playing this malicious trick on you. But how can he or any one else know what takes place in this house? Even if you are suspected and the king accuses you, you have only to say that, after examining the slave, you did not find her worthy of his Majesty. Reassure yourself, and send to the dealers, saying that you are not satisfied, and wish them to find you another slave.”

This advice appearing reasonable, Khacan decided to follow it, but his wrath against his son did not abate. Noureddin dared not appear all that day, and fearing to take refuge with his usual associates in case his father should seek him there, he spent the day in a secluded garden where he was not known. He did not return home till after his father had gone to bed, and went out early next morning before the vizir awoke, and these precautions he kept up during an entire month.

His mother, though knowing very well that he returned to the house every evening, dare not ask her husband to pardon him. At length she took courage and said:

“My lord, I know that a son could not act more basely towards his father than Noureddin has done towards you, but after all will you now pardon him? Do you not consider the harm you may be doing yourself, and fear that malicious people, seeking the cause of your estrangement, may guess the real one?”

“Madam,” replied the vizir, “what you say is very just, but I cannot pardon Noureddin before I have mortified him as he deserves.”

“He will be sufficiently punished,” answered the lady, “if you do as I suggest. In the evening, when he returns home, lie in wait for him and pretend that you will slay him. I will come to his aid, and while pointing out that you only yield his life at my supplications, you can force him to take the beautiful Persian on any conditions you please.” Khacan agreed to follow this plan, and everything took place as arranged. On Noureddin’s return Khacan pretended to be about to slay him, but yielding to his wife’s intercession, said to his son:

“You owe your life to your mother. I pardon you on her intercession, and on the conditions that you take the beautiful Persian for your wife, and not your slave, that you never sell her, nor put her away.”

Noureddin, not hoping for so great indulgence, thanked his father, and vowed to do as he desired. Khacan was at great pains frequently to speak to the king of the difficulties attending the commission he had given him, but some whispers of what had actually taken place did reach Saouy’s ears.

More than a year after these events the minister took a chill, leaving the bath while still heated to go out on important business. This resulted in inflammation of the lungs, which rapidly increased. The vizir, feeling that his end was at hand, sent for Noureddin, and charged him with his dying breath never to part with the beautiful Persian.

Shortly afterwards he expired, leaving universal regret throughout the kingdom; rich and poor alike followed him to the grave. Noureddin showed every mark of the deepest grief at his father’s death, and for long refused to see any one. At length a day came when, one of his friends being admitted, urged him strongly to be consoled, and to resume his former place in society. This advice Noureddin was not slow to follow, and soon he formed little society of ten young men all about his own age, with whom he spent all his time in continual feasting and merry-making.

Sometimes the fair Persian consented to appear at these festivities, but she disapproved of this lavish expenditure, and did not scruple to warn Noureddin of the probable consequences. He, however, only laughed at her advice, saying, that his father had always kept him in too great constraint, and that now he rejoiced at his newfound liberty.

What added to the confusion in his affairs was that he refused to look into his accounts with his steward, sending him away every time he appeared with his book.

“See only that I live well,” he said, “and do not disturb me about anything else.”

Not only did Noureddin’s friends constantly partake of his hospitality, but in every way they took advantage of his generosity; everything of his that they admired, whether land, houses, baths, or any other source of his revenue, he immediately bestowed on them. In vain the Persian protested against the wrong he did himself; he continued to scatter with the same lavish hand.

Throughout one entire year Noureddin did nothing but amuse himself, and dissipate the wealth his father had taken such pains to acquire. The year had barely elapsed, when one day, as they sat at table, there came a knock at the door. The slaves having been sent away, Noureddin went to open it himself. One of his friends had risen at the same time, but Noureddin was before him, and finding the intruder to be the steward, he went out and closed the door. The friend, curious to hear what passed between them, hid himself behind the hangings, and heard the following words:

“My lord,” said the steward, “I beg a thousand pardons for interrupting you, but what I have long foreseen has taken place. Nothing remains of the sums you gave me for your expenses, and all other sources of income are also at end, having been transferred by you to others. If you wish me to remain in your service, furnish me with the necessary funds, else I must withdraw.”

So great was Noureddin’s consternation that he had not a word to say in reply.

The friend, who had been listening behind the curtain, immediately hastened to communicate the news to the rest of the company.

“If this is so,” they said, “we must cease to come here.”

Noureddin re-entering at that moment, they plainly saw, in spite of his efforts to dissemble, that what they had heard was the truth. One by one they rose, and each with a different excuse left the room, till presently he found himself alone, though little suspecting the resolution his friends had taken. Then, seeing the beautiful Persian, he confided to her the statement of the steward, with many expressions of regret for his own carelessness.

“Had I but followed your advice, beautiful Persian,” he said, “all this would not have happened, but at least I have this consolation, that I have spent my fortune in the company of friends who will not desert me in an hour of need. Tomorrow I will go to them, and among them they will lend me a sum sufficient to start in some business.”

Accordingly, next morning, early, Noureddin went to seek his ten friends, who all lived in the same street. Knocking at the door of the first and chief, the slave who opened it left him to wait in a hall while he announced his visit to his master. “Noureddin!” he heard him exclaim quite audibly. “Tell him, every time he calls, that I am not at home.” The same thing happened at the second door, and also at the third, and so on with all the ten. Noureddin, much mortified, recognized too late that he had confided in false friends, who abandoned him in his hour of need. Overwhelmed with grief, he sought consolation from the beautiful Persian.

“Alas, my lord,” she said, “at last you are convinced of the truth of what I foretold. There is now no other resource left but to sell your slaves and your furniture.”

First then he sold the slaves, and subsisted for a time on the proceeds, after that the furniture was sold, and as much of it was valuable, it sufficed for some time. Finally this resource also came to an end, and again he sought counsel from the beautiful Persian.

“My lord,” she said, “I know that the late vizir, your father, bought me for 10,000 gold pieces, and though I have diminished in value since, I should still fetch a large sum. Do not therefore hesitate to sell me, and with the money you obtain, go and establish yourself in business in some distant town.”

“Charming Persian,” answered Noureddin, “how could I be guilty of such baseness? I would die rather than part from you whom I love better than my life.”

“My lord,” she replied, “I am well aware of your love for me, which is only equaled by mine for you, but a cruel necessity obliges us to seek the only remedy.”

Noureddin, convinced at length of the truth of her words, yielded, and reluctantly led her to the slave market, where, showing her to a dealer named Hagi Hassan, he inquired her value.

Taking them into a room apart, Hagi Hassan exclaimed as soon as she had unveiled, “My lord, is not this the slave your father bought for 10,000 pieces?”

On learning that it was so, he promised to obtain the highest possible price for her. Leaving the beautiful Persian shut up in the room alone, he went out to seek the slave merchants, announcing to them that he had found the pearl among slaves, and asking them to come and put a value upon her. As soon as they saw her they agreed that less than 4,000 gold pieces could not be asked. Hagi Hassan, then closing the door upon her, began to offer her for sale–calling out: “Who will bid 4,000 gold pieces for the Persian slave?”

Before any of the merchants had bid, Saouy happened to pass that way, and judging that it must be a slave of extraordinary beauty, rode up to Hagi Hassan and desired to see her. Now it was not the custom to show a slave to a private bidder, but as no one dared to disobey the vizir his request was granted.

As soon as Saouy saw the Persian he was so struck by her beauty, that he immediately wished to possess her, and not knowing that she belonged to Noureddin, he desired Hagi Hassan to send for the owner and to conclude the bargain at once.

Hagi Hassan then sought Noureddin, and told him that his slave was going far below her value, and that if Saouy bought her he was capable of not paying the money. “What you must do,” he said, “is to pretend that you had no real intention of selling your slave, and only swore you would in a fit of anger against her. When I present her to Saouy as if with your consent you must step in, and with blows begin to lead her away.”

Noureddin did as Hagi Hassan advised, to the great wrath of Saouy, who riding straight at him endeavored to take the beautiful Persian from him by force. Noureddin letting her go, seized Saouy’s horse by the bridle, and, encouraged by the applause of the bystanders, dragged him to the ground, beat him severely, and left him in the gutter streaming with blood. Then, taking the beautiful Persian, he returned home amid the acclamation of the people, who detested Saouy so much that they would neither interfere in his behalf nor allow his slaves to protect him.

Covered from head to foot with mire and streaming with blood, he rose, and leaning on two of his slaves, went straight to the palace, where he demanded an audience of the king, to whom he related what had taken place in these words:

“May it please your Majesty, I had gone to the slave market to buy myself a cook. While there I heard a slave being offered for 4,000 pieces. Asking to see her, I found she was of incomparable beauty, and was being sold by Noureddin, the son of your late vizir, to whom your Majesty will remember giving a sum of 10,000 gold pieces for the purchase of a slave. This is the identical slave, whom instead of bringing to your Majesty, he gave to his own son. Since the death of his father this Noureddin has run through his entire fortune, has sold all his possessions, and is now reduced to selling the slave. Calling him to me, I said: “Noureddin, I will give you 10,000 gold pieces for your slave, whom I will present to the king. I will interest him at the same time in your behalf, and this will be worth much more to you than what extra money you might obtain from the merchants.”

“Bad old man,” he exclaimed, “rather than sell my slave to you, I would give her to a Jew.” “But, Noureddin,” I protested “you do not consider that in speaking thus you wrong the king, to whom your father owed everything.” My protest only irritated him the more. Throwing himself on me like a madman, he tore me from my horse, beat me to his heart’s content, and left me in the state your Majesty sees.”

So saying Saouy turned aside his head and wept bitterly.

The king’s wrath was kindled against Noureddin. He ordered the captain of the guard to take with him forty men, to pillage Noureddin’s house, to raze it to the ground, and to bring Noureddin and the slave to him. A doorkeeper, named Sangiar, who had been a slave of Khacan’s, hearing this order given, slipped out of the king’s apartment, and hastened to warn Noureddin to take flight instantly with the beautiful Persian. Then, presenting him with forty gold pieces, he disappeared before Noureddin had time to thank him.

As soon, then, as the fair Persian had put on her veil they fled together, and had the good fortune to get out of the town without being observed. At the mouth of the Euphrates they found a ship just about to start for Bagdad. They embarked, and immediately the anchor was raised and they set sail.

When the captain of the guard reached Noureddin’s house, he caused his soldiers to burst open the door and to enter by force, but no trace was to be found of Noureddin and his slave, nor could the neighbors give any information about them. When the king heard that they had escaped, he issued a proclamation that a reward of 1,000 gold pieces would be given to whoever would bring him Noureddin and the slave, but that, on the contrary, whoever hid them would be severely punished. Meanwhile Noureddin and the fair Persian had safely reached Bagdad. When the vessel had come to an anchor they paid five gold pieces for their passage and went ashore. Never having been in Bagdad before, they did not know where to seek a lodging. Wandering along the banks of the Tigris, they skirted a garden enclosed by a high wall. The gate was shut, but in front of it was an open vestibule with a sofa on either side. “Here,” said Noureddin, “let us pass the night,” and reclining on the sofas they soon fell asleep.

Now this garden belonged to the Caliph. In the middle of it was a vast pavilion, whose superb saloon had eighty windows, each window having a luster, lit solely when the Caliph spent the evening there. Only the door-keeper lived there, an old soldier named Scheih Ibrahim, who had strict orders to be very careful whom he admitted, and never to allow any one to sit on the sofas by the door. It happened that evening that he had gone out on an errand.

When he came back and saw two persons asleep on the sofas he was about to drive them out with blows, but drawing nearer he perceived that they were a handsome young man and beautiful young woman, and decided to awake them by gentler means. Noureddin, on being awoke, told the old man that they were strangers, and merely wished to pass the night there. “Come with me,” said Scheih Ibrahim, “I will lodge you better, and will show you a magnificent garden belonging to me.” So saying the doorkeeper led the way into the Caliph’s garden, the beauties of which filled them with wonder and amazement. Noureddin took out two gold pieces, and giving them to Scheih Ibrahim said,

“I beg you to get us something to eat that we may make merry together.” Being very avaricious, Scheih Ibrahim determined to spend only the tenth part of the money and to keep the rest to himself. While he was gone Noureddin and the Persian wandered through the gardens and went up the white marble staircase of the pavilion as far as the locked door of the saloon. On the return of Scheih Ibrahim they begged him to open it, and to allow them to enter and admire the magnificence within. Consenting, he brought not only the key, but a light, and immediately unlocked the door. Noureddin and the Persian entering, were dazzled with the magnificence they beheld. The paintings and furniture were of astonishing beauty, and between each window was a silver arm holding a candle.

Scheih Ibrahim spread the table in front of a sofa, and all three ate together. When they had finished eating Noureddin asked the old man to bring them a bottle of wine.

“Heaven forbid,” said Scheih Ibrahim, “that I should come in contact with wine! I who have four times made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and have renounced wine forever.”

“You would, however, do us a great service in procuring us some,” said Noureddin. “You need not touch it yourself. Take the ass which is tied to the gate, lead it to the nearest wine-shop, and ask some passer-by to order two jars of wine; have them put in the ass’s panniers, and drive him before you. Here are two pieces of gold for the expenses.”

At sight of the gold, Scheih Ibrahim set off at once to execute the commission. On his return, Noureddin said: “We have still need of cups to drink from, and of fruit, if you can procure us some.” Scheih Ibrahim disappeared again, and soon returned with a table spread with cups of gold and silver, and every sort of beautiful fruit. Then he withdrew, in spite of repeated invitations to remain.

Noureddin and the beautiful Persian, finding the wine excellent, drank of it freely, and while drinking they sang. Both had fine voices, and Scheih Ibrahim listened to them with great pleasure–first from a distance, then he drew nearer, and finally put his head in at the door. Noureddin, seeing him, called to him to come in and keep them company. At first the old man declined, but was persuaded to enter the room, to sit down on the edge of the sofa nearest the door, and at last to draw closer and to seat himself by the beautiful Persian, who urged him so persistently to drink her health that at length he yielded, and took the cup she offered.

Now the old man only made a pretense of renouncing wine; he frequented wine-shops like other people, and had taken none of the precautions Noureddin had proposed. Having once yielded, he was easily persuaded to take a second cup, and a third, and so on till he no longer knew what he was doing. Till near midnight they continued drinking, laughing, and singing together.

About that time the Persian, perceiving that the room was lit by only one miserable tallow candle, asked Scheih Ibrahim to light some of the beautiful candles in the silver arms.

"Light them yourself," answered the old man; "you are younger than I, but let five or six be enough."

She did not stop, however, till she had lit all the eighty, but Scheih Ibrahim was not conscious of this, and when, soon after that, Noureddin proposed to have some of the lustres lit, he answered:

"You are more capable of lighting them than I, but not more than three."

Noureddin, far from contenting himself with three, lit all, and opened all the eighty windows.

The Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, chancing at that moment to open a window in the saloon of his palace looking on the garden, was surprised to see the pavilion brilliantly illuminated. Calling the grand-vizir, Giafar, he said to him:

"Negligent vizir, look at the pavilion, and tell me why it is lit up when I am not there."

When the vizir saw that it was as the Caliph said, he trembled with fear, and immediately invented an excuse.

"Commander of the Faithful," he said, "I must tell you that four or five days ago Scheih Ibrahim told me that he wished to have an assembly of the ministers of his mosque, and asked permission to hold it in the pavilion. I granted his request, but forgot since to mention it to your Majesty."

"Giafar," replied the Caliph, "you have committed three faults–first, in giving the permission; second, in not mentioning it to me; and third, in not investigating the matter more closely. For punishment I condemn you to spend the rest of the night with me in company of these worthy people. While I dress myself as a citizen, go and disguise yourself, and then come with me."

When they reached the garden gate they found it open, to the great indignation of the Caliph. The door of the pavilion being also open, he went softly upstairs, and looked in at the half-closed door of the saloon. Great was his surprise to see Scheih Ibrahim, whose sobriety he had never doubted, drinking and singing with a young man and a beautiful lady. The Caliph, before giving way to his anger, determined to watch and see who the people were and what they did.

Presently Scheih Ibrahim asked the beautiful Persian if anything were wanting to complete her enjoyment of the evening.

"If only," she said, "I had an instrument upon which I might play."

Scheih Ibrahim immediately took a lute from a cup-board and gave it to the Persian, who began to play on it, singing the while with such skill and taste that the Caliph was enchanted. When she ceased he went softly downstairs and said to the vizir:

"Never have I heard a finer voice, nor the lute better played. I am determined to go in and make her play to me."

"Commander of the Faithful," said the vizir, "if Scheih Ibrahim recognises you he will die of fright."

"I should be sorry for that," answered the Caliph, "and I am going to take steps to prevent it. Wait here till I return."

Now the Caliph had caused a bend in the river to form a lake in his garden. There the finest fish in the Tigris were to be found, but fishing was strictly forbidden. It happened that night, however, that a fisherman had taken advantage of the gate being open to go in and cast his nets. He was just about to draw them when he saw the Caliph approaching. Recognising him at once in spite of his disguise, he threw himself at his feet imploring forgiveness.

“Fear nothing,” said the Caliph, “only rise up and draw thy nets.”

The fisherman did as he was told, and produced five or six fine fish, of which the Caliph took the two largest. Then he desired the fisherman to change clothes with him, and in a few minutes the Caliph was transformed into a fisherman, even to the shoes and the turban. Taking the two fish in his hand, he returned to the vizir, who, not recognising him, would have sent him about his business. Leaving the vizir at the foot of the stairs, the Caliph went up and knocked at the door of the saloon. Noureddin opened it, and the Caliph, standing on the threshold, said:

“Scheih Ibrahim, I am the fisher Kerim. Seeing that you are feasting with your friends, I bring you these fish.”

Noureddin and the Persian said that when the fishes were properly cooked and dressed they would gladly eat of them. The Caliph then returned to the vizir, and they set to work in Scheih Ibrahim’s house to cook the fish, of which they made so tempting a dish that Noureddin and the fair Persian ate of it with great relish. When they had finished Noureddin took thirty gold pieces (all that remained of what Sangiar had given him) and presented them to the Caliph, who, thanking him, asked as a further favour if the lady would play him one piece on the lute. The Persian gladly consented, and sang and played so as to delight the Caliph.

Noureddin, in the habit of giving to others whatever they admired, said, “Fisherman, as she pleases you so much, take her; she is yours.”

The fair Persian, astounded that he should wish to part from her, took her lute, and with tears in her eyes sang her reproaches to its music.

The Caliph (still in the character of fisherman) said to him, “Sir, I perceive that this fair lady is your slave. Oblige me, I beg you, by relating your history.”

Noureddin willingly granted this request, and recounted everything from the purchase of the slave down to the present moment.

“And where do you go now?” asked the Caliph.

“Wherever the hand of Allah leads me,” said Noureddin.

“Then, if you will listen to me,” said the Caliph, “you will immediately return to Balsora. I will give you a letter to the king, which will ensure you a good reception from him.”

“It is unheard of,” said Noureddin, “that a fisherman should be in correspondence with a king.”

“Let not that astonish you,” answered the Caliph; “we studied together, and have always remained the best of friends, though fortune, while making him a king, left me a humble fisherman.”

The Caliph then took a sheet of paper, and wrote the following letter, at the top of which he put in very small characters this formula to show that he must be implicitly obeyed:–“In the name of the Most Merciful God.

“Letter of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid to the King of Balsora.

“Haroun-al-Raschid, son of Mahdi, sends this letter to Mohammed Zinebi, his cousin. As soon as Noureddin, son of the Vizir Khacan, bearer of this letter, has given it to thee, and thou hast read it, take off thy royal mantle, put it on his shoulders, and seat him in thy place without fail. Farewell.”

The Caliph then gave this letter to Noureddin, who immediately set off, with only what little money he possessed when Sangiar came to his assistance. The beautiful Persian, inconsolable at his departure, sank on a sofa bathed in tears.

When Noureddin had left the room, Scheih Ibrahim, who had hitherto kept silence, said: “Kerim, for two miserable fish thou hast received a purse and a slave. I tell thee, I will take the slave, and as to the purse, if it contains silver you may keep one piece, if gold, then I will take it all and give you what copper pieces I have in my purse."

Now here, it must be related that when the Caliph went upstairs with the plate of fish he ordered the vizir to hasten to the palace and bring back four slaves bearing a change of clothing, and the slaves should wait outside the pavilion till the Caliph should clap his hands.

Still impersonating the fisherman, the Caliph answered: "Scheih Ibrahim, whatever is in the purse I will share equally with you, but as to the slave I will keep her for myself. If you do not agree to these conditions you shall have nothing."

The old man, furious at this insolence as he considered it, took a cup and threw it at the Caliph, who easily avoided a missile from the hand of a drunken man. It hit against the wall, and broke into a thousand pieces. Scheih Ibrahim, still more enraged, then went out to fetch a stick. The Caliph at that moment clapped his hands, and the vizir and the four slaves entering took off the fisherman's dress and put on him that which they had brought.

When Scheih Ibrahim returned, a thick stick in his hand, the Caliph was seated on his throne, and nothing remained of the fisherman but his clothes in the middle of the room. Throwing himself on the ground at the Caliph's feet, he said: "Commander of the Faithful, your miserable slave has offended you, and craves forgiveness."

The Caliph came down from his throne, and said: "Rise, I forgive thee." Then turning to the Persian he said: "Fair lady, now you know who I am; learn also that I have sent Noureddin to Balsora to be king, and as soon as all necessary preparations are made I will send you there to be queen. Meanwhile I will give you an apartment in my palace, where you will be treated with all honor."

At this the beautiful Persian took courage, and the Caliph was as good as his word, recommending her to the care of his wife Zobeida.

Noureddin made all haste on his journey to Balsora, and on his arrival there went straight to the palace of the king, of whom he demanded an audience. It was immediately granted, and holding the letter high above his head he forced his way through the crowd. While the king read the letter he changed color. He would instantly have executed the Caliph's order, but first he showed the letter to Saouy, whose interests were equally at stake with his own. Pretending that he wished to read it a second time, Saouy turned aside as if to seek a better light; unperceived by anyone he tore off the formula from the top of the letter, put it to his mouth, and swallowed it. Then, turning to the king, he said:

"Your majesty has no need to obey this letter. The writing is indeed that of the Caliph, but the formula is absent. Besides, he has not sent an express with the patent, without which the letter is useless. Leave all to me, and I will take the consequences."

The king not only listened to the persuasions of Saouy, but gave Noureddin into his hands. Such a severe foot whipping was first administered to him, that he was left more dead than alive; then Saouy threw him into the darkest and deepest dungeon, and fed him only on bread and water. After ten days Saouy determined to put an end to Noureddin's life, but dared not without the king's authority. To gain this end, he loaded several of his own slaves with rich gifts, and presented himself at their head to the king, saying that they were from the new king on his coronation.

"What!" said the king; "is that wretch still alive? Go and behead him at once. I authorize you."

"Sire," said Saouy, "I thank your Majesty for the justice you do me. I would further beg, as Noureddin publicly affronted me, that the execution might be in front of the palace, and that it might be proclaimed throughout the city, so that no one may be ignorant of it."

The king granted these requests, and the announcement caused universal grief, for the memory of Noureddin's father was still fresh in the hearts of his people. Saouy, accompanied by twenty of his own slaves, went to the prison to fetch Noureddin, whom he mounted on a wretched horse without a saddle. Arrived at the palace, Saouy went in to the king, leaving Noureddin in the square, hemmed in not only by Saouy's slaves but by the royal guard, who had great difficulty in preventing the people from rushing in and rescuing Noureddin. So great was the indignation against Saouy that if anyone had set the example he would have been stoned on his way through the streets. Saouy, who witnessed the agitation of the people from the windows of the king's privy chambers, called to the executioner to strike at once. The king, however, ordered him to delay; not only was he jealous of Saouy's interference, but he had another reason. A troop of horsemen was seen at that moment riding at full gallop towards the square. Saouy suspected who they might be, and urged the king to give the signal for the execution without delay, but this the king refused to do till he knew who the horsemen were.

Now, they were the vizir Giafar and his suite arriving at full speed from Bagdad. For several days after Noureddin's departure with the letter the Caliph had forgotten to send the express with the patent, without which the letter was useless. Hearing a beautiful voice one day in the women's part of the palace uttering lamentations, he was informed that it was the voice of the fair Persian, and suddenly calling to mind the patent, he sent for Giafar, and ordered him to make for Balsora with the utmost speed–if Noureddin were dead, to hang Saouy; if he were still alive, to bring him at once to Bagdad along with the king and Saouy.

Giafar rode at full speed through the square, and alighted at the steps of the palace, where the king came to greet him. The vizir's first question was whether Noureddin were still alive. The king replied that he was, and he was immediately led forth, though bound hand and foot. By the vizir's orders his bonds were immediately undone, and Saouy was tied with the same cords. Next day Giafar returned to Bagdad, bearing with him the king, Saouy, and Noureddin.

When the Caliph heard what treatment Noureddin had received, he authorised him to behead Saouy with his own hands, but he declined to shed the blood of his enemy, who was forthwith handed over to the executioner. The Caliph also desired Noureddin to reign over Balsora, but this, too, he declined, saying that after what had passed there he preferred never to return, but to enter the service of the Caliph. He became one of his most intimate courtiers, and lived long in great happiness with the fair Persian. As to the king, the Caliph contented himself with sending him back to Balsora, with the recommendation to be more careful in future in the choice of his vizir.

28

ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP

There once lived a poor tailor, who had a son called Aladdin, a careless, idle boy who would do nothing but play all day long in the streets with little idle boys like himself. This so grieved the father that he died; yet, in spite of his mother's tears and prayers, Aladdin did not mend his ways. One day, when he was playing in the streets as usual, a stranger asked him his age, and if he were not the son of Mustapha the tailor.

"I am, sir," replied Aladdin; "but he died a long while ago."

On this, the stranger, who was a famous African magician, fell on his neck and kissed him, saying: "I am your uncle, and knew you from your likeness to my brother. Go to your mother and tell her I am coming."

Aladdin ran home, and told his mother of his newly found uncle.

"Indeed, child," she said, "your father had a brother, but I always thought he was dead."

However, she prepared supper, and bade Aladdin seek his uncle, who came laden with wine and fruit. He presently fell down and kissed the place where Mustapha used to sit, bidding Aladdin's mother not to be surprised at not having seen him before, as he had been forty years out of the country. He then turned to Aladdin, and asked him his trade, at which the boy hung his head, while his mother burst into tears. On learning that Aladdin was idle and would learn no trade, he offered to take a shop for him and stock it with merchandise. Next day he bought Aladdin a fine suit of clothes, and took him all over the city, showing him the sights, and brought him home at nightfall to his mother, who was overjoyed to see her son so fine.

Next day the magician led Aladdin into some beautiful gardens a long way outside the city gates. They sat down by a fountain, and the magician pulled a cake from his girdle, which he divided between them. They then journeyed onward till they almost reached the mountains. Aladdin was so tired that he begged to go back, but the magician beguiled him with pleasant stories, and led him on in spite of himself.

At last they came to two mountains divided by a narrow valley.

“We will go no farther,” said the false uncle. “I will show you something wonderful; only do you gather up sticks while I kindle a fire.”

When it was lit, the magician threw on it a powder he had about him, at the same time saying some magical words. The earth trembled a little and opened in front of them, disclosing a square flat stone with a brass ring in the middle to raise it by. Aladdin tried to run away, but the magician caught him and gave him a blow that knocked him down.

“What have I done, uncle?” he said piteously; whereupon the magician said more kindly: “Fear nothing, but obey me. Beneath this stone lies a treasure which is to be yours, and no one else may touch it, so you must do exactly as I tell you.”

At the word treasure, Aladdin forgot his fears, and grasped the ring as he was told, saying the names of his father and grandfather. The stone came up quite easily and some steps appeared.

“Go down,” said the magician; “at the foot of those steps you will find an open door leading into three large halls. Tuck up your gown and go through them without touching anything, or you will die instantly. These halls lead into a garden of fine fruit trees. Walk on till you come to a niche in a terrace where stands a lighted lamp. Pour out the oil it contains and bring it to me.”

He drew a ring from his finger and gave it to Aladdin, bidding him prosper.

Aladdin found everything as the magician had said, gathered some fruit off the trees, and, having got the lamp, arrived at the mouth of the cave. The magician cried out in a great hurry:

“Make haste and give me the lamp.” This Aladdin refused to do until he was out of the cave. The magician flew into a terrible passion, and throwing some more powder on the fire, he said something, and the stone rolled back into its place.

The magician left Persia for ever, which plainly showed that he was no uncle of Aladdin’s, but a cunning magician who had read in his magic books about a wonderful lamp, which would make him the most powerful man in the world. Though he alone knew where to find it, he could only receive it from the hand of another. He had picked out the foolish Aladdin for this purpose, intending to get the lamp and kill him afterwards.

For two days Aladdin remained in the dark, crying and lamenting. At last he clasped his hands in prayer, and in so doing rubbed the ring, which the magician had forgotten to take from him. Immediately an enormous and frightful genie rose out of the earth, saying:

“What would you do with me? I am the Slave of the Ring, and will obey you in all things.”

Aladdin fearlessly replied: “Deliver me from this place!” whereupon the earth opened, and he found himself outside. As soon as his eyes could bear the light he went home, but fainted on the threshold. When he came to himself he told his mother what had passed, and showed her the lamp and the fruits he had gathered in the garden, which were in reality precious stones. He then asked for some food.

“Alas! child,” she said, “I have nothing in the house, but I have spun a little cotton and will go and sell it.”

Aladdin bade her keep her cotton, for he would sell the lamp instead. As it was very dirty she began to rub it, that it might fetch a higher price. Instantly a hideous genie appeared, and asked what she would have. She fainted away, but Aladdin, snatching the lamp, said boldly:

“Fetch me something to eat!”

The genie returned with a silver bowl, twelve silver plates containing rich meats, two silver cups, and two bottles of wine. Aladdin’s mother, when she came to herself, said:

“From where comes this splendid feast?”

“Ask not, but eat,” replied Aladdin.

So they sat at breakfast till it was dinnertime, and Aladdin told his mother about the lamp. She begged him to sell it, and have nothing to do with devils.

“No,” said Aladdin, “since chance has made us aware of its virtues, we will use it and the ring likewise, which I shall always wear on my finger.” When they had eaten all the genie had brought, Aladdin sold one of the silver plates, and so on till none were left. He then had recourse to the genie, who gave him another set of plates, and thus they lived for many years.

One day Aladdin heard an order from the Sultan proclaimed that everyone was to stay at home and close his shutters while the princess, his daughter, went to and from the bath. Aladdin was seized by a desire to see her face, which was very difficult, as she always wore a veil. He hid himself behind the door of the bath, and peeped through a hole. The princess lifted her veil as she went in, and looked so beautiful that Aladdin fell in love with her at first sight. He went home so changed that his mother was frightened. He told her he loved the princess so deeply that he could not live without her, and meant to ask her in marriage of her father. His mother, on hearing this, burst out laughing, but Aladdin at last prevailed upon her to go before the Sultan and carry his request. She fetched a napkin and laid in it the magic fruits from the enchanted garden, which sparkled and shone like the most beautiful jewels. She took these with her to please the Sultan, and set out, trusting in the lamp. The grand-vizir and the lords of council had just gone in as she entered the hall and placed herself in front of the Sultan. He, however, took no notice of her. She went every day for a week, and stood in the same place.

When the council broke up on the sixth day the Sultan said to his vizir: "I see a certain woman in the audience-chamber every day carrying something in a napkin. Call her next time, that I may find out what she wants."

Next day, at a sign from the vizir, she went up to the foot of the throne, and remained kneeling till the Sultan said to her: "Rise, good woman, and tell me what you want."

She hesitated, so the Sultan sent away all but the vizir, and bade her speak freely, promising to forgive her beforehand for anything she might say. She then told him of her son's violent love for the princess.

"I prayed him to forget her," she said, "but in vain; he threatened to do some desperate deed if I refused to go and ask your Majesty for the hand of the princess. Now I pray you to forgive me alone, and my son Aladdin."

The Sultan asked her kindly what she had in the napkin, whereupon she unfolded the jewels and presented them.

He was thunderstruck, and turning to the vizir said: "What do you say? Ought I not to bestow the princess on one who values her at such a price?"

The vizir, who wanted her for his own son, begged the Sultan to withhold her for three months, in the course of which he hoped his son would contrive to make him a richer present. The Sultan granted this, and told Aladdin's mother that, though he consented to the marriage, she must not appear before him again for three months.

Aladdin waited patiently for nearly three months, but after two had elapsed his mother, going into the city to buy oil, found everyone rejoicing, and asked what was going on.

“Do you not know,” was the answer, “that the son of the grand-vizir is to marry the Sultan’s daughter tonight?”

Breathless, she ran and told Aladdin, who was overwhelmed at first, but presently bethought him of the lamp. He rubbed it, and the genie appeared, saying: “What is thy will?”

Aladdin replied: “The Sultan, as thou knowest, has broken his promise to me, and the vizir’s son is to have the princess. My command is that tonight you bring hither the bride and bridegroom.”

“Master, I obey,” said the genie.

Aladdin then went to his chamber, where, sure enough, at midnight, the genie transported the bed containing the vizir’s son and the princess.

“Take this newly married man,” he said, “and put him outside in the cold, and return at daybreak.”

Whereupon the genie took the vizir’s son out of bed, leaving Aladdin with the princess.

“Fear nothing,” Aladdin said to her; “you are my wife, promised to me by your unjust father, and no harm shall come to you.”

The princess was too frightened to speak, and passed the most miserable night of her life, while Aladdin lay down beside her and slept soundly. At the appointed hour the genie fetched in the shivering bridegroom, laid him in his place, and transported the bed back to the palace.

Presently the Sultan came to wish his daughter good-morning. The unhappy vizir’s son jumped up and hid himself, while the princess would not say a word, and was very sorrowful.

The Sultan sent her mother to her, who said: “How comes it, child, that you will not speak to your father? What has happened?”

The princess sighed deeply, and at last told her mother how, during the night, the bed had been carried into some strange house, and what had passed there. Her mother did not believe her in the least, but bade her rise and consider it an idle dream.

The following night exactly the same thing happened, and next morning, on the princess's refusing to speak, the Sultan threatened to cut off her head. She then confessed all, bidding him ask the vizir's son if it were not so. The Sultan told the vizir to ask his son, who owned the truth, adding that, dearly as he loved the princess, he had rather die than go through another such fearful night, and wished to be separated from her. His wish was granted, and there was an end of feasting and rejoicing.

When the three months were over, Aladdin sent his mother to remind the Sultan of his promise. She stood in the same place as before, and the Sultan, who had forgotten Aladdin, at once remembered him, and sent for her. On seeing her poverty the Sultan felt less inclined than ever to keep his word, and asked the vizir's advice, who counselled him to set so high a value on the princess that no man living could come up to it.

The Sultan then turned to Aladdin's mother, saying: "Good woman, a Sultan must remember his promises, and I will remember mine, but your son must first send me forty basins of gold brimful of jewels, carried by forty black slaves, led by as many white ones, splendidly dressed. Tell him that I await his answer." The mother of Aladdin bowed low and went home, thinking all was lost.

She gave Aladdin the message, adding: "He may wait long enough for your answer!"

"Not so long, mother, as you think," her son replied "I would do a great deal more than that for the princess."

He summoned the genie, and in a few moments the eighty slaves arrived, and filled up the small house and garden.

Aladdin made them set out to the palace, two and two, followed by his mother. They were so richly dressed, with such splendid jewels in their girdles, that everyone crowded to see them and the basins of gold they carried on their heads.

They entered the palace, and, after kneeling before the Sultan, stood in a half-circle round the throne with their arms crossed, while Aladdin's mother presented them to the Sultan.

He hesitated no longer, but said: "Good woman, return, and tell your son that I wait for him with open arms."

She lost no time in telling Aladdin, bidding him make haste. But Aladdin first called the genie.

"I want a scented bath," he said, "richly embroidered clothing, a horse surpassing the Sultan's, and twenty slaves to attend me. Besides this, six slaves, beautifully dressed, to wait on my mother; and lastly, ten thousand pieces of gold in ten purses."

No sooner said than done. Aladdin mounted his horse and passed through the streets, the slaves strewing gold as they went. Those who had played with him in his childhood did not known him, for he had grown so handsome.

When the Sultan saw him, he came down from his throne, embraced him, and led him into a hall where a feast was spread, intending to marry him to the princess that very day.

But Aladdin refused, saying, "I must build a palace fit for her," and took his leave.

Once home he said to the genie: "Build me a palace of the finest marble, set with jasper, agate, and other precious stones. In the middle you shall build me a large hall with a dome, its four walls of large amounts of gold and silver, each side having six windows, whose lattices, all except one, which is to be left unfinished, must be set with diamonds and rubies. There must be stables and horses and grooms and slaves; go and see about it!"

The palace was finished by next day, and the genie carried him there and showed him all his orders faithfully carried out, even to the laying of a velvet carpet from Aladdin’s palace to the Sultan’s. Aladdin’s mother then dressed herself carefully, and walked to the palace with her slaves, while he followed her on horseback. The Sultan sent musicians with trumpets and cymbals to meet them, so that the air resounded with music and cheers. She was taken to the princess, who saluted her and treated her with great honor. At night the princess said good-bye to her father, and set out on the carpet for Aladdin’s palace, with his mother at her side, and followed by the hundred slaves. She was charmed at the sight of Aladdin, who ran to receive her.

“Princess,” he said, “blame your beauty for my boldness if I have displeased you.”

She told him that, having seen him, she willingly obeyed her father in this matter. After the wedding had taken place Aladdin led her into the hall, where a feast was spread, and she supped with him, after which they danced till midnight.

Next day Aladdin invited the Sultan to see the palace. On entering the hall with the four-and-twenty windows, with their rubies, diamonds, and emeralds, he cried:

“It is a world’s wonder! There is only one thing that surprises me. Was it by accident that one window was left unfinished?”

“No, sir, by design,” returned Aladdin. “I wished your Majesty to have the glory of finishing this palace.”

The Sultan was pleased, and sent for the best jewelers in the city. He showed them the unfinished window, and bade them fit it up like the others.

“Sir,” replied their spokesman, “we cannot find enough jewels.”

The Sultan had his own fetched, which they soon used, but to no purpose, for in a month’s time the work was not half done. Aladdin, knowing that their task was vain, bade them undo their work and carry the jewels back, and the genie finished the window at his command. The Sultan was surprised to receive his jewels again and visited Aladdin, who showed him the window finished. The Sultan embraced him, the envious vizir meanwhile hinting that it was the work of enchantment.

Aladdin had won the hearts of the people by his gentle bearing. He was made captain of the Sultan's armies, and won several battles for him, but remained modest and courteous as before, and lived thus in peace and content for several years.

But far away in Africa, the magician remembered Aladdin, and by his magic arts discovered that Aladdin, instead of perishing miserably in the cave, had escaped, and had married a princess, with whom he was living in great honor and wealth. He knew that the poor tailor's son could only have accomplished this by means of the lamp, and traveled night and day till he reached the capital of China, bent on Aladdin's ruin. As he passed through the town he heard people talking everywhere about a marvelous palace.

"Forgive my ignorance," he asked, "what is this palace you speak of?"

"Have you not heard of Prince Aladdin's palace," was the reply, "the greatest wonder of the world? I will direct you if you have a mind to see it."

The magician thanked him who spoke, and having seen the palace, he knew that it had been raised by the genie of the lamp, and became half mad with rage. He determined to get hold of the lamp, and again plunge Aladdin into the deepest poverty.

Unluckily, Aladdin had gone hunting for eight days, which gave the magician plenty of time. He bought a dozen copper lamps, put them into a basket, and went to the palace, crying: "New lamps for old!" followed by a jeering crowd.

The princess, sitting in the hall of four-and-twenty windows, sent a slave to find out what the noise was about, who came back laughing, so that the princess scolded her.

“Madam,” replied the slave, “who can help laughing to see an old fool offering to exchange fine new lamps for old ones?”

Another slave, hearing this, said: “There is an old one on the cornice there which he can have.”

Now this was the magic lamp, which Aladdin had left there, as he could not take it out hunting with him. The princess, not knowing its value, laughingly bade the slave take it and make the exchange.

She went and said to the magician: “Give me a new lamp for this.”

He snatched it and bade the slave take her choice, amid the jeers of the crowd. Little he cared, but left off crying his lamps, and went out of the city gates to a lonely place, where he remained till nightfall, when he pulled out the lamp and rubbed it. The genie appeared, and at the magician’s command carried him, together with the palace and the princess in it, to a lonely place in Africa.

Next morning the Sultan looked out of the window towards Aladdin’s palace and rubbed his eyes, for it was gone. He sent for the vizir, and asked what had become of the palace. The vizir looked out too, and was lost in astonishment. He again put it down to enchantment, and this time the Sultan believed him, and sent thirty men on horseback to fetch Aladdin in chains. They met him riding home, bound him, and forced him to go with them on foot. The people, however, who loved him, followed, armed, to see that he came to no harm. He was carried before the Sultan, who ordered the executioner to cut off his head. The executioner made Aladdin kneel down, bandaged his eyes, and raised his scimitar to strike.

At that instant the vizir, who saw that the crowd had forced their way into the courtyard and were scaling the walls to rescue Aladdin, called to the executioner to stay his hand. The people, indeed, looked so threatening that the Sultan gave way and ordered Aladdin to be unbound, and pardoned him in the sight of the crowd.

Aladdin now begged to know what he had done.

“False wretch!” said the Sultan, “come hither,” and showed him from the window the place where his palace had stood.

Aladdin was so amazed that he could not say a word.

“Where is my palace and my daughter?” demanded the Sultan. “For the first I am not so deeply concerned, but my daughter I must have, and you must find her or lose your head.”

Aladdin begged for forty days in which to find her, promising if he failed to return and suffer death at the Sultan’s pleasure. His prayer was granted, and he went forth sadly from the Sultan’s presence. For three days he wandered about like a madman, asking everyone what had become of his palace, but they only laughed and pitied him. He came to the banks of a river, and knelt down to say his prayers before throwing himself in. In so doing he rubbed the magic ring he still wore.

The genie he had seen in the cave appeared, and asked his will.

“Save my life, genie,” said Aladdin, “and bring my palace back.”

“That is not in my power,” said the genie; “I am only the slave of the ring; you must ask the slave of the lamp.”

“Even so,” said Aladdin “but you can take me to the palace, and set me down under my dear wife’s window.” He at once found himself in Africa, under the window of the princess, and fell asleep out of sheer weariness.

He was awakened by the singing of the birds, and his heart was lighter. He saw plainly that all his misfortunes were owing to the loss of the lamp, and vainly wondered who had robbed him of it.

That morning the princess rose earlier than she had done since she had been carried into Africa by the magician, whose company she was forced to endure once a day. She, however, treated him so harshly that he dared not live there altogether. As she was dressing, one of her women looked out and saw Aladdin. The princess ran and opened the window, and at the noise she made Aladdin looked up. She called to him to come to her, and great was the joy of these lovers at seeing each other again.

After he had kissed her Aladdin said: “I beg of you, Princess, in God’s name, before we speak of anything else, for your own sake and mine, tell me what has become of an old lamp I left on the cornice in the hall of four-and-twenty windows, when I went a-hunting.”

“Alas!” she said “I am the innocent cause of our sorrows,” and told him of the exchange of the lamp.

“Now I know,” cried Aladdin, “that we have to thank the African magician for this! Where is the lamp?”

“He carries it about with him,” said the princess, “I know, for he pulled it out of his breast to show me. He wishes me to break my faith with you and marry him, saying that you were beheaded by my father’s command. He is forever speaking ill of you, but I only reply by my tears. If I persist, I doubt not that he will use violence.”

Aladdin comforted her, and left her for a while. He changed clothes with the first person he met in the town, and having bought a certain powder returned to the princess, who let him in by a little side door.

“Put on your most beautiful dress,” he said to her, “and receive the magician with smiles, leading him to believe that you have forgotten me. Invite him to dine with you, and say you wish to taste the wine of his country. He will go for some, and while he is gone, I will tell you what to do.”

She listened carefully to Aladdin, and when he left her arrayed herself gaily for the first time since she left China. She put on a girdle and a headdress of diamonds, and seeing in a mirror that she looked more beautiful than ever, received the magician, saying to his great amazement: “I have made up my mind that Aladdin is dead, and that all my tears will not bring him back to me, so I am resolved to mourn no more, and have therefore invited you to sup with me; but I am tired of the wines of China, and would be pleased to taste those of Africa.”

The magician flew to his cellar, and the princess put the powder Aladdin had given her in her cup. When he returned she asked him to drink her health in the wine of Africa, handing him her cup in exchange for his as a sign she was reconciled to him.

Before drinking the magician made her a speech in praise of her beauty, but the princess cut him short saying:

"Let me drink first, and you shall say what you will afterwards." She set her cup to her lips and kept it there, while the magician drained his to the dregs and fell back lifeless.

The princess then opened the door to Aladdin, and flung her arms round his neck, but Aladdin put her away, bidding her to leave him, as he had more to do. He then went to the dead magician, took the lamp out of his vest, and bade the genie carry the palace and all in it back to China. This was done, and the princess in her chamber only felt two little shocks, and little thought she was at home again.

The Sultan, who was sitting in his closet, mourning for his lost daughter, happened to look up, and rubbed his eyes, for there stood the palace as before! He hastened thither, and Aladdin received him in the hall of the four-and-twenty windows, with the princess at his side. Aladdin told him what had happened, and showed him the dead body of the magician, that he might believe. A ten days' feast was proclaimed, and it seemed as if Aladdin might now live the rest of his life in peace; but it was not to be.

The African magician had a younger brother, who was, if possible, more wicked and more cunning than himself. He traveled to China to avenge his brother's death, and went to visit a pious woman called Fatima, thinking she might be of use to him. He entered her cell and clapped a dagger to her breast, telling her to rise and do his bidding on pain of death. He changed clothes with her, colored his face like hers, put on her veil and murdered her, that she might tell no tales. Then he went towards the palace of

Aladdin, and all the people thinking he was the holy woman, gathered round him, kissing his hands and begging his blessing.

When he got to the palace there was such a noise going on round him that the princess bade her slave look out of the window and ask what was the matter. The slave said it was the holy woman, curing people by her touch of their ailments, whereupon the princess, who had long desired to see Fatima, sent for her. On coming to the princess the magician offered up a prayer for her health and prosperity. When he had done the princess made him sit by her, and begged him to stay with her always. The false Fatima, who wished for nothing better, consented, but kept his veil down for fear of discovery. The princess showed him the hall, and asked him what he thought of it.

“It is truly beautiful,” said the false Fatima. “In my mind it wants but one thing.”

“And what is that?” said the princess.

“If only a roc’s egg,” replied he, “were hung up from the middle of this dome, it would be the wonder of the world.”

After this the princess could think of nothing but a roc’s egg, and when Aladdin returned from hunting he found her in a very ill humor. He begged to know what was amiss, and she told him that all her pleasure in the hall was spoiled for the want of a roc’s egg hanging from the dome.

“It that is all,” replied Aladdin, “you shall soon be happy.”

He left her and rubbed the lamp, and when the genie appeared commanded him to bring a roc’s egg. The genie gave such a loud and terrible shriek that the hall shook.

“Wretch!” he cried, “is it not enough that I have done everything for you, but you must command me to bring my master and hang him up in the midst of this dome? You and your wife and your palace deserve to be burnt to ashes; but this request does not come from you, but from the brother of the African magician whom you destroyed. He is now in your palace disguised as the holy woman–whom he murdered. It was he who put that wish into your wife’s head. Take care of yourself, for he means to kill you.” So saying the genie disappeared.

Aladdin went back to the princess, saying his head ached, and requesting that the holy Fatima should be fetched to lay her hands on it. But when the magician came near, Aladdin, seizing his dagger, pierced him to the heart.

“What have you done?” cried the princess. “You have killed the holy woman!”

“Not so,” replied Aladdin, “but a wicked magician,” and told her of how she had been deceived.

After this Aladdin and his wife lived in peace. He succeeded the Sultan when he died, and reigned for many years, leaving behind him a long line of kings.

29

THE ADVENTURES OF HAROUN-AL-RASCHID, CALIPH OF BAGDAD

The Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid sat in his palace, wondering if there was anything left in the world that could possibly give him a few hours' amusement, when Giafar the grand-vizir, his old and tried friend, suddenly appeared before him. Bowing low, he waited, as was his duty, till his master spoke, but Haroun-al-Raschid merely turned his head and looked at him, and sank back into his former weary posture.

Now Giafar had something of importance to say to the Caliph, and had no intention of being put off by mere silence, so with another low bow in front of the throne, he began to speak.

"Commander of the Faithful," said he, "I have taken on myself to remind your Highness that you have undertaken secretly to observe for yourself the manner in which justice is done and order is kept throughout the city. This is the day you have set apart to devote to this object, and perhaps in fulfilling this duty you may find some distraction from the melancholy to which, as I see to my sorrow, you are a prey."

"You are right," returned the Caliph, "I had forgotten all about it. Go and change your coat, and I will change mine."

A few moments later they both re-entered the hall, disguised as foreign merchants, and passed through a secret door, out into the open country. Here they turned towards the Euphrates, and crossing the river in a small boat, walked through that part of the town which lay along the further bank, without seeing anything to call for their interference. Much pleased with the peace and good order of the city, the Caliph and his vizir made their way to a bridge, which led straight back to the palace, and had already crossed it, when they were stopped by an old and blind man, who begged for alms.

The Caliph gave him a piece of money, and was passing on, but the blind man seized his hand, and held him fast.

“Charitable person,” he said, “whoever you may be, grant me yet another prayer. Strike me, I beg of you, one blow. I have deserved it richly, and even a more severe penalty.”

The Caliph, much surprised at this request, replied gently: “My good man, that which you ask is impossible. Of what use would my alms be if I treated you so ill?” And as he spoke he tried to loosen the grasp of the blind beggar.

“My lord,” answered the man, “pardon my boldness and my persistence. Take back your money, or give me the blow which I crave. I have sworn a solemn oath that I will receive nothing without receiving chastisement, and if you knew all, you would feel that the punishment is not a tenth part of what I deserve.”

Moved by these words, and perhaps still more by the fact that he had other business to attend to, the Caliph yielded, and struck him lightly on the shoulder. Then he continued his road, followed by the blessing of the blind man. When they were out of earshot, he said to the vizir, “There must be something very odd to make that man act so–I should like to find out what is the reason. Go back to him; tell him who I am, and order him to come without fail to the palace to-morrow, after the hour of evening prayer.”

So the grand-vizir went back to the bridge; gave the blind beggar first a piece of money and then a blow, delivered the Caliph’s message, and rejoined his master.

They passed on towards the palace, but walking through a square, they came upon a crowd watching a young and well-dressed man who was urging a horse at full speed round the open space, using at the same time his spurs and whip so unmercifully that the animal was all covered with foam and blood. The Caliph, astonished at this proceeding, inquired of a passer-by what it all meant, but no one could tell him anything, except that every day at the same hour the same thing took place.

Still wondering, he passed on, and for the moment had to content himself with telling the vizir to command the horseman also to appear before him at the same time as the blind man.

The next day, after evening prayer, the Caliph entered the hall, and was followed by the vizir bringing with him the two men of whom we have spoken, and a third, with whom we have nothing to do. They all bowed themselves low before the throne and then the Caliph bade them rise, and ask the blind man his name.

“Baba-Abdalla, your Highness,” said he.

“Baba-Abdalla,” returned the Caliph, “your way of asking alms yesterday seemed to me so strange, that I almost commanded you then and there to cease from causing such a public scandal. But I have sent for you to inquire what was your motive in making such a curious vow. When I know the reason I shall be able to judge whether you can be permitted to continue to practice it, for I cannot help thinking that it sets a very bad example to others. Tell me therefore the whole truth, and conceal nothing.”

These words troubled the heart of Baba-Abdalla, who prostrated himself at the feet of the Caliph. Then rising, he answered: “Commander of the Faithful, I crave your pardon humbly, for my persistence in beseeching your Highness to do an action which appears on the face of it to be without any meaning. No doubt, in the eyes of men, it has none; but I look on it as a slight expiation for a fearful sin of which I have been guilty, and if your

Highness will deign to listen to my tale, you will see that no punishment could atone for the crime.”

30

THE STORY OF THE BLIND BABA-ABDALLA

I was born, Commander of the Faithful, in Bagdad, and was left an orphan while I was yet a very young man, for my parents died within a few days of each other. I had inherited from them a small fortune, which I worked hard night and day to increase, till at last I found myself the owner of eighty camels. These I hired out to travelling merchants, whom I frequently accompanied on their various journeys, and always returned with large profits.

One day I was coming back from Balsora, whither I had taken a supply of goods, intended for India, and halted at noon in a lonely place, which promised rich pasture for my camels. I was resting in the shade under a tree, when a dervish, going on foot towards Balsora, sat down by my side, and I inquired whence he had come and to what place he was going. We soon made friends, and after we had asked each other the usual questions, we produced the food we had with us, and satisfied our hunger.

While we were eating, the dervish happened to mention that in a spot only a little way off from where we were sitting, there was hidden a treasure so great that if my eighty camels were loaded till they could carry no more, the hiding place would seem as full as if it had never been touched.

At this news I became almost beside myself with joy and greed, and I flung my arms round the neck of the dervish, exclaiming: “Good dervish, I see plainly that the riches of this world are nothing to you, therefore of what use is the knowledge of this treasure to you? Alone and on foot, you could carry away a mere handful. But tell me where it is, and I will load my eighty camels with it, and give you one of them as a token of my gratitude."

Certainly my offer does not sound very magnificent, but it was great to me, for at his words a wave of covetousness had swept over my heart, and I almost felt as if the seventy-nine camels that were left were nothing in comparison.

The dervish saw quite well what was passing in my mind, but he did not show what he thought of my proposal.

"My brother," he answered quietly, "you know as well as I do, that you are behaving unjustly. It was open to me to keep my secret, and to reserve the treasure for myself. But the fact that I have told you of its existence shows that I had confidence in you, and that I hoped to earn your gratitude for ever, by making your fortune as well as mine. But before I reveal to you the secret of the treasure, you must swear that, after we have loaded the camels with as much as they can carry, you will give half to me, and let us go our own ways. I think you will see that this is fair, for if you present me with forty camels, I on my side will give you the means of buying a thousand more."

I could not of course deny that what the dervish said was perfectly reasonable, but, in spite of that, the thought that the dervish would be as rich as I was unbearable to me. Still there was no use in discussing the matter, and I had to accept his conditions or bewail to the end of my life the loss of immense wealth. So I collected my camels and we set out together under the guidance of the dervish. After walking some time, we reached what looked like a valley, but with such a narrow entrance that my camels could only pass one by one. The little valley, or open space, was shut up by two mountains, whose sides were formed of straight cliffs, which no human being could climb.

When we were exactly between these mountains the dervish stopped.

"Make your camels lie down in this open space," he said, "so that we can easily load them; then we will go to the treasure."

I did what I was bid, and rejoined the dervish, whom I found trying to kindle a fire out of some dry wood. As soon as it was alight, he threw on it a handful of perfumes, and pronounced a few words that I did not understand, and immediately a thick column of smoke rose high into the air. He separated the smoke into two columns, and then I saw a rock, which stood like a pillar between the two mountains, slowly open, and a splendid palace appear within.

But, Commander of the Faithful, the love of gold had taken such possession of my heart, that I could not even stop to examine the riches, but fell upon the first pile of gold within my reach and began to heap it into a sack that I had brought with me.

The dervish likewise set to work, but I soon noticed that he confined himself to collecting precious stones, and I felt I should be wise to follow his example. At length the camels were loaded with as much as they could carry, and nothing remained but to seal up the treasure, and go our ways.

Before, however, this was done, the dervish went up to a great golden vase, beautifully chased, and took from it a small wooden box, which he hid in the bosom of his dress, merely saying that it contained a special kind of ointment. Then he once more kindled the fire, threw on the perfume, and murmured the unknown spell, and the rock closed, and stood whole as before.

The next thing was to divide the camels, and to charge them with the treasure, after which we each took command of our own and marched out of the valley, till we reached the place in the high road where the routes diverge, and then we parted, the dervish going towards Balsora, and I to Bagdad. We embraced each other tenderly, and I poured out my gratitude for the honour he had done me, in singling me out for this great wealth, and having said a hearty farewell we turned our backs, and hastened after our camels.

I had hardly come up with mine when the demon of envy filled my soul. “What does a dervish want with riches like that?” I said to myself. “He alone has the secret of the treasure, and can always get as much as he wants,” and I halted my camels by the roadside, and ran back after him.

I was a quick runner, and it did not take me very long to come up with him. “My brother,” I exclaimed, as soon as I could speak, “almost at the moment of our leave-taking, a reflection occurred to me, which is perhaps new to you. You are a dervish by profession, and live a very quiet life, only caring to do good, and careless of the things of this world. You do not realise the burden that you lay upon yourself, when you gather into your hands such great wealth, besides the fact that no one, who is not accustomed to camels from his birth, can ever manage the stubborn beasts. If you are wise, you will not encumber yourself with more than thirty, and you will find those trouble enough.”

“You are right,” replied the dervish, who understood me quite well, but did not wish to fight the matter. “I confess I had not thought about it. Choose any ten you like, and drive them before you.”

I selected ten of the best camels, and we proceeded along the road, to rejoin those I had left behind. I had got what I wanted, but I had found the dervish so easy to deal with, that I rather regretted I had not asked for ten more. I looked back. He had only gone a few paces, and I called after him.

“My brother,” I said, “I am unwilling to part from you without pointing out what I think you scarcely grasp, that large experience of camel-driving is necessary to anybody who intends to keep together a troop of thirty. In your own interest, I feel sure you would be much happier if you entrusted ten more of them to me, for with my practice it is all one to me if I take two or a hundred.”

As before, the dervish made no difficulties, and I drove off my ten camels in triumph, only leaving him with twenty for his share. I had now sixty, and anyone might have imagined that I should be content.

But, Commander of the Faithful, there is a proverb that says, “the more one has, the more one wants.” So it was with me. I could not rest as long as one solitary camel remained to the dervish; and returning to him I redoubled my prayers and embraces, and promises of eternal gratitude, till the last twenty were in my hands.

“Make a good use of them, my brother,” said the holy man. “Remember riches sometimes have wings if we keep them for ourselves, and the poor are at our gates expressly that we may help them.”

My eyes were so blinded by gold, that I paid no heed to his wise counsel, and only looked about for something else to grasp. Suddenly I remembered the little box of ointment that the dervish had hidden, and which most likely contained a treasure more precious than all the rest. Giving him one last embrace, I observed accidentally, “What are you going to do with that little box of ointment? It seems hardly worth taking with you; you might as well let me have it. And really, a dervish who has given up the world has no need of ointment!”

Oh, if he had only refused my request! But then, supposing he had, I should have got possession of it by force, so great was the madness that had laid hold upon me. However, far from refusing it, the dervish at once held it out, saying gracefully, “Take it, my friend, and if there is anything else I can do to make you happy you must let me know.”

Directly the box was in my hands I wrenched off the cover. “As you are so kind,” I said, “tell me, I pray you, what are the virtues of this ointment?”

“They are most curious and interesting,” replied the dervish. “If you apply a little of it to your left eye you will behold in an instant all the treasures hidden in the bowels of the earth. But beware lest you touch your right eye with it, or your sight will be destroyed for ever.”

His words excited my curiosity to the highest pitch. “Make trial on me, I implore you,” I cried, holding out the box to the dervish. “You will know how to do it better than I! I am burning with impatience to test its charms.”

The dervish took the box I had extended to him, and, bidding me shut my left eye, touched it gently with the ointment. When I opened it again I saw spread out, as it were before me, treasures of every kind and without number. But as all this time I had been obliged to keep my right eye closed, which was very fatiguing, I begged the dervish to apply the ointment to that eye also.

“If you insist upon it I will do it,” answered the dervish, “but you must remember what I told you just now–that if it touches your right eye you will become blind on the spot.”

Unluckily, in spite of my having proved the truth of the dervish’s words in so many instances, I was firmly convinced that he was now keeping concealed from me some hidden and precious virtue of the ointment. So I turned a deaf ear to all he said.

“My brother,” I replied smiling, “I see you are joking. It is not natural that the same ointment should have two such exactly opposite effects.”

“It is true all the same,” answered the dervish, “and it would be well for you if you believed my word.”

But I would not believe, and, dazzled by the greed of avarice, I thought that if one eye could show me riches, the other might teach me how to get possession of them. And I continued to press the dervish to anoint my right eye, but this he resolutely declined to do.

“After having conferred such benefits on you,” said he, “I am loth indeed to work you such evil. Think what it is to be blind, and do not force me to do what you will repent as long as you live.”

It was of no use. “My brother,” I said firmly, “pray say no more, but do what I ask. You have most generously responded to my wishes up to this time, do not spoil my recollection of you for a thing of such little consequence. Let what will happen I take it on my own head, and will never reproach you.”

“Since you are determined upon it,” he answered with a sigh, “there is no use talking,” and taking the ointment he laid some on my right eye, which was tight shut. When I tried to open it heavy clouds of darkness floated before me. I was as blind as you see me now!

“Miserable dervish!” I shrieked, “so it is true after all! Into what a bottomless pit has my lust after gold plunged me. Ah, now that my eyes are closed they are really opened. I know that all my sufferings are caused by myself alone! But, good brother, you, who are so kind and charitable, and know the secrets of such vast learning, have you nothing that will give me back my sight?”

“Unhappy man,” replied the dervish, “it is not my fault that this has befallen you, but it is a just chastisement. The blindness of your heart has wrought the blindness of your body. Yes, I have secrets; that you have seen in the short time that we have known each other. But I have none that will give you back your sight. You have proved yourself unworthy of the riches that were given you. Now they have passed into my hands, whence they will flow into the hands of others less greedy and ungrateful than you.”

The dervish said no more and left me, speechless with shame and confusion, and so wretched that I stood rooted to the spot, while he collected the eighty camels and proceeded on his way to Balsora. It was in vain that I entreated him not to leave me, but at least to take me within reach of the first passing caravan. He was deaf to my prayers and cries, and I should soon have been dead of hunger and misery if some merchants had not come along the track the following day and kindly brought me back to Bagdad.

From a rich man I had in one moment become a beggar; and up to this time I have lived solely on the alms that have been bestowed on me. But, in order to expiate the sin of avarice, which was my undoing, I oblige each passer-by to give me a blow.

This, Commander of the Faithful, is my story.

When the blind man had ended the Caliph addressed him: “Baba-Abdalla, truly your sin is great, but you have suffered enough. Henceforth repent in private, for I will see that enough money is given you day by day for all your wants.”

At these words Baba-Abdalla flung himself at the Caliph’s feet, and prayed that honor and happiness might be his portion for ever.

31

THE STORY OF SIDI-NOUMAN

The Caliph, Haroun-al-Raschid, was much pleased with the tale of the blind man and the dervish, and when it was finished he turned to the young man who had ill-treated his horse, and inquired his name also. The young man replied that he was called Sidi-Nouman.

"Sidi-Nouman," observed the Caliph, "I have seen horses broken all my life long, and have even broken them myself, but I have never seen any horse broken in such a barbarous manner as by you yesterday. Every one who looked on was indignant, and blamed you loudly. As for myself, I was so angry that I was very nearly disclosing who I was, and putting a stop to it at once. Still, you have not the air of a cruel man, and I would gladly believe that you did not act in this way without some reason. As I am told that it was not the first time, and indeed that every day you are to be seen flogging and spurring your horse, I wish to come to the bottom of the matter. But tell me the whole truth, and conceal nothing."

Sidi-Nouman changed color as he heard these words, and his manner grew confused; but he saw plainly that there was no help for it. So he prostrated himself before the throne of the Caliph and tried to obey, but the words stuck in his throat, and he remained silent.

The Caliph, accustomed though he was to instant obedience, guessed something of what was passing in the young man's mind, and sought to put him at his ease. “Sidi-Nouman,” he said, “do not think of me as the Caliph, but merely as a friend who would like to hear your story. If there is anything in it that you are afraid may offend me, take courage, for I pardon you beforehand. Speak then openly and without fear, as to one who knows and loves you.”

Reassured by the kindness of the Caliph, Sidi-Nouman at length began his tale.

“Commander of the Faithful,” said he, “dazzled though I am by the luster of your Highness’ presence, I will do my best to satisfy your wishes. I am by no means perfect, but I am not naturally cruel, neither do I take pleasure in breaking the law. I admit that the treatment of my horse is calculated to give your Highness a bad opinion of me, and to set an evil example to others; yet I have not chastised it without reason, and I have hopes that I shall be judged more worthy of pity than punishment.”

Commander of the Faithful, I will not trouble to describe my birth; it is not of sufficient distinction to deserve your Highness’ attention. My ancestors were careful people, and I inherited enough money to enable me to live comfortably, though without show.

Having therefore a modest fortune, the only thing wanting to my happiness was a wife who could return my affection, but this blessing I was not destined to get; for on the very day after my marriage, my bride began to try my patience in every way that was most hard to bear.

Now, seeing that the customs of our land oblige us to marry without ever beholding the person with whom we are to pass our lives, a man has of course no right to complain as long as his wife is not absolutely repulsive, or is not positively deformed. And whatever defects her body may have, pleasant ways and good behaviour will go far to remedy them.

The first time I saw my wife unveiled, when she had been brought to my house with the usual ceremonies, I was enchanted to find that I had not been deceived in regard to the account that had been given me of her beauty. I began my married life in high spirits, and the best hopes of happiness.

The following day a grand dinner was served to us but as my wife did not appear, I ordered a servant to call her. Still she did not come, and I waited impatiently for some time. At last she entered the room, and she took our places at the table, and plates of rice were set before us.

I ate mine, as was natural, with a spoon, but great was my surprise to notice that my wife, instead of doing the same, drew from her pocket a little case, from which she selected a long pin, and by the help of this pin conveyed her rice grain by grain to her mouth.

“Amina,” I exclaimed in astonishment, “is that the way you eat rice at home? And did you do it because your appetite was so small, or did you wish to count the grains so that you might never eat more than a certain number? If it was from economy, and you are anxious to teach me not to be wasteful, you have no cause for alarm. We shall never ruin ourselves in that way! Our fortune is large enough for all our needs, therefore, dear Amina, do not seek to check yourself, but eat as much as you desire, as I do!”

In reply to my affectionate words, I expected a cheerful answer; yet Amina said nothing at all, but continued to pick her rice as before, only at longer and longer intervals. And, instead of trying the other dishes, all she did was to put every now and then a crumb, of bread into her mouth, that would not have made a meal for a sparrow.

I felt provoked by her obstinacy, but to excuse her to myself as far as I could, I suggested that perhaps she had never been used to eat in the company of men, and that her family might have taught her that she ought to behave prudently and discreetly in the presence of her husband. Likewise that she might either have dined already or intend to do so in her own apartments. So I took no further notice, and when I had finished left the room, secretly much vexed at her strange conduct.

The same thing occurred at supper, and all through the next day, whenever we ate together. It was quite clear that no woman could live upon two or three bread-crumbs and a few grains of rice, and I determined to find out how and when she got food. I pretended not to pay attention to anything she did, in the hope that little by little she would get accustomed to me, and become more friendly; but I soon saw that my expectations were quite vain.

One night I was lying with my eyes closed, and to, all appearance sound asleep, when Amina arose softly, and dressed herself without making the slightest sound. I could not imagine what she was going to do, and as my curiosity was great I made up my mind to follow her. When she was fully dressed, she stole quietly from the room.

The instant she had let the curtain fall behind her, I flung a garment on my shoulders and a pair of slippers on my feet. Looking from a lattice which opened into the court, I saw her in the act of passing through the street door, which she carefully left open.

It was bright moonlight, so I easily managed to keep her in sight, till she entered a cemetery not far from the house. There I hid myself under the shadow of the wall, and crouched down cautiously; and hardly was I concealed, when I saw my wife approaching in company with a ghoul–one of those demons which, as your Highness is aware, wander about the country making their lairs in deserted buildings and springing out upon unwary travellers whose flesh they eat. If no live being goes their way, they then betake themselves to the cemeteries, and feed upon the dead bodies.

I was nearly struck dumb with horror on seeing my wife with this hideous female ghoul. They passed by me without noticing me, began to dig up a corpse which had been buried that day, and then sat down on the edge of the grave, to enjoy their frightful repast, talking quietly and cheerfully all the while, though I was too far off to hear what they said. When they had finished, they threw back the body into the grave, and heaped back the earth upon it. I made no effort to disturb them, and returned quickly to the house, when I took care to leave the door open, as I had previously found it. Then I got back into bed, and pretended to sleep soundly.

A short time after Amina entered as quietly as she had gone out. She undressed and stole into bed, congratulating herself apparently on the cleverness with which she had managed her expedition.

As may be guessed, after such a scene it was long before I could close my eyes, and at the first sound which called the faithful to prayer, I put on my clothes and went to the mosque. But even prayer did not restore peace to my troubled spirit, and I could not face my wife until I had made up my mind what future course I should pursue in regard to her. I therefore spent the morning roaming about from one garden to another, turning over various plans for compelling my wife to give up her horrible ways; I thought of using violence to make her submit, but felt reluctant to be unkind to her. Besides, I had an instinct that gentle means had the best chance of success; so, a little soothed, I turned towards home, which I reached about the hour of dinner.

As soon as I appeared, Amina ordered dinner to be served, and we sat down together. As usual, she persisted in only picking a few grains of rice, and I resolved to speak to her at once of what lay so heavily on my heart.

“Amina,” I said, as quietly as possible, “you must have guessed the surprise I felt, when the day after our marriage you declined to eat anything but a few morsels of rice, and altogether behaved in such a manner that most husbands would have been deeply wounded. However I had patience with you, and only tried to tempt your appetite by the choicest dishes I could invent, but all to no purpose. Still, Amina, it seems to me that there be some among them as sweet to the taste as the flesh of a corpse?”

I had no sooner uttered these words than Amina, who instantly understood that I had followed her to the grave-yard, was seized with a passion beyond any that I have ever witnessed. Her face became purple, her eyes looked as if they would start from her head, and she positively foamed with rage.

I watched her with terror, wondering what would happen next, but little thinking what would be the end of her fury. She seized a vessel of water that stood at hand, and plunging her hand in it, murmured some words I failed to catch. Then, sprinkling it on my face, she cried madly:

“Wretch, receive the reward of your prying, and become a dog.”

The words were not out of her mouth when, without feeling conscious that any change was passing over me, I suddenly knew that I had ceased to be a man. In the greatness of the shock and surprise–for I had no idea that Amina was a magician–I never dreamed of running away, and stood rooted to the spot, while Amina grasped a stick and began to beat me. Indeed her blows were so heavy, that I only wonder they did not kill me at once. However they succeeded in rousing me from my stupor, and I dashed into the court-yard, followed closely by Amina, who made frantic dives at me, which I was not quick enough to dodge. At last she got tired of pursuing me, or else a new trick entered into her head, which would give me speedy and painful death; she opened the gate leading into the street, intending to crush me as I passed through. Dog though I was, I saw through her design, and stung into presence of mind by the greatness of the danger, I timed my movements so well that I contrived to rush through, and only the tip of my tail received a squeeze as she banged the gate.

I was safe, but my tail hurt me horribly, and I yelped and howled so loud all along the streets, that the other dogs came and attacked me, which made matters no better. In order to avoid them, I took refuge in a cookshop, where tongues and sheep’s heads were sold.

At first the owner showed me great kindness, and drove away the other dogs that were still at my heels, while I crept into the darkest corner. But though I was safe for the moment, I was not destined to remain long under his protection, for he was one of those who hold all dogs to be unclean, and that all the washing in the world will hardly purify you from their contact. So after my enemies had gone to seek other prey, he tried to lure me from my corner in order to force me into the street. But I refused to come out of my hole, and spent the night in sleep, which I sorely needed, after the pain inflicted on me by Amina.

I have no wish to weary your Highness by dwelling on the sad thoughts which accompanied my change of shape, but it may interest you to hear that the next morning my host went out early to do his marketing, and returned laden with the sheep's heads, and tongues and trotters that formed his stock in trade for the day. The smell of meat attracted various hungry dogs in the neighborhood, and they gathered round the door begging for some bits. I stole out of my corner, and stood with them.

In spite of his objection to dogs, as unclean animals, my protector was a kind-hearted man, and knowing I had eaten nothing since yesterday, he threw me bigger and better bits than those which fell to the share of the other dogs. When I had finished, I tried to go back into the shop, but this he would not allow, and stood so firmly at the entrance with a stout stick, that I was forced to give it up, and seek some other home.

A few paces further on was a baker's shop, which seemed to have a gay and merry man for a master. At that moment he was having his breakfast, and though I gave no signs of hunger, he at once threw me a piece of bread. Before gobbling it up, as most dogs are in the habit of doing, I bowed my head and wagged my tail, in token of thanks, and he understood, and smiled pleasantly. I really did not want the bread at all, but felt it would be ungracious to refuse, so I ate it slowly, in order that he might see that I only did it out of politeness. He understood this also, and seemed quite willing to let me stay in his shop, so I sat down, with my face to the door, to show that I only asked his protection. This he gave me, and indeed encouraged me to come into the house itself, giving me a corner where I might sleep, without being in anybody's way.

The kindness heaped on me by this excellent man was far greater than I could ever have expected. He was always affectionate in his manner of treating me, and I shared his breakfast, dinner and supper, while, on my side, I gave him all the gratitude and attachment to which he had a right.

I sat with my eyes fixed on him, and he never left the house without having me at his heels; and if it ever happened that when he was preparing to go out I was asleep, and did not notice, he would call “Rufus, Rufus,” for that was the name he gave me.

Some weeks passed in this way, when one day a woman came in to buy bread. In paying for it, she laid down several pieces of money, one of which was bad. The baker perceived this, and declined to take it, demanding another in its place. The woman, for her part, refused to take it back, declaring it was perfectly good, but the baker would have nothing to do with it.

“It is really such a bad imitation,” he exclaimed at last, “that even my dog would not be taken in. Here Rufus! Rufus!” and hearing his voice, I jumped on to the counter. The baker threw down the money before me, and said, “Find out if there is a bad coin.” I looked at each in turn, and then laid my paw on the false one, glancing at the same time at my master, so as to point it out.

The baker, who had of course been only in joke, was exceedingly surprised at my cleverness, and the woman, who was at last convinced that the man spoke the truth, produced another piece of money in its place. When she had gone, my master was so pleased that he told all the neighbors what I had done, and made a great deal more of it than there really was.

The neighbors, very naturally, declined to believe his story, and tried me several times with all the bad money they could collect together, but I never failed to stand the test triumphantly.

Soon, the shop was filled from morning till night, with people pretending to buy bread came to see if I was as clever as I was reported to be. The baker drove a roaring trade, and admitted that I was worth my weight in gold to him.

Of course there were plenty who envied him his large custom, and many was the pitfall set for me, so that he never dared to let me out of his sight. One day a woman, who had not been in the shop before, came to ask for bread, like the rest. As usual, I was lying on the counter, and she threw down six coins before me, one of which was false. I detected it at once, and put my paw on it, looking as I did so at the woman. “Yes,” she said, nodding her head. “You are quite right, that is the one.” She stood gazing at me attentively for some time, then paid for the bread, and left the shop, making a sign for me to follow her secretly.

Now my thoughts were always running on some means of shaking off the spell laid on me, and noticing the way in which this woman had looked at me, the idea entered my head that perhaps she might have guessed what had happened, and in this I was not deceived. However I let her go on a little way, and merely stood at the door watching her. She turned, and seeing that I was quite still, she again beckoned to me.

The baker all this while was busy with his oven, and had forgotten all about me, so I stole out softly, and ran after the woman.

When we came to her house, which was some distance off, she opened the door and then said to me, “Come in, come in; you will never be sorry that you followed me.” When I had entered she fastened the door, and took me into a large room, where a beautiful girl was working at a piece of embroidery. “My daughter,” exclaimed my guide, “I have brought you the famous dog belonging to the baker which can tell good money from bad. You know that when I first heard of him, I told you I was sure he must be really a man, changed into a dog by magic. To-day I went to the baker’s, to prove for myself the truth of the story, and persuaded the dog to follow me here. Now what do you say?”

“You are right, mother,” replied the girl, and rising she dipped her hand into a vessel of water. Then sprinkling it over me she said, “If you were born dog, remain dog; but if you were born man, by virtue of this water resume your proper form.” In one moment the spell was broken. The dog’s shape vanished as if it had never been, and it was a man who stood before her.

Overcome with gratitude at my deliverance, I flung myself at her feet, and kissed the hem of her garment. “How can I thank you for your goodness towards a stranger, and for what you have done? Henceforth I am your slave. Deal with me as you will!”

Then, in order to explain how I came to be changed into a dog, I told her my whole story, and finished with rendering the mother the thanks due to her for the happiness she had brought me.

“Sidi-Nouman,” returned the daughter, “say no more about the obligation you are under to us. The knowledge that we have been of service to you is ample payment. Let us speak of Amina, your wife, with whom I was acquainted before her marriage. I was aware that she was a magician, and she knew too that I had studied the same art, under the same mistress. We met often going to the same baths, but we did not like each other, and never sought to become friends. As to what concerns you, it is not enough to have broken your spell, she must be punished for her wickedness. Remain for a moment with my mother, I beg,” she added hastily, “I will return shortly.”

Left alone with the mother, I again expressed the gratitude I felt, to her as well as to her daughter.

“My daughter,” she answered, “is, as you see, as accomplished a magician as Amina herself, but you would be astonished at the amount of good she does by her knowledge. That is why I have never interfered, otherwise I should have put a stop to it long ago.” As she spoke, her daughter entered with a small bottle in her hand.

“Sidi-Nouman,” she said, “the books I have just consulted tell me that Amina is not home at present, but she should return at any moment. I have likewise found out by their means, that she pretends before the servants great uneasiness as to your absence. She has circulated a story that, while at dinner with her, you remembered some important business that had to be done at once, and left the house without shutting the door. By this means a dog had strayed in, which she was forced to get rid of by a stick. Go home then without delay, and await Amina’s return in your room. When she comes in, go down to meet her, and in her surprise, she will try to run away. Then have this bottle ready, and dash the water it contains over her, saying boldly, “Receive the reward of your crimes.” That is all I have to tell you.”

Everything happened exactly as the young magician had foretold. I had not been in my house many minutes before Amina returned, and as she approached I stepped in front of her, with the water in my hand. She gave one loud cry, and turned to the door, but she was too late. I had already dashed the water in her face and spoken the magic words. Amina disappeared, and in her place stood the horse you saw me beating yesterday.

This, Commander of the Faithful, is my story, and may I venture to hope that, now you have heard the reason of my conduct, your Highness will not think this wicked woman too harshly treated?

“Sidi-Nouman,” replied the Caliph, “your story is indeed a strange one, and there is no excuse to be offered for your wife. But, without condemning your treatment of her, I wish you to reflect how much she must suffer from being changed into an animal, and I hope you will let that punishment be enough. I do not order you to insist upon the young magician finding the means to restore your wife to her human shape, because I know that when once women such as she begin to work evil they never leave off, and I should only bring down on your head a vengeance far worse than the one you have undergone already.”

32

THE STORY OF ALI COGIA, MERCHANT OF BAGDAD

In the reign of Haroun-al-Raschid, there lived in Bagdad a merchant named Ali Cogia, who, having neither wife nor child, contented himself with the modest profits produced by his trade. He had spent some years quite happily in the house his father had left him, when three nights running he dreamed that an old man had appeared to him, and reproached him for having neglected the duty of a good Muslium, in delaying so long his pilgrimage to Mecca.

Ali Cogia was much troubled by this dream, as he was unwilling to give up his shop, and lose all his customers. He had shut his eyes for some time to the necessity of performing this pilgrimage, and tried to atone to his conscience by an extra number of good works, but the dream seemed to him a direct warning, and he resolved to put the journey off no longer.

The first thing he did was to sell his furniture and the wares he had in his shop, only reserving to himself such goods as he might trade with on the road. The shop itself he sold also, and easily found a tenant for his private house. The only matter he could not settle satisfactorily was the safe custody of a thousand pieces of gold which he wished to leave behind him.

After some thought, Ali Cogia hit upon a plan which seemed a safe one. He took a large vase, and placing the money in the bottom of it, filled up the rest with olives. After corking the vase tightly down, he carried it to one of his friends, a merchant like himself, and said to him:

"My brother, you have probably heard that I am staffing with a caravan in a few days for Mecca. I have come to ask whether you would do me the favor to keep this vase of olives for me till I come back?"

The merchant replied readily, "Look, this is the key of my shop: take it, and put the vase wherever you like. I promise that you shall find it in the same place on your return."

A few days later, Ali Cogia mounted the camel that he had laden with merchandise, joined the caravan, and arrived in due time at Mecca. Like the other pilgrims he visited the sacred Mosque, and after all his religious duties were performed, he set out his goods to the best advantage, hoping to gain some customers among the passers-by.

Very soon two merchants stopped before the pile, and when they had turned it over, one said to the other:

"If this man was wise he would take these things to Cairo, where he would get a much better price than he is likely to do here."

Ali Cogia heard the words, and lost no time in following the advice. He packed up his wares, and instead of returning to Bagdad, joined a caravan that was going to Cairo. The results of the journey gladdened his heart. He sold off everything almost directly, and bought a stock of Egyptian curiosities, which he intended selling at Damascus; but as the caravan with which he would have to travel would not be starting for another six weeks, he took advantage of the delay to visit the Pyramids, and some of the cities along the banks of the Nile.

Now the attractions of Damascus so fascinated the worthy Ali, that he could hardly tear himself away, but at length he remembered that he had a home in Bagdad, meaning to return by way of Aleppo, and after he had crossed the Euphrates, to follow the course of the Tigris.

But when he reached Mossoul, Ali had made such friends with some Persian merchants, that they persuaded him to accompany them to their native land, and even as far as India, and so it came to pass that seven years had slipped by since he had left Bagdad, and during all that time the friend with whom he had left the vase of olives had never once thought of him or of it. In fact, it was only a month before Ali Cogia's actual return that the affair came into his head at all, owing to his wife's remarking one day, that it was a long time since she had eaten any olives, and would like some.

"That reminds me," said the husband, "that before Ali Cogia went to Mecca seven years ago, he left a vase of olives in my care. But really by this time he must be dead, and there is no reason we should not eat the olives if we like. Give me a light, and I will fetch them and see how they taste."

"My husband," answered the wife, "beware, I pray, of your doing anything so base! Supposing seven years have passed without news of Ali Cogia, he need not be dead for all that, and may come back any day. How shameful it would be to have to confess that you had betrayed your trust and broken the seal of the vase! Pay no attention to my idle words, I really have no desire for olives now. And probably after all this while they are no longer good. I have a presentiment that Ali Cogia will return, and what will he think of you? Give it up, I entreat."

The merchant, however, refused to listen to her advice, sensible though it was. He took a light and a dish and went into his shop.

"If you will be so obstinate," said his wife, "I cannot help it; but do not blame me if it turns out ill."

When the merchant opened the vase he found the topmost olives were rotten, and in order to see if the under ones were in better condition he shook some out into the dish. As they fell out a few of the gold pieces fell out too.

The sight of the money roused all the merchant’s greed. He looked into the vase, and saw that all the bottom was filled with gold. He then replaced the olives and returned to his wife.

“My wife,” he said, as he entered the room, “you were quite right; the olives are rotten, and I have recorked the vase so well that Ali Cogia will never know it has been touched.”

“You would have done better to believe me,” replied the wife. “I trust that no harm will come of it.”

These words made no more impression on the merchant than the others had done; and he spent the whole night in wondering how he could manage to keep the gold if Ali Cogia should come back and claim his vase. Very early next morning he went out and bought fresh new olives; he then threw away the old ones, took out the gold and hid it, and filled up the vase with the olives he had bought. This done he recorked the vase and put it in the same place where it had been left by Ali Cogia.

A month later Ali Cogia re-entered Bagdad, and as his house was still let he went to an inn; and the following day set out to see his friend the merchant, who received him with open arms and many expressions of surprise. After a few moments given to inquiries Ali Cogia begged the merchant to hand him over the vase that he had taken care of for so long.

“Oh certainly,” said he, “I am only glad I could be of use to you in the matter. Here is the key of my shop; you will find the vase in the place where you put it.”

Ali Cogia fetched his vase and carried it to his room at the inn, where he opened it. He thrust down his hand but could feel no money, but still was persuaded it must be there. So he got some plates and vessels from his travelling kit and emptied out the olives. To no purpose. The gold was not there. The poor man was dumb with horror, then, lifting up his hands, he exclaimed, “Can my old friend really have committed such a crime?”

In great haste he went back to the house of the merchant. “My friend,” he cried, “you will be astonished to see me again, but I can find nowhere in this vase a thousand pieces of gold that I placed in the bottom under the olives. Perhaps you may have taken a loan of them for your business purposes; if that is so you are most welcome. I will only ask you to give me a receipt, and you can pay the money at your leisure.”

The merchant, who had expected something of the sort, had his reply all ready. “Ali Cogia,” he said, “when you brought me the vase of olives did I ever touch it?”

“I gave you the key of my shop and you put it yourself where you liked, and did you not find it in exactly the same spot and in the same state? If you placed any gold in it, it must be there still. I know nothing about that; you only told me there were olives. You can believe me or not, but I have not laid a finger on the vase.”

Ali Cogia still tried every means to persuade the merchant to admit the truth. “I love peace,” he said, “and shall deeply regret having to resort to harsh measures. Once more, think of your reputation. I shall be in despair if you oblige me to call in the aid of the law.”

“Ali Cogia,” answered the merchant, “you allow that it was a vase of olives you placed in my charge. You fetched it and removed it yourself, and now you tell me it contained a thousand pieces of gold, and that I must restore them to you! Did you ever say anything about them before? Why, I did not even know that the vase had olives in it! You never showed them to me. I wonder you have not demanded pearls or diamonds. Retire, I pray you, lest a crowd should gather in front of my shop.”

By this time not only the casual passers-by, but also the neighbouring merchants, were standing round, listening to the dispute, and trying every now and then to smooth matters between them. But at the merchant’s last words Ali Cogia resolved to lay the cause of the quarrel before them, and told them the whole story. They heard him to the end, and inquired of the merchant what he had to say.

The accused man admitted that he had kept Ali Cogia's vase in his shop; but he denied having touched it, and swore that as to what it contained he only knew what Ali Cogia had told him, and called them all to witness the insult that had been put upon him.

"You have brought it on yourself," said Ali Cogia, taking him by the arm, "and as you appeal to the law, the law you shall have! Let us see if you will dare to repeat your story before the Cadi."

Now as a good Muslim the merchant was forbidden to refuse this choice of a judge, so he accepted the test, and said to Ali Cogia, "Very well; I should like nothing better. We shall soon see which of us is in the right."

So the two men presented themselves before the Cadi, and Ali Cogia again repeated his tale. The Cadi asked what witnesses he had. Ali Cogia replied that he had not taken this precaution, as he had considered the man his friend, and up to that time had always found him honest.

The merchant, on his side, stuck to his story, and offered to swear solemnly that not only had he never stolen the thousand gold pieces, but that he did not even know they were there. The Cadi allowed him to take the oath, and pronounced him innocent.

Ali Cogia, furious at having to suffer such a loss, protested against the verdict, declaring that he would appeal to the Caliph, Haroun-al-Raschid, himself. But the Cadi paid no attention to his threats, and was quite satisfied that he had done what was right.

Judgment being given the merchant returned home triumphant, and Ali Cogia went back to his inn to draw up a petition to the Caliph. The next morning he placed himself on the road along which the Caliph must pass after mid-day prayer, and stretched out his petition to the officer who walked before the Caliph, whose duty it was to collect such things, and on entering the palace to hand them to his master. There Haroun-al-Raschid studied them carefully.

Knowing this custom, Ali Cogia followed the Caliph into the public hall of the palace, and waited the result. After some time the officer appeared, and told him that the Caliph had read his petition, and had appointed an hour the next morning to give him audience. He then inquired the merchant’s address, so that he might be summoned to attend also.

That very evening, the Caliph, with his grand-vizir Giafar, and Mesrour, chief of the eunuchs, all three disguised, as was their habit, went out to take a stroll through the town.

Going down one street, the Caliph’s attention was attracted by a noise, and looking through a door which opened into a court he perceived ten or twelve children playing in the moonlight. He hid himself in a dark corner, and watched them.

“Let us play at being the Cadi,” said the brightest and quickest of them all; “I will be the Cadi. Bring before me Ali Cogia, and the merchant who robbed him of the thousand pieces of gold.”

The boy’s words recalled to the Caliph the petition he had read that morning, and he waited with interest to see what the children would do.

The proposal was hailed with joy by the other children, who had heard a great deal of talk about the matter, and they quickly settled the part each one was to play. The Cadi took his seat gravely, and an officer introduced first Ali Cogia, the plaintiff, and then the merchant who was the defendant.

Ali Cogia made a low bow, and pleaded his cause point by point; concluding by imploring the Cadi not to inflict on him such a heavy loss.

The Cadi having heard his case, turned to the merchant, and inquired why he had not repaid Ali Cogia the sum in question.

The false merchant repeated the reasons that the real merchant had given to the Cadi of Bagdad, and also offered to swear that he had told the truth.

“Stop a moment!” said the little Cadi, “before we come to oaths, I should like to examine the vase with the olives. Ali Cogia,” he added, “have you got the vase with you?” and finding he had not, the Cadi continued, “Go and get it, and bring it to me.”

So Ali Cogia disappeared for an instant, and then pretended to lay a vase at the feet of the Cadi, declaring it was his vase, which he had given to the accused for safe custody; and in order to be quite correct, the Cadi asked the merchant if he recognized it as the same vase. By his silence the merchant admitted the fact, and the Cadi then commanded to have the vase opened. Ali Cogia made a movement as if he was taking off the lid, and the little Cadi on his part made a pretense of peering into a vase.

“What beautiful olives!” he said, “I should like to taste one,” and pretending to put one in his mouth, he added, “they are really excellent!

“But,” he went on, “it seems to me odd that olives seven years old should be as good as that! Send for some dealers in olives, and let us hear what they say!”

Two children were presented to him as olive merchants, and the Cadi addressed them. “Tell me,” he said, “how long can olives be kept so as to be pleasant eating?”

“My lord,” replied the merchants, “however much care is taken to preserve them, they never last beyond the third year. They lose both taste and color, and are only fit to be thrown away.”

“If that is so,” answered the little Cadi, “examine this vase, and tell me how long the olives have been in it.”

The olive merchants pretended to examine the olives and taste them; then reported to the Cadi that they were fresh and good.

“You are mistaken,” said he, “Ali Cogia declares he put them in that vase seven years ago.”

“My lord,” returned the olive merchants, “we can assure you that the olives are those of the present year. And if you consult all the merchants in

Bagdad you will not find one to give a contrary opinion."

The accused merchant opened his mouth as if to protest, but the Cadi gave him no time. "Be silent," he said, "you are a thief. Take him away and hang him." So the game ended, the children clapping their hands in applause, and leading the criminal away to be hanged.

Haroun-al-Raschid was lost in astonishment at the wisdom of the child, who had given so wise a verdict on the case which he himself was to hear on the morrow. "Is there any other verdict possible?" he asked the grand-vizir, who was as much impressed as himself. "I can imagine no better judgment."

"If the circumstances are really such as we have heard," replied the grand-vizir, "it seems to me your Highness could only follow the example of this boy, in the method of reasoning, and also in your conclusions."

"Then take careful note of this house," said the Caliph, "and bring me the boy to-morrow, so that the affair may be tried by him in my presence. Summon also the Cadi, to learn his duty from the mouth of a child. Bid Ali Cogia bring his vase of olives, and see that two dealers in olives are present." So saying the Caliph returned to the palace.

The next morning early, the grand-vizir went back to the house where they had seen the children playing, and asked for the mistress and her children. Three boys appeared, and the grand-vizir inquired which had represented the Cadi in their game of the previous evening. The eldest and tallest, changing color, confessed that it was he, and to his mother's great alarm, the grand-vizir said that he had strict orders to bring him into the presence of the Caliph.

"Does he want to take my son from me?" cried the poor woman; but the grand-vizir hastened to calm her, by assuring her that she should have the boy again in an hour, and she would be quite satisfied when she knew the reason of the summons. So she dressed the boy in his best clothes, and the two left the house.

When the grand-vizir presented the child to the Caliph, he was a little awed and confused, and the Caliph proceeded to explain why he had sent for him. “Approach, my son,” he said kindly. “I think it was you who judged the case of Ali Cogia and the merchant last night? I overheard you by chance, and was very pleased with the way you conducted it. To-day you will see the real Ali Cogia and the real merchant. Seat yourself at once next to me.”

The Caliph being seated on his throne with the boy next him, the parties to the suit were ushered in. One by one they prostrated themselves, and touched the carpet at the foot of the throne with their foreheads. When they rose up, the Caliph said: “Now speak. This child will give you justice, and if more should be wanted I will see to it myself.”

Ali Cogia and the merchant pleaded one after the other, but when the merchant offered to swear the same oath that he had taken before the Cadi, he was stopped by the child, who said that before this was done he must first see the vase of olives.

At these words, Ali Cogia presented the vase to the Caliph, and uncovered it. The Caliph took one of the olives, tasted it, and ordered the expert merchants to do the same. They pronounced the olives good, and fresh that year. The boy informed them that Ali Cogia declared it was seven years since he had placed them in the vase; to which they returned the same answer as the children had done.

The accused merchant saw by this time that his condemnation was certain, and tried to allege something in his defence. The boy had too much sense to order him to be hanged, and looked at the Caliph, saying, “Commander of the Faithful, this is not a game now; it is for your Highness to condemn him to death and not for me.”

Then the Caliph, convinced that the man was a thief, bade them take him away and hang him, which was done, but not before he had confessed his guilt and the place in which he had hidden Ali Cogia’s money. The

Caliph ordered the Cadi to learn how to deal out justice from the mouth of a child, and sent the boy home, with a purse containing a hundred pieces of gold as a mark of his favour.

33

THE ENCHANTED HORSE

It was the Feast of the New Year, the oldest and most splendid of all the feasts in the Kingdom of Persia, and the day had been spent by the king in the city of Schiraz, taking part in the magnificent spectacles prepared by his subjects to do honor to the festival. The sun was setting, and the monarch was about to give his court the signal to retire, when suddenly an Indian appeared before his throne, leading a horse richly harnessed, and looking in every respect exactly like a real one.

“Sire,” said he, prostrating himself as he spoke, “although I make my appearance so late before your Highness, I can confidently assure you that none of the wonders you have seen during the day can be compared to this horse, if you will deign to cast your eyes upon him.”

“I see nothing in it,” replied the king, “except a clever imitation of a real one; and any skilled workman might do as much.”

“Sire,” returned the Indian, “it is not of his outward form that I would speak, but of the use that I can make of him. I have only to mount him, and to wish myself in some special place, and no matter how distant it may be, in a very few moments I shall find myself there. It is this, Sire, that makes the horse so marvellous, and if your Highness will allow me, you can prove it for yourself.”

The King of Persia, who was interested in every thing out of the common, and had never before come across a horse with such qualities, bade the Indian mount the animal, and show what he could do. In an instant the man had vaulted on his back, and inquired where the monarch wished to send him.

"Do you see that mountain?" asked the king, pointing to a huge mass that towered into the sky about three leagues from Schiraz; "go and bring me the leaf of a palm that grows at the foot."

The words were hardly out of the king's mouth when the Indian turned a screw placed in the horse's neck, close to the saddle, and the animal bounded like lightning up into the air, and was soon beyond the sight even of the sharpest eyes. In a quarter of an hour the Indian was seen returning, bearing in his hand the palm, and, guiding his horse to the foot of the throne, he dismounted, and laid the leaf before the king.

Now the monarch had no sooner proved the astonishing speed of which the horse was capable than he longed to possess it himself, and indeed, so sure was he that the Indian would be quite ready to sell it, that he looked upon it as his own already.

"I never guessed from his mere outside how valuable an animal he was," he remarked to the Indian, "and I am grateful to you for having shown me my error," said he. "If you will sell it, name your own price."

"Sire," replied the Indian, "I never doubted that a sovereign so wise and accomplished as your Highness would do justice to my horse, when he once knew its power; and I even went so far as to think it probable that you might wish to possess it. Greatly as I prize it, I will yield it up to your Highness on one condition. The horse was not constructed by me, but it was given me by the inventor, in exchange for my only daughter, who made me take a solemn oath that I would never part with it, except for some object of equal value."

“Name anything you like,” cried the monarch, interrupting him. “My kingdom is large, and filled with fair cities. You have only to choose which you would prefer, to become its ruler to the end of your life.”

“Sire,” answered the Indian, to whom the proposal did not seem nearly so generous as it appeared to the king, “I am most grateful to your Highness for your princely offer, and beseech you not to be offended with me if I say that I can only deliver up my horse in exchange for the hand of the princess your daughter.”

A shout of laughter burst from the courtiers as they heard these words, and Prince Firouz Schah, the heir apparent, was filled with anger at the Indian’s presumption. The king, however, thought that it would not cost him much to part from the princess in order to gain such a delightful toy, and while he was hesitating as to his answer the prince broke in.

“Sire,” he said, “it is not possible that you can doubt for an instant what reply you should give to such an insolent bargain. Consider what you owe to yourself, and to the blood of your ancestors.”

“My son,” replied the king, “you speak nobly, but you do not realise either the value of the horse, or the fact that if I reject the proposal of the Indian, he will only make the same to some other monarch, and I should be filled with despair at the thought that anyone but myself should own this Seventh Wonder of the World. Of course I do not say that I shall accept his conditions, and perhaps he may be brought to reason, but meanwhile I should like you to examine the horse, and, with the owner’s permission, to make trial of its powers.”

The Indian, who had overheard the king’s speech, thought that he saw in it signs of yielding to his proposal, so he joyfully agreed to the monarch’s wishes, and came forward to help the prince to mount the horse, and show him how to guide it: but, before he had finished, the young man turned the screw, and was soon out of sight.

They waited some time, expecting that every moment he might be seen returning in the distance, but at length the Indian grew frightened, and prostrating himself before the throne, he said to the king, “Sire, your Highness must have noticed that the prince, in his impatience, did not allow me to tell him what it was necessary to do in order to return to the place from which he started. I implore you not to punish me for what was not my fault, and not to visit on me any misfortune that may occur.”

“But why,” cried the king in a burst of fear and anger, “why did you not call him back when you saw him disappearing?”

“Sire,” replied the Indian, “the rapidity of his movements took me so by surprise that he was out of hearing before I recovered my speech. But we must hope that he will perceive and turn a second screw, which will have the effect of bringing the horse back to earth.”

“But supposing he does!” answered the king, “what is to hinder the horse from descending straight into the sea, or dashing him to pieces on the rocks?”

“Have no fears, your Highness,” said the Indian; “the horse has the gift of passing over seas, and of carrying his rider wherever he wishes to go.”

“Well, your head shall answer for it,” returned the monarch, “and if in three months he is not safe back with me, or at any rate does not send me news of his safety, your life shall pay the penalty.” So saying, he ordered his guards to seize the Indian and throw him into prison.

Meanwhile, Prince Firouz Schah had gone gaily up into the air, and for the space of an hour continued to ascend higher and higher, till the very mountains were not distinguishable from the plains. Then he began to think it was time to come down, and took for granted that, in order to do this, it was only needful to turn the screw the reverse way; but, to his surprise and horror, he found that, turn as he might, he did not make the smallest impression. He then remembered that he had never waited to ask how he was to get back to earth again, and understood the danger in which he stood. Luckily, he did not lose his head, and set about examining the horse's neck with great care, till at last, to his intense joy, he discovered a tiny little peg, much smaller than the other, close to the right ear. This he turned, and found him-self dropping to the earth, though more slowly than he had left it.

It was now dark, and as the prince could see nothing, he was obliged, not without some feeling of disquiet, to allow the horse to direct his own course, and midnight was already passed before Prince Firouz Schah again touched the ground, faint and weary from his long ride, and from the fact that he had eaten nothing since early morning.

The first thing he did on dismounting was to try to find out where he was, and, as far as he could discover in the thick darkness, he found himself on the terraced roof of a huge palace, with a balustrade of marble running round. In one corner of the terrace stood a small door, opening on to a staircase which led down into the palace.

Some people might have hesitated before exploring further, but not so the prince. "I am doing no harm," he said, "and whoever the owner may be, he will not touch me when he sees I am unarmed," and in dread of making a false step, he went cautiously down the staircase. On a landing, he noticed an open door, beyond which was a faintly lighted hall.

Before entering, the prince paused and listened, but he heard nothing except the sound of men snoring. By the light of a lantern suspended from the roof, he perceived a row of black guards sleeping, each with a naked sword lying by him, and he understood that the hall must form the ante-room to the chamber of some queen or princess.

Standing quite still, Prince Firouz Schah looked about him, till his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, and he noticed a bright light shining through a curtain in one corner. He then made his way softly towards it, and, drawing aside its folds, passed into a magnificent chamber full of sleeping women, all lying on low couches, except one, who was on a sofa; and this one, he knew, must be the princess.

Gently stealing up to the side of her bed he looked at her, and saw that she was more beautiful than any woman he had ever beheld. But, fascinated though he was, he was well aware of the danger of his position, as one cry of surprise would awake the guards, and cause his certain death.

So sinking quietly on his knees, he took hold of the sleeve of the princess and drew her arm lightly towards him. The princess opened her eyes, and seeing before her a handsome well-dressed man, she remained speechless with astonishment.

This favorable moment was seized by the prince, who bowing low while he knelt, thus addressed her:

“You behold, madame, a prince in distress, son to the King of Persia, who, owing to an adventure so strange that you will scarcely believe it, finds himself here, a suppliant for your protection. But yesterday, I was in my father’s court, engaged in the celebration of our most solemn festival; to-day, I am in an unknown land, in danger of my life.”

Now the princess whose mercy Prince Firouz Schah implored was the eldest daughter of the King of Bengal, who was enjoying rest and change in the palace her father had built her, at a little distance from the capital. She listened kindly to what he had to say, and then answered:

“Prince, be not uneasy; hospitality and humanity are practised as widely in Bengal as they are in Persia. The protection you ask will be given you by all. You have my word for it.” And as the prince was about to thank her for her goodness, she added quickly, “However great may be my curiosity to learn by what means you have travelled here so speedily, I know that you must be faint for want of food, so I shall give orders to my women to take you to one of my chambers, where you will be provided with supper, and left to repose.”

By this time the princess’s attendants were all awake, and listening to the conversation. At a sign from their mistress they rose, dressed themselves hastily, and snatching up some of the tapers which lighted the room, conducted the prince to a large and lofty room, where two of the number prepared his bed, and the rest went down to the kitchen, from which they soon returned with all sorts of dishes. Then, showing him cupboards filled with dresses and linen, they quitted the room.

During their absence the Princess of Bengal, who had been greatly struck by the beauty of the prince, tried in vain to go to sleep again. It was of no use: she felt broad awake, and when her women entered the room, she inquired eagerly if the prince had all he wanted, and what they thought of him.

“Madame,” they replied, “it is of course impossible for us to tell what impression this young man has made on you. For ourselves, we think you would be fortunate if the king your father should allow you to marry anyone so amiable. Certainly there is no one in the Court of Bengal who can be compared with him.”

These flattering observations were by no means displeasing to the princess, but as she did not wish to betray her own feelings she merely said, “You are all a set of chatterboxes; go back to bed, and let me sleep.”

When she dressed the following morning, her maids noticed that, contrary to her usual habit, the princess was very particular about her toilette, and insisted on her hair being dressed two or three times over. “For,” she said to herself, “if my appearance was not displeasing to the prince when he saw me in the condition I was, how much more will he be struck with me when he beholds me with all my charms.”

Then she placed in her hair the largest and most brilliant diamonds she could find, with a necklace, bracelets and girdle, all of precious stones. And over her shoulders her ladies put a robe of the richest stuff in all the Indies, that no one was allowed to wear except members of the royal family. When she was fully dressed according to her wishes, she sent to know if the Prince of Persia was awake and ready to receive her, as she desired to present herself before him.

When the princess’s messenger entered his room, Prince Firouz Schah was in the act of leaving it, to inquire if he might be allowed to pay his homage to her mistress: but on hearing the princess’s wishes, he at once gave way. “Her will is my law,” he said, “I am only here to obey her orders.”

In a few moments the princess herself appeared, and after the usual compliments had passed between them, the princess sat down on a sofa, and began to explain to the prince her reasons for not giving him an audience in her own apartments. “Had I done so,” she said, “we might have been interrupted at any hour by the chief of the eunuchs, who has the right to enter whenever it pleases him, whereas this is forbidden ground. I am all impatience to learn the wonderful accident which has procured the pleasure of your arrival, and that is why I have come to you here, where no one can intrude upon us. Begin then, I entreat you, without delay.”

So the prince began at the beginning, and told all the story of the festival of Nedrouz held yearly in Persia, and of the splendid spectacles celebrated in its honor. But when he came to the enchanted horse, the princess declared that she could never have imagined anything half so surprising. “Well then,” continued the prince, “you can easily understand how the King my father, who has a passion for all curious things, was seized with a violent desire to possess this horse, and asked the Indian what sum he would take for it.

“The man’s answer was absolutely absurd, as you will agree, when I tell you that it was nothing less than the hand of the princess my sister; but though all the bystanders laughed and mocked, and I was beside myself with rage, I saw to my despair that my father could not make up his mind to treat the insolent proposal as it deserved. I tried to argue with him, but in vain. He only begged me to examine the horse with a view (as I quite understood) of making me more sensible of its value.”

“To please my father, I mounted the horse, and, without waiting for any instructions from the Indian, turned the peg as I had seen him do. In an instant I was soaring upwards, much quicker than an arrow could fly, and I felt as if I must be getting so near the sky that I should soon hit my head against it! I could see nothing beneath me, and for some time was so confused that I did not even know in what direction I was travelling. At last, when it was growing dark, I found another screw, and on turning it, the horse began slowly to sink towards the earth. I was forced to trust to chance, and to see what fate had in store, and it was already past midnight when I found myself on the roof of this palace. I crept down the little staircase, and made directly for a light which I perceived through an open door–I peeped cautiously in, and saw, as you will guess, the eunuchs lying asleep on the floor. I knew the risks I ran, but my need was so great that I paid no attention to them, and stole safely past your guards, to the curtain which concealed your doorway.

“The rest, Princess, you know; and it only remains for me to thank you for the kindness you have shown me, and to assure you of my gratitude. By the law of nations, I am already your slave, and I have only my heart, that is my own, to offer you. But what am I saying? My own? Alas, madame, it was yours from the first moment I beheld you!”

The air with which he said these words could have left no doubt on the mind of the princess as to the effect of her charms, and the blush which mounted to her face only increased her beauty.

“Prince,” returned she as soon as her confusion permitted her to speak, “you have given me the greatest pleasure, and I have followed you closely in all your adventures, and though you are positively sitting before me, I even trembled at your danger in the upper regions of the air! Let me say what a debt I owe to the chance that has led you to my house; you could have entered none which would have given you a warmer welcome. As to your being a slave, of course that is merely a joke, and my reception must itself have assured you that you are as free here as at your father's court. As to your heart," continued she in tones of encouragement, "I am quite sure that must have been disposed of long ago, to some princess who is well worthy of it, and I could not think of being the cause of your unfaithfulness to her."

Prince Firouz Schah was about to protest that there was no lady with any prior claims, but he was stopped by the entrance of one of the princess's attendants, who announced that dinner was served, and, after all, neither was sorry for the interruption.

Dinner was laid in a magnificent apartment, and the table was covered with delicious fruits; while during the repast richly dressed girls sang softly and sweetly to stringed instruments. After the prince and princess had finished, they passed into a small room hung with blue and gold, looking out into a garden stocked with flowers and arbutus trees, quite different from any that were to be found in Persia.

"Princess," observed the young man, "till now I had always believed that Persia could boast finer palaces and more lovely gardens than any kingdom upon earth. But my eyes have been opened, and I begin to perceive that, wherever there is a great king he will surround himself with buildings worthy of him."

"Prince," replied the Princess of Bengal, "I have no idea what a Persian palace is like, so I am unable to make comparisons. I do not wish to depreciate my own palace, but I can assure you that it is very poor beside that of the King my father, as you will agree when you have been there to greet him, as I hope you will shortly do."

Now the princess hoped that, by bringing about a meeting between the prince and her father, the King would be so struck with the young man's distinguished air and fine manners, that he would offer him his daughter to wife. But the reply of the Prince of Persia to her suggestion was not quite what she wished.

“Madame,” he said, “by taking advantage of your proposal to visit the palace of the King of Bengal, I should satisfy not merely my curiosity, but also the sentiments of respect with which I regard him. But, Princess, I am persuaded that you will feel with me, that I cannot possibly present myself before so great a sovereign without the attendants suitable to my rank. He would think me an adventurer.”

“If that is all,” she answered, “you can get as many attendants here as you please. There are plenty of Persian merchants, and as for money, my treasury is always open to you. Take what you please.”

Prince Firouz Schah guessed what prompted so much kindness on the part of the princess, and was much touched by it. Still his passion, which increased every moment, did not make him forget his duty. So he replied without hesitation:

“I do not know, Princess, how to express my gratitude for your obliging offer, which I would accept at once if it were not for the recollection of all the uneasiness the King my father must be suffering on my account. I should be unworthy indeed of all the love he showers upon me, if I did not return to him at the first possible moment. For, while I am enjoying the society of the most amiable of all princesses, he is, I am quite convinced, plunged in the deepest grief, having lost all hope of seeing me again. I am sure you will understand my position, and will feel that to remain away one instant longer than is necessary would not only be ungrateful on my part, but perhaps even a crime, for how do I know if my absence may not break his heart?

“But,” continued the prince, “having obeyed the voice of my conscience, I shall count the moments when, with your gracious permission, I may present myself before the King of Bengal, not as a wanderer, but as a prince, to implore the favor of your hand. My father has always informed me that in my marriage I shall be left quite free, but I am persuaded that I have only to describe your generosity, for my wishes to become his own.”

The Princess of Bengal was too reasonable not to accept the explanation offered by Prince Firouz Schah, but she was much disturbed at his intention of departing at once, for she feared that, no sooner had he left her, than the impression she had made on him would fade away. So she made one more effort to keep him, and after assuring him that she entirely approved of his anxiety to see his father, begged him to give her a day or two more of his company.

In common politeness the prince could hardly refuse this request, and the princess set about inventing every kind of amusement for him, and succeeded so well that two months slipped by almost unnoticed, in balls, spectacles and in hunting, of which, when unattended by danger, the princess was passionately fond. But at last, one day, he declared seriously that he could neglect his duty no longer, and entreated her to put no further obstacles in his way, promising at the same time to return, as soon as he could, with all the magnificence due both to her and to himself.

“Princess,” he added, “it may be that in your heart you class me with those false lovers whose devotion cannot stand the test of absence. If you do, you wrong me; and were it not for fear of offending you, I would beseech you to come with me, for my life can only be happy when passed with you. As for your reception at the Persian Court, it will be as warm as your merits deserve; and as for what concerns the King of Bengal, he must be much more indifferent to your welfare than you have led me to believe if he does not give his consent to our marriage.”

The princess could not find words in which to reply to the arguments of the Prince of Persia, but her silence and her downcast eyes spoke for her, and declared that she had no objection to accompanying him on his travels.

The only difficulty that occurred to her was that Prince Firouz Schah did not know how to manage the horse, and she dreaded lest they might find themselves in the same plight as before. But the prince soothed her fears so successfully, that she soon had no other thought than to arrange for their flight so secretly, that no one in the palace should suspect it.

This was done, and early the following morning, when the whole palace was wrapped in sleep, she stole up on to the roof, where the prince was already awaiting her, with his horse's head towards Persia. He mounted first and helped the princess up behind; then, when she was firmly seated, with her hands holding tightly to his belt, he touched the screw, and the horse began to leave the earth quickly behind him.

He travelled with his accustomed speed, and Prince Firouz Schah guided him so well that in two hours and a half from the time of starting, he saw the capital of Persia lying beneath him. He determined to alight neither in the great square from which he had started, nor in the Sultan's palace, but in a country house at a little distance from the town. Here he showed the princess a beautiful suite of rooms, and begged her to rest, while he informed his father of their arrival, and prepared a public reception worthy of her rank. Then he ordered a horse to be saddled, and set out.

All the way through the streets he was welcomed with shouts of joy by the people, who had long lost all hope of seeing him again. On reaching the palace, he found the Sultan surrounded by his ministers, all clad in the deepest mourning, and his father almost went out of his mind with surprise and delight at the mere sound of his son's voice. When he had calmed down a little, he begged the prince to relate his adventures.

The prince at once seized the opening thus given him, and told the whole story of his treatment by the Princess of Bengal, not even concealing the fact that she had fallen in love with him. "And, Sire," ended the prince, "having given my royal word that you would not refuse your consent to our marriage, I persuaded her to return with me on the Indian's horse. I have left her in one of your Highness's country houses, where she is waiting anxiously to be assured that I have not promised in vain."

As he said this the prince was about to throw himself at the feet of the Sultan, but his father prevented him, and embracing him again, said eagerly:

“My son, not only do I gladly consent to your marriage with the Princess of Bengal, but I will hasten to pay my respects to her, and to thank her in my own person for the benefits she has conferred on you. I will then bring her back with me, and make all arrangements for the wedding to be celebrated to-day.”

So the Sultan gave orders that the habits of mourning worn by the people should be thrown off and that there should be a concert of drums, trumpets and cymbals. Also that the Indian should be taken from prison, and brought before him.

His commands were obeyed, and the Indian was led into his presence, surrounded by guards. “I have kept you locked up,” said the Sultan, “so that in case my son was lost, your life should pay the penalty. He has now returned; so take your horse, and begone for ever.”

The Indian hastily quitted the presence of the Sultan, and when he was outside, he inquired of the man who had taken him out of prison where the prince had really been all this time, and what he had been doing. They told him the whole story, and how the Princess of Bengal was even then awaiting in the country palace the consent of the Sultan, which at once put into the Indian’s head a plan of revenge for the treatment he had experienced. Going straight to the country house, he informed the doorkeeper who was left in charge that he had been sent by the Sultan and by the Prince of Persia to fetch the princess on the enchanted horse, and to bring her to the palace.

The doorkeeper knew the Indian by sight, and was of course aware that nearly three months before he had been thrown into prison by the Sultan; and seeing him at liberty, the man took for granted that he was speaking the truth, and made no difficulty about leading him before the Princess of

Bengal; while on her side, hearing that he had come from the prince, the lady gladly consented to do what he wished.

The Indian, delighted with the success of his scheme, mounted the horse, assisted the princess to mount behind him, and turned the peg at the very moment that the prince was leaving the palace in Schiraz for the country house, followed closely by the Sultan and all the court. Knowing this, the Indian deliberately steered the horse right above the city, in order that his revenge for his unjust imprisonment might be all the quicker and sweeter.

When the Sultan of Persia saw the horse and its riders, he stopped short with astonishment and horror, and broke out into oaths and curses, which the Indian heard quite unmoved, knowing that he was perfectly safe from pursuit. But mortified and furious as the Sultan was, his feelings were nothing to those of Prince Firouz Schah, when he saw the object of his passionate devotion being borne rapidly away. And while he was struck speechless with grief and remorse at not having guarded her better, she vanished swiftly out of his sight. What was he to do? Should he follow his father into the palace, and there give reins to his despair? Both his love and his courage alike forbade it; and he continued his way to the palace.

The sight of the prince showed the doorkeeper of what folly he had been guilty, and flinging himself at his master's feet, implored his pardon. "Rise," said the prince, "I am the cause of this misfortune, and not you. Go and find me the dress of a dervish, but beware of saying it is for me."

At a short distance from the country house, a convent of dervishes was situated, and the superior, or scheih, was the doorkeeper's friend. So by means of a false story made up on the spur of the moment, it was easy enough to get hold of a dervish's dress, which the prince at once put on, instead of his own. Disguised like this and concealing about him a box of pearls and diamonds he had intended as a present to the princess, he left the house at nightfall, uncertain where he should go, but firmly resolved not to return without her.

Meanwhile the Indian had turned the horse in such a direction that, before many hours had passed, it had entered a wood close to the capital of the kingdom of Cashmere. Feeling very hungry, and supposing that the princess also might be in want of food, he brought his steed down to the earth, and left the princess in a shady place, on the banks of a clear stream.

At first, when the princess had found herself alone, the idea had occurred to her of trying to escape and hide herself. But as she had eaten scarcely anything since she had left Bengal, she felt she was too weak to venture far, and was obliged to abandon her design. On the return of the Indian with meats of various kinds, she began to eat voraciously, and soon had regained sufficient courage to reply with spirit to his insolent remarks. Goaded by his threats she sprang to her feet, calling loudly for help, and luckily her cries were heard by a troop of horsemen, who rode up to inquire what was the matter.

Now the leader of these horsemen was the Sultan of Cashmere, returning from the chase, and he instantly turned to the Indian to inquire who he was, and whom he had with him. The Indian rudely answered that it was his wife, and there was no occasion for anyone else to interfere between them.

The princess, who, of course, was ignorant of the rank of her deliverer, denied altogether the Indian’s story. “My lord,” she cried, “whoever you may be, put no faith in this impostor. He is an abominable magician, who has this day torn me from the Prince of Persia, my destined husband, and has brought me here on this enchanted horse.” She would have continued, but her tears choked her, and the Sultan of Cashmere, convinced by her beauty and her distinguished air of the truth of her tale, ordered his followers to cut off the Indian’s head, which was done immediately.

But rescued though she was from one peril, it seemed as if she had only fallen into another. The Sultan commanded a horse to be given her, and conducted her to his own palace, where he led her to a beautiful apartment, and selected female slaves to wait on her, and eunuchs to be her guard. Then, without allowing her time to thank him for all he had done, he bade her repose, saying she should tell him her adventures on the following day.

The princess fell asleep, flattering herself that she had only to relate her story for the Sultan to be touched by compassion, and to restore her to the prince without delay. But a few hours were to undeceive her.

When the King of Cashmere had quitted her presence the evening before, he had resolved that the sun should not set again without the princess becoming his wife, and at daybreak proclamation of his intention was made throughout the town, by the sound of drums, trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments calculated to fill the heart with joy. The Princess of Bengal was early awakened by the noise, but she did not for one moment imagine that it had anything to do with her, till the Sultan, arriving as soon as she was dressed to inquire after her health, informed her that the trumpet blasts she heard were part of the solemn marriage ceremonies, for which he begged her to prepare. This unexpected announcement caused the princess such terror that she sank down in a dead faint.

The slaves that were in waiting ran to her aid, and the Sultan himself did his best to bring her back to consciousness, but for a long while it was all to no purpose. At length her senses began slowly to come back to her, and then, rather than break faith with the Prince of Persia by consenting to such a marriage, she determined to feign madness. So she began by saying all sorts of absurdities, and using all kinds of strange gestures, while the Sultan stood watching her with sorrow and surprise. But as this sudden seizure showed no sign of abating, he left her to her women, ordering them to take the greatest care of her. Still, as the day went on, the malady seemed to become worse, and by night it was almost violent.

Days passed in this manner, till at last the Sultan of Cashmere decided to summon all the doctors of his court to consult together over her sad state. Their answer was that madness is of so many different kinds that it was impossible to give an opinion on the case without seeing the princess, so the Sultan gave orders that they were to be introduced into her chamber, one by one, every man according to his rank.

This decision had been foreseen by the princess, who knew quite well that if once she allowed the physicians to feel her pulse, the most ignorant of them would discover that she was in perfectly good health, and that her madness was feigned, so as each man approached, she broke out into such violent paroxysms, that not one dared to lay a finger on her. A few, who pretended to be cleverer than the rest, declared that they could diagnose sick people only from sight, ordered her certain potions, which she made no difficulty about taking, as she was persuaded they were all harmless.

When the Sultan of Cashmere saw that the court doctors could do nothing towards curing the princess, he called in those of the city, who fared no better. Then he had recourse to the most celebrated physicians in the other large towns, but finding that the task was beyond their science, he finally sent messengers into the other neighbouring states, with a memorandum containing full particulars of the princess’s madness, offering at the same time to pay the expenses of any physician who would come and see for himself, and a handsome reward to the one who should cure her. In answer to this proclamation many foreign professors flocked into Cashmere, but they naturally were not more successful than the rest had been, as the cure depended neither on them nor their skill, but only on the princess herself.

It was during this time that Prince Firouz Schah, wandering sadly and hopelessly from place to place, arrived in a large city of India, where he heard a great deal of talk about the Princess of Bengal who had gone out of her senses, on the very day that she was to have been married to the Sultan of Cashmere. This was quite enough to induce him to take the road to Cashmere, and to inquire at the first inn at which he lodged in the capital the full particulars of the story. When he knew that he had at last found the princess whom he had so long lost, he set about devising a plan for her rescue.

The first thing he did was to procure a doctor’s robe, so that his dress, added to the long beard he had allowed to grow on his travels, might unmistakably proclaim his profession. He then lost no time in going to the palace, where he obtained an audience of the chief usher, and while apologising for his boldness in presuming to think that he could cure the princess, where so many others had failed, declared that he had the secret of certain remedies, which had hitherto never failed of their effect.

The chief usher assured him that he was heartily welcome, and that the Sultan would receive him with pleasure; and in case of success, he would gain a magnificent reward.

When the Prince of Persia, in the disguise of a physician, was brought before him, the Sultan wasted no time in talking, beyond remarking that the mere sight of a doctor threw the princess into transports of rage. He then led the prince up to a room under the roof, which had an opening through which he might observe the princess, without himself being seen.

The prince looked, and beheld the princess reclining on a sofa with tears in her eyes, singing softly to herself a song bewailing her sad destiny, which had deprived her, perhaps for ever, of a being she so tenderly loved. The young man’s heart beat fast as he listened, for he needed no further proof that her madness was feigned, and that it was love of him which had caused her to resort to this species of trick. He softly left his hiding-place, and returned to the Sultan, to whom he reported that he was sure from certain signs that the princess’s malady was not incurable, but that he must see her and speak with her alone.

The Sultan made no difficulty in consenting to this, and commanded that he should be ushered in to the princess’s apartment. The moment she caught sight of his physician’s robe, she sprang from her seat in a fury, and heaped insults upon him. The prince took no notice of her behavior, and approaching quite close, so that his words might be heard by her alone, he said in a low whisper, “Look at me, princess, and you will see that I am no doctor, but the Prince of Persia, who has come to set you free.”

At the sound of his voice, the Princess of Bengal suddenly grew calm, and an expression of joy overspread her face, such as only comes when what we wish for most and expect the least suddenly happens to us. For some time she was too enchanted to speak, and Prince Firouz Schah took advantage of her silence to explain to her all that had occurred, his despair at watching her disappear before his very eyes, the oath he had sworn to follow her over the world, and his rapture at finally discovering her in the palace at Cashmere. When he had finished, he begged in his turn that the princess would tell him how she had come there, so that he might the better devise some means of rescuing her from the tyranny of the Sultan.

It needed but a few words from the princess to make him acquainted with the whole situation, and how she had been forced to play the part of a mad woman in order to escape from a marriage with the Sultan, who had not had sufficient politeness even to ask her consent. If necessary, she added, she had resolved to die sooner than permit herself to be forced into such a union, and break faith with a prince whom she loved.

The prince then inquired if she knew what had become of the enchanted horse since the Indian’s death, but the princess could only reply that she had heard nothing about it. Still she did not suppose that the horse could have been forgotten by the Sultan, after all she had told him of its value.

To this the prince agreed, and they consulted together over a plan by which she might be able to make her escape and return with him into Persia.

And as the first step, she was to dress herself with care, and receive the Sultan with civility when he visited her next morning.

The Sultan was transported with delight on learning the result of the interview, and his opinion of the doctor’s skill was raised still higher when, on the following day, the princess behaved towards him in such a way as to persuade him that her complete cure would not be long delayed. However he contented himself with assuring her how happy he was to see her health so much improved, and exhorted her to make every use of so clever a physician, and to repose entire confidence in him. Then he retired, without awaiting any reply from the princess.

The Prince of Persia left the room at the same time, and asked if he might be allowed humbly to inquire by what means the Princess of Bengal had reached Cashmere, which was so far distant from her father’s kingdom, and how she came to be there alone. The Sultan thought the question very natural, and told him the same story that the Princess of Bengal had done, adding that he had ordered the enchanted horse to be taken to his treasury as a curiosity, though he was quite ignorant how it could be used.

“Sire,” replied the physician, “your Highness’s tale has supplied me with the clue I needed to complete the recovery of the princess. During her voyage hither on an enchanted horse, a portion of its enchantment has by some means been communicated to her person, and it can only be dissipated by certain perfumes of which I possess the secret. If your Highness will deign to consent, and to give the court and the people one of the most astonishing spectacles they have ever witnessed, command the horse to be brought into the big square outside the palace, and leave the rest to me. I promise that in a very few moments, in presence of all the assembled multitude, you shall see the princess as healthy both in mind and body as ever she was in her life. And in order to make the spectacle as impressive as possible, I would suggest that she should be richly dressed and covered with the noblest jewels of the crown.”

The Sultan readily agreed to all that the prince proposed, and the following morning he desired that the enchanted horse should be taken from the treasury, and brought into the great square of the palace. Soon the rumour began to spread through the town, that something extraordinary was about to happen, and such a crowd began to collect that the guards had to be called out to keep order, and to make a way for the enchanted horse.

When all was ready, the Sultan appeared, and took his place on a platform, surrounded by the chief nobles and officers of his court. When they were seated, the Princess of Bengal was seen leaving the palace, accompanied by the ladies who had been assigned to her by the Sultan. She slowly approached the enchanted horse, and with the help of her ladies, she mounted on its back. Directly she was in the saddle, with her feet in the stirrups and the bridle in her hand, the physician placed around the horse some large braziers full of burning coals, into each of which he threw a perfume composed of all sorts of delicious scents. Then he crossed his hands over his breast, and with lowered eyes walked three times round the horse, muttering the while certain words. Soon there arose from the burning braziers a thick smoke which almost concealed both the horse and princess, and this was the moment for which he had been waiting. Springing lightly up behind the lady, he leaned forward and turned the peg, and as the horse darted up into the air, he cried aloud so that his words were heard by all present, “Sultan of Cashmere, when you wish to marry princesses who have sought your protection, learn first to gain their consent.”

It was in this way that the Prince of Persia rescued the Princess of Bengal, and returned with her to Persia, where they descended this time before the palace of the King himself. The marriage was only delayed just long enough to make the ceremony as brilliant as possible, and, as soon as the rejoicings were over, an ambassador was sent to the King of Bengal, to inform him of what had passed, and to ask his approbation of the alliance between the two countries, which he heartily gave.

34

THE STORY OF THE TWO SISTERS WHO WERE JEALOUS OF THEIR YOUNGER SISTER

Once upon a time, there reigned over Persia a Sultan named Kosrouschah, who from his boyhood had been fond of putting on a disguise and seeking adventures in all parts of the city, accompanied by one of his officers, disguised like himself. And no sooner was his father buried and the ceremonies over that marked his accession to the throne, than the young man hastened to throw off his robes of state, and calling to his vizir to make ready likewise, stole out in the simple dress of a private citizen into the less known streets of the capital.

Passing down a lonely street, the Sultan heard women’s voices in loud discussion; and peeping through a crack in the door, he saw three sisters, sitting on a sofa in a large hall, talking in a very lively and earnest manner. Judging from the few words that reached his ear, they were each explaining what sort of men they wished to marry.

“I ask nothing better,” cried the eldest, “than to have the Sultan’s baker for a husband. Think of being able to eat as much as one wanted, of that delicious bread that is baked for his Highness alone! Let us see if your wish is as good as mine.”

“I,” replied the second sister, “should be quite content with the Sultan’s head cook. What delicate stews I should feast upon! And, as I am persuaded that the Sultan's bread is used all through the palace, I should have that into the bargain. You see, my dear sister, my taste is as good as yours."

It was now the turn of the youngest sister, who was by far the most beautiful of the three, and had, besides, more sense than the other two. "As for me," she said, "I should take a higher flight; and if we are to wish for husbands, nothing less than the Sultan himself will do for me."

The Sultan was so much amused by the conversation he had overheard, that he made up his mind to gratify their wishes, and turning to the grand-vizir, he bade him note the house, and on the following morning to bring the ladies into his presence.

The grand-vizir fulfilled his commission, and hardly giving them time to change their dresses, desired the three sisters to follow him to the palace. Here they were presented one by one, and when they had bowed before the Sultan, the sovereign abruptly put the question to them:

"Tell me, do you remember what you wished for last night, when you were making merry? Fear nothing, but answer me the truth."

These words, which were so unexpected, threw the sisters into great confusion, their eyes fell, and the blushes of the youngest did not fail to make an impression on the heart of the Sultan. All three remained silent, and he hastened to continue: "Do not be afraid, I have not the slightest intention of giving you pain, and let me tell you at once, that I know the wishes formed by each one. You," he said, turning to the youngest, "who desired to have me for an husband, shall be satisfied this very day. And you," he added, addressing himself to the other two, "shall be married at the same moment to my baker and to my chief cook."

When the Sultan had finished speaking the three sisters flung themselves at his feet, and the youngest faltered out, "Oh, sire, since you know my foolish words, believe, I pray you, that they were only said in joke. I am unworthy of the honour you propose to do me, and I can only ask pardon for my boldness."

The other sisters also tried to excuse themselves, but the Sultan would hear nothing.

“No, no,” he said, “my mind is made up. Your wishes shall be accomplished.”

So the three weddings were celebrated that same day, but with a great difference. That of the youngest was marked by all the magnificence that was customary at the marriage of the Shah of Persia, while the festivities attending the nuptials of the Sultan’s baker and his chief cook were only such as were suitable to their conditions.

This, though quite natural, was highly displeasing to the elder sisters, who fell into a passion of jealousy, which in the end caused a great deal of trouble and pain to several people. And the first time that they had the opportunity of speaking to each other, which was not till several days later at a public bath, they did not attempt to disguise their feelings.

“Can you possibly understand what the Sultan saw in that little cat,” said one to the other, “for him to be so fascinated by her?”

“He must be quite blind,” returned the wife of the chief cook. “As for her looking a little younger than we do, what does that matter? You would have made a far better Sultana than she.”

“Oh, I say nothing of myself,” replied the elder, “and if the Sultan had chosen you it would have been all very well; but it really grieves me that he should have selected a wretched little creature like that. However, I will be revenged on her somehow, and I beg you will give me your help in the matter, and to tell me anything that you can think of that is likely to mortify her.”

In order to carry out their wicked scheme the two sisters met constantly to talk over their ideas, though all the while they pretended to be as friendly as ever towards the Sultana, who, on her part, invariably treated them with kindness. For a long time no plan occurred to the two plotters that seemed in the least likely to meet with success, but at length the expected birth of an heir gave them the chance for which they had been hoping.

They obtained permission of the Sultan to take up their abode in the palace for some weeks, and never left their sister night or day. When at last a little boy, beautiful as the sun, was born, they laid him in his cradle and carried it down to a canal which passed through the grounds of the palace. Then, leaving it to its fate, they informed the Sultan that instead of the son he had so fondly desired the Sultana had given birth to a puppy. At this dreadful news the Sultan was so overcome with rage and grief that it was with great difficulty that the grand-vizir managed to save the Sultana from his wrath.

Meanwhile the cradle continued to float peacefully along the canal till, on the outskirts of the royal gardens, it was suddenly perceived by the intendant, one of the highest and most respected officials in the kingdom.

“Go,” he said to a gardener who was working near, “and get that cradle out for me.”

The gardener did as he was bid, and soon placed the cradle in the hands of the intendant.

The official was much astonished to see that the cradle, which he had supposed to be empty, contained a baby, which, young though it was, already gave promise of great beauty. Having no children himself, although he had been married some years, it at once occurred to him that here was a child which he could take and bring up as his own. And, bidding the man pick up the cradle and follow him, he turned towards home.

“My wife,” he exclaimed as he entered the room, “heaven has denied us any children, but here is one that has been sent in their place. Send for a nurse, and I will do what is needful publicly to recognise it as my son.”

The wife accepted the baby with joy, and though the intendant saw quite well that it must have come from the royal palace, he did not think it was his business to inquire further into the mystery.

The following year another prince was born and sent adrift, but happily for the baby, the intendant of the gardens again was walking by the canal, and carried it home as before.

The Sultan, naturally enough, was still more furious the second time than the first, but when the same curious accident was repeated in the third year he could control himself no longer, and, to the great joy of the jealous sisters, commanded that the Sultana should be executed. But the poor lady was so much beloved at Court that not even the dread of sharing her fate could prevent the grand-vizir and the courtiers from throwing themselves at the Sultan's feet and imploring him not to inflict so cruel a punishment for what, after all, was not her fault.

"Let her live," entreated the grand-vizir, "and banish her from your presence for the rest of her days. That in itself will be punishment enough."

His first passion spent, the Sultan had regained his self-command. "Let her live then," he said, "since you have it so much at heart. But if I grant her life it shall only be on one condition, which shall make her daily pray for death. Let a box be built for her at the door of the principal mosque, and let the window of the box be always open. There she shall sit, in the coarsest clothes, and every Mussulman who enters the mosque shall spit in her face in passing. Anyone that refuses to obey shall be exposed to the same punishment himself. You, vizir, will see that my orders are carried out."

The grand-vizir saw that it was useless to say more, and, full of triumph, the sisters watched the building of the box, and then listened to the jeers of the people at the helpless Sultana sitting inside. But the poor lady bore herself with so much dignity and meekness that it was not long before she had won the sympathy of those that were best among the crowd.

But it is now time to return to the fate of the third baby, this time a princess. Like its brothers, it was found by the intendant of the gardens, and adopted by him and his wife, and all three were brought up with the greatest care and tenderness.

As the children grew older their beauty and air of distinction became more and more marked, and their manners had all the grace and ease that is proper to people of high birth. The princes had been named by their foster-father Bahman and Perviz, after two of the ancient kings of Persia, while the princess was called Parizade, or the child of the genii.

The intendant was careful to bring them up as befitted their real rank, and soon appointed a tutor to teach the young princes how to read and write. And the princess, determined not to be left behind, showed herself so anxious to learn with her brothers, that the intendant consented to her joining in their lessons, and it was not long before she knew as much as they did.

From that time all their studies were done in common. They had the best masters for the fine arts, geography, poetry, history and science, and even for sciences which are learned by few, and every branch seemed so easy to them, that their teachers were astonished at the progress they made. The princess had a passion for music, and could sing and play upon all sorts of instruments she could also ride and drive as well as her brothers, shoot with a bow and arrow, and throw a javelin with the same skill as they, and sometimes even better.

In order to set off these accomplishments, the intendant resolved that his foster children should not be pent up any longer in the narrow borders of the palace gardens, where he had always lived, so he bought a splendid country house a few miles from the capital, surrounded by an immense park. This park he filled with wild beasts of various sorts, so that the princes and princess might hunt as much as they pleased.

When everything was ready, the intendant threw himself at the Sultan’s feet, and after referring to his age and his long services, begged his Highness’s permission to resign his post. This was granted by the Sultan in a few gracious words, and he then inquired what reward he could give to his faithful servant. But the intendant declared that he wished for nothing except the continuance of his Highness's favour, and prostrating himself once more, he retired from the Sultan's presence.

Five or six months passed away in the pleasures of the country, when death attacked the intendant so suddenly that he had no time to reveal the secret of their birth to his adopted children, and as his wife had long been dead also, it seemed as if the princes and the princess would never know that they had been born to a higher station than the one they filled. Their sorrow for their father was very deep, and they lived quietly on in their new home, without feeling any desire to leave it for court gaieties or intrigues.

One day the princes as usual went out to hunt, but their sister remained alone in her apartments. While they were gone an old Mussulman devotee appeared at the door, and asked leave to enter, as it was the hour of prayer. The princess sent orders at once that the old woman was to be taken to the private oratory in the grounds, and when she had finished her prayers was to be shown the house and gardens, and then to be brought before her.

Although the old woman was very pious, she was not at all indifferent to the magnificence of all around her, which she seemed to understand as well as to admire, and when she had seen it all she was led by the servants before the princess, who was seated in a room which surpassed in splendour all the rest.

"My good woman," said the princess pointing to a sofa, "come and sit beside me. I am delighted at the opportunity of speaking for a few moments with so holy a person." The old woman made some objections to so much honour being done her, but the princess refused to listen, and insisted that her guest should take the best seat, and as she thought she must be tired ordered refreshments.

While the old woman was eating, the princess put several questions to her as to her mode of life, and the pious exercises she practiced, and then inquired what she thought of the house now that she had seen it.

“Madam,” replied the pilgrim, “one must be hard indeed to please to find any fault. It is beautiful, comfortable and well ordered, and it is impossible to imagine anything more lovely than the garden. But since you ask me, I must confess that it lacks three things to make it absolutely perfect.”

“And what can they be?” cried the princess. “Only tell me, and I will lose no time in getting them.”

“The three things, madam,” replied the old woman, “are, first, the Talking Bird, whose voice draws all other singing birds to it, to join in chorus. And second, the Singing Tree, where every leaf is a song that is never silent. And lastly the Golden Water, of which it is only needful to pour a single drop into a basin for it to shoot up into a fountain, which will never be exhausted, nor will the basin ever overflow.”

“Oh, how can I thank you,” cried the princess, “for telling me of such treasures! But add, I pray you, to your goodness by further informing me where I can find them.”

“Madam,” replied the pilgrim, “I should ill repay the hospitality you have shown me if I refused to answer your question. The three things of which I have spoken are all to be found in one place, on the borders of this kingdom, towards India. Your messenger has only to follow the road that passes by your house, for twenty days, and at the end of that time, he is to ask the first person he meets for the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Golden Water.” She then rose, and bidding farewell to the princess, went her way.

The old woman had taken her departure so abruptly that the Princess Parizade did not perceive till she was really gone that the directions were hardly clear enough to enable the search to be successful. And she was still thinking of the subject, and how delightful it would be to possess such rarities, when the princes, her brothers, returned from the chase.

“What is the matter, my sister?” asked Prince Bahman; “why are you so grave? Are you ill? Or has anything happened?”

Princess Parizade did not answer directly, but at length she raised her eyes, and replied that there was nothing wrong.

“But there must be something,” persisted Prince Bahman, “for you to have changed so much during the short time we have been absent. Hide nothing from us, I beseech you, unless you wish us to believe that the confidence we have always had in one another is now to cease.”

“When I said that it was nothing,” said the princess, moved by his words, “I meant that it was nothing that affected you, although I admit that it is certainly of some importance to me. Like myself, you have always thought this house that our father built for us was perfect in every respect, but only to-day I have learned that three things are still lacking to complete it. These are the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Golden Water.” After explaining the peculiar qualities of each, the princess continued: “It was a Mussulman devotee who told me all this, and where they might all be found. Perhaps you will think that the house is beautiful enough as it is, and that we can do quite well without them; but in this I cannot agree with you, and I shall never be content until I have got them. So counsel me, I pray, whom to send on the undertaking.”

“My dear sister,” replied Prince Bahman, “that you should care about the matter is quite enough, even if we took no interest in it ourselves. But we both feel with you, and I claim, as the elder, the right to make the first attempt, if you will tell me where I am to go, and what steps I am to take.”

Prince Perviz at first objected that, being the head of the family, his brother ought not to be allowed to expose himself to danger; but Prince Bahman would hear nothing, and retired to make the needful preparations for his journey.

The next morning Prince Bahman got up very early, and after bidding farewell to his brother and sister, mounted his horse. But just as he was about to touch it with his whip, he was stopped by a cry from the princess.

“Oh, perhaps after all you may never come back; one never can tell what accidents may happen. Give it up, I implore you, for I would a thousand times rather lose the Talking Bird, and the Singing Tree and the Golden Water, than that you should run into danger.”

“My dear sister,” answered the prince, “accidents only happen to unlucky people, and I hope that I am not one of them. But as everything is uncertain, I promise you to be very careful. Take this knife,” he continued, handing her one that hung sheathed from his belt, “and every now and then draw it out and look at it. As long as it keeps bright and clean as it is to-day, you will know that I am living; but if the blade is spotted with blood, it will be a sign that I am dead, and you shall weep for me.”

So saying, Prince Bahman bade them farewell once more, and started on the high road, well mounted and fully armed. For twenty days he rode straight on, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, till he found himself drawing near the frontiers of Persia. Seated under a tree by the wayside he noticed a hideous old man, with a long white moustache, and beard that almost fell to his feet. His nails had grown to an enormous length, and on his head he wore a huge hat, which served him for an umbrella.

Prince Bahman, who, remembering the directions of the old woman, had been since sunrise on the look-out for some one, recognised the old man at once to be a dervish. He dismounted from his horse, and bowed low before the holy man, saying by way of greeting, “My father, may your days be long in the land, and may all your wishes be fulfilled!”

The dervish did his best to reply, but his moustache was so thick that his words were hardly intelligible, and the prince, perceiving what was the matter, took a pair of scissors from his saddle pockets, and requested permission to cut off some of the moustache, as he had a question of great importance to ask the dervish. The dervish made a sign that he might do as he liked, and when a few inches of his hair and beard had been pruned all round the prince assured the holy man that he would hardly believe how much younger he looked. The dervish smiled at his compliments, and thanked him for what he had done.

“Let me,” he said, “show you my gratitude for making me more comfortable by telling me what I can do for you.”

“Gentle dervish,” replied Prince Bahman, “I come from far, and I seek the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Golden Water. I know that they are to be found somewhere in these parts, but I am ignorant of the exact spot. Tell me, I pray you, if you can, so that I may not have travelled on a useless quest.” While he was speaking, the prince observed a change in the countenance of the dervish, who waited for some time before he made reply.

“My lord,” he said at last, “I do know the road for which you ask, but your kindness and the friendship I have conceived for you make me loth to point it out.”

“But why not?” inquired the prince. “What danger can there be?”

“The very greatest danger,” answered the dervish. “Other men, as brave as you, have ridden down this road, and have put me that question. I did my best to turn them also from their purpose, but it was of no use. Not one of them would listen to my words, and not one of them came back. Be warned in time, and seek to go no further.”

“I am grateful to you for your interest in me,” said Prince Bahman, “and for the advice you have given, though I cannot follow it. But what dangers can there be in the adventure which courage and a good sword cannot meet?”

“And suppose,” answered the dervish, “that your enemies are invisible, how then?”

“Nothing will make me give it up,” replied the prince, “and for the last time I ask you to tell me where I am to go.”

When the dervish saw that the prince’s mind was made up, he drew a ball from a bag that lay near him, and held it out. “If it must be so,” he said, with a sigh, “take this, and when you have mounted your horse throw the ball in front of you. It will roll on till it reaches the foot of a mountain, and when it stops you will stop also. You will then throw the bridle on your horse’s neck without any fear of his straying, and will dismount. On each side you will see vast heaps of big black stones, and will hear a multitude of insulting voices, but pay no heed to them, and, above all, beware of ever turning your head. If you do, you will instantly become a black stone like the rest. For those stones are in reality men like yourself, who have been on the same quest, and have failed, as I fear that you may fail also. If you manage to avoid this pitfall, and to reach the top of the mountain, you will find there the Talking Bird in a splendid cage, and you can ask of him where you are to seek the Singing Tree and the Golden Water. That is all I have to say. You know what you have to do, and what to avoid, but if you are wise you will think of it no more, but return whence you have come.”

The prince smilingly shook his head, and thanking the dervish once more, he sprang on his horse and threw the ball before him.

The ball rolled along the road so fast that Prince Bahman had much difficulty in keeping up with it, and it never relaxed its speed till the foot of the mountain was reached. Then it came to a sudden halt, and the prince at once got down and flung the bridle on his horse’s neck. He paused for a moment and looked round him at the masses of black stones with which the sides of the mountain were covered, and then began resolutely to ascend. He had hardly gone four steps when he heard the sound of voices around him, although not another creature was in sight.

“Who is this imbecile?” cried some, “stop him at once.” “Kill him,” shrieked others, “Help! robbers! murderers! help! help!” “Oh, let him alone,” sneered another, and this was the most trying of all, “he is such a beautiful young man; I am sure the bird and the cage must have been kept for him.”

At first the prince took no heed to all this clamour, but continued to press forward on his way. Unfortunately this conduct, instead of silencing the voices, only seemed to irritate them the more, and they arose with redoubled fury, in front as well as behind. After some time he grew bewildered, his knees began to tremble, and finding himself in the act of falling, he forgot altogether the advice of the dervish. He turned to fly down the mountain, and in one moment became a black stone.

As may be imagined, Prince Perviz and his sister were all this time in the greatest anxiety, and consulted the magic knife, not once but many times a day. Hitherto the blade had remained bright and spotless, but on the fatal hour on which Prince Bahman and his horse were changed into black stones, large drops of blood appeared on the surface. “Ah! my beloved brother,” cried the princess in horror, throwing the knife from her, “I shall never see you again, and it is I who have killed you. Fool that I was to listen to the voice of that temptress, who probably was not speaking the truth. What are the Talking Bird and the Singing Tree to me in comparison with you, passionately though I long for them!”

Prince Perviz’s grief at his brother’s loss was not less than that of Princess Parizade, but he did not waste his time on useless lamentations.

“My sister,” he said, “why should you think the old woman was deceiving you about these treasures, and what would have been her object in doing so! No, no, our brother must have met his death by some accident, or want of precaution, and to-morrow I will start on the same quest.”

Terrified at the thought that she might lose her only remaining brother, the princess entreated him to give up his project, but he remained firm. Before setting out, however, he gave her a chaplet of a hundred pearls, and said, “When I am absent, tell this over daily for me. But if you should find that the beads stick, so that they will not slip one after the other, you will know that my brother's fate has befallen me. Still, we must hope for better luck."

Then he departed, and on the twentieth day of his journey fell in with the dervish on the same spot as Prince Bahman had met him, and began to question him as to the place where the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree and the Golden Water were to be found. As in the case of his brother, the dervish tried to make him give up his project, and even told him that only a few weeks since a young man, bearing a strong resemblance to himself, had passed that way, but had never come back again.

"That, holy dervish," replied Prince Perviz, "was my elder brother, who is now dead, though how he died I cannot say."

"He is changed into a black stone," answered the dervish, "like all the rest who have gone on the same errand, and you will become one likewise if you are not more careful in following my directions." Then he charged the prince, as he valued his life, to take no heed of the clamour of voices that would pursue him up the mountain, and handing him a ball from the bag, which still seemed to be half full, he sent him on his way.

When Prince Perviz reached the foot of the mountain he jumped from his horse, and paused for a moment to recall the instructions the dervish had given him. Then he strode boldly on, but had scarcely gone five or six paces when he was startled by a man's voice that seemed close to his ear, exclaiming: "Stop, rash fellow, and let me punish your audacity." This outrage entirely put the dervish's advice out of the prince's head. He drew his sword, and turned to avenge himself, but almost before he had realised that there was nobody there, he and his horse were two black stones.

Not a morning had passed since Prince Perviz had ridden away without Princess Parizade telling her beads, and at night she even hung them round her neck, so that if she woke she could assure herself at once of her brother's safety. She was in the very act of moving them through her fingers at the moment that the prince fell a victim to his impatience, and her heart sank when the first pearl remained fixed in its place. However she had long made up her mind what she would do in such a case, and the following morning the princess, disguised as a man, set out for the mountain.

As she had been accustomed to riding from her childhood, she managed to travel as many miles daily as her brothers had done, and it was, as before, on the twentieth day that she arrived at the place where the dervish was sitting. “Good dervish,” she said politely, “will you allow me to rest by you for a few moments, and perhaps you will be so kind as to tell me if you have ever heard of a Talking Bird, a Singing Tree, and some Golden Water that are to be found somewhere near this?”

“Madam,” replied the dervish, “for in spite of your manly dress your voice betrays you, I shall be proud to serve you in any way I can. But may I ask the purpose of your question?”

“Good dervish,” answered the princess, “I have heard such glowing descriptions of these three things, that I cannot rest till I possess them.”

“Madam,” said the dervish, “they are far more beautiful than any description, but you seem ignorant of all the difficulties that stand in your way, or you would hardly have undertaken such an adventure. Give it up, I pray you, and return home, and do not ask me to help you to a cruel death.”

“Holy father,” answered the princess, “I come from far, and I should be in despair if I turned back without having attained my object. You have spoken of difficulties; tell me, I entreat you, what they are, so that I may know if I can overcome them, or see if they are beyond my strength.”

So the dervish repeated his tale, and dwelt more firmly than before on the clamour of the voices, the horrors of the black stones, which were once living men, and the difficulties of climbing the mountain; and pointed out that the chief means of success was never to look behind till you had the cage in your grasp.

“As far as I can see,” said the princess, “the first thing is not to mind the tumult of the voices that follow you till you reach the cage, and then never to look behind. As to this, I think I have enough self-control to look straight before me; but as it is quite possible that I might be frightened by the voices, as even the boldest men have been, I will stop up my ears with cotton, so that, let them make as much noise as they like, I shall hear nothing.”

“Madam,” cried the dervish, “out of all the number who have asked me the way to the mountain, you are the first who has ever suggested such a means of escaping the danger! It is possible that you may succeed, but all the same, the risk is great.”

“Good dervish,” answered the princess, “I feel in my heart that I shall succeed, and it only remains for me to ask you the way I am to go.”

Then the dervish said that it was useless to say more, and he gave her the ball, which she flung before her.

The first thing the princess did on arriving at the mountain was to stop her ears with cotton, and then, making up her mind which was the best way to go, she began her ascent. In spite of the cotton, some echoes of the voices reached her ears, but not so as to trouble her. Indeed, though they grew louder and more insulting the higher she climbed, the princess only laughed, and said to herself that she certainly would not let a few rough words stand between her and the goal. At last she perceived in the distance the cage and the bird, whose voice joined itself in tones of thunder to those of the rest: “Return, return! never dare to come near me.”

At the sight of the bird, the princess hastened her steps, and without vexing herself at the noise which by this time had grown deafening, she walked straight up to the cage, and seizing it, she said: “Now, my bird, I have got you, and I shall take good care that you do not escape.” As she spoke she took the cotton from her ears, for it was needed no longer.

“Brave lady,” answered the bird, “do not blame me for having joined my voice to those who did their best to preserve my freedom. Although confined in a cage, I was content with my lot, but if I must become a slave, I could not wish for a nobler mistress than one who has shown so much constancy, and from this moment I swear to serve you faithfully. Some day you will put me to the proof, for I know who you are better than you do yourself. Meanwhile, tell me what I can do, and I will obey you."

"Bird," replied the princess, who was filled with a joy that seemed strange to herself when she thought that the bird had cost her the lives of both her brothers, "bird, let me first thank you for your good will, and then let me ask you where the Golden Water is to be found."

The bird described the place, which was not far distant, and the princess filled a small silver flask that she had brought with her for the purpose. She then returned to the cage, and said: "Bird, there is still something else, where shall I find the Singing Tree?"

"Behind you, in that wood," replied the bird, and the princess wandered through the wood, till a sound of the sweetest voices told her she had found what she sought. But the tree was tall and strong, and it was hopeless to think of uprooting it.

"You need not do that," said the bird, when she had returned to ask counsel. "Break off a twig, and plant it in your garden, and it will take root, and grow into a magnificent tree."

When the Princess Parizade held in her hands the three wonders promised her by the old woman, she said to the bird: "All that is not enough. It was owing to you that my brothers became black stones. I cannot tell them from the mass of others, but you must know, and point them out to me, I beg you, for I wish to carry them away."

For some reason that the princess could not guess these words seemed to displease the bird, and he did not answer. The princess waited a moment, and then continued in severe tones, "Have you forgotten that you yourself said that you are my slave to do my bidding, and also that your life is in my power?"

“No, I have not forgotten,” replied the bird, “but what you ask is very difficult. However, I will do my best. If you look round,” he went on, “you will see a pitcher standing near. Take it, and, as you go down the mountain, scatter a little of the water it contains over every black stone and you will soon find your two brothers.”

Princess Parizade took the pitcher, and, carrying with her besides the cage the twig and the flask, returned down the mountain side. At every black stone she stopped and sprinkled it with water, and as the water touched it the stone instantly became a man. When she suddenly saw her brothers before her her delight was mixed with astonishment.

“Why, what are you doing here?” she cried.

“We have been asleep,” they said.

“Yes,” returned the princess, “but without me your sleep would probably have lasted till the day of judgment. Have you forgotten that you came here in search of the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Golden Water, and the black stones that were heaped up along the road? Look round and see if there is one left. These gentlemen, and yourselves, and all your horses were changed into these stones, and I have delivered you by sprinkling you with the water from this pitcher. As I could not return home without you, even though I had gained the prizes on which I had set my heart, I forced the Talking Bird to tell me how to break the spell.”

On hearing these words Prince Bahman and Prince Perviz understood all they owed their sister, and the knights who stood by declared themselves her slaves and ready to carry out her wishes. But the princess, while thanking them for their politeness, explained that she wished for no company but that of her brothers, and that the rest were free to go where they would.

So saying the princess mounted her horse, and, declining to allow even Prince Bahman to carry the cage with the Talking Bird, she entrusted him with the branch of the Singing Tree, while Prince Perviz took care of the flask containing the Golden Water.

Then they rode away, followed by the knights and gentlemen, who begged to be permitted to escort them.

It had been the intention of the party to stop and tell their adventures to the dervish, but they found to their sorrow that he was dead, whether from old age, or whether from the feeling that his task was done, they never knew.

As they continued their road their numbers grew daily smaller, for the knights turned off one by one to their own homes, and only the brothers and sister finally drew up at the gate of the palace.

The princess carried the cage straight into the garden, and, as soon as the bird began to sing, nightingales, larks, thrushes, finches, and all sorts of other birds mingled their voices in chorus. The branch she planted in a corner near the house, and in a few days it had grown into a great tree. As for the Golden Water it was poured into a great marble basin specially prepared for it, and it swelled and bubbled and then shot up into the air in a fountain twenty feet high.

The fame of these wonders soon spread abroad, and people came from far and near to see and admire.

After a few days Prince Bahman and Prince Perviz fell back into their ordinary way of life, and passed most of their time hunting. One day it happened that the Sultan of Persia was also hunting in the same direction, and, not wishing to interfere with his sport, the young men, on hearing the noise of the hunt approaching, prepared to retire, but, as luck would have it, they turned into the very path down which the Sultan was coming. They threw themselves from their horses and prostrated themselves to the earth, but the Sultan was curious to see their faces, and commanded them to rise.

The princes stood up respectfully, but quite at their ease, and the Sultan looked at them for a few moments without speaking, then he asked who they were and where they lived.

“Sire,” replied Prince Bahman, “we are sons of your Highness’s late intendant of the gardens, and we live in a house that he built a short time before his death, waiting till an occasion should offer itself to serve your Highness.”

“You seem fond of hunting,” answered the Sultan.

“Sire,” replied Prince Bahman, “it is our usual exercise, and one that should be neglected by no man who expects to comply with the ancient customs of the kingdom and bear arms.”

The Sultan was delighted with this remark, and said at once, “In that case I shall take great pleasure in watching you. Come, choose what sort of beasts you would like to hunt.”

The princes jumped on their horses and followed the Sultan at a little distance. They had not gone very far before they saw a number of wild animals appear at once, and Prince Bahman started to give chase to a lion and Prince Perviz to a bear. Both used their javelins with such skill that, directly they arrived within striking range, the lion and the bear fell, pierced through and through. Then Prince Perviz pursued a lion and Prince Bahman a bear, and in a very few minutes they, too, lay dead. As they were making ready for a third assault the Sultan interfered, and, sending one of his officials to summon them, he said smiling, “If I let you go on, there will soon be no beasts left to hunt. Besides, your courage and manners have so won my heart that I will not have you expose yourselves to further danger. I am convinced that some day or other I shall find you useful as well as agreeable.”

He then gave them a warm invitation to stay with him altogether, but with many thanks for the honour done them, they begged to be excused, and to be suffered to remain at home.

The Sultan who was not accustomed to see his offers rejected inquired their reasons, and Prince Bahman explained that they did not wish to leave their sister, and were accustomed to do nothing without consulting all three together.

“Ask her advice, then,” replied the Sultan, “and to-morrow come and hunt with me, and give me your answer.”

The two princes returned home, but their adventure made so little impression on them that they quite forgot to speak to their sister on the subject. The next morning when they went to hunt they met the Sultan in the same place, and he inquired what advice their sister had given. The young men looked at each other and blushed. At last Prince Bahman said, “Sire, we must throw ourselves on your Highness’s mercy. Neither my brother nor myself remembered anything about it.”

“Then be sure you do not forget to-day,” answered the Sultan, “and bring me back your reply to-morrow.”

When, however, the same thing happened a second time, they feared that the Sultan might be angry with them for their carelessness. But he took it in good part, and, drawing three little golden balls from his purse, he held them out to Prince Bahman, saying, “Put these in your bosom and you will not forget a third time, for when you remove your girdle to-night the noise they will make in falling will remind you of my wishes.”

It all happened as the Sultan had foreseen, and the two brothers appeared in their sister’s apartments just as she was in the act of stepping into bed, and told their tale.

The Princess Parizade was much disturbed at the news, and did not conceal her feelings. “Your meeting with the Sultan is very honourable to you,” she said, “and will, I dare say, be of service to you, but it places me in a very awkward position. It is on my account, I know, that you have resisted the Sultan’s wishes, and I am very grateful to you for it. But kings do not like to have their offers refused, and in time he would bear a grudge against you, which would render me very unhappy. Consult the Talking Bird, who is wise and far-seeing, and let me hear what he says.”

So the bird was sent for and the case laid before him.

“The princes must on no account refuse the Sultan’s proposal,” said he, “and they must even invite him to come and see your house.”

“But, bird,” objected the princess, “you know how dearly we love each other; will not all this spoil our friendship?”

“Not at all,” replied the bird, “it will make it all the closer.”

“Then the Sultan will have to see me,” said the princess.

The bird answered that it was necessary that he should see her, and everything would turn out for the best.

The following morning, when the Sultan inquired if they had spoken to their sister and what advice she had given them, Prince Bahman replied that they were ready to agree to his Highness’s wishes, and that their sister had reproved them for their hesitation about the matter. The Sultan received their excuses with great kindness, and told them that he was sure they would be equally faithful to him, and kept them by his side for the rest of the day, to the vexation of the grand-vizir and the rest of the court.

When the procession entered in this order the gates of the capital, the eyes of the people who crowded the streets were fixed on the two young men, strangers to every one.

“Oh, if only the Sultan had had sons like that!” they murmured, “they look so distinguished and are about the same age that his sons would have been!”

The Sultan commanded that splendid apartments should be prepared for the two brothers, and even insisted that they should sit at table with him. During dinner he led the conversation to various scientific subjects, and also to history, of which he was especially fond, but whatever topic they might be discussing he found that the views of the young men were always worth listening to. “If they were my own sons,” he said to himself, “they could not be better educated!” and aloud he complimented them on their learning and taste for knowledge.

At the end of the evening the princes once more prostrated themselves before the throne and asked leave to return home; and then, encouraged by the gracious words of farewell uttered by the Sultan, Prince Bahman said: "Sire, may we dare to take the liberty of asking whether you would do us and our sister the honour of resting for a few minutes at our house the first time the hunt passes that way?"

"With the utmost pleasure," replied the Sultan; "and as I am all impatience to see the sister of such accomplished young men you may expect me the day after to-morrow."

The princess was of course most anxious to entertain the Sultan in a fitting way, but as she had no experience in court customs she ran to the Talking Bird, and begged he would advise her as to what dishes should be served.

"My dear mistress," replied the bird, "your cooks are very good and you can safely leave all to them, except that you must be careful to have a dish of cucumbers, stuffed with pearl sauce, served with the first course."

"Cucumbers stuffed with pearls!" exclaimed the princess. "Why, bird, who ever heard of such a dish? The Sultan will expect a dinner he can eat, and not one he can only admire! Besides, if I were to use all the pearls I possess, they would not be half enough."

"Mistress," replied the bird, "do what I tell you and nothing but good will come of it. And as to the pearls, if you go at dawn to-morrow and dig at the foot of the first tree in the park, on the right hand, you will find as many as you want."

The princess had faith in the bird, who generally proved to be right, and taking the gardener with her early next morning followed out his directions carefully. After digging for some time they came upon a golden box fastened with little clasps.

These were easily undone, and the box was found to be full of pearls, not very large ones, but well-shaped and of a good colour. So leaving the gardener to fill up the hole he had made under the tree, the princess took up the box and returned to the house.

The two princes had seen her go out, and had wondered what could have made her rise so early. Full of curiosity they got up and dressed, and met their sister as she was returning with the box under her arm.

“What have you been doing?” they asked, “and did the gardener come to tell you he had found a treasure?”

“On the contrary,” replied the princess, “it is I who have found one,” and opening the box she showed her astonished brothers the pearls inside. Then, on the way back to the palace, she told them of her consultation with the bird, and the advice it had given her. All three tried to guess the meaning of the singular counsel, but they were forced at last to admit the explanation was beyond them, and they must be content blindly to obey.

The first thing the princess did on entering the palace was to send for the head cook and to order the repast for the Sultan When she had finished she suddenly added, “Besides the dishes I have mentioned there is one that you must prepare expressly for the Sultan, and that no one must touch but yourself. It consists of a stuffed cucumber, and the stuffing is to be made of these pearls.”

The head cook, who had never in all his experience heard of such a dish, stepped back in amazement.

“You think I am mad,” answered the princess, who perceived what was in his mind. “But I know quite well what I am doing. Go, and do your best, and take the pearls with you.”

The next morning the princes started for the forest, and were soon joined by the Sultan. The hunt began and continued till mid-day, when the heat became so great that they were obliged to leave off. Then, as arranged, they turned their horses’ heads towards the palace, and while Prince Bahman remained by the side of the Sultan, Prince Perviz rode on to warn his sister of their approach.

The moment his Highness entered the courtyard, the princess flung herself at his feet, but he bent and raised her, and gazed at her for some time, struck with her grace and beauty, and also with the indefinable air of courts that seemed to hang round this country girl. “They are all worthy one of the other,” he said to himself, “and I am not surprised that they think so much of her opinions. I must know more of them.”

By this time the princess had recovered from the first embarrassment of meeting, and proceeded to make her speech of welcome.

“This is only a simple country house, sire,” she said, “suitable to people like ourselves, who live a quiet life. It cannot compare with the great city mansions, much less, of course, with the smallest of the Sultan’s palaces.”

“I cannot quite agree with you,” he replied; “even the little that I have seen I admire greatly, and I will reserve my judgment until you have shown me the whole.”

The princess then led the way from room to room, and the Sultan examined everything carefully. “Do you call this a simple country house?” he said at last. “Why, if every country house was like this, the towns would soon be deserted. I am no longer astonished that you do not wish to leave it. Let us go into the gardens, which I am sure are no less beautiful than the rooms.”

A small door opened straight into the garden, and the first object that met the Sultan’s eyes was the Golden Water.

“What lovely coloured water!” he exclaimed; “where is the spring, and how do you make the fountain rise so high? I do not believe there is anything like it in the world.” He went forward to examine it, and when he had satisfied his curiosity, the princess conducted him towards the Singing Tree.

As they drew near, the Sultan was startled by the sound of strange voices, but could see nothing. “Where have you hidden your musicians?” he asked the princess; “are they up in the air, or under the earth? Surely the owners of such charming voices ought not to conceal themselves!”

“Sire,” answered the princess, “the voices all come from the tree which is straight in front of us; and if you will deign to advance a few steps, you will see that they become clearer.”

The Sultan did as he was told, and was so wrapt in delight at what he heard that he stood some time in silence.

“Tell me, madam, I pray you,” he said at last, “how this marvellous tree came into your garden? It must have been brought from a great distance, or else, fond as I am of all curiosities, I could not have missed hearing of it! What is its name?”

“The only name it has, sire,” replied she, “is the Singing Tree, and it is not a native of this country. Its history is mixed up with those of the Golden Water and the Talking Bird, which you have not yet seen. If your Highness wishes I will tell you the whole story, when you have recovered from your fatigue.”

“Indeed, madam,” returned he, “you show me so many wonders that it is impossible to feel any fatigue. Let us go once more and look at the Golden Water; and I am dying to see the Talking Bird.”

The Sultan could hardly tear himself away from the Golden Water, which puzzled him more and more. “You say,” he observed to the princess, “that this water does not come from any spring, neither is brought by pipes. All I understand is, that neither it nor the Singing Tree is a native of this country.”

“It is as you say, sire,” answered the princess, “and if you examine the basin, you will see that it is all in one piece, and therefore the water could not have been brought through it. What is more astonishing is, that I only emptied a small flaskful into the basin, and it increased to the quantity you now see.”

“Well, I will look at it no more to-day,” said the Sultan. “Take me to the Talking Bird.”

On approaching the house, the Sultan noticed a vast quantity of birds, whose voices filled the air, and he inquired why they were so much more numerous here than in any other part of the garden.

“Sire,” answered the princess, “do you see that cage hanging in one of the windows of the saloon? that is the Talking Bird, whose voice you can hear above them all, even above that of the nightingale. And the birds crowd to this spot, to add their songs to his.”

The Sultan stepped through the window, but the bird took no notice, continuing his song as before.

“My slave,” said the princess, “this is the Sultan; make him a pretty speech.”

The bird stopped singing at once, and all the other birds stopped too.

“The Sultan is welcome,” he said. “I wish him long life and all prosperity.”

“I thank you, good bird,” answered the Sultan, seating himself before the repast, which was spread at a table near the window, “and I am enchanted to see in you the Sultan and King of the Birds.”

The Sultan, noticing that his favourite dish of cucumber was placed before him, proceeded to help himself to it, and was amazed to and that the stuffing was of pearls. “A novelty, indeed!” cried he, “but I do not understand the reason of it; one cannot eat pearls!”

“Sire,” replied the bird, before either the princes or the princess could speak, “surely your Highness cannot be so surprised at beholding a cucumber stuffed with pearls, when you believed without any difficulty that the Sultana had presented you, instead of children, with a dog, a cat, and a log of wood.”

“I believed it,” answered the Sultan, “because the women attending on her told me so.”

“The women, sire,” said the bird, “were the sisters of the Sultana, who were devoured with jealousy at the honour you had done her, and in order to revenge themselves invented this story. Have them examined, and they will confess their crime. These are your children, who were saved from death by the intendant of your gardens, and brought up by him as if they were his own.”

Like a flash the truth came to the mind of the Sultan. “Bird,” he cried, “my heart tells me that what you say is true. My children,” he added, “let me embrace you, and embrace each other, not only as brothers and sister, but as having in you the blood royal of Persia which could flow in no nobler veins.”

When the first moments of emotion were over, the Sultan hastened to finish his repast, and then turning to his children he exclaimed: “To-day you have made acquaintance with your father. To-morrow I will bring you the Sultana your mother. Be ready to receive her.”

The Sultan then mounted his horse and rode quickly back to the capital. Without an instant’s delay he sent for the grand-vizir, and ordered him to seize and question the Sultana’s sisters that very day. This was done. They were confronted with each other and proved guilty, and were executed in less than an hour.

But the Sultan did not wait to hear that his orders had been carried out before going on foot, followed by his whole court to the door of the great mosque, and drawing the Sultana with his own hand out of the narrow prison where she had spent so many years, “Madam,” he cried, embracing her with tears in his eyes, “I have come to ask your pardon for the injustice I have done you, and to repair it as far as I may. I have already begun by punishing the authors of this abominable crime, and I hope you will forgive me when I introduce you to our children, who are the most charming and accomplished creatures in the whole world. Come with me, and take back your position and all the honour that is due to you.”

This speech was delivered in the presence of a vast multitude of people, who had gathered from all parts on the first hint of what was happening, and the news was passed from mouth to mouth in a few seconds.

Early next day the Sultan and Sultana, dressed in robes of state and followed by all the court, set out for the country house of their children. Here the Sultan presented them to the Sultana one by one, and for some time there was nothing but embraces and tears and tender words. Then they ate of the magnificent dinner which had been prepared for them, and after they were all refreshed they went into the garden, where the Sultan pointed out to his wife the Golden Water and the Singing Tree. As to the Talking Bird, she had already made acquaintance with him.

In the evening they rode together back to the capital, the princes on each side of their father, and the princess with her mother. Long before they reached the gates the way was lined with people, and the air filled with shouts of welcome, with which were mingled the songs of the Talking Bird, sitting in its cage on the lap of the princess, and of the birds who followed it.

And in this manner they came back to their father’s palace.

35

WHY THE SUN AND THE MOON LIVE IN THE SKY

Many years ago the sun and water were great friends, and both lived on the earth together. The sun very often used to visit the water, but the water never returned his visits. At last the sun asked the water why it was that he never came to see him in his house, the water replied that the sun's house was not big enough, and that if he came with his people he would drive the sun out.

He then said, "If you wish me to visit you, you must build a very large compound; but I warn you that it will have to be a tremendous place, as my people are very numerous, and take up a lot of room."

The sun promised to build a very big compound, and soon afterwards he returned home to his wife, the moon, who greeted him with a broad smile when he opened the door. The sun told the moon what he had promised the water, and the next day commenced building a huge compound in which to entertain his friend.

When it was completed, he asked the water to come and visit him the next day.

When the water arrived, he called out to the sun, and asked him whether it would be safe for him to enter, and the sun answered, "Yes, come in, my friend."

The water then began to flow in, accompanied by the fish and all the water animals.

Very soon the water was knee-deep, so he asked the sun if it was still safe, and the sun again said, “Yes,” so more water came in.

When the water was level with the top of a man’s head, the water said to the sun, “Do you want more of my people to come?” and the sun and moon both answered, “Yes,” not knowing any better, so the water flowed on, until the sun and moon had to perch themselves on the top of the roof.

Again the water addressed the sun, but receiving the same answer, and more of his people rushing in, the water very soon overflowed the top of the roof, and the sun and moon were forced to go up into the sky, where they have remained ever since.

2. MARGARET ARNDT

CONTENTS

Preface

1. What’s the Use of It?
2. The Engineer and the Dwarfs
3. Käthchen and the Kobold
4. The Old King
5. The Dragon’s Tail
6. The Easter Hare
7. The Nixy Lake
8. King Reinhold
9. The Witch’s Granddaughter
10. Holiday Adventures

PREFACE

ARNDT, MARGARET

Margaret Heaton published her German fairy tales under Margaret Arndt, or Frau Arndt. Historians don't have much information about her life, but we know she was of English descent and married to a German named Paul Arndt. Her cousin was the wife of English novelist G. K. Chesterton. Not only did Chesterton write the introduction to her work, he also illustrated the cover of her collection of German fairy tales, *Fairy Tales from the German Forests*. The book was published around 1913, and features an interesting selection of imaginative fairy tales from Germany with deep conversations, unlike the Grimm Brothers' style of German fairy tales. Some historians and fairy tale experts have likened this collection to a Victorian style of writing.

1

WHAT’S THE USE OF IT?

In a village that was close to the great forest, though it had already become the suburb of a large town, lived a little girl named Hansi Herzchen. She was the seventh child of a family of seven, and she lived at No 7 —— Street. So you see she was a lucky child, for seven is always a lucky number; but nothing had happened to prove her luck as yet.

Her father was a clerk in the post office at the neighbouring town. He would have found it hard to make two ends meet with seven little mouths to fill, but that his wife had brought him substantial help. She was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer peasant and had a considerable dowry when she married. Moreover she was extremely thrifty and industrious. She never spent a halfpenny without carefully considering if a farthing would not do as well. Better £1 in the pocket than 19s. 11½d., she used to say. She drove wonderful bargains at the market. She had no eyes for the artistic and ornamental, though her house was so spick and span, that it was good to look at in its cleanliness and order. She had stored up everything she had possessed since her early youth, and was said to use pins that were at least twenty years old. She managed to put everything to use, and the boys’ knickers were sometimes made of queer materials.

One expression little Hansi often heard at home and that was the word “*useful*.” When she brought in a fresh bunch of darling, pink-tipped daisies and wanted to find a corner for them and a tiny drop of water to put them in, the whole family would exclaim: “Throw them away, what do you want with those half-dead weeds; they’re of no use.” If one of the neighbours gave her a ball or toy, it was the same story: “We’ve no room for such rubbish here.” Each child possessed a money-box, and every coin was immediately put in. They had never had a penny to *spend* in their lives.

The garden was planted solely with vegetables and potatoes and herbs of the most useful character. The scarlet beans in summer, however, would brighten it up, and field poppies and dandelions sprang up in a quite miraculous way to Hansi’s delight. For in each flower was a jolly little fairy, who talked to her and told her stories, because of her being a seventh child and living at No. 7. Perhaps, too, because Hansi’s natural disposition made her look out for wonders, and her loving heart included the field flowers among her friends.

Christmas was coming on; a pig had been killed. Hansi’s father and mother and big brother Paul stayed up all night making sausages, and the children had sausage soup for dinner during the next week.

In preparation for Christmas, Hansi’s mother baked large cakes (called Stollen) of a plain quality, with currants few and far between. Food had become very expensive during the last few years, and no one could deny that seven children were a handful.

She went in to town and returned by electric tram, with the useful things that were intended for Christmas presents for the children, namely:

A PAIR of boots for Paul,

A school-cape for Marie,

Handkerchiefs for Fritz with his name embroidered on them in red cotton,

Stockings for Emma,

A warm hood for Gretchen,

An oilcloth pinafore for Karlchen, who had a special talent for getting dirty,

And lastly a new pinafore for Hansi.

"Now we might be said to have everything ready for Christmas," said Mrs Herzchen, on her return home, "if it were not for the Christmas tree. I suppose we shall have to pay at least one and six for it, and then there are the candles and apples, balls and sweets. It does seem absurd to waste good money on such rubbish. What can be the use of it?"

She talked away in this manner, until she made up her mind to do without the tree for once.

"Your father has no time to see about it," she said to the children. "He is taken up with looking after other people's rubbishing letters and parcels, and I can't be bothered — so put the idea out of your heads, you won't get a tree this year."

The seven children felt very indignant; for it is almost a disgrace in Germany to have no tree; it is worse than going without a pudding on Christmas Day in England. The very poorest families manage somehow to have their tree to light on Christmas Eve. Still they were trained to implicit obedience and respect for their mother, and did not dare grumble much openly.

Mrs Herzchen did not consult her husband about it; so he expected his tree as usual. The good woman felt rather uncomfortable, as if she had either done something wrong, or omitted doing what was right; but she justified herself by saying continually to herself "What's the use of it?"

* * *

HANSI DREAMT that night of a beautiful Christmas tree that reached up to the sky and was covered with shining silver, like cobwebs in the frost, and lit by real stars. She determined that somehow or other they should have their Christmas tree as usual.

When she came out of school at eleven o’clock, she trotted along in the opposite way to home, along the wide high road leading to the woods, with the twisted apple-trees on either side. She made a little bobbing curtsy, and said “good day” to everyone she met who noticed her at all; for she had been taught to be polite and friendly.

The ground was frozen and sparkled brightly; the air brought the fresh colour into her cheeks. She had on a warm hood and cape and a woollen scarf — for her mother was kind-hearted at the bottom and looked well after their material comforts. Hansi’s pretty fair curls peeped out from under the red hood, her blue eyes with their dark lashes were more starry than usual from excitement.

The fir woods looked purple-black against the white fields, and as she came near, she saw the fir-trees covered with silver hoar frost “almost like the tree in my dream,” she thought. Her heart beat faster for a moment as she entered the shade of the solemn evergreen trees, but she did not feel naughty to be running away from home. She felt rather as if she were fulfilling a mission that had been laid upon her.

Meanwhile her mother was worrying and wondering what could have happened that her little girl did not return at the usual time. Then she remembered that Hansi often went home with her friend Barbara Arndt, and then they did their lessons together before dinner. That doubtless accounted for her non-appearance.

Hansi wandered on and on, and the woods seemed deserted. She picked up fir cones and beech nuts and acorns and filled her pinafore with them, also frosted fern leaves and dry grasses exquisitely outlined with hoar frost went into her apron.

At last she stopped before a little fir-tree. This was just the beautiful little tree she wanted. It spread out its branches symmetrically on all sides, and was slender and straight at the top. “That will just do for me! If only I could get it home,” she thought. She tugged at it with her little hands, dropping some of her treasures, but of course it would not move. Just then she heard something stir, and looking round she saw a squirrel peeping at her from behind a big oak-tree near by. This was a wonder in itself if she had known; for squirrels are usually fast asleep in the cold weather, and only wake once or twice to eat some of their store of nuts.

“O, Mr Squirrel, can’t you help me,” Hansi said. Off he went, round and round the trunk, and then suddenly, with a great spring and his tail spread out for a sail, he alighted on Hansi’s tree. He stared at her in a friendly way, and then stretched out one of his dear little paws and offered her a nut, politely cracking it for her first with his sharp teeth which had grown very long whilst he was asleep. She ate it at once, but looked anxious. “O, Mr Squirrel, do cut down this tree for me, and help me to carry it home,” she said, “or else we shall have no Christmas tree, and that would be *dreadful*!”

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke. Mr Squirrel looked at her with his bright eyes, twisted round suddenly, like a cat trying to catch its own tail, and offered her another nut.

“O, Mr Squirrel, *do*,” she said again.

He offered her a third nut, and then he whistled shrilly; it sounded more like a baby crying than a whistle. Then to her surprise, as she looked down the wood path, Hansi saw a troop of little men, such as you see on Christmas cards in Germany, with red caps and green jackets and wooden shoes turned up at the toes. “Real Heinzelmen and no mistake,” thought Hansi delightedly, “they can help me, if anyone can.” She counted them, they were seven in number, like Snowdrop’s dwarfs. They made quite a noise as they marched up in order, whistling a merry tune. When they saw Hansi, they took off their red caps, and their white hair flew about them like a mist, till Hansi could hardly see them any more. The squirrel screamed and shouted at them, and they answered him; but Hansi could not understand at first what it was all about. She thought they must be talking English; she knew a lady who lived near them, and who could only talk English, poor thing. All of a sudden the earth trembled — was it an earthquake? Hansi held tight on to the fir-tree, though its needles hurt her hands. All she saw was the seven little men disappearing into the ground down a long slide such as firemen use, when they are called suddenly from sleep, and are carried by a new mechanical apparatus direct from one floor to the other. The earth closed up again, and Hansi thought it must be all a dream; but in two seconds they were back again with silver hatchets and silver pails. With the hatchets they immediately began to hack away at the tree. They made tremendous efforts, and became quite red in the face. The last moment before it was finally felled, the squirrel bounded off, and tossed a nut to Hansi, who caught it cleverly in her pinafore.

“Dear little men,” she said, “may I have the tree? Will you bring it home for me, and I will give you all my Christmas cake? But I have nothing to hang on it, and make it pretty,” she continued. The dwarfs began to chatter again like so many girls, all trying to say the same thing at once. Then they marched along, dragging the tree with them.

“O, Mr Dwarf, that’s the wrong way home, I’m sure,” said Hansi. But she followed them all the same. They came to where a crystal stream leapt over a little group of rocks. The dwarfs held their buckets under the cascade, and caught some drops. The drops turned into silver fish, each with a little loop on the end of its tail, all ready to hang on the tree.

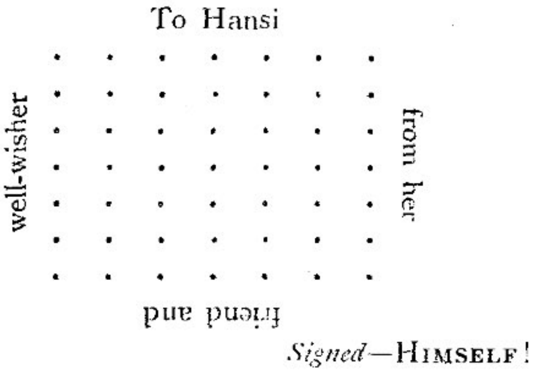
They then took Hansi’s pine cones and ferns and grasses, and even collected the frozen cobwebs from the bushes and let the spray from the waters fall on them, and lo and behold the most exquisite gems were ready for the decoration of the Christmas tree.

“You live at No 7, and you are seven years old,” said the eldest of the dwarfs, addressing Hansi. (“However *could* he have known that?” she thought.) “Perhaps you can tell me what seven times seven makes?”

Hansi considered a moment. “No, we have not got so far as that in our arithmetic,” she replied. “*Twice* seven is fourteen, that I know.”

“Seven times seven is forty-nine and is the square of seven,” said the dwarf. “Always remember that, for it is a most important fact in magic!”

Rummaging in his pocket, he took out a note-book and handed a leaf to her with this diagram and inscription on it



“Thank you *very* much,” said Hansi, feeling duly impressed, and she never forgot this difficult fact in the multiplication table again, although she didn’t quite understand the diagram, and in fact lost it on the way home.

The dwarfs set up the tree on a clear part of the path, and made a little stand for it of boughs cleverly intertwined and moss between. With many a hop, skip and jump of delight, they hung the silver fish and cones and nuts on it; the cobwebs spread themselves out all over the tree. Then they took red holly berries, and stuck them on the boughs where they turned into red candles. All red and silver was this loveliest of Christmas trees!

When it was finished, there was a momentary thrill, and they all cried “Ah!” in tones of wonder.

Then Hansi noticed that a noble herd of deer had approached; the gentle creatures were looking on with the deepest interest.

The woodbirds came flying from all directions, and sang as if it were summer.

“Dear little men, I think I really ought to be going home,” said Hansi anxiously.

“Come along then,” said Himself. “*You* must go back along the high road as you came; we are going to play hide-and-seek; but don’t be afraid, you shall have your tree all right, even if it disappears sometimes.”

They now marched along in the homeward direction; but as soon as they came to the road leading out of the woods they vanished without a word of leave-taking. However, Hansi had not gone far down the road, when she saw a Christmas tree that appeared to be walking by itself across the fields. Other people noticed it too, from the road, and thought how queer it looked. “But *of course*, there is someone behind carrying it,” they said to themselves, and thought no more of the matter. People expect the usual before the unusual, naturally enough, and yet sometimes the unusual is the most probable, as in this case.

Hansi was late for dinner, and had a fine scolding.

“At all events, I suppose you have done your lessons,” said her mother.

“No, mother, I’m afraid not.”

“Well, I never, playing again, I suppose? Now, what *can* be the use of playing, I should like to know?”

This was an exceptionally stupid question; for most people know that little folk cannot grow mentally without play, any more than flowers can grow without sunshine. “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,” is not only a proverb, but it is true as well.

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It was Christmas Eve. Hansi trembled with excitement. “What’s the use of getting so lively, Hansi?” said her big brother Paul despondently. “You know quite well that we are not to have any tree this year. I shall get a new pair of boots, and you a pinafore; these we should have to have anyway. That’s not what I call a merry Christmas.”

“But the bells are ringing, don’t you hear them? and don’t you think you can see just a glimmer of silver through the door?” said Hansi.

The children looked — well, really, perhaps there was a tree there after all.

Just then their father came in tired, but jolly. “Is everything ready? It is late, I have been detained so long,” he said. “Can we go in at once?”

“I haven’t got a tree this year,” whispered his wife in an anxious voice. “I thought we couldn’t afford it. What’s the use of a Christmas tree? We can spend our money in a more practical way!”

“What nonsense. No Christmas tree! but of course you are joking,” said her husband. “I will slip in, and light the candles.” And with these words he disappeared into the inner room, now so mysterious to the waiting children.

Poor Mrs Herzchen nearly began to cry. If only she had not been so silly! Never, never would she neglect to get a tree again! She ought to have considered other people’s prejudices, and Christmas — O well, Christmas only comes once a year.

“I’ve got a surprise for mother,” whispered Gretel, aged ten. “I am going to recite a Christmas poem.” “And I am going to tell the Christmas story from the Bible,” said Hansi. “I have made a letter-box for father,” said Fritz.

“Hush, hush! the bells are ringing — don’t you hear them across the snow?” the children whispered to one another. “But what is that other bell, so soft, so musical and clear!” “That is the summons for us all to enter,” said Paul.

The door flew open, and there stood the most lovely Christmas tree they had ever seen or imagined, all dazzling with silver; silver cones, silver fish, silver nuts and acorns, and red candles, and over all an exquisitely spun cobweb of frost. “That’s my surprise for you all,” said Hansi, who could hardly contain herself for joy. “I found the tree, and the dear, darling Heinzelmen brought it home for me.”

Mrs Herzchen was speechless with astonishment, and her husband not less so. “How very extravagant,” they said, “but how elegant and beautiful! Who can have given it to us?”

But now the children began to sing the sweet German carol sung in every house on Christmas Eve: “O peaceful night, O holy night,” and then, in her earnest, childish way, Hansi told the story of the birth of the Christ-child in the Manger of Bethlehem.

Gretel then stood up eagerly to recite the carol she had learnt at school.

The Children’s King

DEAR CHILDREN COME
On Christmas night,
Put on your gowns
Of purest white.

SPEAK NOT a word
Until you see
The sweet Christ child
On Mary’s knee.

There lies the Babe
An Infant frail.
Is this the King
Whom nations hail?

A helpless King!
His mother's arm
Must hold him safe
From threatened harm.

A tender King,
Most young and sweet,
With dimpled hands
And tiny feet!

A Baby King:
Yet cherubim
Veil their bright eyes
To look on Him.

A mighty King!
For God above
Has crowned Him Lord
And King of Love.

Come kneel and pray,
Ye children dear,
The children’s King
Is lying here!

A glow of warmth and happiness illumined the whole family, and they felt nearer to one another than ever before. The tears actually came into their mother’s eyes, when she realised that they had so nearly missed this moment of supreme joy.

She felt a little ashamed of her presents, and for once in a way suspected herself of having been *too* sensible. “We are not so very poor after all,” she thought. “I might have bought a few toys that would have delighted the children’s hearts, and not have cost much money. But now it is too late!”

But to her surprise, she did not see her presents at all. For each child there was a gingerbread cake with his or her name on it, and then the most lovely surprises — a beautiful doll for Hansi with real eyelashes, fretwork tools for Paul, a doll’s kitchen for Gretel, and so on. For every one of the family there was some delightful gift.

“Thank you, thank you, dear Heinzelmen,” said Hansi, clasping her hands in ecstasy.

There was a big paper parcel addressed to Mrs Herzchen in a very queer handwriting. She opened it with much excitement, thinking it would contain a silk dress, at least. But lo and behold, all the presents that she had intended for her children, tied together with red tape and a card between, on which this verse was written:

“Useful things
For little folk
Are sensible,
But not a joke.”
Signed Himself!

How the children laughed! and even Mrs Herzchen laughed too, though she felt silly and a little disappointed. “It is all very well to play tricks on me,” she said. “Just look at the Müller children next door. They have plenty of toys and are always sucking sweets; but they never have comfortable, warm clothes on, and they look half fed.”

“Of course, mother, you are right,” said the children, “and you were really joking about the tree. We have never had one *half* so lovely!”

Mrs Herzchen felt rather embarrassed at this praise. She called her husband’s attention to the things on the tree. “They can’t be made of chocolate,” she said, trying to bite off the corner of a fir cone. It was quite hard. “I do believe they are all solid silver!” she said.

On closer examination, they found a little lion imprinted on each which proved them without doubt to be of real silver.

“I shall sell them at once, or they may vanish away,” she said.

“I should strongly advise you not to do so,” her husband replied, and the children said, “Oh Mother, do let us keep them always, they are so beautiful?”

“But of what use are they?” said the incorrigible mother who, you see, was not yet quite cured.

Meanwhile the story was noised abroad that Hansi had found a treasure in the forest.

The very next day, Christmas Day, as they were eating their goose, stuffed with apples, there was a ring at the bell — in walked a very pompous Prussian policeman with fierce moustaches.

“Mrs Herzchen here?” he asked abruptly.

“What do *you* want?” asked that lady, much indignant at being disturbed during her Christmas dinner.

“Young person answering to the name of Hansi Herzchen here?”

“Yes, sir. Please, sir, that’s me,” said Hansi, rising and curtsying, and growing very red.

The policeman produced a paper in which he entered all sorts of memoranda.

“*Age and date of birth?*” he demanded of Hansi.

“Seven years old, *of course*,” answered Hansi. “My birthday is on February 27th, if you want to know. It was on a Sunday last year.”

“That’s beside the question.” He looked severe.

“February 27th, 1897,” said Hansi, prompted by her mother.

Residence — temporary or otherwise —— .

Baptism —— date of —— .

Vaccinated —— .

All these facts Hansi’s mother supplied at once. They are so constantly demanded in Germany that she had them always ready at hand, tied up in seven different packets for each child.

Married or single?

Here Hansi giggled, and he entered solemnly the word “*spinster*.”

“Is that something *horrid*?” asked Hansi anxiously.

“No, it only means unmarried,” said Paul laughing. “*What* a fool he is!”

Occupation?

“Please sir, I go to school and learn my lessons, but I play a good deal too.”

“We will write ‘spinster,’” he said, frowning fiercely.

“Now listen to me, child, if you do not wish to go to prison.” The whole family shuddered with horror.

“Take all those silver things off the tree. They are ‘found treasure,’ and belong to the State. You ought to have declared them at once, and saved me all this trouble,” he said.

Hansi began to cry.

Mrs Herzchen was very angry, “Why don’t you mind your own business?” she said. “These things are our property. You will come and demand the clothes off our backs next.”

“Be thankful that I do not accuse you of *stealing* these valuables,” answered the fellow in a terrible voice.

“But are you sure they are not chocolate after all?” he said. “They look remarkably like it, covered with silver paper, you know.”

He examined them carefully and ejaculating, “Well, I never,” tossed them all into a leather wallet that he had brought with him.

Mrs Herzchen poured forth such a storm of abuse, that he threatened her with an action for libel; but she literally turned him out of doors. Her parting words were: “Get out! Go along and make a fool of yourself if you like.”

Some days afterwards, the man took his treasures to the office and gave them up with a self-important flourish, only to be laughed at for his pains. The cones were just common, ordinary fir cones, and the silver fish had turned into little dead trout, smelling very unpleasant.

He chucked them all away in the street, and this was an episode in his dignified career that he did not like to be reminded of.

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ALTHOUGH HANSI’S mother still always preferred useful things to artistic and ornamental ones, still she realised that the useful and ornamental may often be combined, and as she dearly loved her children, and saved up money merely on their account, she determined that they should have a merry Christmas every year, without any special help from the kind little Heinzelmen.

And did Hansi give the cake to her dwarf friends as she had promised to do? Why, of course, she did. The children went all together to the forest on New Year’s Eve, and found the actual spot where the tree had stood. They placed a large piece of cake on the old stump. But they did not see the Heinzelmen or even the squirrel, although they repeated seven times seven is forty-nine in the hope of attracting them.

Now a dear little Heinzelman, whom I met out for a walk, told me this story “himself”; but he vanished at this point, and so must I. I wish Hansi and all her brothers and sisters a very merry Christmas, and so, I am sure, do you.

2

THE ENGINEER AND THE DWARFS

A tunnel had been dug through a crag which had hitherto been considered as a serious obstacle in the railway route; the light now shone through at the farther end. There was a shout of joy from the tired workmen. The air had been stifling in the tunnel; the work was hard and dangerous; several men had been killed in detaching portions of rock that had been loosened by dynamite. It was a great relief to have got through. Now the walls would have to be made smooth with cement — indeed the men had already begun this work at the other end — and the tunnel tested for greater security. Then the express train could run through directly, instead of being obliged to shunt backwards and forwards in a way that made it very uncomfortable for people who did not like sitting with their backs to the engine.

The young engineer, Karl Hammerstein, who had been supervising the men's work, was glad enough to find himself in the fresh air. His head ached violently, the oppression of the atmosphere had well-nigh overpowered him.

The mountain was clothed on this side with tall forest trees; the drooping firs offered an inviting shade. It was seven o'clock in the evening, the men were packing up their tools to go home. They would be obliged to march back through the tunnel; for there was no way round, except through the wildest forest with a tangled undergrowth of brambles and ferns. But they had their lamps, and did not mind the tunnel; it was familiar enough to them, who had worked in it for months.

Meanwhile Karl, who was dead-beat, stretched himself out under the trees, covered himself with his cloak, and fell fast asleep, meaning only to rest a minute or two, before he also set off home.

It was late when he awoke; the full moon was shining. He felt quite dazed. Where could he be?

He had slept in many queer little rooms when he was travelling; but they always had a window and a door. Where was the window? Ugh — he shivered — it was cold. Then an unreasoning terror took hold of him: he was only half-awake as yet. What could that dreadful gap be in the wall of his room, blacker than the darkness? Surely it was a bogey hole leading down to the bottomless pit? The next minute he laughed at his fears, as we usually do when we come safely out of nightmare land and feel the earth — or bed beneath us again.

He saw that it was the mouth of the tunnel, and glancing up he saw the giant fir-tree under which he had been sleeping with outstretched arms above him in the light of the moon.

“Well — I never! what a dunderhead I am!” he said to himself — “fancy sleeping like that, why such a thing has never happened to me before! I had meant to go to have supper and stay the night at the new hotel in Elm. I have heard the landlord’s daughter is an uncommonly pretty girl!”

“Heigho!” he went on, stretching himself, “there’s nothing for it, but to walk home. I might wait a long time before a motor-car came to pick me up here!”

Then he remembered with a sudden start that there was only one possible way back to Elm, and that was through the tunnel. It was not a very pleasant idea to walk back alone through the dark, oppressive tunnel at midnight; luckily he had his lantern with him.

“How could I have been such an idiot!” he muttered to himself again. He found some bread and cheese in his pocket, which he ate with a good appetite. His headache had gone, and he felt much refreshed after his sleep. Then he put on his cloak, lighted the lantern, and set out cheerfully to walk through the tunnel.

He had not gone far into the black darkness, when he thought he heard voices whispering and talking not far away from him; then he distinctly felt something or somebody brush past him.

“Hullo, who’s there?” he called out. Complete silence. He was not easily frightened; but his heart began to beat quicker than usual. “Well, if it’s robbers or tramps, they won’t find much to rob on me,” he thought; for he had only a few shillings in his pocket for his night’s lodging.

It was probably a bat that had strayed in at the opening, he decided. Suddenly he came to a standstill. Right across the way was a mass of freshly fallen earth and rock that quite obstructed his further progress. “Well this is a pretty fix to be in. How aggravating!” he said to himself, and leant for a moment against the wall of the tunnel, to consider what would be best to do. The wall instantly gave way, he stumbled, bruised his arm against a sharp corner of the rock, and his lantern went out. At the same time he heard a sound resembling the slamming of a door. “Donnerwetter!” he exclaimed — a mild German swear which means literally “thunder-weather!” — “whatever shall I do now?” He had a box of matches in his pocket and soon succeeded in relighting the lantern.

“There is nothing for it, but to go back again to where I started from, and wait for daybreak,” he thought.

By this time he had become confused, and had lost the sense of direction; but there *could* be only one way back. So he tramped along a long winding passage that he took to be the excavated tunnel. “How curious, I could have been certain that the tunnel was much wider, and more direct than this. Can I be still dreaming?” he thought.

Suddenly he was startled and astonished to come on a flight of steps leading downwards. There had certainly been no stairs in the tunnel! He saw too that the walls were painted in a decorative way like some of the Catacombs in Rome; only these were far more elaborate. “I’m in for an adventure, I must be lost in the heart of the mountain,” he thought. “Perhaps I shall come upon a robber’s cave, or gipsies may be hiding in these rocks; it is a good thing that I have this pretty little fellow with me,” and he touched the revolver in his breast pocket. He then observed in front of him a faint light, other than that of his lantern and whistled softly with astonishment, as he saw that the way opened out into a cave or vault. A few steps more, and he found himself in an exquisite, though tiny hall, with an arched ceiling supported by pillars of red granite. The walls and ceiling were beautifully inlaid with mosaic work in gold and coloured stones, like the interior of St Mark’s, Venice, and seemed to be of great antiquity, though of this he could not be certain.

The light was so dim that what might have been the brilliant effect of the whole, was lost, and the young engineer thought to himself involuntarily: “This ought to be lit up by electric light — it would look quite different then!” As he was deliberating how electric light might be laid on, a door in the wall opened, and a number of little dwarf men trooped in. They did not see him at first; for he was standing behind a pillar. They settled themselves down on benches that were arranged in a semicircle, and one of them with an important air mounted a raised dais facing them. He was just beginning to speak with the words: “Gentlemen of the Committee,” when they caught sight of the stranger standing in the centre of the hall, lantern in hand. They gave a cry of alarm, and were just going to scuttle away like frightened rabbits, when Karl called out, “Hi — Ho there — Gentlemen of the Committee — good Sirs — don’t run away. I won’t harm you — *Christmas Tree*.”

Now Christmas Tree is the most solemn oath among the dwarfs — it is equivalent to swearing on the Bible with us. How Karl knew this, he did not know; it came to him on the inspiration of the minute. Perhaps his grandmother had told him stories in his childhood about the dwarf men, in which it occurred.

It had an instantaneous effect on the dwarfs who stood still at once. "But you are one of the bad men who are building the tunnel," they cried out. "Aha — we can spoil your little game, my good fellow, we can smash you and your snorting old dragon who is coming here to devour us, into pieces. We can throw rocks on the line — Aha!"

"We have often watched you — though you were not aware of our presence," said the chairman. "We had just called a committee meeting to decide what is to be done about this matter of the tunnel."

"Now you know it is all nonsense about the dragon," said Karl persuasively, as if he were talking to children. "You have heard of trains, haven't you? You are not so behind the times as all that!"

"*Some* of us have seen the dragon and even ridden in him," said Mr Chairman. "There is a famous story about that; but the majority still look upon the railway with suspicion and even distrust. We only ask to be let alone, and not be interfered with by meddling mortals," he said in a gruff voice. "What do we need with you? Our civilization and our history are more ancient even than that of India or Egypt, and from us the human race is descended."

"I tell you what," said Karl, "I could put you up to a thing or two for all that. We live in Modern Europe, you know, and not in ancient Egypt. Now, for instance, why is this beautiful hall, a perfect work of art in its way, so badly illuminated!"

"Badly illuminated! Why, what do you mean?" cried the little men indignantly. "Do you not see our glow-worms hanging in festoons on the walls?"

“O, I say, *glow-worms*! in the twentieth century, that’s rather strong, you know! what you want, is electric light.”

“What’s that?” said the dwarfs curiously.

“You have only to press a little button on the wall, like this,” he pressed his thumb on the wall — “and the whole place is lit up almost as if it were day.”

“We don’t believe it — we don’t believe it,” said the little men.

“But it’s true, I assure you, *Christmas Tree*,” said Karl.

“Wouldn’t it make our eyes blink?” said one thin little fellow.

Karl noticed that the dwarfs’ eyes were small and their faces pale. Most of them had quite white beards and hair.

“That comes of living so long underground, it is a loss of pigment,” thought Karl. “Like a geranium that has been kept in the cellar! Now I could fix it up for you,” said the young engineer, always keenly on the look-out for a job. “We are going to have it laid on in the tunnel.”

“How much would it cost?” inquired the dwarfs.

“O, a thousand pounds or so!” said Karl carelessly. He had heard that dwarfs were very rich, and he was a good man of business, and had his eyes open to his interests.

“That’s a great deal of money, a great deal of money!” said the little men in chorus.

“O, as for that I am sure we could come to an agreement,” said Karl. “By the way,” he went on — “do you happen to have a telephone here? I should like to ‘phone to a friend of mine and tell him where I am. It would be such a joke.”

“What’s a telephone?” asked the dwarfs.

“You don’t know what a telephone is! Himmel! you *are* old-fashioned down here — you are only half civilised!”

“Half civilised, half civilised!” repeated the dwarfs angrily, “let us repeat our civilisation ——”

“I’ll tell you what a telephone is,” said Karl, interrupting this burst of eloquence. “It is a little tube connected with a wire, you put one part of it to your ear, and then you put your mouth to the tube and say: ‘No. 1280,’ and then listen, and your friend will speak to you from miles and miles away, and you can answer him.”

“We don’t believe it, we don’t believe it!” said the unbelieving dwarfs.

“It’s true for all that, *Christmas Tree*,” said Karl. “I could fix that up for you too, if you have any connection with the outer air. You must have,” he continued, sniffing, “for the air is nice and fresh here, quite different to that in the tunnel. Have you a ventilating shaft?”

“O yes,” said the little men, “we can show you that!” And they led him out of the hall. In the passage outside was a great cleft or crevice in the rocks such as we call in England a chine. Above it the moon shone full and bright. A waterfall rushed down on one side; he saw ferns and dear little plants leaning over the water, growing between the cracks of the rocks. There were also glow-worms cunningly arranged in groups that looked like fairy stars. On the other side, he observed to his joy rough steps leading upwards cut in the solid rock. He sighed a sigh of relief, here at least was the way out.

He regarded the pretty sight with the eye of the professional engineer, rather than that of the artist. “That must be a stiff climb for you little men up there,” he said. “Now if you had a lift!”

“What’s that?” asked the dwarfs eagerly.

“It’s a little room that goes up and down when you pull a wire rope.”

“We don’t believe it, we don’t believe it,” said the sceptical gnomes again.

“It’s true nevertheless; now wouldn’t it be fun to have a ride in it? I could fix that up too, you know, if you gave me time and helped a bit yourselves,” said Karl.

“Really you poor things,” he went on, “You do not seem to have heard much of modern technical progress down here in this rabbit-burrow. I beg your pardon I’m sure” — as they looked displeased again — “Now I am really curious to know — have you heard of Zeppelin?”

“Zeppelin, no! — is he the King of Germany?” said the dwarf who had been in the chair.

“Ha! ha! — King of Germany — well he *is* nearly, in some people’s eyes,” said Karl. “He has built an airship; it is the most wonderful of all new inventions, it floats in the air like a boat does in the water.”

Close by it passes, by soft breezes fanned,
Like a great steamboat straight from fairyland

he went on in an enthusiastic way. “You can go for a ride in it any day in Frankfurt, providing the weather is fine and you can afford to pay £15!”

“Just listen to him, just listen to him!” said the dwarfs. “We don’t believe a word you have said. You are imposing on our credulity, you bad man,” and thereupon they flew at him and began to beat him with their clubs, which were heavily weighted, and to pinch him with their long fingers.

It might have gone hardly with him, but quick as thought Karl flashed out the little revolver from his pocket. They seemed to know the meaning of that modern toy; for they crouched back trembling, and not daring to move.

“Now stop it, will you,” he said, “or I shall have to shoot you, and take you home with me to be stuffed or put into the National Anthropological Museum. They would give me a good price for you,” he said musingly — “they would think you were The Missing Link.”

“O please, Mr Hammerstein, don’t shoot us — (“however did the little chaps find out my name!” thought Karl) we will believe all you say, even if it seems the greatest nonsense to us. After all birds fly, bats fly and fairies fly, why should not ships and trains fly?” said the spokesman, who, I must tell you, was a relation of King Reinhold in the Taunus Mountains and was proud of belonging to a royal family.

Karl called him Mr Query, because he was so fond of asking questions, but so slow to take in a new fact, as indeed were all the dwarfs.

“You promised us *Christmas Tree* not to harm us,” said Mr Query, reproachfully.

“Well, I didn’t hurt anyone, did I, but how about your treatment of me? That wasn’t in the contract either,” said Karl.

Meanwhile Karl looked about him curiously. He had never been to dwarfland before, and might never have the chance of visiting it again, and he did not wish to lose the opportunity of seeing all he could.

“Are there any more of you?” he asked the dwarfs.

“I should think so,” they answered. “Hundreds and thousands of us live under this mountain.”

Karl noticed passages running in all directions, and low caves which seemed to be dwellings, many of them richly ornamented and furnished. In one of these caves he observed a looking-glass, and wondered which of the dwarf men trimmed his beard before it. He met a great many little men scurrying about, who cast anxious glances at the giant who had strayed among them. Karl had frequently to stoop; the ceilings seemed very low to him, although they were high enough compared to the dwarf men.

“Where are the female dwarfs?” he asked abruptly.

“Dwarfs have no womenfolk,” Mr Query replied. “We did away with them long, long ago!”

“That was rather rough on them, eh?” said Karl.

“Well it happened so many centuries ago that we have forgotten all about it, and so are unable to gratify your curiosity. Perhaps if you care for antiquities and were to study the pictures on the walls, you might find out.”

“Not my line,” said Karl shortly.

“As we have no women,” Mr Query continued, “we never quarrel and have no differences of opinion.”

“I expect no lady would care to live down here with you in this dark hole,” said Karl, thoughtfully. “But to whom does the looking-glass belong?”

“A fairy comes to visit us occasionally; she makes herself useful and tidies up the place a bit for us,” said the dwarf. “She’s here now — would you like to see her?”

“Of course I should,” said Karl, his heart beating fast at the thought of meeting a real fairy — perhaps she was a princess in disguise, and he might be chosen to win her.

The dwarf drew back the curtain that hung before a beautifully furnished cave, and there Karl saw a young girl who was busy dusting and arranging handsome gold vases on a carved bracket. Even by the pale light of the glow-worms and the lantern which he had not yet extinguished, he could see that she was very beautiful. She had a mass of red-brown hair, that waved in tiny curls about her forehead, and hazel eyes with dark eyelashes. As to her figure, she was small and slight, so that she did not look quite so monstrous in that little world as Karl did. She had a big holland apron on, with a gaily embroidered border. When she saw Karl, she laughed. “To think of meeting a young man in this old hole — how funny,” she exclaimed.

“Are you a fairy?” said Karl, bewildered by her beauty.

“Do I look like one?” she answered with a toss of her bronze curls.

“Not exactly,” said Karl, “but then I have never seen a fairy; you are pretty enough for one!”

She made a little curtsy in acknowledgment of the compliment. “I’ll have finished my work soon,” she said, “and then we will go home together.”

“That will be delightful,” said Karl.

The dwarfs were looking on.

“You may go,” said Mr Query. “You have worked enough for to-day.” He handed her several pieces of gold. Her eyes sparkled with glee as she pocketed the coins; she was proud of having earned some money.

“Follow me,” she said to Karl, “and I will show you the way home. You would never be able to find it alone.”

“The dwarfs have burrowed here like moles,” said Karl aside to the girl, “and I believe they are almost as blind and ignorant.”

“Do not speak disrespectfully of moles,” said a dwarf who had overheard the last part of this remark. “They belong to the most intelligent of all creatures; who can build a fortress like the mole?”

“Norah,” said the dwarfs, “Norah, when are you coming again?”

“Very soon,” she said, “I’ll bring some metal polish with me, and make your vases shine!”

“Norah,” thought Karl, “so that is her name. I wonder where she lives?”

Norah led the way back through intricate passages until they came to the open space where there was the staircase leading up to the outside world. “Good morning,” she said to the dwarfs.

Karl pulled out his watch — yes — the night was already past, it was four o’clock.

“I’ll drop in again soon, and see about your little commissions,” he said to the dwarfs. “Electric light you want, telephone and lift, it will be rather a big job.”

“And what about the airship?” asked Mr Query.

“O I can’t rig that up for you; you must go to Frankfurt and see that for yourselves. Good morning,” and he turned to follow Norah, who was already some way up the stone staircase. From a distance she really looked like a fairy. The light of dawn shone on her wonderful hair; she had taken off her apron, and had on a white dress trimmed with gold, that fluttered as she mounted the steps. At the top she waited to take breath, and Karl easily caught her up. They gazed down into the depths beneath them, but no trace of dwarfland could they see. Even the glow-worms had vanished, and the rough steps looked like natural niches in the rock. They were on the top of the mountain. Near by stood a grove of firs, the trees were so gnarled and stunted from their exposed position that they looked like a dwarf forest, and seemed appropriate growing there.

“Your name is ‘Norah’,” said Karl boldly, “but that is all I know about you!”

“I am no fairy princess, alas,” said Norah, “but only a poor landlord’s daughter. My father and I have the new hotel in Elm!”

“O you must be the pretty innkeeper’s daughter then of whom I have heard so much,” said Karl. “Now isn’t it funny, I had meant to stay the night at your hotel on the chance of seeing you, and now we meet under the earth in dwarfland — romantic I call that! Why do you work for those little beggars?” he continued.

“For the same reason that you have proposed doing so,” she answered, “to earn money. I was picking bilberries on the mountains and strayed into their land by chance one day. I found them busy at work spring cleaning, and helped them a bit, and that was my first introduction to the dwarfs. They pay me well for little work, and starting an hotel costs a great deal of money you must know. I am glad to be able to help my father.”

“You do not come from this part of Germany, you speak quite differently to us,” said the young man inquiringly.

“My home is over the seas,” said Norah. “My father is an Irishman; but we found it hard to get on there, and meant to emigrate to America. Then father changed his mind, and we came to Germany. My mother died some years ago," she said sadly.

"Poor child," said Karl in a deep, sympathetic voice, "there must be a good deal of responsibility on your young shoulders."

"I should just think so," said Norah with a sigh, "but our hotel is going to be a tremendous success!" As she spoke, she led the way through a little narrow path, that crossed a heath where heather grew, and great masses of yellow starred ragwort. "Ah! me beloved golden flower," she cried, pointing the plant out to Karl, who had passed it by a thousand times as a common weed, but to whom it seemed from this day forth to be alive and full of meaning. "We call it fairy-horses in Ireland," she said, with a rapt look on her face, "sure and I can see my native mountains when I pluck it" — and her eyes filled with tears.

She wanted no consoling however, her mood changed quickly enough. "Do come here," she called out to Karl, "and see what I've found now!" She showed him a clump of pure white heather; "it is tremendously lucky," she said, "and you shall have a bit too." So saying she stuck a piece of white heather in his buttonhole — real white heather, not the faded flowers which children sometimes mistake for it. Karl treasured the spray carefully.

"And how did you come to be among the dwarfs?" said Norah. But their further conversation was checked by a little brook that ran straight across the path. Now Norah usually took off her shoes and stockings and waded over this stream; but she did not like to do so with Karl looking on. Karl would have liked to pick her up in his arms and carry her across like a true hero of romance; but he was shy of proposing it. So he fetched some large flat stones, placed them dexterously in the stream, and sprang across himself, then he held out a hand to Norah who stepped over as quickly and gracefully as a young deer.

"Now I will tell you how it was you found me in dwarfland," said Karl as they walked on together. "I was at work on the new tunnel ——"

“You’ll not be telling me that you are a working man?” said Norah.

“No I am an engineer. I was on duty looking after the men, then, somehow or other I fell against the wall of the tunnel and hurt my arm”; he showed her his torn coat as a proof of the story.

“Poor thing,” she interrupted, “did you bind it up properly?”

“O, it was a mere nothing,” said Karl. “Well — I found myself in a strange winding passage that led right down into the central hall of the dwarfs.” He did not wish to say that he had been asleep; he thought that would sound so silly. “Queer little fellows they are, those dwarfs,” he continued, “awfully ignorant too. Now will you believe it they had never heard of the Zeppelin airship?”

“We’ll really have to give them lessons,” said Norah, laughing, “but perhaps they are not so stupid as they make themselves out to be!”

Climbing over boulders and stones, laughing and talking the while like two children just out of school, they reached the bottom of the mountain and saw the village. It could hardly be called a town as yet, though Norah’s father hoped that the new railway station would speedily convert it into one.

“Do you know where our hotel is?” said Norah. “It is at the other end of the village; we will go round through the fields; the village folk stare so; they are up at five o’clock to do their field-work.

“There it is!” she called out proudly, pointing to a large white house with green shutters on which the words “Hôtel Fancy” were written in large gold letters.

“What a queer name for an hotel!” said Karl.

“Yes, don’t you think it is original and attractive?” said Norah. “There are so many hotels called Hôtel Hohenzollern’ — or ‘The German Emperor’ and so I thought we would have a change.”

“It is a splendid idea,” said Karl, who was over head and ears in love with Norah by this time and thought that everything she did and said, was perfect. Still, like a prudent German, he wondered to himself if she would make a good housewife. He knew she must be good at cleaning or the dwarfs would hardly have employed her, but her dainty little hands did not look like cooking.

“What would it matter, if the dinner were burnt sometimes,” he thought, “if I could have such a pretty, fascinating little girl to marry me?”

“Will you come in and have some breakfast?” said Norah as they approached Hôtel Fancy.

“Rather,” he said, “I must own that I am famished. I only had a dry bit of bread and cheese for supper, and that is a long while ago.”

It was early still, Norah’s father was not yet up; so she set to work and lit the fire, and soon had the water boiling for coffee. She set a fine breakfast before him, ham and eggs and sausage and rolls. I am bound in strict veracity to say that love did not prevent his consuming a large amount. He changed his mind about her cooking, and thought that she could do everything well and was a model of perfection.

“Do have some, too, yourself,” he said, and Norah soon joined him with a hearty appetite.

Mr O’Brian, for that was the name of Norah’s father, was astonished to find them at breakfast when he entered the comfortably furnished parlour.

“An early guest, father,” said Norah. “He is going to put up here for the present; he is an engineer at work on the tunnel; good thing for us”; she whispered the last sentence. “I will see about getting your room ready,” she said, turning to Karl.

“Please do not trouble,” said he. “I’m due at the tunnel again at 7 a.m. and it is 6 o’clock now. I hope to return to-night about 8 o’clock; then I shall be glad of a room,” he said, with a hardly suppressed yawn. “Pray excuse me, I had rather a bad night,” he added with a twinkle in his eyes that only Norah perceived.

As soon as he was gone, Norah handed some gold pieces to her father.

“And do you think that I am doing right in taking this money from you, Norah?” he asked.

“Why of course father! I’m telling you that it’s fairy gold, and will bring us luck,” she replied.

The Irish have a great respect for luck and omens; many of them still believe in the good folk, and Mr O’Brian, who was of a very easygoing disposition, was quite satisfied with this explanation.

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Some weeks passed. Karl and Norah became better friends every day. All Karl’s previous notions of the universe had been knocked on the head by his visit to dwarfland. He had thought that he knew almost everything that there was to be known, but now he was always on the look-out for surprises. Moreover his love for Norah had opened his eyes. Every bush seemed ablaze with fire, and the roses and pinks in the gardens smelt as they had never smelt before.

Norah was like a fairy princess; she was not easy to win, she loved her freedom, and wished to call no man lord and master. Because she was such a wild bird and of a poetic and dreamy temperament, Karl’s practical mind appealed to her. He possessed that which she and her father lacked. She was tired of her father’s promises and castles in the air, which usually ended in bitter disappointment. How many guests had they had since Hôtel Fancy had been opened? She could almost count them on her fingers. The peasants frequented the old inn that they were accustomed to in the village, and very few strangers came their way.

“I will play waiter on Sunday and help you,” said Karl one Saturday evening when he had returned from his work.

“Indeed and you’ll not need to,” said Norah with a pretty Irish lilt in her voice, “it’s not many people that will be coming! It will be different of course when the new station is built; then we shall be flourishing,” she continued.

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IT WAS A FINE SUNDAY AFTERNOON. Karl and Norah sat in the garden under the plane-trees which made a chequered pattern in shadow on the ground, and sipped glasses of Apfelwein or cider in German fashion.

“It was a queer thing that we two should meet in the little people’s land. It seems as if we were meant to pull together, doesn’t it?” said Karl with an effort.

Norah jumped up immediately, saying that she must see if the water was boiling for coffee.

“No, no,” said Karl catching her by the hand; “you are not going to run away like that; you’ve just got to listen to me, Norah; for I can’t keep it in any longer. You are my fairy princess — I love you with all my heart, and I want you to promise me to be my little wife — will you?”

“You don’t know me yet,” said Norah blushing like a rose. “I’ve got a most awful temper!”

“I’ll risk it,” said Karl laughing, and they plighted their troth under the trees in the garden with no one but the empty chairs and tables looking on, that were spread in anticipation of the guests who had not arrived.

So Karl and Norah were engaged to be married and were as happy as ever it is possible to be in this world! They did not celebrate the event in the usual ceremonious German fashion; for Norah’s friends and relations were in Ireland and she had only a few acquaintances in Germany as yet. Karl’s mother was a widow, and lived with her married daughter in Pomerania; so she could not come so far south for anything less than a wedding or a funeral.

Now Karl began to consider the material side of the question. “Will the love that we are rich in, light the fire in the kitchen, and the little god of love turn the spit O!” What had they to live on? He was a young man, and his income was very small; it takes many years in Germany to make a career as engineer, unless you are exceptionally lucky and have influential friends.

Hôtel Fancy was rather like its name and did not pay at all as yet. Now Karl had not forgotten the dwarfs, and Norah began to miss the gold pieces which had disappeared fast enough in the last few weeks.

“I tell you what,” she said, “we will go together to dwarfland. You can arrange about the electric light, and I will do some metal polishing; we will meet afterwards and come home again together, it will be splendid fun!”

“How can we get there?” asked Karl somewhat dubiously.

“Why, the same way as we came out — through the rocky gap; I know the way as well as anything, I have been there frequently,” said Norah.

It was early autumn; the evenings had begun to close in. Karl had managed to get off earlier than usual; still it was almost dusk as the two set out to go to dwarfland. The sun was setting and threw a wonderful golden glow over the world that was reflected in the hearts of the young lovers.

“My stones must be there still,” said Karl as they came to the little brook, “for who could have taken them away?” Yet to his surprise there were no stones there; neither were any to be found in the neighbourhood. There was nothing for it, but to carry Norah over. He did not feel so shy and embarrassed this time, as he picked up his little sweetheart laughing and struggling in his arms.

“You are as light as a feather,” he said as he set her down again.

“A feather bed, you mean,” she said, “and they are a pretty fair weight. I shall never get used to German feather beds,” she continued. “I can’t even get them to look right when I make them and shake them!”

"You need to be born and brought up to them to appreciate them," he replied, "but never mind, what does it matter, what is a feather bed in comparison with our love?" They laughed for pure joy and good humour as they walked along; ah how quickly time passes when one is so happy! The sunlight gilded the rocks before them, till they looked as if they contained streaks of gold ore. They crossed the little moor, and clambered over the rocks till they reached the stunted fir-grove.

Looking back they saw that the sky had become a glowing red as it often does just before the light dies out; seen through the dark, twisted trees the wood appeared to be on fire. The lovers sat down and gazed for a few moments in silence till the glory faded from the sky.

"Now for it, Norah," said Karl getting up and offering her a hand, "the way down into dwarfland must be quite near here!"

"Of course I know, I can find it at once," she answered.

They searched carefully around for the great crack in the rocks, but could find nothing in the least resembling it.

"How absurd; how *can* we miss it when it is certainly not more than a yard or two away," said Norah.

"The steps were not so easily recognisable, if I remember rightly," said Karl, "but we are sure to find them in a minute."

It grew darker and darker; the mountain was covered with boulders of stone, juniper bushes and stunted trees; but no trace of the great rent in the mountain-side could they discover.

"Did we dream it all?" said Karl.

"Impossible, why I have been down there many times," said Norah beginning to feel bitterly disappointed.

"Supposing I were to fetch some of my men here and blow up the rocks with dynamite; we must be able to get in then, for the mountain is as full of dwarfs as bees in a hive," said Karl, who was getting in a temper.

“And do you think they would reward you handsomely for your services,” said Norah sarcastically, “and O the poor little men, they always treated me with the utmost kindness and politeness, and gave me far more money than ever I bargained for!”

“They nearly pinched me black and blue, till I frightened them with my revolver,” said Karl.

“The wretches!” said Norah, “but why?”

“Because I was silly enough to tell them about the airship, and they thought I was humbugging them.”

“How absurd!” Norah exclaimed. “But what are we to do now, Karl?” she continued in a doleful voice. “I *must* have some money; we are still in debt for the greater part of our furniture; and the house is heavily mortgaged.”

“If I could only get a good post!” said Karl sighing deeply. “I had reckoned on those dwarf chaps!”

“We shall never be able to marry,” said Norah, now in the depths of despair; “our house will have to be given up, and our things sold by auction, and I, O I shall have to marry a horrid, rich old peasant who will treat me as a servant, and father will be obliged to work in the fields.” With this she burst into tears.

It was quite dark now save for the new moon whose pale crescent shone in the sky. Norah observed it in spite of her tears.

“The new moon!” she exclaimed. “O do let us turn all the money that we have in our pockets. How much have you got Karl?”

“About 10 shillings,” he replied.

“O you are richer than I am; I have only 8d. in my purse; nevertheless let us turn what we have, and it will be sure to bring us a fortune.”

Karl laughed. “You little fairy,” he said, and looked at her with admiration; then involuntarily his eyes strayed in the direction of the fir-grove. He thought he could see something moving there. Norah looked too.

“Karl,” she said excitedly, “I do believe it is the dwarf men after all; who else could it be?”

At the same moment they caught sight of a queer form with a turned-up nose and peaked cap clearly outlined against the sky, and recognised Mr Query.

“Hullo!” said Karl.

“[text missing in original] to you,” he said in a droll manner.

“Now, Mr Dwarf,” said Karl, anxious to proceed to business, “what about our little agreement as to electric light, etc.?”

“The committee has decided against it,” said Mr Query emphatically. “What do we want with your new-fangled inventions; you would bring your workmen with you; they would discover our treasures, and turn the whole place into a mine, and of course we should be obliged to decamp.”

“Well, there is something in what you say,” said Karl to whom this idea had already occurred, “but we could avoid that catastrophe!”

“As for you,” continued the dwarf turning to Norah, “we have discovered that you are a human being also, and no fairy; therefore we shall not require your services any longer.”

“What a horrid way to give me notice, as if I could help not being a fairy!” said poor Norah weeping bitterly.

The little fellow was much distressed; he could not make out what was the matter with her.

“Don’t cry, little Fräuleinchen,” he said, “I am sure we never thought you were so fond of us as all that; it is very gratifying, but it is too late now to alter our decision; the way down into our kingdom is sealed for ever!”

“I could soon open it again,” said Karl wrathfully.

“As for that, it would not be quite such an easy matter as you think,” said Mr Query mockingly. “However we are willing to offer you terms,” he continued, “if you will leave us alone and protect our secrets.”

“What terms?” said Karl and Norah eagerly.

"You shall see," said the dwarf, "follow me to the fir-trees." So saying he sprang down from the stone on which he had been sitting and came up and shook hands with them.

"We are going to be married! what do you think of that?" they informed him.

"Humph! Your taste, not mine," said Mr Query. "However Norah will be able to clean your gold and silver dishes capitally; that's a comfort for you."

"We haven't got any gold and silver dishes to clean, alas!" said Norah.

"Poor things," said Mr Query, "well we'll see." He proceeded to the fir-trees where the Gentlemen of the Committee were again assembled, standing in a solemn semicircle. "If you will sign this contract, we are willing to give you a reward. I speak in the name of the Gentlemen of the Committee," said Mr Query, and the little men nodded their heads in assent. He drew out a roll of parchment from a bag he carried with him and handed it to Karl. Norah looked over his shoulder.

On the parchment was written the following:

WE,

KARL HAMMERSTEIN,
Norah O'Brian,

PLEDGE OUR SOLEMN oath Christmas Tree, that we will not attempt to visit dwarfland again, or molest the dwarfs in any way, by offering them modern inventions for which they have no use, etc., etc., or by revealing their secret chambers to the glaring light of day.

Signed..............................

“We are willing enough to sign,” said Karl, “but what are your terms, old man; we want to know that first. You offered us a bribe, you know.”

“All in good time,” said Mr Query. “Gentlemen of the Committee, display the treasure!” The dwarf men formed themselves into a ring, in the centre of which Norah and Karl could see masses of what looked like solid gold. “You may take as much of this as you like,” they said, “and we warrant you on our solemn word of honour *Christmas Tree* that it is pure, unalloyed gold.”

“We’ll sign anything you like, dear little men,” said Norah, joyfully, “and I invite you all to my wedding!”

“Three weeks from to-day,” said Karl.

But Norah was too excited to notice what he was saying.

“I shall always believe in the new moon,” she repeated again and again. “How shall we carry it?” she exclaimed suddenly. “I have not even got a basket with me.”

“My men shall trundle it along for you in wheelbarrows,” said Mr Query. “No please, do not say ‘thank you.’ I have a great objection to being thanked.”

Karl and Norah now signed the document with joyful hearts. Norah professed herself very sorry not to see her dwarf friends again. She had a real affection for the droll little men.

“You may come across us sometime again, who knows,” said Mr Query. “We make excursions into your world from time to time. It is improbable but not impossible that we may meet again. Good-bye!” A brilliant flash as of lightning shot from under the ground; the earth trembled and shook. Norah clung to Karl in terror; for she thought that the earth would swallow them up too. Then Mr Query and the dwarfs disappeared underground calling out as they did so: “You see we have our lift and our electric light too, Mr Engineer — ha! ha! — we are not quite so behind the times as you thought us — ha! ha!”

Norah and Karl stood still in speechless astonishment; then they looked anxiously for their gold, fearing that the dwarfs might have played them a trick after all. But no, there were two jolly strong-looking little fellows with wheelbarrows. “We’ve got the gold all right,” they said. “Don’t you be afraid. We’ve put some dirty old potatoes at the top,” they continued with a cunning expression on their faces, “just in case we meet anyone on the way you know — we should have to hop skip and jump — one, two, three and off, and it might look awkward for you.”

“I am sure it’s very kind of you,” said Norah, “and we can never thank you enough,” and off they all set down the mountain. It was a troublesome job to get the heavy wheelbarrow over the stream. Norah declared afterwards that some of the gold was lost there; but they found no trace of it again if it were so. They did not feel safe until they reached the gate of Hôtel Fancy.

“Shall we put it in the back yard or in the stable?” said the little fellows in a hoarse whisper.

“Put it in the corner of the stable,” said Norah, “as we have not got a horse no one goes in there. We will manage the rest, *thank you* so much.”

“*Please* don’t thank us,” said the little men, “dwarfs are not used to that, and it hurts their feelings.”

“Well, here is something for your labours,” said Karl, and he gave the little men a handful of silver. They turned it over and over and seemed to regard it as a great curiosity. Then they heard a movement in the house, and quick as lightning they were off before Karl and Norah could say good-bye.

Mr O’Brian was pacing up and down in a great state of agitation; it was nearly midnight and he feared they might have met with an accident. “There’s no depending on the fairies,” he said to himself, “and dwarfs are said to be treacherous,” so you see he knew something of what Norah was up to.

His joy was the greater when Norah and Karl rushed in and dragging him to the stables showed him the pile of gold. “I’ll be for taking it to the bank at once,” he said, “you never know but what it may melt away, or turn into a heap of leaves, I’ve read stories like that.”

“Our wedding shall be next week,” said Karl, joyfully.

“And aren’t you going to give me any time to get my trousseau?” said Norah with a dancing light in her eyes that made her look more enchanting than ever. “Sure and I’ll be wanting the finest trousseau that ever a princess had.”

“We’ll turn Hôtel Fancy into a palace,” said Mr O’Brian.

The wedding was celebrated three weeks from this date, as they had agreed. Norah wore an exquisitely soft cream silk gown, embroidered with real gold; it was said that the embroidery was a present from the dwarfs. Certain it is too that she wore an old pearl necklace of such marvellous workmanship that the like was never seen before.

The tale was whispered that a little deformed man had been seen to slip a parcel containing the necklace into the letter-box.

Norah’s relations came over from Ireland to be present at the wedding, and you may be sure that Karl’s mother arrived too all the way from Pomerania to share the festivities and the cake. Hôtel Fancy was crammed with guests; every available room was occupied; there was some talk already of enlarging the house.

One of the presents that the bride had from her husband, was a looking-glass, set with precious stones. People thought that it was a curious wedding-present, and wondered if Norah were exceptionally vain. But Karl declared that if it had not been for a looking-glass he might never have known his wife, a remark which sounded more mysterious than ever.

Many conjectures were made concerning it, but none of them were half so strange as the truth. Another present was a brooch set in diamonds in the shape of a crescent moon.

As they were now wealthy, Karl was able to indulge his passion for mechanical inventions, and Hôtel Fancy was full of the most delightful surprises: fountains in unexpected places in the spray of which little balls danced up and down, a rare gramophone that played the most soft and pleasant music, every variety of electric light and so on.

Norah was a little disappointed that her friends the dwarfs did not come to the wedding; but what could she expect if her mother-in-law and uncles and aunts and cousins were all asked as well! Could she expect that the dignified Mr Query would condescend to become an object of general curiosity? I have heard that the little men called and left their cards some days after the wedding, when Norah and Karl were away on their honeymoon, and that Mr O’Brian treated them as royal visitors, and that they left charmed with his hospitality, and astounded at the many entertaining and marvellous things that were to be seen in Hôtel Fancy.

3

KÄTHCHEN AND THE KOBOLD

Half-way up the long steep hill that leads from Soden to Königstein, a rough road branches off to the left, plunging suddenly into a valley, and passing through the little village of Altenhain. As you walk down this steep rocky incline, the Taunus Mountains rise up grand and high in ever-changing panorama.

At the bottom of the hill lies Altenhain, an ordinary enough Taunus village, save for the beautiful shrine that stands on the high road. There a Crucifix hangs between two enormous poplar trees, one of the most beautiful natural altars in the world. The trees are tall and pointed like church spires, the trunks venerable with age. May the lightning spare these grand old trees, and the winds play gently through their boughs!

In this village lived a schoolmaster with his wife and family consisting of a daughter, twelve years old, and a baby boy. They were not really poor; for, besides their income, they had a piece of land to grow potatoes and vegetables; also a strip of vineyard and fine strawberry fields on the Dachberg, the produce of which they sold in Frankfurt for a good price. Moreover, they kept pigs and chickens and geese, and two dear little goats that gave them milk.

On a fine September day Käthchen (that was the daughter's name) was on the Dachberg, helping her parents to gather up the potatoes for the winter. Two sacks stood already full, looking from a distance like funny old peasants. Käthe liked to watch the potato fires that are lit to burn the refuse of the plants, smouldering and crackling in the dry autumn air, and the smoke curling up in the clear sky.

It was now about five o’clock, and as she had worked all day, she was tired and began to groan and grumble. So her mother said: “Hurry up and go home now, child, before it gets dark. Fetch the baby (the neighbours had taken charge of it for the day), light the fire, put on the kettle, and peel and boil the potatoes for supper.”

Käthe was only too glad to be let off; her tiredness soon vanished as she flew down the steep, grassy slope of the Dachberg, slipping and tumbling every minute. The sun was low, and glowed through the pines and larches, which stand here together, making a wonderful contrast.

Käthe found her way across the wet emerald field coloured with patches of exquisite lilac from the autumn crocuses growing there in thousands, hanging out their cheeky little orange tongues. She sang and shouted for joy, and a feeling half sadness, half exhilaration, that comes to us often at the twilight, came over her. She wore a little red skirt and loose cotton blouse, and a tidy pinafore put on in order to cover her soiled frock on the way home. Her hair was ash blonde, and braided in two plaits round her head. Her eyes were dark and deep-set, and were a strange contrast to her hair. She passed over the tiny bridge where the brook crosses the field, and gathered a bunch of wild flowers, meadowsweet and harebells, water forget-me-nots and ragged robin, and made a pretty nosegay. She also picked a graceful spray of hops, the leaves slightly tinged with red, and wound it in and out of her hair. She had forgotten the baby and the supper and all the things for which she was responsible, and was just a little maiden living in her own enchanted land.

Now the path wound close by the pine woods, and the air seemed to grow chillier and more solemn. She saw great white clouds resting on the

Dachberg above her. She seemed so far away, down in this valley and so alone. But she knew that her father and mother were near, probably watching her from the hill-top; it was silly to be frightened, she knew the way so well.

Suddenly something sprang out of the bushes on to the path in front of her. She gave a great jump, but then so did he and she saw that it was only an old green frog. He cheered her up at once, and she began to poke at him with a stick and to sing:

THE FROG SITS in the rushes,
The funny fat old man,
And sings his evening ditties
As sweetly as he can,
Quark — Quark — Quark.

BUT AS SUDDENLY AS he had appeared on the scene, the frog vanished again with a leap and a bound into the dark waters of the little brook that ran along by the side of the way.

Then she heard a rustling of the bushes and saw a little red squirrel peering at her with his bright, inquisitive eyes. Round and round the tree-trunk he went, enjoying himself thoroughly, and making fun of Käthchen, playing peep-bo like a baby.

The sun glowed through the tree trunks. It must be about six o’clock. “I must hurry up or supper will not be ready when my father and mother come home,” she thought.

She then became aware of the sound of footsteps coming towards her along the path.

“Probably a peasant from Altenhain,” she thought, and was pleased to think of meeting a friend. But the footsteps sounded strange and light, more like the pattering of raindrops through leaves, and then for a moment, she turned giddy; it seemed to her as if the trees were really rushing past her, as they seem to do when we look at them out of a railway carriage. One of the young oak trees seemed to be running towards her down the path; but as she looked more closely, and her head became steadier, she saw that it was a boy a little older than herself, who came running towards her, and very queer he looked.

He had a great mass of brown curly hair tumbling about his head; green ears — it seemed to her, *could* it be possible? No, it must be that he had stuck oak leaves into his curly locks for ornament, pretty oak leaves tinged with soft red. Moreover he had the bluest and strangest eyes she had ever seen. They shone like wonderful jewels at one moment, and then turned dull and opaque and looked almost dead. He had on rough green trousers, and a white shirt with yellow embroidered braces; his feet were bare and very brown. When he saw Käthe, he gave a wild kind of Indian whoop, and danced round and round her, much to the poor child’s dismay, his eyes flashing all sorts of colours. Her heart beat fast, but not a word or sound would come out of her mouth.

The boy then made a deep bow, and took her by the hand. Soon he had his long arms round her waist and was trying to kiss her.

Käthe began to cry with fear and indignation, “You rude, naughty boy,” she said, “I will tell my mother of you.”

The imp seemed much surprised, caught one of her tears on his finger, held it up to the light and then sucked it, making funny faces all the time. Käthe could not help laughing, and then she dried her tears with a corner of her apron. She sat down on a tree-trunk for a moment and tried to think.

Immediately the boy sat by her, and begged her to give him a kiss. He looked quite nice and pretty for the moment, and Käthe thought she had better do as he wished, or he might begin his antics again. So she gave him a motherly kiss, just as she would give to her baby brother, smack! on the cheek. Immediately the queer look went out of his eyes, and a more human expression took its place.

“Käthe,” he said, “Käthe, I am but a lonely little imp of the forest, but I love you, Käthe, and I want you to marry me, and live with me always, and be my own little wife. Will you, O will you? O *do, do,* do,” he said, dancing up and down in wild excitement.

“O goodness gracious me, you are certainly quite crazy,” said Käthe, “I will tell my mother of you!” She began to cry again, and smacked him whenever he tried to come near her.

Then he seized her by the hand and dragged her after him into the wild woods, till they were lost in the forest.

“O dear, O dear, whatever *shall* I do? what will mother say when she finds no Käthe, no supper, and no baby. Boo-o-o-o!”

“Never mind,” said our imp consolingly, “you can’t help it now, you have run away with me you see.”

“I didn’t, indeed I didn’t,” interrupted Käthe indignantly.

“I will send a moonshine Käthchen to take your place for the night. You *are* fond of dreaming, aren’t you?”

“O yes, mother often calls me ‘Träum Lies’ (Dreaming Liese).”

“Well then, it’s all right, she will not notice anything, and you and I will have fine times together. If you won’t marry me, at least, we can get *engaged* you know, that will be fine fun.”

“Hum ——” said Käthe, “that *would* be amusing. We might *play* at being engaged! that would not matter.”

“Have you a gold ring for me?”

“O we will go and buy one at the flower shop,” said he.

“At the *flower* shop, that is a funny place to buy rings at,” said Käthe.

"Buttercups and dandelions melted to a yellow heat make splendid fairy gold," he replied.

"Ah, then you really *are* a fairy!" said the little girl.

"Why of course, did you think I was a human child like you? What *did* they teach you at school?"

"Reading, writing and arithmetic, history and geography and scripture and sewing," said Käthe.

"But not how to know a fairy when you see one, O my stars!" said our hero.

WHAT IS the good of learning
To read and write and sew,
To count and do addition
If fairies you don't know?

HOW DO YOU KNOW A FAIRY?
O by his glittering eye,
And by his light, light footsteps
You know when he goes by.

O WHAT ARE school and lessons,
My little maiden, pray,
If to the land of fairy
They do not show the way?

So he sang, and Käthchen thought to herself: “I’ve always suspected that we did not learn *everything* at school.”

By this time her little head was completely turned; she thought no more of supper or mother or baby, but only wondered with round eyes what would happen next.

The moon shone brilliantly through the branches, and she noticed that the trees began to move, and some of them quickly changed places.

“Have you ever seen the trees dance?” said our hero. We will call him Green Ears; for I had forgotten to say that being a tree-imp, his ears were shaped like oak leaves, and were green tinged with pinky red. It was peculiar of course, but not so very noticeable on account of his thick curly hair. He was able to move them if anything startled him, to prick up his ears in very truth; then you saw that they really *belonged* to him.

The trees did not wait for Käthe to reply; they formed themselves in long avenues and began a stately dance, something like a quadrille.

A soft fairy music was played by an invisible band. Squirrels sprang at intervals from one tree to another, spreading out their bushy tails and uttering strange cries like new-born babies.

Birds flew in and out singing and keeping time to the music and rhythm of the dance. It was a strange sight, grotesque yet beautiful; the trees took half human forms and faces; it was funny to see how they joined hands (or branches) from time to time in the dance. After they had watched for some time and the sport had become monotonous, Green Ears took Käthe to the top of the hill, and there they saw the beautiful peaked mountain called the Rossert, bathed in the moonlight.

“Well, children, enjoying yourselves on this fine night, I hope?” said a woman of tall and commanding presence. “Will you come home and have supper with me? I am sure Green Ears has forgotten to offer you anything to eat.”

Here she chucked him under his pointed chin.

The two children, fairy and human, turned and followed her, they felt that she was a person of authority and must be obeyed. Her fair hair fell in waving masses almost to her feet, it was covered with soft feathers, as if she had recently been filling feather beds.

The children saw a lighted cottage before them, with red roof and black-beamed walls like so many in the Taunus. A strong smell of honeysuckle was wafted towards them.

"This is my wood cottage, it is quite close to the Rossert, as you see. Some people call me the wood-woman, others Frau Holle," she said. "The Old King (the mountain called Altkönig) is my brother; Olle (slang in German for *old*) or Holle, it is all the same, we are all relations in the Taunus, you must know!"

In front of the house was a dear little garden. The moonlight shone brightly on the flower-beds. The fairies were awake and peeped out with the greatest interest as the children entered.

Over the door was written in letters made of light, like those beautiful advertisements of beer and chocolate which so adorn the city of London by night:

This Way to Fairyland

Käthe felt that she was learning more in one night than in all her life before of that strange dream-world on the borders of which we live.

The house was so neat and tidy, that it looked as if it had just been spring-cleaned; the windows stood wide open, the moonlight streamed in. A little table was laid for supper.

Frau Holle invited them to sit down and they did so at once.

Green Ears sat opposite to Käthe staring at her with a wistful expression of adoration and love in his eyes.

A chocolate pudding with cream and sugar and a bilberry jelly stood on the table, also rolls which were thickly buttered and spread with various kinds of fairy sausage purely vegetarian in character. Mugs of delicious-looking milk were ready for each child.

But the supper reminded Käthe of her home and she felt a little uneasy.

However she had *at the bottom of all* a comfortable feeling that all was right. This is the way with many of our self-imposed troubles, big people's as well as little people's. We groan and grumble, and express our views that everything is very wrong, and the world is soon going to the dogs, but *at the bottom of all*, we know that it is all right, and that all things work together for good.

Green Ears began to fidget; he was like a little girl I know, and *could* not sit still for more than one minute.

"Frau Holle," he said, "Frau Holle, Gracious Lady, we want to get engaged."

Frau Holle burst out laughing: "A mortal child and a Kobold of the forest! nonsense, it's impossible!"

Käthchen lifted up her brown eyes. "We might play at it," she said. "It would be a beautiful game."

Frau Holle chuckled so much at this that she nearly upset the milk jug.

"How *do* people get engaged?" said Käthe. "I have often thought about it, but I never could imagine how they do it?"

"Didn't they teach you that at school either?" said Green Ears. "My stars! What *did* they teach you at school?"

"Children," said the wood-woman, "children, do you mean it?"

"Certainly," said Green Ears.

"I think so," said Käthe.

"Do you wish to buy rings?"

“O yes,” decidedly from both children.

“Now listen; there is a passage from my house leading to the shops, most convenient I assure you,” said Frau Holle. “Everything delivered punctually on the premises within one minute of purchasing it. No lifts or motor-cars necessary. You see I know the ways of the world.” So saying she opened the back door, and they passed into a lane lighted by many lamp-posts. These lamp-posts gave a very bright light and had queer faces like the man in the moon. They grinned and winked as Green Ears and Käthchen went by.

It was a lovely fair; a fair in fairyland you may imagine how gorgeous that must be!

There were stalls on which lay all sorts of tempting things, cakes, sweet and toys. Käthe felt sorry that she had no money.

At the flower stall they paused; the flowers were exquisitely arranged, and out of each peeped a little Fee.

In big gold letters was written:

CONDENSED FLOWERS for Sale

AS GREEN EARS asked boldly for engagement rings, a fairy who stood behind the stall, handed him two little gold rings made to fit any finger; they were a new patent and self-adapting, the fairy said.

Green Ears was so pleased that he turned head over heels again and again for joy, a funny proceeding for a would-be husband.

“Do you know *how* to get engaged,” he said to the fairy.

“Why no, not exactly, but I have heard it is very simple,” said she. “Mother Holle (here she made a deep curtsy), Mother Holle knows all about it.”

Käthe looked out of the corner of her eyes at her lover, and wished he would behave with more dignity. Now he was cramming his mouth with sweeties.

"Aren't you going to give me *any*?" she said.

"O my stars!" he said again, surprised; it had never struck him. Imps are usually egoists; that is to say they think *first* of themselves. There are exceptions, but this is the rule.

He went rapidly from stall to stall and returned with his arms full of parcels done up in pink paper which he presented to Käthchen with a low bow. She accepted them with much delight and they fell to munching chocolate together; it was a real bond of union, and they were not the first sweethearts who discovered it.

They reached the end of the street and suddenly found themselves alone once more on the slopes of the Altenhainer Thal or Valley.

Green Ears sat down by Käthchen, and squeezed himself up closely to her.

"Give me your pretty little hand," he said. "*Do* you know which is the right finger?"

"O yes!" Käthchen knew that quite well, though I have heard that it is a disputed point in Germany.

She stuck out her little hard-worked fingers, and he put the gold ring on the third finger of the left hand. It fitted exactly and with a cry of joy Käthchen put the other on his long brown finger.

Then both the children laughed and clapped their hands, and danced merrily about. "Now we are engaged," they cried, "really engaged to be married!"

They made such a noise that the squirrels were cross and threw sticks at them for disturbing their early-morning sleep.

Then, goodness knows why — let us call it reaction — Käthe began to cry again, great, big drops.

Green Ears was much puzzled.

"You *are* clever, now I can't do that," he said. "You must stay with me always, and live with me in the woods, and be my own little sweetheart."

"O no," said Käthe, "I should never be allowed to do that; I must go to school every day, and then I have my exercises to do, and to help mother with the housework; the baby to mind; and — O I am always so busy."

"I will come and help you," said Green Ears.

"But you *can't*, you are not *real*, you know," said Käthe and began to cry again.

"Käthchen," said Green Ears, and he looked quite serious and thinky all at once. "Listen to me. I will go to the Old King; he is the ruler of all the fairies here, and I will beg him to teach me how to become human. It may be years before we meet again, for the way into your world is very hard for me to find. Yes it is easier for you to find the way into our world, than for us to enter yours; but cheer up, I will dare it and do it for your sake! but O sweetheart wait for me; O wait for me!"

Wait for me, my little sweetheart,
Till I come to you again,
Win the world for you, my sweetheart,
With its joy and with its pain.

Wait for me, my little sweetheart,
For when falling on the ground
I beheld those curious dewdrops
To your heart my heart was bound.

All my fairy life is nothing,
All my fairy joy I give,
Just to hold your hands, my sweetheart,
In your world with you to live.

Wait for me, my little sweetheart:
I will find the way to you,
As a grown man I will seek you,
Seek and find you ever true

So singing they walked arm in arm through the long winding valley, till the dawn approached like a golden bird opening its great wings to fly.

Käthchen reached her cottage door. All was silent within. "Good-bye," she said, and their eyes met in one last farewell.

"Auf Wiedersehen!" said Green Ears (that pretty German farewell greeting which means so much more than good-bye), and then he stole back down the stony street, kissing his hands again and again to the little girl.

In some strange way Käthchen passed *through* the door of her little cottage; she had become for the time incorporeal; through the touch of a fairy her body and soul had become *loose*, that is to say, and she was able to enter the house as silently as a person in a dream. She went through the kitchen and up the steep wooden stairs. It seemed to her as if her feet did not touch the ground, she floated rather than walked. She reached her own little attic, and saw the room as if it were a picture, the square window-frame, the branches of the trees outside, the old pictures on the walls that she was so fond of.

But what was her surprise to see *herself* curled up asleep in her big wooden bed!

The horror of it made her faint, and she remembered no more until she found herself in her own bed under her own big feather sack. In order that she should not forget her night's adventures, or think it was all merely a dream, she found a ring of yellow grass wound tightly round her third finger. From that hour, though the ring fell to pieces, the mark of it was clearly to be seen on her finger. It *was* a fairy ring, you see.

Her mother apparently had not missed her, and the baby was as jolly as ever.

"What *was* the matter with you last night, Käthe?" said her mother. "You were dreamier than ever; not a word could we get out of you. You *must* have been tired out, you poor child!"

"But everything was all right, wasn't it, mother, the potatoes were boiled and the supper ready?"

"Why of course you managed very nicely. Now hurry up and let us have breakfast."

Now I feel sure that all the children who read this story will want to know what happened to Käthchen and Green Ears later on.

Did he really come back to visit her as a grown man?

Did they marry and live happy ever after?

Had he green ears as a mortal?

But alas the fairies who told me this story, have left these questions unanswered, at all events for the present, so I can only guess at the conclusion.

I think myself that Green Ears was pretty sure to succeed in his quest, because if you want a thing intensely enough, you can usually get it.

They would make a rather funny married couple, that is true, and we will hope that Green Ears did not turn head over heels on his marriage day.

But the fairies assure me that the trials necessary to pass through in order to become a mortal, have a very sobering effect on the character, and so we can think of Green Ears as quite different, though still fascinating and charming.

I would have liked to be present at their wedding, wouldn’t you?

O joy when on this solid earth
Is heard the sound of fairy mirth!
O joy, when under earthly things
Is heard the sound of fairy wings,
When the impossible is true,
When I come back and marry you!

4

THE OLD KING

Walter had been playing with his kite in the garden. Somehow or other it would never mount properly, unless his father was there to help him. It was apt to fly up a little way, and then to fall into a bush or fence, and there to perch like a big bird, until Walter and his friends rescued it with difficulty. But on a windy day when his father took him into the open fields, away the kite would sail, until Walter grew anxious lest it should disappear altogether in cloudland.

It was a fine afternoon, about three o'clock, a lazy, sleepy time of day. A queer jumble of all the fairy stories that the boy knew, passed through his head as he sat on the lawn, day-dreaming, while his kite flapped its wings on the ground beside him.

Now you must know that it happened to be Midsummer Eve, the summer fête day of the fairies. Walter stared at the mountains whose great purple heads he could see in the far distance across the green plain. How they changed from moment to moment, as the clouds cast their shadows on them, till the sun shone out bright again and chased away the shadows. As Walter looked intently at his favourite peak, a mountain called the Old King, he saw a shining cloud on the summit against the sky, that he had never noticed there before. As he gazed and gazed, the cloud seemed to form itself into a wonderful castle. Each turret and tower was of an exquisite hue like the clouds at sunset. Grey mists wreathed round it, and made a soft, mysterious background: the castle became more vivid and shone like gold.

How should Walter reach this fairy palace? For reach it he felt that he must! His kite had an answer ready. It jumped up from the ground, and looked at him with a queerly human expression, and seemed to say: “Sail me!”

Walter gave but one touch to unwind the string, and up, up it mounted like the Parzival airship, bearing the little boy with it, who held tight to the end of the cord. He felt rather giddy and frightened at first, but soon found out that by holding the cord in his hands to give him confidence, and making movements in the air, similar to those of swimming, he could fly quite easily.

Most of us have experienced this delightful sensation in our dreams, and I have heard children declare that when they were small, they used to fly downstairs without even touching the banisters. Perhaps flying may be a forgotten art: or perhaps we have not yet learned to discover, and to use our wings.

To Walter it came quite naturally; on, on they flew over the trees, and over the houses, over the windings of the Nidda. Walter could hear the tinkle tinkle of sheep bells below, or was it possible that he could already hear the bells of fairyland ringing? Over the church spire of a little village they soared, and all the children shouted: “Zeppelin! Zeppelin!” because you see all this happened in modern times, when even the children no longer believe in the supernatural.

As the kite flew nearer to the mountains Walter could see the well-known tower of the Feldberg, and the inns kept by the landlords Storm and Monster; he could see the castle of Cronberg, and the interesting village of Falkenstein.

But where was the beautiful palace on the Altkönig? Here was nothing to be seen but trees, trees, trees. He would have thought it all a dream, were it not for his wonderful flight through the air. The kite now dropped gradually, and set Walter on the ground. Then it began to flap about undecidedly, and behave queerly, like a dog seeking for a trail. At last it set off again up a narrow path leading straight into the green woods.

Walter followed, still holding tight by its tail, no longer soaring but skimming the ground. Once or twice the poor kite was entangled in the branches, Walter freed it, and off it set again at a fine pace up the mountain-side.

Walter began to feel hungry; for there is nothing like flying to give you an appetite, as Mr Euler would surely tell you, but the kite allowed him no time even to gather a few raspberries on the way. At last they came to a place where several paths crossed. Here the woods took another character: dark firs grew in the place of beeches and oaks. These firs were covered with a silver lichen that looked like hoar frost.

A little hut made of rough logs of woods stood at this crossing. At the door stood a little old woman. She had neither red eyes nor a hooked nose; so Walter thought to himself: “She cannot be a wicked old witch like the one who caught Hänsel and Gretel.” She had a friendly, grandmotherly face, and invited Walter to come into her hut.

“You must be so hungry, you poor little man,” she said. “Come in, come in, the coffee is all hot and waiting for you!” Then she turned to the kite which was turning head over heels, and making grimaces on the ground. “Be off with you,” she said, “we shall not need you any more!”

“Good-bye, good-bye, dear kite,” said Walter, “thank you very much for bringing me here.”

The kite grinned and made a funny bow; then he mounted up of his own accord, and sailed away home over the tree-tops.

On a rough wooden table was spread a delicious repast. Rolls and butter, coffee and milk, Streuselkuchen and Butterkuchen such as German children love, and also cakes called Bubenschenkel — or little boy's legs. Walter did not quite like the name of these cakes; it made him think of witches again; but they tasted quite harmless.

Whilst he was eating his cake, there was a knock at the door of the hut, and in came a smart fox, wearing a red cap with green feather, and a jaunty coat and waistcoat.

"Heigho! How fine you are, Mr Fox," said the old woman, "I suppose you are going to the ball to-night?"

"O yes, of course, I am going to be there early. Miss Bushy Tail has promised to be my partner for the Polonaise," he said. "I hope you have a cup of coffee ready for me." He then sat down, and peered at Walter with his bright, inquisitive eyes. Now everyone knows that the foxes dance on the Feldberg on May Day. On one of the biggest fir-trees there hangs a picture of two foxes dancing, and these cross-roads have thence derived their name Fuchstanz. But they do not only dance on May Day, but on many other occasions such as the present. Walter had often wished that he could see them at their sports.

Presently there was a scratching at the window, and in came a squirrel in a great hurry with a bag of nuts slung over his shoulder. He disturbed the great black cat who was asleep on the window-sill, and she bristled with rage, and swore at him; but he took no notice, and was off again in a jiffy, after having drunk a tiny little glass of milk which stood all ready for him on the table. The squirrels were very busy; for a great many nuts were required for the feast, and they had been turning out their store cupboards.

A little hare peeped shyly in at the door. "Hullo!" he said. "Fine doings at the castle to-night. I am carrying up a basket or so of Easter Eggs. They are sure to please the Old King," and off he went.

“Is he really the Easter Hare?” asked Walter; but no one answered his question.

The old woman smiled mysteriously. When Walter had finished his coffee, she said: “Now my little dear, you must be off as well, or you will be late at the castle. It is a great privilege for you to be invited; it is long since the Old King has sent for a mortal child.”

“But did he send for me?” said Walter, astonished.

“Why of course, or how could you have got here alone,” said the fairy. “But be very polite and answer nicely when spoken to, or the Old King might be angry, and when he is angry the whole mountain shakes, and I crouch and tremble in my little hut. But now let us see if I have not got something fine for you,” so speaking she pulled out a sack of toys that stood in a dark corner and gave Walter a cart and horse. At first it was quite small; but when she set it on the floor, it grew and grew until it was large enough for a seven year’s old boy to ride in. And O marvel, the wooden horse began to prance as if it were alive!

Walter sprang into the cart; the door of the hut stood wide open, and out he drove.

“Good-bye, good-bye,” said the fairy of Fuchstanz. She gave him a bag of gingerbread nuts, beautifully ornamented, as the peasants in the Odenwald know how to make them. One had on it:

For a good boy.

It was an invitation from the Old King and was worded as follows:

Audience with His Majesty, 10-11.

Amusements Varied.
Supper and Dancing, 12.
Crying forbidden.
Old King.

"Good-bye, I will come to see you again very soon," said Walter, and he drove up the mountain in fine style.

It was now getting quite dark; for he had stayed longer than he was aware of in the little hut; the firs stood black and deep on either hand; he would have been frightened perhaps, but he was tired; he closed his eyes and played at being asleep in his little bed at home. When he opened his eyes again, he saw bright lights flitting through the gloomy fir-trees like so many luminous butterflies. One flew towards him, and settled on the side of his cart, and he saw that it was a lovely elf with a crown of gold on his head. "King Oberon himself," thought Walter, and the elf answered, as all fairies do, to his *thought*:

"Yes I am Oberon, King of the fairies," he said in a voice in a high key like the hum of insects. "I have come to look at you, it is so long since I have spoken to a mortal child. Mortals care no longer for us; they like true stories — that is stories about their own stupid little lives; 'fairies do not exist,' they say, Ha, ha, ha! we pinch their silly little toes, and send them bad dreams, and hide their toys, and blot their copy-books, and then we do not exist, Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I care very much," said Walter eagerly. "O won't you come home with me and live with me always and sleep in my bed, you beautiful little Elf-man." And he put out his hand to catch the fairy as a child might grasp at a butterfly. But — puff! — he was off like a seed of the thistledown, and a peal of fairy laughter sounded in his ears. Then all was still and dark again.

Suddenly a sound of bells broke the stillness ling, lang, ding dong. These were the foxgloves, and the balsams popped like tiny pistols, and from the tall mosses came sudden explosions and the scattering of illuminated spores. All this in honour of the night.

Suddenly Walter became aware of a huge rock in front of him. Towering up black and high on its summit was the wonderful castle that he had seen from the distant plain. White and grey were its cloudy walls, rose and lemon and emerald its towers and turrets; its roof was the sky studded with a thousand diamond-rayed stars.

The horse could go no farther; his mission was accomplished. The boy bade his dear steed farewell with many fond regrets, and set out with a brave heart to scale the rock alone. It was a difficult and dangerous climb in the dark night; but, however, he managed with the help of bushes and shrubs to reach nearly to the top. But alas the last step was too steep for the little boy; it was a sheer, perpendicular wall. Our hero looked round in despair; big drops gathered in his eyes; but he *would* not let them fall. He stood quite still, clinging to the rock and unable to move either forward or backward. It seemed like the climax of a bad dream. Suddenly he saw a bright cloud approaching him, and the air was full of a multitude of tiny elves. They seized hold of him by his coat and knickers and boots and even by his curly hair, and bore him upwards singing:

Fairies seek and fairies save
Children who are bold and brave.

So they supported him up the last step and they floated off as they had come, looking in the distance like a cloud of bright fireflies.

Walter now found himself in a dark, mysterious garden. The bushes and trees took strange forms and seemed alive. One shrub that looked like a big black bear gave a low growl, as he passed by. He was really frightened and his little heart beat fast, in spite of all the fairies had said in praise of his bravery. But he soon reached a lovely lighted avenue leading straight up to the entrance of the castle. The doors were open wide. Two large white owls stood on either side as sentinels. A stream of light poured out of the hall and dazzled Walter's eyes, so that he could not see distinctly at first. Graceful wood nymphs stood chatting in groups. A statue of Siegfried slaying the dragon was in the centre of the hall. Small fountains played round it. It seemed as if he were expected at the castle as his arrival created no surprise. Two fairies advanced and took him by the hand. Walter thought they were the loveliest ladies he had ever seen. One was fair and dressed in cloudy gauze which changed in colour from blue to green and mauve like opalescent waters; the other was dark and wore a dress of rose colour that changed into orange and red like leaping flames of fire. These were the geniuses of water and fire. Walter did not know this at the time; at least he only guessed it; he was too young to speculate as to the nature of the strange sights he saw. He found himself suddenly in a Court suit of white woollen material, beautifully embroidered and lined with silver.

"Now you are a cloud with a silver lining," his fairy friends said to him smiling. "You are sure to please the Old King."

Wonderful fairy creatures, nixies and gnomes and goblins arrived every minute as guests for the castle. The hare came in quite breathless with a basket which he delivered up to an attendant, saying: "Eggs for His Majesty."

The fox from Fuchstanz seemed to feel himself very important; he swaggered about, knocking people with his bushy tail. He stuck out a paw condescendingly for Walter to shake as he went by, and stared at him more inquisitively than ever.

An elderly woman who would have been very neat and tidy, save that her hair was white with snowflakes (no, it could not be snow, it was little feathers as soft as down) came in smiling with a pot of bilberry jam under her arm. She had come from the Rossert Mountain, and the jam had been cooked as was her custom on the Holle Stone, that mysterious stone on the slopes of the Rossert, so neatly marked on the Taunus map, but so impossible for the curious mortal to find.

Gradually all these strange guests began to form into a long procession, and to march round the hall to the sound of fairy music.

One side of the wall was draped with a green curtain; this began to sway and draw itself aside. A fresh, invigorating mountain air blew in their faces; they marched on to a larger and loftier room. The ceiling was the sky; the light was the light of thousands of stars, the same stars that we know, but shining with greater brilliancy for the fairies on Midsummer Eve. The floor was carpeted with the softest moss. Walter's feet sank into it. They marched through green arches made by skilfully interlaced trees. Pines and larches were arranged as pillars, and were adorned by festoons of wild roses, forming garlands from one to the other.

At the far end of the room stood two tall poplar trees, and between them seated on a cloudy throne was a majestic being with flowing white beard, and a crown of gold on his head. As Walter approached the throne, the poplar leaves shook and shivered as before a thunderstorm. Then a great wind arose, a mist rose up, the fairy procession bowed down before the Old King — the Ruler of the Mountain. Then there was a sound like the rumbling of thunder, and the Old King spoke. Walter had some difficulty at first in catching the words, but by nudges, pinches, and pokes, the company gave him to understand that they were addressed to him.

"What is your name? mortal child," said the Old King.

"Walter, please Your Majesty," said Walter with a deep bow, feeling his courage going into his boots.

“Walter — a good old German name,” said the Old King. “Doubtless you are a poet?”

“Oh!” said our hero valiantly, “when I am a man I mean to write story poems like Schiller and Uhland.”

“That is right,” said the Old King. “Real poets are rare in these days. Even if I appear to them in all my splendour the stupid people merely remark ‘a curious cloud formation,’ and think they know all about it. You are young” — he went on — “you will forget all that you have seen here; but the feeling will remain that the heavens are near you. Who knows but what you may be a real poet in the future, a poet who shall open men’s eyes once more to the invisible world which lies so near them. Remember your beautiful costume and show always the cloud with the silver lining in your poems.”

“Which do you like best, work or play?” continued His Majesty in a voice like distant rolls of thunder.

“Play, please Your Majesty,” said Walter, tremulously.

“Quite right, quite right, play play all the day — good folk say — good folk say! Do you cry much? My children are all such cry babies, and though I scold them and lecture them every day, they will not learn to behave better.”

Walter had no time to answer; for clouds came rolling up and almost hid him from view.

“These are my troublesome children,” said the Old King.

Some of the clouds were dear little cuddly babies, others looked like great white poodles, others like huge black bears or crocodiles. With outstretched arms and wingèd helmets strange forms rode by on swift horses with floating manes resembling the Walküre of old; the lightning played across the sky as they passed. Truly they were a strange family with much originality.

"Now, children, be off with you, and whatever you do, *don't cry,*" said the Old King. But even as he spoke, one little cloud dissolved in raindrops and wetted the fine clothes of the company.

Presently a push and a bustle began. Long, narrow tables were brought into the hall, and in a short space of time they were covered with the most wonderful dainties in the way of sweets and cakes, jellies, puddings and fruit.

Walter sat down hastily: a fine plate of Easter eggs and nuts was before him. He helped himself plentifully, and even filled his pockets, which was not quite good manners you know, but seemed to excite no notice.

A venerable water-sprite rose presently and proposed the health of the Old King. Wine-glasses were filled to the brim with golden or crimson wine; as the glasses clinked together, the vibrations sounded sweet yet sad like some high violin note, as it dies on the string. Then a wind arose, summer lightning played round the room, illuminating vividly the faces of that strange company; a roar of thunder shook the castle. Brunhilde's fire sprang up suddenly round the outer walls, so that the scene was brighter than daylight. The tables were cleared away, and the wildest revels began. The Old King faded into the distance like a mountain-peak. A goblin seized hold of Walter and tore him round in the maddest fashion.

The foxes had a corner to themselves; their dancing was evidently much admired. Especially our friend and his sweetheart Miss Bushy Tail distinguished themselves by the elegance of their steps.

Mother Holle seemed to keep a certain amount of order, but the revels became wilder and wilder and Walter grew strangely sleepy and tired; he felt himself a part of some mad dream. As he dreamed, great clouds came rolling up, and all was lost in mist. When the mist cleared, Walter stood once more before the throne of the Old King.

"Come my little fleecy," the Old King was saying to a little girl cloud who came tumbling down before him. "Be the best of daughters and take this little boy home; you know the way. But mind, no tears!”

“Adieu,” he said to Walter. Walter murmured adieu, and, in another moment, he was flying with his arm round the neck of the baby cloud, flying, flying, flying.

* * *

He knew no more till he found himself in his garden at home, feeling rather queer and sleepy. He got up, and stretched himself, and found that he was quite wet; for the little cloud had dissolved in tears at parting from him. On the ground lay his kite looking quite innocent.

He went indoors, and found it was tea-time, and everything was just as usual.

“Why, child, you are quite wet! Why did you not come in during the shower?” he heard his mother’s voice saying to him.

He found a huge walnut in his pocket and when he cracked it out crawled a wonderful beetle with green body streaked with gold. As Walter put out his hand to secure his treasure, it flew away from him looking very much like King Oberon himself. Walter thought that he heard a peal of fairy laughter, but it might have been only his fancy.

The next day was his birthday, and what do you think he had as a present? Why the very same cart and horse that had carried him to the castle, big enough to ride in. But he never told anyone — even his mother — the whole story of his adventures. Perhaps he did not remember them clearly himself; for the fairies protect their secrets well, and draw in sleep the veil of forgetfulness over much that we have seen in our dreams.

And did Walter become a great poet? He is a friend of mine, so I can tell you. The world has not heard of him as yet. He tells me that he often hears a little voice near him, singing, singing; sometimes he can distinguish the words and the melodies. They make him feel sad at times, he says, with longing for a world that is more beautiful than ours, but oftener they make him feel exhilarated and happy.

He thinks that he knows many secret things that would make the world happier if he could only get people to believe them. But these secrets are not about high explosives or torpedoes or aeroplanes, or motor-cars that can do the distance between Paris and Berlin at the very shortest record. They are secrets that can only be breathed in music and poetry.

Be on the look-out for him, children; for the songs he sings will be full of wonder, like Kubla Khan, and the melodies will be those of fairyland. Did he not hear them himself on the Old King’s Mountain, when he attended the Midsummer fête of the fairies?

5

THE DRAGON'S TAIL

I wonder if the girls and boys who read these stories, have heard of the charming and romantic town of Eisenach? I suppose not, for it is a curious fact that few English people visit the place, though very many Americans go there. Americans are well known to have a special interest in old places with historical associations, because they have nothing of the sort in America; moreover many of them are Germans by birth, and have heard stories of the Wartburg, that beautiful old castle, which from the summit of a hill, surrounded by woods, overlooks the town of Eisenach.

The Wartburg is quaintly built with dear little turrets and gables, and high towers, a long curving wall with dark beams like the peasant cottages, and windows looking out into the forest. It belongs at present to the Grand duke of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach.

Every stone and corner of the Wartburg is connected with some old story or legend.

For instance there is the hall with the raised dais at one end and beautiful pillars supporting the roof where minnesingers of old times used to hold their great "musical festivals" as we should say nowadays. There was keen competition for the prizes that were offered in reward for the best music and songs.

In the castle are also the rooms of St Elizabeth, that sweet saint who was so good to the poor, and who suffered so terribly herself in parting from her husband and children.

Then there is the lion on the roof who could tell a fine tale if he chose; the great banqueting hall and the little chapel.

On the top of the tower is a beautiful cross that is lit up at night by electric light and can be seen from a great distance in the country round. This is of course a modern addition.

But the most interesting room in the castle is that where Dr Martin Luther spent his time translating the Bible. A reward had been offered to anyone who should kill this arch-heretic; so his friends brought him disguised as a knight to the Wartburg, and very few people knew of his whereabouts.

As you look through the latticed windows of that little room, the exquisite blue and purple hills of the Thüringen-Wald stretch away in the distance, and no human habitation is to be seen. There too you may see the famous spot on the wall where Luther threw the inkpot at the devil. To be correct you can see the hole where the ink-stain used to be; for visitors have cut away every trace of the ink, and even portions of the old wooden bedstead. There is the writing-desk with the translation of the Bible, and the remarkable footstool that consisted of the bone of a mammoth.

Those were the days in which a man risked his life for his faith; but they were the days also, we must remember, of witchcraft and magic.

One other story of the Wartburg I must narrate in order to give you some idea of the interest that still surrounds the place, and influences the children who grow up there. It was in the days of the old Emperor Barbarossa (Redbeard).

The sister of the Emperor whose name was Jutta, was married to the Landgraf Ludwig of Thüringen, and they lived at the Wartburg.

One day when Barbarossa came to visit them, he observed that the castle had no outer walls round it, as was usual in those days.

"What a pity," he said, "that such a fine castle should be unprotected by walls and ramparts, it ought to be more strongly fortified."

"Oh," said Landgraf Ludwig, "if that is all the castle needs, it can soon have them."

"How soon?" said the Emperor, mockingly.

"In the space of three days," answered his brother-in-law.

"That could only be possible with the aid of the devil," said Barbarossa, "otherwise it could not be done."

"Wait and see for yourself," said the Landgraf.

On the third day of his visit, Ludwig said to the Emperor: "Would you care to see the walls? They are finished now."

Barbarossa crossed himself several times, and prepared for some fearful manifestation of black magic; but what was his surprise to see a living wall round the castle of stout peasants and burghers, ready armed, with weapons in their hands; the banners of well-known knights and lords waved their pennants in the wind where battlements should have been.

The Emperor was much astonished, and called out: "Many thanks, brother-in-law, for your lesson; stronger walls I have never seen, nor better fitted together."

"Rough stones they may some of them be," said the Landgraf, "yet I can rely on them, as you see."

Now as you may imagine, the children who grow up in this town, must have their heads full of these tales, and many poets and artists have been inspired by the beauties of Eisenach. The natural surroundings of the town are so wonderful, that they also provide rich material for the imagination.

Helmut was a boy who lived in Eisenach. He was eight years old, and went to a day school. He lived outside the town, not far from the entrance to the forest. He was a pale, fair-haired little boy, and did not look the tremendous hero he fancied himself in his dreams; not even when he buckled on helmet, breast-plate and sword, and marched out into the street to take his part in the warfare that went on constantly there, between the boys of this neighbourhood, and the boys who belonged to another part of the town.

Now the Dragon’s Gorge is a most marvellous place; it is surrounded on all sides by thick forests, and you come on it suddenly when walking in the woods. It is a group of huge green rocks like cliffs that stand picturesquely piled close together, towering up to the sky. There is only a very narrow pathway between them.

Helmut had often been there with his father and mother or with other boys. After heavy rain or thawing snow it became impassable; at the best of times it was advisable for a lady not to put on her Sunday hat, especially if it were large and had feathers; for the rocks are constantly dripping with water. The great boulders are covered with green moss or tiny ferns; and in the spring time, wood sorrel grows on them in great patches, the under side of the leaves tinged an exquisite violet or pink colour. The entrance to the Dragon’s Gorge is through these rocks; they narrow and almost meet overhead, obscuring the sky, till it seems as if one were walking under the sea. Two persons cannot walk side by side here. In some parts, indeed, one can only just squeeze through; the way winds in and out in the most curious manner; there are little side passages too, that you could hardly get into at all.

In some places you can hear the water roaring under your feet; then the rocks end abruptly and you come out into the forest again, and hear the birds singing and see the little brook dancing along by the side of the way. Altogether it is the most fascinating, wet and delightful walk that you could imagine.

Helmut had long been planning an expedition to these rocks in company with other boy friends, in order to slay the dragon. He dreamt of it day and night, until he brought home a bad mark for “attention” in his school report. He told his mother about it; she laughed and said he might leave the poor old fellow alone; there were plenty of dragons to slay at home, self-will, disobedience, inattention, and so on! She made a momentary impression on the little boy, who always wanted to be good but found it difficult at times, curious to say, to carry out his intention.

He looked thoughtful and answered: “Of course, mother, I know; but this time I want to slay a ‘really and truly’ dragon, may I? Will you let me go with the other boys, it would be such fun?”

The Dragon’s Gorge was not far off, and mother did not think that Helmut could do himself any harm, except by getting wet and dirty, and that he might do as well in the garden at home.

“If you put on your old suit and your thick boots, I think you may go. Keep with the other boys and promise me not to get lost!”

“Oh, I say, won’t it be fine fun! I’ll run off and tell the other fellows. Hurrah!” and Helmut ran off into the street. Soon four heads were to be seen close together making plans for the next day.

“We’ll start quite early at six o’clock,” they said, “and take our second breakfast with us.” (In Germany eleven o’clock lunch is called *second* breakfast.) However it was seven o’clock a.m. before the boys had had their first breakfast, and met outside the house.

How mother and father laughed to see the little fellows, all dressed in the most warlike costumes like miniature soldiers, armed with guns and swords.

Mother was a little anxious and hoped they would come to no harm; but she liked her boy to be independent, and knew how happy children are if left to play their pretence games alone. She watched the four set off at a swinging march down the street. Soon they had recruits, for it was a holiday, and there were plenty of boys about.

Helmut was commanding officer; the boys shouldered their guns, or presented arms as he directed. They passed the pond and followed the stream through the woods, until they came to the Dragon’s Gorge, where the rocks rise up suddenly high and imposing looking. Here they could only proceed in single file. Helmut headed the band feeling as courageous as in his dreams; his head swam with elation. Huge walls towered above them; the rocks dropped water on their heads. As yet they had seen or heard nothing of the dragon. Yet as they held their breath to listen, they could hear something roaring under their feet.

“Don’t you tell me that that is only water,” said Helmut, “A little brook can’t make such a row as that — that’s the dragon.”

The other boys laughed, they were sceptical as to the dragon, and were only pretending, whereas Helmut was in earnest.

“I’m hungry,” said one boy, “supposing we find a dry place and have our lunch!”

They came to where the path wound out again into the open air, and sat down on some stones, which could hardly be described as dry. Here they ate bread and sausage, oranges and bananas.

“Give me the orange peel, you fellows. Mother hates us to throw it about; it makes the place so untidy.” So saying Helmut pushed his orange peel right into a crevice of the rock and covered it with old leaves. But the other boys laughed at him, and chucked theirs into the little stream, which made Helmut very angry.

“I won’t be your officer any more, if you do not do as I say,” he said, and they began to quarrel.

“We’re not going to fight your old dragon, we’re going home again to play football, that will be far better fun,” said the boys who had joined as recruits, and they went off home, till only Helmut’s chums were left. They were glad enough to get rid of the other boys.

“We have more chance of seeing the dragon without those stupid fellows,” they said.

They finished their lunch, shouldered their guns again, and entered the second gorge, which is even more picturesque and narrow than the first.

Suddenly Helmut espied something round, and slimy, and long lying on the path before him like a blind worm, but much thicker than blind worms generally are. He became fearfully excited, “Come along you fellows, hurry up,” he said, “I do believe it is the dragon’s tail!”

They came up close behind him and looked over his shoulders; the gorge was so narrow here that they could not pass one another.

“Good gracious!” they said, “whatever shall we do now?”

They all felt frightened at the idea of a real dragon, but they stood to their guns like men, all but the youngest, Adolf, who wanted to run away home; but the others would not let him.

“Helmut catch hold of it, quick now,” whispered Werner and Wolf, the other two boys.

Helmut stretched out his hand courageously; perhaps it was only a huge, blind worm after all; but as he tried to catch it, the thing slipped swiftly away. They all followed it, running as fast as they could through the narrow gorge, bumping themselves against the walls, scratching themselves and tearing their clothes, but all the time Helmut never let that tail (if it was a tail) out of his sight.

“If we had some salt to put on it,” said he, “we might catch it like a dicky bird.”

“It would be a fine thing to present to a museum,” said Wolf.

Well, that thing led them a fine dance. It would stop short, and then when they thought they had got it, it started off again, until they were all puffing and blowing.

“We’ve got to catch it somehow,” said Helmut, who thought the chase fine sport. At that moment the gorge opened out again into the woods, and the tail gave them the slip; for it disappeared in a crevice of the rock where there was no room for a boy to follow it.

“It *was* a blind worm you see,” said Werner.

Presently, however, they heard a noise as of thunder, and looking down the path they saw a head glaring at them out of the rocks, undeniably a dragon’s head, with a huge jaw, red tongue, and rows of jagged teeth.

The boys stared aghast: they were in for an adventure this time, and no mistake. Slowly the dragon raised himself out of the rocks, so that they saw his whole scaly length, like a huge crocodile. Then he began to move along the path away from them. He moved quite slowly now, so there was no difficulty in keeping up with him; but his tail was so slimy and slippery that they could not keep hold of it; moreover it wriggled dreadfully whenever they tried to seize it. But Helmut had inherited the cool courage of the Wartburg knights, and he was not going to be overcome by difficulties.

With a wild Indian whoop he sprang on the dragon’s back, and all the other boys followed his example, except little Adolf who was timid and began to set up a howl for his mother, I’m sorry to say. No sooner were the boys on his back than the dragon set off at a fine trot up and down the Dragon’s Gorge, they had to hold on tight and to duck whenever the rock projected overhead, or when they went sharply round a corner.

“Hurrah,” cried Helmut waving a flag, “this is better than a motor ride. Isn’t he a jolly old fellow?”

At this remark the jolly old fellow stopped dead and began to snort out fire and smoke, that made the boys cough and choke.

“Now stop that, will you!” said Helmut imperatively, “or we shall have to slay you after all, that’s what we came out for you know.” He pointed his gun at the head of the dragon as he spoke like a real hero.

The dragon began to tremble, and though they could only see his profile, they thought he turned pale.

“Where’s that other little boy?” he asked in a hollow voice. “If you will give him to me for my dinner, I will spare you all.”

Helmut laughed scornfully, “Thanks, old fellow,” he said — “you’re very kind, I’m sure Adolf would be much obliged to you. I expect he’s run home to his mother long ago; he’s a bit of a funk, we shan’t take him with us another time.”

“He looked so sweet and juicy and tender,” said the dragon sighing, “I never get a child for dinner nowadays! Woe is me,” he sniffed.

“You are an old cannibal,” said the boys horrified, and mistaking the meaning of the word cannibal. “Hurry up now and give us another ride, it’s first-rate fun this!”

The dragon groaned and seemed disinclined to stir, but the boys kicked him with their heels, and there was nothing for it but to gee-up.

After he had been up and down several times, and the boys’ clothes were nearly torn to pieces, he suddenly turned into a great crevice in the rocks that led down into a dark passage, and the boys felt really frightened for the first time. Daylight has a wonderfully bracing effect on the nerves.

In a moment, however, a few rays of sunshine penetrated the black darkness, and they saw that they were in a small cave. The next thing they experienced was that the dragon shook himself violently, and the small boys fell off his back like apples from a tree on to the wet and sloppy floor. They picked themselves up again in a second, and there they saw the dragon before them, panting after his exertions and filling the cavern with a poisonous-smelling smoke. Helmut and Wolf and Werner stood near the cracks which did the duty of windows, and held their pistols pointed at him. Luckily he was too stupid to know that they were only toy guns, and when they fired them off crack-crack, they soon discovered that he was in a terrible fright.

“What have I done to you, young sirs?” he gasped out. “What have I done to you, that you should want to shoot me? Yet shoot me! yes, destroy me if you will and end my miserable existence!” He began to groan until the cavern reverberated with his cries.

“What’s the matter now, old chappie?” said Helmut, who, observing the weakness of the enemy, had regained his courage.

“I am an anachronism,” said the dragon, “don’t you know what that is? — well, I am one born out of my age. I am a survival of anything but the fittest. *You* are the masters now, you miserable floppy-looking race of mankind. *You* can shoot me, you can blow me up with dynamite, you can poison me, you can stuff me — Oh, oh — you can put me into a cage in the Zoological Gardens, you have flying dragons in the sky who could drop on me suddenly and crush me. You have the power. We great creatures of bygone ages have only been able to creep into the rocks and caves to hide from your superior cleverness and your wily machinations. We must perish while you go on like the brook for ever.” So saying he began to shed great tears, that dropped on the floor splash, splash, like the water from the rocks.

The boys felt embarrassed: this was not their idea of manly conduct, and considerably lowered their opinion of dragons in general.

“Do not betray me, young sirs,” went on the dragon in a pathetic and weepy voice, “I have managed so far to lie here concealed though multitudes of people have passed this way and never perceived me.”

“I tell you what,” said Helmut touched by the dragon’s evident terror, “let’s make friends with him, boys; he’s given us a nice ride for nothing; we will present him with the flag of truce.”

Turning to the dragon he said: “Allow us to give you a banana and a roll in token of our friendship and esteem.”

“O,” said the dragon brightening up, “I like bananas. People often throw the skins away here. I prefer them to orange peel. I live on such things, you must know, the cast-off refuse of humanity,” he said, becoming tragic again.

They presented him with the banana, and he ate it skin and all, it seemed to give him an appetite. He appeared to recover his spirits, and the boys thought it would be better to look for the way out. The cavern seemed quite smooth and round, except for the cracks through which the daylight came; they could not discover the passage by which they had entered. The dragon’s eyes were beginning to look bloodthirsty; remembrances of his former strength shot across his dulled brains. He could crush and eat these little boys after all and nobody would be the wiser. Little boys tasted nicer than bananas even.

Meanwhile Wolf and Werner had stuck their flags through the holes in the rocks, so that they were visible from the outside.

Now little Adolf had gone straight home, and had told awful tales of the games the others were up to, and he conducted the four mothers to the Dragon’s Gorge where they wandered up and down looking for their boys. Adolf observed the flags sticking up on the rocks, and drew attention to them. The Dragon’s Gorge resounded with the cries of “Helmut! Wolf! Werner!”

The dragon heard the voices as well; his evil intentions died away; the chronic fear of discovery came upon him again. He grew paler and paler; clouds of smoke came from his nostrils, until he became invisible. At the same moment Helmut groping against the wall that lay in shadow, found the opening of the passage through which they had come. Through this the three boys now crawled, hardly daring to breathe, for fear of exciting the dragon again. Soon a gleam of light at the other end told of their deliverance. Their tender mothers fell on their necks, and scolded them at the same time. Truly, never did boys look dirtier or more disreputable.

“We feel positively ashamed to go home with you,” their mothers said to them.

“Well, for once I was jolly glad you did come, mother,” said Helmut. “That treacherous old dragon wanted to turn on us after all; he might have devoured us, if you had not turned up in the nick of time. Not that I believe that he *really* would have done anything of the sort, he was a coward you know, and when we levelled our guns at him he was awfully frightened. Still he *might* have found out that our guns were not properly loaded, and then it would have been unpleasant.”

Mother smiled, she did not seem to take the story quite so seriously as Helmut wished.

“We had a gorgeous ride on his back, mother dear; would you like to see him? You have only to lie down flat and squeeze yourself through that crack in the rocks till you come to his cave.”

“No thank you,” said mother, “I think I can do without seeing your dragon.”

“Oh, we have forgotten our flags!” called out Wolf and Werner, “wait a minute for us,” and they climbed up over the rocks and rescued the flags. “He’s still in there,” they whispered to Helmut in a mysterious whisper.

“Mother,” said Helmut that evening when she came to wish him good night, “do you know, if you stand up to a dragon like a man, and are not afraid of him, he is not so difficult to vanquish after all.”

“I’m glad you think so,” said mother, “‘Volo cum Deo’ — there is a Latin proverb for you; it means, that with God’s help, will-power is the chief thing necessary; this even dragons know. Thus a little boy can conquer even greater dragons than the monsters vast of ages past.”

“Hum!” said Helmut musingly, “mother, dear, I was a real hero to-day, I think you would have been proud of me; but I must confess between ourselves, that the old dragon was a bit of a fool!”

6

THE EASTER HARE

It is curious how little children of one country know about the lives and interests of the children of another. Perhaps if English people would send their children over to Germany, instead of their journalists, singers, etc., the danger of an International war would be lessened. The children would be sure to fall in love with Germany; for it is the land above all others that appeals to children. Women are said to come first in America, children are certainly the first consideration in Germany. Froebel’s motto: “Come let us live with our children,” is nowhere better carried out.

A little English girl, named Patsie, came over to visit her German friends, Gretel and Barbara, shortly before Easter this year; and she was much surprised to find all the shop-windows filled with hares; hares made of chocolate, toy hares, hares with fine red coats on, hares trundling wheelbarrows or carrying baskets full of Easter eggs. Moreover there was no end to the picture post cards representing the hare in various costumes, and in some connection with Easter eggs. One of these post cards represented a hare crawling out of a large broken egg just like a chicken.

Patsie asked her little friends eagerly what this all meant.

“Who is the Hare?” she said. “I do so want to know all about him.”

“Why, *of course*, it is the Easter Hare,” they replied.

"Is it possible that you have not heard of him? O, you *poor* English children! Why, he brings us the eggs on Easter Sunday morning!" said Gretel.

"O don't you know," said Barbara, "he hides them in the garden, unless it rains or is very wet; then we have to stay in our bedrooms for fear of frightening him, and he lays them downstairs in the dining-room or drawing-room. However, this has only happened once since I was born, and I am nine years old; it *must* be always fine at Easter."

"We have to let all the blinds down before he will come into our garden, he is so dreadfully nervous," said Gretel. "Then he hides the eggs in the most unexpected places, we have to hunt and hunt a long time before we have found them all. Last year we discovered an egg some weeks afterwards; luckily it was a glass one filled with sweeties; for if it had been of chocolate, we could not have eaten it, after it had lain on the damp mould, where the snails and worms would have crawled over it. Some of the eggs are made of chocolate or marzipan or sugar, and some are real eggs coloured blue or red or brown, or even sometimes with pictures on them."

"We had two dear little baskets with dollies in them, and a big Easter Hare made of gingerbread, as well as the eggs this year," said Barbara. "We hunt and hunt in every corner of the garden, and then we divide our treasures afterwards on two plates, so that is quite fair."

"You are lucky children, why does not the Hare come to England?" said Patsie. "I am sure little English children would appreciate him too!"

"Well," said Gretel answering in verse:

My dear mother says to me,
That he will not cross the sea;
That he fears his eggs would break
And his precious goods might shake.

He's a fairy you must know,
Little Barbara tells you so;
When he cocks his ears and blinks,
Then of Easter eggs he thinks.

"Yes," interrupted Barbara, "we really and truly saw him one Easter Sunday morning when we came back from church, just at the end of our street, where the gardens join the fields. He had a friend with him, or perhaps it was Mrs Easter Hare. They both looked very alarmed when they saw us, and tore off as fast as they could scuttle, and hid in the corn-fields. I can't remember if he had his red coat on, can you, Gretel?"

"No I don't think he had, he was quietly dressed in his brown fur suit, with a white tail to the coat," said Gretel.

Now mother had been puzzled for some time to think whatever connection there could be between Easter Day and the Hare, and she could not find out. But the other day a kind friend told her: she could never have been able to think of it herself, it is such a queer reason. The legend is that as the Hare always sleeps with its eyes open, it was the only living creature that witnessed the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord, and therefore for ever afterwards it has become associated with Easter.

The Easter egg is easier to account for; the idea there is, that as the little chicken breaks through the hard shell, and awakes to new life, so Christ broke the bars of death on the first glorious Easter morning. So the simple egg has become a symbol or sign of a great heavenly truth. Even little children can understand this if they think about it, and they will be able to find out other things too that are symbols in the same way.

“One year,” said Barbara to Patsie, “we spent Easter Sunday at a farm in the country. We made beautiful nests of moss all ready for the Easter Hare. And just when father had called to us to come out and look for the eggs, we saw to our disgust that the great pigs with their dirty old snouts were already hunting for them, so we rushed down and had to drive them away first. The geese too seemed to want to join in the game; it was fine fun, I can tell you. We filled our pinafores with the eggs.”

“When we got home again, we found the Easter Hare had been there too; so we were finely spoilt that year,” said Gretel.

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Several weeks before Easter this year, before Patsie came to stay with them, Gretel and Barbara went for an afternoon walk in the fields with their father and mother. It was getting late when they returned; white mists were rising over the River Nidda, until the trees in the distance looked like ghosts. There was a strange feeling in the air, as if something were going to happen; the children felt excited without knowing why. Then they suddenly saw a bright light not far off from them, along the path by the river. It seemed to revolve, then to change its position, then it went out altogether. They thought they saw the crouching form of a man beside the light; indeed father said that it was probably a labourer lighting his pipe; but, when they looked again, it was unmistakably a bush that had taken a human form in the twilight. The children instinctively fell back nearer the grown-ups. There was something creepy about that bush.

Suddenly a weird cry, shrill and piercing, broke the silence. It seemed to come from just in front of them, and sounded awful; as if a baby were being murdered. The children clutched hold of father’s hand. “It was all right as long as father and mother were there,” they thought with the touching confidence of children.

No one could imagine what it was. The stretching, ploughed fields on one side could hide nothing, the little path along the river-bank was clearly visible. As they approached the spot whence the crying had seemed to proceed, all was silent again. Gretel had heard of the magic flower Moly which screamed when it was pulled up by the roots; could there be screaming bushes as well? But the cries had seemed to come from the ploughed field, not from the river.

The sun had gone down, the air became darker and chillier. Suddenly the cry began again; this time it seemed to proceed directly from an empty tin lying near them on the ploughed field, broken and upside down. The children stared with wide-open eyes at this mysterious old tin: they could not make head or tail of it, of the tin I mean.

Then mother stooped and picked up a piece of egg-shell coloured a beautiful red, that lay on the path, and held it up triumphantly. “What do you say to that?” she asked the children.

“Why, it is a piece of a broken Easter egg, how queer,” said the children, “such a long time before Easter too.”

“Do you know what I think?” said mother, almost in a whisper. “I think the Easter Hare has been along here, perhaps he lives here, and that tin hides the entrance to his house.”

“Let’s go and see,” said the children. But at this moment the cries broke out again, coming just from their very feet it seemed. They sounded so uncanny that the children did not dare to move, or to investigate the tin.

“If you disturb him now, you certainly will not get any Easter eggs this year,” said mother. “He’s sure to be very busy painting them just now, I dare say he cries like that to frighten you away from his home.”

“I don’t think so,” said father, “he can hide and hold his tongue if he wants to; it is the little baby hares who make that noise; but just as we pass by, the mother hare manages to keep them quiet for a few minutes by giving them something to put in their little mouths, I expect.”

“I *would* like to see them,” said Barbara.

“No, come along, Barbara,” said Gretel, “leave them alone, it would be horrid to get no Easter eggs wouldn’t it?”

7

THE NIXY LAKE

In one of the wildest and most romantic parts of Germany, there is a high mountain which is as renowned for the strange stories that are told about it, as for its many natural peculiarities. It is flat on the top, falling off precipitously on every side. In recent times a high tower has been built on the very edge of the rock. Curious to say, the ground on the summit of this mountain is a bog or morass; flat slabs of stone have been placed on it to enable bold tourists to reach the tower without sinking in unawares. There is a bronze ring on a balcony surrounding the tower, with darts pointing in different directions, showing where London, Paris, and St Petersburg, for instance, are situated. I need hardly say that these towns are not visible, but that if a straight line could be drawn from this spot, it would reach them.

Not far below the summit there is a mysterious-looking lake, which it is strange indeed to find at so high a level. A huge cliff formed of boulders of rock rises on the one side of the lake; it falls like a great wall straight into the water; only daring little ferns and plants have a foothold on it; the lake is inaccessible from this direction. A narrow pathway winding in and out edged with water-reeds leads by it on the other side. This lake is said to be so deep that it is unfathomable; it is dark brown in colour, bitter and brackish to the taste. No fish can live in it. Learned men, called geologists, who study the crust of the earth, have decided that this region is not volcanic in origin as it would appear at first sight, but that the lake is fed by water from the morass.

This mountain is constantly visited by sudden violent atmospheric disturbances, great winds and heavy thunderstorms, that spring up at a moment’s notice, striking terror into the hearts of any travellers who may be caught in them.

Now several centuries ago, before the time of railways and steamboats, a mighty king of the water-sprites lived in this lake with his three beautiful daughters, the famed nixies of the lake.

The King was a majestic old man with long white beard and hair; his eyes were black and sinister, and when he drew his eyebrows together in a straight line over his eyes, his frown was terrible to behold. The thunderstorms which devastated the country round, were attributed to him. In his fits of rage, the village folk declared, he would hurl stones and thunderbolts down from the mountain, heedless of what or whom he might destroy.

The day would be fine, the sky blue, and in a moment a storm wind would arise, clouds would cover the heavens, and lightning shoot forth; how could this be accounted for by natural agency?

The nixies were much to be pitied, if the truth were known, for their father was a stern old tyrant, and interfered constantly with their harmless amusements, also prohibiting their leaving the lake to frolic at midnight with the wood-spirits, whom he considered as beneath them in rank.

On a warm day in the lovely month of June (which is the favourite month of all the year for the water-nixies, for then the white and yellow water lilies are in flower, and the yellow irises shine among the water-reeds) the three sisters were swimming lazily to and fro, plunging under the water like seals, to reappear like seals on the look-out for something to happen. But nothing ever did happen but one of their father’s tempers, and of these they were tired enough as you may imagine. They had not fishes' tails like their cousins the mermaids, but slender limbs of dazzling whiteness. Their hair resembled beautiful seaweed as they dived under the water, or when it spread out like a fan on the surface.

The eldest, Clothilde, was dark; she was beautiful, but haughty, and looked as if she had inherited her father's temper.

The youngest was very fair; she had the golden hair of a fairy, her eyes were blue, but meaningless; there was little sense in their depths. Her name was Elfrida.

The second sister, Lenore, was of a different type, and might have been mistaken for a mortal maiden. Her hair was neither dark nor fair, neither red nor brown, it was of a pale hazel colour and fell in straight masses nearly to her feet. Her eyes were of a deep grey fringed with dark lashes; they had a mysterious and pathetic look — a look caused by longing after something indefinite and yet desired, or by a prescience perhaps of coming disaster.

Lenore rose to the surface of the water. "Sisters," she called, "sisters, listen to me," and she swam towards the shade of the rock, and seated herself on a stony seat, half in half out of the water. "I can bear the monotony of our existence no longer. I tire of this life of ceaseless dancing, swimming, drifting. I want to visit the homes of men who live in the village that lies below us at the foot of the mountain, to hear stories of the world from which we are shut out, to share as far as it is possible for us in the simple and homely amusements of mortals."

"I am willing to go with you," said Clothilde, frowning discontentedly. "I am tired too of this melancholy lake; the eternal nothingness of our life oppresses me too." She tore a water-lily to pieces as she spoke.

"O do not do that!" said Lenore, almost as if in pain, "the flowers can feel too!"

"What if they can!" said Clothilde scornfully; for the cruelty of the nixies coursed through her veins.

"And you Elfrida," said Lenore, turning to her fairer sister, "will you come with us?"

"Ah!" said Elfrida, "I prefer to stay here among the water-lilies. I have no aspirations, I could live here for ever sleeping through the winter months, dreaming through the summer ones, yet if you go, I will go too; for we three have never been separated, and I should be afraid if I were left alone with my father." As she spoke she placed a water-lily in her golden hair; the sunbeams struck through the fir-trees by the lake and fell on her, till she looked like some wonderful fairy princess, too exquisite to be real.

A young man happened to be passing the lake just at this moment; he caught the entrancing picture as if it were a vision from Heaven; his brain reeled, his breath failed him, he would have fallen in a swoon; but then he met Lenore's eyes, grave, calm, and searching. A wild longing and deep melancholy seized on him. He rushed towards the lake, and clutched hold of the branches of a young willow, only just in time to prevent himself from falling into those treacherous depths.

With a weird cry and their white arms raised over their heads, the nixies disappeared in the lake. The young man gazed as one bewitched; crossed himself in fear; and gazed again. All was silent: no living creature stirred; only the sunbeams fell athwart the lake, and little cascades of water fell over the surface of the rock.

"I have seen the nixies of the pool," thought the young man, who was the son of a rich peasant farmer in the village. "Surely that means that I shall die ere long. I should not fear death," he continued, "if I were to die in battle in honourable and open conflict; but to die young, stricken by some awful and unaccountable fate, that would be terrible."

As he turned homewards, a wind arose that nearly hurled him into the lake; so violent was the gust, and a storm burst forth, the like of which he had never experienced before. Branches were torn from the trees, and hurled in his path; the lightning was continuous and nearly blinded him.

Glancing fearfully back at the lake, the waters seemed to have arisen in great waves, and he thought he saw the nixy King himself raging and roaring like a wild creature, casting the storm winds forth from their fortresses in the rocks, holding the lightning like fireworks in his long fingers, and hurling it across the land. Terrified, half-stunned by the thunder, and stupefied by the hail and rain, he at last reached home, where his mother awaited him in great anxiety. However he soon had off his wet, torn clothes, and casting himself on his bed fell into a profound slumber. He slept for nearly a night and a day, and when he awoke his adventures seemed to him a wild dream, and like a dream were half-forgotten although they exerted a subtle influence on his waking thoughts that he was unaware of.

Meanwhile the nixies, and especially Lenore, had been anxious as to his fate. Not until she had sent their dwarf messenger into the village to make inquiries as to his welfare, could she be at rest. Her wish to visit the homes of men became a passion, a burning desire that could not be quenched. She called on her dread father; three times she cried out to him, and her sisters echoed the call. Then he arose from the depths, majestic and so terrible to behold that Lenore almost lost the courage to address him. But he listened to her request in silence, brooding, while great ravens whirled and swooped in the sky above their heads. Then he spoke:

"It is decreed that no one can alter the path of fate, or avoid the doom that is written in the stars. The hour has come: I have foreseen this day; go, my daughters, go. But remember there is one condition which you must strictly obey. One night in the week you may be absent from the lake; but as the hour strikes twelve, you must be back again in these waters. I shall send a messenger to fetch you, the dwarf Hunold, beware lest you keep him waiting! If you disobey, destruction will overtake you, and your home will know you no more." He sank gloomily into the lake; the day was oppressive; no rain fell and the evening brought no relief. Strange and uneasy were the dreams of many that night in the little village.

Some young people returning late from a social gathering, reported that they had seen a bright, uncanny light in the sky, like a fire, or some said like a golden hand, at midnight over the ill-omened mountain.

In those days when it was so difficult to travel from place to place, the villagers were obliged to depend on themselves for amusement and entertainment. In the villages round about the mountain it was the custom for the young people to meet together at each other’s houses on Saturday evenings. Those who had rooms large enough, took it in turns to invite all the rest; the girls brought their spinning-wheels, and the room where they met was called the spinning-room. The girls were busy and merry at the same time. Stories were told, and songs were sung, the young men smoked and drank wine, and not infrequently the spinning-wheels were cleared away and there was dancing. Strangers were welcome; for the peasants were renowned for their hospitality; but seldom did it happen that travellers passed that way; some young fellow perhaps might drop in who was wandering about for a year or so before settling down to the work of his life as the German custom is; but tourists were few when roads were bad and money scarce.

One lovely summer’s evening at the end of June the full moon was shining in the sky, the latticed windows of the peasant’s house where the young folk were assembled, were wide open; the air was laden with the scent of the white lilies and roses that grew in the garden at the back of the cottage. There was no light as yet but that of the moon in the parlour; the spinning-wheels too were silent; for stories were being told; one more marvellous than the other, of ghosts and goblins, of dwarfs and mountain-spirits, and naturally enough awful tales of the neighbouring nixy King, and of his three daughters who lived in the enchanted lake.

Hermann, the young man who had been overtaken by the thunderstorm, was present this evening; he was silent and glum, though the most charming village maidens chaffed him and tried to captivate him, and the peasant girls in this part of Germany are renowned for their beauty and their grace. The melancholy which was not so much part of his natural disposition as due to the adventures of that evening, fell on him again like a dark cloud oppressing his brain. The girls who had been listening to the stories, were by this time worked up to a state of feeling which can only be described by the words creepy, or eerie. Most of them experienced that unaccountable sensation which Germans call Gänsehaut (goose-flesh). So that a sudden knock at the door caused them to cry out in fear and clutch hold of their sweethearts. The knock was repeated three times before anyone summoned up courage to open the door. Then the assembled company fell back in astonishment as three beautiful young girls entered the room, each holding a spinning-wheel under her arm. They walked erect like princesses, everyone was sure they must be of high rank. They wore dresses of some shimmering material such as the village folk had never seen before, and necklaces of pearls, silken hose and silver shoes.

Hermann’s heart beat to bursting as he beheld them: where had he seen them before? Surely they were the nixies of the magic pool, and his doom had fallen upon him. Never, never, had he been able to forget Lenore’s eyes. Their mournful beauty haunted his dreams. He met them now, as his breath came and went in great gasps; and there was a flash of recognition between them. “What heavenly beauty, what a noble air she has,” he thought, hardly regarding her sisters who were strictly speaking far more beautiful.

The three nixies, for of course it was they, put forth all their fascinating arts to ingratiate themselves with the young people assembled there.

“You are pleased to see us, are you not?” they said. “We have heard of the fame of your spinning-evenings, and have come from a far country to take part in them. You shall see how we can spin.”

“Very gratifying for us, I am sure,” murmured the officiating president of the club.

“Now do not let us disturb you, you were telling stories I believe as we entered,” said Lenore, who, being the most human, took the lead in the conversation.

But no one dared to open his mouth, even those who had been the most eager to narrate wild tales before, seemed stricken with dumbness now.

“You could tell us a story, I believe,” she said, turning to Hermann, who could only shake his head. “Then I must tell one myself,” she said with a little sigh. She poured forth an extraordinary story to which the peasants listened open-mouthed, the tale of a terrible doom that overtook a faithless lover.

“A mortal man,” she said, “had made love to a beautiful nixy, and won her affection in return. But because she was not human, he did not think of marrying her, but became engaged to a village maiden who was good and sweet, if not so beautiful as the nixy. But the nixy had her revenge. She swam under the bridge where the little river ran through the fields, and one day as the two were walking in the dewy meadows, she caused the waters to rise suddenly in a great flood, and tore her lover away from his human bride down with her in the stream, choking him under the water till he was dead. Then she sat with his head on her lap, and stroked his beautiful dark curls, and wept until she dissolved in tears, and became part of the water, which has been slightly salt from that day. The village maiden was married to a rich old peasant not long afterwards; so much for human fidelity,” said Lenore, fixing her sad eyes on Hermann.

“He well-deserved his fate,” said Hermann, “who chose the lesser when he might have had the greater love.”

“I think the nixy was a mean, wicked thing,” said a young girl, almost a child, called Brigitte, with soft, dark eyes, and a sweet expression on her face. “She could not really have cared for her lover, or she would have wanted him to be happy with the village girl, as she knew she could not marry him herself.”

“Never,” said Hermann, excitedly, whose blood was coursing like fire in his veins, “better death in the arms of the beloved, than a contented life with lower aims!”

The men laughed.

“Now who would have thought that Hermann was so romantic!” they said. “And he has the fattest pigs and the biggest casks of wine in the village!”

Songs were proposed; everyone joined in; the voices of the nixies were heard above all, clear and beautiful as a bell. They began with one of the best-known songs in the German language which is always sung on especially jovial occasions, it begins:

I cannot tell why or wherefore
A legend of olden times
Deep in my heart is singing,
In mournful rhythmic rhymes.

After several songs had been sung in unison, Hermann begged the young man who was the host that evening to ask the beautiful strangers to sing a song alone and of their own choosing, he longed to hear their voices, unspoilt by those of others.

The nixy maidens readily complied: was not singing their most natural mode of expressing themselves? They sang these verses to a weird, haunting melody:

THE WILD-FOWL ARE CALLING: come back to the lake!
O nixies come back, or your proud hearts must break;
The moonbeams are glancing, the fairies are dancing,
Come back.

THE GREY MISTS ARE RISING! Beware, O beware!
For though you are slender and though you are fair,
Your treacherous waters, O nixy king's daughters,
Can slay.

BEWARE THE KING'S ANGER — O tempt not your fate,
The white water-lilies your coming still wait;
Wide open each flower until the twelfth hour —
Beware!

THE OLD PENDULUM clock on the wall struck eleven. How fast the time had flown! The three beautiful maidens rose up hastily and departed, wishing a courteous "good night" and "good luck to you" to the company.

As Hermann opened the door for them, he saw a little dwarf with a lighted lantern waiting for them outside the door, and much as he wished to accompany them home, he did not dare to do so.

When they had left the room, a storm of conjecture burst forth; at last everyone agreed that they must be the nixies of the lake.

"We did not like the look of their eyes; they were so cold and treacherous," said some of the girls who were jealous of a beauty that they felt they could never attain to.

“You are ill-natured things, not fit to sweep the floor for such exquisite creatures,” said Hermann angrily; and the whole company began to jeer and to laugh at him, saying:

“Hermann has fallen in love with the nixies. Many a wet kiss will he have from them — ha — ha! — but cold water will be his bridal bed, and death the groomsman — ha, ha!”

“Do not be so cruel,” said kind little Brigitte, who had blamed the nixy in the story. “See how pale Hermann looks, he will faint in another minute; he has never been strong since he was out in that awful storm.”

Hermann could bear the conversation no longer; hastily saying good night he went home with wild thoughts in his head, and, alas! wild, ungovernable love in his heart.

For the next few weeks on Saturday evenings the same thing happened. There was the usual social gathering, no one was absent; the little room could hardly hold the thronging guests. Then there was the eagerly looked for knock at the door, and the three lovely maidens entered and shared so naturally in what was going on that the young people gradually lost somewhat of their awe of them. Who could spin so fast and so finely as the three strangers; who could sing such entrancing songs; who could tell more wonderful stories!

Hermann generally managed to sit by Lenore, and to hold her hand, and he knew his love was returned.

Naturally the exquisite Elfrida, and the stately Clothilde had their admirers as well.

“Soon they will have taken all our sweethearts away from us, the nasty creatures,” whispered some of the village girls under their breath, “and they cannot marry all the lads in the country round. The men are bewitched, that is certain — no good can come of it. Most of the men realise it, however, and will come back to us in time; all except Hermann. He is so far gone that it is quite hopeless to try and influence him.”

"I am sorry for Lenore," said little Brigitte, "I would do anything I could to help her; she looks so *very* unhappy!"

On the night of the 9th of September the spinning evening was to be at Hermann's house, which was a splendid building in its way, like a great wooden castle. He was feverish with excitement. He bought and gathered all the flowers he could get together, and decked the house as for a wedding-feast. His mother could not bake cakes that were fine enough to suit his taste; the furniture seemed to him clumsy and old-fashioned. He would gladly have strewn rose-leaves, instead of rushes, on the floor for his lady-love to tread on. All the time a voice was telling him to desist: that such love could never be hallowed; that his bride was but a myth, a dream that would vanish away. His mother was terribly troubled about him, and feared that the boy had lost his wits in the thunderstorm.

"You shall see my bride to-night, mother," he said. "Ah, there is no one like her!"

But the old woman trembled and shook and crossed herself, she knew not why. She felt a presentiment of coming evil.

"She shall not escape from me so soon to-night," thought Hermann to himself. "I know what I will do: I shall put the clock an hour back, so that when it is really twelve o'clock, they will think it is only eleven. One hour, one blessed hour more in her company, snatched in defiance of fate!"

Never had Hermann been more charming as a host than he was to-night. He bade his guests heartily welcome and shook them warmly by the hand. True, he was somewhat distracted and gave strange answers to questions that were put to him. His eyes were constantly on the door. It opened at last, and the three entered; they looked lovelier than ever; they had on golden shoes and wore golden girdles. Their dresses were white edged with pale green like water-lilies with a green calyx. There was to be no spinning to-night. Hermann had provided for music and dancing; he became giddy and his senses failed him almost at the thought of dancing with the lovely Lenore.

Ah what light little feet! They hardly seemed to touch the ground as they flew round; but the time too sped by with great rushing wings, though Hermann had striven to check its headlong course. They paid no heed to the dwarf and his constant warning taps on the door; the three sisters were too engrossed in the delights of the dance. But suddenly Lenore glanced at the clock; it pointed to eleven.

“A few moments more, my belovèd,” she said, “and then we must part. But why are you so pale?” she asked of Hermann, whose heart was beating fast enough to suffocate him; for he was afraid now of the consequences of his deed.

“Lenore,” he said chokingly, “it is midnight; I hope I have not done wrong. I put back the clock. I wanted to keep you all longer at my house.”

Lenore turned deadly pale, then she told her sisters of the fatal trick that Hermann had played on them, and they too turned white as the chalk on the walls; well they knew their father and what his revenge might be!

Murmuring a sad farewell Lenore gazed for the last time in Hermann’s eyes, and then the dark night swallowed her up for ever.

The dwarf’s lantern could be seen from time to time among the forest trees like a will-o’-the-wisp; then that too vanished.

The dancing and feasting went on for some time; but Hermann’s heart was sick within him; he had no spirit left for the revelry. An indescribable feeling of terror and anxiety possessed him. The clock struck twelve; the guests dispersed. They had hardly left the house when a terrific storm broke forth, appalling in its awful violence; the house shook, trees were uprooted, lightning blazed continually. The tempest was nothing, however, compared to that in Hermann’s breast; he could not rest or sleep; fearful visions assailed him: he seemed to hear his beloved Lenore calling him, or begging for mercy from her cruel father.

Towards morning the storm had somewhat abated though it was by no means over. Hermann rushed out of the house, taking a wild pleasure in battling with the fierce elements. Up and up with a certain step he went towards that lake where all his anguish had begun, and yet where all his hopes and desires were centred. As he approached the lake through the fir-wood, the sky over the great cliff was rosy in the early dawn, the birds were singing, the harebells raised their dew-drenched heads and looked at him. No motion — no sound — the lake was cruel it seemed to him in its indifference to his grief. “Lenore,” he cried, “Lenore!”

Then the waters of the lake stirred and three waves arose, each one greater than the last, and in the third was the nixy king with a cruel expression on his face.

“Ah, call for Lenore,” he said mockingly, “but you will never see her again! — Behold, the doom of the disobedient daughters is fulfilled.” As he spoke the lake stirred again, the waters whirled round, three exquisite rose-leaves rose from the depths of the lake and floated on the surface of the water. “Never again will you or any mortal man behold the nixies of the pool; they are changed into rose-leaves; this was their punishment,” he said, “a poetical punishment — ha, ha!” and he vanished with a tremendous clap of thunder.

More than half-mad Hermann stumbled home; for weeks he lingered between life and death.

The kind little Brigitte would have liked to have taken care of him, and would have made him a good wife; but because of his consuming love for Lenore, he slowly pined away, until one day he was found lying dead beside the fatal lake.

8

KING REINHOLD

There are villages in the heart of the Taunus Mountains that are little altered by this progressive age; no railway, not even the post-chaise reaches them, and motor-cars are only to be seen as they whirr past occasionally on the high road.

Such a village is Elhalten; it lies in a green valley, rich with many flowers; a lovely little brook runs through it, disappearing suddenly under houses to reappear again triumphant farther down the road. This brook is called the Silber Bach or Silver Brook, on account of the clearness of its water. On either side of the valley rise up steep mountain-slopes with wild woods and rough pathways. One good road joins the village with Vockenhausen, and so with the well-known town of Eppstein.

On the farther side of the Küppel (the steep peak that rises behind Elhalten) is a forester's cottage, a lonely and deserted-looking dwelling in the middle of the forest. There I once nursed a huge friendly cat who was so delighted to see a stranger that she quite persecuted me with her affection.

On the top of the Küppel is an airy tower; anyone who wishes to try what flying is like, and cannot afford to go in the Zeppelin airship, can form an idea of it here. There is a most expansive view of the Taunus Range, and very little underneath the feet.

In the forester's hut lived a little boy named Hugo. He was the son of the forester, a fine little fellow of nearly six years. Hugo had few story-books; but he did not need them; for he lived in the forest, and the forest tells its own tales to the children who live there. The birds would chatter to him, and tell him their family histories; the silent, sweet-eyed deer came to the forestry to be fed in the cold winter, and so he learnt to know their ways. The little flowers would whisper tales of the strange sights they had seen in the forest, when they had by chance forgotten to close their petals for the night.

Hugo had seen much for a five year's old boy; but he longed to see more. He had heard stories of wood-goblins, of fairies and nixies, and of the busy dwarfs who live underground. He thirsted for adventure.

Now I must tell you that just about this time the news had come from Elhalten that a child had been lost from the village, a dear little girl of four years. She had strayed by herself in the woods of the Küppel, and though her parents and Hugo's father, indeed all the villagers had sought for her, no trace could they find, save strips of her little blue pinafore, and a hair ribbon on the brambles in a remote spot near an old quarry. You can imagine what a stir this made in the quiet life of the neighbourhood.

Some people spoke of gipsies, some of deep holes or pools in the woods; others did not say much, but they thought of the wood-spirits and fairies and shook their heads. Hugo had many a time played with pretty baby Elsa; her father and the forester were friends, and she had spent the day sometimes in the forestry on the Küppel. You may imagine that the children were more strictly watched over than usual. Hugo's mother kept a sharp eye on him; for she knew that his little head was full of all sorts of queer notions.

It happened that, about a fortnight after these events, Hugo's father went out for a night's hunting. His mother had been busy all the afternoon; the weather was hot and sultry. At last drowsiness overcame her and she fell asleep with her head on the kitchen table. Now she was certainly not given to falling asleep in the afternoon, she was generally much too busy for that; so I really think she must have been bewitched. The fairies sometimes put sleeping draughts into people's coffee; then it is all up with them.

Now was Hugo's opportunity. He hastily took up the brown (or grey as it is called in Germany) rye-bread and sausage that stood ready for his supper, packed it into a beautiful green case, with two May-bugs painted on it, snatched up his toy gun in case of accidents, and set out with a brave heart to look for little Elsa.

I must tell you that he had dreamt of her repeatedly since her disappearance. She seemed to look at him with her wistful blue eyes, and to implore his help. A rhyme rang constantly in his head that seemed to have reference to her; but he could not quite make out what it meant:

KING REINHOLD FOUND a little maid
Alone within the forest glade;
She wept and cried in sore distress,
All torn and tattered was her dress;
He set her on a golden throne,
He gave her playthings for her own.
But still she wept the livelong day,
She would not laugh, and would not play.
'This is most tiresome to behold;
What shall I do?' said King Reinhold.

THE LITTLE MAID was probably Elsa; but where was she? Who was King Reinhold? How could Hugo deliver her? He could not answer these questions. “I must trust to luck, and hope that the fairies will help me. Heigho for adventures!”

It was the twilight hour; the sky was of a delicate grey-green tint, the birds called to their roving mates to come home to bed, a few faint stars appeared in the sky; mystery hung in the air.

On Hugo went — following a circle of green and gold that was marked on the trees and seemed to show him the way. He sang and shouted merrily to keep up his spirits; it was supper-time, and the night air had made him hungry; so he unpacked his bread and sausage and made a good meal. The moon had risen, and threw a glimmer of light through the trees; the lingering shades of twilight vanished. On one side of the little path was the dark fir-wood, impenetrable in its gloom, on the other, beeches and oaks. Little harebells, and pink centaury bordered the pathway. There was a lovely woody smell in the late summer night, a smell of damp earth, and fungi and flowers, or rather a combined perfume still more subtle and indescribable.

The stillness and loneliness began to oppress our hero a little for the first time. If he had been a town child he would have been horribly frightened long before this; but he was as used to the silence of the woods, as you may be to the noise and bustle of the street.

Suddenly a muffled sound broke the silence: knock, knock, knock, like the blow of hammers when the workmen are busy at some distance. Hugo’s brave little heart began to beat; for he knew that the noise must be made by the Kobolds at work on their anvils deep underground.

Then he was aware of footsteps behind him: tramp, tramp, tramp. Was it his father come to fetch him home? He rather hoped that it might be so; but when he plucked up courage to turn round, there was no one there! An owl screeched; a bush rustled near him; he turned round sharply, and there he saw a little old man with a huge key in his hand sitting on a felled tree-trunk. His bright blue eyes gleamed strangely in the moonshine, and his shaggy grey hair stood up on either side of his red-peaked cap. He wore a jacket of green, lined with scarlet, and had on heavy wooden shoes such as the peasants wear in some parts of Germany. He plucked a dandelion clock that grew by the way and held it up to the moon.

“One, two, three,” up to nine the little man counted.

“Nine o’clock! Come along hurry up,” said he, and he took Hugo by the hand.

Instantly the child was able to see many things in the forest which he had not observed before; strange fairy forms came floating by and gazed at him with sad, sweet eyes; then a stream of laughing elves passed him in wild frolic. Yes, once he thought that through the trees he saw the gigantic form of the Old King himself, throned on his mountain.

Down, down a narrow bypath they clambered, over stones and through brambles, and interlaced branches. Then they crossed a trout stream silver clear in the moonlight. The trout were asleep; but when the dwarf leant over the little stone bridge and whispered a few words — flash and they were off, far far down the stream; they hid under the rushes and tree-roots by the banks and quaked for fear. They dreaded the dwarfs and with reason.

“Boiled trout with a fine butter sauce, that is my favourite dish,” said the little man to Hugo and smacked his lips greedily.

They walked along the beautifully overshadowed pathway by the trout stream, watching the moonlight on the rippling water, till they left the brook behind, and came to a green meadow in the centre of which stood a venerable oak-tree, which still bore green leaves though its trunk was completely hollow.

The tree was lit from within by a brilliant glow of rosy light. The dwarf approached on tiptoe, taking off his clumsy shoes, and beckoning to Hugo to follow him quietly. They peeped through the holes in the trunk of the tree, and O what a sight they saw!

Twenty or more of the tiniest children, scarcely bigger than my finger, sat or danced or rolled on the green mossy carpet of the tree-room. These were the fairy babies, and this was the fairies' nursery. Each little girl had a dolly made of the loveliest flowers, and a cradle of green oak leaves, sewed together by grass blades.

The tiny Fee babies lay on their backs and kicked and crowed for joy, and the biggest of all the fairies present gave them their bottles, filled with moonshine and honey-dew on which the babies thrive. The boy elves made the most noise; they had captured a field mouse, a huge creature it seemed in comparison with them, and they were all trying to ride on its back at once.

Hugo was so delighted with the lovely sight that he could not resist calling out "Oh!" in tones of ecstasy. In an instant, puff! the light went out; a cold fog arose; Hugo saw his dwarf companion change into a big black bear terrible to behold. Just as our hero thought he was going to be eaten up, the Kobold resumed his natural form.

"Be silent if you would be wise," he said, and that was all.

They followed the little pathway further through the meadow and into the woods again, until they came suddenly on a great pile of rocks, picturesquely heaped up amongst the trees, such as are so common in the Taunus Mountains. The dwarf went up to the rock, key in hand, and searched about until he had found a secret door. Then he fitted the key into the lock and turned it, then tugged and tugged to open the door. Suddenly it swung open, creaking noisily, and the dwarf lay on his back. Up he got grumbling and scolding. "They ought to have oiled the hinges, the lazy louts," he said.

As the door opened, Hugo saw a long corridor before him, lit by stars of light, and countless mirrors reflected the stars in every direction. The effect was rather too dazzling after the dark night, and Hugo's eyes blinked. Down, down, down, the corridor gradually descended and seemed never-ending. “However shall I get out again?” thought Hugo anxiously. He did not know you see that there are many ways out of magic land.

At last they came to another door, made of crystal glass, and entered a large hall with a sparkling roof of rock crystal. In the centre was a fountain, a more wonderful creation fairyland does not contain. Hugo held his breath for fear of saying “Oh!” again. Strange gnomes and fairies seemed to be alive in it, and the element it contained, was not water, but fire. The most marvellous display of fireworks that you have ever seen, would be nothing in comparison.

Sometimes it illustrated well-known fairy tales: Snowdrop in her glass coffin, Cinderella trying on the shoe and so on. Hugo could have watched it for ages, and left it reluctantly, looking back all the time. Then they passed through an arched doorway, and a new scene met their view.

Multitudes of little dwarf men dressed in Court attire stood round the room. Facing them, on a throne of gold, with a tiny crown of gold starred with bright-eyed diamonds on her head sat a real little human girl, with a shabby old dolly in her arms. She was a very pretty little girl, grandly dressed in a frock of blue silk embroidered with white daisies, little blue socks and shoes with diamond buckles. But her face was sad and pale, and her eyes red from crying, and her fair hair hung in tangled locks over her shoulders. She held her dolly clasped tight in her arms and repeated over and over again: “I want my mamma, I want to go home to my mamma.”

As the dwarf, followed by Hugo, entered the room the dwarfs or Kobolds, as they are also called, bowed down with their heads to the ground, and sang in a gruff chorus:

HAIL, thrice hail, to King Reinhold,
We his subjects true and bold
Bow in homage to our king,

Each his cap on high must fling!

WITH THAT EACH Kobold threw his peaked cap up to the roof and caught it again on his head, or his foot, or on his nose as the case might be. Then they all shouted “Hurrah!” and it was as if a mighty flock of ravens were to croak all together. The little girl put her hands up to her ears, and was about to cry again when she saw Hugo. Then she jumped up eagerly with a cry of joy and sprang down the golden steps.

“O you dear, good Hugo,” she said, “have you come to fetch me home? I knew you would come,” she continued, “for I have dreamt of you so often.”

Hugo looked into the sweet little face before him and, in spite of her fine clothes and diamond crown, he recognised little Elsa, his lost playmate. He remembered his dreams, and all seemed to grow clear. He felt himself very big and strong and important all at once. Putting his arms protectingly round the little girl, he said facing the whole assembly: “I have come to take this little girl, Miss Elsa, home to her mamma.”

King Reinhold (for it was the king of the dwarfs himself who had accompanied Hugo) took up a heavy crown that lay on a cushion beside him, put it on, and then took it off again, grumbling that it was too heavy and did not fit him properly.

Then he cleared his throat and addressed his courtiers in these words: “Hum! Hum! Hum! My esteemed subjects! I found this little girl some weeks ago in the woods, within the magic circle of my domain. She was crying bitterly, and seemed very frightened. I comforted her as best I could. I gave her strings of pretty beads and a tiny fan of blue jay’s feathers. I promised to take her with me, and give her a crown of gold, to set her on a golden throne, and make her Queen of all the dwarfs. I even condescended to offer her a kiss; but I am sorry to say the ungrateful child smacked me in the face (cries of “shame.”) There she sits, look at her! how has she repaid me for all my kindness and for all the honours I have conferred on her?” (Here Elsa began to cry again and to clutch tight hold of Hugo’s hand.) “She does nothing but blubber all day, and cuddle her dolly, and say she wants to go home to her mamma! I appeal to you, my Kobolds, is such a baby worthy to be Queen of our realm, of a people more ancient than the mountains, older indeed than mankind; for we were the first inhabitants of the earth, we are Primitive Man!”

A roar of applause met this speech and cries of “She is not worthy, let her be deposed,” were heard. “She is really too young, she is but a baby still,” said one kindly looking old grandpapa Kobold.

King Reinhold raised his hand to command silence, and continued in a loud, harsh voice: “When she is older, she will become too big for us; mortals have the strange habit of growing. No, I have thought the matter over. Young birds are after all safest in the nest. But this baby would never be able to find the way home, not even down her own street. So I have chosen this brave young man to take her home.” Here he gave Hugo a slap on the back that nearly knocked him down, for dwarfs are very strong in spite of their smallness, you know.

Elsa’s face began to beam, and she would have danced for joy; but the King’s uncomplimentary remarks hurt her a little. *She* was quite sure that she could find her way home, a big girl of four years ought certainly to know her own house. She knew exactly where it stood. Near the rushing silver brook, a low, red-roofed house, and a barn with black beams, also cocks and hens and geese strutting about in the little yard. It was quite near the water-mill; she could hear the rushing of the water as she lay in her little bed under her big feather sack, with only her little nose and ears peeping out. A fir-tree with a very tall stem and a thick bushy head stood at the back of the house.

Yes, she was sure that she could find it.

Meanwhile some of the dwarfs were marshalled off to get the carriage ready for the children. Then Hugo summoned up courage to address the King.

“O King!” he said, “I have heard of the wonders of your kingdom and of the marvellous skill of you workmen” — here he stammered a little and his oratory gave way — “I should so much like to see something of it,” he said shyly.

“Certainly, certainly, with the greatest pleasure,” said King Reinhold, and looked much gratified. “Intelligent child,” he muttered. “Ho, Dickkopf, bring me a torch, and lead the way to the workshop,” he said.

Off he marched with majestic tread, and Hugo followed with Elsa, her little warm hand clasped tight in his own; through dark passages and caves lit by a pale light; through store-rooms where masses of minerals were piled up gleaming in wonderful colours; through the treasure-houses containing gold and silver and precious stones in huge quantities.

The children’s eyes grew round in their heads as they saw all this wealth; but they did not understand much about the value of these treasures; toys or sweeties would have been more to their taste.

At last they reached a long, narrow hall where thousands of little men, with leather aprons on, sat busy at work. Each was employed in adorning and completing some work of art: costly goblets, beautiful chain rings, and necklaces were there, such as were never seen in the finest shops of Paris, Berlin or London.

The “joy of the making” was written on every countenance; for the artist is always happy when at work.

One dwarf was illuminating a book, and a beautiful design of grasses and butterflies grew up under his clever fingers.

“Take the book,” said King Reinhold to Hugo. “It is only a tiny chapter from the great book of Nature that has neither beginning nor end. But if you study it carefully and earnestly, it will always bring you hope and happiness, whatever your learned men may say to the contrary. Hold the pages to the light, and you will see that they are transparent.”

As Hugo did so with the deepest interest, behold! the pictures became alive; the butterflies changed into fairies and laughed, and nodded at him in a friendly way.

“Look *through* the book of Nature till you find the soul of things,” said King Reinhold.

Although this sounded very deep and mysterious, Hugo seemed to understand. Do you, I wonder, little children, who read this story? Or are you like the boy in the kindergarten to whom I was telling a fairy story and who interrupted me contemptuously with the remark: “Fairies don’t exist!”

“O don’t they my little man!” said I. “Well *you* think so.”

Presently we read of a ball that grew, and he spoke again with great energy: “Balls don’t grow.”

“Oh, Oh!” said I, “Have you ever seen a little green apple.” Then I tried to show him what wonderful things are always happening in this world of ours, if only we have eyes to see them. I do not think I convinced him; for he was very pig-headed and had a great opinion of himself; and such people big or little are very difficult to argue with.

To Elsa, Reinhold gave a handful of exquisite roses. “In fairyland roses mean love and happiness,” he said. “Little girls should be happy all the day long, and not wet the world with their tears. There are tears enough already” — he said ponderingly — “tears in the centre of the earth.”

Opening out of the hall on either side were huge furnaces. Here the Kobolds were busy smelting the ore, and preparing the materials for the more skilled workmen. Here too were little cupboards with shelves into which the costly vases were put, in order to be burnt hard like china.

The heat was so intense that Hugo and Elsa could only just peep in. It seemed to them as if the little men must be roasted alive; but the Kobolds were used to it, and found it quite cool and pleasant. They swung their hammers and chattered away at the same time, the busier the merrier; they were never idle or tired of their work.

A young dwarf page entered the hall and announced that the carriage was ready. In another moment Hugo and Elsa found themselves standing in the forest in the moonlight. A carriage stood ready for them drawn by six stags. King Reinhold had dispensed with the ceremony of leave-taking; he hated fusses, and wanted to smoke his pipe in peace.

Hugo recognised the stags; he had fed them in the winter from the windows of the forestry; they knew him too, and nodded their gentle heads.

O what a ride that was home through the warm September night! They saw neither spirit nor goblin; no fairy marvel was revealed to them; only the strong, sweet scent of the firs, the dark, weird shape of the trees, and the stars that shone through the branches!

They held one another tight by the hand, and leaned back on the soft cushions; they said nothing, they felt as if they were in a dream.

Presently they heard the noise of a little brook that was hidden in the dark trees, and shortly afterwards they turned a corner and saw the little village of Elhalten before them, peaceful and still in the early morning light.

Elsa recognised her home after all, and called to the stags to stop. Then she kissed Hugo and laid her little cheek against his and said: “Good-bye, darling,” and then she slipped into her house, and it all seemed quite natural. You may imagine *how* delighted Elsa’s mother was to have her baby girl in her arms again. There was such a kissing and hugging as never was before!

Meanwhile Hugo drove up the steep side of the Küppel in the rosy light of the early morning; luckily he met no one on that lonely way. Once he thought he saw a white form standing at the end of the path, like a tall woman who waved her arms and beckoned. But when he looked more closely, it was but the growing light of day through the trees, and not Mother Holle, or the Wood-woman, as he had imagined. The stags galloped along swiftly in spite of the rough road, and soon stopped before the door of the forestry. There everyone seemed still asleep; not a sound was to be heard. Hugo stroked the gentle heads of the stags and bade them good-bye, and they vanished suddenly in the thicket of the Küppel.

With the first rays of the sun Hugo's mother awoke, and was most astonished to find that she had slept all night in the kitchen.

"That's what happens, when one's husband is away," she said stretching herself and shaking her clothes. "What has become of Hugo?" she thought suddenly, and felt anxious. She went quickly upstairs to the bedroom, but there lay Hugo snugly curled up in bed with rosy cheeks and tumbled curls, his nose buried deeply in his pillow.

As she came in, he roused himself and said: "Mother, I have been to fetch little Elsa. She is home again" — then he turned round and fell fast asleep.

The next day the news reached them that little Elsa had really been found.

"Why, how curious, my boy dreamt it last night," said Mrs Forester.

"She was left at her parents' house at about four in the morning, so I heard," said her husband, who had just come home.

Elsa's parents always believed that she had been stolen by the gipsies; it was strange that they should have sent her back so soon, without asking for a reward. Moreover the child was richly dressed; that was also a queer thing; her clothes were the wonder and admiration of the whole village. A blue silk frock, and shoes with shining buckles; never had such a finely dressed child been seen in Elhalten before.

The simple folk never dreamt that the buckles were real diamonds and worth a large sum of money.

When Hugo and Elsa met again on the following Sunday, you may be sure that they had much to talk about, at least when they were left alone undisturbed by grown-ups!

Although the fairy gifts were invisible to all save the children themselves, it seems that they had an influence on them as they grew older.

Elsa became a sweet, loving little person, the sunshine of her home — so she was called — and very, very seldom did anyone see her crying.

Hugo was a quiet, shy boy; but he seemed to observe everything and people said of him: “Hugo has his eyes open; he will make his mark in the world some day.” So the children grew up happy and good, and what can you want to know more about them than that?

9

THE WITCH’S GRANDDAUGHTER

In a green valley between two mountain-slopes lay a little village crowned by the Castle of Eppenhain, that stood on the mountain-side, built on projecting slabs of rock.

The quaint old houses of the village with their red, slanting roofs, and black-beamed walls, made a pretty picture in the May sunshine as Count Karl of Eppenhain rode through the stone-paved highway, mounted on his white steed decked with scarlet fringes. The lilac bushes were in flower, the air was sweet with their scent, the laburnums hung out their “gold rain” between the houses, the cherry-trees in the little gardens shed their blossoms like snow.

At the farther end of the village was a house somewhat larger than the peasant’s cottages, with many gables and corners. This house was surrounded on all sides by a thick briar hedge. The Count knew that it had belonged to an old woman who was said to be a witch. There she had lived all alone, save for her seven cats, her seven ravens, her poultry — famous for the remarkable size of the eggs — and her little granddaughter, Babette.

Count Karl had heard that the old woman was dead; for there had been a great fuss about her burial. The villagers had said that as she was a notorious witch, she ought not to be buried in consecrated ground; but as the old lady had left money to the church, her tombstone was erected after all in the little churchyard. The village boys declared that they had seen her riding on a broomstick over the church spire; but the Count did not believe such tales. He wondered what had become of the child; she was the prettiest, as well as the most mischievous and ill-behaved child in the village.

As the Count came up to the house, he heard voices shouting and scolding. Then he saw a strange hunting scene. The hunters were not men, but women with sticks and brooms, and the creature pursued was neither a hare nor a fox, but just a little girl.

Yes, it was little Babette, the witch’s granddaughter. She was leading the fat peasant women a fine dance. They were quite unused to running, and were obliged to stop every few minutes to pant; then Babette danced just before them, made naughty faces, and (oh, fie!) stuck out her little red tongue. Her hair blew over her head in the fresh breeze, till she looked like some tall flower with curling petals. Sometimes she stopped and shook her little fist at her pursuers; then off she flew again. She knew every nook and corner of the garden, and that was to her advantage.

The Count paused, laughed, then blew a blast from his horn.

Instantly everyone stood still as if they were living pictures.

“Hi! Ho! Come here, good folk!” he cried.

The women came at once, wiping their hot faces with the corner of their aprons, puffing and blowing like so many fat seals. Babette stood at a safe distance, but near enough to hear all that went on.

“Please sir,” said one of the women with a curtsy, “as your Lordship knows, the child’s granny is dead and buried. Four days has the child lived here all alone, never a bite or sup has she had; she will die of starvation. (Here Babette laughed.) She hides in the bushes like the wild cat that she is!”

“Babette, little Babette, come here, child,” he called, interrupting the old woman’s narrative.

She came at once in obedience to his gentle command. She gave him one glance out of her deep brown eyes, lifting up her long black lashes, and his heart was captured at once. He was very fond of children, but he had none of his own. Here was a beautiful child that seemed ready made for him. Not one of the women before him really wished to keep her; for they feared her, and the supposed power of her dead grandmother.

Meanwhile the child stood by the Count, and began to stroke his fine embroidered sleeve; finally she slipped her little hand into his. This settled the matter.

“Well, well, we must see what is to be done for the child. Meanwhile I shall take her up with me to the Castle. She seems to have made you all rather hot,” he remarked mischievously to the reddest and stoutest of the women.

“A devil’s brat, I call her!” she muttered in return, between her teeth.

“Hush,” said my Lord indignantly, “she looks more like a little angel,” and, indeed, at his kind words her small face had become very sweet.

As he mounted his horse again and lifted Babette to place her before him, she began to cry bitterly.

“Why, little one, what ails you?” he said. “Are you frightened?”

“No-o-o-o-o-o,” said Babette, “but I don’t want to go away from my *beau-ti*-ful home!”

“You shall have a far more beautiful home, and everything that you can want, shall be yours,” he said. “Why, you would have starved there alone, you poor little thing!”

“Oh no!” said Babette, “for Lucky — she is my pet hen you know — always laid the biggest eggs for me; then I make a little hole and suck them so. (She tossed back her curly head.) Then I am never hungry or thirsty. O, who will feed Lucky, and all the baby chickens; and my cats?” she continued, and began to cry again.

“We will fetch them all up to the Castle,” said his Lordship consolingly.

The road wound upwards and upwards, until they reached at length the gateway of the Castle. The heavy gates stood open to receive them. There was a pretty terraced garden in the front, where peacocks strutted up and down, who nodded their heads as if they knew Babette.

A dog sprang out barking to meet his master. Count Karl patted his head; then he lifted Babette from his horse, and led her by the hand into the Castle. "Welcome to Eppenhain, my little maid," he said, formally, but kindly.

Her little heart beat fast; for she was timid, like all wild, untamed creatures, and did not know what might happen to her next. The Count drew back the heavy curtain that hung before the entrance to a room; and there in a deep window niche sat a lady dressed in a rich green velvet dress with puffed sleeves, and a gold chain round her neck. She was working at embroidery on a frame. She sprang up at once, as her husband (for it was the Countess herself) entered the room, and uttered a cry of surprise as she saw the child.

"Why, what dirty little thing have you picked up? Send her away again at once," she said imperiously. "Don't touch me, child," as Babette attempted to stroke her grand dress.

Now the Count had not noticed that Babette was very dirty, that her red pinafore hung in rags, and her hair had not been combed for many a day. He was somewhat taken aback, and saw that he had been rash.

"She shall be washed and properly dressed, and *then* you will see," he said. He dared not tell her his plans at once. He sent for his old nurse, who had brought him up as a boy, and gave the child into her care.

The poor woman soon had her hands full, I can tell you! You might as well have tried to dress a hare as Babette! She *would* not stand still for a second, and as for a bath, she seemed to be quite afraid of it. However, several maids were called, and Babette was bathed in spite of kicks and screams. She was no sooner in the water than she began to splash about like a baby, and to enjoy herself finely. It was almost as difficult to get her out as to put her in! Some old clothes that had belonged to the Count's sister, were produced. Babette thought them very fine, and seemed quite pleased, she stroked the old nurse's cheek, chucked her under the chin, and sprang up and down violently on her knee, "nearly cracking my old bones," as nurse related afterwards. Her curls were the most trouble; it would take more than one day's brushing to set them in order.

Meanwhile Count Karl had been explaining to his wife that he meant to adopt Babette, and bring her up as his own daughter.

"A witch's offspring without a family pedigree," exclaimed his wife, "must I be mother to a witch's brat?"

Just then the "witch's brat" entered the room, making a funny bobbing curtsy, as nurse had taught her to do, just outside the door. Very pretty she looked in her low-necked, white-embroidered frock, with the cherry-coloured sash, her face flushed after the bath. Even her Ladyship was bound to acknowledge that she was quite a lovely child.

"What is your name, child?" she said condescendingly.

"I don't love you," said Babette, and stuck out her tongue.

"Babette," said the Count sternly, "if you are a *good* little girl, and do as you are told, you may stay here with us, and this lady will be your mother, and I your father. Then you will be brought up as a lady instead of becoming a little heathen and wild girl of the woods."

Babette stood still a moment, as if she were considering the matter; then she gravely kissed his Lordship's hand. The Countess extended her lily-white fingers, and Babette kissed them as well, but timidly; for she feared a rebuff.

Just at this moment a noise of scratching and miewing was heard at the window.

Babette flew to open it, and in walked — what do you think? — seven cats with their tails in the air rubbing themselves comfortably against the window-pane.

“O my dear Fotchen, dear Silverpaws, how glad I am to see you!” exclaimed Babette, and she kissed them all.

“*What next?*” said the poor Countess, holding up her hands in horror!

In a few minutes there came a rap at the window, seven times repeated. These were the ravens. However, they did not venture into the room; they were afraid of the big gun that stood in the corner. They flew straight up into a tall fir-tree, and there they chattered away as usual, hidden by the dark branches.

The funniest sight of all was the arrival of the poultry. The cocks walked first with an air of importance and authority; the baby bantams sat on their mothers’ backs; the whole procession toiled up the hill to the Castle and entered by the yard gate. The servants watched them with astonishment; they too said: “What next?” However, no one grumbled, not even the Countess when she heard of it; for such guests were welcome. The old witch’s hens were renowned for the size of their eggs; they had often been bought for use at the Castle.

Now the clock struck seven.

“High time for little girls to have their supper and go to bed,” said her Ladyship, and nurse was called, and carried Babette off again.

A beautiful wooden cot, painted white and gold, stood in the room where Babette was to sleep. It was still called the nursery; for the Count and his sister had slept there as children.

Nurse persuaded her to let five of the cats sleep outside in the barn; but she begged so hard to have Fotchen and Silverpaws that nurse sent for a bundle of hay, and the two pussies slept in a corner of the room to keep her from feeling homesick.

Babette stole out of her bed at six o’clock the next morning. She dressed herself in haste; she was so anxious to see her new surroundings. It seemed to her like a wonderful dream, or like one of the fairy stories that her old grandmother had so often narrated to her.

Yesterday, little, wild Babette, whom no one cared for, and everyone scorned; to-day, the Count's own daughter. She would try and be *so* good, never naughty any more. She smoothed her hair a little with her fingers; washing she did not think necessary. Then she went down the big oak staircase followed by her two pussies. When the young servants saw her, they began to tease her unmercifully and to pull the cats' tails.

Then Babette grew very angry. "Leave my cats alone, will you?" she said. She stamped her little foot, made ugly faces, and used bad words. Finally she escaped from her persecutors into the garden. Here she was alone. She sat down and cried with rage and sorrow. She had meant to be so good; but it was very hard when people were so horrid!

However she heard a cock-a-doodle-do from the hen-house, and ran off there, forgetting her troubles. She was greeted by a chorus of melodious voices. They made such a noise that they woke my Lady out of her comfortable early-morning doze. Lucky had laid an immense egg. She rolled it with pride to the feet of her young mistress, who promptly began to suck its contents. The ravens flew down to greet her, and she stroked their glossy plumage.

The five cats were still shut up and miewed bitterly. Babette luckily met one of the gardeners who opened the door of the barn and freed the captives. They followed her into the big kitchen with the shining copper pans, purring and rubbing themselves against her legs. Babette coaxed the cook till he gave her seven saucers of milk; then there was a great smacking of lips.

When nurse awoke as usual at seven o'clock, she was frightened to find that her little charge had vanished. "What a child to look after in my old age!" she groaned. "And yet she is taking too! How sweet she looked curled up in the old cot." She soon found out from the servants what Babette had been doing; so the child was seized upon, washed and brushed again, and dressed in a stiff frock with white frills.

Quite sober and respectable our little wild girl looked when she went downstairs after breakfast to see my Lord and Lady in the dining-room.

She sat on the high, straight-backed sofa, and played with the carved lions' heads, and had never a word to say for herself until the Count produced a doll that he had rummaged out from among some old treasures. It was yellow from age; but its frock was of satin, and it had on little gold shoes. To Babette, who had never had a doll of her own, it seemed very lovely indeed. "Is it *really* for me?" she asked in tones of ecstasy.

She was perfectly good all the morning, playing with it, washing its face, dressing and undressing it, and putting it to bed as little girls love to do.

At dinner she shocked the polite company by putting her food into her mouth with her fingers; forks and spoons she did not know how to manage. So she was sent to have dinner with the servants who made fine fun of her again, till she flew into a passion and declared with many tears that she would run away. Then they were frightened lest my Lord should hear the noise, and soothed and petted her till she was quiet again. They did not mean to be unkind; they were only stupid, and thought her tempers amusing.

Well, the days went on, and Babette became more gentle and docile, and gave up many of her wild ways. She saw but little of the Countess, but she grew to admire the grave, silent lady, and to long for some response to her affection. My Lord was Babette's best friend and protector in all her childish troubles. Everyone said that he was quite infatuated with the child. He would play ball with her in the garden, "regardless of his knightly dignity," as his wife remarked.

Babette knew all the animals about the Castle and ruled over them like a little queen.

She would go up to the proud peacocks and say imperiously: “Spread out your tails, or I will smack your silly heads!” and they obeyed her meekly at once.

She had a pet frog in the pond, and once when the gardener was scolding her for breaking some of his beautiful lilies, she popped it down his neck, to his horror and disgust! For this she was whipped and put to bed. I think she richly deserved it — don’t you?

The garden at the back of the Castle led into the dense forest by which the mountains were covered. Babette would sit on the stone wall and gaze into the deep shades, as if she could see things there that were invisible to others. She knew how to call the deer. One day she enticed a fine stag into the garden. She made a garland of cornflowers and ox-eye daisies, and threw it over his antlers; then she sprang on his back, holding a red foxglove in her hand for a whip, and galloped round the garden, singing and shouting: “Look at me, look at me! I am the Queen of the fairies!”

The Countess herself owned that she had never seen a prettier sight; but then she sighed deeply, and said to her husband she feared all was not right with the child.

The Count shared her fears to some extent, and nurse had orders never to let her out of her sight.

Nurse had several times seen a strange man watching Babette from over the wall as she played alone in the garden. She too felt nervous and anxious about her little charge.

~

YEARS PASSED BY, Babette grew into a tall and charming maiden. She learned to read and write, and to play on the harp. She could even speak a little French, which was the fashionable language of the Court in those days. So that with these accomplishments she was considered a fine lady, far above the village children, who had formerly despised her.

One fine evening (she was then about sixteen years of age) she was walking with her old nurse in the forest, not far from the Castle, picking bilberries, and singing to herself songs of her own composing. The wood was very still; not a leaf stirred. The setting sun shone out behind a beech-tree, making a brilliant star of iridescent colours that dazzled her eyes. She heard a sudden noise as of a cough: the bushes near her rustled. She felt frightened and called out: “Nurse, nurse,” in trembling tones.

As she spoke, a man sprang out of the wood and seized her by the arm. Nurse began to scream; but the man raised the stick he had in his hand, and she stood as if turned to stone.

Babette’s courage always rose to emergencies. She looked the man over from head to foot. He was dressed in green, with a red feather in his cap. His hair was dark and curly; his eyes were large and would have been beautiful, but that they had a wild and sinister look that Babette did not like, and squinted slightly. She seemed to remember his face; but where or when she had seen him before, she did not know. Her first thought was that he must be a wizard like one of those her grandmother had told her stories about.

“Who are you?” he said, shaking her slightly.

“I am Babette, daughter of Count Karl of Eppenhain,” said Babette proudly.

“A Count’s daughter — a fine tale — the witch’s granddaughter you mean,” he said with emphasis, and Babette shuddered. “Come along with me, child!” he continued, “you must follow me now, and serve me well and cook my dinners. I knew your old grandmother and have often seen you as a child; a little imp you were,” he said. “Now it is high time you learnt to be useful; they will only turn your head, and teach you rubbish up there at the Castle; you must come along with me now.” Then he turned to the poor nurse, and said, “In half an hour you will be free to return to the Castle. Adieu!” He fixed his strange eyes on the nurse, who swooned away, and thus she was found exactly half an hour afterwards by the housemaid, who had followed her to say that supper was ready.

You may imagine the consternation at the Castle. The poor Countess who had been so cold to Babette, seemed to feel it most. She sat and cried: “O Babette, come back, come back, my dear, and I will be a real mother to you, indeed I will.”

The Count immediately took steps to recover her. The forests were searched through and through by his men; but not the slightest trace could they discover.

The seven ravens said: “Caw, caw,” and set off at once in search of her.

The next day Fotchen and Silverpaws and the other cats disappeared. Lucky and several of the old witch’s hens were also missed.

It was evident that they had all followed Babette, and that she must be alive somewhere; but where, that was the question. Where there is magic at work, it is always a difficult matter.

One clever youth remarked that if one could find her pets, why, then one might find Babette.

But this brilliant idea was not of much use, as they were *all* lost.

Meanwhile Babette followed her strange guide with many misgivings and sad sinkings of the heart. They had not gone far when they came to a cottage in the forest, surrounded, like her granny’s garden, by a briar hedge.

Now I must tell you that Babette had fallen into the power of a reputed wizard, and he had the power of making everything within this briar hedge invisible and intangible to those outside. So that poor Babette would be more safely imprisoned there than in an iron-barred fortress. She did not realise this at first; she grew to understand it later, when she became more acquainted with the wizard (or Mr Squint-eyes, as Babette called him) and his ways. The hedge was so thick and high, and the thorns were so huge, that it would have been impossible for Babette to think of squeezing herself through it, and running away.

The wizard parted this hedge with his wand; it closed up thick and close behind them as they entered.

The cottage garden was laid out in patches of vegetables. Not a flower was to be seen in it; but there were fruit-trees with ripe apples, and pears, plums and medlars; for it was the early autumn. They entered into the little parlour which seemed dark and gloomy to Babette. Mr Squint-eyes tossed off a mug of beer that stood on the table, and told her to be off to bed. The poor girl was hungry; for bilberries are not very satisfying and it was supper time; but she crept up the narrow stairs, too much frightened to say a word. She found a tiny room with a white bed in it, a looking-glass, very dim and old and uncanny-looking, with candlesticks on either side, also a primitive washing-stand.

As she began to undress, a sense of fear and loneliness came over her. She thought of her happy home at Eppenhain, and of the Count, and hot tears began to fall. However, she was accustomed to look at the cheerful side of things. “They are sure to find me to-morrow,” she said to herself; she knew she could not be far away.

The next morning she was awakened by a loud knocking at the door. The horrid man who had stolen her, poked his head in, “Get up, get up, you lazy bones,” he said, “and see about my breakfast.”

Babette hurried downstairs and found a small kitchen, with a door leading into the garden. There was a heap of dried wood just outside the door, and, after many attempts, she succeeded in making the fire.

She filled the heavy iron kettle from the pump in the yard, making her pretty frock quite black.

“That’s right, that’s the way that women should work,” said the wizard coolly.

Babette felt indignant and thought that he might offer to help her, but not a bit of it. There he stood, leaning against the door, smoking his long pipe, the picture of laziness.

“Please where is the coffee?” said Babette.

“Use your eyes and you will find it,” said her polite host.

Then she saw a jar on a shelf labelled “Coffee,” and near it the coffee-mill.

Babette ground the beans till she was red in the face. Then she waited for the water to boil. Whilst she was attending to the coffee, rolls and butter appeared on the table and a blue and white china coffee service. The table seemed to have laid itself; for Babette was sure that the man had never moved from the door. Now breakfast was ready. They sat down together, the wizard saying never a word, but lifting one eyebrow at times in a peculiar way that made Babette feel very uncomfortable.

After breakfast he went out of the house saying: “Clean the house, make the beds, cook the dinner.”

“But there is no dinner to cook,” said poor Babette.

“Find it,” was all the reply she could get out of him.

Now Babette had not been remarkable for obedience and docility, and if anyone had spoken to her like that at home, she would have rebelled at once; but she felt instinctively that her safety here lay in doing exactly as she was told. The man was half-mad she feared, and if she aroused his wrath, he might do her bodily harm.

The tears came into her eyes; she felt quite in despair; but she was a brave girl and determined to make the best of things.

The vegetables in the garden occurred to her. She would cook some carrots; that was easy. Stewed plums would do for pudding; but what about the soup and the joint?

At this point of her deliberations a hare was thrown over the hedge. This settled the question. Evidently the man did not wish to starve.

“But how shall I get its fur off?” thought Babette. “Bah! I shall never be able to skin the creature!”

Just then she heard to her joy a “caw caw,” seven times repeated, and there she saw her dear ravens sitting on a tree just outside the garden.

Now the limit of invisibility did not exist for the witch’s favourites. They flew at once to Babette; she told them her troubles, and showed them the hare.

“That is an easy matter,” said the ravens, “the hare has seven skins; we are seven ravens, each of us will take off one skin, and may we have the pickings?” said the greedy fellows.

“Anything, anything you like! Please take it away and bring it back again all ready to pop in the pot!” said Babette.

“Potted or jugged hare famous!” said the ravens, and they laughed hoarsely.

“Be quiet, be quiet, or the wizard will catch you!” she said in a warning tone.

Now the dinner was all ready on the stove. Potatoes she had dug out of the garden. “Hare and carrots and stewed plums, what can anyone want more?” she thought, and felt very proud. But suddenly soup occurred to her. How could she make soup? She had heard that soup was made of bones and water; but she had no bones, and those nice little halfpenny packets for making soup out of nothing were not invented in those days.

She put on some hot water with a few carrots and a little chopped parsley in it and plenty of pepper and salt. She tasted it, as a good cook should, and said to herself: “Not bad, I have tasted worse.”

She laid the table, and punctually at one o’clock the man came in. Babette trembled. He proceeded at once to business; that is, he sat down to dinner.

Soup came first, which was unfortunate. “Bah!” he said, making a horribly wry face, “what stuff, child, do you want to make me sick?”

“No-o-o,” said poor Babette.

“Never make such soup again, or I shall fetch my sister, and she will cook *you*,” he said with a terrible look.

However the hare was tender, and when a pot of red-currant jelly produced itself, seemingly from nowhere, it was quite a fine dinner.

The carrots were hard, and “not scraped,” as the wizard said severely. “Plums too much sugar.”

But in spite of all this grumbling she felt immensely proud of her morning’s work. The house was not cleaned; neither were the beds made; but this he did not seem to notice. He lay on the sofa by the window, covered himself up with a bear skin, and snored loudly with his mouth open.

Babette made up the fire, and put the kettle on to boil for tea. Then she strolled out into the garden. She climbed up into a pear-tree. From her perch in its branches she could see far into the woods. She wondered when her friends would come and rescue her.

Then she saw to her delight Lucky and some of her favourite cocks and hens wandering about in search of her. They came scuttling up at once. She held up one finger to enjoin silence. She feared that her capturer might take a fancy for roast fowl if he should see them. So they hid under the hedge.

“Now I can make scrambled eggs for supper,” thought Babette joyfully.

Fotchen and Silverpaws had likewise no rest when their mistress was gone, and they too set out in search of her. When they reached the briar hedge, Babette was indoors making tea. They began to miew and made a great noise.

“The old woman’s cats, by Thor!” said the wizard. “They know a thing or two. I’ll go and let them in.” So saying he again parted the hedge with his wand, and let them through. Although Babette was very pleased to see them, she felt a little anxious as to their welfare.

However the wizard scratched their heads, and was quite affectionate to them. He had, it seemed, a partiality for cats.

Babette felt a little happier now that her pets were with her; yet her heart was sore. She thought of her lovely house, of her kind, good foster-father, and of all her friends, and the tears stood in her eyes.

Several weeks passed away, and Babette cooked and scrubbed every day in fear and trembling, like a regular little Cinderella. Being German, she was used to helping in the household, and was not so inexperienced as many English girls would have been. But never a word of praise did she get from her queer companion; but if anything were amiss, then he opened his mouth and scolded the poor girl roughly.

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A YOUNG MAN was returning home after a day's hunting. He was the son of the knight of a neighbouring castle, and his name was Sir Rudolf of Ruppertshain. It was a hot afternoon; the sunlight made a chequered pattern through the forest trees. His bag was heavy with game, and he whistled merrily as he strode between the oak-trees and bracken fern. He had a light heart and an easy conscience, few enemies and many friends, and added to these advantages was the exhilarating feeling of youth and perfect health.

Suddenly he stopped and looked around him, startled. He heard a sweet voice singing. The notes were clear and distinct as those of a bird, and yet it was no bird. Who could it be in this lonely spot? He could distinguish the words of the song as he held his breath to listen:

A LONELY MAIDEN, I,
Sit here and sob and sigh;
No man my face can see,

Ah, who will rescue me?
O lack-a-daisy-me!

O WASTED LIFE OF MINE!
Here must I sadly pine;
My young life hid must be
From all humanity.
O lack-a-daisy me!

O WERE A KNIGHT SO BOLD,
As in the time of old,
In days of chivalry,
He would deliver me!
O lack-a-daisy-me!

RUDOLF'S EYES were trained by hunting. He searched the woods carefully round that place, and peered behind every bush and tree; but nothing was to be seen. His heart beat fast, this was a real adventure. Surely if a wood-nymph or fairy were to appear to him here in this lonely forest, it would hardly seem strange.

So he summoned up his courage and addressed the wood-spirit as he thought. “Who are you? Where are you?” he said. “Be you wood-sprite or fairy, I fear you not. I am ready to do your bidding; for your sweet voice and your distress have touched my heart: appear, O appear!”

Babette (for of course it was she) trembled with excitement. This was really a chance of escape. She had seen the young huntsman from her perch in the pear-tree, and had made up the impromptu song. She thought it was even more original than her cooking. Now she answered eagerly:

“Alas it is impossible for me to appear unto you; for I am as invisible as if I had on Siegfried’s cap of darkness. I was stolen by a horrid wizard when I was walking in the forest with my nurse. Surely you have heard of me?”

Now of course Sir Rudolf had heard of Babette, — the story of whose kidnapping was told all over the country, and became more wonderful with every telling. Some people said that the devil himself had carried her off; this was really unkind; for Babette, though lively, was not a bad girl, as we know.

“Are you Babette, the witch’s granddaughter?” said the young man hesitatingly.

“O don’t, don’t say that, I want to forget that!” said Babette, and he heard a slight sob. “I am the adopted daughter of Count Karl of Eppenhain, and O, a wicked wizard holds me here invisible under a powerful spell. Just think,” said Babette crying again, “I slave for him all day and cook and do all the house-work, and never a kind word or look do I get from him in return. It is a shame. O dear! O dear!”

“Please don’t cry, I really cannot bear it, when I cannot even see you to comfort you,” said Rudolf tenderly. “Tell me what to do! Shall I shoot the wizard?”

“No, of course not; besides, he is invisible, too. You might walk through us all, and notice no difference, so subtle is the spell,” said Babette.

Rudolf was one of those specially gifted mortals in whom the sense of things unseen is as clearly developed as the senses of sight and hearing. He never doubted Babette’s reality, though I think a more up-to-date youth would certainly have done so, and have thought that his imagination was playing tricks with him. He felt much distressed and perplexed, but could think of no way out of this strange dilemma.

But an inspiration came to Babette.

“Go to Mother Holle,” she said, “if you really wish to help me. She was an intimate friend of my grandmother’s, and she is a powerful fairy and can perhaps help us. What is your name, brave youth?” she continued. “Sir Rudolf of Ruppertshain,” he answered. “Why, then, I know your mother quite well; but you were away travelling with your father, when I visited your castle. But quick, we must not delay matters by conversation, though it is *dreadfully* nice to talk to a real human being again.” Her voice sounded near and yet far away; “a curious kind of conversation,” Rudolf thought it was.

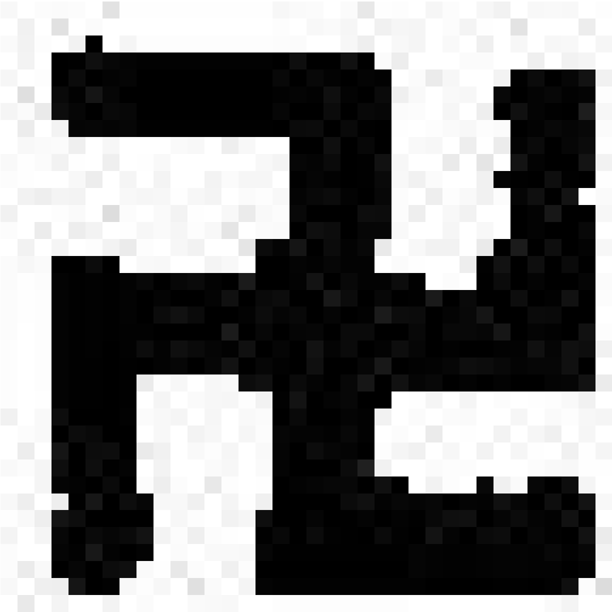
“Where can I find Mother Holle?” said Rudolf. “And will she not drop pitch on my head? I should be no good at shaking feather beds, you see!”

“Nonsense, she won’t expect you to do anything of the sort. She is very kind and friendly; she lives on the Rossert Mountain, quite near to your Castle. Hush, hush, go now! my tyrant is waking up; if he were to suspect us! Go! — go!”

A complete and somewhat unnatural silence followed, like one of those awkward pauses in the conversation when we entertain stiff callers for the first time.

Then Rudolf took the precaution of marking the position of the trees in that part of the woods.

Three tall fir-trees raised their heads among the beech and oaks. He cut a cross



thus, on each one of them, because trees are so deceptive. This mark is the old symbol of the Mithras cult, two axes placed sideways signifying the striking of fire. It is an old sign known and respected by the fairies; so he hoped that the good folk would see it and further his quest.

On one of the firs the ravens were assembled. They caw-cawed seven times to indicate their willingness to lend Rudolf their aid.

The wizard looked at Babette closely that evening. The new-born hope, perhaps, too, the sight of the handsome stranger had given an extra colour to her cheeks. “I may have trouble with her yet!” he said to himself, and cleared his throat with a rumbling sound.

I must tell you that the cocks and hens had betrayed themselves. They were silent all through the night, but when the dawn broke, they could not resist one cock-a-doodle-doo! Then the wizard chuckled and brought them in; but nothing had happened to them as yet.

Babette lived during the next days in a state of suppressed excitement. She felt that something *must* happen for good or evil; but she did not know what. Patient waiting! a hard lesson for all of us to learn, but harder still for a maiden of seventeen years who had been kept so long in that dull hole.

She had passed her birthday in that horrid place! just think of it, and not one birthday present did she get. She made up for it afterwards by having two birthdays at once; but it was not *quite* so nice.

Meanwhile Sir Rudolf had turned homewards pondering on his strange adventure, and fully determined to seek Mother Holle's aid. Should he go first to the Castle of Eppenhain and tell Babette's foster-parents that he had found out where Babette was imprisoned? He felt that, credulous though they were in those days, they would only laugh at him, and consider the story as outside the range of possibility. They might even suggest that a cask of Rhine wine had clouded his intelligence; no, he would go home to Ruppertshain Castle and have supper, and think it over. So he returned home, and was so silent and dreamy, and his appetite, which was usually of heroic proportions, was so small that his mother felt quite anxious about him.

"You are not bewitched, Rudie dear?" she asked anxiously, just as we might inquire if he were a little upset.

"I am not sure, mother, maybe I am!" he answered to the good lady's dismay.

After sprinkling him with various herbs, she insisted on his drinking some nasty aromatic tea when he went to bed. As she had put some spider's legs in it and a few choice things of that sort, Rudolf asked to be allowed to take it upstairs with him. Then I regret to say he deceived the good lady by pouring it out of the window. I rather think that you or I might have done the same thing under the circumstances, though it was undoubtedly wrong.

The full moon was shining into the little window in the gable of the turret. He shook off the very natural sleepiness and fatigue consequent on his night's hunting, took off his soiled clothes, and dressed himself in his fine velvet Court suit with the beautiful lace on the collar.

He opened the little window, squeezed himself (it was lucky that he was slight for a German knight) through the iron bars, and climbed on to the roof with some difficulty, not to say danger. Then he crawled noiselessly along the Castle walls, fearing to be challenged by the warder of the Castle on his nightly rounds. But the warder was just enjoying his seventh glass of lager beer, and was not very keen on the look-out.

As he dropped outside the walls, his favourite dog began to bark and beg to go with him; but Rudolf did not dare to let him out for fear of creating a disturbance.

He soon gained the little path which led through Eppenhain, and then through fields to the woods that clothed the Rossert. Great clouds had obscured the moon; but he was not afraid; he was so used to the woods and could distinguish one creature from another simply by its movements.

In his hand he carried a dark lantern. A rough path covered with rocks and stones led to the summit of the mountain. As he walked cautiously along, a bat hit him in the face as it blundered along. “Hi, ho, steady there, old fellow!” said Rudolf. He now entered the part of the woods where the beeches and oaks grow so closely together that at midday the sky seems green, rather than blue. The moon shone out suddenly, and he saw by its light a gruesome-looking head without a body that seemed to grin at him from among the undergrowth. His heart stood still for a moment, and then he laughed at his fears; for he saw that it was only a grotesque old tree-stump, such as one so often sees in the woods.

Suddenly he saw a bright light through the trees, as if one of the bushes were on fire, or was it merely the brilliant moonbeams shining on a wet clearing?

For a moment all was still; then lightning played across his path, revealing a huge clumsy-looking giant who stood with club uplifted in the way, looking as if he would dash his brains out. Brave though Rudolf was, he did not wish to court danger; so he turned aside into the woods hoping to find another path before long that was not thus barricaded. Then voices seemed to mock him and to laugh at him, and he had the unpleasant sensation of dark shadows, moving as he moved, shadows unaccompanied by substance.

The rain came down, pouring, drenching rain, such as the forests love. In a few minutes he was wet to the skin, as wet as if he had plunged into the river with his clothes on. Naturally his vanity was to blame for this; in his stout hunting clothes and thick leather boots even a deluge could not have wetted him through. To add to this, the air was close and stifling, and he had lost his way. All this for the sake of an unseen maiden. What if she were as old and ugly as Fräulein Kunigunde of whom Heinrich von Kleist has written? Somehow he felt that was impossible; but even if it had been so, his natural gallantry would not have deserted him, and we will hope that he would still have sought to deliver her.

A Christian knight is ready to help all women, be they young or old, rich or poor, plain or pretty.

The rain had ceased; but there was a sense of something oppressive in the atmosphere. An owl with eyes that looked like live coals glared at him from the branch of an oak-tree, vanishing as he approached. A fox? No, it was too large for a fox; it was a wolf (there were really wolves in the Taunus woods in those days!) came up to him snarling. Rudolf had his gun ready, but the creature moved away into the darkest shades, snarling and growling as it went.

Altogether I cannot say it was a pleasant walk. I do not think any one of us would have enjoyed it all alone at the dead of night, do you?

At this moment came a flash of lightning that struck down a tree just before Rudolf’s eyes. He crossed himself involuntarily and muttered a paternoster.

A lull followed the storm; the heavens were clear again. Rudolf made out by the light of his lantern a triangular spot made by three footpaths crossing. It was bare of all vegetation; black ashes were heaped up in the middle as if gipsies had lately lit a fire there.

An irresistible impulse made him enter this triangle, though he felt as if long ghostly arms were trying to hold him back.

No sooner had he stepped on to this spot than he fell into a deep sleep or faint. When he awoke, he saw a wonderful light near him, and in the midst of the light which seemed to radiate from her presence, was a beautiful lady, with long rippling fair hair.

“You are safe now in my kingdom,” she said. “You have passed the boundary between the good and evil powers, and have left the dangers of the night behind you.”

“O can you tell me where to find Mother Holle, beautiful fairy?” he said.

“Easily enough, for I *am* Mother Holle!” she answered. “I know why you have come here, and I am ready to help you.” She took him by the hand, and he leapt to his feet, making a low bow to the lovely lady. All the evil dreams that had perplexed him, fled as the night before the day, and he could have shouted hurrah! for joy and gladness.

He had the unshaken confidence in the final victory of good over evil, that is so necessary to help us to any measure of success in this world with its chequered lights.

He walked with Mother Holle a little way, till they came to an arbour made of honeysuckle and wild roses, surrounded by banks of evening primroses, round which luminous moths were fluttering. Into this they entered, and she sat down and gazed at him, till he was quite overwhelmed with her beauty. He had expected to see an old witch hobbling along with a stick and to have feather beds to make! Feather pillows, indeed, there were in the arbour, very cosy and soft. It was delightful to have a chat with such a woman in such a place, even if there were no Babette in the world.

Mother Holle began to speak, her voice sounded like the murmur of the fir-trees.

“I have heard that pretty little Babette has fallen into the power of a bad man. He stole the magic book from her grandmother’s house at a time when the old lady was ill and feeble, shortly before her death. He has been only able to make out a few of the spells — that, for instance, for rendering things invisible. He is not a real wizard, so that if you obtain the book, the power will be yours. But I strongly advise you to have nothing to do with magic; it is very dangerous; but to return the book to me, to whom, in fact, it rightfully belongs.”

“Have no fear of that,” laughed Rudolf. “I don’t want it, I would not touch it with the tongs if I could help it.”

“Now listen carefully to my instructions! At the foot of one of the fir-trees, grows a red toadstool, spotted with white. On it sits an ugly old toad. Take this handkerchief (she gave him a lovely gauze scarf), wrap the toad in it, and cast it to the ground. Pull up the toadstool. Then the whole place will become visible, and you will be able to consult with Babette as to how to overcome old Squint-eyes, as she calls him.

“Hold this candle alight in your hand” — she gave him the young pointed top of a fir-tree — “it will keep off evil spells. When you have overcome the man, bind him with this grass.” So saying, she gave him a bundle of silvery woodland grass. “Then tie him up to the tallest of the three fir-trees and leave him to us. We will punish him according to his deserts, and teach him to behave better in the future.”

“Can you tell me anything about the fair young lady herself? Is she really the granddaughter of a witch? I could well believe it; for verily she has bewitched me; but who were her parents? I wish to know for her own sake,” asked Rudolf anxiously.

“The old woman was really her nurse,” said Mother Holle. “It is true that the woman had fairy blood in her veins and was learned in magic, but she never used her powers for any evil purposes, and as for riding on a broomstick, she abhorred such practices. Babette is the granddaughter of the great Baron of Siebenbergen. The Baron brought his children up strictly as became their rank; but his youngest son ran away from home, and married a village maiden much beneath him in rank.

“His father was exceedingly angry and refused to acknowledge her. The young wife died when Babette was born. The father went off in despair to the wars. He entrusted the tiny baby to the care of an old woman who had formerly been his own nurse. This old woman, who was spoken of later as Babette’s grandmother, had been nurse to the children in Siebenbergen Castle for many years; but she had been dismissed suddenly in her old age, because evil tongues had denounced her as a witch. The Baron did not believe in the charge, but, nevertheless, he was obliged to send her away. He had his own reputation in the country to think of, and the charge of witchcraft was no light one in those days, and not so easy to disprove. He gave her a handsome pension, and a comfortable house and troubled himself no more about her.

“Babette’s father lost interest in life on the death of his dearly beloved peasant wife. He fought recklessly in the front of the battle, and fell, covered with many wounds. His body was brought home for burial and there was a grand funeral in Siebenbergen. Everyone praised his heroism, and lamented his early death, but no one inquired after his peasant wife, or knew of the existence of his baby daughter.

“The notice of the marriage and the certificate of Babette’s birth are to be found in the church of Eppenhain, all duly registered and complete.

“The old nurse became very feeble and was hardly fitted to bring up such a wild, high-spirited child as Babette. That is all I can tell you; you must find the papers, and test the accuracy of the story for yourself.”

Rudolf was deeply interested; his heart beat fast. Babette became more and more interesting, wrapped round in a web of romance. He wanted to ask more questions of Mother Holle; but she faded slowly away. As she vanished, a voice said: “Adieu, follow the light path, and nothing can molest you.”

A long stream of light shone out from where she had stood and illumined the way through the woods. It shone on and on in one great bright path, like the moon shining over the sea. Rudolf reached home walking like one in a dream, his head full of strange and marvellous fancies.

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RUDOLF AWOKE RATHER LATER than usual; for he was thoroughly tired out. His mother did not feel so concerned about him when she saw the amount of breakfast he consumed; but he was still silent and abstracted. His adventures seemed to him like a wild dream. It seemed almost absurd to seek for the three firs; but yet an irresistible longing led him thither.

On the stroke of twelve at midday he stood beneath them, and recognised his own sign, and O joy! saw the toadstool with the toad sitting on it.

Without a moment’s hesitation he took the handkerchief (“which was in itself a proof of the reality of the story,” he said to himself) and seized the horrid shiny toad (how it wriggled and squirmed like some evil thing!) and cast it to the ground where it sprang into a thousand pieces. These pieces took root in the earth, so to speak, and came up again as a multitude of toadstools quite wonderful to behold. Perhaps you may see them if you ever come across this spot in your excursions to the Taunus Mountains.

Then Rudolf took hold of the red and white toadstool on which the toad had sat. Surely never before had a fungus been so firmly planted in the earth! The whole ground seemed to shake and tremble as he tugged at it; trees were uprooted in the forest; the earth moved up and down like the waves of the sea. At last it was out, and bump down fell Rudolf. One of the great fir-trees fell as well, luckily in another direction, or he might have been crushed beneath it.

When he got up again, he saw to his joy a little red-roofed house and a pretty maiden sitting in a pear-tree.

Babette had been watching him all the time; but she could not make out what he was doing. She had nearly fallen off the tree as he pulled up the toadstool. Now she climbed carefully down and came to the hedge and their eyes met. Need I say that they fell in love, or, at any rate, Rudolf did, at first sight. The hedge parted to let him through. Perhaps this was caused by the fairy candle, or perhaps it was Mother Holle's doing — who knows?

"Hush, he is asleep, you have come just at the right moment," said Babette.

"We must secure the magic book first of all," said Rudolf, holding the fir-branch firmly in his hand, "and would you kindly light this candle for me?"

Babette laughed. "A funny candle," she said.

"A *fairy* candle," he whispered, "to keep off evil spells. Mother Holle recommended it."

Babette felt inclined to dance for joy. "Can you really *see* me?" she whispered. "O how untidy and ragged I am, you must think me a perfect fright!"

"I think you are the most beautiful lady I have ever seen," said Rudolf sincerely, and Babette blushed at the compliment, and felt very grown-up and important.

"I will light the candle for you at the kitchen fire. Come, we will go together softly and try and get the magic book. I know where it is. It is under the sofa where Old Squint-eyes is asleep. Follow me. Throw all that grass away," she said in her old imperious way.

"Let me give it to you to hold," said Rudolf. "It is also a gift from Mother Holle, and may come in useful."

They walked together towards the house, Babette holding the bunch of silvery grass, and entered the kitchen. Here Babette lit the fir-branch.

“It smells just like Christmas; there must be good times coming for poor little me,” she said.

Then they peeped into the parlour, and there was Mr Wizard fast asleep in spite of the earthquake. Rudolf could hardly help laughing; he looked such a funny sight with his mouth wide open, his nose very red, and his hair hanging over his face.

Babette lifted up the bear-skin rug and pulled out the heavy book; but, as soon as she touched the book, the wizard awoke and seized her by the arm and sprang to his feet with many curses.

When he saw Rudolf, he let go of Babette’s arm and tried to seize the young man. Rudolf was fully prepared and threw him off with all his force. A wrestling match began, and it might have ended badly for Rudolf; for his adversary was tremendously strong and agile, but that he had unexpected assistance. The ravens flew in at the window, and beat themselves against Rudolf’s opponent, nearly blinding him. The cats stood on the cupboard, with their backs up and hair bristling ready to spring if necessary. The cocks and hens crowded on the window-sill in war-like attitudes.

Meanwhile the fumes of the fir-candle which Babette had lit, filled the room, and Mr Squint-eyes could not abide the smell of burning fir. He grew weaker and weaker, and more and more confused, and at last Rudolf threw him down with such force that he was partially stunned.

Rudolf then took the woodland grass from Babette, and as he touched it, it wound itself in his hands into strong cord. He bound the man up with Babette’s assistance, and gagged him with Mother Holle’s handkerchief.

The two of them then lugged him into the wood, and tied him up to the biggest of the fir-trees as Mother Holle had directed. Then they fetched the magic book and placed it under the uprooted fir-tree, which instantly stood up again as if nothing had happened, burying the book beneath its roots.

They looked at the man they had tied up, bound like a martyr to the tree. He could not curse and swear as his mouth was stopped up; but he rolled his eyes and squinted so violently that he was horrible to look at.

Then Rudolf and Babette ran off together. Breathlessly they ran and ran. Babette was afraid Old Squint-eyes might wriggle out after all; he was so thin and wiry, and she had no fancy for serving him any more. Not until they came to a main road through the woods leading to Eppenhain Castle, did they pause to look at one another.

Then impetuous Babette (she was half a child still, you must remember) flew at Sir Rudolf and gave him a kiss. She turned red and white when she realised, what she had done. “I couldn’t help it,” she said. “You are such a *dear*. I am so very, very grateful to you for all you have done for me, an unknown and even unseen maiden.”

“Please, don’t apologise, dearest lady,” he said. “I liked it very, very much. Won’t you give me another?”

“*Never*,” said Babette firmly. Subsequent events however caused her to revoke this determination.

Rudolf did not answer, but offered her his arm, which she took shyly, glancing at him from time to time out of her deer-like eyes with the long-fringed lashes. Ragged and untidy as she was, she looked like a princess; and he in his fine clothes, soiled and torn as they were, looked nevertheless like a real fairy-tale prince!

He took her straight home to Eppenhain Castle, and you may imagine the excitement there! The Count clasped Babette in his arms and could hardly speak for emotion. Then he turned to Rudolf saying: “We shall never be able to reward you enough.”

“I shall only want one reward, and that is the little maiden herself,” said Rudolf.

The Countess wept and cried over her darling child, and said she would never scold her any more.

Nurse said: “Well, Miss Babette, you do look a fine sight to be sure — and to come home with such a pretty young man, too! Come upstairs with me, and let me make you clean and tidy.” And this Babette was only too glad to do.

A great company of retainers were sent out by the Count to capture the so-called wizard; but they were unable to find either the fir-trees with the mark on them or the man, or the wood cottage. Neither Babette nor Rudolf set eyes on them since that day. I cannot say that they were altogether sorry.

The papers proving Babette’s parentage were found to be in order, and her father’s name and fortune became hers, so that she was not poor, despised Babette any more — the witch’s granddaughter — but a maiden of good rank and birth with pin-money of her own.

A short time afterwards there was a grand wedding in Eppenhain, and two happier mortals never lived than Rudolf and Babette on that day, and, let us hope, for ever afterwards!

10

HOLIDAY ADVENTURES

O it was so hot, so hot; the earth was well-nigh parched up, and moreover the use of water was restricted in the town where the children lived. The flowers in the little garden were drooping for want of moisture, and the trees began to shed their leaves as if it were already autumn instead of July. The schools were obliged to close early; the children came home at eleven o’clock instead of at one, and announced that they had heat holidays. For there is a regulation in Germany, if the thermometer is over a certain degree in the shade, the school is closed for the rest of the day. The high schools do not have classes in the afternoon; the children have six hours lessons in the morning, with intervals of course for recreation and drilling. Some headmasters douche the walls of the school-building with cold water, and then examine the thermometer; but children as well as teachers think this a very mean thing to do.

The school holidays commence at the beginning of July, not in August, as is the case in England. This year the two little girls, Trudel and Lottchen, and their mother were going to stay at a farm, which was situated high up in the midst of the most lovely woods. Trudel, I must tell you, was ten years old, and Lottchen eight; they both went to the same school. This farm was an inn at the same time; but very few people visited it during the week, and by nine o’clock the house was empty of guests; for the woodways were hardly safe at night. It was easy to get lost in those vast forests where one path so closely resembles the other.

It was a long climb up from the station; the children began to flag, and mother was tired. Father had come with them to settle them in; but he could not stay longer than the first day or two; for his holidays did not begin till August. He invented all sorts of games for getting along quicker; he deposited chocolate on stones or tree-stumps by the wayside, which was discovered by the children with a shout of joy. Then just as Lottchen's legs were beginning to ache badly, and she was nearly crying, he helped them on by telling the story of the assassination of Julius Cæsar. Trudel had read about it in her history-book at school; but it was written in such dreadfully historical language that she had not understood the story; she found it thrillingly interesting as father told it. Lottchen said that she could never have treated her little friend Hansi so cruelly, and that she hated that man Brutus.

At last they reached the end of the woodpath, and there lay Waldheim — for so the farm was called — before them. A big dog sprang out to meet them. Mother and Lottchen shrank back from his rough welcome; but Trudel was soon ordering him about, and did not seem in the least surprised when he obeyed her. His name was Bruno. The farm consisted of a group of buildings; two houses, one for the farm labourers and the maids, the other for guests. There were also large barns which had been newly erected, and a pond.

Round the houses were fields belonging to the farm, and then everywhere woods, woods, woods. Blue mountain-crests were visible above and beyond the woods.

The children partly unpacked the boxes themselves; for mother was still so tired. They even took off her boots and put on her shoes for her, like kind little daughters, and Trudel put away their clothes neatly in the cupboard.

Then they all went downstairs joyfully to a cosy tea, which, I need hardly say, they enjoyed very much after their long walk and journey.

After tea all fatigue vanished, and the children flew out to inspect the premises for themselves. The farmer had two boys of about the same age as Trudel and Lottchen. Their names were Hermann and Fritz. Hermann was very shy; he hid himself at first and peeped out at the strange girls from corners of the yard or barns, rushing away when they caught sight of him. However Trudel soon coaxed him out, and they all played ball together.

Then Hermann and Fritz took the girls round the farm. They went first into the cow-shed; there were fourteen cows, seven calves and a bull. The cow-herd was a strange, uncanny-looking fellow with a great shock of red hair, and a very red face. He shouted at the children in a dreadful hoarse voice; they felt frightened of him at first, and thought he was mad; but they soon found out that the poor fellow was only deaf and dumb. The cows were his intimate friends. He had christened each one of them when they were born: Sophie, Emma, and so on. After they had gone home again, the children learnt to their pride that he had named two new calves after them, Trudel and Lotty.

There were four horses that were used for driving and ploughing. Lottchen was especially fond of horses. She liked to see them come home from the field by themselves and walk straight into the stable with a noble air, like a lord returning to his castle. Her favourite horse was called Hector. Lotty noticed one day that he was left alone in the stable, whilst the other horses were ploughing in the field. The stable-door was open, and after a while to her surprise he walked out. “What is he going to do? I hope he will not run away and get lost,” thought Lotty anxiously. But no, he just walked leisurely up to the field where the other horses were hard at work and looked on! It was evidently dull in the stable and he wanted a little distraction. When he was tired of watching his friends, he returned to the stable, where he was found innocently munching hay as if nothing had happened.

Pigs of course were there too in plenty; they ran about everywhere, grunting and snorting; also geese and chickens. Trudel liked to drive the geese into the water; she was fond of commanding, as her little sister sometimes knew to her cost.

The maids were two peasant girls who wore very short full skirts and a great many petticoats. Their dress was a modification of the wonderful Hessen peasant costume. These girls were ready to do anything for the children. Gustel, who was chief waitress and chambermaid at the same time, said that she had never seen such pretty “kindersche” (little children) in all her life before!

The only other guest in the house at this time was a Herr Baron; he told wonderful stories of his adventures in South America.

“Drought,” he said, “yes, that’s very bad, but floods may be worse. I have known years of labour destroyed in one night by a flood. All the beautiful fields of grain, our sole wealth. I lived at that time with my married sister and her family, and we had only just time to rescue ourselves and the children. I was the last to leave the house which we were never to see again. I could not decide which of my possessions to take with me, so I seized up the skin of a puma that I had shot on another memorable occasion, and bore it off on my shoulder, like Jason carrying the golden fleece, and that was all that was left of my personal property. Ah! it needs patience to conquer the elements,” he said.

Altogether the Herr Baron was a wonderful character; he seemed as if he were not real, but had stepped out of a book of romance. He delighted in reading English stories; he was especially fond of “She” and “King Solomon’s Mines.” The children believed that he smoked day and night; for they had never seen him without a cigarette, except at meal-times.

He told father and mother the story of how he had had a bullet extracted from his side that he had carried about with him for years. It had struck him during one of the revolutions that so frequently go on in South America. The bullet had recently set up inflammation, and a dangerous operation was necessary to remove it. “Chloroform! not if I know it,” he said to the doctors. “Just you let me smoke my cigar, and I shall be all right. I won’t say ‘Oh!’”

The doctors were naturally very astonished and demurred at this new method of treatment; but he persisted in his determination, and the cigar never left his mouth till the painful business was successfully over!

The Herr Baron was a mysterious person; why he lived for months together in that lonely spot, no one knew. True, he was fond of hunting, and went out at nights with the landlord to hunt the stag.

There were hunting-boxes made of logs of wood, with steps that led up into them, placed in different positions in the woods near the inn.

The children loved to climb up into them. A hunting-box made such a nice airy room, they said; but mother was glad when they were down again without broken limbs.

Mother was surprised when she entered the inn-parlour to find the Herr Baron engaged in a game of quartette with Trudel and Lottchen and Fritz. Indeed he was so sociable and kind and fond of children that she thought it was a pity that he had none of his own.

On the pond near the house were two most remarkable-looking boats. These Hermann and Fritz had made themselves with the aid, I believe, of the Herr Baron. They had a long stick and punted about in them on the water, and they managed them quite cleverly. To Trudel and Lottchen they seemed to suggest Robinson Crusoe and all sorts of fine adventures.

One day when mother was reading a book which absorbed her attention, and so was safe not to interfere with them, they thought, the children stole down to the pond. Hermann and Fritz were waiting for them. It was a preconceived plan. “Come along and get in,” they shouted to the girls.

“I daren’t,” said Lottchen. “Mother would be so cross; she has forbidden us to go near the water.”

“You are surely not going to spoil the fun,” said Trudel. “Come along; I’m going to get in first. I can swim, you know!”

“But not in mud and water-weeds,” said Lottchen wisely.

The boys began to laugh at them.

“Why, you’re funky, I do believe; the pond isn’t really deep anywhere,” they said.

So with beating hearts the children got into the boats, Trudel with Fritz, and Hermann, who was the eldest of the party, with Lottchen. It was splendid, quite a real adventure.

“Sit still in the middle of the boat,” said Fritz; “I think we had better keep near the bank.”

“It’s going down on my side; O dear, what shall I do?” said Trudel. “I don’t like it! I want to get out.”

“You’re a bit too heavy and upset the balance,” said Fritz. “Very well, then, get out!”

Trudel tried to do so; but the boat was very wobbly. It was not so easy; her foot slipped, and in she stepped with one foot into the deep mud. She grasped convulsively hold of a willow bush that grew on the bank.

Meanwhile Hermann, seeing the predicament they were in, jumped out of his boat, leaving poor Lottchen quite alone. She began to scream with all her might and main, and she could make a fine noise when she chose.

Mother heard the cries though she was some way off and flew to the pond.

The maids who were bleaching the linen in the meadow, came running to the rescue as well, as fast as their legs could carry them.

Lotty was soon helped out of the boat. Trudel had rescued herself with Hermann’s assistance, and she looked very red and ashamed of herself. She said she did not wish for any more Robinson Crusoe adventures of that sort. Mother naturally gave the children a good talking to; but she thought they had been punished enough this time for their disobedience, by the fright they had had.

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THERE WAS a tree in the garden that was ideal to climb, and mother allowed the children to do so, for she had been very fond of climbing herself when she was a child.

They wore old serge skirts and jerseys that they could not spoil.

This tree made a splendid arbour, or house with a suite of rooms. Lottchen sat up in the branches like a little bird, and like a little bird she sang all the songs she knew. From this tree you could see the mountain called the Stellerskuppe and the blue sky through the tree-stems on the summit. At sunset time, the sky behind the trees turned a golden colour, till it looked like a picture of fairyland.

It was a fine view, but still you could not see from here the famous oak-tree, where the little green tree man lived. This was ten minutes’ walk from the farm.

Trudel and Lottchen saw him first on a wet day when they had set out for a walk in spite of the rain, with their green waterproof cloaks on with hoods over their heads, looking for all the world like wood-goblins themselves. They were walking down a narrow green path, and mother was some distance behind.

“Do just look, Trudel,” said Lottchen. “I believe there is a little man in that hollow tree!”

“So there is, he is smiling and bowing to us, let’s go and visit him,” said Trudel, always enterprising.

Lottchen hung back, feeling a little afraid; she was always on the look-out for the unexpected, and yet was surprised when something really happened.

“Come along, darling,” said Trudel, grasping her smaller sister by the hand.

They both distinctly saw the little man; they said they could have drawn him afterwards, and indeed they attempted to do so as well as they could. But as they approached the venerable oak, the little man vanished, and all they saw was a strange green stain on the inside of the tree, resembling a dwarf with a peaked hood on.

“Just look at this Gothic window,” said Lottchen, proud of her knowledge of the word “Gothic.” “How nicely this tree-room is carved. I am sure *he* lives here; where are his little chairs and tables? I should love to see them.”

They peeped through a window or hole in the old tree and saw their mother approaching.

“Mother, mother, here lives a real tree man; we saw him — didn’t you?”

Mother smiled — what the children called her mysterious smile.

“You look like two little wood-men yourselves,” she said. “Lottchen, stand up straight in the hole and look at me.”

Lottchen stood up just fitting into the green mark on the tree behind her. She made a pretty picture, her laughing brown eyes with the long eyelashes, her rosy cheeks, and the wind-blown hair straying from under her hood.

“O look, Lottchen, here is a little basin of holy water, just like we saw in the cathedral,” said Trudel.

WOOD WATER,

Nice and brown,
In a little cup.
Wood water,
Wood wine,
Won't you drink it up?

SAID a tiny voice that sounded like that of a wood-bird.

"Mother! did *you* hear anything, mother?"

"Yes, darlings, the birds are singing so sweetly now the rain is over. I have brought my camp-stool. I shall sit here and sketch the tree," said mother.

"Do draw *him,*" said Trudel, whose blue eyes were open wider than usual.

"Him! Whom do you mean?" said mother.

"Why, the tree man, of course."

"Hum," said mother mysteriously, "we'll see," and she settled herself down to sketch.

The children collected huge acorns, and laid them on a leaf in the hollow tree. Then they stirred up the brackish "holy" water and put their fingers in it.

"It smells like lavender and roses," said Lottchen.

"Well, you've got a funny nose; it smells to me like blackberry and apple-tart," said Trudel.

"Ha — ha — he!" said a little voice again. Somebody was laughing. Where could he be? Glancing round quickly the children saw a little man about three feet high, dressed in green, wearing a long peaked cap with a wreath of tiny oak-leaves around it. He looked very strong, although he was small, and he stuck his arms out akimbo in a curious angular way like the branches of an oak-tree.

"How did you know that trees were alive?" he asked the children.

They were embarrassed by the question.

"Why, of course we know they are not dead, unless they are cut down," they said.

The little man shuddered; then he began to wave his arms about wildly.

"*Let* them try to cut me down, I'll knock them down. I'll fall on them and crush their bones. I'll smash them like this stone!" Here he gave a stone that stood near by, such a tremendous whack that sparks flew out of it.

"Don't smash us, please, Mr Tree Man," said Lottchen trembling.

"No fear, little Miss Lottchen, no fear, you're a nice little thing, you are; one can see that to look at you. You would *never* cut me down, would you?"

"Why, of course not," said Lotty.

"*I* should not dream of such a thing either," said Trudel. "But may we ask who you are?" Trudel continued, "You are surely not a tree?"

"Well, it's like this," said the little man; "I'm a tree, and the tree's me!"

"*I*," said Trudel, correcting him, "would be more correct."

"Rubbish," said the little man, "Pedantic rot! — the tree's *me*, I repeat. Every tree has its gnome or elf; they used to call us dryads in old times; but nowadays people are getting so cock-sure of knowing everything, that they can't see what is going on right under their noses. Trees are never still," he continued; "they are always moving.

Where there is movement, there is life,
Where there is life, there is thought,
Where there is thought, there is individuality.

"Do you follow me? That is logically expressed."

“You forget we are only children, Mr Tree Man; you are talking too grown-upy for us. Father talks like that sometimes; but then we don’t listen,” they replied.

“Well,” continued the gnome, “in every tree there either lives a jolly fellow like me or a lovely lady fairy. Yes,” he said in a sentimental tone, “I, too, old and tough though I am, I, too, have known love.”

“Who is she?” asked Trudel eagerly.

“Alas! I can never reach her; my old bones are too stiff and unbendable. She is a graceful larch-tree in all the glory of her youth. You may see her yonder!” He sat down and sighed deeply.

The children looked in the direction that the gnome had indicated, and there they saw a larch-tree on which the sunlight had just fallen. It was exquisitely dressed in a robe of delicate green and — was it only fancy? — for one moment the children thought that they saw a lovely lady with flowing tresses that gleamed golden in the sunlight, and large starry eyes. As they gazed, she melted into the blue mist which shimmers always between the forest trees.

“Now we must go home, children,” mother called out, “before it begins to rain again.”

The children glanced round; their little friend had vanished, and no trace was to be seen of the lady of the larch-tree. So they turned reluctantly from the tree-house fully determined to come again very soon to this enchanted spot.

“Mother, may we see your sketch?”

“Not now,” said mother, “it’s going to be a surprise.”

“Did mother see him too?”

“Do you think so?” said Lottchen. “Mother’s a fairy herself.”

“I think,” said Trudel, “she sees all sorts of queer things; but she won’t tell us everything she sees.”

“It spoils some things to tell about them,” said Lottchen. “I shan’t tell Hermann and Fritz about the tree man.”

However, when she got home again, she could not contain herself. “Do you believe in fairies and tree men?” she said to the boys.

“Of course not, that’s all rot,” said Hermann. “Like Santa Claus and such things, just invented to stuff us up!”

“Santa Claus will never come to you any more if you talk like that; *he* is *quite true*, I know. Trudel saw him come in last year when she was in bed, and she heard him filling our stockings. Of course she did not dare to turn round and look at him,” said Lottchen.

“I don’t say it isn’t nice to believe such things,” said Hermann conscientiously, “but it isn’t true; it’s superstitious. You know quite well, Trudel, who Santa Claus really is.”

Trudel was silent; she was ten years old, and she had her doubts.

“But I’ve seen a tree man to-day,” said Lotty.

The boys laughed.

“Don’t try to stuff us up with such nonsense; we’re not so green as your tree man,” they said.

Gustel, the maid, came in, and joined in the conversation. She supported the boys’ view.

“I don’t care,” said Lottchen, now in a high state of excitement. “My mother knows a man — a very clever Irishman — a poet and a painter as well, and he has often seen the fairies.”

“Yes,” said Trudel, “it’s true he draws them just as he sees them with rainbow-coloured wings.”

“Well I never, you don’t expect me to believe such things, do you?” said Gustel. “Why, that’s all lies, and it is very wicked to tell a lie!”

Lotty flew into a perfect tantrum. “How dare you say we tell lies; I will tell my mother of you,” she screamed, and threw herself on the floor crying violently.

Mother rushed in, not knowing what had happened. “Lotty, get up at once; tell me what’s the matter, darling!”

“Booh! — booh — booh! — Gustel won’t believe — booh, booh, booh — that you know a man who has seen the fairies!”

Mother could not help laughing. “Don’t be so absurd, Lotty. Of course Gustel does not understand what you mean. Gustel,” she said, “you are a Catholic and believe in the saints; they saw very queer things too, sometimes, didn’t they?”

“O yes, you’re right; of course, ma’am,” said Gustel, feeling embarrassed; for she had no arguments to support her disbelief in fairies.

“Some people can see more than others,” continued mother. “Now if I were to tell you that I could see the old poacher or wild huntsman who used to live in this house, riding through the yard on a moonlight night, what would you say?”

“Lor, ma’am, if I saw him, I should die of fright,” said Gustel, turning pale.

“But you know that there are no such things as ghosts and fairies!”

“Yes, ma’am, very true, ma’am, it’s rather confusing what you say,” said poor Gustel, feeling her head in a whirl.

~

It was a wonderful moonlight night. As father was still away, mother sat by herself in the big bedroom, whilst the children slept in the little room adjoining. There was a very high wind; the window-panes rattled; the wooden shutters blew to and fro; the branches of the trees made weird patterns on the ground. The moonlight was so white that the fields and paths looked almost as if they were covered with snow. The Stellerskuppe stood out black against the sky. As mother gazed, it seemed to her as if strange creatures were abroad that night, driven to and fro by that tireless hunter, the wind. Wild forms passed by and gazed at her with deathless eyes; for a while she remained there motionless, as under a spell. Then suddenly she remembered her joke about the old huntsman of evil repute, who had formerly lived in this farmhouse. Did his ghost haunt it still? Mother shivered; the nights were cold up in the mountains, though it was such a hot summer. She opened the door of the children’s room and peeped in. To tell the truth, she felt a little creepy, and longed for human companionship. There were her darlings, sleeping soundly; but as she entered the room Trudel turned round and flung herself on the other side of the bed, saying: “Go away, go away, do not come near me!”

“Whom do you mean, darling?” said mother anxiously.

Then Trudel groaned and spoke again in her sleep. She uttered the following deep and mystic words: “Gustel, bring in the shark, please; mother can’t eat the thimble.”

Now, wasn’t that a funny thing for a little girl to say in her sleep. Mother was so amused that she wrote the words down on the spot, so as not to forget them, and she troubled her head no more with thoughts of the wild huntsman; indeed the spectres of the night vanished as they always do vanish at a joke!

Some days passed, before the children visited the oak-tree again. When they did so, they found that an enormous branch had been broken off, and lay across the green pathway.

“O dear me,” said Lottchen, “our *poor* little man. I hope it hasn’t hurt him!”

“It must have happened on that windy night,” said Trudel.

“It was my own fault, it was entirely my own fault,” said a queer little voice, and there was the oak-tree man sitting in his house smoking a reed pipe. His arm was bound up with green fern leaves. “Yes, it was my own fault; the wind excited me, and stirred my sap (that’s my blood you know) — I stretched out my arms towards her — one embrace — one blessed moment in which to call her mine — and here you see me a cripple for ever!”

“O *poor* thing, we are so sorry for you,” said the children.

“Never mind, it heals easily,” said the oak man, “but, alas, my beauty and my symmetry are gone for ever!”

“Your leaves are so nice and fresh; and your house is so pretty; why, you have got furniture in it,” said the children in astonishment.

“Such a pretty oak table and beautifully carved chairs; where did you get them from?” asked Lottchen.

“I made them myself out of my own wood; it cheered me up a bit,” said the little man. “One must do something, you know; looks snug, doesn’t it? Ah, well — I have known love, that is something to be proud of; I have experienced the most pleasing of human emotions. Have you ever been in love?” he said inquisitively, looking at Trudel, who looked big enough in his eyes.

“Why no, not exactly, we’re only kiddies; but still we do love lots of people, of course,” said she.

“Your day will come, your day will come. Do not desire the unattainable, but content yourself with the reachable,” he said; “and yet ‘‘Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all,’ as the dear old poem says.”

“He’s getting grand in his language again; he *is* a funny little man,” said Trudel in a whisper to Lottchen.

“Stay,” said the tree man, “I have a good idea; I will give you a card of introduction to *her*, my beloved Lady Larch-tree.”

He gave them an oak leaf with the words: “Edle Eiche,” printed on it, which is in English Noble Oak.

“You need not say anything; she will know it comes from me,” he said, sighing sentimentally.

Full of curiosity, the children turned to go to the larch-tree, which was only a few steps further down the green pathway. The ardent lover watched the children from the window of his little house. They knocked three times on the bark of the larch-tree; and they were very pleased when a door opened in the tree, and a lovely lady was revealed to them. Her dress was of green, looped up with tiny pink flowers such as grow on the larches in early spring; her hair streamed down like a soft veil about her. She hardly seemed to see the children at first, when they presented their cards. She took the oak-leaf cards and pressed them to her heart.

“Heart of oak! King of the forest! for ever mine,” she murmured, and her words were like the sound that a little brook makes when it trickles beneath dark forest trees.

“He sends you his love,” said the children politely.

“You dear little things,” said Lady Larch; “it was so kind of you to come and call on me. So you understand trees and their language, dear, dear, so young and so clever! *Would* you like some wood wine?”

“Not if it is dirty water with caterpillars in it,” said Trudel.

“O dear no, it is purified and refined; it is most delicious.” So saying, she handed each of them a large acorn cup full; and they drank the contents.

“It does taste nice, dear fairy,” said the children, “like what we make ourselves at a doll’s feast. May we ask you for some more?”

“No, no, it is very strong, and would get into your heads, and you would find out all about…. No, I’m sorry … but ——”

“Children,” said mother’s voice, “where are you? I have been looking for you.”

“We have only been to call on Lady Larch, mother; she has shut her door tight again or we would have introduced you to her,” said Lotty.

~

THEY CAME HOME RATHER late that evening and found the farm in a great state of commotion. The red-haired cow-herd was shouting and crying in an unintelligible way; the house seemed to be deserted. They met the Herr Baron also preparing to set out in a hurry.

“What’s the matter? Where is everybody?” said mother.

“The silly old cow-herd has lost one of the best cows; it has strayed off among the bushes, and may die if it is exposed all night. Who knows where the poor creature may have got to in these vast woods?”

The search went on till late at night; the men, including the Herr Baron, walked miles with their lanterns, but in vain. The deaf mute was in a dreadful state of mind and kept crying out in his harsh, disagreeable voice: “Not my fault — *Schimmel*’s fault.” (Schimmel was the cow.)

It was difficult enough to sleep that night; but when mother had at last dropped into a light doze, it must have been about four o’clock in the morning, she and the children were aroused by a great shouting and disturbance in the house. They looked out of the window and — what do you think? — there was the lost cow, who had returned after all of her own accord. And with her a dear little black and white calf, who frisked and bounded along as if it thought it was fine fun to be in the world on this lovely morning. Now wasn’t that a queer thing, children, queerer than all the fairy stories you have read? for this story is quite true, you must know!

It was an exceptionally fine Sunday, and as father had come down to spend the week-end, mother and the children were in the seventh heaven of joy. It was not possible to go to church; for the nearest town was two hours’ walk away, and would be partly over fields that were exposed to the heat of the midday sun. So father and mother and their two little daughters went to the great woodland cathedral.

The service was on the Stellerskuppe; surely no one could wish for a more beautiful place of worship. Mountain after mountain ranged in the distance, some with rounded or knolled heads, others rising to a peak.

Lottchen called the most pointed one Mesuvius, because she always forgot the “V.”

As the children sat there and sang hymns, with their white Sunday frocks on, mother fancied that eyes were peering at them from out the forest depths. If they were merely those of the gentle deer, or if stranger creatures still were watching them as if fascinated, she did not know: she felt there were lookers-on. There is the old story of the God Pan who played so divinely that all living things came to listen to him. Perhaps there may be a stirring at times in the souls of the mysterious dwellers in the forest that makes them yearn for immortality and gives them a fuller sense of existence. So that all the woodland sang too at that Sunday service.

On Sunday afternoon, father and mother wanted to go for a longer walk than usual; but the lazy children petitioned to be left behind.

“You will promise not to go near the pond,” said mother. “Remember it is Sunday, and you have your best frocks on; you must not romp or climb trees.”

“O no, mother, of course not,” said Trudel. “We’ll stay in the garden and promise to be very good.”

When father and mother returned from their walk, the first thing they saw was Lottchen staggering along with a stand of empty beer-bottles.

“Whatever are you doing, Lottchen?”

“Oh, mother, there are such heaps of people here this afternoon, and there are not enough waitresses to serve them; so Trudel and I are helping. Trudel has got such a lot of tips already; she has bought chocolate with the money. Do tell her to divide it fairly with me!”

Mother looked round. The whole place was covered with tables and benches; a number of gaily dressed people from the neighbouring town were drinking coffee and eating cake or waffeln, a kind of pancake for which the inn was celebrated.

“Mother, don’t speak to me, I’m too busy,” said Trudel. “I’ve been waiting on those gentlemen; the maids were shy of them, so I said I would go and ask what they wanted.” She pointed out some young men in officers’ uniform, who had come from a military school. “I’ve got 6d. in tips, and I spent it on chocolate.”

“Well I never!” said mother, astonished at her daughter’s prowess — “you have turned into a waitress, and on Sunday afternoon too. Whatever would your aunts say?”

“I think I had better tell you what the young men said to me,” said Trudel seriously. “They said I was a sweet little thing, and that if I were older, they would fall in love with me. I laughed of course; I could see they were only silly old stupid heads. I told them they had not much taste; for their military school was the ugliest building in all the town. They quite agreed with me about this, however, and then they asked me who my father was, and when I said he was a professor, they laughed till I thought they would burst. But now you must excuse me, really, mother darling. I have promised to go into the kitchen and wash up cups and saucers!”

The landlady could not praise Trudel enough. Such a useful little girl, she does everything in a most orderly way and wipes down the table when she has finished! “If ever you want her to learn housekeeping, pray send her to me, I should be delighted to teach her,” she said.

“Yes,” thought mother, “and make a nice little slavey of her into the bargain. No, no, our Trudel is not going to turn into a housemaid!”

If Trudel had been some years older, father and mother might have objected to these experiences; but, as it was, they only laughed.

~

AS THE WORLD is full of fact and fancy, so is this story. Whether it is based mostly on fact or on fancy we will leave to the German philosophers to decide, but I have heard that they are doubtful on this point, with regard to the world, I mean.

It was a magical evening. Trudel was so engrossed in a game of cards with the boys that she could not be induced to come out; moreover she had a slight cold and the evenings were chilly. A glorious sunset glow illumined the sky as mother and Lottchen set out for their never-to-be-forgotten walk.

“We will go up and see the fire on the heath; I love the smell of dry pine wood burning,” said mother.

“I love to see the fire dancing and crackling,” said Lottchen. “How still everything is.”

“It is the calm of twilight. The wind usually drops in the evening,” said mother.

“Look, look, over there by those dark woods there is something moving,” said Lotty. “I think it is a white cat.”

“A white cat! How queer that she should have strayed so far; she does not belong to the farm, I know.”

“Hush! perhaps she is not a cat at all — then she will vanish.” And lo and behold when they looked again, there was no cat there, though they had distinctly seen it a minute before on the field at the wood’s edge.

“She is really a witch, I believe,” said mother, with the curious expression on her face that Lotty knew so well.

Going further up the hill, they saw a wonderful sight. Twenty or more peasant girls were busy working, hacking the ground, their faces illuminated by the wonderful sunset glow. They wore short full peasant skirts edged with bright-coloured ribbons, and each had a gaily coloured scarf pinned round the neck and bodice.

We learned afterwards that they were preparing the ground to plant young fir-trees on a clearing. Germans are so careful of their woods, they replant what has been cut down, so that they have a great wealth in wood that we cannot boast of in England. I believe that they would *like* to cut off all the dead branches in order to make the woods quite tidy! But this would be rather too big a job even for the German nation to accomplish!

A man dressed in green with a feather in his cap, and a gun over his shoulder stood by watching the girls at their work.

He was a forester and seemed to act as overseer. He gave the signal to stop work as the strangers (mother and Lotty) approached. The women hid their tools under the dry heather until the next day, and then strapped on the big baskets they carried on their backs, without which they hardly felt properly dressed. They then marched along together, singing a melodious song in unison. As they came to the cross-roads they parted company; some went this way, some that; all kept up the tune, which echoed farther and farther, fainter and fainter in the distance.

Before long Lottchen and her mother were alone; but they felt that the ground they stood on, was enchanted. Mother said it was like a scene from the opera. They watched the fire; how the flames leaped and crackled; yet they were dying down. The fire made a bright contrast to the dark fir-woods which formed the background to the picture. The glory died from the sky; but yet it was strangely light; darker and darker grew the woods near the fire. Suddenly Lotty espied bright sparks among the trees.

“I do believe they have set the wood on fire,” said mother.

“O no, mother, don’t you see; let us crouch down and hide; it is the fairies: they are coming to the fire.”

The air was suddenly full of bright beings.

THERE IS a wood fire on the hill;
High on the heath it glimmers still.
Who are these beings in the air
With gauzy robes and flowing hair?
Is it the wreathing smoke I see

That forms itself so curiously?

Nay, they alight: they form a ring,
Around the flickering fire spring,
And from those embers burning low
They light their wands, they gleam, they glow,
Like firework stars of rainbow hue,
Green, yellow, orange, lilac, blue!

Ah what a scene, how wild, how strange!
The stars each moment break and change
In thousand colours; look on high:
Each slender wand points to the sky,
Then waves and trembles: lo afar
On lonely woods falls many a star!

And all this Trudel had missed. It seemed too great a pity, with that silly old card playing.

Spellbound mother and Lotty watched the fairies at their revels, till Lottchen began to shiver.

“We really must go home,” whispered mother. “Trudel will be anxious.”

“Oh, but mother I want to dance round the fire with the fairies, and I want a fairy wand with shooting stars,” said Lotty almost aloud.

Suddenly it seemed as if the fairies became aware that they were observed. They vanished away, and all became dark. Lottchen said she could hear the sound of little feet stamping out the fire.

“Fairies, dear fairies, come again, do,” said Lotty.

No answer, perfect stillness, not even a leaf stirred.

"Well, you are not so polite as our tree man, not half," said Lotty, "though you are so pretty. Good night," she shouted.

There was a sound of suppressed laughter; then from hill and dale the word "good night" was echoed all around. Spellbound, as if in a trance, they moved toward the farm. Trudel was wild with herself when she heard what she had missed.

"*To-morrow*," she said, but to-morrow is sometimes a long, long way off, and the fairies did not show themselves again during these holidays.

One of Lottchen's favourite walks was the echo walk, but she usually came home quite hoarse after having been this way. The path wound below the fairy heath on the incline of the hill; further down still were the fir-woods through which the light shone.

"Angel-pet!" "Cherry-ripe!" "Cheeky fellow!" "You're another!" So Lotty shouted the whole time, and the echoes came back so surprisingly distinct that Lotty was sure it must be really the fairies answering her. When you turned the corner of the hill, the echoes ceased. It was too queer.

The next day Trudel distinguished herself again. Two great cart-loads of swedes arrived that were to be stored up as fodder for the cattle in the winter. Now the joy was to throw these through a hole in the wall into the cellar. Hermann stood in the cart and Trudel threw the swedes to him as the bricklayers throw the bricks to one another. Fritz and Lottchen helped too; they had to take their turn and be very quick, as the hole was small. Hour after hour this went on, till the children were as black as chimney sweeps, and yet Trudel's energy did not fail. At last the carts were empty, and only then did the little workers leave off, dead tired.

Hermann could make curious heads out of the swedes, with eyes and nose and mouth. If you put an old candle-end inside, they looked ghastly, like some Chinese god. Lotty declared that they rolled about in the yard at night and grinned at her, and that she did not like "heads without people."

“But they *are* so funny, Lottchen,” said mother, and then she laughed at them and was not frightened any more.

In the fields grew nice little buttony mushrooms. No one knew better than the Herr Baron where they were to be found and how to prepare them. Apparently he had lived on mushrooms in the wilds of South America. He was very kind in helping the children to fill their baskets to take home with them; for, alas, even the pleasantest of holidays must come to an end; and there was only one day left. He discovered a treasure in the field, a little mother-of-pearl knife, very old and rusty, and presented it to Trudel. He told her to soak it in petroleum to clean it. That knife was more trouble than all the rest of the luggage on the way back, for Trudel made such a fuss about it, and dissolved in tears several times when she thought that she had lost it.

To leave the beautiful cool woods, the fairies, the tree man and his sweetheart, the cows and the geese and all the marvels of the country, yes, it was hard; but home is home, and always turns a smiling face to us after a long absence. How nice to rediscover one’s playthings and dolls. Trudel’s first thought was always for her doll babies, and she would rush upstairs, and embrace each one tenderly.

As the children drove to the station from the farm, they passed the famous oak-tree, but no little man was to be seen.

“He’s shy of the coachman, of course,” said the children.

Looking back, they caught a glimpse of him in the distance, and shouted and waved their handkerchiefs.

Hermann and Fritz were very sorry to say “good-bye” to their little friends; but school began the next day, and they would not have so much time for play then.

The landlady told the children a great secret before they left. “The Herr Baron is going to be married next week,” she said.

“Well, I am glad,” said mother. “I hope she is very nice,” and the children echoed the wish warmly.

“She has lots of money, and is a countess, I believe,” continued the landlady.

“Well, I do hope she does not object to smoking,” said Trudel, and they all laughed.

~

“Mother, you have never shown us your sketch,” said Trudel during the unpacking.

Mother laughed. “Where’s Lottchen? I suppose she wants to see it too?”

“Here I am,” said Lotty. “Oh, do be quick and show it to us!”

Mother held up the sketch. There was the hollow oak-tree, and standing in it the little tree man himself just as the children had first seen him, with his green peaked hood on.

“So mother really did see him too!” said the children.

Now this story disproves the common fallacy that only children can see the fairies and forest folk; for how could mother have painted the tree gnome unless she had seen him?

3. PETER CHRISTEN ASBJØRNSEN, & JØRGEN MOE

CONTENTS

Preface

1. East of the Sun and West of the Moon
2. The Blue Belt
3. Prince Lindworm
4. The Lassie and Her Godmother
5. The Husband Who Was to Mind the House
6. The Lad Who Went to the North Wind
7. The Three Princesses of Whiteland
8. Soria Moria Castle
9. The Giant Who Had No Heart in His Body
10. The Princess on the Glass Hill
11. The Widow’s Son
12. The Three Billy-Goats Gruff
13. The Three Princesses in the Blue Mountain
14. The Cat on the Dovrefell
15. One’s Own Children Are Always Prettiest
16. Taper Tom
17. Why the Bear Is Stumpy-Tailed
18. Reynard and the Cock
19. Bruin and Reynard Partners
20. Boots and His Brothers
21. The Sheep and the Pig Who Set Up Housekeeping
22. The Parson and the Clerk
23. Father Bruin
24. The Pancake
25. Why the Sea is Salt
26. The Squire’s Bride

27. Peik
28. The Princess Who Could Not Be Silenced
29. The Twelve Wild Ducks
30. Gudbrand-on-the-Hillside
31. Little Freddy with His Fiddle
32. True and Untrue
33. The Old Dame and Her Hen
34. Boots Who Ate a Match with the Troll
35. Hacon Grizzlebeard
36. Boots, Who Made the Princess Say, ‘That’s a Story’
37. The Fox as Herdsman
38. The Mastermaid
39. The Cock and Hen
40. How One Went Out to Woo
41. The Master-Smith
42. The Two Step-Sisters
43. Buttercup
44. Taming the Shrew
45. Shortshanks
46. Not a Pin to Choose Between Them
47. The Three Aunts
48. The Cock, the Cuckoo, and the Black-Cock
49. Rich Peter the Pedlar
50. Gertrude’s Bird
51. Boots and the Troll
52. Goosey Grizzel
53. The Master Thief
54. The Best Wish
55. Well Done and Ill Paid
56. Dapplegrim
57. Farmer Weathersky
58. Lord Peter
59. The Seven Foals

60. Bushy Bride
61. Big Peter and Little Peter
62. Tatterhood
63. The Cock and Hen That Went to the Dovrefell
64. Katie Woodencloak
65. Thumbikin
66. Doll I’ the Grass
67. The Lad and the Deil
68. The Cock and Hen A-Nutting
69. The Big Bird Dan
70. Bruin and Reynard
71. Tom Totherhouse
72. Little Annie the Goose-Girl

PREFACE

ASBJØRNSEN, PETER CHRISTEN & MOE, JØRGEN ENGEBRETSEN

Authors Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Engebretsen Moe were Norwegian folklorists. The pair became famous for their contribution to Norway’s culture with their collection of fairy tales. Both men had began collecting tales separately out of personal interest, and decided to combine their individual collections into volumes. Asbjørnsen was working as a private tutor and during the course of his employment, collected tales, while Moe was also a tutor, collecting tales while on holiday. The result was *Norske Folkeeventyr*.

Upon its publication, *Norske Folkeeventyr*, heralded a significant literary event for Norway. The country had its own folklorists proudly cataloging the heritage of fjords, glaciers, and all the mysteries of Norway. The two were following in the footsteps of German folklorists The Brothers Grimm, and were just as famous as the German duo in Norway. Editions of the title date back to 1841-1844, and one edition, known as *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, featured wonderful color illustrations by Kay Nielsen. Asbjørnsen and Moe received a lot of acclaim for their ability to adapt the original Norwegian tales into simple English. Thanks to their stylistic choice, the tales of Norway were more relatable and available to the rest of Europe.

Contents

1. East of the Sun and West of the Moon

2. The Blue Belt

3. Prince Lindworm

4. The Lassie and Her Godmother

5. The Husband Who Was to Mind the House

6. The Lad Who Went to the North Wind

7. The Three Princesses of Whiteland

8. Soria Moria Castle

9. The Giant Who Had No Heart in His Body

10. The Princess on the Glass Hill

11. The Widow’s Son

12. The Three Billy-Goats Gruff

13. The Three Princesses in the Blue Mountain

14. The Cat on the Dovrefell

15. One’s Own Children Are Always Prettiest

16. Taper Tom

17. Why the Bear Is Stumpy-Tailed

18. Reynard and the Cock

19. Bruin and Reynard Partners

20. Boots and His Brothers

21. The Sheep and the Pig Who Set Up Housekeeping

22. The Parson and the Clerk

23. Father Bruin

24. The Pancake

25. Why the Sea is Salt

26. The Squire’s Bride

27. Peik

28. The Princess Who Could Not Be Silenced

29. The Twelve Wild Ducks

30. Gudbrand-on-the-Hillside

31. Little Freddy with His Fiddle

32. True and Untrue

33. The Old Dame and Her Hen

34. Boots Who Ate a Match with the Troll

35. Hacon Grizzlebeard

36. Boots, Who Made the Princess Say, ‘That’s a Story’

37. The Fox as Herdsman

38. The Mastermaid

39. The Cock and Hen

40. How One Went Out to Woo

41. The Master-Smith

42. The Two Step-Sisters

43. Buttercup

44. Taming the Shrew

45. Shortshanks

46. Not a Pin to Choose Between Them

47. The Three Aunts

48. The Cock, the Cuckoo, and the Black-Cock

49. Rich Peter the Pedlar

50. Gertrude’s Bird

51. Boots and the Troll

52. Goosey Grizzel

53. The Master Thief

54. The Best Wish

55. Well Done and Ill Paid

56. Dapplegrim

57. Farmer Weathersky

58. Lord Peter

59. The Seven Foals

60. Bushy Bride

61. Big Peter and Little Peter

62. Tatterhood

63. The Cock and Hen That Went to the Dovrefell

64. Katie Woodencloak

65. Thumbikin

66. Doll I’ the Grass

67. The Lad and the Deil

68. The Cock and Hen A-Nutting

69. The Big Bird Dan

70. Bruin and Reynard

71. Tom Totherhouse

72. Little Annie the Goose-Girl

1

EAST OF THE SUN AND WEST OF THE MOON

Once on a time there was a poor husbandman who had so many children that he hadn’t much of either food or clothing to give them. Pretty children they all were, but the prettiest was the youngest daughter, who was so lovely there was no end to her loveliness.

So one day, ‘twas on a Thursday evening late at the fall of the year, the weather was so wild and rough outside, and it was so cruelly dark, and rain fell and wind blew, till the walls of the cottage shook again. There they all sat round the fire, busy with this thing and that. But just then, all at once something gave three taps on the window-pane. Then the father went out to see what was the matter; and, when he got out of doors, what should he see but a great big *White Bear*.

“Good-evening to you!” said the *White Bear*.

“The same to you!” said the man.

“Will you give me your youngest daughter? If you will, I’ll make you as rich as you are now poor,” said the *Bear*.

Well, the man would not be at all sorry to be so rich; but still he thought he must have a bit of a talk with his daughter first; so he went in and told them how there was a great *White Bear* waiting outside, who had given his word to make them so rich if he could only have the youngest daughter.

The lassie said “No!” outright. Nothing could get her to say anything else; so the man went out and settled it with the *White Bear* that he should come again the next Thursday evening and get an answer. Meantime he talked his daughter over, and kept on telling her of all the riches they would get, and how well off she would be herself; and so at last she thought better of it, and washed and mended her rags, made herself as smart as she could, and was ready to start. I can’t say her packing gave her much trouble.

Next Thursday evening came the *White Bear* to fetch her, and she got upon his back with her bundle, and off they went. So, when they had gone a bit of the way, the *White Bear* said:

“Are you afraid?”

“No,” she wasn’t.

“Well! mind and hold tight by my shaggy coat, and then there’s nothing to fear,” said the *Bear*.

So she rode a long, long way, till they came to a great steep hill. There, on the face of it, the *White Bear* gave a knock, and a door opened, and they came into a castle where there were many rooms all lit up; rooms gleaming with silver and gold; and there, too, was a table ready laid, and it was all as grand as grand could be. Then the *White Bear* gave her a silver bell; and when she wanted anything, she was only to ring it, and she would get it at once.

Well, after she had eaten and drunk, and evening wore on, she got sleepy after her journey, and thought she would like to go to bed, so she rang the bell; and she had scarce taken hold of it before she came into a chamber where there was a bed made, as fair and white as any one would wish to sleep in, with silken pillows and curtains and gold fringe. All that was in the room was gold or silver; but when she had gone to bed and put out the light, a man came and laid himself alongside her. That was the *White Bear*, who threw off his beast shape at night; but she never saw him, for he always came after she had put out the light, and before the day dawned he was up and off again. So things went on happily for a while, but at last she began to get silent and sorrowful; for there she went about all day alone, and she longed to go home to see her father and mother and brothers and sisters. So one day, when the *White Bear* asked what it was that she lacked, she said it was so dull and lonely there, and how she longed to go home to see her father and mother and brothers and sisters, and that was why she was so sad and sorrowful, because she couldn't get to them.

"Well, well!" said the *Bear*, "perhaps there's a cure for all this; but you must promise me one thing, not to talk alone with your mother, but only when the rest are by to hear; for she'll take you by the hand and try to lead you into a room alone to talk; but you must mind and not do that, else you'll bring bad luck on both of us."

So one Sunday the *White Bear* came and said, now they could set off to see her father and mother. Well, off they started, she sitting on his back; and they went far and long. At last they came to a grand house, and there her brothers and sisters were running about out of doors at play, and everything was so pretty, 'twas a joy to see.

"This is where your father and mother live now," said the *White Bear*; "but don't forget what I told you, else you'll make us both unlucky."

"No! bless her, she'd not forget;" — and when she had reached the house, the *White Bear* turned right about and left her.

Then, when she went in to see her father and mother, there was such joy, there was no end to it. None of them thought they could thank her enough for all she had done for them. Now, they had everything they wished, as good as good could be, and they all wanted to know how she got on where she lived.

Well, she said, it was very good to live where she did; she had all she wished. What she said beside I don't know, but I don't think any of them had the right end of the stick, or that they got much out of her. But so, in the afternoon, after they had done dinner, all happened as the *White Bear* had said. Her mother wanted to talk with her alone in her bedroom; but she minded what the *White Bear* had said, and wouldn't go upstairs.

"Oh! what we have to talk about will keep!" she said, and put her mother off. But, somehow or other, her mother got round her at last, and she had to tell her the whole story. So she said, how every night when she had gone to bed a man came and lay down beside her as soon as she had put out the light; and how she never saw him, because he was always up and away before the morning dawned; and how she went about woeful and sorrowing, for she thought she should so like to see him; and how all day long she walked about there alone; and how dull and dreary and lonesome it was.

"My!" said her mother; "it may well be a Troll you slept with! But now I'll teach you a lesson how to set eyes on him. I'll give you a bit of candle, which you can carry home in your bosom; just light that while he is asleep, but take care not to drop the tallow on him."

Yes! she took the candle and hid it in her bosom, and as night drew on, the *White Bear* came and fetched her away.

But when they had gone a bit of the way, the *White Bear* asked if all hadn't happened as he had said.

"Well, she couldn't say it hadn't."

"Now, mind," said he, "if you have listened to your mother's advice, you have brought bad luck on us both, and then, all that has passed between us will be as nothing."

"No," she said, "she hadn't listened to her mother's advice."

So when she reached home, and had gone to bed, it was the old story over again. There came a man and lay down beside her; but at dead of night, when she heard he slept, she got up and struck a light, lit the candle, and let the light shine on him, and so she saw that he was the loveliest *Prince* one ever set eyes on, and she fell so deep in love with him on the spot, that she thought she couldn't live if she didn't give him a kiss there and then. And so she did; but as she kissed him, she dropped three hot drops of tallow on his shirt, and he woke up.

“What have you done?” he cried; “now you have made us both unlucky, for had you held out only this one year, I had been freed. For I have a step-mother who has bewitched me, so that I am a *White Bear* by day, and a *Man* by night. But now all ties are snapt between us; now I must set off from you to her. She lives in a Castle which stands *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, and there, too, is a *Princess*, with a nose three ells long, and she’s the wife I must have now.”

She wept and took it ill, but there was no help for it; go he must.

Then she asked if she mightn’t go with him.

No, she mightn’t.

“Tell me the way, then,” she said, “and I’ll search you out; *that* surely I may get leave to do.”

“Yes,” she might do that, he said; “but there was no way to that place. It lay *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, and thither she’d never find her way.”

So next morning, when she woke up, both *Prince* and castle were gone, and then she lay on a little green patch, in the midst of the gloomy thick wood, and by her side lay the same bundle of rags she had brought with her from her old home.

So when she had rubbed the sleep out of her eyes, and wept till she was tired, she set out on her way, and walked many, many days, till she came to a lofty crag. Under it sat an old hag, and played with a gold apple which she tossed about. Here the lassie asked if she knew the way to the Prince, who lived with his step-mother in the Castle, that lay *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, and who was to marry the *Princess* with a nose three ells long.

“How did you come to know about him?” asked the old hag; “but maybe you are the lassie who ought to have had him?”

Yes, she was.

"So, so; it's you, is it?" said the old hag. "Well, all I know about him is, that he lives in the castle that lies *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, and thither you'll come, late or never; but still you may have the loan of my horse, and on him you can ride to my next neighbour. Maybe she'll be able to tell you; and when you get there, just give the horse a switch under the left ear, and beg him to be off home; and, stay, this gold apple you may take with you."

So she got upon the horse, and rode a long, long time, till she came to another crag, under which sat another old hag, with a gold carding-comb. Here the lassie asked if she knew the way to the castle that lay *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, and she answered, like the first old hag, that she knew nothing about it, except it was east of the sun and west of the moon.

"And thither you'll come, late or never, but you shall have the loan of my horse to my next neighbour; maybe she'll tell you all about it; and when you get there, just switch the horse under the left ear, and beg him to be off home."

And this old hag gave her the golden carding-comb; it might be she'd find some use for it, she said. So the lassie got up on the horse, and rode a far, far way, and a weary time; and so at last she came to another great crag, under which sat another old hag, spinning with a golden spinning-wheel. Her, too, she asked if she knew the way to the *Prince*, and where the castle was that lay *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. So it was the same thing over again.

"Maybe it's you who ought to have had the *Prince*?" said the old hag.

Yes, it was.

But she, too, didn't know the way a bit better than the other two. "East of the sun and west of the moon it was," she knew — that was all.

"And thither you'll come, late or never; but I'll lend you my horse, and then I think you'd best ride to the East Wind and ask him; maybe he knows those parts, and can blow you thither. But when you get to him, you need only give the horse a switch under the left ear, and he'll trot home of himself."

And so, too, she gave her the gold spinning-wheel. "Maybe you'll find a use for it," said the old hag.

Then on she rode many many days, a weary time, before she got to the East Wind's house, but at last she did reach it, and then she asked the East Wind if he could tell her the way to the *Prince* who dwelt east of the sun and west of the moon. Yes, the East Wind had often heard tell of it, the *Prince* and the castle, but he couldn't tell the way, for he had never blown so far.

"But, if you will, I'll go with you to my brother the West Wind, maybe he knows, for he's much stronger. So, if you will just get on my back, I'll carry you thither."

Yes, she got on his back, and I should just think they went briskly along.

So when they got there, they went into the West Wind's house, and the East Wind said the lassie he had brought was the one who ought to have had the *Prince* who lived in the castle *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*; and so she had set out to seek him, and how he had come with her, and would be glad to know if the West Wind knew how to get to the castle.

"Nay," said the West Wind, "so far I've never blown; but if you will, I'll go with you to our brother the South Wind, for he's much stronger than either of us, and he has flapped his wings far and wide. Maybe he'll tell you. You can get on my back, and I'll carry you to him."

Yes! she got on his back, and so they travelled to the South Wind, and weren't so very long on the way, I should think.

When they got there, the West Wind asked him if he could tell her the way to the castle that lay *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, for it was she who ought to have had the *Prince* who lived there.

"You don't say so! That's she, is it?" said the South Wind.

"Well, I have blustered about in most places in my time, but so far have I never blown; but if you will, I'll take you to my brother the North Wind; he is the oldest and strongest of the whole lot of us, and if he don't know where it is, you'll never find any one in the world to tell you. You can get on my back, and I'll carry you thither."

Yes! she got on his back, and away he went from his house at a fine rate. And this time, too, she wasn't long on her way.

So when they got to the North Wind's house, he was so wild and cross, cold puffs came from him a long way off.

"Blast you both, what do you want?" he roared out to them ever so far off, so that it struck them with an icy shiver.

"Well," said the South Wind, "you needn't be so foul-mouthed, for here I am, your brother, the South Wind, and here is the lassie who ought to have had the *Prince* who dwells in the castle that lies *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, and now she wants to ask you if you ever were there, and can tell her the way, for she would be so glad to find him again."

"Yes, I know well enough where it is," said the North Wind; "once in my life I blew an aspen-leaf thither, but, I was so tired I couldn't blow a puff for ever so many days, after. But if you really wish to go thither, and aren't afraid to come along with me, I'll take you on my back and see if I can blow you thither."

Yes! with all her heart; she must and would get thither if it were possible in any way; and as for fear, however madly he went, she wouldn't be at all afraid.

"Very well, then," said the North Wind, "but you must sleep here to-night, for we must have the whole day before us, if we're to get thither at all."

Early next morning the North Wind woke her, and puffed himself up, and blew himself out, and made himself so stout and big, 'twas gruesome to look at him; and so off they went high up through the air, as if they would never stop till they got to the world's end.

Down here below there was such a storm; it threw down long tracts of wood and many houses, and when it swept over the great sea, ships foundered by hundreds.

So they tore on and on — no one can believe how far they went — and all the while they still went over the sea, and the North Wind got more and more weary, and so out of breath he could scarce bring out a puff, and his wings drooped and drooped, till at last he sunk so low that the crests of the waves dashed over his heels.

"Are you afraid?" said the North Wind.

"No!" she wasn't.

But they weren't very far from land; and the North Wind had still so much strength left in him that he managed to throw her up on the shore under the windows of the castle which lay *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*; but then he was so weak and worn out, he had to stay there and rest many days before he could get home again.

Next morning the lassie sat down under the castle window, and began to play with the gold apple; and the first person she saw was the *Long-nose* who was to have the *Prince*.

"What do you want for your gold apple, you lassie?" said the *Long-nose*, and threw up the window.

"It's not for sale, for gold or money," said the lassie.

"If it's not for sale for gold or money, what is it that you will sell it for? You may name your own price," said the *Princess*.

"Well! if I may get to the *Prince*, who lives here, and be with him to-night, you shall have it," said the lassie whom the North Wind had brought.

Yes! she might; that could be done. So the *Princess* got the gold apple; but when the lassie came up to the *Prince's* bed-room at night he was fast asleep; she called him and shook him, and between whiles she wept sore;

but all she could do she couldn’t wake him up. Next morning, as soon as day broke, came the *Princess* with the long nose, and drove her out again.

So in the daytime she sat down under the castle windows and began to card with her carding-comb, and the same thing happened. The *Princess* asked what she wanted for it; and she said it wasn’t for sale for gold or money, but if she might get leave to go up to the *Prince* and be with him that night, the *Princess* should have it. But when she went up she found him fast asleep again, and all she called, and all she shook, and wept, and prayed, she couldn’t get life into him; and as soon as the first gray peep of day came, then came the *Princess* with the long nose, and chased her out again.

So, in the daytime, the lassie sat down outside under the castle window, and began to spin with her golden spinning-wheel, and that, too, the *Princess* with the long nose wanted to have. So she threw up the window and asked what she wanted for it. The lassie said, as she had said twice before, it wasn’t for sale for gold or money; but if she might go up to the *Prince* who was there, and be with him alone that night, she might have it.

Yes! she might do that and welcome. But now you must know there were some Christian folk who had been carried off thither, and as they sat in their room, which was next the *Prince*, they had heard how a woman had been in there, and wept and prayed, and called to him two nights running, and they told that to the *Prince*.

That evening, when the *Princess* came with her sleepy drink, the *Prince* made as if he drank, but threw it over his shoulder, for he could guess it was a sleepy drink. So, when the lassie came in, she found the *Prince* wide awake; and then she told him the whole story how she had come thither.

“Ah,” said the *Prince*, “you’ve just come in the very nick of time, for to-morrow is to be our wedding-day; but now I won’t have the *Long-nose*, and you are the only woman in the world who can set me free. I’ll say I want to see what my wife is fit for, and beg her to wash the shirt which has the three spots of tallow on it; she'll say yes, for she doesn't know 'tis you who put them there; but that's a work only for Christian folk, and not for such a pack of Trolls, and so I'll say that I won't have any other for my bride than the woman who can wash them out, and ask you to do it."

So there was great joy and love between them all that night. But next day, when the wedding was to be, the *Prince* said:

"First of all, I'd like to see what my bride is fit for."

"Yes!" said the step-mother, with all her heart.

"Well," said the *Prince*, "I've got a fine shirt which I'd like for my wedding shirt, but somehow or other it has got three spots of tallow on it, which I must have washed out; and I have sworn never to take any other bride than the woman who's able to do that. If she can't, she's not worth having."

Well, that was no great thing they said, so they agreed, and she with the long-nose began to wash away as hard as she could, but the more she rubbed and scrubbed, the bigger the spots grew.

"Ah!" said the old hag, her mother, "you can't wash; let me try."

But she hadn't long taken the shirt in hand before it got far worse than ever, and with all her rubbing, and wringing, and scrubbing, the spots grew bigger and blacker, and the darker and uglier was the shirt.

Then all the other Trolls began to wash, but the longer it lasted, the blacker and uglier the shirt grew, till at last it was as black all over as if it had been up the chimney.

"Ah!" said the *Prince*, "you're none of you worth a straw; you can't wash. Why there, outside, sits a beggar lassie, I'll be bound she knows how to wash better than the whole lot of you. Come in, Lassie!" he shouted.

Well, in she came.

"Can you wash this shirt clean, lassie you?" said he.

"I don't know," she said, "but I think I can."

And almost before she had taken it and dipped it in the water, it was as white as driven snow, and whiter still.

“Yes; you are the lassie for me,” said the *Prince*.

At that the old hag flew into such a rage, she burst on the spot, and the *Princess* with the long nose after her, and the whole pack of Trolls after her — at least I’ve never heard a word about them since.

As for the *Prince* and *Princess*, they set free all the poor Christian folk who had been carried off and shut up there; and they took with them all the silver and gold, and flitted away as far as they could from the Castle that lay *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*.

2

THE BLUE BELT

Once on a time there was an old beggar-woman, who had gone out to beg. She had a little lad with her, and when she had got her bag full she struck across the hills towards her own home. So when they had gone a bit up the hill-side, they came upon a little *Blue Belt* which lay where two paths met, and the lad asked his mother’s leave to pick it up.

“No,” said she, “maybe there’s witchcraft in it;” and so with threats she forced him to follow her. But when they had gone a bit further, the lad said he must turn aside a moment out of the road; and meanwhile his mother sat down on a tree-stump. But the lad was a long time gone, for as soon as he got so far into the wood that the old dame could not see him, he ran off to where the *Belt* lay, took it up, tied it round his waist, and lo! he felt as strong as if he could lift the whole hill. When he got back, the old dame was in a great rage, and wanted to know what he had been doing all that while. “You don’t care how much time you waste, and yet you know the night is drawing on, and we must cross the hill before it is dark!” So on they tramped; but when they had got about half-way, the old dame grew weary, and said she must rest under a bush.

“Dear mother,” said the lad, “mayn’t I just go up to the top of this high crag while you rest, and try if I can’t see some sign of folk hereabouts?”

Yes! he might do that; so when he had got to the top he saw a light shining from the north. So he ran down and told his mother.

“We must get on, mother; we are near a house, for I see a bright light shining quite close to us in the north.” Then she rose and shouldered her bag, and set off to see; but they hadn’t gone far, before there stood a steep spur of the hill, right across their path.

“Just as I thought!” said the old dame, “now we can’t go a step farther; a pretty bed we shall have here!”

But the lad took the bag under one arm, and his mother under the other, and ran straight up the steep crag with them.

“Now, don’t you see? Don’t you see that we are close to a house? Don’t you see that bright light?”

But the old dame said those were no Christian folk, but *Trolls*, for she was at home in all that forest far and near, and knew there was not a living soul in it, until you were well over the ridge and had come down on the other side. But they went on, and in a little while they came to a great house which was all painted red.

“What’s the good?” said the old dame. “We daren’t go in, for here the *Trolls* live.”

“Don’t say so; we must go in. There must be men where the lights shine so,” said the lad. So in he went, and his mother after him, but he had scarce opened the door before she swooned away, for there she saw a great stout man, at least twenty feet high, sitting on the bench.

“Good evening, grandfather!” said the lad.

“Well, here I’ve sat three hundred years,” said the man who sat on the bench, “and no one has ever come and called me grandfather before.” Then the lad sat down by the man’s side, and began to talk to him as if they had been old friends.

“But what’s come over your mother?” said the man, after they had chatted a while. “I think she swooned away; you had better look after her.”

So the lad went and took hold of the old dame, and dragged her up the hall along the floor. That brought her to herself, and she kicked and scratched, and flung herself about, and at last sat down upon a heap of firewood in the corner; but she was so frightened that she scarce dared to look one in the face.

After a while, the lad asked if they could spend the night there.

“Yes, to be sure,” said the man.

So they went on talking again, but the lad soon got hungry, and wanted to know if they could get food as well as lodging.

“Of course,” said the man, “that might be got too.” And after he had sat a while longer, he rose up and threw six loads of dry pitch-pine on the fire. This made the old hag still more afraid.

“Oh! now he’s going to roast us alive,” she said, in the corner where she sat.

And when the wood had burned down to glowing embers, up got the man and strode out of his house.

“Heaven bless and help us! what a stout heart you have got!” said the old dame. “Don’t you see we have got amongst *Trolls*?”

“Stuff and nonsense!” said the lad; “no harm if we have.”

In a little while, back came the man with an ox so fat and big, the lad had never seen its like, and he gave it one blow with his fist under the ear, and down it fell dead on the floor. When that was done, he took it up by all the four legs and laid it on the glowing embers, and turned it and twisted it about till it was burnt brown outside. After that, he went to a cupboard and took out a great silver dish, and laid the ox on it; and the dish was so big that none of the ox hung over on any side. This he put on the table, and then he went down into the cellar and fetched a cask of wine, knocked out the head, and put the cask on the table, together with two knives, which were each six feet long. When this was done he bade them go and sit down to supper and eat. So they went, the lad first and the old dame after, but she began to whimper and wail, and to wonder how she should ever use such knives. But her son seized one, and began to cut slices out of the thigh of the ox, which he placed before his mother. And when they had eaten a bit, he took up the cask with both hands, and lifted it down to the floor; then he told his mother to come and drink, but it was still so high she couldn't reach up to it; so he caught her up, and held her up to the edge of the cask while she drank; as for himself, he clambered up and hung down like a cat inside the cask while he drank. So when he had quenched his thirst, he took up the cask and put it back on the table, and thanked the man for the good meal, and told his mother to come and thank him too, and, a-feared though she was, she dared do nothing else but thank the man. Then the lad sat down again alongside the man and began to gossip, and after they had sat a while the man said:

"Well! I must just go and get a bit of supper too;" and so he went to the table and ate up the whole ox — hoofs, and horns, and all — and drained the cask to the last drop, and then went back and sat on the bench.

"As for beds," he said, "I don't know what's to be done. I've only got one bed and a cradle; but we could get on pretty well if you would sleep in the cradle, and then your mother might lie in the bed yonder."

"Thank you kindly, that'll do nicely," said the lad; and with that he pulled off his clothes and lay down in the cradle; but, to tell you the truth, it was quite as big as a four-poster. As for the old dame, she had to follow the man who showed her to bed, though she was out of her wits for fear.

"Well!" thought the lad to himself, "'twill never do to go to sleep yet. I'd best lie awake and listen how things go as the night wears on."

So, after a while, the man began to talk to the old dame, and at last he said:

"We two might live here so happily together, could we only be rid of this son of yours."

“But do you know how to settle him? Is that what you’re thinking of?” said she.

“Nothing easier,” said he; at any rate he would try. He would just say he wished the old dame would stay and keep house for him a day or two, and then he would take the lad out with him up the hill to quarry corner-stones, and roll down a great rock on him. All this the lad lay and listened to.

Next day the *Troll* — for it was a *Troll* as clear as day — asked if the old dame would stay and keep house for him a few days; and as the day went on he took a great iron crowbar, and asked the lad if he had a mind to go with him up the hill and quarry a few corner-stones. With all his heart, he said, and went with him; and so, after they had split a few stones, the *Troll* wanted him to go down below and look after cracks in the rock; and while he was doing this the *Troll* worked away, and wearied himself with his crowbar till he moved a whole crag out of its bed, which came rolling right down on the place where the lad was; but he held it up till he could get on one side, and then let it roll on.

“Oh!” said the lad to the *Troll*, “now I see what you mean to do with me. You want to crush me to death; so just go down yourself and look after the cracks and refts in the rock, and I’ll stand up above.”

The *Troll* did not dare to do otherwise than the lad bade him, and the end of it was that the lad rolled down a great rock, which fell upon the *Troll* and broke one of his thighs.

“Well! you *are* in a sad plight,” said the lad, as he strode down, lifted up the rock, and set the man free. After that he had to put him on his back and carry him home; so he ran with him as fast as a horse, and shook him so that the *Troll* screamed and screeched as if a knife were run into him. And when he got home, they had to put the *Troll* to bed, and there he lay in a sad pickle.

When the night wore on, the *Troll* began to talk to the old dame again, and to wonder how ever they could be rid of the lad.

“Well,” said the old dame, “if you can’t hit on a plan to get rid of him, I’m sure I can’t.”

“Let me see,” said the *Troll*; “I’ve got twelve lions in a garden; if they could only get hold of the lad, they’d soon tear him to pieces.”

So the old dame said it would be easy enough to get him there. She would sham sick, and say she felt so poorly, nothing would do her any good but lion’s milk. All that the lad lay and listened to; and when he got up in the morning his mother said she was worse than she looked, and she thought she should never be right again unless she could get some lion’s milk.

“Then I’m afraid you’ll be poorly a long time, mother,” said the lad, “for I’m sure I don’t know where any is to be got.”

“Oh! if that be all,” said the *Troll*, “there’s no lack of lion’s milk, if we only had the man to fetch it;” and then he went on to say how his brother had a garden with twelve lions in it, and how the lad might have the key if he had a mind to milk the lions. So the lad took the key and a milking pail, and strode off; and when he unlocked the gate and got into the garden, there stood all the twelve lions on their hind-paws, rampant and roaring at him. But the lad laid hold of the biggest, and led him about by the fore-paws, and dashed him against stocks and stones till there wasn’t a bit of him left but the two paws. So when the rest saw that, they were so afraid that they crept up and lay at his feet like so many curs. After that they followed him about wherever he went, and when he got home, they lay down outside the house, with their fore-paws on the door sill.

“Now, mother, you’ll soon be well,” said the lad, when he went in, “for here is the lion’s milk.”

He had just milked a drop in the pail.

But the *Troll*, as he lay in bed, swore it was all a lie. He was sure the lad was not the man to milk lions.

When the lad heard that, he forced the *Troll* to get out of bed, threw open the door, and all the lions rose up and seized the *Troll*, and at last the lad had to make them leave their hold.

That night the *Troll* began to talk to the old dame again. "I'm sure I can't tell how to put this lad out of the way — he is so awfully strong; can't you think of some way?"

"No," said the old dame, "if you can't tell, I'm sure I can't."

"Well!" said the *Troll*, "I have two brothers in a castle; they are twelve times as strong as I am, and that's why I was turned out and had to put up with this farm. They hold that castle, and round it there is an orchard with apples in it, and whoever eats those apples sleeps for three days and three nights. If we could only get the lad to go for the fruit, he wouldn't be able to keep from tasting the apples, and as soon as ever he fell asleep my brothers would tear him in pieces."

The old dame said she would sham sick, and say she could never be herself again unless she tasted those apples; for she had set her heart on them.

All this the lad lay and listened to.

When the morning came the old dame was so poorly that she couldn't utter a word but groans and sighs. She was sure she should never be well again, unless she had some of those apples that grew in the orchard near the castle where the man's brothers lived; only she had no one to send for them.

Oh! the lad was ready to go that instant; but the eleven lions went with him. So when he came to the orchard, he climbed up into the apple tree and ate as many apples as he could, and he had scarce got down before he fell into a deep sleep; but the lions all lay round him in a ring. The third day came the *Troll's* brothers, but they did not come in man's shape. They came snorting like man-eating steeds, and wondered who it was that dared to be there, and said they would tear him to pieces, so small that there should not be a bit of him left. But up rose the lions and tore the *Trolls* into small pieces, so that the place looked as if a dung heap had been tossed about it; and when they had finished the *Trolls* they lay down again. The lad did not wake till late in the afternoon, and when he got on his knees and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, he began to wonder what had been going on, when he saw the marks of hoofs. But when he went towards the castle, a maiden looked out of a window who had seen all that had happened, and she said:

"You may thank your stars you weren't in that tussle, else you must have lost your life."

"What! I lose my life! No fear of that, I think," said the lad.

So she begged him to come in, that she might talk with him, for she hadn't seen a Christian soul ever since she came there. But when she opened the door the lions wanted to go in too, but she got so frightened that she began to scream, and so the lad let them lie outside. Then the two talked and talked, and the lad asked how it came that she, who was so lovely, could put up with those ugly *Trolls*. She never wished it, she said; 'twas quite against her will. They had seized her by force, and she was the King of Arabia's daughter. So they talked on, and at last she asked him what he would do; whether she should go back home, or whether he would have her to wife. Of course he would have her, and she shouldn't go home.

After that they went round the castle, and at last they came to a great hall, where the *Trolls'* two great swords hung high up on the wall.

"I wonder if you are man enough to wield one of these," said the *Princess*.

"Who? I?" said the lad. "'Twould be a pretty thing if I couldn't wield one of these."

With that he put two or three chairs one a-top of the other, jumped up, and touched the biggest sword with his finger tips, tossed it up in the air, and caught it again by the hilt; leapt down, and at the same time dealt such a blow with it on the floor that the whole hall shook. After he had thus got down, he thrust the sword under his arm and carried it about with him.

So, when they had lived a little while in the castle, the *Princess* thought she ought to go home to her parents, and let them know what had become of her; so they loaded a ship, and she set sail from the castle.

After she had gone, and the lad had wandered about a little, he called to mind that he had been sent out on an errand thither, and had come to fetch something for his mother’s health; and though he said to himself, “After all the old dame was not so bad but she’s all right by this time” — still he thought he ought to go and just see how she was. So he went and found both the man and his mother quite fresh and hearty.

“What wretches you are to live in this beggarly hut,” said the lad. “Come with me up to my castle, and you shall see what a fine fellow I am.”

Well! they were both ready to go, and on the way his mother talked to him, and asked how it was he had got so strong.

“If you must know it came of that blue belt which lay on the hill-side that time when you and I were out begging,” said the lad.

“Have you got it still?” asked she.

“Yes” — he had. It was tied round his waist.

“Might she see it?”

“Yes” — she might; and with that he pulled open his waistcoat and shirt to show it to her.

Then she seized it with both hands, tore it off, and twisted it round her fist.

“Now,” she cried, “what shall I do with such a wretch as you? I’ll just give you one blow, and dash your brains out!”

“Far too good a death for such a scamp,” said the *Troll*. “No! let’s first burn out his eyes, and then turn him adrift in a little boat.”

So they burned out his eyes and turned him adrift, in spite of his prayers and tears; but, as the boat drifted, the lions swam after, and at last they laid hold of it and dragged it ashore on an island, and placed the lad under a fir tree. They caught game for him, and they plucked the birds and made him a bed of down; but he was forced to eat his meat raw and he was blind. At last, one day the biggest lion was chasing a hare which was blind, for it ran straight over stock and stone, and the end was, it ran right up against a fir-stump and tumbled head over heels across the field right into a spring; but lo! when it came out of the spring it saw its way quite plain, and so saved its life.

"So, so!" thought the lion, and went and dragged the lad to the spring, and dipped him over head and ears in it. So, when he had got his sight again, he went down to the shore and made signs to the lions that they should all lie close together like a raft; then he stood upon their backs while they swam with him to the mainland. When he had reached the shore he went up into a birchen copse, and made the lions lie quiet. Then he stole up to the castle, like a thief, to see if he couldn't lay hands on his belt; and when he got to the door, he peeped through the keyhole, and there he saw his belt hanging up over a door in the kitchen. So he crept softly in across the floor, for there was no one there; but as soon as he had got hold of the belt, he began to kick and stamp about as though he were mad. Just then his mother came rushing out:

"Dear heart, my darling little boy! do give me the belt again," she said.

"Thank you kindly," said he. "Now you shall have the doom you passed on me," and he fulfilled it on the spot. When the old *Troll* heard that, he came in and begged and prayed so prettily that he might not be smitten to death.

"Well, you may live," said the lad, "but you shall undergo the same punishment you gave me;" and so he burned out the *Troll's* eyes, and turned him adrift on the sea in a little boat, but he had no lions to follow him.

Now the lad was all alone, and he went about longing and longing for the *Princess*; at last he could bear it no longer; he must set out to seek her, his heart was so bent on having her. So he loaded four ships and set sail for Arabia.

For some time they had fair wind and fine weather, but after that they lay wind-bound under a rocky island. So the sailors went ashore and strolled about to spend the time, and there they found a huge egg, almost as big as a little house. So they began to knock it about with large stones, but, after all, they couldn't crack the shell. Then the lad came up with his sword to see what all the noise was about, and when he saw the egg, he thought it a trifle to crack it; so he gave it one blow and the egg split, and out came a chicken as big as an elephant.

"Now we have done wrong," said the lad; "this can cost us all our lives;" and then he asked his sailors if they were men enough to sail to Arabia in four-and-twenty hours if they got a fine breeze. Yes! they were good to do that, they said, so they set sail with a fine breeze, and got to Arabia in three-and-twenty hours. As soon as they landed, the lad ordered all the sailors to go and bury themselves up to the eyes in a sandhill, so that they could barely see the ships. The lad and the captains climbed a high crag and sate down under a fir.

In a little while came a great bird flying with an island in its claws, and let it fall down on the fleet, and sunk every ship. After it had done that, it flew up to the sandhill and flapped its wings, so that the wind nearly took off the heads of the sailors, and it flew past the fir with such force that it turned the lad right about, but he was ready with his sword, and gave the bird one blow and brought it down dead.

After that he went to the town, where every one was glad because the *King* had got his daughter back; but now the *King* had hidden her away somewhere himself, and promised her hand as a reward to any one who could find her, and this though she was betrothed before. Now as the lad went along he met a man who had white bear-skins for sale, so he bought one of the hides and put it on; and one of the captains was to take an iron chain and lead him about, and so he went into the town and began to play pranks. At last the news came to the *King's* ears, that there never had been such fun in the town before, for here was a white bear that danced and cut capers just as it was bid. So a messenger came to say the bear must come to the castle at once, for the *King* wanted to see its tricks. So when it got to the castle every one was afraid, for such a beast they had never seen before; but the captain said there was no danger unless they laughed at it. They mustn't do that, else it would tear them to pieces. When the *King* heard that, he warned all the court not to laugh. But while the fun was going on, in came one of the *King's* maids, and began to laugh and make game of the bear, and the bear flew at her and tore her, so that there was scarce a rag of her left. Then all the court began to bewail, and the captain most of all.

"Stuff and nonsense," said the *King*; "she's only a maid, besides it's more my affair than yours."

When the show was over, it was late at night. "It's no good your going away, when it's so late," said the *King*. "The bear had best sleep here."

"Perhaps it might sleep in the ingle by the kitchen fire," said the captain.

"Nay," said the *King*, "it shall sleep up here, and it shall have pillows and cushions to sleep on." So a whole heap of pillows and cushions was brought, and the captain had a bed in a side room.

But at midnight the *King* came with a lamp in his hand and a big bunch of keys, and carried off the white bear. He passed along gallery after gallery through doors and rooms, up-stairs and down-stairs, till at last he came to a pier which ran out into the sea. Then the *King* began to pull and haul at posts and pins, this one up and that one down, till at last a little house floated up to the water's edge. There he kept his daughter, for she was so dear to him that he had hid her, so that no one could find her out. He left the white bear outside while he went in and told her how it had danced and played its pranks. She said she was afraid, and dared not look at it; but he talked her over, saying there was no danger if she only wouldn't laugh. So they brought the bear in, and locked the door, and it danced and played its tricks; but just when the fun was at its height, the *Princess's* maid began to laugh. Then the lad flew at her and tore her to bits, and the *Princess* began to cry and sob.

“Stuff and nonsense,” cried the *King*; “all this fuss about a maid! I’ll get you just as good a one again. But now I think the bear had best stay here till morning, for I don’t care to have to go and lead it along all those galleries and stairs at this time of night.”

“Well!” said the *Princess*, “if it sleeps here, I’m sure I won’t.”

But just then the bear curled himself up and lay down by the stove; and it was settled at last that the *Princess* should sleep there too, with a light burning. But as soon as the *King* had well gone, the white bear came and begged her to undo his collar. The *Princess* was so scared she almost swooned away; but she felt about till she found the collar, and she had scarce undone it before the bear pulled his head off. Then she knew him again, and was so glad there was no end to her joy, and she wanted to tell her father at once that her deliverer was come. But the lad would not hear of it; he would earn her once more, he said. So in the morning when they heard the *King* rattling at the posts outside, the lad drew on the hide and lay down by the stove.

“Well, has it lain still?” the king asked.

“I should think so,” said the *Princess*; “it hasn’t so much as turned or stretched itself once.”

When they got up to the castle again, the captain took the bear and led it away, and then the lad threw off the hide, and went to a tailor and ordered clothes fit for a prince; and when they were fitted on he went to the *King*, and said he wanted to find the *Princess*.

“You’re not the first who has wished the same thing,” said the *King*, “but they have all lost their lives; for if any one who tries can’t find her in four-and-twenty hours his life is forfeited.”

Yes; the lad knew all that. Still he wished to try, and if he couldn’t find her, ‘twas his look-out. Now in the castle there was a band that played sweet tunes, and there were fair maids to dance with, and so the lad danced away.

When twelve hours were gone, the *King* said:

“I pity you with all my heart. You’re so poor a hand at seeking; you will surely lose your life.”

“Stuff!” said the lad; “while there’s life there’s hope! So long as there’s breath in the body there’s no fear; we have lots of time!” and so he went on dancing till there was only one hour left.

Then he said he would begin to search.

“It’s no use now,” said the *King*; “time’s up.”

“Light your lamp; out with your big bunch of keys,” said the lad, “and follow me whither I wish to go. There is still a whole hour left.”

So the lad went the same way which the *King* had led him the night before, and he bade the *King* unlock door after door till they came down to the pier which ran out into the sea.

“It’s all no use, I tell you,” said the *King*; “time’s up, and this will only lead you right out into the sea.”

“Still five minutes more,” said the lad, as he pulled and pushed at the posts and pins, and the house floated up.

“Now the time is up,” bawled the *King*; “come hither, headsman, and take off his head.”

“Nay, nay!” said the lad; “stop a bit, there are still three minutes! Out with the key, and let me get into this house.”

But there stood the *King* and fumbled with his keys, to draw out the time. At last he said he hadn’t any key.

“Well, if you haven’t, I *have*,” said the lad, as he gave the door such a kick that it flew to splinters inwards on the floor.

At the door the *Princess* met him, and told her father this was her deliverer, on whom her heart was set. So she had him; and this was how the beggar boy came to marry the daughter of the King of Arabia.

3

PRINCE LINDWORM

Once upon a time, there was a fine young *King* who was married to the loveliest of Queens. They were exceedingly happy, all but for one thing — they had no children. And this often made them both sad, because the *Queen* wanted a dear little child to play with, and the *King* wanted an heir to the kingdom.

One day the *Queen* went out for a walk by herself, and she met an ugly old woman. The old woman was just like a witch: but she was a nice kind of witch, not the cantankerous sort. She said, “Why do you look so doleful, pretty lady?” “It’s no use my telling you,” answered the *Queen*, “nobody in the world can help me.” “Oh, you never know,” said the old woman. “Just you let me hear what your trouble is, and maybe I can put things right.”

“My dear woman, how can you?” said the *Queen*: and she told her, “The *King* and I have no children: that’s why I am so distressed.” “Well, you needn’t be,” said the old witch. “I can set that right in a twinkling, if only you will do exactly as I tell you. Listen. To-night, at sunset, take a little drinking-cup with two ears” (that is, handles), “and put it bottom upwards on the ground in the north-west corner of your garden. Then go and lift it up to-morrow morning at sunrise, and you will find two roses underneath it, one red and one white. If you eat the red rose, a little boy will be born to you: if you eat the white rose, a little girl will be sent. But, whatever you do, you mustn’t eat *both* the roses, or you’ll be sorry, — that I warn you! Only one: remember that!” “Thank you a thousand times,” said the *Queen*, “this is good news indeed!” And she wanted to give the old woman her gold ring; but the old woman wouldn’t take it.

So the *Queen* went home and did as she had been told: and next morning at sunrise she stole out into the garden and lifted up the little drinking-cup. She *was* surprised, for indeed she had hardly expected to see anything. But there were the two roses underneath it, one red and one white. And now she was dreadfully puzzled, for she did not know which to choose. “If I choose the red one,” she thought, “and I have a little boy, he may grow up and go to the wars and get killed. But if I choose the white one, and have a little girl, she will stay at home awhile with us, but later on she will get married and go away and leave us. So, whichever it is, we may be left with no child after all.”

However, at last she decided on the white rose, and she ate it. And it tasted so sweet, that she took and ate the red one too: without ever remembering the old woman’s solemn warning.

Some time after this, the *King* went away to the wars: and while he was still away, the *Queen* became the mother of twins. One was a lovely baby-boy, and the other was a *Lindworm,* or Serpent. She was terribly frightened when she saw the *Lindworm,* but he wriggled away out of the room, and nobody seemed to have seen him but herself: so that she thought it must have been a dream. The baby *Prince* was so beautiful and so healthy, the *Queen* was full of joy: and likewise, as you may suppose, was the *King* when he came home and found his son and heir. Not a word was said by anyone about the *Lindworm*: only the *Queen* thought about it now and then.

Many days and years passed by, and the baby grew up into a handsome young *Prince,* and it was time that he got married. The *King* sent him off to visit foreign kingdoms, in the Royal coach, with six white horses, to look for a Princess grand enough to be his wife. But at the very first cross-roads, the way was stopped by an enormous *Lindworm*, enough to frighten the bravest. He lay in the middle of the road with a great wide open mouth, and cried, “A bride for me before a bride for you!” Then the *Prince* made the coach turn round and try another road: but it was all no use. For, at the first cross-ways, there lay the *Lindworm* again, crying out, “A bride for me before a bride for you!” So the *Prince* had to turn back home again to the Castle, and give up his visits to the foreign kingdoms. And his mother, the *Queen*, had to confess that what the *Lindworm* said was true. For he was really the eldest of her twins: and so he ought to have a wedding first.

There seemed nothing for it but to find a bride for the *Lindworm*, if his younger brother, the *Prince*, were to be married at all. So the *King* wrote to a distant country, and asked for a Princess to marry his son (but, of course, he didn’t say which son), and presently a Princess arrived. But she wasn’t allowed to see her bridegroom until he stood by her side in the great hall and was married to her, and then, of course, it was too late for her to say she wouldn’t have him. But next morning the Princess had disappeared. The *Lindworm* lay sleeping all alone: and it was quite plain that he had eaten her.

A little while after, the Prince decided that he might now go journeying again in search of a *Princess*. And off he drove in the Royal chariot with the six white horses. But at the first cross-ways, there lay the *Lindworm*, crying with his great wide open mouth, “A bride for me before a bride for you!” So the carriage tried another road, and the same thing happened, and they had to turn back again this time, just as formerly. And the King wrote to several foreign countries, to know if anyone would marry his son. At last another *Princess* arrived, this time from a very far distant land. And, of course, she was not allowed to see her future husband before the wedding took place, — and then, lo and behold! it was the *Lindworm* who stood at her side. And next morning the Princess had disappeared: and the

Lindworm lay sleeping all alone; and it was quite clear that he had eaten her.

By and by the *Prince* started on his quest for the third time: and at the first cross-roads there lay the *Lindworm* with his great wide open mouth, demanding a bride as before. And the *Prince* went straight back to the castle, and told the *King*: "You must find another bride for my elder brother."

"I don't know where I am to find her," said the *King*, "I have already made enemies of two great Kings who sent their daughters here as brides: and I have no notion how I can obtain a third lady. People are beginning to say strange things, and I am sure no *Princess* will dare to come."

Now, down in a little cottage near a wood, there lived the *King's* shepherd, an old man with his only daughter. And the *King* came one day and said to him, "Will you give me your daughter to marry my son the *Lindworm*? And I will make you rich for the rest of your life." — "No, sire," said the shepherd, "that I cannot do. She is my only child, and I want her to take care of me when I am old. Besides, if the *Lindworm* would not spare two beautiful Princesses, he won't spare her either. He will just gobble her up: and she is much too good for such a fate."

But the *King* wouldn't take "No" for an answer: and at last the old man had to give in.

Well, when the old shepherd told his daughter that she was to be *Prince Lindworm's* bride, she was utterly in despair. She went out into the woods, crying and wringing her hands and bewailing her hard fate. And while she wandered to and fro, an old witch-woman suddenly appeared out of a big hollow oak-tree, and asked her, "Why do you look so doleful, pretty lass?" The shepherd-girl said, "It's no use my telling you, for nobody in the world can help me." — "Oh, you never know," said the old woman. "Just you let me hear what your trouble is, and maybe I can put things right." — "Ah, how can you?" said the girl, "For I am to be married to the *King's* eldest son, who is a *Lindworm*. He has already married two beautiful Princesses, and devoured them: and he will eat me too! No wonder I am distressed.”

“Well, you needn’t be,” said the witch-woman. “All that can be set right in a twinkling: if only you will do exactly as I tell you.” So the girl said she would.

“Listen, then,” said the old woman. “After the marriage ceremony is over, and when it is time for you to retire to rest, you must ask to be dressed in ten snow-white shifts. And you must then ask for a tub full of lye,” (that is, washing water prepared with wood-ashes) “and a tub full of fresh milk, and as many whips as a boy can carry in his arms, — and have all these brought into your bed-chamber. Then, when the *Lindworm* tells you to shed a shift, do you bid him slough a skin. And when all his skins are off, you must dip the whips in the lye and whip him; next, you must wash him in the fresh milk; and, lastly, you must take him and hold him in your arms, if it’s only for one moment.”

“The last is the worst notion — ugh!” said the shepherd’s daughter, and she shuddered at the thought of holding the cold, slimy, scaly *Lindworm*.

“Do just as I have said, and all will go well,” said the old woman. Then she disappeared again in the oak-tree.

When the wedding-day arrived, the girl was fetched in the Royal chariot with the six white horses, and taken to the castle to be decked as a bride. And she asked for ten snow-white shifts to be brought her, and the tub of lye, and the tub of milk, and as many whips as a boy could carry in his arms. The ladies and courtiers in the castle thought, of course, that this was some bit of peasant superstition, all rubbish and nonsense. But the *King* said, “Let her have whatever she asks for.” She was then arrayed in the most wonderful robes, and looked the loveliest of brides. She was led to the hall where the wedding ceremony was to take place, and she saw the *Lindworm* for the first time as he came in and stood by her side. So they were married, and a great wedding-feast was held, a banquet fit for the son of a king.

When the feast was over, the bridegroom and bride were conducted to their apartment, with music, and torches, and a great procession. As soon as the door was shut, the *Lindworm* turned to her and said, “Fair maiden, shed a shift!” The shepherd’s daughter answered him, “*Prince Lindworm*, slough a skin!” — “No one has ever dared tell me to do that before!” said he. — “But I command you to do it now!” said she. Then he began to moan and wriggle: and in a few minutes a long snake-skin lay upon the floor beside him. The girl drew off her first shift, and spread it on top of the skin.

The *Lindworm* said again to her, “Fair maiden, shed a shift.”

The shepherd’s daughter answered him, “*Prince Lindworm*, slough a skin.”

“No one has ever dared tell me to do that before,” said he. — “But I command you to do it now,” said she. Then with groans and moans he cast off the second skin: and she covered it with her second shift. The *Lindworm* said for the third time, “Fair maiden, shed a shift.” The shepherd’s daughter answered him again, “*Prince Lindworm*, slough a skin.” — “No one has ever dared tell me to do that before,” said he, and his little eyes rolled furiously. But the girl was not afraid, and once more she commanded him to do as she bade.

And so this went on until nine *Lindworm* skins were lying on the floor, each of them covered with a snow-white shift. And there was nothing left of the *Lindworm* but a huge thick mass, most horrible to see. Then the girl seized the whips, dipped them in the lye, and whipped him as hard as ever she could. Next, she bathed him all over in the fresh milk. Lastly, she dragged him on to the bed and put her arms round him. And she fell fast asleep that very moment.

Next morning very early, the *King* and the courtiers came and peeped in through the keyhole. They wanted to know what had become of the girl, but none of them dared enter the room. However, in the end, growing bolder, they opened the door a tiny bit. And there they saw the girl, all fresh and rosy, and beside her lay — no *Lindworm*, but the handsomest prince that any one could wish to see.

The *King* ran out and fetched the *Queen*: and after that, there were such rejoicings in the castle as never were known before or since. The wedding took place all over again, much finer than the first, with festivals and banquets and merrymakings for days and weeks. No bride was ever so beloved by a King and Queen as this peasant maid from the shepherd's cottage. There was no end to their love and their kindness towards her: because, by her sense and her calmness and her courage, she had saved their son, *Prince Lindworm*.

4

THE LASSIE AND HER GODMOTHER

Once on a time a poor couple lived far, far away in a great wood. The wife was brought to bed, and had a pretty girl, but they were so poor they did not know how to get the babe christened, for they had no money to pay the parson's fees. So one day the father went out to see if he could find any one who was willing to stand for the child and pay the fees; but though he walked about the whole day from one house to another, and though all said they were willing enough to stand, no one thought himself bound to pay the fees. Now, when he was going home again, a lovely lady met him, dressed so fine, and she looked so thoroughly good and kind; she offered to get the babe christened, but after that, she said, she must keep it for her own. The husband answered, he must first ask his wife what she wished to do; but when he got home and told his story, the wife said, right out, "No!"

Next day the man went out again, but no one would stand if they had to pay the fees; and though he begged and prayed, he could get no help. And again as he went home, towards evening the same lovely lady met him, who looked so sweet and good, and she made him the same offer. So he told his wife again how he had fared, and this time she said, if he couldn't get any one to stand for his babe next day, they must just let the lady have her way, since she seemed so kind and good.

The third day, the man went about, but he couldn't get any one to stand; and so when, towards evening, he met the kind lady again, he gave his word she should have the babe if she would only get it christened at the font. So next morning she came to the place where the man lived, followed by two men to stand godfathers, took the babe and carried it to church, and there it was christened. After that she took it to her own house, and there the little girl lived with her several years, and her *Foster-mother* was always kind and friendly to her.

Now, when the *Lassie* had grown to be big enough to know right and wrong, her *Foster-mother* got ready to go on a journey.

"You have my leave," she said, "to go all over the house, except those rooms which I shew you;" and when she had said that, away she went.

But the *Lassie* could not forbear just to open one of the doors a little bit, when — Pop! out flew a Star.

When her *Foster-mother* came back, she was very vexed to find that the star had flown out, and she got very angry with her *Foster-daughter*, and threatened to send her away; but the child cried and begged so hard that she got leave to stay.

Now, after a while, the *Foster-mother* had to go on another journey; and, before she went, she forbade the *Lassie* to go into those two rooms into which she had never been. She promised to beware; but when she was left alone, she began to think and to wonder what there could be in the second room, and at last she could not help setting the door a little ajar, just to peep in, when — Pop! out flew the Moon.

When her *Foster-mother* came home and found the moon let out, she was very downcast, and said to the *Lassie* she must go away, she could not stay with her any longer. But the *Lassie* wept so bitterly, and prayed so heartily for forgiveness, that this time, too, she got leave to stay.

Some time after, the *Foster-mother* had to go away again, and she charged the Lassie, who by this time was half grown up, most earnestly that she mustn't try to go into, or to peep into, the third room. But when her *Foster-mother* had been gone some time, and the *Lassie* was weary of walking about alone, all at once she thought, "Dear me, what fun it would be just to peep a little into that third room." Then she thought she mustn't do it for her *Foster-mother's* sake; but when the bad thought came the second time she could hold out no longer; come what might, she must and would look into the room; so she just opened the door a tiny bit, when — POP! out flew the Sun.

But when her *Foster-mother* came back and saw that the sun had flown away, she was cut to the heart, and said, "Now, there was no help for it, the *Lassie* must and should go away; she couldn't hear of her staying any longer." Now the *Lassie* cried her eyes out, and begged and prayed so prettily; but it was all no good.

"Nay! but I must punish you!" said her *Foster-mother*; "but you may have your choice, either to be the loveliest woman in the world, and not to be able to speak, or to keep your speech, and to be the ugliest of all women; but away from me you must go."

And the *Lassie* said, "I would sooner be lovely." So she became all at once wondrous fair; but from that day forth she was dumb.

So, when she went away from her *Foster-mother*, she walked and wandered through a great, great wood; but the farther she went, the farther off the end seemed to be. So, when the evening came on, she clomb up into a tall tree, which grew over a spring, and there she made herself up to sleep that night. Close by lay a castle, and from that castle came early every morning a maid to draw water to make the Prince's tea, from the spring over which the *Lassie* was sitting. So the maid looked down into the spring, saw the lovely face in the water, and thought it was her own; then she flung away the pitcher, and ran home; and, when she got there, she tossed up her head and said, “If I’m so pretty, I’m far too good to go and fetch water.”

So another maid had to go for the water, but the same thing happened to her; she went back and said she was far too pretty and too good to fetch water from the spring for the Prince. Then the Prince went himself, for he had a mind to see what all this could mean. So, when he reached the spring, he too saw the image in the water; but he looked up at once, and became aware of the lovely *Lassie* who sate there up in the tree. Then he coaxed her down and took her home; and at last made up his mind to have her for his queen, because she was so lovely; but his mother, who was still alive, was against it.

“She can’t speak,” she said, “and maybe she’s a wicked witch.”

But the Prince could not be content till he got her. So after they had lived together a while, the *Lassie* was to have a child, and when the child came to be born, the Prince set a strong watch about her; but at the birth one and all fell into a deep sleep, and her *Foster-mother* came, cut the babe on its little finger, and smeared the queen’s mouth with the blood; and said:

“Now you shall be as grieved as I was when you let out the star;” and with these words she carried off the babe.

But when those who were on the watch woke, they thought the queen had eaten her own child, and the old queen was all for burning her alive, but the Prince was so fond of her that at last he begged her off, but he had hard work to set her free.

So the next time the young queen was to have a child, twice as strong a watch was set as the first time, but the same thing happened over again, only this time her *Foster-mother* said:

“Now you shall be as grieved as I was when you let the moon out.”

And the queen begged and prayed, and wept; for when her *Foster-mother* was there, she could speak — but it was all no good.

And now the old queen said she must be burnt, but the Prince found means to beg her off. But when the third child was to be born, a watch was set three times as strong as the first, but just the same thing happened. Her *Foster-mother* came while the watch slept, took the babe, and cut its little finger, and smeared the queen's mouth with the blood, telling her now she should be as grieved as she had been when the *Lassie* let out the sun.

And now the Prince could not save her any longer. She must and should be burnt. But just as they were leading her to the stake, all at once they saw her *Foster-mother*, who came with all three children — two she led by the hand, and the third she had on her arm; and so she went up to the young queen and said:

"Here are your children; now you shall have them again. I am the Virgin Mary, and so grieved as you have been, so grieved was I when you let out sun, and moon, and star. Now you have been punished for what you did, and henceforth you shall have your speech."

How glad the Queen and Prince now were, all may easily think, but no one can tell. After that they were always happy; and from that day even the Prince's mother was very fond of the young queen.

5

THE HUSBAND WHO WAS TO MIND THE HOUSE

Once on a time there was a man, so surly and cross, he never thought his *Wife* did anything right in the house. So, one evening, in haymaking time, he came home, scolding and swearing, and showing his teeth and making a dust.

“Dear love, don’t be so angry; there’s a good man,” said his goody; “to-morrow let’s change our work. I’ll go out with the mowers and mow, and you shall mind the house at home.”

Yes! the *Husband* thought that would do very well. He was quite willing, he said.

So, early next morning, his goody took a scythe over her neck, and went out into the hayfield with the mowers, and began to mow; but the man was to mind the house, and do the work at home.

First of all, he wanted to churn the butter; but when he had churned a while, he got thirsty, and went down to the cellar to tap a barrel of ale. So, just when he had knocked in the bung, and was putting the tap into the cask, he heard overhead the pig come into the kitchen. Then off he ran up the cellar steps, with the tap in his hand, as fast as he could, to look after the pig, lest it should upset the churn; but when he got up, and saw the pig had already knocked the churn over, and stood there, routing and grunting amongst the cream which was running all over the floor, he got so wild with rage that he quite forgot the ale-barrel, and ran at the pig as hard as he could. He caught it, too, just as it ran out of doors, and gave it such a kick, that piggy lay for dead on the spot. Then all at once he remembered he had the tap in his hand; but when he got down to the cellar, every drop of ale had run out of the cask.

Then he went into the dairy and found enough cream left to fill the churn again, and so he began to churn, for butter they must have at dinner. When he had churned a bit, he remembered that their milking cow was still shut up in the byre, and hadn't had a bit to eat or a drop to drink all the morning, though the sun was high. Then all at once he thought 'twas too far to take her down to the meadow, so he'd just get her up on the house top — for the house, you must know, was thatched with sods, and a fine crop of grass was growing there. Now the house lay close up against a steep down, and he thought if he laid a plank across to the thatch at the back he'd easily get the cow up.

But still he couldn't leave the churn, for there was his little babe crawling about on the floor, and "if I leave it," he thought, "the child is safe to upset it." So he took the churn on his back, and went out with it; but then he thought he'd better first water the cow before he turned her out on the thatch; so he took up a bucket to draw water out of the well; but, as he stooped down at the well's brink, all the cream ran out of the churn over his shoulders, and so down into the well.

Now it was near dinner-time, and he hadn't even got the butter yet; so he thought he'd best boil the porridge, and filled the pot with water and hung it over the fire. When he had done that, he thought the cow might perhaps fall off the thatch and break her legs or her neck. So he got up on the house to tie her up. One end of the rope he made fast to the cow's neck and the other he slipped down the chimney and tied round his own thigh; and he had to make haste, for the water now began to boil in the pot, and he had still to grind the oatmeal.

So he began to grind away; but while he was hard at it, down fell the cow off the house-top after all, and as she fell, she dragged the man up the chimney by the rope. There he stuck fast; and as for the cow, she hung half-way down the wall, swinging between heaven and earth, for she could neither get down nor up.

And now the goody had waited seven lengths and seven breadths for her *Husband* to come and call them home to dinner; but never a call they had. At last she thought she'd waited long enough, and went home. But when she got there and saw the cow hanging in such an ugly place, she ran up and cut the rope in two with her scythe. But, as she did this, down came her *Husband* out of the chimney; and so, when his old dame came inside the kitchen, there she found him standing on his head in the porridge pot.

6

THE LAD WHO WENT TO THE NORTH WIND

Once on a time there was an old widow who had one son; and as she was poorly and weak, her son had to go up into the safe to fetch meal for cooking; but when he got outside the safe, and was just going down the steps, there came the *North Wind* puffing and blowing, caught up the meal, and so away with it through the air. Then the *Lad* went back into the safe for more; but when he came out again on the steps, if the *North Wind* didn't come again and carry off the meal with a puff: and, more than that, he did so the third time. At this the *Lad* got very angry; and as he thought it hard that the *North Wind* should behave so, he thought he'd just look him up, and ask him to give up his meal.

So off he went, but the way was long, and he walked and walked; but at last he came to the *North Wind's* house.

"Good day!" said the *Lad*, "and thank you for coming to see us yesterday."

"Good Day!" answered the *North Wind*, for his voice was loud and gruff, "and thanks for coming to see me. What do you Want?"

“Oh!” answered the *Lad*, “I only wished to ask you to be so good as to let me have back that meal you took from me on the safe steps, for we haven’t much to live on; and if you’re to go on snapping up the morsel we have, there’ll be nothing for it but to starve.”

“I haven’t got your meal,” said the *North Wind*; “but if you are in such need, I’ll give you a cloth which will get you everything you want, if you only say, ‘Cloth, spread yourself, and serve up all kinds of good dishes!’”

With this the *Lad* was well content. But, as the way was so long he couldn’t get home in one day, so he turned into an inn on the way; and when they were going to sit down to supper he laid the cloth on a table which stood in the corner, and said:

“Cloth, spread yourself, and serve up all kinds of good dishes.”

He had scarce said so before the cloth did as it was bid; and all who stood by thought it a fine thing, but most of all the landlady. So, when all were fast asleep at dead of night, she took the *Lad’s* cloth, and put another in its stead, just like the one he had got from the *North Wind*, but which couldn’t so much as serve up a bit of dry bread.

So, when the *Lad* woke, he took his cloth and went off with it, and that day he got home to his mother.

“Now,” said he, “I’ve been to the *North Wind’s* house, and a good fellow he is, for he gave me this cloth, and when I only say to it, ‘Cloth, spread yourself, and serve up all kinds of good dishes,’ I get any sort of food I please.”

“All very true, I daresay,” said his mother; “but seeing is believing, and I shan’t believe it till I see it.”

So the *Lad* made haste, drew out a table, laid the cloth on it, and said:

“Cloth, spread yourself, and serve up all kinds of good dishes.”

But never a bit of dry bread did the cloth serve up.

“Well,” said the *Lad* “there’s no help for it but to go to the *North Wind* again;” and away he went.

So he came to where the *North Wind* lived late in the afternoon.

“Good evening!” said the *Lad*.

“Good evening!” said the *North Wind*.

“I want my rights for that meal of ours which you took,” said the *Lad*; “for, as for that cloth I got, it isn’t worth a penny.”

“I’ve got no meal,” said the *North Wind*; “but yonder you have a ram which coins nothing but golden ducats as soon as you say to it: ‘Ram, ram! make money!’”

So the *Lad* thought this a fine thing; but as it was too far to get home that day, he turned in for the night to the same inn where he had slept before.

Before he called for anything, he tried the truth of what the *North Wind* had said of the ram, and found it all right; but, when the landlord saw that, he thought it was a famous ram, and, when the *Lad* had fallen asleep, he took another which couldn’t coin gold ducats, and changed the two.

Next morning off went the *Lad*; and when he got home to his mother, he said:

“After all, the *North Wind* is a jolly fellow; for now he has given me a ram which can coin golden ducats if I only say: ‘Ram, ram! make money!’”

“All very true, I daresay,” said his mother; “but I shan’t believe any such stuff until I see the ducats made.”

“Ram, ram! make money!” said the *Lad*; but if the ram made anything, it wasn’t money.

So the *Lad* went back again to the *North Wind*, and blew him up, and said the ram was worth nothing, and he must have his rights for the meal.

“Well!” said the *North Wind*; “I’ve nothing else to give you but that old stick in the corner yonder; but its a stick of that kind that if you say: ‘Stick, stick! lay on!’ it lays on till you say: ‘Stick, stick! now stop!’”

So, as the way was long, the *Lad* turned in this night too to the landlord; but as he could pretty well guess how things stood as to the cloth and the ram, he lay down at once on the bench and began to snore, as if he were asleep.

Now the landlord, who easily saw that the stick must be worth something, hunted up one which was like it, and when he heard the lad snore, was going to change the two; but, just as the landlord was about to take it, the *Lad* bawled out:

“Stick, stick! lay on!”

So the stick began to beat the landlord, till he jumped over chairs, and tables, and benches, and yelled and roared:

“Oh my! oh my! bid the stick be still, else it will beat me to death, and you shall have back both your cloth and your ram.”

When the *Lad* thought the landlord had got enough, he said:

“Stick, stick! now stop!”

Then he took the cloth and put it into his pocket, and went home with his stick in his hand, leading the ram by a cord round its horns; and so he got his rights for the meal he had lost.

7

THE THREE PRINCESSES OF WHITELAND

ONCE ON A TIME there was a fisherman who lived close by a palace, and fished for the *King's* table. One day when he was out fishing he just caught nothing. Do what he would — however he tried with bait and angle — there was never a sprat on his hook. But when the day was far spent a head bobbed up out of the water, and said:

"If I may have what your wife bears under her girdle, you shall catch fish enough."

So the man answered boldly, "Yes;" for he did not know that his wife was going to have a child. After that, as was like enough, he caught plenty of fish of all kinds. But when he got home at night and told his story, how he had got all that fish, his wife fell a-weeping and moaning, and was beside herself for the promise which her husband had made, for she said, "I bear a babe under my girdle."

Well, the story soon spread, and came up to the castle; and when the *King* heard the woman's grief and its cause, he sent down to say he would take care of the child, and see if he couldn't save it.

So the months went on and on, and when her time came the fisher's wife had a boy; so the king took it at once, and brought it up as his own son, until the lad grew up. Then he begged leave one day to go out fishing with his father; he had such a mind to go, he said. At first the *King* wouldn't hear of it, but at last the lad had his way, and went. So he and his father were out the whole day, and all went right and well till they landed at night. Then the lad remembered he had left his handkerchief, and went to look for it; but as soon as ever he got into the boat, it began to move off with him at such speed that the water roared under the bow, and all the lad could do in rowing against it with the oars was no use; so he went and went the whole night, and at last he came to a white strand, far far away.

There he went ashore, and when he had walked about a bit, an old, old man met him, with a long white beard.

"What's the name of this land?" asked the lad.

"Whiteland," said the man, who went on to ask the lad whence he came, and what he was going to do. So the lad told him all.

"Aye, aye!" said the man; "now when you have walked a little farther along the strand here, you'll come to three *Princesses,* whom you will see standing in the earth up to their necks, with only their heads out. Then the first — she is the eldest — will call out and beg you so prettily to come and help her; and the second will do the same; to neither of these shall you go; make haste past them, as if you neither saw nor heard anything. But the third you shall go to, and do what she asks. If you do this, you'll have good luck — that's all."

When the lad came to the first *Princess,* she called out to him, and begged him so prettily to come to her, but he passed on as though he saw her not. In the same way he passed by the second; but to the third he went straight up.

"If you'll do what I bid you," she said, "you may have which of us you please."

“Yes;” he was willing enough; so she told him how three *Trolls* had set them down in the earth there; but before they had lived in the castle up among the trees.

“Now,” she said, “you must go into that castle, and let the *Trolls* whip you each one night for each of us. If you can bear that, you’ll set us free.”

Well, the lad said he was ready to try.

“When you go in,” the *Princess* went on to say, “you’ll see two lions standing at the gate; but if you’ll only go right in the middle between them they’ll do you no harm. Then go straight on into a little dark room, and make your bed. Then the *Troll* will come to whip you; but if you take the flask which hangs on the wall, and rub yourself with the ointment that’s in it, wherever his lash falls, you’ll be as sound as ever. Then grasp the sword that hangs by the side of the flask and strike the *Troll* dead.”

Yes, he did as the *Princess* told him; he passed in the midst between the lions, as if he hadn’t seen them, and went straight into the little room, and there he lay down to sleep. The first night there came a *Troll* with three heads and three rods, and whipped the lad soundly; but he stood it till the *Troll* was done; then he took the flask and rubbed himself, and grasped the sword and slew the *Troll*.

So, when he went out next morning, the *Princesses* stood out of the earth up to their waists.

The next night ‘twas the same story over again, only this time the *Troll* had six heads and six rods, and he whipped him far worse than the first; but when he went out next morning, the *Princesses* stood out of the earth as far as the knee.

The third night there came a *Troll* that had nine heads and nine rods, and he whipped and flogged the lad so long that he fainted away; then the *Troll* took him up and dashed him against the wall; but the shock brought down the flask, which fell on the lad, burst, and spilled the ointment all over him, and so he became as strong and sound as ever again. Then he wasn’t slow;

he grasped the sword and slew the *Troll*; and next morning when he went out of the castle the *Princesses* stood before him with all their bodies out of the earth. So he took the youngest for his *Queen*, and lived well and happily with her for some time.

At last he began to long to go home for a little to see his parents. His *Queen* did not like this; but at last his heart was so set on it, and he longed and longed so much, there was no holding him back, so she said:

“One thing you must promise me. This — only to do what your father begs you to do, and not what mother wishes;” and that he promised.

Then she gave him a ring, which was of that kind that any one who wore it might wish two wishes. So he wished himself home, and when he got home his parents could not wonder enough what a grand man their son had become.

Now, when he had been at home some days, his mother wished him to go up to the palace and show the *King* what a fine fellow he had come to be. But his father said:

“No! don’t let him do that; if he does, we shan’t have any more joy of him this time.”

But it was no good, the mother begged and prayed so long that at last he went. So when he got up to the palace he was far braver, both in clothes and array, than the other king, who didn’t quite like this, and at last he said:

“All very fine; but here you can see my *Queen*, what like she is, but I can’t see yours: that I can’t. Do you know, I scarce think she’s so good-looking as mine.”

“Would to Heaven,” said the young *King*, “she were standing here, then you’d see what she was like.” And that instant there she stood before them.

But she was very woeful, and said to him:

“Why did you not mind what I told you; and why did you not listen to what your father said? Now, I must away home, and as for you, you have had both your wishes.”

With that she knitted a ring among his hair with her name on it, and wished herself home, and was off.

Then the young *King* was cut to the heart, and went, day out day in, thinking and thinking how he should get back to his *Queen*. “I’ll just try,” he thought, “if I can’t learn where Whiteland lies;” and so he went out into the world to ask. So when he had gone a good way, he came to a high hill, and there he met one who was lord over all the beasts of the wood, for they all came home to him when he blew his horn; so the *King* asked if he knew where Whiteland was.

“No, I don’t,” said he, “but I’ll ask my beasts.” Then he blew his horn and called them, and asked if any of them knew where Whiteland lay. But there was no beast that knew.

So the man gave him a pair of snow-shoes.

“When you get on these,” he said, “you’ll come to my brother, who lives hundreds of miles off; he is lord over all the birds of the air. Ask him. When you reach his house, just turn the shoes so that the toes point this way, and they’ll come home of themselves.” So when the *King* reached the house, he turned the shoes as the lord of the beasts had said, and away they went home of themselves.

So he asked again after Whiteland, and the man called all the birds with a blast of his horn, and asked if any of them knew where Whiteland lay; but none of the birds knew. Now, long, long after the rest of the birds came an old eagle, which had been away ten round years, but he couldn’t tell any more than the rest.

“Well, well,” said the man, “I’ll lend you a pair of snow-shoes, and, when you get them on, they’ll carry you to my brother, who lives hundreds of miles off; he’s lord of all the fish in the sea; you’d better ask him. But don’t forget to turn the toes of the shoes this way.”

The *King* was full of thanks, got on the shoes, and when he came to the man who was lord over the fish of the sea, he turned the toes round, and so off they went home like the other pair. After that, he asked again after Whiteland.

So the man called the fish with a blast, but no fish could tell where it lay. At last came an old pike, which they had great work to call home, he was such a way off. So when they asked him he said:

"Know it? I should think I did! I've been cook there ten years, and to-morrow I'm going there again; for now the queen of Whiteland, whose king is away, is going to wed another husband."

"Well!" said the man, "as this is so, I'll give you a bit of advice. Hereabouts, on a moor, stand three brothers, and here they have stood these hundred years, fighting about a hat, a cloak, and a pair of boots. If any one has these three things he can make himself invisible, and wish himself anywhere he pleases. You can tell them you wish to try the things, and, after that, you'll pass judgment between them, whose they shall be."

Yes! the *King* thanked the man, and went and did as he told him.

"What's all this?" he said to the brothers. "Why do you stand here fighting for ever and a day? Just let me try these things, and I'll give judgment whose they shall be."

They were very willing to do this; but, as soon as he had got the hat, cloak, and boots, he said:

"When we meet next time, I'll tell you my judgment," and with these words he wished himself away.

So as he went along up in the air, he came up with the North wind.

"Whither away?" roared the North Wind.

"To Whiteland," said the *King*; and then he told him all that had befallen him.

"Ah," said the North Wind, "you go faster than I — you do; for you can go straight, while I have to puff and blow round every turn and corner. But when you get there, just place yourself on the stairs by the side of the door, and then I'll come storming in, as though I were going to blow down the whole castle. And then when the prince, who is to have your *Queen*, comes out to see what's the matter, just you take him by the collar and pitch him out of doors; then I'll look after him, and see if I can't carry him off."

Well, the *King* did as the North Wind said. He took his stand on the stairs, and when the North Wind came, storming and roaring, and took hold of the castle wall, so that it shook again, the prince came out to see what was the matter. But as soon as ever he came, the *King* caught him by the collar and pitched him out of doors, and then the North Wind caught him up and carried him off. So when there was an end of him, the *King* went into the castle, and at first his *Queen* didn't know him, he was so wan and thin, through wandering so far and being so woeful; but when he shewed her the ring, she was as glad as glad could be; and so the rightful wedding was held, and the fame of it spread far and wide.

8

SORIA MORIA CASTLE

Once on a time there was a poor couple who had a son whose name was *Halvor*. Ever since he was a little boy he would turn his hand to nothing, but just sat there and groped about in the ashes. His father and mother often put him out to learn this trade or that, but *Halvor* could stay nowhere; for, when he had been there a day or two, he ran away from his master, and never stopped till he was sitting again in the ingle, poking about in the cinders.

Well, one day a skipper came, and asked *Halvor* if he hadn’t a mind to be with him, and go to sea, and see strange lands. Yes, *Halvor* would like that very much; so he wasn’t long in getting himself ready.

How long they sailed I’m sure I can’t tell; but the end of it was, they fell into a great storm, and when it was blown over, and it got still again, they couldn’t tell where they were; for they had been driven away to a strange coast, which none of them knew anything about.

Well, as there was just no wind at all, they stayed lying wind-bound there, and *Halvor* asked the skipper’s leave to go on shore and look about him; he would sooner go, he said, than lie there and sleep.

“Do you think now you’re fit to show yourself before folk,” said the skipper, “why, you’ve no clothes but those rags you stand in?”

But *Halvor* stuck to his own, and so at last he got leave, but he was to be sure and come back as soon as ever it began to blow. So off he went and found a lovely land; wherever he came there were fine large flat cornfields and rich meads, but he couldn't catch a glimpse of a living soul. Well, it began to blow, but *Halvor* thought he hadn't seen enough yet, and he wanted to walk a little farther just to see if he couldn't meet any folk. So after a while he came to a broad high road, so smooth and even, you might easily roll an egg along it. *Halvor* followed this, and when evening drew on he saw a great castle ever so far off, from which the sunbeams shone. So as he had now walked the whole day and hadn't taken a bit to eat with him, he was as hungry as a hunter, but still the nearer he came to the castle, the more afraid he got.

In the castle kitchen a great fire was blazing, and *Halvor* went into it, but such a kitchen he had never seen in all his born days. It was so grand and fine; there were vessels of silver and vessels of gold, but still never a living soul. So when *Halvor* had stood there a while and no one came out, he went and opened a door, and there inside sat a *Princess* who span upon a spinning-wheel.

"Nay, nay, now!" she called out, "dare Christian folk come hither? But now you'd best be off about your business, if you don't want the *Troll* to gobble you up; for here lives a *Troll* with three heads."

"All one to me," said the lad, "I'd be just as glad to hear he had four heads beside; I'd like to see what kind of fellow he is. As for going, I won't go at all. I've done no harm; but meat you must get me, for I'm almost starved to death."

When *Halvor* had eaten his fill, the *Princess* told him to try if he could brandish the sword that hung against the wall; no, he couldn't brandish it, he couldn't even lift it up.

"Oh!" said the *Princess*, "now you must go and take a pull of that flask that hangs by its side; that's what the *Troll* does every time he goes out to use the sword.”

So *Halvor* took a pull, and in the twinkling of an eye he could brandish the sword like nothing; and now he thought it high time the *Troll* came; and lo! just then up came the *Troll* puffing and blowing. *Halvor* jumped behind the door.

“Hutetu,” said the *Troll*, as he put his head in at the door, “what a smell of Christian man’s blood!”

“Aye,” said *Halvor*, “you’ll soon know that to your cost,” and with that he hewed off all his heads.

Now the *Princess* was so glad that she was free, she both danced and sang, but then all at once she called her sisters to mind, and so she said:

“Would my sisters were free too!”

“Where are they?” asked *Halvor*.

Well, she told him all about it; one was taken away by a *Troll* to his Castle which lay fifty miles off, and the other by another *Troll* to his Castle which was fifty miles further still.

“But now,” she said, “you must first help me to get this ugly carcass out of the house.”

Yes, *Halvor* was so strong he swept everything away, and made it all clean and tidy in no time. So they had a good and happy time of it, and next morning he set off at peep of grey dawn; he could take no rest by the way, but ran and walked the whole day. When he first saw the Castle he got a little afraid; it was far grander than the first, but here too there wasn’t a living soul to be seen. So *Halvor* went into the kitchen, and didn’t stop there either, but went straight further on into the house.

“Nay, nay,” called out the *Princess*, “dare Christian folk come hither? I don’t know I’m sure how long it is since I came here, but in all that time I haven’t seen a Christian man. ‘Twere best you saw how to get away as fast as you came; for here lives a *Troll* who has six heads.”

“I shan’t go,” said *Halvor*, “if he has six heads besides.”

“He’ll take you up and swallow you down alive,” said the *Princess*.

But it was no good, *Halvor* wouldn’t go; he wasn’t at all afraid of the *Troll*, but meat and drink he must have, for he was half starved after his long journey. Well, he got as much of that as he wished, but then the *Princess* wanted him to be off again.

“No,” said *Halvor*, “I won’t go, I’ve done no harm, and I’ve nothing to be afraid about.”

“He won’t stay to ask that,” said the *Princess*, “for he’ll take you without law or leave; but as you won’t go, just try if you can brandish that sword yonder, which the *Troll* wields in war.”

He couldn’t brandish it, and then the *Princess* said he must take a pull at the flask which hung by its side, and when he had done that he could brandish it.

Just then back came the *Troll*, and he was both stout and big, so that he had to go sideways to get through the door. When the *Troll* got his first head in he called out:

“Hutetu, what a smell of Christian man’s blood!”

But that very moment *Halvor* hewed off his first head, and so on all the rest as they popped in. The *Princess* was overjoyed, but just then she came to think of her sisters, and wished out loud they were free. *Halvor* thought that might easily be done, and wanted to be off at once; but first he had to help the *Princess* to get the *Troll’s* carcass out of the way, and so he could only set out next morning.

It was a long way to the Castle, and he had to walk fast and run hard to reach it in time; but about nightfall he saw the Castle, which was far finer and grander than either of the others. This time he wasn’t the least afraid, but walked straight through the kitchen, and into the Castle. There sat a *Princess* who was so pretty, there was no end to her loveliness. She too like the others told him there hadn’t been Christian folk there ever since she came thither, and bade him go away again, else the *Troll* would swallow him alive, and do you know, she said, he has nine heads.

“Aye, aye,” said *Halvor*, “if he had nine other heads, and nine other heads still, I won’t go away,” and so he stood fast before the stove. The *Princess* kept on begging him so prettily to go away, lest the *Troll* should gobble him up, but *Halvor* said:

“Let him come as soon as he likes.”

So she gave him the *Troll’s* sword, and bade him take a pull at the flask, that he might be able to brandish and wield it.

Just then back came the *Troll* puffing and blowing and tearing along. He was far bigger and stouter than the other two, and he too had to go on one side to get through the door. So when he got his first head in, he said as the others had said:

“Hutetu, what a smell of Christian man’s blood!”

That very moment *Halvor* hewed off the first head and then all the rest; but the last was the toughest of them all, and it was the hardest bit of work *Halvor* had to do, to get it hewn off, although he knew very well he had strength enough to do it.

So all the *Princesses* came together to that Castle, which was called *Soria Moria Castle*, and they were glad and happy as they had never been in all their lives before, and they all were fond of *Halvor* and *Halvor* of them, and he might choose the one he liked best for his bride; but the youngest was fondest of him of all the three.

But there after a while, *Halvor* went about, and was so strange and dull and silent. Then the Princesses asked him what he lacked, and if he didn’t like to live with them any longer? Yes, he did, for they had enough and to spare, and he was well off in every way, but still somehow or other he did so long to go home, for his father and mother were alive, and them he had such a great wish to see.

Well, they thought that might be done easily enough.

“You shall go thither and come back hither, safe and unscathed, if you will only follow our advice,” said the *Princesses*.

Yes, he’d be sure to mind all they said. So they dressed him up till he was as grand as a king’s son, and then they set a ring on his finger, and that was such a ring, he could wish himself thither and hither with it; but they told him to be sure and not take it off, and not to name their names, for there would be an end of all his bravery, and then he’d never see them more.

“If I only stood at home I’d be glad,” said *Halvor*; and it was done as he had wished. Then stood *Halvor* at his father’s cottage door before he knew a word about it. Now it was about dusk at even, and so, when they saw such a grand stately lord walk in, the old couple got so afraid they began to bow and scrape. Then *Halvor* asked if he couldn’t stay there, and have a lodging there that night. No; that he couldn’t.

“We can’t do it at all,” they said, “for we haven’t this thing or that thing which such a lord is used to have; ‘twere best your lordship went up to the farm, no long way off, for you can see the chimneys, and there they have lots of everything.”

Halvor wouldn’t hear of it — he wanted to stop; but the old couple stuck to their own, that he had better go to the farmer’s; there he would get both meat and drink; as for them, they hadn’t even a chair to offer him to sit down on.

“No,” said *Halvor*, “I won’t go up there till to-morrow early, but let me just stay here to-night; worst come to the worst, I can sit in the chimney corner.”

Well, they couldn’t say anything against that; so *Halvor* sat down by the ingle, and began to poke about in the ashes, just as he used to do when he lay at home in old days, and stretched his lazy bones.

Well, they chattered and talked about many things; and they told *Halvor* about this thing and that; and so he asked them if they had never had any children.

Yes, yes, they had once a lad whose name was *Halvor*, but they didn't know whither he had wandered; they couldn't even tell whether he were dead or alive.

"Couldn't it be me, now?" said *Halvor*.

"Let me see; I could tell him well enough," said the old wife, and rose up. "Our *Halvor* was so lazy and dull, he never did a thing; and besides, he was so ragged, that one tatter took hold of the next tatter on him. No; there never was the making of such a fine fellow in him as you are, master."

A little while after the old wife went to the hearth to poke up the fire, and when the blaze fell on *Halvor's* face, just as when he was at home of old poking about in the ashes, she knew him at once.

"Ah! but it is you after all, *Halvor*?" she cried; and then there was such joy for the old couple, there was no end to it; and he was forced to tell how he had fared, and the old dame was so fond and proud of him, nothing would do but he must go up at once to the farmer's, and show himself to the lassies, who had always looked down on him. And off she went first, and *Halvor* followed after. So, when she got up there, she told them all how *Halvor* had come home again, and now they should only just see how grand he was, for, said she, "he looks like nothing but a King's son."

"All very fine," said the lassies, and tossed up their heads. "We'll be bound he's just the same beggarly ragged boy he always was."

Just then in walked *Halvor*, and then the lassies were all so taken aback, they forgot their sarks in the ingle, where they were sitting darning their clothes, and ran out in their smocks. Well, when they were got back again, they were so shamefaced they scarce dared look at *Halvor*, towards whom they had always been proud and haughty.

"Aye, aye," said *Halvor*, "you always thought yourselves so pretty and neat, no one could come near you; but now you should just see the eldest *Princess* I have set free; against her you look just like milkmaids, and the midmost is prettier still; but the youngest, who is my sweetheart, she's fairer than both sun and moon. Would to Heaven they were only here," said *Halvor*, "then you'd see what you would see."

He had scarce uttered these words before there they stood, but then he felt so sorry, for now what they had said came into his mind. Up at the farm there was a great feast got ready for the *Princesses*, and much was made of them, but they wouldn't stop there.

"No, we want to go down to your father and mother," they said to *Halvor*; "and so we'll go out now and look about us."

So he went down with them, and they came to a great lake just outside the farm. Close by the water was such a lovely green bank; here the *Princesses* said they would sit and rest a while; they thought it so sweet to sit down and look over the water.

So they sat down there, and when they had sat a while the youngest *Princess* said:

"I may as well comb your hair a little, *Halvor*."

Well, *Halvor* laid his head on her lap, and she combed his bonny locks, and it wasn't long before *Halvor* fell fast asleep. Then she took the ring from his finger, and put another in its stead; and she said:

"Now hold me all together! and now would we were all in *Soria Moria Castle*."

So when *Halvor* woke up, he could very well tell that he had lost the *Princesses*, and began to weep and wail; and he was so downcast, they couldn't comfort him at all. In spite of all his father and mother said, he wouldn't stop there, but took farewell of them, and said he was safe not to see them again; for if he couldn't find the *Princesses* again, he thought it not worth while to live.

Well, he had still about sixty pounds left, so he put them into his pocket, and set out on his way. So, when he had walked a while, he met a man with a tidy horse, and he wanted to buy it, and began to chaffer with the man.

“Aye,” said the man, “to tell the truth, I never thought of selling him; but if we could strike a bargain perhaps — “

“What do you want for him?” asked *Halvor*.

“I didn’t give much for him, nor is he worth much; he’s a brave horse to ride, but he can’t draw at all; still he’s strong enough to carry your knapsack and you too, turn and turn about,” said the man.

At last they agreed on the price, and *Halvor* laid the knapsack on him, and so he walked a bit, and rode a bit, turn and turn about. At night he came to a green plain where stood a great tree, at the roots of which he sat down. There he let the horse loose, but he didn’t lie down to sleep, but opened his knapsack and took a meal. At peep of day off he set again, for he could take no rest. So he rode and walked and walked and rode the whole day through the wide wood, where there were so many green spots and glades that shone so bright and lovely between the trees. He didn’t know at all where he was or whither he was going, but he gave himself no more time to rest than when his horse cropped a bit of grass, and he took a snack out of his knapsack when they came to one of those green glades. So he went on walking and riding by turns, and as for the wood there seemed to be no end to it.

But at dusk the next day he saw a light gleaming away through the trees.

“Would there were folk hereaway,” thought *Halvor*, “that I might warm myself a bit and get a morsel to keep body and soul together.”

When he got up to it he saw the light came from a wretched little hut, and through the window he saw an old old, couple inside. They were as grey-headed as a pair of doves, and the old wife had such a nose! why, it was so long she used it for a poker to stir the fire as she sat in the ingle.

“Good evening,” said *Halvor*.

“Good evening,” said the old wife.

“But what errand can you have in coming hither?” she went on, “for no Christian folk have been here these hundred years and more.”

Well, *Halvor* told her all about himself, and how he wanted to get to *Soria Moria Castle*, and asked if she knew the way thither.

“No,” said the old wife, “that I don’t, but see now, here comes the Moon, I’ll ask her, she’ll know all about it, for doesn’t she shine on everything?”

So when the Moon stood clear and bright over the tree-tops, the old wife went out.

“Thou Moon, thou Moon,” she screamed, “canst thou tell me the way to *Soria Moria Castle*?”

“No,” said the Moon, “that I can’t, for the last time I shone there a cloud stood before me.”

“Wait a bit still,” said the old wife to *Halvor*, “bye and bye comes the West Wind; he’s sure to know it, for he puffs and blows round every corner.”

“Nay, nay,” said the old wife when she went out again, “you don’t mean to say you’ve got a horse too; just turn the poor beastie loose in our ‘toun,’ and don’t let him stand there and starve to death at the door.”

Then she ran on:

“But won’t you swop him away to me? — we’ve got an old pair of boots here, with which you can take twenty miles at each stride; those you shall have for your horse, and so you’ll get all the sooner to *Soria Moria Castle*.”

That *Halvor* was willing to do at once; and the old wife was so glad at having the horse, she was ready to dance and skip for joy.

“For now,” she said, “I shall be able to ride to church. I, too, think of that.”

As for *Halvor*, he had no rest, and wanted to be off at once, but the old wife said there was no hurry.

“Lie down on the bench with you and sleep a bit, for we’ve no bed to offer you, and I’ll watch and wake you when the West Wind comes.”

So after a while up came the West Wind, roaring and howling along till the walls creaked and groaned again.

Out ran the old wife.

“Thou West Wind, thou West Wind! Canst thou tell me the way to *Soria Moria Castle*? Here’s one who wants to get thither.”

“Yes, I know it very well,” said the West Wind, “and now I’m just off thither to dry clothes for the wedding that’s to be; if he’s swift of foot he can go along with me.”

Out ran *Halvor*.

“You’ll have to stretch your legs if you mean to keep up,” said the West Wind.

So off he set over field and hedge, and hill and fell, and *Halvor* had hard work to keep up.

“Well,” said the West Wind, “now I’ve no time to stay with you any longer, for I’ve got to go away yonder and tear down a strip of spruce wood first before I go to the bleaching-ground to dry the clothes; but if you go alongside the hill you’ll come to a lot of lassies standing washing clothes, and then you’ve not far to go to *Soria Moria Castle*.”

In a little while *Halvor* came upon the lassies who stood washing, and they asked if he had seen anything of the West Wind who was to come and dry the clothes for the wedding.

“Aye, aye, that I have,” said *Halvor*, “he’s only gone to tear down a strip of spruce wood. It’ll not be long before he’s here,” and then he asked them the way to *Soria Moria Castle*.

So they put him into the right way, and when he got to the Castle it was full of folk and horses; so full it made one giddy to look at them. But *Halvor* was so ragged and torn from having followed the West Wind through bush and brier and bog, that he kept on one side, and wouldn’t show himself till the last day when the bridal feast was to be.

So when all, as was then right and fitting, were to drink the bride and bridegroom's health and wish them luck, and when the cupbearer was to drink to them all again, both knights and squires, last of all he came in turn to *Halvor*. He drank their health, but let the ring which the *Princess* had put upon his finger as he lay by the lake fall into the glass, and bade the cupbearer go and greet the bride and hand her the glass.

Then up rose the *Princess* from the board at once.

"Who is most worthy to have one of us," she said, "he that has set us free, or he that here sits by me as bridegroom?"

Well they all said there could be but one voice and will as to that, and when *Halvor* heard that he wasn't long in throwing off his beggar's rags, and arraying himself as bridegroom.

"Aye, aye, here is the right one after all," said the youngest *Princess* as soon as she saw him, and so she tossed the other one out of the window, and held her wedding with *Halvor*.

9

THE GIANT WHO HAD NO HEART IN HIS BODY

Once on a time there was a *King* who had *seven sons*, and he loved them so much that he could never bear to be without them all at once, but one must always be with him. Now, when they were grown up, six were to set off to woo, but as for the youngest, his father kept him at home, and the others were to bring back a princess for him to the palace. So the *King* gave the six the finest clothes you ever set eyes on, so fine that the light gleamed from them a long way off, and each had his horse, which cost many, many hundred pounds, and so they set off. Now, when they had been to many palaces, and seen many princesses, at last they came to a *King* who had *six daughters*; such lovely king's daughters they had never seen, and so they fell to wooing them, each one, and when they had got them for sweethearts, they set off home again, but they quite forgot that they were to bring back with them a sweetheart for *Boots*, their brother, who stayed at home, for they were over head and ears in love with their own sweethearts.

But when they had gone a good bit on their way, they passed close by a steep hill-side, like a wall, where the *Giant's* house was, and there the *Giant* came out, and set his eyes upon them, and turned them all into stone, princes and princesses and all. Now the *King* waited and waited for his *six* *sons*, but the more he waited, the longer they stayed away; so he fell into great trouble, and said he should never know what it was to be glad again.

"And if I had not you left," he said to *Boots*, "I would live no longer, so full of sorrow am I for the loss of your brothers."

"Well, but now I've been thinking to ask your leave to set out and find them again; that's what I'm thinking of," said *Boots*.

"Nay, nay!" said his father; "that leave you shall never get, for then you would stay away too."

But *Boots* had set his heart upon it; go he would; and he begged and prayed so long that the *King* was forced to let him go. Now, you must know the *King* had no other horse to give *Boots* but an old broken-down jade, for his six other sons and their train had carried off all his horses; but *Boots* did not care a pin for that, he sprang up on his sorry old steed.

"Farewell, father," said he; "I'll come back, never fear, and like enough I shall bring my six brothers back with me;" and with that he rode off.

So, when he had ridden a while, he came to a *Raven*, which lay in the road and flapped its wings, and was not able to get out of the way, it was so starved.

"Oh, dear friend," said the *Raven*, "give me a little food, and I'll help you again at your utmost need."

"I haven't much food," said the *Prince*, "and I don't see how you'll ever be able to help me much; but still I can spare you a little. I see you want it."

So he gave the raven some of the food he had brought with him.

Now, when he had gone a bit further, he came to a brook, and in the brook lay a great *Salmon*, which had got upon a dry place and dashed itself about, and could not get into the water again.

"Oh, dear friend," said the *Salmon* to the *Prince*; "shove me out into the water again, and I'll help you again at your utmost need."

"Well!" said the *Prince*, "the help you'll give me will not be great, I daresay, but it's a pity you should lie there and choke;" and with that he shot the fish out into the stream again.

After that he went a long, long way, and there met him a *Wolf* which was so famished that it lay and crawled along the road on its belly.

“Dear friend, do let me have your horse,” said the *Wolf*; “I’m so hungry the wind whistles through my ribs; I’ve had nothing to eat these two years.”

“No,” said *Boots*, “this will never do; first I came to a raven, and I was forced to give him my food; next I came to a salmon, and him I had to help into the water again; and now you will have my horse. It can’t be done, that it can’t, for then I should have nothing to ride on.”

“Nay, dear friend, but you can help me,” said *Graylegs* the wolf; “you can ride upon my back, and I’ll help you again in your utmost need.”

“Well! the help I shall get from you will not be great, I’ll be bound,” said the *Prince*; “but you may take my horse, since you are in such need.”

So when the *Wolf* had eaten the horse, *Boots* took the bit and put it into the *Wolf’s* jaw, and laid the saddle on his back; and now the *Wolf* was so strong, after what he had got inside, that he set off with the *Prince* like nothing. So fast he had never ridden before.

“When we have gone a bit farther,” said *Graylegs*, “I’ll show you the *Giant’s* house.”

So after a while they came to it.

“See, here is the *Giant’s* house,” said the *Wolf*; “and see, here are your six brothers, whom the *Giant* has turned into stone; and see, here are their six brides, and away yonder is the door, and in that door you must go.”

“Nay, but I daren’t go in,” said the *Prince*; “he’ll take my life.”

“No! no!” said the *Wolf*; “when you get in you’ll find a *Princess*, and she’ll tell you what to do to make an end of the *Giant*. Only mind and do as she bids you.”

Well! *Boots* went in, but, truth to say, he was very much afraid. When he came in the *Giant* was away, but in one of the rooms sat the *Princess*, just as the *Wolf* had said, and so lovely a princess *Boots* had never yet set eyes on.

“Oh! heaven help you! whence have you come?” said the *Princess*, as she saw him; “it will surely be your death. No one can make an end of the *Giant* who lives here, for he has no heart in his body.”

“Well! well!” said *Boots*; “but now that I am here, I may as well try what I can do with him; and I will see if I can’t free my brothers, who are standing turned to stone out of doors; and you, too, I will try to save, that I will.”

“Well, if you must, you must,” said the *Princess*; “and so let us see if we can’t hit on a plan. Just creep under the bed yonder, and mind and listen to what he and I talk about. But, pray, do lie as still as a mouse.”

So he crept under the bed, and he had scarce got well underneath it, before the *Giant* came.

“Ha!” roared the *Giant*, “what a smell of Christian blood there is in the house!”

“Yes, I know there is,” said the *Princess*, “for there came a magpie flying with a man’s bone, and let it fall down the chimney. I made all the haste I could to get it out, but all one can do, the smell doesn’t go off so soon.”

So the *Giant* said no more about it, and when night came, they went to bed. After they had lain a while, the *Princess* said:

“There is one thing I’d be so glad to ask you about, if I only dared.”

“What thing is that?” asked the *Giant*.

“Only where it is you keep your heart, since you don’t carry it about you,” said the *Princess*.

“Ah! that’s a thing you’ve no business to ask about; but if you must know, it lies under the door-sill,” said the *Giant*.

“Ho! ho!” said *Boots* to himself under the bed, “then we’ll soon see if we can’t find it.”

Next morning the *Giant* got up cruelly early, and strode off to the wood; but he was hardly out of the house before *Boots* and the *Princess* set to work to look under the door-sill for his heart; but the more they dug, and the more they hunted, the more they couldn’t find it.

“He has baulked us this time,” said the *Princess*, “but we’ll try him once more.”

So she picked all the prettiest flowers she could find, and strewed them over the door-sill, which they had laid in its right place again; and when the time came for the *Giant* to come home again, *Boots* crept under the bed. Just as he was well under, back came the *Giant*.

Snuff — snuff, went the *Giant’s* nose. “My eyes and limbs, what a smell of Christian blood there is in here,” said he.

“I know there is,” said the *Princess*, “for there came a magpie flying with a man’s bone in his bill, and let it fall down the chimney. I made as much haste as I could to get it out, but I daresay it’s that you smell.”

So the *Giant* held his peace, and said no more about it. A little while after, he asked who it was that had strewed flowers about the door-sill.

“Oh, I, of course,” said the *Princess*.

“And, pray, what’s the meaning of all this?” said the *Giant*.

“Ah!” said the *Princess*, “I’m so fond of you that I couldn’t help strewing them, when I knew that your heart lay under there.”

“You don’t say so,” said the *Giant*; “but after all it doesn’t lie there at all.”

So when they went to bed again in the evening, the *Princess* asked the *Giant* again where his heart was, for she said she would so like to know.

“Well,” said the *Giant*, “if you must know, it lies away yonder in the cupboard against the wall.”

“So, so!” thought *Boots* and the *Princess*; “then we’ll soon try to find it.”

Next morning the *Giant* was away early, and strode off to the wood, and so soon as he was gone *Boots* and the *Princess* were in the cupboard hunting for his heart, but the more they sought for it, the less they found it.

“Well,” said the *Princess*, “we’ll just try him once more.”

So she decked out the cupboard with flowers and garlands, and when the time came for the *Giant* to come home, *Boots* crept under the bed again.

Then back came the *Giant*.

Snuff — snuff! “My eyes and limbs, what a smell of Christian blood there is in here!”

“I know there is,” said the *Princess*; “for a little while since there came a magpie flying with a man’s bone in his bill, and let it fall down the chimney. I made all the haste I could to get it out of the house again; but after all my pains, I daresay it’s that you smell.”

When the *Giant* heard that, he said no more about it; but a little while after, he saw how the cupboard was all decked about with flowers and garlands; so he asked who it was that had done that? Who could it be but the *Princess*?

“And, pray, what’s the meaning of all this tomfoolery?” asked the *Giant*.

“Oh, I’m so fond of you, I couldn’t help doing it when I knew that your heart lay there,” said the *Princess*.

“How can you be so silly as to believe any such thing?” said the *Giant*.

“Oh yes; how can I help believing it, when you say it?” said the *Princess*.

“You’re a goose,” said the *Giant*; “where my heart is, you will never come.”

“Well,” said the *Princess*; “but for all that, ‘twould be such a pleasure to know where it really lies.”

Then the poor *Giant* could hold out no longer, but was forced to say:

“Far, far away in a lake lies an island; on that island stands a church; in that church is a well; in that well swims a duck; in that duck there is an egg, and in that egg there lies my heart, — you darling!”

In the morning early, while it was still grey dawn, the *Giant* strode off to the wood.

“Yes! now I must set off too,” said *Boots*; “if I only knew how to find the way.” He took a long, long farewell of the *Princess*, and when he got out of the *Giant’s* door, there stood the *Wolf* waiting for him. So *Boots* told him all that had happened inside the house, and said now he wished to ride to the well in the church, if he only knew the way. So the *Wolf* bade him jump on his back, he’d soon find the way; and away they went, till the wind whistled after them, over hedge and field, over hill and dale. After they had travelled many, many days, they came at last to the lake. Then the *Prince* did not know how to get over it, but the *Wolf* bade him only not be afraid, but stick on, and so he jumped into the lake with the *Prince* on his back, and swam over to the island. So they came to the church; but the church keys hung high, high up on the top of the tower, and at first the *Prince* did not know how to get them down.

“You must call on the raven,” said the *Wolf*.

So the *Prince* called on the raven, and in a trice the raven came, and flew up and fetched the keys, and so the *Prince* got into the church. But when he came to the well, there lay the duck, and swam about backwards and forwards, just as the *Giant* had said. So the *Prince* stood and coaxed it, till it came to him, and he grasped it in his hand; but just as he lifted it up from the water the duck dropped the egg into the well, and then *Boots* was beside himself to know how to get it out again.

“Well, now you must call on the salmon to be sure,” said the *Wolf*; and the king’s son called on the salmon, and the salmon came and fetched up the egg from the bottom of the well.

Then the *Wolf* told him to squeeze the egg, and as soon as ever he squeezed it the *Giant* screamed out.

“Squeeze it again,” said the *Wolf*; and when the *Prince* did so, the *Giant* screamed still more piteously, and begged and prayed so prettily to be spared, saying he would do all that the *Prince* wished if he would only not squeeze his heart in two.

“Tell him, if he will restore to life again your six brothers and their brides, whom he has turned to stone, you will spare his life,” said the *Wolf*. Yes, the *Giant* was ready to do that, and he turned the six brothers into king’s sons again, and their brides into king’s daughters.

“Now, squeeze the egg in two,” said the *Wolf*. So *Boots* squeezed the egg to pieces, and the *Giant* burst at once.

Now, when he had made an end of the *Giant*, *Boots* rode back again on the *Wolf* to the *Giant’s* house, and there stood all his six brothers alive and merry, with their brides. Then *Boots* went into the hill-side after his bride, and so they all set off home again to their father’s house. And you may fancy how glad the old king was when he saw all his seven sons come back, each with his bride — “But the loveliest bride of all is the bride of *Boots*, after all,” said the king, “and he shall sit uppermost at the table, with her by his side.”

So he sent out, and called a great wedding-feast, and the mirth was both loud and long, and if they have not done feasting, why, they are still at it.

10

THE PRINCESS ON THE GLASS HILL

Once on a time there was a man who had a meadow, which lay high up on the hill-side, and in the meadow was a barn, which he had built to keep his hay in. Now, I must tell you, there hadn't been much in the barn for the last year or two, for every St. John's night, when the grass stood greenest and deepest, the meadow was eaten down to the very ground the next morning, just as if a whole drove of sheep had been there feeding on it over night. This happened once, and it happened twice; so at last the man grew weary of losing his crop of hay, and said to his sons — for he had three of them, and the youngest was nicknamed *Boots*, of course — that now one of them must go and sleep in the barn in the outlying field when St. John's night came, for it was too good a joke that his grass should be eaten, root and blade, this year, as it had been the last two years. So whichever of them went must keep a sharp look-out; that was what their father said.

Well, the eldest son was ready to go and watch the meadow; trust him for looking after the grass! It shouldn't be his fault if man or beast, or the fiend himself, got a blade of grass. So, when evening came, he set off to the barn, and lay down to sleep; but a little on in the night came such a clatter, and such an earthquake, that walls and roof shook, and groaned, and creaked; then up jumped the lad, and took to his heels as fast as ever he could; nor dared he once look round till he reached home; and as for the hay, why it was eaten up this year just as it had been twice before.

The next St. John’s night, the man said again, it would never do to lose all the grass in the outlying field year after year in this way, so one of his sons must just trudge off to watch it, and watch it well too. Well, the next oldest son was ready to try his luck, so he set off, and lay down to sleep in the barn as his brother had done before him; but as the night wore on, there came on a rumbling and quaking of the earth, worse even than on the last St. John’s night, and when the lad heard it, he got frightened, and took to his heels as though he were running a race.

Next year the turn came to *Boots*; but when he made ready to go, the other two began to laugh and to make game of him, saying:

“You’re just the man to watch the hay, that you are; you, who have done nothing all your life but sit in the ashes and toast yourself by the fire.”

But *Boots* did not care a pin for their chattering, and stumped away as evening grew on, up the hill-side to the outlying field. There he went inside the barn and lay down; but in about an hour’s time the barn began to groan and creak, so that it was dreadful to hear.

“Well,” said *Boots* to himself, “if it isn’t worse than this, I can stand it well enough.”

A little while after came another creak and an earthquake, so that the litter in the barn flew about the lad’s ears. “Oh!” said *Boots* to himself, “if it isn’t worse than this, I daresay I can stand it out.”

But just then came a third rumbling, and a third earthquake, so that the lad thought walls and roof were coming down on his head; but it passed off, and all was still as death about him.

“It’ll come again, I’ll be bound,” thought *Boots*; but no, it didn’t come again; still it was, and still it stayed; but after he had lain a little while, he heard a noise as if a horse were standing just outside the barn-door, and cropping the grass. He stole to the door, and peeped through a chink, and there stood a horse feeding away. So big, and fat, and grand a horse, *Boots* had never set eyes on; by his side on the grass lay a saddle and bridle, and a full set of armour for a knight, all of brass, so bright that the light gleamed from it.

"Ho, ho!" thought the lad; "it's you, is it, that eats up our hay? I'll soon put a spoke in your wheel, just see if I don't."

So he lost no time, but took the steel out of his tinder-box, and threw it over the horse; then it had no power to stir from the spot, and became so tame that the lad could do what he liked with it. So he got on its back, and rode off with it to a place which no one knew of, and there he put up the horse. When he got home, his brothers laughed and asked how he had fared?

"You didn't lie long in the barn, even if you had the heart to go so far as the field."

"Well," said *Boots*, "all I can say is, I lay in the barn till the sun rose, and neither saw nor heard anything; I can't think what there was in the barn to make you both so afraid."

"A pretty story," said his brothers; "but we'll soon see how you have watched the meadow;" so they set off; but when they reached it, there stood the grass as deep and thick as it had been over night.

Well, the next St. John's eve it was the same story over again; neither of the elder brothers dared to go out to the outlying field to watch the crop; but *Boots*, he had the heart to go, and everything happened just as it had happened the year before. First a clatter and an earthquake, then a greater clatter and another earthquake, and so on a third time; only this year the earthquakes were far worse than the year before. Then all at once everything was as still as death, and the lad heard how something was cropping the grass outside the barn-door, so he stole to the door, and peeped through a chink; and what do you think he saw? Why, another horse standing right up against the wall, and chewing and champing with might and main. It was far finer and fatter than that which came the year before, and it had a saddle on its back, and a bridle on its neck, and a full suit of mail for a knight lay by its side, all of silver, and as grand as you would wish to see.

"Ho, ho!" said *Boots* to himself; "it's you that gobbles up our hay, is it? I'll soon put a spoke in your wheel;" and with that he took the steel out of his tinder-box, and threw it over the horse's crest, which stood as still as a lamb. Well, the lad rode this horse, too, to the hiding-place where he kept the other one, and after that he went home.

"I suppose you'll tell us," said one of his brothers, "there's a fine crop this year too, up in the hayfield."

"Well, so there is," said *Boots*; and off ran the others to see, and there stood the grass thick and deep, as it was the year before; but they didn't give *Boots* softer words for all that.

Now, when the third St. John's eve came, the two elder brothers still hadn't the heart to lie out in the barn and watch the grass, for they had got so scared at heart the nights they lay there before, that they couldn't get over the fright; but *Boots*, he dared to go; and, to make a very long story short, the very same thing happened this time as had happened twice before. Three earthquakes came, one after the other, each worse than the one which went before, and when the last came, the lad danced about with the shock from one barn wall to the other; and after that, all at once, it was still as death. Now when he had laid a little while, he heard something tugging away at the grass outside the barn, so he stole again to the door-chink, and peeped out, and there stood a horse close outside — far, far bigger and fatter than the two he had taken before.

"Ho, ho!" said the lad to himself, "it's you, is it, that comes here eating up our hay? I'll soon stop that — I'll soon put a spoke in your wheel." So he caught up his steel and threw it over his horse's neck, and in a trice it stood as if it were nailed to the ground, and *Boots* could do as he pleased with it. Then he rode off with it to the hiding-place where he kept the other two, and then went home. When he got home, his two brothers made game of him as they had done before, saying, they could see he had watched the grass well, for he looked for all the world as if he were walking in his sleep, and many other spiteful things they said, but *Boots* gave no heed to them, only asking them to go and see for themselves; and when they went, there stood the grass as fine and deep this time as it had been twice before.

Now, you must know that the king of the country where *Boots* lived had a daughter, whom he would only give to the man who could ride up over the hill of glass, for there was a high, high hill, all of glass, as smooth and slippery as ice, close by the *King's* palace. Upon the tip top of the hill the *King's* daughter was to sit, with three golden apples in her lap, and the man who could ride up and carry off the three golden apples, was to have half the kingdom, and the *Princess* to wife. This the *King* had stuck up on all the church-doors in his realm, and had given it out in many other kingdoms besides. Now, this *Princess* was so lovely that all who set eyes on her fell over head and ears in love with her whether they would or no. So I needn't tell you how all the princes and knights who heard of her were eager to win her to wife, and half the kingdom beside; and how they came riding from all parts of the world on high prancing horses, and clad in the grandest clothes, for there wasn't one of them who hadn't made up his mind that he, and he alone, was to win the *Princess*.

So when the day of trial came, which the king had fixed, there was such a crowd of princes and knights under the *Glass Hill*, that it made one's head whirl to look at them, and everyone in the country who could even crawl along was off to the hill, for they were all eager to see the man who was to win the *Princess*. So the two elder brothers set off with the rest; but as for *Boots*, they said outright he shouldn't go with them, for if they were seen with such a dirty changeling, all begrimed with smut from cleaning their shoes and sifting cinders in the dust-hole, they said folk would make game of them.

“Very well,” said *Boots*, “it’s all one to me. I can go alone, and stand or fall by myself.”

Now when the two brothers came to the *Hill of Glass*, the knights and princes were all hard at it, riding their horses till they were all in a foam; but it was no good, by my troth; for as soon as ever the horses set foot on the hill, down they slipped, and there wasn’t one who could get a yard or two up; and no wonder, for the hill was as smooth as a sheet of glass, and as steep as a house-wall. But all were eager to have the *Princess* and half the kingdom. So they rode and slipped, and slipped and rode, and still it was the same story over again. At last all their horses were so weary that they could scarce lift a leg, and in such a sweat that the lather dripped from them, and so the knights had to give up trying any more. So the king was just thinking that he would proclaim a new trial for the next day, to see if they would have better luck, when all at once a knight came riding up on so brave a steed, that no one had ever seen the like of it in his born days, and the knight had mail of brass, and the horse a brass bit in his mouth, so bright that the sunbeams shone from it. Then all the others called out to him he might just as well spare himself the trouble of riding at the Hill, for it would lead to no good; but he gave no heed to them, and put his horse at the hill, and went up it like nothing for a good way, about a third of the height; and when he had got so far, he turned his horse round and rode down again. So lovely a knight the *Princess* thought she had never yet seen; and while he was riding, she sat and thought to herself:

“Would to heaven he might only come up and down the other side.”

And when she saw him turning back, she threw down one of the golden apples after him, and it rolled down into his shoe. But when he got to the bottom of the hill, he rode off so fast that no one could tell what had become of him. That evening all the knights and princes were to go before the king, that he who had ridden so far up the hill might show the apple which the *Princess* had thrown, but there was no one who had anything to show. One after the other they all came, but not a man of them could show the apple.

At even the brothers of *Boots* came home too, and had such a long story to tell about the riding up the hill.

“First of all,” they said, “there was not one of the whole lot who could get so much as a stride up; but at last came one who had a suit of brass mail, and a brass bridle and saddle, all so bright that the sun shone from them a mile off. He was a chap to ride, just! He rode a third of the way up the *Hill of Glass*, and he could easily have ridden the whole way up, if he chose; but he turned round and rode down, thinking, maybe, that was enough for once.”

“Oh! I should so like to have seen him, that I should,” said *Boots*, who sat by the fireside, and stuck his feet into the cinders, as was his wont.

“Oh!” said his brothers, “you would, would you? You look fit to keep company with such high lords, nasty beast that you are, sitting there amongst the ashes.”

Next day the brothers were all for setting off again, and *Boots* begged them this time, too, to let him go with them and see the riding; but no, they wouldn’t have him at any price, he was too ugly and nasty, they said.

“Well, well!” said *Boots*; “if I go at all, I must go by myself. I’m not afraid.”

So when the brothers got to the *Hill of Glass*, all the princes and knights began to ride again, and you may fancy they had taken care to shoe their horses sharp; but it was no good — they rode and slipped, and slipped and rode, just as they had done the day before, and there was not one who could get so far as a yard up the hill. And when they had worn out their horses, so that they could not stir a leg, they were all forced to give it up as a bad job. So the king thought he might as well proclaim that the riding should take place the day after for the last time, just to give them one chance more; but all at once it came across his mind that he might as well wait a little longer, to see if the knight in brass mail would come this day too. Well, they saw nothing of him; but all at once came one riding on a steed, far, far braver and finer than that on which the knight in brass had ridden, and he had silver mail, and a silver saddle and bridle, all so bright that the sunbeams gleamed and glanced from them far away. Then the others shouted out to him again, saying, he might as well hold hard, and not try to ride up the hill, for all his trouble would be thrown away; but the knight paid no heed to them, and rode straight at the hill, and right up it, till he had gone two-thirds of the way, and then he wheeled his horse round and rode down again. To tell the truth, the *Princess* liked him still better than the knight in brass, and she sat and wished he might only be able to come right up to the top, and down the other side; but when she saw him turning back, she threw the second apple after him, and it rolled down and fell into his shoe. But, as soon as ever he had come down from the *Hill of Glass*, he rode off so fast that no one could see what became of him.

At even, when all were to go in before the king and the *Princess*, that he who had the golden apple might show it, in they went, one after the other, but there was no one who had any apple to show, and the two brothers, as they had done on the former day, went home and told how things had gone, and how all had ridden at the hill, and none got up.

“But, last of all,” they said, “came one in a silver suit, and his horse had a silver saddle and a silver bridle. He was just a chap to ride; and he got two-thirds up the hill, and then turned back. He was a fine fellow, and no mistake; and the *Princess* threw the second gold apple to him.”

“Oh!” said *Boots*, “I should so like to have seen him too, that I should.”

“A pretty story,” they said. “Perhaps you think his coat of mail was as bright as the ashes you are always poking about, and sifting, you nasty dirty beast.”

The third day everything happened as it had happened the two days before. *Boots* begged to go and see the sight, but the two wouldn't hear of his going with them. When they got to the hill there was no one who could get so much as a yard up it; and now all waited for the knight in silver mail, but they neither saw nor heard of him. At last came one riding on a steed, so brave that no one had ever seen his match; and the knight had a suit of golden mail, and a golden saddle and bridle, so wondrous bright that the sunbeams gleamed from them a mile off. The other knights and princes could not find time to call out to him not to try his luck, for they were amazed to see how grand he was. So he rode right at the hill, and tore up it like nothing, so that the *Princess* hadn't even time to wish that he might get up the whole way. As soon as ever he reached the top, he took the third golden apple from the *Princess'* lap, and then turned his horse and rode down again. As soon as he got down, he rode off at full speed, and was out of sight in no time.

Now, when the brothers got home at even, you may fancy what long stories they told, how the riding had gone off that day; and amongst other things, they had a deal to say about the knight in golden mail.

"He just was a chap to ride!" they said; "so grand a knight isn't to be found in the wide world."

"Oh!" said *Boots*, "I should so like to have seen him, that I should."

"Ah!" said his brothers, "his mail shone a deal brighter than the glowing coals which you are always poking and digging at; nasty dirty beast that you are."

Next day all the knights and princes were to pass before the king and the *Princess* — it was too late to do so the night before, I suppose — that he who had the gold apple might bring it forth; but one came after another, first the *Princes,* and then the knights, and still no one could show the gold apple.

“Well,” said the king, “some one must have it, for it was something we all saw with our own eyes, how a man came and rode up and bore it off.”

So he commanded that every man who was in the kingdom should come up to the palace and see if they could show the apple. Well, they all came one after another, but no one had the golden apple, and after a long time the two brothers of *Boots* came. They were the last of all, so the king asked them if there was no one else in the kingdom who hadn’t come.

“Oh, yes,” said they; “we have a brother, but he never carried off the golden apple. He hasn’t stirred out of the dusthole on any of the three days.”

“Never mind that,” said the king; “he may as well come up to the palace like the rest.”

So *Boots* had to go up to the palace.

“How now,” said the king; “have you got the golden apple? Speak out!”

“Yes, I have,” said *Boots*; “here is the first, and here is the second, and here is the third too;” and with that he pulled all three golden apples out of his pocket, and at the same time threw off his sooty rags, and stood before them in his gleaming golden mail.

“Yes!” said the king; “you shall have my daughter, and half my kingdom, for you well deserve both her and it.”

So they got ready for the wedding, and *Boots* got the *Princess* to wife, and there was great merry-making at the bridal-feast, you may fancy, for they could all be merry though they couldn’t ride up the *Hill of Glass*; and all I can say is, if they haven’t left off their merry-making yet, why, they’re still at it.

11

THE WIDOW’S SON

Once on a time there was a poor, poor *Widow*, who had an only *Son*. She dragged on with the boy till he had been confirmed, and then she said she couldn’t feed him any longer, he must just go out and earn his own bread. So the lad wandered out into the world, and when he had walked a day or so, a strange man met him.

“Whither away?” asked the man.

“Oh, I’m going out into the world to try and get a place,” said the lad.

“Will you come and serve me?” said the man.

“Oh, yes; just as soon you as any one else,” said the lad.

“Well, you’ll have a good place with me,” said the man; “for you’ll only have to keep me company, and do nothing at all else beside.”

So the lad stopped with him, and lived on the fat of the land, both in meat and drink, and had little or nothing to do; but he never saw a living soul in that man’s house.

So one day the man said:

“Now, I’m going off for eight days, and that time you’ll have to spend here all alone; but you must not go into any one of these four rooms here. If you do, I’ll take your life when I come back.”

“No,” said the lad, he’d be sure not to do that. But when the man had been gone three or four days, the lad couldn’t bear it any longer, but went into the first room, and when he got inside he looked round, but he saw nothing but a shelf over the door where a bramble-bush rod lay.

Well, indeed! thought the lad; a pretty thing to forbid my seeing this.

So when the eight days were out, the man came home, and the first thing he said was:

“You haven’t been into any of these rooms, of course.”

“No, no; that I haven’t,” said the lad.

“I’ll soon see that,” said the man, and went at once into the room where the lad had been.

“Nay, but you have been in here,” said he; “and now you shall lose your life.”

Then the lad begged and prayed so hard that he got off with his life, but the man gave him a good thrashing. And when it was over, they were as good friends as ever.

Some time after the man set off again, and said he should be away fourteen days; but before he went he forbade the lad to go into any of the rooms he had not been in before; as for that he had been in, he might go into that, and welcome. Well, it was the same story over again, except that the lad stood out eight days before he went in. In this room, too, he saw nothing but a shelf over the door, and a big stone, and a pitcher of water on it. Well, after all, there’s not much to be afraid of my seeing here, thought the lad.

But when the man came back, he asked if he had been into any of the rooms. No, the lad hadn’t done anything of the kind.

“Well, well; I’ll soon see that,” said the man; and when he saw the lad had been in them after all, he said:

“Ah! now I’ll spare you no longer; now you must lose your life.”

But the lad begged and prayed for himself again, and so this time too he got off with stripes; though he got as many as his skin would carry. But when he got sound and well again, he led just as easy a life as ever, and he and the man were just as good friends.

So a while after the man was to take another journey, and now he said he should be away three weeks, and he forbade the lad anew to go into the third room, for if he went in there he might just make up his mind at once to lose his life. Then after fourteen days the lad couldn’t bear it, but crept into the room, but he saw nothing at all in there but a trap door on the floor; and when he lifted it up and looked down, there stood a great copper cauldron which bubbled up and boiled away down there; but he saw no fire under it.

“Well, I should just like to know if it’s hot,” thought the lad, and struck his finger down into the broth, and when he pulled it out again, lo! it was gilded all over. So the lad scraped and scrubbed it, but the gilding wouldn’t go off, so he bound a piece of rag round it; and when the man came back, and asked what was the matter with his finger, the lad said he’d given it such a bad cut. But the man tore off the rag, and then he soon saw what was the matter with the finger. First he wanted to kill the lad outright, but when he wept, and begged, he only gave him such a thrashing that he had to keep his bed three days. After that the man took down a pot from the wall, and rubbed him over with some stuff out of it, and so the lad was as sound and fresh as ever.

So after a while the man started off again, and this time he was to be away a month. But before he went, he said to the lad, if he went into the fourth room he might give up all hope of saving his life.

Well, the lad stood out for two or three weeks, but then he couldn’t hold out any longer; he must and would go into that room, and so in he stole. There stood a great black horse tied up in a stall by himself, with a manger of red-hot coals at his head and a truss of hay at his tail. Then the lad thought this all wrong, so he changed them about, and put the hay at his head. Then said the *Horse*:

"Since you are so good at heart as to let me have some food, I'll set you free, that I will. For if the *Troll* comes back and finds you here, he'll kill you outright. But now you must go up to the room which lies just over this, and take a coat of mail out of those that hang there; and mind, whatever you do, don't take any of the bright ones, but the most rusty of all you see, that's the one to take; and sword and saddle you must choose for yourself just in the same way."

So the lad did all that; but it was a heavy load for him to carry them all down at once.

When he came back, the *Horse* told him to pull off his clothes and get into the cauldron which stood and boiled in the other room, and bathe himself there. "If I do," thought the lad, "I shall look an awful fright;" but for all that, he did as he was told. So when he had taken his bath, he became so handsome and sleek, and as red and white as milk and blood, and much stronger than he had been before.

"Do you feel any change?" asked the *Horse*.

"Yes," said the lad.

"Try and lift me, then," said the *Horse*.

Oh yes! he could do that, and as for the sword, he brandished it like a feather.

"Now saddle me," said the *Horse*, "and put on the coat of mail, and then take the bramble-bush rod, and the stone, and the pitcher of water, and the pot of ointment, and then we'll be off as fast as we can."

So when the lad had got on the horse, off they went at such a rate, he couldn't at all tell how they went. But when he had ridden awhile, the *Horse* said, "I think I hear a noise; look round! can you see anything?"

"Yes; there are ever so many coming after us, at least a score," said the lad.

"Aye, aye, that's the *Troll* coming," said the *Horse*; "now he's after us with his pack."

So they rode on a while, until those who followed were close behind them.

“Now throw your bramble-bush rod behind you, over your shoulder,” said the *Horse*; “but mind you throw it a good way off my back.”

So the lad did that, and all at once a close, thick bramblewood grew up behind them. So the lad rode on a long, long time, while the *Troll* and his crew had to go home to fetch something to hew their way through the wood. But at last the *Horse* said again:

“Look behind you! can you see anything now?”

“Yes, ever so many,” said the lad, “as many as would fill a large church.”

“Aye, aye, that’s the *Troll* and his crew,” said the *Horse*; “now he’s got more to back him; but now throw down the stone, and mind you throw it far behind me.”

And as soon as the lad did what the *Horse* said, up rose a great black hill of rock behind him. So the *Troll* had to be off home to fetch something to mine his way through the rock; and while the *Troll* did that, the lad rode a good bit further on. But still the *Horse* begged him to look behind him, and then he saw a troop like a whole army behind him, and they glistened in the sunbeams.

“Aye, aye,” said the *Horse*, “that’s the *Troll*, and now he’s got his whole band with him, so throw the pitcher of water behind you, but mind you don’t spill any of it upon me.”

So the lad did that; but in spite of all the pains he took, he still spilt one drop on the horse’s flank. So it became a great deep lake; and because of that one drop, the horse found himself far out in it, but still he swam safe to land. But when the *Trolls* came to the lake, they lay down to drink it dry; and so they swilled and swilled till they burst.

“Now we’re rid of them,” said the *Horse*.

So when they had gone a long, long while, they came to a green patch in a wood.

“Now, strip off all your arms,” said the *Horse*, “and only put on your ragged clothes, and take the saddle off me, and let me loose, and hang all my clothing and your arms up inside that great hollow lime-tree yonder. Then make yourself a wig of fir-moss, and go up to the king’s palace, which lies close here, and ask for a place. Whenever you need me, only come here and shake the bridle, and I’ll come to you.”

Yes! the lad did all his *Horse* told him, and as soon as ever he put on the wig of moss he became so ugly, and pale, and miserable to look at, no one would have known him again. Then he went up to the king’s palace and begged first for leave to be in the kitchen, and bring in wood and water for the cook, but then the kitchen-maid asked him:

“Why do you wear that ugly wig? Off with it. I won’t have such a fright in here.”

“No, I can’t do that,” said the lad; “for I’m not quite right in my head.”

“Do you think then I’ll have you in here about the food,” cried the cook. “Away with you to the coachman; you’re best fit to go and clean the stable.”

But when the coachman begged him to take his wig off, he got the same answer, and he wouldn’t have him either.

“You’d best go down to the gardener,” said he; “you’re best fit to go about and dig in the garden.”

So he got leave to be with the gardener, but none of the other servants would sleep with him, and so he had to sleep by himself under the steps of the summer-house. It stood upon beams, and had a high staircase. Under that he got some turf for his bed, and there he lay as well as he could.

So, when he had been some time at the palace, it happened one morning, just as the sun rose, that the lad had taken off his wig, and stood and washed himself, and then he was so handsome, it was a joy to look at him.

So the *Princess* saw from her window the lovely gardener’s boy, and thought she had never seen any one so handsome. Then she asked the gardener why he lay out there under the steps.

“Oh,” said the gardener, “none of his fellow-servants will sleep with him; that’s why.”

“Let him come up to-night, and lie at the door inside my bedroom, and then they’ll not refuse to sleep with him any more,” said the *Princess*.

So the gardener told that to the lad.

“Do you think I’ll do any such thing?” said the lad. “Why they’d say next there was something between me and the *Princess*.”

“Yes,” said the gardener, “you’ve good reason to fear any such thing, you who are so handsome.”

“Well, well,” said the lad, “since it’s her will, I suppose I must go.”

So, when he was to go up the steps in the evening, he tramped and stamped so on the way, that they had to beg him to tread softly lest the *King* should come to know it. So he came into the *Princess’* bedroom, lay down, and began to snore at once. Then the *Princess* said to her maid:

“Go gently, and just pull his wig off;” and she went up to him.

But just as she was going to whisk it off, he caught hold of it with both hands, and said she should never have it. After that he lay down again, and began to snore. Then the *Princess* gave her maid a wink, and this time she whisked off the wig; and there lay the lad so lovely, and white and red, just as the *Princess* had seen him in the morning sun.

After that the lad slept every night in the *Princess’* bedroom.

But it wasn’t long before the *King* came to hear how the gardener’s lad slept every night in the *Princess’* bedroom; and he got so wroth he almost took the lad’s life. He didn’t do that, however, but he threw him into the prison tower; and as for his daughter, he shut her up in her own room, whence she never got leave to stir day or night. All that she begged, and all that she prayed, for the lad and herself, was no good. The *King* was only more wroth than ever.

Some time after came a war and uproar in the land, and the *King* had to take up arms against another king who wished to take the kingdom from him. So when the lad heard that, he begged the gaoler to go to the *King* and ask for a coat of mail and a sword, and for leave to go to the war. All the rest laughed when the gaoler told his errand, and begged the *King* to let him have an old worn-out suit, that they might have the fun of seeing such a wretch in battle. So he got that, and an old broken-down hack besides, which went upon three legs, and dragged the fourth after it.

Then they went out to meet the foe; but they hadn't got far from the palace before the lad got stuck fast in a bog with his hack. There he sat and dug his spurs in, and cried, "Gee up! gee up!" to his hack. And all the rest had their fun out of this, and laughed, and made game of the lad as they rode past him. But they were scarcely gone, before he ran to the lime-tree, threw on his coat of mail, and shook the bridle, and there came the *Horse* in a trice, and said: "Do now your best, and I'll do mine."

But when the lad came up the battle had begun, and the *King* was in a sad pinch; but no sooner had the lad rushed into the thick of it than the foe was beaten back, and put to flight. The *King* and his men wondered and wondered who it could be who had come to help them, but none of them got so near him as to be able to talk to him, and as soon as the fight was over he was gone. When they went back, there sat the lad still in the bog, and dug his spurs into his three-legged hack, and they all laughed again.

"No! only just look," they said; "there the fool sits still."

The next day when they went out to battle, they saw the lad sitting there still, so they laughed again, and made game of him; but as soon as ever they had ridden by, the lad ran again to the lime-tree, and all happened as on the first day. Every one wondered what strange champion it could be that had helped them, but no one got so near him as to say a word to him; and no one guessed it could be the lad; that’s easy to understand.

So when they went home at night, and saw the lad still sitting there on his hack, they burst out laughing at him again, and one of them shot an arrow at him and hit him in the leg. So he began to shriek and to bewail; ‘twas enough to break one’s heart; and so the *King* threw his pocket-handkerchief to him to bind his wound.

When they went out to battle the third day, the lad still sat there.

“Gee up! gee up!” he said to his hack.

“Nay, nay,” said the *King’s* men; “if he won’t stick there till he’s starved to death.”

And then they rode on, and laughed at him till they were fit to fall from their horses. When they were gone, he ran again to the lime, and came up to the battle just in the very nick of time. This day he slew the enemy’s king, and then the war was over at once.

When the battle was over, the *King* caught sight of his handkerchief, which the strange warrior had bound round his leg, and so it wasn’t hard to find him out. So they took him with great joy between them to the palace, and the *Princess*, who saw him from her window, got so glad, no one can believe it.

“Here comes my own true love,” she said.

Then he took the pot of ointment and rubbed himself on the leg, and after that he rubbed all the wounded, and so they all got well again in a moment.

So he got the *Princess* to wife; but when he went down into the stable where his horse was on the day the wedding was to be, there it stood so dull and heavy, and hung its ears down, and wouldn’t eat its corn. So when the young *King* — for he was now a king, and had got half the kingdom — spoke to him, and asked what ailed him, the *Horse* said:

"Now I have helped you on, and now I won't live any longer. So just take the sword, and cut my head off."

"No, I'll do nothing of the kind," said the young *King*; "but you shall have all you want, and rest all your life."

"Well," said the *Horse*, "if you don't do as I tell you, see if I don't take your life somehow."

So the *King* had to do what he asked; but when he swung the sword and was to cut his head off, he was so sorry he turned away his face, for he would not see the stroke fall. But as soon as ever he had cut off the head, there stood the loveliest *Prince* on the spot where the horse had stood.

"Why, where in all the world did you come from?" asked the *King*.

"It was I who was a horse," said the *Prince*; "for I was king of that land whose king you slew yesterday. He it was who threw this *Troll's* shape over me, and sold me to the *Troll*. But now he is slain I get my own again, and you and I will be neighbour kings, but war we will never make on one another."

And they didn't either; for they were friends as long as they lived, and each paid the other very many visits.

12

THE THREE BILLY-GOATS GRUFF

Once on a time there were three *Billy-goats*, who were to go up to the hill-side to make themselves fat, and the name of all three was “*Gruff*.”

On the way up was a bridge over a burn they had to cross; and under the bridge lived a great ugly *Troll*, with eyes as big as saucers, and a nose as long as a poker.

So first of all came the youngest billy-goat *Gruff* to cross the bridge.

“Trip, trap! trip, trap!” went the bridge.

“Who’s that tripping over my bridge?” roared the *Troll*.

“Oh! it is only I, the tiniest billy-goat *Gruff*; and I’m going up to the hill-side to make myself fat,” said the billy-goat, with such a small voice.

“Now, I’m coming to gobble you up,” said the *Troll*.

“Oh, no! pray don’t take me. I’m too little, that I am,” said the billy-goat; “wait a bit till the second billy-goat *Gruff* comes, he’s much bigger.”

“Well! be off with you,” said the *Troll*.

A little while after came the second billy-goat *Gruff* to cross the bridge.

“Trip, trap! trip, trap! trip, trap!” went the bridge.

“WHO’S THAT tripping over my bridge?” roared the *Troll*.

“Oh! It’s the second billy-goat *Gruff*, and I’m going up to the hill-side to make myself fat,” said the billy-goat, who hadn’t such a small voice.

“Now, I’m coming to gobble you up,” said the *Troll*.

“Oh, no! don’t take me, wait a little till the big billy-goat *Gruff* comes, he’s much bigger.”

“Very well! be off with you,” said the *Troll*.

But just then up came the big billy-goat *Gruff*.

“TRIP, TRAP! TRIP, TRAP! TRIP, TRAP!” went the bridge, for the billy-goat was so heavy that the bridge creaked and groaned under him.

“WHO’S THAT tramping over my bridge?” roared the *Troll*.

“IT’S I! THE BIG BILLY-GOAT GRUFF,” said the billy-goat, who had an ugly hoarse voice of his own.

“Now, I’m coming to gobble you up,” roared the *Troll*.

Well, come along! I’ve got two spears,
And I’ll poke your eyeballs out at your ears;
I’ve got besides two curling-stones,
And I’ll crush you to bits, body and bones.

That was what the big billy-goat said; and so he flew at the *Troll* and poked his eyes out with his horns, and crushed him to bits, body and bones, and tossed him out into the burn, and after that he went up to the hill-side. There the billy-goats got so fat they were scarce able to walk home again; and if the fat hasn’t fallen off them, why they’re still fat; and so:

Snip, snap, snout,
This tale’s told out.

13

THE THREE PRINCESSES IN THE BLUE MOUNTAIN

There were once upon a time a *King* and *Queen* who had no children, and they took it so much to heart that they hardly ever had a happy moment. One day the *King* stood in the portico and looked out over the big meadows and all that was his. But he felt he could have no enjoyment out of it all, since he did not know what would become of it after his time. As he stood there pondering, an old beggar woman came up to him and asked him for a trifle in heaven’s name. She greeted him and curtsied, and asked what ailed the *King*, since he looked so sad.

“You can’t do anything to help me, my good woman,” said the *King*; “it’s no use telling you.”

“I am not so sure about that,” said the beggar woman. “Very little is wanted when luck is in the way. The *King* is thinking that he has no heir to his crown and kingdom, but he need not mourn on that account,” she said. “The *Queen* shall have three daughters, but great care must be taken that they do not come out under the open heavens before they are all fifteen years old; otherwise a snowdrift will come and carry them away.”

When the time came the *Queen* had a beautiful baby girl; the year after she had another, and the third year she also had a girl.

The *King* and *Queen* were glad beyond all measure; but although the *King* was very happy, he did not forget to set a watch at the Palace door, so that the *Princesses* should not get out.

As they grew up they became both fair and beautiful, and all went well with them in every way. Their only sorrow was that they were not allowed to go out and play like other children. For all they begged and prayed their parents, and for all they besought the sentinel, it was of no avail; go out they must not before they were fifteen years old, all of them.

So one day, not long before the fifteenth birthday of the youngest *Princess*, the *King* and the *Queen* were out driving, and the *Princesses* were standing at the window and looking out. The sun was shining, and everything looked so green and beautiful that they felt that they must go out, happen what might. So they begged and entreated and urged the sentinel, all three of them, that he should let them down into the garden. “He could see for himself how warm and pleasant it was; no snowy weather could come on such a day.” Well, he didn’t think it looked much like it either, and if they must go they had better go, the soldier said; but it must only be for a minute, and he himself would go with them and look after them.

When they got down into the garden they ran up and down, and filled their laps with flowers and green leaves, the prettiest they could find. At last they could manage no more, but just as they were going indoors they caught sight of a large rose at the other end of the garden. It was many times prettier than any they had gathered, so they must have that also. But just as they bent down to take the rose a big dense snowdrift came and carried them away.

There was great mourning over the whole country, and the *King* made known from all the churches that any one who could save the *Princesses* should have half the kingdom and his golden crown and whichever princess he liked to choose.

You can well understand there were plenty who wanted to gain half the kingdom, and a princess into the bargain; so there were people of both high and low degree who set out for all parts of the country. But there was no one who could find the *Princesses*, or even get any tidings of them.

When all the grand and rich people in the country had had their turn, a captain and a lieutenant came to the Palace, and wanted to try their luck. The *King* fitted them out both with silver and gold, and wished them success on their journey.

Then came a soldier, who lived with his mother in a little cottage some way from the Palace. He had dreamt one night that he also was trying to find the *Princesses*. When the morning came he still remembered what he had dreamt, and told his mother about it.

“Some witchery must have got hold of you,” said the woman, “but you must dream the same thing three nights running, else there is nothing in it.” And the next two nights the same thing happened; he had the same dream, and he felt he must go. So he washed himself and put on his uniform, and went into the kitchen at the Palace. It was the day after the captain and the lieutenant had set out.

“You had better go home again,” said the *King*, “the *Princesses* are beyond your reach, I should say; and besides, I have spent so much money on outfits that I have nothing left to-day. You had better come back another time.”

“If I go, I must go to-day,” said the soldier. “Money I do not want; I only need a drop in my flask and some food in my wallet,” he said; “but it must be a good walletful — as much meat and bacon as I can carry.”

Yes, that he might have if that was all he wanted.

So he set off, and he had not gone many miles before he overtook the captain and the lieutenant.

“Where are you going?” asked the captain, when he saw the man in uniform.

“I’m going to try if I can find the *Princesses*,” answered the soldier.

“So are we,” said the captain, “and since your errand is the same, you may keep company with us, for if we don’t find them, you are not likely to find them either, my lad,” said he.

When they had gone awhile the soldier left the high road, and took a path into the forest.

“Where are you going?” said the captain; “it is best to follow the high road.”

“That may be,” said the soldier, “but this is my way.”

He kept to the path, and when the others saw this they turned round and followed him. Away they went further and further, far across big moors and along narrow valleys.

And at last it became lighter, and when they had got out of the forest altogether they came to a long bridge, which they had to cross. But on that bridge a bear stood on guard. He rose on his hind legs and came towards them, as if he wanted to eat them.

“What shall we do now?” said the captain.

“They say that the bear is fond of meat,” said the soldier, and then he threw a fore quarter to him, and so they got past. But when they reached the other end of the bridge, they saw a lion, which came roaring towards them with open jaws as if he wanted to swallow them.

“I think we had better turn right-about, we shall never be able to get past him alive,” said the captain.

“Oh, I don’t think he is so very dangerous,” said the soldier; “I have heard that lions are very fond of bacon, and I have half a pig in my wallet;” and then he threw a ham to the lion, who began eating and gnawing, and thus they got past him also.

In the evening they came to a fine big house. Each room was more gorgeous than the other; all was glitter and splendour wherever they looked; but that did not satisfy their hunger. The captain and the lieutenant went round rattling their money, and wanted to buy some food; but they saw no people nor could they find a crumb of anything in the house, so the soldier offered them some food from his wallet, which they were not too proud to accept, nor did they want any pressing. They helped themselves of what he had as if they had never tasted food before.

The next day the captain said they would have to go out shooting and try to get something to live upon. Close to the house was a large forest where there were plenty of hares and birds. The lieutenant was to remain at home and cook the remainder of the food in the soldier's wallet. In the meantime the captain and the soldier shot so much game that they were hardly able to carry it home. When they came to the door they found the lieutenant in such a terrible plight that he was scarcely able to open the door to them.

"What is the matter with you?" said the captain. The lieutenant then told them that as soon as they were gone a tiny, little man, with a long beard, who went on crutches, came in and asked so plaintively for a penny; but no sooner had he got it than he let it fall on the floor, and for all he raked and scraped with his crutch he was not able to get hold of it, so stiff and stark was he.

"I pitied the poor, old body," said the lieutenant, "and so I bent down to pick up the penny, but then he was neither stiff nor stark any longer. He began to belabour me with his crutches till very soon I was unable to move a limb."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself! you, one of the king's officers, to let an old cripple give you a thrashing, and then tell people of it into the bargain!" said the captain. "Pshaw! to-morrow I'll stop at home, and then you'll hear another story."

The next day the lieutenant and the soldier went out shooting and the captain remained at home to do the cooking and look after the house. But if he fared no worse, he certainly fared no better than the lieutenant. In a little while the old man came in and asked for a penny. He let it fall as soon as he got it; gone it was and could not be found. So he asked the captain to help him to find it, and the captain, without giving a thought, bent down to look for it. But no sooner was he on his knees than the cripple began belabouring him with his crutches, and every time the captain tried to rise, he got a blow which sent him reeling. When the others came home in the evening, he still lay on the same spot and could neither see nor speak.

The third day the soldier was to remain at home, while the other two went out shooting. The captain said he must take care of himself, “for the old fellow will soon put an end to you, my lad,” said he.

“Oh, there can’t be much life in one if such an old crook can take it,” said the soldier.

They were no sooner outside the door, than the old man came in and asked for a penny again.

“Money I have never owned,” said the soldier, “but food I’ll give you, as soon as it is ready,” said he, “but if we are to get it cooked, you must go and cut the wood.”

“That I can’t,” said the old man.

“If you can’t, you must learn,” said the soldier. “I will soon show you. Come along with me down to the wood-shed.” There he dragged out a heavy log and cut a cleft in it, and drove in a wedge till the cleft deepened.

“Now you must lie down and look right along the cleft, and you’ll soon learn how to cut wood,” said the soldier. “In the meantime I’ll show you how to use the axe.”

The old man was not sufficiently cunning, and did as he was told; he lay down and looked steadily along the log. When the soldier saw the old man’s beard had got well into the cleft, he struck out the wedge; the cleft closed and the old man was caught by the beard. The soldier began to beat him with the axe handle, and then swung the axe round his head, and vowed that he would split his skull if he did not tell him, there and then, where the *Princesses* were.

“Spare my life, spare my life, and I’ll tell you!” said the old man. “To the east of the house there is a big mound; on top of the mound you must dig out a square piece of turf, and then you will see a big stone slab. Under that there is a deep hole through which you must let yourself down, and you’ll then come to another world where you will find the *Princesses*. But the way is long and dark and it goes both through fire and water.”

When the soldier got to know this, he released the old man, who was not long in making off.

When the captain and lieutenant came home they were surprised to find the soldier alive. He told them what had happened from first to last, where the *Princesses* were and how they should find them. They became as pleased as if they had already found them, and when they had had some food, they took with them a basket and as much rope as they could find, and all three set off to the mound. There they first dug out the turf just as the old man had told them, and underneath they found a big stone slab, which it took all their strength to turn over. They then began to measure how deep it was; they joined on ropes both two and three times, but they were no nearer the bottom the last time than the first. At last they had to join all the ropes they had, both the coarse and fine, and then they found it reached the bottom.

The captain was, of course, the first who wanted to descend; “But when I tug at the rope you must make haste to drag me up again,” he said. He found the way both dark and unpleasant, but he thought he would go on as long as it became no worse. But all at once he felt ice cold water spouting about his ears; he became frightened to death and began tugging at the rope.

The lieutenant was the next to try, but it fared no better with him. No sooner had he got through the flood of water than he saw a blazing fire yawning beneath him, which so frightened him that he also turned back.

The soldier then got into the bucket, and down he went through fire and water, right on till he came to the bottom, where it was so pitch dark that he could not see his hand before him. He dared not let go the basket, but went round in a circle, feeling and fumbling about him. At last he discovered a gleam of light far, far away like the dawn of day, and he went on in that direction.

When he had gone a bit it began to grow light around him, and before long he saw a golden sun rising in the sky and everything around him became as bright and beautiful as if in a fairy world.

First he came to some cattle, which were so fat that their hides glistened a long way off, and when he had got past them he came to a fine, big palace. He walked through many rooms without meeting anybody. At last he heard the hum of a spinning wheel, and when he entered the room he found the eldest *Princess* sitting there spinning copper yarn; the room and everything in it was of brightly polished copper.

“Oh, dear; oh, dear! what are Christian people doing here?” said the *Princess*. “Heaven preserve you! what do you want?”

“I want to set you free and get you out of the mountain,” said the soldier.

“Pray do not stay. If the troll comes home he will put an end to you at once; he has three heads,” said she.

“I do not care if he has four,” said the soldier. “I am here, and here I shall remain.”

“Well, if you will be so headstrong, I must see if I can help you,” said the *Princess*.

She then told him to creep behind the big brewing vat which stood in the front hall; meanwhile she would receive the troll and scratch his heads till he went to sleep.

“And when I go out and call the hens you must make haste and come in,” she said. “But you must first try if you can swing the sword which is lying on the table.” No, it was too heavy, he could not even move it. He had then to take a strengthening draught from the horn, which hung behind the door; after that he was just able to stir it, so he took another draught, and then he could lift it. At last he took a right, big draught, and he could swing the sword as easily as anything.

All at once the troll came home; he walked so heavily that the palace shook.

“Ugh, ugh! I smell Christian flesh and blood in my house,” said he.

“Yes,” answered the *Princess*, “a raven flew past here just now, and in his beak he had a human bone, which he dropped down the chimney; I threw it out and swept and cleaned up after it, but I suppose it still smells.”

“So it does,” said the troll.

“But come and lie down and I’ll scratch your heads,” said the *Princess*; “the smell will be gone by the time you wake.”

The troll was quite willing, and before long he fell asleep and began snoring. When she saw he was sleeping soundly, she placed some stools and cushions under his heads and went to call the hens. The soldier then stole into the room with the sword, and with one blow cut all the three heads off the troll.

The *Princess* was as pleased as a fiddler, and went with the soldier to her sisters, so that he could also set them free. First of all they went across a courtyard and then through many long rooms till they came to a big door.

“Here you must enter: here she is,” said the *Princess*. When he opened the door he found himself in a large hall, where everything was of pure silver; there sat the second sister at a silver spinning-wheel.

“Oh, dear; oh, dear!” she said. “What do you want here?”

“I want to set you free from the troll,” said the soldier.

“Pray do not stay, but go,” said the *Princess*. “If he finds you here he will take your life on the spot.”

“That would be awkward — that is if I don’t take his first,” said the soldier.

“Well, since you will stay,” she said, “you will have to creep behind the big brewing-vat in the front hall. But you must make haste and come as soon as you hear me calling the hens.”

First of all he had to try if he was able to swing the troll’s sword, which lay on the table; it was much larger and heavier than the first one; he was hardly able to move it. He then took three draughts from the horn and he could then lift it, and when he had taken three more he could handle it as if it were a rolling pin.

Shortly afterwards he heard a heavy, rumbling noise that was quite terrible, and directly afterwards a troll with six heads came in.

“Ugh, ugh!” he said as soon as he got his noses inside the door. “I smell Christian blood and bone in my house.”

“Yes, just think! A raven came flying past here with a thigh-bone, which he dropped down the chimney,” said the *Princess*. “I threw it out, but the raven brought it back again. At last I got rid of it and made haste to clean the room, but I suppose the smell is not quite gone,” she said.

“No, I can smell it well,” said the troll; but he was tired and put his heads in the *Princess’s* lap, and she went on scratching them till they all fell a-snoring. Then she called the hens, and the soldier came and cut off all the six heads as if they were set on cabbage stalks.

She was no less glad than her elder sister, as you may imagine, and danced and sang; but in the midst of their joy they remembered their youngest sister. They went with the soldier across a large courtyard, and, after walking through many, many rooms, he came to the hall of gold where the third sister was.

She sat at a golden spinning-wheel spinning gold yarn, and the room from ceiling to floor glistened and glittered till it hurt one’s eyes.

“Heaven preserve both you and me, what do you want here?” said the *Princess*. “Go, go, else the troll will kill us both.”

“Just as well two as one,” answered the soldier. The *Princess* cried and wept; but it was all of no use, he must and would remain. Since there was no help for it he would have to try if he could use the troll’s sword on the table in the front hall. But he was only just able to move it; it was still larger and heavier than the other two swords.

He then had to take the horn down from the wall and take three draughts from it, but was only just able to stir the sword. When he had taken three more draughts he could lift it, and when he had taken another three he swung it as easily as if it had been a feather.

The *Princess* then settled with the soldier to do the same as her sisters had done. As soon as the troll was well asleep she would call the hens, and he must then make haste and come in and put an end to the troll.

All of a sudden they heard such a thundering, rambling noise, as if the walls and roof were tumbling in.

“Ugh! Ugh! I smell Christian blood and bone in my house,” said the troll, sniffing with all his nine noses.

“Yes, you never saw the like! Just now a raven flew past here and dropped a human bone down the chimney. I threw it out, but the raven brought it back, and this went on for some time,” said the *Princess*; but she got it buried at last, she said, and she had both swept and cleaned the place, but she supposed it still smelt.

“Yes, I can smell it well,” said the troll.

“Come here and lie down in my lap and I will scratch your heads,” said the *Princess*. “The smell will be all gone when you awake.”

He did so, and when he was snoring at his best she put stools and cushions under the heads so that she could get away to call the hens. The soldier then came in in his stockinged feet and struck at the troll, so that eight of the heads fell off at one blow. But the sword was too short and did not reach far enough; the ninth head woke up and began to roar.

“Ugh! Ugh! I smell a Christian.”

“Yes, here he is,” answered the soldier, and before the troll could get up and seize hold of him the soldier struck him another blow and the last head rolled along the floor.

You can well imagine how glad the *Princesses* became now that they no longer had to sit and scratch the trolls’ heads; they did not know how they could do enough for him who had saved them. The youngest *Princess* took off her gold ring and knotted it in his hair. They then took with them as much gold and silver as they thought they could carry and set off on their way home.

As soon as they tugged at the rope the captain and the lieutenant pulled up the *Princesses*, the one after the other. But when they were safely up, the soldier thought it was foolish of him not to have gone up before the *Princesses*, for he had not very much belief in his comrades. He thought he would first try them, so he put a heavy lump of gold in the basket and got out of the way. When the basket was half-way up they cut the rope and the lump of gold fell to the bottom with such a crash that the pieces flew about his ears.

“Now we are rid of him,” they said, and threatened the *Princesses* with their life if they did not say that it was they who had saved them from the trolls. They were forced to agree to this, much against their will, and especially the youngest *Princess*; but life was precious, and so the two who were strongest had their way.

When the captain and lieutenant got home with the *Princesses* you may be sure there were great rejoicings at the palace. The *King* was so glad he didn’t know which leg to stand on; he brought out his best wine from his cupboard and wished the two officers welcome. If they had never been honoured before they were honoured now in full measure, and no mistake. They walked and strutted about the whole of the day, as if they were the cocks of the walk, since they were now going to have the *King* for father-in-law. For it was understood they should each have whichever of the

Princesses they liked and half the kingdom between them. They both wanted the youngest *Princess*, but for all they prayed and threatened her it was of no use; she would not hear or listen to either.

They then asked the *King* if they might have twelve men to watch over her; she was so sad and melancholy since she had been in the mountain that they were afraid she might do something to herself.

Yes, that they might have, and the *King* himself told the watch they must look well after her and follow her wherever she went and stood.

They then began to prepare for the wedding of the two eldest sisters; it should be such a wedding as never was heard or spoken of before, and there was no end to the brewing and the baking and the slaughtering.

In the meantime the soldier walked and strolled about down in the other world. He thought it was hard that he should see neither people nor daylight any more; but he would have to do something, he thought, and so for many days he went about from room to room and opened all the drawers and cupboards and searched about on the shelves and looked at all the fine things that were there. At last he came to a drawer in a table, in which there lay a golden key; he tried this key to all the locks he could find, but there was none it fitted till he came to a little cupboard over the bed, and in that he found an old rusty whistle. “I wonder if there is any sound in it,” he thought, and put it to his mouth. No sooner had he whistled than he heard a whizzing and a whirring from all quarters, and such a large flock of birds swept down, that they blackened all the field in which they settled.

“What does our master want to-day?” they asked.

If he were their master, the soldier said, he would like to know if they could tell him how to get up to the earth again. No, none of them knew anything about that; “But our mother has not yet arrived,” they said; “if she can’t help you, no one can.”

So he whistled once more, and shortly heard something flapping its wings far away, and then it began to blow so hard that he was carried away between the houses like a wisp of hay across the courtyard, and if he had not caught hold of the fence he would no doubt have been blown away altogether.

A big eagle — bigger than you can imagine — then swooped down in front of him.

“You come rather sharply,” said the soldier.

“As you whistle so I come,” answered the eagle. So he asked her if she knew any means by which he could get away from the world in which they were.

“You can’t get away from here unless you can fly,” said the eagle, “but if you will slaughter twelve oxen for me, so that I can have a really good meal, I will try and help you. Have you got a knife?”

“No, but I have a sword,” he said. When the eagle had swallowed the twelve oxen she asked the soldier to kill one more for victuals on the journey. “Every time I gape you must be quick and fling a piece into my mouth,” she said, “else I shall not be able to carry you up to earth.”

He did as she asked him and hung two large bags of meat round her neck and seated himself among her feathers. The eagle then began to flap her wings and off they went through the air like the wind. It was as much as the soldier could do to hold on, and it was with the greatest difficulty he managed to throw the pieces of flesh into the eagle’s mouth every time she opened it.

At last the day began to dawn, and the eagle was then almost exhausted and began flapping with her wings, but the soldier was prepared and seized the last hind quarter and flung it to her. Then she gained strength and brought him up to earth. When she had sat and rested a while at the top of a large pine-tree she set off with him again at such a pace that flashes of lightning were seen both by sea and land wherever they went.

Close to the palace the soldier got off and the eagle flew home again, but first she told him that if he at any time should want her he need only blow the whistle and she would be there at once.

In the meantime everything was ready at the palace, and the time approached when the captain and lieutenant were to be married with the two eldest *Princesses*, who, however, were not much happier than their youngest sister; scarcely a day passed without weeping and mourning, and the nearer the wedding-day approached the more sorrowful did they become.

At last the *King* asked what was the matter with them; he thought it was very strange that they were not merry and happy now that they were saved and had been set free and were going to be married. They had to give some answer, and so the eldest sister said they never would be happy any more unless they could get such checkers as they had played with in the blue mountain.

That, thought the *King*, could be easily managed, and so he sent word to all the best and cleverest goldsmiths in the country that they should make these checkers for the *Princesses*. For all they tried there was no one who could make them. At last all the goldsmiths had been to the palace except one, and he was an old, infirm man who had not done any work for many years except odd jobs, by which he was just able to keep himself alive. To him the soldier went and asked to be apprenticed. The old man was so glad to get him, for he had not had an apprentice for many a day, that he brought out a flask from his chest and sat down to drink with the soldier. Before long the drink got into his head, and when the soldier saw this he persuaded him to go up to the palace and tell the *King* that he would undertake to make the checkers for the *Princesses*.

He was ready to do that on the spot; he had made finer and grander things in his day, he said. When the *King* heard there was some one outside who could make the checkers he was not long in coming out.

“Is it true what you say, that you can make such checkers as my daughters want?” he asked.

“Yes, it is no lie,” said the goldsmith; that he would answer for.

“That’s well!” said the *King*. “Here is the gold to make them with; but if you do not succeed you will lose your life, since you have come and offered yourself, and they must be finished in three days.”

The next morning when the goldsmith had slept off the effects of the drink, he was not quite so confident about the job. He wailed and wept and blew up his apprentice, who had got him into such a scrape while he was drunk. The best thing would be to make short work of himself at once, he said, for there could be no hope for his life; when the best and grandest goldsmiths could not make such checkers, was it likely that he could do it?

“Don’t fret on that account,” said the soldier, “but let me have the gold and I’ll get the checkers ready in time; but I must have a room to myself to work in,” he said. This he got, and thanks into the bargain.

The time wore on, and the soldier did nothing but lounge about, and the goldsmith began to grumble, because he would not begin with the work.

“Don’t worry yourself about it,” said the soldier, “there is plenty of time! If you are not satisfied with what I have promised you had better make them yourself.” The same thing went on both that day and the next; and when the smith heard neither hammer nor file from the soldier’s room the whole of the last day, he quite gave himself up for lost; it was now no use to think any longer about saving his life, he thought.

But when the night came on the soldier opened the window and blew his whistle. The eagle then came and asked what he wanted.

“Those gold checkers, which the *Princesses* had in the blue mountain,” said the soldier; “but you’ll want something to eat first, I suppose? I have two ox carcases lying ready for you in the hay-loft yonder; you had better finish them,” he said. When the eagle had done she did not tarry, and long before the sun rose she was back again with the checkers. The soldier then put them under his bed and lay down to sleep.

Early next morning the goldsmith came and knocked at his door.

"What are you after now again?" asked the soldier. "You rush about enough in the day, goodness knows! If one cannot have peace when one is in bed, whoever would be an apprentice here?" said he.

Neither praying nor begging helped that time; the goldsmith must and would come in, and at last he was let in.

And then, you may be sure, there was soon an end to his wailing.

But still more glad than the goldsmith were the *Princesses*, when he came up to the palace with the checkers, and gladdest of all was the youngest *Princess*.

"Have you made them yourself?" she asked.

"No, if I must speak the truth, it is not I," he said, "but my apprentice, who has made them."

"I should like to see that apprentice," said the *Princess*. In fact all three wanted to see him, and if he valued his life, he would have to come.

He was not afraid, either of women-folk or grand-folk, said the soldier, and if it could be any amusement to them to look at his rags, they should soon have that pleasure.

The youngest *Princess* recognised him at once; she pushed the soldiers aside and ran up to him, gave him her hand, and said:

"Good day, and many thanks for all you have done for us. It is he who freed us from the trolls in the mountain," she said to the *King*. "He is the one I will have!" and then she pulled off his cap and showed them the ring she had tied in his hair.

It soon came out how the captain and lieutenant had behaved, and so they had to pay the penalty of their treachery with their lives, and that was the end of their grandeur. But the soldier got the golden crown and half the kingdom, and married the youngest *Princess*.

At the wedding they drank and feasted both well and long; for feast they all could, even if they could not find the *Princesses*, and if they have not yet done feasting and drinking they must be at it still.

14

THE CAT ON THE DOVREFELL

Once on a time there was a man up in Finnmark who had caught a great white bear, which he was going to take to the King of Denmark. Now, it so fell out, that he came to the *Dovrefell* just about Christmas Eve, and there he turned into a cottage where a man lived, whose name was Halvor, and asked the man if he could get house-room there for his bear and himself.

“Heaven never help me, if what I say isn’t true!” said the man; “but we can’t give anyone house-room just now, for every Christmas Eve such a pack of *Trolls* come down upon us, that we are forced to flit, and haven’t so much as a house over our own heads, to say nothing of lending one to anyone else.”

“Oh?” said the man, “if that’s all, you can very well lend me your house; my bear can lie under the stove yonder, and I can sleep in the side-room.”

Well, he begged so hard, that at last he got leave to stay there; so the people of the house flitted out, and before they went, everything was got ready for the *Trolls*; the tables were laid, and there was rice porridge, and fish boiled in lye, and sausages, and all else that was good, just as for any other grand feast.

So, when everything was ready, down came the *Trolls*. Some were great, and some were small; some had long tails, and some had no tails at all; some, too, had long, long noses; and they ate and drank, and tasted everything. Just then one of the little *Trolls* caught sight of the white bear, who lay under the stove; so he took a piece of sausage and stuck it on a fork, and went and poked it up against the bear's nose, screaming out:

"Pussy, will you have some sausage?"

Then the white bear rose up and growled, and hunted the whole pack of them out of doors, both great and small.

Next year Halvor was out in the wood, on the afternoon of Christmas Eve, cutting wood before the holidays, for he thought the *Trolls* would come again; and just as he was hard at work, he heard a voice in the wood calling out:

"Halvor! Halvor!"

"Well," said Halvor, "here I am."

"Have you got your big cat with you still?"

"Yes, that I have," said Halvor; "she's lying at home under the stove, and what's more, she has now got seven kittens, far bigger and fiercer than she is herself."

"Oh, then, we'll never come to see you again," bawled out the *Troll* away in the wood, and he kept his word; for since that time the *Trolls* have never eaten their Christmas brose with Halvor on the *Dovrefell*.

15

ONE’S OWN CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS PRETTIEST

A sportsman went out once into a wood to shoot, and he met a *Snipe*.

“Dear friend,” said the *Snipe*, “don’t shoot my children!”

“How shall I know your children?” asked the *Sportsman*. “What are they like?”

“Oh!” said the *Snipe*, “mine are the prettiest children in all the wood.”

“Very well,” said the *Sportsman*, “I’ll not shoot them; don’t be afraid.”

But for all that, when he came back, there he had a whole string of young snipes in his hand which he had shot.

“Oh, oh!” said the *Snipe*, “why did you shoot my children after all?”

“What! these your children!” said the *Sportsman*; “why, I shot the ugliest I could find, that I did!”

“Woe is me!” said the *Snipe*; “don’t you know that each one thinks his own children the prettiest in the world?”

16

TAPER TOM

Once on a time there was a King who had a daughter, and she was so lovely that her good looks were well known far and near. But she was so sad and serious she could never be got to laugh, and besides, she was so high and mighty that she said “No” to all who came to woo her. She would have none of them, were they ever so grand — lords or princes, — it was all the same.

The King had long ago become tired of this, for he thought she might just as well marry; she, too, like all other people. There was no use in waiting; she was quite old enough, nor would she be any richer, for she was to have half the kingdom, — that came to her as her mother’s heir.

So he had word sent throughout the kingdom, that anyone who could get his daughter to laugh should have her for his wife and half the kingdom besides. But, if there was anyone who tried and could not, he was to have a sound thrashing. And sure it was that there were many sore backs in that kingdom, for lovers and wooers came from north and south, and east and west, thinking it nothing at all to make a King’s daughter laugh. And gay fellows they were, some of them too, but for all their tricks and capers there sat the Princess, just as sad and serious as she had been before.

Now, not far from the palace lived a man who had three sons, and they, too, had heard how the King had given it out that the man who could make the Princess laugh was to have her to wife and half the kingdom.

The eldest was for setting off first. So he strode off, and when he came to the King's grange, he told the King he would be glad to try to make the Princess laugh.

"All very well, my man," said the King, "but it's sure to be of no use, for so many have been here and tried. My daughter is so sorrowful it's no use trying, and it's not my wish that anyone should come to grief."

But the lad thought he would like to try. It couldn't be such a very hard thing for him to get the Princess to laugh, for so many had laughed at him, both gentle and simple, when he enlisted for a soldier and was drilled by Corporal Jack.

So he went off to the courtyard, under the Princess's window, and began to go through his drill as Corporal Jack had taught him. But it was no good, the Princess was just as sad and serious and did not so much as smile at him once. So they took him and thrashed him well, and sent him home again.

Well, he had hardly got home before his second brother wanted to set off. He was a schoolmaster, and the funniest figure one ever laid eyes upon; he was lopsided, for he had one leg shorter than the other, and one moment he was as little as a boy, and in another, when he stood on his long leg, he was as tall and long as a Troll. Besides this he was a powerful preacher.

So when he came to the king's palace, and said he wished to make the Princess laugh, the King thought it might not be so unlikely after all. "But mercy on you," he said, "if you don't make her laugh. We are for laying it on harder and harder for every one that fails."

Then the schoolmaster strode off to the courtyard, and put himself before the Princess's window, and read and preached like seven parsons, and sang and chanted like seven clerks, as loud as all the parsons and clerks in the country round.

The King laughed loud at him, and the Princess almost smiled a little, but then became as sad and serious as ever, and so it fared no better with

Paul, the schoolmaster, than with Peter the soldier — for you must know one was called Peter and the other Paul. So they took him and flogged him well, and then they sent him home again.

Then the youngest, whose name was Taper Tom, was all for setting out. But his brothers laughed and jeered at him, and showed him their sore backs, and his father said it was no use for him to go for he had no sense. Was it not true that he neither knew anything nor could do anything? There he sat in the hearth, like a cat, and grubbed in the ashes and split tapers. That was why they called him “Taper Tom.” But Taper Tom would not give in, and so they got tired of his growling; and at last he, too, got leave to go to the king’s palace to try his luck.

When he got there he did not say that he wished to try to make the Princess laugh, but asked if he could get work there. No, they had no place for him, but for all that Taper Tom would not give up. In such a big palace they must want someone to carry wood and water for the kitchen maid, — that was what he said. And the king thought it might very well be, for he, too, got tired of his teasing. In the end Taper Tom stayed there to carry wood and water for the kitchen maid.

So one day, when he was going to fetch water from the brook, he set eyes upon a big fish which lay under an old fir stump, where the water had eaten into the bank, and he put his bucket softly under the fish and caught it. But as he was gong home to the grange he met an old woman who led a golden goose by a string.

“Good-day, godmother,” said Taper Tom, “that’s a pretty bird you have, and what fine feathers! If one only had such feathers one might leave off splitting fir tapers.”

The goody was just as pleased with the fish Tom had in his bucket and said, if he would give her the fish, he might have the golden goose. And it was such a curious goose. When any one touched it he stuck fast to it, if Tom only said, “If you want to come along, hang on.” Of course, Taper

Tom was willing enough to make the exchange. “A bird is as good as a fish any day,” he said to himself, “and, if it’s such a bird as you say, I can use it as a fish hook.” That was what he said to the goody, and he was much pleased with the goose.

Now, he had not gone far before he met another old woman. As soon as she saw the lovely golden goose she spoke prettily, and coaxed and begged Tom to give her leave to stroke his lovely golden goose.

“With all my heart,” said Taper Tom, and just as she stroked the goose he said, “If you want to come along, hang on.”

The goody pulled and tore, but she was forced to hang on whether she would or not, and Taper Tom went on as though he alone were with the golden goose.

When he had gone a bit farther, he met a man who had had a quarrel with the old woman for a trick she had played him. So, when he saw how hard she struggled and strove to get free, and how fast she stuck, he thought he would just pay her off the old grudge, and so he gave her a kick with his foot.

“If you want to come along, hang on!” called out Tom, and then the old man had to hop along on one leg, whether he would or not. When he tore and tugged and tried to get loose — it was still worse for him, for he all but fell flat on his back every step he took.

In this way they went on a good bit till they had nearly reached the King’s palace.

There they met the King’s smith, who was going to the smithy, and had a great pair of tongs in his hand. Now you must know this smith was a merry fellow, full of both tricks and pranks, and when he saw this string come hobbling and limping along, he laughed so that he was almost bent double. Then he bawled out, “Surely this is a new flock of geese the Princess is going to have — Ah, here is the gander that toddles in front.

Goosey! goosey! goosey!” he called, and with that he threw his hands about as though he were scattering corn for the geese.

But the flock never stopped — on it went and all that the goody and the man did was to look daggers at the smith for making fun of them. Then the smith went on:

“It would be fine fun to see if I could hold the whole flock, so many as they are,” for he was a stout strong fellow. So he took hold with his big tongs by the old man’s coat tail, and the man all the while screeched and wriggled. But Taper Tom only said:

“If you want to come along, hang on!” So the smith had to go along too. He bent his back and stuck his heels into the ground and tried to get loose, but it was all no good. He stuck fast, as though he had been screwed tight with his own vise, and whether he would or not, he had to dance along with the rest.

So, when they came near to the King’s palace, the dog ran out and began to bark as though they were wolves and beggars. And when the Princess, looking out of the window to see what was the matter, set eyes on this strange pack, she laughed softly to herself. But Taper Tom was not content with that:

“Bide a bit,” he said, “she will soon have to make a noise.” And as he said that he turned off with his band to the back of the palace.

When they passed by the kitchen the door stood open, and the cook was just stirring the porridge. But when she saw Taper Tom and his pack she came running out at the door, with her broom in one hand and a ladle full of smoking porridge in the other, and she laughed as though her sides would split. And when she saw the smith there too, she bent double and went off again in a loud peal of laughter. But when she had had her laugh out, she too thought the golden goose so lovely she must just stroke it.

“Taper Tom! Taper Tom!” she called out, and came running out with the ladle of porridge in her fist, “Give me leave to pet that pretty bird of yours’?”

“Better come and pet me,” said the smith. But when the cook heard that she got angry.

“What is that you say?” she cried and gave the smith a box on his ears with the ladle.

“If you want to come along, hang on,” said Taper Tom. So she stuck fast too, and for all her kicks and plunges, and all her scolding and screaming, and all her riving and striving, she too had to limp along with them.

Soon the whole company came under the Princess’s window. There she stood waiting for them. And when she saw they had taken the cook too, with her ladle and broom, she opened her mouth wide, and laughed so loud that the King had to hold her upright.

So Taper Tom got the Princess and half the kingdom, and they say he kept her in high spirits with his tricks and pranks till the end of her days.

17

WHY THE BEAR IS STUMPY-TAILED

One day the Bear met the Fox, who came slinking along with a string of fish he had stolen.

"Where did you get those?" asked the Bear.

"Oh! my Lord Bruin, I've been out fishing and caught them," said the Fox.

So the Bear had a mind to learn to fish too, and bade the Fox tell him how he was to set about it.

"Oh! it is an easy craft for you," answered the Fox, "and soon learned. You've only to go upon the ice, cut a hole, stick your tail down into it, and hold it there as long as you can. You're not to mind if your tail smarts a little; that's when the fish bite. The longer you hold it there the more fish you'll get; and then all at once out with it, with a cross pull sideways, and with a strong pull too."

Yes, the Bear did as the Fox had said, and held his tail a long, long time down in the hole, till it was frozen in fast. Then he pulled it out with a cross pull, and it snapped short off. That's why Bruin goes about with a stumpy tail to this very day.

18

REYNARD AND THE COCK

Once on a time there was a cock who stood on the barnyard fence and crowed and flapped his wings. Then the fox came by.

“Good-day,” said Reynard. “I have heard you crowing so nicely, but can you stand on one leg and crow, and wink your eyes?”

“Oh, yes,” said the cock, “I can do that very well.” So he stood on one leg and crowed, but he winked only with one eye, and when he had done that he made himself big and flapped his wings, as though he had done a great thing.

“Very pretty, to be sure,” said Reynard. “Almost as pretty as when the parson preaches in church, but can you stand on one leg and wink both your eyes at once? I hardly think you can.”

“Can’t I though!” said the cock, and stood on one leg, and winked both his eyes and crowed. But Reynard caught hold of him, took him by the throat, and threw him on his back, so that he was off to the wood before he had crowed his crow out, as fast as Reynard could lay legs to the ground.

When they had come under an old spruce fir, Reynard threw the cock on the ground, and set his paw on his breast, and was going to take a bite: “You are a heathen, Reynard!” said the cock. “Good Christians say grace before they eat.”

But Reynard would be no heathen, no indeed. So he let go his hold, and was about to fold his paws over his breast, and say grace — but pop! up flew the cock into a tree.

“You shan’t get off for all that,” said Reynard to himself. So he went away, and came again with a few chips which the woodcutters had left. The cock peeped and peered to see what they could be.

“What is that you have there?” he asked.

“These are letters I have just got,” said Reynard, “won’t you help me to read them, for I don’t know how to read writing.”

“I’d be so happy, but I dare not read them now,” said the cock, “for here comes a hunter — I see him, I see him with his pouch and gun.”

When Reynard heard the cock chattering about a hunter, he took to his heels as fast as he could.

19

BRUIN AND REYNARD PARTNERS

Once on a time Bruin and Reynard owned a field in common. They had a little clearing up in the wood, and the first year they sowed rye.

“Now we must share the crop as is fair and right,” said Reynard. “If you like to have the root, I’ll take the top.”

Yes, Bruin was ready to do that; but when they had threshed out the crop, Reynard got all the corn, but Bruin got nothing but roots and rubbish. He did not like that at all; but Reynard said that was how they had agreed to share it.

“This year I have the gain,” said Reynard, “next year it will be your turn. Then you shall have the top, and I shall have to put up with the root.”

But when spring came, and it was time to sow, Reynard asked Bruin what he thought of turnips.

“Aye, aye!” said Bruin, “that’s better food than rye,” and so Reynard thought also. But when harvest time came Reynard got the roots, while Bruin got the turnip-tops. And then Bruin was so angry with Reynard that he put an end at once to his partnership with him.

20

BOOTS AND HIS BROTHERS

Once on a time there was a man who had three sons, Peter, Paul and Espen. Espen was Boots, of course, because he was the youngest. I can't say the man had anything except these three sons, for he did not possess one penny to rub against another; and so he told his sons over and over again they must go out into the world to seek their fortune, for at home there was nothing to be expected but to starve to death.

Now, a short way from the man's cottage was the King's palace, and you must know, just against the King's windows a great oak had sprung up, which was so stout and big that it took away all the light from the king's palace. The King had said he would give much gold to any man who could fell the oak, but no one was man enough to do it, for as soon as one chip of the oak's trunk flew off, two grew in its stead. The King wished also to have a well dug which was to hold water for the whole year. All his neighbors had wells, but he had none, and he thought that a shame.

So the King said he would give to any one who could dig him such a well as would hold water for the whole year round, both money and goods, but no one could do it, for the King's palace lay high, high up on a hill, and they could dig but a few inches before they would come upon rock.

But as the King had set his heart on having these two things done, he had it given out in all the churches of his kingdom far and wide, that he who could fell the big oak in the King’s courtyard, and dig him a well that would hold water the whole year round, should have the Princess and half the kingdom. Well! you may easily know there was many a man who came to try his luck; but all their hacking and hewing, and all their digging and delving were useless. The oak got bigger and stouter at every stroke, and the rock grew no softer either.

One day the three brothers thought they, too, would set off and try it. Their father had not a word to say against it; for even if they did not get the Princess and half the kingdom, it might happen they would get a place somewhere with a good master and that was all he wanted. So when the brothers asked his permission, he consented at once, and Peter, Paul and Espen set forth.

Well, they had not gone far before they came to a fir wood where at one side there rose a steep hill, and as they went along they heard something hewing and hacking away up on the hill among the trees.

“I wonder now what it is that is hewing away up yonder,” said Boots.

“You’re always so clever with your wondering,” laughed Peter and Paul both at once. “What wonder is it, pray, that a wood cutter should stand and hack up on a hillside?”

“Still, I’d like to see what it is, after all,” said Boots, and up he went.

“Oh, if you’re such a child, ‘twill do you good to go and take a lesson,” called out his brothers after him.

But Boots didn’t care for what they said; he climbed the steep hillside towards the spot whence the noise came, and when he reached the place, what do you think he saw? Why, an axe that stood there hacking and hewing, all of itself, at the trunk of a fir tree.

“Good-day,” said Boots. “So you stand here all alone and hew, do you?”

“Yes, here I’ve stood and hewed and hacked for hundreds of years, waiting for you,” said the axe.

“Well, here I am at last,” said Boots, as he took the axe, pulled it off its haft, and stuffed both head and haft into his wallet.

When he got down again to his brothers, they began to jeer and laugh at him.

“And now, what strange thing was it you saw up yonder on the hillside?” they asked.

“Oh, it was only an axe we heard,” said Boots.

When they had gone on a bit farther, their road passed under a steep spur of rock, where they heard something digging and shovelling.

“I wonder now,” said Boots, “what is digging and shovelling up yonder at the top of the rock.”

“Ah, you’re always so clever with your wondering,” laughed Peter and Paul again, “as if you’d never heard a woodpecker hacking and pecking at a hollow tree.”

“Well, well,” said Boots, “I just think it would be fun to see what it really is.”

And so off he set to climb the rock, while the others laughed and made fun of him. But he did not care a bit for that; up he climbed, and when he got near the top, what do you think he saw? Why, a spade that stood there digging and delving.

“Good-day!” said Boots. “So you stand here all alone, and dig and delve, do you?”

“Yes, that’s what I do,” said the spade, “and that’s what I’ve done these hundreds of years, waiting for you, Boots.”

“Well, here I am,” said Boots again, as he took the spade and knocked it off the handle, and put it into his wallet, — and then returned to his brothers.

“Well, what was it, so rare and strange,” said Peter and Paul, “that you saw up there at the top of the rock?”

“Oh,” said Boots, “nothing more than a spade; that was what we heard.”

So they went on again a good bit until they came to a brook. They were thirsty, all three, after their long walk, and so they lay down beside the brook to have a drink.

“I wonder now,” said Boots, “where all this water comes from.”

“I wonder if you’ve lost the little sense you had,” said Peter and Paul in one breath. “Where the brook comes from indeed! Have you never heard how water rises from a spring in the earth?”

“Yes! but still I’ve a great fancy to see where this brook comes from,” said Boots.

So along beside the brook he went, in spite of all that his brothers cried after him. Nothing could stop him. On he went, up and up, and the brook got smaller and smaller, and at last, a little way farther on, what do you think he saw? Why, a great walnut, and out of that the water trickled.

“Good-day!” said Boots again. “So you lie here, and trickle and run down all alone?”

“Yes, I do,” said the walnut, “and here have I trickled and run these hundreds of years, waiting for you, Boots.”

“Well, here I am,” said Boots, as he took up a lump of moss, and plugged up the hole, that the water might not run out. Then he put the walnut into his wallet, and ran down to his brothers.

“Well, now,” said Peter and Paul, “have you found out where the water comes from? A rare sight it must have been!”

“Oh, after all, it was only a hole it ran out of,” said Boots; and so the others laughed and made fun of him again, but Boots didn’t mind that a bit.

“After all, I had the fun of seeing it,” said he.

So when they had gone a bit farther, they came to the King’s palace; but as every one in the kingdom had heard how he might win the Princess and half the realm, if he could only fell the big oak and dig the King’s well, so many had come to try their luck that the oak was now twice as stout and big as it had been at first; for two chips grew for every one they hewed out with their axes, as I dare say you remember I told you. So the King had now laid down as a punishment, that if any one tried and could not fell the oak, he should be put on a barren island, much like a prison.

The two brothers did not let themselves be scared by that, however, for they were quite sure they could fell the oak, and Peter, as he was the eldest, was to try his hand first. But it went with him as with all the rest who had hewn at the oak. For every chip he had cut out, two grew in its place. So the King's men seized him, bound him hand and foot, and put him out on the island.

Now, Paul was to try his luck, but he fared just the same; when he had hewn two or three strokes, they began to see the oak grow, and so the King's men seized him too, bound him hand and foot, and put him out on the island.

And now Boots was to try.

"You can save yourself the trouble, we'll bind you and send you off after your brothers just as well first as last," laughed the King's men.

"Well, I'd just like to try first," said Boots, and so he got leave. Then he took his axe out of his wallet and fitted it to its haft.

"Hew away!" said he to his axe; and away it hewed, making the chips fly, so that it wasn't long before down came the oak.

When that was done Boots pulled out his spade and fitted it to its handle.

"Dig away!" said he to the spade; and the spade began to dig and delve till the earth and rock flew out in splinters, and he had the well soon dug out, as you may believe.

And when he had got it as big and deep as he chose, Boots took out his walnut and laid it in one corner of the well, and pulled the plug of moss out.

"Trickle and run," said Boots; and so the water trickled and ran, till it gushed out of the hole in a stream, and in a short time the well was brimful.

Then Boots had felled the oak which shaded the King’s palace, and dug a well that held water all the year around, and so he got the princess and half the kingdom, as the King had said. And it was lucky for Peter and Paul that they were on the barren island, else they had heard each day and hour how every one said: “Well, after all, Boots did not wonder about things for nothing.”

21

THE SHEEP AND THE PIG WHO SET UP HOUSEKEEPING

Once on a time there was a sheep who stood in the pen to be fattened.

So he lived well and was stuffed and crammed with everything that was good, till one day the dairymaid came to give him still more food. Then she said, “Eat away, sheep, you won’t be here much longer, we are going to kill you to-morrow.”

The sheep thought over this for a while, and then he ate till he was ready to burst; and when he was crammed full, he butted out the door of the pen, and took his way to the neighboring farm. There he went to see a pig whom he had known out on the common, and with whom he had always been very friendly.

“Good-day,” said the sheep, “do you know why it is you are so well off, and why it is they fatten you and take such pains with you?”

“No, I don’t,” said the pig.

“Well, I know; they are going to kill and eat you,” said the sheep.

“Are they?” said the pig, “and what is there to be done about it?”

“If you will do as I do,” said the sheep, “we’ll go off to the wood, build us a house, and set up for ourselves.”

Yes, the pig was willing enough. “Good company is such a comfort,” he said, and so the two set off.

When they had gone a bit they met a goose.

“Good-day, good sirs, and whither away so fast to-day?” said the goose.

“Good-day, good-day,” said the sheep, “we are going to set up for ourselves in the wood, for you know every man’s house is his castle.”

“Well,” said the goose, “I should so much like a home of my own, too. May I go with you?”

“With gossip and gabble is built neither house nor stable,” said the pig, “let us know what you can do.”

“I can pluck moss and stuff it into the seams between the planks, and the house will be tight and warm.”

Yes, they would give him leave, for, above all things, piggy wished to be warm and comfortable.

So, when they had gone a bit farther — the goose had hard work to walk so fast — they met a hare, who came frisking out of the wood.

“Good-day, good sirs,” she said, “how far are you trotting to-day?”

“Good-day, good-day,” said the sheep, “we’re going to the wood to build us a house and set up for ourselves, for, you know, try all the world around, there’s nothing like home.”

“As for that,” said the hare, “I have a house in every bush, but yet, I have often said in winter, ‘If I only live till summer I’ll build me a house,’ and so I have half a mind to go with you and build one, after all.”

“Yes,” said the pig, “if we ever get into trouble we might use you to scare away the dogs, for I don’t fancy you could help us in house-building.”

“Don’t make fun of me. I have teeth to gnaw pegs and paws to drive them into the wall, so I can very well set up to be carpenter,” said the hare.

So he too got leave to go with them and help to build their house, and there was nothing more to be said about it.

When they had gone a bit farther they met a cock.

“Good-day, good sirs,” said the cock, “whither are you going to-day, gentlemen?”

“Good-day, good-day,” said the sheep, “we are going off to the wood to build a house and set up for ourselves, for you know, ‘‘Tis good to travel east and west, but after all a home is best.’“

“Well,” said the cock, “if I might have leave to join such a gallant company, I also would like to go to the wood and build a house.”

“Ay, ay!” said the pig, “but how can you help us build a house?”

“Oh,” said the cock, “what would you do without a cock? I am up early, and I wake every one.”

“Very true,” said the pig, “let him come with us. Sleep is the biggest thief,” he said, “he thinks nothing of stealing half one’s life.”

So they all set off to the wood together, and built a house.

The pig hewed the timber, and the sheep drew it home; the hare was carpenter, and gnawed pegs and bolts and hammered them into the walls and roof; the goose plucked moss and stuffed it into the seams; the cock crew, and looked out that they did not oversleep themselves in the morning; and when the house was ready, and the roof lined with birch bark and thatched with turf, there they lived by themselves and were merry and well.

But you must know that a bit farther on in the wood was a wolf’s den, and there lived two graylegs. When they saw that a new house had been built near by, they wanted to become acquainted with their neighbors. One of them made up an errand and went into the new house and asked for a light for his pipe. But as soon as he got inside the door the sheep gave him such a butt that he fell head foremost into the hearth. Then the pig began to bite him, and the goose to nip and peck him, and the cock upon the roost to crow and chatter, and as for the hare, he was so frightened that he ran about aloft and on the floor and scratched and scrambled in every corner of the house.

So after a time the wolf came out.

“Well,” said the one who waited for him outside, “you must have been well received since you stayed so long. But what became of the light? You have neither pipe nor smoke.”

“Yes, yes,” said the other, “a pleasant company indeed. As soon as I got inside the door, the shoemaker began to beat me with his last, so that I fell head foremost into the open fire, and there sat two smiths who blew the bellows, and made the sparks fly, and struck and punched me with red-hot tongs and pincers. As for the hunter, he went scrambling about looking for his gun, and it was good luck he did not find it. And all the while there was another who sat up under the roof and slapped his arms and cried out, ‘Drag him hither, drag him hither!’ That was what he screamed, and if he had only got hold of me, I should never have come out alive.”

The wolves never went calling on their neighbors any more.

22

THE PARSON AND THE CLERK

There was once a parson who was such a bully that whenever he met anyone driving on the king's highway, he called out, ever so far off — "Out of the way! Out of the way! Here comes the parson!"

One day when he was driving along and behaving so, he met the king. "Out of the way! Out of the way!" he bawled a long way off. But the king drove on and held his own; so it was the parson who had to turn his horse aside that time, and when the king came up beside him, he said, "To-morrow you shall come to me at the palace, and if you can't answer three questions which I shall ask you, you shall lose your office for your pride's sake."

This was something quite different from what the parson was wont to hear. He could bawl and bully, shout and scold. All that he could do, but question and answer were not in his line. So he set off to the clerk, who was said to be worth more than the parson, and told him he had no mind to go to the king. "For one fool can ask more than ten wise men can answer;" and the end was, he got the clerk to go in his place.

Yes, the clerk set off and came to the palace in the parson's clothes. There the king met him out on the porch with crown and sceptre, and he was so grand he fairly glittered and gleamed. “Well, are you there?” said the king.

“Tell me first,” said the king, “how far the east is from the west?”

“Just a day’s journey,” said the clerk.

“How is that?” asked the king.

“Don’t you know,” said the clerk, “that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and he does it just nicely in a day?”

“Very well!” said the king, “but tell me now what you think I am worth, as you see me stand here?”

“Well,” said the clerk, “our Lord was valued at thirty pieces of silver, so I don’t think I can set your price higher than twenty-nine.”

“All very fine!” said the king, “but, as you are so wise, perhaps you can tell me what I am thinking about now?”

“Oh!” said the clerk, “you are thinking it’s the parson who stands before you, but there’s where you are mistaken, for I am the clerk.”

“Be off home with you,” said the king, “and be you parson, and let him be clerk.” And so it was.

23

FATHER BRUIN

Once on a time there was a man who lived far, far away in the wood. He had many, many goats and sheep, but never a one could he keep because of Greylegs, the wolf.

At last he said, “I’ll soon trap Greyboots,” and so he set to work to dig a pitfall. When he had dug it deep enough, he put a pole down in the midst of the pit, and on the top of the pole he set a board, and on the board he put a little dog. Over the pit itself he spread boughs and branches and leaves, and other rubbish, and a-top of all he strewed snow, so that Greylegs might not see that there was a pit underneath.

So when night came on, the little dog grew weary of sitting there: “Bow-wow, bow-wow,” he said, and bayed at the moon. Just then up came a fox, prowling and sneaking, and thought here was a fine time for marketing, and with that gave a jump, — head over heels down into the pitfall.

And when it got a little farther on in the night, the little dog grew so weary and so hungry, and it fell to yelping and howling: “Bow-wow, bow-wow,” he cried out. Just at that very moment up came Greylegs, trotting and trotting. He, too, thought he should get a fat steak, and he, too, made a spring — head over heels down into the pitfall.

When it was getting on towards grey dawn in the morning, down fell the snow, with a north wind, and it grew so cold that the little dog stood and shivered and shook, he was so weary and hungry, “Bow-wow, bow-wow, bow-wow,” he called out, and barked and yelped and howled. Then up came a bear, tramping and tramping along, and thought to himself how he could get a morsel for breakfast at the very top of the morning, and so he thought and thought among the boughs and branches, till he, too, went bump — head over heels down into the pitfall.

So when it got a little farther on in the morning, an old beggar wife came walking by, who toddled from farm to farm with a bag on her back. When she set eyes on the little dog that stood there and howled, she could not help going near to look and see if any wild beasts had fallen into the pit during the night. So she crawled up on her knees and peeped down into it.

“Art thou come into the pit at last, Reynard?” she said to the fox, for he was the first she saw; “a very good place, too, for such a hen-roost robber as thou; and thou, too, Grey-paw,” she said to the wolf; “many a goat and sheep hast thou torn and rent, and now thou shalt be plagued and punished to death. Bless my heart! Thou, too, Bruin! Art thou, too, sitting in this room, thou horse killer? Thee, too, will we strip, and thee shall we flay, and thy skull shall be nailed up on the wall.” All this the old lass screeched out as she bent over towards the bear. But just then her bag fell over her ears and dragged her down, and slap! down went the old woman — head over heels into the pitfall.

So there they all four sat and glared at one another, each in a corner — Reynard in one, Greylegs in another, Bruin in a third, and the old woman in a fourth.

But as soon as it was broad daylight, Reynard began to peep and peer, and to twist and turn about, for he thought he might as well try to get out.

But the old lass cried out, “Canst thou not sit still, thou whirligig thief, and not go twisting and turning? Only look at Father Bruin himself in the corner, how he sits as grave as a judge,” for now she thought she might as well make friends with the bear.

But just then up came the man who owned the pitfall.

First he drew up the old woman, and after that he slew all the beasts, and neither spared Father Bruin himself in the corner, nor Grey-legs, nor Reynard the whirligig thief. That night, at least, he thought he had made a good haul.

24

THE PANCAKE

Once on a time there was a woman who had seven hungry children, and she was frying a pancake for them. It was a sweet milk pancake, and there it lay in the pan, bubbling and frizzling so thick and good, it was a delight to look at it. And the children stood round about, and the old father sat by and looked on.

“Oh, give me a bit of pancake, mother, dear, I am so hungry,” said one child.

“Oh, darling mother,” said the second.

“Oh, darling, good mother,” said the third.

“Oh, darling, good, sweet mother,” said the fourth.

“Oh, darling, pretty, good, sweet mother,” said the fifth.

“Oh, darling, pretty, good, sweet, clever mother,” said the sixth.

“Oh, darling, pretty, good, sweet, clever, kindest little mother,” said the seventh.

So they begged for the pancake all around, the one more prettily than the other, for they were so hungry and so good.

“Yes, yes, children, only bide a bit till it turns itself” — she ought to have said, ‘till I can get it turned,’ — “and then you shall have some lovely sweet milk pancake. Only look how fat and happy it lies there.”

When the pancake heard all this it became afraid, and in a trice it turned itself and tried to jump out of the pan, but it fell back into it again, the other side up. When it had been fried a little on the other side too, till it got firm and stiff, it jumped out of the pan to the floor and rolled off like a wheel through the door and down the hill.

“Holloa! Stop, pancake!” and away ran the mother after it, with the frying pan in one hand and the ladle in the other, as fast as she could, and all the children behind her, while the old father on crutches limped after them last of all.

“Hi! Won’t you stop? Catch it! Stop, pancake!” they all screamed out, one after another, and tried to catch it on the run and hold it. But the pancake rolled on and on, and in a twinkling of an eye it was so far ahead that they couldn’t see it.

So when it had rolled awhile it met a man.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the man.

“Good-day, Manny Panny!” said the pancake.

“Dear pancake,” said the man, “don’t roll so fast; stop a little and let me eat you.”

“No, no; I have run away from the mother, and the father, and seven hungry children. I’ll run away from you, Manny Panny,” said the pancake, and it rolled and rolled till it met a hen.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the hen.

“The same to you, Henny Penny,” said the pancake.

“Pancake, dear, don’t roll so fast. Bide a bit and let me eat you up,” said the hen.

“No, no; I have run away from the mother, and the father, and seven hungry children, and Manny Panny. I’ll run away from you, too, Henny Penny,” said the pancake, and it rolled on like a wheel down the road.

Just then it met a cock.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the cock.

“The same to you, Cocky Locky,” said the pancake.

“Pancake, dear, don’t roll so fast, but bide a bit and let me eat you up.”

“No, no; I have run away from the mother, and the father, seven hungry children, Manny Panny, and Henny Penny. I’ll run away from you too, Cocky Locky,” said the pancake, and it rolled and rolled as fast as it could. Bye and bye it met a duck.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the duck.

“The same to you, Ducky Lucky.”

“Pancake, dear, don’t roll away so fast; bide a bit and let me eat you up.”

“No, no; I have run away from the mother, and the father, and seven hungry children, Manny Panny, Henny Penny, and Cocky Locky. I’ll run away from you, too, Ducky Lucky,” said the pancake, and with that it took to rolling and rolling faster than ever; and when it had rolled a long, long while, it met a goose.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the goose.

“The same to you, Goosey Poosey.”

“Pancake, dear, don’t roll so fast; bide a bit and let me eat you up.”

“No, no; I have run away from the mother, the father, seven hungry children, Manny Panny, Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, and Ducky Lucky. I’ll run away from you, too, Goosey Poosey,” said the pancake, and off it rolled.

So when it had rolled a long way off, it met a gander.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the gander.

“The same to you, Gander Pander,” said the pancake.

“Pancake, dear, don’t roll so fast; bide a bit and let me have a bite.”

“No, no; I’ve run away from the mother, the father, seven hungry children, Manny Panny, Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, Ducky Lucky, and Goosey Poosey. I’ll run away from you, too, Gander Pander,” said the pancake, and it rolled and rolled as fast as ever.

So when it had rolled a long, long time, it met a pig.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the pig.

“The same to you, Piggy Wiggy,” said the pancake, and without a word more it began to roll and roll for dear life.

“Nay, nay,” said the pig, “you needn’t be in such a hurry; we two can go side by side through the wood; they say it is not too safe in there.”

The pancake thought there might be something in that, and so they kept company. But when they had gone a while, they came to a brook. As for Piggy, he was so fat he could swim across. It was nothing for him, but the poor pancake could not get over.

“Seat yourself on my snout,” said the pig, “and I’ll carry you over.”

So the pancake did that.

“Ouf, ouf,” said the pig, and swallowed the pancake at one gulp, and then, as the poor pancake could go no farther, why — this story can go no farther either.

25

WHY THE SEA IS SALT

Once on a time, but it was a long, long time ago, there were two brothers, one rich and one poor.

Now, one Christmas eve, the poor one had not so much as a crumb in the house, either of meat or bread, so he went to his brother to ask him for something with which to keep Christmas. It was not the first time his brother had been forced to help him, and, as he was always stingy, he was not very glad to see him this time, but he said, “I’ll give you a whole piece of bacon, two loaves of bread, and candles into the bargain, if you’ll never bother me again — but mind you don’t set foot in my house from this day on.”

The poor brother said he wouldn’t, thanked his brother for the help he had given him, and started on his way home.

He hadn’t gone far before he met an old, old man with a white beard, who looked so thin and worn and hungry that it was pitiful to see him.

“In heaven’s name give a poor man a morsel to eat,” said the old man.

“Now, indeed, I have been begging myself,” said the poor brother, “but I’m not so poor that I can’t give you something on the blessed Christmas eve.” And with that he handed the old man a candle, a loaf of bread, and he was just going to cut off a slice of bacon, when the old man stopped him — “That is enough and to spare,” said he. “And now, I’ll tell you something.

Not far from here is the entrance to the home of the underground folks. They have a mill there which can grind out anything they wish for except bacon; now mind you go there. When you get inside they will all want to buy your bacon, but don’t sell it unless you get in return the mill which stands behind the door. When you come out I’ll teach you how to handle the mill.”

So the man with the bacon thanked the other for his good advice and followed the directions which the old man had given him, and soon he stood outside the door of the hillfolk’s home.

When he got in, everything went just as the old man had said. All the hillfolk, great and small, came swarming up to him, like ants around an ant-hill, and each tried to outbid the other for the bacon.

“Well!” said the man, “by rights, my old dame and I ought to have this bacon for our Christmas dinner; but, since you have all set your hearts on it, I suppose I must give it up to you. Now, if I sell it at all, I’ll have for it that mill behind the door yonder.”

At first the hillfolk wouldn’t hear of such a bargain and higgled and haggled with the man, but he stuck to what he said, and at last they gave up the mill for the bacon.

When the man got out of the cave and into the woods again, he met the same old beggar and asked him how to handle the mill. After he had learned how to use it, he thanked the old man and went off home as fast as he could; but still the clock had struck twelve on Christmas eve before he reached his own door.

“Wherever in the world have you been?” said his old dame. “Here have I sat hour after hour, waiting and watching, without so much as two sticks to lay together under the Christmas porridge.”

“Oh!” said the man, “I could not get back before, for I had to go a long way first for one thing and then for another; but now you shall see what you shall see.”

So he put the mill on the table, and bade it first of all grind lights, then a tablecloth, then meat, then ale, and so on till they had everything that was nice for Christmas fare. He had only to speak the word and the mill ground out whatever he wanted. The old dame stood by blessing her stars, and kept on asking where he had got this wonderful mill, but he wouldn’t tell her.

“It’s all the same where I got it. You see the mill is a good one, and the mill stream never freezes. That’s enough.”

So he ground meat and drink and all good things to last out the whole of Christmas holidays, and on the third day he asked all his friends and kin to his house and gave them a great feast. Now, when his rich brother saw all that was on the table and all that was in the cupboards, he grew quite wild with anger, for he could not bear that his brother should have anything.

“‘Twas only on Christmas eve,” he said to the rest, “he was so poorly off that he came and begged for a morsel of food, and now he gives a feast as if he were count or a king.” and he turned to his brother and said, “But where in the world did you get all this wealth?”

“From behind the door,” answered the owner of the mill, for he did not care to tell his brother much about it. But later in the evening, when he had gotten a little too merry, he could keep his secret no longer, and he brought out the mill and said:

“There you see what has gotten me all this wealth,” and so he made the mill grind all kinds of things.

When his brother saw it, he set his heart on having the mill, and, after some talk, it was agreed that the rich brother was to get it at hay-harvest time, when he was to pay three hundred dollars for it. Now, you may fancy the mill did not grow rusty for want of work, for while he had it the poor brother made it grind meat and drink that would last for years. When hay-harvest came, the rich brother got it, but he was in such a hurry to make it grind that he forgot to learn how to handle it.

It was evening when the rich brother got the mill home, and next morning he told his wife to go out into the hayfield and toss hay while the mowers cut the grass, and he would stay at home and get the dinner ready. So, when dinner time drew near, he put the mill on the kitchen table and said:

“Grind herrings and broth, and grind them good and fast.”

And the mill began to grind herrings and broth; first of all the dishes full, then all the tubs full, and so on till the kitchen floor was quite covered. The man twisted and twirled at the mill to get it to stop, but for all his fiddling and fumbling the mill went on grinding, and in a little while the broth rose so high that the man was nearly drowning. So he threw open the kitchen door and ran into the parlor, but it was not long before the mill had ground the parlor full too, and it was only at the risk of his life that the man could get hold of the latch of the house door through the stream of broth. When he got the door open, he ran out and set off down the road, with the stream of herrings and broth at his heels, roaring like a waterfall over the whole farm.

Now, his old dame, who was in the field tossing hay, thought it a long time to dinner, and at last she said:

“Well! though the master doesn’t call us home, we may as well go. Maybe he finds it hard work to boil the broth, and will be glad of my help.”

The men were willing enough, so they sauntered homewards. But just as they had got a little way up the hill, what should they meet but herrings and broth, all running and dashing and splashing together in a stream, and the master himself running before them for his life, and as he passed them he called out: “Eat, drink! eat, drink! but take care you’re not drowned in the broth.”

Away he ran as fast as his legs would carry him to his brother’s house, and begged him in heaven’s name to take back the mill, and that at once, for, said he, “If it grinds only one hour more, the whole parish will be swallowed up by herrings and broth.”

So the poor brother took back the mill, and it wasn’t long before it stopped grinding herrings and broth.

And now he set up a farmhouse far finer than the one in which his brother lived, and with the mill he ground so much gold that he covered it with plates of gold. And, as the farm lay by the seaside, the golden house gleamed and glistened far away over the sea. All who sailed by put ashore to see the rich man in the golden house, and to see the wonderful mill the fame of which spread far and wide, till there was nobody who hadn’t heard of it.

So one day there came a skipper who wanted to see the mill, and the first thing he asked was if it could grind salt.

“Grind salt!” said the owner, “I should just think it could. It can grind anything.”

When the skipper heard that, he said he must have the mill, for if he only had it, he thought, he need not take his long voyages across stormy seas for a lading of salt. He much preferred sitting at home with a pipe and a glass. Well, the man let him have it, but the skipper was in such a hurry to get away with it that he had no time to ask how to handle the mill. He got on board his ship as fast as he could and set sail. When he had sailed a good way off, he brought the mill on deck and said, “Grind salt, and grind both good and fast.”

And the mill began to grind salt so that it poured out like water, and when the skipper had got the ship full he wished to stop the mill, but whichever way he turned it, and however much he tried, it did no good; the mill kept on grinding, and the heap of salt grew higher and higher, and at last down sank the ship.

There lies the mill at the bottom of the sea, and grinds away to this very day, and that is the reason why the sea is salt — so some folks say.

26

THE SQUIRE’S BRIDE

There was once a very rich squire who owned a large farm, had plenty of silver at the bottom of his chest, and money in the bank besides; but there was something he had not, and that was a wife.

One day a neighbor’s daughter was working for him in the hayfield. The squire liked her very much and, as she was a poor man’s daughter, he thought that if he only mentioned marriage she would be more than glad to take him at once. So he said to her, “I’ve been thinking I want to marry.”

“Well, one may think of many things,” said the lassie, as she stood there and smiled slyly. She really thought the old fellow ought to be thinking of something that behooved him better than getting married at his time of life.

“Now, you see,” he said, “I was thinking that you should be my wife!”

“No, thank you,” said she, “and much obliged for the honor.”

The squire was not used to being gainsaid, and the more she refused him the more he wanted her. But the lassie would not listen to him at all. So the old man sent for her father and told him that, if he could talk his daughter over and arrange the whole matter for him, he would forgive him the money he had lent him, and would give him the piece of land which lay close to his meadow into the bargain.

“Yes, yes, be sure I’ll bring the lass to her senses,” said the father. “She is only a child and does not know what is best for her.”

But all his coaxing, all his threats and all his talking, went for naught. She would not have the old miser, if he sat buried in gold up to his ears, she said.

The squire waited and waited, but at last he got angry and told the father that he had to settle the matter at once if he expected him to stand by his bargain, for now he would wait no longer.

The man knew no other way out of it, but to let the squire get everything ready for the wedding; then, when the parson and the wedding guests had arrived, the squire would send for the lassie as if she were wanted for some work on the farm. When she got there they would marry her right away, in such a hurry that she would have no time to think it over.

When the guests had arrived the squire called one of his farm lads, told him to run down to his neighbor and ask him to send up immediately what he had promised.

“But if you are not back with her in a twinkling,” he said, shaking his fist at him, “I’ll —— “

He did not finish, for the lad ran off as if he had been shot at.

“My master has sent me to ask for that which you promised him,” said the lad, when he got to the neighbor, “but, pray, lose no time, for master is terribly busy to-day.”

“Yes, yes! Run down in the meadow and take her with you — there she goes,” answered the neighbor.

The lad ran off and when he came to the meadow he found the daughter there raking the hay.

“I am to fetch what your father has promised my master,” said the lad.

“Ah, ha!” thought she, “is that what they are up to?” And with a wicked twinkle of the eye, she said, “Oh, yes, it’s that little bay mare of ours, I suppose. You had better go and take her. She stands tethered on the other side of the pea field.”

The boy jumped on the back of the bay mare and rode home at full gallop.

"Have you got her with you?" asked the squire.

"She is down at the door," said the lad.

"Take her up to the room my mother had," said the squire.

"But, master, how can I?" said the lad.

"Do as I tell you," said the squire. "And if you can't manage her alone, get the men to help you," for he thought the lassie might be stubborn.

When the lad saw his master's face he knew it would be no use to argue. So he went and got all the farm hands together to help him. Some pulled at the head and the forelegs of the mare and others pushed from behind, and at last they got her upstairs and into the room. There lay all the wedding finery ready.

"Well, that's done, master!" said the lad, while he wiped his wet brow, "but it was the worst job I have ever had here on the farm."

"Never mind, never mind, you shall not have done it for nothing," said his master, and he pulled a bright silver coin out of his pocket and gave it to the lad. "Now send the women up to dress her."

"But, I say — master! — "

"None of your talk!" cried the squire. "Tell them to hold her while they dress her, and mind not to forget either wreath or crown."

The lad ran into the kitchen:

"Listen, here, lasses," he called out, "you are to go upstairs and dress up the bay mare as a bride — I suppose master wants to play a joke on his guests."

The women laughed and laughed, but ran upstairs and dressed the bay mare in everything that was there. And then the lad went and told his master that now she was all ready, with wreath and crown and all.

"Very well, bring her down. I will receive her at the door myself," said the squire.

There was a clatter and a thumping on the stairs, for that bride, you know, had no silken slippers on.

When the door was opened and the squire’s bride entered the room, you can imagine there was laughing and tittering and grinning enough.

And as for the squire, they say he never went courting again.

27

PEIK

Once on a time there was a man, and he had a wife. They had a son and a daughter who were twins, and these were so alike that no one could tell one from the other except by their clothing. The boy they called Peik. He was of little use while his father and mother lived, for he cared to do naught else than to befool folk, and he was so full of tricks and pranks that no one was left in peace. When the parents died, matters grew still worse and worse. He would not turn his hand to anything. All he would do was to squander what they left behind them.

His sister toiled and moiled all she could, but it helped little; so at last she told him how silly it was to do naught for the house.

"What shall we have to live on when you have wasted everything?" she said.

"Oh, I'll go out and befool somebody," said Peik.

"Yes, Peik, I'll be bound you'll do that soon enough," said the sister.

"Well, I'll try," said Peik.

At last they had indeed nothing more. There was an end of everything; and Peik started off, and walked and walked till he came to the King's palace.

Now, I must tell you, this King and his queen and eldest daughter were little better than trolls, — mean and hateful and very foolish, — so there was no love lost between them and the people.

When Peik came to the King’s palace, there stood the King in the porch, and as soon as he set eyes on the lad he said,

“Whither away, to-day, Peik?”

“Oh, I was going out to see if I could befool anybody,” said Peik.

“Can’t you befool me now?” said the King.

“No, I’m sure I can’t,” said Peik, “for I’ve forgotten my fooling rods.”

“Can’t you go home and fetch them?” said the King, “I should be very glad to see if you are such a trickster as folks say.”

“I’ve no strength to walk,” said Peik.

“I’ll lend you a horse and saddle,” said the King

“But I can’t ride either,” said Peik.

“We’ll lift you up,” said the King, “then you’ll be able to stick on.”

Well, Peik stood and scratched his head as though he would pull the hair off, and he let them lift him up into the saddle. There he sat, swinging this side and that, so long as the King could see him, and the King laughed till the tears came into his eyes, for such a tailor on horseback he had never seen. But when Peik was come well into the wood behind the hill, so that he was out of the King’s sight, he sat as though he were tied to the horse, and off he rode as fast as the horse could carry him. But when he got to the town he sold both horse and saddle.

All the while the King walked up and down, and loitered, and waited for Peik to come tottering back again with his fooling rods. And every now and then he laughed when he called to mind how wretched the lad looked as he sat swinging about on the horse like a sack of corn, not knowing on which side to fall off. This lasted for seven lengths and seven breaths, but no Peik came, and so at last the King saw that he was fooled and cheated out of his horse and saddle, even though Peik had not had his fooling rods with him. Then there was another story, for the King got wroth, and was all for setting off to kill Peik.

But Peik had found out the day he was coming, and told his sister she must put on the big boiling-pot with a little water in it. Just as the King came in, Peik dragged the pot off the fire and ran off with it to the chopping-block, and so boiled the porridge on the block.

The King wondered at that, and wondered on and on, so much that he quite forgot what brought him there.

“What do you want for that pot?” said he.

“I can’t spare it,” said Peik.

“Why not?” said the King; “I’ll pay what you ask.”

“No, no!” said Peik. “It saves me time and money, wood hire and chopping hire, carting and carrying.”

“Never mind,” said the King, “I’ll give you a hundred dollars. It’s true you’ve fooled me out of a horse and saddle, and bridle besides, but all that shall go for nothing if I can only get the pot.”

“Well, if you must have it, you must,” said Peik.

When the King got home he asked guests and made a feast, but the meat was to be boiled in the new pot, and so he took it up and set it in the middle of the floor. The guests thought the King had lost his wits, and went about elbowing one another, and laughing at him. But he walked round and round the pot and cackled and chattered, saying all in a breath —

“Well, well! bide a bit, bide a bit! ‘Twill boil in a minute.”

But there was no boiling. So he saw that Peik had been out with his fooling rods and had cheated him again, and now he would set off at once and slay him.

When the King came, Peik stood out by the barn door. “Wouldn’t it boil?” he asked.

“No, it would not, and you shall smart for it,” said the King, about to unsheath his knife.

“I can well believe that,” said Peik, “for you did not take the block, too.”

“I wish I thought,” said the King, “you weren’t telling me a pack of lies.”

“I tell you it’s because of the block it stands on; it won’t boil without it,” said Peik.

“Well, what do you want for it?”

It was well worth three hundred dollars; but for the King’s sake it should go for two. So the King got the block and traveled home with it. He bade guests again, made a feast, and set the pot on the chopping-block in the middle of the room. The guests thought he was both daft and mad, and they went about making game of him, while he cackled and chattered around the pot, calling out, “Bide a bit! Now it boils, now it boils in a trice.”

But it wouldn’t boil a bit more on the block than on the bare floor. So he saw that Peik had been out with his fooling rods this time, too. Then he fell a-tearing his hair, and said he would set off at once and slay the lad. He wouldn’t spare him this time, whether or no.

But Peik was ready for him. He had filled a leather bag with blood and stuffed it into his sister’s bosom, and told her what to say and do.

“Where’s Peik?” screamed out the King. He was in such a rage that he stuttered and stammered.

“He is so poorly that he can’t stir hand or foot,” she said, “and now he’s trying to get a nap.”

“Wake him up!” said the King.

“Nay, I daren’t, he will be so angry,” said the sister.

“Well, I am angrier still,” said the King, “and if you don’t wake him, I will,” and with that he tapped his side where his knife hung.

“Well, she would go and wake him,” but Peik turned hastily in his bed, drew out a knife and ripped open the leather bag in her bosom, so that the blood gushed out, and down she fell on the floor as though she were dead.

"What an awful fellow you are, Peik," said the King; "you have killed your sister right before my eyes!"

"Oh, there's no trouble with her so long as there's breath in my nostrils," said Peik, and with that he pulled out a ram's horn and began to toot on it.

"Toot-e-too-too," he blew, with one end of the horn to her body, and up she rose as though there was nothing the matter with her.

"Dear me, Peik! Can you kill folk and blow life into them again? Can you do that?" said the King.

"Why!" said Peik, "how could I get on at all if I couldn't? I am always killing every one I come near; don't you know I have a terrible temper?"

"I am hot-tempered, too," said the King, "and that horn I must have. I'll give you a hundred dollars for it, and besides I'll forgive you for cheating me out of my horse and for fooling me about the pot and the block, and all else."

Peik was loth to part with it, but for his sake he would let him have it. And so the King went off home with it, and he hardly got back before he must try it.

So he fell a-wrangling and quarreling with the queen and his eldest daughter, and they paid him back in the same coin; but before they knew what was happening he had whipped out his knife and cut their throats. They fell down stone dead and the other two daughters ran from the house, they were so afraid.

The King walked about the floor for a while and kept chattering that there was no harm done so long as there was breath in him, and then he pulled out the horn and began to blow "Toot-e-too-too! Toot-e-too-too!" but, though he blew and tooted as hard as he could all that day and the next, too, he could not blow life into them again. Dead they were, and dead they stayed. But the people in the kingdom were only glad to get rid of such troll-folk, and were wishing some one might make an end of the King, too, so that they might have a good King in his place.

But the King was now angrier than ever, and must go right off to kill Peik.

But Peik knew that he was coming and then he said to his sister —

“Now, you must change clothes with me and set off. If you will do that, you may have all we own.”

So, she changed clothes with him, packed up and started off as fast as she could; but Peik sat all alone in his sister’s clothes.

“Where is that Peik?” roared the King, as as he came, in a towering rage, through the door.

“He has run away,” said Peik. “He knew that your Majesty was coming, so he left me all alone without a morsel of bread or a penny in my purse,” and he made himself as gentle and sweet as a young lady.

“Come along, then, to the King’s palace, and you shall have enough to live on. There’s no good sitting here and starving in this cabin by yourself,” said the King.

So Peik went home with the King, and there he was treated as the King’s own daughter, for Miss Peik sewed and stitched and sang and played with the others, and was with them early and late.

But one day a man came to the King and told him that Peik’s sister was at a farm in the neighborhood, and that it was Peik he had brought up in his own house. Now, Peik had heard all that the man told the King, so he ran away from the King’s palace, out into the wide world.

The King got into a terrible rage then, and called for Peik, but he was nowhere to be found. Then he mounted his horse to go out to look for Peik.

He had not gone far before he came to a ploughed field and there sat Peik on a stone, playing on a mouth organ.

“What! Are you sitting there, Peik?” said the King.

“Here I sit, sure enough,” said Peik; “where else should I sit?”

“You have cheated me foully time after time,” said the King, “but now you must come along home with me, and I’ll kill you.”

“Well, well,” said Peik, “if it can’t be helped, it can’t; I suppose I must go along with you.”

When they got home to the King’s palace they got ready a barrel which Peik was to be put in, and when it was ready they carted it up a high mountain. There he was to lie three days, thinking on all the evil he had done, then they were to roll him down the mountain into the sea.

The third day a rich man passed by and when he heard Peik’s story he was ready to help him out of his trouble.

They made a stuffed man and put him with some stones into the barrel — but the rich man gave Peik horses and cows, sheep and swine, and money beside.

Now, the King came to roll Peik down the mountain. “A happy journey!” said the King, “and now it is all over with you and your fooling rods.”

Before the barrel was halfway down the mountain there was not a whole stave of it left, nor would there have been a whole limb on Peik, had he been there. But when the King came back to the palace, Peik was there before him, and sat in the court-yard playing on his mouth organ.

“What! You sitting here, you, Peik?”

“Yes! Here I sit, sure enough. Where else should I sit?” said Peik. “Maybe I can get room here for all my horses and sheep and money.”

“But whither was it that I rolled you that you got all this wealth?” asked the King.

“Oh, you rolled me into the sea,” said Peik, “and when I got to the bottom there was more than enough and to spare, both of horses and sheep, and of gold and silver. The cattle went about in great flocks, and the gold and silver lay in large heaps as big as houses.”

“What will you take to roll me down the same way?” asked the King.

“Oh,” said Peik, “it costs little or nothing to do it. Besides, you took nothing from me, and so I’ll take nothing from you either.”

So he stuffed the King into a barrel and rolled him over, and when he had given him a ride down to the sea for nothing, he went home to the King’s palace.

Then he began to hold his bridal feast with the youngest princess, and afterwards he ruled the land both well and long. But he kept his fooling rods to himself, and kept them so well that nothing was ever heard of Peik and his tricks, but only of “Ourself the King.”

28

THE PRINCESS WHO COULD NOT BE SILENCED

There was once a King, and he had a daughter who was so cross and crooked in her words that no one could silence her, and so he gave it out that he who could do it should marry the princess and have half the kingdom, too. There were plenty of those who wanted to try it, I can tell you, for it is not every day that you can get a princess and half a kingdom. The gate to the King's palace did not stand still a minute. They came in great crowds from the East and the West, both riding and walking. But there was not one of them who could silence the princess.

At last the king had it given out that those who tried, and failed, should have both ears marked with the big redhot iron with which he marked his sheep. He was not going to have all that flurry and worry for nothing.

Well, there were three brothers, who had heard about the princess, and, as they did not fare very well at home, they thought they had better set out to try their luck and see if they could not win the princess and half the kingdom. They were friends and good fellows, all three of them, and they set off together.

When they had walked a bit of the way, Boots picked up something.

"I've found — I've found something!" he cried.

"What did you find!" asked the brothers.

"I found a dead crow," said he.

“Ugh! Throw it away! What would you do with that?” said the brothers, who always thought they knew a great deal.

“Oh, I haven’t much to carry, I might as well carry this,” said Boots.

So when they had walked on a bit, Boots again picked up something.

“I’ve found — I’ve found something!” he cried.

“What have you found now?” said the brothers.

“I found a willow twig,” said he.

“Dear, what do you want with that? Throw it away!” said they.

“Oh, I haven’t much to carry, I might as well carry that,” said Boots.

So when they had walked a bit, Boots picked up something again. “Oh, lads, I’ve found — I’ve found something!” he cried.

“Well, well, what did you find this time?” asked the brothers.

“A piece of a broken saucer,” said he.

“Oh, what is the use of that? Throw it away!” said they.

“Oh, I haven’t much to carry, I might as well carry that,” said Boots.

And when they had walked a bit further, Boots stooped down again and picked up something else.

“I’ve found — I’ve found something, lads!” he cried.

“And what is it now?” said they.

“Two goat horns,” said Boots.

“Oh! Throw them away. What could you do with them?” said they.

“Oh, I haven’t much to carry, I might as well carry them,” said Boots.

In a little while he found something again.

“Oh, lads, see, I’ve found — I’ve found something,” he cried.

“Dear, dear, what wonderful things you do find! What is it now?” said the brothers.

“I’ve found a wedge,” said he.

“Oh, throw it away. What do you want with that?” said they.

“Oh, I haven’t much to carry, I might as well carry that,” said Boots.

And now, as they walked over the fields close up to the King's palace, Boots bent down again and held something in his fingers.

"Oh, lads, lads, see what I've found!" he cried.

"If you only found a little common sense, it would be good for you," said they. "Well, let's see what it is now."

"A worn-out shoe sole," said he.

"Pshaw! Well, that was something to pick up! Throw it away! What do you want with that?" said the brothers.

"Oh, I haven't much to carry, I might as well carry that, if I am to win the princess and half the kingdom," said Boots.

"Yes, you are likely to do that — you," said they.

And now they came to the King's palace. The eldest one went in first.

"Good-day," said he.

"Good-day to you," said the princess, and she twisted and turned.

"It's awfully hot here," said he.

"It is hotter over there in the hearth," said the princess. There lay the red-hot iron ready awaiting. When he saw that he forgot every word he was going to say, and so it was all over with him.

And now came the next oldest one.

"Good-day," said he.

"Good-day to you," said she, and she turned and twisted herself.

"It's awfully hot here," said he.

"It's hotter over there in the hearth," said she. And when he looked at the red-hot iron he, too, couldn't get a word out, and so they marked his ears and sent him home again.

Then it was Boots' turn.

"Good-day," said he.

"Good-day to you," said she, and she twisted and turned again.

"It's nice and warm in here," said Boots.

“It’s hotter in the hearth,” said she, and she was no sweeter, now the third one had come.

“That’s good, I may bake my crow there, then?” asked he.

“I’m afraid she’ll burst,” said the princess.

“There’s no danger; I’ll wind this willow twig around,” said the lad.

“It’s too loose,” said she.

“I’ll stick this wedge in,” said the lad, and took out the wedge.

“The fat will drop off,” said the princess.

“I’ll hold this under,” said the lad, and pulled out the broken bit of the saucer.

“You are crooked in your words, that you are,” said the princess.

“No, I’m not crooked, but this is crooked,” said the lad, and he showed her the goat’s horn.

“Well, I never saw the equal to that!” cried the princess.

“Oh, here is the equal to it,” said he, and pulled out the other.

“Now, you think you’ll wear out my soul, don’t you?” said she.

“No, I won’t wear out your soul, for I have a sole that’s worn out already,” said the lad, and pulled out the shoe sole.

Then the princess hadn’t a word to say.

“Now, you’re mine,” said Boots.

And so she was.

29

THE TWELVE WILD DUCKS

Once on a time there was a Queen who had twelve sons but no daughter.

One day she was out driving in the woods and met the prettiest little lassie one ever did see, and so the Queen stopped her horses, lifted the child up in her arms, kissed her on both cheeks, all the while thinking:

“I wish I had a little girl of my own, oh, how long I’ve waited and wished for one.”

Just then an old witch of the trolls came up to her, but you wouldn’t have known it was a witch at all, she looked so kind and good.

“A daughter you shall have,” she said, “and she shall be the prettiest child in twelve kingdoms, if you will give to me what ever comes to meet you at the bridge.”

Now the Queen had a little snow white dog of which she was very fond, and it always ran to meet her when she had been away. She thought, of course, it was the dog the old dame wanted, so the Queen said, “Yes, you may have what comes to meet me on the bridge.” With that she hurried home as fast as she could.

But, who should come to meet her on the bridge but her twelve sons; and before the mother could cry out to them the wicked witch threw her spell upon them and turned them into twelve ducks which flapped their wings and flew away. Away they went and away they stayed.

But the Queen had a daughter, and she was the loveliest child one ever set eyes upon. The Princess grew up, and she was both tall and fair, but she was often quiet and sorrowful, and no one could understand what it was that ailed her. The Queen, too, was often sorrowful, as you may believe, for she had many strange fears when she thought of her sons. And one day she said to her daughter, “Why are you so sorrowful, lassie mine? Is there anything you want? If so, only say the word, and you shall have it.”

“Oh, it seems so dull and lonely here,” said the daughter, “every one else has brothers and sisters, but I am all alone; I have none. That’s why I’m so sorrowful.”

“But you had brothers, my daughter,” said the Queen; “I had twelve sons, stout, brave lads, but I lost them all when you came;” and so she told her the whole story.

When the Princess heard that she had no rest; for she thought it was all her fault, and in spite of all the Queen could say or do, though she wept and prayed, the lassie would set off to seek her brothers. On and on she walked into the wide world, so far you would never have thought her small feet could have had strength to carry her so far.

Finally, one day, when she was walking through a great, great wood, she felt tired, and sat down on a mossy tuft and fell asleep. Then she dreamt that she went deeper and deeper into the wood, till she came to a little wooden hut, and there she found her brothers. Just then she awoke, and straight before her she saw a worn path in the green moss. This path went deeper into the wood, so she followed it, and after a long time she came to just such a little wooden house as that she had seen in her dream.

Now, when she went into the room there was no one at home, but there were twelve beds, and twelve chairs, and twelve spoons, — in short, a dozen of everything. When she saw that she was very glad; she had not been so glad for many a long year, for she could guess at once that her brothers lived there, and that they owned the beds and chairs and spoons. So she began to make up the fire, and sweep the room and make the beds and cook the dinner, and to make the house as tidy as she could.

And when she had done all the work and the dinner was on the table she suddenly heard something flapping and whirling in the air, and she slipped behind the door. Then all the twelve ducks came sweeping in; but as soon as ever they crossed the threshold they became Princes.

“Oh, how nice and warm it is here,” they said, “Heaven bless him who made up the fire and cooked such a nice dinner for us.”

“But who can it be?” said the youngest Prince, and they all hunted both high and low until they found the lassie behind the door. And she threw her arms around their necks and said, “I’m your sister; I’ve gone about seeking you these three years, and if I could set you free, I’d willingly give my life.”

Then all the brothers looked sorrowfully, one at the other, and they shook their heads.

“No, it’s too hard,” said the eldest Prince, looking at the pretty young Princess, “it’s too hard,” and again they sighed and shook their heads.

“Oh, tell me, only tell me,” said the Princess, “how can it be done, and I’ll do it, whatever it be.” And as she begged and pleaded for them to tell her, the youngest brother said at last, “You must pick thistledown, and you must card it, and spin it, and weave it. After you have done that, you must cut out and make twelve shirts, one for each of us, and while you do that, you must neither talk, nor laugh, nor weep. If you can do that we are free.”

“But where shall I ever get thistledown enough for so many shirts?” asked the sister.

“Well, that is the hardest thing of all,” said the eldest brother. “You must go to the witches’ moor at midnight and gather it there,” and big tears stood in his eyes, “and you must go alone, all alone.”

But the sister smiled and nodded her head, and when midnight came, and the moon was high in the sky she said good-bye to her brothers, and went to the great, wide moor, where the witches lived. There stood a great crop of thistles, all nodding and nodding in the breeze, while the down floated and glistened like gossamer through the air in the moonbeams. The Princess began to pluck and gather it as fast as she could, but she saw long skinny arms outstretched toward her, and, among the thistles, she saw a host of wicked faces all looking at her. Her heart stood still then and she grew icy cold, but never a sound did she utter, only plucked and gathered until her bag was full; and when she got home at break of day she set to work carding and spinning yarn from the down.

So she went on a long, long time picking down on the witches' moor, carding and spinning, and all the while keeping the house of the Princes, cooking, and making their beds. But she never talked, nor laughed, nor wept.

At evening home the brothers came, flapping and whirring like wild ducks, and all night they were Princes, but in the morning off they flew again, and were wild ducks the whole day.

But, it happened one night when she was out on the moor picking thistledown, that the young King who ruled that land was out hunting, and had lost his way. He had become separated from his companions, and now, as he came riding across the moor, he saw her. He stopped and wondered who the lovely lady could be that walked alone on the moor picking thistledown in the dead of the night; and he asked her name. Getting no answer, he was still more astonished, but he liked her so much, that at last nothing would do but he must take her home to his castle and marry her. So he took her and put her upon his horse. The Princess wrung her hands, and made signs to him, and pointed to the bags in which her work was, and when the King saw she wished to have them with her he took the bags and placed them behind them.

When that was done the Princess, little by little, came to herself, for the King was both a wise man and a handsome man, and he was as gentle and kind to her as a mother. But when they reached the palace an old woman met them. She was the King's guardian, and when she set eyes on the Princess she became so cross and jealous of her, because she was so lovely, that she said to the King:

"Can't you see now, that this thing whom you have picked up, and whom you are going to marry, is a witch? Why, she can neither talk nor laugh nor weep!"

But the King did not care a straw for what she said. He held to the wedding and married the Princess, and they lived in great joy and glory. But the Princess didn't forget to go on working on her shirts, and she neither talked nor laughed nor wept. However, when she had spun and woven and cut, she found that she still had not enough cloth for the twelve shirts, and she needs must go to the witches' moor again.

So that night while all the palace slept she quietly slipped out and walked off to pick her thistledown, but the old woman who was the King's guardian saw her, and she knew well where the young Queen was going, for I must tell you she was the same wicked witch who had changed the twelve Princes into wild ducks. She hurried to the King's chamber, woke him and said, "Now, come with me and I'll prove to you that your lovely Queen is a witch, who joins the wicked company on the moor at midnight." The King would not listen to her at first, but when he saw that the Queen's bed was empty, he got up and went with the old woman.

And there upon the edge of the moor they stopped, but in the clear moonlight they could see the Queen among the horrid hags and trolls. The King turned away sadly and said not a word, for he loved his quiet Queen very much.

But the wicked old woman began to whisper and tell abroad about the Queen's nightly visit to the moor, and at last the King's best men came to him and said, “We will not have a Queen who is a witch; the people demand of you that she be burnt alive.”

Then the King was so sad that there was no end to his sadness, for now he saw that he could not save her. He was obliged to order her to be burnt alive on a pile of wood. When the pile was all ablaze, and they were about to put her on it, she made signs to them to take twelve boards and lay them around the pile.

On these she laid the shirts for her brothers all completed but that for the youngest, which lacked its left sleeve; she had not had time to finish it. And as soon as ever she had done that, they heard a flapping and whirring in the air, and down came twelve wild ducks from over the forest, and each snapped up his shirt in his bill and flew off with it.

“See now!” said the old woman to the King, “wasn’t I right when I told you she was a witch! Make haste and burn her before the pile burns low.”

“Oh!” said the King, “we’ve wood enough and to spare, and so I’ll wait a bit, for I have a mind to see what the end of this will be.”

As he spoke up came the twelve Princes riding along, as handsome well-grown lads as you’d wish to see; but the youngest Prince had a wild duck’s wing instead of his left arm. “What’s all this about?” asked the Princes.

“My Queen is to be burnt,” said the King, “because she is a witch, so the people say, and I can’t save her.”

“Speak now, sister,” said the Princes, “you have set us free and saved us, now save yourself.”

Then the young Queen spoke and told the whole story, and the King and all the people listened with wonder and joy. Only the wicked old woman stood trembling with fear. And when the Queen had finished her story, the people took the old witch and bound her and burned her on the pile.

But the King took his wife and the twelve Princes and went home with them to their father and mother, and told all that had befallen them. Then there was joy and gladness over the whole kingdom, because the wicked witch was dead and the Princes saved and set free, and because the lovely Princess had set free her twelve brothers.

30

GUDBRAND-ON-THE-HILLSIDE

Once upon a time there was a man whose name was Gudbrand. He had a farm which lay far, far away upon a hillside, and so they called him Gudbrand-on-the-Hillside.

Now, you must know this man and his good wife lived so happily together, and understood one another so well, that all the husband did the wife thought so well done there was nothing like it in the world, and she was always pleased at whatever he turned his hand to. The farm was their own land, and they had a hundred dollars lying at the bottom of their chest and two cows tethered up in a stall in their farmyard.

So one day his wife said to Gudbrand, “Do you know, dear, I think we ought to take one of our cows into town and sell it; that’s what I think; for then we shall have some money in hand, and such well-to-do people as we ought to have ready money as other folks have. As for the hundred dollars in the chest yonder, we can’t make a hole in our savings, and I’m sure I don’t know what we want with more than one cow.

“Besides, we shall gain a little in another way, for then I shall get off with only looking after one cow, instead of having, as now, to feed and litter and water two.”

Well, Gudbrand thought his wife talked right good sense, so he set off at once with the cow on the way to town to sell her; but when he got to the town, there was no one who would buy his cow.

“Well, well, never mind,” said Gudbrand, “at the worst, I can only go back home with my cow. I’ve both stable and tether for her, and the road is no farther out than in.” And with that he began to toddle home with his cow.

But when he had gone a bit of the way, a man met him who had a horse to sell. Gudbrand thought ‘twas better to have a horse than a cow, so he traded with the man. A little farther on he met a man walking along and driving a fat pig before him, and he thought it better to have a fat pig than a horse, so he traded with the man. After that he went a little farther, and a man met him with a goat, so he thought it better to have a goat than a pig, and he traded with the man who owned the goat. Then he went on a good bit till he met a man who had a sheep, and he traded with him too, for he thought it always better to have a sheep than a goat. After a while he met a man with a goose, and he traded away the sheep for the goose; and when he had walked a long, long time, he met a man with a cock, and he traded with him, for he thought in this wise, “Tis surely better to have a cock than a goose.”

Then he went on till the day was far spent, and he began to get very hungry, so he sold the cock for a shilling, and bought food with the money, for, thought Gudbrand-on-the-Hillside, “Tis always better to save one’s life than to have a cock.”

After that he went on homeward till he reached his nearest neighbor’s house, where he turned in.

“Well,” said the owner of the house, “how did things go with you in town?”

“Rather so-so,” said Gudbrand, “I can’t praise my luck, nor do I blame it either,” and with that he told the whole story from first to last.

“Ah!” said his friend, “you’ll get nicely hauled over the coals, when you go home to your wife. Heaven help you, I wouldn’t stand in your shoes for anything.”

“Well,” said Gudbrand-on-the-Hillside, “I think things might have gone much worse with me; but now, whether I have done wrong or not, I have so kind a good wife she never has a word to say against anything that I do.”

“Oh!” answered his neighbor, “I hear what you say, but I don’t believe it for all that.”

“And so you doubt it?” asked Gudbrand-on-the-Hillside.

“Yes,” said the friend, “I have a hundred crowns, at the bottom of my chest at home, I will give you if you can prove what you say.”

So Gudbrand stayed there till evening, when it began to get dark, and then they went together to his house, and the neighbor was to stand outside the door and listen, while the man went in to his wife.

“Good evening!” said Gudbrand-on-the Hillside.

“Good evening!” said the good wife. “Oh! is that you? Now, I am happy.”

Then the wife asked how things had gone with him in town.

“Oh, only so-so,” answered Gudbrand; “not much to brag of. When I got to town there was no one who would buy the cow, so you must know I traded it away for a horse.”

“For a horse,” said his wife; “well that is good of you; thanks with all my heart. We are so well to do that we may drive to church, just as well as other people, and if we choose to keep a horse we have a right to get one, I should think.” So, turning to her child she said, “Run out, deary, and put up the horse.”

“Ah!” said Gudbrand, “but you see I have not the horse after all, for when I got a bit farther on the road, I traded it for a pig.”

“Think of that, now!” said the wife. “You did just as I should have done myself; a thousand thanks! Now I can have a bit of bacon in the house to set before people when they come to see me, that I can. What do we want with a horse? People would only say we had got so proud that we couldn’t walk to church. Go out, child, and put up the pig in the sty.”

“But I have not the pig either,” said Gudbrand, “for when I got a little farther on, I traded it for a goat.”

“Dear me!” cried the wife, “how well you manage everything! Now I think it over, what should I do with a pig? People would only point at us and say ‘Yonder they eat up all they have.’ No, now I have a goat, and I shall have milk and cheese, and keep the goat too. Run out, child, and put up the goat.”

“Nay, but I haven’t the goat either,” said Gudbrand, “for a little farther on I traded it away and got a fine sheep instead!”

“You don’t say so!” cried his wife, “why, you do everything to please me, just as if I had been with you. What do we want with a goat? If I had it I should lose half my time in climbing up the hills to get it down. No, if I have a sheep, I shall have both wool and clothing, and fresh meat in the house. Run out, child, and put up the sheep.”

“But I haven’t the sheep any more than the rest,” said Gudbrand, “for when I got a bit farther, I traded it away for a goose.”

“Thank you, thank you, with all my heart,” cried his wife, “what should I do with a sheep? I have no spinning wheel or carding comb, nor should I care to worry myself with cutting, and shaping, and sewing clothes. We can buy clothes now as we have always done; and now I shall have roast goose, which I have longed for so often; and, besides, down with which to stuff my little pillow. Run out, child, and put up the goose.

“Well!” said Gudbrand, “I haven’t the goose either; for when I had gone a bit farther I traded it for a cock.”

“Dear me!” cried his wife, “how you think of everything! just as I should have done myself. A cock! think of that! Why it’s as good as an eight day clock, for every day the cock crows at four o’clock, and we shall be able to stir our stiff legs in good time. What should we do with a goose? I don’t know how to cook it; and as for my pillow, I can stuff it with cotton grass. Run out, child, and put up the cock.”

“But after all, I haven’t the cock either,” said Gudbrand, “for when I had gone a bit farther, I became as hungry as a hunter, so I was forced to sell the cock for a shilling, for fear I should starve.”

“Now, God be praised that you did so!” cried his wife, “whatever you do, you do it always just after my own heart. What should we do with the cock? We are our own masters, I should think, and can lie abed in the morning as long as we like. Heaven be thanked that I have you safe back again; you who do everything so well, that I want neither cock nor goose; neither pigs nor kine.”

Then Gudbrand opened the door and said, —

“Well, what do you say now? Have I won the hundred crowns?” and his neighbor was forced to admit that he had.

31

LITTLE FREDDY WITH HIS FIDDLE

Once there was a farmer who had an only son. The lad had had very poor health so he could not go out to work in the field.

His name was Freddy, but, since he remained such a wee bit of a fellow, they called him Little Freddy. At home there was but little to eat and nothing at all to burn, so his father went about the country trying to get the boy a place as cowherd or errand boy; but there was no one who would take the weakly little lad till they came to the sheriff. He was ready to take him, for he had just sent off his errand boy, and there was no one who would fill his place, for everybody knew the sheriff was a great miser.

But the farmer thought it was better there than nowhere; he would get his food, for all the pay he was to get was his board — there was nothing said about wages or clothes. When the lad had served three years he wanted to leave, and the sheriff gave him all his wages at one time. He was to have a penny a year. “It couldn’t well be less,” said the sheriff. And so he got three pence in all.

As for Little Freddy, he thought it was a great sum, for he had never owned so much; but, for all that, he asked if he wasn’t to have anything for clothes, for those he had on were worn to rags. He had not had any new ones since he came to the sheriff’s three years ago.

"You have what we agreed on," said the sheriff, "and three whole pennies besides. I have nothing more to do with you. Be off!"

So Little Freddy went into the kitchen and got a little food in his knapsack, and after that he set off on the road to buy himself more clothes. He was both merry and glad, for he had never seen a penny before, and every now and then he felt in his pockets as he went along to see if he had them all three. So, when he had gone far and farther than far, he got up on top of the mountains. He was not strong on his legs, and had to rest every now and then, and then he counted and counted how many pennies he had. And now he came to a great plain overgrown with moss. There he sat down and began to see if his money was all right. Suddenly a beggarman appeared before him, so tall and big that when he got a good look at him and saw his height and length, the lad began to scream and screech.

"Don't you be afraid," said the beggarman, "I'll do you no harm, I came only to beg you for a penny."

"Dear me!" said the lad, "I have only three pennies, and with them I was going to town to buy clothes."

"It is worse for me than for you," said the beggarman, "I have not one penny, and I am still more ragged than you."

"Well, that is so; you shall have it," said the lad.

When he had walked on a while, he grew weary again, and sat down to rest. Suddenly another beggarman stood before him, and this one was still taller and uglier than the first. When the lad saw how very tall and ugly and long he was, he began to scream again.

"Now, don't you be afraid of me," said the beggar, "I'll do you no harm. I came only to beg for a penny."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said the lad. "I have only two pennies, and with them I was going to the town to buy clothes. If I had only met you sooner, then — "

“It’s worse for me than for you,” said the beggarman. “I have no penny, and a bigger body and less clothing.”

“Well, you may have it,” said the lad. So he went away farther, till he got weary, and then he sat down to rest; but he had scarcely sat down when a third beggarman came to him. This one was so tall and ugly and long that the lad had to look up and up, right up to the sky. And when he took him all in with his eyes, and saw how very, very tall and ugly and ragged he was, he fell a-screeching and screaming again.

“Now, don’t you be afraid of me, my lad,” said the beggarman, “I’ll do you no harm, for I am only a beggarman, who begs you for a penny.”

“Oh dear, oh dear!” said the lad. “I have only one penny left, and with it I was going to the town to buy clothes. If I had only met you sooner, then — “

“As for that,” said the beggarman, “I have no penny at all, that I haven’t, and a bigger body and less clothes, so it is worse for me than for you.”

“Yes,” said Little Freddy, “he must have the penny then — there was no help for it; for so each beggarman would have one penny, and he would have nothing.”

“Well,” said the beggarman, “since you have such a good heart that you gave away all that you had in the world, I will give you a wish for each penny.” For you must know it was the same beggarman who had got them all three; he had only changed his shape each time, that the lad might not know him again.

“I have always had such a longing to hear a fiddle go, and see folk so merry and glad that they couldn’t help dancing,” said the lad; “and so if I may wish what I choose, I will wish myself such a fiddle, that everything that has life must dance to its tune.”

“That you may have,” said the beggarman, “but it is a sorry wish. You must wish something better for the other two pennies.”

“I have always had such a love for hunting and shooting,” said Little Freddy; “so if I may wish what I choose, I will wish myself such a gun that I shall hit everything I aim at, were it ever so far off.”

“That you may have,” said the beggarman, “but it is a sorry wish too. You must wish better for the last penny.”

“I have always had a longing to be in company with folks who were kind and good,” said Little Freddy; “and so, if I could get what I wish, I would wish it to be so that no one can say ‘Nay’ to the first thing I ask.”

“That wish is not so sorry,” said the beggarman; and off he strode between the hills, and Freddy saw him no more.

So the lad lay down to sleep, and the next day he came down from the mountain with his fiddle and his gun. First he went to the storekeeper and asked for clothes. Next at a farm he asked for a horse, and at a second for a sleigh; and at another place he asked for a fur coat. No one said him “Nay” — even the stingiest folk were all forced to give him what he asked for. At last he went through the country as a fine gentleman, and had his horse and his sleigh. When he had gone a bit he met the sheriff whose servant he had been.

“Good day, master,” said Little Freddy, as he pulled up and took off his hat.

“Good day,” said the sheriff, “but when was I ever your master?”

“Oh yes,” said Little Freddy, “don’t you remember how I served you three years for three pence?”

“My goodness, now!” said the sheriff, “you have grown rich in a hurry, and pray, how was it that you got to be such a fine gentleman?”

“Oh, that is a long story,” said Little Freddy.

“And are you so full of fun that you carry a fiddle about with you?” asked the sheriff.

“Yes, yes,” said Freddy. “I have always had such a longing to get folk to dance. But the funniest thing of all is this gun, for it brings down almost anything that I aim at, however far it may be off. Do you see that magpie yonder, sitting in the spruce fir? What will you give me if I hit it as we stand here?”

“Well,” said the sheriff, and he laughed when he said it, “I’ll give you all the money I have in my pocket, and I’ll go and fetch it when it falls,” for he never thought it possible for any gun to carry so far.

But as the gun went off down fell the magpie, and into a great bramble thicket; and away went the sheriff up into the bramble after it, and he picked it up and held it up high for the lad to see. But just then Little Freddy began to play his fiddle, and the sheriff began to dance, and the thorns to tear him; but still the lad played on, and the sheriff danced, and cried, and begged, till his clothes flew to tatters, and he scarce had a thread to his back.

“Yes,” said Little Freddy, “now I think you’re about as ragged as I was when I left your service; so now you may get off with what you have.”

But first the sheriff had to pay him all the money that he had in his pocket.

So when the lad came to town he turned into an inn, and there he began to play, and all who came danced and laughed and were merry, and so the lad lived without any care, for all the folks liked him and no one would say “Nay” to anything he asked.

But one evening just as they were all in the midst of their fun, up came the watchmen to drag the lad off to the town hall; for the sheriff had laid a charge against him, and said he had waylaid him and robbed him and nearly taken his life. And now he was to be hanged. The people would hear of nothing else. But Little Freddy had a cure for all trouble, and that was his fiddle. He began to play on it, and the watchmen fell a-dancing and they danced and they laughed till they gasped for breath.

So soldiers and the guard were sent to take him, but it was no better with them than with the watchmen. When Little Freddy played his fiddle, they were all bound to dance; and dance as long as he could lift a finger to play a tune; but they were half dead long before he was tired.

At last they stole a march on him, and took him while he lay asleep by night. Now that they had caught him they could condemn him to be hanged on the spot, and away they hurried him to the gallows tree.

There a great crowd of people flocked together to see this wonder, and the sheriff too was there. He was glad to get even at last for the money and the clothes he had lost, and to see the lad hanged with his own eyes.

And here came Little Freddy, carrying his fiddle and his gun. Slowly he mounted the steps of the gallows, — and when he got to the top he sat down, and asked if they could deny him a wish, and if he might have leave to do one thing? He had such a longing, he said, to scrape a tune and play a bar on his fiddle before they hanged him.

“No, no,” they said; “it were sin and shame to deny him that.” For you know, no one could say “Nay” to what he asked.

But the sheriff begged them not to let him have leave to touch a string, else it would be all over with them altogether. If the lad leave, he begged them to bind him to the birch that stood there.

Little Freddy was not slow in getting his fiddle to speak, and all that were there fell a-dancing at once, those who went on two legs, and those who went on four. Both the dean and the parson, the lawyer and the sheriff, masters and men, dogs and pigs — they all danced and laughed and barked and squealed at one another. Some danced till they lay down and gasped, some danced till they fell in a swoon. It went badly with all of them, but worst of all with the sheriff; for there he stood bound to the birch, and he danced till he scraped the clothes off his back. I dare say it was a sorry looking sight and a sore back.

But there was not one of them who thought of doing anything to Little Freddy, and away he went with his fiddle and his gun, whither he chose, and he lived merrily and happily all his days, for there was no one who could say “Nay” to the first thing he asked for.

32

TRUE AND UNTRUE

Once on a time there were two brothers; one was called True, and the other Untrue. True was always upright and good towards all, but Untrue was bad and full of lies, so that no one could believe what he said. Their mother was a widow, and hadn’t much to live on; so when her sons had grown up, she was forced to send them away, that they might earn their bread in the world. Each got a little scrip with some food in it, and then they went their way.

Now, when they had walked till evening, they sat down on a windfall in the wood, and took out their scraps, for they were hungry after walking the whole day, and thought a morsel of food would be sweet enough.

‘If you’re of my mind’, said Untrue, ‘I think we had better eat out of your scrip, so long as there is anything in it, and after that we can take to mine.’

Yes! True was well pleased with this, so they fell to eating, but Untrue got all the best bits, and stuffed himself with them, while True got only the burnt crusts and scraps.

Next morning they broke their fast off True’s food, and they dined off it too, and then there was nothing left in his scrip. So when they had walked till late at night, and were ready to eats again, True wanted to eat out of his brother’s scrip, but Untrue said ‘No’, the food was his, and he had only enough for himself.

‘Nay! but you know you ate out of my scrip so long as there was anything in it’, said True.

‘All very fine, I daresay’, answered Untrue; ‘but if you are such a fool as to let others eat up your food before your face, you must make the best of it; for now all you have to do is to sit here and starve.’

‘Very well!’ said True, ‘you’re Untrue by name and untrue by nature; so you have been, and so you will be all your life long.’

Now when Untrue heard this, he flew into a rage, and rushed at his brother, and plucked out both his eyes. ‘Now, try if you can see whether folk are untrue or not, you blind buzzard!’ and so saying, he ran away and left him.

Poor True! there he went walking along and feeling his way through the thick wood. Blind and alone, he scarce knew which way to turn, when all at once he caught hold of the trunk of a great bushy lime-tree, so he thought he would climb up into it, and sit there till the night was over for fear of the wild beasts.

‘When the birds begin to sing’, he said to himself, ‘then I shall know it is day, and I can try to grope my way farther on.’ So he climbed up into the lime-tree. After he had sat there a little time, he heard how some one came and began to make a stir and clatter under the tree, and soon after others came; and when they began to greet one another, he found out it was Bruin the bear, and Greylegs the wolf, and Slyboots the fox, and Longears the hare who had come to keep St. John’s eve under the tree. So they began to eat and drink, and be merry; and when they had done eating, they fell to gossipping together. At last the Fox said:

‘Shan’t we, each of us, tell a little story while we sit here?’ Well! the others had nothing against that. It would be good fun, they said, and the Bear began; for you may fancy he was king of the company.

‘The king of England’, said Bruin, ‘has such bad eyesight, he can scarce see a yard before him; but if he only came to this lime-tree in the morning, while the dew is still on the leaves, and took and rubbed his eyes with the dew, he would get back his sight as good as ever.’

‘Very true!’ said Greylegs. ‘The king of England has a deaf and dumb daughter too; but if he only knew what I know, he would soon cure her. Last year she went to the communion. She let a crumb of the bread fall out of her mouth, and a great toad came and swallowed it down; but if they only dug up the chancel floor, they would find the toad sitting right under the altar rails, with the bread still sticking in his throat. If they were to cut the toad open and take and give the bread to the princess, she would be like other folk again as to her speech and hearing.’

‘That’s all very well’, said the Fox; ‘but if the king of England knew what I know, he would not be so badly off for water in his palace; for under the great stone, in his palace-yard, is a spring of the clearest water one could wish for, if he only knew to dig for it there.’

‘Ah!’ said the Hare in a small voice; ‘the king of England has the finest orchard in the whole land, but it does not bear so much as a crab, for there lies a heavy gold chain in three turns round the orchard. If he got that dug up, there would not be a garden like it for bearing in all his kingdom.’

‘Very true, I dare say’, said the Fox; ‘but now it’s getting very late, and we may as well go home.’

So they all went away together.

After they were gone, True fell asleep as he sat up in the tree; but when the birds began to sing at dawn, he woke up, and took the dew from the leaves, and rubbed his eyes with it, and so got his sight back as good as it was before Untrue plucked his eyes out.

Then he went straight to the king of England’s palace, and begged for work, and got it on the spot. So one day the king came out into the palace-yard, and when he had walked about a bit, he wanted to drink out of his pump; for you must know the day was hot, and the king very thirsty; but when they poured him out a glass, it was so muddy, and nasty, and foul, that the king got quite vexed.

‘I don’t think there’s ever a man in my whole kingdom who has such bad water in his yard as I, and yet I bring it in pipes from far, over hill and dale’, cried out the king. ‘Like enough, your Majesty’, said True; ‘but if you would let me have some men to help me to dig up this great stone which lies here in the middle of your yard, you would soon see good water, and plenty of it.’

Well! the king was willing enough; and they had scarcely got the stone well out, and dug under it a while, before a jet of water sprang out high up into the air, as clear and full as if it came out of a conduit, and clearer water was not to be found in all England.

A little while after the king was out in his palace-yard again, and there came a great hawk flying after his chicken, and all the king’s men began to clap their hands and bawl out, ‘There he flies!’ ‘There he flies!’ The king caught up his gun and tried to shoot the hawk, but he couldn’t see so far, so he fell into great grief.

‘Would to Heaven’, he said, ‘there was any one who could tell me a cure for my eyes; for I think I shall soon go quite blind!’

‘I can tell you one soon enough’, said True; and then he told the king what he had done to cure his own eyes, and the king set off that very afternoon to the lime-tree, as you may fancy, and his eyes were quite cured as soon as he rubbed them with the dew which was on the leaves in the morning. From that time forth there was no one whom the king held so dear as True, and he had to be with him wherever he went, both at home and abroad.

So one day, as they were walking together in the orchard, the king said, ‘I can’t tell how it is *that* I can’t! there isn’t a, man in England who spends so much on his orchard as I, and yet I can’t get one of the trees to bear so much as a crab.’

‘Well! well!’ said True; ‘if I may have what lies three times twisted round your orchard, and men to dig it up, your orchard will bear well enough.’

Yes! the king was quite willing, so True got men and began to dig, and at last he dug up the whole gold chain. Now True was a rich man; far richer indeed than the king himself, but still the king was well pleased, for his orchard bore so that the boughs of the trees hung down to the ground, and such sweet apples and pears nobody had ever tasted.

Another day too the king and True were walking about, and talking together, when the princess passed them, and the king was quite downcast when he saw her.

‘Isn’t it a pity, now, that so lovely a princess as mine should want speech and hearing’, he said to True.

‘Ay, but there is a cure for that’, said True.

When the king heard that, he was so glad that he promised him the princess to wife, and half his kingdom into the bargain, if he could get her right again. So True took a few men, and went into the church, and dug up the toad which sat under the altar-rails. Then he cut open the toad, and took out the bread and gave it to the king’s daughter; and from that hour she got back her speech, and could talk like other people.

Now True was to have the princess, and they got ready for the bridal feast, and such a feast had never been seen before; it was the talk of the whole land. Just as they were in the midst of dancing the bridal-dance in came a beggar lad, and begged for a morsel of food, and he was so ragged and wretched that every one crossed themselves when they looked at him; but True knew him at once, and saw that it was Untrue, his brother.

‘Do you know me again?’ said True.

‘Oh! where should such a one as I ever have seen so great a lord’, said Untrue.

‘Still you *have* seen me before’, said True. ‘It was I whose eyes you plucked out a year ago this very day. Untrue by name, and untrue by nature; so I said before, and so I say now; but you are still my brother, and so you shall have some food. After that, you may go to the lime-tree where I sat last year; if you hear anything that can do you good, you will be lucky.’

So Untrue did not wait to be told twice. ‘If True has got so much good by sitting in the lime-tree, that in one year he has come to be king over half England, what good may not I get’, he thought. So he set off and climbed up into the lime-tree. He had not sat there long, before all the beasts came as before, and ate and drank, and kept St. John’s eve under the tree. When they had left off eating, the Fox wished that they should begin to tell stories, and Untrue got ready to listen with all his might, till his ears were almost fit to fall off. But Bruin the bear was surly, and growled and said:

‘Some one has been chattering about what we said last year, and so now we will hold our tongues about what we know’; and with that the beasts bade one another ‘Good-night’, and parted, and Untrue was just as wise as he was before, and the reason was, that his name was Untrue, and his nature untrue too.

33

THE OLD DAME AND HER HEN

Once on a time there was an old widow who lived far away from the rest of the world, up under a hillside, with her three daughters. She was so poor that she had no stock but one single hen, which she prized as the apple of her eye; in short, it was always cackling at her heels, and she was always running to look after it. Well! one day, all at once, the hen was missing. The old wife went out, and round and round the cottage, looking and calling for her hen, but it was gone, and there was no getting it back.

So the woman said to her eldest daughter, ‘You must just go out and see if you can find our hen, for have it back we must, even if we have to fetch it out of the hill.’

Well! the daughter was ready enough to go, so she set off and walked up and down, and looked and called, but no hen could she find. But all at once, just as she was about to give up the hunt, she heard some one calling out in a cleft in the rock:

Your hen trips inside the hill!
Your hen trips inside the hill!

So she went into the cleft to see what it was, but she had scarce set her foot inside the cleft, before she fell through a trap-door, deep, deep down, into a vault under ground. When she got to the bottom she went through many rooms, each finer than the other; but in the innermost room of all, a great ugly man of the hill-folk came up to her and asked, ‘Will you be my sweetheart?’

‘No! I will not’, she said. She wouldn’t have him at any price! not she; all she wanted was to get above ground again as fast as ever she could, and to look after her hen which was lost. Then the Man o’ the Hill got so angry that he took her up and wrung her head off, and threw both head and trunk down into the cellar.

While this was going on, her mother sat at home waiting and waiting, but no daughter came. So after she had waited a bit longer, and neither heard nor saw anything of her daughter, she said to her midmost daughter, that she must go out and see after her sister, and she added:

‘You can just give our hen a call at the same time.’

Well! the second sister had to get off, and the very same thing befell her; she went about looking and calling, and all at once she too heard a voice away in the cleft of the rock saying:

Your hen trips inside the hill!
Your hen trips inside the hill!

She thought this strange, and went to see what it could be; and so she too fell through the trap-door, deep, deep down, into the vault. There she went from room to room, and in the innermost one the Man o’ the Hill came to her and asked if she would be his sweetheart? No! that she wouldn’t; all she wanted was to get above ground again, and hunt for her hen which was lost. So the Man o' the Hill got angry, and took her up and wrung her head off, and threw both head and trunk down into the cellar.

Now, when the old dame had sat and waited seven lengths and seven breadths for her second daughter, and could neither see nor hear anything of her, she said to the youngest:

'Now, you really must set off and see after your sisters. 'Twas silly to lose the hen, but 'twill be sillier still if we lose both your sisters; and you can give the hen a call at the same time' — for the old dame's heart was still set on her hen.

Yes! the youngest was ready enough to go; so she walked up and down, Wanting for her sisters and calling the hen, but she could neither see nor hear anything of them. So at last she too came up to the cleft in the rock, and heard how something said:

Your hen trips inside the hill!
Your hen trips inside the hill!

She thought this strange, so she too went to see what it was, and fell through the trap-door too, deep, deep down, into a vault. When she reached the bottom she went from one room to another, each grander than the other; but she wasn't at all afraid, and took good time to look about her. So, as she was peeping into this and that, she cast her eye on the trap-door into the cellar, and looked down it, and what should she see there but her sisters, who lay dead. She had scarce time to slam to the trap-door before the Man o' the Hill came to her and asked:

'Will you be my sweetheart?'

'With all my heart', answered the girl, for she saw very well how it had gone with her sisters. So, when the Man o' the Hill heard that, he got her the finest clothes in the world; she had only to ask for them, or for anything else she had a mind to, and she got what she wanted, so glad was the Man o' the Hill that any one would be his sweetheart.

But when she had been there a little while, she was one day even more doleful and downcast than was her wont. So the Man o' the Hill asked her what was the matter, and why she was in such dumps.

'Ah!' said the girl, 'it's because I can't get home to my mother. She's hard pinched, I know, for meat and drink, and has no one with her.'

'Well!' said the Man o' the Hill, 'I can't let you go to see her; but just stuff some meat and drink into a sack, and I'll carry it to her.'

Yes! she would do so, she said, with many thanks; but at the bottom of the sack she stuffed a lot of gold and silver, and afterwards she laid a little food on the top of the gold and silver. Then she told the ogre the sack was ready, but he must be sure not to look into it. So he gave his word he wouldn't, and set off. Now, as the Man o' the Hill walked off, she peeped out after him through a chink in the trap-door; but when he had gone a bit on the way, he said:

'This sack is so heavy, I'll just see what there is inside it.'

And so he was about to untie the mouth of the sack, but the girl called out to him:

I SEE what you're at!
I see what you're at!

'THE DEUCE YOU DO!' said the Man o' the Hill; 'then you must have plaguy sharp eyes in your head, that's all!'

So he threw the sack over his shoulder, and dared not try to look into it again. When he reached the widow's cottage, he threw the sack in through the cottage door, and said:

‘Here you have meat and drink from your daughter; she doesn’t want for anything.’

So, when the girl had been in the hill a good bit longer, one day a billy-goat fell down the trap-door.

‘Who sent for you, I should like to know? you long-bearded beast!’ said the Man o’ the Hill, who was in an awful rage, and with that he whipped up the goat, and wrung his head off, and threw him down into the cellar.

‘Oh!’ said the girl, ‘why did you do that? I might have had the goat to play with down here.’

‘Well!’ said the Man o’ the Hill, ‘you needn’t be so down in the mouth about it, I should think, for I can soon put life into the billy-goat again.’

So saying, he took a flask which hung up against the wall, put the billy-goat’s head on his body again, and smeared it with some ointment out of the flask, and he was as well and as lively as ever again.

‘Ho! ho!’ said the girl to herself; ‘that flask is worth something — that it is.’

So when she had been some time longer in the hill, she watched for a day when the Man o’ the Hill was away, took her eldest sister, and putting her head on her shoulders, smeared her with some of the ointment out of the flask, just as she had seen the Man o’ the Hill do with the billy-goat, and in a trice her sister came to life again. Then the girl stuffed her into a sack, laid a little food over her, and as soon as the Man o’ the Hill came home, she said to him:

‘Dear friend! Now do go home to my mother with a morsel of food again; poor thing! she’s both hungry and thirsty, I’ll be bound; and besides that, she’s all alone in the world. But you must mind and not look into the sack.’

Well! he said he would carry the sack; and he said, too, that he would not look into it; but when he had gone a little way, he thought the sack got awfully heavy; and when he had gone a bit farther he said to himself:

'Come what will, I must see what's inside this sack, for however sharp her eyes may be, she can't see me all this way off'

But just as he was about to untie the sack, the girl who sat inside the sack called out:

I SEE what you're at!
I see what you're at!

'THE DEUCE YOU DO!' said the ogre; 'then you must have plaguey sharp eyes'; for he thought all the while it was the girl inside the hill who was speaking. So he didn't care so much as to peep into the sack again, but carried it straight to her mother as fast as he could, and when he got to the cottage door he threw it in through the door, and bawled out:

'Here you have meat and drink from your daughter; she wants for nothing.'

Now, when the girl had been in the hill a while longer, she did the very same thing with her other sister. She put her head on her shoulders, smeared her with ointment out of the flask, brought her to life, and stuffed her into the sack; but this time she crammed in also as much gold and silver as the sack would hold, and over all laid a very little food.

'Dear friend', she said to the Man o' the Hill, 'you really must run home to my mother with a little food again; and mind you don't look into the sack.'

Yes! the Man o' the Hill was ready enough to do as she wished, and he gave his word too that he wouldn't look into the sack; but when he had gone a bit of the way he began to think the sack got awfully heavy, and when he had gone a bit further, he could scarce stagger along under it, so he set it down, and was just about to untie the string and look into it, when the girl inside the sack bawled out:

I see what you’re at!
I see what you’re at!

‘The deuce you do’, said the Man o’ the Hill, ‘then you must have plaguey sharp eyes of your own.’

Well, he dared not try to look into the sack, but made all the haste he could, and carried the sack straight to the girl’s mother. When he got to the cottage door he threw the sack in through the door, and roared out:

‘Here you have food from your daughter; she wants for nothing.’

So when the girl had been there a good while longer, the Man o’ the Hill made up his mind to go out for the day; then the girl shammed to be sick and sorry, and pouted and fretted.

‘It’s no use your coming home before twelve o’clock at night’, she said, ‘for I shan’t be able to have supper ready before — I’m so sick and poorly.’

But when the Man o’ the Hill was well out of the house, she stuffed some of her clothes with straw, and stuck up this lass of straw in the corner by the chimney, with a besom in her hand, so that it looked just as if she herself were standing there. After that she stole off home, and got a sharpshooter to stay in the cottage with her mother.

So when the clock struck twelve, or just about it, home came the Man o’ the Hill, and the first thing he said to the straw-girl was, ‘Give me something to eat.’

But she answered him never a word.

‘Give me something to eat, I say!’ called out the Man o’ the Hill, ‘for I am almost starved.’

No! she hadn't a word to throw at him.

'Give me something to eat!' roared out the ogre the third time.' I think you'd better open your ears and hear what I say, or else I'll wake you up, that I will!'

No! the girl stood just as still as ever; so he flew into a rage, and gave her such a slap in the face, that the straw flew all about the room; but when he saw that, he knew he had been tricked, and began to hunt everywhere; and at last, when he came to the cellar, and found both the girl's sisters missing, he soon saw how the cat jumped, and ran off to the cottage, saying, 'I'll soon pay her off!'

But when he reached the cottage, the sharp-shooter fired off his piece, and then the Man o' the Hill dared not go into the house, for he thought it was thunder. So he set off home again as fast as he could lay legs to the ground; but what do you think, just as he got to the trap-door, the sun rose and the Man o' the Hill burst.

Oh! if one only knew where the trap-door was, I'll be bound there's a whole heap of gold and silver down there still!

34

BOOTS WHO ATE A MATCH WITH THE TROLL

Once on a time there was a farmer who had three sons; his means were small, and he was old and weak, and his sons would take to nothing. A fine large wood belonged to the farm, and one day the father told his sons to go and hew wood, and try to pay off some of his debts.

Well, after a long talk he got them to set off, and the eldest was to go first. But when he had got well into the wood, and began to hew at a mossy old fir, what should he see coming up to him but a great sturdy Troll.

‘If you hew in this wood of mine’, said the Troll, ‘I’ll kill you!’

When the lad heard that, he threw the axe down, and ran off home as fast as he could lay legs to the ground; so he came in quite out of breath, and told them what had happened, but his father called him ‘hare-heart’ — no Troll would ever have scared him from hewing when he was young, he said.

Next day the second son’s turn came, and he fared just the same. He had scarce hewn three strokes at the fir, before the Troll came to him too, and said:

‘If you hew in this wood of mine, I’ll kill you.’

The lad dared not so much as look at him, but threw down the axe, took to his heels, and came scampering home just like his brother. So when he got home, his father was angry again, and said no Troll had ever scared him when he was young.

The third day Boots wanted to set off.

‘You, indeed!’ said the two elder brothers; ‘you’ll do it bravely, no doubt! you, who have scarce ever set your foot out of the door.’

Boots said nothing to this, but only begged them to give him a good store of food. His mother had no cheese, so she set the pot on the fire to make him a little, and he put it into a scrip and set off. So when he had hewn a bit, the Troll came to him too, and said:

‘If you hew in this wood of mine, I’ll kill you.’

But the lad was not slow; he pulled his cheese out of the scrip in a trice, and squeezed it till the whey spurted out.

‘Hold your tongue!’ he cried to the Troll, ‘or I’ll squeeze you as I squeeze the water out of this white stone.’

‘Nay, dear friend!’ said the Troll, ‘only spare me, and I’ll help you to hew.’

Well, on those terms the lad was willing to spare him, and the Troll hewed so bravely, that they felled and cut up many, many fathoms in the day.

But when even drew near, the Troll said:

‘Now you’d better come home with me, for my house is nearer than yours.’

So the lad was willing enough; and when they reached the Troll’s house, the Troll was to make up the fire, while the lad went to fetch water for their porridge, and there stood two iron pails so big and heavy, that he couldn’t so much as lift them from the ground.

‘Pooh!’ said the lad, ‘it isn’t worth while to touch these finer-basins: I’ll just go and fetch the spring itself.’

‘Nay, nay, dear friend!’ said the Troll; ‘I can’t afford to lose my spring; just you make up the fire, and I’ll go and fetch the water.’

So when he came back with the water, they set to and boiled up a great pot of porridge.

‘It’s all the same to me’, said the lad; ‘but if you’re of my mind, we’ll eat a match!’

‘With all my heart’, said the Troll, for he thought he could surely hold his own in eating. So they sat down; but the lad took his scrip unawares to the Troll, and hung it before him, and so he spooned more into the scrip than he ate himself; and when the scrip was full, he took up his knife and made a slit in the scrip. The Troll looked on all the while, but said never a word. So when they had eaten a good bit longer, the Troll laid down his spoon, saying, ‘Nay! but I can’t eat a morsel more.’

‘But you shall eat’, said the youth; ‘I’m only half done; why don’t you do as I did, and cut a hole in your paunch? You’ll be able to eat then as much as you please.’

‘But doesn’t it hurt one cruelly?’ asked the Troll.

‘Oh’, said the youth, ‘nothing to speak of.’

So the Troll did as the lad said, and then you must know very well that he lost his life; but the lad took all the silver and gold that he found in the hill-side, and went home with it, and you may fancy it went a great way to pay off the debt.

35

HACON GRIZZLEBEARD

Once on a time there was a princess who was so proud and pert that no suitor was good enough for her. She made game of them all, and sent them about their business, one after the other; but though she was so proud, still new suitors kept on coming to the palace, for she was a beauty, the wicked hussey!

So one day there came a prince to woo her, and his name was Hacon Grizzlebeard; but the first night he was there, the Princess bade the king's fool cut off the ears of one of the prince's horses, and slit the jaws of the other up to the ears. When the prince went out to drive next day, the Princess stood in the porch and looked at him.

'Well!' she cried, 'I never saw the like of this in all my life; the keen north wind that blows here has taken the ears off one of your horses, and the other has stood by and gaped at what was going on till his jaws have split right up to his ears.'

And with that she burst out into a roar of laughter, ran in, slammed to the door, and let him drive off.

So he drove home; but as he went, he thought to himself that he would pay her off one day. After a bit, he put on a great beard of moss, threw a great fur cloak over his clothes, and dressed himself up just like any beggar. He went to a goldsmith and bought a golden spinning wheel, and sat down with it under the Princess' window, and began to file away at his spinning wheel, and to turn it this way and that, for it wasn't quite in order, and, besides, it wanted a stand.

So when the Princess rose up in the morning, she came to the window and threw it up, and called out to the beggar if he would sell his golden spinning-wheel?

'No; it isn't for sale', said Hacon Grizzlebeard; 'but if I may have leave to sleep outside your bedroom door to-night, I'll give it you.'

Well, the Princess thought it a good bargain; there could be no danger in letting him sleep outside her door.

So she got the wheel, and at night Hacon Grizzlebeard lay down outside her bedroom. But as the night wore on he began to freeze.

'Hutetutetutetu! it is *so* cold; do let me in', he cried.

'You've lost your wits outright, I think', said the Princess.

'Oh, hutetutetutetu! it is so bitter cold, pray do let me in', said Hacon Grizzlebeard again.

'Hush! hush! hold your tongue!' said the Princess; 'if my father were to know that there was a man in the house, I should be in a fine scrape.'

'Oh, hutetutetutetu! I'm almost frozen to death; only let me come inside and lie on the floor', said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

Yes! there was no help for it. She had to let him in, and when he was, he lay on the ground and slept like a top.

Some time after, Hacon came again with the stand to the spinning-wheel, and sat down under the Princess' window, and began to file at it, for it was not quite fit for use. When she heard him filing, she threw up the window and began to talk to him, and to ask what he had there.

'Oh! only the stand to that spinning-wheel which your royal highness bought; for I thought, as you had the wheel, you might like to have the stand too.'

‘What do you want for it?’ asked the Princess; but it was not for sale any more than the wheel, but she might have them if she would give him leave to sleep on the floor of her bedroom next night.

Well! she gave him leave, only he was to be sure to lie still, and not to shiver and call out ‘hutetu’, or any such stuff. Hacon Grizzlebeard promised fair enough, but as the night wore on he began to shiver and shake, and to ask whether he might not come nearer, and lie on the floor alongside the Princess’ bed.

There was no help for it; she had to give him leave, lest the king should hear the noise he made. So Hacon Grizzlebeard lay alongside the Princess’ bed, and slept like a top.

It was a long while before Hacon Grizzlebeard came again; but when he came he had with him a golden wool-winder, and he sat down and began to file away at it under the Princess’ window. Then came the old story over again. When the Princess heard what was going on, she came to the window, and asked him how he did, and whether he would sell the golden wool-winder?

‘It is not to be had for money; but if you’ll give me leave to sleep to-night in your bedroom, with my head on your bedstead, you shall have it for nothing’, said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

Well! she would give him leave, if he only gave his word to be quiet, and make no noise. So he said he would do his best to be still; but as the night wore on, he began to shiver and shake so, that his teeth chattered again.

‘Hutetutetutetu! it is so bitter cold! Oh, do let me get into bed and warm myself a little’, said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

‘Get into bed!’ said the Princess; ‘why, you must have lost your wits.’

‘Hutetutetutetu!’ said Hacon; ‘do let me get into bed. Hutetutetutetu.’

‘Hush! hush! be still for God’s sake’, said the Princess; ‘if father knows there is a man in here, I shall be in a sad plight. I’m sure he’ll kill me on the spot.’

‘Hutetutetutetu! let me get into bed’, said Hacon Grizzlebeard, who kept on shivering so that the whole room shook.

Well! there was no help for it; she had to let him get into bed, where he slept both sound and soft; but a little while after the Princess had a child, at which the king grew so wild with rage, that he was near making an end of both mother and babe. Just after this happened, came Hacon Grizzlebeard tramping that way once more, as if by chance, and took his seat down in the kitchen, like any other beggar.

So when the Princess came out and saw him, she cried, ‘Ah, God have mercy on me, for the ill-luck you have brought on me; father is ready to burst with rage; do let me follow you to your home.’

‘Oh! I’ll be bound you’re too well bred to follow me’, said Hacon, ‘for I have nothing but a log but to live in; and how I shall ever get food for you I can’t tell, for it’s just as much as I can do to get food for myself.’

‘Oh yes! it’s all the same to me how you get it, or whether you get it at all’, she said; ‘only let me be with you, for if I stay here any longer, my father will be sure to take my life.’

So she got leave to be with the beggar, as she called him, and they walked a long, long way, though she was but a poor hand at tramping. When she passed out of her father’s land into another, she asked whose it was?

‘Oh! this is Hacon Grizzlebeard’s, if you must know’, said he.

‘Indeed!’ said the Princess; ‘I might have married him if I chose, and then I should not have had to walk about like a beggar’s wife.’

So, whenever they came to grand castles, and woods, and parks, and she asked whose they were? the beggar’s answer was still the same: ‘Oh: they are Hacon Grizzlebeard’s.’ And the Princess was in a sad way that she had not chosen the man who had such broad lands. Last of all, they came to a palace, where he said he was known, and where he thought he could get her work, so that they might have something to live on; so he built up a cabin by the woodside for them to dwell in; and every day he went to the king’s palace, as he said, to hew wood and draw water for the cook, and when he came back he brought a few scraps of meat; but they did not go very far. One day, when he came home from the palace, he said: ‘To-morrow I will stay at home and look after the baby, but you must get ready to go to the palace, do you hear! for the Prince said you were to come and try your hand at baking.’

‘I bake!’ said the Princess; ‘I can’t bake, for I never did such a thing in my life.’

‘Well, you must go’, said Hacon, ‘since the Prince has said it. If you can’t bake, you can learn; you have only got to look how the rest bake; and mind, when you leave, you must steal me some bread.’

‘I can’t steal’, said the Princess.

‘You can learn that too’, said Hacon; ‘you know we live on short commons. But take care that the Prince doesn’t see you, for he has eyes at the back of his head.’

So when she was well on her way, Hacon ran by a short cut and reached the palace long before her, and threw off his rags and beard, and put on his princely robes.

The Princess took her turn in the bakehouse, and did as Hacon bade her, for she stole bread till her pockets were crammed full. So when she was about to go home at even, the Prince said:

‘We don’t know much of this old wife of Hacon Grizzlebeard’s, I think we’d best see if she has taken anything away with her.’

So he thrust his hand into all her pockets, and felt her all over, and when he found the bread, he was in a great rage, and led them all a sad life. She began to weep and bewail, and said:

‘The beggar made me do it, and I couldn’t help it.’ ‘Well’, said the Prince at last, ‘it ought to have gone hard with you; but all the same, for the sake of the beggar you shall be forgiven this once.’

When she was well on her way, he threw off his robes, put on his skin cloak, and his false beard, and reached the cabin before her. When she came home, he was busy nursing the baby.

‘Well, you have made me do what it went against my heart to do. This is the first time I ever stole, and this shall be the last’; and with that she told him how it had gone with her, and what the Prince had said.

A few days after Hacon Grizzlebeard came home at even and said:

‘To-morrow I must stay at home and mind the babe, for they are going to kill a pig at the palace, and you must help to make the sausages.’

‘I make sausages!’ said the Princess; ‘I can’t do any such thing. I have eaten sausages often enough; but as to making them, I never made one in my life.’

Well, there was no help for it; the Prince had said it, and go she must. As for not knowing how, she was only to do what the others did, and at the same time Hacon bade her steal some sausages for him.

‘Nay, but I can’t steal them’, she said; ‘you know how it went last time.’

‘Well, you can learn to steal; who knows but you may have better luck next time’, said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

When she was well on her way, Hacon ran by a short cut, reached the palace long before her, threw off his skin cloak and false beard, and stood in the kitchen with his royal robes before she came in. So the Princess stood by when the pig was killed, and made sausages with the rest, and did as Hacon bade her, and stuffed her pockets full of sausages. But when she was about to go home at even, the Prince said:

‘This beggar’s wife was long-fingered last time; we may as well just see if she hasn’t carried anything off.’

So he began to thrust his hands into her pockets, and when he found the sausages he was in a great rage again, and made a great to do, threatening to send for the constable and put her into the cage.

‘Oh, God bless your royal highness; do let me off! The beggar made me do it’, she said, and wept bitterly.

‘Well’, said Hacon, ‘you ought to smart for it; but for the beggar’s sake you shall be forgiven.’

When she was gone, he changed his clothes again, ran by the short cut, and when she reached the cabin, there he was before her. Then she told him the whole story, and swore, through thick and thin, it should be the last time he got her to do such a thing.

Now, it fell out a little time after, when the man came back from the palace, he said:

‘Our Prince is going to be married, but the bride is sick, so the tailor can’t measure her for her wedding gown. And the Prince’s will is, that you should go up to the palace and be measured instead of the bride; for he says you are just the same height and shape. But after you have been measured, mind you don’t go away; you can stand about, you know, and when the tailor cuts out the gown, you can snap up the largest pieces, and bring them home for a waistcoat for me.’

‘Nay, but I can’t steal’, she said; ‘besides, you know how it went last time.’

‘You can learn then’, said Hacon, ‘and you may have better luck, perhaps.’

She thought it bad, but still she went and did as she was told. She stood by while the tailor was cutting out the gown, and she swept down all the biggest scraps, and stuffed them into her pockets; and when she was going away, the Prince said:

‘We may as well see if this old girl has not been long-fingered this time too.’

So he began to feel and search her pockets, and when he found the pieces he was in a rage, and began to stamp and scold at a great rate, while she wept and said:

‘Ah, pray forgive me; the beggar bade me do it, and I couldn’t help it.’

‘Well, you ought to smart for it’, said Hacon; ‘but for the beggar’s sake it shall be forgiven you.’

So it went now just as it had gone before, and when she got back to the cabin, the beggar was there before her.

‘Oh, Heaven help me’, she said; ‘you will be the death of me at last, by making me nothing but what is wicked. The Prince was in such a towering rage that he threatened me both with the constable and cage.’

Sometime after, Hacon came home to the cabin at even and said:

‘Now, the Prince’s will is, that you should go up to the palace and stand for the bride, old lass! for the bride is still sick, and keeps her bed; but he won’t put off the wedding; and he says, you are so like her, that no one could tell one from the other; so to-morrow you must get ready to go to the palace.’

‘I think you’ve lost your wits, both the Prince and you’, said she. ‘Do you think I look fit to stand in the bride’s place? look at me! Can any beggar’s trull look worse than I?’

‘Well, the Prince said you were to go, and so go you must’, said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

There was no help for it, go she must; and when she reached the palace, they dressed her out so finely that no princess ever looked so smart.

The bridal train went to church, where she stood for the bride, and when they came back, there was dancing and merriment in the palace. But just as she was in the midst of dancing with the Prince, she saw a gleam of light through the window, and lo! the cabin by the wood-side was all one bright flame.

‘Oh! the beggar, and the babe, and the cabin’, she screamed out, and was just going to swoon away.

‘Here is the beggar, and there is the babe, and so let the cabin burn away’, said Hacon Grizzlebeard.

Then she knew him again, and after that the mirth and merriment began in right earnest; but since that I have never heard tell anything more about them.

36

BOOTS, WHO MADE THE PRINCESS SAY, ‘THAT’S A STORY’

Once on a time there was a king who had a daughter, and she was such a dreadful story-teller that the like of her was not to be found far or near. So the king gave out, that if any one could tell such a string of lies, as would get her to say, ‘That’s a story’, he should have her to wife, and half the kingdom besides. Well, many came, as you may fancy, to try their luck, for every one would have been very glad to have the Princess, to say nothing of the kingdom; but they all cut a sorry figure, for the Princess was so given to story-telling, that all their lies went in at one ear and out of the other. Among the rest came three brothers to try their luck, and the two elder went first, but they fared no better than those who had gone before them. Last of all the third, Boots, set off and found the Princess in the farm-yard.

‘Good-morning’, he said, ‘and thank you for nothing.’

‘Good-morning’, said she, ‘and the same to you.’

Then she went on:

‘You haven’t such a fine farm-yard as ours, I’ll be bound; for when two shepherds stand, one at each end of it, and blow their ram’s horns, the one can’t hear the other.’

‘Haven’t we though!’ answered Boots; ‘ours is far bigger; for when a cow begins to go with calf at one end of it, she doesn’t get to the other end before the time to drop her calf is come.’

‘I dare say!’ said the Princess. ‘Well, but you haven’t such a big ox, after all, as ours yonder; for when two men sit one on each horn, they can’t touch each other with a twenty-foot rule.’

‘Stuff!’ said Boots; ‘is that all? why, we have an ox who is so big, that when two men sit, one on each horn, and each blows his great mountain-trumpet, they can’t hear one another.’

‘I dare say!’ said the Princess; ‘but you haven’t so much milk as we, I’ll be bound; for we milk our kine into great pails, and carry them in-doors, and empty them into great tubs, and so we make great, great cheeses.’

‘Oh! you do, do you?’ said Boots. ‘Well, we milk ours into great tubs, and then we put them in carts and drive them in-doors, and then we turn them out into great brewing vats, and so we make cheeses as big as a great house. We had, too a dun mare to tread the cheese well together when it was making; but once she tumbled down into the cheese, and we lost her; and after we had eaten at this cheese seven years, we came upon a great dun mare, alive and kicking. Well, once after that I was going to drive this mare to the mill, and her back-bone snapped in two; but I wasn’t put out, not I, for I took a spruce sapling, and put it into her for a back-bone, and she had no other back-bone all the while we had her. But the sapling grew up into such a tall tree, that I climbed right up to heaven by it, and when I got there, I saw the Virgin Mary sitting and spinning the foam of the sea into pig’s-bristle ropes; but just then the spruce-fir broke short off, and I couldn’t get down again; so the Virgin Mary let me down by one of the ropes, and down I slipped straight into a fox’s hole, and who should sit there but my mother and your father cobbling shoes; and just as I stepped in, my mother gave your father such a box on the ear, that it made his whiskers curl.’

‘That’s a story!’ said the Princess; ‘my father never did any such thing in all his born days!’

So Boots got the Princess to wife, and half the kingdom besides.

37

THE FOX AS HERDSMAN

Once on a time there was a woman who went out to hire a herdsman, and she met a bear.

‘Whither away, Goody?’ said Bruin.

‘Oh, I’m going out to hire a herdsman’, answered the woman.

‘Why not have me for a herdsman?’ said Bruin.

‘Well, why not?’ said the woman. ‘If you only knew how to call the flock; just let me hear?’

‘OW, OW!’ growled the bear.

‘No, no! I won’t have you’, said the woman, as soon as she heard him say that, and off she went on her way.

So, when she had gone a bit further, she met a wolf.

‘Whither away, Goody?’ asked the Wolf.

‘Oh!’ said she, ‘I’m going out to hire a herdsman.’

‘Why not have me for a herdsman?’ said the Wolf.

‘Well, why not? if you can only call the flock; let me hear?’ said she.

‘UH, UH!’ said the Wolf.

‘No, no!’ said the woman; ‘you’ll never do for me.’

Well, after she had gone a while longer, she met a fox.

‘Whither away, Goody?’ asked the Fox.

‘Oh, I’m just going out to hire a herdsman’, said the woman.

‘Why not have me for your herdsman?’ asked the Fox.

‘Well, why not?’ said she; ‘if you only knew how to call the flock; let me hear?’

‘DIL-DAL-HOLOM’, sung out the Fox, in such a fine clear voice.

‘Yes; I’ll have you for my herdsman’, said the woman; and so she set the Fox to herd her flock.

The first day the Fox was herdsman he ate up all the woman’s goats; the next day he made an end of all her sheep; and the third day he ate up all her kine. So, when he came home at even, the woman asked what he had done with all her flocks?

‘Oh!’ said the Fox, ‘their skulls are in the stream, and their bodies in the holt.’

Now, the Goody stood and churned when the fox said this, but she thought she might as well step out and see after her flock; and while she was away the Fox crept into the churn and ate up the cream. So when the Goody came back and saw that, she fell into such a rage, that she snatched up the little morsel of the cream that was left, and threw it at the fox as he ran off, so that he got a dab of it on the end of his tail, and that’s the reason why the fox has a white tip to his brush.

38

THE MASTERMAID

Once on a time there was a king who had several sons — I don’t know how many there were — but the youngest had no rest at home, for nothing else would please him but to go out into the world and try his luck, and after a long time the king was forced to give him leave to go. Now, after he had travelled some days, he came one night to a Giant’s house, and there he got a place in the Giant’s service. In the morning the Giant went off to herd his goats, and as he left the yard, he told the Prince to clean out the stable; ‘and after you have done that, you needn’t do anything else to-day; for you must know it is an easy master you have come to. But what is set you to do you must do well, and you mustn’t think of going into any of the rooms which are beyond that in which you slept, for if you do, I’ll take your life.’

‘Sure enough, it is an easy master I have got’, said the Prince to himself, as he walked up and down the room, and carolled and sang, for he thought there was plenty of time to clean out the stable.

‘But still it would be good fun just to peep into his other rooms, for there must be something in them which he is afraid lest I should see, since he won’t give me leave to go in.’

So he went into the first room, and there was a pot boiling on a hook by the wall, but the Prince saw no fire underneath it. I wonder what is inside it, he thought; and then he dipped a lock of his hair into it, and the hair seemed as if it were all turned to copper.

‘What a dainty broth,’ he said; ‘if one tasted it, he’d look grand inside his gullet’; and with that he went into the next room. There, too, was a pot hanging by a hook, which bubbled and boiled; but there was no fire under that either.

‘I may as well try this too’, said the Prince, as he put another lock into the pot, and it came out all silvered.

‘They haven’t such rich broth in my father’s house’, said the Prince; ‘but it all depends on how it tastes’, and with that he went on into the third room. There, too, hung a pot, and boiled just as he had seen in the two other rooms, and the Prince had a mind to try this too, so he dipped a lock of hair into it, and it came out gilded, so that the light gleamed from it.

‘“Worse and worse”, said the old wife; but I say better and better’, said the Prince; ‘but if he boils gold here, I wonder what he boils in yonder.’

He thought he might as well see; so he went through the door into the fourth room. Well, there was no pot in there, but there was a Princess, seated on a bench, so lovely, that the Prince had never seen anything like her in his born days.

‘Oh! in Heaven’s name’, she said, ‘what do you want here?’

‘I got a place here yesterday’, said the Prince.

‘A place, indeed! Heaven help you out of it.’

‘Well, after all, I think I’ve got an easy master; he hasn’t set me much to do to-day, for after I have cleaned out the stable, my day’s work is over.’

‘Yes, but how will you do it’, she said; ‘for if you set to work to clean it like other folk, ten pitchforks full will come in for every one you toss out. But I will teach you how to set to work; you must turn the fork upside down, and toss with the handle, and then all the dung will fly out of itself.’

‘Yes, he would be sure to do that’, said the Prince; and so he sat there the whole day, for he and the Princess were soon great friends, and had made up their minds to have one another, and so the first day of his service with the Giant was not long, you may fancy. But when the evening drew on, she said ‘twould be as well if he got the stable cleaned out before the Giant came home; and when he went to the stable, he thought he would just see if what she had said were true, and so he began to work like the grooms in his father’s stable; but he soon had enough of that, for he hadn’t worked a minute before the stable was so full of dung that he hadn’t room to stand. Then he did as the Princess bade him, and turned up the fork and worked with the handle, and lo! in a trice the stable was as clean as if it had been scoured. And when he had done his work, he went back into the room where the Giant had given him leave to be, and began to walk up and down, and to carol and sing. So after a bit, home came the Giant with his goats.

‘Have you cleaned the stable?’ asked the Giant.

‘Yes, now it’s all right and tight, master’, answered the Prince.

‘I’ll soon see if it is’, growled the Giant, and strode off to the stable, where he found it just as the Prince had said.

‘You’ve been talking to my Mastermaid, I can see’, said the Giant; ‘for you’ve not sucked this knowledge out of your own breast.’

‘Mastermaid!’ said the Prince, who looked as stupid as an owl, ‘what sort of thing is that, master? I’d be very glad to see it.’

‘Well, well!’ said the Giant; ‘you’ll see her soon enough’.

Next day the Giant set off with his goats again, and before he went he told the Prince to fetch home his horse, which was out at grass on the hill-side, and when he had done that he might rest all the day.

‘For you must know, it is an easy master you have come to’, said the Giant; ‘but if you go into any of the rooms I spoke of yesterday, I’ll wring your head off.’

So off he went with his flock of goats.

‘An easy master you are indeed’, said the Prince; ‘but for all that, I’ll just go in and have a chat with your Mastermaid; may be she’ll be as soon mine as yours.’ So he went in to her, and she asked him what he had to do that day.

‘Oh! nothing to be afraid of’, said he; ‘I’ve only to go up to the hill-side to fetch his horse.’

‘Very well, and how will you set about it?’

‘Well, for that matter, there’s no great art in riding a horse home. I fancy I’ve ridden fresher horses before now’, said the Prince.

‘Ah, but this isn’t so easy a task as you think; but I’ll teach you how to do it. When you get near it, fire and flame will come out of its nostrils, as out of a tar barrel; but look out, and take the bit which hangs behind the door yonder, and throw it right into his jaws, and he will grow so tame that you may do what you like with him.’

Yes! the Prince would mind and do that; and so he sat in there the whole day, talking and chattering with the Mastermaid about one thing and another, but they always came back to how happy they would be if they could only have one another, and get well away from the Giant; and, to tell the truth, the Prince would have clean forgotten both the horse and the hill-side, if the Mastermaid hadn’t put him in mind of them when evening drew on, telling him he had better set out to fetch the horse before the Giant came home. So he set off, and took the bit which hung in the corner, ran up the hill, and it wasn’t long before he met the horse, with fire and flame streaming out of its nostrils. But he watched his time, and, as the horse came open-jawed up to him, he threw the bit into its mouth, and it stood as quiet as a lamb. After that, it was no great matter to ride it home and put it up, you may fancy; and then the Prince went into his room again, and began to carol and sing.

So the Giant came home again at even with his goats; and the first words he said were:

‘Have you brought my horse down from the hill?’

‘Yes, master, that I have’, said the Prince; ‘and a better horse I never bestrode; but for all that I rode him straight home, and put him up safe and sound.’

‘I’ll soon see to that’, said the Giant, and ran out to the stable, and there stood the horse just as the Prince had said.

‘You’ve talked to my Mastermaid, I’ll be bound, for you haven’t sucked this out of your own breast’, said the Giant again.

‘Yesterday master talked of this Mastermaid, and to-day it’s the same story’, said the Prince, who pretended to be silly and stupid. ‘Bless you, master! why don’t you show me the thing at once? I should so like to see it only once in my life.’

‘Oh, if that’s all’, said the Giant, ‘you’ll see her soon enough.’

The third day, at dawn, the Giant went off to the wood again with his goats; but before he went he said to the Prince:

‘To-day you must go to Hell and fetch my fire-tax. When you have done that you can rest yourself all day, for you must know it is an easy master you have come to’; and with that off he went.

‘Easy master, indeed!’ said the Prince. ‘You may be easy, but you set me hard tasks all the same. But I may as well see if I can find your Mastermaid, as you call her. I daresay she’ll tell me what to do’; and so in he went to her again.

So when the Mastermaid asked what the Giant had set him to do that day, he told her how he was to go to Hell and fetch the fire-tax.

‘And how will you set about it?’ asked the Mastermaid.

‘Oh, that you must tell me’, said the Prince. ‘I have never been to Hell in my life; and even if I knew the way, I don’t know how much I am to ask for.’

‘Well, I’ll soon tell you’, said the Mastermaid; ‘you must go to the steep rock away yonder, under the hill-side, and take the club that lies there, and knock on the face of the rock. Then there will come out one all glistening with fire; to him you must tell your errand; and when he asks you how much you will have, mind you say, “As much as I can carry.”‘

Yes; he would be sure to say that; so he sat in there with the Mastermaid all that day too; and though evening drew on, he would have sat there till now, had not the Mastermaid put him in mind that it was high time to be off to Hell to fetch the Giant’s fire-tax before he came home. So he went on his way, and did just as the Mastermaid had told him; and when he reached the rock, he took up the club and gave a great thump. Then the rock opened, and out came one whose face glistened, and out of whose eyes and nostrils flew sparks of fire.

‘What is your will?’ said he.

‘Oh! I’m only come from the Giant to fetch his fire-tax’, said the Prince.

‘How much will you have then?’ said the other.

‘I never wish for more than I am able to carry’, said the Prince.

‘Lucky for you that you did not ask for a whole horse-load’, said he who came out of the rock; ‘but come now into the rock with me, and you shall have it.’

So the Prince went in with him, and you may fancy what heaps and heaps of gold and silver he saw lying in there, just like stones in a gravel pit; and he got a load just as big as he was able to carry, and set off home with it. Now, when the Giant came home with his goats at even, the Prince went into his room, and began to carol and sing as he had done the evenings before.

‘Have you been to Hell after my fire-tax?’ roared the Giant.

‘Oh yes; that I have, master’, answered the Prince.

‘Where have you put it?’ said the Giant.

‘There stands the sack on the bench yonder’, said the Prince.

‘I’ll soon see to that’, said the Giant, who strode off to the bench, and there he saw the sack so full that the gold and silver dropped out on the floor as soon as ever he untied the string.

‘You’ve been talking to my Mastermaid, that I can see’, said the Giant; ‘but if you have, I’ll wring your head off.’

‘Mastermaid!’ said the Prince; ‘yesterday master talked of this Mastermaid, and to-day he talks of her again, and the day before yesterday it was the same story. I only wish I could see what sort of thing she is! that I do.’

‘Well, well, wait till to-morrow’, said the Giant, ‘and then I’ll take you in to her myself.’

‘Thank you kindly, master’, said the Prince; ‘but it’s only a joke of master’s, I’ll be bound.’

So next day the Giant took him in to the Mastermaid, and said to her:

‘Now, you must cut his throat, and boil him in the great big pot you wot of; and when the broth is ready, just give me a call.’

After that, he laid him down on the bench to sleep, and began to snore so, that it sounded like thunder on the hills.

So the Mastermaid took a knife and cut the Prince in his little finger, and let three drops of blood fall on a three-legged stool; and after that she took all the old rags, and soles of shoes, and all the rubbish she could lay hands on, and put them into the pot; and then she filled a chest full of ground gold, and took a lump of salt, and a flask of water that hung behind the door, and she took, besides, a golden apple, and two golden chickens, and off she set with the Prince from the Giant’s house as fast as they could; and when they had gone a little way, they came to the sea, and after that they sailed over the sea; but where they got the ship from, I have never heard tell.

So when the Giant had slumbered a good bit, he began to stretch himself as he lay on the bench and called out, ‘Will it be soon done?’

‘Only just begun’, answered the first drop of blood on the stool.

So the Giant lay down to sleep again, and slumbered a long, long time. At last he began to toss about a little, and cried out:

‘Do you hear what I say; will it be soon done?’ but he did not look up this time, any more than the first, for he was still half asleep.

‘Half done’, said the second drop of blood.

Then the Giant thought again it was the Mastermaid, so he turned over on his other side, and fell asleep again; and when he had gone on sleeping for many hours, he began to stir and stretch his old bones, and to call out,—

‘Isn’t it done yet?’

‘Done to a turn’, said the third drop of blood.

Then the Giant rose up and began to rub his eyes, but he couldn’t see who it was that was talking to him, so he searched and called for the Mastermaid, but no one answered.

‘Ah, well! I dare say she’s just run out of doors for a bit’, he thought, and took up a spoon and went up to the pot to taste the broth; but he found nothing but shoe-soles, and rags, and such stuff; and it was all boiled up together, so that he couldn’t tell which was thick and which was thin. As soon as he saw this, he could tell how things had gone, and he got so angry he scarce knew which leg to stand upon. Away he went after the Prince and the Mastermaid, till the wind whistled behind him; but before long, he came to the water and couldn’t cross it.

‘Never mind’, he said; ‘I know a cure for this. I’ve only got to call on my stream-sucker.’

So he called on his stream-sucker, and he came and stooped down, and took one, two, three gulps; and then the water fell so much in the sea, that the Giant could see the Mastermaid and the Prince sailing in their ship.

‘Now, you must cast out the lump of salt’, said the Mastermaid.

So the Prince threw it overboard, and it grew up into a mountain so high, right across the sea, that the Giant couldn’t pass it, and the stream-sucker couldn’t help him by swilling any more water.

‘Never mind!’ cried the Giant; ‘there’s a cure for this too.’ So he called on his hill-borer to come and bore through the mountain, that the stream-sucker might creep through and take another swill; but just as they had made a hole through the hill, and the stream-sucker was about to drink, the Mastermaid told the Prince to throw overboard a drop or two out of the flask, and then the sea was just as full as ever, and before the stream-sucker could take another gulp, they reached the land and were saved from the Giant.

So they made up their minds to go home to the Prince’s father, but the Prince would not hear of the Mastermaid’s walking, for he thought it seemly neither for her nor for him.

‘Just wait here ten minutes’, he said, ‘while I go home after the seven horses which stand in my father’s stall. It’s no great way off, and I shan’t be long about it; but I will not hear of my sweetheart walking to my father’s palace.’

‘Ah!’ said the Mastermaid, ‘pray don’t leave me, for if you once get home to the palace, you’ll forget me outright; I know you will.’

‘Oh!’ said he, ‘how can I forget you; you with whom I have gone through so much, and whom I love so dearly?’

There was no help for it, he must and would go home to fetch the coach and seven horses, and she was to wait for him by the seaside. So at last the Mastermaid was forced to let him have his way; she only said:

‘Now, when you get home, don’t stop so much as to say good day to any one, but go straight to the stable and put to the horses, and drive back as quick as you can; for they will all come about you; but do as though you did not see them; and above all things, mind you do not taste a morsel of food, for if you do, we shall both come to grief.’

All this the Prince promised; but he thought all the time there was little fear of his forgetting her.

Now, just as he came home to the palace, one of his brothers was thinking of holding his bridal feast, and the bride, and all her kith and kin, were just come to the palace. So they all thronged round him, and asked about this thing and that, and wanted him to go in with them; but he made as though he did not see them, and went straight to the stall and got out the horses, and began to put them to. And when they saw they could not get him to go in, they came out to him with meat and drink, and the best of everything they had got ready for the feast; but the Prince would not taste so much as a crumb, and put to as fast as he could. At last the bride's sister rolled an apple across the yard to him, saying:

'Well, if you won't eat anything else, you may as well take a bite of this, for you must be both hungry and thirsty after so long a journey.'

So he took up the apple and bit a piece out of it; but he had scarce done so, before he forgot the Mastermaid, and how he was to drive back for her.

'Well, I think I must be mad', he said; 'what am I to do with this coach and horses?' So he put the horses up again, and went along with the others into the palace, and it was soon settled that he should have the bride's sister, who had rolled the apple over to him.

There sat the Mastermaid by the seashore, and waited and waited for the Prince, but no Prince came; so at last she went up from the shore, and after she had gone a bit she came to a little hut which lay by itself in a copse close by the king's palace. She went in and asked if she might lodge there. It was an old dame that owned the hut, and a cross-grained scolding hag she was as ever you saw. At first she would not hear of the Mastermaid's lodging in her house, but at last, for fair words and high rent, the Mastermaid got leave to be there. Now the but was as dark and dirty as a pigsty, so the Mastermaid said she would smarten it up a little, that their house might look inside like other people's. The old hag did not like this either, and showed her teeth, and was cross; but the Mastermaid did not mind her. She took her chest of gold, and threw a handful or so into the fire, and lo! the gold melted, and bubbled and boiled over out of the grate, and spread itself over the whole hut, till it was gilded both outside and in. But as soon as the gold began to bubble and boil, the old hag got so afraid that she tried to run out as if the Evil One were at her heels; and as she ran out at the door, she forgot to stoop, and gave her head such a knock against the lintel, that she broke her neck, and that was the end of her.

Next morning the Constable passed that way, and you may fancy he could scarce believe his eyes when he saw the golden hut shining and glistening away in the copse; but he was still more astonished when he went in and saw the lovely maiden who sat there. To make a long story short, he fell over head and ears in love with her, and begged and prayed her to become his wife.

‘Well, but have you much money?’ asked the Mastermaid.

Yes, for that matter, he said, he was not so badly off, and off he went home to fetch the money, and when he came back at even he brought a half-bushel sack, and set it down on the bench. So the Mastermaid said she would have him, since he was so rich; but they were scarce in bed before she said she must get up again:

‘For I have forgotten to make up the fire.’

‘Pray, don’t stir out of bed’, said the Constable; ‘I’ll see to it.’

So he jumped out of bed, and stood on the hearth in a trice.

‘As soon as you have got hold of the shovel, just tell me’, said the Mastermaid.

‘Well, I am holding it now’, said the Constable.

Then the Mastermaid said:

‘God grant that you may hold the shovel, and the shovel you, and may you heap hot burning coals over yourself till morning breaks.’

So there stood the Constable all night long, shovelling hot burning coals over himself; and though he begged, and prayed, and wept, the coals were not a bit colder for that; but as soon as day broke, and he had power to cast away the shovel, he did not stay long, as you may fancy, but set off as if the Evil One or the bailiff were at his heels; and all who met him stared their eyes out at him, for he cut capers as though he were mad, and he could not have looked in worse plight if he had been flayed and tanned, and every one wondered what had befallen him, but he told no one where he had been, for shame's sake.

Next day the Attorney passed by the place where the Mastermaid lived, and he too saw how it shone and glistened in the copse; so he turned aside to find out who owned the hut; and when he came in and saw the lovely maiden, he fell more in love with her than the Constable, and began to woo her in hot haste.

Well, the Mastermaid asked him, as she had asked the Constable, if he had a good lot of money? and the Attorney said he wasn't so badly off; and as a proof he went home to fetch his money. So at even he came back with a great fat sack of money — I think it was a whole bushel sack — and set it down on the bench; and the long and the short of the matter was, that he was to have her, and they went to bed. But all at once the Mastermaid had forgotten to shut the door of the porch, and she must get up and make it fast for the night.

'What, you do that!' said the Attorney, 'while I lie here; that can never be; lie still, while I go and do it.'

So up he jumped, like a pea on a drum-head, and ran out into the porch.

'Tell me', said the Mastermaid, 'when you have hold of the door-latch.'

'I've got hold of it now', said the Attorney.

'God grant, then', said the Mastermaid, 'that you may hold the door, and the door you, and that you may go from wall to wall till day dawns.'

So you may fancy what a dance the Attorney had all night long; such a waltz he never had before, and I don't think he would much care if he never had such a waltz again. Now he pulled the door forward, and then the door pulled him back, and so he went on, now dashed into one corner of the porch, and now into the other, till he was almost battered to death. At first he began to curse and swear, and then to beg and pray, but the door cared for nothing but holding its own till break of day. As soon as it let go its hold, off set the Attorney, leaving behind him his money to pay for his night's lodging, and forgetting his courtship altogether, for to tell the truth, he was afraid lest the house-door should come dancing after him. All who met him stared and gaped at him, for he too cut capers like a madman, and he could not have looked in worse plight if he had spent the whole night in butting against a flock of rams.

The third day the Sheriff passed that way, and he too saw the golden hut, and turned aside to find out who lived there; and he had scarce set eyes on the Mastermaid, before he began to woo her. So she answered him as she had answered the other two. If he had lots of money she would have him, if not, he might go about his business. Well, the Sheriff said he wasn't so badly off, and he would go home and fetch the money, and when he came again at even, he had a bigger sack even than the Attorney — it must have been at least a bushel and a half, and put it down on the bench. So it was soon settled that he was to have the Mastermaid, but they had scarce gone to bed before the Mastermaid said she had forgotten to bring home the calf from the meadow, so she must get up and drive him into the stall. Then the Sheriff swore by all the powers that should never be, and, stout and fat as he was, up he jumped as nimbly as a kitten.

'Well, only tell me when you've got hold of the calf's tail', said the Mastermaid.

'Now I have hold of it', said the Sheriff.

'God grant', said the Mastermaid, 'that you may hold the calf's tail, and the calf's tail you, and that you may make a tour of the world together till day dawns'.

Well you may just fancy how the Sheriff had to stretch his legs; away they went, the calf and he, over high and low, across hill and dale, and the more the Sheriff cursed and swore, the faster the calf ran and jumped. At dawn of day the poor Sheriff was well nigh broken-winded, and so glad was he to let go the calf's tail, that he forgot his sack of money and everything else. As he was a great man, he went a little slower than the Attorney and the Constable, but the slower he went the more time people had to gape and stare at him; and I must say they made good use of their time, for he was terribly tattered and torn, after his dance with the calf.

Next day was fixed for the wedding at the palace, and the eldest brother was to drive to church with his bride, and the younger, who had lived with the Giant, with the bride's sister. But when they had got into the coach, and were just going to drive off, one of the trace-pins snapped off; and though they made at least three in its place, they all broke, from whatever sort of wood they were made. So time went on and on, and they couldn't get to church, and every one grew very downcast. But all at once the Constable said, for he too was bidden to the wedding, that yonder away in the copse lived a maiden.

'And if you can only get her to lend you the handle of her shovel with which she makes up her fire, I know very well it will hold.'

Well! they sent a messenger on the spot, with such a pretty message to the maiden, to know if they couldn't get the loan of her shovel which the Constable had spoken of; and the maiden said 'yes', they might have it; so they got a trace-pin which wasn't likely to snap.

But all at once, just as they were driving off, the bottom of the coach tumbled to bits. So they set to work to make a new bottom as they best might; but it mattered not how many nails they put into it, nor of what wood they made it, for as soon as ever they got the bottom well into the coach and were driving off, snap it went in two again, and they were even worse off than when they lost the trace-pin. Just then the Attorney said — for if the Constable was there, you may fancy the Attorney was there too: 'Away yonder, in the copse, lives a maiden, and if you could only get her to lend you one-half of her porch-door, I know it can hold together.’

Well! they sent another message to the copse, and asked so prettily if they couldn’t have the loan of the gilded porch-door which the Attorney had talked of; and they got it on the spot. So they were just setting out; but now the horses were not strong enough to draw the coach, though there were six of them; then they put on eight, and ten, and twelve, but the more they put on, and the more the coachman whipped, the more the coach wouldn’t stir an inch. By this time it was far on in the day, and every one about the palace was in doleful dumps; for to church they must go, and yet it looked as if they should never get there. So at last the Sheriff said, that yonder in the gilded hut, in the copse, lived a maiden, and if they could only get the loan of her calf:

‘I know it can drag the coach, though it were as heavy as a mountain.’

Well they all thought it would look silly to be drawn to church by a calf, but there was no help for it, so they had to send a third time, and ask so prettily in the King’s name, if he couldn’t get the loan of the calf the Sheriff had spoken of, and the Mastermaid let them have it on the spot, for she was not going to say ‘no’ this time either. So they put the calf on before the horses, and waited to see if it would do any good, and away went the coach over high and low, and stock and stone, so that they could scarce draw their breath; sometimes they were on the ground, and sometimes up in the air, and when they reached the church, the calf began to run round and round it like a spinning jenny, so that they had hard work to get out of the coach, and into the church. When they went back, it was the same story, only they went faster, and they reached the palace almost before they knew they had set out.

Now when they sat down to dinner, the Prince who had served with the Giant said he thought they ought to ask the maiden who had lent them her shovel-handle and porch-door, and calf, to come up to the palace.

‘For’, said he, ‘if we hadn’t got these three things, we should have been sticking here still.’

Yes; the King thought that only fair and right, so he sent five of his best men down to the gilded but to greet the maiden from the King, and to ask her if she wouldn’t be so good as to came up and dine at the palace.

‘Greet the King from me’, said the Mastermaid, ‘and tell him, if he’s too good to come to me, so am I too good to go to him.’

So the King had to go himself, and then the Mastermaid went up with him without more ado; and as the King thought she was more than she seemed to be, he sat her down in the highest seat by the side of the youngest bridegroom.

Now, when they had sat a little while at table, the Mastermaid took out her golden apple, and the golden cock and hen, which she had carried off from the Giant, and put them down on the table before her, and the cock and hen began at once to peck at one another, and to fight for the golden apple.

‘Oh! only look’, said the Prince; ‘see how those two strive for the apple.’

‘Yes!’ said the Mastermaid; ‘so we two strove to get away that time when we were together in the hillside.’

Then the spell was broken, and the Prince knew her again, and you may fancy how glad he was. But as for the witch who had rolled the apple over to him, he had her torn to pieces between twenty-four horses, so that there was not a bit of her left, and after that they held on with the wedding in real earnest; and though they were still stiff and footsore, the Constable, the Attorney, and the Sheriff, kept it up with the best of them.

39

THE COCK AND HEN

H*en* — You promise me shoes year after year, year after year, and yet I get no shoes!

Cock — You shall have them, never fear! Henny penny!

Hen — I lay egg after egg, egg after egg, and yet I go about barefoot!

Cock — Well, take your eggs, and be off to the tryst, and buy yourself shoes, and don’t go any longer barefoot!

40

HOW ONE WENT OUT TO WOO

Once on a time there was a lad who went out to woo him a wife. Amongst other places, he came to a farm-house, where the household were little better than beggars; but when the wooer came in, they wanted to make out that they were well to do, as you may guess. Now the husband had got a new arm to his coat.

‘Pray, take a seat’, he said to the wooer; ‘but there’s a shocking dust in the house.’

So he went about rubbing and wiping all the benches and tables with his new arm, but he kept the other all the while behind his back.

The wife she had got one new shoe, and she went stamping and sliding with it up against the stools and chairs, saying, ‘How untidy it is here! Everything is out of its place!’

Then they called out to their daughter to come down and put things to rights; but the daughter, she had got a new cap; so she put her head in at the door, and kept nodding and nodding, first to this side, and then to that.

‘Well! for my part’, she said, ‘I can’t be everywhere at once.’

Aye! aye! that was a well-to-do household the wooer had come to.

41

THE MASTER-SMITH

Once on a time, in the days when our Lord and St Peter used to wander on earth, they came to a smith’s house. He had made a bargain with the Devil, that the fiend should have him after seven years, but during that time he was to be the master of all masters in his trade, and to this bargain both he and the Devil had signed their names. So he had stuck up in great letters over the door of his forge: ‘*Here dwells the Master over all Masters.*’

Now when our Lord passed by and saw that, he went in.

‘Who are you?’ he said to the Smith.

‘Read what’s written over the door’, said the Smith; ‘but maybe you can’t read writing. If so, you must wait till some one comes to help you.’

Before our Lord had time to answer him, a man came with his horse, which he begged the Smith to shoe.

‘Might I have leave to shoe it?’ asked our Lord.

‘You may try, if you like’, said the Smith; ‘you can’t do it so badly that I shall not be able to make it right again.’

So our Lord went out and took one leg off the horse, and laid it in the furnace, and made the shoe red-hot; after that, he turned up the ends of the shoe, and filed down the heads of the nails, and clenched the points; and then he put back the leg safe and sound on the horse again. And when he was done with that leg, he took the other fore-leg and did the same with it; and when he was done with that, he took the hind-legs — first, the off, and then the near leg, and laid them in the furnace, making the shoes red-hot, turning up the ends; filing the heads of the nails, and clenching the points; and after all was done, putting the legs on the horse again. All the while, the Smith stood by and looked on.

'You're not so bad a smith after all', said he.

'Oh, you think so, do you?' said our Lord.

A little while after came the Smith's mother to the forge, and called him to come home and eat his dinner; she was an old, old woman with an ugly crook on her back, and wrinkles in her face, and it was as much as she could do to crawl along.

'Mark now, what you see', said our Lord.

Then he took the woman and laid her in the furnace, and smithied a lovely young maiden out of her.

'Well', said the Smith, 'I say now, as I said before, you are not such a bad smith after all. There it stands over my door. *Here dwells the Master over all Masters*; but for all that, I say right out, one learns as long as one lives'; and with that he walked off to his house and ate his dinner.

So after dinner, just after he had got back to his forge, a man came riding up to have his horse shod.

'It shall be done in the twinkling of an eye', said the Smith, 'for I have just learnt a new way to shoe; and a very good way it is when the days are short.'

So he began to cut and hack till he had got all the horse's legs off, for he said, I don't know why one should go pottering backwards and forwards — first, with one leg, and then with another.

Then he laid the legs in the furnace, just as he had seen our Lord lay them, and threw on a great heap of coal, and made his mates work the bellows bravely; but it went as one might suppose it would go. The legs were burnt to ashes, and the Smith had to pay for the horse.

Well, he didn't care much about that, but just then an old beggar-woman came along the road, and he thought to himself, 'better luck next time'; so he took the old dame and laid her in the furnace, and though she begged and prayed hard for her life, it was no good.

'You're so old, you don't know what is good for you', said the Smith; 'now you shall be a lovely young maiden in half no time, and for all that, I'll not charge you a penny for the job.'

But it went no better with the poor old woman than with the horse's legs.

'That was ill done, and I say it', said our Lord.

'Oh! for that matter', said the Smith, 'there's not many who'll ask after her, I'll be bound; but it's a shame of the Devil, if this is the way he holds to what is written up over the door.'

'If you might have three wishes from me', said our Lord, 'what would you wish for?'

'Only try me', said the Smith, 'and you'll soon know.'

So our Lord gave him three wishes.

'Well', said the Smith, 'first and foremost, I wish that any one whom I ask to climb up into the pear-tree that stands outside by the wall of my forge, may stay sitting there till I ask him to come down again. The second wish I wish is, that any one whom I ask to sit down in my easy chair which stands inside the workshop yonder, may stay sitting there till I ask him to get up. Last of all, I wish that any one whom I ask to creep into the steel purse which I have in my pocket, may stay in it till I give him leave to creep out again.'

'You have wished as a wicked man', said St Peter; 'first and foremost, you should have wished for God's grace and goodwill.'

‘I durstn’t look so high as that’, said the Smith; and after that our Lord and St Peter bade him ‘good-bye’, and went on their way.

Well, the years went on and on, and when the time was up, the Devil came to fetch the Smith, as it was written in their bargain.

‘Are you ready?’ he said, as he stuck his nose in at the door of the forge.

‘Oh’, said the Smith, ‘I must just hammer the head of this tenpenny nail first; meantime, you can just climb up into the pear-tree, and pluck yourself a pear to gnaw at; you must be, both hungry and thirsty after your journey.’

So the Devil thanked him for his kind offer, and climbed up into the pear-tree.

‘Very good’, said the Smith; ‘but now, on thinking the matter over, I find I shall never be able to have done hammering the head of this nail till four years are out at least, this iron is so plaguey hard; down you can’t come in all that time, but may sit up there and rest your bones.’

When the Devil heard this, he begged and prayed till his voice was as thin as a silver penny that he might have leave to come down; but there was no help for it. There he was, and there he must stay. At last he had to give his word of honour not to come again till the four years were out, which the Smith had spoken of, and then the Smith said, ‘Very well, now you may come down.’

So when the time was up, the Devil came again to fetch the Smith.

‘You’re ready now, of course’, said he; ‘you’ve had time enough to hammer the head of that nail, I should think.’

‘Yes, the head is right enough now’, said the Smith; ‘but still you have come a little tiny bit too soon, for I haven’t quite done sharpening the point; such plaguey hard iron I never hammered in all my born days. So while I work at the point, you may just as well sit down in my easy chair and rest yourself; I’ll be bound you’re weary after coming so far.’

‘Thank you kindly’, said the Devil, and down he plumped into the easy chair; but just as he had made himself comfortable, the Smith said, on second thoughts, he found he couldn’t get the point sharp till four years were out. First of all, the Devil begged so prettily to be let out of the chair, and afterwards, waxing wroth, he began to threaten and scold; but the Smith kept on, all the while excusing himself, and saying it was all the iron’s fault, it was so plaguy hard, and telling the Devil he was not so badly off to have to sit quietly in an easy chair, and that he would let him out to the minute when the four years were over. Well, at last there was no help for it, and the Devil had to give his word of honour not to fetch the Smith till the four years were out; and then the Smith said:

‘Well now, you may get up and be off about your business’, and away went the Devil as fast as he could lay legs to the ground.

When the four years were over, the Devil came again to fetch the Smith, and he called out, as he stuck his nose in at the door of the forge:

‘Now, I know you must be ready.’

‘Ready, aye, ready’, answered the Smith; ‘we can go now as soon as you please; but hark ye, there is one thing I have stood here and thought, and thought, I would ask you to tell me. Is it true what people say, that the Devil can make himself as small as he pleases?’

‘God knows, it is the very truth’, said the Devil.

‘Oh!’ said the Smith; ‘it *is* true, is it? then I wish you would just be so good as to creep into this steel purse of mine, and see whether it is sound at the bottom, for to tell you the truth, I’m afraid my travelling money will drop out.’

‘With all my heart’, said the Devil, who made himself small in a trice, and crept into the purse; but he was scarce in when the Smith snapped to the clasp.

‘Yes’, called out the Devil inside the purse; ‘it’s right and tight everywhere.’

‘Very good’, said the Smith; ‘I’m glad to hear you say so, but “more haste the worse speed”, says the old saw, and “forewarned is forearmed”, says another; so I’ll just weld these links a little together, just for safety’s sake’; and with that he laid the purse in the furnace, and made it red-hot.

‘AU! AU!’ screamed the Devil, ‘are you mad? don’t you know I’m inside the purse?’

‘Yes, I do!’ said the Smith; ‘but I can’t help you, for another old saw says, “one must strike while the iron is hot”‘; and as he said this, he took up his sledge-hammer, laid the purse on the anvil, and let fly at it as hard as he could.

‘AU! AU! AU!’ bellowed the Devil, inside the purse. ‘Dear friend, do let me out, and I’ll never come near you again.’

‘Very well!’ said the Smith; ‘now, I think, the links are pretty well welded, and you may come out’; so he unclasped the purse, and away went the Devil in such a hurry that he didn’t once look behind him.

Now, some time after, it came across the Smith’s mind that he had done a silly thing in making the Devil his enemy, for, he said to himself:

‘If, as is like enough, they won’t have me in the kingdom of Heaven, I shall be in danger of being houseless, since I’ve fallen out with him who rules over Hell.’

So he made up his mind it would be best to try to get either into Hell or Heaven, and to try at once, rather than to put it off any longer, so that he might know how things really stood. Then he threw his sledge-hammer over his shoulder and set off; and when he had gone a good bit of the way, he came to a place where two roads met, and where the path to the kingdom of Heaven parts from the path that leads to Hell, and here he overtook a tailor, who was pelting along with his goose in his hand.

‘Good day’, said the Smith; ‘whither are you off to?’

‘To the kingdom of Heaven’, said the Tailor, ‘if I can only get into it’ — ‘but whither are you going yourself?’

‘Oh, our ways don’t run together’, said the Smith; ‘for I have made up my mind to try first in Hell, as the Devil and I know something of one another, from old times.’

So they bade one another ‘Good-bye’, and each went his way; but the Smith was a stout, strong man, and got over the ground far faster than the tailor, and so it wasn’t long before he stood at the gates of Hell. Then he called the watch, and bade him go and tell the Devil there was some one outside who wished to speak a word with him.

‘Go out’, said the Devil to the watch, ‘and ask him who he is?’ So that when the watch came and told him that, the Smith answered:

‘Go and greet the Devil in my name, and say it is the Smith who owns the purse he wots of; and beg him prettily to let me in at once, for I worked at my forge till noon, and I have had a long walk since.’

But when the Devil heard who it was, he charged the watch to go back and lock up all the nine locks on the gates of Hell.

‘And, besides’, he said, ‘you may as well put on a padlock, for if he only once gets in, he’ll turn Hell topsy-turvy!’

‘Well!’ said the Smith to himself, when he saw them busy bolting up the gates, ‘there’s no lodging to be got here, that’s plain; so I may as well try my luck in the kingdom of Heaven’; and with that he turned round and went back till he reached the cross-roads, and then he went along the path the tailor had taken. And now, as he was cross at having gone backwards and forwards so far for no good, he strode along with all his might, and reached the gate of Heaven just as St Peter was opening it a very little, just enough to let the half-starved tailor slip in. The Smith was still six or seven strides off the gate, so he thought to himself, ‘Now there’s no time to be lost’; and, grasping his sledge-hammer, he hurled it into the opening of the door just as the tailor slunk in; and if the Smith didn’t get in then, when the door was ajar, why I don’t know what has become of him.

42

THE TWO STEP-SISTERS

Once on a time there was a couple, and each of them had a daughter by a former marriage. The woman’s daughter was dull and lazy, and could never turn her hand to anything, and the man’s daughter was brisk and ready; but somehow or other she could never do anything to her stepmother’s liking, and both the woman and her daughter would have been glad to be rid of her.

So it fell one day the two girls were to go out and spin by the side of the well, and the woman’s daughter had flax to spin, but the man’s daughter got nothing to spin but bristles.

‘I don’t know how it is’, said the woman’s daughter, ‘you’re always so quick and sharp, but still I’m not afraid to spin a match with you.’

Well, they agreed that she whose thread first snapped, should go down the well. So they span away; but just as they were hard at it, the man’s daughter’s thread broke, and she had to go down the well. But when she got to the bottom she saw far and wide around her a fair green mead, and she hadn’t hurt herself at all.

So she walked on a bit, till she came to a hedge which she had to cross.

‘Ah! don’t tread hard on me, pray don’t, and I’ll help you another time, that I will’, said the Hedge.

Then the lassie made herself as light as she could, and trode so carefully she scarce touched a twig.

So she went on a bit further, till she came to a brindled cow, which walked there with a milking-pail on her horns. ‘Twas a large pretty cow, and her udder was so full and round.

‘Ah! be so good as to milk me, pray’, said the Cow; ‘I’m so full of milk. Drink as much as you please, and throw the rest over my hoofs, and see if I don’t help you some day.’

So the man’s daughter did as the cow begged. As soon as she touched the teats, the milk spouted out into the pail. Then she drank till her thirst was slaked; and the rest she threw over the cow’s hoofs, and the milking-pail she hung on her horns again.

So when she had gone a bit further, a big wether met her, which had such thick long wool, it hung down and draggled after him on the ground, and on one of his horns hung a great pair of shears.

‘Ah, please clip off my wool’, said the Sheep, ‘for here I go about with all this wool, and catch up everything I meet, and besides, it’s so warm, I’m almost choked. Take as much of the fleece as you please, and twist the rest round my neck, and see if I don’t help you some day.’

Yes! she was willing enough, and the sheep lay down of himself on her lap, and kept quite still, and she clipped him so neatly, there wasn’t a scratch on his skin. Then she took as much of the wool as she chose, and the rest she twisted round the neck of the sheep.

A little further on, she came to an apple tree, which was loaded with apples; all its branches were bowed to the ground, and leaning against the stem was a slender pole.

‘Ah! do be so good as to pluck my apples off me’, said the Tree, ‘so that my branches may straighten themselves again, for it’s bad work to stand so crooked; but when you beat them down, don’t strike me too hard. Then eat as many as you please, lay the rest round my root, and see if I don't help you some day or other.'

Yes, she plucked all she could reach with her hands, and then she took the pole and knocked down the rest, and afterwards she ate her fill, and the rest she laid neatly round the root.

So she walked on a long, long way, and then she came to a great farm-house, where an old hag of the Trolls lived with her daughter. There she turned in to ask if she could get a place.

'Oh!' said the old hag; 'it's no use your trying. We've had ever so many maids, but none of them was worth her salt.'

But she begged so prettily that they would just take her on trial, that at last they let her stay. So the old hag gave her a sieve, and bade her go and fetch water in it. She thought it strange to fetch water in a sieve, but still she went, and when she came to the well, the little birds began to sing,

Daub in clay,
Stuff in straw!
Daub in clay,
Stuff in straw.

Yes, she did so, and found she could carry water in a sieve well enough; but when she got home with the water, and the old witch saw the sieve, she cried out:

This you haven't sucked out of your own breast.

So the old witch said, now she might go into the byre to pitch out dung and milk kine; but when she got there, she found a pitchfork so long and heavy, she couldn't stir it, much less work with it. She didn't know at all what to do, or what to make of it; but the little birds sang again that she should take the broom-stick and toss out a little with that, and all the rest of the dung would fly after it. So she did that, and as soon as ever she began with the broom-stick, the byre was as clean as if it had been swept and washed.

Now she had to milk the kine, but they were so restless that they kicked and frisked; there was no getting near them to milk them.

But the little birds sang outside:

A little drop, a tiny sup,
For the little birds to drink it up.

Yes, she did that; she just milked a tiny drop, 'twas as much as she could, for the little birds outside; and then all the cows stood still and let her milk them. They neither kicked nor frisked; they didn't even lift a leg.

So when the old witch saw her coming in with the milk, she cried out:

This you haven't sucked out of your own breast. But now just take this black wool and wash it white.

This the lassie was at her wits' end to know how to do, for she had never seen or heard of any one who could wash black wool white. Still she said nothing, but took the wool and went down with it to the well. There the little birds sang again and told her to take the wool and dip it into the great butt that stood there; and she did so, and out it came as white as snow.

‘Well! I never!’ said the old witch, when she came in with the wool, ‘it’s no good keeping you. You can do everything, and at last you’ll be the plague of my life. We’d best part, so take your wages and be off.’

Then the old hag drew out three caskets, one red, one green, and one blue, and of these the lassie was to choose one as wages for her service. Now she didn’t know at all which to choose, but the little birds sang:

DON’T TAKE THE RED, don’t take the green,
But take the blue, where may be seen
Three little crosses all in a row;
We saw the marks, and so we know.

SO SHE TOOK the blue casket, as the birds sang.

‘Bad luck to you, then’, said the old witch; ‘see if I don’t make you pay for this!’

So when the man’s daughter was just setting off, the old witch shot a red-hot bar of iron after her, but she sprang behind the door and hid herself, so that it missed her, for her friends, the little birds, had told her beforehand how to behave. Then she walked on and on as fast as ever she could; but when she got to the apple tree, she heard an awful clatter behind her on the road, and that was the old witch and her daughter coming after her.

So the lassie was so frightened and scared, she didn’t know what to do.

‘Come hither to me, lassie, do you hear’, said the Apple tree, ‘I’ll help you; get under my branches and hide, for if they catch you, they’ll tear you to death, and take the casket from you.’

Yes! she did so, and she had hardly hidden herself before up came the old witch and her daughter.

‘Have you seen any lassie pass this way, you apple tree’, said the old hag.

‘Yes, yes’, said the Apple tree; ‘one ran by here an hour ago; but now she’s got so far ahead, you’ll never catch her up.’

So the old witch turned back and went home again. Then the lassie walked on a bit, but when she came just about where the sheep was, she heard an awful clatter beginning on the road behind her, and she didn’t know what to do, she was so scared and frightened; for she knew well enough it was the old witch, who had thought better of it.

‘Come hither to me, lassie’, said the Wether, ‘and I’ll help you. Hide yourself under my fleece, and then they’ll not see you; else they’ll take away the casket, and tear you to death.’

Just then up came the old witch, tearing along.

‘Have you seen any lassie pass here, you sheep?’ she cried to the wether.

‘Oh yes’, said the Wether, ‘I saw one an hour ago, but she ran so fast, you’ll never catch her.’

So the old witch turned round and went home.

But when the lassie had come to where she met the cow, she heard another awful clatter behind her.

‘Come hither to me, lassie’, said the Cow, ‘and I’ll help you to hide yourself under my udder, else the old hag will come and take away your casket, and tear you to death.’

True enough, it wasn’t long before she came up.

‘Have you seen any lassie pass here, you cow?’ said the old hag.

‘Yes, I saw one an hour ago’, said the Cow, ‘but she’s far away now, for she ran so fast I don’t think you’ll ever catch her up!’

So the old hag turned round, and went back home again.

When the lassie had walked a long, long way farther on, and was not far from the hedge, she heard again that awful clatter on the road behind her, and she got scared and frightened, for she knew well enough it was the old hag and her daughter, who had changed their minds.

‘Come hither to me, lassie’, said the Hedge, ‘and I’ll help you. Creep under my twigs, so that they can’t see you; else they’ll take the casket from you, and tear you to death.’

Yes! she made all the haste she could to get under the twigs of the hedge.

‘Have you seen any lassie pass this way, you hedge?’ said the old hag to the hedge.

‘No, I haven’t seen any lassie’, answered the Hedge, and was as smooth-tongued as if he had got melted butter in his mouth; but all the while he spread himself out, and made himself so big and tall, one had to think twice before crossing him. And so the old witch had no help for it but to turn round and go home again.

So when the man’s daughter got home, her step-mother and her step-sister were more spiteful against her than ever; for now she was much neater, and so smart, it was a joy to look at her. Still she couldn’t get leave to live with them, but they drove her out into a pigsty. That was to be her house. So she scrubbed it out so neat and clean, and then she opened her casket, just to see what she had got for her wages. But as soon as ever she unlocked it, she saw inside so much gold and silver, and lovely things, which came streaming out till all the walls were hung with them, and at last the pigsty was far grander than the grandest king’s palace. And when the step-mother and her daughter came to see this, they almost jumped out of their skin, and began to ask what kind of a place she had down there?

‘Oh’, said the lassie, ‘can’t you see, when I have got such good wages. ‘Twas such a family, and such a mistress to serve, you couldn’t find their like anywhere.’

Yes! the woman’s daughter made up her mind to go out to serve too, that she might get just such another gold casket. So they sat down to spin again, and now the woman’s daughter was to spin bristles, and the man’s daughter flax, and she whose thread first snapped, was to go down the well. It wasn’t long, as you may fancy, before the woman’s daughter’s thread snapped, and so they threw her down the well.

So the same thing happened. She fell to the bottom, but met with no harm, and found herself on a lovely green meadow. When she had walked a bit she came to the hedge. ‘Don’t tread hard on me, pray, lassie, and I’ll help you again’, said the Hedge.

‘Oh!’ said she, ‘what should I care for a bundle of twigs?’ and tramped and stamped over the hedge till it cracked and groaned again.

A little farther on she came to the cow, which walked about ready to burst for want of milking.

‘Be so good as to milk me, lassie’, said the Cow, ‘and I’ll help you again. Drink as much as you please, but throw the rest over my hoofs.’

Yes! she did that; she milked the cow, and drank till she could drink no more; but when she left off, there was none left to throw over the cow’s hoofs, and as for the pail, she tossed it down the hill and walked on.

When she had gone a bit further, she came to the sheep which walked along with his wool dragging after him.

‘Oh, be so good as to clip me, lassie’, said the Sheep, ‘and I’ll serve you again. Take as much of the wool as you will, but twist the rest round my neck.’

Well! she did that; but she went so carelessly to work, that she cut great pieces out of the poor sheep, and as for the wool, she carried it all away with her.

A little while after she came to the apple tree, which stood there quite crooked with fruit again.

‘Be so good as to pluck the apples off me, that my limbs may grow straight, for it’s weary work to stand all awry’, said the Apple tree. ‘But please take care not to beat me too hard. Eat as many as you will, but lay the rest neatly round my root, and I’ll help you again.’

Well, she plucked those nearest to her, and thrashed down those she couldn’t reach with the pole, but she didn’t care how she did it, and broke off and tore down great boughs, and ate till she was as full as full could be, and then she threw down the rest under the tree.

So when she had gone a good bit further, she came to the farm where the old witch lived. There she asked for a place, but the old hag said she wouldn’t have any more maids, for they were either worth nothing, or were too clever, and cheated her out of her goods. But the woman’s daughter was not to be put off, she *would* have a place, so the old witch said she’d give her a trial, if she was fit for anything.

The first thing she had to do was to fetch water in a sieve. Well, off she went to the well, and drew water in a sieve, but as fast as she got it in it ran out again. So the little birds sung:

Daub in clay,
Put in straw!
Daub in clay,
Put in straw!

But she didn’t care to listen to the birds’ song, and pelted them with clay, till they flew off far away. And so she had to go home with the empty sieve, and got well scolded by the old witch.

Then she was to go into the byre to clean it, and milk the kine. But she was too good for such dirty work, she thought. Still, she went out into the byre, but when she got there, she couldn't get on at all with the pitchfork, it was so big. The birds said the same to her as they had said to her step-sister, and told her to take the broomstick, and toss out a little dung, and then all the rest would fly after it; but all she did with the broomstick was to throw it at the birds. When she came to milk, the kine were so unruly, they kicked and pushed, and every time she got a little milk in the pail, over they kicked it. Then the birds sang again:

A little drop and a tiny sup
For the little birds to drink it up.

But she beat and banged the cows about, and threw and pelted at the birds everything she could lay hold of, and made such a to do, 'twas awful to see. So she didn't make much either of her pitching, or milking, and when she came indoors she got blows as well as hard words from the old witch, who sent her off to wash the black wool white; but that, too, she did no better.

Then the old witch thought this really too bad, so she set out the three caskets, one red, one green, and one blue, and said she'd no longer any need of her services, for she wasn't worth keeping, but for wages she should have leave to choose whichever casket she pleased.

Then sung the little birds:

Don't take the red, don't take the green,
But choose the blue, where may be seen
Three little crosses all in a row;
We saw the marks, and so we know.

She didn’t care a pin for what the birds sang, but took the red, which caught her eye most. And so she set out on her road home, and she went along quietly and easily enough; there was no one who came after *her*.

So when she got home, her mother was ready to jump with joy, and the two went at once into the ingle, and put the casket up there, for they made up their minds there could be nothing in it but pure silver and gold, and they thought to have all the walls and roof gilded like the pigsty. But lo! when they opened the casket there came tumbling out nothing but toads, and frogs, and snakes; and worse than that, whenever the woman’s daughter opened her mouth, out popped a toad or a snake, and all the vermin one ever thought of, so that at last there was no living in the house with her.

That was all the wages *she* got for going out to service with the old witch.

43

BUTTERCUP

Once on a time there was an old wife who sat and baked. Now, you must know that this old wife had a little son, who was so plump and fat, and so fond of good things, that they called him Buttercup; she had a dog, too, whose name was Goldtooth, and as she was baking, all at once Goldtooth began to bark.

‘Run out, Buttercup, there’s a dear!’ said the old wife, ‘and see what Goldtooth is barking at.’

So the boy ran out, and came back crying out:

‘Oh, Heaven help us! here comes a great big witch, with her head under her arm, and a bag at her back.’

‘Jump under the kneading-trough and hide yourself’, said his mother.

So in came the old hag!

‘Good day’, said she!

‘God bless you!’ said Buttercup’s mother.

‘Isn’t your Buttercup at home to-day?’ asked the hag.

‘No, that he isn’t. He’s out in the wood with his father, shooting ptarmigan.’

‘Plague take it’, said the hag, ‘for I had such a nice little silver knife I wanted to give him.’

‘Pip, pip! here I am’, said Buttercup under the kneading-trough, and out he came.

‘I’m so old, and stiff in the back’, said the hag, ‘you must creep into the bag and fetch it out for yourself.’

But when Buttercup was well into the bag, the hag threw it over her back and strode off, and when they had gone a good bit of the way, the old hag got tired, and asked:

‘How far is it off to Snoring?’

‘Half a mile’, answered Buttercup.

So the hag put down the sack on the road, and went aside by herself into the wood, and lay down to sleep. Meantime Buttercup set to work and cut a hole in the sack with his knife; then he crept out and put a great root of a fir-tree into the sack, and ran home to his mother.

When the hag got home and saw what there was in the sack, you may fancy she was in a fine rage.

Next day the old wife sat and baked again, and her dog began to bark just as he did the day before.

‘Run out, Buttercup, my boy’, said she, ‘and see what Goldtooth is barking at.’

‘Well, I never!’ cried Buttercup, as soon as he got out; ‘if there isn’t that ugly old beast coming again with her head under her arm, and a great sack at her back.’

‘Under the kneading-trough with you and hide’, said his mother.

‘Good day!’ said the hag, ‘is your Buttercup at home to-day?’

‘I’m sorry to say he isn’t’, said his mother; ‘he’s out in the wood with his father, shooting ptarmigan.’

‘What a bore’, said the hag; ‘here I have a beautiful little silver spoon I want to give him.’

‘Pip, pip! here I am’, said Buttercup, and crept out.

‘I’m so stiff in the back’, said the old witch, ‘you must creep into the sack and fetch it out for yourself.’

So when Buttercup was well into the sack, the hag swung it over her shoulders and set off home as fast as her legs could carry her. But when they had gone a good bit, she grew weary, and asked:

‘How far is it off to Snoring?’

‘A mile and a half’, answered Buttercup.

So the hag set down the sack, and went aside into the wood to sleep a bit, but while she slept, Buttercup made a hole in the sack and got out, and put a great stone into it. Now, when the old witch got home, she made a great fire on the hearth, and put a big pot on it, and got everything ready to boil Buttercup; but when she took the sack, and thought she was going to turn out Buttercup into the pot, down plumped the stone and made a hole in the bottom of the pot, so that the water ran out and quenched the fire. Then the old hag was in a dreadful rage, and said, ‘If he makes himself ever so heavy next time, he shan’t take me in again.’ The third day everything went just as it had gone twice before; Goldtooth began to bark, and Buttercup’s mother said to him:

‘Do run out and see what our dog is barking at.’

So out he went, but he soon came back crying out:

‘Heaven save us! Here comes the old hag again with her head under her arm, and a sack at her back.’

‘Jump under the kneading-trough and hide’, said his mother.

‘Good day!’ said the hag, as she came in at the door; ‘is your Buttercup at home to-day?’

‘You’re very kind to ask after him’, said his mother; ‘but he’s out in the wood with his father, shooting ptarmigan.’

‘What a bore now’, said the old hag; ‘here have I got such a beautiful little silver fork for him.’

‘Pip, pip! here I am’, said Buttercup, as he came out from under the kneading-trough.

‘I’m so stiff in the back’, said the hag, ‘you must creep into the sack and fetch it out for yourself.’

But when Buttercup was well inside the sack, the old hag swung it across her shoulders, and set off as fast as she could. This time she did not turn aside to sleep by the way, but went straight home with Buttercup in the sack, and when she reached her house it was Sunday.

So the old hag said to her daughter:

‘Now you must take Buttercup and kill him, and boil him nicely till I come back, for I’m off to church to bid my guests to dinner.’

So, when all in the house were gone to church the daughter was to take Buttercup and kill him, but then she didn’t know how to set about it at all.

‘Stop a bit’, said Buttercup; ‘I’ll soon show you how to do it; just lay your head on the chopping-block, and you’ll soon see.’

So the poor silly thing laid her head down, and Buttercup took an axe and chopped her head off, just as if she had been a chicken. Then he laid her head in the bed, and popped her body into the pot, and boiled it so nicely; and when he had done that, he climbed up on the roof, and dragged up with him the fir-tree root and the stone, and put the one over the door, and the other at the top of the chimney.

So when the household came back from church, and saw the head on the bed, they thought it was the daughter who lay there asleep; and then they thought they would just taste the broth.

Good, by my troth!
Buttercup broth,

SAID THE OLD HAG.

GOOD, by my troth!
Daughter broth,

SAID BUTTERCUP DOWN THE CHIMNEY, but no one heeded him. So the old hag’s husband, who was every bit as bad as she, took the spoon to have a taste.

GOOD, by my troth!
Buttercup broth,

SAID HE.

GOOD, by my troth!
Daughter broth,

SAID Buttercup down the chimney pipe.

Then they all began to wonder who it could be that chattered so, and ran out to see. But when they came out at the door, Buttercup threw down on them the fir-tree root and the stone, and broke all their heads to bits. After that he took all the gold and silver that lay in the house, and went home to his mother, and became a rich man.

44

TAMING THE SHREW

Once on a time there was a king, and he had a daughter who was such a scold, and whose tongue went so fast, there was no stopping it. So he gave out that the man who could stop her tongue should have the Princess to wife, and half his kingdom into the bargain. Now, three brothers, who heard this, made up their minds to go and try their luck; and first of all the two elder went, for they thought they were the cleverest; but they couldn't cope with her at all, and got well thrashed besides.

Then Boots, the youngest, set off, and when he had gone a little way he found an ozier band lying on the road, and he picked it up. When he had gone a little farther he found a piece of a broken plate, and he picked that up too. A little farther on he found a dead magpie, and a little farther on still, a crooked ram's horn; so he went on a bit and found the fellow to the horn; and at last, just as he was crossing the fields by the king's palace, where they were pitching out dung, he found a worn-out shoe-sole. All these things he took with him into the palace, and went before the Princess.

'Good day', said he.

'Good day', said she, and made a wry face.

'Can I get my magpie cooked here?' he asked.

'I'm afraid it will burst', answered the Princess.

‘Oh! never fear! for I’ll just tie this ozier band round it’, said the lad, as he pulled it out.

‘The fat will run out of it’, said the Princess.

‘Then I’ll hold this under it’, said the lad, and showed her the piece of broken plate.

‘You are so crooked in your words’, said the Princess, ‘there’s no knowing where to have you.’

‘No, I’m not crooked’, said the lad; ‘but this is’, as he held up one of the horns.

‘Well!’ said the Princess, ‘I never saw the match of this in all my days.’

‘Why, here you see the match to it’, said the lad, as he pulled out the other ram’s horn.

‘I think’, said the Princess, ‘you must have come here to wear out my tongue with your nonsense.’

‘No, I have not’, said the lad; ‘but this is worn out’, as he pulled out the shoe-sole.

To this the Princess hadn’t a word to say, for she had fairly lost her voice with rage.

‘Now you are mine’, said the lad; and so he got the Princess to wife, and half the kingdom.

45

SHORTSHANKS

Once on a time, there was a poor couple who lived in a tumble-down hut, in which there was nothing but black want, so that they hadn’t a morsel to eat, nor a stick to burn. But though they had next to nothing of other things, they had God’s blessing in the way of children, and every year they had another babe. Now, when this story begins, they were just looking out for a new child; and, to tell the truth, the husband was rather cross, and he was always going about grumbling and growling, and saying, ‘For his part, he thought one might have too many of these God’s gifts.’ So when the time came that the babe was to be born, he went off into the wood to fetch fuel, saying, ‘he didn’t care to stop and see the young squaller; he’d be sure to hear him soon enough, screaming for food.’

Now, when her husband was well out of the house, his wife gave birth to a beautiful boy, who began to look about the room as soon as ever he came into the world.

‘Oh! dear mother’, he said, ‘give me some of my brother’s cast-off clothes, and a few days’ food, and I’ll go out into the world and try my luck; you have children enough as it is, that I can see.’

‘God help you, my son!’ answered his mother; ‘that can never be, you are far too young yet.’

But the tiny one stuck to what he said, and begged and prayed till his mother was forced to let him have a few old rags, and a little food tied up in a bundle, and off he went right merrily and manfully into the wide world. But he was scarce out of the house before his mother had another boy, and he too looked about him, and said:

‘Oh, dear mother! give me some of my brother’s old clothes and a few days’ food, and I’ll go out into the world to find my twin-brother; you have children enough already on your hands, that I can see.’

‘God help you, my poor little fellow!’ said his mother; ‘you are far too little, this will never do.’

But it was no good; the tiny one begged and prayed so hard, till he got some old tattered rags and a bundle of food; and so he wandered out into the world like a man, to find his twin-brother. Now, when the younger had walked a while, he saw his brother a good bit on before him, so he called out to him to stop.

‘Holloa! can’t you stop? why, you lay legs to the ground as if you were running a race. But you might just as well have stayed to see your youngest, brother before you set off into the world in such a hurry.’

So the elder stopped and looked round; and when the younger had come up to him and told him the whole story, and how he was his brother, he went on to say:

‘But let’s sit down here and see what our mother has given us for food.’ So they sat down together, and were soon great friends.

Now when they had gone a bit farther on their way, they came to a brook which ran through a green meadow, and the youngest said now the time was come to give one another names, ‘Since we set off in such a hurry that we hadn’t time to do it at home, we may as well do it here.’

‘Well!’ said the elder, ‘and what shall your name be?’

‘Oh!’ said the younger, ‘my name shall be Shortshanks; and yours, what shall it be?’

‘I will be called King Sturdy’, answered the eldest.

So they christened each other in the brook, and went on; but when they had walked a while they came to a cross road, and agreed they should part there, and each take his own road. So they parted, but they hadn’t gone half a mile before their roads met again. So they parted the second time, and took each a road; but in a little while the same thing happened, and they met again, they scarce knew how; and the same thing happened a third time also. Then they agreed that they should each choose a quarter of the heavens, and one was to go east and the other west; but before they parted, the elder said:

‘If you ever fall into misfortune or need, call three times on me, and I will come and help you; but mind you don’t call on me till you are at the last pinch.’

‘Well!’ said Shortshanks, ‘if that’s to be the rule, I don’t think we shall meet again very soon.’

After that they bade each other good-bye, and Shortshanks went east, and King Sturdy west.

Now, you must know, when Shortshanks had gone a good bit alone, he met an old, old crook-backed hag, who had only one eye, and Shortshanks snapped it up.

‘Oh! oh!’ screamed the hag, ‘what has become of my eye?’

‘What will you give me’, asked Shortshanks, ‘if you get your eye back?’

‘I’ll give you a sword, and such a sword! It will put a whole army to flight, be it ever so great’, answered the old woman.

‘Out with it, then!’ said Shortshanks.

So the old hag gave him the sword, and got her eye back again. After that, Shortshanks wandered on a while, and another old, old crook-backed hag met him who had only one eye, which Shortshanks stole before she was aware of him.

‘Oh, oh! whatever has become of my eye’, screamed the hag.

‘What will you give me to get your eye back?’ asked Shortshanks.

‘I’ll give you a ship’, said the woman, ‘which can sail over fresh water and salt water, and over high hills and deep dales.’

‘Well! out with it’, said Shortshanks.

So the old woman gave him a little tiny ship, no bigger than he could put in his pocket, and she got her eye back again, and they each went their way. But when he had wandered on a long, long way, he met a third time an old, old crook-backed hag, with only one eye. This eye, too, Shortshanks stole; and when the hag screamed and made a great to-do, bawling out what had become of her eye, Shortshanks said:

‘What will you give me to get back your eye?’

Then she answered:

‘I’ll give you the art how to brew a hundred lasts of malt at one strike.’

Well! for teaching that art the old hag got back her eye, and they each went their way.

But when Shortshanks had walked a little way, he thought it might be worth while to try his ship; so he took it out of his pocket, and put first one foot into it, and then the other; and as soon as ever he set one foot into it, it began to grow bigger and bigger, and by the time he set the other foot into it, it was as big as other ships that sail on the sea. Then Shortshanks said:

‘Off and away, over fresh water and salt water, over high hills and deep dales, and don’t stop till you come to the king’s palace.’

And lo! away went the ship as swiftly as a bird through the air, till it came down a little below the king’s palace, and there it stopped. From the palace windows people had stood and seen Shortshanks come sailing along, and they were all so amazed that they ran down to see who it could be that came sailing in a ship through the air. But while they were running down, Shortshanks had stepped out of his ship and put it into his pocket again; for as soon as he stepped out of it, it became as small as it was when he got it from the old woman. So those who had run down from the palace saw no one but a ragged little boy standing down there by the strand. Then the king asked whence he came, but the boy said he didn't know, nor could he tell them how he had got there. There he was, and that was all they could get out of him; but he begged and prayed so prettily to get a place in the king's palace; saying, if there was nothing else for him to do, he could carry in wood and water for the kitchen-maid, that their hearts were touched, and he got leave to stay there.

Now when Shortshanks came up to the palace, he saw how it was all hung with black, both outside and in, wall and roof; so he asked the kitchen-maid what all that mourning meant?

'Don't you know?' said the kitchen-maid; 'I'll soon tell you: the king's daughter was promised away a long time ago to three ogres, and next Thursday evening one of them is coming to fetch her. Ritter Red, it is true, has given out that he is man enough to set her free, but God knows if he can do it; and now you know why we are all in grief and sorrow.'

So when Thursday evening came, Ritter Red led the Princess down to the strand, for there it was she was to meet the Ogre, and he was to stay by her there and watch; but he wasn't likely to do the Ogre much harm, I reckon, for as soon as ever the Princess had sat down on the strand, Ritter Red climbed up into a great tree that stood there, and hid himself as well as he could among the boughs. The Princess begged and prayed him not to leave her, but Ritter Red turned a deaf ear to her, and all he said was:

'Tis better for one to lose life than for two.'

That was what Ritter Red said.

Meantime Shortshanks went to the kitchen-maid, and asked her so prettily if he mightn't go down to the strand for a bit?

'And what should take you down to the strand?' asked the kitchen-maid. 'You know you've no business there.'

‘Oh, dear friend’, said Shortshanks, ‘do let me go? I should so like to run down there and play a while with the other children; that I should.’

‘Well, well!’ said the kitchen-maid, ‘off with you; but don’t let me catch you staying there a bit over the time when the brose for supper must be set on the fire, and the roast put on the spit; and let me see; when you come back, mind you bring a good armful of wood with you.’

Yes! Shortshanks would mind all that; so off he ran down to the strand.

But just as he reached the spot where the Princess sat, what should come but the Ogre tearing along in his ship, so that the wind roared and howled after him. He was so tall and stout it was awful to look on him, and he had five heads of his own.

‘Fire and flame!’ screamed the Ogre.

‘Fire and flame yourself!’ said Shortshanks.

‘Can you fight?’ roared the Ogre.

‘If I can’t, I can learn’, said Shortshanks.

So the Ogre struck at him with a great thick iron club which he had in his fist, and the earth and stones flew up five yards into the air after the stroke.

‘My!’ said Shortshanks, ‘that was something like a blow, but now you shall see a stroke of mine.’

Then he grasped the sword he had got from the old crook-backed hag, and cut at the Ogre; and away went all his five heads flying over the sand. So when the Princess saw she was saved, she was so glad that she scarce knew what to do, and she jumped and danced for joy. ‘Come, lie down, and sleep a little in my lap’, she said to Shortshanks, and as he slept she threw over him a tinsel robe.

Now you must know, it wasn’t long before Ritter Red crept down from the tree, as soon as he saw there was nothing to fear in the way, and he went up to the Princess and threatened her until she promised to say it was he who had saved her life; for if she wouldn’t say so, he said he would kill her on the spot. After that he cut out the Ogre’s lungs and tongue, and wrapped them up in his handkerchief, and so led the Princess back to the palace, and whatever honours he had not before, he got then, for the king did not know how to find honour enough for him, and made him sit every day on his right hand at dinner.

As for Shortshanks, he went first of all on board the Ogre’s ship, and took a whole heap of gold and silver rings, as large as hoops, and trotted off with them as hard as he could to the palace. When the kitchen-maid set her eyes on all that gold and silver, she was quite scared, and asked him:

‘But dear, good, Shortshanks, wherever did you get all this from?’ for she was rather afraid he hadn’t come rightly by it.

‘Oh!’ answered Shortshanks, ‘I went home for a bit, and there I found these hoops, which had fallen off some old pails of ours, so I laid hands on them for you, if you must know.’

Well! when the kitchen-maid heard they were for her, she said nothing more about the matter, but thanked Shortshanks, and they were good friends again.

The next Thursday evening it was the same story over again; all were in grief and trouble, but Ritter Red said, as he had saved the Princess from one Ogre, it was hard if he couldn’t save her from another; and down he led her to the strand as brave as a lion. But he didn’t do this Ogre much harm either, for when the time came that they looked for the Ogre, he said, as he had said before:

‘‘Tis better one should lose life than two’, and crept up into his tree again. But Shortshanks begged the kitchen-maid to let him go down to the strand for a little.

‘Oh!’ asked the kitchen-maid, ‘and what business have you down there?’

‘Dear friend’, said Shortshanks. ‘do pray let me go. I long so to run down and play a while with the other children.’

Well! the kitchen-maid gave him leave to go, but he must promise to be back by the time the roast was turned, and he was to mind and bring a big bundle of wood with him. So Shortshanks had scarce got down to the strand, when the Ogre came tearing along in his ship, so that the wind howled and roared around him; he was twice as big as the other Ogre, and he had ten heads on his shoulders.

‘Fire and flame!’ screamed the Ogre.

Fire and flame yourself!’ answered Shortshanks.

‘Can you fight?’ roared the Ogre.

‘If I can’t, I can learn’, said Shortshanks.

Then the Ogre struck at him with his iron club; it was even bigger than that which the first Ogre had, and the earth and stones flew up ten yards into the air.

My!’ said Shortshanks, ‘that was something like a blow now you shall see a stroke of mine.’ Then he grasped his sword, and cut off all the Ogre’s ten heads at one blow, and sent them dancing away over the sand.

Then the Princess said again to him, ‘Lie down and sleep a little while on my lap’; and while Shortshanks lay there, she threw over him a silver robe. But as soon as Ritter Red marked that there was no more danger in the way, he crept down from the tree, and threatened the Princess, till she was forced to give her word, to say it was he who had set her free; after that, he cut the lungs and tongue out of the Ogre, and wrapped them in his handkerchief, and led the Princess back to the palace. Then you may fancy what mirth and joy there was, and the king was at his wits’ end to know how to show Ritter Red honour and favour enough.

This time, too, Shortshanks took a whole armful of gold and silver rings from the Ogre’s ship, and when he came back to the palace the kitchen-maid clapped her hands in wonder, asking wherever he got all that gold and silver from. But Shortshanks answered that he had been home a while, and that the hoops had fallen off some old pails, so he had laid his hands on them for his friend the kitchen-maid. So when the third Thursday evening came, everything happened as it had happened twice before; the whole palace was hung with black, and all went about mourning and weeping. But Ritter Red said he couldn’t see what need they had to be so afraid; he had freed the Princess from two Ogres, and he could very well free her from a third; so he led her down to the strand, but when the time drew near for the Ogre to come up, he crept into his tree again, and hid himself. The Princess begged and prayed, but it was no good, for Ritter Red said again:

‘‘Tis better that one should lose life than two.’

That evening, too, Shortshanks begged for leave to go down to the strand.

‘Oh!’ said the kitchen-maid, ‘what should take you down there?’

But he begged and prayed so, that at last he got leave to go, only he had to promise to be back in the kitchen again when the roast was to be turned. So off he went, but he had scarce reached the strand when the Ogre came with the wind howling and roaring after him. He was much, much bigger than either of the other two, and he had fifteen heads on his shoulders.

‘Fire and flame!’ roared out the Ogre.

‘Fire and flame yourself!’ said Shortshanks.

‘Can you fight?’ screamed the Ogre.

‘If I can’t, I can learn’, said Shortshanks.

‘I’ll soon teach you’, screamed the Ogre, and struck at him with his iron club, so that the earth and stones flew up fifteen yards into the air.

‘My!’ said Shortshanks, ‘that was something like a blow; but now you shall see a stroke of mine.’

As he said that, he grasped his sword, and cut off all the Ogre’s fifteen heads at one blow, and sent them all dancing over the sand.

So the Princess was freed from all the Ogres, and she both blessed and thanked Shortshanks for saving her life.

‘Sleep now a while on my lap’, she said; and he laid his head on her lap, and while he slept, she threw over him a golden robe.

‘But how shall we let it be known that it is you that have saved me?’ she asked, when he awoke.

‘Oh, I’ll soon tell you’, answered Shortshanks. ‘When Ritter Red has led you home again, and given himself out as the man who has saved you, you know he is to have you to wife, and half the kingdom. Now, when they ask you, on your wedding-day, whom you will have to be your cup-bearer, you must say, “I will have the ragged boy who does odd jobs in the kitchen, and carries in wood and water for the kitchen-maid.” So when I am filling your cups, I will spill a drop on his plate, but none on yours; then he will be wroth, and give me a blow, and the same thing will happen three times. But the third time you must mind and say, “Shame on you! to strike my heart’s darling; he it is who set me free, and him will I have!”‘

After that Shortshanks ran back to the palace, as he had done before; but he went first on board the Ogre’s ship, and took a whole heap of gold, silver, and precious stones, and out of them he gave the kitchen-maid another great armful of gold and silver rings.

Well! as for Ritter Red, as soon as ever he saw that all risk was over, he crept down from his tree, and threatened the Princess till she was forced to promise she would say it was he who had saved her. After that, he led her back to the palace, and all the honour shown him before was nothing to what he got now, for the king thought of nothing else than how he might best honour the man who had saved his daughter from the three Ogres. As for his marrying her, and having half the kingdom, that was a settled thing, the king said. But-when the wedding-day came, the Princess begged she might have the ragged boy who carried in wood and water for the cook to be her cup-bearer at the bridal-feast.

‘I can’t think why you should want to bring that filthy beggar boy in here’, said Ritter Red; but the Princess had a will of her own, and said she would have him, and no one else, to pour out her wine; so she had her way at last. Now everything went as it had been agreed between Shortshanks and the Princess; he spilled a drop on Ritter Red's plate, but none on hers, and each time Ritter Red got wroth and struck him. At the first blow Shortshank's rags fell off which he had worn in the kitchen; at the second the tinsel robe fell off; and at the third the silver robe; and then he stood in his golden robe, all gleaming and glittering in the light. Then the Princess said:

'Shame on you! to strike my heart's darling! he has saved me, and him will I have!'

Ritter Red cursed and swore it was he who had set her free; but the king put in his word, and said:

'The man who saved my daughter must have some token to show for it.'

Yes! Ritter Red had something to show, and he ran off at once after his handkerchief with the lungs and tongues in it, and Shortshanks fetched all the gold and silver, and precious things, he had taken out of the Ogres' ships. So each laid his tokens before the king, and the king said:

'The man who has such precious stores of gold, and silver, and diamonds, must have slain the Ogre, and spoiled his goods, for such things are not to be had elsewhere.'

So Ritter Red was thrown into a pit full of snakes, and Shortshanks was to have the Princess and half the kingdom.

One day Shortshanks and the king were out walking, and Shortshanks asked the king if he hadn't any more children?

'Yes', said the king, 'I had another daughter; but the Ogre has taken her away, because there was no one who could save her. Now you are going to have one daughter, but if you can set the other free whom the Ogre has carried off, you shall have her too with all my heart, and the other half of my kingdom.'

‘Well’, said Shortshanks, ‘I may as well try; but I must have an iron cable, five hundred fathoms long, and five hundred men, and food for them to last fifteen weeks, for I have a long voyage before me.’

Yes! the king said he should have them, but he was afraid there wasn’t a ship in his kingdom big enough to carry such a freight.

‘Oh! if that’s all’, said Shortshanks, ‘I have a ship of my own.’

With that he whipped out of his pocket the ship he had got from the old hag.

The king laughed, and thought it was all a joke; but Shortshanks begged him only to give him what he asked, and he should soon see if it was a joke. So they got together what he wanted, and Shortshanks bade him put the cable on board the ship first of all; but there was no one man who could lift it, and there wasn’t room for more than one at a time round the tiny ship. Then Shortshanks took hold of the cable by one end, and laid a link or two into the ship; and as he threw in the links, the ship grew bigger and bigger, till at last it got so big, that there was room enough and to spare in it for the cable, and the five hundred men, and their food, and Shortshanks, and all. Then he said to the ship:

‘Off and away, over fresh water and salt water, over high hill and deep dale, and don’t stop till you come to where the king’s daughter is.’ And away went the ship over land and sea, till the wind whistled after it.

So when they had sailed far, far away, the ship stood stock still in the middle of the sea.

‘Ah!’ said Shortshanks, ‘now we have got so far; but how we are to get back is another story.’

Then he took the cable and tied one end of it round his waist, and said:

‘Now, I must go to the bottom, but when I give the cable a good tug, and want to come up again, mind you all hoist away with a will, or your lives will be lost as well as mine’; and with these words overboard he leapt, and dived down, so that the yellow waves rose round him in an eddy.

Well, he sank and sank, and at last he came to the bottom, and there he saw a great rock rising up with a door in it, so he opened the door and went in. When he got inside, he saw another Princess, who sat and sewed, but when she saw Shortshanks, she clasped her hands together and cried out:

‘Now, God be thanked! you are the first Christian man I’ve set eyes on since I came here.’

‘Very good’, said Shortshanks; ‘but do you know I’ve come to fetch you?’

‘Oh!’ she cried, ‘you’ll never fetch me; you’ll never have that luck, for if the Ogre sees you, he’ll kill you on the spot.’

‘I’m glad you spoke of the Ogre’, said Shortshanks; ‘‘twould be fine fun to see him; whereabouts is he?’

Then the Princess told him the Ogre was out looking for some one who could brew a hundred lasts of malt at one strike, for he was going to give a great feast, and less drink wouldn’t do.

‘Well! I can do that’, said Shortshanks.

‘Ah!’ said the Princess, ‘if only the Ogre wasn’t so hasty, I might tell him about you; but he’s so cross; I’m afraid he’ll tear you to pieces as soon as he comes in, without waiting to hear my story. Let me see what is to be done. Oh! I have it; just hide yourself in the side-room yonder, and let us take our chance.’

Well! Shortshanks did as she told him, and he had scarce crept into the side-room before the Ogre came in.

‘HUF!’ said the Ogre; ‘what a horrid smell of Christian man’s blood!’

‘Yes!’ said the Princess, ‘I know there is, for a bird flew over the house with a Christian man’s bone in his bill, and let it fall down the chimney. I made all the haste I could to get it out again, but I dare say it’s that you smell.’

‘Ah!’ said the Ogre, ‘like enough.’

Then the Princess asked the Ogre if he had laid hold of any one who could brew a hundred lasts of malt at one strike?

‘No’, said the Ogre, ‘I can’t hear of any one who can do it.’

‘Well’, she said, ‘a while ago, there was a chap in here who said he could do it.’

‘Just like you, with your wisdom!’ said the Ogre; ‘why did you let him go away then, when you knew he was the very man I wanted?’

‘Well then, I didn’t let him go’, said the Princess; ‘but father’s temper is a little hot, so I hid him away in the side-room yonder; but if father hasn’t hit upon any one, here he is.’

‘Well’, said the Ogre, ‘let him come in then.’

So Shortshanks came in, and the Ogre asked him if it were true that he could brew a hundred lasts of malt at a strike?

‘Yes it is’, said Shortshanks.

‘Twas good luck then to lay hands on you’, said the Ogre, ‘and now fall to work this minute; but heaven help you if you don’t brew the ale strong enough.’

‘Oh’, said Shortshanks, ‘never fear, it shall be stinging stuff’; and with that he began to brew without more fuss, but all at once he cried out:

‘I must have more of you Ogres to help in the brewing, for these I have got a’nt half strong enough.’

Well, he got more — so many, that there was a whole swarm of them, and then the brewing went on bravely. Now when the sweet-wort was ready, they were all eager to taste it, you may guess; first of all the Ogre, and then all his kith and kin. But Shortshanks had brewed the wort so strong that they all fell down dead, one after another, like so many flies, as soon as they had tasted it. At last there wasn’t one of them left alive but one vile old hag, who lay bed-ridden in the chimney-corner.

‘Oh you poor old wretch’, said Shortshanks, ‘you may just as well taste the wort along with the rest.’

So, he went and scooped up a little from the bottom of the copper in a scoop, and gave her a drink, and so he was rid of the whole pack of them.

As he stood there and looked about him, he cast his eye on a great chest, so he took it and filled it with gold and silver; then he tied the cable round himself and the Princess and the chest, and gave it a good tug, and his men pulled them all up, safe and sound. As soon as ever Shortshanks was well up, he said to the ship,

‘Off and away, over fresh water and salt water, high hill and deep dale, and don’t stop till you come to the king’s palace’; and straightway the ship held on her course, so that the yellow billows foamed round her. When the people in the palace saw the ship sailing up, they were not slow in meeting them with songs and music, welcoming Shortshanks with great joy; but the gladdest of all was the king, who had now got his other daughter back again.

But now Shortshanks was rather down-hearted, for you must know that both the princesses wanted to have him, and he would have no other than the one he had first saved, and she was the youngest. So he walked up and down, and thought and thought what he should do to get her, and yet do something to please her sister. Well, one day as he was turning the thing over in his mind, it struck him if he only had his brother King Sturdy, who was so like him that no one could tell the one from the other, he would give up to him the other princess and half the kingdom, for he thought one-half was quite enough.

Well, as soon as ever this came into his mind, he went outside the palace and called on King Sturdy, but no one came. So he called a second time a little louder, but still no one came. Then he called out the third time ‘King Sturdy’ with all his might, and there stood his brother before him. ‘Didn’t I say!’ he said to Shortshanks, ‘didn’t I say you were not to call me except in your utmost need? and here there is not so much as a gnat to do you any harm’, and with that he gave him such a box on the ear that Shortshanks tumbled head over heels on the grass.

‘Now shame on you to ‘hit so hard!’ said Shortshanks. ‘First of all I won a princess and half the kingdom, and then I won another princess and the other half of the kingdom; and now I’m thinking to give you one of the princesses and half the kingdom. Is there any rhyme or reason in giving me such a box on the ear?’

When King Sturdy heard that, he begged his brother to forgive him, and they were soon as good friends as ever again.

‘Now’, said Shortshanks, ‘you know, we are so much alike, that no one can tell the one from the other; so just change clothes with me and go into the palace; then the princesses will think it is I that am coming in, and the one that kisses you first you shall have for your wife, and I will have the other for mine.’

And he said this because he knew well enough that the elder king’s daughter was the stronger, and so he could very well guess how things would go. As for King Sturdy, he was willing enough, so he changed clothes with his brother and went into the palace. But when he came into the Princesses’ bower they thought it was Shortshanks, and both ran up to him to kiss him; but the elder, who was stronger and bigger, pushed her sister on one side, and threw her arms round King Sturdy’s neck, and gave him a kiss; and so he got her for his wife, and Shortshanks got the younger Princess. Then they made ready for the wedding, and you may fancy what a grand one it was, when I tell you, that the fame of it was noised abroad over seven kingdoms.

46

NOT A PIN TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THEM

Once on a time there was a man, and he had a wife. Now this couple wanted to sow their fields, but they had neither seed-corn nor money to buy it with. But they had a cow, and the man was to drive it into town and sell it, to get money to buy corn for seed. But when it came to the pinch, the wife dared not let her husband start for fear he should spend the money in drink, so she set off herself with the cow, and took besides a hen with her.

Close by the town she met a butcher, who asked:

‘Will you sell that cow, Goody?’

‘Yes, that I will’, she answered.

‘Well, what do you want for her?’

‘Oh! I must have five shillings for the cow, but you shall have the hen for ten pounds.’

‘Very good!’ said the man; ‘I don’t want the hen, and you’ll soon get it off your hands in the town, but I’ll give you five shillings for the cow.’

Well, she sold her cow for five shillings, but there was no one in the town who would give ten pounds for a lean tough old hen, so she went back to the butcher, and said:

‘Do all I can, I can’t get rid of this hen, master! you must take it too, as you took the cow.’

‘Well’, said the butcher, ‘come along and we’ll see about it.’ Then he treated her both with meat and drink, and gave her so much brandy that she lost her head, and didn’t know what she was about, and fell fast asleep. But while she slept, the butcher took and dipped her into a tar-barrel, and then laid her down on a heap of feathers; and when she woke up, she was feathered all over, and began to wonder what had befallen her.

‘Is it me, or is it not me? No, it can never be me; it must be some great strange bird. But what shall I do to find out whether it is me or not. Oh! I know how I shall be able to tell whether it is me; if the calves come and lick me, and our dog Tray doesn’t bark at me when I get home, then it must be me, and no one else.’

Now, Tray, her dog, had scarce set his eyes on the strange monster which came through the gate, than he set up such a barking, one would have thought all the rogues and robbers in the world were in the yard.

‘Ah, deary me’, said she, ‘I thought so; it can’t be me surely.’ So she went to the straw-yard, and the calves wouldn’t lick her, when they snuffed in the strong smell of tar. ‘No, no!’ she said, ‘it can’t be me; it must be some strange outlandish bird.’

So she crept up on the roof of the safe and began to flap her arms, as if they had been wings, and was just going to fly off.

When her husband saw all this, out he came with his rifle, and began to take aim at her.

‘Oh!’ cried his wife, ‘don’t shoot, don’t shoot! it is only me.’

‘If it’s you’, said her husband, ‘don’t stand up there like a goat on a house-top, but come down and let me hear what you have to say for yourself.’

So she crawled down again, but she hadn’t a shilling to shew, for the crown she had got from the butcher she had thrown away in her drunkenness. When her husband heard her story, he said, ‘You’re only twice as silly as you were before’, and he got so angry that he made up his mind to go away from her altogether, and never to come back till he had found three other Goodies as silly as his own.

So he toddled off, and when he had walked a little way he saw a Goody, who was running in and out of a newly-built wooden cottage with an empty sieve, and every time she ran in, she threw her apron over the sieve just as if she had something in it, and when she got in she turned it upside down on the floor.

‘Why, Goody!’ he asked, ‘what are you doing?’

‘Oh’, she answered, ‘I’m only carrying in a little sun; but I don’t know how it is, when I’m outside, I have the sun in my sieve, but when I get inside, somehow or other I’ve thrown it away. But in my old cottage I had plenty of sun, though I never carried in the least bit. I only wish I knew some one who would bring the sun inside; I’d give him three hundred dollars and welcome.’

‘Have you got an axe?’ asked the man. ‘If you have, I’ll soon bring the sun inside.’

So he got an axe and cut windows in the cottage, for the carpenters had forgotten them; then the sun shone in, and he got his three hundred dollars.

‘That was one of them’, said the man to himself, as he went on his way.

After a while he passed by a house, out of which came an awful screaming and bellowing; so he turned in and saw a Goody, who was hard at work banging her husband across the head with a beetle, and over his head she had drawn a shirt without any slit for the neck.

‘Why, Goody!’ he asked, ‘will you beat your husband to death?’

‘No’, she said, ‘I only must have a hole in this shirt for his neck to come through.’

All the while the husband kept on screaming and calling out:

‘Heaven help and comfort all who try on new shirts. If anyone would teach my Goody another way of making a slit for the neck in my new shirts, I’d give him three hundred dollars down and welcome.’

‘I’ll do it in the twinkling of an eye’, said the man, ‘if you’ll only give me a pair of scissors.’

So he got a pair of scissors, and snipped a hole in the neck, and went off with his three hundred dollars.

‘That was another of them’, he said to himself, as he walked along.

Last of all, he came to a farm, where he made up his mind to rest a bit. So when he went in, the mistress asked him:

‘Whence do you come, master?’

‘Oh!’ said he, ‘I come from Paradise Place’, for that was the name of his farm.

‘From Paradise Place!’ she cried, ‘you don’t say so! Why, then, you must know my second husband Peter, who is dead and gone, God rest his soul.’

For you must know this Goody had been married three times, and as her first and last husbands had been bad, she had made up her mind that the second only was gone to heaven.

‘Oh yes’, said the man; ‘I know him very well.’

‘Well’, asked the Goody, ‘how do things go with him, poor dear soul?’

‘Only middling’, was the answer; ‘he goes about begging from house to house, and has neither food nor a rag to his back. As for money, he hasn’t a sixpence to bless himself with.’

‘Mercy on me’, cried out the Goody; ‘he never ought to go about such a figure when he left so much behind him. Why, there’s a whole cupboard full of old clothes up-stairs which belonged to him, besides a great chest full of money yonder. Now, if you will take them with you, you shall have a horse and cart to carry them. As for the horse, he can keep it, and sit on the cart, and drive about from house to house, and then he needn’t trudge on foot.’

So the man got a whole cart-load of clothes, and a chest full of shining dollars, and as much meat and drink as he would; and when he had got all he wanted, he jumped into the cart and drove off.

‘That was the third’, he said to himself, as he went along. Now this Goody’s third husband was a little way off in a field ploughing, and when he saw a strange man driving off from the farm with his horse and cart, he went home and asked his wife who that was that had just started with the black horse.

‘Oh, do you mean him?’ said the Goody; ‘why, that was a man from Paradise, who said that Peter, my dear second husband, who is dead and gone, is in a sad plight, and that he goes from house to house begging, and has neither clothes nor money; so I just sent him all those old clothes he left behind him, and the old money box with the dollars in it.’ The man saw how the land lay in a trice, so he saddled his horse and rode off from the farm at full gallop. It wasn’t long before he was close behind the man who sat and drove the cart; but when the latter saw this he drove the cart into a thicket by the side of the road, pulled out a handful of hair from the horse’s tail, jumped up on a little rise in the wood, where he tied the hair fast to a birch, and then lay down under it, and began to peer and stare up at the sky.

‘Well, well, if I ever!’ he said, as Peter the third came riding up. ‘No! I never saw the like of this in all my born days!’

Then Peter stood and looked at him for some time, wondering what had come over him; but at last he asked:

‘What do you lie there staring at?’

‘No’, kept on the man, ‘I never did see anything like it! — here is a man going straight up to heaven on a black horse, and here you see his horse’s tail still hanging in this birch; and yonder up in the sky you see the black horse.’

Peter looked first at the man, and then at the sky, and said:

‘I see nothing but the horse hair in the birch; that’s all I see!’

‘Of course you can’t where you stand’, said the man; ‘but just come and lie down here, and stare straight up, and mind you don’t take your eyes off the sky; and then you shall see what you shall see.’

But while Peter the third lay and stared up at the sky till his eyes filled with tears, the man from Paradise Place took his horse and jumped on its back and rode off both with it and the cart and horse.

When the hoofs thundered along the road, Peter the third jumped up; but he was so taken aback when he found the man had gone off with his horse that he hadn't the sense to run after him till it was too late.

He was rather down in the mouth when he got home to his Goody; but when she asked him what he had done with the horse, he said,

'I gave it to the man too for Peter the second, for I thought it wasn't right he should sit in a cart, and scramble about from house to house; so now he can sell the cart and buy himself a coach to drive about in.'

'Thank you heartily!' said his wife; 'I never thought you could be so kind.'

Well, when the man reached home, who had got the six hundred dollars and the cart-load of clothes and money, he saw that all his fields were ploughed and sown, and the first thing he asked his wife was, where she had got the seed-corn from.

'Oh', she said, 'I have always heard that what a man sows he shall reap, so I sowed the salt which our friends the north-country men laid up here with us, and if we only have rain I fancy it will come up nicely.'

'Silly you are', said her husband, 'and silly you will be so long as you live; but that is all one now, for the rest are not a bit wiser than you. There is not a pin to choose between you.'

47

THE THREE AUNTS

Once on a time there was a poor man who lived in a hut far away in the wood, and got his living by shooting. He had an only daughter who was very pretty, and as she had lost her mother when she was a child, and was now half grown up, she said she would go out into the world and earn her bread.

‘Well, lassie!’ said the father, ‘true enough you have learnt nothing here but how to pluck birds and roast them, but still you may as well try to earn your bread.’

So the girl went off to seek a place, and when she had gone a little while, she came to a palace. There she stayed and got a place, and the queen liked her so well, that all the other maids got envious of her. So they made up their minds to tell the queen how the lassie said she was good to spin a pound of flax in four and twenty hours, for you must know the queen was a great housewife, and thought much of good work.

‘Have you said this? then you shall do it’, said the queen; ‘but you may have a little longer time if you choose.’

Now, the poor lassie dared not say she had never spun in all her life, but she only begged for a room to herself. That she got, and the wheel and the flax were brought up to her. There she sat sad and weeping, and knew not how to help herself. She pulled the wheel this way and that, and twisted and turned it about, but she made a poor hand of it, for she had never even seen a spinning-wheel in her life.

But all at once, as she sat there, in came an old woman to her.

‘What ails you, child?’ she said.

‘Ah!’ said the lassie, with a deep sigh, ‘it’s no good to tell you, for you’ll never be able to help me.’

‘Who knows?’ said the old wife. ‘May be I know how to help you after all.’

Well, thought the lassie to herself, I may as well tell her, and so she told her how her fellow-servants had given out that she was good to spin a pound of flax in four and twenty hours.

‘And here am I, wretch that I am, shut up to spin all that heap in a day and a night, when I have never even seen a spinning-wheel in all my born days.’

‘Well, never mind, child’, said the old woman. ‘If you’ll call me Aunt on the happiest day of your life, I’ll spin this flax for you, and so you may just go away and lie down to sleep.’

Yes, the lassie was willing enough, and off she went and lay down to sleep.

Next morning when she awoke, there lay all the flax spun on the table, and that so clean and fine, no one had ever seen such even and pretty yarn. The queen was very glad to get such nice yarn, and she set greater store by the lassie than ever. But the rest were still more envious, and agreed to tell the queen how the lassie had said she was good to weave the yarn she had spun in four and twenty hours. So the queen said again, as she had said it she must do it; but if she couldn’t quite finish it in four and twenty hours, she wouldn’t be too hard upon her, she might have a little more time. This time, too, the lassie dared not say No, but begged for a room to herself, and then she would try. There she sat again, sobbing and crying, and not knowing which way to turn, when another old woman came in and asked:

‘What ails you, child?’

At first the lassie wouldn’t say, but at last she told her the whole story of her grief.

‘Well, well!’ said the old wife, ‘never mind. If you’ll call me Aunt on the happiest day of your life, I’ll weave this yarn for you, and so you may just be off, and lie down to sleep.’

Yes, the lassie was willing enough; so she went away and lay down to sleep. When she awoke, there lay the piece of linen on the table, woven so neat and close, no woof could be better. So the lassie took the piece and ran down to the queen, who was very glad to get such beautiful linen, and set greater store than ever by the lassie. But as for the others, they grew still more bitter against her, and thought of nothing but how to find out something to tell about her.

At last they told the queen the lassie had said she was good to make up the piece of linen into shirts in four and twenty hours. Well, all happened as before; the lassie dared not say she couldn’t sew; so she was shut up again in a room by herself, and there she sat in tears and grief. But then another old wife came, who said she would sew the shirts for her if she would call her Aunt on the happiest day of her life. The lassie was only too glad to do this, and then she did as the old wife told her, and went and lay down to sleep.

Next morning when she woke she found the piece of linen made up into shirts, which lay on the table — and such beautiful work no one had ever set eyes on; and more than that, the shirts were all marked and ready for wear. So, when the queen saw the work, she was so glad at the way in which it was sewn, that she clapped her hands, and said:

‘Such sewing I never had, nor even saw in all my born days’; and after that she was as fond of the lassie as of her own children; and she said to her:

‘Now, if you like to have the Prince for your husband, you shall have him; for you will never need to hire work-women. You can sew, and spin, and weave all yourself.’

So as the lassie was pretty, and the Prince was glad to have her, the wedding soon came on. But just as the Prince was going to sit down with the bride to the bridal feast, in came an ugly old hag with a long nose — I’m sure it was three ells long.

So up got the bride and made a curtsey, and said: ‘Good-day, Auntie.’

‘*That* Auntie to my bride?’ said the Prince.

‘Yes, she was!’

‘Well, then, she’d better sit down with us to the feast’, said the Prince; but, to tell you the truth, both he and the rest thought she was a loathsome woman to have next you.

But just then in came another ugly old hag. She had a back so humped and broad, she had hard work to get through the door. Up jumped the bride in a trice, and greeted her with ‘Good-day, Auntie!’

And the Prince asked again if that were his bride’s aunt. They both said Yes; so the Prince said, if that were so, she too had better sit down with them to the feast.

But they had scarce taken their seats before another ugly old hag came in, with eyes as large as saucers, and so red and bleared, ‘twas gruesome to look at her. But up jumped the bride again, with her ‘Good-day, Auntie’, and her, too, the Prince asked to sit down; but I can’t say he was very glad, for he thought to himself: ‘Heaven shield me from such Aunties as my bride has!’ So when he had sat awhile, he could not keep his thoughts to himself any longer, but asked,

‘But how, in all the world, can my bride, who is such a lovely lassie, have such loathsome, misshapen Aunts?’

‘I’ll soon tell you how it is’, said the first. ‘I was just as good-looking when I was her age; but the reason why I’ve got this long nose is, because I was always kept sitting, and poking, and nodding over my spinning, and so my nose got stretched and stretched, until it got as long as you now see it.’

‘And I’, said the second, ‘ever since I was young, I have sat and scuttled backwards and forwards over my loom, and that’s how my back has got so broad and humped as you now see it.’

‘And I’, said the third, ‘ever since I was little, I have sat, and stared, and sewn, and sewn and stared, night and day; and that’s why my eyes have got so ugly and red, and now there’s no help for them.’

‘So! so! ‘said the Prince, ‘‘twas lucky I came to know this; for if folk can get so ugly and loathsome by all this, then my bride shall neither spin, nor weave, nor sew all her life long.’

48

THE COCK, THE CUCKOO, AND THE BLACK-COCK

Once on a time the Cock, the Cuckoo, and the Black-cock bought a cow between them. But when they came to share it, and couldn't agree which should buy the others out, they settled that he who woke first in the morning should have the cow.

So the Cock woke first.

Now the cow's mine!
Now the cow's mine!
Hurrah! hurrah!

he crew, and as he crew, up awoke the Cuckoo.

Half cow!
Half cow!

sang the Cuckoo, and woke up the Black-cock.

A like share, a like share;
Dear friends, that's only fair!
Saw see! See saw!

That's what the Black-cock said.

And now, can you tell me which of them ought to have the cow?

49

RICH PETER THE PEDLAR

Once on a time there was a man whom they called Rich Peter the Pedlar, because he used to travel about with a pack, and got so much money, that he became quite rich. This Rich Peter had a daughter, whom he held so dear that all who came to woo her, were sent about their business, for no one was good enough for her, he thought. Well, this went on and on, and at last no one came to woo her, and as years rolled on, Peter began to be afraid that she would die an old maid.

'I wonder now', he said to his wife, 'why suitors no longer come to woo our lass, who is so rich. 'Twould be odd if no body cared to have her, for money she has, and more she shall have. I think I'd better just go off to the Stargazers, and ask them whom she shall have, for not a soul comes to us now.'

'But how', asked the wife, 'can the Stargazers answer that?'

'Can't they?' said Peter; 'why! they read all things in the stars.'

So he took with him a great bag of money, and set off to the Stargazers, and asked them to be so good as to look at the stars, and tell him the husband his daughter was to have. Well! the Stargazers looked and looked, but they said they could see nothing about it. But Peter begged them to look better, and to tell him the truth; he would pay them well for it. So the Stargazers looked better, and at last they said that his daughter's husband was to be the miller’s son, who was only just born, down at the mill below Rich Peter’s house. Then Peter gave the Stargazers a hundred dollars, and went home with the answer he had got. Now, he thought it too good a joke that his daughter should wed one so newly born, and of such poor estate. He said this to his wife, and added:

‘I wonder now if they would sell me the boy; then I’d soon put him out of the way?’

‘I daresay they would’, said his wife; ‘you know they’re very poor.’

So Peter went down to the mill, and asked the miller’s wife whether she would sell him her son; she should get a heap of money for him?

‘No!’ that she wouldn’t.

‘Well!’ said Peter, ‘I’m sure I can’t see why you shouldn’t; you’ve hard work enough as it is to keep hunger out of the house, and the boy won’t make it easier, I think.’

But the mother was so proud of the boy, she couldn’t part with him. So when the miller came home, Peter said the same thing to him, and gave his word to pay six hundred dollars for the boy, so that they might buy themselves a farm of their own, and not have to grind other folks’ corn, and to starve when they ran short of water. The miller thought it was a good bargain, and he talked over his wife; and the end was, that Rich Peter got the boy. The mother cried and sobbed, but Peter comforted her by saying the boy should be well cared for; only they had to promise never to ask after him, for he said he meant to send him far away to other lands, so that he might learn foreign tongues.

So when Peter the Pedlar got home with the boy, he sent for a carpenter, and had a little chest made, which was so tidy and neat, ‘twas a joy to see. This he made water-tight with pitch, put the miller’s boy into it, locked it up, and threw it into the river, where the stream carried it away.

‘Now, I’m rid of him’, thought Peter the Pedlar.

But when the chest had floated ever so far down the stream, it came into the mill-head of another mill, and ran down and hampered the shaft of the wheel, and stopped it. Out came the miller to see what stopped the mill, found the chest and took it up. So when he came home to dinner to his wife, he said:

‘I wonder now whatever there can be inside this chest which came floating down the mill-head, and stopped our mill to-day?’

‘That we’ll soon know’, said his wife; ‘see, there’s the key in the lock, just turn it.’

So they turned the key and opened the chest, and lo! there lay the prettiest child you ever set eyes on. So they were both glad, and were ready to keep the child, for they had no children of their own, and were so old, they could now hope for none.

Now, after a little while, Peter the Pedlar began to wonder how it was no one came to woo his daughter, who was so rich in land, and had so much ready money. At last, when no one came, off he went again to the Stargazers, and offered them a heap of money if they could tell him whom his daughter was to have for a husband.

‘Why! we have told you already, that she is to have the miller’s son down yonder’, said the Stargazers.

‘All very true, I daresay’, said Peter the Pedlar; ‘but it so happens he’s dead; but if you can tell me whom she’s to have, I’ll give you two hundred dollars, and welcome.’ So the Stargazers looked at the stars again, but they got quite cross, and said,

‘We told you before, and we tell you now, she is to have the miller’s son, whom you threw into the river, and wished to make an end of; for he is alive, safe and sound, in such and such a mill, far down the stream.’

So Peter the Pedlar gave them two hundred dollars for this news, and thought how he could best be rid of the miller’s son. The first thing Peter did when he got home, was to set off for the mill. By that time the boy was so big that he had been confirmed, and went about the mill and helped the miller. Such a pretty boy you never saw.

‘Can’t you spare me that lad yonder?’ said Peter the Pedlar to the miller.

‘No! that I can’t’, he answered; ‘I’ve brought him up as my own son, and he has turned out so well, that now he’s a great help and aid to me in the mill, for I’m getting old and past work.’

‘It’s just the same with me’, said Peter the Pedlar; ‘that’s why I’d like to have some one to learn my trade. Now, if you’ll give him up to me, I’ll give you six hundred dollars, and then you can buy yourself a farm, and live in peace and quiet the rest of your days.’

Yes! when the miller heard that, he let Peter the Pedlar have the lad.

Then the two travelled about far and wide, with their packs and wares, till they came to an inn, which lay by the edge of a great wood. From this Peter the Pedlar sent the lad home with a letter to his wife, for the way was not so long if you took the short cut across the wood, and told him to tell her she was to be sure and do what was written in the letter as quickly as she could. But it was written in the letter, that she was to have a great pile made there and then, fire it, and cast the miller’s son into it. If she didn’t do that, he’d burn her alive himself when he came back. So the lad set off with the letter across the wood, and when evening came on he reached a house far, far away in the wood, into which he went; but inside he found no one. In one of the rooms was a bed ready made, so he threw himself across it and fell asleep. The letter he had stuck into his hat-band, and the hat he pulled over his face. So when the robbers came back — for in that house twelve robbers had their abode — and saw the lad lying on the bed, they began to wonder who he could be, and one of them took the letter and broke it open, and read it.

‘Ho! ho!’ said he; ‘this comes from Peter the Pedlar, does it? Now we’ll play him a trick. It would be a pity if the old niggard made an end of such a pretty lad.’

So the robbers wrote another letter to Peter the Pedlar's wife, and fastened it under his hat-band while he slept; and in that they wrote, that as soon as ever she got it she was to make a wedding for her daughter and the miller's boy, and give them horses and cattle, and household stuff, and set them up for themselves in the farm which he had under the hill; and if he didn't find all this done by the time he came back, she'd smart for it — that was all.

Next day the robbers let the lad go, and when he came home and delivered the letter, he said he was to greet her kindly from Peter the Pedlar, and to say that she was to carry out what was written in the letter as soon as ever she could.

'You must have behaved very well then', said Peter, the Pedlar's wife to the miller's boy, 'if he can write so about you now, for when you set off, he was so mad against you, he didn't know how to put you out of the way.' So she married them on the spot, and set them up for themselves, with horses, and cattle, and household stuff, in the farm up under the hill.

No long time after Peter the Pedlar came home, and the first thing he asked was, if she had done what he had written in his letter.

'Aye! aye!' she said; 'I thought it rather odd, but I dared not do anything else'; and so Peter asked where his daughter was.

'Why, you know well enough where she is', said his wife. 'Where should she be but up at the farm under the hill, as you wrote in the letter.'

So when Peter the Pedlar came to hear the whole story, and came to see the letter, he got so angry he was ready to burst with rage, and off he ran up to the farm to the young couple.

'It's all very well, my son, to say you have got my daughter', he said to the miller's lad; 'but if you wish to keep her, you must go to the Dragon of Deepferry, and get me three feathers out of his tail; for he who has them may get anything he chooses.'

'But where shall I find him?' said his son-in-law.

‘I’m sure I can’t tell’, said Peter the Pedlar; ‘that’s your look-out, not mine.’

So the lad set off with a stout heart, and after he had walked some way, he came to a king’s palace.

‘Here I’ll just step in and ask’, he said to himself; ‘for such great folk know more about the world than others, and perhaps I may here learn the way to the Dragon.’

Then the King asked him whence he came, and whither he was going?

‘Oh!’ said the lad, ‘I’m going to the Dragon of Deepferry to pluck three feathers out of his tail, if I only knew where to find him.’

‘You must take luck with you, then’, said the King, ‘for I never heard of any one who came back from that search. But if you find him, just ask him from me why I can’t get clear water in my well; for I’ve dug it out time after time, and still I can’t get a drop of clear water.’

‘Yes, I’ll be sure to ask him’, said the lad. So he lived on the fat of the land at the palace, and got money and food when he left it.

At even he came to another king’s palace; and when he went into the kitchen, the King came out of the parlour, and asked whence he came, and on what errand he was bound?

‘Oh!’ said the lad, ‘I’m going to the Dragon of Deepferry to pluck three feathers out of his tail.’

‘Then you must take luck with you’, said the King, ‘for I never yet heard that any one came back who went to look for him. But if you find him, be so good as to ask him from me where my daughter is, who has been lost so many years. I have hunted for her, and had her name given out in every church in the country, but no one can tell me anything about her.’

‘Yes, I’ll mind and do that’, said the lad; and in that palace too he lived on the best, and when he went away he got both money and food.

So when evening drew on again he came at last to another king’s palace. Here who should come out into the kitchen but the Queen, and she asked him whence he came, and on what errand he was bound?

‘I’m going to the Dragon of Deepferry to pluck three feathers out of his tail’, said the lad.

‘Then you’d better take a good piece of luck with you’, said the Queen, ‘for I never heard of any one that came back from him. But if you find him, just be good enough to ask him from me where I shall find my gold keys which I have lost.’

‘Yes! I’ll be sure to ask him’, said the lad.

Well! when he left the palace he came to a great broad river; and while he stood there and wondered whether he should cross it, or go down along the bank, an old hunchbacked man came up, and asked whither he was going?

‘Oh, I’m going to the Dragon of Deepferry, if I could only find any one to tell where I can find him.’

‘I can tell you that’, said the man; ‘for here I go backwards and forwards, and carry those over who are going to see him. He lives just across, and when you climb the hill you’ll see his castle; but mind, if you come to talk with him, to ask him from me how long I’m to stop here and carry folk over.’

‘I’ll be sure to ask him’, said the lad.

So the man took him on his back and carried him over the river; and when he climbed the hill, he saw the castle, and went in.

He found there a Princess who lived with the Dragon all alone; and she said:

‘But, dear friend, how can Christian folk dare to come hither? None have been here since I came, and you’d best be off as fast as you can; for as soon as the Dragon comes home, he’ll smell you out, and gobble you up in a trice, and that’ll make me so unhappy.’

‘Nay! nay!’ said the lad; ‘I can’t go before I’ve got three feathers out of his tail.’

‘You’ll never get them’, said, the Princess; ‘you’d best be off.’

But the lad wouldn’t go; he would wait for the Dragon, and get the feathers, and an answer to all his questions.

‘Well, since you’re so steadfast I’ll see what I can do to help you’, said the Princess; ‘just try to lift that sword that hangs on the wall yonder.’

No; the lad could not even stir it.

‘I thought so’, said the Princess; ‘but just take a drink out of this flask.’

So when the lad had sat a while, he was to try again; and then he could just stir it.

‘Well! you must take another drink’, said the Princess, ‘and then you may as well tell me your errand hither.’

So he took another drink, and then he told her how one king had begged him to ask the Dragon, how it was he couldn’t get clean water in his well? — how another had bidden him ask, what had become of his daughter, who had been lost many years since? — and how a queen had begged him to ask the Dragon what had become of her gold keys? — and, last of all, how the ferryman had begged him to ask the Dragon, how long he was to stop there and carry folk over?? When he had done his story, and took hold of the sword, he could lift it; and when he had taken another drink, he could brandish it.

‘Now’, said the Princess, ‘if you don’t want the Dragon to make an end of you, you’d best creep under the bed, for night is drawing on, and he’ll soon be home, and then you must lie as still as you can, lest he should find you out. And when we have gone to bed, I’ll ask him, but you must keep your ears open, and snap up all that he says; and under the bed you must lie till all is still, and the Dragon falls asleep; then creep out softly and seize the sword, and as soon as he rises, look out to hew off his head at one stroke, and at the same time pluck out the three feathers, for else he’ll tear them out himself, that no one may get any good by them.’

So the lad crept under the bed, and the Dragon came home.

‘What a smell of Christian flesh’, said the Dragon.

‘Oh, yes’, said the Princess, ‘a raven came flying with a man’s bone in his bill, and perched on the roof. No doubt it’s that you smell.’

‘So it is, I daresay’, said the Dragon.

So the Princess served supper; and after they had eaten, they went to bed. But after they had lain a while, the Princess began to toss about, and all at once she started up and said:

‘Ah! ah!’

‘What’s the matter?’ said the Dragon.

‘Oh’, said the Princess, ‘I can’t rest at all, and I’ve had such a strange dream.’

‘What did you dream about? Let’s hear?’ said the Dragon.

‘I thought a king came here, and asked you what he must do to get clear water in his well.’

‘Oh’, said the Dragon, ‘he might just as well have found that out for himself. If he dug the well out, and took out the old rotten stump which lies at the bottom, he’d get clean water, fast enough. But be still now, and don’t dream any more.’

When the Princess had lain a while, she began to toss about, and at last she started up with her

‘Ah! ah!’

‘What’s the matter now?’ said the Dragon.

‘Oh! I can’t get any rest at all, and I’ve had such a strange dream’, said the Princess.

‘Why, you seem full of dreams to-night’, said the Dragon what was your dream now?’

‘I thought a king came here, and asked you what had become of his daughter who had been lost many years since’, said the Princess.

‘Why, you are she’, said the Dragon; ‘but he’ll never set eyes on you again. But now, do pray be still, and let me get some rest, and don’t let’s have any more dreams, else I'll break your ribs.'

Well, the Princess hadn't lain much longer before she began to toss about again. At last she started up with her

'Ah! ah!'

'What! Are you at it again?' said the Dragon. 'What's the matter now?' for he was wild and sleep-surly, so that he was ready to fly to pieces.

'Oh, don't be angry', said the Princess; 'but I've had such a strange dream.'

'The deuce take your dreams', roared the Dragon; 'what did you dream this time?'

I thought a queen came here, who asked you to tell her where she would find her gold keys, which she has lost.'

'Oh', said the Dragon, 'she'll find them soon enough if she looks among the bushes where she lay that time she wots of. But do now let me have no more dreams, but sleep in peace.'

So they slept a while; but then the Princess was just as restless as ever, and at last she screamed out:

'Ah! ah!'

'You'll never behave till I break your neck', said the Dragon, who was now so wroth that sparks of fire flew out of his eyes. 'What's the matter now?'

'Oh, don't be so angry', said the Princess; 'I can't bear that; but I've had such a strange dream.'

'Bless me!' said the Dragon, 'if I ever heard the like of these dreams — there's no end to them. And pray, what did you dream now?'

'I thought the ferryman down at the ferry came and asked how long he was to stop there and carry folk over', said the Princess.

'The dull fool!' said the Dragon; 'he'd soon be free, if he chose. When any one comes who wants to go across, he has only to take and throw him into the river, and say, "Now, carry folk over yourself till someone sets you free.” But now, pray let’s have an end of these dreams, else I’ll lead you a pretty dance.’

So the Princess let him sleep on. But as soon as all was still, and the miller’s lad heard that the Dragon snored, he crept out. Before it was light the Dragon rose; but he had scarce set both his feet on the floor before the lad cut off his head, and plucked three feathers out of his tail. Then came great joy, and both the lad and the Princess took as much gold, and silver, and money, and precious things as they could carry; and when they came down to the ford, they so puzzled the ferryman with all they had to tell, that he quite forgot to ask what the Dragon had said about him till they had got across.

‘Halloa, you sir’, he said, as they were going off, ‘did you ask the Dragon what I begged you to ask?’

‘Yes I did’, said the lad, ‘and he said, “When any one comes and wants to go over, you must throw him into the midst of the river, and say, ‘Now, carry folk over yourself till some one comes to set you free,’“ and then you’ll be free.’

‘Ah, bad luck to you’, said the ferryman; ‘had you told me that before, you might have set me free yourself.’

So, when they got to the first palace, the Queen asked if he had spoken to the Dragon about her gold keys? ‘Yes’, said the lad, and whispered in the Queen’s ear, ‘he said you must look among the bushes where you lay the day you wot of.’

‘Hush! hush! Don’t say a word’, said the Queen, and gave the lad a hundred dollars.

When they came to the second palace, the King asked if he had spoken to the Dragon of what he begged him?

‘Yes’, said the lad, ‘I did; and see, here is your daughter.’

At that the King was so glad, he would gladly have given the Princess to the miller’s lad to wife, and half the kingdom beside; but as he was married already, he gave him two hundred dollars, and coaches and horses, and as much gold and silver as he could carry away.

When he came to the third King’s palace, out came the King and asked if he had asked the Dragon of what he begged him?

‘Yes’, said the lad, ‘and he said you must dig out the well, and take out the rotten old stump which lies at the bottom, and then you’ll get plenty of clear water.’

Then the King gave him three hundred dollars, and he set out home; but he was so loaded with gold and silver, and so grandly clothed, that it gleamed and glistened from him, and he was now far richer than Peter the Pedlar.

When Peter got the feathers he hadn’t a word more to say against the wedding; but when he saw all that wealth, he asked if there was much still left at the Dragon’s castle.

‘Yes, I should think so’, said the lad; ‘there was much more than I could carry with me — so much, that you might load many horses with it; and if you choose to go, you may be sure there’ll be enough for you.’

So his son-in-law told him the way so clearly, that he hadn’t to ask it of any one.

‘But the horses’, said the lad ‘you’d best leave this side the river; for the old ferryman, he’ll carry you over safe enough.’

So Peter set off, and took with him great store of food and many horses; but these he left behind him on the river’s brink, as the lad had said. And the old ferryman took him upon his back; but when they had come a bit out into the stream, he cast him into the midst of the river, and said,

‘Now you may go backwards and forwards here, and carry folk over till you are set free.’

And unless some one has set him free, there goes Rich Peter the Pedlar backwards and forwards, and carries folk across this very day.

50

GERTRUDE’S BIRD

In those days when our Lord and St Peter wandered upon earth, they came once to an old wife’s house, who sat baking. Her name was Gertrude, and she had a red mutch on her head. They had walked a long way, and were both hungry, and our Lord begged hard for a bannock to stay their hunger. Yes, they should have it. So she took a little tiny piece of dough and rolled it out, but as she rolled it, it grew and grew till it covered the whole griddle.

Nay, that was too big; they couldn’t have that. So she took a tinier bit still; but when that was rolled out, it covered the whole griddle just the same, and that bannock was too big, she said; they couldn’t have that either.

The third time she took a still tinier bit — so tiny you could scarce see it; but it was the same story over again — the bannock was too big.

‘Well’, said Gertrude, ‘I can’t give you anything; you must just go without, for all these bannocks are too big.’

Then our Lord waxed wroth, and said:

‘Since you loved me so little as to grudge me a morsel of food, you shall have this punishment: you shall become a bird, and seek your food between bark and bole; and never get a drop to drink save when it rains.’

He had scarce said the last word before she was turned into a great black woodpecker, or Gertrude’s bird, and flew from her kneading-trough right up the chimney; and till this very day you may see her flying about, with her red mutch on her head, and her body all black, because of the soot in the chimney; and so she hacks and taps away at the trees for her food, and whistles when rain is coming, for she is ever athirst, and then she looks for a drop to cool her tongue.

51

BOOTS AND THE TROLL

Once on a time there was a poor man who had three sons. When he died, the two elder set off into the world to try their luck, but the youngest they wouldn’t have with them at any price.

‘As for you’, they said, ‘you’re fit for nothing but to sit and poke about in the ashes.’

So the two went off and got places at a palace — the one under the coachman, and the other under the gardener. But Boots, he set off too, and took with him a great kneading-trough, which was the only thing his parents left behind them, but which the other two would not bother themselves with. It was heavy to carry, but he did not like to leave it behind, and so, after he had trudged a bit, he too came to the palace, and asked for a place. So they told him they did not want him, but he begged so prettily that at last he got leave to be in the kitchen, and carry in wood and water for the kitchen maid. He was quick and ready, and in a little while every one liked him; but the two others were dull, and so they got more kicks than halfpence, and grew quite envious of Boots, when they saw how much better he got on.

Just opposite the palace, across a lake, lived a Troll, who had seven silver ducks which swam on the lake, so that they could be seen from the palace. These the king had often longed for; and so the two elder brothers told the coachman:

‘If our brother only chose, he has said he could easily get the king those seven silver ducks.’

You may fancy it wasn’t long before the coachman told this to the king; and the king called Boots before him, and said:

‘Your brothers say you can get me the silver ducks; so now go and fetch them.’

‘I’m sure I never thought or said anything of the kind,’ said the lad.

‘You did say so, and you shall fetch them’, said the king, who would hold his own.

‘Well! well!’ said the lad; ‘needs must, I suppose; but give me a bushel of rye, and a bushel of wheat, and I’ll try what I can do.’

So he got the rye and the wheat, and put them into the kneading-trough he had brought with him from home, got in, and rowed across the lake. When he reached the other side he began to walk along the shore, and to sprinkle and strew the grain, and at last he coaxed the ducks into his kneading-trough, and rowed back as fast as ever he could.

When he got half over, the Troll came out of his house, and set eyes on him.

‘HALLOA!’ roared out the Troll; ‘is it you that has gone off with my seven silver ducks.’

‘AYE! AYE!’ said the lad.

‘Shall you be back soon?’ asked the Troll.

‘Very likely’, said the lad.

So when he got back to the king, with the seven silver ducks, he was more liked than ever, and even the king was pleased to say, ‘Well done!’ But at this his brothers grew more and more spiteful and envious; and so they went and told the coachman that their brother had said, if he chose, he was man enough to get the king the Troll’s bed-quilt, which had a gold patch and a silver patch, and a silver patch and a gold patch; and this time, too, the coachman was not slow in telling all this to the king. So the king said to the lad, how his brothers had said he was good to steal the Troll's bed-quilt, with gold and silver patches; so now he must go and do it, or lose his life.

Boots answered, he had never thought or said any such thing; but when he found there was no help for it, he begged for three days to think over the matter.

So when the three days were gone, he rowed over in his kneading-trough, and went spying about. At last he saw those in the Troll's cave come out and hang the quilt out to air, and as soon as ever they had gone back into the face of the rock, Boots pulled the quilt down, and rowed away with it as fast as he could.

And when he was half across, out came the Troll and set eyes on him, and roared out:

'HALLOA! Is it you who took my seven silver ducks?'

'AYE! AYE!' said the lad.

'And now, have you taken my bed-quilt, with silver patches and gold patches, and gold patches and silver patches?'

'Aye! aye!' said the lad.

'Shall you come back again?'

'Very likely', said the lad.

But when he got back with the gold and silver patchwork quilt, every one was fonder of him than ever, and he was made the king's body-servant.

At this, the other two were still more vexed, and, to be revenged, they went and told the coachman:

'Now, our brother has said, he is man enough to get the king the gold harp which the Troll has, and that harp is of such a kind, that all who listen when it is played grow glad, however sad they may be.'

Yes! the coachman went and told the king, and he said to the lad:

‘If you have said this, you shall do it. If you do it, you shall have the Princess and half the kingdom. If you don’t, you shall lose your life.’

‘I’m sure I never thought or said anything of the kind’, said the lad; ‘but if there’s no help for it, I may as well try; but I must have six days to think about it.’

Yes! he might have six days, but when they were over, he must set out.

Then he took a tenpenny nail, a birch-pin, and a waxen taper-end in his pocket, and rowed across, and walked up and down before the Troll’s cave, looking stealthily about him. So when the Troll came out, he saw him at once.

‘HO, HO!’ roared the Troll; ‘is it you who took my seven silver ducks?’

‘AYE! AYE!’ said the lad.

‘And it is you who took my bed-quilt, with the gold and silver patches?’ asked the Troll.

‘Aye! aye!’ said the lad.

So the Troll caught hold of him at once, and took him off into the cave in the face of the rock.

‘Now, daughter dear’, said the Troll, ‘I’ve caught the fellow who stole the silver ducks and my bed-quilt, with gold and silver patches; put him into the fattening coop, and when he’s fat, we’ll kill him, and make a feast for our friends.’

She was willing enough, and put him at once into the fattening coop, and there he stayed eight days, fed on the best, both in meat and drink, and as much as he could cram. So, when the eight days were over, the Troll said to his daughter to go down and cut him in his little finger, that they might see if he were fat. Down she came to the coop.

‘Out with your little finger!’ she said.

But Boots stuck out his tenpenny nail, and she cut at it.

‘Nay! nay! he’s as hard as iron still’, said the Troll’s daughter, when she got back to her father; ‘we can’t take him yet.’

After another eight days the same thing happened, and this time Boots stuck out his birchen pin.

‘Well, he’s a little better’, she said, when she got back to the Troll; ‘but still he’ll be as hard as wood to chew.’

But when another eight days were gone, the Troll told his daughter to go down and see if he wasn’t fat now.

‘Out with your little finger’, said the Troll’s daughter, when she reached the coop, and this time Boots stuck out the taper end.

‘Now he’ll do nicely’, she said.

‘Will he?’ said the Troll. ‘Well, then, I’ll just set off and ask the guests; meantime you must kill him, and roast half and boil half.’

So when the Troll had been gone a little while, the daughter began to sharpen a great long knife.

‘Is that what you’re going to kill me with?’ asked the lad.

‘Yes it is,’ said she.

‘But it isn’t sharp’, said the lad. ‘Just let me sharpen it for you, and then you’ll find it easier work to kill me.’

So she let him have the knife, and he began to rub and sharpen it on the whetstone.

‘Just let me try it on one of your hair plaits; I think it’s about right now.’

So he got leave to do that; but at the same time that he grasped the plait of hair, he pulled back her head, and at one gash, cut off the Troll’s daughter’s head; and half of her he roasted and half of her he boiled, and served it all up.

After that he dressed himself in her clothes, and sat away in the corner.

So when the Troll came home with his guests, he called out to his daughter — for he thought all the time it was his daughter — to come and take a snack.

‘No, thank you’, said the lad, ‘I don’t care for food, I’m so sad and downcast.’

‘Oh!’ said the Troll, ‘if that’s all, you know the cure; take the harp, and play a tune on it.’

‘Yes!’ said the lad; ‘but where has it got to; I can’t find it.’

‘Why, you know well enough’, said the Troll; ‘you used it last; where should it be but over the door yonder?

The lad did not wait to be told twice; he took down the harp, and went in and out playing tunes; but, all at once he shoved off the kneading-trough, jumped into it, and rowed off, so that the foam flew around the trough.

After a while the Troll thought his daughter was a long while gone, and went out to see what ailed her; and then he saw the lad in the trough, far, far out on the lake.

‘HALLOA! Is it you’, he roared, ‘that took my seven silver ducks?’

‘AYE, AYE!’ said the lad.

‘Is it you that took my bed-quilt, with the gold and silver patches.’

‘Yes!’ said the lad.

‘And now you have taken off my gold harp?’ screamed the Troll.

‘Yes!’ said the lad; ‘I’ve got it, sure enough.’

‘And haven’t I eaten you up after all, then?’

‘No, no! ‘twas your own daughter you ate’, answered the lad.

But when the Troll heard that, he was so sorry, he burst; and then Boots rowed back, and took a whole heap of gold and silver with him, as much as the trough could carry. And so, when he came to the palace with the gold harp, he got the Princess and half the kingdom, as the king had promised him; and, as for his brothers, he treated them well, for he thought they had only wished his good when they said what they had said.

52

GOOSEY GRIZZEL

Once on a time there was a widower, who had a housekeeper named Grizzel, who set her mutch at him and teazed him early and late to marry her. At last the man got so weary of her, he was at his wits' end to know how to get rid of her. So it fell on a day, between hay time and harvest, the two went out to pull hemp. Grizzel's head was full of her good looks and her handiness, and she worked away at the hemp till she grew giddy from the strong smell of the ripe seed, and at last down she fell flat, fast asleep among the hemp. While she slept, her master got a pair of scissors and cut her skirts short all round, and then he rubbed her all over, face and all, first with tallow and then with soot, till she looked worse than the Deil himself. So, when Grizzel woke and saw how ugly she was, she didn't know herself.

'Can this be me now?' said Grizzel. 'Nay, nay! it can never be me. So ugly have I never been; it's surely the Deil himself?'

Well! that she might really know the truth, she went off and knocked at her master's door, and asked,

'Is your Girzie at home the day, father?'

'Aye, aye, our Girzie is at home safe enough', said the man, who wanted to be rid of her.

‘Well, well!’ she said to herself, ‘then I can’t be his Grizzel,’ and stole away; and right glad the man was, I can tell you.

So, when she had walked a bit she came to a great wood, where she met two thieves. ‘The very men for my money, thought Grizzel, ‘since I am the Deil, thieves are just fit fellows for me.’

But the thieves were not of the same mind, not they. As soon as they set eyes on her, they took to their heels as fast as they could, for they thought the Evil One was come to catch them. But it was no good, for Grizzel was long-legged and swift-footed, and she came up with them before they knew where they were.

‘If you’re going out to steal, I’ll go with you and help,’ said Grizzel, ‘for I know the whole country round.’ So, when the thieves heard that, they thought they had found a good mate, and were no longer afraid.

Then they said they were off to steal a sheep, only they didn’t know where to lay hold of one.

‘Oh!’ said Grizzel, ‘that’s a small matter, for I was maid with a farmer ever so long out in the wood yonder, and I could find the sheepfold, though the night were dark as pitch.’

The thieves thought that grand; and when they came to the place, Grizzel was to go into the fold and turn out the sheep, and they were to lay hold on it. Now, the sheepfold lay close to the wall of the room where the farmer slept, so Grizzel crept quite softly and carefully into the fold; but, as soon as she got in, she began to scream out to the thieves, ‘Will you have a wether or a ewe? here are lots to choose from.’

‘Hush, hush!’ said the thieves, ‘only take one that is fine and fat.’

‘Yes, yes! but will you have a wether or a ewe? will you have a wether or a ewe? for here are lots to choose from,’ screeched Grizzel.

‘Hush, hush!’ said the thieves again, ‘only take one that’s fine and fat; it’s all the same to us whether it’s a wether or a ewe.’

‘Yes!’ screeched Grizzel, who stuck to her own; ‘but will you have a wether or a ewe — a wether or a ewe? here are lots to choose from.’

‘Hold your jaw!’ said the thieves, ‘and take a fine fat one, wether or ewe, its all one to us.’

But just then out came the farmer in his shirt, who had been waked by all this clatter, and wanted to see what was going on. So the thieves took to their heels, and Grizzel after them, upsetting the farmer in her flight.

‘Stop, boys! stop, boys!’ she screamed; but the farmer, who had only seen the black monster, grew so afraid that he could scarce stand, for he thought it was the Deil himself that had been in his sheepfold. The only help he knew was, to go indoors and wake up the whole house; and they all sat down to read and pray, for he had heard that was the way to send the Deil about his business.

Now the next night the thieves said they must go and steal a fat goose, and Grizzel was to shew them the way. So when they came to the goosepen, Grizzel was to go in and turn one out, for she knew the ways of the place, and the thieves were to stand outside and catch it. But as soon as ever she got in she began to scream,

‘Will you have goose or gander? you may pick and choose here.’

‘Hush hush! choose only a fine fat one’, said the thieves. ‘Yes, yes! but will you have goose or gander — goose or gander? you may pick and choose’, screamed Grizzel.

‘Hush, hush! only choose one that’s fine and fat, and it’s all one to us whether it’s goose or gander; but do hold your jaw’, said they.

But while Grizzel and the thieves were settling this, one of the geese began to cackle, and then another cackled, and then the whole flock cackled and hissed, and out came the farmer to see what all the noise could mean, and away went the thieves, and Grizzel after them, at full speed, and the farmer thought again it was the black Deil flying away; for long-legged she was, and she had no skirts to hamper her.

‘Stop a bit, boys!’ she kept on screaming, ‘you might as well have said whether you would have goose or gander?’

But they had no time to stop, they thought; and, as for the farmer, he began to read and pray with all his house, small and great, for they thought it was the Deil, and no mistake.

Now, the third day, when night came, the thieves and Grizzel were so hungry they did not know what to do; so they made up their minds to go to the larder of a rich farmer, who lived by the wood’s side, and steal some food. Well, off they went, but the thieves did not dare to venture themselves, so Grizzel was to go up the steps which led to the larder, and hand the food out, and the others were to stand below and take it from her. So when Grizzel got inside, she saw the larder was full of all sorts of things, fresh meat and salt, and sausages and oat-cake. The thieves begged her to be still, and just throw out something to eat, and to bear in mind how badly they had fated for two nights. But Grizzel stuck to her own, that she did.

‘Will you have fresh meat, or salt, or sausages, or oat-cake? Just look, what a lovely oat-cake’, she bawled out enough to split your head. ‘You may have what you please, for here’s plenty to choose from.’

But the farmer woke with all this noise, and ran out to see what it all meant. As for the thieves, off they ran as fast as they could; but while the farmer was looking after them, down came Grizzel so black and ugly.

‘Stop a bit! stop a bit, boys!’ she bellowed; ‘you may have what you please, for there’s plenty to choose from.’

And when the farmer saw that ugly monster, he, too, thought the Deil was loose, for he had heard what had happened to his neighbours the evenings before; so he began both to read and pray, and every one in the whole parish began to read and pray, for they knew that you could read the Deil away.

The next evening was Saturday evening, and the thieves wanted to steal a fat ram for their Sunday dinner; and well they might, for they had fasted many days. But they wouldn't have Grizzel with them at any price. She brought bad luck with her jaw, they said; so while Grizzel was walking about waiting for them on Sunday morning, she got so awfully hungry — for she had fasted for three days — that she went into a turnip-field and pulled up some turnips to eat. But when the farmer who owned the turnips rose, he felt uneasy in his mind, and thought he would just go and take a look at his turnips on the Sunday morning. So he pulled on his trousers and went across the moss which lay under the hill, where the turnip-field lay. But when he got to the bottom of the field, he saw something black walking about in the field and pulling up his turnips, and he soon made up his mind that it was the Deil. So away he ran home as fast as he could, and said the Deil was among the turnips. This frightened the whole house out of their wits, and they agreed they'd best send for the priest, and get him to bind the Deil.

'That won't do', said the goodwife, 'this is Sunday morning, you'll never get the priest to come; for either he'll be in bed; or if he's up, he'll be learning his sermon by heart.'

'Oh!' said the goodman, 'never fear; I'll promise him a fat loin of veal, and then he'll come fast enough.'

So off he went to the priest's house; but when he got there, sure enough, the priest was still in bed. The maid begged the farmer to walk into the parlour while she ran up to the priest, and said:

'Farmer So-and-So was downstairs, and wished to have a word with him.'

Well! when the priest heard that such a worthy man was downstairs, he got up at once, and came down just as he was, in his slippers and nightcap.

So the goodman told his errand; how the Deil was loose in his turnip-field; and if the priest would only come and bind him, he would send him a fat loin of veal. Yes! the priest was willing enough, and called out to his groom, to saddle his horse, while he dressed himself.

‘Nay, nay, father!’ said the man; ‘the Deil won’t wait for us long, and no one knows where we shall find him again if we miss him now. Your reverence must come at once, just as you are.’

So the priest followed him just as he was, with the clothes he stood in, and went off in his nightcap and slippers. But when they got to the moss, it was so moist the priest couldn’t cross it in his slippers. So the goodman took him on his back to carry him over. On they went, the goodman picking his way from one clump to the other, till they got to the middle; then Grizzel caught sight of them, and thought it was the thieves bringing the ram.

‘Is he fat?’ she screamed; ‘is he fat?’ and made such a noise that the wood rang again.

‘The Deil knows if he’s fat or lean; I’m sure I don’t’, said the goodman, when he heard that; ‘but, if you want to know, you had better come yourself and see.’

And then he got so afraid, he threw the priest head over heels into the soft wet moss, and took to his legs; and if the priest hasn’t got out, why I dare say he’s lying there still.

53

THE MASTER THIEF

Once upon a time there was a poor cottager who had three sons. He had nothing to leave them when he died, and no money with which to put them to any trade, so that he did not know what to make of them. At last he said he would give them leave to take to anything each liked best, and to go whithersoever they pleased, and he would go with them a bit of the way; and so he did. He went with them till they came to a place where three roads met, and there each of them chose a road, and their father bade them good-bye, and went back home. I have never heard tell what became of the two elder; but as for the youngest, he went both far and long, as you shall hear.

So it fell out one night as he was going through a great wood that such bad weather overtook him. It blew, and sleeted, and drove so that he could scarce keep his eyes open; and in a trice, before he knew how it was, he got bewildered, and could not find either road or path. But as he went on and on, at last he saw a glimmering of light far far off in the wood. So he thought he would try and get to the light; and after a time he did reach it. There it was in a large house, and the fire was blazing so brightly inside, that he could tell the folk had not yet gone to bed; so he went in and saw an old dame bustling about and minding the house.

‘Good evening!’ said the youth.

‘Good evening!’ said the old dame.

‘Hutetu! it’s such foul weather out of doors to-night’, said he.

‘So it is’, said she.

‘Can I get leave to have a bed and shelter here to-night?’ asked the youth.

‘You’ll get no good by sleeping here’, said the old dame; ‘for if the folk come home and find you here, they’ll kill both me and you.’

‘What sort of folk, then, are they who live here?’ asked the youth.

‘Oh, robbers! And a bad lot of them too’, said the old dame. ‘They stole me away when I was little, and have kept me as their housekeeper ever since.’

‘Well, for all that, I think I’ll just go to bed’, said the youth. ‘Come what may, I’ll not stir out at night in such weather.’

‘Very well’, said the old dame; ‘but if you stay, it will be the worse for you.’

With that the youth got into a bed which stood there, but he dared not go to sleep, and very soon after in came the robbers; so the old dame told them how a stranger fellow had come in whom she had not been able to get out of the house again.

‘Did you see if he had any money?’ said the robbers.

‘Such a one as he money!’ said the old dame, ‘the tramper! Why, if he had clothes to his back, it was as much as he had.’

Then the robbers began to talk among themselves what they should do with him; if they should kill him outright, or what else they should do. Meantime the youth got up and began to talk to them, and to ask if they didn’t want a servant, for it might be that he would be glad to enter their service.

‘Oh’, said they, ‘if you have a mind to follow the trade that we follow, you can very well get a place here.’

‘It’s all one to me what trade I follow’, said the youth; ‘for when I left home, father gave me leave to take to any trade I chose.’

‘Well, have you a mind to steal?’ asked the robbers.

‘I don’t care’, said the youth, for he thought it would not take long to learn that trade.

Now there lived a man a little way off who had three oxen. One of these he was to take to the town to sell, and the robbers had heard what he was going to do, so they said to the youth, if he were good to steal the ox from the man by the way without his knowing it, and without doing him any harm, they would give him leave to be their serving-man.

Well! the youth set off, and took with him a pretty shoe, with a silver buckle on it, which lay about the house; and he put the shoe in the road along which the man was going with his ox; and when he had done that, he went into the wood and hid himself under a bush. So when the man came by he saw the shoe at once.

‘That’s a nice shoe’, said he. ‘If I only had the fellow to it, I’d take it home with me, and perhaps I’d put my old dame in a good humour for once.’ For you must know he had an old wife, so cross and snappish, it was not long between each time that she boxed his ears. But then he bethought him that he could do nothing with the odd shoe unless he had the fellow to it; so he went on his way and let the shoe lie on the road.

Then the youth took up the shoe, and made all the haste he could to get before the man by a short cut through the wood, and laid it down before him in the road again. When the man came along with his ox, he got quite angry with himself for being so dull as to leave the fellow to the shoe lying in the road instead of taking it with him; so he tied the ox to the fence, and said to himself, ‘I may just as well run back and pick up the other, and then I’ll have a pair of good shoes for my old dame, and so, perhaps, I’ll get a kind word from her for once.’

So he set off, and hunted and hunted up and down for the shoe, but no shoe did he find; and at length he had to go back with the one he had. But, meanwhile the youth had taken the ox and gone off with it; and when the man came and saw his ox gone, he began to cry and bewail, for he was afraid his old dame would kill him outright when she came to know that the ox was lost. But just then it came across his mind that he would go home and take the second ox, and drive it to the town, and not let his old dame know anything about the matter. So he did this, and went home and took the ox without his dame's knowing it, and set off with it to the town. But the robbers knew all about it, and they said to the youth, if he could get this ox too, without the man's knowing it, and without his doing him any harm, he should be as good as any one of them. If that were all, the youth said, he did not think it a very hard thing.

This time he took with him a rope, and hung himself up under the armpits to a tree right in the man's way. So the man came along with his ox, and when he saw such a sight hanging there he began to feel a little queer.

'Well', said he, 'whatever heavy thoughts you had who have hanged yourself up there, it can't be helped; you may hang for what I care! I can't breathe life into you again'; and with that he went on his way with his ox. Down slipped the youth from the tree, and ran by a footpath, and got before the man, and hung himself up right in his way again.

'Bless me!' said the man, 'were you really so heavy at heart that you hanged yourself up there — or is it only a piece of witchcraft that I see before me? Aye, aye! you may hang for all I care, whether you are a ghost or whatever you are.' So he passed on with his ox.

Now the youth did just as he had done twice before; he jumped down from the tree, ran through the wood by a footpath, and hung himself up right in the man's way again. But when the man saw this sight for the third time, he said to himself:

‘Well! this is an ugly business! Is it likely now that they should have been so heavy at heart as to hang themselves, all these three? No! I cannot think it is anything else than a piece of witchcraft that I see. But now I’ll soon know for certain; if the other two are still hanging there, it must be really so; but if they are not, then it can be nothing but witchcraft that I see.’

So he tied up his ox, and ran back to see if the others were still really hanging there. But while he went and peered up into all the trees, the youth jumped down and took his ox and ran off with it. When the man came back and found his ox gone, he was in a sad plight, and, as any one might know without being told, he began to cry and bemoan; but at last he came to take it easier, and so he thought:

‘There’s no other help for it than to go home and take the third ox without my dame’s knowing it, and to try and drive a good bargain with it, so that I may get a good sum of money for it.’

So he went home and set off with the ox, and his old dame knew never a word about the matter. But the robbers, they knew all about it, and they said to the youth, that if he could steal this ox as he had stolen the other two, then he should be master over the whole band. Well, the youth set off, and ran into the wood; and as the man came by with his ox he set up a dreadful bellowing, just like a great ox in the wood. When the man heard that, you can’t think how glad he was, for it seemed to him that he knew the voice of his big bullock, and he thought that now he should find both of them again; so he tied up the third ox, and ran off from the road to look for them in the wood; but meantime the youth went off with the third ox. Now, when the man came back and found he had lost this ox too, he was so wild that there was no end to his grief. He cried and roared and beat his breast, and, to tell the truth, it was many days before he dared go home; for he was afraid lest his old dame should kill him outright on the spot.

As for the robbers, they were not very well pleased either, when they had to own that the youth was master over the whole band. So one day they thought they would try their hands at something which he was not man enough to do; and they set off all together, every man Jack of them, and left him alone at home. Now, the first thing that he did when they were all well clear of the house, was to drive the oxen out to the road, so that they might run back to the man from whom he had stolen them; and right glad he was to see them, as you may fancy. Next he took all the horses which the robbers had, and loaded them with the best things he could lay his hands on-gold and silver, and clothes and other fine things; and then he bade the old dame to greet the robbers when they came back, and to thank them for him, and to say that now he was setting off on his travels, and they would have hard work to find him again; and with that, off he started.

After a good bit he came to the road along which he was going when he fell among the robbers, and when he got near home, and could see his father's cottage, he put on a uniform which he had found among the clothes he had taken from the robbers, and which was made just like a general's. So he drove up to the door as if he were any other great man. After that he went in and asked if he could have a lodging? No; that he couldn't at any price.

'How ever should I be able', said the man, 'to make room in my house for such a fine gentleman — I who scarce have a rag to lie upon, and miserable rags too?'

'You always were a stingy old hunks', said the youth, 'and so you are still, when you won't take your own son in.'

'What, you my son!' said the man.

'Don't you know me again?' said the youth. Well, after a little while he did know him again.

'But what have you been turning your hand to, that you have made yourself so great a man in such haste?' asked the man.

'Oh! I'll soon tell you', said the youth. 'You said I might take to any trade I chose, and so I bound myself apprentice to a pack of thieves and robbers, and now I’ve served my time out, and am become a Master Thief.’

Now there lived a Squire close by to his father’s cottage, and he had such a great house, and such heaps of money, he could not tell how much he had. He had a daughter too, and a smart and pretty girl she was. So the Master Thief set his heart upon having her to wife, and he told his father to go to the Squire and ask for his daughter for him.

‘If he asks by what trade I get my living, you can say I’m a Master Thief.’

‘I think you’ve lost your wits’, said the man, ‘for you can’t be in your right mind when you think of such stuff.’

No! he had not lost his wits, his father must and should go to the Squire, and ask for his daughter.

‘Nay, but I tell you, I daren’t go to the Squire and be your spokesman; he who is so rich, and has so much money’, said the man.

Yes, there was no help for it, said the Master Thief; he should go whether he would or no; and if he did not go by fair means, he would soon make him go by foul. But the man was still loath to go; so he stepped after him, and rubbed him down with a good birch cudgel, and kept on till the man came crying and sobbing inside the Squire’s door.

‘How now, my man! what ails you?’ said the Squire. So he told him the whole story; how he had three sons who set off one day, and how he had given them leave to go whithersoever they would, and to follow whatever calling they chose. ‘And here now is the youngest come home, and has thrashed me till he has made me come to you and ask for your daughter for him to wife; and he bids me say, besides, that he’s a Master Thief.’ And so he fell to crying and sobbing again.

‘Never mind, my man’, said the Squire, laughing; ‘just go back and tell him from me, he must prove his skill first. If he can steal the roast from the spit in the kitchen on Sunday, while all the household are looking after it, he shall have my daughter. Just go and tell him that.’

So he went back and told the youth, who thought it would be an easy job. So he set about and caught three hares alive, and put them into a bag, and dressed himself in some old rags, until he looked so poor and filthy that it made one's heart bleed to see; and then he stole into the passage at the back-door of the Squire's house on the Sunday forenoon, with his bag, just like any other beggar-boy. But the Squire himself and all his household were in the kitchen watching the roast. Just as they were doing this, the youth let one hare go, and it set off and ran round and round the yard in front of the house.

'Oh, just look at that hare!' said the folk in the kitchen, and were all for running out to catch it.

Yes, the Squire saw it running too. 'Oh, let it run', said he; 'there's no use in thinking to catch a hare on the spring.'

A little while after, the youth let the second hare go, and they saw it in the kitchen, and thought it was the same they had seen before, and still wanted to run out and catch it; but the Squire said again it was no use. It was not long before the youth let the third hare go, and it set off and ran round and round the yard as the others before it. Now, they saw it from the kitchen, and still thought it was the same hare that kept on running about, and were all eager to be out after it.

'Well, it is a fine hare', said the Squire; 'come let's see if we can't lay our hands on it.'

So out he ran, and the rest with him — away they all went, the hare before, and they after; so that it was rare fun to see. But meantime the youth took the roast and ran off with it; and where the Squire got a roast for his dinner that day I don't know; but one thing I know, and that is, that he had no roast hare, though he ran after it till he was both warm and weary.

Now it chanced that the Priest came to dinner that day, and when the Squire told him what a trick the Master Thief had played him, he made such game of him that there was no end of it.

‘For my part’, said the Priest, ‘I can’t think how it could ever happen to me to be made such a fool of by a fellow like that.’

‘Very well — only keep a sharp look-out’, said the Squire; ‘maybe he’ll come to see you before you know a word of it.’ But the Priest stuck to his text — that he did, and made game of the Squire because he had been so taken in.

Later in the afternoon came the Master Thief, and wanted to have the Squire’s daughter, as he had given his word. But the Squire began to talk him over, and said, ‘Oh, you must first prove your skill a little more; for what you did to-day was no great thing, after all. Couldn’t you now play off a good trick on the Priest, who is sitting in there, and making game of me for letting such a fellow as you twist me round his thumb.’

‘Well, as for that, it wouldn’t be hard’, said the Master Thief. So he dressed himself up like a bird, threw a great white sheet over his body, took the wings of a goose and tied them to his back, and so climbed up into a great maple which stood in the Priest’s garden. And when the Priest came home in the evening, the youth began to bawl out:

‘Father Laurence! Father Laurence!’ — for that was the Priest’s name.

‘Who is that calling me?’ said the Priest.

‘I am an angel’, said the Master Thief, ‘sent from God to let you know that you shall be taken up alive into heaven for your piety’s sake. Next Monday night you must hold yourself ready for the journey, for I shall come then to fetch you in a sack; and all your gold and your silver, and all that you have of this world’s goods, you must lay together in a heap in your dining-room.’

Well, Father Laurence fell on his knees before the angel, and thanked him; and the very next day he preached a farewell sermon, and gave it out how there had come down an angel unto the big maple in his garden, who had told him that he was to be taken up alive into heaven for his piety’s sake; and he preached and made such a touching discourse, that all who were at church wept, both young and old.

So the next Monday night came the Master Thief like an angel again, and the Priest fell on his knees and thanked him before he was put into the sack; but when he had got him well in, the Master Thief drew and dragged him over stocks and stones.

‘OW! OW!’ groaned the Priest inside the sack, ‘wherever are we going?’

‘This is the narrow way which leadeth unto the kingdom of heaven’, said the Master Thief, who went on dragging him along till he had nearly broken every bone in his body. At last he tumbled him into a goose-house that belonged to the Squire, and the geese began pecking and pinching him with their bills, so that he was more dead than alive.

‘Now you are in the flames of purgatory, to be cleansed and purified for life everlasting’, said the Master Thief; and with that he went his way, and took all the gold which the Priest had laid together in his dining-room. The next morning, when the goose-girl came to let the geese out, she heard how the Priest lay in the sack, and bemoaned himself in the goose-house.

‘In heaven’s name, who’s there, and what ails you?’ she cried.

‘Oh!’ said the Priest, ‘if you are an angel from heaven, do let me out, and let me return again to earth, for it is worse here than in hell. The little fiends keep on pinching me with tongs.’

‘Heaven help us, I am no angel at all’, said the girl, as she helped the Priest out of the sack; ‘I only look after the Squire’s geese, and like enough they are the little fiends which have pinched your reverence.’

‘Oh!’ groaned the Priest, ‘this is all that Master Thief’s doing. Ah! my gold and my silver, and my fine clothes.’ And he beat his breast, and hobbled home at such a rate that the girl thought he had lost his wits all at once.

Now when the Squire came to hear how it had gone with the Priest, and how he had been along the narrow way, and into purgatory, he laughed till he well-nigh split his sides. But when the Master Thief came and asked for his daughter as he had promised, the Squire put him off again, and said:

‘You must do one masterpiece better still, that I may see plainly what you are fit for. Now, I have twelve horses in my stable, and on them I will put twelve grooms, one on each. If you are so good a thief as to steal the horses from under them, I’ll see what I can do for you.’

‘Very well, I daresay I can do it’, said the Master Thief; ‘but shall I really have your daughter if I can?’

‘Yes, if you can, I’ll do my best for you’, said the Squire. So the Master Thief set off to a shop, and bought brandy enough to fill two pocket-flasks, and into one of them he put a sleepy drink, but into the other only brandy. After that he hired eleven men to lie in wait at night, behind the Squire’s stable-yard; and last of all, for fair words and a good bit of money, he borrowed a ragged gown and cloak from an old woman; and so, with a staff in his hand, and a bundle at his back, he limped off, as evening drew on, towards the Squire’s stable. Just as he got there they were watering the horses for the night, and had their hands full of work. ‘What the devil do you want?’ said one of the grooms to the old woman.

‘Oh, oh! hutetu! it is so bitter cold’, said she, and shivered and shook, and made wry faces. ‘Hutetu! it is so cold, a poor wretch may easily freeze to death’; and with that she fell to shivering and shaking again.

‘Oh! for the love of heaven, can I get leave to stay here a while, and sit inside the stable door?’

‘To the devil with your leave’, said one. ‘Pack yourself off this minute, for if the Squire sets his eye on you, he’ll lead us a pretty dance.’

‘Oh! the poor old bag-of-bones’, said another, whose heart took pity on her, ‘the old hag may sit inside and welcome; such a one as she can do no harm.’

And the rest said, some she should stay, and some she shouldn’t; but while they were quarrelling and minding the horses, she crept further and further into the stable, till at last she sat herself down behind the door; and when she had got so far, no one gave any more heed to her.

As the night wore on, the men found it rather cold work to sit so still and quiet on horseback.

‘Hutetu! it is so devilish cold’, said one, and beat his arms crosswise.

‘That it is’, said another; ‘I freeze so, that my teeth chatter.’

‘If one only had a quid to chew’, said a third.

Well! there was one who had an ounce or two; so they shared it between them, though it wasn’t much, after all, that each got; and so they chewed and spat, and spat and chewed. This helped them somewhat; but in a little while they were just as bad as ever.

‘Hutetu!’ said one, and shivered and shook.

‘Hutetu!’ said the old woman, and shivered so, that every tooth in her head chattered. Then she pulled out the flask with brandy in it, and her hand shook so that the spirit splashed about in the flask, and then she took such a gulp, that it went ‘bop’ in her throat.

‘What’s that you’ve got in your flask, old girl?’ said one of the grooms.

‘Oh! it’s only a drop of brandy, old man’, said she.

‘Brandy! Well, I never! Do let me have a drop’, screamed the whole twelve, one after another.

‘Oh! but it is such a little drop’, mumbled the old woman, ‘it will not even wet your mouths round.’ But they must and would have it; there was no help for it; and so she pulled out the flask with the sleepy drink in it, and put it to the first man’s lips; then she shook no more, but guided the flask so that each of them got what he wanted, and the twelfth had not done drinking before the first sat and snored. Then the Master Thief threw off his beggar’s rags, and took one groom after the other so softly off their horses, and set them astride on the beams between the stalls; and so he called his eleven men, and rode off with the Squire’s twelve horses. But when the Squire got up in the morning, and went to look after his grooms, they had just begun to come to; and some of them fell to spurring the beams with their spurs, till the splinters flew again, and some fell off, and some still hung on and sat there looking like fools.

‘Ho! ho!’ said the Squire; ‘I see very well who has been here; but as for you, a pretty set of blockheads you must be to sit here and let the Master Thief steal the horses from between your legs.’

So they all got a good leathering because they had not kept a sharper look-out.

Further on in the day came the Master Thief again, and told how he had managed the matter, and asked for the Squire’s daughter, as he had promised; but the Squire gave him one hundred dollars down, and said he must do something better still.

‘Do you think now’, said he, ‘you can steal the horse from under me while I am out riding on his back?’ ‘O, yes! I daresay I could’, said the Master Thief, ‘if I were really sure of getting your daughter.’

Well, well, the Squire would see what he could do; and he told the Master Thief a day when he would be taking a ride on a great common where they drilled the troops. So the Master Thief soon got hold of an old worn-out jade of a mare, and set to work, and made traces and collar of withies and broom-twigs, and bought an old beggarly cart and a great cask. After that he told an old beggar woman, he would give her ten dollars if she would get inside the cask, and keep her mouth agape over the taphole, into which he was going to stick his finger. No harm should happen to her; she should only be driven about a little; and if he took his finger out more than once, she was to have ten dollars more. Then he threw a few rags and tatters over himself, and stuffed himself out, and put on a wig and a great beard of goat’s hair, so that no one could know him again, and set off for the common, where the Squire had already been riding about a good bit. When he reached the place, he went along so softly and slowly that he scarce made an inch of way. ‘Gee up! Gee up!’ and so he went on a little; then he stood stock still, and so on a little again; and altogether the pace was so poor it never once came into the Squire’s head that this could be the Master Thief.

At last the Squire rode right up to him, and asked if he had seen any one lurking about in the wood thereabouts. ‘No’, said the man, ‘I haven’t seen a soul.’

‘Harkye, now’, said the Squire, ‘if you have a mind to ride into the wood, and hunt about and see if you can fall upon any one lurking about there, you shall have the loan of my horse, and a shilling into the bargain, to drink my health, for your pains.’

‘I don’t see how I can go’, said the man, ‘for I am going to a wedding with this cask of mead, which I have been to town to fetch, and here the tap has fallen out by the way, and so I must go along, holding my finger in the taphole.’

‘Ride off’, said the Squire; ‘I’ll look after your horse and cask.’

Well, on these terms the man was willing to go; but he begged the Squire to be quick in putting his finger into the taphole when he took his own out, and to mind and keep it there till he came back. At last the Squire grew weary of standing there with his finger in the taphole, so he took it out.

‘Now I shall have ten dollars more!’ screamed the old woman inside the cask; and then the Squire saw at once how the land lay, and took himself off home; but he had not gone far before they met him with a fresh horse, for the Master Thief had already been to his house, and told them to send one. The day after, he came to the Squire and would have his daughter, as he had given his word; but the Squire put him off again with fine words, and gave him two hundred dollars, and said he must do one more masterpiece. If he could do that, he should have her. Well, well, the Master Thief thought he could do it, if he only knew what it was to be.

‘Do you think, now’, said the Squire, ‘you can steal the sheet off our bed, and the shift off my wife’s back. Do you think you could do that?’

‘It shall be done’, said the Master Thief. ‘I only wish I was as sure of getting your daughter.’

So when night began to fall, the Master Thief went out and cut down a thief who hung on the gallows, and threw him across his shoulders, and carried him off. Then he got a long ladder and set it up against the Squire’s bedroom window, and so climbed up, and kept bobbing the dead man up and down, just for all the world like one that was peeping in at the window.

‘That’s the Master Thief, old lass!’ said the Squire, and gave his wife a nudge on the side. ‘Now see if I don’t shoot him, that’s all.’

So saying he took up a rifle which he had laid at his bedside.

‘No! no! pray don’t shoot him after telling him he might come and try’, said his wife.

‘Don’t talk to me, for shoot him I will’, said he; and so he lay there and aimed and aimed; but as soon as the head came up before the window, and he saw a little of it, so soon was it down again. At last he thought he had a good aim; ‘bang’ went the gun, down fell the dead body to the ground with a heavy thump, and down went the Master Thief too as fast as he could.

‘Well’, said the Squire, ‘it is quite true that I am the chief magistrate in these parts; but people are fond of talking, and it would be a bore if they came to see this dead man’s body. I think the best thing to be done is that I should go down and bury him.’

‘You must do as you think best, dear’, said his wife. So the Squire got out of bed and went downstairs, and he had scarce put his foot out of the door before the Master Thief stole in, and went straight upstairs to his wife.

‘Why, dear, back already!’ said she, for she thought it was her husband.

‘O yes, I only just put him into a hole, and threw a little earth over him. It is enough that he is out of sight, for it is such a bad night out of doors; by-and-by I’ll do it better. But just let me have the sheet to wipe myself with — he was so bloody — and I have made myself in such a mess with him.’

So he got the sheet.

After a while he said:

‘Do you know I am afraid you must let me have your nightshift too, for the sheet won’t do by itself; that I can see.’

So she gave him the shift also. But just then it came across his mind that he had forgotten to lock the house-door, so he must step down and look to that before he came back to bed, and away he went with both shift and sheet.

A little while after came the true Squire.

‘Why! what a time you’ve taken to lock the door, dear!’ said his wife; ‘and what have you done with the sheet and shift?’

‘What do you say?’ said the Squire.

‘Why, I am asking what you have done with the sheet and shift that you had to wipe off the blood’, said she.

‘What, in the Deil’s name!’ said the Squire, ‘has he taken me in this time too?’

Next day came the Master Thief and asked for the Squire’s daughter, as he had given his word; and then the Squire dared not do anything else than give her to him, and a good lump of money into the bargain; for, to tell the truth, he was afraid lest the Master Thief should steal the eyes out of his head, and that the people would begin to say spiteful things of him if he broke his word. So the Master Thief lived well and happily from that time forward. I don’t know whether he stole any more; but if he did, I am quite sure it was only for the sake of a bit of fun.

54

THE BEST WISH

Once on a time there were three brothers; I don’t quite know how it happened, but each of them had got the right to wish one thing, whatever he chose. So the two elder were not long a-thinking; they wished that every time they put their hands in their pockets they might pull out a piece of money; for, said they:

‘The man who has as much money as he wishes for is always sure to get on in the world.’

But the youngest wished something better still. He wished that every woman he saw might fall in love with him as soon as she saw him; and you shall soon hear how far better this was than gold and goods.

So, when they had all wished their wishes, the two elder were for setting out to see the world; and Boots, their youngest brother, asked if he mightn’t go along with them; but they wouldn’t hear of such a thing.

‘Wherever we go’, they said, ‘we shall be treated as counts and kings; but you, you starveling wretch, who haven’t a penny, and never will have one, who do you think will care a bit about you?’

‘Well, but in spite of that, I’d like to go with you’, said Boots; ‘perhaps a dainty bit may fall to my share too off the plates of such high and mighty lords.’

At last, after begging and praying, he got leave to go with them, if he would be their servant, else they wouldn’t hear of it.

So, when they had gone a day or so, they came to an inn, where the two who had the money alighted, and called for fish and flesh, and fowl, and brandy and mead, and everything that was good; but Boots, poor fellow, had to look after their luggage and all that belonged to the two great people. Now, as he went to and fro outside, and loitered about in the inn-yard, the innkeeper’s wife looked out of window and saw the servant of the gentlemen upstairs; and, all at once, she thought she had never set eyes on such a handsome chap. So she stared and stared, and the longer she looked the handsomer he seemed.

‘Why what, by the Deil’s skin and bones, is it that you are standing there gaping at out of the window?’ said her husband. ‘I think ‘twould be better if you just looked how the sucking pig is getting on, instead of hanging out of window in that way. Don’t you know what grand folk we have in the house to-day?’

‘Oh!’ said his old dame, ‘I don’t care a farthing about such a pack of rubbish; if they don’t like it they may lump it, and be off; but just do come and look at this lad out in the yard; so handsome a fellow I never saw in all my born days; and, if you’ll do as I wish, we’ll ask him to step in and treat him a little, for, poor lad, he seems to have a hard fight of it.’

‘Have you lost the little brains you had, Goody?’ said the husband, whose eyes glistened with rage; ‘into the kitchen with you, and mind the fire; but don’t stand there glowering after strange men.’

So the wife had nothing left for it but to go into the kitchen, and look after the cooking; as for the lad outside, she couldn’t get leave to ask him in, or to treat him either; but just as she was about spitting the pig in the kitchen, she made an excuse for running out into the yard, and then and there she gave Boots a pair of scissors, of such a kind that they cut of themselves out of the air the loveliest clothes any one ever saw, silk and satin, and all that was fine.

‘This you shall have because you are so handsome,’ said the innkeeper’s wife.

So when the two elder brothers had crammed themselves with roast and boiled, they wished to be off again, and Boots had to stand behind their carriage, and be their servant; and so they travelled a good way, till they came to another inn. There the two brothers again alighted and went indoors, but Boots, who had no money, they wouldn’t have inside with them; no, he must wait outside and watch the luggage. ‘And mind’, they said, ‘if any one asks whose servant you are, say we are two foreign Princes.’

But the same thing happened now as happened before; while Boots stood hanging about out in the yard, the innkeeper’s wife came to the window and saw him, and she too fell in love with him, just like the first innkeeper’s wife; and there she stood and stared, for she thought she could never have her fill of looking at him. Then her husband came running through the room with something the two Princes had ordered.

‘Don’t stand there staring like a cow at a barn-door, but take this into the kitchen, and look after your fish-kettle, Goody’, said the man; ‘don’t you see what grand people we have in the house to-day?’

‘I don’t care a farthing for such a pack of rubbish’, said the wife; ‘if they don’t like what they get they may lump it, and eat what they brought with them. But just do come here, and see what you shall see! Such a handsome fellow as walks here, out in the yard, I never saw in all my born days. Shan’t we ask him in and treat him a little; he looks as if he needed it, poor chap?’ and then she went on:

‘Such a love! such a love!’

‘You never had much wit, and the little you had is clean gone, I can see’, said the man, who was much more angry than the first innkeeper, and chased his wife back, neck and crop, into the kitchen.

‘Into the kitchen with you, and don’t stand glowering after lads’, he said.

So she had to go in and mind her fish-kettle, and she dared not treat Boots, for she was afraid of her old man; but as she stood there making up the fire, she made an excuse for running out into the yard, and then and there she gave Boots a table-cloth, which was such that it covered itself with the best dishes you could think of, as soon as it was spread out.

‘This you shall have’, she said, ‘because you’re so handsome.’

So when the two brothers had eaten and drank of all that was in the house, and had paid the bill in hard cash, they set off again, and Boots stood up behind their carriage. But when they had gone so far that they grew hungry again, they turned into a third inn, and called for the best and dearest they could think of.

‘For’, said they, ‘we are two kings on our travels, and as for our money, it grows like grass.’

Well, when the innkeeper heard that, there was such a roasting, and baking, and boiling; why! you might smell the dinner at the next neighbour’s house, though it wasn’t so very near; and the innkeeper was at his wits’ end to find all he wished to put before the two kings. But Boots, he had to stand outside here too, and look after the things in the carriage.

So it was the same story over again. The innkeeper’s wife came to the window and peeped out, and there she saw the servant standing by the carriage. Such a handsome chap she had never set eyes on before; so she looked and looked, and the more she stared the handsomer he seemed to the innkeeper’s wife. Then out came the innkeeper, scampering through the room, with some dainty which the travelling kings had ordered, and he wasn’t very soft-tongued when he saw his old dame standing and glowering out of the window.

‘Don’t you know better than to stand gaping and staring there, when we have such great folk in the house’, he said; ‘back into the kitchen with you this minute, to your custards.’

‘Well! well!’ she said, ‘as for them, I don’t care a pin. If they can’t wait till the custards are baked, they may go without — that’s all. But do, pray, come here, and you’ll see such a lovely lad standing out here in the yard. Why I never saw such a pretty fellow in my life. Shan’t we ask him in now, and treat him a little, for he looks as if it would do him good. Oh! what a darling! What a darling!’

‘A wanton gadabout you’ve been all your days, and so you are still’, said her husband, who was in such a rage he scarce knew which leg to stand on; ‘but if you don’t be off to your custards this minute, I’ll soon find out how to make you stir your stumps; see if I don’t.’

So the wife had off to her custards as fast as she could, for she knew that her husband would stand no nonsense; but as she stood there over the fire she stole out into the yard, and gave Boots a tap.

‘If you only turn this tap’, she said; ‘you’ll get the finest drink of whatever kind you choose, both mead, and wine, and brandy; and this you shall have because you are so handsome.’

So when the two brothers had eaten and drunk all they could, they started from the inn, and Boots stood up behind again as their servant, and thus they drove far and wide, till they came to a king’s palace. There the two elder gave themselves out for two emperor’s sons, and as they had plenty of money, and were so fine that their clothes shone again ever so far off, they were well treated. They had rooms in the palace, and the king couldn’t tell how to make enough of them. But Boots, who went about in the same rags he stood in when he left home, and who had never a penny in his pocket, he was taken up by the king’s guard, and put across to an island, whither they used to row over all the beggars and rogues that came to the palace. This the king had ordered, because he wouldn’t have the mirth at the palace spoilt by those dirty blackguards; and thither, too, only just as much food as would keep body and soul together was sent over everyday. Now Boots’ brothers saw very well that the guard was rowing him over to the island, but they were glad to be rid of him, and didn’t pay the least heed to him.

But when Boots got over there, he just pulled out his scissors and began to snip and cut in the air; so the scissors cut out the finest clothes any one would wish to see; silk and satin both, and all the beggars on the island were soon dressed far finer than the king and all his guests in the palace. After that, Boots pulled out his table-cloth, and spread it out, and so they got food too, the poor beggars. Such a feast had never been seen at the king’s palace, as was served that day at the Beggars’ Isle.

‘Thirsty, too, I’ll be bound you all are’, said Boots, and out with his tap, gave it a turn, and so the beggars got all a drop to drink; and such ale and mead the king himself had never tasted in all his life.

So, next morning, when those who were to bring the beggars their food on the island, came rowing over with the scrapings of the porridge-pots and cheese-parings — that was what the poor wretches had — the beggars wouldn’t so much as taste them, and the king’s men fell to wondering what it could mean; but they wondered much more when they got a good look at the beggars, for they were so fine the guard thought they must be Emperors or Popes at least, and that they must have rowed to a wrong island; but when they looked better about them, they saw they were come to the old place.

Then they soon found out it must be he whom they had rowed out the day before who had brought the beggars on the island all this state and bravery; and as soon as they got back to the palace, they were not slow to tell how the man, whom they had rowed over the day before, had dressed out all the beggars so fine and grand that precious things fell from their clothes.

‘And as for the porridge and cheese we took, they wouldn’t even taste them, so proud have they got’, they said.

One of them, too, had smelt out that the lad had a pair of scissors which he cut out the clothes with.

‘When he only snips with those scissors up in the air he snips and cuts out nothing but silk and satin’, said he.

So, when the Princess heard that, she had neither peace nor rest till she saw the lad and his scissors that cut out silk and satin from the air; such a pair was worth having, she thought, for with its help she would soon get all the finery she wished for. Well, she begged the king so long and hard, he was forced to send a messenger for the lad who owned the scissors; and when he came to the palace, the Princess asked him if it were true that he had such and such a pair of scissors, and if he would sell it to her. Yes, it was all true he had such a pair, said Boots, but sell it he wouldn’t; and with that he took the scissors out of his pocket, and snipped and snipped with them in the air till strips of silk and satin flew all about him.

‘Nay, but you must sell me these scissors’, said the Princess. ‘You may ask what you please for them, but have them I must.’

No! Such a pair of scissors he wouldn’t sell at any price, for he could never get such a pair again; and while they stood and haggled for the scissors, the Princess had time to look better at Boots, and she too thought with the innkeepers’ wives that she had never seen such a handsome fellow before. So she began to bargain for the scissors over again, and begged and prayed Boots to let her have them; he might ask many, many hundred dollars for them, ‘twas all the same to her, so she got them.

‘No! sell them I won’t’, said Boots; ‘but all the same, if I can get leave to sleep one night on the floor of the Princess’ bedroom, close by the door, I’ll give her the scissors. I’ll do her no harm, but if she’s afraid, she may have two men to watch inside the room.’

Yes! the Princess was glad enough to give him leave, for she was ready to grant him anything if she only got the scissors. So Boots lay on the floor inside the Princess' bedroom that night, and two men stood watch there too; but the Princess didn't get much rest after all; for when she ought to have been asleep, she must open her eyes to look at Boots, and so it went on the whole night. If she shut her eyes for a minute, she peeped out at him again the next, such a handsome fellow he seemed to her to be.

Next morning Boots was rowed over to the Beggars' isle again; but when they came with the porridge scrapings and cheese parings from the palace, there was no one who would taste them that day either, and so those who brought the food were more astonished than ever. But one of those who brought the food contrived to smell out that the lad who had owned the scissors owned also a table-cloth, which he only needed to spread out, and it was covered with all the good things he could wish for. So when he got back to the palace, he wasn't long before he said:

'Such hot joints and such custards I never saw the like of in the king's palace.'

And when the Princess heard that, she told it to the king, and begged and prayed so long, that he was forced to send a messenger out to the island to fetch the lad who owned the table-cloth; and so Boots came back to the palace. The Princess must and would have the cloth of him, and offered him gold and green woods for it, but Boots wouldn't sell it at any price.

'But if I may have leave to lie on the bench by the Princess' bed-side to-night, she shall have the cloth; but if she's afraid, she is welcome to set four men to watch inside the room.'

Yes! the Princess agreed to this, so Boots lay down on the bench by the bed-side, and the four men watched; but if the Princess hadn't much sleep the night before, she had much less this, for she could scarce get a wink of sleep; there she lay wide awake looking at the lovely lad the whole night through, and after all, the night seemed too short.

Next morning Boots was rowed off again to the Beggars' island, though sorely against the Princess' will, so happy was she to be near him; but it was past praying for; to the island he must go, and there was an end of it. But when those who brought the food to the beggars came with the porridge scrapings and cheese parings, there wasn't one of them who would even look at what the king sent, and those who brought it didn't wonder either; though they all thought it strange that none of them were thirsty. But just then, one of the king's guard smelled out that the lad who had owned the scissors and the table-cloth had a tap besides, which, if one only turned it a little, gave out the rarest drink, both ale, and mead, and wine. So when he came back to the palace, he couldn't keep his mouth shut this time any more than before; he went about telling high and low about the tap, and how easy it was to draw all sorts of drink out of it.

'And as for that mead and ale, I've never tasted the like of them in the king's palace; honey and syrup are nothing to them for sweetness.'

So when the Princess heard that, she was all for getting the tap, and was nothing loath to strike a bargain with the owner either. So she went again to the king, and begged him to send a messenger to the Beggars' Isle after the lad who had owned the scissors and cloth, for now he had another thing worth having, she said; and when the king heard it was a tap, that was good to give the best ale and wine any one could drink, when one gave it a turn, he wasn't long in sending the messenger, I should think.

So when Boots came up to the palace, the Princess asked whether it were true he had a tap which could do such and such things? 'Yes! he had such a tap in his waistcoat pocket', said Boots; but when the Princess wished with all her might to buy it, Boots said, as he had said twice before, he wouldn't sell it, even if the Princess bade half the kingdom for it.

'But all the same', said Boots; 'if I may have leave to sleep on the Princess' bed to-night, outside the quilt, she shall have my tap. I'll not do her any harm; but, if she’s afraid, she may set eight men to watch in her room.’

‘Oh, no!’ said the Princess, ‘there was no need of that, she knew him now so well’; and so Boots lay outside the Princess’ bed that night. But if she hadn’t slept much the two nights before, she had less sleep that night; for she couldn’t shut her eyes the livelong night, but lay and looked at Boots, who lay alongside her outside the quilt.

So, when she got up in the morning, and they were going to row Boots back to the island, she begged them to hold hard a little bit; and in she ran to the king, and begged him so prettily to let her have Boots for a husband, she was so fond of him, and, unless she had him, she did not care to live.

‘Well, well!’ said the king, ‘you shall have him if you must; for he who has such things is just as rich as you are.’

So Boots got the Princess and half the kingdom — the other half he was to have when the king died; and so everything went smooth and well; but as for his brothers, who had always been so bad to him, he packed them off to the Beggars’ island.

‘There’, said Boots, ‘perhaps they may find out which is best off, the man who has his pockets full of money, or the man whom all women fall in love with.’

Nor, to tell you the truth, do I think it would help them much to wander about upon the Beggars’ island pulling pieces of money out of their pockets; and so, if Boots hasn’t taken them off the island, there they are still walking about to this very day, eating cheese-parings and the scrapings of the porridge-pots.

55

WELL DONE AND ILL PAID

Once on a time there was a man, who had to drive his sledge to the wood for fuel. So a Bear met him.

‘Out with your horse’, said the Bear, ‘or I’ll strike all your sheep dead by summer.’

‘Oh! heaven help me then’, said the man; ‘there’s not a stick of firewood in the house; you must let me drive home a load of fuel, else we shall be frozen to death. I’ll bring the horse to you to-morrow morning.’

Yes! on those terms he might drive the wood home, that was a bargain; but Bruin said, ‘if he didn’t come back, he should lose all his sheep by summer’.

So the man got the wood on the sledge and rattled homewards, but he wasn’t over pleased at the bargain you may fancy. So just then a Fox met him.

‘Why, what’s the matter?’ said the Fox; ‘why are you so down in the mouth?’

‘Oh, if you want to know’, said the man; ‘I met a Bear up yonder in the wood, and I had to give my word to him to bring Dobbin back to-morrow, at this very hour; for if he didn’t get him, he said he would tear all my sheep to death by summer.’

‘Stuff, nothing worse than that’, said the Fox; ‘if you’ll give me your fattest wether, I’ll soon set you free; see if I don’t.’

Yes! the man gave his word, and swore he would keep it too.

‘Well, when you come with Dobbin to-morrow for the bear’, said the Fox, ‘I’ll make a clatter up in that heap of stones yonder, and so when the bear asks what that noise is, you must say ‘tis Peter the Marksman, who is the best shot in the world; and after that you must help yourself.’

Next day off set the man, and when he met the Bear, something began to make a clatter up in the heap of stones.

‘Hist! what’s that?’ said the Bear.

‘Oh! that’s Peter the Marksman, to be sure’, said the than; ‘he’s the best shot in the world. I know him by his voice.’

‘Have you seen any bears about here, Eric?’ shouted out a voice in the wood.

‘Say, no!’ said the Bear.

‘No, I haven’t seen any’, said Eric.

‘What’s that then, that stands alongside your sledge?’ bawled out the voice in the wood.

‘Say it’s an old fir-stump’, said the Bear.

‘Oh, it’s only an old fir-stump’, said the man.

‘Such fir-stumps we take in our country and roll them on our sledges’, bawled out the voice; ‘if you can’t do it yourself, I’ll come and help you.’

‘Say you can help yourself, and roll me up on the sledge’, said the Bear.

‘No, thank ye, I can help myself well enough’, said the man, and rolled the Bear on to the sledge.

‘Such fir-stumps we always bind fast on our sledges in our part of the world’, bawled out the voice; ‘shall I come and help you?’

‘Say you can help yourself, and bind me fast, do’, said the Bear.

‘No, thanks, I can help myself well enough’, said the man, who set to binding Bruin fast with all the ropes he had, so that at last the bear couldn’t stir a paw.

‘Such fir-stumps we always drive our axes into, in our part of the world’, bawled out the voice; ‘for then we guide them better going down the steep pitches.’

‘Pretend to drive your axe into me, do now’, said the bear. Then the man took up his axe, and at one blow split the bear’s skull, so that Bruin lay dead in a trice, and so the man and the Fox were great friends, and on the best terms. But when they came near the farm, the Fox said:

‘I’ve no mind to go right home with you, for I can’t say I like your tykes; so I’ll just wait here, and you can bring the wether to me, but mind and pick out one nice and fat.’

Yes! the man would be sure to do that, and thanked the Fox much for his help. So when he had put up Dobbin, he went across to the sheep-stall.

‘Whither away, now?’ asked his old dame.

‘Oh!’ said the man, ‘I’m only going to the sheep-stall to fetch a fat wether for that cunning Fox, who set our Dobbin free. I gave him my word I would.’

‘Whither, indeed’, said the old dame; ‘never a one shall that thief of a Fox get. Haven’t we got Dobbin safe, and the bear into the bargain; and as for the Fox, I’ll be bound he’s stolen more of our geese than the wether is worth; and even if he hasn’t stolen them, he will. No, no; take a brace of your swiftest hounds in a sack, and slip them loose after him; and then, perhaps, we shall be rid of this robbing Reynard.’

Well, the man thought that good advice; so he took two fleet red hounds, put them into a sack, and set off with them.

‘Have you brought the wether?’ said the Fox.

‘Yes, come and take it’, said the man, as he untied the sack and let slip the hounds.

‘HUF’, said the Fox, and gave a great spring; ‘true it is what the old saw says, “Well done is often ill paid”; and now, too, I see the truth of another saying, “The worst foes are those of one’s own house.”‘ That was what the Fox said as he ran off, and saw the red foxy hounds at his heels.

56

DAPPLEGRIM

Once on a time there was a rich couple who had twelve sons; but the youngest when he was grown up, said he wouldn’t stay any longer at home, but be off into the world to try his luck. His father and mother said he did very well at home, and had better stay where he was. But no, he couldn’t rest; away he must and would go. So at last they gave him leave. And when he had walked a good bit, he came to a king’s palace, where he asked for a place, and got it.

Now the daughter of the king of that land had been carried off into the hill by a Troll, and the king had no other children; so he and all his land were in great grief and sorrow, and the king gave his word that any one who could set her free should have the Princess and half the kingdom. But there was no one who could do it, though many tried.

So when the lad had been there a year or so, he longed to go home again and see his father and mother, and back he went, but when he got home his father and mother were dead, and his brothers had shared all that the old people owned between them, and so there was nothing left for the lad.

‘Shan’t I have anything at all, then, out of father’s and mother’s goods?’ said the lad.

‘Who could tell you were still alive, when you went gadding and wandering about so long?’ said his brothers. ‘But all the same; there are twelve mares up on the hill which we haven’t yet shared among us; if you choose to take them for your share, you’re quite welcome.’

Yes! the lad was quite content; so he thanked his brothers, and went at once up on the hill, where the twelve mares were out at grass. And when he got up there and found them, each of them had a foal at her side, and one of them had besides, along with her, a big dapple-gray foal, which was so sleek that the sun shone from its coat.

‘A fine fellow you are, my little foal’, said the lad.

‘Yes’, said the foal; ‘but if you’ll only kill all the other foals, so that I may run and suck all the mares one year more, you’ll see how big and sleek I’ll be then.’

Yes! the lad was ready to do that; so he killed all those twelve foals, and went home again.

So when he came back the next year to look after his foal and mares, the foal was so fat and sleek, that the sun shone from its coat, and it had grown so big, the lad had hard work to mount it. As for the mares, they had each of them another foal.

‘Well, it’s quite plain I lost nothing by letting you suck all my twelve mares’, said the lad to the yearling, ‘but now you’re big enough to come along with me.’

‘No’, said the colt, ‘I must bide here a year longer; and now kill all the twelve foals, that I may suck all the mares this year too, and you’ll see how big and sleek I’ll be by summer.’

Yes! the lad did that; and next year when he went up on the hill to look after his colt and the mares, each mare had her foal, but the dapple colt was so tall the lad couldn’t reach up to his crest when he wanted to feel how fat he was; and so sleek he was too, that his coat glistened in the sunshine.

‘Big and beautiful you were last year, my colt’, said the lad, ‘but this year you’re far grander. There’s no such horse in the king’s stable. But now you must come along with me.’

‘No’, said Dapple again, ‘I must stay here one year more. Kill the twelve foals as before, that I may suck the mares the whole year, and then just come and look at me when the summer comes.’

Yes! the lad did that; he killed the foals, and went away home.

But when he went up next year to look after Dapple and the mares, he was quite astonished. So tall, and stout, and sturdy, he never thought a horse could be; for Dapple had to lie down on all fours before the lad could bestride him, and it was hard work to get up even then, although he lay flat; and his coat was so smooth and sleek, the sunbeams shone from it as from a looking-glass.

This time Dapple was willing enough to follow the lad, so he jumped up on his back, and when he came riding home to his brothers, they all clapped their hands and crossed themselves, for such a horse they had never heard of nor seen before.

‘If you will only get me the best shoes you can for my horse, and the grandest saddle and bridle that are to be found’, said the lad, ‘you may have my twelve mares that graze up on the hill yonder, and their twelve foals into the bargain.’ For you must know that this year too every mare had her foal.

Yes, his brothers were ready to do that, and so the lad got such strong shoes under his horse, that the stones flew high aloft as he rode away across the hills; and he had a golden saddle and a golden bridle, which gleamed and glistened a long way off.

‘Now we’re off to the king’s palace’, said Dapplegrim — that was his name; ‘but mind you ask the king for a good stable and good fodder for me.’

Yes! the lad said he would mind; he’d be sure not to forget; and when he rode off from his brothers’ house, you may be sure it wasn’t long, with such a horse under him, before he got to the king’s palace.

When he came there the king was standing on the steps, and stared and stared at the man who came riding along.

‘Nay, nay!’, said he, ‘such a man and such a horse I never yet saw in all my life.’

But when the lad asked if he could get a place in the king’s household, the king was so glad he was ready to jump and dance as he stood on the steps.

Well, they said, perhaps he might get a place there.

‘Aye’, said the lad, ‘but I must have good stable-room for my horse, and fodder that one can trust.’

Yes! he should have meadow-hay and oats, as much as Dapple could cram, and all the other knights had to lead their horses out of the stable that Dapplegrim might stand alone, and have it all to himself.

But it wasn’t long before all the others in the king’s household began to be jealous of the lad, and there was no end to the bad things they would have done to him, if they had only dared. At last they thought of telling the king he had said he was man enough to set the king’s daughter free — whom the Troll had long since carried away into the hill — if he only chose. The king called the lad before him, and said he had heard the lad said he was good to do so and so; so now he must go and do it. If he did it, he knew how the king had promised his daughter and half the kingdom, and that promise would be faithfully kept; if he didn’t, he should be killed.

The lad kept on saying he never said any such thing; but it was no good — the king wouldn’t even listen to him; and so the end of it was he was forced to say he’d go and try.

So he went into the stable, down in the mouth and heavy-hearted, and then Dapplegrim asked him at once why he was in such dumps.

Then the lad told him all, and how he couldn’t tell which way to turn:

‘For as for setting the Princess free, that’s downright stuff.’

‘Oh! but it might be done, perhaps’, said Dapplegrim. ‘I’ll help you through; but you must first have me well shod. You must go and ask for ten pound of iron and twelve pound of steel for the shoes, and one smith to hammer and another to hold.’

Yes, the lad did that, and got for answer ‘Yes!’ He got both the iron and the steel, and the smiths, and so Dapplegrim was shod both strong and well, and off went the lad from the court-yard in a cloud of dust.

But when he came to the hill into which the Princess had been carried, the pinch was how to get up the steep wall of rock where the Troll’s cave was, in which the Princess had been hid. For you must know the hill stood straight up and down right on end, as upright as a house-wall, and as smooth as a sheet of glass.

The first time the lad went at it he got a little way up; but then Dapple’s fore-legs slipped, and down they went again, with a sound like thunder on the hill.

The second time he rode at it he got some way further up; but then one fore-leg slipped, and down they went with a crash like a landslip.

But the third time Dapple said:

‘Now we must show our mettle’; and went at it again till the stones flew heaven-high about them, and so they got up.

Then the lad rode right into the cave at full speed, and caught up the Princess, and threw her over his saddle-bow and out and down again before the Troll had time even to get on his legs; and so the Princess was freed.

When the lad came back to the palace, the king was both happy and glad to get his daughter back; that you may well believe; but somehow or other, though I don’t know how, the others about the court had so brought it about that the king was angry with the lad after all.

‘Thanks you shall have for freeing my Princess’, said he to the lad, when he brought the Princess into the hall, and made his bow.

‘She ought to be mine as well as yours; for you’re a word-fast man, I hope’, said the lad.

‘Aye, aye!’ said the king, ‘have her you shall, since I said it; but first of all, you must make the sun shine into my palace hall.’

Now, you must know there was a high steep ridge of rock close outside the windows, which threw such a shade over the hall that never a sunbeam shone into it.

‘That wasn’t in our bargain’, answered the lad; ‘but I see this is past praying against; I must e’en go and try my luck, for the Princess I must and will have.’

So down he went to Dapple, and told him what the king wanted, and Dapplegrim thought it might easily be done, but first of all he must be new shod; and for that ten pound of iron, and twelve pound of steel besides, were needed, and two smiths, one to hammer and the other to hold, and then they’d soon get the sun to shine into the palace hall.

So when the lad asked for all these things, he got them at once — the king couldn’t say nay for very shame; and so Dapplegrim got new shoes, and such shoes! Then the lad jumped upon his back, and off they went again; and for every leap that Dapplegrim gave, down sank the ridge fifteen ells into the earth, and so they went on till there was nothing left of the ridge for the king to see.

When the lad got back to the king’s palace, he asked the king if the Princess were not his now; for now no one could say that the sun didn’t shine into the hall. But then the others set the king’s back up again, and he answered the lad should have her of course, he had never thought of anything else; but first of all he must get as grand a horse for the bride to ride on to church as the bridegroom had himself.

The lad said the king hadn’t spoken a word about this before, and that he thought he had now fairly earned the Princess; but the king held to his own; and more, if the lad couldn’t do that he should lose his life; that was what the king said. So the lad went down to the stable in doleful dumps, as you may well fancy, and there he told Dapplegrim all about it; how the king had laid that task on him, to find the bride as good a horse as the bridegroom had himself, else he would lose his life.

‘But that’s not so easy’, he said, ‘for your match isn’t to be found in the wide world.’

‘Oh yes, I have a match’, said Dapplegrim; ‘but ‘tisn’t so easy to find him, for he abides in Hell. Still we’ll try. And now you must go up to the king and ask for new shoes for me, ten pound of iron, and twelve pound of steel; and two smiths, one to hammer and one to hold; and mind you see that the points and ends of these shoes are sharp; and twelve sacks of rye, and twelve sacks of barley, and twelve slaughtered oxen, we must have with us; and mind, we must have the twelve ox-hides, with twelve hundred spikes driven into each; and, let me see, a big tar-barrel — that’s all we want.’

So the lad went up to the king and asked for all that Dapplegrim had said, and the king again thought he couldn’t say nay, for shame’s sake, and so the lad got all he wanted.

Well, he jumped up on Dapplegrim’s back, and rode away from the palace, and when he had ridden far far over hill and heath, Dapple asked:

‘Do you hear anything?’

‘Yes, I hear an awful hissing and rustling up in the air,’ said the lad; ‘I think I’m getting afraid.’

‘That’s all the wild birds that fly through the wood. They are sent to stop us; but just cut a hole in the corn-sacks, and then they’ll have so much to do with the corn, they’ll forget us quite.’

Yes! the lad did that; he cut holes in the corn-sacks, so that the rye and barley ran out on all sides. Then all the wild birds that were in the wood came flying round them so thick that the sunbeams grew dark; but as soon as they saw the corn, they couldn’t keep to their purpose, but flew down and began to pick and scratch at the rye and barley, and after that they began to fight among themselves. As for Dapplegrim and the lad, they forgot all about them, and did them no harm.

So the lad rode on and on — far far over mountain and dale, over sand-hills and moor. Then Dapplegrim began to prick up his ears again, and at last he asked the lad if he heard anything?

‘Yes! now I hear such an ugly roaring and howling in the wood all round, it makes me quite afraid.’

‘Ah!’ said Dapplegrim, ‘that’s all the wild beasts that range through the wood, and they’re sent out to stop us. But just cast out the twelve carcasses of the oxen, that will give them enough to do, and so they’ll forget us outright.’

Yes! the lad cast out the carcasses, and then all the wild beasts in the wood, both bears, and wolves, and lions — all fell beasts of all kinds — came after them. But when they saw the carcasses, they began to fight for them among themselves till blood flowed in streams; but Dapplegrim and the lad they quite forgot.

So the lad rode far away, and they changed the landscape many many times, for Dapplegrim didn’t let the grass grow under him, as you may fancy. At last Dapple gave a great neigh.

‘Do you hear anything?’ he said.

‘Yes, I hear something like a colt neighing loud, a long long way off’, answered the lad.

‘That’s a full-grown colt then’, said Dapplegrim, ‘if we hear him neigh so loud such a long way off.’

After that they travelled a good bit, changing the landscape once or twice, maybe. Then Dapplegrim gave another neigh.

‘Now listen, and tell me if you hear anything’, he said.

‘Yes, now I hear a neigh like a full-grown horse’, answered the lad.

‘Aye! aye!’ said Dapplegrim, ‘you’ll hear him once again soon, and then you’ll hear he’s got a voice of his own.’

So they travelled on and on, and changed the landscape once or twice, perhaps, and then Dapplegrim neighed the third time; but before he could ask the lad if he heard anything, something gave such a neigh across the heathy hill-side, the lad thought hill and rock would surely be rent asunder.

‘Now, he’s here!’ said Dapplegrim; ‘make haste, now, and throw the ox hides, with the spikes in them, over me, and throw down the tar-barrel on the plain; then climb up into that great spruce-fir yonder. When it comes fire will flash out of both nostrils, and then the tar-barrel will catch fire. Now, mind what I say. If the flame rises, I win; if it falls, I lose; but if you see me winning take and cast the bridle — you must take it off me — over its head, and then it will be tame enough.’

So just as the lad had done throwing the ox hides, with the spikes, over Dapplegrim, and had cast down the tar-barrel on the plain, and had got well up into the spruce-fir, up galloped a horse, with fire flashing out of his nostrils, and the flame caught the tar-barrel at once. Then Dapplegrim and the strange horse began to fight till the stones flew heaven high. They fought and bit, and kicked, both with fore-feet and hind-feet, and sometimes the lad could see them, and sometimes he couldn’t; but at last the flame began to rise; for wherever the strange horse kicked or bit, he met the spiked hides, and at last he had to yield. When the lad saw that, he wasn’t long in getting down from the tree, and in throwing the bridle over its head, and then it was so tame you could hold it with a pack-thread.

And what do you think? that horse was dappled too, and so like Dapplegrim, you couldn’t tell which was which. Then the lad bestrode the new Dapple he had broken, and rode home to the palace, and old Dapplegrim ran loose by his side. So when he got home, there stood the king out in the yard.

‘Can you tell me now’, said the lad, ‘which is the horse I have caught and broken, and which is the one I had before. If you can’t, I think your daughter is fairly mine.’

Then the king went and looked at both Dapples, high and low, before and behind, but there wasn't a hair on one which wasn't on the other as well. 'No', said the king, 'that I can't; and since you've got my daughter such a grand horse for her wedding, you shall have her with all my heart. But still, we'll have one trial more, just to see whether you're fated to have her. First, she shall hide herself twice, and then you shall hide yourself twice. If you can find out her hiding-place, and she can't find out yours, why then you're fated to have her, and so you shall have her.'

'That's not in the bargain either', said the lad; 'but we must just try, since it must be so'; and so the Princess went off to hide herself first.

So she turned herself into a duck, and lay swimming on a pond that was close to the palace. But the lad only ran down to the stable, and asked Dapplegrim what she had done with herself.

'Oh, you only need to take your gun', said Dapplegrim, 'and go down to the brink of the pond, and aim at the duck which lies swimming about there, and she'll soon show herself.'

So the lad snatched up his gun and ran off to the pond. 'I'll just take a pop at this duck', he said, and began to aim at it.

'Nay, nay, dear friend, don't shoot. It's I', said the Princess.

So he had found her once.

The second time the Princess turned herself into a loaf of bread, and laid herself on the table among four other loaves; and so like was she to the others, no one could say which was which.

But the lad went again down to the stable to Dapplegrim, and said how the Princess had hidden herself again, and he couldn't tell at all what had become of her.

'Oh, just take and sharpen a good bread-knife', said Dapplegrim,' and do as if you were going to cut in two the third loaf on the left hand of those four loaves which are lying on the dresser in the king's kitchen, and you'll find her soon enough.'

Yes! the was down in the kitchen in no time, and began to sharpen the biggest bread-knife he could lay hands on; then he caught hold of the third loaf on the left hand, and put the knife to it, as though he was going to cut it in two. I'll just have a slice off this loaf', he said,

Nay, dear friend', said the Princess, 'don't cut. It's I' So he had found her twice.

Then he was to go and hide; but he and Dapplegrim had settled it all so well beforehand, it wasn't easy to find him. First he turned himself into a tick, and hid himself in Dapplegrim's left nostril; and the Princess went about hunting him everywhere, high and low; at last she wanted to go into Dapplegrim's stall, but he began to bite and kick, so that she daren't go near him, and so she couldn't find the lad.

'Well', she said, 'since I can't find you, you must show where you are yourself'; and in a trice the lad stood there on the stable floor.

The second time Dapplegrim told him again what to do; and then he turned himself into a clod of earth, and stuck himself between Dapple's hoof and shoe on the near forefoot. So the Princess hunted up and down, out and in, everywhere; at last she came into the stable, and wanted to go into Dapplegrim's loose-box. This time he let her come up to him, and she pried high and low, but under his hoofs she couldn't come, for he stood firm as a rock on his feet, and so she couldn't find the lad.

'Well; you must just show yourself, for I'm sure I can't find you', said the Princess, and as she spoke the lad stood by her side on the stable floor.

'Now you are mine indeed', said the lad; 'for now you can see I'm fated to have you.' This he said both to the father and daughter.

'Yes; it is so fated', said the king; 'so it must be.' Then they got ready the wedding in right down earnest, and lost no time about it; and the lad got on Dapplegrim, and the Princess on Dapplegrim's match, and then you may fancy they were not long on their way to the church.

57

FARMER WEATHERSKY

Once on a time there was a man and his wife, who had an only son, and his name was Jack. The old dame thought it high time for her son to go out into the world to learn a trade, and bade her husband be off with him.

'But all you do', she said, 'mind you bind him to some one who can teach him to be master above all masters'; and with that she put some food and a roll of tobacco into a bag, and packed them off.

Well! they went to many masters; but one and all said they could make the lad as good as themselves, but better they couldn't make him. So when the man came home again to his wife with that answer, she said:

'I don't care what you make of him; but this I say and stick to, you must bind him to some one where he can learn to be master above all masters'; and with that she packed up more food and another roll of tobacco, and father and son had to be off again.

Now when they had walked a while they got upon the ice, and there they met a man who came whisking along in a sledge, and drove a black horse.

'Whither away?' said the man.

'Well!' said the father, 'I'm going to bind my son to some one who is good to teach him a trade; but my old dame comes of such fine folk, she will have him taught to be master above all masters.'

'Well met then', said the driver; 'I'm just the man for your money, for I'm looking out for such an apprentice. Up with you behind!' he added to the lad, and whisk! off they went, both of them, and sledge and horse, right up into the air.

'Nay, nay!' cried the lad's father, 'you haven't told me your name, nor where you live.'

'Oh!' said the master, 'I'm at home alike north and south, and east and west, and my name's *Farmer Weathersky*. In a year and a day you may come here again, and then I'll tell you if I like him.' So away they went through the air, and were soon out of sight.

So when the man got home, his old dame asked what had become of her son.

'Well', said the man, 'Heaven knows, I'm sure I don't. They went up aloft'; and so he told her what had happened. But when the old dame heard that her husband couldn't tell at all when her son's apprenticeship would be out, nor whither he had gone, she packed him off again, and gave him another bag of food and another roll of tobacco.

So, when he had walked a bit, he came to a great wood, which stretched on and on all day as he walked through it. When it got dark he saw a great light, and he went towards it. After a long, long time he came to a little but under a rock, and outside stood an old hag drawing water out of a well with her nose, so long was it.

'Good evening, mother!' said the man.

'The same to you', said the old hag. 'It's hundreds of years since any one called me mother.'

'Can I have lodging here to-night?' asked the man.

'No! that you can't', said she.

But then the man pulled out his roll of tobacco, lighted his pipe, and gave the old dame a whiff, and a pinch of snuff. Then she was so happy she began to dance for joy, and the end was, she gave the man leave to stop the night.

So next morning he began to ask after Farmer Weathersky. 'No! she never heard tell of him, but she ruled over all the four-footed beasts; perhaps some of them might know him.' So she played them all home with a pipe she had, and asked them all, but there wasn't one of them who knew anything about Farmer Weathersky.

'Well!' said the old hag, 'there are three sisters of us; maybe one of the other two know where he lives. I'll lend you my horse and sledge, and then you'll be at her house by night; but it's at least three hundred miles off, the nearest way.'

Then the man started off, and at night reached the house, and when he came there, there stood another old hag before the door, drawing water out of the well with her nose.

'Good evening, mother!' said the man.

'The same to you', said she; 'it's hundreds of years since any one called me mother.'

'Can I lodge here to-night?' asked the man.

'No!' said the old hag.

But he took out his roll of tobacco, lighted his pipe, and gave the old dame a whiff, and a good pinch of snuff besides, on the back of her hand. Then she was so happy that she began to jump and dance for joy, and so the man got leave to stay the night. When that was over, he began to ask after Farmer Weathersky. 'No! she had never heard tell of him; but she ruled all the fish in the sea; perhaps some of them might know something about him.' So she played them all home with a pipe she had, and asked them, but there wasn't one of them who knew anything about Farmer Weathersky.

'Well, well!' said the old hag, 'there's one sister of us left; maybe she knows something about him. She lives six hundred miles off, but I'll lend you my horse and sledge, and then you'll get there by nightfall.'

Then the man started off, and reached the house by nightfall, and there he found another old hag who stood before the grate, and stirred the fire with her nose, so long and tough it was.

‘Good evening, mother!’ said the man.

‘The same to you’, said the old hag; ‘it’s hundreds of years since any one called me mother.’

‘Can I lodge here to-night?’ asked the man.

‘No’, said the old hag.

Then the man pulled out his roll of tobacco again, and lighted his pipe, and gave the old hag such a pinch of snuff it covered the whole back of her hand. Then she got so happy she began to dance for joy, and so the man got leave to stay. But when the night was over, he began to ask after Farmer Weathersky. She never heard tell of him she said; but she ruled over all the birds of the air, and so she played them all home with a pipe she had, and when she had mustered them all, the Eagle was missing. But a little while after he came flying home, and when she asked him, he said he had just come straight from Farmer Weathersky. Then the old hag said he must guide the man thither; but the eagle said he must have something to eat first, and besides he must rest till the next day; he was so tired with flying that long way, he could scarce rise from the earth.

So when he had eaten his fill and taken a good rest, the old hag pulled a feather out of the Eagle’s tail, and put the man there in its stead; so the Eagle flew off with the man, and flew, and flew, but they didn’t reach Farmer Weathersky’s house before midnight.

So when they got there, the Eagle said

‘There are heaps of dead bodies lying about outside but you mustn’t mind them. Inside the house every man Jack of them are so sound asleep, ‘t will be hard work to wake them; but you must go straight to the table drawer, and take out of it three crumbs of bread, and when you hear some one snoring loud, pull three feathers out of his head; he won't wake for all that.'

So the man did as he was told, and after he had taken the crumbs of bread, he pulled out the first feather.

'OOF!' growled Farmer Weathersky, for it was he who snored.

So the man pulled out another feather.

'OOF!' he growled again.

But when he pulled out the third, Farmer Weathersky roared so, the man thought roof and wall would have flown asunder, but for all that the snorer slept on.

After that the Eagle told him what he was to do. He went to the yard, and there at the stable-door he stumbled against a big gray stone, and that he lifted up; underneath it lay three chips of wood, and those he picked up too; then he knocked at the stable-door, and it opened of itself. Then he threw down the three crumbs of bread, and a hare came and ate them up; that hare he caught and kept. After that the Eagle bade him pull three feathers out of his tail, and put the hare, the stone, the chips, and himself there instead, and then he would fly away home with them all.

So when the Eagle had flown a long way, he lighted on a rock to rest.

'Do you see anything?' it asked.

'Yes', said the man, 'I see a flock of crows coming flying after us.'

'We'd better be off again, then', said the Eagle, who flew away.

After a while it asked again:

'Do you see anything now?'

'Yes', said the man; 'now the crows are close behind us.'

'Drop now the three feathers you pulled out of his head, said the Eagle.

Well, the man dropped the feathers, and as soon as ever he dropped them they became a flock of ravens which drove the crows home again. Then the Eagle flew on far away with the man, and at last it lighted on another stone to rest.

‘Do you see anything?’ it said.

‘I’m not sure’, said the man; ‘I fancy I see something coming far far away’.

‘We’d better get on then’, said the Eagle; and after a while it said again:

‘Do you see anything?’

‘Yes’, said the man, ‘now he’s close at our heels.’

‘Now, you must let fall the chips of wood which you took from under the gray stone at the stable door’, said the Eagle.

Yes! the man let them fall, and they grew at once up into tall thick wood, so that Farmer Weathersky had to go back home to fetch an axe to hew his way through. While he did this, the Eagle flew ever so far, but when it got tired, it lighted on a fir to rest.

‘Do you see anything?’ it said.

‘Well! I’m not sure’, said the man; ‘but I fancy I catch a glimpse of something far away.’

‘We’d best be off then’, said the Eagle; and off it flew as fast as it could. After a while it said:

‘Do you see anything now?’

‘Yes! now he’s close behind us’, said the man.

‘Now, you must drop the big stone you lifted up at the stable door’, said the Eagle.

The man did so, and as it fell it became a great high mountain, which Farmer Weathersky had to break his way through. When he had got half through the mountain, he tripped and broke one of his legs, and so he had to limp home again and patch it up.

But while he was doing this, the Eagle flew away to the man’s house with him and the hare, and as soon as they got home, the man went into the churchyard and sprinkled Christian mould over the hare, and lo! it turned into ‘Jack’, his son.

Well, you may fancy the old dame was glad to get her son again, but still she wasn't easy in her mind about his trade, and she wouldn't rest till he gave her a proof that he was 'master above all masters'.

So when the fair came round, the lad changed himself into a bay horse, and told his father to lead him to the fair. 'Now, when any one comes', he said, 'to buy me, you may ask a hundred dollars for me; but mind you don't forget to take the headstall off me; if you do, Farmer Weathersky will keep me for ever, for he it is who will come to deal with you.'

So it turned out. Up came a horse-dealer, who had a great wish to deal for the horse, and he gave a hundred dollars down for him; but when the bargain was struck, and Jack's father had pocketed the money, the horse-dealer wanted to have the headstall. 'Nay, nay!' said the man, 'there's nothing about that in the bargain; and besides, you can't have the headstall, for I've other horses at home to bring to town to-morrow.'

So each went his way; but they hadn't gone far before Jack took his own shape and ran away, and when his father got home, there sat Jack in the ingle.

Next day he turned himself into a brown horse, and told his father to drive him to the fair.

'And when any one comes to buy me, you may ask two hundred dollars for me — he'll give that and treat you besides; but whatever you do, and however much you drink, don't forget to take the headstall off me, else you'll never set eyes on me again.'

So all happened as he had said; the man got two hundred dollars for the horse and a glass of drink besides, and when the buyer and seller parted, it was as much as he could do to remember to take off the headstall. But the buyer and the horse hadn't got far on the road before Jack took his own shape, and when the man got home, there sat Jack in the ingle.

The third day, it was the same story over again: the lad turned himself into a black horse, and told his father some one would come and bid three hundred dollars for him, and fill his skin with meat and drink besides; but however much he ate or drank, he was to mind and not forget to take the headstall off, else he’d have to stay with Farmer Weathersky all his life long.

‘No, no; I’ll not forget, never fear’, said the man.

So when he came to the fair, he got three hundred dollars for the horse, and as it wasn’t to be a dry bargain, Farmer Weathersky made him drink so much that he quite forgot to take the headstall off, and away went Farmer Weathersky with the horse. Now when he had gone a little way, Farmer Weathersky thought he would just stop and have another glass of brandy; so he put a barrel of red-hot nails under his horse’s nose, and a sieve of oats under his tail, hung the halter, upon a hook, and went into the inn. So the horse stood there and stamped and pawed, and snorted and reared. Just then out came a lassie, who thought it a shame to treat a horse so.

‘Oh, poor beastie’, she said, ‘what a cruel master you must have to treat you so’, and as she said this she pulled the halter off the hook, so that the horse might turn round and taste the oats.

‘I’M AFTER YOU’, roared Farmer Weathersky, who came rushing out of the door.

But the horse had already shaken off the headstall, and jumped into a duck-pond, where he turned himself into a tiny fish. In went Farmer Weathersky after him, and turned himself into a great pike. Then Jack turned himself into a dove, and Farmer Weathersky made himself into a hawk, and chased and struck at the dove. But just then a Princess stood at the window of the palace and saw this struggle.

‘Ah! poor dove’, she cried, ‘if you only knew what I know, you’d fly to me through this window.’

So the dove came flying in through the window, and turned itself into Jack again, who told his own tale.

‘Turn yourself into a gold ring, and put yourself on my finger’, said the Princess.

‘Nay, nay!’ said Jack, ‘that’ll never do, for then Farmer Weathersky will make the king sick, and then there’ll be no one who can make him well again till Farmer Weathersky comes and cures him, and then, for his fee, he’ll ask for that gold ring.’

‘Then I’ll say I had it from my mother, and can’t part with it’, said the Princess.

Well, Jack turned himself into a gold ring, and put himself on the Princess’ finger, and so Farmer Weathersky couldn’t get at him. But then followed what the lad had foretold; the king fell sick, and there wasn’t a doctor in the kingdom who could cure him till Farmer Weathersky came, and he asked for the ring off the Princess’ finger for his fee. So the king sent a messenger to the Princess for the ring; but the Princess said she wouldn’t part with it, her mother had left it her. When the king heard that, he flew into a rage, and said he would have the ring, whoever left it to her.

‘Well’, said the Princess, ‘it’s no good being cross about it. I can’t get it off, and if you must have the ring, you must take my finger too.’

‘If you’ll let me try, I’ll soon get the ring off’, said Farmer Weathersky.

‘No, thanks, I’ll try myself’, said the Princess, and flew off to the grate and put ashes on her finger. Then the ring slipped off and was lost among the ashes. So Farmer Weathersky turned himself into a cock, who scratched and pecked after the ring in the grate, till he was up to the ears in ashes. But while he was doing this, Jack turned himself into a fox, and bit off the cock’s head; and so if the Evil One was in Farmer Weathersky, it is all over with him now.

58

LORD PETER

Once on a time there was a poor couple, and they had nothing in the world but three sons. What the names the two elder had I can’t say, but the youngest he was called Peter. So when their father and mother died, the sons were to share what was left, but there was nothing but a porridge-pot, a griddle, and a cat.

The eldest, who was to have first choice, he took the pot; ‘for’, said he, ‘whenever I lend the pot to any one to boil porridge, I can always get leave to scrape it’.

The second took the griddle; ‘for’, said he, ‘whenever I lend it to any one, I’ll always get a morsel of dough to make a bannock.’

But the youngest, he had no choice left him; if he was to choose anything it must be the cat.

‘Well!’ said he, ‘if I lend the cat to any one I shan’t get much by that; for if pussy gets a drop of milk, she’ll want it all herself. Still, I’d best take her along with me; I shouldn’t like her to go about here and starve.’

So the brothers went out into the world to try their luck, and each took his own way; but when the youngest had gorse a while, the cat said:

‘Now you shall have a good turn, because you wouldn’t let me stay behind in the old cottage and starve. Now, I’m off to the wood to lay hold of a fine fat head of game, and then you must go up to the king’s palace that you see yonder, and say you are come with a little present for the king; and when he asks who sends it, you must say, “Why, who should it be from but Lord Peter.”‘

Well! Peter hadn’t waited long before back came the cat with a reindeer from the wood; she had jumped up on the reindeer’s head, between his horns, and said, ‘If you don’t go straight to the king’s palace I’ll claw your eyes out.’

So the reindeer had to go whether he liked it or no.

And when Peter got to the palace he went into the kitchen with the deer, and said: ‘Here I’m come with a little present for the king, if he won’t despise it.’

Then the King went out into the kitchen, and when he saw the fine plump reindeer, he was very glad.

‘But, my dear friend’, he said, ‘who in the world is it that sends me such a fine gift?’

‘Oh!’ said Peter, ‘who should send it but Lord Peter.’

‘Lord Peter! Lord Peter!’ said the King. ‘Pray tell me where he lives’; for he thought it a shame not to know so great a man. But that was just what the lad wouldn’t tell him; he daren’t do it, he said, because his master had forbidden him.

So the King gave him a good bit of money to drink his health, and bade him be sure and say all kind of pretty things, and many thanks for the present to his master when he got home.

Next day the Cat went again into the wood, and jumped up on a red deer’s head, and sat between his horns, and forced him to go to the palace. Then Peter went again into the kitchen, and said he was come with a little present for the King, if he would be pleased to take it. And the King was still more glad to get the red deer than he had been to get the reindeer, and asked again who it was that sent so fine a present.

‘Why, it’s Lord Peter, of course’, said the lad; but when the King wanted to know where Lord Peter lived, he got the same answer as the day before; and this day, too, he gave Peter a good lump of money to drink his health with.

The third day the Cat came with an elk. And so when Peter got into the palace kitchen, and said he had a little present for the King, if he’d be pleased to take it, the King came out at once into the kitchen; and when he saw the grand big elk, he was so glad he scarce knew which leg to stand on; and this day, too, he gave Peter many many more dollars — at least a hundred. He wished now, once for all, to know where this Lord Peter lived, and asked and asked about this thing and that, but the lad said he daren’t say, for his master’s sake, who had strictly forbidden him to tell.

‘Well, then’, said the King, ‘beg Lord Peter to come and see me.’

Yes, the lad would take that message; but when Peter got out into the yard again, and met the Cat, he said,

‘A pretty scrape you’ve got me into now, for here’s the King, who wants me to come and see him, and you know I’ve nothing to go in but these rags I stand and walk in.’

‘Oh, don’t be afraid about that’, said the Cat; ‘in three days you shall have coach and horses, and fine clothes, so fine that the gold falls from them, and then you may go and see the king very well. But mind, whatever you see in the king’s palace, you must say you have far finer and grander things of your own. Don’t forget that.’

No, no, Peter would bear that in mind, never fear.

So when three days were over, the Cat came with a coach and horses, and clothes, and all that Peter wanted, and altogether it was as grand as anything you ever set eyes on; so off he set, and the Cat ran alongside the coach. The King met him well and graciously; but whatever the King offered him, and whatever he showed him, Peter said, ‘twas all very well, but he had far finer and better things in his own house. The King seemed not quite to believe this, but Peter stuck to what he said, and at last the King got so angry, he couldn’t bear it any longer.

‘Now I’ll go home with you’, he said, ‘and see if it be true what you’ve been telling me, that you have far finer and better things of your own. But if you’ve been telling a pack of lies, Heaven help you, that’s all I say.’

‘Now, you’ve got me into a fine scrape’, said Peter to the Cat, ‘for here’s the King coming home with me; but my home, that’s not so easy to find, I think.’

‘Oh! never mind’, said the Cat; ‘only do you drive after me as I run before.’

So off they set; first Peter, who drove after his Cat, and then the King and all his court.

But when they had driven a good bit, they came to a great flock of fine sheep, that had wool so long it almost touched the ground.

‘If you’ll only say’, said the Cat to the Shepherd, ‘this flock of sheep belongs to Lord Peter, when the King asks you, I’ll give you this silver spoon’, which she had taken with her from the King’s palace.

Yes! he was willing enough to do that. So when the king came up, he said to the lad who watched the sheep,

‘Well, I never saw so large and fine a flock of sheep in my life! Whose is it? my little lad.’

‘Why’, said the lad, ‘whose should it be but Lord Peter’s.’

A little while after they came to a great, great herd of fine brindled kine, who were all so sleek the sun shone from them.

‘If you’ll only say’, said the Cat to the neat-herd, ‘this herd is Lord Peter’s, when the King asks you, I’ll give you this silver ladle’; and the ladle too she had taken from the King’s palace.

‘Yes! with all my heart’, said the neat-herd.

So when the King came up, he was quite amazed at the fine fat herd, for such a herd he had never seen before, and so he asked the neat-herd who owned those brindled kine.

‘Why! who should own them but Lord Peter’, said the neat-herd.

So they went on a little further, and came to a great, great drove of horses, the finest you ever saw, six of each colour, bay, and black, and brown, and chesnut.

‘If you’ll only say this drove of horses is Lord Peter’s when the King asks you’, said the Cat, ‘I’ll give you this silver stoop’; and the stoop too she had taken from the palace.

Yes! the lad was willing enough; and so when the King came up, he was quite amazed at the grand drove of horses, for the matches of such horses he had never yet set eyes on, he said.

So he asked the lad who watched them, whose all these blacks, and bays, and browns, and chesnuts were?

‘Whose should they be’, said the lad, ‘but Lord Peter’s.’

So when they had gone a good bit farther, they came to a castle; first there was a gate of tin, and next there was a gate of silver, and next a gate of gold. The castle itself was of silver, and so dazzling white, that it quite hurt one’s eyes to look at in the sunbeams which fell on it just as they reached it.

So they went into it, and the Cat told Peter to say this was his house. As for the castle inside, it was far finer than it looked outside, for everything was pure gold — chairs, and tables, and benches, and all. And when the King had gone all over it, and seen everything high and low, he got quite shameful and downcast.

‘Yes’, he said at last; ‘Lord Peter has everything far finer than I have, there’s no gainsaying that’, and so he wanted to be off home again.

But Peter begged him to stay to supper, and the King stayed, but he was sour, and surly the whole time.

So as they sat at supper, back came the Troll who owned the castle, and gave such a great knock at the door.

‘WHO’S THIS EATING MY MEAT AND DRINKING MY MEAD LIKE SWINE IN HERE’, roared out the Troll.

As soon as the Cat heard that, she ran down to the gate.

‘Stop a bit’, she said, ‘and I’ll tell you how the farmer sets to work to get in his winter rye.’

And so she told him such a long story about the winter rye.

‘First of all, you see, he ploughs his field, and then he dungs it, and then he ploughs it again, and then he harrows it’; and so she went on till the sun rose.

‘Oh, do look behind you, and there you’ll see such a lovely lady’, said the Cat to the Troll.

So the Troll turned round, and, of course, as soon as he saw the sun he burst.

‘Now all this is yours’, said the Cat to Lord Peter. ‘Now, you must cut off my head; that’s all I ask for what I have done for you.’

‘Nay, nay’, said Lord Peter, ‘I’ll never do any such thing, that’s flat.’

‘If you don’t’, said the Cat,’ see if I don’t claw your eyes out.’

Well! so Lord Peter had to do it, though it was sore against his will. He cut off the Cat’s head, but there and then she became the loveliest Princess you ever set eyes on, and Lord Peter fell in love with her at once.

‘Yes! all this greatness was mine first’, said the Princess, ‘but a Troll bewitched me to be a Cat in your father’s and mother’s cottage. Now you may do as you please, whether you take me as your queen or not, for you are now king over all this realm.’

Well, well; there was little doubt Lord Peter would be willing enough to have her as his queen, and so there was a wedding that lasted eight whole days, and a feast besides; and after it was over, I stayed no longer with Lord Peter and his lovely queen, and so I can’t say anything more about them.

59

THE SEVEN FOALS

Once on a time there was a poor couple who lived in a wretched hut, far far away in the wood. How they lived I can’t tell, but I’m sure it was from hand to mouth, and hard work even then; but they had three sons, and the youngest of them was Boots, of course, for he did little else than lie there and poke about in the ashes.

So one day the eldest lad said he would go out to earn his bread, and he soon got leave, and wandered out into the world. There he walked and walked the whole day, and when evening drew in, he came to a king’s palace, and there stood the King out on the steps, and asked whither he was bound.

‘Oh, I’m going about, looking after a place’, said the lad.

‘Will you serve me?’ asked the King, ‘and watch my seven foals. If you can watch them one whole day, and tell me at night what they eat and what they drink, you shall have the Princess to wife, and half my kingdom; but if you can’t, I’ll cut three red stripes out of your back. Do you hear?’

Yes! that was an easy task, the lad thought; he’d do that fast enough, never fear.

So next morning, as soon as the first peep of dawn came, the king’s coachman let out the seven foals. Away they went, and the lad after them. You may fancy how they tore over hill and dale, through bush and bog.

When the lad had run so a long time, he began to get weary, and when he had held on a while longer, he had more than enough of his watching, and just there, he came to a cleft in a rock, where an old hag sat and spun with a distaff. As soon as she saw the lad who was running after the foals till the sweat ran down his brow, this old hag bawled out:

‘Come hither, come hither, my pretty son, and let me comb your hair.’

Yes! the lad was willing enough; so he sat down in the cleft of the rock with the old hag, and laid his head on her lap, and she combed his hair all day whilst he lay there, and stretched his lazy bones.

So, when evening drew on, the lad wanted to go away. ‘I may just as well toddle straight home now’, said he, ‘for it’s no use my going back to the palace.’

‘Stop a bit till it’s dark’, said the old hag, ‘and then the king’s foals will pass by here again, and then you can run home with them, and then no one will know that you have lain here all day long, instead of watching the foals.’

So, when they came, she gave the lad a flask of water and a clod of turf. Those he was to show to the King, and say that was what his seven foals ate and drank.

‘Have you watched true and well the whole day, now?’ asked the King, when the lad came before him in the evening.

‘Yes, I should think so’, said the lad.

‘Then you can tell me what my seven foals eat and drink’, said the King.

‘Yes!’ and so the lad pulled out the flask of water and the clod of turf, which the old hag had given him.

‘Here you see their meat, and here you see their drink’, said the lad.

But then the King saw plain enough how he had watched, and he got so wroth, he ordered his men to chase him away home on the spot; but first they were to cut three red stripes out of his back, and rub salt into them. So when the lad got home again, you may fancy what a temper he was in. He'd gone out once to get a place, he said, but he'd never do so again.

Next day the second sons aid he would go out into the world to try his luck. His father and mother said 'No', and bade him look at his brother's back; but the lad wouldn't give in; he held to his own, and at last he got leave to go, and set off. So when he had walked the whole day, he, too, came to the king's palace. There stood the King out on the steps, and asked whither he was bound? and when the lad said he was looking about for a place, the King said he might have a place there, and watch his seven foals. But the king laid down the same punishment, and the same reward, as he had settled for his brother. Well, the lad was willing enough; he took the place at once with the King, for he thought he'd soon watch the foals, and tell the King what they ate and drank. So, in the gray of the morning, the coachman let out the seven foals, and off they went again over hill and dale, and the lad after them. But the same thing happened to him as had befallen his brother. When he had run after the foals a long long time, till he was both warm and weary, he passed by the cleft in a rock, where an old hag sat and spun with a distaff, and she bawled out to the lad:

'Come hither, come hither, my pretty son, and let me comb your hair.'

That the lad thought a good offer, so he let the foals run on their way, and sat down in the cleft with the old hag. There he sat, and there he lay, taking his ease, and stretching his lazy bones the whole day.

When the foals came back at nightfall, he too got a flask of water and clod of turf from the old hag to show to the King. But when the King asked the lad:

'Can you tell me now, what my seven foals eat and drink?' and the lad pulled out the flask and the clod, and said:

'Here you see their meat, and here you see their drink.'

Then the King got wroth again, and ordered them to cut three red stripes out of the lad's back, and rub salt in, and chase him home that very minute.

And so when the lad got home, he also told how he had fared, and said, he had gone out once to get a place, but he'd never do so any more.

The third day Boots wanted to set out; he had a great mind to try and watch the seven foals, he said. The others laughed at him, and made game of him, saying:

'When we fared so ill, you'll do it better — a fine joke; you look like it — you, who have never done anything but lie there and poke about in the ashes.'

'Yes!' said Boots, 'I don't see why I shouldn't go, for I've got it into my head, and can't get it out again.'

And so, in spite of all the jeers of the others and the prayers of the old people, there was no help for it, and Boots set out.

So after he had walked the whole day, he too came at dusk to the king's palace. There stood the King out on the steps, and asked whither he was bound.

'Oh', said Boots, 'I'm going about seeing if I can hear of a place.'

'Whence do you come then?' said the King, for he wanted to know a little more about them before he took any one into his service.

So Boots said whence he came, and how he was brother to those two who had watched the king's seven foals, and ended by asking if he might try to watch them next day.

'Oh, stuff!' said the King, for he got quite cross if he even thought of them; 'if you're brother to those two, you're not worth much, I'll be bound. I've had enough of such scamps.'

'Well', said Boots; but since I've come so far, I may just as well get leave to try, I too.'

'Oh, very well; with all my heart', said the King, 'if you *will* have your back flayed, you're quite welcome.'

'I'd much rather have the Princess', said Boots.

So next morning, at gray of dawn, the coachman let out the seven foals again, and away they went over hill and dale, through bush and bog, and Boots behind them. And so, when he too had run a long while, he came to the cleft in the rock, where the old hag sat, spinning at her distaff. So she bawled out to Boots:

‘Come hither, come hither, my pretty son, and let me comb your hair.’

‘Don’t you wish you may catch me’, said Boots. ‘Don’t you wish you may catch me’, as he ran along, leaping and jumping, and holding on by one of the foal’s tails. And when he had got well past the cleft in the rock, the youngest foal said:

‘Jump up on my back, my lad, for we’ve a long way before us still.’

So Boots jumped up on his back.

So they went on, and on, a long, long way.

‘Do you see anything now’, said the Foal.

‘No’, said Boots.

So they went on a good bit farther.

‘Do you see anything now?’ asked the Foal.

‘Oh no’, said the lad.

So when they had gone a great, great way farther — I’m sure I can’t tell how far — the Foal asked again:

‘Do you see anything now?’

‘Yes’, said Boots; ‘now I see something that looks white — just like a tall, big birch trunk.’

‘Yes’, said the Foal; ‘we’re going into that trunk.’ So when they got to the trunk, the eldest foal took and pushed it on one side, and then they saw a door where it had stood, and inside the door was a little room, and in the room there was scarce anything but a little fireplace and one or two benches; but behind the door hung a great rusty sword and a little pitcher.

‘Can you brandish the sword?’ said the Foals; ‘try.’ So Boots tried, but he couldn’t; then they made him take a pull at the pitcher; first once, then twice, and then thrice, and then he could wield it like anything.

‘Yes’, said the Foals, ‘now you may take the sword with you, and with it you must cut off all our seven heads on your wedding-day, and then we’ll be princes again as we were before. For we are brothers of that Princess whom you are to have when you can tell the King what we eat and drink; but an ugly Troll has thrown this shape over us. Now mind, when you have hewn off our heads, to take care to lay each head at the tail of the trunk which it belonged to before, and then the spell will have no more power over us.’

Yes! Boots promised all that, and then on they went. And when they had travelled a long long way, the Foal asked:

‘Do you see anything?’

‘No’, said Boots.

So they travelled a good bit still.

‘And now?’ asked the Foal.

‘No, I see nothing’, said Boots.

So they travelled many many miles again, over hill and dale.

‘Now then’, said the Foal, ‘do you see anything now?’

‘Yes’, said Boots, ‘now I see something like a blue stripe, far far away.’

‘Yes’, said the Foal, ‘that’s a river we’ve got to cross.’ Over the river was a long, grand bridge; and when they had got over to the other side, they travelled on a long, long way. At last the Foal asked again:

‘If Boots didn’t see anything?’

‘Yes, this time he saw something that looked black far far away, just as though it were a church steeple.’

‘Yes’, said the Foal, ‘that’s where we’re going to turn in.’

So when the foals got into the churchyard, they became men again, and looked like Princes, with such fine clothes that it glistened from them; and so they went into the church, and took the bread and wine from the priest who stood at the altar. And Boots he went in too; but when the priest had laid his hands on the Princes, and given them the blessing, they went out of the church again, and Boots went out too; but he took with him a flask of wine and a wafer. And soon as ever the seven Princes came out into the churchyard, they were turned into foals again, and so Boots got up on the back of the youngest, and so they all went back the same way that they had come; only they went much, much faster. First they crossed the bridge, next they passed the trunk, and then they passed the old hag, who sat at the cleft and span, and they went by her so fast, that Boots couldn't hear what the old hag screeched after him; but he heard so much as to know she was in an awful rage.

It was almost dark when they got back to the palace, and the King himself stood out on the steps and waited for them. 'Have you watched well and true the whole day?' said he to Boots.

'I've done my best', answered Boots.

'Then you can tell me what my seven foals eat and drink', said the King.

Then Boots pulled out the flask of wine and the wafer, and showed them to the King.

'Here you see their meat, and here you see their drink', said he.

'Yes', said the King, 'you have watched true and well, and you shall have the Princess and half the kingdom.'

So they made ready the wedding-feast, and the King said it should be such a grand one, it should be the talk far and near.

But when they sat down to the bridal-feast, the bridegroom got up and went down to the stable, for he said he had forgotten something, and must go to fetch it. And when he got down there, he did as the Foals had said, and hewed their heads off, all seven, the eldest first, and the others after him; and at the same time he took care to lay each head at the tail of the foal to which it belonged; and as he did this, lo! they all became Princes again.

So when he went into the bridal hall with the seven princes, the King was so glad he both kissed Boots and patted him on the back, and his bride was still more glad of him than she had been before.

‘Half the kingdom you have got already’, said the King, ‘and the other half you shall have after my death; for my sons can easily get themselves lands and wealth, now they are princes again.’

And so, like enough, there was mirth and fun at that wedding. I was there too; but there was no one to care for poor me; and so I got nothing but a bit of bread and butter, and I laid it down on the stove, and the bread was burnt and the butter ran, and so I didn’t get even the smallest crumb. Wasn’t that a great shame?

60

BUSHY BRIDE

Once on a time there was a widower, who had a son and a daughter by his first marriage. Both were good children, and loved each other dearly. Some time after the man married a widow, who had a daughter by her first husband, and she was both ugly and bad, like her mother. So from the day the new wife came into the house there was no peace for her stepchildren in any corner; and at last the lad thought he'd best go out into the world, and try to earn his own bread. And when he had wandered a while he came to a king's palace, and got a place under the coachman, and quick and willing he was, and the horses he looked after were so sleek and clean that their coats shone again.

But the sister who stayed at home was treated worse than badly; both her stepmother and stepsister were always at her, and wherever she went, and whatever she did, they scolded and snarled so, the poor lassie hadn't an hour's peace. All the hard work she was forced to do, and early and late she got nothing but bad words, and little food besides.

So one day they had sent her to the burn to fetch water: and what do you think? up popped an ugly, ugly head out of the pool, and said:

'Wash me, you lassie.'

'Yes, with all my heart I'll wash you', said the lassie. So she began to wash and scrub the ugly head; but truth to say, she thought it nasty work.

Well, as soon as she had done washing it, up popped another head out of the pool, and this was uglier still.

‘Brush me, you lassie’, said the head.

‘Yes, with all my heart I’ll brush you.’

And with that she took in hand the matted locks, and you may fancy she hadn’t very pleasant work with them. But when she had got over that, if a third head didn’t pop up out of the pool, and this was far more ugly and loathsome than both the others put together.

‘Kiss me, you lassie!’

‘Yes, I’ll kiss you’, said the lassie, and she did it too, though she thought it the worst work she had ever had to do in her life.

Then the heads began to chatter together, and each asked what they should do for the lassie who was so kind and gentle.

‘That she be the prettiest lassie in the world, and as fair as the bright day’, said the first head.

‘That gold shall drop from her hair, every time she brushes it’, said the second head.

‘That gold shall fall from her mouth every time she speaks’, said the third head.

So when the lassie came home looking so lovely, and beaming as the bright day itself, her stepmother and her stepsister got more and more cross, and they got worse still when she began to talk, and they saw how golden guineas fell from her mouth. As for the stepmother, she got so mad with rage, she chased the lassie into the pigsty. That was the right place for all her gold stuff, but as for coming into the house, she wouldn’t hear of it.

Well, it wasn’t long before the stepmother wished her own daughter to go to the burn to fetch water. So when she came to the water’s edge with her buckets, up popped the first head.

‘Wash me, you lassie’, it said.

‘The Deil wash you’, said the stepdaughter.

So the second head popped up.

‘Brush me, you lassie’, it said.

‘The Deil brush you’, said the stepdaughter.

So down it went to the bottom, and the third head popped up.

‘Kiss me, you lassie’, said the head.

‘The Deil kiss you, you pig’s-snout’, said the girl.

Then the heads chattered together again, and asked what they should do to the girl who was so spiteful and cross-grained; and they all agreed she should have a nose four ells long, and a snout three ells long, and a pine bush right in the midst of her forehead, and every time she spoke, ashes were to fall out of her mouth.

So when she got home with her buckets, she bawled out to her mother:

‘Open the door.’

‘Open it yourself, my darling child’, said the mother.

‘I can’t reach it because of my nose’, said the daughter.

So, when the mother came out and saw her, you may fancy what a way she was in, and how she screamed and groaned; but, for all that, there were the nose and the snout and the pine bush, and they got no smaller for all her grief.

Now the brother, who had got the place in the King’s stable, had taken a little sketch of his sister, which he carried away with him, and every morning and every evening he knelt down before the picture and prayed to Our Lord for his sister, whom he loved so dearly. The other grooms had heard him praying, so they peeped through the key-hole of his room, and there they saw him on his knees before the picture. So they went about saying how the lad every morning and every evening knelt down and prayed to an idol which he had, and at last they went to the king himself and begged him only to peep through the key-hole, and then His Majesty would see the lad, and what things he did. At first the King wouldn’t believe it, but at last they talked him over, and he crept on tiptoe to the door and peeped in. Yes, there was the lad on his knees before the picture, which hung on the wall, praying with clasped hands.

‘Open the door!’ called out the King; but the lad didn’t hear him.

So the King called out in a louder voice, but the lad was so deep in his prayers he couldn’t hear him this time either. ‘OPEN THE DOOR, I SAY!’ roared out the King; ‘It’s I, the King, who want to come in.’

Well, up jumped the lad and ran to the door, and unlocked it, but in his hurry he forgot to hide the picture. But when the King came in and saw the picture, he stood there as if he were fettered, and couldn’t stir from the spot, so lovely he thought the picture.

‘So lovely a woman there isn’t in all the wide world’, said the King.

But the lad told him she was his sister whom he had drawn, and if she wasn’t prettier than that, at least she wasn’t uglier.

‘Well, if she’s so lovely’, said the King, ‘I’ll have her for my queen’; and then he ordered the lad to set off home that minute, and not be long on the road either. So the lad promised to make as much haste as he could, and started off from the King’s palace.

When the brother came home to fetch his sister, the step-mother and stepsister said they must go too. So they all set out, and the good lassie had a casket in which she kept her gold, and a little dog, whose name was ‘Little Flo’; those two things were all her mother left her. And when they had gone a while, they came to a lake which they had to cross; so the brother sat down at the helm, and the stepmother and the two girls sat in the bow foreward, and so they sailed a long, long way.

At last they caught sight of land.

‘There’, said the brother, ‘where you see the white strand yonder, there’s where we’re to land’; and as he said this he pointed across the water.

‘What is it my brother says?’ asked the good lassie.

‘He says you must throw your casket overboard’, said the stepmother.

‘Well, when my brother says it, I must do it’, said the lassie, and overboard went the casket.

When they had sailed a bit farther, the brother pointed again across the lake.

‘There you see the castle we’re going to.’

‘What is it my brother says?’ asked the lassie.

‘He says now you must throw your little dog overboard’, said the stepmother.

Then the lassie wept and was sore grieved, for Little Flo was the dearest thing she had in the world, but at last she threw him overboard.

‘When my brother says it, I must do it, but heaven knows how it hurts me to throw you over, Little Flo’, she said.

So they sailed on a good bit still.

‘There you see the King coming down to meet us’, said the brother, and pointed towards the strand.

‘What is it my brother says’, asked the lassie.

‘Now he says you must make haste and throw yourself overboard’, said the stepmother.

Well, the lassie wept and moaned; but when her brother told her to do that, she thought she ought to do it, and so she leapt down into the lake.

But when they came to the palace, and the King saw the loathly bride, with a nose four ells long, and a snout three ells long, and a pine-bush in the midst of her forehead, he was quite scared out of his wits; but the wedding was all ready, both in brewing and baking, and there sat all the wedding guests, waiting for the bride; and so the King couldn’t help himself, but was forced to take her for better for worse. But angry he was, that any one can forgive him, and so he had the brother thrown into a pit full of snakes.

Well, the first Thursday evening after the wedding, about midnight, in came a lovely lady into the palace-kitchen, and begged the kitchen-maid, who slept there, so prettily, to lend her a brush. That she got, and then she brushed her hair, and as she brushed, down dropped gold, A little dog was at her heel, and to him she said:

‘Run out, Little Flo, and see if it will soon be day.’

This she said three times, and the third time she sent the dog it was just about the time the dawn begins to peep. Then she had to go, but as she went she sung:

Out on you, ugly Bushy Bride,
Lying so warm by the King’s left side;
While I on sand and gravel sleep,
And over my brother adders creep,
And all without a tear.

‘Now I come twice more, and then never again.’

So next morning the kitchen-maid told what she had seen and heard, and the King said he’d watch himself next Thursday night in the kitchen, and see if it were true, and as soon as it got dark, out he went into the kitchen to the kitchen-maid. But all he could do, and however much he rubbed his eyes and tried to keep himself awake, it was no good; for the Bushy Bride chaunted and sang till his eyes closed, and so when the lovely lady came, there he slept and snored. This time, too, as before, she borrowed a brush, and brushed her hair till the gold dropped, and sent her dog out three times, and as soon as it was gray dawn, away she went singing the same words, and adding:

‘Now I come once more, and then never again.’

The third Thursday evening the King said he would watch again; and he set two men to hold him, one under each arm, who were to shake and jog him every time he wanted to fall asleep; and two men he set to watch his

Bushy Bride. But when the night wore on, the Bushy Bride began to chaunt and sing, so that his eyes began to wink, and his head hung down on his shoulders. Then in came the lovely lady, and got the brush and brushed her hair, till the gold dropped from it; after that she sent Little Flo out again to see if it would soon be day, and this she did three times. The third time it began, to get gray in the east; then she sang,

Out on you, ugly Bushy Bride,
Lying so warm by the King's left side;
While I on sand and gravel sleep,
And over my brother adders creep,
And all without a tear.

'Now I come back never more', she said, and went towards the door. But the two men who held the King under the arms, clenched his hands together, and put a knife into his grasp; and so, somehow or other, they got him to cut her in her little finger, and drew blood. Then the true bride was freed, and the King woke up, and she told him now the whole story, and how her stepmother and sister had deceived her. So the King sent at once and took her brother out of the pit of snakes, and the adders hadn't done him the least harm, but the stepmother and her daughter were thrown into it in his stead.

And now no one can tell how glad the King was to be rid of that ugly Bushy Bride, and to get a Queen who was as lovely and bright as the day itself. So the true wedding was held, and every one talked of it over seven kingdoms; and then the King and Queen drove to church in their coach, and Little Flo went inside with them too, and when the blessing was given they drove back again, and after that I saw nothing more of them.

61

BIG PETER AND LITTLE PETER

Once on a time there were two brothers, both named Peter, and so the elder was called Big Peter, and the younger Little Peter. When his father was dead, Big Peter took him a wife with lots of money, but Little Peter was at home with his mother, and lived on her means till he grew up. So when he was of age he came into his heritage, and then Big Peter said he mustn’t stay any longer in the old house, and eat up his mother’s substance; ‘twere better he should go out into the world and do something for himself.

Yes; Little Peter thought that no bad plan; so he bought himself a fine horse and a load of butter and cheese, and set off to the town; and with the money he got for his goods he bought brandy, and wine, and beer, and as soon as ever he got home again it was one round of holiday-keeping and merry-making; he treated all his old friends and neighbours, and they treated him again; and so he lived in fun and frolic so long as his money lasted. But when his last shilling was spent, and Little Peter hadn’t a penny in his purse, he went back home again to his old mother, and brought nothing with him but a calf. When the spring came he turned out the calf and let it graze on Big Peter’s meadow. Then Big Peter got cross and killed the calf at one blow; but Little Peter, he flayed the calf, and hung the skin up in the bath-room till it was thoroughly dry; then he rolled it up, stuffed it into a sack, and went about the country trying to sell it; but wherever he came, they only laughed at him, and said they had no need of smoked calfskin. So when he had walked on a long way, he came to a farm, and there he turned in and asked for a night's lodging.

'Nay, nay', said the Goody, 'I can't give you lodging, for my husband is up at the shieling on the hill, and I'm alone in the house. You must just try to get shelter at our next neighbour's; but still if they won't take you in, you may come back, for you must have a house over your head, come what may.'

So as little Peter passed by the parlour window, he saw that there was a priest in there, with whom the Goody was making merry, and she was serving him up ale and brandy, and a great bowl of custard. But just as the priest had sat down to eat and drink, back came the husband, and as soon as ever the Goody heard him in the passage, she was not slow; she took the bowl of custard, and put it under the kitchen grate, and the ale and brandy into the cellar, and as for the priest, she locked him up in a great chest which stood there. All this Little Peter stood outside and saw, and as soon as the husband was well inside Little Peter went up to the door and asked if he might have a night's lodging.

'Yes, to be sure', said the man, 'we'll take you in'; and so he begged Little Peter to sit down at the table and eat. Yes, Little Peter sat down, and took his calfskin with him, and laid it down at his feet.

So, when they had sat a while, Little Peter began to mutter to his skin:

'What are you saying now? can't you hold your tongue', said Little Peter.

'Who is it you're talking with?' asked the man.

'Oh!' answered Little Peter, 'it's only a spae-maiden whom I've got in my calfskin.'

'And pray what does she spae?' asked the man again.

‘Why, she says that no one can say there isn’t a bowl of custard standing under the grate’, said Little Peter.

‘She may spae as much as she pleases’, answered the man, ‘but we haven’t had custards in this house for a year and a day.’

But Peter begged him only to look, and he did so; and he found the custard-bowl. So they began to make merry with it, but just as they sat and took their ease, Peter muttered something again to the calfskin.

‘Hush!’ he said, ‘can’t you hold your jaw?’

‘And pray what does the spae-maiden say now?’ asked the man.

‘Oh! she says no one can say there isn’t brandy and ale standing just under the trap-door which goes down into the cellar’, answered Peter.

‘Well! if she never spaed wrong in her life, she spaes wrong now’, said the man. ‘Brandy and ale! why, I can’t call to mind the day when we had such things in the house!’

‘Just look’, said Peter; and the man did so, and there, sure enough, he found the drink, and you may fancy how merry and jolly he was.

‘What did you give for that spae-maiden?’ said the man, ‘for I must have her, whatever you ask for her.’

‘She was left me by my father’, said Peter, ‘and so she didn’t cost me much. To tell you the truth, I’ve no great mind to part with her, but, all the same, you may have her, if you’ll let me have, instead of her, that old chest that stands in the parlour yonder.’

‘The chest’s locked and the key lost’, screamed the old dame.

‘Then I’ll take it without the key, that I will’, said Peter. And so he and the man soon struck the bargain. Peter got a rope instead of the key, and the man helped him to get the chest up on his back, and then off he stumped with it. So when he had walked a bit he came on to a bridge, and under the bridge ran a river in such a headlong stream; it leapt, and foamed, and made such a roar, that the bridge shook again.

‘Ah!’ said Peter, ‘that brandy-that brandy! Now I can feel I’ve had a drop too much. What’s the good of my dragging this chest about? If I hadn’t been drunk and mad, I shouldn’t have gone and swopped away my spae-maiden for it. But now this chest shall go out into the river this very minute.’

And with that he began to untie the rope.

‘Au! Au! do for God’s sake set me free. The priest’s life is at stake; he it is whom you have got in the chest’, screamed out some one inside.

‘This must be the Deil himself’, said Peter, ‘who wants to make me believe he has turned priest; but whether he makes himself priest or clerk, out he goes into the river.’ ‘Oh no! oh no! ‘roared out the priest. ‘The parish priest is at stake. He was on a visit to the Goody for her soul’s health, but her husband is rough and wild, and so she had to hide me in the chest. Here I have a gold watch and a silver watch in my fob; you shall have them both, and eight hundred dollars beside, if you will only let me out.’

‘Nay, nay’, said Peter; ‘is it really your reverence after all’; and with that he took up a stone, and knocked the lid of the chest to pieces. Then the priest got out, and off he set home to his parsonage both fast and light, for he no longer had his watches and money to weigh him down.

As for Little Peter, he went home again, and said to Big Peter, ‘There was a good sale to-day for calfskins at the market.’

‘Why, what did you get for your tattered one, now?’ asked Big Peter.

‘Quite as much as it was worth. I got eight hundred dollars for it, but bigger and stouter calves-skins fetched twice as much’, said Little Peter, and showed his dollars.

‘‘Twas well you told me this’, answered Big Peter, who went and slaughtered all his kine and calves, and set off on the road to town with their skins and hides. So when he got to the market, and the tanners asked what he wanted for his hides, Big Peter said he must have eight hundred dollars for the small ones, and so on, more and more for the big ones. But all the folk only laughed and made game of him, and said he oughtn't to come there; he'd better turn into the madhouse for a better bargain, and so he soon found out how things had gone, and that Little Peter had played him a trick. But when he got home again, he was not very soft-spoken, and he swore and cursed; so help him, if he wouldn't strike Little Peter dead that very night. All this Little Peter stood and listened to; and so, when he had gone to bed with his mother, and the night had worn on a little, he begged her to change sides with him, for he was well-nigh frozen, he said, and might be 'twas warmer next the wall. Yes, she did that, and in a little while came Big Peter with an axe in his hand, and crept up to the bedside, and at one blow chopped off his mother's head.

Next morning, in went Little Peter into Big Peter's sitting-room.

'Heaven better and help you', he said; 'you who have chopped our mother's head off. The Sheriff will not be over-pleased to hear that you pay mother's dower in this way.'

Then Big Peter got so afraid, he begged Little Peter, for God's sake, to say nothing about what he knew. If he would only do that, he should have eight hundred dollars.

Well, Little Peter swept up the money; set his mother's head on her body again; put her on a hand-sledge, and so drew her to market. There he set her up with an apple-basket on each arm, and an apple in each hand. By and by came a skipper walking along; he thought she was an apple-woman, and asked if she had apples to sell, and how many he might have for a penny. But the old woman made no answer. So the skipper asked again. No! she hadn't a word to say for herself.

'How many may I have for a penny', he bawled the third time, but the old dame sat bolt upright, as though she neither saw him, nor heard what he said. Then the skipper flew into such a rage that he gave her one under the ear, and so away rolled her head across the market-place. At that moment, up came Little Peter with a bound; he fell a-weeping and bewailing, and threatened to make the skipper smart for it, for having dealt his old mother her death blow.

‘Dear friend, only hold your tongue about what you know’, said the skipper, ‘and you shall have eight hundred dollars.’

And so they made it up.

When Little Peter got home again, he said to Big Peter:

‘Old women fetch a fine price at market to-day. I got eight hundred dollars for mother; just look’, and so he showed him the money.

‘‘Twas well I came to know this’, said Big Peter.

Now, you must know he had an old stepmother, so he took and killed her out of hand, and strode off to sell her. But when they heard how he went about trying to sell dead bodies, the neighbours were all for handing him over to the Sheriff, and it was as much as he could do to get out of the scrape.

When Big Peter got home again, he was so wroth and mad against Little Peter, he threatened to strike him dead there and then; he needn’t hope for mercy, die he must.

‘Well! well!’ said Little Peter, ‘that’s the way we must all trudge, and betwixt to-day and to-morrow, there’s only a night to come. But if I must set off now, I’ve only one thing to ask; stuff me into that sack that hangs yonder, and take and toss me into the river.’

Well! Big Peter had nothing to say against that, he stuffed him into the sack and set off. But he hadn’t gone far on his way, before it came into his mind that he had forgotten something which he must go back to fetch; meanwhile, he set the sack down by the road side. Just then came a man driving a fine fat flock of sheep.

TO KINGDOM-COME, to Paradise.

To Kingdom-come, to Paradise.

ROARED OUT LITTLE PETER, who lay inside the sack, and that he kept bawling and bellowing out.

'Mayn't I get leave to go with you', asked the man who drove the sheep.

'Of course you may', said Little Peter. 'If you'll only untie the sack, and creep into it in my stead, you'll soon get there. As for me, I don't mind biding here till next time, that I don't. But you must keep on calling out the words I bawled out, else you'll not go to the right place.'

Then the man untied the sack, and got into it in Little Peter's place: Peter tied the sack up again and the man began to bawl out:

TO KINGDOM-COME, to Paradise.
To Kingdom-come, to Paradise.

AND TO THAT text he stuck.

When Peter had got him well into the sack, he wasn't slow; off he went with the flock of sheep, and soon put a good bit of the road behind him. Meantime, back came Big Peter, took the sack on his shoulders, and bore it across the country to the river, and all the while he went, the drover sat inside bawling out:

TO KINGDOM-COME, to Paradise.
To Kingdom-come, to Paradise.

‘Aye, aye’, said Big Peter; ‘try now to find the way for yourself’; and with that, he tossed him out into the stream.

So when Big Peter had done that, and was going back home, whom should he overtake but his brother, who went along driving the flock of sheep before him. Big Peter could scarce believe his eyes, and asked how Little Peter had got out of the river, and whence the fine flock of sheep came.

‘Ah!’ said Little Peter, ‘that just was a good brotherly turn you did me, when you threw me into the river. I sank right down to the bottom like a stone, and there I just did see flocks of sheep; you’d scarce believe now, that they go about down there by thousands, one flock bigger than the other. And just look here! here are fleeces for you!’

‘Well’, said Big Peter, ‘I’m very glad you told me.’

So off he ran home to his old dame; made her come with him to the river; crept into a sack, and bade her make haste to tie it up, and toss him over the bridge.

‘I’m going after a flock of sheep’, he said, ‘but if I stay too long, and you think I can’t get along with the flock by myself, just jump over and help me; do you hear?’

‘Well, don’t stay too long’, said his wife, ‘for my heart is set on seeing those sheep.’

There she stood and waited a while, but then she thought, perhaps her husband couldn’t keep the flock well together, and so down she jumped after him.

And so Little Peter was rid of them all, and the farm and fields came to him as heir, and horses and cattle too; and, besides, he had money in his pocket to buy milch kine to tether in his byre.

62

TATTERHOOD

Once on a time there was a king and a queen who had no children, and that gave the queen much grief; she scarce had one happy hour. She was always bewailing and bemoaning herself, and saying how dull and lonesome it was in the palace.

‘If we had children there’d be life enough’, she said.

Wherever she went in all her realm she found God’s blessing in children, even in the vilest hut; and wherever she came she heard the Goodies scolding the bairns, and saying how they had done that and that wrong. All this the queen heard, and thought it would be so nice to do as other women did. At last the king and queen took into their palace a stranger lassie to rear up, that they might have her always with them, to love her if she did well, and scold her if she did wrong, like their own child.

So one day the little lassie whom they had taken as their own, ran down into the palace yard, and was playing with a gold apple. Just then an old beggar wife came by, who had a little girl with her, and it wasn’t long before the little lassie and the beggar’s bairn were great friends, and began to play together, and to toss the gold apple about between them. When the Queen saw this, as she sat at a window in the palace, she tapped on the pane for her foster-daughter to come up. She went at once, but the beggar-girl went up too; and as they went into the Queen’s bower, each held the other by the hand. Then the Queen began to scold the little lady, and to say:

‘You ought to be above running about and playing with a tattered beggar’s brat.’

And so she wanted to drive the lassie downstairs.

‘If the Queen only knew my mother’s power, she’d not drive me out’, said the little lassie; and when the Queen asked what she meant more plainly, she told her how her mother could get her children if she chose. The Queen wouldn’t believe it, but the lassie held her own, and said every word of it was true, and bade the Queen only to try and make her mother do it. So the Queen sent the lassie down to fetch up her mother.

‘Do you know what your daughter says?’ asked the Queen of the old woman, as soon as ever she came into the room.

No; the beggar wife knew nothing about it.

‘Well, she says you can get me children if you will’, answered the Queen.

‘Queens shouldn’t listen to beggar lassies’ silly stories’, said the old wife, and strode out of the room.

Then the Queen got angry, and wanted again to drive out the little lassie; but she declared it was true every word that she had said.

‘Let the Queen only give my mother a drop to drink,’ said the lassie; ‘when she gets merry she’ll soon find out a way to help you.’

The Queen was ready to try this; so the beggar wife was fetched up again once more, and treated both with wine and mead as much as she chose; and so it was not long before her tongue began to wag. Then the Queen came out again with the same question she had asked before.

‘One way to help you perhaps I know’, said the beggar wife. ‘Your Majesty must make them bring in two pails of water some evening before you go to bed. In each of them you must wash yourself, and afterwards throw away the water under the bed. When you look under the bed next morning, two flowers will have sprung up, one fair and one ugly. The fair one you must eat, the ugly one you must let stand; but mind you don’t forget the last.’

That was what the beggar wife said.

Yes; the Queen did what the beggar wife advised her to do; she had the water brought up in two pails, washed herself in them, and emptied them under the bed; and lo! when she looked under the bed next morning, there stood two flowers; one was ugly and foul, and had black leaves; but the other was so bright, and fair, and lovely, she had never seen its like; so she ate it up at once. But the pretty flower tasted so sweet, that she couldn’t help herself. She ate the other up too, for, she thought, ‘it can’t hurt or help one much either way, I’ll be bound’.

Well, sure enough, after a while the Queen was brought to bed. First of all, she had a girl who had a wooden spoon in her hand, and rode upon a goat; loathly and ugly she was, and the very moment she came into the world, she bawled out ‘Mamma’.

‘If I’m your mamma’, said the Queen, ‘God give me grace to mend my ways.’

‘Oh, don’t be sorry’, said the girl, who rode on the goat, ‘for one will soon come after me who is better looking.’

So, after a while, the Queen had another girl, who was so fair and sweet, no one had ever set eyes on such a lovely child, and with her you may fancy the Queen was very well pleased. The elder twin they called ‘Tatterhood’, because she was always so ugly and ragged, and because she had a hood which hung about her ears in tatters. The Queen could scarce bear to look at her, and the nurses tried to shut her up in a room by herself, but it was all no good; where the younger twin was, there she must also be, and no one could ever keep them apart.

Well, one Christmas eve, when they were half grown up, there rose such a frightful noise and clatter in the gallery outside the Queen’s bower. So

Tatterhood asked what it was that dashed and crashed so out in the passage.

‘Oh!’ said the Queen, ‘it isn’t worth asking about.’

But Tatterhood wouldn’t give over till she found out all about it and so the Queen told her it was a pack of Trolls and witches who had come there to keep Christmas. So Tatterhood said she’d just go out and drive them away; and in spite of all they could say, and however much they begged and prayed her to let the Trolls alone, she must and would go out to drive the witches off; but she begged the Queen to mind and keep all the doors close shut, so that not one of them came so much as the least bit ajar. Having said this, off she went with her wooden spoon, and began to hunt and sweep away the hags; and all this while there was such a pother out in the gallery, the like of it was never heard. The whole Palace creaked and groaned as if every joint and beam were going to be torn out of its place. Now, how it was, I’m sure I can’t tell; but somehow or other one door did get the least bit ajar, then her twin sister just peeped out to see how things were going with Tatterhood, and put her head a tiny bit through the opening. But, POP! up came an old witch, and whipped off her head, and stuck a calf’s head on her shoulders instead; and so the Princess ran back into the room on all-fours, and began to ‘moo’ like a calf. When Tatterhood came back and saw her sister, she scolded them all round, and was very angry because they hadn’t kept better watch, and asked them what they thought of their heedlessness now, when her sister was turned into a calf.

‘But still I’ll see if I can’t set her free’, she said.

Then she asked the King for a ship in full trim, and well fitted with stores; but captain and sailors she wouldn’t have. No; she would sail away with her sister all alone; and as there was no holding her back, at last they let her have her own way.

Then Tatterhood sailed off, and steered her ship right under the land where the witches dwelt, and when she came to the landing-place, she told her sister to stay quite still on board the ship; but she herself rode on her goat up to the witches’ castle. When she got there, one of the windows in the gallery was open, and there she saw her sister’s head hung up on the window frame; so she leapt her goat through the window into the gallery, snapped up the head, and set off with it. After her came the witches to try to get the head again, and they flocked about her as thick as a swarm of bees or a nest of ants; but the goat snorted, and puffed, and butted with his horns, and Tatterhood beat and banged them about with her wooden spoon; and so the pack of witches had to give it up. So Tatterhood got back to her ship, took the calf’s head off her sister, and put her own on again, and then she became a girl as she had been before. After that she sailed a long, long way, to a strange king’s realm.

Now the king of that land was a widower, and had an only son. So when he saw the strange sail, he sent messengers down to the strand to find out whence it came, and who owned it; but when the king’s men came down there, they saw never a living soul on board but Tatterhood, and there she was, riding round and round the deck on her goat at full speed, till her elf locks streamed again in the wind. The folk from the palace were all amazed at this sight, and asked, were there not more on board? Yes, there were; she had a sister with her, said Tatterhood. Her, too, they wanted to see, but Tatterhood said ‘No’:

‘No one shall see her, unless the king comes himself’, she said; and so she began to gallop about on her goat till the deck thundered again.

So when the servants got back to the palace, and told what they had seen and heard down at the ship, the king was for setting out at once, that he might see the lassie that rode on the goat. When he got down, Tatterhood led out her sister, and she was so fair and gentle, the king fell over head and ears in love with her as he stood. He brought them both back with him to the Palace, and wanted to have the sister for his queen; but Tatterhood said ‘No’; the king couldn’t have her in any way, unless the king’s son chose to have Tatterhood. That you may fancy the prince was very loath to do, such an ugly hussy as Tatterhood was; but at last the king and all the others in the palace talked him over, and he yielded, giving his word to take her for his queen; but it went sore against the grain, and he was a doleful man.

Now they set about the wedding, both with brewing and baking; and when all was ready, they were to go to church; but the prince thought it the weariest churching he had ever had in all his life. First, the king drove off with his bride, and she was so lovely and so grand, all the people stopped to look after her all along the road, and they stared at her till she was out of sight. After them came the prince on horseback by the side of Tatterhood, who trotted along on her goat with her wooden spoon in her fist, and to look at him, it was more like going to a burial than a wedding, and that his own; so sorrowful he seemed, and with never a word to say.

‘Why don’t you talk?’ asked Tatterhood, when they had ridden a bit.

‘Why, what should I talk about?’ answered the prince.

‘Well, you might at least ask me why I ride upon this ugly goat’, said Tatterhood.

‘Why do you ride on that ugly goat?’ asked the prince.

‘Is it an ugly goat? why, it’s the grandest horse bride ever rode on’, answered Tatterhood; and in a trice the goat became a horse, and that the finest the prince had ever set eyes on.

Then they rode on again a bit, but the prince was just as woeful as before, and couldn’t get a word out. So Tatterhood asked him again why he didn’t talk, and when the Prince answered he didn’t know what to talk about, she said:

‘You can at least ask me why I ride with this ugly spoon in my fist.’

‘Why do you ride with that ugly spoon? ‘asked the prince.

‘Is it an ugly spoon? why, it’s the loveliest silver wand bride ever bore’, said Tatterhood; and in a trice it became a silver wand, so dazzling bright, the sunbeams glistened from it.

So they rode on another bit, but the Prince was just as sorrowful, and said never a word. In a little while, Tatterhood asked him again why he didn’t talk, and bade him ask why she wore that ugly grey hood on her head.

‘Why do you wear that ugly grey hood on your head?’ asked the Prince.

‘Is it an ugly hood? why, it’s the brightest golden crown bride ever wore’, answered Tatterhood, and it became a crown on the spot.

Now, they rode on a long while again, and the Prince was so woeful, that he sat without sound or speech just as before. So his bride asked him again why he didn’t talk, and bade him ask now, why her face was so ugly and ashen-grey?

‘Ah!’ asked the Prince, ‘why is your face so ugly and ashen-grey?’

‘I ugly’, said the bride; ‘you think my sister pretty, but I am ten times prettier’; and lo! when the Prince looked at her, she was so lovely, he thought there never was so lovely a woman in all the world. After that, I shouldn’t wonder if the Prince found his tongue, and no longer rode along hanging down his head.

So they drank the bridal cup both deep and long, and, after that, both Prince and King set out with their brides to the Princess’s father’s palace, and there they had another bridal feast, and drank anew, both deep and long. There was no end to the fun; and, if you make haste and run to the King’s palace, I dare say you’ll find there’s still a drop of the bridal ale left for you.

63

THE COCK AND HEN THAT WENT TO THE DOVREFELL

Once on a time there was a Hen that had flown up, and perched on an oak-tree for the night. When the night came, she dreamed that unless she got to the Dovrefell, the world would come to an end. So that very minute she jumped down, and set out on her way. When she had walked a bit she met a Cock.

‘Good day, Cocky-Locky’, said the Hen.

‘Good day, Henny-Penny’, said the Cock, ‘whither away so early.’

‘Oh, I’m going to the Dovrefell, that the world mayn’t come to an end’, said the Hen.

‘Who told you that, Henny-Penny’, said the Cock.

‘I sat in the oak and dreamt it last night’, said the Hen.

‘I’ll go with you’, said the Cock.

Well! they walked on a good bit, and then they met a Duck.

‘Good day, Ducky-Lucky’, said the Cock.

‘Good day, Cocky-Locky’, said the Duck, ‘whither away so early?’

‘Oh, I’m going to the Dovrefell, that the world mayn’t come to an end’, said the Cock.

‘Who told you that, Cocky-Locky?’

‘Henny-Penny’, said the Cock.

‘Who told you that, Henny-Penny?’ said the Duck.

‘I sat in the oak and dreamt it last night’, said the Hen.

‘I’ll go with you’, said the Duck.

So they went off together, and after a bit they met a Goose.

‘Good day, Goosey-Poosey’, said the Duck.

‘Good day, Ducky-Lucky’, said the Goose, ‘whither away so early?’

‘I’m going to the Dovrefell, that the world mayn’t come to an end’, said the Duck.

‘Who told you that, Ducky-Lucky?’ asked the Goose.

‘Cocky-Locky.’

‘Who told you that, Cocky-Locky?’

‘Henny-Penny.’

‘How you do know that, Henny-Penny?’ said the Goose.

‘I sat in the oak and dreamt it last night, Goosey-Poosey’, said the Hen.

‘I’ll go with you’, said the Goose.

Now when they had all walked along for a bit, a Fox met them.

‘Good day, Foxsy-Cocksy’, said the Goose.

‘Good day, Goosey-Poosey.’

‘Whither away, Foxy-Cocksy?’

‘Whither away yourself, Goosey-Poosey?’

‘I’m going to the Dovrefell that the world mayn’t come to an end’, said the Goose.

‘Who told you that, Goosey-Poosey?’ asked the Fox.

‘Ducky-Lucky.’

‘Who told you that, Ducky-Lucky?’

‘Cocky-Locky.’

‘Who told you that, Cocky-Locky?’

‘Henny-Penny.’

‘How do you know that, Henny-Penny?’

‘I sat in the oak and dreamt last night, that if we don’t get to the Dovrefell, the world will come to an end’, said the Hen.

‘Stuff and nonsense’, said the Fox; ‘the world won’t come to an end if you don’t get thither. No! come home with me to my earth. That’s far better, for it’s warm and jolly there.’

Well, they went home with the Fox to his earth, and when they got in, the Fox laid on lots of fuel, so that they all got very sleepy.

The Duck and the Goose, they settled themselves down in a corner, but the Cock and Hen flew up on a post. So when the Goose and Duck were well asleep, the Fox, took the Goose and laid him on the embers, and roasted him. The Hen smelt the strong roast meat, and sprang up to a higher peg, and said, half asleep:

FAUGH, what a nasty smell!
What a nasty smell!

‘OH, STUFF’, said the Fox; ‘it’s only the smoke driven down the chimney; go to sleep again, and hold your tongue.’ So the Hen went off to sleep again.

Now the Fox had hardly got the Goose well down his throat, before he did the very same with the Duck. He took and laid him on the embers, and roasted him for a dainty bit. Then the hen woke up again, and sprung up to a higher peg still.

FAUGH, what a nasty smell!
What a nasty smell!

She said again, and then she got her eyes open, and came to see how the Fox had eaten both the twain, goose and duck; so she flew up to the highest peg of all, and perched there, and peeped up through the chimney.

‘Nay, nay; just see what a lovely lot of geese flying yonder’, she said to the Fox.

Out ran Reynard to fetch a fat roast. But while he was gone, the Hen woke up the Cock, and told him how it had gone with Goosey-Poosey and Ducky-Lucky; and so Cocky-Lucky and Henny-Penny flew out through the chimney, and if they hadn’t got to the Dovrefell, it surely would have been all over with the world.

64

KATIE WOODENCLOAK

Once on a time there was a King who had become a widower. By his Queen he had one daughter, who was so clever and lovely, there wasn’t a cleverer or lovelier Princess in all the world. So the King went on a long time sorrowing for the Queen, whom he had loved so much, but at last he got weary of living alone, and married another Queen, who was a widow, and had, too, an only daughter; but this daughter was just as bad and ugly as the other was kind, and clever, and lovely, The stepmother and her daughter were jealous of the Princess, because she was so lovely; but so long as the King was at home, they daredn’t do her any harm, he was so fond of her.

Well, after a time, he fell into war with another King, and went out to battle with his host, and then the stepmother thought she might do as she pleased; and so she both starved and beat the Princess, and was after her in every hole and corner of the house. At last she thought everything too good for her, and turned her out to herd cattle. So there she went about with the cattle, and herded them in the woods and on the fells. As for food, she got little or none, and she grew thin and wan, and was always sobbing and sorrowful. Now in the herd there was a great dun bull, which always kept himself so neat and sleek, and often and often he came up to the Princess, and let her pat him. So one day when she sat there, sad, and sobbing, and sorrowful, he came up to her and asked her outright why she was always in such grief. She answered nothing, but went on weeping.

‘Ah!’ said the Bull, ‘I know all about it quite well, though you won’t tell me; you weep because the Queen is bad to you, and because she is ready to starve you to death. But food you’ve no need to fret about, for in my left ear lies a cloth, and when you take and spread it out, you may have as many dishes as you please.’

So she did that, took the cloth and spread it out on the grass, and lo! it served up the nicest dishes one could wish to have; there was wine too, and mead, and sweet cake. Well, she soon got up her flesh again, and grew so plump, and rosy, and white, that the Queen and her scrawny chip of a daughter turned blue and yellow for spite. The Queen couldn’t at all make out how her stepdaughter got to look so well on such bad fare, so she told one of her maids to go after her in the wood, and watch and see how it all was, for she thought some of the servants in the house must give her food. So the maid went after her, and watched in the wood, and then she saw how the stepdaughter took the cloth out of the Bull’s ear, and spread it out, and how it served up the nicest dishes, which the stepdaughter ate and made good cheer over. All this the maid told the Queen when she went home.

And now the King came home from war, and had won the fight against the other king with whom he went out to battle. So there was great joy throughout the palace, and no one was gladder than the King’s daughter. But the Queen shammed sick, and took to her bed, and paid the doctor a great fee to get him to say she could never be well again unless she had some of the Dun Bull’s flesh to eat. Both the king’s daughter and the folk in the palace asked the doctor if nothing else would help her, and prayed hard for the Bull, for every one was fond of him, and they all said there wasn’t that Bull’s match in all the land. But, no; he must and should be slaughtered, nothing else would do. When the king’s daughter heard that, she got very sorrowful, and went down into the byre to the Bull. There, too, he stood and hung down his head, and looked so downcast that she began to weep over him.

‘What are you weeping for?’ asked the Bull.

So she told him how the King had come home again, and how the Queen had shammed sick and got the doctor to say she could never be well and sound again unless she got some of the Dun Bull’s flesh to eat, and so now he was to be slaughtered.

‘If they get me killed first’, said the Bull, ‘they’ll soon take your life too. Now, if you’re of my mind, we’ll just start off, and go away to-night.’

Well, the Princess thought it bad, you may be sure, to go and leave her father, but she thought it still worse to be in the house with the Queen; and so she gave her word to the Bull to come to him.

At night, when all had gone to bed, the Princess stole down to the byre to the Bull, and so he took her on his back, and set off from the homestead as fast as ever he could. And when the folk got up at cockcrow next morning to slaughter the Bull, why, he was gone; and when the King got up and asked for his daughter, she was gone too. He sent out messengers on all sides to hunt for them, and gave them out in all the parish churches; but there was no one who had caught a glimpse of them. Meanwhile, the Bull went through many lands with the King’s daughter on his back, and so one day they came to a great copper-wood, where both the trees, and branches, and leaves, and flowers, and everything, were nothing but copper.

But before they went into the wood, the Bull said to the King’s daughter:

‘Now, when we get into this wood, mind you take care not to touch even a leaf of it, else it’s all over both with me and you, for here dwells a Troll with three heads who owns this wood.’

No, bless her, she’d be sure to take care not to touch anything. Well, she was very careful, and leant this way and that to miss the boughs, and put them gently aside with her hands; but it was such a thick wood, ‘twas scarce possible to get through; and so, with all her pains, somehow or other she tore off a leaf, which she held in her hand.

'AU! AU! what have you done now?' said the Bull; 'there's nothing for it now but to fight for life or death; but mind you keep the leaf safe.'

Soon after they got to the end of the wood, and a Troll with three heads came running up:

'Who is this that touches my wood?' said the Troll.

'It's just as much mine as yours', said the Bull.

'Ah!' roared the Troll, 'we'll try a fall about that.'

'As you choose', said the Bull.

So they rushed at one another, and fought; and the Bull he butted, and gored, and kicked with all his might and main; but the Troll gave him as good as he brought, and it lasted the whole day before the Bull got the mastery; and then he was so full of wounds, and so worn out, he could scarce lift a leg. Then they were forced to stay there a day to rest, and then the Bull bade the King's daughter to take the horn of ointment which hung at the Troll's belt, and rub him with it. Then he came to himself again, and the day after they trudged on again. So they travelled many, many days, until, after a long long time, they came to a silver wood, where both the trees, and branches, and leaves, and flowers, and everything, were silvern.

Before the Bull went into the wood, he said to the King's daughter:

'Now, when we get into this wood, for heaven's sake mind you take good care; you mustn't touch anything, and not pluck off so much as one leaf, else it is all over both with me and you; for here is a Troll with six heads who owns it, and him I don't think I should be able to master.'

'No', said the King's daughter; 'I'll take good care and not touch anything you don't wish me to touch.'

But when they got into the wood, it was so close and thick, they could scarce get along. She was as careful as careful could be, and leant to this side and that to miss the boughs, and put them on one side with her hands, but every minute the branches struck her across the eyes, and in spite of all her pains, it so happened she tore off a leaf.

‘AU! AU! what have you done now?’ said the Bull. ‘There’s nothing for it now but to fight for life and death, for this Troll has six heads, and is twice as strong as the other, but mind you keep the leaf safe, and don’t lose it.’

Just as he said that, up came the Troll:

‘Who is this’, he said, ‘that touches my wood?’

‘It’s as much mine as yours’, said the Bull.

‘That we’ll try a fall about’, roared the Troll.

‘As you choose’, said the Bull, and rushed at the Troll, and gored out his eyes, and drove his horns right through his body, so that the entrails gushed out; but the Troll was almost a match for him, and it lasted three whole days before the Bull got the life gored out of him. But then he, too, was so weak and wretched, it was as much as he could do to stir a limb, and so full of wounds, that the blood streamed from him. So he said to the King’s daughter she must take the horn of ointment that hung at the Troll’s belt, and rub him with it. Then she did that, and he came to himself; but they were forced to stay there a week to rest before the Bull had strength enough to go on.

At last they set off again, but the Bull was still poorly, and they went rather slowly at first. So, to spare time, the King’s daughter said, as she was young and light of foot, she could very well walk, but she couldn’t get leave to do that. No; she must seat herself up on his back again. So on they travelled through many lands a long time, and the King’s daughter did not know in the least whither they went; but after a long, long time they came to a gold wood. It was so grand, the gold dropped from every twig, and all the trees, and boughs, and flowers, and leaves, were of pure gold. Here, too, the same thing happened as had happened in the silver wood and copper wood. The Bull told the King’s daughter she mustn’t touch it for anything, for there was a Troll with nine heads who owned it, and he was much bigger and stouter than both the others put together; and he didn't think he could get the better of him. No; she'd be sure to take heed not to touch it; that he might know very well. But when they got into the wood, it was far thicker and closer than the silver wood, and the deeper they went into it, the worse it got. The wood went on, getting thicker and thicker, and closer and closer; and at last she thought there was no way at all to get through it. She was in such an awful fright of plucking off anything, that she sat, and twisted, and turned herself this way and that, and hither and thither, to keep clear of the boughs, and she put them on one side with her hands; but every moment the branches struck her across the eyes, so that she couldn't see what she was clutching at; and lo! before she knew how it came about, she had a gold apple in her hand. Then she was so bitterly sorry, she burst into tears, and wanted to throw it away; but the Bull said, she must keep it safe and watch it well, and comforted her as well as he could; but he thought it would be a hard tussle, and he doubted how it would go.

Just then up came the Troll with the nine heads, and he was so ugly, the King's daughter scarcely dared to look at him.

'WHO IS THIS THAT TOUCHES MY WOOD?' he roared.

'It's just as much mine as yours', said the Bull.

'That we'll try a fall about', roared the Troll again.

'Just as you choose', said the Bull; and so they rushed at one another, and fought, and it was such a dreadful sight, the King's daughter was ready to swoon away. The Bull gored out the Troll's eyes, and drove his horns through and through his body, till the entrails came tumbling out; but the Troll fought bravely; and when the Bull got one head gored to death, the rest breathed life into it again, and so it lasted a whole week before the Bull was able to get the life out of them all. But then he was utterly worn out and wretched. He couldn't stir a foot, and his body was all one wound. He couldn't so much as ask the King's daughter to take the horn of ointment which hung at the Troll’s belt, and rub it over him. But she did it all the same, and then he came to himself by little and little; but they had to lie there and rest three weeks before he was fit to go on again.

Then they set off at a snail’s pace, for the Bull said they had still a little further to go, and so they crossed over many high hills and thick woods. So after awhile they got upon the fells.

‘Do you see anything?’ asked the Bull.

‘No, I see nothing but the sky, and the wild fell’, said the King’s daughter.

So when they clomb higher up, the fell got smoother, and they could see further off.

‘Do you see anything now?’ asked the Bull.

‘Yes, I see a little castle far, far away’, said the Princess.

‘That’s not so little though’, said the Bull.

After a long, long time, they came to a great cairn, where there was a spur of the fell that stood sheer across the way.

‘Do you see anything now?’ asked the Bull.

‘Yes, now I see the castle close by’, said the King’s daughter, ‘and now it is much, much bigger.’

‘Thither you’re to go’, said the Bull. ‘Right underneath the castle is a pig-sty, where you are to dwell. When you come thither you’ll find a wooden cloak, all made of strips of lath; that you must put on, and go up to the castle and say your name is “Katie Woodencloak”, and ask for a place. But before you go, you must take your penknife and cut my head off, and then you must flay me, and roll up the hide, and lay it under the wall of rock yonder, and under the hide you must lay the copper leaf, and the silver leaf, and the golden apple. Yonder, up against the rock, stands a stick; and when you want anything, you’ve only got to knock on the wall of rock with that stick.’

At first she wouldn’t do anything of the kind; but when the Bull said it was the only thanks he would have for what he had done for her, she couldn’t help herself. So, however much it grieved her heart, she hacked and cut away with her knife at the big beast till she got both his head and his hide off, and then she laid the hide up under the wall of rock, and put the copper leaf, and the silvern leaf, and the golden apple inside it.

So when she had done that, she went over to the pig-sty, but all the while she went she sobbed and wept. There she put on the wooden cloak, and so went up to the palace. When she came into the kitchen she begged for a place, and told them her name was Katie Woodencloak. Yes, the cook said she might have a place — she might have leave to be there in the scullery, and wash up, for the lassie who did that work before had just gone away.

‘But as soon as you get weary of being here, you’ll go your way too, I’ll be bound.’

No; she was sure she wouldn’t do that.

So there she was, behaving so well, and washing up so handily. The Sunday after there were to be strange guests at the palace, so Katie asked if she might have leave to carry up water for the Prince’s bath; but all the rest laughed at her, and said:

‘What should you do there? Do you think the Prince will care to look at you, you who are such a fright!’

But she wouldn’t give it up, and kept on begging and praying; and at last she got leave. So when she went up the stairs, her wooden cloak made such a clatter, the Prince came out and asked:

‘Pray who are you?’

‘Oh! I was just going to bring up water for your Royal Highness’s bath’, said Katie.

‘Do you think now’, said the Prince, ‘I’d have anything to do with the water you bring?’ and with that he threw the water over her.

So she had to put up with that, but then she asked leave to go to church; well, she got that leave too, for the church lay close by. But, first of all, she went to the rock, and knocked on its face with the stick which stood there, just as the Bull had said. And straightway out came a man, who said:

‘What’s your will?’

So the Princess said she had got leave to go to church and hear the priest preach, but she had no clothes to go in. So he brought out a kirtle, which was as bright as the copper wood, and she got a horse and saddle beside. Now, when she got to the church she was so lovely and grand, all wondered who she could be, and scarce one of them listened to what the priest said, for they looked too much at her. As for the Prince, he fell so deep in love with her, he didn’t take his eyes off her for a single moment.

So, as she went out of church, the Prince ran after her, and held the church door open for her; and so he got hold of one of her gloves, which was caught in the door. When she went away and mounted her horse, the Prince went up to her again, and asked whence she came.

‘Oh! I’m from Bath’, said Katie; and while the Prince took out the glove to give it to her, she said:

BRIGHT BEFORE AND DARK BEHIND,
Clouds come rolling on the wind;
That this Prince may never see
Where my good steed goes with me.

THE PRINCE HAD NEVER SEEN the like of that glove, and went about far and wide asking after the land whence the proud lady, who rode off without her glove, said she came; but there was no one who could tell where ‘Bath’ lay.

Next Sunday some one had to go up to the Prince with a towel.

‘Oh! may I have leave to go up with it?’ said Katie.

‘What’s the good of your going?’ said the others; ‘you saw how it fared with you last time.’

But Katie wouldn’t give in; she kept on begging and praying, till she got leave; and then she ran up the stairs, so that her wooden cloak made a great clatter. Out came the Prince, and when he saw it was Katie, he tore the towel out of her hand, and threw it into her face.

‘Pack yourself off, you ugly Troll’, he cried; ‘do you think I’d have a towel which you have touched with your smutty fingers?’

After that the Prince set off to church, and Katie begged for leave to go too. They all asked what business she had at church — she who had nothing to put on but that wooden cloak, which was so black and ugly. But Katie said the priest was such a brave man to preach, what he said did her so much good; and so she at last got leave. Now she went again to the rock and knocked, and so out came the man, and gave her a kirtle far finer than the first one; it was all covered with silver, and it shone like the silver wood; and she got besides a noble steed, with a saddle-cloth broidered with silver, and a silver bit.

So when the King’s daughter got to the church, the folk were still standing about in the churchyard. And all wondered and wondered who she could be, and the Prince was soon on the spot, and came and wished to hold her horse for her while she got off. But she jumped down, and said there was no need, for her horse was so well broke, it stood still when she bid it, and came when she called it. So they all went into church; but there was scarce a soul that listened to what the priest said, for they looked at her a deal too much; and the Prince fell still deeper in love than the first time.

When the sermon was over, and she went out of church and was going to mount her horse, up came the Prince again, and asked her whence she came.

‘Oh! I’m from Towelland’, said the King’s daughter; and as she said that, she dropped her riding-whip, and when the Prince stooped to pick it up, she said:

Bright before and dark behind,
Clouds come rolling on the wind;
That this Prince may never see
Where my good steed goes with me.

So away she was again; and the Prince couldn’t tell what had become of her. He went about far and wide asking after the land whence she said she came, but there was no one who could tell him where it lay; and so the Prince had to make the best he could of it.

Next Sunday some one had to go up to the Prince with a comb. Katie begged for leave to go up with it, but the others put her in mind how she had fared the last time, and scolded her for wishing to go before the Prince — such a black and ugly fright as she was in her wooden cloak. But she wouldn’t leave off asking till they let her go up to the Prince with his comb. So, when she came clattering up the stairs again, out came the Prince, and took the comb, and threw it at her, and bade her be off as fast as she could. After that the Prince went to church, and Katie begged for leave to go too. They asked again what business she had there, she who was so foul and black, and who had no clothes to show herself in. Might be the Prince or some one else would see her, and then both she and all the others would smart for it; but Katie said they had something else to do than to look at her; and she wouldn’t leave off begging and praying till they gave her leave to go.

So the same thing happened now as had happened twice before. She went to the rock and knocked with the stick, and then the man came out and gave her a kirtle which was far grander than either of the others. It was almost all pure gold, and studded with diamonds; and she got besides a noble steed, with a gold broidered saddle-cloth and a golden bit.

Now when the King's daughter got to the church, there stood the priest and all the people in the churchyard waiting for her. Up came the Prince running, and wanted to hold her horse, but she jumped off, and said:

'No; thanks — there's no need, for my horse is so well broke, it stands still when I bid him.'

So they all hastened into church, and the priest got into the pulpit, but no one listened to a word he said; for they all looked too much at her, and wondered whence she came; and the Prince, he was far deeper in love than either of the former times. He had no eyes, or ears, or sense for anything, but just to sit and stare at her.

So when the sermon was over, and the King's daughter was to go out of the church, the Prince had got a firkin of pitch poured out in the porch, that he might come and help her over it; but she didn't care a bit — she just put her foot right down into the midst of the pitch, and jumped across it; but then one of her golden shoes stuck fast in it, and as she got on her horse, up came the Prince running out of the church, and asked whence she came.

'I'm from Combland', said Katie. But when the Prince wanted to reach her the gold shoe, she said,

Bright before and dark behind,
Clouds come rolling on the wind;
That this Prince may never see
Where my good steed goes with me.

So the Prince couldn't tell still what had become of her, and he went about a weary time all over the world asking for 'Combland'; but when no one could tell him where it lay, he ordered it to be given out everywhere that he would wed the woman whose foot could fit the gold shoe.

So many came of all sorts from all sides, fair and ugly alike; but there was no one who had so small a foot as to be able to get on the gold shoe. And after a long, long time, who should come but Katie's wicked stepmother, and her daughter, too, and her the gold shoe fitted; but ugly she was, and so loathly she looked, the Prince only kept his word sore against his will. Still they got ready the wedding-feast, and she was dressed up and decked out as a bride; but as they rode to church, a little bird sat upon a tree and sang:

A bit off her heel,
And a bit off her toe;
Katie Woodencloak's tiny shoe
Is full of blood — that's all I know.

And, sure enough, when they looked to it the bird told the truth, for blood gushed out of the shoe.

Then all the maids and women who were about the palace had to go up to try on the shoe, but there was none of them whom it would fit at all.

'But where's Katie Woodencloak?' asked the Prince, when all the rest had tried the shoe, for he understood the song of birds very well, and bore in mind what the little bird had said.

'Oh! she think of that!' said the rest; 'it's no good her coming forward. Why, she's legs like a horse.'

‘Very true, I daresay’, said the Prince; ‘but since all the others have tried, Katie may as well try too.’

‘Katie’, he bawled out through the door; and Katie came trampling upstairs, and her wooden cloak clattered as if a whole regiment of dragoons were charging up.

‘Now, you must try the shoe on, and be a Princess, you too,’ said the other maids, and laughed and made game of her.

So Katie took up the shoe, and put her foot into it like nothing, and threw off her wooden cloak; and so there she stood in her gold kirtle, and it shone so that the sunbeams glistened from her; and, lo! on her other foot she had the fellow to the gold shoe.

So when the Prince knew her again, he grew so glad, he ran up to her and threw his arms round her, and gave her a kiss; and when he heard she was a King’s daughter, he got gladder still, and then came the wedding feast; and so,

Snip, snip, snover,
This story’s over.

65

THUMBIKIN

Once on a time there was a woman who had an only son, and he was no taller than your thumb; and so they called him Thumbikin.

Now, when he had come to be old enough to know right and wrong, his mother told him to go out and woo him a bride, for now she said it was high time he thought about getting a wife. When Thumbikin heard that, he was very glad; so they got their driving gear in order and set off, and his mother put him into her bosom. Now they were going to a palace where there was an awfully big Princess, but when they had gone a bit of the way, Thumbikin was lost and gone. His mother hunted for him everywhere, and bawled to him, and wept because he was lost, and she couldn't find him again.

'*Pip*, *Pip*', said Thumbikin, 'here I am'; and he had hidden himself in the horse's mane.

So he came out, and had to give his word to his mother that he wouldn't do so any more. But when they had driven a bit further on, Thumbikin was lost again. His mother hunted for him, and called him, and wept; but gone he was, and gone he stayed.

'*Pip*, *Pip*', said Thumbikin at last; and then she heard how he laughed and tittered, but she couldn't find him at all for the life of her.

‘*Pip, Pip*, why, here I am now!’ said Thumbikin, and came out of the horse’s ear.

So he had to give his word that he wouldn’t hide himself again; but they had scarce driven a bit further before he was gone again. He couldn’t help it. As for his mother, she hunted, and wept, and called him by name; but gone he was, and gone he stayed; and the more she hunted, the less she could find him in any way.

‘*Pip, Pip*, here I am then’, said Thumbikin.

But she couldn’t make out at all where he was, his voice sounded so dull, and muffled.

So she hunted, and he kept on saying, ‘Pip, here I am’, and laughed and chuckled, but she couldn’t find him; but all at once the horse snorted, and it snorted Thumbikin out, for he had crept up one of his nostrils.

Then his mother took him and put him into a bag; she knew no other way, for she saw well enough he couldn’t help hiding himself.

So, when they came to the palace, the match was soon made, for the Princess thought him a pretty little chap, and it wasn’t long before the wedding came on too.

Now, when they were going to sit down to the wedding-feast, Thumbikin sat at the table by the Princess’s side; but he had worse than no seat, for when he was to eat he couldn’t reach up to the table; and so if the Princess hadn’t helped him up on to it, he wouldn’t have got a bit to eat.

Now it went good and well so long as he had to eat off a plate, but then there came a great bowl of porridge — that he couldn’t reach up to; but Thumbikin soon found out a way to help himself; he climbed up and sat on the lip of the bowl. But then there was a pat of melting butter right in the middle of the bowl, and that he couldn’t reach to dip his porridge into it, and so he went on and took his seat at the edge of the melting butter; but just then who should come but the Princess, with a great spoonful of porridge to dip it into the butter; and, alas! she went too near to Thumbikin, and tipped him over; and so he fell over head and ears, and was drowned in the melted butter.

66

DOLL I’ THE GRASS

Once on a time there was a King who had twelve sons. When they were grown big he told them they must go out into the world and win themselves wives, but these wives must each be able to spin, and weave, and sew a shirt in one day, else he wouldn’t have them for daughters-in-law.

To each he gave a horse and a new suit of mail, and they went out into the world to look after their brides; but when they had gone a bit of the way, they said they wouldn’t have Boots, their youngest brother, with them — he wasn’t fit for anything.

Well, Boots had to stay behind, and he didn’t know what to do or whither to turn; and so he grew so downcast, he got off his horse, and sat down in the tall grass to weep. But when he had sat a little while, one of the tufts in the grass began to stir and move, and out of it came a little white thing, and when it came nearer, Boots saw it was a charming little lassie, only such a tiny bit of a thing. So the lassie went up to him, and asked if he would come down below and see ‘Doll i’ the Grass’.

Yes, he’d be very happy, and so he went.

Now, when he got down; there sat Doll i’ the Grass on a chair; she was so lovely and so smart, and she asked Boots whither he was going, and what was his business.

So he told her how there were twelve brothers of them, and how the King had given them horses and mail, and said they must each go out into the world and find them a wife who could spin, and weave, and sew a shirt in a day.

‘But if you’ll only say at once you’ll be my wife, I’ll not go a step further’, said Boots to Doll i’ the Grass.

Well, she was willing enough, and so she made haste and span, and wove, and sewed the shirt, but it was so tiny, tiny little. It wasn’t longer than so —— —— long.

So Boots set off home with it, but when he brought it out he was almost ashamed, it was so small. Still the King said he should have her, and so Boots set off, glad and happy to fetch his little sweetheart. So when he got to Doll i’ the Grass, he wished to take her up before him on his horse; but she wouldn’t have that, for she said she would sit and drive along in a silver spoon, and that she had two small white horses to draw her. So off they set, he on his horse and she on her silver spoon, and the two horses that drew her were two tiny white mice; but Boots always kept the other side of the road, he was so afraid lest he should ride over her, she was so little. So, when they had gone a bit of the way, they came to a great piece of water. Here Boots’ horse got frightened, and shied across the road and upset the spoon, and Doll i’ the Grass tumbled into the water. Then Boots got so sorrowful because he didn’t know how to get her out again; but in a little while up came a merman with her, and now she was as well and full grown as other men and women, and far lovelier than she had been before. So he took her up before him on his horse, and rode home.

When Boots got home all his brothers had come back each with his sweetheart, but these were all so ugly, and foul, and wicked, that they had done nothing but fight with one another on the way home, and on their heads they had a kind of hat that was daubed over with tar and soot, and so the rain had run down off the hats on to their faces, till they got far uglier and nastier than they had been before. When his brothers saw Boots and his sweetheart, they were all as jealous as jealous could be of her; but the King was so overjoyed with them both, that he drove all the others away, and so Boots held his wedding-feast with Doll i’ the Grass, and after that they lived well and happily together a long long time, and if they’re not dead, why they’re alive still.

67

THE LAD AND THE DEIL

Once on a time there was a lad who was walking along a road cracking nuts, so he found one that was worm-eaten, and just at that very moment he met the Deil.

‘Is it true, now’, said the lad, ‘what they say, that the Deil can make himself as small as he chooses, and thrust himself in through a pinhole?’

‘Yes it is’, said the Deil.

‘Oh! it is, is it? then let me see you do it, and just creep into this nut’, said the lad.

So the Deil did it.

Now, when he had crept well in through the worm’s hole, the lad stopped it up with a pin.

‘Now, I’ve got you safe’, he said, and put the nut into his pocket.

So when he had walked on a bit, he came to a smithy, and he turned in and asked the smith if he’d be good enough to crack that nut for him.

‘Aye, that’ll be an easy job’, said the smith, and took his smallest hammer, laid the nut on the anvil, and gave it a blow, but it wouldn’t break.

So he took another hammer a little bigger, but that wasn’t heavy enough either.

Then he took one bigger still, but it was still the same story; and so the smith got wroth, and grasped his great sledge-hammer.

‘Now, I’ll crack you to bits’, he said, and let drive at the nut with all his might and main. And so the nut flew to pieces with a bang that blew off half the roof of the smithy, and the whole house creaked and groaned as though it were ready to fall.

‘Why! if I don’t think the Deil must have been in that nut’, said the smith.

‘So he was; you’re quite right’, said the lad, as he went away laughing.

68

THE COCK AND HEN A-NUTTING

Once on a time the cock and the hen went out into the hazel-wood to pick nuts; and so the hen got a nutshell in her throat, and lay on her back, flapping her wings.

Off went the cock to fetch water for her; so he came to the Spring and said:

‘Dear good friend Spring give me a drop of water, that I may give it to Dame Partlet, my mate, who lies at death’s door in the hazel-wood.’

But the Spring answered:

‘You’ll get no water from me until I get leaves from you.’

So the Cock ran to the Linden, and said:

‘Dear good friend Linden, give me some of your leaves, the leaves I’ll give to the Spring, and the Spring’ll give me water to give to Dame Partlet my mate, who lies at death’s door in the hazel-wood.’

‘You’ll get no leaves from me’, said the Linden, ‘until I get a red ribbon with a golden edge from you.’

So the Cock ran to the Virgin Mary.

‘Dear good Virgin Mary, give me a red ribbon with a golden edge, and I’ll give the red ribbon to the Linden, the Linden’ll give me leaves, the leaves I’ll give to the Spring, the Spring’ll give me water, and the water I’ll give to Dame Partlet my mate, who lies at death’s door, in the hazel-wood.’

‘You’ll get no red ribbon from me’, answered the Virgin Mary, ‘until I get shoes from you.’

So the Cock ran to the Shoemaker and said

‘Dear good friend Shoemaker, give me shoes, and I’ll give the shoes to the Virgin Mary, the Virgin Mary’ll give me a red ribbon, the red ribbon I’ll give to the Linden, the Linden’ll give me leaves, the leaves I’ll give to the Spring, the Spring’ll give me water, the water I’ll give to Dame Partlet my mate, who lies at death’s door in the hazel-wood.’

‘You’ll get no shoes from me’, said the Shoemaker, ‘until I get bristles from you.’

So the Cock ran to the Sow and said:

‘Dear good friend Sow, give me bristles, the bristles I’ll give to the Shoemaker, the Shoemaker’ll give me shoes, the shoes I’ll give to the Virgin Mary, the Virgin Mary’ll give me a red ribbon, the red ribbon I’ll give to the Linden, the Linden’ll give me leaves, the leaves I’ll give to the Spring, the Spring’ll give me water, the water I’ll give to Dame Partlet my mate, who lies at death’s door in the hazel-wood.’

‘You’ll get no bristles from me’, said the Sow, ‘until I get corn from you.’

So the Cock ran to the Thresher and said:

‘Dear good friend Thresher, give me corn, the corn I’ll give to the Sow, the Sow’ll give me bristles, the bristles I’ll give to the Shoemaker, the Shoemaker’ll give me shoes, the shoes I’ll give to the Virgin Mary, the Virgin Mary’ll give me a red ribbon, the red ribbon I’ll give to the Linden, the Linden’ll give me leaves, the leaves I’ll give to the Spring, the Spring’ll give me water, the water I’ll give to Dame Partlet my mate, who lies at death’s door in the hazel-wood.’

‘You’ll get no corn from me’, said the Thresher, ‘until I get a bannock from you.’

So the Cock ran to the Baker’s wife and said:

‘Dear good friend Mrs. Baker, give me a bannock, the bannock I’ll give to the Thresher, the Thresher’ll give me corn, the corn I’ll give to the Sow, the Sow’ll give me bristles, the bristles I’ll give to the Shoemaker, the Shoemaker’ll give me shoes, the shoes I’ll give to the Virgin Mary, the Virgin Mary’ll give me a red ribbon, the red ribbon I’ll give to the Linden, the Linden’ll give me leaves, the leaves I’ll give to the Spring, the Spring’ll give me water, the water I’ll give to Dame Partlet my mate, who lies at death’s door in the hazel-wood.’

‘You’ll get no bannock from me’, said the Baker’s wife, until I get wood from you.’

So the Cock ran to the Woodcutter and said:

‘Dear good friend Woodcutter, give me wood, the wood I’ll give to the Baker’s wife, the Baker’s wife’ll give me a bannock, the bannock I’ll give to the Thresher, the Thresher’ll give me corn, the corn I’ll give to the Sow, the Sow’ll give me bristles, the bristles I’ll give to the Shoemaker, the Shoemaker’ll give me shoes, the shoes I’ll give to the Virgin Mary, the Virgin Mary’ll give me a red ribbon, the red ribbon I’ll give to the Linden, the Linden’ll give me leaves, the leaves I’ll give to the Spring, the Spring’ll give me water, the water I’ll give to Dame Partlet my mate, who lies at death’s door in the hazel-wood.’

‘You’ll get no wood from me’, answered the Woodcutter, ‘until I get an axe from you.’

So the Cock ran to the Smith and said:

‘Dear good friend Smith, give me an axe, the axe I’ll give to the Woodcutter, the Woodcutter’ll give me wood, the wood I’ll give to the Baker’s wife, the Baker’s wife’ll give me a bannock, the bannock I’ll give to the Thresher, the Thresher’ll give me corn, the corn I’ll give to the Sow, the Sow’ll give me bristles, the bristles I’ll give to the Shoemaker, the Shoemaker’ll give me shoes, the shoes I’ll give to the Virgin Mary, the Virgin Mary’ll give me a red ribbon, the red ribbon I’ll give to the Linden, the Linden’ll give me leaves, the leaves I’ll give to the Spring, the Spring’ll give me water, the water I’ll give to Dame Partlet my mate, who lies at death’s door in the hazel-wood.’

‘You’ll get no axe from me’, answered the Smith, ‘until I get charcoal of you.’

So the Cock ran to the Charcoal-burner and said

‘Dear good friend Charcoal-burner, give me charcoal, the charcoal I’ll give to the Smith, the Smith’ll give me an axe, the axe I’ll give to the Woodcutter, the Woodcutter’ll give me wood, the wood I’ll give to the Baker’s wife, the Baker’s wife’ll give me a bannock, the bannock I’ll give to the Thresher, the Thresher’ll give me corn, the corn I’ll give to the Sow, the Sow’ll give me bristles, the bristles I’ll give to the Shoemaker, the Shoemaker’ll give me shoes, the shoes I’ll give to the Virgin Mary, the Virgin Mary’ll give me a red ribbon, the red ribbon I’ll give to the Linden, the Linden’ll give me leaves, the leaves I’ll give to the Spring, the Spring’ll give me water, the water I’ll give to Dame Partlet my mate, who lies at death’s door in the hazel-wood.

So the Charcoal-burner took pity on the Cock, and gave him a bit of charcoal, and then the Smith got his coal, and the Woodcutter his axe, and the Baker’s wife her wood, and the Thresher his bannock, and the Sow her corn, and the Shoemaker his bristles, and the Virgin Mary her shoes, and the Linden its red ribbon with a golden edge, and the Spring its leaves, and the Cock his drop of water, and he gave it to Dame Partlet, his mate, who lay there at death’s door in the hazel-wood, and so she got all right again.

69

THE BIG BIRD DAN

Once on a time there was a king who had twelve daughters, and he was so fond of them they must always be at his side; but every day at noon, while the king slept, the Princesses went out to take a walk. So once, while the king was taking his noontide nap, and the Princesses had gone to take their walk, all at once they were missing, and worse, they never came home again. Then there was great grief and sorrow all over the land, but the most sorry of all was the king. He sent messengers out throughout his own and other realms, and gave out their names in all the churches, and had the bells tolled for them in all the steeples; but gone the Princesses were, and gone they stayed, and none could tell what was become of them. So it was as clear as day that they must have been carried off by some witchcraft.

Well, it wasn’t long before these tidings spread far and wide, over land and town, aye, over many lands; and so the news came to a king ever so many lands off, who had twelve sons. So when these Princes heard of the twelve king’s daughters, they asked leave of their father to go out and seek them. They had hard work to get his leave, for he was afraid lest he should never see them again, but they all fell down on their knees before the king, and begged so long, at last he was forced to let them go after all.

He fitted out a ship for them, and gave them Ritter Red, who was quite at home at sea, for a captain. So they sailed about a long, long time, landed on every shore they came to, and hunted and asked after the Princesses, but they could neither hear nor see anything of them. And now, a few days only were wanting to make up seven years since they set sail, when one day a strong storm rose, and such foul weather, they thought they should never come to land again, and all had to work so hard, they couldn’t get a wink of sleep so long as the storm lasted. But when the third day was nearly over, the wind fell, and all at once it got as still as still could be. Now, they were all so weary with work and the rough weather, they fell fast asleep in the twinkling of an eye; all but the youngest Prince, he could get no rest, and couldn’t go off to sleep at all.

So as he was pacing up and down the deck, the ship came to a little island, and on the island ran a little dog, and bayed and barked at the ship as if it wanted to come on board. So the Prince went to that side of the deck, and tried to coax the dog, and whistled and whistled to him, but the more he whistled and coaxed, the more the dog barked and snarled. Well, he thought it a shame the dog should run about there and starve, for he made up his mind that it must have come thither from a ship that had been cast away in the storm; but still he thought he should never be able to help it after all, for he couldn’t put out the boat by himself, and as for the others, they all slept so sound, he wouldn’t wake them for the sake of a dog. But then the weather was so calm and still; and at last he said to himself: ‘Come what may, you must go on shore and save that dog’, and so he began to try to launch the boat, and he found it far easier work than he thought. So he rowed ashore, and went up to the dog; but every time he tried to catch it, it jumped on one side, and so it went on till he found himself inside a great grand castle, before he knew where he was. Then the dog, all at once, was changed into a lovely Princess; and there, on the bench, sat a man so big and ugly, the Prince almost lost his wits for fear.

‘YOU’VE NO NEED TO BE AFRAID’, said the man — but the Prince, to tell you the truth, got far more afraid when he heard his gruff voice — ‘for I know well enough what you want. There are twelve Princes of you, and you are looking for the twelve Princesses that are lost. I know, too, very well whereabouts they are; they’re with my lord and master, and there they sit, each of them on her chair, and comb his hair; for he has twelve heads. And now you have sailed seven years, but you’ll have to sail seven years more before you find them. As for you, you might stay here and welcome, and have my daughter; but you must first slay him, for he’s a hard master to all of us, and we’re all weary of him, and when he’s dead I shall be King in his stead; but first try if you can brandish this sword’.

Then the King’s son took hold of a rusty old sword which hung on the wall, but he could scarce stir it.

‘Now you must take a pull at this flask’, said the Troll; and when he had done that he could stir it, and when he had taken another he could lift it, and when he had taken a third he could brandish the sword as easily as if it had been his own.

‘Now, when you get on board’, said the Troll Prince, ‘you must hide the sword well in your berth, that Ritter Red mayn’t set eyes on it; he’s not man enough to wield it, but he’ll get spiteful against you, and try to take your life. And when seven years are almost out all but three days’, he went on to say, ‘everything will happen just as now; foul weather will come on you, with a great storm, and when it is over you’ll all be sleepy. Then you must take the sword and row ashore, and so you’ll come to a castle where all sorts of guards will stand — wolves, and bears, and lions; but you needn’t be afraid of them, for they’ll all come and crouch at your feet. But when you come inside the castle, you’ll soon see the Troll; he sits in a splendid chamber in grand attire and array; twelve heads he has of his own, and the Princesses sit round them, each on her chair, and comb his heads, and that’s a work you may guess they don’t much like. Then you must make haste, and hew off one head after the other as quick as you can; for if he wakes and sets his eyes on you, he'll swallow you alive'.

So the King's son went on board with the sword, and he bore in mind what he had come to know. The others still lay fast asleep and snored, and he hid the sword in his berth, so that neither Ritter Red nor any of the rest got sight of it. And now it began to blow again, so he woke up the others and said he thought they oughtn't to sleep any longer now when there was such a good wind. And there was none of them that marked he had been away. Well, after the seven years were all gone but three days, all happened as the Troll had said. A great storm and foul weather came on that lasted three days, and when it had blown itself out, all the rest grew sleepy and went to rest; but the youngest King's son rowed ashore, and the guards fell at his feet, and so he came to the castle. So when he got inside the chamber, there sat the King fast asleep as the Troll Prince had said, and the twelve Princesses sat each on her chair and combed one of his heads. The king's son beckoned to the Princesses to get out of the way; they pointed to the Troll, and beckoned to him again to go his way as quick as ever he could, but he kept on making signs to them to get out of the way, and then they understood that he wanted to set them free, and stole away softly one after the other, and as fast as they went, he hewed off the Troll King's heads, till at last the blood gushed out like a great brook. When the Troll was slain he rowed on board and hid his sword. He thought now he had done enough, and as he couldn't get rid of the body by himself, he thought it only fair they should help him a little. So he woke them all up, and said it was a shame they should be snoring there, when he had found the Princesses, and set them free from the Troll. The others only laughed at him, and said he had been just as sound asleep as they, and only dreamt that he was man enough to do what he said; for if any one was to set the Princesses free, it was far more likely it would be one of them. But the youngest King's son told them all about it, and when they followed him to the land and saw first of all the brook of blood, and then the castle, and the Troll, and the twelve heads, and the Princesses, they saw plain enough that he had spoken the truth, and now the whole helped him to throw the body and the heads into the sea. So all were glad and happy, but none more so than the Princesses, who got rid of having to sit there and comb the Troll's hair all day. Of all the silver and gold and precious things that were there, they took as much as the ship could hold, and so they went on board altogether Princes and Princesses alike.

But when they had gone a bit out on the sea, the Princesses said they had forgotten in their joy their gold crowns; they lay behind in a press, and they would be so glad to have them. So when none of the others was willing to fetch them, the youngest King's son said:

'I have already dared so much, I can very well go back for the gold crowns too, if you will only strike sail and wait till I come again.'

Yes, that they would do. But when he had gone back so far that they couldn't see him any longer, Ritter Red, who would have been glad enough to have been their chief, and to have the youngest Princess, said, 'it was no use their lying there still waiting for him, for they might know very well he would never come back; they all knew, too, how the king had given him all power and authority to sail or not as he chose; and now they must all say 'twas he that had saved the Princesses, and if any one said anything else, he should lose his life'.

The Princes didn't dare to do anything else than what Ritter Red willed, and so they sailed away.

Meanwhile the youngest King's son rowed to land, went up to the castle, found the press with gold crowns in it, and at last lugged it down to the boat, and shoved off; but when he came where he ought to have seen the ship, lo! it was gone. Well, as he couldn't catch a glimpse of it anywhere, he could very soon tell how matters stood. To row after them was no good, and so he was forced to turn about and row back to land. He was rather afraid to stay alone in the castle all night, but there was no other house to be got, so he plucked up a heart, locked up all the doors and gates fast, and lay down in a room where there was a bed ready made. But fearful and woeful he was, and still more afraid he got when he had lain a while and something began to creak and groan and quake in wall and roof, as if the whole castle were being torn asunder. Then all at once down something plunged close by the side of his bed, as if it were a whole cartload of hay. Then all was still again; but after a while he heard a voice, which bade him not to be afraid, and said:

Here am I the Big Bird Dan
Come to help you all I can.

‘But the first thing you must do when you wake in the morning, will be to go to the barn and fetch four barrels of rye for me. I must fill my crop with them for breakfast, else I can’t do anything’.

When he woke up, sure enough there he saw an awfully big bird, which had a feather at the nape of his neck, as thick and long as a half-grown spruce fir. So the King’s son went down to the barn to fetch four barrels of rye for the Big Bird Dan, and when he had crammed them into his crop he told the King’s son to hang the press with the gold crowns on one side of his neck, and as much gold and silver as would weigh it down on the other side, and after that to get on his back and hold fast by the feather in the nape of his neck. So away they went till the wind whistled after them, and so it wasn’t long before they outstripped the ship. The King’s son wanted to go on board for his sword, for he was afraid lest any one should get sight of it, for the Troll had told him that mustn’t be; but Bird Dan said that mustn’t be either.

‘Ritter Red will never see it, never fear; but if you go on board, he’ll try to take your life, for he has set his heart on having the youngest Princess; but make your mind quite easy about her, for she lays a naked sword by her side in bed every night.’

So after a long, long time, they came to the island where the Troll Prince was; and there the King’s son was welcomed so heartily there was no end to it. The Troll Prince didn’t know how to be good enough to him for having slain his Lord and Master, and so made him King of the Trolls, and if the King’s son had been willing he might easily have got the Troll King’s daughter, and half the kingdom. But he had so set his heart on the youngest of the twelve Princesses, he could take no rest, but was all for going after their ship time after time. So the Troll King begged him to be quiet a little longer, and said they had still nearly seven years to sail before they got home. As for the Princess the Troll said the same thing as the Big Bird Dan.

‘You needn’t fret yourself about her, for she lays a naked sword by her side every night in bed. And now if you don’t believe what I say’, said the Troll, ‘you can go on board when they sail by here, and see for yourself, and fetch the sword too, for I may just as well have it again.’

So when they sailed by another great storm arose, and when the king’s son went on board they all slept, and each Princess lay beside her Prince; but the youngest lay alone with a naked sword beside her in the bed, and on the floor by the bedside lay Ritter Red. Then the king’s son took the sword and rowed ashore again, and none of them had seen that he had been on board. But still the King’s son couldn’t rest, and he often and often wanted to be off, and so at last when it got near the end of the seven years, and only three weeks were left, the Troll King said:

‘Now you may get ready to go since you won’t stay with us; and you shall have the loan of my iron boat, which sails of itself, if you only say:

Boat, boat, go on!

‘In that boat there is an iron club, and that club you must lift a little when you see the ship straight a-head of you, and then they’ll get such a rattling fair breeze, they’ll forget to look at you; but when you get alongside them, you must lift the club a little again, and then they’ll get such a foul wind and storm, they’ll have something else to do than to stare at you; and when you have run past them, you must lift the club a third time, but you must always be sure and lay it down carefully again, else there’ll be such a storm both you and they will be wrecked and lost. Now, when you have got to land, you’ve no need to bother yourself at all about the boat; just turn it about, and shove it off, and say:

Boat, boat, go back home!

When he set out they gave him so much gold and silver, and so many other costly things, and clothes and linen which the Troll Princess had sewn and woven for him all that long time, that he was far richer than any of his brothers.

Well, he had no sooner seated himself in the boat, and said,

Boat, boat, go on!

than away went the boat, and when he saw the ship right ahead he lifted up the club, and then they got such a fair breeze, they forgot to look at him. When he was alongside the ship, he lifted the club again, and then such a storm arose and such foul weather, that the white foam flew about the ship, and the billows rolled over the deck, and they had something else to do than to stare at him; and when he had run past them he lifted the club the third time, and then the storm and the wind rose so, they had still less time to look after him, and to make him out. So he came to land long, long before the ship; and when he had got all his goods out of the boat, he shoved it off again, and turned it about and said:

Boat, boat, go back home!

And off went the boat.

Then he dressed himself up as a sailor — whether the Troll king had told him that, or it was his own device, I’m sure I can’t say — and went up to a wretched hut where an old wife lived, whom he got to believe that he was a poor sailor who had been on board a great ship that was wrecked, and that he was the only soul that had got ashore. After that he begged for house-room for himself and the goods he had saved.

‘Heaven mend me!’ said the old wife, ‘how can I lend any one house-room? look at me and mine, why, I’ve no bed to sleep on myself, still less one for any one else to lie on.’

Well, well, it was all the same, said the sailor; if he only got a roof over his head, it didn’t matter where he lay. So she couldn’t turn him out of the house, when he was so thankful for what there was. That afternoon he fetched up his things, and the old wife, who was very eager to hear a bit of news to run about and tell, began at once to ask who he was, whence he came, whither he was bound, what it was he had with him, what his business was, and if he hadn’t heard anything of the twelve Princesses who had been away the Lord knew how many years. All this she asked and much more, which it would be waste of time to tell. But he said he was so poorly and had such a bad headache after the awful weather he had been out in, that he couldn’t answer any of her questions; she must just leave him alone and let him rest a few days till he came to himself after the hard work he’d had in the gale, and then she’d know all she wanted.

The very next day the old wife began to stir him up and ask again, but the sailor’s head was still so bad he hadn’t got his wits together, but somehow he let drop a word or two to show that he did know something about the Princesses. Off ran the old wife with what she had heard to all the gossips and chatterboxes round about, and soon the one came running after the other to ask about the Princesses, ‘if he had seen them’, ‘if they would soon be there’, ‘if they were on the way’, and much more of the same sort. He still went on groaning over his headache after the storm, so that he couldn’t tell them all about it, but so much he told them, unless they had been lost in the great storm they’d make the land in about a fortnight or before perhaps; but he couldn’t say for sure whether they were alive or no, for though he had seen them, it might very well be that they had been cast away in the storm since. So what did one of these old gossips do but run up to the Palace with this story, and say that there was a sailor down in such and such an old wife’s hut, who had seen the Princesses, and that they were coming home in a fortnight or in a week’s time. When the King heard that he sent a messenger down to the sailor to come up to him and tell the news himself.

‘I don’t see how it’s to be’, said the sailor, ‘for I haven’t any clothes fit to stand in before the King.’

But the King said he must come; for the King must and would talk with him, whether he were richly or poorly clad, for there was no one else who could bring him any tidings of the Princesses. So he went up at last to the Palace and went in before the King, who asked him if it were true that he had seen anything of the Princesses.

‘Aye, aye’, said the sailor, ‘I’ve seen them sure enough, but I don’t know whether they’re still alive, for when I last caught sight of them, the weather was so foul we in our ship were cast away; but if they’re still alive they’ll come safe home in a fortnight or perhaps before.’

When the King heard that he was almost beside himself for joy; and when the time came that the sailor had said they would come, the King drove down to the strand to meet them in a great state; and there was joy and gladness over the whole land, when the ship came sailing in with the Princes and Princesses and Ritter Red. But no one was gladder than the old King, who had got his daughters back again. The eleven eldest Princesses too, were glad and merry, but the youngest who was to have Ritter Red, who said that he had set them all free and slain the Troll, she wept and was always sorrowful. The King took this ill, and asked why she wasn’t cheerful and merry like the others; she hadn't anything to be sorry for now when she had got out of the Troll's clutches, and was to have such a husband as Ritter Red. But she daredn't say anything, for Ritter Red had said he would take the life of any one who told the truth how things had gone.

But now one day, when they were hard at work sewing and stitching the bridal array, in came a man in a great sailor's cloak with a pedlar's pack on his back, and asked if the Princesses wouldn't buy something fine of him for the wedding; he had so many wares and costly things, both gold and silver. Yes, they might do so perhaps, so they looked at his wares and they looked at him, for they thought they had seen both him and many of his costly things before.

'He who has so many fine things', said the youngest Princess, 'must surely have something still more precious, and which suits us better even than these.'

'Maybe I have', said the Pedlar.

But now all the others cried 'Hush', and bade her bear in mind what Ritter Red had said he would do.

Well, some time after the Princesses sat and looked out of the window, and then the King's son came again with the great sea-cloak thrown about him, and the press with the gold crowns at his back; and when he got into the palace hall he unlocked the press before the Princesses, and when each of them knew her own gold crown again, the youngest said:

'I think it only right that he who set us free should get the meed that is his due; and he is not Ritter Red, but this man who has brought us our gold crowns. He it is that set us free.'

Then the King's son cast off the sailor's cloak, and stood there far finer and grander than all the rest; and so the old King made them put Ritter Red to death. And now there was real right down joy in the palace; each took his own bride, and there just was a wedding! Why, it was heard of and talked about over twelve kings' realms.

70

BRUIN AND REYNARD

The Bear and the Fox had once bought a firkin of butter together; they were to have it at Yule and hid it till then under a thick spruce bush.

After that they went a little way off and lay down on a sunny bank to sleep. So when they had lain a while the Fox got up, shook himself, and bawled out ‘yes’.

Then he ran off straight to the firkin and ate a good third part of it. But when he came back, and the Bear asked him where he had been, since he was so fat about the paunch, he said:

‘Don’t you believe then that I was bidden to barsel, to a christening feast.’

‘So, so’, said the Bear, ‘and pray what was the bairn’s name.’

‘Just-begun’, said the Fox.

So they lay down to sleep again. In a little while up jumped the Fox again, bawled out ‘yes’, and ran off to the firkin.

This time too he ate a good lump. When he came back, and the Bear asked him again where he had been, he said:

‘Oh, wasn’t I bidden to barsel again, don’t you think.’

‘And pray what was the bairn’s name this time’, asked the Bear.

‘Half-eaten’, said the Fox.

The Bear thought that a very queer name, but he hadn't wondered long over it before he began to yawn and gape and fell asleep. Well, he hadn't lain long before the Fox jumped up as he had done twice before, bawled out 'yes' and ran off to the firkin, which this time he cleared right out. When he got back he had been bidden to barsel again, and when the Bear wanted to know the bairn's name, he answered:

'Licked-to-the-bottom.'

After that they lay down again, and slept a long time; but then they were to go to the firkin to look at the butter, and when they found it eaten up, the Bear threw the blame on the Fox, and the Fox on the Bear; and each said the one had been at the firkin while the other slept.

'Well, well', said Reynard, 'we'll soon find this out, which of us has eaten the butter. We'll just lay down in the sunshine, and he whose cheeks and chaps are greasiest when we wake, he is the thief.'

Yes, that trial Bruin was ready to stand; and as he knew in his heart he had never so much as tasted the butter, he lay down without a care to sleep in the sun.

Then Reynard stole off to the firkin for a morsel of butter, which stuck there in a crack, and then he crept back to the Bear, and greased his chaps and cheeks with it; and then he, too, lay down to sleep as if nothing had happened.

So when they both woke, the sun had melted the butter, and the Bear's whiskers were all greasy; and so it was Bruin after all, and no one else, who had eaten the butter.

71

TOM TOTHERHOUSE

Once on a time there was a Goody who had a deaf husband. A good, easy man he was, but that was just why she thought more of the lad next door, whom they called ‘Tom Totherhouse’. Now the lad that served the deaf man saw very well that the two had something between them, and one day he said to the Goody:

‘Dare you wager ten dollars, mother, that I don’t make you lay bare your own shame?’

‘Yes I dare’, said she; and so they wagered ten dollars. So one day, while the lad and the deaf man stood thrashing in the barn, the lad saw that Tom Totherhouse came to see the Goody. He said nothing, but a good while before dinnertime he turned toward the barn-door, and bawled out ‘Halloa!’

‘What! are we to go home already?’ said the man, who hadn’t given any heed to what the lad did.

‘Yes, we must, since mother calls’, said the lad.

So when they got into the passage, the lad began to hem and cough, that the Goody might get Tom Totherhouse out of the way. But when they came into the room, there stood a whole bowl of custards on the table.

‘Nay, nay, mother’, cried out the man; ‘shall we have custards to-day?’

‘Yes, that you shall, dear’, said the Goody; but she was as sour as verjuice, and as cross as two sticks.

So when they had eaten and drank all the good cheer up, off they went again to their work, and the Goody said to Tom:

‘Deil take that lad’s sharp nose, this was all his fault; but now you must be off as fast as you can, and I’ll come down to you in the mead with a snack between meals.’

This the lad stood outside in the passage and listened to.

‘Do you know, father’, he said, ‘I think we’d best go down into the hollow and put our fence to rights, which is blown down, before the neighbours’ swine get in and root up our meadow.’

‘Aye, aye, let’s go and do it’, said the man; for he did all he was told, good, easy man.

So when the afternoon was half spent, down came the Goody sneaking along into the mead, with something under her apron.

‘Nay, nay, mother’, said the man, ‘it can’t be you any longer; are we to have a snack between meals too?’

‘Yes, yes, that you shall’, she said; but she was sourer and wilder than ever.

So they made merry, and crammed themselves with bannocks and butter, and had a drop of brandy into the bargain.

‘I’ll go off to Tom Totherhouse with a snack — shan’t I, mother?’ said the lad. ‘He’s had nothing between meals, I’ll be bound.’

‘Ah! do; there’s a good fellow’, said the Goody, who all at once got as mild as milk.

As he went along the lad broke a bannock to bits, and dropped the crumbs here and there as he walked. But when he got to Tom Totherhouse he said:

‘Now, just you take care, for our old cock has found out that you come too often to see our Goody. He won’t stand it any longer, and has sworn to drive his axe into you as soon as ever he can set eyes on you.’

As for Tom, he was so frightened he scarce knew which way to turn, and the lad went back again to his master.

‘There’s something wrong’, he said, ‘with Tom’s plough, and he begs you to be so good as to take your axe, and go and see if you can’t set it right.’

Yes, the man set off with his axe, but Tom Totherhouse had scarce caught sight of him before he took to his heels as fast as he could. The man turned and twisted the plough round and round, and looked at it on every side, and when he couldn’t see anything wrong with it he went off home again; but on the way he picked up the bits of broken bannock which the lad had let fall. His old dame stood in the meadow and looked at him as he did this for a while, and wondered and wondered what it could be her husband was gathering up.

‘Oh, I know’, said the lad, ‘master’s picking up stones, I’ll be bound; for he has marked how often this Tom Totherhouse runs over here; and the old fellow won’t stand it any longer; and now he has sworn to stone mother to death.’

Off went the Goody as fast as her legs could carry her.

‘What in the world is it that mother is running after now?’ asked the man, when he reached the spot where she had stood.

‘Oh’, said the lad, ‘maybe the house at home is on fire!’

So there ran the husband behind and the Goody before; and as she ran she screeched out:

‘Ah! ah! don’t stone me to death; don’t stone me to death! and I’ll give you my word never to let Tom Totherhouse come near me again.’

‘Now the ten dollars are mine’, bawled out the lad; and so they were.

72

LITTLE ANNIE THE GOOSE-GIRL

Once on a time there was a King who had so many geese he was forced to have a lassie to tend them and watch them; her name was Annie, and so they called her ‘Annie the Goose-girl’. Now you must know there was a King’s son from England who went out to woo; and as he came along Ann sat herself down in his way.

‘Sitting all alone there, you little Annie?’ said the King’s son.

‘Yes’, said little Annie, ‘here I sit and put stitch to stitch and patch on patch. I’m waiting to-day for the King’s son from England.’

‘Him you mustn’t look to have’, said the Prince.

‘Nay, but if I’m to have him’, said little Annie, ‘have him I shall, after all.’

And now limners were sent out into all lands and realms to take the likenesses of the fairest Princesses, and the Prince was to chose between them. So he thought so much of one of them, that he set out to seek her, and wanted to wed her, and he was glad and happy when he got her for his sweetheart.

But now I must tell you this Prince had a stone with him which he laid by his bedside, and that stone knew everything, and when the Princess came little Annie told her, if so be she’d had a sweetheart before, or didn’t feel herself quite free from anything which she didn’t wish the Prince to know, she’d better not step on that stone which lay by the bedside.

‘If you do, it will tell him all about you’, said little Annie.

So when the Princess heard that she was dreadfully downcast, and she fell upon the thought to ask Annie if she would get into bed that night in her stead and lie down by the Prince’s side; and then when he was sound asleep, Annie should get out and the Princess should get in, and so when he woke up in the morning he would find the right bride by his side.

So they did that, and when Annie the goose-girl came and stepped upon the stone the Prince asked:

‘Who is this that steps into my bed?’

‘A maid pure and bright’, said the stone, and so they lay down to sleep; but when the night wore on the Princess came and lay down in Annie’s stead.

But next morning, when they were to get up, the Prince asked the stone again:

‘Who is this that steps out of my bed?’

‘One that has had three bairns’, said the stone. When the Prince heard that he wouldn’t have her, you may know very well; and so he packed her off home again, and took another sweetheart.

But as he went to see her, little Annie went and sat down in his way again.

‘Sitting all alone there, little Annie, the goose-girl’, said the Prince.

‘Yes, here I sit, and put stitch to stitch, and patch on patch; for I’m waiting to-day for the king’s son from England’, said Annie.

‘Oh! you mustn’t look to have him’, said the king’s son.

‘Nay, but if I’m to have him, have him I shall, after all’; that was what Annie thought.

Well, it was the same story over again with the Prince; only this time, when his bride got up in the morning, the stone said she’d had six bairns.

So the Prince wouldn’t have her either, but sent her about her business; but still he thought he’d try once more if he couldn’t find one who was pure and spotless; and he sought far and wide in many lands, till at last he found one he thought he might trust. But when he went to see her, little Annie the goose-girl had put herself in his way again.

‘Sitting all alone there, you little Annie, the goose-girl’, said the Prince.

‘Yes, here I sit, and put stitch to stitch, and patch on patch; for I’m waiting to-day for the king’s son from England’, said Annie.

‘Him you mustn’t look to have’, said the Prince.

‘Nay, but if I’m to have him, have him I shall, after all’, said little Annie.

So when the Princess came, little Annie the goose-girl told her the same as she had told the other two, if she’d had any sweetheart before, or if there was anything else she didn’t wish the Prince to know, she mustn’t tread on the stone that the Prince had put at his bedside; for, said she:

‘It tells him everything.’

The Princess got very red and downcast when she heard that, for she was just as naughty as the others, and asked Annie if she would go in her stead and lie down with the Prince that night; and when he was sound asleep, she would come and take her place, and then he would have the right bride by his side when it was light next morning.

Yes! they did that. And when little Annie the goose-girl came and stepped upon the stone, the Prince asked:

‘Who is this that steps into my bed.’

‘A maid pure and bright’, said the stone; and so they lay down to rest.

Farther on in the night the Prince put a ring on Annie’s finger, and it fitted so tight she couldn’t get it off again; for the Prince saw well enough there was something wrong, and so he wished to have a mark by which he might know the right woman again.

Well, when the Prince had gone off to sleep, the Princess came and drove Annie away to the pigsty, and lay down in her place. Next morning, when they were to get up, the Prince asked:

‘Who is this that steps out of my bed?’

‘One that’s had nine bairns’, said the stone.

When the Prince heard that he drove her away at once, for he was in an awful rage; and then he asked the stone how it all was with these Princesses who had stepped on it, for he couldn’t understand it at all, he said.

So the stone told him how they had cheated him, and sent little Annie the goose-girl to him in their stead.

But as the Prince wished to have no mistake about it, he went down to her where she sat tending her geese, for he wanted to see if she had the ring too, and he thought, ‘if she has it, ‘twere best to take her at once for my queen’.

So when he got down he saw in a moment that she had tied a bit of rag round one of her fingers, and so he asked her why it was tied up.

‘Oh! I’ve cut myself so badly’, said little Annie the goose-girl.

So he must and would see the finger, but Annie wouldn’t take the rag off. Then he caught hold of the finger; but Annie, she tried to pull it from him, and so between them the rag came off, and then he knew his ring.

So he took her up to the palace, and gave her much fine clothes and attire, and after that they held their wedding feast; and so little Annie the goose-girl came to have the king of England’s son for her husband after all, just because it was written that she should have him.

4. ROBERT NISBET BAIN

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Story of Little Tsar Novishny, the False Sister, and the Faithful Beasts
2. The Vampire and St. Michael
3. The Story of Tremsin, the Bird Zhar, and Nastasia, the Lovely Maid of the Sea
4. The Serpent-Wife
5. The Story of Unlucky Daniel
6. The Sparrow and the Bush
7. The Old Dog
8. The Fox and the Cat
9. The Straw Ox
10. The Golden Slipper
11. The Iron Wolf
12. The Three Brothers
13. The Tsar and the Angel
14. The Story of Ivan and the Daughter of the Sun
15. The Cat, the Cock, and the Fox
16. The Serpent-Tsarevich and His Two Wives
17. The Origin of the Mole
18. The Two Princes
19. The Ungrateful Children and the Old Father Who Went to School Again
20. Ivan the Fool and St. Peter’s Fife
21. The Magic Egg
22. The Story of the Forty-First Brother
23. The Story of the Unlucky Days
24. The Wondrous Story of Ivan Golik and the Serpents
25. The Golden Mountain
26. Morozko

27. The Flying Ship
28. The Muzhichek-As-Big-As-Your-Thumb-with-Moustaches-Seven-Versts Long.
29. The Story of the Tsarevich Ivan, and of the Harp that Harped Without a Harper
30. The Story of Gore-Gorinskoe
31. Go I Know Not Whither — Fetch I Know Not What
32. Kuz’ma Skorobogaty
33. The Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible
34. Verlioka
35. The Frog-Tsarevna
36. The Two Sons of Ivan the Soldier
37. The Woman-Accuser
38. Thomas Berennikov
39. The White Duck
40. The Tale of Little Fool Ivan
41. The Little Feather of Fenist the Bright Falcon
42. The Tale of the Peasant Demyan
43. The Enchanted Ring
44. The Brave Labourer
45. The Sage Damsel
46. The Prophetic Dream
47. Two Out of the Knapsack
48. The Story of Marko the Rich and Vasily the Luckless

PREFACE

BAIN, ROBERT NISBET

Born in London in 1854, Robert Nisbet Bain was a British historian and linguist for the British Museum. Historians tell us that Bain was able to read and work with over 20 languages. His proficiency in languages led to him translating several books including the Norwegian classic, *Weird Tales from Northern Seas*, translated from the Danish by Jonah Lie.

His work with fairy tales includes folklore from the Ukraine, with a collection known as *Cossack Fairy Tales and Folk Tales*. Bain also worked with Russian fairy tales and Turkish fairy tales. He also contributed to the Encyclopedia Britannica, writing biographies for a number of esteemed individuals; in particular, Bain is known for his exhaustive biography on another fairy tale author, Hans Christian Andersen. He passed away in 1909.

1

THE STORY OF LITTLE TSAR NOVISHNY, THE FALSE SISTER, AND THE FAITHFUL BEASTS

Once upon a time, in a certain kingdom, in a certain empire, there dwelt a certain Tsar who had never had a child. One day this Tsar went to the bazaar (such a bazaar as we have at Kherson) to buy food for his needs. For though he was a Tsar, he had a mean and churlish soul, and used always to do his own marketing, and so now, too, he bought a little salt fish and went home with it. On his way homeward, a great thirst suddenly fell upon him, so he turned aside into a lonely mountain where he knew, as his father had known before him, there was a spring of crystal-clear water. He was so very thirsty that he flung himself down headlong by this spring without first crossing himself, wherefore that Accursed One, Satan, immediately had power over him, and caught him by the beard. The Tsar sprang back in terror, and cried, “Let me go!” But the Accursed One held him all the tighter. “Nay, I will not let thee go!” cried he. Then the Tsar began to entreat him piteously. “Ask what thou wilt of me,” said he, “only let me go.” — “Give me, then,” said the Accursed One, “something that thou hast in the house, and then I’ll let thee go!” — “Let me see, what have I got?” said the Tsar. “Oh, I know. I’ve got eight horses at home, the like of which I have seen nowhere else, and I’ll immediately bid my equerry bring them to thee to this spring — take them.” — “I *won’t* have them!” cried the Accursed One, and he held him still more tightly by the beard. “Well, then, hearken now!” cried the Tsar. “I have eight oxen. They have never yet gone a-ploughing for me, or done a day’s work. I’ll have them brought hither. I’ll feast my eyes on them once more, and then I’ll have them driven into thy steppes — take them.” — “No, that won’t do either!” said the Accursed One. The Tsar went over, one by one, all the most precious things he had at home, but the Accursed One said “No!” all along, and pulled him more and more tightly by the beard. When the Tsar saw that the Accursed One would take none of all these things, he said to him at last, “Look now! I have a wife so lovely that the like of her is not to be found in the whole world, take her and let me go!” — “No!” replied the Accursed One, “I will not have her.” The Tsar was in great straits. “What am I to do now?” thought he. “I have offered him my lovely wife, who is the very choicest of my chattels, and he won’t have her!” — Then said the Accursed One, “Promise me what thou shalt find awaiting thee at home, and I’ll let thee go.”

The Tsar gladly promised this, for he could think of naught else that he had, and then the Accursed One let him go.

But while he had been away from home, there had been born to him a Tsarevko and a Tsarivna; and they grew up not by the day, or even by the hour, but by the minute: never were known such fine children. And his wife saw him coming from afar, and went out to meet him, with her two children, with great joy. But he, the moment he saw them, burst into tears. “Nay, my dear love,” cried she, “wherefore dost thou burst into tears? Or art thou so delighted that such children have been born unto thee that thou canst not find thy voice for tears of joy?” — And he answered her, “My darling wife, on my way back from the bazaar I was athirst, and turned toward a mountain known of old to my father and me, and it seemed to me as though there were a spring of water there, though the water was very near dried up. But looking closer, I saw that it was quite full; so I bethought me that I would drink thereof, and I leaned over, when lo! that Evil-wanton (I mean the Devil) caught me by the beard and would not let me go. I begged and prayed, but still he held me tight. ‘Give me,’ said he, ‘what thou hast at home, or I’ll never let thee go!’ — And I said to him, ‘Lo! now, I have horses.’ — ‘I don’t want thy horses!’ said he. — ‘I have oxen,’ I said. — ‘I don’t want thine oxen!’ said he. — ‘I have,’ said I, ‘a wife so fair that the like of her is not to be found in God’s fair world; take her, but let me go.’ — ‘I don’t want thy fair wife!’ said he. — Then I promised him what I should find at home when I got there, for I never thought that God had blessed me so. Come now, my darling wife! and let us bury them both lest he take them!” — “Nay, nay! my dear husband, we had better hide them somewhere. Let us dig a ditch by our hut — just under the gables!” (For there were no lordly mansions in those days, and the Tsars dwelt in peasants’ huts.) So they dug a ditch right under the gables, and put their children inside it, and gave them provision of bread and water. Then they covered it up and smoothed it down, and turned into their own little hut.

Presently the serpent (for the Accursed One had changed himself into a serpent) came flying up in search of the children. He raged up and down outside the hut — but there was nothing to be seen. At last he cried out to the stove, “Stove, stove, where has the Tsar hidden his children?” — The stove replied, “The Tsar has been a good master to me; he has put lots of warm fuel inside me; I hold to him.” — So, finding he could get nothing out of the stove, he cried to the hearth-broom, “Hearth-broom, hearth-broom, where has the Tsar hidden his children?” — But the hearth-broom answered, “The Tsar has always been a good master to me, for he always cleans the warm grate with me; I hold to him.” So the Accursed One could get nothing out of the hearth-broom. — Then he cried to the hatchet, “Hatchet, hatchet, where has the Tsar hidden his children?” — The hatchet replied, “The Tsar has always been a good master to me. He chops his wood with me, and gives me a place to lie down in; so I’ll not have him disturbed.” — Then the Devil cried to the gimlet, “Gimlet, gimlet, where has the Tsar hidden his children?” — But the gimlet replied, “The Tsar has always been a good master to me. He drills little holes with me, and then lets me rest; so I'll let him rest too." — Then the serpent said to the gimlet, "So the Tsar's a good master to thee, eh! Well, I can only say that if he's the good master thou sayest he is, I am rather surprised that he knocks thee on the head so much with a hammer." — "Well, that's true," said the gimlet, "I never thought of that. Thou mayst take hold of me if thou wilt, and draw me out of the top of the hut, near the front gable; and wherever I fall into the marshy ground, there set to work and dig with me!"

The Devil did so, and began digging at the spot where the gimlet fell out on the marshy ground till he had dug out the children. Now, as they had been growing all along, they were children no more, but a stately youth and a fair damsel; and the serpent took them up and carried them off. But they were big and heavy, so he soon got tired and lay down to rest, and presently fell asleep. Then the Tsarivna sat down on his head, and the Tsarevko sat down beside her, till a horse came running up. The horse ran right up to them and said, "Hail! little Tsar Novishny; art thou here by thy leave or against thy leave?" — And the little Tsar Novishny replied, "Nay, little nag! we are here against our leave, not by our leave." — "Then sit on my back!" said the horse, "and I'll carry you off!" So they got on his back, for the serpent was asleep all the time. Then the horse galloped off with them; and he galloped far, far away. Presently the serpent awoke, looked all round him, and could see nothing till he had got up out of the reeds in which he lay, when he saw them in the far distance, and gave chase. He soon caught them up; and little Tsar Novishny said to the horse, "Oh! little nag, how hot it is. It is all up with thee and us!" And, in truth, the horse's tail was already singed to a coal, for the serpent was hard behind them, blazing like fire. The horse perceived that he could do no more, so he gave one last wriggle and died; but they, poor things, were left alive. "Whom have you been listening to?" said the serpent as he flew up to them. "Don't you know that I only am your father and tsar, and have the right to carry you away?" — "Oh, dear daddy! we’ll never listen to anybody else again!” — “Well, I’ll forgive you this time,” said the serpent; “but mind you never do it again.”

Again the serpent took them up and carried them off. Presently he grew tired and again lay down to rest, and nodded off. Then the Tsarivna sat down on his head, and the Tsarevko sat down beside her, till a humble-bee came flying up. “Hail, little Tsar Novishny!” cried the humble-bee. — “Hail, little humble-bee!” said the little Tsar. — “Say, friends, are you here by your leave or against your leave?” — “Alas! little humble-bumble-bee, ‘tis not with my leave I have been brought hither, but against my leave, as thou mayst see for thyself.” — “Then sit on my back,” said the bee, “and I’ll carry you away.” — “But, dear little humble-bumble-bee, if a horse couldn’t save us, how will you?” — “I cannot tell till I try,” said the humble-bee. “But if I cannot save you, I’ll let you fall.” — “Well, then,” said the little Tsar, “we’ll try. For we two must perish in any case, but thou perhaps mayst get off scot-free.” So they embraced each other, sat on the humble-bee, and off they went. When the serpent awoke he missed them, and raising his head above the reeds and rushes, saw them flying far away, and set off after them at full speed. “Alas! little humble-bumble-bee,” cried little Tsar Novishny, “how burning hot ‘tis getting. We shall all three perish!” Then the humble-bee turned his wing and shook them off. They fell to the earth, and he flew away. Then the serpent came flying up and fell upon them with open jaws. “Ah-ha!” cried he, with a snort, “you’ve come to grief again, eh? Didn’t I tell you to listen to nobody but me!” Then they fell to weeping and entreating, “We’ll listen to you alone and to nobody else!” and they wept and entreated so much that at last he forgave them.

So he took them up and carried them off once more. Again he sat down to rest and fell asleep, and again the Tsarivna sat upon his head and the Tsarevko sat down by her side, till a bullock came up, full tilt, and said to them, “Hail, little Tsar Novishny! art thou here with thy leave or art thou here against thy leave?” — “Alas! dear little bullock, I came not hither by my leave; but maybe I was brought here against my leave!" — "Sit on my back, then," said the bullock, "and I'll carry you away." — But they said, "Nay, if a horse and a bee could not manage it, how wilt thou?" — "Nonsense!" said the bullock. "Sit down, and I'll carry you off!" So he persuaded them. — "Well, we can only perish once!" they cried; and the bullock carried them off. And every little while they went a little mile, and jolted so that they very nearly tumbled off. Presently the serpent awoke and was very very wrath. He rose high above the woods and flew after them — oh! how fast he did fly! Then cried the little Tsar, "Alas! bullock, how hot it turns. Thou wilt perish, and we shall perish also!" — Then said the bullock, "Little Tsar! look into my left ear and thou wilt see a horse-comb. Pull it out and throw it behind thee!" — The little Tsar took out the comb and threw it behind him, and it became a huge wood, as thick and jagged as the teeth of a horse-comb. But the bullock went on at his old pace: every little while they went a little mile, and jolted so that they nearly tumbled off. The serpent, however, managed to gnaw his way through the wood, and then flew after them again. Then cried the little Tsar, "Alas! bullock, it begins to burn again. Thou wilt perish, and we shall perish also!" — Then said the bullock, "Look into my right ear, and pull out the brush thou dost find there, and fling it behind thee!" — So he threw it behind him, and it became a forest as thick as a brush. Then the serpent came up to the forest and began to gnaw at it; and at last he gnawed his way right through it. But the bullock went on at his old pace: every little while they went a little mile, and they jolted so that they nearly tumbled off. But when the serpent had gnawed his way through the forest, he again pursued them; and again they felt a burning. And the little Tsar said, "Alas! bullock, look! look! how it burns. Look! look! how we perish." Now the bullock was already nearing the sea. "Look into my right ear," said the bullock, "draw out the little handkerchief thou findest there, and throw it in front of me." He drew it out and flung it, and before them stood a bridge. Over this bridge they galloped, and by the time they had done so, the serpent reached the sea. Then said the bullock to the little Tsar, “Take up the handkerchief again and wave it behind me.” Then he took and waved it till the bridge doubled up behind them, and went and spread out again right in front of them. The serpent came up to the edge of the sea; but there he had to stop, for he had nothing to run upon.

So they crossed over that sea right to the other side, and the serpent remained on his own side. Then the bullock said to them, “I’ll lead you to a hut close to the sea, and in that hut you must live, and you must take and slay me.” But they fell a-weeping sore. “How shall we slay thee!” they cried; “thou art our own little dad, and hast saved us from death!” — “Nay!” said the bullock; “but you must slay me, and one quarter of me you must hang up on the stove, and the second quarter you must place on the ground in a corner, and the third quarter you must put in the corner at the entrance of the hut, and the fourth quarter you must put round the threshold, so that there will be a quarter in all four corners.” So they took and slew him in front of the threshold, and they hung his four quarters in the four corners as he had bidden them, and then they laid them down to sleep. Now the Tsarevko awoke at midnight, and saw in the right-hand corner a horse so gorgeously caparisoned that he could not resist rising at once and mounting it; and in the threshold corner there was a self-slicing sword, and in the third corner stood the dog *Protius*, and in the stove corner stood the dog *Nedviga*. The little Tsar longed to be off. “Rise, little sister!” cried he. “God has been good to us! Rise, dear little sister, and let us pray to God!” So they arose and prayed to God, and while they prayed the day dawned. Then he mounted his horse and took the dogs with him, that he might live by what they caught.

So they lived in their hut by the sea, and one day the sister went down to the sea to wash her bed-linen and her body-linen in the blue waters. And the serpent came and said to her, “How didst thou manage to jump over the sea?” — “Look, now!” said she, “we crossed over in this way. My brother has a handkerchief which becomes a bridge when he waves it behind him." — And the serpent said to her, "I tell thee what, ask him for this handkerchief; say thou dost want to wash it, and take and wave it, and I'll then be able to cross over to thee and live with thee, and we'll poison thy brother." — Then she went home and said to her brother, "Give me that handkerchief, dear little brother; it is dirty, so I'll wash and give it back to thee." And he believed her and gave it to her, for she was dear to him, and he thought her good and true. Then she took the handkerchief, went down to the sea, and waved it — and behold there was a bridge. Then the serpent crossed over to her side, and they walked to the hut together and consulted as to the best way of destroying her brother and removing him from God's fair world. Now it was his custom to rise at dawn, mount his horse, and go a-hunting, for hunting he dearly loved. So the serpent said to her, "Take to thy bed and pretend to be ill, and say to him, 'I dreamed a dream, dear brother, and lo, I saw thee go and fetch me wolf's milk to make me well.' Then he'll go and fetch it, and the wolves will tear his dogs to pieces, and then we can take and do to him as we list, for his strength is in his dogs."

So when the brother came home from hunting the serpent hid himself, but the sister said, "I have dreamed a dream, dear brother. Methought thou didst go and fetch me wolf's milk, and I drank of it, and my health came back to me, for I am so weak that God grant I die not." — "I'll fetch it," said her brother. So he mounted his horse and set off. Presently he came to a little thicket, and immediately a she-wolf came out. Then Protius ran her down and Nedviga held her fast, and the little Tsar milked her and let her go. And the she-wolf looked round and said, "Well for thee, little Tsar Novishny, that thou hast let me go. Methought thou wouldst not let me go alive. For that thou hast let me go, I'll give thee, little Tsar Novishny, a wolf-whelp." — Then she said to the little wolf, "Thou shalt serve this dear little Tsar as though he were thine own dear father." Then the little Tsar went back, and now there were with him two dogs and a little wolf-whelp that trotted behind them.

Now the serpent and the false sister saw him coming from afar, and three dogs trotting behind him. And the serpent said to her, “What a sly, wily one it is! He has added another watch-dog to his train! Lie down, and make thyself out worse than ever, and ask bear’s milk of him, for the bears will tear him to pieces without doubt.” Then the serpent turned himself into a needle, and she took him up and stuck him in the wall. Meanwhile the brother dismounted from his horse and came with his dogs and the wolf to the hut, and the dogs began snuffing at the needle in the wall. And his sister said to him, “Tell me, why dost thou keep these big dogs? They let me have no rest.” Then he called to the dogs, and they sat down. And his sister said to him, “I dreamed a dream, my brother. I saw thee go and search and fetch me from somewhere bear’s milk, and I drank of it, and my health came back to me.” — “I will fetch it,” said her brother.

But first of all he laid him down to sleep. Nedviga lay at his head, and Protius at his feet, and *Vovchok* by his side. So he slept through the night, and at dawn he arose and mounted his good steed and hied him thence. Again they came to a little thicket, and this time a she-bear came out. Protius ran her down, Nedviga held her fast, and the little Tsar milked her and let her go. Then the she-bear said, “Hail to thee, little Tsar Novishny; because thou hast let me go, I’ll give thee a bear-cub.” But to the little bear she said, “Obey him as though he were thine own father.” So he set off home, and the serpent and his sister saw that four were now trotting behind him. “Look!” said the serpent, “if there are not four running behind him! Shall we never be able to destroy him? I tell thee what. Ask him to get thee hare’s milk; perhaps his beasts will gobble up the hare before he can milk it.” So he turned himself into a needle again, and she fastened him in the wall, only a little higher up, so that the dogs should not get at him. Then, when the little Tsar dismounted from his horse, he and his dogs came into the hut, and the dogs began snuffing at the needle in the wall and barked at it, but the brother knew not the cause thereof. But his sister burst into tears and said, “Why dost thou keep such monstrous dogs? Such a kennel of them makes me ill with anguish!” Then he shouted to the dogs, and they sat down quite still. Then she said to him, “I am so ill, brother, that nothing will make me well but hare’s milk. Go and get it for me.” — “I’ll get it,” said he.

But first he laid him down to sleep. Nedviga lay at his head, Protius at his feet, and Vovchok and *Medvedik* each on one side. He slept through the night, but at dawn he mounted his steed, took his pack with him, and departed. Again he came to a little thicket, and a she-hare popped out. Protius ran her down, Nedviga held her fast, then he milked her and let her go. Then the hare said, “Hail to thee, little Tsar Novishny; because thou hast let me go — I thought thou wouldst have torn me to pieces with thy dogs — I’ll give thee a leveret.” But to the leveret she said, “Obey him, as though he were thine own father.” Then he went home, and again they saw him from afar. “What a wily rogue it is!” said they. “All five are following him, and he is as well as ever!” — “Ask him to get thee fox’s milk!” said the serpent; “perhaps when he goes for it his beasts will leave him in the lurch!” Then he changed himself into a needle, and she stuck him still higher in the wall, so that the dogs could not get at him. The Tsar again dismounted from his horse, and his dogs rushed up to the hut and began snuffing at the needle. But his sister fell a-weeping, and said, “Why dost thou keep such monstrous dogs?” He shouted to them, and they sat down quietly on their haunches. Then his sister said again, “I am ailing, my brother; go and get me fox’s milk, and I shall be well.” — “I’ll fetch it for thee,” said her brother.

But first he lay down to sleep. Nedviga lay at his head, Protius at his feet, and Vovchok, Medvedik, and the leveret by his side. The little Tsar slept through the night, and at dawn he arose, mounted his horse, took his pack with him, and went off. They came to a little thicket, and a vixen popped out. Protius ran her down, Nedviga held her fast, and the little Tsar milked her and let her go. Then said the vixen to him, “Thanks to thee, little Tsar Novishny, that thou hast let me go. Methought thou wouldst tear me in pieces with thy dogs. For thy kindness I’ll give thee a little fox.” But to the little fox she said, “Obey him as though he were thine own father.” So he went home, and they saw him coming from afar, and lo! now he had six guardians, and yet had come by no harm. “‘Tis no good; we shall never do for him,” said the serpent. “Look, now! Make thyself worse than ever, and say to him, ‘I am very ill, my brother, because in another realm, far, far away, there is a wild boar who ploughs with his nose, and sows with his ears, and harrows with his tail — and in that same empire there is a mill with twelve furnaces that grinds its own grain and casts forth its own meal, and if thou wilt bring me of the meal that is beneath these twelve furnaces, so that I may make me a cake of it and eat, my soul shall live.’” — Then her brother said to her, “Methinks thou art not my sister, but my foe!” — But she replied, “How can I be thy foe when we two live all alone together in a strange land?” — “Well, I will get it for thee,” said he. For again he believed in his sister.

So he mounted his steed, took his pack with him, and departed, and he came to the land where were that boar and that mill she had told him of. He came up to the mill, tied his horse to it, and entered into it. And there were twelve furnaces there and twelve doors, and these twelve doors needed no man to open or shut them, for they opened and shut themselves. He took meal from beneath the first furnace and went through the second door, but the dogs were shut in by the doors. Through all twelve doors he went, and came out again at the first door, and looked about him, and — there were no dogs to be seen. He whistled, and he heard his dogs whining where they could not get out. Then he wept sore, mounted his horse, and went home. He got home, and there was his sister making merry with the serpent. And no sooner did the brother enter the hut than the serpent said, “Well, we wanted flesh, and now flesh has come to us!” For they had just slain a bullock, and on the ground where they had slain it there sprang up a whitethorn-tree, so lovely that it may be told of in tales, but neither imagined nor divined. When the little Tsar saw it, he said, “Oh, my dear brother-in-law!” (for without his dogs he must needs be courteous to the serpent) “pray let me climb up that whitethorn-tree, and have a good look about me!” But the sister said to the serpent, “Dear friend, make him get ready boiling water for himself, and we will boil him, for it does not become thee to dirty thy hands.” — “Very well,” said the serpent; “he shall make the boiling water ready!” So they ordered the little Tsar to go and chop wood and get the hot water ready. Then he went and chopped wood, but as he was doing so, a starling flew out and said to him, “Not so fast, not so fast, little Tsar Novishny. Be as slow as thou canst, for thy dogs have gnawed their way through two doors.”

Then the little Tsar poured water into the cauldron, and put fire under it. But the wood that he had cut was rotten and very very dry, so that it burned most fiercely, and he took and sprinkled it with water, and sprinkled it again and again, so that it might not burn too much. And when he went out into the courtyard for more water, the starling said to him, “Not so fast, not so fast, little Tsar Novishny, for thy dogs have gnawed their way through four doors!” As he was returning to the hut his sister said to him, “That water does not boil up quickly enough! Take the fire-shovel and poke the fire!” So he did so, and the faggots blazed up, but when she had gone away he sprinkled them with water again, so that they might burn more slowly. Then he went into the courtyard again, and the starling met him and said, “Not so fast, not so fast, little Tsar; be as slow as thou canst, for thy dogs have gnawed their way through six doors.” Then he returned to the hut, and his sister again took up the shovel and made him poke up the fire, and when she went away he again flung water on the burning coals. So he kept going in and out of the courtyard. "'Tis weary work!" cried he; but the starling said to him, "Not so fast, not so fast, little Tsar Novishny, for thy dogs have already gnawed their way through ten doors!" The little Tsar picked up the rottenest wood he could find and flung it on the fire, to make believe he was making haste, but sprinkled it at the same time with water, so that it might not burn up too quickly, and yet the kettle soon began to boil. Again he went to the forest for more wood, and the starling said to him, "Not so fast, not so fast, little Tsar, for thy dogs have already gnawed their way through all the doors, and are now resting!" But now the water was boiling, and his sister ran up and said to him, "Come, boil thyself, be quick; how much longer art thou going to keep us waiting?" Then he, poor thing, began ladling the boiling water over himself, while she got the table ready and spread the cloth, that the serpent might eat her brother on that very table.

But he, poor thing, kept ladling himself, and cried, "Oh, my dear brother-in-law, pray let me climb up to the top of that whitethorn-tree; let me have a look out from the top of it, for thence one can see afar!" — "Don't let him, dear!" said the sister to the serpent; "he will stay there too long and lose our precious time." — But the serpent replied, "It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter; let him climb up if he likes." So the little Tsar went up to the tree, and began to climb it; he did not miss a single branch, and stopped a little at each one to gain time, and so he climbed up to the very top, and then he took out his flute and began to play upon it. But the starling flew up to him and said, "Not so fast, little Tsar Novishny, for lo! thy dogs are running to thee with all their might." But his sister ran out and said, "What art thou playing up there for? Thou dost forget perhaps that we are waiting for thee down here!" Then he began to descend the tree, but he stopped at every branch on his way down, while his sister kept on calling to him to come down quicker. At last he came to the last branch, and as he stood upon it and leaped down to the ground, he thought to himself, "Now I perish!" At that same instant his dogs and his beasts, growling loudly, came running up, and stood in a circle around him. Then he crossed himself and said, “Glory to Thee, O Lord! I have still, perchance, a little time to live in Thy fair world!” Then he called aloud to the serpent and said, “And now, dear brother-in-law, come out, for I am ready for thee!” Out came the serpent to eat him, but he said to his dogs and his beasts, “Vovchok! Medvedik! Protius! Nedviga! Seize him!” Then the dogs and the beasts rushed upon him and tore him to bits.

Then the little Tsar collected the pieces and burnt them to ashes, and the little fox rolled his brush in the ashes till it was covered with them, and then went out into the open field and scattered them to the four winds. But while they were tearing the serpent to pieces the wicked sister knocked out his tooth and hid it. After it was all over the little Tsar said to her, “As thou hast been such a false friend to me, sister, thou must remain here while I go into another kingdom.” Then he made two buckets and hung them up on the whitethorn-tree, and said to his sister, “Look now, sister! if thou weepest for me, this bucket will fill with tears, but if thou weepest for the serpent that bucket will fill with blood!” Then she fell a-weeping and praying, and said to him, “Don’t leave me, brother, but take me with thee.” — “I won’t,” said he; “such a false friend as thou art I’ll not have with me. Stay where thou art.” So he mounted his horse, called to him his dogs and his beasts, and went his way into another kingdom and into another empire.

He went on and on till he came to a certain city, and in this city there was only one spring, and in this spring sat a dragon with twelve heads. And it was so that when any went to draw water from this well the dragon rose up and ate them, and there was no other place whence that city could draw its water. So the little Tsar came to that town and put up at the stranger’s inn, and he asked his host, “What is the meaning of all this running and crying of the people in the streets?” — “Why, dost thou not know?” said he; “it is the turn of the Tsar to send his daughter to the dragon!” — Then he went out and listened, and heard the people say, “The Tsar proclaims that whoever is able to slay the dragon, to him will he give his daughter and one-half of his tsardom!” Then little Tsar Novishny stepped forth and said, “I am able to slay this evil dragon!” So all the people immediately sent and told the Tsar, “A stranger has come hither who says he is ready to meet and slay the dragon.” Then the Tsar bade them take him to the watch-house and put him among the guards.

Then they led out the Tsarivna, and behind her they led him, and behind him came his beasts and his horse. And the Tsarivna was so lovely and so richly attired that all who beheld her burst into tears. But the moment the dragon appeared and opened his mouth to devour the Tsarivna, the little Tsar cried to his self-slicing sword, “Fall upon him!” and to his beasts he cried, “Protius! Medvedik! Vovchok! Nedviga! Seize him!” Then the self-slicing sword and the beasts fell upon him, and tore him into little bits. When they had finished tearing him, the little Tsar took the remains of the body and burnt them to ashes, and the little fox took up all the ashes on her tail, and scattered them to the four winds. Then he took the Tsarivna by the hand, and led her to the Tsar, and the people rejoiced because their water was free again. And the Tsarivna gave him the nuptial ring.

Then they set off home again. They went on and on, for it was a long way from the tsardom of that Tsar, and at last he grew weary and lay down in the grass, and she sat at his head. Then his lackey crept up to him, unfastened the self-slicing sword from his side, went up to the little Tsar, and said, “Self-slicing sword! slay him!” Then the self-slicing sword cut him into little bits, and his beasts knew nothing about it, for they were sleeping after their labours. After that the lackey said to the Tsarivna, “Thou must say now to all men that I saved thee from death, or if not, I will do to thee what I have done to him. Swear that thou wilt say this thing!” Then she said, “I will swear that thou didst save me from death,” for she was sore afraid of the lackey. Then they returned to the city, and the Tsar was very glad to see them, and clothed the lackey in goodly apparel, and they all made merry together.

Now when Nedviga awoke he perceived that his master was no longer there, and immediately awoke all the rest, and they all began to think and consider which of them was the swiftest. And when they had thought it well over they judged that the hare was the swiftest, and they resolved that the hare should run and get living and healing water and the apple of youth also. So the hare ran to fetch this water and this apple, and he ran and ran till he came to a certain land, and in this land the hare saw a spring, and close to the spring grew an apple-tree with the apples of youth, and this spring and this apple-tree were guarded by a Muscovite, oh! so strong, so strong, and he waved his sabre again and again so that not even a mouse could make its way up to that well. What was to be done? Then the little hare had resort to subtlety, and made herself crooked, and limped toward the spring as if she were lame. When the Muscovite saw her he said, “What sort of a little beast is this? I never saw the like of it before!” So the hare passed him by, and went farther and farther on till she came right up to the well. The Muscovite stood there and opened his eyes wide, but the hare had now got up to the spring, and took a little flask of the water and nipped off a little apple, and was off in a trice.

She ran back to the little Tsar Novishny, and Nedviga immediately took the water and sprinkled therewith the fragments of the little Tsar, and the fragments came together again. Then he poured some of the living water into his mouth and he became alive, and gave him a bite of the apple of youth, and he instantly grew young again and stronger than ever. Then the little Tsar rose upon his feet, stretched himself, and yawned. “What a long time I’ve been asleep!” cried he. — “‘Tis a good thing for thee that we got the living and healing water!” said Protius. — “But what shall we do next?” said they all. Then they all took council together, and agreed that the little Tsar should disguise himself as an old man, and so go to the Tsar’s palace.

So the little Tsar Novishny disguised himself as an old man, and went to the palace of the Tsar. And when he got there he begged them to let him in that he might see the young married people. But the lackeys would not let him in. Then the Tsarivna herself heard the sound of his begging and praying, and commanded them to admit him. Now when he entered the room and took off his cap and cloak, the ring which the Tsarivna had given him when he slew the serpent sparkled so that she knew him, but, not believing her own eyes, she said to him, “Come hither, thou godly old pilgrim, that I may show thee hospitality!” Then the little Tsar drew near to the table, and the Tsarivna poured him out a glass of wine and gave it to him, and he took it with his left hand. She marked that he did not take it with the hand on which was the ring, so she drank off that glass herself. Then she filled another glass and gave it him, and he took it with his right hand. Then she immediately recognized her ring, and said to her father, “This man is my husband who delivered me from death, but that fellow” — pointing to the lackey — “that rascally slavish soul killed my husband and made me say that he was my husband.” When the Tsar heard this he boiled over with rage. “So *that* is what thou art!” said he to the lackey, and immediately he bade them bind him and tie him to the tail of a horse so savage that no man could ride it, and then turn it loose into the endless steppe. But the little Tsar Novishny sat down behind the table and made merry.

So the Tsarevko and the Tsarivna lived a long time together in happiness, but one day she asked him, “What of thy kindred and thy father’s house?” Then he told her all about his sister. She immediately bade him saddle his horse, and taking his beasts with him, go in search of her. They came to the place where he had left her, and saw that the bucket which was put up for the serpent was full of blood, but that the little Tsar’s bucket was all dry and falling to pieces. Then he perceived that she was still lamenting for the serpent, and said to her, “God be with thee, but I will know thee no more. Stay here, and never will I look upon thy face again!" But she began to entreat and caress and implore him that he would take her with him. Then the brother had compassion on his sister and took her away with him.

Now when they got home she took out the serpent's tooth which she had hidden about her, and put it beneath his pillow on the bed whereon he slept. And at night-time the little Tsar went to lie down and the tooth killed him. His wife thought that he was sulky, and therefore did not speak to her, so she begged him not to be angry; and, getting no answer, took him by the hand, and lo! his hand was cold, as cold as lead, and she screamed out. But Protius came bounding through the door and kissed his master. Then the little Tsar became alive again, but Protius died. Then Nedviga kissed Protius and Protius became alive, but Nedviga died. Then the Tsarevko said to Medvedik, "Kiss Nedviga!" He did so, and Nedviga became alive again, but Medvedik died. And so they went on kissing each other from the greatest to the smallest, till the turn came to the hare. She kissed Vovchok and died, but Vovchok remained alive. What was to be done? Now that the little hare had died there was none to kiss her back into life again. "Kiss her," said the little Tsar to the little fox. But the little fox was artful, and taking the little hare on his shoulder, he trotted off to the forest. He carried her to a place where lay a felled oak, with two branches one on the top of the other, and put the hare on the lower branch; then he ran under the branch and kissed the hare, but took good care that the branch should be between them. Thereupon the serpent's tooth flew out of the hare and fastened itself in the upper branch, and both fox and hare scampered back out of the forest alive and well. When the others saw them both alive they rejoiced greatly that no harm had come to any of them from the tooth. But they seized the sister and tied her to the tail of a savage horse and let her loose upon the endless steppe.

So they all lived the merry lives of Tsars who feast continually. And I was there too, and drank wine and mead till my mouth ran over and it trickled all down my beard. So there’s the whole *kazka* for you.

2

THE VAMPIRE AND ST. MICHAEL

Once upon a time in a certain village there lived two neighbours; one was rich, very rich, and the other so poor that he had nothing in the world but a little hut, and that was tumbling about his ears. At length things came to such a pass with the poor man that he had nothing to eat, and could get work nowhere. Full of grief, he bethought him what he should do. He thought and thought, and at last he said, “Look ye, wife! I’ll go to my rich neighbour. Perchance he will lend me a silver rouble; that, at any rate, will be enough to buy bread with.” So he went.

He came to the rich man. “Good health to my lord!” cried he. — “Good health!” — “I have come on an errand to thee, dear little master!” — “What may thine errand be?” inquired the rich man. — “Alas! would to God that I had no need to say it. It has come to such a pass with us that there’s not a crust of bread nor a farthing of money in the house. So I have come to thee, dear little master; lend us but a silver rouble and we will be ever thankful to thee, and I’ll work myself old to pay it back.” — “But who will stand surety for thee?” asked the rich man. — “I know not if any man will, I am so poor. Yet, perchance, God and St Michael will be my sureties,” and he pointed at the ikon in the corner. Then the ikon of St Michael spoke to the rich man from the niche and said, “Come now! lend it him, and put it down to my account. God will repay thee!” — “Well,” said the rich man, “I’ll lend it to thee.” So he lent it, and the poor man thanked him and returned to his home full of joy.

But the rich man was not content that God should give him back his loan by blessing him in his flocks and herds, and in his children, and in his health, and in the blessed fruits of the earth. He waited and waited for the poor man to come and pay him back his rouble, and at last he went to seek him. “Thou son of a dog,” he shouted, before the house, “why hast thou not brought me back my money? Thou knowest how to borrow, but thou forgettest to repay!” Then the wife of the poor man burst into tears. “He would repay thee indeed if he were in this world,” said she, “but lo now! he died but a little while ago!” The rich man snarled at her and departed, but when he got home he said to the ikon, “A pretty surety *thou* art!” Then he took St Michael down from the niche, dug out his eyes, and began beating him.

He beat St Michael again and again, and at last he flung him into a puddle and trampled on him. “I’ll give it thee for standing me surety so scurvily,” said he. While he was thus abusing St Michael, a young fellow about twenty years old came along that way, and said to him, “What art thou doing, my father?” — “I am beating him because he stood surety and has played me false. He took upon himself the repayment of a silver rouble, which I lent to the son of a pig, who has since gone away and died. That is why I am beating him now.” — “Beat him not, my father! I’ll give thee a silver rouble, but do thou give me this holy image!” — “Take him if thou wilt, but see that thou bring me the silver rouble first.”

Then the young man ran home and said to his father, “Dad, give me a silver rouble!” — “Wherefore, my son?” — “I would buy a holy image,” said he, and he told his father how he had seen that heathen beating St Michael. — “Nay, my son, whence shall we who are poor find a silver rouble to give to him who is so rich?” — “Nay, but give it me, dad!” and he begged and prayed till he got it. Then he ran back as quickly as he could, paid the silver rouble to the rich man, and got the holy image. He washed it clean and placed it in the midst of sweet-smelling flowers. And so they lived on as before.

Now this youth had three uncles, rich merchants, who sold all manner of merchandise, and went in ships to foreign lands, where they sold their goods and made their gains. One day, when his uncles were again making ready to depart into foreign lands, he said to them, “Take me with you!” — “Why shouldst thou go?” said they; “we have wares to sell, but what hast thou?” — “Yet take me,” said he. — “But thou hast nothing.” — “I will make me laths and boards and take them with me,” said he. — His uncles laughed at him for imagining such wares as these, but he begged and prayed them till they were wearied. “Well, come,” they said, “though there is naught for thee to do; only take not much of these wares of thine with thee, for our ships are already full.” — Then he made him laths and boards, put them on board the ship, took St Michael with him, and they departed.

They went on and on. They sailed a short distance and they sailed a long distance, till at last they came to another tsardom and another empire. And the Tsar of this tsardom had an only daughter, so lovely that the like of her is neither to be imagined nor divined in God’s fair world, neither may it be told in tales. Now this Tsarivna one day went down to the river to bathe, and plunged into the water without first crossing herself, whereupon the Evil Spirit took possession of her. The Tsarivna got out of the water, and straightway fell ill of so terrible a disease that it may not be told of. Do what they would — and the wise men and the wise women did their utmost — it was of no avail. In a few days she grew worse and died. Then the Tsar, her father, made a proclamation that people should come and read the prayers for the dead over her dead body, and so exorcise the evil spirit, and whosoever delivered her was to have half his power and half his tsardom.

And the people came in crowds — but none of them could read the prayers for the dead over her, it was impossible. Every evening a man went into the church, and every morning they swept out his bones, for there was naught else of him remaining. And the Tsar was very wrath. “All my people will be devoured,” cried he. And he commanded that all the foreign merchants passing through his realm should be made to read prayers for the dead over his daughter’s body. “And if they will not read,” said he, “they shall not depart from my kingdom.”

So the foreign merchants went one by one. In the evening a merchant was shut up in the church, and in the early morning they came and found and swept away his bones. At last it came to the turn of the young man’s uncles to read the prayers for the dead in the church. They wept and lamented and cried, “We are lost! we are lost! Heaven help us!” Then the eldest uncle said to the lad, “Listen, good simpleton! It has now come to my turn to read prayers over the Tsarivna. Do thou go in my stead and pass the night in the church, and I’ll give thee all my ship.” — “Nay, but,” said the simpleton, “what if she tear me to pieces too? I won’t go!” — But then St Michael said to him, “Go and fear not! Stand in the very middle of the church, fenced round about with thy laths and boards, and take with thee a basket full of pears. When she rushes at thee, take and scatter the pears, and it will take her till cockcrow to pick them all up. But do thou go on reading thy prayers all the time, and look not up, whatever she may do.”

When night came, he took up his laths and boards and a basket of pears, and went to the church. He entrenched himself behind his boards, stood there and began to read. At dead of night there was a rustling and a rattling. O Lord! what was that? There was a shaking of the bier — bang! bang! — and the Tsarivna arose from her coffin and came straight toward him. She leaped upon the boards and made a grab at him and fell back. Then she leaped at him again, and again she fell back. Then he took his basket and scattered the pears. All through the church they rolled, she after them, and she tried to pick them up till cockcrow, and at the very first “Cock-a-doodle-doo!” she got into her bier again and lay still.

When God’s bright day dawned, the people came to clean out the church and sweep away his bones; but there he was reading his prayers, and the rumour of it went through the town and they were all filled with joy.

Next night it was the turn of the second uncle, and he began to beg and pray, “Go thou, simpleton, in my stead! Look now, thou hast already passed a night there, thou mayst very well pass another, and I’ll give thee all my ship.” — But he said, “I won’t go, I am afraid.” — But then St Michael said to him again, “Fear not, but go! Fence thee all about with thy boards, and take with thee a basket of nuts. When she rushes at thee, scatter thy nuts, and the nuts will go rolling all about the church, and it will take her till cockcrow to gather them all up. But do thou go on reading thy prayers, nor look thou up, whatever may happen.”

And he did so. He took his boards and the basket of nuts, and went to the church at nightfall and read. A little after midnight there was a rustling and an uproar, and the whole church shook. Then came a fumbling round about the coffin — bang! bang! — up she started, and made straight for him. She leaped and plunged, she very nearly got through the boards. She hissed, like seething pitch, and her eyes glared at him like coals of fire, but it was of no use. He read on and on, and didn’t once look at her. Besides, he scattered his nuts, and she went after them and tried to pick them all up till cockcrow. And at the first “Cock-a-doodle-doo!” she leaped into her coffin again and pulled down the lid. In the morning the people came to sweep away his bones, and lo! they found him alive.

The next night he had to go again in the third uncle’s stead. Then he sat down and cried and wailed, “Alas, alas! what shall I do? ‘Twere better I had never been born!” — But St Michael said to him, “Weep not, ‘twill all end happily. Fence thyself about with thy boards, sprinkle thyself all about with holy water, incense thyself with holy incense, and take me with thee. She shall not have thee. And the moment she leaves her coffin, do thou jump quickly into it. And whatever she may say to thee, and however she may implore thee, let her not get into it again until she says to thee, ‘*My consort!*’”

So he went. There he stood in the middle of the church, fenced himself about with his boards, strewed consecrated poppy-seed around him, incensed himself with holy incense, and read and read. About the middle of the night a tempest arose outside, and there was a rustling and a roaring, a hissing and a wailing. The church shook, the altar candelabra were thrown down, the holy images fell on their faces. O Lord, how awful! Then came a bang! bang! from the coffin, and again the Tsarivna started up. She left her coffin and fluttered about the church. She rushed at the boards and made a snatch at him, and fell back; she rushed at him again, and again she fell back. She foamed at the mouth, and her fury every instant grew worse and worse. She dashed herself about, and darted madly from one corner of the church to the other, seeking him everywhere. But he skipped into the coffin, with the image of St Michael by his side. She ran all over the church seeking him. “He was here — and now he is not here!” cried she. Then she ran farther on, felt all about her, and cried again, “He was here — and now he’s not here!” At last she sprang up to the coffin, and there he was. Then she began to beg and pray him, “Come down, come down! I’ll try and catch thee no more, only come down, come down!” But he only prayed to God, and answered her never a word. Then the cock crew once, “Cock-a-doodle-doo!” — “Alas! come down, come down, *my consort!*” cried she. Then he came down, and they both fell on their knees and began praying to God, and wept sore and gave thanks to God because He had had mercy on them both.

And at dawn of day crowds of people, with the Tsar at the head of them, came to the church. “Shall we find him reading prayers, or shall we only find his bones?” said they. And lo! there they both were on their knees praying fervently to God. Then the Tsar rejoiced greatly, and embraced both him and her. After that they had a grand service in the church, and sprinkled her with holy water, and baptized her again, and the unclean spirit departed from her. Then the Tsar gave the young man half his power and half his kingdom, but the merchants departed in their ships, with their nephew on board.

They lived together, and time went on and the young man still remained a bachelor, and was so handsome that words cannot describe it. But the Tsar lived alone with his daughter. She, however, grew sadder and sadder, and was no longer like her former self, so sorrowful was she. And the Tsar asked her, saying, “Wherefore art thou so sorrowful?” — “I am not sorrowful, father,” said she. But the Tsar watched her, and saw that she *was* sorrowful, and there was no help for it. Then he asked her again, “Art thou ill?” — “Nay, dear dad,” said she. “I myself know not what is the matter with me.”

And so it went on, till the Tsar dreamt a dream, and in this dream it was said to him, “Thy daughter grieves because she loves so much the youth who drove the unclean spirit out of her.” Then the Tsar asked her, “Dost thou love this youth?” — And she answered, “I do, dear father.” — “Then why didst thou not tell me before, my daughter?” said he. Then he sent for his heyducks and commanded them, saying, “Go this instant to such and such a kingdom, and there ye will find the youth who cured my daughter; bring him to me.” Then they went on and on until they found him, and he took just the same laths and boards that he had had before, and went with them. The Tsar met him, and bought all his boards, and when they split them in pieces, lo! they were full of precious stones. Then the Tsar took him to his own house and gave him his daughter. And they lived right merrily together.

3

THE STORY OF TREMSIN, THE BIRD ZHAR, AND NASTASIA, THE LOVELY MAID OF THE SEA

There was once upon a time a man and a woman, and they had one little boy. In the summertime they used to go out and mow corn in the fields, and one summer when they had laid their little lad by the side of a sheaf, an eagle swooped down, caught up the child, carried him into a forest, and laid him in its nest. Now in this forest three bandits chanced to be wandering at the same time. They heard the child crying in the eagle's nest: "Oo-oo! oo-oo! oo-oo!" so they went up to the oak on which was the nest and said one to another, "Let us hew down the tree and kill the child!" — "No," replied one of them, "it were better to climb up the tree and bring him down alive." So he climbed up the tree and brought down the lad, and they nurtured him and gave him the name of Tremsin. They brought up Tremsin until he became a youth, and then they gave him a horse, set him upon it, and said to him, "Now go out into the wide world and search for thy father and thy mother!" So Tremsin went out into the wide world and pastured his steed on the vast steppes, and his steed spoke to him and said, "When we have gone a little farther, thou wilt see before thee a plume of the Bird *Zhar*; pick it not up, or sore trouble will be thine!" Then they went on again. They went on and on, through ten tsardoms they went, till they came to another empire in the land of Thrice Ten where lay the feather. And the youth said to himself, "Why should I not pick up the feather when it shines so brightly even from afar?” And he went near to the feather, and it shone so that the like of it cannot be expressed or conceived or imagined or even told of in tales. Then Tremsin picked up the feather and went into the town over against him, and in that town there lived a rich nobleman. And Tremsin entered the house of this nobleman and said, “Sir, may I not take service with thee as a labourer?” — The nobleman looked at him, and seeing that he was comely and stalwart, “Why not? Of course thou mayst,” said he. So he took him into his service. Now this nobleman had many servants, and they curried his horses for him, and made them smart and glossy against the day he should go a-hunting. And Tremsin began to curry his horse likewise, and the servants of the nobleman could not make the horses of their master so shining bright as Tremsin made his own horse. So they looked more closely, and they perceived that when Tremsin cleaned his horse he stroked it with the feather of the Bird Zhar, and the coat of the good steed straightway shone like burnished silver. Then those servants were filled with envy, and said among themselves, “How can we remove this fellow from the world? We’ll saddle him with a task he is unable to do, and then our master will drive him away.” — So they went to their master and said, “Tremsin has a feather of the Bird Zhar, and he says that if he likes he can get the Bird Zhar itself.” Then the nobleman sent for Tremsin and said to him, “O Tremsin! my henchmen say that thou canst get the Bird Zhar if thou dost choose.” — “Nay, but I cannot,” replied Tremsin. — “Answer me not,” said the nobleman, “for so sure as I’ve a sword, I’ll slice thy head off like a gourd.” — Then Tremsin fell a-weeping and went away to his horse. “My master,” said he, “hath given me a task to do that will clean undo me.” — “What task is that?” asked the horse. — “Why, to fetch him the Bird Zhar.” — “Why that’s not a task, but a trifle,” replied the horse. “Let us go to the steppes,” it continued, “and let me go a-browsing; but do thou strip thyself stark-naked and lie down in the grass, and the Bird Zhar will straightway swoop down to feed. So long as she only claws about thy body, touch her not; but as soon as she begins to claw at thine eyes, seize her by the legs."

So when they got to the wild steppes, Tremsin stripped himself naked and flung himself in the grass, and, immediately, the Bird Zhar swooped down and began pecking all about him, and at last she pecked at his eyes. Then Tremsin seized her by both legs, and mounted his horse and took the Bird Zhar to the nobleman. Then his fellow-servants were more envious than ever, and they said among themselves, "How shall we devise for him a task to do that cannot be done, and so rid the world of him altogether?" So they bethought them, and then they went to the nobleman and said, "Tremsin says that to get the Bird Zhar was nothing, and that he is also able to get the thrice-lovely Nastasia of the sea." Then the nobleman again sent for Tremsin and said to him, "Look now! thou didst get for me the Bird Zhar, see that thou now also gettest for me the thrice-lovely Nastasia of the sea." — "But I cannot, sir!" said Tremsin. — "Answer me not so!" replied the nobleman, "for so sure as I've a sword, I'll slice thy head off like a gourd an thou bring her not." — Then Tremsin went out to his horse and fell a-weeping. — "Wherefore dost thou weep?" asked the faithful steed. — "Wherefore should I not weep?" he replied. "My master has given me a task that cannot be done." — "What task is that?" — "Why, to fetch him the thrice-lovely Nastasia of the sea!" — "Oh-ho!" laughed the horse, "that is not a task, but a trifle. Go to thy master and say, 'Cause white tents to be raised by the sea-shore, and buy wares of sundry kinds, and wine and spirits in bottles and flasks,' and the thrice-lovely Nastasia will come and purchase thy wares, and then thou mayst take her."

And the nobleman did so. He caused white tents to be pitched by the sea-shore, and bought kerchiefs and scarves and spread them out gaily, and made great store of wine and brandy in bottles and flasks. Then Tremsin rode toward the tents, and while he was on the way his horse said to him, "Now when I go to graze, do thou lie down and feign to sleep. Then the thrice-lovely Nastasia will appear and say, ‘What for thy wares?’ but do thou keep silence. But when she begins to taste of the wine and the brandy, then she will go to sleep in the tent, and thou canst catch her easily and hold her fast!” Then Tremsin lay down and feigned to sleep, and forth from the sea came the thrice-lovely Nastasia, and went up to the tents and asked, “Merchant, merchant, what for thy wares?” But he lay there, and moved never a limb. She asked the same thing over and over again, but, getting no answer, went into the tents where stood the flasks and the bottles. She tasted of the wine. How good it was! She tasted of the brandy. That was still better. So from tasting she fell to drinking. First she drank a little, and then she drank a little more, and at last she went asleep in the tent. Then Tremsin seized the thrice-lovely Nastasia and put her behind him on horseback, and carried her off to the nobleman. The nobleman praised Tremsin exceedingly, but the thrice-lovely Nastasia said, “Look now! since thou hast found the feather of the Bird Zhar, and the Bird Zhar herself, since also thou hast found me, thou must now fetch me also my little coral necklace from the sea!” Then Tremsin went out to his faithful steed and wept sorely, and told him all about it. And the horse said to him, “Did I not tell thee that grievous woe would come upon thee if thou didst pick up that feather?” But the horse added, “Come! weep not! after all ‘tis not a task, but a trifle.” Then they went along by the sea, and the horse said to him, “Let me out to graze, and then keep watch till thou seest a crab come forth from the sea, and then say to him, ‘I’ll catch thee.’” — So Tremsin let his horse out to graze, and he himself stood by the sea-shore, and watched and watched till he saw a crab come swimming along. Then he said to the crab, “I’ll catch thee.” — “Oh! seize me not!” said the crab, “but let me get back into the sea, and I’ll be of great service to thee.” — “Very well,” said Tremsin, “but thou must get me from the sea the coral necklace of the thrice-lovely Nastasia,” and with that he let the crab go back into the sea again. Then the crab called together all her young crabs, and they collected all the coral and brought it ashore, and gave it to Tremsin. Then the faithful steed came running up, and Tremsin mounted it, and took the coral to the thrice-lovely Nastasia. “Well,” said Nastasia, “thou hast got the feather of the Bird Zhar, thou hast got the Bird Zhar itself, thou hast got me my coral, get me now from the sea my herd of wild horses!” — Then Tremsin was sore distressed, and went to his faithful steed and wept bitterly, and told him all about it. “Well,” said the horse, “this time ‘tis no trifle, but a real hard task. Go now to thy master, and bid him buy twenty hides, and twenty poods of pitch, and twenty poods of flax, and twenty poods of hair.” — So Tremsin went to his master and told him, and his master bought it all. Then Tremsin loaded his horse with all this, and to the sea they went together. And when they came to the sea the horse said, “Now lay upon me the hides and the tar and the flax, and lay them in this order — first a hide, and then a pood of tar, and then a pood of flax, and so on, laying them thus till they are all laid.” Tremsin did so. “And now,” said the horse, “I shall plunge into the sea, and when thou seest a large red wave driving toward the shore, run away till the red wave has passed and thou dost see a white wave coming, and then sit down on the shore and keep watch. I shall then come out of the sea, and after me the whole herd; then thou must strike with the horsehair the horse which gallops immediately after me, and he will not be too strong for thee.” — So the faithful steed plunged into the sea, and Tremsin sat down on the shore and watched. The horse swam to a bosquet that rose out of the sea, and there the herd of sea-horses was grazing. When the strong charger of Nastasia saw him and the hides he carried on his back, it set off after him at full tilt, and the whole herd followed the strong charger of Nastasia. They drove the horse with the hides into the sea, and pursued him. Then the strong charger of Nastasia caught up the steed of Tremsin and tore off one of his hides, and began to worry it with his teeth and tear it to fragments as he ran. Then he caught him up a second time, and tore off another hide, and began to worry that in like manner till he had torn it also to shreds; and thus he ran after Tremsin’s steed for seventy miles, till he had torn off all the hides, and worried them to bits. But Tremsin sat upon the sea-shore till he saw the large white billow bounding in, and behind the billow came his own horse, and behind his own horse came the thrice-terrible charger of the thrice-lovely Nastasia, with the whole herd at his heels. Tremsin struck him full on the forehead with the twenty poods of hair, and immediately he stood stock still. Then Tremsin threw a halter over him, mounted, and drove the whole herd to the thrice-lovely Nastasia. Nastasia praised Tremsin for his prowess, and said to him, “Well, thou hast got the feather of the Bird Zhar, thou hast got the Bird Zhar itself, thou hast got me my coral and my herd of horses, now milk my mare and put the milk into three vats, so that there may be milk hot as boiling water in the first vat, lukewarm milk in the second vat, and icy cold milk in the third vat.” Then Tremsin went to his faithful steed and wept bitterly, and the horse said to him, “Wherefore dost thou weep?” — “Why should I not weep?” cried he; “the thrice-lovely Nastasia has given me a task to do that cannot be done. I am to fill three vats with the milk from her mare, and the milk must be boiling hot in the first vat, and lukewarm in the second, and icy cold in the third vat.” — “Oh-ho!” cried the horse, “that is not a task, but a trifle. I’ll caress the mare, and then go on nibbling till thou hast milked all three vats full.” So Tremsin did so. He milked the three vats full, and the milk in the first vat was boiling hot, and in the second vat warm, and in the third vat freezing cold. When all was ready the thrice-lovely Nastasia said to Tremsin, “Now, leap first of all into the cold vat, and then into the warm vat, and then into the boiling hot vat!” — Tremsin leaped into the first vat, and leaped out again an old man; he leaped into the second vat, and leaped out again a youth; he leaped into the third vat, but when he leaped out again, he was so young and handsome that no pen can describe it, and no tale can tell of it. Then the thrice-lovely Nastasia herself leaped into the vats. She leaped into the first vat, and came out an old woman; she leaped into the second vat, and came out a young maid; but when she leaped out of the third vat, she was so handsome and goodly that no pen can describe it, and no tale can tell of it. Then the thrice-lovely Nastasia made the nobleman leap into the vats. He leaped into the first vat, and became quite old; he leaped into the second vat, and became quite young; he leaped into the third vat, and burst to pieces. Then Tremsin took unto himself the thrice-lovely Nastasia to wife, and they lived happily together on the nobleman's estate, and the evil servants they drove right away.

4

THE SERPENT-WIFE

There was once a gentleman who had a labourer who never went about in company. His fellow-servants did all they could to make him come with them, and now and then enticed him into the tavern, but they could never get him to stay there long, and he always wandered away by himself through the woods. One day he went strolling about in the forest as usual, far from any village and the haunts of men, when he came upon a huge Serpent, which wriggled straight up to him and said, “I am going to eat thee on the spot!” But the labourer, who was used to the loneliness of the forest, replied, “Very well, eat me if thou hast a mind to!” — Then the Serpent said, “Nay! I will not eat thee; only do what I tell thee!” And the Serpent began to tell the man what he had to do. “Turn back home,” it said, “and thou wilt find thy master angry because thou hast tarried so long, and there was none to work for him, so that his corn has to remain standing in the field. Then he will send thee to bring in his sheaves, and I’ll help thee. Load the wagon well, but don’t take quite all the sheaves from the field. Leave one little sheaf behind; more than that thou needst not leave, but that thou must leave. Then beg thy master to let thee have this little sheaf by way of wages. Take no money from him, but that one little sheaf only. Then, when thy master has given thee this sheaf, burn it, and a fair lady will leap out of it; take her to wife!”

The labourer obeyed, and went and worked for his master as the Serpent had told him. He went out into the field to bring home his master’s corn, and marvellously he managed it. He did all the carrying himself, and loaded the wagon so heavily that it creaked beneath its burden. Then when he had brought home all his master’s corn, he begged that he might have the remaining little sheaf for himself. He refused to be rewarded for his smart labour, he would take no money; he wanted nothing for himself, he said, but the little sheaf he had left in the field. So his master let him have the sheaf. Then he went out by himself into the field, burnt the sheaf, just as the Serpent had told him, and immediately a lovely lady leapt out of it. The labourer forthwith took and married her; and now he began to look out for a place to build him a hut upon. His master gave him a place where he might build his hut, and his wife helped him so much with the building of it that it seemed to him as if he himself never laid a hand to it. His hut grew up as quick as thought, and it contained everything that they wanted. The man could not understand it; he could only walk about and wonder at it. Wherever he looked there was everything quite spick and span and ready for use: none in the whole village had a better house than he.

And so he might have lived in all peace and prosperity to the end of his days had not his desires outstripped his deserts. He had three fields of standing corn, and when he came home one day his labourers said to him, “Thy corn is not gathered in yet, though it is standing all ripe on its stalks.” Now the season was getting on, and for all the care and labour of his wife, the corn was still standing in the field. “Why, what’s the meaning of this?” thought he. Then in his anger he cried, “I see how it is. Once a serpent, always a serpent!” He was quite beside himself all the way home, and was very wrath with his wife because of the corn.

When he got home he went straight to his chamber to lie down on his pillow. There was no sign of his wife, but a huge serpent was just coiling itself round and round and settling down in the middle of the pillow. Then he called to mind how, once, his wife had said to him, “Beware, for Heaven’s sake, of ever calling me a serpent. I will not suffer thee to call me by that name, and if thou dost thou shalt lose thy wife.” He called this to mind now, but it was already too late; what he had said could not be unsaid. Then he reflected what a good wife he had had, and how she herself had sought him out, and how she had waited upon him continually and done him boundless good, and yet he had not been able to refrain his tongue, so that now, maybe, he would be without a wife for the rest of his days. His heart grew heavy within him as he thought of all this, and he wept bitterly at the harm he had done to himself. Then the Serpent said to him, “Weep no more. What is to be, must be. Is it thy standing corn thou art grieved about? Go up to thy barn, and there thou wilt find all thy corn lying, to the very last little grain. Have I not brought it all home and threshed it for thee, and set everything in order? And now I must depart to the place where thou didst first find me.” Then she crept off, and the man followed her, weeping and mourning all the time as for one already dead. When they reached the forest she stopped and coiled herself round and round beneath a hazel-nut bush. Then she said to the man, “Now kiss me once, but see to it that I do not bite thee!” — Then he kissed her once, and she wound herself round a branch of a tree and asked him, “What dost thou feel within thee?” — He answered, “At the moment when I kissed thee it seemed to me as if I knew everything that was going on in the world!” — Then she said to him again, “Kiss me a second time!” — “And what dost thou feel now?” she asked when he had kissed her again. — “Now,” said he, “I understand all languages which are spoken among men.” — Then she said to him, “And now kiss me a third time, but this will be for the last time.” Then he kissed the Serpent for the last time, and she said to him, “What dost thou feel now?” — “Now,” said he, “I know all that is going on under the earth.” — “Go now,” said she, “to the Tsar, and he will give thee his daughter for the knowledge thou hast. But pray to God for poor me, for now I must be and remain a serpent for ever.”

And with that the Serpent uncoiled herself and disappeared among the bushes, but the man went away and wedded the Tsar’s daughter.

5

THE STORY OF UNLUCKY DANIEL

There was once upon a time a youth called Unlucky Dan. Wherever he went, and whatever he did, and with whomsoever he served, nothing came of it: all his labour was like spilt water, he got no good from it. One day he took service with a new master. “I’ll serve thee a whole year,” said he, “for a piece of sown wheat-land.” His master agreed, and he entered into his service, and at the same time he sowed his piece of wheat-land. His wheat shot up rapidly. When his master’s wheat was in the stalk, his was already in the ear, and when his master’s wheat was in the ear, his own wheat was already ripe. “I’ll reap it to-morrow,” thought he. The same night a cloud arose, the hail poured down, and destroyed his wheat altogether. Daniel fell a-weeping. “I’ll go serve another master,” he cried, “perhaps God will then prosper me!” So he went to another master. “I’ll serve thee for a whole year,” said he, “if thou wilt give me that wild colt.” So he stopped and served him, and by the end of the year he trained the wild colt so well that he made a carriage-horse out of it. “Oh-ho!” thought he, “I shall take away something with me this time!” The same night the wolves made an inroad upon the stables and tore the horse to pieces. Daniel fell a-weeping. “I’ll go to another master,” said he, “perhaps I shall be luckier there.” So he went to a third master, and on this master’s tomb lay a large stone. Whence it came none knew, and it was so heavy that none could move it, though they tried for ages. “I’ll serve thee a year,” said he, “for that stone.” The master agreed, and he entered his service. Then a change came over the stone, and divers flowers began to grow upon it. On one side they were red, on the second side silver, and on the third side golden. “Oh-ho,” thought Daniel, “that stone, at any rate, will soon be mine. Nobody can move it.” But the next morning a thunderbolt descended and struck the stone, and shivered it to atoms. Then Daniel fell a-weeping, and lamented that God had given him nothing, though he had served for so many years. But the people said to him, “Listen now! thou that art so unlucky, why dost thou not go to the Tsar? He is the father of us all, and will therefore certainly care for thee!” So he listened to them and went, and the Tsar gave him a place at his court. One day the Tsar said to him, “I marvel that thou art so unlucky, for do whatsoever thou wilt, thou art none the better for it. I would fain requite thee for all thy labours.” Then he took and filled three barrels, the first with gold, and the second with coal, and the third with sand, and said to Daniel, “Look now! if thou dost pitch upon that which is filled with gold, thou shalt be a Tsar; if thou dost choose the one that is filled with coal, thou shalt be a blacksmith; but if thou dost pick out the one that is full of sand, why then thou art indeed hopelessly unlucky, and out of my tsardom thou must go straightway, yet I will give thee a horse and armour to take along with thee.” So Daniel was brought to the place where were the three barrels, and went about them and felt and felt them one after the other. “This one is full of gold!” said he. They broke it open and it was full of sand. “Well,” said the Tsar, “I see that thou art hopelessly unlucky. Depart from my tsardom, for I have no need at all of such as thou.” Then he gave him a charger and armour, and the full equipment of a Cossack, and sent him away.

He went on and on for a whole day, he went on and on for a second day, and there was nothing to eat, either for his horse or himself. He went for a third day, and in the distance he saw a hay-cock. “That will do for my horse, at any rate," thought he, "even if it is of no good to me." So he went up to it, and immediately it burst into flames. Daniel began to weep, when he heard a voice crying piteously, "Save me, save me! I am burning!" — "How can I save thee," he cried, "when I myself cannot draw near?" — "Oh! give me thy weapon!" cried the voice, "and I'll seize hold of it, and then thou canst pull me out." So he stretched forth his weapon, and drew forth a goodly serpent, such as is only known of in old folk-songs. And she said to him, "Since thou hast drawn me out, thou must also take me home." — "How shall I carry thee?" asked he. — "Carry me on thy horse, and in whatsoever direction I turn my head and his, thither go." — So he took her upon his horse, and they went on and on till they came to a court so splendid that it was a delight to look at it. Then she glided down from his charger and said, "Wait here, and I'll soon be with thee again," and with that she wriggled under the gate. He stood there and stood and waited and waited till he wept from sheer weariness; but, at last, she came out again in the shape of a lovely damsel in gorgeous raiment, and opened the gate for him. "Lead in thy horse," said she, "and eat and rest awhile." So they went into the courtyard, and in the midst of it stood two springs. The lady drew out of one of these springs a little glass of water, and strewing a handful of oats beside it, said, "Fasten up thy horse here!" — "What!" thought he, "for these three days we have had naught to eat or drink, and now she mocks us with a handful of oats!" — Then they went together to the guest-chamber, and she gave him there a little glass of water and a small piece of wheaten bread. — "Why, what is this for a hungry man like me?" thought he. But when he chanced to glance through the window, he saw that the whole courtyard was full of oats and water, and that his horse had already eaten its fill. Then he nibbled his little piece of wheaten bread and sipped his water, and his hunger was immediately satisfied. "Well," said the lady, "hast thou eaten thy fill?" — "That I have," he replied. — "Then lie down and rest awhile," said she. And the next morning, when he rose up, she said to him, “Give me thy horse, thy armour, and thy raiment, and I’ll give thee mine in exchange.” — Then she gave him her shift and her weapon, and said, “This sword is of such a sort that, if thou do but wave it, all men will fall down before thee; and as for this shift, when once thou hast it on, none will be able to seize thee. And now go on thy way till thou come to an inn, and there they will tell thee that the Tsar of that land is seeking warriors. Go and offer thyself to him, and thou shalt marry his daughter, but tell her not the truth for seven years!” Then they took leave of each other, and he departed. He came to the inn, and there they asked him whence he came. And when they knew that he came from a strange land, they said to him, “A strange people has attacked our Tsar, and he cannot defend himself, for a mighty warrior has conquered his tsardom and carried off his daughter, and worries him to death.” — “Show me the way to your Tsar,” said Daniel. Then they showed him, and he went. When he came to the Tsar, he said to him, “I will subdue this strange land for thee. All the army I want is a couple of Cossacks, but they must be picked men.” Then the heralds went through the tsardom till they had found these two Cossacks, and Daniel went forth with them into the endless steppes, and there he bade them lie down and sleep while he kept watch. And while they slept the army of the strange country came upon them, and cried to Daniel to turn back if he would escape destruction. And then they began to fire with their guns and cannons, and they fired so many balls that the bodies of the two Cossacks were quite covered by them. Then Daniel waved his sword and smote, and only those whom his blows did not reach escaped alive. So he vanquished them all, and conquered that strange land, and came back and married the Tsar’s daughter, and they lived happily together.

But counsellors from the strange land whispered dark sayings in the ears of the Tsarivna. “What is this fellow that thou hast taken to thyself? Who is he, and whence? Find out for us wherein lies his strength, that we may destroy him and take thee away.” — Then she began asking him, and he said to her, “Look now! all my strength is in these gloves.” Then she waited till he was asleep, and drew them off him, and gave them to the people from the strange land. And the next day he went hunting, and the evil counsellors surrounded and shot at him with their darts, and beat him with the gloves; but it was all in vain. Then he waved his sword, and whomsoever he struck fell to the ground, and he clapped them all in prison. But his wife caressed and wheedled him again, and said, “Nay, but tell me, wherein doth thy strength lie?” — “My strength, darling,” said he, “lies in my boots.” Then she drew off his boots while he slept, and gave them to his enemies. And they fell upon him again as he went out, but again he waved his sword, and as many as he struck fell to the ground, and he put them all in prison. Then his wife wheedled and caressed him the third time. “Nay, but tell me, darling,” quoth she, “wherein doth thy strength lie?” Then he was wearied with her beseeching, and said to her, “My strength lies in this sword of mine, and in my shirt, and so long as I have this shirt on, nobody can touch me.” Then she caressed and fondled him, and said, “Thou shouldst take a bath, my darling, and well wash thyself. My father always did so.” So he let himself be persuaded, and no sooner had he undressed than she changed all his clothes for others, and gave his sword and his shirt to his enemies. Then he came out of his bath, and immediately they fell upon him, cut him to pieces, put him in a sack, placed him on his horse, and let the horse go where it would. So the horse went on and on, and wandered farther and farther, till it came to the old place where he had stayed with the Serpent Lady. And when his benefactress saw him, she said, “Why, if poor unlucky Daniel hasn’t fallen into a scrape again.” And immediately she took him out of the sack, and fitted his pieces together, and washed them clean, and took healing water from one of the springs, and living water from the other, and sprinkled him all over, and he stood there sound and strong again. “Now, did I not bid thee tell not thy wife the truth for seven years?” said she, “and thou wouldst not take heed.” And he stood there, and spoke never a word.

“Well, now, rest awhile,” she continued, “for thou dost need it, and then I’ll give thee something else.” So the next day she gave him a chain, and said to him, “Listen! Go to that inn where thou didst go before, and early next morning, whilst thou art bathing, bid the innkeeper beat thee with all his might on the back with this chain, and so thou wilt get back to thy wife, but tell her not a word of what has happened.” So he went to this same inn and passed the night there, and, on the morrow, he called the innkeeper, and said to him, “Look now! the first time I dip my head in the water, beat me about the back with this chain as hard as thou canst.” So the innkeeper waited till he had ducked his head under the water, and then he thrashed him with the chain, whereupon he turned into a horse so beautiful that it was a delight to look upon it. The innkeeper was so glad, so glad. “So I’ve got rid of one guest only to get another one,” thought he. He lost no time in taking the horse to the fair, and offered it for sale, and among those who saw it was the Tsar himself. “What dost thou ask for it?” said the Tsar. — “I ask five thousand roubles.” Then the Tsar counted down the money and took the horse away. When he got to his court, he made a great to-do about his beautiful horse, and cried to his daughter, “Come and see, dear little heart, what a fine horse I have bought.” Then she came forth to look at it; but the moment she saw it, she cried, “That horse will be my ruin. Thou must kill it on the spot.” — “Nay, dear little heart! how can I do such a thing?” said the Tsar. — “Slay it thou must, and slay it thou shalt!” cried the Tsarivna. So they sent for a knife, and began sharpening it, when one of the maidens of the court took pity on the horse, and cried, “Oh, my good, my darling horse, so lovely as thou art, and yet to kill thee!” But the horse neighed and went to her, and said, “Look now! take the first drop of blood which flows from me, and bury it in the garden.” Then they slew the horse, but the maiden did as she was told, and took the drop of blood and buried it in the garden. And from this drop of blood there sprang up a cherry-tree; and its first leaf was golden, and its second leaf was of richer colour still, and its third leaf was yet another colour, and every leaf upon it was different to the others. One day the Tsar went out walking in his garden, and when he saw this cherry-tree he fell in love with it, and praised it to his daughter. “Look!” said he, “what a beauteous cherry-tree we have in our garden! Who can tell whence it sprung?” — But the moment the Tsarivna saw it, she cried, “That tree will be my ruin! Thou must cut it down.” — “Nay!” said he, “how can I cut down the fairest ornament of my garden?” — “Down it must come, and down it shall come!” replied the Tsarivna. Then they sent for an axe and made ready to cut it down, but the damsel came running up, and said, “Oh, darling little cherry-tree, darling little cherry-tree, so fair thou art! From a horse hast thou sprung, and now they will fell thee before thou hast lived a day!” — “Never mind,” said the cherry-tree; “take the first chip that falls from me, and throw it into the water.” — Then they cut down the cherry-tree; but the girl did as she was bidden, and threw the first chip from the cherry-tree into the water, and out of it swam a drake so beautiful that it was a delight to look upon it. Then the Tsar went a-hunting, and saw it swimming in the water, and it was so close that he could touch it with his hand. The Tsar took off his clothes and plunged into the water after it, and it enticed him farther and farther away from the shore. Then the drake swam toward the spot where the Tsar had left his clothes, and when it came up to them it changed into a man and put them on, and behold! the man was Daniel. Then he called to the Tsar: “Swim hither, swim hither!” The Tsar swam up, but when he swam ashore Daniel met and killed him, and after that he went back to court in the Tsar’s clothes. Then all the courtiers hailed him as the Tsar, but he said, “Where is that damsel who was here just now?” — They brought her instantly before him. “Well,” said he to her, “thou hast been a second mother to me, and now thou shalt be my second wife!” So he lived with her and was happy, but he caused his first wife to be tied to the tails of wild horses and torn to pieces in the endless steppes.

6

THE SPARROW AND THE BUSH

A sparrow once flew down upon a bush and said, “Little bush, give good little sparrow a swing.” — “I won’t!” said the little bush. Then the sparrow was angry, and went to the goat and said, “Goat, goat, nibble bush, bush won’t give good little sparrow a swing.” — “I won’t!” said the goat. — Then the sparrow went to the wolf and said, “Wolf, wolf, eat goat, goat won’t nibble bush, bush won’t give good little sparrow a swing.” — “I won’t!” said the wolf. — Then the sparrow went to the people and said, “Good people, kill wolf, wolf won’t eat goat, goat won’t nibble bush, bush won’t give good little sparrow a swing.” — “We won’t!” said the people. — Then the sparrow went to the Tartars and said, “Tartars, Tartars, slay people, people won’t kill wolf, wolf won’t eat goat, goat won’t nibble bush, bush won’t give good little sparrow a swing.” — But the Tartars said, “We won’t slay the people!” and the people said, “We won’t kill the wolf!” and the wolf said, “I won’t eat the goat!” and the goat said, “I won’t nibble the bush!” and the bush said, “I won’t give the good little sparrow a swing.” — “Go!” said the bush, “to the fire, for the Tartars won’t slay the people, and the people won’t kill the wolf, and the wolf won’t eat the goat, and the goat won’t nibble the bush, and the bush won’t give the dear little sparrow a swing.” — But the fire also said, “I won’t!” (they were all alike) — “go to the water,” said he. — So the sparrow went to the water and said, “Come water, quench fire, fire won’t burn Tartars, Tartars won’t slay people, people won’t kill wolf, wolf won’t eat goat, goat won’t nibble bush, bush won’t give good little sparrow a swing.” — But the water also said, “I won’t!” So the sparrow went to the ox and said, “Ox, ox, drink water, water won’t quench fire, fire won’t burn Tartars, Tartars won’t slay people, people won’t kill wolf, wolf won’t eat goat, goat won’t nibble bush, bush won’t give little sparrow a swing.” — “I won’t!” said the ox. — Then the sparrow went to the pole-axe and said, “Pole-axe, pole-axe, strike ox, ox won’t drink water, water won’t quench fire, fire won’t burn Tartars, Tartars won’t slay people, people won’t kill wolf, wolf won’t eat goat, goat won’t nibble bush, bush won’t give little sparrow a swing.” — “I won’t!” said the pole-axe. — So the sparrow went to the worms and said, “Worms, worms, gnaw pole-axe, pole-axe won’t strike ox, ox won’t drink water, water won’t quench fire, fire won’t burn Tartars, Tartars won’t slay people, people won’t kill wolf, wolf won’t eat goat, goat won’t nibble bush, bush won’t give little sparrow a swing.” — “We won’t!” said the worms. — Then the sparrow went to the hen and said, “Hen, hen, peck worms, worms won’t gnaw pole-axe, pole-axe won’t strike ox, ox won’t drink water, water won’t quench fire, fire won’t burn Tartars, Tartars won’t slay people, people won’t kill wolf, wolf won’t eat goat, goat won’t nibble bush, bush won’t give little sparrow a swing.” — “I won’t!” said the hen, “but go to the sparrow-hawk, he ought to give the first push, or why is he called the Pusher!” — So the sparrow went to the sparrow-hawk and said, “Come, pusher, seize hen, hen won’t peck worms, worms won’t gnaw pole-axe, pole-axe won’t strike ox, ox won’t drink water, water won’t quench fire, fire won’t burn Tartars, Tartars won’t slay people, people won’t kill wolf, wolf won’t eat goat, goat won’t nibble bush, bush won’t give little sparrow a swing.”

Then the sparrow-hawk began to seize the hen, the hen began to peck the worms, the worms began to gnaw the pole-axe, the pole-axe began to hit the ox, the ox began to drink the water, the water began to quench the fire, the fire began to burn the Tartars, the Tartars began to slay the people, the people began to kill the wolf, the wolf began to eat the goat, the goat began to nibble the bush, and the bush cried out:

SWING AWAY, swing away, swi-i-i-i-ing!
Little daddy sparrow, have your fli-i-i-ing!

7

THE OLD DOG

There was once a man who had a dog. While the dog was young he was made much of, but when he grew old he was driven out of doors. So he went and lay outside the fence, and a wolf came up to him and said, “Doggy, why so down in the mouth?” — “While I was young,” said the dog, “they made much of me; but now that I am old they beat me.” The wolf said, “I see thy master in the field; go after him, and perchance he’ll give thee something.” — “Nay,” said the dog, “they won’t even let me walk about the fields now, they only beat me.” — “Look now,” said the wolf, “I’m sorry, and will make things better for thee. Thy mistress, I see, has put her child down beneath that wagon. I’ll seize it, and make off with it. Run thou after me and bark, and though thou hast no teeth left, touzle me as much as thou canst, so that thy mistress may see it.”

So the wolf seized the child, and ran away with it, and the dog ran after him, and began to touzle him. His mistress saw it, and made after them with a harrow, crying at the same time, “Husband, husband! the wolf has got the child! Gabriel, Gabriel! don’t you see? The wolf has got the child!” Then the man chased the wolf, and got back the child. “Brave old dog!” said he; “you are old and toothless, and yet you can give help in time of need, and will not let your master’s child be stolen.” And henceforth the woman and her husband gave the old dog a large lump of bread every day.

8

THE FOX AND THE CAT

In a certain forest there once lived a fox, and near to the fox lived a man who had a cat that had been a good mouser in its youth, but was now old and half blind. The man didn’t want puss any longer, but not liking to kill it, took it out into the forest and lost it there. Then the fox came up and said, “Why, Mr Shaggy Matthew! How d’ye do! What brings you here?” — “Alas!” said Pussy, “my master loved me as long as I could bite, but now that I can bite no longer and have left off catching mice — and I used to catch them finely once — he doesn’t like to kill me, but he has left me in the wood where I must perish miserably.” — “No, dear Pussy!” said the fox; “you leave it to me, and I’ll help you to get your daily bread.” — “You are very good, dear little sister foxey!” said the cat, and the fox built him a little shed with a garden round it to walk about in.

Now one day the hare came to steal the man’s cabbage. “Kreem-kreem-kreem!” he squeaked. But the cat popped his head out of the window, and when he saw the hare, he put up his back and stuck up his tail and said, “Ft-t-t-t-Frrrrrrr!” The hare was frightened and ran away and told the bear, the wolf, and the wild boar all about it. “Never mind,” said the bear, “I tell you what, we’ll all four give a banquet, and invite the fox and the cat, and do for the pair of them. Now, look here! I’ll steal the man’s mead; and you, Mr

Wolf, steal his fat-pot; and you, Mr Wildboar, root up his fruit-trees; and you, Mr Bunny, go and invite the fox and the cat to dinner."

So they made everything ready as the bear had said, and the hare ran off to invite the guests. He came beneath the window and said, "We invite your little ladyship Foxey-Woxey, together with Mr Shaggy Matthew, to dinner" — and back he ran again. — "But you should have told them to bring their spoons with them," said the bear. — "Oh, what a head I've got! if I didn't quite forget!" cried the hare, and back he went again, ran beneath the window and cried, "Mind you bring your spoons!" — "Very well," said the fox.

So the cat and the fox went to the banquet, and when the cat saw the bacon, he put up his back and stuck out his tail, and cried, "Mee-oo, mee-oo!" with all his might. But they thought he said, "Ma-lo, ma-lo!" — "What!" said the bear, who was hiding behind the beeches with the other beasts, "here have we four been getting together all we could, and this pig-faced cat calls it too little! What a monstrous cat he must be to have such an appetite!" So they were all four very frightened, and the bear ran up a tree, and the others hid where they could. But when the cat saw the boar's bristles sticking out from behind the bushes he thought it was a mouse, and put up his back again and cried, "Ft! ft! ft! Frrrrrrr!" Then they were more frightened than ever. And the boar went into a bush still farther off, and the wolf went behind an oak, and the bear got down from the tree, and climbed up into a bigger one, and the hare ran right away.

But the cat remained in the midst of all the good things and ate away at the bacon, and the little fox gobbled up the honey, and they ate and ate till they couldn't eat any more, and then they both went home licking their paws.

9

THE STRAW OX

There was once upon a time an old man and an old woman. The old man worked in the fields as a pitch-burner, while the old woman sat at home and spun flax. They were so poor that they could save nothing at all; all their earnings went in bare food, and when that was gone there was nothing left. At last the old woman had a good idea. “Look now, husband,” cried she, “make me a straw ox, and smear it all over with tar.” — “Why, you foolish woman!” said he, “what’s the good of an ox of that sort?” — “Never mind,” said she, “you just make it. I know what I am about.” — What was the poor man to do? He set to work and made the ox of straw, and smeared it all over with tar.

The night passed away, and at early dawn the old woman took her distaff, and drove the straw ox out into the steppe to graze, and she herself sat down behind a hillock, and began spinning her flax, and cried, “Graze away, little ox, while I spin my flax! Graze away, little ox, while I spin my flax!” And while she spun, her head drooped down and she began to doze, and while she was dozing, from behind the dark wood and from the back of the huge pines a bear came rushing out upon the ox and said, “Who are you? Speak and tell me!” — And the ox said, “A three-year-old heifer am I, made of straw and smeared with tar.” — “Oh!” said the bear, “stuffed with straw and trimmed with tar, are you? Then give me of your straw and tar, that I may patch up my ragged fur again!” — “Take some,” said the ox, and the bear fell upon him and began to tear away at the tar. He tore and tore, and buried his teeth in it till he found he couldn’t let go again. He tugged and he tugged, but it was no good, and the ox dragged him gradually off goodness knows where. Then the old woman awoke, and there was no ox to be seen. “Alas! old fool that I am!” cried she, “perchance it has gone home.” Then she quickly caught up her distaff and spinning-board, threw them over her shoulders, and hastened off home, and she saw that the ox had dragged the bear up to the fence, and in she went to the old man. “Dad, dad!” she cried, “look, look! the ox has brought us a bear. Come out and kill it!” Then the old man jumped up, tore off the bear, tied him up, and threw him in the cellar.

Next morning, between dark and dawn, the old woman took her distaff and drove the ox into the steppe to graze. She herself sat down by a mound, began spinning, and said, “Graze, graze away, little ox, while I spin my flax! Graze, graze away, little ox, while I spin my flax!” And while she spun, her head drooped down and she dozed. And, lo! from behind the dark wood, from the back of the huge pines, a grey wolf came rushing out upon the ox and said, “Who are you? Come, tell me!” — “I am a three-year-old heifer, stuffed with straw and trimmed with tar,” said the ox. — “Oh! trimmed with tar, are you? Then give me of your tar to tar my sides, that the dogs and the sons of dogs tear me not!” — “Take some,” said the ox. And with that the wolf fell upon him and tried to tear the tar off. He tugged and tugged, and tore with his teeth, but could get none off. Then he tried to let go, and couldn’t; tug and worry as he might, it was no good. When the old woman woke, there was no heifer in sight. “Maybe my heifer has gone home!” she cried; “I’ll go home and see.” When she got there she was astonished, for by the palings stood the ox with the wolf still tugging at it. She ran and told her old man, and her old man came and threw the wolf into the cellar also.

On the third day the old woman again drove her ox into the pastures to graze, and sat down by a mound and dozed off. Then a fox came running up. “Who are you?” it asked the ox. — “I’m a three-year-old heifer, stuffed with straw and daubed with tar.” — “Then give me some of your tar to smear my sides with, when those dogs and sons of dogs tear my hide!” — “Take some,” said the ox. Then the fox fastened her teeth in him and couldn’t draw them out again. The old woman told her old man, and he took and cast the fox into the cellar in the same way. And after that they caught Pussy Swift-foot likewise.

So when he had got them all safely, the old man sat down on a bench before the cellar and began sharpening a knife. And the bear said to him, “Tell me, daddy, what are you sharpening your knife for?” — “To flay your skin off, that I may make a leather jacket for myself and a pelisse for my old wife.” — “Oh! don’t flay me, daddy dear! Rather let me go, and I’ll bring you a lot of honey.” — “Very well, see you do it,” and he unbound and let the bear go. Then he sat down on the bench and again began sharpening his knife. And the wolf asked him, “Daddy, what are you sharpening your knife for?” — “To flay off your skin, that I may make me a warm cap against the winter.” — “Oh! don’t flay me, daddy dear, and I’ll bring you a whole herd of little sheep.” — “Well, see that you do it,” and he let the wolf go. Then he sat down and began sharpening his knife again. The fox put out her little snout and asked him, “Be so kind, dear daddy, and tell me why you are sharpening your knife!” — “Little foxes,” said the old man, “have nice skins that do capitally for collars and trimmings, and I want to skin you!” — “Oh! don’t take my skin away, daddy dear, and I will bring you hens and geese.” — “Very well, see that you do it!” and he let the fox go. The hare now alone remained, and the old man began sharpening his knife on the hare’s account. “Why do you do that?” asked puss, and he replied, “Little hares have nice little soft warm skins, which will make me gloves and mittens against the winter!” — “Oh! daddy dear! don’t flay me, and I’ll bring you kale and good cauliflower, if only you let me go!” Then he let the hare go also.

Then they went to bed, but very early in the morning, when it was neither dusk nor dawn, there was a noise in the doorway like “Durrrrrr!” — “Daddy!” cried the old woman, “there’s some one scratching at the door, go and see who it is!” The old man went out, and there was the bear carrying a whole hive full of honey. The old man took the honey from the bear, but no sooner did he lie down than again there was another “Durrrrr!” at the door. The old man looked out and saw the wolf driving a whole flock of sheep into the yard. Close on his heels came the fox, driving before him geese and hens and all manner of fowls; and last of all came the hare, bringing cabbage and kale and all manner of good food. And the old man was glad, and the old woman was glad. And the old man sold the sheep and oxen and got so rich that he needed nothing more. As for the straw-stuffed ox, it stood in the sun till it fell to pieces.

10

THE GOLDEN SLIPPER

There was once upon a time an old man and an old woman, and the old man had a daughter, and the old woman had a daughter. And the old woman said to the old man, “Go and buy a heifer, that thy daughter may have something to look after!” So the old man went to the fair and bought a heifer.

Now the old woman spoiled her own daughter, but was always snapping at the old man’s daughter. Yet the old man’s daughter was a good, hard-working girl, while as for the old woman’s daughter, she was but an idle slut. She did nothing but sit down all day with her hands in her lap. One day the old woman said to the old man’s daughter, “Look now, thou daughter of a dog, go and drive out the heifer to graze! Here thou hast two bundles of flax. See that thou unravel it, and reel it, and bleach it, and bring it home all ready in the evening!” Then the girl took the flax and drove the heifer out to graze.

So the heifer began to graze, but the girl sat down and began to weep. And the heifer said to her, “Tell me, dear little maiden, wherefore dost thou weep?” — “Alas! why should I not weep? My stepmother has given me this flax and bidden me unravel it, and reel it, and bleach it, and bring it back as cloth in the evening.” — “Grieve not, maiden!” said the heifer, “it will all turn out well. Lie down to sleep!” — So she lay down to sleep, and when she awoke the flax was all unravelled and reeled and spun into fine cloth, and bleached. Then she drove the heifer home and gave the cloth to her stepmother. The old woman took it and hid it away, that nobody might know that the old man’s daughter had brought it to her.

The next day she said to her own daughter, “Dear little daughter, drive the heifer out to graze, and here is a little piece of flax for thee, unravel it and reel it, or unravel it not and reel it not as thou likest best, but bring it home with thee.” Then she drove the heifer out to graze, and threw herself down in the grass, and slept the whole day, and did not even take the trouble to go and moisten the flax in the cooling stream. And in the evening she drove the heifer back from the field and gave her mother the flax. “Oh, mammy!” she said, “my head ached so the whole day, and the sun scorched so, that I couldn’t go down to the stream to moisten the flax.” — “Never mind,” said her mother, “lie down and sleep; it will do for another day.”

And the next day she called the old man’s daughter again, “Get up, thou daughter of a dog, and take the heifer out to graze. And here thou hast a bundle of raw flax; unravel it, heckle it, wind it on to thy spindles, bleach it, weave with it, and make it into fine cloth for me by the evening!” — Then the girl drove out the heifer to graze. The heifer began grazing, but she sat down beneath a willow-tree, and threw her flax down beside her, and began weeping with all her might. But the heifer came up to her and said, “Tell me, little maiden, wherefore dost thou weep?” — “Why should I not weep?” said she, and she told the heifer all about it. — “Grieve not!” said the heifer, “it will all come right, but lie down to sleep.” — So she lay down and immediately fell asleep. And by evening the bundle of raw flax was heckled and spun and reeled, and the cloth was woven and bleached, so that one could have made shirts of it straight off. Then she drove the heifer home, and gave the cloth to her stepmother.

Then the old woman said to herself, “How comes it that this daughter of the son of a dog has done all her task so easily? The heifer must have got it done for her, I know. But I'll put a stop to all this, thou daughter of the son of a dog," said she. Then she went to the old man and said, "Father, kill and cut to pieces this heifer of thine, for because of it thy daughter does not a stroke of work. She drives the heifer out to graze, and goes to sleep the whole day and does nothing." — "Then I'll kill it!" said he. — But the old man's daughter heard what he said, and went into the garden and began to weep bitterly. The heifer came to her and said, "Tell me, dear little maiden, wherefore dost thou weep?" — "Why should I *not* weep," she said, "when they want to kill thee?" — "Don't grieve," said the heifer, "it will all come right. When they have killed me, ask thy stepmother to give thee my entrails to wash, and in them thou wilt find a grain of corn. Plant this grain of corn, and out of it will grow up a willow-tree, and whatever thou dost want, go to this willow-tree and ask, and thou shalt have thy heart's desire."

Then her father slew the heifer, and she went to her stepmother and said, "Prythee, let me have the entrails of the heifer to wash!" — And her stepmother answered, "As if I would let anybody else do such work but thee!" — Then she went and washed them, and sure enough she found the grain of corn, planted it by the porch, trod down the earth, and watered it a little. And the next morning, when she awoke, she saw that a willow-tree had sprung out of this grain of corn, and beneath the willow-tree was a spring of water, and no better water was to be found anywhere in the whole village. It was as cold and as clear as ice.

When Sunday came round, the old woman tricked her pet daughter out finely, and took her to church, but to the old man's daughter she said, "Look to the fire, thou slut! Keep a good fire burning and get ready the dinner, and make everything in the house neat and tidy, and have thy best frock on, and all the shirts washed against I come back from church. And if thou hast not all these things done, thou shalt say good-bye to dear life."

So the old woman and her daughter went to church, and the smart little stepdaughter made the fire burn up, and got the dinner ready, and then went to the willow-tree and said, “Willow-tree, willow-tree, come out of thy bark! Lady Anna, come when I call thee!” Then the willow-tree did its duty, and shook all its leaves, and a noble lady came forth from it. “Dear little lady, sweet little lady, what are thy commands?” said she. — “Give me,” said she, “a grand dress and let me have a carriage and horses, for I would go to God’s House!” — And immediately she was dressed in silk and satin, with golden slippers on her feet, and the carriage came up and she went to church.

When she entered the church there was a great to-do, and every one said, “Oh! oh! oh! Who is it? Is it perchance some princess or some queen? for the like of it we have never seen before.” Now the young Tsarevich chanced to be in church at that time. When he saw her, his heart began to beat. He stood there, and could not take his eyes off her. And all the great captains and courtiers marvelled at her and fell in love with her straightway. But who she was, they knew not. When service was over, she got up and drove away. When she got home, she took off all her fine things, and put on all her rags again, and sat in the window-corner and watched the folk coming from church.

Then her stepmother came back too. “Is the dinner ready?” said she. — “Yes, it is ready.” — “Hast thou sewn the shirts?” — “Yes, the shirts are sewn too.” — Then they sat down to meat, and began to relate how they had seen such a beautiful young lady at church. — “The Tsarevich,” said the old woman, “instead of saying his prayers, was looking at her all the while, so goodly was she.” Then she said to the old man’s daughter, “As for thee, thou slut! though thou *hast* sewn the shirts and bleached them, thou art but a dirty under-wench!”

On the following Sunday the stepmother again dressed up her daughter, and took her to church. But, before she went, she said to the old man’s daughter, “See that thou keep the fire in, thou slut!” and she gave her a lot of work to do. The old man’s daughter very soon did it all, and then she went to the willow-tree and said, “Bright spring willow, bright spring willow, change thee, transform thee!” Then still statelier dames stepped forth from the willow-tree, “Dear little lady, sweet little lady, what commands hast thou to give?” She told them what she wanted, and they gave her a gorgeous dress, and put golden shoes on her feet, and she went to church in a grand carriage. The Tsarevich was again there, and at the sight of her he stood as if rooted to the ground, and couldn’t take his eyes from her. Then the people began to whisper, “Is there none here who knows her? Is there none who knows who such a handsome lady may be!” And they began to ask each other, “Dost *thou* know her? Dost *thou* know her?” — But the Tsarevich said, “Whoever will tell me who this great lady is, to him will I give a sack-load of gold ducats!” — Then they inquired and inquired, and laid all their heads together, but nothing came of it. But the Tsarevich had a jester who was always with him, and used always to jest and cut capers whenever this child of the Tsar was sad. So now, too, he began to laugh at the young Tsarevich and say to him, “I know how to find out who this fine lady is.” — “How?” asked the young Tsarevich. — “I’ll tell thee,” said the jester; “smear with pitch the place in church where she is wont to stand. Then her slippers will stick to it, and she, in her hurry to get away, will never notice that she has left them behind her in church.” — So the Tsarevich ordered his courtiers to smear the spot with pitch straightway. Next time, when the service was over, she got up as usual and hastened away, but left her golden slippers behind her. When she got home she took off her costly raiment and put on her rags, and waited in the window-corner till they came from church.

When they came from church they had all sorts of things to talk about, and how the young Tsarevich had fallen in love with the grand young lady, and how they were unable to tell him whence she came, or who she was, and the stepmother hated the old man’s daughter all the more because she had done her work so nicely.

But the Tsarevich did nothing but pine away. And they proclaimed throughout the kingdom, “Who has lost a pair of golden slippers?” But none could tell. Then the Tsar sent his wise councillors throughout the kingdom to find her. “If ye do not find her,” said he, “it will be the death of my child, and then ye also are dead men.”

So the Tsar’s councillors went through all the towns and villages, and measured the feet of all the maidens against the golden slippers, and she was to be the bride of the Tsarevich whom the golden slippers fitted. They went to the houses of all the princes, and all the nobles, and all the rich merchants, but it was of no avail. The feet of all the maidens were either too little or too large. Then they hied them to the huts of the peasants.

They went on and on, they measured and measured, and at last they were so tired that they could scarce draw one foot after the other. Then they looked about them and saw a beautiful willow-tree standing by a hut, and beneath the willow-tree was a spring of water. “Let us go and rest in the cool shade,” said they. So they went and rested, and the old woman came out of the hut to them. — “Hast thou a daughter, little mother?” said they. — “Yes, that I have,” said she. — “One or two?” they asked. — “Well, there is another,” said she, “but she is not my daughter, she is a mere kitchen slut, the very look of her is nasty.” — “Very well,” said they, “we will measure them with the golden slippers.” — “Good!” cried the old woman. Then she said to her own daughter, “Go, my dear little daughter, tidy thyself up a bit, and wash thy little feet!” — But the old man’s daughter she drove behind the stove, and the poor thing was neither washed nor dressed. “Sit there, thou daughter of a dog!” said she. — Then the Tsar’s councillors came into the hut to measure, and the old woman said to her daughter, “Put out thy little foot, darling!” — The councillors then measured with the slippers, but they wouldn’t fit her at all. Then they said, “Tell us, little mother, where is thy other daughter?” — “Oh, as for her, she is a mere slut, and besides she isn’t dressed.” — “No matter,” said they;

“where is she?” — Then she came out from behind the stove, and her stepmother hustled her and said, “Get along, thou sluttish hussy!” — Then they measured her with the slippers, and they fitted like gloves, whereupon the courtiers rejoiced exceedingly and praised the Lord.

“Well, little mother,” said they, “we will take this daughter away with us.” — “What! take a slattern like that? Why, all the people will laugh at you!” — “Maybe they will,” said they. — Then the old woman scolded, and wouldn’t let her go. “How can such a slut become the consort of the Tsar’s son?” screeched she. — “Nay, but she must come!” said they; “go, dress thyself, maiden!” — “Wait but a moment,” said she, “and I’ll tire myself as is meet!” — Then she went to the spring beneath the willow-tree, and washed and dressed herself, and she came back so lovely and splendid that the like of it can neither be thought of nor guessed at, but only told of in tales. As she entered the hut she shone like the sun, and her stepmother had not another word to say.

So they put her in a carriage and drove off, and when the Tsarevich saw her, he could not contain himself. “Make haste, O my father!” cried he, “and give us thy blessing.” So the Tsar blessed them, and they were wedded. Then they made a great feast and invited all the world to it. And they lived happily together, and ate wheat-bread to their hearts’ content.

11

THE IRON WOLF

There was once upon a time a parson who had a servant, and when this servant had served him faithfully for twelve years and upward, he came to the parson and said, “Let us now settle our accounts, master, and pay me what thou owest me. I have now served long enough, and would fain have a little place in the wide world all to myself.” — “Good!” said the parson. “I’ll tell thee now what wage I’ll give thee for thy faithful service. I’ll give thee this egg. Take it home, and when thou gettest there, make to thyself a cattle-pen, and make it strong; then break the egg in the middle of thy cattle-pen, and thou shalt see something. But whatever thou doest, don’t break it on thy way home, or all thy luck will leave thee.”

So the servant departed on his homeward way. He went on and on, and at last he thought to himself, “Come now, I’ll see what is inside this egg of mine!” So he broke it, and out of it came all sorts of cattle in such numbers that the open steppe became like a fair. The servant stood there in amazement, and he thought to himself, “However in God’s world shall I be able to drive all these cattle back again?” He had scarcely uttered the words when the Iron Wolf came running up, and said to him, “I’ll collect and drive back all these cattle into the egg again, and I’ll patch the egg up so that it will become quite whole. But in return for that,” continued the Iron Wolf, “whenever thou dost sit down on the bridal bench, I’ll come and eat thee.”

— “Well,” thought the servant to himself, “a lot of things may happen before I sit down on the bridal bench and he comes to eat me, and in the meantime I shall get all these cattle. Agreed, then,” said he. So the Iron Wolf immediately collected all the cattle, and drove them back into the egg, and patched up the egg and made it whole just as it was before.

The servant went home to the village where he lived, made him a cattle-pen stronger than strong, went inside it and broke the egg, and immediately that cattle-pen was as full of cattle as it could hold. Then he took to farming and cattle-breeding, and he became so rich that in the whole wide world there was none richer than he. He kept to himself, and his goods increased and multiplied exceedingly; the only thing wanting to his happiness was a wife, but a wife he was afraid to take. Now near to where he lived was a General who had a lovely daughter, and this daughter fell in love with the rich man. So the General went and said to him, “Come, why don’t you marry? I’ll give you my daughter and lots of money with her.” — “How is it possible for me to marry?” replied the man; “as soon as ever I sit down on the bridal bench, the Iron Wolf will come and eat me up.” And he told the General all that had happened. — “Oh, nonsense!” said the General, “don’t be afraid. I have a mighty host, and when the time comes for you to sit down on the bridal bench, we’ll surround your house with three strong rows of soldiers, and *they* won’t let the Iron Wolf get at you, I can tell you.” So they talked the matter over till he let himself be persuaded, and then they began to make great preparations for the bridal banquet. Everything went off excellently well, and they made merry till the time came when bride and bridegroom were to sit down together on the bridal bench. Then the General placed his men in three strong rows all round the house so as not to let the Iron Wolf get in; and no sooner had the young people sat down upon the bridal bench, than, sure enough, the Iron Wolf came running up. He saw the host standing round the house in three strong rows, but through all three rows he leaped and made straight for the house. But the man, as soon as he saw the Iron Wolf, leaped out of the window, mounted his horse, and galloped off with the wolf after him.

Away and away he galloped, and after him came the wolf, but try as it would, it could not catch him up anyhow. At last, toward evening, the man stopped and looked about him, and saw that he was in a lone forest, and before him stood a hut. He went up to this hut, and saw an old man and an old woman sitting in front of it, and said to them, “Would you let me rest a little while with you, good people?” — “By all means!” said they. — “There is one thing, however, good people!” said he, “don’t let the Iron Wolf catch me while I am resting with you.” — “Have no fear of that!” replied the old couple. “We have a dog called Chutko, who can hear a wolf coming a mile off, and he’ll be sure to let us know.” So he laid him down to sleep, and was just dropping off when Chutko began to bark. Then the old people awoke him, and said, “Be off! be off! for the Iron Wolf is coming.” And they gave him the dog, and a wheaten hearth-cake as provision by the way.

So he went on and on, and the dog followed after him till it began to grow dark, and then he perceived another hut in another forest. He went up to that hut, and in front of it were sitting an old man and an old woman. He asked them for a night’s lodging. “Only,” said he, “take care that the Iron Wolf doesn’t catch me!” — “Have no fear of that,” said they. “We have a dog here called Vazhko, who can hear a wolf nine miles off.” So he laid him down and slept. Just before dawn Vazhko began to bark. Immediately they awoke him. “Run!” cried they, “the Iron Wolf is coming!” And they gave him the dog, and a barley hearth-cake as provision by the way. So he took the hearth-cake, sat him on his horse, and off he went, and his two dogs followed after him.

He went on and on. On and on he went till evening, when again he stopped and looked about him, and he saw that he was in another forest, and another little hut stood before him. He went into the hut, and there were sitting an old man and an old woman. “Will you let me pass the night here, good people?” said he; “only take care that the Iron Wolf does not get hold of me!” — “Have no fear!” said they, “we have a dog called Bary, who can hear a wolf coming twelve miles off. He’ll let us know.” So he lay down to sleep, and early in the morning Bary let them know that the Iron Wolf was drawing nigh. Immediately they awoke him. “‘Tis high time for you to be off!” said they. Then they gave him the dog, and a buckwheat hearth-cake as provision by the way. He took the hearth-cake, sat him on his horse, and off he went. So now he had three dogs, and they all three followed him.

He went on and on, and toward evening he found himself in front of another hut. He went into it, and there was nobody there. He went and lay down, and his dogs lay down also, Chutko on the threshold of the room door, Vazhko at the threshold of the house door, and Bary at the threshold of the outer gate. Presently the Iron Wolf came trotting up. Immediately Chutko gave the alarm, Vazhko nailed him to the earth, and Bary tore him to pieces.

Then the man gathered his faithful dogs around him, mounted his horse, and went back to his own home.

12

THE THREE BROTHERS

There were, once upon a time, three brothers, and the third was a fool. And in their little garden grew golden apple-trees with golden apples, and not far off lived a hog that had taken a fancy to these apples. So the father sent his sons into the garden to guard the trees. The eldest went first, and sat and sat and watched and watched till he was tired of watching, and fell asleep. Then the hog crept in, and dug and dug till he had digged up an apple-tree, which he ate up, and then went his way. The father got up next morning and counted his apple-trees, and one of them was gone. The next night the father sent the second son to watch. He waited and watched till he also fell asleep, and the hog came again and dug up and ate another golden apple-tree and made off. The next morning the father got up again and counted his trees, and another was gone. Then the fool said, “Dad, let me go too!” But the father said, “Oh, fool, fool, wherefore shouldst thou go? Thy wise brethren have watched to no purpose, what canst thou do?” — “Hoity-toity!” said the fool; “give me a gun, and I’ll go all the same.” His father wouldn’t give him a gun, so he took it, and went to watch. He placed his gun across his knees and sat down. He sat and sat, but nothing came, nothing came; he got drowsy, was nodding off, when his gun fell off his knees, and he awoke with a start and watched more warily. At last he heard something — and there stood the hog. It began to dig up another tree, when he pulled the trigger and — bang! His brothers heard the sound, came running up, were quite amazed to see a dead boar lying there, and said, “What will become of us now?” — “Let us kill him,” said the eldest brother, “and bury him in that ditch, and say that we killed the hog.” So they took and slew him, and buried him in the ditch, and took the hog to their father, and said, “While we were watching, this hog came up and began digging, so we killed him and have brought him to you.”

One day a nobleman came by that way, and was surprised to see a beautiful elder-bush growing out of the ditch; so he went up to it, cut off a branch, made him a flute out of it, and began playing upon it. But the flute played of its own accord, and made this moan:

Play, good master, play,
But steal not my heart away!
Me my brothers took and slew,
In the ditch my body threw,
For that hog shot down by me
That rooted up the tree.

The nobleman then went on to the inn, and there he found the fool’s father. “Such a funny thing has happened to me,” said the nobleman. “I went and cut me out a flute from an elder-bush, and lo! it plays of its own accord!” Then the father took the flute and tried his hand at it, and it sang:

Play, good daddy, play,
But don’t steal my heart away!
Me my brothers took and slew,

In the ditch my body threw,
For that hog shot down by me,
That rooted up the tree!

THE FATHER WAS SO astonished that he bought it, and took it home, and gave it to the mother for her to play upon it, and it sang:

PLAY, good mammy, play,
But don’t steal my heart away!
Me my brothers took and slew,
In the ditch my body threw,
For that hog shot down by me,
That rooted up the tree!

THEN THE FATHER gave the flute to his brothers to play upon, but they wouldn’t. “Nay, but you must!” said their father. Then the younger brother took and played upon it:

PLAY, my brother, play,
But don’t steal my heart away!
Me my brothers took and slew,
In the ditch my body threw,
For the hog shot down by me,
That rooted up the tree!

THEN THE FATHER gave the flute to the elder brother who had slain him, but he wouldn't take it. "Take it and play upon it!" roared his father at him. Then he took it and played:

PLAY, my brother, play,
But don't steal my heart away!
'Twas thou who didst me slay,
And stowed my corpse away,
For the hog shot down by me,
That rooted up the tree!

"THEN IT WAS thou who didst slay him?" cried the father. What could the elder brother do but confess it! Then they dug the dead man up, and buried him in the cemetery; but they tied the elder brother to a wild horse, which scattered his bones about the endless steppe.

But I was there, and drank wine and mead till my beard was wet.

13

THE TSAR AND THE ANGEL

Somewhere, nowhere, in a certain kingdom, in a certain empire, time out of mind, and in no land of ours, dwelt a Tsar who was so proud, so very proud, that he feared neither God nor man. He listened to no good counsel from whithersoever it might come, but did only that which was good in his own eyes, and nobody durst put him right. And all his ministers and nobles grieved exceedingly, and all the people grieved likewise.

One day this Tsar went to church; the priest was reading from Holy Scripture, and so he needs must listen. Now there were certain words there which pleased him not. “To say such words to me!” thought he, “words that I can never forget, though I grow grey-headed.” After service the Tsar went home, and bade them send the priest to him. The priest came. “How durst thou read such and such passages to me?” said the Tsar. — “They were written to be read,” replied the priest. — “Written, indeed! And wouldst thou then read everything that is written? Smear those places over with grease, and never dare to read them again, I say!” — “‘Tis not I who have written those words, your Majesty,” said the priest; “nor is it for such as I to smear them over.” — “What! thou dost presume to teach me? I am the Tsar, and it is thy duty to obey me.” — “In all things will I obey thee, O Tsar, save only in sacred things. God is over them, men cannot alter them.” —

“Not alter them!” roared the Tsar; “if I wish them altered, altered they must be. Strike me out those words instantly, I say, and never dare read them in church again. Dost hear?” — “I dare not,” said the priest, “I have no will in the matter.” — “I command thee, fellow!” — “I dare not, O Tsar!” — “Well,” said the Tsar, “I’ll give thee three days to think about it, and on the evening of the fourth day appear before me, and I’ll strike thy head from thy shoulders if thou dost not obey me!” Then the priest bowed low and went home.

The third day was already drawing to a close, and the priest knew not what to do. It was no great terror to him to die for the faith, but what would become of his wife and children? He walked about, and wept, and wrung his hands: “Oh, woe is me! woe is me!” At last he lay down on his bed, but sleep he could not. Only toward dawn did he doze off, then he saw in a dream an angel standing at his head. “Fear nothing!” said the angel. “God hath sent me down on earth to protect thee!” So, early in the morning, the priest rose up full of joy and prayed gratefully to God.

The Tsar also awoke early in the morning, and bawled to his huntsmen to gather together and go a-hunting with him in the forest.

So away they went hunting in the forest, and it was not long before a stag leaped out of the thicket beneath the very eyes of the Tsar. Off after it went the Tsar; every moment the stag seemed to be faltering, and yet the Tsar could never quite come up with it. Hot with excitement, the Tsar spurred his horse on yet faster. “Gee up! gee up!” he cried; “now we’ve got him!” But here a stream crossed the road, and the stag plunged into the water. The Tsar was a good swimmer. “I’ve got him now, at any rate,” thought he. “A little longer, and I shall hold him by the horns.” So the Tsar took off his clothes, and into the water he plunged after the stag. But the stag swam across to the opposite bank, and the Tsar was extending his hand to seize him by the horns — when there was no longer any stag to be seen. It was the angel who had taken the form of a stag. The Tsar was amazed. He looked about him on every side, and wondered where the stag had gone. Then he saw some one on the other side of the river putting on his clothes, and presently the man mounted his horse and galloped away. The Tsar thought it was some evil-doer, but it was the self-same angel that had now put on the Tsar's clothes and gone away to collect the huntsmen and take them home. As for the Tsar, he remained all naked and solitary in the forest.

At last he looked about him and saw, far, far away, smoke rising above the forest, and something like a dark cloud standing in the clear sky. "Maybe," thought he, "that is my hunting-pavilion." So he went in the direction of the smoke, and came at last to a brick-kiln. The brick-burners came forth to meet him, and were amazed to see a naked man. "What is he doing here?" they thought. And they saw that his feet were lame and bruised, and his body covered with scratches. "Give me to drink," said he, "and I would fain eat something also." The brick-burners had pity on him; they gave him an old tattered garment to wear and a piece of black bread and a gherkin to eat. Never from the day of his birth had the Tsar had such a tasty meal. "And now speak, O man!" said they; "who art thou?" — "I'll tell you who I am," said he, when he had eaten his fill; "I am your Tsar. Lead me to my capital, and there I will reward you!" — "What, thou wretched rogue!" they cried, "thou dost presume to mock us, thou old ragamuffin, and magnify thyself into a Tsar! Thou reward us, indeed!" And they looked at him in amazement and scorn. — "Dare to laugh at me again," said he, "and I'll have your heads chopped off!" For he forgot himself, and thought he was at home. — "What! thou!" Then they fell upon him and beat him. They beat him and hauled him about most unmercifully, and then they drove him away, and off he went bellowing through the forest.

He went on and on till at last he saw once more a smoke rising up out of the wood. Again he thought, "That is surely my hunting-pavilion," and so he went up to it. And toward evening he came to another brick-kiln. There, too, they had pity upon and kindly entreated him. They gave him to eat and to drink. They also gave him ragged hose and a tattered shirt, for they were very poor people. They took him to be a runaway soldier, or some other poor man, but when he had eaten his fill and clothed himself, he said to them, “I am your Tsar!” They laughed at him, and again he began to talk roughly to the people. Then they fell upon him and thrashed him soundly, and drove him right away. And he wandered all by himself through the forest till it was night. Then he laid him down beneath a tree, and so he passed the night, and rising up very early, fared on his way straight before him.

At last he came to a third brick-kiln, but he did not tell the brick-burners there that he was the Tsar. All he thought of now was how he might reach his capital. The people here, too, treated him kindly, and seeing that his feet were lame and bruised, they had compassion upon him, and gave him a pair of very, very old boots. And he asked them, “Do ye know by which way I can get to the capital?” They told him, but it was a long, long journey that would take the whole day.

So he went the way they had told him, and he went on and on till he came to a little town, and there the roadside sentries stopped him. “Halt!” they cried. He halted. “Your passport!” — “I have none.” — “What! no passport? Then thou art a vagabond. Seize him!” they cried. So they seized him and put him in a dungeon. Shortly after they came to examine him, and asked him, “Whence art thou?” — “From such and such a capital,” said he. Then they ordered him to be put in irons and taken thither.

So they took him back to that capital and put him in another dungeon. Then the custodians came round to examine the prisoners, and one said one thing and one said another, till at last it came to the turn of the Tsar. — “Who art thou, old man?” they asked. Then he told them the whole truth. “Once I was the Tsar,” said he, and he related all that had befallen him. Then they were much amazed, for he was not at all like a Tsar. For indeed he had been growing thin and haggard for a long time, and his beard was all long and tangled. And yet, for all that, he stood them out that he was the Tsar. So they made up their minds that he was crazy, and drove him away. “Why should we keep this fool for ever,” said they, “and waste the Tsar’s bread upon him?” So they let him go, and never did any man feel so wretched on God’s earth as did that wretched Tsar. Willingly would he have done any sort of work if he had only known how, but he had never been used to work, so he had to go along begging his bread, and could scarce beg enough to keep body and soul together. He lay at night at the first place that came to hand, sometimes in the tall grass of the steppes, sometimes beneath a fence. “That it should ever have come to this!” he sighed.

But the angel who had made himself Tsar went home with the huntsmen. And no man knew that he was not a Tsar, but an angel. The same evening that priest came to him and said, “Do thy will, O Tsar, and strike off my head, for I cannot blot out one word of Holy Scripture.” — And the Tsar said to him, “Glory be to God, for now I know that there is at least one priest in my tsardom who stands firm for God’s Word. I’ll make thee the highest bishop in this realm.” The priest thanked him, bowed down to the earth, and departed marvelling. “What is this wonder?” thought he, “that the haughty Tsar should have become so just and gentle.” — But all men marvelled at the change that had come over the Tsar. He was now so mild and gracious, nor did he spend all his days in the forest, but went about inquiring of his people if any were wronged or injured by their neighbours, and if justice were done. He took count of all, and rebuked the unjust judges, and saw that every man had his rights. And the people now rejoiced as much as they had grieved heretofore, and justice was done in all the tribunals, and no bribes were taken.

But the Tsar, the real Tsar, grew more and more wretched. Then, after three years, a ukase went forth that on such and such a day all the people were to come together to a great banquet given by the Tsar, all were to be there, both rich and poor, both high and lowly. And all the people came, and the unhappy Tsar came too. And so many long tables were set out in the Tsar’s courtyard that all the people praised God when they saw the glad sight. And they all sat down at table and ate and drank, and the Tsar himself and his courtiers distributed the meat and drink to the guests as much as they would, but to the unfortunate Tsar they gave a double portion of everything. And they all ate and drank their fill, and then the Tsar began to inquire of the people whether any had suffered wrong or had not had justice done him. And when the people began to disperse, the Tsar stood at the gate with a bag of money, and gave to every one a *grivna*, but to the unhappy Tsar he gave three.

And after three years the Tsar gave another banquet, and again entertained all the people. And when he had given them both to eat and to drink as much as they would, he inquired of them what was being done in his tsardom, and again gave a *grivna* to each one of them; but to the unlucky Tsar he gave a double portion of meat and drink and three *grivni*.

And again, after three years, he made yet another banquet, and proclaimed that all should come, both rich and poor, both earls and churls. And all the people came and ate and drank and bowed low before the Tsar and thanked him, and made ready to depart. The unlucky Tsar was also on the point of going, when the angel Tsar stopped him, and took him aside into the palace, and said to him, “Lo! God hath tried thee and chastised thy pride these ten years. But me He sent to teach thee that a Tsar must have regard to the complaints of his people. So thou wast made poor and a vagabond on the face of the earth that thou mightst pick up wisdom, if but a little. Look now, that thou doest good to thy people, and judgest righteous judgment, as from henceforth thou shalt be Tsar again, but I must fly back to God in heaven.” — And when he had said this he bade them wash and shave him (for his beard had grown right down to his girdle), and put upon him the raiment of a Tsar. And the angel said further, “Go now into the inner apartments. There the courtiers of the Tsar are sitting and making merry, and none will recognize in thee the vagabond old man. May God help thee always to do good!” And when the angel had said this he was no more to be seen, and only his clothes remained on the floor.

Then the Tsar prayed gratefully to God, and went to the merry-making of his courtiers, and henceforth he ruled his people justly, as the angel had bidden him.

14

THE STORY OF IVAN AND THE DAUGHTER OF THE SUN

There were once upon a time four brethren, and three of them remained at home, while the fourth went out to seek for work. This youngest brother came to a strange land, and hired himself out to a husbandman for three gold pieces a year. For three years he served his master faithfully, so, at the end of his time, he departed with nine gold pieces in his pocket. The first thing he now did was to go to a spring, and into this spring he threw three of his gold pieces. “Let us see now,” said he, “if I have been honest, they will come swimming back to me.” Then he lay down by the side of the spring and went fast asleep. How long he slept there, who can tell? but at any rate he woke up at last and went to the spring, but there was no sign of his money to be seen. Then he threw three more of the gold pieces into the spring, and again he lay down by the side of it and slept. Then he got up and went and looked into the spring, and still there was no sign of the money. So he threw in his three remaining gold pieces, and again lay down and slept. The third time he arose and looked into the spring, and there, sure enough, was his money: all nine of the gold pieces were floating on the surface of the water!

And now his heart felt lighter, and he gathered up the nine gold pieces and went on his way. On the road he fell in with three *katsapi* with a laden wagon. He asked them concerning their wares, and they said they were carrying a load of incense. He begged them straightway to sell him this incense. Then they sold it to him for the gold pieces, and when he had bought it and they had departed, he kindled fire and burnt the incense, and offered it up to God as a sweet-smelling sacrifice. Then an angel flew down to him, and said, “Oh, thou that hast offered this sweet-smelling sacrifice to God, what dost thou want for thine own self? Dost thou want a tsardom, or great riches? Or, perchance, the desire of thy heart is a good wife? Speak, for God will give thee whatsoever thou desirest.” When the man had listened to the angel, he said to him, “Tarry a while! I will go and ask those people who are ploughing yonder.” Now those people who were ploughing there were his own brethren, but he did not know that they were his brethren. So he went up and said to the elder brother, “Tell me, uncle, what shall I ask of God? A tsardom, or great riches, or a good wife? Tell me, which of the three is the best gift to ask for?” — And his eldest brother said to him, “I know not, and who does know? Go and ask some one else.” So he went to the second brother, who was ploughing a little farther on. He asked him the same question, but the man only shrugged his shoulders and said he didn’t know either. Then he went to the third brother, who was the youngest of the three, and also ploughing there. And he asked him, saying, “Tell me, now, which is the best gift to ask of God: a tsardom, or great riches, or a good wife?” — And the third brother said, “What a question! Thou art too young for a tsardom, and great riches last but for a little while; ask God for a good wife, for if it please God to give thee a good wife, ‘tis a gift that will bless thee all thy life long.” So he went back to the angel and asked for a good wife. Then he went on his way till he came to a certain wood, and, looking about him, he perceived that in this wood was a lake. And while he was looking at it, three wild doves came flying along and lit down upon this lake. They threw off their plumage and plunged into the water, and then he saw that they were not wild doves, but three fair ladies. They bathed in the lake, and in the meantime the youth crept up and took the raiment of one of them and hid it behind the bushes. When they came out of the water the third lady missed her clothes. Then the youth said to her, “I know where thy clothes are, but I will not give them to thee unless thou wilt be my wife.” — “Good!” cried she, “thy wife will I be.” Then she dressed herself, and they went together to the nearest village. When they got there, she said to him, “Now go to the nobleman who owns the land here, and beg him for a place where we may build us a hut.” So he went right up to the nobleman’s castle and entered his reception-room, and said, “Glory be to God!” — “For ever and ever!” replied the nobleman. “What dost thou want here, Ivan?” — “I have come, sir, to beg of thee a place where I may build me a hut.” — “A place for a hut, eh? Good, very good. Go home, and I’ll speak to my overseer, and he shall appoint thee a place.” — So he returned from the nobleman’s castle, and his wife said to him, “Go now into the forest and cut down an oak, a young oak, that thou canst span round with both arms.” So he cut down such an oak as his wife had told him of, and she built a hut of the oak, for the overseer had come and shown them a place where they might build their hut. But when the overseer returned home he praised loudly to his master the wife of this Ivan. “She is such and such,” said he. “Fair she may be,” replied the nobleman, “but she is another’s.” — “She need not be another’s for long,” replied the overseer. “This Ivan is in our hands; let us send him to see why it is the sun grows so red when he sets.” — “That’s just the same as if you sent him to a place whence he can never return.” — “All the better.” — Then they sent for Ivan, and gave him this errand, and he returned home to his wife, weeping bitterly. Then his wife asked him all about it, and said, “Well, I can tell thee all about the ways of the sun, for I am the sun’s own daughter. So now I’ll tell thee the whole matter. Go back to this nobleman and say to him that the reason why the sun turns so red as he sets is this: Just as the sun is going down into the sea, three fair ladies rise out of it, and it is the sight of them which makes him turn so red all over!” So he went back and told them.

“Oh-ho!” cried they, “if you can go as far as that, you may now go a little farther”; so they told him to go to hell and see how it was there. “Yes,” said his wife, “I know the road that leads to hell also very well; but the nobleman must let his overseer go with thee, or else he never will believe that thou really didst go to hell.” — So the nobleman told his overseer that he must go to hell too, so they went together; and when they got there the rulers of hell laid hands upon the overseer straightway. “Thou dog!” roared they, “we’ve been looking out for thee for some time!” So Ivan returned without the overseer, and the nobleman said to him, “Where’s my overseer?” — “I left him in hell,” said Ivan, “and they said there that they were waiting for you, sir, too.” When the nobleman heard this he hanged himself, but Ivan lived happily with his wife.

15

THE CAT, THE COCK, AND THE FOX

There was once upon a time a cat and a cock, who agreed to live together, so they built them a hut on an ash-heap, and the cock kept house while the cat went foraging for sausages.

One day the fox came running up: “Open the door, little cock!” cried she. — “Pussy told me not to, little fox!” said the cock. — “Open the door, little cock!” repeated the fox. — “I tell you, pussy told me not to, little fox!” — At last, however, the cock grew tired of always saying “No!” so he opened the door, and in the fox rushed, seized him in her jaws, and ran off with him. Then the cock cried:

Help! pussy-pussy!
That foxy hussy
Has got me tight
With all her might.
Across her tail
My legs do trail
Along the bridge so stony!

THE CAT HEARD IT, gave chase to the fox, rescued the cock, brought him home, scolded him well, and said, “Now keep out of her jaws in the future, if you don’t want to be killed altogether!”

Then the cat went out foraging for wheat, so that the cock might have something to eat. He had scarcely gone when the sly she-fox again came creeping up. “Dear little cock!” said she, “pray open the door!” — “Nay, little fox! Pussy said I wasn’t to.” But the fox went on asking and asking till at last the cock let him in. Then the fox rushed at him, seized him by the neck, and ran off with him. Then the cock cried out:

HELP! pussy-pussy!
That foxy hussy
Has got me tight
With all her might.
Across her tail
My legs do trail
Along the bridge so stony!

THE CAT HEARD IT, and again he ran after the fox and rescued the cock, and gave the fox a sound drubbing. Then he said to the cock, “Now, mind you never let her come in again, or she’ll eat you.”

But the next time the cat went out, the she-fox came again, and said, “Dear little cock, open the door!” — “No, little fox! Pussy said I wasn’t to.” But the fox begged and begged so piteously that, at last, the cock was quite touched, and opened the door. Then the fox caught him by the throat again, and ran away with him, and the cock cried:

Help! pussy-pussy!
That foxy hussy
Has got me tight
With all her might.
Across her tail
My legs do trail
Along the bridge so stony!

The cat heard it, and gave chase again. He ran and ran, but this time he couldn't catch the fox up; so he returned home and wept bitterly, because he was now all alone. At last, however, he dried his tears and got him a little fiddle, a little fiddle-bow, and a big sack, and went to the fox's hole and began to play:

Fiddle-de-dee!
The foxy so wee
Had daughters twice two,
And a little son too,
Called Phil.—Fiddle-dee!
Come, foxy, and see
My sweet minstrelsy!

Then the fox's daughter said, "Mammy, I'll go out and see who it is that is playing so nicely!" So out she skipped, but no sooner did pussy see her than he caught hold of her and popped her into his sack. Then he played again:

Fiddle-de-dee!
The foxy so wee
Had daughters twice two,
And a little son too,
Called Phil.—Fiddle-dee!
Come, foxy, and see
My sweet minstrelsy!

Then the second daughter skipped out, and pussy caught her by the forehead, and popped her into his sack, and went on playing and singing till he had got all four daughters into his sack, and the little son also.

Then the old fox was left all alone, and she waited and waited, but not one of them came back. At last she said to herself, “I’ll go out and call them home, for the cock is roasting, and the milk pottage is simmering, and ‘tis high time we had something to eat.” So out she popped, and the cat pounced upon her, and killed her too. Then he went and drank up all the soup, and gobbled up all the pottage, and then he saw the cock lying on a plate. “Come, shake yourself, cock!” said puss. So the cock shook himself, and got up, and the cat took the cock home, and the dead foxes too. And when they got home they skinned them to make nice beds to lie upon, and lived happily together in peace and plenty. And as they laughed over the joke as a good joke, we may laugh over it too!

16

THE SERPENT-TSAREVICH AND HIS TWO WIVES

There was once a Tsaritsa who had no child, and greatly desired one, so the soothsayers said to her, “Bid them catch thee a pike, bid them boil its head and nothing but its head, eat it, and thou shalt see what will happen.” So she did so. She ate the pike’s head and went about as usual for a whole year, and when the year was out she gave birth to a son who was a serpent.

And no sooner was he born than he looked about him, and said, “Mammy and daddy! Bid them make me a stone hut, and let there be a little bed there, and a little stove and a fire to warm me, and let me be married in a fortnight!” — So they did as he desired. They shut him up in a stone hut, with a little bed and a little stove and fire to warm him, and in a fortnight he grew quite big, indeed he grew too big for his little bed. “And now,” said he, “I want to be married!” So they brought to him all the fair young damsels of the land that he might choose one to be his own true bride. Exceeding fair were all the damsels they brought him, and yet he would choose none of them. Now there was an old woman there, who had twelve daughters, and eleven of these daughters they brought to the Serpent-Tsarevich, but not the twelfth. “She is too young!” said they. — Then the youngest daughter said, “Ye fools, not to take me too! Why, if I were brought to the Serpent-Tsarevich, he would make me his bride at once.”

Now this came to the Tsar’s ears, and he commanded them to bring her to him straightway. And the Tsar said to her, “Wilt thou be my son’s bride or not?” — And she said, “I will; but before I go to thy son, give me at once a score of chemises, and a score of linen kirtles, and a score of woollen kirtles, and twenty pairs of shoes — twenty of each, I say.” — So the Tsar gave them to her, and she put on the twenty chemises, the twenty linen kirtles, the twenty woollen kirtles, and the twenty pairs of shoes, one after the other, and went to see the Serpent-Tsarevich. When she came to the threshold of his hut, she stopped and said, “Hail, O Serpent-Tsarevich!” — “Hail, maiden!” cried he. “Wilt thou be my bride?” — “I will!” — “Then take off one of thy skins!” cried he. — “Yes,” she said, “but thou must do the same.” — So he cast off one of his skins, and she cast off one of her twenty suits of clothes. Then he cried out again, “Cast off another of thy skins, maiden.” — “Yes,” she replied, “but thou must cast off one too!” — So he did so. Nineteen times did he cast off one of his serpent’s skins, and nineteen times did she cast off one of her suits of clothes, till at last she had only her every-day suit left, and he had only his human skin left. Then he threw off his last skin also, and it flew about in the air like a gossamer, whereupon she seized hold of it and threw it into the fire that was burning on the hearth till it was all consumed, and he stood before her no longer a serpent, but a simple Tsarevich. Then they married and lived happily together, but the husband never would go to visit his old father the Tsar, nor would he allow his bride to go near the palace.

The old Tsar sent for him again and again, but his son would never go. At last the wife was ashamed, and said to her husband one day, “Dear heart! let me go to thy father! I will only go for my own pastime, lest he get angry. Why should I not go?” Then he let her go, and she went to the court of the old Tsar, and took her pastime there. She amused herself finely, and ate and drank her fill of all good things. Now her husband had laid this command upon her, “Go and divert thyself if thou wilt, but if thou tell my father and my mother what has happened to me, and how I have lost my twenty serpent skins, thou shalt never see me more.” For they did not know that he was now no longer a serpent, but a simple Tsarevich. She vowed she would never tell; but for all her promises, she nevertheless told them at last how her husband had lost his twenty serpent skins. Then she enjoyed herself to her heart’s content, but when she returned home she found no trace of her husband — he had departed to another kingdom in the uttermost parts of the world.

Then the poor bride sat her down and wept and wept, and when she had no more tears to weep, she went forth into the wide world to seek her husband. She went on till she came to a lonely little house, and she went and begged a night’s lodging from the old woman who dwelt there, who was the Mother of the Winds. But the Mother of the Winds would not let her in. “God preserve thee, child!” said she. “My son is already winging his way hither. In another moment thou wilt hear the rustling of his wings, in another moment he will slay thee, and scatter thy bones to the four winds.” But the bride besought the old woman till she had her desire, and the old woman hid her behind a huge chest. A moment afterward the son of the Mother of the Winds came flying up, and he smelt out the bride, and said, “What’s this, mother? There is an evil smell of Cossack bones about the house!” — “No, it is not that,” said his mother, “but a young woman has taken shelter here, who says that she is going in search of her husband.” — “Then, mother, give her the little silver apple, and let her go, for her husband is in another kingdom.” So they sent her away with the little silver apple.

She went on and on till night descended upon her, and she came to the lonely abode of another old woman, and begged a night’s lodging of her also. But the old woman would not let her in. “My son will be here presently,” said she, “and he will slay thee.” — “Nay, but, granny,” said the bride, “I’ve already stayed the night with such as thou, for I have lodged at the house of the Mother of the Winds.” — Then the old woman took her in, and hid her, for she was the Mother of the Moon. And immediately afterward the Moon came flying up. “What is this, little mother?” cried he. “I smell an evil smell of Cossack bones!” — But she said to him, “Nay, my dear little son, but a young woman has come hither who is obliged to search for her husband because she told his father and mother the truth.” Then the Moon said, “‘Twould be as well to let her go on farther. Give her the little golden apple, and let her be off as quickly as possible, for her husband is about to marry another wife.” So she passed the night there, and in the morning they sent her away with the little golden apple.

She went on and on. Night again descended upon her, and she came to the house of the Mother of the Sun, and begged her for a night’s lodging. But the old woman said to her, “I cannot let thee in. My son is flying about the world, but he will fly hither presently, and if he find thee here he will slay thee!” — Then the bride said, “Nay, but, granny dear, I have already lodged with the like of thee. I have lodged with the Mother of the Winds, and the Mother of the Moon, and they each gave me a little apple.” Then the Mother of the Sun also let her in. Immediately afterward her son, the Sun, came flying up, and he said, “Why, what is this, little mother? I smell an evil smell of Cossack bones!” — But his mother answered, “A young woman came hither who begged for a night’s lodging.” She did not tell her son the whole truth, that the bride was in search of her husband, but he knew it already, and said, “Her husband is about to marry another wife. Let her go to the land where now he is, and give her the diamond apple, which is the best and most precious apple in the whole world, and tell her to hasten on to the house where her husband abides. They won’t let her in there, but she must disguise herself as an old woman, and sit down outside in the courtyard, and spread out a cloth and lay upon it her little silver apple, and all the people will come flocking around to see the old woman who is selling apples of silver.” So the bride did as the Sun bade her, and went to that distant empire, and the Empress of that empire, whom her husband had married, came to see what she was selling, and said to her, “What dost thou want for thy silver apple?” And she answered, “No money do I want for it. Oh, sovereign lady, all that I require in exchange therefor is that I may pass the night near my husband.” — Then the Empress took the apple, and allowed her to come into the bedchamber of the Tsarevich to pass the night there; but first of all she gave the Tsarevich a sleeping draught so that he knew nothing, and could speak not a word to her, nor could he even recognize what manner of person his true wife was. Then only did the Empress let her come into the room where her husband lay. And she watched over him, she watched over him the live-long night, and with the dawn she departed.

The next morning he awoke out of his drugged sleep, and said to himself, “Why, what is this? It is just as if my first wife has been weeping over me here, and wetted me with her tears!” But he told nobody what he thought, nor did he say a word about it to his second wife. “Wait a bit!” thought he, “to-morrow night I’ll not go to sleep. I’ll watch and watch till I watch the thing out.”

The next day the faithful wife spread out her little cloth again, and laid upon it her golden apple. The Empress again came that way, went up to her, and said, “Sell me that apple of thine, and I’ll give thee for it as many pence as thou canst hold in thy lap!” — But she replied, “Nay, my sovereign lady! money for it I will not take, but let me pass one more night in my own husband’s room!” — And the Empress took the apple, and let her go there. But first the Empress caressed and kissed her husband into a good humour, and then she gave him another sleeping draught. And the faithful wife came again, and watched and wept over him and wetted him with her tears, and with the dawn she departed.

And now she had only one apple left, but that was the diamond apple, the most precious apple in the world. And she said to the Empress, “Let me watch by him for this apple but one night more, and I’ll never ask again!” And she let her. Now this night also her husband was asleep. And his first wife came and immediately began to kiss him on the head, but he said nothing. Then she kissed him again, and at last he awoke and started up, and said, “Who’s that?” — “It is I, thy first wife.” — “How hast thou found thy way hither?” — “Oh, I have been here and there and everywhere. I have lodged with the Mother of the Winds, and the Mother of the Moon, and the Mother of the Sun, and they gave me three apples, and I gave these apples to thy Empress-wife, and she let me watch over thee, and this is the third night that I have watched by thy side.”

Then he came to his right mind, and cried aloud that they should bring in lights, and he saw that his faithful wife was quite an old woman. Then he bethought him, and said, “Was ever the like of this known? My first and faithful wife goes a-seeking her husband throughout the wide world, while my accursed second wife, Empress though she be, sells her husband for three apples!”

Then he bade them give his faithful wife rich garments as much as she would, and she stripped off her disguise, and washed her face and grew young again. But the faithless wife was tied to the tails of four wild horses, and they tore her to pieces in the endless steppe.

17

THE ORIGIN OF THE MOLE

Once upon a time a rich man and a poor man had a field in common, and they sowed it with the same seed at the same time. But God prospered the poor man’s labour and made his seed to grow, but the rich man’s seed did not grow. Then the rich man claimed that part of the field where the grain had sprung up, and said to the poor man, “Look now! ‘tis my seed that has prospered, and not thine!” The poor man protested, but the rich man would not listen, but said to him, “If thou wilt not believe me, then, poor man, come into the field quite early to-morrow morning, before dawn, and God shall judge betwixt us.”

Then the poor man went home. But the rich man dug a deep trench in the poor man’s part of the field and placed his son in it, and said to him, “Look now, my son; when I come hither to-morrow morning and ask whose field this is, say that it is not the poor man’s, but the rich man’s.”

Then he well covered up his son with straw, and departed to his own house.

In the morning all the people assembled together and went to the field, and the rich man cried, “Speak, O God! whose field is this, the rich man’s or the poor man’s?”

“The rich man’s, the rich man’s,” cried a voice from the midst of the field.

But the Lord Himself was among the people gathered together there, and He said, “Listen not to that voice, for the field is verily the poor man’s.”

Then the Lord told all the people how the matter went, and then He said to the son of the rich man,

“Stay where thou art, and sit beneath the earth all thy days, so long as the sun is in the sky.”

So the rich man’s son became a mole on the spot, and that is why the mole always flies the light of day.

18

THE TWO PRINCES

There was once upon a time a King who had two sons, and these sons went a-hunting in the forest and there lost themselves. They wandered on and on for twelve weeks, and at the end of the twelve weeks they came to a place where three roads met, and the elder brother said to the younger, “My brother, here our roads part. Take thou the road on that side, and I’ll take the road on this.” Then the elder brother took a knife and stuck it into the trunk of a maple-tree by the roadside, and said, “Look now, brother, should any blood drip from the blade of this knife it will be a sign that I am perishing, and thou must go and seek me; but if any blood flow from the handle, it will be a sign that *thou* art perishing, and I will then go and seek thee.” Then the brothers embraced each other and parted, and one went in one direction and the other went in the other.

The elder brother went on and on and on till he came to a mountain so high that there cannot be a higher, and he began climbing it with his dog and his stick. He went on till he came to an apple-tree, and beneath the apple-tree a fire was burning, and he stopped to warm himself, when an old woman came up and said to him, “Dear little gentleman! dear little gentleman! tie up that dog lest he bite me.” So he took the dog and tied it up, and immediately he was turned to stone, and the dog too, for the old woman was a pagan witch.

Time passed, and the younger brother came back to the maple-tree by the cross-roads and saw that blood was dripping from the blade of the knife. Then he knew that his brother was perishing, and he went in search of him, and came at last to the high mountain that was higher than all others, and on the top of this mountain there was a little courtyard, and in the courtyard an old woman, who said to him, “Little Prince, what brings thee hither, and what dost thou seek?” — “I seek my brother,” said he; “a whole year has passed since I heard of him, and I know not whether he be alive or dead.” — Then she said to him, “I can tell thee that he is dead, and it is of no use seeking for him, though thou goest the wide world over. But go up that mountain, and thou wilt come to two other mountains opposite to each other, and there thou wilt find an old man, who will put thee on thy way.” So he went up the high mountain till he came to two other mountains that were opposite each other, and there he saw two old men sitting, and they asked him straightway, “Little Prince! little Prince! whither dost thou go, and what dost thou seek?” — “I am going in search of my brother,” said he, “my dear elder brother who is perishing, and I can find him nowhere.” — Then one of the old men said to him, “If thou canst scale those two mountains yonder without falling, I’ll give thee all that thou dost want.” Then he scaled the two mountains as nimbly as a goat, and the old man gave him a bast rope, three fathoms long, and bade him return to the mountain where was the fire and the old woman who had asked him to stay and warm himself, and bind this old woman with the cord and beat her till she promised to bring his brother back to life again, and not only his brother but a Tsar and a Tsaritsa and a Tsarivna, who were also turned to stone there. “Beat her till she has brought them all to life again,” said they. So he took the cord and went back to where the fire was burning. An apple-tree was there, and beneath the apple-tree was the fire, and the old witch came out to him and said, “Little master! little master! let me come and warm myself.” — “Come along, little mother!” cried he; “come and warm thyself and make thyself comfortable.” Then she came out, but no sooner had she done so, than he threw the cord around her and began flogging her. “Say,” cried he, “what hast thou done with my brother?” — “Oh, dear little master! dear little master! let me go, let me go! I’ll tell thee this instant where thy brother is.” But he wouldn’t listen, but beat her and beat her, and held her naked feet over the fire, and toasted and roasted her till she shrivelled right up. Then he let her go, and she went with him to a cave that was on that mountain, and drew from the depths of it some healing and life-giving water, and brought his brother back to life again, but it was as much as she could do, for she was half dead herself. Then his brother said to him, “Oh, my dear brother, how heavily I must have been sleeping! But thou must revive my faithful dog too!” Then she revived the faithful dog, and she also revived the Tsar and the Tsaritsa and the Tsarivna, who had been turned to stone there. Then they left that place and when they had gone a little distance, the elder brother bowed to the ground and went on his way alone.

He went on and on till he came to a city where all the people were weeping and all the houses were hung with black cloth. And he said to them, “Why do ye weep, and why are all your houses hung with black?” — And they answered, “Because there’s a Dragon here who eats the people, and it has come to such a pass with us that to-morrow we must give him our Princess for dinner.” — “Nay, but ye shall not do this thing,” said he, and, with that, he set out for the cavern where the Dragon lived, and tethered his horse there and slept by the side of the cavern all night. And the next day, sure enough, the Princess was brought to the mouth of the cavern. She came driving thither in a carriage and four and with a heyduck in attendance. But when the Prince saw her, he came forth to meet her and led her aside and gave her a prayer-book in her hand, and said to her, “Stay here, Princess, and pray to God for me.” Then she fell down on her knees and began to pray, and the Dragon popped one of his heads out of the cavern and said, “It is time I had my dinner now, and there’s not so much as a breakfast here!”

But the Prince also fell down on his knees and read out of his prayer-book and prayed to God, and said to the Dragon, “Come forth! come forth! and I’ll give thee breakfast and dinner at the same time!” Then the Dragon darted back again, but when he had waited till midday and still there was neither breakfast nor dinner for him, he popped two of his heads out and cried, “It is high time I had my dinner, and still there is neither breakfast nor dinner for me!” — “Come forth, and I’ll give thee both at once!” cried the Prince. Then the Dragon wouldn’t wait any longer, but stuck out all his six heads and began to wriggle out of the cavern; but the Prince attacked him with his huge broadsword, a full fathom long, which the Lord had given him, and chopped off all the Dragon’s six heads, and the rock fell upon the Dragon’s body and crushed it to pieces. Then the Prince gathered up the six dragon-heads and laid them on one side, and cut out the six lolling tongues and tied them in his handkerchief, and told the Princess to go back to her palace, for they could not be married for a year and twelve weeks, and if by that time he did not appear, she was to marry another, and with that he departed. Then the coachman of the Princess came up to the place and saw the six heads of the Dragon, and took them up and said to the Princess, “I will slay thee on the spot if thou dost not swear to me twelve times that thou wilt say I slew the Dragon, and wilt take me for thy husband!” Then she swore to it twelve times, for else he would have slain her. So they returned together to the town, and immediately all the black cloth was taken off the houses and the bells fell a-ringing, and all the people rejoiced because the coachman had killed the Dragon. “Let them be married at once!” cried they.

Meanwhile the King’s son went on and on till he came to that town where he had left his brother, and there he found that the Tsar and the Tsaritsa had given his brother the whole tsardom and the Tsarivna to wife as well, and there he tarried for a time; but toward the end of a year and twelve weeks he went back to the other city where he had left the Princess, and there he found them making ready for a grand wedding. “What is the meaning of all this?” asked he. And they answered, “The Tsar’s coachman has slain the Dragon with six heads and saved the Princess, and now he is to be married to her.” — “Good Lord!” cried he, “and I never saw this Dragon! What manner of beast was it?” — Then they took him and showed him the heads of the Dragon, and he cried, “Good Lord! every other beast hath a tongue, but this Dragon hath none!” Then they told this to the coachman, who had been made a Prince, and the coachman was very angry and said, “Whoever maintains that a Dragon has tongues, him will I order to be tied to four wild horses, and they shall tear him to pieces on the open steppe!” The Princess, however, recognized the King’s son, but she held her peace. Then the King’s son took out his handkerchief, unrolled it, showed them the six tongues, and put each one into one of the six mouths of the Dragon’s six heads, and each of the tongues began to speak and bid the Princess say how the matter went. Then the Princess told how she had knelt down and prayed out of the prayer-book while the King’s son slew the Dragon, and how the wicked coachman had made her swear twelve times to that which was false. When the Tsar heard this, he immediately gave the Princess his daughter to the King’s son, and they asked him what death the wicked coachman should die. And he answered, “Let him be tied to the tails of four wild horses, and drive them into the endless steppe that they may tear him to pieces there, and the ravens and crows may come and pick his bones.”

19

THE UNGRATEFUL CHILDREN AND THE OLD FATHER WHO WENT TO SCHOOL AGAIN

Once upon a time there was an old man. He lived to a great age, and God gave him children whom he brought up to man's estate, and he divided all his goods amongst them. "I will pass my remaining days among my children," thought he.

So the old man went to live with his eldest son, and at first the eldest son treated him properly, and did reverence to his old father. "'Tis but meet and right that we should give our father to eat and drink, and see that he has wherewithal to clothe him, and take care to patch up his things from time to time, and let him have clean new shirts on festivals," said the eldest son. So they did so, and at festivals also the old father had his own glass beside him. Thus the eldest son was a good son to his old father. But when the eldest son had been keeping his father for some time he began to regret his hospitality, and was rough to his father, and sometimes even shouted at him. The old man no longer had his own set place in the house as heretofore, and there was none to cut up his food for him. So the eldest son repented him that he had said he would keep his father, and he began to grudge him every morsel of bread that he put in his mouth. The old man had nothing for it but to go to his second son. It might be better for him there or worse, but stay with his eldest son any longer he could not. So the father went to his second son. But here the old man soon discovered that he had only exchanged wheat for straw. Whenever he began to eat, his second son and his daughter-in-law looked sour and murmured something between their teeth. The woman scolded the old man. “We had as much as we could do before to make both ends meet,” cried she, “and now we have old men to keep into the bargain.” The old man soon had enough of it there also, and went on to his next son. So one after another all four sons took their father to live with them, and he was glad to leave them all. Each of the four sons, one after the other, cast the burden of supporting him on one of the other brothers. “It is for him to keep thee, daddy!” said they; and then the other would say, “Nay, dad, but it is as much as we can do to keep ourselves.” Thus between his four sons he knew not what to do. There was quite a battle among them as to which of them should *not* keep their old father. One had one good excuse and another had another, and so none of them would keep him. This one had a lot of little children, and that one had a scold for a wife, and this house was too small, and that house was too poor. “Go where thou wilt, old man,” said they, “only don’t come to us.” And the old man, grey, grey, grey as a dove was he, wept before his sons, and knew not whither to turn. What could he do? Entreaty was in vain. Not one of the sons would take the old man in, and yet he had to be put somewhere. Then the old man strove with them no more, but let them do with him even as they would.

So all four sons met and took counsel. Time after time they laid their heads together, and at last they agreed among themselves that the best thing the old man could do was to go to school. “There will be a bench for him to sit upon there,” said they; “and he can take something to eat in his knapsack.” Then they told the old man about it; but the old man did not want to go to school. He begged his children not to send him there, and wept before them. “Now that I cannot see the white world,” said he, “how can I see a black book? Moreover, from my youth upward I have never learnt my letters; how shall I begin to do so now? A clerk cannot be fashioned out of an old man on the point of death!” But there was no use talking, his children said he *must* go to school, and the voices of his children prevailed against his feeble old voice. So to school he had to go. Now there was no church in that village, so he had to go to the village beyond it to school. A forest lay along the road, and in this forest the old man met a nobleman driving along. When the old man came near to the nobleman's carriage, he stepped out of the road to let it pass, took off his hat respectfully, and then would have gone on farther. But he heard some one calling, and, looking back, saw the nobleman beckoning to him; he wanted to ask him something. The nobleman then got out of his carriage and asked the old man whither he was going. The old man took off his hat to the nobleman and told him all his misery, and the tears ran down the old man's cheeks. "Woe is me, gracious sir! If the Lord had left me without kith and kin, I should not complain; but strange indeed is the woe that has befallen me! I have four sons, thank God, and all four have houses of their own, and yet they send their poor old father to school to learn! Was ever the like of it known before?" So the old man told the nobleman his whole story, and the nobleman was full of compassion for the old man. "Well, old man," said he, "'tis no use for thee to go to school, that's plain. Return home. I'll tell thee what to do so that thy children shall never send thee to school again. Fear not, old man, weep no more, and let not thy soul be troubled! God shall bless thee, and all will be well. I know well what ought to be done here." So the nobleman comforted the old man, and the old man began to be merry. Then the nobleman took out his purse, it was a real nobleman's purse, with a little sack in the middle of it to hold small change. Lord! what a lovely thing it was! The more he looked at it, the more the old man marvelled at it. The nobleman took this purse and began filling it full with something. When he had well filled it, he gave it to the old man. "Take this and go home to thy children," said he, "and when thou hast got home, call together all thy four sons and say to them, 'My dear children, long long ago, when I was younger than I am now, and knocked about in the world a bit, I made a little money. “I won’t spend it,” I said to myself, “for one never knows what may happen.” So I went into a forest, my children, and dug a hole beneath an oak, and there I hid my little store of money. I did not bother much about the money afterward, because I had such good children; but when you sent me to school I came to this self-same oak, and I said to myself, “I wonder if these few silver pieces have been waiting for their master all this time! Let us dig and see.” So I dug and found them, and have brought them home to you, my children. I shall keep them till I die; but after my death consult together, and whosoever shall be found to have cherished me most and taken care of me and not grudged me a clean shirt now and then, or a crust of bread when I’m hungry, to him shall be given the greater part of my money. So now, my dear children, receive me back again, and my thanks shall be yours. You can manage it amongst you, and surely ‘tis not right that I should seek a home among strangers! Which of you will be kind to your old father — for money?’”

So the old man returned to his children with the purse in a casket, and when he came to the village with the casket under his arm, one could see at once that he had been in a *good forest*. When one comes home with a heavy casket under one’s arm, depend upon it there’s something in it! So, no sooner did the old man appear than his eldest daughter-in-law came running out to meet him, and bade him welcome in God’s name. “Things don’t seem to get on at all without thee, dad!” cried she, “and the house is quite dreary. Come in and rest, dad,” she went on; “thou hast gone a long way and must be weary.” Then all the brothers came together, and the old man told them what God had done for him. All their faces brightened as they looked at the casket, and they thought to themselves, “If we keep him we shall have the money.” Then the four brothers could not make too much of their dear old father. They took care of him and the old man was happy, but he took heed to the counsel of the nobleman, and never let the casket out of his hand. “After my death you shall have everything, but I won’t give it you now, for who knows what may happen? I have seen already how you treated your old father when he had nothing. It shall all be yours, I say, only wait; and when I die, take it and divide it as I have said.” So the brothers tended their father, and the old man lived in clover, and was somebody. He had his own way and did nothing.

So the old man was no longer ill-treated by his children, but lived among them like an emperor in his own empire, but no sooner did he die than his children made what haste they could to lay hands upon the casket. All the people were called together and bore witness that they had treated their father well since he came back to them, so it was adjudged that they should divide the treasure amongst them. But first they took the old man’s body to church and the casket along with it. They buried him as God commands. They made a rich banquet of funeral meats that all might know how much they mourned the old man; it was a splendid funeral. When the priest got up from the table, the people all began to thank their hosts, and the eldest son begged the priest to say the *sorokoust* in the church for the repose of the dead man’s soul. “Such a dear old fellow as he was!” said he; “was there ever any one like him? Take this money for the *sorokoust*, reverend father!” so horribly grieved was that eldest son. So the eldest son gave the priest money, and the second son gave him the like. Nay, each one gave him money for an extra half *sorokoust*, all four gave him requiem money. “We’ll have prayers in church for our father though we sell our last sheep to pay for them,” cried they. Then, when all was over, they hastened as fast as they could to the money. The coffer was brought forth. They shook it. There was a fine rattling inside it. Every one of them felt and handled the coffer. That was something like a treasure! Then they unsealed it and opened it and scattered the contents — and it was full of nothing but glass! They wouldn’t believe their eyes. They rummaged among the glass, but there was no money. It was horrible! Surely it could not be that their father had dug up a coffer from beneath an oak of the forest and it was full of nothing but glass! “Why!” cried the brothers, “our father has left us nothing but glass!” But for the crowds of people there, the brothers would have fallen upon and beaten each other in their wrath. So the children of the old man saw that their father had made fools of them. Then all the people mocked them: “You see what you have gained by sending your father to school! You see he learned something at school after all! He was a long time before he *began* learning, but better late than never. It appears to us ‘twas a right good school you sent him to. No doubt they whipped him into learning so much. Never mind, you can keep the money and the casket!” Then the brothers were full of lamentation and rage. But what could they do? Their father was already dead and buried.

20

IVAN THE FOOL AND ST. PETER’S FIFE

There was once upon a time a man who had three sons, and two were clever, but the third, called Ivan, was a fool. Their father divided all his goods among them and died, and the three brothers went out into the world to seek their fortunes. Now the two wise brothers left all their goods at home, but Ivan the fool, who had only inherited a large millstone, took it along with him. They went on and on and on till it began to grow dark, when they came to a large forest. Then the wise brothers said, “Let us climb up to the top of this oak and pass the night there, and then robbers will not fall upon us.” — “But what will this silly donkey do with his millstone?” asked one of them. — “You look to yourselves,” said Ivan, “for I mean to pass the night in this tree also.” Then the wise brothers climbed to the very tip-top of the tree and there sat down, and then Ivan dragged himself up too, and the millstone after him. He tried to get up as high as his brothers, but the thin boughs broke beneath him, so he had to be content with staying in the lower part of the tree on the thicker boughs; so there he sat, hugging the millstone in his arms. Presently some robbers came along that way, red-handed from their work, and they too prepared to pass the night under the tree. So they cut them down firewood, and made them a roaring fire beneath a huge cauldron, and in this cauldron they began to boil their supper. They boiled and boiled till their mess of pottage was ready, and then they all sat down round the cauldron and took out their large ladles, and were just about to fall to — in fact they were blowing their food because it was so boiling hot — when Ivan let his big millstone plump down into the middle of the cauldron, so that the pottage flew right into their eyes. The robbers were so terrified that they all sprang to their feet straightway and scampered off through the forest, forgetting all the booty of which they had robbed the merchantmen. Then Ivan came down from the oak and cried to his brothers, “You come down here and divide the spoil!” So the wise brothers came down, put all the merchandise on the backs of the robbers’ horses, and went home with it; but the only thing that Ivan was able to secure for himself was a bag of incense. This he immediately took to the nearest churchyard, placed it on the top of a tomb, and began to pound away at it with his millstone. Suddenly St Peter appeared to him and said, “What art thou doing, good man?” — “I am pounding up this incense to make bread of it.” — “Nay, good man, I will advise thee better: give me the incense and take from me whatever thou wilt.” — “Very well, St Peter,” said the fool; “thou must give me a little fife, but a fife of such a sort that whenever I play upon it, every one will be obliged to dance.” — “But dost thou know how to play upon a fife?” — “No, but I can soon learn.” Then St Peter drew forth a little fife from his bosom and gave it to him, and took away the incense, and who can say where he went with it? But Ivan stood up and gazed at the sky and said, “Look now! if St Peter hath not already burnt my incense and made of it that large white cloud that is sailing above my head!” Then he took up his fife and began to play, and the moment he began to play, everything around him began to dance; the wolves, and the hares, and the foxes, and the bears, nay, the very birds lit down upon the ground and began to dance, and Ivan went on laughing and playing all the time. Even the savage, surly bears danced and danced till their legs tottered beneath them. Then they clutched tight hold of the trees to stop themselves from dancing; but it was of no use, dance they must. At last Ivan himself was tired, and lay down to rest, and when he had rested a little, he got up again and went on into the town. There all the people were in the bazaars, buying and selling. Some were buying pancakes, others baskets of bright-coloured eggs, others again pitchers of *kvas*. Ivan began playing on his fife, and forthwith they all fell a-dancing. One man who had a whole basket of eggs on his head danced them into bits, and danced and danced till he looked like the yolk of an egg himself. Those who were asleep got up and gave themselves up to dancing straightway; there were some who danced without trousers, and some who danced without smocks or shirts, and there were some who danced with nothing on at all, for dance they must when Ivan began a-playing. The whole town was turned upside down: the dogs, the swine, the cocks and hens, everything that had life came out and danced. At last Ivan was tired, so he left off playing and went into the town to seek service. The parson there took a fancy to him, and said to him, "Good man! wilt enter my service?" — "That will I, gladly," said Ivan. — "How much wages dost thou want by the year then?" — "It won't come dear; five *karbovantsya* are all I ask." — "Good, I agree," said the parson. So he engaged Ivan as his servant, and the next day he sent him out into the fields to tend his cattle. Ivan drove the cattle into the pastures, but he himself perched on the top of a haystack while the cattle grazed. He sat there, and sat and sat till he grew quite dull, and then he said to himself, "I'll play a bit on my fife, I haven't played for a long time." So he began to play, and immediately all the cattle fell a-dancing; and not only the cattle, but all the foxes, and the hares, and the wolves, and everything in the hedges and ditches fell a-dancing too. They danced and danced till the poor cattle were clean worn out and at the last gasp. In the evening Ivan drove them home, but they were so famished that they tugged at the dirty straw roofs of the huts they passed, and so got a chance mouthful or two. But Ivan went in and had supper and a comfortable night's rest afterward. The next day he again drove the cattle into the pastures. They began grazing till he took out his fife again, when they all fell a-dancing like mad. He played on and on till evening, when he drove the cattle home again, and they were all as hungry as could be, and wearied to death from dancing.

Now the parson was not a little astonished when he saw his cattle. “Where on earth has he been feeding them?” thought he; “they are quite tired out and almost famished! I’ll take care to go myself to-morrow, and see exactly whither he takes them, and what he does with them.” On the third day the neat-herd again drove the cattle into the pastures, but this time the parson followed after them, and went and hid himself behind the hedge near to which Ivan was watching the cattle graze. There he sat then, and watched to see what the man would do. Presently Ivan mounted on to the haystack and began to play. And immediately all the cattle fell a-dancing, and everything in the hedge, and the parson behind the hedge danced too. Now the hedge was a quickset hedge, and as the parson began capering about in it, he tore to shreds his cassock and his breeches, and his under-coat, and his shirt, and scratched his skin and wrenched out his beard as if he had been very badly shaved, and still the poor parson had to go on dancing in the midst of the prickly hedge till there were great weals and wounds all over his body, and the red blood began to flow. Then the parson saw he was in evil case, and shrieked to his herdsman to leave off playing; but the herdsman was so wrapped up in his music that he did not hear him; but at last he looked in the direction of the hedge, and when he saw the poor parson skipping about like a lunatic, he stopped. The parson darted away as fast as his legs could carry him toward the village, and oh! what a sight he looked as he dashed through the streets! The people didn’t know him, and — scandalized that anybody should run about in rags and tatters so that his whole body could be seen — began to hoot him. Then the poor man turned aside from the public road, crawled off through the woods, and dashed off through the tall reeds of the gardens, with the dogs after him. For wherever he went they took him for a robber, and hounded on the dogs. At last the parson got home, all rags and tatters, so that when his wife saw him she did not know him, but called to the labourers, “Help, help! here’s a robber, turn him out!” They came rushing up with sticks and cudgels, but he began talking to them, and at last they recognized him, led him home, and he told his wife all about Ivan. The parson’s wife was so amazed she could scarce believe it. In the evening Ivan drove home the oxen, put them into their stalls, gave them straw to eat, and then came into the house himself to have supper. He came into the house, and the parson said to him, “Come now, Ivan, when thou hast rested a bit, play my wife a little song!” But as for the parson, he took good care to tie himself first of all to the pillar which held up the roof of the house. Ivan sat down on the ground near to the threshold and began to play. The parson’s wife sat down on the bench to listen to him while he played; but immediately she leaped up from the bench and began to dance, and she danced with such hearty good-will that the place became too small for her. Then the Devil seemed to take possession of the cat too, for pussy leaped from under the stove and began to spring and bound about also. The parson held on and held on to the pillar with all his might, but it was of no use. He had no power to resist; he let go with his hands, and tugged and tugged till the rope that held him grew slacker and slacker, and then he went dancing round and round the pillar at a furious rate, with the rope chafing his hands and feet all the time. At last he could endure it no longer, and bawled to Ivan to stop. “The deuce is in thee!” cried he. Then Ivan stopped playing, put his fife into his breast-pocket, and went and lay down to sleep. But the parson said to his wife, “We must turn away this Ivan to-morrow, for he will be the death of ourselves and our cattle!” Ivan, however, overheard what the parson said to his wife, and getting up early in the morning, he went straight to the parson, and said to him, “Give me one hundred *karbovantsya*, and I’ll be off; but if you won’t give them to me, I’ll play and play till you and your wife have danced yourselves to death, and then I’ll take your place and live at mine ease.” The parson scratched himself behind the ears and hesitated; but at last he thought he had better give the money and be quit of him. So he took the hundred *karbovantsya* out of his satchel and gave them to Ivan. Then Ivan played them a parting song, till the parson and his wife fell down to the ground, dead-beat, with their tongues lolling out of their mouths; and then he put his fife into his breast-pocket, and wandered forth into the wide world.

21

THE MAGIC EGG

There was once upon a time a lark who was the Tsar among the birds, and he took unto himself as his Tsaritsa a little shrew-mouse. They had a field all to themselves, which they sowed with wheat, and when the wheat grew up they divided it between them, when they found that there was one grain over! The mouse said, “Let me have it!” But the lark said, “No, let me have it!” — “What’s to be done?” thought they. They would have liked to take counsel of some one, but they had no parents or kinsmen, nobody at all to whom they could go and ask advice in the matter. At last the mouse said, “At any rate, let me have the first nibble!” The lark Tsar agreed to this; but the little mouse fastened her teeth in it and ran off into her hole with it, and there ate it all up. At this the Tsar lark was wrath, and collected all the birds of the air to make war upon the mouse Tsaritsa; but the Tsaritsa called together all the beasts to defend her, and so the war began. Whenever the beasts came rushing out of the wood to tear the birds to pieces, the birds flew up into the trees; but the birds kept in the air, and hacked and pecked the beasts wherever they could. Thus they fought the whole day, and in the evening they lay down to rest. Now when the Tsaritsa looked around upon her forces, she saw that the ant was taking no part in the war. She immediately went and commanded the ant to be there by evening, and when the ant came, the Tsaritsa ordered her to climb up the trees with her kinsmen and bite off the feathers round the birds’ wings.

Next day, when there was light enough to see by, the mouse Tsaritsa cried, “Up, up, my warriors!” Thereupon the birds also rose up, and immediately fell to the ground, where the beasts tore them to bits. So the Tsaritsa overcame the Tsar. But there was one eagle who saw there was something wrong, so he did not try to fly, but remained sitting on the tree. And lo! there came an archer along that way, and seeing the eagle on the tree, he took aim at it; but the eagle besought him and said, “Do not kill me, and I’ll be of great service to thee!” The archer aimed a second time, but the eagle besought him still more and said, “Take me down rather and keep me, and thou shalt see that it will be to thy advantage.” The archer, however, took aim a third time, but the eagle began to beg of him most piteously, “Nay, kill me not, but take me home with thee, and thou shalt see what great advantage it will be to thee!” The archer believed the bird. He climbed up the tree, took the eagle down, and carried it home. Then the eagle said to him, “Put me in a hut, and feed me with flesh till my wings have grown again.”

Now this archer had two cows and a steer, and he at once killed and cut up one of the cows for the eagle. The eagle fed upon this cow for a full year, and then he said to the archer, “Let me go, that I may fly. I see that my wings have already grown again!” Then the archer let him loose from the hut. The eagle flew round and round, he flew about for half a day, and then he returned to the archer and said, “I feel I have but little strength in me, slay me another cow!” And the archer obeyed him, and slew the second cow, and the eagle lived upon that for yet another year. Again the eagle flew round and round in the air. He flew round and about the whole day till evening, when he returned to the archer and said, “I am stronger than I was, but I have still but little strength in me, slay me the steer also!” Then the man thought to himself, “What shall I do? Shall I slay it, or shall I not slay it?” At last he said, “Well! I’ve sacrificed more than this before, so let this go too!” and he took the steer and slaughtered it for the eagle. Then the eagle lived upon this for another whole year longer, and after that he took to flight, and flew high up right to the very clouds. Then he flew down again to the man and said to him, “I thank thee, brother, for that thou hast been the saving of me! Come now and sit upon me!” — “Nay, but,” said the man, “what if some evil befall me?” — “Sit on me, I say!” cried the eagle. So the archer sat down upon the bird.

Then the eagle bore him nearly as high as the big clouds, and then let him fall. Down plumped the man; but the eagle did not let him fall to the earth, but swiftly flew beneath him and upheld him, and said to him, “How dost thou feel now?” — “I feel,” said the man, “as if I had no life in me.” — Then the eagle replied, “That was just how I felt when thou didst aim at me the first time.” Then he said to him, “Sit on my back again!” The man did not want to sit on him, but what could he do? Sit he must. Then the eagle flew with him quite as high as the big clouds, and shook him off, and down he fell headlong till he was about two fathoms from the ground, when the bird again flew beneath him and held him up. Again the eagle asked him, “How dost thou feel?” And the man replied, “I feel just as if all my bones were already broken to bits!” — “That is just how I felt when thou didst take aim at me the second time,” replied the eagle. “But now sit on my back once more.” The man did so, and the eagle flew with him as high as the small fleecy clouds, and then he shook him off, and down he fell headlong; but when he was but a hand’s-breadth from the earth, the eagle again flew beneath him and held him up, and said to him, “How dost thou feel now?” And he replied, “I feel as if I no longer belonged to this world!” — “That is just how I felt when thou didst aim at me the third time,” replied the eagle. “But now,” continued the bird, “thou art guilty no more. We are quits. I owe thee naught, and thou owest naught to me; so sit on my back again, and I’ll take thee to my master.”

They flew on and on, they flew till they came to the eagle’s uncle. And the eagle said to the archer, “Go to my house, and when they ask thee, ‘Hast thou not seen our poor child?’ reply, ‘Give me the magic egg, and I’ll bring him before your eyes!’” So he went to the house, and there they said to him, “Hast thou heard of our poor child with thine ears, or seen him with thine eyes, and hast thou come hither willingly or unwillingly?” — And he answered, “I have come hither willingly!” — Then they asked, “Hast thou smelt out anything of our poor youngster? for it is three years now since he went to the wars, and there’s neither sight nor sound of him more!” — And he answered, “Give me the magic egg, and I’ll bring him straightway before your eyes!” — Then they replied, “‘Twere better we never saw him than that we should give thee the magic egg!” — Then he went back to the eagle and said to him, “They said, ‘‘Twere better we never saw him than that we should give thee the magic egg.’” — Then the eagle answered, “Let us fly on farther!”

They flew on and on till they came to the eagle’s brother, and the archer said just the same to him as he had said to the eagle’s uncle, and still he didn’t get the egg. Then they flew to the eagle’s father, and the eagle said to him, “Go up to the hut, and if they ask for me, say that thou hast seen me and will bring me before their eyes.” — So he went up to the hut, and they said to him, “O Tsarevich, we hear thee with our ears and see thee with our eyes, but hast thou come hither of thine own free will or by the will of another?” — And the archer answered, “I have come hither of my own free will!” — Then they asked him, “Hast thou seen our son? Lo, these four years we have not had news of him. He went off to the wars, and perchance he has been slain there.” — And he answered them, “I have seen him, and if you will give me the magic egg, I will bring him before your eyes.” — And the eagle’s father said to him, “What good will such a thing do thee? We had better give thee the lucky penny!” — But he answered, “I don’t want the lucky penny, give me the magic egg!” — “Come hither then,” said he, "and thou shalt have it." So he went into the hut. Then the eagle's father rejoiced and gave him the egg, and said to him, "Take heed thou dost not break it anywhere on the road, and when thou gettest home, hedge it round and build a strong fence about it, and it will do thee good."

So he went homeward. He went on and on till a great thirst came upon him. So he stopped at the first spring he came to, and as he stooped to drink he stumbled and the magic egg was broken. Then he perceived that an ox had come out of the egg and was rolling away. He gave chase to the ox, but whenever he was getting close to one side of it, the other side of it got farther away from him. Then the poor fellow cried, "I shall do nothing with it myself, I see." — At that moment an old she-dragon came up to him and said, "What wilt thou give me, O man, if I chase this ox back again into the egg for thee?" — And the archer replied, "What *can* I give?" — The dragon said to him, "Give me what thou hast at home without thy will and wit!" — "Done!" said the archer. Then the dragon chased the ox nicely into the egg again, patched it up prettily and gave it into the man's hand. Then the archer went home, and when he got home he found a son had been born to him there, and his son said to him, "Why didst thou give me to the old she-dragon, dad? But never mind, I'll manage to live in spite of her." Then the father was very grieved for a time, but what could he do? Now the name of this son was Ivan.

So Ivan lost no time in going to the dragon, and the dragon said to him, "Go to my house and do me three tasks, and if thou dost them not, I'll devour thee." Now, round the dragon's house was a large meadow as far as the eye could reach. And the dragon said to him, "Thou must in a single night weed out this field and sow wheat in it, and reap the wheat and store it, all in this very night; and thou must bake me a roll out of this self-same wheat, and the roll must be lying ready for me on my table in the morning."

Then Ivan went and leaned over the fence, and his heart within him was sore troubled. Now near to him there was a post, and on this post was the dragon’s starveling daughter. So when he came thither and fell a-weeping, she asked him, “Wherefore dost thou weep?” — And he said, “How can I help weeping? The dragon has bidden me do something I can never, never do; and what is more, she has bidden me do it in a single night.” — “What is it, pray?” asked the dragon’s daughter. Then he told her. “Not every bush bears a berry!” cried she. “Promise to take me to wife, and I’ll do all she has bidden thee do.” He promised, and then she said to him again, “Now go and lie down, but see that thou art up early in the morning to bring her her roll.” Then she went to the field, and before one could whistle she had cleaned it of weeds and harrowed it and sown it with wheat, and by dawn she had reaped the wheat and cooked the roll and brought it to him, and said, “Now, take it to her hut and put it on her table.”

Then the old she-dragon awoke and came to the door, and was amazed at the sight of the field, which was now all stubble, for the corn had been cut. Then she said to Ivan, “Yes, thou hast done the work well. But now, see that thou doest my second task.” Then she gave him her second command. “Dig up that mountain yonder and let the Dnieper flow over the site of it, and there build a store-house, and in the store-house stack the wheat that thou hast reaped, and sell this wheat to the merchant barques that sail by, and everything must be done by the time I get up early next morning!” Then he again went to the fence and wept, and the maiden said to him, “Why dost thou weep?” and he told her all that the she-dragon had bidden him do. “There are lots of bushes, but where are the berries? Go and lie down, and I’ll do it all for thee.” Then she whistled, and the mountain was levelled and the Dnieper flowed over the site of it, and round about the Dnieper store-houses rose up, and then she came and woke him that he might go and sell the wheat to the merchant barques that sailed by that way, and when the she-dragon rose up early in the morning she was amazed to see that everything had been done which she had commanded him.

Then she gave him her third command. “This night thou must catch the golden hare, and bring it to me by the morning light.” Again he went to the fence and fell a-weeping. And the girl asked him, “Why art thou weeping?” — He said to her, “She has ordered me to catch her the golden hare.” — “Oh, oh!” cried the she-dragon’s daughter, “the berries are ripening now; only her father knows how to catch such a hare as that. Nevertheless, I’ll go to a rocky place I know of, and there perchance we shall be able to catch it.” So they went to this rocky place together, and she said to him, “Stand over that hole. I’ll go in and chase him out of the hole, and do thou catch him as he comes out; but mind, whatever comes out of the hole, seize it, for it will be the golden hare.”

So she went and began beating up, and all at once out came a snake and hissed, and he let it go. Then she came out of the hole and said to him, “What! has nothing come out?” — “Well,” said he, “only a snake, and I was afraid it would bite me, so I let it go.” — “What hast thou done?” said she; “that was the very hare itself. Look now!” said she, “I’ll go in again, and if any one comes out and tells you that the golden hare is not here, don’t believe it, but hold him fast.” So she crept into the hole again and began to beat for game, and out came an old woman, who said to the youth, “What art thou poking about there for?” — And he said to her, “For the golden hare.” — She said to him, “It is not here, for this is a snake’s hole,” and when she had said this she went away. Presently the girl also came out and said to him, “What! hast thou not got the hare? Did nothing come out then?” — “No,” said he, “nothing but an old woman who asked me what I was seeking, and I told her the golden hare, and she said, ‘It is not here,’ so I let her go.” — Then the girl replied, “Why didst thou not lay hold of her? for she was the very golden hare itself, and now thou never wilt catch it unless I turn myself into a hare and thou take and lay me on the table, and give me into my mother’s, the she-dragon’s hands, and go away, for if she find out all about it she will tear the pair of us to pieces.”

So she changed herself into a hare, and he took and laid her on the table, and said to the she-dragon, “There’s thy hare for thee, and now let me go away!” She said to him, “Very well — be off!” Then he set off running, and he ran and ran as hard as he could. Soon after, the old she-dragon discovered that it was not the golden hare, but her own daughter, so she set about chasing after them to destroy them both, for the daughter had made haste in the meantime to join Ivan. But as the she-dragon couldn’t run herself, she sent her husband, and he began chasing them, and they knew he was coming, for they felt the earth trembling beneath his tread. Then the she-dragon’s daughter said to Ivan, “I hear him running after us. I’ll turn myself into standing wheat and thee into an old man guarding me, and if he ask thee, ‘Hast thou seen a lad and a lass pass by this way?’ say to him, ‘Yes, they passed by this way while I was sowing this wheat!’”

A little while afterward the she-dragon’s husband came flying up. “Have a lad and a lass passed by this way?” said he. “Yes,” replied the old man, “they have.” — “Was it long ago?” asked the she-dragon’s husband. — “It was while this wheat was being sown,” replied the old man. — “Oh!” thought the dragon, “this wheat is ready for the sickle, they couldn’t have been this way yesterday,” so he turned back. Then the she-dragon’s daughter turned herself back into a maiden and the old man into a youth, and off they set again. But the dragon returned home, and the she-dragon asked him, “What! hast thou not caught them or met them on the road?” — “Met them, no!” said he. “I did, indeed, pass on the road some standing wheat and an old man watching it, and I asked the old man if he had seen a lad and a lass pass by that way, and he said, ‘Yes, while this wheat was being sown,’ but the wheat was quite ripe for the sickle, so I knew it was a long while ago and turned back.” — “Why didst thou not tear that old man and the wheat to pieces?” cried the she-dragon; “it was they! Be off after them again, and mind, this time tear them to pieces without fail.”

So the dragon set off after them again, and they heard him coming from afar, for the earth trembled beneath him, so the damsel said to Ivan, “He’s coming again, I hear him; now I’ll change myself into a monastery, so old that it will be almost falling to pieces, and I’ll change thee into an old black monk at the gate, and when he comes up and asks, ‘Hast thou seen a lad and a lass pass this way?’ say to him, ‘Yes, they passed by this way when this monastery was being built.’” Soon afterward the dragon came flying past, and asked the monk, “Hast thou seen a lad and a lass pass by this way?” — “Yes,” he replied, “I saw them what time the holy fathers began to build this monastery.” The dragon thought to himself, “That was not yesterday! This monastery has stood a hundred years if it has stood a day, and won’t stand much longer either,” and with that he turned him back. When he got home, he said to the she-dragon, his wife, “I met a black monk who serves in a monastery, and I asked him about them, and he told me that a lad and a lass had run past that way when the monastery was being built, but that was not yesterday, for the monastery is a hundred years old at the very least.” — “Why didst thou not tear the black monk to pieces and pull down the monastery? for ‘twas they. But I see I must go after them myself, thou art no good at all.”

So off she set and ran and ran, and they knew she was coming, for the earth quaked and yawned beneath her. Then the damsel said to Ivan, “I fear me ‘tis all over, for she is coming herself! Look now! I’ll change thee into a stream and myself into a fish — a perch.” Immediately after the she-dragon came up and said to the perch, “Oh, oh! so thou wouldst run away from me, eh!” Then she turned herself into a pike and began chasing the perch, but every time she drew near to it, the perch turned its prickly fins toward her, so that she could not catch hold of it. So she kept on chasing it and chasing it, but finding she could not catch it, she tried to drink up the stream, till she drank so much of it that she burst.

Then the maiden who had become a fish said to the youth who had become a river, “Now that we are alive and not dead, go back to thy lord-father and thy father’s house and see them, and kiss them all except the daughter of thy uncle, for if thou kiss that damsel thou wilt forget me, and I shall go to the land of Nowhere.” So he went home and greeted them all, and as he did so he thought to himself, “Why should I not greet my uncle’s daughter like the rest of them? Why, they’ll think me a mere pagan if I don’t!” So he kissed her, and the moment he did so he forgot all about the girl who had saved him.

So he remained there half a year, and then bethought him of taking to himself a wife. So they betrothed him to a very pretty girl, and he accepted her and forgot all about the other girl who had saved him from the dragon, though she herself was the she-dragon’s daughter. Now the evening before the wedding they heard a young damsel crying *Shishki* in the streets. They called to the young damsel to go away, or say who she was, for nobody knew her. But the damsel answered never a word, but began to knead more cakes, and made a cock-dove and a hen-dove out of the dough and put them down on the ground, and they became alive. And the hen-dove said to the cock-dove, “Hast thou forgotten how I cleared the field for thee, and sowed it with wheat, and thou mad’st a roll from the corn which thou gavest to the she-dragon?” — But the cock-dove answered, “Forgotten! forgotten!” — Then she said to him again, “And hast thou forgotten how I dug away the mountain for thee, and let the Dnieper flow by it that the merchant barques might come to thy store-houses, and that thou mightst sell thy wheat to the merchant barques?” But the cock-dove replied, “Forgotten! forgotten!” — Then the hen-dove said to him again, “And hast thou forgotten how we two went together in search of the golden hare? Hast thou forgotten me then altogether?” — And the cock-dove answered again, “Forgotten! forgotten!” Then the good youth Ivan bethought him who this damsel was that had made the doves, and he took her to his arms and made her his wife, and they lived happily ever afterward.

22

THE STORY OF THE FORTY-FIRST BROTHER

There was once upon a time an old man who had forty-one sons. Now when this old man was at the point of death, he divided all he had among his sons, and gave to each of the forty a horse; but when he came to the forty-first he found he had no more horses left, so the forty-first brother had to be content with a foal. When their father was dead, the brothers said to each other, “Let us go to Friday and get married!” — But the eldest brother said, “No, Friday has only forty daughters, so one of us would be left without a bride.” — Then the second brother said, “Let us go then to Wednesday — Wednesday has forty-one daughters, and so the whole lot of us can pair off with the whole lot of them.” So they went and chose their brides. The eldest brother took the eldest sister, and the youngest the youngest, till they were all suited. And the youngest brother of all said, “I’ll take that little damsel who is sitting on the stove in the corner and has the nice kerchief in her hand.” Then they all drank a bumper together to seal the bargain, and after that the forty-one bridegrooms and the forty-one brides laid them down to sleep side by side. But the youngest brother of all said to himself, “I will bring my foal into the room.” So he brought in the foal, and then went to his bedchamber and laid him down to sleep also. Now his bride lay down with her kerchief in her hand, and he took a great fancy to it, and he begged and prayed her for it again and again, until at last she gave it to him. Now, when Wednesday thought that all the people were asleep, he went out into the courtyard to sharpen his sabre. Then the foal said, “Oh, my dear little master, come here, come here!” He came, and the foal said to him, “Take off the night-dresses of the forty sleeping bridegrooms and put them on the forty sleeping brides, and put the night-dresses of the brides on the bridegrooms, for a great woe is nigh!” And he did so. When Wednesday had sharpened his sabre he came into the room and began feeling for the stiff collars of the bridegrooms’ night-dresses, and straightway cut off the forty heads above the collars. Then he carried off the heads of his forty daughters in a bunch (for the brides now had on the night-dresses of their bridegrooms), and went and lay down to sleep. Then the foal said, “My dear little father! awake the bridegrooms, and we’ll set off.” So he awoke the bridegrooms and sent them on before, while he followed after on his own little nag. They trotted on and on, and at last the foal said to him, “Look behind, and see whether Wednesday is not pursuing.” He looked round: “Yes, little brother,” said he, “Wednesday *is* pursuing!” — “Shake thy kerchief then!” said the foal. He shook his kerchief, and immediately a vast sea was between him and the pursuer. Then they went on and on till the foal said to him again, “Look behind, and see if Wednesday is still pursuing!” — He looked round. “Yes, little brother, he *is* pursuing!” — “Wave thy handkerchief on the left side!” said the foal. He waved it on the left side, and immediately between them and the pursuer stood a forest so thick that not even a little mouse could have squeezed through it. Then they went on still farther, till the foal said again, “Look behind, and see whether Wednesday is still pursuing!” — He looked behind, and there, sure enough, was Wednesday running after them, and he was not very far off either. — “Wave thy kerchief!” said the foal. He waved his kerchief, and immediately a steep mountain — oh, so steep! — lay betwixt them. They went on and on, until the foal said again, “Look behind, is Wednesday still pursuing?” — So he looked behind him and said, “No, now he is not there.” Then they went on and on again, and soon they were not very far from home. Then the youngest brother said, “You go home now, but I am going to seek a bride!” So he went on and on till he came to a place where lay a feather of the bird Zhar. “Look!” cried he, “what I’ve found!” — But the foal said to him, “Pick not up that feather, for it will bring thee evil as well as good!” — But his master said, “Why, I should be a fool not to pick up a feather like that!” So he turned back and picked up the feather. Then he went on farther and farther, until he came to a clay hut. He went into this clay hut, and there sat an old woman. “Give me a night’s lodging, granny!” said he. — “I have neither bed nor light to offer thee,” said she. Nevertheless he entered the hut and put the feather on the window-corner, and it lit up the whole hut. So he went to sleep. But the old woman ran off to the Tsar, and said to him, “A certain man has come to me and laid a certain feather on the window-sill, and it shines like fire!” Then the Tsar guessed that it was a feather of the bird Zhar, and said to his soldiers, “Go and fetch that man hither!” And the Tsar said to him, “Wilt thou enter my service?” — “Yes,” he replied, “but you must give me all your keys.” So the Tsar gave him all the keys and a hut of his own to live in besides. But one day the Tsar said to his servants, “Boil me now a vat of milk!” So they boiled it. Then he took off his gold ring, and said to the man, “Thou didst get the feather of the bird Zhar, get me also this golden ring of mine out of the vat of boiling milk!” — “Bring hither, then, my faithful horse,” said he, “that he may see his master plunge into the vat of boiling milk and die!” So they brought his horse, and, taking off his clothes, he plunged into the vat, but as he did so the horse snorted so violently that all the boiling milk leaped up in the air and the man seized the ring and gave it back to the Tsar. Now when the Tsar saw that the man had come out of the vat younger and handsomer than ever, he said, “I’ll try and fish up the ring in like manner.” So he flung his ring into the vat of boiling milk and plunged after it to get it. The people waited and waited and wondered and wondered that he was so long about it, and at last they drained off the milk and found the Tsar at the bottom of the vat boiled quite red. Then the man said, “Now, Tsaritsa, thou art mine and I am thine.” And they lived together happily ever afterward.

23

THE STORY OF THE UNLUCKY DAYS

At the end of a village on the verge of the steppe dwelt two brothers, one rich and the other poor. One day the poor brother came to the rich brother’s house and sat down at his table; but the rich brother drove him away and said, “How durst thou sit at my table? Be off! Thy proper place is in the fields to scare away the crows!” So the poor brother went into the fields to scare away the crows. The crows all flew away when they saw him, but among them was a raven that flew back again and said to him, “O man! in this village thou wilt never be able to live, for here there is neither luck nor happiness for thee, but go into another village and thou shalt do well!” Then the man went home, called together his wife and children, put up the few old clothes that still remained in his wardrobe, and went on to the next village, carrying his water-skin on his shoulders. On and on they tramped along the road, but the Unlucky Days clung on to the man behind, and said, “Why dost thou not take us with thee? We will never leave thee, for thou art ours!” So they went on with him till they came to a river, and the man, who was thirsty, went down to the water’s edge for a drink. He undid his water-skin, persuaded the Unlucky Days to get into it, tied it fast again and buried it on the bank close by the river. Then he and his family went on farther. They went on and on till they came to another village, and at the very end of it was an empty hut — the people who had lived there had died of hunger. There the whole family settled down. One day they were all sitting down there when they heard something in the mountain crying, “Catch hold! catch hold! catch hold!” The man went at once into his stable, took down the bit and reins that remained to him, and climbed up into the mountain. He looked all about him as he went, and at last he saw, sitting down, an old goat with two large horns — it was the Devil himself, but of course he didn’t know that. So he made a lasso of the reins, threw them round the old goat, and began to drag it gently down the mountain-side. He dragged it all the way up the ladder of his barn, when the goat disappeared, but showers and showers of money came tumbling through the ceiling. He collected them all together, and they filled two large coffers. Then the poor man made the most of his money, and in no very long time he was well-to-do. Then he sent some of his people to his rich brother, and invited him to come and live with him. The rich brother pondered the matter over. “Maybe he has nothing to eat,” thought he, “and that is why he sends for me.” So he bade them bake him a good store of fat pancakes, and set out accordingly. On the way he heard that his brother had grown rich, and the farther he went the more he heard of his brother’s wealth. Then he regretted that he had brought all the pancakes with him, so he threw them away into the ditch. At last he came to his brother’s house, and his brother showed him first one of the coffers full of money and then the other. Then envy seized upon the rich brother, and he grew quite green in the face. But his brother said to him, “Look now! I have buried a lot more money in a water-skin, hard by the river; you may dig it up and keep it if you like, for I have lots of my own here!” The rich brother did not wait to be told twice. Off he went to the river, and began digging up the water-skin straightway. He unfastened it with greedy, trembling hands; but he had no sooner opened it than the Unlucky Days all popped out and clung on to him. “Thou art ours!” said they. He went home, and when he got there he found that all his wealth was consumed, and a heap of ashes stood where his house had been. So he went and lived in the place where his brother had lived, and the Unlucky Days lived with him ever afterward.

24

THE WONDROUS STORY OF IVAN GOLIK AND THE SERPENTS

Somewhere, nowhere, in another kingdom, in the Empire of Thrice-ten, lived — whether ‘twas a Tsar and a Tsaritsa, or only a Prince and a Princess, I know not, but anyhow they had two sons. One day this prince said to his sons, “Let us go down to the seashore and listen to the songs of the sea-folk!” So they went. Now the prince wanted to test the wits of his two sons; he wanted to see which of the twain was fit for ruling his empire, and which should stand aside and make way for better men. So they went on together till they came to where three oaks stood all in a row. The prince looked at the trees, and said to his eldest son, “My dear son, what wouldst thou make of those trees?”

“What would I make of them, dear father? I would make me good barns and store-houses out of them. I would cut them down and plane the timber well, and goodly should be the planks I should make of them.”

“Good, my son!” replied the prince, “thou wilt make a careful householder.”

Then he asked his younger son, “And what wouldst thou make out of these oaks, my son?”

“Well, dear father,” said he, “had I only as much power as will, I would cut down the middle oak, lay it across the other two, and hang up every prince and every noble in the wide world.”

Then the prince shook his head and was silent.

Presently they came to the sea, and all three stood still and looked at it, and watched the fishes play. Then, suddenly, the prince caught hold of his younger son, and pitched him right into the sea. “Perish!” cried he, “for ‘tis but just that such a wretch as thou shouldst perish!”

Now, just as the father pitched his younger son into the sea, a great whale-fish was coming along and swallowed him, and into its maw he went. There he found wagons with horses and oxen harnessed to them, all of which the fish had also gobbled. So he went rummaging about these wagons to see what was in them, and he found that one of the wagons was full of tobacco-pipes and tobacco, and flints and steels. So he took up a pipe, filled it with tobacco, lit it, and began to smoke. He smoked out one pipe, filled another, and smoked that too; then he filled a third, and began smoking that. At last the smoke inside the whale made it feel so uncomfortable that it opened its mouth, swam ashore, and went asleep on the beach. Now some huntsmen happened to be going along the beach at that time, and one of them saw the whale, and said, “Look, my brethren! we have been hunting jays and crows and shot nothing, and lo! what a monstrous fish lies all about the shore! Let us shoot it!”

So they shot at it and shot at it, and then they fell upon it with their axes and began to cut it to pieces. They cut and hacked at it till suddenly they heard something calling to them from the middle of the fish, “Ho! my brothers! hack fish if you like, but hack not that flesh which is full of Christian blood!”

They fell down to the ground for fright, and were like dead men, but the prince’s younger son crept out of the hole in the fish that the huntsmen had made, went out upon the shore, and sat down. He sat down there quite naked, for all his clothes had rotted and dropped off inside the fish. Maybe he had been a whole year in the whale without knowing it, and he thought to himself, “How shall I now manage to live in the wide, wide world?”

Meanwhile the elder brother had become a great nobleman. His father had died, and he was lord over his whole inheritance. Then, as is the wont of princes, he called together his senators and his servants, and they counselled their young prince to marry; so out he went to seek a bride, and a great retinue followed after him. They went on and on till they came to where a naked man was sitting. Then the prince said to one of his servants, “Go and see what manner of man that is!”

So the servant went up to the man, and said, “Hail!”

“Hail to thee!”

“Who art thou, prythee?”

“I am Ivan Golik. Who art thou?”

“We are from such and such a land, and we are going with our prince to seek him a bride.”

“Go, tell thy prince that he must take me with him, for he’ll make no good match without me.”

So the messenger returned to the prince and told him. Then the prince bade his servants open his trunk and take out a shirt and pantaloons and all manner of raiment, whereupon the naked man went into the water and washed, and after that he dressed himself. Then they brought him to the prince, and he said to him, “If you take me with you, you must all obey me. If you listen to me, you shall remain in the land of Russia; but if not, you shall all perish.”

“Be it so!” said the prince, and he bade all his suite obey him.

They went on and on till they overtook the hosts of the mice. The prince wanted to go hunting after the mice, but Ivan Golik said, “Nay, step aside and give place to the mice, so that not a single one of them lose a single hair!”

So they turned aside, and the mice swept by in their hosts, but the hindmost mouse turned round and said, “Thanks to thee, Ivan Golik, thou hast saved my host from perishing; I will save thine also.”

Then they went on farther, and lo! the gnat was marching with his host, and so vast was it that no eye could take it all in. Then the lieutenant-general of the gnats came flying up and said, “Oh, Ivan Golik! let my host drink of thy blood. If thou dost consent, ‘twill be to thy profit; but if thou dost not consent, thou shalt not remain in the land of Russia.”

Then he stripped off his shirt and bade them tie him up so that he could not beat off a single gnat, and the gnats drank their fill of him and flew off again.

After that they went along by the seashore till they came to a man who had caught two pike. Then Ivan Golik said to the prince, “Buy those two pike of the man, and let them go into the sea again.”

“But wherefore?”

“Ask not wherefore, but buy them!”

So they bought the pike, and let them go into the sea again. But as they swam away, the pike turned round and said, “We thank thee, Ivan Golik, that thou hast not let us perish, and it shall be to thy weal and welfare!”

Swiftly they moved on their way, but the story that tells thereof moves still swifter. They went on and on, for more than a month maybe, till they came to another land and to another tsardom, to the Empire of Thrice-ten. And the serpent was the Tsar of that tsardom. Vast were his palaces, iron railings surrounded his courtyards, and the railings were covered with the heads of various warriors; only on the twenty huge pillars in front of the gate were there no heads. As they drew nigh, deadly fear oppressed the heart of the prince, and he said to Ivan, “Mark me, Ivan! those pillars yonder are meant for *our* heads!” — “That remains to be seen,” replied Ivan Golik.

When they arrived there, the serpent at first treated them hospitably as welcome guests. They were all to come in and make merry, he said, but the prince he took to his own house. So they ate and drank together, and the thoughts of their hearts were joyous. Now the serpent had twenty-one daughters, and he brought them to the prince, and told him which was the eldest, and which the next eldest, down to the very last one. But it was the youngest daughter of all that the prince’s fancy fed upon more than on any of the others. Thus they diverted themselves till evening, and in the evening they made ready to go to sleep. But the serpent said to the prince, “Well, which of my daughters dost thou think the loveliest?”

“The youngest is the most beautiful,” said the prince, “and her will I wed.”

“Good!” said the serpent, “but I will not let thee have my daughter till thou hast done all my tasks. If thou doest my tasks, thou shalt have my daughter; but if thou doest them not, thou shalt lose thy head, and all thy suite shall perish with thee.”

Then he gave him his first task: “In my barn are three hundred ricks of corn; by the morning light thou shalt have threshed and sifted them so that stalk lies by stalk, chaff by chaff, and grain by grain.”

Then the prince went to his own place to pass the night there, and bitterly he wept. But Ivan Golik saw that he was weeping, and said to him, “Why dost thou weep, O prince?”

“Why should I not weep, seeing the task that the serpent has given me is impossible?”

“Nay, weep not, my prince, but lie down to sleep, and by the morning light it will all be done!”

No sooner had Ivan Golik left the prince than he went outside and whistled for the mice. Then the mice assembled round them in their hosts: “Why dost thou whistle, and what dost thou want of us, O Ivan Golik?” said they.

“Why should I not whistle, seeing that the serpent has bidden us thresh out his barn by the morning light, so that straw lies by straw, chaff by chaff, and grain by grain?”

No sooner did the mice hear this than they began scampering all about the barn! There were so many of them that there was not room to move. They set to work with a will, and long before dawn it was quite finished. Then they went and awoke Ivan Golik. He went and looked, and lo! all the chaff was by itself, and all the grain was by itself, and all the straw by itself! Then Ivan bade them be quite sure that there was not a single grain remaining in a single ear of corn. So they scampered all about, and there was not a mouse which did not look under every stalk of straw. Then they ran up to him, and said, "Fear not! there is not a single loose grain anywhere. And now we have requited thee thy service, Ivan Golik, farewell!"

Next morning the prince came to seek Ivan, and marvelled to find that everything had been done as the serpent had commanded. So he thanked Ivan Golik, and went off to the serpent. Then they both went together, and the serpent himself was amazed. He called to his twenty-one daughters to search the ears of corn well to see whether one single grain might not be found therein, and his daughters searched and searched, but there was not a single loose grain to be found. Then said the serpent, "'Tis well, let us go! We will eat and drink and make merry till evening, and in the evening I will give thee thy to-morrow's task." So they made merry till evening, and then the serpent said, "Early this morning, my youngest daughter went bathing in the sea and lost her ring in the water. She searched and searched for it, but could find it nowhere. If thou canst find it to-morrow, and bring it hither while we are sitting down to meat, thou shalt remain alive; if not, 'tis all over with thee!"

The prince returned to his own people and fell a-weeping. Ivan Golik perceived it, and said to him, "Wherefore dost thou weep?"

"For such and such a reason," said he; "dost thou not see that I am ruined?"

Then said Ivan Golik, “The serpent lies. He himself it was who took his daughter’s ring and flew over the sea early this morning, and dropped it in the water. But lie down and sleep! I myself will go to the sea to-morrow, haply I may find the ring.”

So, very early next morning, Ivan Golik went down to the sea. He shouted with an heroic voice, and whistled with an heroic whistle, till the whole sea was troubled by a storm. Then the two pike he had thrown back into the sea came swimming to the shore. “Why dost thou call us, O Ivan Golik?” said they.

“Why should I not call you? The serpent flew over the sea early yesterday morning and dropped in it his daughter’s ring. Search for it everywhere. If you find it, I shall remain alive, but if you find it not, know that the serpent will remove me from the face of the earth!”

Then they swam off and searched, nor was there a single corner of the sea where they searched not. Yet they found nothing. At last they swam off to their mother, and told her what a great woe was about to befall. Their mother said to them, “The ring is with me. I am sorry for him, and still more sorry for you, so you may have it.” And with that she drew off the ring, and they swam with it to Ivan Golik, and said, “Now we have requited thy service. We have found it, but ‘twas a hard task.”

Then Ivan Golik thanked the two pike and went on his way. He found the prince weeping, for the serpent had already sent for him twice, and there was no ring. The moment he saw Ivan Golik he sprang to his feet, and said, “Hast thou the ring?”

“Yes, here it is! But look! the serpent himself is coming!”

“Let him come!”

The serpent was already on the threshold as the prince was going out. They ran against each other with their foreheads, and the serpent was very angry. “Where’s the ring?” cried he.

“There it is! But I will not give it to thee, but to her from whom thou didst take it.”

The serpent laughed. “Very good!” said he, “but now let us go to dinner, for my guests are many, and we have been waiting for thee this long time.”

So they went. The prince arrived at the house, where eleven serpents were sitting down to dinner. He saluted them, and then went on to the daughters, and said, as he drew off the ring, “To which of you does this belong?”

Then the youngest daughter blushed and said, “To me!”

“If it be thine, take it, for I sounded all the depths of the sea in searching for it.”

All the others laughed, but the youngest daughter thanked him.

Then they all went to dine. After dinner the serpent said to him, in the presence of all the guests, “Well, prince, now that thou hast dined and rested, to thy tasks again! I have a bow of one hundred poods weight. If thou canst bend this bow in the presence of these my guests, thou shalt have my daughter!”

When dinner was over they all lay down to rest, but the prince hastened off as quickly as he could to Ivan Golik, and said, “Now indeed it is all over with us, for he has given me such and such a task.”

“Simpleton!” cried Ivan Golik, “when they bring forth this bow, look at it, and say to the serpent, ‘I should be ashamed to bend a bow that the least of my servants can bend!’ Then call me, and I’ll bend the bow so that none other will be able to bend it again.”

With that the prince went straight off to the serpent again, and the serpent commanded and they brought the bow, together with an arrow weighing fifty poods. When the prince saw it, he was like to have died of fright; but they put the bow down in the middle of the courtyard, and all the guests came out to look at it. The prince walked all round the bow and looked at it. “Why,” said he, “I would not deign to touch a bow like that. I’ll call one of my servants, for any one of them can bend such a bow as that!”

Then the serpent looked at the prince’s servants one after the other, and said, “Well, let them try!”

“Come forward thou, Ivan Golik!” cried the prince.

And the prince said to him, “Take me up that bow and bend it!”

Ivan Golik took up the bow, placed the arrow across it, and drew the bow so that the arrow split into twelve pieces and the bow burst. Then the prince said, “Did I not tell you? and was I to put myself to shame by touching a bow that one of my servants can draw?”

After that Ivan Golik returned to his fellow-servants, and put the pieces of the broken bow behind his shin-bone; but the prince returned with the serpents into the guest-chamber, and they all rejoiced because he had done his appointed task. But the serpent whispered something in the ear of his youngest daughter, and she went out, and he after her. They remained outside a long time, and then the serpent came in again, and said to the prince, “There is no time for anything more to-day, but we’ll begin again early to-morrow morning. I have a horse behind twelve doors; if thou canst mount it, thou shalt have my daughter.”

Then they made merry again till evening and lay down to sleep, but the prince went and told Golik. Golik listened to the prince, and said, “Now thou knowest, I suppose, why I took up those pieces of the broken bow, for I could see what was coming. When they lead forth this horse, look at it and say, ‘I will not mount that horse lest I put myself to shame. ‘Tis with the horse as with the bow, any one of my servants can mount it!’ But that horse is no horse at all, but the serpent’s youngest daughter! Thou must not sit upon her back, but I will trounce her finely.”

Early in the morning they all arose, and the prince went to the serpent’s house to greet them all, and there he saw twenty of the serpent’s daughters, but where was the twenty-first? Then the serpent got up and said, “Well, prince, now let us come down into the courtyard; they’ll soon bring out the horse, and we’ll see what thou dost make of it.”

So they all went out and saw two serpents bringing out the horse, and it was as much as the pair of them could do to hold its head, so fierce and strong it was. They led it out in front of the gallery, and the prince walked round it and looked at it. Then said he, “What! did you not say you would bring out a *horse*? Why, this is no horse, but a mare. I will not sit on this mare, for ‘twould be to my shame. I will call one of my servants, and he shall mount her.”

“Good!” said the serpent, “let him try!”

The prince called forth Ivan Golik. “Sit on that mare,” said he, “and trot her about!”

Ivan mounted the mare, and the two serpents let go. She carried him right up among the clouds, and then down again upon the ground she came, with a ringing of hoofs that made the earth tremble. But Ivan Golik took out a fragment of the broken bow, fifty pounds in weight, and trounced her finely. She reared and bucked and carried him hither and thither, but he flogged her between the ears without ceasing. So when she saw that all her prancing and curveting was in vain, she fell to piteously beseeching him, and cried, “Ivan Golik! Ivan Golik! beat me not, and I’ll do all thy behests!”

“I have nothing to do with thee at all,” said he, “but when thou dost come up to the prince, fall down before him, and stretch out thy legs toward him!”

At this she bethought her for a long time. “Well,” cried she at last, “it must be so, there is no doing anything with thee!” So she carried him all over the courtyard, fell down before the prince, and stretched out her legs toward him.

Then said the prince, “Thou seest what a sorry jade it is! And ye would have had me mount such a mare!”

At this the serpent was full of shame, but there was nothing to be said or done. So they went into the garden and sat them down to dinner. The youngest daughter met them there, and they greeted her. The prince could not refrain from looking at her, so fair was she, and now she seemed fairer than ever. Then they sat down and ate, and when the meal was over the serpent said, “Well, prince, after dinner I’ll bring all my daughters into the courtyard, and if you can find out the youngest, you may be happy together.”

So after dinner the serpent bade his daughters go and dress themselves, but the prince took counsel of Ivan Golik. Ivan whistled, and immediately the gnat came flying up. He told the gnat all about it, and the gnat said, “Thou didst help me, so now I will help thee. When the serpent brings out his daughters, let the prince keep his eyes open, for I will fly on her head. Let him walk round them once, and I will fly round them too. Let him walk round them a second time, and I will fly round them twice also. Let him walk round them a third time, and then I’ll settle on her nose, and she will not be able to endure my bite, but will strike at me with her right hand.” And with these words the gnat flew off into the house.

Soon afterward the serpent sent for the prince. He went, and there in the courtyard stood the twenty-one daughters. They were as like as peas, their faces, their hair, and their raiment were exactly the same. He looked and looked, but could not tell one from the other. He walked round them the first time, but there was no sign of the gnat. He walked round them the second time, and the gnat came and lit upon her head. Henceforth he never took his eyes off the gnat, and when he had begun to walk round the twenty-one daughters for the third time, the gnat sat on the nose of the youngest, and began to bite her. She brushed it off with her right hand, whereupon the prince said, “She is mine!” and led her to the serpent.

The serpent was amazed, but said, “Since thou hast found out thy bride, we’ll wed thee to-day, and all be merry together.”

So they made them merry, and that very evening the young couple got their bridal crowns. And they feasted and fired guns, and what else did they not do? But at night, Ivan Golik took the prince aside, and said to him, “Now, prince, see that we go home to-morrow, for they mean us no good here. And now, listen to me! I beg thee tell not thy wife the truth of the matter for seven years. However caressing she may be, thou shalt not let her ears know the truth, for if thou *dost* tell her the truth, both thou and I shall perish!”

“Good!” said he. “I will not tell my wife the truth.”

Next morning the young men arose and went to the serpent, and the prince took leave of his father-in-law, and said he must be going home.

“But why off so soon?” said the serpent.

“Nay, but I must go,” said he.

Then the serpent gave the youth a banquet, and they sat down and ate and made merry, and after that he departed to his own tsardom. And the prince thanked Ivan Golik for all that he had done for him, and made him the first of his counsellors. Whatever Ivan Golik said was performed throughout the realm, while the Tsar had only to sit on his throne and do nothing.

So the young prince dwelt with his wife for a year or two, and in the third year a son was added to them, and the heart of the prince was glad. Now one day he took his little son in his arms, and said, “Is there anything in the wide world that I like better than this child?” When the princess saw that the heart of her spouse was tender, she fell a-kissing and caressing him, and began asking him all about the time when they were first married, and how he had been able to do her father’s commands. And the prince said to her, “My head would long ago have been mouldering on the posts of thy father’s palace had it not been for Ivan Golik. ‘Twas he who did it all and not I.”

Then she was very wrath. But she never changed countenance, and shortly afterward she went out.

Ivan Golik was sitting in his own house at his ease, when the princess came flying in to him. And immediately she drew out of the ground a handkerchief with gold borders, and no sooner had she waved this serpentine handkerchief, than Ivan fell asunder into two pieces. His legs remained where they were, but his trunk with his head disappeared through the roof, and fell seven miles away from the house. And as he fell he cried, “Oh, accursed one! did I not charge thee not to confess! Did I not implore thee not to tell thy wife the truth for seven years! And now I perish and thou also!”

He raised his head and found himself sitting in a wood, and there he saw an armless man pursuing a hare. He pursued and pursued it, but though he caught it up, he couldn’t catch it, for he had no arms. Then Ivan Golik caught it and they fell out about it. The armless one said, “The hare is mine!” — “No,” said Ivan Golik, “it is mine!” So they quarrelled over it, but as one had no legs and the other had no arms, they couldn’t hurt one another. At last the armless one said, “What is the use of our quarrelling? Let us pull up that oak, and whichever of us pitches it farthest shall have the hare.”

“Good!” said Legless.

Then Armless kicked Legless up to the oak, and Legless pulled it up and gave it to Armless. Then Armless lay down on the ground and kicked the oak with his feet three miles off. But Legless threw it seven miles. Then Armless said, “Take the hare and be my elder brother!”

So they became brothers, and made a wagon between them, and fastened ropes to it, and while Armless dragged it along Legless drove it. On they went till they came to a town where a Tsar lived. There they went up to the church, and planted themselves with their wagon in the place of beggars, and waited till the Tsarivna came up. And the Tsarivna said to her court lady, “Take this money, and give it to those poor cripples.”

The lady was about to go with it when Legless said, “Nay, but let the Tsarivna give it to us with her own hands.”

Then the Tsarivna took the money from her court lady and gave it to Legless. But he said to her, “Be not angry, but tell me, now, wherefore art thou so yellow?”

“God made me so,” answered she, and then she sighed.

“No,” replied Legless. “I know why thou art so yellow. But I can make thee once more just as God made thee.”

Now the Tsar had heard them speaking, and the words of the cripples moved him strangely. So he had the armless man and the legless man in the wagon brought to him, and said to them, “Do as you are able.”

But Legless said, “O Tsar! let the Tsarivna speak the truth, and confess openly how she became so yellow!”

Then the father turned to his daughter, and she confessed and said, “The serpent flew to me, and drew my blood out of my breast.”

“When did he fly to thee?” they asked.

“Just before dawn, when the guards were sleeping, he came flying down my chimney. In he came flying, and lay down beneath the cushions of my couch.”

“Stop!” cried Legless; “we’ll hide in the straw in thy room, and when the serpent comes flying in again, thou must cough and wake us.”

So they hid them in the straw, and just as the guards had ceased knocking at the doors as they went their rounds, sparks began to flash beneath the straw roof, and the Tsarivna coughed. They rushed up to her, and saw the serpent already nestling beneath the cushions. Then the Tsarivna leaped out of bed; but Armless lay down on the floor and kicked Legless on to the cushions, and Legless took the serpent in his arms and began to throttle it. “Let me go! let me go!” begged the serpent, “and I’ll never fly here again, but will renounce my tithes.”

But Legless said, “That is but a small thing. Thou must carry us to the place of healing waters, that I may get back my legs and my brother here his arms.”

“Catch hold of me,” said the serpent, “and I’ll take you, only torture me no more.”

So Legless clung on to him with his arms and Armless with his feet, and the serpent flew away with them till he came to a spring. “There’s your healing water!” cried he.

Armless wanted to plunge in straightway, but Legless shrieked, “Wait, brother! Hold the serpent tight with your legs while I thrust a dry stick into the spring, and then we shall see whether it really is healing water.”

So he thrust a stick in, and no sooner had it touched the water than it was consumed as though by fire. Then the pair of them, in their rage, fell upon that false serpent and almost killed him. They beat him and beat him till he cried for mercy. “Beat me no more!” cried he; “the spring of healing water is not very far off!” Then he took them to another spring. Into this they also dipped a dry stick, and immediately it burst into flower. Then Armless leaped into the spring and leaped out again with arms, whereupon he pitched in Legless, who immediately leaped out again with legs of his own. So they let the serpent go, first making him promise never to fly to the Tsarivna again, and then each thanked the other for his friendship, and so they parted.

But Ivan Golik went again to his brother the prince, to see what had become of him. “I wonder what the princess has done to him?” thought he. So he went toward that tsardom, and presently he saw not very far from the roadside, a swineherd tending swine; he was tending swine, but he himself sat upon a tomb. “I’ll go and ask that swineherd what he’s doing there,” thought Ivan Golik.

So he went up to the swineherd, and, looking straight into his eyes, recognized his own brother. And the swineherd looked at him, and recognized Ivan Golik. There they stood for a long time looking into each other’s eyes, but neither of them spoke a word. At last Ivan Golik found his voice: “What!” cried he. “Is it thou, O prince, who art feeding swine? Thou art rightly served! Did I not bid thee, ‘Tell not thy wife the truth for seven years’?”

At this the prince flung himself down at the other’s feet, and cried, “O Ivan Golik! forgive me, and have mercy!”

Then Ivan Golik raised him up by the shoulders and said, “‘Tis well for thee that thou art still in God’s fair world! Yet wait a little while, and thou shalt be Tsar again!”

The prince thereupon asked Ivan Golik how he had got his legs back again, for the princess had told him how she had cut Ivan Golik in two. Then Ivan Golik confessed to him that he was his younger brother, and told him the whole story of his life. So they embraced and kissed each other, and then the prince said, “‘Tis high time I drove these swine home, for the princess doesn’t like being kept waiting for her tea.”

“Well,” said Ivan Golik, “we’ll drive them back together.”

“The worst of it, brother, is this,” said the prince. “Dost thou see that accursed pig that leads the others? Well, he will go only up to the gate of the sty, and there he stands fast as if rooted to the ground, and until I kiss his bristles he will not move from the spot. And all the time the princess and the serpents are sitting in the gallery at tea, and they look on and laugh!”

But Ivan Golik said, “It needs must be so! Kiss it again to-day, and to-morrow thou shalt kiss it no more!”

Then they drove the swine up to the gates, and Ivan Golik looked to see what would happen. He saw the princess sitting in the gallery with six serpents drinking tea, and the accursed pig stuck fast in the gate, and stretched out its legs and wouldn’t go in. The princess looked on and said, “Look at my fool driving the swine, and now he is going to kiss the big boar!”

So the poor fellow stooped down and kissed its bristles, and the pig ran grunting into the courtyard. Then the princess said, “Look! he has picked up from somewhere an under-herdsman to help him!”

The prince and Ivan Golik drove the pigs into their sty, and then Ivan Golik said, “Brother, get me twenty poods of hemp and twenty poods of pitch, and bring them to me in the garden.” And he did so. Then Ivan Golik made him a huge whip of the twenty poods of hemp and the twenty poods of tar. First he twined tightly a pood of hemp, and tarred it well with a pood of pitch; round this he plaited another pood of hemp, and tarred that also with another pood of pitch, till he had used up the whole forty. By midnight his task was done, and then he laid him down to sleep. But the prince had gone to sleep long before in the pig-sty.

Early in the morning they rose up again, and Ivan Golik said to him, “Up till to-day thou hast been a swineherd, and after to-day thou shalt be a prince again; but first let us drive the swine into the field.”

“Nay, but,” said the prince, “the princess has not yet come out upon the balcony to drink tea with the serpents, and see me kiss the pig before it goes out, as is her wont.” Ivan Golik said to him, “We will drive the swine out this time too, but it will not be thou but I who shall kiss the big boar.”

“Good!” said the prince.

And now the time came for the swine to be driven away, and the princess came out on the balcony to drink tea. They took the swine out of the sty, and the pair of them drove the beasts before them. When they reached the gate the leading pig stuck fast in the gateway, and wouldn’t budge an inch. The princess and the serpents grinned and looked on, but Ivan Golik flicked his heroic whip, and struck the pig one blow that made it fly to pieces. Then all the serpents wriggled off as fast as they could. But she, the accursed one, was in no way frightened, but caught Ivan by the hair of his head. He, however, caught her also by her long locks, and flicked her with his whip till he had flicked all the serpent-blood out of her, and she walked the earth in human guise. So she cast off her serpent nature, and lived happily with her husband. And that’s the end of the *kazka*.

25

THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN

There was once upon a time a merchant’s son who squandered and wasted all his goods. To such a pass did he come at last that he had nothing to eat. So he seized a spade, went out into the market-place, and began waiting to see if any one would hire him as a labourer. And behold, the merchant who was one in seven hundred came along that way in his gilded coach; all the day-labourers saw him, and the whole lot of them immediately scattered in every direction and hid themselves in corners. The merchant’s son alone of them all remained standing in the market-place. “Do you want work, young man?” said the merchant who was one in seven hundred; “then take hire from me.” — “Right willingly; ‘twas for no other reason that I came to the market-place.” — “And what wage do you require?” — “If you lay me down one hundred roubles a day, ‘tis a bargain.” — “That is somewhat dear!” — “If you think it dear, go and seek a cheaper article; but this I know, crowds of people were here just now, you came, and — away they all bolted.” — “Well, agreed! come to-morrow to the haven.” The next day, early in the morning, our merchant’s son came to the haven; the merchant who was one in seven hundred had already been awaiting him some time. They went on board ship and went to sea. They sailed and sailed. In the midst of the sea an island appeared; on this island stood high mountains, and on the sea-shore something or other was burning like fire. “Can that which I see be fire?” said the merchant’s son. “Nay, that is my little golden castle.” They drew near to the island; they went ashore; his wife and daughter came forth to meet the merchant who was one in seven hundred, and the daughter was beautiful with a beauty that no man can imagine or devise, and no tale can tell. As soon as they had greeted one another they went on to the castle, and took the new labourer along with them; they sat them down at table, they began to eat, drink, and be merry. “A fig for to-day,” said the host; “to-day we’ll feast, to-morrow we’ll work.” And the merchant’s son was a fair youth, strong and stately, of a ruddy countenance like milk and blood, and he fell in love with the lovely damsel. She went out into the next room; she called him secretly, and gave him a flint and steel. “Take them,” said she, “and if you should be in any need, use them.” Next day the merchant who was one in seven hundred set out with his servant for the high golden mountain. They climbed and climbed, but they climbed not up to the top; they crawled and crawled, but they crawled not up to the top. “Well,” said the merchant, “let’s have a drink first of all.” And the merchant handed him a sleeping poison. The labourer drank and fell asleep. The merchant drew out his knife, killed his wretched nag which he had brought with him, took out its entrails, put the young man into the horse’s stomach, put the spade in too, sewed up the wound, and went and hid himself among the bushes. Suddenly there flew down a whole host of black iron-beaked ravens. They took up the carcase, carried it up into the mountain, and fell a-pecking it; they began eating up the horse, and soon pierced right down to the merchant’s son. Then he awoke, beat off the black crows, looked hither and thither, and asked himself, “Where am I?” The merchant who was one in seven hundred bawled up at him, “On the golden mountain; come, take your spade and dig gold.” So he digged and digged, throwing it all down below, and the merchant put it on wagons. By evening he had filled nine wagons. “That’ll do,” cried the merchant who was one in seven hundred; “thanks for your labour. Adieu!” — “But how about me?” — “You may get on as best you can. Ninety-nine of your sort have perished on that mountain — you will just make up the hundred!” Thus spake the merchant and departed. “What’s to be done now?” thought the merchant’s son; “to get down from this mountain is quite impossible. I shall certainly starve to death.” So there he stood on the mountain, and above him wheeled the black iron-beaked crows, they plainly scented their prey. He began to bethink him how all this had come to pass, and then it occurred to him how the lovely damsel had taken him aside and given him the flint and steel, and said to him herself — “Take it, and if you are in need make use of it.” — “And look now, she did not say it in vain. Let us try it.” The merchant’s son took out the flint and steel, struck it once, and immediately out jumped two fair young heroes. “What do you want? What do you want?” — “Take me from this mountain to the sea-shore.” He had no sooner spoken than they took him under the arms and bore him carefully down from the mountain. The merchant’s son walked about by the shore, and lo, a ship was sailing by the island. “Hi, good ship-folk, take me with you!” — “Nay, brother, we cannot stop, such a stoppage would lose us one hundred knots.” The mariners passed by the island, contrary winds began to blow, a frightful hurricane arose. “Alas! he is plainly no simple man of our sort, we had better turn back and take him on board ship.” So they returned to the island, stopped by the shore, took up the merchant’s son, and conveyed him to his native town. A long time and a little time passed by, and then the merchant’s son took his spade and again went out into the market-place to wait for some one to hire him. Again the merchant who was one in seven hundred passed by in his gilded carriage; the day-labourers saw him and scattered in every direction, and hid them in corners. The merchant’s son was the sole solitary little one left. “Will you take hire from me?” said the merchant who was one in seven hundred. “Willingly; put down two hundred roubles a day, and set me my work.” — “Rather dear, eh?” — “If you find it dear, go and seek cheaper labour. You saw how many people were here, and the moment you appeared they all ran away." — "Well, then, done; come to-morrow to the haven." The next morning they met at the haven, went on board the ship, and sailed to the island. There they ate and drank their fill one whole day, and the next day they got up and went towards the golden mountain. They arrived there, the merchant who was one in seven hundred pulled out his drinking-glass. "Come now, let us have a drink first," said he. — "Stop, mine host! You who are the chief ought to drink the first, let me treat you with mine own drink." And the merchant's son, who had betimes provided himself with sleeping poison, poured out a full glass of it and gave it to the merchant who was one in seven hundred. He drank it off and fell into a sound sleep. The merchant's son slaughtered the sorriest horse, disembowelled it, laid his host in the horse's belly, put the spade there too, sewed up the wound, and went and hid himself among the bushes. Instantly the black iron-beaked crows flew down, took up the carcase, carried it to the mountain, and fell a-pecking at it. The merchant who was one in seven hundred awoke and looked hither and thither. "Where am I?" he asked. "On the mountain," bawled the merchant's son. "Take your spade and dig gold; if you dig much, I will show you how to get off the mountain." The merchant who was one in seven hundred took his spade and dug and dug, he dug up twenty wagon loads. "Stop, that's enough now," said the merchant's son; "thanks for your labour, and good-bye." — "But what about me?" — "You? why, get off as best you can. Ninety-nine of your sort have perished on that mountain, you can make up the hundred." So the merchant's son took all the twenty wagons, went to the golden castle, married the lovely damsel, the daughter of the merchant who was one in seven hundred, took possession of all her riches, and came to live in the capital with his whole family. But the merchant who was one in seven hundred remained there on the mountain, and the black iron-beaked crows picked his bones.

26

MOROZKO

There was once a stepmother who, besides her stepdaughter, had a daughter of her own. Whatever her own daughter might do, she looked kindly at her and said, “Sensible darling!” but as for the stepdaughter, whatever she might do to please, it was always taken amiss. Everything she did was wrong, and not as it should be. Yet, sooth to say, the little stepdaughter was as good as gold; in good hands she would have swum in cheese and butter, but, living with her stepmother, she bathed herself every day in tears. What was she to do? The blast, though it blows, does not blow for ever, but a scolding old woman it is not so easy to avoid. She will take anything into her head, even to combing one’s teeth. And the stepmother took it into her head to drive her stepdaughter from the house. “Take her, take her away, my old man, whithersoever you like, that mine eyes may not see her, that my ears may not hear of her; but don’t take her to my own daughter in the warm room, but take her into the bare fields to the bitter, biting frost.” The old man began to lament and weep, but for all that he put his daughter in the sledge; he would have liked to cover her with the horse-cloth, but even that he dared not do. So he took the homeless one into the bare fields, threw her on a heap of snow, crossed himself, and hastened home as fast as possible, that his eyes might not see his daughter’s death.

There the poor little thing remained on the fringe of the forest, sat down under a fir-tree, shivered, and softly said her prayers. All at once she heard something. Morozko was crackling in a fir-tree not far off, and he leaped from fir to fir and snapped his fingers. And look! now he has come to that fir beneath which the girl was sitting; and he snapped his fingers, and leaped up and down, and looked at the pretty girl. “Maiden, maiden, ‘tis I — Moroz-ruby-nose!” — “Welcome, Moroz! God must have sent thee to my poor sinful soul.” — “Art thou warm, maiden?” — “Warm, warm, dear little father Morozushko!” Moroz began to descend lower, and crackle still more, and snap his fingers more than ever, and again he began speaking to the girl. “Art thou warm, maiden? Art thou warm, beauty?” The girl was scarce able to draw her breath, and yet she kept on saying, “Yes, warm, Morozushko; warm, little father!” Morozko crackled more than ever, and snapped his fingers harder and yet harder, and he said to the maiden for the last time, “Art thou warm, maiden? Art thou warm, beauty? Art thou warm, sweet clover?” The girl was all benumbed, and it was only in a voice scarcely audible that she could say, “Oh, yes! warm, darling little pigeon mine, Morozushko!” Morozko quite loved her for her pretty speeches. He had compassion on the girl; he wrapped her in furs, warmed her with warm coverings, and brought her a coffer, high and heavy, full of bridal garments, and gave her a robe all garnished with gold and silver. She put it on, and oh, how beautiful and stately she looked! And she sat down and began to sing songs. And the stepmother was preparing her funeral feast and frying pancakes. “Be off, husband, and bury your daughter!” she cried. And off the old man went. But the little dog under the table said, “Bow-wow! the old man’s daughter is going about in silver and gold, but the old woman’s daughter no wooers will look at.” — “Silence, you fool! There’s a pancake for you, and now say, ‘The wooers will take the old woman’s daughter, but there’s nothing left of the old man’s daughter but her bones.’” The little dog ate the pancake, but again he said, “Bow-wow! the old man’s daughter goes about in silver and gold, but the old woman's daughter no wooers will look at." The old woman kept beating the dog and giving him pancakes, but the little dog would have his way, and said, "The old man's daughter goes about in silver and gold, but the old woman's daughter no wooers will look at."

The floors creaked, the doors flew open wide, and in they brought the high and heavy coffer, and behind it walked the stepdaughter, in gold and silver, glittering like the sun. The stepmother looked at her, and threw up her arms. "Old man, old man! put to a pair of horses, and take my daughter at once. Put her in the selfsame field, in the selfsame place." And the old man took the daughter to the selfsame place. And Moroz-ruby-nose came and looked at his guest, and began to ask her, "Art thou warm, maiden?" — "Be off with you!" replied the old woman's daughter, "or are you blind not to see that my arms and legs are quite benumbed with cold?" Morozko began skipping and jumping, fair words were not to be expected from that quarter. And he was angry with the stepdaughter, and froze her to death.

"Old man, old man! go and fetch my daughter. Put to my swift horses, and don't overturn the sledge and upset the coffer." But the little dog under the table said, "Bow-wow! the wooers will wed the old man's daughter, but they'll bring home nothing of the old woman's daughter but a sack of bones." — "Don't lie! There's a cake. Take it and say, 'They'll carry about the old woman's daughter in gold and silver!'" And the doors flew open, the nasty old woman ran out to meet her daughter, and instead of her she embraced a cold corpse. She began to howl and cry; she knew then that she had lost her wicked and envious daughter.

27

THE FLYING SHIP

There was once upon a time an old man and an old woman, and they had three sons; two were clever, but the third was a fool. The old woman loved the first two, and quite spoiled them, but the latter was always hardly treated. They heard that a writing had come from the Tsar which said, “Whoever builds a ship that can fly, to him will I give my daughter the Tsarevna to wife.” The elder brothers resolved to go and seek their fortune, and they begged a blessing of their parents. The mother got ready their things for the journey, and gave them something to eat on the way, and a flask of wine. And the fool began to beg them to send him off too. His mother told him he should not go. “Whither would you go, fool?” said she; “why, the wolves would devour you!” But the fool was always singing the same refrain: “I will go, I will go!” His mother saw that she could do nothing with him, so she gave him a piece of dry bread and a flask of water, and quickly shoved him out of the house.

The fool went and went, and at last he met an old man. They greeted each other. The old man asked the fool, “Whither are you going?” — “Look now!” said the fool, “the Tsar has promised to give his daughter to him who shall make a flying ship!” — “And can you then make such a ship?” — “No, I cannot, but they’ll make it for me somewhere.” — “And where is that somewhere?” — “God only knows.” — “Well, in that case, sit down here; rest and eat a bit. Take out what you have got in your knapsack." — "Nay, it is such stuff that I am ashamed to show it to people." — "Nonsense! Take it out! What God has given is quite good enough to be eaten." The fool undid his knapsack, and could scarcely believe his eyes — there, instead of the dry crust of bread, lay white rolls and divers savoury meats, and he gave of it to the old man. So they ate together, and the old man said to the fool, "Go into the wood, right up to the first tree, cross yourself thrice, and strike the tree with your axe, then fall with your face to the ground and wait till you are aroused. Then you will see before you a ship quite ready; sit in it and fly wherever you like, and gather up everything you meet on your road." So our fool blessed the old man, took leave of him, and went into the wood. He went up to the first tree and did exactly as he had been commanded; he crossed himself three times, struck the tree with his axe, fell with his face to the ground, and went to sleep. In a little while some one or other awoke him. The fool rose up, and saw the ship quite ready, and without thinking long about it, he sat in it, and the ship flew up into the air. It flew and flew, and look! — there on the road below, a man was lying with his ear to the damp earth. "Good-day, uncle!" — "Good-day." — "What are you doing?" — "I am listening to what is going on in the world." — "Take a seat in the ship beside me." The man did not like to refuse, so he sat in the ship, and they flew on further. They flew and flew, and look! — a man was coming along hopping on one leg, with the other leg tied tightly to his ear. "Good-day, uncle; what are you hopping on one leg for?" — "Why, if I were to untie the other I should stride half round the world at a single stride." — "Come and sit with us." The man sat down, and they flew on. They flew and flew, and look! — a man was standing with a gun and taking aim, but at what they could not see. "Good-day, uncle; at what are you aiming? Not even a bird is to be seen." — "What! I am shooting at short range. I could hit bird or beast at a distance of one hundred leagues. That's what I call shooting!" — "Sit down with us." This man also sat with them, and they flew on further. They flew and flew, and look! — a man was carrying on his back a whole sack-load of bread. “Good-day, uncle; whither are you going?” — “I am going,” he said, “to get some bread for dinner.” — “But you’ve got a whole sack-load on your back already!” — “That! Why I should think nothing of eating all that at a single mouthful.” — “Come and sit with us.” The Gobbler sat in the ship, and they went flying on further. They flew and they flew, and look! — a man was walking round a lake. “Good-day, uncle; what are you looking for?” — “I want to drink, but I can find no water.” — “But there’s a whole lake before you, why don’t you drink of it?” — “That! Why that water would not be more than a mouthful to me!” — “Then come and sit with us.” He sat down, and again they flew on. They flew and flew, and look! — a man was walking in the forest, and on his shoulders was a bundle of wood. “Good-day, uncle; why are you dragging about wood in the forest?” — “But this is not common wood.” — “What sort is it then?” — “It is of such a sort that if you scatter it, a whole army will spring up.” — “Sit down with us then.” He sat down with them, and they flew on further. They flew and flew, and look! — a man was carrying a sack of straw. “Good-day, uncle; whither are you carrying that straw?” — “To the village.” — “Is there little straw in the village then?” — “Nay, but this straw is of such a kind that if you scatter it on the hottest summer day, cold will immediately set in with snow and frost.” — “Won’t you sit with us, then?” — “Thank you, I will.”

Soon they flew into the Tsar’s courtyard. The Tsar was sitting at table just then; he saw the flying ship, was much surprised, and sent out his servant to ask who was flying on that ship. The servant went to the ship and looked, and brought back word to the Tsar that ‘twas but a single, miserable little muzhik who was flying the ship. The Tsar fell a-thinking. He did not relish the idea of giving his daughter to a simple muzhik, and began to consider how he could rid him of this wretched son-in-law for a whole year. And so he thought, “I’ll give him many grievous tasks to do.” So he immediately sent out to the fool with the command to get him, by the time the imperial meal was over, living and singing water. Now, at the very time when the Tsar was giving this command to his servant, the first comrade whom the fool had met (that is to say, the one who was listening to what was going on in the world) heard what the Tsar said, and told it to the fool. "What shall I do now?" said the fool. "Why, if I search for a year, and for my whole life too, I shall never find such water." — "Don't be afraid," said Swift-of-foot to him, "I'll manage it for you." The servant came and made known the Tsar's command. "Say I'll fetch it," replied the fool, and his comrade untied his other leg from his ear, ran off, and in a twinkling he drew from the end of the world some of the living and singing water. "I must make haste and return presently," said he, and he sat down under a water-mill and went to sleep. The Tsar's dinner was drawing to a close, and still he did not turn up though they were all waiting, so that those on board the ship grew uneasy. The first comrade bent down to the earth and listened. "Oh ho! so you are asleep beneath the mill, are you?" Then the marksman seized his gun, shot into the mill, and awoke Swift-of-foot with his shooting. Swift-of-foot set off running, and in a moment he had brought the water. The Tsar had not yet risen from the table, and his command could not therefore have been more exactly fulfilled. But it was all to no purpose, another task had to be imposed. The Tsar bade them say to the fool, "Come now, as you are so smart, show what you're made of! You and your comrades must eat at one meal twenty roast oxen and twenty large measures of baked bread." The first comrade heard and told this to the fool. The fool was terrified, and said, "Why, I can't eat even one whole loaf at one meal!" — "Don't be afraid," said Gobbler, "that will be very little for me." The servant came and delivered the Tsar's command. "Good!" said the fool, "let us have it and we'll eat it." And they brought twenty roasted bullocks, and twenty measures of baked bread. Gobbler alone ate it all up. "Ugh!" he said, "precious little! they might have given us a little more." The Tsar bade them say to the fool that he must now drink forty barrels of wine, each barrel holding forty buckets. The first comrade of the fool heard these words, and told them to him beforehand. The fool was horrified. “Why, I could not drink a single bucketful,” said he. “Don’t be frightened,” said the Drinker, “I’ll drink for all; it will be little enough for me.” They poured out the forty barrels of wine; the Drinker came and drank the whole lot at one draught; he drank it right to the dregs, and said, “Ugh! little enough, too! I should have liked as much again.” After that the Tsar commanded the fool to get ready for his wedding, and go to the bath-room to have a good wash. Now this bath-room was of cast-iron, and the Tsar commanded that it should be heated hotter than hot, that the fool might be suffocated therein in a single instant. So they heated the bath red-hot. The fool went to wash himself, and behind him came the muzhik with the straw. “I must straw the floor,” said he. They locked them both in the bath-room; the muzhik scattered the straw, and it became so cold that the fool was scarce able to wash himself properly, the water in the bath froze so hard. He crept up on the stove and there he passed the whole night. In the morning they opened the bath, and they found the fool alive and well, lying on the stove and singing songs. They brought word thereof to the Tsar. The Tsar was sore troubled, he did not know how to rid himself of the fool. He thought and thought, and commanded him to produce a whole army of his own devising. “How will a simple muzhik be able to form an army?” thought he; “he will certainly not be able to do that.” As soon as the fool heard of this he was much alarmed. “Now I am quite lost,” said he; “you have delivered me from my straits more than once, my friends, but it is plain that nothing can be done now.”

“You’re a pretty fellow,” said the man with the bundle of wood; “why, you’ve clean forgotten me, haven’t you?” The servant came and told the fool the Tsar’s command: “If you will have the Tsarevna to wife, you must put on foot a whole army by morning.”

“Agreed. But if the Tsar, even after this, should refuse, I will conquer his whole Tsardom and take the Tsarevna by force.” At night the fool’s companion went out into the fields, took his bundle of wood, and began scattering the faggots in different directions — and immediately a countless army appeared, both horse and foot. In the morning the Tsar saw it, and was terrified in his turn, and in all haste he sent to the fool precious ornaments and raiment, and bade them lead him to court and marry him to the Tsarevna. The fool attired himself in these costly ornaments, and they made him look handsomer than words can tell. He appeared before the Tsar, wedded the Tsarevna, received a large wedding-gift, and became quite clever and witty. The Tsar and the Tsaritsa grew very fond of him, and the Tsarevna lived with him all her life, and loved him as the apple of her eye.

28

THE MUZHICHEK-AS-BIG-AS-YOUR-THUMB-WITH-MOUSTACHES-SEVEN-VERSTS LONG.

In a certain kingdom, in a certain empire, there once lived a Tsar. At his royal court there was a harness of golden rings. Now it fell out that this Tsar once dreamed that in this harness was fastened a strange horse, not woolly white, but silvery bright, and on its brow a glistening moon. On awaking in the morning the Tsar commanded the public crier to cry abroad that whoever would interpret this dream, and discover this horse, should have his daughter in exchange, and half his tsardom into the bargain. At this royal proclamation a multitude of princes, boyards, and great lords came together, and thought and thought, but not one of them could interpret the dream, not one of them could discover the horse. At last they hunted up a little withered old grey-beard Muzhichek, and he said to the Tsar, “Thy dream was not a dream, but real. On just such a horse as thou didst see in thy dream, there came to thee in the night the Muzhichek-as-big-as-your-thumb-with-moustaches-seven-versts-long, and he wants to steal away your lovely little daughter out of the strong fortress.” — “I thank thee, good man, for thy interpretation; and now wilt thou not tell me who can get me this horse?” — “I will tell thee, my Lord Tsar. I have three sons, mighty men of valour. My wife bore me all three of them in a single night; the eldest in the evening, the second at midnight, the third at dawn of day, and so we called them Zor’ka, Vechorka, and Polunochka. They have not their equals in this realm for strength or valour. Look now, my little father and sovereign lord, send them forth that they may seek this strange horse for thee." — "Let them go, dear old friend. Let them take as much from my treasury as they need, nor will I go back from my royal word; whichever of them brings me this horse, to him will I give the Tsarevna and half my tsardom."

The next day, early in the morning, the three brother-heroes, Zor'ka, Vechorka, and Polunochka, arrived at the Tsar's court; the first had the fairest face, the second the broadest shoulders, the third the stateliest figure. They went in to the Tsar, prayed before the sacred ikons, and bowed low on every side of them, but to the Tsar they bowed lowest of all. "May our Sovereign Lord and Tsar live long in the land! We have come to thee, not to feast with the festive, but to do a deed right hard and sore, for we have come to fetch thee this strange horse from far away — that selfsame horse that appeared to thee in thy dreams." — "Success attend you, ye good youths! What provision do ye require for your journey?" — "We want nothing, O Gosudar! Only do not neglect our good father and mother. Provide for them in their old age and need." — "If that be all, depart in God's name on your journey. I will bring your old parents to my court, and they shall be my guests; I will give them to eat and drink from my own royal table, they shall be clothed and shod from my own royal wardrobe, and they shall be filled full with all good things."

So the good youths departed on their long journey. They travelled that day, and the next, and the third also, with nothing but the sky above their heads, and the broad steppe on every side of them. At last they left the steppe and entered a dense forest, and rejoiced greatly. On the very skirts of the forest stood a little hut, and beside the little hut a tiny sheepfold full of sheep. "Look," said they, "there we shall find some place to lay our heads in, and rest from our journey." They knocked at the hut — there was no answer; they peeped into it — it was quite empty. The brothers entered in, made ready for the night, prayed to God, and laid them down to sleep. In the morning Zor’ka and Polunochka went into the wood to hunt, and said to Vechorka, “Stay at home and get dinner ready for us.” The eldest brother agreed, put everything to rights in the hut, and then went to the sheepfold, chose the fattest ram, cut it up, cleansed it, and roasted it for dinner. He had no sooner laid the table, however, and had just sat down by the window to await his brothers, when all at once there came a rumbling and a thundering from the forest, the door was nearly torn off its hinges, and the Muzhichek-only-as-big-as-your-thumb-but-with-moustaches-seven-versts-long entered the hut, with his moustaches floating far down his back. On entering the hut he looked at Vechorka from beneath his beetling brows, and shrieked with a terrible voice, “How dare you come into my hut as if you were its lord and master? How dare you cut up my ram?” But Vechorka looked at him and smiled. “You ought to grow a little bigger before you shriek like that,” said he. “Be off, and don’t let me see you here again, or I’ll take a spoonful of cabbage soup, and a little crumb of bread, and glue up your eyes for you.” The Muzhichek-no-bigger-than-your-thumb-but-with-moustaches-seven-versts-long replied, “I see that you don’t know that, though small, I am brave withal;” then, tearing the hero from the bench, he dragged him from corner to corner, bumped his head well against the walls, and then threw him, more dead than alive, beneath the bench. He himself took the roast ram from the table, ate it, bones and all, and vanished. The brothers returned and asked, “What’s the matter? Why have you bandaged your head?” But Vechorka was ashamed to say that such a miserable little wretch had trounced him so soundly, and he said to his brothers, “I got a headache from looking to the fire without you, so that I could neither roast nor boil.”

The next day Zor’ka and Vechorka went out to hunt, and Polunochka stayed behind to get the dinner ready. No sooner had he finished cooking the dinner, than there was again a rushing sound in the wood, and into the hut came the Muzhichek-no-bigger-than-your-thumb-but-with-moustaches-seven-versts-long, knocked Polunochka about, maimed him, pitched him under the bench, ate up the whole dinner, and vanished. Again the brothers returned and asked, “What’s the matter, brotherkin? Why do you tie up your head with rags?” — “I have got a headache from looking to the fire, my brothers,” replied Polunochka, “so that my poor little head was quite splitting, and therefore I could not get ready your dinner for you.”

On the third day the elder brothers went to hunt, and Zor’ka remained in the hut alone, and thought to himself, “There’s something not quite right here. It is not for nothing that my brothers have complained of the heat of the fire two days running.” So he began to look all about, and to listen, in case any one should be coming to fall upon him unawares. He chose a ram, killed and cut it up, cleansed it, roasted it, and placed it on the table, and immediately there was a racket and a thundering in the wood, and in at the door rushed the Muzhichek-no-bigger-than-your-thumb-but-with-moustaches-seven-versts-long, with a rick of hay on his head, and in his hand a bucket of water. He put the bucket of water in the midst of the courtyard, strewed the straw all over the courtyard, and set about counting his sheep. He saw that there was yet another ram missing, flew into a violent rage, stamped on the ground with his little feet, dashed into the hut, and flung himself violently upon Zor’ka. But this Zor’ka was not like his brothers. He seized the Muzhichek by his moustaches, and began to drag him about the hut and well towzle him, and cried at the same time —

“If you don’t know the ford
Don’t step overboard.”

The Muzhichek-no-bigger-than-your-thumb wriggled about from side to side, tore himself out of Zor’ka’s iron paws, though he left the ends of his moustaches in his fists, and ran away from him as hard as he could, Zor’ka after him — but whither, pray? He flew up into the air like fluff, vanished from before his eyes, and was gone. Zor’ka returned to the hut, and sat down by the window to await his beloved brothers. The brothers arrived, and were quite astonished to find him hale and whole, and the dinner ready.

But Zor’ka drew out from his girdle the ends of the long moustaches which he had torn from the monster, and said to his brothers, with a smile, “Look, my brothers, I have twisted your headache that you caught from the fire round my girdle! I see now that neither in strength nor stout-heartedness are ye fit comrades for me, so I will go on alone to discover the wondrous steed, but you go back to the village and plough land.” Then he took leave of his brothers, and went on his way.

Just as he was leaving the wood, Zor’ka came upon a crazy little hut, and in this crazy little hut he heard some one crying dolorously, “Whoever will give me to eat and to drink, him will I serve.” The good youth went into the hut, and saw that on the stove lay an armless, legless one, piteously groaning, and begging for meat and drink. Zor’ka gave him to eat and drink, and asked him who he was. “A hero was I, no whit worse than thou, but lo! I ate one of the rams of the Muzhichek-no-bigger-than-your-thumb, and he made me a cripple for the rest of my life. But because you have had compassion upon me, and given me both to eat and to drink, I will show you how to get the wondrous horse.” — “Show me, I pray, good man.” — “Go, then, to the river hard by, take a ferry-boat on it, ferry people across it the whole year round, take money from none, and — you’ll see what will happen.”

Zor’ka went to the river, took a ferry-boat, and a whole year round he ferried everybody across gratis. And it befell him once that he had to ferry over three old pilgrims. The old men got out on the bank, and began to undo their travelling purses, and the first pulled out a whole handful of gold, the second a whole roll of pure pearls, and the third the most precious stones. “There, that is for thy ferrying, good youth,” said the old men. “I can take nothing from you,” said Zor’ka, “because I am here, according to promise, to ferry every one across without taking money for it.” — “Then for what dost thou do it?” — “I seek the wondrous horse which is not woolly white, but silvery bright, and I can find it nowhere; so that is why good people have advised me to hire a ferry-boat here, and they said, you shall see what will happen." — "Well for thee, good youth, that thou hast been true to thy word; we can equip thee for thy journey. Here is a little ring for thy little finger, do but transfer it from finger to finger, and all thy wishes will be gratified." And the old men went on their way, but Zor'ka immediately put the ring on the other hand and said — "Let me be at once in those places where the Muzhichek-no-bigger-than-your-thumb lives and pastures his horse!" And immediately the tempest took him, and before he could wink once he found himself in front of a deep chasm amongst the gloomy rocks, and he saw that in this side of the chasm, but on the very edge of it, was sitting the Muzhichek-no-bigger-than-your-thumb-but-with-moustaches-seven-versts-long, and around him was pacing the wondrous horse that was not woolly white, but silvery bright; on its brow shone a moon, and many stars were in its mane. "Welcome, good youth!" screeched the monster to Zor'ka; "what brings you hither?" — "I am going to take your horse away from you." — "Nay, 'tis not for you nor for any one else to take him from me. If I but seize him by the mane and lead him to the edge of this abyss, nobody in the world can take him away from hence, though they strive for ever and ever." — "Well, then, let us exchange." — "Willingly. I don't mind exchanging with you. You bring me hither the daughter of your Tsar, and I will give you my horse, and you may lead him from field to field." — "Good," said Zor'ka, and he immediately began considering how he might get the better of the monster. He transferred his ring from finger to finger, and said, "Let the lovely Tsarevna immediately appear here before me." And in the twinkling of an eye the Tsarevna appeared before him, all pale and trembling, and fell down on her knees before him, and begged and prayed him: "Good youth, wherefore hast thou conjured me away from my father? Oh, spare my tender youth!" But Zor'ka whispered her, "I want to get the better of that monster there. I'll make believe to exchange you for the horse, and leave you with the monster as his wife; but you take this ring, and when you want to return home you have only to take it off one finger and put it on the other, and say, ‘I want to turn into a little needle to stick it into Zor’ka behind his collar,’ and you’ll see what will happen.” And as Zor’ka had said to the Tsarevna, so it fell out. He gave the Tsarevna to the monster in exchange for the wondrous horse, put his martial harness on the horse, mounted, and went on his way; but the Muzhichek-no-bigger-than-your-thumb laughed and shouted after him, “‘Tis well, good youth; thou hast exchanged a lovely damsel for a horse.” Zor’ka had not gone two or three versts when he felt something pricking him behind the collar. He put his hand there, and lo! there was a needle. He pitched it on the ground, and before him stood a lovely damsel, who wept and begged him to take her back to her dear father’s house. Zor’ka set her on the horse beside him, and galloped off as only heroes can gallop. He arrived at the Tsar’s court, and found the Tsar in an evil mood. The Tsar said to him, “I rejoice not at all, good youth, in thy faithful service, nor do I require the steed thou hast gotten for me, nor will I reward thee with aught according to thy merits.” — “And wherefore, pray, dear father Tsar?” — “Because, good youth, my daughter went away without my leave.” — “Nay, but, my Sovereign Lord and Tsar, it beseems thee not to trifle with me so: the Tsarevna was only this instant greeting me from out of her stronghold.” Then the Tsar rushed into the stronghold, where he still found his daughter, embraced her, and brought her out to the good youth. “Here is thy reward and my delight.” And the Tsar took the horse, and gave his daughter to Zor’ka to wife, and half his tsardom along with her into the bargain. And Zor’ka still lives with his wife, and cannot love her enough, and he rejoices in his good fortune without over-much boasting.

29

THE STORY OF THE TSAREVICH IVAN, AND OF THE HARP THAT HARPED WITHOUT A HARPER

Far, far behind the blue sea, behind the fiery abyss, in the void places, in the midst of the pleasant meadows, stood a lofty city, and in this city ruled Tsar Umnaya Golova with his Tsaritsa. There they lived a long time, and to their great delight a daughter was born to them, a most lovely Tsarevna whom they called Neotsyenaya, and the next year there was born to them another daughter just as lovely, and her they named the Tsarevna Beztsyenaya. In his joy Tsar Umnaya Golova made merry and gladdened his heart, and feasted and ate and drank to his heart's content. He gave his voevods three hundred and three buckets of mead to toast him in, and bade them regale his whole realm with beer for three days. Whoever liked might drink, and good measure was meted out to him. Now, when all the feastings and junketings were over, Tsar Umnaya Golova began to be troubled with the thought how to feed and nourish and train up his beloved daughters, and bring them under the golden crown. Great were the cares of the Tsar concerning his daughters. They were only fed with gold spoons, they were laid to sleep on eider-down beds, they were covered with sable coverlets, and three nurses took it in turn to drive away the flies when the Tsarevnas laid them down to sleep. Tsar Umnaya Golova bade them watch over his daughters, and take care that the lovely sun never looked into their room with his bright rays, that the cold dew never fell on them, and that the truant wind never dared to blow upon them. And for the defence and protection of his daughters, the Tsar placed beside them seventy-seven nurses, and seventy-seven guardians — a certain wise man advised him to do so.

Thus Tsar Umnaya Golova with his Tsaritsa and his two daughters lived and thrived together. I know not how many years passed by, and the Tsarevnas began to grow up, fill out, and become beautiful. Wooers already began to make their appearance at the Tsar's court, but Tsar Umnaya Golova was in no great haste to marry off his daughters. He reflected that a destined wooer cannot be avoided even on a swift horse, while a wooer that is not destined cannot be held fast by triple iron chains, and while he was thus thinking and casting the matter over in his mind, he suddenly heard a great noise and commotion. There was a scampering up and down and to and fro in his courtyard. The outdoor nurses were crying, the indoor nurses were howling, and the guardians were bawling with all their might. Tsar Umnaya Golova immediately rushed out and asked, "What is the matter?" Then the seventy-seven male attendants, and the seventy-seven female attendants all fell down on their knees before him. "We are guilty," they cried; "look now! the Tsarevnas Neotsyenaya and Beztsyenaya have been carried off by a whirlwind!" A strange thing had happened. The Tsarevnas had gone out to walk in the Tsar's garden to pluck a few sweet-peas and wrench off a red poppy or two, and feast upon a few ripe pippins. Suddenly a black cloud rose up above them (whence it came nobody knew), blew right into the eyes of the nurses and guardians, and by the time they had come to themselves and begun to rub their eyes, all trace of the Tsarevnas had vanished, there was nothing for the eye to see or the ear to hear. Tsar Umnaya Golova regularly flared up with rage. "I will deliver you all over to an evil death!" said he. "You shall perish miserably in dungeons; I will bid them shoot at you with peas in the gates. What! seven-and-seventy of you nurses, and seven-and-seventy of you guardians, could not look after two Tsarevnas!”

And now Tsar Umnaya Golova was in sore trouble and affliction; he neither ate, nor drank, nor slept; everything was a grief and a burden to him; banquets at his court there were none, and the sound of the fiddle and the shawm was heard there no more. Only sad grief sat beside him and sang her mournful dirge like the croaking of a crow of evil omen.

But time passes and sorrow with it. The life of man is like a variegated tapestry, interwoven with dark flowers and bright. Time moved onwards, and then another child was born to the Tsar, but this time it was not a Tsarevna, but a Tsarevich. Tsar Umnaya Golova rejoiced greatly; he called his son Ivan, and placed beside him old-men nurses, foster-fathers, wise teachers, and valiant voevods. And the Tsarevich Ivan began to grow and grow just as wheaten meal swells and swells when good yeast is put to it. He grew not by the day but by the hour, and what wondrous beauty, what a stately figure was his! One thing only weighed upon the heart of Tsar Umnaya Golova: good and beauteous was the Tsarevich Ivan, but there was nothing in him of heroic valour or of knightly skill. He did not tear off the heads of his comrades, nor break their arms and legs; he neither loved to play with lances of damask steel, nor with swords of tempered metal; he did not muster his strong battalions, nor hold converse with his voevods. Good and beauteous was the Tsarevich Ivan; he amazed all men with his wit and wisdom, and his sole delight was to play on the harp that needed no harper. And the Tsarevich Ivan played so that all men forgot all else as they listened. The moment he placed his fingers on the strings they sang and played with such a wondrous voice that the very dumb wept for sympathy, and the very legless danced for joy. Beautiful songs they were, but they did not replenish the Tsar’s treasure, nor defend the realm, nor smite the evil foe.

And one day Tsar Umnaya Golova bade them bring the Tsarevich Ivan before him, and thus he spake to him: “My beloved son, good art thou and beauteous, and I am well content with thee. One thing only grieves me. I do not see in thee the valour of a warrior, or the skill of a champion. Thou dost not love the clash of steel lances and the tempered blade has no charm for thee. Look now! I am growing old, and we have savage foes. They will come to us, make our realm the spoil of war, put to death our boyars and voevods, and lead captive me and my Tsaritsa, for thou canst not defend us.” The Tsarevich Ivan listened to the words of Tsar Umnaya Golova, and thus he made answer: “Dear Tsar-Gosudar and father! Not by strength but by craft are cities taken, not by cudgels but by cunning will I prevail against the foe. Make trial of my martial strength, make trial of my youthful valour. Look now! They tell me that I had two sisters, Tsarevnas, and that the truant whirlwind carried them away, and that the rumour of them vanished as if it were covered with snow. Call together now all thy princes, thy heroes, thy stalwart voevods, and bid them do thee the service of finding out my sisters, the Tsarevnas. Let them bring their damask blades, their iron lances, their glowing darts, and their countless soldiery; and if any one of them shall do thee this service, give to him my tsardom and bid me be unto him as a scullion, to lick his pots, and as a fool to make him sport. But if they cannot render thee this service, then I will render it thee, and then thou shalt see that my wisdom and my wit is sharper than a damask blade, and stronger than a lance of steel.”

And the words of the Tsarevich pleased the Tsar. He called together his boyars, his voevods, his strong and mighty champions, and he said to them: “Is there any one of you, my boyars, voevods, strong and mighty champions, hero enough to go seek my daughters? If so, to him will I give to choose which of my daughters he will to be his love, and with her he shall have half my tsardom.” The boyars, the voevods, and the champions looked one upon another, and hid one behind the other, but not one of them dared to speak. Then the Tsarevich Ivan bowed low before his father and said — “Dear Father-Gosudar! if none will take it upon him to render thee this paltry little service, give me thy blessing on my journey. I will go, I will seek my sisters, nor have I need of any royal gift from thee to enable me to do it.” — “Good!” replied Tsar Umnaya Golova; “my blessing go with thee. Take also of my treasures, silver and gold and precious stones, and if thou requirest soldiers, take a hundred thousand horse and a hundred thousand foot also.” And the Tsarevich Ivan replied, “I need neither silver nor gold, neither horse nor foot, neither the horse of the champion nor his sword and lance. I will take with me my sweet-sounding harp that plays of its own accord, and nothing else. And thou, my Sovereign Tsar, await me these three years, and if I come not again in the fourth year, then choose thee my successor.” Then the Tsarevich Ivan received his father’s blessing both in writing and by word of mouth, commended himself to God, took his harp under his arm, and went straight on his way whither his eyes led him. Whither was he to go to find his sisters? He went and went near and far, high and low. The tale of his going is soon told, but the deed that he did is not soon done. The Tsarevich Ivan went straight onwards, he went on and on, and as he went he played songs upon his harp; whenever the morning broke he arose again and wended his way along; when night fell he laid him down on the silky grass beneath the vast roof of the heavenly dome bright with stars. And at last he came to a dense forest. The Tsarevich Ivan heard a great cracking in this dense forest as if some one were smashing it, such a rumbling and a thundering was there in this forest. “What is this?” thought the Tsarevich Ivan; “a man must die once though no man can die twice.” And his eyes filled with terror, for he saw two wood demons fighting. One was belabouring the other with an uprooted oak, and the other was pitching into his comrade with a pine tree five fathoms long, and the pair of them were fighting with all their devilish strength. The Tsarevich Ivan approached them with his harp and struck up a dance. The demons stopped short, began to dance some devilish dance, and kicked up their heels with such vigour that the very welkin rang. They danced and they danced, they danced themselves off their legs and rolled on to the ground, and the Tsarevich Ivan began to talk to them. “Come now! what are you quarrelling for?” said he. “Ye, my children, are regular wood demons, and yet ye make fools of yourselves as if ye were common people.” Then one of the wood demons said to him, “Wherefore should we not fight? Hearken and judge betwixt us! We were going on our way and we found something. I said, ‘Tis mine; but he said, ‘Tis mine — we tried to divide it and we could not divide it.” — “And what then was it that you found?” asked the Tsarevich Ivan. — “This is what it was: a little bread-and-salt table-cloth, self-moving boots, and an invisible little cap. Dost thou want to eat and drink? Then spread out the little table-cloth, and twelve youths and twelve maids will bring thee mead to drink and sweetmeats as much as thou wilt! And if any one come that way, thou hast only to slip on the self-walking boots and thou canst go seven versts at one stride; nay, thou canst go even quicker than fourteen versts at one stride, so that no bird can fly level with thee and no wind can overtake thee. But if some unavoidable calamity threaten thee thou hast but to put on thy little invisible cap, and thou vanishest so completely that the very dogs cannot scent out thy whereabouts.” — “What a thing to quarrel about! Will ye agree to what I say if I divide what ye have found?” The wood demons agreed, and the Tsarevich Ivan said, “Look now! Run towards that little path, and whichever of you reaches it, he shall have the table-cloth, the boots, and the cap.” — “Ah, now!” cried the wood demons, “that is common sense! Do thou hold the treasures and we will do the running.” So away they went at full tilt, till nothing but their heels were visible and they disappeared in the forest. But the Tsarevich Ivan did not wait for them, he put the boots on his feet, the cap on his head, the little table-cloth under his arm, and made himself scarce as they call it. The wood demons came running back, but could not find the place where the

Tsarevich had stood; but Ivan the Tsarevich, striding with great strides, got out of the wood and saw the wood demons running round him and beyond him, and trying to scent him out, but they could find nothing, and fell to wringing their hands.

Ivan the Tsarevich went on his way; he went on and on, he strode and strode, and he came to the open plains. Three roads lay before him, and in the cross-way stood a wretched little hut turning round and round on hen's legs. And Ivan the Tsarevich said to it, "Izbushka! izbushka! turn your back to the wood and your front to me!" Then Ivan the Tsarevich stepped into the hut, and there in the hut was sitting Baba-Yaga bony-leg. "Fie! fie! fie!" said Baba-Yaga, "up to this day a Russian soul has been a sight unknown to my eyes and a sound unknown to my ears, and now a Russian soul appears before my very eyes! For what hast thou come, good youth?" — "Oh, thou senseless Granny!" said the Tsarevich Ivan to her, "thou shouldst feed me well first, and only after that shouldst thou begin to ask questions." Baba-Yaga leaped up in the twinkling of an eye, heated her little stove, fed Ivan the Tsarevich, and then began to ask him, "Whither dost thou go, good youth, and whither does thy way lie?" — "I go," said Ivan the Tsarevich, "to seek my sisters, the Tsarevna Neotsyenaya and the Tsarevna Beztsyenaya. But now, dear little Granny, tell me, if thou knowest, what way must I go, and where shall I find them?" — "I know where the Tsarevna Neotsyenaya lives!" said Baba-Yaga; "thou must take the middle road to get to her, but she lives in the white stone palace of her old husband the Forest Monster. The road thither is hard, far must thou go; and if thou gettest there 'twill boot thee little, for the Forest Monster will devour thee." — "Well, little Granny, perhaps it will choke him. A Russian man is a bony morsel, and God will not give him over to be eaten by a swine like that! Farewell! and thank you for your bread and salt!" And so the Tsarevich Ivan strode away from her, and look! — there, right across the plain, shone white and dazzling the stony palace of the Forest Monster. Ivan went up to it and saw the gate, and on the gate sat a sort of little devil who said, “No admittance!” — “Open, my friend!” replied Ivan the Tsarevich, “and I’ll give thee some vodka!” The little devil took the vodka, but he didn’t open the gate for all that. Then Ivan the Tsarevich went round about the palace and resolved to climb over the wall. He climbed up and along and never observed the trap into which he was falling, for on the top of the walls wires were spread all about, and the moment the Tsarevich Ivan touched one of these wires with his foot all the bells fell a-ringing. Ivan the Tsarevich looked, and out upon the balcony rushed his sister the Tsarevna Neotsyenaya and said, “Is it thou then that hast come, my beloved brother, Ivan the Tsarevich?” And the brother and the sister embraced and kissed each other. “Where shall I hide thee from the Monster of the Forest?” said the Tsarevna Neotsyenaya, “for I believe he will be here at once.” — “Where indeed, for I am no needle.” The brother and sister were still talking when suddenly there was the dull roar of a tempest and whirlwind, all the palace trembled, and the Monster of the Forest appeared; but Ivan the Tsarevich put on his little invisible cap and became invisible. And the Forest Monster said, “Where then is thy guest who climbed over the wall?” — “I have no guest here at all,” replied the Tsarevna Neotsyenaya, “but perhaps the sparrows have been flying over it and stuck to it with their wings!” — “Sparrows indeed! Methinks I smell the smell of a Russian soul here!” — “What are you dreaming about? You run about the wide world and do nothing but harass souls, and now you would vex other souls also!” — “Don’t be angry, Tsarevna Neotsyenaya, I do no harm to thy happiness, only I have now a desire to eat, and I should like to eat up this unknown,” said the Forest Monster. Ivan the Tsarevich, however, took off his invisible cap, bowed to the Forest Monster, and said, “Why do you want to eat me? Don’t you see what a lean and bony morsel I am! Rather let me regale you with a breakfast such as you have never eaten since the day of your birth, only take care that you don’t swallow your tongue and all!” Then Ivan the

Tsarevich spread out his little bread-and-salt table-cloth, the twelve youths and the twelve damsels appeared, and began to regale the Forest Monster with as much as ever he could eat. The Forest Monster ate and ate and ate, then he drank, and then he ate again, till he was unable to stir from the spot; he fell asleep in the very place where he sat. "And now farewell, my beloved sister!" said the Tsarevich Ivan; "yet tell me, dost thou not know the place where our sister the Tsarevna Beztsyenaya dwells?" — "I know it," replied the Tsarevna Neotsyenaya; "thou must go to her along the great sea Ocean, there she dwells in the very whirlpool of the ocean with her old husband the Sea Monster; but the way thither is hard. Far, very far must thou swim, and if thou gettest there it will boot thee little, for he will devour thee!" — "Well," said the Tsarevich Ivan, "he may chew me perhaps, but he will find me a hard morsel to swallow. Farewell, sister!" And Ivan the Tsarevich began to stride onwards, and he came to the great sea Ocean. By the shore stood a boat such as the Russian people use when they go a-fishing; the shrouds and gear were of linden bast, the sails of fine hair mats, and the boat itself was not welded with nails, but sown fast with birch-bark. On this ship the mariners were getting ready to go to sea, to sail to the Rock-Salt Island. "Won't you take me with you?" said the Tsarevich Ivan; "I will pay you nothing for my passage, but I will tell you tales so that you will never notice how long the journey is." The ship-folk agreed, and they sailed away upon the great sea Ocean, they sailed past the Rock-Salt Island; the Tsarevich Ivan told them tales, and they sailed and sailed. Suddenly, whence they knew not, a tempest came flying up, the thunder began to growl, and the ship began to quake. "Alas!" shrieked the ship's folk, "to our own destruction have we listened to this fair speaker, never shall we see our dear little homes again, we shall descend into the whirlpools of Ocean! There is no help for it, we must pay tribute to the Monster of the Sea; let us cast lots, it will fall upon the guilty!" They cast lots, and it fell upon the Tsarevich Ivan. "It can't be helped, my brothers!" said the Tsarevich Ivan.

“I thank you for your bread and salt; farewell, nor think amiss of me in time to come!” Then he took with him his self-walking boots, his little bread-and-salt table-cloth, his little invisible cap, and his harp that harped of its own accord, and they raised the good youth and swung him right out into the whirlpools of Ocean. The sea became calm, the boat sped on, and the Tsarevich Ivan went like a key to the bottom, and stood upright on his legs in the halls of the Monster of the Sea, the wondrous flower-grown halls of ocean! The Sea Monster was sitting on his throne with the Tsarevna Beztsyenaya by his side, and the Sea Monster said, “‘Tis a long time since I have eaten fresh flesh, and lo! it comes right into my very hands! Welcome, friend! Come here, and let me see at which end of you I may begin!” Then the Tsarevich Ivan began to say that he was the brother of the Tsarevna Beztsyenaya, and that amongst good people one behaved not so badly as to eat another up. “That is too much!” shrieked the Sea Monster; “he comes to force his own rules and regulations upon the homes of other people!” Ivan the Tsarevich saw that things were going badly, so he took out his harp that played of its own accord, and when he began playing a plaintive air, the Sea Monster began to pull wry faces, then fell to sighing like a blacksmith’s bellows, and wept and moaned just as if he had swallowed a needle; and then, when the Tsarevich Ivan struck up the air, “Let the merry churochki go round the little table!” why then indeed the very halls put their arms akimbo and fell a-dancing, while the Sea Monster could not skip up and down enough, but stamped with his feet, snapped with his fingers, rolled his eyes about, and pulled such faces that all the fishes flocked round to see, and nearly died for laughter. The Monster of the Sea thoroughly enjoyed himself. “Well!” said he, “‘twould be a sin to eat such a youth. Stop here, stay with us, sit down and be our guest, won’t you? Here are lots of herrings, pike, bream, and perch! Come, sit down at table, eat, drink, and be merry, my dear guest!” So Ivan the Tsarevich and the Tsarevna Beztsyenaya and the Sea Monster sat down, and ate and drank and made merry. A whale danced a German dance in front of them, the herrings sang glees, the carps performed on various instruments. After dinner the Sea Monster went to sleep, and the Tsarevna Beztsyenaya said, “My beloved brother, I am glad to see thee, dear guest; so far well, but ‘twill not last for ever. When he awakes the Sea Monster will eat thee if the evil humour takes him.” — “Tell me, darling sister,” said the Tsarevich Ivan, “how I may save our sister Neotsyenaya from the Forest Monster, and thee from the Monster of the Sea?” — “If you like you may try your luck, but you’ll find it, I think, a ticklish business. Behind the great sea Ocean here lies a large tsardom, and there reigns there not a Tsar but a Tsaritsa called the Tsar-Maiden. If thou makest thy way thither, and gettest into her fenced garden, then the Tsar-Maiden will become thy consort, and she only can free us and restore us to our father and mother. But the mischief of it is this — she has a strict guard which will allow no one to cross the shore, a guard all bristling with guns and lances, and fastened to each lance is a head, and all these poor little heads are the heads of the youths who came to woo the Tsar-Maiden. There were tsars, tsareviches, kings, kings’ sons, mightily strong warriors, and they came with hosts, and they sailed with ships, and were able to do nothing; all of them were stuck upon lances.” — “Look now!” said the Tsarevich Ivan, “what is there to fear? Terrible are the threats of Heaven and manifold is the mercy of God. Tell me but how I may get to the tsardom of the Tsar-Maiden.” — “But is it a wise thing to make thy way thither? Nevertheless I’ll give thee my beloved sturgeon; sit upon him and go thy way, and my swift runner the long-nosed sterlet shall swim before thee to show the way.” The brother and sister then said farewell, the Tsarevich Ivan sat him on the sturgeon and sped away, and the sterlet went on before to show the way. They fell in with some crabs, and they saluted the Tsarevich Ivan with their moustaches, and beat the drums with their clippers, and drove the little fishes out of the way. But the sea is not the same thing as the dry land. There was neither hemp nor bramble to hold on by, the way was slippery, as slippery as grease. The Tsarevich Ivan slipped and slipped. Then he put on his little invisible cap and saw that the guards of the Tsar-Maiden were opening wide their eyes and gazing afar off, and saw nothing that was going on beneath their noses, and they were still whetting their swords and sharpening their spears. And the Tsarevich Ivan came to the shore, the sturgeon set him safely on the quay, made an obeisance, and jumped into the water again; but the Tsarevich Ivan went past the guard without bending his knee, and entered the fenced garden as if he were the master there; he walked about, he walked all over it, he diverted himself, and ate of the luscious and transparent apples there.

And lo! the Tsarevich lingered and lingered there. And he saw twenty white doves flying towards a pond. They lighted on the ground and became twenty maidens lovely as the stars of heaven and as goodly as blood and milk. Amongst them the Tsar-Maiden was walking like a peacock, and said, “My beloved friends, ‘tis hot; ye see how the sun burns like an oven. Let us bathe! No evil eye can see us here. So strong a guard stands on the shore that not even a fly could pass by them.” — “A fly cannot pass them, eh! Look now what a big fly has passed them,” said the Tsarevich Ivan, and he took off his little invisible cap and bowed low to the Tsar-Maiden. The Tsar-Maiden and her comrades, as maidens are wont to do, shrieked and moaned, thought of running away and didn’t, made as though they wouldn’t look and looked all the same, and winked and blinked with their eyes. “Tsar-Maiden, and ye, lovely damsels,” said the Tsarevich Ivan, “wherefore do ye fear me? I am not a bear, I shall not bite you, I will take no one’s heart against her will; but if my destined bride be here, then am I her destined bridegroom.” Then the Tsar-Maiden turned as scarlet as the red poppy-flower, gave her white hand to the Tsarevich Ivan, and said, “Welcome, good youth! Whether thou be tsar or tsarevich, king or king’s son, I know not; but if thou hast come hither as a gentle guest, thy reception shall be as beseemeth a dear friend. Many brutal wooers have come to me who would have taken my virginal heart by force, such a thing as was never heard of since the beginning of the world. Come into my white stone halls and into my crystal chambers!”

The whole nation heard that their Tsarevna, the Tsar-Maiden, had got her a bridegroom after her own heart, and they came in swarms both of young and old, and shouted and rejoiced with all their might. And the Tsar-Maiden commanded that the royal cellar should be opened for them, and that they should be allowed to beat drums and guitars and play fiddles; and the next day they played at the merry banquet and the wedding feast. And there were banquets for three days and rejoicings for three weeks. And after that the Tsarevich Ivan spoke to his consort about releasing his sisters, one from the Monster of the Forest and the other from the Monster of the Sea. “My beloved consort, Ivan the Tsarevich,” she replied, “what would I not do for thee! Send and fetch me my hedgehog-lawyer and my sparrow-scribe, and let them send ukases to the Monster of the Forest and the Monster of the Sea, bidding them give up the sisters of Ivan the Tsarevich, or I will take them into custody and give them over to a cruel death.” So the hedgehog-lawyer and the sparrow-scribe wrote out ukases and sent them off. And the Monster of the Forest and the Monster of the Sea could do nothing, so they set free the Tsarevna Neotsyenaya and the Tsarevna Beztsyenaya. And the Tsarevich Ivan wrote this letter to his father, the Tsar Umnaya Golova: “Thou seest, O Sovereign Tsar, that not with strength and valour only but with craft and wit also can one prevail over all. And the self-playing harp is sometimes of as good service as the Damascus blade, although of course one must not lash it with a whip. And now come to me, dear father, and be my guest, and I will be with thee with my wife and my sisters. A goodly banquet is ready, and I wish thee long years and many.” And so Ivan the Tsarevich lived a joyous life, and waxed rich and prosperous. And he lived long and reigned gloriously, and feasted me right royally, so I made up this merry tale about him.

30

THE STORY OF GORE-GORINSKOE

There once lived in a village two brothers, one of whom was rich, and the other poor. With the rich man everything went swimmingly, in everything he laid his hand to he found luck and bliss; but as for the poor man, slave and toil as he might, fortune flew away from him. The rich man, in a few years, so grew out of bounds that he went to live in the town, and built him the biggest house there, and settled down as a merchant; but the poor man got into such straits that sometimes he had not even a crust of bread in the house to feed a whole armful of children, small — smaller — smallest, who all cried together, and begged for something to eat and drink. And the poor man began to repine at his fate, he began to lose heart, and his dishevelled head began to sink deeper between his shoulders. And he went to his rich brother in the town and said, “Help me! I am quite worn out.” — “Why should I not?” replied the rich man. “We can well afford it, only you must come and work it out with me all this week.” — “Willingly,” said the poor man; so he set to work, swept out the yard, curried the horses, and split up firewood. At the end of the week the rich brother gave him a *grisenka* in money and a large lump of bread. “Thanks even for that,” said the poor man, and was about to turn away homewards, when his brother’s conscience evidently pricked him, and he said, “Why dost thou slip off like that? To-morrow is my name day; stay and feast with us." And the poor man stayed to his brother's banquet. But, unfortunately for him, a great many rich guests assembled at his brother's — men of renown; and these guests his brother served most zealously, bowing down low before them, and imploring them as a favour to be so good as to eat and drink their fill. But he forgot altogether about his poor brother, who could only look on from afar, and see all the good people eating and drinking, and enjoying themselves, and making merry. At last the banquet was over, the guests arose, they began to thank the host and hostess, and the poor man also bowed to his very girdle. The guests also went home, and very merry they all were; they laughed, and joked, and sang songs all the way. And the poor man went home as hungry as ever, and he thought to himself, "Come, now, I will sing a song too, so that people may think that I too was not overlooked or passed over on my brother's name day, but ate to surfeit, and drank myself drunk with the best of them." And so the peasant began singing a song, but suddenly his voice died away. He heard quite plainly that some one behind his back was imitating his song in a thin piping voice. He stopped short, and the voice stopped short; he went on singing, and again the voice imitated him. "Who is that singing? come forth!" shrieked the poor man, and he saw before him a monster, all shrivelled up and yellow, with scarcely any life in it, huddled up in rags, and girded about with the same vile rags, and its feet wound round with linden bast. The peasant was quite petrified with horror, and he said to the monster, "Who art thou?" — "I am Gore-Gorinskoe; I have compassion on thee; I will help thee to sing." — "Well, Gore, let us go together through the wide world arm in arm; I see that I shall find no other friends and kinsmen there." — "Let us go, then, master; I will never desert thee." — "And on what shall we go, then?" — "I know not what you are going upon, but I will go upon you," and flop! in an instant he was on the peasant's shoulders. The peasant had not strength enough to shake him off. And so the peasant went on his way, carrying Woeful Woe on his shoulders, though he was scarce able to drag one leg after the other, and the monster was singing all the time, and beating time to it, and driving him along with his little stick. "I say, master, wouldst thou like me to teach thee my favourite song?

I AM WOE, the woefully woeful!
Girt about with linden bast rags,
Shod with beggars' buskins, bark stript.
Live with me, then; live with Woe,
And sorrow never know.
If you say you have no money,
You can always raise it, honey;
Yet provide a hard-won penny
'Gainst the day thou'lt not have any.

AND BESIDES," added Woe, "thou already hast this penny against an evil day, besides a crust of bread; let us, then, go on our way, and drink and be merry." So they went on and on, and drank and drank, and so they got home. There sat the wife and all the children, without food, weeping, but Woe set the peasant a-dancing. On the following day Woe began to sigh, and said, "My head aches from drinking!" and again he called upon the master to drink a thimbleful. "I have no money," said the peasant. — "But didn't I tell thee thou canst always raise it, honey? Pawn thy harrow and plough, sledge and cart, and let us drink; we'll have a rare time of it to-day, at any rate." What could he do? The peasant could not rid himself of Woe, so painfully tight did he sit upon him by this time, so he let himself be dragged about by Woe, and drank and idled away the whole day. And on the next day Woe groaned still more, and even began howling, and said, "Come, let us saunter about; let us drink away everything and pawn it. Sell thyself into slavery, and so get money to drink with.” The peasant saw that ruin was approaching him, so he had resort to subtlety, and he said to Woeful Woe, “I have heard our old men say that a treasure was buried about here a long time ago, but it was buried beneath such heavy stones that my single strength would be quite unable to raise it; now, if only we could raise this treasure, darling little Woe, what a fine time of loafing and drinking we should have together!” — “Come, then, and let us raise it; Woe has strength enough for everything.” So they went all about the place, and they came to a very large and heavy stone; five peasants together could not have moved it from the spot, but our friend and Woe lifted it up at the first go. And lo! beneath the stone there was indeed a coffer dark and heavy, and at the very bottom of this coffer something was sparkling. And the peasant said to Woe, “You just creep into the coffer and get out the gold, and I’ll stand here and hold up the stone.” So Woe crept into the coffer with great glee, and cried out, “Hie, master, here are riches incalculable! Twenty jars choke-full of gold, all standing one beside the other!” and he handed up to the peasant one of the jars. The peasant took the jar into his lap, and, as at the same time he let the stone fall back into its old place, he shut up Woeful Woe in the coffer with all the gold. “Perish thou and thy riches with thee!” thought the peasant; “no good luck goes along with thee.” And he went home to his own, and with the money he got from the jar he bought wood, repaired his cottage, added live-stock to his possessions, and worked harder than ever, and he began to engage in trade, and it went well with him. In a single year he grew so much richer, that in place of his hut he built him a large wooden house. And then he went to town to invite his brother and his wife to the house-warming. “What are you thinking of?” said his rich brother, with a scornful smile. “A little while ago you were naked, and had nothing to eat, and now you are giving house-warmings, and laying out banquets!” — “Well, at one time, certainly, I had nothing to eat, but now, thank God, I am no worse off than you. Come and see.”

The next day the rich brother went out into the country to his poor brother, and there on the pebbly plain he saw wooden buildings, all new and lofty, such as not every town merchant can boast of. And the poor brother who dwelt on the pebbles fed the rich brother till he could eat no more, and made him drink his fill; and after that, when the strings of his tongue were loosened, he made a clean breast of it, and told his brother how he had grown so rich. Envy overcame the rich brother. He thought to himself, “This brother of mine is a fool. Out of twenty kegs he only took one. With all that money Woe itself is not terrible. I’ll go there myself, I’ll take away the stone, take the money, and let Woe out from beneath the stone. Let him hound my brother to death if he likes.” No sooner said than done. The rich man took leave of his brother, but, instead of going home, he went to the stone. He pulled and tugged at it, and managed at last to push it a little to one side, so as to be able to peep into the coffer, but before he could pull his head back again, Woe had already skipped out, and was sitting on his neck. Our rich man felt the grievous burden on his shoulders, looked round, and saw the frightful monster bestriding him. And Woe shrieked in his ear, “A pretty fellow you are! You wanted to starve me to death in there, did you? You shall not shake me off again in a hurry, I warrant you. I’ll never leave you again.” — “Oh, senseless Woe!” cried the rich man, “indeed ‘twas not I who placed you beneath that stone, and ‘tis not me, the rich man, you should cleave to; go hence, and torment my brother.” But Woeful Woe would not listen to him. “No,” it screeched, “you lie! You deceived me once, but you shan’t do it a second time.” And so the rich man carried Woe home with him, and all his wealth turned to dust and ashes. But the poor brother now lives in peace and plenty, and sings jesting ditties of Woe the outwitted.

31

GO I KNOW NOT WHITHER — FETCH I KNOW NOT WHAT

By the blue sea, in a certain empire, there dwelt once upon a time a king who was a bachelor, and he had a whole company of archers, and the archers used to go a-hunting with him and shoot the birds that flew about, and provided meat for their master’s table. In this company served a youthful archer named Fedot, a clever marksman was he, never missing his aim, wherefore the King loved him better than all his comrades. One day he chanced to go a-hunting very early, even at break of day. He went into a dense, drear forest, and there he saw a dove sitting on a tree. Fedot stretched his bow, took aim, fired and broke one of the dove’s little wings, and the bird fell from the tree down upon the damp earth. The marksman picked it up, and was about to twist its neck and put it in his pouch, when the dove thus spoke to him: “Alas! young marksman! do not twist my poor little silly neck; drive me not out of the white world. ‘Twere better to take me alive, carry me home, put me in thy little window, and lo! the moment that slumber comes over me, at that very moment, I say, stroke me the wrong side down with thy right hand, and great good fortune shall be thine!” The marksman was much amazed. “Why, what is this?” thought he. “Mine eyes tell me ‘tis a bird, and naught else, yet it speaks with a human voice! Such a thing has never happened to me before.” So he took the bird home, placed it in the window-sill, and waited and waited. ‘Twas not very long before the bird laid its head beneath its wing and began to doze. Then the marksman raised his right hand and stroked it, quite lightly, the wrong side down. The dove instantly fell to the ground and became a maiden-soul, and so beautiful that the like of it can only be told in tales, but is neither to be imagined nor guessed at. And she spoke to the good youth who was the royal archer, and said: “Thou hast had wit enough to win me, have also wit enough to live with me. Thou art my predestined husband, I am thy pre-ordained wife.” They were immediately of one mind. Fedot married, lived at home, and rejoiced in his young wife, yet forgot not his service either. Every morning, before break of day, he took his weapon, went into the forest, shot various kinds of wild beasts, and took them to the royal kitchen. But it was plain that his wife was much tormented by these hunting expeditions, and one day she said to him: “Listen, my friend! I am fearful for thee! Every blessed day thou dost cast thyself into the forest, dost wander through fen and morass, and returnest home wet through and through, and we are none the better for it. What sort of a trade dost thou call this! Look now, I have a plan whereby thou also shalt profit by it. Get me now a hundred or two of rubles, and I’ll manage all the rest.” Then Fedot hastened to his comrades, and borrowed a ruble from one, and two rubles from another till he had collected about two hundred rubles. These then he brought to his wife. “Now,” said she, “buy me various kinds of silk with all this money!” The archer went and bought various kinds of silk with the two hundred rubles. She took them and said: “Be not sorrowful! Pray God and lay thee down to sleep, the morning is wiser than the evening!” So the husband fell asleep, and the wife went out upon the balcony, opened her book of spells, and immediately two invisible youths appeared before her and said: “What art thou pleased to command?” — “Take this silk, and in a single hour weave me a carpet more wondrous than anything to be found in the wide world, and let the whole kingdom be embroidered on this carpet, with all its cities and villages and rivers and lakes.” Then they set to work and wove the carpet, and it was wondrous to behold, wondrous above everything. In the morning the wife handed the carpet to her husband. “There,” said she, “take it to the market-place and sell it to the merchants; but look now! haggle not about the price, but take whatever they offer thee for it.” Fedot took the carpet, turned it round, hung it over his arm, and went to the market-place. A merchant saw him, ran up to him at once, and said to him: “Hearken to me, honoured sir, wilt thou not sell me that carpet?” — “Willingly!” — “And what then is the price?” — “Thou art a frequenter of the marts, therefore will I leave the price to thee!” The merchant fell a-thinking and a-thinking, he could not price the carpet — he was at his wits’ end. Another merchant came running up, and after him a third and a fourth till a great crowd of them collected; they looked at the carpet, marvelled at it, and could not fix the price. At that moment the royal steward passed by that way, saw the crowd, and wanted to know what all the merchants were talking about. So he went up to them and said, “What is the matter?” — “We cannot price this carpet,” said they. The steward looked at the carpet, and he also was amazed. “Hearken, archer!” said he, “tell me the real truth; where didst thou get this lordly carpet?” — “My wife wrought it!” — “How much dost thou want for it?” — “I myself know not the value of it; my wife bade me not to haggle over it, but to take whatever was offered.” — “Then what dost thou say to 10,000 rubles?” The archer took the money and gave up the carpet. Now this steward was always by the King, and ate and drank at his table. So he went to dine with the King now also, and took the carpet with him. “Would it please your Majesty to look at the carpet I have bought to-day?” The King looked, and saw there his whole realm just as if it were on the palm of his hand, and he heaved a great sigh. “Why, what a carpet is this! In all my life I have never seen such cunning craft. Say now, what wilt thou take for this carpet?” And the King drew out 25,000 rubles and gave them into the hand of the steward, but the carpet they hung up in the palace. “That is a mere nothing,” thought the steward, “I’ll make a much better thing out of the second chance.” So he immediately went in search of the archer, sought out his little hut, entered the dwelling-room, and the moment he saw the archer’s wife, at that very instant he forgot all about himself and the errand on which he had come. Nevertheless the steward manned himself with a great effort and turned sullenly homewards. From henceforth he bungled over everything he took in hand, and whether asleep or awake, he thought only of one thing, the wonderfully lovely little archeress.

The King observed the change in him, and asked him, “What ails thee? Has any great grief befallen thee?” — “Alas! my king and father, I have seen the wife of the archer — such a beauty the world knows not of nor has ever seen!” The King himself was seized with a desire to fall in love with her, and he also went to the abode of the archer. He entered the living-room, and saw before him a lady of a loveliness unspeakable. “Love’s burning chilblain oppressed his heart.” “Why should I remain a bachelor any longer?” thought he; “lo! now, I’ll marry this beauty, she’s too good for a mere archer. From her birth she was evidently meant to be a Queen!”

The King returned to his palace and said to the steward, “Hearken! thou hast had wit enough to show me the archer’s wife, that unspeakable beauty; thou must now have wit enough to remove the husband out of the way. I want to marry her myself. And if thou dost not remove him, look to thyself; although thou art my faithful servant, thou shalt be hanged upon a gallows!” Then the steward went about much more afflicted than before, and think as he would, he could not devise a method of getting rid of the archer. He wandered about the broad market-places and the narrow lanes, and there met him one day a miserable old hag. “Stay, thou King’s servant!” cried she. “I can see all thy thoughts, thou wantest help against thy unavoidable woe.” — “Ah, help me, dear little granny! I’ll pay thee what thou wilt!” — “Thou hast received the royal command to get rid of Fedot the archer. The thing is not so very easy. He indeed is simple, but his wife is frightfully artful. Well now, we’ll hit upon an errand which will not be accomplished so speedily. Go to the King and say that he must command the archer *to go I know not whither, and fetch I know not what*. Such a task as that he'll never accomplish, though he live for ever and ever; either he will vanish out of knowledge altogether, or if he does come back, it will be without arms or legs." The steward rewarded the old hag with gold, and hastened back to the King, and the King sent and commanded the archer to be brought before him. "Well, Fedot! thou art my young warrior, and the first in my corps of archers. Render me then this service: *Go I know not whither, and fetch me I know not what!* And mark me, if thou bring it me not back, 'tis I, the King, who say it to thee, thy head shall be severed from thy shoulders." The archer turned to the left, quitted the palace, and came home very sad and thoughtful. And his wife asked him: "Why art thou so sorrowful, darling; has any misfortune befallen thee?" — "The King has sent me I know not whither to fetch I know not what. 'Tis through thy beauty that this ruin has come upon us!" — "Yes, indeed! this service is no light one! It takes nine years to get there, and nine years to get back again, eighteen years in all, and God only knows if it can be managed even then!" — "What's to be done then, and what will become of me?" — "Pray God and lie down to sleep, the morning is wiser than the evening. To-morrow thou wilt know all." The archer lay down to sleep, and his wife sat watching till midnight, opened her book of spells, and the two youths immediately appeared before her. "What is thy pleasure, and what thy command?" — "Do ye know how one can manage to go I know not whither, and fetch I know not what?" — "No, we do not know." She closed the book, and the youths disappeared from before her eyes. In the morning the archeress awoke her husband. "Go to the King," said she, "and ask for gold from the treasury for thy journey. Thou hast a pilgrimage of eighteen years before thee. When thou hast the money, come back to me to say farewell." The archer went to the King, received a whole purseful of money, and returned to say good-bye to his wife. She gave him a pocket-handkerchief and a ball, and said: "When thou goest out of the town, throw this ball in front of thee, and whithersoever it rolls, follow it. Here too is my pocket-handkerchief; when thou dost wash thyself, wherever thou mayst be, always dry thy face with this handkerchief.” The archer took leave of his wife and of his comrades, bowed low on all four sides of him, and went beyond the barriers of the city. He threw the ball in front of him; the ball rolled and rolled, and he followed hard after it.

A month or so passed away, and then the King called the steward and said to him: “The archer has departed to wander about the wide world for eighteen years, and it is plain that he will not return alive. Now eighteen years are not two weeks, and no little disaster may have befallen him by the way; go then to the archer’s house and bring me his wife to the palace!” So the steward went to the archer’s house, entered the room, and said to the beautiful archeress: “Hail, thou wise woman! The King commands thee to present thyself at court!” So to the court she went. The King received her with joy and led her into his golden halls, and said to her: “Wilt thou be a Queen? I will make thee my spouse!” — “Where was such a thing ever seen, where was such a thing ever heard of, to take a wife away from her living husband? Though he be nothing but a simple archer, he is for all that my lawful husband.” — “If thou come not willingly, I’ll take thee by force!” But the beauty laughed, stamped upon the floor, turned into a dove, and flew out of the window.

The archer passed through many countries and kingdoms, and the ball kept rolling ever onwards. Whenever they came to a river the ball expanded into a bridge, and whenever the archer wished to rest, the ball widened into a downy bed. Whether the time be long or whether it be short the tale is quickly told, though the deed be not quickly done; suffice it to say that at last the archer came to a vast and wealthy palace; the ball rolled right up against the door and vanished. The archer fell a-thinking. “I had better go straight on,” thought he, so he went up the staircase into a room, and there met him there three lovely damsels. “Whence and wherefore hast thou come hither, good man?” said they. “Alas! lovely damsels, ye ask me not to rest from my long journey, but ye begin to torment me with questionings. First ye should give me to eat and drink and let me rest, and then only should ye ask me of my tidings!” They immediately laid the table, gave him to eat and drink, and made him lie down to rest. The archer slept away his weariness, rose from his soft bed, and the lovely damsels brought him a washing-basin and an embroidered towel. He washed himself in the clear spring-water, but the towel he would not take. “I have my handkerchief wherewith to wipe my face,” said he, and he drew out the handkerchief and began to dry himself. And the lovely damsels fell a-questioning him. “Tell us, good man! whence hast thou got that handkerchief?” — “My wife gave it to me.” — “Then thou must have married one of our kinswomen.” Then they called their old mother, and she looked at the handkerchief, recognizing it the same instant, and cried: “This is indeed my daughter’s handkerchief!” Then she began to put all manner of questions to the archer. He told her how he had married her daughter, and how the King had sent him *I know not whither, to fetch I know not what*. “Alas! my dear son-in-law, not even I have heard of this marvel. But come now, perchance my servants may know of it.” Then the old woman fetched her book of spells, turned over the leaves, and immediately there appeared two giants. “What is thy pleasure, and what is thy command?” — “Look now, my faithful servants, carry me together with my son-in-law to the wide sea Ocean, and place us in the very centre of it — in the very abyss.” Immediately the giants caught up the archer and the old woman, and bore them, as by a hurricane, to the wide sea Ocean, and placed them in the centre of it — in the very abyss; there they stood like two vast columns, and held the archer and the old woman in their arms. Then the old woman cried with a loud voice, and there came swimming up to her all the fish and creeping things of the sea, so that the blue sea was no longer to be seen for the multitude of them. “Hark! ye fishes and creeping things of the sea. Ye who swim everywhere, have ye perchance heard how to go *I know not whither, to fetch I know not what?*” And all the fishes and creeping things exclaimed with one voice, “No, we have never heard of it.” Suddenly a lame old croaking frog forced its way to the front and said, “Kwa, kwa; I know where this marvel is to be found.” — “Well, dear, that is just what I want to know,” said the old woman, and she took up the frog and bade the giants carry her and her son-in-law home. In an instant they found themselves in their own courtyard. Then the old woman began to question the frog. “How and by what road can my son-in-law go?” And the frog answered, “This place is at the end of the world — far, far away. I would gladly lead him thither myself, but I am so frightfully old, I can scarcely move my legs. I could not get there in fifty years.” The old woman sent for a big jar, filled it with fresh milk, put the frog inside, and said to her son-in-law, “Hold this jar in thy hand and the frog will show thee the way.” The archer took the jar with the frog, took leave of his mother-in-law and his sisters-in-law, and set out on his way. On he went, and the frog showed him the way. Whether it be far or near, long or short, matters not; suffice it that he came to the fiery river; beyond this river was a high mountain, and on this mountain a door was to be seen. “Kwa, kwa,” said the frog, “let me out of the jar, we must cross over this river.” The archer took it out of the jar and placed it on the ground. “Now, my good youth, sit on me. More firmly. Don’t be afraid. Thou wilt not smash me.” The youth sat on the frog and pressed it to the very earth. The frog began to swell; it swelled and swelled till it was as large as a haystack. All that the archer now thought of was the risk of falling off. “If I fall off it will be the death of me,” thought he. The frog, when it had done swelling, took a leap and leaped with one big bound right across the fiery stream, and again made itself quite little. “Now, good youth, go through that door and I’ll wait for thee here; thou wilt come into a cavern, and take care to hide thyself well. In a short time two old men will come; listen to what they are saying, and see what they do, and when they are gone, say and do as they.” The archer went into the mountain, opened the door, and in the cavern it was dark enough to put one’s eyes out. He fumbled his way along and felt all about him with his arms till he felt an empty chest, into which he got and hid himself. And now, after he had waited some time, two old men entered and said: “Hi! Shmat-Razum! come and feed us.” At that very instant — there’s no telling how — lightning-flashes lit candelabras, it thundered plates and dishes, and various wines and meats appeared upon the table. The old men ate and drank, and then they commanded — “Shmat-Razum! take it all away.” And immediately there was nothing, neither table, nor wine, nor meats, and the candelabras all went out. The archer heard the two old men going out, crept out of the chest, and cried: “Hi! Shmat-Razum!” — “What is your pleasure?” — “Feed me.” Again everything appeared. The candelabras were lighted, the table was covered, and all the meats and drinks appeared upon it. The archer sat down at the table and said, “Hi! Shmat-Razum. Come, brother, and sit down with me, let us eat and drink together. I can’t stand eating all alone.” And an invisible voice answered him: “Alas! good man, whence hath God sent thee? ‘Tis thirty years since I have served right trustily the two old men here, and during all that time they have never once asked me to sit down with them.” The archer looked about him and was amazed. He saw nobody, yet the meats disappeared from the dishes as if some one was sweeping them away, and the wine bottles lifted themselves up, poured themselves into the glasses, and in a trice the glasses were empty. Then the archer went on eating and drinking, but he said: “Hearken, Shmat-Razum! Wilt thou be my servant? Thou shalt have a good time of it with me.” — “Why should I not? I have long been growing weary here, and thou, I see, art a good man.” — “Well, get everything ready and come with me.” The archer came out of the cave, looked around him, and there was nothing. “Shmat-Razum, art thou there?” — “I am here. Fear not. I’ll never desert thee.” “Right,” replied the archer, and he sat him on the frog. The frog swelled out and leaped across the fiery stream; he placed it in the jar, and set off on his return journey. He came to his mother-in-law and made his new servant regale the old woman and her daughters right royally. Shmat-Razum feasted them so bountifully that the old woman very nearly danced for joy, and ordered the frog three jars of fresh milk every nine days for its faithful services. The archer then took leave of his mother-in-law and wended his way homewards. He went on and on till he was utterly exhausted, his swift feet trembled beneath him, and his white arms sank down by his side. “Alas!” said he, “Shmat-Razum, dost thou not see how weary I am? My legs fail me.” — “Why didst thou not tell it me long ago? I will bring thee to the place alive and well.” And immediately the archer was seized by a whirlwind and carried through the air so quickly that his hat fell from his head. “Hi! Shmat-Razum! Stop a minute. My hat has fallen from my head.” — “Too late, master. Thou canst not get it. Thy cap is now 5000 miles behind thee.” Towns and villages, rivers and forests, melted away beneath the feet of the archer.

And now the archer was flying over the deep sea, and Shmat-Razum said to him: “An thou wilt let me, I would make a golden bower on this sea, and thou wilt be able to rest and be happy!” — “Do so then,” said the archer, and straightway they began descending towards the sea. Then, for a moment, the waves splashed high, and then an islet appeared, and on the islet was a golden pleasure-house. Shmat-Razum said to the archer: “Sit in this pleasure-house and rest and look out upon the sea; three merchant vessels will sail by and stop at the islet. Thou must invite the merchants hither, hospitably entertain them, and exchange me for three wondrous things which the merchants will bring with them. In due time I will return to thee again.” The archer kept watch, and lo! from the west three ships came sailing up, and the merchantmen saw the islet and the golden pleasure-house. “‘Tis a marvel!” said they; “how many times have we not sailed hither, and nothing was to be seen but the sea! and now, behold! a golden pleasure-house is here. Come, friends, let us put to shore and feast our eyes upon it!” So immediately they lowered the sails and cast the anchor, three of the merchants sat them in a light skiff, and they came to the shore. “Hail, good man!” — “Hail, ye wayfaring merchants, ye men of many marts! be so good as to turn in to me, stroll about at your ease, make merry and repose; this pleasure-house was built expressly for guests that come by sea!” The merchants entered the bower and sat them down on footstools. “Hi! Shmat-Razum!” cried the archer; “give us to eat and drink.” The table appeared, and on the table was wine and savoury meats; whatever the soul desired was there with the wishing. The merchants sighed for envy. “Come,” said they, “let us make an exchange. Thou give us thy servant, and take from us what marvels thou likest best.” — “But what marvels have ye then?” — “Look and see!” And one of the merchants drew out of his pocket a little casket, and he had no sooner opened it than a lovely garden spread out all over the island with fragrant flowers and pleasant paths; but when he shut the casket the garden immediately disappeared. The second merchant drew from beneath the folds of his garment an axe, and began to tap with it: “Rap-tap!” out came a ship. “Rap-tap!” out came another ship. A hundred times he rapped, and made a hundred ships with sails and guns and crews complete; the ships sailed, the sailors stood by the guns and took orders from the merchant. The merchant gloried in it for a while, but then he concealed his axe and the ships vanished out of sight just as if they had never been. The third merchant produced a horn, blew into one end of it, and immediately an army appeared, both horse and foot, with cannons and banners, and through all the ranks went the roll of martial music, and the armour of the warriors flashed like fire in the sunlight. The merchant rejoiced in it all, then he took his horn and blew into the other end of it, and there was nothing to be seen, the whole of that martial might was no more.

“Your marvels are well enough, but they are of no use to me,” said the archer; “your hosts and your fleets would do honour to a Tsar, but I am only a simple archer. If you would change with me, then must you give me all your three wonders in exchange for my one invisible servant." — "But won't that be too much?" — "Know ye that I'll make no other exchange." The merchants considered amongst themselves: "What's the use of this garden, these ships, and these hosts to us? 'Twill be better to make the exchange; at any rate we shall always be able to eat and drink our fill without the least trouble." So they gave the archer their wonders, and said: "Well, Shmat-Razum, we'll take thee with us; wilt thou serve us well and loyally?" — "Why should I not serve you? 'Tis all one with me with whom I live." The merchants returned to their ships and regaled all their crews right royally. "Hi! Shmat-Razum! bestir thyself!" And every one on board ate and drank his fill and lay down and slept heavily. But the archer sat in his golden bower and grew pensive, and said: "Alas! my heart yearns after my faithful servant, Shmat-Razum. I wonder where he is now!" — "I am here, master!" The archer was glad. "Is it not time for us to hasten home?" And he had no sooner spoken than a whirlwind as it were seized him and bore him into the air.

The merchants awoke from their sleep and wanted to drink away the effects of their carouse: "Hi! Shmat-Razum, give us some more drink by way of a pick-me-up!" But no one answered, no one rendered them that service. Order and shout as they might, things remained precisely as they were. "Well, gentlemen! this sharper has befooled us! The devil take him, and may the island vanish and the golden bower perish." Thus the merchants lamented and lamented, then they spread their sails and departed whither their business called them.

The archer flew back to his country, and descended in a waste place by the blue sea. "Hi, Shmat-Razum, can we not build us a little castle here?" — "Why not? It shall be ready immediately." And immediately the castle sprang up, more beautiful than words can tell, 'twas twice as good as a royal palace. The archer opened his casket and a garden immediately appeared round the castle with pleasant country paths and marvellous flowers. There sat the archer at the open window, and quite fell in love with his garden. Suddenly a dove flew in at the window, plumped down upon the ground, and turned into his lovely young wife. They embraced and greeted each other. And the wife said to the archer, “Ever since thou didst leave the house I have been flying as a blue dove among the woods and groves. How happily we will now live together for evermore!”

Early the next morning the King came out on his balcony and looked towards the blue sea, and behold! on the very shore stood a new castle, and round the castle was a green garden. “Who then is this presumptuous stranger who builds on my land without my leave?” Then his couriers ran thither, asked questions, and came back and told him that this castle was built by the archer, and he himself dwelt in this castle and his wife with him. The King was more angry than ever, and he bade them assemble a host and go to the shores of the sea, root up the garden, smash the castle into little bits, and bring the archer and his wife to him. The archer saw the King’s army coming against him, and it was very strong; then he seized his axe quickly and rapped with it, “Rap-tap!” Out came a ship. He rapped one hundred times, and made one hundred ships. Then he seized his horn and blew once, and a host of footmen rolled out. He blew in the other end, and a host of horse rolled out. The commanders of all the corps came rushing up to him, and asked him for orders. The archer bade them begin the battle. The music struck up, the drums rolled, the regiments moved forwards against the royal host. The infantry, like a solid wall, broke down their centre, the horse cut them off at the wings and took them captive, and the guns from the fleet played upon the capital. The King saw that all his host was flying, rushed forward to stop them — but how? He could not do it, and in a moment he was swept from his horse in the midst of the fierce fight and trampled underfoot. When the fight was over the people assembled together and begged the archer to accept the whole realm from their hands.

To this he gave his consent, and ruled that kingdom peaceably all the days of his life.

32

KUZ’MA SKOROBOGATY

There was once a peasant and his wife, and they had one son, and he, though good, was a block-head, and no good at all for working in the fields. “Husband mine,” said the mother, “there is not much wit in our son, and he will eat us out of house and home; send him away, let him live by himself, and make his own way in the world.” So they sent away their son; they gave him a most wretched little nag, a tumble-down hut in the wood, and a cock with five hens. And little Kuz’ma lived alone, all alone in the dark wood.

The little she-fox scented out the fowls that were right under her very nose in the wood, and determined to pay a visit to Kuz’ma’s hut. One day little Kuz’ma went out to hunt, and no sooner had he left the hut than the little fox, who was on the watch all the time, ran up, killed one of the hens, roasted it, and ate it up. Little Kuz’ma returned, and behold! one of the hens was gone. And he thought: “I suppose the vulture must have pounced down on it!” The next day he again went out hunting. He happened to fall in with the fox, and she asked him: “Whither away, little Kuz’ma?” — “I am going a-hunting, little fox!” — “Well, good-bye!” And immediately she scampered off to his hut, killed another hen, cooked it, and ate it. Little Kuz’ma came home and counted his hens, and another was missing. And it occurred to him: “What if the little fox has tasted of my hens!” On the third day he nailed up the door and window of his hut strongly, so strongly, and went about his business as usual. And the fox turned up from somewhither and said to him: “Whither away, little Kuz’ma?” — “I go a-hunting, little fox!” — “Well, good-bye!” Off she ran to Kuz’ma’s hut, and he followed her track back too. The fox ran all round the hut, and saw that the door and window were nailed up strongly, oh so strongly; how was she to get into the hut? So up she climbed and disappeared down the chimney; then up came Kuz’ma and caught the fox. “Ah-ha!” cried he; “look what a thief pays me visits! Wait a bit, my little lady; you shall not get out of my hands alive.” Then the little fox began to implore Kuz’ma: “Don’t kill me! I’ll get thee betrothed to a rich bride. Only please roast me one more fowl, the fattest, with lots of nice oil!” Little Kuz’ma fell a-thinking, and then he killed one more fowl for the little fox: “There, eat, little fox, and much good may it do thee!” The fox ate it up, licked her chaps, and said: “Behind this wood is the tsardom of the great and terrible Tsar Ogon, his wife is the Tsaritsa Molnya, and they have a daughter, a most beauteous Tsarevna; I’ll marry thee to her.” — “Who would take a poor fellow like me?” — “Silence! that’s not thy business.” And the little fox set off to Tsar Ogon and the Tsaritsa Molnya. She ran all the way to them, entered their palace, made a low obeisance, and said: “Hail, mighty, potent Tsar Ogon, and terrible Tsaritsa Molnya!” — “Hail to thee, fox! What nice little piece of good news hast thou brought us?” — “Well, I have come to you as a match-maker. You have the bride and I have the young bridegroom, Kuz’ma Skorobogaty.” — “Where is he buried that he does not come himself?” — “He cannot quit his principality. He rules over the wild beasts, and takes his pleasure with them.” — “So that’s the sort of bridegroom you present us with! Well, go back to him and say that he must send us forty forties of gray wolves, and then we’ll accept him as the bridegroom.” Then the little fox ran to the meadows which lay beneath this very wood and began rolling about in these meadows. A wolf came running up and said: “I see, gossip, that you’ve had a good feed somewhere or you would not roll about like that.” — “I wish I wasn’t so full; I’ve been at a banquet with the Tsar and the Tsaritsa. Do you mean to say that you’ve not been invited there, gossip? Impossible! Why, all the wild beasts were there, and as for the sables and ermines there was no end to them! The bears were still sitting there when I left, and eating like anything!” The wolf began to beg the fox humbly: “Little fox, can’t you take me to the Tsar’s banquet!” — “Why not! Hearken! Go you and collect by to-morrow forty forties of your brethren, the gray wolves, and I’ll lead the whole lot of you thither.” On the following day the wolves assembled and the fox led them to the Tsar’s white stone palace, placed them all in rows, and announced to the Tsar: “Mighty and potent Tsar Ogon and terrible Tsaritsa Molnya, thy destined son-in-law has sent thee gifts; lo! a whole herd of gray wolves does obeisance to you, and the number of them is forty forties.” The Tsar bade them drive all the wolves into the enclosure, and said to the fox: “If my destined son-in-law is able to send me wolves as a present, let him now also send me just as many bears.” The little fox ran to little Kuz’ma and bade him roast another fowl, ate her fill of it, and ran off again to the fenced meadows of the Tsar. Thither she went and fell a-rolling about under the selfsame wood. And out of the wood came running a shaggy bear and looked at the fox. “Well, gossip fox,” said he, “you have plainly had your fill, or what has come over you to make you roll about in the grass so merrily?” — “Had my fill! I should think so. Why I’ve been to the Tsar’s banquet; there was a whole lot of us beasts there, and of sables and ermines no end. The wolves are eating there now, and a nice dinner they are making of it.” Bruin straightway began to beg the fox to let him go: “Little fox, won’t you lead me also to the Tsar’s banquet?” — “Very well; hearken. Bring together by to-morrow forty forties of black bears, and I’ll lead you thither with pleasure, for of course the Tsar’s cooks would not make ready for you alone.” Old bandy-legs wandered all about the woods, proclaimed the news to all the bears, and got together as many bears as the fox had commanded, and she led them to the Tsar's white stone palace, arranged them in rows, and announced: "Mighty and potent Tsar Ogon, and terrible Tsaritsa Molnya, your destined son-in-law salutes you with a present of forty forties of black bears." The Tsar bade them drive the bears also into the enclosure, and said to the fox: "If my destined son-in-law can send me so many bears and wolves as a gift, let him now send us also just as many martens and sables." The fox again hastened off to Kuz'ma, bade him roast the last hen, together with the cock, and when she had eaten them in his honour she went again to the fenced meadows of the Tsar, and began rolling about in the grass. A sable and a marten came running by. "Where have you been feeding so fatly, sly Mrs. Foxy?" they asked. "What! ye live in the wood and yet don't know that I am held in great honour by the Tsar? This day I have conducted the wolves and the bears to his banquet; by this time they will be unable to tear themselves away from the Tsar's tit-bits; never have they had such a feed from the day of their birth." Then the sable and the marten also began wheedling the fox. "Dear little dovey gossip! wilt not thou lead us to the Tsar? We will only look on afar off while the others eat." — "If ye will bring together forty forties of your sables and martens a dinner shall be got ready for the whole lot of you. But a couple of you all alone would not even be admitted into the courtyard." The next day the sables and the martens came together, and the fox led them to Tsar Ogon, made obeisance to him on behalf of his future son-in-law, and presented him with the forty forties of sables and martens. The Tsar accepted the gift, and said: "Thanks! Tell my destined son-in-law to come to me himself; we want to have a look at him, and it is time he saw his bride."

The next day the little fox again came running to court. The Tsar asked her: "Where, then, is our destined son-in-law?" The little fox replied: "He bade me bow low before you and say that to-day he cannot manage to come anyhow!" — "How so?" "Well, he is frightfully busy; he is getting together all his things to come to you, and just now he is counting up his treasures. So now he begs you to lend him a corn-measure, he must measure his silver money; his corn-measures are all choke-full of gold." The Tsar, without more ado, gave the fox the corn-measure, but he said to himself: "Well done, fox! This is something like a son-in-law that has fallen to our lot. He actually measures his gold and silver with corn-measures!" The next day the fox again came running to court and returned the Tsar his corn-measure (but she had stuck little silver pieces all about the corners of it), and said: "Your destined son-in-law, Kuz'ma Skorobogaty, bade me bow low to you and say that to-day he'll be with you with all his riches." The Tsar was delighted, and bade them have everything ready for the reception of the precious guest. But the little fox set off for Kuz'ma's hut, and there, for the last two days, Kuz'ma had been lying on the stove — hungry, oh! so hungry, and waiting. The fox said to him: "Why dost thou lie down like that? I have got thee a bride from Tsar Ogon and the Tsaritsa Molnya. Let us come to them as guests and celebrate the wedding!" — "Why, fox! art thou out of thy wits? How can I go when I haven't even clothes to cover me?" — "Go! saddle thy nag, I say! and don't bother thy head about that!" Kuz'ma brought out his sorry jade from beneath the shed, covered it with a mat, put on the reins, jumped on its back, and set off after the fox at a light trot. They were already drawing near to the palace, when they came across a little bridge directly in their path. "Jump off thy horse!" said the fox to Kuz'ma, "and saw through the buttresses of this bridge." So little Kuz'ma fell a-sawing with all his might, and sawed through the buttresses of the bridge. Down came the bridge with a crash. "Now, strip thyself naked, throw thy horse and all thy clothes into the water, and roll about in the sand, and wait for me!" That's what the fox said; and then off she ran to the Tsar and the Tsaritsa, and cried to them from afar: "Hi, dear little father! Such an accident! Help, help!" — "What's the matter, dear little foxy?" asked the Tsar. — "Why, this; the bridges in your tsardom are not strong enough.

Your destined son-in-law was coming to you with all his riches, and this precious bridge broke down beneath the weight of them, and all his wealth and all his people have fallen in, and he himself is lying on the bridge more dead than alive!” The Tsar made a great to-do, and shrieked at his servants, and cried: “Haste ye, haste ye! as quickly as ye can, and take of my royal robes for Kuz’ma Skorobogaty, and save him from mortal harm!” And the envoys of the Tsar ran as fast as they could to the bridge, and there they saw little Kuz’ma rolling about in the sand. They picked him up, washed and dried him all over, arrayed him in the royal robes, curled his hair, and led him respectfully to the palace. The Tsar, full of joy that his destined son-in-law had been delivered from such peril, bade them ring all the bells, fire all the guns, and celebrate the wedding at once. So they crowned Kuz’ma as the groom of the Tsarevna, and he dwelt with his father-in-law, and sang songs all day; and the fox was held in high honour at court till life at court ceased to bore her, and she had no longer any desire to return to the woods.

33

THE TSAREVNA LOVELINESS-INEXHAUSTIBLE

A long time ago, far from our days, in a certain tsardom in a certain Empire lived a famous Tsar Afron Afronovich, and he had three youthful sons: the eldest the Tsarevich Dimitry, the second the Tsarevich Vasily, and the youngest the Tsarevich Ivan. The sons of Afron were all grown up; the youngest had reached his seventeenth year, while Tsar Afron himself had left sixty years behind him. And once, as Tsar Afron fell a-thinking and looked at his sons, his heart grew sad: “Look now!” thought he, “life is a good thing to these youths, and they rejoice in God’s fair world; but, as for me, I feel old age drawing nigh, and divers diseases begin to afflict me, and the wide world has now but little delight for me. How will it be with me henceforth? How shall I escape old age?” Thus he thought and thought, and so he fell asleep. And a vision appeared to the Tsar. Somewhere or other beyond lands thrice-nine, in the Empire of Thrice-ten, dwelt the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible, the daughter of three mothers, the granddaughter of three grandmothers, the sister of nine brothers; and under the pillow of this Tsarevna was preserved a flask of living-water, and whoever drank of this water instantly became thirty years younger. No sooner did the Tsar Afron awake from his sleep, than he called together his children and the wise men of his realm, and said to them: “Interpret me this dream, ye my sages and cunning counsellors. What shall

I do, and how can I discover this Tsarevna?” The sages were silent. The cunning counsellors stroked their long gray beards, looked up and down, scratched their heads, and thus they answered the Tsar Afron: “Oh, Sovereign Tsar! though we have not seen this thing with our eyes, yet our ears have heard of this Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible; but how to find her, and which way to get at her, that we know not.” No sooner did the three Tsarevichs hear this, when with one voice they thus implored their father the Tsar: “Dear father Tsar! give us thy blessing, and send us to the four corners of the earth, that we may see people and show ourselves and discover the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible.” The father agreed, gave them provision for the journey, took leave of them tenderly, and sent them off to the four corners of the earth. When the two elder brothers got beyond the city gates they turned to the right, but the youngest brother, the Tsarevich Ivan, turned to the left. The elder brothers had got only a hundred miles and no more from home, when they met an old man, and he asked them: “Whither are ye going, young men? Is your journey far?” — But the Tsareviches replied: “Take yourself off, old rogue! What business is it of yours?” The old man said nothing but went on his way. The Tsareviches went on and on, all that day and the next and a whole week, and they came to such a wilderness that they could see neither earth nor sky, nor any living being, nor any habitation; and in the deepest depth of this wilderness they met another old man, even older than the first. “Hail, good youths!” said he to the Tsareviches. “Are ye truants and rest, or are ye in quest?” — “Why, we are in quest of something, of course. We are going in search of the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible, with her flask of living-water!” — “Nay, my good youths!” said the aged stranger, “‘twere better ye did not try to get thither.” — “And why, pray?” — “I’ll tell you. Three rivers cross this road — rivers large and broad. On these rivers are three ferries. At the first ferry they’ll cut off your right arm, at the second your left, but at the third they’ll cut off your head!” The brother Tsareviches were sore distressed, their giddy pates hung down below their sturdy shoulders, and they thought to themselves: “Ought we not to have some regard for our father’s head and our own heads also? ‘Twill be much better to return home alive and well, and wait for fine weather by the sea.” And they turned back; and when they were a twenty-four hours’ journey from home, they resolved to rest in the fields; and they spread their tents, with the golden tent-poles, let their horses out to graze, and said: “Here we’ll stop and await our brother, and while away the time in idleness.”

But with the Tsarevich Ivan it fared far otherwise on his journey. There met him the same old man who had encountered his brothers, and this old man asked him the self-same question: “Whither art thou going, young man? Is thy journey far?” And the Tsarevich Ivan answered him: “What is that to thee? I want to have nothing to say to thee!” — But afterwards, when he had gone on a little further, he bethought him of what he had done. “Why did I answer the old man so rudely? Old people are full of ideas! perchance he might have advised me well.” So he turned his horse, overtook the old man, and said: “Stay, my father! I did not quite hear what thou saidst to me.” — “I asked thee whether thy journey was far?” — “Well, my father, the fact is, I am in search of the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible, the daughter of three mothers, the granddaughter of three grandmothers, the sister of nine brothers. I want to get from her the living-water for my dad the Tsar.” — “Well,” said the old man, “‘tis well for thee, good youth, that thou hast answered courteously, and therefore I will put thee in the right way. But thou wilt never get there on an ordinary horse.” — “Then whence shall I get me an extraordinary horse?” — “I’ll tell thee. Return home, and bid your grooms drive all thy father’s horses down to the blue sea, and whichever horse breaks away from the others and goes right into the sea up to his neck, and begins to drink till the blue sea begins to rise and dash from shore to shore — him seize and mount.” “I thank thee for thy good words, my father.” The Tsarevich did as the old man bade him. He chose the most valiant charger from among his father’s horses, watched all through the night, and when on the following morning he went out and mounted into the saddle, the horse spoke to him, with a man’s voice: “Tsarevich Ivan, dismount! I will buffet thee thrice, to give thee the muscles of a hero.” He buffeted once, he buffeted twice, but the third time he buffeted not at all. “I see,” cried he, “that if I were to buffet thee a third time, the whole land would not be able to hold us both.” Then the Tsarevich Ivan sat on the horse, put on knightly armour, took out of the armoury of his father’s palace an old heroic, trusty blade, and set out upon his quest. He went for a day and for a night, for a month, and for two months, and three; and so he came to a place where his horse was in water up to the knees, and in grass up to the breast, while he, poor youth, had nothing to eat. And in the midst of this wilderness the Tsarevich Ivan found a miserable hut; this hut stood upon fowl’s legs, and in it was the Baba-Yaga; the bony-legged witch was lying down, and her legs stretched from corner to corner. The Tsarevich went into the hut and cried: “Hail, Granny!” — “Hail to thee, Tsarevich Ivan; hast come to rest, or art thou in quest?” — “I am in quest of something, Granny. I am off beyond lands thrice-nine, to the Empire of Thrice-ten, I seek the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible. I want to get from her the living-water for my dad, the Tsar.” The Baba-Yaga answered: “Though I have not seen it with my eyes, I have heard of it with my ears; but thou wilt never get there.” — “Wherefore?” — “Because there, there are three ferries; at the first they’ll cut off thy right hand, at the second thy left, and at the third thy head.” — “Well, Granny, one single head is not such a great matter. I’ll go — and God’s will be done!” — “Alas, O Tsarevich Ivan! ‘twere much better to turn back; thou art still young and tender, thou hast never been in dangerous places, thou hast never run great terrors.” — “Nay, Granny! He who tugs at the rope must not cry, I’m broke!” So he took leave of the Baba-Yaga and went on further, and he came at last to the first ferry, and he saw the ferrymen on the other side, lying down asleep. The Tsarevich Ivan stood on the bank and thought to himself: “If I call to them, I shall deafen them for ever, and if I whistle with all my might, I shall upset the ferry-boat.” So he whistled a half whistle, and immediately the ferrymen started from their slumber and rowed him across the stream. “What do ye want for your labours, my friends?” asked the Tsarevich Ivan. — “Well, what’s the use of haggling? Give us your right arm!” cried the ferrymen, with one voice. — “Nay, nay; I want my arm for myself!” cried the Tsarevich Ivan; and drawing forth his stout blade, he struck to the right and to the left, and beat all the ferrymen till they were half dead, and then went on further. And in this way he crossed the other two fords also. At last he came to the Empire of Thrice-ten, and on the borders of it stood a wild man, in stature like a tree of the forest, as thick-set as a haystack; there he stood, and in his hand he held a club of oak. And the Giant said to the Tsarevich Ivan: “Whither art thou going, oh worm?” — “I am going to the realm of the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible, to get the living-water for my father, the Tsar.” — “What, thou pigmy! I’ve been guarding her realm here these hundred years. I have had my fill of heroes — not like thee were the youths who came hither, yet they all fell beneath my hand, and their bones all lie over there. But as for thee, thou art a mere worm!” The Tsarevich saw that he could not overcome the giant, so he turned his horse aside. He went on and on till he came to the very depths of the forest, till he came upon a hut, and in this hut sat a very old, old woman. The moment she saw the good youth she cried: “Hail! Tsarevich Ivan, why hath God sent thee hither?” The Tsarevich told her all his secrets. The old woman had pity on him, and drew from her stove a magic poisonous weed and a little ball. “Go into the open plain,” said she, “rake up a fire, and throw this magic poisonous weed into it. But mark me now; stand thou at the back of the blast, lest the smoke from the fire blow upon thee. This blast will cause the giant to be overcome by a deep sleep; then do thou cut off his head, but roll the ball before thee and follow whithersoever it rolls. The ball will lead thee to those very places where reigns the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible. The Tsarevna walks about there for nine days, and on the tenth day after that she will refresh herself with the sleep of heroes in her own place. But look to it that thou dost not enter in by the gate, but leap right over the wall with all thy might, and do not stick in the strings at the top of the wall, lest thou arouse the whole empire, when thou wilt not escape alive. But the moment thou hast leaped over the wall, go straight into the palace — into the back-chamber; open the door very, very softly, and draw out the flask of living-water from beneath the pillow of the Tsarevna. But when thou hast got the flask, hasten back as quickly as thou camest, nor look for an instant upon the beauty of the Tsarevna, lest it be too much for thee, good youth!” The Tsarevich Ivan thanked the old woman, and did everything she bade him. As soon as he had lit the fire, he threw the weed into it so that the smoke spread in the direction where the wild man was standing on guard; the eyes of the giant grew dim, he began to yawn and stretch, he laid him on the damp earth and began to sleep soundly — very soundly. The Tsarevich Ivan cut off his head, rolled the little ball along, and went on further. He went on and on, and far away the golden palace began to gleam amidst the green of the forest. All at once a column of dust came out of the palace and along the road, and the gleam of lances and cuirasses was visible through the dust, and there was a sound as of the trampling of many warlike chargers. The little ball rolled out of the road a little on one side; the Tsarevich Ivan, following after it, also turned from the path, went among the bushes, and let his horse out to grass. And from his place in the bushes he saw approaching the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible, and she diverted herself with her warriors in the green meadows. And the whole of the Tsarevna’s array consisted of maidens alone, each one more beautiful than her neighbour. But the most lovely of them all was the inexhaustibly lovely Tsarevna. She pitched her tent in the meadows, and for nine days she and her maidens diverted themselves with divers pastimes. But the Tsarevich, like a hungry wolf, looked out from his hiding-place at the Tsarevna, he could not take his eyes from her, and look as he might he could not look his fill. At last, on the tenth day, when every one in the Tsarevna's golden courts was asleep, he, spurring his horse with all his might, leaped right over the wall into the garden-court of the ladies, fastened his horse to a wooden post, and stealthily as a thief made his way into the palace, right into the very cabinet where, extended on her downy bed, with her fair locks scattered all about, lay the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible, sleeping an unwakable heroic sleep. The Tsarevich drew from under her pillow the flask with the living-water, and was about to run off as quickly as he could, but it was too much for his youthful heart, and leaning over the Tsarevna, he kissed her thrice on her lips, which were sweeter than sugar. And by the time he had got out of the chamber, mounted his horse, and leaped across the wall, she awoke from his kisses. Loveliness-Inexhaustible leaped on her swift-flying mare, and hastened after the Tsarevich Ivan. The Tsarevich urged on his good steed, pulled at the silken reins, and lashed its sides with his whip. And the horse spoke to him with a man's voice: "Wherefore dost thou beat me, Tsarevich Ivan? Neither the fowls of the air nor the beasts of the forest can escape or hide from that mare. She runs so that the earth trembles, she leaps across swift rivers from shore to shore, hills and dales vanish away beneath her feet!" And it had only time to speak these words when the Tsarevna overtook the good youth, struck him with her swinging blade, and pierced him full in the breast. Down fell the Tsarevich Ivan from his horse on the moist ground; his bright eyes closed, his red blood flowed. Loveliness-Inexhaustible gazed into his eyes, and a great sorrow overcame her; she saw that such a lovely youth as that was not to be found in the wide world. And she placed her white hand on the wound, washed it with living-water out of her flask, and immediately the wound healed up, and the Tsarevich Ivan arose well and unharmed. — "Wilt thou take me to wife?" — "That I will, Tsarevna!" —

“Then return to thy kingdom, and if after three years thou hast not forgotten me, I will be thy wife, and thou shalt be my husband.” And the destined bridegroom took leave of his bride, and they parted in different directions. The Tsarevich Ivan went on and on for a long time, and saw many things, and at last he came upon a tent on a mountain, with a golden tent-pole, and round the tent two good horses were feeding on white summer-wheat and drinking mead, and in the tent were lying his two elder brothers, eating and drinking and diverting themselves with manifold diversions. And the elder brothers began to ask the younger one: “Hast thou got the living-water for our father?” — “I have got it!” replied the Tsarevich Ivan simply, for he always spoke out his secrets, happen what might. The elder brothers invited him to feast with them, made him drunk, drew the flask of living-water out of his bosom, and threw him down a precipice. The Tsarevich Ivan flew down and down, and at last he fell into the Realm-beneath-the-Earth. “And now,” thought he, “irretrievable ruin has come upon me! I can never find the ways that lead from hence!” So he went about in the Realm-beneath-the-Earth. He went on and on, and saw that the day grew shorter and shorter till it was like night; and at last he came to a place that was not a desert, and by the sea stood a castle that was a town, and a hut that was a mansion. The Tsarevich went up a flight of steps into a barn, and from the barn he went into the hut, prayed to God, and begged for a good night’s rest. But in the hut sat an old woman — an old, a very old woman; she was all wrinkled and gray. “Good youth,” cried she, “thou mayest sleep there and welcome; but say! how didst thou get hither?” — “Thou art an old person, granny, but thy way of asking is not wise. Thou shouldst first give me to eat and drink, and let me lie down to sleep, and after that ask me concerning my tidings.” The old woman gave the Tsarevich to eat and drink, let him lie down to sleep, and then asked him again. And the Tsarevich Ivan said to her: “I have been in the Kingdom of Thrice-ten, as the guest of the Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible, and now I am returning home to my father the Tsar Afron, but I have wandered from my path. Canst thou not show me the way home?” — “I do not know it myself, Tsarevich. Here have I been living nine-tenths of my life on this earth, and I have never heard of the Tsar Afron. Come now! sleep in peace, and to-morrow I will bring together my messengers, perhaps one of them may know.” The next day the Tsarevich got up very early, washed himself quite white, and went out with the old woman on the balcony, and the old woman cried with a piercing voice: “Hi, hi! ye swimming fish of the sea, and ye creeping reptiles of the earth, my faithful servants, assemble here to the very last one of you!” And immediately the blue sea was disturbed and all the fishes assembled, both small and great, and all the reptiles assembled; they all came to the shore under the water. “Does any one know where in all the world dwells the Tsar Afron, and by what way one can get to his kingdom from here?” And all the fishes and reptiles answered with one voice: “We have neither seen it with our eyes, nor heard it with our ears.” Then the old woman turned to the other side and screeched: “Hi! ye wandering beasts of the forest, and ye fowls that fly in the air, my trusty servants, assemble hither, and fly and run hither all of you, down to the very last one!” And the beasts of the forest came running in bands and bands, and the fowls of the air came flying in flocks and flocks, and the old woman began to ask them about Tsar Afron; and they all with one voice exclaimed to the old woman: “We have neither seen it with our eyes, nor heard it with our ears.” — “Well, Tsarevich, there’s nobody else to ask now, we’ve asked them all.” They were just about to go into the hut again, when there was a whistling and a roaring sound in the air, and the bird Mogol came flying along; he hid the light of day with his wings, and lighted on the ground close to the hut. “Where hast *thou* been, and why art thou come so late?” screeched the old woman. “I have been flying a long way off, in the realm of Tsar Afron, at the uttermost end of the wide world.” — “Well thou art just the one I want; render me now true and loyal service: carry thither the Tsarevich Ivan.” — “I shall be glad to carry him, but I shall want heaps and heaps of food; it takes three years to fly thither.” — “Take as much as thou dost want.” And the old woman made provision for the journey of the Tsarevich Ivan. She placed upon the bird a hogshead of water, and on the top of it a wicker basket full of meat, and put into his hands an iron pole. “There,” said she, “when thou fliest on the bird Mogol and she turns round and looks at thee, immediately plunge thy pole into the basket and give her a piece of beef.” The Tsarevich Ivan said “thank you” to the old woman, sat on the bird, and immediately she rose with him and bore him up in the air like a whirlwind. She flew and flew, she flew for a long, long time, and whenever she looked round at the Tsarevich he fed her with beef off the pole. And at last the Tsarevich Ivan saw that the basket was getting empty, so he said to the bird Mogol: ”Look now, thou bird Mogol! thou hast now but little food left; light upon the moist earth, and I’ll get thee another basketful of divers meats.” But the bird Mogol answered and said: “Art thou mad, Tsarevich Ivan? Beneath us now is a forest dark and drear, muddy and boggy; if we lighted down there, thou and I would never get out again so long as the world lasts.” And now the Tsarevich had dispensed all the meat from the basket, and sent the basket and the hogshead flying off the bird; but the bird Mogol still kept on flying and turning its head for food. What was to be done now? The Tsarevich Ivan cut off the calves of his legs, put them on the pole, and gave them to the bird Mogol. She swallowed them up, and descended with the Tsarevich Ivan into a green meadow, upon silky grass with azure flowers. As the Tsarevich Ivan leaped off her on to the ground, the bird Mogol coughed up his calves again, fastened them on to his legs, moistened them with her spittle, and the Tsarevich went on his way well and strong. He came to the capital of Tsar Afron, his own father, and saw that something amiss was going on in the town. Crowds of people were wandering about the streets from end to end, the Tsar’s cunning counsellors were strolling aimlessly about the city, asking something from every one they met, and shaking their gray heads as if they were out of their wits. And the Tsarevich asked one of the people he met: “What’s the meaning of all this commotion in the city?” And the good people answered him: “The Tsarevna Loveliness-Inexhaustible is sailing against our kingdom; she is bringing a countless host with her in forty ships, and she demands that the Tsar should surrender to her the Tsarevich Ivan who disturbed her sleep three years ago by kissing her on her lips, which are sweeter than sugar; and if we do not surrender him she will destroy our kingdom utterly with fire and sword.” — “Well, it seems to me I have come just in time. I want this Tsarevna just as much as she wants me.” And he immediately went on board the Tsarevna’s ship. Here they embraced and fondled each other, and received their bridal crowns in the church of God, and after that they went to the Tsar Afron and told him all. The Tsar Afron drove his elder sons from Court, deprived them of their inheritance, and lived with his younger son, and lived happily and increased in all riches.

34

VERLIOKA

There was once upon a time an old man and an old woman, and they had two orphan grandchildren so lovely, gentle, and good, that the old man and the old woman could not love them enough. The old man once took it into his head to go out into the fields with his grandchildren to look at the peas, and they saw that their peas were growing splendidly. The old man rejoiced at the sight with his grandchildren, and said: “Well, now, you won’t find peas like that in the whole world! By and by we’ll make kisel out of it, and bake us some pea-cakes.” And next morning the grandfather sent the eldest grandchild, and said: “Go and drive away the sparrows from the peas!” The grandchild sat down beside the peas, shook a dry branch, and kept on saying, “Whish! whish! sparrows, ye have pecked at grandfather’s peas till you’re quite full!” And all at once she heard a rumbling and a roaring in the wood, and Verlioka came, huge of stature, with one eye, a hooked nose, ragged stubbly hair, moustaches half an ell long, swine’s bristles on his head, hobbling on one leg, in a wooden boot, leaning on a crutch, grinding all his teeth, and smiling. He went up to the pretty little grandchild, seized her and dragged her away with him behind the lake. The grandfather waited and waited, but there was no grandchild, and he sent his young grandson after her. Verlioka walked off with him also. The grandfather waited and waited, and said to his wife:

“How very late our grandchildren are! I suppose they are running about there and idling their time away, or catching starlings with some lads or other, and meanwhile the sparrows are looting our peas! Go along, old woman, and teach them sense!” The old woman rose from the stove, took her stick from the corner, gave the pasties another turn, went away — and never came back. As soon as Verlioka saw her in the field, he cried: “What dost thou want here, old hag? Hast thou come hither to shell peas? Then I’ll make thee stand here among the peas for ever and ever!” Then he set to work belabouring her with his crutch, till little by little her very soul oozed out of her, and she lay upon the field more dead than alive.

The grandfather waited in vain for his grandchildren and his old wife, and began to scold at them: “Where on earth have they got to!” said he; “‘tis a true saying that a man must expect no good from his ribs.” Then the old man himself made his way to the peas, and saw the old woman lying on the ground in such a battered condition that he scarcely knew her, and of his grandchildren there was no trace. The grandfather cried aloud, picked up the old woman, dragged her home by degrees, gradually brought her to with a little cold water, and she opened her eyes at last and told the grandfather who it was that had beaten her so, and dragged her grandchildren away from the field. The grandfather was very wroth with Verlioka, and said: “This is too much of a joke! Wait a bit, friend, we also have arms of our own! Look to thyself, Verlioka, and take care that I don’t twist thy moustaches for thee! Thou hast done this thing with thy hand, thou shalt pay for it with thy head!” And as the old grandmother did not hold him back, the grandfather seized his iron crutch and went off to seek Verlioka.

He went on and on till he came to a little pond, and in the pond was swimming a bob-tailed drake. He saw the grandfather and cried: “Tak, tak, tak! Live for a hundred years, old grandad! I have been waiting here for thee a long time!” — “Hail to thee also, drake! Why hast thou been awaiting me?” — “Well I know that thou art in quest of thy grandchildren, and art going to Verlioka to settle accounts with him!” — “And how dost thou come to know of this monster?” — “Tak, tak, tak!” screeched the drake, “I have good cause to know him, ‘twas he who docked my tail!” — “Then canst thou show me his dwelling?” — “Tak, tak, tak!” screeched the drake; “here am I but a little tiny bird, but I’ll have my tail’s worth out of him, I know!” — “Wilt thou go on before and show me the way? I see thou hast a good noddle of thy own, though thou art bob-tailed!” Then the drake came out of the water and climbed up on the bank, waddling from side to side.

They went on and on, and they came upon a little bit of cord lying in the road, and it said, “Hail, little grandad wise-pate!” — “Hail, little cord!” — “Where dost thou dwell, and whither dost thou wander?” — “I live in such and such a place; I am going to pay off Verlioka; he has beaten my old woman and carried off my two grandchildren, and such splendid grandchildren too!” — “Take me that I may help!” The grandfather thought: “I may as well take it, it will do to hang Verlioka with.” Then he said to the little cord: “Come along with us, if thou dost know the way.” And the little cord wriggled after them just as if it were a little tapering snake.

They went on and on, and they saw lying in the road a little water-mill, and it said to them: “Hail, little grandad wise-pate!” — “Hail, little water-mill!” — “Where dost thou dwell, and whither dost thou wander?” — “I live in such and such a place, and I am going to settle accounts with Verlioka. Just fancy! he has beaten my old woman and carried off my grandchildren, and such splendid grandchildren too!” — “Take me with thee that I may help!” And the grandfather thought: “The water-mill may be of use too.” Then the water-mill raised itself up, pressed against the ground with its handle, and went along after the grandfather.

Again they went on and on, and in the road lay an acorn, and it said to them in a little squeaky voice: “Hail, grandad long-nose!” — “Hail, oakey acorn!” — “Whither art thou striding away like that?” — “I am going to beat Verlioka; dost know him?” — “I should think I did; take me with thee to help!” — “But how canst thou help?” — “Don’t spit in the well or thou wilt have to drink up the water thyself!” The grandfather thought to himself: “I may as well let him go!” So he said to the acorn: “Roll on behind then!” But that was a strange rolling, for the acorn leaped to its feet and frisked along in front of them all.

And they came into a thick forest, a forest most drear and dreadful, and in the forest stood a lonely little hut — oh! so lonely. There was no fire burning in the stove, and there stood there a furmenty-pottage for six. The acorn, who knew what he was about, immediately leaped into the pottage, the little cord stretched itself out on the threshold, the grandfather placed the little water-mill on the bench, the drake sat upon the stove, and the grandfather himself stood in the corner. Suddenly he heard a crashing and a trembling in the wood, and Verlioka came along on one leg, in a wooden boot, leaning on his crutch and smiling from ear to ear. Verlioka came up to the hut, threw down some fire-wood on the floor, and began to light the fire in the stove. But the acorn who was sitting in the pottage fell a-singing —

“Pee, pee, pee!
To beat Verlioka come we!”

Verlioka flew into a rage and seized the pot by the handle, but the handle broke, and all the pottage was scattered over the floor, and the acorn leaped out of the pot and flipped Verlioka in his one eye so that it was put out entirely. Verlioka fell a-shrieking, fought about the air with his arms, and would have made for the door; but where was the door? he could not see it! Then the little cord wound itself about his legs and he fell on the threshold, and the little water-mill on the top of him off the bench. Then the grandfather rushed out of the corner and pitched into him with his iron crutch, and the drake on the top of the stove screeched with all its might: “Tak, tak, tak! Pitch into him! pitch into him!” Neither his wrath nor his strength was of any good to Verlioka. The grandfather beat him to death with his iron crutch, and after that, destroyed his hut and laid bare the dungeon beneath it, and out of the dungeon he drew his grandchildren, and dragged all Verlioka’s riches home to his old woman. And so he lived and prospered with his old woman and his grandchildren, and plucked and ate his peas in peace and quietness. So there’s a skazka for you — and I deserve a cake or two also.

35

THE FROG-TSAREVNA

In a certain kingdom, in a certain Empire, there lived a Tsar with his Tsaritsa, and he had three sons, all of them young, valiant, and unwedded, the like of whom is not to be told in tales nor written by pens, and the youngest of them was called the Tsarevich Ivan. And the Tsar spoke these words to them: “My dear children, take unto you your darts, gird on your well-spanned bows, and go hence in different directions, and in whatsoever courts your arrows fall, there choose ye your brides!” The elder brother discharged his arrow and it fell into a boyar’s court, right in front of the *terem* of the maidens. The second brother discharged his arrow, and it flew into the court of a merchant and remained sticking in a beautiful balcony, and on this balcony was standing a lovely young maiden soul, the merchant’s daughter. The youngest brother discharged his arrow, and the arrow fell in a muddy swamp, and a quacking-frog seized hold of it.

The Tsarevich Ivan said to his father: “How can I ever take this quacker to wife? A quacker is not my equal!” — “Take her!” replied his father, “‘tis thy fate to have her!” So the Tsareviches all got married — the eldest to the boyar’s daughter, the second to the merchant’s daughter, and the youngest to the quacking-frog. And the Tsar called them to him and said: “Let your wives, to-morrow morning, bake me soft white bread.” The Tsarevich Ivan returned home, and he was not happy, and his impetuous head hung down lower than his shoulders. “Qua, qua! Ivan the Tsarevich! wherefore art thou so sad?” asked the Frog. “Or hast thou heard unpleasant words from thy father the Tsar?” — “Why should I not be sad? my father and sovereign lord hath commanded thee to bake soft white bread to-morrow.” — “Do not afflict thyself, O Tsarevich! lie down and rest, the morning is wiser than the evening.” She made the Tsarevich lie down and rest, cast her frog-skin, and turned into a maiden soul, Vasilisa Premudraya, went out upon her beautiful balcony, and cried with a piercing voice: “Nurseys — nurseys! assemble, set to work and make me soft white bread such as I myself used to eat at my dear father’s!” In the morning the Tsarevich Ivan awoke, the frog had got the bread ready long ago, and it was so splendid that the like of it is neither to be imagined nor guessed at, but is only to be told of in tales. The loaves were adorned with various cunning devices, royal cities were modelled on the sides thereof, with moats and ditches. The Tsar praised the Tsarevich Ivan greatly because of his bread, and gave this command to his three sons: “Let your wives weave me a carpet in a single night.” The Tsarevich Ivan returned home, and he was sad, and his impetuous head hung lower than his shoulders. “Qua! qua! Tsarevich Ivan! wherefore art thou so sad? Or hast thou heard cruel, unfriendly words from thy father the Tsar?” — “Have I not cause to grieve? My father and sovereign lord commands thee to weave him a silk carpet in a single night!” — “Fret not, Tsarevich! come, lay thee down and sleep, the morning is wiser than the evening!” Then she made him lie down to sleep, threw off her frog-skin, and turned into the lovely maiden soul, Vasilisa Premudraya, went forth upon her beautiful balcony, and cried with a piercing voice: “Nurseys — nurseys! assemble, set to work and weave me a silk carpet such as I was wont to sit upon at my dear father’s!” No sooner said than done. In the morning the Tsarevich Ivan awoke, and the frog had had the carpet ready long ago, and it was such a wondrous carpet that the like of it can only be told of in tales, but may neither be imagined nor guessed at. The carpet was adorned with gold and silver and with divers bright embroiderings. The Tsar greatly praised the Tsarevich Ivan for his carpet, and there and then gave the new command that all three Tsareviches were to appear before him on the morrow to be inspected together with their wives. Again the Tsarevich Ivan returned home and he was not happy, and his impetuous head hung lower than his shoulders. “Qua! qua! Tsarevich Ivan! wherefore art thou grieved? Or hast thou heard words unkind from thy father the Tsar?” — “Have I not cause to be sad? My father and sovereign lord has commanded me to appear before him with thee to-morrow! How can I show thee to people?” — “Fret not, Tsarevich! Go alone to the Tsar and pay thy visit, and I will come after thee. The moment you hear a rumbling and a knocking, say: ‘Hither comes my dear little Froggy in her little basket!’” And behold the elder brothers appeared, to be inspected with their richly-attired and splendidly-adorned consorts. There they stood and laughed at the Tsarevich Ivan and said: “Why, brother! why hast thou come hither without thy wife? Why thou mightest have brought her with thee in a kitchen clout. And where didst thou pick up such a beauty? I suppose thou didst search through all the swamps fairly?” Suddenly there was a great rumbling and knocking, the whole palace shook. The guests were all terribly frightened and rushed from their places, and knew not what to do with themselves, but the Tsarevich Ivan said: “Fear not, gentlemen! ‘tis only my little Froggy coming in her little basket!” And then a golden coach drawn by six horses flew up to the steps of the Tsar’s balcony, and out of it stepped Vasilisa Premudraya; such a beauty as is only to be told of in tales, but can neither be imagined nor guessed at. The Tsarevich Ivan took her by the hand and led her behind the oaken table, behind the embroidered table-cloth. The guests began to eat and drink and make merry. Vasilisa Premudraya drank wine, but the dregs of her cup she poured behind her left sleeve; she ate also of the roast swan, but the bones thereof she concealed behind her right sleeve. The wives of the elder brothers watched these devices, and took care to do the same.

Afterwards when Vasilisa Premudraya began dancing with the Tsarevich Ivan, she waved her left hand and a lake appeared; she waved her right hand and white swans were swimming in the water; the Tsar and his guests were astonished. And now the elder brides began dancing. They waved their left hands and all the guests were squirted with water; they waved their right hands and the bones flew right into the Tsar's eyes. The Tsar was wroth, and drove them from court with dishonour.

Now one day the Tsarevich Ivan waited his opportunity, ran off home, found the frog-skin, and threw it into a great fire. Vasilisa Premudraya duly arrived, missed her frog-skin, was sore troubled, fell a-weeping, and said to the Tsarevich: "Alas! Tsarevich Ivan! what hast thou done? If thou hadst but waited for a little, I should have been thine for ever more, but now farewell! Seek for me beyond lands thrice-nine, in the Empire of Thrice-ten, at the house of Koshchei Bezsmertny." Then she turned into a white swan and flew out of the window.

The Tsarevich Ivan wept bitterly, turned to all four points of the compass and prayed to God, and went straight before his eyes. He went on and on, whether it was near or far, or long or short, matters not, when there met him an old, old man. "Hail, good youth!" said he, "what dost thou seek, and whither art thou going?" The Tsarevich told him all his misfortune. "Alas! Tsarevich Ivan, why didst thou burn that frog-skin? Thou didst not make, nor shouldst thou therefore have done away with it. Vasilisa Premudraya was born wiser and more cunning than her father; he was therefore angry with her, and bade her be a frog for three years. Here is a little ball for thee, follow it whithersoever it rolls." Ivan the Tsarevich thanked the old man, and followed after the ball. He went along the open plain, and there met him a bear. "Come now!" thought the Tsarevich Ivan, "I will slay this beast." But the bear implored him: "Slay me not, Tsarevich Ivan, I may perchance be of service to thee somehow." He went on further, and lo! behind them came waddling a duck. The Tsarevich bent his bow; he would have shot the bird, when suddenly she greeted him with a human voice: “Slay me not, Ivan Tsarevich! I also may befriend thee!” He had compassion on her, and went on further, and a hare darted across their path. The Tsarevich again laid an arrow on his bow and took aim, but the hare greeted him with a human voice: “Slay me not, Tsarevich Ivan! I also will befriend thee!” Ivan the Tsarevich had pity upon him, and went on further to the blue sea, and behold! on the beach lay gasping a pike. “Alas! Tsarevich Ivan!” sighed the pike, “have pity on me and cast me into the sea.” And he cast it into the sea, and went on along the shore. The ball rolled a short way, and it rolled a long way, and at last it came to a miserable hut; the hut was standing on hen’s legs and turning round and round. The Tsarevich Ivan said to it: “Little hut, little hut! stand the old way as thy mother placed thee, with thy front to me, and thy back to the sea!” And the little hut turned round with its front to him, and its back to the sea. The Tsarevich entered in, and saw the bony-legged Baba-Yaga lying on the stove, on nine bricks, and grinding her teeth. — “Hillo! good youth, why dost thou visit me?” asked the Baba-Yaga. — “Fie, thou old hag! thou call’st me a good youth, but thou shouldst first feed and give me to drink, and prepare me a bath, then only shouldst thou ask me questions.” The Baba-Yaga fed him and gave him to drink, and made ready a bath for him, and the Tsarevich told her he was seeking his wife, Vasilisa Premudraya. “I know,” said the Baba-Yaga, “she is now with Koshchei Bezsmertny. ‘Tis hard to get thither, and it is not easy to settle accounts with Koshchei. His death depends upon the point of a needle, that needle is in a hare, that hare is in a coffer, that coffer is on the top of a high oak, and Koshchei guards that tree as the apple of his eye.” The Baba-Yaga then showed him in what place that oak grew; the Tsarevich Ivan went thither, but did not know what to do to get at the coffer. Suddenly, how who can tell, the bear rushed at the tree and tore it up by the roots, the coffer fell and was smashed to pieces, the hare leaped out, and with one bound had taken cover. But look! the other hare bounded off in pursuit, hunted him down and tore him to bits; out of the hare flew a duck and rose high, high in the air, but the other duck dashed after her, and struck her down, whereupon the duck laid an egg, and the egg fell into the sea. The Tsarevich Ivan, seeing the irreparable loss of the egg, burst into tears, when suddenly the pike came swimming ashore holding the egg between its teeth. He took the egg, broke it, drew out the needle and broke off its little point. Then he attacked Koshchei, who struggled hard, but wriggle about as he might he had to die at last. Then the Tsarevich Ivan went into the house of Koshchei, took out Vasilisa Premudraya, and returned home. After that they lived together for a long, long time, and were very, very happy.

36

THE TWO SONS OF IVAN THE SOLDIER

There once dwelt in a certain kingdom a peasant. The time came when they enlisted him as a soldier; he had to quit his wife, and as he bade her good-bye, he said to her, “Hearken, wife! live honestly; flout not good people; do not let our little hut fall to pieces, but keep house wisely, and await my return. If God permit it, I will come back and leave the service. Here are fifty rubles! — whether a little son or a little daughter be born to thee matters not; keep the money till the child grows up. If it be a daughter, wed her to the bridegroom whom God may provide; but if God give thee a son, and he arrive at years of discretion, this money will be of no little help to him.” Then he took leave of his wife, and went to the wars whither he was bidden. Three months passed, and the wife gave birth to twin sons, and she called them the sons of Ivan the soldier. The youngsters grew up betimes; like wheaten dough mixed with yeast they shot up broad and high. When they reached their tenth year their mother gave them instruction, and they quickly learned their letters, and the children of the boyars and the children of the merchants could not hold a candle to them; no one could read aloud, or write, or answer questions so well as they. The two sons of Ivan the soldier thus grew up, and they asked their mother, “Mother, dear! did not our father leave us some money? If there be any, let us have it, and we’ll take it to the fair and buy us a good horse apiece.” Their mother gave them the fifty rubles, twenty-five to each brother, and said to them, “Hearken, children, as ye go to the town, give a bow to every one you come across.” — “Good, dear mother.”

So the brothers hied them off to the town, and went to the horse-market. There were many horses there, but they chose none of them, for they were not good enough mounts for the good brothers. So one of the brothers said to the other: “Let us go to the other end of the square; look how the people are all running together there. There is something strange going on.” Thither they went and joined the crowd; and there stood two mares tied to stout oaken posts with iron clamps; one with six clamps, and the other with twelve clamps. The horses were tugging at their chains, gnawing their bits, and digging up the ground with their hoofs. No one was able to go near them. “What is the price of thy mares?” asked Ivan, the soldier’s son, of the owner. “Don’t thrust thy nose in here, friend! — such mares are not for the like of thee. Ask no more about them!” — “How dost thou know what I am? Maybe I’ll buy them, but I must first look at their teeth.” The horse-dealer smiled: “Look out for your heads, that’s all!” One of the brothers then drew near to the mare that was fastened by six clamps, and the other brother to the mare that was fastened by twelve. They tried to look at the horses’ teeth, but how was it to be done? The mares rose on their hind legs and pawed the air. Then the brothers struck them in the breast with their knees; the chains which held the horses burst, and the mares flew up into the air five fathoms high, and fell down with their legs uppermost. “Well!” cried the brothers, “that’s not much to boast of. We would not take such horses at a gift.” The crowd cried “Oh!” and was amazed. “What strong and stalwart heroes are these?” The horse-dealer was almost in tears. The mares galloped all over the town, and made off over the wide steppe; nobody dared approach them, and nobody knew how to catch them. The sons of Ivan the soldier were sorry for the horse-dealer. They went out into the open steppe, cried with a piercing voice and whistled lustily, and the mares came running back and stood in their proper place as if they had been nailed there. Then the good youths put the iron chains upon them again, and tied them to the oaken posts, and bound them tightly. This they did, and then they went homewards. As they were going along there met them an old graybeard. They forgot what their mother had told them, and passed him by without greeting him. Suddenly one of them recollected himself and cried: “Oh, brother! what have we done? We never gave that old man a bow; let us run after him and bow to him!” They ran after the old man, took off their little caps, bowed to the very girdle, and said, “Forgive us, dear little father, for passing thee by without a greeting. Our mother straightly charged us to pay honour to every one we met in the way.” — “Thanks, good youths! whither is God leading you?” — “We have been to the town fair; we wanted to buy us a good horse apiece, but there are none there which please us.” — “Why, how’s that? Suppose now that I were to give you a little nag apiece?” — “Ah! little father, we would then always pray to God for thee!” — “Well, come with me.” — The old man led them to a huge mountain, opened two cast-iron doors, and brought out two horses of heroic breed. “Here, take your horses and depart in God’s name, good youths, and may ye prosper with them!” They thanked him, mounted and galloped home; reached the courtyard, bound their horses to a post, and entered the hut. Their mother then began, and asked them: “Well, my dear children, have you bought yourselves a little nag apiece?” — “We have not bought them with money, but got them as a gift.” — “Where have you left them?” — “We put them beside the hut.” — “Alas! my children, look if any one has taken them away.” — “Nay, dear mother, such horses are not taken away. No one could lead them, and there’s no getting near them!” The mother went out, looked at the horses, and burst into tears. “Well, my dear sons, ye are surely never those whom I have nourished.”

The next day the sons begged their mother to let them go into the town to buy them a sword apiece. “Go, my children!” Then they got them ready, went to the smith’s, entered the master’s house, and said: “Make us a couple of swords!” — “Why should I make them when they are ready made? Take whichever you like best.” — “No, friend, we want swords which weigh ten puds each.” — “What are you thinking of? Who would be able to wield a machine like that? You’ll find such swords nowhere.” So there was nothing for the good youths to do but return homewards with hanging heads. As they were on their way the same old man met them again. “Hail, young men!” — “Hail, dear little father!” — “Whence do you come?” — “From town, from the smith’s. We wanted to buy two Damascus blades, and there were none that suited our hands.” — “How stupid! Suppose now I were to give you a sword apiece?” — “Ah, dear little father, in that case we would pray to God for thee for evermore.” The old man led them to the huge mountain, opened the cast-iron door, and drew out two heroic swords. The brothers took them, thanked the old man, and their hearts were merry and joyful. They came home, and their mother asked them: “Well, my children, have you bought yourselves a sword apiece?” — “We have not bought them for money, but got them as a gift.” — “And what have you done with them?” — “We have placed them beside the hut.” — “Take care lest some one take them away.” — “Nay, dear mother, nobody will take them away, for it is impossible to even carry them.” The mother went out into the courtyard and looked; the two heavy, heroic swords were leaning against the wall, the hut was scarce able to bear the weight of them. The old woman burst into tears and said: “Well, my dear sons, ye are surely never those whom I have nourished.”

The next morning the sons of Ivan the soldier saddled their good horses, took their heroic blades, went into the hut, prayed to God, and took leave of the mother who bore them. “Bless us, dear little mother, for a long journey is before us.” — “My irremovable, motherly blessing be upon you. Go, in God’s name. Show yourselves, and see the world. Offend none without cause, and follow not evil ways.” — “Be not afraid, dear mother; our motto is, ‘When I eat I don’t whistle, and when I bite I don’t let go.’” Then the good youths mounted their horses and rode off. Whither they went, near or far, long or short, the tale is soon told, but the deed is not soon done; anyhow, they came to a cross-way where stood two pillars. On one pillar was written, “Who goes to the right will become a Tsar,” and on the other pillar was written, “Who goes to the left will become a corpse.” The brothers stood still, read the inscriptions, and fell a-thinking: “Whichever way shall we go? If we both go to the right, there will not be honour and glory enough for the heroic strength and youthful prowess of us both; but nobody wants to go to the left and die.” And one brother said to the other: “Look now, dear brother, I am stronger than thou; let me go a little on the left to see how death can get hold of me. But thou go to the right, and perchance God will make thee a Tsar.” Then they took leave of each other, and each gave to the other a little piece of cloth, and they made this compact — each was to go his own way and place posts along the road, and write on these posts everything concerning himself as a mark and guide; every morning each of them was to wipe his face with his brother’s cloth, and if blood appeared on the cloth it would mean that death had befallen his brother, and in such a calamity he was to hasten back to seek his dead. So the good youths parted in different directions. He who turned his horse to the right came to a splendid kingdom. In this kingdom dwelt a Tsar and his Tsaritsa, and they had a daughter called the thrice-beautiful Tsarevna Nastasia. The Tsar beheld the son of the soldier Ivan, loved him for his knightly valour, and without beating about the bush, gave him his daughter as a consort, called him the Tsarevich Ivan, and bade him rule over the whole kingdom. The Tsarevich Ivan lived right merrily, loved his wife dearly, gave good laws to his kingdom, and diverted himself with the pleasures of the chase.

But his brother, Ivan the soldier’s son, who had taken the road to the left, went on day and night without rest. A month, and a second month, and a third passed by, and he found himself in an unknown empire, in the midst of the capital. In this empire there was great mourning, the houses were covered with black cloth, and the people crept about as if they were dreaming. He hired him a lodging at a poor old woman's, and began to ask her, "Tell me, old mother, why are all the people in this empire of thine so full of woe, and all the houses covered with black cloth?" — "Alas, good youth! a great grief weighs upon us; every day there comes out of the blue sea, from beyond the gray rock, a twelve-headed serpent and eats up a man every time, and now it has come to the turn of the Tsar's own house. He has three most lovely Tsarevnas; at this very time they are escorting the youngest of them to the sea-shore to be devoured by the monster." Ivan the soldier's son mounted his horse and rode off to the blue sea, to the gray rock; on the shore stood the thrice-lovely Tsarevna, tied to an iron chain. She saw the hero and said to him, "Depart hence, good youth. The twelve-headed serpent will soon be here; I shall perish, nor wilt thou escape death; the cruel serpent will devour thee also." "Fear not, lovely maiden. Perhaps it may be overcome." And Ivan the soldier's son went up to her, burst the chain with his heroic hand, and broke it into little bits as if it were rotten rope; then he lit a large fire all round the rock and nourished it with the trunks of uprooted oaks and pines, piled them up into a huge pyre, and then went back to the lovely maiden, laid his head on her knee, and said to her, "I must rest, but thou look seawards, and as soon as a cloud arises, and the wind begins to blow, and the sea to leap and roar, awaken me, young maiden." So he spake, and fell into a deep sleep, and the lovely maiden watched over him, and sat and looked out upon the sea. Suddenly a cloud rose above the horizon, and the wind began to blow, and the sea to leap and roar; the serpent was coming forth from the blue sea, and raised itself mountains high. The Tsarevna tried to awake Ivan the soldier's son; she shook him and shook him; it was of no use, he heard her not; then she burst into tears, and her burning tear-drops fell upon his cheeks. At this the hero awoke, ran to his horse, and the good horse had already ploughed up half a fathom of earth with his hoofs. The twelve-headed serpent rushed straight at him, belching forth fire; it looked upon the hero and cried, “Goodly art thou and comely, fair youth, but thy last hour has come. Say farewell to the wide world, and gallop down my throat as quickly as thou canst.” — “Thou liest, cursed serpent; surrender!” Then they fell to mortal combat. Ivan the soldier’s son struck so deftly and sturdily with his sword that it grew red-hot, there was no holding it in his hand. Then he cried to the Tsarevna: “Save me, lovely maiden! Take out thy fair kerchief, dip it in the blue sea, and wrap it round my sword.” The Tsarevna immediately moistened her kerchief in the sea, and gave it to the good youth. He wrapped it round his sword and again fell fiercely on the serpent, but he found that he could not despatch the serpent with his sword. Then he snatched a burning pine-brand from the pyre and burnt out the serpent’s eye, and then he hewed off all its twelve heads, placed them beneath the rock, cast the body into the sea, and then trotted home, ate and drank, and laid him down to sleep for thrice four-and-twenty hours.

And in the meantime the Tsar called his water-carrier and said to him: “Go to the sea-shore and collect the bones of the Tsarevna, if haply ye find them.” The water-carrier went down to the sea-shore, and lo! the Tsarevna was in no way hurt. He placed her on the cart and drove her into the drear forest — far into the forest he drove her — drew his knife from his girdle, and began to sharpen it. “What art thou doing?” asked the Tsarevna. “I am sharpening my knife. I mean to slay thee. Tell thy father that I slew the serpent, and I’ll have mercy on thee.” He terrified the lovely maiden, and she took an oath to speak according to his words. Now this daughter was the Tsar’s favourite, and when the Tsar saw that she was alive, and in no way hurt, he wished to reward the water-carrier, and gave him his youngest daughter to wife; and the rumour of it went through the whole realm. Ivan the soldier’s son heard also that a marriage was being celebrated at the

Tsar’s, and straight to court he went. There a great banquet was proceeding; the guests were eating and drinking, and diverting themselves with divers pastimes. The youngest Tsarevna looked at Ivan the soldier’s son, and saw his sword wrapped round with her costly kerchief, whereupon she leaped from her chair, seized his hand, and cried: “My dear father and sovereign lord, lo! here is he who saved us from the cruel serpent and from violent death. The water-carrier can only sharpen his knife and say — ‘I am sharpening my knife. I mean to kill thee.’” The Tsar was wroth, and he bade them hang the water-carrier, and gave the Tsarevna to Ivan the soldier’s son as his consort, and there was great rejoicing. And the young couple lived together, and their life was happy and prosperous.

Not a very long time passed away, and then this thing befell the Tsarevich Ivan, the other son of Ivan the soldier.

One day he was going a-hunting, and he started a swift-footed stag. The Tsarevich Ivan put spurs to his horse and pursued the stag. On and on he sped, and he came to a vast meadow. Here the stag vanished from before his eyes. Ivan looked about him and considered — “Whither does my way lie now?” And, lo, in that meadow a little stream was flowing, and on the water two gray ducks were swimming. He took aim at them, fired, and slew the ducks, dragged them out of the water, put them into his knapsack, and went on further. He went on and on till he saw a palace of white stone, dismounted from his horse, fastened it to a post, and went into the rooms. They were all empty, not a living soul was to be seen, only in one room was there a lighted stove, a pan for a meal of six stood there, and the table was already laid; there were plates and glasses and knives. The Tsarevich Ivan pulled the ducks from his pocket and drew them, put them in the pan, cooked them, placed them on the table, and began carving and eating them. Suddenly, whence I know not, a lovely damsel appeared to him, so lovely that the like of her cannot be told of in tales or written with pens, and she said to him: “Bread and salt, Ivan the Tsarevich.” — “I cry thy pardon, lovely damsel, sit down and eat with me." — "I would sit down with thee, but I am afraid. Thou hast an enchanted horse." — "Nay, lovely damsel, thou art ill-informed. I have left my magic horse at home, and am riding on a common one." No sooner did the lovely damsel hear this than she began to swell out and swell out till she became a frightful lioness, opened wide her jaws, and swallowed up the Tsarevich Ivan whole. She was not an ordinary damsel, but the very sister of the serpent who had been slain by Ivan the soldier's son.

And it fell about this time that the other Tsarevich Ivan bethought him of his brother, drew his kerchief out of his pocket, dried his face with it, and saw that the whole kerchief was covered with blood. Sorely grieved was he. "What's the matter?" he cried. He took leave of his wife and father-in-law, and went forth on his heroic horse to seek his brother. He went near and far, and long and short, and at last he came to the same realm where his brother had lived. He asked about everything, and learnt that the Tsarevich had indeed gone hunting and disappeared — not a trace of him could be found. Ivan went a-hunting the selfsame way, and there met him a swift-footed stag. The hero pursued after it; he came out into the vast meadow, and the stag vanished from before his eyes. In the meadow he saw a little stream flowing, and two gray ducks were swimming on the water. Ivan the soldier's son shot the ducks, came to the white stone palace, and went into the rooms. They were all empty, only in one room was a stove lighted and a pan for a meal for six was upon it. He roasted the ducks, went out into the courtyard, sat on the steps, and began carving them up and eating. Suddenly a lovely damsel appeared before him. "Bread and salt, good youth, why dost thou eat in the courtyard?" Ivan the soldier's son answered: "In the rooms it is not to my mind; in the courtyard 'twill be more pleasant. Sit down with me, fair damsel!" — "I would sit down gladly, but I fear thy enchanted horse." — "No need, damsel. I am riding on an ordinary nag." Like a fool she believed him, and began to swell out, and swelled into a frightful lioness, and would have swallowed up the good youth, when his magic horse ran up and seized her round the body with its heroic feet. Ivan the soldier’s son drew his sharp sword and cried with a piercing voice: “Stand, accursed one. Hast thou not swallowed my brother, the Tsarevich Ivan? Give him back to me, or I’ll cut thee into little bits.” The red lioness turned back again into a most lovely damsel, and began to beg and pray: “Spare me, good youth. Take the two phials from that bench full of healing and living water, follow me into the underground chamber, and revive thy brother.”

The Tsarevich Ivan followed the lovely damsel into the underground chamber, and saw his brother lying there torn to bits. He sprinkled his brother with the healing water; the flesh and fat grew together again. He sprinkled him with the living water, and his brother stood up and spoke: “Ah! how long have I slept?” Ivan the Tsarevich said, “Thou wouldst have slept for ever but for me.” And the brothers returned to court, made a three days’ feast, and then took leave of each other. Ivan the soldier’s son remained with his wife, and lived with her in love and harmony and enduring bliss. But the Tsarevich returned to his realm, and I met him on his way; three days he drank and diverted himself with me, and ‘twas he who told me all this tale.

37

THE WOMAN-ACCUSER

There was once upon a time an old man and an old woman. The old woman was not a bad old woman, but there was this one bad thing about her — she did not know how to hold her tongue. Whatever she might hear from her husband, or whatever might happen at home, she was sure to spread it over the whole village; she even doubled everything in the telling, and so things were told which never happened at all. Not unfrequently the old man had to chastise the old woman, and her back paid for the faults of her tongue.

One day the old man went into the forest for wood. He had just got to the border of the forest, when his foot, in treading on a certain place, sank right into the ground. “Why, what’s this?” thought the old man. “Come, now, I’ll dig a bit here; maybe I shall be lucky enough to dig out something.” He dug several times, and saw, buried in the ground, a little cauldron quite full of silver and gold. “Look, now, what good luck has befallen me! But what am I to do with it? I cannot hide it from that good wife of mine at home, and she will be sure to blab to all the world about my lucky find, and thou wilt repent the day thou didst ever see it.”

For a long time the old man sat brooding over his treasure, and at last he made up his mind what to do. He buried the treasure, threw a lot of wood over it, and went to town. There he bought at the bazaar a live pike and a live hare, returned to the wood, and hung the pike upon a tree, at the very top of it, and carried the hare to the stream, where he had a fish-basket, and he put the hare into it in a shallow place.

Then he went off home, whipped up his little nag for pure lightness of heart, and so entered his hut. “Wife, wife,” he cried, “such a piece of luck has befallen me that I cannot describe it!” — “What is it, what is it, hubby darling? Why dost thou not tell me?” — “What’s the good, when thou wilt only blab it all about?” — “On my word, I’ll say nothing to anybody. I swear it. I’ll take the holy image from the wall and kiss it if thou dost not believe me.” — “Well, well, all right. Listen, old woman!” and he bent down towards her ear and whispered, “I have found in the wood a cauldron full of silver and gold.” — “Then why didst thou not bring it hither?” — “Because we had both better go together, and so bring it home.” And the old man went with his old woman to the forest.

They went along the road, and the peasant said to his wife, “From what I hear, old woman, and from what people told me the other day, it would seem that fish are now to be found growing on trees, while the beasts of the forest live in the water.” — “Why, what art thou thinking about, little hubby? People nowadays are much given to lying.” — “Lying, dost thou call it? Then come and see for thyself.” And he pointed to the tree where the pike was hanging. “Why, what marvel is this?” screamed the old woman. “However did that pike get there? Or have the people been speaking the truth to thee after all?” But the peasant stood there, and moved his arms about, and shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head, as if he could not believe his own eyes. “Why dost thou keep standing there?” said the old woman. “Go up the tree, rather, and take the pike; ‘twill do for supper.” So the peasant took the pike, and then they went on further. They passed by the stream, and the peasant stopped his horse. But his wife began screeching at him, and said, “What art gaping at now? let us make haste and go on.” — “Nay, but look! I see something struggling about all round my fish-basket. I'll go and see what it is." So he ran, looked into the fish-basket, and called to his wife. "Just come and look here, old woman! Why, a hare has got into our fishing-basket!" — "Then people must have told thee the truth after all. Fetch it out quickly; it will do for dinner on the feast-day." The old man took up the hare, and then went straight towards the treasure. He pitched away the wood, digged wide and deep, dragged the cauldron out of the earth, and they took it home.

The old man and the old woman grew rich, they lived right merrily, and the old woman did not improve; she went to invite guests every day, and gave such banquets that she nearly drove her husband out of the house. The old man tried to correct her. "What's come to thee?" he cried. "Canst thou not listen to me?" — "Don't order me about," said she. "I found the treasure as well as thou, and have as much right to make merry with it." The old man put up with it for a very long time, but at last he said to the old woman straight out, "Do as best thou canst, but I'm not going to give thee any more money to cast to the winds." But the old woman immediately fell foul of him. "I see what thou art up to," screeched she; "thou wouldst keep all the money for thyself. No, thou rogue, I'll drive thee whither the crows will pick thy bones. Thou wilt have no good from thy money." The old man would have chastised her, but the old woman thrust him aside, and went straight to the magistrate to lay a complaint against her husband. "I have come to throw myself on thy honour's compassion, and to present my petition against my good-for-nothing husband. Ever since he found that treasure there is no living with him. Work he won't, and he spends all his time in drinking and gadding about. Take away all his gold from him, father. What a vile thing is gold when it ruins a man so!" The magistrate was sorry for the old woman, and he sent his eldest clerk to him, and bade him judge between the husband and wife. The clerk assembled all the village elders, and went to the peasant and said to him, "The magistrate has sent me to thee, and bids thee deliver up all thy treasure into my hands."

The peasant only shrugged his shoulders. “What treasure?” said he. “I know nothing whatever about any treasure.” — “Not know? Why, thy old woman has just been to complain to the magistrate, and I tell thee what, friend, if thou deniest it, ‘twill be worse for thee. If thou dost not give up the whole treasure to the magistrate, thou must give an account of thyself for daring to search for treasures, and not revealing them to the authorities.” — “But I cry your pardon, honoured sirs! what is this treasure you are talking of? My wife must have seen this treasure in her sleep; she has told you a pack of nonsense, and you listen to her.” — “Nonsense!” burst forth the old woman; “it is not nonsense, but a whole cauldron full of gold and silver!” — “Thou art out of thy senses, dear wife. Honoured sirs, I cry your pardon. Cross-examine her thoroughly about the affair, and if she proves this thing against me, I will answer for it with all my goods.” — “And dost thou think that I cannot prove it against thee? Thou rascal, I will prove it. This is how the matter went, Mr. Clerk,” began the old woman; “I remember it, every bit. We went to the forest, and we saw a pike on a tree.” — “A pike?” roared the clerk at the old woman; “or dost thou want to make a fool of me?” — “Nay, I am not making a fool of thee, Mr. Clerk; I am speaking the simple truth.” — “There, honoured sirs,” said the old man, “how can you believe her if she goes on talking such rubbish?” — “I am not talking rubbish, yokel! I am speaking the truth — or hast thou forgotten how we found a hare in thy fishing-basket in the stream?” — All the elders rolled about for laughter; even the clerk smiled, and began to stroke down his long beard. The peasant again said to his wife, “Recollect thyself, old woman; dost thou not see that every one is laughing at thee? But ye, honoured gentlemen, can now see for yourselves how far you can believe my wife.” — “Yes,” cried all the elders, with one voice, “long as we have lived in the world, we have never heard of hares living in rivers, and fish hanging on the trees of the forest.” The clerk himself saw that this was a matter he could not get to the bottom of, so he dismissed the assembly with a wave of his hand, and went off to town to the magistrate.

And everybody laughed so much at the old woman that she was forced to bite her own tongue and listen to her husband; and the husband bought wares with his treasure, went to live in the town, and began to trade there, exchanged his wares for money, grew rich and prosperous, and was as happy as the day was long.

38

THOMAS BERENNIKOV

Once upon a time there lived in a village a miserably poor peasant called Tommy Berennikov. Thomas’s tongue could wag right well, and in mother-wit he was no worse than his neighbours, but he was anything but handsome to look at, and for working in the fields he was not worth a button. One day he went into the field to plough. The work was heavy and his nag was a wretched hack, quite starved and scarce able to drag along the plough, so at last Tom quite gave way to woe, sat down on a little stone, and immediately whole swarms of blow-flies and gad-flies fell upon his poor knacker from every quarter and stuck fast. Thomas seized a bundle of dry twigs and thwacked his horse about the back with all his might; the horse never stirred from the spot, and the blow-flies and gad-flies fell off him in swarms. Thomas began to count how many he had killed, eight gad-flies, and there was no numbering the slain of the other flies. And Thomas Berennikov smiled. “That’s something like!” said he, “we’ve killed eight at a blow! And there’s no counting the smaller fry! What a warrior I am, what a hero! I won’t plough any more, I’ll fight. I’ll turn hero, and so seek my fortune!” And he took his crooked sickle from his shoulders, hung up his bast-basket by his girdle, placed in this basket his blunt scythe, and then he mounted his hack and wandered forth into the wide world.

He went on and on till he came to a post on which passing heroes had inscribed their names, and he wrote with chalk on this post, “The hero Thomas Berennikov has passed by this way, who slew eight at one blow, and of the smaller fry without number.” This he wrote and went on further. He had only got a mile from this post when two stalwart young heroes came galloping up to it, read the inscription, and asked one another, “What unheard-of hero is this? Whither has he gone? I never heard of his gallant steed, and there is no trace of his knightly deed!” They followed hard upon Thomas, overtook him, and were amazed at the sight of him. “What sort of a horse is the fellow riding on?” cried they; “why, ‘tis a mere hack! Then all this prowess cannot be in the horse, but in the hero himself.” And they both rode up to Thomas and said to him quite humbly and mildly, “Peace be with thee, good man.” Thomas looked at them over his shoulder, and without moving his head, said, “Who are you?” — “Ilia Muromets and Alesha Popovich; we would fain be thy comrades.” — “Well, maybe you’ll do. Follow behind me pray.”

They came to the realm of the neighbouring Tsar and went straight into his preserves; here they let their horses out to graze, and laid themselves down to rest beneath their tent. The neighbouring Tsar sent out against them a hundred horsemen of his guard, and bade them drive away the strangers from his preserves. Ilia Muromets and Alesha Popovich said to Thomas, “Wilt thou go against them, or wilt thou send us?” — “What, forsooth! do you think I’d soil my hands by going against such muck! No; go thou, Ilia Muromets, and show thy prowess.” So Ilia Muromets sat him on his heroic steed, charged the Tsar’s horsemen, swooped down upon them like a bright falcon on a flock of doves, smote them, and cut them all down to the very last one. At this the Tsar was still more wroth, collected all of his host that was in the town, both horse and foot, and bade his captains drive the wandering strangers out of his preserves without ceremony. The Tsar’s army advanced on the preserves, blew with their trumpets, and columns of dust arose in their path. Ilia Muromets and Alesha Popovich came to Thomas and said to him, “Wilt thou go thyself against the foe, or wilt thou send one of us?” But Thomas, who was lying on his side, did not so much as turn him round, but said to the heroes, “The idea of my coming to blows with this rabble! — the idea of my soiling my heroic hands with the like of them! No! Go thou, Alesha Popovich, and show them our style of fighting, and I’ll look on and see if thy valour be of the right sort.” Alesha rushed like a whirlwind upon the Tsar’s host, his armour rattled like thunder, he waved his mace from afar, and shouted with a voice more piercing than the clang of clarions, “I will slay and smash all of you without mercy!” He flew upon the host and began crushing it. The captains saw that every one took to his heels before him, and there was no way of stopping them, so they blew a retreat with the trumpets, retired towards the town, and came themselves with an apology to Alesha, and said: “Tell us now, strong and potent hero, by what name we must call thee, and tell us thy father’s name that we may honour it. What tribute must we give thee that thou mayst trouble us no more, and leave our realm in peace?” — “‘Tis not to me you must give tribute!” answered Alesha; “I am but a subordinate. I do what I am bidden by my elder brother, the famous hero Thomas Berennikov. You must reckon with him. He will spare you if he pleases, but if he does not please, he will level your whole kingdom with the ground.” The Tsar heard these words, and sent Tommy rich gifts and an honourable embassy of distinguished persons, and bade them say: “We beg the famous hero Thomas Berennikov to come and visit us, to dwell in our royal court, and help us to war against the Khan of China. If, O hero, thou dost succeed in smiting utterly the countless Chinese host, then I will give thee my own daughter, and after my death thou shalt have the whole realm.” But Tommy put on a long face and said, “What’s that? Well, well, I don’t mind! I suppose I may as well consent to that.” Then he mounted his hack, commanded his heroic younger brethren to ride behind him, and went as a guest to the neighbouring Tsar.

Tommy had not yet thoroughly succeeded in testing the quality of the Tsar’s kitchen, he had not yet thoroughly rested from his labours, when there came a threatening embassy from the Khan of China, demanding that the whole kingdom should acknowledge him as its liege lord, and that the Tsar should send him his only daughter. “Tell your Khan,” replied the Tsar, “that I fear him no longer; I now have a firm support, a sure defence, the famous hero Thomas Berennikov, who can slay eight at one blow of his sword, and of the lesser fry without number. If life is not pleasant to your Khan and your Chinese brethren, come to my empire, and you shall have cause to remember Thomas Berennikov.” In two days a countless Chinese host surrounded the city of the Tsar, and the Chinese Khan sent to say, “I have here an unconquerable hero, the like of whom the world knows not; send out against him thy Thomas. If thy champion prevails I’ll submit and pay thee a tribute from my whole Khanate; but if mine prevails, thou must give me thy daughter, and pay me a tribute from thy whole kingdom.” So now it was the turn of Thomas Berennikov to show his prowess! And his heroic younger brothers, Ilia Muromets and Alesha Popovich, said to him: “Mighty and potent hero, our elder brother, how wilt thou fight against this Chinaman without armour? Take our martial armour, choose the best of our heroic horses!” Thomas Berennikov answered thus: “How then? Must I hide myself in armour from this shaven pate? Why, I could finish off this Chinaman with one hand quite easily! Why, you yourselves when you first saw me said, ‘Tis plain that we must not look at the horse, but at the warrior!” But Thomas thought to himself: “I’m in a pretty pickle now! Well, let the Chinaman kill me if he likes — I’ll not be put to shame over the business anyhow!” Then they brought him his hack: he mounted it in peasant style, struck it with his bunch of twigs, and went into the open plain at a gentle amble.

The Chinese Khan had armed his champion like a fortress; he clothed him in armour twelve puds (480 lbs.) in weight, taught him the use of every weapon, put in his hands a battle-axe eighty pounds in weight, and said to him just before he set out, “Mark me, and recollect my words! When a Russian hero cannot prevail by force, he will overcome by cunning, so lest thou should get the worst of it, take care and do everything the Russian hero does.” So the champions went out against each other into the open field, and Thomas saw the Chinese hero advancing against him, as big as a mountain, with his head like a beer-cask, and covered with armour like a tortoise in its shell, so that he was scarcely able to move. So Tommy had recourse to artifice. He got off his horse and sat down on a stone and began to sharpen his scythe. The Chinese hero when he saw that, got off his horse immediately, fastened it to a tree, and began to whet his axe against a stone also. When Thomas had finished sharpening his scythe, he marched up to the Chinaman and said to him, “We two are mighty and potent heroes, we have come out against each other in mortal combat; but before we pitch into each other we ought to show each other proper respect, and salute one another after the custom of the country.” And he saluted the Chinaman with a low, a very low bow. “Oh, oh!” thought the Chinaman, “here’s some piece of trickery, I know. I’ll bow yet lower.” And he bowed himself to the very ground. But before he could raise himself up again in his heavy armour, Thomas rushed at him, tickled him once or twice in the neck, and so cut his throat through for him. Then he leaped upon the heroic horse of the Chinaman, scrambled on the top of it somehow, flourished his birch of twigs, tried to grasp the reins, and quite forgot that the horse was tied to a tree. But the good horse, as soon as he felt a rider on his back, tugged and pulled till he tore the tree up by the roots, and off he set at full gallop towards the Chinese host, dragging after him the big tree as if it had been a mere feather. Thomas Berennikov was terribly frightened, and began bawling, “Help, help!” But the Chinese host feared him more than a snowstorm, and it seemed to them as if he were crying to them, “Run, run!” so they took to their heels without once looking back. But the heroic horse plunged into the midst of them, trampled them beneath its feet, and the huge tree-trunk scattered them in all directions. Wherever it plunged it left a wide road behind it.

The Chinese swore that they would never fight with Thomas again, and this resolution was lucky for Thomas. He returned to the town on his own hack, and they were all amazed at his strength, valour, and success. “What dost thou require of me?” said the Tsar to Thomas, “one half of my golden treasures and my daughter into the bargain, or one half of my glorious kingdom?” “Well, I’ll take half your kingdom if you like, but I wouldn’t turn up my nose either at your daughter with half your golden treasure for a dowry. And look now, when I get married, don’t forget to invite to the wedding my younger brothers, Ilia Muromets and Alesha Popovich!”

And Thomas married the thrice-lovely Tsarevna, and they celebrated the wedding so gloriously that the heads of all the guests ached for more than two weeks afterwards. I too was there, and I drank mead and ale and got rich gifts, and so my tale is told.

39

THE WHITE DUCK

A powerful and mighty Prince married a thrice-lovely Princess, and he had not yet had time to look upon her, he had not yet had time to speak to her, he had not yet had time to listen to her, when he was obliged to depart from her on a far journey, and leave his young wife in the hands of strangers. The Princess wept much, and the consolations of the Prince were also many, and he advised her not to leave her lofty terem, not to have anything to do with bad people, not to listen to evil tongues, and not to consort with strange women. All this the Princess promised to do. The Prince departed, and she shut herself up in her own room. There she sat, and never went out.

Whether it was after a long time or after a short time matters not, but one day she was sitting by her little window, bathed in tears, when a woman passed by the window. In appearance she was simple and kindly, and she leaned her elbows on her crutch, rested her chin on her hands, and said to the Princess in a wheedling, caressing voice: “How’s this, darling little Princess, thou art for ever fretting? Prythee come now out of thy terem and have a peep at God’s fair world, or come down into thy little garden among the sweet green things and drive away thy woe!” For a long time the Princess refused, she did not even care to listen to the woman’s words, but, at last, she thought, “There can be no harm in going into the garden, crossing the brook is another matter.” But she did not know that this woman was a witch, and had come to ruin her because she envied her her bliss. So the Princess went with her into the garden, and listened to her cunning, wheedling words. And in the garden from beneath the mountain trickled a stream of crystalline water. “What dost thou say now,” said the woman, “the day is very hot, the sun is burning with all its might, but this darling little stream is so cold, so refreshing, and hark how it babbles — why should we not have a bath here?” “Ah, no, no! I won’t,” said the Princess; but she thought to herself, “But why not? There can be no harm in having a bath!” So she slipped off her little sarafan, and bounded into the water, and no sooner had she bathed than the witch struck her on the shoulder and said, “Swim about now as a white duck!” But the witch immediately dressed herself in the Princess’s robes, tired and painted herself, and sat in place of the Princess in the terem to await the Prince. And as soon as the little dog began to bark and the little bell fell a-tinkling, she rushed out to meet him, threw herself upon his neck, and kissed and fondled him. The Prince was so overjoyed that he was the first to stretch out his arms towards her, and never noticed that it was not his wife, but an evil witch who stood before him.

Meanwhile the poor duck, dwelling in the bright stream, laid eggs and hatched its young; two were fair, but the third was still-born, and her babies grew up into little children. She brought them up, and they began to walk along the stream, and catch gold-fish, and collect bits of rags, and sew them coats, and run up the banks, and look at the meadows. But the mother said: “Oh! don’t go there, my children. There dwells the evil witch. She ruined me, and she will ruin you!” But the children didn’t listen to their mother, and one day they played in the grass, and the next day they ran after ants, and went further and further, and so got into the Prince’s courtyard. The witch knew them by instinct, and ground her teeth for rage; but she made herself so nice, called the little children into the out-house, gave them a good feed, and a good drink, and made them lie down to sleep, and bade her people light a fire in the courtyard, and put a kettle on it, and sharpen their knives. The two brothers went to sleep, but the still-born one whom the mother had bade the others carry in their bosom that he might not catch cold, the still-born one did not sleep at all, but listened and saw everything. In the night the witch came to their door and said: “Are you asleep, little children, or not?” Then the still-born one answered instead of his brothers: “We do not dream in dreams, but think in our thoughts that you want to cut up the whole lot of us! — the pyres of maple-branches are blazing, the kettles are seething, and the knives of steel are sharpening.” — “They are not asleep,” said the witch, and she went away from the door, walked about and walked about, and then went to the door again: “Are you asleep, children, or are you not?” And the still-born again screeched from beneath the pillow instead of his brethren: “We do not dream in dreams, but think in our thoughts that you want to cut up the whole lot of us; the pyres of maple-branches are blazing, the kettles are seething, and the knives of steel are sharpening.” “How is it that it is always one and the same voice?” thought the witch; “I’ll just have a peep.” She opened the door very, very softly, looked in, and saw both the brothers sleeping soundly. Then she killed the pair of them.

In the morning the white duck began seeking and calling her children, but her darling children did not come to her calling. Her heart had a foreboding of evil. She shuddered and flew off to the Prince’s courtyard. In the Prince’s courtyard, as white as little white kerchiefs, as cold as little cold split fish, lay the brothers all in a row. She flew down, threw herself upon them, fluttered her little wings, flew round and round her little ones, and cried with a mother’s voice:

Kra, kra, my darling loveys!
Kra, kra, my little doveys!

I brought you up in woe and fears,
I nourished you with grief and tears,
Dark night it brought no sleep to me,
No food was sweet because of ye.

And the Prince heard the lament, called the witch to him, and said: “Wife, hast thou heard this thing, this thing unheard of?” — “Thou dost only fancy it! Hi! my serving-men, drive me this duck out of the courtyard!” They began driving her out, but she flew round and round, and again said to her children:

Kra, kra, my darling loveys!
Kra, kra, my little doveys!
The old, old witch your bane hath been,
The old, old witch, that cruel snake,
That cruel snake that lurks unseen;
Your father from you she did take,
Your father dear, my husband true;
Us in the running stream she threw.
She changed us into ducks so white,
And prospers as if wrong were right!

The Prince felt that there was something wrong here, and he cried: “Bring me that white duck hither!” They all hastened to fulfil his command, but the white duck flew round in a circle, and none could catch her. At last the Prince himself went out on the balcony, and she flew upon his hands, and fell at his feet. The Prince took her carefully by her little wing, and said: “White birch-tree stand behind me, and fair damsel stand before me!” Then the white duck turned into her former shape of thrice-lovely Princess, taught them how to get a little bladder of living and speaking water in a magpie’s nest, sprinkled her children with the living water, and they shuddered; then she sprinkled them with the speaking water, and they began to speak. And the Prince suddenly saw himself surrounded by his family all alive and well, and they all lived together, and lived happily, and chose good and avoided evil.

But the witch, by the Prince’s command, was fastened to the tail of a horse and dragged away over the open steppe. The fowls of the air picked her flesh, and the wild winds of heaven scattered her bones, and there remained not a trace or a memorial of her behind.

40

THE TALE OF LITTLE FOOL IVAN

Far, far away, in a certain kingdom, in a certain Empire, stood a city, and in this city reigned Tsar Gorokh, and the Tsaritsa Morkovya. They had many wise Boyars, rich Princes, strong and mighty heroes, and of the common run of warriors 100,000 at least. All manner of people dwelt in this city, worshipful, well-bearded merchants, cunning open-handed sharpers, German mechanics, Swedish beauties, drunken Russians; and in the suburbs beyond the town dwelt peasants who tilled the earth, sowed corn, ground it into meal, took it to the bazaar, and drank away their hard earnings.

In one of these suburbs stood an old hut, and in this hut dwelt an old man with his three sons, Pakhom, Thomas, and Ivan. The old man was not only sage, he was cunning, and whenever he chanced to come across the Devil, he would have a chat with him, make him drunk, and worm many and great secrets out of him, and then would go away and do such wonders that his neighbours called him a wizard and a magician, while others honoured him as a shrewd fellow who knew a thing or two. The old man certainly did great wonders. If any one were being consumed by the flames of hopeless love, he had only to pay his respects to the wizard and the old man would give him some sort of little root which would draw the fickle fair one at once. If anything were lost he would manage to get it back from the thief, however it might be hidden, by means of charmed water and a fishing-net.

But wise as the old man was, he could not persuade his sons to walk in his footsteps. Two of them were great gad-abroads, not because they were wise, but because they were thorough feather-brains; they never knew when to run forward or when to hold back. And they married and had children. The third son was not married, but the old man did not trouble about him, because his third son was a fool, quite a natural in fact, who couldn’t count up to three, but could only eat and drink and sleep and lie on the stove. What was the good of bothering about a fellow like that? — he can manage to jog along of his own accord much better than a man of sense. And besides, Ivan was so mild and gentle that butter would not melt in his mouth. If you asked him for his girdle, he would give you his kaftan also; if you took away his gloves, he would beg you to accept his cap into the bargain; therefore they all liked Ivan and called him dear little Ivan, or dear little fool; in short he was a fool from his birth, but very lovable for all that.

So our old man lived and lived with his sons till the hour came when he was to die. Then the old man called to him his three sons and said to them: “My dear children, my mortal hour has come, and you must fulfil my wish; each of you must come with me into my tomb and there pass a night with me; thou first, Thomas; then thou, Pakhom; and thou third, dear little fool Ivan.” The two elders, like sensible people, promised to obey his words, but the fool promised nothing, but only scratched his head.

The old man died. They buried him. They ate pancakes and honey-cakes, they drank well, and on the first night it was for his eldest son Thomas to go into his tomb. Whether it was laziness or fear I know not, but he said to little fool Ivan: “To-morrow I have to get up early to grind corn; go thou instead of me into our father’s tomb.” — “All right!” answered little fool Ivan, who took a crust of bread, went to the tomb, lay down, and began to snore. So it struck midnight, the tomb began to move, the wind blew, the midnight owl hooted, the tombstone rolled off, and the old man came out of his tomb and said: “Who’s there?” — “I,” answered little fool Ivan. — “Good!” answered the old man; “my dear son, I’ll reward thee for obeying me!” Scarcely had he said these words when the cocks crew and the old man fell back into the tomb. Little fool Ivan went home and threw himself on the top of the stove, and his brother asked him: “Well, what happened?” — “Nothing at all!” said he; “I slept the whole night through, only I am very hungry, and want something to eat.”

The next night it was the turn of Pakhom, the second son, to go to the tomb of his father. He fell a-thinking and a-thinking, and at last he said to little fool Ivan: “I must get up very early to-morrow morning to go to market; go thou instead of me to my father’s tomb.” — “All right!” replied little fool Ivan, who took a cake and some cabbage-soup, went to the tomb, and lay down to sleep. Midnight approached — the tomb began to shake, the tempest began to howl, a flock of ravens flew round and round it, the stone fell from the grave, the old man got out of the tomb and asked: “Who’s there?” — “I,” answered little fool Ivan. — “Good, my beloved son!” replied the old man, “I’ll not forget thee because thou hast not disobeyed me!” Scarcely had he uttered these words when the cocks began to crow, and the old man fell back in his tomb. Little fool Ivan awoke, made himself snug on his stove, and his brother asked him: “Well, what happened?” — “Nothing at all!” answered little Ivan. On the third night the brothers said to little fool Ivan: “Now ‘tis thy turn to go to our father’s tomb. A father’s wish must be fulfilled.” — “By all means!” answered little fool Ivan, who took a fritter, put on his blouse, and went to the tomb. And at midnight the gravestone was torn from the tomb, and the old man came out and asked: “Who’s there?” — “I,” said little fool Ivan. “Good, my obedient son,” answered the old man, “not in vain hast thou obeyed my will — thou shalt have a reward for thy faithful service!” And then he shouted with a monstrous voice and sang with a nightingale’s piping voice: “Hi! thou!

sivka-burka, vyeshchy kaurka! Stand before me like the leaf before the grass!” And it seemed to little fool Ivan as if a horse were running, the earth trembled beneath it, its eyes burned like fire, clouds of smoke poured out of its ears; it ran up, stood still as though it had taken root in the ground, and said with a human voice: “What dost thou require?” The old man got into one of its ears, cooled himself, washed himself, dressed himself finely, and came out of the other ear so young and handsome that there’s no guessing or imagining it, for no pen can write nor tale can tell the like of it. “There, my dear son,” said he, “thou hast my valiant steed; and thou, O horse! my good steed, serve him as thou hast served me!” He had scarcely uttered these words when the crowing cocks of the village flapped their wings and sang their morning song, the magician sank back into his grave, and the grass grew over it. Little fool Ivan went home step by step; he got home, stretched himself in his old corner, and snored till the walls trembled. “What is it?” asked his brothers, but he never answered a word, but only waved his hand.

And so they went on living together, the elder brothers like wise men, the younger like a fool. Thus they lived on and on, day by day, and just as a woman rolls thread into a ball, so their days rolled on till it came to their turn to be rolled. And one day they heard that the captains of the host were going all about the realm with trumpets and clarions and drums and cymbals, and they blew their trumpets and beat their drums, and proclaimed in the bazaars and public places the Tsar’s will, and the will of the Tsar was this. Tsar Gorokh and Tsaritsa Morkovya had an only daughter, the Tsarevna Baktriana, the heir to the throne, and so lovely that when she looked at the sun, the sun was ashamed, and when she regarded the moon, the moon was abashed. And the Tsar and the Tsaritsa thought to themselves: To whom shall we give our daughter in marriage that he may govern our realm, defend it in war, sit as judge in the royal council, help the Tsar in his old age, and succeed him at the end of his days? The Tsar and the Tsaritsa sought for a bridegroom who was to be a valiant young warrior, a handsome hero, who was to love the Tsarevna, and make the Tsarevna love him. But the love part of the business was not so easy, for there was this great difficulty: the Tsarevna loved nobody. If her father the Tsar began talking to her of any bridegroom, she always gave one and the same answer: “I don’t love him!” If her mother the Tsaritsa began talking to her about any one, she always answered: “He is not nice!” At last Tsar Gorokh and Tsaritsa Morkovya said to her: “Dear daughter and darling child, more than thrice lovely Tsarevna Baktriana, it is now time for thee to choose a bridegroom. Look now, pray! the wooers, the royal and imperial ambassadors, are all here at our court; they have eaten all the cakes and drained our cellars dry, and still thou wilt not choose thee the beloved of thy heart!” Then the Tsarevna said to them: “My sovereign papa and my sovereign mamma, I am sorry for your sorrow, and would feign obey your will, but let fate decide who is to be my intended. Build me a terem thirty-two storeys high with a little bow-window at the top of it. I, the Tsarevna, will sit in this terem just beneath the window, and you make a proclamation. Let all people come hither — Tsars, Kings, Tsareviches, Princes, mighty champions, and valiant youths; and whoever leaps up as high as my little window on his fiery steed and exchanges rings with me, he shall be my bridegroom, and your son and successor.” The Tsar and the Tsaritsa followed out the words of their sage daughter. “Good!” said they. They commanded to be built a costly terem of two-and-thirty layers of oak beams; they built it up and adorned it with curious carvings, and hung it all about with Venetian brocade, with pearly tapestries and cloth of gold, and made proclamations and sent forth carrier-pigeons, and despatched ambassadors to all kingdoms, summoning all men to assemble together in the empire of Tsar Gorokh and Tsaritsa Morkovya, and whoever leaped on his proud steed as high as the two-and-thirty oaken beams and exchanged rings with the Tsarevna Baktriana, he was to be her bridegroom and inherit the kingdom with her, whether he were a Tsar or a

King, or a Tsarevich or a Prince, or even nothing but a free, bold-handed Cossack with neither birth nor ancestry.

The day was fixed. The people crowded into the meadows where the Tsarevna's terem was built as if sewn with stars, and the Tsarevna herself sat beneath the window arrayed in pearls and brocade, and lace, and the most precious of precious stones. The mob of people surged and roared like the great sea Ocean. The Tsar and the Tsaritsa sat on their throne, and around them stood their grandees, their Boyars, their captains, and their heroes. And the wooers of the Tsarevna Baktriana came and pranced and galloped, but when they saw the terem their hearts died away within them. The youths tried their best; they ran, they bounded, they leaped, and fell back on the ground again like sheaves of barley, to the amusement of the crowd.

In those days when the valiant wooers of the Tsarevna Baktriana were trying their best to win her, the brothers of little fool Ivan took it into their heads to go thither and see the fun. So they got them ready, and little fool Ivan said: “Take me with you too!” — “What, fool!” answered his brother; “sit at home and look after the fowls! What hast thou got to do with it!” — “You're right!” said he, and he went to the fowl-house and lay down there. But when his brethren had departed, little fool Ivan went into the open plain, on to the wide steppe, cried with a warrior's voice, and whistled with a heroic whistle: “Hi! thou! sivka-burka, vyeshchy kaurka! Stand before me like the leaf before the grass!” And lo! the valiant charger came running up, the earth trembled, flames shot out of his eyes, and clouds of smoke from his ears, and it said with a human voice: “How can I serve thee?” Little fool Ivan crept into one ear, washed and combed himself, and crept out of the other ear so young and handsome, that books cannot describe it, nor the eye of man bear the sight of it. And he sat him on his good horse, and struck its sturdy ribs with a whip of Samarcand silk, and his horse chafed and fumed, and rose from the earth higher than the standing woods, but lower than the moving clouds, and when it came to the large streams it swam them, and when it came to the little streams it brushed them away with its tail, and opened wide its legs for the mountains to pass between them. And little fool Ivan leaped up to the terem of the Tsarevna Baktriana, rose like a bright falcon, leaped over thirty of the two-and-thirty beams of oak, and dashed along like a passing tempest. The people roared: “Hold him, stop him!” The Tsar leaped up, the Tsaritsa cried “Oh!” The people were astonished.

The brothers of little fool Ivan returned home and said to each other: “That was something like a hero; he only missed two storeys.” “Why, that was I, brothers!” said little fool Ivan. “Thou indeed! Hold thy tongue, fool, and lie on the stove and eat cinder cakes!”

The next day the brothers of little fool Ivan again assembled at the Tsar’s sports, and little fool Ivan said to them: “Take me with you!” — “Take thee, fool!” said the brothers; “just sit at home and keep the sparrows from the peas instead of a scarecrow! What hast thou to do with it!” — “That’s true!” said he, went among the peas, sat down, and scared away the sparrows. But when his brothers had gone, little fool Ivan shuffled off into the open plain, into the wide steppe, and roared with a martial voice, and whistled shrilly with a heroic whistle: “Hi! thou! sivka-burka, vyeshchy kaurka! Stand before me like the leaf before the grass!” And lo! his valiant steed came running, the earth trembled, sparks flew from beneath his prancing hoofs, a fire burned in his eyes, and smoke rolled in clouds from his ears. He said with a human voice: “What dost thou require?” Little fool Ivan crept into one of the horse’s ears, and crept out of the other so young and comely that the like of it was never heard of in tales or seen in reality, and he sat on his brave horse and beat its iron ribs with a Circassian whip. And his horse chafed and fumed, and rose from the earth, higher than the standing woods, lower than the moving clouds; at one bound it went a league of the ancient measure: at the second bound it whizzed across the broad river; and at the third bound it reached the terem. It rose into the air like an eagle into the sky, leaped as high as thirty-one of the two-and-thirty oaken beams, and flew past like a passing whirlwind. The people cried: “Hold him, stop him!” The Tsar leaped from his seat, the Tsaritsa cried “Oh!” The Princes and the Boyars stood there with gaping mouths.

The brothers of little fool Ivan returned home and said to each other: “Why, that young warrior of to-day was even better than the warrior of yesterday; there was only one oak beam he could not get as high as!” — “Why, brothers, that was I!” said little fool Ivan. — “Hold thy tongue! Thou indeed! Lie on the stove, and don’t talk bosh!”

On the third day the brothers of little fool Ivan again made them ready to go to the great spectacle, but little fool Ivan said: “Take me with you!” — “A fool like thee!” replied his brethren; “just stay at home and mix the slush in the trough for the pigs. What art thou thinking of!” — “As you please!” said he, and went into the backyard, and began to feed the swine, and grunt along with them. But when his brothers had gone, little fool Ivan shambled off to the open plain, to the wide steppe, and howled with a martial voice, and whistled as only heroes can whistle: “Hi! thou! sivka-burka, vyeshchy kaurka! Stand before me like the leaf before the grass!” And lo! the valiant charger came running, the earth trembled; where it touched the ground with its foot springs gushed forth, and where it struck the ground with its hoof lakes appeared, and flames came from its eyes, and clouds of smoke welled from its ears. It cried with a human voice: “What dost thou require?” Little fool Ivan crept into one of his horse’s ears, and crept out of the other a youthful warrior, so handsome that no lovely maiden ever dreamed the like of him in her dreams, and a hundred sages meditating for a hundred years could not have imagined it. He struck his horse on the backbone, drew tight the rein, sat in the saddle, and rushed away so swiftly that the fleeting wind could not overtake him, and the dear little house-swallow would not vie with him. He flew like a cloud of the sky, his silver harness hissed and gleamed, his yellow locks floated in the wind; he flew towards the

Tsarevna’s terem, struck his horse about the ribs, and his horse leaped like a cruel serpent, and leaped as high as the two-and-thirty oaken beams. Little fool Ivan caught the Tsarevna Baktriana in his heroic hands, kissed her sugary lips, exchanged rings with her, and was borne as by a whirlwind into the meadow, overturning all that met him or stood in his way. The Tsarevna only just succeeded in fastening a diamond star on his forehead — and the mighty warrior had vanished. Tsar Gorokh leaped to his feet, the Tsaritsa Morkovya said “Oh!” The Tsar’s councillors wrung their hands one after another, but spake never a word.

The brothers of little fool Ivan returned home and began to talk about and discuss the matter: “Well, the hero of to-day was the best of all; he is now the bridegroom of our Tsarevna. But who is he?” — “Why, brothers, it was I,” said little fool Ivan. — “Hold thy tongue! Thou indeed! Go and eat cinder cakes and toad-stools, but keep thy tongue well between thy teeth!” But Tsar Gorokh commanded them to surround the city with a strong watch, and let in every one, but let out no one, and proclaim that all people, under pain of death, from the eldest to the youngest, were to come into the Tsar’s courts and do homage, that it might appear on whose forehead was the diamond star which the Tsarevna had fastened to her bridegroom. From very early in the morning the people came crowding together. They looked at everybody’s forehead, but there was no star, and no trace of a star. It was now dinner-time, yet not a single table in the halls of the Tsar was yet laid for dinner. The brothers of little fool Ivan also came thither to show their foreheads at the Tsar’s command, and Ivan said to them: “Take me with you!” — “Take thee!” said the brothers; “sit in thy corner and catch flies! But why hast thou tied thy forehead round with rags, or hast thou damaged it?” — “Yesterday, when you went out, as I was gaping about, I struck my forehead against the door, the door took no hurt, but a big lump sprang out on my forehead!” As soon as his brothers had gone, little fool Ivan passed right below the little window where the Tsarevna was sitting troubled at heart. The soldiers of the Tsar saw him, and asked: “Why hast thou bound up thy forehead? Show it! Is there not a star on thy forehead?” Little fool Ivan would not let them look, and withstood them. The soldiers began to make a to-do, the Tsarevna heard it, and bade them bring little fool Ivan to her, took the clouts from his forehead — and behold! there was the star. She took little fool Ivan by the hand, led him to Tsar Gorokh, and said: “Look, dear sovereign papa! this is my intended bridegroom, and thy son-in-law and successor!” There was nothing more to be said. The Tsar commanded the banquet to be made ready; they married little fool Ivan and the Tsarevna Baktriana; for three days they ate and drank and made merry, and amused themselves with all manner of amusements. The Tsar made the brothers of little fool Ivan captains of his host, and gave them a village and a large house apiece.

The tale of it is soon told, but the deed thereof is not soon done. The brethren of little fool Ivan were wise, and when they grew rich it is not strange that all men gave them out for wise men at once. And when the brethren of little fool Ivan became great people, they began to be proud and haughty, would not suffer men of low degree to come into their courtyards at all, and made even the old voevods and Boyars, when they came to see them, take off their caps on the stairs. So the Boyars came to Tsar Gorokh and said: “Sovereign Tsar! the brethren of thy son-in-law boast that they know where the apple tree grows that hath silver leaves and golden apples, and they want to get this apple tree for thee!” The Tsar sent for the brethren of little fool Ivan, and told them that they might fetch for him this apple tree with the silver leaves and the golden apples; and as they had nothing to say they were obliged to go. The Tsar bade them take horses from the royal stables for their journey, and they set out on their journey to find the apple tree with the silver leaves and the golden apples. And in those days little fool Ivan arose, took his old hack of a horse, sat on it with his face to the tail, and rode out of the city. He went into the open plain, seized his jade by the tail, threw it into the open field, and said: “Come, ye crows and kites, here’s a breakfast for you.” Then he called his good horse, crept in at one ear and out at the other, and his horse carried him to the East where grew the apple tree with silver leaves and golden apples, on the silver waters, by the golden sands, and he pulled it up by the roots, went back, and before he got to the town of Tsar Gorokh, he pitched his tent with its silver tent-pole and laid him down to rest. Now his brethren were going along by this road, their noses hung down, and they did not know what to say to the Tsar by way of excuse, and they saw the tent and the apple tree beside it, and they awoke little fool Ivan, and they began to bargain with him for it, and offered him three cart-loads of silver. “The apple tree is mine, gentlemen; it was not sold and purchased, but bequeathed by will,” said little fool Ivan to them. “Yet a will is no great matter: cut off a toe from the right foot of each one of you, and I’ll say done!” The brothers laid their heads together, but there was nothing for it but to agree. So little fool Ivan cut off one of their toes apiece and gave them the apple tree, and they brought it to the Tsar and boasted mightily. “Behold, O Tsar!” said they, “we have travelled far, we have suffered many hardships, but we have performed thy will.” Tsar Gorokh was overjoyed. He made a great feast, bade them beat the drums, and play on the trumpets and pipes, and he rewarded the brothers of little fool Ivan, and gave them a city apiece, and praised their faithful service.

Then the other voevods and Boyars said to him: “It is not a very great service to bring the apple tree with silver leaves and golden apples. The brothers of thy son-in-law boast that they would go to the Caucasus and fetch thee the swine with golden bristles, and silver teeth, and twenty sucking-pigs.” Tsar Gorokh sent for the brothers of little fool Ivan, and told them to bring him the swine with the golden bristles, and the silver teeth, and the twenty sucklings; and as they had nothing to say for themselves, they dared not disobey. So they went on their way to find for the Tsar’s pleasure the little pig with the golden bristles, and the silver teeth, and the twenty sucklings. And at that very time little fool Ivan arose and saddled his cow, and sat upon it with his face to the tail, and went out of the city. He went into the open plain, seized his cow by the horn, threw her into the field, and cried: “Gallop along, ye gray wolves and pretty little foxes! Here’s a dinner for you!” Then he called his good horse, and crept in at one ear and out at the other, and his horse bore him to lands of the South, and bore him into a dreary wood where the little swine with the golden bristles was rooting up roots with its silver tusks, and twenty sucking-pigs were running after her. Little fool Ivan threw a silk lasso over the little swine, strapped the sucklings to his saddle, turned back, and when he was not very far from the city of Gorokh, pitched his tent with the golden tent-pole, and lay down to rest. Now his brothers were coming along that same way, and were thinking what they could say to the Tsar. Suddenly they saw the tent, and close by it tied by the silken lasso the little swine with the golden bristles, and the silver tusks, and the twenty sucklings. They awoke little fool Ivan, and began to bargain with him for the swine. “We’ll give thee three sacks of precious stones,” they cried. “The little swine is mine, gentlemen,” said little Ivan the fool; “it is not sold or purchased, but bequeathed by will; but a will is no great matter; let each of you cut me off a finger from his hand, and I’ll cry done!” The brothers laid their heads together and talked the matter over: “People can live without brains, why not without fingers also?” thought they. So they let little fool Ivan cut off a finger from each of them, and he gave them the swine, which they took to the Tsar, and they praised themselves more than ever. “Tsar!” said they, “we have been beyond the distant sea, beyond the impenetrable woods, beyond the shifting sands; we have suffered cold and hunger, but we have fulfilled thy commands.” The Tsar was overjoyed to have such faithful servants, gave a great banquet to all the world, rewarded the brethren of little fool Ivan, made them great Boyars, and could not praise their services sufficiently.

Then the other voevods and Boyars came to him and said: "'Tis not such a very great service, O Tsar! to bring thee the little swine with the golden bristles, and the silver tusks, and the twenty sucklings. A swine's a swine all the world over, though it has got golden tusks! But the brethren of thy son-in-law boast that they can do a yet greater service; they say they can get thee from the stables of the Serpent Goruinich, the golden-maned horse with the diamond hoofs." Tsar Gorokh sent for the brethren of little fool Ivan, and bade them fetch him from the stables of the Serpent Goruinich, the golden-maned mare with the diamond hoofs. Then the brothers of little fool Ivan began protesting that they had never said such words. But the Tsar would not listen to a word of it. "Take of my treasures without tale or count," said he, "and of my host as much as you will. Bring me hither the golden-maned mare. Ye are the first in my realm, but if you bring her not, I will again degrade you into ragamuffins." So these good warriors, these useful heroes, departed, scarce able to drag one foot after another, and not knowing whither they were going. And in the self-same time little fool Ivan arose, sat astride his little stick, went out into the open plain, into the wide steppe, called his good horse, crept into one ear and out at the other, and his horse took him into the west country, towards the great island where the Serpent Goruinich guarded in his iron stable, behind seven bolts, behind seven doors, the golden-maned mare with the diamond hoofs. The horse went on and on, near and far, high and low, and little fool Ivan arrived at the island, fought three days with the Serpent till he killed it, spent three days more in bursting the locks and breaking the doors, took out the golden-maned mare by the mane, went back, and had not gone many miles when he stopped, pitched his tent with the diamond tent-pole, and laid him down to rest. And behold his brethren were coming along by the same way, and knew not what they should say to Tsar Gorokh. All at once they felt the ground tremble — 'twas the neighing of the golden-maned mare! They looked about them, and there was a little light like a candle burning in the dark distance — ‘twas the golden mane which burned like fire. They stopped, awoke little fool Ivan, and began to bargain with him for the mare; they said they would each give him a sack of precious stones. “The mare is mine, gentlemen, ‘tis not for purchase or sale, but was bequeathed by will,” said little fool Ivan. “However, a will is not such a great matter; let each of you cut him an ear off, and I’ll cry done!” The brothers did not say him nay, but they let little fool Ivan cut off an ear from each one of them, and he gave them the mare with the golden mane and the diamond hoofs, and they puffed themselves out and talked big, and lied boastingly till it made your ears ache to hear them. “We went,” said they to the Tsar, “beyond lands thrice-ten, beyond the great sea Ocean, we strove with the Serpent Goruinich, and look! he bit off our ears, but for thy sake we reck not of life or goods, but would swim through rivers of blood, and would sacrifice limb and substance in thy service.” In his joy Tsar Gorokh measured them out riches without number, made them the first of his Boyars, and got ready such a feast that the royal kitchens were not big enough for it, though they cooked and roasted there three days, while the royal wine-cellars ran dry, and at the banquet Tsar Gorokh placed one of the brethren of little fool Ivan at his right hand, and the other at his left. And the feast proceeded right merrily, and the guests had eaten themselves half full, and drank themselves half full, and were humming and buzzing like bees in a hive, when they saw entering the palace a gallant warrior, little fool Ivan, in just the same guise as when he had leaped as high as the two-and-thirty oaken beams. And when his brothers saw him, one of them nearly choked himself with a drop of wine from his beaker, and the other nearly suffocated himself with a bit of roast swan, and they wrung their hands, rolled their eyes, and could not utter a word. Little fool Ivan bowed low to his father-in-law, the Tsar, and told how he had got the apple tree with the silver leaves and the golden apples, and after that the swine with the golden bristles and the silver tusks and the twenty sucklings, and after that the golden-maned mare with the diamond hoofs; and he drew out the fingers, and the toes, and the ears for which he had sold them to his brethren.

Then Tsar Gorokh was very wroth, and stamped with his feet, and bade them drive out the brothers of little fool Ivan with broomsticks, and one of them he sent to tend his swine in the cattle-yard, and the other he sent to look after the turkeys in the poultry-yard.

But little fool Ivan he set beside himself, and made him the chief over the Boyars, and the captain of the captains. And long did they feast together in gladness of heart, till everything was eaten and everything was drunk up. And little fool Ivan began to rule the realm, and his rule was wise and terrible, and on the death of his father-in-law he took his place. His children were many, and his subjects loved him, and his neighbours feared him, but the Tsarina Baktriana was just as beautiful in her old age as when she was young.

41

THE LITTLE FEATHER OF FENIST THE BRIGHT FALCON

Once upon a time there was an old widower who lived with his three daughters. The elder and the middle one were fond of show and finery, but the youngest only troubled herself about household affairs, although she was of a loveliness which no pen can describe and no tale can tell. One day the old man got ready to go to market in the town, and said: “Now, my dear daughters, say! what shall I buy for you at the fair?” — The eldest daughter said: “Buy me, dear dad, a new dress!” — The middle daughter said: “Buy me, dear dad, a silk kerchief!” — But the youngest daughter said: “Buy me, dear dad, a little scarlet flower!” — The old man went to the fair; he bought for his eldest daughter a new dress, for his middle daughter a silk kerchief, but though he searched the whole town through he could not find a little scarlet flower. He was already on his way back when there met him a little old man, whom he knew not, and this little old man was carrying a little scarlet flower. Our old man was delighted, and he asked the stranger: “Sell me thy little scarlet flower, thou dear little old man!” — The old man answered him: “My little scarlet flower is not for sale, ‘tis mine by will, it has no price and cannot be priced, but I’ll let thee have it as a gift if thou wilt marry thy youngest daughter to my son!” — “And who then is thy son, dear old man?” — “My son is the good and valiant warrior-youth Fenist the bright falcon. By day he dwells in the sky beneath the high clouds, at night he descends to the earth as a lovely youth." — Our old man fell a-thinking; if he did not take the little scarlet flower he would grieve his daughter, and if he did take it there was no knowing what sort of a match he would be making. He thought and thought, and at last he took the little scarlet flower, for it occurred to him that if this Fenist the bright falcon, who was thus to be wedded to his daughter, did not please him, it would be possible to break the match off. But no sooner had the strange old man given him the little scarlet flower than he vanished from before his eyes just as if he had never met him at all. The old man scratched his head and began to ponder still more earnestly: "I don't like the look of it at all!" he said, and when he got home he gave his elder daughters their things, and his youngest daughter her little scarlet flower, and said to her: "I don't like thy little scarlet flower a bit, my daughter; I don't like it at all!" — "Wherefore so vexed at it, dear father?" quoth she. Then he stooped down and whispered in her ear: "The little scarlet flower of thine is willed away; it has no price, and money could not buy it me — I have married thee beforehand for it to the son of the strange old man whom I met in the way, to Fenist the bright falcon." And he told her everything that the old man had told him of his son. "Grieve not, dear father!" said the daughter; "judge not of my intended by the sight of thine eyes, for though he come a-flying, we shall love him all the same." And the lovely daughter shut herself up in her little gabled chamber, put her little scarlet flower in water, opened her window, and looked forth into the blue distance. Scarcely had the sun settled down behind the forest when, whence he came who knows, Fenist the bright falcon darted up in front of her little window. He had feathers like flowers, he lit upon the balustrade, fluttered into the little window, flopped down upon the floor, and turned into a goodly young warrior. The damsel was terrified, she very nearly screamed; but the good youth took her tenderly by the hand, looked tenderly into her eyes, and said: "Fear me not, my destined bride! Every evening until our marriage I will come flying to thee; whenever thou placest in the window the little scarlet flower I'll appear before thee. And here is a little feather out of my little wing, and whatever thou mayest desire, go but out on the balcony and wave this little feather — and immediately it will appear before thee." Then Fenist the bright falcon kissed his bride and fluttered out of the window again. And he found great favour in her eyes, and from henceforth she placed the little scarlet flower in the window every evening, and so it was that whenever she placed it there the goodly warrior-youth, Fenist the bright falcon, came down to her.

Thus a whole week passed by, and Sunday came round. The elder sisters decked themselves out to go to church, and attired themselves in their new things, and began to laugh at their younger sister. "What art thou going to wear?" said they; "thou hast no new things at all." And she answered: "No, I have nothing, so I'll stay at home." But she bided her time, went out on the balcony, waved her flowery feather in the right direction, and, whence I know not, there appeared before her a crystal carriage and stud-horses and servants in gold galloon, and they brought for her a splendid dress embroidered with precious stones. The lovely damsel sat in the carriage, and went to church. When she entered the church, every one looked at her, and marvelled at her beauty and her priceless splendour. "Some Tsarevna or other has come to our church, depend upon it!" the good people whispered among themselves. When the service was over, our beauty got into her carriage and rolled home; got into the balcony, waved her flowery feather over her left shoulder, and in an instant the carriage and the servants and the rich garments had disappeared. The sisters came home and saw her sitting beneath the little window as before: "Oh, sister!" cried they, "thou hast no idea what a lovely lady was at mass this morning; 'twas a thing marvellous to behold, but not to be described by pen or told in tales."

Two more weeks passed by, and two more Sundays, and the lovely damsel threw dust in the eyes of the people as before, and took in her sisters, her father, and all the other orthodox people. But on the last occasion, when she was taking off her finery, she forgot to take out of her hair her diamond pin. The elder sisters came from church, and began to tell her about the lovely Tsarevna, and as their eyes fell upon her hair they cried with one voice: “Ah! little sister, what is that thou hast got?” The lovely damsel cried also, and ran off into her little room beneath the gables. And from that time forth the sisters began to watch the damsel, and to listen of a night at her little room, and discovered and perceived how at dawn Fenist the bright falcon fluttered out of her little window and disappeared behind the dark woods. And the sisters thought evil of their younger sister. And they strewed pieces of broken glass on the window-sill of their sister’s little dormer chamber, and stuck sharp knives and needles there, that Fenist the bright falcon when he lit down upon the window might wound himself on the knives. And at night Fenist the bright falcon flew down and beat vainly with his wings, and beat again, but could not get through the little window, but only wounded himself on the knives and cut and tore his wings. And the bright falcon lamented and fluttered upwards, and cried to the fair damsel: “Farewell, lovely damsel! farewell, my betrothed! Thou shalt see me no more in thy little dormer chamber! Seek me in the land of Thrice-nine, in the empire of Thrice-ten. The way thither is far, thou must wear out slippers of iron, thou must break to pieces a staff of cast-iron, thou must fret away reins of stone, before thou canst find me, good maiden!” And at the self-same hour a heavy sleep fell upon the damsel, and through her sleep she heard these words yet could not awaken. In the morning she awoke, and lo! knives and needles were planted on the window-sill, and blood was trickling from them. All pale and distraught, she wrung her hands and cried: “Lo! my distresses have destroyed my darling beloved!” And the same hour she packed up and started from the house and went to seek her bright-white love, Fenist the shining falcon.

The damsel went on and on through many gloomy forests, she went through many dreary morasses, she went through many barren wildernesses, and at last she came to a certain wretched little hut. She tapped at the window and cried: “Host and hostess, shelter me, a poor damsel, from the dark night!” An old woman came out upon the threshold: “We crave thy pardon, lovely damsel! Whither art thou going, lovey-dovey?” — “Alas! granny, I seek my beloved Fenist the bright falcon. Wilt thou not tell me where to find him?” — “Nay, I know not, but pray go to my middle sister, she will show thee the right way; and lest thou shouldst stray from the path, take this little ball; whithersoever it rolls, thither will be thy way!” The lovely damsel passed the night with the old woman, and on the morrow, when she was departing, the old woman gave her a little gift. “Here,” said she, “is a silver spinning-board and a golden spindle; thou wilt spin a spindle full of flax and draw out threads of gold. The time will come when my gift will be of service to thee.” The damsel thanked her, and followed the rolling ball. Whether ‘twere a long time or a short matters not, but the ball rolled all the way to another little hut. The damsel opened the door and the second old woman opened it. The old woman asked her questions and said to her: “Thou hast still a long way to go, damsel, and it will be no light matter to find thy betrothed. But look now! when thou comest to my elder sister she will be able to tell thee better than I can. But take this gift from me for thy journey — a silver saucer and a golden apple. The time will come when they will be of use to thee.” The damsel passed the night in the hut, and then went on further after the rolling ball; she went through the woods further and further, and at every step the woods grew blacker and denser, and the tops of the trees reached to the very sky. The ball rolled right up to the last hut; an old woman came out upon the threshold and invited the lovely damsel to take shelter from the dark night.

The damsel told the old woman whither she was going and what she sought. “Thine is a bad business, my child!” said the old woman; “thy Fenist the bright falcon is betrothed to the Tsarevna over sea, and will shortly be married to her. When thou gettest out of the wood on to the shores of the blue sea, sit on a little stone, take out thy silver spinning-board and thy golden spindle and sit down and spin, and the bride of Fenist the bright falcon will come out to thee and will buy thy spindle from thee, but thou must take no money for it, only ask to see the flowery feathers of Fenist the bright falcon!” The damsel went on further, and the road grew lighter and lighter, and behold! there was the blue sea; free and boundless it lay before her, and there, far, far away above the surface of the sea, bright as a burning fire, gleamed the golden summits of the marble palace halls. “Surely that is the realm of my betrothed which is visible from afar!” thought the lovely damsel, and she sat upon the little stone, took out her silver spinning-board and her golden spindle, and began spinning flax and drawing golden thread out of it. And all at once, she saw coming to her along the sea-shore, a certain Tsarevna, with her nurses and her guards and her faithful servants, and she came up to her and watched her working, and began to bargain with her for her silver spinning-board and her golden spindle. “I will give them to thee for nothing, Tsarevna, only let me look on Fenist the bright falcon!” For a long time the Tsarevna would not consent, but at last she said: “Very well, come and look at him when he is lying down to rest after dinner, and drive the flies away from him!” And she took from the damsel the silver spinning-board and the golden spindle and went to her terem, made Fenist the bright falcon drunk after dinner with a drink of magic venom, and then admitted the damsel when an unwakable slumber had overpowered him. The damsel sat behind his pillow, and her tears flowed over him in streams. “Awake, arise, Fenist the bright falcon!” said she to her love; “I, thy lovely damsel, have come to thee from afar; I have worn out slippers of iron, I have ground down a staff of steel, I have fretted away reins of stone;

everywhere and all times have I been seeking thee, my love.” But Fenist the bright falcon slept on, nor knew nor felt that the lovely damsel was weeping and mourning over him. Then the Tsarevna also came in, and bade them lead out the lovely damsel, and awoke Fenist the bright falcon. “I have slept for long,” said he to his bride, “and yet it seemed to me as if some one has been here and wept and lamented over me.” — “Surely thou hast dreamt it in thy dreams?” said the Tsarevna; “I myself was sitting here all the time, and suffered not the flies to light on thee.”

The next day the damsel again sat by the sea, and held in her hands the silver saucer and rolled the little golden apple about on it. The Tsarevna came out walking again, went up to her, looked on and said, “Sell me thy toy!” — “My toy is not merchandise, but an inheritance; let me but look once more on Fenist the bright falcon, and thou shalt have it as a gift.” — “Very well, come again in the evening, and drive the flies away from my bridegroom!” And again she gave Fenist the bright falcon a drink of magic sleeping venom and admitted the lovely damsel to his pillow. And the lovely damsel began to weep over her love, and at last one of the burning tears fell from her eyes upon his cheeks. Then Fenist the bright falcon awoke from his heavy slumbers and cried, “Alas! who was it who burned me?” — “Oh, darling of my desires!” said the lovely damsel, “I, thy maiden, have come to thee from afar. I have worn out shoes of iron, I have worn down staves of steel, I have gnawed away wafers of stone, and have sought thee everywhere, my beloved! This is the second day that I, thy damsel, have sorrowed over thee, and thou wokest not from thy slumber, nor made answer to my words!” Then only did Fenist the bright falcon know his beloved again, and was so overjoyed that words cannot tell of it. And the damsel told him all that had happened, how her wicked sisters had envied her, how she had wandered from land to land, and how the Tsarevna had bartered him for toys. Fenist fell in love with her more than ever, kissed her on her sugary mouth, and bade them set the bells a-ringing without delay, and assemble the Boyars and the Princes and the men of every degree in the market-place. And he began to ask them, “Tell me, good people, and answer me according to good sense, which bride ought I to take to wife and shorten the sorrow of life: her who sold me, or her who bought me back again?” And the people declared with one voice, “Her who bought thee back again!” And Fenist the bright falcon did so. They crowned him at the altar the same day in wedlock with the lovely damsel. The wedding was joyous and boisterous and magnificent. I also was at this wedding, and drank wine and mead, and the bumpers overflowed, and every one had his fill, and the beard was wet when the mouth was dry.

42

THE TALE OF THE PEASANT DEMYAN

Whether it is a long time ago or a short time ago I cannot say, but I know that once upon a time, in a certain village, dwelt a peasant who was headstrong and hot-tempered, and his name was Demyan. He was austere and hard and stern, always seeking an occasion to quarrel, and dealing hardly with whom-soever he fell out. Whatever any one said or did to him, he was always ready with his fists. He would invite a neighbour to be his guest, for instance, and force him to eat, and if the neighbour hung back a bit for bashfulness or courtesy, our peasant would pitch into him at once and cry, "In a strange house obey thy host!"

Now this is what happened one day. A smart, sturdy young fellow came to little Demyan as a guest, and our peasant regaled him finely, and filled the table with meat and drink. The young fellow pulled everything towards himself, dish after dish, and munched away in silence with both cheeks crammed full. Our peasant stared and stared, and at last he took off his cloak and said, "Take off thy blouse, and put on my cloak!" But he thought to himself, "He is sure to refuse, and then I'll show him something!" But the youth put on the cloak, tied it round with his girdle, bowed low and said, "Well, little father! I thank thee for thy gift. I dare not refuse, for in a strange house one must obey the host."

The host was furious; he wanted to pick a quarrel with him now at any price, so he ran into the stable, got out his best horse, and said to the youth, “Nothing is too good for thee! Here, mount my horse, and take it away as thine own!” But he thought, “He’ll be sure to refuse, and then I’ll teach him a lesson.” But the youth again said, “In a strange house we must always obey the host!” Only when he was fairly mounted did he turn round to the peasant Demyan and cry, “Farewell, mine host! Nobody pushed thee, but thou didst fall into the ditch of thine own self!” and he trotted out of the courtyard right away.

But the host looked after him, shook his head, and said, “The scythe has struck upon a stone!”

43

THE ENCHANTED RING

In a certain kingdom in a certain empire, there lived, once upon a time, an old man and an old woman, and they had a son called little Martin. Time went on, the old man fell ill and died, and though he had worked hard all his days, the only inheritance he left behind him was two hundred rubles. The old woman did not want to waste this money, but what was to be done? There was nothing to eat, so she had to have recourse to the pot containing the patrimony. The old woman counted out a hundred rubles, and sent her son to town to buy provision of bread for a whole year. So Martin the widow’s son went to town. He went past the meat market, and saw crowds of people gathered together, and his ears were deafened by the din and noise and racket. Little Martin went into the midst of the throng and saw that the butchers had caught a terrier, and had fastened it to a post, and were beating it unmercifully. Little Martin was sorry for the poor dog, and said to the butchers, “My brothers! why do you beat the poor dog so unmercifully?” — “Why should we not beat him, when he has spoiled a whole quarter of beef?” — “Yet, beat him not, my brothers! ‘Twere better to sell him to me!” — “Buy him if you like then!” said the butchers, mockingly, “but for such a treasure as that we could not take less than a hundred rubles.” — “Well, one hundred rubles is only one hundred rubles after all!” replied little Martin, and he drew out the money and gave it for the dog. But the dog’s name was Jurka. Martin then went home, and his mother asked him, “What hast thou bought?” — “Why look, I have bought Jurka!” replied her son. His mother fell a-scolding him, and reproached him bitterly: “Art thou not ashamed? Soon we shall not have a morsel to eat, and thou hast gone and thrown away so much money on a pagan dog.” The next day the old woman sent her son into the town again, and said to him, “Now there is our last one hundred rubles, buy with it provision of bread. To-day I will collect together the scrapings of the meal-tub and bake us fritters, but to-morrow there will not even be that!” Little Martin got to town and walked along the streets and looked about him, and he saw a boy who had fastened a cord round a cat’s neck and was dragging it off to drown it. “Stop!” shrieked Martin, “whither art thou dragging Vaska?” — “I am dragging him off to be drowned!” — “Why, what has he done?” — “He is a great rascal. He has stolen a whole goose.” — “Don’t drown him, far better sell him to me!” — “I’ll take nothing less than one hundred rubles!” — “Well, one hundred rubles is only one hundred rubles after all; here! take the money!” And he took Vaska from the boy. “What hast thou bought, my son?” asked his mother when he got home. — “Why the cat Vaska!” — “And what besides?” — “Well, perhaps there’s some money still left, and then we can buy something else.” — “Oh, oh, oh! what a fool thou art!” screeched the old woman. “Go out of the house this instant and beg thy bread from the stranger!”

Martin dared not gainsay his mother, so he took Jurka and Vaska with him and went into the neighbouring village to seek work. And there met him a rich farmer. “Whither art thou going?” said he. “I want to hire myself out as a day-labourer.” — “Come to me then. I take labourers without any contract, but if thou serve me well for a year thou shalt not lose by it.” Martin agreed, and for a whole year he worked for this farmer without ceasing. The time of payment came round. The farmer led Martin into the barn, showed him two full sacks, and said, “Take which thou wilt.” Martin looked; in one of the sacks was riches, in the other sand, and he thought to himself, “That’s not done without a reason; there’s some trickery here. I’ll take the sand; something will come of it no doubt.” So Martin put the sack of sand on his back, and went to seek another place. He went on and on, and strayed into a dark and dreary wood. In the midst of the wood was a field, and on the field a fire was burning, and in the fire a maiden was sitting; and it was such a lovely maiden that it was a delight to look at her. And the Beauty said to him, “Martin the widow’s son, if thou wishest to find happiness, save me. Extinguish this flame with the sand which thou hast gotten for thy faithful service.” — “Well, really,” thought Martin, “why should I go on dragging this load about on my shoulders? Far better to help a body with it.” So he undid his sack and emptied all the sand on the fire. The fire immediately went out, but the lovely damsel turned into a serpent, bounded on to the bosom of the good youth, wound itself round his neck, and said, “Fear me not, Martin the widow’s son. Go boldly into the land of Thrice-ten, into the underground realm where my dear father rules. Only mark this; he will offer thee lots of gold and silver and precious stones; thou, however, must take none of them, but beg him for the little ring off his little finger. That ring is no common ring; if thou move it from one hand to the other twelve young heroes will immediately appear, and whatever thou dost bid them do they will do it in a single night.”

Then the young man set out on his long, long journey, whether ‘twere a long time or a short I know not, but at last he drew nigh to the kingdom of Thrice-ten, and came to a place where a huge stone lay across the way. Here the snake leaped from his neck, lit on the damp ground, and turned into the former lovely damsel. “Follow me,” said she to Martin, and showed him a little hole beneath the stone. For a long time they went through this underground way, and came into a wide plain beneath the open sky; and in this plain a castle was built entirely of porphyry, with a roof of golden fish-scales, with sharp-pointed golden pinnacles. “That’s where my father lives, the Tsar of this underground region,” said the lovely damsel to Martin.

The wanderers entered the castle, and the Tsar met them kindly and made them welcome. “My dear daughter,” said he to the lovely damsel, “I did not expect to see thee here. Where hast thou been knocking about all these years?” — “Dear father, and light of my eyes, I should have been lost altogether but for this good youth, who saved me from an unavoidable death!” The Tsar turned, looked with a friendly eye at Martin, and said to him, “I thank thee, good youth. I am ready to reward thee for thy good deeds with whatever thou desirest. Take of my gold and silver and precious stones as much as thy soul longs for.” — “I thank thee, Sovereign Tsar, for thy good words. But I want no precious stones, nor silver, nor gold; but if thou of thy royal grace and favour wouldst indeed reward me, then give me, I pray, the ring from the little finger of thy royal hand. Whenever I look upon that ring I’ll think of thee; but if ever I meet with a bride after mine own heart I will give it to her.” The Tsar immediately took off the ring, gave it to Martin, and said, “By all means, good youth, take the ring, and may it be to thy health! But mark this one thing: tell no one that this ring of thine is no common ring, or it will be to thy hurt and harm!”

Martin the widow’s son thanked the Tsar and took the ring, and returned by the same way through which he had reached the underground realm. He returned to his native place, sought out his old widowed mother, and lived and dwelt with her without either want or care. Yet for all the good life he led, Martin seemed sorrowful; and why should he not? for Martin wanted to marry, and the bride of his choice was not his like in birth, for she was a king’s daughter. So he consulted his mother, and sent her away as his matchmaker, and said to her, “Go to the King himself, and woo for me the thrice-lovely Princess.” — “Alas! my dear son,” said his old mother, “‘twould be far better for thee if thou wert to chop thine own wood. But what art thou thinking of? How can I go to the King and ask him for his daughter for thee? ‘Twould be as much as thy head and my head were worth.” — “Fear not, dear mother! If I send thee, thou mayest go boldly. And mind thou dost not come back from the King without an answer.”

So the old woman dragged herself to the royal palace. She went into the royal courtyard, and without being announced she went right up to the very staircase of the King. The guards shook their arms at her as a sign that nobody was allowed to go there, but she didn’t trouble her head about that one bit, but kept on creeping up. Then all the royal lacqueys came running up, and took the old woman under the arms and would have quite gently led her down again; but the old woman made such a to-do and fell a-shrieking so loudly that it pierced through everything, and the King himself in his lofty carved palace heard the noise, and looked out of his little window into the courtyard, and saw his servants dragging an old woman down the staircase, and preventing her from entering the royal apartments, while the old woman was resisting and shrieking with all her might. “I won’t go out! I have come to the King on a good errand!” The King commanded them to admit the old woman. The old woman entered the carved palace, and saw sitting in the front corner, on the high carved throne, on cushions of purple velvet, the King in state, holding a council in the midst of his grandees and his councillors. The old woman invoked the aid of the holy ikons, and bowed very low before the King. “What hast thou to say, old woman?” asked the King. — “Now, lo! I have come to your Majesty — be not wroth at my words — I have come to your Majesty as a matchmaker!” — “Art thou in thy senses, old woman?” cried the King, and his brow was wrinkled with a frown. — “Nay, O father-king! pray do not be angry; pray give me an answer. You have the wares — a little daughter, a beauty; I have the purchaser — a young man, so wise, so cunning, a master of every trade, so that you could not find a better son-in-law. Tell me, therefore, straight out, won’t you give your daughter to my son?” The King listened and listened to the old woman, and at first his frown was blacker than night, but he thought to himself, “Does it become me, a king, to be wroth with a silly old woman?” And the royal councillors were amazed, for they saw the wrinkles on the King’s forehead smoothing out, and the King looked at the old woman with a smile. “If thy son is so cunning, and a master of every trade, let him build me within twenty-four hours a palace more gorgeous than my own, and let him hang a crystal bridge between this palace and my palace, and let luxuriant apple trees grow up all along this bridge, and let them bear silver and golden pippins, and let birds of paradise sing within these apple trees. And on the right-hand side of this crystal bridge let him build a cathedral five storeys high, with golden pinnacles, where he may receive the wedding crown with my daughter, and where the marriage may be celebrated. But if thy son fulfil not all this, then for thy and his presumption I will have you both smeared with tar and rolled in feathers and down, and hanged up in cages in the market-place as a laughing-stock to all good people.” And the King condescended to smile still more pleasantly, and his grandees and his councillors held their sides, and rolled about the floor for laughter, and they began with one voice to praise his wisdom and thought amongst themselves,”What fun it will be to see the old woman and her son hung up in cages! ‘Tis as plain as daylight; a beard will sooner grow out of the palm of his hand than he be able to accomplish so shrewd a task.” The poor old woman was near to swooning. “What!” said she to the King, “is this thy final sovereign word? Is this what I must say to my son?” — “Yes, thus must thou say: if he accomplish this task, I will give him my daughter; if he does not accomplish it, I will put you both into cages.”

The poor old woman went home more dead than alive. She staggered from side to side, and shed floods of scalding tears. When she saw Martin, she began screeching at him from afar. “Did not I tell thee, my son, to go and chop thine own wood? Now thou seest that our poor little heads are lost.” And she told her son all about it. “Cheer up, mother,” said little Martin, “pray to God and lie down to sleep, the morning is always wiser than the evening.” But he himself went out of the hut, took his little ring from one hand and put it on the other, and the twelve youths immediately appeared before him and said, “What dost thou require?” He told them of the royal task, and the twelve youths answered, “To-morrow, everything will be ready.”

The King awoke next morning, and lo! right in front of his palace towered another palace, and a crystal bridge led from one to the other. Along the sides of the bridge stood luxuriant apple trees, and upon them hung golden pippins, and birds of paradise were singing in the trees; and on the right hand of the bridge, blazing like fire in the sun, stood the cathedral with its golden pinnacles; and the bells of the cathedral were ringing and pealing in all directions. The King had to keep his word. He raised his son-in-law high in rank, gave him a rich inheritance with his daughter, and he took her to wife. Great was the wedding-feast. The wine flowed in streams, and they drank of mead and beer till they could drink no more.

So Martin lived in his palace, and he ate of the best and drank of the best, and his life went as smoothly as cheese with butter. But the Princess did not love him at heart, and when she reflected that they had not married her to the son of a tsar, or the son of a king, or even to a prince from across the sea, but to simple Martin the widow’s son, her wrath waxed hot within her. And she fell a-thinking by what means she might best rid herself of a husband she hated. So she took care to caress him, and flatter him, and waited upon him herself, and made him comfortable, and when they were quite alone she would ask him what it was that made him so wise and clever. And it happened one day that when he had been the King’s guest, and had drunk and made merry with all his lords one after another, and had returned home and laid him down to rest, that the Princess came to him and caressed him, and coaxed him with wheedling words, and made him drunk with strong mead, and in that way found out what she wanted to know, for Martin told her all about his enchanted ring, and showed her how to turn it.

And no sooner was little Martin asleep and snoring, than the Princess took off the enchanted ring from his little finger, went forth into the broad courtyard, moved the ring from one finger to the other, and the twelve youths immediately appeared before her. “What is thy pleasure, and what is thy desire?” — “That to-morrow morning there may be neither palace, nor bridge, nor cathedral on this spot, but only a wretched little hut as heretofore, and cast this drunkard into it, but remove me far from him into the Empire of Thrice-ten.” — “It shall be done,” replied the twelve youths with one voice.

In the morning, when the King awoke, he felt inclined to go and pay a visit to his son-in-law and his daughter, so he went out upon the balcony, and lo! there was neither palace, nor bridge, nor cathedral, nor garden. In place of them stood a wretched old hut, leaning on one side, and scarce able to stand at all. The King sent for his son-in-law, and began asking him what it all meant; but little Martin could only stare blankly at him without uttering a word. And the King bade them sit in judgment on his son-in-law for deceiving him by magic, and destroying his daughter, the thrice-lovely Princess, and they condemned Martin to be put on the top of a lofty stone column with nothing to eat or drink; there he was to be left to die of hunger.

Then it was that Jurka and Vaska remembered how little Martin had saved them from an evil death, and they came and laid their heads together about it. Jurka growled and snarled, and was ready to tear every one to bits, for his master’s sake; but Vaska purred and hummed and scratched himself behind the ear with his velvet paw, and began to think the matter over. And the artful cat hit upon a plan, and said to Jurka, “Let us go for a walk about the town, and as soon as we meet a roll-baker with a tin on his head, you run between his legs and knock the tin off his head, and I’ll be close behind and immediately seize the rolls, and take them to master.” No sooner said than done. Jurka and the cat took a run into the town, and they met a roll-baker. He was carrying a tin on his head, and he looked about him on all sides and cried with a loud voice, “Hot rolls, hot rolls, fresh from the oven!” Jurka ran between his legs, the baker stumbled, the tin fell, and all the rolls were scattered about. But while the angry baker was chasing Jurka, Vaska hid all the rolls in the hedges. Then the cat and Jurka ran to the tower where Martin was placed, dragged with them the stores of bread, and Vaska scrambled up to the top, looked in at the little window, called to his master, and said, “Alive, eh?” — “Scarcely alive!” replied little Martin; “I am quite exhausted from want of food, and it will not be long before I die of hunger.” — “Don’t grieve; wait a bit, and we’ll feed you,” said Vaska, and he began to drag the food up from below — rolls and cakes, and all kinds of bread, till he had dragged up for his master a large store. Then he said, “Master, Jurka and I will go to the kingdom of Thrice-ten, and get you back your enchanted ring. Take care to make the bread last till we return.” Then they both took leave of their master, and departed on their long journey.

They ran on and on, and they smelt out the scent everywhere and followed it; paid great attention to what people told them; carefully made friends with all the other dogs and cats they met; asked about the Princess, and found out at last that they were not far from the kingdom of Thrice-ten, whither she had told the twelve youths to carry her. They ran into the kingdom, went to the palace, and made friends with all the dogs and cats there, asked them all about the Princess’s ways, and turned the conversation to the subject of the enchanted ring; but no one could give them certain information about it. But one day it happened that Vaska went a-hunting in the royal cellars. There he waylaid a big fat mouse, threw himself upon it, dug his cruel claws into it, and was going to begin with its head, when the big mouse spoke to him: “Dear little Vaska, don’t hurt me, don’t kill me. Perhaps I may be of service to you. I’ll do all I can for you. But if you kill me, the Mouse-Tsar, all my mousey tsardom will fall to pieces.” — “Very well,” said Vaska; “I’ll spare you; but this is the service you must do me. In this palace dwells the Princess, the wicked wife of our master; she has stolen from him his wonder-working ring; till you have got me that ring, I will not let you out of my claws under any pretence whatever.” — Agreed,” said the Mouse-Tsar, “I’ll try”; and he piped and whistled all his people together. A countless multitude of mice assembled, both small and great, and they sat all round the cat Vaska, and waited to hear what the Mouse-Tsar would say to them from beneath Vaska’s claws. And the Mouse-Tsar said to them: “Whichever of you shall get the wonder-working ring from the Princess, he will save me from a cruel death, and I will raise him to the highest place about my person.” Then a little mouse rose up and said: “I have often been in the Princess’s bed-chamber, and I’ve noticed that the Princess’s eye rests more often on a certain little ring than on anything else. In the daytime she wears it on her little finger, but at night she stuffs it into her mouth behind her cheeks. If you wait a bit, I’ll get you that ring.” And the little mouse ran into the Princess’s bed-chamber and waited till night, and as soon as ever the Princess was asleep, it wriggled into her bed, picked the down out of her swan-feathered bolster, and strewed it all about under her nose. The fine down went up the Princess’s nose and into her mouth, she sprang up and began to sneeze and cough, and spat out the enchanted ring on to the counterpane. The little mouse immediately snatched it up, and ran off with it to save the life of the Mouse-Tsar.

Vaska and Jurka set off to bring their master the wonder-working ring. Whether they took a long time or a short time matters not, but they arrived at last, and ran to the tower in which Martin was put to die from starvation. The cat immediately climbed up to the window, and called to its master, “Art thou alive, Martin the widow’s son?” — “I am scarce able to keep body and soul together. This is the third day I have been sitting here without bread.” — “Well, thy woes are over now. There will be a feast in *your* street now; we have brought you your ring.” Martin was overjoyed, and began to stroke the cat, and the cat rubbed itself against him, and began purring its own little songs through its nose; but at the bottom of the tower Jurka was leaping and whining and barking for joy, and leaping high in the air. Martin took the ring and turned it from one hand to the other. The twelve youths immediately appeared: “What is thy pleasure, and what thy command?” — “Give me to eat and drink till I can eat and drink no more, and let cunning music be played on the top of this tower to me all day.” When the music began to play, the good folks hastened to the King, and told him that little Martin was up to no good in the tower there. “He ought to have ceased to be among the living long ago,” they said, “and yet he is having such a merry time of it on the top of the tower. They are stamping with their feet, and knocking their plates, and clashing their glasses, and such splendid music is playing, that you can’t help listening to it.” The King sent an express messenger to the tower, and there he stood and listened to the music; the King sent his highest officer, and there they all remained standing, and opened wide their ears. The King himself went to the tower, and the music seemed to turn him into a statue. But little Martin again called his twelve youths, and said to them, “Restore my old palace, as it was before; throw a crystal bridge across from it to the royal palace; let the former five-storeyed cathedral stand by the side of the palace; and let my faithless wife also be found in the palace.” And while he was yet expressing the wish, the whole thing was done. And he went out of the tower, took his father-in-law the King by the hand, led him into the palace, led him up to the sleeping-chamber, where the Princess, in fear and trembling, awaited an evil death, and said to the King, “My dear little father-in-law, a great deal of trouble and anguish has befallen me from living with thy daughter; what shall we sentence her to?” — “My dear son-in-law, let mercy prevail over justice; exhort her with good words, and live with her as heretofore.” And Martin listened to his father-in-law, upbraided his wife for her treachery, and to the end of his life he never parted with the ring, nor with Jurka and Vaska, and saw no more misery.

44

THE BRAVE LABOURER

A young fellow entered the service of a miller. The miller sent him to throw grain on the scoop, but the labourer, not knowing how to set about it, went and strewed the wheat on the mill-stone. The mill-wheel went round, and all the grain was scattered about. The master miller, when he came to the mill, and saw the scattered grain, sent the workman about his business. The workman went home and thought to himself, “Well, I haven’t been very long working at the mill.” So he went on his way thinking to himself, and so he missed the way to his own village. He strayed among the bushes, and wandered and wandered about till he came to a stream, and on the stream stood an empty mill, and in this mill he resolved to pass the night.

The dumb midnight hour approached; the labourer could not sleep in the empty mill; he listened to every rustling sound, and suddenly it was as though he heard some one approaching the mill. The poor labourer started up more dead than alive, and hid himself in the scoop. Three men entered the mill. Judging from their appearance they were no good people, but robbers. They lit a fire in the mill, and began to divide amongst themselves a rich booty. And one of the robbers said to the others, “I will lay my portion underneath the mill.” The second said, “I’ll shove mine underneath the wheel.” But the third said, “I’ll conceal my goods in the scoop.” But our labourer was lying in the scoop, and he thought, “No man can die twice, but every man *must* die once. I wonder now if I can frighten them. Let us try.” And he roared at the top of his voice: “Denis, you come down there; and you, Phocas, look on that side; and you, little one, look there, and I’ll be here. Stop them, don’t let them go, and beat them without mercy.” The robbers were terrified, threw down their booty, took to their heels straightway, and the labourer took their booty and returned home richer than rich.

45

THE SAGE DAMSEL

An old man and an old woman died, and left behind them a son young in years, who was rich neither in wits nor goods. His uncle took him home, gave him to eat and drink, and when he grew up sent him to watch the sheep. And one day he sent for his kinsman and resolved to test his wits; so he said to him: “Here thou hast a flock of sheep, drive them to market and make profit out of them in such a way that both thou and the sheep shall get fat upon it, and the sheep be all brought back whole, and yet all, to the very last one, be sold for ready money.”

“How is that to be managed?” thought the orphan, who drove the sheep into the open field, sat by the roadside, and fell a-thinking. A lovely damsel passed by that way, and she said to him: “Of what art thou thinking, good youth?”

“Why should I not be thinking? My uncle has taken a spite at last against me, a poor orphan; he has given me a task to do, and cudgel my brains as I may I cannot see how it is to be done.”

“What task has he given thee?”

“Well, look here; he says, ‘Go to market, drive those sheep thither and make a profit out of them, but so that thou and the sheep shall grow fat upon it, and the sheep be brought back whole, all down to the last one, and yet be sold for ready money.’”

“Well, that’s no very tricky task,” replied the damsel. “Shear the sheep, take the fleeces to market and sell them, then thou wilt make a profit out of them, and the sheep will remain whole, and thou wilt be able to feed thyself on the profits.”

The youth thanked the damsel and did as she said. He sheared the sheep, sold their fleeces at the market, drove home the flock, and gave the money he had made out of them to his uncle. “Good,” said the uncle to the nephew; “but I am sure thou didst not work this out with thine own wits, eh? Didn’t some one or other teach it thee?” The youth confessed: “Well, I certainly did not do it by my own wits, but a lovely damsel came by and taught me.” — “Well, then, thou must take this sage young damsel to wife. ‘Twill be a very good thing for thee, for here art thou an orphan with neither stick nor stone of thy own, and nothing much in the way of wits either!” — “I don’t mind if I do marry her,” said the nephew to his uncle. — “All right, but thou must render me this one service. Take corn to town to the bazaar. According as thou dost sell it and return again, I’ll wed thee to this damsel.”

So the nephew went to town to sell the uncle’s corn, and on the way he met a rich miller. — “Why art thou off to town?” said the miller. — “I am going to the bazaar to sell my uncle’s corn.” — “Then we’ll go to town together.” — So they went along the road together, the miller in his gig with his plump brown horse, and the orphan in his little cart with his thin gray mare. They encamped side by side in the open field to pass the night there, took out the horses, and themselves lay down to sleep. And it happened that self-same night the gray mare dropped a foal. The rich miller woke earlier than the orphan, saw the foal, and drove him beneath his gig. When the orphan awoke a hot dispute arose between them. The orphan said: “It is my foal, because my mare dropped it.” The covetous miller said: “No, ‘tis mine, because thy mare dropped it beneath my gig.” They wrangled and wrangled till they resolved to go to law about it, and when they arrived in town they went to the court to fight the matter out there. And the judge said to them: “In our town we have introduced this custom into the tribunals, that whoever wants to go to law must first of all guess four riddles. So tell me now: what is the strongest and swiftest thing in the world; what is the fattest thing in the world; and what is the softest and what the sweetest of all?” The judge gave them three days to guess, and said: “If you guess my riddles, I will judge betwixt you according to law; but if not, don’t be angry if I drive you away.”

The rich miller went to his wife and told her how the matter stood, and what riddles the judge had given him to guess. “All thy riddles are but simple ones,” replied the miller’s wife; “if they ask thee what is the strongest and swiftest thing in the world, tell them that my father has a dark-brown horse so strong and nimble that it can run down a hare. And if they ask thee what is the fattest thing in the world, dost thou not know that in our stall we are fattening up a two-year-old boar, and he’s getting so fat that his very legs won’t be able to hold him up? And as for the third riddle, what is the softest thing in the world, why it’s quite plain that that’s a down pillow; thou canst not imagine anything softer than that. And if they ask thee what is the sweetest thing in the world, say: ‘Why, what sweeter thing can a man have than the wife of his bosom?’”

But the orphan went out of the town into the fields and sat by the roadside and racked his brain. He sat and thought of his misery; and along the road, close to him, passed the self-same lovely damsel. “Why art thou so racking thy brains again, good youth?” — “Why, look here, the judge has given me four such riddles to guess that I shall never be able to guess them all my days,” and he told the damsel all about it. The damsel laughed, and said to him: “Go to the judge and say to him, that the strongest and swiftest thing in the world is the wind; that the fattest of all is the earth, for she feeds everything that lives and grows upon her; the softest of all is the palm of the hand, for however soft a man may lie he always puts his hand beneath his head; and there’s nothing sweeter in the whole world than sleep." The poor little orphan bowed to the very girdle to the damsel, and said to her: "I thank thee, thou sagest of maidens, for thou hast snatched me from very ruin."

When the three days had passed, the miller and the orphan appeared in court, and told the court the answers to the riddles. Now the Tsar chanced to be on the bench at that time, and the answers of the orphan so pleased him that he ordered that the cause between them should be given in his favour, and that the miller should be driven with shame from the court. After that the Tsar said to the orphan: "Didst thou hit upon these answers thyself, or did some one else tell thee?" — "To tell the truth, they are not my own; the lovely damsel taught me these answers." — "She has taught thee well too, sage indeed must she be. Go to her and tell her in my name that if she be so wise and sensible she must appear before me to-morrow: neither on foot nor on horseback, neither naked nor clothed, and with a present in her hand that is no gift. If she accomplish this I will reward her as becomes a Tsar, and make her higher than the highest." Again the orphan went out of the town, and again he fell a-fretting, and he said to himself: "Why, I don't even know how and have no idea where to find this lovely damsel; what sort of a task is this that I am bidden to give her?" No sooner had he thought this than the sage and lovely damsel again passed by that way. The orphan told her how his guesses had pleased the Tsar, and how he wanted to see the damsel himself and have proof of her wisdom, and how he had promised to reward her. The damsel thought a bit, and then said to the orphan: "Fetch me a long-bearded billy-goat, and a big net for catching fish, and catch me a pair of sparrows. To-morrow morning we'll meet here, and if I get a reward from the Tsar, I'll share it equally with thee."

The orphan carried out the orders of the damsel, and waited for her next morning at the roadside. The damsel appeared, stripped off her sarafan, and wound herself in the long fishing-net from head to foot; then she sat on the goat, took a sparrow in each hand, and bade the orphan lead the way to town. The young man brought her to the Tsar at court, and she bowed low to the Tsar and said: “Behold, O sovereign Tsar! I come to thee neither on foot nor on horseback, neither naked nor clothed, and I have brought a present in my hand which is no gift.” — “Where is it?” asked the Tsar. “Here!” and she gave the Tsar the live sparrows, and he was about to take them from her hands when the sparrows wriggled out and flew away. “Well,” said the Tsar, “I see thou canst vie even with me in wit. Stay at my court, and look after my children, and I’ll give thee a rich recompense.” — “Nay, my sovereign lord and Tsar, I cannot accept thy gracious favour; I have promised this good youth to share my reward with him for his services.” — “Look now! thou art witty and wise; but in this matter thy head is turned, and thou dost not judge according to reason. I offer thee a high and honourable place with a great recompense; why then canst thou not share this reward with this youth?” — “But how can I share it then?” — “How, thou sage damsel? Why if this good youth be dear to thee, marry him; for honour and recompense, and labour and sorrow and bright-faced joy are shared by husband and wife half and half.” — “Thou too art wise, I see, O sovereign Tsar, and I’ll gainsay thee no longer,” said the lovely damsel. So she took the orphan for her husband, and though the orphan had no very great mind, his heart was simple and good, and he lived with his sage wife all his life in contentment and happiness.

46

THE PROPHETIC DREAM

There was once upon a time a merchant, and he had two sons, Dmitry and Ivan. Once the father bade his sons good-night, sent them off to bed, and said to them: “Now, children, whatever you see in your dreams, tell it all to me to-morrow morning, and whichever of you hides his dream from me, no good thing will befall him.” In the morning the eldest son came to his father and said: “I dreamed, dear father, that my brother Ivan flew high into the sky on twenty eagles.” — “Very good!” said the father; “and what didst thou dream, Vania?” — “Well, such rubbish, father, that it is impossible to tell it.” — “What dost thou mean? Speak!” — “No, I’ll not!” — “Speak, sir, when I bid thee!” — “No, I won’t speak, I won’t.” The father was very angry with his youngest son, and resolved to punish him for his disobedience, so he sent for his overseers and bade them strip Ivan naked and tie him to a post at the crossways as tightly as possible. No sooner said than done. The overseers seized hold of him, dragged him far, far away from home to the crossways, where seven roads crossed, tied him by the hands and feet to the post, and left him alone to his fate. The poor youth fared very badly. The sun scorched him, the gnats and flies sucked his blood, hunger and thirst tortured him. Fortunately for Ivan, a young Tsarevich happened to be going along one of these seven roads; he saw the merchant’s son, had compassion on him, and bade his attendants untie him from the post, dressed him in his own clothes, and saved him from a cruel death. The Tsarevich took Ivan to his court, gave him to eat and drink, and asked him who had tied him to the post. “My own father, who was angry with me.” — “And wherefore, pray? Surely thy fault was not small?” — “Well, in fact, I would not obey him; I would not tell him what I saw in my dreams.” — “And for such a trifle as that he condemned thee to so cruel a punishment! The villain! But surely he has outgrown his wits! But what then didst thou see in thy dream?” — “I saw what I cannot even tell unto thee, O Tsarevich!” — “What! Not tell? Not tell me? me, the Tsarevich? What! I saved thee from a cruel death, and thou wilt not do this trifle for me in return? Speak immediately, or it will not be well with thee!” — “Nay, Tsarevich! I stick to my word. I haven’t told my father, and I’ll not tell thee.” — The Tsarevich boiled over with unspeakable rage, and shrieked to his servants and attendants, “Hi! my faithful servants, take this good-for-nothing boor, put heavy irons on his hands, weld grievous fetters to his legs, and cast him into my deep dungeon!” The servants did not think twice about their master’s commands; they seized Ivan the merchant’s son, loaded his hands and feet with fetters, and put him as God’s slave in the stone sack. A little and a long time passed by, and the Tsarevich thought of marrying the thrice-wise Helena, the first maiden in the whole earth for beauty and wisdom, so he made ready and went into the strange country far away to marry this thrice-wise Helena. Now it happened that the day after he had gone, his sister the Tsarevna went walking in the garden hard by the very same dungeon in which Ivan the merchant’s son had been put. He saw the Tsarevna through the little grated window, and cried to her with a lamentable voice: “Dear mother Tsarevna, thy brother will never be married without my help.” — “Who art thou?” answered the Tsarevna. Ivan named his name and added: “I suppose thou hast heard, O Tsarevna, of the trickeries and the cunning wiles of the thrice-wise Helena? I have heard not once nor twice that she has expedited many wooers into another world;

believe me that thy brother also will not be able to marry her without me!" — "And *thou* art able to help the Tsarevich?" — "Able and willing, but the falcon's wings are bound, and no way for him is found." — The Tsarevna bade them release Ivan from his dungeon, and gave him full liberty to do what was in his mind so long as he only helped the Tsarevich to marry. And then Ivan the merchant's son chose him comrades first of all, one by one, and added youth to youth, and they were all as like to each other as if they had been born brothers. He dressed them in mantles of one kind, sewn in one and the same fashion; he mounted them on horses of one colour, and like each other to a hair, and they all mounted and rode away. Twelve was the number of the young comrades of Ivan the merchant's son. They rode for one day, they rode for another day, and on the third day they entered a gloomy forest, and Ivan said to his comrades: "Stay, my brothers, there is here, on the verge of the precipice, an old tree; a hollow, branchless tree; I must look into its hollow trunk and find my fortune there." So he went to the tree he had described and plunged his hand into the hollow trunk, and drew out of it an invisible cap, hid it in his bosom, and returned to his comrades.

And they came to the realm of the thrice-wise Helena, went straight into the capital, sought out the Tsarevich, and begged him: "Take us into thy service, O Tsarevich; we will serve thee with a single heart." The Tsarevich thought the matter over and said: "How can I help taking such gallant youths into my service? perhaps in a strange land they may be of service to me." And to each of them he assigned his post; he made one his equerry, another his cook, but Ivan he bade never to depart from his side.

The next day the Tsarevich attired himself in festal raiment, and went forth to woo the thrice-wise Helena. She received him courteously, regaled him with all manner of rich meats and drinks, and then she said to the Tsarevich: "I don't at all mind being thy wife, but first of all thou must accomplish these tasks. If thou do them I will be thy faithful wife, but if not, thy haughty head shall wag no more on thy stalwart shoulders." — "Why be afraid before the time? tell me thy tasks, thrice-wise Helena!" — "This then is my first task for thee: I shall have ready by to-morrow what I will not tell thee, and for what purpose I do not know; show thy wit, then, and bring me the fellow of it, of thine own devising." The Tsarevich went home from the court by no means happy; his haughty head hung lower than his stalwart shoulders. And Ivan met him and said: "Halve thy grief with me, O Tsarevich, and it will be better for thee." — "Well, look now," said the Tsarevich, "Helena has set me a task that not a single wise man in the world could do" — and he told Ivan all about it. "Well," said Ivan, "'tis not such a great matter after all! Pray to God and lie down to sleep; the morning is wiser than the evening — to-morrow we'll consider the matter." The Tsarevich lay down to sleep, but Ivan the merchant's son put on his invisible cap, went as swiftly as possible to the palace, ran through all the chambers, and made his way right into the bedchamber of the thrice-wise Helena. And then he heard her giving these orders to her favourite servant: "Take this cloth-of-gold to my shoemaker, and let him make me shoes for my feet as soon as possible." The servant ran with all her might, and behind her ran Ivan. The cobbler set to work; the work seemed to burn his fingers, so quickly did he do it; he beat the stuff with his little hammer and stitched it with his needle; a little shoe was quickly ready, and he put it on the little window-sill. Ivan the merchant's son took the little shoe and hid it in his bosom. The shoemaker was in great consternation: what was the meaning of it? His work had vanished from before his eyes. He searched and searched. He rummaged in every corner, but it was all in vain. "What marvel is this?" thought he; "can the unclean spirit be playing his tricks with me?" There was no help for it. He set to work again with his awl, finished the other slipper, and sent it by the servant-maid to the thrice-wise Helena. But Ivan was after her again, crept like a shadow into the palace in his invisible cap, stood behind the shoulders of the thrice-wise Helena, and saw that she sat behind her little table and began to cover the slipper with gold, embroider it with large pearls, and set it thickly with precious stones. Ivan the merchant’s son drew his own slipper out of his bosom and began to do the like with it; whenever she took up a little gem, he chose out just such another; wherever she threaded a pearl, he took another and sewed that on too. The thrice-wise Helena finished her work, looked at the slipper, and couldn’t admire it enough. She smiled, and thought to herself: “We will see what the Tsarevich will present himself with to-morrow morning.” But Ivan the merchant’s son awoke the Tsarevich very early next morning, took the slipper from his bosom, and gave it to him. “Go to thy lady and show her this slipper,” said he; “there thou hast her first task!” The Tsarevich washed and dressed himself, hastened to his lady, and found her apartments full of Boyars and Grandees, and her Councillors were all assembled there down to the very last one. There was a noise of melody, there came a crash of lively music, the doors of the inner chambers were thrown open, and out came the thrice-wise Helena, sailing along like a white swan. She bowed on all sides, but particularly to the Tsarevich: then she drew out of her pocket the shoe, set with large pearls and adorned with precious stones, and she looked at the Tsarevich with a mocking smile, and all the Boyars, the Grandees, and the Councillors who were in the palace looked intently at the Tsarevich. And the Tsarevich said to the thrice-wise Helena: “Thy slipper is very fine, but ‘tis no good at all unless it have a fellow. Well, here it is, and I give thee the other, which is exactly like it.” And he drew out of his pocket the slipper, and placed it by the side of the other one. The whole palace heaved a great “Oh!” The Boyars, Grandees, and Councillors exclaimed with one voice: “Thou art indeed worthy, O Tsarevich, to wed our Tsarevna, the thrice-wise Helena.” — “Not so quick, please,” cried the Tsarevna; “let us see what he’ll make of the second task. I shall await thee to-morrow in this self-same place, Tsarevich, and this is my task for thee: I shall have an unexplainable somewhat disguised in feathers and in stones;

bring thou also just such another unknown, somewhat disguised in just such feathers and stones.” The Tsarevich bowed and went out, looking much blacker than the evening before. “Well,” thought he, “now indeed my shoulders will not support my head very much longer.” And again Ivan the merchant’s son met him and consoled him with a friendly smile: “Come, Tsarevich, wherefore grieve? Pray to God and lie down to sleep, the morning is wiser than the evening.” Ivan made the Tsarevich lie down, then he quickly took his invisible cap, darted into the palace, and arrived just in time to hear the Tsarevna give this command to her favourite servant: “Go into the fowl-yard and bring me hither a duck.” Off went the servant to the fowl-yard and Ivan after her; she put a duck under her arm, but Ivan hid a drake in his bosom, and they came back the same way. The thrice-wise Helena again sat down at her little table, took the duck, adorned its wings with ribands and its little tail with amethysts, and fastened a necklace of pearls round its neck; and Ivan saw it all, and did just the same to his drake.

The next day the Tsarevich again went up to the palace, and again all the Boyars and Grandees were assembled there; again there was a crash of music, and the doors of the inner chambers opened, and the thrice-wise Helena came forth strutting along like a pea-hen. Behind her came the maids of honour bearing a golden dish, and they all saw that upon this dish beneath the white cloth some living thing was moving about. Softly, very softly, the Tsarevna raised the cloth from the dish, took out the duck, and said to the Tsarevich: “Well, didst thou guess my riddle?” — “How could I help guessing it?” replied the Tsarevich, “there’s nothing so very knowing in such a task as that,” and forthwith he put his hand into his cap and drew out his dressed-up drake.

All the Boyars and Grandees cried “Oh!” and with one voice exclaimed: “Well done, young hero Tsarevich! Thou art indeed worthy to take Helena the thrice-wise to wife.” But Helena the thrice-wise knit her brows and said: “Stop a bit! Let him first fulfil my third task. If he be such a hero, let him fetch me three hairs from the head, and three hairs from the beard, of my grandfather, the Sea-king, and then I am ready to be his wife.” The Tsarevich returned home gloomier than an autumn night: he would look at nothing and speak to nobody. “Don’t fret, Tsarevich!” whispered Ivan the merchant’s son in his ear, and he seized his invisible cap, and was in the palace in a trice, and saw the thrice-wise Helena sitting in her state-coach and preparing to drive to the blue sea. And our Ivan, in his invisible cap, took his seat in the very carriage, and the fiery horses of the Tsar carried them in hot haste to the blue sea.

So the thrice-wise Helena arrived at the blue sea, sat under a rock by the shore on a large stone, turned her face to the blue sea, and began to call her dear grandad the Sea-king. The blue sea boiled as in a storm, and despite a great calm, the depths of the sea were disturbed by a huge wave; a crest of silvery foam worked its way up, rolled along the shore as if caressing it, broke up gradually on the golden beach, scattering crystal jets and pearly shells on the shore, and there rose out of the water, up to the waist, the old, old grandfather. On his head heaps and heaps of gray locks sparkled like silver in the sun, dripping wet, and great tufts of hair hung over his brows; but his face was covered with a thick, thick golden beard like moss; he rode up to the breast in a broad big wave which swept over his shoulders and hid his body to the waist. The ocean grandfather leaned against a stone with his goose-like paws, looked with his green eyes into the eyes of the thrice-wise Helena, and cried: “Hail, granddaughter of my desires. ‘Tis a long time since I have seen thee; ‘tis a long time since thou hast visited me. And now, please, comb my little head for me.” And he leaned his unkempt head against the knee of his granddaughter, and dozed off into a sweet sleep. But the thrice-wise Helena began smoothing her grandfather’s hair and winding his gray locks round her fingers to curl them, and whispering soft words in her grandfather’s ear, and lulling him to sleep with gentle songs; and as soon as she saw that her grandfather was asleep she tugged three silver hairs out of his head. But Ivan the merchant’s son, slipping his hand below hers, wrenched out a whole handful. The grandfather awoke, looked at his granddaughter, and said sleepily: “Art thou mad? It hurts me horribly!” — “Pardon, dear grandfather,” said the thrice-wise Helena, “but it’s such a long time since I did thy hair, that it is quite tangled.” But the grandfather did not hear her to the end; he was already snoring, and shortly afterwards the Tsarevna pulled three golden hairs out of his beard. Ivan the merchant’s son thought, “I must have some of that too,” seized the grandfather by the beard, and tore out a good piece of it. The sea-grandfather roared aloud, awoke from his sleep, and dived into the depths like a bucket — only bubbles remained behind.

Next day the Tsarevna entered the palace and thought: “The Tsarevich really will fall into my clutches now.” And she showed the Tsarevich the three golden hairs and the three silver ones: “Well, Tsarevich, hast managed to pick up such wonderful things as these?” — “Well, Tsarevna, that’s a lot to boast of, I must say! Why, I’ll give thee whole handfuls of such rubbish if thou wilt.” And the whole palace resounded with cries of amazement when the Tsarevich drew from his breast the grandfather’s hairs. The thrice-wise Helena was very wroth; she rushed off to her bedroom, looked into her magic books, and saw that it was not the Tsarevich who was so knowing, but his favourite servant, Ivan the merchant’s son. She returned to her guests and said in soft and wheedling tones: “Thou hast not guessed my riddles and done my tasks of thine own self alone, Tsarevich, but thy favourite servant Ivan has helped thee. I should like to look at the good youth. Bring him to me quickly.” — “I have not one servant but twelve servants, Tsarevna.” — “Then bring him hither whose name is Ivan!” — “They are all called Ivan.” — “Then let them all come,” said she, but she thought to herself: “I’ll pick out the guilty party, I know.” The Tsarevich sent for his servants, and the twelve youths appeared at court. They were all of one face and one stature; their voices were all alike, and there was not a hair’s difference between them. “Which among you is the biggest?” And they all cried with a loud voice: “I am the biggest, I am the biggest!” — “Well,” thought Helena, “I can’t catch you this way, but I’ll manage it somehow.” And she bade them bring eleven common drinking-cups, but the twelfth of pure gold; she filled the drinking-cups full with good wine, and gave them to the good youths to drink. But not one of them would look at the common cups, and all stretched out their hands towards the golden cup, so in struggling for it they only made a great clamour, and all the wine was spilled. The Tsarevna perceived that her artifice had failed, so she invited all the servants of the Tsarevich to pass the night at the palace. All the evening she gave them as much as they could eat and drink, and then she gave them soft downy beds to lie upon. And when all the good youths were sound asleep, then the thrice-wise Helena came to them in their bedroom, looked into her magic book, and immediately discovered which of them was Ivan the merchant’s son. Then she drew out her penknife and cut off the lock of hair over his left temple, and she thought to herself: “By that mark I shall know you in the morning and have you punished.” But in the morning, Ivan the merchant’s son awoke before them all, clapped his hand to his head, and saw that he was shorn of his lock. He immediately rose from his bed and awoke all his comrades: “Quick, my brothers! take your knives and shear off your locks.” In an hour’s time they were summoned to the presence of the thrice-wise Helena. The Tsarevna looked and saw that all of them had their locks shorn off. Full of rage, she seized her magic book, pitched it into the fire, called the Tsarevich to her, and said to him: “I’ll be thy wife, make ready for the wedding!” And the Tsarevich sent for his good youths, and said to Ivan: “Go to my sister and bid her make ready everything for the wedding.” Ivan went to the Tsarevna, told her of her brother, and gave her his command. “I thank thee, thou good youth and faithful servant, for thy services,” said the Tsarevich’s sister to Ivan, “but say now, how shall I reward thee?” — “How shalt thou reward me?” answered Ivan the merchant’s son; “why, bid them put me again in my old dungeon.” And do what the Tsarevna would to persuade him, he insisted upon it.

The Tsarevich and his bride arrived, and the Boyars, the Grandees, and the festal guests came out to meet them, wished them health and happiness, and presented them with bread and salt, and there were so many people pressed together that you could have walked on their heads. “But where is my faithful servant Ivan?” asked the Tsarevich; “how is it I do not see him here?” The Tsarevna answered him: “Thou thyself hadst him put into a dungeon because of a certain dream.” — “What! surely this is never the same person!” — “It’s the very same; I only let him out for a time to go and help thee.” The Tsarevich bade them bring Ivan to him, threw himself on his neck, burst into tears, and begged him not to think evil of him. “But dost thou know, O Tsarevich,” said Ivan, “that I did not tell thee this dream of mine because I saw beforehand in my slumbers all that has now happened to thee. Judge now thyself and tell me, wouldst thou not have thought me half mad if I had told thee all?” And the Tsarevich rewarded Ivan, and made him the greatest in the realm after himself; but Ivan wrote to his father and his brother, and they all lived together and had no end of good things, and lived happily ever after.

47

TWO OUT OF THE KNAPSACK

There was once an old man whose wife was exceedingly quarrelsome. The old man had no rest from her day or night; she nagged and nagged at him at every little trifle, but if the old man ventured to gainsay *her* in anything, she immediately caught up a broomstick, or something else, and chased him out of the kitchen. The old man had only one consolation; he would leave his old woman and go into the fields to set snares and bird-traps, hang them up on the branches of all the trees, and entice into his snares every bird that God has made, and so he would bring home a great booty, and give his old woman enough to last her for a whole day, or even two, and then he would for once enjoy a day in peace.

One day he went out into the fields and set his snares, and caught in them a crane. “What a stroke of luck!” thought the old man; “when I take home this crane to my old woman and we kill and roast it, she won’t row me for a long time.” But the crane guessed his thoughts, and said to him with a human voice: “Don’t take me home and kill me, but let me go and live at liberty as before; thou shalt be dearer to me than my own father, and I will be as good as a son to thee.” The old man was amazed at these words and let the crane go.

But when he returned home with empty hands, the old woman nagged at him so frightfully that he dared not go into the house, but passed the night in the courtyard beneath the staircase. Very early in the morning he went out into the fields, and was just about to lay his snares when he saw the crane of the evening before coming towards him, holding in its long beak a sort of knapsack. “Yesterday,” said the crane, “thou didst set me free, and to-day I bring thee a little gift. Say ‘thanks’ for it. Just look at it!” It placed the knapsack on the ground and cried: “Two out of the knapsack!” And whence I know not, but out of the knapsack leaped two youths, brought oaken tables, covered them with dishes, and on them was flesh and fowl of every description. The old man ate his fill of such delicacies as it had never been his luck to see all his life even from afar; he ate and drank without stopping, and would only rise from the table when the crane cried: “Two into the knapsack!” And the tables with all the flesh and fowl were as if they had never been. “Take this knapsack,” said the crane, “and give it to thy old woman.” The old man thanked him and went home. But all at once the desire seized him to brag about his booty to his godmother. So he went to his godmother, inquired after the healths of herself and her three daughters, and said: “Give me a little supper, according as God has blessed thee!” The godmother put before him what was on the stove, curtseyed, and bade him fall to. But the godson turned up his nose and said to the godmother: “Thine is sorry fare! Why I have as good as that when I’m on the road. I’ll stand treat to thee.” — “Very well, do so.” The old man immediately brought out his knapsack, placed it on the ground, and the moment he cried: “Two out of the knapsack!” two youths, whence they came I know not, leaped out of the knapsack, placed the oaken tables, covered them with carved dishes, and placed upon them all sorts of flesh and fowl, such as the godmother had never seen from the day of her birth. The godmother and her daughters ate and drank their fill, and her thoughts were not good; she meant to deprive her godson of his knapsack by subtlety. And she began flattering her godson, and said to him: “My dear little dovey godson, thou art tired to-day, wilt thou not stop and have a bath? We have everything handy to warm the bath-room for thee.” The godson did not say no to a bath, hung up his knapsack in the hut, and went into the bath-room to bathe. But the godmother immediately bade her daughters sew together in hot haste just such another knapsack as the old man’s, and when they had finished it, she foisted her knapsack on the old man, and took his knapsack for herself. The old man noticed nothing, and went home cheerily-cheerful; he sang songs and whistled all the way, and no sooner did he get home than he cried to his old woman: “Wife, wife, congratulate me upon the gift which I have got from the son of the crane!” The old woman looked at him and thought: “You’ve been drinking somewhere to-day, I know; I’ll give you a lesson!” The old man when he got into the hut immediately placed his knapsack in the middle of the floor and cried: “Two out of the knapsack!” But out of the knapsack came nobody at all. A second time he cried: “Two out of the knapsack!” And again there was nobody. The old woman when she saw this let loose the full flood of her abuse upon him, flew at him like a whirlwind, caught up a wet mop on her way, and it was as much as he could do to escape from her and dash out of the hut.

The poor fellow fell a-weeping, and went to the self-same spot in the fields, thinking: “Perhaps I may meet the crane and get another such knapsack from him!” And indeed the crane *was* there, and was waiting for the old man with just such another knapsack. “Here is just such another knapsack, and it will be of as good service as the former one.” The old man bowed to the very girdle and ran off home at full speed. But on the way a doubt occurred to him: “If now this knapsack be not quite the same as the other one, I shall get into a mess again with my old woman — and this time I shall not be able to hide my head from her even under the ground. Come along then: ‘Two out of the knapsack!’” Immediately two young men leaped out of the knapsack with long sticks in their hands and began to belabour him, crying: “Don’t go to thy godmother; don’t be fooled by honeyed words!” And they kept on beating the old man till he bethought himself to say: “Two into the knapsack!” Then the young men hid themselves in the knapsack. “Well,” thought the old man, “I cracked up the other knapsack to my godmother like a fool, but I shall not be a fool if I crack up this to her also. I wonder if she would like to filch this one from me also? She’d thank me on the other side of her mouth.” So he went quite cheerily to his godmother, hung up the knapsack on the wall, and said: “Pray, heat me a bath, godmother.” — “With pleasure, godson.” The old man got into the bath and had a good wash, staying as long as he could. The godmother called her daughters, placed them behind the table, and said: “Two out of the knapsack.” And out of the knapsack leaped the young men with the long sticks and began beating the godmother and crying: “Give the old man back his knapsack.” The godmother sent her eldest daughter to the old man and said: “Call our godson out of the bath; say that these *two* are beating me to death.” But the godson replied out of the bath: “I have not finished bathing yet!” The godmother sent her youngest daughter, but the godson replied out of the bath: “I have not washed my head yet!” But the two youths kept beating the godmother all the time and saying: “Give back the old man’s knapsack!” The godmother’s patience was quite tired out, and she bade her daughters bring the stolen knapsack, and throw it to the old man in the bath-room. Then the old man got out of his bath and cried: “Two into the knapsack!” And the young men with the long sticks were no more.

Then the old man took both the knapsacks and went home. He approached the house and again began crying: “Congratulate me, wife, on the gifts I have got from the son of the crane!” The old woman flared up at once and got her broom ready. But the old man when he came in, cried: “Two out of the knapsack!” and immediately the tables appeared before the old woman, and the two young men placed on the tables flesh and fowl in abundance. The old woman ate and drank her fill, and became quite mild and tender. “Well, dear little hubby, I’ll thwack thee no more.” But the old man after dinner took this knapsack and put it away, and unexpectedly got out the other, and placed it on the bench in the hut. The old woman wanted to see for herself how the old man’s knapsack set to work, so she cried: “Two out of the knapsack!” Immediately the two young men with the long sticks popped out, and fell to beating the old woman, crying all the time: “Don’t beat thy old man! Don’t curse thy old man!” The old woman screeched with all her might, and called to her old man to help her. The old man took pity on her, came into the hut, and said: “Two into the knapsack!” and the two disappeared into the knapsack.

From henceforth the old man and the old woman lived together in such peace and quietness that the old man is always praising his old woman to the skies, and so this story ends.

48

THE STORY OF MARKO THE RICH AND VASILY THE LUCKLESS

Not in our time, but a long time ago, in a certain realm, lived a very rich merchant, Marko by name, and surnamed the Rich. Cruel and hard was he by nature, greedy of lucre and unmerciful to the poor. Whenever the lowly and the needy came begging beneath his window he sent his servants to drive them away, and let loose his dogs upon them. There was only one thing in the world he loved, and that was his daughter, the thrice-fair Anastasia. To her only he was not hard, and though she was only five years old, he never gainsaid her one of her wishes, and gave her all her heart's desire.

And once on a cold frosty day, three gray-haired men came under the window and asked an alms. Marko saw them, and ordered the dogs to be let loose. The thrice-fair Anastasia heard of it, and implored her father and said: "My own dear father, for my sake don't drive them away, but let them pass the night in the cattle-stall." The father consented, and bade them let the poor old beggar-men into the cattle-stall for the night. As soon as every one was asleep Anastasia rose up, made her way on tiptoe to the stall, climbed up into the loft, and looked at the beggars. The old beggar-men were crouching together in the middle of the stall, leaning on their crutch-staves with their wrinkled hands, and over their hands flowed their gray beards, and they were talking softly among themselves. One of the old men, the oldest of them all, looked at the others and said: “What news from the wide world?” The second one immediately replied: “In the village Pogoryeloe, in the house of Ivan the Luckless, a seventh son is born; what shall we call him, and with what inheritance shall we bless him?” And the third old man, after meditating a little, said: “We’ll call him Vasily, and we’ll enrich him with the riches of Marko the Rich, under whose roof we are now passing the night.” When they had thus said they prepared to depart, bowed low to the holy ikons, and with soft footsteps prepared to depart from the stall. Anastasia heard all this, went straight to her father, and told him the words of the old men.

Marko the Rich thought deeply over it. He thought and thought, and he went to the village Pogoryeloe. “I’ll find out for certain,” thought he, “whether such a babe really has been born there.” He went straight to the priest and told him all about it. “Yes,” replied the priest, “yesterday we had a babe born here, the son of our poorest serf; I christened him Vasily, and luckless he certainly is; he is the seventh son in the family, and the eldest son of the family is only seven years old; the sons of this poor peasant are wee, wee little things; there is next to nothing to eat and drink there; and such hunger and want is in the house that there’s none in the village who will even stand sponsor.” At this news the heart of Marko the Rich began to ache. Marko thought of the unhappy youngster, declared he would be godfather, asked the priest’s wife to be godmother, and bade them make ready a rich table; and they brought the little fellow, christened him, and sat down and feasted.

At the banquet Marko the Rich spoke friendly words to Ivan the Luckless, and said to him: “Gossip, thou art a poor man, and cannot afford to bring up thy son; give him to me; I will bring him up among well-to-do people, and I will give into thy hand at once for thine own maintenance one thousand rubles.” The poor man thought the matter over, and then shook hands upon it. Marko gave gifts to his fellow-sponsor, took the child, wrapped him in fox furs, put him in his carriage, and drove homewards. They had got some ten versts from the village when Marko stopped the horses, took up the child, went to the brink of a great precipice, whirled the child over his head, and pitched it down the precipice, exclaiming: “There you go, and now take possession of my goods if you can!”

Shortly after that some merchants from beyond the sea chanced to be travelling by the self-same road; these merchants brought with them twelve thousand rubles which they owed to Marko the Rich. They passed along by the side of the precipice, and they heard within the precipice the crying of a child. They stopped their horses, went to the precipice, and looked amongst the snowdrifts of the green meadows, and on a meadow a little child was sitting and playing with flowers. The merchants took up the child, wrapped him round with furs, and went on their way. They came to the house of Marko the Rich, and told him of their strange discovery. Marko immediately guessed that the matter concerned his own little serf boy, and he said to the merchants: “I should very much like to look at your foundling; if you will give him to me out and out I’ll forgive you your debt to me.” The merchants agreed, gave the child to Marko, and departed. But Marko that same night took the child, put it in a little cask, tarred it all over, and threw it into the sea.

The cask sailed and sailed along, and at last it came to a monastery. The monks happened to be on the shore just then; they were spreading out their fishing-nets to dry, and all at once they heard the crying of a child. They guessed that the crying came from the cask, and they immediately seized the cask, broke it open, and there was the child. They took the child to the abbot, and as soon as the abbot heard that the child had been cast upon the shore in a cask, he decided that the youngster’s name should be Vasily, and that he should be surnamed the Luckless. And henceforth Vasily lived in the monastery till he was sixteen years old, and he grew up fair of face, soft of heart, and strong in mind. The abbot loved him because he learned his letters so quickly that he was able to read and sing in the church better than all the others, and because he was deft and skilful in affairs. And the abbot made him sacristan.

And it happened that once Marko the Rich was travelling on business, and came to this very monastery. The monks treated him with honour as a rich guest. The abbot commanded the sacristan to run and open the church; the sacristan ran at once, lit the candles, and remained in the choir, and read and sang. And Marko the Rich asked the abbot if the young man had dwelt there long, and the abbot told him all about it. Marko began to think, and it struck him that this could be no other than his serf-boy. And he said to the abbot: “Would that I could lay my hands upon such a smart young fellow as your sacristan, I would place all my treasures beneath his care; I would make him the chief overseer of all my goods, and you know yourselves what goods are mine.” The abbot began to make excuses, but Marko promised the monastery a donation of ten thousand rubles. The abbot wavered; he began to consult the brothers, and the brothers said to him: “Why should we stand in Vasily’s way? let Marko the Rich take him and make him his overseer.” So they deliberated, and agreed to send away Vasily the Luckless with Marko the Rich.

But Marko sent Vasily home in a ship, and wrote to his wife this letter: “When the bearer of this letter reaches thee, go with him at once to our soap-works, and when thou dost pass the great boiling cauldron, shove him in. If thou dost not do this I will punish thee severely, for this youth is my prime enemy and evil-doer.” Vasily duly arrived in port and went on his way, and there met him in the road three poor old men, and they asked him: “Whither art thou going, Vasily the Luckless?” — “Why, to the house of Marko the Rich, I have a letter for his wife.” — “Show us the letter,” said the old men. Vasily took out the letter and gave it them. The old men breathed on the letter and said: “Go now, and give the letter to the wife of Marko the Rich — God will not forsake thee.”

Vasily came to the house of Marko the Rich and gave the letter to his wife. The wife read Marko’s letter, and called her daughter, for she could not believe her own eyes, but in the letter was written as plain as plain could be: “Wife, the next day after thou dost receive this my letter, marry my daughter, Anastasia, to the bearer, and do so without delay. If thou doest it not thou shalt answer to me for it.” Anastasia looked at Vasily, and Vasily stared at her. And they dressed Vasily in rich attire, and the next day they wedded him to Anastasia.

Marko the Rich came home from the sea, and his wife with his daughter and son-in-law met him on the quay. Marko looked at Vasily, fell into a furious passion with his wife, and said to her: “How darest thou wed our daughter away without my consent?” But the wife replied: “I dared not disobey thy strict command!” and she gave the threatening letter to her husband. Marko read the letter, and saw that the handwriting was his own if the intention was not, and he thought to himself: “Good! thrice hast thou escaped ruin at my hands, but now I will send thee where not even the ravens shall pick thy bones.”

Marko lived for a month with his son-in-law and treated him and his daughter most kindly; from his face nobody could have thought that he nourished evil thoughts against him in his heart. One day Marko called Vasily to him and said to him: “Go to the land of Thrice-nine, in the Empire of Thrice-ten, to Tsar Zmy; twelve years ago he built a palace on my land. Thou therefore take rent from him for all the twelve years, and get news from him concerning my twelve ships, which have been wrecked about his kingdom for the last three years, and have left no trace behind them.” Vasily dared not gainsay his father-in-law, but prepared for his journey, took leave of his young wife, took a sack of sweetmeats as provision by the way, and set out.

He went on and on, and whether it was long or short, far or near, matters not, but anyhow at last he heard a voice which said: “Vasily the Luckless, whither art thou going? is thy journey far?” — Vasily looked around him on all sides and answered: “Who called me? speak!” — “‘Tis I, the old leafless oak, and I ask thee whither art thou going, and is thy journey far?” — “I am going to Tsar Zmy to collect arrears of rent for the last twelve years.” And again the oak said to him: “If thou arrivest in time, think of me and ask him: here the old leafless oak has been standing all these three hundred years, and is withered and rotten to the very root — how much longer must he be tormented in this wide world?” Vasily listened attentively, and then went further. He came to a river and sat in the ferry-boat, but the old ferryman looked at him and said: “Is thy journey before thee a long one, Vasily the Luckless?” — Vasily told him. “Well,” said the ferryman, “if thou art in time, remember me, and say to him I have been ferrying here all these thirty years; how much longer, I should like to know, shall I have to go backwards and forwards?” — “Good!” said Vasily, “I will say so.”

He went on to the straits of the sea, and across the straits a whale-fish was lying stretched out, and a road marked out by posts went across its back, and people passed to and fro there. When Vasily stepped on to the whale, the whale-fish spoke to him with a man’s voice and said: “Whither art thou going, Vasily the Luckless, and is thy journey far?” Vasily told it everything, and the whale-fish said again: “If thou art in time, remember me; the poor whale-fish has been lying across this sea these three years, and a road marked out by posts goes across its back, and horse and foot trample into its very ribs, and it has no rest night or day; how much longer, pray, is it to lie here?” — “Good!” said Vasily, “I will say so,” and went on further.

Vasily went on and on, and he came to a broad green meadow. In the meadow stood a gigantic palace; the white marble walls glistened, the roof shone like a rainbow, and was covered with mother-of-pearl, and the crystal windows burned like fire in the sun. Vasily entered the palace; he went from room to room, and marvelled at the indescribable wealth of them. He went into the last room of all, and saw a lovely damsel sitting on a bed. When she saw Vasily, she cried: “Is it Vasily the Luckless that has fallen into this accursed place?” Vasily told her everything, and why he had come, and what had befallen him in the way. And the damsel said to Vasily: “Not to take tribute wast thou sent here, but as food for the serpent, and to thine own destruction.” Scarcely had she spoken these words than the whole palace trembled, and there was clanging and a banging in the courtyard. The damsel shoved Vasily into a coffer beneath the floor, locked him in, and whispered: “Listen to what I say to the Serpent.” And with that she went to meet Tsar Serpent.

A monstrous serpent rolled into the room, and straightway got on to the bed and said: “I have been flying over the Russian land; I’m frightfully tired, and I want to go to sleep.” The lovely damsel flattered him and said: “Everything is known to thee, O Tsar, and without thee I cannot interpret a very hard dream I have dreamed: wilt thou interpret it for me?” — “Well, out with it, quick!” — “I dreamt I was going along a road, and an oak tree cried to me, ‘Ask the Tsar how long I am to stand here’!” — “It will stand till some one comes and kicks it with his foot, and then it will be rooted out and fall, and beneath it is a great quantity of gold and silver: Marko the Rich himself has not got as much.” — “But then I dreamed that I came to a river, and the ferryman on the ferry-boat said to me: ‘Shall I ferry here long’?” — “‘Tis his own fault. Let him put the first who comes to him on the ferry-boat, and push him with the ferry-boat away from the shore, and he will change places with him, and ferry for evermore.” — “And after that I came in my dreams to the sea, and crossed over it on a whale-fish, and it said to me: ‘Ask the Tsar how long I am to be here!’” — “He must lie there till he has cast up the twelve ships of Marko the Rich, then he may go into the water, and his body will grow again.”

All this the serpent said, and then turned over on its other side and fell a-snoring so loudly that all the crystal windows in the palace rattled. Then the damsel let Vasily out of the coffer, opened the garden-gate for him, and showed him the way. Vasily thanked her, and began his return journey.

He came to the straits of the sea where the whale-fish lay, and the whale-fish asked: “Did he say anything about me?” — “Take me over to the other side, and I’ll tell thee.” When he had crossed over, he said to the whale-fish: “Thou must bring up again the twelve ships of Marko the Rich, which thou swallowed three years ago.” The whale-fish cleared its throat and brought up again all the ships quite whole and not a bit hurt, and in its joy leaped about so in the water that Vasily the Luckless, who was standing on the bank, suddenly found himself up to his knees in the sea. He went on further and came to the ferry. “Hast thou spoken about me to Tsar Serpent?” asked the ferryman. “I have; ferry me over first, and I’ll tell thee.” And as soon as he had crossed over, he said to the ferryman: “Whoever comes to thee after me, seat him in the ferry-boat and shove him from the bank, and he will have to ferry in thy place for ever and ever, but thou wilt be as free as the air.” After that, Vasily came to the old leafless oak, kicked it with his foot, and the oak rolled over and the roots sprang out of the ground, and beneath the roots and beneath the stump there was gold and silver and precious stones without number. Vasily looked about him, and lo! up to the very place were sailing the twelve ships of Marko the Rich, the selfsame which the whale-fish had brought up; and in the foremost ship, in the very stern, stood the selfsame old men who had met Vasily when he had the letter to Marko the Rich, and saved him from destruction. And the old men said to Vasily: “Dost thou not see, Vasily, how the Lord has blessed thee?” And they got off the ship and went their way. And the sailors put all the gold and silver in the ships, and went home by sea.

Marko the Rich was more furious than ever. He bade them saddle his horse, and hastened off to Tsar Serpent to the land of Thrice-ten; he wanted to arrange matters with Tsar Serpent himself. When he came to the river, he got on to the ferry-boat, but the ferryman pushed him away from the shore, and there Marko remained as ferryman ever after, and there he is ferrying still. But Vasily the Luckless lived with his wife and mother-in-law, and was happy and prosperous and kind to the poor, and gave them meat and drink and clothed them, and disposed of all the wealth of Marko the Rich.

5. JAMES BALDWIN

CONTENTS

Preface

1. Jupiter and His Mighty Company
2. The Golden Age
3. The Story of Prometheus
4. The Flood
5. The Story of Io
6. The Wonderful Weaver
7. The Lord of the Silver Bow
8. Admetus and Alcestis
9. Cadmus and Europa
10. The Quest of Medusa’s Head
11. The Story of Atalanta
12. The Horse and the Olive
13. The Adventures of Theseus
14. The Wonderful Artisan
15. The Cruel Tribute

PREFACE

BALDWIN, JAMES

Born in 1841 in Indiana, James Baldwin was an author, editor and educator. He was passionate about education and began his career as a teacher before moving on to superintendent. His experience in the school system led to positions as an editor of school books, however, he soon began authoring books himself. Baldwin liked to take complex texts such as the Greek myths and Norse legends, then break them down into simple language for young readers. He published over 50 books in his lifetime, including the texts *Old Greek Stories* and *The Story of Seigfried*. Baldwin passed away in 1925.

1

JUPITER AND HIS MIGHTY COMPANY

A long time ago, when the world was much younger than it is now, people told and believed a great many wonderful stories about wonderful things which neither you nor I have ever seen. They often talked about a certain Mighty Being called Jupiter, or Zeus, who was king of the sky and the earth; and they said that he sat most of the time amid the clouds on the top of a very high mountain where he could look down and see everything that was going on in the earth beneath. He liked to ride on the storm-clouds and hurl burning thunderbolts right and left among the trees and rocks; and he was so very, very mighty that when he nodded, the earth quaked, the mountains trembled and smoked, the sky grew black, and the sun hid his face.

Jupiter had two brothers, both of them terrible fellows, but not nearly so great as himself. The name of one of them was Neptune, or Poseidon, and he was the king of the sea. He had a glittering, golden palace far down in the deep sea-caves where the fishes live and the red coral grows; and whenever he was angry the waves would rise mountain high, and the storm-winds would howl fearfully, and the sea would try to break over the land; and men called him the Shaker of the Earth.

The other brother of Jupiter was a sad pale-faced being, whose kingdom was underneath the earth, where the sun never shone and where there was darkness and weeping and sorrow all the time. His name was Pluto, or Aidoneus, and his country was called the Lower World, or the Land of Shadows, or Hades. Men said that whenever any one died, Pluto would send his messenger, or Shadow Leader, to carry that one down into his cheerless kingdom; and for that reason they never spoke well of him, but thought of him only as the enemy of life.

A great number of other Mighty Beings lived with Jupiter amid the clouds on the mountain top, — so many that I can name a very few only. There was Venus, the queen of love and beauty, who was fairer by far than any woman that you or I have ever seen. There was Athena, or Minerva, the queen of the air, who gave people wisdom and taught them how to do very many useful things. There was Juno, the queen of earth and sky, who sat at the right hand of Jupiter and gave him all kinds of advice. There was Mars, the great warrior, whose delight was in the din of battle. There was Mercury, the swift messenger, who had wings on his cap and shoes, and who flew from place to place like the summer clouds when they are driven before the wind. There was Vulcan, a skillful blacksmith, who had his forge in a burning mountain and wrought many wonderful things of iron and copper and gold. And besides these, there were many others about whom you will learn by and by, and about whom men told strange and beautiful stories.

They lived in glittering, golden mansions, high up among the clouds-so high indeed that the eyes of men could never see them. But they could look down and see what men were doing, and oftentimes they were said to leave their lofty homes and wander unknown across the land or over the sea.

And of all these Mighty Folk, Jupiter was by far the mightiest.

2

THE GOLDEN AGE

Jupiter and his Mighty Folk had not always dwelt amid the clouds on the mountain top. In times long past, a wonderful family called Titans had lived there and had ruled over all the world. There were twelve of them-six brothers and six sisters-and they said that their father was the Sky and their mother the Earth. They had the form and looks of men and women, but they were much larger and far more beautiful.

The name of the youngest of these Titans was Saturn; and yet he was so very old that men often called him Father Time. He was the king of the Titans, and so, of course, was the king of all the earth besides.

Men were never so happy as they were during Saturn’s reign. It was the true Golden Age then. The springtime lasted all the year. The woods and meadows were always full of blossoms, and the music of singing birds was heard every day and every hour. It was summer and autumn, too, at the same time. Apples and figs and oranges always hung ripe from the trees; and there were purple grapes on the vines, and melons and berries of every kind, which the people had but to pick and eat.

Of course nobody had to do any kind of work in that happy time. There was no such thing as sickness or sorrow or old age. Men and women lived for hundreds and hundreds of years and never became gray or wrinkled or lame, but were always handsome and young. They had no need of houses, for there were no cold days nor storms nor anything to make them afraid.

Nobody was poor, for everybody had the same precious things-the sunlight, the pure air, the wholesome water of the springs, the grass for a carpet, the blue sky for a roof, the fruits and flowers of the woods and meadows. So, of course, no one was richer than another, and there was no money, nor any locks or bolts; for everybody was everybody’s friend, and no man wanted to get more of anything than his neighbors had.

When these happy people had lived long enough they fell asleep, and their bodies were seen no more. They flitted away through the air, and over the mountains, and across the sea, to a flowery land in the distant west. And some men say that, even to this day, they are wandering happily hither and thither about the earth, causing babies to smile in their cradles, easing the burdens of the toilworn and sick, and blessing mankind everywhere.

What a pity it is that this Golden Age should have come to an end! But it was Jupiter and his brothers who brought about the sad change.

It is hard to believe it, but men say that Jupiter was the son of the old Titan king, Saturn, and that he was hardly a year old when he began to plot how he might wage war against his father. As soon as he was grown up, he persuaded his brothers, Neptune and Pluto, and his sisters, Juno, Ceres, and Vesta, to join him; and they vowed that they would drive the Titans from the earth.

Then followed a long and terrible war. But Jupiter had many mighty helpers. A company of one-eyed monsters called Cyclopes were kept busy all the time, forging thunderbolts in the fire of burning mountains. Three other monsters, each with a hundred hands, were called in to throw rocks and trees against the stronghold of the Titans; and Jupiter himself hurled his sharp lightning darts so thick and fast that the woods were set on fire and the water in the rivers boiled with the heat.

Of course, good, quiet old Saturn and his brothers and sisters could not hold out always against such foes as these. At the end of ten years they had to give up and beg for peace. They were bound in chains of the hardest rock and thrown into a prison in the Lower Worlds; and the Cyclopes and the hundred-handed monsters were sent there to be their jailers and to keep guard over them forever.

Then men began to grow dissatisfied with their lot. Some wanted to be rich and own all the good things in the world. Some wanted to be kings and rule over the others. Some who were strong wanted to make slaves of those who were weak. Some broke down the fruit trees in the woods, lest others should eat of the fruit. Some, for mere sport, hunted the timid animals which had always been their friends. Some even killed these poor creatures and ate their flesh for food.

At last, instead of everybody being everybody’s friend, everybody was everybody’s foe.

So, in all the world, instead of peace, there was war; instead of plenty, there was starvation; instead of innocence, there was crime; and instead of happiness, there was misery.

And that was the way in which Jupiter made himself so mighty; and that was the way in which the Golden Age came to an end.

3

THE STORY OF PROMETHEUS

How Fire Was Given to Men

IN THOSE OLD, old times, there lived two brothers who were not like other men, nor yet like those Mighty Ones who lived upon the mountain top. They were the sons of one of those Titans who had fought against Jupiter and been sent in chains to the strong prison-house of the Lower World.

The name of the elder of these brothers was Prometheus, or Forethought; for he was always thinking of the future and making things ready for what might happen to-morrow, or next week, or next year, or it may be in a hundred years to come. The younger was called Epimetheus, or Afterthought; for he was always so busy thinking of yesterday, or last year, or a hundred years ago, that he had no care at all for what might come to pass after a while.

For some cause Jupiter had not sent these brothers to prison with the rest of the Titans.

Prometheus did not care to live amid the clouds on the mountain top. He was too busy for that. While the Mighty Folk were spending their time in idleness, drinking nectar and eating ambrosia, he was intent upon plans for making the world wiser and better than it had ever been before.

He went out amongst men to live with them and help them; for his heart was filled with sadness when he found that they were no longer happy as they had been during the golden days when Saturn was king. Ah, how very poor and wretched they were! He found them living in caves and in holes of the earth, shivering with the cold because there was no fire, dying of starvation, hunted by wild beasts and by one another-the most miserable of all living creatures.

"If they only had fire," said Prometheus to himself, "they could at least warm themselves and cook their food; and after a while they could learn to make tools and build themselves houses. Without fire, they are worse off than the beasts."

Then he went boldly to Jupiter and begged him to give fire to men, that so they might have a little comfort through the long, dreary months of winter.

"Not a spark will I give," said Jupiter. "No, indeed! Why, if men had fire they might become strong and wise like ourselves, and after a while they would drive us out of our kingdom. Let them shiver with cold, and let them live like the beasts. It is best for them to be poor and ignorant, that so we Mighty Ones may thrive and be happy."

Prometheus made no answer; but he had set his heart on helping mankind, and he did not give up. He turned away, and left Jupiter and his mighty company forever.

As he was walking by the shore of the sea he found a reed, or, as some say, a tall stalk of fennel, growing; and when he had broken it off he saw that its hollow center was filled with a dry, soft pith which would burn slowly and keep on fire a long time. He took the long stalk in his hands, and started with it towards the dwelling of the sun in the far east.

“Mankind shall have fire in spite of the tyrant who sits on the mountain top,” he said.

He reached the place of the sun in the early morning just as the glowing, golden orb was rising from the earth and beginning his daily journey through the sky. He touched the end of the long reed to the flames, and the dry pith caught on fire and burned slowly. Then he turned and hastened back to his own land, carrying with him the precious spark hidden in the hollow center of the plant.

He called some of the shivering men from their caves and built a fire for them, and showed them how to warm themselves by it and how to build other fires from the coals. Soon there was a cheerful blaze in every rude home in the land, and men and women gathered round it and were warm and happy, and thankful to Prometheus for the wonderful gift which he had brought to them from the sun.

It was not long until they learned to cook their food and so to eat like men instead of like beasts. They began at once to leave off their wild and savage habits; and instead of lurking in the dark places of the world, they came out into the open air and the bright sunlight, and were glad because life had been given to them.

After that, Prometheus taught them, little by little, a thousand things. He showed them how to build houses of wood and stone, and how to tame sheep and cattle and make them useful, and how to plow and sow and reap, and how to protect themselves from the storms of winter and the beasts of the woods. Then he showed them how to dig in the earth for copper and iron, and how to melt the ore, and how to hammer it into shape and fashion from it the tools and weapons which they needed in peace and war; and when he saw how happy the world was becoming he cried out:

“A new Golden Age shall come, brighter and better by far than the old!”

How Diseases and Cares Came Among Men

Things might have gone on very happily indeed, and the Golden Age might really have come again, had it not been for Jupiter. But one day, when he chanced to look down upon the earth, he saw the fires burning, and the people living in houses, and the flocks feeding on the hills, and the grain ripening in the fields, and this made him very angry.

“Who has done all this?” he asked.

And some one answered, “Prometheus!”

“What! that young Titan!” he cried. “Well, I will punish him in a way that will make him wish I had shut him up in the prison-house with his kinsfolk. But as for those puny men, let them keep their fire. I will make them ten times more miserable than they were before they had it.”

Of course it would be easy enough to deal with Prometheus at any time, and so Jupiter was in no great haste about it. He made up his mind to distress mankind first; and he thought of a plan for doing it in a very strange, roundabout way.

In the first place, he ordered his blacksmith Vulcan, whose forge was in the crater of a burning mountain, to take a lump of clay which he gave him, and mold it into the form of a woman. Vulcan did as he was bidden; and when he had finished the image, he carried it up to Jupiter, who was sitting among the clouds with all the Mighty Folk around him. It was nothing but a mere lifeless body, but the great blacksmith had given it a form more perfect than that of any statue that has ever been made.

“Come now!” said Jupiter, “let us all give some goodly gift to this woman;” and he began by giving her life.

Then the others came in their turn, each with a gift for the marvelous creature. One gave her beauty; and another a pleasant voice; and another good manners; and another a kind heart; and another skill in many arts; and, lastly, some one gave her curiosity. Then they called her Pandora, which means the all-gifted, because she had received gifts from them all.

Pandora was so beautiful and so wondrously gifted that no one could help loving her. When the Mighty Folk had admired her for a time, they gave her to Mercury, the light-footed; and he led her down the mountain side to the place where Prometheus and his brother were living and toiling for the good of mankind. He met Epimetheus first, and said to him:

“Epimetheus, here is a beautiful woman, whom Jupiter has sent to you to be your wife.”

Prometheus had often warned his brother to beware of any gift that Jupiter might send, for he knew that the mighty tyrant could not be trusted; but when Epimetheus saw Pandora, how lovely and wise she was, he forgot all warnings, and took her home to live with him and be his wife.

Pandora was very happy in her new home; and even Prometheus, when he saw her, was pleased with her loveliness. She had brought with her a golden casket, which Jupiter had given her at parting, and which he had told her held many precious things; but wise Athena, the queen of the air, had warned her never, never to open it, nor look at the things inside.

“They must be jewels,” she said to herself; and then she thought of how they would add to her beauty if only she could wear them. “Why did Jupiter give them to me if I should never use them, nor so much as look at them?” she asked.

The more she thought about the golden casket, the more curious she was to see what was in it; and every day she took it down from its shelf and felt of the lid, and tried to peer inside of it without opening it.

“Why should I care for what Athena told me?” she said at last. “She is not beautiful, and jewels would be of no use to her. I think that I will look at them, at any rate. Athena will never know. Nobody else will ever know.”

She opened the lid a very little, just to peep inside. All at once there was a whirring, rustling sound, and before she could shut it down again, out flew ten thousand strange creatures with death-like faces and gaunt and dreadful forms, such as nobody in all the world had ever seen. They fluttered for a little while about the room, and then flew away to find dwelling-places wherever there were homes of men. They were diseases and cares; for up to that time mankind had not had any kind of sickness, nor felt any troubles of mind, nor worried about what the morrow might bring forth.

These creatures flew into every house, and, without any one seeing them, nestled down in the bosoms of men and women and children, and put an end to all their joy; and ever since that day they have been flitting and creeping, unseen and unheard, over all the land, bringing pain and sorrow and death into every household.

If Pandora had not shut down the lid so quickly, things would have gone much worse. But she closed it just in time to keep the last of the evil creatures from getting out. The name of this creature was Foreboding, and although he was almost half out of the casket, Pandora pushed him back and shut the lid so tight that he could never escape. If he had gone out into the world, men would have known from childhood just what troubles were going to come to them every day of their lives, and they would never have had any joy or hope so long as they lived.

And this was the way in which Jupiter sought to make mankind more miserable than they had been before Prometheus had befriended them.

How the Friend of Men Was Punished

The next thing that Jupiter did was to punish Prometheus for stealing fire from the sun. He bade two of his servants, whose names were Strength and

Force, to seize the bold Titan and carry him to the topmost peak of the Caucasus Mountains. Then he sent the blacksmith Vulcan to bind him with iron chains and fetter him to the rocks so that he could not move hand or foot.

Vulcan did not like to do this, for he was a friend of Prometheus, and yet he did not dare to disobey. And so the great friend of men, who had given them fire and lifted them out of their wretchedness and shown them how to live, was chained to the mountain peak; and there he hung, with the storm-winds whistling always around him, and the pitiless hail beating in his face, and fierce eagles shrieking in his ears and tearing his body with their cruel claws. Yet he bore all his sufferings without a groan, and never would he beg for mercy or say that he was sorry for what he had done.

Year after year, and age after age, Prometheus hung there. Now and then old Helios, the driver of the sun car, would look down upon him and smile; now and then flocks of birds would bring him messages from far-off lands; once the ocean nymphs came and sang wonderful songs in his hearing; and oftentimes men looked up to him with pitying eyes, and cried out against the tyrant who had placed him there.

Then, once upon a time, a white cow passed that way, — a strangely beautiful cow, with large sad eyes and a face that seemed almost human. She stopped and looked up at the cold gray peak and the giant body which was chained there. Prometheus saw her and spoke to her kindly:

“I know who you are,” he said. “You are Io who was once a fair and happy maiden in distant Argos; and now, because of the tyrant Jupiter and his jealous queen, you are doomed to wander from land to land in that unhuman form. But do not lose hope. Go on to the southward and then to the west; and after many days you shall come to the great river Nile. There you shall again become a maiden, but fairer and more beautiful than before; and you shall become the wife of the king of that land, and shall give birth to a son, from whom shall spring the hero who will break my chains and set me free. As for me, I bide in patience the day which not even Jupiter can hasten or delay. Farewell!”

Poor Io would have spoken, but she could not. Her sorrowful eyes looked once more at the suffering hero on the peak, and then she turned and began her long and tiresome journey to the land of the Nile.

Ages passed, and at last a great hero whose name was Hercules came to the land of the Caucasus. In spite of Jupiter’s dread thunderbolts and fearful storms of snow and sleet, he climbed the rugged mountain peak; he slew the fierce eagles that had so long tormented the helpless prisoner on those craggy heights; and with a mighty blow, he broke the fetters of Prometheus and set the grand old hero free.

“I knew that you would come,” said Prometheus. “Ten generations ago I spoke of you to Io, who was afterwards the queen of the land of the Nile.”

“And Io,” said Hercules, “was the mother of the race from which I am sprung.”

4

THE FLOOD

In those very early times there was a man named Deucalion, and he was the son of Prometheus. He was only a common man and not a Titan like his great father, and yet he was known far and wide for his good deeds and the uprightness of his life. His wife's name was Pyrrha, and she was one of the fairest of the daughters of men.

After Jupiter had bound Prometheus on Mount Caucasus and had sent diseases and cares into the world, men became very, very wicked. They no longer built houses and tended their flocks and lived together in peace; but every man was at war with his neighbor, and there was no law nor safety in all the land. Things were in much worse case now than they had been before Prometheus had come among men, and that was just what Jupiter wanted. But as the world became wickeder and wickeder every day, he began to grow weary of seeing so much bloodshed and of hearing the cries of the oppressed and the poor.

"These men," he said to his mighty company, "are nothing but a source of trouble. When they were good and happy, we felt afraid lest they should become greater than ourselves; and now they are so terribly wicked that we are in worse danger than before. There is only one thing to be done with them, and that is to destroy them every one."

So he sent a great rain-storm upon the earth, and it rained day and night for a long time; and the sea was filled to the brim, and the water ran over the land and covered first the plains and then the forests and then the hills. But men kept on fighting and robbing, even while the rain was pouring down and the sea was coming up over the land.

No one but Deucalion, the son of Prometheus, was ready for such a storm. He had never joined in any of the wrong doings of those around him, and had often told them that unless they left off their evil ways there would be a day of reckoning in the end. Once every year he had gone to the land of the Caucasus to talk with his father, who was hanging chained to the mountain peak.

“The day is coming,” said Prometheus, “when Jupiter will send a flood to destroy mankind from the earth. Be sure that you are ready for it, my son.”

And so when the rain began to fall, Deucalion drew from its shelter a boat which he had built for just such a time. He called fair Pyrrha, his wife, and the two sat in the boat and were floated safely on the rising waters. Day and night, day and night, I cannot tell how long, the boat drifted hither and thither. The tops of the trees were hidden by the flood, and then the hills and then the mountains; and Deucalion and Pyrrha could see nothing anywhere but water, water, water-and they knew that all the people in the land had been drowned.

After a while the rain stopped falling, and the clouds cleared away, and the blue sky and the golden sun came out overhead. Then the water began to sink very fast and to run off the land towards the sea; and early the very next day the boat was drifted high upon a mountain called Parnassus, and Deucalion and Pyrrha stepped out upon the dry land. After that, it was only a short time until the whole country was laid bare, and the trees shook their leafy branches in the wind, and the fields were carpeted with grass and flowers more beautiful than in the days before the flood.

But Deucalion and Pyrrha were very sad, for they knew that they were the only persons who were left alive in all the land. At last they started to walk down the mountain side towards the plain, wondering what would become of them now, all alone as they were in the wide world. While they were talking and trying to think what they should do, they heard a voice behind them. They turned and saw a noble young prince standing on one of the rocks above them. He was very tall, with blue eyes and yellow hair. There were wings on his shoes and on his cap, and in his hands he bore a staff with golden serpents twined around it. They knew at once that he was Mercury, the swift messenger of the Mighty Ones, and they waited to hear what he would say.

“Is there anything that you wish?” he asked. “Tell me, and you shall have whatever you desire.”

“We should like, above all things,” said Deucalion, “to see this land full of people once more; for without neighbors and friends, the world is a very lonely place indeed.”

“Go on down the mountain,” said Mercury, “and as you go, cast the bones of your mother over your shoulders behind you;” and, with these words, he leaped into the air and was seen no more.

“What did he mean?” asked Pyrrha.

“Surely I do not know,” said Deucalion. “But let us think a moment. Who is our mother, if it is not the Earth, from whom all living things have sprung? And yet what could he mean by the bones of our mother?”

“Perhaps he meant the stones of the earth,” said Pyrrha. “Let us go on down the mountain, and as we go, let us pick up the stones in our path and throw them over our shoulders behind us.”

“It is rather a silly thing to do,” said Deucalion; “and yet there can be no harm in it, and we shall see what will happen.”

And so they walked on, down the steep slope of Mount Parnassus, and as they walked they picked up the loose stones in their way and cast them over their shoulders; and strange to say, the stones which Deucalion threw sprang up as full-grown men, strong, and handsome, and brave; and the stones which Pyrrha threw sprang up as full-grown women, lovely and fair. When at last they reached the plain they found themselves at the head of a noble company of human beings, all eager to serve them.

So Deucalion became their king, and he set them in homes, and taught them how to till the ground, and how to do many useful things; and the land was filled with people who were happier and far better than those who had dwelt there before the flood. And they named the country Hellas, after Hellen, the son of Deucalion and Pyrrha; and the people are to this day called Hellenes.

But we call the country GREECE.

5

THE STORY OF IO

In the town of Argos there lived a maiden named Io. She was so fair and good that all who knew her loved her, and said that there was no one like her in the whole world. When Jupiter, in his home in the clouds, heard of her, he came down to Argos to see her. She pleased him so much, and was so kind and wise, that he came back the next day and the next and the next; and by and by he stayed in Argos all the time so that he might be near her. She did not know who he was, but thought that he was a prince from some far-off land; for he came in the guise of a young man, and did not look like the great king of earth and sky that he was.

But Juno, the queen who lived with Jupiter and shared his throne in the midst of the clouds, did not love Io at all. When she heard why Jupiter stayed from home so long, she made up her mind to do the fair girl all the harm that she could; and one day she went down to Argos to try what could be done.

Jupiter saw her while she was yet a great way off, and he knew why she had come. So, to save Io from her, he changed the maiden to a white cow. He thought that when Juno had gone back home, it would not be hard to give Io her own form again.

But when the queen saw the cow, she knew that it was Io.

“Oh, what a fine cow you have there!” she said. “Give her to me, good Jupiter, give her to me!”

Jupiter did not like to do this; but she coaxed so hard that at last he gave up, and let her have the cow for her own. He thought that it would not be long till he could get her away from the queen, and change her to a girl once more. But Juno was too wise to trust him. She took the cow by her horns, and led her out of the town.

“Now, my sweet maid,” she said, “I will see that you stay in this shape as long as you live.”

Then she gave the cow in charge of a strange watchman named Argus, who had, not two eyes only, as you and I have, but ten times ten. And Argus led the cow to a grove, and tied her by a long rope to a tree, where she had to stand and eat grass, and cry, “Moo! moo!” from morn till night; and when the sun had set, and it was dark, she lay down on the cold ground and wept, and cried, “Moo! moo!” till she fell asleep.

But no kind friend heard her, and no one came to help her; for none but Jupiter and Juno knew that the white cow who stood in the grove was Io, whom all the world loved. Day in and day out, Argus, who was all eyes, sat on a hill close by and kept watch; and you could not say that he went to sleep at all, for while half of his eyes were shut, the other half were wide awake, and thus they slept and watched by turns.

Jupiter was grieved when he saw to what a hard life Io had been doomed, and he tried to think of some plan to set her free. One day he called sly Mercury, who had wings on his shoes, and bade him go and lead the cow away from the grove where she was kept. Mercury went down and stood near the foot of the hill where Argus sat, and began to play sweet tunes on his flute. This was just what the strange watchman liked to hear; and so he called to Mercury, and asked him to come up and sit by his side and play still other tunes.

Mercury did as he wished, and played such strains of sweet music as no one in all the world has heard from that day to this. And as he played, queer old Argus lay down upon the grass and listened, and thought that he had not had so great a treat in all his life. But by and by those sweet sounds wrapped him in so strange a spell that all his eyes closed at once, and he fell into a deep sleep.

This was just what Mercury wished. It was not a brave thing to do, and yet he drew a long, sharp knife from his belt and cut off the head of poor Argus while he slept. Then he ran down the hill to loose the cow and lead her to the town.

But Juno had seen him kill her watchman, and she met him on the road. She cried out to him and told him to let the cow go; and her face was so full of wrath that, as soon as he saw her, he turned and fled, and left poor Io to her fate.

Juno was so much grieved when she saw Argus stretched dead in the grass on the hilltop, that she took his hundred eyes and set them in the tail of a peacock; and there you may still see them to this day.

Then she found a great gadfly, as big as a bat, and sent it to buzz in the white cow’s ears, and to bite her and sting her so that she could have no rest all day long. Poor Io ran from place to place to get out of its way; but it buzzed and buzzed, and stung and stung, till she was wild with fright and pain, and wished that she were dead. Day after day she ran, now through the thick woods, now in the long grass that grew on the treeless plains, and now by the shore of the sea.

By and by she came to a narrow neck of the sea, and, since the land on the other side looked as though she might find rest there, she leaped into the waves and swam across; and that place has been called Bosphorus-a word which means the Sea of the Cow-from that time till now, and you will find it so marked on the maps which you use at school. Then she went on through a strange land on the other side, but, let her do what she would, she could not get rid of the gadfly.

After a time she came to a place where there were high mountains with snow-capped peaks which seemed to touch the sky. There she stopped to rest a while; and she looked up at the calm, cold cliffs above her and wished that she might die where all was so grand and still. But as she looked she saw a giant form stretched upon the rocks midway between earth and sky, and she knew at once that it was Prometheus, the young Titan, whom Jupiter had chained there because he had given fire to men.

“My sufferings are not so great as his,” she thought; and her eyes were filled with tears.

Then Prometheus looked down and spoke to her, and his voice was very mild and kind.

“I know who you are,” he said; and then he told her not to lose hope, but to go south and then west, and she would by and by find a place in which to rest.

She would have thanked him if she could; but when she tried to speak she could only say, “Moo! moo!”

Then Prometheus went on and told her that the time would come when she should be given her own form again, and that she should live to be the mother of a race of heroes. “As for me,” said he, “I bide the time in patience, for I know that one of those heroes will break my chains and set me free. Farewell!”

Then Io, with a brave heart, left the great Titan and journeyed, as he had told her, first south and then west. The gadfly was worse now than before, but she did not fear it half so much, for her heart was full of hope. For a whole year she wandered, and at last she came to the land of Egypt in Africa. She felt so tired now that she could go no farther, and so she lay down near the bank of the great River Nile to rest.

All this time Jupiter might have helped her had he not been so much afraid of Juno. But now it so chanced that when the poor cow lay down by the bank of the Nile, Queen Juno, in her high house in the clouds, also lay down to take a nap. As soon as she was sound asleep, Jupiter like a flash of light sped over the sea to Egypt. He killed the cruel gadfly and threw it into the river. Then he stroked the cow's head with his hand, and the cow was seen no more; but in her place stood the young girl Io, pale and frail, but fair and good as she had been in her old home in the town of Argos. Jupiter said not a word, nor even showed himself to the tired, trembling maiden. He hurried back with all speed to his high home in the clouds, for he feared that Juno might waken and find out what he had done.

The people of Egypt were kind to Io, and gave her a home in their sunny land; and by and by the king of Egypt asked her to be his wife, and made her his queen; and she lived a long and happy life in his marble palace on the bank of the Nile. Ages afterward, the great-grandson of the great-grandson of Io's great-grandson broke the chains of Prometheus and set that mighty friend of mankind free.

The name of the hero was Hercules.

6

THE WONDERFUL WEAVER

The Warp

THERE WAS a young girl in Greece whose name was Arachne. Her face was pale but fair, and her eyes were big and blue, and her hair was long and like gold. All that she cared to do from morn till noon was to sit in the sun and spin; and all that she cared to do from noon till night was to sit in the shade and weave.

And oh, how fine and fair were the things which she wove in her loom! Flax, wool, silk-she worked with them all; and when they came from her hands, the cloth which she had made of them was so thin and soft and bright that men came from all parts of the world to see it. And they said that cloth so rare could not be made of flax, or wool, or silk, but that the warp was of rays of sunlight and the woof was of threads of gold.

Then as, day by day, the girl sat in the sun and span, or sat in the shade and wove, she said: “In all the world there is no yarn so fine as mine, and in all the world there is no cloth so soft and smooth, nor silk so bright and rare.”

“Who taught you to spin and weave so well?” some one asked.

“No one taught me,” she said. “I learned how to do it as I sat in the sun and the shade; but no one showed me.”

“But it may be that Athena, the queen of the air, taught you, and you did not know it.”

“Athena, the queen of the air? Bah!” said Arachne. “How could she teach me? Can she spin such skeins of yarn as these? Can she weave goods like mine? I should like to see her try. I can teach her a thing or two.”

She looked up and saw in the doorway a tall woman wrapped in a long cloak. Her face was fair to see, but stern, oh, so stern! and her gray eyes were so sharp and bright that Arachne could not meet her gaze.

“Arachne,” said the woman, “I am Athena, the queen of the air, and I have heard your boast. Do you still mean to say that I have not taught you how to spin and weave?”

“No one has taught me,” said Arachne; “and I thank no one for what I know;” and she stood up, straight and proud, by the side of her loom.

“And do you still think that you can spin and weave as well as I?” said Athena.

Arachne’s cheeks grew pale, but she said: “Yes. I can weave as well as you.”

“Then let me tell you what we will do,” said Athena. “Three days from now we will both weave; you on your loom, and I on mine. We will ask all the world to come and see us; and great Jupiter, who sits in the clouds, shall be the judge. And if your work is best, then I will weave no more so long as the world shall last; but if my work is best, then you shall never use loom or spindle or distaff again. Do you agree to this?” “I agree,” said Arachne.

“It is well,” said Athena. And she was gone.

WHEN THE TIME came for the contest in weaving, all the world was there to see it, and great Jupiter sat among the clouds and looked on.

Arachne had set up her loom in the shade of a mulberry tree, where butterflies were flitting and grasshoppers chirping all through the livelong day. But Athena had set up her loom in the sky, where the breezes were blowing and the summer sun was shining; for she was the queen of the air.

Then Arachne took her skeins of finest silk and began to weave. And she wove a web of marvelous beauty, so thin and light that it would float in the air, and yet so strong that it could hold a lion in its meshes; and the threads of warp and woof were of many colors, so beautifully arranged and mingled one with another that all who saw were filled with delight.

“No wonder that the maiden boasted of her skill,” said the people.

And Jupiter himself nodded.

Then Athena began to weave. And she took of the sunbeams that gilded the mountain top, and of the snowy fleece of the summer clouds, and of the blue ether of the summer sky, and of the bright green of the summer fields, and of the royal purple of the autumn woods, — and what do you suppose she wove?

The web which she wove in the sky was full of enchanting pictures of flowers and gardens, and of castles and towers, and of mountain heights, and of men and beasts, and of giants and dwarfs, and of the mighty beings who dwell in the clouds with Jupiter. And those who looked upon it were so filled with wonder and delight, that they forgot all about the beautiful web which Arachne had woven. And Arachne herself was ashamed and afraid when she saw it; and she hid her face in her hands and wept.

“Oh, how can I live,” she cried, “now that I must never again use loom or spindle or distaff?”

And she kept on, weeping and weeping and weeping, and saying, “How can I live?”

Then, when Athena saw that the poor maiden would never have any joy unless she were allowed to spin and weave, she took pity on her and said:

“I would free you from your bargain if I could, but that is a thing which no one can do. You must hold to your agreement never to touch loom or spindle again. And yet, since you will never be happy unless you can spin and weave, I will give you a new form so that you can carry on your work with neither spindle nor loom.”

Then she touched Arachne with the tip of the spear which she sometimes carried; and the maiden was changed at once into a nimble spider, which ran into a shady place in the grass and began merrily to spin and weave a beautiful web.

I have heard it said that all the spiders which have been in the world since then are the children of Arachne; but I doubt whether this be true. Yet, for aught I know, Arachne still lives and spins and weaves; and the very next spider that you see may be she herself.

7

THE LORD OF THE SILVER BOW

Delos

Long before you or I or anybody else can remember, there lived with the Mighty Folk on the mountain top a fair and gentle lady named Leto. So fair and gentle was she that Jupiter loved her and made her his wife. But when Juno, the queen of earth and sky, heard of this, she was very angry; and she drove Leto down from the mountain and bade all things great and small refuse to help her. So Leto fled like a wild deer from land to land and could find no place in which to rest. She could not stop, for then the ground would quake under her feet, and the stones would cry out, “Go on! go on!” and birds and beasts and trees and men would join in the cry; and no one in all the wide land took pity on her.

One day she came to the sea, and as she fled along the beach she lifted up her hands and called aloud to great Neptune to help her. Neptune, the king of the sea, heard her and was kind to her. He sent a huge fish, called a dolphin, to bear her away from the cruel land; and the fish, with Leto sitting on his broad back, swam through the waves to Delos, a little island which lay floating on top of the water like a boat. There the gentle lady found rest and a home; for the place belonged to Neptune, and the words of cruel Juno were not obeyed there. Neptune put four marble pillars under the island so that it should rest firm upon them; and then he chained it fast, with great chains which reached to the bottom of the sea, so that the waves might never move it.

By and by twin babes were born to Leto in Delos. One was a boy whom she called Apollo, the other a girl whom she named Artemis, or Diana. When the news of their birth was carried to Jupiter and the Mighty Folk on the mountain top, all the world was glad. The sun danced on the waters, and singing swans flew seven times round the island of Delos. The moon stooped to kiss the babes in their cradle; and Juno forgot her anger, and bade all things on the earth and in the sky be kind to Leto.

The two children grew very fast. Apollo became tall and strong and graceful; his face was as bright as the sunbeams; and he carried joy and gladness with him wherever he went. Jupiter gave him a pair of swans and a golden chariot, which bore him over sea and land wherever he wanted to go; and he gave him a lyre on which he played the sweetest music that was ever heard, and a silver bow with sharp arrows which never missed the mark. When Apollo went out into the world, and men came to know about him, he was called by some the Bringer of Light, by others the Master of Song, and by still others the Lord of the Silver Bow.

Diana was tall and graceful, too, and very handsome. She liked to wander in the woods with her maids, who were called nymphs; she took kind care of the timid deer and the helpless creatures which live among the trees; and she delighted in hunting wolves and bears and other savage beasts. She was loved and feared in every land, and Jupiter made her the queen of the green woods and the chase.

Delphi

“Where is the center of the world?”

This is the question which some one asked Jupiter as he sat in his golden hall. Of course the mighty ruler of earth and sky was too wise to be puzzled by so simple a thing, but he was too busy to answer it at once. So he said:

“Come again in one year from to-day, and I will show you the very place.”

Then Jupiter took two swift eagles which could fly faster than the storm-wind, and trained them till the speed of the one was the same as that of the other. At the end of the year he said to his servants:

“Take this eagle to the eastern rim of the earth, where the sun rises out of the sea; and carry his fellow to the far west, where the ocean is lost in darkness and nothing lies beyond. Then, when I give you the sign, loosen both at the same moment.”

The servants did as they were bidden, and carried the eagles to the outermost edges of the world. Then Jupiter clapped his hands. The lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, and the two swift birds were set free. One of them flew straight back towards the west, the other flew straight back towards the east; and no arrow ever sped faster from the bow than did these two birds from the hands of those who had held them.

On and on they went like shooting stars rushing to meet each other; and Jupiter and all his mighty company sat amid the clouds and watched their flight. Nearer and nearer they came, but they swerved not to the right nor to the left. Nearer and nearer-and then with a crash like the meeting of two ships at sea, the eagles came together in mid-air and fell dead to the ground.

“Who asked where is the center of the world?” said Jupiter. “The spot where the two eagles lie-that is the center of the world.”

They had fallen on the top of a mountain in Greece which men have ever since called Parnassus.

“If that is the center of the world,” said young Apollo, “then I will make my home there, and I will build a house in that place, so that my light may be seen in all lands.”

So Apollo went down to Parnassus, and looked about for a spot in which to lay the foundations of his house. The mountain itself was savage and wild, and the valley below it was lonely and dark. The few people who lived there kept themselves hidden among the rocks as if in dread of some great danger. They told Apollo that near the foot of the mountain where the steep cliff seemed to be split in two there lived a huge serpent called the Python. This serpent often seized sheep and cattle, and sometimes even men and women and children, and carried them up to his dreadful den and devoured them.

“Can no one kill this beast?” said Apollo.

And they said, “No one; and we and our children and our flocks shall all be slain by him.”

Then Apollo with his silver bow in his hands went up towards the place where the Python lay. The monster had worn great paths through the grass and among the rocks, and his lair was not hard to find. When he caught sight of Apollo, he uncoiled himself, and came out to meet him. The bright prince saw the creature’s glaring eyes and blood-red mouth, and heard the rush of his scaly body over the stones. He fitted an arrow to his bow, and stood still. The Python saw that his foe was no common man, and turned to flee. Then the arrow sped from the bow-and the monster was dead.

“Here I will build my house,” said Apollo.

Close to the foot of the steep cliff, and beneath the spot where Jupiter’s eagles had fallen, he laid the foundations; and soon where had been the lair of the Python, the white walls of Apollo’s temple arose among the rocks. Then the poor people of the land came and built their houses near by; and

Apollo lived among them many years, and taught them to be gentle and wise, and showed them how to be happy. The mountain was no longer savage and wild, but was a place of music and song; the valley was no longer dark and lonely, but was filled with beauty and light.

“What shall we call our city?” the people asked.

“Call it Delphi, or the Dolphin,” said Apollo; “for it was a dolphin that carried my mother across the sea.”

DAPHNE

IN THE VALE OF TEMPE, which lies far north of Delphi, there lived a young girl whose name was Daphne. She was a strange child, wild and shy as a fawn, and as fleet of foot as the deer that feed on the plains. But she was as fair and good as a day in June, and none could know her but to love her.

Daphne spent the most of her time in the fields and woods, with the birds and blossoms and trees; and she liked best of all to wander along the banks of the River Peneus, and listen to the ripple of the water as it flowed among the reeds or over the shining pebbles. Very often she would sing and talk to the river as if it were a living thing, and could hear her; and she fancied that it understood what she said, and that it whispered many a wonderful secret to her in return. The good people who knew her best said:

“She is the child of the river.”

“Yes, dear river,” she said, “let me be your child.”

The river smiled and answered her in a way which she alone could understand; and always, after that, she called it “Father Peneus.”

One day when the sun shone warm, and the air was filled with the perfume of flowers, Daphne wandered farther away from the river than she had ever gone before. She passed through a shady wood and climbed a hill, from the top of which she could see Father Peneus lying white and clear and smiling in the valley below. Beyond her were other hills, and then the green slopes and wooded top of great Mount Ossa. Ah, if she could only climb to the summit of Ossa, she might have a view of the sea, and of other mountains close by, and of the twin peaks of Mount Parnassus, far, far to the south!

"Good-by, Father Peneus," she said. "I am going to climb the mountain; but I will come back soon."

The river smiled, and Daphne ran onward, climbing one hill after another, and wondering why the great mountain seemed still so far away. By and by she came to the foot of a wooded slope where there was a pretty waterfall and the ground was bespangled with thousands of beautiful flowers; and she sat down there a moment to rest. Then from the grove on the hilltop above her, came the sound of the loveliest music she had ever heard. She stood up and listened. Some one was playing on a lyre, and some one was singing. She was frightened; and still the music was so charming that she could not run away.

Then, all at once, the sound ceased, and a young man, tall and fair and with a face as bright as the morning sun, came down the hillside towards her.

"Daphne!" he said; but she did not stop to hear. She turned and fled like a frightened deer, back towards the Vale of Tempe.

"Daphne!" cried the young man. She did not know that it was Apollo, the Lord of the Silver Bow; she only knew that the stranger was following her, and she ran as fast as her fleet feet could carry her. No young man had ever spoken to her before, and the sound of his voice filled her heart with fear.

"She is the fairest maiden that I ever saw," said Apollo to himself. "If I could only look at her face again and speak with her, how happy I should be."

Through brake, through brier, over rocks and the trunks of fallen trees, down rugged slopes, across mountain streams, leaping, flying, panting, Daphne ran. She looked not once behind her, but she heard the swift footsteps of Apollo coming always nearer; she heard the rattle of the silver bow which hung from his shoulders; she heard his very breath, he was so close to her. At last she was in the valley where the ground was smooth and it was easier running, but her strength was fast leaving her. Right before her, however, lay the river, white and smiling in the sunlight. She stretched out her arms and cried:

"O Father Peneus, save me!"

Then it seemed as though the river rose up to meet her. The air was filled with a blinding mist. For a moment Apollo lost sight of the fleeing maiden. Then he saw her close by the river's bank, and so near to him that her long hair, streaming behind her, brushed his cheek. He thought that she was about to leap into the rushing, roaring waters, and he reached out his hands to save her. But it was not the fair, timid Daphne that he caught in his arms; it was the trunk of a laurel tree, its green leaves trembling in the breeze.

"O Daphne! Daphne!" he cried, "is this the way in which the river saves you? Does Father Peneus turn you into a tree to keep you from me?"

Whether Daphne had really been turned into a tree, I know not; nor does it matter now-it was so long ago. But Apollo believed that it was so, and hence he made a wreath of the laurel leaves and set it on his head like a crown, and said that he would wear it always in memory of the lovely maiden. And ever after that, the laurel was Apollo's favorite tree, and, even to this day, poets and musicians are crowned with its leaves.

DELUDED

APOLLO DID NOT CARE to live much of the time with his mighty kinsfolk on the mountain top. He liked better to go about from place to place and from land to land, seeing people at their work and making their lives happy. When men first saw his fair boyish face and his soft white hands, they sneered and said he was only an idle, good-for-nothing fellow. But when they heard him speak, they were so charmed that they stood, spellbound, to listen; and ever after that they made his words their law. They wondered how it was that he was so wise; for it seemed to them that he did nothing but stroll about, playing on his wonderful lyre and looking at the trees and blossoms and birds and bees. But when any of them were sick they came to him, and he told them what to find in plants or stones or brooks that would heal them and make them strong again. They noticed that he did not grow old, as others did, but that he was always young and fair; and, even after he had gone away, — they knew not how, nor whither, — it seemed as though the earth were a brighter and sweeter place to live in than it had been before his coming.

In a mountain village beyond the Vale of Tempe, there lived a beautiful lady named Coronis. When Apollo saw her, he loved her and made her his wife; and for a long time the two lived together, and were happy. By and by a babe was born to them, — a boy with the most wonderful eyes that anybody ever saw, — and they named him AEsculapius. Then the mountains and the woods were filled with the music of Apollo’s lyre, and even the Mighty Folk on the mountain top were glad.

One day Apollo left Coronis and her child, and went on a journey to visit his favorite home on Mount Parnassus.

“I shall hear from you every day,” he said at parting. “The crow will fly swiftly every morning to Parnassus, and tell me whether you and the child are well, and what you are doing while I am away."

For Apollo had a pet crow which was very wise, and could talk. The bird was not black, like the crows which you have seen, but as white as snow. Men say that all crows were white until that time, but I doubt whether anybody knows.

Apollo's crow was a great tattler, and did not always tell the truth. It would see the beginning of something, and then, without waiting to know anything more about it, would hurry off and make up a great story about it. But there was no one else to carry news from Coronis to Apollo; for, as you know, there were no postmen in those days, and there was not a telegraph wire in the whole world.

All went well for several days. Every morning the white bird would wing its way over hills and plains and rivers and forests until it found Apollo, either in the groves on the top of Parnassus or in his own house at Delphi. Then it would alight upon his shoulder and say, "Coronis is well! Coronis is well!"

One day, however, it had a different story. It came much earlier than ever before, and seemed to be in great haste.

"Cor-Cor-Cor!" it cried; but it was so out of breath that it could not speak her whole name.

"What is the matter?" cried Apollo, in alarm. "Has anything happened to Coronis? Speak! Tell me the truth!"

"She does not love you! she does not love you!" cried the crow. "I saw a man-I saw a man, —" and then, without stopping to take breath, or to finish the story, it flew up into the air, and hurried homeward again.

Apollo, who had always been so wise, was now almost as foolish as his crow. He fancied that Coronis had really deserted him for another man, and his mind was filled with grief and rage. With his silver bow in his hands he started at once for his home. He did not stop to speak with any one; he had made up his mind to learn the truth for himself. His swan-team and his golden chariot were not at hand-for, now that he was living with men, he must travel like men. The journey had to be made on foot, and it was no short journey in those days when there were no roads. But after a time, he came to the village where he had lived happily for so many years, and soon he saw his own house half-hidden among the dark-leaved olive trees. In another minute he would know whether the crow had told him the truth.

He heard the footsteps of some one running in the grove. He caught a glimpse of a white robe among the trees. He felt sure that this was the man whom the crow had seen, and that he was trying to run away. He fitted an arrow to his bow quickly. He drew the string. Twang! And the arrow which never missed sped like a flash of light through the air.

Apollo heard a sharp, wild cry of pain; and he bounded forward through the grove. There, stretched dying on the grass, he saw his dear Coronis. She had seen him coming, and was running gladly to greet him, when the cruel arrow pierced her heart. Apollo was overcome with grief. He took her form in his arms, and tried to call her back to life again. But it was all in vain. She could only whisper his name, and then she was dead.

A moment afterwards the crow alighted on one of the trees near by. “Cor-Cor-Cor,” it began; for it wanted now to finish its story. But Apollo bade it begone.

“Cursed bird,” he cried, “you shall never say a word but ‘Cor-Cor-Cor!’ all your life; and the feathers of which you are so proud shall no longer be white, but black as midnight.”

And from that time to this, as you very well know, all crows have been black; and they fly from one dead tree to another, always crying, “Cor-cor-cor!”

Disgraced

Soon after this, Apollo took the little AEsculapius in his arms and carried him to a wise old schoolmaster named Cheiron, who lived in a cave under the gray cliffs of a mountain close by the sea.

“Take this child,” he said, “and teach him all the lore of the mountains, the woods, and the fields. Teach him those things which he most needs to know in order to do great good to his fellow-men.”

And AEsculapius proved to be a wise child, gentle and sweet and teachable; and among all the pupils of Cheiron he was the best loved. He learned the lore of the mountains, the woods, and the fields. He found out what virtue there is in herbs and flowers and senseless stones; and he studied the habits of birds and beasts and men. But above all he became skillful in dressing wounds and healing diseases; and to this day physicians remember and honor him as the first and greatest of their craft. When he grew up to manhood his name was heard in every land, and people blessed him because he was the friend of life and the foe of death.

As time went by, AEsculapius cured so many people and saved so many lives that Pluto, the pale-faced king of the Lower World, became alarmed.

“I shall soon have nothing to do,” he said, “if this physician does not stop keeping people away from my kingdom.”

And he sent word to his brother Jupiter, and complained that AEsculapius was cheating him out of what was his due. Great Jupiter listened to his complaint, and stood up among the storm clouds, and hurled his thunderbolts at AEsculapius until the great physician was cruelly slain. Then all the world was filled with grief, and even the beasts and the trees and the stones wept because the friend of life was no more.

When Apollo heard of the death of his son, his grief and wrath were terrible. He could not do anything against Jupiter and Pluto, for they were stronger than he; but he went down into the smithy of Vulcan, underneath the smoking mountains, and slew the giant smiths who had made the deadly thunderbolts.

Then Jupiter, in his turn, was angry, and ordered Apollo to come before him and be punished for what he had done. He took away his bow and arrows and his wonderful lyre and all his beauty of form and feature; and after that Jupiter clothed him in the rags of a beggar and drove him down from the mountain, and told him that he should never come back nor be himself again until he had served some man a whole year as a slave.

And so Apollo went out, alone and friendless, into the world; and no one who saw him would have dreamed that he was once the sun-bright Lord of the Silver Bow.

8

ADMETUS AND ALCESTIS

The Slave

In a little town north of Delphi, and not very far from the sea, there lived a young man named Admetus. He was the ruler of the town, and hence was called its king; but his kingdom was so small that he could walk all round it in half a day. He knew the name of every man and woman and child in the town, and everybody loved him because he was so gentle and kind and at the same time a king.

Late one day, when the rain was falling and the wind was blowing cold from the mountains, a beggar came to his door. The man was ragged and dirty and half starved, and Admetus knew that he must have come from some strange land, for in his own country no one ever went hungry. So the kind king took him into the house and fed him; and after the man had bathed he gave him his own warm cloak, and bade the servants make a place for him to sleep through the night.

In the morning Admetus asked the poor man his name, but he shook his head and made no answer. Then Admetus asked him about his home and his country; and all that the man would say was: “Make me your slave, master! Make me your slave, and let me serve you for a year.”

The young king did not need another servant. But he saw that the poorest slave in the land was better off than this man, and so he took pity on him. “I will do as you ask,” he said. “I will give you a home and food and clothing; and you shall serve me and be my slave for one year.”

There was but little that the stranger knew how to do, and so he was sent to the hills to take care of the king’s sheep and goats. For a whole year he tended the flocks, finding the greenest pastures and the freshest water for them, and keeping the wolves away. Admetus was very kind to him, as he was to all his servants, and the food and clothing which he gave him were of the best in the land. But the stranger did not tell his name nor say anything about his kindred or his home.

When a year and a day had passed, it so happened that Admetus was walking out among the hills to see his sheep. All at once the sound of music fell upon his ear. It was no such music as shepherds play, but sweeter and richer than any he had ever heard before. He looked to see where the sound came from. Ah! who was that sitting on the hilltop, with the sheep around him listening to his music? Surely it was not his shepherd?

It was a tall and handsome young man, clad in robes lighter and finer than any king might wear. His face was as bright as sunbeams, and his eyes gleamed like lightning. Upon his shoulder was a silver bow, from his belt hung a quiver of sharp arrows, and in his hands was a golden lyre. Admetus stood still and wondered. Then the stranger spoke:

“King Admetus,” he said, “I am the poor beggar whom you fed-your slave to whom you were so kind. I have served you, as I agreed, for a whole year, and now I am going home. Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Yes,” said Admetus; “tell me your name.”

“My name is Apollo,” was the answer. “Twelve months ago my father, mighty Jupiter, drove me away from before his face and bade me go out friendless and alone upon the earth; and he told me that I should not turn again towards home until I had served a year as some man’s slave. I came to you, ragged and half starved, and you fed and clothed me; and I became your slave, and you were as kind to me as though I were your son. What shall I give you to reward you?”

“Lord of the Silver Bow,” said the king, “I have all that any man can want. I am happy in the thought that I have been of some help to you. I can ask for nothing more.”

“Very well,” said Apollo; “but if the time should ever come when you need my help, let me know.”

Then the bright prince walked swiftly away, playing sweet music as he went; and Admetus with glad heart returned to his home.

The Chariot

From the place where Admetus lived it was only a few miles to Iolcus, a rich city by the sea. The king of Iolcus was a cruel tyrant named Pelias, who cared for nobody in all the world but himself. This Pelias had a daughter named Alcestis, who was as fair as any rose in June and so gentle and good that everybody praised her. Many a prince from over the sea had come to woo Alcestis for his wife; and the noblest young men in Greece had tried to win her favor. But there was only one to whom she would listen, and that was her young neighbor, King Admetus.

So Admetus went before gruff King Pelias to ask him whether he might wed Alcestis.

“No one shall have my daughter,” said the old king, “until he proves that he is worthy to be my son-in-law. If you want her, you must come for her in a chariot drawn by a lion and a wild boar. If you come in any other way, she shall not be your wife.” And Pelias laughed, and drove the young man out of his palace.

Admetus went away feeling very sad; for who had ever heard of harnessing a lion and a wild boar together in a chariot? The bravest man in the world could not do such a thing as that.

As he walked along and saw the sheep and goats feeding on the hilltops near his own town, he chanced to think of Apollo and of the last words that he had heard him say: “When you need my help, let me know.”

“I will let him know,” said Admetus.

Early the next morning he built an altar of stones in the open field; and when he had killed the fattest goat of the flock, he built a fire on the altar and laid the thighs of the goat in the flames. Then when the smell of the burning flesh went up into the air, he lifted his hands towards the mountain tops and called to Apollo.

“Lord of the Silver Bow,” he cried, “if ever I have shown kindness to the poor and the distressed, come now and help me. For I am in sore need, and I remember your promise.”

Hardly was he done speaking when bright Apollo, bearing his bow and his quiver of arrows, came down and stood before him.

“Kindest of kings,” he said, “tell me how I can help you.”

Then Admetus told him all about the fair Alcestis, and how her father would give her only to the man who should come for her in a chariot drawn by a lion and a wild boar.

“Come with me,” said Apollo, “and I will help you.”

Then the two went together into the forest, the Lord of the Silver Bow leading the way. Soon they started a lion from its lair and gave chase to it. The fleet-footed Apollo seized the beast by its mane, and although it howled and snapped with its fierce jaws it did not touch him. Then Admetus started a wild boar from a thicket. Apollo gave chase to it, too, making the lion run beside him like a dog. When he had caught the boar, he went on through the forest, leading the two beasts, one with his right hand, the other with his left; and Admetus followed behind.

It was not yet noon when they came to the edge of the woods and saw the sea and the city of Iolcus only a little way off. A golden chariot stood by the roadside as if waiting for them, and the lion and the boar were soon harnessed to it. It was a strange team, and the two beasts tried hard to fight each other; but Apollo lashed them with a whip and tamed them until they lost their fierceness and were ready to mind the rein. Then Admetus climbed into the chariot; and Apollo stood by his side and held the reins and the whip, and drove into Iolcus.

Old King Pelias was astonished when he saw the wonderful chariot and the glorious charioteer; and when Admetus again asked him for the fair Alcestis, he could not refuse. A day was set for the wedding, and Apollo drove his team back to the forest and set the lion and the wild boar free.

And so Admetus and Alcestis were married, and everybody in the two towns, except gruff old King Pelias, was glad. Apollo himself was one of the guests at the wedding feast, and he brought a present for the young bridegroom; it was a promise from the Mighty Folk upon the mountain top that if Admetus should ever be sick and in danger of death, he might become well again if some one who loved him would die for him.

The Shadow Leader

Admetus and Alcestis lived together happily for a long time, and all the people in their little kingdom loved and blessed them. But at last Admetus fell sick, and, as he grew worse and worse every day, all hope that he would ever get well was lost. Then those who loved him remembered the wedding gift which Apollo had given him, and they began to ask who would be willing to die in his stead.

His father and mother were very old and could hope to live but a short time at best, and so it was thought that one of them would be glad to give up life for the sake of their son. But when some one asked them about it, they shook their heads and said that though life was short they would cling to it as long as they could.

Then his brothers and sisters were asked if they would die for Admetus, but they loved themselves better than their brother, and turned away and left him. There were men in the town whom he had befriended and who owed their lives to him; they would have done everything else for him, but this thing they would not do.

Now while all were shaking their heads and saying “Not I,” the beautiful Alcestis went into her own room and called to Apollo and asked that she might give up her life to save her husband. Then without a thought of fear she lay down upon her bed and closed her eyes; and a little while afterward, when her maidens came into the room they found her dead.

At the very same time Admetus felt his sickness leave him, and he sprang up as well and strong as he had ever been. Wondering how it was that he had been so quickly cured, he made haste to find Alcestis and tell her the good news. But when he went into her room, he saw her lying lifeless on her couch, and he knew at once that she had died for him. His grief was so great that he could not speak, and he wished that death had taken him and spared the one whom he loved.

In all the land every eye was wet with weeping for Alcestis, and the cries of the mourners were heard in every house. Admetus sat by the couch where his young queen lay, and held her cold hand in his own. The day passed, and night came, but he would not leave her. All through the dark hours he sat there alone. The morning dawned, but he did not want to see the light.

At last the sun began to rise in the east, and then Admetus was surprised to feel the hand which he held growing warm. He saw a red tinge coming into the pale cheeks of Alcestis.

A moment later the fair lady opened her eyes and sat up, alive and well and glad.

How was it that Alcestis had been given back to life?

When she died and left her body, the Shadow Leader, who knows no pity, led her, as he led all others, to the cheerless halls of Proserpine, the queen of the Lower World.

“Who is this who comes so willingly?” asked the pale-faced queen.

And when she was told how Alcestis, so young and beautiful, had given her life to save that of her husband, she was moved with pity; and she bade the Shadow Leader take her back again to the joy and sunlight of the Upper World.

So it was that Alcestis came to life; and for many years she and Admetus lived in their little kingdom not far from the sea; and the Mighty Ones on the mountain top blessed them; and, at last, when they had become very old, the Shadow Leader led them both away together.

9

CADMUS AND EUROPA

The Bull

In Asia there lived a king who had two children, a boy and a girl. The boy’s name was Cadmus, and the girl’s name was Europa. The king’s country was a very small one. He could stand on his house top and see the whole of it. On one side of it there were mountains, and on the other side was the sea. The king thought that it was the center of the world, and he did not know much about other lands and people.

Yet he was very happy in his own little kingdom, and very fond of his children. And he had good reason to be proud of them; for Cadmus grew up to be the bravest young man in the land, and Europa to be the fairest maiden that had ever been seen. But sad days came to them all at last.

One morning Europa went out into a field near the seashore to pick flowers. Her father’s cattle were in the field, grazing among the sweet clover. They were all very tame, and Europa knew every one of them by name. The herdsman was lying in the shade under a tree, trying to make music on a little flute of straw. Europa had played in the field a thousand times before, and no one had ever thought of any harm befalling her.

That morning she noticed that there was a strange bull with the herd. He was very large and as white as snow; and he had soft brown eyes which somehow made him look very gentle and kind. At first he did not even look at Europa, but went here and there, eating the tender grass which grew among the clover. But when she had gathered her apron full of daisies and buttercups, he came slowly towards her. She was not at all afraid of him; and so she stopped to look at him, he was so handsome. He came close to her, and rubbed her arm with his nose to say "Good-morning!"

She stroked his head and neck, and he seemed much pleased. Then she made a wreath of daisies, and hung it round his neck. He looked at her with his soft kind eyes, and seemed to thank her; and in a little while, he lay down among the clover. Europa then made a smaller wreath, and climbed upon his back to twine it round his horns. But all at once he sprang up, and ran away so swiftly that Europa could not help herself. She did not dare to jump off while he was going so fast, and all that she could think to do was to hold fast to his neck and scream very loud.

The herdsman under the tree heard her scream, and jumped up to see what was the matter. He saw the bull running with her towards the shore. He ran after them as fast as he could, but it was of no use. The bull leaped into the sea, and swam swiftly away, with poor Europa on his back. Several other people had seen him, and now they ran to tell the king. Soon the whole town was alarmed. Everybody ran out to the shore and looked. All that could be seen was something white moving very fast over the calm, blue water; and soon it was out of sight.

The king sent out his fastest ship to try to overtake the bull. The sailors rowed far out to sea, much farther than any ship had ever gone before; but no trace of Europa could be found. When they came back, everybody felt that there was no more hope. All the women and children in the town wept for the lost Europa. The king shut himself up in his house, and did not eat nor drink for three days. Then he called his son Cadmus, and bade him take a ship and go in search of his sister; and he told him that, no matter what dangers might be in his way, he must not come back until she was found.

Cadmus was glad to go. He chose twenty brave young men to go with him, and set sail the very next day. It was a great undertaking; for they were to pass through an unknown sea, and they did not know what lands they would come to. Indeed, it was feared that they would never come to any land at all. Ships did not dare to go far from the shore in those days. But Cadmus and his friends were not afraid. They were ready to face any danger.

In a few days they came to a large island called Cyprus. Cadmus went on shore, and tried to talk with the strange people who lived there. They were very kind to him, but they did not understand his language. At last he made out by signs to tell them who he was, and to ask them if they had seen his little sister Europa or the white bull that had carried her away. They shook their heads and pointed to the west.

Then the young men sailed on in their little ship. They came to many islands, and stopped at every one, to see if they could find any trace of Europa; but they heard no news of her at all. At last, they came to the country which we now call Greece. It was a new country then, and only a few people lived there, and Cadmus soon learned to speak their language well. For a long time he wandered from one little town to another, always telling the story of his lost sister.

THE PYTHIA

ONE DAY an old man told Cadmus that if he would go to Delphi and ask the Pythia, perhaps she could tell him all about Europa. Cadmus had never heard of Delphi or of the Pythia, and he asked the old man what he meant.

“I will tell you,” said the man. “Delphi is a town, built near the foot of Mount Parnassus, at the very center of the earth. It is the town of Apollo, the Bringer of Light; and there is a temple there, built close to the spot where Apollo killed a black serpent, many, many years ago. The temple is the most wonderful place in the world. In the middle of the floor there is a wide crack, or crevice; and this crevice goes down, down into the rock, nobody knows how deep. A strange odor comes up out of the crevice; and if any one breathes much of it, he is apt to fall over and lose his senses.”

“But who is the Pythia that you spoke about?” asked Cadmus.

“I will tell you,” said the old man. “The Pythia is a wise woman, who lives in the temple. When anybody asks her a hard question, she takes a three-legged stool, called a tripod, and sets it over the crevice in the floor. Then she sits on the stool and breathes the strange odor; and instead of losing her senses as other people would do, she talks with Apollo; and Apollo tells her how to answer the question. Men from all parts of the world go there to ask about things which they would like to know. The temple is full of the beautiful and costly gifts which they have brought for the Pythia. Sometimes she answers them plainly, and sometimes she answers them in riddles; but what she says always comes true.”

So Cadmus went to Delphi to ask the Pythia about his lost sister. The wise woman was very kind to him; and when he had given her a beautiful golden cup to pay her for her trouble, she sat down on the tripod and breathed the strange odor which came up through the crevice in the rock. Then her face grew pale, and her eyes looked wild, and she seemed to be in great pain; but they said that she was talking with Apollo. Cadmus asked her to tell him what had become of Europa. She said that Jupiter, in the form of a white bull, had carried her away, and that it would be of no use to look for her any more.

“But what shall I do?” said Cadmus. “My father told me not to turn back till I should find her.”

“Your father is dead,” said the Pythia, “and a strange king rules in his place. You must stay in Greece, for there is work here for you to do.”

“What must I do?” said Cadmus.

“Follow the white cow,” said the Pythia; “and on the hill where she lies down, you must build a city.”

Cadmus did not understand what she meant by this; but she would not speak another word.

“This must be one of her riddles,” he said, and he left the temple.

The Dragon

When Cadmus went out of the temple, he saw a snow-white cow standing not far from the door. She seemed to be waiting for him, for she looked at him with her large brown eyes, and then turned and walked away. Cadmus thought of what the Pythia had just told him, and so he followed her. All day and all night he walked through a strange wild country where no one lived; and two of the young men who had sailed with Cadmus from his old home were with him.

When the sun rose the next morning, they saw that they were on the top of a beautiful hill, with woods on one side and a grassy meadow on the other. There the cow lay down.

“Here we will build our city,” said Cadmus.

Then the young men made a fire of dry sticks, and Cadmus killed the cow. They thought that if they should burn some of her flesh, the smell of it would go up to the sky and be pleasing to Jupiter and the Mighty Folk who lived with him among the clouds; and in this way they hoped to make friends with Jupiter so that he would not hinder them in their work.

But they needed water to wash the flesh and their hands; and so one of the young men went down the hill to find some. He was gone so long that the other young man became uneasy and went after him.

Cadmus waited for them till the fire had burned low. He waited and waited till the sun was high in the sky. He called and shouted, but no one answered him. At last he took his sword in his hand and went down to see what was the matter.

He followed the path which his friends had taken, and soon came to a fine stream of cold water at the foot of a hill. He saw something move among the bushes which grew near it. It was a fierce dragon, waiting to spring upon him. There was blood on the grass and leaves, and it was not hard to guess what had become of the two young men.

The beast sprang at Cadmus, and tried to seize him with its sharp claws. But Cadmus leaped quickly aside and struck it in the neck with his long sword. A great stream of black blood gushed out, and the dragon soon fell to the ground dead. Cadmus had seen many fearful sights, but never anything so dreadful as this beast. He had never been in so great danger before. He sat down on the ground and trembled; and, all the time, he was weeping for his two friends. How now was he to build a city, with no one to help him?

The City

WHILE CADMUS WAS STILL WEEPING he was surprised to hear some one calling him. He stood up and looked around. On the hillside before him was a tall woman who had a helmet on her head and a shield in her hand. Her eyes were gray, and her face, though not beautiful, was very noble. Cadmus knew at once that she was Athena, the queen of the air-she who gives wisdom to men.

Athena told Cadmus that he must take out the teeth of the dragon and sow them in the ground. He thought that would be a queer kind of seed. But she said that if he would do this, he would soon have men enough to help him build his city; and, before he could say a word, she had gone out of his sight.

The dragon had a great many teeth-so many that when Cadmus had taken them out they filled his helmet heaping full. The next thing was to find a good place to sow them. Just as he turned away from the stream, he saw a yoke of oxen standing a little way off. He went to them and found that they were hitched to a plow. What more could he want? The ground in the meadow was soft and black, and he drove the plow up and down, making long furrows as he went. Then he dropped the teeth, one by one, into the furrows and covered them over with the rich soil. When he had sown all of them in this way, he sat down on the hillside and watched to see what would happen.

In a little while the soil in the furrows began to stir. Then, at every place that a tooth had been dropped, something bright grew up. It was a brass helmet. The helmets pushed their way up, and soon the faces of men were seen underneath, then their shoulders, then their arms, then their bodies; and then, before Cadmus could think, a thousand warriors leaped out of the furrows and shook off the black earth which was clinging to them. Every man was clothed in a suit of brass armor; and every one had a long spear in his right hand and a shield in his left.

Cadmus was frightened when he saw the strange crop which had grown up from the dragon’s teeth. The men looked so fierce that he feared they would kill him if they saw him. He hid himself behind his plow and then began to throw stones at them. The warriors did not know where the stones came from, but each thought that his neighbor had struck him. Soon they began to fight among themselves. Man after man was killed, and in a little while only five were left alive. Then Cadmus ran towards them and called out:

“Hold! Stop fighting! You are my men, and must come with me. We will build a city here.”

The men obeyed him. They followed Cadmus to the top of the hill; and they were such good workmen that in a few days they had built a house on the spot where the cow had lain down.

After that they built other houses, and people came to live in them. They called the town Cadmeia, after Cadmus who was its first king. But when the place had grown to be a large city, it was known by the name of Thebes.

Cadmus was a wise king. The Mighty Folk who lived with Jupiter amid the clouds were well pleased with him and helped him in more ways than one. After a while he married Harmonia, the beautiful daughter of Mars. All the Mighty Ones were at the wedding; and Athena gave the bride a wonderful necklace about which you may learn something more at another time.

But the greatest thing that Cadmus did is yet to be told. He was the first schoolmaster of the Greeks, and taught them the letters which were used in his own country across the sea. They called the first of these letters *alpha* and the second *beta*, and that is why men speak of the *alphabet* to this day. And when the Greeks had learned the alphabet from Cadmus, they soon began to read and write, and to make beautiful and useful books.

As for the maiden Europa, she was carried safe over the sea to a distant shore. She may have been happy in the new, strange land to which she was taken-I cannot tell; but she never heard of friends or home again. Whether it was really Jupiter in the form of a bull that carried her away, nobody knows. It all happened so long ago that there may have been some mistake about the story; and I should not think it strange if it were a sea robber who stole her from her home, and a swift ship with white sails that bore her away. Of one thing I am very sure: she was loved so well by all who knew her that the great unknown country to which she was taken has been called after her name ever since-Europe.

10

THE QUEST OF MEDUSA’S HEAD

The Wooden Chest

THERE WAS a king of Argos who had but one child, and that child was a girl. If he had had a son, he would have trained him up to be a brave man and great king; but he did not know what to do with this fair-haired daughter. When he saw her growing up to be tall and slender and wise, he wondered if, after all, he would have to die some time and leave his lands and his gold and his kingdom to her. So he sent to Delphi and asked the Pythia about it. The Pythia told him that he would not only have to die some time, but that the son of his daughter would cause his death.

This frightened the king very much, and he tried to think of some plan by which he could keep the Pythia’s words from coming true. At last he made up his mind that he would build a prison for his daughter and keep her in it all her life. So he called his workmen and had them dig a deep round hole in the ground, and in this hole they built a house of brass which had but one room and no door at all, but only a small window at the top. When it was finished, the king put the maiden, whose name was Danaë, into it;

and with her he put her nurse and her toys and her pretty dresses and everything that he thought she would need to make her happy.

“Now we shall see that the Pythia does not always tell the truth,” he said.

So Danaë was kept shut up in the prison of brass. She had no one to talk to but her old nurse; and she never saw the land or the sea, but only the blue sky above the open window and now and then a white cloud sailing across. Day after day she sat under the window and wondered why her father kept her in that lonely place, and whether he would ever come and take her out. I do not know how many years passed by, but Danaë grew fairer every day, and by and by she was no longer a child, but a tall and beautiful woman; and Jupiter amid the clouds looked down and saw her and loved her.

One day it seemed to her that the sky opened and a shower of gold fell through the window into the room; and when the blinding shower had ceased, a noble young man stood smiling before her. She did not know-nor do I-that it was mighty Jupiter who had thus come down in the rain; but she thought that he was a brave prince who had come from over the sea to take her out of her prison-house.

After that he came often, but always as a tall and handsome youth; and by and by they were married, with only the nurse at the wedding feast, and Danaë was so happy that she was no longer lonesome even when he was away. But one day when he climbed out through the narrow window there was a great flash of light, and she never saw him again.

Not long afterwards a babe was born to Danaë, a smiling boy whom she named Perseus. For four years she and the nurse kept him hidden, and not even the women who brought their food to the window knew about him. But one day the king chanced to be passing by and heard the child’s prattle. When he learned the truth, he was very much alarmed, for he thought that now, in spite of all that he had done, the words of the Pythia might come true.

The only sure way to save himself would be to put the child to death before he was old enough to do any harm. But when he had taken the little Perseus and his mother out of the prison and had seen how helpless the child was, he could not bear the thought of having him killed outright. For the king, although a great coward, was really a kind-hearted man and did not like to see anything suffer pain. Yet something must be done.

So he bade his servants make a wooden chest that was roomy and watertight and strong; and when it was done, he put Danaë and the child into it and had it taken far out to sea and left there to be tossed about by the waves. He thought that in this way he would rid himself of both daughter and grandson without seeing them die; for surely the chest would sink after a while, or else the winds would cause it to drift to some strange shore so far away that they could never come back to Argos again.

All day and all night and then another day, fair Danaë and her child drifted over the sea. The waves rippled and played before and around the floating chest, the west wind whistled cheerily, and the sea birds circled in the air above; and the child was not afraid, but dipped his hands in the curling waves and laughed at the merry breeze and shouted back at the screaming birds.

But on the second night all was changed. A storm arose, the sky was black, the billows were mountain high, the winds roared fearfully; yet through it all the child slept soundly in his mother’s arms. And Danaë sang over him this song:

SLEEP, sleep, dear child, and take your rest
Upon your troubled mother’s breast;
For you can lie without one fear
Of dreadful danger lurking near.

Wrapped in soft robes and warmly sleeping,
You do not hear your mother weeping;
You do not see the mad waves leaping,
Nor heed the winds their vigils keeping.

The stars are hid, the night is drear,
The waves beat high, the storm is here;
But you can sleep, my darling child,
And know naught of the uproar wild.

At last the morning of the third day came, and the chest was tossed upon the sandy shore of a strange island where there were green fields and, beyond them, a little town. A man who happened to be walking near the shore saw it and dragged it far up on the beach. Then he looked inside, and there he saw the beautiful lady and the little boy. He helped them out and led them just as they were to his own house, where he cared for them very kindly. And when Danaë had told him her story, he bade her feel no more fear; for they might have a home with him as long as they should choose to stay, and he would be a true friend to them both.

The Magic Slippers

So Danaë and her son stayed in the house of the kind man who had saved them from the sea. Years passed by, and Perseus grew up to be a tall young man, handsome, and brave, and strong. The king of the island, when he saw

Danaë, was so pleased with her beauty that he wanted her to become his wife. But he was a dark, cruel man, and she did not like him at all; so she told him that she would not marry him. The king thought that Perseus was to blame for this, and that if he could find some excuse to send the young man on a far journey, he might force Danaë to have him whether she wished or not.

One day he called all the young men of his country together and told them that he was soon to be wedded to the queen of a certain land beyond the sea. Would not each of them bring him a present to be given to her father? For in those times it was the rule, that when any man was about to be married, he must offer costly gifts to the father of the bride.

“What kind of presents do you want?” said the young men.

“Horses,” he answered; for he knew that Perseus had no horse.

“Why don’t you ask for something worth the having?” said Perseus; for he was vexed at the way in which the king was treating him. “Why don’t you ask for Medusa’s head, for example?”

“Medusa’s head it shall be!” cried the king. “These young men may give me horses, but you shall bring Medusa’s head.”

“I will bring it,” said Perseus; and he went away in anger, while his young friends laughed at him because of his foolish words.

What was this Medusa’s head which he had so rashly promised to bring? His mother had often told him about Medusa. Far, far away, on the very edge of the world, there lived three strange monsters, sisters, called Gorgons. They had the bodies and faces of women, but they had wings of gold, and terrible claws of brass, and hair that was full of living serpents. They were so awful to look upon, that no man could bear the sight of them, but whoever saw their faces was turned to stone. Two of these monsters had charmed lives, and no weapon could ever do them harm; but the youngest, whose name was Medusa, might be killed, if indeed anybody could find her and could give the fatal stroke.

When Perseus went away from the king’s palace, he began to feel sorry that he had spoken so rashly. For how should he ever make good his promise and do the king’s bidding? He did not know which way to go to find the Gorgons, and he had no weapon with which to slay the terrible Medusa. But at any rate he would never show his face to the king again, unless he could bring the head of terror with him. He went down to the shore and stood looking out over the sea towards Argos, his native land; and while he looked, the sun went down, and the moon arose, and a soft wind came blowing from the west. Then, all at once, two persons, a man and a woman, stood before him. Both were tall and noble. The man looked like a prince; and there were wings on his cap and on his feet, and he carried a winged staff, around which two golden serpents were twined.

He asked Perseus what was the matter; and the young man told him how the king had treated him, and all about the rash words which he had spoken. Then the lady spoke to him very kindly; and he noticed that, although she was not beautiful, she had most wonderful gray eyes, and a stern but lovable face and a queenly form. And she told him not to fear, but to go out boldly in quest of the Gorgons; for she would help him obtain the terrible head of Medusa.

“But I have no ship, and how shall I go?” said Perseus.

“You shall don my winged slippers,” said the strange prince, “and they will bear you over sea and land.”

“Shall I go north, or south, or east, or west?” asked Perseus.

“I will tell you,” said the tall lady. “You must go first to the three Gray Sisters, who live beyond the frozen sea in the far, far north. They have a secret which nobody knows, and you must force them to tell it to you. Ask them where you shall find the three Maidens who guard the golden apples of the West; and when they shall have told you, turn about and go straight thither. The Maidens will give you three things, without which you can never obtain the terrible head; and they will show you how to wing your way across the western ocean to the edge of the world where lies the home of the Gorgons."

Then the man took off his winged slippers, and put them on the feet of Perseus; and the woman whispered to him to be off at once, and to fear nothing, but be bold and true. And Perseus knew that she was none other than Athena, the queen of the air, and that her companion was Mercury, the lord of the summer clouds. But before he could thank them for their kindness, they had vanished in the dusky twilight.

Then he leaped into the air to try the Magic Slippers.

The Gray Sisters

Swifter than an eagle, Perseus flew up towards the sky. Then he turned, and the Magic Slippers bore him over the sea straight towards the north. On and on he went, and soon the sea was passed; and he came to a famous land, where there were cities and towns and many people. And then he flew over a range of snowy mountains, beyond which were mighty forests and a vast plain where many rivers wandered, seeking for the sea. And farther on was another range of mountains; and then there were frozen marshes and a wilderness of snow, and after all the sea again, — but a sea of ice. On and on he winged his way, among toppling icebergs and over frozen billows and through air which the sun never warmed, and at last he came to the cavern where the three Gray Sisters dwelt.

These three creatures were so old that they had forgotten their own age, and nobody could count the years which they had lived. The long hair which covered their heads had been gray since they were born; and they had among them only a single eye and a single tooth which they passed back and forth from one to another. Perseus heard them mumbling and crooning in their dreary home, and he stood very still and listened.

“We know a secret which even the Great Folk who live on the mountain top can never learn; don’t we, sisters?” said one.

“Ha! ha! That we do, that we do!” chattered the others.

“Give me the tooth, sister, that I may feel young and handsome again,” said the one nearest to Perseus.

“And give me the eye that I may look out and see what is going on in the busy world,” said the sister who sat next to her.

“Ah, yes, yes, yes, yes!” mumbled the third, as she took the tooth and the eye and reached them blindly towards the others.

Then, quick as thought, Perseus leaped forward and snatched both of the precious things from her hand.

“Where is the tooth? Where is the eye?” screamed the two, reaching out their long arms and groping here and there. “Have you dropped them, sister? Have you lost them?”

Perseus laughed as he stood in the door of their cavern and saw their distress and terror.

“I have your tooth and your eye,” he said, “and you shall never touch them again until you tell me your secret. Where are the Maidens who keep the golden apples of the Western Land? Which way shall I go to find them?”

“You are young, and we are old,” said the Gray Sisters; “pray, do not deal so cruelly with us. Pity us, and give us our eye.”

Then they wept and pleaded and coaxed and threatened. But Perseus stood a little way off and taunted them; and they moaned and mumbled and shrieked, as they found that their words did not move him.

“Sisters, we must tell him,” at last said one.

“Ah, yes, we must tell him,” said the others. “We must part with the secret to save our eye.”

And then they told him how he should go to reach the Western Land, and what road he should follow to find the Maidens who kept the golden apples. When they had made everything plain to him Perseus gave them back their eye and their tooth.

“Ha! ha!” they laughed; “now the golden days of youth have come again!” And, from that day to this, no man has ever seen the three Gray Sisters, nor does any one know what became of them. But the winds still whistle through their cheerless cave, and the cold waves murmur on the shore of the wintry sea, and the ice mountains topple and crash, and no sound of living creature is heard in all that desolate land.

THE WESTERN MAIDENS

AS FOR PERSEUS, he leaped again into the air, and the Magic Slippers bore him southward with the speed of the wind. Very soon he left the frozen sea behind him and came to a sunny land, where there were green forests and flowery meadows and hills and valleys, and at last a pleasant garden where were all kinds of blossoms and fruits. He knew that this was the famous Western Land, for the Gray Sisters had told him what he should see there. So he alighted and walked among the trees until he came to the center of the garden. There he saw the three Maidens of the West dancing around a tree which was full of golden apples, and singing as they danced. For the wonderful tree with its precious fruit belonged to Juno, the queen of earth and sky; it had been given to her as a wedding gift, and it was the duty of the Maidens to care for it and see that no one touched the golden apples.

Perseus stopped and listened to their song:

We sing of the old, we sing of the new,
Our joys are many, our sorrows are few;
Singing, dancing,
All hearts entrancing,
We wait to welcome the good and the true.

The daylight is waning, the evening is here,
The sun will soon set, the stars will appear.
Singing, dancing,
All hearts entrancing,
We wait for the dawn of a glad new year.

The tree shall wither, the apples shall fall,
Sorrow shall come, and death shall call,
Alarming, grieving,
All hearts deceiving,
But hope shall abide to comfort us all.

Soon the tale shall be told, the song shall be sung,
The bow shall be broken, the harp unstrung,
Alarming, grieving,
All hearts deceiving,
Till every joy to the winds shall be flung.

But a new tree shall spring from the roots of the old,
And many a blossom its leaves shall unfold,

Cheering, gladdening,
With joy maddening,
For its boughs shall be laden with apples of gold.

Then Perseus went forward and spoke to the Maidens. They stopped singing, and stood still as if in alarm. But when they saw the Magic Slippers on his feet, they ran to him, and welcomed him to the Western Land and to their garden.

"We knew that you were coming," they said, "for the winds told us. But why do you come?"

Perseus told them of all that had happened to him since he was a child, and of his quest of Medusa's head; and he said that he had come to ask them to give him three things to help him in his fight with the Gorgons.

The Maidens answered that they would give him not three things, but four. Then one of them gave him a sharp sword, which was crooked like a sickle, and which she fastened to the belt at his waist; and another gave him a shield, which was brighter than any looking-glass you ever saw; and the third gave him a magic pouch, which she hung by a long strap over his shoulder.

"These are three things which you must have in order to obtain Medusa's head; and now here is a fourth, for without it your quest must be in vain." And they gave him a magic cap, the Cap of Darkness; and when they had put it upon his head, there was no creature on the earth or in the sky-no, not even the Maidens themselves-that could see him.

When at last he was arrayed to their liking, they told him where he would find the Gorgons, and what he should do to obtain the terrible head and escape alive. Then they kissed him and wished him good luck, and bade him hasten to do the dangerous deed. And Perseus donned the Cap of Darkness, and sped away and away towards the farthermost edge of the earth; and the three Maidens went back to their tree to sing and to dance and to guard the golden apples until the old world should become young again.

The Dreadful Gorgons

With the sharp sword at his side and the bright shield upon his arm, Perseus flew bravely onward in search of the dreadful Gorgons; but he had the Cap of Darkness upon his head, and you could no more have seen him than you can see the wind. He flew so swiftly that it was not long until he had crossed the mighty ocean which encircles the earth, and had come to the sunless land which lies beyond; and then he knew, from what the Maidens had told him, that the lair of the Gorgons could not be far away.

He heard a sound as of some one breathing heavily, and he looked around sharply to see where it came from. Among the foul weeds which grew close to the bank of a muddy river there was something which glittered in the pale light. He flew a little nearer; but he did not dare to look straight forward, lest he should all at once meet the gaze of a Gorgon, and be changed into stone. So he turned around, and held the shining shield before him in such a way that by looking into it he could see objects behind him as in a mirror.

Ah, what a dreadful sight it was! Half hidden among the weeds lay the three monsters, fast asleep, with their golden wings folded about them. Their brazen claws were stretched out as though ready to seize their prey; and their shoulders were covered with sleeping snakes. The two largest of the Gorgons lay with their heads tucked under their wings as birds hide their heads when they go to sleep. But the third, who lay between them, slept with her face turned up towards the sky; and Perseus knew that she was Medusa.

Very stealthily he went nearer and nearer, always with his back towards the monsters and always looking into his bright shield to see where to go. Then he drew his sharp sword and, dashing quickly downward, struck a back blow, so sure, so swift, that the head of Medusa was cut from her shoulders and the black blood gushed like a river from her neck. Quick as thought he thrust the terrible head into his magic pouch and leaped again into the air, and flew away with the speed of the wind.

Then the two older Gorgons awoke, and rose with dreadful screams, and spread their great wings, and dashed after him. They could not see him, for the Cap of Darkness hid him from even their eyes; but they scented the blood of the head which he carried in the pouch, and like hounds in the chase, they followed him, sniffing the air. And as he flew through the clouds he could hear their dreadful cries and the clatter of their golden wings and the snapping of their horrible jaws. But the Magic Slippers were faster than any wings, and in a little while the monsters were left far behind, and their cries were heard no more; and Perseus flew on alone.

The Great Sea Beast

Perseus soon crossed the ocean and came again to the Land of the West. Far below him he could see the three Maidens dancing around the golden tree; but he did not stop, for, now that he had the head of Medusa safe in the pouch at his side, he must hasten home. Straight east he flew over the great sea, and after a time he came to a country where there were palm trees and pyramids and a great river flowing from the south. Here, as he looked down, a strange sight met his eyes: he saw a beautiful girl chained to a rock by the seashore, and far away a huge sea beast swimming towards her to devour her. Quick as thought, he flew down and spoke to her; but, as she could not see him for the Cap of Darkness which he wore, his voice only frightened her.

Then Perseus took off his cap, and stood upon the rock; and when the girl saw him with his long hair and wonderful eyes and laughing face, she thought him the handsomest young man in the world.

“Oh, save me! save me!” she cried as she reached out her arms towards him.

Perseus drew his sharp sword and cut the chain which held her, and then lifted her high up upon the rock. But by this time the sea monster was close at hand, lashing the water with his tail and opening his wide jaws as though he would swallow not only Perseus and the young girl, but even the rock on which they were standing. He was a terrible fellow, and yet not half so terrible as the Gorgon. As he came roaring towards the shore, Perseus lifted the head of Medusa from his pouch and held it up; and when the beast saw the dreadful face he stopped short and was turned into stone; and men say that the stone beast may be seen in that selfsame spot to this day.

Then Perseus slipped the Gorgon’s head back into the pouch and hastened to speak with the young girl whom he had saved. She told him that her name was Andromeda, and that she was the daughter of the king of that land. She said that her mother, the queen, was very beautiful and very proud of her beauty; and every day she went down to the seashore to look at her face as it was pictured in the quiet water; and she had boasted that not even the nymphs who live in the sea were as handsome as she. When the sea nymphs heard about this, they were very angry and asked great Neptune, the king of the sea, to punish the queen for her pride. So Neptune sent a sea monster to crush the king’s ships and kill the cattle along the shore and break down all the fishermen’s huts. The people were so much distressed that they sent at last to ask the Pythia what they should do; and the Pythia said that there was only one way to save the land from destruction, — that they must give the king’s daughter, Andromeda, to the monster to be devoured.

The king and the queen loved their daughter very dearly, for she was their only child; and for a long time they refused to do as the Pythia had told them. But day after day the monster laid waste the land, and threatened to destroy not only the farms, but the towns; and so they were forced in the end to give up Andromeda to save their country. This, then, was why she had been chained to the rock by the shore and left there to perish in the jaws of the beast.

While Perseus was yet talking with Andromeda, the king and the queen and a great company of people came down the shore, weeping and tearing their hair; for they were sure that by this time the monster had devoured his prey. But when they saw her alive and well, and learned that she had been saved by the handsome young man who stood beside her, they could hardly hold themselves for joy. And Perseus was so delighted with Andromeda’s beauty that he almost forgot his quest which was not yet finished; and when the king asked him what he should give him as a reward for saving Andromeda’s life, he said:

“Give her to me for my wife.”

This pleased the king very much; and so, on the seventh day, Perseus and Andromeda were married, and there was a great feast in the king’s palace, and everybody was merry and glad. And the two young people lived happily for some time in the land of palms and pyramids; and, from the sea to the mountains, nothing was talked about but the courage of Perseus and the beauty of Andromeda.

The Timely Rescue

But Perseus had not forgotten his mother; and so, one fine summer day, he and Andromeda sailed in a beautiful ship to his own home; for the Magic Slippers could not carry both him and his bride through the air. The ship came to land at the very spot where the wooden chest had been cast so many years before; and Perseus and his bride walked through the fields towards the town.

Now, the wicked king of that land had never ceased trying to persuade Danaë to become his wife; but she would not listen to him, and the more he pleaded and threatened, the more she disliked him. At last when he found that she could not be made to have him, he declared that he would kill her; and on this very morning he had started out, sword in hand, to take her life.

So, as Perseus and Andromeda came into the town, whom should they meet but his mother fleeing to the altar of Jupiter, and the king following after, intent on killing her? Danaë was so frightened that she did not see Perseus, but ran right on towards the only place of safety. For it was a law of that land that not even the king should be allowed to harm any one who took refuge on the altar of Jupiter.

When Perseus saw the king rushing like a madman after his mother, he threw himself before him and bade him stop. But the king struck at him furiously with his sword. Perseus caught the blow on his shield, and at the same moment took the head of Medusa from his magic pouch.

“I promised to bring you a present, and here it is!” he cried.

The king saw it, and was turned into stone, just as he stood, with his sword uplifted and that terrible look of anger and passion in his face.

The people of the island were glad when they learned what had happened, for no one loved the wicked king. They were glad, too, because Perseus had come home again, and had brought with him his beautiful wife, Andromeda. So, after they had talked the matter over among themselves, they went to him and asked him to be their king. But he thanked them, and said that he would rule over them for one day only, and that then he would give the kingdom to another, so that he might take his mother back to her home and her kindred in distant Argos.

On the morrow therefore, he gave the kingdom to the kind man who had saved his mother and himself from the sea; and then he went on board his ship, with Andromeda and Danaë, and sailed away across the sea towards Argos.

The Deadly Quoit

When Danaë's old father, the king of Argos, heard that a strange ship was coming over the sea with his daughter and her son on board, he was in great distress; for he remembered what the Pythia had foretold about his death. So, without waiting to see the vessel, he left his palace in great haste and fled out of the country.

“My daughter’s son cannot kill me if I will keep out of his way,” he said.

But Perseus had no wish to harm him; and he was very sad when he learned that his poor grandfather had gone away in fear and without telling any one where he was going. The people of Argos welcomed Danaë to her old home; and they were very proud of her handsome son, and begged that he would stay in their city, so that he might some time become their king.

It happened soon afterwards that the king of a certain country not far away was holding games and giving prizes to the best runners and leapers and quoit throwers. And Perseus went thither to try his strength with the other young men of the land; for if he should be able to gain a prize, his name would become known all over the world. No one in that country knew who he was, but all wondered at his noble stature and his strength and skill; and it was easy enough for him to win all the prizes.

One day, as he was showing what he could do, he threw a heavy quoit a great deal farther than any had been thrown before. It fell in the crowd of lookers-on, and struck a stranger who was standing there. The stranger threw up his hands and sank upon the ground; and when Perseus ran to help him, he saw that he was dead. Now this man was none other than Danaë’s father, the old king of Argos. He had fled from his kingdom to save his life, and in doing so had only met his death.

Perseus was overcome with grief, and tried in every way to pay honor to the memory of the unhappy king. The kingdom of Argos was now rightfully his own, but he could not bear to take it after having killed his grandfather. So he was glad to exchange with another king who ruled over two rich cities, not far away, called Mycenae and Tiryns. And he and Andromeda lived happily in Mycenae for many years.

11

THE STORY OF ATALANTA

The Bear on the Mountain

In a sunny land in Greece called Arcadia there lived a king and a queen who had no children. They wanted very much to have a son who might live to rule over Arcadia when the king was dead, and so, as the years went by, they prayed to great Jupiter on the mountain top that he would send them a son. After a while a child was born to them, but it was a little girl. The father was in a great rage with Jupiter and everybody else.

“What is a girl good for?” he said. “She can never do anything but sing, and spin, and spend money. If the child had been a boy, he might have learned to do many things, — to ride, and to hunt, and to fight in the wars, — and by and by he would have been king of Arcadia. But this girl can never be a king.”

Then he called to one of his men and bade him take the babe out to a mountain where there was nothing but rocks and thick woods, and leave it there to be eaten up by the wild bears that lived in the caves and thickets. It would be the easiest way, he said, to get rid of the useless little creature.

The man carried the child far up on the mountain side and laid it down on a bed of moss in the shadow of a great rock. The child stretched out its baby hands towards him and smiled, but he turned away and left it there, for he did not dare to disobey the king.

For a whole night and a whole day the babe lay on its bed of moss, wailing for its mother; but only the birds among the trees heard its pitiful cries. At last it grew so weak for want of food that it could only moan and move its head a little from side to side. It would have died before another day if nobody had cared for it.

Just before dark on the second evening, a she-bear came strolling down the mountain side from her den. She was out looking for her cubs, for some hunters had stolen them that very day while she was away from home. She heard the moans of the little babe, and wondered if it was not one of her lost cubs; and when she saw it lying so helpless on the moss she went to it and looked at it kindly. Was it possible that a little bear could be changed into a pretty babe with fat white hands and with a beautiful gold chain around its neck? The old bear did not know; and as the child looked at her with its bright black eyes, she growled softly and licked its face with her warm tongue and then lay down beside it, just as she would have done with her own little cubs. The babe was too young to feel afraid, and it cuddled close to the old bear and felt that it had found a friend. After a while it fell asleep; but the bear guarded it until morning and then went down the mountain side to look for food.

In the evening, before dark, the bear came again and carried the child to her own den under the shelter of a rock where vines and wild flowers grew; and every day after that she came and gave the child food and played with it. And all the bears on the mountain learned about the wonderful cub that had been found, and came to see it; but not one of them offered to harm it. And the little girl grew fast and became strong, and after a while could walk and run among the trees and rocks and brambles on the round top of the mountain; but her bear mother would not allow her to wander far from the den beneath the rock where the vines and the wild flowers grew.

One day some hunters came up the mountain to look for game, and one of them pulled aside the vines which grew in front of the old bear’s home. He was surprised to see the beautiful child lying on the grass and playing with the flowers which she had gathered. But at sight of him she leaped to her feet and bounded away like a frightened deer. She led the hunters a fine chase among the trees and rocks; but there were a dozen of them, and it was not long till they caught her.

The hunters had never taken such game as that before, and they were so well satisfied that they did not care to hunt any more that day. The child struggled and fought as hard as she knew how, but it was of no use. The hunters carried her down the mountain, and took her to the house where they lived on the other side of the forest. At first she cried all the time, for she sadly missed the bear that had been a mother to her so long. But the hunters made a great pet of her, and gave her many pretty things to play with, and were very kind; and it was not long till she began to like her new home.

The hunters named her Atalanta, and when she grew older, they made her a bow and arrows, and taught her how to shoot; and they gave her a light spear, and showed her how to carry it and how to hurl it at the game or at an enemy. Then they took her with them when they went hunting, and there was nothing in the world that pleased her so much as roaming through the woods and running after the deer and other wild animals. Her feet became very swift, so that she could run faster than any of the men; and her arms were so strong and her eyes so sharp and true that with her arrow or her spear she never missed the mark. And she grew up to be very tall and graceful, and was known throughout all Arcadia as the fleet-footed huntress.

The Brand on the Hearth

Now, not very far from the land of Arcadia there was a little city named Calydon. It lay in the midst of rich wheat fields and fruitful vineyards; but beyond the vineyards there was a deep dense forest where many wild beasts lived. The king of Calydon was named OEneus, and he dwelt in a white palace with his wife Althea and his boys and girls. His kingdom was so small that it was not much trouble to govern it, and so he spent the most of his time in hunting or in plowing or in looking after his grape vines. He was said to be a very brave man, and he was the friend of all the great heroes of that heroic time.

The two daughters of OEneus and Althea were famed all over the world for their beauty; and one of them was the wife of the hero Hercules, who had freed Prometheus from his chains, and done many other mighty deeds. The six sons of OEneus and Althea were noble, handsome fellows; but the noblest and handsomest of them all was Meleager, the youngest.

When Meleager was a tiny babe only seven days old, a strange thing happened in the white palace of the king. Queen Althea awoke in the middle of the night, and saw a fire blazing on the hearth. She wondered what it could mean; and she lay quite still by the side of the babe, and looked and listened. Three strange women were standing by the hearth. They were tall, and two of them were beautiful, and the faces of all were stern. Althea knew at once that they were the Fates who give gifts of some kind to every child that is born, and who say whether his life shall be a happy one or full of sadness and sorrow.

“What shall we give to this child?” said the eldest and sternest of the three strangers. Her name was Atropos, and she held a pair of sharp shears in her hand.

“I give him a brave heart,” said the youngest and fairest. Her name was Clotho, and she held a distaff full of flax, from which she was spinning a golden thread.

“And I give him a gentle, noble mind,” said the dark-haired one, whose name was Lachesis. She gently drew out the thread which Clotho spun, and turning to stern Atropos, said: “Lay aside those shears, sister, and give the child your gift.”

“I give him life until this brand shall be burned to ashes,” was the answer; and Atropos took a small stick of wood and laid it on the burning coals.

The three sisters waited till the stick was ablaze, and then they were gone. Althea sprang up quickly. She saw nothing but the fire on the hearth and the stick burning slowly away. She made haste to pour water upon the blaze, and when every spark was put out, she took the charred stick and put it into a strong chest where she kept her treasures, and locked it up.

“I know that the child’s life is safe,” she said, “so long as that stick is kept unburned.”

And so, as the years went by, Meleager grew up to be a brave young man, so gentle and noble that his name became known in every land of Greece. He did many daring deeds and, with other heroes, went on a famous voyage across the seas in search of a marvelous fleece of gold; and when he returned to Calydon the people declared that he was the worthiest of the sons of OEneus to become their king.

The Gifts on the Altars

Now it happened one summer that the vineyards of Calydon were fuller of grapes than they had ever been before, and there was so much wheat in the fields that the people did not know what to do with it.

"I will tell you what to do," said King OEneus. "We will have a thanksgiving day, and we will give some of the grain and some of the fruit to the Mighty Beings who sit among the clouds on the mountain top. For it is from them that the sunshine and the fair weather and the moist winds and the warm rains have come; and without their aid we could never have had so fine a harvest."

The very next day the king and the people of Calydon went out into the fields and vineyards to offer up their thank offerings. Here and there they built little altars of turf and stones and laid dry grass and twigs upon them; and then on top of the twigs they put some of the largest bunches of grapes and some of the finest heads of wheat, which they thought would please the Mighty Beings who had sent them so great plenty.

There was one altar for Ceres, who had shown men how to sow grain, and one for Bacchus, who had told them about the grape, and one for wing-footed Mercury, who comes in the clouds, and one for Athena, the queen of the air, and one for the keeper of the winds, and one for the giver of light, and one for the driver of the golden sun car, and one for the king of the sea, and one-which was the largest of all-for Jupiter, the mighty thunderer who sits upon the mountain top and rules the world. And when everything was ready, King OEneus gave the word, and fire was touched to the grass and the twigs upon the altars; and the grapes and the wheat that had been laid there were burned up. Then the people shouted and danced, for they fancied that in that way the thank offerings were sent right up to Ceres and Bacchus and Mercury and Athena and all the rest. And in the evening they went home with glad hearts, feeling that they had done right.

But they had forgotten one of the Mighty Beings. They had not raised any altar to Diana, the fair huntress and queen of the woods, and they had not offered her a single grape or a single grain of wheat. They had not intended to slight her; but, to tell the truth, there were so many others that they had never once thought about her.

I do not suppose that Diana cared anything at all for the fruit or the grain; but it made her very angry to think that she should be forgotten. “I’ll show them that I am not to be slighted in this way,” she said.

All went well, however, until the next summer; and the people of Calydon were very happy, for it looked as though there would be a bigger harvest than ever.

“I tell you,” said old King OEneus, looking over his fields and his vineyards, “it pays to give thanks. We’ll have another thanksgiving as soon as the grapes begin to ripen.”

But even then he did not think of Diana.

The very next day the largest and fiercest wild boar that anybody had ever seen came rushing out of the forest. He had two long tusks which stuck far out of his mouth on either side and were as sharp as knives, and the stiff bristles on his back were as large and as long as knitting needles. As he went tearing along towards Calydon, champing his teeth and foaming at the mouth, he was a frightful thing to look at, I tell you. Everybody fled before him. He rushed into the wheat fields and tore up all the grain; he went into the vineyards and broke down all the vines; he rooted up all the trees in the orchards; and, when there was nothing else to do, he went into the pasture lands among the hills and killed the sheep that were feeding there. He was so fierce and so fleet of foot that the bravest warrior hardly dared to attack him. His thick skin was proof against arrows and against such spears as the people of Calydon had; and I do not know how many men he killed with those terrible razor tusks of his. For weeks he had pretty much his own way, and the only safe place for anybody was inside of the walls.

When he had laid waste the whole country he went back into the edge of the forest; but the people were so much afraid of him that they lived in dread every day lest he should come again and tear down the gates of the city.

“We must have forgotten somebody when we gave thanks last year,” said King OEneus. “Who could it have been?”

And then he thought of Diana.

“Diana, the queen of the chase,” said he, “has sent this monster to punish us for forgetting her. I am sure that we shall remember her now as long as we live.”

Then he sent messengers into all the countries near Calydon, asking the bravest men and skillfullest hunters to come at a certain time and help him hunt and kill the great wild boar. Very many of these men had been with Meleager in that wonderful voyage in search of the Golden Fleece, and he felt sure they would come.

THE HUNT in the Forest

WHEN THE DAY came which King OEneus had set, there was a wonderful gathering of men at Calydon. The greatest heroes in the world were there; and every one was fully armed, and expected to have fine sport hunting the terrible wild boar. With the warriors from the south there came a tall maiden armed with bow and arrows and a long hunting spear. It was our friend Atalanta, the huntress.

“My daughters are having a game of ball in the garden,” said old King OEneus. “Wouldn’t you like to put away your arrows and your spear, and go and play with them?”

Atalanta shook her head and lifted her chin as if in disdain.

“Perhaps you would rather stay with the queen, and look at the women spin and weave,” said OEneus.

“No,” answered Atalanta, “I am going with the warriors to hunt the wild boar in the forest!”

How all the men opened their eyes! They had never heard of such a thing as a girl going out with heroes to hunt wild boars.

“If she goes, then I will not,” said one.

“Nor I, either,” said another.

“Nor I,” said a third. “Why, the whole world would laugh at us, and we should never hear the end of it.”

Several threatened to go home at once; and two brothers of Queen Althea, rude, unmannerly fellows, loudly declared that the hunt was for heroes and not for puny girls.

But Atalanta only grasped her spear more firmly and stood up, tall and straight, in the gateway of the palace. Just then a handsome young man came forward. It was Meleager.

“What’s this?” he cried. “Who says that Atalanta shall not go to the hunt? You are afraid that she’ll be braver than you-that is all. Pretty heroes you are! Let all such cowards go home at once.”

But nobody went, and it was settled then and there that the maiden should have her own way. And yet the brothers of Queen Althea kept on muttering and complaining.

For nine days the heroes and huntsmen feasted in the halls of King OEneus, and early on the tenth they set out for the forest. Soon the great beast was found, and he came charging out upon his foes. The heroes hid behind the trees or climbed up among the branches, for they had not expected to see so terrible a creature. He stood in the middle of a little open space, tearing up the ground with his tusks. The white foam rolled from his mouth, his eyes glistened red like fire, and he grunted so fiercely that the woods and hills echoed with fearful sounds.

Then one of the bravest of the men threw his spear. But that only made the beast fiercer than ever; he charged upon the warrior, caught him before he could save himself, and tore him in pieces with his tusks. Another man ventured too far from his hiding-place and was also overtaken and killed. One of the oldest and noblest of the heroes leveled his spear and threw it with all his force; but it only grazed the boar's tough skin and glanced upward and pierced the heart of a warrior on the other side. The boar was getting the best of the fight.

Atalanta now ran forward and threw her spear. It struck the boar in the back, and a great stream of blood gushed out. A warrior let fly an arrow which put out one of the beast's eyes. Then Meleager rushed up and pierced his heart with his spear. The boar could no longer stand up; but he fought fiercely for some moments, and then rolled over, dead.

The heroes then cut off the beast's head. It was as much as six of them could carry. Then they took the skin from his great body and offered it to Meleager as a prize, because he had given the death wound to the wild boar. But Meleager said:

"It belongs to Atalanta, because it was she who gave him the very first wound." And he gave it to her as the prize of honor.

You ought to have seen the tall huntress maiden then, as she stood among the trees with the boar's skin thrown over her left shoulder and reaching down to her feet. She had never looked so much like the queen of the woods. But the rude brothers of Queen Althea were vexed to think that a maiden should win the prize, and they began to make trouble. One of them snatched Atalanta's spear from her hand, and dragged the prize from her shoulders, and the other pushed her rudely and bade her go back to Arcadia and live again with the she-bears on the mountain side. All this vexed Meleager, and he tried to make his uncles give back the spear and the prize, and stop their unmannerly talk. But they grew worse and worse, and at last set upon Meleager, and would have killed him if he had not drawn his sword to defend himself. A fight followed, and the rude fellows struck right and left as though they were blind. Soon both were stretched dead upon the ground. Some who did not see the fight said that Meleager killed them, but I would rather believe that they killed each other in their drunken fury.

And now all the company started back to the city. Some carried the boar's huge head, and some the different parts of his body, while others had made biers of the green branches, and bore upon them the dead bodies of those who had been slain. It was indeed a strange procession.

A young man who did not like Meleager, had run on in front and had reached the city before the rest of the company had fairly started. Queen Althea was standing at the door of the palace, and when she saw him she asked what had happened in the forest He told her at once that Meleager had killed her brothers, for he knew that, with all their faults, she loved them very dearly. It was terrible to see her grief. She shrieked, and tore her hair, and rushed wildly about from room to room. Her senses left her, and she did not know what she was doing.

It was the custom at that time for people to avenge the death of their kindred, and her only thought was how to punish the murderer of her brothers. In her madness she forgot that Meleager was her son. Then she thought of the three Fates and of the unburned firebrand which she had locked up in her chest so many years before. She ran and got the stick and threw it into the fire that was burning on the hearth.

It kindled at once, and she watched it as it blazed up brightly. Then it began to turn into ashes, and as the last spark died out, the noble Meleager, who was walking by the side of Atalanta, dropped to the ground dead.

When they carried the news to Althea she said not a word, for then she knew what she had done, and her heart was broken. She turned silently away and went to her own room. When the king came home a few minutes later, he found her dead.

So ended the hunt in the wood of Calydon.

THE RACE for a Wife

AFTER THE DEATH OF MELEAGER, Atalanta went back to her old home among the mountains of Arcadia. She was still the swift-footed huntress, and she was never so happy as when in the green woods wandering among the trees or chasing the wild deer. All the world had heard about her, however; and the young heroes in the lands nearest to Arcadia did nothing else but talk about her beauty and her grace and her swiftness of foot and her courage. Of course every one of these young fellows wanted her to become his wife; and she might have been a queen any day if she had only said the word, for the richest king in Greece would have been glad to marry her. But she cared nothing for any of the young men, and she liked the freedom of the green woods better than all the fine things she might have had in a palace.

The young men would not take "No!" for an answer, however. They could not believe that she really meant it, and so they kept coming and staying until the woods of Arcadia were full of them, and there was no getting along with them at all. So, when she could think of no other way to get rid of them, Atalanta called them together and said:

"You want to marry me, do you? Well, if any one of you would like to run a race with me from this mountain to the bank of the river over there, he may do so; and I will be the wife of the one who outruns me."

"Agreed! agreed!" cried all the young fellows.

"But, listen!" she said. "Whoever tries this race must also agree that if I outrun him, he must lose his life."

Ah, what long faces they all had then! About half of them drew away and went home.

“But won’t you give us the start of you a little?” asked the others.

“Oh, yes,” she answered. “I will give you the start by a hundred paces. But remember, if I overtake any one before he reaches the river, he shall lose his head that very day.”

Several others now found that they were in ill health or that business called them home; and when they were next looked for, they were not to be found. But a good many who had had some practice in sprinting across the country stayed and made up their minds to try their luck. Could a mere girl outrun such fine fellows as they? Nonsense!

And so it happened that a race was run almost every day. And almost every day some poor fellow lost his head; for the fleetest-footed sprinter in all Greece was overtaken by Atalanta long before he could reach the river bank. But other young men kept coming and coming, and no sooner had one been put out of the way than another took his place.

One day there came from a distant town a handsome, tall young man named Meilanion.

“You’d better not run with me,” said Atalanta, “for I shall be sure to overtake you, and that will be the end of you.”

“We’ll see about that,” said Meilanion.

Now Meilanion, before coming to try his chance, had talked with Venus, the queen of love, who lived with Jupiter among the clouds on the mountain top. And he was so handsome and gentle and wise that Venus took pity on him, and gave him three golden apples and told him what to do.

Well, when all was ready for the race, Atalanta tried again to persuade Meilanion not to run, for she also took pity on him.

“I’ll be sure to overtake you,” she said.

“All right!” said Meilanion, and away he sped; but he had the three golden applies in his pocket.

Atalanta gave him a good start, and then she followed after, as swift as an arrow shot from the bow. Meilanion was not a very fast runner, and it would not be hard for her to overtake him. She thought that she would let him get almost to the goal, for she really pitied him. He heard her coming close behind him; he heard her quick breath as she gained on him very fast. Then he threw one of the golden apples over his shoulder.

Now, if there was anything in the world that Atalanta admired, it was a bright stone or a pretty piece of yellow gold. As the apple fell to the ground she saw how beautiful it was, and she stopped to pick it up; and while she was doing this, Meilanion gained a good many paces. But what of that? In a minute she was as close behind him as ever. And yet, she really did pity him.

Just then Meilanion threw the second apple over his shoulder. It was handsomer and larger than the first, and Atalanta could not bear the thought of allowing some one else to get it. So she stopped to pick it up from among the long grass, where it had fallen. It took somewhat longer to find it than she had expected, and when she looked up again Meilanion was a hundred feet ahead of her. But that was no matter. She could easily overtake him. And yet, how she did pity the foolish young man!

Meilanion heard her speeding like the wind behind him. He took the third apple and threw it over to one side of the path where the ground sloped towards the river. Atalanta’s quick eye saw that it was far more beautiful than either of the others. If it were not picked up at once it would roll down into the deep water and be lost, and that would never do. She turned aside from her course and ran after it. It was easy enough to overtake the apple, but while she was doing so Meilanion gained upon her again. He was almost to the goal. How she strained every muscle now to overtake him! But, after all, she felt that she did not care very much. He was the handsomest young man that she had ever seen, and he had given her three golden apples. It would be a great pity if he should have to die. And so she let him reach the goal first.

After that, of course, Atalanta became Meilanion’s wife. And he took her with him to his distant home, and there they lived happily together for many, many years.

12

THE HORSE AND THE OLIVE

Finding a King

ON A STEEP STONY hill in Greece there lived in early times a few very poor people who had not yet learned to build houses. They made their homes in little caves which they dug in the earth or hollowed out among the rocks; and their food was the flesh of wild animals, which they hunted in the woods, with now and then a few berries or nuts. They did not even know how to make bows and arrows, but used slings and clubs and sharp sticks for weapons; and the little clothing which they had was made of skins. They lived on the top of the hill, because they were safe there from the savage beasts of the great forest around them, and safe also from the wild men who sometimes roamed through the land. The hill was so steep on every side that there was no way of climbing it save by a single narrow footpath which was always guarded by some one at the top.

One day when the men were hunting in the woods, they found a strange youth whose face was so fair and who was dressed so beautifully that they could hardly believe him to be a man like themselves. His body was so slender and lithe, and he moved so nimbly among the trees, that they fancied him to be a serpent in the guise of a human being; and they stood still in wonder and alarm. The young man spoke to them, but they could not understand a word that he said; then he made signs to them that he was hungry, and they gave him something to eat and were no longer afraid. Had they been like the wild men of the woods, they might have killed him at once. But they wanted their women and children to see the serpent man, as they called him, and hear him talk; and so they took him home with them to the top of the hill. They thought that after they had made a show of him for a few days, they would kill him and offer his body as a sacrifice to the unknown being whom they dimly fancied to have some sort of control over their lives.

But the young man was so fair and gentle that, after they had all taken a look at him, they began to think it would be a great pity to harm him. So they gave him food and treated him kindly; and he sang songs to them and played with their children, and made them happier than they had been for many a day. In a short time he learned to talk in their language; and he told them that his name was Cecrops, and that he had been shipwrecked on the seacoast not far away; and then he told them many strange things about the land from which he had come and to which he would never be able to return. The poor people listened and wondered; and it was not long until they began to love him and to look up to him as one wiser than themselves. Then they came to ask him about everything that was to be done, and there was not one of them who refused to do his bidding.

So Cecrops-the serpent man, as they still called him-became the king of the poor people on the hill. He taught them how to make bows and arrows, and how to set nets for birds, and how to take fish with hooks. He led them against the savage wild men of the woods, and helped them kill the fierce beasts that had been so great a terror to them. He showed them how to build houses of wood and to thatch them with the reeds which grew in the marshes. He taught them how to live in families instead of herding together like senseless beasts as they had always done before. And he told them about great Jupiter and the Mighty Folk who lived amid the clouds on the mountain top.

Choosing a Name

By and by, instead of the wretched caves among the rocks, there was a little town on the top of the hill, with neat houses and a market place; and around it was a strong wall with a single narrow gate just where the footpath began to descend to the plain. But as yet the place had no name.

One morning while the king and his wise men were sitting together in the market place and planning how to make, the town become a rich, strong city, two strangers were seen in the street. Nobody could tell how they came there. The guard at the gate had not seen them; and no man had ever dared to climb the narrow footway without his leave. But there the two strangers stood. One was a man, the other a woman; and they were so tall, and their faces were so grand and noble, that those who saw them stood still and wondered and said not a word.

The man had a robe of purple and green wrapped round his body, and he bore in one hand a strong staff with three sharp spear points at one end. The woman was not beautiful, but she had wonderful gray eyes; and in one hand she carried a spear and in the other a shield of curious workmanship.

“What is the name of this town?” asked the man.

The people stared at him in wonder, and hardly understood his meaning. Then an old man answered and said, “It has no name. We who live on this hill used to be called Cranae; but since King Cecrops came, we have been so busy that we have had no time to think of names."

"Where is this King Cecrops?" asked the woman.

"He is in the market place with the wise men," was the answer.

"Lead us to him at once," said the man.

When Cecrops saw the two strangers coming into the market place, he stood up and waited for them to speak. The man spoke first:

"I am Neptune," said he, "and I rule the sea."

"And I am Athena," said the woman, "and I give wisdom to men."

"I hear that you are planning to make your town become a great city," said Neptune, "and I have come to help you. Give my name to the place, and let me be your protector and patron, and the wealth of the whole world shall be yours. Ships from every land shall bring you merchandise and gold and silver; and you shall be the masters of the sea."

"My uncle makes you fair promises," said Athena; "but listen to me. Give my name to your city, and let me be your patron, and I will give you that which gold cannot buy: I will teach you how to do a thousand things of which you now know nothing. I will make your city my favorite home, and I will give you wisdom that shall sway the minds and hearts of all men until the end of time."

The king bowed, and turned to the people, who had all crowded into the market place. "Which of these mighty ones shall we elect to be the protector and patron of our city?" he asked. "Neptune offers us wealth; Athena promises us wisdom. Which shall we choose?"

"Neptune and wealth!" cried many.

"Athena and wisdom!" cried as many others.

At last when it was plain that the people could not agree, an old man whose advice was always heeded stood up and said:

"These mighty ones have only given us promises, and they have promised things of which we are ignorant. For who among us knows what wealth is or what wisdom is? Now, if they would only give us some real gift, right now and right here, which we can see and handle, we should know better how to choose."

"That is true! that is true!" cried the people.

"Very well, then," said the strangers, "we will each give you a gift, right now and right here, and then you may choose between us."

Neptune gave the first gift. He stood on the highest point of the hill where the rock was bare, and bade the people see his power. He raised his three-pointed spear high in the air, and then brought it down with great force. Lightning flashed, the earth shook, and the rock was split half way down to the bottom of the hill. Then out of the yawning crevice there sprang a wonderful creature, white as milk, with long slender legs, an arching neck, and a mane and tail of silk.

The people had never seen anything like it before, and they thought it a new kind of bear or wolf or wild boar that had come out of the rock to devour them. Some of them ran and hid in their houses, while others climbed upon the wall, and still others grasped their weapons in alarm. But when they saw the creature stand quietly by the side of Neptune, they lost their fear and came closer to see and admire its beauty.

"This is my gift," said Neptune. "This animal will carry your burdens for you; he will draw your chariots; he will pull your wagons and your plows; he will let you sit on his back and will run with you faster than the wind."

"What is his name?" asked the king.

"His name is Horse," answered Neptune.

Then Athena came forward. She stood a moment on a green grassy plot where the children of the town liked to play in the evening. Then she drove the point of her spear deep down in the soil. At once the air was filled with music, and out of the earth there sprang a tree with slender branches and dark green leaves and white flowers and violet green fruit.

“This is my gift,” said Athena. “This tree will give you food when you are hungry; it will shelter you from the sun when you are faint; it will beautify your city; and the oil from its fruit will be sought by all the world.”

“What is it called?” asked the king.

“It is called Olive,” answered Athena.

Then the king and his wise men began to talk about the two gifts.

“I do not see that Horse will be of much use to us,” said the old man who had spoken before. “For, as to the chariots and wagons and plows, we have none of them, and indeed do not know what they are; and who among us will ever want to sit on this creature’s back and be borne faster than the wind? But Olive will be a thing of beauty and a joy for us and our children forever.”

“Which shall we choose?” asked the king, turning to the people.

“Athena has given us the best gift,” they all cried, “and we choose Athena and wisdom!”

“Be it so,” said the king, “and the name of our city shall be Athens.”

From that day the town grew and spread, and soon there was not room on the hilltop for all the people. Then houses were built in the plain around the foot of the hill, and a great road was built to the sea, three miles away; and in all the world there was no city more fair than Athens.

In the old market place on the top of the hill the people built a temple to Athena, the ruins of which may still be seen. The olive tree grew and nourished; and, when you visit Athens, people will show you the very spot where it stood. Many other trees sprang from it, and in time became a blessing both to Greece and to all the other countries round the great sea. As for the horse, he wandered away across the plains towards the north and found a home at last in distant Thessaly beyond the River Peneus. And I have heard it said that all the horses in the world have descended from that one which Neptune brought out of the rock; but of the truth of this story there may be some doubts.

13

THE ADVENTURES OF THESEUS

Aegeus and Aethra

There was once a king of Athens whose name was AEgeus. He had no son; but he had fifty nephews, and they were waiting for him to die, so that one of them might be king in his stead. They were wild, worthless fellows, and the people of Athens looked forward with dread to the day when the city should be in their power. Yet so long as AEgeus lived they could not do much harm, but were content to spend their time in eating and drinking at the king’s table and in quarreling among themselves.

It so happened one summer that AEgeus left his kingdom in the care of the elders of the city and went on a voyage across the Saronic Sea to the old and famous city of Troezen, which lay nestled at the foot of the mountains on the opposite shore. Troezen was not fifty miles by water from Athens, and the purple-peaked island of AEgina lay between them; but to the people of that early time the distance seemed very great, and it was not often that ships passed from one place to the other. And as for going by land round the great bend of the sea, that was a thing so fraught with danger that no man had ever dared try it.

King Pittheus of Troezen was right glad to see AEgeus, for they had been boys together, and he welcomed him to his city and did all that he could to make his visit a pleasant one. So, day after day, there was feasting and merriment and music in the marble halls of old Troezen, and the two kings spent many a happy hour in talking of the deeds of their youth and of the mighty heroes whom both had known. And when the time came for the ship to sail back to Athens, AEgeus was not ready to go. He said he would stay yet a little longer in Troezen, for that the elders of the city would manage things well at home; and so the ship returned without him.

But AEgeus tarried, not so much for the rest and enjoyment which he was having in the home of his old friend, as for the sake of AEthra, his old friend's daughter. For AEthra was as fair as a summer morning, and she was the joy and pride of Troezen; and AEgeus was never so happy as when in her presence. So it happened that some time after the ship had sailed, there was a wedding in the halls of King Pittheus; but it was kept a secret, for AEgeus feared that his nephews, if they heard of it, would be very angry and would send men to Troezen to do him harm.

Month after month passed by, and still AEgeus lingered with his bride and trusted his elders to see to the affairs of Athens. Then one morning, when the gardens of Troezen were full of roses and the heather was green on the hills, a babe was born to AEthra-a boy with a fair face and strong arms and eyes as sharp and as bright as the mountain eagle's. And now AEgeus was more loth to return home than he had been before, and he went up on the mountain which overlooks Troezen, and prayed to Athena, the queen of the air, to give him wisdom and show him what to do. Even while he prayed there came a ship into the harbor, bringing a letter to AEgeus and alarming news from Athens.

“Come home without delay”-these were words of the letter which the elders had sent-”come home quickly, or Athens will be lost. A great king from beyond the sea, Minos of Crete, is on the way with ships and a host of fighting men; and he declares that he will carry sword and fire within our walls, and will slay our young men and make our children his slaves. Come and save us!”

“It is the call of duty,” said AEgeus; and with a heavy heart he made ready to go at once across the sea to the help of his people. But he could not take AEthra and her babe, for fear of his lawless nephews, who would have slain them both.

“Best of wives,” he said, when the hour for parting had come, “listen to me, for I shall never see your father’s halls, nor dear old Troezen, nor perhaps your own fair face, again. Do you remember the old plane tree which stands on the mountain side, and the great flat stone which lies a little way beyond it, and which no man but myself has ever been able to lift? Under that stone, I have hidden my sword and the sandals which I brought from Athens. There they shall lie until our child is strong enough to lift the stone and take them for his own. Care for him, AEthra, until that time; and then, and not till then, you may tell him of his father, and bid him seek me in Athens.”

Then AEgeus kissed his wife and the babe, and went on board the ship; the sailors shouted; the oars were dipped into the waves; the white sail was spread to the breeze; and AEthra from her palace window saw the vessel speed away over the blue waters towards AEgina and the distant Attic shore.

Sword and Sandals

Year after year went by, and yet no word reached AEthra from her husband on the other side of the sea. Often and often she would climb the mountain above Troezen, and sit there all day, looking out over the blue waters and the purple hills of AEgina to the dim, distant shore beyond. Now and then she could see a white-winged ship sailing in the offing; but men said that it was a Cretan vessel, and very likely was filled with fierce Cretan warriors, bound upon some cruel errand of war. Then it was rumored that King Minos had seized upon all the ships of Athens, and had burned a part of the city, and had forced the people to pay him a most grievous tribute. But further than this there was no news.

In the meanwhile AEthra's babe had grown to be a tall, ruddy-cheeked lad, strong as a mountain lion; and she had named him Theseus. On the day that he was fifteen years old he went with her up to the top of the mountain, and with her looked out over the sea.

"Ah, if only your father would come!" she sighed.

"My father?" said Theseus. "Who is my father, and why are you always watching and waiting and wishing that he would come? Tell me about him."

And she answered: "My child, do you see the great flat stone which lies there, half buried in the ground, and covered with moss and trailing ivy? Do you think you can lift it?"

"I will try, mother," said Theseus. And he dug his fingers into the ground beside it, and grasped its uneven edges, and tugged and lifted and strained until his breath came hard and his arms ached and his body was covered with sweat; but the stone was moved not at all. At last he said, "The task is too hard for me until I have grown stronger. But why do you wish me to lift it?"

"When you are strong enough to lift it," answered AEthra, "I will tell you about your father."

After that the boy went out every day and practiced at running and leaping and throwing and lifting; and every day he rolled some stone out of its place. At first he could move only a little weight, and those who saw him laughed as he pulled and puffed and grew red in the face, but never gave up until he had lifted it. And little by little he grew stronger, and his muscles became like iron bands, and his limbs were like mighty levers for strength. Then on his next birthday he went up on the mountain with his mother, and again tried to lift the great stone. But it remained fast in its place and was not moved.

"I am not yet strong enough, mother," he said.

"Have patience, my son," said AEthra.

So he went on again with his running and leaping and throwing and lifting; and he practiced wrestling, also, and tamed the wild horses of the plain, and hunted the lions among the mountains; and his strength and swiftness and skill were the wonder of all men, and old Troezen was filled with tales of the deeds of the boy Theseus. Yet when he tried again on his seventeenth birthday, he could not move the great flat stone that lay near the plane tree on the mountain side.

"Have patience, my son," again said AEthra; but this time the tears were standing in her eyes.

So he went back again to his exercising; and he learned to wield the sword and the battle ax and to throw tremendous weights and to carry tremendous burdens. And men said that since the days of Hercules there was never so great strength in one body. Then, when he was a year older, he climbed the mountain yet another time with his mother, and he stooped and took hold of the stone, and it yielded to his touch; and, lo, when he had lifted it quite out of the ground, he found underneath it a sword of bronze and sandals of gold, and these he gave to his mother.

"Tell me now about my father," he said.

Aethra knew that the time had come for which she had waited so long, and she buckled the sword to his belt and fastened the sandals upon his feet. Then she told him who his father was, and why he had left them in Troezen, ands how he had said that when the lad was strong enough to lift the great stone, he must take the sword and sandals and go and seek him in Athens.

Theseus was glad when he heard this, and his proud eyes flashed with eagerness as he said: “I am ready, mother; and I will set out for Athens this very day.”

Then they walked down the mountain together and told King Pittheus what had happened, and showed him the sword and the sandals. But the old man shook his head sadly and tried to dissuade Theseus from going.

“How can you go to Athens in these lawless times?” he said. “The sea is full of pirates. In fact, no ship from Troezen has sailed across the Saronic Sea since your kingly father went home to the help of his people, eighteen years ago.”

Then, finding that this only made Theseus the more determined, he said: “But if you must go, I will have a new ship built for you, stanch and stout and fast sailing; and fifty of the bravest young men in Troezen shall go with you; and mayhap with fair winds and fearless hearts you shall escape the pirates and reach Athens in safety.”

“Which is the most perilous way?” asked Theseus-”to go by ship or to make the journey on foot round the great bend of land?”

“The seaway is full enough of perils,” said his grandfather, “but the landway is beset with dangers tenfold greater. Even if there were good roads and no hindrances, the journey round the shore is a long one and would require many days. But there are rugged mountains to climb, and wide marshes to cross, and dark forests to go through. There is hardly a footpath in all that wild region, nor any place to find rest or shelter; and the woods are full of wild beasts, and dreadful dragons lurk in the marshes, and many cruel robber giants dwell in the mountains.”

“Well,” said Theseus, “if there are more perils by land than by sea, then I shall go by land, and I go at once.”

“But you will at least take fifty young men, your companions, with you?” said King Pittheus.

“Not one shall go with me,” said Theseus; and he stood up and played with his sword hilt, and laughed at the thought of fear.

Then when there was nothing more to say, he kissed his mother and bade his grandfather good-by, and went out of Troezen towards the trackless coastland which lay to the west and north. And with blessings and tears the king and AEthra followed him to the city gates, and watched him until his tall form was lost to sight among the trees which bordered the shore of the sea.

Rough Roads and Robbers

With a brave heart Theseus walked on, keeping the sea always upon his right. Soon the old city of Troezen was left far behind, and he came to the great marshes, where the ground sank under him at every step, and green pools of stagnant water lay on both sides of the narrow pathway. But no fiery dragon came out of the reeds to meet him; and so he walked on and on till he came to the rugged mountain land which bordered the western shore of the sea. Then he climbed one slope after another, until at last he stood on the summit of a gray peak from which he could see the whole country spread out around him. Then downward and onward he went again, but his way led him through dark mountain glens, and along the edges of mighty precipices, and underneath many a frowning cliff, until he came to a dreary wood where the trees grew tall and close together and the light of the sun was seldom seen.

In that forest there dwelt a robber giant, called Club-carrier, who was the terror of all the country. For oftentimes he would go down into the valleys where the shepherds fed their flocks, and would carry off not only sheep and lambs, but sometimes children and the men themselves. It was his custom to hide in the thickets of underbrush, close to a pathway, and, when a traveler passed that way, leap out upon him and beat him to death. When he saw Theseus coming through the woods, he thought that he would have a rich prize, for he knew from the youth's dress and manner that he must be a prince. He lay on the ground, where leaves of ivy and tall grass screened him from view, and held his great iron club ready to strike.

But Theseus had sharp eyes and quick ears, and neither beast nor robber giant could have taken him by surprise. When Club-carrier leaped out of his hiding place to strike him down, the young man dodged aside so quickly that the heavy club struck the ground behind him; and then, before the robber giant could raise it for a second stroke, Theseus seized the fellow's legs and tripped him up.

Club-carrier roared loudly, and tried to strike again; but Theseus wrenched the club out of his hands, and then dealt him such a blow on the head that he never again harmed travelers passing through the forest. Then the youth went on his way, carrying the huge club on his shoulder, and singing a song of victory, and looking sharply around him for any other foes that might be lurking among the trees.

Just over the ridge of the next mountain he met an old man who warned him not to go any farther. He said that close by a grove of pine trees, which he would soon pass on his way down the slope, there dwelt a robber named Sinis, who was very cruel to strangers.

“He is called Pine-bender,” said the old man; “for when he has caught a traveler, he bends two tall, lithe pine trees to the ground and binds his captive to them-a hand and a foot to the top of one, and a hand and a foot to the top of the other. Then he lets the trees fly up, and he roars with laughter when he sees the traveler's body torn in sunder."

"It seems to me," said Theseus, "that it is full time to rid the world of such a monster;" and he thanked the kind man who had warned him, and hastened onward, whistling merrily as he went down towards the grove of pines.

Soon he came in sight of the robber's house, built near the foot of a jutting cliff. Behind it was a rocky gorge and a roaring mountain stream; and in front of it was a garden wherein grew all kinds of rare plants and beautiful flowers. But the tops of the pine trees below it were laden with the bones of unlucky travelers, which hung bleaching white in the sun and wind.

On a stone by the roadside sat Sinis himself; and when he saw Theseus coming, he ran to meet him, twirling a long rope in his hands and crying out:

"Welcome, welcome, dear prince! Welcome to our inn-the true Traveler's Rest!"

"What kind of entertainment have you?" asked Theseus. "Have you a pine tree bent down to the ground and ready for me?"

"Ay; two of them!" said the robber. "I knew that you were coming, and I bent two of them for you."

As he spoke he threw his rope towards Theseus and tried to entangle him in its coils. But the young man leaped aside, and when the robber rushed upon him, he dodged beneath his hands and seized his legs, as he had seized Club-carrier's, and threw him heavily to the ground. Then the two wrestled together among the trees, but not long, for Sinis was no match for his lithe young foe; and Theseus knelt upon the robber's back as he lay prone among the leaves, and tied him with his own cord to the two pine trees which were already bent down. "As you would have done unto me, so will I do unto you," he said.

Then Pine-bender wept and prayed and made many a fair promise; but Theseus would not hear him. He turned away, the trees sprang up, and the robber's body was left dangling from their branches.

Now this old Pine-bender had a daughter named Perigune, who was no more like him than a fair and tender violet is like the gnarled old oak at whose feet it nestles; and it was she who cared for the flowers and the rare plants which grew in the garden by the robber's house. When she saw how Theseus had dealt with her father, she was afraid and ran to hide herself from him.

"Oh, save me, dear plants!" she cried, for she often talked to the flowers as though they could understand her. "Dear plants, save me; and I will never pluck your leaves nor harm you in any way so long as I live."

There was one of the plants which up to that time had had no leaves, but came up out of the ground looking like a mere club or stick. This plant took pity on the maiden. It began at once to send out long feathery branches with delicate green leaves, which grew so fast that Perigune was soon hidden from sight beneath them. Theseus knew that she must be somewhere in the garden, but he could not find her, so well did the feathery branches conceal her. So he called to her:

"Perigune," he said, "you need not fear me; for I know that you are gentle and good, and it is only against things dark and cruel that I lift up my hand."

The maiden peeped from her hiding-place, and when she saw the fair face of the youth and heard his kind voice, she came out, trembling, and talked with him. And Theseus rested that evening in her house, and she picked some of her choicest flowers for him and gave him food. But when in the morning the dawn began to appear in the east, and the stars grew dim above the mountain peaks, he bade her farewell and journeyed onward over the hills. And Perigune tended her plants and watched her flowers in the lone garden in the midst of the piny grove; but she never plucked the stalks of asparagus nor used them for food, and when she afterwards became the wife of a hero and had children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, she taught them all to spare the plant which had taken pity upon her in her need.

The road which Theseus followed now led him closer to the shore, and by and by he came to a place where the mountains seemed to rise sheer out of the sea, and there was only a, narrow path high up along the side of the cliff. Far down beneath his feet he could hear the waves dashing evermore against the rocky wall, while above him the mountain eagles circled and screamed, and gray crags and barren peaks glistened in the sunlight.

But Theseus went on fearlessly and came at last to a place where a spring of clear water bubbled out from a cleft in the rock; and there the path was narrower still, and the low doorway of a cavern opened out upon it. Close by the spring sat a red-faced giant, with a huge club across his knees, guarding the road so that no one could pass; and in the sea at the foot of the cliff basked a huge turtle, its leaden eyes looking always upward for its food. Theseus knew-for Perigune had told him-that this was the dwelling-place of a robber named Sciron, who was the terror of all the coast, and whose custom it was to make strangers wash his feet, so that while they were doing so, he might kick them over the cliff to be eaten, by his pet turtle below.

When Theseus came up, the robber raised his club, and said fiercely: “No man can pass here until he has washed my feet! Come, set to work!”

Then Theseus smiled, and said: “Is your turtle hungry to-day? and do you want me to feed him?” The robber’s eyes flashed fire, and he said, “You shall feed him, but you shall wash my feet first;” and with that he brandished his club in the air and rushed forward to strike.

But Theseus was ready for him. With the iron club which he had taken from Club-carrier in the forest he met the blow midway, and the robber’s weapon was knocked out of his hands and sent spinning away over the edge of the cliff. Then Sciron, black with rage, tried to grapple with him; but Theseus was too quick for that. He dropped his club and seized Sciron by the throat; he pushed him back against the ledge on which he had been sitting; he threw him sprawling upon the sharp rocks, and held him there, hanging half way over the cliff.

“Enough! enough!” cried the robber. “Let me up, and you may pass on your way.”

“It is not enough,” said Theseus; and he drew his sword and sat down by the side of the spring. “You must wash my feet now. Come, set to work!”

Then Sciron, white with fear, washed his feet.

“And now,” said Theseus, when the task was ended, “as you have done unto others, so will I do unto you.”

There was a scream in mid air which the mountain eagles answered from above; there was a great splashing in the water below, and the turtle fled in terror from its lurking place. Then the sea cried out: “I will have naught to do with so vile a wretch!” and a great wave cast the body of Sciron out upon the shore. But it had no sooner touched the ground than the land cried out: “I will have naught to do with so vile a wretch!” and there was a sudden earthquake, and the body of Sciron was thrown back into the sea. Then the sea waxed furious, a raging storm arose, the waters were lashed into foam, and the waves with one mighty effort threw the detested body high into the air; and there it would have hung unto this day had not the air itself disdained to give it lodging and changed it into a huge black rock. And this rock, which men say is the body of Sciron, may still be seen, grim, ugly, and desolate; and one third of it lies in the sea, one third is embedded in the sandy shore, and one third is exposed to the air.

Wrestler and Wrong-Doer

Keeping the sea always in view, Theseus went onward a long day's journey to the north and east; and he left the rugged mountains behind and came down into the valleys and into a pleasant plain where there were sheep and cattle pasturing and where there were many fields of ripening grain. The fame of his deeds had gone before him, and men and women came crowding to the roadside to see the hero who had slain Club-carrier and Pine-bender and grim old Sciron of the cliff.

"Now we shall live in peace," they cried; "for the robbers who devoured our flocks and our children are no more."

Then Theseus passed through the old town of Megara, and followed the shore of the bay towards the sacred city of Eleusis.

"Do not go into Eleusis, but take the road which leads round it through the hills," whispered a poor man who was carrying a sheep to market.

"Why shall I do that?" asked Theseus.

"Listen, and I will tell you," was the answer. "There is a king in Eleusis whose name is Cercyon, and he is a great wrestler. He makes every stranger who comes into the city wrestle with him; and such is the strength of his arms that when he has overcome a man he crushes the life out of his body. Many travelers come to Eleusis, but no one ever goes away."

"But I will both come and go away," said Theseus; and with his club upon his shoulder, he strode onward into the sacred city.

"Where is Cercyon, the wrestler?" he asked of the warden at the gate.

"The king is dining in his marble palace," was the answer. "If you wish to save yourself, turn now and flee before he has heard of your coming."

"Why should I flee?" asked Theseus. "I am not afraid;" and he walked on through the narrow street to old Cercyon's palace.

The king was sitting at his table, eating and drinking; and he grinned hideously as he thought of the many noble young men whose lives he had destroyed. Theseus went up boldly to the door, and cried out:

“Cercyon, come out and wrestle with me!”

“Ah!” said the king, “here comes another young fool whose days are numbered. Fetch him in and let him dine with me; and after that he shall have his fill of wrestling.”

So Theseus was given a place at the table of the king, and the two sat there and ate and stared at each other, but spoke not a word. And Cercyon, as he looked at the young man’s sharp eyes and his fair face and silken hair, had half a mind to bid him go in peace and seek not to test his strength and skill. But when they had finished, Theseus arose and laid aside his sword and his sandals and his iron club, and stripped himself of his robes, and said:

“Come now, Cercyon, if you are not afraid; come, and wrestle with me.”

Then the two went out into the courtyard where many a young man had met his fate, and there they wrestled until the sun went down, and neither could gain aught of advantage over the other. But it was plain that the trained skill of Theseus would, in the end, win against the brute strength of Cercyon. Then the men of Eleusis who stood watching the contest, saw the youth lift the giant king bodily into the air and hurl him headlong over his shoulder to the hard pavement beyond.

“As you have done to others, so will I do unto you!” cried Theseus.

But grim old Cercyon neither moved nor spoke; and when the youth turned his body over and looked into his cruel face, he saw that the life had quite gone out of him.

Then the people of Eleusis came to Theseus and wanted to make him their king. “You have slain the tyrant who was the bane of Eleusis,” they said, “and we have heard how you have also rid the world of the giant robbers who were the terror of the land. Come now and be our king; for we know that you will rule over us wisely and well.”

“Some day,” said Theseus, “I will be your king, but not now; for there are other deeds for me to do.” And with that he donned his sword and his sandals and his princely cloak, and threw his great iron club upon his shoulder, and went out of Eleusis; and all the people ran after him for quite a little way, shouting, “May good fortune be with you, O king, and may Athena bless and guide you!”

PROCRUSTES the Pitiless

ATHENS WAS NOW NOT MORE than twenty miles away, but the road thither led through the Parnes Mountains, and was only a narrow path winding among the rocks and up and down many a lonely wooded glen. Theseus had seen worse and far more dangerous roads than this, and so he strode bravely onward, happy in the thought that he was so near the end of his long journey. But it was very slow traveling among the mountains, and he was not always sure that he was following the right path. The sun was almost down when he came to a broad green valley where the trees had been cleared away. A little river flowed through the middle of this valley, and on either side were grassy meadows where cattle were grazing; and on a hillside close by, half hidden among the trees, there was a great stone house with vines running over its walls and roof.

While Theseus was wondering who it could be that lived in this pretty but lonely place, a man came out of the house and hurried down to the road to meet him. He was a well-dressed man, and his face was wreathed with smiles; and he bowed low to Theseus and invited him kindly to come up to the house and be his guest that night.

“This is a lonely place,” he said, “and it is not often that travelers pass this way. But there is nothing that gives me so much joy as to find strangers and feast them at my table and hear them tell of the things they have seen and heard. Come up, and sup with me, and lodge under my roof; and you shall sleep on a wonderful bed which I have-a bed which fits every guest and cures him of every ill.”

Theseus was pleased with the man’s ways, and as he was both hungry and tired, he went up with him and sat down under the vines by the door; and the man said:

“Now I will go in and make the bed ready for you, and you can lie down upon it and rest; and later, when you feel refreshed, you shall sit at my table and sup with me, and I will listen to the pleasant tales which I know you will tell.”

When he had gone into the house, Theseus looked around him to see what sort of a place it was. He was filled with surprise at the richness of it-at the gold and silver and beautiful things with which every room seemed to be adorned-for it was indeed a place fit for a prince. While he was looking and wondering, the vines before him were parted and the fair face of a young girl peeped out.

“Noble stranger,” she whispered, “do not lie down on my master’s bed, for those who do so never rise again. Fly down the glen and hide yourself in the deep woods ere he returns, or else there will be no escape for you.”

“Who is your master, fair maiden, that I should be afraid of him?” asked Theseus.

“Men call him Procrustes, or the Stretcher,” said the girl-and she talked low and fast. “He is a robber. He brings hither all the strangers that he finds traveling through the mountains. He puts them on his iron bed. He robs them of all they have. No one who comes into his house ever goes out again.”

“Why do they call him the Stretcher? And what is that iron bed of his?” asked Theseus, in no wise alarmed.

“Did he not tell you that it fits all guests?” said the girl; “and most truly it does fit them. For if a traveler is too long, Procrustes hews off his legs until he is of the right length; but if he is too short, as is the case with most guests, then he stretches his limbs and body with ropes until he is long enough. It is for this reason that men call him the Stretcher.”

“Methinks that I have heard of this Stretcher before,” said Theseus; and then he remembered that some one at Eleusis had warned him to beware of the wily robber, Procrustes, who lurked in the glens of the Parnes peaks and lured travelers into his den.

“Hark! hark!” whispered the girl. “I hear him coming!” And the vine leaves closed over her hiding-place.

The very next moment Procrustes stood in the door, bowing and smiling as though he had never done any harm to his fellow men.

“My dear young friend,” he said, “the bed is ready, and I will show you the way. After you have taken a pleasant little nap, we will sit down at table, and you may tell me of the wonderful things which you have seen in the course of your travels.”

Theseus arose and followed his host; and when they had come into an inner chamber, there, surely enough, was the bedstead, of iron, very curiously wrought, and upon it a soft couch which seemed to invite him to lie down and rest. But Theseus, peering about, saw the ax and the ropes with cunning pulleys lying hidden behind the curtains; and he saw, too, that the floor was covered with stains of blood.

“Now, my dear young friend,” said Procrustes, “I pray you to lie down and take your ease; for I know that you have traveled far and are faint from want of rest and sleep. Lie down, and while sweet slumber overtakes you, I will have a care that no unseemly noise, nor buzzing fly, nor vexing gnat disturbs your dreams.”

“Is this your wonderful bed?” asked Theseus.

“It is,” answered Procrustes, “and you need but to lie down upon it, and it will fit you perfectly.”

“But you must lie upon it first,” said Theseus, “and let me see how it will fit itself to your stature.”

“Ah, no,” said Procrustes, “for then the spell would be broken,” and as he spoke his cheeks grew ashy pale.

“But I tell you, you must lie upon it,” said Theseus; and he seized the trembling man around the waist and threw him by force upon the bed. And no sooner was he prone upon the couch than curious iron arms reached out and clasped his body in their embrace and held him down so that he could not move hand or foot. The wretched man shrieked and cried for mercy; but Theseus stood over him and looked him straight in the eye.

“Is this the kind of bed on which you have your guests lie down?” he asked.

But Procrustes answered not a word. Then Theseus brought out the ax and the ropes and the pulleys, and asked him what they were for, and why they were hidden in the chamber. He was still silent, and could do nothing now but tremble and weep.

“Is it true,” said Theseus, “that you have lured hundreds of travelers into your den only to rob them? Is it true that it is your wont to fasten them in this bed, and then chop off their legs or stretch them out until they fit the iron frame? Tell me, is this true?”

“It is true! it is true!” sobbed Procrustes; “and now kindly touch the spring above my head and let me go, and you shall have everything that I possess.”

But Theseus turned away. “You are caught,” he said, “in the trap which you set for others and for me. There is no mercy for the man who shows no mercy;” and he went out of the room, and left the wretch to perish by his own cruel device.

Theseus looked through the house and found there great wealth of gold and silver and costly things which Procrustes had taken from the strangers who had fallen into his hands. He went into the dining hall, and there indeed was the table spread with a rich feast of meats and drinks and delicacies such as no king would scorn; but there was a seat and a plate for only the host, and none at all for guests.

Then the girl whose fair face Theseus had seen among the vines, came running into the house; and she seized the young hero's hands and blessed and thanked him because he had rid the world of the cruel Procrustes.

"Only a month ago," she said, "my father, a rich merchant of Athens, was traveling towards Eleusis, and I was with him, happy and care-free as any bird in the green woods. This robber lured us into his den, for we had much gold with us. My father, he stretched upon his iron bed; but me, he made his slave."

Then Theseus called together all the inmates of the house, poor wretches whom Procrustes had forced to serve him; and he parted the robber's spoils among them and told them that they were free to go wheresoever they wished. And on the next day he went on, through the narrow crooked ways among the mountains and hills, and came at last to the plain of Athens, and saw the noble city and, in its midst, the rocky height where the great Temple of Athena stood; and, a little way from the temple, he saw the white walls of the palace of the king.

When Theseus entered the city and went walking up the street everybody wondered who the tall, fair youth could be. But the fame of his deeds had gone before him, and soon it was whispered that this was the hero who had slain the robbers in the mountains and had wrestled with Cercyon at Eleusis and had caught Procrustes in his own cunning trap.

"Tell us no such thing!" said some butchers who were driving their loaded carts to market. "The lad is better suited to sing sweet songs to the ladies than to fight robbers and wrestle with giants."

“See his silken black hair!” said one.

“And his girlish face!” said another.

“And his long coat dangling about his legs!” said a third.

“And his golden sandals!” said a fourth.

“Ha! ha!” laughed the first; “I wager that he never lifted a ten-pound weight in his life. Think of such a fellow as he hurling old Sciron from the cliffs! Nonsense!”

Theseus heard all this talk as he strode along, and it angered him not a little; but he had not come to Athens to quarrel with butchers. Without speaking a word he walked straight up to the foremost cart, and, before its driver had time to think, took hold of the slaughtered ox that was being hauled to market, and hurled it high over the tops of the houses into the garden beyond. Then he did likewise with the oxen in the second, the third, and the fourth wagons, and, turning about, went on his way, and left the wonder-stricken butchers staring after him, speechless, in the street.

He climbed the stairway which led to the top of the steep, rocky hill, and his heart beat fast in his bosom as he stood on the threshold of his father’s palace.

“Where is the king?” he asked of the guard.

“You cannot see the king,” was the answer; “but I will take you to his nephews.”

The man led the way into the feast hall, and there Theseus saw his fifty cousins sitting about the table, and eating and drinking and making merry; and there was a great noise of revelry in the hall, the minstrels singing and playing, and the slave girls dancing, and the half-drunken princes shouting and cursing. As Theseus stood in the doorway, knitting his eyebrows and clinching his teeth for the anger which he felt, one of the feasters saw him, and cried out:

“See the tall fellow in the doorway! What does he want here?”

“Yes, girl-faced stranger,” said another, “what do you want here?”

“I am here,” said Theseus, “to ask that hospitality which men of our race never refuse to give.”

“Nor do we refuse,” cried they. “Come in, and eat and drink and be our guest.”

“I will come in,” said Theseus, “but I will be the guest of the king. Where is he?”

“Never mind the king,” said one of his cousins. “He is taking his ease, and we reign in his stead.”

But Theseus strode boldly through the feast hall and went about the palace asking for the king. At last he found AEgeus, lonely and sorrowful, sitting in an inner chamber. The heart of Theseus was very sad as he saw the lines of care upon the old man’s face, and marked his trembling, halting ways.

“Great king,” he said, “I am a stranger in Athens, and I have come to you to ask food and shelter and friendship such as I know you never deny to those of noble rank and of your own race.”

“And who are you, young man?” said the king.

“I am Theseus,” was the answer.

“What? the Theseus who has rid the world of the mountain robbers, and of Cercyon the wrestler, and of Procrustes, the pitiless Stretcher?”

“I am he,” said Theseus; “and I come from old Troezen, on the other side of the Saronic Sea.”

The king started and turned very pale.

“Troezen! Troezen!” he cried. Then checking himself, he said, “Yes! yes! You are welcome, brave stranger, to such shelter and food and friendship as the King of Athens can give.”

Now it so happened that there was with the king a fair but wicked witch named Medea, who had so much power over him that he never dared to do anything without asking her leave. So he turned to her, and said: “Am I not right, Medea, in bidding this young hero welcome?”

“You are right, King AEgeus,” she said; “and let him be shown at once to your guest chamber, that he may rest himself and afterwards dine with us at your own table.”

Medea had learned by her magic arts who Theseus was, and she was not at all pleased to have him in Athens; for she feared that when he should make himself known to the king, her own power would be at an end. So, while Theseus was resting himself in the guest chamber, she told AEgeus that the young stranger was no hero at all, but a man whom his nephews had hired to kill him, for they had grown tired of waiting for him to die. The poor old king was filled with fear, for he believed her words; and he asked her what he should do to save his life.

“Let me manage it,” she said. “The young man will soon come down to dine with us. I will drop poison into a glass of wine, and at the end of the meal I will give it to him. Nothing can be easier.”

So, when the hour came, Theseus sat down to dine with the king and Medea; and while he ate he told of his deeds and of how he had overcome the robber giants, and Cercyon the wrestler, and Procrustes the pitiless; and as the king listened, his heart yearned strangely towards the young man, and he longed to save him from Medea’s poisoned cup. Then Theseus paused in his talk to help himself to a piece of the roasted meat, and, as was the custom of the time, drew his sword to carve it-for you must remember that all these things happened long ago, before people had learned to use knives and forks at the table. As the sword flashed from its scabbard, AEgeus saw the letters that were engraved upon it-the initials of his own name. He knew at once that it was the sword which he had hidden so many years before under the stone on the mountain side above Troezen.

“My son! my son!” he cried; and he sprang up and dashed the cup of poisoned wine from the table, and flung his arms around Theseus. It was indeed a glad meeting for both father and son, and they had many things to ask and to tell. As for the wicked Medea, she knew that her day of rule was past. She ran out of the palace, and whistled a loud, shrill call; and men say that a chariot drawn by dragons came rushing through the air, and that she leaped into it and was carried away, and no one ever saw her again.

The very next morning, AEgeus sent out his heralds, to make it known through all the city that Theseus was his son, and that he would in time be king in his stead. When the fifty nephews heard this, they were angry and alarmed.

“Shall this upstart cheat us out of our heritage?” they cried; and they made a plot to waylay and kill Theseus in a grove close by the city gate.

Right cunningly did the wicked fellows lay their trap to catch the young hero; and one morning, as he was passing that way alone, several of them fell suddenly upon him, with swords and lances, and tried to slay him outright. They were thirty to one, but he faced them boldly and held them at bay, while he shouted for help. The men of Athens, who had borne so many wrongs from the hands of the nephews, came running out from the streets; and in the fight which followed, every one of the plotters, who had lain in ambush was slain; and the other nephews, when they heard about it, fled from the city in haste and never came back again.

14

THE WONDERFUL ARTISAN

Perdix

While Athens was still only a small city there lived within its walls a man named Daedalus who was the most skillful worker in wood and stone and metal that had ever been known. It was he who taught the people how to build better houses and how to hang their doors on hinges and how to support the roofs with pillars and posts. He was the first to fasten things together with glue; he invented the plumb-line and the auger; and he showed seamen how to put up masts in their ships and how to rig the sails to them with ropes. He built a stone palace for AEgeus, the young king of Athens, and beautified the Temple of Athena which stood on the great rocky hill in the middle of the city.

Daedalus had a nephew named Perdix whom he had taken when a boy to teach the trade of builder. But Perdix was a very apt learner, and soon surpassed his master in the knowledge of many things. His eyes were ever open to see what was going on about him, and he learned the lore of the fields and the woods. Walking one day by the sea, he picked up the backbone of a great fish, and from it he invented the saw. Seeing how a certain bird carved holes in the trunks of trees, he learned how to make and use the chisel. Then he invented the wheel which potters use in molding clay; and he made of a forked stick the first pair of compasses for drawing circles; and he studied out many other curious and useful things.

Daedalus was not pleased when he saw that the lad was so apt and wise, so ready to learn, and so eager to do.

“If he keeps on in this way,” he murmured, “he will be a greater man than I; his name will be remembered, and mine will be forgotten.”

Day after day, while at his work, Daedalus pondered over this matter, and soon his heart was filled with hatred towards young Perdix. One morning when the two were putting up an ornament on the outer wall of Athena’s temple, Daedalus bade his nephew go out on a narrow scaffold which hung high over the edge of the rocky cliff whereon the temple stood. Then, when the lad obeyed, it was easy enough, with a blow of a hammer, to knock the scaffold from its fastenings.

Poor Perdix fell headlong through the air, and he would have been dashed in pieces upon the stones at the foot of the cliff had not kind Athena seen him and taken pity upon him. While he was yet whirling through mid-air she changed him into a partridge, and he flitted away to the hills to live forever in the woods and fields which he loved so well. And to this day, when summer breezes blow and the wild flowers bloom in meadow and glade, the voice of Perdix may still sometimes be heard, calling to his mate from among the grass and reeds or amid the leafy underwoods.

Minos

As for Daedalus, when the people of Athens heard of his dastardly deed, they were filled with grief and rage-grief for young Perdix, whom all had learned to love; rage towards the wicked uncle, who loved only himself. At first they were for punishing Daedalus with the death which he so richly deserved, but when they remembered what he had done to make their homes pleasanter and their lives easier, they allowed him to live; and yet they drove him out of Athens and bade him never return.

There was a ship in the harbor just ready to start on a voyage across the sea, and in it Daedalus embarked with all his precious tools and his young son Icarus. Day after day the little vessel sailed slowly southward, keeping the shore of the mainland always upon the right. It passed Troezen and the rocky coast of Argos, and then struck boldly out across the sea.

At last the famous Island of Crete was reached, and there Daedalus landed and made himself known; and the King of Crete, who had already heard of his wondrous skill, welcomed him to his kingdom, and gave him a home in his palace, and promised that he should be rewarded with great riches and honor if he would but stay and practice his craft there as he had done in Athens.

Now the name of the King of Crete was Minos. His grandfather, whose name was also Minos, was the son of Europa, a young princess whom a white bull, it was said, had brought on his back across the sea from distant Asia. This elder Minos had been accounted the wisest of men-so wise, indeed, that Jupiter chose him to be one of the judges of the Lower World. The younger Minos was almost as wise as his grandfather; and he was brave and far-seeing and skilled as a ruler of men. He had made all the islands subject to his kingdom, and his ships sailed into every part of the world and brought back to Crete the riches of foreign lands. So it was not hard for him to persuade Daedalus to make his home with him and be the chief of his artisans.

And Daedalus built for King Minos a most wonderful palace with floors of marble and pillars of granite; and in the palace he set up golden statues which had tongues and could talk; and for splendor and beauty there was no other building in all the wide earth that could be compared with it.

There lived in those days among the hills of Crete a terrible monster called the Minotaur, the like of which has never been seen from that time until now. This creature, it was said, had the body of a man, but the face and head of a wild bull and the fierce nature of a mountain lion. The people of Crete would not have killed him if they could; for they thought that the Mighty Folk who lived with Jupiter on the mountain top had sent him among them, and that these beings would be angry if any one should take his life. He was the pest and terror of all the land. Where he was least expected, there he was sure to be; and almost every day some man, woman, or child was caught and devoured by him.

“You have done so many wonderful things,” said the king to Daedalus, “can you not do something to rid the land of this Minotaur?”

“Shall I kill him?” asked Daedalus.

“Ah, no!” said the king. “That would only bring greater misfortunes upon us.”

“I will build a house for him then,” said Daedalus, “and you can keep him in it as a prisoner.”

“But he may pine away and die if he is penned up in prison,” said the king.

“He shall have plenty of room to roam about,” said Daedalus; “and if you will only now and then feed one of your enemies to him, I promise you that he shall live and thrive.”

So the wonderful artisan brought together his workmen, and they built a marvelous house with so many rooms in it and so many winding ways that no one who went far into it could ever find his way out again; and Daedalus called it the Labyrinth, and cunningly persuaded the Minotaur to go inside of it. The monster soon lost his way among the winding passages, but the sound of his terrible bellowings could be heard day and night as he wandered back and forth vainly trying to find some place to escape.

ICARUS

NOT LONG AFTER this it happened that Daedalus was guilty of a deed which angered the king very greatly; and had not Minos wished him to build other buildings for him, he would have put him to death and no doubt have served him right.

"Hitherto," said the king, "I have honored you for your skill and rewarded you for your labor. But now you shall be my slave and shall serve me without hire and without any word of praise."

Then he gave orders to the guards at the city gates that they should not let Daedalus pass out at any time, and he set soldiers to watch the ships that were in port so that he could not escape by sea. But although the wonderful artisan was thus held as a prisoner, he did not build any more buildings for King Minos; he spent his time in planning how he might regain his freedom.

"All my inventions," he said to his son Icarus, "have hitherto been made to please other people; now I will invent something to please myself."

So, all through the day he pretended to be planning some great work for the king, but every night he locked himself up in his chamber and wrought secretly by candle light. By and by he had made for himself a pair of strong wings, and for Icarus another pair of smaller ones; and then, one midnight, when everybody was asleep, the two went out to see if they could fly. They fastened the wings to their shoulders with wax, and then sprang up into the air. They could not fly very far at first, but they did so well that they felt sure of doing much better in time.

The next night Daedalus made some changes in the wings. He put on an extra strap or two; he took out a feather from one wing, and put a new feather into another; and then he and Icarus went out in the moonlight to try them again. They did finely this time. They flew up to the top of the king's palace, and then they sailed away over the walls of the city and alighted on the top of a hill. But they were not ready to undertake a long journey yet; and so, just before daybreak, they flew back home. Every fair night after that they practiced with their wings, and at the end of a month they felt as safe in the air as on the ground, and could skim over the hilltops like birds.

Early one morning; before King Minos had risen from his bed, they fastened on their wings, sprang into the air, and flew out of the city. Once fairly away from the island, they turned towards the west, for Daedalus had heard of an island named Sicily, which lay hundreds of miles away, and he had made up his mind to seek a new home there.

All went well for a time, and the two bold flyers sped swiftly over the sea, skimming along only a little above the waves, and helped on their way by the brisk east wind. Towards noon the sun shone very warm, and Daedalus called out to the boy who was a little behind and told him to keep his wings cool and not fly too high. But the boy was proud of his skill in flying, and as he looked up at the sun he thought how nice it would be to soar like it high above the clouds in the blue depths of the sky.

"At any rate," said he to himself, "I will go up a little higher. Perhaps I can see the horses which draw the sun car, and perhaps I shall catch sight of their driver, the mighty sun master himself."

So he flew up higher and higher, but his father who was in front did not see him. Pretty soon, however, the heat of the sun began to melt the wax with which the boy's wings were fastened. He felt himself sinking through the air; the wings had become loosened from his shoulders. He screamed to his father, but it was too late. Daedalus turned just in time to see Icarus fall headlong into the waves. The water was very deep there, and the skill of the wonderful artisan could not save his child. He could only look with sorrowing eyes at the unpitying sea, and fly on alone to distant Sicily. There, men say, he lived for many years, but he never did any great work, nor built anything half so marvelous as the Labyrinth of Crete. And the sea in which poor Icarus was drowned was called forever afterward by his name, the Icarian Sea.

15

THE CRUEL TRIBUTE

The Treaty

Minos, king of Crete, had made war upon Athens. He had come with a great fleet of ships and an army, and had burned the merchant vessels in the harbor, and had overrun all the country and the coast even to Megara, which lies to the west. He had laid waste the fields and gardens round about Athens, had pitched his camp close to the walls, and had sent word to the Athenian rulers that on the morrow he would march into their city with fire and sword and would slay all their young men and would pull down all their houses, even to the Temple of Athena, which stood on the great hill above the town. Then AEgeus, the king of Athens, with the twelve elders who were his helpers, went out to see King Minos and to treat with him.

“O mighty king,” they said, “what have we done that you should wish thus to destroy us from the earth?”

“O cowardly and shameless men,” answered King Minos, “why do you ask this foolish question, since you can but know the cause of my wrath? I had an only son, Androgeos by name, and he was dearer to me than the hundred cities of Crete and the thousand islands of the sea over which I rule. Three years ago he came hither to take part in the games which you held in honor of Athena, whose temple you have built on yonder hilltop. You know how he overcame all your young men in the sports, and how your people honored him with song and dance and laurel crown. But when your king, this same AEgeus who stands before me now, saw how everybody ran after him and praised his valor, he was filled with envy and laid plans to kill him. Whether he caused armed men to waylay him on the road to Thebes, or whether as some say he sent him against a certain wild bull of your country to be slain by that beast, I know not; but you cannot deny that the young man's life was taken from him through the plotting of this AEgeus."

"But we do deny it-we do deny it!" cried the elders. "For at that very time our king was sojourning at Troezen on the other side of the Saronic Sea, and he knew nothing of the young prince's death. We ourselves managed the city's affairs while he was abroad, and we know whereof we speak. Androgeos was slain, not through the king's orders but by the king's nephews, who hoped to rouse your anger against AEgeus so that you would drive him from Athens and leave the kingdom to one of them."

"Will you swear that what you tell me is true?" said Minos.

"We will swear it," they said.

"Now then," said Minos, "you shall hear my decree. Athens has robbed me of my dearest treasure, a treasure that can never be restored to me; so, in return, I require from Athens, as tribute, that possession which is the dearest and most precious to her people; and it shall be destroyed cruelly as my son was destroyed."

"The condition is hard," said the elders, "but it is just. What is the tribute which you require?"

"Has the king a son?" asked Minos.

The face of King AEgeus lost all its color and he trembled as he thought of a little child then with its mother at Troezen, on the other side of the Saronic Sea. But the elders knew nothing about that child, and they answered:

“Alas, no! he has no son; but he has fifty nephews who are eating up his substance and longing for the time to come when one of them shall be king; and, as we have said, it was they who slew the young prince, Androgeos.”

“I have naught to do with those fellows,” said Minos; “you may deal with them as you like. But you ask what is the tribute that I require, and I will tell you. Every year when the springtime comes and the roses begin to bloom, you shall choose seven of your noblest youths and seven of your fairest maidens, and shall send them to me in a ship which your king shall provide. This is the tribute which you shall pay to me, Minos, king of Crete; and if you fail for a single time, or delay even a day, my soldiers shall tear down your walls and burn your city and put your men to the sword and sell your wives and children as slaves.”

“We agree to all this, O King,” said the elders; “for it is the least of two evils. But tell us now, what shall be the fate of the seven youths and the seven maidens?”

“In Crete,” answered Minos, “there is a house called the Labyrinth, the like of which you have never seen. In it there are a thousand chambers and winding ways, and whosoever goes even a little way into them can never find his way out again. Into this house the seven youths and the seven maidens shall be thrust, and they shall be left there-”

“To perish with hunger?” cried the elders.

“To be devoured by a monster whom men call the Minotaur,” said Minos.

Then King AEgeus and the elders covered their faces and wept and went slowly back into the city to tell their people of the sad and terrible conditions upon which Athens could alone be saved.

"It is better that a few should perish than that the whole city should be destroyed," they said.

THE TRIBUTE

YEARS PASSED BY. Every spring when the roses began to bloom seven youths and seven maidens were put on board of a black-sailed ship and sent to Crete to pay the tribute which King Minos required. In every house in Athens there was sorrow and dread, and the people lifted up their hands to Athena on the hilltop and cried out, "How long, O Queen of the Air, how long shall this thing be?"

In the meanwhile the little child at Troezen on the other side of the sea had grown to be a man. His name, Theseus, was in everybody's mouth, for he had done great deeds of daring; and at last he had come to Athens to find his father, King AEgeus, who had never heard whether he was alive or dead; and when the youth had made himself known, the king had welcomed him to his home and all the people were glad because so noble a prince had come to dwell among them and, in time, to rule over their city.

The springtime came again. The black-sailed ship was rigged for another voyage. The rude Cretan soldiers paraded the streets; and the herald of King Minos stood at the gates and shouted:

"Yet three days, O Athenians, and your tribute will be due and must be paid!"

Then in every street the doors of the houses were shut and no man went in or out, but every one sat silent with pale cheeks, and wondered whose lot it would be to be chosen this year. But the young prince, Theseus, did not understand; for he had not been told about the tribute.

“What is the meaning of all this?” he cried. “What right has a Cretan to demand tribute in Athens? and what is this tribute of which he speaks?”

Then AEgeus led him aside and with tears told him of the sad war with King Minos, and of the dreadful terms of peace. “Now, say no more,” sobbed AEgeus, “it is better that a few should die even thus than that all should be destroyed.”

“But I will say more,” cried Theseus. “Athens shall not pay tribute to Crete. I myself will go with these youths and maidens, and I will slay the monster Minotaur, and defy King Minos himself upon his throne.”

“Oh, do not be so rash!” said the king; “for no one who is thrust into the den of the Minotaur ever comes out again. Remember that you are the hope of Athens, and do not take this great risk upon yourself.”

“Say you that I am the hope of Athens?” said Theseus. “Then how can I do otherwise than go?” And he began at once to make himself ready.

On the third day all the youths and maidens of the city were brought together in the market place, so that lots might be cast for those who were to be taken. Then two vessels of brass were brought and set before King AEgeus and the herald who had come from Crete. Into one vessel they placed as many balls as there were noble youths in the city, and into the other as many as there were maidens; and all the balls were white save only seven in each vessel, and those were black as ebony.

Then every maiden, without looking, reached her hand into one of the vessels and drew forth a ball, and those who took the black balls were borne away to the black ship, which lay in waiting by the shore. The young men also drew lots in like manner, but when six black balls had been drawn Theseus came quickly forward and said:

“Hold! Let no more balls be drawn. I will be the seventh youth to pay this tribute. Now let us go aboard the black ship and be off.”

Then the people, and King AEgeus himself, went down to the shore to take leave of the young men and maidens, whom they had no hope of seeing again; and all but Theseus wept and were brokenhearted.

"I will come again, father," he said.

"I will hope that you may," said the old king. "If when this ship returns, I see a white sail spread above the black one, then I shall know that you are alive and well; but if I see only the black one, it will tell me that you have perished."

And now the vessel was loosed from its moorings, the north wind filled the sail, and the seven youths and seven maidens were borne away over the sea, towards the dreadful death which awaited them in far distant Crete.

The Princess

At last the black ship reached the end of its voyage. The young people were set ashore, and a party of soldiers led them through the streets towards the prison, where they were to stay until the morrow. They did not weep nor cry out now, for they had outgrown their fears. But with paler faces and firm-set lips, they walked between the rows of Cretan houses, and looked neither to the right nor to the left. The windows and doors were full of people who were eager to see them.

"What a pity that such brave young men should be food for the Minotaur," said some.

"Ah, that maidens so beautiful should meet a fate so sad!" said others.

And now they passed close by the palace gate, and in it stood King Minos himself, and his daughter Ariadne, the fairest of the women of Crete.

"Indeed, those are noble young fellows!" said the king.

"Yes, too noble to feed the vile Minotaur," said Ariadne.

“The nobler, the better,” said the king; “and yet none of them can compare with your lost brother Androgeos.”

Ariadne said no more; and yet she thought that she had never seen any one who looked so much like a hero as young Theseus. How tall he was, and how handsome! How proud his eye, and how firm his step! Surely there had never been his like in Crete.

All through that night Ariadne lay awake and thought of the matchless hero, and grieved that he should be doomed to perish; and then she began to lay plans for setting him free. At the earliest peep of day she arose, and while everybody else was asleep, she ran out of the palace and hurried to the prison. As she was the king’s daughter, the jailer opened the door at her bidding and allowed her to go in. There sat the seven youths and the seven maidens on the ground, but they had not lost hope. She took Theseus aside and whispered to him. She told him of a plan which she had made to save him; and Theseus promised her that, when he had slain the Minotaur, he would carry her away with him to Athens where she should live with him always. Then she gave him a sharp sword, and hid it underneath his cloak, telling him that with it alone could he hope to slay the Minotaur.

“And here is a ball of silken thread,” she said. “As soon as you go into the Labyrinth where the monster is kept, fasten one end of the thread to the stone doorpost, and then unwind it as you go along. When you have slain the Minotaur, you have only to follow the thread and it will lead you back to the door. In the meanwhile I will see that your ship, is ready to sail, and then I will wait for you at the door of the Labyrinth.”

Theseus thanked the beautiful princess and promised her again that if he should live to go back to Athens she should go with him and be his wife. Then with a prayer to Athena, Ariadne hastened away.

AS SOON AS the sun was up the guards came to lead the young prisoners to the Labyrinth. They did not see the sword which Theseus had under his cloak, nor the tiny ball of silk which he held in his closed hand. They led the youths and maidens a long way into the Labyrinth, turning here and there, back and forth, a thousand different times, until it seemed certain that they could never find their way out again. Then the guards, by a secret passage which they alone knew, went out and left them, as they had left many others before, to wander about until they should be found by the terrible Minotaur.

“Stay close by me,” said Theseus to his companions, “and with the help of Athena who dwells in her temple home in our own fair city, I will save you.”

Then he drew his sword and stood in the narrow way before them; and they all lifted up their hands and prayed to Athena.

For hours they stood there, hearing no sound, and seeing nothing but the smooth, high walls on either side of the passage and the calm blue sky so high above them. Then the maidens sat down upon the ground and covered their faces and sobbed, and said:

“Oh, that he would come and put an end to our misery and our lives.”

At last, late in the day, they heard a bellowing, low and faint as though far away. They listened and soon heard it again, a little louder and very fierce and dreadful.

“It is he! it is he!” cried Theseus; “and now for the fight!”

Then he shouted, so loudly that the walls of the Labyrinth answered back, and the sound was carried upward to the sky and outward to the rocks and cliffs of the mountains. The Minotaur heard him, and his bellowings grew louder and fiercer every moment.

“He is coming!” cried Theseus, and he ran forward to meet the beast. The seven maidens shrieked, but tried to stand up bravely and face their fate; and the six young men stood together with firm-set teeth and clinched fists, ready to fight to the last.

Soon the Minotaur came into view, rushing down the passage towards Theseus, and roaring most terribly. He was twice as tall as a man, and his head was like that of a bull with huge sharp horns and fiery eyes and a mouth as large as a lion’s; but the young men could not see the lower part of his body for the cloud of dust which he raised in running. When he saw Theseus with the sword in his hand coming to meet him, he paused, for no one had ever faced him in that way before. Then he put his head down, and rushed forward, bellowing. But Theseus leaped quickly aside, and made a sharp thrust with his sword as he passed, and hewed off one of the monster’s legs above the knee.

The Minotaur fell upon the ground, roaring and groaning and beating wildly about with his horned head and his hoof-like fists; but Theseus nimbly ran up to him and thrust the sword into his heart, and was away again before the beast could harm him. A great stream of blood gushed from the wound, and soon the Minotaur turned his face towards the sky and was dead.

Then the youths and maidens ran to Theseus and kissed his hands and feet, and thanked him for his great deed; and, as it was already growing dark, Theseus bade them follow him while he wound up the silken thread which was to lead them out of the Labyrinth. Through a thousand rooms and courts and winding ways they went, and at midnight they came to the outer door and saw the city lying in the moonlight before them; and, only a little way off, was the seashore where the black ship was moored which had brought them to Crete. The door was wide open, and beside it stood Ariadne waiting for them.

“The wind is fair, the sea is smooth, and the sailors are ready,” she whispered; and she took the arm of Theseus, and all went together through the silent streets to the ship.

When the morning dawned they were far out to sea, and, looking back from the deck of the little vessel, only the white tops of the Cretan mountains were in sight.

Minos, when he arose from sleep, did not know that the youths and maidens had gotten safe out of the Labyrinth. But when Ariadne could not be found, he thought that robbers had carried her away. He sent soldiers out to search for her among the hills and mountains, never dreaming that she was now well on the way towards distant Athens.

Many days passed, and at last the searchers returned and said that the princess could nowhere be found. Then the king covered his head and wept, and said:

“Now, indeed, I am bereft of all my treasures!”

In the meanwhile, King AEgeus of Athens had sat day after day on a rock by the shore, looking and watching if by chance he might see a ship coming from the south. At last the vessel with Theseus and his companions hove in sight, but it still carried only the black sail, for in their joy the young men had forgotten to raise the white one.

“Alas! alas! my son has perished!” moaned AEgeus; and he fainted and fell forward into the sea and was drowned. And that sea, from then until now, has been called by his name, the Aegean Sea.

Thus Theseus became king of Athens.

6. ALEKSANDER CHODZKO

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Abode of the Gods
2. The Sun or the Three Golden Hairs of the Old Man Vsévède
3. Kovlad
4. The Maid with Hair of Gold
5. The Journey to the Sun and the Moon
6. The Dwarf with the Long Beard
7. The Flying Carpet, the Invisible Cap, the Gold-Giving Ring, and the Smiting Club
8. The Broad Man, the Tall Man, and the Man with Eyes of Flame
9. The History of Prince Slugobyl or the Invisible Knight
10. The Spirit of the Steppes
11. The Prince with the Golden Hand
12. Imperishable
13. Ohnivak
14. Tears of Pearls
15. The Sluggard
16. Kinkach Martinko
17. The Story of the Plentiful Tablecloth, the Avenging Wand, the Sash that Becomes a Lake, and the Terrible Helmet

PREFACE

CHODZKO, ALEKSANDER

Aleksander Chodzko (1804-1891) was a Polish poet, folklorist, Slavist, and Iranologist. Chodzko worked as a Russian diplomat in Iran, and also worked for the French ministry in Paris. In 1857, he was the chair of Slavic languages and literature at the College de France, and served in this position until 1883. His book *Fairy Tales of the Slav Peasants and Herdsmen* features 17 folk tales from the Slavic countries and territories.

1

THE ABODE OF THE GODS

1 — The Two Brothers

Once upon a time there were two brothers whose father had left them but a small fortune. The eldest grew very rich, but at the same time cruel and wicked, whereas there was nowhere a more honest or kinder man than the younger. But he remained poor, and had many children, so that at times they could scarcely get bread to eat. At last, one day there was not even this in the house, so he went to his rich brother and asked him for a loaf of bread. Waste of time! His rich brother only called him beggar and vagabond, and slammed the door in his face.

The poor fellow, after this brutal reception, did not know which way to turn. Hungry, scantily clad, shivering with cold, his legs could scarcely carry him along. He had not the heart to go home, with nothing for the children, so he went towards the mountain forest. But all he found there were some wild pears that had fallen to the ground. He had to content himself with eating these, though they set his teeth on edge. But what was he to do to warm himself, for the east wind with its chill blast pierced him through and through. “Where shall I go?” he said; “what will become of us in the cottage? There is neither food nor fire, and my brother has driven me from his door.” It was just then he remembered having heard that the top of the mountain in front of him was made of crystal, and had a fire for ever burning upon it. “I will try and find it,” he said, “and then I may be able to warm myself a little.” So he went on climbing higher and higher till he reached the top, when he was startled to see twelve strange beings sitting round a huge fire. He stopped for a moment, but then said to himself, “What have I to lose? Why should I fear? God is with me. Courage!”

So he advanced towards the fire, and bowing respectfully, said: “Good people, take pity on my distress. I am very poor, no one cares for me, I have not even a fire in my cottage; will you let me warm myself at yours?” They all looked kindly at him, and one of them said: “My son, come sit down with us and warm yourself.”

So he sat down, and felt warm directly he was near them. But he dared not speak while they were silent. What astonished him most was that they changed seats one after another, and in such a way that each one passed round the fire and came back to his own place. When he drew near the fire an old man with long white beard and bald head arose from the flames and spoke to him thus:

“Man, waste not thy life here; return to thy cottage, work, and live honestly. Take as many embers as thou wilt, we have more than we need.”

And having said this he disappeared. Then the twelve filled a large sack with embers, and, putting it on the poor man’s shoulders, advised him to hasten home.

Humbly thanking them, he set off. As he went he wondered why the embers did not feel hot, and why they should weigh no more than a sack of paper. He was thankful that he should be able to have a fire, but imagine his astonishment when on arriving home he found the sack to contain as many gold pieces as there had been embers; he almost went out of his mind with joy at the possession of so much money. With all his heart he thanked those who had been so ready to help him in his need.

He was now rich, and rejoiced to be able to provide for his family. Being curious to find out how many gold pieces there were, and not knowing how to count, he sent his wife to his rich brother for the loan of a quart measure.

This time the brother was in a better temper, so he lent what was asked of him, but said mockingly, “What can such beggars as you have to measure?”

The wife replied, “Our neighbour owes us some wheat; we want to be sure he returns us the right quantity.”

The rich brother was puzzled, and suspecting something he, unknown to his sister-in-law, put some grease inside the measure. The trick succeeded, for on getting it back he found a piece of gold sticking to it. Filled with astonishment, he could only suppose his brother had joined a band of robbers: so he hurried to his brother’s cottage, and threatened to bring him before the Justice of the Peace if he did not confess where the gold came from. The poor man was troubled, and, dreading to offend his brother, told the story of his journey to the Crystal Mountain.

Now the elder brother had plenty of money for himself, yet he was envious of the brother’s good fortune, and became greatly displeased when he found that his brother won every one’s esteem by the good use he made of his wealth. At last he determined to visit the Crystal Mountain himself.

“I may meet with as good luck as my brother,” said he to himself.

Upon reaching the Crystal Mountain he found the twelve seated round the fire as before, and thus addressed them:

“I beg of you, good people, to let me warm myself, for it is bitterly cold, and I am poor and homeless.”

But one of them replied, “My son, the hour of thy birth was favourable; thou art rich, but a miser; thou art wicked, for thou hast dared to lie to us.

Well dost thou deserve thy punishment.”

Amazed and terrified he stood silent, not daring to speak. Meanwhile the twelve changed places one after another, each at last returning to his own seat. Then from the midst of the flames arose the white-bearded old man and spoke thus sternly to the rich man:

“Woe unto the wilful! Thy brother is virtuous, therefore have I blessed him. As for thee, thou art wicked, and so shalt not escape our vengeance.”

At these words the twelve arose. The first seized the unfortunate man, struck him, and passed him on to the second; the second also struck him and passed him on to the third; and so did they all in their turn, until he was given up to the old man, who disappeared with him into the fire.

Days, weeks, months went by, but the rich man never returned, and none knew what had become of him. I think, between you and me, the younger brother had his suspicions but he very wisely kept them to himself.

2 — Time and the Kings of the Elements

THERE WAS ONCE a married pair who loved each other tenderly. The husband would not have given up his wife for all the riches in the world, while her first thought was how best to please him. So they were very happy, and lived like two grains in one ear of corn.

One day while working in the fields, a great longing came over him to see her: so without waiting for the hour of sunset he ran home. Alas! she was not there. He looked high and low, he ran here, there, and everywhere, he wept, he called to her; in vain! his dear wife was not to be found.

So heartbroken was he that he no longer cared to live. He could think of nothing but the loss of his dear wife and how to find her again. At last he determined to travel all over the world in search of her. So he began to walk straight on, trusting God to direct his steps. Sad and thoughtful, he wandered for many days, until he reached a cottage close by the shores of a large lake. Here he stopped, hoping to find out news. On entering the cottage he was met by a woman, who tried to prevent him entering.

“What do you want here, unlucky wretch?” said she. “If my husband sees you, he will kill you instantly.”

“Who is your husband then?” asked the traveller.

“What! you do not know him? My husband is the Water-King; everything under water obeys him. Depart quickly, for if he finds you here he will certainly devour you.”

“Perhaps after all he would take pity on me. But hide me somewhere, for I am worn and weary, and without shelter for the night.”

So the Water-Queen was persuaded, and hid him behind the stove. Almost immediately after the Water-King entered. He had barely crossed the threshold when he called out, “Wife, I smell human flesh; give it me quickly, for I am hungry.” She dared not disobey him, and so she had to tell him of the traveller’s hiding-place. The poor man became terribly frightened, and trembled in every limb, and began to stammer out excuses.

“I assure you I have done no harm. I came here in search of news of my poor wife. Oh, do help me to find her; I cannot live without her.”

”Well,” replied the Water-King, “as you love your wife so tenderly I will forgive you for coming here, but I cannot help you to find her, for I do not know where she is. Yet I remember seeing two ducks on the lake yesterday, perchance she is one of them. But I should advise you to ask my brother the Fire-King; he may be able to tell you more.”

Happy to have escaped so easily, he thanked the Water-King and set out to find the Fire-King. But the latter was unable to help him, and could only advise him to consult his other brother, the Air-King. But the Air-King, though he had travelled all over the earth, could only say he thought he had seen a woman at the foot of the Crystal Mountain.

But the traveller was cheered at the news, and went to seek his wife at the foot of the Crystal Mountain, which was close to their cottage. On reaching it he began at once to climb the mountain by making his way up the bed of the torrent that came rushing down there. Several ducks that were in the pools near the waterfall called out, “My good man, don’t go up there; you’ll be killed.”

But he walked fearlessly on till he came to some thatched cottages, at the largest of which he stopped. Here a crowd of wizards and witches surrounded him, screaming at the top of their voices, “What are you looking for?”

“My wife,” said he.

“She is here,” they cried, “but you cannot take her away unless you recognise her among two hundred women all exactly like her.”

”What! Not know my own wife? Why, here she is,” said he, as he clasped her in his arms. And she, delighted to be with him again, kissed him fondly. Then she whispered:

“Dearest, though you knew me to-day I doubt whether you will to-morrow, for there will be so many of us all alike. Now I will tell you what to do. At nightfall go to the top of the Crystal Mountain, where live the King of Time and his court. Ask him how you may know me. If you are good and honest he will help you; if not, he will devour you whole at one mouthful.”

“I will do what you advise, dear one,” he replied, “but tell me, why did you leave me so suddenly? If you only knew what I have suffered! I have sought you all over the world.”

“I did not leave you willingly,” said she. “A countryman asked me to come and look at the mountain torrent. When we got there he sprinkled some water over himself, and at once I saw wings growing out of his shoulders, and he soon changed his shape entirely into that of a drake; and I too became a duck at the same time, and whether I would or no I was obliged to follow him. Here I was allowed to resume my own form; and now there is but the one difficulty of being recognised by you.”

So they parted, she to join the other women, he to continue his way to the Crystal Mountain. At the top he found twelve strange beings sitting round a large fire: they were the attendants of the King of Time. He saluted them respectfully.

“What dost thou want?” said they.

“I have lost my dear wife. Can you tell me how to recognise her among two hundred other women all exactly alike?”

“No,” said they, “but perhaps our King can.”

Then arose from the midst of the flames an old man with bald head and long white beard, who, on hearing his request, replied: “Though all these women be exactly alike, thy wife will have a black thread in the shoe of her right foot.”

So saying he vanished, and the traveller, thanking the twelve, descended the mountain.

Sure it is that without the black thread he would never have recognised her. And though the Magician tried to hide her, the spell was broken; and the two returned rejoicing to their home, where they lived happily ever after.

3 — The Twelve Months

THERE WAS ONCE a widow who had two daughters, Helen, her own child by her dead husband, and Marouckla, his daughter by his first wife. She loved Helen, but hated the poor orphan, because she was far prettier than her own daughter. Marouckla did not think about her good looks, and could not understand why her stepmother should be angry at the sight of her. The hardest work fell to her share; she cleaned out the rooms, cooked, washed, sewed, spun, wove, brought in the hay, milked the cow, and all this without any help. Helen, meanwhile, did nothing but dress herself in her best clothes and go to one amusement after another. But Marouckla never complained; she bore the scoldings and bad temper of mother and sister with a smile on her lips, and the patience of a lamb. But this angelic behaviour did not soften them. They became even more tyrannical and grumpy, for Marouckla grew daily more beautiful, while Helen's ugliness increased. So the stepmother determined to get rid of Marouckla, for she knew that while she remained her own daughter would have no suitors. Hunger, every kind of privation, abuse, every means was used to make the girl's life miserable. The most wicked of men could not have been more mercilessly cruel than these two vixens. But in spite of it all Marouckla grew ever sweeter and more charming.

One day in the middle of winter Helen wanted some wood-violets.

"Listen," cried she to Marouckla; "you must go up the mountain and find me some violets, I want some to put in my gown; they must be fresh and sweet-scented—do you hear?"

"But, my dear sister, who ever heard of violets blooming in the snow?" said the poor orphan.

"You wretched creature! Do you dare to disobey me?" said Helen. "Not another word; off with you. If you do not bring me some violets from the mountain forest, I will kill you."

The stepmother also added her threats to those of Helen, and with vigorous blows they pushed Marouckla outside and shut the door upon her. The weeping girl made her way to the mountain. The snow lay deep, and there was no trace of any human being. Long she wandered hither and thither, and lost herself in the wood. She was hungry, and shivered with cold, and prayed to die. Suddenly she saw a light in the distance, and climbed towards it, till she reached the top of the mountain. Upon the highest peak burnt a large fire, surrounded by twelve blocks of stone, on which sat twelve strange beings. Of these the first three had white hair, three were not quite so old, three were young and handsome, and the rest still younger.

There they all sate silently looking at the fire. They were the twelve months of the year. The great Setchène (January) was placed higher than the others; his hair and moustache were white as snow, and in his hand he held a wand. At first Marouckla was afraid, but after a while her courage returned, and drawing near she said:

“Men of God, may I warm myself at your fire? I am chilled by the winter cold.”

The great Setchène raised his head and answered:

“What brings thee here, my daughter? What dost thou seek?”

“I am looking for violets,” replied the maiden.

“This is not the season for violets; dost thou not see the snow everywhere?” said Setchène.

”I know well, but my sister Helen and my stepmother have ordered me to bring them violets from your mountain: if I return without them they will kill me. I pray you, good shepherds, tell me where they may be found?”

Here the great Setchène arose and went over to the youngest of the months, and placing his wand in his hand, said:

“Brother Brezène (March), do thou take the highest place.”

Brezène obeyed, at the same time waving his wand over the fire. Immediately the flames rose towards the sky, the snow began to melt and the trees and shrubs to bud; the grass became green, and from between its blades peeped the pale primrose. It was Spring, and the meadows were blue with violets.

“Gather them quickly, Marouckla,” said Brezène.

Joyfully she hastened to pick the flowers, and having soon a large bunch she thanked them and ran home. Helen and the stepmother were amazed at the sight of the flowers, the scent of which filled the house.

“Where did you find them?” asked Helen.

“Under the trees on the mountain slope,” said Marouckla.

Helen kept the flowers for herself and her mother; she did not even thank her step-sister for the trouble she had taken. The next day she desired Marouckla to fetch her strawberries.

“Run,” said she, “and fetch me strawberries from the mountain: they must be very sweet and ripe.”

“But who ever heard of strawberries ripening in the snow?” exclaimed Marouckla.

”Hold your tongue, worm; don’t answer me; if I don’t have my strawberries I will kill you.”

Then the stepmother pushed her into the yard and bolted the door. The unhappy girl made her way towards the mountain and to the large fire round which sat the twelve months. The great Setchène occupied the highest place.

“Men of God, may I warm myself at your fire? The winter cold chills me,” said she, drawing near.

The great Setchène raised his head and asked:

“Why comest thou here? What dost thou seek?”

“I am looking for strawberries,” said she.

“We are in the midst of winter,” replied Setchène; “strawberries do not grow in the snow.”

“I know,” said the girl sadly, “but my sister and stepmother have ordered me to bring them strawberries; if I do not they will kill me. Pray, good shepherds, tell me where to find them.”

The great Setchène arose, crossed over to the month opposite him, and putting the wand into his hand, said:

“Brother Tchervène (June), do thou take the highest place.”

Tchervène obeyed, and as he waved his wand over the fire the flames leapt towards the sky. Instantly the snow melted, the earth was covered with verdure, trees were clothed with leaves, birds began to sing, and various flowers blossomed in the forest. It was summer. Under the bushes masses of star-shaped flowers changed into ripening strawberries. Before Marouckla had time to cross herself they covered the glade, making it look like a sea of blood.

"Gather them quickly, Marouckla," said Tchervène.

Joyfully she thanked the months, and having filled her apron ran happily home. Helen and her mother wondered at seeing the strawberries, which filled the house with their delicious fragrance.

"Wherever did you find them?" asked Helen crossly.

"Right up among the mountains; those from under the beech trees are not bad."

Helen gave a few to her mother and ate the rest herself; not one did she offer to her step-sister. Being tired of strawberries, on the third day she took a fancy for some fresh red apples.

"Run, Marouckla," said she, "and fetch me fresh red apples from the mountain."

"Apples in winter, sister? why, the trees have neither leaves nor fruit."

"Idle slut, go this minute," said Helen; "unless you bring back apples we will kill you."

As before, the stepmother seized her roughly and turned her out of the house. The poor girl went weeping up the mountain, across the deep snow upon which lay no human footprint, and on towards the fire round which were the twelve months. Motionless sat they, and on the highest stone was the great Setchène.

"Men of God, may I warm myself at your fire? The winter cold chills me," said she, drawing near.

The great Setchène raised his head.

“Why com’st thou here? What dost thou seek?” asked he.

“I am come to look for red apples,” replied Marouckla.

“But this is winter, and not the season for red apples,” observed the great Setchène.

”I know,” answered the girl, “but my sister and stepmother sent me to fetch red apples from the mountain; if I return without them they will kill me.”

Thereupon the great Setchène arose and went over to one of the elderly months, to whom he handed the wand, saying:

“Brother Zaré (September), do thou take the highest place.”

Zaré moved to the highest stone and waved his wand over the fire. There was a flare of red flames, the snow disappeared, but the fading leaves which trembled on the trees were sent by a cold north-east wind in yellow masses to the glade. Only a few flowers of autumn were visible, such as the fleabane and red gillyflower, autumn colchicums in the ravine, and under the beeches bracken and tufts of northern heather. At first Marouckla looked in vain for red apples. Then she espied a tree which grew at a great height, and from the branches of this hung the bright red fruit. Zaré ordered her to gather some quickly. The girl was delighted and shook the tree. First one apple fell, then another.

“That is enough,” said Zaré, “hurry home.”

Thanking the months, she returned joyfully. Helen marvelled and the stepmother wondered at seeing the fruit.

“Where did you gather them?” asked the step-sister.

“There are more on the mountain top,” answered Marouckla.

“Then why did you not bring more?” said Helen angrily; “you must have eaten them on your way back, you wicked girl.”

“No, dear sister, I have not even tasted them,” said Marouckla. “I shook the tree twice; one apple fell each time. I was not allowed to shake it again, but was told to return home.”

“May Perum smite you with his thunderbolt,” said Helen, striking her.

Marouckla prayed to die rather than suffer such ill-treatment. Weeping bitterly, she took refuge in the kitchen. Helen and her mother found the apples more delicious than any they had ever tasted, and when they had eaten both longed for more.

“Listen, mother,” said Helen. “Give me my cloak; I will fetch some more apples myself, or else that good-for-nothing wretch will eat them all on the way. I shall be able to find the mountain and the tree. The shepherds may cry ‘Stop,’ but I shall not leave go till I have shaken down all the apples.”

In spite of her mother’s advice she put on her pelisse, covered her head with a warm hood, and took the road to the mountain. The mother stood and watched her till she was lost in the distance.

Snow covered everything, not a human footprint was to be seen on its surface. Helen lost herself and wandered hither and thither. After a while she saw a light above her, and following in its direction reached the mountain top. There was the flaming fire, the twelve blocks of stone, and the twelve months. At first she was frightened and hesitated; then she came nearer and warmed her hands. She did not ask permission, nor did she speak one polite word.

“What has brought thee here? What dost thou seek?” said the great Setchène severely.

“I am not obliged to tell you, old greybeard; what business is it of yours?” she replied disdainfully, turning her back on the fire and going towards the forest.

The great Setchène frowned, and waved his wand over his head. Instantly the sky became covered with clouds, the fire went down, snow fell in large flakes, an icy wind howled round the mountain. Amid the fury of the storm Helen added curses against her step-sister. The pelisse failed to warm her benumbed limbs. The mother kept on waiting for her; she looked from the window, she watched from the doorstep, but her daughter came not. The hours passed slowly, but Helen did not return.

“Can it be that the apples have charmed her from her home?” thought the mother. Then she clad herself in hood and pelisse and went in search of her daughter. Snow fell in huge masses; it covered all things, it lay untouched by human footsteps. For long she wandered hither and thither; the icy north-east wind whistled in the mountain, but no voice answered her cries.

Day after day Marouckla worked and prayed, and waited; but neither stepmother nor sister returned, they had been frozen to death on the mountain. The inheritance of a small house, a field, and a cow fell to Marouckla. In course of time an honest farmer came to share them with her, and their lives were happy and peaceful.

2

THE SUN OR THE THREE GOLDEN HAIRS OF THE OLD MAN VSÉVÈDE

Can this be a true story? It is said that once there was a king who was exceedingly fond of hunting the wild beasts in his forests. One day he followed a stag so far and so long that he lost his way. Alone and overtaken by night, he was glad to find himself near a small thatched cottage in which lived a charcoal-burner.

”Will you kindly show me the way to the high-road? You shall be handsomely rewarded.”

“I would willingly,” said the charcoal-burner, “but God is going to send my wife a little child, and I cannot leave her alone. Will you pass the night under our roof? There is a truss of sweet hay in the loft where you may rest, and to-morrow morning I will be your guide.”

The king accepted the invitation and went to bed in the loft. Shortly after a son was born to the charcoal-burner’s wife. But the king could not sleep. At midnight he heard noises in the house, and looking through a crack in the flooring he saw the charcoal-burner asleep, his wife almost in a faint, and by the side of the newly-born babe three old women dressed in white, each holding a lighted taper in her hand, and all talking together. Now these were the three Soudiché or Fates, you must know.

The first said, “On this boy I bestow the gift of confronting great dangers.”

The second said, “I bestow the power of happily escaping all these dangers, and of living to a good old age.”

The third said, “I bestow upon him for wife the princess born at the selfsame hour as he, and daughter of the very king sleeping above in the loft.”

At these words the lights went out and silence reigned around.

Now the king was greatly troubled, and wondered exceedingly; he felt as if he had received a sword-thrust in the chest. He lay awake all night thinking how to prevent the words of the Fates from coming true.

With the first glimmer of morning light the baby began to cry. The charcoal-burner, on going over to it, found that his wife was dead.

“Poor little orphan,” he said sadly, “what will become of thee without a mother’s care?”

“Confide this child to me,” said the king, “I will look after it. He shall be well provided for. You shall be given a sum of money large enough to keep you without having to burn charcoal.”

The poor man gladly agreed, and the king went away promising to send some one for the child. The queen and courtiers thought it would be an agreeable surprise for the king to hear that a charming little princess had been born on the night he was away. But instead of being pleased he frowned, and calling one of his servants, said to him, “Go to the charcoal-burner’s cottage in the forest, and give the man this purse in exchange for a new-born infant. On your way back drown the child. See well that he is drowned, for if he should in any way escape, you yourself shall suffer in his place.”

The servant was given the child in a basket, and on reaching the centre of a narrow bridge that stretched across a wide and deep river, he threw both basket and baby into the water.

“A prosperous journey to you, Mr. Son-in-Law,” said the king, on hearing the servant’s story: for he fully believed the child was drowned. But it was far from being the case; the little one was floating happily along in its basket cradle, and slumbering as sweetly as if his mother had sung him to sleep. Now it happened that a fisherman, who was mending his nets before his cottage door, saw the basket floating down the river. He jumped at once into his boat, picked it up, and ran to tell his wife the good news.

"Look," said he, "you have always longed for a son; here is a beautiful little boy the river has sent us."

The woman was delighted, and took the infant and loved it as her own child. They named him *Plavacek* (the floater), because he had come to them floating on the water.

The river flowed on. Years passed away. The little baby grew into a handsome youth; in all the villages round there were none to compare with him. Now it happened that one summer day the king was riding unattended. And the heat being very great he reined in his horse before the fisherman's door to ask for a drink of water. Plavacek brought the water. The king looked at him attentively, then turning to the fisherman, said, "That is a good-looking lad; is he your son?"

"He is and he isn't," replied the fisherman. "I found him, when he was quite a tiny baby, floating down the stream in a basket. So we adopted him and brought him up as our own son."

The king turned as pale as death, for he guessed that he was the same child he had ordered to be drowned. Then recovering himself he got down from his horse and said: "I want a trusty messenger to take a letter to the palace, could you send him with it?"

"With pleasure! Your majesty may be sure of its safe delivery."

Thereupon the king wrote to the queen as follows—

"The man who brings you this letter is the most dangerous of all my enemies. Have his head cut off at once; no delay, no pity, he must be executed before my return. Such is my will and pleasure."

This he carefully folded and sealed with the royal seal.

Plavacek took the letter and set off immediately. But the forest through which he had to pass was so large, and the trees so thick, that he missed the path and was overtaken by the darkness before the journey was nearly over. In the midst of his trouble he met an old woman who said, “Where are you going, Plavacek? Where are you going?”

“I am the bearer of a letter from the king to the queen, but have missed the path to the palace. Could you, good mother, put me on the right road?”

“Impossible to-day, my child; it is getting dark, and you would not have time to get there. Stay with me to-night. You will not be with strangers, for I am your godmother.”

Plavacek agreed. Thereupon they entered a pretty little cottage that seemed suddenly to sink into the earth. Now while he slept the old woman changed his letter for another, which ran thus:—

“Immediately upon the receipt of this letter introduce the bearer to the princess our daughter. I have chosen this young man for my son-in-law, and it is my wish they should be married before my return to the palace. Such is my pleasure.”

The letter was duly delivered, and when the queen had read it, she ordered everything to be prepared for the wedding. Both she and her daughter greatly enjoyed Plavacek’s society, and nothing disturbed the happiness of the newly married pair.

Within a few days the king returned, and on hearing what had taken place was very angry with the queen.

“But you expressly bade me have the wedding before your return. Come, read your letter again, here it is,” said she.

He closely examined the letter; the paper, handwriting, seal—all were undoubtedly his. He then called his son-in-law, and questioned him about his journey. Plavacek hid nothing: he told how he had lost his way, and how he had passed the night in a cottage in the forest.

“What was the old woman like?” asked the king.

From Plavacek’s description the king knew it was the very same who, twenty years before, had foretold the marriage of the princess with the charcoal-burner’s son. After some moments’ thought the king said, “What is done is done. But you will not become my son-in-law so easily. No, i’ faith! As a wedding present you must bring me three golden hairs from the head of Dède-Vsévède.”

In this way he thought to get rid of his son-in-law, whose very presence was distasteful to him. The young fellow took leave of his wife and set off. “I know not which way to go,” said he to himself, “but my godmother the witch will surely help me.”

But he found the way easily enough. He walked on and on and on for a long time over mountain, valley, and river, until he reached the shores of the Black Sea. There he found a boat and boatman.

“May God bless you, old boatman,” said he.

“And you, too, my young traveller. Where are you going?”

”To Dède-Vsévède’s castle for three of his golden hairs.”

“Ah, then you are very welcome. For a long weary while I have been waiting for such a messenger as you. I have been ferrying passengers across for these twenty years, and not one of them has done anything to help me. If you will promise to ask Dède-Vsévède when I shall be released from my toil I will row you across.”

Plavacek promised, and was rowed to the opposite bank. He continued his journey on foot until he came in sight of a large town half in ruins, near which was passing a funeral procession. The king of that country was following his father’s coffin, and with the tears running down his cheeks.

“May God comfort you in your distress,” said Plavacek.

“Thank you, good traveller. Where are you going?”

“To the house of Dède-Vsévède in quest of three of his golden hairs.”

“To the house of Dède-Vsévède? indeed! What a pity you did not come sooner, we have long been expecting such a messenger as you. Come and see me by and bye."

When Plavacek presented himself at court the king said to him:

"We understand you are on your way to the house of Dède-Vsévède? Now we have an apple-tree here that bears the fruit of everlasting youth. One of these apples eaten by a man, even though he be dying, will cure him and make him young again. For the last twenty years neither fruit nor flower has been found on this tree. Will you ask Dède-Vsévède the cause of it?"

"That I will, with pleasure."

Then Plavacek continued his journey, and as he went he came to a large and beautiful city where all was sad and silent. Near the gate was an old man who leant on a stick and walked with difficulty.

"May God bless you, good old man."

"And you, too, my handsome young traveller. Where are you going?"

"To Dède-Vsévède's palace in search of three of his golden hairs."

"Ah, you are the very messenger I have so long waited for. Allow me to take you to my master the king."

On their arrival at the palace, the king said, "I hear you are an ambassador to Dède-Vsévède. We have here a well, the water of which renews itself. So wonderful are its effects that invalids are immediately cured on drinking it, while a few drops sprinkled on a corpse will bring it to life again. For the past twenty years this well has remained dry: if you will ask old Dède-Vsévède how the flow of water may be restored I will reward you royally."

Plavacek promised to do so, and was dismissed with good wishes. He then travelled through deep dark forests, in the midst of which might be seen a large meadow; out of it grew lovely flowers, and in the centre stood a castle built of gold. It was the home of Dède-Vsévède. So brilliant with light was it that it seemed to be built of fire. When he entered there was no one there but an old woman spinning.

“Greeting, Plavacek, I am well pleased to see you.”

She was his godmother, who had given him shelter in her cottage when he was the bearer of the king’s letter.

”Tell me what brings you here from such a distance,” she went on.

“The king would not have me for his son-in-law, unless I first got him three golden hairs from the head of Dède-Vsévède. So he sent me here to fetch them.”

The Fate laughed. “Dède-Vsévède indeed! Why, I am his mother, it is the shining sun himself. He is a child at morning time, a grown man at midday, a decrepit old man, looking as if he had lived a hundred years, at eventide. But I will see that you have the three hairs from his head; I am not your godmother for nothing. All the same you must not remain here. My son is a good lad, but when he comes home he is hungry, and would very probably order you to be roasted for his supper. Now I will turn this empty bucket upside down, and you shall hide underneath it.”

Plavacek begged the Fate to obtain from Dède-Vsévède the answers to the three questions he had been asked.

“I will do so certainly, but you must listen to what he says.”

Suddenly a blast of wind howled round the palace, and the Sun entered by a western window. He was an old man with golden hair.

“I smell human flesh,” cried he, “I am sure of it. Mother, you have some one here.”

“Star of day,” she replied, “whom could I have here that you would not see sooner than I? The fact is that in your daily journeys the scent of human flesh is always with you, so when you come home at evening it clings to you still.”

The old man said nothing, and sat down to supper. When he had finished he laid his golden head on the Fate’s lap and went to sleep. Then she pulled out a hair and threw it on the ground. It fell with a metallic sound like the vibration of a guitar string.

“What do you want, mother?” asked he.

“Nothing, my son; I was sleeping, and had a strange dream.”

“What was it, mother?”

“I thought I was in a place where there was a well, and the well was fed from a spring, the water of which cured all diseases. Even the dying were restored to health on drinking that water, and the dead who were sprinkled with it came to life again. For the last twenty years the well has run dry. What must be done to restore the flow of water?”

“That is very simple. A frog has lodged itself in the opening of the spring, this prevents the flow of water. Kill the frog, and the water will return to the well.”

He slept again, and the old woman pulled out another golden hair, and threw it on the ground.

“Mother, what do you want?”

“Nothing, my son, nothing; I was dreaming. In my dream I saw a large town, the name of which I have forgotten. And there grew an apple-tree the fruit of which had the power to make the old young again. A single apple eaten by an old man would restore to him the vigour and freshness of youth. For twenty years this tree has not borne fruit. What can be done to make it fruitful?”

“The means are not difficult. A snake hidden among the roots destroys the sap. Kill the snake, transplant the tree, and the fruit will grow as before.”

He again fell asleep, and the old woman pulled out another golden hair.

“Now look here, mother, why will you not let me sleep?” said the old man, really vexed; and he would have got up.

“Lie down, my darling son, do not disturb yourself. I am sorry I awoke you, but I have had a very strange dream. It seemed that I saw a boatman on the shores of the Black Sea, and he complained that he had been toiling at the ferry for twenty years without any one having come to take his place. For how much longer must this poor old man continue to row?”

“He is a silly fellow. He has but to place his oars in the hands of the first comer and jump ashore. Whoever receives the oars will replace him as ferryman. But leave me in peace now, mother, and do not wake me again. I have to rise very early, and must first dry the eyes of a princess. The poor thing spends all night weeping for her husband who has been sent by the king to get three of my golden hairs.”

Next morning the wind whistled round Dède-Vsévède’s palace, and instead of an old man, a beautiful child with golden hair awoke on the old woman’s lap. It was the glorious sun. He bade her good-bye, and flew out of the eastern window. The old woman turned up the bucket and said to Plavacek, “Look, here are the three golden hairs. You now know the answers to your questions. May God direct you and send you a prosperous journey. You will not see me again, for you will have no further need of me.”

He thanked her gratefully and left her. On arriving at the town with the dried-up well, he was questioned by the king as to what news he had brought.

”Have the well carefully cleaned out,” said he, “kill the frog that obstructs the spring, and the wonderful water will flow again.”

The king did as he was advised, and rejoiced to see the water return. He gave Plavacek twelve swan-white horses, and as much gold and silver as they could carry.

On reaching the second town and being asked by the king what news he had brought, he replied, “Excellent; one could not wish for better. Dig up your apple-tree, kill the snake that lies among the roots, transplant the tree, and it will produce apples like those of former times.”

And all turned out as he had said, for no sooner was the tree replanted than it was covered with blossoms that gave it the appearance of a sea of roses. The delighted king gave him twelve raven-black horses, laden with as much wealth as they could carry. He then journeyed to the shores of the Black Sea. There the boatman questioned him as to what news he had brought respecting his release. Plavacek first crossed with his twenty-four horses to the opposite bank, and then replied that the boatman might gain his freedom by placing the oars in the hands of the first traveller who wished to be ferried over.

Plavacek’s royal father-in-law could not believe his eyes when he saw Dède-Vsévède’s three golden hairs. As for the princess, his young wife, she wept tears, but of joy, not sadness, to see her dear one again, and she said to him, “How did you get such splendid horses and so much wealth, dear husband?”

And he answered her, “All this represents the price paid for the weariness of spirit I have felt; it is the ready money for hardships endured and services given. Thus, I showed one king how to regain possession of the Apples of Youth: to another I told the secret of reopening the spring of water that gives health and life.”

“Apples of Youth! Water of Life!” interrupted the king. “I will certainly go and find these treasures for myself. Ah, what joy! having eaten of these apples I shall become young again; having drunk of the Water of Immortality, I shall live for ever.”

And he started off in search of these treasures. But he has not yet returned from his search.

3

KOVLAD

1 — The Sovereign of the Mineral Kingdom

Once upon a time, and a long long time ago it was, there lived a widow who had a very pretty daughter. The mother, good honest woman, was quite content with her station in life. But with the daughter it was otherwise; she, like a spoilt beauty, looked contemptuously upon her many admirers, her mind was full of proud and ambitious thoughts, and the more lovers she had, the prouder she became.

One beautiful moonlight night the mother awoke, and being unable to sleep, began to pray God for the happiness of her only child, though she often made her mother's life miserable. The fond woman looked lovingly at the beautiful daughter sleeping by her side, and she wondered, as she saw her smile, what happy dream had visited her. Then she finished her prayer, and laying her head on the girl's pillow, fell asleep. Next day she said, "Come, darling child, tell me what you were dreaming about last night, you looked so happy smiling in your sleep."

“Oh yes, mother, I remember. I had a very beautiful dream. I thought a rich nobleman came to our house, in a splendid carriage of brass, and gave me a ring set with stones, that sparkled like the stars of heaven. When I entered the church with him, it was full of people, and they all thought me divine and adorable, like the Blessed Virgin.”

“Ah! my child, what sin! May God keep you from such dreams.”

But the daughter ran away singing, and busied herself about the house. The same day a handsome young farmer drove into the village in his cart and begged them to come and share his country bread. He was a kind fellow, and the mother liked him much. But the daughter refused his invitation, and insulted him into the bargain.

“Even if you had driven in a carriage of brass,” she said, “and had offered me a ring set with stones shining as the stars in heaven, I would never have married you—you, a mere peasant!”

The young farmer was terribly upset at her words, and with a prayer for her soul, returned home a saddened man. But her mother scolded and reproached her.

The next night the woman again awoke, and taking her rosary prayed with still greater fervour, that God would bless her child. This time the girl laughed as she slept.

“What can the poor child be dreaming about?” she said to herself: and sighing she prayed for her again. Then she laid her head upon her pillow and tried in vain to sleep. In the morning, when her daughter was dressing, she said: “Well, my dear, you were dreaming again last night, and laughing like a maniac.”

“Was I? Listen, I dreamt a nobleman came for me in a silver carriage, and gave me a golden diadem. When I entered the church with him, the people admired and worshipped me more than the Blessed Virgin.”

“Ay me, what a terrible dream! what a wicked dream! Pray God not to lead you into temptation.”

Then she scolded her daughter severely and went out, slamming the door after her. That same day a carriage drove into the village, and some gentlemen invited mother and daughter to share the bread of the lord of the manor. The mother considered such an offer a great honour, but the daughter refused it and replied to the gentlemen scornfully: “Even if you had come to fetch me in a carriage of solid silver and had presented me with a golden diadem, I would never have consented to be the wife of your lord.”

The gentlemen turned away in disgust and returned home; the mother rebuked her severely for so much pride.

“Miserable, foolish girl!” she cried, “pride is a breath from hell. It is your duty to be humble, honest, and sweet-tempered.”

The daughter replied by a laugh.

The third night she slept soundly, but the poor woman at her side could not close her eyes. Tormented with dark forebodings, she feared some misfortune was about to happen, and counted her beads, praying fervently. All at once the young sleeper began to sneer and laugh.

”Merciful God! ah me!” cried the poor woman, “what are these dreams that worry her poor brain!”

In the morning she said, “What made you sneer so frightfully last night? You must have had bad dreams again, my poor child.”

“Now, mother, you look as if you were going to preach again.”

“No, no; but I want to know what you were dreaming about.”

“Well, I dreamt some one drove up in a golden carriage and asked me to marry him, and he brought me a mantle of cloth of pure gold. When we came into church, the crowd pressed forward to kneel before me.”

The mother wrung her hands piteously, and the girl left the room to avoid hearing her lamentations. That same day three carriages entered the yard, one of brass, one of silver, and one of gold. The first was drawn by two, the second by three, the third by four magnificent horses. Gentlemen wearing scarlet gloves and green mantles got out of the brass and silver carriages, while from the golden carriage alighted a prince who, as the sun shone on him, looked as if he were dressed in gold. They all made their way to the widow and asked for her daughter’s hand.

”I fear we are not worthy of so much honour,” replied the widow meekly, but when the daughter’s eyes fell upon her suitor she recognised in him the lover of her dreams, and withdrew to weave an aigrette of many-coloured feathers. In exchange for this aigrette which she offered her bridegroom, he placed upon her finger a ring set with stones that shone like the stars in heaven, and over her shoulders a mantle of cloth of gold. The young bride, beside herself with joy, retired to complete her toilette. Meanwhile the anxious mother, a prey to the blackest forebodings, said to her son-in-law, “My daughter has consented to share your bread, tell me of what sort of flour it is made?”

“In our house we have bread of brass, of silver, and of gold; my wife will be free to choose.”

Such a reply astonished her more than ever, and made her still more unhappy. The daughter asked no questions, was in fact content to know nothing, not even what her mother suffered. She looked magnificent in her bridal attire and golden mantle, but she left her home with the prince without saying good-bye either to her mother or to her youthful companions. Neither did she ask her mother’s blessing, though the latter wept and prayed for her safety.

After the marriage ceremony they mounted the golden carriage and set off, followed by the attendants of silver and brass. The procession moved slowly along the road without stopping until it reached the foot of a high rock. Here, instead of a carriage entrance, was a large cavern which led out into a steep slope down which the horses went lower and lower. The giant *Zémo-tras* (he who makes the earthquakes) closed the opening with a huge stone. They made their way in darkness for some time, the terrified bride being reassured by her husband.

“Fear nothing,” said he, “in a little while it will be clear and beautiful.”

Grotesque dwarfs, carrying lighted torches, appeared on all sides, saluted and welcomed their King Kovlad as they illumined the road for him and his attendants. Then for the first time the girl knew she had married Kovlad, but this mattered little to her. On coming out from these gloomy passages into the open they found themselves surrounded by large forests and mountains, mountains that seemed to touch the sky. And, strange to relate, all the trees of whatsoever kind, and even the mountains that seemed to touch the sky, were of solid lead. When they had crossed these marvellous mountains the giant Zémo-tras closed all the openings in the road they had passed. They then drove out upon vast and beautiful plains, in the centre of which was a golden palace covered with precious stones. The bride was weary with looking at so many wonders, and gladly sat down to the feast prepared by the dwarfs. Meats of many kinds were served, roast and boiled, but lo! they were of metal—brass, silver, and gold. Every one ate heartily and enjoyed the food, but the young wife, with tears in her eyes, begged for a piece of bread.

“Certainly, madam, with pleasure,” answered Kovlad. But she could not eat the bread which was brought, for it was of brass. Then the king sent for a piece of silver bread, still she could not eat it; and again for a slice of golden bread, that too she was unable to bite. The servants did all they could to get something to their mistress’s taste, but she found it impossible to eat anything.

“I should be most happy to gratify you,” said Kovlad “but we have no other kind of food.”

Then she realised for the first time in whose power she had placed herself, and she began to weep bitterly and wish she had taken her mother’s advice.

“It is of no use to weep and regret,” said Kovlad, “you must have known the kind of bread you would have to break here; your wish has been fulfilled.”

And so it was, for nothing can recall the past. The wretched girl was obliged henceforth to live underground with her husband Kovlad, the God of Metals, in his golden palace. And this because she had set her heart upon nothing but the possession of gold, and had never wished for anything better.

2 — The Lost Child

LONG LONG AGO THERE lived a very rich nobleman. But though he was so rich he was not happy, for he had no children to whom he could leave his wealth. He was, besides, no longer young. Every day he and his wife went to church to pray for a son. At last, after long waiting, God sent them what they desired. Now the evening before its arrival the father dreamed that its chance of living would depend upon one condition, namely, that its feet never touched the earth until it was twelve years old. Great care was taken that this should be avoided, and when the little stranger came, only trustworthy nurses were employed to look after him. As the years passed on the child was diligently guarded, sometimes he was carried in his nurses’ arms, sometimes rocked in his golden cradle, but his feet never touched the ground.

Now when the end of the time drew near the father began preparations for a magnificent feast which should be given to celebrate his son’s release. One day while these were in progress a frightful noise, followed by most unearthly yells, shook the castle. The nurse dropped the child in her terror and ran to the window: that instant the noises ceased. On turning to take up the boy, imagine her dismay when she found him no longer there, and remembered that she had disobeyed her master’s orders.

Hearing her screams and lamentations, all the servants of the castle ran to her. The father soon followed, asking, “What is the matter? What has happened? Where is my child?” The nurse, trembling and weeping, told of the disappearance of his son, his only child. No words can tell the anguish of the father’s heart. He sent servants in every direction to hunt for his boy, he gave orders, he begged and prayed, he threw away money right and left, he promised everything if only his son might be restored to him. Search was made without loss of time, but no trace of him could be discovered; he had vanished as completely as if he had never existed.

Many years later the unhappy nobleman learnt that in one of the most beautiful rooms of the castle, footsteps, as of some one walking up and down, and dismal groans, were heard every midnight. Anxious to follow the matter up, for he thought it might in some way concern his lost son, he made known that a reward of three hundred gold pieces would be given to any one who would watch for one whole night in the haunted room. Many were willing, but had not the courage to stay till the end; for at midnight, when the dismal groans were heard, they would run away rather than risk their lives for three hundred gold pieces. The poor father was in despair, and knew not how to discover the truth of this dark mystery.

Now close to the castle dwelt a widow, a miller by trade, who had three daughters. They were very poor, and hardly earned enough for their daily needs. When they heard of the midnight noises in the castle and the promised reward, the eldest daughter said, “As we are so very poor we have nothing to lose; surely we might try to earn these three hundred gold pieces by remaining in the room one night. I should like to try, mother, if you will let me.”

The mother shrugged her shoulders, she hardly knew what to say; but when she thought of their poverty and the difficulty they had to earn a living she gave permission for her eldest daughter to remain one night in the haunted room. Then the daughter went to ask the nobleman’s consent.

“Have you really the courage to watch for a whole night in a room haunted by ghosts? Are you sure you are not afraid, my good girl?”

“I am willing to try this very night,” she replied. “I would only ask you to give me some food to cook for my supper, for I am very hungry.”

Orders were given that she should be supplied with everything she wanted, and indeed enough food was given her, not for one supper only, but for three. With the food, some dry firewood and a candle, she entered the room. Like a good housewife, she first lit the fire and put on her saucepans, then she laid the table and made the bed. This filled up the early part of the evening. The time passed so quickly that she was surprised to hear the clock strike twelve, while at the last stroke, footsteps, as of some one walking, shook the room, and dismal groans filled the air. The frightened girl ran from one corner to the other, but could not see any one. But the footsteps and the groans did not cease. Suddenly a young man approached her and asked, “For whom is this food cooked?”

“For myself,” she said.

The gentle face of the stranger saddened, and after a short silence he asked again, “And this table, for whom is it laid?”

“For myself,” she replied.

The brow of the young man clouded over, and the beautiful blue eyes filled with tears as he asked once more, “And this bed, for whom have you made it?”

“For myself,” replied she in the same selfish and indifferent tone.

Tears fell from his eyes as he waved his arms and vanished.

Next morning she told the nobleman all that had happened, but without mentioning the painful impression her answers had made upon the stranger. The three hundred golden crowns were paid, and the father was thankful to have at last heard something that might possibly lead to the discovery of his son.

On the following day the second daughter, having been told by her sister what to do and how to answer the stranger, went to the castle to offer her services. The nobleman willingly agreed, and orders were given that she should be provided with everything she might want. Without loss of time she entered the room, lit the fire, put on the saucepans, spread a white cloth upon the table, made the bed, and awaited the hour of midnight. When the young stranger appeared and asked, “For whom is this food prepared? for whom is the table laid? for whom is the bed made?” she answered as her sister had bidden her, “For me, for myself only.”

As on the night before, he burst into tears, waved his arms, and suddenly disappeared.

Next morning she told the nobleman all that had happened except the sad impression her answers had made upon the stranger. The three hundred gold pieces were given her, and she went home.

On the third day the youngest daughter wanted to try her fortune.

“Sisters,” said she, “as you have succeeded in earning three hundred gold crowns each, and so helping our dear mother, I too should like to do my part and remain a night in the haunted room.”

Now the widow loved her youngest daughter more dearly than the others, and dreaded to expose her to any danger; but as the elder ones had been successful, she allowed her to take her chance. So with the instructions from her sisters as to what she should do and say, and with the nobleman’s consent and abundant provisions, she entered the haunted room. Having lit the fire, put on the saucepans, laid the table and made the bed, she awaited with hope and fear the hour of midnight.

As twelve o’clock struck, the room was shaken by the footsteps of some one who walked up and down, and the air was filled with cries and groans. The girl looked everywhere, but no living being could she see. Suddenly there stood before her a young man who asked in a sweet voice, “For whom have you prepared this food?”

Now her sisters had told her how to answer and how to act, but when she looked into the sad eyes of the stranger she resolved to treat him more kindly.

“Well, you do not answer me; for whom is the food prepared?” he asked again impatiently, as she made no reply. Somewhat confused, she said, “I prepared it for myself, but you too are welcome to it.”

At these words his brow grew more serene.

“And this table, for whom is it spread?”

“For myself, unless you will honour me by being my guest.”

A bright smile illumined his face.

“And this bed, for whom have you made it?”

“For myself, but if you have need of rest it is for you.”

He clapped his hands for joy and replied, “Ah, that’s right; I accept the invitation with pleasure, and all that you have been so kind as to offer me. But wait, I pray you wait for me; I must first thank my kind friends for the care they have taken of me.”

A fresh warm breath of spring filled the air, while at the same moment a deep precipice opened in the middle of the floor. He descended lightly, and she, anxious to see what would happen, followed him, holding on to his mantle. Thus they both reached the bottom of the precipice. Down there a new world opened itself before her eyes. To the right flowed a river of liquid gold, to the left rose high mountains of solid gold, in the centre lay a large meadow covered with millions of flowers. The stranger went on, the girl followed unnoticed. And as he went he saluted the field flowers as old friends, caressing them and leaving them with regret. Then they came to a forest where the trees were of gold. Many birds of different kinds began to sing, and flying round the young stranger perched familiarly on his head and shoulders. He spoke to and petted each one. While thus engaged, the girl broke off a branch from one of the golden trees and hid it in remembrance of this strange land.

Leaving the forest of gold, they reached a wood where all the trees were of silver. Their arrival was greeted by an immense number of animals of various kinds. These crowded together and pushed one against another to get close to their friend. He spoke to each one and stroked and petted them. Meanwhile the girl broke off a branch of silver from one of the trees, saying to herself, “These will serve me as tokens of this wonderful land, for my sisters would not believe me if I only told them of it.”

When the young stranger had taken leave of all his friends he returned by the paths he had come, and the girl followed without being seen. Arrived at the foot of the precipice, he began to ascend, she coming silently after, holding on to his mantle. Up they went higher and higher, until they reached the room in the castle. The floor closed up without trace of the opening. The girl returned to her place by the fire, where she was standing when the young man approached.

“All my farewells have been spoken,” said he, “now we can have supper.”

She hastened to place upon the table the food so hurriedly prepared, and sitting side by side they supped together. When they had made a good meal he said, “Now it is time to rest.”

He lay down on the carefully-made bed, and the girl placed by his side the gold and silver branches she had picked in the Mineral Land. In a few moments he was sleeping peacefully.

Next day the sun was already high in the sky, and yet the girl had not come to give an account of herself. The nobleman became impatient; he waited and waited, becoming more and more uneasy. At last he determined to go and see for himself what had happened. Picture to yourself his surprise and joy, when on entering the haunted chamber he saw his long-lost son sleeping on the bed, while beside him sat the widow’s beautiful daughter. At that moment the son awoke. The father, overwhelmed with joy, summoned the attendants of the castle to rejoice with him in his new-found happiness.

Then the young man saw the two branches of metal, and said with astonishment, “What do I see? Did you then follow me down there? Know that by this act you have broken the spell and released me from the enchantment. These two branches will make two palaces for our future dwelling.”

Thereupon he took the branches and threw them out of the window. Immediately there were seen two magnificent palaces, one of gold, the other of silver. And there they lived happily as man and wife, the nobleman’s son and the miller’s daughter. And if not dead they live there still.

4

THE MAID WITH HAIR OF GOLD

There was once a king so wise and clever that he understood the language of all animals. You shall hear how he gained this power.

One day an old woman came to the palace and said, “I wish to speak to his majesty, for I have something of great importance to tell him.” When admitted to his presence she presented him with a curious fish, saying, “Have it cooked for yourself, and when you have eaten it you will understand all that is said by the birds of the air, the animals that walk the earth, and the fishes that live under the waters.”

The king was delighted to know that which every one else was ignorant of, so he rewarded the old woman generously, and told a servant to cook the fish very carefully.

“But take care,” said the monarch, “that you do not taste it yourself, for if you do you will be killed.”

George, the servant, was astonished at such a threat, and wondered why his master was so anxious that no one else should eat any of the fish. Then examining it curiously he said, “Never in all my life have I seen such an odd-looking fish; it seems more like a reptile. Now where would be the harm if I did take some? Every cook tastes of the dishes he prepares.”

When it was fried he tasted a small piece, and while taking some of the sauce heard a buzzing in the air and a voice speaking in his ear.

“Let us taste a crumb: let us taste a little,” it said.

He looked round to see where the words came from, but there were only a few flies buzzing about in the kitchen. At the same moment some one out in the yard said in a harsh jerky voice, “Where are we going to settle? Where?”

And another answered, “In the miller’s barley-field; ho! for the miller’s field of barley.”

When George looked towards where this strange talk came he saw a gander flying at the head of a flock of geese.

“How lucky,” thought he; “now I know why my master set so much value on this fish and wished to eat it all himself.”

George had now no doubt that by tasting the fish he had learnt the language of animals, so after having taken a little more he served the king with the remainder as if nothing had happened.

When his majesty had dined he ordered George to saddle two horses and accompany him for a ride. They were soon off, the master in front, the servant behind.

While crossing a meadow George’s horse began to prance and caper, neighing out these words, “I say, brother, I feel so light and in such good spirits to-day that in one single bound I could leap over those mountains yonder.”

“I could do the same,” answered the king’s horse, “but I carry a feeble old man on my back; he would fall like a log and break his skull.”

“What does that matter to you? So much the better if he should break his head, for then, instead of being ridden by an old man you would probably be mounted by a young one.”

The servant laughed a good deal upon hearing this conversation between the horses, but he took care to do so on the quiet, lest the king should hear him. At that moment his majesty turned round, and, seeing a smile on the man’s face, asked the cause of it.

“Oh nothing, your majesty, only some nonsense that came into my head.”

The king said nothing, and asked no more questions, but he was suspicious, and distrusted both servant and horses; so he hastened back to the palace.

When there he said to George, “Give me some wine, but mind you only pour out enough to fill the glass, for if you put in one drop too much, so that it overflows, I shall certainly order my executioner to cut off your head.”

While he was speaking two birds flew near the window, one chasing the other, who carried three golden hairs in his beak.

“Give them me,” said one, “you know they are mine.”

“Not at all, I picked them up myself.”

“No matter, I saw them fall while the Maid with Locks of Gold was combing out her hair. At least, give me two, then you can keep the third for yourself.”

“No, not a single one.”

Thereupon one of the birds succeeded in seizing the hairs from the other bird’s beak, but in the struggle he let one fall, and it made a sound as if a piece of metal had struck the ground. As for George, he was completely taken off his guard, and the wine overflowed the glass.

The king was furious, and feeling convinced that his servant had disobeyed him and had learnt the language of animals, he said, “You scoundrel, you deserve death for having failed to do my bidding, nevertheless, I will show you mercy upon one condition, that you bring me the Maid with the Golden Locks, for I intend to marry her.”

Alas, what was to be done? Poor fellow, he was willing to do anything to save his life, even run the risk of losing it on a long journey. He therefore promised to search for the Maid with the Golden Locks: but he knew not where or how to find her.

When he had saddled and mounted his horse he allowed it to go its own way, and it carried him to the outskirts of a dark forest, where some shepherds had left a bush burning. The sparks of fire from the bush endangered the lives of a large number of ants which had built their nest close by, and the poor little things were hurrying away in all directions, carrying their small white eggs with them.

"Help us in our distress, good George," they cried in a plaintive voice; "do not leave us to perish, together with our children whom we carry in these eggs."

George immediately dismounted, cut down the bush, and put out the fire.

"Thank you, brave man: and remember, when you are in trouble you have only to call upon us, and we will help you in our turn." The young fellow went on his way far into the forest until he came to a very tall fir tree. At the top of the tree was a raven's nest, while at the foot, on the ground, lay two young ones who were calling out to their parents and saying, "Alas, father and mother, where have you gone? You have flown away, and we have to seek our food, weak and helpless as we are. Our wings are as yet without feathers, how then shall we be able to get anything to eat? Good George," said they, turning to the young man, "do not leave us to starve."

Without stopping to think, the young man dismounted, and with his sword slew his horse to provide food for the young birds. They thanked him heartily, and said, "If ever you should be in distress, call to us and we will help you at once."

After this George was obliged to travel on foot, and he walked on for a long time, ever getting further and further into the forest. On reaching the end of it, he saw stretching before him an immense sea that seemed to mingle with the horizon. Close by stood two men disputing the possession of a large fish with golden scales that had fallen into their net.

“The net belongs to me,” said one, “therefore the fish must be mine.”

“Your net would not have been of the slightest use, for it would have been lost in the sea, had I not come with my boat just in the nick of time.”

“Well, you shall have the next haul I make.”

“And suppose you should catch nothing? No; give me this one and keep the next haul for yourself.”

“I am going to put an end to your quarrel,” said George, addressing them. “Sell me the fish: I will pay you well, and you can divide the money between you.”

Thereupon he put into their hands all the money the king had given him for the journey, without keeping a single coin for himself. The fishermen rejoiced at the good fortune which had befallen them, but George put the fish back into the water. The fish, thankful for this unexpected freedom, dived and disappeared, but returning to the surface, said, “Whenever you may need my help you have but to call me, I shall not fail to show my gratitude.”

“Where are you going?” asked the fisherman.

“I am in search of a wife for my old master; she is known as the Maid with the Golden Locks: but I am at a loss where to find her.”

“If that be all, we can easily give you information,” answered they. “She is Princess Zlato Vlaska, and daughter of the king whose crystal palace is built on that island yonder. The golden light from the princess’s hair is reflected on sea and sky every morning when she combs it. If you would like to go to the island we will take you there for nothing, in return for the clever and generous way by which you made us stop quarrelling. But beware of one thing: when in the palace do not make a mistake as to which is the princess, for there are twelve of them, but only Zlato Vlaska has hair of gold.”

When George reached the island he lost no time in making his way to the palace, and demanded from the king the hand of his daughter, Princess

Zlato Vlaska, in marriage to the king his master.

“I will grant the request with pleasure,” said his majesty, “but only on one condition, namely, that you perform certain tasks which I will set you. These will be three in number, and must be done in three days, just as I order you. For the present you had better rest and refresh yourself after your journey.”

On the next day the king said, “My daughter, the Maid with the Golden Hair, had a string of fine pearls, and the thread having broken, the pearls were scattered far and wide among the long grass of this field. Go and pick up every one of the pearls, for they must all be found.”

George went into the meadow, which was of great length and stretched away far out of sight. He went down on his knees and hunted between the tufts of grass and bramble from morning until noon, but not a single pearl could he find.

”Ah, if I only had my good little ants here,” he cried, “they would be able to help me.”

“Here we are, young man, at your service,” answered the ants, suddenly appearing. Then they all ran round him, crying out, “What is the matter? What do you want?”

“I have to find all the pearls lost in this field, and cannot see a single one: can you help me?”

“Wait a little, we will soon get them for you.”

He had not to wait very long, for they brought him a heap of pearls, and all he had to do was to thread them on the string. Just as he was about to make a knot he saw a lame ant coming slowly towards him, for one of her feet had been burned in the bush fire.

“Wait a moment, George,” she called out; “do not tie the knot before threading this last pearl I am bringing you.”

When George took his pearls to the king, his majesty first counted them to make sure they were all there, and then said, “You have done very well in this test, to-morrow I will give you another.”

Early next morning the king summoned George to him and said, “My daughter, the Princess with the Golden Hair, dropped her gold ring into the sea while bathing. You must find the jewel and bring it me to-day.”

The young fellow walked thoughtfully up and down the beach. The water was pure and transparent, but he could not see beyond a certain distance into its depths, and therefore could not tell where the ring was lying beneath the water.

“Ah, my golden fishling, why are you not here now? You would surely be able to help me,” he said to himself, speaking aloud.

“Here I am,” answered the fish’s voice from the sea, “what can I do for you?”

“I have to find a gold ring which has been dropped in the sea, but as I cannot see to the bottom there is no use looking.”

The fish said, “Fortunately I have just met a pike, wearing a gold ring on his fin. Just wait a moment, will you?”

In a very short time he reappeared with the pike and the ring. The pike willingly gave up the jewel.

The king thanked George for his cleverness, and then told him the third task. “If you really wish me to give the hand of my daughter with the golden hair to the monarch who has sent you here, you must bring me two things that I want above everything: the Water of Death and the Water of Life.”

George had not the least idea where to find these waters, so he determined to trust to chance and “follow his nose,” as the saying is. He went first in one direction and then in another, until he reached a dark forest.

“Ah, if my little ravens were but here, perhaps they would help me,” he said aloud.

Suddenly there was heard a rushing noise, as of wings overhead, and then down came the ravens calling “Krâk, krâk, here we are, ready and willing to help you. What are you looking for?”

“I want some of the Water of Death and the Water of Life: it is impossible for me to find them, for I don’t know where to look.”

”Krâk, krâk, we know very well where to find some. Wait a moment.”

Off they went immediately, but soon returned, each with a small gourd in his beak. One gourd contained the Water of Life, the other the Water of Death.

George was delighted with his success, and went back on his way to the palace. When nearly out of the forest, he saw a spider’s web hanging between two fir trees, while in the centre was a large spider devouring a fly he had just killed. George sprinkled a few drops of the Water of Death on the spider; it immediately left the fly, which rolled to the ground like a ripe cherry, but on being touched with the Water of Life she began to move, and stretching out first one limb and then another, gradually freed herself from the spider’s web. Then she spread her wings and took flight, having first buzzed these words in the ears of her deliverer: “George, you have assured your own happiness by restoring mine, for without my help you would never have succeeded in recognising the Princess with the Golden Hair when you choose her to-morrow from among her twelve sisters.”

And the fly was right, for though the king, on finding that George had accomplished the third task, agreed to give him his daughter Zlato Vlaska, he yet added that he would have to find her himself.

He then led him to a large room and bade him choose from among the twelve charming girls who sat at a round table. Each wore a kind of linen head-dress that completely hid the upper part of the head, and in such a way that the keenest eye could not discover the colour of the hair.

”Here are my daughters,” said the king, “but only one among them has golden hair. If you find her you may take her with you; but if you make a mistake she will remain with us, and you will have to return empty-handed.”

George felt much embarrassed, not knowing what course to take.

“Buzz, Buzz, come walk round these young girls, and I will tell you which is yours.”

Thus spoke the fly whose life George had saved.

Thus reassured he walked boldly round, pointing at them one after the other and saying, “This one has not the golden hair, nor this one either, nor this….”

Suddenly, having been told by the fly, he cried, “Here we are: this is Zlato Vlaska, even she herself. I take her for my own, she whom I have won, and for whom I have paid the price with many cares. You will not refuse her me this time.”

“Indeed, you have guessed aright,” replied the king.

The princess rose from her seat, and letting fall her head-dress, exposed to full view all the splendour of her wonderful hair, which seemed like a waterfall of golden rays, and covered her from head to foot. The glorious light that shone from it dazzled the young man’s eyes, and he immediately fell in love with her.

The king provided his daughter with gifts worthy of a queen, and she left her father’s palace in a manner befitting a royal bride. The journey back was accomplished without any mishaps.

On their arrival the old king was delighted at the sight of Zlato Vlaska, and danced with joy. Splendid and costly preparations were made for the wedding. His majesty then said to George, “You robbed me of the secret of animal language. For this I intended to have your head cut off and your body thrown to birds of prey. But as you have served me so faithfully and won the princess for my bride I will lessen the punishment—that is, although you will be executed, yet you shall be buried with all the honours worthy of a superior officer.”

So the sentence was carried out, cruelly and unjustly. After the execution the Princess with the Golden Hair begged the king to make her a present of George’s body, and the monarch was so much in love that he could not refuse his intended bride anything.

Zlato Vlaska with her own hands replaced the head on the body, and sprinkled it with the Water of Death. Immediately the separated parts became one again. Upon this she poured the Water of Life, and George returned to life, fresh as a young roebuck, his face radiant with health and youth.

“Ah me! How well I have slept,” said he, rubbing his eyes.

“Yes; no one could have slept better,” answered the princess, smiling, “but without me you would have slept through eternity.”

When the old king saw George restored to life, and looking younger, handsomer, and more vigorous than ever, he too wanted to be made young again. He therefore ordered his servants to cut off his head and sprinkle it with the Life-Giving Water. They cut it off, but he did not come to life again, although they sprinkled his body with all the water that was left. Perhaps they made some mistake in using the wrong water, for the head and body were joined, but life itself never returned, there being no Water of Life left for that purpose. No one knew where to get any, and none understood the language of animals.

So, to make a long story short, George was proclaimed king, and the Princess with Hair of Gold, who really loved him, became his queen.

5

THE JOURNEY TO THE SUN AND THE MOON

There were once two young people who loved each other dearly. The young man was called Jean, the girl, Annette. In her sweetness she was like unto a dove, in her strength and bravery she resembled an eagle.

Her father was a rich farmer, and owned a large estate, but Jean's father was only a poor mountain shepherd. Annette did not in the least mind her lover being poor, for he was rich in goodness: nor did she think her father would object to their marrying.

One day Jean put on his best clothes, and went to ask the farmer for his daughter's hand. The farmer listened without interrupting him, and then replied, "If you would marry Annette, go and ask of the Sun why he does not warm the night as well as the day. Then inquire of the Moon why she does not shine by day as well as by night. When you return with these answers you shall not only have my daughter but all my wealth."

These conditions in no way daunted Jean, who placed his hat on the side of his head, and taking a loving farewell of Annette, set out in search of the Sun. On reaching a small town at the close of day, he looked about for a place wherein to pass the night. Some kind people offered him shelter and invited him to sup with them, inquiring as to the object of his journey. When they heard that he was on his way to visit the Sun and Moon, the master of the house begged him to ask the Sun why the finest pear-tree they had in the town had, for several years, ceased to bear fruit, for it used to produce the most delicious pears in the world.

Jean willingly promised to make this inquiry, and the next day continued his journey.

He walked on and on, over mountain and moor, through valley and dense forest, until he came to a land where there was no drinking water. The inhabitants, when they heard the object of Jean’s journey, begged him to ask the Sun and Moon why a well, that was the chief water supply of the district, no longer gave good water. Jean promised to do so, and resumed his journey.

After long and weary wanderings he reached the Sun’s abode, and found him about to start on his travels.

“O Sun,” said he, “stop one moment, do not depart without first answering a few questions.”

“Be quick then and speak, for I have to go all round the world to-day.”

“Pray tell me why you do not warm or light the earth by night as well as day?”

“For this simple reason, that if I did, the world and everything upon it would be very soon burnt up.”

Jean then put his questions concerning the pear-tree and the well. But the Sun replied that his sister, the Moon, would be able to answer him on those points.

Hardly had the Sun finished speaking before he was obliged to hurry off, and Jean travelled far and fast to meet the Moon. On coming up to her he said, “Would you kindly stop one moment? there are a few questions I should like to ask you.”

“Very well, be quick, for the earth is waiting for me,” answered she, and stood still at once.

“Tell me, dear Moon, why you do not light the world by day as well as by night? And why you never warm it?”

“Because if I lit up the world by day as well as by night the plants would produce neither fruit nor flower. And though I do not warm the earth, I supply it with dew, which makes it fertile and fruitful.”

She was then about to continue her course, but Jean, begging her to stop one moment longer, questioned her about the pear-tree which had ceased to bear fruit.

And she answered him thus: “While the king’s eldest daughter remained unmarried the tree bore fruit every year. After her wedding she had a little child who died and was buried under this tree. Since then there has been neither fruit nor flower on its branches: if the child be given Christian burial the tree will produce blossom and fruit as in the past.”

The Moon was just moving off when Jean begged her to stop and answer one more question, which was, why the inhabitants of a certain land were unable to obtain from their well the clear and wholesome water it had formerly poured forth.

She replied: “Under the mouth of the well, just where the water should flow, lies an enormous toad which poisons it continually: the brim of the well must be broken and the toad killed, then the water will be as pure and wholesome as formerly.”

The Moon then resumed her journey, for Jean had no more questions to ask her.

He joyfully went back to claim his Annette, but forgot not to stop on coming to the land where they were short of water. The inhabitants ran out to meet him, anxious to know what he had found out.

Jean led them to the well and there explained the instructions he had received from the Moon, at the same time showing them what to do. Sure enough, right underneath the brim of the well they found a horrible toad which poisoned everything. When they had killed it, the water immediately became pure and transparent, and sweet to the taste as before.

All the people brought Jean presents, and thus laden with riches he again set out. On arriving at the town where grew the unfruitful pear-tree, he was warmly welcomed by the prince, who at once asked if he had forgotten to question the stars about the tree.

“I never forget a promise once made,” replied Jean, “but I doubt whether it will be agreeable to your majesty to know the cause of the evil.”

He then related all the Moon had said, and when his directions had been carried out they were rewarded by seeing the tree blossom immediately. Jean was loaded with rich gifts, and the king presented him with a most valuable horse, by means of which he reached home very quickly.

Little Annette was wild with joy on hearing of her lover’s safe return, for she had wept and suffered much during his absence. But her father’s feelings were very different; he wished never to see Jean again, and had, indeed, sent him in search of the Sun with the hope that he might be burnt up by the heat. True it is that “Man proposes and God disposes.” Our young shepherd returned, not only safe and sound, but with more knowledge than any of his evil-wishers. For he had learnt why the Sun neither lights nor warms the earth by night as in the day; also why the Moon does not give warmth, and only lights up during the night. Besides all this he had brought with him riches which far exceeded those of his father-in-law, and a steed full of fire and vigour.

So Annette’s father could find no fault, and the wedding was celebrated with joy and feasting. Large quantities of roasted crane were eaten, and glasses overflowing with mead were emptied. So beautiful, too, was the music, that for long, long after it was heard to echo among the mountains, and even now its sweet sounds are heard at times by travellers among those regions.

6

THE DWARF WITH THE LONG BEARD

In a far distant land there reigned a king, and he had an only daughter who was so very beautiful that no one in the whole kingdom could be compared to her. She was known as Princess Pietnotka, and the fame of her beauty spread far and wide. There were many princes among her suitors, but her choice fell upon Prince Dobrotek. She obtained her father's consent to their marriage, and then, attended by a numerous suite, set off with her lover for the church, having first, as was the custom, received her royal parent's blessing. Most of the princes who had been unsuccessful in their wooing of Pietnotka returned disappointed to their own kingdoms: but one of them, a dwarf only seven inches high, with an enormous hump on his back and a beard seven feet long, who was a powerful prince and magician, was so enraged that he determined to have his revenge. So he changed himself into a whirlwind and lay in wait to receive the princess. When the wedding procession was about to enter the church the air was suddenly filled with a blinding cloud of dust, and Pietnotka was borne up high as the highest clouds, and then right down to an underground palace. There the dwarf, for it was he who had worked this spell, disappeared, leaving her in a lifeless condition.

When she opened her eyes she found herself in such a magnificent apartment that she imagined some king must have run away with her. She got up and began to walk about, when lo! as if by some unseen hand the table was laden with gold and silver dishes, filled with cakes of every kind. They looked so tempting, that in spite of her grief she could not resist tasting, and she continued to eat until she was more than satisfied. She returned to the sofa and lay down to rest, but being unable to sleep, she looked first at the door, and then at the lamp burning on the table, then at the door again, and then back to the lamp. Suddenly the door opened of itself, giving entrance to four negroes fully armed, and bearing a golden throne, upon which was seated the Dwarf with the Long Beard. He came close up to the sofa and attempted to kiss the princess, but she struck him such a blow in the face that a thousand stars swam before his eyes, and a thousand bells rang in his ears; upon which he gave such a shout, that the palace walls trembled. Yet his love for her was so great that he did his best not to show his anger, and turned away as if to leave her. But his feet became entangled in his long beard, and he fell down, dropping a cap he was carrying in his hand. Now this cap had the power of making its wearer invisible. The negroes hastened up to their master, and placing him on his throne bore him out.

Directly the princess found herself alone she jumped off the sofa, locked the door, and picking up the cap ran to a mirror to try it on and see how it suited her. Imagine her amazement when looking in the glass she saw—nothing at all! She took off the cap, and behold, she was there again as large as life. She soon found out what sort of cap it was, and rejoicing in the possession of such a marvel, put it on her head again and began to walk about the room. Soon the door was burst violently open, and the dwarf entered with his beard tied up. But he found neither the princess nor the cap, and so came to the conclusion that she had taken it. In a great rage he began to search high and low; he looked under all the furniture, behind the curtains, and even beneath the carpets, but it was all in vain. Meanwhile the princess, still invisible, had left the palace and run into the garden, which was very large and beautiful. There she lived at her ease, eating the delicious fruit, drinking water from the fountain, and enjoying the helpless fury of the dwarf, who sought her untiringly. Sometimes she would throw the fruit-stones in his face, or take off the cap and show herself for an instant: then she would put it on again, and laugh merrily at his rage.

One day, while playing this game, the cap caught in the branches of a gooseberry bush. The dwarf seeing this at once ran up, seized the princess in one hand and the cap in the other, and was about to carry both off when the sound of a war-trumpet was heard.

The dwarf trembled with rage and muttered a thousand curses. He breathed on the princess to send her to sleep, covered her with the invisible cap, and seizing a double-bladed sword, rose up in the air as high as the clouds, so that he might fall upon his assailant and kill him at one stroke. We shall now see with whom he had to deal.

After the hurricane had upset the wedding procession and carried off the princess, there arose a great tumult among those at court. The king, the princess's attendants, and Prince Dobrotek sought her in every direction, calling her by name, and making inquiries of every one they met. At last, the king in despair declared that if Prince Dobrotek did not bring back his daughter, he would destroy his kingdom and have him killed. And to the other princes present he promised that whosoever among them should bring Pietnotka back to him should have her for his wife and receive half of the kingdom. Whereupon they all mounted their horses without loss of time and dispersed in every direction.

Prince Dobrotek, overpowered with grief and dismay, travelled three days without eating, drinking, or sleeping. On the evening of the third day he was quite worn-out with fatigue, and stopping his horse in a field, got down to rest for a short time. Suddenly he heard cries, as of something in pain, and looking round saw an enormous owl tearing a hare with its claws. The prince laid hold of the first hard thing that came to his hand; he imagined it to be a stone, but it was really a skull, and aiming it at the owl, killed the bird with the first blow. The rescued hare ran up to him and gratefully licked his hands, after which it ran away: but the human skull spoke to him and said, “Prince Dobrotek, accept my grateful thanks for the good turn you have done me. I belonged to an unhappy man who took his own life, and for this crime of suicide I have been condemned to roll in the mud until I was the means of saving the life of one of God’s creatures. I have been kicked about for seven hundred and seventy years, crumbling miserably on the earth, and without exciting the compassion of a single individual. You have been the means of setting me free by making use of me to save the life of that poor hare. In return for this kindness I will teach you how to call to your aid a most marvellous horse, who during my life belonged to me. He will be able to help you in a thousand ways, and when in need of him you have only to walk out on the moorland without once looking behind you, and to say:

Dappled Horse with Mane of Gold,
Horse of Wonder! Come to me.
Walk not the earth, for I am told
You fly like birds o’er land and sea.

Finish your work of mercy by burying me here, so that I may be at rest until the day of judgment. Then depart in peace and be of good cheer.”

The prince dug a hole at the foot of a tree, and reverently buried the skull, repeating over it the prayers for the dead. Just as he finished he saw a small blue flame come out of the skull and fly towards heaven: it was the soul of the dead man on its way to the angels.

The prince made the sign of the cross and resumed his journey. When he had gone some way along the moorland he stopped, and without looking back tried the effect of the magic words, saying:

Dappled Horse with Mane of Gold,
Horse of Wonder! Come to me.
Walk not the earth, for I am told
You fly like birds o’er land and sea.

Then amid flash of lightning and roll of thunder appeared the horse. A horse, do I say? Why, he was a miracle of wonder. He was light as air, with dappled coat and golden mane. Flames came from his nostrils and sparks from his eyes. Volumes of steam rolled from his mouth and clouds of smoke issued from his ears. He stopped before the prince, and said in a human voice, “What are your orders, Prince Dobrotek?”

“I am in great trouble,” answered the prince, “and shall be glad if you can help me.” Then he told all that had happened.

And the horse said, “Enter in at my left ear, and come out at my right.”

The prince obeyed, and came out at the right ear clad in a suit of splendid armour. His gilded cuirass, his steel helmet inlaid with gold, and his sword and club made of him a complete warrior. Still more, he felt himself endowed with superhuman strength and bravery. When he stamped his foot and shouted the earth trembled and gave forth a sound like thunder, the very leaves fell from the trees.

”What must we do? Where are we to go?” he asked.

The horse replied, “Your bride, Princess Pietnotka, has been carried off by the Dwarf with the Long Beard, whose hump weighs two hundred and eighty pounds. This powerful magician must be defeated, but he lives a long way from here, and nothing can touch or wound him except the sharp smiting sword that belongs to his own brother, a monster with the head and eyes of a basilisk. We must first attack the brother.”

Prince Dobrotek leaped on to the dappled horse, which was covered with golden trappings, and they set off immediately, clearing mountains, penetrating forests, crossing rivers; and so light was the steed’s step that he galloped over the grass without bending a single blade, and along sandy roads without raising a grain of dust. At last they reached a vast plain, strewn with human bones. They stopped in front of a huge moving mountain, and the horse said:

“Prince, this moving mountain that you see before you is the head of the Monster with Basilisk Eyes, and the bones that whiten the ground are the skeletons of his victims, so beware of the eyes that deal death. The heat of the midday sun has made the giant sleep, and the sword with the never-failing blade lies there before him. Bend down and lie along my neck until we are near enough, then seize the sword and you have nothing more to fear. For, without the sword, not only will the monster be unable to harm you, but he himself will be completely at your mercy.”

The horse then noiselessly approached the huge creature, upon which the prince bent down, and quickly picked up the sword. Then, raising himself on his steed’s back, he gave a “Hurrah!” loud enough to wake the dead. The giant lifted his head, yawned, and turned his bloodthirsty eyes upon the prince; but seeing the sword in his hand he became quiet, and said, “Knight, is it weariness of life that brings you here?”

“Boast not,” replied the prince, “you are in my power. Your glance has already lost its magic charm, and you will soon have to die by this sword. But first tell me who you are.”

“It is true, prince, I am in your hands, but be generous, I deserve your pity. I am a knight of the race of giants, and if it were not for the wickedness of my brother I should have lived in peace. He is the horrible dwarf with the great hump and the beard seven feet long. He was jealous of my fine figure, and tried to do me an injury. You must know that all his strength, which is extraordinary, lies in his beard, and it can only be cut off by the sword you hold in your hand. One day he came to me and said, ‘Dear brother, I pray you help me to discover the sharp smiting sword that has been hidden in the earth by a magician. He is our enemy, and he alone can destroy us both.’ Fool that I was, I believed him, and by means of a large oak tree, raked up the mountain and found the sword. Then we disputed as to which of us should have it, and at last my brother suggested that we should cease quarrelling and decide by lot. ‘Let us each put an ear to the ground, and the sword shall belong to him who first hears the bells of yonder church,’ said he. I placed my ear to the ground at once, and my brother treacherously cut off my head with the sword. My body, left unburied, became a great mountain, which is now overgrown with forests. As for my head, it is full of a life and strength proof against all dangers, and has remained here ever since to frighten all who attempt to take away the sword. Now, prince, I beg of you, use the sword to cut off the beard of my wicked brother; kill him, and return here to put an end to me: I shall die happy if I die avenged.”

“That you shall be, and very soon, I promise you,” replied his listener.

The prince bade the Dappled Horse with Golden Mane carry him to the kingdom of the Dwarf with the Long Beard. They reached the garden gate at the very moment when the dwarf had caught sight of Princess Pietnotka and was running after her. The war-trumpet, challenging him to fight, had obliged him to leave her, which he did, having first put on her head the invisible cap.

While the prince was awaiting the answer to his challenge he heard a great noise in the clouds, and looking up saw the dwarf preparing to aim at him from a great height. But he missed his aim and fell to the ground so heavily that his body was half buried in the earth. The prince seized him by the beard, which he at once cut off with the sharp smiting sword.

Then he fastened the dwarf to the saddle, put the beard in his helmet, and entered the palace. When the servants saw that he had really got possession of the terrible beard, they opened all the doors to give him entrance. Without losing a moment he began his search for Princess Pietnotka. For a long time he was unsuccessful, and was almost in despair when he came across her accidentally, and, without knowing it, knocked off the invisible cap. He saw his lovely bride sound asleep, and being unable to wake her he put the cap in his pocket, took her in his arms, and, mounting his steed, set off to return to the Monster with the Basilisk Eyes. The giant swallowed the dwarf at one mouthful, and the prince cut the monster's head up into a thousand pieces, which he scattered all over the plain.

He then resumed his journey, and on coming to the moorland the dappled horse stopped short and said, "Prince, here for the present we must take leave of each other. You are not far from home, your own horse awaits you; but before leaving, enter in at my right ear and come out at my left."

The prince did so, and came out without his armour, and clad as when Pietnotka left him.

The dappled horse vanished, and Dobrotek whistled to his own horse, who ran up, quite pleased to see him again. They immediately set off for the king's palace.

But night came on before they reached the end of their journey.

The prince laid the sleeping maiden on the grass, and, covering her up carefully to keep her warm, he himself fell fast asleep. By chance, a knight, one of her suitors, passed that way. Seeing Dobrotek asleep he drew his sword and stabbed him; then he lifted the princess on his horse and soon reached the king's palace, where he addressed Pietnotka's father in these words: "Here is your daughter, whom I now claim as my wife, for it is I who have restored her to you. She was carried off by a terrible sorcerer who fought with me three days and three nights. But I conquered him, and I have brought you the princess safely back."

The king was overjoyed at seeing her again, but finding that his tenderest efforts were powerless to awake her, he wanted to know the reason of it.

"That I cannot tell you," replied the impostor; "you see her as I found her myself."

Meanwhile, poor Prince Dobrotek, seriously wounded, was slowly recovering consciousness, but he felt so weak that he could hardly utter these words:

Come, Magic Horse with Mane of Gold,
Come, Dappled Horse, O come to me.
Fly like the birds as you did of old,
As flashes of lightning o'er land and sea.

Instantly a bright cloud appeared, and from the midst thereof stepped the magic horse. As he already knew all that had happened, he dashed off immediately to the Mountain of Eternal Life. Thence he drew the three kinds of water: the Water that gives Life, the Water that Cures, and the Water that Strengthens. Returning to the prince, he sprinkled him first with the Life-giving Water, and instantly the body, which had become cold, was warm again and the blood began to circulate. The Water that Cures healed the wound, and the Strength-giving Water had such an effect upon him that he opened his eyes and cried out, "Oh, how well I have slept."

"You were already sleeping the eternal sleep," replied the dappled horse. "One of your rivals stabbed you mortally, and carried off Pietnotka, whom he pretends to have rescued. But do not worry yourself, she still sleeps, and none can arouse her but you, and this you must do by touching her with the dwarf's beard. Go now, and be happy."

The brave steed disappeared in a whirlwind, and Prince Dobrotek proceeded on his way. On drawing near the capital he saw it surrounded by a large foreign army; part of it was already taken, and the inhabitants seemed to be begging for mercy. The prince put on his invisible cap, and began to strike right and left with the sharp smiting sword. With such fury did he attack the enemy that they fell dead on all sides, like felled trees. When he had thus destroyed the whole army he went, still invisible, into the palace, where he heard the king express the utmost astonishment that the enemy had retired without fighting.

"Where then is the brave warrior who has saved us?" said his majesty aloud.

Every one was silent, when Dobrotek took off his magic cap, and falling on his knees before the monarch, said: "It is I, my king and father, who have routed and destroyed the enemy. It is I who saved the princess, my bride. While on my way back with her I was treacherously killed by my rival, who has represented himself to you as her rescuer, but he has deceived you. Lead me to the princess, that I may awaken her."

On hearing these words the impostor ran away as quickly as possible, and Dobrotek approached the sleeping maiden. He just touched her brow with the dwarf's beard, upon which she opened her eyes, smiled, and seemed to ask where she was.

The king, overcome with joy, kissed her fondly, and the same evening she was married to the devoted Prince Dobrotek. The king himself led her to the altar, and to his son-in-law he gave half his kingdom. So splendid was the wedding banquet, that eye has never seen, nor ear ever heard of its equal.

7

THE FLYING CARPET, THE INVISIBLE CAP, THE GOLD-GIVING RING, AND THE SMITING CLUB

In a cottage near the high-road, and close to the shores of a large lake, there once lived a widow, poor and old. She was very very poor, but her mother's heart was rich in pride in her son, who was the joy of her life. He was a handsome lad with an honest soul. He earned his living by fishing in the lake, and succeeded so well that neither he nor his mother were ever in want of their daily bread. Every one called him "the fisherman."

One evening at dusk he went down to the lake to throw in his nets, and standing on the shore with a new bucket in his hand, waited to put into it whatever fish it might please God to send him. In about a quarter of an hour or so he drew in his nets and took out two bream. These he threw into the bucket, and humming a merry song turned to go home. At that moment a traveller, poorly clad, with hair and beard white as the wings of a dove, spoke to him, saying, "Have pity on a feeble old man, obliged to lean on his stick, hungry and ragged. I beg you, in Heaven's name, to give me either money or bread. The sun will soon set, and I who have eaten nothing to-day shall have to pass the night fasting, with the bare earth for a bed."

"My good old friend, I am sorry I have nothing about me to give you, but you see the black smoke curling up in the distance? That is our cottage, where my old mother is waiting for me to bring her some fish to cook for our supper. Now take these two bream to her, meanwhile I will return to the lake and throw in my nets again to see if I can catch something more. Thus, with God’s help, we shall all three have enough for supper to-night and breakfast to-morrow morning.”

While speaking the fisherman handed the fish to the old man, when, marvel of marvels! he melted into the rays of the setting sun and vanished, both he and the fish.

The fisherman, much astonished, rubbed his eyes and looked about on all sides. For a moment he felt afraid, but when he had crossed himself all terror left him and he went to draw in his nets by the light of the moon. And what do you think he found in them? It was neither a pike nor a trout, but a small fish with eyes of diamonds, fins of rainbow colour, and golden scales that shone and flashed like lightning.

When he had spread his nets on the beach the fish began to talk to him in the language of men.

“Do not kill me, young fisherman,” it said, “but accept in exchange for my life this golden ring. Every time you put it on your finger repeat these words:

I conjure thee, O ring, who gold can give,
In the name of the little fishling of gold,
For the good of man, that man may live,
And the honour of heaven, send, new or old,
Little or much, as may be my need,
Coins of the realm, let them fall like seed.

After uttering each of these words, a shower of gold pieces will fall.”

The fisherman gladly accepted the ring, and freeing the miraculous fish from the net he threw it back into the water. As it fell, it shone in the air like a shooting star and then disappeared beneath the waves.

On his way back he said to himself, “My mother and I will go to bed hungry to-night, without our fried fish, but to-morrow, when I have made the golden coins gleam in our humble cottage, all sorts of good things will find their way there, and we shall live like lords.”

But things turned out very differently, for the first thing he saw on opening the door was the table covered with a white cloth, and upon it a china soup-tureen in which lay the two bream freshly cooked.

“Where did you get those fish from, dear mother?”

“I do not know myself,” replied she, “for I have neither cleaned them nor cooked them. Our table spread itself, the fish placed themselves upon it, and although they have been there an hour they do not get cold; any one might think they had just been taken off the fire. Come, let us eat them.”

The widow and her son sat down, said grace, and after eating as much as they wanted went to bed.

Next morning, at breakfast time, the fisherman made the sign of the cross, and then put on the gold ring, at the same time repeating the words the fish had taught him:

I CONJURE THEE, O ring, who gold can give,
In the name of the little fishling of gold,
For the good of man, that man may live,
And the honour of heaven, send, new or old,
Little or much, as may be my need,
Coins of the realm, let them fall like seed.

When he had ceased speaking the room was filled with a blast of wind followed by flashes of lightning, then a hailstorm of gold pieces showered down and quite covered the table.

The chink of the money aroused his mother, who sat up in bed perfectly amazed.

“What is the meaning of this, my son? Am I awake or dreaming? or is it the work of the Evil One? Where did all that money come from?”

“Fear not, mother, I wear a cross that charms away evil spirits. I have my work, so that you shall never want, and I have your heart, where for me there will ever be love to sweeten the disappointments and troubles of life. This gold that you see will drive poverty far away, and enable us to help others. Take these pieces, lock them up safely, and use them when in need. As for me, kiss me, and wish me good luck on my journey.”

“What! Is it possible that you want to leave me already? Why? and whither are you going?”

“I want to go, mother mine, to see the great city. When there, I mean to enrol myself in the national army. Thus the fisherman turned soldier will become the defender of his king, for the glory of his country and his mother.”

“Of a truth, my son, I have heard some talk about the king being in danger, and that our enemies are trying to take his crown from him. But why should you go? Stay at home rather, for alone and unnoticed among so many troops you will neither be able to help nor to hinder.”

“You are right, one man alone is a small thing, but by adding one grain to another the measure overflows. If all those who are capable of bearing arms will help the king, there is no doubt that he will soon overcome his enemies.”

“But a harmless fisherman like you! Of what use can you be in a battle?”

“The fisherman has, doubtless, a peaceable disposition, and he never boasts of his strength. But when the right moment comes he knows how to handle a sword, and how to water the land with the enemy’s blood. And the victorious king will, perhaps, reward me for my bravery by giving me some splendid castle, or a few acres of forest land, a suit of armour and a horse, or even the hand of his daughter in marriage.”

”If you feel like this,” answered she, “go, and may God bless you. May He cover you, dear child, with His grace as with a buckler, so that neither guns nor sabres shall do you harm. May He take you under His protection, so that you may return safe and sound to be a comfort to me; and at the end of my days may I rejoice in your happiness, and live near you as long as God in His wisdom shall allow.”

Then she gave him her blessing and kissed him tenderly, making the sign of the cross in the direction he was about to take.

So he departed, and after a few days’ march reached the capital, thinking within himself how he might help the king most effectually.

The town was surrounded by a countless host who threatened to utterly destroy it unless the king would agree to pay a very large ransom.

The people crowded into the square, and stood before the palace gates listening to the herald’s proclamation.

“Hear the king’s will,” said the herald; “listen, all ye faithful subjects, to the words he speaks to you by my mouth. Here are our deadly enemies, who have scattered our troops, and have come to besiege the capital of our kingdom. If we do not send them, by daybreak to-morrow, twenty-four waggons, each drawn by six horses and loaded with gold, they threaten to take the town and destroy it by fire and sword, and to deliver our land to the soldiers. It is certain that we cannot hold out any longer, and our royal treasure-house does not contain one-half the amount demanded. Therefore, through me our sovereign announces, that whosoever among you shall succeed, either in defeating our foes, or in providing the money needed for the ransom, him will he appoint his heir to the crown, and to him will he give his only daughter in marriage, a princess of marvellous beauty. Further, he shall receive half the kingdom in his own right.”

When the fisherman heard these words he went to the king and said, “My sovereign and father, command that twenty-four waggons, each harnessed with twenty-four horses and provided with leathern bags, be brought into the courtyard; I will engage to fill them with gold, and that at once, before your eyes.”

Then he left the palace, and standing in the middle of the large square, recited the words the fish had taught him.

These were followed by rumblings of thunder and flashes of lightning, and then by a perfect hurricane which sent down masses and showers of gold. In a few minutes the square was covered with a layer of gold so thick that, after loading the twenty-four waggons and filling a large half of the royal treasure-house, there was enough left to make handsome presents to all the king’s officers and servants.

Next day the enemy returned to their own country laden with the heavy ransom they had demanded.

The king sent for the fisherman, and inviting him to partake of hydromel wine and sweetmeats, said, “You have to-day been the means of saving our capital from a great calamity, and shall, therefore, receive the reward which you have earned. My only daughter, a princess of great beauty, shall be your wife, and I will give you the half of my kingdom for a wedding present. I also appoint you my heir to the throne. But tell me, to whom am I indebted? What kingdom or land belongs to you? How is it that by a mere movement of the hand you were able to supply my enemies with such a quantity of gold?”

And the fisherman, simple-hearted and straightforward as a child, ignorant of the deceptions practised in court, answered frankly, “Sire, I belong to no royal or princely family, I am a simple fisherman and your loyal subject. I procure my gold by means of this magic ring, and at any time I can have as much as I want."

Then he told how his good fortune had come to him.

The king made no answer, but it hurt his royal dignity to think that he owed his safety to one of his own peasants, and that he had promised to make him his son-in-law.

That evening, after a luxurious supper, the fisherman, having taken a little more wine than usual, ventured to ask the king to present him to his bride. The king whispered a few words in the ear of the chamberlain of the court, and then went out.

The chamberlain took the fisherman to the top of the castle tower, and there said to him, "According to the customs of the court you should, before being introduced to the princess, send her by my hands some valuable jewel as a wedding gift."

"But I have nothing of value or beauty about me," replied he, "unless you offer the princess this golden ring, to which I owe all my good fortune, the princess herself, and the safety of her father."

The chamberlain took the ring, and opening the window of the tower, asked, "Fisherman, do you see the moon in the heavens?"

"I do."

"Very well, she shall be the witness of your betrothal. Now look down; do you see that precipice, and the deep river shining in its depths."

"I do."

"Very well, it shall be your bridal couch."

So saying the chamberlain threw him into the deep abyss, shut the window, and ran to tell the king that there was no longer a suitor for the hand of his daughter.

The fisherman, stunned by the force of his fall, reached the water quite senseless. When he came to himself and opened his eyes, he lay in a boat which at that moment was leaving the mouth of the river and entering the open sea.

The very old man, to whom he had given the bream, was guiding the vessel with an oar.

“My good old man, is it you? How did you manage to save me?” asked the astonished fisherman.

“I came to your assistance,” replied the old man, “because he who shows pity to others deserves their help when in need of it. But take the oar and row to whatever place you wish.”

And having thus spoken the mysterious old man disappeared. The fisherman crossed himself, and having looked round upon the royal palace sparkling with light he sighed deeply, and chanting the hymn “Under Thy Help,” put out to sea.

When the sun rose he saw some nets in the boat, and throwing them into the water caught some pike, which he sold in a town near the shore, and then continued his journey on foot.

Two or three months later, when crossing some open country, he heard cries for help which came from a hill near the forest. There he saw two little demons pulling each other’s hair. By the cut of their short waistcoats, by their tight pantaloons and three-cornered hats, he knew that they were inhabitants of the nether world, from which they must have escaped. He had no doubt about it, but being a good Christian he was not afraid, and accosted them boldly, saying, “Why do you ill-treat each other in this way? What is the meaning of it?”

“It means, that for many a long year we have both been working hard to entice a silly fellow down below. He was first tempted by the desire to learn something of sorcery, and he ended by becoming an accomplished scoundrel. After giving him time to commit a great many crimes and thus forfeit his soul, we handed him over to safe keeping. Now we want to divide his property between us. He has left three things, which by every right belong to us. The first is a wonderful carpet. Whoever sits down upon it, and pronounces certain magic words, will be carried off at once, over forests and under clouds, never stopping until his destination is reached. The magic words are as follows:

Carpet, that of thyself through space takes flight,
O travel, thou airy car, both day and night
Till my desired haven comes in sight.

The second piece of property is that club lying on the grass. After uttering some magic words, the club will immediately begin to hit so vigorously that a whole army may be crushed to pieces or dispersed. The words run thus:

Club, thou marvellous club, who knows
How to strike and smite my foes,
By thine own strength and in God's name
O strike well home and strike again.

The third piece of property is a cap that renders its wearer invisible. Now, my good man, you see our difficulty: there are but two of us, and we are fighting to decide how these three lots may be divided into two equal parts."

"I can help you," said the fisherman, "provided you will do as I tell you. Leave the three lots here just as they are—the carpet, the club, and the magic cap. I will roll a stone from the top of this hill to the bottom—whoever catches it first shall have two lots for his share. What do you say?"

“Agreed!” cried the demons, racing after the stone that rolled and bounded on its way down.

In the meantime the fisherman hastily put on the cap, seized the club, and sitting down on the carpet, repeated the magic formula without forgetting a single word.

He was already high up in the air when the demons returned carrying the stone and calling out to him to come and reward the winner.

“Come down and divide those things between us,” they cried after him.

The fisherman’s only answer was the magic address to his club. This enchanted weapon then fell upon them and struck so hard that the country round echoed to the sound thereof. In the midst of screams and cries and clouds of dust they escaped at last, and the club, of its own accord, came back and placed itself at the fisherman’s orders. He, in spite of the rapid motion, sat comfortably on the carpet with the cap under his arm and the club in his hand. Thus they flew over forests, under clouds, and so high that seen from the earth they looked like a tiny white cloud.

Within two or three days they stopped at the king’s capital. The fisherman, with his cap on, descended into the middle of the courtyard.

The whole place was in confusion and trouble, for the commander of the foreign army, encouraged by having so easily received such a large sum of money, had returned to the attack and again held the town in siege, declaring that he would destroy every house and slay all the inhabitants, not sparing even the king himself, unless he agreed to give him his only daughter in marriage.

The terrified citizens crowded to the palace and besought his majesty to do as they asked him, and so save them from such a fate. The king, standing on the balcony, addressed them thus: “Faithful and devoted people, listen to me. Nothing but a miracle can save us from this fearful calamity; yet it has happened that the most powerful assailants have been forced to ask mercy of the most feeble. I will never consent to the marriage of my only daughter with my most hated and cruel foe. Within a few moments my guards will be ready for combat, and I myself will lead them against the enemy. If there be any among you who can win the victory, to him will I give my only daughter in marriage, the half of my kingdom for her dowry, and the heirship to the throne.”

When he had finished speaking the fisherman ordered his club to fall on the foe, while the country round echoed and re-echoed to the blows by means of which it destroyed the besieging army. It was in vain that the brave commander shouted to his soldiers not to run away, for when he himself received three blows from the club he was obliged to make off as fast as possible.

When the club had destroyed or driven away into the desert all the troops it came back to its master; he, still wearing the magic cap, and with his carpet folded up under his arm and his club in his hand, made his way to the king’s apartment.

In the palace shouts of joy had succeeded the cries of fear which had been heard but a short while ago. Every one was happy, and every one congratulated the king upon his victory, as sudden and complete as it was unexpected. But the monarch, turning to his warriors, addressed them thus: “Victory! Let us rather return thanks to God. He who has won for us the victory has but to present himself and receive the reward he so richly deserves, that is, my beautiful daughter in marriage, the half of my kingdom, and the right of succession to my throne. These are the gifts that await this victorious hero. Where is he?”

They all stood silent and looked from one to the other. Then the fisherman, who had taken off his cap, appeared before the assembly and said, “Behold, it was I who destroyed your enemies, O king. This is the second time that I have been promised the hand of the princess in marriage, the half of the kingdom, and the right of succession to the throne.”

The king, struck dumb with amazement, looked inquiringly at his chamberlain, then recovering his presence of mind he shook hands with the fisherman.

"Your good health, my friend. By what happy fortune do you return safe and sound to my court? The chamberlain told me that through your own carelessness you had fallen out of the tower window; in truth, we mourned you as dead."

"I should not have fallen out of the window if I had not been thrown down by your chamberlain; there is the traitor. I only escaped death through God's help, and I have just come to the palace in my air-car."

The king made a pretence of being angry with the guilty chamberlain, and ordered his guards to take him away to the donjon cell; then, with pretended friendship, he embraced the fisherman and led him to his own apartments. All the while he was thinking and thinking what he could do to get rid of him. The idea of having him, a mere peasant and one of his own subjects, for a son-in-law was most repugnant to him, and hurt his kingly pride. At last he said, "The chamberlain will most certainly be punished for his crime. As for you, who have twice been my saviour, you shall be my son-in-law. Now the customs observed at court demand that you should send your bride a wedding gift, a jewel, or some other trifle of value. When this has been observed I promise to give my blessing on the marriage, and may you both be happy and live long."

"I have no jewel worthy of the princess's acceptance. I might have given her as much gold as she wished, but your chamberlain took my magic golden ring from me."

"Before insisting upon its return something else might be done. I thoroughly appreciate the value of your marvellous flying carpet—why should not we both sit on it and make an excursion to the Valley of Diamonds? There we can obtain stones of the finest water, such as no one in the world has ever possessed. Afterwards we will return here with your wedding present for my daughter.”

The king then opened the window, and the fisherman, spreading out his carpet, repeated the magic words.

Thus they took flight into the air, and after travelling one or two hours began to descend at their destination. It was a valley surrounded on all sides by rocks so steep and so difficult of access, that, except by God’s special grace, no mortal man imprisoned there could possibly escape. The ground was strewn with diamonds of the finest quality. The king and fisherman found it easy to make a large collection, picking and choosing, gathering and arranging them upon the carpet. When they had put together all there was room for, the king sat down, and pointing to a large diamond shining at a little distance, said to the fisherman, “There is yet a more splendid one by the stream yonder; run, my son-in-law, and bring it here, it would be a pity to leave it.”

The man went for it, while the king, taking advantage of his absence to pronounce the magic words, seated himself on the carpet, which lifted itself up, and floating like an air-car above the forest and under the clouds, descended by one of the palace windows.

His joy knew no bounds, for he now found himself not only free from his enemies and rid of the embarrassing presence of the fisherman, but also the possessor of the richest and most beautiful collection of diamonds in the world;—by his orders they were put away in the caves of the royal treasure-house, and with them the magic ring and the flying carpet.

Meantime the fisherman had returned with the diamond, and had stood aghast to see the carpet vanishing away in the distance.

Wounded at the ingratitude and indignant at the perversity of a prince for whom he had done so much, he burst into tears.

And, indeed, he had good reason to weep. For he had but to look at the enormous height of the polished rocks to be convinced of the impossibility of climbing them. The vegetation, too, was so scanty that it could only provide him with food for a very short time. He saw but two courses open to him: either to die from starvation, or to be devoured by the monstrous serpents that crawled about in great numbers. Night was now coming on, and the poor fellow was obliged to plan some way of escaping the frightful reptiles which were leaving their hiding-places. At last he climbed up a tree, the highest he could find, and there, with his magic cap on and his club in his hand, passed the night without even closing his eyes.

Next morning when the sun rose the serpents went back to their holes, and the fisherman got down from his tree feeling stiff with cold and very hungry. For some time he walked about the valley in search of food, turning over the diamonds now so useless to him. There he found a few worthless mushrooms, and with such poor food as berries and sorrel leaves, and the water of the valley stream for drink, he lived for some days.

One night when he went to sleep it happened that his cap came off and fell to the ground, whereupon all the reptiles of the place immediately gathered round him. Aroused by their hisses, he awoke to find himself surrounded on all sides and almost in reach of their stings. He immediately seized his club, and had scarcely begun to repeat the magic formula before the weapon set to work to destroy the snakes, while the rocks resounded right and left with the blows. It was as if the monsters were being covered with boiling water, and the noise they made was like that produced by a flock of birds overtaken by a storm. They roared and hissed and twisted themselves into a thousand knots, gradually disappearing one by one. Then the club returned of its own accord to the fisherman’s hands, while he returned thanks to God for having delivered him from such a horrible death. At that moment there appeared upon the top of a steep rock his friend, the old man. Overcome with joy at the sight of him, the fisherman called out, “Save me! come to me, my divine protector.”

The old man spread out his arms towards him, and having blessed him drew him up, saying, “Now you are free again, hasten to save your king, his daughter your bride, and their kingdom. After he had left you in the valley as food for serpents he was punished for his great crimes by the return of the enemy, who again laid siege to the capital. This happened at the very moment when he was surrounded by his guests, and was boasting of his possession of the air-car, the magic golden ring, and the rest of his evilly acquired riches.

“His foes had consulted Yaga, a wicked sorceress; she advised them to obtain the help of Kostey the magician, who promised his aid in carrying off the princess. When he came he fell in love with the beautiful maiden at first sight, and determined to marry her himself. In order to bring this about he threw the king, the courtiers, and all the inhabitants of the land into a heavy sleep. Then he bore off the princess to his own palace, where she has been shut up and ill-treated because she refuses to have anything to do with him. His castle is situated at the very end of the world, to the west. There is nothing to hinder you from taking possession of your carpet and ring, they are hidden in the king’s treasure-house. Then go with your cap and club and conquer Kostey, rescue the princess, and deliver the king and his subjects.”

The fisherman would have thrown himself at the old man’s feet to pour out his gratitude, but he suddenly vanished. So he thanked God for all His mercies, put on his invisible cap, and taking his club, made his way towards the capital.

At the end of three days he entered the royal city. All the inhabitants were sleeping the enchanted sleep, from which they were powerless to rouse themselves. The fisherman went straight to the royal treasure-house, took the magic ring and carpet, then seating himself upon the latter and repeating the magic words, away he went like a bird, over rustling forests and under clouds, floating across the blue sky.

After some days of travel he alighted in Kostey’s courtyard. Without a moment’s delay he folded up his carpet, put the magic cap on his head, and with club in hand entered Kostey’s room. There, to his astonishment, stood the magician himself, admiring the wondrous beauty of the princess. For she was perfectly beautiful; eye had never seen nor ear heard of such loveliness. With a low bow full of pride and an ironical smile he was saying to her: “Beauteous princess, you have sworn a most solemn oath to marry none but that man who can solve your six riddles. It is in vain that I strive to guess them. Now there are only two courses open to you: either to release yourself from your vow, putting the riddles aside and consenting to be my wife; or to persist in your vow and thus deliver yourself up to my anger, which you will bitterly regret. I give you three minutes to decide.”

Upon hearing these threats the fisherman trembled with rage, and in a low voice whispered the magic words to his club.

This good weapon did not wait for the order to be repeated, but with one bound came down full upon Kostey’s forehead. Stunned for a moment by the violence of the blow, the terrible creature rolled upon the ground. Sparks like fireworks sprang from his eyes, and the noise as of a hundred mills seemed to go through his head. Any ordinary mortal would never have opened his eyes again, but Kostey was immortal.

Getting on his feet he pulled himself together, and tried to find out who had thus attacked him. Then the club began to hit him again, and the sound thereof was like unto blows on an empty vault. It seemed to the magician as if showers of boiling water were being poured upon him. He twisted himself about in awful convulsions, and would have liked to bury himself in his palace walls and be turned to stone.

At last, crippled with wounds, he began to hiss like a serpent, and springing forwards breathed upon the princess, filling the air with the poisonous blast.

The maiden tottered and fell, as if dead. Kostey changed himself into a wreath of smoke, and floating out of the window, disappeared in a hurricane.

The fisherman, still invisible, carried the princess into the courtyard of the castle, hoping that the fresh air might restore her to consciousness. He laid her upon the grass, his heart throbbing with hope and fear, and waited anxiously. Suddenly a raven and his nestlings, attracted by the sight of a dead body, and not being able to see the fisherman, came by croaking. The parent bird said to his young ones:

Come, children, sharpen claws and beak, krâk, krâk,
For here’s a feast not far to seek, krâk, krâk,
This young girl’s corse so white and sleek, krâk, krâk.

One small bird at once settled down on the princess, but the fisherman seized it and took off his cap, so that he could be seen.

“Fisherman,” said the father raven, “let go my dear birdling and I will give you anything you want.”

“Then bring me some of the Life-Giving Water.”

The raven flew away and returned in about an hour, carrying in his beak a tiny bottle of the water. Then he again begged to have his nestling back.

“You shall have it as soon as I have proved that the water is of the right sort.”

So saying, he sprinkled the pale face of the princess. She sighed, opened her eyes, and blushing at the sight of a stranger, got up and said, “Where am I? Why, how soundly I have slept!”

“Lovely princess, your sleep might have lasted for ever.”

Then he told her his story, how he had been thrown into the river, abandoned in the Valley of Diamonds, and so on, relating at full length all the marvellous events that had taken place.

She listened attentively, then, thanking him for all he had done for her, placed her hand in his and said, “In the garden behind the palace is an apple-tree that bears golden fruit. A guzla that plays of its own accord hangs on its branches, and is guarded day and night by four negroes. Now the music from this guzla has the wonderful power of restoring health to invalids who listen to it, and happiness to those who are sad. That which is ugly becomes beautiful, and charms and enchantments of all kinds are broken and destroyed for ever.”

The fisherman put on his invisible cap and went into the garden in search of the negroes. Before going up to them he addressed the magic words to his golden ring, and after a short thunderstorm a shower of gold covered the ground. The negroes, greedy of wealth, threw themselves upon it, snatching from each other handfuls of the golden rain. While thus engaged the fisherman unhooked the guzla from the branches and hurried off into the courtyard with it. There he unfolded his carpet, and sitting down upon it with the princess at his side, flew high up into the air. He had not forgotten to bring with him the cap, the club, and the ring; the princess took care of the guzla.

They floated across the blue sky, above the rustling forests and under the clouds, and in a few days arrived at the palace. There they descended, but the people still lay wrapped in the enchanted sleep, from which they seemed to have no power of awakening.

The silence of the tomb reigned around. Some of the officers were sitting, others standing, all motionless and rigid, and each one in the position he occupied when last awake. The king held a goblet filled with wine, for he had been giving a toast. The chamberlain had his throat half filled with a lying tale, which there had been no time to finish. One had the end of a joke upon his lips, another a dainty morsel between his teeth, or a tale ready cooked upon his tongue.

And it was the same in all the villages throughout the length and breadth of the land. All the inhabitants lay under the enchanted spell. The labourer held his whip in the air, for he had been about to strike his oxen. The harvesters with their sickles had stopped short in their work. The shepherds slept by their sheep in the middle of the road. The huntsman stood with the powder still alight on the pan of his gun. The birds, arrested in their flight, hung in mid-air. The animals in the woods were motionless. The water in the streams was still. Even the wind slept. Everywhere men had been overtaken in their occupations or amusements. It was a soundless land, without voice or movement; on all sides calm, death, sleep.

The fisherman stood with the princess at his side in the banqueting-hall where slept the king and his guests. Taking the magic guzla from the maid, he pronounced these words:

O GUZLA, play, and let thy sweetest harmonies resound
Through hall and cot, o’er hill and dale, and all the country round;
That by the power and beauty of thy heavenly tones and song
Awakened may these sleepers be who sleep too well, too long.

WHEN THE FIRST tones of music burst forth everything began to move and live again. The king finished proposing his toast. The chamberlain ended his tale. The guests continued to feast and enjoy themselves. The servants waited at their posts. In short, everything went on just as before, and as if nothing had happened to interrupt it.

And it was just the same in all the country round. Everything suddenly awoke to life. The labourer finished ploughing his furrow. The haymakers built up the hay in ricks. The reapers cut down the golden grain. The hunter's gun went off and shot the duck. The trees rustled. The gardener went on with his work and his song. The rich, who thought only of enjoyment, entertained one another in luxury and splendour.

Now when the king caught sight of his daughter leaning on the fisherman's arm he could hardly believe his own eyes, and it made him very angry. But the princess ran to him, and throwing herself in his arms, related all that he had accomplished. The monarch's heart was softened, and he felt ashamed. With tears in his eyes he drew the fisherman towards him, and before the assembled company thanked him for having the third time saved his life.

"God has punished me for my ill-treatment of you," said he. "Yet He is generous and forgives; I will fulfil all your wishes."

He then added that the wedding feast should be held that very day, and that his only daughter would be married to the fisherman.

The princess was filled with gladness, and standing with her father's arms round her, said, "I cannot, however, break my word. When in Kostey's palace I made a vow to bestow my hand only on that man who should guess the six riddles I put to him. I am sure the heroic man, who has done so much, will not refuse to submit to this last trial for my sake."

To this the fisherman bowed a willing assent.

The first riddle was: "Without legs it walks. Without arms it strikes. Without life it moves continually."

"A clock," he answered promptly, and to the great satisfaction of the princess, to whom this good beginning seemed to presage a happy ending.

The second riddle ran thus: "Without being either bird, reptile, insect, or any animal whatsoever, it ensures the safety of the whole house."

"A bolt," said her lover.

"Good! Now this is the third: 'Who is that pedestrian who walks fully armed, seasons dishes, and in his sides has two darts? He swims across the water without the help of a boatman.’”

“A lobster.”

The princess clapped her hands and begged him to guess the fourth.

“It runs, it moves along on two sides, it has but one eye, an overcoat of polished steel, and a tail of thread.”

“A needle.”

“Well guessed. Now listen to the fifth: ‘It walks without feet, beckons without hands, and moves without a body.’”

“It must be a shadow.”

“Exactly,” said she, well pleased. “Now you have succeeded so well with these five you will soon guess the sixth: ‘It has four feet, but is not an animal. It is provided with feathers and down, but is no bird. It has a body, and gives warmth, but is not alive.’”

“It is certainly a bed,” exclaimed the fisherman.

The princess gave him her hand. They both knelt at the king’s feet and received his fatherly blessing, after which he with a large wedding party accompanied them to the church. At the same time messengers were sent to bring the fisherman’s mother to the palace.

The marvellous guzla played the sweetest music at the marriage feast, while the old king ate and drank and enjoyed himself, and danced like a madman. He treated his guests with so much kindness and generosity that to this very hour the happiness of those who were present is a thing to be talked about and envied.

Now you see what it is to love virtue and pursue it with energy and courage. For by so doing a mere peasant, a poor simple fisherman, married the most lovely and enchanting princess in the whole world. He received, besides, half the kingdom on his wedding day, and the right of succession to the throne after the old king’s death.

8

THE BROAD MAN, THE TALL MAN, AND THE MAN WITH EYES OF FLAME

In those days the king of a certain country had a daughter, who was not only exceedingly beautiful but also remarkably clever. Many kings and princes travelled from far distant lands, each one with the hope of making her his wife. But she would have nothing to do with any one of them. Finally, it was proclaimed that she would marry that man who for three successive nights should keep such strict watch upon her that she could not escape unnoticed. Those who failed were to have their heads cut off.

The news of this offer was noised about in all parts of the world. A great many kings and princes hastened to make the trial, taking their turn and keeping watch. But each one lost his life in the attempt, for they could not prevent, indeed they were not even able to see, the princess take her flight.

Now it happened that Matthias, prince of a royal city, heard of what was going on and resolved to watch through the three nights. He was young, handsome as a deer, and brave as a falcon. His father did all he could to turn him from his purpose: he used entreaties, prayers, threats, in fact he forbade him to go, but in vain, nothing could prevent him. What could the poor father do? Worn-out with contention, he was at last obliged to consent. Matthias filled his purse with gold, girded a well-tried sword to his side, and quite alone started off to seek the fortune of the brave.

Walking along next day, he met a man who seemed hardly able to drag one leg after the other.

“Whither are you going?” asked Matthias.

“I am travelling all over the world in search of happiness.”

“What is your profession?”

“I have no profession, but I can do what no one else can. I am called *Broad*, because I have the power of swelling myself out to such a size that there is room for a whole regiment of soldiers inside me.”

So saying he puffed himself out till he formed a barricade from one side of the road to the other.

“Bravo!” cried Matthias, delighted at this proof of his capacities. “By the way, would you mind coming with me? I, too, am travelling across the world in search of happiness.”

“If there is nothing bad in it I am quite willing,” answered Broad. And they continued their journey together.

A little further on they met a very slender man, frightfully thin, and tall and straight as a portico.

“Whither are you going, good man?” asked Matthias, filled with curiosity at his strange appearance.

“I am travelling about the world.”

“To what profession do you belong?”

“To no profession, but I know something every one else is ignorant of. I am called *Tall*, and with good reason. For without leaving the earth I can stretch out and reach up to the clouds. When I walk I clear a mile at each step.”

Without more ado he lengthened himself out until his head was lost in the clouds, while he really cleared a mile at each step.

“I like that, my fine fellow,” said Matthias. “Come, would you not like to travel with us?”‘

“Why not?” replied he. “I’ll come.”

So they proceeded on their way together. While passing through a forest they saw a man placing trunks of trees one upon another.

“What are you trying to do there?” asked Matthias, addressing him.

“I have *Eyes of Flame*,” said he, “and I am building a pile here.” So saying he fixed his flaming eyes upon the wood, and the whole was instantly set alight.

“You are a very clever and powerful man,” said Matthias, “would you like to join our party?”

“All right, I am willing.”

So the four travelled along together. Matthias was overjoyed to have met with such gifted companions, and paid their expenses generously, without complaining of the enormous sum of money he had to spend on the amount of food Broad consumed.

After some days they reached the princess’s palace. Matthias had told them the object of his journey, and had promised each a large reward if he was successful. They gave him their word to work with a will at the task which every one up till then had failed to accomplish. The prince bought them each a handsome suit of clothes, and when they were all presentable sent them to tell the king, the princess’s father, that he had come with his attendants to watch three nights in the lady’s boudoir. But he took very good care not to say who he was, nor whence he had come.

The king received them kindly, and after hearing their request said: “Reflect well before engaging yourselves in this, for if the princess should escape you will have to die.”

“We very much doubt her escaping from us,” they replied, “but come what will, we intend to make the attempt and to begin at once.”

“My duty was to warn you,” replied the monarch, smiling, “but if you still persist in your resolution I myself will take you to the lady’s apartments.”

Matthias was dazzled at the loveliness of the royal maiden, while she, on her side, received the brilliant and handsome young man most graciously, not trying to hide how much she liked his good looks and gentle manner. Hardly had the king retired when Broad lay down across the threshold; Tall and the Man with Eyes of Flame placed themselves near the window; while Matthias talked with the princess, and watched her every movement attentively.

Suddenly she ceased to speak, then after a few moments said, “I feel as if a shower of poppies were falling on my eyelids.”

And she lay down on the couch, pretending to sleep.

Matthias did not breathe a word. Seeing her asleep he sat down at a table near the sofa, leaned his elbows upon it, and rested his chin in the hollow of his hands. Gradually he felt drowsy and his eyes closed, as did those of his companions.

Now this was the moment the princess was waiting for. Quickly changing herself into a dove, she flew towards the window. If it had not happened that one of her wings touched Tall’s hair he would not have awakened, and he would certainly never have succeeded in catching her if it had not been for the Man with Eyes of Flame, for he, as soon as he knew which direction she had taken, sent such a glance after her, that is, a flame of fire, that in the twinkling of an eye her wings were burnt, and having been thus stopped, she was obliged to perch on the top of a tree. From thence Tall reached her easily, and placed her in Matthias’ hands, where she became a princess again. Matthias had hardly awakened out of his sleep.

Next morning and the morning after the king was greatly astonished to find his daughter sitting by the prince’s side, but he was obliged to keep silent and accept facts as they were, at the same time entertaining his guests royally. At the approach of the third night he spoke with his daughter, and begged her to practise all the magic of which she was capable, and to act in such a way as to free him from the presence of intruders of whom he knew neither the rank nor the fortune.

As for Matthias, he used every means in his power to bring about a happy ending to such a hitherto successful undertaking. Before entering the princess’s apartments he took his comrades aside and said, “There is but one more stroke of luck, dear friends, and then we have succeeded. If we fail, do not forget that our four heads will roll on the scaffold.”

“Come along,” replied the three; “never fear, we shall be able to keep good watch.”

When they came into the princess’s room they hastened to take up their positions, and Matthias sat down facing the lady. He would have much preferred to remain with her without being obliged to keep watch all the time for fear of losing her for ever. Resolving not to sleep this time, he said to himself, “Now I will keep watch upon you, but when you are my wife I will rest.”

At midnight, when sleep was beginning to overpower her watchers, the princess kept silence, and, stretching herself on the couch, shut her beautiful eyes as if she were really asleep.

Matthias, his elbows on the table, his chin in the palms of his hand, his eyes fixed upon her, admired her silently. But as sleep closes even the eyes of the eagle, so it shut those of the prince and his companions.

The princess, who all this time had been watching them narrowly and only waiting for this moment, got up from her seat, and changing herself into a little fly, flew out of the window. Once free, she again changed herself into a fish, and falling into the palace well, plunged and hid herself in the depths of the water.

She would certainly have made her escape if, as a fly, she had not just touched the tip of the nose of the Man with Eyes of Flame. He sneezed, and opened his eyes in time to notice the direction in which she had disappeared. Without losing an instant he gave the alarm, and all four ran into the courtyard. The well was very deep, but that did not matter. Tall soon stretched himself to the required depth, and searched in all the corners: but he was unable to find the little fish, and it seemed impossible that it could ever have been there.

“Now then, get out of that, I will take your place,” said Broad.

And getting in at the top by the rim, he filled up all the inside of the well, stopping it so completely with his huge body that the water sprang out: but nothing was seen of the little fish.

“Now it is my turn,” said the Man with Eyes of Flame, “I warrant I’ll dislodge this clever magician.”

When Broad had cleared the well of his enormous person the water returned to its place, but it soon began to boil from the heat of the eyes of flame. It boiled and boiled, till it boiled over the rim; then, as it went on boiling and rising ever higher and higher, a little fish was seen to throw itself out on the grass half cooked. As it touched the ground it again took the form of the princess.

Matthias went to her and kissed her tenderly.

“You have conquered, my master and husband,” she said, “you have succeeded in preventing my escape. Henceforth I am yours, both by right of conquest and of my own free will.”

The young man’s courtesy, strength, and gentleness, as well as his beauty, were very pleasing to the princess; but her father, the king, was not so ready to approve of her choice, and he resolved not to let her go with them. But this did not trouble Matthias, who determined to carry her off, aided by his three comrades. They soon all left the palace.

The king was furious, and ordered his guards to follow them and bring them back under pain of death. Meanwhile Matthias, the princess, and the three comrades had already travelled a distance of some miles. When she heard the steps of the pursuers she begged the Man with Eyes of Flame to see who they were. Having turned to look, he told her that a large army of men on horseback were advancing at a gallop.

“They are my father’s guards,” said she, “we shall have some difficulty in escaping them.”

Then, seeing the horsemen draw nearer she took the veil from her face, and throwing it behind her in the direction of the wind, said, “I command as many trees to spring up as there are threads in this veil.”

Instantly, in the twinkling of an eye, a high thick forest rose up between them. Before the soldiers had time to clear for themselves a pathway through this dense mass, Matthias and his party had been able to get far ahead, and even to take a little rest.

“Look,” said the princess, “and see if they are still coming after us.”

The Man with Eyes of Flame looked back, and replied that the king’s guards were out of the forest and coming towards them with all speed.

“They will not be able to reach us,” cried she. And she let fall a tear from her eyes, saying as she did so, “Tear, become a river.”

At the same moment a wide river flowed between them and their pursuers, and before the latter had found means of crossing it, Matthias and his party were far on in front.

“Man with Eyes of Flame,” said the princess, “look behind and tell me how closely we are followed.”

“They are quite near to us again,” he replied, “they are almost upon our heels.”

“Darkness, cover them,” said she.

At these words Tall drew himself up. He stretched and stretched and stretched until he reached the clouds, and there, with his hat he half covered the face of the sun. The side towards the soldiers was black as night, while Matthias and his party, lit up by the shining half, went a good way without hindrance.

When they had travelled some distance, Tall uncovered the sun, and soon joined his companions by taking a mile at each step. They were already in sight of Matthias’ home, when they noticed that the royal guards were again following them closely.

“Now it is my turn,” said Broad; “go on your way in safety, I will remain here. I shall be ready for them.”

He quietly awaited their arrival, standing motionless, with his large mouth open from ear to ear. The royal army, who were determined not to turn back without having taken the princess, advanced towards the town at a gallop. They had decided among themselves that if it resisted they would lay siege to it.

Mistaking Broad’s open mouth for one of the city gates, they all dashed through and disappeared.

Broad closed his mouth, and having swallowed them, ran to rejoin his comrades in the palace of Matthias’ father. He felt somewhat disturbed with a whole army inside him, and the earth groaned and trembled beneath him as he ran. He could hear the shouts of the people assembled round Matthias, as they rejoiced at his safe return.

“Ah, here you are at last, brother Broad,” cried Matthias, directly he caught sight of him. “But what have you done with the army? Where have you left it?”

“The army is here, quite safe,” answered he, patting his enormous person. “I shall be very pleased to return them as they are, for the morsel is not very easy to digest.”

“Come then, let them out of their prison,” said Matthias, enjoying the joke, and at the same time calling all the inhabitants to assist at the entertainment.

Broad, who looked upon it as a common occurrence, stood in the middle of the palace square, and putting his hands to his sides, began to cough. Then—it was really a sight worth seeing—at each cough horsemen and horses fell out of his mouth, one over the other, plunging, hopping, jumping, trying who could get out of the way the quickest. The last one had a little difficulty in getting free, for he somehow got into one of Broad’s nostrils and was unable to move. It was only by giving a good sneeze that Broad could release him, the last of the royal cavaliers, and he lost no time in following his companions at the top of his speed.

A few days later a splendid feast was given at the wedding of Prince Matthias and the princess. The king, her father, was also present. Tall had been sent to invite him. Owing to his knowledge of the road and the length of his limbs, he accomplished the journey so quickly that he was there before the royal horsemen had time to get back. It was well for them that it was so, for, had he not pleaded that their lives might be saved, their heads would certainly have been cut off for returning empty-handed.

Everything was now arranged to everybody’s satisfaction. The princess’s father was delighted to know that his daughter was married to a rich and noble prince, and Matthias generously rewarded his brave travelling companions, who remained with him to the end of their days.

9

THE HISTORY OF PRINCE SLUGOBYL OR THE INVISIBLE KNIGHT

There was once a king who had an only son, called Prince Slugobyl. Now this young prince loved nothing better than travelling; so fond of it was he that when he was twenty years old he gave his father no rest until he allowed him to go on a long journey, in short, to travel all over the world. Thus he hoped to see many beautiful and strange things, to meet with marvellous adventures, to gain happiness, knowledge, and wisdom, and to return a better man in every way than when he left. Fearing his youth and want of experience might lead him astray, his father sent with him a valued and faithful servant. When all was ready, Slugobyl bade the king adieu and set off to visit the land of his dreams.

As he was jogging along, allowing his horse to go at its own pace, he saw a beautiful white swan pursued by an eagle about to pounce down upon it. Seizing his crossbow, he took such good aim that the eagle fell dead at his feet. The rescued swan stopped in its flight, and turning round said to him, “Valiant Prince Slugobyl, it is not a mere swan who thanks you for your most timely help, but the daughter of the Invisible Knight, who, to escape the pursuit of the giant Kostey, has changed herself into a swan. My father will gladly be of service to you in return for this kindness to me. When in need of his help, you only have to say three times, ‘Invisible Knight, come to me.’”

Having thus spoken the swan flew away. The prince looked after her for a long time, and then continued his journey. He travelled on and on and on, over high mountains, through dark forests, across barren deserts, and so to the middle of a vast plain where every green thing had been burnt up by the rays of the sun. Not a single tree, not even a bush or a plant of any kind was to be seen. No bird was heard to sing, no insect to hum, no breath of air to stir the stillness of this land of desolation. Having ridden for some hours, the prince began to suffer terribly from thirst; so, sending his servant in one direction, he himself went in another, in search of some well or spring. They soon found a well full of cool fresh water, but unluckily without either rope or bucket to draw it up. After a few moments' thought the prince said to his servant, "Take the leathern strap used for tethering our horses, put it round your body, and I will then let you down into the well; I cannot endure this thirst any longer."

"Your highness," answered the servant, "I am heavier than you, and you are not as strong as I, so you will not be able to pull me out of the water. If you, therefore, will go down first, I shall be able to pull you up when you have quenched your thirst."

The prince took his advice, and fastening an end of the strap under his arms, was lowered into the well. When he had enjoyed a deep draught of the clear water and filled a bottle of the same for his servant, he gave the signal that he wished to be pulled up. But instead of obeying the servant said, "Listen, prince; from the day you were born up to the present moment you have never known anything but luxury, pleasure, and happiness, while I have suffered poverty and slaved all my life. Now we will change places, and you shall be my servant. If you refuse you had better make your peace with God, for I shall drown you."

"Stop, faithful servant," cried the prince, "you will not be so wicked as to do that. What good will it do you? You will never be so happy as you have been with me, and you know what dreadful tortures are in store for murderers in the other world; their hands are plunged into boiling pitch, their shoulders bruised with blows from red-hot iron clubs, and their necks sawn with wooden saws."

"You may cut and saw me as much as you like in the other world," said the servant, "but I shall drown you in this." And he began to let the strap slide through his fingers.

"Very well," said the prince, "I agree to accept your terms. You shall be the prince and I will be your servant, I give you my word."

"I have no faith in words that are carried away by the first wind that blows. Swear to confirm your promise in writing."

"I swear."

The servant then let down paper and pencil, and dictated the following:

"I hereby declare that I renounce my name and rights in favour of the bearer of this writing, and that I acknowledge him to be my prince, and that I am his servant. Written in the well. (Signed) Prince Slugobyl."

The man having taken this document, which he was quite unable to read, drew out the prince, took off the clothes in which he was dressed, and made him wear those he himself had just taken off. Thus disguised they travelled for a week, and arriving at a large city, went straight to the king's palace. There the false prince dismissed his pretended servant to the stables, and presenting himself before the king, addressed him thus in a very haughty manner:

"King, I am come to demand the hand of your wise and beautiful daughter, whose fame has reached my father's court. In exchange I offer our alliance, and in case of refusal, war."

"Prayers and threats are equally out of place," answered the king; "nevertheless, prince, as proof of the esteem in which I hold the king, your father, I grant your request: but only on one condition, that you deliver us from a large army that now besets our town. Do this, and my daughter shall be yours."

“Certainly,” said the impostor, “I can soon get rid of them, however near they may be. I undertake by to-morrow morning to have freed the land entirely of them.”

In the evening he went to the stables, and calling his pretended servant, saluted him respectfully and said, “Listen, my dear friend, I want you to go immediately outside the town and destroy the besieging army that surrounds it. But do it in such a way that every one will believe that I have done it. In exchange for this favour I promise to return the writing in which you renounced your title of prince and engaged to serve me.”

The prince put on his armour, mounted his horse, and rode outside the city gates. There he stopped and called three times to the Invisible Knight.

“Behold me, prince, at your service,” said a voice close to him. “I will do anything you wish, for you saved my only daughter from the hands of the giant Kostey; I shall always be grateful.”

Slugobyl showed him the army he had to destroy before morning, and the Invisible Knight whistled and sang:

MAGU, Horse with Golden Mane,
I want your help yet once again,
Walk not the earth but fly through space
As lightnings flash or thunders race.
Swift as the arrow from the bow,
Come quick, yet so that none can know.

AT THAT INSTANT a magnificent grey horse appeared out of a whirlwind of smoke, and from his head there hung a golden mane. Swift as the wind was he, flames of fire blazed forth from his nostrils, lightnings flashed from his eyes, and volumes of smoke came from his ears. The Invisible Knight leapt upon his back, saying to the prince, “Take my sword and destroy the left wing of the army, while I attack the right wing and the centre.”

The two heroes rushed forward and attacked the invaders with such fury that on all sides men fell like chopped wood or dried grass. A frightful massacre followed, but it was in vain that the enemy fled, for the two knights seemed to be everywhere. Within a short time only the dead and dying remained on the battle-field, and the two conquerors quietly returned to the town. On reaching the palace steps, the Invisible Knight melted into the morning mist, and the serving-man prince returned to the stables.

That same night it happened that the king’s daughter, not being able to sleep, had remained on her balcony and seen and heard all that had taken place. She had overheard the conversation between the impostor and the real prince, had seen the latter call to his assistance the Invisible Knight, and then doff his royal armour in favour of the false prince; she had seen and understood everything, but she determined to keep silence for a little longer.

But when on the next day the king, her father, celebrated the victory of the false prince with great rejoicings, loaded him with honours and presents, and calling his daughter expressed a wish that she should marry him—the princess could be silent no longer. She walked up to the real prince, who was waiting at table with the other servants, took his arm, and leading him to the king, said:

“Father, and all good people, this is the man who has saved our country from the enemy, and whom God has destined to be my husband. He to whom you pay these honours is but a vile impostor, who has robbed his master of name and rights. Last night I witnessed such deeds as eye has never seen nor ear heard, but which shall be told afterwards. Bid this traitor show the writing which proves the truth of what I say.”

When the false prince had delivered up the paper signed by the serving-man prince, it was found to contain the following words:

The bearer of this document, the false and wicked servant of the serving-man prince, shall receive the punishment his sin deserves.

Prince Slugobyl.

“What? Is that the real meaning of that writing?” asked the traitor, who could not read.

“Most assuredly,” was the reply.

Then he threw himself at the king’s feet and begged for mercy. But he received his punishment, for he was tied to the tails of four wild horses and torn to pieces.

Prince Slugobyl married the princess. It was a magnificent wedding. I myself was there, and drank of the mead and wine; but they only touched my beard, they did not enter my mouth.

10

THE SPIRIT OF THE STEPPES

In ancient days there lived a king and queen; the former was old but the latter young. Although they loved one another dearly they were very unhappy, for God had not given them any children. They fretted and grieved about this so deeply that the queen became ill with melancholy. The doctors advised her to travel. The king was obliged to remain at home, so she went without him, accompanied by twelve maids of honour, all beautiful and fresh as flowers in May. When they had travelled for some days, they reached a vast uninhabited plain which stretched so far away it seemed to touch the sky. After driving hither and thither for some time the driver was quite bewildered, and stopped before a large stone column. At its foot stood a warrior on horseback, clad in steel armour.

“Brave knight, can you direct me to the high-road?” said the driver; “we are lost, and know not which way to go.”

“I will show you the way,” said the warrior, “but only on one condition, that each of you gives me a kiss.”

The queen looked at the warrior in wrath, and ordered the coachman to drive on. The carriage continued moving nearly all day, but as if bewitched, for it always returned to the stone column. This time the queen addressed the warrior.

“Knight,” said she, “show us the road, and I will reward you richly.”

"I am the Master Spirit of the Steppes," answered he. "I demand payment for showing the way, and my payment is always in kisses."

"Very well, my twelve maids of honour shall pay you."

"Thirteen kisses are due to me; the first must be given by the lady who addresses me."

The queen was very angry, and again the attempt was made to find their way. But the carriage, though during the whole time it moved in an opposite direction, still returned to the stone column. It was now dark, and they were obliged to think of finding shelter for the night, so the queen was obliged to give the warrior his strange payment. Getting out of her carriage she walked up to the knight, and looking modestly down allowed him to kiss her; her twelve maids of honour who followed did the same. A moment later stone column and horseman had vanished, and they found themselves on the high-road, while a perfumed cloud seemed to float over the steppes. The queen stepped into her carriage with her ladies, and so the journey was continued.

But from that day the beautiful queen and her maids became thoughtful and sad; and, losing all pleasure in travel, went back to the capital. Yet the return home did not make the queen happy, for always before her eyes she saw the Horseman of the Steppes. This displeased the king, who became gloomy and ill-tempered.

One day while the king was on his throne in the council chamber he suddenly heard the sweetest warblings, like unto those produced by a bird of paradise; these were answered by the songs of many nightingales. Wondering, he sent to find out what it was. The messenger returned saying that the queen and her twelve maids of honour had each been presented with a girl baby, and that the sweet warblings were but the crying of the children. The king was greatly astonished, and while he was engaged in deep thought about the matter the palace was suddenly lit up by lights of dazzling brightness. On inquiring into the cause he learnt that the little princess had opened her eyes, and that they shone with matchless brilliancy.

At first the king could not speak, so amazed was he. He laughed and he cried, he sorrowed and he rejoiced, and in the midst of it all a deputation of ministers and senators was announced. When these were shown into his presence they fell on their knees, and striking the ground with their foreheads, said, “Sire, save your people and your royal person. The queen and her twelve maids of honour have been presented by the Spirit of the Steppes with thirteen girl babies. We beseech you to have these children killed, or we shall all be destroyed.”

The king, roused to anger, gave orders that all the babies should be thrown into the sea. The courtiers were already on their way to obey this cruel command when the queen entered, weeping, and pale as death. She threw herself at the king’s feet and begged him to spare the lives of these helpless and innocent children, and instead to let them be placed on a desert island and there left in the hands of God.

The king granted her wish. The baby princess was placed in a golden cradle, her little companions in copper cradles, and the thirteen were taken to a desert island and left quite alone. Every one at court thought that they had perished, and said one to another, “They will die from cold and hunger; they will be devoured by wild beasts, or birds of prey; they are sure to die; perchance they will be buried under dead leaves or covered with snow.” But happily nothing of the kind happened, for God takes care of little children.

The small princess grew bigger day by day. Every morning she was awakened by the rising sun, and bathed by the dew. Soft breezes refreshed her, and twisted into plaits her luxuriant hair. The trees sang her to sleep with their rustling lullabies, the stars watched over her at night. The swans clothed her in their soft raiment, and the bees fed her with their honey. The beauty of the little maiden increased with her growth. Her brow was calm and pure as the moon, her lips red as a rosebud, and so eloquent that her voice sounded like a shower of pearls. But wonderful beyond compare was the expressive beauty of her eyes, for if she looked at you kindly you seemed to float in a sea of joy, if angrily it made you numb with fear, and you were instantly changed into a block of ice. She was waited upon by her twelve companions, who were almost as charming as their mistress, to whom they were devotedly attached. Rumours of the loveliness of Princess Sudolisu spread far and wide. People came to see her from all parts of the world, so that it was soon no longer a desert island, but a thickly populated and magnificent city.

Many a prince came from afar and entered the lists as suitor for the hand of Sudolisu, but none succeeded in winning her love. Those who bore with good temper and resignation the disappointment of being refused returned home safe and sound, but woe to the unlucky wretch who rebelled against her will and attempted to use an armed force; his soldiers perished miserably, while he, frozen to the heart by her angry glance, was turned into a block of ice.

Now it happened that the famous ogre, Kostey, who lived underground, was a great admirer of beauty. And he took it into his head to see what the creatures above ground were doing. By the help of his telescope he was able to observe all the kings and queens, princes and princesses, gentlemen and ladies, living on the earth. As he was looking his eye fell upon a beautiful island, where, bright as many stars, stood twelve maidens; while in their midst, upon a couch of swan’s-down, slept a young princess lovely as the dawn of day. Sudolisu was dreaming of a young knight who rode a spirited horse; on his breast was a golden cuirass, and in his hand an invisible club. And in her dream she admired this knight, and loved him more than life itself. The wicked Kostey longed to have her for his own, and determined to carry her off. He reached the earth by striking it from underground three times with his forehead. The princess called her army together, and putting herself at its head, led her soldiers against him. But he merely breathed upon the soldiers and they fell down in an overpowering sleep. Then he stretched out his bony hands to take the princess, but she, throwing a glance full of anger and disdain at him, changed him into a block of ice. Then she shut herself up in her palace. Kostey did not remain frozen long; when the princess had departed he came to life again, and started off in pursuit of her. On reaching the town where she dwelt, he put all the inhabitants into a charmed sleep, and laid the same spell upon the twelve maids of honour. Fearing the power of her eyes, he dared not attack Sudolisu herself; so he surrounded her palace with an iron wall, and left it in charge of a monster dragon with twelve heads. Then he waited, in hope that the princess would give in.

Days passed, weeks grew into months, and still Princess Sudolisu's kingdom looked like one large bedchamber. The people snored in the streets, the brave army lying in the fields slept soundly, hidden in the long grass under the shadow of nettle, wormwood, and thistle, rust and dust marring the brightness of their armour. Inside the palace everything was the same. The twelve maids of honour lay motionless. The princess alone kept watch, silent amid this reign of sleep. She walked up and down her narrow prison, sighing and weeping bitter tears, but no other sound broke the silence; only Kostey, avoiding her glance, still called through the doors and begged her to refuse him no longer. Then he promised she should be Queen of the Nether World, but she answered him not.

Lonely and miserable, she thought of the prince of her dreams. She saw him in his golden armour, mounted on his spirited steed, looking at her with eyes full of love. So she imagined him day and night.

Looking out of window one day, and seeing a cloud floating on the horizon, she cried:

Floating Cloudlet soft and white,

Pilgrim of the sky,
I pray you for one moment, light
On me your pitying eye.
Where my love is can you tell?
Thinks he of me ill or well?

"I KNOW NOT," answered the cloud, "ask the wind."

Then she saw a tiny breeze playing among the field flowers, and called out:

GENTLE BREEZELET, soul of air,
Look not lightly on my pain;
Kindly lift me from despair,
Help me freedom to regain.
Where my love is can you tell?
Thinks he of me ill or well?

"ASK THAT LITTLE STAR YONDER," answered the breeze, "she knows more than I."

Sudolisu raised her beautiful eyes to the twinkling stars and said:

SHINING STAR, God's light on high,
Look down and prithee see;
Behold me weep and hear me sigh,
Then help and pity me.
Where my love is canst thou tell?

Thinks he of me ill or well?

"You will learn more from the moon," answered the star; "she lives nearer the earth than I, and sees everything that goes on there."

The moon was just rising from her silver bed when Sudolisu called to her:

Pearl of the Sky, thou radiant Moon,
Thy watch o'er the stars pray leave,
Throw thy soft glance o'er the earth ere I swoon,
O'ercome by my sorrows I weep and I grieve.
I pine for my friend, oh ease thou my heart,
And say, am I loved? In his thoughts have I part?

"Princess," replied the moon, "I know nothing of your friend. But wait a few hours, the sun will have then risen; he knows everything, and will surely be able to tell you."

So the princess kept her eyes fixed upon that part of the sky where the sun first appears, chasing away the darkness like a flock of birds. When he came forth in all his glory she said:

Soul of the World, thou deep fountain of life,
Eye of all-powerful God,
Visit my prison, dark scene of sad strife,
Raise up my soul from the sod,
With hope that my friend whom I pine for and love

May come to my rescue. Say, where does he rove?

"Sweet Sudolisu," answered the sun, "dry the tears that like pearls roll down your sad and lovely face. Let your troubled heart be at peace, for your friend the prince is now on his way to rescue you. He has recovered the magic ring from the Nether World, and many armies from those countries have assembled to follow him. He is now moving towards Kostey's palace, and intends to punish him. But all this will be of no avail, and Kostey will gain the victory, if the prince does not make use of other means which I am now on my way to provide him with. Farewell; be brave, he whom you love will come to your aid and save you from Kostey and his sorceries; happiness is in store for you both."

The sun then rose upon a distant land where Prince Junak, mounted on a powerful steed and clad in golden armour, assembled his forces to fight against the giant Kostey. Thrice he had dreamt of the beautiful princess shut up in the Sleeping Palace, for the fame of her loveliness had reached him, and he loved without having seen.

"Leave your army where it is," said the sun, "it will not be of the slightest use in fighting against Kostey, he is proof against all weapons. The only way to rescue the princess is to kill him, and there is but one who can tell you how to do it, and that is the witch, old Yaga. I will show you how to find the horse that will carry you straight to her. First take the road to the east, and walk on till you come to a wide plain: there, right in the middle of the plain, are three oaks, and in the centre of these, lying close to the ground, is an iron door with a copper handle. Behind the door is the horse, also an invisible club; both are necessary for the work you have to do. You will learn the rest afterwards. Farewell."

This advice astonished the prince greatly; he hardly knew what to do. After deep reflection he crossed himself, took the magic ring from his finger and cast it into the sea. Instantly the army vanished like mist before the wind, and when not a trace of it was left he took the road to the east. After walking straight on for eight days he reached a large green plain, in the middle of which grew the three oaks, and in the centre of these, close to the ground, was the iron door with the copper handle. Opening the door, he found a winding staircase which led to a second door bound with iron, and shut by means of a huge padlock sixty pounds in weight. At this moment he heard the neighing of a horse, the sound being followed by the opening of eleven other iron doors. There he saw the war-horse which centuries ago had been bewitched by a magician. The prince whistled; the horse immediately bounded towards him, at the same time breaking the twelve iron chains that fastened him to the manger. He was a beautiful creature, strong, light, handsome, full of fire and grace; his eyes flashed lightnings, from his nostrils came flames of fire, his mane was like a cloud of gold, he was certainly a marvel of a horse.

"Prince Junak," said the steed, "I have waited centuries for such a knight as you; here I am, ready to carry you and serve you faithfully. Mount upon my back, and take hold of the invisible club that hangs at the pommel of the saddle. You yourself will not need to use it; give it your orders, it will carry them out and do the fighting itself. Now we will start; may God look after us! Tell me where you wish to go, and you shall be there directly."

The prince quickly told the horse his history, mounted, seized the club, and set off. The creature capered, galloped, flew, and swam in the air higher than the highest forests but lower than the clouds; he crossed mountains, rivers, and precipices; he barely touched the blades of grass in passing over them, and went so lightly along the roads that he did not raise one grain of dust.

Towards sunset Junak found himself close to an immense forest, in the centre of which stood Yaga's house. All around were oaks and pines hundreds of years old, untouched by the axe of man. These enormous trees, lit up by the rays of the setting sun, seemed to look with astonishment at their strange guest. The silence was absolute; not a bird sang in the branches, not an insect hummed in the air, not a worm crawled upon the ground. The only sound was that made by the horse as he broke through the underwood. Then they came in sight of a small house supported by a cock's foot, round which it turned as on a movable pivot. Prince Junak cried:

Turn round, little house, turn round,
I want to come inside;
Let thy back to the forest be found,
Thy door to me open wide.

The little house turned round, and the prince entering saw old Yaga, who immediately cried out, “What, Prince Junak! How have you come here, where no one ever enters?”

“You are a silly old witch, to worry me with questions instead of making me welcome,” said the prince.

At these words old Yaga jumped up and hastened to attend to his needs. She prepared food and drink, made him a soft bed where he could sleep comfortably, and then leaving the house passed the night out of doors. On her return in the morning the prince related all his adventures and confided his plans.

“Prince Junak,” said she, “you have undertaken a very difficult task, but your courage will enable you to accomplish it successfully. I will tell you how to kill Kostey, for without that you can do nothing. Now, in the very midst of the ocean lies the Island of Eternal Life. Upon this island is an oak tree, and at the foot of it, hidden in the earth, a coffer bound with iron. A hare is shut up in this coffer, and under her sits a grey duck whose body contains an egg. Within this egg is Kostey’s life—if it be broken he dies. Good-bye, Prince Junak, start without loss of time. Your horse will carry you to the island.”

Junak mounted his horse, spoke a few words to him, and the brave creature fled through space with the swiftness of an arrow. Leaving the forest and its enormous trees behind, they soon reached the shores of the ocean. Fishermen’s nets lay on the beach, and in one of them was a large sea fish who, struggling to free itself, spoke to the prince in a human voice.

“Prince Junak,” he said sadly, “free me from my prison; I assure you you will lose nothing by doing me this service.”

Junak did what was required of him, and threw the fish back into the water. It plunged and disappeared, but he paid little attention to it, so occupied was he with his own thoughts. In the far distance could be seen the rocks of the Island of Eternal Life, but there seemed no way of reaching it. Leaning on his club he thought and thought, and ever as he thought he grew sadder and sadder.

“What is the matter, Prince Junak? Has anything vexed you?” asked his horse.

“How can I help grieving when, while in sight of the island, I can go no further? How can we cross the sea?”

“Get on my back, prince, I will be your bridge; only take care to hold on tight.”

The prince held firmly to its mane, and the horse leapt into the sea. At first they were plunged right beneath the waves, but rising again to the surface swam easily across. The sun was about to set when the prince dismounted on the Island of Eternal Life. He first took off his horse’s harness, and leaving him to browse on the green grass, hurried to the top of a distant hill, whence he could see a large oak. Without losing a moment he hastened towards it, seized the tree with both hands, pulled at it with all his might, and after the most violent efforts tore it up by the roots from the place it had filled for centuries. The tree groaned and fell, and the hole in which it had been planted appeared like an immense case. Right at the bottom of this case was a coffer bound with iron. The prince took it up, broke the lock by striking it with a stone, opened it and seized the hare that was trying to make its escape. The grey duck that had lain underneath flew off towards the sea: the prince fired, struck the bird, the latter dropped its egg into the sea, and both were swallowed by the waves. Junak gave a cry of despair and rushed to the beach. At first he could see nothing. After a few minutes there was a slight movement of the waves, while upon the surface swam the fish whose life he had saved. It came towards him, right on to the sand, and dropping the lost egg at his feet, said: “You see, prince, I have not forgotten your kindness, and now I have found it in my power to be of service to you.”

Having thus spoken it disappeared in the water. The prince took the egg, mounted his horse, and crossing the sea with his heart full of hope, journeyed towards the island where Princess Sudolisu kept watch over her sleeping subjects in the Enchanted Palace. The latter was surrounded by a wall, and guarded by the Dragon with Twelve Heads. Now these heads went to sleep in turn, six at a time, so it was impossible to take him unawares or to kill him, for that could be done only by his own blows.

On reaching the palace gates Junak sent his invisible club forward to clear the way, whereupon it threw itself upon the dragon, and began to beat all the heads unmercifully. The blows came so thick and fast that the body was soon crushed to pieces. Still the dragon lived and beat the air with its claws. Then it opened its twelve jaws from which darted pointed tongues, but it could not lay hold of the invisible club. At last, tormented on all sides and filled with rage, it buried its sharp claws in its own body and died. The prince then entered the palace gates, and having put his faithful horse in the stables and armed himself with his invisible club, made his way for the tower in which the princess was shut up. On seeing him she cried out, “Prince, I rejoiced to see your victory over the dragon. There is yet a more terrible foe to conquer, and he is my jailor, the cruel Kostey. Beware of him, for if he should kill you, I shall throw myself out of window into the precipice beneath.”

“Be comforted, my princess: for in this egg I hold the life or death of Kostey.”

Then turning to the invisible club, he said, “Press forward, my invisible club; strike your best, and rid the earth of this wicked giant.”

The club began by breaking down the iron doors, and thus reached Kostey. The giant was soon so crippled with blows that his teeth were smashed, lightnings flashed from his eyes, and he rolled round and round like a pin-cushion. Had he been a man he must have died under such treatment. But he was no man, this master of sorcery. So he managed to get on his feet and look for his tormentor. The blows from the club rained hard upon him all the time, and with such effect that his groans could be heard all over the island. On approaching the window he saw Prince Junak.

“Ah, wretch!” cried the ogre, “it is you, is it, who torments me in this way!” and he prepared to blow upon him with his poisonous breath. But the prince instantly crushed the egg between his hands, the shell broke, the white and yellow mingled and flowed to the ground, and Kostey died.

As the sorcerer breathed his last, the enchantments vanished and the sleeping islanders awoke. The army, once more afoot, advanced with beating drums to the palace, and everything fell into its accustomed place. As soon as Princess Sudolisu was freed from her prison she held out her white hand to her deliverer, and thanking him in the most touching words, led him to the throne and placed him at her side. The twelve maids of honour having chosen young and brave warriors, ranged themselves with their lovers round the queen. Then the doors were thrown open, and the priests in their robes entered, bearing a golden tray of wedding rings.

Thereupon the marriage ceremony was gone through, and the lovers united in God’s name.

After the wedding there were feasting and music and dancing, as is usual on such occasions, and they all enjoyed themselves. It makes one glad to think how happy they were, and what a glorious time they had after their misfortunes.

11

THE PRINCE WITH THE GOLDEN HAND

There once lived a king and queen who had an only daughter. And the beauty of this princess surpassed everything seen or heard of. Her forehead was brilliant as the moon, her lips like the rose, her complexion had the delicacy of the lily, and her breath the sweetness of jessamine. Her hair was golden, and in her voice and glance there was something so enchanting that none could help listening to her or looking at her.

The princess lived for seventeen years in her own rooms, rejoicing the heart of her parents, teachers, and servants. No one else ever saw her, for the sons of the king and all other princes were forbidden to enter her rooms. She never went anywhere, never looked upon the outside world, and never breathed the outer air, but she was perfectly happy.

When she was eighteen it happened, either by chance or by the will of fate, that she heard the cry of the cuckoo. This sound made her strangely uneasy; her golden head drooped, and covering her eyes with her hands, she fell into thought so deep as not to hear her mother enter. The queen looked at her anxiously, and after comforting her went to tell the king about it.

For many years past the sons of kings and neighbouring princes had, either personally or by their ambassadors, presented themselves at court to ask the king for the hand of his daughter in marriage. But he had always bidden them wait until another time. Now, after a long consultation with the queen, he sent messengers to foreign courts and elsewhere to proclaim that the princess, in accordance with the wishes of her parents, was about to choose a husband, and that the man of her choice would also have the right of succession to the throne.

When the princess heard of this decision her joy was very great, and for days she would dream about it. Then she looked out into the garden through the golden lattice of her window, and longed with an irresistible longing to walk in the open air upon the smooth lawn. With great difficulty she at last persuaded her governesses to allow her to do so, they agreeing on condition that she should keep with them. So the crystal doors were thrown open, the oaken gates that shut in the orchard turned on their hinges, and the princess found herself on the green grass. She ran about, picking the sweet-scented flowers and chasing the many-coloured butterflies. But she could not have been a very prudent maiden, for she wandered away from her governesses, with her face uncovered.

Just at that moment a raging hurricane, such as had never been seen or heard before, passed by and fell upon the garden. It roared and whistled round and round, then seizing the princess carried her far away. The terrified governesses wrung their hands, and were for a time speechless with grief. At last they rushed into the palace, and throwing themselves on their knees before the king and queen, told them with sobs and tears what had happened. They were overwhelmed with sorrow and knew not what to do.

By this time quite a crowd of princes had arrived at the palace, and seeing the king in such bitter grief, inquired the reason of it.

“Sorrow has touched my white hairs,” said the king. “The hurricane has carried off my dearly beloved child, the sweet Princess with the Golden Hair, and I know not where it has taken her. Whoever finds this out, and brings her back to me, shall have her for his wife, and with her half my kingdom for a wedding present, and the remainder of my wealth and titles after my death."

After hearing these words, princes and knights mounted their horses and set off to search throughout the world for the beautiful Princess with the Golden Hair, who had been carried away by Vikher.

Now among the seekers were two brothers, sons of a king, and they travelled together through many countries asking for news of the princess, but no one knew anything about her. But they continued their search, and at the end of two years arrived in a country that lies in the centre of the earth, and has summer and winter at the same time.

The princes determined to find out whether this was the place where the hurricane had hidden the Princess with the Golden Hair. So they began to ascend one of the mountains on foot, leaving their horses behind them to feed on the grass. On reaching the top, they came in sight of a silver palace supported on a cock's foot, while at one of the windows the sun's rays shone upon a head of golden hair; surely it could only belong to the princess. Suddenly the north wind blew so violently, and the cold became so intense, that the leaves of the trees withered and the breath froze. The two princes tried to keep their footing, and battled manfully against the storm, but they were overcome by its fierceness and fell together, frozen to death.

Their broken-hearted parents waited for them in vain. Masses were said, charities distributed, and prayers sent up to God to pity them in their sorrow.

One day when the queen, the mother of the princes, was giving a poor old man some money she said to him, "My good old friend, pray God to guard our sons and soon bring them back in good health."

"Ah, noble lady," answered he, "that prayer would be useless. Everlasting rest is all one may ask for the dead, but in return for the love you have shown and the money you have given the poor and needy, I am charged with this message—that God has taken pity on your sorrow, and that ere long you will be the mother of a son, the like of whom has never yet been seen."

The old man, having spoken thus, vanished.

The queen, whose tears were falling, felt a strange joy enter her heart and a feeling of happiness steal over her, as she went to the king and repeated the old man's words. And so it came to pass, for a week or two later God sent her a son, and he was in no way like an ordinary child. His eyes resembled those of a falcon, and his eyebrows the sable's fur. His right hand was of pure gold, and his manner and appearance were so full of an indescribable majesty, that he was looked upon by every one with a feeling of awe.

His growth, too, was not like that of other children. When but three days old, he stepped out of his swaddling-clothes and left his cradle. And he was so strong that when his parents entered the room he ran towards them, crying out, "Good morning, dear parents, why are you so sad? Are you not happy at the sight of me?"

"We are indeed happy, dear child, and we thank God for having sent us you in our great grief. But we cannot forget your two brothers; they were so handsome and brave, and worthy of a great destiny. And our sadness is increased when we remember that, instead of resting in their own country in the tomb of their forefathers, they sleep in an unknown land, perhaps without burial. Alas! it is three years since we had news of them."

At these words the child's tears fell, and he embraced his parents and said, "Weep no more, dear parents, you shall soon be comforted: for before next spring I shall be a strong young man, and will look for my brothers all over the world. And I will bring them back to you, if not alive, yet dead: ay, though I have to seek them in the very centre of the earth."

At these words and at that which followed the king and queen were amazed. For the strange child, guided as it were by an invisible hand, rushed into the garden, and in spite of the cold, for it was not yet daylight, bathed in the early dew. When the sun had risen he threw himself down near a little wood on the fine sand, rubbed and rolled himself in it, and returned home, no longer a child but a youth.

It was pleasant to the king to see his son thrive in this way, and indeed the young prince was the handsomest in the whole land. He grew from hour to hour. At the end of a month he could wield a sword, in two months he rode on horseback, in three months he had grown a beautiful moustache of pure gold. Then he put on a helmet, and presenting himself before the king and queen, said: “My much honoured parents, your son asks your blessing. I am no longer a child, and now go to seek my brothers. In order to find them I will, if necessary, go to the furthest ends of the world.”

“Ah, do not venture. Stay rather with us, dear son, you are still too young to be exposed to the risks of such an undertaking.”

“Adventures have no terrors for me,” replied the young hero, “I trust in God. Why should I for a moment hesitate to face these dangers? Whatever Destiny has in store for us will happen, whatever we may do to try to prevent it.”

So they agreed to let him go. Weeping they bade him farewell, blessing him and the road he was to travel.

A pleasant tale is soon told, but events do not pass so quickly.

The young prince crossed deep rivers and climbed high mountains, till he came to a dark forest. In the distance he saw a cottage supported on a cock’s foot, and standing in the midst of a field full of poppies. As he made his ways towards it he was suddenly seized by an overpowering longing to sleep, but he urged on his horse, and breaking off the poppy heads as he galloped through the field, came up close to the house. Then he called out:

LITTLE COT, *turn around, on thy foot turn thou free;*

To the forest set thy back, let thy door be wide to me.

THE COTTAGE TURNED round with a great creaking noise, the door facing the prince. He entered, and found an old woman with thin white hair and a face covered with wrinkles, truly frightful to look upon. She was sitting at a table, her head resting on her hands, her eyes fixed on the ceiling, lost in deep thought. Near her were two beautiful girls, their complexions like lilies and roses, and in every way sweet to the eye.

“Ah, how do you do, Prince with Moustache of Gold, Hero with the Golden Fist?” said old Yaga; “what has brought you here?”

Having told her the object of his journey, she replied, “Your elder brothers perished on the mountain that touches the clouds, while in search of the Princess with the Golden Hair, who was carried off by Vikher, the hurricane.”

“And how is this thief Vikher to be got at?” asked the prince.

“Ah, my dear child, he would swallow you like a fly. It is now a hundred years since I went outside this cottage, for fear Vikher should seize me and carry me off to his palace near the sky.”

“I am not afraid of his carrying me off, I am not handsome enough for that; and he will not swallow me either, for my golden hand can smash anything.”

“Then if you are not afraid, my dove, I will help you to the best of my power. But give me your word of honour that you will bring me some of the Water of Youth, for it restores even to the most aged the beauty and freshness of youth.”

“I give you my word of honour that I will bring you some.”

“This then is what you must do. I will give you a pin-cushion for a guide; this you throw in front of you, and follow whithersoever it goes. It will lead you to the mountain that touches the clouds, and which is guarded in Vikher's absence by his father and mother, the northern blast and the south wind. On no account lose sight of the pin-cushion. If attacked by the father, the northern blast, and suddenly seized with cold, then put on this heat-giving hood: if overpowered by burning heat of the south wind, then drink from this cooling flagon. Thus by means of the pin-cushion, the hood, and the flagon, you will reach the top of the mountain where the Princess with the Golden Hair is imprisoned. Deal with Vikher as you will, only remember to bring me some of the Water of Youth."

Our young hero took the heat-giving hood, the cooling flagon, and the pin-cushion, and, after bidding farewell to old Yaga and her two pretty daughters, mounted his steed and rode off, following the pin-cushion, which rolled before him at a great rate.

Now a beautiful story is soon told, but the events of which it consists do not in real life take place so rapidly.

When the prince had travelled through two kingdoms, he came to a land in which lay a very beautiful valley that stretched into the far distance, and above it towered the mountain that touches the sky. The summit was so high above the earth you might almost fancy it reached the moon.

The prince dismounted, left his horse to graze, and having crossed himself began to follow the pin-cushion up steep and rocky paths. When he had got half-way there the north wind began to blow, and the cold was so intense that the wood of the trees split up and the breath froze: he felt chilled to the heart. But he quickly put on the heat-giving hood, and cried:

O Heat-Giving Hood, see I fly now to thee,
Lend me quickly thine aid;
O hasten to warm ere the cold has killed me,
With thee I'm not afraid.

THE NORTHERN BLAST blew with redoubled fury, but to no purpose. For the prince was so hot that he streamed with perspiration, and indeed was obliged to unbutton his coat and fan himself.

Here the pin-cushion stopped upon a small snow-covered mound. The prince cleared away the snow, beneath which lay the frozen bodies of two young men, and he knew them to be those of his lost brothers. Having knelt beside them and prayed he turned to follow the pin-cushion, which had already started, and was rolling ever higher and higher. On reaching the top of the mountain he saw a silver palace supported on a cock's foot, and at one of the windows, shining in the sun's rays, a head of golden hair which could belong to no one but the princess. Suddenly a hot wind began to blow from the south, and the heat became so intense that leaves withered and dropped from the trees, the grass dried up, and large cracks appeared in several places of the earth's surface. Thirst, heat, and weariness began to tell upon the young prince, so he took the cooling flagon from his pocket and cried:

FLAGON, bring me quick relief
From this parching heat;
In thy draught I have belief,
Coolness it will mete.

AFTER DRINKING DEEPLY he felt stronger than ever, and so continued to ascend. Not only was he relieved from the great heat, but was even obliged to button up his coat to keep himself warm.

The pin-cushion still led the way, ever climbing higher and higher, while the prince followed close behind. After crossing the region of clouds they came to the topmost peak of the mountain. Here the prince came close to the palace, which can only be likened to a dream of perfect beauty. It was supported on a cock’s foot, and was built entirely of silver, except for its steel gates and roof of solid gold. Before the entrance was a deep precipice over which none but the birds could pass. As the prince gazed upon the splendid building the princess leaned out of one of the windows, and seeing him light shone from her sparkling eyes, her lovely hair floated in the wind, and the scent of her sweet breath filled the air. The prince sprang forward and cried out:

Silver Palace, oh turn, on thy foot turn thou free,
To the steep rocks thy back, but thy doors wide to me.

At these words it revolved creaking, the doorway facing the prince. As he entered it returned to its original position. The prince went through the palace till he came to a room bright as the sun itself, and the walls, floor, and ceiling of which consisted of mirrors. He was filled with wonder, for instead of one princess he saw twelve, all equally beautiful, with the same graceful movements and golden hair. But eleven were only reflections of the one real princess. She gave a cry of joy on seeing him, and running to meet him, said: “Ah, noble sir, you look like a delivering angel. Surely you bring me good news. From what family, city, or country have you come? Perhaps my dear father and mother sent you in search of me?”

“No one has sent me, I have come of my own free will to rescue you and restore you to your parents.”

When he had told her all that had passed she said, “Your devotion, prince, is very great; may God bless your attempt. But Vikher the hurricane is unconquerable, so, if life be dear to you, fly. Leave this place before his return, which I expect every minute; he will kill you with one glance of his eyes."

"If I should not succeed in saving you, sweet princess, life can be no longer dear to me. But I am full of hope, and I beg you first to give me some of the Strength-Giving Water from the Heroic Well, for this is drunk by the hurricane."

The princess drew a bucketful of water, which the young man emptied at one draught and then asked for another. This astonished her somewhat, but she gave it him, and when he had drunk it he said, "Allow me, princess, to sit down for a moment to take breath."

She gave him an iron chair, but directly he sat down it broke into a thousand pieces. She then brought him the chair used by Vikher himself, but although it was made of the strongest steel, it bent and creaked beneath the prince's weight.

"Now you see," said he, "that I have grown heavier than your unconquerable hurricane: so take courage, with God's help and your good wishes I shall overcome him. In the meantime tell me how you pass your time here."

"Alas! in bitter tears and sad reflections. My only consolation is that I have been able to keep my persecutor at a distance, for he vainly implores me to marry him. Two years have now passed away, and yet none of his efforts to win my consent have been successful. Last time he went away he told me that if on his return he had not guessed the riddles I set him (the correct explanation of these being the condition I have made for his marrying me), he would set them aside, and marry me in spite of my objections."

"Ah, then I am just in time. I will be the priest on that occasion, and give him Death for a bride."

At that moment a horrible whistling was heard.

"Be on your guard, prince," cried she, "here comes the hurricane."

The palace spun rapidly round, fearful sounds filled the building, thousands of ravens and birds of ill omen croaked loudly and flapped their wings, and all the doors opened with a tremendous noise.

Vikher, mounted on his winged horse that breathed fire, leapt into the mirrored room, then stopped amazed at the sight before him. He was indeed the hurricane, with the body of a giant and the head of a dragon, and as he gazed his horse pranced and beat his wings.

“What is your business here, stranger?” he shouted: and the sound of his voice was like unto a lion’s roar.

“I am your enemy, and I want your blood,” replied the prince calmly.

“Your boldness amuses me. At the same time, if you do not depart at once I will take you in my left hand and crush every bone in your body with my right.”

“Try, if you dare, woman-stealer,” he answered.

Vikher roared, breathing fire in his rage, and with his mouth wide open threw himself upon the prince, intending to swallow him. But the latter stepped lightly aside, and putting his golden hand down his enemy’s throat, seized him by the tongue and dashed him against the wall with such force that the monster bounded against it like a ball, and died within a few moments, shedding torrents of blood.

The prince then drew from different springs the water that *restores*, that *revives*, and that *makes young*, and taking the unconscious girl in his arms he led the winged horse to the door and said:

SILVER PALACE, *oh turn, on thy foot turn thou free,*
To the steep rocks thy back, the courtyard may I see.

Whereupon the palace creaked round on the cock's foot, and the door opened on the courtyard. Mounting the horse he placed the princess before him, for she had by this time recovered from her swoon, and cried:

Fiery Horse with strength of wing,
I am now your lord;
Do my will in everything,
Be your law my word.
Where I point there you must go
At once, at once. The way you know.

And he pointed to the place where his brothers lay frozen in death. The horse rose, pranced, beat the air with his wings, then, lifting himself high in the air, came down gently where the two princes were lying. The Prince with the Golden Hand sprinkled their bodies with the Life-Restoring Water, and instantly the pallor of death disappeared, leaving in its place the natural colour. He then sprinkled them with the Water that Revives, after which they opened their eyes, got up, and looking round said, "How well we have slept: but what has happened? And how is it we see the lovely princess we sought in the society of a young man, a perfect stranger to us?"

The Prince with the Golden Hand explained everything, embraced his brothers tenderly, and taking them with him on his horse, showed the latter that he wished to go in the direction of Yaga's cottage. The horse rose up, pranced, lifted himself in the air, then, beating his wings far above the highest forests, descended close by the cottage. The prince said:

Little cot, turn around, on thy foot turn thou free, *To the forest thy back, but thy door wide to me.*

THE COTTAGE BEGAN to creak without delay, and turned round with the floor facing the travellers. Old Yaga was on the look-out, and came to meet them. As soon as she got the Water of Youth she sprinkled herself with it, and instantly everything about her that was old and ugly became young and charming. So pleased was she to be young again that she kissed the prince's hands and said, "Ask of me anything you like, I will refuse you nothing."

At that moment her two beautiful young daughters happened to look out of the window, upon which the two elder princes, who were admiring them, said, "Will you give us your daughters for wives?"

"That I will, with pleasure," said she, and beckoned them to her. Then curtseying to her future sons-in-law, she laughed merrily and vanished. They placed their brides before them on the same horse, while the Prince with the Golden Hand, pointing to where he wished to go, said:

FIERY HORSE with strength of wing,
I am now your lord;
Do my will in everything,
Be your law my word.
Where I point there you must go
At once, at once. The way you know.

THE HORSE ROSE UP, pranced, flapped his wings, and flew far above the forest. An hour or two later he descended before the palace of the Golden-Haired Princess's parents. When the king and queen saw their only daughter who had so long been lost to them, they ran to meet her with exclamations of joy and kissed her gratefully and lovingly, at the same time thanking the prince who had restored her to them. And when they heard the story of his adventures they said: “You, Prince with the Golden Hand, shall receive our beloved daughter in marriage, with the half of our kingdom, and the right of succession to the remainder after us. Let us, too, add to the joy of this day by celebrating the weddings of your two brothers.”

The Princess with the Golden Hair kissed her father lovingly and said, “My much honoured and noble sire and lord, the prince my bridegroom knows of the vow I made when carried off by the hurricane, that I would only give my hand to him who could answer aright my six enigmas: it would be impossible for the Princess with the Golden Hair to break her word.”

The king was silent, but the prince said, “Speak, sweet princess, I am listening.”

“This is my first riddle: ‘Two of my extremities form a sharp point, the two others a ring, in my centre is a screw.’”

“A pair of scissors,” answered he.

“Well guessed. This is the second: ‘I make the round of the table on only one foot, but if I am wounded the evil is beyond repair.’”

“A glass of wine.”

“Right. This is the third: ‘I have no tongue, and yet I answer faithfully; I am not seen, yet every one hears me.’”

“An echo.”

“True. This is the fourth: ‘Fire cannot light me; brush cannot sweep me; no painter can paint me; no hiding-place secure me.’”

“Sunshine.”

“The very thing. This is the fifth: ‘I existed before the creation of Adam. I am always changing in succession the two colours of my dress. Thousands of years have gone by, but I have remained unaltered both in colour and form.’”

“It must be time, including day and night.”

“You have succeeded in guessing the five most difficult, the last is the easiest of all. ‘By day a ring, by night a serpent; he who guesses this shall be my bridegroom.’”

“It is a girdle.”

“Now they are all guessed,” said she, and gave her hand to the young prince.

They knelt before the king and queen to receive their blessing. The three weddings were celebrated that same evening, and a messenger mounted the winged horse to carry the good news to the parents of the young princes and to bring them back as guests. Meanwhile a magnificent feast was prepared, and invitations were sent to all their friends and acquaintances. And from that evening until the next morning they ceased not to feast and drink and dance. I too was a guest, and feasted with the rest; but though I ate and drank, the wine only ran down my beard, and my throat remained dry.

12

IMPERISHABLE

Once upon a time, ever so many years ago, there lived a little old man and a little old woman. Very old indeed were they, for they had lived nearly a hundred years. But they took neither joy nor pleasure in anything, and this because they had no children. They were now about to keep the seventy-fifth anniversary of their wedding day, known as the Diamond Wedding, but no guests were invited to share their simple feast.

As they sat side by side they went over in memory the years of their long life, and as they did so they felt sure that it was to punish them for their sins that God had denied them the sweet happiness of having children about them, and as they thought their tears fell fast. At that moment some one knocked.

“Who is there?” cried the old woman, and ran to open the door. There stood a little old man leaning on a stick, and white as a dove.

“What do you want?” asked the old woman.

“Charity,” answered he.

The good old woman was kind-hearted, and she cut her last loaf in two, giving one half to the beggar, who said, “I see you have been weeping, good wife, and I know the reason of your tears; but cheer up, by God’s grace you shall be comforted. Though poor and childless to-day, to-morrow you shall have family and fortune.”

When the old woman heard this she was overjoyed, and fetching her husband they both went to the door to invite the old man in. But he was gone, and though they searched for him in every direction they found nothing but his stick lying on the ground. For it was not a poor old beggar, but an angel of God who had knocked. Our good friends did not know this, so they picked up the stick and hurried off to find the old man, with the purpose of returning it. But it seemed as if the stick, like its master, were endowed with some marvellous power, for whenever the old man or the old woman tried to pick it up it slipped out of their hands and rolled along the ground. Thus they followed it into a forest, and at the foot of a shrub which stood close by a stream it disappeared. They hunted all round the shrub thinking to find the stick there, but instead of the stick they came upon a bird’s nest containing twelve eggs, and from the shape of the shells it seemed as if the young ones were ready to come forth.

“Pick up the eggs,” said the old man, “they will make us an omelette for our wedding feast.”

The old woman grumbled a little, but she took the nest and carried it home in the skirt of her gown. Fancy their astonishment when at the end of twelve hours there came out, not unfledged birdlings, but twelve pretty little boys. Then the shells broke into tiny fragments which were changed into as many gold pieces. Thus, as had been foretold, the old man and his wife found both family and fortune.

Now these twelve boys were most extraordinary children. Directly they came out of the shells they seemed to be at least three months old, such a noise did they make, crying and kicking about. The youngest of all was a very big baby with black eyes, red cheeks, and curly hair, and so lively and active that the old woman could hardly keep him in his cradle at all. In twelve hours’ time the children seemed to be a year old, and could walk about and eat anything.

Then the old woman made up her mind that they should be baptized, and thereupon sent her husband to fetch priest and organist without delay; and the diamond wedding was celebrated at the same time as the christening. For a short time their joy was clouded over by the disappearance of the youngest boy, who was also the best-looking, and his parents’ favourite. They had begun to weep and mourn for him as if he were lost, when suddenly he was seen to come from out of the sleeves of the priest’s cassock, and was heard to speak these words: “Never fear, dear parents, your beloved son will not perish.”

The old woman kissed him fondly and handed him to his godfather, who presented him to the priest. So they had named him *Niezguinek*, that is, *Imperishable*. The twelve boys went on growing at the rate of six weeks every hour, and at the end of two years were fine strong young men. Niezguinek, especially, was of extraordinary size and strength. The good old people lived happily and peacefully at home while their sons worked in the fields. On one occasion the latter went ploughing; and while the eleven eldest used the ordinary plough and team of oxen, Niezguinek made his own plough, and it had twelve ploughshares and twelve handles, and to it were harnessed twelve team of the strongest working oxen. The others laughed at him, but he did not mind, and turned up as much ground as his eleven brothers together.

Another time when they went haymaking and his brothers used the ordinary scythes, he carried one with twelve blades, and managed it so cleverly, in spite of the jests of his companions, that he cut as much grass as all of them together. And again, when they went to turn over the hay, Niezguinek used a rake with twelve teeth, and so cleared twelve plots of ground with every stroke. His haycock, too, was as large as a hill in comparison with those of his brothers. Now, the day after the making of the haycocks the old man and his wife happened to be in the fields, and they noticed that one haycock had disappeared; so thinking wild horses had made off with it, they advised their sons to take turns in watching the place.

The eldest took his turn first, but after having watched all night fell asleep towards morning, when he awoke to find another haycock missing. The second son was not more fortunate in preventing the disappearance of the hay, while the others succeeded no better; in fact, of all the twelve haycocks, there only remained the largest, Niezguinek's, and even that had been meddled with.

When it was the youngest's turn to watch, he went to the village blacksmith and got him to make an iron club weighing two hundred and sixty pounds; so heavy was it that the blacksmith and his assistants could hardly turn it on the anvil. In order to test it, Niezguinek whirled it round his head and threw it up in the air, and when it had nearly reached the ground he caught it on his knee, upon which it was smashed to atoms. He then ordered another weighing four hundred and eighty pounds, and this the blacksmith and his men could not even move. Niezguinek had helped them to make it, and when finished he tested it in the same manner as the first. Finding it did not break he kept it, and had in addition a noose plaited with twelve strong ropes. Towards nightfall he went to the field, crouched down behind his haycock, crossed himself, and waited to see what would happen. At midnight there was a tremendous noise which seemed to come from the east, while in that direction appeared a bright light. Then a white mare, with twelve colts as white as herself, trotted up to the haycock and began to eat it. Niezguinek came out of his hiding-place, and throwing the noose over the mare's neck, jumped on her back and struck her with his heavy club. The terrified creature gave the signal to the colts to escape, but she herself, hindered by the noose, out of breath, and wounded by the club, could not follow, but sank down on the earth saying, “Do not choke me, Niezguinek.”

He marvelled to hear her speak human language, and loosened the noose. When she had taken breath she said, “Knight, if you give me my liberty you shall never repent it. My husband, the Dappled Horse with Golden Mane, will cruelly revenge himself upon you when he knows I am your prisoner; his strength and swiftness are so great you could not escape him. In exchange for my freedom I will give you my twelve colts, who will serve you and your brothers faithfully.”

On hearing their mother neigh the colts returned and stood with bent heads before the young man, who released the mare, and led them home. The brothers were delighted to see Niezguinek return with twelve beautiful white horses, and each took the one that pleased his fancy most, while the thinnest and weakest-looking was left for the youngest.

The old couple were happy in the thought that their son was brave as well as strong. One day it occurred to the old woman that she would like to see them all married, and to have the house merry with her daughters-in-law and their children. So she called upon her gossips and friends to talk the matter over, and finally persuaded her husband to be of the same opinion. He called his sons around him and addressed them thus: “Listen to me, my sons: in a certain country lives a celebrated witch known as old Yaga. She is lame, and travels about in an oaken trough. She supports herself on iron crutches, and when she goes abroad carefully removes all traces of her steps with a broom. This old witch has twelve beautiful daughters who have large dowries; do your best to win them for your wives. Do not return without bringing them with you.”

Both parents blessed their sons, who, mounting their horses, were soon out of sight. All but Niezguinek, who, left alone, went to the stable and began to shed tears.

“Why do you weep?” asked his horse.

“Don’t you think I have good reason?” replied he. “Here I have to go a long long way in search of a wife, and you, my friend, are so thin and weak that were I to depend upon your strength I should never be able to join my brothers."

"Do not despair, Niezguinek," said the horse, "not only will you overtake your brothers, but you will leave them far behind. I am the son of the Dappled Horse with the Golden Mane, and if you will do exactly as I tell you I shall be given the same power as he. You must kill me and bury me under a layer of earth and manure, then sow some wheat over me, and when the corn is ripe it must be gathered and some of it placed near my body."

Niezguinek threw his arms round his horse's neck and kissed him fondly, then led him into a yard and killed him with one blow of his club. The horse staggered a moment and then fell dead. His master covered him with a layer of manure and earth, upon which he sowed wheat, as had been directed. It was immediately watered by a gentle rain, and warmed by the heat of the sun's rays. The corn took root and ripened so quickly that on the twelfth day Niezguinek set to work to cut, thresh, and winnow it. So abundant was it that he was able to give eleven measures to his parents, and keeping one for himself, spread it before his horse's bones. In a very short time the horse moved his head, sniffed the air, and began to devour the wheat. As soon as it was finished he sprang up, and was so full of life that he wanted to jump over the fence in one bound: but Niezguinek held him by the mane, and getting lightly on his back, said: "Halt there, my spirited steed, I do not want others to have the benefit of all the trouble I have had with you. Carry me to old Yaga's house."

He was of a truth a most magnificent horse, big and strong, with eyes that flashed like lightning. He leapt up into the air as high as the clouds, and the next moment descended in the middle of a field, saying to his master: "As we have first to see old Yaga, from whom we are still a great way off, we can stop here for a short time: take food and rest, I will do the same. Your brothers will be obliged to pass us, for we are a good way in front of them. When they come you can go on together to visit the old witch: remember, though it is difficult to get into her house, it is much more difficult still to get out. But if you would be perfectly safe, take from under my saddle a brush, a scarf, and a handkerchief. They will be of use in helping you to escape; for when you unroll the scarf, a river will flow between you and your enemy; if you shake the brush it will become a thick forest; and by waving the handkerchief it will be changed into a lake. After you have been received into Yaga's house, and your brothers have stabled their horses and gone to bed, I will tell you how to act."

For twelve days Niezguinek and his horse rested and gained strength, and at the end of the time the eleven brothers came up. They wondered greatly to see the youngest, and said, "Where on earth did you come from? And whose horse is that?"

"I have come from home. The horse is the same I chose at first. We have been waiting here twelve days; let us go on together now."

Within a short time they came to a house surrounded by a high oaken paling, at the gate of which they knocked. Old Yaga peeped out through a chink in the fence and cried, "Who are you? What do you want?"

"We are twelve brothers come to ask the twelve daughters of Yaga in marriage. If she is willing to be our mother-in-law, let her open the door."

The door was opened and Yaga appeared. She was a frightful-looking creature, old as the hills; and being one of those monsters who feed on human flesh, the unfortunate wretches who once entered her house never came out again. She had a lame leg, and because of this she leaned on a great iron crutch, and when she went out removed all traces of her steps with a broom.

She received the young travellers very graciously, shut the gate of the courtyard behind them, and led them into the house. Niezguinek's brothers dismounted, and taking their horses to the stables, tied them up to rings made of silver; the youngest fastened his to a copper ring. The old witch served her guests with a good supper, and gave them wine and hydromel to drink. Then she made up twelve beds on the right side of the room for the travellers, and on the left side twelve beds for her daughters.

All were soon asleep except Niezguinek. He had been warned beforehand by his horse of the danger that threatened them, and now he got up quietly and changed the positions of the twenty-four beds, so that the brothers lay to the left side of the room, and Yaga's daughters to the right. At midnight, old Yaga cried out in a hoarse voice, "Guzla, play. Sword, strike."

Then were heard strains of sweet music, to which the old woman beat time from her oaken trough. At the same moment a slender sword descended into the room, and passing over to the beds on the right, cut off the heads of the girls one by one: after which it danced about and flashed in the darkness.

When the dawn broke the guzla ceased playing, the sword disappeared, and silence reigned. Then Niezguinek softly aroused his brothers, and they all went out without making any noise. Each mounted his horse, and when they had broken open the yard gate they made their escape at full speed. Old Yaga, thinking she heard footsteps, got up and ran into the room where her daughters lay dead. At the dreadful sight she gnashed her teeth, barked like a dog, tore out her hair by handfuls, and seating herself in her trough as in a car, set off after the fugitives. She had nearly reached them, and was already stretching out her hand to seize them, when Niezguinek unrolled his magic scarf, and instantly a deep river flowed between her and the horsemen. Not being able to cross it she stopped on the banks, and howling savagely began to drink it up.

"Before you have swallowed all that river you will burst, you wicked old witch," cried Niezguinek. Then he rejoined his brothers.

But the old woman drank all the water, crossed the bed of the river in her trough, and soon came near the young people. Niezguinek shook his handkerchief, and a lake immediately spread out between them. So she was again obliged to stop, and shrieking with rage began to drink up the water.

"Before you have drunk that lake dry you will have burst yourself," said Niezguinek, and rode after his brothers.

The old vixen drank up part of the water, and turning the remainder into a thick fog, hastened along in her trough. She was once more close upon the young men when Niezguinek, without a moment's delay, seized his brush, and as he waved it in the air a thick forest rose between them. For a time the witch was at a loss to know what to do. On one side she saw Niezguinek and his brothers rapidly disappearing, while she stood on the other hindered by the branches and torn by the thorns of the thick bushes, unable either to advance or retreat. Foaming with rage, with fire flashing from her eyes, she struck right and left with her crutches, crashing trees on all sides, but before she could clear a way those she was in pursuit of had got more than a hundred miles ahead.

So she was forced to give up, and grinding her teeth, howling, and tearing out her hair, she threw after the fugitives such flaming glances from her eyes that she set the forest on fire, and taking the road home was soon lost to sight.

The travellers, seeing the flames, guessed what had happened, and thanked God for having preserved them from such great dangers. They continued their journey, and by eventide arrived at the top of a steep hill. There they saw a town besieged by foreign troops, who had already destroyed the outer part, and only awaited daylight to take it by storm.

The twelve brothers kept out of sight behind the enemy; and when they had rested and turned out their horses to graze all went to sleep except Niezguinek, who kept watch without closing an eye. When everything was perfectly still he got up, and calling his horse, said, "Listen; yonder in that tent sleeps the king of this besieging army, and he dreams of the victory he hopes for on the morrow: how could we send all the soldiers to sleep and get possession of his person?”

The horse replied, “You will find some dried leaves of the herb of Sleep in the pocket of the saddle. Mount upon my back and hover round the camp, spreading fragments of the plant. That will cause all the soldiers to fall into a sound sleep, after which you can carry out your plans.”

Niezguinek mounted his horse, pronouncing these magic words:

Marvel of strength and of beauty so white,
Horse of my heart, let us go;
Rise in the air, like a bird take thy flight,
Haste to the camp of the foe.

The horse glanced upwards as if he saw some one beckoning to him from the clouds, then rose rapidly as a bird on the wing and hovered over the camp. Niezguinek took handfuls of the herb of Sleep from the saddle-pockets and sprinkled it all about. Upon which all in the camp, including the sentinels, fell at once into a heavy sleep. Niezguinek alighted, entered the tent, and carried off the sleeping king without any difficulty. He then returned to his brothers, unharnessed his horse and lay down to rest, placing the royal prisoner near him. His majesty slept on as if nothing unusual had taken place.

At daybreak the soldiers of the besieging army awoke, and not being able to find their king, were seized with such a panic of terror that they retreated in great disorder. The ruler of the besieged city would not at first believe that the enemy had really disappeared, and indeed went himself to see if it was true: of a truth there remained nothing of the enemy’s camp but a few deserted tents whitening on the plain. At that moment Niezguinek came up with his brothers, and said, “Sire, the enemy has fled, and we were unable to detain them, but here is their king whom we have made prisoner, and whom I deliver up to you.”

The ruler replied, “I see, indeed, that you are a brave man among brave men, and I will reward you. This royal prisoner is worth a large ransom to me; so speak,—what would you like me to do for you?”

“I should wish, sire, that my brothers and I might enter the service of your majesty.”

“I am quite willing,” answered the king. Then, having placed his prisoner in charge of his guards, he made Niezguinek general, and placed him at the head of a division of his army; the eleven brothers were given the rank of officers.

When Niezguinek appeared in uniform, and with sabre in hand mounted his splendid charger, he looked so handsome and conducted the manœuvres so well that he surpassed all the other chiefs in the country, thus causing much jealousy, even among his own brothers, for they were vexed that the youngest should outshine them, and so determined to ruin him.

In order to accomplish this they imitated his handwriting, and placed such a note before the king’s door while Niezguinek was engaged elsewhere. When the king went out he found the letter, and calling Niezguinek to him, said, “I should very much like to have the phonic guzla you mention in your letter.”

“But, sire, I have not written anything about a guzla,” said he.

“Read the note then. Is it not in your handwriting?”

Niezguinek read:

In a certain country, within the house of old Yaga, is a marvellous guzla: if the king wish I will fetch it for him.

Niezguinek.

"It is true," said he, "that this writing resembles mine, but it is a forgery, for I never wrote it."

"Never mind," said the king, "as you were able to take my enemy prisoner you will certainly be able to succeed in getting old Yaga's guzla: go then, and do not return without it, or you will be executed."

Niezguinek bowed and went out. He went straight to the stable, where he found his charger looking very sad and thin, his head drooping before the trough, the hay untouched.

"What is the matter with you, my good steed? What grieves you?"

"I grieve for us both, for I foresee a long and perilous journey."

"You are right, old fellow, but we have to go. And what is more, we have to take away and bring here old Yaga's guzla; and how shall we do it, seeing that she knows us?"

"We shall certainly succeed if you do as I tell you."

Then the horse gave him certain instructions, and when Niezguinek had led him out of the stable and mounted he said:

Marvel of strength and of beauty so white,
Horse of my heart, do not wait on the road;
Rise in the air, like a bird take thy flight,
Haste to the wicked old Yaga's abode.

The horse arose in the air as if he heard some one calling to him from the clouds, and flitting rapidly along passed over several kingdoms within a few hours, thus reaching old Yaga's dwelling before midnight. Niezguinek threw the leaves of Sleep in at the window, and by means of another wonderful herb caused all the doors of the house to open. On entering he found old Yaga fast asleep, with her trough and iron crutches beside her, while above her head hung the magic sword and guzla.

While the old witch lay snoring with all her might, Niezguinek took the guzla and leapt on his horse, crying:

Marvel of strength and of beauty so white,
Horse of my heart, while I sing,
Rise in the air, like a bird take thy flight,
Haste to the court of my king.

Just as if the horse had seen something in the clouds, he rose swift as an arrow, and flew through the air, above the fogs. The same day about noon he neighed before his own manger in the royal stable, and Niezguinek went in to the king and presented him with the guzla. On pronouncing the two words, "Guzla, play," strains of music so gay and inspiriting were heard that all the courtiers began dancing with one another. The sick who listened were cured of their diseases, those who were in trouble and grief forgot their sorrows, and all living creatures were thrilled with a gladness such as they had never felt before. The king was beside himself with joy; he loaded Niezguinek with honours and presents, and, in order to have him always at court, raised him to a higher rank in the army. In this new post he had many under him, and he showed much exactitude in drill and other matters, punishing somewhat severely when necessary. He made, too, no difference in the treatment of his brothers, which angered them greatly, and caused them to be still more jealous and to plot against him. So they again imitated his handwriting and composed another letter, which they left at the king's door. When his majesty had read it he called Niezguinek to him and said, “I should much like to have the marvellous sword you speak of in your letter.”

“Sire, I have not written anything about a sword,” said Niezguinek.

“Well, read it for yourself.” And he read:

In a certain country within the house of old Yaga is a sword that strikes of its own accord: if the king would like to have it, I will engage to bring it him.

Niezguinek.

“Certainly,” said Niezguinek, “this writing resembles mine, but I never wrote those words.”

“Never mind, as you succeeded in bringing me the guzla you will find no difficulty in obtaining the sword. Start without delay, and do not return without it at your peril.”

Niezguinek bowed and went to the stable, where he found his horse looking very thin and miserable, with his head drooping.

“What is the matter, my horse? Do you want anything?”

“I am unhappy because I foresee a long and dangerous journey.”

“You are right, for we are ordered to return to Yaga’s house for the sword: but how can we get hold of it? doubtless she guards it as the apple of her eye.”

The horse answered, “Do as I tell you and all will be right.” And he gave him certain instructions. Niezguinek came out of the stable, saddled his friend, and mounting him said:

Marvel of strength and of beauty so white;

Horse of my heart, do not wait on the road;
Rise in the air, like a bird take thy flight,
Haste to the wicked old witch’s abode.

The horse rose immediately as if he had been beckoned to by some one in the clouds, and passing swiftly through the air, crossed rivers and mountains, till at midnight he stopped before old Yaga’s house.

Since the disappearance of the guzla the sword had been placed on guard before the house, and whoever came near it was cut to pieces.

Niezguinek traced a circle with holy chalk, and placing himself on horseback in the centre of it, said:

Sword who of thyself can smite,
I come to brave thy ire;
Peace or war upon this site
Of thee I do require.
If thou canst conquer, thine my life;
Should I beat thee, then ends this strife.

The sword clinked, leapt into the air, and fell to the ground divided into a thousand other swords, which ranged themselves in battle array and began to attack Niezguinek. But in vain; they were powerless to touch him; for on reaching the chalk-traced circle they broke like wisps of straw. Then the sword-in-chief, seeing how useless it was to go on trying to wound him, submitted itself to Niezguinek and promised him obedience. Taking the magic weapon in his hand, he mounted his horse and said:

Marvel of strength and of beauty so white,
Horse of my heart, while I sing,
Rise in the air, like a bird take thy flight,
Back to the court of my king.

The horse started with renewed courage, and by noon was eating his hay in the royal stables. Niezguinek went in to the king and presented him with the sword. While he was rejoicing over it one of his servants rushed in quite out of breath and said, “Sire, your enemies who attacked us last year, and whose king is your prisoner, surround our town. Being unable to redeem their sovereign, they have come with an immense army, and threaten to destroy us if their king is not released without ransom.”

The king armed himself with the magic sword, and going outside the city walls, said to it, as he pointed to the enemy’s camp, “Magic Sword, smite the foe.”

Immediately the sword clinked, leapt flashing in the air, and fell in a thousand blades that threw themselves on the camp. One regiment was destroyed during the first attack, another was defeated in the same way, while the rest of the terrified soldiers fled and completely disappeared. Then the king said, “Sword, return to me.”

The thousand swords again became one, and so it returned to its master’s hand.

The victorious king came home filled with joy. He called Niezguinek to him, loaded him with gifts, and assuring him of his favour, made him the highest general of his forces. In carrying out the duties of this new post Niezguinek was often obliged to punish his brothers, who became more and more enraged against him, and took counsel together how they might bring about his downfall.

One day the king found a letter by his door, and after reading it he called Niezguinek to him and said, “I should very much like to see Princess Sudolisu, whom you wish to bring me.”

“Sire, I do not know the lady, and have never spoken to her.”

“Here, look at your letter.”

Niezguinek read:

Beyond the nine kingdoms, far beyond the ocean, within a silver vessel with golden masts lives Princess Sudolisu. If the king wishes it, I will seek her for him.

Niezguinek.

“It is true the writing is like unto mine; nevertheless, I neither composed the letter nor wrote it.”

“No matter,” answered the king. “You will be able to get this princess, as you did the guzla and the sword: if not, I will have you killed.”

Niezguinek bowed and went out. He entered the stable where stood his horse looking very weak and sad, with his head bent down.

“What is the matter, dear horse? Are you in want of anything?”

“I am sorrowful,” answered the horse, “because I foresee a long and difficult journey.”

“You are right, for we have to go beyond the nine kingdoms, and far beyond the ocean, to find Princess Sudolisu. Can you tell me what to do?”

“I will do my best, and if it is God’s will we shall succeed. Bring your club of four hundred and eighty pounds weight, and let us be off.”

Niezguinek saddled his horse, took his club, and mounting said:

Marvel of strength and of beauty so white,
Horse of my heart, do not lag on the road;
Rise in the air, through the clouds take thy flight,
Haste to Princess Sudolisu's abode.

Then the horse looked up as if there were something he wanted in the clouds, and with a spring flew through the air, swift as an arrow; and so by the second day they had passed over ten kingdoms, and finding themselves beyond the ocean, halted on the shore. Here the horse said to Niezguinek, "Do you see that silver ship with golden masts that rides on the waves yonder? That beautiful vessel is the home of Princess Sudolisu, youngest daughter of old Yaga. For after the witch had lost the guzla and magic sword she feared to lose her daughter too: so she shut her up in that vessel, and having thrown the key thereof into the ocean, sat herself in her oaken trough, where with the help of the iron crutches she rows round and round the silver ship, warding off tempests, and keeping at a distance all other ships that would approach it.

"The first thing to be done is to get the diamond key that opens the ship. In order to procure this you must kill me, and then throw into the water one end of my entrails, by which bait you will trap the King of the Lobsters. Do not set him free until he has promised to get you the key, for it is this key that draws the vessel to you of its own accord."

"Ah, my beloved steed," cried Niezguinek, "how can I kill you when I love you as my own brother, and when my fate depends upon you entirely?"

"Do as I tell you; you can bring me to life again, as you did before."

Niezguinek caressed his horse, kissed him and wept over him; then, raising his mighty club, struck him full on the forehead. The poor creature staggered and fell down dead. Niezguinek cut him open, and putting an end of his entrails in the water, he kept hold of it and hid himself in the water-rushes. Soon there came a crowd of crawfish, and amongst them a gigantic lobster as large as a year-old calf. Niezguinek seized him and threw him on the beach. The lobster said, “I am king of all the crawfish tribe. Let me go, and I will give you great riches for my ransom.”

“I do not want your riches,” answered Niezguinek, “but in exchange for your freedom give me the diamond key which belongs to the silver ship with the golden masts, for in that vessel dwells Princess Sudolisu.”

The King of the Crawfish whistled, upon which myriads of his subjects appeared. He spoke to them in their own language, and dismissed one, who soon returned with the magic diamond key in his claws.

Niezguinek loosed the King of the Crawfish; and hiding himself inside his horse’s body as he had been instructed, lay in wait. At that moment an old raven, followed by all his nestlings, happened to pass, and attracted by the horse’s carcase, he called to his young ones to come and feast with him. Niezguinek seized the smallest of the birds and held it firmly.

“Let my birdling go,” said the old raven, “I will give you in return anything you like to ask.”

“Fetch me then three kinds of water, the Life-giving, the Curing, and the Strengthening.”

The old raven started off, and while awaiting his return Niezguinek, who still held the ravenling, questioned him as to where he had come from and what he had seen on his travels, and in this way heard news of his brothers.

When the father bird returned, carrying with him the bottles filled with the marvellous waters, he wanted to have his nestling back.

“One moment more,” said Niezguinek, “I want to be sure that they are of the right sort.”

Then he replaced the entrails in the body of his horse and sprinkled him first with the Life-giving, then with the Curing, and finally with the

Strengthening Water; after which his beloved steed leapt to his feet full of strength and cried, “Ah! how very soundly I have slept.”

Niezguinek released the young raven and said to his horse, “For sure, you would have slept to all eternity, and have never seen the sun again, if I had not revived you as you taught me.”

While speaking he saw the marvellous ship sparkling white in the sun. She was made entirely of pure silver, with golden masts. The rigging was of silk, the sails of velvet, and the whole was enclosed in a casing of inpenetrable steel network. Niezguinek sprang down to the water’s edge armed with his club, and rubbing his forehead with the diamond key, said:

Riding on the ocean waves a magic ship I see;
Stop and change thy course, O ship, here I hold the key.
Obey the signal known to thee,
And come at once direct to me.

The vessel turned right round and came at full speed towards land, and right on to the bank, where it remained motionless.

Niezguinek smashed in the steel network with his club; and opening the doors with the diamond key, there found Princess Sudolisu. He made her unconscious with the herb Sleep, and lifting her before him on his horse, said:

Marvel of strength and of beauty so white,
Horse of my heart, while I sing,
Swift as an arrow through space take thy flight
Straight to the court of my king.

THEN THE HORSE, as if he saw some strange thing in the clouds, lifted himself in the air and began to fly through space so rapidly that in about two hours he had crossed rivers, mountains, and forests, and had reached his journey’s end.

Although Niezguinek had fallen violently in love with the princess himself, he took her straight to the royal palace and introduced her to the king.

Now she was so exquisitely beautiful that the monarch was quite dazzled by looking at her, and being thus carried away by his admiration, he put his arm round her as if to caress her: but she rebuked him severely.

“What have I done to offend you, princess? Why do you treat me so harshly?”

“Because in spite of your rank you are ill-bred. You neither ask my name nor that of my parents, and you think to take possession of me as if I were but a dog or a falcon. You must understand that he who would be my husband must have triple youth, that of heart, soul, and body.”

“Charming princess, if I could become young again we would be married directly.”

She replied, “But I have the means of making you so, and by help of this sword in my hand. For with it I will pierce you to the heart, then cut up your body into small pieces, wash them carefully, and join them together again. And if I breathe upon them you will return to life young and handsome, just as if you were only twenty years of age.”

“Oh indeed! I should like to know who would submit to that; first make trial of Sir Niezguinek here.”

The princess looked at him, whereupon he bowed and said, “Lovely princess, I willingly submit, although I am young enough without it. In any case life without you would be valueless.”

Then the princess took a step towards him and killed him with her sword. She cut him up in pieces and washed these in pure water, after which she joined them together again and breathed upon them. Instantly Niezguinek sprang up full of life and health, and looked so handsome and bright that the old king, who was dreadfully jealous, exclaimed, “Make me, too, young again, princess; do not lose a moment.”

The princess pierced him to the heart with her sword, cut him up into little pieces, and, opening the window, threw them out, at the same time calling the king’s dogs, who quickly ate them up. Then she turned to Niezguinek and said, “Proclaim yourself king, and I will be your queen.”

He followed her advice, and within a short time they were married; his brothers, whom he had pardoned, and his parents having been invited to the wedding. On their way back from the church the magic sword suddenly clinked, and, flashing in the air, divided itself into a thousand swords that placed themselves on guard as sentinels all round the palace. The guzla, too, began to play so sweetly and gaily that every living thing began to dance for joy.

The festival was magnificent. I myself was there, and drank freely of wine and mead; and although not a drop went into my mouth, my chin was quite wet.

13

OHNIVAK

A certain king had a beautiful garden which contained a number of very rare trees, but the most rare of all was an apple tree. It stood in the middle of the garden, and produced one golden apple every day. In the morning the blossom unfolded, during the day you might watch the fruit grow, and before nightfall the apple was fully ripe. The next day the same thing occurred—indeed, it happened regularly every twenty-four hours. Nevertheless, no ripe fruit ever remained on the tree on the following day; the apple disappeared, no one knew how or when, and this deeply grieved the king.

At last he could bear it no longer, and calling his eldest son to him, said: “My child, I wish you to keep watch in the garden to-night, and see if you can find out what becomes of my golden apples. I will reward you with the choice of all my treasures; if you should be lucky enough to get hold of the thief, and bring him to me, I would gladly give you half my kingdom.”

The young prince girded his trusty sword to his side, and with his crossbow on his shoulder and a good stock of well-tempered arrows, went into the garden to mount guard. And as he sat under the apple tree a great drowsiness came over him which he could not resist; his arms dropped, his eyes closed, and stretching himself on the grass he slept as soundly as if he had been in his own bed at home, nor did he awake until day dawn, and then he saw that the apple had disappeared.

When questioned by his father, he said that no thieves had come, but that the apple had vanished all the same. The king shook his head, for he did not believe a word of it. Then, turning to his second son, he bade him keep watch, and promised him a handsome reward if he should catch the thief.

So the second son armed himself with everything necessary and went into the garden. But he succeeded no better than his brother, for he could not resist the desire to sleep, and when he awoke the apple was no longer there.

When his father asked him how it disappeared, he replied, “No one took it, it vanished of itself.”

“Now, my dearest one, take your turn,” said the king to his youngest son; “although you are young, and have less experience than your brothers, let us see if you cannot succeed where they have failed. If you are willing, go, and may God help you.”

Towards evening, when it began to be dusk, the youngest son went into the garden to keep watch. He took with him a sword and crossbow, a few well-tempered arrows, and a hedgehog’s skin as a sort of apron, for he thought that while sitting under the tree, if he spread the skin over his knees, the pricking of the bristles on his hands might keep him awake. And so it did, for by this means he was able to resist the drowsiness that came over him.

At midnight Ohnivak, the bird of fire, flew down and alighted upon the tree, and was just going off with the apple when the prince fixed an arrow to his bow, and letting it fly, struck the bird under the wing. Although wounded, it flew away, dropping one of its feathers upon the ground. That night for the first time the apple remained untouched upon the tree.

“Have you caught the thief?” asked the king next day.

"Not altogether, but no doubt we shall have him in time. I have a bit of his trappings." And he gave the king the feather, and told him all that had taken place.

The king was charmed with the feather; so lovely and bright was it that it illumined all the galleries of the palace, and they needed no other light.

The courtiers told the king that the feather could only belong to Ohnivak, the bird of fire, and that it was worth all the rest of the royal treasures put together.

From that time Ohnivak came no more to the garden, and the apples remained untouched. Yet the king could think of nothing else but how to possess this marvellous bird. At last, beginning to despair of ever seeing it, he was filled with melancholy, and would remain for hours in deep thought; thus he became really ill, and every day continued to grow worse.

One day he summoned his three sons before him and said, "My dear children, you see the sad state I am in. If I could but hear the bird Ohnivak sing just once I should be cured of this disease of the heart; otherwise it will be my death. Whichever of you shall succeed in catching Ohnivak alive and inducing him to sing to me, to him I will give half of my kingdom and the heirship to the throne."

Having taken leave of their father the brothers set off. They travelled together until they came to a part of the forest where the road branched off in three directions.

"Which turning shall we take?" asked the eldest.

The second brother answered, "We are three, and three roads lie before us; let us each choose one, thus we shall treble our chances of finding the bird, for we shall seek it in three different countries."

"That is a good idea, but how shall each one decide which way to choose?"

The youngest brother said, "I will leave the choice to you two, and will take whichever road you leave me."

So each took the road that chance decided for him, agreeing that when their mission was over they would return to the point of departure. In order to recognise the place again each one planted the branch of a tree at the cross roads, and they believed that he whose branch should take root and grow into a big tree would be successful in the quest.

When each one had planted his branch at the chosen road they started off. The eldest rode on, and never stopped until he reached the top of a high mountain; there he dismounted, and let his horse graze while he ate his breakfast. Suddenly a red fox came up, and speaking in the language of men, said: “Pray, my handsome prince, give me a little of what you are eating; I am very hungry.”

For answer the prince let fly an arrow from his crossbow, but it is impossible to say whether he hit the fox for it vanished and did not appear again.

The second brother, without meeting with any adventure, reached a wide-stretching moor, where he stopped for his meal. The red fox appeared to him and begged for food; but he also refused food to the famished fox, and shot at him. The creature disappeared as before.

The youngest travelled on till he came to the banks of a river. Feeling tired and hungry, he got down from his horse and began his breakfast; while he was eating, up came the red fox.

“Please, young sir,” said the fox, “give me a morsel to satisfy my hunger.”

The prince threw him a piece of meat, and spoke kindly to him.

“Come near, do not be afraid, my red fox; I see you are more hungry than I, but there is enough for us both.”

And he divided all his provisions into two equal parts, one for himself, and one for the poor red fox.

When the latter had eaten to his heart’s content, he said: “You have fed me well, in return I will serve you well; mount your horse and follow me. If you do everything I tell you, the Bird of Fire shall be yours.”

Then he set off at a run before the horseman, clearing the road for him with his bushy tail. By means of this marvellous broom, mountains were cut down, ravines filled up, and rivers bridged over.

The young prince followed at a gallop, without the slightest wish to stop, until they came to a castle built of copper.

“The Bird of Fire is in this castle,” said the fox; “you must enter exactly at midday, for then the guards will be asleep, and you will pass unnoticed. Above all, beware of stopping anywhere. In the first apartment you will find twelve birds black as night, in golden cages; in the second, twelve golden birds in wooden cages; in the third, Ohnivak, the bird of fire, roosting on his perch. Near him are two cages, one of wood and the other of gold; be sure you put him in the wooden cage—you would be sorry for it if he were put into the golden one.”

The prince entered the castle, and found everything just as the fox had told him. Having passed through the two rooms he came to the third, and there saw the fire-bird on his perch, apparently asleep. It was indeed a beautiful creature, so beautiful that the prince’s heart beat high with joy. He handled him without difficulty, and put him into the wooden cage, thinking at the same time to himself that it could hardly be right for so lovely a bird to be in such an ugly cage, a golden cage could be the only right place for him. So he took him out of the wooden cage and placed him in the golden one. Hardly had he shut the door when the bird opened his eyes and gave a piercing scream; so shrill was it that it awoke the other birds, who began to sing as loud as they could, and gave the alarm to the guards at the palace door. These rushed in, seized the prince, and dragged him before the king. The latter was very angry, and said: “Infamous thief, who are you to have dared to force an entrance, and pass through my sentinels, to steal my bird Ohnivak?”

“I am not a thief,” answered the young prince indignantly, “I have come to reclaim a thief whom you protect. I am the son of a king, and in my father’s gardens is an apple tree that bears golden fruit. It blossoms at morning-time, while during the day the flower develops into an apple that grows and ripens after sunset. Now in the night your bird robbed us of our golden apples, and though I watched and wounded him I could not catch him. My father is dying with grief because of this, and the only remedy that can save and restore him to health, is that he may listen to the fire-bird’s song. This is why I beg your majesty to give him me.”

“You may have him,” said the king, “but on one condition, that you bring me Zlato-Nrivak, the horse with the golden mane.”

So the prince had to go away empty-handed.

“Why did you not do as I told you? Why must you go and take the golden cage?” said the fox, in despair at the failure of the expedition.

“I admit it was my own fault,” said the prince, “but do not punish me by being angry. I want your advice: tell me how I am to get Zlato-Nrivak?”

“I know how it can be done,” answered the red fox, “and I will help you once more. Get on your horse, follow me, and do as I tell you.”

The fox ran on in front, clearing the road with his bushy tail. The prince followed at a gallop, until they came to a castle built entirely of silver.

“In that castle lives the Horse with the Golden Mane,” said the fox. “You will have to go exactly at midday, when the sentinels are asleep; thus you will get past safe and sound. But mind, do not stop anywhere. You must pass through three stables. In the first are twelve black horses with golden bridles; in the second, twelve white horses with black bridles; in the third stands Zlato-Nrivak in front of his manger, while near him are two bridles, one of gold, the other of black leather. Whatever you do, beware of using the first, for you will surely repent it.”

The prince waited until the appointed time and then entered the castle, finding everything exactly as the fox had said. In the third stable stood

Zlato-Nrivak, eating fire that flared up out of his silver trough.

The Horse with the Golden Mane was so beautiful that the prince could not take his eyes off him. Quickly unhooking the black leather bridle, he put it over the horse's head. The animal made no resistance, but was gentle and quiet as a lamb. Then the prince looked covetously at the golden bridle sparkling with gems, and said to himself, "It is a shame that such a splendid creature should be guided by these ugly black reins while there is a bridle here far more suited to him, and that is indeed his by right." So, forgetting his late experience and the warnings of the red fox, he tore off the black bridle and put in its place that of gold set with precious stones. No sooner did the horse feel the change than he began to neigh and caper about, while all the other horses answered with a perfect storm of neighings. The sentinels, aroused by the noise, ran in, and seizing the prince, led him before the king.

"Insolent thief," cried the enraged monarch, "how is it that you have escaped the vigilance of the guards and have dared to lay hands upon my horse with the golden mane? It is really disgraceful."

"True, I am nothing better," replied the prince proudly, "but I was forced to do it against my will." And he related all his misadventures at the copper castle, adding that it was impossible to obtain the fire-bird except in exchange for Zlato-Nrivak, and that he hoped his majesty would make him a present of the horse.

"Most willingly," answered the king, "but on one condition, that you bring me the Maiden with the Golden Locks: she lives in the golden castle on the shores of the Black Sea."

The fox was waiting in the forest the prince's return, and when he saw him come back without the horse he was very angry indeed.

"Did I not warn you," said he, "to be content with the black leather bridle? It is really a loss of time to try and help such an ungrateful fellow, for it seems impossible to make you hear reason."

“Don’t be cross,” said the prince, “I confess that I am in fault; I ought to have obeyed your orders. But have a little more patience with me and help me out of this difficulty.”

“Very well; but this will certainly be the last time. If you do just as you are told we may yet repair all that has been spoilt by your imprudence. Mount your horse and follow—off!”

The fox ran on in front, clearing the road with his bushy tail, until they reached the shores of the Black Sea.

“That palace yonder,” said the fox, “is the residence of the Queen of the Ocean Kingdom. She has three daughters; it is the youngest who has the golden hair, and is called Zlato-Vlaska. Now you must first go to the queen and ask her to give you one of her daughters in marriage. If she takes kindly to your proposal she will bid you choose, and mind you take that princess who is the most plainly dressed.”

The queen received him most graciously, and when he explained the object of his visit she led him into a room where the three daughters were spinning.

They were so much alike that no one could possibly distinguish one from the other, and they were all so marvellously lovely that when the young prince looked upon them he dared hardly breathe. Their hair was carefully covered by a veil through which one could not distinguish the colour of it, but their dresses were different. The first wore a gown and veil embroidered with gold, and used a golden distaff; the second had on a gown embroidered with silver and held a distaff of the same metal; the third wore a gown and veil of dazzling whiteness, and her distaff was made of wood.

The mother bade the prince choose, whereupon he pointed to the maiden clothed in white, saying, “Give me this one to wife.”

“Ah,” said the queen, “some one has been letting you into the secret: but wait a little, we shall meet again to-morrow.”

All that night the prince lay awake, wondering how he should manage not to make a mistake on the morrow. At dawn he was already at the palace gates, which he had hardly entered when the princess clothed in white chanced to pass: it was Zlato-Vlaska, and she had come to meet him.

“If it is your wish to choose me again to-day,” she said, “observe carefully, and take the maiden around whose head buzzes a small fly.”

In the afternoon the queen took the prince into a room where her three daughters sat, and said: “If among these princesses you recognise the one you chose yesterday she shall be yours; if not, you must die.”

The young girls stood side by side, dressed alike in costly robes, and all had golden hair. The prince was puzzled, and their beauty and splendour dazzled him. For some time he could hardly see distinctly; then, all of a sudden, a small fly buzzed over the head of one of the princesses.

“This is the maiden who belongs to me,” cried he, “and whom I chose yesterday.”

The queen, astonished that he should have guessed correctly, said, “Quite right, but I cannot let you have her until you have submitted to another trial, which shall be explained to you to-morrow.”

On the morrow she pointed out to him a large fish-pond which lay in the forest, and giving him a small golden sieve, said: “If with this sieve you can, before sunset, empty that fish-pond yonder, I will give you my daughter with the golden hair, but if you fail you will lose your life.”

The prince took the sieve, and, going down to the pond, plunged it in to try his luck; but no sooner had he lifted it up than all the water ran out through the holes—not a drop was left behind. Not knowing what to do, he sat down on the bank with the sieve in his hand, wondering in what possible way the difficulty might be overcome.

“Why are you so sad?” asked the maiden in white, as she came towards him.

“Because I fear you will never be mine,” sighed he; “your mother has given me an impossible task.”

“Come, cheer up, away with fear; it will all be right in the end.”

Thereupon she took the sieve and threw it into the fishpond. Instantly the water turned to foam on the surface, and a thick vapour rose up, which fell in a fog so dense that nothing could be seen through it. Then the prince heard footsteps, and turning round saw his horse coming towards him, with his bridle down and the red fox at his side.

“Mount quickly,” said the horse, “there is not a moment to lose; lift the maiden in front of you.”

The faithful steed flew like an arrow, and sped rapidly along over the road that had been recently cleared by the bushy tail of the red fox. But this time, instead of leading, the red fox followed, his tail working marvels as he went: it destroyed the bridges, reopened the ravines, raised high mountains, and in fact put back everything as it used to be.

The prince felt very happy as he rode along, holding the Princess with the Golden Hair, but it saddened him much to think he would have to give up all thought of marrying her himself, and that within a few short hours he must leave her with the king of the silver palace: the nearer he came to it, the more wretched he grew. The red fox, who noticed this, said: “It appears to me that you do not want to exchange the lovely Zlato-Vlaska for the Horse with the Golden Mane: is it not so? Well, I have helped you so far, I will see what I can do for you now.”

And having thus spoken he turned a somersault over the stump of a fallen tree which lay in the forest: while, to the prince’s amazement, he was immediately transformed into a young girl exactly resembling the Princess with the Golden Hair.

“Now, leave your real bride in the forest,” said the transformed fox, “and take me with you to offer to the king of the silver palace in exchange for his horse Zlato-Nrivak. Mount the horse, return here, and escape with the maid you love; I will manage the rest.”

The king of the silver castle received the maiden without the least suspicion, and handed over in exchange the Horse with the Golden Mane, over whose back lay the bejewelled bridle. The prince left at once.

At the palace all were busy preparing the wedding feast, for the marriage was to take place immediately, and everything was to be of the most costly description. Invitations had been out to all the grandees of the land.

Towards the end of the feast, when every one had drunk his fill of wine and pleasure, the king asked his guests their opinions on the charms of his bride.

“She is most beautiful,” said one, “in fact, it would be impossible for her to be more lovely; only, it seems to me that her eyes are somewhat like those of a fox.”

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the royal bride vanished, while in her place sat a red fox, who with one vigorous bound sprang through the door and disappeared to rejoin the prince, who had hastened on in front. With sweeping strokes of his bushy tail he overthrew bridges, reopened precipices, and heaped up mountains; but it was very hard work for the poor thing, and he did not come up with the runaways until they had almost reached the copper castle. Here they all had a rest, while the red fox turned a somersault and transformed himself into a horse resembling the one with the golden mane. Then the prince entered the copper castle and exchanged the transformed fox for the fire-bird Ohnivak, the king having no suspicions whatever. The red fox, having thus deceived the monarch, reassumed his own shape and hurried after the departing prince, whom he did not overtake until they had reached the banks of the river where they had first become acquainted.

“Now here you are, prince,” said the red fox, “in possession of Ohnivak, of the lovely Zlato-Vlaska, and of the Horse with the Golden Mane. Henceforth you can manage without my help, so return to your father’s house in peace and joy; but, take warning, do not stop anywhere on the way, for if you do some misfortune will overtake you.”

With these words the red fox vanished, while the prince continued his journey unhindered. In his hand he held the golden cage that contained the fire-bird, and at his side the lovely Zlato-Vlaska rode the Horse with the Golden Mane; truly, he was the happiest of men.

When he reached the cross roads where he had parted from his brothers, he hastened to look for the branches they had planted. His alone had become a spreading tree, theirs were both withered. Delighted with this proof of divine favour, he felt a strong desire to rest for a while under the shadow of his own tree; he therefore dismounted, and assisting the princess to do the same, fastened their horses to one of the branches and hung up the cage containing Ohnivak on another: within a few moments they were all sound asleep.

Meanwhile the two elder brothers arrived at the same place by different roads, and both with empty hands. There they found their two branches withered, that of their brother having grown into a splendid tree. Under the shade of the latter he lay sleeping; by his side was the Maid with the Golden Locks; the horse, Zlato-Nrivak, was fastened to a tree, and the fire-bird roosted in his golden cage.

The hearts of the two brothers were filled with envious and wicked thoughts, and they whispered thus to one another, “Just think what will become of us—the youngest will receive half of the kingdom during our father’s life and succeed to the throne at his death; why not cut his throat at once? One of us will take the Maid with the Golden Locks, the other can carry the bird to our father and keep the Horse with the Golden Mane; as for the kingdom, we will divide it between us.”

After this debate they killed their youngest brother and cut up his body into small pieces, while they threatened to treat Zlato-Vlaska in the same way if she attempted to disobey them.

On reaching home they sent the Horse with the Golden Mane to the marble stables, the cage containing Ohnivak was placed in the room where their father lay sick, and the princess was allowed a beautiful suite of apartments and maids of honour to attend her.

When the king, who was much weakened by suffering, had looked at the bird, he asked after his youngest son. To which the brothers replied: “We have not seen or heard anything of him, it is very likely that he has been killed.”

The poor old man was much affected—it seemed, indeed, as if his last hour had come. The fire-bird moped and refused to sing; the Horse with the Golden Mane stood with his head bent down before his manger, and would eat no food; while Princess Zlato-Vlaska remained as silent as if she had been born dumb, her beautiful hair was neglected and uncombed, and she wept—her tears fell fast.

Now as the red fox chanced to pass through the forest he came upon the mangled body of the youngest brother, and he at once set to work to put the scattered pieces together, but was unable to restore them to life. At that moment a raven, accompanied by two young ones, came hovering overhead. The fox crouched behind a bramble bush; and when one of the young birds alighted upon the body to feed, he seized it and made a pretence of strangling it. Upon which the parent bird, full of anxious love and fear, perched upon a branch close by and croaked as if to say, “Let my poor little nestling go. I have done you no harm, neither have I worried you; let him free, and I will take the first opportunity of returning your kindness.”

“Just so,” replied the red fox, “for I am greatly in need of some kindness. Now if you will fetch me some of the Water of Death, and some of the Water of Life, from the Red Sea, I will let your nestling go safe and sound.”

The old raven promised to fetch the water, and went off at once.

Within three days he returned, carrying in his beak two small bottles, one full of the Water of Death, the other of the Water of Life. When the red fox received them he wished first to try their effect upon some living creature, so he cut the small raven up, and joining the pieces together, watered them with the Water of Death. Instantly they became a living bird, without mark or join anywhere. This he sprinkled with the Water of Life, upon which the young raven spread its wings and flew off to its family.

The red fox then performed the same operation on the body of the young prince, and with the same happy result, for he rose again perfect in form, and having about him no wound scars. On coming to life again, all he said was, “Dear me! What a pleasant sleep I have had.”

“I believe you,” replied the red fox, “you would have gone on sleeping for ever if I had not awakened you. And what a foolish young man you are: did I not particularly order you not to stop anywhere, but to go straight back to your father’s house?”

He then related all that his brothers had done, and having obtained a peasant’s dress for him, led him to the outskirts of the forest, close to the royal palace, where he left him.

The young prince then entered the palace grounds, unrecognised by the servants, and on representing that he was in need of employment, was appointed stable-boy to the royal stables. Some little time after he heard the grooms lamenting that the Horse with the Golden Mane would eat no food.

“What a pity it is,” said they, “that this splendid steed should starve to death; he droops his head and will take nothing.”

“Give him,” said the disguised prince, “some pea-straw; I bet you anything he will eat that.”

"But do you really think so? Why, our rough draught horses would refuse such coarse food."

The prince's only answer was to fetch a bundle of pea-straw, which he put into Zlato-Nrivak's marble trough: then, passing his hand gently over his neck and mane, he said to him, "Grieve no more, my horse with the golden mane."

The beautiful creature recognised his master's voice, and neighing with joy, greedily devoured the pea-straw.

The news was noised about from one end of the palace to the other, and the sick king summoned the boy to his presence.

"I hear you have made Zlato-Nrivak eat," said his majesty; "do you think you could make my fire-bird sing? Go and examine him closely: he is very sad, he droops his wings, and will neither eat nor drink. Ah me! if he dies I shall certainly die too."

"Your majesty may rest assured, the bird will not die. Let him have some husks of barley to eat, then he will soon be all right and begin to sing."

The king ordered them to be brought, and the disguised prince put a handful into Ohnivak's cage, saying, "Cheer up, my fire-bird."

As soon as Ohnivak heard his master's voice he shook himself, and made his feathers shine with more than their usual brightness. Then he began to dance about his cage, and pecking up the husks, sang so exquisitely that the king immediately felt better, and it was as if a great weight had been lifted off his heart. The fire-bird again burst into song, and this so affected the king that he sat up quite well, and embraced the disguised prince out of very gratitude.

"Now," said he, "teach me how to restore to health this beautiful maiden with the golden hair whom my sons brought back with them; for she will not speak a word, her beautiful hair remains uncared for, and her tears fall night and day."

“If your majesty will allow me to speak a few words to her, it may be the means of making her bright and happy.”

The king himself led the way to her apartments, and the disguised prince, taking her hand, said: “Look up a moment, sweetheart; why these tears? And why grieve thus, dear bride?”

The maiden knew him at once, and with a cry of joy threw herself into his arms. This astonished the king mightily, and he could not for the life of him think how a stable-boy dare address such a princess as his “dear bride.”

The prince then addressed the king thus: “And are you indeed the only one who does not know me? How is it, my father and sovereign, that you have not recognised your youngest son? I alone have succeeded in obtaining the Fire-Bird, the Horse with the Golden Mane, and the Maid with the Golden Hair.”

Thereupon he related all his adventures, and Zlato-Vlaska in her turn told how the wicked brothers had threatened to kill her if she betrayed them. As for these bad men, they shook from head to foot, and trembled like leaves in the wind. The indignant king ordered them to be executed then and there.

Not very long after these events the youngest prince married the beautiful Zlato-Vlaska, and the king gave him half of his kingdom as a wedding present. When the old king died he reigned in his stead, and lived happily with the princess ever after.

14

TEARS OF PEARLS

Once upon a time there lived a very rich widow, with whom lived three children—a handsome stepson; his sister, who was marvellously beautiful; and her own daughter, passably good-looking.

All three children lived under the same roof, but, as is often the case where there are step-parents, they were treated very differently. The lady's own daughter was bad-tempered, disobedient, vain, and of a tell-tale disposition: yet she was made much of, praised, and caressed. The step-children were treated very harshly: the boy, kind-hearted and obliging, was made to do all sorts of hard unpleasant work, was constantly scolded, and looked upon as a good-for-nothing. The step-daughter, who was not only exceedingly pretty but was as sweet as an angel, was found fault with on all occasions, and her life made utterly miserable.

It is, after all, but natural to love one's own children better than those of others, but the feeling of love should be governed by the laws of fairness. Now this wicked woman was blind to the faults of the child she loved, and to the good qualities of her husband's children, whom she hated.

When in a bad temper she was fond of boasting of the handsome fortune she intended securing for her own daughter, even though the step-children should be unprovided for. But, as the old proverb says, “Man proposes, but God disposes.” We shall therefore see how things turned out.

One Sunday morning, before going to church, the step-daughter went into the garden to pick some flowers for decorating the altar. She had only gathered a few roses when, looking up, she saw quite close to her three young men robed in dazzling white garments. They sat on a bench shaded by shrubs, while near them was an old man who asked her for alms.

She felt rather nervous before the strangers, but when she saw the old man she took her last penny from her purse and gave it him. He thanked her, and raising his hand over the girl’s head, said to the men: “This orphan girl is pious, patient under misfortune, and kind to the poor, with whom she shares the little she has. Tell me what you wish for her.”

The first said, “I wish that when she weeps her tears may be changed into so many pearls.”

“And I,” replied the second, “that when she smiles sweet roses may fall from her lips.”

“My wish,” said the third, “is that whenever she dips her hands into water there shall appear in it shining gold-fish.”

“All these gifts shall be hers,” added the old man. And with these words they vanished.

The maiden was filled with awe, and fell on her knees in prayer. Then her heart was filled with joy and peace, and she went back into the house. She had scarcely crossed the threshold when her stepmother came forward, and looking at her sternly, said, “Well, where have you been?”

The poor child began to cry, when—marvel of marvels—instead of tears, pearls fell from her eyes.

Notwithstanding her rage, the stepmother picked them up as quickly as possible, while the girl smiled as she watched her. And as she smiled roses fell from her lips, and her stepmother was beside herself with delight.

The girl then went to put the flowers she had gathered in water; and as she dipped her fingers in it while arranging them, pretty little gold-fish appeared in the bowl.

From that day these marvels were constantly occurring; the tears were changed into pearls, the smiles scattered roses, and the water, even if she dipped but the tips of her fingers in, was filled with gold-fish.

The stepmother softened and became more gentle, while little by little she managed to draw from her step-child the secret of these gifts.

So next Sunday morning she sent her own daughter into the garden to gather flowers, under pretence of their being for the altar. When she had picked a few, she raised her eyes and saw the three young men sitting on a low seat, while near them stood the little old man with white hair, begging for alms. She pretended to be shy before the young men, but at the beggar's request drew from her pocket a gold piece, and gave it him, evidently much against her will. He put it in his pocket, and turning to his companions, said: "This girl is the spoilt child of her mother; she is bad-tempered and naughty, while her heart is hardened against the poor. It is easy to understand why, for the first time in her life, she has been so generous to-day. Tell me what gifts you would wish me to bestow upon her."

The first said, "May her tears be changed into lizards."

"And her smile produce hideous toads," added the second.

"And when her hands touch the water may it be filled with serpents," said the third.

"So let it be," cried the old man. And they all vanished.

The poor girl was terrified, and went back to tell her mother what had happened. And it was even so; for if she smiled hideous toads fell from her mouth, her tears were changed into lizards, and the water in which she dipped but the tips of her fingers was filled with serpents.

The stepmother was in despair, but she only loved her child the more, and hated the orphans with a yet more bitter hatred. Indeed, she worried them to such an extent that the boy determined to put up with it no longer, but to seek his fortune elsewhere. So he tied up his belongings in a handkerchief, took a loving farewell of his sister, commending her to God's care, and left his home. The great world lay before him, but which path to take he knew not. Turning to the cemetery where his parents lay side by side, he wept and prayed, kissed the earth that covered them three times, and set off on his travels.

At that moment he felt something hard in the folds of his tunic, and pressing on his heart. Wondering what it could be, he put in his hand and drew thence a charming portrait of his dearly loved sister, surrounded with pearls, roses, and gold-fish. So great was his astonishment he could hardly believe his eyes. But he was very happy, and kissed the picture over and over again; then, with one more look at the cemetery, he made the sign of the cross and departed.

Now a beautiful story is soon told, but the acts of which it is the sum pass more slowly.

After many adventures of little importance he reached the capital of a kingdom by the sea, and there obtained the post of under-gardener at the royal palace, with good food and wages.

In his prosperity he did not forget his unhappy sister, for he felt very uneasy about her. When he had a few moments to himself he would sit down in some retired spot and gaze upon her portrait with a sad heart and eyes filled with tears. For the picture was a faithful likeness of her, and he looked upon it as a gift from his parents.

Now the king had noticed this habit of his, and one day while he sat by a stream looking at the picture he came quietly behind him, and glanced over his shoulder to see what he was so attentively regarding.

"Give me that portrait," said the monarch.

The boy handed it him. The king examined it closely, and admiring it greatly, said: "I have never seen such a beautiful face in all my life, never even dreamed of such loveliness. Come, tell me, is the original of the picture living?”

The lad burst into tears, and told him it was the living image of his sister, who a short time since had received as a special mark of favour from God, that her tears should be changed into pearls, her smiles into roses, and the touch of her hands in water should produce beautiful gold-fish.

The king commanded him to write to his stepmother at once and bid her send her lovely step-daughter to the chapel of the palace, where the king would be waiting to marry her. The letter also contained promises of special royal favours.

The lad wrote the letter, which the king sent by a special messenger.

Now a good story is soon told, but the deeds of which it is the sum are not performed so quickly.

When the stepmother received the letter she determined to say nothing about it to her step-child, but she showed it to her own daughter, and talked the matter over with her. Then she went to learn the art of sorcery from a witch, and having found out all it was necessary to know, set off with both of the girls. On approaching the capital, the wicked woman pushed her step-child out of the carriage and repeated some magic words over her. After this she became very small and covered with feathers, then in a moment she was changed into a wild-duck. She began to quack, and made for the water, as ducks do, and swam to a far distance. The stepmother bade her farewell in the following words: “By the strength of my hate may my will be fulfilled. Swim about the banks in the form of a duck, and rejoice in thy liberty. During that time my daughter shall take thy form, shall marry the king, and shall enjoy the good fortune fate destined for thee.”

At the conclusion of these words her own child became endowed with all the graces and beauty of her unfortunate step-sister. The two then continued their journey, arriving at the royal chapel at the appointed hour. The king received them with all honours, while the deceitful woman gave away her own daughter, whom the bridegroom believed to be the original of the beautiful picture. After the ceremony the mother went away loaded with presents. The king, as he looked at his young wife, could not understand why he did not feel for her the sympathy and admiration he had felt for the portrait she so much resembled. But it could not be altered now; what is done is done. So he admired her beauty and looked forward to the pleasure of seeing pearls fall from her eyes, roses from her lips, and gold-fish at the touch of her fingers.

During the wedding feast the newly-made bride forgot herself and smiled at her husband; immediately a number of hideous toads escaped from her lips. The king, overcome with horror and disgust, rushed away from her, upon which she began to cry, but instead of pearls, lizards fell from her eyes. The majordomo ordered water to be brought for her to wash her hands, but no sooner had she dipped the tips of her fingers in the bowl than it was filled with serpents that hissed and twisted and threw themselves among the wedding guests. The panic was general, and a scene of great confusion followed. The guard was called in, and had the greatest trouble to clear the hall of the disgusting reptiles.

The bridegroom had taken refuge in the garden, and when he saw the young man coming towards him, whom he thought had deceived him, his anger overcame him, and he struck the poor lad with so much force that he fell down dead.

The queen ran forward sobbing, and taking the king by the hand, said: “What have you done? You have killed my innocent brother. It is neither my fault, nor was it his, that since the wedding I have by some enchantment lost the marvellous power I possessed before. This evil will pass away in time, but time can never restore to me my dear brother, my own mother’s son.”

“Forgive me, dear wife; in a moment of irritation I thought he had deceived me, and I wanted to punish him, but did not mean to kill. I regret it deeply, but it cannot be helped now. Forgive me my fault as I forgive yours, with all my heart.”

“You have my forgiveness, but I beg you to see that your wife’s brother has an honourable burial.”

Her wishes were carried out, and the orphan lad, who had passed as her brother, was laid in a handsome coffin. The chapel was hung with black, and at night a guard was placed both inside and out.

Towards midnight the church doors silently opened, and while the guards were overcome by sleep a pretty little duck entered unnoticed. She stopped in the middle of the aisle, shook herself, and pulled out her feathers one by one. Then it took the form of the beautiful step-daughter, for it was she. She went up to her brother’s coffin and stood gazing at him, and as she looked she wept sorrowfully. Then she put on her feathers again and went out a duck. When the guards awoke they were astonished to find a quantity of fine pearls in the coffin. Next day they told the king that the doors had opened of themselves towards midnight, that they had been overcome by sleep, and that on awakening they had found a large number of pearls in the coffin, but knew not how they got there. The king was very much surprised, especially at the appearance of the pearls, that ought to have been produced by his wife’s tears. On the second night he doubled the guard, and impressed upon them the necessity for watchfulness.

At midnight the doors again opened silently as before, the soldiers went to sleep, and the same little duck entered, and, taking out her feathers, appeared as a lovely maiden. She could not help smiling as she looked upon the sleeping soldiers, the number of which had been doubled on her account; and as she smiled a number of roses fell from her lips. As she drew near her brother her tears fell in torrents, leaving a profusion of fine pearls. After some time she put on her feathers and went out a duck. When the guards awoke they took the roses and the pearls to the king. He was still more surprised to see roses with the pearls, for these roses should have fallen from his wife's lips. He again increased the number of the guard, and threatened them with the most severe punishment if they failed to watch all night. They did their best to obey, but in vain; they could only sleep. When they awoke they found, not only roses and pearls, but little gold-fish swimming in the holy water.

The amazed king could only conclude that their sleep was caused by magic. On the fourth night he not only increased the number of soldiers, but, unknown to every one, hid himself behind the altar, where he hung a mirror, through which he could see everything that passed without being seen.

At midnight the doors opened. The soldiers, under the influence of sleep, had let fall their arms and lay on the ground. The king kept his eyes fixed on the mirror, through which he saw a little wild-duck enter. It looked timidly round on all sides, then, reassured at the sight of the sleeping guards, advanced to the centre of the nave and took off its feathers, thus appearing as a young maiden of exquisite beauty.

The king, overwhelmed with joy and admiration, had a presentiment that this was his true bride. So when she drew near the coffin he crept noiselessly out of his hiding-place, and with a lighted taper set fire to the feathers. They flared up immediately, and with such a bright light that the soldiers were aroused. The girl ran towards the monarch, wringing her hands and weeping tears of pearl.

"What have you done?" cried she. "How can I now escape my stepmother's vengeance? For it is by her magic that I have been changed into a wild-duck."

When the king had heard all, he ordered some of his soldiers to seize the wife he had married and to take her right out of the country. He sent others to take the wicked stepmother prisoner, and to burn her as a witch. Both commands were instantly carried out. Meanwhile the girl drew from the folds of her gown three small bottles, filled with three different kinds of water, which she had brought from the sea.

The first possessed the virtue of restoring life. This she sprinkled over her brother, whereupon the chill and rigidity of death disappeared, the colour came to his face, and warm red blood flowed from his wound. Upon the wound she poured water from the second bottle, and it was immediately healed. When she had made use of the third kind of water he opened his eyes, looked at her with astonishment, and threw himself joyfully into her arms.

The king, enraptured at this sight, conducted the two back to the palace.

So instead of a funeral there was a wedding, to which a large number of guests were immediately invited. Thus the orphan maid was married to the king, while her brother became one of his majesty’s nobles. And the magnificence of the wedding feast was greater than anything seen or heard of.

15

THE SLUGGARD

On the banks of a certain river, where there was always good fishing, lived an old man and his three sons. The two eldest were sharp-witted, active young men, already married; the youngest was stupid and idle, and a bachelor. When the father was dying, he called his children to him and told them how he had left his property. The house was for his two married sons, with a sum of three hundred florins each. After his death he was buried with great pomp, and after the funeral there was a splendid feast. All these honours were supposed to be for the benefit of the man's soul.

When the elder brothers took possession of their inheritance, they said to the youngest: "Listen, brother; let us take charge of your share of the money, for we intend going out into the world as merchants, and when we have made a great deal of money we will buy you a hat, a sash, and a pair of red boots. You will be better at home; and mind you do as your sisters-in-law tell you."

For a long time this silly fellow had been wanting a cap, a sash, and a pair of red boots, so he was easily persuaded to give up all his money.

The brothers set out on their travels, and crossed the sea in search of fortune. The "fool" of the family remained at home; and, as he was an out-and-out sluggard, he would lie whole days at a time on the warm stove without doing a stroke of work, and only obeying his sisters-in-law with the greatest reluctance. He liked fried onions, potato soup, and cider, better than anything else in the world.

One day his sisters-in-law asked him to fetch them some water.

It was winter, and a hard frost; moreover, the sluggard did not feel at all inclined to go out. So he said, “Go yourselves, I prefer to stay here by the fire.”

“Stupid boy, go at once. We will have some onions, potato soup, and cider ready for you when you come back. If you refuse to do what we ask you we shall tell our husbands, and then there will be neither cap, sash, nor red boots for you.”

At these words the sluggard thought he had better go. So he rolled off the stove, took a hatchet and a couple of pails, and went down to the river. On the surface of the water, where the ice had been broken, was a large pike. The sluggard seized him by the fins and pulled him out.

“If you will let me go,” said the pike, “I promise to give you everything you wish for.”

“Well then, I should like all my desires to be fulfilled the moment I utter them.”

“You shall have everything you want the moment you pronounce these words:

AT MY BEHEST, and by the orders of the pike,
May such and such things happen, as I like.”

“JUST WAIT one moment while I try the effect,” said the sluggard, and began at once to say:

At my behest, and by the orders of the pike,
Bring onions, cider, soup, just as I like.

That very moment his favourite dishes were before him. Having eaten a large quantity, he said, “Very good, very good indeed; but will it always be the same?”

“Always,” replied the pike.

The sluggard put the pike back into the river, and turning towards his buckets, said:

At my behest, and by the orders of the pike,
Walk home yourselves, my pails—that I should like.

The pails, and the strong rod to which they were fastened, immediately set off and walked solemnly along, the sluggard following them with his hands in his pockets. When they reached the house he put them in their places, and again stretched himself out to enjoy the warmth of the stove. Presently the sisters-in-law said, “Come and chop some wood for us.”

”Bother! do it yourselves.”

“It is not fit work for women. Besides, if you don’t do it the stove will be cold, and then you will be the chief sufferer. Moreover, pay attention to what we say, for if you do not obey us, there will be no red boots, nor any other pretty things.”

The sluggard then just sat up and said:

At my behest, and by the orders of the pike, *Let what my sisters want be done—that’s what I like.*

Instantly the hatchet came out from behind a stool and chopped up a large heap of wood, put a part of it on the stove, and retired to its corner. All this time the sluggard was eating and drinking at his ease.

Another day some wood had to be brought from the forest. Our sluggard now thought he would like to show off before the villagers, so he pulled a sledge out of the shed, loaded it with onions and soup, after which he pronounced the magic words.

The sledge started off, and passing through the village at a rattling pace, ran over several people, and frightened the women and children.

When the forest was reached, our friend looked on while the blocks of wood and faggots cut, tied, and laid themselves on the sledge, after which they set off home again. But when they got to the middle of the village the men, who had been hurt and frightened in the morning, seized hold of the sluggard and pulled him off the sledge, dragging him along by the hair to give him a sound thrashing.

At first he thought it was only a joke, but when the blows hurt his shoulders, he said:

At my behest, and by the orders of the pike,
Come, faggots, haste, and my assailants strike.

In a moment all the blocks of wood and faggots jumped off the sledge and began to hit right and left, and they hit so well that the men were glad to get out of the way as best they could.

The sluggard laughed at them till his sides ached; then he remounted his sledge, and was soon lying on the stove again.

From that day he became famous, and his doings were talked about all through the country.

At last even the king heard of him, and, his curiosity being aroused, he sent some of his soldiers to fetch him.

"Now then, booby," said the soldier, "come down off that stove and follow me to the king's palace."

"Why should I? There is as much cider, onions, and soup as I want at home."

The man, indignant at his want of respect, struck him.

Upon which the sluggard said:

At my behest, and by the orders of the pike,
May this man get a taste of what a broom is like.

A large broom, and not particularly clean, immediately hopped up, and first dipping itself in a pail of water, beat the soldier so mercilessly that he was obliged to escape through the window, whence he returned to the king. His majesty, amazed at the sluggard's refusal, sent another messenger. This man was 'cuter than his comrade, and first made inquiries as to the sluggard's tastes. Then he went up to him and said, "Good-day, my friend; will you come with me to see the king? He wishes to present you with a cap, a waistband, and a pair of red boots."

"With the greatest pleasure; you go on, I will soon overtake you."

Then he ate as much as he could of his favourite dishes and went to sleep on the stove. He slept so long that at last his sisters-in-law woke him up and told him he would be late if he did not at once go to see the king. The lazy fellow said nothing but these words:

At my behest, and by the orders of the pike,
This stove to carry me before the king I'd like.

At the very same instant the stove moved from its place and carried him right up to the palace door. The king was filled with amazement, and running out, followed by the whole court, asked the sluggard what he would like to have.

"I have merely come to fetch the hat, waistband, and red boots you promised me."

Just then the charming princess Gapiomila came to find out what was going on. Directly the sluggard saw her, he thought her so enchanting that he whispered to himself:

At my behest, and by the orders of the pike,
That this princess so fair may love me, I should like.

Then he ordered his stove to take him back home, and when there he continued to eat onions and soup and to drink cider.

Meanwhile the princess had fallen in love with him, and begged her father to send for him again. As the sluggard would not consent, the king had him bound when asleep, and thus brought to the palace. Then he summoned a celebrated magician, who at his orders shut the princess and sluggard up in a crystal cask, to which was fastened a balloon well filled with gas, and sent it up in the air among the clouds. The princess wept bitterly, but the fool sat still and said he felt very comfortable. At last she persuaded him to exert his powers, so he said:

At my behest, and by the orders of the pike,
This cask of crystal earth at once must strike
Upon the friendly island I should like.

The crystal cask immediately descended, and opened upon a hospitable island where travellers could have all they wanted by simply wishing for it. The princess and her companion walked about, eating when hungry, and drinking when athirst. The sluggard was very happy and contented, but the lady begged him to wish for a palace. Instantly the palace made its appearance. It was built of white marble, with crystal windows, roof of yellow amber, and golden furniture. She was delighted with it. Next day she wanted a good road made, along which she could go to see her father. Immediately there stretched before them a fairy-like bridge made of crystal, having golden balustrades set with diamonds, and leading right up to the king's palace. The sluggard was just about to accompany the princess when he began to think of his own appearance, and to feel ashamed that such an awkward, stupid fellow as he should walk by the side of such a lovely and graceful creature. So he said:

At my behest, and by the orders of the pike,
To be both handsome, wise, and clever I should like.

SUDDENLY HE BECAME AS HANDSOME, wise, and clever as it was possible to be. Then he got into a gorgeous carriage with Gapiomila, and they drove across the bridge that led to the king’s palace.

There they were received with every mark of joy and affection. The king gave them his blessing, and they were married the same evening. An immense number of guests were invited to the wedding feast; I, too, was there, and drank freely of wine and hydromel. And this is the story I have done my best to tell you as faithfully as possible.

16

KINKACH MARTINKO

Once upon a time there was a poor woman who had an only daughter, named Helen, a very lazy girl. One day when she had refused to do a single thing, her mother took her down to the banks of a stream and began to strike her fingers with a flat stone, just as you do in beating linen to wash it.

The girl cried a good deal. A prince, Lord of the Red Castle, happened at that moment to pass by, and inquired as to the cause of such treatment, for it horrified him that a mother should so ill-use her child.

“Why should I not punish her?” answered the woman. “The idle girl can do nothing but spin hemp into gold thread.”

“Really?” cried he. “Does she really know how to spin gold thread out of hemp? If that be so, sell her to me.”

“Willingly; how much will you give me for her?”

“Half a measure of gold.”

“Take her,” said the mother; and she gave him her daughter as soon as the money was paid.

The prince placed the girl behind him on the saddle, put spurs to his horse, and took her home.

On reaching the Red Castle, the prince led Helen into a room filled from floor to ceiling with hemp, and having supplied her with distaff and spinning-wheel, said, “When you have spun all this hemp into gold thread I will make you my wife.”

Then he went out, locking the door after him.

On finding herself a prisoner, the poor girl wept as if her heart would break. Suddenly she saw a very odd-looking little man seated on the window-sill. He wore a red cap, and his boots were made of some strange sort of material.

“Why do you weep so?” he asked.

“I cannot help it,” she replied, “I am but a miserable slave. I have been ordered to spin all this hemp into gold thread, but it is impossible, I can never do it, and I know not what will become of me.”

“I will do it for you in three days, on condition that at the end of that time you guess my right name, and tell me what the boots I am wearing now are made of.”

Without for one moment reflecting as to whether she would be able to guess aright she consented. The uncanny little man burst out laughing, and taking her distaff set to work at once.

All day as the distaff moved the hemp grew visibly less, while the skein of gold thread became larger and larger.

The little man spun all the time, and, without stopping an instant, explained to Helen how to make thread of pure gold. As night drew on he tied up the skein, saying to the girl, “Well, do you know my name yet? Can you tell me what my boots are made of?”

Helen replied that she could not, upon which he grinned and disappeared through the window. She then sat and looked at the sky, and thought, and thought, and thought, and lost herself in conjecturing as to what the little man’s name might be, and in trying to guess what was the stuff his boots were made of. Were they of leather? or perhaps plaited rushes? or straw? or cast iron? No, they did not look like anything of that sort. And as to his name—that was a still more difficult problem to solve.

“What shall I call him?” said she to herself—”John? Or Henry? Who knows? perhaps it is Paul or Joseph.”

These thoughts so filled her mind that she forgot to eat her dinner. Her meditations were interrupted by cries and groans from outside, where she saw an old man with white hair sitting under the castle wall.

“Miserable old man that I am,” cried he; “I die of hunger and thirst, but no one pities my sufferings.”

Helen hastened to give him her dinner, and told him to come next day, which he promised to do.

After again thinking for some time what answers she should give the little old man, she fell asleep on the hemp.

The little old man did not fail to make his appearance the first thing next morning, and remained all day spinning the gold thread. The work progressed before their eyes, and it was only when evening came that he repeated his questions. Not receiving a satisfactory answer, he vanished in a fit of mocking laughter. Helen sat down by the window to think; but think as she might, no answer to these puzzling questions occurred to her.

While thus wondering the hungry old man again came by, and she gave him her dinner. She was heart-sick and her eyes were full of tears, for she thought she would never guess the spinner’s name, nor of what stuff his boots were made, unless perhaps God would help her.

“Why are you so sad?” asked the old man when he had eaten and drunk; “tell me the cause of your grief, dear lady.”

For a long time she would not tell him, thinking it would be useless; but at last, yielding to his entreaties, she gave a full account of the conditions under which the gold thread was made, explaining that unless she could answer the little old man’s questions satisfactorily she feared some great misfortune would befall her. The old man listened attentively, then, nodding his head, he said:

"In coming through the forest to-day I passed close to a large pile of burning wood, round which were placed nine iron pots. A little man in a red cap was running round and jumping over them, singing these words:

My sweet friend, fair Helen, at the Red Castle near,
Two days and two nights seeks my name to divine.
She'll never find out, so the third night 'tis clear
My sweet friend, fair Helen, can't fail to be mine.
Hurrah! for my name is Kinkach Martinko,
Hurrah! for my boots are of doggies' skin O!

"Now that is exactly what you want to know, my dear girl; so do not forget, and you are saved."

And with these words the old man vanished.

Helen was greatly astonished, but she took care to fix in her memory all that the good fellow had told her, and then went to sleep, feeling that she could face to-morrow without fear.

On the third day, very early in the morning, the little old man appeared and set busily to work, for he knew that all the hemp must be spun before sunset, and that then he should be able to claim his rights. When evening came all the hemp was gone, and the room shone with the brightness of the golden thread.

As soon as his work was done, the queer little old man with the red cap drew himself up with a great deal of assurance, and with his hands in his pockets strutted up and down before Helen, ordering her to tell him his right name and to say of what stuff the boots were made: but he felt certain that she would not be able to answer aright.

“Your name is Kinkach Martinko, and your boots are made of dogskin,” she replied without the slightest hesitation.

At these words he spun round on the floor like a bobbin, tore out his hair and beat his breast with rage, roaring so that the very walls trembled.

“It is lucky for you that you have guessed. If you had not, I should have torn you to pieces on this very spot:” so saying he rushed out of the window like a whirlwind.

Helen felt deeply grateful towards the old man who had told her the answers, and hoped to be able to thank him in person. But he never appeared again.

The Prince of the Red Castle was very pleased with her for having accomplished her task so punctually and perfectly, and he married her as he had promised.

Helen was truly thankful to have escaped the dangers that had threatened her, and her happiness as a princess was greater than she had dared hope. She had, too, such a good stock of gold thread that she never had occasion to spin any more all her life long.

17

THE STORY OF THE PLENTIFUL TABLECLOTH, THE AVENGING WAND, THE SASH THAT BECOMES A LAKE, AND THE TERRIBLE HELMET

Now it once happened that one of the king’s herdsmen had three sons. Two of these lads were supposed to be very sharp-witted, while the youngest was thought to be very stupid indeed. The elder sons helped their father to look after the flocks and herds, while the fool, so they called him, was good for nothing but sleeping and amusing himself.

He would pass whole days and nights slumbering peacefully on the stove, only getting off when forced to by others, or when he was too warm and wished to lie on the other side, or when, hungry and thirsty, he wanted food and drink.

His father had no love for him, and called him a ne’er-do-well. His brothers often tormented him by dragging him off the stove, and taking away his food—indeed, he would many a time have gone hungry if his mother had not been good to him and fed him on the quiet. She caressed him fondly, for why should he suffer, thought she, if he does happen to have been born a fool? Besides, who can understand the ways of God? It sometimes happens that the wisest men are not happy, while the foolish, when harmless and gentle, lead contented lives.

One day, on their return from the fields, the fool’s two brothers dragged him off the stove, and taking him into the yard, where they gave him a sound thrashing, they turned him out of the house, saying, “Go, fool, and lose no time, for you shall have neither food nor lodging until you bring us a basket of mushrooms from the wood.”

The poor lad was so taken by surprise he hardly understood what his brothers wanted him to do. After pondering for a while he made his way towards a small oak forest, where everything seemed to have a strange and marvellous appearance, so strange that he did not recognise the place. As he walked he came to a small dead tree-stump, on the top of which he placed his cap, saying, “Every tree here raises its head to the skies and wears a good cap of leaves, but you, my poor friend, are bare-headed; you will die of cold. You must be among your brothers, as I am among mine—a born fool. Take then my cap.” And, throwing his arms round the dead stump, he wept and embraced it tenderly. At that moment an oak which stood near began to walk towards him as if it were alive. The poor fellow was frightened, and about to run away, but the oak spake like a human being and said, “Do not fly; stop a moment and listen to me. This withered tree is my son, and up to this time no one has grieved for his dead youth but me. You have now watered him with your tears, and in return for your sympathy you shall henceforward have anything you ask of me, on pronouncing these words:

O Oak Tree so green, and with acorns of gold,
Your friendship to prove I will try;
In Heaven’s good name now to beg I’ll make bold,
My needs, then, oh kindly supply.

At the same moment a shower of golden acorns fell. The fool filled his pockets, thanked the oak, and bowing to her returned home.

“Well, stupid, where are the mushrooms?” cried one of his brothers.

“I have some mushrooms off the oak in my pockets.”

“Eat them yourself then, for you will get nothing else, you good-for-nothing. What have you done with your cap?”

“I put it on a poor stump of a tree that stood by the wayside, for its head was uncovered, and I was afraid it might freeze.”

He then scrambled on to the top of the stove, and as he lay down some of the golden acorns fell out of his pocket. So bright were they, they shone like sunbeams in the room. In spite of the fool’s entreaties the brothers picked them up and gave them to their father, who hastened to present them to the king, telling him that his idiot son had gathered them in the wood. The king immediately sent a detachment of his guards to the forest to find the oak which bore golden acorns. But their efforts were fruitless, for, though they hunted in every nook and corner of the forest, they found not a single oak that bore acorns of gold.

At first the king was very angry, but when he grew calmer he sent for his herdsman and said to him, “Tell your son, the fool, that he must bring me, by this evening, a cask filled to the brim with these precious golden acorns. If he obeys my commands you shall never lack bread and salt, and you may rest assured that my royal favour will not fail you in time of need.”

The herdsman gave his youngest son the king’s message.

“The king, I see,” he replied, “is fond of a good bargain; he does not ask, he commands—and insists upon a fool fetching him acorns of solid gold in return for promises made of air. No, I shall not go.”

And neither prayers nor threats were of the slightest avail to make him change his mind. At last his brothers pulled him forcibly off the stove, put his coat on him and a new cap, and dragged him into the yard, where they gave him a good beating and drove him away, saying, “Now, you stupid, lose no time; be off, and be quick. If you return without the golden acorns you shall have neither supper nor bed.”

What was the poor fellow to do? For a long time he wept, then crossing himself he went in the direction of the forest. He soon reached the dead stump, upon which his cap still rested, and going up to the mother oak, said to her:

O Oak Tree so green, and with acorns of gold,
In my helplessness I to thee cry;
In Heaven's great name now to beg I make bold,
My pressing needs pray satisfy.

The oak moved, and shook its branches: but instead of golden acorns, a tablecloth fell into the fool's hands. And the tree said, "Keep this cloth always in your possession, and for your own use. When you want a benefit by it, you need only say:

O Tablecloth, who for the poor,
The hungry, and thirsty, makes cheer,
May he who begs from door to door
Feed off you without stint or fear.

When it had uttered these words the oak ceased to speak, and the fool, thanking her, bowed, and turned towards home. On his way he wondered to himself how he should tell his brothers, and what they would say, but above all he thought how his good mother would rejoice to see the feast-giving tablecloth. When he had walked about half the distance he met an old beggar who said to him, “See what a sick and ragged old man I am: for the love of God give me a little money or some bread.”

The fool spread his tablecloth on the grass, and inviting the beggar to sit down, said:

O Tablecloth, who for the poor,
The hungry, and thirsty, makes cheer,
May he who begs from door to door
Feed off you without stint or fear.

Then a whistling was heard in the air, and overhead something shone brightly. At the same instant a table, spread as for a royal banquet, appeared before them. Upon it were many different kinds of food, flasks of mead, and glasses of the choicest wine. The plate was of gold and silver.

The fool and the beggar man crossed themselves and began to feast. When they had finished the whistling was again heard, and everything vanished. The fool folded up his tablecloth and went on his way. But the old man said, “If you will give me your tablecloth you shall have this wand in exchange. When you say certain words to it, it will set upon the person or persons pointed out, and give them such a thrashing, that to get rid of it they will give you anything they possess.”

The fool thought of his brothers and exchanged the tablecloth for the wand, after which they both went on their respective ways.

Suddenly the fool remembered that the oak had ordered him to keep the tablecloth for his own use, and that by parting with it he had lost the power of giving his mother an agreeable surprise. So he said to the wand:

Thou self-propelling, ever willing, fighting Wand,
Run quick and bring
My feast-providing tablecloth back to my hand,
Thy praise I'll sing.

The wand went off like an arrow after the old man, quickly overtook him, and throwing itself upon him began to beat him dreadfully, crying out in a loud voice:

For others' goods you seem to have a liking,
Stop, thief, or sure your back I'll keep on striking.

The poor beggar tried to run away, but it was of no use, for the wand followed him, striking all the time and repeating the same words over and over again. So in spite of his anxiety to keep the tablecloth he was forced to throw it away and flee.

The wand brought the cloth back to the fool, who again went on his way towards home, thinking of the surprise in store for his mother and brothers. He had not gone very far when a traveller, carrying an empty wallet, accosted him, saying, "For the love of God, give me a small coin or a morsel of food, for my bag is empty and I am very hungry. I have, too, a long journey before me."

The fool again spread his tablecloth on the grass and said:

O Tablecloth, who for the poor,
The hungry, and thirsty, makes cheer,

May he who begs from door to door
Feed off you without stint or fear.

A WHISTLING WAS HEARD in the air, something shone brightly overhead, and a table, spread as for a royal feast, placed itself before them. It was laid with a numerous variety of dishes, hydromel and costly wines. The fool and his guest sat down, crossed themselves, and ate to their hearts' content. When they had finished whistling was again heard, and everything vanished. The fool folded the cloth up carefully, and was about to continue his journey when the traveller said, "Will you exchange your tablecloth for my waistband? When you say to it certain words it will turn into a deep lake, upon which you may float at will. The words run thus:

O MARVELLOUS, wonderful, lake-forming Band,
For my safety, and not for my fun,
Bear me in a boat on thy waves far from land,
So that I from my foes need not run.

THE FOOL THOUGHT his father would find it very convenient always to have water at hand for the king's flocks, so he gave his tablecloth in exchange for the belt, which he wound round his loins, and taking the wand in his hand, they went off in opposite directions. After a little while the fool began to reflect on what the oak had told him about keeping the tablecloth for his own use, and he remembered, too, that he was depriving himself of the power of giving his mother a pleasant surprise. Thereupon he said the magic words to his wand:

Thou self-propelling, ever willing, fighting Wand,
Run quick and bring
My feast-providing tablecloth back to my hand,
Thy praise I'll sing.

The wand at once started in pursuit of the poor traveller, whom it began to beat, at the same time crying out:

For others' goods you seem to have a liking,
Stop, thief, or sure your back I'll keep on striking.

The man was scared out of his wits, and tried to escape the wand's blows, but it was of no use, so he was forced to throw the tablecloth away and run at the top of his speed. The wand brought the tablecloth back to his master. The latter hid it under his coat, rearranged the waistband, and taking the faithful wand in his hand, again went towards home. As he walked he rejoiced to think of the pleasure he should have in exercising the wand on his wicked brothers, of his father's satisfaction when, by the help of the waistband, he could always have water for the king's flocks, even in the driest weather, and of his mother's joy on witnessing the wonders of the feast-giving tablecloth. These pleasant thoughts were interrupted by a soldier, lame, clothed in rags, and covered with wounds. He had once been a famous warrior.

"I am pursued by misfortunes," said he to the fool. "I was once a brave soldier, and fought valiantly in my youth. Now I am lamed for life, and on this lonely road have found no one to give me a morsel of food. Have pity on me and give me a little bread."

The fool sat down on the grass, and spreading out his tablecloth, said:

O TABLECLOTH*, who for the poor,*
The hungry, and thirsty, makes cheer,
May he who begs from door to door
Feed off you without stint or fear.

A WHISTLING WAS HEARD in the air, something bright shone overhead, and then before them stood a table, spread as for a royal feast, loaded with dainty dishes, mead, and costly wines. When they had eaten and drunk as much as they wanted the whistling was again heard, and then everything vanished.

The fool was folding up his tablecloth, when the soldier said:

"Will you give me your tablecloth in exchange for this six-horned helmet? It will fire itself off and instantly destroy the object pointed out. You have but to turn it round on your head and repeat these words:

O MAGIC HELMET*, never thou*
Dost want for powder nor shot;
Allay my fears and fire now
Just where I point. Fail not.

YOU WILL SEE that it fires off immediately: and even if your enemy were a mile away he would fall."

The fool was delighted with the idea, and thought how useful such a hat would be in any sudden danger; it would even serve him to defend his country, the king, or himself. So he handed the tablecloth to the soldier, put the helmet on his head, took his wand in his hand, and again set his face towards home.

When he had gone some distance, and the soldier was almost out of sight, he began to think of what the oak had said about not parting with the tablecloth, and of how his dear mother could not now enjoy the pleasant surprise he had been dreaming about. So he said to the wand:

Thou self-propelling, ever willing, fighting Wand,
Run quick, and bring
My feast-providing tablecloth back to my hand,
Thy praise I'll sing.

The wand dashed after the soldier, and having reached him began to beat him, crying out:

For others' goods you seem to have a liking,
Stop, thief, or sure your back I'll keep on striking.

The soldier was still a powerful man, and in spite of his wound turned right about face, intending to give blow for blow. But the wand was too much for him, and he soon found resistance useless. So, overcome by pain rather than fear, he threw away the tablecloth and took to his heels.

The faithful wand brought the tablecloth back to his master, who, glad to have it again, once more turned towards home.

He soon left the forest, crossed the fields, and came in sight of his father's house. At a little distance therefrom his brothers met him, and said crossly, "Well, stupid, where are the golden acorns?"

The fool looked at them and laughed in their faces. Then he said to his wand:

O self-propelling, ever willing, fighting Wand
Strike with thy usual fire
My ever-scolding, teasing, worrying brother band,
For they have roused my ire.

The wand needed no second bidding, and darting out of his hand began to thrash the brothers soundly, crying out like a reasoning creature:

Your brother has often your blows felt, alack!
Now taste it yourselves; hope you like it, whack, whack.

The brothers were overpowered, and felt all the while as if boiling water were being poured over their heads. Yelling with pain they began to run at full speed, and soon disappeared with clouds of dust flying round them.

The wand then came back to the fool's hand. He went into the house, climbed on the stove, and told his mother all that had happened. Then he cried:

O Tablecloth, who for the poor,
The hungry, and thirsty, makes cheer,
Let us within our cottage door
Feed off you without stint or fear.

A whistling was heard in the air, something bright shone overhead, and then a table, laid as for a royal banquet, was placed before them, covered with dainty meats, glasses, and bottles of mead and wine. The whole service was of gold and silver. As the fool and his mother were about to begin the feast the herdsman entered. He stopped, dumb with amazement, but when invited to partake, began to eat and drink with great enjoyment.

At the end of the meal the whistling was again heard, and everything vanished completely.

The herdsman set off in hot haste to the court, to tell the king of this new marvel. Thereupon his majesty sent one of his heroes in search of the fool, whom he found stretched on the stove.

"If you value your life, listen, and obey the king's orders," said the paladin. "He commands you to send him by me your tablecloth, then you shall have your share of his royal favour. But if not you will always remain a poor fool, and will, moreover, be treated as a refractory prisoner. We teach them how to behave; you understand?"

"Oh yes, I understand." And then he pronounced the magic words:

O self-propelling, ever willing, fighting Wand,
Go, soundly thrash that man—
The most deceiving, dangerous wretch in all the land,
So hurt him all you can.

THE WAND SPRANG from the fool’s hand with the speed of lightning and struck the paladin three times in the face. He immediately fled, but the wand was after him, hitting him all the time, and crying out:

MERE PROMISES ARE children’s play,
So do not throw your breath away,
But think of something true to say,
You rogue, when next you come our way.

DEFEATED AND FILLED WITH CONSTERNATION, the paladin returned to the king and told him about the wand, and how badly he had been beaten. When the king heard that the fool possessed a wand that struck of itself, he wanted it so much that for a time he forgot all about the tablecloth, and sent some of his soldiers with orders to bring him back the wand.

When they entered the cottage, the fool, as usual, was lying on the stove.

“Deliver up the wand to us instantly,” said they; “the king is willing to pay any price you ask, but if you refuse he will take it from you by force.”

Instead of replying the fool unwound the waistband, saying to it as he did so:

O MARVELLOUS, wonderful, lake-forming Band,
For my safety, and not for my fun,
Bear me in a boat on thy waves far from land,
So that I from my foes need not run.

THERE WAS a shimmering in the air, while at the same moment everything around them disappeared, and a beautiful lake, long, wide, and deep, was seen, surrounded by green fields. Fish with golden scales and eyes of pearls played in the clear water. In the centre, in a small silver skiff, rowed a man, whom the soldiers recognised as the fool.

They remained some time looking at this miracle, and then ran off to tell the king. Now when the king heard thereof he was so anxious to possess the lake, or rather the waistband that produced the lake, that he sent a whole battalion of soldiers to take the fool prisoner.

This time they managed to get hold of him while he was asleep, but as they were about to tie his hands he turned his hat round and said:

O MAGIC HELMET, never thou
Dost want for powder nor shot,
Allay my fears and fire now
Just where I point. Fail not.

INSTANTLY A HUNDRED BULLETS whistled through the air, amid clouds of smoke and loud reports. Many of the soldiers fell dead, others took refuge in the wood, whence they returned to the king to give an account of what had taken place.

Whereupon the king flew into a violent rage, furious that he had as yet failed to take the fool. But his wish to possess the feast-giving tablecloth, the magic wand, the lake-forming sash, and above all the helmet with twenty-four horns, was stronger than ever.

Having reflected for some days on the best ways and means to attain his object, he resolved to try the effect of kindness, and sent for the fool's mother.

“Tell your son, the fool,” said his majesty to the woman, “that my charming daughter and I send greeting, and that we shall consider it an honour if he will come here and show us the marvellous things he possesses. Should he feel inclined to make me a present of them, I will give him half my kingdom and will make him my heir. You may also say that the princess, my daughter, will choose him for her husband.”

The good woman hastened home to her son, whom she advised to accept the king’s invitation and show him his treasures. The fool wound the waistband round his loins, put the helmet on his head, hid the tablecloth in his breast, took his magic wand in his hand, and started off to go to the court.

The king was not there on his arrival, but he was received by the paladin, who saluted him courteously. Music played, and the troops did him military honours—in fact, he was treated far better than he had expected. On being presented to the king he took off his helmet, and bowing low, said: “O king, I am come to lay at the foot of your throne my tablecloth, waistband, wand, and helmet. In return for these gifts I beg that your favour may be shown to the most humble of your subjects.”

“Tell me then, fool, what price you want for these goods?”

“Not money, sire, a fool of my sort cares very little about money. Has not the king promised my mother that he will give me in exchange the half of his kingdom, and the hand of his daughter in marriage? These are the gifts I claim.”

After these words the paladin was filled with envy at the good fortune of the fool, and made a sign for the guards to enter. The soldiers seized the poor fellow, dragged him out into the courtyard, and they killed him treacherously to the sound of drums and trumpets, after which they covered him over with earth.

Now it happened that when the soldiers stabbed him his blood spurted out, and some of the drops fell beneath the princess’s window. The maiden wept bitterly at the sight, watering the blood-stained ground with her tears. And lo! marvellous to relate, an apple-tree grew out of the blood-sprinkled earth. And it grew so rapidly that its branches soon touched the windows of her rooms; by noon it was covered with blossom, while at eventide ripe red apples hung thereon. As the princess was admiring them she noticed that one of the apples trembled, and when she touched it, it fell into the bosom of her dress. This took her fancy, and she held it in her hand.

Meanwhile the sun had set, night had fallen, and every one in the palace was asleep, except the guard, the paladin, and the princess. The guard, sword in hand, patrolled up and down, for it was his duty. The princess toyed with her pretty little apple, and could not sleep. The paladin, who had gone to bed, was aroused by a sound that made his blood run cold, for the avenging wand stood before him and began to beat him soundly. And although he rushed from the room trying to escape from it, it followed him, crying out:

FALSE PALADIN, you worthless man,
Do not so envious be;
Why act unjustly, when you can
Both just and honest be?
For others' goods why have you such a liking?
You rogue, you thief, be sure I'll keep on striking.

THE UNHAPPY MAN wept and cried for mercy, but the wand still continued to strike.

The princess was distressed on hearing these cries of distress, and she watered her much-cherished apple with her tears. And, strange to tell, the apple grew and changed its shape. Thus continuing to change, it suddenly turned into a handsome young man, even the very same who had been killed that morning.

"Lovely princess, I salute you," said the fool. "The cunning of the paladin caused my death, but with your tears you have restored me to life. Your father promised to give you to me: are you willing?"

"If such be the king's wish, I consent," replied she, as she gave him her hand with a tender look.

As he spoke the door opened, admitting the helmet, which placed itself upon his head; the sash, which wound itself round his waist; the tablecloth, which hid itself in one of his pockets; and the avenging wand, which placed itself in his hand. Then came the king, all out of breath, and wondering what the noise was about. He was amazed to see the fool alive again, and even more so that he should be with the princess.

The young fellow, fearing the king's wrath, cried out:

O MARVELLOUS, wonderful, lake-forming Band,
For my safety, and not for my fun,
Bear us in a boat on thy waves far from land,
So that we from our foes need not run.

THERE WAS a shimmering in the air, and then everything disappeared, while on the lawn before the palace stretched a wide deep lake, in the crystal water of which swam little fish with eyes of pearl and scales of gold. Far away rowed the princess and the fool in a silver skiff. The king stood on the shores of the lake and signed to them to return. When they had landed they knelt at his feet and avowed their mutual love. Upon which his majesty bestowed his blessing, the lake disappeared, and they again found themselves in the princess's apartments.

The king called a special meeting of his council, at which he explained how things had turned out—that he had made the fool his heir, and betrothed him to his daughter, and had put the paladin in prison.

The fool gave the king his magic treasures, and told him what words to say in each case.

Next day all their wishes were fulfilled. The fool of the family was married to the princess, and at the same time received half the kingdom, with the promise of succession to the throne. And the wedding feast, to which all the rich and noble of the land were invited, exceeded in its magnificence and splendour any other festival ever seen or heard of.

7. THOMAS FREDERICK CRANE

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The King of Love
2. Zelinda and the Monster
3. King Bean
4. The Dancing Water, the Singing Apple, and the Speaking Bird
5. The Fair Angiola
6. The Cloud
7. The Cistern
8. The Griffin
9. Fair Maria Wood
10. The Curse of the Seven Children
11. Oraggio and Bianchinetta
12. The Fair Fiorita
13. Bierde
14. Snow-White-Fire-Red
15. How the Devil Married Three Sisters
16. In Love with a Statue
17. Thirteenth
18. The Cobbler
19. The King Who Wanted a Beautiful Wife
20. The Bucket
21. The Two Humpbacks
22. The Story of Catherine and Her Fate
23. The Crumb in the Beard
24. The Fairy Orlanda
25. The Shepherd Who Made the King’s Daughter Laugh
26. The Ass That Lays Money

27. Don Joseph Pear
28. Fair Brow
29. Lionbruno

PREFACE

CRANE, THOMAS FREDERICK

Thomas Frederick Crane (1844-1927) was an American folklorist, academic and lawyer. He studied law at Princeton, earned his undergraduate degree in 1864, and in 1867 graduated with an A.M. After graduation, he studied law at Columbia Law School but moved to Ithaca when a relative there became ill. He was admitted to the bar and worked as a lawyer in the community and as a librarian for newly founded Cornell University. He went on to become a student of languages, and was offered a faculty position by President A.D. White and taught French, Italian, Spanish, and medieval literature. He was among the founders of the *Journal of American Folklore*. He also served as the first Dean of the Arts College and later as Acting President of the University. As a young faculty member, he became one of the first members of the Cornell Chapter of The Kappa Alpha Society.

Crane is particularly noted for his collection *Italian Popular Tales*. Many of its tales were published in the popular children's magazine *St. Nicholas Magazine*.

1

THE KING OF LOVE

Once upon a time there was a man with three daughters, who earned his living by gathering wild herbs. One day he took his youngest daughter with him. They came to a garden, and began to gather vegetables. The daughter saw a fine radish, and began to pull it up, when suddenly a Turk appeared, and said: “Why have you opened my master’s door? You must come in now, and he will decide on your punishment.”

They went down into the ground, more dead than alive; and when they were seated they saw a green bird come in and bathe in a pan of milk, then dry itself, and become a handsome youth. He said to the Turk: “What do these persons want?” “Your worship, they pulled up a radish, and opened the door of the cave.” “How did we know,” said the father, “that this was Your Excellency’s house? My daughter saw a fine radish; it pleased her, and she pulled it up.” “Well, if that’s the case,” said the master, “your daughter shall stay here as my wife; take this sack of gold and go; when you want to see your daughter, come and make yourself at home.” The father took leave of his daughter and went away.

When the master was alone with her, he said: “You see, Rosella (Rusidda), you are now mistress here,” and gave her all the keys. She was perfectly happy (literally, “was happy to the hairs of her head”). One day, while the green bird was away, her sisters took it into their heads to visit her, and asked her about her husband. Rosella said she did not know, for he had made her promise not to try to find out who he was. Her sisters, however, persuaded her, and when the bird returned and became a man, Rosella put on a downcast air. “What is the matter?” asked her husband. “Nothing.” “You had better tell me.” She let him question her a while, and at last said: “Well, then, if you want to know why I am out of sorts, it is because I wish to know your name.” Her husband told her that it would be the worse for her, but she insisted on knowing his name. So he made her put the gold basins on a chair, and began to bathe his feet. “Rosella, do you really want to know my name?” “Yes.” And the water came up to his waist, for he had become a bird, and had got into the basin. Then he asked her the same question again, and again she answered yes, and the water was up to his mouth. “Rosella, do you really want to know my name?” “Yes, yes, yes!” “Then know that I am called The King of Love!” And saying this he disappeared, and the basins and the palace disappeared likewise, and Rosella found herself alone out in an open plain, without a soul to help her. She called her servants, but no one answered her. Then she said: “Since my husband has disappeared, I must wander about alone and forlorn to seek him!”

The poor woman, who expected before long to become a mother, began her wanderings, and at night arrived at another lonely plain; then she felt her heart sink, and, not knowing what to do, she cried out: —

Ah! King of Love,
You did it, and said it.
You disappeared from me in a golden basin,
And who will shelter to-night
This poor unfortunate one?

WHEN SHE HAD UTTERED these words an ogress appeared and said: “Ah! wretch, how dare you go about seeking my nephew?” and was going to eat her up; but she took pity on her miserable state, and gave her shelter for the night. The next morning she gave her a piece of bread, and said: “We are seven sisters, all ogresses, and the worst of all is your mother-in-law; look out for her!”

To be brief, the poor girl wandered about six days, and met all six of the ogresses, who treated her in the same way. The seventh day, in great distress, she uttered her usual lament, and the sister of the King of Love appeared and said, “Rosella, while my mother is out, come up!” and she lowered the braids of her hair, and pulled her up. Then she gave her something to eat, and told her how to seize and pinch her mother until she cried out: “Let me alone for the sake of my son, the King of Love!”

Rosella did as she was told, but the ogress was so angry she was going to eat her. But her daughters threatened to abandon her if she did. “Well, then, I will write a letter, and Rosella must carry it to my friend.” Poor Rosella was disheartened when she saw the letter, and, descending, found herself in the midst of a plain. She uttered her usual complaint, when the King of Love appeared, and said: “You see your curiosity has brought you to this point!” Poor thing! when she saw him she began to cry, and begged his pardon for what she had done. He took pity on her, and said: “Now listen to what you must do. On your way you will come to a river of blood; you must bend down and take some up in your hands, and say: ‘How beautiful is this crystal water! such water as this I have never drunk!’ Then you will come to another stream of turbid water, and do the same there. Then you will find yourself in a garden where there is a great quantity of fruit; pick some and eat it, saying: ‘What fine pears! I have never eaten such pears as these.’ Afterward, you will come to an oven that bakes bread day and night, and no one buys any. When you come there, say: ‘Oh, what fine bread! bread like this I have never eaten,’ and eat some. Then you will come to an entrance guarded by two hungry dogs; give them a piece of bread to eat. Then you will come to a doorway all dirty and full of cobwebs; take a broom and sweep it clean. Half-way up the stairs you will find two giants, each with a dirty piece of meat by his side; take a brush and clean it for them. When you have entered the house, you will find a razor, a pair of scissors, and a knife; take something and polish them. When you have done this, go in and deliver your letter to my mother’s friend. When she wants to make you enter, snatch up a little box on the table, and run away. Take care to do all the things I have told you, or else you will never escape alive.”

Rosella did as she was told, and while the ogress was reading the letter Rosella seized the box and ran for her life. When the ogress had finished reading her letter, she called: “Rosella! Rosella!” When she received no answer, she perceived that she had been betrayed, and cried out: “Razor, Scissors, Knife, cut her in pieces!” They answered: “As long as we have been razor, scissors, and knife, when did you ever deign to polish us? Rosella came and brightened us up.” The ogress, enraged, exclaimed: “Stairs, swallow her up!” “As long as I have been stairs, when did you ever deign to sweep me? Rosella came and swept me.” The ogress cried in a passion: “Giants, crush her!” “As long as we have been giants, when did you ever deign to clean our food for us? Rosella came and did it.”

Then the furious ogress called on the entrance to bury her alive, the dogs to devour her, the furnace to burn her, the fruit-tree to fall on her, and the rivers to drown her; but they all remembered Rosella’s kindness, and refused to injure her.

Meanwhile Rosella continued her way, and at last became curious to know what was in the box she was carrying. So she opened it, and a great quantity of little puppets came out; some danced, some sang, and some played on musical instruments. She amused herself some time with them;

but when she was ready to go on, the little figures would not return to the box. Night approached, and she exclaimed, as she had so often before: —

“Ah! King of Love,” etc.

Then her husband appeared and said, “Oh, your curiosity will be the death of you!” and commanded the puppets to enter the box again. Then Rosella went her way, and arrived safely at her mother-in-law’s. When the ogress saw her she exclaimed: “You owe this luck to my son, the King of Love!” and was going to devour poor Rosella, but her daughters said: “Poor child! she has brought you the box; why do you want to eat her?” “Well and good. You want to marry my son, the King of Love; then take these six mattresses, and go and fill them with birds’ feathers!” Rosella descended, and began to wander about, uttering her usual lament. When her husband appeared Rosella told him what had happened. He whistled and the King of the Birds appeared, and commanded all the birds to come and drop their feathers, fill the six beds, and carry them back to the ogress, who again said that her son had helped Rosella. However, she went and made up her son’s bed with the six mattresses, and that very day she made him marry the daughter of the King of Portugal. Then she called Rosella, and, telling her that her son was married, bade her kneel before the nuptial bed, holding two lighted torches. Rosella obeyed, but soon the King of Love, under the plea that Rosella was not in a condition to hold the torches any longer, persuaded his bride to change places with her. Just as the queen took the torches in her hands, the earth opened and swallowed her up, and the king remained happy with Rosella.

When the ogress heard what had happened she clasped her hands over her head, and declared that Rosella’s child should not be born until she unclasped her hands. Then the King of Love had a catafalque erected, and stretched himself on it as though he were dead, and had all the bells tolled, and made the people cry, “How did the King of Love die?” The ogress heard it, and asked: “What is that noise?” Her daughters told her that their brother was dead from her fault. When the ogress heard this she unclasped her hands, saying, “How did my son die?” At that moment Rosella’s child was born. When the ogress heard it she burst a blood-vessel (in her heart) and died. Then the King of Love took his wife and sisters, and they remained happy and contented.

2

ZELINDA AND THE MONSTER

There was once a poor man who had three daughters; and as the youngest was the fairest and most civil, and had the best disposition, her other two sisters envied her with a deadly envy, although her father, on the contrary, loved her dearly. It happened that in a neighboring town, in the month of January, there was a great fair, and that poor man was obliged to go there to lay in the provisions necessary for the support of his family; and before departing he asked his three daughters if they would like some small presents in proportion, you understand, to his means. Rosina wished a dress, Marietta asked him for a shawl, but Zelinda was satisfied with a handsome rose. The poor man set out on his journey early the next day, and when he arrived at the fair quickly bought what he needed, and afterward easily found Rosina’s dress and Marietta’s shawl; but at that season he could not find a rose for his Zelinda, although he took great pains in looking everywhere for one. However, anxious to please his dear Zelinda, he took the first road he came to, and after journeying a while arrived at a handsome garden inclosed by high walls; but as the gate was partly open he entered softly. He found the garden filled with every kind of flowers and plants, and in a corner was a tall rose-bush full of beautiful rose-buds. Wherever he looked no living soul appeared from whom he might ask a rose as a gift or for money, so the poor man, without thinking, stretched out his hand, and picked a rose for his Zelinda.

Mercy! scarcely had he pulled the flower from the stalk when there arose a great noise, and flames darted from the earth, and all at once there appeared a terrible Monster with the figure of a dragon, and hissed with all his might, and cried out, enraged at that poor Christian: “Rash man! what have you done? Now you must die at once, for you have had the audacity to touch and destroy my rose-bush.” The poor man, more than half dead with terror, began to weep and beg for mercy on his knees, asking pardon for the fault he had committed, and told why he had picked the rose; and then he added: “Let me depart; I have a family, and if I am killed they will go to destruction.” But the Monster, more wicked than ever, responded: “Listen; one must die. Either bring me the girl that asked for the rose or I will kill you this very moment.” It was impossible to move him by prayers or lamentations; the Monster persisted in his decision, and did not let the poor man go until he had sworn to bring him there in the garden his daughter Zelinda.

Imagine how downhearted that poor man returned home! He gave his oldest daughters their presents and Zelinda her rose; but his face was distorted and as white as though he had arisen from the dead; so that the girls, in terror, asked him what had happened and whether he had met with any misfortune. They were urgent, and at last the poor man, weeping bitterly, related the misfortunes of that unhappy journey and on what condition he had been able finally to return home. “In short,” he exclaimed, “either Zelinda or I must be eaten alive by the Monster.” Then the two sisters emptied the vials of their wrath on Zelinda. “Just see,” they said, “that affected, capricious girl! She shall go to the Monster! She who wanted roses at this season. No, indeed! Papa must stay with us. The stupid creature!” At all these taunts Zelinda, without growing angry, simply said: “It is right that the one who has caused the misfortune should pay for it. I will go to the Monster’s. Yes, Papa, take me to the garden, and the Lord’s will be done.”

The next day Zelinda and her sorrowful father began their journey and at nightfall arrived at the garden gate. When they entered they saw as usual no one, but they beheld a lordly palace all lighted and the doors wide open. When the two travellers entered the vestibule, suddenly four marble statues, with lighted torches in their hands, descended from their pedestals, and accompanied them up the stairs to a large hall where a table was lavishly spread. The travellers, who were very hungry, sat down and began to eat without ceremony; and when they had finished, the same statues conducted them to two handsome chambers for the night. Zelinda and her father were so weary that they slept like dormice all night.

At daybreak Zelinda and her father arose, and were served with everything for breakfast by invisible hands. Then they descended to the garden, and began to seek the Monster. When they came to the rose-bush he appeared in all his frightful ugliness. Zelinda, on seeing him, became pale with fear, and her limbs trembled, but the Monster regarded her attentively with his great fiery eyes, and afterward said to the poor man: “Very well; you have kept your word, and I am satisfied. Now depart and leave me alone here with the young girl.” At this command the old man thought he should die; and Zelinda, too, stood there half stupefied and her eyes full of tears; but entreaties were of no avail; the Monster remained as obdurate as a stone, and the poor man was obliged to depart, leaving his dear Zelinda in the Monster’s power.

When the Monster was alone with Zelinda he began to caress her, and make loving speeches to her, and managed to appear quite civil. There was no danger of his forgetting her, and he saw that she wanted nothing, and every day, talking with her in the garden, he asked her: “Do you love me, Zelinda? Will you be my wife?” The young girl always answered him in the same way: “I like you, sir, but I will never be your wife.” Then the Monster appeared very sorrowful, and redoubled his caresses and attentions, and, sighing deeply, said: “But you see, Zelinda, if you should marry me wonderful things would happen. What they are I cannot tell you until you will be my wife.”

Zelinda, although in her heart not dissatisfied with that beautiful place and with being treated like a queen, still did not feel at all like marrying the Monster, because he was too ugly and looked like a beast, and always answered his requests in the same manner. One day, however, the Monster called Zelinda in haste, and said: “Listen, Zelinda; if you do not consent to marry me it is fated that your father must die. He is ill and near the end of his life, and you will not be able even to see him again. See whether I am telling you the truth.” And, drawing out an enchanted mirror, the Monster showed Zelinda her father on his death-bed. At that spectacle Zelinda, in despair and half mad with grief, cried: “Oh, save my father, for mercy’s sake! Let me be able to embrace him once more before he dies. Yes, yes, I promise you I will be your faithful and constant wife, and that without delay. But save my father from death.”

Scarcely had Zelinda uttered these words when suddenly the Monster was transformed into a very handsome youth. Zelinda was astounded by this unexpected change, and the young man took her by the hand, and said: “Know, dear Zelinda, that I am the son of the King of the Oranges. An old witch, touching me, changed me into the terrible Monster I was, and condemned me to be hidden in this rose-bush until a beautiful girl consented to become my wife.”

3

KING BEAN

There was once an old man who had three daughters. One day the youngest called her father into her room, and requested him to go to King Bean and ask him whether he wished her for his wife. The poor old man said: “You want me to go, but what shall I do; I have never been there?” “No matter,” she answered; “I wish you to obey me and go.” Then he started on his way, and asked (for he did not know) where the king lived, and they pointed out the palace to him. When he was in the king’s presence he said: “Your Majesty’s servant.” The king replied: “What do you want of me, my good old man?” Then he told him that his daughter was in love with him, and wanted to marry him. The king answered: “How can she be in love with me when she has never seen or known me?” “She is killing herself with weeping, and cannot stand it much longer.” The king replied: “Here is a white handkerchief; let her dry her tears with it.”

The old man took back the handkerchief and the message to his daughter, who said: “Well, after three or four days you must go back again, and tell him that I will kill myself or hang myself if he will not marry me.”

The old man went back, and said to the king: “Your Majesty, do me the favor to marry my daughter; if not, she will make a great spectacle of herself.” The king replied: “Behold how many handsome portraits I have here, and how many beautiful young girls I have, and not one of them suits me.” The old man said: “She told me also to say to you that if you did not marry her she would kill herself or hang herself.” Then the king gave him a knife and a rope, and said: “Here is a knife if she wants to kill herself, and here is a rope if she wants to hang herself.”

The old man bore this message back to his daughter, who told her father that he must go back to the king again, and not leave him until he obtained his consent. The old man returned once more, and, falling on his knees before the king, said: “Do me this great favor: take my daughter for your wife; do not say no, for the poor girl is beside herself.” The king answered: “Rise, good old man, and I will consent, for I am sorry for your long journeys. But hear what your daughter must do first. She must prepare three vessels: one of milk and water, one of milk, and one of rose-water. And here is a bean; when she wants to speak with me, let her go out on the balcony and open the bean, and I will come.”

The old man returned home this time more satisfied, and told his daughter what she must do. She prepared the three vessels as directed, and then opened the bean on the balcony, and saw at once something flying from a distance towards her. It flew into the room by the balcony, and entered the vessel of water and milk to bathe; then it hastened into the vessel of milk, and finally into that containing the rose-water. And then there came out the handsomest youth that was ever seen, and made love to the young girl. Afterward, when they were tired of their love-making, he bade her good-night, and flew away.

After a time, when her sisters saw that she was always shut up in her room, the oldest said: “Why does she shut herself up in her room all the time?” The other sister replied: “Because she has King Bean, who is making love to her.” The oldest said: “Wait until she goes to church, and then we will see what there is in her room.” One day the youngest locked her door, and went to church. Then the two sisters broke open the door, and saw the three vessels prepared, and said: “This is the vessel in which the king goes to bathe." The oldest said: "Let us go down into the store, and get some broken glass, and put a little in each of the three vessels; and when the king bathes in them, the glass will pierce him and cut all his body."

They did so, and then left the room looking as it did first. When the youngest sister returned, she went to her room, and wished to talk with her husband. She opened the balcony, and then she opened the bean, and saw at once her husband come flying from a distance, with his arms open to embrace her. He flew on to the balcony, and threw himself into the vessel of milk and water, and the pieces of glass pierced his body; then he entered the vessel of milk and that of rose-water, and his body was filled with the fragments of glass. When he came out of the rose-water, he flew away. Then his wife hastened out on the balcony, and saw a streak of blood wherever he had flown. Then she looked into the vessels, and saw all three full of blood, and cried: "I have been betrayed! I have been betrayed!"

She called her father, and told him that she had been betrayed by her sisters, and that she wished to go away and see whether she could cure her husband. She departed, and had not gone far when she found herself in a forest. There she saw a little house, with a little bit of a door, at which she knocked, and heard a voice saying, "Are you Christians?" She replied, "Yes." Then the door opened, and she saw a holy hermit, who said: "Blessed one, how did you get here? In a moment the witches will come who might bewitch you." She replied: "Father, I am seeking King Bean, who is ill." The hermit said: "I know nothing about him. Climb that tree; the witches will soon come, and you will learn something from them. If you want anything afterward, come to me, and I will give it to you."

When she was up the tree she heard a loud noise and the words, "Here we are! here we are!" and all the witches run and seat themselves on the ground in the midst of the forest, and begin to say: "The cripple is not here! Where has that cursed cripple gone?" Some one answered: "Here she is coming!" Another said: "You cursed cripple, where have you been?" The cripple answered: “Be still; I will tell you now. But wait a moment until I shake this tree to see whether there is any one in it.” The poor girl held on firmly so as not to fall down. After she had shaken it this cripple said to her companions: “Do you want me to tell you something? King Bean has only two hours to live.” Another witch said: “What is the matter with him?” The cripple answered: “He had a wife, and she put some broken glass in the three vessels, and he filled his body with it.” Another witch asked: “Is there nothing that can cure him?” The cripple replied: “It is very difficult.” Another said: “What would be necessary?” The cripple said: “Listen to what it needs. One of us must be killed, and her blood put in a kettle, and have added to it the blood of one of these doves flying about here. When this blood is well mixed, it must be heated, and with this blood the whole body of the king must be anointed. Another thing yet is necessary. Under the stone you see there is a flask of water. The stone must be removed, a bottle of the water must be poured over the king, and all the bits of glass will come out of him, and in five minutes he will be safe and sound.”

Then the witches ate and drank until they were intoxicated and tired, and then threw themselves down on the ground to sleep. When the young girl saw that they were asleep, she descended quietly from the tree, knocked at the hermit’s door, told him what the witches had said, and asked him for a kettle, knife, and bottle. He gave them to her, and caught a dove, which he killed, bled, and put the blood in a kettle.

The young girl did not know which one of the witches to kill, but finally she decided to kill the cripple who had spoken, and put her blood in the kettle. Afterward she lifted the stone, found the flask of water, and filled her bottle with it. She then returned to the hermit, and told him all she had done. He gave her a physician’s dress, which she put on, and went to the palace of King Bean. There she asked the guards to let her pass, for she was going, she said, to see about curing the king. The guards refused at first, but, seeing her so confident, allowed her to enter. The king’s mother went to her at once and said: “My good physician, if you can cure my son, you shall mount the throne, and I will give you my crown.” “I have come in haste from a distance,” said the physician, “and will cure him.” Then the physician went to the kitchen, put the kettle on the fire, and afterward entered the room of the king, who had but a few minutes to live, anointed his whole body with the blood, and then poured the bottle of water all over him. Then the glass came out of his body, and in five minutes he was safe and sound. The king said: “Here, physician, is my crown. I wish to put it on your head.” The physician answered: “How did your Majesty come to have this slight trouble?” The king said: “On account of my wife. I went to make love to her, and she prepared for me three vessels of water and milk, of milk, and of rose-water, and put broken glass in them, so that I had my body full of it.” Said the physician: “See whether it was your wife who worked you this treason! Could it not have been some one else?” “That is impossible,” said the king; “for no one entered her room.” “And what would you do,” said the physician, “if you had her now in your hands?” “I would kill her with a knife.” “You are right,” said the physician; “because, if it is true that she has acted thus, she deserves nothing but death.”

Then the physician said he must depart; but the king’s mother said: “No, no! It shall never be said that after saving my son’s life you went away. Here you are, and here I wish you to stay; and, on account of the promise I made you, I wish my crown to come upon your head.” “I want but one thing,” said the physician. “Command, doctor; only say what you desire.” “I wish the king to write on the palm of one of my hands my name and surname, and on the other his name and surname.” The king did so, and the physician said: “Now I am going to make some visits, then I will return.”

Instead of returning, the pretended physician went to her own home, and threw away the water and milk in the three vessels, and put in other pure water and milk and rose-water. Then she went out on the balcony, and opened the bean. The king, who felt his heart opened, seized his dagger, and hastened to his wife to kill her. When she saw the dagger, she raised her hands, and the king beheld his name and hers. Then he threw his dagger away, bathed in the three vessels, and then threw his arms about his wife's neck, and exclaimed: "If you are the one who did me so much harm, you are also the one who cured me." She answered: "It was not I. I was betrayed by my sisters." "If that is so," said he, "come at once to my parents' house, and we will be married there." When she arrived at the king's palace, she related everything to his parents, and showed them her hands with her name and surname. Then the king's parents embraced her, and gave her a wedding, and she and the king loved each other as long as they lived.

4

THE DANCING WATER, THE SINGING APPLE, AND THE SPEAKING BIRD

There was once an herb-gatherer who had three daughters who earned their living by spinning. One day their father died and left them all alone in the world. Now the king had a habit of going about the streets at night, and listening at the doors to hear what the people said of him. One night he listened at the door of the house where the three sisters lived, and heard them disputing about something. The oldest said: “If I were the wife of the royal butler, I would give the whole court to drink out of one glass of water, and there would be some left.” The second said: “If I were the wife of the keeper of the royal wardrobe, with one piece of cloth I would clothe all the attendants, and have some left.” The youngest said: “Were I the king’s wife, I would bear him three children: two sons with apples in their hands, and a daughter with a star on her brow.”

The king went back to his palace, and the next morning sent for the sisters, and said to them: “Do not be frightened, but tell me what you said last night.” The oldest told him what she had said, and the king had a glass of water brought, and commanded her to prove her words. She took the glass, and gave all the attendants to drink, and there was some water left. “Bravo!” cried the king, and summoned the butler. “This is your husband. Now it is your turn,” said the king to the next sister, and commanded a piece of cloth to be brought, and the young girl at once cut out garments for all the attendants, and had some cloth left. “Bravo!” cried the king again, and gave her the keeper of the wardrobe for her husband. “Now it is your turn,” said the king to the youngest. “Your Majesty, I said that were I the king’s wife, I would bear him three children: two sons with apples in their hands, and a daughter with a star on her brow.” The king replied: “If that is true, you shall be queen; if not, you shall die,” and straightway he married her.

Very soon the two older sisters began to be envious of the youngest. “Look,” said they: “she is going to be queen, and we must be servants!” and they began to hate her. A few months before the queen’s children were to be born, the king declared war, and was obliged to depart; but he left word that if the queen had three children: two sons with apples in their hands and a girl with a star on her brow, the mother was to be respected as queen; if not, he was to be informed of it, and would tell his servants what to do. Then he departed for the war.

When the queen’s children were born, as she had promised, the envious sisters bribed the nurse to put little dogs in the place of the queen’s children, and sent word to the king that his wife had given birth to three puppies. He wrote back that she should be taken care of for two weeks, and then put into a tread-mill.

Meanwhile the nurse took the little babies, and carried them out of doors, saying: “I will make the dogs eat them up,” and she left them alone. While they were thus exposed, three fairies passed by and exclaimed: “Oh how beautiful these children are!” and one of the fairies said: “What present shall we make these children?” One answered: “I will give them a deer to nurse them.” “And I a purse always full of money.” “And I,” said the third fairy, “will give them a ring which will change color when any misfortune happens to one of them.”

The deer nursed and took care of the children until they grew up. Then the fairy who had given them the deer came and said: “Now that you have grown up, how can you stay here any longer?” “Very well,” said one of the brothers, “I will go to the city and hire a house.” “Take care,” said the deer, “that you hire one opposite the royal palace.” So they all went to the city and hired a palace as directed, and furnished it as if they had been royal personages. When the aunts saw these three youths, imagine their terror! “They are alive!” they said. They could not be mistaken, for there were the apples in their hands, and the star on the girl’s brow. They called the nurse and said to her: “Nurse, what does this mean? are our nephews and niece alive?” The nurse watched at the window until she saw the two brothers go out, and then she went over as if to make a visit to the new house. She entered and said: “What is the matter, my daughter; how do you do? Are you perfectly happy? You lack nothing. But do you know what is necessary to make you really happy? It is the Dancing Water. If your brothers love you, they will get it for you!” She remained a moment longer and then departed.

When one of the brothers returned, his sister said to him: “Ah! my brother, if you love me go and get me the Dancing Water.” He consented, and next morning saddled a fine horse, and departed. On his way he met a hermit, who asked him, “Where are you going, cavalier?” “I am going for the Dancing Water.” “You are going to your death, my son; but keep on until you find a hermit older than I.” He continued his journey until he met another hermit, who asked him the same question, and gave him the same direction. Finally he met a third hermit, older than the other two, with a white beard that came down to his feet, who gave him the following directions: “You must climb yonder mountain. On top of it you will find a great plain and a house with a beautiful gate. Before the gate you will see four giants with swords in their hands. Take heed; do not make a mistake; for if you do that is the end of you! When the giants have their eyes closed, do not enter; when they have their eyes open, enter. Then you will come to a door. If you find it open, do not enter; if you find it shut, push it open and enter. Then you will find four lions. When they have their eyes shut, do not enter; when their eyes are open, enter, and you will see the Dancing Water." The youth took leave of the hermit, and hastened on his way.

Meanwhile the sister kept looking at the ring constantly, to see whether the stone in it changed color; but as it did not, she remained undisturbed.

A few days after leaving the hermit the youth arrived at the top of the mountain, and saw the palace with the four giants before it. They had their eyes shut, and the door was open. "No," said the youth, "that won't do." And so he remained on the lookout a while. When the giants opened their eyes, and the door closed, he entered, waited until the lions opened their eyes, and passed in. There he found the Dancing Water, and filled his bottles with it, and escaped when the lions again opened their eyes.

The aunts, meanwhile, were delighted because their nephew did not return; but in a few days he appeared and embraced his sister. Then they had two golden basins made, and put into them the Dancing Water, which leaped from one basin to the other. When the aunts saw it they exclaimed: "Ah! how did he manage to get that water?" and called the nurse, who again waited until the sister was alone, and then visited her. "You see," said she, "how beautiful the Dancing Water is! But do you know what you want now? The Singing Apple." Then she departed. When the brother who had brought the Dancing Water returned, his sister said to him: "If you love me you must get for me the Singing Apple." "Yes, my sister, I will go and get it."

Next morning he mounted his horse, and set out. After a time he met the first hermit, who sent him to an older one. He asked the youth where he was going, and said: "It is a difficult task to get the Singing Apple, but hear what you must do: Climb the mountain; beware of the giants, the door, and the lions; then you will find a little door and a pair of shears in it. If the shears are open, enter; if closed, do not risk it." The youth continued his way, found the palace, entered, and found everything favorable. When he saw the shears open, he went in a room and saw a wonderful tree, on top of which was an apple. He climbed up and tried to pick the apple, but the top of the tree swayed now this way, now that. He waited until it was still a moment, seized the branch, and picked the apple. He succeeded in getting safely out of the palace, mounted his horse, and rode home, and all the time he was carrying the apple it kept making a sound.

The aunts were again delighted because their nephew was so long absent; but when they saw him return, they felt as though the house had fallen on them. Again they summoned the nurse, and again she visited the young girl, and said: “See how beautiful they are, the Dancing Water and the Singing Apple! But should you see the Speaking Bird, there would be nothing left for you to see.” “Very well,” said the young girl; “we will see whether my brother will get it for me.”

When her brother came she asked him for the Speaking Bird, and he promised to get it for her. He met, as usual on his journey, the first hermit, who sent him to the second, who sent him on to a third one, who said to him: “Climb the mountain and enter the palace. You will find many statues. Then you will come to a garden, in the midst of which is a fountain, and on the basin is the Speaking Bird. If it should say anything to you, do not answer. Pick a feather from the bird’s wing, dip it into a jar you will find there, and anoint all the statues. Keep your eyes open, and all will go well.”

The youth already knew well the way, and soon was in the palace. He found the garden and the bird, which, as soon as it saw him, exclaimed: “What is the matter, noble sir; have you come for me? You have missed it. Your aunts have sent you to your death, and you must remain here. Your mother has been sent to the tread-mill.” “My mother in the tread-mill?” cried the youth, and scarcely were the words out of his mouth when he became a statue like all the others.

When the sister looked at her ring she saw that it had changed its color to blue. “Ah!” she exclaimed, and sent her other brother after the first.

Everything happened to him as to the first. He met the three hermits, received his instructions, and soon found himself in the palace, where he discovered the garden with the statues, the fountain, and the Speaking Bird.

Meanwhile the aunts, who saw that both their nephews were missing, were delighted; and the sister, on looking at her ring, saw that it had become clear again.

Now when the Speaking Bird saw the youth appear in the garden it said to him: “What has become of your brother? Your mother has been sent to the tread-mill.” “Alas, my mother in the tread-mill!” And when he had spoken these words he became a statue.

The sister looked at her ring, and it had become black. Poor child! not having anything else to do, she dressed herself like a page and set out.

Like her brothers, she met the three hermits, and received their instructions. The third concluded thus: “Beware, for if you answer when the bird speaks you will lose your life.” She continued her way, followed exactly the hermit’s directions, and reached the garden in safety. When the bird saw her it exclaimed: “Ah! you here, too? Now you will meet the same fate as your brothers. Do you see them? one, two, and you make three. Your father is at the war. Your mother is in the tread-mill. Your aunts are rejoicing.” She did not reply, but let the bird sing on. When it had nothing more to say it flew down, and the young girl caught it, pulled a feather from its wing, dipped it into the jar, and anointed her brothers’ nostrils, and they at once came to life again. Then she did the same with all the other statues, with the lions and the giants, until all became alive again. Then she departed with her brothers, and all the noblemen, princes, barons, and kings’ sons rejoiced greatly. Now when they had all come to life again the palace disappeared, and the hermits disappeared, for they were the three fairies.

The day after the brothers and sister reached the city where they lived, they summoned a goldsmith, and had him make a gold chain, and fasten the bird with it. The next time the aunts looked out they saw in the window of the palace opposite the Dancing Water, the Singing Apple, and the Speaking Bird. “Well,” said they, “the real trouble is coming now!”

The bird directed the brothers and sister to procure a carriage finer than the king’s, with twenty-four attendants, and to have the service of their palace, cooks and servants, more numerous and better than the king’s. All of which the brothers did at once. And when the aunts saw these things they were ready to die of rage.

At last the king returned from the war, and his subjects told him all the news of the kingdom, and the thing they talked about the least was his wife and children. One day the king looked out of the window and saw the palace opposite furnished in a magnificent manner. “Who lives there?” he asked, but no one could answer him. He looked again and saw the brothers and sister, the former with the apples in their hands, and the latter with the star on her brow. “Gracious! if I did not know that my wife had given birth to three puppies, I should say that those were my children,” exclaimed the king. Another day he stood by the window and enjoyed the Dancing Water and the Singing Apple, but the bird was silent. After the king had heard all the music, the bird said: “What does your Majesty think of it?” The king was astonished at hearing the Speaking Bird, and answered: “What should I think? It is marvellous.” “There is something more marvellous,” said the bird; “just wait.” Then the bird told his mistress to call her brothers, and said: “There is the king; let us invite him to dinner on Sunday. Shall we not?” “Yes, yes,” they all said. So the king was invited and accepted, and on Sunday the bird had a grand dinner prepared and the king came. When he saw the young people, he clapped his hands and said: “I cannot persuade myself; they seem my children.”

He went over the palace and was astonished at its richness. Then they went to dinner, and while they were eating the king said: “Bird, every one is talking; you alone are silent.” “Ah! your Majesty, I am ill; but next Sunday

I shall be well and able to talk, and will come and dine at your palace with this lady and these gentlemen.” The next Sunday the bird directed his mistress and her brothers to put on their finest clothes; so they dressed in royal style and took the bird with them. The king showed them through his palace and treated them with the greatest ceremony: the aunts were nearly dead with fear. When they had seated themselves at the table, the king said: “Come, bird, you promised me you would speak; have you nothing to say?” Then the bird began and related all that had happened from the time the king had listened at the door until his poor wife had been sent to the tread-mill; then the bird added: “These are your children, and your wife was sent to the mill, and is dying.” When the king heard all this, he hastened to embrace his children, and then went to find his poor wife, who was reduced to skin and bones and was at the point of death. He knelt before her and begged her pardon, and then summoned her sisters and the nurse, and when they were in his presence he said to the bird: “Bird, you who have told me everything, now pronounce their sentence.” Then the bird sentenced the nurse to be thrown out of the window, and the sisters to be cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. This was at once done. The king was never tired of embracing his wife. Then the bird departed and the king and his wife and children lived together in peace.

5

THE FAIR ANGIOLA

Once upon a time there were seven women, neighbors, all of whom were seized with a great longing for some jujubes which only grew in a garden opposite the place where they all lived, and which belonged to a witch. Now this witch had a donkey that watched the garden and told the old witch when any one entered. The seven neighbors, however, had such a desire for the jujubes that they entered the garden and threw the donkey some nice soft grass, and while he was eating it they filled their aprons with jujubes and escaped before the witch appeared. This they did several times, until at last the witch noticed that some one had been in her garden, for many of the jujubes were gone. She questioned the donkey, but he had eaten the nice grass and noticed nothing. Then she resolved the third day to remain in the garden herself. In the middle of it was a hole, in which she hid and covered herself with leaves and branches, leaving only one of her long ears sticking out. The seven neighbors once more went into the garden and began picking jujubes, when one of them noticed the witch's ear sticking out of the leaves and thought it was a mushroom and tried to pick it. Then the witch jumped out of the hole and ran after the women, all of whom escaped but one. The witch was going to eat her, but she begged hard for pardon and promised never to enter the garden again. The witch finally forgave her on the condition that she would give her her child, yet unborn, whether a boy or girl, when it was seven years old. The poor woman promised in her distress, and the witch let her go.

Some time after the woman had a beautiful little girl whom she named Angiola. When Angiola was six years old, her mother sent her to school to learn to sew and knit. On her way to school she had to pass the garden where the witch lived. One day, when she was almost seven, she saw the witch standing in front of her garden. She beckoned to Angiola and gave her some fine fruits and said: “You see, fair Angiola, I am your aunt. Tell your mother you have seen your aunt, and she sends her word not to forget her promise.” Angiola went home and told her mother, who was frightened and said to herself: “Ah! the time has come when I must give up my Angiola.” Then she said to the child: “When your aunt asks you to-morrow for an answer, tell her you forgot her errand.” The next day she told the witch as she was directed. “Very well,” she replied, “tell her to-day, but don’t forget.” Thus several days passed; the witch was constantly on the watch for Angiola when she went to school, and wanted to know her mother’s answer, but Angiola always declared that she had forgotten to ask her. One day, however, the witch became angry and said: “Since you are so forgetful, I must give you some token to remind you of your errand.” Then she bit Angiola’s little finger so hard that she bit a piece out. Angiola went home in tears and showed her mother her finger. “Ah!” thought her mother, “there is no help for it. I must give my poor child to the witch, or else she will eat her up in her anger.” The next morning as Angiola was going to school, her mother said to her: “Tell your aunt to do with you as she thinks best.” Angiola did so, and the witch said: “Very well, then come with me, for you are mine.”

So the witch took the fair Angiola with her and led her away to a tower which had no door and but one small window. There Angiola lived with the witch, who treated her very kindly, for she loved her as her own child.

When the witch came home after her excursions, she stood under the window and cried: “Angiola, fair Angiola, let down your pretty tresses and pull me up!” Now Angiola had beautiful long hair, which she let down and with which she pulled the witch up.

Now it happened one day when Angiola had grown to be a large and beautiful maiden, that the king’s son went hunting and chanced to come where the tower was. He was astonished at seeing the house without any door, and wondered how the people got in. Just then the old witch returned home, stood under the window, and called: “Angiola, fair Angiola, let down your beautiful tresses and pull me up.” Immediately the beautiful tresses fell down, and the witch climbed up by them. This pleased the prince greatly, and he hid himself near by until the witch went away again. Then he went and stood under the window and called: “Angiola, fair Angiola, let down your beautiful tresses and pull me up.” Then Angiola let down her tresses and drew up the prince, for she believed it was the witch. When she saw the prince, she was much frightened at first, but he addressed her in a friendly manner and begged her to fly with him and become his wife.

She finally consented, and in order that the witch should not know where she had gone she gave all the chairs, tables, and cupboards in the house something to eat; for they were all living beings and might betray her. The broom, however, stood behind the door, so she did not notice it, and gave it nothing to eat. Then she took from the witch’s chamber three magic balls of yarn, and fled with the prince. The witch had a little dog that loved the fair Angiola so dearly that it followed her.

Soon after they had fled, the witch came back, and called: “Angiola, fair Angiola, let down your beautiful tresses and draw me up.” But the tresses were not let down for all she called, and at last she had to get a long ladder and climb in at the window. When she could not find Angiola, she asked the tables and chairs and cupboards: “Where has she fled?” But they answered: “We do not know.” The broom, however, called out from the corner: “The fair Angiola has fled with the king’s son, who is going to marry her.” Then the witch started in pursuit of them and nearly overtook them. But Angiola threw down behind her one of the magic balls of yarn, and there arose a great mountain of soap. When the witch tried to climb it she slipped back, but she persevered until at last she succeeded in getting over it, and hastened after the fugitives. Then Angiola threw down the second ball of yarn, and there arose a great mountain covered all over with nails small and large. Again the witch had to struggle hard to cross it; when she did she was almost flayed. When Angiola saw that the witch had almost overtaken them again, she threw down the third ball, and there arose a mighty torrent. The witch tried to swim across it, but the stream kept increasing in size until she had at last to turn back. Then in her anger she cursed the fair Angiola, saying: “May your beautiful face be turned into the face of a dog!” and instantly Angiola’s face became a dog’s face.

The prince was very sorrowful and said: “How can I take you home to my parents? They would never allow me to marry a maiden with a dog’s face.” So he took her to a little house, where she was to live until the enchantment was removed. He himself returned to his parents; but whenever he went hunting he visited poor Angiola. She often wept bitterly over her misfortunes, until one day the little dog that had followed her from the witch’s said: “Do not weep, fair Angiola. I will go to the witch and beg her to remove the enchantment.” Then the little dog started off and returned to the witch and sprang up on her and caressed her. “Are you here again, you ungrateful beast?” cried the witch, and pushed the dog away. “Did you leave me to follow the ungrateful Angiola?” But the little dog caressed her until she grew friendly again and took him up on her lap. “Mother,” said the little dog, “Angiola sends you greeting; she is very sad, for she cannot go to the palace with her dog’s face and cannot marry the prince.” “That serves her right,” said the witch. “Why did she deceive me? She can keep her dog’s face now!” But the dog begged her so earnestly, saying that poor

Angiola was sufficiently punished, that at last the witch gave the dog a flask of water, and said: “Take that to her and she will become the fair Angiola again.” The dog thanked her, ran off with the flask, and brought it safely to poor Angiola. As soon as she washed in the water, her dog’s face disappeared and she became beautiful again, more beautiful even than she had been before. The prince, full of joy, took her to the palace, and the king and queen were so pleased with her beauty that they welcomed her, and gave her a splendid wedding, and all remained happy and contented.

6

THE CLOUD

Once upon a time there was a fisherman who had a wife and many children. Now it happened that the fisherman did not catch any fish for a time and did not know how to support his family. One day he cast his net and drew out a large fish which began to talk: “Let me go and cast in your net again and you will catch as many fish as you wish.” The fisherman did so and caught more fish than he remembered to have taken before. But in a few days the fish were gone and the fisherman cast his net again, and again caught the big fish, which said: “I see clearly that I must die, so kill me now, and cut me into pieces. Give half to the king, a piece to your wife, one to your dog; and one to your horse; the bones you will tie to the kitchen rafters; your wife will bear sons, and when anything happens to one of them the fish-bone will sweat drops of blood.” The fisherman did as he was told, and in due time his wife gave birth to three sons, the dog to three puppies, and the horse to three colts. The boys grew up and went to school and learned much and prospered. One day the oldest said: “I want to go and see a little of the world,” and took one of the dogs, one of the horses, and some money, and set out, after receiving his father’s and mother’s blessing. He arrived at a forest, and there saw a lion, an eagle, and an ant which had found a dead ass that they wanted to divide among themselves, but could not agree and so were quarrelling. They saw the youth, and called on him to make the division. He was afraid at first, but took heart and gave the lean meat to the eagle, the brains to the ant, and the rest to the lion. They were all satisfied, and the youth continued his way. After he had gone a few steps the animals called him back, and the lion said: “You have settled our dispute, and we wish to reward you; when you wish to become a lion, you have only to say: ‘No more a man, a lion, with the strength of a hundred lions!’” The eagle said: “When you wish to become an eagle, say: ‘No more a man, an eagle, with the strength of a hundred eagles!’” The ant, also, gave him power to transform himself into an ant in the same way. The youth thanked them and departed. As he was passing along the shore of the sea, he saw a dog-fish that was out of the water; he put it back into the sea. The fish said: “When you need me, come to the sea and cry: ‘Dog-fish, help me!’”

The youth continued his way and arrived at a city all hung with mourning. “What is the matter?” the young man asked. “There is here,” they told him, “a big cloud (it was a fairy) that every year must have a young girl. This year the lot has fallen on the king’s daughter. If they do not give her up, the cloud will throw so many things into the city that we shall all be killed.” The youth asked if he could see how the thing went, and they told him he could. The ceremony began with muffled drums and an escort of soldiers; the king and queen in tears accompanied their daughter, who was taken to the top of a mountain, placed in a chair, and left alone. The youth, who had followed them, hid himself behind a bush. Then the cloud came, took the young girl in her lap, took her finger in her mouth, and began to suck her blood. This was what the cloud lived on. The princess remained half dead, like a log, and then the cloud carried her away. The youth, who had seen all this, cried: “No more a man, an eagle, with the strength of a hundred eagles!” Then he became an eagle and flew after the cloud. They arrived at a palace, the doors flew open and the cloud entered and carried the princess up-stairs. The eagle alighted on a tree opposite and saw a large room all full of young girls in bed. When the cloud entered they exclaimed: “Mamma! here is our mamma!” The poor girls were always in bed, because the fairy half killed them. She put the princess in a bed, and said to the girls: “I am going to leave you for a few days.” She went away and left the girls. The youth was near and heard everything; he said: “No more an eagle, an ant, with the force of a hundred ants!” He became an ant, entered the palace unseen, and went to the room where the young girls were. There he resumed his shape, and the girls were astonished at seeing a man appear so suddenly, and one of them said to him: “Take care, there is a fairy here; if she finds you on her return she will kill you.” “Do not be troubled,” he answered, “for I wish to see about setting you all free.” Then he went to the bed of the king’s daughter and asked her if she had some token to send her mother. She gave him a ring, and the youth took it and went to the queen, told her where her daughter was, and asked her to send some food to the poor girl. She did so, and the youth retraced his steps, reached the palace, informed the girls, and drew up the food with ropes. He then said to the girls: “When the fairy returns, ask her what you shall do when she dies; thus you will find out how to kill her.” Then he hid himself, and when the fairy returned the girls asked her the question; but she answered: “I shall never die.” They urged her to tell them, and the next day she took them out on a terrace, and said: “Do you see that mountain far off there? On that mountain is a tigress with seven heads. If you wish me to die, a lion must fight that tigress and tear off all seven of her heads. In her body is an egg, and if any one hits me with it in the middle of my forehead I shall die; but if that egg falls into my hands the tigress will come to life again, resume her seven heads, and I shall live.” “Good!” said the young girls; “certainly our mamma can never die.” But in their hearts they were discouraged. When the fairy had departed, the youth came forth and they told him all. “Do not be disheartened,” he said, and straightway went to the princess’ father, asked him for a room, a pan of bread, a barrel of good wine, and a child seven years old. He took all these things and shut himself up in the room, and said to the child: “Do you want to see something, my child? I am going to turn into a lion.” Then he turned into a lion, and the child was afraid; but the youth persuaded him that it was only himself after all, and the child fed him, and was no longer frightened. As soon as he had instructed the child, he took all the things and went to the mountain where the tigress was. Then he filled the pan with bread and wine and said to the child: “I am going to become a lion; when I return give me something to eat.” Then he became a lion, and went to fight the tigress. Meanwhile the fairy returned home, saying: “Alas! I feel ill!” The young girls said to themselves, in delight: “Good!” The youth fought until night, and tore off one of the tigress’ heads; the second day another, and so on until six heads were gone. The fairy kept losing her strength all the time. The youth rested two days before tearing off the last head, and then resumed the fight. At evening the last head was torn off, and the dead tigress disappeared, but the youth was not quick enough to catch the egg, which rolled from her body into the sea and was swallowed by the dog-fish. Then the youth went to the sea: “Dog-fish, help me!” The fish appeared: “What do you want?” “Have you found an egg?” “Yes.” “Give it to me;” and the fish gave him the egg. He took it and went in search of the fairy, and suddenly appeared before her with the egg in his hand. The fairy wanted him to give her the egg, but he made her first restore all the young girls to health and send them home in handsome carriages. Then the youth took the egg, struck it on the fairy’s forehead, and she fell down dead. When the youth saw that she was really dead, he entered a carriage with the king’s daughter and drove to the palace. When the king and queen saw their daughter again, they wept for joy, and married her to her deliverer. The wedding took place with great magnificence, and there were great festivities and rejoicings in the city.

A few days after, the husband looked out of the window and saw at the end of the street a dense fog; he said to his wife: “I will go and see what that fog is.” So he dressed for the chase and went away with his dog and horse. After he had passed through the mist, he saw a mountain on which were two beautiful ladies. They came to meet him, and invited him to their palace. He accepted and they showed him into a room, and one of the ladies asked: “Would you like to play a game of chess?” “Very well,” he answered, and began to play and lost. Then they took him into a garden where there were many marble statues, and turned him into one, together with his dog and horse. These ladies were sisters of the fairy, and this was the way they avenged her death.

Meanwhile the princess waited and her husband did not return. One morning the father and brothers of the youth found the kitchen full of blood, which dropped from the fish-bone. “Something has happened to him,” they said, and the second brother started in search of him with another one of the dogs and horses. He passed by the palace of the princess, who was at the window, and those brothers looked so much alike that when she saw him she thought it was her husband and called him. He entered and she spoke to him of the fog, but he did not understand her; he let her talk on, however, imagining that his brother was mixed up in that affair. The next morning he arose and went to see the fog with his dog and horse. He passed through the fog, found the mountain and the two ladies, and, to make the story short, the same thing happened to him that happened to his brother, and he became stone. And the queen waited, and in the father’s kitchen the bone dropped blood faster than ever.

The third brother too set out with his dog and horse. When he came to the palace, the princess saw him from the window, took him for her husband, and called him in. He entered and she reproved him for having made her wait so long, and spoke of the mist; but he did not understand her and said: “I did not see very clearly what was in the mist, and I wish to go there again.” He departed, and when he had passed through the mist he met an old man who said to him: “Where are you going? Take care, your brothers have been turned into statues. You will meet two ladies; if they ask you to play chess with them, here are two pawns, say that you cannot play except with your own pawns. Then make an agreement with them that, if you win, you can do with them what you please; if they win, they can do what they please with you. If you win, and they beg for mercy, command them to restore to life all the stone statues with which the palace is filled, and when they have done so, you can do what you will with these ladies."

The youth thanked the old man, departed, followed his directions, and won. The two ladies begged for their lives, and he granted their prayer on condition of restoring to life all those stone statues. They took a wand, touched the statues, and they became animated; but no sooner were they all restored to life than they fell on the two ladies and cut them into bits no larger than their ears.

Thus the three brothers were reunited. They related their adventures, and returned to the palace. The princess was astonished when she saw them, and did not know which was her husband. But he made himself known, told her that these were his brothers, and they had their parents come there, and they all lived happily together, and thus the story is ended.

7

THE CISTERN

There were once three king’s sons. Two of them were going hunting one day, and did not want to take their youngest brother with them. Their mother asked them to let him go with them, but they would not. The youngest brother, however, followed them, and they had to take him with them. They came to a beautiful plain, where they found a fine cistern, and ate their lunch near it. After they had finished, the oldest said: “Let us throw our youngest brother into the cistern, for we cannot take him with us.” Then he said to his brother: “Salvatore, would you like to descend into this cistern, for there is a treasure in it?” The youngest consented, and they lowered him down. When he reached the bottom, he found three handsome rooms and an old woman, who said to him: “What are you doing here?” “I am trying to find my way out; tell me how to do it.” The old woman answered: “There are here three princesses in the power of the magician; take care.” “Never mind, tell me what to do; I am not afraid.” “Knock at that door.” He did so and a princess appeared: “What has brought you here?” “I have come to liberate you; tell me what I have to do.” “Take this apple and pass through that door; my sister is there, who can give you better directions than I can.”

She gave him the apple as a token. He knocked at that door, another princess appeared, who gave him a pomegranate for a remembrance and directed him to knock at a third door. It opened and the last princess appeared. “Ah! Salvatore” (for she knew who he was), “what have you come for?” “I have come to liberate you; tell me what to do.” She gave him a crown, and said: “Take this; when you are in need, say: ‘I command! I command!’ and the crown will obey you. Now enter and eat; take this bottle; the magician, you see, is about rising; hide yourself behind this door, and when he awakens he will ask you: ‘What are you here for?’ You will answer: ‘I have come to fight you; but you must agree to take smaller horse and sword than mine, because I am smaller than you.’ You will see there a fountain which will invite you to drink; do not risk it, for all the statues you see there are human beings who have become statues drinking that water; when you are thirsty drink secretly from this bottle.”

With these directions the youth went and knocked at the door. Just then the magician arose and said: “What are you here for?” “I have come to fight with you.” And he added what the princess had told him. The fountain invited him to drink, but he would not. They began to fight, and at the first blow the youth cut off the magician’s head. He took the head and sword, and went to the princesses and said: “Get your things together, and let us go, for my brothers are still waiting at the mouth of the cistern.”

Let us now return to the brothers. After they had lowered their youngest brother into the cistern, they turned around and went back to the royal palace. The king asked: “Where is your brother?” “We lost him in a wood, and could not find him.” “Quick!” said the king, “go and find my son, or I will have your heads cut off.” So they departed, and on their way found a man with a rope and a bell, and took them with them. When they reached the cistern, they lowered the rope with the bell, saying among themselves: “If he is alive he will hear the bell and climb up; if he is dead, what shall we do with our father?” When they lowered the rope, Salvatore made the princesses ascend one by one. As the first appeared, who was the oldest, the oldest brother said: “Oh, what a pretty girl! This one shall be my wife.”

When the second appeared, the other brother said: “This is mine.” The youngest princess did not wish to ascend, and said to Salvatore: “You go up, Salvatore, first; if you do not, your brothers will leave you here.” He said he would not; she said he must; finally he prevailed, and she ascended. When she appeared the two brothers took her, and left Salvatore in the cistern, and returned to the palace. When they arrived there, they said to their father: “We have looked for Salvatore, but we could not find him; but we have found these three young girls, and now we wish to marry them.” “I,” said the oldest brother, “will take this one.” “And I,” said the second, “take this one. The other sister we will marry to some other youth.”

Now let us return to Salvatore, who, when he found himself alone and disconsolate, felt in his pockets and touched the apple. “O my apple, get me out of this place!” And at once he found himself out of the cistern. He went to the city where he lived, and met a silversmith, who took him as an apprentice, feeding and clothing him. While he was with the silversmith, the king commanded the latter to make a crown for his oldest son, who was to be married: “You must make me a royal crown for my son, and to-morrow evening you must bring it to me.”

He gave him ten ounces and dismissed him. When he reached home, the silversmith was greatly disturbed, for he had such a short time to make the crown in. Salvatore said: “Grandfather, why are you so disturbed?” The master replied: “Take these ten ounces, for now I am going to seek refuge in a church, for there is nothing else for me to do.” (For in olden times the church had the privilege that whoever robbed or killed fled to the church, and they could not do anything with him.) The apprentice replied: “Now I will see if I can make this crown. My master would take refuge in a church for a trifle.” So he began to make the crown. What did he do? He took out the apple and commanded it to make a very beautiful crown. He hammered away, but the apple made the crown. When it was finished he gave it to the wife of the silversmith, who took it to her husband. When the latter saw that he need not flee to the church, he went to the king, who, well pleased, invited him to the feast in the evening. When he told this at home, the apprentice said: “Take me to the feast.” “How can I take you when you have no clothes fit to wear? I will buy you some, and when there is another feast I will take you.” When it struck two, the silversmith departed, and Salvatore took the apple and said: “O my apple, give me clothes and carriages and footmen, for I am going to see my brother married.” Immediately he was dressed like a prince, and went to the palace, where he hid in the kitchen, saw his brother married, and then took a big stick and gave the silversmith a sound beating. When the latter reached home, he cried: “I am dying! I am dying!” “What is the matter?” asked the apprentice, and when he learned what had happened, he said: “If you had taken me with you to the feast this would not have happened.”

A few days after, the king summoned the silversmith again to make another crown within twenty-four hours. Everything happened as before: the apprentice made a crown handsomer than the first, with the aid of the pomegranate. The smith took it to the king, but after the feast came home with his shoulders black and blue from the beating he received.

After a time they wanted to marry the third sister, but she said: “Who wishes me must wait a year, a month, and a day.” And she had no peace wondering why Salvatore did not appear for all he had the apple, the pomegranate, and the crown. After a year, a month, and a day, the wedding was arranged, and the smith had orders to make another crown more beautiful than the first two. (This was so that no one could say that because the young girl was a foreigner they treated her worse than the others.) Again the smith was in despair, and the apprentice had to make, by the aid of his magic crown, a better and larger crown than the others. The king was astonished when he saw the beautiful crown, and again invited the silversmith to the feast. The smith returned home sorrowful, for fear that he should again receive a beating, but he would not take his apprentice with him.

After Salvatore had seen him depart, he took his magic crown and ordered splendid clothes and carriages. When he reached the palace, he did not go to the kitchen, but before the bride and groom could say “yes,” “Stop!” said Salvatore. He took the apple and said: “Who gave me this?” “I did,” replied the wife of the oldest brother. “And this?” showing the pomegranate. “I, my brother-in-law,” said the wife of the second brother. Then he took out the crown. “Who gave me that?” “I, my husband,” said the young girl whom they were marrying. And at once she married Salvatore, “for,” said she, “he freed me from the magician.”

The bridegroom was fooled and had to go away, and the astonished silversmith fell on his knees, begging for pity and mercy.

8

THE GRIFFIN

There was once a king who had three sons. His eyes were diseased, and he called in a physician who said that to cure them he needed a feather of the griffin. Then the king said to his sons: “He who finds this feather for me shall have my crown.” The sons set out in search of it. The youngest met an old man, who asked him what he was doing. He replied: “Papa is ill. To cure him a feather of the griffin is necessary. And papa has said that whoever finds the feather shall have his crown.” The old man said: “Well, here is some corn. When you reach a certain place, put it in your hat. The griffin will come and eat it. Seize him, pull out a feather, and carry it to papa.” The youth did so, and for fear that some one should steal it from him, he put it into his shoe, and started all joyful to carry it to his father. On his way he met his brothers, who asked him if he had found the feather. He said No; but his brothers did not believe him, and wanted to search him. They looked everywhere, but did not find it. Finally they looked in his shoe and got it. Then they killed the youngest brother and buried him, and took the feather to their father, saying that they had found it. The king healed his eyes with it. A shepherd one day, while feeding his sheep, saw that his dog was always digging in the same place, and went to see what it was, and found a bone. He put it to his mouth, and saw that it sounded and said: “Shepherd, keep me in your mouth, hold me tight, and do not let me go! For a feather of the griffin, my brother has played the traitor, my brother has played the traitor.”

One day the shepherd, with this whistle in his mouth, was passing by the king’s palace, and the king heard him, and called him to see what it was. The shepherd told him the story, and how he had found it. The king put it to his mouth, and the whistle said: “Papa! papa! keep me in your mouth, hold me tight, and do not let me go. For a feather of the griffin, my brother has played the traitor, my brother has played the traitor.” Then the king put it in the mouth of the brother who had killed the youngest, and the whistle said: “Brother! brother! keep me in your mouth, hold me fast, and do not let me go. For a feather of the griffin, you have played the traitor, you have played the traitor.” Then the king understood the story and had his two sons put to death. And thus they killed their brother and afterwards were killed themselves.

The feminine counterpart of “Boots,” or the successful youngest brother, is Cinderella, the youngest of three sisters who despise and ill-treat her. Her usual place is in the chimney-corner, and her name is derived from the grime of cinders and ashes (her name in German is *Aschenputtel*). Assisted by some kind fairy who appears in various forms, she reveals herself in her true shape, captivates the prince, who finally recognizes her by the slipper. There are two branches of this story: the one just mentioned, and one where the heroine assumes a repulsive disguise in order to escape the importunities of a father who wishes to marry her. This second branch may be distinguished by the name of “Allerleirauh,” the well-known Grimm story of this class. For the first branch of this story we have selected a Florentine story (*Novellaja fior.* p. 151) called:

IX. CINDERELLA.

Once upon a time there was a man who had three daughters. He was once ordered to go away to work, and said to them: “Since I am about making a journey, what do you want me to bring you when I return?” One asked for a handsome dress; the other, a fine hat and a beautiful shawl. He said to the youngest: “And you, Cinderella, what do you want?” They called her Cinderella because she always sat in the chimney-corner. “You must buy me a little bird Verdeliò.” “The simpleton! she does not know what to do with the bird! Instead of ordering a handsome dress, a fine shawl, she takes a bird. Who knows what she will do with it!” “Silence!” she says, “it pleases me.” The father went, and on his return brought the dress, hat, and shawl for the two sisters, and the little bird for Cinderella. The father was employed at the court, and one day the king said to him: “I am going to give three balls; if you want to bring your daughters, do so; they will amuse themselves a little.” “As you wish,” he replies, “thanks!” and accepts. He went home and said: “What do you think, girls? His Majesty wishes you to attend his ball.” “There, you see, Cinderella, if you had only asked for a handsome dress! This evening we are going to the ball.” She replied: “It matters nothing to me! You go; I am not coming.” In the evening, when the time came, they adorned themselves, saying to Cinderella: “Come along, there will be room for you, too.” “I don’t want to go; you go; I don’t want to.” “But,” said their father, “let us go, let us go! Dress and come along; let her stay.” When they had gone, she went to the bird and said: “O Bird Verdeliò, make me more beautiful than I am!” She became clothed in a sea-green dress, with so many diamonds that it blinded you to behold her. The bird made ready two purses of money, and said to her: “Take these two purses, enter your carriage, and away!” She set out for the ball, and left the bird Verdeliò at home. She entered the ball-room. Scarcely had the gentlemen seen this beautiful lady (she dazzled them on all sides), when the king, just think of it, began to dance with her the whole evening. After he had danced with her all the evening, his Majesty stopped, and she stood by her sisters. While she was at her sisters’ side, she drew out her handkerchief, and a bracelet fell out. “Oh, Signora,” said the eldest sister, “you have dropped this.” “Keep it for yourself,” she said. “Oh, if

Cinderella were only here, who knows what might not have happened to her?” The king had given orders that when this lady went away they should find out where she lived. After she had remained a little, she left the ball. You can imagine whether the servants were on the lookout! She entered her carriage and away! She perceives that she is followed, takes the money and begins to throw it out of the window of the carriage. The greedy servants, I tell you, seeing all that money, thought no more of her, but stopped to pick up the money. She returned home and went up-stairs. “O Bird Verdeliò, make me homelier than I am!” You ought to see how ugly, how horrid, she became, all ashes. When the sisters returned, they cried: “Cin-der-ella!” “Oh, leave her alone,” said her father; “she is asleep now, leave her alone!” But they went up and showed her the large and beautiful bracelet. “Do you see, you simpleton? You might have had it.” “It matters nothing to me.” Their father said: “Let us go to supper, you little geese.”

Let us return to the king, who was awaiting his servants, who had not the courage to appear, but kept away. He calls them. “How did the matter go?” They fall at his feet. “Thus and thus! She threw out so much money!” “Wretches, you are nothing else,” he said, “were you afraid of not being rewarded? Well! to-morrow evening, attention, under pain of death.” The next evening the usual ball. The sisters say: “Will you come this evening, Cinderella?” “Oh,” she says, “don’t bother me! I don’t want to go.” Their father cries out to them: “How troublesome you are! Let her alone!” So they began to adorn themselves more handsomely than the former evening, and departed. “Good-by, Cinderella!” When they had gone, Cinderella went to the bird and said: “Little Bird Verdeliò, make me more beautiful than I am!” Then she became clothed in sea-green, embroidered with all the fish of the sea, mingled with diamonds more than you could believe. The bird said: “Take these two bags of sand, and when you are followed, throw it out, and so they will be blinded.” She entered her carriage and set out for the ball. As soon as his Majesty saw her he began to dance with her and danced as long as he could. After he had danced as long as he could (she did not grow weary, but he did), she placed herself near her sisters, drew out her handkerchief, and there fell out a beautiful necklace all made of coal. The second sister said: “Signora, you have dropped this.” She replied: “Keep it for yourself.” “If Cinderella were here, who knows what might not happen to her! To-morrow she must come!” After a while she leaves the ball. The servants (just think, under pain of death!) were all on the alert, and followed her. She began to throw out all the sand, and they were blinded. She went home, dismounted, and went up-stairs. “Little Bird Verdeliò, make me homelier than I am!” She became frightfully homely. When her sisters returned they began from below: “Cin-der-ella! if you only knew what that lady gave us!” “It matters nothing to me!” “But to-morrow evening you must go!” “Yes, yes! you would have had it!” Their father says: “Let us go to supper and let her alone; you are really silly!”

Let us return to his Majesty, who was waiting for his servants to learn where she lived. Instead of that they were all brought back blinded, and had to be accompanied. “Rogue!” he exclaimed, “either this lady is some fairy or she must have some fairy who protects her.”

The next day the sisters began: “Cinderella, you must go this evening! Listen; it is the last evening; you must come.” The father: “Oh let her alone! you are always teasing her!” Then they went away and began to prepare for the ball. When they were all prepared, they went to the ball with their father. When they had departed, Cinderella went to the bird: “Little Bird Verdeliò, make me more beautiful than I am!” Then she was dressed in all the colors of the heavens; all the comets, the stars, and moon on her dress, and the sun on her brow. She enters the ball-room. Who could look at her! for the sun alone they lower their eyes, and are all blinded. His Majesty began to dance, but he could not look at her, because she dazzled him. He had already given orders to his servants to be on the lookout, under pain of death; not to go on foot, but to mount their horses that evening. After she had danced longer than on the previous evenings she placed herself by her father’s side, drew out her handkerchief, and there fell out a snuff-box of gold, full of money. “Signora, you have dropped this snuff-box.” “Keep it for yourself!” Imagine that man: he opens it and sees it full of money. What joy! After she had remained a time she went home as usual. The servants followed her on horseback, quickly; at a distance from the carriage; but on horseback that was not much trouble. She perceived that she had not prepared anything to throw that evening. “Oh!” she cried, “what shall I do?” She left the carriage quickly, and in her haste lost one of her slippers. The servants picked it up, took the number of the house, and went away. Cinderella went up-stairs and said: “Little Bird Verdeliò, make me more homely than I am!” The bird does not answer. After she had repeated it three or four times, it answered: “Rogue! I ought not to make you more homely, but...” and she became homely and the bird continued: “What are you going to do now? You are discovered.” She began to weep in earnest. When her sisters returned, they cried: “Cin-der-ella!” You can imagine that she did not answer them this evening. “See what a beautiful snuff-box. If you had gone you might have had it.” “I do not care! Go away!” Then their father called them to supper.

Let us now turn to the servants who went back with the slipper and the number of the house. “To-morrow,” said his Majesty, “as soon as it is day, go to that house, take a carriage, and bring that lady to the palace.” The servants took the slipper and went away. The next morning they knocked at the door. Cinderella’s father looked out and exclaimed: “Oh, Heavens! it is his Majesty’s carriage; what does it mean?” They open the door and the servants ascend. “What do you want of me?” asked the father. “How many daughters have you?” “Two.” “Well, show them to us.” The father made them come in there. “Sit down,” they said to one of them. They tried the slipper on her; it was ten times too large for her. The other one sat down; it was too small for her. “But tell me, good man, have you no other daughters?

Take care to tell the truth! because his Majesty wishes it, under pain of death!” “Gentlemen, there is another one, but I do not mention it. She is all in the ashes, the coals; if you should see her! I do not call her my daughter from shame.” “We have not come for beauty, or for finery; we want to see the girl!”

Her sisters began to call her: “Cin-der-ella!” but she did not answer. After a time she said: “What is the matter?” “You must come down! there are some gentlemen here who wish to see you.” “I don’t want to come.” “But you must come, you see!” “Very well; tell them I will come in a moment.” She went to the little bird: “Ah little Bird Verdeliò, make me more beautiful than I am!” Then she was dressed as she had been the last evening, with the sun, and moon, and stars, and in addition, great chains all of gold everywhere about her. The bird said: “Take me away with you! Put me in your bosom!” She puts the bird in her bosom and begins to descend the stairs. “Do you hear her?” said the father, “do you hear her? She is dragging with her the chains from the chimney-corner. You can imagine how frightful she will look!” When she reached the last step, and they saw her, “Ah!” they exclaimed, and recognized the lady of the ball. You can imagine how her father and sisters were vexed. They made her sit down, and tried on the slipper, and it fitted her. Then they made her enter the carriage, and took her to his Majesty, who recognized the lady of the other evenings. And you can imagine that, all in love as he was, he said to her: “Will you really be my wife?” You may believe she consents. She sends for her father and sisters, and makes them all come to the palace. They celebrate the marriage. Imagine what fine festivals were given at this wedding! The servants who had discovered where Cinderella lived were promoted to the highest positions in the palace as a reward.

9

FAIR MARIA WOOD

There was once a husband and wife who had but one child, a daughter. Now it happened that the wife fell ill and was at the point of death. Before dying she called her husband, and said to him, weeping: “I am dying; you are still young; if you ever wish to marry again, be mindful to choose a wife whom my wedding ring fits; and if you cannot find a lady whom it fits well, do not marry.” Her husband promised that he would do so. When she was dead he took off her wedding ring and kept it until he desired to marry again. Then he sought for some one to please him. He went from one to another, but the ring fitted no one. He tried so many but in vain. One day he thought of calling his daughter, and trying the ring on her to see whether it fitted her. The daughter said: “It is useless, dear father; you cannot marry me, because you are my father.” He did not heed her, put the ring on her finger, and saw that it fitted her well, and wanted to marry his daughter *nolens volens*. She did not oppose him, but consented. The day of the wedding, he asked her what she wanted. She said that she wished four silk dresses, the most beautiful that could be seen. He, who was a gentleman, gratified her wish and took her the four dresses, one handsomer than the other, and all the handsomest that had ever been seen. “Now, what else do you want?” said he. “I want another dress, made of wood, so that I can conceal myself in it.” And at once he had this wooden dress made. She was well pleased. She waited one day until her husband was out of sight, put on the wooden dress, and under it the four silk dresses, and went away to a certain river not far off, and threw herself in it. Instead of sinking and drowning, she floated, for the wooden dress kept her up.

The water carried her a long way, when she saw on the bank a gentleman, and began to cry: “Who wants the fair Maria Wood?” That gentleman who saw her on the water, and whom she addressed, called her and she came to the bank and saluted him. “How is it that you are thus dressed in wood, and come floating on the water without drowning?” She told him that she was a poor girl who had only that dress of wood, and that she wanted to go out to service. “What can you do?” “I can do all that is needed in a house, and if you would only take me for a servant you would be satisfied.”

He took her to his house, where his mother was, and told her all that had happened, saying: “If you, dear mother, will take her as a servant, we can try her.” In short, she took her and was pleased with this woman dressed in wood.

It happened that there were balls at that place which the best ladies and gentlemen attended. The gentleman who had the servant dressed in wood prepared to go to the ball, and after he had departed, the servant said to his mother: “Do me this kindness, mistress: let me go to the ball too, for I have never seen any dancing.” “What, you wish to go to the ball so badly dressed that they would drive you away as soon as they saw you!” The servant was silent, and when the mistress was in bed, dressed herself in one of her silk dresses and became the most beautiful woman that was ever seen. She went to the ball, and it seemed as if the sun had entered the room; all were dazzled. She sat down near her master, who asked her to dance, and would dance with no one but her. She pleased him so much that he fell in love with her. He asked her who she was and where she came from. She replied that she came from a distance, but told him nothing more.

At a certain hour, without any one perceiving it, she went out and disappeared. She returned home and put on her wooden dress again. In the morning the master returned from the ball, and said to his mother: “Oh! if you had only seen what a beautiful lady there was at the ball! She appeared like the sun, she was so beautiful and well dressed. She sat down near me, and would not dance with any one but me.” His mother then said: “Did you not ask her who she was and where she came from?” “She would only tell me that she came from a distance; but I thought I should die; I wish to go again this evening.” The servant heard all this dialogue, but kept silent, pretending that the matter did not concern her.

In the evening he prepared himself again for the ball, and the servant said to him: “Master, yesterday evening I asked your mamma to let me, too, go to the ball, for I have never seen dancing, but she would not; will you have the kindness to let me go this evening?” “Be still, you ugly creature, the ball is no place for you!” “Do me this favor,” she said, weeping, “I will stand out of doors, or under a bench, or in a corner so no one shall see me; but let me go!” He grew angry then, and took a stick and began to beat the poor servant. She wept and remained silent.

After he had gone, she waited until his mother was in bed, and put on a dress finer than the first, and so rich as to astonish, and away to the ball! When she arrived all began to gaze at her, for they had never seen anything more beautiful. All the handsomest young men surround her and ask her to dance; but she would have nothing to do with any one but her master. He again asked her who she was, and she said she would tell him later. They danced and danced, and all at once she disappeared. Her master ran here and there, asked one and another, but no one could tell him where she had gone. He returned home and told his mother all that had passed. She said to him: “Do you know what you must do? Take this diamond ring, and when she dances with you give it to her; and if she takes it, it is a sign that she loves you.” She gave him the ring. The servant listened, saw everything, and was silent.

In the evening the master prepared for the ball and the servant again asked him to take her, and again he beat her. He went to the ball, and after midnight, as before, the beautiful lady returned more beautiful than before, and as usual would dance only with her master. At the right moment he took out the diamond ring, and asked her if she would accept it. She took it and thanked him, and he was happy and satisfied. Afterward he asked her again who she was and where from. She said that she was of that country

THAT WHEN THEY speak of going to a ball,
They are beaten on the head

AND SAID NO MORE. At the usual hour she stopped dancing and departed. He ran after her, but she went like the wind, and reached home without his finding out where she went. But he ran so in all directions, and was in such suffering, that when he reached home he was obliged to go to bed more dead than alive. Then he fell ill and grew worse every day, so that all said he would die. He did nothing but ask his mother and every one if they knew anything of that lady, and that he would die if he did not see her. The servant heard everything; and one day, when he was very ill, what did she think of? She waited until her mistress’ eye was turned, and dropped the diamond ring in the broth her master was to eat. No one saw her, and his mother took him the broth. He began to eat it, when he felt something hard, saw something shine, and took it out... You can imagine how he looked at it and recognized the diamond ring! They thought he would go mad. He asked his mother if that was the ring and she swore that it was, and all happy, she said that now he would see her again.

Meanwhile the servant went to her room, took off her wooden dress, and put on one all of silk, so that she appeared a beauty, and went to the room of the sick man. His mother saw her and began to cry: “Here she is; here she is!” She went in and saluted him, smiling, and he was so beside himself that he became well at once. He asked her to tell him her story, — who she was, where she came from, how she came, and how she knew that he was ill. She replied: “I am the woman dressed in wood who was your servant. It is not true that I was a poor girl, but I had that dress to conceal myself in, for underneath it I was the same that I am now. I am a lady; and although you treated me so badly when I asked to go to the ball, I saw that you loved me, and now I have come to save you from death.” You can believe that they stayed to hear her story. They were married and have always been happy and still are.

10

THE CURSE OF THE SEVEN CHILDREN

There was once a king and a queen who had six children, all sons. The queen was about to give birth to another child, and the king said that if it was not a daughter all seven children would be cursed. Now it happened that the king had to go away to war; and before departing he said to the queen, “Listen. If you have a son, hang a lance out of the window; if a daughter, a distaff; so that I can see as soon as I arrive which it is.” After the king had been gone a month, the queen gave birth to the most beautiful girl that was ever seen. Imagine how pleased the queen was at having a girl. She could scarcely contain herself for joy, and immediately gave orders to hang the distaff out of the window; but in the midst of the joyful confusion, a mistake was made, and they put out a lance. Shortly after, the king returned and saw the sign at the window, and cursed all his seven sons; but when he entered the house and the servants crowded around him to congratulate him and tell him about his beautiful daughter, then the king was amazed and became very melancholy. He entered the queen’s room and looked at the child, who seemed exactly like one of those wax dolls to be kept in a box; then he looked about him and saw nothing of his sons, and his eyes filled with tears, for those poor youths had wandered out into the world.

Meanwhile the girl grew, and when she was large she saw that her parents caressed her, but always with tears in their eyes. One day she said to her mother: “What is the matter with you, mother, that I always see you crying?” Then the queen told her the story, and said that she was afraid that some day she would see her disappear too. When the girl heard how it was, what did she do? One night she rose softly and left the palace, with the intention of going to find her brothers. She walked and walked, and at last met a little old man, who said to her: “Where are you going at this time of the night?” She answered: “I am in search of my brothers.” The old man said: “It will be difficult to find them, for you must not speak for seven years, seven months, seven weeks, seven days, seven hours, and seven minutes.” She said: “I will try.” Then she took a bit of paper which she found on the ground, wrote on it the day and the hour with a piece of charcoal, and left the old man and hastened on her way. After she had run a long time, she saw a light and went towards it, and when she was near it, she saw that it was over the door of a palace where a king lived. She entered and sat down on the stairway, and fell asleep. The servants came later to put out the light, and saw the pretty girl asleep on the stone steps; they awakened her, asking her what she was doing there. She began to make signs, asking them to give her a lodging. They understood her, and said they would ask the king. They returned shortly to tell her to enter, for the king wished to see her before she was shown to her room. When the king saw the beautiful girl, with hair like gold, flesh like milk and wine, teeth white as pearls, and little hands that an artist could not paint as beautiful as they were, he suddenly imagined that she must be the daughter of some lord, and gave orders that she should be treated with all possible respect. They showed her to a beautiful room; then a maid came and undressed her and put her to bed. Next morning, Diana, for so she was called, arose, saw a frame with a piece of embroidery in it, and began to work at it. The king visited her, and asked if she needed anything, and she made signs that she did not. The king was so pleased with the young girl that he ended by falling in love with her, and after a year had passed he thought of marrying her. The queen-mother, who was an envious person, was not content with the match, because, said she, no one knows where she came from, and, besides, she is dumb, something that would make people wonder if a king should marry her. But the king was so obstinate that he married her; and when his mother saw that there was no help, she pretended to be satisfied. Shortly after, the queen-mother put into the king’s hands a letter which informed him of an imminent war, in which, if he did not take part, he would run the risk of losing his realm. The king went to the war, in fact, with great grief at leaving his wife; and before departing, he commended her earnestly to his mother, who said: “Do not be anxious, my son, I shall do all that I can to make her happy.” The king embraced his wife and mother, and departed.

Scarcely had the king gone when the queen-mother sent for a mason, and made him build a wall near the kitchen-sink, so that it formed a sort of box. Now you must know that Diana expected soon to become a mother, and this afforded the queen-mother a pretext to write to her son that his wife had died in giving birth to a child. She took her and put her in the wall she had had built, where there was neither light nor air, and where the wicked woman hoped that she would die. But it was not so. The scullion went every day to wash the dishes at the sink near where poor Diana was buried alive. While attending to his business, he heard a lamentation, and listened to see where it could come from. He listened and listened, until at last he perceived that the voice came from the wall that had been newly built. What did he do then? He made a hole in the wall, and saw that the queen was there. The scullion asked how she came there; but she only made signs that she was about to give birth to a child. The poor scullion had his wife make a fine cushion, on which Diana reposed as well as she could, and gave birth to the most beautiful boy that could be seen. The scullion’s wife went to see her every moment, and carried her broth, and cared for the child; in short, this poor woman, as well as her husband, did everything she could to alleviate the poor queen, who tried to make them understand by signs what she needed. One day it came into Diana's head to look into her memorandum book and see how long she still had to keep silent, and she saw that only two minutes yet remained. As soon as they had passed, she told the scullion all that had happened. At that moment the king arrived, and the scullion drew the queen from out the hole, and showed her to the king. You can imagine how delighted he was to see again his Diana, whom he believed to be dead. He embraced her, and kissed her and the child; in short, such was his joy that it seemed as if he would go mad. Diana related everything to him: why she had left her home, and why she had played dumb so long, and finally how she had been treated by the queen-mother, and what she had suffered, and how kind those poor people had been to her. When he had heard all this, he said: "Leave the matter to me; I will arrange it."

The next day the king invited all the nobles and princes of his realm to a great banquet. Now it happened that in setting the tables the servants laid six plates besides the others; and when the guests sat down, six handsome youths entered, who advanced and asked what should be given to a sister who had done so and so for her brothers. Then the king sprang up and said: "And I ask what shall be done to a mother who did so and so to her son's wife?" and he explained everything. One said: "Burn her alive." Another: "Put her in the pillory." Another: "Fry her in oil in the public square." This was agreed to. The youths had been informed by that same old man whom Diana had met, and who was a magician, where their sister was and what she had done for them. Then they made themselves known, and embraced Diana and their brother-in-law the king, and after the greatest joy, they all started off to see their parents. Imagine the satisfaction of the king and queen at seeing again all their seven children. They gave the warmest reception to the king, Diana’s husband, and after they had spent some days together, Diana returned with her husband to their city. And all lived there afterward in peace and contentment.

11

ORAGGIO AND BIANCHINETTA

There was once a lady who had two children: the boy was called Oraggio, the girl, Bianchinetta. By misfortunes they were reduced from great wealth to poverty. It was decided that Oraggio should go out to service, and indeed he found a situation as *valet de chambre* to a prince. After a time the prince, satisfied with his service, changed it, and set him to work cleaning the pictures in his gallery. Among the various paintings was one of a very beautiful lady, which was constantly Oraggio's admiration. The prince often surprised him admiring the portrait. One day he asked him why he spent so much time before that picture. Oraggio replied that it was the very image of his sister, and having been away from her some time, he felt the need of seeing her again. The prince answered that he did not believe that picture resembled his sister, because he had a search made, and it had not been possible to find any lady like the portrait. He added: "Have her come here, and if she is as beautiful as you say, I will make her my wife."

Oraggio wrote at once to Bianchinetta, who immediately set out on her journey. Oraggio went to the harbor to await her, and when he perceived the ship at a distance, he called out at intervals: "Mariners of the high sea, guard my sister Bianchina, so that the sun shall not brown her." Now, on the ship where Bianchinetta was, was also another young girl with her mother, both very homely. When they were near the harbor, the daughter gave Bianchinetta a blow, and pushed her into the sea. When they landed, Oraggio could not recognize his sister; and that homely girl presented herself, saying that the sun had made her so dark that she could no longer be recognized. The prince was surprised at seeing such a homely woman, and reproved Oraggio, removing him from his position and setting him to watch the geese. Every day he led the geese to the sea, and every day Bianchinetta came forth and adorned them with tassels of various colors. When the geese returned home, they said: —

Crò! crò! From the sea we come,
We feed on gold and pearls.
Oraggio's sister is fair,
She is fair as the sun;
She would suit our master well.

The prince asked Oraggio how the geese came to repeat those words every day. He told him that his sister, thrown into the sea, had been seized by a fish, which had taken her to a beautiful palace under the water, where she was in chains. But that, attached to a long chain, she was permitted to come to the shore when he drove the geese there. The prince said: “If what you relate is true, ask her what is required to liberate her from that prison.”

The next day Oraggio asked Bianchinetta how it would be possible to take her from there and conduct her to the prince. She replied: “It is impossible to take me from here. At least, the monster always says to me: ‘It would require a sword that cuts like a hundred, and a horse that runs like the wind.’ It is almost impossible to find these two things. You see, therefore, it is my fate to remain here always.” Oraggio returned to the palace, and informed the prince of his sister’s answer. The latter made every effort, and succeeded in finding the horse that ran like the wind, and the sword that cut like a hundred. They went to the sea, found Bianchinetta, who was awaiting them. She led them to her palace. With the sword the chain was cut. She mounted the horse, and thus was able to escape. When they reached the palace the prince found her as beautiful as the portrait Oraggio was always gazing at, and married her. The other homely one was burned in the public square, with the accustomed pitch-shirt; and they lived content and happy.

12

THE FAIR FIORITA

There was once a king who had four children: three daughters and a son, who was the heir to the throne. One day the king said to the prince: “My son, I have decided to marry your three sisters to the first persons who pass our palace at noon.” At that time there first passed a swine-herd, then a huntsman, and finally a grave-digger. The king had them all three summoned to his presence, and told the swine-herd that he wished to give him his oldest daughter for a wife, the second to the huntsman, and the third to the grave-digger. Those poor creatures thought they were dreaming. But they saw that the king spoke seriously, or rather commanded. Then, all confused, but well pleased, they said: “Let your Majesty’s will be done.” The prince, who loved his youngest sister dearly, was deeply grieved that she should become a grave-digger’s wife. He begged the king not to make this match, but the king would not listen to him.

The prince, grieved at his father’s caprice, would not be present at his sisters’ wedding, but took a walk in the garden at the foot of the palace. Now, while the priest in the marriage hall was blessing the three brides, the garden suddenly bloomed with the fairest flowers, and there came forth from a white cloud a voice which said: “Happy he who shall have a kiss from the lips of the fair Fiorita!” The prince trembled so that he could hardly stand; and afterward, leaning against an olive-tree, he began to weep for the sisters he had lost, and remained buried in thought many hours. Then he started, as if awakening from a dream, and said to himself: “I must flee from my father’s house. I will wander about the world, and will not rest until I have a kiss from the lips of the fair Fiorita.”

He travelled over land and sea, over mountains and plains, and found no living soul that could give him word of the fair Fiorita. Three years had elapsed, when one day, leaving a wood and journeying through a beautiful plain, he arrived at a palace before which was a fountain, and drew near to drink. A child two years old, who was playing by the fountain, seeing him approach, began to cry and call its mother. The mother, when she saw the prince, ran to meet him, embraced him, and kissed him, crying: “Welcome, welcome, my brother!” The prince at first did not recognize her; but looking at her closely in the face, he saw that it was his oldest sister, and embracing her in turn, exclaimed: “How glad I am to see you, my sister!” and they rejoiced greatly. The sister invited him to enter the palace, which was hers, and led him to her husband, who was much pleased to see him, and all three overwhelmed with caresses the child who, by calling his mother, had been the cause of all that joy.

The prince then asked about his other two sisters, and his brother-in-law replied that they were well, and lived in a lordly way with their husbands. The prince was surprised, and his brother-in-law added that the fortunes of the three husbands of his sisters had changed since they had been enchanted by a magician. “And cannot I see my other two sisters?” asked the prince. The brother-in-law replied: “Direct your journey towards sunrise. After a day you will find your second sister; after two days, the third.” “But I must seek the way to the fair Fiorita, and I do not know whether it is towards sunrise or sunset.” “It is precisely towards sunrise; and you are doubly fortunate: first, because you will see your two sisters again; secondly, because from the last you can receive information about the fair Fiorita. But before departing I wish to give you a remembrance. Take these hog’s bristles. The first time you encounter any danger from which you cannot extricate yourself, throw them on the ground, and I will free you from the danger.” The prince took the bristles, and after he had thanked his brother-in-law, resumed his journey.

The next day he arrived at the palace of his second sister; was received there also with great joy, and this brother-in-law, too, wished to give him a memento before he departed; and because he had been a huntsman, presented him with a bunch of birds’ feathers, telling him the same thing that the other brother-in-law had. He thanked him and departed. The third day he came to his youngest sister’s, who, seeing the brother who had always loved her more dearly than his other sisters, welcomed him more warmly, as did also her husband. The latter gave him a little human bone, giving him the same advice as the other brothers-in-law had. His sister then told him that the fair Fiorita lived a day’s journey from there, and that he could learn more about her from an old woman who was indebted to her, and to whom she sent him.

As soon as the prince arrived at the fair Fiorita’s country (she was the king’s daughter), he went to the old woman. When she heard that he was the brother of the one who had been so kind to her, she received him like a son. Fortunately, the old woman’s house was exactly opposite that side of the king’s palace where there was a window to which the fair Fiorita came every day at dawn. Now one morning at that hour she appeared at the window, scarcely covered by a white veil. When the prince saw that flower of beauty, he was so agitated that he would have fallen had not the old woman supported him. The old woman attempted to dissuade him from the idea of marrying the fair Fiorita, saying that the king would give his daughter only to him who should discover a hidden place, and that he killed him who could not find it, and that already many princes had lost their lives for her. But, notwithstanding, he answered that he should die if he could not obtain possession of the fair Fiorita. Having learned afterward from the old woman that the king bought for his daughter the rarest musical instruments, hear what he devised! He went to a cymbal-maker and said: “I want a cymbal that will play three tunes, and each tune to last a day, and to be made in such a way that a man can be hidden inside of it; and I will pay you a thousand ducats for it. When it is finished I will get in it; and you must go and play it in front of the king’s palace; and if the king wishes to buy it you will sell it to him on condition that you shall take it every three days to fix it.” The cymbal-maker consented, and did all that the prince commanded him. The king purchased the cymbal with the maker’s condition, had it carried to his daughter’s bed-chamber, and said to her: “See, my daughter, I do not wish you to lack any diversion, even when you are in bed and cannot sleep.”

Next to the fair Fiorita’s chamber slept her maids of honor. In the night when all were asleep, the prince, who was hidden in the cymbal, came out and called: “Fair Fiorita! fair Fiorita!” She awoke in a fright and cried: “Come, my maids of honor, I hear some one calling me.” The maids of honor came quickly, but found no one, for the prince hid himself suddenly in the instrument. The same thing happened twice, and the maids coming and finding no one, the fair Fiorita said: “Well, it must be my fancy. If I call you again, do not come, I command you.” The prince, within the cymbal, heard this. Scarcely had the maids of honor fallen asleep again, when the prince approached the fair one’s bed and said: “Fair Fiorita, give me, I beg you, a kiss from your lips; if you do not, I shall die.” She, all trembling, called her maids; but obeying her command, they did not come. Then she said to the prince: “You are fortunate and have won. Draw near.” And she gave him the kiss, and on the prince’s lips there remained a beautiful rose. “Take this rose,” she said, “and keep it on your heart, for it will bring you good luck.” The prince placed it on his heart, and then told his fair one all his history from the time he had left his father’s palace until he had introduced himself into her chamber by the trick with the cymbal. The fair

Fiorita was well pleased, and said that she would willingly marry him; but to succeed, he must perform many difficult tasks which the king would lay upon him. First he must discover the way to a hiding-place where the king had concealed her with a hundred damsels; then he must recognize her among the hundred damsels, all dressed alike and veiled. “But,” she said, “you need not trouble yourself about these difficulties, for the rose you have taken from my lips, and which you will always wear over your heart, will draw you like the loadstone, first to the hiding-place, and afterward to my arms. But the king will set you other tasks, and perhaps terrible ones. These you must think of yourself. Let us leave it to God and fortune.”

The prince went at once to the king, and asked for the fair Fiorita’s hand. The king did not refuse it, but made the same conditions, that the princess had told him of. He consented, and by the help of the rose quickly performed the first tasks. “Bravo!” exclaimed the king, when the prince recognized the fair Fiorita among the other damsels; “but this is not enough.” Then he shut him up in a large room all full of fruit, and commanded him, under pain of death, to eat it all up in a day. The prince was in despair, but fortunately he remembered the hog’s bristles and the advice which his first brother-in-law had given him. He threw the bristles on the ground, and there suddenly came forth a great herd of swine which ate up all the fruit and then disappeared. This task was accomplished. But the king proposed another. He wished the prince to retire with his bride, and cause her to fall asleep at the singing of the birds which are the sweetest to hear and the most beautiful to see. The prince remembered the bunch of feathers given him by his brother-in-law the huntsman, and threw them on the ground. Suddenly there appeared the most beautiful birds in the world, and sang so sweetly that the king himself fell asleep. But a servant awakened him at once, because he had commanded it, and he said to the prince and his daughter: “Now you can enjoy your love at liberty. But to-morrow, on arising, you must present me with a child two years old, who can speak and call you by name. If not, you will both be killed.” “Now let us retire, my dear wife,” said the prince to the fair Fiorita. “Between now and to-morrow some saint will aid us.” The next morning the prince remembered the bone which his brother-in-law the grave-digger had given him. He rose and threw it to the ground, and lo! a beautiful child, with a golden apple in his right hand, who cried papa and mamma. The king entered the room, and the child ran to meet him, and wished to put the golden apple on the crown which the king wore. The king then kissed the child, blessed the pair, and taking the crown from his head, put it on his son-in-law’s, saying: “This is now yours.” Then they gave a great feast at the court for the wedding, and they invited the prince’s three sisters, with their husbands. And the prince’s father, receiving such good news of the son whom he believed lost, hastened to embrace him, and gave him his crown too. So the prince and the fair Fiorita became king and queen of two realms, and from that time on were always happy.

13

BIERDE

Once upon a time there was a mother who had a son, who went to school. One day he came home and said to his mother: “Mother, I want to go and seek my fortune.” She replied: “Ah, my son, are you mad? Where do you want to seek it?” “I want to wander about the world until I find it.” Now he had a dog whose name was Bierde. He said: “To-morrow morning bake me some bread, put it into a bag, give me a pair of iron shoes, and I and Bierde will go and seek our fortune.” His mother said: “No, my son, don’t go, for I shall not see you again!” And she wept him as dead. After she was quieted she said to him: “Well, if you will go, to-morrow I will bake you some bread, and I will make you a bread-cake.” She made the bread-cake, and put some poison in it; she put the bread and the bread-cake in the bag, and he went away. He walked and walked and walked until he felt hungry, and said to the dog: “Ah, poor Bierde, how tired you are, and how hungry, too! Wait until we have gone a little farther, and then we will eat.” He went on, tired as he was, and at last seated himself under a tree, with the dog near him. He said: “Oh, here we are; now we will eat. Wait, Bierde; I will give you a piece of the bread-cake so that you, too, can eat.” He broke off a piece of the cake, and gave it to him to eat. The dog was so hungry that he ate it greedily. After he had eaten it he took two or three turns, and fell dead on the ground, with his tongue sticking out. “Ah, poor Bierde!” said his master. “You have been poisoned! My mother has done it! The wretch! She has put poison in the cake in order to kill me!” He kept weeping and saying: “Poor Bierde, you are dead, but you have saved my life!” While he was weeping three crows passed, alighted, and pecked at the tongue of the dog, and all three died. Then he said: “Well, well! *Bierde dead has killed three crows!* I will take them with me.” So he took them and continued his journey. He saw at a distance a large fire; he approached and heard talking and singing, and beheld seven highwaymen, who had eaten a great many birds, and who had a great deal of meat still left. He said to himself: “Poor me! Now I shall have to die; there is no escape; they will certainly take me and kill me!” Then he said: “Enough; I will go ahead.” As soon as they saw him they cried: “Stop! Your money or your life!” The poor fellow said: “Brothers, what would you have me give you? Money I have not. I am very hungry. I have nothing but these three birds. If you want them I will give them to you.” “Very well,” they said; “eat and drink; we will eat the birds.” They took the birds, picked them, skinned them, roasted them over the coals, and said to the youth: “We will not give you any of these; you can eat the others.” They ate them, and all seven fell down dead. When the youth saw that they did not stir, but were dead, he said: “Well, well! *Bierde dead has killed three, and these three have killed seven!*” He rose and went away after he had made a good meal. On the way he felt hungry again, and sat down under a tree, and began to eat. When he got up he saw a beautiful canary-bird on the top of another tree. He took up a stone and threw at it. The bird flew away. Now, behind this tree was a hare, big with young, and it happened that the stone fell on it and killed it. The youth went to see where the stone fell, and when he saw the dead hare he said: “Well, well! *I threw it at the canary-bird and the stone killed the hare!* I will take it with me. If I had the fire that those robbers left I would cook it.” He went on until he came to a church, in which he found a lighted lamp and a missal. So he skinned the hare, and made a fire with the missal, and roasted and ate the hare. Then he continued his journey until he came to the foot of a mountain, where the sea was On the shore he saw two persons with a boat, who ferried over those who wished to reach the other shore, because one could not go on foot on account of the great dust, which was suffocating. The price for crossing was three *soldi*. The youth said to the owners of the bark: “How much do you want to set me down on the other bank?” “Three *soldi*.” “Take me across, brothers; I will give you two, for I have no more.” They replied: “*Two do not enter if there are not three*.” He repeated his offer and they made the same answer. Then he said: “Very well. I will stay here.” And he remained there. In a moment, however, there came up a shower, and laid the dust, and he went on. He reached a city, and found it in great confusion. He asked: “What is the matter here, that there are so many people?” They answered: “It is the governor’s daughter, who guesses everything. He whose riddle she cannot guess is to marry her; but he whose riddle she guesses is put to death.” He asked: “Could I, too, go there?” “What, you go, who are a foolish boy! So many students have abstained, and you, so ignorant, wish to go! You will certainly go to your death!” “Well,” he said, “my mother told me that she would never see me again, so I will go.” He presented himself to the governor and said: “Sir governor, I wish to go to your daughter and see whether she can guess what I have to tell her.” “Do you wish,” he replied, “to go to your death? So many have lost their lives, do you, also, wish to lose yours?” He answered: “Let me go and try.” He wished to go and see for himself. He entered the hall where the daughter was. The governor summoned many gentlemen to hear. When they were all there the governor again said that the youth should reflect that if she guessed what he had to say that he would lose his life. He replied that he had thought of that. The room was full of persons of talent, and the youth presented himself and said: —

Bierde dead has killed three.

She said to herself: “How can it be that one dead should kill three?”

And three have killed seven.

She said: “Here is nothing but dead and killed; what shall I do?” She was puzzled at once, and felt herself perplexed. He continued: —

I threw where I saw, and reached where I did not expect to.
I have eaten that which was born, and that which was not born.
It was cooked with words.
Two do not enter if there are not three;
But the hard passes over the soft.

When she heard this the governor’s daughter could not answer. All the others were astonished likewise, and said that she must marry him. Then he told them all that had happened, and the marriage took place.

14

SNOW-WHITE-FIRE-RED

There was once a king and queen who had no son, and they were always making vows to obtain one; and they promised that if they had a son, or even a daughter, they would maintain two fountains for seven years: one running wine, the other oil. After this vow the queen gave birth to a handsome boy.

As soon as the child was born, the two fountains were erected, and everybody went and took oil and wine. At the end of seven years the fountains began to dry up. An ogress, wishing to collect the drops that still fell from the fountain, went there with a sponge and pitcher. She sopped up the drops with the sponge and then squeezed it in the pitcher. After she had worked so hard to fill this pitcher, the little son of the king, who was playing ball, from caprice threw a ball and broke the pitcher. When the old woman saw this, she said: “Listen. I can do nothing to you, for you are the king’s son; but I can bestow upon you an imprecation: May you be unable to marry until you find Snow-white-fire-red!” The cunning child took a piece of paper and wrote down the old woman’s words, put it away in a drawer, and said nothing about it. When he was eighteen the king and queen wished him to marry. Then he remembered the old woman’s imprecation, took the piece of paper, and said: “Ah! if I do not find Snow-white-fire-red I cannot marry!” When it seemed fit, he took leave of his father and mother, and began his journey entirely alone. Months passed without meeting any one. One evening, night overtook him, tired and discouraged, in a plain in the midst of which was a large house.

At daybreak he saw an ogress coming, frightfully tall and stout, who cried: “Snow-white-fire-red, lower your tresses for me to climb up!” When the prince heard this he took heart, and said: “There she is!” Snow-white-fire-red lowered her tresses, which seemed never to end, and the ogress climbed up by them. The next day the ogress descended, and when the prince saw her depart, he came from under the tree where he had concealed himself, and cried: “Snow-white-fire-red, lower your tresses for me to climb up!” She, believing it was her mother (for she called the ogress mother), lowered her tresses, and the prince climbed boldly up. When he was up, he said: “Ah! my dear little sister, how I have labored to find you!” And he told her of the old woman’s imprecation when he was seven years old.

She gave him some refreshments, and then said: “You see, if the ogress returns and finds you here, she will devour you. Hide yourself.” The ogress returned, and the prince concealed himself.

After the ogress had eaten, her daughter gave her wine to drink, and made her drunk. Then she said: “My mother, what must I do to get away from here? Not that I want to go, for I wish to stay with you; but I want to know just out of curiosity. Tell me!” “What you must do to get away from here!” said the ogress. “You must enchant everything that there is here, so that I shall lose time. I shall call, and instead of you, the chair, the cupboard, the chest of drawers, will answer for you. When you do not appear, I will ascend. You must take the seven balls of yarn that I have laid away. When I come and do not find you, I shall pursue you; when you see yourself pursued, throw down the first ball, and then the others. I shall always overtake you until you throw down the last ball.”

Her daughter heard all that she said, and remembered it. The next day the ogress went out, and Snow-white-fire-red and the prince did what they had to do. They went about the whole house, saying: “Table, you answer if my mother comes; chairs, answer if my mother comes; chest of drawers, answer if my mother comes;” and so she enchanted the whole house. Then she and the prince departed in such a hurry that they seemed to fly. When the ogress returned, she called: “Snow-white-fire-red, let down your tresses that I may climb up!” The table answered: “Come, come, mother!” She waited a while, and when no one appeared to draw her up, she called again: “Snow-white-fire-red, lower your tresses for me to climb up!” The chair answered: “Come, come, mother!” She waited a while, but no one appeared; then she called again, and the chest of drawers replied: “Come, come, mother!” Meanwhile the lovers were fleeing. When there was nothing left to answer, the ogress cried out: “Treason! treason!” Then she got a ladder and climbed up. When she saw that her daughter and the balls of yarn were gone, she cried: “Ah, wretch! I will drink your blood!” Then she hastened after the fugitives, following their scent. They saw her afar off, and when she saw them, she cried: “Snow-white-fire-red, turn around so that I can see you.” (If she had turned around she would have been enchanted.)

When the ogress had nearly overtaken them, Snow-white-fire-red threw down the first ball, and suddenly there arose a lofty mountain. The ogress was not disturbed; she climbed and climbed until she almost overtook the two again. Then Snow-white-fire-red, seeing her near at hand, threw down the second ball, and there suddenly appeared a plain covered with razors and knives. The ogress, all cut and torn, followed after the lovers, dripping with blood.

When Snow-white-fire-red saw her near again, she threw down the third ball, and there arose a terrible river. The ogress threw herself into the river and continued her pursuit, although she was half dead. Then another ball, and there appeared a fountain of vipers, and many other things. At last, dying and worn out, the ogress stopped and cursed Snow-white-fire-red, saying: “The first kiss that the queen gives her son, may the prince forget you!” Then the ogress could stand it no longer, and died in great anguish.

The lovers continued their journey, and came to a town near where the prince lived. He said to Snow-white-fire-red: “You remain here, for you are not provided with proper clothes, and I will go and get what you need, and then you can appear before my father and mother.” She consented, and remained.

When the queen beheld her son, she threw herself on him to kiss him. “Mother,” said he, “I have made a vow not to allow myself to be kissed.” The poor mother was petrified. At night, while he was asleep, his mother, who was dying to kiss him, went and did so. From that moment he forgot all about Snow-white-fire-red.

Let us leave the prince with his mother, and return to the poor girl, who was left in the street without knowing where she was. An old woman met her, and saw the poor girl, as beautiful as the sun, weeping. “What is the matter, my daughter?” “I do not know how I came here!” “My daughter, do not despair; come with me.” And she took her to her house. The young girl was deft with her hands, and could work enchantment. She made things, and the old woman sold them, and so they both lived. One day the maiden said to the old woman that she wanted two bits of old cloth from the palace for some work she had to do. The old woman went to the palace, and began to ask for the bits, and said so much that at last she obtained them. Now the old woman had two doves, a male and a female, and with these bits of cloth Snow-white-fire-red dressed the doves so prettily that all who saw them marvelled. The young girl took these doves, and whispered in their ears: “You are the prince, and you are Snow-white-fire-red. The king is at the table, eating; fly and relate all that you have undergone.”

While the king, queen, prince, and many others were at the table, the beautiful doves flew in and alighted on the table. “How beautiful you are!” And all were greatly pleased. Then the dove which represented Snow-white-fire-red began: “Do you remember when you were young how your father promised a fountain of oil and one of wine for your birth?” The other dove answered: “Yes, I remember.” “Do you remember the old woman whose pitcher of oil you broke? do you remember?” “Yes, I remember.” “Do you remember the imprecation she pronounced on you, — that you could not marry until you found Snow-white-fire-red?” “I remember,” replied the other dove. In short, the first dove recalled all that had passed, and finally said: “Do you remember how you had the ogress at your heels, and how she cursed you, saying that at your mother’s first kiss you must forget Snow-white-fire-red?” When the dove came to the kiss, the prince remembered everything, and the king and queen were astounded at hearing the doves speak.

When they had ended their discourse, the doves made a low bow and flew away. The prince cried: “Ho, there! ho, there! see where those doves go! see where they go!” The servants looked and saw the doves alight on a country house. The prince hastened and entered it, and found Snow-white-fire-red. When he saw her he threw his arms about her neck, exclaiming: “Ah! my sister, how much you have suffered for me!” Straightway they dressed her beautifully and conducted her to the palace. When the queen saw her there, she said: “What a beauty!” Things were soon settled and the lovers were married.

15

HOW THE DEVIL MARRIED THREE SISTERS

Once upon a time the Devil was seized with a desire to marry. He therefore left hell, took the form of a handsome young man, and built a fine large house. When it was completed and furnished in the most fashionable style, he introduced himself to a family where there were three pretty daughters, and paid his addresses to the eldest of them. The handsome man pleased the maiden, her parents were glad to see a daughter so well provided for, and it was not long before the wedding was celebrated.

When he had taken his bride home, he presented her with a very tastefully arranged bouquet, led her through all the rooms of the house, and finally to a closed door. “The whole house is at your disposal,” said he, “only I must request one thing of you; that is, that you do not on any account open this door.”

Of course the young wife promised faithfully; but equally, of course, she could scarcely wait for the moment to come when she might break her promise. When the Devil had left the house the next morning, under pretence of going hunting, she ran hastily to the forbidden door, opened it, and saw a terrible abyss full of fire that shot up towards her, and singed the flowers on her bosom. When her husband came home and asked her whether she had kept her promise, she unhesitatingly said “Yes;” but he saw by the flowers that she was telling a lie, and said: “Now I will not put your curiosity to the test any longer. Come with me. I will show you myself what is behind the door.” Thereupon he led her to the door, opened it, gave her such a push that she fell down into hell, and shut the door again.

A few months after he wooed the next sister for his wife, and won her; but with her everything that had happened with the first wife was exactly repeated.

Finally he courted the third sister. She was a prudent maiden, and said to herself: “He has certainly murdered my two sisters; but then it is a splendid match for me, so I will try and see whether I cannot be more fortunate than they.” And accordingly she consented. After the wedding the bridegroom gave her a beautiful bouquet, but forbade her, also, to open the door which he pointed out.

Not a whit less curious than her sisters, she, too, opened the forbidden door when the Devil had gone hunting, but she had previously put her flowers in water. Then she saw behind the door the fatal abyss and her sisters therein. “Ah!” she exclaimed, “poor creature that I am; I thought I had married an ordinary man, and instead of that he is the Devil! How can I get away from him?” She carefully pulled her two sisters out of hell and hid them. When the Devil came home he immediately looked at the bouquet, which she again wore on her bosom, and when he found the flowers so fresh he asked no questions; but reassured as to his secret, he now, for the first time, really loved her.

After a few days she asked him if he would carry three chests for her to her parents’ house, without putting them down or resting on the way. “But,” she added, “you must keep your word, for I shall be watching you.” The Devil promised to do exactly as she wished. So the next morning she put one of her sisters in a chest, and laid it on her husband’s shoulders. The Devil, who is very strong, but also very lazy and unaccustomed to work, soon got tired of carrying the heavy chest, and wanted to rest before he was out of the street on which he lived; but his wife called out to him: “Don’t put it down; I see you!” The Devil went reluctantly on with the chest until he had turned the corner, and then said to himself: “She cannot see me here; I will rest a little.” But scarcely had he begun to put the chest down when the sister inside cried out: “Don’t put it down; I see you still!” Cursing, he dragged the chest on into another street, and was going to lay it down on a doorstep, but he again heard the voice: “Don’t lay it down, you rascal; I see you still!” “What kind of eyes must my wife have,” he thought, “to see around corners as well as straight ahead, and through walls as if they were made of glass!” and thus thinking he arrived, all in a perspiration and quite tired out, at the house of his mother-in-law, to whom he hastily delivered the chest, and then hurried home to strengthen himself with a good breakfast.

The same thing was repeated the next day with the second chest. On the third day she herself was to be taken home in the chest. She therefore prepared a figure which she dressed in her own clothes, and placed on the balcony, under the pretext of being able to watch him better; slipped quickly into the chest, and had the maid put it on the Devil’s back. “The deuce!” said he; “this chest is a great deal heavier than the others; and to-day, when she is sitting on the balcony, I shall have so much the less chance to rest.” So by dint of the greatest exertions he carried it, without stopping, to his mother-in-law, and then hastened home to breakfast, scolding, and with his back almost broken. But quite contrary to custom, his wife did not come out to meet him, and there was no breakfast ready. “Margerita, where are you?” he cried; but received no answer. As he was running through the corridors he at length looked out of a window, and saw the figure on the balcony. “Margerita, have you gone to sleep? Come down. I am as tired as a dog, and as hungry as a wolf.” But there was no reply. “If you do not come down instantly I will go up and bring you down,” he cried, angrily; but Margerita did not stir. Enraged, he hastened up to the balcony, and gave her such a box on the ear that her head flew off, and he saw that the head was nothing but a milliner’s form, and the body, a bundle of rags. Raging, he rushed down and rummaged through the whole house, but in vain; he found only his wife’s empty jewel-box. “Ha!” he cried; “she has been stolen from me, and her jewels, too!” and he immediately ran to inform her parents of the misfortune. But when he came near the house, to his great surprise he saw on the balcony above the door all three sisters, his wives, who were looking down on him with scornful laughter.

Three wives at once terrified the Devil so much that he took his flight with all possible speed.

Since that time he has lost his taste for marrying.

16

IN LOVE WITH A STATUE

There was once a king who had two sons. The eldest did not wish to marry, and the youngest, although he went about everywhere, found no lady to his taste. Now it happened that he once went to a certain city, and there saw a statue with which he fell in love. He bought it, had it carried to his room, and every day embraced and kissed it. One day his father became aware of this, and said to him: “What are you doing? If you want a wife, take one of flesh and bones, and not one of marble.” He answered that he would take one exactly like the statue, or none at all. His older brother, who at this time had nothing to do, went out into the world to seek her. On his way he saw in a city a man who had a mouse which danced so that it seemed like a human being. He said to himself: “I will take it home to my brother to amuse himself with.” He continued his journey, and, arrived in a more distant town, where he found a bird that sang like an angel, and bought that, too, for his brother. He was on the point of returning home, and was passing through a street, when he saw a beggar knocking at a door. A very beautiful girl appeared at the window, who resembled in every respect the prince’s statue, and suddenly withdrew. Then he told the beggar to ask alms again; but the beggar refused, because he feared that the magician, who was then absent, would return home and eat him up. But the prince gave him so much money and other things that he knocked again, and the young girl appeared again, and suddenly withdrew. Then the prince went through the streets, saying that he mended and sold looking-glasses. The servant of the young girl, who heard him, told her mistress to go and see the mirrors. She went, but he told her that if she wanted to select the mirrors she would have to go on board his ship. When she was there, he carried her away, and she wept bitterly and sighed, so that he would let her return home, but it was like speaking to the wall.

When they were out at sea, there was heard the voice of a large black bird, saying: "*Ciriù, ciriù!* what a handsome mouse you have! You will take it to your brother; you will turn his head; and if you tell him of it, you will become marble. *Ciriù, ciriù!* a fine bird you have; you will take it to your brother; you will turn his head; and if you tell him, you will become marble. *Ciriù, ciriù!* a fine lady you have; you will take her to your brother; you will turn his head; and if you tell him of it, you will become marble." He did not know how he could tell his brother, because he was afraid of becoming marble. He landed, and took the mouse to his brother; and when he had seen it and wanted it, the elder brother cut off its head. Then he showed him the bird that sang like an angel, and his brother wanted it; but the elder brother again cut off its head. Then he said: "I have something handsomer," and he produced the beautiful girl who looked like the statue. And as the brother who had brought her said nothing, the other feared that he would take her away from him, and had him thrown into prison, where he was a long time; and because he continued to keep silence, he was condemned to death. Three days before he was to die he asked his brother to come and see him, and he consented, although unwillingly. Then the condemned brother said: "A large black bird told me that if I brought you back the dancing mouse, and spoke, I should become a statue." And saying this, he became a statue to the waist. "And if, bringing you the singing bird, I spoke, it would be the same." Then he became a statue to his breast. "And if, bringing you the lady, I spoke, I should become a statue." Then he became a statue all over, and his brother began to lament in despair, and tried to restore him to life. All kinds of physicians came, but none succeeded. Finally there came one who said that he was capable of turning the statue into a man provided they gave him what he needed. The king said he would do so, and the physician demanded the blood of the king’s two children; but the mother would on no account consent. Then the king gave a ball, and while his wife was dancing he had the two children killed, and bathed with their blood the statue of his brother, and the statue straightway became a man and went to the ball. The mother, when she beheld him, suddenly thought of her children. She ran to them and found them half dead, and fainted away. All around sought to console and encourage her; but when she opened her eyes and saw the physician, she cried: “Out of my sight, ugly wretch! It is you who have caused my children to be killed.” He answered: “Pardon me, my lady, I have done no harm. Go and see whether your children are there!” She ran to see, and found them alive and making a great noise. Then the physician said: “I am the magician, your father, whom you forsook, and I have wished to show you what it is to love one’s children.” Then they made peace, and remained happy and contented.

17

THIRTEENTH

There was once a father who had thirteen sons, the youngest of whom was named Thirteenth. The father had hard work to support his children, but made what he could gathering herbs. The mother, to make the children quick, said to them: “The one who comes home first shall have herb soup.” Thirteenth always returned the first, and the soup always fell to his share, on which account his brothers hated him and sought to get rid of him.

The king issued a proclamation in the city that he who was bold enough to go and steal the ogre’s coverlet should receive a measure of gold. Thirteenth’s brothers went to the king and said: “Majesty, we have a brother, named Thirteenth, who is confident that he can do that and other things too.” The king said: “Bring him to me at once.” They brought Thirteenth, who said: “Majesty, how is it possible to steal the ogre’s coverlet? If he sees me he will eat me!” “No matter, you must go,” said the king. “I know that you are bold, and this act of bravery you must perform.” Thirteenth departed and went to the house of the ogre, who was away. The ogress was in the kitchen. Thirteenth entered quietly and hid himself under the bed. At night the ogre returned. He ate his supper and went to bed, saying as he did so:

I smell the smell of human flesh;
Where I see it I will swallow it!

The ogress replied: “Be still; no one has entered here.” The ogre began to snore, and Thirteenth pulled the coverlet a little. The ogre awoke and cried: “What is that?” Thirteenth began to mew like a cat. The ogress said: “Scat! scat!” and clapped her hands, and then fell asleep again with the ogre. Then Thirteenth gave a hard pull, seized the coverlet, and ran away. The ogre heard him running, recognized him in the dark, and said: “I know you! You are Thirteenth, without doubt!”

After a time the king issued another proclamation, that whoever would steal the ogre’s horse and bring it to the king should receive a measure of gold. Thirteenth again presented himself, and asked for a silk ladder and a bag of cakes. With these things he departed, and went at night to the ogre’s, climbed up without being heard, and descended to the stable. The horse neighed on seeing him, but he offered it a cake, saying: “Do you see how sweet it is? If you will come with me, my master will give you these always.” Then he gave it another, saying: “Let me mount you and see how we go.” So he mounted it, kept feeding it with cakes, and brought it to the king’s stable.

The king issued another proclamation, that he would give a measure of gold to whoever would bring him the ogre’s bolster. Thirteenth said: “Majesty, how is that possible? The bolster is full of little bells, and you must know that the ogre awakens at a breath.” “I know nothing about it,” said the king. “I wish it at any cost.” Thirteenth departed, and went and crept under the ogre’s bed. At midnight he stretched out his hand very softly, but the little bells all sounded. “What is that?” said the ogre. “Nothing,” replied the ogress; “perhaps it is the wind that makes them ring.” But the ogre, who was suspicious, pretended to sleep, but kept his ears open. Thirteenth stretched out his hand again. Alack! the ogre put out his arm and seized him. “Now you are caught! Just wait; I will make you cry for your first trick, for your second, and for your third.” After this he put Thirteenth in a barrel, and began to feed him on raisins and figs. After a time he said: “Stick out your finger, little Thirteenth, so that I can see whether you are fat.” Thirteenth saw there a mouse’s tail, and stuck that out. “Ah, how thin you are!” said the ogre; “and besides, you don’t smell good! Eat, my son; take the raisins and figs, and get fat soon!” After some days the ogre told him again to put out his finger, and Thirteenth stuck out a spindle. “Eh, wretch! are you still lean? Eat, eat, and get fat soon.”

At the end of a month Thirteenth had nothing more to stick out, and was obliged to show his finger. The ogre cried out in joy: “He is fat, he is fat!” The ogress hastened to the spot: “Quick, my ogress, heat the oven three nights and three days, for I am going to invite our relatives, and we will make a fine banquet of Thirteenth.”

The ogress heated the oven three days and three nights, and then released Thirteenth from the barrel, and said to him: “Come here, Thirteenth; we have got to put the lamb in the oven.” But Thirteenth caught her meaning; and when he approached the oven, he said: “Ah, mother ogress, what is that black thing in the corner of the oven?” The ogress stooped down a little, but saw nothing. “Stoop down again,” said Thirteenth, “so that you can see it.” When she stooped down again, Thirteenth seized her by the feet and threw her into the oven, and then closed the oven door. When she was cooked, he took her out carefully, cut her in two, divided her legs into pieces, and put them on the table, and placed her trunk, with her head and arms, in the bed, under the sheet, and tied a string to the chin and another to the back of her head.

When the ogre arrived with his guests he found the dishes on the table. Then he went to his wife’s bed and asked: “Mother ogress, do you want to dine?” Thirteenth pulled the string, and the ogress shook her head. “How are you, tired?” And Thirteenth, who was hidden under the bed, pulled the other string and made her nod. Now it happened that one of her relatives moved something and saw that the ogress was dead, and only half of her was there. She cried in a loud voice: “Treason! treason!” and all hastened to the bed. In the midst of the confusion Thirteenth escaped from under the bed and ran away to the king with the bolster and the ogre’s most valuable things.

After this, the king said to Thirteenth: “Listen, Thirteenth. To complete your valiant exploits, I wish you to bring me the ogre himself, in person, alive and well.” “How can I, your Majesty?” said Thirteenth. Then he roused himself, and added: “I see how, now!” Then he had a very strong chest made, and disguised himself as a monk, with a long, false beard, and went to the ogre’s house, and called out to him: “Do you know Thirteenth? The wretch! he has killed our superior; but if I catch him! If I catch him, I will shut him up in this chest!” At these words the ogre drew near and said: “I, too, would like to help you, against that wretch of an assassin, for you don’t know what he has done to me.” And he began to tell his story. “But what shall we do?” said the pretended monk. “I do not know Thirteenth. Do you know him?” “Yes, sir.” “Then tell me, father ogre, how tall is he?” “As tall as I am.” “If that is so,” said Thirteenth, “let us see whether this chest will hold you; if it will hold you, it will hold him.” “Oh, good!” said the ogre; and got into the chest. Then Thirteenth shut the chest and said: “Look carefully, father ogre, and see whether there is any hole in the chest.” “There is none.” “Just wait; let us see whether it shuts well, and is heavy to carry.”

Meanwhile Thirteenth shut and nailed up the chest, took it on his back, and hastened to the city. When the ogre cried: “Enough, now!” Thirteenth ran all the faster, and, laughing, sang this song to taunt the ogre:

I am Thirteenth,
Who carry you on my back;
I have tricked you and am going to trick you.
I must deliver you to the king.

When he reached the king, the king had an iron chain attached to the ogre’s hands and feet, and made him gnaw bones the rest of his miserable life. The king gave Thirteenth all the riches and treasures he could bestow on him, and always wished him at his side, as a man of the highest valor.

18

THE COBBLER

There was once a cobbler who one day was so tired of cobbling that he said: “Now I will go and seek my fortune.” He bought a little cheese and put it on the table. It got full of flies, and he took an old shoe, and hit the cheese and killed all the flies. He afterward counted them, and five hundred were killed, and four hundred wounded. He then girded on a sword, and put on a cocked hat, and went to the court, and said to the king: “I am the chief warrior of the flies. Four hundred I have killed, and five hundred I have wounded.” The king answered: “Since you are a warrior, you will be brave enough to climb that mountain there, where there are two magicians, and kill them. If you kill them, you shall marry my daughter.” Then he gave him a white flag to wave when he had killed them. “And sound the trumpet, you will put his head in a bag, both the heads, to show me.” The cobbler then departed, and found a house, which was an inn, and the innkeeper and his wife were none other than the magician and his wife. He asked for lodging and food, and all he needed. Afterward he went to his room; but before going to bed, he looked up at the ceiling. There he saw a great stone over the bed. Instead of getting into bed, he got into a corner. When a certain hour struck, the magicians let the stone drop and it crushed the whole bed. The next morning the cobbler went down and said that he could not sleep for the noise. They told him they would change his room. The same thing happened the next night, and in the morning they told him they would give him another room. When it was a certain hour, the husband and wife went to the forest to cut a bundle of fagots. Then the magician went home; and the cobbler, who had made ready a sickle, said: “Wait until I help you to take the bundle off your back.” Then he gave the magician a blow with the sickle and cut off his head. He did the same thing when the magician’s wife returned. Then he unfurled his flag, and sounded his trumpet, and the band went out to meet him. After he had arrived at the court, the king said to him: “Now that you have killed the two magicians, you shall marry my daughter.” But the cobbler had got so used to drawing the thread that he did so in his sleep, and kept hitting his wife, so that she could not rest. Then the king gave him a great deal of money and sent him home.

19

THE KING WHO WANTED A BEAUTIFUL WIFE

There was once a king who wanted to marry. But his wife must be more beautiful than the sun, and no matter how many maidens he saw, none was beautiful enough to suit him. Then he called his trusty servant, and commanded him to seek everywhere and see whether he could find a beautiful girl. The servant set out, and wandered through the whole land, but found none who seemed handsome enough to him. One day, however, after he had run about a great deal and was very thirsty, he came to a little house. He knocked and asked for a drink of water. Now there dwelt in the house two very old women, — one eighty and the other ninety years old, — who supported themselves by spinning. When the servant asked for water, the one eighty years old rose, opened a little wicket in the shutter, and handed him out the water. From spinning so much, her hands were very white and delicate; and when the servant saw them he thought, “It must be a handsome maiden, for she has such a delicate white hand.” So he hastened to the king, and said: “Your royal Majesty, I have found what you seek; so and so has happened to me.” “Very well,” answered the king, “go once more and try to see her.”

The servant returned to the little house, knocked, and asked again for some water. The old woman did not open the window, but handed him the pitcher through the little opening in the shutter. “Do you live here all alone?” asked the servant. “No,” she answered. “I live here with my sister; we are poor girls and support ourselves by the work of our hands.” “How old are you, then?” “I am fifteen and my sister twenty.” The servant went back to the king and told him all, and the king said: “I will take the one who is fifteen. Go and bring her to me.” When the servant returned to the two old women, and told them that the king wished to elevate the younger to the position of his wife, she answered: “Tell the king I am ready to do his will. Since my birth no ray of the sun has ever struck me, and if a ray of the sun or a beam of light should strike me now, I would become perfectly black. Ask the king, therefore, to send a closed carriage for me at night, and I will come to his palace.”

When the king heard this he sent royal apparel and a closed carriage, and at night the old woman covered her face with a thick veil and rode to the palace. The king received her joyfully, and begged her to lay aside the veil. She replied: “There are too many lighted candles here; their light would make me black.” So the king married her without having seen her face. When they came into the king’s chamber, however, and she removed her veil, the king saw for the first time what an ugly old woman he had married, and in his rage he opened the window and threw her out. Fortunately there was a nail in the wall, on which she caught by her clothes, and remained hanging between heaven and earth. Four fairies chanced to pass by, and when they saw the old woman hanging there, one of them cried: “See, sisters, there is the old woman who cheated the king; shall we wish her dress to tear and let her fall?” “Oh, no! let us not do that,” cried the youngest and most beautiful of the fairies. “Let us rather wish her something good. I wish her youth.” “And I, beauty.” “And I, prudence.” “And I, a good heart.” Thus the fairies cried, and while they were yet speaking the old woman became a wondrous fair maiden.

The next morning, when the king looked out of the window and saw the beautiful girl hanging there, he was terrified, and thought: “Unhappy man!

What have I done! Had I no eyes last night?” Then he had her carefully taken down with long ladders, and begged her pardon, saying: “Now we will have a great festival and be right happy.” So they celebrated a splendid feast, and the young queen was the fairest in the whole city.

But one day the sister ninety years old came to the palace to visit the queen, her sister. “Who is this ugly creature?” asked the king. “An old neighbor of mine who is half-witted,” replied the queen, quickly. The old woman kept looking at her rejuvenated sister, and asked: “What did you do to become so young and lovely? I, too, would like to be young and pretty again.” She kept asking this the whole day, until the queen finally lost her patience, and said: “I had my old skin taken off, and this new, smooth skin came to light.” The old woman went to a barber and said: “I will give you what you will to remove my old skin, so that I may become young and handsome again.” “But good old woman, you will surely die if I skin you.” The old woman would not listen to him, and at last he had to do her will. He took his knife and made a cut in her forehead. “Oh!” cried the old woman.

Who will look fair
Must grief and pain bear,

answered the barber. “Then skin away, master,” said the old woman. The barber kept cutting on, until all at once the old woman fell down dead.

20

THE BUCKET

There was once a mother who had two daughters: one was bad and the other was very good. But the mother loved the bad one more than the good one. She said one day to the bad one: “Go and draw a bucket of water.” The bad one did not want to go, and so she would not obey her mother. The good daughter, however, said: “I will go and draw it.” She went to draw the water, and the bucket fell down the well. She said: “If I go home now without the bucket, who knows what my mother will do to me?” So she climbed down the well, and at the bottom found a narrow passage, with a door. She knocked at the door. “Have you not found a cord and bucket?” There was a saint there, who answered: “No, my child.” She continued her way and found another door. “Have you not found a cord and bucket?” “No!” That was the devil there. He answered her angrily because she was a good girl; he did not say: “My child.” She knocked at another door. “Have you not found a cord and bucket?” It was the Madonna who replied: “Yes, my child. Listen. You could do me a pleasure to stay here while I am away. I have my little son here, to whom you will give his soup; you will sweep and put the house in order. When I come home I will give you your bucket.” The Madonna went away, and the good girl put the house in order, gave the child his broth, swept the house; and while she was sweeping, instead of finding dirt, she found coral and other beautiful things.

She saw that it was not dirt, and put it aside to give the Madonna when she returned. When the Madonna came back, she asked: “Have you done all I told you to do?” The good girl answered: “Yes, but I have kept these things here; I found them on the ground; it is not dirt.” “Very well; keep them for yourself. Would you like a dress of calico, or one of silk?” The girl answered: “No, no! a calico dress.” Instead of that, the Madonna gave her the silk one. “Do you wish a brass thimble, or a silver one?” “Give me the brass one.” “No, take the silver thimble. Here is the bucket and your cord. When you reach the end of this passage, look up in the air.” The girl did so, and a beautiful star fell on her brow.

She went home, and her mother ran to meet her to scold her for being away so long; and was about to strike her, when she saw the star on her brow, which shone so that it was beautiful to see, and said: “Where have you been until now? Who put that thing on your forehead?” The girl answered: “I don’t know what there is there.” Her mother tried to wash it away, but instead of disappearing, it shone more beautiful than ever. Then the girl told what had happened to her, and the other sister wished to go there, too. She went, and did the same as her sister. She let the bucket fall, climbed down, and knocked at the saint’s door. “Have you not found a cord and bucket?” “No, my child.” She knocked at the next door. “Have you not found a cord and bucket?” The devil answered: “No, I have not found them; but come here, my child, come here.” But when she heard that he had not found her bucket, she said: “No, I will go on.” She knocked at the Madonna’s door. “Have you not found a cord and bucket?” The Madonna said that she had. “I am going away: you will give my son his broth, and then you will sweep. When I return I will give you your bucket.” Instead of giving the broth to the child, the bad girl ate it herself. “Oh!” she said, “how good it was!” She swept and found a great deal of dirt. “Oh, poor me! My sister found so many pretty things!” The Madonna returned. “Have you done what I told you?” “Yes.” “Do you wish the brass or silver thimble?”

“Oh! I want the silver one!” She gave her the brass one. “Do you want the calico dress or the silk one?” “Give me the silk dress.” She gave her the calico dress. “Here is your bucket and cord. When you are out of here, look up into the air.” When she was out she looked up into the air and there fell on her forehead a lump of dirt that soiled her whole face. She went home in a rage to weep and scold her sister because she had had the star, while she had that dirt on her face. Her mother began to wash her face and rub it; and the more she did so the less the dirt went away. Then the mother said: “I understand; the Madonna has done this to show me that I loved the bad girl and neglected the good one.”

21

THE TWO HUMPBACKS

There were once two companions who were humpbacks, but one more so than the other. They were both so poor that they had not a penny to their names. One of them said: “I will go out into the world, for here there is nothing to eat; we are dying of hunger. I want to see whether I can make my fortune.” “Go,” said the other. “If you make your fortune, return, and I will go and see if I can make mine.” So the humpback set off on his journey. Now these two humpbacks were from Parma. When the humpback had gone a long way, he came to a square where there was a fair, at which everything was sold. There was a person selling cheese, who cried out: “Eat the little Parmesan!” The poor humpback thought he meant him, so he ran away and hid himself in a court-yard. When it was one o’clock, he heard a clanking of chains and the words “Saturday and Sunday” repeated several times. Then he answered: “And Monday.” “Oh, heavens!” said they who were singing. “Who is this who has harmonized with our choir?” They searched and found the poor humpback hidden. “O gentlemen!” he said, “I have not come here to do any harm, you know!” “Well! we have come to reward you; you have harmonized our choir; come with us!” They put him on a table and removed his hump, healed him, and gave him two bags of money. “Now,” they said, “you can go.” He thanked them and went away without his hump. He liked it better, you can believe!

He returned to his place at Parma, and when the other humpback saw him he exclaimed: “Does not that look just like my friend? But he had a hump! It is not he! Listen! You are not my friend so and so, are you?” “Yes, I am,” he replied. “Listen! Were you not a humpback?” “Yes. They have removed my hump and given me two bags of money. I will tell you why. I reached,” he continued, “such and such a place, and I heard them beginning to say, ‘*Eat the little Parmesan! eat the little Parmesan!*’ I was so frightened that I hid myself.” (He mentioned the place — in a court-yard.) “At a certain hour, I heard a noise of chains and a chorus singing: ‘*Saturday and Sunday.*’ After two or three times, I said: ‘*And Monday.*’ They came and found me, saying that I had harmonized their chorus, and they wanted to reward me. They took me, removed my hump, and gave me two bags of money.” “Oh, heavens!” said the other humpback. “I want to go there, too!” “Go, poor fellow, go! farewell!” The humpback reached the place, and hid himself precisely where his companion had. After a while he heard a noise of chains, and the chorus: “Saturday and Sunday!” Then another chorus: “And Monday!” After the humpback had heard them repeat: “Saturday and Sunday, and Monday!” several times, he added: “And Tuesday!” “Where,” they exclaimed, “is he who has spoiled our chorus? If we find him, we will tear him in pieces.” Just think! they struck and beat this poor humpback until they were tired; then they put him on the same table on which they had placed his companion, and said: “Take that hump and put it on him in front.” So they took the other’s hump and fastened it to his breast, and then drove him away with blows. He went home and found his friend, who cried: “Mercy! is not that my friend? but it cannot be, for this one is humpbacked in front. Listen,” he said, “are you not my friend?” “The same,” he answered, weeping. “I did not want to bear my own hump, and now I have to carry mine and yours! and so beaten and reduced, you see!” “Come,” said his friend, “come home with me, and we will eat a mouthful together;

and don’t be disheartened.” And so, every day, he dined with his friend, and afterward they died, I imagine.

22

THE STORY OF CATHERINE AND HER FATE

There was once a merchant who was very rich and had greater treasures than the king. In his reception room stood three wonderfully beautiful seats. One was of silver, the second of gold, and the third of diamonds. This merchant had an only daughter, whose name was Catherine, and who was fairer than the sun.

One day as Catherine was sitting in her chamber, the door suddenly opened of itself, and there entered a tall, beautiful lady, who held in her hand a wheel. “Catherine,” said she, “when would you rather enjoy your life, in youth or in old age?” Catherine gazed at her in amazement, and could make no answer. The beautiful lady again asked: “Catherine, when would you rather enjoy your life, in youth or in old age?” Then thought Catherine: “If I say in youth, I must suffer for it in old age; wherefore I will rather enjoy my life in old age, and in youth God’s will be done.” So she answered: “In old age.” “Be it as you have wished,” said the beautiful woman, turned her wheel once, and disappeared. Now this beautiful tall lady was poor Catherine’s Fate.

A few days later, her father suddenly received news that some of his ships had been wrecked in a storm; a few days after, he learned that several more of his ships had foundered; and to cut the matter short, scarcely a month had passed when he was himself deprived of all his riches. He had to sell all that he had, and this, too, he lost, until at last he remained poor and wretched. From grief he fell ill and died.

So poor Catherine remained all alone in the world, without a penny, and with no one to give her shelter. She thought: “I will go to another city and seek me a place there.” So she set out and walked until she came to another city. As she was going through the streets a noble lady happened to be standing by the window, and asked her: “Where are you going, all alone, pretty maiden?” “Ah! noble lady, I am a poor girl, and would like to find a place to earn my bread. Can you not find use for me?” So the noble lady received her, and Catherine served her faithfully.

Some days later the lady said one evening: “Catherine, I must go out for a time, and will lock the house door.” “Very well,” said Catherine, and after her mistress had gone she took her work and sat down and sewed. Suddenly the door opened, and her Fate entered. “So?” she cried, “are you here, Catherine? and do you think now that I am going to leave you in peace?” With these words, her Fate ran to all the cupboards, dragged out the linen and clothes of Catherine’s mistress, and tore everything into a thousand pieces. Catherine thought: “Woe is me if my mistress returns and finds everything in this condition; she will certainly kill me!” And in her anguish she opened the door and fled. Her Fate, however, gathered up all the torn and ruined things, made them whole, and laid them away in their places. When the mistress returned she called Catherine, but Catherine was nowhere to be seen. “Can she have robbed me?” she thought; but when she looked about, nothing was gone. She was very much astonished, but Catherine did not return, but hastened on until she came to another city. As she was passing through the streets, another lady, standing by the window, asked her: “Where are you going, all alone, pretty maiden?” “Ah! noble lady, I am a poor girl, and would like a place to earn my bread. Can you not make use of me?” Then the lady took her in, and Catherine served her and thought now she could rest in peace. It lasted, however, but a few days. One evening, when her mistress was out, her Fate appeared again and addressed her harshly: “So, here you are now? Do you think you can escape me?” Then the Fate tore and destroyed everything that it found, so that poor Catherine again fled, in her anguish of heart. To cut the matter short, poor Catherine led this frightful life seven years, flying from one city to another, and everywhere attempting to find a place. Her Fate always appeared after a few days, and tore and destroyed her employers’ things, so that the poor girl had to flee. As soon as she had left the house the Fate restored everything and put it in its place.

Finally, after seven years, her Fate seemed weary of always persecuting the unfortunate Catherine. One day Catherine came again to a city and saw a lady standing at a window, who asked her: “Where are you going, all alone, pretty girl?” “Ah! noble lady, I am a poor girl, and would like to find a place to earn my bread. Can you not find use for me?” The lady answered: “I will give you a place willingly, but you must perform daily a service, and I do not know whether you have strength for it.” “Tell me what it is,” said Catherine, “and if I can, I will do it.” “Do you see yonder high mountain?” asked the lady. “Every morning you must carry up there a large board covered with fresh bread, and cry with a loud voice: ‘O my mistress’ Fate! O my mistress’ Fate! O my mistress’ Fate!’ thrice. Then my Fate will appear and receive the bread.” “I will do that willingly,” said Catherine, and the lady took her into her service.

Now Catherine remained years with this lady, and every morning she took a board with fresh bread and carried it up the mountain, and when she had called three times: “O my mistress’ Fate!” there appeared a beautiful tall lady, who received the bread. Catherine often wept when she thought that she, who had once been so rich, must now serve like a poor maid. One day her mistress said to her: “Catherine, why do you weep so much?” Then Catherine told her how ill it had fared with her, and her mistress said: “I will tell you what, Catherine, when you take the bread to the mountain to-morrow, ask my Fate to try and persuade your Fate to leave you now in peace. Perhaps that will do some good.” This advice pleased poor Catherine, and the next morning, after she had taken the bread to her mistress’ Fate, she disclosed her trouble to her, and said: “O my mistress’ Fate, beg my Fate to persecute me no longer.” Then the Fate answered: “Ah, poor girl, your Fate is just now covered with seven coverlets, so that she cannot hear you; but when you come to-morrow I will take you to her.” After Catherine had returned home, her mistress’ Fate went to the young girl’s Fate and said: “Dear sister, why are you never weary of making poor Catherine suffer? Permit her again to see some happy days.” The Fate answered: “Bring her to me to-morrow and I will give her something that will help her out of all her trouble.” When Catherine brought the bread the next morning, her mistress’ Fate conducted her to her own Fate, who was covered with seven coverlets. Her Fate gave her a small skein of silk, and said: “Preserve it carefully; it will be of use to you.” Then Catherine went home and said to her mistress: “My Fate has given me a little skein of silk; what shall I do with it? It is not worth three *grani*.” “Well,” said her mistress, “preserve it; who knows of what use it may be?”

Now it happened, some time after this, that the young king was to marry, and on that account had royal garments made for himself. As the tailor was about to sew a beautiful dress, there was no silk of the same color to be found. So the king proclaimed throughout the whole land that whoever had such silk should bring it to the court and would be well rewarded. “Catherine,” said her mistress, “your skein is of that color; take it to the king so that he may make you a handsome present.” Then Catherine put on her best clothes, and went to the Court; and when she appeared before the king, she was so beautiful that he could not keep his eyes from her. “Royal Majesty,” said she, “I have brought you a little skein of silk, of the color that could not be found.” “I will tell you what, royal Majesty,” cried one of his ministers, “we will pay the maiden for the silk with its weight in gold.” The king was satisfied and they brought a balance; in one scale the king laid the silk, in the other, a gold coin. Now just imagine what happened: no matter how many gold coins the king laid in the scale, the silk was always heavier. Then the king had a larger balance brought, and threw all his treasures into the scale, but the silk still weighed the more. Then the king at last took his crown from his head and placed it with all the other treasures, and behold! the scale with gold sank and weighed exactly as much as the silk. “Where did you get this silk?” asked the king. “Royal Majesty, it was a present from my mistress,” answered Catherine. “No, that is impossible,” cried the king. “If you do not tell me the truth, I will have your head cut off.” Then Catherine related all that had happened to her since she was a rich maiden.

Now there lived at the court a wise lady, who said: “Catherine, you have suffered much, but you will now see happy days; and that it was not until the golden crown was put in the scale that the balance was even, is a sign that you will be a queen.” “If she is to be a queen,” cried the king, “I will make her one, for Catherine and none other shall be my wife.” And so it was; the king informed his betrothed that he no longer wished her, and married the fair Catherine. And after Catherine in her youth had suffered so much, she enjoyed nothing but happiness in her old age, and was happy and contented.

23

THE CRUMB IN THE BEARD

There was once a king who had a daughter whose name was Stella. She was indescribably beautiful, but was so whimsical and hard to please that she drove her father to despair. There had been princes and kings who had sought her in marriage, but she had found defects in them all and would have none of them. She kept advancing in years, and her father began to despair of knowing to whom he should leave his crown. So he summoned his council, and discussed the matter, and was advised to give a great banquet, to which he should invite all the princes and kings of the surrounding countries, for, as they said, there cannot fail to be among so many, some one who should please the princess, who was to hide behind a door, so that she could examine them all as she pleased. When the king heard this advice, he gave the orders necessary for the banquet, and then called his daughter, and said: “Listen, my little Stella, I have thought to do so and so, to see if I can find any one to please you; behold, my daughter, my hair is white, and I must have some one to leave my crown to.” Stella bowed her head, saying that she would take care to please him. Princes and kings then began to arrive at the court, and when it was time for the banquet, they all seated themselves at the table. You can imagine what sort of a banquet that was, and how the hall was adorned: gold and silver shone from all their necks; in the four corners of the room were four fountains, which continually sent forth wine and the most exquisite perfumes. While the gentlemen were eating, Stella was behind a door, as has been said, and one of her maids, who was near by, pointed out to her now this one, now that one. “See, your Majesty, what a handsome youth that is there.” “Yes, but he has too large a nose.” “And the one near your father?” “He has eyes that look like saucers.” “And that other at the head of the table?” “He has too large a mouth; he looks as if he liked to eat.” In short, she found fault with all but one, who, she said, pleased her, but that he must be a very dirty fellow, for he had a crumb on his beard after eating. The youth heard her say this, and swore vengeance. You must know that he was the son of the king of Green Hill, and the handsomest youth that could be seen. When the banquet was finished and the guests had departed, the king called Stella and asked: “What news have you, my child?” She replied, that the only one who pleased her was the one with the crumb in his beard, but that she believed him to be a dirty fellow and did not want him. “Take care, my daughter, you will repent it,” answered her father, and turned away.

You must know that Stella’s chamber looked into a court-yard into which opened the shop of a baker. One night, while she was preparing to retire, she heard, in the room where they sifted the meal, some one singing so well and with so much grace that it went to her heart. She ran to the window and listened until he finished. Then she began to ask her maid who the person with the beautiful voice could be, saying she would like to know. “Leave it to me, your Majesty,” said the maid; “I will inform you to-morrow.” Stella could not wait for the next day; and, indeed, early the next day she learned that the one who sang was the sifter. That evening she heard him sing again, and stood by the window until everything became quiet. But that voice had so touched her heart that she told her maid that the next day she would try and see who had that fine voice. In the morning she placed herself by the window, and soon saw the youth come forth. She was enchanted by his beauty as soon as she saw him, and fell desperately in love with him.

Now you must know that this was none other than the prince who was at the banquet, and whom Stella had called “dirty.” So he had disguised himself in such a way that she could not recognize him, and was meanwhile preparing his revenge. After he had seen her once or twice he began to take off his hat and salute her. She smiled at him, and appeared at the window every moment. Then they began to exchange words, and in the evening he sang under her window. In short, they began to make love in good earnest, and when he learned that she was free, he began to talk about marrying her. She consented at once, but asked him what he had to live on. “I haven’t a penny,” said he; “the little I earn is hardly enough to feed me.” Stella encouraged him, saying that she would give him all the money and things he wanted. To punish Stella for her pride, her father and the prince’s father had an understanding, and pretended not to know about this love affair, and let her carry away from the palace all she owned. During the day Stella did nothing but make a great bundle of clothes, of silver, and of money, and at night the disguised prince came under the balcony, and she threw it down to him. Things went on in this manner some time, and finally one evening he said to her: “Listen. The time has come to elope.” Stella could not wait for the hour, and the next night she quietly tied a cord about her and let herself down from the window. The prince aided her to the ground, and then took her arm and hastened away. He led her a long ways to another city, where he turned down a street and opened the first door he met. They went down a long passage; finally they reached a little door, which he opened, and they found themselves in a hole of a place which had only one window, high up. The furniture consisted of a straw bed, a bench, and a dirty table. You can imagine that when Stella saw herself in this place she thought she should die. When the prince saw her so amazed, he said: “What is the matter? Does the house not please you? Do you not know that I am a poor man? Have you been deceived?” “What have you done with all the things I gave you?” “Oh, I had many debts, and I have paid them, and then I have done with the rest what seemed good to me. You must make up your mind to work and gain your bread as I have done. You must know that I am a porter of the king of this city, and I often go and work at the palace. To-morrow, they have told me, the washing is to be done, so you must rise early and go with me there. I will set you to work with the other women, and when it is time for them to go home to dinner, you will say that you are not hungry, and while you are alone, steal two shirts, conceal them under your skirt, and carry them home to me.” Poor Stella wept bitterly, saying it was impossible for her to do that; but her husband replied: “Do what I say, or I shall beat you.” The next morning her husband rose with the dawn, and made her get up, too. He had bought her a striped skirt and a pair of coarse shoes, which he made her put on, and then took her to the palace with him, conducted her to the laundry and left her, after he had introduced her as his wife, saying that she should remember what awaited her at home. Then the prince ran and dressed himself like a king, and waited at the gate of the palace until it was time for his wife to come. Meanwhile poor Stella did as her husband had commanded, and stole the shirts. As she was leaving the palace, she met the king, who said: “Pretty girl, you are our porter’s wife, are you not?” Then he asked her what she had under her skirt, and shook her until the shirts dropped out, and the king cried: “See there! the porter’s wife is a thief; she has stolen some shirts.” Poor Stella ran home in tears, and her husband followed her when he had put on his disguise again. When he reached home Stella told him all that had happened and begged him not to send her to the palace again; but he told her that the next day they were to bake, and she must go into the kitchen and help, and steal a piece of dough. Everything happened as on the previous day. Stella’s theft was discovered, and when her husband returned he found her crying like a condemned soul, and swearing that she had rather be killed than go to the palace again. He told her, however, that the king’s son was to be married the next day, and that there was to be a great banquet, and she must go into the kitchen and wash the dishes. He added that when she had the chance she must steal a pot of broth and hide it about her so that no one should see it. She had to do as she was told, and had scarcely concealed the pot when the king’s son came into the kitchen and told his wife she must come to the ball that had followed the banquet. She did not wish to go, but he took her by the arm and led her into the midst of the festival. Imagine how the poor woman felt at that ball, dressed as she was, and with the pot of broth! The king began to poke his sword at her in jest, until he hit the pot, and all the broth ran on the floor. Then all began to jeer her and laugh, until poor Stella fainted away from shame, and they had to go and get some vinegar to revive her. At last the king’s mother came forward and said: “Enough; you have revenged yourself sufficiently.” Then turning to Stella: “Know that this is your mother, and that he has done this to correct your pride and to be avenged on you for calling him dirty.” Then she took her by the arm and led her to another room, where her maids dressed her as a queen. Her father and mother then appeared and kissed and embraced her. Her husband begged her pardon for what he had done, and they made peace and always lived in harmony. From that day on she was never haughty, and had learned to her cost that pride is the greatest fault.

24

THE FAIRY ORLANDA

There was once a merchant who had no children. He was obliged to go away for merchandise. His wife said to him: “Here is a ring; put it on your finger. You must bring me a doll as large as I am; one that can move, sew, and dress herself. If you forget, this ring will turn red, and your steamer will go neither forward nor backward.” And so it happened. He forgot the doll, embarked on the steamer, and it would not move. The pilot said: “Sir, have you forgotten anything?” to all the gentlemen who were there. “No, sir; nothing.” At the end of the steamer was this merchant. “Sir, have you forgotten anything; for the steamer cannot move?” He looked at his hand and replied: “Yes, I have forgotten something — my wife’s doll.” He landed, got the doll, reëmbarked, and the steamer continued its way. On his arrival at Naples, he carried the doll to his wife, well dressed and elegant; it seemed like a very handsome young girl. His wife, well pleased, talked to the doll, and they both worked near the balcony. Opposite lived a king’s son, who fell in love with the doll, and became ill from his passion. The queen, who saw that her son was ill, asked: “My son, what is the matter with you? Tell your mamma. To-day or to-morrow we die, and you reign; and if you take an illness and die, who will reign?” He answered: “Mamma, I have taken this illness because there is a young girl, the daughter of the merchant who lives opposite, who is so beautiful that she has enamored me.” The queen said: “Yes, my son, I shall marry you to her. Were she the daughter of a scavenger, you shall marry her.” “You would do a good thing. Now let us send for the merchant.” They sent a servant to the merchant’s house. “Her Majesty wishes you at the palace!” “What does she want?” “She must speak with you.” The merchant went to the palace, and asked: “Majesty, what do you wish?” “Have you a daughter?” “No, Majesty.” “What do you mean? My son has fallen ill from the love he has conceived for your daughter.” “Your Majesty, I tell you it is a doll, and not a human being.” “I don’t want to hear nonsense! If you don’t present your daughter to me in a fortnight, your head will fall under the guillotine.” (Do you not know what the guillotine is? It is the gallows. He was to be hung if he did not take her his daughter within a fortnight.) The merchant went home, weeping. His wife said: “What is the matter; what has the king said to you at the palace, to make you weep?” “Can you not guess what has happened to me? The king’s son has fallen ill for the sake of the doll you have!” “He has fallen ill? did he not see that it was a doll?” “He would not believe it, and says it is my daughter, and that if I do not bring her to him within a fortnight, my head will fall under the guillotine.” “Well,” said his wife, “take the doll, and carry her out into the country, and see what will happen.” He did so, and while he was going along, all confused, he met an old man who asked him: “Merchant, what are you doing?” “Ah, my old man, why should I tell you?” “I know all.” Then said the merchant: “Since you know all, find some remedy for my life.” The old man said: “Exactly. Go to such and such a place, where there is a fairy, who is called the fairy Orlanda. She has a palace with no doorkeeper, and no stairway. Here is a violin and a silk ladder. When you reach this palace, begin to play. The fairy and all her twelve maidens will appear at the window. This fairy Orlanda can give you help.”

The merchant continued his journey, and found the palace without a doorkeeper, and with no stairway. He began to play the violin, and the fairy and all her twelve damsels appeared and said: “What do you want that you call us?” “Ah! fairy Orlanda, help me!” “What help do you want?” “I have this doll, and the king’s son has fallen in love with it, and is ill. What shall I do? If I do not present her to him in a fortnight my head will be cut off.” The fairy Orlanda said: “Put this ladder to the wall. Give me the doll. Wait two hours and I will give her back to you again.” He waited two hours and then the fairy appeared: “Here is your daughter. She will speak to all, to the king, to the queen, but not to the prince. Farewell.” The fairy Orlanda disappeared within, and the merchant departed with his daughter. He took her home to his wife. The doll said: “Mamma, how do you do?” “I am very well, my daughter. Where have you been?” “I have been into the country with papa, and now I have returned.” In a fortnight the merchant dressed her elegantly and carried her to the palace. As soon as the king saw her he said to the queen: “My son was right; she is a beautiful girl!” She went into the gallery and spoke with the king and queen, but did not speak to the prince. The mortified prince thought: “She speaks to papa, she speaks to mamma, but not to me! What does it mean? Perhaps she does not speak to me from embarrassment.” They were married, but even then she did not speak to him. So the prince was obliged to separate from her, and they lived in two rooms apart. The prince, meanwhile, courted another princess. One morning, while he was breakfasting with his sweetheart, his wife called a servant: “Come here; is the prince at table?” “Yes, Highness.” “Wait!” She cut off her two hands and put them in the oven, and there came out a roast, with ten sausages. “Carry these to the prince.” “Prince, the princess sends you this.” He asked: “How was it made?” The servant replied: “Prince, she cut off her two hands and put them in the oven. She amazed me.” “Enough,” said the prince, “let us eat them.” His sweetheart said: “I can do it, too.” So she cut off her hands and put them in the oven; but they were burned and she died. “Oh, what have you done to me! you have killed one for me!” said the prince. After a time he made love to another. The first time he sat at table with her, the princess called another servant: “Servant, where are you going?” “I am going, Majesty, to the prince’s table.” “Wait!” She cut off her arms, and put them in the oven, and there came out a roast, with two blood-puddings. She said: “Carry it to the prince, at table.” “Prince!” “Go away, I don’t want to hear any nonsense.” “But listen; let me tell you!” “Well, tell away.” So the servant told how the princess had cut off her arms (which had grown out again) and put them in the oven, and the roast and puddings had come out. The second sweetheart tried to do the same and died. After a while the prince fell in love with another, and the same thing was repeated. The princess cut off her legs and put them in the oven, and a large roast came out, with two larded hams. The third sweetheart tried to do the same, and died like the others. Then the prince said: “Ah! she has done it to three for me! Unhappy me! I will not make love to any more.”

During the night when the princess had gone to bed, the lamp said: “Lady, I want to drink.” “Oil-cruet, give the lamp a drink.” “Lady, it has hurt me.” “Oil-cruet, why did you hurt the lamp? How beautiful is the fairy Orlanda! How beautiful is the fairy Orlanda! How beautiful is the fairy Orlanda!” So she did all night until day. All these things were enchanted: the lamp and the oil-cruet. The prince, who heard it, said one day to a servant: “This evening you must enter the princess’ room. You must spend the night under her bed. You must see what she does in the night.” The servant did so, and the same thing was repeated with the lamp and the oil-cruet. The servant told the prince, who said: “To-night, I will go.” At night he crept under his wife’s bed. The same thing was repeated. The lamp said: “Lady, I want to drink!” “Oil-cruet, give the lamp a drink.” “Lady, it has hurt me.” “Oil-cruet, why have you hurt the lamp? How beautiful is the fairy Orlanda!” The whole night she repeated: “How beautiful is the fairy Orlanda!” The prince responded: “Blessed be the fairy Orlanda!” “Ah!”

said the princess, “did it need so much to say a word?” Then they embraced and kissed each other, and remained contented and happy.

25

THE SHEPHERD WHO MADE THE KING’S DAUGHTER LAUGH

There was once a king and a queen who had an only daughter, whom they loved very dearly. When she was fifteen years old she became suddenly very sad and would not laugh any more. So the king issued a proclamation that whoever made his daughter laugh, whether he were a prince, peasant, or beggar, should become her husband. Many made the attempt, but none succeeded. Now there was a poor woman who had an only son, who was idle and would not learn any trade; so finally his mother sent him to a farmer to keep his sheep. One day, as he was driving the sheep over the fields, he came to a well, and bent over it to drink. As he did so he saw a handsome ring on the wheel, and as it pleased him, he put it on the ring finger of his right hand. He had scarcely put it on, however, when he began to sneeze violently, and could not stop until he had accidentally removed the ring. Then his sneezing ceased as suddenly as it had begun. “Oh!” thought he, “if the ring has this virtue, I had better try my fortune with it, and see whether it will not make the king’s daughter laugh.” So he put the ring on his left hand, and no longer had to sneeze. Then he drove the sheep home, took leave of his master, and set out toward the city where the king lived. He was obliged, however, to pass through a dense forest which was so extensive that it grew dark before he left it. He thought: “If the robbers find me here they will take away my ring, and then I should be a ruined man. I would rather climb a tree and spend the night there.” So he climbed a tree, tied himself fast with his belt, and soon fell asleep. Before long, thirteen robbers came and sat down under the tree, and talked so loud that the shepherd awoke. The captain of the robbers said: “Let each relate what he has accomplished to-day;” and each exhibited what he had taken. The thirteenth, however, pulled out a tablecloth, a purse, and a whistle, and said: “I have gained to-day the greatest treasures, for these three things I have taken from a monk, and each of them has a particular virtue. If any one spreads out the tablecloth and says: ‘My little tablecloth, give me macaroni, or roast meat,’ or whatever one will, he will find everything there immediately. Likewise the purse will give all the money one wants; and whoever hears the whistle must dance whether he will or no.” The robbers at once put the power of the tablecloth to the test, and then went to sleep, the captain laying the precious articles near himself. When they were all snoring hard the shepherd descended, took the three articles, and crept away.

The next day he came to the city where the king lived, and went straight to the palace. “Announce me to the king,” said he to the servants; “I will try to make the king’s daughter laugh.” The servants tried to dissuade him, but he insisted on being led before the king, who took him into a large room, in which was the king’s daughter, sitting on a splendid throne and surrounded by the whole court. “If I am to make the princess laugh,” said the shepherd to the king, “you must first do me the kindness to put this ring on the ring-finger of your right hand.” The king had scarcely done so when he began to sneeze violently, and could not stop, but ran up and down the room, sneezing all the time. The entire court began to laugh, and the king’s daughter could not stay sober, but had to run away laughing. Then the shepherd went up to the king, took off the ring, and said: “Your Majesty, I have made the princess laugh; to me belongs the reward.” “What! you worthless shepherd!” cried the king. “You have not only made me the laughing-stock of the whole court, but now you want my daughter for your wife! Quick! take the ring from him, and throw him into prison.”

While there the wonderful tablecloth provides him and his companions with plenty to eat, and when it is discovered and taken from him by the king’s orders, the purse enables them all to live in comfort. That is also discovered, and nothing is left but the whistle. “Well!” thought the shepherd, “if we can’t eat any more, we will at least dance;” and he pulled out his pipe and began to play on it, and all the prisoners began to dance, and the guards with them, and between them all they made a great noise. When the king heard it he came running there with his servants, and had to dance like all the rest, but found breath enough to order the pipe to be taken away from the shepherd, and all became quiet again.

So now the shepherd had nothing left, and remained in prison some time, until he found an old file, and one night filed through the iron bars and escaped. He wandered about all day, and at last came to the same forest where he had formerly been. All at once he saw a large fig-tree bearing the most beautiful fruit, — on one side black figs, on the other, white ones. “That is something I have never seen,” thought the shepherd, — “a fig-tree that bears black and white figs at the same time. I must try them.” Scarcely had he tasted them when he felt something move on the top of his head, and putting his hand up, found he had two long horns. “Unhappy man!” he cried; “what shall I do?” However, as he was very hungry, he picked some of the white figs and ate them, and immediately one of the horns disappeared, and also the other after he had eaten a few more white figs. “My fortune is made!” he thought. “The king will have to give me all my things back, and his daughter in the bargain.”

The shepherd disguised himself and went to the city with two baskets of figs, — one of the black and one of the white kind, the former of which he sold to the king’s cook, whom he met in the market place. While the king was at the table the servant put the figs before him, and he was much pleased with them, and gave some to his wife and daughter; the rest he ate himself. Scarcely had they eaten them when they saw with terror the long horns that had grown from their heads. The queen and her daughter began to weep, and the king, in a rage, called the cook and asked him who had sold him the figs. “A peasant in the market,” answered the cook. “Go at once and bring him here,” cried the king.

The shepherd had remained near the palace, and as the cook came out, he went up to him with the basket of white figs in his hand. “What miserable figs did you sell me this morning!” cried out the cook to him. “As soon as the king, queen, and princess had eaten your figs, great horns grew on their heads.” “Be quiet,” said the shepherd; “I have a remedy here, and can soon remove the horns. Take me to the king.” He was led before the king, who asked him what kind of figs he had sold. “Be quiet, your Majesty,” said the shepherd, “and eat these figs,” at the same time giving him a white one; and as soon as the king had eaten it one of the horns disappeared. “Now,” said the shepherd, “before I give you any more of my figs you must give me back my whistle; if not, you may keep your horn.” The king in his terror gave up the whistle, and the shepherd handed the queen a fig. When one of the queen’s horns had disappeared, he said: “Now give me my purse back, or else I will take my figs away.” So the king gave him his purse, and the shepherd removed one of the princess’ horns. Then he demanded his tablecloth; and when he had received it he gave the king another fig, so that the second horn disappeared. “Now give me my ring,” he said; and the king had to give him his ring before he would remove the queen’s horn. The only one left now was the princess, and the shepherd said: “Now fulfil your promise and marry me to the princess; otherwise she may keep her horn as long as she lives.” So the princess had to marry him, and after the wedding he gave her another fig to eat, so that her last horn also disappeared. They had a merry wedding, and when the old king died the shepherd became king, and so they remained contented and happy, and were like a bundle of roots.

26

THE ASS THAT LAYS MONEY

There was once a poor widow with an only son, and whose brother-in-law was a steward. One day she said to her child: “Go to your uncle and ask him to give you something to keep you from starving.” The boy went to the farm and asked his uncle to help him a little. “We are dying of hunger, uncle. My mother earns a little by weaving, and I am too small to find anything. Be charitable to us, for we are your relatives.” The steward answered: “Why not? You should have come sooner and I would have helped you the sooner. But now I will give you something to support you always, without need of anything more. I will give you this little ass that lays money. You have only to put a cloth under him, and he will fill it for you with handsome coins. But take care! Don’t tell it, and don’t leave this animal with any one.” The youth departed in joy, and after he had travelled a long way, he stopped at an inn to sleep, for his house was distant. He said to the landlord: “Give me a lodging, but look! my ass spends the night with me.” “What!” said the landlord, “what are you thinking about! It cannot be.” The youth replied: “Yes, it can be, because my ass does not leave my side.” They disputed a while, but the landlord finally consented; but he had some suspicions; and when the boy and his beast were shut in the room, he looked through the key-hole, and saw that wonder of an ass that laid money in abundance. “Bless me!” cried the host.

“I should be a fool, indeed, if I let this piece of good fortune escape my hands!” He at once looked for another ass of the same color and size, and while the lad was asleep, exchanged them. In the morning the boy paid his bill and departed, but on the way, the ass no longer laid any money. The stupefied child did not know what to think at first, but afterward examining it more closely, it appeared to him that the ass was not his, and straightway he returned to the innkeeper, to complain of his deception. The landlord cried out: “I wonder at your saying such a thing! We are all honest people here, and don’t steal anything from anybody. Go away, blockhead, or you will find something to remember a while.”

The child, weeping, had to depart with his ass, and he went back to his uncle’s farm, and told him what had happened. The uncle said: “If you had not stopped at the innkeeper’s, you could not have met with this misfortune. However, I have another present to help you and your mother. But take care! Do not mention it to any one, and take good care of it. Here it is. I give you a tablecloth, and whenever you say: ‘*Tablecloth, make ready,*’ after having spread it out, you will see a fine repast at your pleasure.” The youth took the tablecloth in delight, thanked his uncle, and departed; but like the fool he was, he stopped again at the same inn. He said to the landlord: “Give me a room and you need not prepare anything to eat. I have all I want with me.” The crafty innkeeper suspected that there was something beneath this, and when the lad was in his room, he looked through the key-hole, and saw the tablecloth preparing the supper. The host exclaimed: “What good luck for my inn! I will not let it escape me.” He quickly looked for another tablecloth like this one, with the same embroidery and fringe, and while the child was sleeping, he exchanged it for the magic one, so that in the morning the lad did not perceive the knavery. Not until he had reached a forest where he was hungry, did he want to make use of the tablecloth. But it was in vain that he spread it out and cried: “*Tablecloth, make ready.*” The tablecloth was not the same one, and made nothing ready for him. In despair the boy went back to the innkeeper to complain, and the landlord would have thrashed him if he had not run away, and he ran until he reached his uncle’s. His uncle, when he saw him in such a plight, said: “Oh! what is the matter?” “Uncle!” said the boy, “the same innkeeper has changed the tablecloth, too, for me.” The uncle was on the point of giving the dunce a good thrashing; but afterward, seeing that it was a child, he calmed his anger, and said: “I understand; but I will give you a remedy by which you can get back everything from that thief of a landlord. Here it is! It is a stick. Hide it under your bolster; and if any one comes to rob you of it, say to it, in a low voice: ‘*Beat, beat!*’ and it will continue to do so until you say to it, ‘*Stop*.’”

Imagine how joyfully the boy took the stick! It was a handsome polished stick, with a gold handle, and delighted one only to see it. So the boy thanked his uncle for his kindness, and after he had journeyed a while, he came to the same inn. He said: “Landlord, I wish to lodge here to-night.” The landlord at once drew his conclusions about the stick, which the boy carried openly in his hands, and at night when the lad appeared to be sound asleep, but really was on the watch, the landlord felt softly under the bolster and drew out the stick. The boy, although it was dark, perceived the theft and said in a low voice: “*Beat, beat, beat!*” Suddenly blows were rained down without mercy; everything broken to pieces, the chest of drawers, the looking-glass, all the chairs, the glass in the windows; and the landlord, and those that came at the noise, beaten nearly to death. The landlord screamed to split his throat: “Save me, boy, I am dead!” The boy answered: “What! I will not deliver you, if you do not give me back my property, — the ass that lays gold, and the tablecloth that prepares dinner.” And if the landlord did not want to die of the blows, he had to consent to the boy’s wishes.

When he had his things back, the boy went home to his mother and told her what had happened to him, and then said: “Now, we do not need anything more. I have an ass that lays money, a tablecloth that prepares food at my will, and a stick to defend me from whoever annoys me.” So that woman and her son, who, from want had become rich enough to cause every one envy, wished from pride to invite their relatives to a banquet, to make them acquainted with their wealth. On the appointed day the relatives came to the woman’s new house; but noon strikes, one o’clock strikes, it is almost two, and in the kitchen the fire is seen extinguished, and there were no provisions anywhere. “Are they playing a joke on us?” said the relatives. “We shall have to depart with dry teeth.” At that moment, however, the clock struck two, and the lad, after spreading the cloth on the table, commanded: “Tablecloth, prepare a grand banquet.” In short, those people had a fine dinner and many presents in money, and the boy and his mother remained in triumph and joy.

27

DON JOSEPH PEAR

There were once three brothers who owned a pear-tree and lived on the pears. One day one of the brothers went to pick these pears, and found that they had been gathered. “Oh! my brothers! what shall we do, for our pears have been picked?” So the eldest went and remained in the garden to guard the pear-tree during the night. He fell asleep, however, and the next morning the second brother came and said: “What have you done, my brother? Have you been sleeping? Do you not see that the pears have been picked? To-night I will stay.” That night the second brother remained. The next morning the youngest went there and saw more of the pears picked, and said: “Were you the one that was going to keep a good watch? Go, I will stay here to-night; we shall see whether they can cheat me to my face.” At night the youngest brother began to play and dance under the pear-tree; while he was not playing, a fox, believing that the youth had gone to sleep, came out and climbed the tree and picked the rest of the pears. When it was coming down the tree, the youth quickly aimed his gun at it and was about to shoot. The fox said: “Don’t shoot me, Don Joseph; for I will have you called Don Joseph Pear, and will make you marry the king’s daughter.” Don Joseph answered: “And where shall I see you again? What has the king to do with you? With one kick that he would give you, you would never appear before him again.” However, Don Joseph

Pear from pity let her escape. The fox went away to a forest and caught all sorts of game, squirrels, hares, and quails, and carried them to the king; so that it was a sight. “Sir Majesty, Don Joseph Pear sends me; you must accept this game.” The king said: “Listen, little fox, I accept this game; but I have never heard this Don Joseph Pear mentioned.” The fox left the game there, and ran away to Don Joseph. “Softly, Don Joseph, I have taken the first step; I have been to the king, and carried him the first game; and he accepted it.”

A week later the fox went to the forest, caught the best animals, squirrels, hares, birds, and took them to the king. “Sir Majesty, Don Joseph Pear sends me to you with this game.” The king said to the fox: “My daughter, I don’t know who this Don Joseph Pear is; I am afraid you have been sent somewhere else! I will tell you what: have this Don Joseph Pear come here, so that I can make his acquaintance.” The fox wished to leave the game, and said: “I am not mistaken; my master sent me here; and for a token, he said that he wished the princess for his wife.”

The fox returned to Don Joseph Pear, and said to him: “Softly, things are going well; after I have been to the king again, the matter is settled.” Don Joseph said: “I will not believe you until I have my wife.”

The fox now went to an ogress and said: “Friend, friend, have we not to divide the gold and silver?” “Certainly,” said the ogress to the fox; “go and get the measure and we will divide the gold from the silver.” The fox went to the king and did not say: “The ogress wants to borrow your measure;” but she said: “Don Joseph Pear wants to borrow, for a short time, your measure to separate the gold from the silver.” “What!” said the king, “has this Don Joseph Pear such great riches? Is he then richer than I?” And he gave the fox the measure. When he was alone with his daughter he said to her, in the course of his conversation: “It must be that this Don Joseph Pear is very rich, for he divides the gold and silver.” The fox carried the measure to the ogress, who began to measure and heap up gold and silver. When she had finished, the fox went to Don Joseph Pear and dressed him in new clothes, a watch with diamonds, rings, a ring for his betrothed, and everything that was needed for the marriage. “Behold, Don Joseph,” said the fox, “I am going before you now; you go to the king and get your bride and then go to the church.” Don Joseph went to the king; got his bride, and they went to the church. After they were married, the princess got into the carriage and the bridegroom mounted his horse. The fox made a sign to Don Joseph and said: “I will go before you; you follow me and let the carriages and horses come after.”

They started on their way, and came to a sheep-farm which belonged to the ogress. The boy who was tending the sheep, when he saw the fox approach, threw a stone at her, and she began to weep. “Ah!” she said to the boy; “now I will have you killed. Do you see those horsemen? Now I will have you killed!” The youth, terrified, said: “If you will not do anything to me I will not throw any more stones at you.” The fox replied: “If you don’t want to be killed, when the king passes and asks you whose is this sheep-farm, you must tell him: ‘Don Joseph Pear’s,’ for Don Joseph Pear is his son-in-law, and he will reward you.” The cavalcade passed by, and the king asked the boy: “Whose is this sheep-farm?” The boy replied at once: “Don Joseph Pear’s.” The king gave him some money.

The fox kept about ten paces before Don Joseph, and the latter did nothing but say in a low tone: “Where are you taking me, fox? What lands do I possess that you can make me believed to be rich? Where are we going?” The fox replied: “Softly, Don Joseph, and leave it to me.” They went on and on, and the fox saw another farm of cattle, with the herdsman. The same thing happened there as with the shepherd: the stone thrown and the fox’s threat. The king passed. “Herdsman, whose is this farm of cattle?” “Don Joseph Pear’s.” And the king, astonished at his son-in-law’s wealth, gave the herdsman a piece of gold.

Don Joseph was pleased on the one hand, but on the other was perplexed and did not know how it was to turn out. When the fox turned around, Joseph said: “Where are you taking me, fox? You are ruining me.” The fox kept on as if she had nothing to do with the matter. Then she came to another farm of horses and mares. The boy who was tending them threw a stone at the fox. She frightened him, and he told the king, when the king asked him, that the farm was Don Joseph Pear’s.

They kept on and came to a well, and near it the ogress was sitting. The fox began to run and pretended to be in great terror. “Friend, friend, see, they are coming! These horsemen will kill us! Let us hide in the well, shall we not?” “Yes, friend,” said the ogress in alarm. “Shall I throw you down first?” said the fox. “Certainly, friend.” Then the fox threw the ogress down the well, and then entered the ogress’ palace. Don Joseph Pear followed the fox, with his wife, his father-in-law, and all the riders. The fox showed them through all the apartments, displaying the riches, Don Joseph Pear contented at having found his fortune, and the king still more contented because his daughter was so richly settled. There was a festival for a few days, and then the king, well satisfied, returned to his own country and his daughter remained with her husband. One day the fox was looking out of the window, and Don Joseph Pear and his wife were going up to the terrace. Don Joseph Pear took up a little dust from the terrace and threw it at the fox’s head. The fox raised her eyes. “What is the meaning of this, after the good I have done you, miserable fellow?” said she to Don Joseph. “Take care or I will speak!” The wife said to her husband: “What is the matter with the fox, to speak thus?” “Nothing,” answered her husband. “I threw a little dust at her and she got angry.” Don Joseph took up a little more dust and threw it at the fox’s head. The fox, in a rage, cried: “Joe, you see I will speak! and I declare that you were the owner of a pear-tree!” Don Joseph was frightened, for the fox told his wife everything; so he took an earthen jar and threw it at the fox’s head, and so got rid of her. Thus — the ungrateful fellow that he was — he killed the one who had done him so much kindness; but nevertheless he enjoyed all his wealth with his wife.

28

FAIR BROW

There was once a father who had a son. After this son had passed through school, his father said to him: “Son, now that you have finished your studies, you are of an age to travel. I will give you a vessel, in order that you may load it and unload it, buy and sell. Be careful what you do; take care to make gains!” He gave him six thousand *scudi* to buy merchandise, and the son started on his voyage. On his journey, without having yet purchased anything, he arrived at a town, and on the sea-shore he saw a bier, and noticed that those who passed by left there some a penny, some two; they bestowed alms on the corpse. The traveller went there and asked: “Why do you keep[Pg 132] this dead man here? *for the dead desires the grave*.” They replied: “Because he owed a world of debts, and it is the custom here *to bury no one until his debts are paid*. Until this man’s debts are paid by charity we cannot bury him.” “What is the use of keeping him here?” he said. “Proclaim that all those whom he owed shall come to me and be paid.” Then they issued the proclamation and he paid the debts; and, poor fellow! he did not have a farthing left — not a penny of his capital. So he returned to his father’s house. “What news, son? What means your return so soon?” He replied: “On crossing the sea, we encountered pirates; they have robbed me of all my capital!” His father said: “No matter, son; it is enough that they have left you your life. Behold, I will give you more money; but you must not go again in that direction.” He gave him another six thousand *scudi*. The son replied: “Yes, father, don’t worry; I will change my course.” He departed and began his journey. When he was well out at sea he saw a Turkish vessel. He said to himself: “Now it is better for me to summon them on board than for them to summon us.” They came on board. He said to them: “Whence do you come?” They answered: “We come from the Levant.” “What is your cargo?” “Nothing but a beautiful girl.” “How do you come to have this girl?” “For her beauty; to sell her again. We have stolen her from the Sultan, she is so beautiful!” “Let me see this girl.” When he saw her he said: “How much do you want for her?” “We want six thousand *scudi*!” The money which his father gave him he gave to those corsairs, and took the girl and carried her away to his ship. But he at once had her become a Christian and married her.

He returned to his father’s house; he went up, and his father said to him:

“Welcome! O my handsome son.
What merchandise of women have you made?”
“My father, I bring you a handsome ring,
I bring it for your reward;
It cost me neither city nor castle,
But the most beautiful woman you have ever seen:
The daughter of the Sultan, who is in Turkey,
Her I bring for my first cargo!”

“Ah, you miserable knave!” cried his father. “Is this the cargo you have brought?” He ill-treated them both, and drove them from the house. Those poor unfortunate ones did not know where to find shelter. They went away, and at a short distance from their town there were some rooms at a villa.

They went to live in one of those. He said: “What shall we do here? I do not know how to do anything; I have no profession or business!” She said: “Now I can paint beautiful pictures; I will paint them, and you shall go and sell them!” He said: “Very well!” “But, remember, you must tell no one that I paint them!” “No, no!” he said.

Now let us go to Turkey. The Sultan, meanwhile, had sent out many vessels in search of his daughter. These ships went here and there in quest of her. Now it happened that one of these vessels arrived in the town near where she lived, and many of the sailors went on land. Now one day the husband said to his wife: “Make many pictures, for to-day we shall sell them!” She made them, and said to him that he should not sell them for less than twenty *scudi* apiece. She made a great many, and he carried them to the public square. Some of the Turks came there; they gave a glance at the paintings, and said to themselves: “Surely, it must be the Sultan’s daughter who has painted these.” They came nearer, and asked the young man how he sold them. He said they were dear; that he could not let them go for less than twenty *scudi*. They said: “Very well! we will buy them; but we want some more.” He answered: “Come to the house of my wife who makes them!” They went there, and when they saw the Sultan’s daughter, they seized her, bound her, and carried her far away to Turkey. This husband, then, unhappy, without wife, without a trade, alone in that house, what could he do?

Every day he walked along the beach, to see if he could[Pg 134] find a ship that would take him on board; but he never saw any. One day he saw an old man fishing in a little boat; he cried: “Good old man, how much better off you are than I!” The old man asked: “Why, my dear son?” He said: “Good old man, will you take me to fish with you?” “Yes, my son,” said he; “if you wish to come with me in this boat, I will take you!” “Thank heaven!” said he. “Good!” said the old man:

You with the rod, and I with the boat,
Perhaps we shall catch some fish.

I will go and sell the fish, for I am not ashamed, and we will live together!” They ate, and afterward went to sleep; without knowing it, there arose in the night a severe storm, and the wind carried them to Turkey. The Turks, seeing this boat arrive, went on board, seized them, made slaves of them, and took them before the Sultan. He said: “Let one of them make bouquets; let the other plant flowers; put them in the garden!” They placed the old man there as gardener, and the young man to carry flowers to the Sultan’s daughter, who with her maids was shut up in a very high tower for punishment. They were very comfortable there. Every day they went into the garden and made friends with the other gardeners. As time went on, the old man made some fine guitars, violins, flutes, clarionets, piccolos — all sorts of instruments he made. The young man played them beautifully when he had time. One day his wife, who was in the tower, hearing his fine songs, — Fair Brow had a voice which surpassed all instruments, — said: “Who is playing, who is singing so beautifully?” They went out on the balcony, and when she saw Fair Brow, she thought at once of having him come up. The Sultan’s daughter said to one of those who filled the basket with flowers: “Put that young man in the basket and cover him with flowers!” He put him in, and the maids drew him up. When he was up, he came out of the basket, and beheld his wife. He embraced and kissed her and thought about escaping from there. Then she told her damsels that she wished to depart without any one knowing it. So they loaded a large ship with pearls and precious stones, with rods of gold and jewels; then they let down Fair Brow first, then his wife; finally the damsels. They embarked and departed. When they were out at sea the husband remembered that he had forgotten the old man and left him on shore. Fair Brow said: “My sister, even if I thought I should lose my life, I would turn back, for *the word which I have given him is the mother of faith*!" So they turned back, and saw the old man, who was still awaiting them in a cave; they took him with them, and put to sea again. When they were near home, the old man said: "Now, my son, it is fitting for us to settle our accounts and divide things!" "Know, good old man," said Fair Brow to him, "that all the wealth that I have belongs half to you and half to me!" "Your wife, too, belongs half to me!" He said: "Good old man, I will leave you three quarters, and I will take one only, but leave me my wife. Do you want me to divide her in two?" Then the old man said: "You must know that I am the soul of him whom you had buried; and you have had all this good fortune because you did that good action, and converted and baptized your wife!" Then he gave him his blessing and disappeared. Fair Brow, when he heard this, as you can imagine, came near dying of joy. When they reached his city, they fired a salute, for Fair Brow had arrived with his wife, the wealthiest gentleman in the world. He sent for his father and told him all that had happened to him. He went to live with them, and as he was old, he died soon, and all his riches went to Fair Brow.

29

LIONBRUNO

There was once a mariner who had a wife and three or four children. He followed the business of a fisherman, and he and his family lived on his fishing. For three or four years there had been a dearth of fish, so that he had not been able to catch even a sardine. Poor mariner! From this misfortune he had been obliged to sell, little by little, all he possessed, to live, and was reduced almost to beggary. One day he was fishing, and as you can imagine, poor fellow! he did not haul in even a shell. He cursed madonnas and saints. All at once a certain person (it was the Enemy) rose in the midst of the sea before his bark. “What is the matter, mariner, that you are so angry?” “What should the matter be? My bad luck. For three or four years I have been ruining myself, body and soul, in this sea with these nets, and I cannot catch even a string to hang myself with.” “Listen,” said the Enemy. “If you will agree to give me your wife’s next child in thirteen years, from now until you deliver it to me I will cause you to catch so much fish that you shall become the richest of men by selling it.” Then the mariner understood that this was the Enemy, and said to himself: “My wife has had no children for some years. Will she take it into her head to have another just now when I make this agreement with the Enemy? Oh, come! she is old now; she will have no more.” Then turning to the Enemy, he said: “Well, since you wish to make this contract, let us make it. But, remember, you must make me rich.” “Don’t fear,” said the Enemy; “let us make the agreement and then leave the matter to me.” “Softly, we must settle another matter first; then we will make the contract.” “What is it?” “Listen. Suppose my wife should have no children during these thirteen years?” “Then you will remain rich and give me nothing.” “That is what I wanted to know. Now we can make the contract.” And they settled everything at once. Then the Enemy disappeared. The mariner began to draw in his nets, and they were full to overflowing of all kinds of fish, and he became richer from day to day. In great joy he said: “I have played a trick on the devil!” — and, poor man! he did not know that it was the devil who had played a trick on him. Now you must know that just when they were making the contract, the mariner’s wife, old as she was, expected to become a mother again, and the Enemy knew it. In due time the wife gave birth to a boy so handsome that he seemed a flower. His parents named him Lionbruno. The Enemy suddenly appeared: “Mariner! mariner!” “How can I serve you?” replied the poor man, all trembling. “The promise is due. Lionbruno is mine.” “Yes, you are right. But you must obey the contract. Remember that it is in thirteen years. Now only a few months have passed.” “That is true,” replied the Enemy; “farewell, then, until the end of the thirteen years.” Then he vanished. Meanwhile Lionbruno grew every day, and became constantly handsomer, and his parents sent him to school. But time passes, and behold the end of the thirteen years draws near. One day, before the time agreed upon, the Enemy appeared. “Mariner! mariner!” “Oh, poor me!” said the wretched man, who recognized him by his horrid voice. But he had to answer. And what could he do? The contract was clear and the time come. The poor mariner, willingly or unwillingly, was obliged to promise to send the boy the next day alone to the sea. The next day the mother sent her son, when he returned from school, to carry something to eat to his father. The unhappy father had, however, gone far out to sea, so that his son could not find him. The poor boy sat down on the beach, and to pass the time, took pieces of wood and made little crosses of them, and stuck them in the sand around him, so that he was surrounded by them, and held one also in his hand, singing all the time.

Behold, the Enemy comes to take him, and says to him: “What are you doing, boy?” “I am waiting for my father,” he replied. The Enemy looked and saw that he could not take him, because he was seated in the midst of all those little crosses, and moreover had one in his hand. He regarded the boy with an ugly look, and cried: “Destroy those crosses, miserable boy!” “No, I will not destroy them.” “Destroy them at once, or — or” — and he threatened him and frightened him with his ugly face. Then the poor child destroyed the little crosses around him, but still held one in his hand. “Destroy the other, quick!” cried the Enemy, more enraged than ever. “No, no!” the poor child replied, all in tears; “I will not destroy this little cross.” The Enemy threatened him again and terrified him with his rolling eyes, but the child was firm, and then a bright light appeared in the air. The fairy Colina, queen of the fairies, came down, took the good boy by the hair, and delivered him from the Enemy. Then if you had seen what lightnings and thunder! what darts! The Enemy shot fire from his eyes, mouth, nose, ears, everywhere! But with all his flames he remained duped, and the fairy carried the good boy away to her splendid palace. There Lionbruno grew up in the midst of the fairies. Imagine how well off he was there! He lacked nothing. Increasing always in beauty, he became a youth whom you should have seen! Some years passed. One day Lionbruno said to the fairy Colina: “Listen. I want to go and see my mother and father a little. You will not refuse me your permission, will you?” “No, I will not refuse you it,” said the fairy. “I will give you twenty days to go and see your family. But do not stay any longer. Remember that I have saved you from the Enemy and have brought you up in the midst of great wealth. Now this wealth we are to enjoy together, for you, Lionbruno, are to be my husband.” You can imagine whether the youth wished to say no. He replied at once: “I will do your will in all things.” Then the fairy said: “My Lionbruno, take this ruby; all that you ask of it you shall have.” He took the ruby. Then all the fairies gave him in turn some token. He took them, and thanked them all. Then he embraced his bride and departed. Lionbruno travelled better than a prince, magnificently dressed, on a superb horse, with guards before him. He arrived at his town, went to the square, and a crowd of people surrounded him out of curiosity. He asked his way to the house of the mariner who was his father. He did not reveal himself to his parents, but asked them for a lodging that night. At midnight Lionbruno changed, by virtue of the ruby, the wretched hovel into a magnificent palace, and the next day he changed himself into the thirteen-year-old Lionbruno and revealed himself to his parents, telling them how the fairy Colina had liberated him from the Enemy, brought him up, and made him her husband. “For this reason, dear father and mother,” said he, “I cannot remain with you. I have come to see you, to embrace you, to make you rich; but I can stay with you a few days only, and then I must leave you.” His father and mother saw that they could do nothing, and had to be contented. One fine morning Lionbruno, by an order to the ruby, which he wore on his finger, brought together a great mass of riches, and then called his parents and said: “I leave you masters of all this wealth and of this palace. You will no longer need anything. Now give me your blessing, for I wish to go.” The poor people began to weep, and said: “Bless you, my son!” They embraced each other in tears, and he departed.

He arrived at a great city, — like Naples, for example, — and went to lodge at the finest inn. Then he went out to walk and heard a proclamation which declared: “Whatever prince or knight, on horse, with spear in hand, shall pierce and carry away a gold star, shall marry the king’s daughter.” Imagine how many princes and knights entered the lists! Lionbruno, more for braggadocio than for anything else, said to himself: “I wish to go and carry away the star;” and he commanded the ruby: “My ruby, to-morrow, I wish to carry away the golden star." The princes and knights began to assemble and try their skill. Every one reached the star and touched it with his spear, but there was no talk of their carrying it away. Lionbruno came, and with a master-stroke carried off the star. Then he quickly escaped with his horse to the inn, so that no one should see him. "Who is he?" "Where is the winner?" No one can give any news of him. The king was ill-humored about it, and issued the proclamation again for the next day. But, to cut the matter short, the same thing occurred the next day. Lionbruno duped them a second time. Imagine how angry the king was! He issued a third proclamation. But this time what does the crafty king do? He posts a large number of soldiers at all the places by which one could escape. The princes and knights begin their courses. As usual, no one carries away the star, and Lionbruno carries it off and rides away. But the soldiers, quicker than he, seize him, arrest him, and carry him to the king. "What do you take me for, that, not satisfied with duping me twice, you wish to dupe me a third time?" Thus spoke the king, who was seated on the throne. "Pardon, Majesty. I did not dare to enter your presence." "Then you ought not to have undertaken to carry away the star. Now you have done so, and must become my daughter's husband." Lionbruno, *nolens volens*, was obliged to marry the princess. The king prepared a magnificent feast for the wedding, and invited all the princes, counts, and barons, — all sorts of persons. When the hall was filled with these gentlemen, Lionbruno, before marrying the princess, said to the king: "Majesty, it is true that your daughter is a very beautiful girl, but I had a bride by whose side your daughter could not stand for beauty, grace, everything." Imagine how the king felt when he heard these words. The poor princess, at this affront in the presence of so many noblemen, became as red as fire. The king, greatly disturbed, said: "Well, if it is so, we wish to see your wife, if she is as beautiful as you say." "Yes, yes!" cried all the noblemen; "we, too, wish to see her; we wish to see her!" Poor Lionbruno was in a tight place. What could he do? He had recourse to the ruby. “Ruby mine, make fairy Colina come here.” But this time he was mistaken. The ruby could do everything, but it could not compel the fairy to come, for it was she who had given it its magic power. The summons, however, reached the fairy Colina; but she did not go. “My friend has done a pretty thing!” said she. “Bravo! good! Now I will fix him as he deserves!” She called the lowest of her servants, and made her suddenly appear in the great hall of the king, where all were assembled for the wedding. “How beautiful she is! how beautiful she is!” all said as soon as they saw her. “Is this, then, your first bride?” “What!” answered Lionbruno, “my first bride! This is the lowest of the servants of my first bride.” “Gracious!” exclaimed the noblemen; “if this is the lowest of the servants and is so beautiful, imagine what the mistress must be!” “Then,” said the king, “if this is not your first bride, I wish you to make her come herself.” “Yes, yes, herself!” cried the others, likewise. Poor Lionbruno! He was obliged to have recourse again to the ring. But this time, also, the fairy did not go, but sent instead her next servant. Scarcely had they seen her when they all said: “This one, oh, this one, is really beautiful! This, now, is certainly your first bride, is she not, Lionbruno?” “No, no!” replied Lionbruno; “my first bride is a marvel of beauty. Different from this one! This one is only the second servant.” Then the king, in a threatening tone, said to him: “Lionbruno, let us put an end to this! I command you to cause your first wife to come here instantly.” The matter was growing serious. Poor Lionbruno had recourse for the third time to the ruby, and said to it: “Ruby mine, if you really wish to help me, now is the moment. You must cause the fairy Colina herself to come here.” The summons reached her at once, and this time she went. When all those great lords and the king and his daughter saw that marvel of beauty, they became as so many statues. But the fairy Colina approached Lionbruno, pretended to take his hand, and drew off his ring, saying: “Traitor! you cannot find me until you have worn out seven pairs of iron shoes.” Then she vanished. The king, in fury, said to Lionbruno: “I understand. The power of carrying off the star was not yours, but your ruby’s. Leave my palace!” He had him seized and well beaten and sent away.

And so poor Lionbruno was left without the fairy Colina and the king’s daughter, and departed from the city in great grief. When he had gone a few steps, he heard a great noise. It was a smithy. He entered, and called the blacksmith: “Master, I want seven pairs of iron shoes.” “I will make you twelve if you wish, but it seems to me that you must have some agreement with the Eternal to live who knows how many hundred years to wear out all these shoes.” “What does that matter to you? It is enough if I pay you. Make me the shoes and hold your tongue.” He made them for him at once. Lionbruno paid him, put on one pair, and stuck three in one side of his travelling sack and three in the other, and set out. After walking a long time, he arrived late at night in a forest. All at once three robbers came there. “Good man,” said they to Lionbruno, “how did you happen here?” “I am a poor pilgrim,” he replied; “it grew dark and I stopped here to rest. And who are you, gentlemen?” “We are travellers.” And they all stopped there to rest. The next day Lionbruno arose, took leave of the three robbers, and departed. But he had scarcely gone a few steps when he heard them quarrelling. Now you must know that those robbers had stolen three objects of great value, and were now disputing as to how they should divide them. One of them said: “Fools that we are! We had here that pilgrim, who could have acted as judge and made the division, and we have let him go. Let us call him back.” “Yes, yes! let us call him,” said the others. They called him, and he came back. “How can I serve you, gentlemen?” said he. “Listen, good man; we have three objects of great value to divide. You must be the judge, and give to each one what belongs to him.” “Very well; but what objects are you talking of?” “Here is a pair of boots, a purse, and a cloak. The boots have this virtue, that he who has them on runs faster than the wind. If you say to the purse, ‘open and shut,’ it at once gives you a hundred ducats. Finally he who puts on the cloak and buttons it up, can see and yet not be seen.” “Very good. But to act the judge well, I must first examine these three objects carefully.” “Certainly, that is right.” Lionbruno put on the boots, tried to run, and went marvellously. “What do you think of these boots?” asked the thieves. “Excellent, indeed,” replied Lionbruno, and kept them on. Then he said: “Now let us see the purse.” He took it and said: “Purse, open and shut,” and at once there came forth a hundred silver ducats. “Now let us see what this cloak is,” he said, at last. He put it on and began to button it up. While he was doing so he asked the robbers: “Do you see me now?” They answered: “Yes.” He kept on buttoning it and asked again: “Now do you see me?” “Yes.” Finally he reached the last button. “Now do you see me?” “No.” “If you don’t see me now you never will see me again.” He threw away the iron shoes and cried: “Now for you, boots!” And away! faster than the wind. When the three robbers saw themselves duped in that way, what a rage they were in! They thrashed each other soundly, and especially the one who had called Lionbruno back; and at last they all found themselves with broken bones.

Lionbruno, after having cheated the robbers thus, continued his way joyfully. After a long journey, he arrived in the midst of a forest. He saw at a distance a slight smoke, and among frightful rocks, a little old hovel all surrounded by dense wild shrubs, with a little door entirely covered with ivy, so that it could scarcely be seen. Lionbruno approached the door and knocked softly. “Who is knocking?” asked from within an old woman’s voice. “I am a poor Christian,” replied Lionbruno; “night has overtaken me here, and I am seeking a lodging, if it can be had.” The door opened and Lionbruno entered. “Oh, poor youth! How have you been tempted to come and ruin yourself in this remote place?” demanded, in great wonder, the old woman, who was within, and who was Borea. (Do you know who Borea is? No less a person than the mother of the winds.) “Oh, dear little old lady, my aunt,” replied Lionbruno, “I am lost in this great forest, for I have been travelling a long time to find my dear bride, the fairy Colina, and I have not yet been able to find any trace of her.” “My son, you have made a great mistake! What shall we do now that my sons are coming home? Perhaps, God help you! they will want to eat you.” “Oh, wretched me!” cried Lionbruno, then, all trembling; “who, my aunt, are these sons of yours who so devour Christians?” “My son,” replied Borea, “you do not know where you are. Do you not know that this house in the midst of these precipices is the house of the winds? And I, you do not recognize me; I, my son, am Borea, the mother of all the winds.” “What shall I do now? Oh, my dear aunt, help me; do not let your sons eat me up!” The old woman finally concealed him in a chest, telling him not to make the slightest noise when her sons returned. Soon a loud noise was heard at a distance: it was the winds returning home. The nearer they approached the louder the noise grew, and a sound of branches and trees broken off was heard. At last the winds arrived, pushed open the door, and entered. “Good evening, mamma.” “Welcome, my sons!” replied their mother, all smiling. And so one after the other all the winds entered, and the last to enter was Sirocco, for you must know that Sirocco is the youngest of Borea’s sons. Scarcely had they entered when they began to say: “What smell of human flesh is here? Here Christians, Christians!” “Oh, bad luck to you! what fools you are! Where is there any smell of human flesh here? Who do you think would risk their lives by coming here?” But her sons would not be convinced, especially that obstinate Sirocco. Lionbruno commended his soul to God, for he saw death at his heels. But finally Borea succeeded in convincing her sons. “Oh, mamma, what is there to eat to-night? We have travelled so far, and are so hungry!” “Here, my sons,” the mother answered, “come here; for a nice polenta is cooking for you. I will finish cooking it soon, and put it at once on the table.” The next day Borea said to her sons: “My sons, when you came you said you smelled human flesh. Tell me, should you really see a man now, what would you do to him?” “Now, we would not do anything to him. Last night, we should have torn him in pieces.” “But you would not do anything to him, truly?” “Truly.” “Well, if you will give me your promise by St. John not to harm him, I will show you a live man.” “Oh! just see! A man here! Yes, yes, mamma, show him to us at once. We swear by St. John! we will not touch a hair of his head.” Then their mother opened the chest and made Lionbruno come forth. If you had heard the winds then! They puffed and blowed around him and asked him, first of all, how he had come to that place, where no living soul had ever penetrated. Lionbruno said: “Would to heaven that my journey ended here! I must go to the palace of the fairy Colina; perhaps one of you can tell me where it is?” Then Borea asked her sons one by one and each replied that he knew nothing of it. Finally she questioned her youngest son: “And you, Sirocco, do you not know anything about it?” “I? Should I not know something about it? Am I perchance like my brothers who never can find a hiding-place? The fairy Colina is love-sick. She says that her lover has betrayed her, and continually weeps, and is so reduced by her grief that she can live but little longer. And I deserve to be hanged, for I have seen her in this condition, and yet I have annoyed her so that I have driven her to despair. I amused myself by making a noise about her palace, and more than once I burst open windows and turned things upside down, even the bed she was resting on.” “Oh, my dear Sirocco!” said Lionbruno; “my good Sirocco, you must aid me! Since you have given me news of her, you must also do me the favor to show me the way to my bride’s palace. I, dear Sirocco, am the betrothed of the fairy Colina, and it is not true that I have betrayed her; on the contrary, if I do not find her, I shall die of grief.” “My son,” said Sirocco, “listen; for my part I would take you there with all my heart. But I should have to carry you about my neck. And the trouble is I cannot do so, for I am wind, I am air, and you would slip off. Were you like me the matter would go very well.” “Don’t worry about that,” said Lionbruno, “show me the way, and I will not lag behind.” “He is crazy,” said Sirocco to himself; then he said to Lionbruno: "Very well, since you feel so strong, to-morrow we will make the trial. Meanwhile let us go to bed, for it is late, and to-morrow, God willing, we will rise early!" And all went to sleep. In the morning early Sirocco arose and cried: "Lionbruno! Lionbruno! get up quickly!" And Lionbruno put on his boots in a hurry, seized his purse, fixed his cloak carefully, and left the house with Sirocco. "There," said Sirocco, "is the way we must take. Be careful! Don't let me out of your sight, and leave the rest to me. If a few hours after sunset to-night I don't make you find your beauty, you may call me an ass." They started. They ran like the wind. Every little while Sirocco called out: "Lionbruno!" and he, who was ahead, answered at once: "Oh! don't think I am going to lag behind!" and with these questions and answers they finally reached the palace of the fairy Colina about two hours after sunset. "Here we are," said Sirocco. "Here is your fair one's balcony! See how I am going to blow open the window for you. Attention, now! As soon as it is opened you give a jump and spring in." And so he did. Before the servants could run and shut the balcony window, Lionbruno was already under the fairy Colina's bed. Afterwards one of the maids said to the fairy: "My mistress, how do you feel now? Do you not feel a little better?" "Better? I am half dead. That cursed wind has nearly killed me." "But, mistress, will you not take something this evening? A little coffee, or chocolate, or broth?" "I wish nothing at all." "Take something, if you don't, you will not rest to-night, you have eaten nothing for three or four days. Really, you must take something." And the servant said so much that to get rid of her importunity the fairy said: "Well, bring something; if I want it, I will take it." The servant brought a little coffee, and left it by the side of the bed. Lionbruno, in his cloak so that no one could see him, came from under the bed and drank the coffee himself. The servant, believing her mistress had drunk it, brought the chocolate too, and Lionbruno drank that as before. Then the servant brought the fairy some broth and a pigeon. "Mistress," said she, “since, thank God, you have taken the coffee and the chocolate, take this broth and a bit of pigeon, and so you will gain strength and be better to-morrow.” The mistress on hearing all this believed that the servants were making fun of her. “Oh, stupid blockheads! What are you saying? Are not the cups still here with the coffee and the chocolate? I have touched nothing.” The servants thought that their mistress was out of her mind. Then Lionbruno took off his cloak, came out from under the bed, and said: “My bride, do you know me?” “Lionbruno mine, is it you?” and she rose from the bed and embraced him. “Then it is not true, my Lionbruno, that you have forgotten me?” “If I had forgotten you I should not have suffered so much to find you. But do you still love me?” “My Lionbruno, if I had not always loved you, you would not have found me at the point of death. And now you see I am cured only because I have seen you.”

Then they ate and drank together, and summoned the servants and made a great festival. The next day they arranged everything for the wedding and were married with great splendor and joy. In the evening they gave a grand ball and a fine banquet, which you should have seen!

8. JEREMIAH CURTIN

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Son of the King of Erin, and the Giant of Loch Léin
2. The Three Daughters of the King of the East, and the Son of a King in Erin
3. The Weaver's Son and the Magic of the White Hill
4. Fair, Brown and Trembling
5. The King of Erin and the Queen of the Lonesome Island
6. The Shee an Gannon and the Gruagach Gaire
7. The Three Daughters of King O'Hara
8. The Fisherman's Son and the Gruagach of Tricks
9. The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin
10. Kil Arthur
11. Shaking-Head
12. Birth of Fin MacCumhail and Origin of the Fenians of Erin
13. Fin MacCumhail and the Fenians of Erin in the Castle of Fear Dubh
14. Fin MacCumhail and the Knight of the Full Axe
15. Gilla na Grakin and Fin MacCumhail
16. Fin MacCumhail, the Seven Brothers, and the King of France
17. Black, Brown and Gray
18. Fin MacCumhail and the Son of the King of Alba
19. Cucúlin
20. Oisin in Tir na n-Og
21. The Adventures of Wolf-Marked
22. A Battle Between Frost and Whirlwind
23. A Bird in Search of a Mate
24. Géha Aids a Deserted Boy
25. Géha, the Friend of a Deserted Boy
26. Gáqgá

27. Grandfather and Grandson and an Eagle Woman
28. Hótho Conquers Shagodyoweg Gowa
29. The Man-Eating Wife, the Little Old Woman and the Morning Star
30. Okteondon and His Uncle, the Planter, or, Winter Delaying Spring
31. The Origin of Stories
32. Summer Conquers Winter
33. Skagédi and the Man-Eater
34. Summer Kills Autumn and Is Herself Killed by Winter
35. Two Young Men Who Went to ‘‘The Blue’’, Speaker and Definer
36. The Trials and Death of Inchworm
37. The Thunder Boy
38. Whirlwind and Panther
39. The Three Kingdoms — The Copper, The Silver, and the Golden
40. Ivan Tsarevich, the Fire-Bird, and the Gray Wolf
41. Ivan the Peasant’s Son and the Little Man Himself One-Finger Tall, His Mustache Seven Versts in Length
42. The Feather of Bright Finist the Falcon
43. The Pig with Gold Bristles, the Deer with Golden Horns, and the Golden-Maned Steed with Golden Tail
44. Water of Youth, Water of Life, and Water of Death
45. The Footless and Blind Champions
46. The Three Kingdoms
47. Koshchéi Without-Death
48. Vassilissa Golden Tress, Bareheaded Beauty
49. The Ring with Twelve Screws
50. The Footless and the Blind
51. Koshchéi Without-Death
52. Go to the Verge of Destruction and Bring Back Shmat-Razum
53. Marya Morevna
54. Yelena the Wise
55. The Seven Simeons, Full Brothers
56. The Enchanted Princess
57. Vassilissa the Cunning and the Tsar of the Sea

58. Boyislav, Youngest of Twelve
59. The Table, the Pack, and the Bag
60. The King of the Toads
61. The Mouse-Hole, and the Underground Kingdom
62. The Cuirassier and the Horned Princess
63. The Treacherous Brothers
64. The Poor Man, and the King of the Crows
65. The Useless Wagoner
66. Mirko, the King’s Son
67. The Reed Maiden
68. Kiss Miklos, and the Green Daughter of the Green King
69. The Hedgehog, the Merchant, the King, and the Poor Man

PREFACE

CURTIN, JEREMIAH

Jeremiah Curtin was a folklorist and and translator from America. Born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1835, he had a poor childhood in Wisconsin as the eldest of eight children. After his father died, he sold his shares of the farm to finance his education at Harvard. It was there that he first studied folklore, and when he graduated, he moved to New York City, and eventually traveled to Russia. On a trip to Wisconsin, he met his future wife, Alma, and the two traveled to Russia, writing and traveling.

The duo traveled back to the States, and began ethnographical work in California, and Curtin began translating Polish works. However, one of his greatest interests was folklore and this would culminate into several collections of folk tales. While Alma wrote with him, Curtin rarely gave her credit, thus all of their works are in his name. Their collections included *Myths and Folk-Lore of Ireland*, *Myths and Folk-Tales of the Russians*, *Western Slavs and Magyars*, *Hero Tales of Ireland*, and more. They would collect these tales from local residents of the areas they traveled in, and then mark them down for generations to enjoy. After her husband’s death in 1906, Alma published several books based on his notes and their travels.

The epitaph of his gravestone was written by Theodore Roosevelt and claims Curtin spoke over 70 languages.

1

THE SON OF THE KING OF ERIN, AND THE GIANT OF LOCH LÉIN

On a time there lived a king and a queen in Erin, and they had an only son. They were very careful and fond of this son; whatever he asked for was granted, and what he wanted he had.

When grown to be almost a young man the son went away one day to the hills to hunt. He could find no game, — saw nothing all day. Towards evening he sat down on a hillside to rest, but soon stood up again and started to go home empty-handed. Then he heard a whistle behind him, and turning, saw a giant hurrying down the hill.

The giant came to him, took his hand, and said: “Can you play cards?”

“I can indeed,” said the king’s son.

“Well, if you can,” said the giant, “we’ll have a game here on this hillside.”

So the two sat down, and the giant had out a pack of cards in a twinkling. “What shall we play for?” asked the giant.

“For two estates,” answered the king’s son.

They played: the young man won, and went home the better for two estates. He was very glad, and hurried to tell his father the luck he had.

Next day he went to the same place, and didn’t wait long till the giant came again.

“Welcome, king’s son,” said the giant. “What shall we play for to-day?”

“I’ll leave that to yourself,” answered the young man.

“Well,” said the giant, “I have five hundred bullocks with golden horns and silver hoofs, and I’ll play them against as many cattle belonging to you.”

“Agreed,” said the king’s son.

They played. The giant lost again. He had the cattle brought to the place; and the king’s son went home with the five hundred bullocks. The king his father was outside watching, and was more delighted than the day before when he saw the drove of beautiful cattle with horns of gold and hoofs of silver.

When the bullocks were driven in, the king sent for the old blind sage (Sean dall Glic), to know what he would say of the young man’s luck.

“My advice,” said the old blind sage, “is not to let your son go the way of the giant again, for if he plays with him a third time he’ll rue it.”

But nothing could keep the king’s son from playing the third time. Away he went, in spite of every advice and warning, and sat on the same hillside.

He waited long, but no one came. At last he rose to go home. That moment he heard a whistle behind him, and turning, saw the giant coming.

“Well, will you play with me to-day?” asked the giant.

“I would,” said the king’s son, “but I have nothing to bet.”

“You have indeed.”

“I have not,” said the king’s son.

“Haven’t you your head?” asked the giant of Loch Léin, for it was he that was in it.

“I have,” answered the king’s son.

“So have I my head,” said the giant; “and we’ll play for each other’s heads.”

This third time the giant won the game; and the king’s son was to give himself up in a year and a day to the giant in his castle.

The young man went home sad and weary. The king and queen were outside watching, and when they saw him approaching, they knew great trouble was on him. When he came to where they were, he wouldn't speak, but went straight into the castle, and wouldn't eat or drink.

He was sad and lamenting for a good while, till at last he disappeared one day, the king and queen knew not whither. After that they didn't hear of him, — didn't know was he dead or alive.

The young man after he left home was walking along over the kingdom for a long time. One day he saw no house, big or little, till after dark he came in front of a hill, and at the foot of the hill saw a small light. He went to the light, found a small house, and inside an old woman sitting at a warm fire, and every tooth in her head as long as a staff.

She stood up when he entered, took him by the hand, and said, "You are welcome to my house, son of the king of Erin." Then she brought warm water, washed his feet and legs from the knees down, gave him supper, and put him to bed.

When he rose next morning he found breakfast ready before him. The old woman said: "You were with me last night; you'll be with my sister to-night, and what she tells you to do, do, or your head'll be in danger. Now take the gift I give you. Here is a ball of thread: do you throw it in front of you before you start, and all day the ball will be rolling ahead of you, and you'll be following behind winding the thread into another ball."

He obeyed the old woman, threw the ball down, and followed. All the day he was going up hill and down, across valleys and open places, keeping the ball in sight and winding the thread as he went, till evening, when he saw a hill in front, and a small light at the foot of it.

He went to the light and found a house, which he entered. There was no one inside but an old woman with teeth as long as a crutch.

"Oh! then you are welcome to my house, king's son of Erin," said she. "You were with my sister last night; you are with me to-night; and it's glad I am to see you."

She gave him meat and drink and a good bed to lie on.

When he rose next morning breakfast was there before him, and when he had eaten and was ready for the journey, the old woman gave him a ball of thread, saying: "You were with my younger sister the night before last; you were with me last night; and you'll be with my elder sister to-night. You must do what she tells you, or you'll lose your head. You must throw this ball before you, and follow the clew till evening."

He threw down the ball: it rolled on, showing the way up and down mountains and hills, across valleys and braes. All day he wound the ball; unceasingly it went till nightfall, when he came to a light, found a little house, and went in. Inside was an old woman, the eldest sister, who said: "You are welcome, and glad am I to see you, king's son."

She treated him as well as the other two had done. After he had eaten breakfast next morning, she said: —

"I know well the journey you are on. You have lost your head to the Giant of Loch Léin, and you are going to give yourself up. This giant has a great castle. Around the castle are seven hundred iron spikes, and on every spike of them but one is the head of a king, a queen, or a king's son. The seven hundredth spike is empty, and nothing can save your head from that spike if you don't take my advice.

"Here is a ball for you: walk behind it till you come to a lake near the giant's castle. When you come to that lake at midday the ball will be unwound.

"The giant has three young daughters, and they come at noon every day of the year to bathe in the lake. You must watch them well, for each will have a lily on her breast, — one a blue, another a white, and the third a yellow lily. You mustn't let your eyes off the one with the yellow lily. Watch her well: when she undresses to go into the water, see where she puts her clothes; when the three are out in the lake swimming, do you slip away with the clothes of Yellow Lily.

“When the sisters come out from bathing, and find that the one with the yellow lily has lost her clothes, the other two will laugh and make game of her, and she will crouch down crying on the shore, with nothing to cover her, and say, ‘How can I go home now, and everybody making sport of me? Whoever took my clothes, if he’ll give them back to me, I’ll save him from the danger he is in, if I have the power.’”

The king’s son followed the ball till nearly noon, when it stopped at a lake not far from the giant’s castle. Then he hid behind a rock at the water’s edge, and waited.

At midday the three sisters came to the lake, and, leaving their clothes on the strand, went into the water. When all three were in the lake swimming and playing with great pleasure and sport, the king’s son slipped out and took the clothes of the sister with the yellow lily.

After they had bathed in the lake to their hearts’ content, the three sisters came out. When the two with the blue and the white lilies saw their sister on the shore and her clothes gone, they began to laugh and make sport of her. Then, cowering and crouching down, she began to cry and lament, saying: “How can I go home now, with my own sisters laughing at me? If I stir from this, everybody will see me and make sport of me.”

The sisters went home and left her there. When they were gone, and she was alone at the water crying and sobbing, all at once she came to herself and called out: “Whoever took my clothes, I’ll forgive him if he brings them to me now, and I’ll save him from the danger he is in if I can.”

When he heard this, the king’s son put the clothes out to her, and stayed behind himself till she told him to come forth.

Then she said: “I know well where you are going. My father, the Giant of Loch Léin, has a soft bed waiting for you, — a deep tank of water for your death. But don’t be uneasy; go into the water, and wait till I come to save you. Be at that castle above before my father. When he comes home to-night and asks for you, take no meat from him, but go to rest in the tank when he tells you."

The giant's daughter left the king's son, who went his way to the castle alone at a fair and easy gait, for he had time enough on his hands and to spare.

When the Giant of Loch Léin came home that night, the first question he asked was, "Is the son of the king of Erin here?"

"I am," said the king's son.

"Come," said the giant, "and get your evening's meat."

"I'll take no meat now, for I don't need it," said the king's son.

"Well, come with me then, and I'll show you your bed." He went, and the giant put the king's son into the deep tank of water to drown, and being tired himself from hunting all day over the mountains and hills of Erin, he went to sleep.

That minute his youngest daughter came, took the king's son out of the tank, placed plenty to eat and to drink before him, and gave him a good bed to sleep on that night.

The giant's daughter watched till she heard her father stirring before daybreak; then she roused the king's son, and put him in the tank again.

Soon the giant came to the tank and called out: "Are you here, son of the king of Erin?"

"I am," said the king's son.

"Well, come out now. There is a great work for you to-day. I have a stable outside, in which I keep five hundred horses, and that stable has not been cleaned these seven hundred years. My great-grandmother when a girl lost a slumber-pin (bar an suan) somewhere in that stable, and never could find it. You must have that pin for me when I come home to-night; if you don't, your head will be on the seven hundredth spike to-morrow."

Then two shovels were brought for him to choose from to clean out the stable, an old and a new one. He chose the new shovel, and went to work.

For every shovelful he threw out, two came in; and soon the door of the stable was closed on him. When the stable-door was closed, the giant's daughter called from outside: "How are you thriving now, king's son?"

"I'm not thriving at all," said the king's son; "for as much as I throw out, twice as much comes in, and the door is closed against me."

"You must make a way for me to come in, and I'll help you," said she.

"How can I do that?" asked the king's son.

However, she did it. The giant's daughter made her way into the stable, and she wasn't long inside till the stable was cleared, and she saw the bar an suan.

"There is the pin over there in the corner," said she to the king's son, who put it in his bosom to give to the giant.

Now he was happy, and the giant's daughter had good meat and drink put before him.

When the giant himself came home, he asked: "How did you do your work to-day?"

"I did it well; I thought nothing of it."

"Did you find the bar an suan?"

"I did indeed; here 'tis for you."

"Oh! then," said the giant, "it is either the devil or my daughter that helped you to do that work, for I know you never did it alone."

"It's neither the devil nor your daughter, but my own strength that did the work," said the son of the king of Erin.

"You have done the work; now you must have your meat." "I want no meat to-day; I am well satisfied as I am," said the king's son.

"Well," said the giant, "since you'll have no meat, you must go to sleep in the tank."

He went into the tank. The giant himself was soon snoring, for he was tired from hunting over Erin all day.

The moment her father was away, Yellow Lily came, took the king’s son out of the tank, gave him a good supper and bed, and watched till the giant was stirring before daybreak. Then she roused the king’s son and put him in the tank.

“Are you alive in the tank?” asked the giant at daybreak.

“I am,” said the king’s son.

“Well, you have a great work before you to-day. That stable you cleaned yesterday hasn’t been thatched these seven hundred years, and if you don’t have it thatched for me when I come home to-night, with birds’ feathers, and not two feathers of one color or kind, I’ll have your head on the seven hundredth spike to-morrow.”

“Here are two whistles, — an old, and a new one; take your choice of them to call the birds.”

The king’s son took the new whistle, and set out over the hills and valleys, whistling as he went. But no matter how he whistled, not a bird came near him. At last, tired and worn out with travelling and whistling, he sat down on a hillock and began to cry.

That moment Yellow Lily was at his side with a cloth, which she spread out, and there was a grand meal before him. He hadn’t finished eating and drinking, before the stable was thatched with birds’ feathers, and no two of them of one color or kind.

When he came home that evening the giant called out: “Have you the stable thatched for me to-night?”

“I have indeed,” said the king’s son; “and small trouble I had with it.”

“If that’s true,” said the giant, “either the devil or my daughter helped you.”

“It was my own strength, and not the devil or your daughter that helped me,” said the king’s son.

He spent that night as he had the two nights before.

Next morning, when the giant found him alive in the tank, he said: “There is great work before you to-day, which you must do, or your head’ll be on the spike to-morrow. Below here, under my castle, is a tree nine hundred feet high, and there isn’t a limb on that tree, from the roots up, except one small limb at the very top, where there is a crow’s nest. The tree is covered with glass from the ground to the crow’s nest. In the nest is one egg: you must have that egg before me here for my supper to-night, or I’ll have your head on the seven hundredth spike to-morrow.”

The giant went hunting, and the king’s son went down to the tree, tried to shake it, but could not make it stir. Then he tried to climb; but no use, it was all slippery glass. Then he thought, “Sure I’m done for now; I must lose my head this time.”

He stood there in sadness, when Yellow Lily came, and said: “How are you thriving in your work?”

“I can do nothing,” said the king’s son.

“Well, all that we have done up to this time is nothing to climbing this tree. But first of all let us sit down together and eat, and then we’ll talk,” said Yellow Lily.

They sat down, she spread the cloth again, and they had a splendid feast. When the feast was over she took out a knife from her pocket and said: —

“Now you must kill me, strip the flesh from my bones, take all the bones apart, and use them as steps for climbing the tree. When you are climbing the tree, they will stick to the glass as if they had grown out of it; but when you are coming down, and have put your foot on each one, they will drop into your hand when you touch them. Be sure and stand on each bone, leave none untouched; if you do, it will stay behind. Put all my flesh into this clean cloth by the side of the spring at the roots of the tree. When you come to the earth, arrange my bones together, put the flesh over them, sprinkle it with water from the spring, and I shall be alive and well before you. But don’t forget a bone of me on the tree.”

“How could I kill you,” asked the king’s son, “after what you have done for me?”

“If you won’t obey, you and I are done for,” said Yellow Lily. “You must climb the tree, or we are lost; and to climb the tree you must do as I say.”

The king’s son obeyed. He killed Yellow Lily, cut the flesh from her body, and unjointed the bones, as she had told him.

As he went up, the king’s son put the bones of Yellow Lily’s body against the side of the tree, using them as steps, till he came under the nest and stood on the last bone.

Then he took the crow’s egg; and coming down, put his foot on every bone, then took it with him, till he came to the last bone, which was so near the ground that he failed to touch it with his foot.

He now placed all the bones of Yellow Lily in order again at the side of the spring, put the flesh on them, sprinkled it with water from the spring. She rose up before him, and said: “Didn’t I tell you not to leave a bone of my body without stepping on it? Now I am lame for life! You left my little toe on the tree without touching it, and I have but nine toes.”

When the giant came home that night, the first words he had were, “Have you the crow’s egg for my supper?”

“I have,” said the king’s son.

“If you have, then either the devil or my daughter is helping you.”

“It is my own strength that’s helping me,” said the king’s son.

“Well, whoever it is, I must forgive you now, and your head is your own.”

So the king’s son was free to go his own road, and away he went, and never stopped till he came home to his own father and mother, who had a great welcome before him; and why not? for they thought he was dead.

When the son was at home a time, the king called up the old blind sage, and asked, “What must I do with my son now?”

“If you follow my advice,” said the old blind sage, “you’ll find a wife for him; and then he’ll not go roaming away again, and leave you as he did before.”

The king was pleased with the advice, and he sent a message to the king of Lochlin to ask his daughter in marriage.

The king of Lochlin came with the daughter and a ship full of attendants, and there was to be a grand wedding at the castle of the king of Erin. Now, the king’s son asked his father to invite the Giant of Loch Léin and Yellow Lily to the wedding. The king sent messages for them to come.

The day before the marriage there was a great feast at the castle. As the feast went on, and all were merry, the Giant of Loch Léin said: “I never was at a place like this but one man sang a song, a second told a story, and the third played a trick.”

Then the king of Erin sang a song, the king of Lochlin told a story, and when the turn came to the giant, he asked Yellow Lily to take his place.

She threw two grains of wheat in the air, and there came down on the table two pigeons. The cock pigeon pecked at the hen and pushed her off the table. Then the hen called out to him in a human voice, “You wouldn’t do that to me the day I cleaned the stable for you.”

Next time Yellow Lily put two grains of wheat on the table. The cock ate the wheat, pecked the hen, and pushed her off the table to the floor. The hen said: “You would not do that to me the day I thatched the stable for you with birds’ feathers, and not two of one color or kind.”

The third time Yellow Lily put two more grains of wheat on the table. The cock ate both, and pushed the hen off to the floor. Then the hen called out: “You wouldn’t do that to me the day you killed me and took my bones to make steps up the glass tree nine hundred feet high to get the crow’s egg for the supper of the Giant of Loch Léin, and forget my little toe when you were coming down, and left me lame for life."

"Well," said the king's son to the guests at the feast, "when I was a little younger than I am now, I used to be everywhere in the world sporting and gaming; and once when I was away, I lost the key of a casket that I had. I had a new key made, and after it was brought to me I found the old one. Now, I'll leave it to any one here to tell what am I to do, — which of the keys should I keep?"

"My advice to you," said the king of Lochlin, "is to keep the old key, for it fits the lock better, and you're more used to it."

Then the king's son stood up and said: "I thank you, king of Lochlin, for a wise advice and an honest word. This is my bride, the daughter of the Giant of Loch Léin. I'll have her, and no other woman. Your daughter is my father's guest, and no worse, but better, for having come to a wedding in Erin."

The king's son married Yellow Lily, daughter of the Giant of Loch Léin, the wedding lasted long, and all were happy.

2

THE THREE DAUGHTERS OF THE KING OF THE EAST, AND THE SON OF A KING IN ERIN

There was once a king in Erin, and he had an only son. While this son was a little child his mother died.

After a time the king married and had a second son.

The two boys grew up together; and as the elder was far handsomer and better than the younger, the queen became jealous, and was for banishing him out of her sight.

The king's castle stood near the shore of Loch Erne, and three swans came every day to be in the water and swim in the lake. The elder brother used to go fishing; and once when he sat at the side of the water, the three swans made young women of themselves, came to where he sat, and talked to the king's son.

The queen had a boy minding cows in the place, and when he went home that night he told about what he had seen, — that there were three young women at the lake, and the king's son was talking to the three that day. Next morning the queen called the cowboy to her, and said: "Here is a pin of slumber; and do you stick it in the clothes of the king's son before the young women come, and when they go away, take out the pin and bring it back to me."

That day when the cowboy saw the three young women coming, he went near and threw the pin, which stuck in the clothes of the king's son.

That instant he fell asleep on the ground.

When the young women came, one of them took a towel, dipped it in the cold water of the lake, and rubbed his face; but she could not rouse him. When their time came to go, they were crying and lamenting because the young man was asleep; and one of the three put a gold pin in his bosom, so that when he woke up he would find it and keep her in mind.

After they had gone a couple of hours, the cowboy came up, took out the sleeping-pin, and hurried off. The king's son woke up without delay; and finding the gold pin in his bosom, he knew the young woman had come to see him.

Next day he fished and waited again. When the cowboy saw the young women coming out of the lake, he stole up a second time, and threw the pin, which stuck in his clothes, and that moment he was drowsy and fell asleep. When the young women came he was lying on the ground asleep. One of them rubbed him with a towel dipped in the water of the lake; but no matter what she did, he slept on, and when they had to go, she put a gold ring in his bosom. When the sisters were leaving the lake, and had put on their swan-skins and become swans, they all flew around him and flapped their wings in his face to know could they rouse him; but there was no use in trying.

After they had gone, the cowboy came and took out the sleeping-pin. When the king's son was awake he put his hand in his bosom, found the keepsake, and knew that the sisters had come to him.

When he went fishing the third day, he called up the cowboy and said: "I fall asleep every day. I know something is done to me. Now do you tell me all. In time I'll reward you well. I know my stepmother sends something by you that takes my senses away."

"I would tell," said the cowboy, "but I'm in dread my mistress might kill or banish me."

"She will not, for I'll put you in the way she'll not harm you. You see my fishing-bag here? Now throw the pin, which I know you have, towards me, and hit the bag."

The cowboy did as he was told, and threw the pin into the fishing-bag, where it remained without harm to any one. The cowboy went back to his cattle, and the prince fished on as before. The three swans were out in the middle of the lake swimming around for themselves in the water, and the prince moved on, fishing, till he came to a bend in the shore. On one side of him a tongue of land ran out into the lake. The swans came to the shore, leaving the piece of land between themselves and the prince. Then they took off their swan-skins, were young women, and bathed in the lake.

After that they came out, put on the dress of young women, and went to where the king's son was fishing.

He spoke to them, and asked where were they from, in what place were they born, and why were they swans.

They said: "We are three sisters, daughters of the king of the East, and we have two brothers. Our mother died, and our father married again, and had two other daughters; and these two are not so good looking nor so well favored as we, and their mother was in dread they wouldn't get such fine husbands as we, so she enchanted us, and now we are going about the world from lake to lake in the form of swans."

Then the eldest of the three sisters said to the king's son: "What kind are you, and where were you born?"

"I was born in Erin," said he; "and when I was a little boy my mother died, my father married again and had a second son, and that son wasn't to the eye what I was, and my stepmother was for banishing me from my father's house because she thought her own son was not so good as I was, and I am fishing here every day by the lake to keep out of her sight."

"Well," said the eldest sister, "I thought you were a king's son, and so I came to you in my own form to know could we go on in the world together.”

“I don’t know yet what to do,” said the king’s son.

“Well, be sure of your mind to-morrow, for that will be the last day for me here.”

When the cowboy was going home, the king’s son gave him the sleeping-pin for the stepmother. When he had driven in the cattle, the cowboy told the queen that the young man had fallen asleep as on the two other days.

But there was an old witch in the place who was wandering about the lake that day. She saw everything, went to the queen, and told her how the three swans had made young women of themselves, and talked with her stepson.

When the queen heard the old witch, she fell into a terrible rage at the cowboy for telling her a lie, and banished him out of her sight forever. Then she got another cowboy, and sent him off with the sleeping-pin next day. When he came near the lake, the king’s son tried to drive him off; but the cowboy threw the sleeping-pin into his clothes, and he fell down near the edge of the water without sight or sense.

The three sisters came, and found him sleeping. They rubbed him, and threw water on his face, but they could not wake him. And the three were lamenting sorely, for they had brought a swan’s skin with them that day, so the king’s son might make a swan of himself and fly away with them, for this was their last day at that place; but they could do nothing now, for he lay there dead asleep on the ground before them.

The eldest sister pulled out her handkerchief, and the falling tears dropped on it. Then she took a knife, and cut one of the nipples from her breast. The second sister wrote on the handkerchief: “Keep this in mind till you get more account from us.” They put it in his bosom and went away.

As soon as the sisters had gone, the cowboy came, drew out the pin, and hurried away. The stepmother was always trying to banish the king’s son, hoping that something might happen to him, and her own son be the heir. So now he went off and wandered away through Erin, always inquiring for the eldest sister, but never could find her.

At the end of seven years he came home, and was fishing at the side of Loch Erne again, when a swan flew up to him and said: “Your love is lying on her death-bed, unless you go to save her. She is bleeding from the breast, and you must go to her now. Go straight to the East!”

The king’s son went straight to the East, and on the way there rose up storm and fog against him; but they did not stop him. He was going on always, and when he was three weeks’ journey from his father’s castle he stumbled one dark, misty day and fell over a ditch. When he rose up there stood on the other side of the ditch before him a little horse, all bridled and saddled, with a whip on the saddle. The horse spoke up and said: “If you are the king’s son, I was sent here to meet you, and carry you to the castle of the king of the East. There is a young woman at the castle who thinks it long till she sees you. Now ask me no questions, for I’m not at liberty to talk to you till I bring you to the East.”

“I suppose we are to be a long time going?” said the king’s son.

“Don’t trouble yourself about the going; I’ll take you safely. Sit on my back now, and be sure you’re a good rider, and you’ll not be long on the road. This is my last word.”

They went on, and were going always; and as he travelled, the prince met the wind that was before him, and the wind that blew behind could not come up with him. When he was hungry the pommel of the saddle opened, and he found the best of eating inside.

They went on sweeping over the world for two weeks, and when they were near the East the horse said: “Get down from my back now, for it’s tired I am.”

“How far are we from the castle?” asked the king’s son.

"Five days' journey," answered the horse. "When you come to the castle, don't stop a moment till you ask where the young woman is lying; and tell them to be sure to give good stabling and food to the horse. Come and see me yourself every day. If you don't, there will be nothing for me but fasting; and that's what I don't like."

When the king's son came to the castle it was evening. The two younger sisters welcomed him. (These were two of the swans at the lake in Erin, and now at home by the enchantment of their stepmother. They were swans in the daytime, and women only at night, so as not to be under the eye of young men when these came to see the stepmother's own daughters.) They said: "Our sister is on an island, and we'll go to her." They got a boat for the young man, and went with him to where their sister was lying. They said to her: "The son of the king of Erin is here."

"Let him come in, that I may look at him," said she.

The king's son went in, and when she saw him she was glad. "Have you anything that belongs to me?" asked she.

"I have."

"Then throw it on my breast."

He threw the handkerchief on her breast and went away. Next day she rose from the bed as well as ever. On the third day after his arrival, the son of the king of Erin married the eldest daughter of the king of the East, and the stepmother's enchantment was destroyed; and there was the grandest wedding that ever was seen in that kingdom.

The king's son, thinking only of his bride, forgot all about the horse that had brought him over the long road. When at last he went to see him, the stable was empty; the horse had gone. And neither his father in Erin nor the stepmother came to his mind, he was living so pleasantly in the East. But after he had been there a long time, and a son and a daughter had been born to him, he remembered his father. Then he made up his mind not to let the stepmother's son be heir to the kingdom in place of himself. So taking his wife and children, he left the East and travelled to Erin. He stopped on the road, and sent word to the father that he was coming.

When the stepmother heard the news, a great weakness came on her. She fell into a fit and died.

The king's son waited in a convenient place till the funeral was over, and then he came to the castle and lived with his father. He was not long in the place when he sent messengers to know could they find the cowboy that the stepmother banished for telling about the sleeping-pin. They brought the cowboy to the castle, and the king made him his coachman.

The cowboy was not twelve months in his new place before he married. Then the king's son gave him a fine piece of land to live on, with six cows and four horses. There was not a happier man in the kingdom than the cowboy. When the father died, the king's son became king in Erin himself.

3

THE WEAVER’S SON AND THE MAGIC OF THE WHITE HILL

There was once a weaver in Erin who lived at the edge of a wood; and on a time when he had nothing to burn, he went out with his daughter to get fagots for the fire.

They gathered two bundles, and were ready to carry them home, when who should come along but a splendid-looking stranger on horseback. And he said to the weaver: “My good man, will you give me that girl of yours?”

“Indeed then I will not,” said the weaver.

“I’ll give you her weight in gold,” said the stranger, and he put out the gold there on the ground.

So the weaver went home with the gold and without the daughter. He buried the gold in the garden, without letting his wife know what he had done. When she asked, “Where is our daughter?” the weaver said: “I sent her on an errand to a neighbor’s house for things that I want.”

Night came, but no sight of the girl. The next time he went for fagots, the weaver took his second daughter to the wood; and when they had two bundles gathered, and were ready to go home, a second stranger came on horseback, much finer than the first, and asked the weaver would he give him his daughter.

“I will not,” said the weaver.

“Well,” said the stranger, “I’ll give you her weight in silver if you’ll let her go with me;” and he put the silver down before him.

The weaver carried home the silver and buried it in the garden with the gold, and the daughter went away with the man on horseback.

When he went again to the wood, the weaver took his third daughter with him; and when they were ready to go home, a third man came on horseback, gave the weight of the third daughter in copper, and took her away. The weaver buried the copper with the gold and silver.

Now, the wife was lamenting and moaning night and day for her three daughters, and gave the weaver no rest till he told the whole story.

Now, a son was born to them; and when the boy grew up and was going to school, he heard how his three sisters had been carried away for their weight in gold and silver and copper; and every day when he came home he saw how his mother was lamenting and wandering outside in grief through the fields and pits and ditches, so he asked her what trouble was on her; but she wouldn’t tell him a word.

At last he came home crying from school one day, and said: “I’ll not sleep three nights in one house till I find my three sisters.” Then he said to his mother: “Make me three loaves of bread, mother, for I am going on a journey.”

Next day he asked had she the bread ready. She said she had, and she was crying bitterly all the time. “I’m going to leave you now, mother,” said he; “and I’ll come back when I have found my three sisters.”

He went away, and walked on till he was tired and hungry; and then he sat down to eat the bread that his mother had given him, when a red-haired man came up and asked him for something to eat. “Sit down here,” said the boy. He sat down, and the two ate till there was not a crumb of the bread left.

The boy told of the journey he was on; then the red-haired man said: “There may not be much use in your going, but here are three things that’ll serve you, — the sword of sharpness, the cloth of plenty, and the cloak of darkness. No man can kill you while that sword is in your hand; and whenever you are hungry or dry, all you have to do is to spread the cloth and ask for what you'd like to eat or drink, and it will be there before you. When you put on the cloak, there won't be a man or a woman or a living thing in the world that'll see you, and you'll go to whatever place you have set your mind on quicker than any wind."

The red-haired man went his way, and the boy travelled on. Before evening a great shower came, and he ran for shelter to a large oak-tree. When he got near the tree his foot slipped, the ground opened, and down he went through the earth till he came to another country. When he was in the other country he put on the cloak of darkness and went ahead like a blast of wind, and never stopped till he saw a castle in the distance; and soon he was there. But he found nine gates closed before him, and no way to go through. It was written inside the cloak of darkness that his eldest sister lived in that castle.

He was not long at the gate looking in when a girl came to him and said, "Go on out of that; if you don't, you'll be killed."

"Do you go in," said he to the girl, "and tell my sister, the woman of this castle, to come out to me." The girl ran in; out came the sister, and asked: "Why are you here, and what did you come for?"

"I have come to this country to find my three sisters, who were given away by my father for their weight in gold, silver, and copper; and you are my eldest sister."

She knew from what he said that he was her brother, so she opened the gates and brought him in, saying: "Don't wonder at anything you see in this castle. My husband is enchanted. I see him only at night. He goes off every morning, stays away all day, and comes home in the evening."

The sun went down; and while they were talking, the husband rushed in, and the noise of him was terrible. He came in the form of a ram, ran up stairs, and soon after came down a man.

“Who is this that’s with you?” asked he of the wife.

“Oh! that’s my brother, who has come from Erin to see me,” said she.

Next morning, when the man of the castle was going off in the form of a ram, he turned to the boy and asked, “Will you stay a few days in my castle? You are welcome.”

“Nothing would please me better,” said the boy; “but I have made a vow never to sleep three nights in one house till I have found my three sisters.”

“Well,” said the ram, “since you must go, here is something for you.” And pulling out a bit of his own wool, he gave it to the boy, saying: “Keep this; and whenever a trouble is on you, take it out, and call on what rams are in the world to help you.” Away went the ram. The boy took farewell of his sister, put on the cloak of darkness, and disappeared. He travelled till hungry and tired, then he sat down, took off the cloak of darkness, spread the cloth of plenty, and asked for meat and drink. After he had eaten and drunk his fill, he took up the cloth, put on the cloak of darkness, and went ahead, passing every wind that was before him, and leaving every wind that was behind.

About an hour before sunset he saw the castle in which his second sister lived. When he reached the gate, a girl came out to him and said: “Go away from that gate, or you’ll be killed.”

“I’ll not leave this till my sister who lives in the castle comes out and speaks to me.”

The girl ran in, and out came the sister. When she heard his story and his father’s name, she knew that he was her brother, and said: “Come into the castle, but think nothing of what you’ll see or hear. I don’t see my husband from morning till night. He goes and comes in a strange form, but he is a man at night.”

About sunset there was a terrible noise, and in rushed the man of the castle in the form of a tremendous salmon. He went flapping upstairs; but he wasn’t long there till he came down a fine-looking man.

“Who is that with you?” asked he of the wife. “I thought you would let no one into the castle while I was gone.”

“Oh! this is my brother, who has come to see me,” said she.

“If he’s your brother, he’s welcome,” said the man.

They supped, and then slept till morning. When the man of the castle was going out again, in the form of a great salmon, he turned to the boy and said: “You’d better stay here with us a while.”

“I cannot,” said the boy. “I made a vow never to sleep three nights in one house till I had seen my three sisters. I must go on now and find my third sister.”

The salmon then took off a piece of his fin and gave it to the boy, saying: “If any difficulty meets you, or trouble comes on you, call on what salmons are in the sea to come and help you.”

They parted. The boy put on his cloak of darkness, and away he went, more swiftly than any wind. He never stopped till he was hungry and thirsty. Then he sat down, took off his cloak of darkness, spread the cloth of plenty, and ate his fill; when he had eaten, he went on again till near sundown, when he saw the castle where his third sister lived. All three castles were near the sea. Neither sister knew what place she was in, and neither knew where the other two were living.

The third sister took her brother in just as the first and second had done, telling him not to wonder at anything he saw.

They were not long inside when a roaring noise was heard, and in came the greatest eagle that ever was seen. The eagle hurried upstairs, and soon came down a man.

“Who is that stranger there with you?” asked he of the wife. (He, as well as the ram and salmon, knew the boy; he only wanted to try his wife.)

“This is my brother, who has come to see me.”

They all took supper and slept that night. When the eagle was going away in the morning, he pulled a feather out of his wing, and said to the boy: “Keep this; it may serve you. If you are ever in straits and want help, call on what eagles are in the world, and they’ll come to you.”

There was no hurry now, for the third sister was found; and the boy went upstairs with her to examine the country all around, and to look at the sea. Soon he saw a great white hill, and on the top of the hill a castle.

“In that castle on the white hill beyond,” said the sister, “lives a giant, who stole from her home the most beautiful young woman in the world. From all parts the greatest heroes and champions and kings’ sons are coming to take her away from the giant and marry her. There is not a man of them all who is able to conquer the giant and free the young woman; but the giant conquers them, cuts their heads off, and then eats their flesh. When he has picked the bones clean, he throws them out; and the whole place around the castle is white with the bones of the men that the giant has eaten.”

“I must go,” said the boy, “to that castle to know can I kill the giant and bring away the young woman.”

So he took leave of his sister, put on the cloak of darkness, took his sword with him, and was soon inside the castle. The giant was fighting with champions outside. When the boy saw the young woman he took off the cloak of darkness and spoke to her.

“Oh!” said she, “what can you do against the giant? No man has ever come to this castle without losing his life. The giant kills every man; and no one has ever come here so big that the giant did not eat him at one meal.”

“And is there no way to kill him?” asked the boy.

“I think not,” said she.

“Well, if you’ll give me something to eat, I’ll stay here; and when the giant comes in, I’ll do my best to kill him. But don’t let on that I am here.”

Then he put on the cloak of darkness, and no one could see him. When the giant came in, he had the bodies of two men on his back. He threw down the bodies and told the young woman to get them ready for his dinner. Then he snuffed around, and said: “There’s some one here; I smell the blood of an Erineach.”

“I don’t think you do,” said the young woman; “I can’t see any one.”

“Neither can I,” said the giant; “but I smell a man.”

With that the boy drew his sword; and when the giant was struck, he ran in the direction of the blow to give one back; then he was struck on the other side.

They were at one another this way, the giant and the boy with the cloak of darkness on him, till the giant had fifty wounds, and was covered with blood. Every minute he was getting a slash of a sword, but never could give one back. At last he called out: “Whoever you are, wait till to-morrow, and I’ll face you then.”

So the fighting stopped; and the young woman began to cry and lament as if her heart would break when she saw the state the giant was in. “Oh! you’ll be with me no longer; you’ll be killed now: what can I do alone without you?” and she tried to please him, and washed his wounds.

“Don’t be afraid,” said the giant; “this one, whoever he is, will not kill me, for there is no man in the world that can kill me.” Then the giant went to bed, and was well in the morning.

Next day the giant and the boy began in the middle of the forenoon, and fought till the middle of the afternoon. The giant was covered with wounds, and he had not given one blow to the boy, and could not see him, for he was always in his cloak of darkness. So the giant had to ask for rest till next morning.

While the young woman was washing and dressing the wounds of the giant she cried and lamented all the time, saying: “What’ll become of me now? I’m afraid you’ll be killed this time; and how can I live here without you?”

“Have no fear for me,” said the giant; “I’ll put your mind at rest. In the bottom of the sea is a chest locked and bound, in that chest is a duck, in the duck an egg; and I never can be killed unless some one gets the egg from the duck in the chest at the bottom of the sea, and rubs it on the mole that is under my right breast.”

While the giant was telling this to the woman to put her mind at rest, who should be listening to the story but the boy in the cloak of darkness. The minute he heard of the chest in the sea, he thought of the salmons. So off he hurried to the seashore, which was not far away. Then he took out the fin that his eldest sister’s husband had given him, and called on what salmons were in the sea to bring up the chest with the duck inside, and put it out on the beach before him.

He had not long to wait till he saw nothing but salmon, — the whole sea was covered with them, moving to land; and they put the chest out on the beach before him.

But the chest was locked and strong; how could he open it? He thought of the rams; and taking out the lock of wool, said: “I want what rams are in the world to come and break open this chest!”

That minute the rams of the world were running to the seashore, each with a terrible pair of horns on him; and soon they battered the chest to splinters. Out flew the duck, and away she went over the sea.

The boy took out the feather, and said: “I want what eagles are in the world to get me the egg from that duck.”

That minute the duck was surrounded by the eagles of the world, and the egg was soon brought to the boy. He put the feather, the wool, and the fin in his pocket, put on the cloak of darkness, and went to the castle on the white hill, and told the young woman, when she was dressing the wounds of the giant again, to raise up his arm.

Next day they fought till the middle of the afternoon. The giant was almost cut to pieces, and called for a cessation.

The young woman hurried to dress the wounds, and he said: “I see you would help me if you could: you are not able. But never fear, I shall not be killed.” Then she raised his arm to wash away the blood, and the boy, who was there in his cloak of darkness, struck the mole with the egg. The giant died that minute.

The boy took the young woman to the castle of his third sister. Next day he went back for the treasures of the giant, and there was more gold in the castle than one horse could draw.

They spent nine days in the castle of the eagle with the third sister. Then the boy gave back the feather, and the two went on till they came to the castle of the salmon, where they spent nine more days with the second sister; and he gave back the fin.

When they came to the castle of the ram, they spent fifteen days with the first sister, and had great feasting and enjoyment. Then the boy gave back the lock of wool to the ram, and taking farewell of his sister and her husband, set out for home with the young woman of the white castle, who was now his wife, bringing presents from the three daughters to their father and mother.

At last they reached the opening near the tree, came up through the ground, and went on to where he met the red-haired man. Then he spread the cloth of plenty, asked for every good meat and drink, and called the red-haired man. He came. The three sat down, ate and drank with enjoyment.

When they had finished, the boy gave back to the red-haired man the cloak of darkness, the sword of sharpness, and the cloth of plenty, and thanked him.

“You were kind to me,” said the red-haired man; “you gave me of your bread when I asked for it, and told me where you were going. I took pity on you; for I knew you never could get what you wanted unless I helped you. I am the brother of the eagle, the salmon, and the ram.”

They parted. The boy went home, built a castle with the treasure of the giant, and lived happily with his parents and wife.

4

FAIR, BROWN AND TREMBLING

King Aadh Cúrucha lived in Tir Conal, and he had three daughters, whose names were Fair, Brown, and Trembling.

Fair and Brown had new dresses, and went to church every Sunday. Trembling was kept at home to do the cooking and work. They would not let her go out of the house at all; for she was more beautiful than the other two, and they were in dread she might marry before themselves.

They carried on in this way for seven years. At the end of seven years the son of the king of Omanya fell in love with the eldest sister.

One Sunday morning, after the other two had gone to church, the old henwife came into the kitchen to Trembling, and said: “It’s at church you ought to be this day, instead of working here at home.”

“How could I go?” said Trembling. “I have no clothes good enough to wear at church; and if my sisters were to see me there, they’d kill me for going out of the house.”

“I’ll give you,” said the henwife, “a finer dress than either of them has ever seen. And now tell me what dress will you have?”

“I’ll have,” said Trembling, “a dress as white as snow, and green shoes for my feet.”

Then the henwife put on the cloak of darkness, clipped a piece from the old clothes the young woman had on, and asked for the whitest robes in the world and the most beautiful that could be found, and a pair of green shoes.

That moment she had the robe and the shoes, and she brought them to Trembling, who put them on. When Trembling was dressed and ready, the henwife said: “I have a honey-bird here to sit on your right shoulder, and a honey-finger to put on your left. At the door stands a milk-white mare, with a golden saddle for you to sit on, and a golden bridle to hold in your hand.”

Trembling sat on the golden saddle; and when she was ready to start, the henwife said: “You must not go inside the door of the church, and the minute the people rise up at the end of Mass, do you make off, and ride home as fast as the mare will carry you.”

When Trembling came to the door of the church there was no one inside who could get a glimpse of her but was striving to know who she was; and when they saw her hurrying away at the end of Mass, they ran out to overtake her. But no use in their running; she was away before any man could come near her. From the minute she left the church till she got home, she overtook the wind before her, and outstripped the wind behind.

She came down at the door, went in, and found the henwife had dinner ready. She put off the white robes, and had on her old dress in a twinkling.

When the two sisters came home the henwife asked: “Have you any news to-day from the church?”

“We have great news,” said they. “We saw a wonderful, grand lady at the church-door. The like of the robes she had we have never seen on woman before. It’s little that was thought of our dresses beside what she had on; and there wasn’t a man at the church, from the king to the beggar, but was trying to look at her and know who she was.”

The sisters would give no peace till they had two dresses like the robes of the strange lady; but honey-birds and honey-fingers were not to be found.

Next Sunday the two sisters went to church again, and left the youngest at home to cook the dinner.

After they had gone, the henwife came in and asked: “Will you go to church to-day?”

“I would go,” said Trembling, “if I could get the going.”

“What robe will you wear?” asked the henwife.

“The finest black satin that can be found, and red shoes for my feet.”

“What color do you want the mare to be?”

“I want her to be so black and so glossy that I can see myself in her body.”

The henwife put on the cloak of darkness, and asked for the robes and the mare. That moment she had them. When Trembling was dressed, the henwife put the honey-bird on her right shoulder and the honey-finger on her left. The saddle on the mare was silver, and so was the bridle.

When Trembling sat in the saddle and was going away, the henwife ordered her strictly not to go inside the door of the church, but to rush away as soon as the people rose at the end of Mass, and hurry home on the mare before any man could stop her.

That Sunday the people were more astonished than ever, and gazed at her more than the first time; and all they were thinking of was to know who she was. But they had no chance; for the moment the people rose at the end of Mass she slipped from the church, was in the silver saddle, and home before a man could stop her or talk to her.

The henwife had the dinner ready. Trembling took off her satin robe, and had on her old clothes before her sisters got home.

“What news have you to-day?” asked the henwife of the sisters when they came from the church.

“Oh, we saw the grand strange lady again! And it’s little that any man could think of our dresses after looking at the robes of satin that she had on! And all at church, from high to low, had their mouths open, gazing at her, and no man was looking at us.”

The two sisters gave neither rest nor peace till they got dresses as nearly like the strange lady's robes as they could find. Of course they were not so good; for the like of those robes could not be found in Erin.

When the third Sunday came, Fair and Brown went to church dressed in black satin. They left Trembling at home to work in the kitchen, and told her to be sure and have dinner ready when they came back.

After they had gone and were out of sight, the henwife came to the kitchen and said: “Well, my dear, are you for church to-day?”

“I would go if I had a new dress to wear.”

“I'll get you any dress you ask for. What dress would you like?” asked the henwife.

“A dress red as a rose from the waist down, and white as snow from the waist up; a cape of green on my shoulders; and a hat on my head with a red, a white, and a green feather in it; and shoes for my feet with the toes red, the middle white, and the backs and heels green.”

The henwife put on the cloak of darkness, wished for all these things, and had them. When Trembling was dressed, the henwife put the honey-bird on her right shoulder and the honey-finger on her left, and placing the hat on her head, clipped a few hairs from one lock and a few from another with her scissors, and that moment the most beautiful golden hair was flowing down over the girl's shoulders. Then the henwife asked what kind of a mare she would ride. She said white, with blue and gold-colored diamond-shaped spots all over her body, on her back a saddle of gold, and on her head a golden bridle.

The mare stood there before the door, and a bird sitting between her ears, which began to sing as soon as Trembling was in the saddle, and never stopped till she came home from the church.

The fame of the beautiful strange lady had gone out through the world, and all the princes and great men that were in it came to church that Sunday, each one hoping that it was himself would have her home with him after Mass.

The son of the king of Omanya forgot all about the eldest sister, and remained outside the church, so as to catch the strange lady before she could hurry away.

The church was more crowded than ever before, and there were three times as many outside. There was such a throng before the church that Trembling could only come inside the gate.

As soon as the people were rising at the end of Mass, the lady slipped out through the gate, was in the golden saddle in an instant, and sweeping away ahead of the wind. But if she was, the prince of Omanya was at her side, and, seizing her by the foot, he ran with the mare for thirty perches, and never let go of the beautiful lady till the shoe was pulled from her foot, and he was left behind with it in his hand. She came home as fast as the mare could carry her, and was thinking all the time that the henwife would kill her for losing the shoe.

Seeing her so vexed and so changed in the face, the old woman asked: “What’s the trouble that’s on you now?”

“Oh! I’ve lost one of the shoes off my feet,” said Trembling.

“Don’t mind that; don’t be vexed,” said the henwife; “maybe it’s the best thing that ever happened to you.”

Then Trembling gave up all the things she had to the henwife, put on her old clothes, and went to work in the kitchen. When the sisters came home, the henwife asked: “Have you any news from the church?”

“We have indeed,” said they; “for we saw the grandest sight to-day. The strange lady came again, in grander array than before. On herself and the horse she rode were the finest colors of the world, and between the ears of the horse was a bird which never stopped singing from the time she came till she went away. The lady herself is the most beautiful woman ever seen by man in Erin.”

After Trembling had disappeared from the church, the son of the king of Omanya said to the other kings' sons: "I will have that lady for my own."

They all said: "You didn't win her just by taking the shoe off her foot, you'll have to win her by the point of the sword; you'll have to fight for her with us before you can call her your own."

"Well," said the son of the king of Omanya, "when I find the lady that shoe will fit, I'll fight for her, never fear, before I leave her to any of you."

Then all the kings' sons were uneasy, and anxious to know who was she that lost the shoe; and they began to travel all over Erin to know could they find her. The prince of Omanya and all the others went in a great company together, and made the round of Erin; they went everywhere, — north, south, east, and west. They visited every place where a woman was to be found, and left not a house in the kingdom they did not search, to know could they find the woman the shoe would fit, not caring whether she was rich or poor, of high or low degree.

The prince of Omanya always kept the shoe; and when the young women saw it, they had great hopes, for it was of proper size, neither large nor small, and it would beat any man to know of what material it was made. One thought it would fit her if she cut a little from her great toe; and another, with too short a foot, put something in the tip of her stocking. But no use, they only spoiled their feet, and were curing them for months afterwards.

The two sisters, Fair and Brown, heard that the princes of the world were looking all over Erin for the woman that could wear the shoe, and every day they were talking of trying it on; and one day Trembling spoke up and said: "Maybe it's my foot that the shoe will fit."

"Oh, the breaking of the dog's foot on you! Why say so when you were at home every Sunday?" They were that way waiting, and scolding the younger sister, till the princes were near the place. The day they were to come, the sisters put Trembling in a closet, and locked the door on her.

When the company came to the house, the prince of Omanya gave the shoe to the sisters. But though they tried and tried, it would fit neither of them.

"Is there any other young woman in the house?" asked the prince.

"There is," said Trembling, speaking up in the closet; "I'm here."

"Oh! we have her for nothing but to put out the ashes," said the sisters.

But the prince and the others wouldn't leave the house till they had seen her; so the two sisters had to open the door. When Trembling came out, the shoe was given to her, and it fitted exactly.

The prince of Omanya looked at her and said: "You are the woman the shoe fits, and you are the woman I took the shoe from."

Then Trembling spoke up, and said: "Do you stay here till I return."

Then she went to the henwife's house. The old woman put on the cloak of darkness, got everything for her she had the first Sunday at church, and put her on the white mare in the same fashion. Then Trembling rode along the highway to the front of the house. All who saw her the first time said: "This is the lady we saw at church."

Then she went away a second time, and a second time came back on the black mare in the second dress which the henwife gave her. All who saw her the second Sunday said: "That is the lady we saw at church." A third time she asked for a short absence, and soon came back on the third mare and in the third dress. All who saw her the third time said: "That is the lady we saw at church." Every man was satisfied, and knew that she was the woman.

Then all the princes and great men spoke up, and said to the son of the king of Omanya: "You'll have to fight now for her before we let her go with you."

"I'm here before you, ready for combat," answered the prince.

Then the son of the king of Lochlin stepped forth. The struggle began, and a terrible struggle it was. They fought for nine hours; and then the son of the king of Lochlin stopped, gave up his claim, and left the field. Next day the son of the king of Spain fought six hours, and yielded his claim. On the third day the son of the king of Nyerfói fought eight hours, and stopped. The fourth day the son of the king of Greece fought six hours, and stopped. On the fifth day no more strange princes wanted to fight; and all the sons of kings in Erin said they would not fight with a man of their own land, that the strangers had had their chance, and as no others came to claim the woman, she belonged of right to the son of the king of Omanya.

The marriage-day was fixed, and the invitations were sent out. The wedding lasted for a year and a day. When the wedding was over, the king's son brought home the bride, and when the time came a son was born. The young woman sent for her eldest sister, Fair, to be with her and care for her. One day, when Trembling was well, and when her husband was away hunting, the two sisters went out to walk; and when they came to the seaside, the eldest pushed the youngest sister in. A great whale came and swallowed her.

The eldest sister came home alone, and the husband asked, "Where is your sister?"

"She has gone home to her father in Ballyshannon; now that I am well, I don't need her."

"Well," said the husband, looking at her, "I'm in dread it's my wife that has gone."

"Oh! no," said she; "it's my sister Fair that's gone."

Since the sisters were very much alike, the prince was in doubt. That night he put his sword between them, and said: "If you are my wife, this sword will get warm; if not, it will stay cold."

In the morning when he rose up, the sword was as cold as when he put it there.

It happened when the two sisters were walking by the seashore, that a little cowboy was down by the water minding cattle, and saw Fair push Trembling into the sea; and next day, when the tide came in, he saw the whale swim up and throw her out on the sand. When she was on the sand she said to the cowboy: “When you go home in the evening with the cows, tell the master that my sister Fair pushed me into the sea yesterday; that a whale swallowed me, and then threw me out, but will come again and swallow me with the coming of the next tide; then he’ll go out with the tide, and come again with to-morrow’s tide, and throw me again on the strand. The whale will cast me out three times. I’m under the enchantment of this whale, and cannot leave the beach or escape myself. Unless my husband saves me before I’m swallowed the fourth time, I shall be lost. He must come and shoot the whale with a silver bullet when he turns on the broad of his back. Under the breast-fin of the whale is a reddish-brown spot. My husband must hit him in that spot, for it is the only place in which he can be killed.”

When the cowboy got home, the eldest sister gave him a draught of oblivion, and he did not tell.

Next day he went again to the sea. The whale came and cast Trembling on shore again. She asked the boy: “Did you tell the master what I told you to tell him?”

“I did not,” said he; “I forgot.”

“How did you forget?” asked she.

“The woman of the house gave me a drink that made me forget.”

“Well, don’t forget telling him this night; and if she gives you a drink, don’t take it from her.”

As soon as the cowboy came home, the eldest sister offered him a drink. He refused to take it till he had delivered his message and told all to the master. The third day the prince went down with his gun and a silver bullet in it. He was not long down when the whale came and threw Trembling upon the beach as the two days before. She had no power to speak to her husband till he had killed the whale. Then the whale went out, turned over once on the broad of his back, and showed the spot for a moment only. That moment the prince fired. He had but the one chance, and a short one at that; but he took it, and hit the spot, and the whale, mad with pain, made the sea all around red with blood, and died.

That minute Trembling was able to speak, and went home with her husband, who sent word to her father what the eldest sister had done. The father came, and told him any death he chose to give her to give it. The prince told the father he would leave her life and death with himself. The father had her put out then on the sea in a barrel, with provisions in it for seven years.

In time Trembling had a second child, a daughter. The prince and she sent the cowboy to school, and trained him up as one of their own children, and said: “If the little girl that is born to us now lives, no other man in the world will get her but him.”

The cowboy and the prince’s daughter lived on till they were married. The mother said to her husband: “You could not have saved me from the whale but for the little cowboy; on that account I don’t grudge him my daughter.”

The son of the king of Omanya and Trembling had fourteen children, and they lived happily till the two died of old age.

5

THE KING OF ERIN AND THE QUEEN OF THE LONESOME ISLAND

There was a king in Erin long ago, and this king went out hunting one day, but saw nothing till near sunset, when what should come across him but a black pig.

“Since I’ve seen nothing all day but this black pig, I’ll be at her now,” said the king; so he put spurs to his horse and raced after the pig.

When the pig was on a hill he was in the valley behind her; when he was on a hill, the pig was in the valley before him. At last they came to the sea-side, and the pig rushed out into the deep water straight from the shore. The king spurred on his horse and followed the black pig through the sea till his horse failed under him and was drowned.

Then the king swam on himself till he was growing weak, and said: “It was for the death of me that the black pig came in my way.”

But he swam on some distance yet, till at last he saw land. The pig went up on an island; the king too went on shore, and said to himself: “Oh! it is for no good that I came here; there is neither house nor shelter to be seen.” But he cheered up after a while, walked around, and said: “I’m a useless man if I can’t find shelter in some place.”

After going on a short space he saw a great castle in a valley before him. When he came to the front of the castle he saw that it had a low door with a broad threshold all covered with sharp-edged razors, and a low lintel of long-pointed needles. The path to the castle was covered with gravel of gold. The king came up, and went in with a jump over the razors and under the needles. When inside he saw a great fire on a broad hearth, and said to himself, “I’ll sit down here, dry my clothes, and warm my body at this fire.”

As he sat and warmed himself, a table came out before him with every sort of food and drink, without his seeing any one bring it.

“Upon my honor and power,” said the king of Erin, “there is nothing bad in this! I’ll eat and drink my fill.”

Then he fell to, and ate and drank his fill. When he had grown tired, he looked behind him, and if he did he saw a fine room, and in it a bed covered with gold. “Well,” said he, “I’ll go back and sleep in that bed a while, I’m so tired.”

He stretched himself on the bed and fell asleep. In the night he woke up, and felt the presence of a woman in the room. He reached out his hand towards her and spoke, but got no answer; she was silent.

When morning came, and he made his way out of the castle, she spread a beautiful garden with her Druidic spells over the island, — so great that though he travelled through it all day he could not escape from it. At sunset he was back at the door of the castle; and in he went over the razors and under the needles, sat at the fire, and the table came out before him as on the previous evening. He ate, drank, and slept on the bed; and when he woke in the night, there was the woman in the room; but she was silent and unseen as before.

When he went out on the second morning the king of Erin saw a garden three times more beautiful than the one of the day before. He travelled all day, but could not escape, — could not get out of the garden. At sunset he was back at the door of the castle; in he went over the razors and under the needles, ate, drank, and slept, as before.

In the middle of the night he woke up, and felt the presence of the woman in the room. “Well,” said he, “it is a wonderful thing for me to pass three nights in a room with a woman, and not see her nor know who she is!”

“You won’t have that to say again, king of Erin,” answered a voice. And that moment the room was filled with a bright light, and the king looked upon the finest woman he had ever seen. “Well, king of Erin, you are on Lonesome Island. I am the black pig that enticed you over the land and through the sea to this place, and I am queen of Lonesome Island. My two sisters and I are under a Druidic spell, and we cannot escape from this spell till your son and mine shall free us. Now, king of Erin, I will give you a boat to-morrow morning, and do you sail away to your own kingdom.”

In the morning she went with him to the seashore to the boat. The king gave the prow of the boat to the sea, and its stern to the land; then he raised the sails, and went his way. The music he had was the roaring of the wind with the whistling of eels, and he broke neither oar nor mast till he landed under his own castle in Erin.

Three quarters of a year after, the queen of Lonesome Island gave birth to a son. She reared him with care from day to day and year to year till he was a splendid youth. She taught him the learning of wise men one half of the day, and warlike exercises with Druidic spells the other half. One time the young man, the prince of Lonesome Island, came in from hunting, and found his mother sobbing and crying.

“Oh! what has happened to you, mother?” he asked.

“My son, great grief has come on me. A friend of mine is going to be killed to-morrow.”

“Who is he?”

“The king of Erin. The king of Spain has come against him with a great army. He wishes to sweep him and his men from the face of the earth, and take the kingdom himself.”

“Well, what can we do? If I were there, I’d help the king of Erin.”

“Since you say that, my son, I’ll send you this very evening. With the power of my Druidic spells, you’ll be in Erin in the morning.”

The prince of Lonesome Island went away that night, and next morning at the rising of the sun he drew up his boat under the king's castle in Erin. He went ashore, and saw the whole land black with the forces of the king of Spain, who was getting ready to attack the king of Erin and sweep him and his men from the face of the earth.

The prince went straight to the king of Spain, and said, "I ask one day's truce."

"You shall have it, my champion," answered the king of Spain.

The prince then went to the castle of the king of Erin, and stayed there that day as a guest. Next morning early he dressed himself in his champion's array, and, taking his nine-edged sword, he went down alone to the king of Spain, and, standing before him, bade him guard himself.

They closed in conflict, the king of Spain with all his forces on one side, and the prince of Lonesome Island on the other. They fought an awful battle that day from sunrise till sunset. They made soft places hard, and hard places soft; they made high places low, and low places high; they brought water out of the centre of hard gray rocks, and made dry rushes soft in the most distant parts of Erin till sunset; and when the sun went down, the king of Spain and his last man were dead on the field.

Neither the king of Erin nor his forces took part in the battle. They had no need, and they had no chance.

Now the king of Erin had two sons, who were such cowards that they hid themselves from fright during the battle; but their mother told the king of Erin that her elder son was the man who had destroyed the king of Spain and all his men.

There was great rejoicing and a feast at the castle of the king of Erin. At the end of the feast the queen said: "I wish to give the last cup to this stranger who is here as a guest;" and taking him to an adjoining chamber which had a window right over the sea, she seated him in the open window and gave him a cup of drowsiness to drink. When he had emptied the cup and closed his eyes, she pushed him out into the darkness.

The prince of Lonesome Island swam on the water for four days and nights, till he came to a rock in the ocean, and there he lived for three months, eating the seaweeds of the rock, till one foggy day a vessel came near and the captain cried out: “We shall be wrecked on this rock!” Then he said, “There is some one on the rock; go and see who it is.”

They landed, and found the prince, his clothes all gone, his body black from the seaweed, which was growing all over it.

“Who are you?” asked the captain.

“Give me first to eat and drink, and then I’ll talk,” said he.

They brought him food and drink; and when he had eaten and drunk, the prince said to the captain: “What part of the world have you come from?”

“I have just sailed from Lonesome Island,” said the captain. “I was obliged to sail away, for fire was coming from every side to burn my ship.”

“Would you like to go back?”

“I should indeed.”

“Well, turn around; you’ll have no trouble if I am with you.”

The captain returned. The queen of Lonesome Island was standing on the shore as the ship came in.

“Oh, my child!” cried she, “why have you been away so long?”

“The queen of Erin threw me into the sea after I had kept the head of the king of Erin on him, and saved her life too.”

“Well, my son, that will come up against the queen of Erin on another day.”

Now, the prince lived on Lonesome Island three years longer, till one time he came home from hunting, and found his mother wringing her hands and shedding bitter tears.

“Oh! what has happened?” asked he.

"I am weeping because the king of Spain has gone to take vengeance on the king of Erin for the death of his father, whom you killed."

"Well, mother, I'll go to help the king of Erin, if you give me leave."

"Since you have said it, you shall go this very night."

He went to the shore. Putting the prow of his bark to the sea and her stern to land, he raised high the sails, and heard no sound as he went but the pleasant wind and the whistling of eels, till he pulled up his boat next morning under the castle of the king of Erin and went on shore.

The whole country was black with the troops of the king of Spain, who was just ready to attack, when the prince stood before him, and asked a truce till next morning.

"That you shall have, my champion," answered the king. So there was peace for that day.

Next morning at sunrise, the prince faced the king of Spain and his army, and there followed a struggle more terrible than that with his father; but at sunset neither the king of Spain nor one of his men was left alive.

The two sons of the king of Erin were frightened almost to death, and hid during the battle, so that no one saw them or knew where they were. But when the king of Spain and his army were destroyed, the queen said to the king: "My elder son has saved us." Then she went to bed, and taking the blood of a chicken in her mouth, spat it out, saying: "This is my heart's blood; and nothing can cure me now but three bottles of water from Tubber Tintye, the flaming well."

When the prince was told of the sickness of the queen of Erin, he came to her and said: "I'll go for the water if your two sons will go with me."

"They shall go," said the queen; and away went the three young men towards the East, in search of the flaming well.

In the morning they came to a house on the roadside; and going in, they saw a woman who had washed herself in a golden basin which stood before her. She was then wetting her head with the water in the basin, and combing her hair with a golden comb. She threw back her hair, and looking at the prince, said: “You are welcome, sister’s son. What is on you? Is it the misfortune of the world that has brought you here?”

“It is not; I am going to Tubber Tintye for three bottles of water.”

“That is what you’ll never do; no man can cross the fiery river or go through the enchantments around Tubber Tintye. Stay here with me, and I’ll give you all I have.”

“No, I cannot stay, I must go on.”

“Well, you’ll be in your other aunt’s house to-morrow night, and she will tell you all.”

Next morning, when they were getting ready to take the road, the elder son of the queen of Erin was frightened at what he had heard, and said: “I am sick; I cannot go farther.”

“Stop here where you are till I come back,” said the prince. Then he went on with the younger brother, till at sunset they came to a house where they saw a woman wetting her head from a golden basin, and combing her hair with a golden comb. She threw back her hair, looked at the prince, and said: “You are welcome, sister’s son! What brought you to this place? Was it the misfortune of the world that brought you to live under Druidic spells like me and my sisters?” This was the elder sister of the queen of the Lonesome Island.

“No,” said the prince; “I am going to Tubber Tintye for three bottles of water from the flaming well.”

“Oh, sister’s son, it’s a hard journey you’re on! But stay here to-night; to-morrow morning I’ll tell you all.”

In the morning the prince’s aunt said: “The queen of the Island of Tubber Tintye has an enormous castle, in which she lives. She has a countless army of giants, beasts, and monsters to guard the castle and the flaming well. There are thousands upon thousands of them, of every form and size. When they get drowsy, and sleep comes on them, they sleep for seven years without waking. The queen has twelve attendant maidens, who live in twelve chambers. She is in the thirteenth and innermost chamber herself. The queen and the maidens sleep during the same seven years as the giants and beasts. When the seven years are over, they all wake up, and none of them sleep again for seven other years. If any man could enter the castle during the seven years of sleep, he could do what he liked. But the island on which the castle stands is girt by a river of fire and surrounded by a belt of poison-trees."

The aunt now blew on a horn, and all the birds of the air gathered around her from every place under the heavens, and she asked each in turn where it dwelt, and each told her; but none knew of the flaming well, till an old eagle said: "I left Tubber Tintye to-day."

"How are all the people there?" asked the aunt.

"They are all asleep since yesterday morning," answered the old eagle.

The aunt dismissed the birds; and turning to the prince, said, "Here is a bridle for you. Go to the stables, shake the bridle, and put it on whatever horse runs out to meet you."

Now the second son of the queen of Erin said: "I am too sick to go farther."

"Well, stay here till I come back," said the prince, who took the bridle and went out.

The prince of the Lonesome Island stood in front of his aunt's stables, shook the bridle, and out came a dirty, lean little shaggy horse.

"Sit on my back, son of the king of Erin and the queen of Lonesome Island," said the little shaggy horse.

This was the first the prince had heard of his father. He had often wondered who he might be, but had never heard who he was before.

He mounted the horse, which said: "Keep a firm grip now, for I shall clear the river of fire at a single bound, and pass the poison-trees; but if you touch any part of the trees, even with a thread of the clothing that's on you,

you’ll never eat another bite; and as I rush by the end of the castle of Tubber Tintye with the speed of the wind, you must spring from my back through an open window that is there; and if you don’t get in at the window, you’re done for. I’ll wait for you outside till you are ready to go back to Erin.”

The prince did as the little horse told him. They crossed the river of fire, escaped the touch of the poison-trees, and as the horse shot past the castle, the prince sprang through the open window, and came down safe and sound inside.

The whole place, enormous in extent, was filled with sleeping giants and monsters of sea and land, — great whales, long slippery eels, bears, and beasts of every form and kind. The prince passed through them and over them till he came to a great stairway. At the head of the stairway he went into a chamber, where he found the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, stretched on a couch asleep. “I’ll have nothing to say to you,” thought he, and went on to the next; and so he looked into twelve chambers. In each was a woman more beautiful than the one before. But when he reached the thirteenth chamber and opened the door, the flash of gold took the sight from his eyes. He stood a while till the sight came back, and then entered. In the great bright chamber was a golden couch, resting on wheels of gold. The wheels turned continually; the couch went round and round, never stopping night or day. On the couch lay the queen of Tubber Tintye; and if her twelve maidens were beautiful, they would not be beautiful if seen near her. At the foot of the couch was Tubber Tintye itself, — the well of fire. There was a golden cover upon the well, and it went around continually with the couch of the queen.

“Upon my word,” said the prince, “I’ll rest here a while.” And he went up on the couch, and never left it for six days and nights.

On the seventh morning he said, “It is time for me now to leave this place.” So he came down and filled the three bottles with water from the flaming well. In the golden chamber was a table of gold, and on the table a leg of mutton with a loaf of bread; and if all the men in Erin were to eat for a twelvemonth from the table, the mutton and the bread would be in the same form after the eating as before.

The prince sat down, ate his fill of the loaf and the leg of mutton, and left them as he had found them. Then he rose up, took his three bottles, put them in his wallet, and was leaving the chamber, when he said to himself: “It would be a shame to go away without leaving something by which the queen may know who was here while she slept.” So he wrote a letter, saying that the son of the king of Erin and the queen of the Lonesome Island had spent six days and nights in the golden chamber of Tubber Tintye, had taken away three bottles of water from the flaming well, and had eaten from the table of gold. Putting this letter under the pillow of the queen, he went out, stood in the open window, sprang on the back of the lean and shaggy little horse, and passed the trees and the river unharmed.

When they were near his aunt’s house, the horse stopped, and said: “Put your hand into my ear, and draw out of it a Druidic rod; then cut me into four quarters, and strike each quarter with the rod. Each one of them will become the son of a king, for four princes were enchanted and turned into the lean little shaggy horse that carried you to Tubber Tintye. When you have freed the four princes from this form you can free your two aunts from the spell that is on them, and take them with you to Lonesome Island.”

The prince did as the horse desired; and straightway four princes stood before him, and thanking him for what he had done, they departed at once, each to his own kingdom.

The prince removed the spell from his aunts, and, travelling with them and the two sons of the queen of Erin, all soon appeared at the castle of the king.

When they were near the door of their mother’s chamber, the elder of the two sons of the queen of Erin stepped up to the prince of Lonesome

Island, snatched the three bottles from the wallet that he had at his side, and running up to his mother's bed, said: "Here, mother, are the three bottles of water which I brought you from Tubber Tintye."

"Thank you, my son; you have saved my life," said she.

The prince went on his bark and sailed away with his aunts to Lonesome Island, where he lived with his mother seven years.

When seven years were over, the queen of Tubber Tintye awoke from her sleep in the golden chamber; and with her the twelve maidens and all the giants, beasts, and monsters that slept in the great castle.

When the queen opened her eyes, she saw a boy about six years old playing by himself on the floor. He was very beautiful and bright, and he had gold on his forehead and silver on his poll. When she saw the child, she began to cry and wring her hands, and said: "Some man has been here while I slept."

Straightway she sent for her Seandallglic (old blind sage), told him about the child, and asked: "What am I to do now?"

The old blind sage thought a while, and then said: "Whoever was here must be a hero; for the child has gold on his forehead and silver on his poll, and he never went from this place without leaving his name behind him. Let search be made, and we shall know who he was."

Search was made, and at last they found the letter of the prince under the pillow of the couch. The queen was now glad, and proud of the child.

Next day she assembled all her forces, her giants and guards; and when she had them drawn up in line, the army was seven miles long from van to rear. The queen opened through the river of fire a safe way for the host, and led it on till she came to the castle of the king of Erin. She held all the land near the castle, so the king had the sea on one side, and the army of the queen of Tubber Tintye on the other, ready to destroy him and all that he had. The queen sent a herald for the king to come down.

“What are you going to do?” asked the king when he came to her tent. “I have had trouble enough in my life already, without having more of it now.”

“Find for me,” said the queen, “the man who came to my castle and entered the golden chamber of Tubber Tintye while I slept, or I’ll sweep you and all you have from the face of the earth.”

The king of Erin called down his elder son, and asked: “Did you enter the chamber of the queen of Tubber Tintye?”

“I did.”

“Go, then, and tell her so, and save us.”

He went; and when he told the queen, she said: “If you entered my chamber, then mount my gray steed.”

He mounted the steed; and if he did, the steed rose in the air with a bound, hurled him off his back, in a moment, threw him on a rock, and dashed the brains out of his head.

The king called down his second son, who said that he had been in the golden chamber. Then he mounted the gray steed, which killed him as it had his brother.

Now the queen called the king again, and said: “Unless you bring the man who entered my golden chamber while I slept, I’ll not leave a sign of you or anything you have upon the face of the earth.” Straightway the king sent a message to the queen of Lonesome Island, saying: “Come to me with your son and your two sisters!”

The queen set out next morning, and at sunset she drew up her boat under the castle of the king of Erin. Glad were they to see her at the castle, for great dread was on all.

Next morning the king went down to the queen of Tubber Tintye, who said: “Bring me the man who entered my castle, or I’ll destroy you and all you have in Erin this day.”

The king went up to the castle; immediately the prince of Lonesome Island went to the queen.

"Are you the man who entered my castle?" asked she.

"I don't know," said the prince.

"Go up now on my gray steed!" said the queen.

He sat on the gray steed, which rose under him into the sky. The prince stood on the back of the horse, and cut three times with his sword as he went up under the sun. When he came to the earth again, the queen of Tubber Tintye ran over to him, put his head on her bosom, and said: "You are the man."

Now she called the queen of Erin to her tent, and drawing from her own pocket a belt of silk, slender as a cord, she said: "Put this on."

The queen of Erin put it on, and then the queen of Tubber Tintye said: "Tighten, belt!" The belt tightened till the queen of Erin screamed with pain. "Now tell me," said the queen of Tubber Tintye, "who was the father of your elder son."

"The gardener," said the queen of Erin.

Again the queen of Tubber Tintye said; "Tighten, belt!" The queen of Erin screamed worse than before; and she had good reason, for she was cut nearly in two. "Now tell me who was the father of your second son."

"The big brewer," said the queen of Erin.

Said the queen of Tubber Tintye to the king of Erin: "Get this woman dead."

The king put down a big fire then, and when it was blazing high, he threw the wife in, and she was destroyed at once.

"Now do you marry the queen of Lonesome Island, and my child will be grandchild to you and to her," said the queen of Tubber Tintye.

This was done, and the queen of Lonesome Island became queen of Erin and lived in the castle by the sea. And the queen of Tubber Tintye married the prince of Lonesome Island, the champion who entered the golden chamber while she slept.

Now the king of Erin sent ten ships with messages to all the kings of the world, inviting them to come to the wedding of the queen of Tubber Tintye and his son, and to his own wedding with the queen of Lonesome Island.

The queen removed the Druidic spells from her giants, beasts, and monsters; then went home, and made the prince of Lonesome Island king of Tubber Tintye and lord of the golden chamber.

6

THE SHEE AN GANNON AND THE GRUAGACH GAIRE

The Shee an Gannon was born in the morning, named at noon, and went in the evening to ask his daughter of the king of Erin.

"I will give you my daughter in marriage," said the king of Erin; "you won't get her, though, unless you go and bring me back the tidings that I want, and tell me what it is that put a stop to the laughing of the Gruagach Gaire, who before this laughed always, and laughed so loud that the whole world heard him. There are twelve iron spikes out here in the garden behind my castle. On eleven of the spikes are the heads of kings' sons who came seeking my daughter in marriage, and all of them went away to get the knowledge I wanted. Not one was able to get it and tell me what stopped the Gruagach Gaire from laughing. I took the heads off them all when they came back without the tidings for which they went, and I'm greatly in dread that your head'll be on the twelfth spike, for I'll do the same to you that I did to the eleven kings' sons unless you tell what put a stop to the laughing of the Gruagach."

The Shee an Gannon made no answer, but left the king and pushed away to know could he find why the Gruagach was silent.

He took a glen at a step, a hill at a leap, and travelled all day till evening. Then he came to a house. The master of the house asked him what sort was he, and he said: "A young man looking for hire."

"Well," said the master of the house, "I was going to-morrow to look for a man to mind my cows. If you'll work for me, you'll have a good place, the best food a man could have to eat in this world, and a soft bed to lie on."

The Shee an Gannon took service, and ate his supper. Then the master of the house said: "I am the Gruagach Gaire; now that you are my man and have eaten your supper, you'll have a bed of silk to sleep on."

Next morning after breakfast the Gruagach said to the Shee an Gannon: "Go out now and loosen my five golden cows and my bull without horns, and drive them to pasture; but when you have them out on the grass, be careful you don't let them go near the land of the giant."

The new cowboy drove the cattle to pasture, and when near the land of the giant, he saw it was covered with woods and surrounded by a high wall. He went up, put his back against the wall, and threw in a great stretch of it; then he went inside and threw out another great stretch of the wall, and put the five golden cows and the bull without horns on the land of the giant.

Then he climbed a tree, ate the sweet apples himself, and threw the sour ones down to the cattle of the Gruagach Gaire.

Soon a great crashing was heard in the woods, — the noise of young trees bending, and old trees breaking. The cowboy looked around, and saw a five-headed giant pushing through the trees; and soon he was before him. "Poor miserable creature!" said the giant; "but weren't you impudent to come to my land and trouble me in this way? You're too big for one bite, and too small for two. I don't know what to do but tear you to pieces."

"You nasty brute," said the cowboy, coming down to him from the tree, "'tis little I care for you;" and then they went at each other. So great was the noise between them that there was nothing in the world but what was looking on and listening to the combat.

They fought till late in the afternoon, when the giant was getting the upper hand; and then the cowboy thought that if the giant should kill him, his father and mother would never find him or set eyes on him again, and he would never get the daughter of the king of Erin. The heart in his body grew strong at this thought. He sprang on the giant, and with the first squeeze and thrust he put him to his knees in the hard ground, with the second thrust to his waist, and with the third to his shoulders.

“I have you at last; you’re done for now!” said the cowboy. Then he took out his knife, cut the five heads off the giant, and when he had them off he cut out the tongues and threw the heads over the wall.

Then he put the tongues in his pocket and drove home the cattle. That evening the Gruagach couldn’t find vessels enough in all his place to hold the milk of the five golden cows.

After supper the cowboy would give no talk to his master, but kept his mind to himself, and went to the bed of silk to sleep.

Next morning after breakfast the cowboy drove out his cattle, and going on farther than the day before, stopped at a high wall. He put his back to the wall, threw in a long stretch of it, then went in and threw out another long stretch of it.

After that he put the five golden cows and the bull without horns on the land, and going up on a tree, ate sweet apples himself, and threw down the sour ones to the cattle.

Now the son of the king of Tisean set out from the king of Erin on the same errand, after asking for his daughter; and as soon as the cowboy drove in his cattle on the second day, he came along by the giant’s land, found the five heads of the giant thrown out by the cowboy the day before, and picking them up, ran off to the king of Erin and put them down before him.

“Oh, you have done good work!” said the king. “You have won one third of my daughter.”

Soon after the cowboy had begun to eat sweet apples, and the son of the king of Tisean had run off with the five heads, there came a great noise of young trees bending, and old trees breaking, and presently the cowboy saw a giant larger than the one he had killed the day before.

“You miserable little wretch!” cried the giant; “what brings you here on my land?”

“You wicked brute!” said the cowboy, “I don’t care for you;” and slipping down from the tree, he fell upon the giant.

The fight was fiercer than his first one; but towards evening, when he was growing faint, the cowboy remembered that if he should fall, neither his father nor mother would see him again, and he would never get the daughter of the king of Erin.

This thought gave him strength; and jumping up, he caught the giant, put him with one thrust to his knees in the hard earth, with a second to his waist, with a third to his shoulders, and then swept the five heads off him and threw them over the wall, after he had cut out the tongues and put them in his pocket.

Leaving the body of the giant, the cowboy drove home the cattle, and the Gruagach had still greater trouble in finding vessels for the milk of the five golden cows.

After supper the cowboy said not a word, but went to sleep.

Next morning he drove the cattle still farther, and came to green woods and a strong wall. Putting his back to the wall, he threw in a great piece of it, and going in, threw out another piece. Then he drove the five golden cows and the bull without horns to the land inside, ate sweet apples himself, and threw down sour ones to the cattle.

The son of the king of Tisean came and carried off the heads as on the day before.

Presently a third giant came crashing through the woods, and a battle followed more terrible than the other two.

Towards evening the giant was gaining the upper hand, and the cowboy, growing weak, would have been killed; but the thought of his parents and the daughter of the king of Erin gave him strength, and he swept the five heads off the giant, and threw them over the wall after he had put the tongues in his pocket.

Then the cowboy drove home his cattle; and the Gruagach didn't know what to do with the milk of the five golden cows, there was so much of it.

But when the cowboy was on the way home with the cattle, the son of the king of Tisean came, took the five heads of the giant, and hurried to the king of Erin.

"You have won my daughter now," said the king of Erin when he saw the heads; "but you'll not get her unless you tell me what stops the Gruagach Gaire from laughing."

On the fourth morning the cowboy rose before his master, and the first words he said to the Gruagach were:

"What keeps you from laughing, you who used to laugh so loud that the whole world heard you?"

"I'm sorry," said the Gruagach, "that the daughter of the king of Erin sent you here."

"If you don't tell me of your own will, I'll make you tell me," said the cowboy; and he put a face on himself that was terrible to look at, and running through the house like a madman, could find nothing that would give pain enough to the Gruagach but some ropes made of untanned sheepskin hanging on the wall.

He took these down, caught the Gruagach, fastened his two hands behind him, and tied his feet so that his little toes were whispering to his ears. When he was in this state the Gruagach said: "I'll tell you what stopped my laughing if you set me free."

So the cowboy unbound him, the two sat down together, and the Gruagach said: —

"I lived in this castle here with my twelve sons. We ate, drank, played cards, and enjoyed ourselves, till one day when my sons and I were playing, a wizard hare came rushing in, jumped on our table, defiled it, and ran away.

“On another day he came again; but if he did, we were ready for him, my twelve sons and myself. As soon as he defiled our table and ran off, we made after him, and followed him till nightfall, when he went into a glen. We saw a light before us. I ran on, and came to a house with a great apartment, where there was a man with twelve daughters, and the hare was tied to the side of the room near the women.

“There was a large pot over the fire in the room, and a great stork boiling in the pot. The man of the house said to me: ‘There are bundles of rushes at the end of the room, go there and sit down with your men!’

“He went into the next room and brought out two pikes, one of wood, the other of iron, and asked me which of the pikes would I take. I said, ‘I’ll take the iron one;’ for I thought in my heart that if an attack should come on me, I could defend myself better with the iron than the wooden pike.

“The man of the house gave me the iron pike, and the first chance of taking what I could out of the pot on the point of the pike. I got but a small piece of the stork, and the man of the house took all the rest on his wooden pike. We had to fast that night; and when the man and his twelve daughters ate the flesh of the stork, they hurled the bare bones in the faces of my sons and myself.

“We had to stop all night that way, beaten on the faces by the bones of the stork.

“Next morning, when we were going away, the man of the house asked me to stay a while; and going into the next room, he brought out twelve loops of iron and one of wood, and said to me: ‘Put the heads of your twelve sons into the iron loops, or your own head into the wooden one;’ and I said: ‘I’ll put the twelve heads of my sons in the iron loops, and keep my own out of the wooden one.’

“He put the iron loops on the necks of my twelve sons, and put the wooden one on his own neck. Then he snapped the loops one after another, till he took the heads off my twelve sons and threw the heads and bodies out of the house; but he did nothing to hurt his own neck.

“When he had killed my sons he took hold of me and stripped the skin and flesh from the small of my back down, and when he had done that he took the skin of a black sheep that had been hanging on the wall for seven years and clapped it on my body in place of my own flesh and skin; and the sheepskin grew on me, and every year since then I shear myself, and every bit of wool I use for the stockings that I wear I clip off my own back.”

When he had said this, the Gruagach showed the cowboy his back covered with thick black wool.

After what he had seen and heard, the cowboy said: “I know now why you don’t laugh, and small blame to you. But does that hare come here still to spoil your table?”

“He does indeed,” said the Gruagach.

Both went to the table to play, and they were not long playing cards when the hare ran in; and before they could stop him he was on the table, and had put it in such a state that they could not play on it longer if they had wanted to.

But the cowboy made after the hare, and the Gruagach after the cowboy, and they ran as fast as ever their legs could carry them till nightfall; and when the hare was entering the castle where the twelve sons of the Gruagach were killed, the cowboy caught him by the two hind legs and dashed out his brains against the wall; and the skull of the hare was knocked into the chief room of the castle, and fell at the feet of the master of the place.

“Who has dared to interfere with my fighting pet?” screamed he.

“I,” said the cowboy; “and if your pet had had manners, he might be alive now.”

The cowboy and the Gruagach stood by the fire. A stork was boiling in the pot, as when the Gruagach came the first time. The master of the house went into the next room and brought out an iron and a wooden pike, and asked the cowboy which would he choose.

"I'll take the wooden one," said the cowboy; "and you may keep the iron one for yourself."

So he took the wooden one; and going to the pot, brought out on the pike all the stork except a small bite, and he and the Gruagach fell to eating, and they were eating the flesh of the stork all night. The cowboy and the Gruagach were at home in the place that time.

In the morning the master of the house went into the next room, took down the twelve iron loops with a wooden one, brought them out, and asked the cowboy which would he take, the twelve iron or the one wooden loop.

"What could I do with the twelve iron ones for myself or my master? I'll take the wooden one."

He put it on, and taking the twelve iron loops, put them on the necks of the twelve daughters of the house, then snapped the twelve heads off them, and turning to their father, said: "I'll do the same thing to you unless you bring the twelve sons of my master to life, and make them as well and strong as when you took their heads."

The master of the house went out and brought the twelve to life again; and when the Gruagach saw all his sons alive and as well as ever, he let a laugh out of himself, and all the Eastern world heard the laugh.

Then the cowboy said to the Gruagach: "It's a bad thing you have done to me, for the daughter of the king of Erin will be married the day after your laugh is heard."

"Oh! then we must be there in time," said the Gruagach; and they all made away from the place as fast as ever they could, the cowboy, the Gruagach, and his twelve sons.

On the road they came to a woman who was crying very hard.

“What is your trouble?” asked the cowboy.

“You need have no care,” said she, “for I will not tell you.”

“You must tell me,” said he, “for I’ll help you out of it.”

“Well,” said the woman, “I have three sons, and they used to play hurley with the three sons of the king of the Sasenach, and they were more than a match for the king’s sons. And it was the rule that the winning side should give three wallops of their hurleys to the other side; and my sons were winning every game, and gave such a beating to the king’s sons that they complained to their father, and the king carried away my sons to London, and he is going to hang them there to-day.”

“I’ll bring them here this minute,” said the cowboy. “You have no time,” said the Gruagach.

“Have you tobacco and a pipe?” asked the cowboy of the Gruagach.

“I have not,” said he.

“Well, I have,” said the cowboy; and putting his hand in his pocket, he took out tobacco and a pipe, gave them to the Gruagach, and said: “I’ll be in London and back before you can put tobacco in this pipe and light it.”

He disappeared, was back from London with the three boys all safe and well, and gave them to their mother before the Gruagach could get a taste of smoke out of the pipe.

“Now come with us,” said the cowboy to the woman and her sons, “to the wedding of the daughter of the king of Erin.”

They hurried on; and when within three miles of the king’s castle there was such a throng of people that no one could go a step ahead. “We must clear a road through this,” said the cowboy.

“We must indeed,” said the Gruagach; and at it they went, threw the people some on one side and some on the other, and soon they had an opening for themselves to the king’s castle.

As they went in, the daughter of the king of Erin and the son of the king of Tisean were on their knees just going to be married. The cowboy drew his hand on the bridegroom, and gave a blow that sent him spinning till he stopped under a table at the other side of the room.

“What scoundrel struck that blow?” asked the king of Erin.

“It was I,” said the cowboy.

“What reason had you to strike the man who won my daughter?”

“It was I who won your daughter, not he; and if you don’t believe me, the Gruagach Gaire is here himself. He’ll tell you the whole story from beginning to end, and show you the tongues of the giants.”

So the Gruagach came up and told the king the whole story, how the Shee an Gannon had become his cowboy, had guarded the five golden cows and the bull without horns, cut off the heads of the five-headed giants, killed the wizard hare, and brought his own twelve sons to life. “And then,” said the Gruagach, “he is the only man in the whole world I have ever told why I stopped laughing, and the only one who has ever seen my fleece of wool.”

When the king of Erin heard what the Gruagach said, and saw the tongues of the giants fitted into the heads, he made the Shee an Gannon kneel down by his daughter, and they were married on the spot.

Then the son of the king of Tisean was thrown into prison, and the next day they put down a great fire, and the deceiver was burned to ashes.

The wedding lasted nine days, and the last day was better than the first.

7

THE THREE DAUGHTERS OF KING O'HARA

There was a king in Desmond whose name was Coluath O'Hara, and he had three daughters. On a time when the king was away from home, the eldest daughter took a thought that she'd like to be married. So she went up in the castle, put on the cloak of darkness which her father had, and wished for the most beautiful man under the sun as a husband for herself.

She got her wish; for scarcely had she put off the cloak of darkness, when there came, in a golden coach with four horses, two black and two white, the finest man she had ever laid eyes on, and took her away.

When the second daughter saw what had happened to her sister, she put on the cloak of darkness, and wished for the next best man in the world as a husband.

She put off the cloak; and straightway there came, in a golden coach with four black horses, a man nearly as good as the first, and took her away.

The third sister put on the cloak, and wished for the best white dog in the world.

Presently he came, with one man attending, in a golden coach and four snow-white horses, and took the youngest sister away.

When the king came home, the stable-boy told him what had happened while he was gone. He was enraged beyond measure when he heard that his youngest daughter had wished for a white dog, and gone off with him.

When the first man brought his wife home he asked: “In what form will you have me in the daytime, — as I am now in the daytime, or as I am now at night?”

“As you are now in the daytime.”

So the first sister had her husband as a man in the daytime; but at night he was a seal.

The second man put the same question to the middle sister, and got the same answer; so the second sister had her husband in the same form as the first.

When the third sister came to where the white dog lived, he asked her: “How will you have me to be in the daytime, — as I am now in the day, or as I am now at night?”

“As you are now in the day.”

So the white dog was a dog in the daytime, but the most beautiful of men at night.

After a time the third sister had a son; and one day, when her husband was going out to hunt, he warned her that if anything should happen the child, not to shed a tear on that account.

While he was gone, a great gray crow that used to haunt the place came and carried the child away when it was a week old.

Remembering the warning, she shed not a tear for the loss.

All went on as before till another son was born. The husband used to go hunting every day, and again he said she must not shed a tear if anything happened.

When the child was a week old a great gray crow came and bore him away; but the mother did not cry or drop a tear.

All went well till a daughter was born. When she was a week old a great gray crow came and swept her away. This time the mother dropped one tear on a handkerchief, which she took out of her pocket, and then put back again.

When the husband came home from hunting and heard what the crow had done, he asked the wife, “Have you shed tears this time?”

“I have dropped one tear,” said she.

Then he was very angry; for he knew what harm she had done by dropping that one tear.

Soon after their father invited the three sisters to visit him and be present at a great feast in their honor. They sent messages, each from her own place, that they would come.

The king was very glad at the prospect of seeing his children; but the queen was grieved, and thought it a great disgrace that her youngest daughter had no one to come home with her but a white dog.

The white dog was in dread that the king wouldn’t leave him inside with the company, but would drive him from the castle to the yard, and that the dogs outside wouldn’t leave a patch of skin on his back, but would tear the life out of him.

The youngest daughter comforted him. “There is no danger to you,” said she, “for wherever I am, you’ll be, and wherever you go, I’ll follow and take care of you.”

When all was ready for the feast at the castle, and the company were assembled, the king was for banishing the white dog; but the youngest daughter would not listen to her father, — would not let the white dog out of her sight, but kept him near her at the feast, and divided with him the food that came to herself.

When the feast was over, and all the guests had gone, the three sisters went to their own rooms in the castle.

Late in the evening the queen took the cook with her, and stole in to see what was in her daughters’ rooms. They were all asleep at the time. What should she see by the side of her youngest daughter but the most beautiful man she had ever laid eyes on.

Then she went to where the other two daughters were sleeping; and there, instead of the two men who brought them to the feast, were two seals, fast asleep.

The queen was greatly troubled at the sight of the seals. When she and the cook were returning, they came upon the skin of the white dog. She caught it up as she went, and threw it into the kitchen fire.

The skin was not five minutes in the fire when it gave a crack that woke not only all in the castle, but all in the country for miles around.

The husband of the youngest daughter sprang up. He was very angry and very sorry, and said: "If I had been able to spend three nights with you under your father's roof, I should have got back my own form again for good, and could have been a man both in the day and the night; but now I must go."

He rose from the bed, ran out of the castle, and away he went as fast as ever his two legs could carry him, overtaking the one before him, and leaving the one behind. He was this way all that night and the next day; but he couldn't leave the wife, for she followed from the castle, was after him in the night and the day too, and never lost sight of him. In the afternoon he turned, and told her to go back to her father; but she would not listen to him. At nightfall they came to the first house they had seen since leaving the castle. He turned and said: "Do you go inside and stay in this house till morning; I'll pass the night outside where I am."

The wife went in. The woman of the house rose up, gave her a pleasant welcome, and put a good supper before her. She was not long in the house when a little boy came to her knee and called her "Mother."

The woman of the house told the child to go back to his place, and not to come out again.

“Here are a pair of scissors,” said the woman of the house to the king’s daughter, “and they will serve you well. Whatever ragged people you see, if you cut a piece off their rags, that moment they will have new clothes of cloth of gold.”

She stayed that night, for she had good welcome. Next morning when she went out, her husband said: “You’d better go home now to your father.”

“I’ll not go to my father if I have to leave you,” said she.

So he went on, and she followed. It was that way all the day till night came; and at nightfall they saw another house at the foot of a hill, and again the husband stopped and said: “You go in; I’ll stop outside till morning.”

The woman of the house gave her a good welcome. After she had eaten and drunk, a little boy came out of another room, ran to her knee, and said, “Mother.” The woman of the house sent the boy back to where he had come from, and told him to stay there.

Next morning, when the princess was going out to her husband, the woman of the house gave her a comb, and said: “If you meet any person with a diseased and a sore head, and draw this comb over it three times, the head will be well, and covered with the most beautiful golden hair ever seen.”

She took the comb, and went out to her husband.

“Leave me now,” said he, “and go back to your own father.”

“I will not,” said she, “but I will follow you while I have the power.” So they went forward that day, as on the other two.

At nightfall they came to a third house, at the foot of a hill, where the princess received a good welcome. After she had eaten supper, a little girl with only one eye came to her knee and said, “Mother.”

The princess began to cry at sight of the child, thinking that she herself was the cause that it had but one eye. Then she put her hand into her pocket where she kept the handkerchief on which she had dropped the tear when the gray crow carried her infant away. She had never used the handkerchief since that day, for there was an eye on it.

She opened the handkerchief, and put the eye in the girl’s head. It grew into the socket that minute, and the child saw out of it as well as out of the other eye; and then the woman of the house sent the little one to bed.

Next morning, as the king’s daughter was going out, the woman of the house gave her a whistle, and said: “Whenever you put this whistle to your mouth and blow on it, all the birds of the air will come to you from every quarter under the sun. Be careful of the whistle, as it may serve you greatly.”

“Go back to your father’s castle,” said the husband when she came to him, “for I must leave you to-day.”

They went on together a few hundred yards, and then sat on a green hillock, and he told the wife: “Your mother has come between us; but for her we might have lived together all our days. If I had been allowed to pass three nights with you in your father’s house, I should have got back my form of a man both in the daytime and the night. The Queen of Tir na n-Og [the land of youth] enchanted and put on me a spell, that unless I could spend three nights with a wife under her father’s roof in Erin, I should bear the form of a white dog one half of my time; but if the skin of the dog should be burned before the three nights were over, I must go down to her kingdom and marry the queen herself. And ‘tis to her I am going to-day. I have no power to stay, and I must leave you; so farewell, you’ll never see me again on the upper earth.”

He left her sitting on the mound, went a few steps forward to some bulrushes, pulled up one, and disappeared in the opening where the rush had been.

She stopped there, sitting on the mound lamenting, till evening, not knowing what to do. At last she bethought herself, and going to the rushes, pulled up a stalk, went down, followed her husband, and never stopped till she came to the lower land.

After a while she reached a small house near a splendid castle. She went into the house and asked, could she stay there till morning. “You can,” said the woman of the house, “and welcome.”

Next day the woman of the house was washing clothes, for that was how she made a living. The princess fell to and helped her with the work. In the course of that day the Queen of Tir na n-Og and the husband of the princess were married.

Near the castle, and not far from the washerwoman’s, lived a henwife with two ragged little daughters. One of them came around the washerwoman’s house to play. The child looked so poor and her clothes were so torn and dirty that the princess took pity on her, and cut the clothes with the scissors which she had.

That moment the most beautiful dress of cloth of gold ever seen on woman or child in that kingdom was on the henwife’s daughter.

When she saw what she had on, the child ran home to her mother as fast as ever she could go.

“Who gave you that dress?” asked the henwife.

“A strange woman that is in that house beyond,” said the little girl, pointing to the washerwoman’s house.

The henwife went straight to the Queen of Tir na n-Og and said: “There is a strange woman in the place, who will be likely to take your husband from you, unless you banish her away or do something to her; for she has a pair of scissors different from anything ever seen or heard of in this country.”

When the queen heard this she sent word to the princess that, unless the scissors were given up to her without delay, she would have the head off her.

The princess said she would give up the scissors if the queen would let her pass one night with her husband.

The queen answered that she was willing to give her the one night. The princess came and gave up the scissors, and went to her own husband; but the queen had given him a drink, and he fell asleep, and never woke till after the princess had gone in the morning.

Next day another daughter of the henwife went to the washerwoman's house to play. She was wretched-looking, her head being covered with scabs and sores.

The princess drew the comb three times over the child's head, cured it, and covered it with beautiful golden hair. The little girl ran home and told her mother how the strange woman had drawn the comb over her head, cured it, and given her beautiful golden hair.

The henwife hurried off to the queen and said: "That strange woman has a comb with wonderful power to cure, and give golden hair; and she'll take your husband from you unless you banish her or take her life."

The queen sent word to the princess that unless she gave up the comb, she would have her life.

The princess returned as answer that she would give up the comb if she might pass one night with the queen's husband.

The queen was willing, and gave her husband a draught as before. When the princess came, he was fast asleep, and did not waken till after she had gone in the morning.

On the third day the washerwoman and the princess went out to walk, and the first daughter of the henwife with them. When they were outside the town, the princess put the whistle to her mouth and blew. That moment the birds of the air flew to her from every direction in flocks. Among them was a bird of song and new tales. The princess went to one side with the bird. "What means can I take," asked she, "against the queen to get back my husband? Is it best to kill her, and can I do it?"

"It is very hard," said the bird, "to kill her. There is no one in all Tir na n-Og who is able to take her life but her own husband. Inside a holly-tree in front of the castle is a wether, in the wether a duck, in the duck an egg, and in that egg is her heart and life. No man in Tir na n-Og can cut that holly-tree but her husband."

The princess blew the whistle again. A fox and a hawk came to her. She caught and put them into two boxes, which the washerwoman had with her, and took them to her new home.

When the henwife's daughter went home, she told her mother about the whistle. Away ran the henwife to the queen, and said: "That strange woman has a whistle that brings together all the birds of the air, and she'll have your husband yet, unless you take her head."

"I'll take the whistle from her, anyhow," said the queen. So she sent for the whistle.

The princess gave answer that she would give up the whistle if she might pass one night with the queen's husband.

The queen agreed, and gave him a draught as on the other nights. He was asleep when the princess came and when she went away.

Before going, the princess left a letter with his servant for the queen's husband, in which she told how she had followed him to Tir na n-Og, and had given the scissors, the comb, and the whistle, to pass three nights in his company, but had not spoken to him because the queen had given him sleeping draughts; that the life of the queen was in an egg, the egg in a duck, the duck in a wether, the wether in a holly-tree in front of the castle, and that no man could split the tree but himself.

As soon as he got the letter the husband took an axe, and went to the holly-tree. When he came to the tree he found the princess there before him, having the two boxes with the fox and the hawk in them.

He struck the tree a few blows; it split open, and out sprang the wether. He ran scarce twenty perches before the fox caught him. The fox tore him open; then the duck flew out. The duck had not flown fifteen perches when the hawk caught and killed her, smashing the egg. That instant the Queen of Tir na n-Og died.

The husband kissed and embraced his faithful wife. He gave a great feast; and when the feast was over, he burned the henwife with her house, built a palace for the washerwoman, and made his servant secretary.

They never left Tir na n-Og, and are living there happily now; and so may we live here.

8

THE FISHERMAN’S SON AND THE GRUAGACH OF TRICKS

There was an old fisherman once in Erin who had a wife and one son.

The old fisherman used to go about with a fishing-rod and tackle to the rivers and lochs and every place where fish resort, and he was killing salmon and other fish to keep the life in himself and his wife and son.

The son was not so keen nor so wise as another, and the father was instructing him every day in fishing, so that if himself should be taken from the world, the son would be able to support the old mother and get his own living.

One day when the father and son were fishing in a river near the sea, they looked out over the water and saw a small dark speck on the waves. It grew larger and larger, till they saw a boat, and when the boat drew near they saw a man sitting in the stern of it.

There was a nice beach near the place where they were fishing. The man brought the boat straight to the beach, and stepping out drew it up on the sand.

They saw then that the stranger was a man of high degree (duine uasal).

After he had put the boat high on the sand, he came to where the two were at work, and said: “Old fisherman, you’d better let this son of yours with me for a year and a day, and I will make a very wise man of him. I am the Gruagach na g-cleasan (Gruagach of tricks), and I'll bind myself to be here with your son this day year."

"I can't let him go," said the old fisherman, "till he gets his mother's advice."

"Whatever goes as far as women I'll have nothing to do with," said the Gruagach. "You had better give him to me now, and let the mother alone."

They talked till at last the fisherman promised to let his son go for the year and a day. Then the Gruagach gave his word to have the boy there at the seashore that day year.

The Gruagach and the boy went into the boat and sailed away.

When the year and a day were over, the old fisherman went to the same place where he had parted with his son and the Gruagach, and stood looking over the sea, thinking would he see his son that day.

At last he saw a black spot on the water, then a boat. When it was near he saw two men sitting in the stern of the boat. When it touched land, the two, who were duine uasal in appearance, jumped out, and one of them pulled the boat to the top of the strand. Then that one, followed by the other, came to where the old fisherman was waiting, and asked: "What trouble is on you now, my good man?"

"I had a son that wasn't so keen nor so wise as another, and myself and this son were here fishing, and a stranger came, like yourself to-day, and asked would I let my son with him for a year and a day. I let the son go, and the man promised to be here with him to-day, and that's why I am waiting at this place now." "Well," said the Gruagach, "am I your son?"

"You are not," said the fisherman.

"Is this man here your son?"

"I don't know him," said the fisherman.

"Well, then, he is all you will have in place of your son," said the Gruagach.

The old man looked again, and knew his son. He caught hold of him and welcomed him home.

“Now,” said the Gruagach, “isn’t he a better man than he was a year ago?”

“Oh, he’s nearly a smart man now!” said the old fisherman.

“Well,” said the Gruagach, “will you let him with me for another year and a day?”

“I will not,” said the old man; “I want him myself.”

The Gruagach then begged and craved till the fisherman promised to let the son with him for a year and a day again. But the old man forgot to take his word of the Gruagach to bring back the son at the end of the time; and when the Gruagach and the boy were in the boat, and had pushed out to sea, the Gruagach shouted to the old man: “I kept my promise to bring back your son to-day. I haven’t given you my word at all now. I’ll not bring him back, and you’ll never see him again.”

The fisherman went home with a heavy and sorrowful heart, and the old woman scolded him all that night till next morning for letting her son go with the Gruagach a second time.

Then himself and the old woman were lamenting a quarter of a year; and when another quarter had passed, he said to her: “I’ll leave you here now, and I’ll be walking on myself till I wear my legs off up to my knees, and from my knees to my waist, till I find where is my son.” So away went the old man walking, and he used to spend but one night in a house, and not two nights in any house, till his feet were all in blisters. One evening late he came to a hut where there was an old woman sitting at a fire.

“Poor man!” said she, when she laid eyes on him, “it’s a great distress you are in, to be so disfigured with wounds and sores. What is the trouble that’s on you?”

“I had a son,” said the old man, “and the Gruagach na g-cleasan came on a day and took him from me.”

"Oh, poor man!" said she. "I have a son with that same Gruagach these twelve years, and I have never been able to get him back or get sight of him, and I'm in dread you'll not be able to get your son either. But to-morrow, in the morning, I'll tell you all I know, and show you the road you must go to find the house of the Gruagach na g-cleasan."

Next morning she showed the old fisherman the road. He was to come to the place by evening.

When he came and entered the house, the Gruagach shook hands with him, and said: "You are welcome, old fisherman. It was I that put this journey on you, and made you come here looking for your son."

"It was no one else but you," said the fisherman.

"Well," said the Gruagach, "you won't see your son to-day. At noon to-morrow I'll put a whistle in my mouth and call together all the birds in my place, and they'll come. Among others will be twelve doves. I'll put my hand in my pocket, this way, and take out wheat and throw it before them on the ground. The doves will eat the wheat, and you must pick your son out of the twelve. If you find him, you'll have him; if you don't, you'll never get him again."

After the Gruagach had said these words the old man ate his supper and went to bed.

In the dead of night the old fisherman's son came. "Oh, father!" said he, "it would be hard for you to pick me out among the twelve doves, if you had to do it alone; but I'll tell you. When the Gruagach calls us in, and we go to pick up the wheat, I'll make a ring around the others, walking for myself; and as I go I'll give some of them a tip of my bill, and I'll lift my wings when I'm striking them. There was a spot under one of my arms when I left home, and you'll see that spot under my wing when I raise it to-morrow. Don't miss the bird that I'll be, and don't let your eyes off it; if you do, you'll lose me forever."

Next morning the old man rose, had his breakfast, and kept thinking of what his son had told him.

At midday the Gruagach took his whistle and blew. Birds came to him from every part, and among others the twelve doves.

He took wheat from his pocket, threw it to the doves, and said to the father: “Now pick out your son from the twelve.”

The old man was watching, and soon he saw one of the doves walking around the other eleven and hitting some of them a clip of its bill, and then it raised its wings, and the old man saw the spot. The bird let its wings down again, and went to eating with the rest.

The father never let his eyes off the bird. After a while he said to the Gruagach: “I’ll have that bird there for my son.” “Well,” said the Gruagach, “that is your son. I can’t blame you for having him; but I blame your instructor for the information he gave you, and I give him my curse.”

So the old fisherman got his son back in his proper shape, and away they went, father and son, from the house of the Gruagach. The old man felt stronger now, and they never stopped travelling a day till they came home.

The old mother was very glad to see her son, and see him such a wise, smart man.

After coming home they had no means but the fishing; they were as poor as ever before.

At this time it was given out at every crossroad in Erin, and in all public places in the kingdom, that there were to be great horse-races. Now, when the day came, the old fisherman’s son said:

“Come away with me, father, to the races.”

The old man went with him, and when they were near the race-course, the son said:

“Stop here till I tell you this: I’ll make myself into the best horse that’s here to-day, and do you take me to the place where the races are to be, and when you take me in, I’ll open my mouth, trying to kill and eat every man that’ll be near me, I’ll have such life and swiftness; and do you find a rider for me that’ll ride me, and don’t let me go till the other horses are far ahead on the course. Then let me go. I’ll come up to them, and I’ll run ahead of them and win the race. After that every rich man there will want to buy me of you; but don’t you sell me to any man for less than five hundred pounds; and be sure you get that price for me. And when you have the gold, and you are giving me up, take the bit out of my mouth, and don’t sell the bridle for any money. Then come to this spot, shake the bridle, and I’ll be here in my own form before you.”

The son made himself a horse, and the old fisherman took him to the race. He reared and snorted, trying to take the head off every man that came near him.

The old man shouted for a rider. A rider came; he mounted the horse and held him in. The old man didn’t let him start till the other horses were well ahead on the course; then he let him go.

The new horse caught up with the others and shot past them. So they had not gone half way when he was in at the winning-post.

When the race was ended, there was a great noise over the strange horse. Men crowded around the old fisherman from every corner of the field, asking what would he take for the horse.

“Five hundred pounds,” said he.

“Here ‘tis for you,” said the next man to him.

In a moment the horse was sold, and the money in the old man’s pocket. Then he pulled the bridle off the horse’s head, and made his way out of the place as fast as ever he could.

It was not long till he was at the spot where the son had told him what to do. The minute he came, he shook the bridle, and the son was there before him in his own shape and features.

Oh, but the old fisherman was glad when he had his son with him again, and the money in his pocket!

The two went home together. They had money enough now to live, and quit the fishing. They had plenty to eat and drink, and they spent their lives in ease and comfort till the next year, when it was given out at all the cross-roads in Erin, and every public place in the kingdom, that there was to be a great hunting with hounds, in the same place where the races had been the year before.

When the day came, the fisherman's son said: "Come, father, let us go away to this hunting."

"Ah!" said the old man, "what do we want to go for? Haven't we plenty to eat at home, with money enough and to spare? What do we care for hunting with hounds?"

"Oh! they'll give us more money," said the son, "if we go."

The fisherman listened to his son, and away they went. When the two came to the spot where the son had made a horse of himself the year before, he stopped, and said to the father: "I'll make a hound of myself to-day, and when you bring me in sight of the game, you'll see me wild with jumping and trying to get away; but do you hold me fast till the right time comes, then let go. I'll sweep ahead of every hound in the field, catch the game, and win the prize for you.

"When the hunt is over, so many men will come to buy me that they'll put you in a maze; but be sure you get three hundred pounds for me, and when you have the money, and are giving me up, don't forget to keep my rope. Come to this place, shake the rope, and I'll be here before you, as I am now. If you don't keep the rope, you'll go home without me."

The son made a hound of himself, and the old father took him to the hunting-ground.

When the hunt began, the hound was springing and jumping like mad; but the father held him till the others were far out in the field. Then he let him loose, and away went the son.

Soon he was up with the pack, then in front of the pack, and never stopped till he caught the game and won the prize.

When the hunt was over, and the dogs and game brought in, all the people crowded around the old fisherman, saying: “What do you want of that hound? Better sell him; he’s no good to you.”

They put the old man in a maze, there were so many of them, and they pressed him so hard.

He said at last: “I’ll sell the hound; and three hundred pounds is the price I want for him.”

“Here ‘tis for you,” said a stranger, putting the money into his hand.

The old man took the money and gave up the dog, without taking off the rope. He forgot his son’s warning.

That minute the Gruagach na g-cleasan called out: “I’ll take the worth of my money out of your son now;” and away he went with the hound.

The old man walked home alone that night, and it is a heavy heart he had in him when he came to the old woman without the son. And the two were lamenting their lot till morning.

Still and all, they were better off than the first time they lost their son, as they had plenty of everything, and could live at their ease.

The Gruagach went away home, and put the fisherman’s son in a cave of concealment that he had, bound him hand and foot, and tied hard knots on his neck up to the chin. From above there fell on him drops of poison, and every drop that fell went from the skin to the flesh, from the flesh to the bone, from the bone to the marrow, and he sat there under the poison drops, without meat, drink, or rest.

In the Gruagach’s house was a servant-maid, and the fisherman’s son had been kind to her the time he was in the place before.

On a day when the Gruagach and his eleven sons were out hunting, the maid was going with a tub of dirty water to throw it into the river that ran by the side of the house. She went through the cave of concealment where the fisherman’s son was bound, and he asked of her the wetting of his mouth from the tub.

“Oh! the Gruagach would take the life of me,” said she, “when he comes home, if I gave you as much as one drop.”

“Well,” said he, “when I was in this house before, and when I had power in my hands, it’s good and kind I was to you; and when I get out of this confinement I’ll do you a turn, if you give me the wetting of my mouth now.”

The maid put the tub near his lips.

“Oh! I can’t stoop to drink unless you untie one knot from my throat,” said he.

Then she put the tub down, stooped to him, and loosed one knot from his throat. When she loosed the one knot he made an eel of himself, and dropped into the tub. There he began shaking the water, till he put some of it on the ground, and when he had the place about him wet, he sprang from the tub, and slipped along out under the door. The maid caught him; but could not hold him, he was so slippery. He made his way from the door to the river, which ran near the side of the house.

When the Gruagach na g-cleasan came home in the evening with his eleven sons, they went to take a look at the fisherman’s son; but he was not to be seen. Then the Gruagach called the maid, and taking his sword, said: “I’ll take the head off you if you don’t tell me this minute what happened while I was gone.”

“Oh!” said the maid, “he begged so hard for a drop of dirty water to wet his mouth that I hadn’t the heart to refuse, for ‘tis good he was to me and kind each time he saw me when he was here in the house before. When the water touched his mouth, he made an eel of himself, spilled water out of the tub, and slipped along over the wet place to the river outside. I caught him to bring him back, but I couldn’t hold him; in spite of all I could do, he made away.”

The Gruagach dropped his sword, and went to the water side with his sons.

The sons made eleven eels of themselves, and the Gruagach their father was the twelfth. They went around in the water, searching in every place, and there was not a stone in the river that they passed without looking under and around it for the old fisherman’s son.

And when he knew that they were after him, he made himself into a salmon; and when they knew he was a salmon, the sons made eleven otters of themselves, and the Gruagach made himself the twelfth.

When the fisherman’s son found that twelve otters were after him, he was weak with hunger, and when they had come near, he made himself a whale. But the eleven brothers and their father made twelve cannon whales of themselves, for they had all gone out of the river, and were in the sea now.

When they were coming near him, the fisherman’s son was weak from pursuit and hunger, so he jumped up out of the water, and made a swallow of himself; but the Gruagach and his sons became twelve hawks, and chased the swallow through the air; and as they whirled round and darted, they pressed him hard, till all of them came near the castle of the king of Erin.

Now the king had made a summer-house for his daughter; and where should she be at this time but sitting on the top of the summer-house.

The old fisherman’s son dropped down till he was near her; then he fell into her lap in the form of a ring. The daughter of the king of Erin took up the ring, looked at it, and put it on her finger. The ring took her fancy, and she was glad.

When the Gruagach and his sons saw this, they let themselves down at the king’s castle, having the form of the finest men that could be seen in the kingdom.

When the king's daughter had the ring on her finger she looked at it and liked it. Then the ring spoke, and said: "My life is in your hands now; don't part from the ring, and don't let it go to any man, and you'll give me a long life."

The Gruagach na g-cleasan and his eleven sons went into the king's castle and played on every instrument known to man, and they showed every sport that could be shown before a king. This they did for three days and three nights. When that time was over, and they were going away, the king spoke up and asked:

"What is the reward that you would like, and what would be pleasing to you from me?"

"We want neither gold nor silver," said the Gruagach; "all the reward we ask of you is the ring that I lost on a time, and which is now on your daughter's finger." "If my daughter has the ring that you lost, it shall be given to you," said the king.

Now the ring spoke to the king's daughter and said: "Don't part with me for anything till you send your trusted man for three gallons of strong spirits and a gallon of wheat; put the spirits and the wheat together in an open barrel before the fire. When your father says you must give up the ring, do you answer back that you have never left the summer-house, that you have nothing on your hand but what is your own and paid for. Your father will say then that you must part with me, and give me up to the stranger. When he forces you in this way, and you can keep me no longer, then throw me into the fire; and you'll see great sport and strange things."

The king's daughter sent for the spirits and the wheat, had them mixed together, and put in an open barrel before the fire.

The king called the daughter in, and asked: "Have you the ring which this stranger lost?"

"I have a ring," said she, "but it's my own, and I'll not part with it. I'll not give it to him nor to any man."

“You must,” said the king, “for my word is pledged, and you must part with the ring!”

When she heard this, she slipped the ring from her finger and threw it into the fire.

That moment the eleven brothers made eleven pairs of tongs of themselves; their father, the old Gruagach, was the twelfth pair.

The twelve jumped into the fire to know in what spark of it would they find the old fisherman’s son; and they were a long time working and searching through the fire, when out flew a spark, and into the barrel. The twelve made themselves men, turned over the barrel, and spilled the wheat on the floor. Then in a twinkling they were twelve cocks strutting around.

They fell to and picked away at the wheat to know which one would find the fisherman’s son. Soon one dropped on one side, and a second on the opposite side, until all twelve were lying drunk from the wheat.

Then the old fisherman’s son made a fox of himself, and the first cock he came to was the old Gruagach na g-cleasan himself. He took the head off the Gruagach with one bite, and the heads off the eleven brothers with eleven other bites.

When the twelve were dead, the old fisherman’s son made himself the finest-looking man in Erin, and began to give music and sport to the king; and he entertained him five times better than had the Gruagach and his eleven sons.

Then the king’s daughter fell in love with him, and she set her mind on him to that degree that there was no life for her without him.

When the king saw the straits that his daughter was in, he ordered the marriage without delay.

The wedding lasted for nine days and nine nights, and the ninth night was the best of all.

When the wedding was over, the king felt he was losing his strength, so he took the crown off his own head, and put it on the head of the old fisherman’s son, and made him king of Erin in place of himself.

The young couple were the luck, and we the stepping-stones. The presents we got at the marriage were stockings of buttermilk and shoes of paper, and these were worn to the soles of our feet when we got home from the wedding.

9

THE THIRTEENTH SON OF THE KING OF ERIN

There was a king in Erin long ago who had thirteen sons, and as they grew up he taught them good learning and every exercise and art befitting their rank.

One day the king went hunting, and saw a swan swimming in a lake with thirteen little ones. She kept driving away the thirteenth, and would not let it come near the others.

The king wondered greatly at this, and when he came home he summoned his Sean dall Glic (old blind sage), and said: “I saw a great wonder to-day while out hunting, — a swan with thirteen cygnets, and she driving away the thirteenth continually, and keeping the twelve with her. Tell me the cause and reason of this. Why should a mother hate her thirteenth little one, and guard the other twelve?”

“I will tell you,” said the old blind sage: “all creatures on earth, whether beast or human, which have thirteen young, should put the thirteenth away, and let it wander for itself through the world and find its fate, so that the will of Heaven may work upon it, and not come down on the others. Now you have thirteen sons, and you must give the thirteenth to the Diachbha.”

“Then that is the meaning of the swan on the lake, — I must give up my thirteenth son to the Diachbha?”

“It is,” said the old blind sage; “you must give up one of your thirteen sons.”

“But how can I give one of them away when I am so fond of all; and which one shall it be?”

“I’ll tell you what to do. When the thirteen come home to-night, shut the door against the last that comes.”

Now one of the sons was slow, not so keen nor so sharp as another; but the eldest, who was called Sean Ruadh, was the best, the hero of them all. And it happened that night that he came home last, and when he came his father shut the door against him. The boy raised his hands and said: “Father, what are you going to do with me; what do you wish?”

“It is my duty,” said the father, “to give one of my sons to the Diachbha; and as you are the thirteenth, you must go.”

“Well, give me my outfit for the road.”

The outfit was brought, Sean Ruadh put it on; then the father gave him a black-haired steed that could overtake the wind before him, and outstrip the wind behind.

Sean Ruadh mounted the steed and hurried away. He went on each day without rest, and slept in the woods at night.

One morning he put on some old clothes which he had in a pack on the saddle, and leaving his horse in the woods, went aside to an opening. He was not long there when a king rode up and stopped before him.

“Who are you, and where are you going?” asked the king. “Oh!” said Sean Ruadh, “I am astray. I do not know where to go, nor what I am to do.”

“If that is how you are, I’ll tell you what to do, — come with me.”

“Why should I go with you?” asked Sean Ruadh.

“Well, I have a great many cows, and I have no one to go with them, no one to mind them. I am in great trouble also. My daughter will die a terrible death very soon.”

“How will she die?” asked Sean Ruadh.

“There is an urfeist, a great serpent of the sea, a monster which must get a king’s daughter to devour every seven years. Once in seven years this thing comes up out of the sea for its meat. The turn has now come to my daughter, and we don’t know what day will the urfeist appear. The whole castle and all of us are in mourning for my wretched child.”

“Perhaps some one will come to save her,” said Sean Ruadh.

“Oh! there is a whole army of kings’ sons who have come, and they all promise to save her; but I’m in dread none of them will meet the urfeist.”

Sean Ruadh agreed with the king to serve for seven years, and went home with him.

Next morning Sean Ruadh drove out the king’s cows to pasture.

Now there were three giants not far from the king’s place. They lived in three castles in sight of each other, and every night each of these giants shouted just before going to bed. So loud was the shout that each let out of himself that the people heard it in all the country around.

Sean Ruadh drove the cattle up to the giant’s land, pushed down the wall, and let them in. The grass was very high, — three times better than any on the king’s pastures.

As Sean Ruadh sat watching the cattle, a giant came running towards him and called out: “I don’t know whether to put a pinch of you in my nose, or a bite of you in my mouth!”

“Bad luck to me,” said Sean Ruadh, “if I came here but to take the life out of you!”

“How would you like to fight, — on the gray stones, or with sharp swords?” asked the giant.

“I’ll fight you,” said Sean Ruadh, “on the gray stones, where your great legs will be going down, and mine standing high.”

They faced one another then, and began to fight. At the first encounter Sean Ruadh put the giant down to his knees among the hard gray stones, at the second he put him to his waist, and at the third to his shoulders.

"Come, take me out of this," cried the giant, "and I'll give you my castle and all I've got. I'll give you my sword of light that never fails to kill at a blow. I'll give you my black horse that can overtake the wind before, and outstrip the wind behind. These are all up there in my castle."

Sean Ruadh killed the giant and went up to the castle, where the housekeeper said to him: "Oh! it is you that are welcome. You have killed the dirty giant that was here. Come with me now till I show you all the riches and treasures."

She opened the door of the giant's store-room and said: "All these are yours. Here are the keys of the castle."

"Keep them till I come again, and wake me in the evening," said Sean Ruadh, lying down on the giant's bed.

He slept till evening; then the housekeeper roused him, and he drove the king's cattle home. The cows never gave so much milk as that night. They gave as much as in a whole week before.

Sean Ruadh met the king, and asked: "What news from your daughter?"

"The great serpent did not come to-day," said the king; "but he may come to-morrow."

"Well, to-morrow he may not come till another day," said Sean Ruadh.

Now the king knew nothing of the strength of Sean Ruadh, who was bare-footed, ragged, and shabby.

The second morning Sean Ruadh put the king's cows in the second giant's land. Out came the second giant with the same questions and threats as the first, and the cowboy spoke as on the day before.

They fell to fighting; and when the giant was to his shoulders in the hard gray rocks, he said: "I'll give you my sword of light and my brown-haired horse if you'll spare my life."

"Where is your sword of light?" asked Sean Ruadh.

"It is hung up over my bed."

Sean Ruadh ran to the giant's castle, and took the sword, which screamed out when he seized it; but he held it fast, hurried back to the giant, and asked, "How shall I try the edge of this sword?"

"Against a stick," was the reply.

"I see no stick better than your own head," said Sean Ruadh; and with that he swept the head off the giant.

The cowboy now went back to the castle and hung up the sword. "Blessing to you," said the housekeeper; "you have killed the giant! Come, now, and I'll show you his riches and treasures, which are yours forever."

Sean Ruadh found more treasure in this castle than in the first one. When he had seen all, he gave the keys to the housekeeper till he should need them. He slept as on the day before, then drove the cows home in the evening.

The king said: "I have the luck since you came to me. My cows give three times as much milk to-day as they did yesterday."

"Well," said Sean Ruadh, "have you any account of the urfeist?"

"He didn't come to-day," said the king; "but he may come to-morrow."

Sean Ruadh went out with the king's cows on the third day, and drove them to the third giant's land, who came out and fought a more desperate battle than either of the other two; but the cowboy pushed him down among the gray rocks to his shoulders and killed him.

At the castle of the third giant he was received with gladness by the housekeeper, who showed him the treasures and gave him the keys; but he left the keys with her till he should need them. That evening the king's cows had more milk than ever before.

On the fourth day Sean Ruadh went out with the cows, but stopped at the first giant's castle. The housekeeper at his command brought out the dress of the giant, which was all black. He put on the giant's apparel, black as night, and girded on his sword of light. Then he mounted the black-haired steed, which overtook the wind before, and outstripped the wind behind; and rushing on between earth and sky, he never stopped till he came to the beach, where he saw hundreds upon hundreds of kings' sons, and champions, who were anxious to save the king's daughter, but were so frightened at the terrible urfeist that they would not go near her.

When he had seen the princess and the trembling champions, Sean Ruadh turned his black steed to the castle. Presently the king saw, riding between earth and sky, a splendid stranger, who stopped before him.

"What is that I see on the shore?" asked the stranger. "Is it a fair, or some great meeting?"

"Haven't you heard," asked the king, "that a monster is coming to destroy my daughter to-day?"

"No, I haven't heard anything," answered the stranger, who turned away and disappeared.

Soon the black horseman was before the princess, who was sitting alone on a rock near the sea. As she looked at the stranger, she thought he was the finest man on earth, and her heart was cheered.

"Have you no one to save you?" he asked.

"No one."

"Will you let me lay my head on your lap till the urfeist comes? Then rouse me."

He put his head on her lap and fell asleep. While he slept, the princess took three hairs from his head and hid them in her bosom. As soon as she had hidden the hairs, she saw the urfeist coming on the sea, great as an island, and throwing up water to the sky as he moved. She roused the stranger, who sprang up to defend her.

The urfeist came upon shore, and was advancing on the princess with mouth open and wide as a bridge, when the stranger stood before him and said: "This woman is mine, not yours!"

Then drawing his sword of light, he swept off the monster's head with a blow; but the head rushed back to its place, and grew on again.

In a twinkle the urfeist turned and went back to the sea; but as he went, he said: “I’ll be here again to-morrow, and swallow the whole world before me as I come.”

“Well,” answered the stranger, “maybe another will come to meet you.”

Sean Ruadh mounted his black steed, and was gone before the princess could stop him. Sad was her heart when she saw him rush off between the earth and sky more swiftly than any wind.

Sean Ruadh went to the first giant’s castle and put away his horse, clothes, and sword. Then he slept on the giant’s bed till evening, when the housekeeper woke him, and he drove home the cows. Meeting the king, he asked: “Well, how has your daughter fared to-day?”

“Oh! the urfeist came out of the sea to carry her away; but a wonderful black champion came riding between earth and sky and saved her.”

“Who was he?”

“Oh! there is many a man who says he did it. But my daughter isn’t saved yet, for the urfeist said he’d come to-morrow.”

“Well, never fear; perhaps another champion will come to-morrow.”

Next morning Sean Ruadh drove the king’s cows to the land of the second giant, where he left them feeding, and then went to the castle, where the housekeeper met him and said: “You are welcome. I’m here before you, and all is well.” “Let the brown horse be brought; let the giant’s apparel and sword be ready for me,” said Sean Ruadh.

The apparel was brought, the beautiful blue dress of the second giant, and his sword of light. Sean Ruadh put on the apparel, took the sword, mounted the brown steed, and sped away between earth and air three times more swiftly than the day before.

He rode first to the seashore, saw the king’s daughter sitting on the rock alone, and the princes and champions far away, trembling in dread of the urfeist. Then he rode to the king, enquired about the crowd on the seashore, and received the same answer as before. “But is there no man to save her?” asked Sean Ruadh.

“Oh! there are men enough,” said the king, “who promise to save her, and say they are brave; but there is no man of them who will stand to his word and face the urfeist when he rises from the sea.”

Sean Ruadh was away before the king knew it, and rode to the princess in his suit of blue, bearing his sword of light. “Is there no one to save you?” asked he.

“No one.”

“Let me lay my head on your lap, and when the urfeist comes, rouse me.”

He put his head on her lap, and while he slept she took out the three hairs, compared them with his hair, and said to herself: “You are the man who was here yesterday.”

When the urfeist appeared, coming over the sea, the princess roused the stranger, who sprang up and hurried to the beach.

The monster, moving at a greater speed, and raising more water than on the day before, came with open mouth to land. Again Sean Ruadh stood in his way, and with one blow of the giant’s sword made two halves of the urfeist. But the two halves rushed together, and were one as before.

Then the urfeist turned to the sea again, and said as he went: “All the champions on earth won’t save her from me to-morrow!”

Sean Ruadh sprang to his steed and back to the castle. He went, leaving the princess in despair at his going. She tore her hair and wept for the loss of the blue champion, — the one man who had dared to save her.

Sean Ruadh put on his old clothes, and drove home the cows as usual. The king said: “A strange champion, all dressed in blue, saved my daughter to-day; but she is grieving her life away because he is gone.”

“Well, that is a small matter, since her life is safe,” said Sean Ruadh.

There was a feast for the whole world that night at the king's castle, and gladness was on every face that the king's daughter was safe again.

Next day Sean Ruadh drove the cows to the third giant's pasture, went to the castle, and told the housekeeper to bring the giant's sword and apparel, and have the red steed led to the door. The third giant's dress had as many colors as there are in the sky, and his boots were of blue glass.

Sean Ruadh, dressed and mounted on his red steed, was the most beautiful man in the world. When ready to start, the housekeeper said to him: "The beast will be so enraged this time that no arms can stop him; he will rise from the sea with three great swords coming out of his mouth, and he could cut to pieces and swallow the whole world if it stood before him in battle. There is only one way to conquer the urfeist, and I will show it to you. Take this brown apple, put it in your bosom, and when he comes rushing from the sea with open mouth, do you throw the apple down his throat, and the great urfeist will melt away and die on the strand."

Sean Ruadh went on the red steed between earth and sky, with thrice the speed of the day before. He saw the maiden sitting on the rock alone, saw the trembling kings' sons in the distance watching to know what would happen, and saw the king hoping for some one to save his daughter; then he went to the princess, and put his head on her lap; when he had fallen asleep, she took the three hairs from her bosom, and looking at them, said: "You are the man who saved me yesterday."

The urfeist was not long in coming. The princess roused Sean Ruadh, who sprang to his feet and went to the sea. The urfeist came up enormous, terrible to look at, with a mouth big enough to swallow the world, and three sharp swords coming out of it. When he saw Sean Ruadh, he sprang at him with a roar; but Sean Ruadh threw the apple into his mouth, and the beast fell helpless on the strand, flattened out and melted away to a dirty jelly on the shore.

Then Sean Ruadh went towards the princess and said: “That urfeist will never trouble man or woman again.”

The princess ran and tried to cling to him; but he was on the red steed, rushing away between earth and sky, before she could stop him. She held, however, so firmly to one of the blue glass boots that Sean Ruadh had to leave it in her hands.

When he drove home the cows that night, the king came out, and Sean Ruadh asked: “What news from the urfeist?”

“Oh!” said the king, “I’ve had the luck since you came to me. A champion wearing all the colors of the sky, and riding a red steed between earth and air, destroyed the urfeist to-day. My daughter is safe forever; but she is ready to kill herself because she hasn’t the man that saved her.”

That night there was a feast in the king’s castle such as no one had ever seen before. The halls were filled with princes and champions, and each one said: “I am the man that saved the princess!”

The king sent for the old blind sage, and asked, what should he do to find the man who saved his daughter. The old blind sage said, —

“Send out word to all the world that the man whose foot the blue glass boot will fit is the champion who killed the urfeist, and you’ll give him your daughter in marriage.”

The king sent out word to the world to come to try on the boot. It was too large for some, too small for others. When all had failed, the old sage said, —

“All have tried the boot but the cowboy.”

“Oh! he is always out with the cows; what use in his trying,” said the king.

“No matter,” answered the old blind sage; “let twenty men go and bring down the cowboy.”

The king sent up twenty men, who found the cowboy sleeping in the shadow of a stone wall. They began to make a hay rope to bind him; but he woke up, and had twenty ropes ready before they had one. Then he jumped at them, tied the twenty in a bundle, and fastened the bundle to the wall. They waited and waited at the castle for the twenty men and the cowboy, till at last the king sent twenty men more, with swords, to know what was the delay.

When they came, this twenty began to make a hay rope to tie the cowboy; but he had twenty ropes made before their one, and no matter how they fought, the cowboy tied the twenty in a bundle, and the bundle to the other twenty men.

When neither party came back, the old blind sage said to the king: "Go up now, and throw yourself down before the cowboy, for he has tied the forty men in two bundles, and the bundles to each other."

The king went and threw himself down before the cowboy, who raised him up and said: "What is this for?"

"Come down now and try on the glass boot," said the king.

"How can I go, when I have work to do here?"

"Oh! never mind; you'll come back soon enough to do the work."

The cowboy untied the forty men and went down with the king. When he stood in front of the castle, he saw the princess sitting in her upper chamber, and the glass boot on the window-sill before her.

That moment the boot sprang from the window through the air to him, and went on his foot of itself. The princess was downstairs in a twinkle, and in the arms of Sean Ruadh.

The whole place was crowded with kings' sons and champions, who claimed that they had saved the princess.

"What are these men here for?" asked Sean Ruadh. "Oh! they have been trying to put on the boot," said the king.

With that Sean Ruadh drew his sword of light, swept the heads off every man of them, and threw heads and bodies on the dirt-heap behind the castle.

Then the king sent ships with messengers to all the kings and queens of the world, — to the kings of Spain, France, Greece, and Lochlin, and to Diarmuid, son of the monarch of light, — to come to the wedding of his daughter and Sean Ruadh.

Sean Ruadh, after the wedding, went with his wife to live in the kingdom of the giants, and left his father-in-law on his own land.

10

KIL ARTHUR

10. Kil Arthur

THERE WAS A TIME LONG AGO, and if we had lived then, we shouldn’t be living now.

In that time there was a law in the world that if a young man came to woo a young woman, and her people wouldn’t give her to him, the young woman should get her death by the law.

There was a king in Erin at that time who had a daughter, and he had a son too, who was called Kil Arthur, son of the monarch of Erin.

Now, not far from the castle of the king there was a tinker; and one morning he said to his mother: “Put down my breakfast for me, mother.”

“Where are you going?” asked the mother.

“I’m going for a wife.”

“Where?”

“I am going for the daughter of the king of Erin.”

“Oh! my son, bad luck is upon you. It is death to ask for the king’s daughter, and you a tinker.”

"I don't care for that," said he.

So the tinker went to the king's castle. They were at dinner when he came, and the king trembled as he saw him.

Though they were at table, the tinker went into the room.

The king asked: "What did you come for at this time?"

"I came to marry your daughter."

"That life and strength may leave me if ever you get my daughter in marriage! I'd give her to death before I would to a tinker."

Now Kil Arthur, the king's son, came in, caught the tinker and hanged him, facing the front of the castle. When he was dead, they made seven parts of his body, and flung them into the sea.

Then the king had a box made so close and tight that no water could enter, and inside the box they fixed a coffin; and when they had put a bed with meat and drink into the coffin, they brought the king's daughter, laid her on the bed, closed the box, and pushed it into the open sea. The box went out with the tide and moved on the water for a long time; where it was one day it was not the next, — carried along by the waves day and night, till at last it came to another land.

Now, in the other land was a man who had spent his time in going to sea, till at length he got very poor, and said: "I'll stay at home now, since God has let me live this long. I heard my father say once that if a man would always rise early and walk along the strand, he would get his fortune from the tide at last."

One morning early, as this man was going along the strand, he saw the box, and brought it up to the shore, where he opened it and took out the coffin. When the lid was off the coffin, he found a woman inside alive.

"Oh!" said he, "I'd rather have you there than the full of the box of gold."

"I think the gold would be better for you," said the woman.

He took the stranger to his house, and gave her food and drink. Then he made a great cross on the ground, and clasping hands with the woman, jumped over the arms of the cross, going in the same direction as the sun. This was the form of marriage in that land. They lived together pleasantly. She was a fine woman, worked well for her husband, and brought him great wealth, so that he became richer than any man; and one day, when out walking alone, he said to himself: “I am able to give a grand dinner now to Ri Fohin, Sladaire Mor [king under the wave, the great robber], who owns men, women, and every kind of beast.”

Then he went home and invited Ri Fohin to dinner. He came with all the men, women, and beasts he had, and they covered the country for six miles.

The beasts were fed outside by themselves, but the people in the house. When dinner was over, he asked Ri Fohin: “Have you ever seen a house so fine and rich, or a dinner so good, as mine to-night?”

“I have not,” said Ri Fohin.

Then the man went to each person present. Each gave the same answer, and said, “I have never seen such a house nor such a dinner.”

He asked his wife, and she said: “My praise is no praise here; but what is this to the house and the feasting of my father, the king of Erin?”

“Why did you say that?” asked the man, and he went a second and a third time to the guests and to his wife. All had the same answers for him. Then he gave his wife a flip of the thumb on her ear, in a friendly way, and said: “Why don’t you give good luck to my house; why do you give it a bad name?”

Then all the guests said: “It is a shame to strike your wife on the night of a feast.”

Now the man was angry and went out of his house. It was growing dark, but he saw a champion coming on a black steed between earth and air; and the champion, who was no other than Kil Arthur, his brother-in-law, took him up and bore him away to the castle of the king of Erin.

When Kil Arthur arrived they were just sitting down to dinner in the castle, and the man dined with his father-in-law. After dinner the king of Erin had cards brought and asked his son-in-law: “Do you ever play with these?”

“No, I have never played with the like of them.”

“Well, shuffle them now,” said the king. He shuffled; and as they were enchanted cards and whoever held them could never lose a game he was the best player in the world, though he had never played a game before in his life.

The king said, “Put them in your pocket, they may do you good.” Then the king gave him a fiddle, and asked:

“Have you ever played on the like of this?”

“Indeed I have not,” said the man.

“Well, play on it now,” said the king.

He played, and never in his life had he heard such music.

“Keep it,” said the king; “as long as you don’t let it from you, you’re the first musician on earth. Now I’ll give you something else. Here is a cup which will always give you every kind of drink you can wish for; and if all the men in the world were to drink out of it they could never empty it. Keep these three things; but never raise hand on your wife again.”

The king of Erin gave him his blessing; then Kil Arthur took him up on the steed, and going between earth and sky he was soon back at his own home.

Now Ri Fohin had carried off the man’s wife and all that he had while he was at dinner with the King of Erin. Going out on the road the king’s son-in-law began to cry: “Oh, what shall I do; what shall I do!” and as he cried, who should come but Kil Arthur on his steed, who said, “Be quiet, I’ll go for your wife and goods.”

Kil Arthur went, and killed Ri Fohin and all his people and beasts, — didn’t leave one alive. Then he brought back his sister to her husband, and stayed with them for three years.

One day he said to his sister: “I am going to leave you. I don’t know what strength I have; I’ll walk the world now till I know is there a man in it as good as myself.”

Next morning he bade good-bye to his sister, and rode away on his black-haired steed, which overtook the wind before and outstripped the wind behind. He travelled swiftly till evening, spent the night in a forest, and the second day hurried on as he had the first.

The second night he spent in a forest; and next morning as he rose from the ground he saw before him a man covered with blood from fighting, and the clothes nearly torn from his body.

“What have you been doing?” asked Kil Arthur.

“I have been playing cards all night. And where are you going?” inquired the stranger of Kil Arthur.

“I am going around the world to know can I find a man as good as myself.”

“Come with me,” said the stranger, “and I’ll show you a man who couldn’t find his match till he went to fight the main ocean.”

Kil Arthur went with the ragged stranger till they came to a place from which they saw a giant out on the ocean beating the waves with a club.

Kil Arthur went up to the giant’s castle, and struck the pole of combat such a blow that the giant in the ocean heard it above the noise of his club as he pounded the waves.

“What do you want?” asked the giant in the ocean, as he stopped from the pounding.

“I want you to come in here to land,” said Kil Arthur, “and fight with a better man than yourself.”

The giant came to land, and standing near his castle said to Kil Arthur: “Which would you rather fight with, — gray stones or sharp weapons?”

“Gray stones,” said Kil Arthur.

They went at each other, and fought the most terrible battle that either of them had ever seen till that day. At last Kil Arthur pushed the giant to his shoulders through solid earth.

“Take me out of this,” cried the giant, “and I’ll give you my sword of light that never missed a blow, my Druidic rod of most powerful enchantment, and my healing draught which cures every sickness and wound.”

“Well,” said Kil Arthur, “I’ll go for your sword and try it.”

He went to the giant’s castle for the sword, the rod, and the healing draught. When he returned the giant said: “Try the sword on that tree out there.”

“Oh,” said Kil Arthur, “there is no tree so good as your own neck,” and with that he swept off the head of the giant; took it, and went on his way till he came to a house. He went in and put the head on a table; but that instant it disappeared, — went away of itself. Food and drink of every kind came on the table. When Kil Arthur had eaten and the table was cleared by some invisible power, the giant’s head bounded on to the table, and with it a pack of cards. “Perhaps this head wants to play with me,” thought Kil Arthur, and he cut his own cards and shuffled them.

The head took up the cards and played with its mouth as well as any man could with his hands. It won all the time, — wasn’t playing fairly. Then Kil Arthur thought: “I’ll settle this;” and he took the cards and showed how the head had taken five points in the game that didn’t belong to it. Then the head sprang at him, struck and beat him till he seized and hurled it into the fire.

As soon as he had the head in the fire a beautiful woman stood before him, and said: “You have killed nine of my brothers, and this was the best of the nine. I have eight more brothers who go out to fight with four hundred men each day, and they kill them all; but next morning the four hundred are alive again and my brothers have to do battle anew. Now my mother and these eight brothers will be here soon; and they’ll go down on their bended knees and curse you who killed my nine brothers, and I’m afraid your blood will rise within you when you hear the curses, and you’ll kill my eight remaining brothers.”

“Oh,” said Kil Arthur, “I’ll be deaf when the curses are spoken; I’ll not hear them.” Then he went to a couch and lay down. Presently the mother and eight brothers came, and cursed Kil Arthur with all the curses they knew. He heard them to the end, but gave no word from himself.

Next morning he rose early, girded on his nine-edged sword, went forth to where the eight brothers were going to fight the four hundred, and said to the eight: “Sit down, and I’ll fight in your place.”

Kil Arthur faced the four hundred, and fought with them alone; and exactly at midday he had them all dead. “Now some one,” said he, “brings these to life again. I’ll lie down among them and see who it is.”

Soon he saw an old hag coming with a brush in her hand, and an open vessel hanging from her neck by a string. When she came to the four hundred she dipped the brush into the vessel and sprinkled the liquid which was in it over the bodies of the men. They rose up behind her as she passed along.

“Bad luck to you,” said Kil Arthur, “you are the one that keeps them alive;” then he seized her. Putting one of his feet on her two ankles, and grasping her by the head and shoulders, he twisted her body till he put the life out of her.

When dying she said: “I put you under a curse, to keep on this road till you come to the ‘ram of the five rocks,’ and tell him you have killed the hag of the heights and all her care.”

He went to the place where the ram of the five rocks lived and struck the pole of combat before his castle. Out came the ram, and they fought till Kil Arthur seized his enemy and dashed the brains out of him against the rocks.

Then he went to the castle of the beautiful woman whose nine brothers he had killed, and for whose eight brothers he had slain the four hundred. When he appeared the mother rejoiced; the eight brothers blessed him and gave him their sister in marriage; and Kil Arthur took the beautiful woman to his father’s castle in Erin, where they both lived happily and well.

11

SHAKING-HEAD

There was once a king of a province in Erin who had an only son. The king was very careful of this son, and sent him to school for good instruction.

The other three kings of provinces in Erin had three sons at the same school; and the three sent word by this one to his father, that if he didn’t put his son to death they would put both father and son to death themselves.

When the young man came home with this word to his father and mother, they were grieved when they heard it. But the king’s son said that he would go out into the world to seek his fortune, and settle the trouble in that way. So away he went, taking with him only five pounds in money for his support.

The young man travelled on till he came to a grave-yard, where he saw four men fighting over a coffin. Then he went up to the four, and saw that two of them were trying to put the coffin down into a grave, and the other two preventing them and keeping the coffin above ground. When the king’s son came near the men, he asked: “Why do you fight in such a place as this, and why do you keep the coffin above ground?”

Two of the men answered, and said: “The body of our brother is in this coffin, and these two men won’t let us bury it.”

The other two then said: “We have a debt of five pounds on the dead man, and we won’t let his body be buried till the debt is paid.” The king’s son said: “Do you let these men bury their brother, and I will pay what you ask.”

Then the two let the brothers of the dead man bury him. The king’s son paid the five pounds, and went away empty-handed, and, except the clothes on his back, he had no more than on the day he was born. After he had gone on his way awhile and the grave-yard was out of sight he turned and saw a sprightly red-haired man (fear ruadh) hurrying after him. When he came up, the stranger asked: “Don’t you want a serving man?”

“I do not,” answered the king’s son, “I have nothing to support myself with, let alone a serving man.”

“Well, never mind that,” said the red-haired man; “I’ll be with you wherever you go, whether you have anything or not.”

“What is your name?” asked the king’s son.

“Shaking-head,” answered the red man.

When they had gone on a piece of the way together the king’s son stopped and asked: “Where shall we be to-night?”

“We shall be in a giant’s castle where there will be small welcome for us,” said Shaking-head.

When evening came they found themselves in front of a castle. In they went and saw no one inside, only a tall old hag. But they were not long in the place till they heard a loud, rushing noise outside, and a blow on the castle. The giant came; and the first words he let out of his mouth were: “I’m glad to have an Erinach on my supper-table to eat to-night.” Then turning to the two he said: “What brought you here this evening; what do you want in my castle?”

“All the champions and heroes of Erin are going to take your property from you and destroy yourself; we have come to warn you, and there is nobody to save you from them but us,” said Shaking-head.

When the giant heard these words he changed his treatment entirely. He gave the king’s son and Shaking-head a hearty welcome and a kindly greeting. When he understood the news they brought, he washed them with the tears of his eyes, dried them with kisses, and gave them a good supper and a soft bed that night.

Next morning the giant was up at an early hour, and he went to the bedside of each man and told him to rise and have breakfast. Shaking-head asked his reward of the giant for telling him of the champions of Erin and the danger he was in.

“Well,” said the giant, “there’s a pot of gold over there under my bed; take as much out of it as ever you wish, and welcome.”

“It isn’t gold I want for my service,” said Shaking-head; “you have a gift which suits me better.”

“What gift is that?” asked the giant.

“The light black steed in your stable.”

“That’s a gift I won’t give you,” said the giant, “for when any one comes to trouble or attack me, all I have to do is to throw my leg over that steed, and away he carries me out of sight of every enemy.”

“Well,” said Shaking-head, “if you don’t give me that steed I’ll bring all the kingdom of Erin against you, and you’ll be destroyed with all you have.”

The giant stopped a moment, and said: “I believe you’d do that thing, so you may take the steed.” Then Shaking-head took the steed of the giant, gave him to the king’s son, and away they went.

At sunset Shaking-head said: “We are near the castle of another giant, the next brother to the one who entertained us last night. He hasn’t much welcome for us either; but he will treat us well when he is threatened.”

The second giant was going to eat the king’s son for supper, but when Shaking-head told him about the forces of Erin he changed his manner and entertained them well.

Next morning after breakfast, Shaking-head said: “You must give me a present for my services in warning you.”

“There is a pot of gold under my bed,” said the giant; “take all you want of it.”

“I don’t want your gold,” said Shaking-head, “but you have a gift which suits me well.”

“What is that?” asked the giant.

“The two-handed black sword that never fails a blow.”

“You won’t get that gift from me,” said the giant; “and I can’t spare it; for if a whole army were to come against me, as soon as I’d have my two hands on the hilt of that sword, I’d let no man near me without sweeping the head off him.”

“Well,” said Shaking-head, “I have been keeping back your enemies this long time; but I’ll let them at you now, and I’ll raise up more. I’ll put the whole kingdom of Erin against you.”

The giant stopped a moment, and said: “I believe you’d do that if it served you.” So he took the sword off his belt and handed it to his guest. Shaking-head gave it to the king’s son, who mounted his steed, and they both went away.

When they had gone some distance from the giant’s castle Shaking-head said to the king’s son, “Where shall we be to-night? — you have more knowledge than I.” “Indeed then I have not,” said the king’s son; “I have no knowledge at all of where we are going; it is you who have the knowledge.”

“Well,” said Shaking-head, “we’ll be at the third and youngest giant’s castle to-night, and at first he’ll treat us far worse and more harshly, but still we’ll take this night’s lodging of him, and a good gift in the morning.”

Soon after sunset they came to the castle where they met the worst reception and the harshest they had found on the road. The giant was going to eat them both for supper; but when Shaking-head told him of the champions of Erin, he became as kind as his two brothers, and gave good entertainment to both.

Next morning after breakfast, Shaking-head asked for a present in return for his services.

“Do you see the pot of gold in the corner there under my bed? — take all you want and welcome,” said the giant.

“It’s not gold I want,” said Shaking-head, “but the cloak of darkness.”

“Oh,” said the giant, “you’ll not get that cloak of me, for I want it myself. If any man were to come against me, all I’d have to do would be to put that cloak on my shoulders, and no one in the world could see me, or know where I’d be.”

“Well,” said Shaking-head, “it’s long enough that I am keeping your enemies away; and if you don’t give me that cloak now I’ll raise all the kingdom of Erin and still more forces to destroy you, and it’s not long you’ll last after they come.”

The giant thought a moment, and then said: “I believe you’d do what you say. There’s the black cloak hanging on the wall before you; take it.”

Shaking-head took the cloak, and the two went away together, the king’s son riding on the light black steed, and having the double-handed sword at his back. When out of sight of the giant, Shaking-head put on the cloak, and wasn’t to be seen, and no other man could have been seen in his place. Then the king’s son looked around, and began to call and search for his man, — he was lonely without him and grieved not to see him. Shaking-head, glad to see the affection of the king’s son, took off the cloak and was at his side again.

“Where are we going now?” asked the king’s son.

“We are going on a long journey to (Ri Chuil an Or) King Behind the Gold, to ask his daughter of him.”

The two travelled on, till they came to the castle of King Behind the Gold. Then Shaking-head said: “Go in you, and ask his daughter of the king, and I'll stay here outside with the cloak on me." So he went in and spoke to the king, and the answer he got was this: —

"I am willing to give you my daughter, but you won't get her unless you do what she will ask of you. And I must tell you now that three hundred kings' sons, lacking one, have come to ask for my daughter, and in the garden behind my castle are three hundred iron spikes, and every spike of them but one is covered with the head of a king's son who couldn't do what my daughter wanted of him, and I'm greatly in dread that your own head will be put on the one spike that is left uncovered."

"Well," said the king's son, "I'll do my best to keep my head where it is at present."

"Stay here in my castle," said the king, "and you'll have good entertainment till we know can you do what will be asked of you." At night when the king's son was going to bed, the princess gave him a thimble, and said: "Have this for me in the morning."

He put the thimble on his finger; and she thought it could be easily taken away, if he would sleep. So she came to him in the night, with a drink, and said: "I give you this in hopes I'll gain more drink by you." He swallowed the liquor, and the princess went away with the empty cup. Then the king's son put the thimble in his mouth between his cheek and his teeth for safe keeping, and was soon asleep.

When the princess came to her own chamber, she struck her maid with a slat an draoichta (a rod of enchantment) and turned her into a rat; then she made such music of fifes and trumpets to sound throughout the castle, that every soul in it fell asleep. That minute, she sent the rat to where the king's son was sleeping, and the rat put her tail into the nostrils of the young man, tickled his nose so that he sneezed and blew the thimble out of his mouth. The rat caught it and ran away to the princess, who struck her with the rod of enchantment and turned her into a maid again.

Then the princess and the maid set out for the eastern world, taking the thimble with them. Shaking-head, who was watching with his cloak on, unseen by all, had seen everything, and now followed at their heels. In the eastern world, at the sea-side was a rock. The princess tapped it with her finger, and the rock opened; there was a great house inside, and in the house a giant. The princess greeted him and gave him the thimble, saying: “You’re to keep this so no man can get it.”

“Oh,” said the giant, taking the thimble and throwing it aside, “you need have no fear; no man can find me in this place.”

Shaking-head caught the thimble from the ground and put it in his pocket. When she had finished conversation with the giant, the princess kissed him, and hurried away. Shaking-head followed her step for step, till they came at break of day to the castle of King Behind the Gold. Shaking-head went to the king’s son and asked: “Was anything given you to keep last night?”

“Yes, before I came to this chamber the princess gave me her thimble, and told me to have it for her in the morning.”

“Have you it now?” asked Shaking-head.

“It is not in my mouth where I put it last night, it is not in the bed; I’m afraid my head is lost,” said the king’s son.

“Well, look at this,” said Shaking-head, taking the thimble out of his pocket and giving it to him. “The whole kingdom is moving to-day to see your death. All the people have heard that you are here asking for the princess, and they think your head’ll be put on the last spike in the garden, with the heads of the other kings’ sons. Rise up now, mount your light black steed, ride to the summer-house of the princess and her father, and give her the thimble.”

The king’s son did as Shaking-head told him. When he gave up the thimble, the king said, “You have won one third of my daughter.” But the princess was bitterly angry and vexed to the heart, that any man on earth should know that she had dealings with the giant; she cared more for that than anything else.

When the second day had passed, and the king's son was going to bed, the princess gave him a comb to keep, and said: "If you don't have this for me in the morning, your head will be put on the spike that's left in my father's garden."

The king's son took the comb with him, wrapped it in a handkerchief, and tied it to his head.

In the night the princess came with a draught which she gave him, and soon he was asleep. Going back to her own chamber, she struck the maid with her rod of enchantment, and made a great yellow cat of her. Then she caused such music of fifes and trumpets to sound throughout the castle that every soul was in a deep sleep before the music was over, and that moment she sent the cat to the chamber of the king's son. The cat worked the handkerchief off his head, took out the comb and ran with it to the princess, who turned her into a maid again.

The two set out for the eastern world straightway; but as they did, Shaking-head followed them in his cloak of darkness, till they came to the house of the giant in the great rock at the end of the road, at the sea. The princess gave the giant the comb, and said: "The thimble that I gave you to keep last night was taken from you, for the king's son in Erin brought it back to me this morning, and has done one third of the work of winning me, and I didn't expect you'd serve me in this way."

When the giant heard this, he was raging, and threw the comb into the sea behind him. Then with Druidic spells he raised thunder and lightning and wind. The sea was roaring with storm and rain; but the comb had not touched the water when Shaking-head caught it.

When her talk was over the princess gave the giant a kiss, and home she went with the maid; but Shaking-head followed them step by step.

In the morning Shaking-head went to the king's son, roused him, and asked: "What was your task last night?"

"The princess gave me a comb to have for her this morning," answered the king's son.

"Where is it now?" asked Shaking-head.

"Here on my head," said the king's son, putting up his hand to get it; but the comb was gone. "I'm done for now," said the king's son; "my head will be on the last spike to-day unless I have the comb for the princess."

"Here it is for you," said Shaking-head, taking the comb out of his pocket. "And now," said he, "the whole kingdom is coming to this castle to-day to see your head put on the last spike in the garden of King Behind the Gold, for all men think the same will happen to you that has happened to every king's son before you. Go up on your steed and ride to the summer-house where the king and his daughter are sitting, and give her the comb."

The king's son did as Shaking-head bade him. When he saw the comb the king said, "Now you have my daughter two-thirds won." But her face went from the princess entirely, she was so vexed that any man should know of her dealings with the giant.

The third night when he was going to bed the princess said to the king's son, "If you will not have at my father's castle to-morrow morning the head I will kiss to-night, you'll die to-morrow, and your own head will be put on the last spike in my father's garden." Later in the night she came to the bedside of the king's son with a draught, which he drank, and before she was back in her chamber, he slept. Then she made such music all over the castle that not a soul was awake when the music had ceased. That moment she hurried away with her maid to the eastern world; but Shaking-head followed her in his cloak of darkness. This time he carried with him the two-handed sword that never failed a blow.

When she came to the rock in the eastern world and entered the house of the giant, the princess said, "You let my two gifts go with the son of the king in Erin, and he'll have me won to-morrow if he'll have your head at my father's castle in the morning."

"Never fear," said the giant, "there is nothing in the world to take the head off me but the double-handed sword of darkness that never fails a blow, and that sword belongs to my brother in the western world."

The princess gave the giant a kiss at parting; and as she hurried away with her maid the giant turned to look at her. His head was covered with an iron cap; but as he looked he laid bare a thin strip of his neck. Shaking-head was there near him, and said in his mind: "Your brother's sword has never been so close to your neck before;" and with one blow he swept the head off him. Then began the greatest struggle that Shaking-head ever had, to keep the head from the body of the giant. The head fought to put itself on again, and never stopped till the body was dead; then it fell to the ground. Shaking-head seized, but couldn't stir the head, — couldn't move it from its place. Then he searched all around it and found a (bar an suan) pin of slumber near the ear. When he took the pin away he had no trouble in carrying the head; and he made no delay but came to the castle at daybreak, and threw the head to a herd of pigs that belonged to the king. Then he went to the king's son, and asked:

"What happened to you last night?"

"The princess came to me, and said that if I wouldn't bring to her father's castle this morning the head she was to kiss last night, my own head would be on the last spike to-day."

"Come out with me now to the pigs," said Shaking-head.

The two went out, and Shaking-head said: "Go in among the pigs, and take the head with you to the king; and a strange head it is to put before a king."

So the king's son went on his steed to the summer-house, and gave the head to the king and his daughter, and turning to the princess, said:

"This is the head you kissed last night, and it's not a nice looking head either."

"You have my daughter won now entirely," said the king, "and she is yours. And do you take that head to the great dark hole that is out there on one side of my castle grounds, and throw it down."

The king's son mounted his steed, and rode off with the head till he came to the hole going deep into the earth. When he let down the head it went to the bottom with such a roaring and such a noise that every mare and cow and every beast in the whole kingdom cast its young, such was the terror that was caused by the noise of the head in going to the bottom of the hole.

When the head was put away the king's son went back to the castle, and married the daughter of King Behind the Gold. The wedding lasted nine days and nights, and the last night was better than the first.

When the wedding was over Shaking-head went to the king, and said: "You have provided no fortune for your daughter, and it is but right that you should remember her."

"I have plenty of gold and silver to give her," said the king.

"It isn't gold and silver that your son-in-law wants, but men to stand against his enemies, when they come on him."

"I have more treasures than men," said King Behind the Gold; "but I won't see my daughter conquered for want of an army."

They were satisfied with the king's word, and next day took the road to Erin, and kept on their way till they came opposite the grave-yard. Then Shaking-head said to the king's son: "You are no good, you have never told me a story since the first day I saw you."

"I have but one story to tell you, except what happened since we met."

"Well, tell me what happened before we met."

"I was passing this place before I saw you," said the king's son, "and four men were fighting over a coffin. I spoke to them, and two of them said they were burying the body of their brother which was in the coffin, and the others said the dead man owed them five pounds, and they wouldn’t let the coffin into the ground until they got the money. I paid five pounds and the body was buried.”

“It was my body was in the coffin,” said Shaking-head, “and I came back into this world to do you a good turn; and now I am going, and you’ll never see me again unless trouble is on you.”

Shaking-head disappeared, and the king’s son went home. He wasn’t with his father long till the other three kings’ sons heard he had come back to Erin with the daughter of King Behind the Gold. They sent word, saying: “We’ll take the head off you now, and put an end to your father and yourself.”

The king’s son went out to walk alone, and as he was lamenting the fate he had brought on his father, who should come along to meet him but Shaking-head.

“What trouble is on you now?” asked he.

“Oh, three kings’ sons are coming with their fleets and armies to destroy my father and myself, and what can we do with our one fleet and one army?”

“Well,” said Shaking-head, “I’ll settle that for you without delay.” Then he sent a message straight to King Behind the Gold, who gave a fleet and an army, and they came to Erin so quickly that they were at the castle before the forces of the three kings’ sons. And when the three came the battle began on sea and land at both sides of the castle.

The three fleets of the three kings’ sons were sunk, their armies destroyed, and the three heads taken off themselves. When the battle was over and the country safe the king resigned the castle and power to his son, and the son of a king in a province became king over all the land of Erin.

12

BIRTH OF FIN MACCUMHAIL AND ORIGIN OF THE FENIANS OF ERIN

Cumhal Macart was a great champion in the west of Erin, and it was prophesied of him that if ever he married he would meet death in the next battle he fought.

For this reason he had no wife, and knew no woman for a long time; till one day he saw the king’s daughter, who was so beautiful that he forgot all fear and married her in secret.

Next day after the marriage, news came that a battle had to be fought.

Now a Druid had told the king that his daughter’s son would take the kingdom from him; so he made up his mind to look after the daughter, and not let any man come near her.

Before he went to the battle, Cumhal told his mother everything, — told her of his relations with the king’s daughter.

He said, “I shall be killed in battle to-day, according to the prophecy of the Druid, and I’m afraid if his daughter has a son the king will kill the child, for the prophecy is that he will lose the kingdom by the son of his own daughter. Now, if the king’s daughter has a son do you hide and rear him, if you can; you will be his only hope and stay.”

Cumhal was killed in the battle, and within that year the king’s daughter had a son. By command of his grandfather, the boy was thrown out of the castle window into a loch, to be drowned, on the day of his birth.

The boy sank from sight; but after remaining a while under the water, he rose again to the surface, and came to land holding a live salmon in his hand.

The grandmother of the boy, Cumhal’s mother, stood watching on the shore, and said to herself as she saw this: “He is my grandson, the true son of my own child,” and seizing the boy, she rushed away with him, and vanished, before the king’s people could stop her.

When the king heard that the old woman had escaped with his daughter’s son, he fell into a terrible rage, and ordered all the male children born that day in the kingdom to be put to death, hoping in this way to kill his own grandson, and save the crown for himself.

After she had disappeared from the bank of the loch, the old woman, Cumhal’s mother, made her way to a thick forest, where she spent that night as best she could. Next day she came to a great oak tree. Then she hired a man to cut out a chamber in the tree.

When all was finished, and there was a nice room in the oak for herself and her grandson, and a whelp of the same age as the boy, and which she had brought with her from the castle, she said to the man: “Give me the axe which you have in your hand, there is something here that I want to fix.”

The man gave the axe into her hand, and that minute she swept the head off him, saying: “You’ll never tell any man about this place now.” One day the whelp ate some of the fine chippings (bran) left cut by the carpenter from the inside of the tree. The old woman said: “You’ll be called Bran from this out.”

All three lived in the tree together, and the old woman did not take her grandson out till the end of five years; and then he couldn’t walk, he had been sitting so long inside.

When the old grandmother had taught the boy to walk, she brought him one day to the brow of a hill from which there was a long slope. She took a switch and said: “Now, run down this place. I will follow and strike you with this switch, and coming up I will run ahead, and you strike me as often as you can."

The first time they ran down, his grandmother struck him many times. In coming up the first time, he did not strike her at all. Every time they ran down she struck him less, and every time they ran up he struck her more.

They ran up and down for three days; and at the end of that time she could not strike him once, and he struck her at every step she took. He had now become a great runner.

When he was fifteen years of age, the old woman went with him to a hurling match between the forces of his grandfather and those of a neighboring king. Both sides were equal in skill; and neither was able to win, till the youth opposed his grandfather's people. Then, he won every game. When the ball was thrown in the air, he struck it coming down, and so again and again, — never letting the ball touch the ground till he had driven it through the barrier.

The old king, who was very angry, and greatly mortified, at the defeat of his people, exclaimed, as he saw the youth, who was very fair and had white hair: "Who is that fin cumhal [white cap]?"

"Ah, that is it; Fin will be his name, and Fin MacCumhail he is," said the old woman.

The king ordered his people to seize and put the young man to death, on the spot. The old woman hurried to the side of her grandson. They slipped from the crowd and away they went, a hill at a leap, a glen at a step, and thirty-two miles at a running-leap. They ran a long distance, till Fin grew tired; then the old grandmother took him on her back, putting his feet into two pockets which were in her dress, one on each side, and ran on with the same swiftness as before, a hill at a leap, a glen at a step, and thirty-two miles at a running-leap.

After a time, the old woman felt the approach of pursuit, and said to Fin: "Look behind, and tell me what you see."

“I see,” said he, “a white horse with a champion on his back.”

“Oh, no fear,” said she; “a white horse has no endurance; he can never catch us, we are safe from him.” And on they sped. A second time she felt the approach of pursuit, and again she said: “Look back, and see who is coming.”

Fin looked back, and said: “I see a warrior riding on a brown horse.”

“Never fear,” said the old woman; “there is never a brown horse but is giddy, he cannot overtake us.” She rushed on as before. A third time she said: “Look around, and see who is coming now.” Fin looked, and said: “I see a black warrior on a black horse, following fast.”

“There is no horse so tough as a black horse,” said the grandmother. “There is no escape from this one. My grandson, one or both of us must die. I am old, my time has nearly come. I will die, and you and Bran save yourselves. (Bran had been with them all the time.) Right here ahead is a deep bog; you jump off my back, and escape as best you can. I’ll jump into the bog up to my neck; and when the king’s men come, I’ll say that you are in the bog before me, sunk out of sight, and I’m trying to find you. As my hair and yours are the same color, they will think my head good enough to carry back. They will cut it off, and take it in place of yours, and show it to the king; that will satisfy his anger.”

Fin slipped down, took farewell of his grandmother, and hurried on with Bran. The old woman came to the bog, jumped in, and sank to her neck. The king’s men were soon at the edge of the bog, and the black rider called out to the old woman: “Where is Fin?”

“He is here in the bog before me, and I’m trying can I find him.”

As the horsemen could not find Fin, and thought the old woman’s head would do to carry back, they cut it off, and took it with them, saying: “This will satisfy the king.”

Fin and Bran went on till they came to a great cave, in which they found a herd of goats. At the further end of the cave was a smouldering fire. The two lay down to rest.

A couple of hours later, in came a giant with a salmon in his hand. This giant was of awful height, he had but one eye, and that in the middle of his forehead, as large as the sun in heaven.

When he saw Fin, he called out: “Here, take this salmon and roast it; but be careful, for if you raise a single blister on it I’ll cut the head off you. I’ve followed this salmon for three days and three nights without stopping, and I never let it out of my sight, for it is the most wonderful salmon in the world.”

The giant lay down to sleep in the middle of the cave. Fin spitted the salmon, and held it over the fire.

The minute the giant closed the one eye in his head, he began to snore. Every time he drew breath into his body, he dragged Fin, the spit, the salmon, Bran, and all the goats to his mouth; and every time he drove a breath out of himself, he threw them back to the places they were in before. Fin was drawn time after time to the mouth of the giant with such force, that he was in dread of going down his throat.

When partly cooked, a blister rose on the salmon. Fin pressed the place with his thumb, to know could he break the blister, and hide from the giant the harm that was done. But he burned his thumb, and, to ease the pain, put it between his teeth, and gnawed the skin to the flesh, the flesh to the bone, the bone to the marrow; and when he had tasted the marrow, he received the knowledge of all things. Next moment, he was drawn by the breath of the giant right up to his face, and, knowing from his thumb what to do, he plunged the hot spit into the sleeping eye of the giant and destroyed it.

That instant the giant with a single bound was at the low entrance of the cave, and, standing with his back to the wall and a foot on each side of the opening, roared out: “You’ll not leave this place alive.”

Now Fin killed the largest goat, skinned him as quickly as he could, then putting the skin on himself he drove the herd to where the giant stood;

the goats passed out one by one between his legs. When the great goat came the giant took him by the horns. Fin slipped from the skin, and ran out.

“Oh, you’ve escaped,” said the giant, “but before we part let me make you a present.”

“I’m afraid to go near you,” said Fin; “if you wish to give me a present, put it out this way, and then go back.”

The giant placed a ring on the ground, then went back. Fin took up the ring and put it on the end of his little finger above the first joint. It clung so firmly that no man in the world could have taken it off.

The giant then called out, “Where are you?”

“On Fin’s finger,” cried the ring. That instant the giant sprang at Fin and almost came down on his head, thinking in this way to crush him to bits. Fin sprang to a distance. Again the giant asked, “Where are you?”

“On Fin’s finger,” answered the ring.

Again the giant made a leap, coming down just in front of Fin. Many times he called and many times almost caught Fin, who could not escape with the ring on his finger. While in this terrible struggle, not knowing how to escape, Bran ran up and asked:

“Why don’t you chew your thumb?” Fin bit his thumb to the marrow, and then knew what to do. He took the knife with which he had skinned the goat, cut off his finger at the first joint, and threw it, with the ring still on, into a deep bog near by.

Again the giant called out, “Where are you?” and the ring answered, “On Fin’s finger.”

Straightway the giant sprang towards the voice, sank to his shoulders in the bog, and stayed there.

Fin with Bran now went on his way, and travelled till he reached a deep and thick wood, where a thousand horses were drawing timber, and men felling and preparing it.

“What is this?” asked Fin of the overseer of the workmen.

“Oh, we are building a dun (a castle) for the king; we build one every day, and every night it is burned to the ground. Our king has an only daughter; he will give her to any man who will save the dun, and he’ll leave him the kingdom at his death. If any man undertakes to save the dun and fails, his life must pay for it; the king will cut his head off. The best champions in Erin have tried and failed; they are now in the king’s dungeons, a whole army of them, waiting the king’s pleasure. He’s going to cut the heads off them all in one day.”

“Why don’t you chew your thumb?” asked Bran.

Fin chewed his thumb to the marrow, and then knew that on the eastern side of the world there lived an old hag with her three sons, and every evening at nightfall she sent the youngest of these to burn the king’s dun.

“I will save the king’s dun,” said Fin.

“Well,” said the overseer, “better men than you have tried and lost their lives.” “Oh,” said Fin, “I’m not afraid; I’ll try for the sake of the king’s daughter.”

Now Fin, followed by Bran, went with the overseer to the king. “I hear you will give your daughter to the man who saves your dun,” said Fin.

“I will,” said the king; “but if he fails I must have his head.”

“Well,” said Fin, “I’ll risk my head for the sake of your daughter. If I fail I’m satisfied.” The king gave Fin food and drink; he supped, and after supper went to the dun.

“Why don’t you chew your thumb?” said Bran; “then you’ll know what to do.” He did. Then Bran took her place on the roof, waiting for the old woman’s son. Now the old woman in the east told her youngest son to hurry on with his torches, burn the dun, and come back without delay; for the stirabout was boiling and he must not be too late for supper.

He took the torches, and shot off through the air with a wonderful speed. Soon he was in sight of the king’s dun, threw the torches upon the thatched roof to set it on fire as usual.

That moment Bran gave the torches such a push with her shoulders, that they fell into the stream which ran around the dun, and were put out. “Who is this,” cried the youngest son of the old hag, “who has dared to put out my lights, and interfere with my hereditary right?”

“I,” said Fin, who stood in front of him. Then began a terrible battle between Fin and the old woman’s son. Bran came down from the dun to help Fin; she bit and tore his enemy’s back, stripping the skin and flesh from his head to his heels.

After a terrible struggle such as had not been in the world before that night, Fin cut the head off his enemy. But for Bran, Fin could never have conquered.

The time for the return of her son had passed; supper was ready. The old woman, impatient and angry, said to the second son: “You take torches and hurry on, see why your brother loiters. I’ll pay him for this when he comes home! But be careful and don’t do like him, or you’ll have your pay too. Hurry back, for the stirabout is boiling and ready for supper.”

He started off, was met and killed exactly as his brother, except that he was stronger and the battle fiercer. But for Bran, Fin would have lost his life that night.

The old woman was raging at the delay, and said to her eldest son, who had not been out of the house for years: (It was only in case of the greatest need that she sent him. He had a cat’s head, and was called Pus an Chuine, “Puss of the Corner;” he was the eldest and strongest of all the brothers.) “Now take torches, go and see what delays your brothers; I’ll pay them for this when they come home.”

The eldest brother shot off through the air, came to the king’s dun, and threw his torches upon the roof. They had just singed the straw a little, when Bran pushed them off with such force that they fell into the stream and were quenched.

"Who is this," screamed Cat-head, "who dares to interfere with my ancestral right?"

"I," shouted Fin. Then the struggle began fiercer than with the second brother. Bran helped from behind, tearing the flesh from his head to his heels; but at length Cat-head fastened his teeth into Fin's breast, biting and gnawing till Fin cut the head off. The body fell to the ground, but the head lived, gnawing as terribly as before. Do what they could it was impossible to kill it. Fin hacked and cut, but could neither kill nor pull it off. When nearly exhausted, Bran said:

"Why don't you chew your thumb?"

Fin chewed his thumb, and reaching the marrow knew that the old woman in the east was ready to start with torches to find her sons, and burn the dun herself, and that she had a vial of liquid with which she could bring the sons to life; and that nothing could free him from Cat-head but the old woman's blood.

After midnight the old hag, enraged at the delay of her sons, started and shot through the air like lightning, more swiftly than her sons. She threw her torches from afar upon the roof of the dun; but Bran as before hurled them into the stream.

Now the old woman circled around in the air looking for her sons. Fin was getting very weak from pain and loss of blood, for Cat-head was biting at his breast all the time.

Bran called out: "Rouse yourself, oh, Fin; use all your power or we are lost! If the old hag gets a drop from the vial upon the bodies of her sons, they will come to life, and then we're done for."

Thus roused, Fin with one spring reached the old woman in the air, and swept the bottle from her grasp; which falling upon the ground was emptied.

The old hag gave a scream which was heard all over the world, came to the ground and closed with Fin. Then followed a battle greater than the world had ever known before that night, or has ever seen since. Water sprang out of gray rocks, cows cast their calves even when they had none, and hard rushes grew soft in the remotest corner of Erin, so desperate was the fighting and so awful, between Fin and the old hag. Fin would have died that night but for Bran.

Just as daylight was coming Fin swept the head off the old woman, caught some of her blood, and rubbed it around Cat-head, who fell off dead.

He rubbed his own wounds with the blood and was cured; then rubbed some on Bran, who had been singed with the torches, and she was as well as ever. Fin, exhausted with fighting, dropped down and fell asleep.

While he was sleeping the chief steward of the king came to the dun, found it standing safe and sound, and seeing Fin lying there asleep knew that he had saved it. Bran tried to waken Fin, pulled and tugged, but could not rouse him.

The steward went to the king, and said: “I have saved the dun, and I claim the reward.”

“It shall be given you,” answered the king; and straightway the steward was recognized as the king’s son-in-law, and orders were given to make ready for the wedding.

Bran had listened to what was going on, and when her master woke, exactly at midday, she told him of all that was taking place in the castle of the king.

Fin went to the king, and said: “I have saved your dun, and I claim the reward.”

“Oh,” said the king, “my steward claimed the reward, and it has been given to him.”

“He had nothing to do with saving the dun; I saved it,” said Fin.

“Well,” answered the king, “he is the first man who told me of its safety and claimed the reward.” “Bring him here: let me look at him,” said Fin.

He was sent for, and came. “Did you save the king’s dun?” asked Fin. “I did,” said the steward.

“You did not, and take that for your lies,” said Fin; and striking him with the edge of his open hand he swept the head off his body, dashing it against the other side of the room, flattening it like paste on the wall.

“You are the man,” said the king to Fin, “who saved the dun; yours is the reward. All the champions, and there is many a man of them, who have failed to save it are in the dungeons of my fortress; their heads must be cut off before the wedding takes place.”

“Will you let me see them?” asked Fin.

“I will,” said the king.

Fin went down to the men, and found the first champions of Erin in the dungeons. “Will you obey me in all things if I save you from death?” said Fin. “We will,” said they. Then he went back to the king and asked:

“Will you give me the lives of these champions of Erin, in place of your daughter’s hand?”

“I will,” said the king.

All the champions were liberated, and left the king’s castle that day. Ever after they followed the orders of Fin, and these were the beginning of his forces and the first of the Fenians of Erin.

13

FIN MACCUMHAIL AND THE FENIANS OF ERIN IN THE CASTLE OF FEAR DUBH

It was the custom with Fin MacCumhail and the Fenians of Erin, when a stranger from any part of the world came to their castle, not to ask him a question for a year and a day.

On a time, a champion came to Fin and his men, and remained with them. He was not at all pleasant or agreeable.

At last Fin and his men took counsel together; they were much annoyed because their guest was so dull and morose, never saying a word, always silent.

While discussing what kind of man he was, Diarmuid Duivne offered to try him; so one evening when they were eating together, Diarmuid came and snatched from his mouth the hind-quarter of a bullock, which he was picking.

Diarmuid pulled at one part of the quarter, — pulled with all his strength, but only took the part that he seized, while the other kept the part he held. All laughed; the stranger laughed too, as heartily as any. It was the first laugh they had heard from him.

The strange champion saw all their feats of arms and practised with them, till the year and a day were over. Then he said to Fin and his men:

“I have spent a pleasant year in your company; you gave me good treatment, and the least I can do now is to give you a feast at my own castle.”

No one had asked what his name was up to that time. Fin now asked his name. He answered: “My name is Fear Dubh, of Alba.”

Fin accepted the invitation; and they appointed the day for the feast, which was to be in Erin, since Fear Dubh did not wish to trouble them to go to Alban. He took leave of his host and started for home.

When the day for the feast came, Fin and the chief men of the Fenians of Erin set out for the castle of Fear Dubh.

They went, a glen at a step, a hill at a leap, and thirty-two miles at a running leap, till they came to the grand castle where the feast was to be given.

They went in; everything was ready, seats at the table, and every man’s name at his seat in the same order as at Fin’s castle. Diarmuid, who was always very sportive, — fond of hunting, and paying court to women, was not with them; he had gone to the mountains with his dogs.

All sat down, except Conan Maol MacMorna (never a man spoke well of him); no seat was ready for him, for he used to lie on the flat of his back on the floor, at Fin’s castle.

When all were seated the door of the castle closed of itself. Fin then asked the man nearest the door, to rise and open it. The man tried to rise; he pulled this way and that, over and hither, but he couldn’t get up. Then the next man tried, and the next, and so on, till the turn came to Fin himself, who tried in vain.

Now, whenever Fin and his men were in trouble and great danger it was their custom to raise a cry of distress (a voice of howling), heard all over Erin. Then all men knew that they were in peril of death; for they never raised this cry except in the last extremity.

Fin’s son, Fialan, who was three years old and in the cradle, heard the cry, was roused, and jumped up.

“Get me a sword!” said he to the nurse. “My father and his men are in distress; I must go to aid them.”

“What could you do, poor little child.”

Fialan looked around, saw an old rusty sword-blade laid aside for ages. He took it down, gave it a snap; it sprang up so as to hit his arm, and all the rust dropped off; the blade was pure as shining silver.

“This will do,” said he; and then he set out towards the place where he heard the cry, going a glen at a step, a hill at a leap, and thirty-two miles at a running leap, till he came to the door of the castle, and cried out.

Fin answered from inside, “Is that you, my child?”

“It is,” said Fialan.

“Why did you come?”

“I heard your cry, and how could I stay at home, hearing the cry of my father and the Fenians of Erin!”

“Oh, my child, you cannot help us much.”

Fialan struck the door powerfully with his sword, but no use. Then, one of the men inside asked Fin to chew his thumb, to know what was keeping them in, and why they were bound.

Fin chewed his thumb, from skin to blood, from blood to bone, from bone to marrow, and discovered that Fear Dubh had built the castle by magic, and that he was coming himself with a great force to cut the head off each one of them. (These men from Alba had always a grudge against the champions of Erin.)

Said Fin to Fialan: “Do you go now, and stand at the ford near the castle, and meet Fear Dubh.”

Fialan went and stood in the middle of the ford. He wasn’t long there when he saw Fear Dubh coming with a great army.

“Leave the ford, my child,” said Fear Dubh, who knew him at once. “I have not come to harm your father. I spent a pleasant year at his castle. I’ve only come to show him honor.”

“I know why you have come,” answered Fialan. “You’ve come to destroy my father and all his men, and I’ll not leave this ford while I can hold it.”

“Leave the ford; I don’t want to harm your father, I want to do him honor. If you don’t let us pass my men will kill you,” said Fear Dubh.

“I will not let you pass so long as I’m alive before you,” said Fialan.

The men faced him; and if they did Fialan kept his place, and a battle commenced, the like of which was never seen before that day. Fialan went through the army as a hawk through a flock of sparrows on a March morning, till he killed every man except Fear Dubh. Fear Dubh told him again to leave the ford, he didn’t want to harm his father.

“Oh!” said Fialan, “I know well what you want.”

“If you don’t leave that place I’ll make you leave it!” said Fear Dubh. Then they closed in combat; and such a combat was never seen before between any two warriors. They made springs to rise through the centre of hard gray rocks, cows to cast their calves whether they had them or not. All the horses of the country were racing about and neighing in dread and fear, and all created things were terrified at the sound and clamor of the fight, till the weapons of Fear Dubh went to pieces in the struggle, and Fialan made two halves of his own sword.

Now they closed in wrestling. In the first round Fialan put Fear Dubh to his knees in the hard bottom of the river; the second round he put him to his hips, and the third, to his shoulders.

“Now,” said he, “I have you,” giving him a stroke of the half of his sword, which cut the head off him.

Then Fialan went to the door of the castle and told his father what he had done.

Fin chewed his thumb again, and knew what other danger was coming. “My son,” said he to Fialan, “Fear Dubh has a younger brother more powerful than he was; that brother is coming against us now with greater forces than those which you have destroyed.”

As soon as Fialan heard these words he hurried to the ford, and waited till the second army came up. He destroyed this army as he had the other, and closed with the second brother in a fight fiercer and more terrible than the first; but at last he thrust him to his armpits in the hard bottom of the river and cut off his head.

Then he went to the castle, and told his father what he had done. A third time Fin chewed his thumb, and said: “My son, a third army more to be dreaded than the other two is coming now to destroy us, and at the head of it is the youngest brother of Fear Dubh, the most desperate and powerful of the three.”

Again Fialan rushed off to the ford; and, though the work was greater than before, he left not a man of the army alive. Then he closed with the youngest brother of Fear Dubh, and if the first and second battles were terrible this was more terrible by far; but at last he planted the youngest brother up to his armpits in the hard bottom of the river, and swept the head off him.

Now, after the heat and struggle of combat Fialan was in such a rage that he lost his mind from fury, not having any one to fight against; and if the whole world had been there before him he would have gone through it and conquered it all.

But having no one to face him he rushed along the river-bank, tearing the flesh from his own body. Never had such madness been seen in any created being before that day.

Diarmuid came now and knocked at the door of the castle, having the dog Bran with him, and asked Fin what had caused him to raise the cry of distress.

“Oh, Diarmuid,” said Fin, “we are all fastened in here to be killed. Fialan has destroyed three armies, and Fear Dubh with his two brothers. He is raging now along the bank of the river; you must not go near him, for he would tear you limb from limb. At this moment he wouldn’t spare me, his own father; but after a while he will cease from raging and die down; then you can go. The mother of Fear Dubh is coming, and will soon be at the ford. She is more violent, more venomous, more to be dreaded, a greater warrior than her sons. The chief weapon she has are the nails on her fingers; each nail is seven perches long, of the hardest steel on earth. She is coming in the air at this moment with the speed of a hawk, and she has a kŭŕan (a small vessel), with liquor in it, which has such power that if she puts three drops of it on the mouths of her sons they will rise up as well as ever; and if she brings them to life there is nothing to save us.

“Go to the ford; she will be hovering over the corpses of the three armies to know can she find her sons, and as soon as she sees them she will dart down and give them the liquor. You must rise with a mighty bound upon her, dash the kŭŕan out of her hand and spill the liquor.

“If you can kill her save her blood, for nothing in the world can free us from this place and open the door of the castle but the blood of the old hag. I’m in dread you’ll not succeed, for she is far more terrible than all her sons together. Go now; Fialan is dying away, and the old woman is coming; make no delay.”

Diarmuid hurried to the ford, stood watching a while; then he saw high in the air something no larger than a hawk. As it came nearer and nearer he saw it was the old woman. She hovered high in the air over the ford. At last she saw her sons, and was swooping down, when Diarmuid rose with a bound into the air and struck the vial a league out of her hand.

The old hag gave a shriek that was heard to the eastern world, and screamed: “Who has dared to interfere with me or my sons?”

“I,” answered Diarmuid; “and you’ll not go further till I do to you what has been done to your sons.”

The fight began; and if there ever was a fight, before or since, it could not be more terrible than this one; but great as was the power of Diarmuid he never could have conquered but for Bran the dog.

The old woman with her nails stripped the skin and flesh from Diarmuid almost to the vitals. But Bran tore the skin and flesh off the old woman's back from her head to her heels.

From the dint of blood-loss and fighting, Diarmuid was growing faint. Despair came on him, and he was on the point of giving way, when a little robin flew near to him, and sitting on a bush, spoke, saying:

"Oh, Diarmuid, take strength; rise and sweep the head off the old hag, or Fin and the Fenians of Erin are no more."

Diarmuid took courage, and with his last strength made one great effort, swept the head off the old hag and caught her blood in a vessel. He rubbed some on his own wounds, — they were cured; then he cured Bran.

Straightway he took the blood to the castle, rubbed drops of it on the door, which opened, and he went in.

All laughed with joy at the rescue. He freed Fin and his men by rubbing the blood on the chairs; but when he came as far as Conan Maol the blood gave out.

All were going away. "Why should you leave me here after you;" cried Conan Maol, "I would rather die at once than stay here for a lingering death. Why don't you, Oscar, and you, Gol MacMorna, come and tear me out of this place; anyhow you'll be able to drag the arms out of me and kill me at once; better that than leave me to die alone."

Oscar and Gol took each a hand, braced their feet against his feet, put forth all their strength and brought him standing; but if they did, he left all the skin and much of the flesh from the back of his head to his heels on the floor behind him. He was covered with blood, and by all accounts was in a terrible condition, bleeding and wounded.

Now there were sheep grazing near the castle. The Fenians ran out, killed and skinned the largest and best of the flock, and clapped the fresh skin on Conan’s back; and such was the healing power in the sheep, and the wound very fresh, that Conan’s back healed, and he marched home with the rest of the men, and soon got well; and if he did, they sheared off his back wool enough every year to make a pair of stockings for each one of the Fenians of Erin, and for Fin himself.

And that was a great thing to do and useful, for wool was scarce in Erin in those days. Fin and his men lived pleasantly and joyously for some time; and if they didn’t, may we.

14

FIN MACCUMHAIL AND THE KNIGHT OF THE FULL AXE

There was a day when Fin went on an expedition by himself. He walked out to his currochán on the seashore, gave it a kick that sent it out nine leagues from land, then with a spring he jumped into the boat and rowed over the sea.

After he had gone some distance he saw a giant coming towards him, walking through the water, which did not reach his knees. Looking up, Fin could see nothing between the head of the giant and the sky.

With one step the giant was in front of Fin, and it seemed that he and his boat would be lost in a moment between the legs of the terrible monster.

“Poor, little helpless creature! what brings you here in my way?” asked the giant. He was just going to lay hold of the boat and toss it far off to one side, when Fin called out:

“Won’t you give fair play; just let me put foot on solid land, and see what will happen. Don’t attack me here; I’m not afraid to meet you once I have earth for my two feet to stand on.”

“If that is all you want I can take you to land very soon.” And seizing the boat as he would a grass-blade, the giant drew it to the shore of the sea opposite to that from which Fin started, and in front of his own castle. “What will you do now?” asked the giant.

“I’ll fight with you,” said Fin.

The giant brought out his battle-axe, which had a blade seven acres in size. Fin was ready with his sword, and now began a most terrible battle.

Fin faced the giant, slashing at him with his sword, and when the giant made an offer of the axe at him, Fin would dart to one side; and when the axe missing him struck the ground, it went into the handle. The giant was a long time striving to know could he draw out the axe; and while at this Fin ran behind and cut steps with his sword into the leg of his enemy; and by the time the giant had the axe out of the ground, Fin was ready for him again and in front of him, striking and vexing him with his sword. It was another long while till a blow came down; and when the axe went into the ground again, Fin ran behind a second time, cut more steps in the leg and body of the giant, so as to reach his neck and cut the head off him.

When the axe was coming to the ground the third time, Fin slipped and fell under one corner of it, and between the feet of the giant, who closed his legs with a clap that was heard to the end of the Western World. He thought to catch Fin; but Fin was too quick for him, and though badly hurt he was able to cut more steps and climb to the neck of the giant. With one blow he swept the head off him, — and a big head it was; by all accounts as broad as the moon.

The battle was fought in front of the giant’s castle. Fin was terribly wounded; the axe had cut that deep that his bowels were to be seen. He dropped at the side of the giant, and lay helpless on the ground. After the fall of the giant twelve women came out of his castle, and when they drew near and saw him dead they laughed from joy; but seeing Fin with his wound they began to mourn.

“Oh, then,” said Fin, “is it making sport of me you are after the evil day that I’ve had?”

“Indeed it is not. We are twelve daughters of kings, stolen from our fathers. We saw the giant fall, and came here to look at him dead; we grieve for you and mourn for the sorrow that is on you, but we are so glad the giant is killed that we cannot help laughing."

"Well," said Fin, "if you mourn for me and are glad that I have killed the giant, will you carry me to my currochán, lay me in it, and push it out to sea? The waves may bear me home, and I care for nothing else if only one day my bones may come to land in Erin."

The twelve women took him up carefully and put him in the boat, and when the tide came they pushed it out to sea.

Fin lay in the bottom of the boat barely alive. It floated along, and he was borne over the waves. Hither and thither went the boat, till at last one day a blackbird came down on the body of Fin MacCumhail, and began to pick at his entrails. The blackbird said:

"Many a long day have I watched and waited for this chance, and glad am I to have it now."

That moment the blackbird turned into a little man not more than three feet high. Then he said: "I was under a Druidic spell, to be a blackbird till I should get three bites of fat from the entrails of Fin MacCumhail. I have followed you everywhere; have watched you in battle and hunt, on sea and land, but never have I been able to get the chance till this day. Now I have it, I have also the power to make you well again."

He put Fin's entrails into their proper place, rubbed him with an ointment that he had, and Fin was well as ever.

The little man, who said his name was Ridiri na lan tur (Knight of the Full Axe) had a small axe, his only weapon. As they floated along he said to Fin: "I wish to show you some strange things, such as you have never seen in Erin. We are near a country where the king's daughter is to be married to-night. We will prevent the ceremony."

"Oh no," said Fin, "I would rather go to my own home."

"Never mind," said the little man, "nothing can harm you in my company; come with me. This is a wonderful king, and he has a wonderful daughter. It’s a strange country, and I want to show you the place. We’ll tell him that you are Fin MacCumhail, monarch of Erin; that we have been shipwrecked, and ask for a night’s shelter.”

Fin consented at last, and with the Knight of the Full Axe landed, drew the boat on shore, and went to the king’s castle. There was noise and tumult; great crowds of people had come to do honor to the king’s daughter. Never before had such preparations been made in that kingdom.

The Knight of the Full Axe knocked at the door, and asked admission for himself and Fin MacCumhail, monarch of Erin, shipwrecked on that shore. (The country was north of Erin, far out in the sea.)

The attendants said: “No strangers may enter here, but there is a great house further on; go there and welcome.”

The house to which they were directed was twenty-one miles long, ten miles wide, and about five miles distant from the castle; inhabited by the strangest men in the world, body-guards of the king, fed from the king’s house, and a terrible feeding it was, — human flesh. All strangers who came to the king’s castle were sent to that house, where the guards tore them to pieces and ate them up.

These guards had to be fed well; if not they would devour the whole country.

With Fin and the Knight of the Full Axe there went a messenger, who was careful not to go near the house; he pointed it out from a distance, and ran home.

Fin and the knight knocked at the door. When it was opened all inside laughed; as they laughed, Fin could see their hearts and livers they were so glad. The Knight of the Full Axe asked, “Why do you laugh in this way?”

“Oh,” answered they, “we laugh because you are so small you’ll not make a mouthful for one of us.”

The guards barred the door and put a prop against it. Now the knight put a second prop against the door; the guards asked, “Why do you do that?”

“I do it so none of you may escape me,” answered the knight. Then seizing two of the largest of the guards, one in each hand, he used them as clubs and killed the others with them. He ran the length of the house, striking right and left, till he walloped the life out of all that was in it, but the two. To them he said: “I spare you to clean out the house, and make the place fit for the monarch of Erin to spend the night in. Bring rushes, and make ready to receive Fin MacCumhail.”

And from wherever they got them, they brought two baskets of rushes, each basket as big as a mountain, and spread litter on the ground two feet deep through the whole house; and then at the knight’s command they brought a pile of turf, and made a grand fire.

Late in the evening the king’s attendants brought food, which they left near the house of the guards; these monsters were fed twice a day, morning and evening. To their great surprise the attendants saw the bodies of the dead giants piled up outside the house; they ran off quickly to tell the news.

Now the Knight of the Full Axe sat by the fire. The two guards that he had spared tried to chat and be agreeable; but the knight snapped at them and said: “What company are you for the monarch of Erin?” Then he caught the two, squeezed the life out of them, and threw them on the pile outside.

“Now,” said the knight to Fin, “there is no suitable food for you; I must get you something good to eat from the castle.”

So off he started, reached the castle quickly, knocked at the door, and demanded the best of food, saying, “‘Tis fine treatment you are giving the monarch of Erin to-night!”

They trembled at the voice of the little man, and without words or delay gave him the best they had in the castle. He carried it back and placed it before Fin. “Now,” said he, “they have given us no wine; we must have wine, and that of the best.”

“Oh, we have no need of wine!” said Fin; but off went the knight.

Again he demanded supplies at the castle. He took a hogshead of the best wine, threw it over his shoulder, and, as he hurried out, he struck a jamb off the door and swept it along with the hogshead.

"Now," said the knight, after they had eaten and drunk, "'tis too bad for the monarch of Erin to sleep on rushes; he should have the best bed in the land."

"Oh, trouble yourself no further," said Fin; "better sleep on rushes than all this noise."

But the knight would listen to nothing; away he went to the castle, and shouted: "Give me the best bed in this place! I want it for Fin MacCumhail, the monarch of Erin."

They gave him the bed in a moment. With hurried steps he was back, and said to Fin: "Rest on this bed. Now I'll stop the wedding of the princess; you may take her to Erin if you like."

"Oh, that would not be right! I am well as I am," said Fin, who was getting in dread of the knight himself.

"No, you'd better have the princess," and off rushed the knight. He entered the castle. All were in terror; hither and thither they hurried, not knowing what to do. The Knight of the Full Axe seized the princess. "The monarch of Erin is a better man than your bridegroom," said he; and clapping her under his arm, away he went. Not a man had the courage to stir.

All was confusion and fear in the king's castle. The princess was gone and no one could save her. All were in terrible dread, knowing what had been done at the long house.

At last an old hag, one of the queen's waiting-women, said: "I'll go and see what has become of the princess. I'll go on the chimney and look down."

Off ran the hag, and never rested till she was on the top of the chimney, sticking down her head to know what could she see. The chimney was wide, for the king’s guards had cooked all their food below on the fire. The Knight of the Full Axe was looking up at the time and saw the two eyes staring down at him.

“Go on out of that,” cried he, flinging his axe; which stuck in the old woman’s forehead. Off she rushed to the castle. She had seen nothing of the princess; all she knew was that a little man was sitting by the fire warming himself, that he had thrown his axe at her, and it had stuck in her forehead.

At daylight the knight spoke to Fin, who rose at once. “Now,” said he, “I have no strength left; all my strength is in the axe. While I had that I could do anything, now I can do nothing. We are in great danger; but there is such dread of us on the people here that we may mend matters yet. Do you put on the dress of a leech, get herbs and vials, and pretend you have great skill in healing. Go to the castle, and say you can take the axe out of the old hag’s head. No man there can do that without killing her; she will die the minute it is drawn. Get at her, seize the axe, pull it out, and with it you will have the greatest power on earth.”

Fin went to the castle, and said: “I am a great doctor. I can take the axe out of the old woman’s head without trouble.”

They took him to the hag, who was sitting upright in bed; her head was so sore she couldn’t lie down. He felt her head around the axe, sent the people away; when they were gone he took hold of the handle. With one snap he made two halves of the old woman’s head. Fin ran out with the axe, leaving the old hag dead behind him. He never stopped till he came where he had left the knight.

Fin MacCumhail was now the strongest man on earth, and the knight the weakest. “You may keep the axe,” said the little man; “I shall not envy you, but will go with you and you will protect me.”

“No,” said Fin, “it shall never be said that I took the axe from you, though I know its value and feel its power.”

The knight was glad to get back his axe, and now the two set out for Erin. Fin kicked the boat three leagues from land, and with a bound they both came down in it, and floated on till they saw the coast of Erin. Then the little man said:

“I must leave you now. Though of your kin, I cannot land in Erin. But if you need me at any time you have only to look over your right shoulder, call my name, and you will see me before you.”

Now Fin sprang ashore; he had been absent a year and more, and no man knew where he was while gone. All thought him lost. Great was the gladness when Fin came home, and told the Fenians of Erin of what he had seen and what he had done.

15

GILLA NA GRAKIN AND FIN MACCUMHAIL

There was a blacksmith in Dun Kinealy beyond Killybegs, and he had two young men serving him whose names were Césa MacRi na Tulach and Lun Dubh MacSmola.

When their time was up the young men settled with the blacksmith and took their pay of him. After they had eaten breakfast in the morning they went away together.

When they had gone some distance from the house they changed their gait, so that when they took one step forward they took two backwards; and when evening came they were not five perches away from the house where they had eaten breakfast in the morning.

Then one said to the other: “I suppose what is on one of us is on the other.”

“What’s that?” asked the first.

“We are both in love with Scéhide ni Wánanan.”

“That is true,” said the other, “we are both in love with the blacksmith’s maid.”

When this was said they turned and went back to the house. The blacksmith welcomed them, and was glad.

“You need not welcome us,” said they; “we have not come back to you to seek hire; but we are both in love with Scéhide ni Wánanan, and you’ll have to settle the matter for us."

"Well," said the blacksmith, "I can do that. We'll open the two doors of the forge, and let you and the maiden go in and stand in the middle of the place. Then do you two go out, one at each door, and the man she'll follow will have her."

The three came in, — one man went out at each door of the forge; Scéhide followed Lun Dubh.

When he saw this Césa spoke up, and said: "I'm willing to leave her with you; but turn back a moment here to me, for the word that'll be between us."

Lun Dubh turned back into the forge, and Césa said: "Put your finger on this anvil."

Lun Dubh put his finger on the anvil. Césa, catching up a good spike, which the old blacksmith had made, and a hammer drove the spike through the finger of Lun Dubh, fastening him to the anvil.

"Now," said Lun Dubh to Césa; "let me go free, and do you take Scéhide; but I must have the first blow on you in battle or war, or wherever else I meet you in the world."

"I will give you that," said Césa. So he freed his comrade from the anvil. The young men parted from each other, — Lun Dubh went one way alone, and Césa another with Scéhide ni Wánanan.

As Césa went along he bought a skin at every house where he could find one, until he had enough to make clothes in which to disguise himself; for he was in dread of Lun Dubh, on account of the first blow which he had the right to strike when they met.

He put on the skin clothes, and changed his name to Gilla na Grakin (the fellow of the skins).

Gilla and his wife held on their way till they came to the castle of Fin MacCumhail; and the time they came there was no one in the place but women.

"Where is Fin MacCumhail with his men to-day?" asked Gilla na Grakin.

"They are all out hunting," said the women.

Now Gilla saw that the castle stood with open door facing the wind, and turning again to the women he asked: "Why do you have the door of the castle to the wind?"

"When Fin and his men are at home and the wind comes in at the door, they all go out, take hold of the castle and turn it around till the door is on the sheltered side."

When Gilla na Grakin heard this he went out, put his hands to the castle, and turned it around till the door was on the sheltered side.

In the evening when Fin and the Fenians of Erin were coming from the hunt, they saw the castle turned around, and Fin said to the men: "I'm afraid we haven't half enough of game for the supper of the strangers who have come to visit us to-day, there are so many of them that they have turned the castle around."

When they came home they saw there was no man there but Gilla na Grakin, and they wondered at the work he had done.

Gilla stood before Fin, and said: "Do you want a serving man?"

"I do indeed," said Fin.

"What wages will you give me for a year and a day?" asked Gilla.

"What yourself will ask," replied Fin.

"I won't ask much," said Gilla; "five pounds for myself, and a room in the castle for my wife."

"You shall have both," said Fin.

"I'm your man now," said Gilla. The whole company spent the first part of that night in ease, the second in sport, and the third in a short sleep.

The next morning all the Fenians of Erin were going to hunt, as the day before, and Fin said to Gilla na Grakin: "Will you take any man to help you?"

"I'll take no man with me but myself; and do you let me go in one part of the country alone, and go yourself with all your men in another part."

"Well," said Fin, "will you find dry glens of ridges, or go in deep boggy places where there is danger of drowning?"

"I will go in deep boggy places."

All left the castle to hunt. Fin and the Fenians of Erin went in one direction, and Gilla na Grakin in another, and hunted all day.

When they came home in the evening Gilla na Grakin had a thousand times more game than Fin and all his men together.

When Fin saw this he was glad to have such a good man, and was pleased beyond measure with Gilla na Grakin. The whole company spent that night as they had the night before, — in ease and sport and sleep.

Next day Conan Maol was outside with Fin, and he said: "Gilla na Grakin will destroy the Fenians of Erin and put you and all of us to death, unless you banish him in some way from this castle."

"Well;" said Fin to Conan Maol, "I've never had a good man but you wanted me to put him away. And how could I banish such a man as this if I tried?"

"The way to banish him," said Conan Maol, "is to send him to the king of Lochlin to take from him the pot of plenty that's never without meat, but has always enough in it to feed the whole world, and bring that pot to this castle."

Fin called Gilla na Grakin, and said: "You'll have to go for me now to the king of Lochlin, and get from him the pot of plenty that is never without meat, and bring it here to me."

"Well," said Gilla, "as long as I'm in your service I can't refuse to do your work."

So away went Gilla. He took a glen at a step and a hill at a leap till he came to the shore of the sea, where he caught up two sticks, put one across the other, then gave them a tip of the hand, and a fine vessel rose out of the two pieces of wood.

Gilla na Grakin went on board the vessel, hoisted the sails, and off he went in a straight line. The music he heard on his way was the whistling of eels in the sea and the calling of gulls in the air, till he came under the king's castle in Lochlin. When he came, there were hundreds of ships standing near the shore, and he had to anchor outside them all; then he stepped from ship to ship till he stood on land.

What should there be at the time he landed but a great feast in the castle of the king. So Gilla went to the front of the castle and stood outside at the door; but he could go no further for the crowd, and no one looked at him. At last he shouted: “This is a very hospitable feast, and you are a people of fine manners not to ask a stranger is he hungry or thirsty.”

“You are right,” said the king, who turned to the people and said: “Give the pot of plenty to the stranger till he eats his fill.”

The people obeyed the king, and when Gilla na Grakin got hold of the pot he made for the ship, and never stopped till he was on board. He put the pot in a safe place below. Then standing on deck he said to himself: “It is no use to take the pot by my swiftness unless I take it by my strength.”

So he turned and went to land again. All the heroes and champions of the king of Lochlin and his whole army were ready to fight, but if they were so was Gilla na Grakin.

When he came up to the army he began and went through it as a hawk goes through a flock of swallows, till he made one heap of their heads and another heap of their weapons. Then he went to the castle, caught the king in one hand and the queen in the other, and putting them under his two arms brought them out in front of the castle and killed each with the other.

All was quiet and still at the castle. There wasn't a man alive to stand up against Gilla na Grakin, who went to his ship, raised the sails, and started for Erin. All he heard was the spouting of whales, the whistling of eels, the calling of gulls, and the roar of the wind, as the ship rushed back to the place where he had made it in Erin. When he reached that place he gave the ship a tip of his hand, and there before him was the pot of plenty, and with it the two sticks which he had found on the shore of the sea when he was going to the castle of the king of Lochlin.

He left the sticks where he found them, put the pot on his back, and hurried away to the castle of Fin MacCumhail.

Fin and all the Fenians of Erin were glad to see Gilla na Grakin, and Fin thanked him for the work he had done.

The first part of that night they spent in ease, the second in sport, the third in a hurried sleep.

Next morning they rose and had breakfast from the pot. From that day out they hunted for pleasure alone. They had enough and to spare from the pot of plenty.

Another day Conan Maol was outside the castle with Fin, and he said: “Gilla na Grakin will destroy you and me and all of us unless we find some way of putting him to death.”

“What do you want him to do now?” asked Fin.

“Let him go,” said Conan Maol, to the king of the Flood, “and bring back the cup that is never drained.”

Fin went to the castle and called up Gilla na Grakin. “I want you to go now,” said he, “to the king of the Flood, and bring me his cup that is never dry.”

When he heard Fin’s words, Gilla went off without delay; he took a glen at a step, and a hill at a leap, till he came to the sea. There he took up two sticks of wood, threw one across the other, and they became a fine large ship.

Away he sailed in a straight line, listening as he went to the spouting of whales, the whistling of eels and the calling of gulls, and never stopped till he anchored outside the castle of the king of the Flood. There was many a ship at land before him, so he stopped outside them all, and stepped from ship to ship till he reached the shore.

The king of the Flood was giving a great feast that day. Gilla na Grakin went to the castle, but could not enter, so great was the throng. He stood at the door a while, and then called out, “You are an ill-mannered people, not to ask a stranger is he hungry or dry!”

The king heard these words, and said, “You are right;” and turning to his people said, “Give this stranger the cup till he drinks his fill.”

As soon as ever Gilla got the cup in his hands, he made for the ship and never stopped till he put the cup in the hold of the vessel. Then he came on deck, and thought, “It’s no use to take the cup with my swiftness, unless I take it with my strength.”

So back he turned to the castle, and when he reached land, the whole army and all the champions of the king of the Flood stood ready to oppose him. When he came up, he went through them as a hawk through a flock of swallows. He made a heap of their heads in one place, and a heap of their weapons in another, and then went back to the ship without thinking of the king and the queen of the Flood — forgot them.

He raised his sails and went away, listening to music on the sea till he touched land in Erin. Then he took the cup in one hand, struck the ship with the other, turned it into the two sticks which he had found on the shore, and travelled on till he came to the castle of Fin MacCumhail and gave up the cup.

“You’re the best man I have ever had,” said Fin; “and I give you my thanks and praise for the work you have done.”

In the castle they spent the first part of that night in ease, the second in sport, and the third in a hurried sleep.

Next morning said Fin to the Fenians of Erin, “We needn’t leave the house now unless we like. We have the best of eating from the pot, and the best of drinking from the cup. The one is never empty, and the other is never dry, and we’ll go hunting in future only to pass the time for ourselves.”

One day Conan Maol was out with Fin a third time, and said he: “If we don’t find some way to kill Gilla na Grakin, he’ll destroy you and me, and all the Fenians of Erin.”

“Well,” asked Fin, “where do you want to send him this time?”

“I want him to go to the eastern world, and find out what was it that left the Gruagach with but the one hair on his head.”

Fin went to the castle, called up Gilla na Grakin, and said:

“You must go for me now to the eastern world, to know what was it that left the Gruagach with the one hair on his head.”

“Well,” said Gilla, “I never knew that you wanted to put me to death till this minute; I know it now. But still so long as I’m in your service I can’t refuse to do your work.”

Then Gilla na Grakin stepped out of the castle door, and away he went to the eastern world. He took a glen at a step, a hill at a leap, and lochs and seas at a bound till he entered the Gruagach’s house in the eastern world.

“What is your errand to me,” asked the Gruagach, “and why have you come to my house?”

“I have come,” said Gilla, “to know what was it that left you with the one hair on your head.”

“Sit down here and rest yourself to-night, and if you are a good man, I’ll tell you to-morrow,” said the Gruagach.

When bedtime came the Gruagach said: “There is an iron harrow there beyond, with teeth on both sides of it; go now and stretch yourself on that harrow, and sleep till morning.”

When daylight came, the Gruagach was on his feet, and asked Gilla was he up.

“I am,” said he. After they had eaten breakfast, the Gruagach went to another room and brought out two iron loops. One of these he put on Gilla’s neck, and the other on his own, and then they began to jerk the loops and pull one another and they fought till late in the afternoon; neither had the upper hand, but if one man was weaker than the other, that man was Gilla na Grakin.

"And now," thought he to himself, "the Gruagach will take my life, and my wife will never know what became of me." The thought gave him strength and power, so up he sprang, and with the first pull he gave he put the Gruagach to his knees in the ground, with the second he put him to his waist, with the third to his shoulders.

"Indeed," said Gilla, "it would be easier for me to strike the head off you now, than to let you go; but if I took your head I shouldn't have my master's work done."

"If you let me go," said the Gruagach, "I'll tell you what happened to me, and why I have but the one hair on my head."

Gilla set him free, then the two sat down together, and the Gruagach began: —

"I was living here, without trouble or annoyance from any man, till one day a hare ran in, made an unseemly noise under that table there, and insulted us. I was here myself at the time with my wife and my son and my daughter; and we had a hound, a beagle, and a black horse.

"The hare ran out from under the table, and I made after the hare, and my wife and son and daughter, with the horse and the two dogs, followed me.

"When the hare was on the top of a hill, I had almost hold of his hind legs, but I never caught him.

"When night was near, the hare came to the walls of a great castle, and as he was jumping over, I hit him a blow on the hind leg with a stick, but in he went to the castle.

"Out came an old hag, and screamed, 'Who is it that worried the pet of this castle!'

“I said it was myself that did it. Then she faced me, and made at me and the fight began between us. We fought all that night, and the next day till near evening. Then she turned around and pulled a Druidic rod out of herself, ran from me and struck my wife and son and daughter and the two hounds and the horse with the Druidic rod and made stones of them.

“Then she turned on me again and there wasn’t but the one hair left on my head from the desperate fighting, and she looked at me, and said:

“‘I’ll let you go this time but I’ll give you a good payment before you leave.’ She caught hold of me then in the grip of her one hand and with the other she took a sharp knife and stripped all the skin and flesh off my back, from my waist to my heels. Then, taking the skin of a rough shaggy goat, she clapped it on to me in place of my own skin and flesh, and told me to go my way.

“I left the old hag and the castle behind, but the skin grew to me and I wear it to this day.” And here the Gruagach turned to Gilla na Grakin and showed him the goatskin growing on his body in place of his own skin and flesh.

“Well,” said Gilla, when he saw the shaggy back of the Gruagach, “does that hare come here to insult you yet?”

“He does, indeed,” said the Gruagach, “but I haven’t taken a bite nor a sup off that table since his first visit.” “Let us sit down there now,” said Gilla na Grakin.

They sat down at the table, but they were not sitting long till the hare came, repeated the insult, and ran out.

Gilla na Grakin made after the hare, and the Gruagach after Gilla.

Gilla ran as fast as ever his legs could carry him, and he was often that near that he used to stretch his arm out after the hare, and almost catch him; but he never touched him till near night, when he was clearing the wall. Then Gilla caught him by the two hind legs, and, swinging him over his own shoulder, dashed him against the wall, tore the head from the body, and sent it bounding across the courtyard of the castle.

Out rushed an old hag that minute. She had but one tooth and that in her upper jaw, and she used this tooth for a crutch.

“Who has killed the pet of this castle!” shrieked she.

“It was I that killed him,” said Gilla na Grakin. Then the two made at one another, — the hag and Gilla. They fought all that night and next day. With their fighting they made the hard rocks soft, and water to spring out through the middle of them. All the land of the eastern world was trembling as the evening drew near, and if one of the two was getting weak from the struggle and tired, that one was Gilla na Grakin. When he saw this he thought to himself, “Isn’t it a pity if an old hag puts me to death, me, who has put to death many a strong hero.”

At this thought he sprang up and seized the hag. With the first thrust which he gave her into the ground he put her to the knees, with the second to her waist, with the third to her shoulders.

“Now,” said the old hag to Gilla, “don’t kill me, and I’ll give you the rod of druidism (enchantment), which I have between my skin and flesh.”

“Oh, you wicked old wretch! I’ll have that after your death, and no thanks to you,” said Gilla. With that he swept the head off of her with a single blow.

Then the head jumped at the body, and tried to get its place again, but Gilla stood between them, and kept the head off till the body was cold. Then he took out the rod of enchantment from between the skin and the flesh, and threw the body and the head of the old hag aside.

The Gruagach came up, and Gilla said, “Show me now the stones which were once your wife and children, your dogs and your horse.”

The Gruagach went with him to the stones. Gilla struck each with the rod, and the wife, the son, the daughter, the hounds and the horse of the Gruagach were alive again.

When this was done, Gilla turned to the Gruagach, struck the goatskin from his body, and gave him his own skin and flesh back again with the power of the rod.

When all were restored, they started for the Gruagach's house, and when there the Gruagach said to Gilla na Grakin, —

"Stay here with me till you get your rest. We won't leave this place for a year and a day, and then I'll go with you to the castle of Fin MacCumhail and give witness to Fin of all that has happened to me and all you have done."

"Oh," said Gilla na Grakin, "I can't stay to rest, I must go now!"

The Gruagach was so glad that he had got back all his family and his own flesh that he followed Gilla, and they set out for the castle of Fin MacCumhail in Erin.

They took a glen at a step, a hill at a leap, and the sea at a bound.

Conan Maol, who was outside the castle when they came in sight, ran in and said to Fin, "Gilla na Grakin and the Gruagach are coming, and they'll destroy all that's about the castle, and all that's inside as well!"

"If they do," said Fin, "it's your own fault, and you have no one to blame but yourself."

"Well," said Conan Maol, "I'll lie down here in the cradle, and put a steel cap on my head."

Conan lay down in the cradle. Gilla and the Gruagach came into the castle. The Gruagach sat down near the cradle. Then he said to Fin, "I came here with Gilla na Grakin to bear witness to you of all that has happened to me, and of all he has done."

Then he told Fin the whole story of what they had gone through and what they had done.

With that the Gruagach put his hand behind him and asked: "How old is this child lying here in the cradle?"

"Only three years," said Fin's wife.

Then the Gruagach took the steel cap between his thumb and fingers, thinking it was the head of the child, and squeezed till the steel cracked with a loud snap, but the child didn't cry.

"Oh, there's the making of a man in him. If he gets age he'll be a champion," said the Gruagach.

Next day the Gruagach left Fin's castle and went to his own place and family.

Gilla na Grakin's time was now up, for he had served a year and a day.

Fin went out to wash himself in a spring near the castle, and when he looked into the spring a spirit spoke up out of the water to him and said:

"You must give back his cup to the king of the Flood, or you must give him battle in its place."

Fin went back to the castle, lamenting the state he was in.

Conan Maol said, "You look like a sorrowful man."

"Why shouldn't I be?" said Fin. "A spirit spoke to me from the spring outside, and told me I must give back the cup to the king of the Flood, or give him battle in place of it. Now Gilla's time is up, and I don't know what to do."

"Well," said Conan Maol, "do you go now and speak to him, and maybe he'll do you a good turn."

Fin went to Gilla na Grakin, and told him what happened at the spring.

"My time is up, as you know," said Gilla, "and I cannot serve on time that is past; but if you want me to go, you must watch my wife Scéhide ni Wánanan on Friday night; and in the middle of the night, when she is combing her hair, any request you'll make of her she can't refuse. The request you'll make is that she'll let me go with you to the king of the Flood, to take the cup to his castle and bring it back again."

Fin watched the time closely, and when the middle of Friday night came, he looked through a hole in the door and saw Scéhide combing her hair. Then he asked his request of her.

“Well,” answered she, “I can’t refuse, but you must promise me to bring back Gilla, dead or alive.”

Fin promised her that.

Next morning Fin MacCumhail and Gilla na Grakin set out for the castle of the king of the Flood, taking the cup with them.

They walked over Erin till they came to the shore of the sea. There Gilla caught up two pieces of wood, and putting one across the other, struck them a tip of his fingers, and out of them rose a fine ship. He and Fin went on board, sailed away, and never stopped till they cast anchor outside all the ships, under the castle of the king of the Flood. The two walked on from deck to deck till they stood on shore.

They went a short distance from the castle of the king and pitched a tent.

Said Gilla to Fin, “Now we are hungry, and I must find food for you and myself.”

So Gilla na Grakin went to the castle and asked food of the king of the Flood.

“You’ll get nothing to eat from me. I have no food in this place to give you or the like of you; but there is a wild bull in the wood outside. Find him: if you kill him, you’ll have something to eat; if not you’ll go fasting,” said the king of the Flood to Gilla na Grakin.

Gilla went out to the wood, and when the wild bull saw a man coming towards him he drove his horns into the ground, and put an acre of land over his own back. Then he threw up an oak-tree, roots and all, till it nearly reached the sky, and made at Gilla na Grakin. But if he did, Gilla was ready for him and faced him, and when the bull came up, he caught him by the horns and threw him to the ground; then putting a foot on one horn, he took the other in his two hands, split the bull from muzzle to tail, and made two halves of him.

Gilla carried the carcass to the tent, and when he had taken off the skin he said to Fin, “We have no pot to boil the meat in. Well, I’ll go to the king again.”

So off he went and knocked at the castle door.

“What do you want now?” asked the king.

“I want a pot,” said Gilla, “to boil the wild bull.”

“Well,” said the king, “I have no pot for you but that big pot back in the yard, in which we boil stuff for the pigs. I’ll give you the loan of that if you are able to carry it.”

“It’s good to get that itself from a bad person,” said Gilla na Grakin, and away he went to look for the pot behind the castle.

At last he found it, and when he put it down at the tent he said to Fin, “We have nothing now to boil the pot with, nothing to make a fire.”

Then he went a third time to the castle, knocked at the door, and out came the king. “What do you want now?” asked he.

“Fire to boil the bull.”

“Go to the wood and get firewood for yourself, or do without it. You’ll get no firewood from me,” said the king of the Flood.

Gilla went out, got plenty of wood and boiled the whole bull.

“We are well off now,” said he to Fin; “we have plenty to eat.”

Next morning Gilla na Grakin went to the castle and knocked.

“Who is that?” asked the king, without opening the door.

“I want no chat nor questions from you,” said Gilla, “but get me a breakfast.” “I have no breakfast now,” said the king; “but wait a minute and you’ll get a hot breakfast from me.”

That moment the signal was sounded for the armies of the king of the Flood to take Gilla na Grakin and his master.

When the armies stood ready Gilla began and went through them as a hawk through sparrows. He made one heap of their heads and another of their weapons, — didn’t leave a man living. Then he went into the castle and taking the king of the Flood in one hand and the queen in the other, he killed each of them against the other.

Now all was quiet at the castle. Gilla na Grakin struck the tent and went to the ship with Fin MacCumhail, who had the cup that was never dry.

They raised the sails and went over the sea toward Erin, till they saw a large ship on one side of them.

"If it's going to help us that ship is," said Fin, "'tis all the better for us, but if 'tis going against us she is, that's the bad part of it."

As the ship came near, Gilla na Grakin looked at her sharply, and said to Fin, "I think it's Lun Dubh that's on that ship."

"Well," said Fin, "maybe he'll not know you in a strange dress."

When Lun Dubh came alongside, he called out: "I know you well, and it's not by your dress that I know you, Césa MacRi na Tulach." Then Lun Dubh sprang on deck, raised his hand, struck Gilla, and stretched him dead.

Fin sailed away with the body of Gilla na Grakin, and when he came in sight of the shore of Erin he raised a black flag; for he had promised Gilla's wife to raise a white flag if her husband was well, but a black one if he was dead.

When he came to the shore, Scéhide ni Wánanan was there before him, and she had a large, roomy box. When she saw Fin she said, "You have him dead with you?"

"I have," said Fin.

"What will you do with him now?" asked she.

"I will bury him decently," said Fin.

"You will not," said she; "you will put him in this box."

Then Fin put him in the box. She went aside and got some fresh shamrock and went into the box with Gilla. Then she told Fin to push the box out to sea, and putting down the cover fastened it inside.

Fin pushed the box out into the sea, and away it went driven by wind and waves, till one day Scéhide looked out through a hole and saw two sparrows flying and a dead one between them. The two living sparrows let the dead one down on an island. Soon they rose up again, and the dead one was living.

Said Scéhide to herself, “There might be something on that island that would cure my husband as it cured the dead bird.”

Now the sea put the box in on the island. Scéhide unfastened the cover, came out, and walked around the island. Nothing could she find but a small spring of water in a rock. “It’s in this the cure may be,” thought she, as she looked at the water. Then taking off one of her shoes she put it full of the water, took it to the box, and poured it on Gilla na Grakin. That moment he stood up alive and well. Gilla walked along the shore till he found two pieces of wood. He threw one across the other, gave them a tip of his hand, a fine large ship stood there at the shore, and in it he sailed with Scéhide back to Erin.

When they landed he turned the vessel into two sticks again with a tip of the hand, and set out with his wife for the castle of Fin MacCumhail in TirConal.

They came to the castle of Fin at midnight. Gilla knocked and said, “Put my wages out to me.”

“Well,” said Fin inside, “there is no man, alive or dead, that has wages on me but Gilla na Grakin, and I would rather see that fellow here than the wages of three men.”

“Well, rise up now and you’ll see him,” said Gilla.

Fin rose up, saw his man, gave him his wages with thanks and Gilla departed.

At the break of day they saw a great house before them. A man walked out with a kerchief bound on his head.

When Gilla na Grakin came up, he knew the man, and raising his hand, struck him dead with a blow.

“I have satisfaction on Lun Dubh, now,” said Gilla to the wife. The two went into the house and stayed there, and may be there yet for anything we know. We are the luck and they are the winners.

16

FIN MACCUMHAIL, THE SEVEN BROTHERS, AND THE KING OF FRANCE

When Fin MacCumhail with seven companies of the Fenians of Erin was living at Tara of the Kings, he went hunting one day with the seven companies; and while out on the mountains seven young men came towards him and when they came up and stood before him he asked their names of them.

Each gave his name in turn, beginning with the eldest, and their names were Strong, son of Strength; Wise, son of Wisdom; Builder, son of Builder; Whistler, son of Whistler; Guide, son of Guide; Climber, son of Climber; Thief, son of Thief.

The seven young men pleased Fin; they were looking for service, so he hired them for a year and a day.

When Fin and the Fenians of Erin went home that night from the hunt there was a message at the castle before them from the king of France to Fin MacCumhail and the Fenians of Erin, asking them to come over to him on a most important affair.

Fin held a council straightway and said, "France is a thousand miles from this and the sea between it and Erin; how can we go to the king of France?"

Then Strong, son of Strength, spoke up and said: "What is the use of hiring us if we can't do this work and the like of it? If you'll make a ship here, or in any place, I’ll pull it in the sea.”

“And I,” said Builder, “will make a ship fit for you or any king on earth with one blow of this axe in my hand.”

“That’s what I want,” said Fin, “and now do you make that ship for me.”

“I will,” said Builder.

“Well,” said Strong, “I’ll put your ship in the sea.”

Builder made the ship there at Tara of the Kings and then Strong brought it to the seashore and put it in the water. Fin and the Fenians of Erin went on board, and Guide took the ship from Erin to France.

When Fin and his men went to the king of France he was glad to see them and said:

“I’ll tell you the reason now I asked you here, and the business I have with you. This time three years ago my wife had a son, two years ago a second, one year ago a third, and the neighbors’ wives are thinking she’ll have another child soon. Immediately they were born the three were taken away, and I want you to save the fourth; for we all think it will be taken from us like the other three. When each one of the others was sleeping, a hand came down the chimney to the cradle and took the child away with it up the chimney. There is meat and drink in plenty in that room for you and the Fenians of Erin. My only request is that you’ll watch the child.”

“We’ll do that,” said Fin, and he went into the chamber with men enough to watch and the seven brothers with him. Then the seven said: “Do you and the men go to sleep for yourselves, and we’ll do the watching.” So Fin and the men went to sleep. The child was born early in the evening and put in the cradle. At the dead of night Wise said to Strong: “Now is your time; the hand is near; keep your eye on it.”

Soon he saw the hand coming lower and lower and moving towards the child; and when it was going into the cradle, Strong caught the hand and it drew him up nearly to the top of the chimney. Then he pulled it down to the ashes; again it drew him up.

They were that way all night, — the hand drawing Strong almost to the top of the chimney and out of the house and Strong dragging the hand down to the hearth. They were up and down the chimney till break of day; and every stone in the castle of the king of France was trembling in its place from the struggle.

But at break of day Strong tore from its shoulder the arm with the hand, and there was peace. Now all rose up at the castle. The king came and was glad when he saw the child.

Then Fin spoke up and said: “We have done no good thing yet till we bring back the other three to you.”

Wise spoke up and said: “I know very well where the other three are, and I’ll show you the place.”

So all set out and they followed him to the castle of Mal MacMulcan and there they saw the three sons of the King of France carrying water to MacMulcan to cool the shoulder from which the arm had been torn by Strong.

Then Wise said to Climber: “Now is your time to take the children away; for we can do it without being seen; but if Mal MacMulcan were to see the children going from him, he’d destroy the whole world. But as it is when he finds the children are gone, he has a sister there near himself, and he’ll break her head against the wall of the castle.”

Then Climber took a clew from his pocket and threw it over the walls of the castle, and the walls were so high that no bird of the air could fly over them. Then they fixed a rope ladder on the castle. Wise, Guide, and Climber went up the ladder and at break of day they brought away the three children and gave them to the king of France that morning. And the king of France was so glad when he saw his three sons that he said to Fin: “I will give you your ship full of the most precious stuffs in my kingdom.”

“I will take nothing for myself,” said Fin; “but do you give what you like to my seven young men who have done the work;” and the seven said they wouldn’t take anything while they were serving with him. So Fin took the present from the king of France and set sail for Erin with the Fenians and the seven young men.

While they were on the way to Erin they saw the sea raging after them. Wise, son of Wisdom, said: “That is Mal MacMulcan coming to get satisfaction out of us.”

Then MacMulcan caught hold of the ship by the stern and pulled it down till the masts touched the sea. Strong caught him by the left remaining hand, and the two began to fight, and at last Strong pulled him on to the deck of the ship.

“Our ship will be sunk,” said Wise, “and Fin with the Fenians of Erin and the seven of us will be drowned unless you make a flail out of MacMulcan and thrash the head off his body on the deck of the ship.”

Strong made a flail out of MacMulcan and killed him, and the sea was filled with blood in a minute of time. Then the ship moved on without harm till they came to the same spot in Erin from which they had sailed.

When Fin came to the place where he had hired the seven young men the year and a day were over. He paid them their hire and they left him. Then he came to his own castle at Tara of the Kings.

One day Fin went out walking alone, and he met an old hag by the way. She spoke up to him and asked: “Would you play a game of cards with me?”

“I would,” said Fin, “if I had the means of playing.”

The old hag pulled out a pack of cards and said: “Here you have the means of playing as many games as you like.”

They sat down and played; Fin got the first game on the old woman. Then she said, “Put the sentence on me now.”

“I will not,” said Fin; “I’ll do nothing till we play another game.”

They played again and she won the second game. Then she said to Fin, "You will have to go and bring here for me the head of Curucha na Gras and the sword that guards his castle; and I won't give you leave to take away any of your men with you but one, and he is the worst of them all, — 'Iron back without action,' and the time for your journey is a year and a day. Now what is your sentence on me?" said the old hag.

"You'll put one foot," said Fin, "on the top of my castle in Tara of the Kings, and the other on a hill in Mayo, and you'll stand with your back to the wind and your face to the storm, a sheaf of wheat on the ground before the gate will be all you'll have to eat, and any grain that will be blown out of it, if you catch that you'll have it, and you'll be that way till I come back."

So Fin went away with himself and "Iron back without action." And when they had gone as far as a large wood that was by the roadside, a thick fog came on them, and rain, and they sat down at the edge of the wood and waited. Soon they saw a red-haired boy with a bow and arrows shooting birds, and whenever he hit a bird he used to put the arrow through its two eyes and not put a drop of blood on its feathers.

And when the red boy came near Fin, he drew his bow, sent an arrow through "Iron back without action," and put the life out of him.

When he did that Fin said, "You have left me without any man, though this was the worst of all I have."

"You'd better hire me," said the red boy; "you've lost nothing, for you were without a man when you had that fellow the same as you are now."

So Fin hired the red boy and asked him his name. "I won't tell you that," said he, "but do you put the name on me that'll please yourself."

"Well," said Fin, "since I met you in the rain and the mist I'll call you Misty."

"That'll be my name while I'm with you," said the red boy, "and now we'll cast lots to see which of us will carry the other;" and the lot fell upon

Misty. He raised Fin on his back to carry him, and the first leap he took was six miles, and every step a mile, and he went on without stopping till he was in the Western World. When they came to the castle of Curucha na Gras, Fin and Misty put up a tent for themselves and they were hungry enough after the long road, and Misty said, “I will go and ask Curucha for something to eat.” He went to the castle and put a fighting blow on the door. Curucha came out and Misty asked him for bread.

“I wouldn’t give you the leavings of my pigs,” said Curucha.

Misty turned and left him, but on the way he met the bakers bringing bread from the bake house and he caught all their loaves from them and ran home to Fin. “We have plenty to eat now,” said Misty, “but nothing at all to drink. I must go to Curucha to know will he give us something to drink.”

He went a second time to the castle, put a fighting blow on the door, and out came Curucha.

“What do you want this time?” asked he.

“I want drink for myself and my master, Fin MacCumhail.”

“You’ll get no drink from me. I wouldn’t give you the dirty ditch-water that’s outside my castle.”

Misty turned to go home, but on the way he met twelve boys each carrying the full of his arms of bottles of wine. He took every bottle from them, and it wasn’t long till he was in the tent.

“Now we can eat and drink our fill.”

“We can indeed,” said Fin. Next morning Misty put another fighting blow on the door of the castle. Out flew Curucha with his guardian sword in his hand, and he made at Misty. With the first blow he gave him, he took an ear off his head.

Misty sprang back, drew his bow, and sent an arrow into Curucha’s breast. It flew out through his head and he fell lifeless on the ground. Then Misty drew his knife, cut off the head, and carried the head and the sword to Fin MacCumhail, and Fin was glad to get them both.

“Take the head,” said Misty, “and put it on top of the holly bush that’s out here above us.” Fin put the head on the holly bush, and the minute he put it there the head burnt the bush to the earth, and the earth to the clay.

Then they took the best horse that could be found about Curucha’s castle. Fin sat on the horse, with the sword and head in front of him; and Misty followed behind.

They went their way and never stopped till they came to the place where Misty sent the arrow through “Iron back without action” and killed him. When they came to that spot, Misty asked Fin would he tell him a story, and Fin answered, “I have no story to tell except that we are in the place now where you killed my man.”

“Oh, then,” said Misty, “I’m glad you put that in my mind for I’ll give him back to you now.” So they went and took “Iron back without action” out of the ground; then Misty struck him with a rod of enchantment which he had, and brought life into him again.

Then Misty turned to Fin and said: “I am a brother of the seven boys who went with you to save the children of the king of France. I was too young for action at that time, but my mother sent me here now as a gift to help you and tell you what to do. When you go to the hag she’ll ask you for the sword, but you’ll not give it, you’ll only show it to her. And when she has seen the sword she’ll ask for the head. And you’ll not give the head to her either, you’ll only show it; and when she sees the head, she’ll open her mouth with joy at seeing the head of her brother; and when you see her open her mouth be sure to strike her on the breast with the head; and if you don’t do that, the whole world wouldn’t be able to kill her.”

Then Fin left Misty where he met him and with “Iron back without action” he made for Tara of the Kings.

When he came in front of the old hag she asked him had he the gifts. Fin said he had. She asked for the sword but she didn’t get it, Fin only showed it to her. Then she asked for the head, and when she saw the head, she opened her mouth with delight at seeing the head of her brother.

While she stood there with open mouth gazing, Fin picked out the mark and struck her on the breast with the head. She fell to the ground; they left her there dead and went into the castle.

17

BLACK, BROWN AND GRAY

In a day Fin MacCumhail was near Tara of the Kings, south of Ballyshannon, hunting with seven companies of the Fenians of Erin.

During the day they saw three strange men coming towards them, and Fin said to the Fenians: “Let none of you speak to them, and if they have good manners they’ll not speak to you nor to any man till they come to me.”

When the three men came up, they said nothing till they stood before Fin himself. Then he asked what their names were and what they wanted. They answered: —

“Our names are Dubh, Dun, and Glasán [Black, Brown, and Gray]. We have come to find Fin MacCumhail, chief of the Fenians of Erin, and take service with him.”

Fin was so well pleased with their looks that he brought them home with him that evening and called them his sons. Then he said, “Every man who comes to this castle must watch the first night for me, and since three of you have come together, each will watch one third of the night. You’ll cast lots to see who’ll watch first and second.”

Fin had the trunk of a tree brought, three equal parts made of it, and one given to each of the men.

Then he said, “When each of you begins his watch he will set fire to his own piece of wood, and so long as the wood burns he will watch.”

The lot fell to Dubh to go on the first watch. Dubh set fire to his log, then went out around the castle, the dog Bran with him. He wandered on, going further and further from the castle, and Bran after him. At last he saw a bright light and went towards it. When he came to the place where the light was burning, he saw a large house. He entered the house and when inside saw a great company of most strange looking men, drinking out of a single cup.

The chief of the party, who was sitting on a high place, gave the cup to the man nearest him; and when he had drunk his fill out of it, he passed it to his neighbor, and so on to the last.

While the cup was going the round of the company, the chief said, “This is the great cup that was taken from Fin MacCumhail a hundred years ago; and as much as each man wishes to drink he always gets from it, and no matter how many men there may be, or what they wish for, they always have their fill.”

Dubh sat near the door on the edge of the crowd, and when the cup came to him he drank a little, then slipped out and hurried away in the dark; when he came to the fountain at the castle of Fin MacCumhail, his log was burned.

As the second lot had fallen on Dun, it was now his turn to watch, so he set fire to his log and went out, in the place of Dubh, with the dog Bran after him.

Dun walked on through the night till he saw a fire. He went towards it, and when he had come near he saw a large house, which he entered; and when inside he saw a crowd of strange looking men, fighting. They were ferocious, wonderful to look at, and fighting wildly.

The chief, who had climbed on the crossbeams of the house to escape the uproar and struggle, called out to the crowd below: “Stop fighting now;

for I have a better gift than the one you have lost this night.” And putting his hand behind his belt, he drew out a knife and held it before them, saying: “Here is the wonderful knife, the small knife of division, that was stolen from Fin MacCumhail a hundred years ago, and if you cut on a bone with the knife, you’ll get the finest meat in the world, and as much of it as ever your hearts can wish for.”

Then he passed down the knife and a bare bone to the man next him, and the man began to cut; and off came slices of the sweetest and best meat in the world.

The knife and the bone passed from man to man till they came to Dun, who cut a slice off the bone, slipped out unseen, and made for Fin’s castle as fast as his two legs could carry him through the darkness and over the ground.

When he was by the fountain at the castle, his part of the log was burned and his watch at an end.

Now Glasán set fire to his stick of wood and went out on his watch and walked forward till he saw the light and came to the same house that Dubh and Dun had visited. Looking in he saw the place full of dead bodies, and thought, “There must be some great wonder here. If I lie down in the midst of these and put some of them over me to hide myself, I shall be able to see what is going on.”

He lay down and pulled some of the bodies over himself. He wasn’t there long when he saw an old hag coming into the house. She had but one leg, one arm, and one upper tooth, which was as long as her leg and served her in place of a crutch. When inside the door she took up the first corpse she met and threw it aside; it was lean. As she went on she took two bites out of every fat corpse she met, and threw every lean one aside.

She had her fill of flesh and blood before she came to Glasán; and as soon as she had that, she dropped down on the floor, lay on her back, and went to sleep.

Every breath she drew, Glasán was afraid she’d drag the roof down on top of his head, and every time she let a breath out of her he thought she’d sweep the roof off the house.

Then he rose up, looked at her, and wondered at the bulk of her body. At last he drew his sword, hit her a slash, and if he did, three young giants sprang forth.

Glasán killed the first giant, the dog Bran killed the second, and the third ran away.

Glasán now hurried back, and when he reached the fountain at Fin’s castle, his log of wood was burned, and day was dawning.

When all had risen in the morning, and the Fenians of Erin came out, Fin said to Dubh, “Have you anything new or wonderful to tell me after the night’s watching?”

“I have,” said Dubh; “for I brought back the drinking-cup that you lost a hundred years ago. I was out in the darkness watching. I walked on, and the dog Bran with me till I saw a light. When I came to the light I found a house, and in the house a company feasting. The chief was a very old man, and sat on a high place above the rest. He took out the cup and said: ‘This is the cup that was stolen from Fin MacCumhail a hundred years ago, and it is always full of the best drink in the world; and when one of you has drunk from the cup pass it on to the next.’

“They drank and passed the cup till it came to me. I took it and hurried back. When I came here, my log was burned and my watch was finished. Here now is the cup for you,” said Dubh to Fin MacCumhail.

Fin praised him greatly for what he had done, and turning to Dun said: “Now tell us what happened in your watch.”

“When my turn came I set fire to the log which you gave me, and walked on; the dog Bran following, till I saw a light. When I came to the light, I found a house in which was a crowd of people, all fighting except one very old man on a high place above the rest. He called to them for peace, and told them to be quiet. ‘For,’ said he, ‘I have a better gift for you than the one you lost this night,’ and he took out the small knife of division with a bare bone, and said: ‘This is the knife that was stolen from Fin MacCumhail, a hundred years ago, and whenever you cut on the bone with the knife, you’ll get your fill of the best meat on earth.’

“Then he handed the knife and the bone to the man nearest him, who cut from it all the meat he wanted, and then passed it to his neighbor. The knife went from hand to hand till it came to me, then I took it, slipped out, and hurried away. When I came to the fountain, my log was burned, and here are the knife and bone for you.”

“You have done a great work, and deserve my best praise,” said Fin. “We are sure of the best eating and drinking as long as we keep the cup and the knife.”

“Now what have you seen in your part of the night?” said Fin to Glasán.

“I went out,” said Glasán, “with the dog Bran, and walked on till I saw a light, and when I came to the light I saw a house, which I entered. Inside were heaps of dead men, killed in fighting, and I wondered greatly when I saw them. At last I lay down in the midst of the corpses, put some of them over me and waited to see what would happen.

“Soon an old hag came in at the door, she had but one arm, one leg, and the one tooth out of her upper jaw, and that tooth as long as her leg, and she used it for a crutch as she hobbled along. She threw aside the first corpse she met and took two bites out of the second, — for she threw every lean corpse away and took two bites out of every fat one. When she had eaten her fill, she lay down on her back in the middle of the floor and went to sleep. I rose up then to look at her, and every time she drew a breath I was in dread she would bring down the roof of the house on the top of my head, and every time she let a breath out of her, I thought she’d sweep the roof from the building, so strong was the breath of the old hag.

"Then I drew my sword and cut her with a blow, but if I did three young giants sprang up before me. I killed the first, Bran killed the second, but the third escaped. I walked away then, and when I was at the fountain outside, daylight had come and my log was burned."

"Between you and me," said Fin, "it would have been as well if you had let the old hag alone. I am greatly in dread the third young giant will bring trouble on us all."

For twenty-one years Fin MacCumhail and the Fenians of Erin hunted for sport alone. They had the best of eating from the small knife of division, and the best of drinking from the cup that was never dry. At the end of twenty-one years Dubh, Dun, and Glasán went away, and one day, as Fin and the Fenians of Erin were hunting on the hills and mountains, they saw a Fear Ruadh (a red haired man) coming toward them.

"There is a bright looking man coming this way," said Fin, "and don't you speak to him."

"Oh, what do we care for him?" asked Conan Maol.

"Don't be rude to a stranger," said Fin.

The Fear Ruadh came forward and spoke to no man till he stood before Fin.

"What have you come for?" asked Fin.

"To find a master for twenty-one years."

"What wages do you ask?" inquired Fin.

"No wages but this, — that if I die before the twenty-one years have passed, I shall be buried on Inis Caol (Light Island)."

"I'll give you those wages," said Fin, and he hired the Fear Ruadh for twenty-one years.

He served Fin for twenty years to his satisfaction; but toward the end of the twenty-first year he fell into a decline, became an old man, and died.

When the Fear Ruadh was dead, the Fenians of Erin said that not a step would they go to bury him; but Fin declared that he wouldn't break his word for any man, and must take the corpse to Inis Caol.

Fin had an old white horse which he had turned out to find a living for himself as he could on the hillsides and in the woods. And now he looked for the horse and found that he had become younger than older in looks since he had put him out. So he took the old white horse and tied a coffin, with the body of the Fear Ruadh in it, on his back. Then they started him on ahead and away he went followed by Fin and twelve men of the Fenians of Erin.

When they came to the temple on Inis Caol there were no signs of the white horse and the coffin; but the temple was open and in went Fin and the twelve.

There were seats for each man inside. They sat down and rested awhile and then Fin tried to rise but couldn't. He told the men to rise, but the twelve were fastened to the seats, and the seats to the ground, so that not a man of them could come to his feet.

"Oh," said Fin, "I'm in dread there is some evil trick played on us."

At that moment the Fear Ruadh stood before them in all his former strength and youth and said: "Now is the time for me to take satisfaction out of you for my mother and brothers," Then one of the men said to Fin, "Chew your thumb to know is there any way out of this."

Fin chewed his thumb to know what should he do. When he knew, he blew the great whistle with his two hands; which was heard by Donogh Kamcosa and Diarmuid O'Duivne.

The Fear Ruadh fell to and killed three of the men; but before he could touch the fourth Donogh and Diarmuid were there, and put an end to him. Now all were free, and Fin with the nine men went back to their castle south of Ballyshannon.

18

FIN MACCUMHAIL AND THE SON OF THE KING OF ALBA

On a day Fin went out hunting with his dog Bran, on Knock an Ar; and he killed so much game that he didn't know what to do with it or how to bring it home. As he stood looking and thinking, all at once he saw a man running towards him, with a rope around his waist so long that half his body was covered with it; and the man was of such size that, as he ran, Fin could see the whole world between his legs and nothing between his head and the sky. When he came up, the man saluted Fin, who answered him most kindly. "Where are you going?" asked Fin. "I am out looking for a master." "Well," said Fin, "I am in sore need of a man; what can you do?" "Do you see this rope on my body? Whatever this rope will bind I can carry." "If that is true," said Fin, "you are the man I want. Do you see the game on this hillside?" "I do," said the man. "Well, put that into the rope and carry it to my castle."

The man put all the game into the rope, made a great bundle, and threw it on his back.

"Show me the way to the castle now," said he. Fin started on ahead, and though he ran with all his might, he could not gain one step on the man who followed with the game. The sentry on guard at the castle saw the man running while yet far off. He stepped inside the gate and said: "There is a man coming with a load on his back as big as a mountain." Before he could come out again to his place the man was there and the load off his back. When the game came to the ground, it shook the castle to its foundations. Next day the man was sent to herd cows for a time, and while he was gone, Conán Maol said to Fin: “If you don’t put this cowherd to death, he will destroy all the Fenians of Erin.” “How could I put such a good man to death?” asked Fin. “Send him,” said Conán, “to sow corn on the brink of a lake in the north of Erin. Now, in that lake lives a serpent that never lets a person pass, but swallows every man that goes that way.” Fin agreed to this, and the next morning after breakfast he called the man, gave him seven bullocks, a plough, and a sack of grain, and sent him to the lake in the north of Erin to sow corn. When he came to the lake, the man started to plough, drew one furrow. The lake began to boil up, and as he was coming back, making the second furrow, the serpent was on the field before him and swallowed the seven bullocks and the plough up to the handles. But the man held fast to what he had in his two hands, gave a pull, and dragged the plough and six of the bullocks out of the belly of the serpent. The seventh one remained inside. The serpent went at him and they fought for seven days and nights. At the end of that time the serpent was as tame as a cat, and the man drove him and the six bullocks home before him.

When he was in sight of Fin’s castle, the sentry at the gate ran in and cried: “That cowherd is coming with the size of a mountain before him!” “Run out,” said Conán Maol, “and tell him to tie the serpent to that oak out there.”

They ran out, and the man tied the serpent to the oak-tree, then came in and had a good supper.

Next morning the man went out to herd cows as before. “Well,” said Conán Maol to Fin, “if you don’t put this man to death, he’ll destroy you and me and all the Fenians of Erin.”

“How could I put such a man to death?”

“There is,” said Conán, “a bullock in the north of Erin, and he drives fog out of himself for seven days and then he draws it in for seven other days. To-morrow is the last day for drawing it in. If any one man comes near, he’ll swallow him alive.”

When the cowherd came to supper in the evening, Fin said to him: “I am going to have a feast and need fresh beef. Now there is a bullock in that same valley by the lake in the north of Erin where you punished the serpent; and if you go there and bring the bullock to me, you’ll have my thanks.”

“I’ll go,” said the man, “the first thing after breakfast in the morning.”

So off he went next morning; and when he came near the valley, he found the bullock asleep and drawing in the last of the fog; and soon he found himself going in with it. So he caught hold of a great oak-tree for safety. The bullock woke up then and saw him, and letting a roar out of himself, faced him, and gave him a pitch with his horn which sent him seven miles over the top of a wood. And when he fell to the ground, the bullock was on him again before he had time to rise, and gave him another pitch which sent him back and broke three ribs in his body.

“This will never do,” said the man, as he rose, and pulling up an oak-tree by the roots for a club, he faced the bullock. And there they were at one another for five days and nights, till the bullock was as tame as a cat and the man drove him home to Fin’s castle. The sentry saw them coming and ran inside the gate with word. “Tell the man to tie the bullock to that oak-tree beyond,” said Conán. “We don’t want him near this place.” The cowherd tied the bullock, and told Fin to send four of the best butchers in Erin to kill him with an axe; and the four of them struck him one after another and any of them couldn’t knock him.

“Give me an axe,” said the man to the butchers. They gave him the axe, and the first stroke he gave, he knocked the bullock. Then they began to skin him; but the man didn’t like the way they were doing the work, so he took his sword and had three quarters of the bullock skinned before they could skin one.

Next morning the cowherd went out with the cows; but he wasn't long gone when Conán Maol came to Fin and said: "If you don't put an end to that man, he'll soon put an end to you and to me and to all of us, so there won't be a man of the Fenians of Erin left alive."

"How could I put an end to a man like him?" asked Fin.

"There is in the north of Erin," said Conán, "a wild sow who has two great pigs of her own; and she and her two pigs have bags of poison in their tails; and when they see any man, they run at him and shake their poison bags; and if the smallest drop of the poison touches him, it is death to him that minute. And, if by any chance he should escape the wild sow and the pigs, there is a fox-man called the Gruagach, who has but one eye and that in the middle of his forehead. The Gruagach carries a club of a ton weight, and if the cowherd gets one welt of that club, he'll never trouble the Fenians of Erin again."

Next morning Fin called up the cowherd and said, "I am going to have a feast in this castle, and I would like to have some fresh pork. There is a wild sow in the north of Erin with two pigs, and if you bring her to me before the feast, you'll have my thanks."

"I'll go and bring her to you," said the cowherd. So after breakfast he took his sword, went to the north of Erin, and stole up to the sow and two pigs, and whipped the tails off the three of them, before they knew he was in it. Then he faced the wild sow and fought with her for four days and five nights, and on the morning of the fifth day he knocked her dead. At the last blow, his sword stuck in her backbone and he couldn't draw it out. But with one pull he broke the blade, and stood there over her with only the hilt in his hand. Then he put his foot on one of her jaws, took the other in his hands, and splitting her evenly from the nose to the tail, made two halves of her.

He threw one half on his shoulder; and that minute the big Gruagach with one eye in his head came along and made an offer of his club at him to kill him. But the cowherd jumped aside, and catching the Gruagach by one of his legs, threw him up on to the half of the wild sow on his shoulder, and taking the other half of her from the ground, clapped that on the top of the Gruagach, and ran away to Fin's castle as fast as his legs could carry him.

The sentry at the castle gate ran in and said: "The cowherd is running to the castle, and the size of a mountain on his back." "Go out now," said Conán Maol, "and stop him where he is, or he'll throw down the castle if he comes here with the load that's on him." But before the sentry was back at his place, the cowherd was at the gate shaking the load off his back and the castle to its foundations, so that every dish and vessel in it was broken to bits.

The Gruagach jumped from the ground, rubbed his legs and every part of him that was sore from the treatment he got. He was so much in dread of the cowherd that he ran with all the strength that was in him, and never stopped to look back till he was in the north of Erin.

Next morning the cowherd went out with the cows, drove them back in the evening, and while picking the thigh-bone of a bullock for his supper, Oscar, son of Oisin, the strongest man of the Fenians of Erin, came up to him and took hold of the bone to pull it from his hand. The cowherd held one end and Oscar the other, and pulled till they made two halves of the bone. "What did you carry away?" asked the cowherd. "What I have in my hand," said Oscar. "And I kept what I held in my fist," said the cowherd. "There is that for you now," said Oscar, and he hit him a slap.

The cowherd said no word in answer, but next morning he asked his wages of Fin. "Oh, then," said Fin, "I'll pay you and welcome, for you are the best man I have ever had or met with."

Then the cowherd went away to Cahirciveen in Kerry where he had an enchanted castle. But before he went he invited Fin MacCumhail and the

Fenians of Erin to have a great feast with him. “For,” said he to Fin, “I’m not a cowherd at all, but the son of the king of Alba, and I’ll give you good cheer.”

When the Fenians came to the place, they found the finest castle that could be seen. There were three fires in each room and seven spits at every fire. When they had gone and sat down in their places, there was but one fire in each room. “Rise up, every man of you,” said Fin, “or we are lost; for this is an enchanted place.”

They tried to rise, but each man was fastened to his seat, and the seat to the floor; and not one of them could stir. Then the last fire went out and they were in darkness.

“Chew your thumb,” said Conán to Fin, “and try is there any way out of here.” Fin chewed his thumb and knew what trouble they were in. Then he put his two hands into his mouth and blew the old-time whistle. And this whistle was heard by Pogán and Ceolán, two sons of Fin who were in the North at that time, one fishing and the other hurling.

When they heard the whistle, they said: “Our father and the Fenians of Erin are in trouble.” And they faced towards the sound and never stopped till they knocked at the door of the enchanted castle of the son of Alba at Cahirciveen.

“Who is there?” asked Fin.

“Your two sons,” said one of them.

“Well,” said Fin, “we are in danger of death to-night. That cowherd I had in my service was no cowherd at all, but the son of the king of Alba; and his father has said that he will not eat three meals off one table without having my head. There is an army now on the road to kill us to-night. There is no way in or out of this castle but by one ford, and to that ford the army of the king of Alba is coming.”

The two sons of Fin went out at nightfall and stood in the ford before the army. The son of the king of Alba knew them well, and calling each by name, said: “Won’t you let us pass?” “We will not,” said they; and then the fight began. The two sons of Fin MacCumhail, Pogán and Ceolán, destroyed the whole army and killed every man except the son of the king of Alba.

After the battle the two went back to their father. “We have destroyed the whole army at the ford,” said they.

“There is a greater danger ahead,” said Fin. “There is an old hag coming with a little pot. She will dip her finger in the pot, touch the lips of the dead men, and bring the whole army to life. But first of all there will be music at the ford, and if you hear the music, you’ll fall asleep. Now go, but if you do not overpower the old hag, we are lost.”

“We’ll do the best we can,” said the two sons of Fin.

They were not long at the ford when one said, “I am falling asleep from that music.” “So am I,” said the other. “Knock your foot down on mine,” said the first. The other kicked his foot and struck him, but no use. Then each took his spear and drove it through the foot of the other, but both fell asleep in spite of the spears.

The old hag went on touching the lips of the dead men, who stood up alive; and she was crossing the ford at the head of the army when she stumbled over the two sleeping brothers and spilt what was in the pot over their bodies.

They sprang up fresh and well, and picking up two stones of a ton weight each that were there in the ford, they made for the champions of Alban and never stopped till they killed the last man of them; and then they killed the old hag herself.

Pogán and Ceolán then knocked at the door of the castle.

“Who’s there?” asked Fin.

“Your two sons,” said they; “and we have killed all the champions of Alban and the old hag as well.” “You have more to do yet,” said Fin. “There are three kings in the north of Erin who have three silver goblets. These kings are holding a feast in a fort to-day. You must go and cut the heads off the three, put their blood in the goblets and bring them here. When you come, rub the blood on the keyhole of the door and it will open before you. When you come in, rub the seats and we shall all be free."

The three goblets of blood were brought to Cahirciveen, the door of the castle flew open, and light came into every room. The brothers rubbed blood on the chairs of all the Fenians of Erin and freed them all, except Conán Maol, who had no chair, but sat on the floor with his back to the wall. When they came to him the last drop of blood was gone.

All the Fenians of Erin were hurrying past, anxious to escape, and paid no heed to Conán, who had never a good word in his mouth for any man. Then Conán turned to Diarmuid, and said: "If a woman were here in place of me, you wouldn't leave her to die this way." Then Diarmuid turned, took him by one hand, and Goll MacMorna by the other, and pulling with all their might, tore him from the wall and the floor. But if they did, he left all the skin of his back from his head to his heels on the floor and the wall behind him. But when they were going home through the hills of Tralee, they found a sheep on the way, killed it, and clapped the skin on Conán. The sheepskin grew to his body; and he was so well and strong that they sheared him every year, and got wool enough from his back to make flannel and frieze for the Fenians of Erin ever after.

19

CUCÚLIN

There was a king in a land not far from Greece who had two daughters, and the younger was fairer than the elder daughter.

This old king made a match between the king of Greece and his own elder daughter; but he kept the younger one hidden away till after the marriage. Then the younger daughter came forth to view; and when the king of Greece saw her, he wouldn't look at his own wife. Nothing would do him but to get the younger sister and leave the elder at home with her father.

The king wouldn't listen to this, wouldn't agree to the change, so the king of Greece left his wife where she was, went home alone in a terrible rage and collected all his forces to march against the kingdom of his father-in-law.

He soon conquered the king and his army and, so far as he was able, he vexed and tormented him. To do this the more completely, he took from him a rod of Druidic spells, enchantment, and ring of youth which he had, and, striking the elder sister with the rod, he said: "You will be a serpent of the sea and live outside there in the bay by the castle."

Then turning to the younger sister, whose name was Gil an Og, he struck her, and said: "You'll be a cat while inside this castle, and have your own form only when you are outside the walls."

After he had done this, the king of Greece went home to his own country, taking with him the rod of enchantment and the ring of youth. The king died in misery and grief, leaving his two daughters spellbound.

Now there was a Druid in that kingdom, and the younger sister went to consult him, and asked: “Shall I ever be released from the enchantment that’s on me now?”

“You will not, unless you find the man to release you; and there is no man in the world to do that but a champion who is now with Fin MacCumhail in Erin.”

“Well, how can I find that man?” asked she.

“I will tell you,” said the Druid. “Do you make a shirt out of your own hair, take it with you, and never stop till you land in Erin and find Fin and his men; the man that the shirt will fit is the man who will release you.”

She began to make the shirt and worked without stopping till it was finished. Then she went on her journey and never rested till she came to Erin in a ship. She went on shore and inquired where Fin and his men were to be found at that time of the year.

“You will find them at Knock an Ar,” was the answer she got.

She went to Knock an Ar carrying the shirt with her. The first man she met was Conan Maol, and she said to him: “I have come to find the man this shirt will fit. From the time one man tries it all must try till I see the man it fits.”

The shirt went from hand to hand till Cucúlin put it on. “Well,” said she, “it fits as your own skin.”

Now Gil an Og told Cucúlin all that had happened, — how her father had forced her sister to marry the king of Greece, how this king had made war on her father, enchanted her sister and herself, and carried off the rod of enchantment with the ring of youth, and how the old Druid said the man this shirt would fit was the only man in the world who could release them.

Now Gil an Og and Cucúlin went to the ship and sailed across the seas to her country and went to her castle.

"You'll have no one but a cat for company to-night," said Gil an Og. "I have the form of a cat inside this castle, but outside I have my own appearance. Your dinner is ready, go in."

After the dinner Cucúlin went to another room apart, and lay down to rest after the journey. The cat came to his pillow, sat there and purred till he fell asleep and slept soundly till morning.

When he rose up, a basin of water, and everything he needed was before him, and his breakfast ready. He walked out after breakfast; Gil an Og was on the green outside before him and said:

"If you are not willing to free my sister and myself, I shall not urge you; but if you do free us, I shall be glad and thankful. Many king's sons and champions before you have gone to recover the ring and the rod; but they have never come back."

"Well, whether I thrive or not, I'll venture," said Cucúlin.

"I will give you," said Gil an Og, "a present such as I have never given before to any man who ventured out on my behalf; I will give you the speckled boat."

Cucúlin took leave of Gil an Og and sailed away in the speckled boat to Greece, where he went to the king's court, and challenged him to combat.

The king of Greece gathered his forces and sent them out to chastise Cucúlin. He killed them all to the last man. Then Cucúlin challenged the king a second time.

"I have no one now to fight but myself," said the king; "and I don't think it becomes me to go out and meet the like of you."

"If you don't come out to me," said Cucúlin, "I'll go in to you and cut the head off you in your own castle."

"That's enough of impudence from you, you scoundrel," said the king of Greece. "I won't have you come into my castle, but I'll meet you on the open plain.”

The king went out, and they fought till Cucúlin got the better of him, bound him head and heels, and said: “I’ll cut the head off you now unless you give me the ring of youth and the rod of enchantment that you took from the father of Gil an Og.”

“Well, I did carry them away,” said the king, “but it wouldn’t be easy for me now to give them to you or to her; for there was a man who came and carried them away, who could take them from you and from me, and from as many more of us, if they were here.”

“Who was that man?” asked Cucúlin.

“His name,” said the king, “is Lug Longhand. And if I had known what you wanted, there would have been no difference between us. I’ll tell you how I lost the ring and rod and I’ll go with you and show you where Lug Longhand lives. But do you come to my castle. We’ll have a good time together.”

They set out next day, and never stopped till they came opposite Lug Longhand castle, and Cucúlin challenged his forces to combat.

“I have no forces,” said Lug, “but I’ll fight you myself.” So the combat began, and they spent the whole day at one another, and neither gained the victory.

The king of Greece himself put up a tent on the green in front of the castle, and prepared everything necessary to eat and drink (there was no one else to do it). After breakfast next day, Cucúlin and Lug began fighting again. The king of Greece looked on as the day before.

They fought the whole day till near evening, when Cucúlin got the upper hand of Lug Longhand and bound him head and heels, saying: “I’ll cut the head off you now unless you give me the rod and the ring that you carried away from the king of Greece.”

“Oh, then,” said Lug, “it would be hard for me to give them to you or to him; for forces came and took them from me; and they would have taken them from you and from him, if you had been here.”

“Who in the world took them from you?” asked the king of Greece.

“Release me from this bond, and come to my castle, and I’ll tell you the whole story,” said Lug Longhand.

Cucúlin released him, and they went to the castle. They got good reception and entertainment from Lug that night, and the following morning as well. He said: “The ring and the rod were taken from me by the knight of the island of the Flood. This island is surrounded by a chain, and there is a ring of fire seven miles wide between the chain and the castle. No man can come near the island without breaking the chain, and the moment the chain is broken the fire stops burning at that place; and the instant the fire goes down the knight rushes out and attacks and slays every man that’s before him.” The king of Greece, Cucúlin, and Lug Longhand now sailed on in the speckled boat towards the island of the Flood. On the following morning when the speckled boat struck the chain, she was thrown back three days’ sail, and was near being sunk, and would have gone to the bottom of the sea but for her own goodness and strength.

As soon as Cucúlin saw what had happened, he took the oars, rowed on again, and drove the vessel forward with such venom that she cut through the chain and went one third of her length on to dry land. That moment the fire was quenched where the vessel struck, and when the knight of the Island saw the fire go out, he rushed to the shore and met Cucúlin, the king of Greece, and Lug Longhand.

When Cucúlin saw him, he threw aside his weapons, caught him, raised him above his head, hurled him down on the flat of his back, bound him head and heels, and said: “I’ll cut the head off you unless you give me the ring and the rod that you carried away from Lug Longhand.”

“I took them from him, it’s true,” said the knight; “but it would be hard for me to give them to you now; for a man came and took them from me, who would have taken them from you and all that are with you, and as many more if they had been here before him."

"Who in the world could that man be?" asked Cucúlin.

"The Dark Gruagach of the Northern Island. Release me, and come to my castle. I'll tell you all and entertain you well."

He took them to his castle, gave them good cheer, and told them all about the Gruagach and his island. Next morning all sailed away in Cucúlin's vessel, which they had left at the shore of the island, and never stopped till they came to the Gruagach's castle, and pitched their tents in front of it.

Then Cucúlin challenged the Gruagach. The others followed after to know would he thrive. The Gruagach came out and faced Cucúlin, and they began and spent the whole day at one another and neither of them gained the upper hand. When evening came, they stopped and prepared for supper and the night.

Next day after breakfast Cucúlin challenged the Gruagach again, and they fought till evening; when Cucúlin got the better in the struggle, disarmed the Gruagach, bound him, and said: "Unless you give up the rod of enchantment and the ring of youth that you took from the knight of the island of the Flood, I'll cut the head off you now."

"I took them from him, 'tis true; but there was a man named Thin-in-Iron, who took them from me, and he would have taken them from you and from me, and all that are here, if there were twice as many. He is such a man that sword cannot cut him, fire cannot burn him, water cannot drown him, and 'tis no easy thing to get the better of him. But if you'll free me now and come to my castle, I'll treat you well and tell you all about him." Cucúlin agreed to this.

Next morning they would not stop nor be satisfied till they went their way. They found the castle of Thin-in-Iron, and Cucúlin challenged him to combat. They fought; and he was cutting the flesh from Cucúlin, but

Cucúlin's sword cut no flesh from him. They fought till Cucúlin said: "It is time now to stop till to-morrow."

Cucúlin was scarcely able to reach the tent. They had to support him and put him to bed. Now, who should come to Cucúlin that night but Gil an Og, and she said: "You have gone further than any man before you, and I'll cure you now, and you need go no further for the rod of enchantment and the ring of youth."

"Well," said Cucúlin, "I'll never give over till I knock another day's trial out of Thin-in-Iron."

When it was time for rest, Gil an Og went away, and Cucúlin fell asleep for himself. On the following morning all his comrades were up and facing his tent. They thought to see him dead, but he was in as good health as ever.

They prepared breakfast, and after breakfast Cucúlin went before the door of the castle to challenge his enemy.

Thin-in-Iron thrust his head out and said: "That man I fought yesterday has come again to-day. It would have been a good deed if I had cut the head off him last night. Then he wouldn't be here to trouble me this morning. I won't come home this day till I bring his head with me. Then I'll have peace."

They met in combat and fought till the night was coming. Then Thin-in-Iron cried out for a cessation, and if he did, Cucúlin was glad to give it; for his sword had no effect upon Thin-in-Iron except to tire and nearly kill him (he was enchanted and no arms could cut him). When Thin-in-Iron went to his castle, he threw up three sups of blood, and said to his housekeeper: "Though his sword could not penetrate me, he has nearly broken my heart."

Cucúlin had to be carried to his tent. His comrades laid him on his bed and said: "Whoever came and healed him yesterday, may be the same will be here to-night." They went away and were not long gone when Gil an Og came and said: "Cucúlin, if you had done my bidding, you wouldn't be as you are to-night. But if you neglect my words now, you'll never see my face again. I’ll cure you this time and make you as well as ever;” and whatever virtue she had she healed him so he was as strong as before.

“Oh, then,” said Cucúlin, “whatever comes on me I’ll never turn back till I knock another day’s trial out of Thin-in-Iron.”

“Well,” said she, “you are a stronger man than he, but there is no good in working at him with a sword. Throw your sword aside to-morrow, and you’ll get the better of him and bind him. You’ll not see me again.”

She went away and he fell asleep. His comrades came in the morning and found him sleeping. They got breakfast, and, after eating, Cucúlin went out and called a challenge.

“Oh, ‘tis the same man as yesterday,” said Thin-in-Iron, “and if I had cut the head off him then, it wouldn’t be he that would trouble me to-day. If I live for it, I’ll bring his head in my hand to-night, and he’ll never disturb me again.”

When Cucúlin saw Thin-in-Iron coming, he threw his sword aside, and facing him, caught him by the body, raised him up, then dashed him to the ground, and said, “If you don’t give me what I want, I’ll cut the head off you.”

“What do you want of me?” asked Thin-in-Iron.

“I want the rod of enchantment and the ring of youth you carried from the Gruagach.”

“I did indeed carry them from him, but it would be no easy thing for me to give them to you or any other man; for a force came which took them from me.”

“What could take them from you?” asked Cucúlin.

“The queen of the Wilderness, an old hag that has them now. But release me from this bondage and I’ll take you to my castle and entertain you well, and I’ll go with you and the rest of the company to see how will you thrive.”

So he took Cucúlin and his friends to the castle and entertained them joyously, and he said: “The old hag, the queen of the Wilderness, lives in a round tower, which is always turning on wheels. There is but one entrance to the tower, and that high above the ground, and in the one chamber in which she lives, keeping the ring and the rod, is a chair, and she has but to sit on the chair and wish herself in any part of the world, and that moment she is there. She has six lines of guards protecting her tower, and if you pass all of these, you’ll do what no man before you has done to this day. The first guards are two lions that rush out to know which of them will get the first bite out of the throat of any one that tries to pass. The second are seven men with iron hurlies and an iron ball, and with their hurlies they wallop the life out of any man that goes their way. The third is Hung-up-Naked, who hangs on a tree with his toes to the earth, his head cut from his shoulders and lying on the ground, and who kills every man who comes near him. The fourth is the bull of the Mist that darkens the woods for seven miles around, and destroys everything that enters the Mist. The fifth are seven cats with poison tails; and one drop of their poison would kill the strongest man.”

Next morning all went with Cucúlin as far as the lions who guarded the queen of the Wilderness, an old hag made young by the ring of youth. The two lions ran at Cucúlin to see which would have the first bite out of him.

Cucúlin wore a red silk scarf around his neck and had a fine head of hair. He cut the hair off his head and wound it around one hand, took his scarf and wrapped it around the other. Then rushing at the lions, he thrust a hand down the throat of each lion (for lions can bite neither silk nor hair). He pulled the livers and lights out of the two and they fell dead before him. His comrades looking on, said: “You’ll thrive now since you have done this deed;” and they left him and went home, each to his own country.

Cucúlin went further. The next people he met were the seven men with the iron hurlies (ball clubs), and they said; “‘Tis long since any man walked this way to us; we’ll have sport now.”

The first one said: “Give him a touch of the hurly and let the others do the same; and we’ll wallop him till he is dead.”

Now Cucúlin drew his sword and cut the head off the first man before he could make an offer of the hurly at him; and then he did the same to the other six.

He went on his way till he came to Hung-up-Naked, who was hanging from a tree, his head on the ground near him. The queen of the Wilderness had fastened him to the tree because he wouldn’t marry her; and she said: “If any man comes who will put your head on you, you’ll be free.” And she laid the injunction on him to kill every man who tried to pass his way without putting the head on him.

Cucúlin went up, looked at him, and saw heaps of bones around the tree. The body said: “You can’t go by here. I fight with every man who tries to pass.”

“Well, I’m not going to fight with a man unless he has a head on him. Take your head.” And Cucúlin, picking up the head, clapped it on the body, and said, “Now I’ll fight with you!”

The man said: “I’m all right now. I know where you are going. I’ll stay here till you come; if you conquer you’ll not forget me. Take the head off me now; put it where you found it; and if you succeed, remember that I shall be here before you on your way home.”

Cucúlin went on, but soon met the bull of the Mist that covered seven miles of the wood with thick mist. When the bull saw him, he made at him and stuck a horn in his ribs and threw him three miles into the wood, against a great oak tree and broke three ribs in his side.

“Well,” said Cucúlin, when he recovered, “if I get another throw like that, I’ll not be good for much exercise.” He was barely on his feet when the bull was at him again; but when he came up he caught the bull by both horns and away they went wrestling and struggling. For three days and nights Cucúlin kept the bull in play, till the morning of the fourth day, when he put him on the flat of his back. Then he turned him on the side, and putting a foot on one horn and taking the other in his two hands, he said: "'Tis well I earned you; there is not a stitch on me that isn't torn to rags from wrestling with you." He pulled the bull asunder from his horns to his tail, into two equal parts, and said: "Now that I have you in two, it's in quarters I'll put you." He took his sword, and when he struck the backbone of the bull, the sword remained in the bone and he couldn't pull it out.

He walked away and stood awhile and looked. "'Tis hard to say," said he, "that any good champion would leave his sword behind him." So he went back and made another pull and took the hilt off his sword, leaving the blade in the back of the bull. Then he went away tattered and torn, the hilt in his hand, and he turned up towards the forge of the Strong Smith. One of the Smith's boys was out for coal at the time: he saw Cucúlin coming with the hilt in his hand, and ran in, saying: "There is a man coming up and he looks like a fool; we'll have fun!"

"Hold your tongue!" said the master. "Have you heard any account of the bull of the Mist these three days?"

"We have not," said the boys.

"Perhaps," said the Strong Smith, "that's a good champion that's coming, and do you mind yourselves."

At that moment Cucúlin walked in to the forge where twelve boys and the master were working. He saluted them and asked, "Can you put a blade in this hilt?"

"We can," said the master. They put in the blade. Cucúlin raised the sword and took a shake out of it and broke it to bits.

"This is a rotten blade," said he. "Go at it again."

They made a second blade. The boys were in dread of him now. He broke the second blade in the same way as the first. They made six blades, one stronger than the other. He did the same to them all. "There is no use in talking," said the Strong Smith; "we have no stuff that would make a right blade for you. Go down now," said he to two of the boys, "and bring up an old sword that's down in the stable full of rust."

They went and brought up the sword on two hand-spikes between them; it was so heavy that one couldn't carry it. They gave it to Cucúlin, and with one blow on his heel he knocked the dust from it and went out at the door and took a shake out of it; and if he did, he darkened the whole place with the rust from the blade.

"This is my sword, whoever made it," said he.

"It is," said the master; "it's yours and welcome. I know who you are now, and where you are going. Remember that I'm in bondage here." The Strong Smith took Cucúlin then to his house, gave him refreshment and clothes for the journey. When he was ready, the Smith said: "I hope you'll thrive. You have done a deal more than any man that ever walked this way before. There is nothing now to stand in your way till you come to the seven cats outside the turning tower. If they shake their tails and a drop of poison comes on you, it will penetrate to your heart. You must sweep off their tails with your sword. 'Tis equal to you what their bodies will do after that."

Cucúlin soon came to them and there wasn't one of the seven cats he didn't strip of her tail before she knew he was in it. He cared nothing for the bodies so he had the tails. The cats ran away.

Now he faced the tower turning on wheels. The queen of the Wilderness was in it. He had been told by Thin-in-Iron that he must cut the axle. He found the axle, cut it, and the tower stopped that instant. Cucúlin made a spring and went in through the single passage.

The old hag was preparing to sit on the chair as she saw him coming. He sprang forward, pushed the chair away with one hand, and, catching her by the back of the neck with the other, said: "You are to lose your head now, old woman!"

“Spare me, and what you want you’ll get,” said she. “I have the ring of youth and the rod of enchantment,” and she gave them to him. He put the ring on his finger, and saying, “You’ll never do mischief again to man!” he turned her face to the entrance, and gave her a kick. Out she flew through the opening and down to the ground, where she broke her neck and died on the spot.

Cucúlin made the Strong Smith king over all the dominions of the queen of the Wilderness, and proclaimed that any person in the country who refused to obey the new king would be put to death.

Cucúlin turned back at once, and travelled till he came to Hung-up-Naked. He took him down, and putting the head on his body, struck him a blow of the rod and made the finest looking man of him that could be found. The man went back to his own home happy and well.

Cucúlin never stopped till he came to the castle of Gil an Og. She was outside with a fine welcome before him; and why not, to be sure, for he had the rod of enchantment and the ring of youth!

When she entered the castle and took the form of a cat, he struck her a blow of the rod and she gained the same form and face she had before the king of Greece struck her. Then he asked, “Where is your sister?” “In the lake there outside,” answered Gil an Og, “in the form of a sea-serpent.” She went out with him, and the moment they came to the edge of the lake the sister rose up near them. Then Cucúlin struck her with the rod and she came to land in her own shape and countenance.

Next day they saw a deal of vessels facing the harbor, and what should they be but a fleet of ships, and on the ships were the king of Greece, Lug Longhand, the knight of the island of the Flood, the Dark Guagach of the Northern Island and Thin-in-Iron: and they came each in his own vessel to know was there any account of Cucúlin. There was good welcome for them all, and when they had feasted and rejoiced together Cucúlin married Gil an

Og. The king of Greece took Gil an Og's sister, who was his own wife at first, and went home.

Cucúlin went away himself with his wife Gil an Og, never stopping till he came to Erin; and when he came, Fin MacCumhail and his men were at KilConaly, near the river Shannon.

When Cucúlin went from Erin he left a son whose mother was called the Virago of Alba: she was still alive and the son was eighteen years old. When she heard that Cucúlin had brought Gil an Og to Erin, she was enraged with jealousy and madness. She had reared the son, whose name was Conlán, like any king's son, and now giving him his arms of a champion she told him to go to his father.

"I would," said he, "if I knew who my father is."

"His name is Cucúlin, and he is with Fin MacCumhail. I bind you not to yield to any man," said she to her son, "nor tell your name to any man till you fight him out."

Conlán started from Ulster where his mother was, and never stopped till he was facing Fin and his men, who were hunting that day along the cliffs of KilConaly.

When the young man came up Fin said, "There is a single man facing us."

Conan Maol said, "Let some one go against him, ask who he is and what he wants."

"I never give an account of myself to any man," said Conlán, "till I get an account from him."

"There is no man among us," said Conan, "bound in that way but Cucúlin." They called on Cucúlin; he came up and the two fought. Conlán knew by the description his mother had given that Cucúlin was his father, but Cucúlin did not know his son. Every time Conlán aimed his spear he threw it so as to strike the ground in front of Cucúlin's toe, but Cucúlin aimed straight at him.

They were at one another three days and three nights. The son always sparing the father, the father never sparing the son.

Conan Maol came to them the fourth morning. “Cucúlin,” said he, “I didn’t expect to see any man standing against you three days, and you such a champion.”

When Conlán heard Conan Maol urging the father to kill him, he gave a bitter look at Conan, and forgot his guard. Cucúlin’s spear went through his head that minute, and he fell. “I die of that blow from my father,” said he.

“Are you my son?” said Cucúlin.

“I am,” said Conlán.

Cucúlin took his sword and cut the head off him sooner than leave him in the punishment and pain he was in. Then he faced all the people, and Fin was looking on.

“There’s trouble on Cucúlin,” said Fin. “Chew your thumb,” said Conan Maol, “to know what’s on him.”

Fin chewed his thumb, and said, “Cucúlin is after killing his own son, and if I and all my men were to face him before his passion cools, at the end of seven days, he’d destroy every man of us.”

“Go now,” said Conan, “and bind him to go down to Bale strand and give seven days’ fighting against the waves of the sea, rather than kill us all.”

So Fin bound him to go down. When he went to Bale strand Cucúlin found a great white stone. He grasped his sword in his right hand and cried out: “If I had the head of the woman who sent her son into peril of death at my hand, I’d split it as I split this stone,” and he made four quarters of the stone. Then he strove with the waves seven days and nights till he fell from hunger and weakness, and the waves went over him.

20

OISIN IN TIR NA N-OG

There was a king in Tir na n-Og (the land of Youth) who held the throne and crown for many a year against all comers; and the law of the kingdom was that every seventh year the champions and best men of the country should run for the office of king.

Once in seven years they all met at the front of the palace and ran to the top of a hill two miles distant. On the top of that hill was a chair and the man that sat first in the chair was king of Tir na n-Og for the next seven years. After he had ruled for ages, the king became anxious; he was afraid that some one might sit in the chair before him, and take the crown off his head. So he called up his Druid one day and asked: “How long shall I keep the chair to rule this land, and will any man sit in it before me and take the crown off my head?”

“You will keep the chair and the crown forever,” said the Druid, “unless your own son-in-law takes them from you.”

The king had no sons and but one daughter, the finest woman in Tir na n-Og; and the like of her could not be found in Erin or any kingdom in the world. When the king heard the words of the Druid, he said, “I’ll have no son-in-law, for I’ll put the daughter in a way no man will marry her.”

Then he took a rod of Druidic spells, and calling the daughter up before him, he struck her with the rod, and put a pig’s head on her in place of her own. Then he sent the daughter away to her own place in the castle, and turning to the Druid said: “There is no man that will marry her now.”

When the Druid saw the face that was on the princess with the pig’s head that the father gave her, he grew very sorry that he had given such information to the king; and some time after he went to see the princess.

“Must I be in this way forever?” asked she of the Druid.

“You must,” said he, “till you marry one of the sons of Fin MacCumhail in Erin. If you marry one of Fin’s sons, you’ll be freed from the blot that is on you now, and get back your own head and countenance.”

When she heard this she was impatient in her mind, and could never rest till she left Tir na n-Og and came to Erin. When she had inquired she heard that Fin and the Fenians of Erin were at that time living on Knock an Ar, and she made her way to the place without delay and lived there a while; and when she saw Oisin, he pleased her; and when she found out that he was a son of Fin MacCumhail, she was always making up to him and coming towards him. And it was usual for the Fenians in those days to go out hunting on the hills and mountains and in the woods of Erin, and when one of them went he always took five or six men with him to bring home the game.

On a day Oisin set out with his men and dogs to the woods; and he went so far and killed so much game that when it was brought together, the men were so tired, weak, and hungry that they couldn’t carry it, but went away home and left him with the three dogs, Bran, Sciolán, and Buglén, to shift for himself.

Now the daughter of the king of Tir na n-Og, who was herself the queen of Youth, followed closely in the hunt all that day, and when the men left Oisin she came up to him; and as he stood looking at the great pile of game and said, “I am very sorry to leave behind anything that I’ve had the trouble of killing,” she looked at him and said, “Tie up a bundle for me, and I’ll carry it to lighten the load off you.”

Oisin gave her a bundle of the game to carry, and took the remainder himself. The evening was very warm and the game heavy, and after they had gone some distance, Oisin said, “Let us rest a while.” Both threw down their burdens, and put their backs against a great stone that was by the roadside. The woman was heated and out of breath, and opened her dress to cool herself. Then Oisin looked at her and saw her beautiful form and her white bosom.

“Oh, then,” said he, “it’s a pity you have the pig’s head on you; for I have never seen such an appearance on a woman in all my life before.”

“Well,” said she, “my father is the king of Tir na n-Og, and I was the finest woman in his kingdom and the most beautiful of all, till he put me under a Druidic spell and gave me the pig’s head that’s on me now in place of my own. And the Druid of Tir na n-Og came to me afterwards, and told me that if one of the sons of Fin MacCumhail would marry me, the pig’s head would vanish, and I should get back my face in the same form as it was before my father struck me with the Druid’s wand. When I heard this I never stopped till I came to Erin, where I found your father and picked you out among the sons of Fin MacCumhail, and followed you to see would you marry me and set me free.”

“If that is the state you are in, and if marriage with me will free you from the spell, I’ll not leave the pig’s head on you long.”

So they got married without delay, not waiting to take home the game or to lift it from the ground. That moment the pig’s head was gone, and the king’s daughter had the same face and beauty that she had before her father struck her with the Druidic wand.

“Now,” said the queen of Youth to Oisin, “I cannot stay here long, and unless you come with me to Tir na n-Og we must part.”

“Oh,” said Oisin, “wherever you go I’ll go, and wherever you turn I’ll follow.”

Then she turned and Oisin went with her, not going back to Knock an Ar to see his father or his son. That very day they set out for Tir na n-Og and never stopped till they came to her father's castle; and when they came, there was a welcome before them, for the king thought his daughter was lost. That same year there was to be a choice of a king, and when the appointed day came at the end of the seventh year all the great men and the champions, and the king himself, met together at the front of the castle to run and see who should be first in the chair on the hill; but before a man of them was halfway to the hill, Oisin was sitting above in the chair before them. After that time no one stood up to run for the office against Oisin, and he spent many a happy year as king in Tir na n-Og. At last he said to his wife: "I wish I could be in Erin to-day to see my father and his men."

"If you go," said his wife, "and set foot on the land of Erin, you'll never come back here to me, and you'll become a blind old man. How long do you think it is since you came here?"

"About three years," said Oisin. "It is three hundred years," said she, "since you came to this kingdom with me. If you must go to Erin, I'll give you this white steed to carry you; but if you come down from the steed or touch the soil of Erin with your foot, the steed will come back that minute, and you'll be where he left you, a poor old man."

"I'll come back, never fear," said Oisin. "Have I not good reason to come back? But I must see my father and my son and my friends in Erin once more; I must have even one look at them."

She prepared the steed for Oisin and said, "This steed will carry you wherever you wish to go."

Oisin never stopped till the steed touched the soil of Erin; and he went on till he came to Knock Patrick in Munster, where he saw a man herding cows. In the field, where the cows were grazing there was a broad flat stone.

"Will you come here," said Oisin to the herdsman, "and turn over this stone?"

"Indeed, then, I will not," said the herdsman; "for I could not lift it, nor twenty men more like me."

Oisin rode up to the stone, and, reaching down, caught it with his hand and turned it over. Underneath the stone was the great horn of the Fenians (borabu), which circled round like a seashell, and it was the rule that when any of the Fenians of Erin blew the borabu, the others would assemble at once from whatever part of the country they might be in at the time.

"Will you bring this horn to me!" asked Oisin of the herdsman.

"I will not," said the herdsman; "for neither I nor many more like me could raise it from the ground." With that Oisin moved near the horn, and reaching down took it in his hand; but so eager was he to blow it, that he forgot everything, and slipped in reaching till one foot touched the earth. In an instant the steed was gone, and Oisin lay on the ground a blind old man. The herdsman went to Saint Patrick, who lived near by, and told him what had happened.

Saint Patrick sent a man and a horse for Oisin, brought him to his own house, gave him a room by himself, and sent a boy to stay with him to serve and take care of him. And Saint Patrick commanded his cook to send Oisin plenty of meat and drink, to give him bread and beef and butter every day.

Now Oisin lived a while in this way. The cook sent him provisions each day, and Saint Patrick himself asked him all kinds of questions about the old times of the Fenians of Erin. Oisin told him about his father, Fin MacCumhail, about himself, his son Osgar, Goll MacMorna, Conan Maol, Diarmuid, and all the Fenian heroes; how they fought, feasted, and hunted, how they came under Druidic spells, and how they were freed from them.

At the same time, Saint Patrick was putting up a great building; but what his men used to put up in the daytime was levelled at night, and Saint Patrick lamented over his losses in the hearing of Oisin. Then Oisin said in the hearing of Saint Patrick, “If I had my strength and my sight, I’d put a stop to the power that is levelling your work.”

“Do you think you’d be able to do that,” said Saint Patrick, “and let my building go on?”

“I do, indeed,” said Oisin. So Saint Patrick prayed to the Lord, and the sight and strength came back to Oisin. He went to the woods and got a great club and stood at the building on guard.

What should come in the night but a great beast in the form of a bull, which began to uproot and destroy the work. But if he did Oisin faced him, and the battle began hot and heavy between the two; but in the course of the night Oisin got the upper hand of the bull and left him dead before the building. Then he stretched out on the ground himself and fell asleep.

Now Saint Patrick was waiting at home to know how would the battle come out, and thinking Oisin too long away he sent a messenger to the building; and when the messenger came he saw the ground torn up, a hill in one place and a hollow in the next. The bull was dead and Oisin sleeping after the desperate battle. He went back and told what he saw.

“Oh,” said Saint Patrick, “it’s better to knock the strength out of him again; for he’ll kill us all if he gets vexed.”

Saint Patrick took the strength out of him, and when Oisin woke up he was a blind old man and the messenger went out and brought him home.

Oisin lived on for a time as before. The cook sent him his food, the boy served him, and Saint Patrick listened to the stories of the Fenians of Erin.

Saint Patrick had a neighbor, a Jew, a very rich man but the greatest miser in the kingdom, and he had the finest haggart of corn in Erin. Well, the Jew and Saint Patrick got very intimate with one another and so great became the friendship of the Jew for Saint Patrick at last, that he said he’d give him, for the support of his house, as much corn as one man could thrash out of the haggart in a day.

When Saint Patrick went home after getting the promise of the corn, he told in the hearing of Oisin about what the Jew had said.

“Oh, then,” said Oisin, “if I had my sight and strength, I’d thrash as much corn in one day as would do your whole house for a twelvemonth and more.”

“Will you do that for me?” said Saint Patrick.

“I will,” said Oisin.

Saint Patrick prayed again to the Lord, and the sight and strength came back to Oisin. He went to the woods next morning at daybreak, Oisin did, pulled up two fine ash-trees and made a flail of them. After eating his breakfast he left the house and never stopped till he faced the haggart of the Jew. Standing before one of the stacks of wheat he hit it a wallop of his flail and broke it asunder. He kept on in this way till he slashed the whole haggart to and fro, — and the Jew running like mad up and down the highroad in front of the haggart, tearing the hair from his head when he saw what was doing to his wheat, and the face gone from him entirely he was so in dread of Oisin.

When the haggart was thrashed clean, Oisin went to Saint Patrick and told him to send his men for the wheat; for he had thrashed out the whole haggart. When Saint Patrick saw the countenance that was on Oisin, and heard what he had done he was greatly in dread of him, and knocked the strength out of him again, and Oisin became an old, blind man as before.

Saint Patrick’s men went to the haggart and there was so much wheat they didn’t bring the half of it away with them and they didn’t want it.

Oisin again lived for a while as before and then he was vexed because the cook didn’t give him what he wanted. He told Saint Patrick that he wasn’t getting enough to eat. Then Saint Patrick called up the cook before himself and Oisin and asked her what she was giving Oisin to eat. She said: “I give him at every meal what bread is baked on a large griddle and all the butter I make in one churn, and a quarter of beef besides.”

“That ought to be enough for you,” said Saint Patrick.

“Oh, then,” said Oisin, turning to the cook, “I have often seen the leg of a blackbird bigger than the quarter of beef you give me, I have often seen an ivy leaf bigger than the griddle on which you bake the bread for me, and I have often seen a single rowan berry [the mountain ash berry] bigger than the bit of butter you give me to eat.”

“You lie!” said the cook, “you never did.”

Oisin said not a word in answer.

Now there was a hound in the place that was going to have her first whelps, and Oisin said to the boy who was tending him: “Do you mind and get the first whelp she’ll have and drown the others.”

Next morning the boy found three whelps, and coming back to Oisin, said: “There are three whelps and ‘tis unknown which of them is the first.”

At Saint Patrick’s house they had slaughtered an ox the day before, and Oisin said: “Go now and bring the hide of the ox and hang it up in this room.” When the hide was hung up Oisin said, “Bring here the three whelps and throw them up against the hide.” The boy threw up one of the whelps against the oxhide. “What did he do?” asked Oisin.

“What did he do,” said the boy, “but fall to the ground.”

“Throw up another,” said Oisin. The boy threw another. “What did he do?” asked Oisin.

“What did he do but to fall the same as the first.”

The third whelp was thrown and he held fast to the hide, — didn’t fall. “What did he do?” asked Oisin.

“Oh,” said the boy, “he kept his hold.”

“Take him down,” said Oisin; “give him to the mother: bring both in here; feed the mother well and drown the other two.”

The boy did as he was commanded, and fed the two well, and when the whelp grew up the mother was banished, the whelp chained up and fed for a year and a day. And when the year and a day were spent, Oisin said, “We’ll go hunting to-morrow, and we’ll take the dog with us.”

They went next day, the boy guiding Oisin, holding the dog by a chain. They went first to the place where Oisin had touched earth and lost the magic steed from Tir na n-Og. The borabu of the Fenians of Erin was lying on the ground there still. Oisin took it up and they went on to Glen na Smuil (Thrush’s Glen). When at the edge of the glen Oisin began to sound the borabu. Birds and beasts of every kind came hurrying forward. He blew the horn till the glen was full of them from end to end.

“What do you see now?” asked he of the boy.

“The glen is full of living things.”

“What is the dog doing?” “He is looking ahead and his hair is on end.”

“Do you see anything else?”

“I see a great bird all black settling down on the north side of the glen.”

“That’s what I want,” said Oisin; “what is the dog doing now?”

“Oh, the eyes are coming out of his head, and there isn’t a rib of hair on his body that isn’t standing up.”

“Let him go now,” said Oisin. The boy let slip the chain and the dog rushed through the glen killing everything before him. When all the others were dead he turned to the great blackbird and killed that. Then he faced Oisin and the boy and came bounding toward them with venom and fierceness. Oisin drew out of his bosom a brass ball and said: “If you don’t throw this into the dog’s mouth he’ll destroy us both; knock the dog with the ball or he’ll tear us to pieces.”

“Oh,” said the boy, “I’ll never be able to throw the ball, I’m so in dread of the dog.”

“Come here at my back, then,” said Oisin, “and straighten my hand towards the dog.” The boy directed the hand and Oisin threw the ball into the dog’s mouth and killed him on the spot.

“What have we done?” asked Oisin.

“Oh, the dog is knocked,” said the boy.

“We are all right then,” said Oisin, “and do you lead me now to the blackbird of the carn, I don’t care for the others.”

They went to the great bird, kindled a fire and cooked all except one of its legs. Then Oisin ate as much as he wanted and said; “I’ve had a good meal of my own hunting and it’s many and many a day since I have had one. Now let us go on farther.” They went into the woods, and soon Oisin asked the boy; “Do you see anything wonderful?”

“I see an ivy with the largest leaves I have ever set eyes on.”

“Take one leaf of that ivy,” said Oisin.

The boy took the leaf. Near the ivy they found a rowan berry, and then went home taking the three things with them, — the blackbird’s leg, the ivy leaf, and the rowan berry. When they reached the house Oisin called for the cook, and Saint Patrick made her come to the fore. When she came Oisin pointed to the blackbird’s leg and asked, “Which is larger, that leg or the quarter of beef you give me?”

“Oh, that is a deal larger,” said the cook.

“You were right in that case,” said Saint Patrick to Oisin.

Then Oisin drew out the ivy leaf and asked, “Which is larger, this or the griddle on which you made bread for me?”

“That is larger than the griddle and the bread together,” said the cook.

“Right again,” said Saint Patrick.

Oisin now took out the rowan berry and asked: “Which is larger, this berry or the butter of one churning which you give me?”

“Oh, that is bigger,” said the cook, “than both the churn and the butter.”

“Right, every time,” said Saint Patrick.

Then Oisin raised his arm and swept the head off the cook with a stroke from the edge of his hand, saying, “You’ll never give the lie to an honest man again.”

21

THE ADVENTURES OF WOLF-MARKED

A brother and sister lived together. The brother loved his sister so well that he did not want her to work; he did all the work himself. Each morning when he was starting off to hunt he said to her. “You mustn’t go out,” and he fastened the door. When he came home in the evening he cooked and after they had eaten he said to his sister, “Lie down and sleep, I am going to a council.”

The sister never knew when her brother came home, but when she wakened in the morning he was cooking. The girl didn’t like to be fastened in, she said nothing, but all the time she was thinking how she could get out of the house.

At last a night came when her brother started off forgetting to fasten the door, then she determined to follow, him to the council. She found his tracks and after following them a long distance came to a house; she pushed the skin door aside and went in.

An old man sat by a fire making a wooden ladle. He looked up, and said, “Thank you, my niece, I have waited a long time for you to come.”

“I have come to get you to do something for me,” said the girl.

“I expected that you would ask me to do something for you. There they are, take your choice,” and he pointed to a pile of ladles.

“It isn’t a ladle that I want.”

“What is it then? Any one who wishes for something asks for it.”

“I want you to destroy my brother. He keeps me fastened into the house.”

“I can’t do that; your brother has great power. Perhaps my brother who lives near here can; he has greater power than I have.”

The girl went on. She soon came to an opening and in the opening was a house. She went to the house and looking through a crack saw an old man making bark bowls.

“Come in!” called the old man. “I have been expecting you.”

“I have come to get you to do something for me,” said the girl.

“There they are, take your choice,” said the old man pointing to a pile of bowls.

“I don’t want a bowl.”

“What do you want?”

“I want you to destroy my brother.”

“I can’t destroy him, but I can make him go a long way off.”

“Do that,” said the girl.

“This is what you must do,” said the old man. “When you get home begin to help about the cooking. To-morrow morning, just as the sun comes up, look toward the South till you see me. I shall come in the form of a white turkey. When you see me, call to your brother, ‘Oh, catch that turkey! I want it for a pet.’ He will say, ‘I have never heard of any one’s having a turkey for a pet.’ Then say, ‘Kill it for me.’ Stand just back of the door and as he draws to shoot push the door, hit the arrow and make it glance off, then your brother’s courage will appear, he will say, ‘I have never been outrun,’ and he will chase me.”

The next morning the girl insisted on helping her brother cook. Just at sunrise she saw a turkey coming from the South. When it was near the cabin she called out, “Oh, brother, catch that white turkey! I want it for a pet.”

“Who ever heard of having a turkey for a pet?” asked he.

“Well, kill it for me.”

The man fixed an arrow in his bow and as he let it fly, the girl shut the door so quickly that it hit the arrow and sent it away from the turkey — then off ran the man to catch the bird.

The two ran till midday, the turkey always a little ahead. Then the turkey called out, “Let us rest. Mark where you stop and I will mark where I stop.” After resting a while they started again and ran till dark, then the turkey called out, “Let us rest till morning.”

The man lay down at the foot of a tree; the turkey roosted in a hemlock not far away. Early the next morning they started; rested at midday, and when the sun went down they stopped for the night.

For ten days they ran, then the man began to gain on the turkey. The eleventh day they were running along the edge of a precipice when the turkey turned, ran around the man and pushed him over the cliff saying “This is the kind of man I am, I cannot be overcome.”

At the bottom of the cliff was a swift river. The man struck the water and floated down till he came to a fish dam made by the women of the river. He lodged in the dam. Soon two girls came to the river to see if they had caught many fish. One said to the other, “Look! there is a dead man in the dam. Run and tell mother to come!”

The old woman came and the three pulled the man out of the water. On each side of this man’s body was the mark of a wolf.

“It is the Wolf-Marked man,” said the mother. “He has never been overpowered before.”

They carried the man to the house and began to work over him; in a short time he opened his eyes, but he could not speak. By motions he made the girls understand that he wanted to smoke. One of the girls looked around for a pipe, then he motioned for his pouch. She found a pipe in the pouch and was about to light it when he motioned her to give it to him. He put the pipe between his lips and drawing twice or three times lighted it.

The smoke gave him strength and soon he said, “Hang skin blankets around me.”

The old woman said, “From now on you will be my son, and these girls will be your sisters.”

The women took great care of Wolf-Marked, and he was soon as well as ever.

One day steps were heard outside, the door was kicked open and a man came in. “I’ve come to give you some pudding, said he, as he threw down a lot of nasty bark. He went off and the women swept out the bark.

“Have you a bow and arrows?” asked Wolf-Marked.

The old woman gave him a bow and arrows. He dusted the bow and straightened the arrows, then stringing an arrow and saying to it, “Go and kill a bear,” he shot it through the smoke hole. Soon a noise was heard outside. The women went to the door and found a bear lying dead on the ground. They skinned it and cutting up the meat put it where it would dry.

The next morning a man kicked the door open and was about to throw down a bundle of nasty bark when he saw the meat, and, knowing there must be a man around, he turned and ran off. Soon afterward Wolf-Marked said, “A man is coming to visit me. When he gets here let him come inside the skin blankets.” — He had always stayed behind the blankets the women hung up when he first came.

The next morning when the dew was getting off the grass, the women saw a man coming; he was unkempt and shabby. When he reached the house, the mother told him to go behind the skins. The women heard the two men talking; toward night Shabby Man came out and went away.

In a few days the same man came again. This time he brought news: the chief’s daughters were to marry but their husbands must be men who possessed powerful spirits. Spirits that could take any form they liked, walk around a fire and scatter wampum beads.

"Will you try?" asked Shabby Man.

"No," said Wolf-Marked.

That night Shabby Man went to the chief's house. All the powerful men were there. When they saw Shabby Man they pushed him out, but he looked through a crack and saw what was going on.

The power of the first man who tried was in a fisher pouch. He called the pouch to life and sent it around the fire. It went half way, then dropped down, a pouch again.

The second man's power was in a mink pouch. The pouch became a live mink, took wampum beads from a nearby pile and scattered them till a little more than half way around the fire, then the mink dropped down, a pouch again. Each man tried his power, but the power died before it got around the fire.

After a while, the chief said to the people, "Go home now, but come again to-morrow night."

The next day Shabby Man urged Wolf-Marked to go to the chief's house and try his power. At last Wolf-Marked said, "I will go to-morrow night."

Shabby Man went to the chief's house. Again he was thrown out and again he looked in through a crack. The men cheered one another; Shabby Man cheered too. Soon he saw that as each man tried, all of the others blew against his power to prevent its getting around the fire; Shabby Man blew too.

After a while the chief said, "Go home now; we will try again to-morrow.

That night when Wolf-Marked was walking around outside thinking what he could use to show his power, he heard a noise and then a voice said to him in a whisper, "I have come to help you. Here is a pouch. You will find another pouch inside of this one. Your friend will use the mud turtle pouch; the fawn pouch is yours, but you must not go to the chief’s house. Let the old woman and Shabby Man go. Inside the pouches are little pieces of medicine for the woman and Shabby Man to put in their mouths when they blow. When they are in the chief’s house they must sit side by side. The woman will take the mud turtle pouch, shake it till it grows large and comes to life, then Shabby Man will set it down and tell it to go around the fire and not to let anything stop it. When the turtle gets around, the woman must put the

fawn pouch down, bring it to life and tell it to go around the fire. When the turtle and fawn have won Shabby Man must take one of the chief’s daughters and go to his own home; the other daughter must come to you.

Wolf-Marked took the pouches and thanked his friend.

The next morning, just at daylight, Shabby Man came and asked, “Are you ready?”

“I am ready,” answered Wolf-Marked.

“Well, let us try our power and see if we are going to succeed.”

“We will succeed,” said Wolf-Marked.

“Let us try so as to get used to doing it,” urged Shabby Man.

“There is no need of trying,” said the other.

Shabby Man urged a long time, then he went off but he soon came back and began again, urged till he was tired, went off and again came back to tease Wolf-Marked to try his power. All day he kept going and coming back to urge again. At dark he said, “We must start now or we will not get seats.”

“Wait a while,” answered his friend. “They will give us seats when we get there.”

After dark Wolf -Marked said to the old woman, “Mother, I want you to go with this man to the chief’s house.”

Shabby Man was disappointed. “Won’t you go?” asked he.

“No, my mother will go in my place.”

“You had better go, we may fail.”

“You will not fail,” said Wolf-Marked.

On the road Shabby Man said, “Let us hurry!” And he went ahead and waited. When the woman overtook him, he again urged her to walk fast. At last they were there.

When the people saw Shabby Man and the woman they wanted to throw them out, but the chief said, “Let them stay.”

When Shabby Man’s turn came he put the piece of medicine in his mouth; the woman put down the turtle Pouch and urged the turtle on. The people began to call for a close of the meeting. Shabby Man insisted on trying and said, “O chief, give us a chance!”

The chief said to the people, “Sit down and give them a chance.”

They did all they could to obstruct the turtle, but it came around to the starting point. Shabby Man picked it up and gave it to the woman. She shook it and made it small. It was again a pouch.

Shabby Man got up and took his place by the chief’s daughter.

The people said, “Now we will go home,” but the woman insisted on having a chance. They got up to go, but she cried at the top of her voice, “Come back, and let me try. If I succeed I have some one to marry the chief’s daughter.”

The chief said, “Sit down and let the woman try.”

She got the fawn skin pouch out and shook it. It became a live fawn. She put it down and told it to run around the fire. It was around in a flash.

The chief said, “This is the end. What I required has been accomplished.”

Everyone went home, with Shabby Man went the chief’s elder daughter.

The next morning men came to Wolf-Marked, and said,

The chief has sent for you to come and claim his daughter.”

“She must come to me,” said the young man, “and Shabby Man and his wife must come too.”

The three came, and Wolf-Marked was the husband of the chief's younger daughter.

The men hunted and killed plenty of game; the women took care of the skins, and cooked. Some time passed. The men of the village were jealous of Wolf-Marked and they plotted against him. They put up a long pole, and said, "Whoever can lodge a ball on the top of the pole will win, we have a man who can do it. We will challenge Wolf-Marked and he will lose. The wager will be seven heads."

As the woman and her daughters sat in the house, they saw a man coming on a run; the door flew open and in he came. When he saw Wolf-Marked he said, "I have come to challenge you to lodge a ball on the top of a pole, the wager is seven heads on each side."

"Very well," said Wolf-Marked. "That is the game amuse myself with." When the runner left, the old woman began to cry and lament. "Don't cry," said Wolf-Marked. "Nothing will happen to us." She only cried the harder, and wailed that he would surely lose, and then the seven members of the family would be destroyed. But after a time he was able to quiet her.

That night when Wolf-Marked was standing outside and thinking about the challenge, thinking that maybe he would lose, he heard a whisper and a voice said, "When you were challenged you said, 'That is the game I amuse myself with.' This will come true. Don't use, their ball and don't begin the game. Here is the ball you are to use, and here is a piece of medicine for you to put in your mouth when you go to the place; with it in your mouth blow against their ball."

The next morning, when it was time to go, Shabby Man said, "I am sick, I can't go. Couldn't you bet three against three, the old woman and her two daughters on our side?"

"No," said Wolf-Marked, "We have agreed seven against seven. We must all go."

When they reached the place, they saw a long pole standing in the center of an opening. Seven men were standing near the pole; they were the wager on the chief’s side. Now Wolf-Marked and his wife, the mother and her two daughters and Shabby Man and his wife stood together as the wager on Wolf-Marked’s side. Stuck into the pole was a great flint knife with which to cut off their heads.

The chief asked Wolf-Marked to begin the game. When he refused a man on the chief’s side picked up the ball, rubbed it a long time, then threw it into the air. It came down, hit the top of the pole and bounded back and went up again. Wolf-Marked was blowing against it, and he had the medicine in his mouth. At last he said in his mind, “Let the ball fall.” It came to the ground, then the chief gave it to Wolf-Marked, and said, “Now it is Your turn.”

“I have a ball of my own,” said Wolf-Marked, and he refused to take the chief’s ball. He said to his own ball, “Be faithful. Don’t fall, stick to the pole.”

He rubbed the ball in his hands, then threw it up, the whiz was heard, and right away the ball was out of sight, After a long time they heard it strike the sky, and it made a pleasant sound, a sound that was heard by all of the people in the world. It came down, hit the pole and bounded back to the sky. Three times it went to the sky, The third time it hit, the sound was very faint. Many times it went up, but a little lower every time.

Each man on the chief’s side was wishing with all his power that the ball would fall to the ground. The seven of Wolf-Marked’s party were wishing it to stay on the pole. There was great excitement.

The ball struck the top of the pole and stayed there.

“You have won the game,” said the chief.

“That is what I expected. I knew that we would win,” said Shabby Man. And straightway he cut off the seven heads, the chief’s wager.

Wolf-Marked and his friends went home and were happy, but the men of the village were still plotting. After a good deal of talk one of the men said, “This is what we will do: I am the swiftest runner in the world. I have never been beaten. Challenge Wolf-Marked to run a race with me. We will run around the lake, and the wager will be seven heads.”

A man went to Wolf-Marked and notified him of the race and its conditions.

“That is the game I like best,” said he. “I have never been beaten; I can outrun anyone.”

When the old woman heard of the challenge, she cried and lamented.

“Stop crying,” said Wolf-Marked. “Nothing will happen to us.”

When everyone in the house was asleep, Wolf-Marked went outside and stood thinking what he could do to win. All at once he heard a whisper and a voice said, “Come here!”

He went toward the voice and listened, soon the voice said, “You are going to run a race. You said that you liked the game; you will not be disappointed this time. When the runner finds that you are winning, he will throw back a buffalo horn. It will stick in your foot, pull it out and throw it at him as hard as you can. You will win.”

The next morning Wolf-Marked said to his family, “Get ready!”

“I am sick,” said Shabby Man, “I can’t go.”

“You must go,” said Wolf-Marked. “The wager is seven heads, we must all be there.”

When they reached the place, they saw a crowd of people, and seven men standing a little to one side; they were the chief’s wager.

The chief said, “Each runner must take hold of a long pole and run against that hickory tree over there, bend the tree down drawing the pole across it. When the pole comes off from the top and the tree springs back, drop the pole and run.” The pole was of red willow.

The runners started exactly at midday, the chief’s runner holding one end of the pole, Wolf-Marked the other. They had to pull hard to bend the tree over. Just as they got the pole near the top, the chief’s runner let go of his end and Wolf-Marked was thrown far back beyond the crowd of people. He sprang up and saying, “I have never been beaten!” he gave a whoop and ran. His opponent was out of sight. People shouted with joy.

Shabby Man rolled on the ground, and cried, “Oh, we are beaten! We are beaten! If he had only said that the wager would be one head, and that his own!”

When Wolf-Marked got out of sight, he called a mole, and said, “You see that man running. Get ahead of him!”

Wolf-Marked went into the mole; the mole went under the ground and came out ahead of the runner, who wasn’t going very fast for he thought Wolf-Marked was far behind.

After a while he saw a track and thought, “Can he be ahead?” then he ran swiftly, but didn’t see anyone. Looking again at the tracks he said in his mind, “He is ahead!” and taking a buffalo horn out of his pouch he told it to go to the young man and stick in his foot; and he threw it. The horn overtook Wolf-Marked and as one of his feet came up it went into it, and he fell to the ground. He tried to pull the horn out, but couldn’t. As the chief’s runner passed he called out, “Get up! I never before saw a man sit down when he was running a race.”

Just then Wolf-Marked’s whispering friend said to him, “Pull the horn out, throw it, and say, ‘Go fast and enter the runner’s foot so deep that he can’t get you out.’”

Wolf-Marked threw the horn and ran on. He hadn’t gone far when he saw his opponent sitting on the ground trying to get the horn out of his foot. “Stop and help me,” begged he.

“I didn’t say that when you sent the horn into my foot, said Wolf-Marked, and he ran on.

All the people were watching to see which runner was ahead. The chief’s party said, “We might as well begin to cut off those heads, we will cut off six, then take Wolf-Marked’s when he comes.”

A man seized a flint knife and ran to Shabby Man, but the chief called to him, “Wait till the runners get here.”

At last they saw one runner, then the crowd shouted, “Our man is coming! Our man is coming!”

When the runner came a little nearer, people began to feel uneasy; they were not quite sure that it was their man — then they saw that it was Wolf-Marked.

Shabby Man looked up, he had been sitting with his head down, thinking that right away be was going to lose his life. Then he called out, “Just as I told you! I knew Wolf-Marked would win.”

When the runner came near, he called to his friend, “Why don’t you take the wager?”

Up jumped Shabby Man, and soon seven heads were lying on the ground.

Twin boys were born to Wolf-Marked and they were marked exactly as he was. When the first one was born, the father picked him up and threw him over the skin enclosure where he himself had stayed when he first came to the old woman’s cabin, and as he threw the child, he said, “This, my first son, must grow to be a powerful man.” When the second child was born, he threw it over the enclosure, and said, “This, my second son must grow to be a powerful man.”

Nobody paid any attention to the children. After time talking was heard, then a voice said, “Father, we wan t a club and a ball to play with.”

Wolf-Marked threw in a ball and a club. Some days passed, then one of the boys called out, “Father, we are tired of the club and ball, we want a bow and arrows.

He gave them a bow and made them red willow arrows.

For a time they were satisfied, then one called out, “Father we want to go for our aunt!”

“Very well. When you start go in the direction the sun goes, and don’t let anything stop you.”

The boys started. They went through a wide valley and climbed a hill at the end of the valley. They were walking along quietly when the younger brother called out, “Stop brother, and look at this.”

“No,” answered the elder brother, “our father told us not to stop.”

The younger brother thought, “Yes, our father told us not to let anything stop us,” and he hurried on.

They had traveled a number of days when the younger boy asked, “Brother, what would frighten you most?”

“Our father told us not to be frightened by anything,” answered the elder boy. “What would you be afraid of?”

“Of Big Head (Whirlwind).”

That minute the boys heard a great noise. From the southwest came a terrible roar. The elder brother kept on; the younger was frightened, but when Big Head was near he said to himself, “I won’t be afraid.”

That minute the roar and wind ceased.

At last the brothers came to a trail and saw foot-prints all going in one direction. The trail ran north and south, the foot-prints pointed north, some were very large, others were small.

The elder brother glanced at the tracks and went on, the Younger stopped and looking at the tracks said, “Let us follow them and find out what is going on.”

“Our father told us not to stop,” answered his brother.

“It won’t take long; we can come right back,” urged the Younger. The elder brother yielded and they followed the foot-prints; they had not gone far when a man of enormous size came along, seized the boys and, tucking one under each arm, walked off. Soon he came to a village and going into a hut at the edge of it said to men sitting around, “I have brought game. We will notify the: people.”

The boys were taken to the long house in the center of the village. Two large kettles were brought and made ready. As people came in they went up and looked the game over. When the chief came, he looked also, but what he saw frightened him. Right away he said, “Free these boys; they are the sons of the Wolf-Marked Man. If we harm them he will destroy us; he is the most powerful man in the world.”

The people of this village were all Frost (or Ice) people.

They liberated the boys and the two traveled on till they came to a beautiful country.

“I think that our aunt is near here,” said the younger boy.

“Oh, no,” said the elder, “she must be far away yet.”

The younger brother insisted that his aunt was near and he began to look around. The elder stopped and watched him.

The boy came to a hollow tree and in the opening saw the body of a woman.

“Come here, brother,” called he, “I have found our aunt.”

He struck the woman with his arrow; she didn’t move, then he struck her twice with his bow, and said, “Your brother has sent for you.”

The woman moved and roused up a little; her face was covered with scabs and sores and she was frightful to look at. The younger boy rubbed her with saliva; the scabs fell off, and she was well. Then the boys saw that she was a fine-looking woman.

“Now we will go home,” said the younger brother, and the three started.

Wolf-Marked had forgiven his sister for trying to destroy him; be was glad to see her. After this they all lived together happily.

22

A BATTLE BETWEEN FROST AND WHIRLWIND

Dagwanoenyent (Whirlwind), an old woman, the oldest of all her people, lived in the forest with her two grandchildren, a boy and a girl.

One day when the grandmother was out digging roots a Génonskwa (Frost and Great Cold) woman came to the cabin, picked up the little girl and, after speaking kindly, telling her she was a nice little thing, swallowed her.

Then she began to talk to the boy. Sitting down by him, she said, “Get on to my back and I will carry you to where your grandmother is digging roots.”

The boy did as Génonskwa told him to, but he was frightened, and he clung to her so tightly that he became fastened to her back, and couldn’t get off, though he tried hard.

Génonskwa started off, but in a different direction from where the boy’s grandmother was. When the boy told her she was going the wrong way, she said, “No, I am not, we will soon come to where she is at work.”

The woman went far into the forest and the boy began to cry for his grandmother. He cried so hard and loud that Génonskwa told him to get off of her back. She didn’t like to hear him cry, and she thought it was best to eat him at once.

He couldn’t get off and she couldn’t put her hands around to pull him off, nor turn her head to bite him.

When the boy saw that she couldn’t harm him if he stayed where he was, he clung all the tighter and stopped trying to get away.

When the grandmother came home and found that the boy and girl were not in the cabin, she was frightened and began to search for them. After a while she came upon the tracks of the Génonskwa woman and then she knew who had stolen the children and she followed the tracks, thinking she would soon overtake the thief.

The woman was tired of the boy and tried in every way to free herself of him. She rubbed him against hickory trees and against rocks. He said, “Oh, I like that, rub harder.” She stopped then and traveled on.

The grandmother followed in the form of a Whirlwind Génonskwa said to the boy, “Your grandmother is coming. She will kill us both. Get off of my back.”

The boy kept still, didn’t answer. The woman looked around for a hiding place and found one in a deep ravine. She dug a hole, went into it and covered herself with the earth that slipped down from above. When she heard Whirlwind coming nearer and nearer she asked the boy, “Can you hear your grandmother coming?”

He didn’t answer.

When Whirlwind rushed over the place where the woman lay, the boy shouted to her. She heard him and, changing her course, came straight to where they were. When she asked the boy if he was there, the woman told him to keep still, but he called out, “I am here!”

Whirlwind blew the earth from the hiding place and shouted, “Dagwanoenyent, get off of Génonskwa’s back!” That instant the boy slipped off and went among the rocks. The old woman hurled stones at the Génonskwa, tore off her clothes and killed her. Then she took her grandson and started for home.

On the way, she said to him, “Never let yourself be treated in that manner again. Never let anyone abuse you. You can conquer everybody if you use your power, for you are of the Whirlwind family.”

The old woman stayed at home for a time, caring for her grandson.

Meanwhile some of the Génonskwa woman’s people found her trail and followed it till they came to where her body was. They asked who had killed her and her spirit answered, “Whirlwind killed me.” Right away the Génonskwa men decided to kill old woman Whirlwind.

Whirlwind, out on one of her journeys, discovered their plans. She went home and said to her grandson, “We must get your sister out of Génonskwa ‘s stomach, she is sitting there and crying for me.”

They set out and when they reached the place where the body lay, the old grandmother built a fire and began to burn tobacco, saying, “This is what we like! This is what we like!” She burned half a pouchful and pushed the smoke toward the body, repeating, “This is what we like.” Then she called, “My grandchild, come out of Génonskwa’s body!”

When the girl didn’t come, the old woman said to her grandson, “We must have people come and help us. We have many relatives, uncles, aunts, and cousins, we will call them.” Then she called each relative by name, and one after another they came. They built a fire at Génonskwa’s head, and burned tobacco, as they walked around the fire each threw in tobacco, saying, “Ne vonoes, ne vonoes” (This is what we like).

When the last one had thrown in tobacco, the girl, panting for breath, came out and asked, “How long have I been here?” She was very weak. They gave her tobacco smoke and she inhaled it till she gained strength, then all Whirlwinds went home.

When the old woman and her grandchildren had been at home some time a Génonskwa woman came to the cabin, she talked pleasantly, found out there were only three persons there and left thinking it would be a small task to kill them.

After the woman had gone, Whirlwind said to her grandchildren, “We are in trouble now. A great number of those people will come against us. They have assembled somewhere nearby. When the struggle begins I don’t know that we will be able to come home again.” She went out and called, “Dagwanoenyent Gowa! Dagwanoenyent Gowa!”

The girl asked, “Grandmother, what are you doing?”

“I am calling our relatives,” answered the old woman.

The Whirlwinds came, one by one, when all were there the old woman said, “Each one of you must have a big round stone to strike with.”

They had just picked up the stones when the Génonskwas began to come; there were thousands and thousands of them.

The Whirlwinds were frightened when they saw how. strong the enemy was. The old woman said, “We must separate and fight singly. Keep the stones in your hands, be firm and have faith that you will kill one man with each blow you strike.”

The Whirlwinds went in different directions; the Génonskwas chased them.

The Whirlwinds struck whenever they had the chance and kept retreating, they went up a high mountain, fighting as they went. The old woman said, “When we all reach the top we will go down a short distance on the other side. When the Génonskwas come to the top we will strike them on the east and on the west, some of us will get behind them and drive them over the mountain and into the deep ravine on the other side, they will die there for a river runs through the ravine and they cannot cross it.

The Génonskwas came to the top of the mountain and seeing nothing of the Whirlwinds, thought they had escaped. They stood and listened. Soon they heard wind on each side of them. The sound grew louder and louder and right away the Dagwanoenyents struck them on both sides and, uniting in the rear, struck them from behind., So fierce was the attack and power of the Whirlwinds that they tore out all the trees by their roots, swept the earth from the top of the mountain and hurled trees and earth into the ravine and river below. The Génonskwas Were piled up, like rocks, in the river and along the banks.

The Whirlwinds were dancing and rejoicing on the top of the mountain when the old woman said, “We have hurled our enemies into the ravine, now we will finish them. Half of you go along the ridges east of the river and the other half go along the western ridges and blow all the trees and rocks and earth into the ravine.”

They went, and when they came together again they had stripped the mountain spurs naked and filled up the ravine. The river had no outlet; it became a great lake and ever after was called, “The grave of the Génonskwas.”

23

A BIRD IN SEARCH OF A MATE

A young woman lived alone on the bank of a large river. One day she thought, “I am old enough to have a husband. It is lonely here by myself.”

She oiled her hair, painted her face red, put on her best clothes and went to a spring. She dipped up a bucket of water and looking in it said, “I am nice enough for any man.”

Then she started off along the bank of the river that ran through a forest. Toward midday she came to a place where she saw signs of people living near, and, seating herself on a log she began to sing, “I wonder if any man around here wants a wife. I wonder if any man around here wants a wife.”

Soon some one far off in the forest answered, “I want a wife. I want a wife.”

Then the woman sang back, “What will we live on? What will we live on when we live together?”

And he sang, “We will live on moss.”

And she, singing, answered, “I couldn’t live on moss. I am too good for such coarse food; I’m a nice looking girl.”

Again she traveled along the bank of the river. It was near sunset when the young woman came to a place where she saw signs of people living near. She seated herself on a log and sang, “I wonder if any man around here wants a wife. I wonder if any man around here wants a wife.”

Some one, not far off, answered, singing, “I want a wife. I want a wife.”

Then she sang, “What will we live on? What will live on? What will we live on when we live together?”

And he, singing, answered, “We will live on hawthorn berries and roots.”

She sang, I cannot live on hawthorn berries and roots. I am too good for such food; I’m a nice looking girl.”

The young woman traveled on till dusk then, seeing signs of some one having been along a short time before, she seated herself on a log and sang, “I wonder if any man around here wants a wife. I wonder if any man around here wants a wife.”

Close by some one sang, “I want a wife. I want a wife.”

And she, singing, asked, “What will we live on? What will we live on when we live together?”

And he sang back, “When we live together we will live on seeds.”

Singing, she answered, “That is the food I like; seeds are nice and soft.”

The singer, hearing her answer, was pleased. He came and sat on a log by her side, and, singing, asked, “Did you understand my song when you asked what we would live on when we lived together?”

She, singing, answered, “Yes, seeds. I love seeds, they are sweet and soft.”

Then the two flew off along the bank of the river, and ever since have lived happily together — The first birds of Spring.

The first man to answer the young woman’s call was a deer — the second was a bear; the third was a bird like herself.

24

GÉHA AIDS A DESERTED BOY

In a cabin at the edge of a village lived a grandmother and her grandson. The grandmother was old and the grandson was young and they were so poor that they ate scraps given them by their neighbors.

Once, when a hunting party was starting off, the little boy followed it. The hunters traveled five days, then camped and built a bark hut.

The boy was too young to hunt; he went out with the men but never killed anything. They called him Othwénsawénhde from the part of a deer they threw out for him to eat — “the small liver by the side of the large one.”

When the hunters were ready to start for home, they agreed to leave the boy, not letting him know that they were going; they wanted to travel fast.

One day when he came back to the hut, the boy found only the pile of hair left from the skins they had dressed. The men had taken everything and gone. The child didn’t know the way home.

That night he slept on the pile of hair; the next morning be found the chin bone of a deer and getting out the marrow ate it. When it was night again, he heard somebody coming; the door opened, and a man said, “Well, Othwénsawénhde, you think you are going to die, but you are not. Get your knife and put it on the stump outside the door, and in the morning go and bring it in. You must hunt, to-morrow.” The stranger, who was Géha (Wind), went away.

The boy had an old basswood knife; he carried it out and put it on the stump. Early in the morning he went to the stump and there he found a new knife. He took his bow and arrow and knife and went into the woods. He saw a deer, ran after it, overtook it and killed it with his knife. Then he threw his bow and arrow away and afterward when hunting used his knife. He killed large game and had plenty of meat.

One night he heard somebody coming, then a man pushed open the door, and said, calling him by name, “I am here to tell you that Nyagwaihe is coming to kill you. To-night put your knife on the stump outside, get it in the morning and go to the top of the tall elm tree at the end of the hut; hide in the branches and wait. Nyagwaihe will climb the tree and look over into the hut to see if you are there. When he is coming down backwards, stick your knife into a small white spot in his right hind foot; he will fall to the ground, dead. Then pile up wood around the body and burn it.”

Géha went out.

The boy put his knife on the stump and in the morning the old knife was gone and a larger and longer knife was in its place. He picked up the knife and climbing the tree hid in the branches. Just at daybreak he heard a terrible roar, and right away Nyagwaihe was climbing the tree. When he got to the top, he looked into the smoke-hole of the hut, and said, “There is a fire; the boy must be there,” and he started down the tree.

The boy saw the white spot and stuck his knife into it; Nyagwaihe fell to the ground, dead.

That night, just as the boy was going to sleep, he heard somebody coming. Géha opened the door, and said, “I came to tell you that those hunters who left you here are starving. Ten days from now they will come back to the hut. You must be kind to them. Don’t feel proud or boast of your swiftness. You felt proud, that is why Nyagwaihe came to destroy you. ”Don’t say that there is no one who can outrun you, When they come tell them to help themselves to the meat you have dried. When they are ready to go home, go with them; tell every man to take as much meat as he can carry. Put your knife on the stump.”

Géha went away. The boy put his knife, which was made of basswood, on the stump. In the morning the knife was shorter and smaller.

During the next nine days the boy killed many deer, The tenth day he stayed in the hut, watching and listening. At midday the hunters came. When they saw how much; meat the boy had, they asked forgiveness. He told them to eat as much meat as they wanted, then take as much home as each man could carry.

They took half of the meat. The boy packed up the other half, shook it till it was as light a pack as any one of the men was carrying, then started on behind them.

When they got back to the village, the boy went to his grandmother’s house and threw down his pack. That minute it came to its natural size.

“Oh,” cried his grandmother, “I am happy now. The hunters said you were lost in the woods. But you are back and have brought plenty of meat.”

“Go, grandmother,” said the boy, “and ask all the women to come and get as much meat as they can carry away.”

The women came and carried away many loads of meat, but the meat in the house wasn’t diminished. There seemed to be as much as before any was taken.

Now a chief in the East challenged the chief of the village to run a race; whichever side was beaten all the men on that side would lose their lives.

The chief called the people together to decide on a runner. The boy said, “I will run with the man you choose and you can decide which is the better runner.”

The chief was pleased. He chose a man and the two stood apart. Other men also volunteered to run. The chief raised his hand, then dropped it, and the runners started, that minute the boy was out of sight, then off at the end of the opening a small dark object was seen. The other runner was only half way across the opening when the boy was back at the starting place. Then he began to boast that nobody could outrun him; he forgot Géha's warning.

There was a valley that went across the world; that valley was to be the race course. At the edge of the world was a rock that stood up like the trunk of a huge tree. The rock was white flint and it shone brightly; there was no other rock like it. The runner who reached the rock was to bring back a chip of it.

The runner for the challenging chief was tall and thin. At midday the sign was given and the runners started — the boy ran on the ground, his opponent ran in the air.

The boy used his full power and soon came back with a piece of the stone in his hand. After a long time the other runner came — the challenging chief and his men lost their heads.

The boy was proud and boastful. That night, just as he was falling asleep, he heard somebody coming. The door opened and a man said, "Come out, I want to talk to you."

He went out.

"I challenge you to a foot race," said the man. "You must wager the heads of all the people of the village, except yourself, against my head. I have no people. We will start at daylight and run till the sun reaches the middle of the Blue."

"Very well," said the boy.

The man disappeared. The boy told his grandmother what had happened and she started off to notify the people that their heads had been put up as a wager. While she was gone Géha came to the boy, and said, "I warned you not to boast and told you what would happen if you did. Now you must do your best or you will be beaten. You must help yourself. I am going home."

The people assembled and the challenger came. Just as the sun rose, word was given and the runners started. As the challenger ran he threw up so much dirt that the boy was thrown back, and he fell. The people couldn’t see the runner; but off in the distance was a Nyagwaihe.

As the boy fell, Géha was there, and said, “Get up and start! Help yourself and I’ll help you.”

The boy ran to the first knoll, looked but didn’t see his opponent, reached the second knoll and saw him on a knoll far ahead, then saw him on the fourth knoll.

Now a Whirlwind took the boy up and, like a flash of lightning, put him at the runner’s heels. He called out, “Hurry, or I’ll overtake you!”

The runner used all his strength and soon was out of sight.

Again a Whirlwind picked up the boy and put him at the heels of his opponent. He shot twice and called out, “Do your best or I’ll beat you!”

The runner couldn’t get out of sight, he was losing strength.

Again a Whirlwind came and as it picked the boy up a voice said, out of the cloud, “This is the last time I’ll help you.”

Whirlwind put the boy down at his opponent’s heels; the runner, now in his real form, the form of a Nyagwaihe, said, “You have overtaken me and won the race.”

Exactly at midday the boy cut off the Bear’s head, and taking it started for home. When over three hills he was tired; he hung the head on the limb of a tree and taking the tongue went on. He went over two other hills and was tired; he hung the tongue on the limb of a tree and went on over other hills and knolls. When he reached home and told the people that he had killed his opponent, they said,

“We will go and see the body.”

“You’ll find it over the tenth hill. I tried to bring back the head, but seven hills from here I was tired and I hung it on the limb of a tree. I took the tongue, but when I came to the fifth hill I was tired and I hung the tongue on the limb of a tree.”

It took a long time for the people to get to the first hill. When they had traveled five Summers and five Winters, they came to a hill. On the top of the hill was a tree, and on the tree was the tongue of the Nyagwaihe. The ground around the tree was trampled down; thousands of wild beasts had been there and tried to get the tongue, the men looked at it and went on.

When they had traveled two more Summers and two more Winters they came to the seventh hill and found a skull, all that was left of the head. The ground around the tree was trampled down: thousands of wild beasts had been there and tried to get the head.

They traveled three Summers and three Winters, then reached the tenth hill. For a great distance around the ground had been made bare and hard by the trampling of wild beasts.

The place where Nyagwaihe fell had become a deer-lick, not a bone or a trace of the body was left.

The men were ten years going home. The boy aided by Géha had made the journey between sunrise and midday.

25

GÉHA, THE FRIEND OF A DESERTED BOY

A party of Senecas went hunting. When they had killed many deer and were ready to go home, they didn't know what to do with a little boy whose father and mother had died while they had been in the forest.

The hunters had so much meat they couldn't carry the boy and he couldn't walk so far. At last they decided to leave him in the cabin, leaving plenty of wood and meat.

The child cried bitterly and begged to go, but they left him.

When the hunters reached home and the report went around that the child had been left in the woods, every one thought it would die.

After some days the chief sent a man to see if the child was alive.

As soon as the messenger was outside of the village, he changed himself into a bear.

The little boy kept a fire, cooked meat, and lived. One cold night he began to cry; the meat was almost gone and the wood was burned up. While crying he heard some one come to the door. After making a noise, as if shaking A snow, a man said, “Little boy, you think you are going I o die, you are not. I am going to take care of you. The chief has sent a man to see if you are alive, but he will not be here for a long time. I will be your friend. When you want me think of me and I will come.”

The man went away and the boy fell asleep. In the morning he found a pile of wood at the door, and on a low limb of a tree hung a piece of deer meat. Now he was happy; he built a fire and cooked some of the meat.

The next night the man came again; he stopped at the door, and shook his feet, as if shaking off snow, but he didn't go in. He called to the boy, and said, "The man who is coming won't help you; he has taken the form of a bear. He will be here at midday, to-morrow. In the morning you will find, between the roots of the old stump near the door, a rusty knife. Sharpen it and kill the bear. When you hear him coming, run to the spring where the tall hemlock stands, and climb the tree; the bear will follow you. Slip down on the other side and as he is coming down stab him in the forefoot."

The boy did as the voice told him. When he had killed the bear, he went back to the cabin. The next night the stranger came to the door, and said, "My friend, men are coming for you. Go home with them, they will be good to you. The chief will adopt you and you will become the swiftest runner living, but don't be proud and boast of your power. I am your friend but you will never see me. I am the one who is called Géha (Wind). If you are in trouble think of me and I will help you. When the men come they will ask about the messenger the chief sent, you will say, 'I haven't seen a man, but one morning a strong wind went through the woods.'"

The next day four men came with food for the boy. They saw that he had wood and meat, but no bow or arrow. He went home with the men and the chief had him brought to his own house, for the child's relatives were all dead.

The chief said, "You will be my grandson and live with me." When they gave the boy a bow and arrows, he asked for a club.

"What do you want of a club?" asked the chief.

"To kill deer."

The chief had a club made for him. He chased deer, overtook them hit them on the head and killed them. He killed bird's before they could fly away. Géha had told him he would be the swiftest runner living and he always had that in mind. When he saw boys running he laughed, and thought, “That running is nothing. I can run faster than any boy living.”

One night some one struck on the door near the boy’s bed and a man called out, “Who is in here?”

“I am,” answered the boy.

“Well, I challenge you to run a race with me. You think you are the swiftest runner in the world. We will start from the second mountain and run from sunrise till sundown.”

In the morning the boy asked the chief, whom he called Grandfather,” if in the night he had heard some one talking outside.

“I did not,” answered the chief.

“Well, a man came and challenged me to run a race,”

“I don’t think it was a man,” said the chief; “it must have been a beast and I am afraid you will get killed.”

“I’ve been challenged, and I must go,” said the boy. “I must be ready the third morning from this.”

He made ten pairs of moccasins, put flint in his arrows, and parched corn to eat. On the third morning he started, When near the appointed place he saw a dark mass. At first he didn’t know what it was, but when daylight came he saw it was a great bear.

When the sun appeared, the bear said, “Now, we’ll start.”

He leaped across the valley and on to the first mountain; where he struck the ground sank. He leaped from mountain to mountain, but the boy had to run through the valleys.

At midday the bear was ahead and the boy thought, am lost. I wish my friend Géha would come.”

That minute Géha came as a whirlwind and carried the boy far ahead of the bear. As Géha traveled he threw down trees and that delayed the bear for it had to jump over them.

At last the bear’s strength gave out and he called to the boy that he might have his life.

The boy killed the bear, then he burned tobacco to friend Géha and asked to be taken home, Géha carried him in a whirlwind and put him down in front of the chief’s house.

“I have come, Grandfather,” said the boy, “I have killed bear. You must send men to bring it home.”

The chief sent eight men. They were twenty days going and twenty returning, the boy wasn’t half a day, for Géha had carried him over the woods and under the clouds.

26

GÁQGÁ

Raven was traveling but he didn't know whence he came or whither he was going. As he journeyed along he was thinking, "How did I come to be alive? Where did I come from? Where am I going?" After traveling a long time he saw a smoke and going toward it saw four hunters — blackbirds. Afraid to go near them he hid in the forest and watched.

The next morning after the hunters had started away, Raven crept up to their camp, stole their meat, carried it into the woods and made a camp for himself. He was lonely and he said, "I wish there were other people here." Looking around he saw a house west of his camp and going to it found Robin and his wife and five children. Raven ate the youngest child, then ate the other four. The father and mother tried to drive him away, but could not. When at last Raven went off he left old Rabin and his wife crying for their children.

Sometime after this, Raven saw a camp off in the southeast and going there found a family of Sparrows. He was afraid of the old people and he ran off, but they followed him, caught up and hit him on the head till they drove him far away.

"It is a shame to let such little people beat me!" thought Raven. But he was afraid to go back.

Now Raven had gone far from his camp; he hunted everywhere in the forest but couldn’t find it. “Well,” said he at last, “let it go, I don’t care!” and he walked away toward the North. Just before dark, he found a camp and going towards it saw four men and a large quantity of meat. He hid in the forest and the next morning’, looking toward the camp, he again saw the hunters.

“I’ll wait till they go away,” thought Raven, “then I’ll steal their meat.” Soon he heard the men moving around, then all was quiet and he knew that they had gone. He crept slowly toward the camp, but when he reached it be didn’t find even one bite of meat — they were the hunters from whom he had stolen before. They had finished hunting, had packed their meat and started for home.

Raven was disappointed. He walked on and toward night found another camp. Creeping near it, he again saw the four hunters. He listened to what they were saying.

One said, “I wonder who stole our meat that day?”

Another said, “I think the thief is walking around in the woods, I think his name is Raven.”

“Oh,” thought Raven, “they are talking about me. They will be on the watch. How can I get their meat? Then he said, “Let them fall asleep and sleep soundly!”

That minute the four hunters fell asleep. Raven went up boldly, took their meat, carried it off into the woods and hid it, saying, “This is the kind of man I am!”

The next morning the four hunters missed their meat.

One said, “Somebody has stolen my meat!”

Another asked, “Who has stolen my meat?”

The third said, “I dreamed that I saw Raven around here and he started off toward the Southwest.”

Then the four said, “Let us follow the direction given by the dream.”

The hunters started to follow the thief. Soon they came to the place where he was camped. Raven had been out all night and now he was sleeping soundly.

One of the men said, “We must kill him.”

“No,” said another, “let him live, he didn’t kill us while we were asleep.”

They took their meat and went away.

When Raven woke up, he was very hungry, but the meat was gone. “Well,” thought he, “I must hunt for something to eat.” He traveled around in every direction but found no game. About midday he heard the noise of people. He listened a while then went on till he came to a house. A man inside the house was singing and the song said, “Raven is coming! Look out! Be careful! Raven is coming!”

“Why does he sing about me?” thought Raven, “I’ll go in and find out.”

He went into the house and found Ground-bird and his wife and four children.

“I have come to stay a few days with you,” said Raven.

“Very well,” said the man.

That night Raven ate the four children, then he lay down and slept.

The next morning the father and mother asked, “Where are our children?”

Raven said, “I dreamed that a man came and carried your children off, and my dream told me which way he went. I will go with you and hunt for them.”

When the three had traveled some distance Raven said, “The man who stole your children lives on that high cliff over there. I can’t go there with you, for I don’t like that man. I will wait here till you come back.”

As soon as the father and mother were out of sight, Raven ran off. He traveled till he came to where there were many of his own people. They were dancing and he sat down to watch them.

Soon Muck-worm was seen coming from the East. The people stopped dancing and ran in every direction, but Muck-worm pursued them and catching one after another by the neck he threw them aside dead.

Raven, who was watching, thought, “What sort of man is that? I wish he would see me. He can’t throw me off dead, in that way.”

Muck-worm, after killing many of the Raven people, started toward the West, Raven followed him. Muck-worm kept on for a long time without seeming to know that there was anyone behind him, but at last he stopped, looked back, and asked, “What do you want?”

“I don’t want anything,” said Raven, “I’ve come to be company for you.”

“I don’t want company,” said Muck-worm.

Raven was frightened. Both men stood still for a minute then Muck-worm sprang at Raven and caught him. He would have killed him, but Raven screamed so loudly that many of his people heard the cry and came to his aid. They flew at Muck-worm and pecked him to death.

27

GRANDFATHER AND GRANDSON AND AN EAGLE WOMAN

A grandfather and grandson lived far away from any village. All the people of their nation had been carried off. The grandfather was very careful of his grandson for he was the only comfort he had.

One day the boy ran into the cabin, and said, “Grandfather, I heard something out in the woods crying, ‘kidjidi! kidjidi!’”

“Oh,” said the grandfather, “that was a chickadee, that is the first game hunters kill.”

The boy went out with his bow and arrows and after many attempts he killed a chickadee. When he took it home the old man danced with joy, singing as he danced, “My grandson will be a great hunter! My grandson will be a great hunter!”

Another day the boy ran in crying, “O Grandfather, I’ve seen something with four legs, and a tail with four black stripes around it!

“That was a coon,” said the grandfather. “That is the second game hunters kill.”

The boy killed a coon, and the old man danced and sang, “Oh, my grandson will be a great hunter! Oh, my grandson will be a great hunter!”

The next day the boy ran in crying, “O, Grandfather, I’ve seen a strange thing walking on two legs. Red skin hangs from its head, and it makes a great noise."

"That was a turkey," said the grandfather. "That is the third game a hunter kills."

The boy went to the woods and when he saw a flock of turkeys, he ran till he caught one of them. Again the old man danced and sang, "My grandson will be a great hunter."

The boy went out another day and saw a long creature with thin legs and something, like the branches of a tree, on its head. He was frightened; he ran home and told his grandfather what he had seen. The old man said, "That is the fourth and largest game; that was a deer. When a man can kill a deer he is a good hunter."

The next clay the boy killed a deer.

The old man didn't dance or sing this time; it was a solemn occasion. He taught the boy how to dress the deer and stretch the skin, then he said, "You are a young man now. You needn't run in to tell me what you have seen, kill anything that comes along. A man that can kill a deer can kill all kinds of game. When hunting you can go in any direction except the North, wicked women live in the North; women who have killed many of our people."

The young man went toward the South, but he kept thinking about the women who had killed his relatives and at last he turned and went North. After a time he came to a tree that was covered with scratches, like the scratches made by a coon's nails. He said in his mind, "It must be that there are a great many coons in this tree."

He threw off his blanket, took a stick and his bow and arrows and climbed up till he came to a hole in the tree; he looked into the hole and, seeing a number of coons, poked his stick down, killed two or three of them, pulled them up and threw them to the ground. As he did this he looked down and he saw, near the foot of the tree, a beautiful young woman.

As soon as he saw her, she called out, “Come down, I want to talk to you.”

He paid no attention to the woman, but kept on killing coons. She called again and again. At last he went to the other side of the tree, turned himself into a red-headed woodpecker and went up the tree pecking the bark. When he got to the top he shot an arrow off toward home. The arrow whizzed through the air, making a noise like a woodpecker.

The woman, thinking that the boy was in the arrow, hurried after it.

The young man took his own form, slipped down from the tree, put on his clothes, gathered up the coons and went home. The grandfather was glad to get the coons, but when he knew where his grandson had been he was angry. “You must not go there again,” said he. “If you do, great harm will come to us.”

The next day the young man started off toward the South, but when out of sight he turned and went North. He went beyond the first tree and came to a second tree covered with scratches. He climbed the tree and killed a number of coons, then he looked down and saw, sitting on a log, near the foot of the tree, the same young woman. As soon as he saw her, she began to urge him to come down. She talked with enticing words. He knew that he ought not to go, but the feeling came into his heart that he wanted to. He went half way and stopped. Again the woman urged. At last he went to the ground and sat down on the end of the log — the woman was sitting in the middle.

“Why do you sit so far away?” asked she, “A young man and a young woman sit near each other when they talk.”

He drew a little nearer, then she urged him to come up close to her. At last he sat by her side. She told him stories and talked till he fell asleep then she put him in a skin bag, took the bag on her shoulders and hurried off through the air.

After a long time, the woman came to the ground, took the young man out of the bag, roused him, and asked, “Do you know this place?”

“Yes, my grandfather used to fish here.”

“I don’t believe it,” said the woman, “Point out something you remember.”

“There are the poles we put up; and there is the old kettle we cooked in.” He willed that she should see those things; he bewitched her eyes.

Again she told him stories till she put him to sleep. A second time she carried him far away. When she came to the ground and opened the bag, the young man found that he was on the shelf of a high cliff. On narrow places near him were other men, some alive, some half eaten up. “Oh,” thought he, “my grandfather was right, there are bad women in the North.” He called to the man nearest him and asked how he came there.

“A woman brought me here; other women brought these other men to where they are; many men have been eaten up; you and I will be eaten when they come to us.”

The young man thought how he might escape. All at once he remembered that, on a time, a great spider had appeared to him in a dream, and had promised to help him when in trouble, and he cried, “O Spider, help me now!”

Right away an enormous spider was there on the top of the cliff and it began weaving threads for a rope. When the rope was long enough the spider let it down and the young man climbed up on it. Then he let the rope down and drew up the men on the cliff one after another. All the men went home except the young man. He set out for the home of the woman who had deceived him.

He found the woman living in an old house with her mother and he said to her, “I have come to marry you.”

The woman said, “I have a very bad mother, I’m afraid that she will kill you; she sent me to deceive you and carry you to the cliff.”

“I’ll try to save myself,” said the young man.

The old woman slept at the end of the house. In the night she began to groan and roll around on the ground.

The young woman said, “Strike my mother on the head with the corn pounder.”

He struck her, and asked, “What is the matter, Mother-in-law?”

“I dreamed that my son-in-law killed the white beaver in the lake and made a feast for the DagwanoenyentS.”

“Go to sleep now,” said the son-in-law, “I’ll do that to-morrow.”

The next morning he went to the lake and killed the beaver with a single arrow, but as soon as he lifted it out of the water the lake rose up and pursued him with fury. The young man knew the water was so poisonous that flesh that it touched instantly dropped from the bones, so he ran for his life. He reached the house and threw the beaver down. That minute the water disappeared.

The old woman was raging, she said, “Oh, my poor son, my poor son! I thought that my son-in-law’s bones would be in the lake.”

The beaver was dressed and cooked. The man invited the DagwanoenyentS and the GÁSYONDETHAS to come to the feast. They came; the house was full of horrid heads with long hair. When the dinner was eaten to the last morsel, the heads began to smack their lips. “A splendid feast!” said they. “A grand dinner the old woman’s son has made us! How sweet his flesh was!”

The old woman was furious; she seized a club and drove the guests away.

The next night the old woman rolled around the house and down to the fire, crying, “Agi! Agi!”

“Oh,” said the wife. “This time my mother will dream that you and she must go to the sweat house, you first and then she. Now strike her with the corn pounder.”

He struck her and she called out, “I dreamed that my son-in-law went to the sweat house and then I went.”

“Go to sleep, Mother-in-law, I’ll attend to that to-morrow.”

In the morning the sweat house was heated. As soon as the young man went in, the old woman danced around outside and sang “Let there be heat to kill him! Let there be heat to kill him!”

When she thought he was dead she went in, but she found him comfortable and happy. Now it was her turn to sweat. The son-in-law closed the sweat house, then he danced and sang “Let it become flint, first at a red and then at a white heat.”

Right away the house was flint and red hot.

The old woman was burned up.

“Now,” said the young man to his wife, “You brought me most of the journey on your back, you know the way; take me to my home.”

She put him on her back, carried him over the fields and the woods, past the fishing grounds where he had said that his grandfather used to fish, past the trees scratched by the coons, and at last brought him to his grandfather’s house, and they lived there happily.

The women in this story were eagles.

28

HÓTHO CONQUERS SHAGODYOWEG GOWA

A mother and her two daughters lived in an opening in the woods. When the daughters became women the mother said, “You must marry. Make twenty loaves of green corn bread, tie up the bread in husks and go to the house of two brothers, who live not far from here. Their house has a partition; you, my elder daughter, go in at the first door and say to the man, ‘This is marriage bread, I have come here to be your wife.’ You, my younger daughter, go in at the other door and say to the man, ‘This is marriage bread, I have come here to be your wife.’ The brothers will take your bread and tell you to stay.

“Before you come to the house a trail branches off. Be sure to keep the straight trail.”

The sisters started. When they came to the branch trail they mistook it for the straight one and followed it till they came to a bark house. Looking in through a crack they saw a number of men, *shagodyoweg gowas*, and were so frightened that they ran toward home.

The men followed. When they were near, one of the sisters threw down her basket of bread. The men stopped, ate the bread, then followed again. The second sister put down her basket. Piece by piece the sisters threw off their clothes, the pursuers stopped and examined each piece. In this way the girls kept a little ahead and finally reached home.

“You didn’t do as I told you,” said the mother, “you must try again.”

They made bread and the next morning started again. This time they reached the right house. The elder sister went in at the first door and placing her basket of bread before the man said, “I have come here to be your wife.” He ate the bread, and thanked her.

The younger sister went in at the second door, placed her basket in front of the man, and said, “I have come here to be your wife.” He ate the bread, and thanked her.

In the morning one of the brothers called, through the partition, to the other, “I am up.”

“So am I,” answered the other.

“We are eating.”

“So are we.”

“I am going to hunt.”

“So am I.”

Before starting, each brother said to his wife, “You must stay in the house ten days. If you don’t, our brother, Shagodyoweg Gowa, may come and carry you away.”

For nine days the sisters stayed indoors, then the younger said, “It is bright and pleasant, let us sit outside a little while.”

The elder sister consented and they sat down near the house, but they hadn’t been there long when Shagodyoweg came. The sisters didn’t see him as he was and when he asked them to come and eat with him they went.

When the men came home and didn’t find their wives they knew that their brother had captured them. The elder brother went to Shagodyoweg, and said, “I have come to ask you to give us our wives; watch over them, but let them stay with us.”

At last be consented and the women went home with their husbands.

Hótho (Cold Weather) was a brother of these men and lived not far away. Hótho always went naked, his only weapon was a hatchet that he carried in a hole in his hip. It is Hótho who, in winter, makes the trees crack with such a loud noise; he is striking them with his hatchet,

The two brothers went to Hótho and asked him to protect their wives.

Some time after this, the two again went hunting, Shagodyoweg Gowa came to the house and said to the sisters, “Come and eat with me. You can eat and be back in a little while.”

Not seeing him as he was they went. He took them to his house in the forest and shut them up. The younger sister escaped but had not gone far when her brother-in. law found it out and followed, screaming as he ran.

The woman was terribly frightened and ran straight to Hótho. He said to her, “Go home, I will meet my brother.”

They met and began a terrible battle. Shagodyoweg Gowa fought with his rattle; Hótho with his hatchet. As they went toward the East, fighting, they tore up all the trees and bushes. But at last Hótho conquered his brother and made him promise not to steal the sisters again.

29

THE MAN-EATING WIFE, THE LITTLE OLD WOMAN AND THE MORNING STAR

A man and a woman lived by themselves in a clearing in the forest. The man hunted; the woman raised beans and corn.

One day, when the woman sat in front of the fire baking an ash cake, a large spark flew out and burned her. She rubbed the spot with her finger, and when it began to blister she wet her finger in her mouth and rubbed the blister; in this way she got the taste of her own flesh, and she liked it.

She took a flint knife, cut out the burnt piece of flesh and ate it. The taste was so agreeable that she took a coal of fire, burned another place on her arm, cut out the flesh and ate it. The desire grew upon her and she kept burning and eating herself till she had eaten all the flesh she could reach on her arms and legs.

The man had a dog that was wise and was his friend. The dog sat by the fire and watched the woman. When she was about half through eating herself, she said to him, “You had better go and tell your friend to run away and to take you with him. If he doesn’t hurry off, I shall eat both of you.”

The dog ran as fast as he could and when he came to where the man was hunting, he told him what had happened, that his wife had become a *ongweias* (Man-eater) and was going to eat herself and then eat them.

The man and the dog started off. The dog's legs were short, he couldn't run fast, so the man put him in a hollow tree and commanded him to become punk. The dog was willing, for he wanted his master to save himself.

The man went on as fast as he could till he came to a river with high banks. By the river sat an old man.

"Grandfather," said the man, "I am in great trouble. Put me across the river; save me, my wife is following me I she wants to kill and eat me."

"I know she is following you," said the old man, "but she is still a long way off. I will put you across but first you must bring me a basketful of fish from my fish pond."

The man went for the fish. The pond was enclosed. On the bank was a basket with a handle. The man caught a large number of fish, filled the basket and carried it to the old man, who cooked the fish and then said, "Sit down and eat with me."

They ate together, then the old man said, "Now you must bring me a basketful of groundnuts."

The man ran to the old man's garden, dug up the groundnuts as quickly as possible and carried them to him. After he had cooked and eaten the nuts, he said, "Now I will put you across the river."

He lay down at the edge of the water and, leaning on his elbows, stretched his neck to the opposite bank, and called out, "Walk across on my neck, but be careful, I am not as strong as I used to be."

The man walked over carefully, then the old man bade him, good-bye, saying, "Far off in the West you will come to a large bark house; that house belongs to your three aunts; they will help you."

After the women sent the dog away, she took a stick, and pushing the marrow out of her bones, ate it. She filled her bones with pebbles and the pebbles rattled as she moved. Every little while she stopped eating and danced and when she heard the stones rattle in her legs and arms, she said, “Oh, that sounds good!”

The woman devoured everything in the cabin, meat, bread, skins, everything that could be eaten, and when there was nothing left she started off to find her husband.

She came upon his tracks and followed them. Once in a while she stopped and danced and listened with delight to the rattle of the pebbles in her bones; then she went on again.

When she came to the bank of the river and saw the old ferryman she screamed to him, “Old man, come and put me across the river; I am following my husband. Be quick!”

The fisherman turned slowly toward her, and said, “I can’t put you across. There is no crossing for a woman who is chasing her husband to catch and eat him.”

But the woman urged and begged till at last the old man said, “I’ll put you across, but first you must bring me a basketful of fish, and dig me a basketful of groundnuts.”

She brought the fish and the nuts, but when they were cooked she wouldn’t eat with the old man. She would eat nothing now but human flesh.

After the old man had eaten the fish and the nuts he stretched his neck across the river but in the form of a horse’s neck, very narrow and arching. The woman was angry, and asked, “How do you think I am going to walk on that?”

“You can do as you like,” answered he, “I am old. I can’t make my neck flat; it would break. As it is you must walk carefully.”

No matter how the woman raged, she had to stay where she was or cross on the arched neck. At last she started, picking her steps and scolding as she went.

The water was deep and full of terrible creatures. When the woman reached the middle of the river the old man, angry because she scolded, jerked his neck. She fell into the water and that minute was seized and devoured all except her stomach; that floated down the river and past the house of the three aunts.

The woman’s life was in her stomach.

The aunts were watching, for their nephew had been at the house and they had promised to help him; they caught the stomach, chopped it up and killed it.

The husband hurried on till he came to a forest where he found a young woman gathering sticks. “Where are you going?” asked the woman.

“I am going on till I find pleasant pleasant to live with.”

“Stay here and be my husband,” said the woman. “We can live happily if you can manage my Grandmother, who is a little old woman and very troublesome.”

The woman was good-looking, pleasant and young; the man was glad to go home with her. When they came to the cabin the little old woman was sitting outside, she was not half as tall as an ordinary person and was very thick. As soon as she saw them she called out, “Oh, you have brought a husband! Give him something to eat.”

“Ask him in, Grandmother,” said the young woman. The old woman said, “Come in!” They followed her into the cabin and sat down, then she picked up a club and began to beat her granddaughter, saying, “You want a husband, do you?” She struck and struck and the woman endured the blows without saying a word.

The next morning the old woman said to her grandson, “We must go to the island and hunt.” They went — The island was low and in the center of a deep lake. They landed and drew up the canoe, then the old woman said, pointing in a direction away from the landing, “Take your place over there, I will drive the game toward you.”

When the man had gone some distance he turned and saw that the old woman was in the canoe and paddling off as fast as she could go. He called to her, but she didn’t answer. He stayed all day on the island; there was no way of escape. After a while he noticed water marks very high up on the trees and then he knew that at times the island was almost under water. When night came the water began to rise; the man climbed the tallest tree he could find ; the water kept rising and he kept climbing. About half way between midnight and morning, when all the smaller trees were covered, the man was at the very top of the high tree and around was a crowd of creatures waiting to devour him.

All at once the man saw the Morning Star shining brightly. Then he remembered that in his youth the Morning Star had promised him, in a dream, to help him in time of trouble or peril, and he thought, “If the Morning Star will hurry the day and make light come quickly, the water will go down and I will be saved.” And he called out, “Oh, Morning Star, hurry on the day; Oh Morning Star, hurry on the day! When I was young you promised to help me if I were ever in great peril.” The Morning Star lived in a beautiful house and had a small boy as servant, hearing the voice he called to the boy, “Who is that shouting on the island?”

“Oh,” said the boy, “that is the husband of the little old woman’s Granddaughter. He says that when he was young you promised in a dream, to help him.” “Yes, I did promise,” said Morning Star. “Let day come right away!”

Day came immediately and the water on the island went down at once. When the ground was dry the man slipped down from the tree and going to the landing place buried himself in the sand, leaving only his nostrils and eyes exposed. Early in the forenoon the little old woman came in a canoe and pulling it up on the beach, she said to herself, “The flesh of my granddaughter’s husband is eaten up, but maybe his bones are left; they are young and full of nice marrow. I’ll find them and eat the marrow.”

And she began to search for the bones. When she was far enough away, the man crawled out of the sand, sprang into the canoe, pushed out, and paddled away. When he was some distance from the island the old woman turned, and seeing him, cried out, “Come back, my Grandson, come back! I’ll never play another trick on you. I will love you.”

“Oh, no!” called the man, “You’ll not play another trick on me,” and he hurried on. When night came and the water began to rise the old woman climbed the tall pine tree. Halfway between midnight and morning, when the water was near the top of the tree, and the creatures in the water were waiting to eat her.

She screamed out to the Morning Star, “When I was young, you promised to help me if ever I were in distress. Help me now.”

The Morning Star heard the voice and called to his boy, “Is that man on the island yet?”

“Oh, no!” answered the boy. “He got off yesterday; that is the little old woman herself. She says that, when she was young, you promised in a dream that if ever she were in trouble you would help her.”

“Oh, no!” said the Morning Star. “I never had any conversation with that old woman, I never made her any promise.”

The Morning Star went to sleep and let day come at its own time. The water rose till it reached the top of the pine tree, then the creatures of the lake seized the little old woman and ate her up.

The man went home to his wife and they lived happily ever after.

30

OKTEONDON AND HIS UNCLE, THE PLANTER, OR, WINTER DELAYING SPRING

Okteondon lived in the woods with his uncle Haienthwûs. The young man lay fastened under the roots of an elm tree which grew through his uncle’s bark house. When very small, his uncle had hidden him there so nobody could carry him off. There were persons in the South who came North to steal the boys of the Wampum people.

Note: The original text featured Okteondon with a small “n,” thus we have preserved it as such here.

One day, while the uncle was planting corn, he heard his nephew sing in a loud voice, “I am rising, I am rising.”

The old man dropped his planting stick, and saying, “No, nephew, you are in too great a hurry,” he ran home, and, finding that the boy had raised his head, he pushed him back, and said, “I will tell you when it is time to rise. As soon as you get up, women, who float around in a canoe, will come from the South and carry you away.”

The next day the old man went out to plant corn and a second time his nephew began to sing and to try to get up. He ran home so fast that he lost his seed corn by the way and when he came to the house he found the tree leaning over. He put his nephew back, but the tree could not be fixed as firmly as before.

On the third day Haienthwûs went to finish his planting, but the minute he began to drop seed he heard the song, “I am rising! I am rising!” He ran towards home but while running he heard an awful crash, and he knew the tree had fallen; when he reached the house Okteondon was sitting on the ground.

The old man didn’t go back to his planting; he stayed at home to look after his nephew.

Early the next morning they heard women singing and soon a beautiful young woman came in; one of the Wild Duck sisters.

She put down a basket near the old man, and said, “Here is the marriage bread,” and going to Okteondon she said, “I have come to take you home with me.”

“Very well,” answered the young man, and he was starting to go when his uncle stopped him, and said, “You must not go yet, you have friends coming, men whom these sisters have stolen. You must wait for them.”

The women went away and the old man began to cook, He put over the fire a kettle with hominy (snow) in it, When the hominy was ready, three young men came in. Haienthwûs invited them to eat and when they had eaten, he put clothing in a bundle and said to his nephew, “If your friends are in need of things, you will find them in this bundle.”

The young man put on snowshoes, told his friends to walk in his tracks; and they started. The three young men found that walking in Okteondon’s tracks was like walking on solid ground.

Toward night the young man saw a smoke and going near it found four fires and four young women. Each woman had her own fire.

“We will make our fires near theirs,” said the young man.

When the fires were burning, he went boldly up to where the four sisters had their fires. Over each fire a kettle of hominy was boiling. He walked through the fires from the first one to the last, and threw the kettles over. Three of the sisters were angry, but the youngest sister laughed.

Okteondon went back to his friends, and said, “I am going to hunt now,” and he started off. Very near his fire he saw bear marks on a tree. He struck the tree, and said: “You who are in here, come out.”

A bear came out; he killed it and carried the meat to the camp. Then he said, “I will bring my uncle’s kettle,” and going behind a tree he brought back a big kettle.

When the meat was cooked, the friends sat down and ate, and when all had eaten enough Okteondon said, “We will go to where our wives are, but we must not take any of this meat to them, if we do we will have bad luck.”

When they came to the women, they found they had hominy cooked and were cooling it; they sat with their backs to the men, facing the direction they were traveling in. The youngest sister, whom Okteondon claimed as his wife, asked him to come and eat; the other sisters said nothing.

Hótho (Cold), one of the three friends, was naked; he had a hole through his hip and in that hole he carried a mallet; he chose the eldest of the Wild Duck sisters.

The women kept their canoe on one side of the first fire and when they undressed they put their clothes in the canoe.

The next morning the men went back to their fires, but one of them had lost his leggings and moccasins; his wife had stolen them.

The sisters warmed up the cold hominy and ate it. After eating they sat in their canoe and sailed away through the air.

Okteondon opened the bundle his uncle had given him, took out leggings and moccasins and gave them to the man whose wife had stolen his clothes.

When the men had eaten and were ready, they started off, following the canoe, the trail of which they saw in the air.

Towards evening the young man saw a smoke and when some distance from it, he said, “We will stay here.”

Again he went to where the sisters were camped, walked through their fires and spilled their hominy. Then he went back to his friends and started off to hunt for game; but this time he had to go far, for the woman who had stolen the leggings and moccasins had long arms. She had stretched them out over the country, made a circle with them and told the game to go outside that circle. Okteondon had to go outside the circle too, before he could find a bear. When he had the bear, he went back to camp and said to the three men, “You have tired me with your folly. I told you not to take even one bite of our meat to those women. You disobeyed me.”

He got a kettle as before, cooked some of the bear meat and they all ate heartily, then they went over to where the women were camped. Each woman was sitting with a dish of hot hominy on her knees, cooling it. Their faces were turned in the direction in which they were traveling.

The youngest sister asked Okteondon to eat. The young man grew angrier and angrier and in the night, when all were asleep, he said to a great tree that stood near the canoe the women traveled in, “I want you to bend down to me.” The tree bent down to him and he fastened the canoe among its topmost branches, then he said, “I want you to stand straight.” The tree stood erect. Then he said, “I want you to be covered with ice.” The tree was covered with ice.

Okteondon did this because he was angry at the woman who had stolen the leggings and moccasins of one of his companions, and had driven the game away and made him go so far to hunt for a bear.

Early the next morning the young men went back to their own camp.

When the women couldn’t find their canoe they ran around looking for it, ran for a good while. At last they saw it in the top of the tree. The eldest sister said, “I will try to get it down.” She spat on her hands and feet, rubbed the spittle in and right away long nails, like bear claws, grew out on her fingers and toes. She began to climb, went half way up the tree, then lost her grip and came down, her claws scratching the ice as she slipped.

Now the sisters talked together and said that Okteondon and no one else, had done this. They asked him about it

and he said, “I put your canoe on the tree because you made me angry.”

When they promised not to steal again, he told the tree to bend down. The tree bent to the ground and Okteondon took off the canoe and gave it to the sisters, who dressed themselves, took their food out of the canoe, cooked hominy, ate it and then sat in the canoe and continued their journey.

All day the four men. followed the trail of the canoe. Towards evening they saw a smoke in the distance, but when they drew near they found a great lake covered with smooth ice.

In the middle of the lake the four sisters were camped. Okteondon said to his friends, “We will camp on the ice too.” And getting a handful of dry leaves and hemlock boughs he said to the men, “Follow in my steps, and be sure to put your feet in my tracks.”

When near the sisters’ camp, he said, “We will camp here.” He put down his handful of boughs and leaves and it became a great pile. He said, “I want a fire!” And there was a fire. He scattered a handful of hemlock boughs on the other side of the fire, and said, “Here will be our house and beds.” And straightway a house of hemlock boughs covered their fire, and in the house was a place for each one of the four men to sleep.

The home of the sisters was on the edge of the lake, but they camped in the middle of it, on the ice, to see how the men would act and what power they had.

In the morning Okteondon saw that the banks of the lake were black with people.

The sisters went to their home on the land and their mother asked, “Which of your husbands has the most power?”

They answered “Okteondon.”

Now Okteondon said to the three men, “We will go to the women, but you must not look at the people.”

The four started, from their camp on the ice, for the shore. When they had gone a short distance three of them heard a voice singing, “We are raining bones. We are raining bones.” They heard the song a second time, and nearer, then they heard a rustling noise and a mass of dry bones swept past them on the ice. Okteondon said “One of us has looked up and he has turned to bones.”

At that moment all the people on the shore disappeared except an old woman who was walking back and forth singing, “Okteondon is my son-in-law. Okteondon is my son-in-law.”

When the young man and his two friends came to the shore, the old woman went home and they followed her and went to her house. When there she said, “I will see if my daughters are getting you something to eat. You must wait here till I come back.” Her house was of ice.

While she was gone, Okteondon took a small bundle of sticks and said, “Let them burn.” Straightway the pile of sticks became large and there was a great fire. Then he said to the two men, “The old woman will bring food, out you mustn’t eat it. I will eat it for it won’t hurt me.” He made a hole in the ice, took a reed and put it through himself into the hole.

The old woman came, and said, “Son-in-law, I have brought you a little to eat. It is the rule to eat only a little after a long journey.”

The young man took the bark bowl and ate all the food, It ran through the reed into the ground. The food was hominy (snow) and bloodsuckers (clouds).

Soon she came with a second bowl, and said, “I have brought more for you. This is hominy cooked with maple sugar.” (It was wild flint, a weed that floats on water.)

When the old woman’s house was getting full of holes from the heat of the fire, she said, “Whu! My son-in-law has spoiled my house. We’ll go to my daughters’ house.”

Okteondon's wife said to him, "My mother will try to kill you; she doesn't care about the other men for she knows what power they have and that she can kill them whenever she wants to."

Towards night the old woman said, "Whu! I think it's going to be cold to-night, I will get logs and make a great fire to keep my back warm." She brought logs from the woods and made a hot fire.

Okteondon's wife said, "My mother will say to-night, 'I dreamed that my son-in-law must go hunting and kill Skada'géa. [In-the-Mist, a bird] and he must come back before the door that he slams behind him stops shaking. if he doesn't, something bad will happen.'"

When night came, all lay down to sleep. In the middle of the night the old woman began to groan terribly, she rolled out of her place and into the fire with such force that she pushed the fire-brands and coals about the house.

Okteondon jumped up, took the corn-pounder, struck her and called out, "Well, Mother-in-law, what are you doing?"

The old woman sat up, and said, "Oh, I have had a dream. I dreamt that you, my son-in-law, must kill In-the-Mist and bring him in here before the door, that you slam behind you when going out, stops trembling. If you fail to do this, something bad will happen.

"Go to sleep, Mother-in-law," said the young man, "we will see to that in the morning."

The old woman lay down again and slept.

The next morning Okteondon was ready. He took hairs from his wife's head and tied them together till he had a long cord. Then he tied one end of the cord to the door and giving the other end to his wife told her to jerk it and keep the door trembling till he came back from shooting In-the-Mist.

Okteondon started and before he had gone far from the house he saw In-the-Mist sitting on a cloud. He let go his arrow, and the bird fell to the ground.

The old woman was very angry when she saw that the door didn’t stop trembling after Okteondon had slammed it in going out. She pushed the door to, but her daughter kept it moving, unknown to her.

When Okteondon went in and threw the bird on the ground saying, “Here is a feast for you!” she said, “O, my son-in-law, you must give me one of the wings for a fan, my old one is worn out.”

“No,” said the young man. “You cannot have a wing,” and he threw the bird on the, fire.

Hótho, Okteondon’s friend, hung a kettle over the fire and filled it with water. As soon as the feathers were burned off the bird Okteondon cut it up and put the pieces in the kettle. When cooked he took out the meat and skimmed every drop of fat from the broth.

“Now,” said the old woman, “you must invite all the best men of the village to come and eat.”

“I’ll invite whom I please,” said Okteondon. He went out and shouted, “I invite you all, O Whirlwinds (Dagwanoenyents), to a feast.”

Soon the guests began to come, one after another. When all were present, Okteondon said, “I have invited you to a feast at which everything must be consumed. You must eat the meat, drink the broth, chew up and swallow the bones.”

They finished everything, left neither a drop of broth nor a bit of bone. When they were through eating, they laughed and said, “The flesh of the old woman’s husband made a good meal.”

The woman was raving. She took a pounder and struck the guests. They flew up through the smoke-hole and off as fast as they could. One of them made a great rent in the side of the house as he rushed through.

When she had driven the guests out and the house was clear, the old woman said, “I think the night is going to be cold, I must go for wood.”

She brought wood, made a great fire, and said, “Now I will warm my back.” Then she went to sleep with her back to the fire.

Okteondon’s wife said, “My mother will dream again to-night, and will say, ‘I dreamed that my son-in-law was to kill the white beaver and bring it here before the door, that he slams when going out, stops moving. If he doesn’t get back before the door stops moving, something bad will happen.’”

Late in the night the young man heard his mother-in-law groaning. She rolled around, threw the wood from its place on the fire and scattered the coals.

He jumped up, took the corn-pounder, hit the old woman on the head, and said, “You must be dreaming about me, Mother-in-law.

“Yes, I was dreaming about you, and I am afraid something bad may happen, but you are powerful. The dream says that my son-in-law is to kill the white beaver, and if the door that he slams behind him stops trembling before he comes back, something bad will happen.”

“Go to sleep, Mother-in-law, that is nothing.”

In the morning, the young man fastened the cord made of his wife’s hair to the door and told her to keep the door moving while he was gone. Then he went out and running to a knoll where there was a butter-nut tree, he took a nut from the tree and hurried to the lake. He threw the nut into the water, and said, “You who live in this lake, come out.”

The water rose up and rushed after him till he reached the knoll where the butter-nut tree was, there it stopped. Okteondon saw the white beaver looking out of the water. He drew his bow, killed the beaver, seized the body and hurried home.

When he reached the door, the old woman was trying to hold it still and was repeating every word that had power to stop it.

When the young man threw the beaver into the house, she said, `My son-in-law, you must make me a pouch of this skin.”

“Oh, no! I’ll do what I like with it,” said he, and he threw the beaver into the fire. Hótho put on a kettle, prepared everything and when the water was boiling, he put the beaver into the kettle and cooked it. Then the old woman said, “Son-in-law, I want you to invite all the chief men of this place to the feast.”

“I will invite such men as I like,” said Okteondon.

When the beaver was cooked, he took out the pieces of meat and cooled them, then going outside he called loudly, “I invite all you Whirlwinds to come to a feast.”

They came and when all were there Okteondon said, “You must eat everything to the end. Here is meat, broth, and bones. You must eat all, and lick the bowls.”

They ate the meat, swallowed the fat and drank the broth, then the crunching of bones could be heard. Last of all they licked the bark bowls.

When they had finished and were satisfied, they began to laugh. “Hi; hi; hi!” said they. “The flesh of the old woman’s brother has made us a good meal.”

The old woman was terribly angry. She ran at them with the corn-pounder and drove them out of the house.

After the feast Okteondon’s wife said, “There is one more trial, the worst of all. My mother will say to-night, ‘I dreamed that my son-in-law was killed and skinned and I made a pouch of his skin.’

Okteondon said, “When she kills and skins me and puts my flesh in a bowl, take the bowl and place it on the top of the house.”

Towards night the old woman said, “The sky is clear we will have a cold night, I must get logs and make a big fire.”

She made a great fire and in the night began to groan and throw the logs and fire about. Okteondon jumped up, struck her on the head with the corn-pounder, and said, “Mother-in-law, what is the trouble, what are you dreaming about?”

“I dreamed that I killed you and made a pouch of your skin.”

“Go to sleep, we will see to that in the morning.”

The next morning the young man said, “Now, Mother-in-law, I am ready.”

The old woman put a large piece of bark on the ground and told him to lie on it. He lay down, she struck him on the head and killed him. Then she took off his skin, leaving his hands and feet on the skin, and cutting up the flesh put it into a bark bowl. As soon as Okteondon’s wife saw her put in the last piece, she took the bowl and placed it on the top of the house.

The old woman sewed up the skin in the form of a pouch and distended it by blowing. Then she hung it over the fire and poked the fire to make it blaze. The pouch swayed to and fro over the fire and the, old woman sang, “Oh, what a nice pouch have I, no woman living has such a pouch!”

Each time she punched the fire, the pouch swayed more quickly to and fro. At last it began to sing, “Oh, if the wind were out of me!” She poked and poked the fire and the pouch swayed faster and faster. “What a beautiful pouch I have,” said she, “it even sings.”

After a while the pouch made a noise: “Sho!” and went out through the smoke-hole.

As it went the old woman cried, “Oh, I’ve lost my pouch, I’ve lost my pouch! It has run away from me!”

She hurried to the door, but in going out she met her son-in-law coming in alive and well.

That night Okteondon had a dream; he groaned and rolled around till the old woman got up and hit him with the corn-pounder, saying, “Wake up!”

“I had a dream,” said he.

“What was it?” asked the old woman.

“I dreamed that I must kill the Ancient of Bears and have a feast and invite all the people in the village.”

The next morning the young man killed the Ancient of Bears.

Hótho got the kettle ready and when the flesh of the bear was cooked Okteondon said to his wife and the two friends, who had come with him from his uncle's place, "You must go out of the house."

They went out and the new company came in: the old woman and her other daughters and the people of the place. Okteondon said, "Here is flesh, fat, and bones. You must eat all that is placed before you and clean the bowls."

The chief of the people said, "We have everything here before us. Now eat."

Okteondon went out and ran around the house; while running he said, "Let this house become stone, and the ground under it be stone, so that the greatest wizard couldn't get out, and let the house become red hot."

While the people were eating and drinking and saying, "Ho, ho, this is a great feast," the house began to grow hot. Someone spoke up so loudly that he was heard outside, and said, "Let us get out of here as quickly as we can. Something is wrong."

They all tried to get out, but couldn't. One jumped up to where the smoke-hole had been, and those outside heard him knock his head against solid stone and fall back. Another said, "I will go out through the ground."

After a while the voices and screams inside the house died down; and all was quiet.

The house cracked open, the heads of the people burst, one after another, and out of them came screech owls, horned owls, and gray and red foxes, and all rushed out of sight.

The people of the old woman's village were man-eaters. The sisters sailed around everywhere in their canoe, deceiving men and luring them to that village to be devoured. All the sisters, except Okteondon's wife were burned up with the old woman and the man-eaters.

The young man and his wife went to the lake shore where they found a great pile of bones; they gathered them up, put them under a large hickory tree, then pushed the tree and called out, “Rise up, or the tree will fall on you!”

At this call the bones sprang up living men, and each man went to his own home.

“We will go home too,” said the young man to his wife, and they went to the house of his uncle, Haienthwûs.

When Okteondon went away his uncle hung up a belt, and said, “The deeper you are in trouble the nearer this belt will come to the ground, if you die it will touch the ground.”

The belt had touched the ground and the old man had mourned, but now it was up again.

While his nephew was away, many persons had come to the door pretending to be Okteondon and had deceived the old man. Now when his nephew knocked, he said, “Put your arm through the hole in the door.” He did so. The old man tied it there firmly, then said, “Now, I have got you!” and he opened the door to strike whoever was outside, but seeing Okteondon and his wife he said, “Oh, my nephew, wait a minute till I clean up a bit.” He brushed away the ashes and then he welcomed his nephew.

The narrator said that this story described winter trying to delay spring.

31

THE ORIGIN OF STORIES

In a Seneca village lived a boy whose father and mother died when he was only a few weeks old. The little boy was cared for by a woman, who had known his parents, She gave him the name of Poyeshaon (Orphan).

The boy grew to be a healthy, active little fellow. When he was old enough, his foster mother gave him a bow and arrows, and said “It is time for you to learn to hunt. To-morrow morning go to the woods and kill all the birds you can find.”

Taking cobs of dry corn the woman shelled off the kernels and parched them in hot ashes; and the next morning she gave the boy some of the corn for his breakfast and rolled up some in a piece of buckskin and told him to take it with him, for he would be gone all day and would get hungry.

Poyeshaon started off and was very successful. At noon he sat down and rested and ate some of the parched corn, then he hunted till the middle of the afternoon. When he began to work toward home he had a good string of birds.

The next morning Poyeshaon’s foster mother gave him parched corn for breakfast and while he was eating she told him that he must do his best when hunting, for if he became a good hunter he would always be prosperous.

The boy took his bow and arrows and little bundle parched corn and went to the woods; again he found plenty of birds. At midday he ate his corn and thought over what his foster mother had told him. In his mind he said, ”I’ll do just as my mother tells me, then some time I’ll be able to hunt big game.”

Poyeshaon hunted till toward evening, then went home with a larger string of birds than he had the previous day. His foster mother thanked him, and said, “Now you have began to help me get food.”

Early the next morning the boy’s breakfast was ready and as soon as he had eaten it he took his little bundle of parched corn and started off. He went farther into the woods and at night came home with a larger string of birds than he had the second day. His foster mother praised and thanked him.

Each day the boy brought home more birds than the previous day. On the ninth day he killed so many that he brought them home on his back. His foster mother tied the birds in little bundles of three or four and distributed them among her neighbors.

The tenth day the boy started off, as usual, and, as each day he had gone farther for game than on the preceding day, so now he went deeper into the woods than ever. About midday the sinew that held the feathers to his arrow loosened. Looking around for a place where he could sit down while he took the sinew off and wound it on again, he saw a small opening and near the center of the opening a high, smooth, flat-topped, round stone. He went to the stone, sprang up on to it and sat down. He unwound the sinew and put it in his mouth to soften, then he arranged the arrow feathers and was about to fasten them to the arrow when a voice, right there near him, asked, “Shall I tell you stories?”

Poyeshaon looked up expecting to see a man, not seeing any one he looked behind the stone and around it, then he again began to tie the feathers to his arrow.

“Shall I tell you stories?” asked a voice right there by him.

The boy looked in every direction, but saw no one. Then he made up his mind to watch and find out who was trying to fool him. He stopped work and listened and when the voice again asked, “Shall I tell you stories?” he found that it came from the stone, then he asked, “What is that? What does it mean to tell stories?”

“It is telling what happened a long time ago. If you will give me your birds, I’ll tell you stories.”

“You may have the birds.”

As soon as the boy promised to give the birds, the stone began telling what happened long ago. When one story was told, another was begun. The boy sat, with his head down, and listened. Toward night the stone said, “We will rest now. Come again to-morrow. If anyone asks about your birds, say that you have killed so many that they are getting scarce and you have to go a long way to find one.”

While going home the boy killed five or six birds. When his foster mother asked why he had so few birds, he said that they were scarce; that he had to go far for them.

The next morning Poyeshaon started off with his bow and arrows and little bundle of parched corn, but he forgot to hunt for birds, he was thinking of the stories the stone had told him. When a bird lighted near him he shot it, but he kept straight on toward the opening in the woods. When he got there he put his birds on the stone, and called out, “I’ve come! Here are birds. Now tell me stories.”

The stone told story after story. Toward night it said “Now we must rest till to-morrow.”

On the way home the boy looked for birds, but it was late and he found only a few.

That night the foster mother told her neighbors that when Poyeshaon first began to hunt he had brought home a great many birds, but now he brought only four or five after being in the woods from morning till night. She said there was something strange about it, either he threw the birds away or gave them to some animal, or maybe he idled time away, didn’t hunt. She hired a boy to follow Poyeshaon and find out what he was doing.

The next morning the boy took his bow and arrows and followed Poyeshaon, keeping out of his sight and sometimes shooting a bird. Poyeshaon killed a good many birds; then, about the middle of the forenoon, he suddenly started off toward the East, running as fast as he could. The boy followed till he came to an opening in the woods and saw Poyeshaon climb up and sit down on a large round stone; he crept nearer and heard talking. When he couldn’t see the person to whom Poyeshaon was talking he went up to the boy, and asked, “What are you doing here?

“Hearing stories.”

“What are stories?”

“Telling about things that happened long ago. Put your birds on this stone, and say, ‘I’ve come to hear stories.’”

The boy did as told and straightway the stone began. The boys listened till the sun went down, then the stone said, “We will rest now. Come again to-morrow.”

On the way home Poyeshaon killed three or four birds.

When the woman asked the boy she had sent why Poyeshaon killed so few birds, he said, “I followed him for a while, then I spoke to him, and after that we hunted together till it was time to come home. We couldn’t find many birds.”

The next morning the elder boy said, “I’m going with Poyeshaon to hunt, it’s sport.” The two started off together. By the middle of the forenoon each boy had a long string of birds. They hurried to the opening, put the birds on the stone, and said, “We have come, here are the birds! Tell us stories.”

They sat on the stone and listened to stories till late in the afternoon, then the stone said, “We’ll rest now till to-morrow.

On the way home the boys shot every bird they could find, but it was late and they didn’t find many.

Several days went by in this way, then the foster mother said, “Those boys kill more birds than they bring home,” and she hired two men to follow them.

The next morning, when Poyeshaon and his friend started for the woods the two men followed. When the boys had a large number of birds they stopped hunting and hurried to the opening. The men followed and, hiding behind trees, saw them put the birds on a large round stone, then jump up and sit there, with their heads down, listening to a man’s voice; every little while they said, “Ûn!”

“Let’s go there and find out who is talking to those boys,” said one man to the other. They walked quickly to the stone, and asked, “What are you doing, boys?”

The boys were startled, but Poyeshaon said, “You must promise not to tell anyone.”

They promised, then Poyeshaon said, “Jump up and sit on the stone.”

The men seated themselves on the stone, then the boy said, “Go on with the story, we are listening.”

The four sat with their heads down and the stone began to tell stories. When it was almost night the Stone said, “To-morrow all the people in your village must come and listen to my stories. Tell the chief to send every man, and have each man bring something to eat. You must clean the brush away so the people can sit on the ground near me.”

That night Poyeshaon told the chief about the story. telling stone, and gave him the stone’s message. The chief sent a runner to give the message to each family in the village.

Early the next morning every one in the village was ready to start. Poyeshaon went ahead and the crowd followed. When they came to the opening each man put what he had brought, meat or bread, on the stone; the brush was cleared away, and every one sat down.

When all was quiet the stone said, “Now I will tell you stories of what happened long ago. There was a world before this. The things that I am going to tell about happened in that world. Some of you will remember every word that I say, some will remember a part of the words, and some will forget them all — I think this will be the way, but each man must do the best he can. Hereafter you must tell these stories to one another — now listen.”

Each man bent his head and listened to every word the stone said. Once in a while the boys said “Ûn!” When the sun was almost down the stone said, “We’ll rest now. Come to-morrow and bring meat and bread.”

The next morning when the people gathered around the stone they found that the meat and bread they had left there the day before was gone. They put the food they had brought on the. stone, then sat in a circle and waited.

When all was quiet the stone began. Again it told stories till the sun was almost down, then it said, “Come tomorrow. To-morrow I will finish the stories of what happened long a o.

Early in the morning the people of the village gathered around the stone and, when all was quiet, the stone began to tell stories, and it told till late in the afternoon, then it said, “I have finished! You must keep these stories as long as the world lasts; tell them to your children and grandchildren generation after generation. One person will remember them better than another. When you go to a man or a woman to ask for one of these stories carry something to pay for it, bread or meat, or whatever you have. I know all that happened in the world before this; I have told it to you. When you visit one another, you must tell these things, and keep them up always. I have finished.”

And so it has been. From the Stone came all the knowledge the Senecas have of the world before this.

32

SUMMER CONQUERS WINTER

There was a village where it was the habit of the people to fight a great deal; they were warlike. A boy came to that village. He was perhaps four years old. No one knew where he came from. He wandered around staying here and there; first one family kept him a while, then another. The people didn't care for the child or pay much attention to him.

One spring, when the boy was almost a young man, there was a good deal of talk about getting up a party to go on the warpath. Twenty men volunteered. The boy wanted to go; he asked one man and another, but all refused. Then he said, "I will go anyhow."

The twenty started and the boy went with them. When night came, fires were built and two men camped at each fire. The boy built his own fire and sat by it alone.

Several days passed. One night the boy had a dream: A man appeared to him, and said, "If you keep on in the direction you are going you will all perish to-morrow at midday. Tell the head man of the party and ask him to change his course."

They were going south.

When the boy told his dream to the leader of the party, he was angry and said to his men, "I didn't want this fellow to come; he is a hindrance and a coward. We have come to meet an enemy; why should we turn back even if we knew there was one on our road?”

After eating they went on, paying no heed to the dream.

‘When the sun was near the middle of the sky, the boy, who was in the rear — the party was going Indian file — noticed that the leader stopped, then the next man stopped and the next. When he came up he found they were looking at a track.

“It is Nyagwaihe,” said the leader. “The bear that kills everyone it meets. It knows when a person looks at its track and no matter how far away it is, it comes back and destroys that person.”

The boy listened, then said, “I would like to see this bear.” The men said, “No, you wouldn’t; nobody wants to see such a terrible creature.” But the boy insisted.

Then the leader said, “If you want to see the bear you mustn’t follow us. We will turn off here and you can keep on, but if you meet it and run, don’t run in the direction we take.”

They urged him to go with them, but he wouldn’t.

The boy hung his bundle in the crotch of a tree, then went on, and soon, not far ahead, he saw something of enormous size. When nearer, he found it was a great bear and that it sat up on the trail with its back toward him. He crept close and looked at the creature. It had no hair on its body except a little at the end of its tail. He sent an arrow. The bear sprang forward, then turned and ran after him., It got so near that he could feel its breath.

The boy dodged from tree to tree, then darted off and ran swiftly, the bear close behind. He came to a stream that was deep but narrow. He jumped across it; the bear followed him.

The boy sprang back and the bear sprang back. The boy jumped across the stream a number of times; the bear always just behind him.

The boy felt his strength increasing; the bear’s strength was failing. To tire the bear the boy made a great circle before he sprang. At last the bear fell behind; as it sprang across, the boy passed it coming back. Soon the bear had to scramble to get a footing on the bank. The boy shot and the arrow entered the middle of one of the bear's forefeet. The bear scrambled on to the bank, reeled from tree to tree, staggered, fell, rose again, struggled for a time, then rolled over and died.

The boy took three hairs from the bear's whiskers and one tooth from its jaw; went back to where he had left his bundle; took it; followed the trail of the twenty men; ran fast; overtook them, and said, "I have killed the Nyagwaihe you were so afraid of."

They were astonished, for no man had ever killed a Nyagwaihe. They said, "If he has done this he must have great power. Let us go and see."

They traveled till sundown; came to where the bear lay and saw it was of immense size. They said, "We'll build a fire and burn the body, then each man can take some of the ashes and a bone for medicine to give him power."

Towards morning, when the fire had burned down, they stirred the ashes till each man found a bone.

The leader said, "You must be careful about taking up the remnants of this bear. Let each man, before he takes up his bone, say what gift he wants, what power."

Most of the men wished to be good hunters and brave warriors; some wished to be fast runners. The tooth and whiskers were good for every purpose; the boy didn't tell the men that he had taken anything. They had changed their ideas of him; they now looked on him as having great power.

The party traveled many days, camping at night. One night the young man had a dream and the dream said, "Tomorrow you will meet an enemy of greater number than your own party. Among them is a large man of immense power. He is so much larger than the rest of the men that you will easily know him. You must all fight him. When you meet the enemy, let every man hang up his bundle and begin to fight."

The young man didn’t tell his dream. After eating, the party started on. When the sun was well up, they saw a bear on the trail ahead. It got up, stretched itself, and looked at them.

When they came nearer the bear said, “We have met and we shall get what we want.”

Then he turned and disappeared. The bear was one of the enemy’s men, sent to challenge the opponent.

The leader said to his men, “Our enemy is near. Be of good courage; we will conquer.”

They went on and before long saw the enemy. The enemy saw them; they gave a war-whoop and arrows began to fly.

The young man said, “Let every man hang his bundle on a tree.”

They hung up their bundles and began to fight.

The young man remembered his dream and looked for the large warrior. When he saw him, he saw that he had a medicine that he held in front of his face to ward off arrows. This defense was larger than the one the young man had — the smaller it was the more power it possessed — and the young man felt sure of success — Stone Coats (Ice and Cold) were born with this power, a tiny hand to be kept on the palm of the hand — the young man was a Stone Coat.

The large man said, “You will get what you deserve, you Stone Coat, I will kill you.”

He and the young man watched out, each eager to kill the other; they paid no attention to the rest of the warriors. They fought with clubs. At last the young man snatched his opponent’s club, hurled it away and threw him down.

When the enemy saw their leader overpowered, they ran. The big warrior and many of his party were killed, The Northern men piled up the dead and burned them, They had secured a long string of scalps.

When the party went back to the village and told what had happened, the young man was made chief. They thought him a Stone Coat though he didn’t look like one.

Another expedition was arranged, many volunteered, but only thirty were chosen. They went South as before, The third night the young chief dreamed that a man came to him, and said, “To-morrow night when you camp, an enemy will camp nearby and you will discover each other [It was not the custom of Indians to attack in the night, they waited till daylight.] Be sure that you make the attack.”

The next morning when the chief told his dream, the men believed him. That -night they discovered the enemy not far away. Toward daylight, the chief told his men to be ready. Just as light came, they started. As they stole near, they saw that the enemy was preparing for an attack.

The chief said to his warriors, “We will circle around the camp. When around, I will raise a war-whoop, then let every man whoop, and attack.”

The chief saw that one of the enemy’s warriors was a much larger man than the others, and that he had a medicine shield to ward off arrows and it was about the size of his own. Then he said to his men, “You must fight desperately. I don’t know how this will end.”

The big warrior shouted, “You are among these men, are you, Stone Coat? I am going to kill you.”

The chief didn’t hold up his medicine shield.

When the two met, they used their clubs first, then they grappled. The chief, getting a good hold of the big man, pulled out his arm and threw it off; right away it was back. Then the big man pulled off the chief’s arm and hurled it away; in an instant it was back and was as before.

While the two fought, the shouting and noise began to die away. Once in a while there was a shout, but it could be known that many people were being killed.

The chief pulled off the man's head, tore off the flesh and kicked away the pieces as they came back; for if the pieces were kept away till cold their strength died and they couldn't come back. He kept the pieces away till the big man died.

When the fight was over and their enemy conquered, the chief found that fifteen of his men had been killed. Those left went back to their village and for a long time there was no more fighting.

When the chief had passed the prime of life, he said,

I am getting old, I want to go on one more expedition, then I will be satisfied."

Forty men volunteered. They went toward the South, for the people they were to fight with came from the South. One night the chief dreamed that a man appeared, and said, "I have come to tell you that a very powerful man will be with the enemy. Maybe you will not be able to conquer him, Tomorrow, just before midday, an owl will light on your trail, and say, 'Be ready, the enemy is near.'"

In the morning the chief told his dream. At midday they heard an owl hoot. It flew along the trail, lighted on a tree, and said, "The enemy is near."

The chief said to his men, "Be ready! Hang your, bundles on a tree. If the big man throws me twice you had better run."

While they were hanging up their bundles, they heard the enemy's war-whoop. When they were near, the men of the South called out: "We have come to destroy you. You have destroyed our other expeditions, now we will destroy you."

The chief and the strong man met and fought with clubs. Then they threw down their clubs and clinched. They struggled for a time, then the chief was thrown, but he sprang up and threw the strong man, who had barely touched the ground when he was up again.

The second time the chief was thrown, his men ran off some distance, then turned and looked back. The chief was up again, they saw his arm pulled off; it was on again, then his head was hurled away. Some of the men ran toward home, but five hid and remained.

The enemy began to gather up the dead; they thought all of the chief’s men had run away. The chief was dead. The men in hiding saw the enemy gather up his limbs and flesh. Then they heard the strong man say, “We will hold a council and give thanks for conquering this man who has killed so many of our people.”

They formed a ring and placed in the center the pieces of the chief’s body.

They were to give thanks by singing a war-song. A man sang and as he sang he went towards the chief’s feet. When the song ended the singer went to the chief’s head, and said, “You have been conquered, now we will have peace,” and he struck the head with his club, saying, “I will punish you.”

That instant the pieces flew together, became the chief again.

He sprang up, killed five men, then lay down and fell apart.

The Southern people said, “Our singer did wrong to abuse a warrior after he was dead; this is why we have lost five men. We had better kill him before he brings us more bad luck.”

They cut off the singer’s head, then sang the war-song over, but no one raised a club or other weapon.

Of the chief’s men ten out of the forty reached home. They said, “The friend whom we depended upon is dead, we must stay at home hereafter.”

The tribe lived in peace after that.

This was a battle between Winter and Summer. Summer conquered.

33

SKAGÉDI AND THE MAN-EATER

Skagédi lived on a hill and a man-eater lived at the foot of the same hill. The man-eater had a little kettle and a piece of chestnut. One day he scraped some of the chestnut into the kettle and taking a stick whipped the kettle till it was of the size he wanted and was full of chestnut pudding. Then he called for someone to come and eat with him.

He began to sing and dance; when he reached the end of the house, he struck his mallet against a post, and sang, “If a man-eater comes, I will kill him.”

Skagédi heard the song and the call, and he thought “I am hungry, maybe I had better go down to that man’s house and get something to eat. He will not kill me, for I am not a man-eater. If he calls again, I will go.”‘ He stood waiting uncertain what to do.

Soon the man-eater sang, “I wish Skagédi would come and help me eat this pudding.”

“Now is my time,” thought Skagédi, “I will go.”

He sang “He-gah-ya” and jumped. Again he sang, “He-gah-ya” and jumped; this was the way he traveled, he jumped by singing. At the first jump he went over the hill, then he said to himself, “This is too risksome; that man is dangerous.” Again he heard the song, “if a man-eater comes, I will kill him,” and he said, “I think I had better go home, he may kill me.”

Skagédi turned around, and singing, “He-gah-ya” jumped, but he didn’t go where he wanted to. He came down near the man-eater’s house. Hearing the man-eater’s song he was frightened and singing in a whisper, “He-gah-ya” he jumped, but again he didn’t go where he intended; he came down in front of the man-eater’s house — the man-eater’s song was drawing him there. He heard the mallet strike the wall, and singing, “He-gah-ya” to get away he jumped and came down at the door. The man-eater opened the door and said, “Come in!”

Skagédi was terribly frightened; singing “He-gah-ya” in a low whisper he jumped to get away, but he went straight into the house.

“I am not going to kill you,” said the man-eater, “I want you to eat some of my pudding.”

Skagédi ate a good while, then stopped.

“You must eat all of the pudding I have given you,” said the man-eater. “That is my rule.”

Skagédi ate more of the pudding and then wanted to stop, but the man-eater said, “Hurry, I must go away, eat quickly.”

Skagédi finished the pudding.

“The next time I invite you,” said the man-eater, “if you start you must come, not start and try to turn back.”

Skagédi was so full of pudding that it was night before he got home; he could jump only a few feet at a time.

The man-eater had always gone South to hunt for game, but now he went North. After a while he came to an opening in the forest, and, in the middle of the opening, he saw a house.

“I have never seen that house,” thought he. “I will go and find out who lives there.”

In the house was a very old man. “Hello!” said the man-eater, “I have come to visit you.”

“I have never seen you before,” said the old man.

"No. What are you doing here?"

"I have lived here always, I am a betting man."

"What game do you play?"

"I play hide-and-seek, and bet heads."

"Oh, that is the way you bet! I am alone in the world, but I don't want to have my head cut off. Can I come to life afterwards?"

"No, you will stay dead."

"Well, I will go and talk with my uncle about this. I will come back."

By his "uncle" the man-eater meant Skagédi. He went home, made a pudding, struck the kettle twice and had enough for two, then he went to the post of the house, beat time on it with the mallet, and sang, "I want my uncle to come and help me eat this pudding."

Skagédi heard the song and said to himself, "'I am hungry ,I will go." He sang "He-gah-ya," took a short jump and was outside of the door. Turning in the direction of the man-eater's house he sang, "He-gah-ya," jumped and was down the hill. Then he listened and wondered if the man-eater really called him. Again he heard the song, then he said, "Oh, he means me!" He sang "He-gah-ya," jumped and was near the man-eater's house. Then he heard the blows of the mallet and was so frightened that he sang "He-gah-ya" in a whisper and jumped to get away, but he didn't go as he wanted to; he came down at the door of the man-eater's house.

"Come in," said the man-eater. "Yesterday I went toward the North. I had never been in that direction before, but I have killed everybody in the South so I thought would find out who lived in the North. I came to a house in an opening. In the house was a very old man, who said that he lived by betting. The man who loses the game loses his head also. He asked me to play. I told him I didn't know the game, but I would ask you if you knew anything about it."

"I know the game," said Skagédi. "My father was a great player, but at last he lost his head."

“If you will help me,” said the man-eater. “I will help you. When you are hungry you can always come here and get something to eat; I will never harm you.”

“I will tell you what to do,” said Skagédi. “The old man will hide first and you will have three chances to find him. Begin inside the house, but for your last chance say, ‘I have found you, you are up behind the sun.’ Then it will be your turn to hide. Go under the back of the old man’s breech-clout. If he finds you it will be a tie. Then he will go in at one end of the log on the fire and out at one end of the house, I don’t know which end. That is your chance.”

Skagédi ate his pudding and went home.

The next morning the man-eater hit the post and sang, “Now I must be strong and kill the old man who bets heads.”

He went to the house in the opening and called out, “Hello, my friend!”

The old man looked up, and said, “Oh, you have come again. Will you play a game with me?”

“I will play.”

“What do you do at home?”

“I hunt.”

“Do you find enough game?”

“Yes, I go in every direction and kill everybody I find.”

“You kill animals?”

“I do not, I kill men and witches.”

“That is my way of living,” said the old man. “Now we will have a little sport. We will play hide-and-seek. If you find me and I find you it will be a tie, then we will have a foot-race, or we will pitch quoits to decide the game. I will hide first. Stand here and cover your head with a blanket, when I say Onen! throw off the blanket and hunt for me.”

The man-eater waited a while, when he heard, far away, “Onen;” he took off the blanket and found himself alone. He hit the fire with a mallet, and said, “You are under the fire” — No answer. He waited, then called out, “You are up behind the sun.”

The old man came down, and said, “Now it is your turn to hide,” and he threw the blanket over his own head.

The man-eater made himself small, crawled under the old man’s breech-clout, then said, and his voice seemed far away, “Onen.”

The old man looked everywhere. “You are behind that big star up there,” said he. No answer. He went out and around the house and finding a crack in the house struck it, and said, “You are in here.” No answer. Then he went into the house and taking his pipe, made of a wild-cat’s head, said, “I will smoke. Maybe the smoke will tell me where to find that man.”

He drew a long whiff, the smoke went toward the corner of the house where the corn pounder was. The old man struck the pounder and called out, “You are in the pounder.” His three chances were gone.

The man came from the back of the breech-clout. The old man felt him move, and clapping his hand to his thigh said, “You were here!”

“I was.”

“That was sport. Let’s play again,” said the old man.

“I have played long enough,” said the man-eater, and, catching the old man by the hair he cut off his head. Then he thought he would look around and see what the man had been doing.

At the edge of the woods he found a great many bones. He stacked the bones up, then going to a tree gave it a push and called out, “Get up or the tree will fall on you!” Men sprang up and ran for their lives. All the people in the world heard the tree fall and knew that some one had killed the old man.

The man-eater burned up the old man’s house and his body, then he carried the head home and put it up at the end of his house.

The next morning he thought, “Now I will make a pudding for my uncle.”

He scraped a little chestnut into a kettle, struck the kettle with a switch and straightway the kettle was large and was full of pudding. Then he struck the post with his mallet and sang for Skagédi to come.

Skagédi heard the song, and said, “My nephew has killed the betting man.” He sang “He-gah-ya” and with two jumps was at the house.

“What luck did you have?” asked he.

The man-eater showed the head, and said, “This is my luck!”

“Well, nephew,” said Skagédi, “that would have been your head if I hadn’t helped you.”

“I know it, and I will always help you and give you a plenty to eat. Will I have more trouble if I go farther North? Have you been in the North?”

“I have been all over the world; two long jumps will take me anywhere. If you have trouble I will help you.”

Skagédi went home and the next morning the man-eater went North again. He passed the house he had burned and went on till he came to an opening and saw a woman standing on a log that was lying on the ground. The woman had great eyes and was looking around in every direction; if she saw anything, even a bird or a mouse, she called out, “I have caught you, I think you are a man?” When the man-eater saw her, he dodged behind a tree. if the bird or animal she called to were a man, her words made him take his own form, then she squeezed his heart and killed him.

The man-eater had never seen such a woman. He thought, “That is a dangerous woman, I will go home,” and he crept away. The next morning he sang and danced and his steps shook the world and frightened everybody.

Skagédi said, “My nephew has come!”

The man-eater cooked a bit of the chestnut he had stolen from people in the South and when he had switched the kettle and made it large, he said, “Now I will sing for my uncle. I want to ask him about the woman who stands on a log.”

Skagédi heard the song and, singing “He-gah-yaH” he made a jump and was over the trees and down the hill. Then with a whispered song and a short jump he was in the man-eater’s house.

While he was eating, his nephew said, “Off in the North there is a woman who stands on a log and says to every mouse or bird or living creature she sees, ‘I have caught you, I think you are a man.’ I have never seen such a Woman, I want to talk to her.”

“I know that woman,” said Skagédi. “She caught my brother. If she sees you first, she will catch you and squeeze your heart. If you are weak, she will kill you; if You are very strong you may come home, but you will be sick.”

“I want to kill that woman,” said the man-eater.

“Well,” said Skagédi, “I will help you if you will promise to stop killing people. It is wrong to kill people and eat them.”

“I was brought up on such flesh,” said the man-eater. “I couldn’t live on game as you do. I will try, but I don’t want to starve.”

“You must come and eat of my kind of food,” said Skagédi. He went home and cooked fat deer meat, then he sang, “The man-eater must come and eat! the man-eater must come and eat.”

The man-eater heard the song and started. When he came into the house Skagédi placed deer meat before him, and said, “You must eat it all, that is my rule.”

He ate the meat and went home. For a time he was sick, then he felt better and was hungry. He tried to eat some of his own kind of meat but the first bite made him sick. He thought he would go and ask Skagédi what he could do to get well. He was so weak that he was a long time getting to the house on the hill.

Skagédi said, “Try my meat,” and he gave him bear meat. He ate it and felt stronger.

“I will come to-morrow and eat more of your kind of meat,” said he. “If it doesn’t make me sick, I will hunt deer and bears hereafter and let men alone.”

The next morning he took a mouthful of his own food. It made him sick. “I will eat no more of this kind of meat,” said he, and he went to Skagédi, and said, “Hereafter I will eat your kind of food. Now tell me about the woman.”

Skagédi said, “When you come to the opening you must call a mole, go inside of it and tell it to take you to the log. When the mole gets to the log, jump out and say to the woman, ‘I have caught you!’”

The man-eater went home, took down the heads stuck up around the house and, pushing them along with a stick, for he was afraid of getting sick if he touched them, he got them far away from the place. Then he went off and killed a deer, came home, cleaned up his kettle, cooked the deer meat and ate it with relish.

The next day the man-eater went to the opening and found the woman standing on the log watching for a fly, bird, a mouse or any living thing so that she could sing out, “I have caught you! I think you are a man.”

He called a mole and told it to carry him under the ground and come up near where the woman stood. He made himself small, went into the mole and when it was right at the log, he sprang out and called, “I have caught you!” That minute he took hold of the woman’s heart and squeezed it. She screamed and begged him not to kill her.

“You must go home,” said the man, “and on the way you must sing, ‘We will have a dance, we will have a dance!’”

The woman started and as she traveled she sang, “We will have a dance.” Her sisters heard the song and said to one another, “Our sister has been beaten, she is sick.”

The mother sent the youngest sister to tell an old medicine man to come and cure her daughter. He asked what the woman’s song was and when told he said, “You must notify all the people in the world and have a great dance for your sister.”

The dance was called and food made ready. The woman came and danced, but all at once she fell to the ground and died.

The man-eater saw a great many bones around the log where the woman had stood. After working a long time he got the bones into a pile, then going to a nearby tree he called out, “Get up or the tree will fall on you!”

Men and women sprang up and started to run, but he called them back and sent them to their homes.

Skagédi’s father and mother and his brother were in the crowd, so was the man-eater’s wife. When Skagédi saw his relatives he was glad.

The man-eater never ate human flesh again.

34

SUMMER KILLS AUTUMN AND IS HERSELF KILLED BY WINTER

There was a man called Donwenwa. This man wouldn’t let anyone come into his house. He had two nephews old enough to hunt small game: birds, squirrels and coons. The boys lived in a house near their uncle’s and each morning he called to them, saying, “Up, boys! or the game will be gone.” The boys jumped up and were off.

One day the younger boy heard something making a noise. He listened and listened and at last found that the noise came from the ground. He ran to his brother, and said, “Come and help me dig. I hear a noise down in the ground.”

The brother went to the place with him and they began to dig with sharp sticks. When they got down some distance they found a hollow and in it a little child.

“This is the best luck we’ve had yet,” said the elder boy. “This will be our brother, but I’m afraid our uncle will find out about him; if he does he’ll kill him and eat him.”

“We’ll try to save him, we’ll fix it so our uncle won’t find him,” said the younger boy.

They carried the child home. That night the uncle woke up, stretched himself, and said, “I think my nephews have found game, I hear it breathing. I’ll go and ask them.” He stuck his head in at their door, and asked, “Well, boys, have you any game?”

“No,” answered the younger brother.

“I hear it breathing.”

“How can you tell? There are two of us here.”

“I hear three breathing.”

“If you know there are three, you may as well kill us.”

“Our people don’t allow a man to kill his nephews.”

“Well, you’ll not kill our brother,” said the younger nephew. “If you kill him you must kill us.”

The old man went home, but came back and stuck his head in again. “You might as well give me that boy,” said he.

“If you kill him, you’ll kill us,” answered the elder nephew.

When the old man found that his nephews wouldn’t give him the child, he promised not to harm it.

All went well for a time, then the younger brother said, “I think we had better go away and leave our uncle.”

“We can’t leave him,” said the elder.

“Why can’t we?”

“He would follow us.”

“We can try to get away. We are not safe here.”

They gathered dry sticks and piled them up near the house. Then one morning they set the sticks on fire and running around on the house top they jumped into the smoke, and it carried them up and away. After a while they came to the ground and hid under a big stone.

That night Donwenwa thought the boys were very quiet. He went to their house, stuck his head in and found that they were gone.

“Oh, my poor nephews!” said he. “They think they can get away from me.”

He tracked them to the top of the house and found that they jumped into the blaze and went off in the smoke. Then he went straight to the stone where they were and struck the stone with a dadishe (sort of cane). The stone split open and he found the three boys.

“Come out, boys,” said he, “we’ll go home. You should stay at home, not try to go away from me.”

When the boys were back in their own house the second brother asked, “Haven’t we any relatives except this old man?”

“We have,” said the elder brother. “We have another uncle worse looking and crosser than this one, and we have aunts.”

“Can’t we go and see our uncle?”

“We can, but we must ask this uncle how to go.”

The younger brother went to the old man, struck him with a mallet, and said, “I want you to tell me how I can go and see my uncle in the East?”

“You have no uncle in the East.”

“Yes, I have.”

“You have no uncle there, or if you have he is very cross. He is *hatdedases* (Whirlwind maker). He’ll kill us all if he comes here. But you can go and see him if you are able to draw a bow that I will make for you.”

The old man made a strong bow and a big double-headed arrow and told his nephews to try it. The elder brother took the bow first and couldn’t bend it; the younger brother bent it easily. Then the uncle gave him the arrow, and said, pointing to a great hickory tree, “Shoot that.” He shot and the arrow split the tree.

Then the old man said, “That will do. You may go and try to see your Uncle Dagwanoenyent (or Hatdedases). If he sees you before you shoot him, he’ll say ‘Ogongahgeni,’ and fly off. If you succeed in shooting him before he sees you, pick up the arrow and shoot again then he’ll ask you what you want, and you’ll answer ‘I want you to come and live with us.

We’ll give you plenty of rocks and hickory sticks to eat, and make you a nest to lie in.’”

The boy started and after traveling a long distance came to a place where he heard a great noise; cracking and gnawing. He called his medicine mole and told it to make a trail under the ground to the place the noise came from and he would follow in the trail.

Dagwanoenyent stopped gnawing and listened; the mole stopped. The old man gnawed again; mole went on. A second time the old man stopped and listened; the mole stopped. And so it went on till mole was straight in front of Dagwanoenyent. Then he made a hole and the boy came to the top of the ground, drew his bow and hit his uncle in the middle of the forehead; the arrow rebounded, he caught it and shot again. The third time he shot Dagwanoenyent called out, “I give up, what do you want?”

“I want you to come and live with us, we’ll give you plenty of rocks and hickory sticks to eat and a good nest to live in. If you don’t come, I’ll shoot you again.”

Dagwanoenyent said, “Go and fix the nest, and gather rocks and sticks for me to eat, and I’ll come.”

The boy went home and he and his brother and uncle put up a strong platform and on top of it they made a nest. When all was ready the old man came and settled on the nest.

Once when the two boys were out hunting the younger boy heard a noise off in the South. While he stood listening, a False Face ran toward him. The boy was frightened; he darted around trees and tried to get away. At last, when he was getting tired, he called loudly, “Haknosen Donwenwa gadjionegaqdianh (Donwenwa, if you don’t come, I shall be killed).”

That minute Donwenwa was there, and saying, “I’ll save you,” he struck False Face with his onwe and killed him.

Now the old man told his nephews never to go toward the South, that in the South there were bad women, who would kill them.

After a time the elder nephew thought he would go toward the South and see if anything would happen to him. When he had traveled a long distance, he heard some one singing, and, going toward the voice, through the dense woods, he came to an opening, and at the farther end of the opening saw the singer, Her song

said, “A young boy is coming for me. He has no power; he can’t come where I am.”

When the boy heard this he was angry, and said, “She isn’t strong enough to keep me back, I’ll go there and pound her.”

He doubled up his fist and ran toward the woman. She didn’t look up, kept on singing. When he came to where she was sitting, he struck her a heavy blow, but instead of falling over, she said, “Ha! ha! who touches me?” That minute the boy fell to the ground dead.

The woman straightened out the body and talked to it, saying, “Poor boy, you thought you could kill me, now you are dead.” She pushed the body a little to one side and kept on singing.

When the boy didn’t come home, his brother went to hunt for him. He tracked him till he came to where he had stood and listened to the singing. He heard the same song and looking across the opening saw the woman and his brother’s body. He was angry and doubling up his fist he ran across the opening and struck the woman a heavy blow on her head.

“Ha, ha! Who touches me?” growled she. That minute the boy fell to the ground, dead. She straightened out the body and kept on singing.

The third boy, the boy the brothers had dug out of the ground, went to look for the other two and was killed as they had been.

That night Donwenwa wondered why he heard no breathing at the other house, wondered if the boys had run away again. Going to the house he stuck his head in and seeing no one, said, “They can’t get away from me, I’ll find them, wherever they are.”

The next morning he went toward the South till he came to the place where the boys stood and listened to the woman’s song. When he saw the woman and the three bodies he said, “You’ve killed my nephews, now I’ll kill you!” And running to the woman he gave her a terrible blow and before she had a chance to say anything he gave her a second and a third blow; but then she got a chance to call out, “Ha! ha! who touches me?” and that instant the old man grew weak and died.

Now Dagwanoenyent missed his brother and nephews. “My brother,” said he, “thinks that he has great power but he hasn’t, maybe he has been killed by that woman in the South, I’ll go and find him.”

He followed the tracks of his nephews and brother till he came to the clearing and saw the woman sitting on the ground singing. He flew at her and struck such a heavy blow that she had no chance to speak, he hit her a second and third blow then his hair began to fall out, his strength was in his long hair — but he kept striking, The woman had no chance to speak and at last hi I her. Then he called to his brother and nephews, “Get up, you ought to be ashamed to lie there.”

The four came to life and went home. They lived on; quietly for a while, then the younger brother said that lid, was going to travel around the world and see what he’ could find, and he started off toward the East. After traveling some distance, he saw a hut and going into it found an old blind man, and began to torment him.

The old man said, “My brothers will come soon and then you’ll stop abusing me.”

The boy thought he would go before the other men came. He spent the night under a tree and the next day he traveled till nearly sundown, then came to a house, There was an old man in the house, who said, “I’m glad you have come; I want to gamble with plum stones.”

“What will you bet?” asked the boy.

“I always bet heads. If you beat me, you’ll cut off my head; if I beat, I’ll cut off your head.”

The old man had a stone bowl and some plum stones. The boy threw first, and lost, then the old man threw and lost, but in the end the boy won, and cut off the old man’s head; then he went on. Soon he saw a wasp’s nest hanging from the limb of a tree. He stopped up the hole in the nest, and cutting off the limb carried it along with him in a bundle. He hadn’t gone far when he saw a great many people coming toward him. He wanted to pass them but they ‘caught hold of him, and said “You are only a boy. We are going to kill you.”

“You must wait a while,” said the boy. “When any one is going to be killed it is the custom to let him do something first.” He put down his bundle, and said, “Tear it open if you want to.”

They snatched up the bundle and tore it open. The wasps flew at them, and in the excitement they forgot the boy, who ran off as fast as he could, and this time he ran toward home. When he came in sight of his uncle’s house things looked strange; he didn’t see Dagwanoenyent’s nest. Then he found that his uncles and brothers were gone, He searched for tracks and finding none he began to mourn and he mourned till at last he changed to a red fox.

The woman in the South was Summer, the boys Autumn and old Cyclone, who at last conquered her was Winter.

35

TWO YOUNG MEN WHO WENT TO “THE BLUE”, SPEAKER AND DEFINER

In a village, in olden times, lived two young men who were such great friends that they cared for no one else, on that account everybody disliked and shunned them. They could find no home to live in so they said to each other, “Since everybody dislikes us the sooner we go away from the village the better,” and they started toward the South.

When night overtook them they looked around for a dry place, where leaves had fallen, for they wanted to sleep comfortably.

At first the friends had only evergreen and roots to eat, but afterward they made bows and arrows and killed birds and small game.

When they were out of the forest, they came to opening where there was swampy ground, but they traveled on. Once in a while one said to the other, “I am afraid we will never get across the swamp”; but the other said encouraging words, and they went on.

One day the two young men came to a tall hemlock tree. “Climb up and look around. See if there is a house in sight,” said one to the other.

The limbs of the hemlock came almost to the ground and the young man climbed up easily. When he reached the top of the tree and looked off, he saw a beautiful trail leaping from the tree into the air. He called to his companion, “Throw down our bows and arrows and come up here and see what a splendid trail I have found.”

The other climbed the tree and looking at the trail, said, “Let us find out where it leads to.”

They looked in every direction, but saw no forest or trees on any side.

It had always been necessary that whatever the two friends undertook they should be of one mind. They were now of one mind and they started off together.

The trail from the tree seemed as solid as if upon the ground, and extended as far as eye could see.

The young men traveled along the trail and never knew they were going up till they had reached another world. It seemed pleasant there, but the leader said, “Don’t stop here, let us go on and see where the trail ends.”

Along the trail there was plenty of game, but the young men paid no heed to it. After a time they came to a bark-house out of which smoke was rising. One of the young men said, “It is customary for travelers to stop at any house near a trail and find out who is living there. Let us look in here.”

The elder went first. The house was of bark with bark suspended for a door. They pushed the door open and saw an old man sitting inside; he saluted the young men, and said, “I know the trouble you have undergone, I know that people dislike you. I have called you and you have come from the lower world, you often spoke of the world above. I caused you to follow the trail that leads up here. Come into my house, but you cannot stay long for I must go elsewhere.”

The man, who seemed to be about middle age, said, “People down in your world often speak of a brother whose home is in ‘the Blue.’ I am that brother. I am he who makes light (the sun). Háweniyo commands me, says I must give light to the world. This is my resting place and I can stay here but a short time. When you come this way again you must stop. I am always here at midday. I go under the earth and come out in the East. When you come to the next house you must go in and speak to the woman who lives there,” said the man as he started off toward the West.

The two young men traveled on till they came to second bark house, then the leader said, “We must stop here for our friend told us to.”

The house looked exactly like the first one. The young men went inside and saw an old woman sewing skins together. They said to her, “We have come, Grandmother.”

“I am glad,” said she. “It was your brother who seat you here. Now you must eat, for it is a long time that you are without food.”

In one part of the house they saw a bark bowl full of boiled squash, evidently just from the kettle. They sat down and the old woman gave each of them half of a squash and a quarter of a loaf of Indian bread, saying, “This will be enough for both.”

“No,” said one of the young men, “there is no more here than I can eat.”

“It is enough,” said the woman, “when you come back, stop and I will give you more, I am the woman whom people down below call the ‘Moon.’ Be on your guard; the trail is full of danger, you must be brave. Don’t look at anything outside of your path for an enemy is there. Don’t heed anything you see or hear; if you do you are lost. After a while you will pass the dangerous part and come to a house where you can stop.”

As the friends traveled on they saw all kinds of fruit and game. It called to them “Stop! Come and eat, I am good!”

But they remembered the old woman’s words and paid no heed. Each fruit had words of its own with which it begged the young men to come and eat of it. After a while the fruit stopped calling, and the friends thought, “Maybe we are out of trouble now and will soon come to the house where the old woman told us to stop.”

But they came to a second place. The first fruit was full of witchcraft. If they had eaten of it, they would have died, but at the second place they ate of the fruit and were refreshed. After a while, they saw a house in the distance and one said to the other, “We are coming to a place where we may be in danger, we may have no mind of our own. We wanted to come and now that we are here we must endure what we meet."

They talked in this way till they came to the house. In the house they found a man who called himself their uncle and said, "I am glad that your brother has sent you. You are going to a large assembly, but you cannot join it unless I change you."

One of the young men was frightened. He asked, "Why should we be changed? We are men, we have come thus far in our own form."

"You have come here in your own form, but now you must be made ready to enter the assembly of this world."

The other young man looked steadfastly at his uncle and was not frightened or discouraged.

The old man went to another part of the house and brought out a long wide strip of bark, set it up slanting, and said, "The first that came shall be transformed first," and he called to the young man to come and lie on the bark. He did so; then the old man asked, "Are you ready?"

"I am ready."

The uncle blew through his hand on to the young man's head, and bones and flesh separated and fell into two heaps.

The other nephew looked on, saw how the uncle took every joint, separated the parts, wiped and put the bones aside, and he thought, "My luck is hard. I am alone here; my friend is gone."

After the bones had been cleaned the old man put them in place again then saying, "Be ready!" he blew through his hands on to the skull of the skeleton. The force of the blowing sent the skeleton a long distance, but again it was a man. This was the way in which each man had to be purified.

The second nephew did not want to be treated in the same manner. He did not go forward willingly, but when the uncle was ready he gave the word and the young man could not hold back. He lay on the bark and was treated as his friend had been treated, while the friend in his turn looked on. Because he had been unwilling, his body was more difficult to purify.

The old man washed and wiped each bone. He took more uncleanness from this nephew than from the first After he had put the bones in place, and said, “Be ready!” he blew on the skull with such force that the skeleton shot off a long distance, but it became a beautiful young man.

Then the old man said, “You are purified. Now I will try your power.”

They went outside and stood in the opening. A deer was feeding on the grass. The uncle said to one of the young men, “Catch that deer.” To the deer he called out, “Be on your guard, my nephew is going to kill you!”

The deer sprang off, but had made only a few bounds when the young man was at its side. The uncle saw how he caught the deer, and, knowing that he was fit for any race, he said, “You are ready now.”

Then he told the second nephew to catch the deer calling out to the deer, “Be on your guard, my nephew is going to kill you!”

The deer sprang away, but the young man overtook it and brought it to the old man, who said, “You also are ready. You can go to the assembly and see what you can accomplish.”

The young men started. They had not gone far when they saw a man coming toward them. There was a little hollow ahead. They saw him go down into this hollow and come up, walking very fast. As the three men met, the stranger said, “You have come, brothers. Your elder brother wanted you to come. Now you must go with me to the great assembly. He who has charge of the assembly is the same who made the world from which you hall come. As you could not go to the assembly alone I have been sent to conduct you.”

The stranger turned and the young men followed him at what seemed to them incredible speed. Soon they heard the noise as of a multitude of voices and the sound grew louder and louder. The stranger said, “It is the sound of mirth and it comes from the assembly.”

When they approached there seemed to be an immense settlement and the stranger said to one of the young men, “Your sister’s house is off at the end, and your brothers’ are there too. You cannot go into their houses for you did not die before you came here. You must pass through the same that they have to enter their homes.”

As the young men went along, they felt a great desire to go into the houses, but they knew they could not. As they walked they inhaled the odor of beautiful flowers that grew along the path.

After a while the guide pointed to a long house, and said, “That is where Háweniyo lives, he who made the world below and allowed you to come here. We will sit down by the door and afterward go in.”

The long house was built with low walls and hung inside with green boughs that gave out a delightful odor. As the air moved, a strong perfume came from the flowers and herbs that were inside the house. As the young men entered, they saw a great many people, who had come to praise Háweniyo and have the Green Corn dance. These people did not notice that two men were there in human flesh — for the two had been purified.

A man came out of the crowd and proclaimed what things had to be done. The guide said, “This is the one whom you call Háweniyo. It is here that those who are good in the lower world come when they die. When you reach home you will tell your people what you have seen. Now I will go back with you.”

The three started. When they came to the place where he had met them, the guide left them and the young men went on alone. They traveled very swiftly, calling at each place where they had stopped when coming, but only to return thanks.

When they reached Sun’s house, Sun said, “You are going home. I caused you to come hither. You have been ten days traveling, but what we call a day here is a year in the lower world.”

When the young men got back to the lower world they were about thirty years old. The ten years they had been gone seemed no longer than going in the morning and coming back in the evening.

Sun took them to the hemlock tree where the trail began. They found that their bows, which they had left on the ground, were covered with moss. Sun reached for the bows and arrows, took them in his hands, rapped off the moss, and they were as new as if just made. He said “Long ago the people moved from the village where you were born.”

It was twelve looks from the hemlock tree to where the village had been. When they came to the end of twelve looks Sun said, “Here is where the village was.” Clearings and little hillocks where corn had been were to be seen, but grass was growing everywhere.

Sun said, “You will find your people twelve looks farther on. When you come to the first house ask the old man you will find there, if years ago he heard of two young men who disappeared from his village. If he gives you no information, go to the next house, you will find an old woman there, ask her the same question. Now we will part.”

Sun turned back and the young men went forward, After a time they came to an opening in the woods and saw a village. They entered the first house and called the old man sitting there “Grandfather” and one asked, “Do you remember that once two young men were lost from the village where you were living?”

The old man held his head down, as if thinking, then raised it and said, “Why do you ask the question? Two young men did disappear. It was said that they were lost, but it was never known in what way.”

“How long ago did this happen?”

“At the time they were lost the village was forsaken. It was ten years ago. The old chief told the young men that they must not stay any longer in that place; their children or grandchildren might disappear in the same way the two friends had. But," said the old man, "there is a woman in the next house, who can tell you more than I can.

They went to the second house and said to the woman they found there, "How do you do, Grandmother, we have come to talk with you." Their first question was, "Why did your people desert the old village?"

"Two young men disappeared," replied the old woman. "The place was blamed for it; people thought it must be inhabited by some evil thing which took off their children."

The young men thought they had done as Sun instructed them to do, so they said, "We are the two who were lost. We have returned."

"Where have you been?" asked the old woman.

"We cannot tell you alone, but let an assembly be called and we will speak of all we have seen. Notify the people that there will be dancing, then they will come. There was nothing but mirth where we were."

The old woman said, "It is the duty of the man who lives in that house yonder to notify the people of such gatherings. I will go and tell him."

"Very well," said the young man, "the account of our journey is important, none of our people will ever see what we have seen and return to tell about it."

The old woman told the messenger that two men had come to the village with important news and a meeting of the people must be called.

The messenger started and when he came to a certain spot he called out, "Gowe! Gowe!" and continued to call till he reached the end of the village.

The people assembled and the chief went to the old woman's cabin and said to the two strangers, "Let your work be done."

When the young men came to the assembly, people looked at them with curiosity, for they seemed to be a different kind of people. They did not recognize them.

The chief said, "These men are here with a message. Whence they have come no one knows, for we know of no other people living in the world but ourselves.”

The chief sat down and one of the young men rose, and said, “Listen!” — He was the first one purified, he had been first in all things afterward and was now the first to speak — “I want to ask you a question. Did you, while living in your old village lose two young men?”

A woman rose up, and said, “I will answer that question. Two young men, despised and shunned by all, disappeared and have not been seen since.” And she sat down.

Then the old man whom the two friends had visited rose, but he couldn’t say much.

The last man purified stood up, and said, “We are the two who disappeared, nobody cared for us and we ‘were grieved. We have been to the other world, have been in the Southern world, and have returned to you. A guide came with us to our starting place. Your own wickedness caused you to leave your village and homes. You are like animals in the forest; when their young are old enough they desert them. As soon as we were large enough, you deserted us. The birds build homes for their young, but soon leave them. You will see that whenever the young bird meets its mother it flutters its wings, but the mother passes it by. We, like the young bird, were happy to meet you, but you didn’t want to see us. When we went away we were young; we are now men. What is your opinion? Will it be customary hereafter to desert homeless children?”

(The two wanted to be received into the gens [clan].)

The young man’s companion listened to his speech and then said, “Let this be a starting point. Whenever a poor family are rearing children, never forsake them. When parents die, care for their fatherless and motherless children.”

The two friends told how they had visited the long house in “the Blue” and seen Háweniyo; how they had been directed to describe to their people in the lower world all they had seen. Then they told the people they must learn the dance that Háweniyo wished them to know, the Green Corn dance.

One of the young men sang the song he had heard in the world above; the other taught the people how to dance to the song. He said to them, “Let it be that whatever we saw done up there will be done here.” The people adopted the rules laid down for them at this time, and their religion was formed.

The friend, who was last to be purified, became *hadentheni* (Speaker), the first to be purified became *hanigongendatha* (Definer), to explain the meaning of everything touching Háweniyo.

After a time, the two young men said, “Let us continue our journey.” They went on. They found many villages and spoke to the people. This is why the Indians are religious to-day. Those men were good in all things and the people followed their example.

They traveled till they had finished their work in the North, then they said, “We have spoken peace to all the tribes of the North, now we will return to our birthplace.”

After they had been at home a while, they said, “Let us travel South from the hemlock tree and let our food be the game we kill.”

When they had traveled a few days they camped and began to hunt, going in different directions in quest of game. During one of those expeditions, the Speaker saw a man dodging around the trees. As he approached the dodger stopped, and said, “Grandson, I am glad to see you. I have been sent to tell you that you and others are in great danger. This is all I can say, but come with me to my chief, he will answer your questions.”

The Speaker followed the stranger for he wanted to find out if there were really people living near.

The two soon came to a high cliff and the stranger said, “We live down there.”

Looking closely the young man saw an almost invisible trail. They followed the trail to the bottom of the ravine and came to an opening in the rocks. When about to enter the stranger said, “Leave your bow and arrows, as you do when you go into other houses.”

They went through the first opening and into a second. In the second was an old man and an old woman. The stranger said to them, “I have brought your grandson.”

“We have met many times,” said the old man, “but you have never been able to know it. Now I have sent for You for I want to tell you that you are in great danger. Your companion has gone far into the forest and the Nyagwaihe Gowa is on his trail. At midday to-morrow the enemy will be at your camp. He is full of witchcraft and if you do not act as I tell you he will kill you and kill us. We have many times tried to destroy Nyagwaihe Gowa, but he is so full of magic that we cannot kill him.

“Go back to your camp, your friend is there now. Cut some basswood sticks and make them into mannikins. When the mannikins are finished put them down in front of your brush house, near the door, and give each one a bow and arrow. When Nyagwaihe Gowa approaches, you will know it by the roar. Fell trees in the path and be ready with bow and arrows.

“Nyagwaihe Gowa’s life is in his feet. When he raises a foot to cross the trees you have felled you will see a white spot in the sole of the foot; there his heart is. Hit it if you can, for there only will a shot take effect.”

The young man went back to camp, cut down basswood trees, and, with the aid of his friend, made two mannikins. He obeyed the old man in everything.

The old man who lived among the rocks was of the Gadjiqsa (Husk False Face) people.

The young men sat in their brush house till midday. When they heard Nyagwaihe Gowa roaring, far off in the ravine, they grew weak. Gadjiqsa had told them to keep on the leeward of Nyagwaihe so he might not scent them.

They were frightened, but said, “We cannot run away, we would not escape. Our only chance is to stay here and kill the enemy. If he kills us he will go to our village and destroy everybody.”

As the creature came in sight it was furious. Whenever it came to a tree it sprang at it and tore it to pieces; the smaller trees fell at its touch.

Every time the creature roared, the young men lost their strength and were ready to drop to the ground. When the Bear passed their hiding place and went toward the mannikins and raised his feet in crossing a tree one of the men shot at the white spot and when he was going over a second tree the other man shot him through the other foot. This made Nyagwaihe rage fearfully. He seized one of the mannikins and bit it through the body, then tore the house to bits, but a little farther on he fell dead.

The young men cut the Bear’s hind feet off, for Gadjiqsa had said that if they failed to do this Nyagwaihe would come to life. As they cut off the feet the whole body quivered.

The ribs of this Bear were not like those in other animals, they formed one solid bone. They cut the carcass into pieces and burned the pieces to ashes, together with all the bones, for Gadjiqsa said, “If even one particle of bone is left, Nyagwaihe Gowa will come to life, and the hide must be hung over a fire and smoked, otherwise it will retain life and become Nyagwaihe Gowa himself again.”

The young men did exactly as they had been told, then they continued to hunt.

Again a man from the Gadjiqsa met one of the friends, and led him to the old man among the rocks, who said, “By killing the Great Bear you saved my people as well as your own. Háweniyo (The Great Spirit) has given us power to aid men. It is my wish that you and your people should prosper. There is another enemy to conquer. When you leave your camp, you will go on till you come to a river. There you will camp again, but be on your guard.”

The young men set out again. When they came to a river they camped, put up a bark cabin, and while one was building a fire, the other went to look for game.

Soon the man building the fire heard somebody talking loudly, as though making a speech. He went toward the voice and saw the speaker in a valley beyond a low hill. He crept forward cautiously so as not to be seen. On a slight elevation stood a man surrounded by many people. The man said, “To-morrow we start for the village from which the two friends came. At the journey’s end we will have a great feast.”

The young man, who was listening, knew that these people were Génonskwa (Frost and Cold) and that they were going to his village to eat all the people. He was frightened at their great number; he went back to the bark cabin, scattered the brands and put out the fire. When his friend came and asked why he had no fire, he said, “Don’t talk so loudly, there are many Génonskwa under the hill; they are going to destroy our people.”

“We must hurry home,” said the other, and they started at once.

The next morning they heard the approach of the Génonskwa. The sound was like heavy thunder. It was evident that they traveled much faster than the two men,

One of the friends said to the other, who was a swift runner, “Run to the village and warn the people!”

He ran to the village, and said, “The Génonskwa are coming. You may die, but do not die without a struggle.” Then he hurried back to his comrade.

The comrade said, “I will stay near the enemy and detain him all I can.”

That night the Génonskwa chief said, “No one must go far. If he does and is away when the feast begins he will lose his share of it.”

The two men listening heard what the chief said. They couldn't think of any way to save themselves or their people. The people of the village were so frightened that they ran from place to place not knowing what to do.

When the Génonskwa were near the village the chief said, "Let us halt and rest."

The two friends sat in a sheltered place near the bank of a river. All at once they saw a man with a smiling face. When he came up he said, "I will save you and your people. I will conquer the Génonskwa. Háweniyo has sent me to aid you. You must stay here and listen, I will go alone and fight the enemy."

With a smiling face and telling the people, who were running for their lives, not to be frightened if they heard a terrible noise, the stranger went into the valley where the Génonskwas had halted to rest.

Soon a noise as of a desperate battle was heard and the two men, who had been told to listen, saw steam, from the sweat of the Génonskwa people, rising above the hill.

The sound came at intervals, but decreased in volume. At last it ceased altogether and the men saw the stranger coming. When he was near, he said, "I am thankful that I was able to destroy them. The *génonskwas* are dead and your people are safe. Háweniyo sends me to aid his people. Wherever there is witchcraft I am sent against it. I am sure to kill whomever I pursue. If a witch crawls into a tree, I shoot the tree; it opens and the witch comes out. I am he whom you call 'Lightning. '"

The stranger disappeared and the two men went to where the Génonskwas army had been. Only piles of stones were left. The stones of the earth are from this battle and the killing of the *génonskwas*.

It was through the two purified young men that our forefathers were saved from death and lived to great old age. They foretold what would be. And to this day we hold to the teachings of those men. They obtained their religion in the upper world.

Lightning is the forerunner of Spring. Warm weather destroyed the *génonskwas* (Frost and Cold).

36

THE TRIALS AND DEATH OF INCHWORM

Inchworm lived in a little dirt cabin in the center of a big forest. He had plenty of meat and provisions of all kinds. One morning a messenger came to his cabin and said, “They want you to come to Dry Island, two days from now, to be present at a meeting.”

“I will be there,” said the old man, but, after the messenger had gone, he began to wonder what the meeting was for, and if he ought to go.

Two days later, Inchworm, starting before sunrise and traveling very fast, at midday reached a large lake. He stood near the water and looking around asked in his mind, “Where is Dry Island?” After a while he saw, off in the western part of the lake, a small island. He walked along the shore till he was opposite the island, then went into the water and swam till he came to it. He went ashore, looked around and thought, “Well, where are the people? I can’t stay here long; it’s too dry. But I have promised to be at the meeting.”

Then he saw, at the northern end of the island, a crowd of people. He went to the place and when the chiefs saw him they called out, “All are present. Now we will begin.”

The four chiefs: Meteor, Rabbit, Raven and Fox, sat down and began to talk about Inchworm. They were of one mind; they wanted Inchworm to move away from the forest where his home was.

Inchworm didn’t want to go away from a place where he had lived a long time, he said, “I am satisfied with my home. I like the country around there. Why should I leave it?”

The chiefs tried to make him consent to move, but he wouldn’t, his answer was always, “I am satisfied with my home. Why should I leave it?”

The chiefs were losing patience and getting angry with him when all at once they heard a noise at the southern end of the island; they heard Mud Turtle coming and he was scolding. When he came to where the people were assembled, he said, “I want you to leave my island.”

“Be quiet!” said one of the chiefs. “Don’t drive my people away, they are peaceable people.”

“I won’t be quiet,” said Turtle. “This is my island, I do as I please here. I don’t want you around. Go away!”

“We will go across the lake,” said the chief.

Turtle followed the crowd to the edge of the lake. There everybody jumped into the water, and swam away. When they came out on mainland one of the chiefs said, “We will sit down here.”

The People sat down, and again the chiefs tried to make Inchworm say that he would leave his place in the woods when he refused they talked to him and scolded till they saw a dark object coming toward them, then they stopped talking and watched. At last Rabbit -said, “That is an enemy of ours; that is Blue, Lizard. I am going. I don’t want him to chase me.”

He stood up and called to the people to come with him. All went, except Inchworm. He thought, “Lizard doesn’t want to kill me; I’ll stay here.”

When Blue Lizard came up he asked, “Where is the council?”

“The chiefs have gone to the other side of the lake,” said Inchworm.

“I thought I would come to the meeting,” said Lizard,

“I am friendly, I don’t want to kill anybody. Why did they go away?”

“They are afraid of you,” said Inchworm. “I don’t like those chiefs. I can’t say anything to them; they won’t listen; they want me to leave the forest where I live.”

“Why do they want you to leave your home?” asked Lizard. “I think you had better go back to your cabin and stay there. I will stay here till they come again and if they are cross, because I have sent you back to the woods, I will fight them. It won’t do to drive a person out of the place where his home is; that’s why I want you to go back. Don’t be afraid of those people. I will fight them!”

Inchworm went home and Blue Lizard waited for the people to come back.

When Inchworm got home he cooked some meat, ate it, and then went to sleep. While sleeping he dreamed that somebody came to his cabin, and said, “I am here to tell you that trouble is coming and to tell you what to do. If you want to live, pile up meat on your couch and under it, then start off. Go north till you come to a high cliff; climb the cliff and stay there till morning, your life depends upon this.” The voice stopped.

Inchworm piled meat on to the couch, and under it, threw his blanket over the couch, and started off, going toward the North. When he came to a cliff he climbed it and lay down where there was nice green grass, and soon he was asleep.

The council sent Nyagwaihe (the Ancient of Bears) to kill Inchworm. He went into Inchworm’s cabin, pulled the skin blanket from the couch and saying in his mind, “Here is the man I’m to kill,” he ate all the meat, thinking he was eating Inchworm. Then he went back to the council, and said, “Inchworm is dead; I’ve killed him.”

The next morning Inchworm woke up and started for home. When he got there, he found that the meat he had put on the couch and under it had been eaten, not even a bone was left. He cleaned his house, cooked, and after he had eaten he said in his mind, “I’ll go to Dry Island and say a few words to Turtle, but first I’ll send a messenger to tell him that I am coming.”

He called Yellowbird and sent him to tell Turtle that he would be there in two days, that he wanted to say a few words to him.

Yellowbird did as he was told. Turtle said, “Let him come. This is the way to do; when a person wants to talk with me, he should send a messenger to tell me that he is coming.”

After two days Inchworm started. He reached the lake and swam across to the island, then looked around for Turtle’s house. Soon he saw an underground house in the middle of the island and going to it knocked on the door. When Turtle got up to open the door he began to scold and he scolded till he came out of the house. Inchworm was frightened and backed away. Turtle laughed, stopped scolding, and said, “Come back, I am ready to talk.”

Inchworm said, “I came to talk about the council that was here, and to ask you to be my friend. You are of the same mind that I am: you want to keep your home as long as you live. Those chiefs say that I must leave the forest where I have always been. I don’t want to leave, I want you to be my friend so we can hold the places where we live.”

Turtle said “I like what you say, and I will help you. I will tell you what to do. Whenever you want to come here wend a messenger to say that you are coming.”

“Now I am going,” said Inchworm. When he got to the lake, he ran on the water, he didn’t swim as he had when coming. He traveled quickly and was soon at home.

Some days later Inchworm heard, off in the East, a loud noise, then he heard it again and nearer his house. “Well,” said he in his mind, “my friend said he would tell me what to do if an enemy came. I don’t think that noise is made by anyone coming to fight with me.” But he stayed in the cabin and watched. Soon he saw Nyagwaihe so near the cabin that there was no chance to run away from him. Then Inchworm thought, “It must be that the end of my life has come.”

Nyagwaihe came in, but Inchworm wasn’t afraid. He laughed, and said, “You are a fine looking man, I will give you a name that will help you always. I will call you Shagóya Dogédas (He drives them away).”

“I don’t like that name, I never act in that way.”

“I will call you Shagónoges (He torments them).”

“I don’t want that name.”

“I will call you Daendzongo (Soaked with Earth).”

“That will do, I’ll take that name.”

(Inchworm didn’t know that each night the chiefs held a council to devise a way to kill him.)

Nyagwaihe went off and soon Inchworm heard the voice that had spoken to him in the night. It was the voice of Géha (Wind) and the voice said, “I am here to help you. People are coming to kill you. I will tell you how to overpower them. At the northern end of this forest you will find a weed called awéondágon; gather that weed and plant it around your house; get four white flint stones and put one stone at each corner of the house, outside. Then bring wood and pile it up around the house. On the tenth day set fire to the wood. That day the chiefs will come to kill you. This is all.”

“Why do the chiefs want to kill me,” asked Inchworm. The voice didn’t answer.

Inchworm put on his best clothes, took his bow and arrows and went for the weed. In the woods he couldn’t walk very fast. Before he got far, night came. He looked around for a hollow tree, found one, and crept into it. The next morning he went on, traveled all day asking In his mind, “When will I get to the end of my journey?”

Another night came. He looked around for a hollow tree, found one and crawled into it. When almost asleep he heard a noise like footsteps. He listened. The steps came nearer and he heard two men talking, one said, “I think this is a hollow tree,” the other said, “Let’s crawl into it, but first we must know how big the hole is. Pound on the tree and find out.”

Inchworm backed into the hole as far as he could, and kept still.

The two men were of the Woodcock people. They crawled into the hole, and soon one of them said, “It seems to me there is somebody in here.”

“I don’t think there is anyone here, but ourselves,” said the other man.

The next morning the two men got out of the tree and went off toward the West. Soon after Inchworm crawled out and looked around. When he saw the two men he whooped; they heard him and one asked the other, “Who is that whooping? Let’s go back, maybe it’s the man we are hunting for.”

They found Inchworm sitting on the ground near the hollow tree.

“Where did you come from?” asked one of the men.

“From Broken Land.”

“Do you know the man who lives in the woods?”

“I don’t know him.”

“Why are you here? Where are you going?”

“I’m traveling through the forest to see how the country looks where the sun goes down.”

“We are going to that country,” said one of the men. “We will go with you.”

“I am not going now. I must stop and hunt for game.”

“We will stay with you; maybe we can help you. Where will you camp?”

“I will look around and see where there is a good place. You can look for one too.”

Inchworm went in one direction, the two men in another. When Inchworm got out of sight, he started off toward the North.

At midday the two men came back to the hollow tree, but Inchworm wasn’t there.

Just at midday Inchworm reached the edge of the forest and began to look for the weed. He found it and in a short time gathered a big bundle of it, then he started for home. Near sunset he came to the hollow tree and found the two men there; they had killed game and were roasting some of the meat. When they saw Inchworm, one asked, “Where have you been all day?”

“Oh, around here, not far away,” said Inchworm.

“We have plenty of meat,” said the man. “Come and eat with us.”

Inchworm put his bundle down, ate, and rested. The next morning when. the men began to cook, Inchworm said, “I will go into the woods a little way, I will be back before you are through eating.” And, taking his bundle, he started off toward the East. When out of sight, he ran as fast as he could and was at home before midday, He put down his bundle of weeds and went for the white flint, found the stones and took them to the cabin.

The next morning he went into the forest to look for dry boughs and pieces of wood. When he had gathered a large pile he carried it home, a load at a time, and put it down near the cabin. At the end of six days he said in his mind, “I have enough wood, now I will plant the awéondágon.”

He planted the weed; put a white flint stone at each corner of the cabin outside, and piled up the wood around the cabin.

The next morning Inchworm said in his mind, “At midday the chiefs will come.” Just before midday he set fire to the wood; it blazed up quickly, made a great fire.

When the chiefs came Rabbit said, “Inchworm’s house is burning up.”

Gásyondetha (Meteor) said, “Let us find out which one of us has the greatest power,” and he sprang into the fire. The burning was not as wide as he thought; he came down between the fire and the cabin and straight on to a sharp flint stone, he was impaled and couldn’t move. He saw that the cabin was not burning, that there were beautiful plants growing around it, and they were covered with bright red blossoms. He began to cry and he cried louder and louder.

Inchworm said, “Somebody is crying; I’ll go and see who it is.”

When he saw Meteor he asked, “What are you doing there?”

The man was crying so hard that at first he couldn’t answer, but after a while he said, “I came here to visit you.”

“Where are the other chiefs?”

“They are in the fire.” They had jumped in to test their power, and not able to get out had burned to death.

Inchworm said, “You came here to kill me,” and he reproached Meteor till the man gave up his enmity, and said, “I will be your friend and give you my power.” Then Inchworm stopped his reproaches.

“Let us go into the cabin,” said the chief.

Inchworm was angry; he asked, “Do you think this is your cabin?”

“No.”

“Then why did you say, ‘Let us go in’?”

“I just said it, that’s all. I didn’t mean anything wrong.”

“Well, we will be friends,” said Inchworm. He went into the cabin and, looking back, thought, “Where is my friend?” He went out and found Meteor standing on the flint stone; he couldn’t move. Inchworm took him by the hand and pulled him from the flint. Then they went into the cabin and sat down and talked, and became good friends.

Just at sundown the fire around the cabin went out. The weeds that Inchworm had planted kept the cabin from burning.

One morning after Meteor had made Inchworm a long visit, he said, “I am going home now,” and he started off.

Inchworm was alone, but he had plenty to eat and was happy. One morning he heard footsteps outside; he sat still, but he said in his mind, “Meteor is coming again.”

He listened and when some one knocked on the door, he called out, “Why don’t you come in?”

The door opened slowly; Inchworm watched sharply, soon a beautiful woman of the Blackbird people came in and said to him, “I have come to marry you, my old folks' sent me here."

Inchworm hung his head, "What shall I do?" thought he, then he looked up, and asked, "Will trouble come of this?"

"No," said the woman, "I want to live in peace."

"I'll marry you," said Inchworm.

Some days later the woman began to scold; she scolded all day.

Toward night Inchworm said, "I am tired. You scold all the time, you must go home."

"I'll stop scolding," said the woman.

"I don't believe you. It won't be quiet with you here, you must go."

He went to where she was sitting, took her by the hair, dragged her to the door and pushed her out. When she was outside he said, "Now go away, and never come back to this cabin."

She went away, crying.

One morning, a few days later, Inchworm sat on the flint stone at one corner of his house, and said to himself, "I feel weak this morning." He looked around in the woods and thought, "I wish my wife were here, I am sorry that I drove her away."

He thought about it all day. Towards night a man came, and said, "I have come with a message from your friend, who lives on Dry Island. He wants to visit you."

Inchworm said, "Tell him to come two days from now."

Two days later, Inchworm, forgetting that Turtle was coming, said in his mind, "I'm going East this morning." He traveled along till at midday he came to the end of the forest and off in the distance raw a village. He went to the village, but every house was empty. At last, at the east end of the village he saw smoke and going toward it found a hut. In the hut was a very old woman. When she heard some one come in she stood up and raised a mallet. Inchworm saw the mallet and hurried out of the hut as fast as he could. Outside he stood around to see what would happen. Just, then he remembered about Turtle's visit.

"I must go home," thought he. "My friend is coming to-day, but first I'll burn this old woman's hut. I don't like the way she has acted toward me."

He burned the hut with the old woman in it, then ran home as fast as he could, but when he came to the clearing where his cabin had been there was nothing there but a pile of dead coals.

"My friend has burned my house," said he. "I'll kill my friend. If I can't kill him, I'll punish him in some way," and he hurried off to Dry Island.

When he came to Turtle's house in the middle of the island he jumped into it, but no one was there. He went outside, set fire to the place and waited around till only dead coals were left, then he went to the other side of the lake. As he stood on the bank, listening, he heard some one scolding; Turtle had come back to Dry Island and found his house burned. He was mad and kept saying, "I'll kill my friend! I'll kill my friend! He crossed the lake and went to where Inchworm was waiting for him. Right away they began to fight. They fought all day and all night, fought five days and five nights, and then their bodies were gone, only their heads were left. The heads fought till the seventh morning, then, worn out, both died at the same time.

37

THE THUNDER BOY

A poor old woman lived in a smoky little cabin in the woods. She was only skin and bones and she cried all the time, both day and night. Her blanket was so old and dirty that nobody could have told of what kind of skin it was made.

This old woman had had seven daughters. Six had been carried off, one after another; the seventh daughter died.

The daughter who died had been buried some time when one night her mother heard crying. She took a torch and going out toward the grave found a naked baby. She wrapped the baby in her blanket and took it home.

The baby, a little boy, grew very fast. One day when the grandmother came home from gathering wood he was not in the house and she couldn't find him.

That night there was a storm with thunder and lightning. In the morning when the child came back the grandmother asked, "Where have you been, my grandson?"

"I have been with my father; he took me home with him."

"Who is your father?"

"Híno' is my father. He took me home first, then we came back and were around here all night."

"Was my daughter your mother?" asked the old woman.

“She was,” answered the boy, “and Híno’ is my father.”

The old woman believed her grandson. As the boy grew he often made a noise like the noise of thunder and whenever Híno’ came to the neighborhood the child went out and helped his father; he was Híno’hoháwank, son of híno’.

After a time the boy asked his grandmother where his six aunts were, and she said, “Far from here there is a mother and son who live by playing dice. Your aunts went there with a company of people; they played, were beaten and their heads were cut off. Many men and women have gone to the same place and have lost their heads.”

“I will go and kill that woman and her son,” said the boy.

The grandmother tried to keep him at home but he wouldn’t stay with her. He was ragged and dirty. He asked her to make him two pairs of moccasins. She made them, and, for a pouch, she gave him the skin of a flying squirrel.

The boy started off toward the West and after a while he came to a large opening where there was a bark house with a pole in front of it, and on the pole hung a skin blanket. He heard a great noise and saw that at one end of the opening old men were betting and boys were playing ball.

When people saw him, one said to another, “Who is that boy? Where did he come from?”

Soon an old man went up to Híno’hoháwank, gave him a club and asked him to play.

He played ball so well that the same man came to him, and said, “We want you to play dice, my people will bet on you.

“I don’t know how to play dice,” answered the boy.

“We will risk our heads on you,” said the man.

Young Híno’ followed the old man to the pole that stood by the bark house. The betting woman was sitting there on an elk skin. In front of her was a white stone bowl as smooth as glass. Híno'hoháwank knelt down beside the bowl.

The woman said, “You must play first.”

“No,” said he, “you must play first.”

The woman took up her dice, which were round and made out of stone. She blew on them, threw them into the bowl, shook the bowl, and called out, “Game! Game!”

The dice flew up in the air, became crows and cawed as they went out of sight. Soon they came down, cawing; as they touched the bowl they were stones again.

The woman had three plays in which to get a count of seventeen. She threw three times, but made no score. Then young Híno' took dice out of his pouch made of the skin of a flying squirrel. The woman insisted on his using her dice, but he refused. He put his dice in the bowl and shook the bowl. The dice became wild ducks and flew into the air.

The ducks went very high, all the people heard them as they rose. When they came down and touched the bowl they were stones and scored ten.

Híno' shook the bowl again, and called “Game! Game!”

The old woman called “No game! No game!”

The ducks flew up and when they came down they scored another ten. He tried a third time and scored ten, then he called to the people to come and see him cut off the head of the betting woman.

“Wait,” said the woman, “You must play ball with my son. If he loses, he will lose his head.”

Híno' asked the old men what he should do. Seeing how powerful he was, they said, “Play.”

He went to the ball ground — he was ragged and looked very poor. Only the two played. Híno'hoháwank sprang forward and knocked the club out of Yegenhdji's hand. The young man ran for his club, but before he could get it, Híno’hohá sent the ball through the goal. This was repeated seven times, and Híno’’s son won the game.

Then he said to the people, “Now you can destroy the old woman and her son.”

They did. Then the young boy said, “I am going to bring my grandmother to this place and we will have this long house to live in.”

As he traveled toward home, he sang praises of himself, and his grandmother heard him when he was a long way off. When he came to the cabin he told her what he had done, and said, “We must go there and live in the long house.”

She made ready and started, but it took a long time to reach the place, for friends went with them. When all had settled in houses built around the opening Híno’hohá called the people to the long house for a dance. The grandmother threw away her old blanket and put on the clothes left by the gambling woman and then she looked like a young girl.

After a time Híno’hohá went off with Híno’, his father, and stayed with him all Winter.

When Spring came the grandmother was uneasy about the boy, but one day she heard Thunder off in the West and soon her grandson came to the cabin.

“Where have you been?” asked she.

“On a great mountain far off in the West. I have been with my father, helping the nations and protecting men.”

The boy stayed with his grandmother that Spring and Summer. Once in a while when it began to storm, he went away, but he always came back when the storm was over. The two lived a long time in this way, but at last the boy said, “You have a brother living in the West. Some wizard stole him from you. I must go and find him.”

And he went West to look for his uncle.

Híno’hohá traveled till he came to a cabin. In the cabin a woman was sitting by a fire. When he asked where his uncle was she wouldn’t answer. Taking his war club from his pouch, he struck her on the head and killed her. Then he went out and walked around the house, mourning and looking for his uncle. At last he heard a man groaning. He looked up in the trees for he couldn’t see anyone on the ground, but the man was not in a tree.

He followed the sound and soon came to a large slippery elm tree. A man lay under the tree; he was held do, down by great roots; his head came out between two roots on one side and his feet between two roots on the other side. The tree stood on the middle of his body. He was calling to his nephew to give him a smoke.

Híno’hohá said, “Oh, my poor uncle, how badly off you are! I will give you a smoke right away.”

He kicked the tree over, saying, “Rise up, uncle!”

The man stood up at once, and was well. Híno’hohá took out his pouch and gave the old man a stone pipe and Indian tobacco, and he grew strong. Then he told his nephew how a woman had enticed him to go with her, then she ate him up and put his bones under the elm tree, The uncle and nephew went to the long house. The old grandmother was surprised and glad and the three lived happily together till one day the nephew went off in a storm and when the storm was over he brought back a wife. Then when be went off with a storm his wife was uneasy. The woman didn’t know where she was from. In a terrible storm Híno’hohá had brought her home on his back.

After a time she had a son and when the boy was old enough to run around, the uncle, whose bones had lain under the elm tree, began to teach him, and soon the child was able to make a noise like the roar of thunder.

One day the child followed his mother out of the house; he had a little dog and that followed too. As the boy was running along somebody seized him and rushed off. The dog ran after him, and, jumping to snatch him away, caught hold of his feet and pulled off his moccasins; the dog carried the moccasins home.

When the mother saw the moccasins, she knew that her boy was gone. The father was off in a storm. When he came home the woman asked if he had taken the boy away.

“I have not,” said he.

“Oh, he is lost; he is lost!” cried the woman.

“He is safe,” said Híno’hohá. “He has many relatives around the world, uncles and cousins.”

The boy was gone all Winter, but one day in Spring he came home with his father. Then Híno’hohá said to his family, “We must all go and live with my father.”

The old grandmother said, “I can’t go; it is far and I am old.”

“I will carry you,” said the grandson.

Then Híno’hohá began to thunder, and lightning flew around. The long house was torn to pieces and blazed up in flames. All the rocks and houses and trees in the opening were destroyed. Híno’hohá and his people rose up in the air. The East wind blew and it bore them to the high mountain in the West and there they found old Híno’.

And to this day the Thunder family live on that mountain in caves and among rocks.

38

WHIRLWIND AND PANTHER

Once, in a Seneca village, a party of men was preparing to go on a hunting expedition. In that village was a young man whom people thought was foolish, not strong of mind. He knew that hunters were getting ready for an expedition and he went to one and another and asked to go with them, but no one would let him go.

After the hunters started a young woman took pity on the young man, went to him, and said, “Let us marry and go hunting.” He was willing. They started off together and after going some distance camped in the forest. The man couldn’t find any big game, but he killed squirrels and small game. He made traps to catch deer and put them down where he thought deer would come.

One morning, when the young man went to look at his traps, he heard some one crying; the sound came nearer and nearer. Soon he saw a woman and two little boys. The woman was crying.

As she came up she said to the young man, “Help me, or we will be killed. One of my little boys stole a feather and pulled it to bits and we are going to be killed for it. I want you to shoot the hawk on that tree over there and when the person comes whose feather my little boy took, throw the hawk at him and call out, ‘Here is your feather!’”

The man killed the hawk and no sooner had he done so than he heard a terrible roar and noise, and trees began to fall. A man came and stood on a close-by tree. This man had enormous eyes and long hair, and that was all there was of him — just a great head without a body. The young man threw the hawk at him, and said, “Here is your feather.” The Head caught it, said, “Thank you,” and was satisfied.

The woman was a panther and the children were her cubs, but to the young man she appeared to be a real woman. She told him that she lived among the rocks and that the Head (Whirlwind) was her neighbor. While he was away from home, her little boy went to his cabin, found his feathers and spoiled one of them. When Whirlwind came home he was angry and chased her.

She told the young man that she knew he was poor, that no man would hunt with him, and she said, “Hereafter I will help you and you will get more game than any of the hunters, I do this because you saved me and my boys.”

After that the young man killed more game than any other hunter in the village.

39

THE THREE KINGDOMS — THE COPPER, THE SILVER, AND THE GOLDEN

In a certain kingdom in a certain land lived a Tsar, — Bail Bailyanyin. He had a wife, Nastasya, Golden Tress, and three sons, — Pyotr Tsarevich, Vassili Tsarevich, and Ivan Tsarevich. The Tsaritsa went with her maidens and nurses to walk in the garden. All at once such a mighty Whirlwind rose that, God save us! it caught the Tsaritsa and bore her it was unknown whither.

The Tsar was grieved and distressed, and knew not what to do. His sons grew up, and he said to them: “My dear children, which of you will go to seek your mother?”

The two elder brothers made ready and went. After they had gone, the youngest begged permission of his father. “No,” said the Tsar, “go not, my dear son; do not leave me an old man in loneliness.”

“Let me go, father; I want awfully to wander over the white world and find my mother.”

The Tsar dissuaded and dissuaded, but could not convince him. “Well, there is no help for it, go; God be with thee!”

Ivan saddled his good steed and set out. He rode and rode, whether it was long or short: a tale is soon told, but a deed is not soon done; he came to a forest. In that forest was the richest of castles. Ivan Tsarevich entered a broad court, saw an old man, and said, “Many years’ health to thee!”

“We beg the favor of thy presence. Who art thou, gallant youth?”

“I am Ivan Tsarevich, the son of Tsar Bail Bailyanyin and of Tsaritsa Nastasya, Golden Tress.”

“Oh, my own nephew! Whither is God bearing thee?”

“For this cause and that,” said he, “I am in search of my mother. Canst thou not tell me, uncle, where to find her?”

“No, nephew, I cannot; with what I am able, with that I do service. But here is a ball; throw it ahead, it will roll on before thee and lead thee to steep, rugged mountains. In those mountains is a cave, enter it; take there iron claws, put them on thy hands and thy feet, and climb up the mountains. Perhaps thou wilt find there thy mother, Nastasya, Golden Tress.”

That was good aid. Ivan Tsarevich took leave of his uncle, and threw the ball before him; the ball rolled and rolled on, he rode behind it. Whether it was long or short, he saw his brothers, Pyotr Tsarevich and Vassili Tsarevich. They were encamped in the open field with thousands of troops. His brothers were surprised, and asked, “Where art thou going, Ivan Tsarevich?”

“Oh!” said he, “I grew weary at home, and I thought of going to look for my mother. Send your army home, and let us go on together.”

They sent home the army, and the three went on together after the ball. While yet at a distance they saw the mountains, — such steep and lofty mountains that, God save us! they touched the heavens with their heads. The ball rolled straight to a cave. Ivan Tsarevich slipped down from his horse and said to his brothers, “Here, brothers, is my good steed; I will go up on the mountains to look for my mother, and ye remain here. Wait for me just three months. If I am not here in three months, there will be no use in waiting longer.”

The brothers thought, but how could a man climb these mountains? He would break his head there.

“Well,” said they, “go, with God; we will wait for thee here.”

Ivan approached the cave; he saw that the door was of iron. He struck it with all his strength. It opened, he entered; iron claws went on to his feet and hands of themselves. He began to climb the mountains, — climb, climb; he toiled a whole month, reaching the top with difficulty. “Well,” said he, “glory be to God!” He rested a little, and walked along on the mountain; walked and walked, walked and walked, saw a copper castle, at the gate terrible serpents fastened with copper chains, crowds of them; and right there was a well, and at the well a copper bucket hung by a copper chain. Ivan Tsarevich drew water and gave the serpents to drink. They became quiet, lay down, and he passed into the court.

The Tsaritsa of the Copper Kingdom ran out to meet him. “Who art thou, gallant youth?”

“I am Ivan Tsarevich.”

“Well, hast thou come of thy own will, or against thy will?”

“Of my own will; I am in search of my mother, Nastasya, Golden Tress. A certain Whirlwind bore her away out of the garden. Dost thou know where she is?”

“No; but not far from here lives my second sister, the Tsaritsa of the Silver Kingdom, — maybe she will tell thee.”

She gave him a copper ball and a copper ring. “The ball,” said she, “will lead thee to my second sister, and in this ring is the whole Copper Kingdom. When thou overcomest Whirlwind, who keeps me here and flies to me once in three months, forget me not, poor woman, rescue me from this place, and take me with thee to the free world.”

“I will,” said Ivan Tsarevich. He threw the copper ball before him; the ball rolled ahead, and he followed after. He came to the Silver Kingdom and saw a castle finer than the first, all silver; at the gate were terrible serpents fastened to silver chains, and at the side of them was a well with a silver bucket. Ivan Tsarevich drew water and gave the serpents to drink. They lay down then, and let him enter the castle. The Tsaritsa of the Silver Kingdom came out.

“It will soon be three years,” said she, “since mighty Whirlwind confined me here, and no Russian have I heard with hearing, or seen with sight; but now a Russian I see. Who art thou, good youth?”

“I am Ivan Tsarevich.”

“How didst thou happen hither, — with thy own will, or against thy will?”

“With my own will; I am in search of my mother. She went in the green garden to walk, Whirlwind came and bore her away, it is unknown whither. Canst thou not tell me where to find her?”

“No, I cannot; but not far from here lives my eldest sister, the Tsaritsa of the Golden Kingdom, Yelena the Beautiful, — maybe she will tell thee. Here is a silver ball, roll it ahead and follow; it will lead thee to the Golden Kingdom. But see, when thou hast killed Whirlwind, forget me not, poor woman; rescue me from this place, and take me to the free world. Whirlwind holds me captive, and flies hither once in two months.” Then she gave him a silver ring, saying, “In this ring is the whole Silver Kingdom.”

Ivan rolled the ball; wherever it went he followed. Whether it was long or short, he saw a golden castle gleaming like fire; at the gate was a crowd of terrible serpents fastened to golden chains, and right there a well, at the well a golden bucket on a golden chain. Ivan Tsarevich drew water, and gave the serpents to drink; they lay down and were soothed. He entered the palace; Yelena the Beautiful met him.

“Who art thou, gallant youth?”

“I am Ivan Tsarevich.”

“How hast thou come hither, — of thy own will, or against thy will?”

“I came of my own will; I am in search of my mother, Nastasya, Golden Tress. Knowest thou not where to find her?”

"Why shouldn't I know? She lives not far from here, Whirlwind flies to her once a week, and to me once a month. Here is a golden ball for thee: throw it ahead and follow, — it will lead thee to thy mother. And take besides this golden ring; in this ring is the whole Golden Kingdom. And be careful when thou hast conquered Whirlwind. Forget me not, poor woman; take me with thee to the free world."

"I will take thee," said he.

Ivan Tsarevich rolled the ball and followed after; he went and went till he came to such a palace that, Lord save us! it was just blazing with diamonds and precious stones. At the gate six-headed serpents were hissing. Ivan Tsarevich gave them to drink; the serpents were soothed, and let him pass to the castle. He went through the great chambers, and in the most distant found his own mother. She was sitting on a lofty throne arrayed in Tsaritsa's robes and crowned with a costly crown. She looked at the stranger and cried: "Ah! is that thou, my dear son? How hast thou come hither?"

"So and so," said Ivan; "I have come for thee."

"Well, dear son, 'twill be hard for thee. Here in these mountains reigns Whirlwind, the evil and mighty, all spirits obey him; he is the one that bore me away. Thou wilt have to fight him; come quickly to the cellar."

They went to the cellar; there were two tubs of water, one on the right, the other on the left hand. "Drink," said the Tsaritsa, "from the right-hand tub."

Ivan drank.

"Well, what strength is in thee?"

"I am so strong that I could turn the whole castle over with one hand."

"Then drink more."

Ivan drank again.

"What strength is in thee now?"

"If I wished, I could turn the whole world over."

“That is very great strength. Move these tubs from one place to the other: put that on the right to the left, that on the left take to the right.”

Ivan interchanged the tubs.

“Thou seest, my dear son, in one tub is water of strength, in the other water of weakness. Whoso drinks from the first will be a strong, mighty hero; whoso drinks from the second will grow weak altogether. Whirlwind always drinks the water of strength and puts it on the right side; so we must deceive him, or thou canst never overcome him.”

They returned to the castle.

“Soon Whirlwind will fly home,” said the Tsaritsa to Ivan Tsarevich. “Sit under my purple robe, so that he may not see thee; and when he comes and runs to embrace and kiss me, do thou seize his club. He will rise high, high; he will bear thee over seas, over precipices: but see to it, let not the club go out of thy hand. Whirlwind will grow tired, will want to drink the water of strength, will come down to the cellar and rush to the tub placed on the right hand; but do thou drink from the tub on the left. Then he will grow weak; wrest his sword from him, and with one blow hew off his head. When his head is off, that moment there will be voices behind thee crying, ‘Strike again, strike again.’ Strike not, my son, but say in answer, ‘A hero’s hand strikes not twice, but always once.’”

Ivan Tsarevich had barely hidden under the robe when the court grew dark and everything trembled. Whirlwind flew home, struck the earth, became a brave hero, and entered the castle, in his hands a club.

“Tfu, tfu, tfu! somehow it smells of Russia here. Was any one visiting?”

“I don’t know why it seems so to thee,” said the Tsaritsa.

Whirlwind rushed to embrace her; but Ivan that moment seized the club.

“I’ll eat thee!” shouted Whirlwind.

“Well, grandmother spoke double; either thou wilt eat, or thou wilt not.”

Whirlwind tore out through the window and up to the sky; he bore Ivan Tsarevich away. Over mountains he said, “I will smash thee;” over seas he said, “I will drown thee.” But Ivan did not let the club out of his hands. Whirlwind flew over the whole world, wearied himself out, and began to sink. He came down straight into the cellar, rushed to the tub on the right hand, and fell to drinking the water of weakness; but Ivan ran to the left, drank his fill of the water of strength, and became the first mighty hero in the whole world. He saw that Whirlwind had become utterly weak, wrested the sharp sword from him, and cut off his head with a blow. Voices cried behind, “Strike again, strike again, or he will come to life!” “No,” said Ivan; “a hero’s hand strikes not twice, but always finishes at a blow.” Straightway he made a fire, burned the body and the head, scattered the ashes to the wind.

The mother of Ivan Tsarevich was glad. “Now, my dear son,” said she, “let us rejoice. We will eat; and then for home with all speed, for it is wearisome here, — there are no people.”

“But who serves thee?”

“Thou wilt see directly.”

They had barely thought of eating, when a table set itself, and various meats and wines appeared on the table of themselves. The Tsaritsa and the Tsarevich dined. Meanwhile unseen musicians played wonderful songs for them. They ate and drank, and when they had rested, Ivan said, —

“Let us go, mother, it is time; for under the mountains my brothers are waiting. And on the road I must save three Tsaritsas who are living in Whirlwind’s castles.”

They took everything needful and set out on the journey. They went first to the Tsaritsa of the Golden Kingdom, then to her sisters of the Silver and Copper Kingdoms. They took them, and brought linen and all kinds of stuffs. In a short time they reached the place where they had to go down the mountain.

Ivan Tsarevich let his mother down first on the linen, then Yelena the Beautiful and her two sisters. The brothers were standing below waiting, and they thought to themselves, “Let us leave Ivan Tsarevich up there; we will take our mother and the three Tsaritsas to our father, and say that we found them.” “I’ll take Yelena the Beautiful for myself,” said Pyotr Tsarevich; “thou, Vassili, wilt have the Tsaritsa of the Silver Kingdom; and we will give the Tsaritsa of the Copper Kingdom to some general.”

When it was time for Ivan Tsarevich to come down from the mountain, his elder brothers seized the linen, pulled and tore it away. Ivan remained on the mountain. What could he do? He wept bitterly; then turned back, walked and walked over the Copper Kingdom, over the Silver Kingdom and the Golden Kingdom, — not a soul did he see. He came to the Diamond Kingdom, — no one there either. What was he to do alone, — deathly weariness! He looked around; on the window of the castle a whistle was lying. He took it in his hand. “Let me play from weariness,” said he. He had barely blown when out sprang Lame and Crooked.

“What is thy pleasure?”

Said Ivan Tsarevich, “I want to eat.” That moment, from wherever it came, a table was set, and on the table the very best food. Ivan Tsarevich ate and thought, “Now it would not be bad to rest.” He blew on the whistle. Lame and Crooked appeared.

“What is thy pleasure, Ivan Tsarevich?”

“That a bed be ready.” The word wasn’t out of his mouth when the bed was ready. He lay down, slept splendidly, then whistled again.

“What is thy pleasure?” asked Lame and Crooked.

“Everything can be done, then?”

“Everything is possible, Ivan Tsarevich. Whoever blows that whistle, we will do everything for him. As we served Whirlwind before, so we are glad to serve thee now; it is only necessary to keep the whistle by thee at all times.”

“Well,” said Ivan, “let me be in my own kingdom this minute.”

He had barely spoken when he appeared in his own kingdom, in the middle of the market square. He was walking along the square, when a shoemaker came toward him, — such a jolly fellow! The Tsarevich asked: “Whither art thou going, good man?”

“I am taking shoes to sell; I am a shoemaker.”

“Take me into thy service,” said Ivan.

“Dost thou know how to make shoes?”

“Yes, I can do everything. I can make not only shoes, but clothes.”

“Well, come on.”

They went to his house. The shoemaker said: “Go to work; here is leather for thee, — the best kind; I’ll see what skill thou hast.”

Ivan Tsarevich went to his own room, and took out the whistle. Lame and Crooked came. “What is thy pleasure, Ivan Tsarevich?”

“To have shoes ready by to-morrow.”

“Oh, that is not work, that is play!”

“Here is the leather.”

“What sort of leather is that? That’s trash, nothing more; that should go out of the window.”

Next morning Ivan Tsarevich woke up; on the table were beautiful shoes, the very best.

The shoemaker rose. “Well, young man, hast thou made the shoes?”

“They are finished.”

“Well, show them.” He looked at the shoes and was astonished. “See what a man I have got for myself, — not a shoemaker, but a wonder!” He took the shoes and carried them to the market to sell.

At that same time three weddings were in preparation at the palace. Pyotr Tsarevich was to marry Yelena the Beautiful, Vassili Tsarevich the Tsaritsa of the Silver Kingdom, and they were giving the Tsaritsa of the Copper Kingdom to a general. They were making dresses for those weddings. Yelena the Beautiful wanted shoes. Our shoemaker’s shoes were better than all the others brought to the palace.

When Yelena looked at them she said, “What does this mean? They make shoes like these only in the mountains.” She paid the shoemaker a large price and said, “Make me without measure another pair wonderfully sewed, ornamented with precious stones, and studded with diamonds. They must be ready by to-morrow; if not, to the gallows with thee.”

The shoemaker took the precious stones and money and went home, — such a gloomy man! “Misery,” said he, “what am I to do now? How can I make shoes by to-morrow, and besides without measure? It is clear that they will hang me to-morrow; let me have at least a last frolic with my friends.”

He went to the inn. These friends of his were numerous; they asked, “Why art thou so gloomy, brother?”

“Oh, my dear friends,” answered he, “they are going to hang me to-morrow!”

“Why so?”

The shoemaker told his trouble. “How think of work in such a position? Better I’ll frolic to-night for the last time.”

So they drank and drank, frolicked and frolicked; the shoemaker was staggering already.

“Well,” said he, “I’ll take home a keg of spirits, lie down to sleep; and to-morrow when they come to hang me, I’ll drink a gallon and a half right away. Let them hang me without my senses.”

He came home. “Well, thou reprobate!” said he to Ivan Tsarevich, “see what thy shoes have done ... so and so.... When they come in the morning for me, wake me up.”

In the night Ivan Tsarevich took out the whistle and blew. Lame and Crooked appeared. “What is thy pleasure, Ivan Tsarevich?”

“That shoes of such a kind be ready.”

“We obey!”

Ivan lay down to sleep. Next morning he woke up; the shoes were on the table shining like fire. He went to rouse his master.

“It is time to rise, master.”

“What! have they come for me? Bring the keg quickly! Here is a cup, pour the spirits in; let them hang me drunk.”

“But the shoes are made.”

“How made? Where are they?”

The master ran and saw them. “But when did we make them?”

“In the night. Is it possible that thou dost not remember when we cut and sewed?”

“Oh, I’ve slept so long, brother! I barely, barely remember.”

He took the shoes, wrapped them up, and ran to the palace.

Yelena the Beautiful saw the shoes and knew what had happened. “Surely,” she thought, “the spirits made these for Ivan Tsarevich. — How didst thou make these?” asked she of the shoemaker.

“Oh! I know how to do everything.”

“If that is the case, make me a wedding robe embroidered with gold, ornamented with diamonds and precious stones; let it be ready to-morrow morning: if not, off with thy head!”

The shoemaker went home again gloomy, and his friends were long waiting for him. “Well, what is it?”

“Nothing but cursedness. The destroyer of Christian people has come; she commanded me to make her a robe with gold and precious stones by to-morrow morning: and what sort of a tailor am I? They will take my head surely to-morrow.”

“Ah! brother, the morning is wiser than the evening; let us go and frolic.”

They went to the inn, they drank and frolicked; the shoemaker got tipsy again, brought home a whole keg of spirits, and said to Ivan Tsarevich: “Now, young fellow, when thou wilt rouse me in the morning I’ll toss off three gallons; let them cut the head off me drunk. I couldn’t make such a robe in a lifetime.” The shoemaker lay down to sleep and snored.

Ivan Tsarevich blew on the whistle, and Lame and Crooked appeared. “What is thy pleasure, Tsarevich?”

“That a robe be ready by to-morrow morning exactly such as Yelena the Beautiful wore in Whirlwind’s house.”

“We obey; it will be ready.”

Ivan Tsarevich woke at daylight; the robe was on the table, shining like fire, so that the whole chamber was lighted up. Then he roused his master, who rubbed his eyes and asked, “What! have they come to cut my head off? Give the spirits here this minute.”

“But the robe is ready.”

“Is that true? When did we make it?”

“In the night, of course; dost thou not remember cutting it thyself?”

“Ah, brother, I just remember, — see it as in a dream!”

The shoemaker took the robe and ran to the palace.

Yelena the Beautiful gave him much money and the command, “See that to-morrow by daylight the Golden Kingdom be on the sea, seven versts from shore, and from it to our palace let there be a golden bridge with costly velvet spread upon it, and at the railings on both sides let wonderful trees be growing, and let there be wonderful song-birds singing, with various voices. If thou wilt not have it done by morning, I’ll give orders to quarter thee.”

The shoemaker went from Yelena the Beautiful with drooping head. His friends met him. “Well, brother?”

“What well! I am lost; to-morrow I shall be quartered. She gave me such a task that no devil could do it.”

“Oh, never mind! the morning is wiser than the evening; let us go to the inn.”

“Well, let us go; at the last parting we must have a carousal at least.”

They drank and drank; and towards evening the shoemaker drank so much they had to lead him home. “Farewell, young fellow,” said he to Ivan; “to-morrow they will put me to death.”

“But has a new task been given?”

“Yes, so and so, so and so.” He lay down and snored; but Ivan Tsarevich went straight to his room, and blew on the whistle. Lame and Crooked appeared.

“What is thy pleasure, Ivan Tsarevich?”

“Can ye do me such a work as this?”

“Ivan Tsarevich, this is a work indeed. But there is no avoiding it; toward morning all will be ready.”

When daylight began to come, Ivan woke up, looked out of the window. Fathers! everything was ready as asked for. A golden castle was gleaming like fire. He roused his master, who sprang up. “Well, have they come for me? Give the keg here this minute!”

“But the palace is ready.”

“What dost thou say?”

The shoemaker looked through the window and said, “Ah!” in astonishment, “how was that done?”

“Dost thou not remember how thou and I fixed it?”

“Yes, it is clear that I have slept too soundly; I barely, barely remember.”

They ran to the golden castle; in it was wealth untold, unseen.

Said Ivan Tsarevich: “Here, master, is a wing, go and dust the railing of the bridge; and if they come and ask who lives in the palace, say thou nothing, but give this letter.”

“Very well.”

The shoemaker went to dust the railing of the bridge.

In the morning Yelena the Beautiful woke up; she saw the golden castle, and ran straight to the Tsar. “See what is done in our place! There is a golden palace on the sea, and from that palace a golden bridge seven versts long; and on both sides of the bridge wonderful trees are growing, and song-birds are singing in various voices.”

The Tsar sent immediately to ask what that meant? Had not some hero come to his kingdom? The messengers came to the shoemaker, asked him. “I know not, but there is a letter to thy Tsar.” In that letter Ivan Tsarevich related everything to his father as it was, — how he had liberated his mother, won Yelena the Beautiful, and how his elder brothers had deceived him. With the letter Ivan Tsarevich sent golden carriages, and begged the Tsar and Tsaritsa to come to him. Let Yelena the Beautiful and her sisters and his brothers be brought behind in simple wagons.

All assembled at once and started. Ivan Tsarevich met them with joy. The Tsar wished to put his elder sons to death for their untruths; but Ivan Tsarevich implored his father, and they were forgiven. Then began a mountain of a feast. Ivan Tsarevich married Yelena the Beautiful. They gave the Tsaritsa of the Silver Kingdom to Pyotr Tsarevich, the Tsaritsa of the Copper Kingdom to Vassili Tsarevich, and made the shoemaker a general.

40

IVAN TSAREVICH, THE FIRE-BIRD, AND THE GRAY WOLF

In a certain kingdom, in a certain land, lived Tsar Vwislav Andronovich; he had three sons, — Dmitri Tsarevich, Vassili Tsarevich, and Ivan Tsarevich. Tsar Vwislav had a garden so rich that in no land was there better. In the garden grew many precious trees, with fruit and without fruit.

Tsar Vwislav had one favorite apple-tree, and on that tree grew apples all golden. The Fire-bird used to fly to the garden of Tsar Vwislav. She had wings of gold, and eyes like crystals of the East; and she used to fly to that garden every night, sit on the favorite apple-tree, pluck from it golden apples, and then fly away.

The Tsar grieved greatly over that apple-tree because the Fire-bird plucked from it many apples. Therefore he called his three sons and said: “My dear children, whichever one of you can catch the Fire-bird in my garden and take her alive, to him will I give during my life one half of the kingdom, and at my death I will give it all.”

Then the sons cried out in one voice: “Gracious sovereign, our father, we will try with great pleasure to take the Fire-bird alive.”

The first night Dmitri Tsarevich went to watch in the garden, and sat under the apple-tree from which the Fire-bird had been plucking the apples.

He fell asleep, and did not hear the Fire-bird when she came, nor when she plucked many apples.

Next morning Tsar Vwislav called his son Dmitri Tsarevich, and asked, “Well, my dear son, hast thou seen the Fire-bird?”

“No, gracious sovereign, my father, she came not last night.”

The next night Vassili Tsarevich went to the garden to watch the Fire-bird. He sat under the same apple-tree, and in a couple of hours fell asleep so soundly that he did not hear the Fire-bird when she came nor when she plucked apples.

Next morning Tsar Vwislav called him and asked, “Well, my dear son, hast thou seen the Fire-bird?”

“Gracious sovereign, my father, she came not last night.”

The third night Ivan Tsarevich went to watch in the garden, and sat under the same apple-tree. He sat an hour, a second, and a third. All at once the whole garden was lighted up as if by many fires. The Fire-bird flew hither, perched on the apple-tree, and began to pluck apples. Ivan stole up to her so warily that he caught her tail, but could not hold the bird, she tore off, flew away; and there remained in the hand of Ivan Tsarevich but one feather of the tail, which he held very firmly.

Next morning, the moment Tsar Vwislav woke from his sleep, Ivan Tsarevich went to him and gave him the feather of the Fire-bird. The Tsar was greatly delighted that his youngest son had been able to get even one feather of the Fire-bird. This feather was so wonderful and bright that when carried into a dark chamber it shone as if a great multitude of tapers were lighted in that place. Tsar Vwislav put the feather in his cabinet as a thing to be guarded forever. From that time forth the Fire-bird flew to the garden no more.

Tsar Vwislav again called his sons, and said: “My dear children, I give you my blessing. Set out, find the Fire-bird, and bring her to me alive; and what I promised at first he will surely receive who brings me the bird.”

Dmitri and Vassili Tsarevich began to cherish hatred against their youngest brother because he had pulled the feather from the tail of the Fire-bird. They took their father's blessing, and both went to find the Fire-bird. Ivan Tsarevich too began to beg his father's blessing. The Tsar said to him: "My dear son, my darling child, thou art still young, unused to such a long and difficult journey: why shouldst thou part from me? Thy brothers have gone; now, if thou goest too, and all three of you fail to return for a long time (I am old, and walk under God), and if during your absence the Lord takes my life, who would rule in my place? There might be rebellion too, or disagreement among our people, — there would be no one to stop it; or if an enemy should invade our land, there would be no one to command our men."

But no matter how the Tsar tried to detain Ivan Tsarevich, he could not avoid letting him go at his urgent prayer. Ivan Tsarevich took a blessing of his father, chose a horse, and rode away; he rode on, not knowing himself whither.

Riding by the path by the road, whether it was near or far, high or low, a tale is soon told, but a deed's not soon done. At last he came to the green meadows. In the open field a pillar stands, and on the pillar these words are written: "Whoever goes from the pillar straight forward will be hungry and cold; whoever goes to the right hand will be healthy and well, but his horse will be dead; whoever goes to the left hand will be killed himself, but his horse will be living and well." Ivan read the inscription, and went to the right hand, holding in mind that though his horse might be killed, he would remain alive, and might in time get another horse.

He rode one day, a second, and a third. All at once an enormous gray wolf came out against him and said: "Oh! is that thou, tender youth, Ivan Tsarevich? Thou hast read on the pillar that thy horse will be dead: why hast thou come hither, then?" The wolf said these words, tore Ivan Tsarevich's horse in two, and went to one side.

Ivan grieved greatly for his horse. He cried bitterly, and went forward on foot. He walked all day, and was unspeakably tired. He was going to sit down and rest, when all at once the Gray Wolf caught up with him and said: “I am sorry for thee, Ivan Tsarevich, thou art tired from walking; I am sorry that I ate thy good steed. Well, sit on me, the old wolf, and tell me whither to bear thee, and why.”

Ivan Tsarevich told the Gray Wolf whither he had to go, and the Gray Wolf shot ahead with him swifter than a horse. After a time, just at nightfall, he brought Ivan Tsarevich to a stone wall not very high, halted, and said: “Now, Ivan Tsarevich, come down from the Gray Wolf, climb over that stone wall; on the other side is a garden, and in the garden the Fire-bird, in a golden cage. Take the Fire-bird, but touch not the cage. If thou takest the cage, thou’lt not escape; they will seize thee straightway.”

Ivan Tsarevich climbed over the wall into the garden, saw the Fire-bird in the golden cage, and was greatly tempted by the cage. He took the bird out, and was going back; but changed his mind, and thought, “Why have I taken the bird without the cage? Where can I put her?” He returned; but had barely taken down the cage when there was a hammering and thundering throughout the whole garden, for there were wires attached to the cage. The watchmen woke up at that moment, ran to the garden, caught Ivan Tsarevich with the Fire-bird, and took him to the Tsar, who was called Dolmat. Tsar Dolmat was terribly enraged at Ivan, and shouted at him in loud, angry tones: “Is it not a shame for thee, young man, to steal? But who art thou, of what land, of what father a son, and how do they call thee by name?”

Ivan Tsarevich replied: “I am from Vwislav’s kingdom, the son of Tsar Vwislav Andronovich, and they call me Ivan Tsarevich. Thy Fire-bird used to fly to our garden each night and pluck golden apples from my father’s favorite apple-tree, and destroyed almost the whole tree. Therefore my father has sent me to find the Fire-bird and bring it to him.”

“Oh, youthful young man, Ivan Tsarevich,” said Tsar Dolmat, “is it fitting to do as thou hast done? Thou shouldst have come to me, and I would have given thee the Fire-bird with honor; but now will it be well for thee when I send to all lands to declare how dishonorably thou hast acted in my kingdom? Listen, however, Ivan Tsarevich. If thou wilt do me a service, — if thou wilt go beyond the thrice ninth land to the thirtieth kingdom and get for me from Tsar Afron the golden-maned steed, I will forgive thy offence and give thee the Fire-bird with great honor; if not, I will publish in all kingdoms that thou art a dishonorable thief.”

Ivan Tsarevich went away from Tsar Dolmat in great grief, promising to obtain for him the golden-maned steed.

He came to the Gray Wolf, and told him all that Tsar Dolmat had said.

“Oh! is that thou, youthful young man, Ivan Tsarevich? Why didst thou disobey my words and take the golden cage?”

“I have offended in thy sight,” said Ivan to the Gray Wolf.

“Well, let that go; sit on me, and I will take thee wherever thou wilt.”

Ivan Tsarevich sat on the back of the Gray Wolf. The wolf was as swift as an arrow, and ran, whether it was long or short, till he came at last to the kingdom of Tsar Afron in the night-time. Coming to the white-walled stables, the Gray Wolf said: “Go, Ivan Tsarevich, into these white-walled stables (the grooms on guard are sleeping soundly), and take the golden-maned steed. On the wall hangs a golden bridle; but take not the bridle, or it will go ill with thee.”

Ivan Tsarevich entered the white-walled stables, took the steed, and was coming back; but he saw on the walls the golden bridle, and was so tempted that he took it from the nail. That moment there went a thunder and a noise throughout the stables, because strings were tied to the bridle. The grooms on guard woke up that moment, rushed in, seized Ivan Tsarevich, and took him to Tsar Afron. Tsar Afron began to question him. “Oh, youthful young man, tell me from what land thou art, of what father a son, and how do they call thee by name?"

To this Ivan Tsarevich replied: "I am from Vwislav's kingdom, the son of Tsar Vwislav, and they call me Ivan Tsarevich."

"Oh, youthful young man, Ivan Tsarevich!" said Tsar Afron, "was that which thou hast done the deed of an honorable knight? I would have given thee the golden-maned steed with honor. But now will it be well for thee when I send to all lands a declaration of how dishonorably thou hast acted in my kingdom? Hear me, however, Ivan Tsarevich: if thou wilt do me a service and go beyond the thrice ninth land to the thirtieth kingdom and bring to me Princess Yelena the Beautiful, with whom I am in love heart and soul for a long time, but whom I cannot obtain, I will pardon thy offence and give thee the golden-maned steed with honor. And if thou wilt not do me this service, I will declare in all lands that thou art a dishonorable thief."

Ivan Tsarevich promised Tsar Afron to bring Yelena the Beautiful, left the palace, and fell to crying bitterly.

He came to the Gray Wolf and told him all that had happened.

"Oh, Ivan Tsarevich, thou youthful young man," said the Gray Wolf, "why didst thou disobey me and take the golden bridle?"

"I have offended in thy sight," said Ivan Tsarevich.

"Well, let that go," replied the Wolf. "Sit on me; I will take thee wherever need be."

Ivan Tsarevich sat on the back of the Gray Wolf, who ran as swiftly as an arrow flies, and he ran in such fashion as to be told in a tale no long time; and at last he came to the kingdom of Yelena the Beautiful. Coming to the golden fence which surrounded her wonderful garden, the Wolf said: "Now, Ivan Tsarevich, come down from me and go back by the same road along which we came and wait in the field, under the green oak."

Ivan Tsarevich went where he was commanded. But the Gray Wolf sat near the golden fence, and waited till Yelena the Beautiful should walk in the garden.

Toward evening, when the sun was sinking low in the west, therefore, it was not very warm in the air, Princess Yelena went to walk in the garden with her maidens and court ladies. When she entered the garden and approached the place where the Gray Wolf was sitting behind the fence, he jumped out suddenly, caught the princess, sprang back again, and bore her away with all his power and might. He came to the green oak in the open field where Ivan Tsarevich was waiting, and said, “Ivan Tsarevich, sit on me quickly.” Ivan sat on him, and the Gray Wolf bore them both along swiftly to the kingdom of Tsar Afron.

The nurses and maidens and all the court ladies who had been walking in the garden with the princess Yelena the Beautiful ran straightway to the palace and sent pursuers to overtake the Gray Wolf; but no matter how they ran, they could not overtake him, and turned back.

Ivan Tsarevich while sitting on the Gray Wolf with princess Yelena the Beautiful came to love her with his heart, and she Ivan Tsarevich; and when the Gray Wolf arrived at the kingdom of Tsar Afron, and Ivan Tsarevich had to take Yelena the Beautiful to the palace and give her to Tsar Afron, he grew very sad, and began to weep tearfully.

“What art thou weeping for, Ivan Tsarevich?” asked the Gray Wolf.

“My friend, why should I, good youth, not weep? I have formed a heartfelt love for Yelena the Beautiful, and now I must give her to Tsar Afron for the golden-maned steed; and if I yield her not, then Tsar Afron will dishonor me in all lands.”

“I have served thee much, Ivan Tsarevich,” said the Gray Wolf, “and I will do yet this service. Listen to me. I will turn myself into a princess, Yelena the Beautiful. Do thou give me to Tsar Afron and take from him the golden-maned steed; he will think me the real princess. And when thou art sitting on the steed and riding far away, I will beg of Tsar Afron permission to walk in the open field. When he lets me go with the maidens and nurses and all the court ladies, and I am with them in the open field, remember me, and I will come to thee.”

The Gray Wolf spoke these words, struck the damp earth, and became a princess, Yelena the Beautiful, so that it was not possible in any way to know that the wolf was not the princess. Ivan Tsarevich told Yelena the Beautiful to wait outside the town, and took the Gray Wolf to the palace of Tsar Afron.

When Ivan Tsarevich came with the pretended Yelena the Beautiful, Tsar Afron was greatly delighted in his heart that he had received a treasure which he had long desired. He took the false maiden, and gave Ivan Tsarevich the golden-maned steed.

Ivan Tsarevich mounted the steed and rode out of the town, seated Yelena the Beautiful with him, and rode on, holding his way toward the kingdom of Tsar Dolmat.

The Gray Wolf lived with Tsar Afron a day, a second, and a third, instead of Yelena the Beautiful. On the fourth day he went to Tsar Afron, begging to go out in the open field to walk, to drive away cruel grief and sorrow. Then Tsar Afron said: “Oh, my beautiful princess Yelena, I will do everything for thee; I will let thee go to the open field to walk!” And straightway he commanded the nurses, the maidens, and all the court ladies to go to the open field and walk with the beautiful princess.

Ivan Tsarevich was riding along his road and path with Yelena the Beautiful, talking with her; and he had forgotten about the Gray Wolf, but afterward remembered. “Oh, where is my Gray Wolf?”

All at once, from wherever he came, the wolf stood before Ivan, and said: “Ivan Tsarevich, sit on me, the Gray Wolf, and let the beautiful princess ride on the golden-maned steed.”

Ivan Tsarevich sat on the Gray Wolf, and they went toward the kingdom of Tsar Dolmat. Whether they journeyed long or short, when they had come to the kingdom they stopped about three versts from the capital town; and Ivan Tsarevich began to implore: "Listen to me, Gray Wolf, my dear friend. Thou hast shown me many a service, show me the last one now; and the last one is this: Couldst thou not turn to a golden-maned steed instead of this one? for I do not like to part with this horse."

Suddenly the Gray Wolf struck the damp earth and became a golden-maned steed. Ivan Tsarevich, leaving princess Yelena in the green meadow, sat on the Gray Wolf and went to the palace of Tsar Dolmat. The moment he came, Tsar Dolmat saw that Ivan Tsarevich was riding on the golden-maned steed, and he rejoiced greatly. Straightway he went out of the palace, met the Tsarevich in the broad court, kissed him, took him by the right hand, and led him into the white stone chambers. Tsar Dolmat on the occasion of such joy gave orders for a feast, and they sat at the oaken table at the spread cloth. They ate, they drank, they amused themselves, and rejoiced exactly two days; and on the third day Tsar Dolmat gave Ivan Tsarevich the Fire-bird together with the golden cage. Ivan took the Fire-bird, went outside the town, sat on the golden-maned steed together with Yelena the Beautiful, and went toward his own native place, toward the kingdom of Tsar Vwislav.

Tsar Dolmat the next day thought to take a ride through the open field on his golden-maned steed. He ordered them to saddle him; he sat on the horse, and rode to the open field. The moment he urged the horse, the horse threw Tsar Dolmat off his back, became the Gray Wolf as before, ran off, and came up with Ivan Tsarevich. "Ivan Tsarevich," said he, "sit on me, the Gray Wolf, and let Yelena the Beautiful ride on the golden-maned steed."

Ivan sat on the Gray Wolf, and they went their way. When the Gray Wolf had brought Ivan to the place where he had torn his horse, he stopped and said: "I have served thee sufficiently, with faith and truth. On this spot I tore thy horse in two; to this spot I have brought thee. Come down from me, the Gray Wolf: thou hast a golden-maned steed; sit on him, and go wherever thou hast need. I am no longer thy servant."

The Gray Wolf said these words and ran to one side. Ivan wept bitterly for the Gray Wolf, and went on with the beautiful princess.

Whether he rode long or short with the beautiful princess, when he was within twenty versts of his own kingdom he stopped, dismounted, and he and the beautiful princess rested from the heat of the sun under a tree; he tied the golden-maned steed to the same tree, and put the cage of the Fire-bird by his side. Lying on the soft grass, they talked pleasantly, and fell soundly asleep.

At that time the brothers of Ivan Tsarevich, Dmitri and Vassili Tsarevich, after travelling through many lands without finding the Fire-bird, were on their way home with empty hands, and came unexpectedly upon their brother with the beautiful princess. Seeing the golden-maned steed and the Fire-bird in the cage, they were greatly tempted, and thought of killing their brother Ivan. Dmitri took his own sword out of the scabbard, stabbed Ivan Tsarevich, and cut him to pieces; then he roused the beautiful princess and asked: "Beautiful maiden, of what land art thou, of what father a daughter, and how do they call thee by name?"

The beautiful princess, seeing Ivan Tsarevich dead, was terribly frightened; she began to shed bitter tears, and in her tears she said: "I am Princess Yelena the Beautiful; Ivan Tsarevich, whom ye have given to a cruel death, got me. If ye were good knights, ye would have gone with him into the open field and conquered him there; but ye killed him when asleep; and what fame will ye receive for yourselves? A sleeping man is the same as a dead one."

Then Dmitri Tsarevich put his sword to the heart of Yelena the Beautiful and said: "Hear me, Yelena the Beautiful, thou art now in our hands; we will take thee to our father, Tsar Vwislav, thou wilt tell him that we got thee and the Fire-bird and the golden-maned steed. If not, we will give thee to death this minute.” The princess, afraid of death, promised them, and swore by everything sacred that she would speak as commanded. Then they began to cast lots who should have Yelena the Beautiful, and who the golden-maned steed; and the lot fell that the princess should go to Vassili, and the golden-maned steed to Dmitri.

Then Vassili Tsarevich took the princess, and placed her on his horse; Dmitri sat on the golden-maned steed, and took the Fire-bird to give to their father, Tsar Vwislav; and they went their way.

Ivan Tsarevich lay dead on that spot exactly thirty days; then the Gray Wolf ran up, knew Ivan by his odor, wanted to aid him, to bring him to life, but knew not how. Just then the Gray Wolf saw a raven with two young ones who were flying above the body and wanted to eat the flesh of Ivan Tsarevich. The wolf hid behind a bush; and when the young ravens had come down and were ready to eat the body, he sprang out, caught one, and was going to tear it in two. Then the raven came down, sat a little way from the Gray Wolf, and said: “Oh, Gray Wolf, touch not my young child; it has done nothing to thee!”

“Listen to me, raven,” said the Gray Wolf. “I will not touch thy child; I will let it go unharmed and well if thou wilt do me a service. Fly beyond the thrice ninth land to the thirtieth kingdom, and bring me the water of death and the water of life.”

“I will do that, but touch not my son.” Having said these words, the raven flew away and soon disappeared from sight. On the third day the raven returned, bringing two vials, in one the water of life, in the other the water of death, and gave them both to the Gray Wolf. The wolf took the vials, tore the young raven in two, sprinkled it with the water of death; the little raven grew together, he sprinkled it with the water of life, and the raven sprang up and flew away.

The Gray Wolf sprinkled Ivan Tsarevich with the water of death: the body grew together; he sprinkled it with the water of life: Ivan Tsarevich stood up and exclaimed, “Oh, how long I have slept!”

“Thou wouldst have slept forever, had it not been for me. Thy brothers cut thee to pieces and carried off Princess Yelena with the golden-maned steed and the Fire-bird. Now hurry with all speed to thy own country; Vassili Tsarevich will marry thy bride to-day. To reach home quickly, sit on me; I will bear thee.”

Ivan sat on the Gray Wolf; the wolf ran with him to the kingdom of Tsar Vwislav, and whether it was long or short, he ran to the edge of the town.

Ivan sprang from the Gray Wolf, walked into the town, and found that his brother Vassili had married Yelena the Beautiful, had returned with her from the ceremony, and was sitting with her at the feast.

Ivan Tsarevich entered the palace; and when Yelena the Beautiful saw him, she sprang up from the table, kissed him, and cried out: “This is my dear bridegroom, Ivan Tsarevich, and not that scoundrel at the table.”

Then Tsar Vwislav rose from his place and asked the meaning of these words. Yelena the Beautiful told the whole truth, — told how Ivan Tsarevich had won her, the golden-maned steed, and the Fire-bird; how his elder brother had killed him while asleep; and how they had terrified her into saying that they had won everything.

Tsar Vwislav was terribly enraged at Dmitri and Vassili, and cast them into prison; but Ivan Tsarevich married Yelena the Beautiful, and lived with her in harmony and love, so that one of them could not exist a single minute without the other.

41

IVAN THE PEASANT’S SON AND THE LITTLE MAN HIMSELF ONE-FINGER TALL, HIS MUSTACHE SEVEN VERSTS IN LENGTH

In a certain kingdom in a certain land there lived a Tsar, and in the court-yard of the Tsar was a pillar, and in the pillar three rings, one gold, one silver, and the third copper. One night the Tsar dreamed that there was a horse tied to the gold ring, that every hair on him was silver, and the clear moon was on his forehead. In the morning the Tsar rose up and ordered it to be proclaimed that whoever could interpret the dream and get the horse for him, to that man would he give his daughter, and one half the kingdom in addition.

At the summons of the Tsar a multitude of princes, boyars, and all kinds of lords assembled. No man could explain the dream; no man would undertake to get the horse. At last they explained to the Tsar that such and such a poor man had a son Ivan, who could interpret the dream and get the horse.

The Tsar commanded them to summon Ivan. They summoned him. The Tsar asked, “Canst thou explain my dream and get the horse?”

“Tell me first,” answered Ivan, “what the dream was, and what horse thou dost need.”

The Tsar said: “Last night I dreamed that a horse was tied to the gold ring in my court-yard; every hair on him was silver, and on his forehead the clear moon.”

“That is not a dream, but a reality; for last night the twelve-headed serpent came to thee on that horse and wanted to steal thy daughter.”

“Is it possible to get that horse?”

“It is,” answered Ivan; “but only when my fifteenth year is passed.”

Ivan was then but twelve years old. The Tsar took him to his court, gave him food and drink till his fifteenth year.

When his fifteenth year had passed, Ivan said to the Tsar: “Now give me a horse on which I can ride to the place where the serpent is.”

The Tsar led him to his stables and showed him all his horses; but he could not find a single one, by reason of his strength and weight. When he placed his hero’s hand on any horse, that horse fell to the ground; and he said to the Tsar: “Let me go to the open country to seek a horse of sufficient strength.”

The Tsar let him go. Ivan the peasant’s son looked for three years; nowhere could he find a horse. He was returning to the Tsar in tears, when an old man happened to meet him, and asked, “Why dost thou weep, young man?”

To this question Ivan answered rudely; just chased the old man away.

The old man said: “Look out, young fellow; do not speak ill.”

Ivan went away a little from the old man, and thought, “Why have I offended the old man? Old people know much.”

He returned, caught up with the old man, fell down before him, and said: “Grandfather, forgive me! I offended thee through grief. This is what I am crying about: three years have I travelled through the open country among many herds; nowhere can I find a horse to suit me.”

The old man said: “Go to such a village; there in the stable of a poor peasant is a mare; that mare has a mangy colt; take the colt and feed him, — he will be strong enough for thee.”

Ivan bowed down to the old man, and went to the village; went straight to the peasant’s stable; saw the mare with the mangy colt, on which he put his hands. The colt did not quiver in the least. Ivan took him from the peasant, fed him some time, came to the Tsar, and said that he had a horse. Then he began to make ready to visit the serpent.

The Tsar asked: “How many men dost thou need, Ivan?”

“I need no men,” replied Ivan; “I can get the horse alone. Thou mightest give me perhaps half a dozen to send on messages.”

The Tsar gave him six men; they made ready and set out. Whether they travelled long or short it is unknown to any man; only this is known, — that they came to a fiery river. Over the river was a bridge; near the river an enormous forest. In that forest they pitched a tent, got many things to drink, and began to eat and make merry.

Ivan the peasant’s son said to his comrades: “Let us stand guard every night in turn, and see if any man passes the river.”

It happened that when any of Ivan’s comrades went on guard, each one of them got drunk in the evening and could see nothing. At last Ivan himself went on guard; and just at midnight he saw that a three-headed serpent was crossing the river, and the serpent called, “I have no enemy, no calumniator, unless one enemy and one calumniator, Ivan the peasant’s son; but the raven hasn’t brought his bones in a bladder yet.”

Ivan the peasant’s son sprang from under the bridge. “Thou liest; I am here!”

“If thou art here, then let us make trial;” and the serpent on horseback advanced against Ivan. But Ivan went forth on foot, gave a blow with his sabre, and cut off the three heads of the serpent, took the horse for himself, and tied him to the tent.

The next night Ivan the peasant’s son killed the six-headed serpent, the third night the nine-headed one, and threw them into the fiery river. When he went on guard the fourth night the twelve-headed serpent came, and began to speak wrathfully. “Who art thou, Ivan the peasant’s son? Come out this minute to me! Why didst thou kill my sons?”

Ivan the peasant’s son slipped out and said: “Let me go first to my tent, and then I will fight with thee.”

“Well, go on.”

Ivan ran to his comrades. “Here, boys, is a bowl, look into it; when it shall be filled with blood, come to me.”

He returned and stood against the serpent; they rushed and struck each other. Ivan at the first blow cut four heads off the serpent, but went himself to his knees in the earth; when they met the second time, Ivan cut three heads off and sank to his waist in the earth; the third time they met he cut off three more heads, and sank to his breast in the earth; at last he cut off one head, and sank to his neck in the earth. Then only did his comrades think of him; they looked, and saw that the blood was running over the edge of the bowl. They hastened out, cut off the last head of the serpent, and pulled Ivan out of the earth. Ivan took the serpent’s horse and led him to the tent.

Night passed, morning came; the good youth began to eat, drink, and be merry. Ivan the peasant’s son rose up from the merry-making and said to his comrades, “Do ye wait here.” He turned into a cat, and went along the bridge over the fiery river, came to the house where the serpents used to live, and began to make friends with the cats there. In the house there remained alive only the old mother of the serpents and her three daughters-in-law; they were sitting in the chamber talking to one another. “How could we destroy that scoundrel, that Ivan the peasant’s son?”

The youngest daughter-in-law said: “I’ll bring hunger on the road, and turn myself into an apple-tree, so that when he eats an apple it will tear him to pieces in a moment.”

The second daughter-in-law said: “I will bring thirst on the road, and turn myself into a well; let him try to drink.”

The eldest said: “I’ll bring sleep and make a bed of myself; let Ivan try to lie down, he’ll die in a minute.”

At last the old woman said: “I’ll open my mouth from earth to sky and swallow them all.”

Ivan heard what they said, went out of the chamber, turned into a man, and went back to his comrades. “Now, boys, make ready for the road.”

They made ready, went their way, and to begin with a terrible hunger appeared on the road, so that they had nothing to eat. They saw an apple-tree. Ivan’s comrades wanted to pluck the apples, but Ivan would not let them. “That is not an apple-tree,” said he; and began to slash at it: blood came out. Another time thirst came upon them. Ivan saw a well; he would not let them drink from it; he began to slash at it: blood came forth. Then sleep came on them; there was a bed on the road. Ivan cut it to pieces. They came to the jaws stretched from the earth to the sky. What was to be done? They thought of jumping through on a run. No man was able to jump through save Ivan; and he was borne out of the trouble by his wonderful steed, every hair of which was silver, and the bright moon on his forehead.

He came to a river; at the river was a hut; there he was met by a little man, himself one finger tall, his mustache seven versts in length, who said: “Give me the horse; and if thou wilt not give him quietly, I’ll take him by force.”

Ivan answered: “Leave me, cursed reptile, or I’ll crush thee under the horse.”

The little man himself, one finger tall, his mustache seven versts in length, knocked him on to the ground, sat on the horse, and rode away. Ivan went into the hut and grieved greatly for his horse. In the hut was lying on the stove a footless, handless man, and he said to Ivan: “Listen, good hero, — I know not how to call thee by name. Why didst thou try to fight with him? I was something more of a hero than thou, and still he gnawed my hands and feet off.”

“Why?”

“Because I ate bread on his table.”

Ivan began to ask how he could win his horse back. The footless, handless said, —

“Go to such a river and take the ferry, ferry for three years, take money from no man: then thou mayest win the horse back.”

Ivan bowed down to him, went to the river, took the ferry, and ferried three whole years for nothing. Once it happened to him to ferry over three old men; they offered him money, he would not take it.

“Tell me, good hero, why thou takest no money?”

He said, “According to a promise.”

“What promise?”

“A malicious man took my horse, and good people told me to take the ferry for three years, and receive money from no man.”

The old men said: “If thou choosest, Ivan, we are ready to help thee to get back thy horse.”

“Help me, my friends.”

The old men were not common people; they were the Freezer, the Devourer, and the Wizard. The Wizard went out on the shore, made the picture of a boat in the sand and said: “Well, brothers, you see this boat?”

“We see it.”

“Sit in it.”

All four sat in the boat.

The Wizard said: “Now, light little boat, do me a service as thou didst do before.”

Straightway the boat rose in the air, and in a flash, just like an arrow sent from a bow, it brought them to a great stony mountain. At that mountain stood a house, and in the house lived the little man, — himself one finger tall, his mustache seven versts in length. The old men sent Ivan to ask for the horse. Ivan began to ask.

The little man said: “Steal the Tsar’s daughter and bring her to me; then I’ll give thee the horse.”

Ivan told this to his comrades. They left him at once and went to the Tsar. The Tsar knew what they had come for, and commanded his servants to heat the bath red hot. “Let them suffocate there,” said he. Then he asked his guests to the bath. They thanked him and went. The Wizard commanded the Freezer to go first. The Freezer went into the bath and made it cool. Then they washed and steamed themselves, and came to the Tsar. He ordered a great dinner to be given, and a multitude of all kinds of food was on the table. The Devourer began and ate everything. In the night they came together, stole the Tsar’s daughter, and brought her to the little man himself, one finger tall, his mustache seven versts in length. They gave him the Tsar’s daughter and got the horse.

Ivan bowed down to the old men, sat on the horse, and went to the Tsar. He travelled and travelled, stopped in an open field to rest, put up his tent, and lay down. He woke up, threw out his hand, the Tsar’s daughter was by him; he was delighted, and asked, “How didst thou come here?”

“I turned into a pin, and stuck myself into thy collar.”

That moment she turned into a pin again. Ivan stuck her into his collar and travelled on; came to the Tsar. The Tsar saw the wondrous horse, received the good hero with honor, and told how his daughter had been stolen.

Ivan said: “Do not grieve, I have brought her back.”

He went into the next chamber; the Tsarevna turned into a fair maiden. Ivan took her by the hand and brought her to the Tsar.

The Tsar was still more rejoiced. He took the horse for himself, and gave his daughter to Ivan. Ivan is living yet with his young wife.

42

THE FEATHER OF BRIGHT FINIST THE FALCON

There lived an old man with his old wife. They had three daughters. The youngest was such a beauty that she could neither be told of in a tale nor described with a pen. Once the old man was going to town to the fair, and he said: “My dear daughters, say what ye want; I will buy all ye wish at the fair.”

The eldest said, “Father, buy me a new dress.” The second said, “Father, buy me a shawl kerchief.” But the youngest said, “Buy me a red flower.”

The old man laughed at his youngest daughter. “Oh, little dunce! what dost thou want of a red flower? Great good in it for thee; better I’ll buy thee clothes.”

No matter what he said, he could not persuade her. “Buy me a little red flower, nothing but that.” The old man went to the fair, bought the eldest daughter a dress, the second a shawl kerchief; but in the whole town he could not find a red flower. Only as he was coming home did an unknown old man happen in his way. The old man had a red flower in his hand. “Sell me thy flower, old man.”

“It is not for sale, it is reserved. If thy youngest daughter will marry my son, Bright Finist the Falcon, I will give the flower as a gift.”

The father grew thoughtful. Not to take the flower was to grieve his daughter, and to take it was to give her in marriage, God knows to whom!

He thought and thought; still he took the flower. “What harm?” said he to himself; “they will come with proposals by and by. If he is not the right man, why, we can refuse.” He came home, gave the eldest daughter her dress, the second her shawl, and to the youngest he gave the flower, saying, “I like not thy flower, my dear daughter; greatly I like it not.” And then he whispered in her ear: “The flower was reserved, and not for sale. I took it from a strange man for the promise to give thee in marriage to his son, Bright Finist the Falcon.”

“Be not troubled, father, he is so good and kind; he flies as a bright falcon in the sky, and when he strikes the damp earth he is a hero of heroes.”

“But dost thou know him?”

“I know him, father. Last Sunday he was at Mass, and looked at me all the time. I talked to him — he loves me, father.”

The old man shook his head, looked at his daughter very sharply, made the sign of the cross on her, and said: “Go to thy room, my dear daughter, it is time to sleep. The morning is wiser than the evening; we will talk this matter over hereafter.”

The daughter shut herself up in her room, put the red flower in water, opened the window, and looked into the blue distance. Wherever he came from, Bright Finist the Falcon of Flowery Feathers wheeled before her, sprang in through the window, struck the floor, and became a young man. The maiden was frightened; but when he spoke it became one knows not how joyous and pleasant at her heart. They talked till dawn, — I know not indeed of what; I know only that when day began to break, Bright Finist the Falcon of Flowery Feathers kissed her and said: “Every night as soon as the bright little flower is placed on the window I will fly to thee, my dear. But here is a feather from my wing. Shouldst thou wish for robes, go out on the balcony and wave it on the right side; in a moment all that thy soul desires will appear before thee.” He kissed her once more, turned into a bright falcon, and flew away beyond the dark forest.

The maiden looked after her fated one, closed the window, and lay down to sleep. From that time every night, as soon as she placed the little red flower at the window, the good youth, Bright Finist the Falcon, flew to her.

Well, Sunday came. The elder sisters began to dress for Mass. “But what art thou going to wear? Thou hast nothing new,” said they to the youngest one.

She answered, “Never mind; I can pray even at home.”

The elder sisters went to church, and the youngest sat at the window in an old dress and looked at the orthodox people going to church. She bided her time, went out on the porch, waved her colored feather on the right; and from wherever they came there appeared before her a crystal carriage, blooded horses, servants in gold, robes, and every ornament of precious stones. In one moment the beautiful maiden was dressed, sat in the carriage, and dashed off to church. The people look, admire her beauty. “It is clear that some Tsar’s daughter has come,” said they among themselves.

As soon as “Dostoino” was sung, she went out of the church, sat in the carriage, and was whirled back home. The orthodox people went out to look at her, to see where she would go; but nothing of the sort, — her trace had grown cold long ago.

Our beauty had barely come to the court when she waved her bright feather on the left side; in a moment the maidens undressed her and the carriage vanished. She was sitting as if nothing had happened, looking out through the window to see how the orthodox people go home from church.

The sisters too came home. “Well, sister,” said they, “what a beauty was at church to-day! Just a sight, neither to be told in a tale nor described with a pen. It must be that she is some Tsar’s daughter from another land, so splendidly dressed, wonderfully!”

The second and third Sundays came; the beautiful maiden mystified the orthodox people, and her sisters, her father, and her mother. But the last time when she undressed she forgot to take out of her hair the diamond pin. The elder sisters came from the church and told her of the Tsar’s daughter; but when they looked at the youngest sister the diamonds were blazing in her hair.

“Oh, sister, what is this?” cried they; “why just such a pin was in the hair of the Tsar’s daughter to-day. Where didst thou get it?”

The beautiful maiden was confused, and ran to her chamber. There was no end of guesses and whispers, but the youngest sister said nothing and laughed in secret. The elder sisters began to watch her and to listen in the night at her chamber; and they overheard one time her conversation with Bright Finist the Falcon, and saw with their own eyes at daybreak how he sprang from the window and flew off beyond the dark forest.

The elder sisters were clearly malicious. They planned to put hidden knives for the evening on the window of their sister’s room, so that Bright Finist the Falcon might cut his colored wings. They did this straightway; the youngest sister knew nothing of the matter. She put her red flower on the window, lay down on the couch, and fell asleep soundly. Bright Finist the Falcon flew to the window, and as he was springing in cut his left foot; but the beautiful maiden knew nothing of this; she was sleeping so sweetly, so calmly. Angrily did Bright Finist the Falcon rise to the sky and fly beyond the dark forest.

In the morning the maiden woke up. She looked on every side; it was daylight already, and the good youth was not there. She looked at the window, and on the window were two sharp knives across each other, and red blood was dripping from them to the flower. Long did the maiden shed bitter tears, many sleepless nights did she pass by the window of her chamber. She waved the bright feather in vain; Bright Finist the Falcon flies no longer himself, and sends not his servants.

At last she went to her father with tears in her eyes and begged his blessing, gave orders to forge three pairs of iron shoes, three iron staves, three iron caps, and three iron Easter cakes; she put a pair of shoes on her feet, the cap on her head, took a staff in her hand, and went toward that point from which Bright Finist the Falcon had flown to her. She goes through slumbering forests, she goes over stumps, over logs. One pair of iron shoes are trodden out, one iron cap is worn off, one staff is breaking up, one cake is gnawed away, and the beautiful maiden walks on, walks all the time, and the forest grows darker, grows denser.

All at once she sees standing before her an iron hut on hen's legs, and it turns without ceasing.

"Hut, hut!" said she, "stand with thy back to the forest, thy front to me."

The hut turned its front to her. She entered the hut, and in it was lying a Baba-Yaga from corner to corner, her lips on the crosspiece, her nose in the loft.

"Tfu-tfu-tfu! in former days nothing of Russia was seen with sight nor heard with hearing; but now the odor of Russia goes through the wide world in visible seeming, runs to one's nose. Where dost thou hold thy way, beautiful maiden? Art flying from labor, or seekest labor?"

"Oh, grandmother dear, I had Bright Finist the Falcon of Flowery Feathers; my sisters did harm him! Now I am seeking for Bright Finist the Falcon."

"Oh, my child, thou hast far to go; thrice nine lands must yet be passed! Bright Finist the Falcon of Flowery Feathers lives in the fiftieth kingdom in the eightieth land, and is now betrothed to the daughter of a Tsar."

The Baba-Yaga nourished and fed the maiden with what God had sent, and put her to bed. Next morning, when the light was just coming, she roused her, gave her a present for the road, — a small golden hammer and ten little diamond nails, — and said: "When thou comest to the blue sea, the bride of Bright Finist the Falcon will come out on the shore to walk; take the golden hammer and drive the diamond nails. She will try to buy them of thee; but, beautiful maiden, take no pay, only ask to see Bright Finist the Falcon. Now go, with God, to my second sister."

Again the fair maiden goes through the dark forest, goes farther and farther; the forest is darker and deeper, the tree-tops wind up to the sky. Now almost the second pair of shoes are trodden out, the second cap worn away, the second iron staff breaking, the iron cake gnawed away; before the maiden is an iron hut on hen's legs, and it turns without ceasing.

"Hut, oh, hut!" said she, "stop with thy back to the trees and thy front to me, so that I may creep in and eat."

The hut turned its back to the trees and its front to the maiden. She entered. In the hut lay a Baba-Yaga from corner to corner, her lips on the crosspiece, her nose in the loft.

"Tfu-tfu-tfu! in former days nothing of Russia was seen with sight or heard with hearing; but now the odor of Russia goes through the wide world. Whither dost hold thy way, fair maiden?"

"Grandmother, dear, I am seeking Bright Finist the Falcon."

"Oh! he is going to marry; they have the maiden's party to-night," said the Baba-Yaga.

She gave her to eat and drink, and put the maiden to sleep. At daybreak next morning she roused her, gave her a golden plate with a diamond ball, and enjoined on her most firmly, "When thou comest to the shore of the blue sea, roll the diamond ball on the golden plate. The bride of Bright Finist the Falcon of Flowery Feathers will try to buy the plate and ball; but take nothing for it, only ask to see Bright Finist the Falcon. Now go, with God, to my eldest sister."

Again the fair maiden goes through the dark forest, goes farther and farther; the forest grows darker and deeper. Now are the third pair of shoes almost trodden out, the third cap is wearing off, the third staff is breaking, and the last cake is gnawed away. On hen’s legs stands an iron hut and turns about.

“Hut, oh, hut!” cried she, “stand with thy back to the trees and thy face to me; I must creep in and eat bread.”

The hut turned. In the hut lay another Baba-Yaga from corner to corner, her lips on the crosspiece, her nose in the loft.

“Tfu-tfu-tfu! in former times nothing of Russia was seen with sight nor heard with hearing; but now the odor of Russia goes through the wide world. Where, beautiful maiden, dost thou hold thy way?”

“Grandmother, dear, I am seeking Bright Finist the Falcon.”

“Oh, fair maiden, he has married a Tsar’s daughter! Here is my swift steed; sit on him, and go, with God.”

The maiden sat on the steed and shot away farther. The forest grew thinner and thinner.

Behold, the blue sea is before her; broad and roomy is it spread, and there in the distance, like fire, burn the golden summits above the lofty, white-walled chambers. That is the kingdom of Bright Finist the Falcon. She sat then on the movable sand of the shore, and hammered with hammer the diamond nails. All at once the Tsar’s daughter goes with her nurses and maidens and trusty serving-women along the shore; she stops, and wants to buy the diamond nails and the golden hammer.

“Tsar’s daughter, let me but look at Bright Finist the Falcon, I will give them for nothing,” answered the maiden.

“Bright Finist the Falcon is sleeping at present, and has ordered that none be admitted; but give me thy beautiful nails and hammer, I will show him to thee.”

She took the hammer and nails, ran to the palace, stuck into the clothes of Bright Finist the Falcon a magic pin, so that he should sleep more soundly and not wake; then she commanded her nurses to conduct the beautiful maiden through the palace to her husband, and went herself to walk.

Long did the maiden struggle, long did she weep over her dear one; she could not wake him in any way. When she had walked to her pleasure, the Tsar’s daughter came home, drove her away, and pulled out the pin.

Bright Finist the Falcon woke. “Oh, how long I have slept! Some one was here,” said he, “and wept over me all the time, talking the while; but I could not open my eyes, I felt so heavy.”

“Thou wast only dreaming,” said the Tsar’s daughter; “no one was here.”

Next day the beautiful maiden sat again on the shore of the blue sea, and was rolling a diamond ball on a golden plate.

The Tsar’s daughter went out to walk; she saw them, and said, “Sell them to me.”

“Let me look at Bright Finist the Falcon, and I will give them for nothing.”

The Tsar’s daughter agreed, and again she pierced the clothes of Bright Finist the Falcon with a magic pin. Again the fair maiden wept bitterly over her dear one, but could not rouse him.

The third day she sat on the shore of the blue sea, so sad and sorrowful, she was feeding her steed with glowing coals. The Tsar’s daughter, seeing that the steed was eating fire, wanted to buy him.

“Let me look on Bright Finist the Falcon, and I’ll give the steed for nothing.”

The Tsar’s daughter agreed, ran to the palace, and said to her husband, “Let me look in thy head.” She sat down to look in his head, and stuck the pin in his hair; straightway he was in a deep sleep. Then she sent her nurses for the beautiful maiden.

The fair maiden came, tried to wake her dear, embraced him and kissed him, crying bitterly, bitterly herself; he wakes not. Then she began to look in his head, and out fell the magic pin.

Bright Finist the Falcon woke all at once; he saw the fair maiden and was glad. She told him everything as it was, — how her malicious sisters had envied her, how she had wandered, and how she had exchanged with the Tsar’s daughter. He loved her more than before, kissed her on the sweet lips, and gave command to call without delay boyars, princes, and people of every degree. Then he asked: “What is your judgment: with which wife should I spend my life, — with her who sold me, or her who bought me?”

All the boyars, princes, and people of each degree decided in one voice to take the woman who had bought him; but the one who had sold him, to hang on the gate and shoot her. Bright Finist the Falcon of Flowery Feathers did this.

43

THE PIG WITH GOLD BRISTLES, THE DEER WITH GOLDEN HORNS, AND THE GOLDEN-MANED STEED WITH GOLDEN TAIL

There lived a Tsar, and he had a daughter, Tsarevna, Priceless Beauty, not to be told of in a tale nor described with a pen. The Tsar issued a call throughout all towns that whoever would kiss the Tsarevna through twelve windows, no matter of what stock he might be, he would get the Tsarevna for wife, and receive half the kingdom.

In this kingdom lived a merchant, and he had three sons; the two elder were crafty, and the third, the youngest, was a simpleton. Well, the elder brothers said, “Father, we will go to get the Tsarevna.”

“Go, with God,” said the merchant.

They took the very best horses and began to make ready for the road. The fool also was preparing.

“Where art thou going, fool? How couldst thou kiss the Tsarevna?” and they laughed at him in every manner.

They went away, and the simpleton dragged along after them on a poor mangy little horse. He went into the field, and he cried with a shrill voice: “Oh, blue-brown, cunning bay, stand before me as leaf before stem!”

Wherever he came from, a splendid steed rushed up; the ground trembled. The simpleton crept into one ear of the steed and out of the other, and became such a beauty as had never been seen nor heard of. He sat on the horse, and rode to the Tsar’s palace; and when he rushed up he broke six panes of glass.

All were astonished, and cried, “Who is that? Seize him, hold him!”

But his trace was cold. He rode away into the field, crept into one ear of his steed, out of the other, and became just such a simpleton as before; he sat on his wretched horse, rode home, and lay on the stove.

His brothers came back and said: “Well, father, there was a hero, — such a hero! He broke through six glasses at once.”

The simpleton from the stove cried out: “Ah, brothers, was not that I?”

“Thou dunce! how couldst thou do it; how couldst thou get the Tsarevna? Thou art not worth her finger nail.”

Next day the brothers prepared again to go to the Tsar’s palace; the simpleton also prepared. “What art thou going for, thou dunce?” laughed the brothers; “thou art needed there, I suppose!”

The simpleton went again on his mangy, wretched little horse to the field, and cried in a shrill voice: “Oh, blue-brown, cunning bay, stand before me as leaf before stem!”

The steed rushed, the ground trembled, the simpleton crept into one ear of the steed and out of the other, and became such a beauty as had never been seen or heard of before. He rushed through the Tsar’s court, broke all the twelve windows, and kissed the Tsarevna, Priceless Beauty. She put a mark straight on his forehead.

All were astonished, and cried: “Stop him, hold him! Who is he?”

But his trace was cold. He rode out to the field, crept into one ear and out of the other, became just such a simpleton as before, came home, tied a rag around his forehead, pretended that his head was aching, and lay down on the stove.

His brothers returned and said: “Oh, father, there was a hero, such a hero! At once he broke all twelve windows and kissed the Tsarevna.”

The simpleton cried out from the stove: “Ah, brothers, was it not I?”

“Oh, thou dunce, how could it be?”

Meanwhile the Tsarevna was thinking who her bridegroom could be. She went to the Tsar and said: “Father, let me bring together all the Tsars’ sons, kings’ sons, nobles, merchants, and peasants to a feast, to a talk, and find out who kissed me.” The Tsar permitted her.

Well, the whole Christian world met. The Tsarevna herself went among them all, entertained all with wine, examined to see if she could find the mark on any man’s forehead. She went to each; at last she brought wine to the simpleton.

“What hast thou bound up there?” asked the Tsarevna.

“So, nothing; my head aches,” said the simpleton.

“Well, then, untie it.” The Tsarevna unbound his head, recognized the mark, and grew faint.

The Tsar said to her, “It is impossible to change the word now; it has to be so, — be his wife.”

They married the simpleton and the Tsarevna. She was weeping bitterly; her two sisters, who had married Tsars’ sons, were laughing at her, and said: “There it is; she has married a fool!”

Once the Tsar called all his sons-in-law and said: “I have heard that in such a state, in such a kingdom, there is a wonder, — a pig with gold bristles. Is it not possible in some way to get this pig? Try.”

Well, the two crafty sons-in-law saddled the very best horses, sat on them, and rode away.

The fool took from the stable the very last miserable horse, and followed his brothers. He came out into an open field, and cried with a shrill voice: “Come, blue-brown, cunning bay, stand before me as leaf before stem!” Wherever he came from, the wondrous horse was snorting and tearing the ground with his hoof. The simpleton crawled into one ear and out of the other.

Wherever they came from, there stood before him two youths, and they asked, “What dost thou wish, what is thy pleasure?”

“To have a tent here, and in the tent a bed; beside the tent to have the pig with gold bristles walking.”

All was done in a moment. The tent was there, in the tent a bed; on the bed lay the simpleton, but such a hero that no one could know him. The pig with gold bristles was walking by the side of the tent in the meadow.

The other brothers-in-law travelled and travelled; nowhere could they see a pig with gold bristles. On their way home they approached the tent and saw the wonder. “Oh! here is where the pig with gold bristles is walking; let us go,” said they, “and whatever must be given we will give, we will buy the pig and please our father-in-law.”

They went to the tent and saluted the owner. The simpleton asked: “Where are ye travelling? what are ye looking for?”

“Wilt thou sell us the pig with gold bristles? we are looking for this pig a long time.”

“No, I want it myself.”

“Ask what will please thee, but sell.”

They offered him a thousand for the pig, and two and three and more; but the simpleton would not consent. “I will not take a hundred thousand,” said he.

“Oh, let us have him, please; take what seems good to thee!”

“Well, ye need him so greatly, I will give him, and will not take much, — the middle toe of each man’s foot.”

They thought and thought, took off their boots, and each man cut off the middle toe of his foot. The simpleton took the toes, hid them, and gave the pig with gold bristles. The brothers-in-law went home, taking the pig with them.

The Tsar was so glad that he knew not what to call them, where to seat them, or what to give them to eat.

"Have ye seen the fool?" asked the Tsar.

"With seeing we have not seen him, with hearing we have not heard."

The simpleton crept into one ear of his horse, out of the other, and became just such a fool as before. He killed his horse, took off his skin, and put it on; then he caught magpies, crows, jackdaws, and sparrows, tied them around himself, and went home. He came into the palace and let all his birds loose; they flew around on every side, and broke nearly all the windows of the palace.

The Tsarevna, Priceless Beauty, covered herself with tears, and her sisters were screaming with laughter. "Our husbands," said they, "brought home the pig with gold bristles, and thy fool — look, if it please thee, how he has dressed himself as a monster!"

The Tsar shouted: "What a clown! I'll fix him."

Again the Tsar called his sons-in-law. "My dear sons-in-law, I have heard that in such a kingdom, in such a land, there is a wonder, — a deer with golden horns and a golden tail. Can ye not get him in any way?"

"We can, your Majesty."

Now the two crafty sons-in-law saddled the very best horses and set out.

"Well," said the Tsar to the simpleton, "go thou with the others."

The simpleton took from the stable the very last miserable horse and followed his brothers. He went out in the open field and cried with a shrill voice: "Oh, blue-brown, cunning bay, stand before me as leaf before stem." Wherever he came from, the wonderful horse was there, snorting and tearing the ground with his hoofs. The simpleton crept in one of his ears and out of the other. Wherever they came from, two young men stood before him and asked: "What dost thou want?"

"I want a tent here, in the tent a bed, and at the side of the tent a deer with golden horns and a golden tail."

That moment the tent was there, in the tent a bed, on the bed the simpleton stretched himself, — such a beauty that no man could know him;

at the side of the tent walked a deer with golden horns and a golden tail.

The crafty brothers travelled and travelled. Nowhere did they see such a deer, and they turned to come home. They came near the tent and saw the wonder. “Oh, this is where the deer with golden horns and a golden tail is! Let us go,” said they; “whatever must be given we’ll give, buy that deer, and please our father-in-law.”

They came up and saluted. The simpleton asked: “Why are ye travelling; what are ye seeking?”

“Wilt thou sell us the deer with golden horns and a golden tail?”

“No, it is not for sale; I want it myself.”

“Ask what will please thee, but sell.” They offered one, two, three thousand, and more. The simpleton wouldn’t listen to the offers, would not take money.

“But if my deer has pleased you, I’ll sell him, if ye like, at a cheap price, — the middle finger of each man’s hand.”

They thought and thought, and agreed. They took off their gloves and cut off the middle finger. The simpleton put the fingers away and gave the deer.

The sons-in-law came home, and brought the deer with golden horns and a golden tail. The Tsar from joy knew not what to call them, where to seat them, or with what to entertain them.

“Have ye seen the fool anywhere?” asked the Tsar.

“With seeing we have not seen him, with hearing we have not heard.”

The simpleton crept into one ear of the horse and out of the other, and became just such a simpleton as he had been before. He killed his wretched horse, skinned him, and put on the skin; then caught a lot of jackdaws, crows, magpies, and sparrows, tied them around himself, and went home. He came again to the palace, and let out the birds in different directions; his wife was sobbing, and her sisters were laughing. “Our husbands,” said they, "brought home the deer with golden horns and a golden tail, and thy fool — look at him!"

The Tsar shouted at the fool: "What an ignorant lout!" and he gave half the kingdom to his crafty sons-in-law.

The third time the Tsar called his crafty sons-in-law, and said: "My dear sons-in-law, I will give you the whole kingdom if ye will get for me the golden-maned steed with golden tail; I have heard that he is in such a kingdom and such a land."

The crafty sons-in-law saddled the very best horses and went on their journey.

The Tsar sent also the fool. "Well, go thou too."

The simpleton took the very last wretched horse from the stable and followed his crafty brothers. He came to the open field and cried with a shrill voice: "Oh, blue-brown, cunning bay, stand before me as leaf before stem!" Wherever he came from, the marvellous steed was snorting, and tearing the earth with his hoof. Behold, the simpleton crept into one ear and out of the other, and became such a beauty that it was not in the power of man to recognize him. Then, wherever they came from, there stood before him two youths, and they asked, "What dost thou wish; what dost thou want?"

"I want a tent here, in the tent a bed, and at the side of the tent the golden-maned steed with golden tail."

That minute the tent was made, in the tent a bed. The simpleton stretched himself on the bed; at the side of the tent the golden-maned steed with golden tail was walking.

The crafty sons-in-law travelled and travelled; nowhere did they see that kind of steed, and were on their way home. They drew near the tent, and saw the wonder.

"Oh, here is the place where the golden-maned steed with golden tail is walking. Let us go in," said they; "we will give whatever they ask, and buy him to please our father-in-law."

The simpleton asked: "Whither are ye travelling; what are ye seeking?"

"Sell us the golden-maned steed with golden tail."

"He is not for sale; I want him myself."

"Ask what may please thee, only sell him;" and they offered one, two, three thousand and more.

"I would not take a hundred thousand," said the simpleton.

"Sell him to us; take what will please thee."

"Well, if ye need him greatly, I will give him to you; I will not take a high price. Let me cut a strap from the back of each one of you."

They thought and thought, struggled and struggled, wanted the horse very badly, were sorry for themselves, but decided at last, undressed, and took off their shirts. The simpleton cut from the back of each one of them a strap, took the straps, put them away, and delivered the steed.

The sons-in-law came home bringing the golden-maned steed with golden tail. The Tsar from delight knew not what to call them, where to seat them, or how to entertain them, and gave them the remaining half of the kingdom. The simpleton crept into one ear of the steed and out of the other, and became what he had been before. He killed his wretched horse, took off the skin, put it on himself, caught magpies, crows, jackdaws, and sparrows, tied them around himself, came to the palace, and let out the birds; they flew in different directions, and broke nearly all the windows. The Tsarevna, his wife, was crying, and her sisters were laughing at her. "Our husbands have brought the golden-maned steed with golden tail; but look at thy fool going around such a fright!"

The Tsar shouted at the fool: "What an ignorant lout! I'll have thee shot."

And the simpleton asked: "With what wilt thou reward me?"

"What reward shouldst thou have?" asked the Tsar.

“If the truth must be told, I got for thee the pig with gold bristles, the deer with golden horns and a golden tail, and the golden-maned steed with golden tail.”

“How canst thou prove that?” asked the Tsar.

“Command thy sons-in-law, Gosudár, to take off their boots.”

The sons-in-law began to make excuses; they didn’t want to take off their boots.

“Take off your boots,” urged the Tsar; “there is no harm in that.”

They took off their boots. The Tsar looks: one toe is missing.

“Here are their toes,” said the simpleton. “Order them now to take off their gloves.”

They removed their gloves, and the Tsar saw there was a finger missing.

“Here are their fingers,” said the simpleton. “Order them now to take off their shirts.”

The Tsar saw that the affair was coming true, and ordered them to undress. They took off their shirts, and the Tsar saw that each one of them had a strap cut from his back the width of two fingers.

“Here are the straps,” said the simpleton; and told the whole story as it was.

The Tsar didn’t know how to entertain him, nor how to reward him. He gave him the whole kingdom, and the other sons-in-law, because they had deceived him, he had shot.

The simpleton went to the open field and cried with a shrill voice: “Oh, blue-brown, cunning bay, stand before me as leaf before stem!” The horse ran, the ground trembled, the simpleton crept into one ear of the steed and out of the other, and became a hero and a beauty.

He came home, began to live with his Tsarevna and win wealth.

44

WATER OF YOUTH, WATER OF LIFE, AND WATER OF DEATH

In a certain kingdom in a certain land there lived a Tsar; that Tsar had three sons, — two crafty, and the third simple. Somehow the Tsar had a dream that beyond the thrice ninth land, in the thirtieth kingdom, there was a beautiful maiden, from whose hands and feet water was flowing, that whoever would drink that water would become thirty years younger. The Tsar was very old. He summoned his sons and counsellors, and asked: “Can any one explain my dream?”

The counsellors answered the Tsar: “We have not seen with sight nor heard with hearing of such a beautiful maiden, and how to go to her is unknown to us.”

Now the eldest son, Dmitri Tsarevich, spoke up: “Father, give me thy blessing to go in all four directions, look at people, show myself, and make search for the beautiful maiden.”

The Tsar gave his parental blessing. “Take,” said he, “treasure as much as thou wishest, and all kinds of troops as many as are necessary.”

Dmitri Tsarevich took one hundred thousand men and set out on the road, on the journey. He rode a day, he rode a week, he rode a month, and two and three months. No matter whom he asked, no one knew of the beautiful maiden, and he came to such desert places that there were only heaven and earth. He urged his horse on, and behold before him is a lofty mountain; he could not see the top with his eyes. Somehow he climbed the mountain and found there an ancient, a gray old man.

“Hail, grandfather!”

“Hail, brave youth! Art fleeing from labor, or seekest thou labor?”

“I am seeking labor.”

“What dost thou need?”

“I have heard that beyond the thrice ninth land, in the thirtieth kingdom, is a beautiful maiden, from whose hands and feet healing water flows, and that whoever gets and drinks this water will grow thirty years younger.”

“Well, brother, thou canst not go there.”

“Why not?”

“Because there are three broad rivers on the road, and on these rivers three ferries: at the first ferry they will cut off thy right hand, at the second thy left foot, at the third they will take thy head.”

Dmitri Tsarevich was grieved; he hung his stormy head below his shoulders, and thought: “Must I spare my father’s head? Must I spare my own? I’ll turn back.”

He came down from the mountain, went back to his father, and said: “No, father, I have not been able to find her; there is nothing to be heard of that maiden.”

The second son, Vassili Tsarevich, began to beg: “Father, give me thy blessing; perhaps I can find her.”

“Go, my son.”

Vassili Tsarevich took one hundred thousand men, and set out on his road, on his journey. He rode a day, he rode a week, he rode a month, and two, and three, and entered such places that there was nothing but forests and swamps. He found there Baba-Yaga, boneleg. “Hail, Baba-Yaga, boneleg!”

“Hail, brave youth! Art thou fleeing from labor, or seekest labor?”

“I am seeking labor. I have heard that beyond the thrice ninth land, in the thirtieth kingdom, is a beautiful maiden, from whose feet and hands healing water flows.”

“There is, father; only thou canst not go there.”

“Why not?”

“Because on the road there are three ferries: at the first ferry they will cut off thy right hand, at the second thy left foot, at the third off with thy head.”

“It is not a question of saving my father’s head, but sparing my own.”

He returned, and said to his father: “No, father, I could not find her; there is nothing to be heard of that maiden.”

The youngest son, Ivan Tsarevich, began to beg: “Give me thy blessing, father; maybe I shall find her.”

The father gave him his blessing. “Go, my dear son; take troops and treasure all that are needed.”

“I need nothing, only give me a good steed and the sword Kládyenets.”

Ivan Tsarevich mounted his steed, took the sword Kládyenets, and set out on his way, on his journey. He rode a day, he rode a week, he rode a month, and two and three; and rode into such places that his horse was to the knees in water, to the breast in grass, and he, good youth, had nothing to eat. He saw a cabin on hen’s feet, and entered: inside sat Baba-Yaga, boneleg.

“Hail, grandmother!”

“Hail, Ivan Tsarevich! Art flying from labor, or seekest labor?”

“What labor? I am going to the thirtieth kingdom; there, it is said, lives a beautiful maiden, from whose hands and feet healing water flows.”

“There is, father; though with sight I have not seen her, with hearing I have heard of her: but to her it is not for thee to go.”

“Why so?”

“Because there are three ferries on the way: at the first ferry they will cut off thy right hand, at the second thy left foot, at the third off with thy head.”

“Well, grandmother, one head is not much; I will go, whatever God gives.”

“Ah! Ivan Tsarevich, better turn back; thou art still a green youth, hast never been in places of danger, hast not seen great terror.”

“No,” said Ivan; “if thou seizest the rope, don’t say thou art not strong.” He took farewell of Baba-Yaga and went farther.

He rode a day, a second, and a third, and came to the first ferry: the ferrymen were sleeping on the opposite bank. “What is to be done?” thought Ivan. “If I shout, they’ll be deaf for the rest of their lives; if I whistle, I shall sink the ferry-boat.” He whistled a half whistle. The ferrymen sprang up that minute and ferried him across the river.

“What is the price of your work, brothers?”

“Give us thy right hand.”

“Oh, I want that for myself!” Then Ivan Tsarevich struck with his sword on the right, and on the left. He cut down all the ferrymen, mounted his horse, and galloped ahead. At the two other ferries he got away in the same fashion. He was drawing near the thirtieth kingdom. On the boundary stood a wild man, in stature tall as a forest, in thickness the equal of a great stack of hay; he held in his hands an enormous oak-tree.

“Oh, worm!” said the giant to Ivan Tsarevich, “whither art thou riding?”

“I am going to the thirtieth kingdom; I want to see the beautiful maiden from whose hands and feet healing water flows.”

“How couldst thou, little pigmy, go there? I am a hundred years guarding her kingdom, great, mighty heroes came here, — not the like of thee, — and they fell from my strong hand. What art thou? Just a little worm!”

Ivan Tsarevich saw that he could not manage the giant, and he turned aside. He travelled and travelled till he came to a sleeping forest; in the forest was a cabin, and in the cabin an old, ancient woman was sitting. She saw the good youth, and said: “Hail, Ivan Tsarevich! Why has God brought thee hither?”

He told her all without concealment. The old woman gave him magic herbs and a ball.

“Go out,” said she, “into the open field, make a fire, and throw these herbs on it; but take care to stand on the windward. From these magic herbs the giant will sleep a deep sleep; cut his head off, then let the ball roll, and follow. The ball will take thee to those regions where the beautiful maiden reigns. She lives in a great golden castle, and often rides out with her army to the green meadows to amuse herself. Nine days does she stay there; then sleeps a hero’s sleep nine days and nine nights.”

Ivan Tsarevich thanked the old woman and went to the open field, where he made a fire and threw into it the magic herbs. The stormy wind bore the smoke to where the wild man was standing on guard. It grew dim in his eyes; he lay on the damp earth and fell soundly asleep. Ivan Tsarevich cut off his head, let the ball roll, and rode on. He travelled and travelled till the golden palace was visible; then he turned from the road, let his horse out to feed, and crept into a thicket himself. He had just hidden, when dust was rising in a column from the front of the palace: the beautiful maiden rode out with her army to amuse herself in the green meadows. The Tsarevich saw that the whole army was formed of maidens alone. One was beautiful, the next surpassed that one; fairer than all, and beyond admiration was the Tsarevna herself.

Nine days was she sporting in the green meadows, and the Tsarevich did not take his eyes from her, still he could not gaze his fill. On the tenth day he went to the golden palace. The beautiful maiden was lying on a couch of down, sleeping a hero’s sleep; from her hands and feet healing water was flowing. At the same time her trusty army was sleeping as well.

Ivan Tsarevich took a flask of the healing water. His heroic heart could not withstand her maiden beauty. He tarried awhile, then left the palace, mounted his good steed, and rushed toward home.

Nine days slept the beautiful maiden, and when she woke her rage was dreadful. She stamped, she screamed with a piercing voice: “What wretch has been here?” she sprang on to her fleet-flying mare, and struck into a chase after Ivan Tsarevich. The mare races, the ground trembles; she caught up with the good hero, struck him with her sword, and straight in the breast did she strike. The Tsarevich fell on the damp earth: his bright eyes close, his red blood stiffens. The fair maiden looked at him, and great pity seized her; through the whole world might she search, and not find such a beauty. She placed her white hand on his wound, moistened it with healing water. All at once the wound closed, and Ivan Tsarevich rose up unharmed.

“Wilt thou take me as wife?” asked she.

“I will, beautiful maiden.”

“Well, go home, and wait three years.”

Ivan Tsarevich took farewell of his betrothed bride and continued his journey. He was drawing near his own kingdom; but his elder brothers had put guards everywhere, so as not to let him come near his father. The guards gave notice at once that Ivan Tsarevich was coming. The elder brothers met him on the road, drugged him, took the flask of healing water, and threw him into a deep pit. Ivan Tsarevich came out in the underground kingdom.

He travelled and travelled in the underground kingdom. When he came to a certain place, a great storm rose up, lightning flashed, thunder roared, rain fell. He went to a tree to find shelter; looked up, and saw young birds in that tree all wet. He took off his coat, covered them, and sat himself under the tree.

When the old bird flew to the tree, she was so large that she hid the light, and it grew dark as if night were near. When she saw her young covered, she asked: “Who has protected my little birds?” Then, seeing the Tsarevich, she said: “It is thou who didst this; God save thee! Whatever thou wishest, ask of me; I will do everything for thee.”

He said, “Bear me out into the upper world.”

“Make ready,” said the bird, “a double box. Fill one half of it with every kind of game, and in the other half put water, so as to have something with which to nourish me.”

The Tsarevich did all that was asked. The bird took the box on her back, and the Tsarevich sat in the middle. She flew up; and whether it was long or short, she bore him to this upper world, took farewell of him, and flew home.

Ivan Tsarevich went to his father; but the old Tsar did not like him by reason of the lies which his brothers had told, and sent him into exile. For three whole years Ivan wandered from place to place. When three years had passed, the beautiful maiden sailed in a ship to the capital town of Ivan Tsarevich’s father. She sent a letter to the Tsar, demanding the man who had stolen the water, and if he refused she would burn and destroy his kingdom utterly.

The Tsar sent his eldest son; he went to the ship. Two little boys, grandsons of the Tsar, saw him, and asked their mother: “Is that our father?”

“No, that is your uncle.”

“How shall we meet him?”

“Take each one a whip and flog him back home.”

The eldest Tsarevich returned, looking as if he had eaten something unsalted.

The maiden continued her threats, demanded the guilty man. The Tsar sent his second son, and the same thing happened to him as to the eldest. Now the Tsar gave command to find the youngest Tsarevich.

When the Tsarevich was found, his father wished him to go on the ship to the maiden. But he said: “I will go when a crystal bridge is built to the ship, and on the bridge there shall be many kinds of food and wine set out.”

There was no help for it; they built the bridge, prepared the food, brought wines and meat.

The Tsarevich collected his comrades. “Come with me, attend me,” said he; “eat ye and drink, spare nothing.”

While he was walking on the bridge the little boys cried out: “Mother, who is that?”

“That is your father.”

“How shall we meet him?”

“Take him by the hands and lead him to me.”

They did so; there was kissing and embracing. After that they went to the Tsar, told him all just as it had been. The Tsar drove his eldest sons from the castle, and lived with Ivan, — lived on and gained wealth.

45

THE FOOTLESS AND BLIND CHAMPIONS

In a certain kingdom, in a certain land, there lived a Tsar with his Tsaritsa. They had a son, Ivan Tsarevich, and Katoma of the Oaken Cap was appointed tutor to care for and guard Ivan.

The Tsar and Tsaritsa attained to ancient years, fell ill, and had no thought to recover. They summoned Ivan Tsarevich and said: “When we die, do thou obey in all things Katoma of the Oaken Cap and honor him. If thou obeyest him, thou’lt be happy; but if disobedient, thou wilt perish like a fly.”

Next day the Tsar and Tsaritsa died. Ivan buried his parents and lived according to their command: whatever he did, he always held counsel with his tutor. Whether it was long or short, the Tsarevich grew to years of manhood and thought of marrying. He came to Katoma of the Oaken Cap and said: “I feel dreary alone; I wish to marry.”

“Well, Tsarevich, where is the halt? Thy years are such that it is time to think of a bride. Go to the great chamber, — there the portraits of all Tsars’ daughters and all kings’ daughters are collected. Look at them and choose; if any please thee, propose for that one.”

Ivan Tsarevich went to the great chamber, examined the portraits; and Princess Anna the Beautiful suited his mind, — such a beauty that in the whole world there was not her equal. Under her portrait was written that if any man gave her a riddle and she could not solve it, she would marry the man; and whose riddle she solved, off went his head. Ivan Tsarevich read this inscription, grew very sorrowful, and went to his uncle. “I have been,” said he, “in the great chamber, and have found for myself a bride, — Anna the Beautiful; but I know not how to get her.”

“Yes, Tsarevich, it is difficult to win her. If thou go alone, thou wilt never succeed; but if thou take me and will do what I say, perhaps the affair may be settled.”

Ivan Tsarevich begged Katoma of the Oaken Cap to go with him, and gave his faithful word to obey him in sorrow and in joy.

They prepared for the road and the journey, and went to ask Princess Anna the Beautiful in marriage. They travelled one year, travelled a second, then a third, and passed over many lands. Ivan Tsarevich said: “Uncle, we are travelling now so long a time, are nearing the land of Anna the Beautiful, and we know not what riddle to give her.”

“Oh, we will think of one yet.”

They went farther. Uncle Katoma looked on the road, and there was lying a purse with gold. He took it up, poured all the money out of it into his own purse, and said: “Here is the riddle, Ivan Tsarevich. When thou comest to the princess, give her the riddle in these words: ‘We were travelling along, and we saw good lying on the road. We took good with good and put it in our good.’ She’ll not solve that riddle all her life; and every other one she would know in a moment, — she would just look into her magic book, and as soon as she knew the riddle she would have thy head cut off.”

Well, Ivan Tsarevich with his uncle came at last to the lofty palace where the beautiful princess was living. At that very time she was on the balcony, saw the travellers, and sent out to know whence they were, and what they had come for.

Ivan Tsarevich replied: “I have come from such and such a kingdom, and I wish to ask Anna the Beautiful in marriage.”

They reported this to the princess. She gave answer that the Tsarevich should come to the palace and give, in the presence of all her counselling princes and boyars, a riddle. “With me,” said she, “this order is established, that if I solve not the riddle of a man, I will marry him; but if I solve any man’s riddle, I give him to a cruel death.”

“Hear my riddle, beautiful princess,” said Ivan. “We were going along, we saw good lying on the road, we took good with good and put it in our good.”

Anna the Beautiful took her magic book, began to examine it and look for riddles; she went through the whole volume and found nothing. Then the counselling princes and boyars decided that the princess must marry Ivan Tsarevich. Though sorry, she had to give way, and began to prepare for the wedding; but plotting to win time and get rid of the bridegroom, she thought, “I will trouble him with difficult tasks.” She called Ivan Tsarevich and said: “Oh, my dear Ivan Tsarevich, my betrothed husband, we must prepare for the wedding; do me a small service. In my kingdom in such a place stands a great iron pillar; bring it to the palace kitchen and cut it into small pieces as fuel for the cook.”

“My princess, is it possible that I have come here to cut fuel? Is that my business? I have a servant for that, — Uncle Katoma of the Oaken Cap.”

The Tsarevich called Uncle Katoma straightway, and commanded him to bring the iron pillar to the kitchen and cut it into small pieces as fuel for the cook.

Uncle Katoma went to the place mentioned, took the pillar in his arms, brought it to the palace kitchen, and cut it into small pieces. Four pieces of iron did he put in his pocket, saying, “They will be good in the future.”

Next day the princess said to Ivan: “My dear Tsarevich, my betrothed husband, to-morrow we must go to the crown: I will go in a carriage, and thou on an heroic steed. Meanwhile thou shouldst try the steed."

"Shall I try a horse when I have a servant for that?" Ivan Tsarevich called Uncle Katoma of the Oaken Cap.

"Go," said he, "and order the stable-boys to lead forth the heroic steed; sit on him and ride him around. To-morrow I will go to the marriage on him."

Uncle Katoma saw through the cunning of the princess, without talking long. He went to the stable and ordered them to lead forth the heroic steed. Twelve men went: they opened twelve locks, opened twelve doors, and led out the magic horse by twelve iron chains.

Uncle Katoma went to the horse: the moment he sat on him the magic steed left the earth and rose higher than the standing forest, lower than the moving clouds. Katoma sat firmly; with one hand he held the mane, with the other he took from his pocket one of the iron bars and began to pound the horse between the ears with it. He broke one bar, took another, broke that, took a third, broke that. The fourth entered service; and Katoma so hammered the steed that he could not endure, but spoke with the voice of a man: "Father Katoma, let me even live in the white world; whatever thou wishest, command, — everything shall be as thou sayest."

"Listen, dog's meat!" answered Uncle Katoma. "To-morrow Ivan Tsarevich will ride thee to the marriage: see to it when they lead thee to the broad court, when the Tsarevich approaches and puts his hand on thee, that thou standest quietly, movest not an ear; and when he sits on thy back, sink to thy fetlocks, and walk under him with a heavy tread, as if an immeasurable burden were on thee."

The heroic steed heard the command and came down barely alive to the earth. Katoma took him by the tail and threw him to the side of the stable, saying, "Oh, coachmen and grooms, take this dog's meat to the stable!"

The next day rose, the hour of marriage came. They gave a carriage to the princess, and led out the heroic steed for Ivan Tsarevich. The people ran from every side in thousands. The bridegroom and the bride came forth from the white-walled palace. The princess sat in the carriage and waited for what would happen to Ivan Tsarevich. The magic steed, she thought, would scatter his hair to the wind and drag his bones over the field.

Ivan Tsarevich approached the steed, put his hand on his back, his foot in the stirrup; the horse stood as if fixed to the earth, moved not an ear. Ivan sat on his back; the horse sank in the ground to the fetlocks. They removed the twelve chains from him; the horse began to walk with a slow and heavy tread, the sweat rolled from him like rain.

"Oh, what a champion, what immeasurable strength!" said the people, looking at the Tsarevich.

They crowned the bridegroom with the bride. They were coming out of the church, took each other by the hand, and the princess thought of testing once more the strength of Ivan Tsarevich. She pressed his hand with such force that he could not endure; the blood rushed to his face, his eyes went up under his forehead.

"So this is the kind of hero thou art!" thought the princess. "Thy uncle has deceived me grandly; but this will not go with thee for nothing."

Anna the Beautiful lived with Ivan Tsarevich as was befitting a wife with a God-given husband, and she in every way flattered him with words, but thought only of one thing, — how to destroy Uncle Katoma of the Oaken Cap. It was not difficult for her to manage the Tsarevich without the uncle. No matter how much calumny she invented, Ivan did not yield to her speeches; he had pity on his uncle. In a year's time he said to his wife: "My dear consort, beautiful princess, I should like to go with thee to my own kingdom."

"Very well, let us go; I have long wished to see thy kingdom."

They got ready and went, making Uncle Katoma coachman. They travelled and travelled. Ivan Tsarevich fell asleep on the way. All at once Anna the Beautiful began to rouse him and complain: "Now, Tsarevich, thou art sleeping all the time, hearest nothing. But thy uncle will not obey me; he drives the horses on purpose over hillocks and into holes, just as if trying to kill me. I spoke to him kindly, and he laughed at me. I will not live unless thou punish him.”

Ivan in his drowsiness grew very angry at his uncle, and gave him over entirely to the princess. “Do with him as thou desirest.” The princess gave orders to cut off his feet. Katoma allowed himself to be maltreated by her. “Let me endure,” thought he; “and the Tsarevich will know what it is to suffer sorrow.” They cut off Katoma’s feet. The princess looked around and saw a high stump on one side; she called the servants and ordered them to seat him on that stump. Ivan Tsarevich she tied by a rope to the carriage, turned back, and went to her own kingdom. Uncle Katoma of the Oaken Cap was sitting on the stump, shedding bitter tears. “Farewell, Ivan Tsarevich,” said he, “thou wilt remember me;” and Ivan Tsarevich ran jumping behind the carriage. He knew himself that he had made a mistake, but he could not turn back.

Anna the Beautiful came to her own kingdom, and she made Ivan Tsarevich herd cows. Every morning he went with the herd into the open field, and in the evening he drove them back into the princess’ yard; and at that time she sat on the balcony and counted the cows, were they all there? She counted them, and ordered the Tsarevich to kiss the last cow on the tail; and the cow was so well trained that when she came to the gate she stopped and raised her tail.

Uncle Katoma was sitting on the stump one day, a second, a third, without food or drink. He could in no way slip down, and it was coming to him to die of hunger. Not far away was a thick wood, and in that wood lived a blind, mighty hero; and he nourished himself only with this, that when he knew by the smell that a beast was running past, — a hare, fox, or bear, — that moment he ran, caught it, and his dinner was ready. The hero was very swift of foot, and no running beast could escape him. Behold, it happened thus: a fox was slipping by; the hero heard it and pursued; the fox ran to the tall stump and turned aside. The blind champion hurried, and in the run struck his forehead against the stump so that he drove it out of the ground with its roots.

Katoma was thrown to the earth, and asked, “Who art thou?”

“The blind hero; I live in this forest thirty years, and I nourish myself only in this way. If I seize a beast, I roast it on the fire; otherwise I should have died of hunger long since.”

“Is it possible that thou art blind from birth?”

“No, not from birth; Anna the Beautiful put out my eyes.”

“Well, brother,” said Uncle Katoma of the Oaken Cap, “and I through her am footless; she cut off my two feet, the cursed woman.”

The two heroes talked to each other, and agreed to live together and find food in common. The blind said to the footless: “Sit on me and show the way; I will serve thee with my feet, and thou shalt serve me with thy eyes.”

He took the footless and carried him. Katoma sat, looked on both sides, and cried out: “To the right; to the left; straight ahead.” They lived in this way some time in the forest and caught food, — hares, foxes, and bears.

Once the footless asked: “Is it possible that we shall live all our lives without company? I have heard that in a certain town there is a rich merchant with his daughter, and the daughter is very charitable to poor people and cripples, and gives alms herself to all. Let us carry her off, brother; let her live with us as a housekeeper.”

The blind man took a wagon, put the footless in it, and drew him to the town. They went straight to the house of the rich merchant. The merchant’s daughter saw them through the window. Straightway she sprang up and went to give them something. She went to the footless: “Take this, poor man, for Christ’s sake.” While taking the gift he seized her by the hand and into the wagon with her. He called to the blind man, who ran so swiftly that no horseman could come up with him.

The merchant sent a party in pursuit, but no one could overtake the two men. The heroes brought the merchant’s daughter to their hut in the forest, and said to her: “Be to us in the place of our own sister; live with us, keep the house, for we have no one to cook a meal for us or to wash our shirts. God will not forget thee for doing this.”

The maiden remained with them. The heroes respected and loved her, and considered her as their own sister. The way was, they used to go hunting, and she was always at home, took care of the housekeeping, cooked for them, washed for them. Now a Baba-Yaga, boneleg, began to come to the hut and suck the blood of the merchant’s daughter. The moment the heroes went to hunt, Baba-Yaga was there. Whether it was long or short, the fair maiden’s face fell away; she grew thin and poor.

The blind man saw nothing, but Uncle Katoma of the Oaken Cap noticed that something was wrong. He spoke of it to the blind man, and they questioned their adopted sister. They began to urge her to answer. The Baba-Yaga had strictly forbidden her to confess. For a long time she was afraid to tell of her trouble; long she resisted. At last they persuaded her, and she confessed everything. “Whenever ye go away to hunt, an ancient old woman comes, evil-faced, long-haired, gray; she makes me search in her head, and then sucks my blood.”

“Ah!” said the blind man, “that is Baba-Yaga. Wait, we must settle with her in our own fashion; to-morrow we will not go to hunt, we will try to come upon her and catch her.”

Next morning they did not go to hunt.

“Well, footless uncle,” said the blind man, “crawl thou under the bench; sit quietly. I will go outside and stay under the window. And thou, sister, when Baba-Yaga comes, sit right here in this window, search in her head, separate her hair gradually, and let it out of the window. I will catch her by the gray locks.”

It was said and done. The blind man caught the Baba-Yaga by the gray locks and cried, “Ei! Uncle Katoma, crawl from under the bench and hold the viperous old hag till I go into the house.”

Baba-Yaga heard trouble, wanted to jump up, and raised her head. What could she do? She had no chance; she tore and tore, — no use.

Then Katoma crawled from under the bench, threw himself on her like a stone mountain, and began to smother Baba-Yaga. She was frightened out of her wits.

The blind man sprang into the house, and said to the footless: “We must make a big fire now, burn the old outcast, and scatter her ashes to the wind.”

Baba-Yaga implored. “Father, dove, forgive me; whatever thou wishest I’ll do.”

“Well, old witch,” said the heroes, “show us the well of living and healing water.”

“Only don’t beat me, and I’ll show you this moment.”

Uncle Katoma sat on the blind man, the blind man took Baba-Yaga by the hair, and she led them to the forest depth, brought them to a well, and said: “Here is the healing and living water.”

“See to it, Uncle Katoma,” said the blind man, “make no mistake; if she deceives us now, we cannot mend matters while we live.”

Uncle Katoma of the Oaken Cap broke from a tree a green branch and threw it into the well; the branch had not reached the water when it burst into a blaze.

“Ah, thou hast turned to deceit!”

They began to choke the old woman, and wanted to throw her into the fiery well. She implored more than before, and gave an awful oath that now she would play no tricks. “‘Pon my true word, I will lead you now to good water.”

They agreed to try once more, and the old woman brought them to another well.

Uncle Katoma broke a dry branch from a tree, and threw it into the well; the branch had not reached the water when it gave out buds, grew green, and blossomed.

“Oh, this is good water!” said Uncle Katoma.

The blind man moistened his eyes with it, and in a moment he saw. He let the footless down into the water, and his feet grew out.

Both were rejoiced, and said: “Now we will restore everything; but first we must settle with Baba-Yaga. If we forgive her now, we shall not see good ourselves; she will plot evil against us all our lives.”

They returned to the fiery well and threw Baba-Yaga into it, so that she perished. Then Uncle Katoma married the merchant’s daughter, and all three went to the kingdom of Anna the Beautiful to liberate Ivan Tsarevich.

They were approaching the capital town. They looked, Ivan Tsarevich was driving a herd of cows.

“Stop, herdsman!” said Uncle Katoma. “Whither art thou driving these cows?”

“I am driving them to the royal castle. The princess always counts them herself, to see if all the cows are there.”

“Well, herdsman, here are my clothes; put them on. I’ll put on thine, and drive the cows.”

“No, brother, that is impossible; if the princess should know it, woe to me.”

“Never fear, nothing will come of it; Uncle Katoma is security for thee in that.”

Ivan Tsarevich sighed, and said: “Oh, kind man, if Uncle Katoma were living I should not be herding cows in this field.”

Then Uncle Katoma confessed to him who he was. Ivan Tsarevich embraced him firmly and shed tears. “I did not think to see thee.”

They changed clothes. Uncle Katoma drove the cows to the princess’s yard. Anna the Beautiful came out on the balcony, counted to see if all the cows were there, and gave command to drive them into the shed. All went in but the last one; she stopped at the gate. Katoma jumped up. “What art thou waiting for, dog’s meat?” caught her by the tail, and pulled her skin off.

The princess saw this and cried: “What is that scoundrel of a herdsman doing? Seize him; bring him to me!”

Here the servants caught Katoma and dragged him to the palace. He made no excuse, for he was confident in himself. They brought him to the palace. She looked at him and asked: “Who art thou? Whence art thou here?”

“I am the man whose feet thou didst cut off, and thou didst seat me on a stump; they call me Uncle Katoma of the Oaken Cap.”

“Well,” thought the princess, “if he has brought back his feet, there is no use in playing tricks with him;” and she begged forgiveness of him, was sorry for her sins, and took an oath to love Ivan Tsarevich forever and obey him in all things.

Ivan Tsarevich forgave her, and began to live with her in peace and harmony. The blind hero lived with them, and Uncle Katoma went with his wife to the rich merchant and lived in his house.

46

THE THREE KINGDOMS

In that ancient time when God’s world was full of wood-demons, witches, and river-maidens, when rivers of milk were flowing between banks of jelly, when over the fields roast partridges were flying, there lived a Tsar, Goroh by name, with his Tsaritsa, Anastasia the Beautiful; and they had three sons. A misfortune not small happened, — an unclean spirit carried away the Tsaritsa.

Said the eldest son to the Tsar: “Father, give me thy blessing; I will go in search of my mother.”

He went away and vanished; for three years there were neither tidings nor report of him.

The second son began to ask: “Father, give me thy blessing for the road, for the journey. Perhaps I may have the luck to find my brother and my mother.”

The Tsar gave his blessing. The Tsarevich rode off and also disappeared as if he had sunk in water.

Ivan, the youngest son, came to the Tsar. “My dear father, give me thy blessing for the road, for the journey; perhaps I shall find my brothers and mother.”

“Go thy way, my dear son.”

Ivan Tsarevich set out for a strange, distant region. He travelled and travelled, and reached the blue sea. He stopped on the shore and thought: “Whither can I hold my way now?” All at once there flew to sea three and thirty spoonbills, struck the earth, and became fair maidens, — all beautiful, but one was better than all the rest. They undressed and rushed into the water. Whether they were bathing a long or short time, Ivan Tsarevich stole up and took the girdle of that maiden who was better than all the rest and hid it in his bosom. When they had finished bathing they came out on shore and began to dress. One girdle was gone.

“Ah! Ivan Tsarevich,” said the beauty, “give me my girdle.”

“Tell me first where my mother is.”

“Thy mother is at the house of my father, Raven son of Raven (Voron Voronovich). Go up along the sea, thou wilt meet a silver bird with a golden crest; wherever it flies do thou follow.”

Ivan Tsarevich gave her the girdle and went along the sea; there he met his brothers, exchanged greetings, and took them with him. They went together along the shore, saw the golden-tufted silver bird, and ran after it. The bird flew and flew till it rushed under an iron plate into an opening.

“Well, brothers,” said Ivan Tsarevich, “give me your blessing in the place of father and mother. I will let myself down into this opening and discover what a land of strange faith is like, — perhaps our mother is there.”

His brothers gave him their blessing. He sat on a rope swing, crawled into that deep opening, and went down no short distance. Just three years was he letting himself down, and then went on his road and way. He went and went, went and went. He saw the Copper Kingdom. In the castle were sitting three and thirty spoonbill maidens. They were embroidering towels with cunning designs, with towns and suburbs.

“Hail, Ivan Tsarevich!” said the Tsaritsa of the Copper Kingdom. “Whither dost thou hold thy way?”

“I am going in search of my mother.”

“Thy mother is with my father, Raven son of Raven. He is cunning and wise; over mountains and valleys, over caves and clouds, has he flown. He will slay thee, good youth. Here is a ball for thee. Go to my second sister; hear what she will tell thee. If thou comest back, forget me not.”

Ivan rolled the ball and followed; he came to the Silver Kingdom. The Tsaritsa of the Silver Kingdom said: “Till now the Russian odor was not to be seen with sight nor heard with hearing; but now the Russian odor appears visibly. Well, Ivan Tsarevich, art fleeing from work, or seekest work?”

“Ah, fair maiden! I am in search of my mother.”

“Thy mother is with my father, Raven son of Raven. Cunning is he and wise; over mountains, over valleys has he flown, over caves, over clouds has he swept. Oh, Tsarevich, he will slay thee! Here is a ball. Go to my youngest sister; hear what she will say to thee, whether to go on or come back.”

Ivan Tsarevich came to the Golden Kingdom; there three and thirty spoonbill maidens were sitting embroidering towels. Taller than all, fairer than all, was the Tsaritsa of the Golden Kingdom, — a beauty that could not be told of in a tale or described with a pen.

“Hail, Ivan Tsarevich!” said she. “Whither dost thou hold thy way?”

“I am going to seek my mother.”

“Thy mother is with my father, Raven son of Raven. Cunning is he and wise. Oh, Tsarevich, he will slay thee surely! Here is a ball for thee. Go now to the Pearl Kingdom; there thy mother lives. When she sees thee she will be rejoiced, and that moment will say, ‘Nurses, and maidens, bring my son green wine;’ but take it not. Ask her to give thee wine three years old that is in the cupboard, and a burnt crust for lunch, and do not forget that my father has in the yard two jars of water, — one water of strength, the other of weakness; put each in the place of the other, and drink of the water of strength."

The Tsarevich talked a long time with the Tsaritsa, and they fell in love with each other to such a degree that they hated to part; but there was no help for them. Ivan Tsarevich took farewell of her and went on his journey. He travelled and travelled till he came to the Pearl Kingdom. His mother saw him, was delighted, and cried out, "Nurses and maidens, bring my son green wine."

"I drink no common wine; give me wine three years old, and for a bite a burnt crust." He drank wine three years old, ate the burnt crust, went out in the broad court, put each jar in the place of the other, and fell to drinking the water of strength.

All at once Raven son of Raven flew home, bright as the clear day; but when he saw Ivan Tsarevich he grew gloomier than the dark night. He stooped down to the jar, and began to drink the water of weakness. Then Ivan Tsarevich fell upon his wings, and Raven son of Raven soared high, high; he bore Ivan over mountains, over valleys, over caves, over clouds. "What dost thou need, Ivan Tsarevich? If thou wishest, I will give thee treasure."

"I want nothing but the feather staff."

"No, Ivan Tsarevich, thou wishest to sit in a very wide sleigh." And again Raven son of Raven bore him over mountains, over valleys, over caves, over clouds.

Ivan held firmly, bore down with all his weight, and nearly broke the wings of Raven son of Raven, who screamed, "Break not my wings; take the feather staff!" He gave Ivan the feather staff, became a common raven himself, and flew away to the steep mountains.

Ivan Tsarevich went back, came to the Pearl Kingdom, took his mother, and set out for home. He looked; the Pearl Kingdom had turned into a ball, and was rolling after him. He came to the Golden Kingdom, then to the

Silver, and then to the Copper Kingdom. He took and brought with him the three beautiful Tsaritsas, and those kingdoms were wound into balls and rolled after him. He came to the rope swing and sounded a golden trumpet: "My own brothers, if ye are alive, do not betray me."

The brothers heard the call, and drew out into the white world the beautiful soul maiden, the Tsaritsa of the Copper Kingdom. They saw her, and began to fight among themselves; one would not yield to the other.

"Why fight, good youths?" said the maiden. "Down there are better than I."

They let down the rope swing and drew up the Tsaritsa of the Silver Kingdom. Again they began to dispute and fight; one said, "Let her be mine, and come to me;" the other said, "I won't let her be thine."

"Do not fight, good youths; down there is a maiden more beautiful than I."

They stopped fighting, put down the rope swing, and drew up the Tsaritsa of the Golden Kingdom. Again they began to fight; but the Tsaritsa, the beauty, immediately stopped them, saying: "Your mother is waiting for you." They drew out their mother, and let down the rope swing for Ivan Tsarevich; they raised him half way, and cut the rope. Ivan Tsarevich fell into the depth and was terribly shocked; he lay half a year without senses, came to himself, and looked around, remembered everything that had happened to him, took out the feather staff, and struck the earth with it. That moment twelve youths appeared. "What is thy command, Ivan Tsarevich?"

"Take me out into the free world."

The youths seized him under the arms and bore him into the free world. Ivan Tsarevich inquired about his brothers, and heard that they had married long before. The Tsaritsa of the Copper Kingdom married the second brother; the Tsaritsa of the Silver Kingdom, his eldest brother; but his own bride would not marry any man: his old father wanted to marry her. He summoned a council, accused his wife of intimacy with evil spirits, and gave command to cut her head off. After the execution he said to the Tsaritsa of the Golden Kingdom: “Wilt thou marry me?”

“I will when thou makest shoes for me without measure.”

The Tsar gave command to issue a call and ask all and each, would any man make shoes for the Tsaritsa without taking her measure. At this time Ivan Tsarevich had come to his own kingdom, and hired as a workman with a certain old man; and he sent him to the Tsar: “Go, grandfather, take this affair on thyself, and I will make the shoes for thee; but do not tell about me.”

The old man went to the Tsar. “I,” said he, “am ready to undertake the work.”

The Tsar gave him leather for a pair of shoes, and asked: “But canst thou do it, old man?”

“Never fear, Gosudár. I have a son who is a shoemaker.”

When he came home the old man gave the leather to Ivan Tsarevich, who cut it into bits and threw it out of the window; then he opened the Golden Kingdom and took out shoes already made. “Here, grandfather, take these and carry them to the Tsar.”

The Tsar was delighted, and urged the bride: “Shall we go to the crown soon?”

She answered: “I will marry thee if thou wilt make for me robes to fit without measure.”

The Tsar again was in trouble; he assembled all the dressmakers, and offered them much money if they would only make robes to fit without measuring the Tsaritsa.

Ivan Tsarevich said to the old man: “Grandfather, go to the Tsar, get cloth; I will sew robes for thee, but do not tell of me.”

The old man dragged himself off to the palace, took satin and velvet, came home, and gave it to the Tsarevich. Ivan Tsarevich took scissors straightway, and cut all the satin and velvet to pieces and threw them out of the window. Then he opened the Golden Kingdom and took out the most beautiful robes and gave them to the old man, saying, “Take these to the palace.”

The Tsar was delighted. “Well, my beloved bride, is it not time for us to go to the crown?”

The Tsaritsa answered: “I will marry thee when thou wilt take the son of that old man and command that he be boiled in milk.”

The Tsar thought awhile, then gave the command; and that day they collected three gallons of milk from each house, filled a great caldron, and boiled it on a hot fire. They brought Ivan Tsarevich. He took farewell of all, bowed to the earth, then threw himself into the caldron, dived once, dived twice, sprang out such a beauty that it could neither be told of in a tale nor described with a pen.

Said the Tsaritsa: “Look, Tsar! Whom shall I marry, — thee, old man, or that gallant youth?”

The Tsar thought awhile. “If I bathe in the milk, I shall become just such a beauty as he.” He sprang into the caldron, and was cooked in a minute. But Ivan Tsarevich went to be crowned with the Tsaritsa of the Golden Kingdom; they were crowned, and began to live and live on, gaining wealth.

47

KOSHCHÉI WITHOUT-DEATH

It happened that once there lived in a certain land a Tsar and a Tsaritsa. They had a son, Ivan Tsarevich. When an infant the maidens rocked him; but do what they might, they could not rock him to sleep. “Tsar, great Gosudár, come, rock thy own son.” The Tsar went to rock the child: “Sleep, little son, sleep my own dear; thou wilt grow up a man. I will get thee Peerless Beauty as bride, — the daughter of three mothers, the granddaughter of three grandmothers, and the sister of nine brothers.” The Tsarevich went to sleep and slept for three days and three nights; woke up, and cried more than before.

The maidens rock him, but they cannot rock him to sleep; they call his father: “Tsar, great Gosudár, come, rock thy own son.”

The Tsar rocked him, saying, “Sleep, little son, sleep, my own dear; thou wilt grow up a man. I will get thee Peerless Beauty as bride, the daughter of three mothers, the granddaughter of three grandmothers, and the sister of nine brothers.” The Tsarevich fell asleep, and again slept three days and three nights. He woke up and cried more than ever.

The maidens rock him, they cannot rock him to sleep. “Come, Tsar, great Gosudár,” said they, “rock thy own son.”

The Tsar rocked him, saying the while, “Sleep, little son, sleep, my own dear; thou wilt grow up a man. I will get thee Peerless Beauty as bride, the daughter of three mothers, the granddaughter of three grandmothers.”

The Tsarevich fell asleep and slept again three days and three nights. He woke up and said, “Give thy blessing, father; I am going to marry.”

“What dost thou mean, my dear little child? Whither canst thou go? Thou art but nine days of age in all.”

“If thou wilt give me thy blessing, I’ll go; if not, I’ll go also.”

“Well, the Lord guide thee.”

Ivan Tsarevich arrayed himself, and went to find a horse. He went a short way from the house, and met an old man. “Where art thou going, young man,” asked he, — “of thy own will, or against thy will?”

“I will not talk with thee,” answered the Tsarevich. He went on a little, changed his mind. “Why did I not say something to the old man. Old people bring us to sense.” Straightway he overtook the old man. “Stop, grandfather. Of what didst thou ask me?”

“I asked where art thou going, young man, — of thy own will, or against thy will?”

“I go so much of my own will, and twice that much against my will. I was in early years; my father rocked me in the cradle; he promised to get me Peerless Beauty as bride.”

“Thou art a good youth, thou art well spoken; but thou canst not go on foot. Peerless Beauty dwells far away.”

“How far?”

“In the Golden Kingdom, at the end of the white world, where the sun comes up.”

“What am I to do? I, young man, have no saddle-horse unridden, and silken whip unused that are fitting for me.”

“Why hast thou not? Thy father has thirty horses all alike. Go home, tell the grooms to water them at the blue sea; and whichever horse shall push ahead, enter the water to its neck, and when it drinks, waves rise on the blue sea and roll from shore to shore, that one take.”

“God save thee for the good word, grandfather!”

As the old man taught him, so did the Tsarevich do, — he chose for himself an heroic steed, passed the night, rose next morning early, opened the gate, and was preparing to go.

The horse spoke to him in the language of men: “Ivan Tsarevich, drop to the earth; I will push thee three times.” He pushed him once, he pushed him twice; but the third time he pushed not. “If thou wert pushed a third time, the earth would not bear thee and me.”

Ivan Tsarevich took his horse from the chains, saddled him, sat on him. The Tsar barely sees his son. He rides far, far. The day is growing short, night is coming on. A house stood like a town, each room is a chamber. He came to the house, straight to the porch, tied his horse to the copper ring, went into the first chamber, then into the second, prayed to God, asked to spend the night.

“Stay the night, good youth,” said an old woman. “Whither is God bearing thee?”

“Old woman, thou dost ask impolitely. First give me to eat and to drink, put me to rest, and then ask me for news.”

She gave him food and drink, put him to bed, and then asked for news.

“I was, grandmother,” said he, “in tender years; my father rocked me in the cradle, and promised me Peerless Beauty as bride, — the daughter of three mothers, the granddaughter of three grandmothers, and the sister of nine brothers.”

“Thou art a good youth, and fair spoken. I am living to the end of the seventh ten of years, and of that beauty I have not heard. Farther on the road lives my elder sister; maybe she knows. But sleep now; the morning is wiser than the evening.”

Ivan Tsarevich passed the night; next morning he rose early, washed himself white, led forth his steed, saddled him, put his foot in the stirrup. The old woman merely saw him. He rode far with distance, high with height; the day was shortening, coming toward night. There stood a house like a town, each room was a chamber. He rode to the porch, tied his horse to a silver ring, went to the entrance, and then to the chamber, prayed to God, asked a night's lodging. An old woman said: "Tfu, tfu! so far a Russian bone was not seen with sight nor heard with hearing; but now a Russian bone has come itself to the house. Where hast thou come from, Ivan Tsarevich?"

"Oh, thou old hag, how angry thou art! Thou dost not ask with politeness; thou shouldst first give me food and drink, put me to rest, then ask for news."

She seated him at the table, gave him food and drink, put him to rest, sat at the head of the bed, and inquired: "Where is God bearing thee?"

"I was in tender years, grandmother; my father rocked me in the cradle and promised me Peerless Beauty as bride, — the daughter of three mothers, the granddaughter of three grandmothers, and the sister of nine brothers."

"Thou art a good youth, of kind speech. I am living toward the end of the eighth ten of years, and of that beauty I have never heard. Before thee on the road lives my elder sister, — mayhap she knows; she has answer-givers. Her first answer-givers are the beasts of the forests, the second are the birds of the air, the third are the fish and creatures of the sea. Whatever is in the white world obeys her. Go to her in the morning, but sleep now; the morning is wiser than the evening."

Ivan Tsarevich passed the night, rose early, washed himself very white, sat on his steed, and vanished. He rode far with distance, high with height. The day was growing short, drawing near to the night; and there stood a house like a town, each room was a chamber. He came to the porch, tied his horse to a golden ring, then went to the entrance, and next to the chamber, prayed to God, and asked a night's lodging. An old woman screamed at him. “Oh, thou, this and that kind of man, thou art not worthy of an iron ring, and thou hast tied thy horse to a gold one!”

“Well, grandmother, scold not; the horse may be loosed and tied to another ring.”

“Oh, good hero, have I given thee a fright? Be not afraid; sit on the bench, and I will ask from what stock, from what town, thou dost come.”

“Oh, grandmother, thou shouldst first give me food and drink, then ask for the news! Thou seest I’m a wayfaring man; I’ve not eaten all day.”

Straightway the old woman set the table, brought bread and salt, poured out a glass of *vodka*, and began to entertain Ivan Tsarevich. He ate and drank plenty, threw himself on the bed. The old woman made no inquiry; he told her himself: “I was in tender years, my father rocked me in the cradle, promised me Peerless Beauty as bride, — the daughter of three mothers, the granddaughter of three grandmothers, and the sister of nine brothers. Do me a kindness, grandmother; tell me where Peerless Beauty is living, and how I may reach her.”

“But, Ivan Tsarevich, I know not myself; I am ending the ninth ten of years, and I have not heard of that beauty. But sleep now with God; in the morning I will summon my answer-givers, — maybe one of them knows.”

Next day the old woman rose early, washed herself very white, came out with Ivan Tsarevich on the porch, cried with a champion’s voice, whistled with a hero’s whistle. She cried to the sea-fish and creatures of the water, “Come hither.”

That instant the blue sea boiled up, the fish, great and small, came together, all creatures assembled and went toward the shore; they covered the water.

The old woman asked: “Where lives Peerless Beauty, the daughter of three mothers, the granddaughter of three grandmothers, the sister of nine brothers?”

All the fish and all the creatures answered in one voice: “We have not seen her with sight, nor heard of her with hearing.”

The old woman shouted over the land: “Assemble, ye beasts of the forest.”

The beasts run; they hide the earth. In one voice they answer: “We have not seen her with sight, nor heard her with hearing.”

The old woman cried toward the sky: “Come hither, ye birds of the air!”

The birds fly, they hide the light of day. In one voice they answer: “We have not seen her with sight, we have not heard her with hearing.”

“There is no one else to ask,” said the old woman. She took Ivan Tsarevich by the hand and led him into the room. They had just come in when the Mogol bird arrived on the wing, fell to the ground. There was no light in the window.

“Oh, thou Mogol bird, where hast thou been flying; why art thou late?”

“I was arraying Peerless Beauty for mass.”

“Thou hast the news I need. Now do me a service with faith and truth, — carry Ivan Tsarevich to her.”

“Gladly would I serve, but much food is needed.”

“How much?”

“Three forties of beef, and a vessel of water.”

Ivan Tsarevich filled the vessel with water, brought oxen with beef. He put the kegs on the bird, ran to the forge, and had a long iron lance made for himself; he came back and took farewell of the old woman. “Good-by,” said he. “Feed my good steed enough; I will pay thee for everything.”

He sat on the Mogol bird, and that moment it rose up and flew; it flew and looked around continually. When it looked, Ivan Tsarevich immediately gave a piece of meat on the end of his lance. Now it was flying and flying no short time. The Tsarevich had already given two kegs of beef, and had begun on the third; and he said, “O Mogol bird, fall to the damp earth; small nourishment is left.”

"What art thou saying, Ivan Tsarevich? Below us are sleeping forests and sticky morasses; we could not escape to the end of our lives."

Ivan Tsarevich gave out all the beef and threw down the kegs; but the Mogol bird flies, looks around. What can be done? Ivan Tsarevich thought a while, cut off the calves of his own legs, and gave them to the bird. It swallowed them, and flew out over the green meadow, silken grass, blue flowers, then dropped to the earth. Ivan Tsarevich stood on his feet, walked along the meadow, was lame of both legs.

"What is the matter, Ivan Tsarevich? Art thou lame?"

"I am lame, Mogol bird; a little while ago I cut off my calves to nourish thee."

The Mogol bird coughed up the calves, put them on the legs of Ivan Tsarevich, blew and spat; the calves grew to their places, and the Tsarevich went on in strength and activity. He came to a great town, and stopped to rest with a grandmother living in a backyard.

"Sleep, Ivan Tsarevich; in the morning, when the bell rings, I'll rouse thee."

Ivan Tsarevich lay down and slept that minute; he slept the day, slept the night. The bells rang for early prayers, the backyard grandmother ran to him, fell to beating him with whatever she found at hand, but could not rouse him. The morning prayers were over, they rang for mass; Peerless Beauty went to church. The old grandmother came again, and went to work again at Ivan Tsarevich, beat him with whatever came under her hands; with great effort she woke him. Ivan Tsarevich sprang up very quickly, washed himself very white, dressed, and went to mass. He came to the church, prayed before the images, bowed down on every side, and especially to Peerless Beauty. They stood side by side and prayed. At the end of mass she went first to the cross, then he went out on a platform, looked at the blue sea; ships are approaching, six champions came to offer marriage.

The champions saw Ivan Tsarevich and began to ridicule him: “Oh, thou country clown, is such a beauty as this for thee? Thou art not worth her middle finger!”

They said this once, they said it twice, they said it thrice. Ivan Tsarevich was offended. He swung his arm, there was a street; he swung it a second time, the place was clear and smooth all around. Then he went to the old grandmother.

“Well, Ivan Tsarevich, hast thou seen Peerless Beauty?”

“I have, and I shall not forget her for an age.”

“Now lie down to sleep. To-morrow thou wilt go to mass again; I will wake thee the minute the bell rings.”

The Tsarevich lay down; he slept the day, he slept the night. The bell rang for early prayers; the grandmother ran to him, began to rouse him; whatever happened under her hand, with that she beat him; but she couldn’t wake him. They rang the bell for mass; again she beat him and roused him. Ivan Tsarevich sprang up very quickly, washed very white, dressed, and to church. He entered, prayed to the images, bowed on all four sides, especially to Peerless Beauty. She looked at him and blushed. They stood side by side, prayed to God. At the end of mass she went to the cross first, he second. The Tsarevich went out on a platform, looked on the blue sea; ships were sailing, twelve champions came. They began to ask Peerless Beauty in marriage, and to make sport of Ivan Tsarevich: “Oh, thou country clown, is such a beauty for thee? Thou art not worth her middle finger!”

He was offended at these speeches. He swung his arm, there was a street; he swung the other, the place was clear and smooth around.

He went to the old grandmother. “Hast thou seen Peerless Beauty?” asked she.

“I have, and for an age I shall not forget her.”

“Well, sleep now; in the morning I will wake thee.”

Ivan Tsarevich slept the day, he slept the night; they rang the bell for morning prayers; the old woman ran in to wake him, beat him with whatever happened under her hand, did not spare, but could not rouse him. They rang the bell for mass, and she was working away all the time at the Tsarevich. At last she roused him. He rose up quickly, washed himself very white, prepared, dressed, and to church. When he came he prayed to the images, bowed on all four sides, and separately to Peerless Beauty. She saluted him, put him at her right hand, and she stood at the left. They stand there, pray to God. At the end of mass he went first to the cross, she after him. The Tsarevich went out on the platform, looked on the blue sea; ships are sailing, and twenty-four champions come to offer marriage to Peerless Beauty.

The champions saw Ivan Tsarevich and straightway began to make sport of him: “Oh, country clown, is such a beauty for thee? Thou art not worth her middle finger!”

They attacked him on every side to take away his bride. Ivan Tsarevich did not endure this. He swung his arm, there was a street; he swung the other, the place was smooth and clear around. He killed all to the last man. Peerless Beauty took him by the hand, led him to her chambers, seated him at the oaken tables, at the spread cloths, entertained him, called him her bridegroom. Soon after they prepared for the road and set out for the land of Ivan Tsarevich. They travelled and travelled, halted in the open field to rest. Peerless Beauty lay down to sleep, and Ivan Tsarevich guarded her slumber. When she had slept enough, and woke up, the Tsarevich said: “Peerless Beauty, guard my white body; I will lie down to sleep.”

“But wilt thou sleep long?”

“Nine days and nights; and I shall not turn from one side to the other. If thou tryest to wake me, thou wilt not rouse me. When the time comes I shall wake myself.”

“It is long, Ivan Tsarevich; I shall be wearied.”

“Wearied or not, there is no help for it.”

He lay down to sleep, and slept exactly nine days and nights. Meanwhile Koshchéi Without-Death bore away Peerless Beauty to his own kingdom. Ivan Tsarevich woke up; there was no Peerless Beauty. He began to weep, and went along neither by the road nor the way. Whether it was long or short, he came to the kingdom of Koshchéi Without-Death, and begged lodgings of an old woman.

“Well, Ivan Tsarevich, why art thou so sad looking?”

“Thus and thus, grandmother; I had everything, now I have nothing.”

“Thy affair is a bad one, Ivan Tsarevich; thou canst not kill Koshchéi.”

“Well, I will look on my bride at least.”

“Lie down, sleep till morning; to-morrow Koshchéi will go to war.”

Ivan Tsarevich lay down, but sleep did not come to his mind. In the morning Koshchéi went out of the house, and Ivan Tsarevich went in. He stood at the gate and knocked. Peerless Beauty opened it, looked at him, and fell to weeping. They went to the upper chamber, sat at the table, and talked. Ivan Tsarevich instructed her. “Ask Koshchéi where his death is.”

“I will.”

He had just left the house when Koshchéi came in. “Oh!” said he, “it smells of the Russian bone; it must be that Ivan Tsarevich was with thee.”

“What art thou thinking of, Koshchéi Without-Death? Where could I see Ivan Tsarevich? He has remained in slumbering forests and in sticky quagmires; wild beasts have destroyed him ere now.”

They sat down to sup. At supper Peerless Beauty said: “Tell me, Koshchéi Without-Death, where is thy death?”

“Why dost thou wish to know, silly woman? My death is tied up in the broom.”

Early next morning Koshchéi went to war. Ivan Tsarevich came to Peerless Beauty. She took the broom, gilded it brightly with pure gold. The

Tsarevich had just departed when Koshchéi came in. “Ah!” said he, “it smells of the Russian bone; Ivan Tsarevich has been with thee.”

“What dost thou mean, Koshchéi Without-Death? Thou hast been flying through Russia thyself and hast caught up the odor of Russia; it is from thee. Where should I see Ivan Tsarevich?”

At supper Peerless Beauty sat on a small bench and seated Koshchéi on a large one. He looked under the threshold; the broom was lying there gilded. “What does this mean?”

“Oh, Koshchéi Without-Death, thou seest thyself how I honor thee!”

“Oh, simple woman, I was joking! My death is out there, fastened in the oak fence.”

Next day Koshchéi went away. Ivan Tsarevich came and gilded the whole fence. Towards evening Koshchéi came home. “Ah!” said he, “it smells of the Russian bone. Ivan Tsarevich has been with thee.”

“What dost thou mean, Koshchéi Without-Death? It seems I have told thee times more than one, where am I to see Ivan Tsarevich? He has remained in dark forests, in sticky quagmires; the wild beasts have torn him to pieces ere now.”

Supper-time came. Peerless Beauty sat on a bench herself, and seated him on a chair. Koshchéi looked through the window, saw the fence gilded, shining like fire. “What is that?”

“Thou seest thyself, Koshchéi, how I respect thee. If thou art dear to me, of importance is thy death.”

This speech pleased Koshchéi Without-Death. “Oh, simple woman, I was joking with thee! My death is in an egg, the egg is in a duck, and the duck is in a stump floating on the sea.”

When Koshchéi went off to war, Peerless Beauty baked cakes for Ivan Tsarevich and told him where to look for the death of Koshchéi. Ivan Tsarevich went neither by road nor by way, came to the ocean sea broad, and knew not where to go farther. The cakes had long since given out, and he had nothing to eat. All at once a hawk flew up. Ivan Tsarevich aimed. "Well, hawk, I'll shoot thee and eat thee raw."

"Do not eat me, Ivan Tsarevich; I will serve thee in time of need."

A bear ran along. "Oh, bear, crooked paw, I'll kill thee and eat thee raw!"

"Do not eat me, Ivan Tsarevich; I'll serve in time of need."

Behold, a pike is struggling on the beach. "Oh, big-toothed pike, thou hast come to it! I'll eat thee raw."

"Eat me not, Ivan Tsarevich; better throw me into the sea. I will serve thee in time of need."

Ivan stood there thinking, "The time of need will come, it is unknown when. But now I must go hungry." All at once the blue sea boiled up, waves rose, began to cover the shore. Ivan Tsarevich ran up the hill, ran with all his might, and the water followed at his heels; chasing, he ran to the very highest place and climbed a tree. A little later the water began to fall, the sea grew calm, fell, and a great stump was left on land. The bear ran up, raised the stump, and when he had hurled it to the ground the stump opened; out flew a duck and soared high, high. That minute, from wherever he came, the hawk flew, caught the duck, and in a twinkle tore her in two. An egg fell out; then the pike caught it, swam to the beach, and gave the egg to Ivan Tsarevich, who put it in his bosom and went to Koshchéi Without-Death. He came to the house. Peerless Beauty met him, she kissed him on the lips and fell on his shoulder. Koshchéi Without-Death was sitting at the window cursing.

"Oh, Ivan Tsarevich, thou wishest to take Peerless Beauty from me; and so thou wilt not live."

"Thou didst take her from me thyself," answered Ivan Tsarevich, took the egg from his bosom, and showed it to Koshchéi. "What is this?"

The light grew dim in the eyes of Koshchéi; then he became mild and obedient. Ivan Tsarevich threw the egg from one hand to the other.

Koshchéi Without-Death staggered from corner to corner. This seemed pleasant to the Tsarevich. He threw the egg more quickly from hand to hand, and broke it; then Koshchéi fell and died.

Ivan Tsarevich attached the horses to his golden carriage, took whole bags filled with gold and silver, and went to his father. Whether it was long or short, he came to that old woman who had inquired of every creature, fish, bird, and beast. He found his steed. “Glory be to God,” said he, “the raven (black steed) is alive;” and he poured forth gold freely for her care of the steed. Though she were to live ninety-nine years longer, she would have enough. Then the Tsarevich sent a swift courier to the Tsar with a letter, in which he wrote: “Father, meet thy son; I am coming with my bride, Peerless Beauty.”

His father got the letter, read it, and had not belief. “How could that be? Ivan Tsarevich left home when nine days old!” After the courier came the Tsarevich himself. The Tsar saw that his son had written the real truth; he ran out to the porch, met him, and gave command to beat drums and sound music.

“Father, bless me for the wedding.”

Tsars have not to brew beer nor make wine; they have much of all things. That same day there was a joyous feast and a wedding. They crowned Ivan Tsarevich and Peerless Beauty, and put out on all streets great jars of various drinks; every one could come and drink what his soul desired. I was there, drank mead and wine; it flowed on my mustaches, but was not in my mouth.

48

VASSILISSA GOLDEN TRESS, BAREHEADED BEAUTY

There lived a Tsar Svaitozar. This Tsar had two sons and a beauty of a daughter. Twenty years did she live in her bright chamber. The Tsar and Tsaritsa admired her, and so did the nurses and maidens; but no one of the princes and champions had seen her face. And this beauty was called Vassilissa Golden Tress. She went nowhere out of her chamber; the Tsarevna did not breathe the free air. She had many bright dresses and jewels, but was wearied; it was oppressive for her in the chamber. Her robes were a burden, her thick golden silk hair, covered with nothing, bound in a tress, fell to her feet, and people called her Vassilissa Golden Tress, Bareheaded Beauty. The kingdom was filled with her fame. Many Tsars heard of her and sent envoys to Tsar Svaitozar to beat with the forehead and ask the Tsarevna in marriage.

The Tsar was in no hurry, but when the time came, he sent messengers to all lands with tidings that the Tsarevna would choose a bridegroom; and inviting Tsars and Tsareviches to assemble and collect at his palace to feast, he went himself to the lofty chamber to tell Vassilissa the Beautiful. It was gladsome in the heart of the Tsarevna. Looking out of the sloping window from behind the golden lattice on the green garden, the flowery meadow, she was eager to walk; she asked him to let her go forth to the garden to play with the maidens. “My sovereign father,” said she, “I have not seen the world of God yet, I have not walked on the grass, on the flowers, I have not looked on thy palace; let me go with my nurses and maidens to walk in thy garden.”

The Tsar permitted, and Vassilissa the Beautiful went down from the lofty chamber to the broad court. The plank gate was open, and she appeared in the green meadow. In front was a steep mountain; on that mountain grew curly trees; on the meadow were beautiful flowers of many kinds. The Tsarevna plucked blue flowers, stepped aside a little from her nurses; there was no caution in her young mind; her face was exposed, her beauty uncovered. Suddenly a mighty whirlwind rose, such as had not been seen, heard of, or remembered by old people; the whirlwind turned and twisted — behold, it seized the Tsarevna and carried her through the air.

The nurses screamed and shrieked: they ran and stumbled, threw themselves on every side; they saw nothing but how the whirlwind shot away with her. And Vassilissa Golden Tress was borne over many lands, across deep rivers, through three kingdoms into the fourth, into the dominions of the Savage Serpent.

The nurses hurry to the palace, covering themselves with tears, throw themselves at the feet of the Tsar. “Sovereign, we are not answerable for the misfortune, we are answerable to thee. Give not command to slay us, command us to speak. The whirlwind bore away our sun, Vassilissa Golden Tress, the Beauty, and it is unknown whither.”

The Tsar was sad, he was angry; but in his anger he pardoned the poor women.

Next morning the princes and kings’ sons came to the Tsar’s palace, and seeing the sadness and seriousness of the Tsar they asked him what had happened.

“There is a sin to my account,” said the Tsar. “My dear daughter, Vassilissa Golden Tress, has been borne away by the whirlwind, I know not whither;” and he told everything as it had happened.

Talk rose among the guests, and the princes and kings’ sons thought and talked among themselves. “Is not the Tsar refusing us; is he not unwilling to let us see his daughter?” They rushed to the chamber of the Tsarevna; nowhere did they find her.

The Tsar made them presents, gave to each one from his treasure. They mounted their steeds, he conducted them with honor; the bright guests took farewell, and went to their own lands.

The two young Tsareviches, brave brothers of Vassilissa Golden Tress, seeing the tears of their father and mother, begged of their parents: “Let us go, our father, — bless us, our mother, — to find your daughter, our sister.”

“My dear sons, my own children,” said the Tsar, without joy, “where will ye go?”

“We will go, father, everywhere, — where a road lies, where a bird flies, where the eyes have vision; mayhap we shall find her.”

The Tsar gave his blessing, the Tsaritsa prepared them for the journey; they wept, and they parted.

The two Tsareviches journeyed on. Whether the road was near or far, long in going or short, they did not know. They travelled a year, they travelled two. They passed three kingdoms, lofty mountains were visible and seemed blue; between these mountains were sandy plains, — the land of the Savage Serpent. And the Tsareviches inquired of those whom they met had they not heard, had they not seen, where Tsarevna Vassilissa Golden Tress was. And from all the answer was one: “We know not where she is, and we have not heard.”

The Tsar’s sons approach a great town; a decrepit old man stands on the road; crooked-eyed and lame, with a crutch and a bag, he begs alms. The Tsareviches stopped, threw him a silver coin, and asked had he not seen, had he not heard of the Tsarevna Vassilissa Golden Tress, Bareheaded Beauty?

“Ah! my friend,” said the old man, “it is clear that thou art from a strange land. Our ruler, the Savage Serpent, has forbidden strongly and sternly to speak with men from abroad. We are forbidden under penalty to tell or relate how a whirlwind bore past the town the beautiful princess.”

Now the sons of the Tsar understood that their sister was near. They urged on their restive steeds and approached the castle of gold which stood on a single pillar of silver; over the castle was a curtain of diamonds; the stairways, mother-of-pearl, opened and closed like wings.

At this moment Vassilissa the Beautiful was looking in sadness through the golden lattice, and she screamed out for joy. She knew her brothers from a distance, just as if her heart had told her. And the Tsarevna sent down in silence to meet them, to bring them to the castle; the Savage Serpent was absent.

Vassilissa the Beautiful was wary; she feared the serpent might see them. They had barely entered when the silver pillar groaned, the stairways opened, all the roofs glittered; the whole castle began to turn and move. The Tsarevna was frightened, and said to her brothers: “The serpent is coming, the serpent is coming; that’s why the castle goes round! Hide, brothers!”

She had barely said this when the Savage Serpent flew in, cried with a thundering voice, and whistled with a hero’s whistle: “What living man is here?”

“We, Savage Serpent,” answered the Tsar’s sons, without fear; “from our birthplace we’ve come for our sister.”

“Oh, the young men are here!” shouted the serpent, clapping his wings. “Ye should not die here from me, nor seek your sister to free; her own brothers, champions, are ye, but champions puny I see.” And the serpent caught one of them with his wing, struck him against the other, whistled and shouted. The castle guard ran to him, took the dead Tsareviches, threw them both down a deep ditch.

The Tsarevna Vassilissa Golden Tress covered herself with tears, took neither food nor drink, would not look on the world. Two days and three passed. It was not right she should die, she did not decide to die; she took pity on her beauty, took counsel of hunger. On the third day she ate, and was thinking how to free herself from the serpent, and began to gain knowledge by wheedling.

"Savage Serpent," said she, "great is thy power, mighty thy flight: is it possible that thou hast no foe?"

"Not yet," replied the serpent; "it was fated at my birth that my foe should be Ivan Goroh [John Pea]; and he will be born from a pea."

The serpent said this in jest; he expected no foe. The strong one relied on his strength; but the jest came true.

The mother of Vassilissa Golden Tress was grieving because she had no news of her children after the Tsarevna, the Tsareviches, were lost.

She went one day to walk in the garden with her ladies; the day was hot, she was thirsty. In that garden, from a foot-hill, spring water ran forth in a stream, and above it was a white marble well. They drew, with a golden cup, water pure as a tear. The Tsaritsa was eager to drink, and with the water she swallowed a pea. The pea burst, and the Tsaritsa became heavy; the pea increased and grew. In time the Tsaritsa gave birth to a son; they called him Ivan Goroh, and he grew, not by the year, but by the hour, smooth and plump; he is lively, laughs, jumps, springs on the sand, and his strength is growing in him all the time, so that at ten years he was a mighty champion. Then he asked the Tsar and Tsaritsa if he had had many brothers and sisters, and he heard how it happened that the whirlwind had borne away his sister, it was unknown whither, how his two brothers had begged to go in search of their sister, and were lost without tidings.

"Father, mother," begged Ivan Goroh, "let me go too; give me your blessing to find my brothers and sister."

“What art thou saying, my child?” asked the Tsar and Tsaritsa at once. “Thou art still green and young; thy brothers went, they were lost, thou wilt go too and be lost.”

“Mayhap I shall not be lost,” said Ivan Goroh. “I want to find my brothers and sister.”

The Tsar and Tsaritsa persuaded and begged their dear son, but he craved, cried, and entreated. They prepared him for the road, let him go with tears.

Ivan Goroh was free. He went out into the open field, travelled one day, travelled another. Toward night he came to a dark forest; in that forest was a cabin on hen’s legs; from the wind it was shaking and turning. Ivan spoke from the old saying, from his nurse’s tale. “Cabin, cabin,” said he, “turn thy back to the forest, thy front to me;” and the cabin turned around to Ivan. Out of the window an old woman was looking, and she asked, “Whom is God bringing?”

Ivan bowed, and hastened to ask: “Hast thou not seen, grandmother, in what direction the passing whirlwind carries beautiful maidens?”

“Oh, young man,” said she, coughing, and looking at Ivan, “that whirlwind has frightened me too, so that I sit in this cabin a hundred and twenty years, and I go out nowhere! Maybe he would fly up and sweep me away. That’s not a whirlwind, but the Savage Serpent.”

“How could one go to him?” asked Ivan.

“What art thou thinking of, my world? The serpent will swallow thee.”

“Maybe he will not swallow me.”

“See to it, champion, or thou wilt not save thy head. But shouldst thou come back, give me thy word to bring from the serpent’s castle water with which, if a man sprinkles himself, he will grow young,” said she, moving her teeth beyond measure.

“I will get it, grandmother, I give thee my word.”

"I believe thee, on conscience! Go straight to where the sun sets. In one year thou wilt reach the bald mountain there; ask for the road to the serpent's kingdom."

"God save thee, grandmother!"

"There is no reason for thanks, father."

Well, Ivan Goroh went to the land where the sun sets. A story is soon told, but a deed's not soon done. He passed three kingdoms, and went to the serpent's land; before the gates of the town he saw a beggar, — a lame, blind old man with a crutch, — and giving him charity, he asked if the young Tsarevna Vassilissa Golden Tress was in that town.

"She is, but it is forbidden to say so," answered the beggar.

Ivan knew that his sister was there; the good, bold hero became courageous, and went to the palace. At that time Vassilissa Golden Tress was looking out of the window to see if the Savage Serpent was coming; and she saw from afar the young champion, wished to know of him, sent quietly to learn from what land he had come, of what stock was he, was he sent by her father or by her own mother.

Hearing that Ivan, her youngest brother, had come (and she did not know him by sight), Vassilissa ran to him, wet him with tears. "Run, brother, quickly!" cried she. "The serpent will soon be here; he will see thee, destroy thee."

"My dear sister," answered Ivan, "if another had spoken, I should not have listened. I have no fear of the serpent, no fear of his strength."

"But art thou Goroh," asked Vassilissa Golden Tress, "to manage him?"

"Wait, friend sister; first give me to drink. I have travelled under heat, I am tired from the road; I want a drink."

"What dost thou drink, brother?"

"Three gallons of sweet mead, dear sister."

Vassilissa gave command to bring a three-gallon measure of sweet mead, and Goroh drank it all at one breath. He asked for another; the

Tsarevna gave orders to hurry, looked, and wondered.

“Well, brother, I did not know thee; but now I believe that thou art Ivan Goroh!”

“Let me sit down a moment to rest from the road.”

Vassilissa gave command to bring a strong chair; but the chair broke under Ivan, flew into bits. They brought another all bound with iron, and that one cracked and bent. “Oh, brother,” cried Vassilissa, “that is the chair of the Savage Serpent!”

“Now it is clear that I am heavier than he,” said Goroh, laughing.

He rose and went on the street, went from the castle to the forge; there he ordered the old sage, the serpent’s blacksmith, to forge him an iron club of nine tons weight. The blacksmith hastened the work. They hammered the iron; night and day the hammers thundered, the sparks just flying. In forty hours the work was done. Fifty men were barely able to carry the club; but Ivan Goroh, seizing it in one hand, hurled the club to the sky: it flew, roared like a storm, whirled above the clouds, vanished from the eye. All the people ran trembling from terror, thinking if that club falls on the town, it will break the walls and crush the people; if it falls in the sea, it will raise the sea and flood the town. But Ivan Goroh went quietly to the castle, and gave command to tell when the club was coming. The people ran from the square, looked from under the gate, looked out of windows. “Isn’t the club coming?” They waited an hour, they waited two; the third hour they ran to say that the club was coming. Goroh sprang to the square, put forth his hand, caught the club as it came, bent not himself, but the iron bent on the palm of his hand. Ivan took the club, pressed it against his knee, straightened it, went to the castle.

All at once a terrible whistling was heard, the Savage Serpent was racing; Whirlwind, his steed, flying like an arrow, breathes fire. The serpent in shape is a champion, but his head is the head of a serpent. When he flies, the whole castle quivers; when he is ten versts distant, it begins to whirl and dance. But now the castle moves not: it is clear that some one is sitting inside. The serpent grew thoughtful, whistled, shouted; the whirlwind steed shook his dark mane, opened his broad wings, reared and roared.

The serpent flew up to the castle, but the castle moves not. “Ho!” roared the Savage Serpent, “it is plain there is a foe. Is not Goroh at my house?” Soon came the champion. “I’ll put thee on the palm of one hand, and slap with the other: they won’t find thy bones.”

“We shall see,” said Ivan Goroh.

He went out with his club, and the serpent cried from his whirlwind: “Take thy place in a hurry.”

“Take thy own place, Savage Serpent,” said Ivan, and raised his club.

The Savage Serpent flew up to strike Ivan, to pierce him with his spear, and missed. Goroh sprang to one side, did not stagger.

“Now I’ll finish thee!” roared Goroh. Raising his club, he struck the serpent a blow that tore him to pieces, scattered him; the club went across the earth, went through two kingdoms into a third.

The people hurled up their caps and saluted Ivan Tsar. But Ivan seeing the wise blacksmith, as a reward for having made the club quickly, he called up the old man and said to the people: “Here is your head; obey him while doing good, as before ye obeyed the Savage Serpent for evil.”

Ivan got also the water of life and the water of death, sprinkled his brothers; they rose up, rubbed their eyes and thought, “We slept long; God knows what has happened.”

“Without me you would have slept forever, my dear brothers,” said Ivan Goroh, pressing them to his restive heart.

He did not forget to take the serpent’s water; he made a ship, and on the Swan’s river sailed with Vassilissa Golden Tress to his own land through three kingdoms into the fourth. He did not forget the old woman in the cabin; he let her wash in the serpent’s water. She turned into a young woman, began to sing and dance, ran out after Goroh, and conducted him to the road.

His father and mother met him with joy and honor. They sent messengers to all lands with tidings that their daughter Vassilissa had returned. In the town there was ringing, and in the ears triple ringing; trumpets sounded, drums were beaten, guns thundered.

A bridegroom came to Vassilissa, and a bride was found for the Tsarevich; they had four crowns made, and celebrated two weddings. At the rejoicing, at the gladness, there was a feast as a mountain, and mead a river.

The grandfathers of grandfathers were there; they drank mead, and it came to us, flowed on our mustaches, but reached not our mouths. Only it became known that Ivan, after the death of his father, received the crown, and ruled the land with renown; and age after age the name of Goroh was famous.

49

THE RING WITH TWELVE SCREWS

There lived in a village a son with his mother, and the mother was a very old woman. The son was called Ivan the Fool. They lived in a poor little cottage with one window, and in great poverty. Such was their poverty that besides dry bread they ate almost nothing, and sometimes they had not even the dry bread. The mother would sit and spin, and Ivan the Fool would lie on the stove, roll in the ashes, and never wipe his nose. His mother would say to him time and again: “Ivanushka, thou art sitting there with thy nose unwiped. Why not go somewhere, even to the public-house? Some kind man may come along and take thee to work. Thou wouldst have even a bit of bread, while at home here we have nothing to keep the life in us.”

“Very well, I’ll go,” said Ivan. He rose up and went to the public-house. On the way a man met him.

“Where art thou going, Ivan?”

“I am going to hire out to work.”

“Come, work for me; I’ll give thee such and such wages, and other things too.”

Ivan agreed. He went to work.

The man had a dog with whelps; one of the whelps pleased Ivan greatly, and he trained it. A year passed, and the time came to pay wages for the work. The man was giving Ivan money, but he answered: “I need not thy money; give me that whelp of thine that I trained.”

The man was glad that he had not to pay money, and gave the whelp.

Ivan went home; and when his mother found what he had done, she began to cry, saying: “All people are people, but thou art a fool; we had nothing to eat, and now there is another life to support.”

Ivan the Fool said nothing, sat on the stove with unwiped nose, rolling in the ashes, and the whelp with him. Some time passed; whether it was short or long, his mother said again: “Why art thou sitting there without sense; why not go to the public-house? Some good man may come along and hire thee.”

“Very good, I’ll go,” said the Fool.

He took his dog and started. A man met him on the road.

“Where art thou going, Ivan?”

“To find service,” said he; “to hire out.”

“Come, work for me.”

“Very well,” said Ivan.

They agreed, and Ivan went again to work; and that man had a cat with kittens. One of the kittens pleased the Fool, and he trained it. The time came for payment.

Ivan the Fool said to this man: “I need not thy money, but give me that kitten.”

“If thou wilt have it,” said the man.

Now the Fool went home, and his mother cried more than before. “All people are people, but thou wert born a fool. We had nothing to eat, and now we must support two useless lives!”

It was bitter for Ivan to hear this. He took his dog and cat and went out into the field. He saw in the middle of the field a fire burning in a great pile of wood, — such an awful pile of wood! When he drew nearer he saw that a snake was squirming in it, burning on hot coals.

The snake screamed to him in a human voice: “Oh, Ivan the Fool, save me! I will give thee a great ransom for my life.”

Ivan took a stick and raised the snake out of the fire.

When he had thrown it out, there stood before him, not a snake, but a beautiful maiden; and she said: “Thanks to thee, Ivanushka. Thou hast done me great service; I will do thee still greater. We will go,” said she, “to my mother. She will offer thee copper money: do not take it, because it is coals, and not money; she will offer thee silver coin: do not take that either, for that will be chips, and not silver; she will bring out to thee gold: take not even that, because instead of gold it is potsherds and broken bricks. But ask of her in reward the ring with twelve screws. It will be hard for her to give it; but be firm, she will give it for my sake.”

Behold, all took place as she said. Though the old woman grew very angry, she gave the ring. Ivan was going along through the field, thinking, “What shall I do with this ring?”

He was looking at it, when that same young girl caught up with him and said: “Ivan, whatever thou wishest, thou wilt have. Only stand in the evening on the threshold, loosen all the twelve screws, and before thee twelve thousand men will appear: whatever thou wishest, command; all will be done.”

Ivan went home, said nothing to his mother, sat on the stove, lay in the ashes with unwiped nose. Evening came; they lay down to sleep.

Ivan waited for the hour, went on the threshold, unscrewed the twelve screws, and twelve thousand men stood before him. “Thou art our master, we are thy men: declare thy soul’s desire.”

Said Ivan to the men: “Have it made that on this very spot a castle shall stand such as there is not in the world, and that I sleep on a bedstead of gold, on down of swans, and that my mother sleep in like manner; that coachmen, outriders, servants, and all kinds of powerful people be walking in my court and serving me.”

"Lie down for thyself in God's name," said the men; "all will be done at thy word."

Ivan the Fool woke up next morning, and was frightened even himself. He looked around; he was sleeping on a golden bedstead on down of swans, and there were lofty chambers and so rich that even the Tsar had not such. In the court-yard were walking coachmen, outriders, servants, and all kinds of mighty and important people who were serving him. The Fool was amazed, and thought, "This is good." He looked in the mirror, and did not know his own self; he had become a beauty that could not be described with a pen or be told of in a tale. As was fitting, the lord was as fine as his chambers.

When the Tsar woke up at the same hour, — and the Tsar lived in that town, — he looked, and behold opposite his palace stood a castle just gleaming in gold.

The Tsar sent to learn whose it was. "Let the owner come to me," said he, "and show what sort of man he is."

They informed Ivan, and he said: "Tell him that this is the castle of Ivan Tsarevich; and if he wants to see me, he is not so great a lord, let him come himself."

There was no help for it. The Tsar had to go to Ivan the Fool's castle. They became acquainted, and after that Ivan the Fool went to the Tsar. The Tsar had a most beautiful young Tsarevna of a daughter, and she brought refreshments to Ivan; and right there she pleased him greatly, and straightway he begged the Tsar to give her in marriage to him. Now the Tsar in his turn began to put on airs.

"Give her, — why not give her? But thou, Ivan Tsarevich, perform a service for me. My daughter is not of common stock, and therefore she must marry only the very best among the whole people. Arrange this for me, that from thy castle to mine there be a golden road, and that I have a bridge over the river, — not a common one, but such a bridge that one side shall be of gold, and the other of silver; and let all kinds of rare birds be swimming on the river, — geese and swans; and on the other side of the river let there be a church, — not a simple one, but one all wax, — and let there grow around it wax apple-trees and bear ripe apples. If thou do this, my daughter shall be thine; and if not, blame thyself." ("Well," thought the Tsar, "I have joked enough with Ivan Tsarevich;" but he kept his own counsel.)

"Agreed," said Ivan. "Now do thou make ready the wedding to-morrow." With that he departed.

In the evening, when all had lain down to sleep, he stood on the threshold, unscrewed all the screws in the ring: twelve thousand men stood before him.

"Thou art our master, we are thy men: command what thy soul desires."

"Thus and thus," said he; "I want this and that."

"All right," said they; "lie down with God."

In the morning the Tsar woke up, went to the window; but his eyes were dazzled. He sprang back six paces. That meant that the bridge was there, one side silver, the other gold, just blazing and shining. On the river were geese and swans and every rare bird. On the opposite bank stood a church of white wax, and around the church apple-trees, but without leaves; the naked branches were sticking up.

"Well," thought the Tsar, "the trick has failed; we must prepare our daughter for the wedding."

They arrayed her and drove to the church. When they were driving from the palace, buds began to come out on the apple-trees; when they were crossing the bridge, the apple-trees were coming into leaf; when they were driving up to the church, white blossoms were bursting forth on the trees; and when the time came to go home from the marriage ceremony, the servants and all kinds of people met them, gave them ripe apples on a golden salver. Then they began to celebrate the wedding. Feasts and balls were given; they had a feast which lasted three days and three nights.

After that, whether it was a short time or a long one, the Tsarevna began to tease Ivan. “Tell me, my dear husband, how dost thou do all this? How dost thou build a bridge in one night, and a wax church?”

Ivan the Fool would not tell her for a long time; but as he loved her very much, and she begged very hard, he said: “I have a ring with twelve screws, and it must be handled in such and such fashion.”

Well, they lived on. The misery of the matter was this: one of their servants pleased the Tsarevna, — he was a fine-looking, shapely, strong fellow, and she conspired with him to rob her husband, take away the ring, and the two would then go to live beyond the sea.

As soon as evening came she took out the ring quietly, stood on the threshold, and unscrewed the twelve screws: twelve thousand men stood before her.

“Thou art our mistress, we are thy men: command what thy soul desires.”

She said: “Take this castle for me and bear it beyond the sea, with all that is in it; and on this spot let the old cabin stand, with my ragged husband, Ivan the Fool, inside.”

“Lie down with God,” said the men; “all will be done on thy word.”

Next morning Ivan woke up, looked around. He was lying on a bark mat, covered with a ragged coat, and not a sign of his castle. He began to cry bitterly, and went to the Tsar, his father-in-law. He came to the palace, asked to announce to the Tsar that his son-in-law had come. When the Tsar saw him he said: “Oh, thou this and that kind of breechesless fellow, what son-in-law art thou to me? My sons-in-law live in golden chambers and ride in silver carriages. Take him and wall him up in a stone pillar.”

It was commanded and done. They took Ivan and walled him up in a stone pillar. But the cat and the dog did not leave him, they were there too, and dug out a hole for themselves; through the hole they gave food to Ivan. But one time they thought: “Why do we sit here, dog and cat, with folded hands? Let’s run beyond the sea and get the ring.”

As they decided to do that, they did it. They swam through the sea, found their castle. The Tsarevna was walking in the garden with the servant, laughing at her husband.

“Well, do thou remain here a while, and I’ll go to the chamber and get the ring,” said the cat; and she went her way, mi-au, mi-au, under the door. The Tsarevna heard her, and said: “Ah, here is that scoundrel’s cat; let her in and feed her.” They let her in and fed her. The cat walked through the chambers all the time and looked for the ring. She saw on the stove a glass box, and in the box the ring.

The cat was delighted. “Glory be to God!” thought she. “Now only wait for night; I’ll get the ring, and then for home!”

When all had lain down, the cat sprang on to the stove and threw down the glass box; it fell, and was broken. She caught the ring in her mouth and hid under the door. All in the house were roused; the Tsarevna herself got up, and saw that the box was broken.

“Oh!” said she, “it must be the cat of that scoundrel broke it. Drive her out; drive her out!”

They chased out the cat, and she was glad; she ran to the dog.

“Well, brother dog,” said she, “I have the ring. Now if we could only get home quickly!”

They swam through the sea, were a long time swimming. When the dog was tired, he sat on the cat; when the cat was tired, she sat on the dog; and so they worked on and it was not far from land. But the dog was growing weak. The cat saw this, and said, “Sit thou on me; thou art tired.” The minute she said this the ring fell out of her mouth into the water. What was to be done? They swam to shore and wept tears. Meanwhile they grew hungry. The dog ran through the field and caught sparrows for himself, and the cat ran along the shore catching little fish thrown up by the waves; that was how she fed herself.

But all at once the cat cried out: “Oh, thou dog, come here quickly to me; I have found the ring! I caught a fish, began to eat it, and in the fish was the ring.”

Now they were both powerfully glad; they ran to Ivan and brought him the ring.

Ivan waited till evening, unscrewed all the twelve screws, and twelve thousand men stood before him.

“Thou art our master, we are thy men: tell us to do what thy soul desires.”

“Break in a minute this stone pillar so that dust from it shall not remain; and from beyond the sea bring hither my castle with all who are in it, and every one as sleeping now, and put it in the old place.”

Straightway all this was done. In the morning Ivan went to his father-in-law. The Tsar met him, seated him in the first place, and said: “Where hast thou been pleased to pass thy time, my dear son-in-law?”

“I was beyond the sea,” said Ivan.

“That’s it,” said the Tsar, “beyond the sea. ‘Tis clear that thou hadst pressing business, for thou didst not come to take farewell of thy father-in-law. But while thou wert gone, some sort of bare-legged fellow came to me and called himself my son-in-law. I gave command to wall him up in a stone pillar; he has perished there, doubtless. Well, beloved son-in-law, where hast thou been pleased to spend thy time; what sights hast thou seen?”

“I have seen,” said Ivan, “various sights; and beyond the sea there was an affair of such kind that no man knew how to settle it.”

“What was the affair?”

“Well, this is the kind of affair it was; and if thou art a wise man, decide it according to thy wisdom of Tsar: A husband had a wife, and while he was living she found a sweetheart for herself; she robbed her husband, and went away with the sweetheart beyond the sea; and now she is with that man. What, to thy thinking, should be done with that wife?”

“According to my wisdom of Tsar I will utter the following sentence: Tie them both to the tails of horses, and let the horses loose in the open field, — let that be their punishment.”

“If that is thy judgment, very well,” said Ivan. “Come with me as a guest; I will show thee other sights and another wonder.”

They went to Ivan’s castle, and found there the Tsar’s daughter and the servant. As Ivan had commanded, they were still asleep.

There was no help for it; according to the word of the Tsar they tied them both to the tails of horses and urged the horses into the open field, — that was their punishment. But Ivan afterwards married that beautiful, most beautiful maiden whom he had saved from the fire, and they began to live and win wealth.

50

THE FOOTLESS AND THE BLIND

In a certain kingdom, in a certain state, lived a terrible Tsar. He was famed through all lands, — a terror to kings and princes. The Tsar took a thought to marry, and published an order in every town and village that whoever would find him a bride ruddier than the sun, fairer than the moon, and whiter than snow, would be rewarded with countless wealth. The report of this went through the whole kingdom; and from small to great, all were talking and thinking, but no one offered to find such a beauty.

Not far from the king’s castle was a large brewery. The working-men came together for some reason, and began to say that a man might get much money from the Tsar, but where could such a bride be found?

“Well, brothers,” said a man, Nikita Koltoma by name, “no one can find a bride for the Tsar without my help; but if I undertake it, then he will find her without fail.”

“What art thou boasting of, thou fool? How couldst thou do that deed? There are famous and rich people, not the like of us, and they are afraid. Thou couldst not do it in a dream, much less in thy senses.”

“Well, say what ye please; but I have faith in myself,” said he, “and I’ll get her.”

"Ah, Nikita, don't boast; thou knowest our Tsar is terrible, and for an empty boast he will put thee to death."

"He won't put me to death; he will reward me with money."

They reported these speeches to the Tsar himself. He was delighted, and gave command to bring Nikita before his bright eyes. The soldiers ran, seized Nikita Koltoma, and hurried him to the palace. His comrades called after him: "Well, brother, thou hast said it; thou thinkest to joke with the Tsar: go now and give answer."

They brought Nikita to the great palace, and the terrible Tsar said to him: "Thou, Nikita, dost boast that thou art able to find me a bride ruddier than the sun, fairer than the moon, and whiter than snow."

"I can, your Majesty."

"Very well, brother. If thou wilt do me that service, I will reward thee with countless treasure and make thee first minister; but if thou hast lied, I have a sword, and thy head leaves thy shoulders."

"I am glad to serve thee, Great Tsar; but command that I have a holiday for a whole month."

The Tsar consented, and gave over his own signature an open order to Nikita, commanding that in all eating-houses and inns they should give him gratis all kinds of food and drink.

Nikita went through the capital to enjoy himself. Whatever inn he entered, he showed the paper; immediately they brought him everything that his soul desired. He caroused one day, a second, a third; a week, a second, a third week. And now the term is passed; 'tis time to go to the Tsar.

Nikita took farewell of his friends, went to the palace, and asked the Tsar to collect for him twelve brave youths, the same in stature, in hair, and in voice, and to prepare besides thirteen white woven tents with golden embroidery. Everything was soon ready; the young men were collected at once, and the tents made.

"Now, Great Tsar," said Nikita, "get ready, and we will go for the bride."

They saddled their good steeds, packed the tents on the horses. After that they had a prayer in the church, took leave of the people of the town, sat on their steeds, and galloped away; nothing but a pillar of dust behind them. They travelled one day, a second, and a third. In the open field was a forge. Said Nikita: "Go straight ahead with God, and I will run into the forge and smoke a pipe." He entered the forge; fifteen blacksmiths were forging iron inside, striking with their hammers.

"God aid you, brothers!"

"God save thee, good man!"

"Make me a staff fifteen poods weight."

"To make it we are not unwilling; but who will turn the iron? Fifteen poods are no joke."

"That is nothing, brothers; you beat with the hammers, and I'll turn the iron."

The blacksmiths went to work and forged an iron staff of fifteen poods. Nikita took the rod, went out into the field, and threw it up ninety feet, held out his hand; the iron staff fell on his hand, but was not equal to the strength of the hero, it broke in two. Nikita Koltoma paid the blacksmiths for their work, threw the broken rod to them, and rode away. He caught up with his comrades. They travelled three days more; again there was a forge in the open field.

"Go on, I will enter this forge," said Nikita. He went into the forge. Twenty-five blacksmiths were working inside, forging iron, pounding with their hammers.

"God aid thee, boys!"

"God save thee, good man!"

"Make me a staff twenty-five poods in weight."

“To forge is no trouble; but where is the man with strength to turn so much iron?”

“I will turn it myself.”

He took the twenty-five poods weight of iron, heated it red hot, and turned it on the anvil while the blacksmiths pounded with their hammers. They made a staff twenty-five poods in weight. Nikita took that staff, went out into the open field, threw it up one hundred and fifty feet, and held out his hand: the staff struck the hero’s hand and broke in two.

“No, this will not do,” said Nikita. He paid for the work, sat on his horse, and rode away. He overtook his comrades. They travelled a day, a second, and a third. Again there was a forge in the open field.

“Go on,” said Nikita; “I will smoke a pipe in this forge.”

He entered the forge, where fifty blacksmiths were tormenting an old man. A gray-haired old man was lying on the anvil; ten men were holding him with pincers by the beard, and forty men were pounding him on the sides with hammers.

“Have pity on me, brothers!” cried the old man, with all his strength. “Leave the life in me to do penance!”

“God aid you!” said Nikita.

“God aid thee, good man!” said the blacksmiths.

“Why are ye tormenting the old man?”

“Because he owes each one of us a rouble, and he will not pay it. Why shouldn’t we beat him?”

“What an unfortunate man,” thought Nikita; “for fifty roubles he suffers such torment!” And he said to the blacksmiths: “Listen, brothers: I’ll pay you for him; let the old man go.”

“Agreed, good man; it is all the same to us from whom we get the money, so that we have it.”

Nikita took out fifty roubles. The blacksmiths took the money, and the moment they freed the old man out of the iron pincers, he vanished from the eye. Nikita looked. “But where is the old man?”

“Oh, look for him now; he is a wizard!”

Nikita ordered them to forge an iron staff of fifty poods. He hurled it up three hundred feet, and held out his hand: the staff stood the test, did not break. “This will do,” said Nikita, and rode off to overtake his comrades. All at once he heard a voice behind him. Nikita Koltoma stopped; he looked around, and saw the same old man running after him.

“Thanks to thee,” said the old man, “for saving me from cruel torture; I suffered that misery for thirty years exactly. Here is a present to remember me by, — take it; it will be of use to thee;” and he gave him a cap of invisibility. “Just put it on thy head; no man will see thee.”

Nikita took the cap, thanked the old man, and galloped on. He overtook his comrades, and all rode together. Whether it was long or short, near or far, they came to a castle; around the castle was a great iron paling; there was no way to enter, on foot or on horseback. The terrible Tsar said: “Well, brother Nikita, there is no passage farther.”

Nikita Koltoma answered: “Why not, Great Tsar? I’ll go through the whole world but I’ll find thee a bride. This paling is no stop to us. Now, boys, break the paling; open the gate to the wide court!”

The good youths came down from their horses and went at the paling; but no matter what they did, they could not break it, it stood fast.

“Oh, brothers,” said Nikita, “ye sail in shallow water! No use in my depending on you; I must work myself.”

Nikita sprang from his horse, went to the paling, took it with his heroic hand, pulled once, — the whole paling was on the ground. The terrible Tsar and the young men rode in on the broad court, and there on the green meadow they put up their white woven, gold-embroidered tents, ate what God sent them, lay down, and from weariness slept a sound sleep. Each one had a tent, but there was none for Nikita Koltoma; he found three worn bark mats, made himself a little hut, lay down on the bare ground. As to sleeping, he slept not; he waited for what would be.

At the morning dawn Yelena the Beautiful woke up in her chamber, looked out through her lattice-window, and saw that thirteen white woven tents were standing on her green meadow, and in front of all a small hut of bark rugs.

“What is this?” thought the Tsarevna; “whence have these guests come? See, the iron paling is broken!”

Yelena the Beautiful was terribly enraged; she called her powerful, mighty hero, and said: “To horse this minute! Ride to the tents and give all those disobedient scoundrels to a cruel death; throw their bodies over the fence, and bring the tents to me.”

The powerful, mighty hero saddled his good steed, put on his battle-armor, and went toward the unbidden guests. Nikita Koltoma saw him. “Who goes?” asked he.

“And who art thou, rude fellow, that askest?”

These words did not please Nikita. He sprang out of his hut, caught the hero by the foot, dragged him from the horse to the damp earth, raised his iron staff of fifty poods, gave him one blow, and said: “Go now to thy Tsarevna, tell her to stop her pride, not to waste her men, but to marry our terrible Tsar.”

The hero galloped back, glad that Nikita had left him alive, came to the castle, and said to the Tsarevna: “Men of immeasurable strength have come to our place. They ask thee for their terrible Tsar in marriage, and commanded me to tell thee to put an end to thy pride, not to waste thy army in vain, and to marry their Tsar.”

When Yelena the Beautiful heard such bold speeches she was roused. She summoned her great, mighty heroes, and began to command them all: “My trusty servants, assemble a countless army, take down these white tents, kill these unbidden guests, that the dust of them be not here.”

The great, mighty heroes did not stop long. They collected a countless army, sat on their heroic steeds, and bore down on the white woven, gold-embroidered tents.

As soon as they came to the bark hut, Nikita Koltoma sprang out before them, took his iron staff of fifty poods, and began to wave it at them in different directions. In a little while he had killed the whole army, and of the great, mighty heroes he left but one alive. “Go,” said he, “to thy Tsarevna, Yelena the Beautiful, and tell her not to waste her army further. She cannot frighten us with armies. Now I have fought with you alone; what will happen to your kingdom when my comrades wake? We will not leave a stone upon a stone; we will scatter everything over the open field.”

The hero returned to the Tsarevna and said: “Thy whole army is slain; against such champions no power can avail.” Yelena the Beautiful sent to invite the terrible Tsar to the castle, and then ordered that the sharp arrow be ready; went herself to meet the guests with grace, with honor. The Tsarevna moves on to meet them, and behind her fifty men are bearing the bow and the arrow. Nikita Koltoma saw that that was a hero’s bow, and knew at once that it was intended to treat them to the arrow. He put on the cap of invisibility, drew the bow, and aimed the arrow at the Tsarevna’s chamber. In one moment he knocked off the whole top of her castle.

There was no help for her now. Yelena the Beautiful took the terrible Tsar by the hand, led him to the white-walled chambers, seated him and his men at the oaken tables with the spread cloths. They began to drink, to eat and rejoice. In the chambers were wonderful ornaments; the whole world might be searched, and the like wouldst thou find nowhere.

After dinner Nikita said to the terrible Tsar: “Does the young woman please thee, or shall we go for another?”

“No, Nikita, there is no use in travelling for nothing; there is not a better than this in the whole world.”

“Well, then, marry now she is in our hands. But look out, Great Tsar, don’t be caught napping. The first three nights she will try thy strength; she will put her hand on thee and press mightily, mightily: thou canst not endure it in any way. At these times hurry out of the chamber; I’ll take thy place and soon tame her.”

They set about the wedding, and Tsars have not to make mead or wine; all was on hand. They had the wedding, and the terrible Tsar went to the chamber of Yelena the Beautiful. He reclined on a couch.

Yelena put her hand on his breast and asked: “Is my hand heavy?”

“It is as heavy as a feather on water,” answered the terrible Tsar; but he could barely draw breath, so had she pressed his breast. “Wait, I have forgotten to give an order; I must give it now.” He left the chamber.

Nikita was standing at the door outside. “Well, brother, thou didst speak truly; she came very near putting the breath out of me.”

“Never mind, I’ll settle the matter; stay here.”

Nikita entered the dark chamber, lay on the couch. Yelena thought the Tsar had returned. She put her hand on his breast, pressed and pressed; could do nothing. She put on both hands, and pressed more than before. Nikita Koltoma, like a man in sleep, caught her and hurled her to the floor, so that the whole castle shook. The Tsarevna got up, went quietly to her bed, and fell asleep.

Now Nikita slipped out to the Tsar and said: “Go in boldly; she will do nothing till to-morrow.”

With Nikita’s aid the Tsar escaped the second and the third time, and then lived as was proper with Yelena the Beautiful. Neither a long nor a short time passed, but Yelena the Beautiful discovered that the terrible Tsar had deceived her, that his strength was not great, that people were laughing at her, that Nikita was the man who had conquered her. She was in a terrible rage, and hid in her heart a cruel revenge.

The Tsar had in mind to go to his own kingdom, and said: "We have stayed here long enough; it is time to go home. Make ready for the road."

They prepared to go by the sea, and had a ship laden with various precious things. They went on board, and sailed out on the sea; sailed one day, sailed a second, then a third. The Tsar was delighted; he could not rejoice sufficiently that he was taking home a Tsaritsa ruddier than the sun, fairer than the moon, whiter than snow. But Yelena the Beautiful was thinking her own thought, — thinking how to pay for the insult.

At that time an heroic slumber overcame Nikita, and he slept for twelve whole days and nights. When the Tsaritsa saw Nikita in this sleep, she summoned her trusty servants, commanded them to cut off his legs to the knee, put him in a boat, and push him out into the sea. Before her eyes they cut off the legs of the sleeping Nikita, put him in a boat, and pushed him out to sea.

On the thirteenth day poor Nikita woke. He looked around, — water everywhere; he was lying without feet, and no trace of the ship.

Meanwhile the ship sailed on, sailed on. At last the harbor was before them. The cannon thundered, the people ran together. The merchants and boyars met the Tsar with bread and salt, and congratulated him on his marriage. The Tsar called guests, gave feasts, and forgot to think of Nikita. Little time had he left to rejoice. Yelena the Beautiful soon seized his kingdom, took the management of all to herself, and forced him to herd pigs. The wrath of the Tsaritsa was not allayed with this; she gave command to make search on every side for relatives of Nikita Koltoma, and if any were found to bring them to the palace.

Messengers galloped and searched everywhere. They found a brother of Nikita, — Timoféi Koltoma; they brought him to the palace. Yelena the Beautiful gave command to take out his eyes and drive him from the town.

When they had blinded Timoféi they led him outside the town and left him in the open field. The blind man dragged along, found his way by feeling; he went and went, till he came to the sea-shore, advanced a step or two, and felt water under his feet. He halted, stood on one spot, moved neither backward nor forward; he was afraid to go. All at once the boat with Nikita was borne toward the shore. Nikita saw a man, was rejoiced, and called to him: “Ei! good man; help me to land.”

The blind man answered: “Gladly would I help thee, but I cannot. I am without eyes; I see nothing.”

“But whence art thou, and what is thy name?”

“I am Timoféi Koltoma. The new Tsaritsa, Yelena the Beautiful, had my eyes put out, and drove me from her kingdom.”

“Ah! but thou art my own brother; I am Nikita Koltoma. Go thou, Timoféi, to the right side, — there a tall oak is growing; pull out the oak, bring it here, and throw it from the shore into the water. I will creep out upon it to thee.”

Timoféi turned to the right, stepped forward, and found the tall old oak, seized it with both hands, pulled it out by the roots, drew the oak, and threw it into the water. The tree lay with one end on land, the other came down near the boat. Nikita crept out on shore somehow, kissed his brother, and said: “How is our terrible Tsar living now?”

“Oh, brother,” answered Timoféi, “our terrible Tsar is now in great straits, — he is herding pigs in the field! Every morning he gets a pound of bread, a jug of water, and three rods on his back.”

Then they talked about how they were to live and how to support themselves. Said Nikita: “Hear, brother, my advice: thou wilt carry me, because I am footless, and I will sit on thee and tell thee where to go.”

“Agreed; be it as thou sayest. Though we are both maimed, we shall serve for one sound man.”

So Nikita sat on his brother’s shoulders and showed him the way. Timoféi walked and walked, and came into a slumbering forest. In that forest stood the cabin of Baba-Yaga. The brothers entered the cabin; there was not a soul inside.

“Well, brother,” said Nikita, “feel in the oven. Isn’t there some food?”

Timoféi crawled to the oven, took out every kind of food, put it on the table, and they both began to put the food away; from hunger they ate everything clean. Then Nikita began to examine the cabin. He saw on the window a small whistle, placed it to his lips and began to whistle. He looks — what sort of wonder! His blind brother is dancing, the cabin is dancing, the table, the dishes are dancing, everything dancing; the pots were broken into bits.

“Enough, Nikita, stop playing,” begged the blind man; “my strength can hold out no longer.”

Nikita stopped whistling, and that moment everything was silent. All at once the door opened, in walked Baba-Yaga, and she screamed with a loud voice: “Oh, homeless vagrants, to this minute not a bird has flown past, nor a beast run by here; and ye have come, devoured my food, broken my pots! Very good; I’ll settle with you!”

“Silence, old carrion! We shall be able to settle with thee ourselves. Here, brother Timoféi, hold the old witch firmly!”

Timoféi caught the Baba-Yaga in his arms, squeezed her hard, hard; but Nikita seized her that moment by the hair and dragged her through the cabin.

“Oh, fathers,” begged Baba-Yaga, “I’ll be of use to you myself; whatever ye want I’ll get you!”

“Well, then, old woman, speak. Canst thou get us healing and living water? If thou gettest it, I’ll let thee go alive into the white world; if not, then I’ll give thee to a cruel death.”

Baba-Yaga agreed, and led them to two springs. “Here are for you the healing and living water.”

Nikita Koltoma took the healing water, poured it on himself, and his legs grew out. They were quite healthy, but wouldn’t move. He took living water, moistened his legs, and began to use them. The same happened to Timoféi Koltoma: he washed the hollows of his eyes with healing water, eyes came in his head just as if they had never been injured, but saw nothing; he washed them with the living water, and they began to see better than ever.

The brothers thanked the old woman, let her go home, and went to liberate the terrible Tsar from suffering and misfortune. They came to the capital town and saw that the Tsar was herding pigs in front of the castle. Nikita Koltoma began to blow on the whistle, and the herdsman with the pigs fell to dancing. Yelena the Beautiful saw this from the window; she was furious, and gave command to take a bunch of rods and flog the pigherd and the musicians.

The guard ran out, seized them, brought them to the castle to treat them to rods. When Nikita Koltoma came to Yelena the Beautiful he made no delay, but seized her white hands and said: “Dost know me, Yelena the Beautiful? I am Nikita Koltoma. Well, terrible Tsar, she is in thy power; what thou wishest, that do.”

The Tsar gave command to shoot her, and he made Nikita his first minister; he honored him always, and obeyed him in all things.

51

KOSHCHÉI WITHOUT-DEATH

There was a Tsar who had one son, and when the Tsarevich was an infant his nurses and maids used to sing to him, “Baiyú, baiyú, Ivan Tsarevich; when thou’lt grow up a man thou’lt find thee a bride in the thirtieth kingdom, beyond the thrice ninth land, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna, and her marrow flows from bone to bone.”

Fifteen years had passed for the Tsarevich, and he went to ask leave to search for his bride. “Where wilt thou go?” asked his father. “Thou art still too small.”

“No, father; when I was small the nurses and maids sang to me, and told where my bride lives; and now I am going to find her.”

The Tsar gave his blessing and sent word to all kingdoms that his son, Ivan Tsarevich, was going for his bride.

Well, the Tsarevich came to a town, gave his horse to be cared for, and went himself to walk along the streets. He walked, and saw that on the square they were punishing a man with a whip. “Why,” asked he, “do ye flog him?”

“Because,” answered they, “he went in debt ten thousand to an eminent merchant, and did not pay in season. And whoso redeems him, that man’s wife Koshchéi Without-Death will bear away.”

Now the Tsarevich thought and thought, and then went off. As he was walking through the town he came out again on the square, and they were still beating that man. Ivan Tsarevich pitied him and resolved to redeem him.

“I have no wife,” thought Ivan; “there is no one to take from me.” He paid the ten thousand and went to his lodgings.

All at once the man whom he had redeemed ran after him and called: “God save thee, Ivan Tsarevich! If thou hadst not redeemed me, thou couldest not have gained thy bride in a lifetime; but now I will help thee. Buy me a horse and saddle straightway.”

The Tsarevich bought him a horse and saddle, and asked: “What is thy name?”

“They call me Bulat the hero.”

They sat on the horses, went their way and road. When they came to the thirtieth kingdom, Bulat said: “Well, Ivan Tsarevich, give orders to buy and roast chickens, ducks, and geese, so that there may be plenty of everything, and I will go to get thy bride. And see to it: every time I run to thee, cut the right wing of a bird, and hand it to me on a plate.”

Bulat the hero went to the lofty tower where Vassilissa Kirbítyevna was sitting, threw a stone lightly, and broke the summit of the gilded tower. He ran to the Tsarevich and said to him: “What, art thou sleeping? Give me a hen.”

Ivan Tsarevich cut off the right wing and gave it on a plate. Bulat took the plate, ran to the tower, and cried out: “Hail, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna! Ivan Tsarevich gave command to bow to thee, and asked me to give thee this hen.”

Vassilissa was frightened, and sat in silence. Bulat gave answer to himself instead of her: “Hail, Bulat the hero! Is Ivan Tsarevich in good health?

“Glory be to God, in good health.

“But why stand there, Bulat the hero? Take the key, open the cupboard, drink a glass of *vodka*, and go with God.”

Bulat the hero ran to Ivan Tsarevich and said: “Art sitting here? Give me a duck.”

He cut off the wing, and gave it on a plate.

Bulat bore it to the tower and said: “Hail, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna! Ivan Tsarevich gave command to bow to thee, and sent thee this duck.”

She sat there, said nothing; but he answered instead of her: “Hail, Bulat the hero! Is Ivan Tsarevich well?

“Glory be to God, he is well.

“But why stand there, Bulat the hero? Take the key, open the cupboard, drink a glass, and go with God.”

Bulat ran again to Ivan Tsarevich. “Art thou sitting here? Give me a goose.”

Ivan cut off the right wing and gave it on a plate. Bulat the hero bore it to the tower. “Hail, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna! Ivan Tsarevich gave command to bow to thee, and sent thee this goose.”

Vassilissa Kirbítyevna took the key quickly, opened the cupboard, and reached a glass of *vodka*. Bulat the hero took not the glass, but seized the maiden by the right hand, drew her out of the tower, and seated her on the Tsarevich’s steed. They galloped away, the good hero and the beautiful soul-maiden, with all horse-speed.

Next morning Tsar Kirbít woke and rose. He saw that the top of the tower was broken and his daughter stolen; he grew powerfully angry, and gave command to pursue over all roads and ways.

Whether our heroes travelled much or little, Bulat took the ring from his hand, hid it, and said: “Go on, Ivan Tsarevich; but I will turn back and look for my ring.”

Vassilissa Kirbítyevna began to implore: “Do not leave us, Bulat the hero; if it please thee, thou shalt have my ring.”

“Impossible, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna; my ring was priceless. My own mother gave it me, and when giving, she said: ‘Wear and lose it not; forget not thy mother.’”

Bulat the hero galloped back and met the pursuers on the road. He slew them all straightway, left but one man to take news to the Tsar, hurried back, and caught up with the Tsarevich.

Whether they went much or little, Bulat hid his handkerchief and said: “Oh, Ivan Tsarevich, I have lost my handkerchief! Ride on thy road and way; I will soon come up with thee.”

He turned back, went some versts, and met pursuers twice as many; he slew them all, and returned to Ivan, who asked: “Hast found the handkerchief?”

“I have found it.”

Dark night overtook them. They pitched a tent; Bulat lay down to sleep, left Ivan Tsarevich on guard, and said to him: “If need be, rouse me.”

Ivan Tsarevich stood and stood, grew tired; sleep began to bend him; he sat down at the tent and fell asleep.

From wherever he came, Koshchéi Without-Death bore away Vassilissa Kirbítyevna. Ivan Tsarevich woke up at dawn, saw that his bride was gone, and began to weep bitterly. Bulat the hero woke up and asked: “Why art thou weeping?”

“Why should I not weep? Some one has borne away Vassilissa Kirbítyevna.”

“I told thee to keep watch. That is the work of Koshchéi Without-Death. Let us set out in search of her.”

Long and long did they ride, till they saw two shepherds herding a flock. “Whose herd is that?”

The herdsmen answered: “This is the herd of Koshchéi Without-Death.”

Bulat and Ivan Tsarevich asked the herdsmen if Koshchéi Without-Death lived far from there, how to go to his house, what time they went home with the flock, and how they shut it in. Then they came down from their horses, wrung the necks of the shepherds, dressed themselves in their clothes, drove the herd home, and stood at the gate.

Ivan Tsarevich had a gold ring on one of his fingers, Vassilissa had given it to him. Vassilissa had a goat, and she washed herself morning and evening with the milk of that goat. The maid ran with a vessel, milked the goat, and was carrying the milk. Bulat took the Tsarevich's ring and threw it into the vessel.

"Oh, my dove," said the maid, "thou art getting impudent!" She came to Vassilissa Kirbítyevna and complained. "Now," said she, "the herdsmen have begun to make sport of us, — they threw a ring into the milk."

"Leave the milk; I will strain it myself," said Vassilissa. She strained the milk, saw the ring, and gave command to send the herdsmen to her. The herdsmen came.

"Hail, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna!" said Bulat the hero.

"Hail, Bulat the hero! Be well, Tsarevich! How did God bring you?"

"We came for thee, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna; thou wilt hide from us nowhere. We should find thee even on the bottom of the sea."

She seated them at the table, gave them every sort of food and all kinds of wine.

Said Bulat the hero: "When Koshchéi comes home from hunting, ask him, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna, where his death is. And now it would not be amiss for us to hide."

As soon as the guests had hidden, Koshchéi Without-Death was flying home from the hunt. "Tfu-tfu!" said he; "of old there wasn't a sign of Russia to be heard with hearing or seen with sight; but now Russia runs into one's eyes and mouth."

Said Vassilissa: "Thou hast been flying through Russia thyself, and art full of its odor; so to thy thinking dost find it here."

Koshchéi ate his dinner and lay down to rest. Vassilissa came to him, threw herself on his neck, fondled him, and kissed him, saying: “My dear love, hardly was I able to wait for thee. I did not expect to see thee alive; I feared that savage beasts had devoured thee.”

Koshchéi laughed aloud. “Simple woman! her hair is long, but her wit is short. Could savage beasts eat me?”

“But where is thy death, then?”

“My death is in the broom which lies around at the threshold.”

As soon as Koshchéi had flown away, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna ran to Ivan Tsarevich.

Bulat asked: “Well, where is Koshchéi’s death?”

“In a broom thrown around at the threshold.”

“No, he lies with design; thou must ask him more cunningly.”

Vassilissa Kirbítyevna formed a plan. She took the broom, gilded it, adorned it with various ribbons, and placed it on the table. When Koshchéi Without-Death flew home, he saw the broom on the table, and asked why that was done.

“How was it possible,” answered Vassilissa Kirbítyevna, “that thy death should roll around at the threshold? Better let it lie on the table.”

“Ha, ha, ha! The woman is simple; her hair is long, but her wit is short! Could my death be here?”

“Where is it, then?”

“My death is hidden in the goat.”

As soon as Koshchéi went off to the hunt, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna took the goat and adorned it with ribbons and bells, and gilded its horns. Koshchéi saw the goat; again he laughed. “Oh, the woman is simple; her hair is long, but her wit is short!”

“My death is far from here. On the sea, on the ocean, is an island; on that island stands an oak; under the oak is buried a chest; in the chest is a hare, in the hare a duck, in the duck an egg, and in the egg my death," said he, and flew away.

Vassilissa Kirbítyevna told all this to Ivan Tsarevich. They took supplies and went to find Koshchéi's death. Whether they travelled long or short, they ate all their provisions and began to be hungry.

A dog with her whelps happened in their way. "I will kill her," said Bulat the hero; "there is nothing else to eat."

"Do not kill me," said the dog, "do not make my children orphans, and I will serve thee myself."

"Well, God be with thee."

They went farther. On an oak was an eagle with eaglets. Said Bulat the hero: "I will kill the eagle."

"Kill me not," said the eagle, "make not my children orphans; I will serve thee myself."

"Let it be so; live to thy health."

They came to the ocean sea wide; on the shore a lobster was crawling. Said Bulat the hero: "I will kill it with a blow."

"Strike me not, good hero; there is not much good in me. Wilt eat me, thou'lt not be satisfied. The time will come when I will serve thee myself."

"Well, crawl off with God," said Bulat the hero. He looked on the sea, saw a fisherman in a boat, and shouted, "Come to shore." The fisherman brought the boat. Ivan Tsarevich and Bulat the hero sat in it and went to the island; they landed, and came to the oak. Bulat the hero caught the oak with his mighty hands and tore it out with the roots. They took the chest from under the oak, opened it; out of the chest sprang a hare, and ran with all its breath.

"Ah!" said Ivan Tsarevich, "if the dog were here now, she would catch the hare."

Behold, the dog is bringing the hare. Bulat the hero tore it open; out of the hare flew the duck and rose high in the air.

“Ah!” said Ivan Tsarevich, “if the eagle were here, she would catch the duck.” And already the eagle was bringing the duck.

Bulat the hero tore open the duck; an egg rolled out and fell into the sea.

“Ah!” said Ivan Tsarevich, “if the lobster would pull it out.” The lobster was crawling and bringing the egg. They took the egg, went to Koshchéi Without-Death, struck him with the egg on the forehead; that moment he stretched out and died.

Ivan Tsarevich took Vassilissa Kirbítyevna, and they went their way. They travelled and travelled; dark night overtook them; they pitched their tent. Vassilissa Kirbítyevna lay down to rest. Said Bulat the hero, “Lie down too, Tsarevich, and I will stand guard.”

At dark midnight twelve doves appeared, struck wing against wing, and became maidens.

“Well, Bulat the hero and Ivan Tsarevich, ye killed our brother, Koshchéi Without-Death, ye carried away our sister-in-law, Vassilissa Kirbítyevna; but no good will come to you either. When Ivan Tsarevich comes home, he will give command to bring out his favorite dog, the dog will break away from the keeper and tear the Tsarevich into small pieces; but whoso hears this and tells Ivan what we have said will become stone to the knees.”

In the morning Bulat the hero roused the Tsarevich and Vassilissa Kirbítyevna; they made ready and went their road and way. A second night overtook them; they pitched their tent in the open field. Again Bulat said: “Lie down to sleep, Ivan Tsarevich; I will stand guard.” In the dark midnight twelve doves came flying, they struck wing against wing, and became maidens.

“Well, Bulat and Ivan Tsarevich, ye killed our brother, Koshchéi Without-Death, ye carried away our sister-in-law; but no good will come to you, for when Ivan Tsarevich comes home he will give command to bring out his favorite horse, on which he has ridden since childhood. The horse will tear away from the groom and beat the Tsarevich to death; and whoso hears this and tells him will become stone to the girdle."

Morning came, again they travelled on. A third night overtook them. They pitched their tent and stopped in the open field. Bulat said: "Lie down to sleep, Ivan Tsarevich; I will stand watch." Again at midnight twelve doves came flying, struck wing against wing, and became maidens.

"Well, Bulat and Ivan Tsarevich, ye killed our brother, Koshchéi Without-Death, and carried away our sister-in-law; but no good will come to you. When Ivan Tsarevich comes home he will give command to lead out his favorite cow, on whose milk he has been nourished since childhood. She will tear away from the herder and raise the Tsarevich on her horns. But whoso sees and hears us, and tells him this, will become altogether stone." They finished the sentence, turned into doves, and flew home.

In the morning Ivan Tsarevich and Vassilissa set out on the road. The Tsarevich came home, married Vassilissa Kirbítyevna; and in a day or two he said to her, "I will show thee my favorite dog, with which I played all the time when I was little."

Bulat the hero took his sword, ground it sharp, sharp, and stood at the porch. They were bringing the dog. It tore away from the keeper and ran straight to the porch; but Bulat drew his sword and cut the dog in two. Ivan Tsarevich was angry, but for Bulat's former service he was silent.

The next day he ordered them to bring out his favorite horse. The horse broke his halter, tore away from the groom, and galloped straight at Ivan Tsarevich. Bulat the hero cut off the horse's head.

Ivan Tsarevich was still more in anger, and gave command to seize Bulat and hang him; but Vassilissa Kirbítyevna interceded. "Had it not been for him," said she, "thou wouldst never have won me."

On the third day the Tsarevich gave command to lead out his favorite cow. She tore away from the herder and ran straight at the Tsarevich. Bulat cut off her head too.

Now Ivan Tsarevich was so enraged that he would listen to no one, gave orders to call the headsman to put Bulat to death on the spot.

“Oh, Ivan Tsarevich, if ‘tis thy wish to put me to death by the executioner, better let me die of myself; only let me speak three speeches.”

Bulat told about the first night, how twelve doves flew to them in the open field, and what they said. That moment he was stone to the knees; he told of the second night, and was stone to the girdle. Now Ivan Tsarevich begged him not to speak to the end. Bulat answered: “‘Tis all the same now, I am stone to the girdle; it is not worth while to live.” He told of the third night, and was all stone.

Ivan Tsarevich put him in a chamber apart, went there each day with Vassilissa, and wept bitterly.

Years passed on. Once Ivan Tsarevich was weeping over the stone hero Bulat, and heard a voice coming out of the stone: “Why dost thou weep? It is hard for me even as I am.”

“Why should I not weep? How can I help it? Thou knowest I destroyed thee.”

“If thou wishest, thou canst save me. Thou hast two children, — a son and a daughter. Kill them, pour their blood into a vessel, and rub this stone with the blood.”

Ivan Tsarevich told this to Vassilissa Kirbítyevna. They grieved and mourned; decided to kill their children. They killed them, gathered the blood, and rubbed the stone.

When Bulat the hero came to life he asked the Tsarevich and his wife, “Were ye grieved for the children?”

“We were grieved, Bulat.”

“Well, let us go to their room.”

They went, and behold, the children were alive! The father and mother were delighted, and in their delight gave a feast to all.

52

GO TO THE VERGE OF DESTRUCTION AND BRING BACK SHMAT-RAZUM

In a certain kingdom there lived a wifeless, unmarried king, who had a whole company of sharpshooters. They went to the forests, shot birds of passage, and furnished the king's table with game. Among these sharpshooters was one named Fedot, who hit the mark and almost never missed; for this reason the king loved him beyond all his comrades.

Once while shooting in the early morning, just at dawn, Fedot went into a dark, dense forest, and saw a blue dove sitting on a tree. He aimed, fired, struck her wing, and she fell to the damp earth. The sharpshooter picked her up, was going to twist her neck and put her in his bag, when the blue dove spoke: "Oh, brave youth, do not tear off my stormy little head, do not send me out of the white world! Better take me alive, carry me home, put me on the window, and watch. As soon as sleep comes upon me strike me that moment with the back of thy right hand, and thou wilt gain great fortune."

Fedot marvelled. "What can it mean?" thought he; "in seeming a bird, but she speaks with a human voice. Never has such a thing happened to me before."

He brought the bird home, placed her on the window, and stood waiting. After a short time the bird put her head under her wing and fell asleep. The sharpshooter struck her lightly with the back of his right hand. The blue dove fell to the floor, and became a soul-maiden so beautiful as not to be imagined nor described, but only told about in a tale. Such another beauty could not be found in the whole world.

Said she to the young man, the king’s sharpshooter: “Thou hast known how to get me; now know how to live with me. Thou wilt be my wedded husband, and I thy God-given wife. I am not a blue dove, but a king’s daughter.”

They agreed. Fedot married her, and they lived together. He is happy with his young wife, but does not forget his service. Every morning at dawn he takes his gun, goes out into the forest, and shoots game, which he carries to the king’s kitchen.

His wife sees that he is wearied from this hunting, and says: “Listen, my dear. I am sorry for thee. Every God-given day thou dost wander through forests and swamps, comest home wet and worn, and profit to us not a whit. What sort of a life is this? But I know something so that thou wilt not be without gain. Get of roubles two hundred, and we will correct the whole business.”

Fedot rushed around to his friends, got a rouble from one, and two from another, till he had just two hundred. “Now,” said his wife, “buy different kinds of silk for this money.”

He bought the silk; she took it, and said: “Be not troubled; pray to God and lie down to sleep: the morning is wiser than the evening.”

He lay down and fell asleep; his wife went out on the porch, opened her magic book, and two unknown youths appeared at once. “What dost thou wish? Command us.”

“Take this silk, and in one single hour make a piece of such wonderful tapestry as has not been seen in the world; let the whole kingdom be embroidered on it, with towns, villages, rivers, and lakes.”

They went to work, and not only in an hour, but in ten minutes they had the tapestry finished, — a wonder for all. They gave it to the sharpshooter’s wife, and vanished in an instant just as if they never had been. In the morning she gave the tapestry to her husband. “Here,” said she, “take this to the merchants’ rows, sell it, but see that thou ask no price of thy own; take what they give.”

Fedot went to the merchants’ rows; a trader saw him, came up, and asked: “Well, my good man, is this article for sale?”

“It is.”

“What’s the price?”

“Thou art a dealer, name the price.”

The merchant thought and thought, but could not fix a price. Now a second, a third, and a fourth came; no one could set a price on the tapestry. At this time the mayor of the palace was passing by and saw the crowd; wishing to know what the merchants were talking about, he jumped out of his carriage, came up to them, and said: “Good morning, merchants, dealers, guests from beyond the sea; what is the question?”

“Here is a piece of tapestry that we cannot value.”

The mayor looked at the tapestry and marvelled himself. “Look here, sharpshooter,” said he, “tell me in truth and sincerity where didst thou get such glorious tapestry?”

“My wife made it.”

“How much must one give for it?”

“I know not myself; my wife told me to set no price on it, but what people would give, that would be ours.”

“Well here are ten thousand for thee.”

Fedot took the money and gave up the tapestry. The mayor was always near the person of the king, ate and drank at his table. When he went to the king’s to dine he took the tapestry. “Would it not please your Majesty to see what a glorious piece of work I have bought to-day?”

The king looked; he saw his whole kingdom as if on the palm of his hand. He opened his mouth in amazement.

"This is indeed work; in all my life I have never seen such cunning art. Well, mayor, say what thou pleasest, but I shall not give this back to thee." Straightway the king took twenty-five thousand out of his pocket, placed the money in the mayor's hand, and hung the tapestry in the palace.

"That's nothing," thought the mayor; "I will order another still better." Straightway he galloped to find the sharpshooter, found his cottage, went in; and the moment he saw Fedot's wife he forgot himself, his errand, knew not why he had come. Before him was such a beauty that he would not take his eyes off her all his life; he would have looked and looked. He gazes on another man's wife, and in his head thought follows thought: "Where has it been seen, where heard of, that a simple soldier possessed such a treasure? Though I serve the king's person and rank as a general I have never beheld such beauty!"

The mayor came to his mind with difficulty, and went home, 'gainst his will. From that hour, from that time, he was not his own. Sleeping or waking, he thought only of the beautiful woman; he could neither eat nor drink, she was ever before his eyes. The king noticed the change, and asked: "What has come upon thee, — some grief?"

"Oh, your Majesty, I have seen the sharpshooter's wife; there is not such a beauty in the whole world! I am thinking of her all the time; I can neither eat nor drink, with no herb can I charm away my sorrow."

The desire came to the king to admire the woman himself. He ordered his carriage and drove to the soldier's quarters. He entered the room and saw unspeakable beauty. No matter who looked on the woman, — an old man, a youth; each was in love, lost his wits, a heart-flame pinched him. "Why," thought the king, "am I wifeless and single? Let me marry this beauty, — that is the thing. Why is she a sharpshooter's wife? It is her fate to be queen."

The king returned to his palace and said to the mayor: "Listen to me! Thou hast known how to show me this unimaginable beauty, now find the way to get rid of her husband; I want to marry her myself. And if thou dost not put him out of the way, blame thyself; for though thou art my faithful servant, thou’lt die on the gallows.”

The mayor went his way sadder than before. How was he to “finish the sharpshooter?” he could not think. As he was going through back lanes and waste places, a Baba-Yaga met him.

“Stop,” said she, “servant of the king! I know all thy thoughts. If thou wilt, I will aid thee in this unavoidable sorrow.”

“Aid me, grandmother, and I’ll pay what thou wishest.”

“The king has ordered thee to put an end to Fedot the sharpshooter. That would be easy enough, for he is simple, were it not for his wife, who is awfully cunning. Well, we’ll give them such a riddle that it will not soon be explained. Go back to the king and say: ‘Beyond the thrice-ninth land, in the thirtieth kingdom, is an island, on that island a deer with golden horns.’ Let the king bring together half a hundred sailors, — the most good-for-nothing fellows, all bitter drunkards, — and order that a rotten old ship which has been out of service for thirty years be fitted for the voyage. Let him send Fedot the sharpshooter on that ship to get the deer with golden horns. In order to go to the island it is necessary to sail neither more nor less than three years, and back from the island three more; six in all. Well, the ship will sail out on the sea, serve about a month, and sink right there; the sharpshooter and the sailors will go to the bottom, every man!”

The mayor listened to these words, thanked the Baba-Yaga for her counsel, rewarded her with gold, and went off on a run to the king. “Your Majesty,” said he, “Fedot can be finished in such and such fashion.”

The king consented, and issued an order at once to the navy to prepare for a voyage an old rotten ship, to provision it for six years, and man it with fifty sailors, the most dissolute and bitter drunkards. Messengers ran to all the dram-shops and drinking-houses, collected such sailors that it was dear and precious to look at them. One had a black eye, another had his nose driven to one side.

As soon as it was reported to the king that the ship was ready, he sent for the sharpshooter and said: “Now, Fedot, thou art a hero of mine, — the first shot in the company. Do me a service. Go beyond the thrice-ninth land to the thirtieth kingdom. In that place is an island, on that island lives the deer with golden horns. Take it alive, and bring it to me.”

Fedot became thoughtful, knew not what to answer.

“Think, think not,” said the king; “but if thou do not the work, I have a sword, and thy head leaves thy shoulders!”

Fedot wheeled round to the left and went forth from the palace, came home in the evening powerfully sad, not wishing to utter one word.

“Why dost thou grieve, my dearest?” asked his wife. “Is there some mishap?”

He told her all.

“This is why thou art grieved. There is reason, indeed; for it is an exploit, not a service. Pray to God and lie down to sleep; the morning is wiser than the evening: everything will be done.”

The sharpshooter lay down and slept. But his wife opened her magic-book, at once two unknown youths appeared before her and asked: “What dost thou wish? What dost thou need?”

“Go beyond the thrice-ninth land to the thirtieth kingdom, to an island; seize there the deer with golden horns, and bring it here.”

“We obey; it will be done before dawn.”

They rushed like a whirlwind to the island, caught the deer with golden horns, and brought it straight to Fedot’s house. An hour before daybreak all was done, and they vanished as if they had never been. The beautiful wife roused her husband at dawn and said: “Look out; the deer with golden horns is walking in the yard. Take it with thee on board the ship, sail forward five days, on the sixth turn back.”

The sharpshooter put the deer in a close, fastened cage, and had it carried on board the ship.

“What’s there?” asked the sailors.

“Oh, supplies and medicine! It’s a long voyage; we shall need many a thing.”

The day for sailing came. A great crowd of people went to see the ship leave the wharf. The king went himself, made Fedot chief over all the sailors, and bade him farewell.

The vessel sailed five days on the sea; the shores had long vanished. Fedot ordered a hundred-and-twenty-gallon cask to be rolled on to the deck, and said to the sailors: “Drink, brothers; spare it not, your souls are your measure!”

They were delighted, rushed to the cask, began to drink, and got so drunk that they rolled down on the deck, and fell fast asleep at the side of the cask. Fedot took the helm, turned the ship around toward the harbor, and sailed home. So that the sailors should not know anything about it, he kept pouring liquor into them from morning till night; when they began to open their eyes after one drunken fit, a new cask was ready. On the eleventh day the ship drew up at the wharf; the flag was hoisted, and guns fired. The king heard the firing, and ran down to the landing. “What does all this mean?” He saw the sharpshooter, fell into a towering passion, and rushed at him furiously. “How hast thou dared to come back before time?”

“But where was I to go, your Majesty? Some fool might have spent ten years in sailing over the seas and got nothing; but I, instead of spending six years, did the work in ten days. Would you be pleased to look at the golden-horned deer?”

Straightway they brought the cage from the ship and let out the golden-horned deer. The king saw that the sharpshooter was right; he could not touch him, he let him go home. The sailors had a holiday for six years; no one could ask them to work during that time, for the voyage was counted as six years, and they had served their time.

Next day the king called the mayor into his presence and threatened him: “What meanest thou; art making sport of me? ‘Tis clear thy head is not dear to thee. Do what thou pleasest, but find means of putting Fedot to a cruel death.”

“Let me think, your Majesty; we may mend matters.” The mayor went his way, betook himself to back lanes and waste places, met the Baba-Yaga.

“Stop, servant of the king! I know thy thoughts: dost wish I will help thee in trouble?”

“Oh, help me, grandmother! Fedot has brought the deer with golden horns.”

“Oh, I have heard that already. It would be as easy to put Fedot out of the way as to take a pinch of snuff, for he is simple; but his wife is terribly cunning. Well, we’ll give them another riddle that they will not solve so quickly. Tell the king to send the sharpshooter to the verge of destruction and bring back Shmat-Razum, — that’s a task he will not accomplish to all eternity; he will either be lost without tidings, or come back empty-handed.”

The mayor rewarded the old witch with gold and hurried to the king, who heard him and summoned Fedot.

“Fedot,” said the king, “thou art a hero, the best shot I have. Thou hast brought me the deer with golden horns, now thou must do me another service; and if thou wilt not do it, I have a sword, and thy head leaves thy shoulders. Thou must go to the verge of destruction and bring back Shmat-Razum.”

Fedot turned to the left, walked out of the palace, went home sad and thoughtful.

“My dear,” asked his wife, “why art thou sad, has some misfortune happened?”

"Ah," said he, "one woe has rolled from my neck and another rolled on! The king sends me to the verge of destruction to bring back Shmat-Razum. For thy beauty I bear all this trouble and care."

"That," said she, "is no small task, — nine years to go there, and nine to come back, eighteen in all. Will good come of it? God knows. But pray to the Lord and lie down to sleep; the morning is wiser than the evening. To-morrow thou'lt know all."

After Fedot had lain down, his wife opened her magic book and asked the two unknown youths if they knew how to go to the verge of destruction and bring back Shmat-Razum. They answered: "We know not." In the morning she roused her husband and said, "Go to the king and ask for the road golden treasure, — thou hast eighteen years to wander; when thou hast the money come home for the parting."

Fedot got the money from the king and returned to take farewell of his wife. She gave him a towel and a ball, and said: "When thou goest out of the town throw the ball down before thee, and wherever it rolls do thou follow. Here is a towel of my own work; no matter where thou art, wipe thy face with it after washing."

Fedot took farewell of his wife and comrades, bowed down on all four sides, and went beyond the barrier. He threw down the ball before him; it rolled, rolled on, and he followed after.

About a month had passed, when the king summoned the mayor and said: "The sharpshooter has gone to wander over the white world for eighteen years; it is evident that he will not come back alive. Eighteen years, as thou knowest, are not two weeks; many a thing may happen on the road. He has much money, and robbers will fall upon him perhaps, strip him, and give him to a savage death. I think we can begin at his wife now. Take my carriage, drive to the soldier's quarters, and bring her to the palace."

The mayor drove to Fedot's house, entered, saluted the sharpshooter's wife, and said: "Hail, witty woman, the king has ordered us to present thee at the palace."

She went. The king received her with gladness, led her to a golden chamber, and spoke these words: "Dost thou wish to be queen? I will take thee in marriage."

"Where has it ever been seen or heard of," asked she, "that a wife was taken from her living husband? Though he is a simple soldier he is my lawful husband."

"If thou wilt not yield of thy free will, I will take thee by force."

The beautiful woman laughed, struck the floor, became a blue dove, and flew out through the window.

Fedot journeyed over many lands and kingdoms, the ball rolling ahead of him all the time. When he came to a river the ball became a bridge; whenever he wanted rest it became a soft couch. Whether it is long or short, a story is soon told, but a deed is not soon done; the sharpshooter arrived at a splendid palace, the ball rolled to the gate and disappeared. Fedot went straight up the stairs into a rich chamber, where he was met by three maidens of unspeakable loveliness.

"Whence comest, good man, and for what?"

"Oh, beautiful maidens, ye have not let me rest after the long journey, but have begun to inquire. First ye should give me to eat and drink, put me to rest, and then make inquiry."

Straightway they set the table. When he had eaten and drunk and rested, they brought him water, a basin, and an embroidered towel. He took not the towel, but said, "I have one of my own." When they saw it they asked: "Good man, where didst thou get that towel?"

"My wife gave it me."

"Then thy wife is our own sister."

They called their aged mother. The moment she saw the towel she recognized it. “Why, this is my daughter’s work.” She asked the guest all sorts of questions. He told her how he had married her daughter, and how the king had sent him to the verge of destruction to bring back Shmat-Razum.

“Oh, my dear son-in-law, of that wonder even I have not heard! Wait a moment; maybe my servants have.”

She went out on the balcony and called in a loud voice. Presently all kinds of beasts ran up, and all kinds of birds flew to her. “Hail to you, beasts of the wilderness, birds of the air! Ye beasts run through all places, ye birds fly everywhere; have ye never heard how to go to the verge of destruction, where Shmat-Razum lives?”

All the beasts and birds answered in one voice: “No; we have never heard!”

Then the old woman sent them all to their homes in hidden places, forests, and thickets; went to her magic book, opened it, and that instant two giants appeared. “What is thy pleasure; what dost thou wish?”

“This, my faithful servants, — bear my son-in-law and me to the ocean sea wide, and stop just in the middle above the very abyss.”

Immediately they seized the sharpshooter and the old woman and bore them on like a stormy whirlwind till they stopped just in the middle above the abyss. They stood up themselves like pillars, holding the old woman and the sharpshooter in their arms. The old woman cried out with a loud voice, and all the fishes and living things in the sea swam to her in such multitudes that the blue sea could not be seen for them: “Hail, fish and worms of the sea! Ye swim in all places, ye pass by all islands; have ye not heard how to go to the verge of destruction, where lives Shmat-Razum?”

All worms and fishes answered in one voice, “No; we’ve not heard!”

All at once an old limping frog, who had been thirty years out of service, pushed her way to the front and said, “Kwa-kwa! I know where to find such a wonder!”

“Well, then, my dear, thou art the person I need,” said the old woman. She took the frog, and commanded the giants to bear them home. They were at the palace in a flash. The old woman asked the frog how her son was to go.

“Oh!” said the frog, “that place is at the rim of the world, — far, far away. I would conduct him myself, but I am very old; I can barely move my legs, — I couldn’t jump there in fifty years.”

The old woman took a bowl with some fresh milk, put the frog in it, gave the bowl to Fedot, and said: “Carry this in thy hand; she will show thee the way.”

The sharpshooter took farewell of the old woman and her daughters, and went on his journey, the frog showing him the way. Whether it was near or distant, long or short, he came at last to a flaming river, beyond which was a lofty mountain with a door in the side.

“Kwa-kwa!” said the frog. “Put me down out of the bowl; we must cross the river.”

He put her on the ground.

“Now, good youth, sit thou on my back; do not spare me.”

He sat on her back and pressed her to the ground; she began to swell, and swelled until she was as big as a stack of hay. The sharpshooter’s one care was to keep from falling. “If I fall,” thought he, “I shall be crushed.” The frog cleared the flaming river at a jump, became small as before, and said: “Now, good youth, I will wait here; but do thou enter that door in the mountain. Thou wilt find a cave, — hide thyself well. After a time two old men will come in: listen to what they say, and watch what they do; when they are gone, act as they did.”

The sharpshooter entered the door of the mountain; it was so dark in the cave that if a man strained his eyes out he could not see a thing. Fedot felt around and found a cupboard, crept in. After a while two old men entered and said, “Shmat-Razum, feed us!”

That moment, however it happened, the lamps were lighted, the dishes and plates rattled, and various kinds of food and wine appeared on the table. The old men ate and drank, and then ordered Shmat-Razum to remove everything. Everything disappeared in a flash; neither table, nor food, nor wine, nor lights remained. The two old men went out.

The sharpshooter crawled from the cupboard and cried, “Hei, Shmat-Razum!”

“What dost thou wish?”

“Feed me!”

Again the lights, the table, the food and drink appeared as before. Fedot sat at the table and said: “Hei, Shmat-Razum, sit down brother, with me, we’ll eat and drink together; it is irksome for me alone.”

The voice of the unseen answered: “Oh, kind man! whence has God brought thee? It is nearly thirty years that I serve these old men in faith and in truth, and all this time they have never once seated me with themselves.”

The sharpshooter looked and wondered. He saw no one, but the food was swept from the plates as if with a broom; the bottles raised themselves and poured the wine into glasses, — behold, in a moment bottles and glasses are empty!

“Shmat-Razum, dost thou wish to serve me?” asked the sharpshooter. “I’ll give thee a pleasant life.”

“Why not? I am sick of being here; and thou, I see, art a kind man.”

“All right; pick up everything and come along.” The sharpshooter went out of the cave, looked around, saw no one, and asked: “Art thou here, Shmat-Razum?”

“Here; I’ll not leave thee, never fear.”

“Very well,” said Fedot, and sat on the frog, — she swelled, jumped over the river, and became small. He put her in the bowl, and went on the homeward road, came to his mother-in-law, and made his new servant entertain the old woman and her daughters. Shmat-Razum gave them such a feast that the old woman came very near dancing from joy. She ordered that three bowls of milk be given to the frog every day in reward for her faithfulness. The sharpshooter bade good-by to his friends and set out for home. He travelled and journeyed till he was almost wearied to death. “Oh, Shmat-Razum,” said he, “if thou couldst only know how tired I am, I am just losing my legs.”

“Why not tell me long ago?” asked the other; “I should have brought thee home quickly.” With that he seized Fedot and bore him like a rushing whirlwind, so swiftly that his cap fell off.

“Hei, Shmat-Razum, wait a minute; my cap is gone.”

“Late, my master; thy cap is now three thousand miles behind.”

Towns and villages, rivers and forests, just flashed before the eye; as Fedot was flying over a deep sea Shmat-Razum said: “If thou wishest, I will make a summer-house in the midst of the sea; thou canst rest, and acquire great fortune.”

“Well, make it.”

They dropped down toward the sea, and behold, where a moment before the waves were rolling, an island rose up, and in the centre a golden pleasure-house.

“Now, my master, sit down in this house, rest, and look at the sea. Presently three merchant-ships will sail by and cast anchor. Invite the merchants, entertain them well, and exchange me for three wonderful things which they have. I’ll come to thee again in my own time.”

Fedot looked; three merchant-ships were sailing from the west. The merchants saw the island and wondered.

“What does this mean?” asked they. “How many times have we sailed by here and seen nothing but water, and now an island and a pleasure-house! Let us stand up to the shore, brothers, let us look and admire.”

They stopped the ships, cast anchor; the three merchants stepped into a light boat, went to the island, landed, and saluted Fedot, —

“Hail, worthy man!”

“Good health to you, foreign merchants! We crave kindness. Come in, rejoice, have a good time, and rest yourselves. This pleasure-house was made on purpose for passing guests.” They went in and sat down.

“Hei, Shmat-Razum, meat and drink!” A table appeared; on the table wines and meats, whatever the soul could desire was at hand in a moment. The merchants opened their mouths in amazement.

“Let us exchange,” said they. “Give us thy servant, and take any one of our wonders.”

“What wonders have ye?”

“Look, and thou wilt see.”

One merchant took a small box from his pocket and opened it: that minute a glorious garden was spread over the whole island with flowers and paths; he closed the box, and the garden was gone. The second merchant took an axe from under his skirts and began to hit, hit strike, a ship came out: hit strike — another ship. He struck a hundred times — a hundred ships. They moved around the island under full canvas, with sailors and cannon. The sailors run and fire guns. The commanders come to the merchant for orders. He amused himself, hid his axe: the ships vanished from the eye, were as if they had never been. The third merchant took a horn, blew into it at one end: that minute an army appeared, cavalry and infantry, with muskets and cannons and flags; from every regiment come reports to the merchant, and he gives them orders. The army marches, with music sounding and banners waving. The merchant took his horn, blew in at the other end: there is nothing. Where has all the power gone to?

“Your wonders are strange,” said the sharpshooter; “but these are all playthings for kings, and I am a simple soldier. If ye will exchange, however, I agree to give you my unseen servant for all three of your wonders."

"Is not that rather too much?"

"Well, ye know your own business, I suppose; but I will not exchange on other conditions."

The merchants thought to themselves, "What good are these ships and soldiers and garden to us? Let us exchange, — at least we shall have enough to eat and drink all our lives without trouble."

They gave the sharpshooter their wonders, and asked: "Shmat-Razum, wilt thou come with us?"

"Why not? It's all the same to me where I live."

The merchants returned to their ships and said: "Now, Shmat-Razum, fly about; give us to eat and drink." They invited all the men, and had such a feast that every one got drunk and slept a sound sleep.

The sharpshooter was sitting in the golden summer-house; he fell to thinking, and said: "I am sorry; where art thou now, trusty servant?"

"Here, my master."

Fedot rejoiced. "Isn't it time for us to go home?" The moment he spoke he was borne through the air as if by a whirlwind.

The merchants woke up, and wishing to drink off the effects of their carousal, cried out: "Give us to drink, Shmat-Razum." No one answered, nothing was brought; no matter how much they screamed and commanded, no result. "Well, gentlemen, this scoundrel has swindled us. Now Satan himself could not find him; the island has vanished, the pleasure-house is gone." The merchants grieved and regretted; then hoisted their sails and went to where they had business.

The sharpshooter soon arrived at his own kingdom, came down by the sea-shore. "Shmat-Razum, canst thou build me a palace here?"

"Why not? — it will be ready directly."

The palace appeared so splendid that it could not be described, — twice as good as the king’s. Now the box was opened, and all around the palace was a glorious garden, with rare trees and flowers.

The sharpshooter sat by the window admiring the garden when all at once a blue dove flew in through the open window, struck the floor, and became his young wife. They embraced and kissed each other; then made inquiries and gave answer. Said his wife to Fedot: “Since the time thou didst leave me I have lived a lone dove in the forests and thickets.”

Next morning the king went out on the balcony, and saw by the shore of the blue sea a new palace, and a green garden around it. “What insolent fellow has built on my land without leave?” Couriers hastened, discovered, reported, that the palace was built by Fedot, who was living there then, and with him his wife.

The king’s anger increased. He gave orders to collect troops and go to the sea-shore, destroy the garden, break the palace into small pieces, and give the sharpshooter and his wife to a cruel death.

Fedot saw the strong army approaching. He took his axe quickly, and struck; a ship came forth; he struck a hundred times, — a hundred ships were ready; he blew his horn once, infantry was marching; he blew it a second time, cavalry was galloping. The commanders rushed to him from the ships, from the army, for orders. He ordered them to give battle. The music sounded at once, the drums rattled, the regiments advanced. The hundred ships open a cannonade on the king’s capital. The army moves on at the sound of music and beat of drum. The infantry rout the king’s soldiers, the cavalry take them prisoners. The king sees that his army is fleeing, hurries forward himself to stop it. But what could he do? Half an hour had not passed before he was killed.

When the battle was over, the people came together and begged the sharpshooter to take the government of the kingdom into his hands. He agreed, became king, and his wife queen.

53

MARYA MOREVNA

In a certain kingdom in a certain land lived Ivan Tsarevich. He had three sisters. The first was Marya Tsarevna; the second, Olga Tsarevna; the third, Anna Tsarevna. Their father and mother were dead. When dying they said to their son: “Whoever woos first a sister of thine, give her to him; keep not thy sisters with thee long.”

The Tsarevich buried his parents, and from sorrow went with his sisters to walk in the green garden. Suddenly a black cloud rose in the sky; a fearful storm was coming. “Let us go home, sisters,” said Ivan Tsarevich. They had barely entered the castle when thunder roared, the ceiling opened, and a bright falcon flew into the chamber. The falcon struck the floor, became a gallant youth, and said: “Hail, Ivan Tsarevich! Ere now I came as a guest, but now I’m a suitor. I wish to sue for thy sister, Marya Tsarevna.”

“If thou art pleasing to my sister, I shall not restrain her. Let her go, with God.”

Marya Tsarevna agreed, the Falcon married her, and bore her away to his own kingdom.

Days followed days, hours chased hours, a whole year was as if it had not been. Ivan Tsarevich went with his two sisters to walk in the green garden. Again a cloud rose with whirlwind, with lightning. “Let us go home, my sisters,” said the Tsarevich. They had barely entered the castle when a thunderclap came, the roof fell apart, the ceiling opened, and in flew an eagle. The eagle struck the floor and became a gallant youth. “Hail, Ivan Tsarevich! Ere now I came as a guest, but now I’m a suitor.” And he asked for Olga Tsarevna in marriage.

Ivan Tsarevich answered: “If thou art pleasing to Olga Tsarevna, then let her marry thee; I take not her will from her.” Olga Tsarevna consented, and accepted the Eagle in marriage. The Eagle caught her up and bore her to his own kingdom.

Another year passed. Ivan Tsarevich said to his youngest sister: “Let us go to walk in the green garden.” They walked a little; again a cloud rose with whirlwind, with lightning. “Come home, my sister, come!” They returned to the castle, but had not sat down when a thunderclap came, the ceiling opened, and in flew a raven. The raven struck the floor and became a gallant youth. The others were beautiful in person, but he was still better.

“Well, Ivan Tsarevich! Ere now I came as a guest, but now I’m a wooer. Give me Anna Tsarevna.”

“I take not her will from my sister. If thou hast pleased her, take her in marriage.”

Anna Tsarevna married the Raven, and he bore her away to his own kingdom.

Ivan Tsarevich remained alone. He lived a whole year without sisters, grew wearied. “I will go,” said he, “to seek out my sisters.”

He made ready for the road, travelled and travelled, saw an army, a power lying slain on the field. Said Ivan Tsarevich: “If there is a living man here, let him speak. Who killed this great army?”

A living man answered: “Marya Morevna, the fair Korolyevna, killed all this great army.”

Ivan Tsarevich went farther; he came to white tents. Marya Morevna, the fair Korolyevna, came forth to meet him. “Hail, Tsarevich! Where does God bear thee? Of thy own will, or against thy will?”

Ivan Tsarevich gave answer: “Good heroes travel not against their will.”

“Well, if thy work be not hasty be a guest in my tents.”

Ivan Tsarevich was glad; he spent two nights in the tents, pleased Marya Morevna, and married her. Marya Morevna, the fair Korolyevna, took him with her to her own kingdom. They lived together a time, and then the Korolyevna had a thought to make war; she left to her husband her household, and said: “Go everywhere, see after all things, but look not in this closet.”

Ivan Tsarevich could not endure this, but when Marya Morevna had gone he rushed to the closet, opened the door, looked, and there Koshchéi Without-Death was hanging inside, fastened with twelve chains. Koshchéi implored the Tsarevich: “Take pity on me, give me to drink. Twelve years do I sit here in torment; I have not eaten nor drunk; my throat is parched.”

The Tsarevich gave him a whole three-gallon tub of water. He drank it, and begged, “With one tub my thirst cannot be quenched.” The Tsarevich gave him another tub. Koshchéi drank that, and begged for a third; and when he had drunk the third tub he regained his former strength, shook his chains, and in one moment broke all twelve.

“God save thee, Ivan Tsarevich!” said Koshchéi Without-Death; “now thou wilt never see Marya Morevna any more than thy own ears;” and he went out a terrific whirlwind, flew through the window, overtook on the road Marya Morevna, the fair Korolyevna, seized her, and bore her away.

But Ivan Tsarevich cried bitterly, bitterly, made ready, and went on his road, on his way. “Whatever may happen, I will find Marya Morevna.” He travelled one day, he travelled a second; at the dawn of the third day he saw a wonderful palace, near the palace an oak, on the oak a bright falcon. The falcon flew down from the tree, struck the earth, turned into a gallant youth, and shouted: “Ah! my dear brother-in-law, how does God favor thee?”

Marya Tsarevna ran out, met Ivan Tsarevich joyously, asked about his health, his life, and told about her own life and household.

The Tsarevich stayed three days with them, and said: “I cannot stay longer, I am in search of my wife, Marya Morevna, the fair Korolyevna.”

“It is hard to find her,” said the Falcon. “In any case leave thy silver spoon here; we will look at it and think of thee.”

Ivan Tsarevich left his silver spoon and went his way. He travelled a day, he travelled a second; at the dawn of the third he saw a castle better than the first, at the side of the castle an oak, on the oak sits an eagle. The eagle flew from the tree, struck the ground, turned into a gallant youth, and shouted: “Rise up, Olga Tsarevna; our dear brother is coming.” Olga Tsarevna ran out that moment to meet him; she began to kiss, to embrace her brother, to ask about his health, and to tell of her own life and household.

Ivan Tsarevich remained three days with them, and then said: “I have no time to visit longer; I am going to seek my wife, Marya Morevna, the fair Korolyevna.”

Said the Eagle: “It is hard for thee to find her. Leave with us thy silver fork; we will look at it and remember thee.”

He left the fork and went his way. He travelled a day, he travelled a second; and on the dawn of the third day he saw a castle better than the other two. At the side of the castle was an oak, and on the oak a raven was perched. The raven flew down, struck the earth, turned into a gallant youth, and cried: “Anna Tsarevna, hurry out; our brother is coming.”

Anna Tsarevna ran out, met him joyously, began to kiss and embrace her brother, to ask about his health, and to tell about her own life and household.

Ivan Tsarevich stayed with them three short days, and said: “Farewell, I am going to look for my wife, Marya Morevna, the fair Korolyevna.”

The Raven said: “It is hard for thee to find her; but leave thy gold ring with us, we will look at it and remember thee. If the ring is bright, it means that thou art alive and well; if dim, then we shall know that evil has come on thee."

Ivan Tsarevich left his gold ring and went his way. He travelled a day, he travelled a second; and on the third he came to Marya Morevna. She saw her dear one, rushed on his neck, covered herself with tears, and said: "Ivan Tsarevich, why didst thou not obey me; why didst thou look in the closet and let out Koshchéi Without-Death?"

"Forgive me, Marya Morevna; remember not the past. Better go with me while Koshchéi is not here; mayhap he will not overtake us."

They made ready and went. Koshchéi was out hunting; toward evening he was coming home, his good steed stumbled under him. "Why stumble, hungry crowbait; or dost feel some misfortune?"

The horse answered: "Ivan Tsarevich came and took Marya Morevna away."

"Can we overtake them?"

"Thou mightest sow wheat, wait till it should ripen, reap it, thresh it, make flour, bake five ovens of bread, eat that bread, go in pursuit, and overtake them."

Koshchéi galloped on, overtook Ivan Tsarevich. "Well," said he, "I forgive thee the first time for thy kindness, because thou didst give me water to drink; and a second time I'll forgive thee: but for the third have a care; I will hew thee to pieces."

He took Marya Morevna and led her away. Ivan Tsarevich sat on a stone and wept; he cried and cried, went back for Marya Morevna. Koshchéi Without-Death did not happen to be at home.

"Let us go, Marya Morevna."

"Ah, Ivan Tsarevich, he will overtake us!"

"Let him overtake us; anyhow, we shall pass a couple of hours together." They made ready and started away.

Koshchéi Without-Death was coming home; his good steed stumbled under him. “Why dost thou stumble, hungry crowbait; or feelest thou evil?”

“Ivan Tsarevich came and carried Marya Morevna away.”

“Can they be overtaken?”

“Barley might be sown, waited for till ripe, harvested, threshed, and beer made of it; we might drink the beer, sleep after drinking, then pursue and catch them.”

Koshchéi galloped on, rode up, overtook Ivan Tsarevich. “But I have said that thou canst no more see Marya Morevna than look at thy own ears.” He took her away and led her home.

Ivan Tsarevich remained alone; he cried and cried, and went back for Marya Morevna. That time Koshchéi was not at home.

“Let us go, Marya Morevna.”

“Ah! Ivan Tsarevich, he will come up with us, will hew thee to pieces.”

“Let him hew me; I cannot live without thee.” They made ready and started.

Koshchéi Without-Death was coming home; his good steed stumbled under him. “Why dost thou stumble, hungry crowbait; or feelest thou evil?”

“Ivan Tsarevich came, and took Marya Morevna away.”

Koshchéi galloped on, caught up with Ivan Tsarevich, hewed him into small pieces, put him in a pitched barrel, took that barrel, strengthened it with iron hoops, and cast it into the blue sea. Marya Morevna he took home.

Now the silver grew black at the houses of Ivan Tsarevich’s brothers-in-law. “Oh,” said they, “it is clear that some evil has happened!”

The Eagle rushed off to the blue sea, caught the barrel, and drew it to shore; the Falcon flew for the living water, and the Raven for the dead water. All flew together to the same place, broke the barrel, took out the pieces of Ivan Tsarevich, washed them, put them together in proper order. The Raven sprinkled them with dead water, the body grew together and united; the Falcon sprinkled the body with living water. Ivan Tsarevich trembled, rose up, and said, “Oh, how long I have been sleeping!”

“Thou wouldst have slept still longer without us,” answered the brothers-in-law. “Come now to our houses.”

“No, brothers, I shall go to seek Marya Morevna.” He came to her and said, “Discover from Koshchéi Without-Death where he found such a steed.”

Behold, Marya Morevna seized a favorable moment, inquired of Koshchéi. Koshchéi said: “Beyond the thrice-ninth land, in the thirtieth kingdom, beyond the fiery river, lives Baba-Yaga; and she has a mare on which she flies round the world each day; she has many other glorious mares. I was her herdsman for three days. I let not one mare stray from her, and for that service Baba-Yaga gave me a colt.”

“But how didst thou cross the river of fire?”

“I have a kerchief of such sort that when I wave it on the right side three times, a bridge is made, lofty and high; the fire cannot reach it.”

Marya Morevna listened, told all to Ivan Tsarevich, carried away the kerchief, and gave it to him. Ivan Tsarevich crossed the fiery river, and went to Baba-Yaga. Long did he go without eating and drinking; a bird from beyond the sea, with her little children, happened in his way. “I’ll eat one little chick,” said Ivan Tsarevich.

“Eat it not, Ivan Tsarevich,” begged the bird from beyond the sea; “in time I will serve thee.”

He went farther, saw in the forest a swarm of bees. “I’ll take some honey,” said he.

The queen-bee called out, “Touch not my honey, Ivan Tsarevich; in time I will serve thee.”

He left the honey and went on. Then a lioness and her whelp met him. “At least I’ll eat this little lion; I feel such hunger that I am sick.”

“Touch him not, Ivan Tsarevich; in time I will serve thee.”

“Well, let it be as thou sayest.”

He went on hungry; he travelled and travelled. There is the house of Baba-Yaga. Around the house stand twelve stakes; on eleven are heads of men, — only one stake is unoccupied.

“Hail to thee, grandmother!”

“Hail to thee, Ivan Tsarevich! Hast come of thy own good will, or from need?”

“I have come to earn of thee an heroic steed.”

“Very well, Tsarevich; no need to serve a year with me, but three days in all. If thou wilt herd my mares, I’ll give thee an heroic steed; but if not, be not angry, thy head will be on the last stake.”

Ivan Tsarevich consented. Baba-Yaga gave him food with drink, and ordered him to begin the work. As soon as he had driven the mares a-field, they raised their tails and all ran apart through the meadows. The Tsarevich could not cast his eyes round before they had vanished. Then he began to weep and grow sad; he sat on a stone and fell asleep. The sun was going down when the bird from beyond the sea flew up and roused him.

“Rise, Ivan Tsarevich; the mares are now home.”

The Tsarevich stood up, came home, but Baba-Yaga was screaming and crying at her mares. “Why did ye come home?”

“How could we help it, when birds from the whole world flew together and almost picked our eyes out?”

“Well, to-morrow don’t run in the meadows, but scatter through the sleeping forest.”

Ivan Tsarevich slept the night; in the morning Baba-Yaga said: “See to it, Tsarevich. If thou dost not herd the mares, if thou losest even one of them, thy stormy head will be on the stake.”

He drove the mares a-field. That moment they raised their tails and ran through the sleeping forest. Again the Tsarevich sat down on a stone, cried and cried, then fell asleep. The sun had gone behind the forest when the lioness ran up. “Rise, Ivan Tsarevich; the mares are driven in.”

Ivan Tsarevich stood up and went home. Baba-Yaga was screaming and crying more than before at her mares. “Why did ye come home?”

“How could we help coming? Savage beasts ran at us from the whole world, came near tearing us to pieces.”

“Well, run to-morrow into the blue sea.”

Ivan Tsarevich slept that night; next morning Baba-Yaga sent him to herd the mares. “If thou dost not guard them, thy stormy head will be on the stake.”

He drove the mares to the field; that moment they raised their tails and vanished from the eye, ran into the blue sea, and stood to their necks in the water.

Ivan Tsarevich sat on a stone, cried, and fell asleep. The sun had gone beyond the forest when a bee flew up and said: “Ivan Tsarevich, the mares are driven in. But when thou art home, do not show thyself before the eyes of Baba-Yaga; go to the stable and hide behind the manger. There is a mangy little colt lying on the dung-heap; steal him, and at dark midnight leave the place.”

Ivan Tsarevich rose up, made his way to the stable, and lay down behind the manger. Baba-Yaga screamed and cried at her mares: “Why did ye come home?”

“How could we help coming home when bees, seen and unseen, flew from the whole world and began to sting us on every side till the blood came!”

Baba-Yaga went to sleep, and just at midnight Ivan Tsarevich stole from her the mangy colt, saddled him, sat on his back, and galloped to the fiery river; when he came to the river he shook the kerchief three times on the right side, and suddenly, from wherever it came, a high, splendid bridge was hanging over the river. The Tsarevich crossed on the bridge, waved the kerchief on the left side only twice, and there remained above the river a bridge very, very slender.

In the morning Baba-Yaga woke up; the mangy colt is not to be seen with sight. Baba-Yaga, on an iron mortar, rushed off in pursuit with all her breath, urging forward with a pestle, and removing her trail with a broom. She galloped to the fiery river, looked and thought: “The bridge is good.” She rode out on it, and the moment she reached the middle the bridge broke. Baba-Yaga went headlong into the river; there a savage death came to her.

Ivan Tsarevich fed his colt in the green meadows, and it became a marvellous steed. The Tsarevich came to Marya Morevna; she ran out to him, threw herself on his neck.

“How has God brought thee to life?”

“In this way and that way,” said he; “come with me.”

“I am afraid, Ivan Tsarevich. If Koshchéi overtakes us again, thou wilt be cut to pieces.”

“No, he will not overtake us. I have a glorious, heroic steed now; he goes like a bird.”

They sat on the horse and rode off. Koshchéi Without-Death was coming home; under him stumbled his steed.

“Why stumble, hungry crowbait; or feelest thou evil?”

“Ivan Tsarevich came, took away Marya Morevna.”

“Can we overtake him?”

“God knows! Now Ivan Tsarevich has an heroic steed better than I.”

“I cannot stand this,” said Koshchéi the Deathless, “I’ll give chase.”

Whether it was long or short, he caught up with Ivan Tsarevich, sprang to the ground, and wanted to cut him with his sharp sword. That moment Ivan’s horse struck, with all the sweep of his hoof, Koshchéi Without-Death, and smashed his skull. The Tsarevich finished him with his club.

Then he raised a pile of wood, made a fire, burned Koshchéi Without-Death on the fire, and scattered the ashes to the wind.

Marya Morevna mounted Koshchéi’s horse, and Ivan Tsarevich his own. They went to visit the Raven, then the Eagle, and last the Falcon; wherever they came they were met with joy.

“Oh, Ivan Tsarevich, we did not think to see thee! It was not for nothing thou didst struggle; another such beauty as Marya Morevna could not be found if sought for in the whole world.”

They visited and feasted, and set out for their own kingdom; arrived there, gained wealth, and drank mead.

54

YELENA THE WISE

In a certain kingdom, in a certain land, the Tsar had a golden company; in this company served a soldier, Ivan by name, a hero in appearance. The Tsar took him into favor and began to reward him with rank; in a short time he made him colonel. The superior officers envied him. “Why have we served for our rank as we have thirty years, and he has got every rank all at once? We must get rid of him, or he will go ahead of us.”

The generals and counselling boyars arranged a trip on the sea, prepared the ship, invited Ivan the colonel to go with them. They sailed out into the open sea, and went around till late in the evening. Ivan grew tired, lay on a bed, and fell into a deep sleep. That was all the boyars and generals were waiting for. They seized him, put him in a boat, pushed him out to sea, and returned home themselves.

Soon dark clouds came up and a storm began to roar; the waves rose and carried the boat it is unknown whither; they carried it far, far away, and cast it out on an island. Here Ivan woke up, looked, saw a desert land, no trace of the ship, and the sea ran terribly high.

“It is clear,” thought he, “that the ship has been wrecked by the storm, and all my comrades are drowned. Glory be to God that I am safe myself!”

He went to look at the island, walked and walked. Nowhere did he see a springing beast, a flying bird, or a dwelling of man. Whether it was long or short, Ivan wandered to an underground passage; through this he went down a deep precipice, and came to the underground kingdom, where the six-headed serpent lived and reigned. He saw a white-walled castle, entered. The first chamber was empty, in the second there was no one, in the third the six-headed serpent was sleeping a hero’s sleep. At his side stood a table, on the table an enormous book was lying.

Ivan opened the book and read to the page where it was written that a Tsar had never a son, but always a Tsaritsa had sons. He took and scratched out these words with a knife, and in place of them wrote that a Tsaritsa had never a son, but always a Tsar had sons.

In an hour’s time the serpent turned to his other side, woke up, opened his eyes, saw Ivan, and asked: “From what place hast thou come? I live so many years in the world and I have not seen one man in my kingdom.”

“How from what place? But thou knowest I am thy son.”

“How can that be?” asked the serpent. “I will look in the book and see if a Tsar can have a son.”

He opened the book, read in it what Ivan had written, and was convinced. “Thou art right, my son.”

He took Ivan by the hand, led him through all his treasure-chambers, showed him his countless wealth, and they began to live and live on together.

Some time passed, and the six-headed serpent said: “My dear son, here are the keys of all the chambers; go wherever thy desire may lead thee, but do not dare to look into that chamber which is fastened with two locks, one of gold, the other of silver. I will fly around the world, will look at people, and amuse myself.”

He gave the keys, and flew away out of the underground kingdom to wander through the white world. Ivan Tsarevich remained all alone. He lived a month, a second and a third month, and the year was coming to an end, when it became dreary for him, and he thought to examine the chambers; he walked and walked till he came straight in front of the forbidden chamber. The good youth could not restrain himself; he took out the keys, opened both locks, the gold and the silver, opened the oaken door.

In that chamber were sitting two maidens riveted in chains: one was Tsarevna Yelena the Wise, and the other her maid. The Tsarevna had golden wings, and her maid silver wings. Said Yelena the Wise: “Hail, good hero! Do us a service not great: give us each of a glass of spring water to drink.”

Ivan, looking at her unspeakable beauty, forgot all about the serpent, pitied the poor prisoners, poured out two glasses of spring water, and gave them to the beautiful women. They drank, shook themselves; the iron rings were broken, and the heavy chains fell. The beautiful women clapped their wings and flew through the open window; then only did Ivan come to his mind. He shut the empty chamber, came out on the porch, sat on the step, hung his stormy head below his mighty shoulders, and grew powerfully, powerfully sad. How was he to give answer? Suddenly the wind began to whistle, a mighty storm rose up, the six-headed serpent flew home.

“Hail, my dear son!”

Ivan answered not a word.

“Why art thou silent; or has something happened?”

“Evil, father, — I did not obey thy command. I looked into that chamber where two maidens were sitting riveted in chains, I gave them spring water to drink, they drank, shook themselves, clapped their wings, and flew out through the open window.”

The serpent was terribly enraged; he began to abuse and curse in every fashion. Then he took an iron rod, heated it red hot, and gave Ivan three blows on the back. “It is thy luck,” said he, “that thou art my son; if thou wert not, I should eat thee alive.”

As soon as Ivan’s back had healed he began to beg of the serpent: “Father, let me go out into the world to look for Yelena the Wise.”

“What couldst thou do? I was thirty-three years getting her, and barely, barely had I the skill to catch her.”

“Let me go, father; let me try my fortune.”

“Well, after me if thou pleasest. Here is the carpet that flies of itself: wherever thou wishest, there will it bear thee; only I am sorry for thee, since Yelena the Wise is terribly cunning. If thou catch her she will still overreach and deceive thee.”

Ivan sat on the carpet that flies of itself, flew out of the underground kingdom, and hadn’t time to wink before he found himself in a beautiful garden. He went to a pond, sat under a laburnum-bush, and began to look and admire the gold and silver fish swimming in the clear water. Before five minutes had passed, Yelena the Wise had flown to the pond with her maid. They took off their wings at once, put them near the bush, undressed, and ran into the water to bathe.

Ivan took the wings quietly, came from under the bush, and cried with a loud voice: “But now ye are in my hands!”

The beautiful women sprang out of the pond, put on their clothes, came to the good youth, and begged him to give back their wings. “No,” said Ivan, “I will not give them for anything. Yelena the Wise, thou hast pleased me more than the bright sun; now I will take thee to my father and my mother, I will marry thee, and thou shalt be my wife, and I will be thy husband.”

The Tsarevna’s maid said: “Hear me, good youth: ‘tis thy wish to marry Yelena the Wise, but why detain me. Better give me my wings; I will serve thee in time.”

Ivan thought and thought, and gave her the silver wings. She tied them on quickly, sprang up, and flew far, far away. After that, Ivan made a box, put the golden wings into it, and closed it firmly with a lock. He sat on the self-flying carpet, placed Yelena the Wise at his side, and flew away to his own kingdom. He came to his father, to his mother, brought them his bride, and begged them to love and to favor her. Then there was rejoicing such as no one had seen.

Next day Ivan gave his mother the key of the box. “Take care of it for a time,” said he, “give it to no one; and I will go to the Tsar and invite him to the wedding.”

As soon as he had gone, Yelena the Wise ran in: “Mother, give me the key of the box; I must get clothes to dress for the wedding.” The mother, knowing nothing, gave her the key without fear. Yelena the Wise ran to the box, raised the lid, took her wings, put them on, clapped them once and again; that was all they saw of her.

The bridegroom came home. “Mother, where is my bride? It is time to prepare for the crown.”

“Oh, my dear son, she has flown away!”

Deeply did the good youth sigh; he took farewell of his father and his mother, sat on his self-flying carpet, and flew to the underground kingdom, to the six-headed serpent, who saw him and said: “Well, daring head, did I speak in vain when I said that thou couldst not get Yelena the Wise; and if thou didst get her she would deceive thee?”

“Thou art right, father; but no matter what comes, I will try again, I will go to get her.”

“Ah! thou irrestrainable fellow, knowest thou she has a rule that whoever wants to marry her must hide three times, and if she finds him she will have his head cut off? Many a hero has gone to her, but all to the last man have laid down their stormy heads; and the same is preparing for thee. But here is a flint and steel for thee: when Yelena the Wise makes thee hide, strike the flint with the steel, — strike out a spark, and set fire to the grass of the steppe. At that moment a blue-winged eagle will appear and raise thee above the third range of clouds; if that does not succeed, strike fire again, and let it into the blue sea. A giant pike will swim to land, will take thee and bear thee away to the depth of the sea; and if Yelena the Wise finds thee, then there is no place in which thou canst hide from her.”

Ivan Tsarevich took the flint and steel, thanked the six-headed serpent, and flew off on the carpet. Whether it was long or short, near or far, he flew beyond the thrice-ninth land to the thirtieth kingdom, where lived Yelena the Wise. Her palace was flashing like fire; it was made of pure silver and gold. At her gate, on iron points, were the heads of eleven heroes. Ivan the good youth became thoughtful. “Eleven heads on the points, mine will surely be the twelfth.” He came down in the broad court, went on the lofty porch, and straight to the chamber.

Yelena the Wise met him. “Thou!” said she, “why art thou here?”

“I want to take thee in marriage.”

“Well, all right, try. If thou art able to hide from me, I will marry thee; if not, thou wilt pay with thy head.”

Ivan went out in the open field, took his flint and steel, struck fire, and put it to the steppe grass. From wherever he came, a blue-winged eagle flew to him and said, with the voice of a man, “Good youth, sit on me quickly; hold firmly, or thou wilt fall.”

Ivan sat on the eagle, grasped firmly with his hands. The eagle clapped his wings, and rose high beyond the third range of clouds. He is well hidden; it seems no one can find him. But Yelena the Wise had a mirror: all she had to do was to look in it, and the whole world was open to her. She knew in a moment where and what was going on in the white world. She stepped up to that mirror, looked in it, and knew every secret.

“Stop, cunning fellow,” cried Yelena the Wise, with a loud voice; “I see thou hast flown above the third range of clouds. The blue-winged eagle bore thee; it is time to come down to the earth.”

Ivan came to the earth, slipped off the eagle, went to the sea-shore, struck fire, and put it to the blue sea. Suddenly, from wherever he came, a giant pike swam to shore. “Well, good youth, creep into my mouth; I’ll hide thee in the bottom of the sea.” He opened his jaws, took in the young man, sank with him in the abyss of the sea, and covered him with sand.

“Now,” thought Ivan, “perhaps it will be all right.” But the point was not there.

Yelena the Wise barely looked in the mirror, and saw everything at once. “Stop, cunning fellow, I see thou hast gone into the giant pike, and thou art sitting now in the abyss of the sea beneath rolling sands; it is time to come to shore.” The pike swam to shore, threw out the good youth, and vanished in the sea.

Ivan returned to the broad court of Yelena the Wise, sat on the porch, and grew powerfully thoughtful and sad. At that moment the maid of Yelena the Wise ran up the stairway. “Why are thou sad, good youth?”

“How can I be glad? If I hide not the third time, I must part with the white world; so here I am sitting and waiting for death.”

“Grieve not; foretell no evil on thy own stormy head. Once I promised to serve thee; I spoke no empty word. Come, I will hide thee.”

She took Ivan by the hand, led him in, and put him behind the mirror. A little later Yelena the Wise ran to the chamber, looked and looked in the mirror. She could not see her bridegroom; the appointed time had passed. She grew angry, and with vexation struck the glass; it fell into fragments, and before her stood Ivan the brave youth.

There was no help for it, — she had to yield this time. At the house of Yelena the Wise there was no need of waiting to make mead or wine; that day they had a noble feast and a wedding. They were crowned, and began to live, — to live on and win wealth.

55

THE SEVEN SIMEONS, FULL BROTHERS

There lived an old man and his old wife; they lived many years, to a great age. Then they began to pray to God to give them a child who in their old age might help them to work. They prayed a year, they prayed a second, they prayed a third and fourth, they prayed a fifth and a sixth, and did not receive a child; but in the seventh year the Lord gave them seven sons, and they called them all Simeon. When the old man with the old woman died, the Simeons were left orphans all in their tenth year.

They ploughed their own land, and were not worse than their neighbors. It happened one time to Tsar Ador, the ruler of all that country, to pass their village, and he saw the Seven Simeons working in the field. He wondered greatly that such small boys were ploughing and harrowing. Therefore he sent his chief boyar to inquire whose children they were. When the boyar came to the Simeons he asked why they, such small children, were doing such heavy work?

The eldest Simeon answered that they were orphans, that there was no one to work for them, and said at the same time that they were all called Simeon. The boyar left them and told this to the Tsar, who wondered greatly that so many small boys, brothers, should be called by one name. Therefore he sent the same boyar to take them to the palace. The boyar carried out the command of the Tsar and took all the Simeons with him. When the Tsar came to the palace he assembled the boyars and men of counsel and asked advice in the following words:

“My boyars and men of counsel, ye see these seven orphans who have no relatives: I wish to make of them men who may be grateful to me hereafter; therefore I ask counsel of you. In what science or art should I have them instructed?”

To this all answered as follows: “Most Gracious Sovereign, as they are now grown somewhat and have reason, dost thou not think it well to ask each one of them separately with what science or art he would like to occupy himself?”

The Tsar accepted this advice gladly, and began by asking the eldest Simeon: “Listen to me, my friend: with whatever science or art thou wishest to occupy thyself, in that I will have thee instructed.”

Simeon answered: “Your Majesty, I have no wish to occupy myself with any science or art; but if you would give command to build a forge in the middle of your court-yard, I would forge a pillar reaching to the sky.”

The Tsar saw that there was no reason to teach this Simeon, for he knew well enough the art of a blacksmith; still, he did not believe that the boy could forge a pillar to the very sky, therefore he gave command to build in quick time a forge in the middle of his court-yard. After the first he called the second Simeon. “And thou, my friend, whatever science or art thou wishest to study, in that will I give thee to be taught.”

Then that Simeon answered: “Your Majesty, I do not wish to study any science or art; but if my eldest brother will forge a pillar to the sky, then I will climb that pillar to the top, and will look at all lands, and tell you what is going on in each one of them.”

The Tsar considered that there was no need to teach this Simeon either, because he was wise already. Then he asked the third Simeon: “Thou, my friend, what science or art dost thou wish to learn?”

Simeon answered: “Your Majesty, I do not wish to learn any science or art; but if my eldest brother will make me an axe, with the axe I will strike once, twice; that moment there will be a ship.”

Then the king answered: “I need shipwrights, and thou shouldst not be taught anything else.” Next he asked the fourth: “Thou, Simeon, what science or art dost thou wish to know?”

“Your Majesty,” answered he, “I do not wish to know any science; but if my third brother should make a ship, and if it should happen to that ship to be at sea, and an enemy should attack it, I would seize it by the prow and take the ship to the underground kingdom; and when the enemy had gone away I would bring it back to the surface of the sea.”

The Tsar was astonished at these great wonders of the fourth Simeon, and he said: “There is no need to teach thee either.” Then he asked the fifth Simeon: “And thou, Simeon, what science or art dost thou wish to learn?”

“I do not wish to learn any,” said he; “but if my eldest brother will make me a gun, with that gun, if I see a bird, I will hit it, even one hundred versts distant.”

“Well, thou wilt be a splendid sharpshooter for me,” said the Tsar. Then he asked the sixth Simeon: “Thou, Simeon, what science dost thou wish to begin?”

“Your Majesty,” said Simeon, “I have no wish to begin any science or art; but if my fifth brother will shoot a bird on the wing, I will not let it reach the earth, but will catch it and bring it to you.”

“Thou’rt very cunning,” said the Tsar; “thou wilt take the place of a retriever for me in the field.” Then the Tsar asked the last Simeon: “What art or science dost thou wish to learn?”

“Your Majesty,” answered he, “I do not wish to learn any science or art, because I have a most precious craft.”

“But what is thy craft? Tell me, if it please thee.”

"I know how to steal dexterously," said Simeon, "so that no man can steal in comparison with me."

The Tsar became greatly enraged, hearing of such an evil art, and said to his boyars and men of counsel: "Gentlemen, how do ye advise me to punish this thief Simeon? Tell me what death should he die?"

"Your Majesty," said they all to him, "why put him to death? He is a thief in name, but a thief who may be needed on an occasion."

"For what reason?" asked the Tsar.

"For this reason: your Majesty is trying now these ten years to get Tsarevna Yelena the Beautiful, and you have not been able to get her; and besides, have lost great forces and armies, and spent much treasure and other things. Mayhap this Simeon the thief may in some way be able to steal Yelena the Beautiful for your Majesty."

The Tsar said in answer: "My friends, ye tell me the truth." Then he turned to Simeon the thief and asked: "Well, Simeon, canst thou go to the thrice-ninth land, to the thirtieth kingdom, and steal for me Yelena the Beautiful? I am strongly in love with her, and if thou canst steal her for me I'll give thee a great reward."

"Stealing is my art, your Majesty," answered the seventh Simeon, "and I will steal her for you; only give the command."

"Not only do I give the command, but I beg thee to do it; and delay no longer at my court, but take for thyself troops and money, whatever is needed."

"Neither troops nor treasure do I need," answered he. "Let all of us brothers go together, and I will get Tsarevna Yelena the Beautiful."

The Tsar did not like to part with all the Simeons; still, though he regretted it, he was obliged to let them all go together. Meanwhile the forge was built in the court, and the eldest Simeon forged an iron pillar to the very sky; the second Simeon climbed on that pillar to the top, and looked in the direction in which was the kingdom of the father of Yelena the Beautiful.

After he had looked he cried from the top of the pillar: “Your Majesty, I see Yelena the Beautiful sitting beyond the thrice-ninth land in the thirtieth kingdom under a window; her marrow flows from bone to bone.”

Now the Tsar was still more enticed by her beauty, and said to the Simeons in a loud voice: “My friends, start on your journey at once, for I cannot live without Yelena, the beautiful Tsarevna.”

The eldest Simeon made an axe for the third, and for the fifth he made a gun; and after that they took bread for the journey, and Simeon the Thief took a cat, and they went their way. Simeon the Thief had made the cat so used to him that she ran after him everywhere like a dog; and if he stopped on the road, or in any other place, the cat stood on her hind legs, rubbed against him, and purred. So the brothers went their way for some time, and at last came to the sea, which they had to cross, and there was nothing to cross upon. They walked along the shore and looked for a tree of some kind to make a vessel, and they found a very large oak. The third Simeon took his axe and cut the oak at the very root, and then with one stroke and another he made straightway a ship, which was rigged, and in the ship were various costly goods. All the Simeons sat on that ship and sailed on their journey.

In a few months they arrived safely at the place where it was necessary for them to go. When they entered the harbor they cast anchor at once. On the following day Simeon the Thief took his cat and went into the town, and coming to the Tsar’s palace he stood opposite the window of Yelena the Beautiful. At that moment the cat stood on her hind legs and began to rub against him and to purr. It is necessary to say that in that kingdom they knew nothing of cats, and had not heard what kind of beast the cat is.

Tsarevna Yelena the Beautiful was sitting at the window; and seeing the cat, sent straightway her nurses and maidens to ask Simeon what kind of beast that was, would he not sell it, and what price would he take. The maidens and nurses ran out in the street and asked Simeon what kind of beast that was, and would he not sell it?

Simeon answered: “My ladies, be pleased to relate to her Highness, Yelena the Beautiful, that this little beast is called a cat, that I will not sell it, but if she wishes to have it I will give it to her without price.”

The maidens and nurses ran straight to the palace and told what they had heard from Simeon.

Tsarevna Yelena the Beautiful was rejoiced beyond measure, ran out herself, and asked Simeon would he not sell the cat.

Simeon said: “Your Highness, I will not sell the cat; but if you like her, then I make you a present of her.”

The Tsarevna took the cat in her arms and went to the palace, and Simeon she commanded to follow. When she came to the palace the Tsarevna went to her father, and showed him the cat, explaining that a certain foreigner had given it to her as a present.

The Tsar, seeing such a wonderful little beast, was greatly delighted, and gave orders to call Simeon the Thief; and when he came, the Tsar wished to reward him with money for the cat; but as Simeon would not take it, he said: “My friend, live for the time in my house, and meanwhile, in your presence, the cat will become better used to my daughter.”

To this Simeon did not agree, and said to the Tsar: “Your Majesty, I could live with great delight in your house if I had not the ship on which I came to your kingdom, and which I cannot commit to any one; but if you command me, I will come every day and teach the cat to know your daughter.”

The Tsar commanded Simeon to come every day. Simeon began to visit Tsarevna Yelena the Beautiful. One day he said to her: “Gracious lady, often have I come here; I see that you are not pleased to walk anywhere; you might come to my ship, and I would show you such costly brocades as you have never seen till this day.”

The Tsarevna went straightway to her father and began to beg permission to go to the ship-wharf. The Tsar permitted her, and told her to take nurses and maidens, and go with Simeon.

As soon as they came to the wharf Simeon invited her to his ship, and when she entered the ship Simeon and his brothers began to show the Tsarevna various rich brocades. Then Simeon the Thief said to Yelena the Beautiful: “Now be pleased to tell your nurses and maidens to leave the ship, because I wish to show you things so costly that they should not see them.”

The Tsarevna commanded her maidens and nurses to leave the ship. As soon as they had gone, Simeon the Thief ordered his brothers in silence to cut off the anchor and go to sea with all sail; meanwhile he showed the Tsarevna rich goods and made her presents of some. About two hours had passed while he was showing the stuffs. At last she said it was time for her to go home, the Tsar her father would expect her to dinner. Then she went out of the cabin and saw that the ship was under sail and land no longer in sight.

She struck herself on the breast, turned into a swan, and flew off. The fifth Simeon took his gun that minute and wounded the swan; the sixth Simeon did not let her fall to the water, but brought her back to the ship, where she became a maiden as before.

The nurses and maidens who were at the wharf, seeing the ship move away from the shore with the Tsarevna, ran straight to the Tsar and told him of Simeon’s deceit. Then the Tsar sent a whole fleet in pursuit. When this fleet coming up was very near the ship of the Simeons, the fourth Simeon seized the prow and conducted the ship to the underground kingdom. When the ship had become entirely invisible, the commanders of the fleet thought it was lost, with the Tsarevna; therefore they returned, and reported to the Tsar that Simeon’s ship had gone to the bottom with Yelena the Beautiful.

The Simeons arrived at their own kingdom successfully, delivered Yelena the Beautiful to Tsar Ador, who for such a mighty service of the Simeons gave liberty to them all, and plenty of gold, silver, and precious stones, married Yelena the Beautiful himself, and lived with her many years.

56

THE ENCHANTED PRINCESS

In a certain kingdom a soldier served in the mounted guard of the king. He served twenty-five years in faithfulness and truth; and for his good conduct the king gave orders to discharge him with honor, and give him as reward the same horse on which he had ridden in the regiment, with all the caparison.

The soldier took farewell of his comrades and set out for his native place. He travelled a day, a second, and a third. Behold, a whole week had gone; a second and third week! The soldier had no money; he had nothing to eat himself, nothing to give his horse, and his home was far, far away. He saw that the affair was a very bad one; he wanted terribly to eat, began to look in one direction and another, and saw on one side a great castle. “Well,” thought he, “better go there; maybe they will take me even for a time to serve, — I’ll earn something.”

He turned to the castle, rode into the court, put his horse in the stable, gave him hay, and entered the castle. In the castle a table was set with food and wine, — with everything that the soul could wish for.

The soldier ate and drank. “Now,” thought he, “I may sleep.”

All at once a bear came in. “Fear me not, brave hero; thou hast come in good time. I am not a savage bear, but a fair maiden, an enchanted princess.

If thou canst endure and pass three nights in this place, the enchantment will be broken, I shall be a princess as before, and will marry thee."

The soldier consented. Now, there fell upon him such a sadness that he could not look on the world, and every moment the sadness increased; if there had been no wine he could not have held out a single night, as it seemed. The second night it went so far that the soldier resolved to leave everything and run away; but no matter how he struggled, no matter how he tried, he found no way out of the castle. There was no help for it, he had to stay in spite of himself.

He passed the third night. In the morning there stood before him a princess of unspeakable beauty. She thanked him for his service, and told him to make ready for the crown (marriage). Straightway they had the wedding, and began to live together without care or trouble. After a time the soldier remembered his native place; he wanted to spend some time there. The princess tried to dissuade him.

"Remain, stay here, my friend, go not away. What is lacking to thee?"

No, she could not dissuade him. She took farewell of her husband, gave him a sack filled with seeds, and said: "On whatever road thou mayest travel, throw these seeds on both sides. Wherever they fall, that moment trees will spring up; on the trees precious fruit will be hanging in beauty, various birds will sing songs, and tom-cats from over the sea will tell tales."

The good hero sat on his horse of service and went his way. Wherever he journeyed he cast seeds on both sides, and after him forests were rising, just creeping out of the damp earth. He rode one day, he rode a second, a third, and saw in the open field a caravan. On the grass merchants were sitting playing cards, near them a great kettle was hanging, and, though there was no fire under the kettle, it was boiling like a fountain within the pot. "What a wonder!" thought the soldier; "there is no fire to be seen, and in the kettle it is boiling like a fountain, — let me look at it more closely." He turned his horse to the place and rode up to the merchants.

“Hail, honorable gentlemen!” He had no suspicion that these were not merchants, but all unclean. “That is a good trick of yours, — a kettle boiling without fire; but I have a better one.”

He took out a seed and threw it on the ground, — that moment a full-grown tree came up; on the tree were precious fruits in their beauty, various birds were singing songs, and tom-cats from over the sea were telling tales. From this boast the unclean knew him.

“Ah,” said they among themselves, “this is the man who liberated the princess! Come, brothers, let us drug him with a weed, and let him sleep half a year.”

They went to entertaining him, and drugged him with the magic weed. The soldier dropped on the grass and fell into deep sleep from which he could not be roused. The merchants, the caravan, and the kettle vanished in a twinkle.

Soon after the princess went out in her garden and saw that the tops of all the trees had begun to wither. “This is not for good,” thought she; “it is evident that evil has come to my husband.”

Three months passed. It was time for his return, and there was nothing of him, nothing. The princess made ready and went to search for him. She went by that road along which he had travelled, — on both sides forests were growing, birds were singing, and tom-cats from over the sea were purring their tales. She reached the spot where there were no more trees, the road wound out into the open field; she thought, “Where has he gone to? Of course he has not sunk through the earth.”

She looked, aside by itself was one of the wonderful trees, and under it her dear husband. She ran to him, pushed, and tried to rouse him. No, he did not wake. She pinched him, stuck pins in his side, pricked and pricked him. He did not feel even the pain, — lay like a corpse without motion. The princess grew angry, and in her anger pronounced the spell: “Mayest thou be caught by the stormy whirlwind, thou good-for-nothing sleepy head, and be borne to places unknown!”

She had barely uttered these words when the wind began to whistle, to sound, and in one flash the soldier was caught up by a boisterous whirlwind and borne away from the eyes of the princess. She saw too late that she had spoken an evil speech. She shed bitter tears, went home, lived alone and lonely.

The poor soldier was borne by the whirlwind far, far away beyond the thrice-ninth land, to the thirtieth kingdom, and thrown on a point between two seas; he fell on the very narrowest little wedge. If the sleeping man were to turn to the right, or roll to the left, that moment he would tumble into the sea, and then remember his name.

The good hero slept out his half year, — moved not a finger; and when he woke he sprang straight to his feet, looked on both sides. The waves are rolling; no end can be seen to the broad sea. He stands in doubt, asking himself, “By what miracle have I come to this place? Who dragged me hither?” He turned back from the point and came out on an island; on that island was a mountain steep and lofty, touching the clouds with its peak, and on the mountain a great stone. He came near this mountain and saw three devils fighting; blood was just flowing from them, and bits of flesh flying.

“Stop, ye outcasts! What are ye fighting for?”

“But seest thou our father died three days ago and left three wonderful things, — a flying carpet, swift-moving boots, and a cap of invisibility; and we cannot divide them.”

“Oh, ye cursed fellows, to fight for such trifles! If ye wish I’ll divide them between you, and ye shall be satisfied; I’ll offend no one.”

“Well then, countryman, divide between us if it please thee.”

“Very good. Run quickly through the pine woods and gather one hundred poods of pitch, and bring it here.”

The devils rushed through the pine woods, collected three hundred poods of pitch, and brought it to the soldier.

“Now bring me from your own kingdom the very largest kettle that is in it.” The devils brought the very largest kettle, — one holding forty barrels, — and put the pitch into it. The soldier made a fire, and when the pitch was boiling he ordered the devils to take it on the mountain and pour it out from the top to the bottom. The devils did this in a flash. “Now,” said the soldier, “push that stone there; let it roll from the mountain, and follow it. Whoever comes up with it first may take any of the three things; whoever comes up second will choose from the two remaining ones whichever he likes; and the last wonder will go to the third.” The devils pushed the stone, and it rolled from the mountain quickly, quickly. One devil caught up, seized the stone, the stone turned, and in a flash put him under it, crushed him into the pitch. The second devil caught up, and then the third; and with them it happened as with the first, — they were driven firmly into the pitch.

The soldier took under his arm the swift boots and the cap of invisibility, sat on the flying carpet, and flew off to look for his own country. Whether it was long or short, he came to a hut, went in. In the hut was sitting a Baba-Yaga, boneleg, old and toothless. “Greetings to thee, grandmother! Tell how I am to find my fair princess.”

“I have not seen her with sight, I have not heard of her with hearing; but pass over so many seas and so many lands, and there lives my second sister. She knows more than I do; mayhap she can tell thee.”

The soldier sat on his carpet and flew away. He had to wander long over the white world. Whenever he wanted to eat or drink, he put on the cap of invisibility, let himself down, entered a shop, and took what his heart desired; then to the carpet and off on his journey. He came to the second hut, entered; inside was sitting Baba-Yaga, boneleg, old and toothless. “Greetings to thee, grandmother! Dost thou know how I can find my fair princess?”

“No, my dove, I do not know.”

“Ah, thou old hag! how many years art thou living in the world? All thy teeth are out, and thou knowest no good.”

He sat on the flying carpet and flew toward the eldest sister. Long did he wander, many seas and many lands did he see. At last he flew to the end of the world, where there was a hut and no road beyond, — nothing but outer darkness, nothing to be seen.

“Well,” thought he, “if I can get no account here, there is nowhere else to fly to.” He went into the hut; there a Baba-Yaga was sitting, gray, toothless.

“Greetings to thee, grandmother! Tell me where must I seek my princess.”

“Wait a little; I will call all my winds together and ask them. They blow over all the world, so they must know where she is living at present.”

The old woman went out on the porch, cried with a loud voice, whistled with a hero’s whistle. Straightway the stormy winds rose and blew from every side; the hut just quivered.

“Quieter, quieter!” cried Baba-Yaga; and as soon as the winds had assembled, she said: “My stormy winds, ye blow through all the world. Have ye seen the beautiful princess anywhere?”

“We have not seen her anywhere,” answered the winds in one voice.

“But are ye all here?”

“All but South Wind.”

After waiting a little, South Wind flew up. The old woman asked: “Where hast thou been lost to this moment? I could hardly wait for thee.”

“Pardon, grandmother; I went into a new kingdom, where the beautiful princess is living. Her husband has vanished without tidings, so now various Tsars and Tsars’ sons, kings and kings’ sons are paying court to her.”

“And how far is it to the new kingdom?”

“For a man on foot thirty-five years, ten years on wings; but if I blow I can put a man there in three hours.”

The soldier implored South Wind tearfully to take him and bear him to the new kingdom.

“I will, if it please thee,” said South Wind, “provided thou wilt let me run around in thy kingdom three days and three nights as I like.”

“Frolic three weeks if thou choosest.”

“Well, I will rest for two or three days, collect my forces and my strength, and then for the road!”

South Wind rested, collected his strength, and said to the soldier: “Well, brother, make ready, we’ll go straightway; but look out, have no fear, thou wilt arrive in safety.”

All at once a mighty whirlwind whistled and roared, caught the soldier into the air, and bore him over mountains and seas up to the very clouds; and in three hours exactly he was in the new kingdom, where his beautiful princess was living. South Wind said, —

“Farewell, good hero; out of compassion for thee I will not frolic in thy kingdom.”

“Why is that?”

“Because if I frolic, not one house will be standing in the town, not one tree in the gardens; I should put everything bottom upward.”

“Farewell then; God save thee!” said the soldier, who put on his cap of invisibility and went to the white-walled castle. Behold, while he was absent from the kingdom all the trees in the garden had stood with withered tops, and the moment he appeared they came to life and began to bloom. He entered the great hall; there were sitting at the table various Tsars and Tsars’ sons, kings and kings’ sons who had come to pay court to the beautiful princess. They were sitting and entertaining themselves with sweet wines. Whoever filled a glass and raised it to his lips, the soldier that moment struck it with his fist and knocked it from his hand. All the guests wondered at this; but the beautiful princess understood in a moment the reason.

“Surely,” thought she, “my friend is here.” She looked through the window; all the tree-tops in the garden had come to life, and she gave a riddle to the guests. “I had a home-made casket with a golden key; I lost this key, and did not think to find it: but now this key has found itself. Who guesses the riddle, him will I marry.”

The Tsars and Tsars’ sons, the kings and kings’ sons were long breaking their wise heads over this riddle, and could not solve it in any way.

The princess said: “Show thyself, dear friend.”

The soldier removed his cap of invisibility, took her by the white hand, and began to kiss her on the sweet mouth.

“Here is the riddle for you,” said the fair princess: “I am the home-made casket, and the golden key is my faithful husband.”

The wooers had to turn their wagon-shafts around. They all drove home, and the princess began to live with her husband, to live and win wealth.

57

VASSILISSA THE CUNNING AND THE TSAR OF THE SEA

A peasant sowed rye, and the Lord gave him a wonderful harvest. He could barely bring it in from the field. He drew the bundles home, threshed the grain, and poured it into bins; his granary was full to the brim. When he was pouring it in, he thought, “Now I shall live without trouble.”

A mouse and a sparrow used to visit that peasant’s barn; every one of God’s days they came about five times, ate all they could, and then went out. The mouse would spring into her hole, and the sparrow fly away to his nest. They lived together in this way in friendship for three whole years, ate up all the grain; there remained only a mere trifle, about eight bushels, not more.

The mouse saw that the supply was drawing to an end, and began to contrive how to deceive the sparrow and get possession of all that was left. And the mouse succeeded. She came in the dark night-time, gnawed a great hole in a plank, and let all the rye down through the floor to the last grain. Next morning the sparrow came to the granary to have breakfast; looked, there was nothing! The poor fellow flew out hungry, and thought to himself, “Oh, the cursed creature, she has deceived me! I will fly now to her sovereign, the lion, and present a petition against the mouse; let the lion pass judgment on us in justice.”

So he started and flew to the lion. “Lion, Tsar of beasts,” said the sparrow, beating to him with the forehead, “I lived with one of thy beasts, the strong-toothed mouse. We lived for three years in one barn and had no dispute. But when the supply began to come to an end, she went to playing tricks, gnawed a hole through the floor, and let all the grain down to herself, — left me, poor fellow, to be hungry. Judge us in truth; if not, I will fly to seek justice and reparation from my own Tsar, the eagle.”

“Well, fly off, with God!” said the lion.

The sparrow rushed with his petition to the eagle, related the whole offence, how the mouse had stolen and the lion had upheld her. The eagle grew fiercely angry, and sent a swift courier to the lion straightway: “Come to-morrow with thy army of beasts to such and such a field; I will assemble all the birds and give battle.”

Nothing to be done, the lion made a great call and summoned the beasts to battle. There were assembled of them seen and unseen. As soon as they came to the open field, the eagle flew upon them with his winged warriors like a cloud from heaven. A great battle began. They fought for three hours and three minutes, and the eagle Tsar conquered; he covered the whole field with bodies of beasts. Then he sent his birds to their homes, and flew himself to a slumbering forest, sat on a lofty oak, bruised and wounded, and began to think seriously how to regain his former strength.

This was a long time ago. There lived then a merchant with his wife, and they had not a single child. The merchant rose up one morning and said to his wife: “I have had a bad dream. I thought that a great bird fastened on me, — one that eats a whole ox at a meal and drinks a pailful; and it was impossible to get rid of the bird, impossible not to feed it. I’ll go to the forest; mayhap the walk will cheer me.”

He took his gun and went to the forest. Whether he wandered long or short in that forest, he wandered till he came to an oak-tree, saw an eagle, and was going to shoot it.

“Kill me not, good hero,” said the eagle, in a human voice. “If thou kill me, small will be thy profit. Better take me home, feed me for three years, three months, and three days. I shall recover at thy house, shall let my wings grow, regain my strength, and repay thee with good.”

“What pay can one expect from an eagle?” thought the merchant, and aimed a second time. The eagle spoke as at first. The merchant aimed a third time, and again the eagle begged, —

“Kill me not, good hero! Feed me three years, three months, and three days; when I have recovered, when my wings have grown, and I have regained my strength, I’ll repay thee with good.”

The merchant took pity on the eagle, carried him home, killed an ox, and poured out a pailful of mead. “This will serve the eagle for a long time,” thought he; but the eagle ate and drank all at one meal. A bad time to the merchant; from the unbidden guest utter ruin.

The eagle saw the merchant’s loss and said: “Hear me, my host! Go to the open field. Thou wilt find there many beasts killed and wounded. Take their rich furs, bear them to the town to sell. Get food for thyself and me, and there will be some left for a supply.”

The merchant went into the open field and saw many animals lying there, some slain and some wounded. He took the dearest furs, carried them to town to sell, and sold them for much money.

A year passed. The eagle said: “Bear me to that place where the lofty oaks are standing.”

The merchant got his wagon ready and took him to that place. The eagle rose above the clouds, and when he swooped down, he struck a tree with his breast, the oak was split in two. “Well, merchant, good hero,” said the eagle, “I have not regained my former strength; feed me another round year.”

Another year passed. Again the eagle rose beyond the dark clouds, shot down from above, struck the tree with his breast, split the oak into small pieces. “Merchant, good hero, thou must feed me another whole year; I have not regained my former strength!”

When three years, three months, and three days had passed, the eagle said to the merchant: “Take me again to the same place, — to the lofty oaks.” The merchant carried him to the lofty oaks. The eagle soared higher than before; like a mighty whirlwind he struck from above the largest oak, broke it into small bits from the top to the root, — indeed, the forest was reeling all around. “God save thee, merchant, good hero!” said the eagle; “now all my former strength is with me. Leave thy horse, sit on my wings; I will bear thee to my own land, and pay thee for all the good thou hast done.” The merchant sat on his wings, the eagle bore him out on the blue sea, and he rose high, high. “Look now,” said he, “on the blue sea. Is it wide?”

“As a cart-wheel,” answered the merchant.

The eagle shook his wings and threw the merchant, let him fall, gave him to feel mortal terror, and caught him before he had reached the water, — caught him, and rose still higher. “Look on the blue sea. Is it great?”

“As a hen’s egg.”

The eagle shook his wings, threw the merchant, let him fall, but did not let him reach the water, caught him, and rose up higher than ever. “Look on the blue sea. Is it great?”

“As a poppy seed.”

A third time the eagle shook his wings and threw the merchant from under the heavens; still he didn’t let him reach the water, caught him, and asked: “Well, merchant, good hero, hast thou felt what mortal terror is?”

“I have,” said the merchant; “and I thought I was lost forever.”

“And so did I when thou wert pointing thy gun at me.”

The eagle flew with the merchant beyond the sea, straight to the copper kingdom. “Behold, my eldest sister lives here!” said the eagle. “When we shall be guests with her, and she brings presents, take nothing, but ask for the copper casket.” The eagle said this, struck the damp earth, turned into a gallant hero.

They went through the broad court. The sister saw him, and was delighted. “Oh, my own brother, how has God brought thee? I have not seen thee for three years and more; I thought thou wert lost forever. How can I entertain thee? How can I feast thee?”

“Entertain not me, my dear sister, I am at home in thy house; but entreat and entertain this good hero. He gave me meat and drink for three years, — did not let me die of hunger.”

She seated them at the oaken table, at the spread cloth; she feasted and entertained them, then led them to her treasure-chambers, showed treasures incalculable, and said to the merchant: “Good hero, here are gold, silver, and precious stones; take what thy soul desires.”

The merchant gave answer: “I need neither gold, silver, nor precious stones. Give me the copper casket.”

“Thou’lt not get it; that is not the boot for thy foot.”

The brother was angry at his sister’s words; he turned into an eagle, — a swift bird, — caught the merchant, and flew away.

“Oh, my own brother, come back!” cried the sister. “I’ll not stand for the casket.”

“Thou art late, sister!”

The eagle flew through the air. “Look, merchant, good hero, what is behind us and what before?”

“Behind, a fire is in sight; before us flowers are blooming.”

“That is the copper kingdom in flames, and the flowers are blooming in the silver kingdom of my second sister. When we are her guests, and she offers gifts, take nothing, but ask for the silver casket.” The eagle came, struck the damp earth, and become a good hero.

“Oh, my own brother,” said his sister, “whence hast come; where wert thou lost; why hast thou been so long without visiting me; with what can I serve thee?”

“Entreat me not, entertain me not, my dear sister, I am at home with thee; but entreat and entertain this good hero, who gave me meat and drink for three years, and did not let me die of hunger.”

She seated them at the oaken tables at spread cloths, entertained and feasted them, then led them to treasure-chambers. “Here are gold and silver and precious stones; take, merchant, what thy soul desires.”

“I want neither gold, silver, nor precious stones. Give me only the silver casket.”

“No, good hero, thy desire is not for the right morsel; thou mightest choke thyself.”

The eagle brother was angry, caught up the merchant, and flew away.

“Oh, my own brother, come back! I will not stand for the casket.”

“Thou art late, sister!”

Again the eagle flew under the heavens. “See, merchant, good hero, what is behind us, what is before?”

“Behind us a fire is blazing; before us are flowers in bloom.”

“That is the silver kingdom in flames; but the flowers are blooming in the golden kingdom of my youngest sister. When we are her guests, and she offers gifts, take nothing; ask only the golden casket.” The eagle came to the golden kingdom and turned into a good hero.

“Oh, my own brother,” said the sister, “whence hast thou come? Where hast thou vanished so long that thou hast not visited me? With what shall I feast thee?”

“Entreat me not, feast me not, I am at home; but entreat and feast this merchant, good hero. He gave me meat and drink for three years, — saved me from hunger.”

She seated them at the oaken table, at the spread cloth, entertained them, feasted them, led the merchant to her treasure-chambers, offered him gold, silver, and precious stones.

“I need nothing; give me only the golden casket.”

“Take it for thy happiness. Thou didst give meat and drink to my brother for three years, and didst save him from hunger; I regret nothing that is spent on my brother.”

So the merchant lived and feasted a while in the golden kingdom, till the time came for parting, for taking the road.

“Farewell,” said the eagle; “think not on me with harsh feeling, but see that the casket is not opened till thou art at home.”

The merchant journeyed homeward. Whether it was long or short, he grew tired and wished to rest. He stopped in a strange meadow on the land of the Tsar of the Sea; he looked and looked at the golden casket, couldn’t endure, opened it. That moment, wherever it came from, there stood before him a great castle all painted, a multitude of servants appeared, inquiring: “What dost thou wish for; what dost thou want?” The merchant, good hero, ate his fill, drank enough, and lay down to sleep. The Tsar of the Sea saw that there was a great castle on his land, and he sent messengers: “Go see what sort of an insolent fellow has come and built a castle on my land without leave; let him go off at once in health and safety.”

When such a threatening word came to the merchant he began to think and conjecture how to put the castle into the casket as before; he thought and thought, — no, he could do nothing. “I should be glad to go away,” said he, “but how, I can’t think myself.”

The messengers returned, and reported all to the Tsar of the Sea. “Let him give me what he has at home but knows it not; I will put his palace in the golden casket.”

There was no other way, and so the merchant promised with an oath to give what he had at home but knew it not. The Tsar of the Sea put the palace in the golden casket at once. The merchant took the casket and went his way. Whether it was long or short, he came home, his wife met him. “Oh, be thou hearty, my world. Where wert thou lost?”

“Well, where I was I am not now.”

“But while thou wert gone the Lord gave us a son.”

“Ah! that is what was at home and I knew it not,” thought the merchant; and he grew very sad and sorrowful.

“What is the matter? Art thou not glad to be here?” insisted his wife.

“Not that,” said the merchant; and he told her all that had happened to him, and they grieved and wept together. But people of course cannot cry all their lives. The merchant opened his golden casket, and before them stood a great castle cunningly adorned, and he began to live with his wife and son and gain wealth.

Ten years passed and more; the merchant’s son grew up, became wise, fine-looking, a splendid fellow. One morning he rose up in sadness and said to his father: “My father, I had a bad dream last night. I dreamed of the Tsar of the Sea; he commanded me to come to him. ‘I am waiting long,’ said he; ‘it is time to know thy honor.’”

The father and mother shed tears, gave him their parental blessing, and let him go to a strange land. He went along the road, along the broad road; he walked over clear fields and wide steppes, and came to a dreamy forest. It was empty all around, not a soul to be seen; but there stood a small cabin by itself, with front to the forest and back to Ivan. “Cabin, cabin,” said he, “turn thy back to the forest, thy front to me.” The cabin obeyed, and turned its back to the forest, its front to Ivan. He entered the cabin, inside was Baba-Yaga, boneleg, lying from corner to corner. Baba-Yaga saw him and said: “Before now, nothing of Russia was heard with hearing or seen with sight, but now Russia runs to our eyes. Whence dost thou come, good hero, and where dost thou bear thy way?”

“Oh, thou old hag, thou hast given neither meat nor drink to a wayfaring man, and art asking for news!”

Baba-Yaga put drink on the table and various meats; she fed him, she gave him to drink, and put him to rest. Early next morning she roused him, and then she put questions. Ivan the merchant's son told the whole secret, and said: "Teach me, grandmother, how to go to the Tsar of the Sea."

"It is well that thou hast come to me; hadst thou not, thou wouldst have lost thy life, for the Tsar of the Sea is terribly angry because thou didst not go to him long ago. Listen to me: go by this path; thou wilt come to a lake, hide behind a tree and wait a while. Three beautiful doves, maidens, will fly there, — they are the daughters of the Tsar of the Sea; they will loose their wings, undress, and bathe in the lake. One will have many-colored wings: watch the moment, seize the wings, and do not give them up till she consents to marry thee; then all will be right."

Ivan the merchant's son took farewell of Baba-Yaga and travelled the path she had shown, walked and walked, saw the lake, hid himself behind a thick tree. After a time three doves came flying, one with many-colored wings; they struck the earth, turned into beautiful maidens, removed their wings, and took off their dresses. Ivan the merchant's son kept his eyes open; he crept up in silence and took the many-colored wings. He watched to see what would happen. The fair maidens bathed, came out of the water, two of them dressed straightway, put on their wings, turned into doves, and flew away. The third remained to find her wings. She searched, singing the while: "Tell who thou art, thou who hast taken my wings! If an old man, thou wilt be a father to me; if of middle years, my uncle dear; if a good youth, I will marry thee."

Ivan the merchant's son came from behind the tree. "Here are thy wings!"

"Now tell me, good youth, betrothed husband, of what stock or race art thou, and whither dost thou bear thy way?"

"I am Ivan the merchant's son, and I am going to thy own father, to the Tsar of the Sea."

"And my name is Vassilissa the Cunning."

Now, Vassilissa was the favorite daughter of the Tsar, and was first in mind and beauty. She showed her bridegroom how to go to the Tsar of the Sea, sprang away as a dove, and flew after her sisters.

Ivan the merchant’s son came to the Tsar of the Sea, who made him serve in the kitchen, cut wood, and draw water. Chumichka, the cook, did not like him, and told lies to the Tsar. “Your Majesty,” said he, “Ivan the merchant’s son boasts that in one night he can cut down a great dense forest, pile the logs in heaps, dig out the roots, plough the land, sow it with wheat, reap that wheat, thresh it, grind it into flour, make cakes of the flour, and give these cakes to your Majesty at breakfast next morning.”

“Well,” said the Tsar, “call him to me.”

Ivan the merchant’s son came.

“Why art thou boasting that in one night thou canst cut down a thick forest, plough the land just like a clean field, sow it with wheat, reap the wheat, thresh it, and make it into flour, the flour into cakes for my breakfast next morning? See that by to-morrow morning this is all done; if not, I have a sword, and thy head leaves thy shoulders.”

No matter how Ivan protested, it was no use; the order was given, it had to be carried out. He went away from the Tsar, and hung his stormy head from grief. Vassilissa the Cunning, the daughter of the Tsar, saw him, and asked: “Why art thou grieved?”

“What is the use in telling thee? Thou couldst not cure my sorrow!”

“How knowest? Maybe I can.”

Ivan the merchant’s son told her what task the Tsar had put on him.

“What task is that! That is a pleasure, — the task is ahead. Go thy way; pray to God and lie down to rest; the morning is wiser than the evening; toward daylight all will be ready.”

Just at midnight Vassilissa the Cunning went out on the great porch and cried in a piercing voice. In one moment laborers ran together from every side, — myriads of them; one was felling a tree, another digging out roots, another ploughing the land. In one place they were sowing, in another reaping and threshing; a pillar of dust went up to the sky, and at daybreak the grain was ground, the cakes baked. Ivan took the cakes to the breakfast of the Tsar.

“Splendid fellow!” said the Tsar; and he gave command to reward him from his own treasure.

Chumichka the cook was angrier than ever at Ivan, began to talk against him again. “Your Majesty, Ivan the merchant’s son boasts that in one night he can make a ship that will fly through the air.”

“Well, call him hither.”

They called Ivan the merchant’s son.

“Why boast to my servants that in one night thou canst make a wonderful ship that will fly through the air, and say nothing to me? See this ship is ready by morning; if not, I have a sword, and thy head leaves thy shoulders.”

Ivan the merchant’s son from sorrow hung his stormy head lower than his shoulders, and went from the Tsar beside himself. Vassilissa the Cunning said to him: “Of what art thou grieving; why art thou sad?”

“Why should I not be sad? The Tsar of the Sea has commanded me to build in one night a ship that will fly through the air.”

“What sort of task is that? That is not a task, but a pleasure; the task is ahead. Go thy way; lie down and rest: the morning is wiser than the evening; at daybreak all will be done.”

At midnight Vassilissa the Cunning went out on the great porch, cried in a piercing voice. In a moment carpenters ran together from every side; they began to pound with their axes, and the work was seething quickly. Toward morning all was ready.

“A hero!” said the Tsar. “Come, now we will take a trip.”

They sat on the ship together, and took as a third companion Chumichka the cook; and they flew through the air. When they were flying over the place of wild beasts the cook bent over the side to look out. Ivan the merchant's son pushed him from the ship that moment. The savage beasts tore him into little bits. "Oh," cried Ivan the merchant's son, "Chumichka has fallen off!"

"The devil be with him," said the Tsar of the Sea; "to a dog, a dog's death!" They came back to the palace. "Thou art skilful, Ivan," said the Tsar; "here is a third task for thee. Break my unridden stallion so that he will go under a rider. If thou wilt break him I will give thee my daughter in marriage; if not, I have a sword, and thy head leaves thy shoulders."

"Now that is an easy task," thought Ivan the merchant's son. He went away from the Tsar laughing. Vassilissa the Cunning saw him and asked about everything; he told her.

"Thou art not wise, Ivan," said she; "now a difficult task is given thee, — no easy labor. That stallion will be the Tsar himself: he will carry thee through the air above the standing forest, below the passing cloud, and scatter thy bones over the open field. Go quickly to the blacksmiths, order them to make for thee an iron hammer three poods in weight, and when thou art sitting on the stallion hold firmly and beat him on the head with the iron hammer."

Next day the grooms brought out the unridden stallion. They were barely able to hold him; he snorted, rushed, and reared. The moment Ivan sat on him he rose above the standing forest, below the passing cloud, flew through the air more swiftly than strong wind. The rider held firmly, beating him all the time on the head with the hammer. The stallion struggled beyond his power, and dropped to the damp earth. Ivan the merchant's son gave the stallion to the grooms, drew breath himself, and went to the palace. The Tsar of the Sea met him with bound head.

"I have ridden the horse, your Majesty."

"Well, come to-morrow to choose thy bride; but now my head aches."

Next morning Vassilissa the Cunning said to Ivan the merchant’s son, “There are three sisters of us with our father; he will turn us into mares, and make thee select. Be careful, take notice; on my bridle one of the spangles will be dim. Then he will let us out as doves; my sisters will pick buckwheat very quietly, but I will not, — I will clap my wings. The third time he will bring us out as three maidens, one like the other in face, in stature, and hair. I will shake my handkerchief; by that thou mayest know me.”

The Tsar brought out the three mares, one just like the other, put them in a row. “Take the one that pleases thee,” said the Tsar.

Ivan the merchant’s son examined them carefully. He saw that on one bridle a spangle had grown dim; he caught that bridle and said, “This is my bride.”

“Thou hast taken a bad one; thou mayest choose a better.”

“No use, this will do for me.”

“Choose a second time.”

The Tsar let out three doves just alike, and scattered buckwheat before them. Ivan saw that one of them was shaking her wings all the time. He caught her by the wing and said, “This is my bride.”

“Thou hast not taken the right piece; thou wilt choke thyself. Choose a third time.”

He brought out three maidens, one like the other in face, in stature, and hair. Ivan the merchant’s son saw that one waved her handkerchief; he seized her by the hand, “This is my bride.”

There was nothing to be done. The Tsar could not help himself, gave Vassilissa the Cunning to Ivan, and they had a joyous wedding.

Not much nor little time had passed when Ivan thought of escaping to his own country with Vassilissa the Cunning. They saddled their horses and rode away in the dark night. In the morning the Tsar discovered their flight and sent a pursuing party.

“Drop down to the damp earth,” said Vassilissa the Cunning to her husband; “perhaps thou wilt hear something.”

He dropped to the earth, listened, and answered: “I hear the neighing of horses.”

Vassilissa turned him into a garden, and herself into a head of cabbage. The pursuers returned to the Tsar empty-handed. “Your Majesty, there is nothing to be seen in the open country; we saw only a garden, and in the garden a head of cabbage.”

“Go on, bring me that head of cabbage; that is their tricks.”

Again the pursuers galloped on; again Ivan dropped down to the damp earth. “I hear,” said he, “the neighing of horses.” Vassilissa the Cunning made herself a well, and turned Ivan into a bright falcon; the falcon was sitting on the brink, drinking water. The pursuers came to the well; there was no road beyond, and they turned back.

“Your Majesty, there is nothing to be seen in the open country; we saw only a well, and a bright falcon was drinking water out of that well.”

The Tsar himself galloped a long time to overtake them.

“Drop down to the damp earth; perhaps thou wilt hear something,” said Vassilissa the Cunning to her husband.

“There is a hammering and thundering greater than before.”

“That is my father chasing us. I know not, I cannot think what to do.”

Vassilissa the Cunning had three things, — a brush, a comb, and a towel. She remembered them, and said: “God is yet merciful; I have still defence before the Tsar.” She threw the brush behind her: it became a great drowsy forest; a man could not put his hand through, could not ride around it in three years. Behold, the Tsar of the Sea gnawed and gnawed the drowsy forest, made a path for himself, burst through it, and was again in pursuit. He is drawing near them, has only to seize them with his hand. Vassilissa threw her comb behind, and it became such a great lofty mountain that a man could neither pass over it nor go around it.

The Tsar of the Sea dug and dug in the mountain, made a path, and again chased after them. Then Vassilissa the Cunning threw the towel behind her, and it became a great, great sea. The Tsar galloped up to the sea, saw the road was stopped, and turned homeward.

Ivan the merchant's son was near home, and said to Vassilissa the Cunning: "I will go ahead, tell my father and mother about thee, and do thou wait here."

"See to it," said Vassilissa the Cunning, "when thou art home, kiss all but thy godmother; if thou kiss her thou'lt forget me."

Ivan came home, kissed all in delight, kissed his godmother, and forgot Vassilissa. She stood there, poor thing, on the road, waited and waited; Ivan did not come for her. She went to the town and hired to do work for an old woman.

Ivan thought of marrying; he found a bride, and arranged a feast for the whole world.

Vassilissa heard this, dressed herself as a beggar, and came to the merchant's house to beg alms.

"Wait," said the merchant's wife; "I'll bake thee a small cake instead of cutting the big one."

"God save thee for that, mother!" said Vassilissa.

But the great cake got burnt, and the small one came out nicely. The merchant's wife gave Vassilissa the burnt cake and put the small one on the table. They cut that cake, and immediately two pigeons flew out.

"Kiss me," said the cock-pigeon to the other.

"No, thou wilt forget me, as Ivan the merchant's son forgot Vassilissa the Cunning."

And the second and the third time he asked, "Kiss me."

"No, thou'lt forget me, as Ivan the merchant's son forgot Vassilissa the Cunning."

Ivan remembered then; he knew who the beggar was, and said to his father and mother: “This is my wife.”

“Well, if thou hast a wife, then live with her.”

They gave rich presents to the new bride, and let her go home; but Ivan the merchant’s son lived with Vassilissa the Cunning, gained wealth, and shunned trouble.

58

BOYISLAV, YOUNGEST OF TWELVE

Once there was a king who groaned many a day; doctors came from far and near, but they could not cure him. At last his condition was such that one day all thought he must die. The following night he had a marvellous dream. It seemed to him that he was on Black Island, had freed three princesses, and straightway recovered. When he woke he felt a certain relief, but had almost forgotten the dream. The next night he had the same dream, and again on waking felt easier, but did not ascribe the relief to his dream. The third night he had no dream, but a vision, in which the three princesses appeared to him and said: “Free us, and thou wilt recover; if not, thou wilt die.” Then they vanished, and the terrified king felt such pain that he could barely wait till morning. He summoned his twelve sons in haste, and when he had told them of his vision he said in a sad voice: “But how can I, poor man, go on a long journey to Black Island, of which I have never even heard?”

“I will go instead of thee,” said Boyislav, the youngest son, with decision.

“We will all go,” said the others, looking angrily at Boyislav, whom they hated with all their hearts, because he was his father’s favorite.

“Ye cannot all leave me; and thou, Boyislav, surely not,” said the king, shaking his head. “Who would there be to reign in my place?”

"Let Boyislav stay at home," said the eldest; "besides, he would be merely a hindrance to us on the road."

"I a hindrance!" said Boyislav, flushing up with anger and pity. "Let me go, father; I will free the princesses alone."

His brothers began to laugh at him and then to dispute as to who should go to Black Island. Since they could not decide, the king said: "I know that ye would all gladly serve me, but since some of you must stay at home, I will make six blank lots and six written ones; whoever draws a written one will go, whoever a blank will remain."

The princes were satisfied and drew lots. They were angry when Boyislav drew a prize, and the king was sad; but he had given his word and could not withdraw it. That very day the princes set out and Boyislav with them. While on dry land they were prosperous; it was worse when they entered a boat and knew not whither to turn. Boyislav said that they ought to go north, but his brothers laughed at him. When they had sailed many weeks in one direction and another without finding Black Island, they were glad to follow his advice; and the third day they arrived at the place, but so terrible was it that no one dared to land save Boyislav. He took provisions and sprang on shore, telling his brothers to await his return. While light lasted he ran up and down on the island, but saw nothing except black rocks. He was forced to pass the night on a bare stone, but rose early, completely refreshed by sleep, and examined farther.

One day passed, and a second; the third day appeared, and still he found nothing. At last, in the evening, he came to a large stone, which seemed to him hewn out by men's hands. He lifted with all his might, turned it over, and found a great dark opening, from which a pleasant odor arose. He went down without delay, and soon found himself in a glorious garden, in which were three golden castles at a great distance. He gazed with astonishment; though there were things there without number such as he had never seen before, still his attention was attracted first by three horses, which rushed around him three times in a wild gallop, and then vanished in the twinkle of an eye. Boyislav looked after them, and heard a voice saying: “I welcome thee, Boyislav, youngest of twelve!”

He looked on every side, but could see no one. The voice cried out the second time: “I welcome thee, Boyislav, youngest of twelve!”

Now he knew where the voice came from; but though he went in that direction and examined everything very carefully, he could see no one. Only after the voice had called much louder than the first and second time, “I welcome thee, Boyislav, youngest of twelve!” did he see behind a rock a famished little horse, so poor that he could count all its ribs.

“What dost thou want of me?” asked Boyislav, not a little astonished that the horse knew him.

“‘Tis thy wish to free the three princesses,” answered the horse; “then listen to what I advise: In the first castle thou wilt find the first princess, who will greet thee with kindness beyond measure, and offer thee food and drink. Eat with relish, but let not the princess eat with thee or kiss thee. Take what is left of the food when thou hast eaten, and go to the second castle; there the second princess will greet thee with still greater kindness, and offer food and drink. Eat with relish, but for no reason let her eat with thee or kiss thee. Take what is left after eating, and go to the third castle, where the third princess will give thee the most kindly reception of all, and place food and drink before thee; eat freely, but let not the princess eat with thee or kiss thee. Take what is left, and come here to me.”

“Is nothing more needed to gain their freedom?” asked Boyislav.

“Nothing,” answered the horse; “but thou must not speak a word all this time.”

“That is very easy,” thought Boyislav.

But the horse said with great emphasis: “Have a care; for to thee ‘tis a question of life or death.”

Boyislav went with quick step to the first castle, where a princess of wonderful beauty ran forth toward him. “I welcome thee, Boyislav, youngest of twelve!” cried she, with glad voice. “How art thou here? Come to my chamber; let me give thee good cheer. What is thy father doing? How are thy brothers?”

Then she took his hand and seated him at the table, to which she brought the most savory food and drink, continually speaking of his home. But he gave no regard; and when she wished to eat with him, he thrust her aside without mercy. Then he seized what was left of the food and hurried away. The princess gave him the sweetest of names, and stretched her hands toward him, but he acted as if he neither saw her nor heard her.

At the second castle a still more beautiful princess ran toward him, greeted him with still greater gladness, led him into a chamber, seated him at a table, and brought the most savory food and drink, talking continually. She moved toward him, wishing to kiss him; but he thrust her aside very rudely, so that she fell to the floor. Before she could rise he had taken what was left of the food, and was gone.

He had barely reached the third castle when a princess ran out to meet him. She was far more beautiful than the other two, and wished to fall on his neck straightway. He was amazed at her beauty; but keeping in mind the words of the horse, he thrust her away. But still she led him into the castle, seated him at a table in the loftiest chamber, and entertained him with the best food and drink. Boyislav ate and drank heartily, but when the princess wished to eat, he pushed her aside so rudely that, after staggering a few steps, she fell to the floor. Then, quickly gathering the remnants of food, he ran off, though the princess called him with heart-rending voice.

When he came to the horse he spread on the rock the remnants of food, which the horse devoured eagerly. “What now?” asked Boyislav.

“Go for the three princesses, and bring them to thy brothers in the boat; they are free, for they are the horses which thou hast seen running around thee. A wicked sorceress enchanted them, so that twelve hours they were horses and twelve hours princesses. Then come for me, or thou wilt suffer."

Boyislav did as the horse desired, and brought to his brothers the three princesses, who, with tearful eyes, thanked him for their liberation. Then he returned to the horse, which said, with sad voice: "Too bad! too bad!"

"What has happened?" asked Boyislav.

"Thou art unfortunate," answered the horse; "thy departure from home was unfortunate, for know that thy brothers have gone."

"Then I must perish here!" cried Boyislav.

"Now thou wilt not perish; but hadst thou gone on the boat thy death would be sure, for thy brothers had conspired to kill thee."

"Oh, the thankless wretches!" cried Boyislav. "What shall I do now?"

"If thou wilt obey me," said the horse, "thou wilt gain thy object in time. Go now to the garden of the first castle, and pluck four golden apples, but only four."

Boyislav went, and for the first time noticed the beauty of the whole garden; he went back and forth, and would have soon forgotten the apples had he not heard the neighing of the horse. Now he saw the tree with golden apples, and plucked four. Since they were so beautiful, he wanted more, but the horse neighed so fiercely that the whole castle trembled; his arm, which was stretched to the apples, dropped of itself, and he returned to the horse, which said, "Now sit on me."

Boyislav did so, and the horse bore him soon to the shore of the sea, and said, "Throw an apple in the sea."

"But it is a pity to lose it!" said Boyislav.

"Throw it in!" repeated the horse, with stern voice; and Boyislav obeyed. That moment a road five hundred miles long rose out of the sea. The horse stepped on the road, and hurried along night and day. When the domes of a great city were seen in the distance, he said to Boyislav: "Now we are going to Red Island, to a king who has a very ugly daughter; but have no fear in the world of her. When she casts eyes on thee, say that thou art seeking a bride, but before choosing thou must consult thy father. Then the king will offer thee a present; take nothing but a piece of rope for my bridle."

Boyislav promised obedience. When they came to Red Island, the road sank in the sea, and the horse hurried on. Boyislav left him on the meadow outside the city, and went straight to the king's castle, where he was courteously received. "Where art thou going, noble prince?" asked the king.

"In search of a bride," answered Boyislav; and the king led him to his daughter. She was so ugly that Boyislav was frightened.

"Does she not please thee?" asked the king.

"Oh, she pleases me," said Boyislav, — "pleases me greatly; but first I must talk with my father." The king smiled, and led his guest to the supper-chamber, where he was entertained in king's fashion. Boyislav wished to go very soon, but the king took him first to his treasury, and offered him much gold and silver.

"Thanks to thy Grace!" answered Boyislav. "My father has great treasures also; but if thou wilt make me some present, give me a piece of rope to repair my horse's bridle."

"Oh, I will give thee a splendid bridle and saddle!" said the king.

But Boyislav answered: "I wish no rich outfit on the road; it is an enticement to robbers."

The king tried to persuade him, but could not; then he had a rope brought which was very slender, but very long, so that Boyislav was hardly able to bear it away. After a kindly farewell to the king and the princess, he hastened outside the town, where the horse called from a distance: "Thou hast done well; now wind that rope round my body."

Boyislav opened the bundle, and a whole hour passed before he could wind the rope around the horse. When he had finished, they hurried to the sea, where the horse said, "Throw a second apple in the sea."

“But it would be an eternal pity!” said Boyislav.

“I tell thee to throw the second apple in the sea!” repeated the horse, with stern voice. Boyislav obeyed. That moment five hundred miles of road rose from the waves of the sea, along which the horse rushed like the wind, night and day. When the domes of a great city were visible in the distance, he said to Boyislav: “Now we are coming to Green Island, ruled by a king who has a daughter, not beautiful and not ugly; thou wilt say that thou art looking for a bride, but before choosing thou must consult thy father. When thou art taking leave, the king will offer all kinds of jewels as a gift; accept nothing, but ask for the cloth of the table from which thou hast eaten.”

Boyislav promised this. When they had come to Green Island, the road sank in the sea, and the horse hurried toward the city. The horse remained in a meadow outside the gates. Boyislav went to the palace, where he was welcomed by the king, and presented to the princess.

“What brought thee to me?” asked the king.

“I am in search of a bride,” answered Boyislav, looking at the princess, who seemed pleased at his words.

“And hast thou found one?” asked the king.

“Not yet,” replied Boyislav.

“Does my daughter not please thee?” The princess blushed.

“Oh, she pleases me greatly,” said Boyislav, “but first I must talk with my father.”

The king frowned at these words, and the princess was flushed with anger; but Boyislav changed not, and was so courteous that the king grew ashamed, and conducted him to the supper-chamber, where there was a small table covered with a poor-looking cloth, but upon which stood the choicest food and drink. Boyislav ate with relish. When he had finished, the king took him to his treasure-chamber, where he offered him the richest presents; but Boyislav said: “My father has many treasures, and I prefer to travel unburdened.” When the king insisted on his taking something as a keepsake, even if of the smallest value, Boyislav said: “Give me the cloth of the table on which I was entertained by thee.”

“Oh, I should be ashamed to give such a thing,” said the king. “I will give thee another very skilfully woven.”

“I want no other,” answered Boyislav, making ready to go.

“Then take it,” said the king, giving the cloth with evident reluctance.

Boyislav parted with him and the princess, and hastened to the horse, which called out from afar: “Thou hast done well; now sit on my back, we’ll fare farther.” Boyislav sprang on the horse, and he raced over Green Island till he came to the sea.

“Throw the third apple in the sea,” said the horse.

“But ‘tis a pity forever to lose it,” said Boyislav.

“Throw the third apple in the sea, I say,” commanded the horse, sternly; and Boyislav obeyed.

That moment a road five hundred miles long rose from the waves of the sea. The horse ran like a flash, day and night, till they saw in the distance the domes of a great city.

“Now we are nearing White Island,” said the horse, “where a king reigns who has the most beautiful daughter under the sun. All the people on the island are asleep; for in the king’s palace a taper is burning which never burns out, and till some one quenches it they must all sleep. Go to the palace, look at the princess as much as may please thee, then take the taper, but be careful that it does not go out on a sudden; if it is quenched, run to me with all speed or thou wilt have trouble.”

Boyislav promised to obey faithfully. When they came to White Island the road sank in the sea. Boyislav, leaving his horse before the gates of the city, hastened to the palace. The most luxuriant trees were growing all over the island, and beautiful flowers were in bloom; the city was splendid, the palace of silver and gold, but nowhere was a living creature to be seen. Boyislav moved on carefully through the empty streets as if afraid of waking some person. When he entered the palace he was amazed at its matchless beauty, but all was as nothing in comparison with the beauty of the princess who was sleeping on a dark purple couch in the last chamber. She was clothed in a light garment, white as new-fallen snow, her dark hair fell on her white, slightly moving bosom, her lips were half open, her teeth shone like pearls, and her whole figure was so full of charm that Boyislav held his breath. With head inclined, with crossed hands, he looked at her long, — forgot the horse, the taper, and the whole world, not thinking whether he was living; he only felt that the princess was beautiful. When he had waited a long time he remembered the taper, looked around the room, saw it on the table, and saw on two couches the king and queen. He stepped quickly to the table to quench the taper and rouse the princess, when all at once he heard the horse neigh so fiercely that the palace trembled to its foundation; his hand dropped of itself, and he muttered: "Thanks to thee, oh horse! Had I quenched the taper all would have risen, and who knows what might have come to me?"

He took the taper quickly and turned away, but when passing through the door he could not refrain from looking at the princess again; she seemed still more beautiful. He put the taper on the table, knelt and kissed her hand; with that her face became ruddy as a rose, and around her mouth appeared a smile. He sprang up; and as dark night had come, he thought of his return, seized the taper quickly, looked at the princess, wrote on the table, "Boyislav, youngest of twelve," and went from the palace, taking care that the taper should not be quenched. He reached the gate of the city, but there the taper was blown out by the wind. That moment was heard in the city a shout, which grew louder the longer it lasted; but the trusty steed appeared and bore him in a flash to the shore of the sea.

"Throw in the last apple," said the horse.

Boyislav obeyed without a murmur. That moment there rose from the waves a road which reached to firm land, and as dawn was appearing they came to the shore. Then the road sank in the sea.

“Now come down,” said the horse; “let me rest, and do thou rest, too.”

The horse went to the green meadow, and Boyislav lay on the grass and mused on the princess of White Island. Since he was wearied greatly, he fell asleep, but thought of the princess so that he sighed from sorrow when the horse roused him and said, “Let us go.”

Boyislav mounted in silence. They travelled till they saw the domes of a great city. “What city is this?” inquired Boyislav.

“Seest not,” asked the horse, “that is thy birthplace?”

“Sure enough! Go quickly, dear horse, that I may embrace my father.”

“Hurry not,” said the horse; “for it would be better for thee not to go.”

“Why?” asked Boyislav with wonder.

“Because thy father has uttered sentence of death against thee.”

“I do not believe that,” replied Boyislav, shaking his head; and the horse was silent.

Boyislav’s heart beat with joy when he entered the gates of his native place, but his joy was short-lived. He had scarcely passed one street when people began to gather around him, till at last an officer of the king’s army seized the bridle of his horse, and ordered the people who were standing around to seize his arms. All rushed like hungry birds of prey on the terrified Boyislav.

“What art thou doing!” cried he, when at length he recovered himself. “Do ye not know that I am your prince?”

“Prince or not,” cried all, “we know thee well enough to know that to-morrow thou wilt dance in the air.” They took the unfortunate Boyislav to the castle, where, by command of the king, he was cast into a dark dungeon, and his horse, which they all laughed at, was shut up in a pen. The officer who brought Boyislav to the palace got a great reward, and went in high glee to the nearest inn to drink with his comrades.

Why was the king enraged with his favorite son? Because shameless lies had been told by his other sons. When Boyislav brought the three princesses of Black Island to the boat and returned for his horse, his brothers weighed anchor at once and sailed off. On the way they forced the unfortunate princesses to promise on oath to tell the king that they were the liberators, and to say that Boyislav on Black Island had attached himself to a worthless woman, and made sport of his old father.

Meanwhile they agreed to cast lots for the princesses. When the brothers declared their wish, the princesses said that they would not break their oaths, but could never be the wives of such men. The brothers paid small heed to this, for their hearts were hard. They were satisfied with having got rid of Boyislav. They ordered the oarsmen to press on. As a favorable wind blew without stopping, they soon arrived safely on firm land, where they hired horses and hurried to their native place.

The king, who had recovered as soon as the princesses on Black Island were freed, welcomed his sons and the princesses with tears in his eyes. But how he flushed up with anger when they told the story to which they had been forced by oath! He ordered the death of Boyislav at once, and offered a great reward for his capture. The wicked brothers rubbed their hands with glee, but the princesses withdrew to the chambers given them by the king, and passed their time in silent grief.

The king was astonished at this, and wished to know what prince they loved; he would give his blessing at once, and the proper income. But the princesses only shook their heads, and the king asked his sons the reason of the princesses’ sorrow. The young men evaded the question, saying that perhaps the princesses were homesick. At last they led the conversation to Boyislav. The king flushed up with anger, which was all his sons wanted, so as to avoid speaking of the princesses of Black Island, for they knew nothing about them.

And now, when Boyislav was in prison, they continued to excite the king to give an order forbidding any one to ask mercy for him under pain of death. “Why should I endanger my life?” thought every one; “the king of course knows why he puts his son to death.” Many pitied the prince, but only one man shed tears. He was an old warrior who had once commanded the king’s armies, and was retained as a friend of the king; he did not believe that Boyislav deserved death, and resolved to ask pardon for him. “Well,” thought he, “I shall not live till spring, and it is all the same whether I die a day earlier or later. I have been in danger of death times without number and have never been even wounded; perhaps I shall escape now.”

He went bravely to the king, who greeted him very kindly, as was his wont. “What dost thou wish?” asked he of the old man, who was silent.

“I ask mercy for Boyislav,” said he.

“How darest thou slight my order?” asked the king, angrily. “Knowest not thou art doomed to death?”

“I know,” answered the old man with dignity; “but I fear not death. I mean to say that thou art disgracing thyself by giving thy own blood to the hangman.”

The king was struck with these words, and walked up and down the room with bowed head.

“Who knows whether Boyislav is really guilty or not?” said the old man, “for the conduct of the princesses from Black Island is strange.”

“Thou art right, and I will not give him to the hangman; but still he must die. I shall have him confined with the lions. Let them tear him.”

The old man made further effort, but the king would not be persuaded. When night came Boyislav was taken secretly from prison and shut in with the lions. But the brothers were not satisfied yet; they told the king that Boyislav could easily escape, and advised him to wall up the doors. The king consented, and the next day the doors were walled up, there remaining only a small opening on the other side. This was fortunate, for otherwise

Boyislav must have perished for want of air. He looked at the lions without fear; they did not harm him. Then he took out the taper and the tablecloth, which he kept in his bosom, lighted the taper, laid the cloth on the ground, and asked for the choicest food; it appeared. He fed the lions first, then ate and drank himself. The lions lay at his feet in thankfulness; he lay on them and fell asleep. When awake he played with the lions, — who in a few days were tame, — or thought of the princess on White Island. In this way his days passed quickly, and before he knew it a whole year had gone.

Meanwhile the princess of White Island travelled over the world with an army in search of her liberator; she had already visited many kings, but in no royal family had she found twelve sons. At last she came to the dominions of the old king and learned that he had twelve sons. Her heart jumped for joy, and she marched night and day till she appeared before the capital. Straightway she sent messengers to the king, asking him to send her that prince who had freed her and her whole kingdom.

The king called the five princes who went with Boyislav, and asked if they had been on White Island.

“Of course!” answered the truthless princes; and the eldest one shamelessly added that he had freed its princess.

“Then hurry to her,” said the king. He went.

“Where is the taper?” asked the princess when he came; but he knew nothing of it. Thereupon the princess became so angry that she drew her sword and cut off his head with a blow.

Again she sent the messenger with the announcement that if her liberator were not sent, she would turn the city into dust and ashes.

“I freed her,” said the second prince to the frightened king.

“Then go to her.”

When she asked the second prince about the taper, he could give no answer, and lost his life. The messenger returned to the king, and told him what had happened to the two princes; the three remaining ones were so terrified that they confessed the truth.

The old man, Boyislav's savior, now said to the king, "I told thee Boyislav was innocent; thou wouldst not believe me. Now see how thou hast saved thy city from destruction, for the princess will surely carry out her threat unless Boyislav is delivered up."

"But how can I deliver him up when he is dead?" asked the king.

"He is not dead," replied the old man, joyfully, "for there is still a little opening in the lions' den, and there is light there night and day."

The king sprang up joyfully, hastened to the den, and had the walled-up doors opened. Boyislav looked on this carelessly; and when the king implored him with tenderness to come out, that he forgave him all, he shook his head saying: "I will not go, it is good enough for me here."

"But the princess will destroy my city," said the king.

"What princess?" asked Boyislav with curiosity.

"The princess from White Island."

In silence, but with gladness in his eyes, Boyislav quenched the taper, folded the tablecloth, and taking both with him walked out. When he went with the messenger to the princess, his heart beat with anxiety so that he could not raise his eyes when he stood before her.

"Thou art the man!" exclaimed the princess, joyfully. But when Boyislav knew not what to answer, she said reproachfully: "Has the ardor with which thou didst kiss me grown cold?"

"It has not," murmured Boyislav, wishing to kiss the golden hem of her robe.

The princess raised him up, and kissing him, said: "This is the earnest of our betrothal."

Boyislav was glad to respond; and now all returned to the castle, where feasting began, which was to be closed by the wedding of the princess and Boyislav. All were rejoiced except the princesses of Black Island, who were as sad as ever. The three princes who had gone to Black Island were in deathly terror. Boyislav in the middle of the feast grew sad, and when asked the reason, he inquired: “Where is my trusty horse?”

No one could answer him, till at last one of the servants remembered that the horse had been shut up in a pen. To the great astonishment of all, Boyislav ran out to him, fell upon his neck, and shed tears of joy.

“Thou hast done well to come,” said the horse, sadly, “or I should have perished with hunger; for the cord brought from Red Island is eaten. Every span of it became a bundle of hay. But now thou hast attained thy object, and I am needed no longer; cut off my head.”

“I cut off thy head!” exclaimed Boyislav.

“Then thou dost not wish to free me,” said the horse, with chiding voice.

Boyislav drew his sword and cut off the horse’s head at one blow. The horse disappeared in an instant, but in his stead appeared a beautiful prince, who fell on Boyislav’s neck and shed tears of joy.

“What is this?” asked Boyislav, full of astonishment.

“Come to supper,” said the prince; “I will explain it all.” Both hurried to supper; scarcely were they at the door, when the youngest princess from Black Island fell into his arms, and the other two pressed his hands. When they had recovered from the first surprise, the prince said: “I am the only son of a powerful king, whose dominions are not far from Black Island. I would not marry the daughter of a queen who was a witch, and she enchanted me; and the princesses of Black Island — the youngest of whom is my bride — were turned into horses twelve hours of each day. Boyislav freed the princesses first, and now has freed me. The moment I regained my form, the spell was removed from Black Island.”

All were delighted with Boyislav; but the king was thoughtful, and seemed to ponder over important things. At last he summoned the three princes who went with Boyislav to Black Island, and gave command to throw them to the lions; the lions tore them to pieces in an instant.

Now came new festivities; and when all was finished, Boyislav went with his wife to White Island; and the liberated prince, with his wife and sisters, went to Black Island, where they celebrated at once their wedding and their liberation.

59

THE TABLE, THE PACK, AND THE BAG

Before times long past, there lived in a little cottage an old father, with his three sons. The eldest son was called Martin; the second, Mihal; and the third, Yanek.

“Martin,” the father used to say often, as they were sitting in the evening at a bowl of skimmed milk, “I shall not be long alive; I feel it in my body. When I die, the cottage will come to thee; but do not cheat thy old mother and thy brothers.”

Martin always promised; but while the others were listening to their father, he looked sharply at the food, and picked out every piece of bread from the milk. Mihal saw this with astonishment; but Yanek was always grieved from his father’s talk, and did not even think of eating.

The father spoke the truth. In no long time he groaned his last; but when he saw his death-hour, he had all summoned for the parting. He reminded Martin again that he was never to let the cottage go out of his possession; and then turning to Yanek, whom he loved most, he said: “Yanichek, thou art simple, ‘tis true; but what the Lord has kept from thee in wit, he has added in heart. Only be ever as kind as thou hast been, and obey thy brothers;” with that he coughed, and was no more.

Martin and Mihal gave themselves up to lamentation, but Yanek was silent; he stood by his father’s bedside as if without sense. Only after a long time did he go out, sit in the garden under a tree, and cry like a little child.

After the funeral, Martin and Mihal decided to go out in the world, and leave Yanek with his mother. “The world is wide,” said they; “there fortune may meet us quickly, while in this little cottage we should never come to anything as long as we lived.”

It was all one to Yanek; but his mother who was still in good strength, did not like to have Yanek lose his fortune, and talked with his brothers so long that they took him with them. This was not agreeable to Martin and Mihal, but they reverenced their mother, and obeyed her.

All three made ready; Martin and Mihal put food in bags for themselves, and went out into the world. On the road Yanek said to his brothers, “I shall be glad to see if that fortune meets us soon.”

“Thou mayest run to meet it,” snapped the brothers, “since thou hast nothing to carry.” They were angry that Yanek had taken nothing, while they must carry heavy bags on their backs.

They walked on a whole half-day; the sun was burning, and the brothers were tired and hungry. They sat down at the roadside under a tree, in the shade, took out provisions, and began to eat, — that is, Martin and Mihal; but Yanek sat by himself and began to cry, either because he remembered his father’s death or was hungry. His brothers ridiculed him and said: “See now, thou wilt not be so lazy another time, and then thou wilt not be hungry.”

Yanek brushed away his tears with his sleeve, and said: “Ye might have a little shame. Ye are going out into the world so as to be able to support your mother when ye go home; but now ye have taken from her everything!”

Such an answer the brothers did not expect from simple Yanek. They were silent; and after a while, as if moved from kindness, they asked Yanek to eat with them; but they did not do it from compassion or brotherly love, but to lessen their fault. When they had eaten, they rose and went on their way. In the evening they came to a cottage and asked for lodgings. The cottager took them under his roof, and asked them to sup. Martin thanked him with a certain boastfulness, saying that he had provisions enough of his own.

The man sat down to supper with his wife. Yanek sat with downcast face alone in a corner. The woman went to the kitchen, and when returning, saw that Yanek had nothing to eat. “Oh, little boy, come and eat with us!” said she kindly. Turning to Martin she asked if that was their servant.

“What servant!” said Martin. “He is our brother, but such a lazy fellow, he would not bring anything for himself.”

Yanek did not wish to go to the table, but consented at last. Martin squinted at the dish; and when he saw soup, he hated Yanek. Soup was his favorite dish, and now he must look on and see how Yanek enjoyed it, and must be satisfied with dry bread and a bit of cheese. Full of hatred he went to bed in the place which the cottager showed him, with his brothers. For a long time he lay awake, and when he fell asleep he saw in a dream, Yanek eating soup. In the morning the brothers rose before breakfast, because they wanted Yanek to have nothing to eat. Martin went through the nearest forest, hoping that they would find no house all day, and so Yanek would have no food.

The whole forenoon they walked through the thick forest, and Martin wished to eat his dinner; but the forest began to grow thin and soon they came to an open country. They looked for a road, went on a small hill, and then saw in the valley a great castle as high as ten houses placed one on the other. Yanek laughed, but Martin was not pleased: “We have lost the road,” said he; “we must go back.”

“But, foolish fellow,” said Mihal, who was tired, “we are going out in the world, what difference does it make; it is all the same whether we go one way or another.”

Without saying a word or looking at his brothers, Yanek went straight toward the castle. That started off Martin, and soon he caught up with Yanek. “Walk behind,” said he, “I’m the eldest; I must go ahead.”

They soon came to the castle, but did not see a living thing; they were greatly afraid. Martin wished to run away; but when he saw Yanek open the door, he followed him. They entered a splendid hall. How astonished were they! On the floor was a pile of copper money five ells high. Martin and Mihal, blinded by the glitter of the money, threw out their remaining provisions, filled their bags, and wanted to run away; but Yanek opened the next door, through which the brothers saw in another hall a still greater pile of money, but silver. They emptied their bags of the copper money with all speed, and filled them with silver. They had barely done this when Yanek opened a third door, and cried out with wonder, — a thing which he seldom did, — “Ai!” The brothers threw their bags on the floor, rushed to the door, but had to cover their eyes with their hands, for it was as bright as the sun in the next chamber. They saw this was gold. Still more quickly than before, they threw the silver out of their bags, and panting for breath, filled them with gold pieces.

“Now let us go,” cried Martin; “some one may come, and then we shall suffer.” They started from the castle as fast as they could. Yanek went too, and took as he was going only one piece of money from each heap, and in the third room the remnants of food which his brothers had thrown out. The brothers escaped with the money successfully, meeting no one. Yanek followed at his leisure, eating the provisions which his brothers had thrown away. When they came to the forest, the two brothers crawled into the thicket, threw their bags on the ground, and began to rest. Yanek also lay down after he had put the last bit of bread in his mouth. Here Martin remembered the provisions, but he had only ducats in his bag.

“Yanek,” said he, “run back to the castle and bring us from the first chamber the provisions which we forgot there.”

But Yanek answered bluntly, “I will not go.”

“Why not?” asked Martin in anger.

“Because they might catch me, and I should have to suffer instead of you; besides, there is no food there, for when you threw it away I picked it up and ate it.”

“Monster!” screamed Martin in rage, “I’ll teach thee to obey thy eldest brother. Mihal, give him here to me.”

Mihal did not wait to be spoken to twice. They took poor Yanek between them and put so many blows on him that he was soon lying as if dead on the ground; then they took their bags on their backs and hurried home through the woods.

“That lazy-bones!” growled Martin, “let him go wherever he likes; he will not dare to teach us again.” They got out of the forest quickly, and in the evening came to an inn where they refreshed themselves. Next morning they set out for home. In the neighboring town, where the king dwelt, they bought a house, brought their mother to it, and began to live like great lords.

Yanek, poor fellow, lay for a long time unconscious in the forest. At last he woke from his trance, rested his head against a tree, and fell to thinking of his condition. “Oh, cruel brothers, ye have left the forest! Who knows whether I shall find the way home? I am weak; I cannot walk far; I will go back to the castle, no matter what meets me; I will take money, too, and live like a lord.”

Many a one will wonder that Yanek changed all at once; but a beating has brought many a man to new ways. So Yanek made ready and went to the castle. In the castle there was not a living soul. Yanek took off his coat, tied the sleeves at the wrist, and began to rake gold into them. He had almost finished when he heard noises at a distance like bursts of thunder. These noises grew louder and louder till at last they were so loud that the castle trembled. All at once a voice as if a fifteen-year-old bull were bellowing, called, “Hu! hu! I smell the flesh of a man!” and before Yanek could gather his wits after the fright, he saw two giants standing at the door.

“Oh, worm of the earth, thou art the one who is stealing our treasures!” howled one of the giants. “Ha, thou wilt be a nice roast for supper,” added he, smacking his lips so that Yanek lost his senses. But the second giant whispered something in the ear of the first, who nodded, and said to Yanek: “Listen, worm of the earth, I grant thee life, but henceforth thou wilt watch our treasures when we are from home.”

Yanek wanted to kiss the giant’s hand, but he could barely reach to his knee. “Only watch well, worm of the earth,” said the giant, graciously; “but so that thou shouldst not be hungry, strike on this little table three times with thy fist and call, ‘Food for a king!’ and thou wilt have food to thy liking.”

Yanek promised everything, and from that time forth he led a very pleasant life, — he did nothing, no living soul ever came to the castle, the table was always obedient. But at last he grew tired of all this. “Watch your own treasures, lord giants,” said he one day when the giants had gone out; “and thou, my good little table, come! — we will go home.”

Yanek put the table on his back, stole away from the castle, and soon found himself in the forest. He strolled leisurely through the forest, and after no long time was in the open field. Here an old grandfather met him, and asked if he had not something to eat. “‘Tis long since I have had a bit in my mouth,” lamented the grandfather.

“Then I will help thee,” said Yanek; “come with me to that tree over there.” They sat under the tree; Yanek put his table on the ground, and striking on it three times with his fist, said: “Food for a king!” The table was covered with the daintiest dishes.

The grandfather ate his fill, and said: “Indeed this is a very beautiful thing! But, my lad, if thou wouldst give me this little table, I would give thee something better in place of it. This pack has the virtue that at command an army will spring out of it as numerous as ever thou carest to wish.”

Yanek was greedy, but only from the time that he got a beating from his brothers; he took the pack, gave the grandfather the table, and they parted. But Yanek soon felt hungry; he was in the open field, and nowhere a house to be seen. Now he was angry at himself for having given away the table so frivolously; and besides he wished to know if what the grandfather said of the pack was true. He opened the pack and commanded “two hundred hussars to the field.” He had barely spoken when horses were neighing, arms rattling, and sooner than he could think, two hundred hussars stood in line before him. The officers saluted Yanek, and asked with respect what he wanted.

“About five thousand yards from here, under that tree, an old man took a table from me; ride after him, take the table, and bring it to me.”

He had barely finished speaking when the hussars rode off at a wild gallop, in no long time they returned, and their leader gave Yanek the table. Yanek opened his pack and said: “Two hundred hussars in here.” In a twinkle the hussars were in the pack, from the first man and horse to the last. “That is not a bad thing,” said Yanek to himself as he sat at the table, struck three times with his fist, and commanded, “Food for a king.”

When he had eaten to his content he took his table and his pack and went on. It was inclining toward evening, and Yanek had to look for a night’s lodging. But this made him small trouble; it was warm enough, he laid himself under a tree, put the pack under his head, held the table in his hand, and so fell asleep. Next morning he ate like a king and went on. This time he met a grandfather as he had the day before, and he too asked for food. Yanek commanded the table, and the grandfather ate his fill. “My lad,” said he, “here is a bag; give me thy table for it.”

“Oh, grandfather,” said Yanek, with a laugh, “nothing can come of that.”

“This is no laughing matter, my lad; the bag is worth getting, for it has this virtue, — that wherever and whenever thou hast the wish, thou canst call out of it as many castles as may please thee.”

Yanek fell to thinking, and then said with a smile, “Let it be so.”

The grandfather took the table, Yanek the bag; then they parted. But barely had the grandfather vanished from sight when Yanek opened the pack and commanded: “Three hundred Uhlans to the field!” Scarce had he spoken when three hundred Uhlans were standing in line before him. “Go now to the right on the road; at the ditch a man took my table: take that table and bring it to me.”

The Uhlans flashed away, and a man could scarcely have counted ten before Yanek had the table. Then he opened the pack and commanded: “Three hundred Uhlans this way!” and the Uhlans vanished in the pack. Yanek was beside himself with gladness when he took the table, the pack, and the bag, and continued his way.

In the evening he came to the capital town, and there he learned that his brothers had become great lords. He went before the town, tore his clothes purposely, then lay in the dust and rolled several times. He did this so that he might seem out and out ragged and poor. Then he went to his brothers and implored them to take pity on him. They would not even recognize him; but his mother fell on his neck and begged for him. The brothers gave way, and granted him lodging, but in the stable. Yanek was satisfied; he lay on the bed which was given him, — that is, a bundle of straw, — and waited till all were asleep. Then he sprang over the fence to the garden, opened the bag, and commanded: “One castle out of the bag!” and that moment there stood in the garden the most beautiful castle. Then he opened the pack and commanded: “Fifty infantry come out!” and fifty foot-soldiers stood before him.

“Ye,” said he to them, “will be all night on guard here in my castle; but when in the morning the cock crows the second time, rouse me.”

The warriors saluted and took their places on guard. Yanek took the table which he had secreted, as well as the pack and bag, and went into the castle. There he selected the most beautiful chamber, commanded the table, and supped. After supper he lay down and slept till the guards roused him. He rose, ate, and before any one was awake in the house of his brothers he commanded the warriors into the pack, the castle into the bag, then crawled over the fence, and lay on his straw in the stable. This he did night after night. But it was a wonder to his brothers how he was alive; for though they had two bags of ducats, they never gave him a morsel to eat. Therefore they pressed Yanek to tell them if he had gathered much coin in the castle; they thought he had money, but did not wish to show it before them.

“Simpleton! I was glad to get out of there alive; for that castle belongs to giants,” answered Yanek. “But I have something else, and it is better than your gold pieces.”

Then he brought the table, struck it three times with his fist, and said: “Food for a king!”

Martin and Mihal stood like apparitions, they could not believe their eyes; but when they began to eat they believed their tongues.

The story of the wonderful table was spread through the town, and soon came to the king. He was eager for the food of the table, and sent his chamberlain to Yanek to borrow the table for three days.

“Agreed,” said Yanek; “here it is. But if it is not returned to me at the end of three days I will declare war against the king.”

The chamberlain bowed, took the table, and told the king, with a smile, that Yanek would declare war against him unless the table was returned. The table pleased the king beyond measure, but still more the food; therefore he meditated how to deceive Yanek. He summoned all the joiners, carvers, and turners in the town, and ordered them to make exactly such a table as Yanek’s. They went to work, and before the third day had passed there were two tables, and the king himself could not tell which was the right one. Soon he made sure of it, and then he sent the counterfeit table by the chamberlain to Yanek.

Yanek struck the table three times with his fist and ordered: “Food for a king!” The table trembled, but nothing more. “Food for a king!” shouted Yanek, full of anger; but he soon discovered that the king had deceived him, and he pounded the table till he pounded it to pieces.

“Take this and carry it to the king,” said he to the chamberlain, “and tell him that I’ll smash down his castle to-morrow as I have broken this table!”

The chamberlain collected the fragments, took them to the king, and told him what Yanek had said. The king only smiled haughtily, and thought that he had finished with Yanek. In the night, however, he had wonderful dreams, and early next morning he ordered his army to be placed before the castle and be ready for battle.

Now Yanek came with his pack, counted the royal troops, and still once more asked the king to return his table; but the king only laughed. Then Yanek opened the pack and commanded: “A thousand times a thousand infantry out; a thousand times a thousand cavalry out.” From the pack there was the rush of an avalanche. Soon the whole country in front of the castle was filled with the finest of armies. The king and his troops were as if before a vision; but when Yanek raised his hand as a signal for attack, the king raised a white flag and went to Yanek.

“Thou seest,” said the king, almost imploringly, “I was mistaken; but I wish to correct my mistake. I will return the table, and besides I will give thee my daughter in marriage.”

“Then peace,” said Yanek. “But first bring thy princess; let me see her.”

The princess soon came with her ladies, raised her veil, and stood before Yanek.

“The wedding will be to-day!” ordered Yanek, and kissed the princess on the forehead. She was not angry; nay, it may be said she was glad. Then

Yanek commanded: “A thousand times a thousand infantry in; a thousand times a thousand cavalry in,” and closed the pack.

The royal army withdrew to the fortress, and now quick preparations were made for the marriage. At midday Yanek and the princess belonged to each other. Then they feasted, and the table gave meat and drink till the evening.

When all were in bed Yanek went out to the king’s garden with his bag, opened it, and commanded: “Let the most beautiful castle that can be in the world come out of this bag!” And that was such a castle that Yanek himself was astonished.

Then he went to the old castle to the king, who had already prepared chambers to which he wished to conduct him and the princess; but Yanek answered that he had his own household, and the king had such faith in him that he believed. Yanek conducted his bride to the new castle, and she could not admire its splendor sufficiently.

In the morning people hurried to the king and told him that there was a new castle in the garden. The sun was just rising, and casting its rays on the castle, the castle was blazing with gold, silver, and precious stones. The king now respected Yanek still more, and gave him all that he could, even his kingdom.

So Yanek became king, and a great king who could give battle to the whole world. On the boundaries he put castles everywhere out of the bag, and from the pack he garrisoned them with troops. The table gave him the best of food; what more could he want?

He reigned long, and was a real father to his subjects. As a punishment to his brothers he did not let them come near him; but his mother he cared for so well that she reached a great age. In the most beautiful chamber of the castle, on a golden throne, were the pack and the bag, and near them the table.

When King Yanek died he was mourned by all; he left his children the mightiest kingdom on earth. His eldest son succeeded him; but accustomed to splendor and luxury, he did not govern the kingdom so well as his father. After his death it was still worse. The succeeding kings were ashamed of their peasant stock; and so that no man might discover the real foundation of their power and turn them into ridicule, they took the table, the pack, and the bag, and cast them into a dark, damp cellar.

And will ye ask what became of such a mighty kingdom? The table rotted, the bag rotted, the mice gnawed the pack; and then it was all over with that kingdom.

In after times, when he was in straits, the king ran to the cellar, struck on the table, looked for the pack and the bag. But the table fell to pieces at the first blow, of the pack there remained but a few little straps, and of the bag a few threads.

60

THE KING OF THE TOADS

60. The King of the Toads

Many and many a year ago there was a cottage by the sea, and in this cottage lived a fisherman who caught fish in the sea. By the king’s command he was allowed to take fish, not when he liked, but only once a week, and that on Mondays. He was anxious, therefore, to catch many on that day. Fish, of course, are not so crafty as men, but still they know enough to see that there is no fun in being caught. What is to be done with them afterwards they don’t know; still, they must suspect that it can hardly be for their amusement. It is no wonder then that they did not crowd into the fisherman’s net.

The fisherman worked every Monday till the sweat streamed down his face; and this all the more, since, come what might, he was obliged to bring fish to the king’s kitchen each Monday. Once he worked the whole forenoon without catching even a white fish. “I will try once more,” thought the tired fisherman; “I will throw everything into the water, and jump around to frighten the fish, they are so stubborn.”

He threw the net deeply, and when he pulled it was very heavy. “Now there will be fish,” thought he, joyfully; but what was his astonishment when, instead of fish, he drew out a great copper kettle.

The kettle was so well fastened that the fisherman had to work long before he could take off the cover. But how he was frightened! Scarcely had he removed the cover when out of the kettle rushed black smoke, which grew thicker and thicker, till at last it changed to a fiery man.

“Thou hast helped me, and I will help thee,” said he to the terrified fisherman; “but in my own way I will destroy thee.”

The fisherman lost his head, but soon recovering said: “Oh, I don’t care, I am already tired of this world; still thou must do something for me, since I freed thee. I can’t understand how thou wert able to live in such a small place, and under the water too, and then change so quickly.”

“I’ll show thee in a moment,” said the fiery man; and he began to turn into black smoke, and in no long time he was packed into the kettle again.

“Dost see me?” inquired he of the fisherman.

“I see thee,” answered the fisherman, laughing; “I see thee, but thou’lt not see me any more.”

The cover was already on the kettle and fastened firmly. The fiery man by no means expected to find such cunning among people, and considering his condition in the kettle, began to beg of the fisherman: “Let me out and I will reward thee.”

“Swear that thou wilt never destroy me,” said the fisherman.

The spirit answered with a solemn voice, “I swear.”

The fisherman removed the cover, and black smoke rolled out, growing thicker and thicker, till at last it turned into a fiery man.

“Follow me,” said he to the fisherman; and the latter followed without thinking.

In a short time they came to a high cliff in which steps were cut in the stone. The fiery man bent to the earth, plucked an herb, and giving it to the fisherman said: “Keep this with thee always. Put thy foot on this step; immediately after thou wilt be on a high mountain, from which thou wilt see a great lake. In the lake is a wealth of fish, and thou hast the right to catch as many of them as may please thee, but only once a week, on Mondays. When thou hast the wish to come down, climb to the top, and soon thou wilt be at the bottom.”

Thereupon the fiery man vanished, but the fisherman went on the steps cut in the rock; in one moment a mighty wind caught him, and in a twinkle he was on a high mountain, from which he saw an altogether unknown country covered with dark forests, in the midst of which was a broad lake; only here and there was a grass-plot to be seen, there were neither hills nor the dwellings of men.

The fisherman went down from the mountain, and when he had reached the lake he found a boat with all the fishing-tackle, as if made ready for him. He went to work willingly, threw in the net, and drew out nothing; he threw it in a second time, drew out as much as before. “That fiery man has fooled me,” thought he, “but the third throw is always the best.” He cast his net again and drew out three fish; when he saw them in the net, he said bitterly: “Well, this is a wealth of fish! If it goes on in this way I’ll soon leave the place; besides, I don’t like travelling by wind.” But when he looked at the fish more carefully, and took them in his hand, he found that in all his life he had never seen anything like them. “These are not for me,” muttered he, “I must give them to the king; he will soon try them.” With that he left the boat, went to the mountain, and had barely touched the summit when a mighty wind seized him, and placed him on level land. He set out for home, and it was time; for his wife had already cooked the dinner and was waiting. As soon as he saw her before the door, he hurried his steps; and when she was in the cottage he began to run. And why did he run, because he feared her? Not at all. He cared nothing for her, as he said himself; but he loved domestic peace, and did everything his wife wanted, but always did it in such fashion that she might not know what he was doing; this was to preserve his own importance in her eyes. He went into the house slowly, and said at the door: “Well, my dear, I have caught a few fish to-day; but I had much trouble, or I should have been home long ago.”

“Time for thee,” snapped his wife; “if thou art late again I’ll eat alone, leave nothing, and thou wilt find out that I am not thy slave to wait and suffer hunger.”

“Oh well, things are not so bad to-day,” said the fisherman; “better come and see these wonderful fish.”

“They are just like any other fish,” cried the woman, “only they look a little different, that’s all.”

“And for that very reason thou wilt take them to the king. He will pay us well for them; we should not be able to use them.”

“Oh, thou couldst soon do away with them,” replied his wife, “but that’s why I’ll take them to the king; besides, we are up to our ears in fish.”

After dinner the fisherman’s wife hurried to the king with the fish. When she came to the palace, she asked the first man she met where the king was, but got as answer: “I don’t keep the king!” She went farther, making confusion everywhere until all the servants came together, but no one said anything to her. At last she reached the guard who stood before the king’s chamber; she wanted to go without ceremony to his Kingly Grace. The guard pushed her back sharply, but the fishwoman did not retreat so easily; she tried once more to break through the guards, but this time she was repulsed. One of the guards, as firm as a rock, and with as much hair on his face as a bear, caught her by the hand and pulled her so roughly that she almost fell to the floor. She screamed that they were killing her, and roused the whole palace; even the king came. She turned straight to him and cried out over the heads of the men: “Royal Grace, I am bringing fish, and these bears won’t let me in.”

The king, who was in good humor that day, beckoned her to come. “What kind of fish, and how many?” asked he when she approached.

“Royal Grace, only three, but so wonderful that I have not seen such as long as I live.” With that she took a fish from the basket and handed it to the king.

“Wonderful, indeed,” said the king, “but give them not to me, give them to my cook; and here is to thee for the road,” giving her a handful of goldpieces.

The fishwoman, when she saw so much money, fell at the king’s feet, and came near throwing him down; but he didn’t mind. Then she took the fish to the kitchen, and ran headlong home.

After she had gone the king went to the kitchen, looked at one of the fish, and said to the cook: “Thou must dress these fish in a special manner, and answer with thy head for the cooking.”

“Royal Grace, in what manner?” asked the cook, trembling with terror when he heard of his head; for though he was a great hero at cutting off heads, he trembled like an aspen when his own head was in question.

“That’s thy affair,” replied the king; “I will send my chamberlain to thee to look after the fish.”

The king went away, and presently the chamberlain appeared. The cook did not know how to prepare the fish, and lost his wits, — but that was his luck, for he did everything without knowing it, and altogether different from his wont. At last when they had the fish on the pan, and began to butter them, the whole palace trembled. Then followed a terrible shock; and before the cook or the chamberlain could think what it meant, they received each such a slap on the face from an invisible hand that they fell senseless to the floor. And while they were lying in such concord on the floor, they knew not that one of the fish stood on his tail in the pan, and said to the other two: “Will ye serve me or be food for the king?”

“Serve thee,” said both in one voice. With that all three of them vanished, and to this day no man knows whither they went.

The cook woke up from his involuntary slumber sooner than the chamberlain; he did not rise, however, but waited for the other. Then he rose, groaned heavily, complained, and both hurried to the fish; but they were gone. “The devil take the fish!” said the cook; “but what will the king say?”

It was no great joy for the chamberlain that the fish were gone; still he went to the king and told him of all that had happened in the kitchen.

“I cannot believe it,” said the king; “but if thou canst get more fish like these, thou wilt be forgiven this time. Now go to the fisherman and tell him to get other fish like these.”

The chamberlain hurried away with light heart, rejoiced at his easy escape. The fisherman said that he could catch fish only on Mondays. The chamberlain told this to the king; the king was very angry. But what could he gain by that?

There was joy in the fisherman’s cottage by reason of so much money, and the fisherman’s wife could hardly wait till Monday. She roused her husband early Monday morning, got him a holiday breakfast, and almost pushed him out of the house, so as to bring those strange fish with all speed. The fisherman obeyed, not his wife, however, but the king, and hastened to the cliff with the wonderful herb in his bosom. He had barely stood on the step, when he was carried to the mountain; and from there he rushed to the lake, where he found a boat waiting for him as before. The first and second time he caught nothing; but the third time he drew out three fish. “Now my wife will be glad,” thought he, and hurried up the mountain; from there he was taken to the valley in an instant, and ran home. His wife pulled the fish out of his hands, threw them into a basket, and ran to the king’s palace. The guard was ordered to let her pass; and she went straight to the king, who came out to meet her, and looking at the fish, to see if they were the same, gave her another handful of gold for her trouble. The fishwoman thanked him, took the fish to the kitchen, and went home leisurely, for she counted the money to see if there was the same as before; there was still more. Now there was joy in the cottage; and the fisherman was thankful in his heart to the fiery man, by whose action he had gained such peace in his household.

New orders were issued by the king to the cook, who was trembling with terror, thinking what would come of the fish. But the king, who did not believe even the chamberlain, sent his eldest son to watch both the chamberlain and the cook, lest they should eat the fish themselves. They all stood in great expectation around the pan in which the butter was melting under the fish; but as soon as they began to butter the fish, the castle was shaken more violently than before, a still louder shock followed, and the cook, chamberlain, and even the prince himself, received such slaps from an unseen hand that all three fell senseless to the floor. And while they were lying there, they did not know that one of the fish stood on its tail in the pan, and said to the other two: “Will ye be food for the king, or serve me?”

“Serve thee,” answered the two in one voice; then all three vanished in an instant, and to this day no man knows whither.

The cook came to his senses first; but seeing the chamberlain and the prince still on the floor, he stayed where he was. The chamberlain followed his example; at last the prince jumped up and roused both. For a while they acted as if they had lost their wits, then rose to their feet slowly, and complained. When they looked in the pan they found it empty. The prince told all carefully to his father. The king was raging, and threatened them all with death. At last he was pacified, and sent the prince to the fisherman. The prince gave the king’s order, but the fisherman said that he could catch those fish only on Mondays. When the king heard this he fell into a towering passion, though he knew himself that the fish could be caught only on Mondays. At last he grew calm, but resolved to be present next time they cooked these most wonderful fish.

On Monday the fisherman’s wife pushed her husband out of the house at the dawn of day. The fisherman came to the top of the mountain as before, then hastened to the lake, where on the third cast of the net he drew out three fish. He hurried to the top of the mountain; next moment he was in the valley, and ran home as fast as his breath would let him. His wife shortened the journey for him: she ran to meet him, and pulling the fish out of his hands, rushed off to the palace like a crazy woman. The king was waiting; and ran out the moment he saw her. When he looked at the fish he gave her two handfuls of gold. She took the fish to the kitchen, and hurried away. When she came to the field she sat down and counted the money ten times.

In the king’s kitchen the king, the prince, and the chamberlain watched the cook while he was preparing the fish. Because the king was present, great attention was paid to everything. This was done partly to make the king tired of being there; but he gave them to understand that he would wait till the fish were ready. After long preparation they got them on the pan; but as soon as the cook began to butter them the palace shook as in a tempest. Then came a shock as from a lightning-stroke, and in an instant all present received such slaps on the face that they fell senseless to the floor. While lying there without distinction of persons none of them knew, not even the king, that one of the fish stood on its tail in the pan and said to the other two: “Will ye serve me or be food for the king?”

“Serve thee!” answered both in one voice; and all three vanished.

After a long time the cook woke from his trance, and seeing the king prostrate, remained as he was. In like manner acted the chamberlain and the prince when they recovered. At last the king rose, walked around the pan quickly, saw no fish, wondered greatly, and went to his chambers in silence. When the king had gone, the prince, the chamberlain, and the cook sprang from the floor and shook themselves.

The king pondered long over these fish, weighed everything duly, and then sent for the fisherman. The fisherman came straightway; but how he wondered when he heard what had happened at the buttering of the fish! The king said: “Take me to that lake; I will examine everything carefully myself.” The fisherman of course consented. The king took his body-guard, and all moved toward the cliff, with the fisherman at the head. When they arrived there the fisherman gave the king some of the herb which he had received from the fiery man, took him by the hand, and stood on the stone step. In an instant a mighty wind seized them; the king and the fisherman flew through the air, but the body-guard stood, as if fallen from heaven. They waited long; but when nothing came of it, they returned to the palace, and told the terrified people what they had seen.

In due time the king with the fisherman appeared on the summit of the mountain, from whence he saw the whole country. Although there was no palace, nor even a cottage, still it pleased him greatly at first sight.

“There,” said the fisherman to the king, “is the lake where I catch the wonderful fish; I haven’t gone farther yet in any direction.”

“Very well,” said the king, “let us go down.”

On reaching the lake the king told the fisherman to catch the fish; but he went on himself to examine the place. The farther he went the thicker the grass, till at last he had hard work to get through; still he advanced till he came to a beautiful green meadow, having on one side the forest, and on the other the lake. Near the shore in a boat sat an old grandfather, whose head was as white as an apple-tree in blossom.

“Wilt thou row me over, grandfather?” asked the king.

“Why should I not, since that is what I am here for?”

The king took a seat in the boat. The old man rowed without hurrying; but the boat moved lightly over the smooth water, like a fly through the blue sky. When they reached the middle of the lake the old man turned to one side. Then the king saw a grand castle half hidden in the dark forest.

“Oh, what a beautiful castle! Who reigns there?” asked the king.

“Thou wilt learn if thou enter,” replied the old man. When they touched the shore he gave the king a green twig, and said: “Take this twig; it will be of use to thee. Good-by, for thou wilt not see me again.”

“But who will take me back?”

“No one. Thou wilt go back on dry land;” and turning aside, he disappeared.

The king went straight to the palace; and if he wondered at the words of the old man, he was still more astonished when he entered the principal gate and saw no living soul. Thoughtfully he ascended the broad steps, went through one chamber, then another, a third, and a fourth; but nowhere did he find a living creature. “This is some enchanted castle,” thought the king to himself. “Who knows how I shall escape? But I will see all, and then find the way home.” He examined the chambers further till he came to the last, and there in the middle of the room sat an old man, bent to the floor. “I said this was an enchanted castle,” thought the king; “here sits one man!”

The old man raised his head, and seeing the king, said: “Welcome; at last I see a human face!”

The king approached him and asked: “Who art thou, and what does this empty palace mean?”

“I am a king, but without subjects or power; another rules in my place,” answered the old man, bitterly.

“What is the cause of this?”

“The treason of my own wife.”

“And is there no rescue?”

“Well, the same as none; therefore be off at once, otherwise my wife will kill thee when she returns from the King of the Toads.”

“I am not afraid of a woman,” said the king. “I want to stand before her; we shall see if there is no escape.”

“If there were escape I should not be sitting here confined by the King of the Toads!”

“Who is this King of the Toads?”

“Listen; I will tell thee my whole sad story. The sun is yet high, and until it sets my wife will not return: Once I ruled over a powerful nation; around my palace was a great city, and near it a beautiful garden. All is changed into a dark forest and a lake. The fish in the lake are my former subjects. I was once happy, and the more so because I obtained as wife a beautiful and kind princess; but the King of the Toads got into the place where the lake now is, and he turned my wife’s heart from me. I remonstrated, begged, threatened my wife with death, but in vain. Every day she went to meet the King of the Toads, and listened to his wheedling speech. Once I came upon them in the summer-house, and heard with my own ears their whispering and kissing. At last the King of the Toads said: ‘I will find the nest of the magic bird, will take its eggs, and give them thee to eat; thou wilt become immortal and ever young; then we shall be altogether happy.’ ‘Deceitful serpent!’ I cried, springing from my hiding-place; and with a sharp sword I cut the King of the Toads in two. My wife fell upon him, weeping, and he grew together again. Looking at me with venomous eye he muttered words I could not understand, and that moment I felt my blood grow cold, and my veins stiffened so that I could not think of further struggle. I came home in misery and sat down on this chair to rest; but the King of the Toads froze me to my seat, and laid a spell upon the land. From that time I sit here, I know not how many years. My wife spends every day with her lover, and catches frogs for him out of the lake; in return, he promises her immortality and eternal youth. Now, thou canst see there is no aid for me; but escape thou before my wife kills thee.”

“I will not flee,” said the king, and drew his sword. “I’ll cut off her head, — the traitorous soul!”

“Foolish man,” said the old king; “the King of the Toads saves her, and will not let her be hurt.”

“Let him guard her; I must avenge thee,” answered the king, and sat on a chair waiting for the deceitful queen, paying no attention to the old man, who begged him by everything in the world to escape.

As the sun was going down the queen came, and was not a little astonished when she saw the stately knight with her husband. The king drew his sword and ran towards her, but the moment the sword touched her clothing it broke in two. It would have been bad for the king now, if he had not remembered the twig which the boatman gave him. He pulled it out quickly, and struck the queen three times. The third time he struck she dropped on a seat, and was unable to move an eye.

“Sit there, like thy husband,” said the king, mockingly, and counselled with the old man what to do further.

“It would be better,” said the old man, who gained courage when he saw his wife frozen to the chair, “to persuade the King of the Toads to free the kingdom and me from enchantment.”

“I will try,” answered the king; and going to the adjoining chamber, where the queen’s wardrobe was, he dressed in her garments and came back to the old man. “Now I will go to the King of the Toads and pretend to be his love, thy virtuous wife. Then I will beg him; and if he does not do what I want, I’ll freeze him with this twig, and stroke him with my sword till his heart softens.”

“But beg of him first,” said the old man.

The king made his way in silence to the King of the Toads; but as it was night he could not find him, and was obliged to call out. He changed his voice, which deceived the King of the Toads, who came quickly and wished to embrace him, thinking that he was the queen.

“No, my dear,” said the king; “first thou must do something to please me. What good is it for us to live together if my former husband is troubling me? Either kill him altogether or give him back his former condition, so that he may die; if thou wilt take the spell from him, he will fall to dust and ashes."

"Let it be as thou wishest," said he, drawing nearer.

But she moved away, and said: "I have one more favor to ask, but this concerns us alone. As soon as my former husband dies thou wilt take his place and we shall reign together, but what sort of a reign would it be if the whole country were enchanted; therefore give back its former shape to the kingdom, and I will marry thee before the world."

"So let it be," replied the King of the Toads, and embraced his supposed love, who refused no longer. Scarcely had he touched her when he was struck three times with the twig, in the dark night, and the King of the Toads was frozen to the earth.

"Serpent of hell!" cried the king with his powerful voice, "now I'll enchant thee for the eternal ages;" and with that he drew out his sword and cut him into countless pieces, which he threw into the water. Frogs rushed from every side with a terrible croaking, and greedily swallowed the bits of the body of their destroyer.

They had barely devoured him when the water began to run out of the lake; and the king saw by the light of the moon which had risen over the mountain summit, how the tree-tops were rising quickly from the water, higher and higher till the water disappeared altogether, and in the place of the lake was a splendid park, in which were multitudes of people who, praising the king, hurried to the castle. The king joined them, but before reaching the castle he had to pass through a large city; and only after travelling many streets did he arrive there. All the chambers were lighted up, and full of people, so that with difficulty did he find the old man, who was standing in the last chamber, and preventing the people from hewing the queen to pieces; but the king drew his sword and cut off her head. "She deserved it,” said he to the old man, who dropped a few tears for his former wife.

Now universal rejoicings began, but the liberated king took no part in them. He called his deliverer and said: “My hours are numbered, I give the whole kingdom to thee; rule in my place.”

The new king thanked the old one kindly, and when he rose in the morning, he heard that the old king was dead.

Our king mounted a fiery steed, rode to the city, and announced to the people the death and last will of their former ruler. They grieved for a moment, then with shouts of gladness greeted the new king.

After the burial of the old monarch, his successor examined the kingdom; and as everything pleased him greatly, he decided to stay there. Therefore he went to his former palace, but the road was far longer than when he had travelled it with the fisherman. He was obliged to ride several weeks before arriving there. No one knew him, for several years had passed while he was in the enchanted kingdom. At last an old grandfather came, who said: “I am one of the body-guard who went with thee to the cliff where thou didst leave us. Take me, I beg, into thy service again, for all my comrades are dead; I am alone.”

The people believed quickly the grandfather’s words, gathered around the king and kissed the hem of his garment. The king sold his castle, put everything he could into wagons, and made ready for the road. Now he remembered the fisherman, asked how he was getting on, and when he had returned home.

“Only yesterday,” was the reply.

“Send for him,” commanded the king; and straightway the fisherman was there.

When the king asked about his adventures, the fisherman answered: “Royal Grace, I have no fish, and God alone knows what happened in that place. All at once the water disappeared under my boat and I was on dry land. I left everything and ran away; but trees began to grow under me, and so quickly that every second branches struck my face. Since it was in the night I might have lost my senses. In the morning I wondered when I saw instead of a forest an enormous city, with a great palace. I hurried from that magic country, thinking to see my cottage soon; but I travelled one day, I travelled two, a week, a month, and then a year — no sign of my cottage. I gave up for a time, and only yesterday I came home safely. My wife was dead; I am all alone now in this wide world."

"Do not cry," said the king; "thou hast me yet. Thou wilt stay with me."

The fisherman answered with tears, and all started off on their journey. They arrived safely at the new kingdom; and all lived happily till they died.

61

THE MOUSE-HOLE, AND THE UNDERGROUND KINGDOM

Before times long past there reigned a king somewhere, and he had three sons. When they had grown up, and were trained as befits princes, they came one day to their father and said: “Our kingly father, permit us to visit strange lands, since we know our own country well.”

“Yes, it is proper,” answered the king, wisely, “for royal princes to know more than any of my subjects; and I permit what ye ask, but on one condition. Ye are all of an age in which almost every man seeks the partner of his life; and as far as I know, ye also will do the same. I have no wish to tell you what princesses to fall in love with, but I ask this: Return before a year and a day, and bring me some gift — not costly, but valued — from your chosen ones.”

The princes were astonished that their father had guessed their thoughts so well, and agreed without thinking. Then they took their crossbows and went to the open field. The eldest son let the bow-string go, and the arrow flew to the east. The second let the string go, and the arrow flew to the west.

“And where am I to aim?” cried the youngest, whose name was Yarmil. That moment a mouse ran near him to its hole; he let the string go, and the arrow flew after the mouse.

“Oh, thoughtless fellow!” said the eldest prince in rebuke; “now thou must go to the mouse-hole.”

“It is settled,” answered Yarmil, and shrugged his shoulders.

They went home, prepared for the road, and next day started; the eldest to the east, the second to the west, and Yarmil to the mouse-hole. Up to that moment he had held it merely a jest; but how was he astonished when on nearing the place the earth opened so that he rode in conveniently, and sooner than he could think was in an open country, in the middle of which stood a white marble castle. Nowhere did he see a living soul; and he felt sure then that he would find no one in the castle; but scarcely had he entered the gate when a lady came forth to meet him who had not only garments, but face, hair, eyes, in short everything, white as newly fallen snow. She held by the bridle a mettlesome white steed, and without saying a word, indicated to Yarmil to descend from his own horse and sit on the white one; but he had barely mounted the white steed when it rose with him through the air, and without heeding the bit, went on till it brought him to the earth before a splendid castle. Yarmil marvelled, for the castle was so brilliant that he could not look at it, such was the glitter of gold and precious stones. Around about, wherever the eye could see, was a beautiful garden, in which the most luxuriant trees were growing, the most beautiful flowers were in bloom, and birds of every color were singing.

When he had recovered from the first surprise, Yarmil dismounted and wished to lead the steed to the castle; but it tore away, rose through the air, and vanished like a white dove in the clouds.

Full of expectation Yarmil entered the castle. He struck on the gate; no answer, but it opened of itself. He went in on broad marble steps to the door of the first chamber. Again he knocked; no answer, but the door opened. He entered, but how did he wonder again! There was such splendor that he exclaimed, “My father is by far the richest king, but this chamber alone is worth more than his kingdom.”

But if the first chamber was rich, the second was richer; and that splendor increased till he came to the eleventh, where there was a great crystal tub with golden hoops, into which, through a golden pipe, water still clearer than crystal was flowing. In the twelfth chamber were only four naked walls, an ordinary ceiling, and a common floor, but in the middle of the floor a diamond pan. When Yarmil examined more carefully, he saw written on it: “Whoever wishes to liberate me must carry me next to his body, and bathe me each day.”

Urged by curiosity Yarmil removed a diamond, then a golden, and finally, with great effort, a silver, cover. But how was he frightened when under it appeared a great ugly toad! He wished to escape, but at that moment such terror seized him that in spite of himself he took the toad out of the pan and put it in his bosom. The toad chilled him, but in a moment he was as happy as if he had liberated some one from death. Straightway he went to the eleventh chamber, took the toad from his bosom, and washed it carefully; but to his great affliction he saw that it was a toad, and the more he washed the uglier it grew. When he had grown tired he put it in his bosom again and went to the garden to cheer himself.

A sight of the trees and the flowers hitherto unnoticed, the odor of them, and the singing of the birds entertained him so that midday came before he knew it. He went back to the castle, and there, to his great surprise, saw in the first chamber a table covered with the most delicate dishes. He sat down with appetite, and when he had eaten to his content, and drunk of the wine which an unseen hand had placed before him in a golden goblet, he confessed that he had never tasted at his father’s table, or at the greatest festivals, such delicate dishes and such good wine.

Now he looked the room through with more care; the splendor did not charm him so much as at first, but the many musical instruments, writing implements, and beautiful books pleased him beyond measure, for he was skilled in every good art.

After the supper, which was as good as the dinner, he lay on a soft bed and slept soundly till morning; then he ate a good meal, which was on the table, and spent the time as he had the day before. He was annoyed at his lonely life, but he soon drove away trouble. He was grieved because the more the toad was washed the uglier it grew; still he washed it with care, and carried it in his bosom.

Now the year was nearing its end, when he had to return to his father with a gift from his bride. He walked like one deprived of reason through the castle and the garden; nothing could comfort him, but still he did not forget to bathe the toad each day, and with greater care. When the last day of the year had come, he knew not what to begin; but while walking through the room he saw on his writing-table a sheet of paper not there before. He seized it quickly; and on it was written in black letters:

Dear Yarmil,

I love thee unspeakably; but be thou patient, as I am patient. A gift for thy father thou hast in the pan; give it to him, but tarry not long at home. Put me back in the pan.

Yarmil hastened with joy to the twelfth chamber, took from the pan a rich casket set with diamonds, and put the toad in the pan; then he ran out quickly, mounted the white steed which was waiting, and which rose in the air and flew regardless of bit, till it stopped before the white castle; there the white lady gave Yarmil his horse, took the white steed, and led it away.

In a short time Yarmil came to the great gate, and when he had ridden through and looked, there was nothing behind but a mouse-hole. Putting spurs to his horse he rushed on at a gallop and came to the gate of his father's castle almost at the same moment as his brothers, so that all three were able to appear together before their father, and say: “Here we are, according to thy command.”

“But have ye brought gifts from your princesses?” asked the king.

“Of course,” cried the elder brothers, proudly. Yarmil answered, as it were, timidly, with a nod; for he knew not what was in that casket taken from the pan.

The king had invited a great number of guests to look at the gifts. All were in the banqueting-hall. The king led his sons thither, and when the feast was ended, he said to the eldest: “Now give me the gift from thy princess.”

“My love is the daughter of a great king,” said the prince, proudly; and he gave his father a casket containing a small mirror.

The king looked, and wondered not a little that he saw his whole person. Then he said: “Well, men’s hands can do everything.”

The second son gave him a still smaller mirror, but the king saw in it his whole person; still he only said: “Men’s hands can do everything. But what has thy princess sent me?” asked he of Yarmil. In silence, and timidly, Yarmil gave him the casket. The king barely looked in it when he cried in amazement, “That princess of thine has wealth in abundance; these diamonds alone have more value than my kingdom.” But he wondered when he took from the casket another such mirror, but smaller; and he was really frightened when in a twinkle a puppet sprang out and held the glass for him as soon as he looked at it, and the moment he stopped looking the puppet was gone.

“Oh,” cried the king, “no hand of man could frame that;” and embracing Yarmil, he added with tenderness: “Thou hast brought me true joy, my son.”

Yarmil called to mind the ugly toad, and had no regret now that he had spent a whole year with it; but his brothers and his mother, who was a witch and hated Yarmil, were enraged though they dissembled.

When the feast was over and the princes were parting with their father, he said: “Go now with rejoicing, but return in a year and a day, and bring me portraits of your princesses.”

The elder brothers promised with joy, but Yarmil barely nodded, for he feared what his father would say should he bring the toad’s portrait; still he went with his brothers beyond the town, where he parted with them, and galloped on to the mouse-hole. He was just drawing near when the ground opened to give a good entrance. At the white castle the white lady took his horse and gave him the white steed, which rose through the air, and regardless of bit, flew on till it reached the golden castle. Yarmil hurried to the twelfth chamber; the steed disappeared like a dove in the clouds.

In the castle nothing was changed, and the diamond pan was standing in the twelfth chamber. Yarmil removed the three covers, took out the toad and placed it in his bosom. Now he bathed it twice each day, but to his grief it grew uglier. How could he take the portrait of his princess to his father! He might paint the most beautiful lady, because he was very well skilled in painting, but he would not deceive his father. Only the hope that the toad would help him as before gave him strength to endure the dreary life.

At last the day was near in which he must return to his father. He looked continually on his writing-table till he saw to his great joy a sheet of paper on which was written in silver letters, —

Dear Yarmil,

I love thee unspeakably; be patient, as I am patient. Thou hast my portrait in the pan; give it to thy father, but tarry not long. Put me back in the pan.

Yarmil hastened to the twelfth chamber, found in the pan a casket still richer than the first. He took it quickly, and put the toad in its place. Then he hurried forth, sat on the white steed, which brought him to the white castle, where the white lady gave him his own horse. When he had ridden through the gate and looked back, he saw nothing behind but a mouse-hole. He put spurs to his horse, and rode to the gate of his father’s castle at the same time with his brothers. They stood before their father and said: “Here we are, as thou hast commanded.”

“Do ye bring me portraits of your princesses?” asked the king.

“Of course!” exclaimed the two elder brothers, full of pride. But Yarmil only answered with a nod, for he knew not what portrait the casket contained.

The king led them to the banqueting-hall, where the guests were assembled. When the banquet was over, he said to the eldest: “Now show me the portrait of thy princess.”

The eldest brother gave a rich casket to his father. He opened it, took out a portrait, and looking at it from every side, said at last: “That is a beautiful lady; she pleases me. Still there are fairer than she in the world, but any man might love her.” Then he gave the portrait to the guests, and said to his second son: “And the portrait of thy princess?”

The second son gave him promptly a richer casket, and smiled with happiness. He thought doubtless that his father must be astonished at the beauty of his princess; but he looked on her with indifference and said: “A beautiful lady too, but there are more beautiful in the world; still any man might fall in love with her.”

Then he nodded to Yarmil, who gave with trembling hand his diamond casket. Scarcely had the king looked at it when he exclaimed: “Thy princess must be rich beyond measure; thy casket is at any time worth twice my whole kingdom.” But how was he astonished when he took out the portrait!

He looked fixedly at it for a while, unable to utter a word. Then he said with the greatest enthusiasm, “No; such a lady cannot be found in the world.”

All the guests crowded around the portrait, and in one voice agreed with the king. At last Yarmil drew near to look at his princess, unknown till that moment. Now he regretted no whit that he had spent two years in lone life and nursing a toad; but his brothers and his mother were raging, and envied him his princess.

Next day the princes were taking farewell, and the king said to them: “After this time I will not let you go again. In a year and a day I wish to see your princesses; then we will celebrate the weddings.”

The two elder brothers were shouting with joy, but Yarmil answered no word. They took leave of their father and went together to the edge of the town, where they separated; the eldest went to the east, the second to the west, but Yarmil to the mouse-hole, which opened quickly to give him a convenient passage. At the white castle the white lady gave him the white steed, which flew to the golden castle regardless of bit. There Yarmil descended, and the steed vanished like a dove in the clouds.

Full of hope Yarmil hastened to the twelfth chamber, for he trusted to find there his wondrous fair princess whose portrait he had taken to his father; but he found in the pan the ugly toad, which he put in his bosom, and now washed three times each day. In vain was all his labor, for the more he bathed the uglier grew the toad. Had it not been for the portrait he would have fled from the castle, and who knows what he might have done? Every day his strength decreased, and when the last day of the year drew near it is a wonder that he did not despair; for the toad had become now not only ugly beyond measure, but all mangy, so that he shivered when he looked at it. And now he must bring this to his father as his chosen one.

“My father will kill me!” cried he with grief, and threw himself on the couch. He thought what to do, but could come to no resolve. At last he reached to his bosom to look once more at the toad, hoping that at sight of it a happy thought might come; but a new surprise, — the toad was gone. Now he began to lament. He ran through the whole castle, searched every room, in the garden every tree and bush, but no trace of the toad.

At last he remembered the dish in the twelfth chamber, ran thither, but stopped on the threshold as if thunderstruck; for that poor chamber had become a real paradise, and in the middle of it stood a lady as beautiful, if not still more beautiful, than the portrait which he had carried to his father. In speechless amazement he looked at her, and who knows how long he might have stood there had she not turned to him and said: “My dear, thou hast suffered much; but I am not yet entirely free, and my people are not. Hurry now to the cellar; here is the key, and do to a hair what I command, or it will go ill with us. When the door is opened, thou wilt hear a terrible wailing; but listen to nothing, and speak not a word. Go down on the steps; below thou wilt find on a table twelve burning tapers, and before each taper one shirt. Roll up the shirts, quench the tapers, bring them all with thee.”

Yarmil took the key. When he opened the door of the cellar he heard such wailing that it is a wonder his heart did not break; but mindful of what had been said by his bride, he went boldly, descended the steps, rolled up the twelve shirts, quenching at each one, one taper; then he took the shirts and the tapers and hurried back. But how did he wonder when he saw a man nailed to the door by his tongue! The man begged Yarmil by all things to set him free, so that there was a strange feeling in Yarmil’s heart; but after short hesitation he mastered this feeling, and shut the door.

When he came to his bride and gave her the shirts, with the tapers, she said: “These twelve shirts are my twelve skins, in which I was a toad; and these twelve tapers burned me continually. Now I am liberated, it is true; but it will be three years before I shall be completely free. Know that I am the daughter of a mighty king, whom that foul monster, who is nailed to the cellar door by the tongue, changed into a toad because I refused him my hand. He is a wizard; but there is a witch more powerful than he. To punish him, she nailed him to that door; I, too, am still in her power. Now promise that for three years thou wilt tell no living person into what creature I was enchanted; but especially tell not how many skins I had."

"Not even to my own mother!" exclaimed Yarmil, with excitement.

"It is just from thy own mother that thou must hide it most, for she is a witch, and hates thee; she knows long since that thou art three years with me, and most carefully will she try to learn from thee just what I have forbidden thee to tell."

Yarmil was greatly grieved, but the princess soon cheered him, especially when she said: "It is now high time to go, so as to come to thy father's at the right moment." Then she took him by the hand, and led him down the stairs. In front of the castle a carriage with four white horses was waiting; when they entered, the horses rushed off with such speed that soon they passed the white castle. Yarmil was going to ask who the white lady was, when the princess said: "That is my mother, who has aided in my liberation."

Soon they were at the great gate; and when they had passed it, and looked back, there was nothing but a mouse-hole. They arrived at the king's castle just in the same moment with the two elder brothers and their princesses. But no one looked at them, for the eyes of all were turned to Yarmil's bride.

The king was rejoiced most of all. He conducted the bride to the banqueting-hall, where there was a multitude of guests, and with tears of delight he exalted the happiness of his favorite son; but the elder princes and the queen were enraged, though they would not let it be known.

On the following day came the weddings of the three princes; though Yarmil and his bride were the last, still glory came only to them. At the banquet the guests drank continually to the health of his bride, so that the other princesses were purple from shame.

When Yarmil was almost reeling with delight, the queen drew near him, and praised with great flattery the beauty of his bride; but all at once she spoke of her origin, and in every way tried to discover whence she had come.

Yarmil at first evaded her questions; but when she urged him vehemently to tell from what land came his bride, he said: “Dear mother, I will do everything according to thy wish, but of this one thing ask me not.”

“I know well whence she comes,” smiled the queen; “I know, too, that thou didst not see her first in her present form.”

“Of course not; but I am proud that I liberated her.”

“Oh, my dear son!” exclaimed the queen, compassionately. “I pity thee greatly for letting thyself be so duped; but dost thou know that that beauty of hers is pure deceit?”

“Why?” asked Yarmil in fright.

“Because she is a witch,” whispered the queen in his ear, with an anxious look. “There is still time,” continued she, when she saw that Yarmil as it were believed, “to extricate thyself from her snares; and I wish to aid thee in every way. But thou must tell me what form she had before.”

Yarmil said that he would not tell, but the queen did not abandon her plan. When she could not discover from him directly, she began to name every kind of beast, looking with exceeding quickness at his face. Yarmil shook his head unceasingly, but was confused when she said “toad.”

“Then she was a toad before,” cried in horror the queen. “Ah! dear son, it is ill, very ill with thee; but it may be well yet if only I know in how many skins she was living.”

Again Yarmil answered decidedly that he would not tell, but the queen tried so long that at last she discovered. Now she knew what she wanted, and went from Yarmil. It is a wonder that he was not suspicious, but he said nothing to the princess.

Next morning a number of guests went with the king and his sons to the chase, and stayed in the forest till evening; thus the queen could act freely.

While the three princesses and the remaining guests were walking in the garden, she stole into the chamber of Yarmil's bride, found the twelve shirts and the tapers, hid them in her own apartments, and in the evening, when the king had returned from the chase and all were sitting in the banqueting-hall at table, she went to the garden, where she burned the shirts and the tapers. At that moment Yarmil's bride felt great faintness, so that she went for fresh air in the garden.

Yarmil hurried after her, but he had scarcely gone through the door, when she cried: "Woe is me, Yarmil! Thou hast told what I forbade thee to tell. Forget me; I must now to the glass mountain, from which there is no liberation." Straightway she vanished in the darkness of night.

Yarmil remained a moment as if paralyzed; then he ran through the garden as if he had lost his wits, and called his bride by the most endearing names, but in vain. The guests ran out at the sound of his lamentation, and were greatly terrified when Yarmil told his misfortune. The queen also came quickly, and listened as if with terrified wonder to what had happened.

"That was a witch," said she; "and 'tis well that other mishaps have not come."

But the king was grieved more than all, and put an end to the rejoicing. Next day the two elder brothers went away with their brides, and poor Yarmil stayed home alone. In vain did his father try to comfort him; in vain did he promise that he would go himself to seek another bride for him. Yarmil was not to be consoled; and when the first onrush of sorrow had passed, he resolved to go to the glass mountain for his bride.

"In what direction wilt thou go?" objected his father. "While I live no one has heard of a glass mountain."

“Still I will go,” said Yarmil, firmly. “It will come to the same whether I perish on the road or at home; in any event I shall die of disappointment.”

The king tried in all ways to dissuade him from going, but Yarmil would not let him talk. He mounted his horse, dropped the reins, and let him go whithersoever he would. He travelled long in this objectless way, hither and thither; but at last he saw that he must act differently if he meant to reach the glass mountain. But now came his real trouble; for wherever he asked about the glass mountain, people stared at him, and said that there was no such mountain in the world. Yarmil did not let himself be frightened; and now he galloped the more eagerly on his horse, and asked the more carefully everywhere. He had passed through towns without number, but still no one knew of a glass mountain. At last he heard the name.

In a certain town there was a juggler, — a showman with every kind of wonder. Yarmil was just going past him at the moment when he cried out: “The witch with her twelve daughters on the glass mountain!”

Yarmil called the juggler aside and said: “Here are ten goldpieces, tell me where the glass mountain is.”

“I am a poor man,” said the juggler, honestly, “and need these goldpieces greatly; but I know nothing of the glass mountain.”

“Nor in what country it is?” asked Yarmil, impatiently.

“I know that,” answered the man. “It is in the east, but they say it is very far off; and besides, they say that no one can go within twenty miles of it.”

Yarmil threw the ten goldpieces into the juggler’s cap, and putting spurs to his horse galloped off to the east. Many a time did the sun rise and set before he reached the glass mountain. But what good did it do him to go there? Around the mountain flowed an immensely great river, and on the bridge which was across it stood on guard three very fierce giants.

Yarmil’s courage fell. That moment the white lady from the white castle appeared suddenly before him and said: “Bind thy horse’s hoofs with thy coat, and go very carefully over the bridge. The giant who stands on watch will see thee only when thou art in front of him, and will start after thee; but throw behind this dust and nothing will harm thee. Do the same for the second and third giant.” She gave him three packages of dust, and said: “Beyond the river is a mill in which they give a witch to grind. Ask the miller for a night’s lodging; he will give it thee, and invite thee to supper. Towards the end of the supper the cook will bring him a roast cock, and to that he will not invite thee; he eats it all himself. The bones of it he leaves on the plate and the cook must throw them under the wheel; but tell her to hide them for thee. And when it will be midnight, go to the glass mountain and put the bones before thee; but be careful to save one till thou art on the summit, then throw that last one back over thy head.”

The moment the lady had finished, she disappeared. Yarmil sprang from his horse, tore his coat into four pieces, and with them muffled the feet of his horse; then he mounted and rode cautiously to the bridge. The first giant was sitting with his back to him and dozing. Yarmil passed him safely; but that moment the giant woke, and howled with a terrible voice to him to come back. Here Yarmil threw the dust behind, and that moment there was such darkness that it hid the giant completely. The same happened with the second and third giant, and Yarmil crossed the river safely. Not far off was the mill, and the miller stood just on the threshold.

“What dost thou wish here?” growled he at Yarmil.

“Oh, grant me a night’s lodging,” said Yarmil; “I am a traveller from distant lands.”

“I’ll give thee nothing,” answered the miller, roughly, “for if I did I should lose my place.”

Yarmil begged again, and begged so long that the miller asked: “Whence art thou?” Yarmil told him; and the miller, meditating awhile, said: “Well, if thou art the son of so powerful a king, I will give thee a night’s lodging; for we are from the same country, and I knew thy father very well.”

Then he led him to a sitting-room; and since it was just dark, he asked him to supper. Yarmil watched continually to see if the cock would soon come to the table, and he had not long to wait. The miller grew sullen, and without speaking a word ate the cock. Yarmil went out, and pressing a few goldpieces into the hands of the cook, begged her to hide the bones of the cock for him. The moment the cook saw the goldpieces she was glad to agree.

When the miller had picked the cock he called the cook and ordered her strictly to throw the bones under the wheel. The cook took the plate and motioning as if she had thrown them into the water, put them very adroitly into her apron; when all were asleep she gave them to Yarmil. He waited quietly till the approach of midnight, then he went out cautiously and made for the glass mountain with his horse. Full of expectation he took out the first bone and put it on the mountain; and behold! in a moment a step was made so that he could walk comfortably on it, and so it happened with every bone. Yarmil was already at the summit and only one bone remained to him; this he threw with all his power over his head, and in a twinkle there was a pleasant highway along which his horse ran after him with ease.

All wearied, Yarmil fell down at the castle, in which lived the sorceress with the twelve princesses her daughters, and he soon fell asleep. When he woke the sun was high in the heavens; and before he could think what further to do, his own princess came to him.

“I told thee,” said she, reproachfully, “to forget me; but thou didst not obey.”

“Hide me somewhere quickly from the sorceress; in the night we will flee.”

“Simple man!” said the princess smiling. “She knows long ago that thou art here; rather go to her, but be polite beyond measure. At dinner, rise after each dish and walk through the room, otherwise thou wilt stay here for the ages.”

Yarmil had to obey. When he came to the sorceress he bowed low before her, and said: “Great mighty lady, I have come for my bride.”

“I will give her to thee,” smiled the sorceress, “but first thou must serve me three years.”

“I am glad to do everything thou mayest desire,” said Yarmil bowing; and the sorceress answered graciously, inviting him at once to the table, to which just then one of the princesses brought the first dish. Yarmil ate with a relish; but when he had finished, he said to the sorceress: “Permit me, great mighty lady, to walk a little. I have travelled so much that I fear my legs will lose their power.”

“Oh, walk if it please thee,” answered the sorceress, but her eyes glittered with anger. And Yarmil did the same after each dish, and the sorceress was ready to split from rage. Next day she gave him a wooden axe and saw, and said: “Thou must clear all that forest over there, or be the son of Death.”

Yarmil took the axe and the saw, and went on. In the forest he threw himself on the ground and thought of death; for such a stretch of forest no man could clear alone, still less with such tools. At midday his princess brought him dinner.

“Ah!” scolded she, “thou art not working diligently.”

“Why trouble myself for nothing?” sighed Yarmil.

“Only be of good courage,” said the princess, comforting him. “It is not so bad to-day; it will be worse to-morrow.”

Then she gave him dinner; and when Yarmil had eaten, he put his head on her lap and fell asleep soundly. Then the princess took out of her bosom some kind of powder, and muttering mysterious words she threw it in the air. And wonder of wonders! in the twinkle of an eye invisible hands began to fell the aged trees, cut, split, and pile, so that in a short time the whole forest was felled.

Now Yarmil woke up, and hurried with the princess to the castle. The sorceress praised him; she suppressed her rage with difficulty, and said: “Thou hast worked out thy first year in order.”

Next day the sorceress gave him a spade and a wheelbarrow, and said: “Thou must carry away that mountain out there, or be the son of Death.”

Yarmil went with his tools to the hill, but when there he threw himself on the ground, for a thousand men would not have been able to carry off the hill in ten years. At midday his princess brought him dinner, and said: “Oh, thou art working as diligently as yesterday!”

“I am,” sighed Yarmil.

“Only be of good cheer,” said the princess, comforting him. “To-day it is not so bad; it will be worse to-morrow.”

When Yarmil had eaten, he put his head on her lap and fell asleep. The princess again threw into the air a powder of some kind, muttering mysterious words; and straightway unseen hands began to work so vigorously that in a short time the hill was carried away.

Then Yarmil woke up, and hurried to the sorceress to tell her he had done what she had commanded. She flamed up in anger, but nevertheless said: “Thou hast worked the second year of thy service in order.”

Next day she gave him a tailor’s thimble, and said: “Thou must bail out that fish-pond, or be the son of Death.”

Yarmil took the thimble and went. At the fish-pond, however, he threw himself on the ground and waited for the princess. She came sooner than usual; and when Yarmil, strengthened with food, had fallen asleep with his head on her lap, she threw powder in the air, muttering mysterious words. Soon the water began to disappear from the fish-pond. Now she roused Yarmil, and said to him: “Draw thy sword, and give good care. When all the water is gone from the pond the sorceress will take the shape of a rain-storm, and try to destroy us; but look well at the darkness, and where it is blackest strike there with thy sword.”

Yarmil promised to do so, and had barely drawn his sword when a black darkness rushed from the castle, — but almost on the ground, so that Yarmil could strike the blackest spot with ease. At that moment the darkness turned into the sorceress, and Yarmil's sword stuck in her heart. With fearful cursing, she fell to the earth and died. Yarmil hurried to the castle with the princess, mounted his horse, and rushed off at a swift gallop.

He had to travel far before he came to his father's castle; but to make up, there was joy unspeakable at the happy meeting. The queen was terrified when she saw them, and she had reason; for when Yarmil told all to his father the king gave her to be burned without mercy.

When the feasting was over Yarmil set out with his wife on the journey to their kingdom. When they came to the mouse-hole it was no longer a mouse-hole, but a magnificent gate leading to a great city, in the middle of which stood a golden castle on a hill; and in that city there were multitudes of people everywhere, and in the castle throngs of courtiers and servants, who greeted with mighty applause their master and mistress, thanking Yarmil at the same time for their liberation.

Now followed feasting, which lasted for eight whole days; and when the feasting was over they all lived happily beyond measure, because the royal pair were goodness itself.

62

THE CUIRASSIER AND THE HORNED PRINCESS

In a certain town were encamped a regiment of cuirassiers, and they had a very unpleasant life. Twelve men of them agreed to desert, — three sergeants and nine from the ranks. They carried out their plan; and when they had gone a good distance, one said to the rest: “Let us look, brothers, and see if we are not pursued.” Another dismounted, and climbed a high tree, — “Oh! they are searching; but they will not overtake us, for we are far in advance of them.” Then he came down, mounted his horse, and all rode rapidly on, — rode till dusk. Then the chief man said: “Where shall we go for the night, brothers? Around here we see nothing but mountains and forests.”

One of them climbed a tree again to look for a light. He saw one, and called to his comrades, “Look out! We will ride in the direction in which I throw this sword, for I see a light there.”

All rode toward the light, and came to a very large building in the wild mountains. At the first glance they saw it was an enormous castle, which was open. They entered the court, led their horses to the stable, — where oats were ready for twelve horses, — and then went themselves into a hall where a table was laid for twelve persons, so that all might sit down and eat; but there was not a living soul to be seen.

“Brothers,” said one of them, “may we touch this food and drink?”

"Why not?" said the chief. "What if we have to pay a few ducats for the entertainment?"

They sat down, and ate with good relish. After they had eaten and drunk, an old sorceress slipped in and saluted them, saying: "Good evening, gentlemen. I greet you in this our famous castle. Did the supper taste well?"

"We ate with pleasure," answered one in the name of all, "only we were a little afraid how it would end."

"Fear not, fear not, I am glad ye are strengthened after the long ride," said the sorceress; and then she said further: "Now of course ye will need good beds, so as to refresh yourselves with grateful sleep. In the next chamber are twelve beds and twelve caskets. Lie on the beds prepared for you, but let no man dare, on pain of great punishment, to look at the caskets, which are unlocked."

All went to the next chamber; the sorceress gave them good-night and went out through the opposite door. In the morning when they rose everything was well prepared for them, — basins with water and towels, and food for each man. After breakfast they spoke of the good cheer which they had not expected to find in the castle. They spoke of various subjects till they came to the caskets, and the splendid things that must be therein. Some expressed great curiosity; some were heard to say that they could not refrain till evening from looking in the caskets; others warned their comrades not to do that which they might regret.

They had a pleasant time all day at the castle, an excellent dinner, a good lunch, a splendid supper. After supper they went to bed. The sun was shining brightly through the windows next morning, but no man was stirring.

The chief rose and called the others, saying, "It is time to be up." Only two gave answer; the rest did not move. These three went to the beds and found their comrades lifeless. All were terrified, and went to the stable to look at their horses. In the stable they found the nine dead horses, of the nine dead men.

“What shall we do?” asked one of them. “We must leave this place where our comrades have perished; nothing can comfort us again.”

They returned to the hall where breakfast was ready for only three. They sat down and ate. After eating, the sorceress came again, and said: “Ye see, my friends, that sinful curiosity has cost those nine men their lives. They could withstand it no longer, rose at midnight, opened the caskets, and looked at the contents; scarcely had they lain down again when sudden death overtook them. Had they followed my advice, as ye have, all might have had a pleasant time, and lived joyously here a whole year. Now I see by your faces that nothing can comfort you here, and that ye would gladly go away.”

“Yes,” answered one, “we fear to remain longer in this place, where our comrades died a sudden death.”

“There is nothing to fear,” said the sorceress; “but since it is unpleasant for you, I will not keep you. Go where ye like, but before going each may look without fear or danger in his casket, and take the things inside to remember me by; they may be useful.”

The men were afraid at first to open the caskets, having before their eyes the sad example of their comrades; but when the sorceress assured them again and again that they might open them without fear and take out the contents, they grew bold and opened them. The first took from his casket a cap, which the sorceress said had such power that whoever put it on his head no man could see him. The second drew from his casket a mantle, and whoever put it on, the sorceress said, could fly through the air as high as he wished. The third took a purse which had the power that whenever it was shaken ten ducats were in it.

The sorceress bade them good-by. They thanked her for the hospitality and useful presents, and saddling their horses, rode away from that castle with the Lord God.

They travelled long, and on the road kept telling what a good time they would have with their gifts. At last they came to a large town, took up their lodging at an inn, and asked what there was strange in the place. The innkeeper answered: “Nothing, unless it be that we have a princess immeasurably fond of playing cards, and who says that no one is able to play with her. She vanquishes every comer, and then has him flogged out of the castle.”

The man who had the purse thought, “Wait a while, I’ll settle thy play.” He made ready straightway, and went to the castle. He had himself announced, and declared that he wished to play with the princess. Meanwhile the other two ate and drank well in the inn.

The princess was glad to find some one again with whom to play cards and whom she might overcome. She had him brought in without delay. The game began. The man lost; but he didn’t mind that, for whenever he lost he shook the purse and had ten ducats again. So he kept losing and shaking the purse till the princess was astonished, and thought to herself: “Where dost thou get all these ducats, good man? Thou hast not a treasury at thy side, and still thou hast plenty of money. How dost thou get it?”

She watched him and saw that he shook the purse on his knee, from which he took the ducats. She had already won a great bag of ducats, but still was not able to win all he had. She kept thinking how to get that magic purse. “Now let us rest a little,” said she, and went to the next room, from which she brought two goblets of wine. One she gave him and drank the other herself, for they were tired and needed refreshment. Her wine was pure, but in his she put a sleeping-powder. She drank to his health, and he emptied his goblet at a draught. After a while he was so very drowsy that he slipped from the seat, dropped under the table, and fell soundly asleep. That was his misfortune. The princess took the magic purse and gave him one like it containing ten ducats.

When he woke up the princess said to him: “Now let us play again.” They played while he had ducats. When the ducats were gone he shook and shook the purse, but in vain. The princess said: “Well, my dear man, since thou hast no money, go. But that disgrace which I have put on others I will not put on thee. I will not have thee flogged out of the castle because I have won much money from thee; go in peace.”

He went to his friends in great trouble. They greeted him from afar, and called out: “Well, how didst thou prosper?”

“Oh, badly, very badly, brothers; I no longer have the purse; I lost that.”

“Oh, comrade, that is bad; how shall we live now? We are in debt for food and drink, and have nothing to pay with.”

The one who had the magic mantle said: “Do ye know what, brothers? I’ll take a good vengeance on that wicked woman!”

“But how?” was the question.

He answered, “This is how I’ll do it. Let me have thy cap so that no one may see me, and I’ll take my mantle. When the princess is going to church I’ll seize her, fly with her through the air to desert regions, so far away that she will never be able to come home again.”

“Yes, that will be a just punishment for her,” said the two others. The third one immediately took the cap, wrapped the mantle around him, and waited for the princess. As she was going along the street he seized her, flew far away with her to wild mountains, and let her down there on the ground near a pear-tree. On that tree were beautiful pears.

The princess begged the man to climb the tree and shake it, so that she might have some of the fruit to eat. “I’ll gratify thee just once,” said he. But he was so cunning that he did not leave the cap or magic mantle on the ground, but took them up on the tree, hung them both on a limb, and shook the tree with all his might. The cap and the mantle fell to the ground before the pears. The princess put the cap on her head at once, wrapped the mantle around her, and was off in an instant, — sooner than the man on the tree had recovered from his fright.

He was now alone in the wild mountains. What was he to do? He stood motionless as the tree at his side, as if senseless from a thunderbolt; he had no longer magic cap or magic mantle. “Oh, where shall I go?” groaned he, and walked around on the mountains. In his trouble and fright he picked up some pears and ate them. Then other terrible miseries came upon him, for he had barely eaten the pears when unheard of gigantic horns grew out of his head, so that he could not walk through the woods nor turn around; the horns stopped him everywhere; he could barely crawl forward.

With great care and much struggling, he dragged himself over a bit of road and came to a deep ravine, in which a hermit lived whose name was Wind.

“Oh, friend,” said the man, “help me from the mountain, and take me home.”

Said Wind, “I am not strong enough to bear thee to thy home, but go to my brother; he is the strongest of us. He will take thee home quickly.”

“I should like to go to him, but I cannot move.”

“He is not far from here, — there, on that side; but go as well as thou art able. He will rid thee of those horns.”

The man pushed through as best he could, and came, covered with sweat, to another cave, in which the eldest Wind brother was living. He fell on his knees before Wind, and cried imploringly: “Be so kind as to bear me home!”

“I should like to help thee, my friend; but it is not so easy as may seem to thee. I must go to the Lord to ask with what force Wind may blow. If Wind may blow so trees will be torn out with their roots, thou canst reach home; if Wind blows but weakly, thou wilt not go there, for ‘tis far. Wait a while; I’ll come back soon.”

Wind went to ask the Lord how hard he might blow, and the Lord commanded him to blow mightily.

When he returned, the man asked: “How is it?”

“Well,” said Wind, “I must blow mightily; thou wilt reach home. But knowest thou there is an apple-tree over there? Climb it, pluck an apple, cut it into four parts, and eat; thy great horns will fall off.”

The man was glad, climbed the apple-tree quickly, but the horns hindered him much. He plucked an apple and ate it; how soon was he free of the horns! He came down from the tree like a squirrel, and thought: “Oh, brother, thou’lt get back thy things!” As he was coming down he took more apples and put them in his pocket; then went to the pear-tree and took pears. Soon Wind caught him up, bore him off swiftly, and in a short time put him down in front of the inn where his friends were waiting impatiently. They were all very glad.

“Where wert thou?” asked they.

“Oh, I was where ye will not be to your dying day, brothers!”

“How didst thou prosper?”

“Badly, badly.”

“Where hast thou the cap and the mantle?”

“Oh, that woman took them from me!”

“Woe to us, — woe, passing woe! Now we have neither the purse, the cap, nor the mantle. We are beggared beyond reckoning.”

The innkeeper would not let them go because of their debt.

“What will become of us?” asked they in one voice.

The man whom Wind bore home said: “I have here noble and wonderful fruit which I brought from the wild mountains. One of you will take these pears to the street and sell them; but do not dare to sell them to any one save the princess when she is going home from church. For the people thou must put such a price that they will not buy; for the princess reduce the price so that she may buy.”

One of the men put the pears in a clean basket, covered them with a neat cloth, and went to the square through which the princess was wont to go to church and return. Soon she was coming out of the church, her servant following some steps behind. She saw the uncommonly beautiful pears from a distance, came up herself, and asked: “How many dost thou give for a copper?”

“Oh, these pears are not sold for copper coin! They are so splendid, and have such a flavor, that I can give only three for a ducat.”

The princess bought all, and gave them to her servant to carry; she had barely reached home, and sat near the table, when she took a golden knife, pared and ate with great relish a number of pears. She ate with such pleasure that she saw not how horns began to grow on her head after the first pear; and in a little while they had grown so much that she could not remain in the room. She went to the great supper-hall, but even there was forced to lie down on the floor, so broad and so lofty were her horns. She gave herself up to fearful lamentation and tears, so that all the servants and the king, her father, with the queen, her mother, ran in. All were horrified and wrung their hands, seeing the princess disfigured.

The king sent quickly for the doctors, who came in all haste from each corner and town. The servants ran to every place; each one in his excitement brought whomsoever he knew. The doctors met and shook their heads one after another; each said that in his life he had never seen nor had experience of such a case. They held a consultation, and at last decided to saw off the horns. They went to work, but in vain; they had barely sawed a piece, when it grew on again quickly, so that fright seized every one. The princess was so horrified and ashamed that she would have preferred to be out of the world; no man could help her. Then the king made proclamation that whoso would free the princess from the horns, would get her in marriage, and with her the whole kingdom.

Who was so glad now as the man with the apples? “Wait,” thought he; “my little bird, thou’lt sing as I whistle, — no man can help thee but me.”

He had fine clothes brought, and dressed as a doctor had himself announced at the palace. He was soon admitted, and began to speak to the princess, saying: “You must have angered God greatly, must have committed grievous sins, for which you are punished in this way. I expect to give you real help; but first of all you must tell me sincerely what you have done, — my aid has to be rendered in view of that.”

She confessed with weeping that she had been fond of playing cards; had outplayed all men, then had them flogged from the castle. The last time she had played with a stranger, from whom she had stolen a magic purse; and afterward she had stolen from another man a magic cap and mantle. No doubt the Lord had now punished her for that.

“Before we can think of a cure,” said the unknown physician, “you must return the stolen property.”

The princess had all the above-mentioned articles brought at once, and gave them gladly to the doctor, who promised to deliver them to the owners. “I will carry them away,” said he, “and bring my medicine, through which you will be freed from the horns.”

Half an hour later he returned, took her by the hand, looked at her tongue, and said: “Charming woman, you have eaten something, I suppose, from which these horns grew.”

The princess answered: “I don’t know that I have eaten anything harmful; I ate a few beautiful pears; with that exception I have never eaten any common food.”

“You must have eaten something,” said the doctor. “I have good medicine that will not fail; but I can only help you on condition that I receive the whole kingdom, with you in marriage, as our lord the king has proclaimed.”

The king and princess promised then that the proclamation would be carried out if he would free her from the horns. After these words he set about the cure. He took from his pocket an apple, and cut it into four parts; he told her to lie down, and gave her the first fourth of the apple. She was not able however to lie with comfort by reason of the horns. When she had eaten all the four quarters of the apple, the horns fell off at a blow. Then there was mighty gladness throughout the whole castle; every one rejoiced that the princess, the only daughter of the king, was free of her horns.

The king had the marriage contract drawn up, and soon after they celebrated the wedding, at which the two friends of the young king were present; and he promised that while they lived they should remain at his court as the very first lords.

There was eating and drinking at the wedding; and among other things they ate bread made from rye. But, Mark tell thou no lie.

63

THE TREACHEROUS BROTHERS

There was a king, and he had seven sons, — young men strong and healthy as deer, except the seventh, the youngest, whose name was Jalmir. He was in his twentieth year, and still a nurse had to care for him as for a little child. It was pitiful to look at Jalmir; he was as shapely as a maiden, and beautiful as a spring day, still could not walk from weakness. How much the king had paid to doctors, quacks, and every kind of old woman, to cure him, but in vain! At last the afflicted father lost all hope that his dearest son would ever grow strong.

For this reason there reigned in the king's palace deep distress, which was in no way to the taste of Jalmir's brothers, especially since they could not hunt in the neighborhood. "What shall we do in future?" asked the eldest one day when they were resting in the forest after a hunt. "Let us go into the world."

"Yes, yes!" answered all the others. They went home and laid their wishes before their father.

"What am I to do?" objected the king. "Jalmir is sickly; I shall be without aid in my old age."

The sons agreed with him in this, but wheedled him so slyly that at last they received his consent to go out in the world. They rushed with rejoicing to the stable, chose the best horses, took what money they could, and that same day rode away from their father’s house at a gallop, without even saying good-by to their brother Jalmir. How strange was the feeling at the heart of the poor fellow when his nurse told him of this! He turned from her in silence; but under the pillow with which he covered his face he shed many tears. When it was growing dark the nurse hurried out of his chamber to chat with the servants. She began with the cook, and they talked till midnight was near before she knew it.

Meanwhile Jalmir was lying on his bed sadder than ever. This time he was not thinking of his bodily pain, but of his brothers who had left him without saying farewell; this troubled him most. He thought, “Shall I ever be well?” and some internal voice said that he would. Filled with hope he fell into a doze, and saw himself hunting on horseback, and hurling a spear at wild beasts as his brothers had done. All at once, and near midnight, a venerable man, with snow-white beard reaching to his waist, stood before the bed, and said: “Jalmir art thou sleeping?”

Jalmir started, opened his eyes, but saw no one. “That was a dream,” thought he. He meditated a while, and again closed his eyes. After a short time the old man stood before him again, and asked: “Jalmir art thou sleeping?” Jalmir opened his eyes quickly, but saw no one. “That was only a dream then,” said he to himself, and again closed his eyes. But soon the old man stood before him and inquired a third time: “Jalmir art thou sleeping?”

“I am not,” said Jalmir, and rubbing his eyes, saw the old man at his bed.

“Rise in the morning,” said the old man, “provide thyself with everything for the road, and go through the southern gate. Outside the town thou wilt find under an old pear-tree a white horse; mount that horse and ride after thy brothers.” Then the old man vanished in a twinkle.

Jalmir rubbed his eyes again, and looked around his chamber, but there was no old man anywhere. “It was only a dream,” thought he. Again he lay down and slept soundly; but when he woke in the morning he felt so well that he sprang from his bed, and jumped around the chamber from gladness. His nurse returned at that moment; but when she saw that her weakly charge was well, she ran to the king, and before she had reached the door, cried: “Jalmir is well!”

The king went out, and asked in a sad voice: “Hast thou lost thy senses?”

“He is really well,” said the nurse with greater rejoicing; but the king shook his head.

Meanwhile Jalmir recollected his supposed dream, and ascribed his recovery to that majestic old man. “Since he has cured me, I must obey him,” said he to himself. He dressed quickly and went to the king. When the king saw him he believed the nurse, and, thoroughly happy, fell on the young man’s neck; but he was astonished still more when Jalmir said: “Now, father, let me go; I must follow my brothers.”

“And thou wilt leave me?” complained the father.

“I must,” answered Jalmir seriously, and he told his dream. The king shook his head incredulously, and at first would not even hear of the departure of his favorite son; but at last he consented with tears. Jalmir made ready for the journey without delay.

The king gave him a carriage and four servants, he took money, and departed straightway. Outside the town he dismissed the servants, giving them the carriage and the horses, and walked on alone to the pear-tree, where a splendid white steed was waiting, stamping the ground impatiently. “Sit on me, quickly,” said he with the voice of a man, “or we shall be late.”

Jalmir sprang to his back and they went on, not on the ground though, but through the air. In a short time the white steed asked: “Dost thou see thy brothers?”

“I do not see,” answered Jalmir.

“But the hill on which they are?”

“Neither do I see that.”

“Thou wilt soon see it,” said the steed, and hastened his course. “Dost thou see the hill now?” asked he after a time.

“I see,” answered Jalmir, “and on it are six ants.”

“Those are thy brothers,” said the white steed. “But now listen; we shall soon come up with them, but do not make thyself known. We shall pass the night in an inn. Thy brothers will feast, but will not be able to pay, for they lost all their money foolishly yesterday. Pay for them; in the morning we shall go farther.”

Jalmir promised to do this, and then the white steed came down to the earth. Soon they overtook the brothers, who did not know Jalmir; and indeed, how could they in that stately, fiery hero recognize their weakly brother. Jalmir bowed to them courteously, and asked permission to travel in their company.

“But where art thou going?” inquired one of the brothers.

“To see the world,” answered Jalmir.

“We too,” cried the others; “so thou must go with us.”

Jalmir bowed to them, and in silence agreed with a nod. But his brothers all gave him their hands, and soon began to tell him how delightfully they had passed the previous day. Jalmir did not, however, find much that was pleasant in it, and frowned.

“Art sorry that thou wert not there?” asked one of the brothers. “Never mind, we can have such days yet without number.”

With that they came to an inn. The innkeeper, seeing through the window so many lords, ran out and took the horses. When he took the white steed, Jalmir asked: “Hast thou a stable apart?”

“Yes; and such a one!” boasted the innkeeper.

“Then put my horse in it alone,” said Jalmir, “for he is very vicious.”

Then he followed his brothers to a room where they were already seated at a table, and calling with terrible uproar on the innkeeper for wine. In a short time the innkeeper brought all that he had, and the brothers drank, sang, shouted, and rioted till the inn trembled; but Jalmir barely drank for one, because he was sick from the action of his brothers. But how grieved was he when one of the brothers said: “This is a different life from being at home with that grumbling father and that sickly brother.”

Gradually one after the other dropped under the table, overcome by wine. When all were asleep Jalmir said to the innkeeper: “Be careful that no harm comes to them; I will sleep a little too.”

Then he was going to lie on a bench near the fire. “Do not,” said the innkeeper; “I have a bed ready for thee. Come with me.”

Jalmir, after useless refusals, followed him at last; but before he lay down he visited the white steed to see if he had plenty of oats and water.

When the brothers woke in the morning they looked for Jalmir with a great outcry: “It would have been a nice thing if he had run away from us!” cried one to another. “Who would pay? — for I have no money.”

Soon Jalmir came to the room and told them to travel farther; all was settled.

“Thou art ours,” said they. All embraced him, — ‘tis a wonder they did not suffocate him. Escaping from the brothers, Jalmir went to his horse. The brothers followed his example, and soon the inn was far behind.

“Listen,” said the white steed to Jalmir, when the brothers had gone ahead. “In the evening we shall come to a castle, in which lives a sorceress with her seven daughters; they will take your horses, and lead you to a chamber. The sorceress will bring you wine after supper, but drink not. What will take place later, thou wilt see.”

“Why loiter so?” called one of the brothers suddenly to Jalmir.

“I am coming,” answered he; and the white steed soon galloped so that in a few moments he was ahead of the brothers.

“Slower or thou wilt leave us!” cried the brothers; and the white steed waited for them of his own accord. Soon they entered a forest, rode and rode, but there was no end to the forest; only in the evening did they come out on a plain. In the middle of the plain was a beautiful castle. “Oh, now we are in luck,” said the brothers, and they began to rejoice.

They galloped into the court of the castle, and were still more rejoiced when seven princesses came forth to meet them. They sprang from their horses in a moment to give a courteous salute; but how did they wonder when the princesses took their horses by the bridles and led them to the stable. Jalmir begged the youngest princess, who had taken his steed, to put the horse in a stable apart, for he was very vicious.

She did as he wished; he saw this, and only then did he go to the supper chamber, where his brothers and the six princesses were already sitting at a great table, covered with the daintiest dishes. He came to them with the youngest princess, but ate very little, though she urged him continually; but when the vile old woman who served them brought wine and poured it to each one in a golden goblet, Jalmir seized his goblet eagerly, but did not drink the wine. He poured it out on one side.

By degrees the brothers began to doze; at last one after another they fell asleep. Jalmir suspected that the old woman had drugged them, — which was true, — and that she had no good thoughts regarding them; therefore he feigned sleep so that in the hour of need he might aid his brothers. Soon after the old woman came and put away each brother with his partner on a couch, of which there were seven in the adjoining chamber; then she went out, but returned straightway with a great broom, and began to strike the brothers. First she struck the eldest, but he moved not; when she had finished with the six she came to Jalmir, and said to herself: “If six are asleep, so is the seventh.” She went out, but soon returned with sulphur in her hand, and burned it under the nose of each brother. She began with the eldest, and as not one of them moved, she said when she reached Jalmir: “If six are asleep, so is the seventh.”

She went out, but came back bringing pitch, which she burned on the breast of each brother. She began with the eldest, and as none of them sighed, she said when she reached Jalmir: “If six are asleep, so is the seventh; now I may cut off their heads without fear.”

Jalmir quivered; and when the old woman went out, he sprang quickly from the couch, put each of his brothers in the place of a princess and did the same with himself. The old woman returned with a sword, but without a light, and cut off the heads of the seven princesses; then she went out. Jalmir sprang up in a moment and tried to rouse his brothers, but in vain. What anguish the poor fellow suffered; only towards morning did the brothers wake and look in terror at the dead bodies of the princesses. But Jalmir exclaimed in a voice of despair: “Let us flee!” and rushed forth; the brothers followed him. In the stable they untied their horses, and springing on them hurried in a wild chase from the castle and across the broad plain.

The sorceress soon saw their flight, and pursued; but as they had crossed the boundary of her castle lands she had power over them no longer, and with work undone was forced to go home, where she cursed herself above the dead bodies of her daughters. The brothers rode without stopping, farther and farther, till at last the castle disappeared from their sight; then they made the first halt to rest and inquire of Jalmir what had been done to them. When they heard that he had saved them from certain death, they fell upon his neck and cried: “Tell us who thou art, since thou hast done so much for us.”

“Who else but your brother Jalmir,” answered he, almost swimming in tears; and he pressed brother after brother to his breast. But how astonished was he when he saw that they were much colder to him than they had been when they knew him not! Still, they asked how he had recovered, why he had ridden after them, and what their father was doing. But gradually they grew silent and hung their heads. Beyond doubt it was not to their liking that just the youngest of them was so wise.

Jalmir also was silent, and his white steed dropped behind of his own accord. When the brothers could not hear him, he said to his master: “I told thee not to discover thyself, but thou didst not obey me. The results thou canst lay to thyself. In a few days we shall come to a mighty king; thou and thy brothers will enter his service. When in need come to me for advice.”

Jalmir stroked the white steed, and begged his forgiveness. From that time the brothers were no longer joyous as before, and kept noticeably aside from Jalmir. But since they had no money they wheedled him greatly whenever they saw an inn, since he always paid for them. After some days they came to a great city. Their first road, however, was to the inn, where they ate moderately but drank beyond measure; and now they began to do such senseless things that Jalmir went to his steed as quickly as possible to get consolation.

When the brothers were alone the eldest said: “I have had favors enough from that sickly brother; to-morrow we will go to the king of this country and serve him. What do ye think?”

“We will all go with thee,” cried the others; but suddenly they were confused, for Jalmir had returned.

“Where are ye going?” inquired he. “I will go with you.”

The brothers answered him sullenly, but Jalmir said he would go. Towards evening, when the brothers had had a good sleep, they went to the king, who made them men of his court without delay. Now they had a good living, large pay, and almost nothing to do; but as an offset they were still not at rest, for Jalmir was always a thorn in their eyes, especially since the friendship of the king for him increased every day.

Once when the brothers, from idleness, were examining the chambers of the king’s castle, they came to one in which were all kinds of books, small and great, piled up to the ceiling. They fell to reading these books with great eagerness.

“Brothers,” cried one of them suddenly, “I read here that the king has not a bird in his kingdom.”

“Is this true?” exclaimed the others in wonder; “we have not noticed it.”

“But know ye,” asked the eldest, “to what use we may put this?” All shook their heads. “Listen,” said he in a whisper; “we will tell the king that Jalmir knows about birds, and to send him for them.”

“And the king will do so at once,” said the brother who had read of the birds, “for here is written the great cost of the birds eaten on the king’s table in a year.”

They stopped reading at once and went straight to the king, to whom they told what they thought. “But, gracious king,” said the eldest, “thou must sharply insist, or Jalmir will excuse himself, saying that he knows nothing of birds.”

The king nodded graciously and sent for Jalmir. He came quickly, and the king said: “As thou knowest well I have no birds in my kingdom, therefore I command thee to bring them.”

“I, gracious king,” said Jalmir, in fright, “know nothing of birds.”

“Whether thou knowest or knowest not,” said the king, in sudden anger, “thou’lt get birds.” With that he waved his hand, and poor Jalmir went out with drooping head. Whither can he go? Who can help him in peril? He went straight to the white steed and complained.

“Grieve not,” said the steed; “at dusk we will go for the birds.”

Jalmir thanked the horse, and could hardly wait till evening. The moment the sun had disappeared behind the woods he was ready for the road; and when the first star had appeared in the sky he led out the white steed, sprang on his back, and flew off like the wind. “But where are we going?” inquired Jalmir of his steed on the way.

“To that sorceress in whose castle thou didst save thy brothers from death,” answered the horse.

“To that place!” cried Jalmir in fright.

“Have no fear,” said the steed, comforting him; “only do to a hair what I tell thee.”

The good steed now increased his speed so that he went like an arrow, and about an hour later he came to the ground at the castle of the sorceress. Jalmir sprang from him, and the steed said: “When thou art in the first chamber thou wilt see silver cages, and in them silver birds; in the second chamber will be golden cages with golden birds; in the third chamber diamond cages with diamond birds. Of all these touch nothing, or such a blow will fall that the whole castle will tremble, and the sorceress will seize thee to kill thee. But go to the fourth chamber; there take a wooden cage in which is a mean-looking bird, and hasten to me.”

Jalmir entered the first chamber with courage, but cautiously, and looking at nothing, went to the second chamber; there the glitter of gold dazzled him somewhat. When he opened the door to the third chamber he stood almost blind on the threshold; but quickly recovering, he shaded his eyes, ran to the fourth chamber, and seizing the cage with the bird in an instant, rushed out swift as an arrow. He sprang on the horse, which rose with him through the air in a moment. The sorceress burst out of the castle, and cursing fearfully because she could not stop him, screamed: “But thou wilt come here again!”

When the white steed was beyond the boundary of the castle land, he said to Jalmir: “Open the cage and let the bird fly.”

“But shall I not bring it to the king?”

“Only do what I ask,” said the steed, with such a stern voice that Jalmir obeyed without thinking.

It was yet night when they reached home. Jalmir tied the horse in the stable and went to his room to strengthen himself with sleep, but he did not sleep long. The morning dawn had barely shown itself when in the king’s garden was heard such a loud and cheerful singing of birds that all the people were soon on their feet, and earlier than any the king. At the first moment he was so astonished that he asked whence these wonderful creatures had come.

“Royal Grace,” said one of the brothers, “thou didst send Jalmir for them.”

“True,” said the king, as he bethought himself; “but where is Jalmir?”

A courtier soon brought him, and the king fell on his neck from very joy. He was now really dear to the king; but for that reason was held in more hatred by his brothers.

“How can we get rid of him?” asked the brothers when they were alone.

“Maybe we can read something else,” said one of them.

“Very good,” answered all, at once; and they hurried to the chamber in which so many books were collected, and it was not long before one of the brothers cried out: “The king has no beasts, and they cost him more than the birds, since he uses many more of them in a year.”

“Then let Jalmir go for them,” said the sixth brother, smiling maliciously; and they went straight to the king, to whom they told their minds. The king nodded graciously; dismissed them, called Jalmir and said: “I have no beasts in my kingdom; and since they cost me much in a year, I command thee to get me beasts.”

“I, gracious king,” said Jalmir in wonder, “know of none.”

“Thou knowest well,” said the king in anger, “for thy brothers told me.”

“Did they?” said Jalmir in astonishment. “Well, I will try;” and he went to his white steed, to whom he told everything.

“Be not down-hearted,” said the steed, comforting him. “Come to me in the evening; we will go for the beasts.”

When it was dark the good steed was flying through the air. “But where shall we go?” asked Jalmir.

“To the sorceress from whom we got the birds,” answered the steed.

“But I am afraid that she will catch me,” said Jalmir.

“Fear not,” said the steed; “only do to a hair what I tell thee.” When he came to the ground in front of the castle, he said: “In the first chamber thou wilt see a beast with silver hair, tied with silver chains; in the second chamber a beast with golden hair and golden chains; in the third, one with pearl hair and pearl chains. Touch not any of these, or a blow will fall so that the whole castle will tremble, and the sorceress will seize thee to kill thee. But go to the fourth chamber; there seize an ugly dog that is tied with a ragged rope, and hurry to me.”

Somewhat timidly, but all the more carefully, did Jalmir pass the first, second, and third chamber, shading his eyes with his hands so the glitter of the silver, gold, and pearl might not blind him. When he entered the fourth chamber he broke the rope, seized the dog in his arms, rushed out, and swift as an arrow sprang on the horse, which rose in the air. And it was high time; for scarcely had he sat on the horse when the sorceress ran out after him. When she was unable to stop him, she cursed fearfully, and screamed: “But thou wilt come here again!”

When the steed had sprung over the boundary of the castle land, he said: “Now let the dog go.”

Jalmir obeyed at once, for he was sure the steed gave good counsel. When they came home, dawn was already appearing; still Jalmir lay on the bed, for he was greatly wearied. He did not sleep long, however; for barely had the dawn come when there was a noise in the castle, in the town, and outside the town, as if the earth were breaking. The king sprang in wonder to the window. But how astonished was he! Right in the garden he saw deer, stags, rabbits; on the trees squirrels; on the ground under the trees mice; in short, such myriads of beasts that his eyes danced. In the king’s garden it was pleasant for the beasts; but in the town and outside the town the people killed them, chased wildly after them, and threw stones at them. This displeased the king; and he issued an order that all beasts belonged to him, and that no man should dare to injure them. Then he went to Jalmir, thanked him cordially, and expressed his friendship with an ardent embrace.

The whole kingdom was pleased with the beasts, but Jalmir's brothers were not pleased.

"What shall we do with him?" asked the eldest of the others. "Instead of getting rid of him we have brought him into still greater favor with the king."

"But let us go and read again."

"Yes, yes," said a third; and all hurried off to the well-known room. They had read a long time when at last one cried out: "The king has no wine, and of course wine costs him money."

"Then let Jalmir go for it," answered the eldest, quietly; "and he must get luck from hell if he comes back."

They went straight to the king, and very insinuatingly they told him that Jalmir might easily supply him with wine.

"Then he will do it;" and dismissing them graciously he had Jalmir summoned, and told him his wish.

"Gracious king," answered Jalmir, "I know nothing of wine, but I will go and see."

The king was somewhat angry, thinking surely that Jalmir was unwilling, and thereupon said: "Thou wilt answer to me with thy head." Jalmir, bowing in silence, went out to the steed.

"Fear not," said the steed; "in the evening we will go for the wine." The moment it was dark the kind steed shot away with Jalmir through the air.

"Where are we going this time?" asked Jalmir, a little frightened.

"To the sorceress from whom we got the birds and the beasts. But now pull a hair from my tail, and one from my mane; from the first make a rope three hundred yards long, from the other a net large enough to contain thee."

Jalmir did in silence according to the steed’s words; and to his astonishment, before they came to the castle the rope and the net were finished.

“Now attend to my words,” said the steed when he had come to the ground. “Tie one end of the rope to my foot and the other to the net, take the net with thee and put it on the door of the cellar, to which thou must go down on three hundred steps. In the cellar thou wilt see vessels with silver and gold and diamond hoops; pay no heed to them, or a blow will fall, and it will be ill with thee. Go to the farthest part of the cellar. There thou wilt see in a niche a little vessel with wooden hoops, take that quickly and hurry to me; but if thou art not able to come, just spring into the net and I will help thee.”

Jalmir did everything according to the words of the steed. It was as clear as white day in the cellar from the silver, gold, and diamond hoops, so that he soon saw the little vessel in the niche; but when he caught it, it is a wonder that he did not fall under its weight. With a mighty effort he carried it to the steps; but there he struck his foot against a vessel, and such a blow fell that the castle trembled from its foundation to the highest points of its tower. Jalmir, however, did not grow weak; he sprang up like an arrow over the three hundred steps and jumped into the net.

Meanwhile, the sorceress flew out of the castle and sprang at the steed; but the steed got her down, and so thrashed her with his feet that he did not leave a sound bone in her body. At the same time he wound up the rope so nicely that in a little while he had drawn up the net containing Jalmir. “Sit quickly on me,” said he. Jalmir mounted in a moment, keeping the vessel carefully in his arms. The steed rose in the air and flew like lightning, because the sorceress who had picked herself from the ground was chasing him. But soon they had the boundary of the castle land behind them, so that they had no further need to strain their powers.

When they reached home the steed was drooping wearily to the earth, so that Jalmir had to support him in going to the stable. Jalmir was barely able to go to his own room; but first, according to the command of the steed, he left the cask of wine at the door of the king's chamber, then he lay on his bed and was soon asleep.

When the king opened the door of his chamber in the morning he saw the cask. "This must be wine," said the king, rejoicing; and taking off the head, he tried it. "It's wine; it's wine!" rejoiced he; and calling the people of the castle, he drank a health with them all.

"But what is this?" wondered they; "we have taken ten kegs of wine out already, and still it comes."

"This must be an enchanted cask," said the king, and began to laugh. Then he said in serious tones: "Little cask, I should like to have red wine." He drew some. And what a wonder! the wine was red. "I want yellow wine," said the king; and yellow wine flowed out.

"In real fact, it is an enchanted cask," said the king. "Oh, Jalmir," cried he in delight, "how can I reward thee!"

"I have only obeyed thy command, gracious king," answered Jalmir, who had just entered the room.

"Yes, thou hast done all that I commanded, and much more," said the king; "therefore I make thee my son, and proclaim thee viceroy."

All present broke out in tumultuous shouting, but Jalmir's brothers were silent; they bit their lips and clinched their fists. The king, altogether joyous and full of tenderness, from success and from wine, arranged to have a seven day's celebration in honor of the new viceroy. The people did not wait to have the order repeated, but began that very day, especially since they had plenty of food, and the wine which the enchanted cask gave them without stint. The new viceroy was greeted everywhere with shouts, and won at once the love of the people.

But his brothers were enraged all the more. Instead of going to the festivities they went to the room where the books were, and read as diligently as if they wished to become sages at once. This time, however, they were not able to find anything for a great while; but at last they read what they wanted.

“Now I have something for our darling viceroy!” cried one. “In the sea is a golden castle, and in the castle a princess, the most beautiful under the heavens. If our king would take her in marriage, he would grow young and lengthen his life.”

“Oh, that is splendid!” said all, rejoicing. “The king will surely send him for the princess, and darling Jalmir will either be drowned in the sea or run home to his father.”

When the feasting was over the brothers went to the king, who was, as it were, ill, — just the thing for them. “Gracious king,” said the eldest, insinuatingly, “we are always trying to prepare some pleasure for thee.”

“Indeed, I have need of it,” said the king; “old age and disease are pressing me more and more every day.”

“We have just found a remedy for those two evils,” said the brothers.

“But what is it, — tell me!” broke out the king, delighted. They told him what they had read.

“Well, Jalmir must take the road this very day,” cried the king; and calling Jalmir he explained his wish. Jalmir agreed in silence, but scarcely controlling his tears, hastened to his steed and fell on his neck, weeping.

“What is the matter now?” asked the steed. Jalmir told him all.

“Do not lose courage,” said the horse. “Go to the king, and ask him to give thee three hundred loaves of bread, three hundred kegs of wine, and three hundred beeves. Have all put into wagons, and then we will go for the princess.”

Jalmir went straightway to the king and asked for these. The king had all provided quickly, and promised him mountains and valleys if he would bring the princess. Jalmir took the road that very day, sitting on his good white steed, which this time did not fly through the air, but walked with slow step behind the wagons on which the loaves, the wine, and the beeves were carried. And many times did day and night change places before they came to the sea. Now they went along the shore; the white steed, going ahead with Jalmir, showed the road to the wagons.

Jalmir saw a great fish on the beach which was trying in vain to get back to the water. “Help it,” said the steed; and Jalmir, springing to the ground, helped the fish.

The fish sank under the water, but soon came to the surface and said to Jalmir: “Wait, I must reward thee. Take this whistle, and shouldst thou need aught from me, blow.”

Jalmir took the whistle from the fish’s lips, gave thanks, and sat again on his steed. After a time they heard as it were distant thunder. “What is that?” asked he of the horse.

“We shall soon be at the end of our journey,” said the steed; “those are giants talking.”

In a short time Jalmir saw three giants lying on the beach. When he came up they rose, and now he saw their stature. When he looked in their faces he had to bend back his head as if looking at the highest tower.

“What is the good word?” roared one of them, so that Jalmir had to cover his ears.

“I bring three hundred loaves of bread, three hundred kegs of wine, and three hundred slaughtered oxen,” answered he.

“That is good of thee,” said the giants, nodding their heads with satisfaction; and they rushed to the wagons in which the things were placed. They built a fire, and stuck the oxen on great spits to roast; then they went to the bread and wine, and soon had half inside themselves. A great eagle settled down near by, and looked wistfully at the beeves. Jalmir cut off a quarter and gave it to the eagle.

“Thank thee!” said the eagle. “I will help thee in time;” and she rose in the air with the quarter.

The giants did not leave the oxen very long over the fire; and when they had finished, they said to Jalmir: “Now tell us thy wish; well do we know that ye little worms of the earth do nothing for nothing.”

“I have no wish for myself,” said Jalmir; “but my master has sent me to bring the princess from the golden castle which stands out in the sea.”

“That one over there?” asked the other giant, pointing with his finger to the sea.

Jalmir looked around and saw for the first time a magnificent castle, which gleamed in the waves like the rising sun. “Yes,” replied Jalmir.

“We will take thee to it,” said the first giant; “but will the princess go with thee?”

“I will ask her,” said Jalmir; “but how will ye take me there?”

“Thou wilt soon see,” said the giants; and they took pieces of a cliff and hurled them into the sea. They went on breaking the cliff, and sooner than Jalmir expected there was a long stretch of dam in the sea. But the giants did not stop; they worked till the setting of the sun, so that in the evening they had one third of the dam finished, and on the third day it was possible to go with dry foot to the golden castle.

Jalmir thanked the giants heartily, and the morning of the fourth day he went to the princess. The castle was a wonder to look at; but he scarcely noticed it. He entered, and how surprised was he when in the first chamber he saw the princess. With downcast eyes he said: “My king and master has sent me to beg thee in his name to share his throne and crown.”

“I will go,” answered the princess, with a silvery voice; “but wilt thou remain at his court?”

“I must,” said Jalmir. “I am the viceroy.”

“Let us go, then,” said the princess.

She mounted a splendid crow-black horse, Jalmir his white steed, and they galloped along the dam. On the way Jalmir took courage to look at the princess more closely, and thought that the king would grow younger, and lengthen his life, if the princess would marry him. At the same time he felt a certain agreeable straitening of the heart. He bent his head, and rode in silence at the side of the princess; and the nearer he came to the castle of the king, the more did trouble take hold of his heart. The more joyous, however, was the princess; and her eyes rested on him with a certain special delight. They arrived soon without great adventure.

The king went outside the town to meet them, and conducted them in solemn procession to the castle. “Art thou willing, honored princess, to become my spouse?” asked he of the princess when he had led her to the chambers prepared for her.

“First I must have my golden castle,” replied the princess.

The king was amazed; but he bethought himself soon, and turned to Jalmir, gazing imploringly.

“I will go for it,” said Jalmir, with decision, especially when the princess nodded graciously and smiled at him.

“Go, my dear Jalmir,” said the king, with a soft voice. “I will reward thee in kings’ fashion.”

Jalmir went to the white steed for advice, and the steed said: “Tell the king to give thee three hundred loaves of bread, three hundred kegs of wine, and three hundred slaughtered oxen; then we will go for the golden castle.”

Jalmir told the king his wishes, and the king gave him all. Everything was ready so soon that Jalmir was able to set out that very day. But it was a tedious journey; the wagons went slowly, and after them Jalmir still more slowly, and with drooping head, — why, he knew best himself. When they came to the giants, Jalmir gave them the loaves, the wine, and the meat, begging them urgently to bring the golden castle to the princess.

“Ah, little worm of the earth!” said the giants, laughing, “dost thou think that the castle is made of wood? but we will try,” added they after they had looked at the three hundred loaves, at the kegs and the oxen.

They began eating, and when they had eaten heartily, they went to a neighboring forest, where they pulled up three of the strongest trees; and when they had played with them as men play with canes, they went along the dam to the golden castle. After a short time they moved the castle from its foundations, put it on the oak-trees, and then on to their shoulders; and as if it were nothing they walked after Jalmir without weariness till night, when they slept, and next morning went farther. They worked in this way till they drew near the king’s castle; they did not go to it, however, but waited till night. Then they put the golden castle in the garden, bade farewell to Jalmir, and went home.

When the morning sun rose people shouted “Fire!” in the castle. All ran to the garden to put it out; but the princess standing in her window cried, “Be quiet! That is my golden castle.”

Soon after the king hurried in, and opening his arms in delight, wished to embrace the princess, calling out, “Now thou art mine!”

“Not yet,” answered the princess. “What is my golden castle to me if I have lost the key of it?”

The king was frightened; but soon he said, with clear face: “My dear Jalmir will bring it to thee.” He wanted to go for him; but Jalmir came just then to the princess to tell her that he had brought the castle. The king told his wish; and Jalmir, gaining pleasure and strength from a gracious smile of the princess, departed. He took counsel of his steed, who said: “The key is somewhere in the sea near the dam.” Jalmir mounted; they flew through the air, and were soon on the island where the castle had been.

“But how shall I find the key in the sea?” sighed Jalmir.

“Thou hast the whistle from the fish helped by thee into the water.”

“Yes,” rejoiced Jalmir; and he blew on the whistle.

That moment the fish swam to the surface, and asked, “What dost thou wish?”

“The princess has lost the key of her golden castle,” answered Jalmir, who was about to ask the fish to find it; but the fish had already vanished to tell all fish to look for the key. Now there was life under water, — such gleaming of fish flying hither and thither, up and down! till at last after long swimming, one little fish brought the key to the chief fish. The chief fish gave it to Jalmir; Jalmir gave heartfelt thanks, and was soon flying through the air on his steed, so that he was home before night. When he had given the key to the king he went to his room and shut himself in. Why he did this he knew not himself; but he felt that it would have been better for him had he never seen that princess of the golden castle.

The king, perfectly happy, went with the key to the princess; he felt sure this time that she would make no objection. All the greater was his grief when she said: “I have the castle and the key to it; but what would life be in the castle without the water of death, the water of life, and the water of youth?”

“And where are they to be found?” asked the king.

“They are on my island,” answered the princess so decidedly that the king went away in silence to think whom he should send. He had pity on Jalmir, and therefore he went to the brothers; but they spoke to him so convincingly that the king asked Jalmir again to go and do that last service for him. How could Jalmir refuse? Besides, what he had done he had done for her for whom he would have jumped into fire if need be. He went to his steed to ask aid once more, and for the last time. The steed reproached him for lack of courage, and said: “Sit on my back; we’ll go straight for the water.” Jalmir did so with joy, and was soon going through the air to the island swifter than ever he had travelled before. In a short time the horse came down on the sea-shore and said: “Go to the island for the water of death, the water of life, and the water of youth; but hurry, or the waves will wash down the dam and thou wilt perish. I will eat grass here a while.”

Jalmir went forward, but very slowly; for the image of the princess rose continually before his eyes. Except her, the whole world was as naught to him. He was perhaps half way on the dam when all at once the sea rose and bore it away. Jalmir screamed in terror and disappeared in the sea. The steed heard his screams, but did not run to help him, and hanging his head, went with slow step; he knew well that he could give no aid to Jalmir. Then came a terrible storm on the sea. The steed thought that Jalmir had perished; he rose in the air and shot away like a flash.

Not far from the dam — of which there was not a trace after the storm — was an eagle’s nest high on the cliff, and in it five little eagles that stretched out their necks, without ceasing looking down eagerly, and crying meanwhile. “What do ye want?” called the old eagle, which sat near by on a cliff and looked down. But how quickly did she fly to the beach when she saw a body there! She recognized it at once; for though she was only a wild creature she remembered well that Jalmir had done her a kindness by giving her the quarter of beef for her young. She seized him now in her strong talons and bore him to the island where the golden castle had been; she plunged him into a spring, then placing him on the ground, sat near his side. Soon Jalmir began to breathe, — at first with difficulty and slowly, then more quickly and evenly, till at last he opened his eyes with a deep sigh. “Why not let me sleep longer? — I slept so lightly! I dreamed so sweetly!” said Jalmir, as if waking from slumber. When he looked around more attentively he called out in amazement, “What has been done to me?”

“Dost thou not know me?” asked the eagle, standing before him.

“I do not know thee,” replied Jalmir, shaking his head.

“But I know thee well,” cried the eagle. “Thou didst give me a quarter of beef for my children. But what art thou looking for now?”

“The princess sent me to this island for the water of death, the water of life, and the water of youth,” answered Jalmir.

“Then take them,” said the eagle, and brought him to the three springs. Jalmir took three flasks from his bosom, and filled them with the three waters.

“But how shall I leave here?”

“I would gladly bear thee wherever thou wishest, but I cannot, for I have children; but I will go to my brother. He has no children.” She flew off in a flash, soon returning, and with her her brother.

“But where has my white steed gone?” asked Jalmir suddenly.

“I will soon tell thee,” answered the eagle, and she rose in the sky till she seemed to the eye of Jalmir as small as the point of a pine leaf. She remained motionless a moment, then came down like a bolt and said: “I saw thy steed under the old pear-tree which stands before the southern gate of the great town.”

“Bear me to that place then,” said Jalmir, with a voice of entreaty.

The eagle’s brother caught him in his strong talons, and was soon flying with him high in the air; so high that Jalmir saw his native place, but it was as small as an ant-hill. He went farther, it became greater, till at last the eagle came to the earth and put Jalmir down near the old pear-tree; then he parted with him, and soon vanished in the air.

The white steed was standing behind the pear-tree, with drooping head, and so gloomy that he did not notice his master.

“My very good steed!” cried Jalmir, and fell on his neck.

“Thou art alive and well?” asked the steed in amazement.

“Yes,” answered Jalmir, and told him all that had happened.

“I am happy,” said the steed; “but now sit quickly on me, we must go to the princess or we shall be late.”

“What is the matter?” asked Jalmir in fright.

“The king wants the wedding to-day,” answered the steed.

“Then let us hurry,” said Jalmir, and he sprang on the steed, opened his arms toward the town, and cried: “Oh, my dear father!”

“Calm thyself,” said the steed; “I know that thou wouldst embrace him; but vain is thy wish, for he died long ago.” The steed rose in the air and flew so swiftly that his native place soon vanished from the tearful eyes of Jalmir. On the road the steed said: “When thou art king, judge justly, even if thy heart has to bleed.”

Jalmir did not understand him; but when he came to the town and heard how his brothers were laughing at their puny little Jalmir who had perished somewhere, an evil feeling seized him. Mastering himself however, he went to the princess to give her the three waters; and she hastened to the king to whom she said: “My dear bridegroom, so that our marriage be equal, thou must become young and beautiful as I am, and therefore I will rub thee with the water of death so that thy old age shall perish, then with the water of youth, and last with the water of life.”

The king consented with gladness, and the princess rubbed him with the water of death; then he straightened himself on the couch so that the princess herself was terrified. Seizing quickly the water of youth; she rubbed him with it and the fresh color of youth shone on the face of the old king. “But still he is not so beautiful as Jalmir,” sighed the princess, greatly grieved. With tearful eyes she reached for the water of life, but instead of it took the water of death and rubbed the king. Straightway the pallor of death spread over his face. The princess fell in a faint at his side and remained in it till Jalmir came by chance to the chamber, seized the water of life, and rubbed with it quickly the princess and the king. The princess stood up at once, but the king remained dead.

“Is there no help for him?” asked Jalmir with trembling voice.

“There is not,” said the princess, shaking her head; “whoever is rubbed twice with the water of death can never live again.”

“But what shall I do now?” muttered Jalmir, closing his eyes.

“Thou art king,” answered the princess, “but I —”

“Queen!” cried Jalmir eagerly, and sank at her feet saying, “Forgive me, but I love thee more than myself.”

The princess in place of an answer kissed him; and now they went to announce to the people that the old king was dead.

The people, who had already assembled in the square for the wedding of the king, were greatly distressed; but when the princess presented Jalmir as the new king, and herself as his wife, they broke out into mighty rejoicing, which had no end. But Jalmir’s brothers were silent; and when the new king with his bride retired, they reported that these two had poisoned the old king. The people raised a tumult; but Jalmir went out among them and asked the cause. Some were silent, and others told him what his brothers had said. “Do ye believe this?” asked Jalmir.

“We do not believe,” was shouted from every side.

“Very well,” answered Jalmir, “but that ye may believe me I will tell how my brothers tried to kill me;” and he told them all.

“The wretches!” cried the people in a rage; and they caught all the six brothers. Before Jalmir could stop them the people had fired a stack of straw, and when it was blazing high they threw the six brothers into the flames.

“Now ye are all in one pile,” laughed the people, “because hitherto ye were always setting fire.”

Jalmir turned to the princess with tears in his eyes, but she soon consoled him. After the funeral of the old king they celebrated their betrothal; but when Jalmir, full of happiness, sat at the feast by the side of his bride, all at once he remembered his steed, ran to him, and fell on his neck thanking him as author of all his happiness.

“I have helped thee, do thou help me now,” said the steed. “Lead me to the garden.” Jalmir did as he desired; then the steed said: “Cut off my head.”

“I cut off thy head!” cried Jalmir in fright.

“Wilt thou let me suffer one hundred years longer?” asked the steed in a sad voice.

In place of an answer Jalmir drew his sword, and with one blow cut off his friend’s head. The head fell on the ground, but out of it flew a white dove which rose toward the sky. Jalmir turned in sorrow to the princess, but she soon drove the sadness away from his face. They lived happily together, and because they had the water of life, they lived so long that no one has memory of it.

64

THE POOR MAN, AND THE KING OF THE CROWS

There was once a very poor man, and he had two lean cows. The two cows were to the poor man as their mother’s breast to children; for not only did they give milk and butter, for which he got a few coppers to buy salt, but he tilled his patch of land with them.

Now, he was ploughing one day at the edge of the woods with the two cows, when, from wherever it came, a six-horse coach stood before him, and in it sat no other than the King of the Crows, who found this to say to the poor man, —

“Listen, poor man; I will tell thee one thing, and two will come of it. Sell me those lean cows; I’ll give thee good money for them. I’ll pay double price. My army hasn’t tasted a morsel for three days, and the soldiers will die of hunger and thirst unless thou wilt save them.”

“If that’s the case,” said the poor man to the King of the Crows, “if it be that thy Highness’s army hasn’t eaten anything for three days, I don’t mind the difficulty. I’ll let thee have the cows, not for money; let thy Highness return a cow for a cow.”

“Very good, poor man, let it be as thou sayest. I will give thee a cow for a cow; more than that, for two thou wilt get four cows. For that purpose find me in my kingdom, for I am the King of the Crows. Thou hast but to look in the north for the black castle; thou’lt be sure to find it.”

With that the King of the Crows vanished as if he had never been there, — as if the earth had swallowed him. The poor man kept on ploughing with the two lean cows, till, all at once, the army of the King of the Crows appeared like a black cloud approaching through the air, with mighty cawing, and seizing the two cows tore them bit from bit. When they had finished, the dark legions with tumultuous cawing moved on their way like a cloud. The poor man watched the direction in which they flew so that he might know the way.

Now he strolled home in great sadness, took leave of his two handsome sons and his dear wife, in the midst of bitter tears, and set out into the world to find the black castle. He travelled and journeyed over forty-nine kingdoms, beyond the Operentsia Sea and the glass mountains, and beyond that, where the little short-tailed pig roots, and beyond that, and still farther on, till he came to an ocean-great sand-plain.

Nowhere for gold was a town, a village, or a cabin to be seen where he might recline his head for a night's rest, or beg a morsel of bread or a cup of water. Food had long since left his bag, and he might have struck fire in the gourd which hung at his side. What was he to do? Where could he save his life? Here he must perish of hunger and thirst in the midst of this ocean-great desert, and then at home let them wait for him till the day of Judgment. Here the poor man's power of walking decreased, and he floundered about like a dazed fish, like a man struck on the head. While stumbling along he sees on a sudden a shepherd's fire.

He moves towards the light, creeping on all fours. At last he arrives there with great difficulty, and sees that three or four men are lying around the fire, boiling kasha in a pot. He salutes them with, "God give you a good evening."

"God receive thee, poor man; how is it that thou art journeying in this strange land where even a bird does not go?"

"I am looking for the black castle in the north. Have ye heard nothing of it in your world-beautiful lives?"

"How not? Of course we have. Are we not the shepherds of that king, who rigorously and mercilessly enjoined that, if such and such a man, who sold him the two lean cows for his army, should find us, to treat him well with meat and drink, and then to show him the right road? Maybe thou art the man!"

"I am indeed."

"Is it possible?"

"I am no one else."

"In that case sit here on the sheepskin; eat, drink, and enjoy thyself, for the kasha will be ready this minute."

As they said, he did. The poor man sat by the fire, ate, drank, and satisfied himself, then lay down and fell asleep. When he rose in the morning they gave him a round cheese, and drove the air out of his bottle; then they let him go his way, showing him the right road.

The poor man travelled and journeyed along the right road; and now, when he was hungry and dry, he had his bag, and his bottle too. Towards evening he sees again a shepherd's fire. He draws near the great fire, and sees the shepherds of the King of the Crows sitting around it cooking a meat stew. He wishes them, "God give you a good-day, my lords, the horseherds."

"God guard thee, poor man," said the chief herdsman; "where art thou going here in this strange land?"

"I am looking for the black castle of the King of the Crows. Hast thou never heard of it, brother, in thy world-beautiful life?"

"How not heard of it? Of course I have. Are we not the servants of him who commanded rigorously and unflinchingly that if such and such a poor man, who sold him two lean cows for his army, should wander along, to receive him kindly? Therefore, this is my word and speech to thee. Art thou, perchance, that man?"

"Of course I am."

"Is it possible?"

"I'm no one else."

"In that case sit down here by the fire, drink, and be filled."

The poor man sat down by the fire, ate, drank, and satisfied himself; then lying on the sheepskin, he fell asleep. When he rose in the morning the horseherds entertained the poor man again, wished him happiness, and showing the right road let him go his way; but they left neither his bag nor his bottle empty. Then he went along the right road. But why multiply words? — for there is an end even to a hundred words; it is enough to know that towards evening he came to the ground of the swineherds of the King of the Crows. He saluted them with, "God give you a good evening."

"God guard thee," said the reckoning swineherd. "How is it thou art journeying in this strange land, where even a bird does not go?"

"I am looking for the black castle of the King of the Crows. Has my lord elder brother never heard of it in his world-beautiful life?"

"Haho, poor man! How not heard of it? Are we not the servants of the lord of that castle? But art not thou the poor man who sold his Highness the two lean cows?"

"Well, what's the use in delay or denial? I am, indeed, he."

"Art thou in truth?"

"I am no one else."

"But how wilt thou enter the black castle, since it is covered all around with a stone wall, and whirls unceasingly on a golden cock's foot? But make no account of that. Here is a shining axe. Just strike the wall with it so that sparks will fly, and thou wilt come upon the door, which will spring open. Then jump in. Have a care, though; for if thou slip and fall, neither God nor man can save thee. When thou art once inside, the King of the

Crows will come forward and receive thee kindly. He won't put his soul on the palm of his hand at once; but when his Highness inquires what thy wish is, ask for nothing else but the salt-mill which stands in the corner."

Well, the talk ended there. In the morning the poor man moves on towards the black castle. When he arrives there, he saw that it whirled of itself on a golden cock's foot, like some infernal spindle; and nowhere can he see either window or door upon it, — nothing but the naked wall. He took the swineherd's axe and struck the wall, and sparks flew from the axe in such style that it couldn't be better. After a time he came upon the door; it flew open, and he jumped in. If he had delayed but one flash of an eye the stone wall door would have crushed him; as it was, the edge of his trousers was carried off.

As soon as the poor man got in, he saw that the castle turned only on the outside. At this moment the King of the Crows was standing by the window, and saw the poor man coming for the price of the cows. He went to meet him, shook his hand, treated him as tenderly as an egg; then he led him into the most beautiful chamber, and seated him at his side on a golden couch. The poor man saw not a soul anywhere, although it was midday, the time of eating. All at once the table began to spread, and was soon bending under its load, so much food was on it. The poor man shook his head, — for, as I say, though no one was to be seen anywhere, neither cook nor kitchen-boy nor servant, still, wasn't the table spread? It was surely witchcraft, surely some infernal art, but not the work of a good spirit, — maybe the salt-mill had something to do with it. That, however, did not come into the poor man's mind, though the mill stood there in the corner.

He was there three days, the guest of the King of the Crows, who received him with every kindness he could offer, so that no man's son could raise a complaint against his Highness. Morning, noon, and night the poor man's food appeared in proper form, but the roast and the wine had no taste for him; for it came to his mind that while he was feasting there, most likely his wife and children had not bread enough. I say it came to his mind; he began to be restless and uneasy. The King of the Crows noticed this, and said to him: “Well, poor man, I see that thou dost not wish to stay longer with me, because thy heart is at home, therefore I ask what dost thou wish for the two lean cows? — believe me, brother, thou didst save me from great trouble that time; if thou hadst not taken pity on me I should have lost my whole army from famine.”

“I want nothing else,” said the poor man, “but that salt-mill standing there in the corner.”

“Oh, poor man, hast thou lost thy wits? Tell me, what good couldst thou get of the mill?”

“Oh, I could grind corn or a little wheat from time to time; if I did not some one else might, so there would be something to take to the kitchen.”

“Ask for something else; ask for all the cattle which in coming hither thou didst see.”

“What should I do with such a tremendous lot of cattle? If I should drive them home, people would think evil of me; besides, I have neither stable nor pasture.”

“But I’ll give thee money. How much dost thou wish? Wouldst be content with three bags of it?”

“What could I do with such an ocean-great lot of money? My evil fate would use it to kill me; people would think that I stole the coin, or murdered some man for it; besides, I might be stopped with it on the road.”

“But I’ll give thee a soldier as a guard.”

“What good is one of thy Highness’s soldiers?” asked the poor man, smiling; “a hen, I think, would drive him away.”

“What! one of my soldiers?”

Here the King of the Crows blew a small whistle; straightway a crow appeared which shook itself, and became such a gallant young fellow that he was not only so, but just so. “That’s the kind of soldiers I have;” said the king and commanded the young man out of the room. The soldier shook himself, became a crow, and flew away.

“It’s all the same to me what kind of soldiers thy Highness has. Thy Highness promised to give me what I want, and I ask for nothing else but the salt-mill.”

“I will not give it. Ask for all my herds, but not for that.”

“I need not herds; all I want is the mill.”

“Well, poor man, I have refused thee three times, and three times thou hast asked for the mill; now, whether I will or not, I must give it. But know that thou art not to grind corn or wheat with the mill; for it has this virtue, — that it accomplishes all wishes. Here it is, take it, though my heart bleeds after it. Thou didst me a good deed, therefore let it be thine.”

The poor man put the mill on his back, took farewell of the King of the Crows, thanking him for his hospitality, and trudged home at his leisure. On the way back he entertained the swineherds, the horseherds, and the cowherds. All he did was to say, “Grind, my dear mill,” and what food was dear to the eye, the mouth, and the taste appeared of itself; and if he said, “Draw up, my dear mill,” all the food was as if the ground had swallowed it, — it vanished. Then he took leave of the good shepherds and continued his way.

As he travelled and journeyed, he came to a great wild wood; and having grown hungry, he said: “Grind, my dear mill.” Straightway the table was spread, not for one, but for two persons. The mill knew at once that the poor man would have a guest; for that moment, wherever he came from, a great fat man appeared, who without saying a word, took his seat at the table. When they had enjoyed God’s blessing, the great fat man spoke, and said:

“Listen, poor man. Give me that mill for this knotty club; for if thy mill has the power of accomplishing all thy desires [the fat man knew this already], my knotty club has this power, that thou hast need but to say, ‘Strike, my club,’ and the man thou hast in mind is the son of Death.”

What was the poor man to do? Thinking if he did not give it of his free will the fat man would take it by force, he exchanged the mill for the knotty club; but when he had it once in his hand, he said in a low voice, for he was commanding the knotty club, “Strike, my dear club.” And it so struck the fat man behind the ears that he gave forth not a sound; he didn’t move his little finger. Then the poor man continued his journey homeward at his ease; and when seven years had passed he was able to say: “Here we are!”

His wife who was weeping by the hearth, mourning over her dear lost lord and the two lean cows, scarcely knew the poor man, but still she knew him. His two sons had become large, and had grown out of their long clothes. When the poor man put his foot in his own house he set the mill down in the chimney-corner, loosed his mantle from his neck, hung it up on a nail, and only then did they know him.

“Well, father,” said his wife, “thou hast come; God knows ‘tis time. I never expected to see thee again; but what didst thou get for Bimbo and Csako?”

“This mill,” answered he with many “see here’s” and “see there’s.”

“If that’s the case, the palsy strike thy work,” cried the woman; “better for thee to have stayed at home these seven years, and swung thy feet around here, than to have dragged that good-for-nothing mill from such a distant land, just as if thou hadst eaten the crazy-weed!”

“Oh, my sweet wife, something is better than nothing; if we have no grain to grind for ourselves, we can grind for other people, if not in streams at least in drops.”

“May a cancer eat thy mill! I haven’t a thing to put between my teeth, and still —”

“Well, my sweet wife, if thou hast nothing to put between thy teeth thou’lt soon have. Grind, my dear mill.”

At these words, so much meat and drink appeared on the poor man’s table that half of it would have been enough. It was only then that the woman regretted her tongue rattling. But a woman is a woman; beat her with a stone, only let her talk.

The poor man, his wife, and two sons sat down at the table, looking at the food like an army of locusts. They ate and drank to their hearts’ content. Whether from wine or some other cause, a desire to dance came to the two sons; and they jumped up and danced, so it was pure delight to look at them. “Oh,” said the elder one, “if we only had a gypsy!” That moment a band of gypsies by the chimney struck up their music, and played away with such variations that the poor man too wished to dance, and so whirled his wife around that better could not be asked for. The neighbors knew not what to think of the affair. How was it that music was sounding in the poor man’s house?

“What is this?” said they one to another, coming nearer and nearer, till they came up to the door and the windows. Only then did they see that a band of gypsies were fiddling away with might and main, and the old man, his wife, and their two sons were dancing, while the table was bending under loads of rich meat and drink.

“Come in cousin! come in friend! come in brother-in-law, bring thy wife! come in brother!” and there was no end to the invitations of the poor man. Guests collected unceasingly, and still the table was spread. “‘Pon my soul,” said the poor man, “it’s a pity my house isn’t larger; for all these guests could scarcely find room in a palace.” At these words, instead of the poor man’s cabin such a magnificent palace appeared, with chambers, twelve in a row, that the king himself hadn’t the like of it.

A multitude of grand people with the king in the midst of them were out walking just at that time. “What’s this? what’s this?” asked they of one another. “There has always been a poor man’s cabin here, now there’s a king’s palace, and besides, music is sounding, and gypsies are fiddling. Let’s go and have a look.”

The king went in front, and after him all the grand people, — counts, dukes, barons, and so on. The poor man came out and received the king with the great personages very kindly, and conducted them all to the head of the table as their fitting place. They ate, drank, and caroused, so that it was like a small wedding.

While they were enjoying themselves at the best, a great sealed letter came to the king. When he had read it, he turned yellow and blue, because it was written therein that the Turk-Tartar was nearing his kingdom with a great army, destroying everything with fire and sword, and sparing not the property of innocent, weeping people, whom he puts to the point of the sword; that the earth is drinking their blood; their flesh is devoured by dogs.

From great joy there was great sorrow.

Then the poor man stood forth and asked the king: “If ‘tis no offence, may I ask a question?”

“What may it be, poor man?”

“Would thy Highness tell me the contents of that great letter received just now?”

“Why ask, poor man? Thou couldst not mend the affair.”

“But if I can?”

“Well, know then, and let the whole kingdom know, that the Turk-Tartar is moving on our country with a great army, with cruel intent; that he spares not the property of innocent, weeping people, puts them to the sword, so that the earth drinks their blood, and their flesh is devoured by dogs.”

“And what will be the reward of him who drives the enemy out of the country?” asked the poor man.

“In truth,” said the king, “great reward and honor await him; for if he should have two sons, I would give them my two daughters in marriage, with half the kingdom. After my death they would inherit the whole kingdom.”

“Well, I’ll drive out the enemy all alone.”

But the king did not place much confidence in the poor man’s promise; he hurried together all his soldiers, and marched with them against the enemy. The two armies were looking at each other with wolves’ eyes, when the poor man went between the camps and commanded the club: “Strike, my dear club.” And the club pommelled the Turk-Tartar army so that only one man was left to carry home the tidings.

The poor man gained half the kingdom and the two beautiful princesses, whom he married to his two stalwart sons. They celebrated a wedding which spoke to the seven worlds; and they are living now if they are not dead.

65

THE USELESS WAGONER

There was once in the world a king, and he had a Useless Wagoner who never and never did anything but frolic in the tavern. The whole standing day and all the ocean-great night there was nothing for him but singing and dancing, eating and drinking. The king had money of course.

But the king began to grow tired of this thing. He called up the Useless Wagoner, and gave him a terrible scolding. But ‘tis vain to seat a dog at table, and when the Devil gets into a man he stays there; so it was labor lost to drive the Useless Wagoner to work, for he went his way, and frolicked as before. At last the king resolved to take his life, and calling him up, said, —

“Dost hear me, work-shunning Useless Wagoner! I revile thy mother, if within the turn of four and twenty hours thou dost not make for me a three-hundred-gallon cask; and though one joint or seam is not much, if it has that, I’ll empale thee on a stake.”

The Useless Wagoner said not a word to all this, but put a hamper on his back, took a cutting-axe in his hand, and strolled off to the forest to find a tree fit to make a three-hundred-gallon cask.

When he came to the forest, being hungry and tired, he sat down under a large shady tree, opened his hamper, and began to eat lunch. He ate and ate, till all at once, from some corner or another, a little fox stood before him and begged food to eat.

“Of course I’ll give thee something. The food came here, ‘twill stay here;” and with that he threw a slice of bread and a bit of sausage to the fox.

When the fox had finished eating she said: “Dost hear, Useless Wagoner? As thou hast taken pity on me, I will take pity on thee; in place of a good deed look for a good deed. Though thou hast not told me, still I know why thou hast come to this forest. I know, too, that the king is breaking his head to kill thee; but he’ll not be in time, for I will help thee out of thy trouble and make thee the three-hundred-gallon cask. And though one seam or joint is not much, even that will not be in it. Now lie down and rest.”

And so it was. The Useless Wagoner lay down and rested. Meanwhile the little fox got such a three-hundred-gallon cask ready, that although a joint or seam is not much, even that was not to be seen in it.

When the cask was finished the Useless Wagoner took it home and gave it to the king, who, after looking at it, dropped his eyes and his lip like a sheep; for neither his father, his grandfather, nor his great-grandfather had ever seen such a cunningly made cask, for not a seam nor a joint could be seen in it for gold.

Well and good for the moment; but soon the king summoned the Useless Wagoner to his presence again, and cried out, —

“Dost thou hear me, work-shunning Useless Wagoner! I revile thy soul if within the turn of four and twenty hours thou dost not make for me a chariot which will go itself, without horses. I’ll break thee on a wheel!”

The Useless Wagoner said nothing, but put his hamper on his back, took his cutting-axe in his hand, and wandered off to the forest to find a tree fit to make the chariot.

When he came to the forest he was hungry, and tired too; therefore he sat down under a large, shady tree, opened his hamper, and began to eat lunch.

He ate and ate till all at once, from some corner or another, the little fox stood before him again, and begged food to eat.

“Of course, my dear little fox, I’ll give thee something. It came here, and ‘twill stay here.”

With that he threw a piece of bread and a slice of ham to the little fox, who after she had eaten, said:

“Well, Useless Wagoner, in place of a good deed look for a good deed. Though thou hast not told me, still I know why thou art here. I know, too, that the king is breaking his head to kill thee; but he won’t, for I shall help thee out of trouble. I’ll make for thee the chariot which will go of itself, without horses; but do thou lie down and rest.”

And so it was. The Useless Wagoner reclined his head in rest; and meanwhile the little fox fashioned a chariot beautifully. When all was ready she roused the Useless Wagoner, and said, —

“Here is the chariot which runs of itself; thou hast but to step in and command it to stop in the king’s court-yard. But I would tell thee this: Here is a whistle that will serve thee; shouldst thou fall into trouble, just blow, — it will help thee.”

The Useless Wagoner thanked the fox for her kindness, and entered the chariot, which stopped not till it reached the king’s court-yard.

When the king saw the chariot he said nothing, but shook his head, turned on the Useless Wagoner in a rage, and cried, —

“Useless Wagoner, I revile thy mother! In my stable there are a hundred hares; and if thou dost not herd them three days, if thou dost not drive them a-field in the morning and bring them back at night so that not one shall be missing from the hundred, I’ll strike off thy head.”

What was the poor Useless Wagoner to do? Against his will, and of need, he let the hundred hares out of the stable and drove them a-field. They had barely touched the edge of the field when they ran in as many directions as there were hares. Who could bring them together again? The poor Useless Wagoner ran first after one and then after another hare; he chased the whole day, but could not bring back a single hare. It was already growing late, time to go home, but the hundred hares were in a hundred places; therefore the Useless Wagoner became terribly sad, and wished to make an end of his own life, — it was all the same whether he or the king took it; there was no salvation for him anyhow. So he put his hand in his bosom to take out his clasp-knife and strike himself in the heart, but instead of the knife he found the whistle which the little fox had given him. That was all he wanted; he drew out the whistle, sounded it, and, behold! all the hares ran up to him, — as tame as pet lambs fed from the palm of the hand.

When all the hares had come together he drove them home.

The king stood at the gate and let them in singly, counting, “One, two, three ... ninety-nine, a hundred.” Not one was missing.

Next day the Useless Wagoner drove the hares out again, and when they had barely touched the edge of the field they ran off in as many directions as there were hares.

But this time the Useless Wagoner took no thought of running and chasing after them; he thought to himself that he would take his whistle and blow, and they would come. So he lay down in a nice shady place, and slept to his liking.

But the king did not sleep; he was racking his brain to destroy the Useless Wagoner. So he called his only and dearly beloved daughter, and said to her, “My darling daughter, I have a great favor to ask of thee.”

“What may it be, my father the king?”

“Of a truth nothing but this, — that thou dress in peasant’s clothes, and go out to the field where the Useless Wagoner is herding the hundred hares, and beg one of him. If he gives it not for a good word, mayhap he will give it for a sweet kiss; but come not home to me without the hare, even if he asks a piece of thy body for it.”

The princess granted her father’s request. She gathered her wits about her, dressed up in peasant’s clothes, and went in the field to the Useless Wagoner, who was sleeping at his leisure under a shady tree. The princess pushed him with her foot; he woke, and saw in a moment with whom he had to deal.

“God give thee a good-day, hareherd!”

“God save thee, king’s daughter! What good dost thou bring the poor hareherd?”

“I have brought nothing but this, that I have come because I would like to get one little hare. Wouldst thou not give even one for good money?”

“High princess, I will not give one for money; but if thou wilt give me three kisses, I can give them back. Then I don’t mind; I’ll give thee a hare.”

So the princess got a hare for three pairs of kisses, and ran home very joyfully; but just as she was touching the latch to open the gate, the hareherd sounded his whistle, the hare jumped like lightning from her bosom, and stopped not till it reached the flock.

The hareherd drove home his flock; the king was waiting for him at the gate, and let them in one by one, counting till he came to a hundred.

Next day the hareherd drove out his hares the third time, and left them to go their way.

The king now called his wife to the white chamber, and spoke thus to her: “My heart’s beautiful love, I have a great favor to ask of thee.”

“And what may it be, my dear husband?”

“Of a truth, nothing but this, — that thou dress in peasant’s clothes, go to the hareherd in the field, and ask a hare of him. If he will not give it for fair words, he may for a sweet kiss; but come not home to me without a hare, even if he asks a piece of thy flesh.”

Well, the queen yielded to her husband’s request, put on a peasant’s dress, and went to the field, where she found the Useless Wagoner sleeping in the shade. She roused him with her foot; he knew at once who was in the peasant’s dress.

“God give thee a good-day, hareherd!”

“God save thee, kind queen! What good hast thou brought the poor hareherd? Why hast thou come, may I ask?”

“I have only come to ask if thou wilt give me a hare for good money.”

“I will not give a hare for money, my queen; but if thou wilt give me three kisses, I will return them again. Then I don’t mind; I’ll risk my head, and let thee have a hare.”

So the queen got a hare for three pairs of kisses, and took her way home joyously; but just as she was putting her hand on the latch to open the gate, the hareherd sounded the whistle, the hare jumped like a flash from the queen’s bosom, and stopped not till it joined its companions.

When the hares were all together, the hareherd drove them home. The king was waiting for him at the gate, let each in singly, counting till he reached a hundred, — not one missing from the round number.

Next morning the hares were driven out as before; but the king now put on a peasant’s dress, and went to the field himself. When he came to the hareherd he said: “God give thee good-day!”

“God save thee, poor man!” answered the hareherd. “What art thou looking for?”

“Well, what’s the use in delay or denial? I have come to buy a little hare of thee for good money. Of course thou wilt part with one.”

“I will not give one for money; but if I can wear out twelve rods on thy back, I don’t mind; I’ll risk my head on it.”

What was the king to do? He stretched himself out with face and hands on the grass, and the hareherd flogged him as a corporal does a soldier; but he endured it all, gritting his teeth, and thinking to himself, “Wait a bit, thief of a Useless Wagoner, thou wilt have a dose when I get at thee!”

But all to no use, for when the king had reached home, and was just putting his hand on the latch to open the gate, the whistle sounded, and the hare sprang away from him like a flash, and ran till it joined the flock.

Then the Useless Wagoner drove home the hundred hares a fourth time. The king was standing at the little gate; he counted them one by one, but could find no fault, for they were all there.

The Useless Wagoner drove out the hares the fifth time to pasture; but the king mounted the chariot which went wherever the owner commanded, and drove to the Useless Wagoner, taking three empty bags with him. “Dost hear me, thou! — this-and-that-kind-of-work-shunning? Hareherd, I revile thy soul! If thou wilt not fill these three bags with truth, I will strike off thy head.”

To all this the Useless Wagoner answered in words: “The king’s daughter came out; I gave her, and she gave me. The queen came; I gave her, and she gave me. The king came; I gave him, and he —”

“Stop! stop!” cried the king, “the three bags are full; and I’d rather be in hell than hear thy words.”

At this speech the chariot started off with the king, and never stopped till it took him to the bottom of hell.

Then the Useless Wagoner went home, married the king’s daughter, became king, and reigns yet with his queen, unless he is dead.

66

MIRKO, THE KING’S SON

Once there was a king, and he had three sons. The king rejoiced in his three sons, and resolved to have them instructed in a befitting manner, so that he might leave good heirs to the kingdom. Therefore he sent his sons to school, where they got on well enough for a time, till at length they turned their backs on the school, went home, all three, and knew their studies no more.

The king grew fiercely angry at this, forbade his sons to stand before his face, and betook himself to live in the chamber of his palace next the rising sun, where he sat continually at the window and looked towards the east as if waiting for something; and with one eye he wept unceasingly, while with the other he laughed.

After the three princes had grown up to a good age, they agreed among themselves to inquire of the king why he was always sitting in the chamber next the rising sun, and why one of his eyes was always crying, while the other was always laughing. First the eldest son went in and put the question, saying, “My father the king, I have come to ask why one of thy eyes is always crying and the other always laughing, while thou art looking continually towards the east.”

The king measured his son with his eyes from head to foot, said not a word, but took a sword which hung at the window and hurled it at him with such force that it sank into the door up to the hilt. The prince sprang through the door, thus escaping the blow aimed at him. When he came out his brothers asked what success he had had. He answered: “Try yourselves; then ye will know.” The second brother tried, with the same result as the first. At last the youngest, who was called Mirko, went in and declared the cause of his coming. The king answered him not, but seized the sword in still greater anger, and hurled it at him so that it entered the stone wall up to the hilt. Mirko did not spring aside, but went to the sword, drew it out of the stone wall, took it to the king, his father, and placed it before him on the table.

Seeing this, the king opened his mouth and said to Mirko: “I see now, my son, that thou knowest somewhat better than thy two brothers what honor is; to thee then will I give answer. My one eye weeps unceasingly for sadness at your insignificance, not being fit to rule; but my other eye laughs because in the time of my youth I had a trusty comrade, the Hero of the Plain, who battled by my side, and he promised that if he should overpower his enemies he would come to dwell with me, that we might pass the days of our old age together. For this reason I sit ever by the window next the rising sun, because I await his coming; but every day there rise up against the Hero of the Plain, who dwells in the silken meadow, as many enemies as there are grass-blades on the field. Every day he unaided cuts them down; and until all his enemies have disappeared, he will not be able to come to me.”

With that Mirko left his father’s chamber, came out to his brothers, and told them the king’s speech. They counselled together again, and agreed to ask leave of the king to try their fortune. First the eldest son went to his father and made known his wish. The king consented, and the eldest brother went to the royal stables where he chose a good steed, which he saddled next day, and set out on his journey. After he had been absent a whole year, behold he rides home, bearing on his shoulders the top of the copper bridge, which he threw down before the palace. He went in then, stood before the face of the king, and told him where he had been and what he had brought back.

The king heard his son’s discourse to the end, and said: “Oh, my son, when I was of thy age the road to the copper bridge was a two hours’ ride for me. Thou art a soft hero. Thou wilt never make vitriol. Go thy way.”

With that, the eldest son left his father’s chamber. After him the second brother went in, and asked leave of the king to try his fortune. Having received it, he went also to the stables and chose a good steed, which he saddled, mounted, and went his way. At the end of a year he came home, bringing the top of the silver bridge, which he threw down in front of the palace; then he stood before the king, his father, and told him where he had been and what he had brought back.

“Oh,” said the king, “when I was of thy age that was only a three hours’ ride for me. Thou too art a soft hero; nothing at all will come of thee.” With that he dismissed the second son.

At last Mirko appeared; he also asked to try his fortune. The king consented, and Mirko went to the stables to choose a steed. Finding nothing to his mind, he went out to the royal stud and examined it carefully, but could not decide which steed to take. Just then an old witch chanced to be passing that way, and asked what he wanted. Mirko told her. “Oh, my master,” said she, “thou wilt not find a horse to thy wish here, but I will tell thee how to find one. Go to the king, thy father, and ask him for the horn with which in his youth he called together his golden-haired steeds. Sound this horn and the steeds will appear at once. Choose not among the golden-haired ones; but last of all will come a shaggy-coated, crooked-legged old mare, — thou wilt know her by this, that when she strikes the pillars with her tail the whole palace will tremble from the blow. Choose her; try thy fortune with her.”

Mirko took the old witch’s advice, went straightway to the king and said: “My father, I have come that thou mayest give me the horn with which in thy youth thou wert wont to call together thy golden-haired steeds.”

The king asked: “Who told thee of this horn?”

“No man,” answered Mirko.

“Well, my dear son, if no man told thee, thou art wise; but if some man told thee, he does not wish thee harm. I will tell thee where to find the horn; the rust has eaten it up, perhaps, by this time. In the seventh cellar it is enclosed in the wall; look for it, take it out, and make use of it if thou art able.”

Mirko called a mason, went with him to the seventh cellar, found the hollow place in the wall, took out the horn, and carried it away. Then standing on the square before the palace, he sounded towards the east, the west, the south, and the north, and having waited a little, behold! he hears the golden horse bells ringing so that the whole city is full of the sound. The steeds came in, one more beautiful than the other in appearance and in breed. At a distance he saw the shaggy-haired, crooked-legged mare; and when she came to the gate, as true as I live, she struck the pillars with her tail so that the whole palace trembled.

When the steeds had stopped in the court-yard, Mirko went up to the mare, led her away to the stable, and then said that he had taken her to try his fortune. The magic mare answered: “That is well, my lord king’s son; but first thou must feed me, for without that it will be hard to endure the long road.”

“What kind of food dost thou wish? — for whatever my father has, I will give thee with a good heart.”

“Very well, kind master; but a steed must be fed before starting, not while on the road.”

“I know not what I can do,” said Mirko, “except to give what I have with a good heart.”

“Bring me straightway a measure of peas, and turn them into the manger.”

Mirko obeyed, and when the peas were eaten, he brought a measure of beans; when these were eaten the mare turned to Mirko and said: “Now bring me half a measure of glowing coals.”

The coals were brought; and when she had eaten the glowing coals, she became such a golden-haired steed as the Star of Dawn, and spoke further to Mirko. “Go now, my master, to the king, and ask of him that saddle which he used when he coursed the meadow with me in his youth.”

Mirko went to the old king and asked for the saddle. The king answered that it was useless, for it had been thrown about a long time in the carriage-house, but if he could find it, he might take it. Mirko went to the carriage-house and found the saddle all befouled by the hens and turkeys. He took it, however, to his steed, which said that it was not proper for a king’s son to sit on such a saddle. Mirko was about to carry it away and have a fresh cover put on, when she said: “Place it before me.” He obeyed. Straightway she blew on it, and in an instant it became such a golden saddle that its like could not be found in seven kingdoms.

With this he saddled the magic mare, and she said: “Go now, my dear master, to thy father, and ask him for the weapons and the sword with which he fought when he journeyed with me.”

Mirko asked his father; the old king said they were on the shelf if he wanted them. Mirko took them to the mare, who blew on them, and instantly they became the most beautiful gold-mounted sword and weapons. Mirko girded on the sword and took the weapons. Then the bridle was brought, and when blown upon became of the most beautiful gold.

Mirko bridled the mare, led her out of the stable, and wished to sit in the saddle, but she said: “Wait, my dear master; lead me out of the city first, and then sit on me.” He hearkened to these words, and led her out of the city; then she stood still, and he sat in the saddle.

The magic steed now asked: “How shall I bear thee, dear master; with the speed of the fleet whirlwind, or of quick thought?”

“Carry me as may please thee,” answered the prince; “only manage so that I shall endure the swift flight.”

“Well, close thy eyes,” said the steed, “and hold fast.”

Mirko closed his eyes; the steed shot on like a rushing whirlwind, and after a short time struck the earth with her foot, and said to Mirko: “Open thy eyes! What dost thou see?”

“I see,” said he, “a great river and a copper bridge.”

“That, my dear master, is the bridge the top of which thy first brother brought home; but look for the open place.”

“I see it,” said Mirko; “but where are we going from here?”

“Only close thy eyes; I will take thee straight there.”

With that she moved as quick as thought, and in a few moments struck the earth, stood still, and said to Mirko: “Open thy eyes! What dost thou see?”

“I see a great river, and across it a silver bridge.”

“That is the bridge the top of which thy second brother took home; look for the open place.”

“I see it,” said Mirko; “but where do we go from here?”

“Only close thy eyes,” said the steed; “I will take thee at once.”

With that she moved on like lightning, and in a flash stamped on the ground, and said to the prince: “Open thy eyes! What dost thou see?”

“I see,” said Mirko, “an enormously wide and deep river, across it a golden bridge, and at both ends of the bridge, at this side and that, are four unmercifully large lions. Must we cross this bridge?”

“Never mind,” said the steed, “I’ll manage; only shut thy eyes.”

The mare sped on like a swift falcon, and thus flew across the bridge. After a short time she struck the ground, and said: “Open thy eyes! What dost thou see?”

“I see,” replied Mirko, “a summitless, high glass mountain, as steep as the side of a house.”

“We must cross that very mountain, my master.”

“That, I think, is impossible,” said Mirko.

“Fear not,” said the steed; “for I have on my feet the shoes which thy father fastened to me with diamond nails, seven hundred years ago. Only shut thy eyes and hold to me firmly.”

Now the steed sprang up, and in an instant was on the glass mountain. She stamped, and said, “Open thy eyes! What dost thou see?”

“I see,” said Mirko, “when I look behind, something dark, as large as a great plate.”

“Oh, my master, that is the round of the earth. But what dost thou see before thee?”

“I see a narrow glass road, rising like a half circle. On both sides of it is emptiness of bottomless depth.”

“My dear master, we must pass over that road; but the passage is so delicate that if one of my feet slip the least bit to one side or the other, there is an end to our lives. But trust thyself to me, and close thy eyes. Hold fast, I will manage.”

With that she swept on, and in an instant stamped again. “Open thy eyes! What dost thou see?”

“I see behind me,” said Mirko, “a faint light, in front of me is darkness so dense that when I hold my finger before my eyes I cannot see it.”

“Well, we must go through that also; shut thy eyes and hold firmly.”

She sped on anew, and again stamped. “Open thy eyes! What dost thou see now?”

“I see,” said Mirko, “the most glorious, light, beautiful, snow-covered mountains, and in the midst of them a silken meadow; in the centre of the silken meadow something dark.”

“This silken meadow,” said the steed, “belongs to the Hero of the Plain; and the dark object in the middle is his tent, woven from black silk. Now close thy eyes or not as may please thee. We shall go there directly.” Mirko spurred the steed, and they were at the tent in a twinkle.

Mirko sprang from his steed and left her at the tent by the side of that of the Hero of the Plain, and entered himself. Within lay a warrior stretched on the silken grass, sleeping; but a sword above him was cutting around in every direction, so that a fly could not light on his body. “Well,” thought Mirko to himself, “though he be a good warrior I could slay him in slumber; but it would not be honorable to slay a sleeping man. I will wait till he rises.” Then he went out and tied his steed fast to the tent, near the other, stretched himself on the silken grass, and called: “Sword out of thy sheath!” and the sword cut around above him, as his sword above the Hero of the Plain, so that a fly could not touch his body.

When the Hero of the Plain woke up and saw that a horse was tied near his own, he marvelled, and said: “What does this mean? I am here seven hundred years, and I have not seen a strange horse near mine before. Whose can this be?” He rose, went out, and saw Mirko sleeping near the tent with the sword cutting above him. “That,” said he, “is an honest warrior; he has not slain me while sleeping. It would not become me to touch him now.”

Then he pushed the foot of the sleeping hero with his own. Mirko jumped up straightway, and the Hero of the Plain asked: “Who art thou, and on what journey?” Mirko told whose son he was, and what his journey. “God has brought thee, dear younger brother,” said the Hero; “thy father is my old friend, and thou, I see, art as good as thy father. But I have need of thee. This great silken meadow which thou seest, is every day filled with enemies, and every day I cut them down; but to-day as thou art with me, we shall not hurry. Come, let us eat and drink; let them crowd.” Then the two went in, ate and drank till the enemy had so increased that they reached almost to the tent. The Hero of the Plain sprang then to his feet and said:

“Up, my comrade, we’ll soon finish.” Both leaped into their saddles and rushed to the centre of the enemy, crying out, “Sword from the sheath!” The swords hewed off the heads of the countless multitude, so there was scarcely room to move for bodies. Twelve of the opposing warriors now flee from the rear, the Hero of the Plain and Mirko pursuing. They come to a glass mountain; the twelve warriors rushing ahead. Mirko pursues in hot haste. On the top of the mountain there is a nice, level space; he sees them running upon it. He gallops after them; but all at once they are as if the ground had swallowed them. Mirko springs to the place where they disappear, finds a breach and a deep opening with winding steps. His steed rushes into the opening and down the stairs; they are soon in the lower world.

Mirko looks around the lower world and sees a shining diamond castle, which serves instead of the sun down there. The twelve fleeing warriors rush towards the castle, he after them, and ordering his sword out of the sheath, cuts off their heads in a moment. The next instant Mirko stands before the diamond castle. Within, there is such a clatter and pounding that the whole interior trembles and shivers. He dismounts and enters. Inside is an old witch weaving, and the racket is deafening. The building is full of armed men. The infernal old witch weaves them. When she throws her shuttle to the right, two hussars spring out on horseback; when she throws it to the left, two men on foot jump out armed.

Meanwhile Sword out of the Sheath cuts down the newly made soldiers, but the old witch weaves more. “Well,” thinks Mirko to himself, “I shall never get out of here, at this rate;” but he commands the sword, and it cuts the old witch into small pieces. Then he carries the loom into the yard, where there is a pile. He throws everything on the pile and sets fire to it; but when all is burned one of the old witch’s ribs springs out, begins to turn round in the dust, and she rises up again entire. Again Mirko is going to command the sword to cut her to pieces, but she speaks up, “Spare my life, Mirko, and await one good deed for another, if thou wilt let me go. Thou dost not know how to escape from here; I will give thee four diamond horse-shoe nails. Do as I say; thou wilt profit by it."

Mirko takes the nails and puts them away, but says to himself: "If I leave the old witch alive, she will put up her loom again, and the Hero of the Plain will never be able to free himself from his enemies." Again he orders his sword to cut the old witch in pieces; he throws the pieces into the fire, where they are consumed, so that she can never rise again. He mounts his steed and searches the underground world, but nowhere does he find a living soul.

Then he puts spurs to his steed, springs up the circular stairs, and issues forth into the upper world. Straightway he comes down from the glass mountain, and passing over the silken meadow, returns to the Hero of the Plain, who thought Mirko had left him. But when he saw his friend returning, he went out to meet him with great joy, and took him into the tent, where they feasted together gloriously. And when the prince rose to go, he offered him his silken meadow and all the royal domains; but Mirko answered: "My dear elder brother, I have finished thy enemies; they will never attack thy kingdom again. I have this now to ask, that thou come with me to my father the king, who has long been waiting for thee."

Thereupon they mounted their steeds, and set out for the realms of the old king. They went on easily till they reached the glass mountain, where the Hero of the Plain stopped, and said: "My dear younger brother, I cannot go on, for the diamond nails are long since worn from my horse's shoes, and his feet have no grip."

Mirko called to mind that the cursed old witch had given him the diamond nails, and said: "Grieve not, elder brother, I have nails; I'll shoe thy horse this minute."

So he took out the nails, and shod the Hero's horse. Then they continued their journey over the glass mountain with ease and comfort, like two jolly comrades, and sped homeward as swiftly as thought.

At that time the old king was sitting at the window of his palace next the rising sun, and lo! he beholds two horsemen riding towards him. Straightway he takes his field-glass, and sees that it is his trusty old comrade, the Hero of the Plain, together with his son Mirko. He runs out, and from the tower commands that a twelve-year old ox be killed; and when Mirko and the Hero arrive, the great feast is ready. He receives them with joy, kisses and embraces them; this time both his eyes are laughing. Then they sat down to the feast, ate and drank with gladness. Meanwhile the Hero of the Plain spoke of Mirko's doings, and among other things said to the old king: "Well, comrade, thy son Mirko will be a better hero than we were; he is already a gallant youth. Thou hast cause to rejoice in him."

"Indeed, I begin to be satisfied with him," said the king, "especially since he has brought thee. But I do not think he would venture yet to measure strength with Doghead."

Mirko heard the conversation, but said nothing. After dinner, however, he spoke to the Hero of the Plain apart, and inquired who Doghead was, and in what direction he lived. The Hero of the Plain told him that Doghead lived in the north, and was such a hero that his like was not under the sun.

Mirko made preparations for his journey, took provisions, and next day set out for Doghead's. According to his wont, he sat on his steed, held fast, and closed his eyes. The steed sped on, flying like the swift whirlwind. At length she stopped, struck the ground, and said to Mirko: "Open thy eyes! What dost thou see?"

"I see," said the prince, "a seven-story diamond castle, so bright that I can look on the sun, but not on it."

"Well, Doghead lives there; that is the royal castle."

Mirko sprang towards it, stopped right under the window, and called out in a loud voice: "Art thou here, Doghead? I have an account to settle with thee."

Doghead was not at home, but his daughter was, and such a beautiful princess that her like could not be found on the whole round of the earth. As she sat by the window embroidering, and heard the loud, piercing voice, she looked out so angrily with her wondrous black, beautiful eyes that Mirko and his horse were turned into stone in an instant from the flash. Then she thought: “Maybe this young man is a king’s son.” She went to look at him, was sorry she had turned him to stone so quickly, and approached, taking a golden rod, walked around the stone statue and struck it on all sides with the rod. The stone began to move, and in a moment Mirko and his horse stood alive before her. Then the maiden asked, “Who art thou, and on what journey?”

Mirko answered that he was a king’s son, and had come to see Doghead’s daughter.

The maiden was so displeased that she called out to her father very angrily; but presently she thought better of it, fell in love with Mirko, and led him up into the seven-story diamond palace, where she saw him with a good heart. During conversation at the table, Mirko confessed that he had come to try his strength with Doghead.

The maiden advised him not to do that, since there was no man on the round of the earth whom her father could not conquer. Seeing, however, that Mirko would not desist from his purpose, she took compassion on him, and told how her father might, perhaps, be overcome. “Go down,” said she “into the seventh cellar of the castle. There thou wilt find an unsealed cask, in which my father keeps his strength. Here is a silver flask; fill it from the cask. Do not stop the flask, but keep it always hanging from thy neck uncorked; and when thy strength begins to fail, dip thy little finger in. Every time thou shalt do so, thy strength will be increased with the strength of five thousand men. Drink of the wine, for every drop contains the strength of five thousand men.”

Mirko listened to her advice attentively, hung the flask upon his neck, went into the cellar, and found the wine. He took a good draught of it; then thinking that he had enough, and lest Doghead might make further use of the wine, he poured it all on the ground, to the last drop. There were six measures of wheat-flour in the cellar, which he sprinkled around to absorb the moisture. Having done this, he went up to Doghead's daughter, and declared that he was ready, and thanking her for the counsel, vowed to take her as wife for her kindness, and swore eternal fidelity.

The beautiful princess consented, making one condition, — that if Mirko should overcome her father, he would spare his life.

Mirko asked the maiden when her father might be expected to return, and from what quarter.

She answered that he was then in the realms of the setting sun, that he took delight in those regions, but would soon be home, for it was the hour of his coming. But it was easy to know it beforehand, for when he was forty miles distant, he was in the habit of hurling home a forty-hundred-pound club before him; and wherever it fell a fountain gushed out of the earth.

Mirko and the princess went on the balcony to wait for Doghead; all at once (the Lord save us!) the sky grew dark, and a forty-hundred pound club fell in the court-yard. A stream rushed out of the earth as if from a force-pump.

Mirko ran down straightway to see how much his strength had increased. He picked up the club, whirled it around his head, and let it go so that it came down just in front of Doghead. Doghead's horse stumbled over the club, whereupon his master flew into a rage, and cried out: "May the wolves and dogs devour thee! Seven hundred years have I ridden thee, and to this day thou hast never stumbled. Why begin now?"

"Oh, dear master," answered the magic steed, "there is mighty trouble at home; for the club which thou hast sent ahead has been hurled back, and I stumbled over it."

“Oh, that’s nothing!” said Doghead. “Seven hundred years ago I saw in a dream that I should have a struggle with Mirko, the king’s son, some day. He is now at the castle; but what is he to me? There is more strength in my little finger than in his whole body.” With that Doghead sped homeward and was soon there.

Mirko, the king’s son, was waiting in the court-yard, and when Doghead saw the prince he made straight towards him and said: “Mirko, I know that thou art waiting for me. Well, here I am; what dost thou wish, that we should fight with swords or wrestle?”

“I care not,” answered Mirko; “any way that may please thee.”

“Well, let us try it first with swords,” said Doghead.

He got off his horse; they stood face to face, and both commanded: “Sword out of the sheath.”

The swords sprang out in fighting, and so cut above the heads of the two that the whole place was rattling with their blows. Sparks flew so thickly from their fierce slashing that fire covered the ground, and it was impossible to stand long in one place.

Then Doghead said: “Let us not spoil our swords, but put them up and try wrestling.”

They laid aside the swords and began to wrestle. Doghead seized Mirko by the body, raised him up in the air, and so planted him on the ground that he sank in it up to the girdle. Mirko, frightened at this, thrust his little finger into the flask, and became so strong that he sprang out of the earth in a moment, rushed at Doghead, and so stretched him on the ground that he lay there like a flattened frog. Then, seizing him by the hair, he dragged him toward the castle, where a golden bridge was built across a bottomless lake. Having brought him to the middle of the bridge, he held his head above the water and commanded the sword to cut. The head fell into the bottomless lake, and Mirko threw the body after.

Doghead’s daughter saw all this, and was powerfully angry at Mirko, the king’s son. When he came before her she turned her face away and would not come to speech with him. But Mirko explained that he could not have done otherwise, for if he had spared Doghead’s life, he would have lost his own; but as he had pledged his faith to the princess, he held to his word, and would marry her. The princess approved this, and they agreed to make ready and set out for Mirko’s kingdom. The horses were brought, — Doghead’s magic steed for the princess. They mounted the horses, but when ready to start, Mirko became very sorrowful.

“Why art thou sad Mirko?” inquired the princess.

“Because,” said he, “I wish greatly to go home, but it is hard to leave this glorious, seven-story diamond castle here, which was thy father’s, for there is none like it in our kingdom.”

“Oh, my dear,” said the princess, “I will turn it at once into a golden apple. I will sit in the middle of the apple; thou mayst put it in thy pocket, and thus carry home the castle and me. There thou canst change it back again whenever the wish comes.”

The beautiful princess came down from her horse, gave the reins to Mirko, and taking out a diamond rod walked around the building and struck it on the sides with the rod. The castle began to shrink together, and became smaller and smaller until it was the size of a watchman’s booth. Then she jumped in and it became a golden apple, but the diamond rod remained on the ground outside. Mirko, the king’s son, picked up the golden apple and the diamond rod, put them in his pocket, sat on his steed, and leading Doghead’s horse by the bridle, travelled home comfortably.

When Mirko had come home and seen his horses in the stable he went to the palace, where he found the old king with the Hero of the Plain, satisfied and amused. He told them that he had conquered Doghead and put him to death; but the old king and the Hero of the Plain shook their heads.

Mirko, taking them both by the hands, said: “Come with me, and I will show you, so that ye may see with your own eyes that I have beaten Doghead; for not only have I brought his seven-story diamond castle with me, but his loveliest daughter with the castle, as proof of my work.”

The old king and the Hero of the Plain marvelled at Mirko’s speech, and were in doubt; but they went with him, and he led them to the flowery garden of the palace, in the middle of which Mirko took a beautiful spacious place for the diamond castle, where he put down the golden apple. He began to turn and strike it on the sides with the diamond rod. The apple swelled out and began to extend with four corners, and grew greater and greater, till it became a seven-story diamond castle as high as the trees.

Then taking them by the hands he led them up the diamond staircase and entered the halls of the castle, where the world-renowned beautiful princess met and received them with a good heart. Then she sent for the old king’s other sons and the chief men of his court. In the dining-hall was a great horse-shoe table. She commanded it; the table opened of itself, and every kind of precious meat and drink appeared upon it. Then the assembled guests feasted joyously. The old king was satisfied at last with his son. He gave Mirko his kingdom and all his possessions, but he withdrew himself to quiet private life, with the Hero of the Plain, and many a pleasant day the old comrades had together; and the old king’s two eyes were always laughing. The royal pair lived happily, and had beautiful children. They are still alive if they are not dead.

67

THE REED MAIDEN

There was once a king, and he had two sons. The king sent his eldest son to marry. He went, and chose the elder sister of the Reed Maiden. When he brought home his wife the king was satisfied with the choice. After that the king sent his younger son to marry, and he answered that he would not take any poor skeleton of a thing, but that his wife must be the most beautiful flower on the whole round of the earth, — the most lovely, world-beautiful maiden.

Once the king’s two sons went to hunt; on the way home the younger said to the elder: “My dear elder brother, I would beg of thee a favor.”

“And what may it be, younger brother?”

“In truth, no other than this: When we come home, ask thy wife if there is any one more beautiful than she.”

“If that’s thy trouble, it is no great matter, for my wife is just coming to meet us. — Well, my heart’s gold-enclosed ruby, wilt thou answer one question? Thou art for me the most beautiful, but is there one still more beautiful in the world?”

Now the princess all at once acted like one hard of hearing; she answered nothing, but stopped them with a nod, and commanded with her eye, “Silence! not a word more.”

It stopped there. The younger brother, whatever he did not do, he stole into his brother’s bed-chamber quietly. In the evening, when the elder brother and his wife came in, the husband said: “Tell me, my heart’s heart, why didst thou not answer my question a little while ago?”

“I did not answer, dear husband, because thou didst ask me before thy brother. It would not have been well for him to know that I have a younger sister who is the most beautiful maiden on the whole round of the earth, but she is hidden in the middle one of three reeds; for this reason she is known as the world-beautiful Reed Maiden. The other two reeds are her waiting-maids.”

“But thou hast not told me, my dear, in what corner of the world she is hidden.”

“Oh, my dear husband, it is far from here, — as far as from here there and from there back; but as thou hast asked I will tell thee. Hast thou heard of the fame of the Black Sea?”

“I have not, indeed.”

“Well, if thou hast not, then hear now. In the seventy-seventh island of the Black Sea, right in the middle, are hidden three reeds, but no mortal could go to them unless by some magic power or infernal art; but if by a miracle he should get there, he would not be able to bring away anything. — First, because there is such darkness on the islands of the Black Sea that a spoon might stand up in it; second, because the world-beautiful Reed Maiden is guarded by a witch whose life will end when the reeds are cut down; therefore she guards them as the light of her two eyes, or still more carefully. But if any man could bring the maiden away, he would be the happiest person in the wide world; for the islands would be lighted up, and he would gain a wife whom the starry heavens would gaze upon with smiles.”

When the king’s younger son had heard all this from root to branch, he went out of the room by the same way he had entered. Then saddling his best and favorite steed, he put provisions in his bag and moved out into the wide world in search of the beautiful Reed Maiden. He journeyed and travelled over forty-nine kingdoms and beyond the Operentsia Sea till he came to a hut; in the hut an old woman was living: “God give thee good-day, dear old mother.”

“If thou hadst not called me old mother, I should have eaten thee on the spot. But whither art thou journeying in this strange land, where even a bird does not go?”

“I am looking for the world-beautiful Reed Maiden, who is blooming in the seventy-seventh island of the Black Sea. Hast thou not heard of her, dear old mother?”

“What’s the use in denying, my son? I have not heard. Why should I evade, since it can neither harm nor profit me? But here in the neighboring valley, over the mountain, straight ahead, near a round forest on the top of a hill, lives my elder sister; if she knows nothing about it, then no one in the world knows. Here, Mitsi, come out! Conduct the king’s son to my elder sister.”

The king’s son followed Mitsi, who was no other than a large-whiskered little mouse. When they came to a cross-road Mitsi squeaked once, showed the middle of the road, and ran home. The king’s son went along the right road, and arrived at the hut in which the second sister lived. She received him in like manner as the first, and sent her servant, Pitsi, to show him the road to her eldest sister. Pitsi was no other than a dove-white squirrel, with a long bushy tail. When the king’s son came to the third hut, where the eldest sister lived, he said: “God give thee a good-day, dear old mother.”

“If thou hadst not called me old mother, I should have eaten thee on the spot. Whither art thou wandering in this strange land, where even a bird does not go?”

“I am in search of the world-beautiful Reed Maiden, who is blooming in the seventy-seventh island of the Black Sea. Hast thou not heard of her, dear old mother?”

“Oh, king’s son, thou wouldst wear off thy horse’s legs to the knees, and wear out twelve pairs of iron boots on thy own feet, before thou couldst reach that place, for it is only possible to go there on a steed that has sucked dragon’s milk, eaten glowing coals, and drunk the fiery flame; but thou hast in thy head three golden hairs, grown from one root, of which thou hast known nothing to this moment. Come hither; let me cut them out.”

The king’s son bent down his head. The old woman cut out the three golden hairs. “See, my son, these three hairs have wondrous power. A fairy gave them to thy father, with whom, as he was a beautiful man, she fell in love, and thou hast inherited them. Here they are; I give them to thee with this latch-string. Go up on this terribly high mountain, which in front of my hut supports the heavens. When thou shalt come to the top, strike the three golden hairs with the latch-string three times; at once will stand before thee a magic steed that has grown up on the silken meadow, sucked dragon’s milk, eaten glowing coals, and drunk fiery flames.”

The king’s son gave heartfelt thanks for the kindness shown him, then went up on the great unclimbable mountain that supported the heavens. When he had reached the top he took out the three golden hairs and struck them three times with the old latch-string. Behold, a fiery cloud rushed towards him like a shot arrow, with a fearful rumbling and cracking, as if a whole stud of horses were before it, and then stood still above his head. All at once he heard from the fiery cloud a triple neighing, at the sound of which, as of a bell, the earth trembled three times. The magic steed rushed out, and like a flood, like a cloud-burst, plunged down by his side, blowing from its nostrils varied flames, — red, blue, and green. The latch-string became such a saddle that for the fur and diamond buttons, and silver and gold embroidery, the earth could not be seen.

“Hip, hop! here am I, dear master! That there be no delay in thy affair, wilt thou not sit on my back that I may be off with thee? Shall I go like the swiftest whirlwind, or like thought, or as a bird can fly?”

“Go, my dear steed, in such fashion that there may be no fault in thee or me.”

“But before we set out on the long road,” said the magic steed, “I wish to say this: Since such dense darkness reigns in the islands that a spoon might stand straight in it, we must first go to the bright antechamber of the Sun, and take thence one burning ray.”

When the steed had thus ended the speech, he rose in the airy heavens. They journeyed and travelled across forty-nine kingdoms till they came to the portals of the earth, where two bearded wolves stood on guard. These wolves stood on the road and demanded toll. The toll was no other than two pounds of flesh from the good steed. Now, if two pounds of flesh were taken from the steed, it would be but half magic, and so would never reach the end of the road. Whatever the king’s son did not do, he took his gleaming clasp-knife and cut out two pounds of his own flesh; then he threw it to the bearded wolves, and only on this condition did they let him pass.

The king’s son pursued his way till he came to the Sun’s bright antechamber, where he tied his steed to a diamond pillar; then he bathed in the fire-bath, and rubbed with fire-towels; looking at himself from head to foot in the shining wall of the antechamber as in a mirror, he combed his hair with a golden comb. Here, ‘pon my soul, what came of the affair, or what did not, a subject-spirit in the service of the Sun became enraged in good earnest (for his eyebrows struggled with each other), — no doubt it was at the king’s son, — and with a single breath, which the son of the hurricane could not withstand, blew straight ahead, so that the king’s son did not feel the ground under his feet for seventy-seven miles. Then he fell into a terribly dark opening, and groped along in this cavern, feeling his way like a blind man. If he made a step, he trod on a serpent; if he felt with his hand, he grasped a warty toad; if he looked around, he saw only red-eyed worms, — creeping, crawling things. He went on and on till he heard the plash of seething water. The beating of iron hammers struck his ear-drum, and so struck as almost to break it. This is the place where thunderbolts are made. He went on till he came to a great iron gate, standing open just then; but a tremendous, cursed, hundred-headed dragon, who let no one pass, kept guard there. What could the king's son take hold of? What could he do with his life? Here, upon my soul! what he did, or what he did not do, he took out a sweet-speaking, magic flute, and blew on it so sadly that his tears rolled down. Such touching notes did he draw from the flute that the great powerful beast — the hundred-headed dragon — became as a lamb, lowered his bloody crest; his bristling scales dropped smoothly, one on the other; he stretched on the ground, and cowered, whining like a dog when he beholds his master after an absence. Seeing this, the king's son grew bold, and going straight to the dragon, stepped upon him, walked on his back, and the terrible wild beast did not mind it; he only licked his foot, wagged his tail, and let the king's son pass over.

After he had gone through the gate the darkness began to part; and no wonder, for a charm-given, lovely maiden, in a purple velvet robe, stepped before him. She was no other than Dawn, the dearest and best-beloved daughter of the Sun. Now, the splendid young prince pleased this flower of the skies. She placed him by her side on her winged steed, and flew across the vault of heaven, and they swept on till they reached the razor bridge. When they touched the bridge, their horse became as if he were not; and they crossed so that the horse's feet were not injured, and the razor's edge was not dented. Having passed the razor bridge they came to the copper forest, where were working at that moment the woodcutters of the Sun, who on iron wagons were taking wood to the kitchen, with a terrible rattling and pounding. Thence they rode to the silver forest, where silver-white birds cheered every wanderer. Two of the birds came and sang the sweetest notes. The silver-trees inclined thrice to the daughter of the Sun. Next they reached the golden forest, where sweet-voiced, golden-yellow birds enlivened the visitors, and threw down golden nuts here and there from the trees. The golden forest bent thrice to the daughter of the Sun.

In the middle of the golden forest was Dawn’s garden; in the garden her copper-roofed mansion. When the Beauty of the Skies came home the pearly flowers shook their bells, and began to sound. On hearing this, the stars swept forth like a swarm, and glittered round about. The maiden nodded but once, and behold! purple clouds swam before her like so many sky-sacks, which serve on the extended firmament as boats. Dawn took her seat, but first she spread her mantle and seated the king’s son at her side. Lest his part of the boat might be heavier, she drew him nearer to her with an embrace; but he dared not embrace in return.

They sailed and sailed through the airy heavens till they were weary; then they tied their boat to the tree with diamond blossoms, silver leaves, and golden apples. They sat on a golden bench under the tree, and were there but a moment, when at a nod from the Sun’s daughter a golden butterfly appeared more quickly than a spoken word, and brought fresh-gathered honey of the skies on a rose-leaf. When they had eaten, thirst seized the king’s son; then a modest star came bringing a goblet on a silver tray, in the goblet a charm-drink, and when the king’s son had drunk from the golden goblet his thirst fell away as if it had been cut in two.

When their hunger and thirst were gone, at the Sun’s daughter’s nod the modest stars brought a cithara. Dawn then played on its golden chords with silver feathers, and sounded such notes that a man hearing them would spring up and whirl in the dance, even if his own father were lying dead on the table. After that came the hour of rest; the king’s son was led across seventy-seven chambers to the bath-room. In the middle of the room stood a great golden cask filled with dew, and on a boxwood table lay lathery soap. The king’s son bathed in the dew-water, washed himself with the lathery soap, and wiped with a towel of gold.

When he rose next morning, Dawn gave him a burning ray which she wound up like a ribbon, put in a box, and hung with a golden hair on the neck of the king’s son. After that they parted amidst tear-shedding. The Sun’s daughter sped across the vault of heaven on her winged steed, and the king’s son continued his journey.

As I say, he had a ray to light up the island. The king’s son journeyed and travelled till the steed spoke, saying: “Listen, dear master.”

“What is thy command, dear horse?”

“Gird thyself well, for thou must cut the three reeds at a blow; a second blow would lose thee thy head. If at one blow thou succeed, the island will be lighted up. The world-beautiful maiden and her two attendants will be thine, but only on condition that thou cut not open the reeds before coming to water; for if thou dost, they will die a fearful death in a moment.”

The king’s son promised by heaven and earth that he would act as told. On the seventh day they came to the island of the Black Sea, where there was such darkness that a spoon would have stood up in it; but the king’s son drew out the box hanging by the golden hair and removed the cover. All at once the way was lighted, but so strangely that it gave light only to him; he could see everything, but not a created soul could see him. When he came to where the three reeds were growing, they bent before him and bowed to the earth. They continued to bow; at the best moment the king’s son drew his sword and with a blow all three reeds fell upon his breast. But from the three reed-stumps black blood sprang forth, and a bitter wail was heard as if a naked sword had been thrust into some one’s heart. It had been thrust into the heart of the witch; for the black blood was hers, and the bitter wail was her death-sigh. She could only live while the three reeds stood. As soon as the old witch had breathed out her soul, the burning ray flew out of the silver box as if it had been shot from a gun, and the whole island was in light.

Then the king’s son sat on his good steed and journeyed over forty-nine kingdoms as swiftly as the most fleet-winged bird could go. Once curiosity rose in him to know if there was indeed something in the reeds, and what it could be like. I say, curiosity rose up in him, and bored his side as if with an iron auger, so that what he did or did not do, he took out his gleaming knife and split the smallest reed, in which was the youngest attendant of the world-beautiful Reed Maiden. No sooner had he split the reed than a beauteous, pearl-given, lovely girl fell upon his breast; and her first word was: “Water! Only as much water as a little swallow takes in her beak when she gives drink to her young, or I die!”

But the king’s son had it not. One drop of water is not much, but he could not give that much. The beautiful maiden, like a broken flower, began to wither, grew paler and paler, till at last the pallor of death seized her head, and bending to the breast of the king’s son, she died.

The king’s son was so sorry for his fault that if it had been possible, he would have atoned for it with his blood; but that was not possible. Therefore he came down from his good steed, dug a grave with his sword, and buried the maiden; as a grave-mark he planted the split reed, and from it a black rose sprang, which as mourning, bloomed in black.

A bitter weeping wail, a bitter woe-cry was heard from the two reeds that were not split yet, as if some one were bewailing a brother. Great sadness seized the king’s son too, who thought, “I caused the death of this maiden. I broke this flower and planted it in the bosom of death.” But if he had wept out his soul, it would have been useless; therefore he mounted his steed and rode farther. He travelled and journeyed till curiosity rose in his breast, and bored his side as with an iron auger. “Is there in the second reed another such maiden; and will she go like the first?”

At last he could resist the devil’s boring no longer; so he took his gleaming clasp-knife, and split the second reed also. Behold, the elder attendant of the Reed Maiden, came out, saying: “Water, water, or I shall die a fearful death!” But the king’s son had not one drop of water; the maiden grew paler and paler, till she dropped her head on the breast of the king’s son, and died. The king’s son came to the earth, dug a grave with his sword, and buried the maiden. At the head of the grave he placed the split reed; from it a beautiful rose-bush sprang up, which bloomed in black, as mourning.

A bitter weeping wail, a bitter woe-cry of pain was heard from the unsplit reed, in which the world-beautiful maiden herself was hidden; and no less grief seized the king’s son. He had killed two; with his own strength he had broken two beautiful flowers, and put them in the bosom of death. Grief covered him with black wing. His good steed went as a bird of swiftest flight till curiosity rose up in the breast of the king’s son, bored his side as with an iron auger. “What sort of person is his future bride? who is the world-beautiful Reed Maiden?”

Since he could not resist this devil’s boring, this mighty curiosity, he took out the third and last reed to split it; but the magic steed reached back, and taking the reed from the king’s son, did not return it till they came to the shore of a lake.

At the water the king’s son split the last reed, and there came forth such a maiden that her like was not born since the world began, nor before, nor after. Her first word was: “Water! Only as much water as a little swallow takes in her beak when she gives drink to her young, or I shall die in a moment!”

The king’s son gave her to drink; she felt better. Then they embraced, and kissed, saying, “I am thine, thou art mine.”

“Listen, my beautiful love,” said the king’s son, “while I ride home for a carriage of glass and gold do thou hide in this willow; but till I see thee, though one word is not much, speak not that much to any one.”

The king’s son rode for the glass and golden carriage; the maiden climbed the willow where she hid. Now, what came of the affair, and what did not, while the king’s son was gone a crawfish-gathering gypsy girl happened under the willow-tree, and looking in the water she saw the quivering image of the charming maiden. Putting her hand on her hip she said: “What a beautiful shadow I have, quite worthy of a princess.”

“It’s thine of course! I’ll tell whose it is,” said a golden bird from the tree, in a golden voice.

The gypsy looked into the tree, where she saw the world-beautiful princess, for the sight of whom the sun would have stood still in heaven. The girl said nothing, but in a twinkle she dragged the maiden from the tree by her white foot, pulled off her purple velvet robe, and threw her into the water. The maiden did not sink, but shaking herself, turned into a golden-feathered duck and swam on the lake. The gypsy then, ill or well, put on the purple velvet robe, which sat on her as if it had been put on with a fork and rake; then she sat with great importance on the tree. But she did not sit long; for seeing the golden duck, she jumped down and began to throw stones at her. She threw and threw so many that her arm grew tired, but she could not hit, for the golden duck dived into the water the moment a stone flew over her. At last the gypsy was tired, climbed into the willow-tree and waited for fortune.

She had not long to wait, for soon the king’s son came with a gold and glass carriage to take home the golden bird; but the gypsy had her mind, for she would not come down from the tree — at least she said so — till he should shoot the golden duck on the lake, so she might drink its red blood, and eat its tender flesh.

The king’s son took his arrow, aimed to kill the golden duck; but the gypsy will not drink its red blood, will not eat its tender flesh, for the arrow never went with its point to the duck, but always turned towards her the feathered end. If it had found her, it would not have been her death. The king’s son had shot away all his arrows, and besides it was evening; he had to leave the amusement and turn his wagon-tongue homeward.

At home he had told how beautiful a wife he was bringing; all the greater was the surprise when he led in the bride with raised veil. The king's son had praised the world-beautiful Reed Maiden, and now before the wedding assembly stands a leather-cheeked gypsy girl. The guests know not whether to laugh or to be angry.

Now, the queen — the former gypsy — thought that it could not remain thus, without the world-beautiful Reed Maiden visiting her husband in the night; therefore she put a sleeping-powder into his drink every God-given evening, from which the king's son slept like a shepherd's coat.

The world-beautiful Reed Maiden shook herself, turned into a little bird, and at midnight she came to the king's son's window. She knocked with her little beak, the window opened of itself, and she flew in; then the little bird shook herself, turned into a princess such as had not been born before, nor since, nor after that. She went to the king's son, spoke to him fondling words, but he did not hear; roused him, but he did not wake; bent over him, and at last cried long, but he did not feel the hot tears which burned his cheek, — he lay there motionless as a block.

Then she said: "Oh, king's son, youth of my soul, thy dear lips are dumb; open them for one, two words, to cheer thy beautiful love, thy tender violet. I will come yet twice, then never again."

But the king's son did not wake. When the clock struck one after midnight the maiden shook herself, turned into a bird, and flew out through the window; the window closed after her of itself.

The servant of the king's son heard all these words clearly, for he was awake; but in the morning when he woke he thought it was all a dream, therefore he did not tell the king's son what he had seen, but resolved that he would wait for the coming night, and if the maiden would appear again in the form of a bird, then surely it was not a dream, and he would tell the king's son.

The next evening also his wife gave the king’s son a sleeping-powder, and he slept like a shepherd’s coat. When the clock struck twelve the little bird rapped with her beak, the window opened before her, and closed behind.

The little bird shook herself and became the beautiful Reed Maiden. She went to the bed of the sleeping king’s son, spoke to him, strove to rouse him, and cried as the evening before; but he was motionless as a block. When the clock struck one the maiden shook herself, was a bird, and flew out through the window, which closed behind her. The servant of the king’s son heard all this clearly, for he had not slept, and was now sure that it was no dream. He said to his master next morning: “I would say something to thy Highness if I were not afraid.”

“Oh, good Yanchi, thou wilt have no trouble, only speak.”

“Well, the night before last, at midnight, a little bird flew to the window, struck and beat it with her beak; the window opened before her. She flew in, shook herself, and became such a beautiful maiden that I looked on her as an altar image; and I was afraid that she would bewitch me. The beautiful maiden then bent over thy Highness, spoke to thee, but thou didst not wake; she cried a long time, but thou didst not feel her hot tears. At last she said, with a bird’s tongue: ‘Oh, king’s son, youth of my soul, thy dear lips are dumb; open them for one, two words, to cheer thy beautiful love, thy tender violet I will come yet twice, then never again.’ This was repeated last night, but thy Highness spoke not a word, and lay there like a block. And thy Highness may believe that she was so beautiful that if I had been lying dead on the table, I should have risen.”

“Is that true, Yanchi?”

“As true as that the bright sun is shining in the sky.”

“Well, Yanchi, couldst thou take a slap on the cheek for a hundred florins?”

“Not for the money, but gladly for thy Highness, — even a hundred of them.”

“If thou wilt, then take it when my wife gives me the sleeping-powder again; for her dog soul gives it so that I should not wake. Knock down the light as though from awkwardness, then I will pour the sleeping-draught quietly into the bath; the woman will think that I have drunk it.”

When bath-time came Yanchi took the candle as if he wished to snuff it, and put it out. The king’s son, meanwhile, poured the sleeping-powder and wine into the bath quietly. The gypsy queen thought that he had drunk it, but she gave such a cuff to poor Yanchi that his eyes saw stars; but Yanchi, for the sake of his master, took the cuff as if a pretty girl had kissed him.

As the clock struck twelve, the king’s son feigned sleep; but he was just as much awake as good myself. I say, the clock struck twelve. The little bird came to the window, knocked with her beak, the window opened before and closed behind her; she shook herself and became such a maiden as neither before that, nor since, was born, so that the starry heavens would have looked at her with smiles. She bent over the king’s son; when at last she cried, the king’s son put his arm around her and drew her to him, that she might not become a little bird again; that she might not fly away any more.

He assembled, next day, all the dukes and counts in the kingdom, and all the doers of good, and taking before them the hand of the world-beautiful Reed Maiden, he asked, —

“What does that person deserve who tries to separate from each other a couple?”

Because the gypsy thought that the question was in favor of her own leathery face, she called out in an instant: “That person, my royal husband, deserves to be put in a cask, with spikes driven inward from the outside all through it, and rolled from the highest mountain in the kingdom.”

“Oh, dog-given wretch, thou hast pronounced thy own sentence!”

And they took by the neck the queen, once a gypsy, and put her in a cask like that, with spikes driven in, and let the cask roll from the highest mountain in the kingdom.

68

KISS MIKLOS, AND THE GREEN DAUGHTER OF THE GREEN KING

There was once a poor man, and he had three sons. When the poor man was on his death-bed, he called his three sons, and this was his word and speech to them: “My dear sons, if I do not tell, still mayhap ye know why our kingdom is in mourning, in unbroken darkness, such that a spoon might stand up in it; but if ye know not, then I will tell. My sons, this unbroken darkness is here because they have stolen the sun and the moon from our bright heavens. But I will tell one thing, and two will come of it; a wizard foretold that among my three sons was one (which one I with firm trust cannot say) who would bring back the sun and the moon. Therefore, my sons, I leave you this: that after my death ye will go out to seek the sun and the moon, and not come home till ye bring back the sources of light.”

With that the poor man turned to the wall, wandered forth from this world of shadows, and was buried with honor.

But here, my lord’s son, what comes of the affair or what does not, I saw it as I see now; I was in the place where they were talking. The report ran through the whole kingdom of what the poor man had left in his will to his three sons, so that even the king heard it, and he summoned straightway to his presence the three brothers. And when the three brothers appeared before the king, he said: “My dear young men, I hear that your father —

may God give him rest — on his death-bed left this to you: that after his death ye would go out into the wide, great world to look for the sun and the moon. Therefore, my sons, this is my word and speech to you: that whoso brings back the sun and the moon will be king after my death, and whoso will assist him in everything, this one I will make viceroy. Now go to my stable and to my armory and choose for yourselves horses and swords; I will give in a sealed letter to you the order that wherever ye go men shall give you in all places, hay, oats, food, and drink free of cost."

Here the three young men entered the king's stable, and the two elder chose the most beautiful golden-haired steeds; but the youngest, somewhere off by the wall in a hidden corner, among cobwebs and dirt, picked out for himself a wretched, shaggy haired, plucked colt. The two elder brothers laughed at the youngest because he intended to go on that ragged, nasty colt that was hardly able to stand on its feet; but the youngest brother thought nothing of this, and did not give ear to the talk of his brothers.

Now they went to the king's armory, where the elder brothers chose for themselves two beautiful gold-mounted swords; but the youngest brother, who had more wit, picked out a rusty steel sword. This rusty sword now jumped out of the sheath, now sprang in again, — played unceasingly. The two elder brothers laughed at the youngest again, but he put this as well as their former ridicule quietly in his pocket, thinking to himself that he laughs truly who laughs last; for the nasty colt, as surely as I live and as ye live — I was present where they were talking, I saw as I do now, and I was looking as I am now — was a magic six-legged steed, conceived of the Wind, and eating live coals; and the rusty sword had this kind of virtue that a man had only to say, "Cut, my dear sword," and it cut down whatever he wished. But the two elder brothers knew nothing of all this, for they did not understand wood-work.

Now the three brothers moved on their way through the kingdom, to look for the sun and the moon. They travelled and journeyed over forty-nine kingdoms, beyond the Operentsia Sea, beyond the glass mountains, and beyond that, to where the little short-tailed pig roots, and farther than that, and still farther, till they came to the silver bridge. When they came to the silver bridge the youngest brother, speaking a word, said to his two brothers: “My dear brothers, let us go under the bridge, for soon the steed of the moon will be here, and the twelve-headed dragon, from whose saddle-bow the bright moon is dangling.”

Now, the two brothers had barely hidden when the steed of the moon was on the bridge, and on the steed the twelve-headed dragon, from whose saddle-bow the bright moon was dangling. The milk-white steed of the moon stumbled on the bridge. Then the twelve-headed dragon was enraged, and said this to the steed of the moon, —

“Ah, may the crow eat thy eye, may the dog eat thy flesh, may the earth drink thy blood! From forest to forest I have ridden thee, from mountain to mountain I have sprung with thee, and thou hast never stumbled, but now on the even road thou hast stumbled. Well, in my world-beautiful life I have always heard the fame of Kiss Miklos; if he were here now, I would like to have a struggle with him.”

At this word our Kiss Miklos — for let it be said, meanwhile, this was the name of the youngest brother — sprang out from beneath to the silver bridge on his golden-haired magic steed, and closed with the twelve-headed dragon. Long did they struggle, the one with the other, but Kiss Miklos said to the rusty sword: “Cut, my dear sword!” and with that it cut three heads off the dragon, and in the same order till all the twelve heads were hewn off, so that the twelve-headed dragon drew his shortest breath. Then Kiss Miklos took by the halter the milk-white haired, black-maned steed of the moon, on whose saddle-bow was dangling the bright moon, and gave him to the care of his second brother. Then they passed over the silver bridge, which sounded like most beautiful music from the golden shoes of the magic steed.

They travelled and journeyed then through forty-nine kingdoms, beyond the Operentsia Sea and the glass mountains, beyond that, where the little short-tailed pig roots, beyond that, and farther, till they came to the golden bridge.

Then Kiss Miklos spoke, and said this to his two brothers, speaking speech: “My dear brothers, let us hide under the bridge, for soon will the steed of the sun be here, and on him the twenty-four-headed dragon, from whose saddle-bow the shining sun is dangling. He will call me out at once to the keen sword, and I will measure with him strength with strength. He will not be able to conquer me, nor I him; then he and I will turn into flames. He will be a red and I a blue flame, but even then we shall not be able to conquer one the other, for we shall be of equal strength. But here is a sulphur stone; when the red flame springs highest toward the sky to press down the blue flame, that is me, strike the sulphur stone on the red flame.”

Our Kiss Miklos had barely finished his speech when the steed of the sun was on the bridge, bearing the twenty-four-headed dragon and the shining sun. The steed of the sun stumbled on the golden bridge. The twenty-four-headed dragon was enraged at him, and said, —

“Ah, may the crow eat thy eye, may the dog eat thy flesh, may the earth drink thy blood! I have ridden from forest to forest on thee, I have leaped thee from mountain to mountain, and never hast thou stumbled; but now on the even road thou hast stumbled. In my world-beautiful life I have heard always the fame of Kiss Miklos — may the dog devour him! — and if he were here now I would like to have a struggle with him.”

At this word our Kiss Miklos sprang out on to the golden bridge, and closed with the twenty-four-headed dragon. But Kiss Miklos commanded, saying: “Cut, my dear sword!” and that instant it cut the twenty-four heads off the dragon; but, wonder of the world! when all the twenty-four heads were off, in the twinkle of an eye new ones grew out which the leaping sword could not cut. In vain Kiss Miklos said: “Cut, my dear sword!” for it could not cut these heads. Well, Kiss Miklos took the sword in his hand and whirled it like lightning; but he did nothing with it, for the dragon had power of the same kind as he.

When the dragon saw that he could not succeed against Kiss Miklos, he spoke in this way: “Listen to me, Kiss Miklos! I wish thou hadst perished with thy mother, for I see that I can do nothing with thee, nor thou with me. Let us make one trial. Turn thou into a blue flame, and I will turn into a red one, and whichever can put the other out, his will be the steed of the sun and the shining sun upon him.”

That is what was done. Kiss Miklos turned to a blue flame, and the twenty-four-headed dragon to a red one. The two flames fought the one with the other, but neither was able to put out the other. Happily the two brothers threw the sulphur stone on the red flame, and then the blue flame put out the red one; and when it was quenched altogether, the twenty-four-headed dragon ceased to live.

Kiss Miklos gave the steed of the sun to his elder brother, and told his two brothers to go home quietly, for he had work of his own; and with that he took farewell of them. Miklos then shook himself, turned into a little gray cat, ran along the highroad, and all at once sprang into a cabin. In the cabin was the mother of the dragons and their two wives.

The younger dragon’s wife saw the little gray cat; she took it on her lap, stroked it, and found this to say to the mother of the dragons: “Well, if I knew that that cursed Kiss Miklos had killed my lord, I would turn into such a spring of water that if he and his two brothers were to drink not more than one drop of it, they would die a fearful death on the spot.”

With this the little gray cat sprang from the lap of the younger dragon’s wife, and rubbed up to the skirt of the wife of the elder dragon, who took it on to her lap, stroked it, and found this to say: “Ah! if I knew that that cursed Kiss Miklos had killed my lord, I would change into such a pear-tree that if he and his two brothers were to eat no more than one morsel of a pear of mine, they would die a fearful death.”

With this the little gray cat sprang from the lap of the elder dragon’s wife, and rubbed on the skirt of the old woman, who took it on her lap, fondled it, and found this to say to her two daughters-in-law: “My dear girls, just prop up my two eyes with that iron bar, which weighs twelve hundred pounds, so that I may look around.”

Her two daughters-in-law then took the twelve-hundred-pound iron bar and opened the old woman’s eyes; then she spoke thuswise: “If that cursed Kiss Miklos has killed my two sons, I will turn into a mouth, one jaw of which will be on the earth and the other I will throw to the sky, so as to catch that cursed villain and his two brothers, and grind them as mill-stones grind wheat.”

When the little gray cat had heard all this exactly, it shot away in a flash out of the cabin, sprang along, and never stopped till it came to the good magic steed. The old woman threw the twelve-hundred-pound bar after the cat, but she failed in her cast, for that moment her eyelids fell; she was not able to keep them open unless they were propped, for she was old. So Kiss Miklos escaped the twelve-hundred-pound bar, — certain death. I say that he escaped, for he came to his good magic steed, shook himself, and from a little gray cat became a young man as before. Then he sat on the good steed, which sprang once, jumped twice, and straightway Miklos was with his two brothers; then they fared homeward in quiet comfort.

The second brother grew thirsty, and found this to say: “Oh, but I am dry! My throat is burning!”

“If that is thy only trouble,” said Miklos, “I will soon bring thee water. Out there a spring is bubbling up.”

With that Kiss Miklos put spurs to his good magic steed, which sprang once, jumped twice, and was at the spring; but here, instead of filling the gourd that hung at his side, he drew his sharp sword, and thrust it three times into the bubbling water. In a moment from the spring blood gushed forth, and a word of bitter pain was heard. That was the blood of the younger dragon’s wife, and the word of pain was her death-groan. The blood made all the water red, and when the two brothers came up they had no wish to drink a drop from the spring.

Well, they travelled and journeyed till the elder brother said: “Oh, but I am hungry!”

“If that is thy trouble,” said Kiss Miklos, “we can easily cure it, for there near the dam is a pear-tree, and on it so much ripe fruit that the limbs are breaking. Wait, I will bring thee a pear directly; but lead thou the steed of the sun there.”

Here Kiss Miklos put spurs to his steed, which sprang once, jumped twice, and stood before the pear-tree. Miklos drew his sharp sword and stabbed the pear-tree in the trunk three times; from the trunk blood gushed forth, and a bitter word of pain was heard. The red blood was the blood of the elder dragon’s wife, and the bitter word of pain was her death-groan. With that the pears fell, so that when the two elder brothers reached the tree, not only would they not eat the pears, but the desire of eating had gone from them.

Now they journeyed and travelled through forty-nine kingdoms, till at last Miklos saw from a distance that an unmercifully great mouth, one jaw of which was on earth and the other thrown up to the heavens, was nearing them like the swiftest storm, so that they had barely time left to run into the door of the Lead Friend’s house. And a thousand-fold was their luck that they got in; for the unmercifully great mouth stood before the threshold of the Lead Friend, so that whoever should go out would fall into it, and be swallowed that minute.

“Hei! good Lead-Melting Friend,” said Miklos, “hast thou much molten lead? I will pay thee for it in honest coin.”

“Haho! my friend Kiss Miklos, I know thee; in my world-beautiful life I have ever heard thy fame. Long have I been waiting for thee. It is well that thou art here, — that thou hast entered my door, — for thou wilt never go a step farther from me.”

“Oh! for God’s sake,” said Kiss Miklos, “do not pass thy own threshold, for straightway the mother of the dragons will swallow thee with her great mouth.”

The Lead-Melting Friend went out of his chamber, saw the great mouth of the mother of the dragons, and went back in terror to his chamber, where he said this to Kiss Miklos: “Oh, my good friend Kiss Miklos, give counsel. What are we to do?”

“Hast thou much molten lead?”

“Not much, only eighteen tons; it is out there in the caldron boiling.”

“Knowest thou what? I will say one thing and two will come of it. Let us take the handles of that great caldron and pour its contents into the great mouth of the mother of the dragons.”

Here, ‘pon my soul! the Lead-Melting Friend put one handle on his shoulder, Kiss Miklos the other on his, brought the unmercifully great caldron to the threshold, and poured the eighteen tons of boiling lead into the old witch’s mouth. The boiling lead burned up the stomach of the mother of the dragons, and straightway she breathed out her cursed soul.

So Kiss Miklos was freed from the mother of the dragons; but, poor fellow, he was like one that goes from the pail into the barrel, for the Lead-Melting Friend caught his Grace by the neck and took him, as he would a straw, to the chamber, where he found this to say, —

“Look here, my good friend Kiss Miklos, in my world-beautiful life I have ever heard thy fame; therefore let us struggle now and see who is stronger, thou or I.” With that the Lead Friend put only his little finger on Kiss Miklos; from that he began to sink, and went down through the lead floor of the chamber the distance of an ell.

"Kiss Miklos, my friend, dost thou wish to fight with me?" asked the Lead Friend. "Thou sayest nothing, so I see that thou dost not; therefore this is my word and speech: I will keep thee in endless slavery unless thou bring me the Green Daughter of the Green King. But ye," and he turned to the two brothers, "ye may go home in gentle quietness, and take with you the steeds of the moon and the sun, on which are the bright moon and the shining sun, for of them I have no need."

Here our Miklos, in the midst of bitter tear-shedding, took farewell of his dear brothers. They held on their way homeward, and arrived there in health. Great was the rejoicing in the kingdom that the poor man's sons, as their father had bequeathed them on his death-bed, brought home the bright moon and the shining sun. Therefore the king assembled all that were in his dominions of dukes, counts, barons, lords, lord's sons, chosen gypsies, and broad-brimmed, country-dressed Slovaks; of these he sought council and asked, "What do brothers deserve who have brought home the bright moon and the shining sun?"

To this question then they answered, "Our high lord, the one who has brought back the steed of the sun, and on it the bright shining sun, deserves to be king of the country, and he who has brought home the steed of the bright moon, and on it the fair moon, to be viceroy; and each one of them should receive as wife a daughter of thy Highness."

So it was done. The poor man's eldest son became king, and the second son viceroy; and each one of them got a maiden princess as wife. Then they let out the steed of the bright moon and the steed of the shining sun on the highway of the heavens, but both the moon and the sun shone sadly. For this reason they shone sadly: that he was without merited reward who had really freed them from the dragons, for Kiss Miklos was now in never-ending slavery to the Lead Friend.

Once the Lead Friend called Miklos and found this to tell him: "Well, Miklos, if thou wilt bring me the Green Daughter of the Green King, I will let thee go free, and I will strike from thee the three-hundred-pound ring and the twelve-hundred-pound chain. Therefore, good friend Miklos, I advise thee to start in the morning with the bright shining sun, and bring to me my heart's desire."

Now our Miklos moved on the road again, and a long one too; whether there will be an end to it, only the good God knows. And as he travelled and journeyed across forty-nine kingdoms, and beyond that, and still farther, at the foot of a great mountain was a little hill, and as a shot arrow, as the swiftest whirlwind, ran towards him a man who was always crying, "Out of my way! out of my way!" This was Swift Runner, who stood still in a moment, like a pillar, before Miklos, and asked, "Whither, whither, Kiss Miklos? for in my world-beautiful life I have ever heard thy fame."

"Haho! Swift Runner, better thou hadst not asked. I am going for the Green Daughter of the Green King. Hast thou ever heard of her?"

"I have not heard. I speak not of that, but of this: take me with thee, for thou wilt get good of me somewhere."

"Well, come on thy own legs, if it please thee."

They travelled and journeyed after that, two of them, till they came to the sea-shore, and saw a man who was drinking the sea to the last drop, just as I would drink a cup of water; and then he cried out unceasingly: "Oh, I'm thirsty! Oh, I'm thirsty!" This was Great Drinker who, when he saw Miklos, went to him and said: "God's good-day, famous Kiss Miklos; for in my world-beautiful life I have ever heard thy fame."

"God keep thee, Great Drinker!"

"On what journey art thou, renowned Kiss Miklos?"

"On what journey? Haho! better thou hadst not asked. I am going for the Green Daughter of the Green King. Hast thou heard of her?"

"I have not, in truth," answered Great Drinker; "I speak not of that, but of this: take me with thee, for mayhap thou'lt get good of me."

"Well, come on thy own legs, if it please thee."

So there were three of them, and they travelled and journeyed after that till they saw a man running on the plain towards cattle, and he thrust the beautiful bullocks one by one into his mouth as I would a piece of bread, and swallowed them, hide and horns, one after the other; and even when he had swallowed all the standing herd of three hundred and sixty-six bullocks, he called out unceasingly: “Oh, I am hungry! Oh, I am hungry!” This was Great Eater who, when he saw Miklos, went to him and said: “God give thee a good-day, renowned Kiss Miklos; for in my world-beautiful life I have ever heard thy fame.”

“God keep thee, Great Eater!”

“What journey art thou on, renowned Kiss Miklos?”

“Better thou hadst not asked. I am going for the Green Daughter of the Green King. Hast thou heard of her?”

“I have not heard, in truth,” answered Great Eater; “but take me with thee, mayhap thou’lt get good of me.”

“Well, come on thy own legs, if it please thee.”

Now there were four of them, and they travelled and journeyed till one day they struck upon a man whose bolster was the glowing coals, whose pillow was the burning fire, and whose blanket was the flaming blaze; he had nine pairs of boots on his feet, nine pairs of drawers and nine shirts on his body, nine neckcloths on his neck, nine sheepskin caps on his head, nine pairs of trousers, nine vests on his body, and nine sheepskin overcoats hung from his shoulders, but even then he did nothing but cry out unceasingly: “Oh, I’m freezing! Oh, I’m freezing!” When he saw Kiss Miklos, he stood before him and said: “God give thee a good-day, renowned Kiss Miklos; for in my world-beautiful life I have ever heard thy fame.”

“God guard thee, Great Freezer!”

“What journey art thou on, renowned Kiss Miklos?”

“Ah, comrade, thou shouldst not have asked. Hast thou heard of the fame of the Green Daughter of the Green King?”

“I have not heard of it.”

“Well, if thou hast not, hear now; for I am going to her as a wooer.”

“Take me with thee, mayhap thou wilt get good of me.”

“Well, come on thy own legs, if it please thee.”

There were five of them now. They journeyed and travelled after that till they came upon a man who was looking around unceasingly. In one twinkle, in the turn of an eye, he saw the round earth, and in another turn of the eye he looked through the deep sea; and he saw Miklos and his comrades thirty-five miles off.

This was Far Seer, who stood before Miklos and said: “God give thee a good-day, renowned Kiss Miklos.”

“God keep thee, Far Seer!”

“On what journey art thou, renowned Kiss Miklos?”

“Haho! good friend Far Seer, perhaps thou hast heard of the Green Daughter of the Green King.”

“I have not.”

“Well then, hear now, for I am going to woo her.”

“Take me with thee, mayhap thou’lt get good of me.”

Now there were six of them, and they journeyed and travelled after that, across forty-nine kingdoms and farther, till they came upon a man who threw a seven-hundred-pound iron club thirty-five miles as easily as I could throw a small stone a few yards. This was Far Caster, who, when he saw Kiss Miklos and his comrades, came and said: “God give thee a good-day, renowned Kiss Miklos; for in my world-beautiful life I have ever heard thy fame.”

“God guard thee, Far Caster!”

“What journey art thou on?”

“Better thou hadst not asked. Hast thou heard of the Green King?”

“I have not.”

“Well, I am going to woo his daughter.”

“Take me with thee, mayhap thou’lt get good of me.”

“Come on thy own legs, if it please thee.”

Like the seven deadly sins, they were seven now. They journeyed and travelled till they came to the castle of the Green King. Kiss Miklos stood before the king and said: “God give a good-day to thy Highness.”

“God keep thee, renowned Kiss Miklos; for in my world-beautiful life I have ever heard thy fame. What journey art thou on?”

“In my journeys and travels I have heard that thy Highness has a charming, love-pervaded, beautiful flower-stalk. What is the use in delay and denial? I have come for her.”

“Haho! my good friend, the Green Daughter of the Green King is not so easily taken, for there are three tests before thee; if thou stand these tests, I will give thee my most beloved, my truly one and only daughter. The first test will be this: Thou hast a swift runner and so have I. They are making for my daughter at present a wedding dress at Pluto’s, or perhaps it’s ready this moment. If thy swift runner will bring that dress here, all right, — I care not: let the Green Daughter of the Green King be thine. My swift runner and thine will start to-morrow about four o’clock in the morning. But if I have not told thee, know now the thick end of the business, I will bring you all to the stake, if thy swift runner comes second.”

But the Green King deceived; for that evening after sunset he sent off his swift runner, who was no other than his own old mother, who, let it be said meanwhile, was a witch, and a big one at that. Next morning at four o’clock, as had been agreed, Miklos started his own swift runner on the road so as to bring the wedding dress.

Swift Runner moved on, and he saw that the old mother of the Green King was a good way ahead, for she was just on the point of going in at Pluto’s gate. Nothing more was needed. He rushed at her and she saw trouble soon, for he came up just as she had taken hold of the key; Swift Runner was not slow. He caught her by the jacket, hurled her back, ran in at the gate himself, and did not stop till he stood before his Highness, Pluto, told why he had come, and asked for the wedding dress. The dainty dress was nicely packed already in a box, and they gave it to him. Swift Runner hurried homeward, but the old mother of the Green King waited for him, and said: “Hear me, Swift Runner! Now thou art the victor, run not so fast; let us go home in pleasant quiet together.”

Swift Runner stopped at the old woman’s words, and they went on together, — went on till they came to a nice shady place, where the old woman found this to say: “Let us sit down in this shady place; let us rest. It is all the same. Thou art the winner. I will look in thy head.”

Here Swift Runner sat down in the shady place; the old woman bent his head to her lap and began to search in it, and she searched and searched till Swift Runner fell asleep and was sunk in slumber. When Swift Runner was snoring away at his best, the old woman put a horse-skull under his head, — from that he would not have waked till the day of judgment; then she took the box from him and raced off as if she had been shot from a gun.

It was near four o’clock in the afternoon and Swift Runner had not come yet, though he said he ought to be there at three o’clock. Miklos therefore began to be uneasy, — his nose was itching, it was ringing in his right ear and jumping in his right eye, therefore he found this to say to his Far Seer: “Just look, canst thou see Swift Runner coming?”

Far Seer did not let this be repeated; in an instant he ran up on a hill, looked around, saw that Swift Runner was in a shady place, sleeping like a pumpkin, under a tree, with a horse-skull under his head.

“Oh, my good friend Kiss Miklos, the dog is in the garden! Swift Runner is sleeping in a nice shady place with a horse-skull under his head; the old woman is right here near the garden, and she has the wedding dress in a box.”

“Here, good friend Far Caster,” said Kiss Miklos, “stand forth and throw thy twelve-hundred-pound club at that cursed horse-skull under the head of Swift Runner; for as God is true, all seven of us will see shame, and die a fearful death.”

Far Caster was not slow; in an instant he hurled the twelve-hundred-pound club and struck out luckily the horse-skull from under Swift Runner’s head.

Then, ‘pon my soul! Swift Runner sprang up, rubbed his eyes, looked around, saw that the old woman was running near the garden, and bearing the wedding robe. He was not slow. He rushed at her, but in truth it hung from a hair that he did not see disgrace, for the old woman had just taken the key of the Green King’s door when Swift Runner reached her. He caught her by the jacket, took the box, and hurled the old woman back to Pluto’s in such fashion that not her foot, nor even her little toe, touched ground on the way. Then he gave the wedding dress to Miklos, who took it that moment to the Green King, and putting it on the boxwood table said: “High lord, thy desire is accomplished; here is the dainty wedding dress.”

“Haho! renowned Kiss Miklos, this is but one trial in which thou art the winner, there are two behind. The Green Daughter of the Green King will not be thine till all of you, as many as there are, spend one night in my iron furnace, which I have heated with three hundred and sixty-six cords of wood; if ye can endure that terrible heat, all right; if not, ye will be roasted alive.”

Here, ‘pon my soul! what came of the affair or what did not, the Green King, as he had said, heated the iron furnace with three hundred and sixty-six cords of wood. The whole furnace was nothing but glowing fire, so that it was impossible to go near it. Now the question was, who should enter first, — who but Great Freezer? He was delighted with the pleasant amusement; he was shivering terribly because God’s cold had then caught him, though he had nine pairs of boots on his feet, nine shirts and drawers on his body, nine neckcloths on his neck, nine sheepskin caps on his head, nine sheepskin overcoats on his back. I say, Great Freezer went first into the fiery furnace. He walked around in it, and straightway it became as cold as an ice-house; therefore he called out at the entrance: “Oh, I’m freezing! Oh, I’m freezing!” Then the others and Kiss Miklos went in, and they felt that the furnace was as cold as an ice-house, so that their teeth chattered. Kiss Miklos cried out at the entrance, saying, “Wood this way, or we shall freeze!”

The servants of the Green King threw an extra cord of wood into the furnace. With this Miklos and his companions made a fire, and gave earth no trouble. Next morning the Green King himself went to see the seven roasts, thinking they were burnt into dust. He opened the mouth of the furnace. He will fall on his back with horror, perhaps. Nothing of the sort; the seven good birds were sitting there alive in the furnace at the side of a fire, and not a dog’s trouble had happened to a man of them.

Straightway the Green King called up Kiss Miklos and said to him: “Well, renowned Kiss Miklos, thou hast stood two trials, but the third still remains. If ye pass that unharmed, then I don’t care; my daughter will be thine, for I shall see that thou art not inferior to thy fame. The third trial is not other than this: In the yard is a herd of cattle not less than three hundred and sixty-six in number, and also there are three hundred and sixty-six kegs of wine, and if ye do not eat the three hundred and sixty-six head of cattle and drink the three hundred and sixty-six kegs of wine by to-morrow, then I will have you all at the stake; but if ye eat and drink all, then as I say, I care not. Let my one and only most beloved daughter be thine.”

In the evening after bedtime Miklos went with his comrades to the other yard where were the three hundred and sixty-six head of cattle and the three hundred and sixty-six kegs of wine; but now the question was who should eat that ocean-great lot of cattle and drink that thundering lot of wine. No one would take more delight in the cattle than Great Eater, and with the thundering lot of wine no one felt better than Great Drinker; they would take care of them if they were twice as great. Miklos and his comrades, except Great Eater, knocked one of the bullocks on the head, pulled off his jacket, cut up his flesh and roasted it. That was enough for them, but it was not enough for Great Eater; for he would not spoil the taste of his mouth with it. He ate that herd of beasts, one after another, as if the earth had swallowed them, — ate hair, hide, bones, and horns, so that he didn't leave a single thing as a novelty; and even then he cried out nothing but, "Oh, I'm hungry! Oh, I'm hungry!" Then he went to his comrades, ate what they had left of the roast, and pressed it down with the ox-hide for a dessert. Even then he cried without ceasing, "Oh, I'm hungry! Oh, I'm hungry!"

Then they began at the wine. Miklos and his comrades, except Great Drinker, rolled forth one keg of wine, knocked the bottom out, and went to drinking. That keg was enough for them, but not enough for Great Drinker; for him it was as much as one drop would be for me. He would not spoil the taste of his mouth with it, but fell to drinking from the rest in such Magyar-Mishka style that when he looked around he saw that the three hundred and sixty-five kegs were empty. Then he cried unceasingly, "Oh, I'm thirsty! Oh, I'm thirsty!" After that he came to his comrades, and what they had left he drank to the last drop; and cried: "Oh, I'm thirsty! Oh, I'm thirsty!"

Next morning the Green King went himself to the yard to see if Kiss Miklos and his comrades had endured the third trial, — had they eaten the cattle and drunk the wine. It is a wonder that he didn't turn into a pillar of salt he was so frightened when he saw that there was not a horned beast left, nor a drop of wine. Then he complained: "They have eaten three hundred and sixty-six bullocks. Plague take it! let them eat the cattle, but they might have left the hides; those could at least have been sold to a Jew for good money. — Well, renowned Kiss Miklos, thou hast stood the three tests, now my only and most dearly beloved daughter is thine; take her." With that the Green King seated his Green Daughter in a coach drawn by six black horses, and they drove towards the dominions of the Lead Friend.

On the road the Green Daughter of the Green King beckoned Miklos to her and asked him: “Hei! my heart’s beautiful love, renowned Kiss Miklos, tell me, on thy true soul, art thou taking me for thyself or for another? If thou art not taking me for thyself, I will play tricks with thee.”

“I am taking thee for myself; I am taking thee for another,” answered Kiss Miklos.

Well, no more was said. Once, when turning and winding, they look in the coach; it is empty. The beautiful girl is gone. In a moment they stop, search the coach, but find her nowhere.

“Here, good friend Far Seer,” said Kiss Miklos, “look around! Whither has our beautiful bird flown?”

Far Seer didn’t let that be said twice. In the turn of an eye he surveyed the round earth, but he saw not the beautiful maiden.

“She is not on the dry earth,” said Far Seer.

“Look into the sea,” said Kiss Miklos.

Far Seer surveyed the deep sea, and saw her hidden in the belly of a three-pound whale, near the opposite shore of the sea.

“Ah, I see where she is!”

“Where?” asked Miklos.

“Hidden in the belly of a three-pound whale.”

“Here, good friend Great Drinker,” said Miklos, “come hither, and drink up the water of this deep sea!”

Great Drinker was not slow. He lay face under by the sea, and with three draughts drank up all the water. The three-pound whale was lying then in a bay near the opposite shore.

“Now, good brother Swift Runner,” said Kiss Miklos, “step out and bring me that three-pound whale which is lying near the opposite shore.”

Swift Runner rushed in a moment across the bottom of the sea, and brought back the three-pound whale. Miklos opened the whale, took out its stomach, cut it carefully, and out fell the Green Daughter of the Green King. Then he seated her in the coach, and they drove on.

They travelled and journeyed, and once the princess beckoned to Miklos, and asked: “My heart’s beautiful love, renowned Kiss Miklos, tell me, on thy true soul, art thou taking me for thyself, or for another? If for thyself, very well; if not, I’ll play tricks with thee.”

“I am taking thee for myself; I am taking thee for another,” answered Miklos.

No more was said. Once while turning and winding, the beautiful maiden is gone, the coach is empty. “Oh, the dog is in the garden!” They stop, search the six-horse coach, but find no beautiful princess.

“Here, good friend Far Seer,” said Miklos, “stand forth, look around! Where is our beautiful bird?”

Far Seer surveyed the deep sea, but got no sight of the princess. “She is not in the sea.”

“If she is not in the sea, look on dry land.”

Far Seer looked around again, and he saw that the princess was at home, in the very middle of her father’s garden, on the highest top of a blooming apple-tree, hidden in a ripe red apple. “I have found her!” said Far Seer.

“Where is she?”

“At home, in the very centre of the garden, hidden on the highest top of an apple-tree, in the middle of a ripe red apple.”

“Here, Swift Runner, come forth!”

Swift Runner came forth, and stood like a pillar before Miklos, waiting for command.

“Run in a twinkle to the garden of the Green King, in the very middle of which is blooming an apple-tree; climb the tree, and bring me the ripe red apple which is on its highest top.”

Swift Runner rushed as a whirlwind, at horse-death speed, found the tree, climbed it, plucked the red apple, and then, as if shot from a cannon, came back to Miklos, and gave him the apple. Miklos cut the apple in two; the Green Daughter of the Green King fell out. He seated her again in the coach, and they fared farther.

They travelled and journeyed, and again the princess beckoned to Miklos, and said: “My heart’s heart, renowned Kiss Miklos, tell me, on thy true soul, art thou taking me for thyself, or for another? If for thyself, very well; if not, I’ll play tricks with thee.”

“I am taking thee for myself; I am taking thee for another.”

Well, they said no more. Once, while turning and winding, they look in the coach the maiden is gone; the coach is empty. “Oh, the dog is in the garden!” They stop, search the six-horse coach, but find not the maiden.

“Friend Far Seer,” said Miklos, “look around! Where is our beautiful bird?”

Far Seer was not slow; in the turn of an eye he surveyed the round earth, but saw nowhere the Green Daughter of the Green King. “She is not on the round earth,” said he.

“Well, look in the deep sea.”

Far Seer looked again; in the turn of an eye he surveyed the deep sea, but saw not the princess. “She is not in the deep sea,” said Far Seer.

“Well, if she is not in the deep sea, look in the cloudy heavens.”

Far Seer looked around; in the turn of an eye he surveyed the broad sky and the cloudy heavens. He saw a cocoon hanging from a thread slender as a spider-web, and hidden in that cocoon the Green Daughter of the Green King. “I have found her!” said Far Seer.

“Where is she?” asked Kiss Miklos.

“Far, far away, near the round forest, from the cloudy heavens is hanging a silk thread, slender as a spider-web, and on the end dangles a cocoon; in that she is hidden.”

“Now, Far Caster, come forth!” said Miklos.

Far Caster stood like a pillar before Kiss Miklos, only waiting for command; but he had not long to wait, for Miklos said: “Listen, good friend Far Caster. Seest thou that thin silk thread hanging from the cloudy sky near the round forest?”

“I see.”

“Then cast it down; but only when Swift Runner reaches the place beneath, so that it may not fall on the earth, but into his hand. Therefore, Swift Runner, move thy wheels that way; catch the cocoon and bring it to us.”

Swift Runner rushed at horse-death speed to the place; Far Caster brought down the cocoon. Swift Runner caught it safely, and brought it to Miklos, who with his bright knife cut it open, and out came the princess. Then he seated her a third time in the coach; but they had arrived in the domains of the Lead Friend, so the Green Daughter of the Green King, having lost her power, could play no more tricks.

Kiss Miklos took farewell of his good friends, thanking them kindly for their aid. When they were alone the Green Daughter of the Green King fell to crying, and said: “My heart’s beautiful love, I know thou art taking me to that dog of a Lead Friend, and I would rather be the bride of death than of him.”

“Oh, my heart’s golden bird,” said Miklos, “I am taking thee for myself; but thou canst not be mine till I know where the strength of the Lead Friend lies. If we can discover that, it will be easy to destroy him.”

“If that is thy grief, my heart’s heart,” said she, “I will soon help thee; leave that to me. Thou must know I am a woman.”

With that Miklos and the princess kissed each other, and there was holy peace; they said: “I am thine, thou art mine.”

They travelled and journeyed across forty-nine kingdoms, till Kiss Miklos could say, “We are at home,” — for they were at the Lead Friend’s mansion, — and could say to the princess, “Come out of thy coach; it won’t cost thee a copper.” Here the Lead Friend ran panting out of his mansion to the beautiful princess, but she turned from him. This pleased not the Lead Friend, and though one word is not much, he uttered not that much, but brought her into the lead mansion in silence.

Next day at sunrise the Lead Friend had to go to his furnace, taking Kiss Miklos with him. The young woman remained all alone. She took a lamp and started to search through the lead house. From chamber to chamber she went till she came to the cellar, but that was closed against her with seven iron doors. Now the question was to get into the cellar. Another would not have been able to pass the first door, but every iron door opened of itself before the magic of the Green Daughter of the Green King. She passed through the seven doors and entered the cellar. She saw there seven leaden vats placed in a row, and every one of them filled to the brim with gold and silver. She took off her apron and filled it with gold, went up, summoned the goldsmith, and gilded the lead threshold a hand in thickness. The Lead Friend was such a miser that he had not bread enough to eat, and every little coin he turned seven times between his teeth before he let it go once from his hand.

Well, in the evening the Lead Friend came home from his furnace, saw the housekeeping and what the young woman had done. Then, ‘pon my soul! he plucked out his own lead beard and hair, trampled them like tow, and roared till the lead house was trembling.

“Who, in the name of a hundred thousand thunders, did this?” asked the Lead Friend.

“I did it,” answered quite bravely the princess.

“How didst thou dare to do it without my knowledge, — without informing me?” With that the Lead Friend went to the Green Daughter of the Green King, and seized in his hand the golden hair which reached her heels. Twelve times did he drag her on the lead floor, and he wanted to take the lead flail to her. Kiss Miklos did not permit that, but took the maiden from his grasp and placed her on the silken bed. She was neither dead nor alive, but lay as a lifeless block of wood. But the Green Daughter of the Green King had no more pain than good myself; being a magic woman, seest thou, she had much in her power.

Now, what did she do? When the Lead Friend wound around his hand the golden hair reaching to her heels, she suddenly sprang out of her skin, and a devil jumped into it. And if the Lead Friend had struck him with the back of an axe, he would not have felt a dog's trouble; for the more he was beaten the more he would have laughed.

But the Lead Friend was troubled; ragged, with torn hair, crying and weeping he entered the white chamber, where the princess was lying without life. He went to her; pushed her, but she waked not; talked to her, but she heard not; cried, but she listened not. At last he found this to say: "Wake, my heart's beautiful love; I will do all that may please thee, but stop the gilding."

Then the princess spoke up to the Lead Friend, "I'll stop the gilding, but tell where thy strength lies."

"Oh, my heart's beautiful love, I would rather part with life than tell that."

Well, things remained thus. Next day at sunrise the Lead Friend went to his furnace, taking Kiss Miklos with him, for he lived in the suspicion that Miklos and the Green Daughter of the Green King would plot together and strive for his destruction.

The bride remained alone; she took the lamp and turned straight to the cellar. The great iron doors opened before her and closed behind. When she had passed the seven iron doors and entered the cellar, she spread her silk apron, and filled it with gold. Three times she returned, and three times she bore away the same amount, so that the apron was almost torn under it. Straightway she called the goldsmith and had the lead thresholds of three chambers gilded to the thickness of a hand. And as I say, the Lead Friend was so stingy that he did not eat bread enough, and every little coin he put seven times between his teeth before he let it out of his hand once.

The Lead Friend came home from his furnace towards evening, and saw the housekeeping, and saw also that now not one but three thresholds were gilded a hand’s thickness. Here, ‘pon my soul! the Lead Friend fell into such rage that he tore his own lead beard and hair out, and trampled them as he would tow. Then he roared so terribly that the lead house quivered, and turning to the princess he asked: “In the name of a hundred thousand devils, who did this?”

“I did it,” answered the princess quite bravely.

“How didst thou dare to do this without my knowledge and consent?”

With that the Lead Friend seized the golden hair of the princess, which reached to her heels, and dragged her twelve times up and down the lead floor, twelve times did he hurl her against the floor, then he ran for the lead flail to kill her. Kiss Miklos would not let him do that, but seized the maiden from his hands, and placed her on the silken bed. The Green Daughter of the Green King was neither dead nor alive; she lay there still as a soulless block of wood. Still the princess felt no more pain than good myself. She knew witchcraft, and whatever she did or did not do, when the Lead Friend twisted her golden hair in his hand, she jumped out of her skin in a twinkle, and a devil got into it; if they had beaten him like a two-headed drum, or even more, he would have taken it as if they were fondling him.

Now the Lead Friend was terribly sorry; ragged, with torn hair, he entered the white chamber weeping; he wept a long time; pushed the princess, who waked not; spoke to her, she heard not; at last he found this to say: “Wake up, my heart’s beautiful love; all thy desires will be accomplished, only stop the gilding.”

“I’ll stop the gilding, but tell where thy strength lies.”

“Oh, my heart’s beautiful love, I would rather part with my life than tell that.”

Next day at sunrise the Lead Friend took Kiss Miklos to the furnace, lest while he was gone himself Miklos might go in secret and gather another man’s hay. The bride was alone again, and wanted nothing better. Again she took the lamp and went straight to the cellar, where she opened her beautiful silk apron and filled it with gold, — took so much that the apron almost tore under it. She came seven times, and each time carried so much gold that her nose almost cut the earth, like the coulter of a plough. Then she called a goldsmith, and gilded to a hand’s thickness the thresholds of seven rooms.

When the Lead Friend came home in the evening, he saw that not three but seven thresholds had a hand’s thickness of gold on them. Then he fell into such a rage that he tore his leaden beard and hair, and trampled them as he would tow; but what good did that do him? — for he was trampling his own. Then he roared till the lead house rattled, and in his fury he asked: “A thousand million demons, who did this?”

“I did it,” answered the princess all bravely.

“How didst thou dare to do this without my knowledge or command?”

With that he went in fury to the Green Daughter of the Green King, wound round his hand the golden hair which reached to her heels. Twelve times did he drag her over the leaden floor, twelve times did he dash her against it, twelve times did he raise her aloft, — and that was not enough; but he took out the lead flail, and began to thrash and beat the princess as if she were a bundle of wheat, so that she was swimming in blood. Kiss Miklos took her from his hands and placed her on the silken bed, where she lay, neither dead nor alive, still as a lifeless block.

Now the Lead Friend grew terribly sorry, and making himself squalid looking, he entered the white chamber, rushed to the princess, wept without ceasing, touched her but she woke not, spoke to her but she heard him not.

At last he found this to say: “Wake up, my heart’s beautiful love. I will tell where my strength lies. In the silken meadow under the seventh bush is a hare, under the tail of the hare an egg, in the egg a hornet, and in the hornet is hidden my strength, so that I live as long as the hornet lives; if the hornet dies, I die too.”

The Green Daughter of the Green King heard all these words clearly, but acted as if she were neither dead nor alive, — lay there like a soulless block.

Well, ‘pon my soul! what came of the affair or what did not, the princess rose from her silken bed in the night-time, quietly, in one garment; but she threw a great shawl around her neck, slipped out of the gate, found Kiss Miklos, to whom her word and speech was this: “Wake up, my heart’s beautiful love, renowned Kiss Miklos, I know now where the strength of the Lead Friend lies; but listen to my word. In the silken meadow under the seventh bush lies a hare, under the hare’s tail is an egg, in the egg a hornet, in the hornet is the Lead Friend’s strength. If thou kill the hornet, the Lead Friend will lose his strength.”

Our Miklos wanted nought else. He turned himself at once into a hound, drove the hare from the seventh bush of the silken meadow. The hare began to run, but the hound was not slow; with a long stick he struck the egg from the hare’s tail. The egg broke and the hornet flew out, but the hound was not slow; with a great jump he caught the hornet, and crushed it to bits in his teeth. Then the hound shook himself and turned into Kiss Miklos again.

At daylight the Lead Friend was sick. He had lost his strength, he could not move his hands or his feet, and lay groaning on his lead couch like a man who had been pressing a straw-bed for seven years; and when the sun rose he breathed out his cursed soul.

Who was more delighted at his death than our Kiss Miklos and the Green Daughter of the Green King? Straightway they called a priest and a hangman and an iron cap. The priest joined them, the hangman thrashed around, God’s arrow flashed, but no one was struck. There was soup plenty and to spare, lucky was the man who came with a spoon; the unhappy were happy; the gypsy fiddled, and the music spoke. When the feasting and the poppy week had passed, Kiss Miklos and his consort took a chariot of glass and gold, drawn by six black-haired steeds, and set out for Miklos’s birthplace. Now, the shining sun had shone so sadly, and the bright moon had beamed so sadly that it could not be more so; but the moment they beheld Miklos and his wife in the chariot of glass and gold, the bright sun shone joyously, and so did the clear moon.

“What’s this? what’s this?” said to himself the old king, who still rejoiced in good health. He summoned the wise men and the skilled scribes of the kingdom to his palace and gave them the following question: “Explain to me this. It is seven years since the two sons of the poor man brought back the bright moon and the shining sun; these two sons are now ruling kings, — may God keep them in health! — but the clear moon and the shining sun gave us such sorrowful light, and now all at once both are radiant.”

One old man skilled in letters, and so old that his white beard almost came to the earth, and he could not stand on his feet alone, but three men supported him, spoke the following words: “Haho! high lord, there is great reason for this. The clear moon and the shining sun were sad because the man who really freed them from the claws of the dragons was pinioned in bondage; and he is no other than the renowned Kiss Miklos, the poor man’s youngest son, who even at this moment is driving to the king’s palace with the Green Daughter of the Green King, in a chariot drawn by six horses.”

That moment Kiss Miklos and his wife entered the white chamber together. Here the lords and those great wise men all rose before them, as did even the old king himself, who advancing embraced and kissed them, led them to his own purple velvet throne, seated them thereon, and turning to the wise men and the skilled scribes, asked them, “Who really deserves the kingdom, the elder brothers or Kiss Miklos?”

The council said: “Kiss Miklos.”

Then Miklos rose and said to the old king and the council: “High king and worthy council, it is true that I deserve the kingdom, and I would take it were I not the heir of the far-famed Lead Friend, and were it not that the dominions of the Green King, after his death, — which from my heart I wish not, — will come to me. This being the case the worthy council can see, and thy Highness can see also, that I may not accept the kingdom. Let it remain as it is, — let my eldest brother be king, and my second brother be viceroy; they are, I think, honorable men, and worthy.”

The lords, sages, and skilled scribes present, as well as the old king, rose up and confirmed the wise speech of the youthful Kiss Miklos.

Then the two brothers of Kiss Miklos — the king and the viceroy — entered; they embraced and kissed one another, and sacred was the peace. After that, Kiss Miklos and his wife returned to the domains of the Lead Friend, and after the death of the Green King, Kiss Miklos inherited his dominions. And so he ruled two kingdoms very happily; and he and the Green Daughter of the Green King are living yet, if they are not dead.

69

THE HEDGEHOG, THE MERCHANT, THE KING, AND THE POOR MAN

Where there was, where there was not, it is enough that there was once a merchant, there were also a king, and a poor man.

One day the merchant went out to hunt, and he travelled and journeyed till, oh! my lord’s son, he found himself in such a thick forest that he saw neither the sky nor the earth; he just groped around like a blindman. Here, ‘pon my soul! whether the merchant tried to free himself by turning to the left or the right, he only went into a thicker place. When he was there five days, in hunger and thirst, stumbling about in the great wild wood without liberation, the merchant called out: —

“Oh, my God, if any one would take me out of this great wild thicket to the right road, I would give him the best of my three daughters, and as a wedding gift three sacks of coin.”

“I’ll lead thee out right away,” said some one before him.

The merchant looked to the right, to the left, but not a soul did he see.

“Don’t look around,” said the certain one again, “look under thy feet.”

The merchant then looked in front and saw that near his feet was a little hedgehog, and to him he directed then his word and speech. “Well, if thou wilt lead me out, I will give thee my best daughter and three sacks of coin; the first will be gold, the second silver, and the third copper.”

The hedgehog went on ahead, the merchant walked after. Soon they came out of the great wild wood. Then the hedgehog went back, and the merchant turned his wagon-tongue homeward.

Now the king went to hunt, — went in the same way as the merchant; and he too was lost in the great wild wood. The king went to the right and the left, tried in every way to free himself; all he gained was that he came to a thicker and a darker place. He too stumbled around five days in the thick wood, without food or drink. On the sixth morning the king cried out: “Oh, my God! if any one would free me from this dense wood, even if a worm, I would give him the most beautiful of my daughters, and as a wedding gift three coaches full of coin.”

“I’ll lead thee out right away,” said some one near him.

The king looked to the right, to the left, but saw not a soul.

“Why stare around? Look at thy feet; here I am.”

The king then looked at his feet and saw a little hedgehog stretched out, and said to him: “Well, hedgehog, if thou wilt lead me forth, I’ll give thee the fairest of my daughters and three coaches full of coin, — the first gold, the second silver, the third copper.”

The hedgehog went ahead, the king followed, and in this way they soon came out of the great wild wood. The hedgehog went back to his own place; the king reached home in safety.

Very well, a poor man went out for dry branches. He went like the merchant and king, and he got astray, so that he wandered dry and hungry for five days in the great wild wood; and whether he turned to the right or the left he gained only this, that he went deeper into the denseness.

“My God,” cried the poor man at last, “send me a liberator! If he would lead me out of this place, as I have neither gold nor silver, I would take him as a son, and care for him as my own child.”

“Well, my lord father, I’ll lead thee out; only follow.”

“Where art thou, dear son?”

“Here, under thy feet; only look this way, my lord father.”

The poor man looked near his feet, and saw a little hedgehog stretched out.

“Well, my dear son, lead me out and I’ll keep my promise.”

The hedgehog went ahead, the poor man followed, and soon they came out of the great wild wood. The hedgehog then went back to his own place, and the poor man strolled home.

Well, things remained thus till once after bedtime there was a knocking at the poor man’s door. “My lord father, rise up, open the door.” The poor man, who was lying on the stove, heard only that some one was knocking at the door.

“My lord father, rise up, open the door.”

The poor man heard, and heard that some one was knocking and as he thought calling out: “My lord father, rise up, open the door;” but in his world life he had never had a son. The third time he heard clearly, “My lord father, rise up, open the door.”

The poor man did not take this as a joke. He rose up and opened the door. My lord’s son, who came in to him? No one else than the little hedgehog.

“God give a good evening to my lord father and to my mother as well,” said the hedgehog.

“God receive thee, my dear son. Hast thou come then?”

“I have indeed, as thou seest, my lord father; but I am very tired, therefore wake up my mother and let her make a bed for me in my chamber.”

What was the poor man to do? He woke up his wife; she made a towering bed, and the hedgehog lay in it. In the morning the poor man and his wife sat down to breakfast. They did not wish to forget their adopted son, but gave him food on a wooden plate under a bench by the fire. The hedgehog did not touch it. “Well, my son,” asked the poor man, “why not eat?”

“I do not eat, my lord father, because it is not proper to treat an adopted son like some orphan or another; therefore it beseems me not to eat all alone from a wooden plate under a bench at the fire. Seat me nicely at the table by thy side, put a tin plate before me, and place my food on it.”

What was the poor man to do? He seated the Hedgehog at his side, put a tin plate before him, and measured out food on it; then the Hedgehog ate with his father and mother. When they had finished breakfast the Hedgehog spoke thuswise: “Well, my lord father, hast thou a couple of thalers?”

“I have.”

“I suppose thou art keeping them to buy salt and wood with?”

“Yes, my son.”

“I speak not of that, I am speaking of this: lend me the money; I will return it a thousand-fold. Set not thy mind much on salt and wood now; but go, my lord father, to the market. In such and such a place an old woman has a black cock for sale; buy him of her. If she asks a small price, give her double; for that will be my steed. When thou hast bought the cock for two prices, in such and such a place is a saddler; go to him. In a corner of his shop is a cast-away, thrown-away, ragged, torn saddle; buy that for me, but give him two prices also. If he asks little, give him double.”

The poor man put on his coat, put the two thalers in his pocket, went to the market, bought the black cock and the cast-away, thrown-away saddle for two prices; each one for two small bits of money.

The Hedgehog then saddled the black cock with the cast-away, thrown-away saddle, sat upon him, and went to the court of the rich merchant whom he had led out of the great wild wood; he knocked at the door and called: “Hei, father-in-law, open the gate, let me in!”

The rich merchant opened the gate in great wonder. Who was coming? No one other than our Hedgehog, riding on a black cock.

“Hear me, rich merchant,” began the Hedgehog; “knowest thou thy promise? When I led thee out of the great wild wood, dost remember thy promise to give me the best of thy three daughters and three sacks of coin? Now I have come for the maid and the money.”

What could the rich merchant do? He called his three daughters into the white chamber, and turned to the Hedgehog, saying: “Well, choose among the three the one who pleases thy eye, thy mouth, and thy heart.”

The Hedgehog chose the second daughter, for she was the most beautiful of the three. The merchant then measured out three sacks of coin, — in the first, as he had said, there was gold, in the second silver, in the third copper; then he put his daughter and the three sacks of coin in a coach, to which four horses were attached, and he sent on her way his most beautiful daughter, with the Hedgehog. They travelled and journeyed till the Hedgehog, who was riding at the side of the coach on his black cock, came up, looked in through the window, and saw that the bride was in tears.

“Why dost thou cry, why dost thou weep, my heart’s beautiful love?” asked the Hedgehog of the maiden.

“Why should I not cry, why should I not weep, when God has punished me with such a nasty thing as thee? — for I know not whether thou art a man or a beast.”

“If this is thy only trouble, my heart’s beautiful love, we can easily cure it; I’ll keep the three sacks of coin for myself, and thee I’ll send back to thy father, for I see that of me thou art not worthy.”

Thus was it settled; the Hedgehog kept the three sacks of coin, but the merchant’s daughter he sent back to her father. The Hedgehog then took the coin to the poor man, who became so rich that I think another could not be found like him in seven villages.

Now the Hedgehog plucked up courage, saddled his black cock, sat on him, and rode away to the king, stood before him, and spoke in this fashion: “Dost thou remember, king, that when I brought thee out of the great wild wood, thou didst promise that if I would show the right road thou wouldst give me the most beautiful of thy three daughters and fill for me three coaches, the first with gold, the second with silver, and the third with copper coin? I am here so that thou mayest keep thy word."

The king called his three daughters to the white chamber and said: "I made a promise, and this is it: to give one of my three daughters to this Hedgehog as wife; I promised because the Hedgehog led me out of a great wild wood, in which I wandered for five days without food or drink, and he saved me from certain death. Therefore say, my dear daughters, which of you will agree to marry the Hedgehog."

The eldest daughter turned away, the second turned away also; but the youngest and fairest spoke thus: "If thou, my father the king, hast made such a promise, I will marry him. Let the will of God be done if he has appointed such a husband for me."

"Thou art my dearest and best daughter," said the king; and he kissed her again and again. Then the king measured out three coaches of coin, seated the princess in a chariot of gold and glass and started her on her journey, amid bitter tear-shedding, with the Hedgehog, who rode at the side of the chariot on his black cock. They travelled and journeyed across forty-nine kingdoms till the Hedgehog rode up to the chariot, opened the window, looked in, and saw that the princess was not weeping, but was in the best cheerful humor.

"Oh, my heart's beautiful love," said the princess, "why art thou riding on that black cock? Better come here and sit at my side on the velvet cushion."

"Thou art not afraid of me?"

"I am not afraid."

"Thou art not disgusted with me?"

"No; if God has given thee to me, then thou shouldst be mine."

“Thou art my only and most beloved wife!” said the Hedgehog; and with that he shook himself, and straightway turned into such a pearl-given, charming, twenty-four-years-old king’s son that tongue could not tell, — golden-haired, golden-mouthed, golden-toothed. And the black cock shook himself three times, and became such a golden-haired magic steed that his equal would have to be sought for; the cast-away, thrown-away saddle became golden, everything on it was gold to the last buckle.

The king’s son then picked out the most beautiful place in the kingdom; standing in the middle of this he thought once, and suddenly that instant there stood before him a copper-roofed marble palace, turning on a cock’s foot, and in it every kind of the most varied and beautiful golden furniture, — everything and everything was of gold, beginning with the mirror-frame and ending with the cooking-spoon. The king’s son conducted the beautiful golden bird — the fair princess — into the pearl-given palace, where, like birds in a nest, they lived in quiet harmony. When the merchant’s three daughters and the two elder princesses heard of the happiness of the youngest princess, — how well she had married, — in their sorrow one of them jumped into a well, another drowned herself in a hemp-pond, and a third was drawn dead out of the river Tisza. In this way four of the maidens came to an evil end; but the second daughter of the merchant gritted her teeth venomously at the princess, and made a firm and merciless resolve that she would imbitter her life’s happiness. She went therefore to the palace, and found service in the guise of an old woman. She, the devil-given, came at a critical time; for the Burkus king had declared war against the king’s son, and the princess, while her husband was in the field, was left to the care of the merchant’s daughter, disguised as an old woman. Milk might as well be confided to a cat as the princess to that cockroach of the underground kingdom. While the king’s son was gone, the Lord gave the princess two beautiful children. The old woman packed them into a basket, put them under a tree in the woods, then ran back to the princess, who, recovering from a faint into which she had fallen, asked the old woman to give her the children so that she might embrace and kiss them.

“High queen,” answered the old woman, “what is the use in delay or denial? They were two untimely, hairy monsters, and to save thee from terror at sight of them, I threw both into the river.”

The two children slept quietly under the tree till a white deer burst with great noise through the thicket, went straight as if sent, and taking the basket hung it on his antlers; then the white deer disappeared in the forest, went on till he came to the bank of a stream, where he called three times. The Forest Maiden appeared as if by magic, took the basket with great delight, and ran panting into her own palace.

The two children were seven years with the Forest Maiden, who reared them as carefully as if they had been her own.

Here, ‘pon my soul, what came of the affair, or what did not, the Forest Maiden once sent the little girl with a green jug for water, and enjoined on her rigorously to be careful not to break the jug.

The little girl did not let this be said twice; she was obedient and attentive. She took the jug, and was at the well in a moment. When she came, she saw a little golden bird flying around the well. Being a child, she wanted to catch the golden bird, therefore ran around with the jug in her hand till at last she saw that only the handle was left. The little girl, terrified, burst into tears, sat at the edge of the well, and cried there. The Forest Maiden waited and waited; but she could not wait longer, therefore she sent the little brother with a second jug, and told him sternly to be careful not to break the jug. The little brother went in the same way, for he also, like children of that age, barely saw the golden bird when he wanted to strike it with the jug, which he whirled around till only the handle remained in his hand; then he burst into tears, sat by his sister, and there the two were crying at the edge of the well.

Here, ‘pon my soul, the golden bird pitied the children, and asked: “Why do ye cry? Why do ye weep, pretty children?”

“Oh, pretty bird,” answered the boy, who had more sense than his sister, “why should we not cry? Why should we not weep? We shall be flogged for breaking the green jugs; our dear mother will whip us.”

“Oh, my children, she is not your own mother! She is only your foster-mother. Your father and mother live far from here, — beyond those green mountains; so if ye will follow, I’ll lead you home.”

The two children wanted nothing else. They went back no more to their foster-mother, for they would be flogged; but they followed the golden bird, which went always before them. And they travelled and journeyed till once in a forest they came upon a great heap of gold; near the gold was a number of dice, as if some one had been playing there. The little boy and girl each took a handful of gold, and went farther. They travelled and journeyed till they came to an inn; since they were wearied, and it was evening, they went in to ask lodging. In the inn three lords were playing dice; the two children at first merely noticed that they were playing. At last the boy took from his pocket the handful of gold, and began to play in such fashion that he won all the money of the three lords; and then one of them spoke thuswise: —

“Well, my dear son, I see that thou hast good luck. I have in a certain place a charming flower-garden; in the middle of the garden is a marble palace, and the palace has this peculiarity, — if it is struck on the side three times with this golden rod, it will turn into a golden apple; and thou mayest put down the marble palace and the flower-garden in any part of the world if thou wilt strike the golden apple with the small end of the golden rod. I will bet now this flower-garden and this marble palace; if thou canst win, they’ll be thine.”

The little boy agreed; and he won fortunately the flower-garden and the marble palace. The other then gave him the golden rod, and showed him where the garden and the palace were. Next morning the children sought out the garden and the palace, which the boy struck three times on the side, and it turned to a golden apple; he put the apple in his pocket, and strolled on homeward. The little golden bird flew always ahead of them. They travelled and journeyed till one time the golden bird stopped and said: —

“Well, dear children, now we are at home; put down the golden apple on this spot and strike it three times with the rod, and ye will see what a beautiful marble palace and flowery garden there will be, speaking to the seven kingdoms. The report of the palace and garden will circulate immediately, and the king himself will come to look at them. Him ye must honor as your father, for thou my little boy art the king’s son, and thou my little girl the king’s daughter. Dear children, here in a golden frame is a picture which gives your arms and name. Hang in the palace this picture, in the best place; but lest it be seen, cover it with velvet, and show it to no man save your own father. When he asks what that picture is, draw the velvet from it, and the rest will follow.”

So it happened; the two children hung up the picture in the best room of the marble palace, and covered it with velvet. Now, the report ran to distant parts of the kingdom that there was a charming and wonderful marble palace in such and such a place, and people hastened from the seventh province distant to look at it; so that the report came to the ears of the king himself. The king decided straightway to look at the flowery garden and marble palace; but he had hardly conceived the idea when the old woman gave him a drug. The king fell ill, and could not see the flowery garden and marble palace; and then the old woman, without invitation, stood before the king and said: “High king, if thou art so curious to see this flowery garden and marble palace, then I will go and see if they are as beautiful as report says, and tell the story to thy Highness.”

The king in one way or another agreed, and the old woman went, not to see the garden, but to bring the two children to evil destruction; the wicked creature tried but succeeded not, for her weapons broke. Not to confound one word with another, I will tell the whole tale in order and accuracy.

The old witch had barely reached the famous flower-garden when the two children hurried before her and showed everything from root to top, and the old piece of leather began to talk thus: “It is true that the garden is beautiful, but it would be seven times more beautiful if ye would bring the world-sounding tree.”

“What must be done to get that?” asked the little boy.

“Not other than this,” answered the old skeleton: “In such and such a place, in an enchanted palace, is the world-sounding tree; but ye must go for it and bring it.”

With that the old witch took farewell of the two children, and strolled home; but the boy had no peace from that hour. He wanted to go and bring the world-sounding tree; therefore taking farewell of his sister with bitter tear-shedding he set out for the tree. He was going and travelling across forty-nine kingdoms till he came to a dark castle; this was the first enchanted castle. A big, lame, hairy devil stood there on guard with a fearful whip, so that no man might enter. The hairy devil shouted very angrily at our boy: “Stop! Who is there?”

“I,” answered the little boy.

“Who is ‘I’?”

“I.”

“Art thou Yanoshka?” asked the devil.

“I am.”

“What journey art thou on?”

“I am looking for the world-beautifully sounding tree. Hast thou not heard of it, my lord elder brother?”

“I have not heard of it; but in such and such a place my brother stands guard, and if he has not heard of it, then no one in the world has.”

Yanoshka went forward on the right road in search of the world-sounding tree. He travelled and journeyed till he came to another enchanted dark castle; there a big, lame, hairy devil was standing on guard who shouted to our Yanoshka in great anger. Our Yanoshka was much braver now, for he knew he had nothing to fear.

"Who is it?" called out the devil.

"I."

"Art thou Yanoshka?"

"I am, at the service of my lord elder brother."

"Why art thou journeying here in this strange land, where even a bird does not go?"

"I am looking for the world-beautifully sounding tree. Hast thou not heard of it, my lord elder brother?"

"What is the use in delay or denial? I have not heard; but in such and such a place my eldest brother is on guard, and if he knows nothing of it, then no one in the world knows."

With this Yanoshka moved on towards the third enchanted castle; when he came, there was a big, lame, hairy devil on guard, who called out in great anger to Yanoshka: "Who is that?"

"I."

"Thou art Yanoshka?"

"I am."

"Why art thou journeying here in this strange land, where even a bird does not go?"

"I am looking for the world-beautifully sounding tree. Hast thou not heard of it, my lord elder brother?"

"Ho, ho, Yanoshka! of course I have; it is here in the garden of this enchanted palace. Thou mayest take it, but only if thou obey my words. If thou dost not value them or dost not observe them, thou wilt never see God's bright sky or the shining day again. I only want to say this: Here is a golden rod; strike the wall of the enchanted castle with it three times. Straightway a door will open before thee. In the very middle of the garden thou wilt find the world-beautifully sounding tree. Go around it three times and then hurry like a shot arrow, with the speed of a dog, or the stone wall will close, and thou wilt remain inside; and if thou art once shut in, God have mercy and pity on thee, for that instant thou wilt be turned to stone. This is my word and speech; if thou cling to it, thou wilt be lucky; if not, thou wilt be wretched forever."

The boy took the golden rod and struck the side of the enchanted castle with it. That instant the door opened before him. The king's son did not inquire much whether he might enter or not; in a moment he ran in through the door and straight to the garden. Every kind of singing and dancing maidens came to meet him, — some with citharas and harps; some played on cymbals and begged him to play and dance with them; some offered rich food and drink of every kind agreeable to the taste. But the king's son had no mind to eat or drink; he pushed aside the maidens and ran to the very centre of the garden, where the world-beautifully sounding tree was; then he went around it three times, turning toward the point whence he had come. That done he rushed from the garden, and a thousand times lucky was he. It was not the same for him to be a few minutes later, for the door closed and bit off the heel of his boot; but he did not care much about the heel of his boot. He ran home on the same road over which he had come; and when he arrived, the world-beautifully sounding tree was in the middle of the flowery garden. Hitherto the flowery garden had been in good fame, but now the fame was seven times greater, so that people came from seven worlds to look at the tree; and the report of it reached the king himself, who determined in his mind if he had not seen it yet he would now at least go to see it.

As soon as the old witch divined his thought she put a powder in his coffee so that he became sick, and was not able to leave the room; then she stood before him without invitation, and said: “High king, as thy Highness is sick, I will go to see if the world-sounding tree is as beautiful as reported, and will soon bring back word.”

The king in one way or another agreed to the old witch’s proposal, and let her go to see the world-beautifully sounding tree. She had barely put foot in the flowery garden when the two children ran out to her to hear what the old woman would say this time.

“Beautiful children,” said she, “beautiful is the garden of itself, beautiful is the sounding tree, but still seven times more beautiful would it be if the world-sweetly speaking bird were to sing upon it.”

“What must I do?” asked the little boy.

“Nothing else,” answered the old witch, “than this: In such and such a place is an enchanted castle, and thence it would be necessary to bring the world-sweetly speaking bird.”

Then she went back; and from that hour the king’s son could not remain at home, but planned to go for the world-sweetly speaking bird. Therefore, parting with his sister amidst bitter tear-shedding, he started through the kingdom and the world to bring home the sweetly speaking bird; but he enjoined on his sister that if the third day he were not at home, she should set out to seek him over a certain road, — and with that the king’s son went his way.

He journeyed and travelled across forty-nine kingdoms to the first enchanted castle, where there stood on guard a big hairy devil, who had a terribly large whip in his hand, to kill, without pity or mercy, every man going up or down. Now, the hairy devil attacked Yanoshka sharply and roughly, thus: —

“Who art thou?”

“I, my lord elder brother.”

“Who art thou?” asked the devil again.

“I.”

“Art thou Yanoshka?”

“I am.”

“Why art thou here in this strange land, where even a bird does not go?”

“I am going for the world-sweetly speaking bird. Hast thou heard of it, my lord elder brother?”

“What is the use in delay or denial? I have not indeed heard. But over there lives my elder brother; if he knows nothing of it, then no one in the world knows.”

Now the king’s son came to the second enchanted castle; the second devil sent him to his eldest brother, the big lame devil.

When Yanoshka came to the third castle, the devil asked, “Why art thou here in this strange land, where even a bird does not go?”

“I am looking for the world-sweetly speaking bird. Hast thou not heard of it, lord elder brother, in thy world-beautiful life?”

“Of course I have; it is here in this enchanted castle. Thou mayest take it away if thou wilt listen to my word; if not, better thou hadst never been born. For if thou wilt not observe my words, thou wilt never see God’s bright sun again. I only wish to say: Here is a golden rod; take it, and with it strike the wall of the enchanted castle three times. Straightway the door will open before thee; pass in, run to the end of the glass corridor and across eight chambers. In the ninth chamber is the world-sweetly speaking bird in a rusty cage. Thou wilt find there every kind of beautiful and more beautiful golden birds, but look not at them, listen not to them, take no one of them, but take the sweetly speaking bird sitting sadly in the rusty cage. Snatch the cage in an instant, and rush from the enchanted castle as if thou hadst been shot from a cannon.”

The king’s son took the golden rod and struck the wall of the enchanted castle with it three times, and in a twinkle the door opened before him. The king’s son then asked few questions. Whether it was permitted or not he ran into the room in an instant. While he was running to the end of the glass corridor he was called by name, from the right to the left, to stop. It is true that he was frightened, but he paid no heed. He ran straight to the first chamber. Every kind of flowers, more and more beautiful, were in golden pots; but the king's son did not touch them. He ran to the second chamber. In that were all kinds of swords and guns, but he did not choose from them. He entered the third, fourth, fifth, and in this way till he came to the ninth chamber. The ninth chamber, as the devil had told him, was full of all kinds of golden and silver cages, and in them golden-feathered birds, more and more beautiful, were singing; but the world-sweetly speaking bird was drooping there sadly in a rusty cage, and was not singing.

As the world-sweetly speaking bird was not golden-feathered like the others, it did not please the king's son, and he did not take it, but chose from among the many golden-feathered birds the prettiest, and wished to take that; but as he reached towards it, suddenly, in the twinkle of an eye, he was turned to stone, and the door of the stone wall closed before him.

Now, the little princess every God-given day spread the table for her good brother, but he did not come. Every God-given evening she went out before the house and waited till nearly midnight; then she spread the bed for him, but he did not lie in it. So the first day passed, and the second, and the third, — day after day, but still the dear brother came not; therefore the princess, crying and weeping, went out to look for her brother. She journeyed and travelled upon his trail till she came to the first enchanted castle, and the second, and at last the third. The devil there stood on guard, with a great whip like a chain, so as to strike on the head, without pity or mercy, every one going up or down; and he shouted angrily at the little girl, "Who art thou?"

"I."

"Thou art Marishka?" For meanwhile, let it be said, this was the name of the king's son's sister.

"I am."

“Why art thou travelling in this strange land, where not even a bird goes?”

“I am looking for my brother. Hast thou not heard of him, lord elder brother?”

“Of course I have heard, — of course! He is in this enchanted castle, turned into stone; he had to be, for he would not obey me. Thou wilt go that way, too, if thou wilt not hold to my word.”

Now the little girl took the golden rod from the devil, who told her what to do with it, and struck the wall of the enchanted castle with it three times. The door opened before her in a twinkle, the princess ran in; but she looked neither to the right nor the left. She ran straight to the ninth chamber; there she took the rusty cage, struck her brother three times on the side with the rod, then ran as if shot from a cannon. And a thousand-fold was her luck that she did not delay an eye-twinkle longer, for the stone-wall door, as it was, cut the edge of her skirt off when it closed.

The princess had barely come out of the enchanted castle when she heard behind her frightful thundering, hammering and blowing, swearing and cursing, with threats; they shouted after her: “Wait, thou! — this-and-that-kind-of-wretch, it will soon be bitter for thee!” But she did not turn to them; she ran like a hunted deer till she reached home. Who was waiting for her there? No one else but her dear brother.

The brother and sister then put up the sweetly speaking bird on the world-beautifully sounding tree, and the sweetly speaking bird spoke, sang more sweetly than any cithara, so that whoever heard it became ten years younger. If the flowery garden had been famous before, it now stood in seven times greater fame, so that from seven kingdoms the people came to look at it; and the king, hearing of the fair fame of the flowery garden, resolved in his mind that, though he had not gone yet, he would go to see it now.

The old witch barely divined this intention of the king when she gave him powders in black coffee, from which the king became so sick that this time, too, his visit to the beautiful garden came to nothing. And then the old woman, without invitation, stood before him, and said: “High king, thou hast such a great desire to see the flowery garden, I will go at once, and bring back word if its beauty is as great as its fame.”

The king agreed, and the old woman went to see the flowery garden. She had barely put foot in it when the two children ran out to meet her, received her very cordially, and did not know where to seat her.

“Beautiful children,” began the old sinner, “the marble palace is beautiful, the flowery garden is beautiful, the world-sweetly speaking bird is beautiful; but the flowery garden would be still more beautiful if the silver lake were flowing in it, and in the lake golden fish were playing.”

“What must I do to get the lake?” asked the king’s son.

“Only this,” answered the old skeleton. “In a certain place, in an enchanted castle, is the world-silver lake, and in it the world-golden fish; it is only necessary to go for the silver lake, for the golden fish will come in it. All that is needed is to bring the lake.”

Then the old woman took leave of the pair pleasantly, and went home. But the king’s son from that day had no rest, so he took leave of his dear sister, and went out into the world for the silver lake. He travelled and journeyed across forty-nine kingdoms, and the Operentsia Sea, till he came to the first enchanted castle. A devil was guarding there, who sent him to his elder brother, and he to his eldest. The king’s son arrived at the third enchanted palace. A devil stood guard there, with an enormous knotty club, to hit every man going up or down, without mercy or pity.

“God give thee good evening, my lord elder brother.”

“God receive thee, Yanoshka; whither art thou faring in this strange land, where not even a bird goes?”

“I am looking for the world-silver lake. Hast thou not heard of it, lord elder brother?”

“Of course I have heard, — of course; it is here in this enchanted castle. But, my younger brother, thou wilt have to tie up thy drawers well if ‘tis thy wish to take that away; for if thou dost not obey my word, I tell thee, on my true soul, that thou wilt reach Pilate by supper-time. I wish to say this: Here is a golden rod; strike the side of the enchanted palace with it, and suddenly the door will open before thee, run in straight to the garden. Thou wilt hear thy name called, but listen not. Every kind of beautiful maiden will come before thee, offering meat and drink; but eat not, neither drink. Thou wilt find on the way every kind of rich thing, — gold, silver, diamonds, — but touch nothing. Then every kind of disgusting snake and toad will come out, but be not afraid; run straight to the silver lake, which flows in the garden, run around it three times towards home, and then run out as thou didst go in.”

Well, the king’s son took the golden rod, struck the side of the enchanted castle three times, and the door opened before him; scarcely had he put foot inside when maidens called him by name. “This way, this way, Yanoshka! Eat, drink, with relish, Yanoshka! This way, Yanoshka, my embracing two arms are open to thee, run no farther!”

The king’s son, as if deaf, did not listen, but ran farther. Then maidens more and more beautiful came before him, — some sprang at him, dangled their golden hair in his face; the king’s son did not stop, but struck at them rudely, rushing on. He had barely left the maidens when he fell on to piles of treasure thrown in his way: beaten gold was piled high, and milk-white silver coin, — here every kind of diamond ring, there swords set in diamonds; but the king’s son touched nothing, and ran on. Then every kind of crawling, creeping thing swarmed around him, — here hissing snakes, there warty toads. Yanoshka looked not under his feet, but ran till he came to the silver lake, around which he rushed three times, and went out as he had come. A thousand-fold was his fortune, for had he been an instant later the stone wall would have closed before him; as it was it took the heel off his boot, but he cared nothing for that. He left his boots there and ran home barefoot; when he reached home the silver lake was already flowing through the flowery garden, and in it all kinds of precious golden fish were jumping.

Hitherto the marble palace and the flowery garden with the sounding tree and the sweetly speaking bird had been in fair fame, but now, when the silver lake was flowing through the garden, and golden fish playing in it, now I say their fame spoke to the seven worlds, and people came to look at them. When this reached the ears of the king he resolved that he would neither eat nor drink till he saw the marble palace with all its wonders. Though the old witch offered him black coffee repeatedly, the king did not take it; but sitting in the golden carriage with his wife, he drove to see the flowery garden.

Scarcely had the king and queen entered the flowery garden when the brother and sister ran out before them, panting, and kissed their hands.

“Oh, father, this little girl is like thee!” cried the queen; “she is thy carved second!”

“And the little boy looks like thee,” answered the king.

Well, the king and the queen went around the garden in order, and they could not do justice to its beauty; when they saw the sounding tree and the sweetly speaking bird, they clapped their hands. The boy went up in a moment on the sounding tree, plucked from it a couple of golden apples, gave one to the king and the other to the queen, who could not praise sufficiently his kindness. Then the king and queen looked at the silver lake and the golden fish in it; they visited the marble palace, and went from chamber to chamber till they had gone through seven in order.

The king and queen were unable to praise sufficiently the beauty of the rooms; but when they came to the most beautiful of all, the king found this to say, speaking speech: “Well, my little servant, wilt thou not answer a question of mine?”

“And what is it?” asked the prince.

“I should like to know why that picture is covered with velvet, and what it depicts.”

One word is not much, but the king’s little son did not say that much; speechless he drew the velvet covering aside. The king and queen were amazed, and knew their own children, whom they had never seen before. One embraced one of them, and the other the other; they could not speak, but they wept and laughed, and then the world-sounding tree and the sweetly speaking bird were heard.

Great was the rejoicing of every kind, but sad grew the old sinner when the king seized her, made her fast to a tree, and piled up beneath her a fire of sulphur.

9. JEAN DE BOSSCHÈRE

CONTENTS

Preface

1. Ups and Downs
2. The Three Monkeys
3. How the Goldfinch Got His Colours
4. The Cock and the Fox
5. The Most Cunning Animal
6. Sponsken and the Giant
7. Why Cats Always Wash After Eating
8. The choristers of St. Gudule
9. The Magic Cap
10. The Trial of Reynard the Fox
11. Sugar-Candy House
12. Poor Peter
13. The Peasant and His Ass
14. The King of the Birds
15. A Drum Full of Bees
16. The Drunken Rooks
17. The Battle of the Birds and Beasts
18. The End of the World
19. The Reward of the World
20. One Bad Turn Begets Another
21. The Peasant and the Satyrs
22. The Two Friends and the Barrel of Grease
23. Why the Bear Has a Stumpy Tail
24. The Witch’s Cat

PREFACE

DE BOSSCHÈRE, JEAN

Jean de Bosschère (1878-1953) was a Belgian writer and painter. His work was marked by a persistent spiritual seeking and a fascination with the occult, the spiritual, the obscure and the sexual. De Bosschère gave himself the nickname “Satan” and “l’Obscure”, which formed the title of *Satan l’Obscure* (1933), his second autobiographical novel.

The decade of the ‘30s was difficult for De Bosschère, since he wrote several novels that he regarded as failures. From 1938 he lived a secluded life in La Châtre in central France. He kept a diary from 1946 titled *Journal d’un Rebelle Solitaire* that has remained unreleased. He also made two anthologies of most of his poetry: *Derniers poèmes de l’Obscure* (1948) and *Héritiers de l’abime* (1950).

De Bosschère also wrote and illustrated a collection of Belgian stories, *Beasts and Men: Folk Tales Collected in Flanders*. The folk tales and fairy tales feature whimsical stories of animals and humans for all ages.

1

UPS AND DOWNS

The summer had been very hot. Not a drop of rain had fallen for many weeks, and there was drought in the valley where the animals lived. The streams had dried up and the springs had ceased to flow. Master Fox took up his pipe and went out to take a walk under the lime-trees to think things over. There he met Mistress Goat, all dressed up in her Sunday clothes.

“Good morrow, cousin,” said he. “You are very fine to-day.”

“Yes,” she answered, “I put on my best dress because it helps me to think. What we are to do for water I do not know. We have finished all that we had in the barrel, and unless we can find some more very quickly I and my children will die of thirst.”

“To tell you the truth,” said the Fox, “I was thinking the same thing. I am so dry that my tongue is sticking to the roof of my mouth, and I cannot even smoke my pipe with pleasure. What do you say to going together in search of water? Four eyes are better than two, any day in the week.”

“Agreed,” said the Goat; and away they started together. For a long time they looked everywhere, but not a trace of water could they find. All of a sudden the Goat gave a cry of joy, and running up to her the Fox saw that she had discovered a well, on the brink of which she was standing gazing at the cool water far below.

“Hurrah!” cried the Fox. “We are saved!”

“Yes,” answered the Goat, “but see how far down the water is! How are we to get at it!”

“You just leave that to me,” said the Fox. “I know all about wells — I’ve seen them before. All one has to do is to get into the bucket which is hanging by the rope and descend as smoothly and as safely as you please. I’ll go first, just to show you the way.”

So the Fox got into the bucket, and the weight of him caused it to descend, while the empty bucket at the other end of the rope rose to the top of the well. A minute afterwards he was at the bottom, leaning over the side of the pail and greedily lapping up the water. Nothing had ever tasted so delicious. He drank and drank until he could hold no more.

“Is it good?” cried Mrs. Goat from above, dancing with impatience.

“It is like the purest nectar!” answered the Fox. “Get into the bucket quickly and come down and join me.”

So the goat stepped into the bucket, which immediately began to descend with her weight, while at the same time the bucket with Master Fox in it began to rise to the surface. The two met half-way.

“How is this?” asked Mrs. Goat in surprise. “I thought you were going to wait for me!”

“Ah, my dear friend,” answered Reynard with a wicked grin, “it is the way of the world. Some go up and some go down. I hope you will enjoy your drink. Good-bye!”

And as soon as he got to the top he jumped out of the bucket and ran off at top speed.

So poor Mrs. Goat had to stay there at the bottom of the well until the farmer came and found her, half dead with cold. When at last she was rescued she found that she had only exchanged one prison for another, for the farmer put her into the fold with his own sheep and goats, and so she lost her liberty for ever.

2

THE THREE MONKEYS

There were once three monkeys who were going for a voyage in a balloon. (This was in Monkey-land, far, far away and ever so long ago.) The three were so much alike that it was impossible to tell one from the other, and to make matters worse each of them answered to the name of James. Such a thing would never do in the crew of a balloon, so the old monkey who was in command decided that each of the three should have a different name. The first was to be called James, the second Jemmy, and the third Little James.

So far so good. The three monkeys climbed into the balloon, the ground ropes were untied, and the voyage was begun. When they had reached a height of some hundreds of feet, the captain wished to give an order, so he called to the first monkey: “James!”

“Aye aye, sir,” said all the three, running up to him.

“I called James,” said the captain, looking from one to the other.

“Well, I am James,” answered the first monkey.

“No, no. James is my name,” said the second.

“And mine too,” said the third.

“How can you be James if I am he?” cried the first angrily.

“I tell you James is my name!” cried the second.

“No, mine!”

And so the three monkeys began to quarrel and dispute. Words led to blows, and soon they were tumbling about all over the car of the balloon, biting, scratching, and pummelling while the captain sat in his chair and bawled to them to stop. Every minute it seemed as though the car would overturn, and the end of it was that Little James got pushed over the side. He turned a beautiful somersault, and fell down, down, down through the air, landing in a soft bed of mud, into which he sank so that only his face and the top of his yellow cranium were visible.

"Help! help!" bawled Little James at the top of his voice.

Up ran a pair of monkeys belonging to the neighbourhood and stood looking at him.

"He's in the mud, brother," said one.

"Up to his neck," said the other. "How silly!" And they both began to grin.

"Help!" cried Little James again, more faintly, for he was sinking deeper, and the mud was nearly at the level of his mouth. "Pull me out! Pull me out!"

"Ah, but how?" asked the first monkey, looking at him gravely.

"Wait a minute," cried the second, "I have an idea!" and he pulled out of his pocket one of those leather suckers on a string which boys use to lift stones. Moistening the disc, he clapped it on to Little James's head, and began to tug on the cord with all his might.

"Hey!" cried the other monkey, running to help. "Pull, brother, pull, and we'll soon have him out!"

Crack! The cord snapped suddenly, and the two monkeys tumbled head over heels. Never mind; they got another cord to repair the damage, and this time they succeeded in pulling Little James clear of the mud.

Did I say Little James? Alas! it was only half of him! His rescuers had pulled so hard that he had broken off short in the middle, and his two legs were left embedded in the mud.

“Dear me!” said the first monkey, scratching his head. “This is very sad. The poor fellow has lost his legs. What shall we do?”

“Let us make him some wooden ones!” said the other.

So said, so done. They made him a beautiful pair of wooden legs, and Little James hobbled painfully home. By the time he reached his house he felt so ill that he went straight to bed. “I believe I am going to die,” he said to himself. “I must make my will and set down the cause of my death.”

So he sent for pen and paper and began to write. Before very long, however, he stopped and began to scratch his head in perplexity. “If I am going to die,” he thought, “I must be going to die of something! Now, what am I going to die of? This must be carefully considered, for above all one must write the truth in one’s last testament!”

So he pondered and pondered, but he could not make up his mind as to the cause of his death. Was he going to die of the fall from the balloon, or of his broken legs, or what? Just then he happened to look in the mirror by the bedside, and saw that there was a lump on his forehead, which he had got while fighting with James and Jemmy in the balloon.

“Why, of course,” cried he, “I am going to die of that big bruise on my forehead!” So he wrote it down in his will, and then, happy at having solved the difficulty, turned over on his side and died.

And, as I said before, this all took place in Monkey-land, ever so long ago.

3

HOW THE GOLDFINCH GOT HIS COLOURS

When the Angel whose mission it was to colour the birds had finished his work, he began to scrape his palette and to make ready for departure. He had done his task well, for the plumage of the feathered creatures all around him glowed with a thousand glorious colours. There was the lordly eagle, arrayed in a robe of golden brown. The peacock had a tail of shimmering blue and green that looked as if it were studded with precious stones. The crow’s black coat shone in the sun with a kind of steely radiance, very wonderful to behold. The canary was as yellow as a buttercup; the jay had a spot of blue sky on either wing; even the humble sparrow wore a handsome black neck-tie; while Chanticleer, the cock, was resplendent in yellow, black, and red. All the birds were very proud of their appearance, and they strutted about here and there, gazing at their reflections in the water and calling upon their neighbours to come and admire their beauties.

Alone among the birds the little goldfinch took no part in the rejoicing. Somehow or other the Angel had overlooked him, so that he remained uncoloured, a drab little creature, in his sober grey dress, among the gaily clothed throng. More than once he had tried to draw the Angel’s attention to himself, and now, seeing him cleaning his palette in readiness to depart, he stepped forward and said: “Have pity on me, good Angel, and paint my plumage as you have painted that of the others, so that I may walk among them unashamed. I have nothing to commend me — no beautiful song like the nightingale or the throstle, no grace of form such as the swallows have. If I am to go unadorned, nothing remains for me but to hide myself among the leaves.”

Then the Angel took pity on the little creature, and would gladly have painted him with glowing colours, but alas, he had scraped his palette clean. Therefore he took up a brush, and going from bird to bird took from each a spot of colour, which he laid upon the goldfinch, blending a score of brilliant hues with marvellous skill. When he had finished, the tiny bird was transformed, and from being the saddest in that brilliant company he took a place among the most beautiful of them all.

It is not possible, by means of words, to describe the beauty of the colouring which the Angel gave to the goldfinch, but you may see him any day you like, sitting on a thistle, and chirping his song of gratitude and praise.

4

THE COCK AND THE FOX

This is the story that the old woman who was called Tante Sannie told to the little boy who would always be talking:

A long time ago (she said) there lived in a farmyard a Cock who was very proud of himself, and with reason, too, for he was, indeed, a plump and handsome bird. Nothing could have been finer than his appearance when he strutted through the yard, lifting his feet high as he walked, and nodding his head at each step. He had a magnificent comb of coral-red, and blue-black plumage streaked with gold, which shone so brilliantly when the sun flashed on it that it was a joy to see him. No wonder that his twenty wives gazed at him admiringly and followed him wherever he went, and were quite content to let him hustle them about and gobble up all the fattest worms and the finest grains of corn.

If this Cock was proud of his appearance, there was one thing of which he was even prouder, and that was his voice. He was a famous songster; he could crow you high and he could crow you low; he could utter tones as deep as the pealing of the organ in church or as shrill as the blast of a trumpet. Every morning, when the first streak of dawn appeared in the sky, he would get down off his perch, raise himself on his toes, stretch out his neck, close his eyes and crow so loudly that he roused people who were sleeping in the next parish. And this he loved to do, because it was his nature.

Now in the forest close to the farmyard there lived a Fox who had often gazed with longing eyes upon the plump and handsome bird. His mouth watered every time he thought of him, and many were the artful tricks he played to try and catch him for his dinner. One day he hid himself among the bushes in the garden by the farmyard and waited patiently until the Cock happened to stray his way. After a time the bird came along, pecking here and pecking there, wandered through the gate into the garden, and made straight for the bush under which Master Fox was hidden. He was just going to run into the bush after a butterfly which was fluttering about, when he caught sight of Reynard’s black snout and cunning, watchful eyes, and with a squeak of alarm he jumped aside, just in time, and hopped on to the wall.

At this the Fox rose to his feet. “Don’t go away, my dear friend,” said he in honeyed tones. “I would not for the world do you any harm. I know that it is my bad fortune to be disliked by your family — I can’t for the life of me think why, and it is a pity, because I have to hide myself for the pleasure of hearing you sing. There is no cock in all these parts has such a magnificent voice as yours, and I simply do not believe the stories they tell about you.”

“Eh, what is that?” said the Cock, stopping at a safe distance and looking at the Fox with his head on one side. “What do they say?”

“Why,” Reynard went on, edging a little nearer, “they tell me that you can only crow with your eyes open. They say that if you were to shut your eyes, that clarion call of yours would become only a feeble piping, like the clucking of a new-born chick. But of course I don’t believe them. Any one can see they are merely jealous.”

“I should think so,” cried the Cock, bristling with anger. “Crow with my eyes shut, indeed! Why, I never crow in any other way. Just look here — I’ll prove it to you!” And he raised himself on his toes, stretched out his neck, closed his eyes, and was just going to crow, when, *Snap!* the Fox sprang upon him and caught him in his teeth!

Then began a great to-do! The poor cock flapped his wings and struggled as the Fox ran off with him. The hens ran about the yard clucking and squawking, and the noise they made alarmed the farmer’s wife, who was cooking in the kitchen. Out she came running, with the rolling-pin in her hand, and, seeing the fox with the cock in his mouth, gave chase, shrieking as she ran. The farm-hands tumbled out of barn and byre armed with pitch-forks, spades, and sticks. All the beasts began to raise a clatter, and what with the shouting of the men, the squealing of the pigs, the neighing of the horses, and the lowing of the cows, to say nothing of the clucking of the hens and the old woman’s screaming, one would have thought the end of the world was at hand.

The Fox was not a little frightened by all this clatter, but he was not so frightened as the Cock, who saw that only cunning would save his life.

“They will catch us in a minute,” he said to the Fox, “and, as likely as not, we shall both be killed by a single blow. Why don’t you call out and tell them I came with you of my own accord?”

“A good idea,” thought the Fox, and he opened his mouth to call out to his pursuers, thereby loosening his grip on the Cock’s neck. Then, with a squirm and a twist and a flutter of his wings, the wily bird wrenched himself free and flew up to the branches of a tree near by.

The Fox cast a look at him and saw that he was out of reach; then he glanced over his shoulder at his pursuers, who were getting perilously near. “It seems to me,” he said, grinning with rage, “I should have done better to hold my tongue.”

“That is true,” said the Cock to himself as he smoothed his ruffled feathers. “And I would have been better advised to keep my weather-eye open.”

5

THE MOST CUNNING ANIMAL

One day the Fox and the Bear began to argue as to which was the most cunning animal. The Bear said that he thought foxes and bears took first place.

“You are wrong, my friend,” said Reynard. “We are clever, you and I, but there is one animal that is as far above us as we are above the rest of creation.”

“Oh, indeed,” sneered the Bear, “and what is the name of this marvellous creature?”

“He is called the man-animal,” answered Reynard, “and he goes on two legs instead of four, which is a wonderful thing in itself. Here are some of the cunning things he can do; first, he can swim in the water without getting wet; when he is cold he makes yellow flowers grow out of sticks to warm himself; and he can strike at an enemy a hundred yards away!”

“I do not believe you,” answered the Bear. “This is a fairy-tale you are telling me. If such a creature as the man-animal really exists, it is very strange that I have never seen him!”

“Strange, indeed!” grinned the Fox, “but soon remedied. Would you like to see the man-animal?”

“It would be a sight for sore eyes,” said the Bear.

“Very well,” said the Fox, “come along with me.” And he led the Bear through the forest until they came to a road leading to a village. “Now, then,” said he, “let us lie down in the ditch and watch the road, and we shall see what we shall see.”

Presently a child from the village came along.

“Look! Look!” whispered the Bear. “An animal walking on two legs! Is this the creature we seek?”

“No,” answered the Fox, “but one of these days it will become a man-animal.”

Shortly afterwards there came along an old woman, all bent and wrinkled.

“Is that one?” asked the Bear.

“No,” said the Fox again, “but once upon a time that was the mother of one!”

At last there came the sound of brisk footsteps on the road, and peeping out between the bushes the Bear saw a tall soldier in a red coat marching towards them. He had a sword by his side and a musket over his shoulder.

“This must surely be the man-animal,” said the Bear. “Ugh! what an ugly creature! I don’t believe he is cunning in the least!” But the Fox made no answer, for at the first sight of the soldier he had fled into the forest.

“Well, well,” muttered the Bear, “I don’t see anything to be afraid of here. Let us have a talk with this wonder!” And hoisting himself clumsily out of the ditch he lumbered along the road to meet the soldier.

“Now then, my fine fellow,” he growled, “I have heard some wonderful stories about you. Tell me....”

But before he could get another word out of his mouth the soldier drew his sword and struck him such a shrewd blow that he cut off his ear.

“Wow!” cried the Bear, “what’s that for? Tell me....” But then, seeing the gleaming steel flash once again, he turned tail and ran off as fast as he could go. Just as he reached the edge of the wood, he looked backward and saw the soldier raise his gun to his shoulder. There was a flash, a loud report, and the Bear felt a terrific blow against his side. Down he went like a ninepin, but fortunately for him the bullet had merely glanced off his hide, and he was not seriously hurt. Picking himself up, he lost no time in gaining the shelter of the trees, and presently came limping painfully to the place where the Fox was waiting for him.

“Well, my friend,” said Reynard, “did you see the man-animal? And what did you think of him?”

“You were right,” answered poor Bruin sadly. “He is certainly the most cunning creature in the world. I went up to speak to him and he tore a rib from his side and cut off my ear. Then I ran away, but before I could reach the trees he picked up a stick and pointed it at me. Then there came thunder and lightning, and a piece of the earth heaved itself up and knocked me spinning! Beyond all doubt the man-animal takes the palm for cunning, but I never want to see him again, for I shall carry the marks of our first meeting to my dying day.”

And Reynard grinned, and said: “I told you so!”

6

SPONSKEN AND THE GIANT

There was once a lad whose face was so badly pitted by the smallpox that everybody called him Sponsken, which means little sponge. From the very day of his birth Sponsken had been a great cause of anxiety to his parents, and as he grew older he became more trouble still, for he was so full of whims and mischief that one never knew where one had him. He would not learn his lessons, nor work at any serious task for ten minutes on end. All he seemed to think of was cutting capers and playing practical jokes on people. At last, in despair, his parents told their trouble to the village sexton, who was a great friend of the family, and often came to smoke his pipe with Sponsken's father in the chimney corner.

"Don't worry, my friends," said the sexton. "I've seen young men like your son before, and they are quite easy to manage if one only goes about it the right way. Just leave him to me. What he wants is a good fright, and I'll make it my business to see that he gets it."

So far so good. Sponsken's parents were only too glad to fall in with any plan which seemed likely to reform their unruly son, so the sexton went off to make his arrangements. That night he whitened his face with flour, covered himself in a white sheet, and hid behind a tree on a road along which he knew Sponsken would have to pass.

It was the dark of the moon, and the place the sexton had chosen was very lonely. For a long time he waited; then, hearing Sponsken coming along whistling a merry tune, he sprang out suddenly from behind his tree and waved his arms in a terrifying manner.

“Hallo!” said Sponsken. “Who are you?”

The sexton uttered a hollow groan.

“What’s the matter?” said the boy. “Are you ill? If you can’t speak, get out of my way, for I am in a hurry.”

The sexton groaned again, louder than before, and waved his arms wildly.

“Come, come,” cried Sponsken, “I can’t stay here all night. Tell me what you want at once and let me pass.” Then, as the ghostly figure made no answer, he struck it a blow with the stout ash-stick which he carried, and the poor sexton fell, stunned, to the ground. Sponsken stayed long enough to take a glimpse of the ghost’s face and to recognize the features of the sexton beneath the flour; then he went on his way homeward, whistling as merrily as before.

When he reached home his parents gazed at him uneasily. They were very anxious about the success of their friend’s plan, but Sponsken did not look at all like a lad who had been frightened — quite the contrary in fact, for he drew his chair up to the table and set to work upon his supper with an excellent appetite.

“A funny thing happened to me to-night,” he said carelessly between two bites of an onion. “As I was walking along the lonely road by the cemetery a white figure jumped out at me.”

“A wh-white figure!” stammered his father. “How terrifying! And what did you do, my son?”

“Do?” said Sponsken cheerfully. “Why, I fetched him a crack on the skull with my staff. He went down like a ninepin, and I warrant he won’t try to frighten travellers again!”

“Base, ungrateful boy!” cried his father, rising to his feet. “It was my dear friend Jan the sexton you struck. All I hope is that you have not killed him.”

“Well, if I have, it is his own fault,” answered Sponsken. “He should not play tricks on me.” But his father continued to rage and grumble so long that Sponsken got tired of hearing him at last, and flung off to bed in a sulk.

“I’ll stand no more of this,” he said to himself. “Since my own people do not appreciate me, I’ll go out and seek my own fortune in the world, and they may go on as best they can.”

The next morning, therefore, having packed a loaf of bread and a piece of cheese in a bag, Sponsken set off on his travels, telling nobody where he was going, and taking nothing else with him except a sparrow which he had tamed and kept since it was a fledgling. After walking for a long time he came to a forest, and feeling rather tired he sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree to rest.

Now in this forest lived a giant who was the most hideous creature one could possibly imagine. From his forehead jutted a pair of horns; his features were more like those of a beast than a man, and his finger-nails grew long and curved like the claws of a wild animal. The giant considered himself lord of the whole wood, and was very jealous lest anybody should enter his domain. When, therefore, he saw Sponsken he was very angry, and having pulled up a young tree by the roots to serve him as a club, he approached the young man, who was sitting with his eyes closed, and struck him a heavy blow on the shoulder.

In spite of appearances, Sponsken was not asleep; he was far too wary a person to be caught napping under such conditions. As a matter of fact, he had seen the giant before the giant saw him, and he knew that his only chance of escape was to remain unperturbed and calm. When, therefore, the giant struck him on the shoulder, he opened his eyes sleepily, rubbed the place, and said with a yawn: “A pest on these flies! They bite so hard that a fellow can’t sleep for them.”

“You shall sleep soundly enough in a minute!” muttered the giant, who was enraged at Sponsken’s nonchalance. “See how you like this!” And he gave the lad a blow on the other shoulder, harder than before.

“There they are again!” cried Sponsken, rubbing the place. “My word! They bite even harder on this side than on the other. It is time I was going!” And he rose from his seat, starting back with surprise as he affected to see the giant for the first time.

“So it’s you, is it?” he cried. “What do you mean by tickling me when I am trying to sleep? If I were not so kind-hearted I’d break your neck for you!”

“Have a care what you say,” cried the giant. “Do you know that I have the strength of twenty men and could crush you between my hands like a kitten?”

“Pooh!” said Sponsken. “Words are windy things. I have no doubt you could kill a whole regiment with your breath. But words won’t go with me, my man; you must give me some proof of your prowess.”

“Proof!” roared the giant. “See here! I can throw a stone so high into the air that it will not come down for a quarter of an hour.” And he was as good as his word, for, picking up a large stone, he flung it with all his strength, and it was more than a quarter of an hour before it fell again at their feet.

“Can you match that?” asked the giant with a grin.

“Easily,” said Sponsken. “I will throw a stone so high that it will not come down at all!” Bending to the ground he picked up a pebble and showed it to the giant, but very cleverly he managed at the last moment to exchange it for the sparrow which he carried in his pocket, and this he was able to do because the giant was rather short-sighted, and, if truth be told, slow-witted as well.

“One, two, three!” cried Sponsken, and he tossed the bird into the air, and of course it flew up and up and never came down at all.

“Well, well,” said the giant, “I never saw such a thing as that in my life before. You are certainly a wonderful stone-thrower, little man. But can you do this?” And picking up another stone, he squeezed it so hard between his immense fists that he crushed it into a fine powder.

“Yes, that is hard to do,” said Sponsken, “but I think I can go one better. Any oaf, if he be strong enough, can crush a stone to powder, but it requires skill as well as strength to wring the juice out of one. Watch me!” So saying, Sponsken adroitly slipped out his piece of cheese, and squeezed it until the whey dripped from between his fingers.

“Marvellous!” said the giant. “I confess myself beaten. Let us go into partnership, for there cannot be two others like us in the whole world.”

“Willingly,” answered Sponsken, “but what are we to do?”

“Why, as for that,” said the giant, “the King of this country has promised his daughter’s hand in marriage, and a great treasure besides, to anybody who can destroy three ferocious beasts which are devastating his realm. It seems to me that this is a task we can quite well do together. You, with your quickness and skill, can trap the beasts, and I can kill them with my club. That done, we will divide the spoils.”

So it was agreed, and without wasting a moment the two took the wood together. Before very long they reached the King’s palace, and sent up a message by one of the lords in waiting that they would like to see His Majesty.

“And do you mean to tell me,” asked the King, when he had heard the giant’s tale, “that you can overcome the three fierce animals by the help of this ugly little pock-marked fellow.”

“Hush! Not so loud, for the love of heaven!” whispered the giant. “My friend is very touchy about his appearance, and if he hears you making such slighting remarks it is very likely he will bring the whole of your palace down about your head!”

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THE BEAR FOLLOWED HIM INTO THE HOLLOW TRUNK

“You don’t say so!” whispered the King in reply, glancing fearfully at the terrible little man. “Well, you are at liberty to try your luck. The three animals are a bear, a unicorn, and a wild boar, and at present they are hidden in the wood close by. There you will find them, but take care of yourselves, for they have already killed scores of my men.”

“Don’t be afraid,” answered the giant, “for us this is as easy as playing a game.”

After having partaken of a good meal the two made their way towards the wood in which the animals were hidden.

“We must make a plan,” said Sponsken. “Listen to what I propose. You go into the middle of the wood while I remain here on the outskirts; then when you drive the beasts out I will see that they do not escape.”

So it was arranged. The giant went forward into the wood, while Sponsken remained outside, waiting to see what would happen. He had not to wait long, for presently there was a crashing and a tearing of undergrowth and a great bear came lumbering towards him. Sponsken did not like the look of the creature at all, and decided to put as much space between them as possible. Looking here and there for a refuge, he spied a big oak-tree, and quickly climbed its trunk and ensconced himself among the branches. Unfortunately the bear had already seen him, and, raising himself on his hind legs with a dreadful roar, he rushed to the tree and began to climb. In another moment Sponsken would have been lost, but by good chance the tree happened to be hollow, so without hesitation the lad let himself down into the trunk, and finding at the bottom a small hole which led to the open air, he was just able to wriggle through it and escape. The bear followed him into the hollow trunk, but the hole at the bottom was too small for him to get out by, and as there was hardly room to move inside the trunk, the angry creature had to stay where he was, waking all the echoes in the forest with his growling.

The next minute the giant came running out of the forest. “Have you seen the bear?” he cried. “I drove him towards you!”

“Don’t worry,” answered Sponsken coolly; “I’ve shut him up in the tree there to keep him safe.”

The giant rushed to the tree and dispatched the bear with one blow of his great club. Then, pulling out the carcass, he shouldered it, and the two went back to the palace, congratulating each other on the excellent beginning of their enterprise.

There remained now the unicorn and the wild boar. Next day Sponsken and the giant went to the forest again, and since their first plan had been so successful, it was arranged that they should follow exactly the same course. The giant went into the depths of the wood to find the unicorn and drive him out, while Sponsken remained on the borders to capture the animal when he came.

This time the period of waiting was longer, and Sponsken, leaning against the oak-tree, had almost fallen asleep when a clattering of hoofs awakened him, and he sprang aside just in time to escape the unicorn, who, breathing fire from his nostrils, charged down upon him. So great was the impetus of the beast’s charge that he could not stop himself, and with a mighty crash he ran full tilt into the tree, driving his horn so far into the trunk that, although he pulled and struggled, he could not wrench himself free.

When the giant came up, Sponsken showed him the animal, which was quickly killed with a single blow of the club.

“Didn’t I manage that affair well?” asked Sponsken as they went back to the palace.

“You are a wonder!” answered the giant, and he really believed what he said.

Now only the wild boar remained, and on the following day the two went to the forest to capture him also. Once again the same plan was followed, but this time Sponsken kept his eyes wide open, and when the ferocious beast broke cover he ran as fast as he could in the direction of the royal chapel. The wild boar followed him, and a fearsome creature he looked, I assure you, with his wicked little eyes and his great curved tusks and the hair on his back bristling like the quills of a porcupine.

Through the open door of the chapel Sponsken ran, and the boar, snorting with fury, followed him. Then began a fine chase, round and round the aisles, over the pews, and in and out of the vestries. At last Sponsken seized a chair, and dashing it against a window broke several panes, and so made good his escape. While the boar was still standing stupidly staring at the hole through which he had gone out, Sponsken ran round to the door, which he closed and locked. Then, having broken one or two more panes of glass, he sat down quietly by the chapel wall and began to pare his nails.

A short time afterwards the giant came rushing up.

“Where is the boar? Have you let him get away?” he cried.

“Don’t get so excited,” answered Sponsken. “The boar is safe enough. He’s in the chapel there. I had no other place to put him, so I flung him through the window!”

“What a wonderful little man you are!” said the giant gleefully, and he ran off to kill the boar with one blow of his club. This done, he hoisted the carcass on to his shoulders and took the road to the palace. Half-way there the weight of the boar began to tell, for it was a massive beast, and the giant was forced to stay and rest.

“It is all very well,” said he, mopping his streaming brow, “but I think you ought to take a turn with me in carrying this carcass.”

“Not I,” answered Sponsken. “We made an agreement that my work was done when I captured the beast, and I intend to keep to it.”

So the giant had to struggle on as best he could for the rest of the way, grumbling at every step, while Sponsken followed, laughing up his sleeve, and exceedingly thankful that he had escaped the task.

When they reached the palace the two presented themselves before the King and claimed the promised reward. But now a difficulty arose. It was quite easy to divide the treasure, but which of them was to have the Princess?

“I think it should be I,” said the giant, “for I killed the three animals.”

“Not at all,” said Sponsken. “The Princess should be given to me, for I captured the beasts.”

“A lot of good your capturing them would have been if I had not killed them!” said the giant.

“How could you have killed them if I had not caught them first?” answered Sponsken. And so the two began to quarrel, and neither would give way, and high words passed between them. Truth to tell, the King was not at all sorry that the dispute had arisen, for he did not very much relish the idea of his daughter marrying either the bestial giant or the pock-marked, ugly little fellow who was his companion.

“There is only one way out of the difficulty,” said the King at last. “We must let fate decide. Listen to the plan I propose. You shall both of you sleep in the Princess’s chamber to-night — the giant in a bed on one side of her couch, and Sponsken on the other. I also will remain in her chamber and watch her carefully. If she spends most of the night with her face turned towards Sponsken, it shall be a sign that she is to marry him; if, on the other hand, she favours the giant, he shall be her husband; but if she sleeps all night with her face towards neither of you, then you must both give her up, and be satisfied with the treasure.”

So it was agreed, and that night the trial took place. Sponsken, however, did not by any means intend that blind chance should settle so important a matter, and he spent the intervening time in making certain preparations. First of all he went to the palace gardens, from which he gathered certain herbs having an aromatic and beautiful perfume; these he placed in a bag and hid under his clothes. Then from the woods he gathered all the herbs he could find which had a disagreeable smell, such as garlic and stinkwort and poisonous fungus; these also he placed in a bag, and seized an early opportunity, when they came to the Princess’s chamber, of hiding the bag under the pillow on which the giant’s head was to rest.

The Princess well knew the fateful issue which was to be decided in the night, and as she had firmly made up her mind not to marry either the one or the other of her suitors, she determined to remain awake all night and to take care to keep her face turned towards the ceiling. For a time she managed to do so, but before long drowsiness overcame her, and she slept. Presently she turned over on her left side and lay with her face turned towards the giant, who began to chuckle to himself.

“Wait a minute,” thought Sponsken. “I don’t think the Princess will keep that position long!” And sure enough, the horrible stench of the herbs in the bag beneath the giant’s pillow penetrated even to her dreams, and the Princess turned over hurriedly on the other side. What a change was there! Instead of a disgusting smell which made her dream of gloomy caverns and noisome things, she found now a delicious perfume that brought pictures of sunlit gardens all glowing with flowers and bright-winged butterflies flitting over them. The Princess gave a little sigh of content, and for the rest of the night she remained with her face turned towards Sponsken, so that the King had no choice but to declare the little man the winner.

The Princess, however, refused to abide by the judgment. “I will *not* marry that vulgar fellow,” she cried. “I will die first! Oh, father, if you love me, think of a means of escape!”

“Do not be afraid, my child,” answered the King. “I will arrange something.” And the next day he took the giant aside and proposed to him that he should rid him of Sponsken, promising a rich reward for the service. The giant’s greed was aroused, and being very jealous of his companion’s success, he was the more ready to fall in with the King’s suggestion.

Fortunately for himself, Sponsken’s quick wits made him suspicious. He guessed that some treachery was afoot, and in order to be prepared for emergencies he took a heavy hammer with him when he retired to bed at night. His suspicions were justified, for towards midnight the door of his room opened and the giant entered on tiptoe, carrying a heavy axe with which he intended to dispatch our friend. No sooner was his foot inside the door, however, than Sponsken jumped out of bed and sprang at him, looking so fierce that the giant, who was a coward at heart, and had besides a healthy respect for his companion’s powers, turned and fled in dismay. Then Sponsken lifted his heavy hammer and struck three resounding blows upon the floor. The noise awoke everybody in the palace, and servants, guards, and lords in waiting came flocking to the room to discover the cause. The King came last of all, a little anxious about the success of his fine plot, and when he found Sponsken sitting up in bed, quite unharmed, his face fell.

“What is the matter?” he stammered.

“Matter?” answered Sponsken. “Nothing very much! Some person wandered into my room, so I just gave three taps with my fingers on the wall. It is lucky for you all that I did not strike the blows with my fist, for had I done so I am afraid there would have been nothing left of your palace but a heap of dust!”

At these words everybody turned pale, and the King made haste to protest his undying friendship for his terrible guest.

As for the giant, he was in such fear of encountering Sponsken’s resentment that he fled, and nobody ever saw him again.

Now the poor King did not know what to do, for his daughter still persisted in her refusal to marry Sponsken, and he was torn two ways by love and fear. Just at that time, however, a neighbouring monarch, who was an old enemy of the King’s, declared war upon him, and this offered another opportunity for delay. Calling Sponsken before him, the King proposed that he should prove his valour by challenging the enemy king to mortal combat. Sponsken agreed; but his fame had already been noised abroad, and the challenge was refused.

“Very well,” said the King, who was at the end of his resources. “As my prospective son-in-law you ought to lead my armies into battle. I will place my own charger at your disposal, and I look to you to save my country from defeat."

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! Sponsken had never ridden a horse in his life, and he had not the slightest knowledge of warfare. To make matters worse, the steed in question was a notoriously vicious brute who would allow nobody but his own master to mount him. Already he had accounted for several grooms and stablemen, whom he had kicked to death.

Sponsken commanded that the steed should be led to the borders of the forest and tied by the bridle to a tree. He had not the slightest intention of trying to mount the brute, and his plan was to wait until the attendants had gone away and then to slip off unobserved. Fate, however, was too much for him, for hardly was the horse safely tied up than couriers came spurring along the road to say that the enemy king was advancing at the head of his army, and was at that very moment less than half a mile away.

All the attendants fled at once, and Sponsken himself was so overcome by terror that, without thinking what he was doing, he jumped upon the back of the steed, and, forgetting that it was tied to the tree, dug his sharp spurs into its side. The horse plunged and reared, champing at the bit and doing its best to dislodge Sponsken from the saddle, but the lad clung on for dear life. At last, finding all its efforts unavailing, the horse dragged the tree up by the roots and charged forward in a straight line towards the advancing enemy. Almost dislodged from his seat by the sudden jerk, Sponsken stretched out his hand and grasped the branches of the tree, which swung in a terrifying manner at his side, promising every moment to hurl him from the saddle, and the result was that to the enemy army it appeared as though he were charging down upon them at full speed, bearing a tree as a club. Filled with dismay at the terrifying sight, the soldiers of the enemy king fled in all directions and hid themselves in the woods and in the crevices of the rocks. Sponsken rode on for the simple reason that he could do nothing else, right into the enemy's camp, where the steed came to a standstill and our hero was able to jump down from its back. Entering the king’s tent, he helped himself to all the documents and articles of value he could find; then, having cut the tree from the bridle, he remounted the horse, which was now quite tame and docile, and rode back to the palace.

When the King heard that the enemy was routed he was overjoyed, and he recognized that a man who could perform such a feat single-handed was not to be treated lightly. His daughter, however, was still firm in her refusal to marry Sponsken, and so the King made him an offer of half his kingdom if he would release him from his promise and allow the Princess to go free. Sponsken accepted his terms and married a girl who, although she was not a princess, was nevertheless very pretty. Their wedding was celebrated with great pomp and they lived together very happily for the rest of their lives.

7

WHY CATS ALWAYS WASH AFTER EATING

A long time ago a cat caught a sparrow, and licked his lips in anticipation of the delight he would feel in devouring it. After playing with it for a time, as cats will, he was going to eat it, when the sparrow spoke to him.

“The Emperor’s cat,” said the sparrow, “and all his family, never begin a meal without washing themselves first. Everybody knows that such is the custom in polite society.”

“Really,” answered the cat, “well, I will do as the Emperor’s cat does!” And he let go the sparrow and began to wash his face. Feeling itself free, the sparrow flew away, and alighted safely on the branch of a tree well out of reach.

“It serves me right,” muttered the cat, “for being so easily taken in.”

And ever since that time cats have always washed themselves after their meals.

8

THE CHORISTERS OF ST. GUDULE

The miller of Sandhills had a donkey which had served him well in its time, but was now too old to work. The miller was a careful man, who did not believe in feeding useless mouths, so he decided that he would sell the donkey for the price of its skin. “I do not suppose I shall get very much for the wretched beast,” he said, regarding poor Greyskin as he stood with hanging head in his stall, “but I shall save the cost of his corn anyhow, and that is always something.”

Left alone, Greyskin reflected sadly upon the fate in store for him. “Such is the way of the world,” he thought. “When I was young and hearty nothing was too good for me; now I’m old and useless I am to be cast out. But am I so useless after all? True, I can no longer pull a cart to market, but I have a magnificent voice still. There must be a place somewhere for one who can sing as beautifully as I. I’ll go to the Cathedral of St. Gudule, in Brussels, and offer myself as a chorister.”

Greyskin lost no time in acting upon his resolve, but left his stable immediately and set out on the road to Brussels. Passing the Burgomaster’s house he saw an old hound sitting disconsolately on the doorstep.

“Hallo, friend!” said he. “What is the matter with you? You seem very sad this morning.”

“The matter is that I am tired of life,” answered the dog. “I’m getting old and stiff and I can no longer hunt hares for my master as I used to do. The result is that I am reckoned good for nothing and they grudge me every morsel of food I put into my mouth.”

“Come, come, cheer up, my friend,” said Greyskin. “Never say die! I am in a similar case to yourself and have just left my master for precisely the same reason. My plan is to go to the Cathedral of St. Gudule and offer my services to the master of the choir. If I may say so without conceit, I have a lovely voice — one must make the most of one’s gifts, you know — and I ought to be able to command good pay.”

“Well, if it comes to that,” said the dog, “I can sing too. I sang a lovely song to the moon last night, and if you’ll believe me, all the people in our street opened their windows to listen. I sang for quite an hour, and I’d have gone on longer if some malicious person, who was no doubt jealous, had not thrown an old boot at my head.”

“Excellent,” said Greyskin. “Come along with me. You shall sing tenor and I’ll sing bass. We’ll make a famous pair.”

So the dog joined company with Greyskin, and they went on together towards Brussels. A little farther down the road they saw a cat sitting on the rubbish-heap outside a miserable hovel. The creature was half blind with age, and had a face as long as a fiddle.

“Why, what is the matter with you?” asked Greyskin, who had a tender heart.

“Matter enough,” said the cat. “I’ve just been turned out of house and home, and all because I took a little piece of bacon from the larder. Upon my honour, it was no bigger than a baby’s fist, but they made as much fuss as though it had been a whole gammon. I was beaten, and kicked out to starve. If I could catch mice as I used to do, it would not matter so much, but the mice are too quick for me nowadays. They laugh at me. Nothing remains for me but to die, and I hope it may be soon.”

“Nonsense,” said Greyskin. “You shall live to laugh at all your troubles. Come along with us and sing in the choir at St. Gudule. Your voice is a little too thin for my own taste, but you’ll make a very good soprano in a trio. What do you say?”

“You give me new hopes,” answered the cat. “Of course I’ll join you,” and so the three went on together.

Towards nightfall they arrived at a farmyard, on the gate of which a cock was crowing lustily.

“Hallo!” said Greyskin. “What’s all this about?”

“I am singing my last song on earth,” said the cock. “An hour ago I sang a song, although it is not my usual custom to crow in the afternoon, and as I ended I heard the farmer’s wife say: ‘Hearken to Chanticleer. He’s crowing for fine weather to-morrow. I wonder if he’d crow so loudly if he knew that we had guests coming, and that he was going into the pot to make their soup!’ She has a horrid laugh, that woman. I have always hated her!”

“And do you mean to tell me,” said Greyskin, “that you are going to stay here quite contentedly till they come to wring your neck?”

“What else can I do?” asked Chanticleer.

“Join us, and turn your talents to account. We are all beautiful singers and we are going to Brussels to offer ourselves as choristers at St. Gudule. We were a trio before. With you we shall be a quartet, and that’s one better!”

Chanticleer was only too glad to find a means of escape, so he willingly joined the party, and they once more took the road. A little while afterwards they came to a thick wood, which was the haunt of a notorious band of robbers. There they decided to rest for the night, so Greyskin and the dog lay down beneath the shelter of a large beech-tree, while the cat climbed on to one of the branches, and Chanticleer perched himself at the very top. From this lofty post he could see over the whole wood, and it was not long before he espied a light twinkling among the trees not far away.

"There must be a house of some sort over there," he said to his companions. "Shall we go and see? We may find something to eat."

"Or some straw to lie upon, at any rate," said Greyskin. "This damp ground gives me rheumatics in my old bones."

"I was just thinking the same thing," said the dog. "Let us go."

So the four choristers, led by the cock, walked in the direction from which the light came, and before long they found themselves in front of a little house, the windows of which were brilliantly lighted. In order to reach to the windows the animals made a tower of their bodies, with Greyskin at the bottom and Chanticleer at the top.

Now this house was the abode of a band of robbers, who, at that very moment, were seated before a table laden with all kinds of food. There they sat and feasted, and poor Chanticleer's mouth watered as he watched them.

"Is there anybody inside?" asked the dog, who was impatient.

"Hush!" said Chanticleer. "Men! They're eating their dinner!"

"I wish I was," said the dog. "What are they eating?"

"All sorts of things — sausage, and fish...."

"Sausage!" said the dog.

"Fish!" said the cat.

"And ever so many other delicacies," Chanticleer went on. "Look here, friends. Wouldn't it be a fine thing if we could get a share of their meal? I confess that my stomach aches with hunger."

"And mine too," said the dog. "I've never been so hungry in my life. But how are we to get the food?"

"Let us serenade them, and perhaps they'll throw us something as a reward," said Greyskin. "Music, you know, has charms to soothe the savage breast."

This seemed such a good idea that the choristers lost no time in putting it into execution. All four began to sing. The donkey hee-hawed, the dog howled, the cat miaued, and the cock crowed. From the noise they made one would have thought that the heavens were falling.

The effect of this marvellous quartet upon the robbers was instantaneous. Leaping from their seats, they ran from place to place in mortal terror, tumbling over one another, oversetting chairs and adding to the racket by their shrieks and cries. At that moment the cock fell against the window, breaking the glass to smithereens; the donkey gave the frame a push, and all the four precipitated themselves into the room. This was the last straw; the robbers could stand no more; half mad with fear they rushed to the door and fled into the forest.

Then our four choristers drew up to the table and set to work upon the food with which it was laden. Their long walk had given them a good appetite, so that there was little left by the time they had finished. Feeling drowsy after their meal, they then settled themselves to sleep. The donkey made himself a bed on a heap of straw in the yard; the dog stretched himself out upon the mat by the house door; the cat lay among the warm cinders on the hearth; and the cock perched upon the roof-top. A few minutes more and they were all fast asleep.

Meanwhile the robbers, who had retreated some distance into the forest, waited anxiously for something dreadful to happen. An hour passed by and there was neither sight nor sound to alarm them, so they began to feel a little ashamed of their cowardice. Creeping stealthily nearer to the cottage, they saw that everything was still, and that no light was showing from the windows.

At last the robber chief sent his lieutenant to spy out the land, and this man, returning to the cottage without mishap, found his way into the kitchen and proceeded to light a candle. He had no matches, but he saw two sparks of fire among the cinders on the hearth, so he went forward to get a light from them.

Now this light came from the cat’s eyes, and as soon as puss felt the robber touch her, she sprang up, snarling and spitting, and scratched his face. With a scream of terror, he dropped his candle and rushed for the door, and as he passed the dog bit him in the leg. By this time the noise had awakened Greyskin, who got upon his feet just as the man ran by, and helped him forward with a mighty kick, which sent him flying out into the roadway. Seeing this, the cock on the housetop spread his wings and crowed in triumph, “Cock-a-doodle-doo!”

I wish you could have seen the way that robber ran! He covered the ground so quickly that he seemed like a flying shadow, and I am perfectly certain that not even a hare could have overtaken him. At last, panting for breath, he rejoined his comrades in the forest, who were eagerly awaiting his return.

“Well,” cried the chief, “is the way clear? Can we go back?”

“Not on any account,” cried the robber. “There’s a horrible witch in the kitchen. Directly I entered she sprang at me and tore my face with her long claws, calling out at the same time to her creatures to come and devour me. As I ran through the door one of them buried his fangs in my leg, and a little farther on, in the yard, a great black monster struck at me with an enormous club, giving me a blow that nearly broke my back-bone. On the roof a little demon with wings and eyes that shone like coals of fire cried, ‘Stop him! Eat him! Stop him! Eat him!’ You may guess that I did not wait for more. It is a miracle that I have escaped with my life!”

When they heard this terrible story the robbers lost no time in decamping, and such was their terror that they deserted the forest altogether and went away to another part of the country. The result was that our four friends were left to dwell in the cottage, where they lived happily for the rest of their lives, and as they had now everything they wanted, they quite gave up their idea of going to St. Gudule.

9

THE MAGIC CAP

There was once a poor countryman, of whom his neighbours said that he had no more wits than he was born with, and that was not many. He was, indeed a simple-minded fellow, and anybody could get the better of him. One day the countryman's wife said to him: "Jan, put on your best smock and your soundest clogs, and go to the market to try and sell our calf. She is a good calf and you ought to get at least a hundred francs for her."

Away went Jan, along the road to the market town, with the calf behind him. He felt quite glad to be out on this fine spring day, and he hummed a merry tune as he plodded along. Three students who were lounging at the door of an inn saw him pass, and, marking his air of simplicity, thought it would be good fun to play a joke upon him, so one of them went up to him and said:

"Good-morning, friend! How much are you asking for your goat?"

"Goat?" answered the peasant in surprise. "This is not a goat, but a calf!"

"Indeed!" said the student politely. "And who told you that?"

"It was my wife," answered the peasant. "'Jan,' she said, 'go to the market and try to sell our calf.' I am sure she said calf. I could not make a mistake about such a thing!"

“Your wife was playing a joke on you,” said the student. “Anybody can see that is a goat. If you don’t believe me, ask the next person you meet on the road.” And he went off, laughing.

Jan continued his walk, a little troubled in his mind, and before very long he saw the second of the students coming towards him. “Stay a minute, sir,” he cried. “Do you mind looking at this animal of mine and telling me what sort of a creature it is?”

“Why, a goat, of course,” answered the student.

“You’re wrong,” said the peasant. “It’s a calf. My wife says so, and she could not be mistaken!”

“Have it your own way!” replied the student, “but if you’ll take my advice you won’t pretend that animal is a calf when you get to the market, unless you want to be hooted out of the town!”

“Ah!” said Jan, and he went on his way, muttering to himself, and casting many a troubled glance at the innocent calf who ambled along peacefully behind him. “If it is a goat it ought to have horns,” he said to himself. “And it hasn’t got any horns. But if it is a calf it will have horns when it grows to be a cow. Perhaps it is a goat-calf. I wonder whether goat-calves have horns!” And he continued to puzzle his poor brains about the matter until he was suddenly interrupted by a shout from the side of the road. The shout came from the third student, who had been waiting for him.

“Hallo, you there!” cried the student. “How much do you want for your goat?”

“Goat? Goat?” murmured the peasant in dismay. “Here, take the thing. If it’s a goat, I don’t want it, for I was sent to market to sell a calf. You may have it for nothing — I’ll make you a present of it!” And so saying, he pushed the cord into the student’s hand. Then turning his back without another word, he retraced his steps towards his home.

When his wife heard what had happened she was furious. “You stupid lout!” she cried, “could you not see that you were being made a fool of?”

And she called him all the names she could lay her tongue to, until the poor fellow blushed and hung his head for shame. Her anger did not last long, however, for she was a good woman and she knew that her husband’s simplicity was not his fault, but his misfortune. Fortunately, she had quite enough wits for them both, and instead of wasting more time in reproaches, she set to work to think how she might pay back the practical jokers in their own coin. It did not take her long to think of a plan, and as the first step towards carrying it out, she put on her bonnet and went off to the town, where she called at three inns, paying at each of them for a dinner for four persons, the dinner to be eaten on the next market day. Returning home, she explained the plan to her husband and gave him very exact instructions as to the part he was to play.

When the next market day came round Jan set off for the town, and by the door of the very first inn on the road he met the three students. They exchanged a sly smile when they saw him, and one of them said: “Good morning, good fellow. And how do you find yourself to-day? I notice that you have no goat with you this time.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Jan, “that was a good joke you played on me, but I bear you no ill-will for it. Come in and drink a glass of wine. I’m in funds this morning and I’ll willingly stand treat.”

The students accepted Jan’s offer with enthusiasm, for they belonged to that class of men who are always thirsty. Accordingly the four went into the tavern; and Jan called for wine. When the time came to pay for it, he called the serving-maid, and taking off his cap, spun it round three times on his finger. “Madam,” said he, “everything is paid for, isn’t it?”

“Yes, sir, and thank you very much,” answered the serving-maid.

The three students watched this procedure with a good deal of surprise, but Jan carried off the whole affair as if it were the most natural thing in the world. “Now, my friends,” said he, “the doctors say it is bad to drink on an empty stomach. What do you say to a good meal?”

"Excellent," cried the students.

"Very well then, come along with me to the next inn, and you shall have one."

Laughing in their sleeves at the peasant's simplicity, the students followed. Arrived at the inn, Jan ordered dinner for four, and a heap of good things were put upon the table. After the repast, he called the serving-maid to him, took off his cap as before, and twirled it round three times on his finger. "Now then," said he, "everything is paid for, isn't that so?"

"Certainly, sir," answered the serving-maid, "and I am very much obliged to you."

At this the three students opened their eyes even wider than before, but Jan took not the slightest notice of their astonishment.

"What do you say, friends," he asked, "shall we go on to the town together and wash the dinner down with a glass of ale apiece?"

"As many as you please," answered the students joyfully, and so they followed Jan to the town, where he entered a third tavern and ordered drinks all round. Then, taking off his cap once again, he twirled it round three times on his finger, and said to the innkeeper: "Everything is paid for, isn't it, my good man?"

"Certainly, sir," said the innkeeper, bowing.

But this was more than the curiosity of the students could stand.

"Look here, gossip," said one of them, "how is it that you are able to get food and drink for nothing everywhere you go, simply by twirling your cap in people's faces?"

"Oh, that's easily explained," answered Jan, "This cap of mine is a magic cap, which was left to me by my great-great-grandmother, who was a witch, so I have heard say. If I twirl it on my finger, and say, 'Everything is paid for,' — well, everything *is* paid for! You understand me?"

"Perfectly," said the student. "My faith, but that is a wonderful cap — the very thing to have when one goes a journey! Will you sell it to me?"

“How much will you give me for it?” asked Jan.

“Two hundred francs!”

“Nonsense! Do you think I am going to brave my wife’s anger for a paltry two hundred francs?”

“Well then, three hundred.”

“Not enough! My wife says it is worth a fortune.”

“Four hundred.”

Jan shook his head doubtfully, and, seeing his hesitation, the student cried:

“Come now, we’ll give you five hundred, and not a penny more. You’d better accept, or you’ll lose your chance.”

“Well then, hand over the money. I don’t know what my wife will say, but....”

“She’ll give you a kiss for making such a splendid bargain,” cried the student, pushing a bag of coins into Jan’s hand and snatching the magic cap. “Hurry off home as fast as you can to tell her the good news!” Then the three went away, laughing, slapping each other on the back in their joy at having got the better of the simple peasant.

That afternoon the students, eager to take advantage of the qualities of the magic cap, invited about fifty of their friends to a splendid feast at the largest inn in the town. Everybody who was invited came, as you may imagine, and the resources of the innkeeper were taxed to the utmost to supply the hungry and thirsty crowd with all that they wanted. When the feast was ended, the student who had Jan’s cap called the host, and twirling it three times round his finger, said: “Now, sir, everything is paid for, isn’t it?”

“Paid for?” cried the innkeeper. “What do you mean? I’ve not seen the colour of your money yet.”

At this reply the student’s face fell, but one of his companions snatched the cap from his hands. “Idiot,” said he, “you twirled the cap the wrong way! I was watching the peasant carefully, and he twisted it like this.” So saying, he gave the cap a twirl and said: “Now then, my good sir, I think you will agree that everything is paid for.”

“I don’t know whether you are trying to play a joke on me?” answered the innkeeper grimly, “but your idea of humour is not mine. You had better pay up at once, before I call the police!”

“Here, let me try,” cried the third; and in his turn he twirled the cap, and, fixing the host with his eye, repeated that everything was paid for.

At this the innkeeper flew into a passion, and made such a fuss that the room was in an uproar. It was only by promising to pay him at once that the innkeeper could be quietened down, and prevented from putting his threat of calling the police into execution. The banquet cost a good round sum, and as the three students had no money left, their invited guests were obliged to subscribe the money between them, which they did with much grumbling. Afterwards they took their three hosts outside and dipped them into the horse-trough to punish them for their bad taste in playing practical jokes on their friends.

And a few miles away, in their little cottage, Jan and his wife sat counting the five hundred francs he had got for his greasy old cap, which indeed had not been left him by his great-great-grandmother, but which was as old and ragged as though it had!

10

THE TRIAL OF REYNARD THE FOX

How Chanticleer the Cock Made Complaint Against Reynard

THERE WAS REJOICING among the animals, for it was said that Reynard the Fox — sly, spiteful Reynard — had at last repented him of his misdeeds and resolved to lead a new life. Such a thing was, indeed, very hard to believe, but nevertheless everybody said that it was true. Certainly he was seen no more in his usual haunts, or about the Court of King Lion. The news went round that he had put on the robe of piety and had become a hermit, endeavouring to atone, by fasting and prayer, for all the sins of which he had been guilty.

At the Court of King Nobel, Reynard's change of heart was the one topic of conversation. A few of the animals frankly expressed their doubts of the sincerity of such a tardy repentance, but the majority were quite willing to accept it, for, as a rule, one believes what one wishes to believe.

While the subject was still being eagerly discussed by the animals around the Lion's throne, the sound of wailing was heard, and a strange procession was seen making its way towards the King's throne. At the head of the procession marched Chanticleer the Cock, dressed in the deepest mourning and sobbing miserably, with bowed head. Behind him, borne by two hens, was a bier on which was stretched the headless body of a beautiful fowl, one of his daughters, and all the other hens of his family followed the bier, raising their voices to heaven in grievous lamentation. At this sad sight the whole Court stood in amaze, and many of the animals wept in sympathy with the bereaved father, who advanced towards the King's throne, crying for justice.

"Whom do you accuse?" asked the Lion.

"Whom should I accuse but that accursed Reynard, the source of untold misery to me and mine? You know, O King, none better, how we have suffered from his cruelty in the past. The tale I now have to tell is a tale of wrong that would bring tears to the eyes of a stone image — a tale of treachery such as would abash the Evil One himself, a tale so base that I can hardly bring myself to utter it!"

"Say on," said the King, "and rest content, for if what you say be true, the Fox shall receive his due reward — I swear it by my crown!"

"Lord," continued Chanticleer, "I had six sons and fourteen daughters. We all dwelt together in the farmyard, a peaceable and happy family. The rigours of the winter were spent; spring had come again with its flowers and perfumes. The sun shone brightly, and insects abounded in the farmyard. We dwelt in the midst of abundance; we were happy, and as we thought, safe, for the farmer's six faithful dogs guarded us from danger. Alas, for our beautiful hopes! A few days ago Reynard appeared — cruel, black-hearted Reynard — and at one fell blow changed our happiness into misery.

"This is how it all happened, Sire. Reynard came to the farmyard one fine morning and brought me a letter bearing your Majesty's own seal. I opened it, and read that your Majesty had commanded that all the animals should hence-forward live together in peace. A noble ordinance, Sire, such as would make the world a beautiful place — were it not for villains. I gave the document back to Reynard, expressing my joy at the news it contained, whereupon he said: ‘My heart is full, Cock, when I think of the cruelty with which I have treated you and your family in the past, but you need have no further fear, I have seen the error of my ways. Henceforth my life shall be given up to repentance and prayer. I have renounced all worldly pleasures. Even now I am on my way to a remote hermitage where, in fasting and solitude, I shall endeavour to atone for my sins.’

“Then the hypocritical wretch stretched his paw over my head and gave me his blessing and departed, reading his Book of Hours.

“Thinking no evil, and full of joy at the news, I called my children around me and cried: ‘Rejoice, my dear ones. No more will you live in daily terror of your lives. Our noble King has given us his protection and has commanded the Fox to leave us alone. Reynard himself has just brought me the news, so I know it is true, and he himself has gone away to become a holy hermit!’

“My children danced with glee when they heard my words, and I danced with them, O King! We danced in the farmyard and in the garden, and in the kitchen garden, for it was as though a black cloud had vanished from over us.

“This was the very moment Reynard had been waiting for. He had not gone far away — no farther in fact than the shelter of the wall by the kitchen garden, and as soon as we reached there, he rushed out, fell upon the finest of my daughters and slew her before my eyes. It all happened in a flash! We ran hither and thither, trying to escape, but all in vain. Before we had gone a dozen steps the Fox was among us again, and killed fifteen of my children. Last night he returned, and slew her whose body now lies upon the bier. I have brought her here to show you, O King, that the sight of her corpse may strike pity into your heart, for I claim justice upon her murderer!”

So saying, the Cock bowed his head again and wept bitterly into his handkerchief, and pitiful sobs echoed from among the beasts around. Even the King could hardly restrain his emotion.

“A terrible tale, indeed,” said he. “Our hearts are heavy for you, Cock, and it will go hard with this Reynard when he falls into our hands!” Then, addressing his courtiers, he asked for volunteers to go to the Fox’s retreat and bring the murderer to justice. For a time there was no response, for few of the animals relished the task, but at last the Bear, who had an old grudge against Reynard, offered to go. “Leave this to me,” said he. “If the Fox won’t come quietly, I’ll drag him here by his tail. He shall not escape!”

So the Bear set off to find Reynard, who had retreated to one of his châteaux — a veritable fortress — situated many miles away in the mountains at the very end of the kingdom. To reach it the Bear had to travel over lonely paths, and through dark woods, where he lost his way a hundred times, but at length he arrived at Reynard’s house, only to find the massive door locked, and the walls so high that he could not climb them.

HOW BRUIN the Bear Was Sent to Bring Reynard to Court

“OPEN, in the name of the King!” cried Bruin, hammering at the door. “Come out, Reynard! I have been sent to bring you up for trial. You have come to the end of your rope at last! Open the door, I say, or I’ll batter it down!”

From his safe retreat in the very heart of the fortress Reynard heard Bruin’s clamour. He stretched himself lazily and yawned. “Now who is this pestilent fellow making such a din?” said he to his wife. “Well, I suppose I’d better go and see.” So he made his way through the labyrinth of passages which led from his burrow to the open air, and peeped through the crack of the door. There was Bruin, hammering away at the massive oak, and roaring: “Come out, Reynard. Come out and be hanged!”

“What! is that you, Uncle Bruin?” said Reynard, opening the wicket. “You are in a noisy mood this morning. What is the matter?”

“The matter is that the King has sent me to bring you to Court,” growled the Bear. “And you had best come quietly, for I represent the law.”

“By all means,” answered Reynard, opening the door. “My word, but I’m glad to see you, uncle! And an ambassador, too — such an honour! How are you, and what sort of a journey have you had? Very trying, I’m afraid. Really it was a shame to impose upon your good nature and send you all this way!”

So saying the Fox led the way into his castle, keeping up a continual patter of talk, so that Bruin could not get a word in edgeways.

“I’m so sorry to have kept you waiting at the gate,” Reynard went on. “The fact is, I was dozing and did not hear you at first. I rarely sleep in the afternoon, but to-day I had such a heavy dinner that I felt extremely drowsy!”

“What did you have?” asked the Bear with interest.

“Oh, a simple meal enough. I am not rich, you know, and I have to eat what I can find. To-day it was a big comb of honey — not very much to my taste, but I was hungry and I ate it!”

Bruin pricked up his ears. “Eh?” said he. “Did you say honey?”

“Strange food for a fox, isn’t it?” said Reynard. “I wish I hadn’t touched the stuff now, for, to tell you the truth, it’s lying on my chest like a load of lead. I swear never to eat it again, although I know a place, not far from here, where there are immense quantities of it!”

By this time Bruin was all agog with excitement.

“Nephew,” said he, laying his paw on Reynard’s shoulder, “show me the place where that honey is. My mouth is watering at the very thought of it. I love honey better than anything else in the world, and I’d give all I possess for a taste of it!”

“You are joking, no doubt,” said Reynard laughingly. “How can any one like such stuff?”

“Joking, am I?” growled Bruin. “Just lead me to the honey and I’ll show you whether I’m joking. I tell you I’d give my eyes and ears for a taste!”

“Well, if that’s the case,” said Reynard, “you shall be satisfied. There’s a carpenter not far from here who keeps bees, and from time immemorial his family have been noted for the excellence of their honey. I’ll take you there, and I’m very glad to be able to render you this little service. In return, all I ask of you is that you will speak up for me when I come before the King.”

“Of course I will,” answered Bruin. “Let us go at once. I can hardly contain myself for impatience.”

Reynard called upon Bruin to follow him and led the way to the carpenter’s yard. The afternoon was very hot, and the carpenter was taking a nap after dinner. His yard was empty and in the middle of it was the trunk of a great oak-tree which he had laid out ready to be cut up into planks. The trunk was split down the middle, and kept open by two wedges of wood.

“Here you are!” said Reynard, going up to the tree-trunk. “This is the place where the carpenter keeps his honey. Put your muzzle in and root it out from the bottom. Don’t eat too much!”

“Never fear,” answered Bruin. “I’ll be moderate.” And he plunged his head and his two front paws into the crack. The next moment Reynard knocked out the wedges which kept the two halves of the trunk apart. They sprang together with the force of a steel spring, catching Bruin firmly by the nose and paws.

The poor beast roared with pain, making a din that echoed back like thunder from the mountains. The carpenter woke up from his slumber, and seizing an axe, ran out into the yard. His wife came tumbling out of the scullery with a broom in her hand, and people from the neighbouring village came running to see what all the noise was about. When they saw that the Bear was a prisoner they fell upon him and began to belabour him with mighty blows, while the unhappy creature gave himself up for lost. Maddened with pain, he redoubled his efforts to tear himself free, and at last succeeded in getting away, although he left most of the skin of his nose and paws behind. With the blood flowing from his muzzle, and his eyes shining red with rage, he made such a terrible picture that the people fled hither and thither, leaving him a free passage, and he limped off into the shelter of the woods, moaning and breathing out threats against his betrayer.

From a safe distance Reynard watched him go, with a malicious grin. “Farewell, Uncle Bear,” said he. “I hope you found the honey good!”

TYBERT’S MISSION and How He Fared

KING LION WAS furious when he saw the miserable state in which his ambassador returned. He immediately called a council of his ministers, to whom Bruin related all that had happened.

“This recreant must be punished,” said the King when the tale was ended. “It is a disgrace to our kingdom that he remains at large. Somebody else must go to bring him here. Who shall it be?”

After a good deal of discussion it was decided that Tybert the Cat should undertake the task, for he was reputed to be as cunning and artful as Reynard himself. “Do not be deceived by his wiles,” said the King. “No doubt he will try to flatter you, or to play upon your weaknesses, but pay no attention to his words. You must take this mission very seriously and not allow yourself to be led aside by anything. On your head be it!”

The Cat promised to be very circumspect, and set off at once. He travelled quickly, and soon arrived at the door of Reynard’s castle, where he found the Fox playing with his cubs on the grass, tumbling them over and over, and having fine fun. It was a touching spectacle of domestic bliss. Reynard jumped to his feet when he saw Tybert.

“Why, cousin,” said he, “this is a pleasant surprise! What makes you desert the gaieties of the Court for my poor home?”

“I come in the King’s name,” answered the Cat sternly. “He has sent me to bring you to Court, where you are to answer for your revolting crimes. The Bear returned yesterday, and the tale he told has stiffened the King’s anger against you. I am to say that if you refuse to accompany me, your house shall be destroyed and your family wiped off the face of the earth!”

“Refuse,” said Reynard, “whoever thought of refusing? I am sure the King has no more obedient subject than I. As for that Bruin, he is a bad subject, and I expect he has been telling a pack of lies about me. Do I look as if I could do anybody any harm? As a matter of fact I spend all my time here in meditation and prayer. But come in, come in! You must have a meal, for you have had a long journey. To-morrow we will set out together.”

“It seems to me,” said the Cat, “that it would be better if we started at once.”

“Nonsense, my dear fellow,” said Reynard. “It is bad to make a journey on an empty stomach. What difference will an hour or two make? We shall travel all the faster if we start in good condition.”

“Well, there’s something in that,” said Tybert, who, to tell the truth, was not sorry of an excuse to break a fast of many hours. “What have you got for dinner?”

“What would you like?” asked Reynard. “Shall we say a comb of honey?”

“Bah!” cried the Cat. “Honey indeed! I loathe the stuff. Now if you had a nice fat mouse...!”

“Happy thought,” said Reynard. “As it happens, I know a house close by where there are hundreds of mice, the fattest and sleekest creatures you ever saw in your life, and so tame that one can literally scoop them up by the score. I often catch a few myself when I am hungry and other game is scarce."

"Take me to this house," said Tybert. "Tame or not, I'll catch the mice if they are there. I love the creatures." And he licked his lips and stretched out his paws.

Now Reynard had spoken the truth when he said that he knew a house where mice abounded, and it was true also that he often went there — not in search of mice, but of chickens. The last time he had paid a visit he had found that the farmer had put a string noose over the hole by which he was used to enter, but fortunately for himself Reynard had discovered it in time.

Towards this house he now led the unsuspecting Tybert, and having shown him the hole, bade him enter and take his fill of the mice. Tybert obeyed, but no sooner had he got his head through the hole than the trap was sprung, and there he was, caught. He gave a scream of pain and fear, and from behind Reynard answered mockingly: "Sing away, cousin. I love to hear your voice. But mind you don't frighten the mice!" Then he took to his heels and ran back to his castle.

A minute or two later the farmer, having heard the Cat's miaulings, arrived armed with a heavy stick. "Ah, you thief," he cried, "I've got you at last, have I?" And he began to lay the stick on the Cat's back with all his might. Tybert kicked and struggled, and managed at last to get free, but he was more dead than alive when he went limping back to the King's Court.

How Blaireau the Badger Brought Reynard to Trial

"This is monstrous," said King Nobel when he had heard Tybert's piteous tale. "It is no use paltering any longer. We must burn this caitiff's castle about his ears."

"One moment, Sire," said Blaireau the Badger, who was a great friend of Reynard's. "Our ancient laws demand that any person accused of crime shall be called three times before extreme measures are taken against him. Now Reynard has only been called twice. I propose, therefore, that he be given one more chance to render himself peacefully before your Majesty, and to defend himself. There are two sides to every story, and so far we have only heard one."

"That is all very well," said the King, "but who will be the messenger? It seems to me that the experiences of the other two will be little encouragement for a third."

"If no one else will go," answered Blaireau, "I will go myself. Reynard has been a very good friend of mine in the past, and I may be able to appeal to his better self."

"I doubt it," said the King; "but go by all means, and bring him back if you can. Should you fail, I will batter down his castle stone by stone."

So Blaireau went off on his mission, and arriving at the château, found Reynard in the midst of his family.

"Look here, uncle," said he, "there must be an end to all nonsense. The King is at the end of his patience, and unless you obey his commands he is determined to stick at nothing with you. Tybert and Bruin are both badly knocked about, and the sympathy of all the animals is with them. But for my pleadings the King would have sent an army to burn your castle about your ears. Be sensible now, and come back quietly with me. You have wits enough to defend yourself against all accusations and need not fear the issue. I tell you frankly, delay will be dangerous."

"Ah," said Reynard, "if those others had only spoken to me as you have spoken, my dear nephew, things would have been very different. They were insolent and they paid the price, but nobody shall say that Reynard the Fox was impervious to good counsel. Of course I will go with you — the sooner the better. I have no fear of being able to silence my calumniators. The King can’t live without me — he knows it very well, and that fact alone will provide him with a good motive for giving me a free pardon.”

Then Reynard took a tender farewell of Hermeline, his wife, and Reynkin, his eldest son, and all the other children, and set off with Blaireau towards the King’s Court.

On the way Reynard said: “My dear Blaireau, this is a very solemn moment of my life! I cannot help feeling that I have not, perhaps, always lived as righteously as I might have done. It will relieve my mind somewhat if I might make confession of some of the most heinous of my crimes. Will you hear me?”

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“AND CAUSED HIM TO JUMP AT LEAST TWENTY FEET INTO THE AIR”

“Certainly,” answered Blaireau. “I am glad to hear you have a contrite heart, uncle. Speak on by all means. Confession is the first step towards repentance.”

“I have been a sad sinner,” Reynard went on. “My heart fails me when I think of all the misery I have caused! I weep for the poor Bear, whose nose and paws are skinless because of me, and for the Cat, who suffered a terrible beating at the hands of the farmer. Then there was the Wolf — did I ever tell you about the Wolf?”

“No,” said Blaireau, “you did not.”

“Well,” continued Reynard, “the Wolf and I were one day walking along the road when we came to a monastery. It was the time of evensong, and the sound of the bells made such a sweet music in the air that I felt my soul grow full of enthusiasm. ‘Ah,’ said I, ‘if I were only one of the monks in that monastery, with what joy would I sound the bells!’ Isengrim thought the idea a splendid one, and wished to carry it into practice, so, as he was not a monk, I took it upon myself to introduce him into the monastery at dead of night. There I tied him to the bell-rope and bade him pull, for the good of his soul. He pulled — ah, nephew, how enthusiastically he pulled! The bells rang as they had never rung before, and all the monks in the monastery came running to see what was the matter. Isengrim would have run away if he could, but alas, I had tied him so firmly to the rope that he could not escape, and he got a sound beating for his pains.

“Another time, still under the influence of his monastic ideas, Isengrim proposed to me that I should shave his head. I agreed, and when I had him in the chair, to my eternal shame be it said, I planted a burning firebrand on his pate, and caused him to jump at least twenty feet into the air. Ah, I am a miserable sinner.” And Reynard broke into sobs and lamentations.

“Never mind,” said Blaireau consolingly, “since you are truly repentant, all will be forgiven you. See, there are the towers of the King’s palace. We shall soon be there. Get ready to make your speech of defence, for you will need all your eloquence this day.”

How Reynard Told the King of a Hidden Treasure

When Reynard arrived at the court he found all the animals assembled to witness his trial. King Nobel sat on his throne, with the Queen by his side, and very cold and stern was the glance which the monarch cast upon Master Fox as he stepped up and made his obeisance. “Reynard,” said the King, “you have been accused of crimes so many and so grievous that if only the half of all the accusations are true, you have merited death a hundred times. What have you to say?”

Reynard put a paw up to his face and brushed away a tear; then, with his voice broken with emotion, he answered: “My lord the King, I have been a miserable sinner, and there is nothing left for me to do but to cast myself upon your royal mercy. Where King Nobel sits, there justice and mercy sit also. I am sure of the one; therefore I make bold to plead earnestly for the other. Perhaps, O King, I am not so bad as I have been painted. The tongues of enemies have uttered slanders before to-day, and brought upright men to ruin. All I ask, O King, is that you will let me state my case, and, when I shall have finished my tale, judge me according to my deserts. I will keep nothing back, for in this serious hour I wish to speak nothing but the naked truth. Listen to me, O King, and let these others listen also. Perchance the sad story of my wrongdoings, and of my gradual fall from righteousness, may be a lesson to many here, and by serving as an example help to keep them upon the strait and narrow path.”

“You have a glib tongue, Reynard,” said the King. “It has saved you before to-day, but this time the count is too serious to be hidden by a mist of words. Yet speak on. The accused has a right to make his own defence, and that right I should be the last to deny, even to one forsworn and treacherous, as you have proved yourself to be.”

Reynard sobbed aloud. “Hard words, O King,” said he, “and harder still because of the truth that is in them. I do not complain. Meekly I bow the head and make confession of my sins.”

At this all the animals settled themselves comfortably to listen. The idea of Reynard the Fox confessing anything was so new that not one of them would willingly have missed a word. Those of the animals who knew

Reynard well regarded him a little uneasily, but nobody broke silence. Reynard remained for a time sobbing quietly with head bowed upon his paws, then, in a broken voice, he began to speak:

“From my very earliest years, O King,” said he, “I was mischievous and unruly. Had there been anybody to give me counsel and guidance I might perhaps have outgrown the errors of my youth and become a worthy subject. Unfortunately I fell into bad company, and, under the influence of evil companions went rapidly from bad to worse. Isengrim the Wolf was my friend in those early days. He it was who taught me to steal and to prey upon the defenceless creatures of the woods and fields. My first victim, I well remember, was a young lamb which had strayed from the fold. Isengrim led me to her and persuaded me to kill her, and afterwards, in the same way, a goat and two young deer fell victims to my raging thirst for blood. Soon not a hen-house, not a fold was safe from my depredations. I killed for the sake of killing, and that part of the meat which I could not devour I gave to the Wolf, who was only too willing to take it, or hid it in certain holes and crannies in the wood.”

All the time that Reynard had been speaking Isengrim had been making frantic efforts to speak, but a glance from the King had kept him silent. Now he could contain himself no longer. Trembling with fury, he rose to his feet and cried: “Lies! All lies, O King! Will your Majesty believe anything it pleases this slanderous dog to say?”

“Silence!” cried the King. “Your turn will come later. For the present let the accused speak without interruption!”

“Thanks, O King,” said Reynard. “I can well understand the Wolf’s wrath when his connexion with so vile a creature as I is thus brought to light. Yet I have sworn to tell the truth, and the truth I will tell without regard to persons. Sorry as I am to say it, the Wolf was not the only one to lead me into bad ways. Among my companions of those early days were also the Bear and the Cat. They made me hunt for them when I was young, and such was their voracity that there was little left for myself, and I should have died of hunger were it not for the fact that I was fortunate enough to discover a hidden treasure!"

"Eh, what's that?" said the King. "Did you say a treasure?"

"Aye," answered Reynard, "a treasure of gold, my lord; so great a treasure that it would take your servants many days even to count it all. And not gold alone, but precious gems — diamonds of the purest water, rubies red as blood, and emeralds green as the sea when the sun shines upon it!"

The Queen leaned forward upon her throne and fixed Reynard with burning eyes. "And pearls too?" she whispered.

"Pearls too, O Queen. Ropes of pearls that well would adorn your Majesty's fair neck. And jewelled crowns worthy of a royal brow! Hidden deep in the earth they lie, all those riches, and now they will lie there for ever, for nobody knows of them but myself. Perhaps it is as well. The lust of gold is the motive of many crimes, and this treasure has already been the cause of a serious attempt against the throne and the life of the King! But all this has nothing to do with my confession. With your Majesty's leave I will go on with what I was about to say."

"One moment," said the Queen. "Those crowns you spoke of — describe them more fully. What stones had they, and how set?"

"Time enough for that," cried the King. "You shall try the crowns upon your head before all is done. Let the Fox tell us where this treasure is hidden; that is the important thing!"

"I had thought to carry the secret with me to the grave," said Reynard, "but in this solemn hour I can hide nothing. If it is your Majesty's will, I will tell all."

"Beware, O King!" cried the Bear. "He will deceive you now as he has deceived others. Believe not his lying words!"

"Silence!" cried the King. "This matter concerns me, and me alone. Let Reynard speak!"

Reynard cast a look of triumph at Bruin and Isengrim, and, smiling faintly, went on with his tale.

"The treasure was discovered first of all by my father. He came upon it one day when he was hunting in the forest, among the ruins of a palace that once belonged to an ancient king. There, in a deep hole, under a big stone, he found the gold and gems, and for ever afterwards he was a changed creature. No longer blithe and care-free, he slunk about as though overburdened with responsibility. He knew himself rich beyond compare — richer than any king in all the world, and gradually into his heart there crept the desire to win, by means of his riches, a place of power.

"At that time, O King, my father was bitter against your Majesty because of your disapproval of his manner of life, and I am sorry to say that he determined to wrest you from the throne and to set up another in your place. Full of this project, he took Tybert the Cat into his confidence. The two met together secretly in the forest of the Ardennes, and after much discussion they decided to offer the throne to Bruin the Bear!"

"Ah!" ejaculated the King, turning his gaze upon Bruin, who was too furious to speak. "So now we know why you wished to still Reynard's tongue."

"The Bear was delighted with the prospect," Reynard went on, "and strutted about the forest as though he were already crowned. He was always talking of the fine laws he would make and the splendid time he would have, but he was too stupid to be of much use as a plotter. Indeed, it was for reason of his stupidity that my father and Tybert chose him as king, for they thought they could make of him a useful tool. They had, however, to lay their plans without him, and the better to carry them out, they called Isengrim the Wolf, and Grimbard the Ape, into conference. The five met together at a certain place between Heyst and Gand, and it was there, O King, that your death was decided upon. Each of the conspirators took a solemn oath not to divulge the proceedings to a living soul, and having settled the very hour and day of your Majesty's assassination, they departed to their homes.

"Now, like all apes, Grimbard was a chatterer, and no sooner was he within his house than he told his wife all that had happened, explaining to her that it was a great secret and she was not to tell a soul. Of course she promised faithfully to keep a still tongue in her head, and as a matter of fact I believe she did manage to keep the secret for a whole day. Then she happened to meet my wife in the woods, and having sworn *her* to secrecy, told her the whole thing. My wife, out of a feeling of love and regard to your Majesty, thought it her duty to inform me, which she did, immediately she returned home, without keeping back a single detail.

"I could not believe my ears at first. 'What! Bruin, king!' I cried. 'That great fat lump of hairy stupidity, king of the animals! Is the world going mad? Would they dethrone our loved and gracious lord in favour of so base a beast?' There and then, O King, I raised my hand above my head and swore to defend your Majesty's life to the last. 'While Reynard lives,' I said, 'the King's throne shall be secure, cost what it may!'

"From that moment I thought of nothing else but how best to thwart my father's base plans. It seemed to me that if I could only discover the treasure I might stop the whole thing, for the conspirators relied upon the gold to pay the armies they intended to raise. For days, therefore, I lurked about the woods, following my father wherever he went, in the hope that, sooner or later, he would betray the treasure's whereabouts. But he was far too wary to go near it, and had it not been for the stupidity of the Ape I might have remained none the wiser. One day I noticed Grimbard wheeling a barrow through the forest with an air of great secrecy, and following him unseen, at a safe distance, I saw him stop in the midst of the ruins of that ancient palace in the forest. There, at the foot of a great tree, he lifted a heavy stone, discovering a deep hole, from which he took several vases filled to the brim with golden coins. These he placed upon his barrow, and having carefully covered up the hole again, trundled off into the forest.

“No sooner had he disappeared amid the shade of the trees than I ran forward and lifted the stone. What a sight met my eyes! There lay the treasure — chest upon chest of shining gold, and heaps of jewels flashing with rays of many-coloured light. My eyes were nearly blinded by the splendour.

“Even as I stood gazing in a sort of dazed trance, I realized what I must do. If I could get this treasure away from the place where it was hidden, and, unknown to the conspirators, transport it somewhere else, their plot would be strangled at its birth. Unfortunately the treasure was heavy and I had no means of conveyance — not even a barrow, but I took counsel of Hermeline, my wife, and she, noble soul as she is, strengthened me in my resolve. ‘Though we wear our paws to the bone,’ said she, ‘we must take the treasure away and save the life of our noble and our beloved King.’ That very night we began our task, and little by little we moved the treasure, hiding it in a safe place known only to ourselves. For the best part of a month we laboured, working only at night, and fearful every moment that we should be discovered. At last everything was finished, and the whole of the treasure removed.

“In the meantime, the conspiracy gained adherents every day. My father was the life and soul of the plot. He sent messengers far and near, into every corner of the land, to win the animals over to his side. ‘Those who enrol under my banner,’ said he, ‘shall receive a large sum of money paid in advance. I do not ask them to trust my word, but to come to me and let me pour the money into their hands.’ In such circumstance what wonder that his supporters grew every hour. Before long he had gathered together an immense army, which was increased by troops raised by the Bear, the Wolf, and the Cat. Bruin, in particular, was very proud of his success in raising soldiers. He already fancied himself king, and walked about giving orders to everybody who crossed his path.

“Now the time for payment had come, so my father, accompanied by Grimbard and the Cat, made his way to the hiding-place of the treasure to bring out the gold. I watched them from afar, and saw them uncover the hole, and never to my dying day shall I forget the scream my father uttered when he saw that the treasure was no longer there. Frantically the two of them dug up the soil around the place in the hope that they were mistaken, but not a single gold piece could they find. At last Grimbard, chattering with fear, turned and slunk away, while my father crept home and hanged himself with a cord to a nail just outside the back door. A terrible end, O King, but though he was my father, I cannot help feeling he deserved the misery he had brought upon himself. As for Bruin, he found himself faced with the necessity of explaining to the soldiers that no money was forthcoming, and being a coward at heart, he shirked the task. He, too, fled secretly, and Tybert the Cat soon followed. To-day, sire, these three stand among the foremost of my accusers. If I have sinned, have they not sinned too, and in greater measure?”

The King waved his paw impatiently. “We will deal with them presently,” said he. “For the present, keep to your tale. Where is the treasure hidden? Speak, and lie not, on your life!”

“Why should I lie, O King?” asked Reynard in an aggrieved tone. “Have I not sworn to tell the truth? In Western Flanders there is a little wood called Husterloo. In the midst of that wood lies a pool, which is known by the name of Krekelput. It is a dreary place, O King, and solitary, for it lies among marshes where no man can pass. No sound is heard in that place save only the call of the carrion-crow by day, and the dismal hooting of the owl by night. There, close to that pool, I hid the treasure, in a hole in the earth which I covered with soil, marking the place with three great stones. Remove those stones, and dig up the soil, and you will discover three enormous golden vases, beautifully carved and modelled. In the first is the royal crown of the ancient King Emrik, which Bruin thought to wear. In the second is the crown of Emrik’s queen — a thing of wonder, flashing with splendid gems; and in the third is the suit of golden armour Emrik wore. Beneath these three vases lies the rest of the treasure — chest after chest of golden coins, ropes of pearls, necklaces of diamonds and rubies, so many gems that I cannot describe them all. If your Majesty will send trusty messengers to Krekelput, they can easily prove the truth of what I say!”

During this recital the King had raised himself from his throne in his excitement, and now he turned to the assembled animals and cried: “Which of you knows Krekelput? Who will go and fetch the treasure?”

Nobody answered, for, as a matter of fact, not a soul present had ever heard of Krekelput before Reynard mentioned the name.

“Come, come,” cried the King. “One of you must know the wood of Husterloo and the pool of which Reynard speaks!”

“Be patient with them, Sire,” said Reynard. “They are afraid to speak. The Hare knows the place very well. Do you not remember, friend,” said he, fixing the Hare with a menacing glance, “you took refuge in the wood of Husterloo one day when the hounds were after you!”

“I cannot remember very well,” stammered the Hare, who was nearly out of his senses with fright. “Perhaps I did!”

“Of course you did,” said Reynard, “and you could find the place again, no doubt?”

“I am not sure,” said the poor Hare, who indeed had never heard of Husterloo.

“A truce to all this!” cried the King impatiently. “If you cannot remember, Reynard shall go with you to refresh your memory, and Bellyn the Ram shall accompany the two of you to see that you do not run away. Be off with you at once, and bring back the treasure as quickly as you can, for my eyes are aching for a sight of Emrik’s crown and the suit of golden armour Emrik wore.”

“And forget not the ropes of pearls and the jewelled coronet!” cried the Queen. “Bring those first!”

“I will bring everything in good time,” said Reynard; “trust me for that. But before I set out on this journey I must go to Rome to ask absolution of the Pope for all the sins I have committed. Suffer me first of all to go on this pilgrimage, O King, and, if you will, send Bellyn and the Hare with me to see that I do not escape. Nothing is further from my thoughts, but after what has happened I cannot expect your Majesty to trust my word, and I am content to go in ward.”

“Be it so!” said the King. “Set off at once and return as soon as may be. And now there is another little affair to settle! Where is Bruin, our would-be king. Stand forth, Bruin, with your precious conspirators, the Wolf, the Cat, and the Ape.” But nobody answered, for seeing how affairs were going all the four had quietly slipped away, fearing to stay and face the vengeance of the King.

Reynard smiled maliciously as he put on a pilgrim’s cloak and marched away with Bellyn and the Hare along the road that led from the Court.

For several miles they walked in silence. Then Reynard sighed and said: “Ah, friends, how I long to see my dear wife and children just once more before I go on this long journey that lies before us. Let us take the road that leads past my castle of Malpertuis. It is not much out of our way, and we can enter there and refresh ourselves.”

The Hare was too frightened to dispute the matter, and Bellyn on his part good-humouredly agreed, so the three of them took the road to Malpertuis, and before long came to the gate of Reynard’s castle.

“Here we are at last, Cousin Bellyn,” said Reynard. “Did you ever see such fine pastures! You must be famished after our long tramp. Take a rest a while and eat some of this sweet grass, while I and the Hare go into the house and console my wife for the long separation that is before her. We shall not stay more than a few minutes.”

“Well, hurry up,” said Bellyn, who had already begun to graze. “I will wait for you, but don’t stay talking all day!”

So Reynard and the Hare went into the house, where they were met by Hermeline, Reynard’s devoted spouse.

“What, husband,” said she, “are you back already? How did things go at Court?”

“Just as I said they would,” answered Reynard. “When the King heard my tale he acquitted me of the charges that had been brought against me, and allowed me to return here in honour. The Wolf, the Bear, and the Cat, who were my most powerful enemies, have fled the Court, so that, for the time being, they have escaped my vengeance; but I have brought with me this fellow whom you see at my side, for he was among the foremost of my accusers!”

When he heard these words the poor Hare trembled with fright, and turned to flee, but in a moment Reynard sprang at his throat. One loud cry he gave for help, but Bellyn, peacefully cropping the grass outside, did not hear, and the next moment the Hare was dead. Then Reynard and Hermeline and all the little foxes had a splendid feast, and in less than half an hour nothing was left of the Hare’s carcass but the head.

While they were still feasting there came a loud knocking at the door. It was Bellyn, who, having eaten his fill, was now impatient with waiting.

Snatching up the head of the Hare Reynard put it into a bag, which he carefully sealed. Then, running to the door, he threw it open.

“You have been a long time!” grumbled Bellyn. “Where is the Hare?”

“Oh, he is just inside, playing with my little ones,” said Reynard. “He’s a merry fellow, that one, and so fond of children that it is beautiful to watch him. Leave him alone for a time. He’ll be out presently. While you are waiting, you might run back to the King with this bag, which he asked me to send him. It contains papers referring to the conspiracy — papers which involve a great many people at Court, in fact nearly all of the animals except yourself. Hurry off with it, and give it into the King's own hands, and, as you value your life, do not open the bag upon the road, or the King will suspect that you also are involved and have erased your name on the way."

"Did the King say I was to take back the papers?" asked Bellyn.

"Of course he did!" answered Reynard. "'Send them back by my trusty Bellyn' — those were his very words, and he whispered in my ear that you were the only one among the whole court that he could trust. I should not be surprised if he gave you a handsome reward, and perhaps made you a peer of the realm!"

"Give me the bag!" cried Bellyn. "I'll take it to the King. I shall not be long. Wait until I come back, and tell the Hare that he is on no account to set out without me."

"Never fear," said Reynard. "He'll not stir a step out of my castle — I'll answer for that. Farewell, good Bellyn. I will be waiting here when you return!"

Full of pride at his important mission, Bellyn trotted off down the road, bearing the bag very carefully with him, and Reynard, with a spiteful smile, stood and watched him till he was out of sight.

In good time Bellyn returned to the Court and handed to the astonished King the bag which Reynard had sent. The King broke the seal, and gazed inside, while the Queen pressed close to him, peering over his shoulder. The next moment he gave a cry of horror, as he drew forth the head of the poor Hare. The Queen fell to the ground in a dead faint, and for a time the King remained holding the head in his hands, gazing at it vacantly. Then he cast it from him, and without a word turned his steps towards his palace, where he immediately took to his bed, for the shock of the thing had made him ill. Not for several weeks afterwards, when he had somewhat recovered, was he able to turn his thoughts to vengeance. Then he gave orders for a large army to march to Reynard's castle of Malpertuis to raze it to the ground, and bring back the Fox in chains.

The army set out, but when they arrived at Malpertuis they found the birds had flown. Reynard and Hermeline and all the little foxes had left the country, and were never seen again.

Some people say that they took up their abode in a distant land, where Reynard soon began once more to play his old tricks, until the King of that land caught him one day red-handed, and hanged him on the nearest tree without giving him a chance to say a word. I do not know whether this story is true, although I hope it is. All that I can say for certain is that Reynard and his family were never seen in King Nobel's dominions from that day on.

11

SUGAR-CANDY HOUSE

Jan and Jannette were brother and sister. They lived near a big wood, and every day they used to go to play there, fishing for sticklebacks in the streams, and making necklaces of red berries.

One day they wandered farther from their home than usual, and all of a sudden they came to a brook crossed by a pretty red bridge. On the other side of the bridge, half hidden among the trees, they espied the roofs of a little pink cottage, which, when they came closer, they found to be built entirely of sugar-candy! Here was a delightful find for a little boy and girl who loved sweetstuff! They lost no time in breaking off pieces of the roof and popping them into their mouths.

Now in that house there lived an old wolf whose name was Garon. He was paralysed in one leg, and could not run very fast, but in all other respects he was as fierce and strong as he had been in his youth. When he heard Jan and Jannette breaking off bits of his roof he growled out, “Who is touching my Sugar-Candy House?” Then he came limping out to see who it was, but by that time the children were safely hidden in the woods.

“Who dares to touch my Sugar-Candy House?” roared the wolf again.

Then Jan replied:

“It’s the wind so mild, It’s the wind so mild, That lovable child!”

This satisfied the old wolf, and back he went to his house, grumbling.

The next day Jan and Jannette once again crossed over the little red bridge, and broke some more candy from the wolf's house. Out came Garon again, bristling all over.

"Who is touching my Sugar-Candy House?" he roared.

And Jan and Jannette replied:

"It's the wind so mild, It's the wind so mild, That lovable child!"

"Very well," said the wolf, and he went back again, but this time there was a gleam of suspicion in his eye.

The next day was stormy, and hardly had Jan and Jannette reached the Sugar-Candy House than the wolf came out, and surprised them in the very act of breaking a piece off his window-sill.

"Oho!" said he. "It was the wind so mild, was it? That lovable child, eh? Precious lovable children, I must say! Gr-r-r, I'll eat them up!" And he sprang at Jan and Jannette, who took to their heels and ran off as fast as their legs could carry them. Garon pursued them at a good speed in spite of his stiff paw, and although he never gained upon them, yet he kept them in sight, and refused to give up the chase. The children looked back once or twice, and saw that the wolf was still following them, but they were not very much afraid, because they were confident of their ability to outrun him.

All of a sudden they found their way barred by a river. There was no bridge across it, and the water was very deep. What were they to do? Nearer and nearer came the wolf!

In the middle of the river some ducks were swimming, and Jan called out to them: "Little ducks! Little ducks! Carry us over the river on your backs, for if you do not the wolf will get us!"

So the ducks came swimming up, and Jan and Jannette climbed each on to the back of one, and were carried safely over to the other bank.

Presently the wolf, in his turn, came to the river. He had seen how the children had managed to cross, and he roared out at the ducks in a terrible voice, “Come and carry me over, or I’ll eat you all up!”

“Very well,” answered the ducks, and they swam to the bank, and Garon balanced himself on four of them, one paw on the back of each. But they had no intention of carrying the wicked old wolf to the other side, for they did not love him or any of his tribe, and, moreover, they objected to his impolite way of asking a favour. So, at a given signal from the leader, all the ducks dived in midstream, and left old Garon struggling in the water. Three times he went down and three times he came up, but the fourth time he sank never to rise any more.

That was the end of old Garon, and a good job, too, say I. I don’t know what became of his Sugar-Candy House, but I dare say, if you could find the wood, and the sun had not melted the candy, or the rain washed it away, you might break a bit of it off for yourselves.

12

POOR PETER

There was once a man named Jaco Peter who was so poor that he had not two sous to rub together. His clothes were rags, his boots were shocking, and as for his house, it was nothing but a miserable hovel hardly fit for a dog. The only friend poor Peter had in the world was a big fox who was called Reynard the Red because of the colour of his hide.

One day as Poor Peter was walking along the road looking out for stray scraps of food which he could pick up for his dinner, whom should he meet but Reynard, who was going off to spy round a farmhouse where, he had been told, there were some fine fat chickens.

“How now, Peter,” said Reynard, “you look very miserable to-day! What is the matter?”

“I have fallen on bad luck,” answered Peter gloomily. “I have found nothing to-day but two cabbage-stalks and a half-gnawed bone, and to make matters worse, the bone has no marrow in it.”

“Why do you eat such stuff?” asked Reynard disgustedly. “Look at me — I am just as poor as you, yet I live on the fat of the land! And how do I do it, Peter? Why, by using my wits! Cheer up, my friend, you shall be a man of fortune yet, for I’ll take your case in hand myself!”

Reynard was as good as his word. The same day he called at the King’s palace and asked if he might borrow a bushel measure. Such an unusual request from a fox caused some amazement and the matter was brought to the notice of the King himself, who sent for Reynard and asked him what he wanted with such a thing.

"The fact is," answered Reynard, "that a friend of mine, a certain Lord Jaco Peter, has come by a good deal of money, and he wishes to measure it."

"Very well," said the King, "you may take the measure, but I would like to have it back when you have done with it, if you do not mind."

Off went Reynard with the bushel basket, and the same night, having stuck a couple of sous to the bottom of it with a bit of grease, he sent it back with a message to say that it was not large enough, and might he have another? In reply, the King sent a two-bushel measure, and after a time Reynard sent this back also, with a request for a larger one still. "If I have to measure the money with a thing like this," said he, "I shall be a month over the task."

"That friend of yours must be an enormously wealthy man," said the King. "Let me see — what did you say his name was? Lord Jaco Peter? I do not seem to remember a lord of that name in my dominions!"

"He is a foreign noble," said Reynard glibly, "who has only lately arrived in this country. He will shortly be coming to pay his respects to your Majesty, for it is his intention to ask for the hand of the Princess, your daughter, in marriage."

"That is a thing one must consider," replied the King, "but in the meantime I will gladly give your noble friend an audience."

Away went Reynard in high feather and recounted to Poor Peter all that had happened. "The affair is as good as finished," said he, "you shall marry the Princess and sit at the King's right hand!"

Peter looked down at his clothes, which indeed, were too well ventilated to be quite seemly, and made a grimace. "A fine lord I shall look!" said he, "with my toes sticking out of my boots and holes in my breeches."

“Never mind about that,” Reynard answered. “Just leave everything to me, and all be well.”

The next day, when the time came for the pair to set out for the palace, Reynard said to his friend: “Now pay great attention to what I have to say. Close by the King’s palace there is a big muddy puddle in the middle of the road. When you come to that puddle I want you to trip over yourself and fall plump into it. Don’t let there be any half measures! Get right into the mud — wallow in it, and smear yourself from head to foot!”

“But why...?” asked Peter.

“Never mind about why. Do as I tell you!”

Poor Peter carried out his directions to the letter. When they reached the puddle he pretended to slip, and fell souse into it, covering himself with a thick layer of mud. At sight of the disaster Reynard began to cry out in dismay, and the guards at the King’s palace, who had seen the accident, came running up to offer their aid.

“Did you fall down?” asked one of them politely. Peter was wiping the mud out of his mouth and could not answer, but the fox cried: “Of course he has fallen down, oaf! Do you think he sat in the puddle for amusement. Don’t stand gaping there, but run to the palace quickly, and borrow a change of clothes, for this is Lord Jaco Peter who is on his way to visit the King. And look you,” he added, as the guards ran off, “see that you bring some robes worthy of my lord’s great estate, or it will be the worse for you!”

Away went the guards, and told the King’s Chamberlain about the catastrophe. A few minutes later they returned bearing with them a magnificent robe of cloth-of-gold, beautifully embroidered and sewn with precious stones. Then they led Peter to a chamber, where he bathed himself and donned his new finery. Unfortunately the Chamberlain had forgotten to send any shoes, so there was Peter with his toes sticking out of his boots under his magnificent gown.

“Never mind,” said Reynard, “you must keep your feet out of sight,” and he led him before the King, who was immensely taken with his appearance.

“Tell me,” he said to Reynard, after greetings had been exchanged, “why does your friend keep staring at his clothes. One would think he was not used to them!”

Reynard smiled. “As a matter of fact, your Majesty,” he answered, “he is not. This dress of his came out of your Majesty’s wardrobe, for he had the ill-fortune to spoil his own on the way here, by falling into a puddle. The gown is good enough, as it goes, of course; but my friend is used to something far finer. I would wager a thousand crowns he is thinking this very moment that he has never been so poorly clad before in his life! Is it not so, my lord?” he added, turning to Peter.

Peter gave a grin and a nod of the head, and the affair passed without further comment, but on their way in to dinner Reynard seized the opportunity to warn his friend against further faults of deportment. But, as the saying goes, it is no use trying to make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear, and no sooner were they seated at table, and Peter saw the magnificent golden dishes, the delicate cut glass, and the fine candlesticks, than he opened his eyes wide, and gave an exclamation of astonishment.

“What is the matter now?” asked the King, staring at him.

“I crave your Majesty’s pardon,” said Reynard. “My friend is a little overwhelmed, for your customs are new to him. In his own palace, you see, he is used to a certain degree of luxury — such a service of plate, for instance, as this on the table, would there only be found in the servant’s quarters. Come, come, my lord,” he added, clapping Peter on the shoulder, “it will do you good to live the simple life. Spartan fare, my lord, Spartan fare!”

Peter rolled his eyes and grinned again, before falling to, with a fairly good appetite, upon the rich food spread before him.

“This lord must certainly be of enormous wealth,” thought the King. “True, he has certain curious tricks of manner, such as supping his gravy with a table-knife, but what does a little thing like that matter! In other countries, other ways! That is a very good proverb.”

After dinner was over Reynard broached the matter of Peter’s marriage with the King’s daughter, and the King gave his consent. He begged Reynard and his friend to remain at the palace as his guests until the ceremony should take place, and apportioned to them a magnificent suite of rooms. A week later Peter and the Princess were married. The poor man could hardly believe his good luck as he stood before the altar dressed out in gorgeous robes. All he could do was to stare like one who is dazed, and Reynard had to nudge him from behind to get him to make the responses. After the wedding a splendid feast was held, to which all the greatest and wealthiest lords in the kingdom were invited, and then the King’s carriages arrived to conduct the happy pair to Peter’s castle.

Now what was to be done? Peter’s castle was a broken-down hovel at the edge of the forest. He shivered with fear when he thought of what the Princess would say when she saw it, with its mud floor, and its furniture consisting of one chair with no back, one battered table, and a heap of brushwood covered with a ragged pallet which served as a bed. Could Reynard overcome this difficulty as he had overcome all the others?

Of course he could, and he did! Away went the coaches, with Reynard sitting proudly on the box of the foremost, and presently the whole cortège halted before the gates of an enchanted castle, which Reynard had borrowed from the fairies of the forest. There Lord Jaco Peter and his bride lived for many happy years. They had six children, three boys and three girls, and Reynard was the friend of them all.

13

THE PEASANT AND HIS ASS

There once lived a poor peasant. I do not know his name, but he earned a living by gathering dead wood in the forest, and he had a donkey who was no bigger ass than himself. Perhaps by this you will be able to recognize him.

One day the peasant hitched his donkey into the shafts of his little cart and went off as usual to the wood for his day’s toil. Arrived there, he tied the donkey to a tree and then, by way of the cart, climbed the trunk in order to break off some dead branches which he had noticed above. As he sat there, legs astraddle on the branch, busily breaking away the dead wood, along through the forest came a lord dressed in fine clothes, with his manservant behind him.

“Hallo! my man,” cried the lord, “if you don’t come down from that tree pretty soon you’ll get a tumble. The branch you are sitting on is cracked.”

“Cracked, is it?” answered the peasant. “Well, so much the worse for me.” And he went on calmly with his work.

The lord went away shrugging his shoulders at the peasant’s stupidity; and, sure enough, before he had gone very far, *crack! crack!* the branch broke, and down fell the peasant to the foot of the tree, giving himself a fine blow on the nose, which immediately swelled almost to the size of a turnip.

“My word,” muttered the peasant, tenderly feeling the sore place, “that man must have been a sorcerer! He can foretell the future! He said I’d fall and I certainly have fallen! I must run after him and ask him to tell me something else. This is a chance not to be missed!”

So off he ran as fast as his bruised limbs would allow, in pursuit of the lord, and presently came up with him. “Hi, sir, wait a minute!” he cried. “You told me the truth about the tree. The branch broke right enough and I fell on my nose. Won’t you tell me something else?”

“Willingly,” answered the lord, “and I hope this time that you will pay heed to what I say. Take care not to load your ass too heavily, for if you do so he will bray, and if he brays three times running I predict that you will suddenly die.”

“Oh dear me!” sighed the peasant. “I am the most unfortunate of men. Each prediction about my future seems to be an unhappy one. Nevertheless, I am very much obliged to you, sir. Good day.” And he took off his cap to the lord and bowed, and lurched off back to his tree.

For a long time he worked busily, and found so much wood that his little cart soon became full. Then he remembered what the lord had told him about loading his ass too heavily, but he was so avaricious that he could not make up his mind to stop. “One more branch won’t make any difference,” he kept on saying as he piled more and more wood into the cart. At last the poor donkey could stand no more and, lifting his head, he uttered a loud “Hee-haw!”

At this the peasant turned pale with fright. “Stop, stop, what are you doing?” he cried. “Oh, my dear little ass, I beg you not to bray again. I will not put another branch into the cart. We will go home straight away and you shall have carrots for supper!”

So saying, he climbed to his seat and shook the reins as a signal for departure. The donkey pulled and pulled, but not an inch would the cart budge, although he strained his muscles to the utmost. Finding all his efforts vain, he turned his head and once again gave utterance to a loud bray of protest.

“Oh, dear me, that’s twice!” cried the peasant, jumping down from his perch. “If he brays once more I’m a dead man. Do you hear that, little ass? For goodness’ sake, remain dumb until we reach home, and I’ll help you pull the cart!” Freed of the peasant’s weight, the load for a time was easier to pull, but at the end of another ten minutes the weight began to tell again. The ass stopped and brayed loudly for the third time.

“That’s finished it!” cried the peasant. “I am dead!” And he fell flat to the ground.

Left to himself, the ass wandered slowly on, dragging the load behind him. Soon he came to the gates of the town, and the guard took him and put him into the pound. After a time, as nobody claimed him, he was sold.

Meanwhile the peasant lay where he had fallen. Presently a carriage drove up, and the coachman was forced to pull in his horses because of the body that lay stretched across the road.

“Come,” he cried, thinking that the peasant was drunk, “rouse yourself, swill-tub! Get up, unless you want to be run over!”

“I can’t get up!” moaned the peasant.

“Why not?”

“Because I’m dead!”

“Dead, are you?” cried the coachman, jumping from his seat in anger. “Well I’ve something here that will bring you to life again!” And he took his whip and laid on to the peasant with such a will that in less than ten seconds the fellow was capering about all over the road. Having thus effectively brought the dead man to life, he remounted his box and drove off grumbling.

In the roadway the peasant continued to dance about until the pain of his beating had somewhat subsided. Then he looked around, and for the first time missed his donkey.

"Dear, dear, dear!" he cried, "one trouble after another! When I was dead I wished I was alive; now I'm alive I wish I was dead again, for I'm sore all over, and I've lost my donkey. Whatever shall I do?" And, groaning and grumbling, he set off along the road in search of his beast.

After a time he came to the gates of the town, where a sentry was standing with his pike on his shoulder. "Good morning, good man," said the peasant. "Have you seen my little ass?"

"Your ass!" answered the sentry, smiling. "The only ass that has passed through these gates to-day is already become burgomaster!"

"What! Burgomaster!" cried the peasant. "My ass Burgomaster! Tell me quickly, where does he live? I must go to him at once!"

Hardly able to control his amusement, the sentry pointed out the way to the Burgomaster's house, and thither went the peasant in all haste. Arrived at the door, he sounded the great bell — *Darlindindin!* — and a maidservant appeared.

"Is the Burgomaster at home?" asked the peasant. Yes, he was at home, and the maidservant led the peasant to the room where he sat behind a big table loaded with documents.

"Good morning, Ass!" said the peasant, with a grin of delight that twisted his swollen and discoloured features.

"Eh! what, what!" stammered the Burgomaster, turning purple with anger.

"I beg your pardon," said the peasant, "I should have said, 'Good morning, Mr. Ass, Esquire,' for you have become a great man now, while I am still a poor woodcutter. I don't envy you your good fortune, I am sure, although your promotion has left me without a donkey. Since you have become such a great lord, won't you give me back the ten florins you cost me, so that I may buy another?"

At this the Burgomaster's rage exploded. Leaping over the table with one bound, he seized the hapless peasant by the collar of his coat, threw open the door, and, with one mighty kick, sent him sprawling from top to bottom of the stairs.

14

THE KING OF THE BIRDS

At one time the birds, like the four-footed animals, were ruled over by the lion, who is the King of the Beasts, but they grew discontented with his dominion and decided to have a king of their own. It was the eagle's idea: he thought of it one day when he was standing on the lofty crag by his nest, gazing out upon the plain below, and he saw the lion, no bigger than a mouse in appearance, slinking beside a dried-up stream. "Earth-bound creature!" thought the eagle scornfully. "Who are you to reign over us, who cleave the air with wings and fly in the face of the sun! He who is lordliest among the birds should rule the feathered creatures, and surely I am he!"

So thinking, the eagle spread his wings and soared high into the air, and then swooped suddenly down upon the lion, casting sand into his eyes with a harsh scream of defiance. Having thus relieved his feelings, he sent messengers near and far to assemble all the birds that he might unfold his plan to them.

Such a scurry of wings as there was when the birds came to answer the summons! The sky was black with them, so that the animals on the earth below, fearing a dreadful storm, took shelter in their caves and holes. From north, south, east, and west they came; over mountain, valley, and plain; birds of all sorts and sizes, from the little humming-bird to the condor and the vulture. The ostrich left the burning plains where he loves to roam, and flapping his ridiculous wing, for he could not fly, raced to the meeting-place. All those birds that dwell in the tropical forests, and flash from tree to tree like living jewels in the green twilight; the penguins and skua-gulls from the icy north; the cormorants and shags, and all the hosts of the birds of the sea — if I were to go on naming them I should fill every page of this book and never even begin my story. And as they flew each uttered his own cry, so that what with the calling and the screaming, the whistling, warbling, chirping, and chattering, the air was filled with a mighty sound that echoed to the very ends of the world.

When all the birds were duly assembled the eagle addressed them thus: “Listen, brothers,” said he, “I have called you together in order that we may choose a king, for it is not fitting that the lion, that earth-bound creature, should continue to reign over the free company of the birds. We are distinguished from the beasts by our power of flight, and it therefore seems to me that the crown of sovereignty should be given to the one amongst us who possesses that power in the fullest degree. What do you say? Shall we test this matter, and let him who can fly nearest to the sun be king?”

A confused chorus of cries answered his question, one bird speaking against another.

“What is flight compared to song?” asked the nightingale. “Let the sweetest singer among us reign.”

The canary and the throstle and the blackcap all agreed with the nightingale, but they were shouted down.

“Beauty, beauty!” cried the peacock. “That is the test! A king should be resplendent in gay robes!” And he spread his gorgeous tail.

“Aye, there speaks wisdom,” gobbled the turkey, turning red in the face, and strutting up and down. “What do you say, brother,” he asked the cock. “Shall we arrange it so?”

“A fig for gay feathers!” cackled the ostrich. “Is our king then only to be looked at, or is he to do nothing all day but chirp and twitter foolish songs? As for flying, I found my wings of so little use that I gave up using them long ago. My idea is that we should settle this matter by a running race!”

And so the birds went on quarrelling and disputing until at last the eagle called for silence, and, addressing the company again, insisted upon the adoption of his own plan. He spoke sternly and menacingly, and as all the birds went in fear of his curved beak and sharp talons, no further objections were raised.

It was agreed that the trial should take place at once, and the cock was chosen to give the signal for the start. Very proud of the honour, he stationed himself on a little grassy knoll, and having ascertained that everybody was ready, gave a loud and clarion call. There was the sound as of a rushing mighty wind as all the birds sprang into the air. Only the eagle remained in his place, looking after the others a little contemptuously. So confident did he feel in his ability to outfly them all, that he allowed them at least five minutes start. Then, very leisurely, he spread his wings and soared. Up, up, up he went; he overtook the stragglers on the fringe of the crowd, passed through the thickest press, outdistanced the foremost flyer of them all. Still up and up he soared, exalting in his strength and power, until the birds flying far below were hidden by the clouds. Then he hung for a moment, motionless on extended wings, for he was a little wearied by his efforts.

All of a sudden he heard, above his head, a tiny *twit, twit, twit,* and looking up, saw, to his surprise, the golden-crested wren, one of the smallest of the birds, flying merrily above him.

“I have outdistanced you. I am king! I am king!” cried the wren in his joy.

“We will see,” said the eagle grimly; and once again he beat his mighty wings and soared.

At the end of a further five minutes, he stopped again, only to hear, as before, the wren’s cheerful twitter above him. Again and again the same thing happened. Try as he might, the eagle could not outdistance the tiny bird, and at last, worn out with his exertions, he was obliged to give up the contest, and to descend, crestfallen, to the earth again.

And how did the little wren, which is certainly not famed for its powers of flight, come to be able to defeat the mighty eagle? By a very simple trick! When the eagle started on its flight the wren was safely perched upon his back. There he clung until the eagle stopped flying, when it was an easy matter to rise from his place and fly a yard or two higher. When the eagle began to fly again, the wren again took its place on his back, and this continued time after time until the great bird was exhausted.

Although nobody suspected the trick which the wren had played, the other birds were very indignant when they heard the wren declare that he had won the contest. “You, king!” they cried. “An insignificant thing like you! It would be a disgrace to us if we were to suffer it. We would rather be ruled by the lion! At any rate, he had majesty of deportment and dignity. You have neither grace nor wisdom, strength nor beauty. Away with you before we tear you to pieces!”

The wren was as perky as you please, and for only answer he flew to the boughs of a tree, whence he looked down on them all with his head on one side, chirping, “I am king! I am king. Bow down and make obeisance!”

A great cry of anger arose. “Kill him! Kill him!” screamed the hawk. “Tear him to pieces!”

“You will have to catch him first!” twittered the wren, and as the hawk made a rush at him, he popped into a hole in the trunk of a tree — a hole so small that nobody could get at him. From the shelter of that safe retreat he continued to gibe at the birds, issuing commands, and asserting that he was their king.

What was to be done? Nobody could get at the wren, and yet all the birds felt that he should be punished for his impudence. A consultation was held, and it was finally decided to set the owl as a guard at the mouth of his hole. “Sooner or later,” said the eagle, “he will have to come out in order to get food, and then we will have him. If, however, he elects to stay where he is, let him; either way our purpose will be served.”

So the owl mounted guard by the hole in the trunk of the tree, and having given him the most careful instructions not on any account to let the wren escape, the other birds flew away. All that day the owl remained vigilant at his post, and though the wren put his head out of the hole a hundred times, he always found his guard keeping careful watch. Night fell, and a great silence fell upon the woods, but still the owl kept awake for hour after hour, watching with unwinking eyes. At last, towards morning, his vigilance relaxed a little. His head sank forward on his breast; and he fell fast asleep. Hardly had his eyes closed than, *rip!* the wren darted out of his hole, and the next moment he had vanished among the trees.

When the birds returned the next morning they were furious to find that their prisoner had escaped. “Unfaithful servant,” they cried, “you have betrayed your trust!” And they fell upon the owl to put him to death. With some difficulty he managed to escape, but ever since that time the birds chase the owl wherever they see him, for they are still angry with him. To keep out of their way he has to hide during the day and venture out only at night, when all the other birds are fast asleep.

As for the golden-crested wren, he is known as the Kinglet, or little king, to this day.

15

A DRUM FULL OF BEES

A certain regiment had for its drummer an old man named Donatus. He was a good-for-nothing rascal, who spent most of his time in the tavern drinking and playing cards, but he was an excellent drummer for all that, and it was a fine sight to see him on parade days, marching along with the band, and playing on his drum with a flourish that was the envy of all the boys in the town. None of his companions in the regiment liked Donatus, because of his fondness for playing practical jokes. There was hardly one of them whom at some time or another he had not hoaxed, and as most of his jokes were spiteful ones, nobody pretended to be sorry when one day the drummer was found cheating at cards, and being brought before the Captain, was dismissed from the regiment. It was in vain that he pleaded for mercy, with the tears running down his face. The Captain had forgiven him many times, and was determined not to do so again.

“Well,” said Donatus at last, “if I must go, I beg you, Captain, to let me keep my drum. I have played on it since I was a lad of fourteen, and I know no other trade. If you take it away from me, I don’t know how I am going to live, but with it I may perhaps manage to turn an honest penny or two.”

“Very well, you old scoundrel,” answered the Captain. “Keep your drum and take yourself off; only be quick about it, or you shall be soundly thrashed.”

So away went Donatus with his drum on his back, and not having any particular place to go to, he just took the first road that came, and marched along it all day until he was forced to rest because his legs were so tired. Setting his drum down in the middle of the road he sat upon it and began to wonder what he should do for food and a bed for the night. First of all he turned out his pockets to see what he could find, but there was nothing there except two sous and a pack of very greasy playing cards. Donatus put them back again, with a sigh, and fell again to wondering how he was going to fare.

Now the road along which he had been walking was bordered by a dense forest, and suddenly Donatus thought that if he were to get among the trees he could at least find shelter. So he shouldered his drum again and entered the wood. Hardly had he done so than he heard a loud humming noise, and proceeding in the direction from which it came, he saw a swarm of bees hanging to the branch of a big tree.

“Here’s fine fruit!” said he to himself, laughing. “I’ll pluck them. They may come in useful one of these days!” So he took off the top skin of his drum, and having skilfully caused the swarm to drop inside the instrument, replaced the skin and went on his way.

Presently he came to a little house in the wood, and knocked at the door to ask for shelter for the night. The door was opened by a peasant woman of comely appearance, but with a very disagreeable expression of face. She looked the drummer up and down very sourly. “Be off with you!” she said, “we want no soldiers here. We have seen your kind before, my man, and do not like them.” And so saying, she very rudely shut the door in his face.

“Now what am I to do?” thought Donatus ruefully. “Night has fallen, and I am too weary to wander any farther. A plague take that hard-hearted vixen, who will not take pity on my misfortunes!”

Thus reflecting, he cast his eye about to look for a corner in which he might rest, and suddenly spied a heap of faggots piled up against the cottage wall. Climbing to the top of the heap, he found that it was possible to reach the window of the attic, which fortunately stood open, so he lost no time in crawling inside, where he stretched himself out upon the planks to sleep.

Now the attic happened to be directly above the kitchen, and as there was a knot-hole in the wooden floor, the drummer could see everything that was going on in the room below. There was the peasant-woman busily preparing the supper, and the fragrant fumes which rose from the viands tickled the drummer's nose, and made the water run out of the corners of his mouth.

After a time there was a loud knock at the house door, and the woman hurried to open it, admitting a man dressed in a long cloak. He was the village beadle, and a nephew of the woman's husband, but that good man had such a hatred of beadles that he could not bear to look at one, and his nephew never dared to come to the house while the husband was at home. His visits therefore were few and far between, but when he did come his aunt always feasted him right royally. This time she bade him welcome with great tenderness, helped him off with his cloak and sat him down at the table, upon which she placed a fine roast fowl, with a gammon of bacon and a bottle of wine.

"Ha, ha!" cried the beadle, rubbing his hands. "You are a famous hostess, aunt! My walk has given me an appetite, and I am just in a condition to do justice to your good victuals. Here's health!" And he filled a glass with wine and drained it to the dregs.

"Gr-r, you greedy fellow!" muttered the drummer, who was lying full length in the attic above with his eye to the knot-hole. "I hope it may choke you!" And he watched eagerly while the beadle began to fall to upon the roast fowl.

Suddenly the feast was interrupted by another loud knock at the door.

"My husband!" cried the woman in great agitation. "He has come back unexpectedly. If he finds you here, something terrible will happen, for he cannot bear the sight of a beadle. Quick! jump into this chest and pull down the lid, while I clear away all signs of the supper!"

The beadle, who was just as frightened as his hostess, lost no time in doing as she bade him. He hopped into the chest and pulled down the lid, while she hurried to clear the table. All this time the husband was thundering at the door, very impatient at being kept waiting. When at last his wife let him in, he flew into a temper and began to scold her.

"I am very sorry, good man," she answered, "but I did not hear you knock, I was hard at work in the scullery."

"Bring me something to eat!" growled the man.

"Just as you like," answered his wife. "But if I were you I would not sup so late — you know how it always gives you indigestion. Wouldn't it be better to go straight to bed?"

"Hold your peace, woman," said her spouse. "I am not sleepy!" And he sat himself down at the table.

Hardly had he done so than there came a loud knocking on the floor of the attic above his head.

"What is that?" he cried, jumping up. "Is there somebody in the attic?"

"Not that I know of," answered his wife. "Nobody has been here all day except a soldier with a most villainous face, who came begging. I sent him away with a flea in his ear, I assure you."

"Did you so?" said her husband. "Well, I believe he has managed to get into the attic. I remember now that I forgot to fasten the window." Off he went upstairs to see, and sure enough, there was the drummer, who was not slow in explaining his presence.

"Well, come along downstairs and warm yourself," said the peasant. "My wife is just about to get my supper, and I expect there will be enough for two."

Nothing loath, the drummer accompanied his host to the kitchen, and sat down at the table, paying no heed to the venomous glances which the woman of the house cast at him as she slammed down a loaf of black bread and a bowl of milk.

“Ho, ho,” said the drummer to himself. “There is fowl for the beadle and dry bread for the good man and his guest. Well, we shall see!” And he gave a kick with his foot to the drum which was under the table.

“What have you there?” asked the peasant, starting up at the sound.

“Oh, that is my oracle,” answered the drummer coolly.

“Your oracle! Does he, then, speak to you?”

“Certainly,” answered the drummer. “He speaks to me three times a day.”

“Faith,” said the peasant, “I should very much like to hear him.”

So the drummer picked up his drumsticks and beat a lively tattoo upon the drum, and, aroused by the noise and vibration, the swarm of bees within began to buzz about in great commotion.

“Wonderful! Wonderful!” cried the peasant delightedly, as he listened to the humming. “And do you really understand that language? What does the oracle say?”

“He says,” answered the peasant, “that there is no need for us to drink sour milk, because there is a bottle of wine standing by the wall, just behind the big chest.”

“Ha, ha, ha! that is a good joke!” roared the peasant. “Wine in my house, indeed! I only wish it were true!”

“Tell your wife to look behind the chest, and I’ll warrant you she will find it.”

Very unwillingly the dame went to the place indicated, and came back with the bottle of wine. She tried to look as surprised as her husband, but only succeeded in pulling a very wry mouth.

“Bring glasses, wife!” cried the peasant in great good humour. “We must drink the health of this famous oracle. Do you think you can make him speak again, friend?”

“Certainly,” said the drummer, beating another tattoo upon the drum. Once again the bees began to hum loudly, and he leant down, pretending to listen to what they had to say.

“Well? Well?” cried the peasant impatiently.

“He says that if your wife will look in the cupboard, she will find a roast fowl and a gammon of bacon, which we can eat instead of this dry bread.”

“Upon my word, that is a wonderful oracle!” cried the peasant. “Make haste, wife, and look in the cupboard.”

The dame could not refuse to obey, so she brought the good things and set them on the table, but if looks could have killed anybody the drummer would have been a dead man that day. Little heed he paid to her evil glances, however, but applied himself to the food with a good appetite. Before very long, between the two of them, there was nothing left of the chicken but the bones, and of the gammon but the scrag-end.

“Faith,” said the peasant, unbuttoning his waistcoat, “that was a better meal than I expected to get this night. Has your oracle any more agreeable surprises for us, good sir. I pray you, make him speak again.”

“With all the will in the world,” answered the drummer, “but this will be the last occasion, for he only speaks three times a day.” Taking up his sticks, he played the war-march of Napoleon on the drum, and the bees accompanied him as before with their loud humming. The peasant leaned forward eagerly to listen, while his wife stood by trembling with fear.

“Ah,” said the drummer at last, looking at them both with a grave face. “This time my oracle tells me of a very serious matter. He says that in the big chest over there a big black demon is hidden!”

“What! What!” cried the peasant, jumping up from his chair as though he had been stung. “A demon, did you say?”

“Precisely,” answered the drummer. “But don’t be alarmed. I will get rid of him for you. Open the door and the windows and then place yourself here, by my side.”

The peasant made haste to do what he was told, and marching boldly up to the chest, the drummer seized the heavy lid and threw it open. Immediately the beadle, who had heard everything and was not a little afraid of his own skin, jumped up, his figure entirely covered with the folds of his black mantle, and ran for the door. So sudden was his appearance, and so hasty his flight, that he ran with full force into the peasant, who had no time to get out of his way, and knocked that worthy man flying head over heels. The beadle, too, stumbled and fell, but quickly recovering himself, made blindly for the door, fell over the folds of his cloak, and tumbled head foremost into the ditch by the side of the road. There was a sudden splashing sound, a muffled murmur, and then silence.

“Poof!” said the peasant, when he had picked himself up and rubbed his limbs. “That was a narrow escape! I saw the demon quite plainly — he was all black, with fiery eyes, and a forked tail! Thank heaven that your oracle warned us, good sir, or he would have devoured us as we slept!”

The next morning, as the drummer and the peasant sat at breakfast, the latter said:

“Will you sell me that oracle of yours, drummer?”

“That depends,” answered his guest. “You know it is worth a great deal of money.”

“I will give you a hundred crowns,” said the peasant, “and that is all I have in the world.”

“Very well,” said the drummer. “It is little enough for such a wonderful oracle as this is, but I have taken a fancy to you, and I cannot refuse. Give me the money.” So the bargain was concluded. Donatus received the hundred crowns, and in return handed over the drum. Then he bade farewell to his host and was just going out of the door when the latter called after him: “Stay a moment — I have just thought of something. How am I to understand the language which the oracle speaks?”

“Oh, that is easy enough,” answered Donatus. “Listen while I tell you what to do. At ten o’clock, precisely, not a minute before or a minute afterwards, go and plant your wife in the ground up to her armpits, then smear her face and shoulders with honey. That done, take the oracle with you into the attic where you found me, and having first bandaged your eyes, remove the top skin of the drum. Wait for a quarter of an hour; then replace the skin, and take the drum with you to the place where you left your wife. In that very moment the meaning of the oracle’s language will be revealed to you, and you will know as much as I know myself!”

“Many thanks!” cried the peasant delightedly. “Good day to you, soldier, and good luck!”

“And to you!” answered the drummer, and he went away laughing up his sleeve at the fellow’s simplicity.

About a mile farther along the road he saw a man working in the fields, and went up to him.

“If you like, gossip,” said he, “I’ll do a bit of that digging for you.”

“With all my heart,” answered the labourer, giving up his spade.

“Very well, but let us change clothes, for I do not wish to soil my uniform. Here is a crown for you. Go to the inn and buy yourself a glass of wine. When you return you will be surprised to see how much I have done.”

The exchange was made and the labourer departed. Less than half an hour afterwards the sound of hoofs was heard on the road, and looking up, the drummer saw his late host, mounted on horseback, spurring furiously towards him. The man’s face was purple with fury and he was muttering threats as to what he would do to the drummer when he caught him. He had faithfully carried out all his instructions, and had truly enough learnt the meaning of the humming noise within the drum. So had his wife; for when he went to her in the garden, he found her with her face and shoulders black with bees!

Abreast of the place where the drummer was working the peasant reined in his horse, and cried out, “Hallo, you there. Have you seen a soldier pass by this way?”

“A man, master?” mumbled the drummer.

“I said a soldier, you stupid oaf! A man in a red coat with a most villainous face. Have you seen him, I say?”

“Why, yes,” the drummer answered. “He went past here about a quarter of an hour ago and made his way into the wood yonder. You’ll never find him, master!” he added, with a grin.

“And why won’t I?”

“Because he’s gone by a secret way. I saw the road he took, and I know how he means to go, but even if I were to show you the way, you would never overtake him, for you would lose yourself in the wood.”

“I’ll give you a crown if you’ll help me to find the rascal,” cried the peasant.

“A crown! Come now, that’s high pay. You must want him very badly!”

“I do indeed, and I’ll break every bone in his body when I catch him.”

“Here, lend me your horse, master,” said the drummer. “I’ll catch him for you, and not for a crown neither, but for nothing. I’d like to see him get a good thrashing, for he called me names as he passed by.”

“But can you ride?” asked the peasant.

“Can a duck swim?” answered the drummer scornfully. “Dismount quickly or the scoundrel will get away. Wait here for me,” he added, as he rode off, “I’ll be back in less than half an hour.” Off he went at a gallop, smiling to himself. “First of all a hundred crowns, and now a fine steed,” thought he. “Come Donatus, your luck is standing you in good stead. It’s odds but you’ll win through yet!” He reached the wood, entered it, and the peasant waiting by the roadside, heard the sound of his horse's hoofs grow fainter and fainter until at last they died away.

A quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, an hour, but the labourer did not return. The peasant, fuming with impatience, strode up and down the road, slashing at the grass and bushes with his stick. Suddenly he heard footsteps, and saw a man in a red coat approaching. It was the labourer dressed in the drummer's clothes, who had drunk, not one, but several glasses of wine, and was now returning very pleased with himself and all the world. As he came he trilled out a merry song.

"You knave! You villain!" cried the peasant, throwing himself upon him. "Where are my hundred crowns? What! you would teach me the language of the bees, would you? — and my poor wife is stung all over, and cannot see out of her eyes. Rascal! Scoundrel! Oh, you scum! Take that, and that, and that!" And with each word, he lifted his heavy stick and brought it down heavily upon the shoulders of the unfortunate labourer.

"Here, hold hard, master!" cried the man, twisting and turning to get away. "What's the meaning of this? I'll have the law on you if you don't leave me alone! *Ouch*, give over I tell you! What do I know about your hundred crowns or your wife?"

"What!" cried the peasant, laying on harder than before. "Do you add lying to your other crimes? You will tell me next you have never seen a drum!" And with one last mighty cut he stretched the unfortunate fellow at his feet. Then, for the first time, he had a full view of his face, and saw that he was not the man he took him for.

"Was there ever such an unlucky man in all the world as I?" he moaned, as he turned wearily homeward, pursued by the curses and threats of the man he had beaten. "First I lose a hundred crowns, and then the love of my wife, who will never forgive me her injuries; and now, into the bargain, I have lost my horse! God forgive that drummer, and protect him if ever he falls into my hands!"

I wish I could tell you that the unlucky peasant’s desire was fulfilled, and that the drummer met with his deserts. Unhappily my story ends here, and I do not know for certain what happened to him, but people do say that he never came out of the wood, but rode straight into a marsh and was drowned. If this is true, I am sure that nobody will be sorry!

16

THE DRUNKEN ROOKS

It was the middle of winter and the ground was covered with snow. Along the high road came Mynheer Van Ash, the well-known merchant of Alost, driving to the town with two immense casks of the liquor known as Hollands, in which he traded. All unknown to the merchant, one of the casks had a hole in it, and as he drove along the liquor leaked out, and sank into the snow.

In a field close by the roadside were a flock of fifty rooks, who were eagerly turning up the snow and pecking at the ground beneath in search of food. Attracted by the strong and heady smell of the spilt liquor, they flew across to investigate, and having tasted some of the gin-sodden snow, liked it so well that they followed in the train of the cart, eating more and more of it, until at last they were so drunk that they could hardly stand on their feet. Away they went to the fields again, and very soon afterwards the whole flock of them was fast asleep.

Presently, Little Pol, a peasant who worked in the neighbourhood, happened to cross the field on his way homeward, and saw the crows lying stiff and silent on the snow.

“Ah!” said he to himself. “Here is a funny sight! Fifty crows frozen to death with the cold. I’ll take them home with me and pluck them. Rook-pie is excellent eating, and such a find is welcome these hard times!” So, taking a cord from his pocket, he set to work to gather up all the rooks, and tie them together by the legs. This done, he proceeded on his way, dragging the rooks behind him.

The roughness of the motion and the friction of the snow very soon aroused the rooks from their slumber. They all woke up, and finding their legs tied, began to flap their wings together with admirable precision. Unfortunately for Little Pol, he had taken the precaution of fastening the cord to the belt round his middle, so when the fifty rooks began to fly he could not get free, and found himself being lifted into the air.

Up went the fifty rooks cawing and crying, and up too went Little Pol, calling in vain for help. They reached the clouds; they penetrated the clouds; they disappeared from sight.

And since that day not a sign has ever been seen either of the fifty rooks or of Little Pol.

17

THE BATTLE OF THE BIRDS AND BEASTS

One day as Bruin the Bear and Isengrim the Wolf were taking a walk in the woods they came to a big elm-tree with a hollow trunk. Peering within in the hope of finding something to eat they espied a little nest supported by two notches in the bark. It was the tiniest and neatest little house one could wish to see, made of fresh green moss, with a small opening in the middle for a door, and was, in fact, the home of a little bird called the Golden-crested Wren. Now among the country people the golden-crested wren is often known by the name of the Kinglet, and being aware of this, Isengrim saw a chance of playing a joke upon his companion. “Look at this nest, Bruin,” said he. “What would you say if I told you it was a King’s palace?”

“That a King’s palace!” laughed Bruin scornfully. “A handful of moss in a hole! Why, with one tap of my paw I could smash it to fragments!”

“I should not advise you to do any such thing,” said Isengrim. “The King who lives in that palace is much more powerful than you think, and unless you are looking for trouble it would be best to leave his home alone.”

“What!” cried Bruin, in a rage. “Am I to be defied by a miserable little fowl in my own forest? That for your King!” And with one sweep of his paw, he reduced the nest to a shapeless heap of moss. “Now let him revenge himself if he can,” he roared. “I hereby declare war upon him and upon all his tribe. Fur against feather! The four-legged animals against those that go on wings. We will put this matter to the test!”

When the Kinglet came home and found his nest destroyed he danced and chattered with anger. Isengrim lost no time in letting him know who was responsible for the mischief, and took a spiteful joy in telling him of the Bear’s challenge.

“Very well,” said the little wren. “Kinglet is my name, and King shall be my nature. I will call all the winged creatures together and we will settle the matter by the test of arms.”

During the next two or three weeks there was a great coming and going in the forest as the two armies assembled. The air was full of the whirl and rustle of wings. From the nests under sunny banks came the wasps in thousands, each with his shining cuirass of black and yellow, and his deadly sting. The gadfly came too, and the tiny gnat, and the mosquito from the stagnant pools, with insects of every other sort and kind — more than one could count in a day. From his eyrie on the mountain crags the lordly eagle came swooping to take his place beside the nightingale and the sparrow. In that hour of need all rivalries were forgotten; the falcon and the hawk took their place in the ranks with the thrush and the robin.

The Bear, on his side, was not idle. Swift-footed messengers were sent to every part of the land to summon the four-legged animals to arms. Slinking through the undergrowth came Isengrim’s kin, the grey wolves, with lean flanks and fierce eyes shining. Reynard brought his troop of foxes. Crashing through the trees came the mighty elephants, waving their trunks and trumpeting defiance to the foe. Out of the mud of river-beds, from the grassy plains, and the densest thickets of the forest, the animals came flocking — lions, tigers, camels, bulls, horses — if I were to name them all I should fill this book with their names. Never had so many animals been brought together since the days of Noah’s Ark.

When everything was ready, the Kinglet, who was a prudent leader, sent out a spy to try to gain information about the enemy's plans. For this purpose he chose the mosquito, who, as you may imagine, was neither easily seen nor easily caught, particularly as the Kinglet warned him to be very careful not to buzz. Under cover of the darkness he flew to the Bear's camp, and succeeded in discovering the headquarters of the general staff, where the leaders of the animal army were conferring. Just as the mosquito arrived, the Bear and the Fox were speaking together.

"So it is settled," the Bear was saying. "Our great offensive will begin to-morrow. Each of you knows what to do, I think? We have discussed everything, and nothing remains to do, but to press forward to a glorious victory."

"You are right, my lord," said Reynard, "but there is just one thing you have forgotten. How are we to know when the victory is won? We must have a standard-bearer."

"Of course," answered the Bear, "we must have a standard-bearer. I was just going to say so. Who shall it be?"

"With all respect, my lord," answered Reynard, "I propose that it should be I. My beautiful bushy tail will serve as a battle-flag. I will walk at the head of the army and hold my tail straight up in the air, as stiff as a poker. So long as I keep it like that, you will know that all is well; but if anything disastrous should happen, I will let it droop to the ground, so that our troops may have ample warning to take refuge in flight."

"Excellent," said Bruin. "You have heard what Reynard proposes. Take notice that I hereby appoint him standard-bearer to our armies."

So it was agreed, and having learnt all that he wished to know, the mosquito flew back to the Kinglet with his news. The Kinglet said nothing, but sent for the wasp, and gave him certain orders.

At dawn the next morning the great offensive began, and from the very beginning things went rather badly for the armies of the winged animals. At two points of the line the Bear and the Tiger led dashing attacks against divisions commanded by the eagle and the hawk, and after long and fierce fighting, forced them to retire. High upon a knoll commanding the battlefield, in full view of the troops, stood the Fox, with his bushy tail held proudly in the air. As he watched the struggle his lips curled in a grin of triumph.

Suddenly there was a piercing yell that rang out clear above the noise of battle. It came from the Fox, who drooped his tail to the ground, and ran, howling with pain, to the rear.

“We are lost! We are lost!” cried the animals, seeing the standard lowered. “Traitors are amongst us! Fly for your lives!” From point to point of the swaying battle-line the panic spread, throwing the army into hopeless confusion. Before long the whole of the Bear’s troops were in retreat, and the victorious army of the winged-creatures swept on and over them.

Late that night Bruin the Bear and Isengrim the Wolf, both of them very bedraggled and wearied with much running, sat together gloomily in a distant part of the wood. Presently they saw Reynard the Fox limping towards them, and immediately they rose and began to heap reproaches upon him.

“Traitor!” said Bruin. “Why did you lower the standard? In another hour we should have won.”

The Fox looked at them sulkily. “Why did I lower the standard?” said he. “Because a wasp came and stung me right at the root of my tail!”

18

THE END OF THE WORLD

Once upon a time an old woman sat spinning in a room at the top of a high tower. Beneath her chair Chaton, her cat, lay peacefully sleeping. All of a sudden the spinning-wheel jarred and made a loud creaking sound. Startled out of his sleep, Chaton the Cat rushed out of the room and bolted down the stairs as though a thousand demons were at his heels.

In the yard he passed the house-dog who was sitting in front of his kennel. “Hallo, Chaton!” cried the dog. “Where are you going to in such a hurry?”

“I am fleeing the country,” answered Chaton. “I have just heard the sounding of the last trump! The end of the world is at hand!”

“If that is so,” said the dog, “I would like to run away too. May I come with you?”

“Certainly,” answered Chaton. “Seat yourself on my beautiful curly tail.” So the dog perched himself on the cat’s tail, and off they went together.

A little farther on they came to the farm-gate, and there, perched on the topmost rail, was the cock.

“Whither away, Chaton?” asked the cock. “You seem to be in haste.”

“Yes,” said Chaton. “I have heard the last trump, which proves that the world is coming to an end, and I want to get safely away before that happens.”

“Take me with you, Chaton dear,” said the cock.

“By all means,” answered the cat. “Jump on to my beautiful curly tail beside the dog.” So the cock perched himself on Chaton’s tail, and now there were two passengers.

Away went the cat even faster than before, so as to make up for lost time, and presently they passed a rabbit who was nibbling the grass in a field.

“Chaton, Chaton,” cried the rabbit, “why are you running so quickly?”

“Don’t stop me!” answered the cat. “I’ve heard the last trump! The end of the world is coming!”

“Oh, dear me!” cried the rabbit. “What an unfortunate thing! Don’t leave me here, Chaton, for I am afraid to face the end of the world.”

“Very well,” said Chaton. “Jump on to my beautiful curly tail with the dog and the cock, and I’ll take you with me.” So the rabbit also perched himself on the cat’s tail, and now there were three of them riding there.

Off went the cat again, but not so quickly this time, because of the weight on his tail, and before very long he came to a pond by the side of which a goose was standing.

“Now then, now then, what’s the hurry?” asked the goose. “If you run so fast you’ll overheat your blood and die of a fever.”

“It’s all very well to scoff,” answered the cat, “but you must know that the end of the world is coming. I have heard the last trump sound!”

“My goodness!” said the goose. “This is dreadful! Take me with you, Chaton, and I’ll be grateful for ever.”

“Very well,” said the cat. “Jump on to my beautiful curly tail with the dog and the fox and the rabbit.” So the goose also perched herself on the cat’s tail, so now there were four passengers, and that made five altogether who were running away to escape the end of the world.

All that day the cat kept on running, and towards dusk they came to a forest.

“This seems a good place to rest,” said Chaton. “Now then, master cock, fly to the top of a tree and see if you can espy a house in which we can take shelter.”

The cock flew to the top of a high tree and from there he saw a number of lights twinkling in the distance. The five fugitives thereupon set off in the direction from which the lights shone, and before long they came to a little village. All the people of the village had left their houses and were gathered together in the square, round a man dressed all in red, with a big red feather in his cap, who was addressing them.

Chaton and his companions pressed close to the edge of the crowd and were just in time to hear these words: “Whoever finds the ring,” said the man with the red feather, “and places it on the table in my palace to-morrow before dawn, shall have the five bags of gold which hang on my saddle bow.” Having said this, the man in red mounted his horse and rode away.

Chaton went up to a little peasant who was standing in the crowd. “Tell me, gossip,” said he, “who is the man with the red feather, and what’s all this about a ring and five bags of gold?”

“Why,” said the peasant, “the man in red is the King of this country. He had a valuable ring which was kept in a tiny wooden case on the table by his bed. This afternoon a magpie flew in through the window, snatched up the case, and bore it away to its nest in the topmost boughs of the walnut tree on the village green. The King wants his ring back again, and will give the five bags of gold to anybody who will recover it for him.”

“I see,” said Chaton; “and why don’t *you* climb the walnut-tree and get the ring?”

“Because I have too much respect for my neck,” answered the peasant, “and so has everybody else here. The boughs at the top of the tree where the nest is are so thin and slender that they would not bear the weight of a child, let alone a grown man. Gold is good, but whole limbs are better, that’s what I say!”

“And I!” “And I!” echoed other villagers who had been listening to this conversation.

“In my belief you are quite right,” said Chaton seriously. “Let the King risk his own life if he is so anxious to recover his ring.” But afterwards, when he had withdrawn with his companions to the shelter of the wood, he sang a different tune.

“My friends,” said he, “our fortunes are made! As soon as all is quiet I will climb the tree and get the ring; then you shall sit on my tail again and we’ll all go off together to the King’s palace and get the bags of gold!” He danced for joy, and the dog and the cock and the goose and the rabbit danced with him.

An hour afterwards the cat climbed the tree and came down safely with the little wooden box. The rabbit gnawed it open with his teeth, and sure enough there was the ring inside it.

“Now,” said Chaton, “we will all go to the King’s palace, but I am very tired with running all day. I propose that the dog takes a turn at carrying us.” This was agreed. The other four got on to the dog’s back and clung there while he ambled off as fast as he could along the road towards the palace.

Just before dawn they came to a wide river. Now it was the turn of the goose to work for the common good. She was quite used to the water, and one by one she took the other animals across on her back. Shortly afterwards they arrived at the King’s palace, and the cock flew up through the open window of the King’s room with the ring in his beak, and placed it on the table by the bed. Then he awoke the King with a loud crow and claimed the reward, which was willingly given.

In great glee at their good fortune the animals went on their way, each with his bag of gold, and every one of them had by this time quite forgotten his fear about the coming of the end of the world. They went on and on until they came to a place where five ways met. Then Chaton said: “Here we are at the parting of the ways. Let us each choose a road, and part good friends.”

At this moment there came along a pig with a knife and fork stuck in his back. In his right ear was salt; in his left ear pepper, and mustard was on his tail, so that everybody who was hungry had only to cut themselves a slice of meat and sit down to feast.

Our friends gladly availed themselves of this good chance, and I who tell you this story would willingly have done the same, but as soon as I went up to the pig, he ran at me with his head down and sent me flying through the air, and through the window of my house, where I fell into the chair in which I am now sitting, finishing this story of the wonderful adventures of Chaton, the Dog, the Cock, the Rabbit, and the Goose.

19

THE REWARD OF THE WORLD

In days of old, when there were dragons in the land, a youthful knight was riding along the high road. It was a beautiful summer day, and the sun shone so warmly that the rider presently began to feel thirsty, so coming to a clear stream of water, he swung himself from the saddle and went to drink. As he parted the bushes to get to the water he heard a strange rumbling and roaring sound, and looking quickly in the direction from which it came he saw to his horror an immense dragon lying by the water-side pinned down by a huge mass of rock which had rolled down upon the creature as it came to drink.

The knight's first impulse was to flee, for it is better not to meddle with dragons, even when accident has rendered them helpless, but before he could regain his horse the creature saw him, and cried, "Good knight, come and help me, I pray you, to escape from my miserable position. This rock upon my back is slowly crushing me to death."

The knight hesitated, and was in two minds what to do between his fear of the dragon and his pity for its unfortunate plight. Seeing this, the creature called out again, saying, "If you will only set me free I will repay you richly, for I will give you *The Reward of the World*."

"*The Reward of the World,*" thought the knight, "that will indeed be worth having!" for he had often heard that dragons were the guardians of immense treasures. So, overcoming his fright, he went up to the creature, and at the cost of great exertion managed to roll away the stone that was pressing on its back.

“Poof! That’s better,” said the dragon, blowing a cloud of smoke out of its nostrils. “I had begun to think I was doomed to stay in that place for ever!” He rubbed his sore back reflectively with one scaly paw, and looked at the knight, who stood waiting.

“Well?” said he.

“You promised me *The Reward of the World*!” said the knight.

“Did I so?” asked the dragon, still tenderly stroking his back. “Well, you shall have it!” And suddenly he launched himself upon the knight, winding his horrible coils around his body, and almost crushing him to death. The unfortunate young man struggled feebly, but he was powerless in the grip of the monster.

“Your promise!” he gasped. “Is this my reward for having saved your life?”

“Certainly,” replied the dragon. “This is *The Reward of the World*. I am keeping my word!”

“I don’t believe you,” said the knight. “It is a trick to excuse your treachery. What a fool I was to trust a dragon’s word!”

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AN IMMENSE DRAGON LYING BY THE WATER-SIDE

“It is just as I say,” the dragon replied. “But I confess I owe you something, and I should hate to eat you feeling that you had a grievance. I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll submit this question to the first three people we meet along the road, and if they decide in my favour you must accept the verdict. Is it agreed?”

“Agreed,” said the knight, who was glad of any chance to escape from the dragon’s coils, so the creature released him, and the two set off together down the road.

They had not gone far before they met the dog.

“Stay a moment, master dog,” said the knight. “What do you understand by *The Reward of the World*?”

The dog replied, “When I was young I was a splendid watch-dog, and guarded my master’s house against all comers. In those days everybody made a fuss of me. I had plenty of good food to eat, and my own particular place before the fire. Now, alas! I am old. My sight is so weak and my powers so feeble that I can no longer work for my living, and in consequence everybody kicks me out of their way. I eat what I can get, which is not much. Even the children throw stones at me, knowing that my teeth are not sharp enough to bite, and wherever I go people say, 'There is that beastly hound again! Chase him away with a stick!' That is *The Reward of the World*."

There was little comfort for the knight in this, nevertheless he did not give up hope, but accosted the next creature they met, which happened to be a horse.

"What is *The Reward of the World*?" the knight asked him.

"Listen," said the horse bitterly, "and I will tell you. All my life I have laboured diligently for one master. Day in and day out I dragged his cart to market, working myself to skin and bone in his service. Now I am grown old and my strength begins to fail, so that I can no longer earn my keep. To-day I heard him say that he was going to send me to the knackers' yard and sell my poor old carcass for a couple of crowns. That is *The Reward of the World*, young master, and may heaven preserve you from it!"

"You see!" said the dragon, as the two went on, "my words are already justified. Come, be sensible and let me eat you without further ado!"

"No," said the knight, "we have still one person to ask. Here comes a fox. Let us see what he has to say about the matter. Reynard, what do you understand by *The Reward of the World*?"

"How do you mean?" asked the fox. "What is the case in point?"

"Well, you see," explained the knight, "I found this dragon in a position of uncommon peril, and he promised, if I would rescue him, to give me *The Reward of the World*. The question now arises as to what *The Reward of the World* is."

"I see," said Reynard thoughtfully. "His life was in danger, you say? How was that?"

"A huge stone had fallen on to his back, pinning him down so that he could not move. I rolled the stone away, and set him free."

The fox scratched his head and pondered. "If you don't mind," said he, "I'd rather like to have this matter made a little clearer. Where did all this happen?"

"A little farther back along the road, by the side of the stream."

"I'll come and look at the place!"

So the knight led Reynard to the banks of the stream, where he stood gazing for a time at the big stone.

"I want to be quite sure I understand all the circumstances," said he at last. "Does the dragon mind getting under the stone again for a moment, so that I can see exactly how he lay?"

"Not at all," said the dragon politely, and he lay down on the bank, while the knight and the fox together rolled the stone on top of him.

"Splendid!" said Reynard, when the dragon was safely pinned down. "Now everything is as it was before!" Then turning to the knight, he added, "If you, knowing what you know now, care to release him again, you are at liberty to do so, but...." And he winked slyly. There was no need to say more.

"I am really very much obliged to you," said the knight, as he walked off down the road with Reynard, leaving the dragon still under the stone. "That was a capital idea of yours, and it certainly saved my life. I would like to show my gratitude in some way, and I shall be honoured if you will accept my hospitality for a few days."

Reynard needed no pressing, but went home with the young man there and then, and thoroughly enjoyed the good fare with which he was provided. Since, however, a fox is always a fox, no matter what company he is in, Master Reynard could not forbear from stealing, and every night he crept into the hen-house and killed one or two chickens. When the knight discovered this he was very angry, and picking up a big stick he gave the fox a good thrashing and drove him forth.

“That is *The Reward of the World*,” he said to himself, as he watched Reynard disappearing into the distance. But whether he was referring to the way the fox had treated him, or to his own treatment of the fox, I cannot say.

20

ONE BAD TURN BEGETS ANOTHER

Tybert the Cat and Courtoys the Dog were very great friends — that is to say they were as friendly as their natures would let them be. Both of them were exceedingly greedy and selfish. The Cat was spiteful and the Dog was sullen. Master Tyb was always willing to give up to the dog what he did not need himself, and on his part, Courtoys never stole the cat's food while the cat was looking. Neither was loath to play a mean trick upon the other if he could do so without injury to himself, but except for these little matters they were quite in accord, and very friendly, as I said before, and on the whole they got on very well together.

There came a time when, in spite of Tybert's shyness and Courtoys' strength, they could by no means find anything to eat. For two days not a morsel of food had passed the lips of either; and this made them very bad tempered.

"I wish I'd never seen you," said Courtoys to Tyb. "A fine partner you are, upon my word, when you can't find food for us. Where are those wonderful wits of yours, of which you are always boasting."

"In my head," answered Tyb spitefully. "And such as they are, they have to do duty for two. If you'd talk less, and think more, and use your eyes, we would be better off. Here is a cart coming along the road; perhaps we shall find our dinner inside it!"

Sure enough, a heavy wagon was rumbling along the road towards them, driven by a peasant with a round and rather stupid face. As it came nearer, Tyb and Courtoys sniffed the air, and the water ran out of the corners of their mouths.

“Fish,” said Tybert ravenously.

“Fish!” echoed Courtoys. “Here’s a chance to exercise those wits of yours. How can we get it?”

“I have a plan,” answered the Cat. “Come quickly and hide yourself with me in the ditch until the wagon has passed, and I will tell you all about it!”

So it was done. The wagon rumbled by, the scent of the fish with which it was laden filling the air, and the driver went on calmly smoking his pipe, little dreaming that four hungry eyes were gazing at him through the bushes that bordered the side of the road.

“Now then,” cried Tybert, “our time has come. Follow the wagon and don’t let it out of your sight for a moment, but take care that the driver does not see you. I shall go on in front and stretch myself out on the road, pretending to be dead. It’s odds but what the driver, seeing me lying there, will covet my skin, and will pick me up and throw me into the cart. Once there, I’ll throw the fish out to you, and you will know what to do with it.”

“Oh, yes, I’ll know what to do with it,” said Courtoys to himself, with a grin, and, keeping well out of sight of the driver, he followed the wagon.

Tybert’s plan worked to perfection. He ran on for about a quarter of a mile, keeping to the fields bordering the road, and then stretched himself out at full length, with his mouth open as though he were dead.

“Oho!” said the peasant, as he drove up. “What’s this? A dead cat! I’ll take him with me, and sell his skin for a few sous. This time next week some fine lady will be wearing him round her neck, thinking he’s sable.” And with that he dismounted, picked up the cat and slung him carelessly into the wagon on top of the heap of fish.

Hardly was he back in his place, than Tybert arose and began to pick out the biggest and fattest fish and throw them into the road. He had to be very careful in doing this, because now and again the peasant turned his head. Once when a very big fish was tumbled out, the noise of its fall aroused the peasant, who swung round sharply, and Tybert was only just in time to avert discovery by laying himself out and pretending to be dead as before.

When he had thrown out what he considered was a sufficient quantity, Tybert rested awhile, so that the dog could collect the spoils, and then jumped from the wagon to go and claim his share. When he came up to Courtoys, however, he found to his dismay that nothing was left of the fish but a heap of bones.

"That was a splendid plan of yours, brother," said Courtoys, licking his lips. "The fish were delicious, and I hardly feel hungry at all now! Do make haste and take your share!" And he waved his paw invitingly towards the heap of bones. Tybert gave him one look, and then grinned as though in enjoyment of an excellent joke. Not by word or action did he give any sign of the anger which was consuming him, but he determined to have his revenge.

A day or two later his chance came. Lurking in his usual stealthy way in a farmyard, he saw the farmer go into the house with a fine big ham, which he hung by a cord on a nail in the kitchen wall. Away he ran to Courtoys and told him what he had seen.

"Well," said Courtoys surlily, "and what about it?"

"Why," answered Tybert. "There is no reason why we should not feast on that ham, you and I. It will be the easiest thing in the world to steal it. The latch of the kitchen window is broken, and it cannot be locked. All you have to do is to go there to-night, creep through the window, pull down the ham, and throw it out to me."

"Why can't you get it yourself?" asked Courtoys suspiciously.

"Ah," said the cat, "I am not strong enough to pull it down."

“And what about the farmer’s dogs? I seem to remember hearing they are savage brutes!”

“Well, of course, if you’re *afraid* ...” answered the cat disdainfully.

“Afraid yourself!” cried Courtoys. “You leave this to me.”

So that very night, when the moon had set, the two crept into the farmyard, and the dog managed to get through the window into the kitchen unobserved. The next moment he had pulled down the ham and had thrown it out of the window to Tybert, who was waiting below. Tybert seized it in his mouth and ran off, but as soon as he reached the gate he gave a series of such blood-curdling miaows, that he roused every dog on the farm. Out they came, hair bristling, and teeth flashing, just in time to catch our friend Courtoys as he jumped down from the window.

Then occurred a ferocious fight. With his back to the wall Courtoys put up a sturdy resistance, but he was very badly mangled indeed before he managed to escape. With one ear torn off and one eye closed, bleeding from many wounds and panting with his exertions, he limped painfully up to where the cat awaited him.

“My poor friend,” cried Tybert. “Are you badly hurt? Never mind, the ham was worth it — it simply melted in the mouth. I have already eaten my share, and I willingly give you yours!” So saying, he pointed to the greasy string by which the ham had been suspended, and which was now all that remained. Courtoys gazed at it blankly.

“You see,” explained Tybert calmly, as he prepared to take his departure, “a cord is worth a good many fishbones!”

21

THE PEASANT AND THE SATYRS

One cold winter’s day a peasant set out on a journey which led him through the depths of a forest into which he had not hitherto been. The result was that he lost his way, and after wandering about for many hours in the hope of finding it again, he found himself, just as dusk was coming on, in a little clearing where he was overjoyed to see a small house with a cheerful light in the window. “Here is a chance of supper and a bed,” thought the peasant, and he made haste to go up to the cottage door.

Now this house in the clearing was not inhabited by men, but by some strange forest folk who were called satyrs. If you want to know what they were like, you must look at the pictures. Certainly the peasant had never seen anything like them before, although he had often heard of them, and when he nearly tumbled over the little satyr children who were playing in the snow outside the house door, he was the most surprised man in all those parts. It was too late to draw back however, so he went boldly up to the door and gave a loud knock.

“Come in!” cried a gruff voice, and the peasant accordingly went in and found himself facing the Father of all the Satyrs, who had a long beard and a pair of horns jutting from his forehead. The poor fellow’s knees trembled underneath him for fright, especially when he saw all the other satyrs, the mother and the uncles and the aunts, glowering at him.

"Please forgive me for my intrusion," said he, "but I have lost my way in the woods, and I am half dead with hunger and cold. It would be an act of great kindness if you would give me some food and allow me to take shelter for the night." So saying, to give point to his remarks, he set to work to blow upon his chilled fingers, which indeed were blue with the cold.

"Why are you blowing your fingers?" asked the Father of all the Satyrs curiously.

"Why, to warm them," answered the peasant, and he blew harder than before.

"Well, sit down," said the Satyr. "As it happens we are just about to have supper, and you are welcome to share it with us."

So the peasant sat down to supper, and all the Satyr family sat down too, and watched him with big unblinking eyes, so that he felt very uncomfortable. A big basin of soup was set before him, and finding it very hot, he began to blow upon it.

At this all the Satyr family cried out in surprise, and the Father Satyr said, "Why are you blowing your soup?"

"To cool it," answered the peasant. "It is too hot, and I am afraid it may scald my mouth."

Another and a louder cry of surprise came from all the Satyrs, but the Father cried out loudest of all, and seemed very indignant. "Come," he said, advancing to the peasant and taking him by the collar. "Out you go! There is no place in my house for a man who can blow hot and cold with the same breath. That smells too much of sorcery or magic. Out you go, I say, and practise your spells in the forest."

So the poor peasant had to go supperless and spend the night in the woods, with no shelter but the trees, and the snow for coverlet.

And, if you wish to know when all this happened, all I can tell you is that it was a very long time ago, in the days when fishes flew, and cats had wings.

22

THE TWO FRIENDS AND THE BARREL OF GREASE

A dog and a wolf who were very great friends set up house together, and agreed to share equally any food they might obtain. One day they managed to steal a barrel of grease from the house of a countryman who lived close by, and having no immediate need of it, they decided to put it away until the winter, when they might be glad of anything they could get to appease their hunger. So the barrel of grease was carefully hidden away in the cellar.

All went well for some time, and then the wolf began to think longingly of the hidden store. Every time he thought of the grease he imagined himself licking it up, and at last he could withstand the temptation no longer, so he went to the dog and said: “I shall be out all day to-morrow. A cousin of mine has just had a little son, and he has sent for me to go and be godfather at the christening.”

“Very well, my friend,” answered the dog. “Go by all means. They have paid you a great honour by asking you, and of course you cannot refuse.”

The wolf departed, but he went no farther than the cellar, where he spent the whole of the day by the barrel of grease, eating and eating until he could hold no more. Late at night he returned, licking his chops, and the dog said: “Well, my friend, did everything go off well?”

“Splendidly, thank you!” answered the wolf.

“Good! And what name did they give the child?”

“Oh,” said the wolf, thinking of the barrel of grease, “they called him *Begun*.”

“What a strange name!” cried the dog, “I never heard the like of it in my life. However, every one to his taste!”

A day or two later the wolf once again began to think of the delicious food in the cellar, so he told the dog that he had just received another summons from a different cousin, who also had a baby to which she wished him to stand godfather. “I wish to goodness they would leave me alone!” he said, pretending to be very much annoyed. “Anybody would think that I had nothing else to do but to stand godfather to other people’s brats!”

“You shouldn’t be so good-natured,” laughed the dog. “It is clear that you make a very good godfather, or you would not be so much in demand.”

Away went the wolf and spent a second satisfying day with the barrel of grease. When he returned the dog asked him the name of the child.

“*Half-Done*,” said the wolf.

“Bah!” cried the dog, “that is an even sillier name than the other. I can’t think what parents are coming to — in my time plain Jean or Jacques was good enough for anybody.”

The wolf made no reply, being in fact fast asleep, for he had dined very well, and was drowsy. A day or two afterwards however, he played the same trick again, and devoured the last of the fat in the barrel. This time, when asked the name of the child to whom he had stood godfather, he answered: “*All-done*.”

The dog had no suspicion of the way he had been deceived, and all went well until the winter came and food became difficult to procure. Then one day the dog said: “It seems to me that the time has come to tap our barrel of grease. What do you say, friend? Weren’t we wise to put it away for a time like this!”

“I believe you,” answered the wolf.

“Come then, let us go to the cellar and enjoy the fruits of our prudence.”

So off they went to the cellar, where they found the barrel in the very place they had left it, but with nothing inside it. The dog looked at the wolf, and the wolf looked at the dog, and of the two the wolf seemed the more surprised.

“What’s this?” cried the dog. “Where has our grease gone?” Then, looking at the wolf suspiciously: “This is some of your work, my friend!”

“Oh, indeed!” said the wolf, “and since when has it been proved that dogs do not like grease?”

“You mean to accuse me of stealing it?” cried the dog angrily.

“One of the two of us must have taken it, for nobody else knew it was here!”

“It was certainly not I.”

“Well,” said the wolf, “it is no use squabbling over the matter. Fortunately there is a way of discovering which of us is the culprit. Obviously the one who has eaten all that grease must be absolutely full of fat. Let us both go to sleep in the sunshine. At the end of an hour or two the heat will melt the grease which will soak through and show on the body of the one who is the thief.”

Feeling quite secure in his innocence, the dog willingly agreed to this plan, and the two went out and lay down in a sheltered place, where the heat of the sun was strong. After a time the dog began to yawn, and in less than half an hour he was sound asleep, but the wolf had a good reason for not following his example, and although he closed his eyes to deceive his friend, he remained wide awake.

Presently, having made sure that the dog was slumbering peacefully, he arose and tiptoed softly down to the cellar. There he collected with his long tongue, every bit of the grease that still remained sticking to the sides and bottom of the barrel, and returning to the sleeper, carefully smeared the grease over his jaws, back, and thighs. Several times he did this, until the dog was covered with a thin greasy film. Then he lay down again and once more pretended to sleep.

A little while afterwards the dog woke up, and found the grease all over his body. He could not make out how it got there, and while he was still regarding himself with a look of blank surprise, the wolf cried: “Ah, now we know who was the thief! The grease has betrayed you, my friend!”

The poor dog looked very sheepish, and had not a word to say for himself. He puzzled over the matter until his head ached, and at last he came to the conclusion that he must have been sleep-walking and have stolen the grease without knowing it — a conclusion with which the wolf entirely agreed.

23

WHY THE BEAR HAS A STUMPY TAIL

One very cold winter, when the ground was covered with snow and the ponds and rivers were frozen hard, Reynard the Fox and all the other animals went out to enjoy themselves by sliding and skating on the ice. After a time Reynard began to feel hungry, so he wandered off by himself in search of something to eat. He nosed about here, and he nosed about there; he lay in wait behind bushes in the hope of being able to catch a bird; he lurked by the walls of farmhouses ready to spring out upon any unsuspecting chicken that might show itself, but all in vain. The birds were wary, and the fowls were all safe in the hen-houses.

Disappointed with his lack of success Reynard betook himself to the river, now covered with a glistening sheet of ice, and there, under the shelter of a bank, he found a hole in the ice which had not been frozen over. He sat down to watch the hole, and presently a little fish popped up its head for a breath of air. Reynard’s paw darted, and the next moment the unfortunate creature lay gasping on the ice. Fish after fish the fox caught in this way, and when he had quite satisfied his hunger he strung the remainder on a stick and took his departure, not forgetting first of all to offer up a prayer for the repose of his victims.

He had not gone far before he met Mrs. Bruin, who had also come out in search of something to eat. When she saw Reynard with his fine catch of fish, she opened her eyes, I can tell you, and said: “Wherever did you get all those fine fishes from, cousin? They make my mouth water! I am so hungry that I could bite the head off an iron nail!”

“Ah,” said Reynard slyly, “wouldn’t you just like to know!”

“It is what I’m asking you,” said Mrs. Bruin. “You would surely not be so mean as to keep the good news to yourself!”

“I don’t know so much about that,” answered Reynard, “but I have a certain fondness for you, cousin, so come along with me and I will show you the place where I caught the fish.”

Nothing loath, the bear followed, and presently they came to the hole in the ice.

“Do you see that hole, cousin?” said Reynard. “That is where the fish come up to breathe. All you have to do is to sit on the ice and let your tail hang down into the water. After a time the fish will come to bite at it, but don’t you move. Sit quite still until the evening; then you will find a score of fishes on your tail and you can pull them out all together.”

Mrs. Bruin was delighted with the plan and immediately sat down and dipped her tail into the water.

“That’s the way,” said Reynard. “Now I’ll just be walking home to see to my dinner, but I’ll be back presently. Be careful to keep quite still, or you’ll spoil everything!”

So for the next three hours Mrs. Bruin sat on the ice with her tail in the water, and very cold it was, but she consoled herself with the thought of the delicious meal she would have when the fish were landed.

Late in the afternoon Reynard returned. “Well, cousin,” said he, “how do you feel?”

“Very cold,” said Mrs. Bruin, with her teeth chattering. “My tail is so numb that I hardly know I’ve got one!”

“Does it feel heavy?” asked Reynard anxiously.

“Very heavy,” said Mrs. Bruin.

“There must be *hundreds* of fish on it!” said Reynard. He left the bank and walked round the bear, observing that the water in the hole had frozen over, and that Mrs. Bruin’s tail was held firmly in the ice.

“I think you may safely pull up now,” he went on, “but you must be careful to land all the fish together. There is only one way to do that: you must give a strong, sharp, sudden pull and take them by surprise. Now then, are you ready? One, two, three...!”

At the word three Mrs. Bruin rose on her hind legs and gave a mighty jerk, but her tail was so firmly embedded in the ice that it would not come out.

“My word,” cried Reynard, “you have caught the whole river-full. Persevere, cousin — now then, a long pull and a strong pull!”

“Ouf!” grunted Mrs. Bruin, “ouf, ouf ... ah!” And then she suddenly tumbled head over heels on the ice, as with one mighty jerk, she snapped her beautiful bushy tail clean off close to the roots.

When she had gathered her scattered wits together well enough to understand what had happened, she went to look for Reynard, but he had suddenly remembered an important engagement elsewhere, and was not to be found. And from that time down to this every bear has been born with a little stumpy tail.

24

THE WITCH’S CAT

Once upon a time there was a wicked old witch who lived all alone in the topmost chamber of a tall and gloomy tower. There she sat day after day with her ugly head resting on her hands, peering out through a slit in the wall upon the countryside. Her only companion was a big black tom-cat, who sat by her side in the darkened chamber, his eyes shining like green fire in the gloom.

One day as the witch sat there, she saw a little girl gathering berries in the wood. The sight made her show her toothless gums in a malicious grin and she muttered to herself: “Wait there, wait there, my ducky, my darling, till I come to you, for your flesh will be very sweet.” Then she put on a long cloak and took a walking-staff in her hand and went down the stairs.

Now the little girl, whose name was Margot, had strayed very far from home in her eagerness to gather the ripe berries, and she was in a part of the country which was quite strange to her. Had she happened to meet anybody on her way they would have warned her not to go near the witch’s tower, but she had not met a soul all day, and so she had no idea of the dreadful danger that was threatening her. She went on gathering her berries, light-heartedly humming a tune, until her basket was nearly full, and then she sat down at the foot of a tree to rest.

Presently she saw an old woman coming towards her. It was the witch, who had muffled herself up in her cloak, so that her face could not easily be seen.

“Good-day, my dear,” said the witch. “Will you give me a few of those ripe berries?”

“Of course I will,” answered Margot. “Take as many as you like, I can easily gather some more.” So the witch took a handful of berries, and sat down by Margot’s side to eat them. And all the time she was eating she was gazing greedily at the little girl’s white neck and rosy cheeks, but Margot could not see the hateful look in the witch’s eyes because the cloak hid her face.

“Where do you live, little girl?” asked the witch after a while.

Margot told her, and the witch said: “You must be very tired with walking all that way. If you will come to my house I will give you a bowl of milk and a slice of currant cake, and you shall see all the wonderful things that I keep in my cupboards.”

So Margot went with the witch into the gloomy tower, not so much because she wanted the milk or the cake, but to see the pretty things in the cupboards, and no sooner was she within than the witch fell upon her, and bound her fast with a cord, and carried her up to the topmost room, where the cat was sitting blinking its green eyes. Then the old witch opened the door of a dark cupboard, and pushed poor Margot inside, for she meant to keep her there until she had grown bigger and fatter, so that she would make a more satisfying meal. To this end the witch brought her plenty of rich food every day, and from time to time she would feel Margot’s arm to see whether she was plump enough to go into the pot. Poor child, how frightened she was, and how miserable at being kept in that dark cupboard all alone. She cried nearly all day long, but there was nobody to hear her except the witch’s big black cat, and he was a silent animal who did not show his feelings. Margot was almost as sorry for him as she was for herself, for the witch often beat him unmercifully, and the girl tried to comfort him by giving him pieces from her dinner, which she pushed out through the crack under the door.

One day when the old witch had gone out as usual, leaving Margot a prisoner, the girl was surprised to hear a voice speaking to her from the room beyond. “Margot, Margot,” said the voice, “don’t cry any more, but listen to me.”

“Who are you?” asked the little girl.

“I am the witch’s cat,” the voice went on. “I am going to push the key of the cupboard underneath the door. Take it and let yourself out, but make haste, for you have no time to waste!”

“Thank you, thank you,” said Margot, when she found herself free. “But how is it that you are able to talk? I did not know that cats could speak.”

“They can’t, as a rule,” said the witch’s cat, “but never mind that now. The witch may return at any moment, and we must get you safely out of her reach.”

“Yes, yes,” said Margot, “I must go at once. I will run like the wind!”

“That is no use,” said the cat. “Before you had got half-way home the witch would overtake you.”

“Then what must I do? Is there anywhere I can hide?”

“When she returns and finds you gone she will ransack every corner of the tower. Not even a mouse could escape her keen eyes.”

“Oh dear! oh dear!” said Margot, beginning to cry again. “Do help me to escape, kind cat, and I will be grateful to you all my life.”

“Of course I will help you,” answered the cat, “that is why I let you out of the cupboard. Take this piece of carpet, and when the witch has almost overtaken you, throw it on to the ground and it will turn into a wide river. That will delay her for some time, because she cannot swim, but if she manages to get across, and overtakes you again, throw down this comb, which will immediately change into a dense forest. You may plunge into it without fear, for a way will open before you between the trees, but the witch will have to cut a way through, foot by foot, with her knife; and long before she has done that you will be safely home.”

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Paddling with her Broom

Margot thanked the cat, and having taken the carpet and the comb, she fled swiftly down the stairs.

A short time afterwards the witch came home, and when she discovered that her prisoner had escaped she howled with rage. Mounting to the very roof of the tower, she gazed out upon the countryside, and soon descried the figure of the little girl, running as fast as she could in the direction of her home.

“I’ll have you yet,” muttered the witch, and away she went after her.

Margot saw her coming, and redoubled her speed, but all to no avail, for the witch gained upon her rapidly. Soon she heard her hissing breath, and looking fearfully over her shoulder, saw the baleful look of triumph in her eyes.

Quickly then, Margot took out the strip of carpet and laid it upon the ground. Immediately it turned into a wide and swiftly flowing river. The witch gave a cry of rage, and tried to wade after her, but the flood mounted swiftly, first to her knees, and then to her waist. Another moment and she would have been swept away, but taking a nutshell from her pocket she set it afloat upon the waters, muttering a charm as she did so. Then the nutshell turned into a little boat, into which the old crone pulled herself, and, paddling with her broom, made shift to cross the river.

The delay had given Margot a good start, but the witch wore enchanted boots which enabled her to cover the ground at a wonderful rate. Ten minutes more and she was once again at Margot's heels.

Then the little girl drew out the comb and flung it behind her. Immediately a dense forest sprang up, and Margot fled into it, through an alley that opened itself before her. Spluttering with anger, the witch drew her knife to hack her way through the wood, but long before she had cut a dozen yards Margot was safely home and in her mother's arms.

The old witch made her way back to the tower, and the things she said were so terrible that the very air was poisoned, and the grass by the roadside withered and turned black. No sooner had she set foot within her doorway, however, than she crumbled to dust, and a wind arose and blew the dust to all quarters of the heavens.

So that was the end of the old witch, for her power ceased as soon as one of her victims managed to escape. As for the black cat, nobody ever saw him again, but it was whispered that he was really a Prince whom the wicked old crone had captured years before, and given the shape of a cat by enchantment. By helping Margot to escape he had released himself from the spell that bound him, and was enabled to return to his father's kingdom.

10. MARIE-CATHERINE D'AULNOY

CONTENTS

Preface

1. Princess Belle-Étoile
2. Gracieuse and Percinet
3. The Fair with Golden Hair
4. The Blue Bird
5. Prince Sprite
6. Princess Printaniere
7. Princess Rosette
8. The Golden Branch
9. The Bee and the Orange Tree
10. The Good Little Mouse
11. The Ram
12. Finette Cendron
13. Fortunée
14. Babiole
15. The Yellow Dwarf
16. Green-Serpent
17. The Princess Carpillon
18. The Friendly Frog
19. The Hind in the Wood
20. The White Cat
21. Belle-Belle
22. The Pigeon and the Dove
23. Prince Marcassin
24. The Dolphin
25. The Wonderful Sheep
26. The White Dow

PREFACE

D’AULNOY, MARIE-CATHERINE

Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baroness d’Aulnoy (1650/1651-1705), also known as Countess d’Aulnoy, was a French writer known for her fairy tales and for her novels of court intrigue, whose personal intrigues were commensurate with those described in her books.

Shortly after her marriage as a young girl in 1666, Marie d’Aulnoy conspired with her mother and their two lovers to accuse falsely Marie’s husband, a middle-aged financier, of high treason. When the plot miscarried, she was forced to spend the next 15 years out of the country, leading a peripatetic existence in Spain, the Netherlands, and England before returning to Paris and beginning her literary career in 1685. Her best-remembered works are *Contes de Fées* (1697; “Fairy Tales”) and *Les Contes Nouveaux ou les Fées à la Mode* (1698; “New Tales, or the Fancy of the Fairies”), written in the manner of the great fairy tales of Charles Perrault but laced with her own sardonic touch. Her pseudo-historical novels, which were immensely popular throughout Europe, include *Hippolyte, comte de Douglas* (1690; *Hippolitus, Earl of Douglas*), *Memoires de la Cour d’Espagne* (1690; *Memoirs from the Court of Spain*), and *Relation du Voyage d’Espagne* (1691; *Travels into Spain*). An English-language translation of her works, including the fairy tales, was published in four volumes in 1707.

1

PRINCESS BELLE-ÉTOILE

Once upon a time there were three Princesses, named Roussette, Brunette, and Blondine, who lived in retirement with their mother, a Princess who had lost all her former grandeur. One day an old woman called and asked for a dinner, as this Princess was an excellent cook. After the meal was over, the old woman, who was a fairy, promised that their kindness should be rewarded, and immediately disappeared.

Shortly after, the King came that way, with his brother and the Lord Admiral. They were all so struck with the beauty of the three Princesses, that the King married the youngest, Blondine, his brother married Brunette, and the Lord Admiral married Roussette.

The good Fairy, who had brought all this about, also caused the young Queen Blondine to have three lovely children, two boys and a girl, out of whose hair fell fine jewels. Each had a brilliant star on the forehead, and a rich chain of gold around the neck. At the same time Brunette, her sister, gave birth to a handsome boy. Now the young Queen and Brunette were much attached to each other, but Roussette was jealous of both, and the old Queen, the King’s mother, hated them. Brunette died soon after the birth of her son, and the King was absent on a warlike expedition, so Roussette joined the wicked old Queen in forming plans to injure Blondine. They ordered Feintise, the old Queen’s waiting-woman, to strangle the Queen’s three children and the son of Princess Brunette, and bury them secretly. But as she was about to execute this wicked order, she was so struck by their beauty, and the appearance of the sparkling stars on their foreheads, that she shrank from the deed.

So she had a boat brought round to the beach, and put the four babes, with some strings of jewels, into a cradle, which she placed in the boat, and then set it adrift. The boat was soon far out at sea. The waves rose, the rain poured in torrents, and the thunder roared. Feintise could not doubt that the boat would be swamped, and felt relieved by the thought that the poor little innocents would perish, for she would otherwise always be haunted by the fear that something would occur to betray the share she had had in their preservation.

But the good Fairy protected them, and after floating at sea for seven days they were picked up by a Corsair. He was so struck by their beauty that he altered his course, and took them home to his wife, who had no children. She was transported with joy when he placed them in her hands. They admired together the wonderful stars, the chains of gold that could not be taken off their necks, and their long ringlets. Much greater was the woman’s astonishment when she combed them, for at every instant there rolled out of their hair pearls, rubies, diamonds, and emeralds. She told her husband of it, who was not less surprised than herself.

“I am very tired,” said he, “of a Corsair’s life, and if the locks of those little children continue to supply us with such treasures, I will give up roaming the seas.” The Corsair’s wife, whose name was Corsine, was enchanted at this, and loved the four infants so much the more for it. She named the Princess, Belle-Etoile, her eldest brother, Petit-Soleil, the second, Heureux, and the son of Brunette, Cheri.

As they grew older, the Corsair applied himself seriously to their education, as he felt convinced there was some great mystery attached to their birth.

The Corsair and his wife had never told the story of the four children, who passed for their own. They were exceedingly united, but Prince Cheri entertained for Princess Belle-Etoile a greater affection than the other two. The moment she expressed a wish for anything, he would attempt even impossibilities to gratify her.

One day Belle-Etoile overheard the Corsair and his wife talking. “When I fell in with them,” said the Corsair, “I saw nothing that could give me any idea of their birth.” “I suspect,” said Corsine, “that Cheri is not their brother, he has neither star nor neck-chain.” Belle-Etoile immediately ran and told this to the three Princes, who resolved to speak to the Corsair and his wife, and ask them to let them set out to discover the secret of their birth. After some remonstrance they gained their consent. A beautiful vessel was prepared, and the young Princess and the three Princes set out. They determined to sail to the very spot where the Corsair had found them, and made preparations for a grand sacrifice to the fairies, for their protection and guidance. They were about to immolate a turtle-dove, but the Princess saved its life, and let it fly. At this moment a syren issued from the water, and said, “Cease your anxiety, let your vessel go where it will; land where it stops.” The vessel now sailed more quickly. Suddenly they came in sight of a city so beautiful that they were anxious their vessel should enter the port. Their wishes were accomplished; they landed, and the shore in a moment was crowded with people, who had observed the magnificence of their ship. They ran and told the King the news, and as the grand terrace of the Palace looked out upon the sea-shore, he speedily repaired thither. The Princes, hearing the people say, “There is the King,” looked up, and made a profound obeisance. He looked earnestly at them, and was as much charmed by the Princess’s beauty, as by the handsome mien of the young Princes. He ordered his equerry to offer them his protection, and everything that they might require.

The King was so interested about these four children, that he went into the chamber of the Queen, his mother, to tell her of the wonderful stars which shone upon their foreheads, and everything that he admired in them. She was thunderstruck at it, and was terribly afraid that Feintise had betrayed her, and sent her secretary to enquire about them. What he told her of their ages confirmed her suspicions. She sent for Feintise, and threatened to kill her. Feintise, half dead with terror, confessed all; but promised, if she spared her, that she would still find means to do away with them. The Queen was appeased; and, indeed, old Feintise did all she could for her own sake. Taking a guitar, she went and sat down opposite the Princess's window, and sang a song which Belle-Etoile thought so pretty that she invited her into her chamber. "My fair child," said Feintise, "Heaven has made you very lovely, but you yet want one thing—the dancing-water. If I had possessed it, you would not have seen a white hair upon my head, nor a wrinkle on my face. Alas! I knew this secret too late; my charms had already faded." "But where shall I find this dancing-water?" asked Belle-Etoile. "It is in the luminous forest," said Feintise. "You have three brothers; does not any one of them love you sufficiently to go and fetch some?" "My brothers all love me," said the Princess, "but there is one of them who would not refuse me anything." The perfidious old woman retired, delighted at having been so successful. The Princes, returning from the chase, found Belle-Etoile engrossed by the advice of Feintise. Her anxiety about it was so apparent, that Cheri, who thought of nothing but pleasing her, soon found out the cause of it, and, in spite of her entreaties, he mounted his white horse, and set out in search of the dancing-water. When supper-time arrived, and the Princess did not see her brother Cheri, she could neither eat nor drink; and desired he might be sought for everywhere, and sent messengers to find him and bring him back.

The wicked Feintise was very anxious to know the result of her advice; and when she heard that Cheri had already set out, she was delighted, and reported to the Queen-Mother all that had passed. “I admit, Madam,” said she, “that I can no longer doubt that they are the same four children: but one of the Princes is already gone to seek the dancing-water, and will no doubt perish in the attempt, and I shall find similar means to do away with all of them.”

The plan she had adopted with regard to Prince Cheri was one of the most certain, for the dancing-water was not easily to be obtained; it was so notorious from the misfortunes which occurred to all who sought it, that every one knew the road to it. He was eight days without taking any repose but in the woods. At the end of this period he began to suffer very much from the heat; but it was not the heat of the sun, and he did not know the cause of it, until from the top of a mountain he perceived the luminous forest; all the trees were burning without being consumed, and casting out flames to such a distance that the country around was a dry desert.

At this terrible scene he descended, and more than once gave himself up for lost. As he approached this great fire he was ready to die with thirst; and perceiving a spring falling into a marble basin, he alighted from his horse, approached it, and stooped to take up some water in the little golden vase which he had brought with him, when he saw a turtle-dove drowning in the fountain. Cheri took pity on it, and saved it. “My Lord Cheri,” she said, “I am not ungrateful; I can guide you to the dancing-water, which, without me, you could never obtain, as it rises in the middle of the forest, and can only be reached by going underground.” The Dove then flew away, and summoned a number of foxes, badgers, moles, snails, ants, and all sorts of creatures that burrow in the earth. Cheri got off his horse at the entrance of the subterranean passage they made for him, and groped his way after the kind Dove, which safely conducted him to the fountain. The Prince filled his golden vase; and returned the same way he came.

He found Belle-Etoile sorrowfully seated under some trees, but when she saw him she was so pleased that she scarcely knew how to welcome him.

Old Feintise learned from her spies that Cheri had returned, and that the Princess, having washed her face with the dancing-water, had become more lovely than ever. Finding this, she lost no time in artfully making the Princess sigh for the wonderful singing-apple. Prince Cheri again found her unhappy, and again found out the cause, and once more set out on his white horse, leaving a letter for Belle-Etoile.

In the meanwhile, the King did not forget the lovely children, and reproached them for never going to the Palace. They excused themselves by saying that their brother's absence prevented them.

Prince Cheri at break of day perceived a handsome young man, from whom he learned where the singing-apple was to be found: but after travelling some time without seeing any sign of it, he saw a poor turtle-dove fall at his feet almost dead. He took pity on it, and restored it, when it said, "Good-day, handsome Cheri, you are destined to save my life, and I to do you signal service. You are come to seek for the singing-apple: it is guarded by a terrible dragon." The Dove then led him to a place where he found a suit of armour, all of glass: and by her advice he put it on, and boldly went to meet the dragon. The two-headed monster came bounding along, fire issuing from his throat; but when he saw his alarming figure multiplied in the Prince's mirrors he was frightened in his turn. He stopped, and looking fiercely at the Prince, apparently laden with dragons, he took flight and threw himself into a deep chasm. The Prince then found the tree, which was surrounded with human bones, and breaking off an apple, prepared to return to the Princess. She had never slept during his absence, and ran to meet him eagerly.

When the wicked Feintise heard the sweet singing of the apple, her grief was excessive, for instead of doing harm to these lovely children, she only did them good by her perfidious counsels. She allowed some days to pass by without showing herself; and then once more made the Princess unhappy by saying that the dancing-water and the singing-apple were useless without the little green bird that tells everything.

Cheri again set out, and after some trouble learnt that this bird was to be found on the top of a frightful rock, in a frozen climate. At length, at dawn of day, he perceived the rock, which was very high and very steep, and upon the summit of it was the bird, speaking like an oracle, telling wonderful things. He thought that with a little dexterity it would be easy to catch it, for it seemed very tame. He got off his horse, and climbed up very quietly. He was so close to the green bird that he thought he could lay hands on it, when suddenly the rock opened and he fell into a spacious hall, and became as motionless as a statue; he could neither stir, nor utter a complaint at his deplorable situation. Three hundred knights, who had made the same attempt, were in the same state. To look at each other was the only thing permitted them.

The time seemed so long to Belle-Etoile, and still no signs of her beloved Cheri, that she fell dangerously ill; and in the hopes of curing her, Petit-Soleil resolved to seek him.

But he too was swallowed up by the rock and fell into the great hall. The first person he saw was Cheri, but he could not speak to him; and Prince Heureux, following soon after, met with the same fate as the other two.

When Feintise was aware that the third Prince was gone, she was exceedingly delighted at the success of her plan; and when Belle-Etoile, inconsolable at finding not one of her brothers return, reproached herself for their loss, and resolved to follow them, she was quite overjoyed.

The Princess was disguised as a cavalier, but had no other armour than her helmet. She was dreadfully cold as she drew near the rock, but seeing a turtle-dove lying on the snow, she took it up, warmed it, and restored it to life: and the dove reviving, gaily said, “I know you, in spite of your disguise; follow my advice: when you arrive at the rock, remain at the bottom and begin to sing the sweetest song you know; the green bird will listen to you; you must then pretend to go to sleep; when it sees me, it will come down to peck me, and at that moment you will be able to seize it.”

All this fell out as the Dove foretold. The green bird begged for liberty. “First,” said Belle-Etoile, “I wish that thou wouldst restore my three brothers to me.”

“Under my left wing there is a red feather,” said the bird: “pull it out, and touch the rock with it.”

The Princess hastened to do as she was instructed; the rock split from the top to the bottom: she entered with a victorious air the hall in which stood the three Princes with many others; she ran towards Cheri, who did not know her in her helmet and male attire, and could neither speak nor move. The green bird then told the Princess she must rub the eyes and mouth of all those she wished to disenchant with the red feather, which good office she did to all.

The three Princes and Belle-Etoile hastened to present themselves to the King; and when Belle-Etoile showed her treasures, the little green bird told him that the Princes Petit-Soleil and Heureux and the Princess Belle-Etoile were his children, and that Prince Cheri was his nephew. Queen Blondine, who had mourned for them all these years, embraced them, and the wicked Queen-Mother and old Feintise were justly punished. And the King, who thought his nephew Cheri the handsomest man at Court, consented to his marriage with Belle-Etoile. And lastly, to make everyone happy, the King sent for the Corsair and his wife, who gladly came.

2

GRACIEUSE AND PERCINET

Once upon a time there lived a king and a queen who had but one daughter. For beauty, and gentleness, and quick wit there was no one to be com pared with her, and for this reason they called her Gracieuse. She was her mother’s only joy. Every morning a beautiful dress was brought to her. Some times it would be of gold brocade, sometimes of velvet or satin; yet all her fine clothes never made her a whit more vain or boastful. She spent every morning with great scholars, who taught her all kinds of learning, and in the afternoon she worked near the queen. For luncheon they brought her basins full of sweet-meats, and more than twenty pots of jam. And so everybody said she was the happiest princess in all the world.

Now at the same court there lived a very rich old maid, whose name was Duchess Grognon, and who was as ugly as she could be. Her hair was as red as fire, and her huge face was all covered with pimples. She had but one blear eye left, and her mouth was so big that it looked as if it were going to gobble everybody up, but then as all her teeth were gone there was nothing to fear in that respect. She had a hump before and behind, and she was lame of both legs. Monsters like her are very jealous of those who are beautiful. She therefore hated Gracieuse with a deadly hatred, and left the court so as not to hear her praises sung, retiring to a castle of her own a little way off. When anyone paid her a visit, and brought her news of all the princess's charms, she would cry out in great wrath: "It is a lie! it is a lie! She is not beautiful! There is more charm in my little finger than in her whole body."

Meanwhile the queen fell ill, and died. Princess Gracieuse was like to die too for grief at having lost so good a mother, and the king was in deep distress for the loss of such a wife. For nearly a whole year he shut himself up in his palace, till at last his doctors, fearing lest he too should fall ill, ordered him to go out and to amuse himself. So one day he went hunting. The heat being very great he entered a great castle, which he saw from the roadside, to rest. Now this was the Duchess Grognon's castle, and as soon as she knew of the king's arrival she came to receive him, and told him that the coolest place in the house was a great arched cellar. It was quite clean, she said, as she begged him to come down there. The king went along with her, and seeing in the cellar two hundred barrels in rows, one above another, he asked whether all these supplies were for herself alone. "Yes, sire," she said, "for myself alone; but I shall be delighted to let you taste. Here you find Canary, Saint Laurent, Champagne, Hermitage, Rivesalte, Rossolis, Persicot, Fenouillet. Which do you prefer?" "Well, to tell the truth," said the king, "I think Champagne is by far the best of all." So Grognon took a little hammer, and went tap-tapping at the barrel, out of which came a thousand pistoles. "What is the meaning of this?" said Grognon, with a smile. She struck another barrel, tap-tap, and out came a bushel of double Louis-d'ors. "I can't understand this at all," she said, with a still broader smile. On she passed to a third barrel, and went tap-tapping, when out there poured such a stream of pearls and diamonds that the ground was covered with them. "Ah "she cried, "I am altogether mystified, your majesty. Someone must have stolen my good wine, and put these trifles there instead." "Trifles!" said the king, who was filled with wonder. "By my faith, Madam Grognon, call you these trifles? Why, they are enough to buy ten kingdoms as big as Paris

““Well,” she answered, “I will tell you that all these barrels are full of gold and jewels, and they will be yours if you will marry me.” “Ah!” replied the king, who cared for money more than anything else, “I will do so with the greatest pleasure in the world, and to-morrow if you like.” “But,” she went on, “I have one more condition to make. That is, that I be given authority over your daughter as if I were her mother; that she look to mc for everything, and that you leave all control of her to me.” “She will be entirely under your authority,” said the king. “Here is my hand upon it.” Grognon put her hand in his, and together they went out of the treasure-house, the key of which she gave him.

As soon as he returned to his palace, Gracieuse, hearing his steps, ran to meet him, and, kissing him, asked him if he had had good luck at the hunt. “I caught a dove alive,” he said. “Ah, sire,” said the princess, “give it to me, and I will feed it.” “That is not possible,” he answered, “for, to speak more plainly, I must tell you I met the Duchess Grognon, and I have promised to marry her.” “Oh, heavens “cried Gracieuse, without thinking what she was saying. “Do you call her a dove? She is more like an owl.” “Hold your tongue,” said the king, angrily. “I insist on your loving her, and respecting her as if she were your own mother. Go away at once and get dressed, for I wish to go back and see her this very day.” The princess was very obedient, and went to her room to get ready. Her nurse saw from her eyes that she was in distress. “What is the matter, clear little one?” she said. “You are crying.” “Alas dear nurse,” answered Gracieuse, “who would not cry? The king is going to give me a step-mother, and, worst of all, she is my cruellest enemy-in fact, it is that hideous Grognon. How can I look at her in those beautiful beds that my good mother, the queen, embroidered so exquisitely with her own hands How can I caress a monster who would like to kill me?” “Dear child,” replied the nurse, “your courage should be as great as your birth. Princesses like you must show finer examples than others. And what better can you do than obey your father, and sacrifice yourself to please him? Promise me then that you will not let Grognon see how dismayed you are.” The princess found it difficult to make up her mind to this, but the good nurse reasoned with her so wisely that at last she promised to put a good face on the matter, and to be polite to her Step Then she dressed herself in a green robe with a gold ground. Her fair hair fell over her shoulders, floating in the wind, according to the fashion of those days, and on her head was a light crown of roses and jasmines, all the leaves of which were made of emeralds. When she was ready, Venus, the mother of the loves, would have seemed less fair by her side yet you could read in her face the sadness which she could not altogether overcome.

But let us go back to Grognon. That ugly creature was much taken up with her attire. That she might seem rather less lame she had one shoe made half-a-cubit higher than the other, and to hide her hump she had her bodice stuffed on one shoulder. She stuck in the best made glass eye that could be found, painted her face to make it white, and dyed her red hair black. Then she put on a dress of amaranth satin lined with blue, a yellow petticoat, and violet ribbons. She meant to make her entrance on horseback, for she had heard that the queens of Spain always did so.

While the king was giving his orders, and Gracieuse was waiting the moment when they should set out to meet Grognon, the princess went by herself into the garden, and, entering a little dark wood, she sat down upon the grass. “At last,” she said, “I am free to weep as much as I want. There is nobody to hinder me.” And with that she began to sigh and weep so much that her eyes looked like two streams of living water. In this condition she felt she could not return to the palace. All at once she saw a page coming towards her, dressed in green satin, with white feathers in his cap, and the comeliest face in the world. Kneeling before her, he said: “Princess, the king awaits you “. She was full of admiration for the beauty of this young page whom she did not know, and who she thought must belong to Grognon’s suite. “How long,” she asked, “have you been amongst the king’s pages?” “I am no page of his, madam,” he answered. “I am yours, and I wish for no other service.” “Mine?” she answered, in astonishment, “but I do not know you.” “Ah, princess! “he replied, “I have not dared till now to make myself known to you, but the evil that threatens you from the marriage of the king forces me to speak sooner than I otherwise should have done. I had determined to leave to time and my services the task of declaring my love to you, and . . .” “What! a page!” cried the princess, “a page has the audacity to say he loves me! This is the worst of all! ““Fear not, fair Gracieuse,” he said, with respect and tenderness in his looks; “I am Percinet, a prince not unknown for his wealth and his accomplishments, and you may set your mind at rest as to the equality of our stations in life. It is only your birth and your merit which make us un equal. I have loved you long, and I am often near you without your being aware of it. The fairy gift I received at my birth has been of great service in giving me the pleasure of looking upon you. I shall bear you company to-day in this dress, and I hope I may be of use to you.” While he was speaking the princess was looking at him with an astonishment she could not master. It is you then, fair Percinet,” she said, “you whom I so longed to see, and of whom such wonderful things are told. What joy to have you for a friend I no longer fear the wicked Grognon, since you will watch over my safety.” They talked still a little while longer, and then Gracieuse returned to the palace, where she found a horse ready harnessed and caparisoned that Percinet had placed in the stable, and which was meant for her it was supposed. She mounted, and, as the horse was very spirited, the page took it by the bridle and led it, turning every moment towards the princess, to have the joy of looking on her face.

When the horse that had been chosen for Grognon appeared near Gracieuse’s it looked but a sorry hack, while the saddle-cloth of the princess’s beautiful steed was so splendid with jewels that the other looked poor and mean in comparison. The king, who had many things to see after, paid no attention to this, and none of his lords had any eyes but for Gracieuse, whose beauty so dazzled them, and for the page in green, who was handsomer than all the court pages put together.

They met Grognon on the road in an open carriage, uglier and more misshapen than any old countrywoman. The king and the-princess embraced her, and led forwards her horse. But when she saw the one belonging to Gracieuse, she called out "Why should that creature have a finer horse than I? I would rather not he a queen at all, and go back to my own fine castle, than be treated like this." The king at once ordered Gracieuse to dismount and beg Grognon to do her the honour of riding on her horse, and the princess obeyed without a word. Grognon neither looked at her nor thanked her, and she was hoisted up on the pretty horse very much like a bundle of dirty linen. Eight gentlemen held her on, in case she should fall; and still she was not pleased, but went on muttering threats under her breath. They asked her what was the matter. "As I am the mistress," she answered, "I want the page in green to hold the bridle of my horse, as he did when Gracieuse was riding it." So the king ordered the page in green to lead the queens horse. Percinet cast his eyes towards the princess, and she looked at him without saving a single word. He obeyed, and all the Court set out amidst the loud din of drums and trumpets. Grognon was dc lighted; and for all her flat nose and her crooked mouth, she would not have changed places with Gracieuse.

But, just when they were least thinking of it, the beautiful horse began to rear, and to kick, and to run so fast that no one could stop him. Away he went With Grognon holding on to the saddle and the mane, crying as loud as she could. At last her foot caught in the stirrup, and she fell. The horse dragged her for a long way over the stones, through thorns, and through mud in which she was all but buried. They had all followed after, and they soon came up to her, and found her full of scratches, her head broken in four or five places, and one of her arms fractured. Never was a bride in a more woeful plight. The king was in despair. She was picked up like a glass shivered to atoms; he cap was found lying on one side of the road, her shoes on the other. She was carried to the town, and put to bed, and the best doctors were sent for. But in spite of all her sufferings, she never stopped scolding. “This is one of Gracieuse’s tricks,” she said. “I am sure she only took that beautiful and vicious horse to make me jealous, and so that I might be killed. If the king does not right my wrongs, I shall go back to my own fine castle, and never look on his face again.” The king was told of Grognon’s rage. As his ruling passion was avarice, the mere thought of losing the thousand barrels of gold and diamonds made him shudder, and he would have done anything to prevent it. So he ran to the loathsome sufferer, flung himself at her feet, and swore to her that she had only to name a punishment fitting for the offence Gracieuse had committed, and that he would give up the princess to her angry will. She said that was enough, and she would send for Gracieuse. So they went to tell the princess that Grognon was asking for her. The princess became pale and trembled, knowing well enough it was not for caresses she was sought. She looked round on every side for Percinet to come, but not seeing him, she made her way in all sadness to Grognon’s chamber. Hardly was she inside when the doors were shut, and four women, like four furies, threw themselves on her by their mistress’s orders, pulled off her pretty clothes, and tore her shift from her back. When her shoulders were bare these merciless furies could not endure to look on their dazzling whiteness, and shut their eyes as if they had been looking on snow for a long time. “Lay on, lay on! courage!” cried the pitiless Grognon from her bed. “Flay her till not a little morsel remains of that white skin she thinks so beautiful.” In the midst of any other trouble Gracieuse would have wished for the handsome Percinet to come to her aid; but being all but naked, she was too modest to desire him for a witness, and she made up her mind to suffer everything as meekly as a lamb. Each of the four furies held in her hand a bunch of horrible-looking rods, and there were also large brooms out of which they could pluck fresh ones. They beat her mercilessly; and at every stroke Grognon would say: “Harder! harder! you are too gentle with her!” After this nobody would believe but that the princess was flayed from head to foot. Yet, it was not so at all; for the gallant Percinet had put a charm on the eyes of those women, and what they took for rods in their hands were only feathers of every possible colour. As soon as the beating began Gracieuse saw how it was, and was no longer afraid. “Ah, Percinet,” she said, under her breath, “how generous of you to come to my aid! What should I have done without you?” At last the floggers were so exhausted that they could not move their arms any longer, so they bustled her into her clothes, and put her out of the room, calling her all kind of ugly names. She went back to her own room, and pretending to be very ill, she went to bed, giving orders that no one but her nurse should remain with her. To her she told the whole story, till at last she fell asleep. The nurse went away, and when Gracieuse woke up she saw the page in green in a dark corner of the room, not daring to come near, by reason of the respect he felt towards her. She told him she would never forget, during her whole life long, her obligations to him; begged him not to leave her to the fury of her enemy, and, in the meantime, to go away, as she had always been told she should not stay alone with boys. He replied that his respect for her must be evident, but that it was only right that he should obey his mistress in every thing, even at the cost of his own happiness. Thereupon he left her, after advising her to pretend to be very ill in consequence of the cruel treatment she had received.

Grognon was so glad to think of Gracieuse in this condition that she got better twice as soon again as she would have otherwise done, and the wedding was celebrated with great splendour. Now, as the king knew that Grognon liked to be called beautiful better than anything else, he had her portrait painted, and ordered a tournament to be arranged, where six of the best knights of the court should sustain in the face of, and against all corners that Queen Grognon was the fairest princess in the whole world. Many foreign knights came to maintain the contrary. The hideous creature was present throughout the whole proceedings, seated on a great balcony covered with gold brocade, and seeing with pleasure how the prowess of her knights was triumphing in her wicked cause. Gracieuse was behind her, and every eve sought hers; but vain and foolish Grognon thought she was the object of everybody's attention.

There was hardly a knight left who dared dispute the beauty of Grognon, when a young man was seen approaching, carrying a portrait in a diamond box. He would maintain, he said, that Grognon was the most hideous of all women, and that she whose portrait was in his box was the fairest of damsels. At the word he charged the six knights, and threw them to the ground. Six others came up. In the end four-and-twenty had presented themselves, but he was Victor over all. Then, opening his box, he told them that for their consolation he would show them his beautiful picture. Everyone recognised it as that of Gracieuse to whom he made a profound reverence, and then retired without telling his name. But she had no doubt of its being Percinet.

Grognon was well nigh choking with anger. Her throat swelled, and she could not get a word out, but she signed that it was Gracieuse she had to deal with, and when she could find words she raged like a madwoman. "How dare you," she said, "dispute with me the prize of beauty? How dare you cause my knights to be insulted in this fashion? I will have my revenge, or I will die for it!" "Madam," said the princess, "I protest I have no part in what has just happened. If you like, I will attest with my blood that you are the most beautiful lady in the world, and that I am a monster of ugliness." "Oh, you would laugh at me, little one, would you?" answered Grognon, "but my turn will come soon." The king was told of the fury of his wife, and how the princess, half dead with fright, begged him to have pity on her, for if he left her to the tender mercies of the queen, all sorts of evil things would happen to her. Still he was quite unmoved, and only answered: “I gave her to her step-mother. Let her do what she likes with her.”

The wicked Grognon waited for night to come with much impatience. As soon as it was dark she had horses harnessed to her carriage. Gracieuse was forced to get into it, and with a strong escort was taken away for a hundred leagues, into a great forest through which no one dared to pass, for it was full of lions, and bears, and tigers, and wolves. When they had reached the middle of the terrible forest they made her get down, and there they left her, in spite of her prayers that they should have mercy. “I do not ask you to spare my life,” she cried; “I only ask a speedy death. Kill me and thus save me from all the ills which I must meet with here.” She spoke to deaf ears. They would not even answer, and fled from her, leaving this poor unhappy beauty all by herself. For some time she walked on without knowing where she was going, now bruising herself against a tree, now falling, now entangled in the bushes. At length, over come with grief, she threw herself on the ground, with no strength left to get up. “Percinet,” she cried from time to time, “Percinet, where are you? Can you in truth have left me? “At last, just as she had said these words, she suddenly saw the most beautiful and the most astonishing thing in the world. It was an illumination, so magnificent that there was not a tree in the forest from which did not hang several chandeliers filled with candles; while at the other end of an avenue she saw a palace all made of crystal, glistening like the sun. She began to think that Percinet must have something to do with this fresh wonder, and her joy was mingled with fear. “I am alone,” she said. “This prince is young, beautiful, and full of-affection for me. I owe my life to him. Ah, I must not think of it! Better to die than to love him!” And so saying, she got up, and spite of her fatigue and her weakness, and without a glance at the beautiful castle, she walked in the opposite direction, so troubled and so confused in her mind with all the different thoughts that crowded there that she did not know what she was doing. At that moment she heard a noise behind her. Fear took hold of her. She thought some wild beast was going to devour her, and looking round in terror, she saw Prince Percinet as beautiful as Love himself. “Are you fleeing from me?” he said. “Do you fear me when I adore you? Can you have so poor an idea of me as to think I could be lacking in respect for you? Come, come away without fear to the Fairy Palace. I shall not enter if you forbid me, but you will find there my mother, the queen, and my sisters, who love you tenderly already from what I have told them of you.” Gracieuse, delighted at the mild and gentle manner in which her young lover spoke, could not refuse to mount along with him into a little sleigh, painted and gilded, and drawn with marvellous speed by two stags. In this way he took her to see end less beautiful spots in the forest. It was daylight everywhere, and they saw shepherds and shepherdesses gaily dressed, (lancing to the sound of flutes and Pipes. In other places, by the banks of rivers, there were village lads with their Sweethearts feasting and singing merry songs. “I thought this forest was not inhabited, she said; “but I see life and cheerfulness everywhere.’ “Since you have come, my princess,” replied Percinet, “this dark solitude is full of pleasure and gaiety. The loves accompany you, and flowers spring up where’er you tread.” Gracieuse dared not answer. She did not wish to take part in this kind of Conversation and she begged the prince to take her to the queen, his mother. So he told the stags to set out for the Fairy Palace. As they were nearing It, beautiful music sounded in their ears, and the queen with two of her daughters, who were all very lovely, embraced her and led her into a great ball, whose walls were of rock crystal. With much astonishment she saw that own life, up to that very day, was engraved on them, even her drive with the prince in the sleigh, and all in a style so finished, that the works of Phidias and all the sculpture that ancient Greece could boast of were as nothing in comparison. You have very watchful craftsmen,” said Gracieuse to Percinet, “for no sooner do I make a sign or a movement but I see it carved there.” “That is because I wish nothing to be lost that relates in any way to you, my princess,” he answered. “But alas! nowhere am I happy or satisfied.” She said nothing in reply, but thanked the queen for the way in which she received her. A great feast was served, and Gracieuse ate with a good appetite, so delighted was she to have found Percinet instead of the bears and lions she had feared to meet in the forest. Although she was very tired, he persuaded her to come with him into a saloon all shining with gold and pictures, where an opera was performed. The subject was the Loves of Psyche and Cupid, and it was interspersed with dances and little songs. A young shepherd stepped forward and sang these words:

Why so cruel, lady mine?
Dost thou know the love that’s thine
In my true heart burning?
Even the tigers fierce and wild,
‘Neath the power of love grow mild,
Tame and lamb-like turning.
Only gentle Gracieuse flees
When the looks of love she sees,
All my worship spurning.

She blushed at hearing her name mentioned in this way before the queen and the princesses, and she told Percinet that it grieved her somewhat that ever)’ body should know their secrets. “That reminds one of a maxim,” she said, “which I agree with entirely:

Discretion adds a grace and charm to wooing;

Then tell your love not in the world's ear,
Lest, as a cruel judge your joys pursuing,
It makes their harmlessness as crimes appear'."

HE ASKED her pardon for having done anything to displease her. When the opera was finished the queen sent the two princesses to take her to her rooms. Nothing so beautiful as the furniture was ever seen, nor so elegant as the bed and the bed where she was to sleep. She was waited on by t four maidens dressed as nymphs, the eldest eighteen years old, and each of them a wonder of beauty. When she had gone to bed, exquisite music was played to lull her to sleep, but her astonishment was so great that she could not close her eyes. "All I have seen," she said, is the work of magic. There is danger in being near a prince so beautiful and so wonderful. I cannot too soon flee away from here." But the thought of escaping was very painful to her. Were she to leave this splendid palace and fall into the hands of cruel Grognon, what different treatment she would experience Such a step was not to be taken too suddenly. Yet Percinet seemed to her so charming that she did not wish to remain in a palace where he was master.

When she rose they brought her dresses of every colour, trinkets of precious stones of every shape, lace, ribbons, gloves, silk stockings, and all in exquisite taste. Nothing was lacking. Her costume was of chased gold, and never before had she been so finely dressed, never before had she looked so beautiful. Percinet entered her room clad in cloth of gold and green, for green was his colour, because Gracieuse liked it. The comeliest, the handsomest of men beside him would have seemed plain. Gracieuse told him she had not been able to sleep, so much did the memory of her misfortunes torment her, and that she could not but fear what was still to come. "What is there to fear, madam?" he said. "You are sovereign here: you are adored. Would you wish to for sake me for your cruel enemy?" "If I were mistress of my fate,” she said, I should accept your proposal, but I am accountable for my actions to the king, my father, and it is better for me to suffer than to fail in my duty.” Percinet said everything he could think of to persuade her to marry him, but she would not consent, and it was almost in spite of herself that he kept her for eight days, during which time he invented all kinds of pleasures to amuse her.

She would often say to the prince: “I should like to know what is passing at Grognon’s court, and what kind of explanation she has given of her conduct to me “. Percinet said he would send his squire, who was a man of intelligence, to make inquiries. She told him she was sure he did not need anyone to inform him of what was going on, and that he himself could tell her. “Come with me, then,” he said, “to the great tower, and you will see for yourself.” Thereupon he took her to the top of an enormously high tower, made of rock crystal as the rest of the castle was, and told her to put her foot on his and her little finger in his mouth, and to look towards the town. Then she saw the Wicked Grognon with the king, and she heard her crying: “That unfortunate Princess has hanged herself in the cellar. I have just seen her. She is horrible to look at, and she must be speedily buried, and you must console yourself for so trifling a loss.” But the king began to cry for the death of his daughter. Grognon turned her back on him, and went to her own room. She had a log dressed up with a cap and well wrapped about, and put into a coffin. Then, by order of the king, there was a grand funeral, where everybody wept and cursed the step-mother, who, they said, had killed Gracieuse. They all wore mourning, and the princess on the tower heard the lamentations for her death, and heard them saying to themselves: “How sad that so young and fair a princess should have perished by the cruelty of this wicked wretch! She ought to be hacked to pieces and put into a pie! “And the king, unable to eat or drink, wept bitterly. Gracieuse, seeing her father in such distress, said: “Ah! Percinet, I cannot bear that my father should any longer think I am dead. If you love me, take me back to him.

Whatever he says, I must obey him, however dis. tasteful it may be to me.” “My princess,” he said, “you will often regret the Fairy Palace, though I do not dare to think you will regret me. You are more cruel to me than Grognon is to you.” Yet, for all he said, she persisted in setting off, and took leave of the prince’s mother and sisters. He got in with her into the sleigh, and the stags began to run. As she went out of the palace gates she heard a great noise, and looking behind her, she saw the whole building falling in a thousand pieces. “What is this I see?” she said. “The palace has vanished! ““No,” answered Percinet; “my palace will be among the dead. There you will never enter till after you are buried.” “You are angry,’ said Gracieuse, trying to soften him. “But, after all, am I not more to be pitied than you?”

When they had reached her home, Percinet made the princess, himself, and the sleigh invisible. Then she went up to the king’s room, and flung herself at his feet. When he saw her he was afraid, and would have fled, for he took her for a ghost. But she held him, and told him she was not dead, that Grognon had sent her into the wild-beast forest, where she had climbed to the top of a tree, and lived on fruits; and that it was a log that had been buried in her stead. She begged, for pity’s sake, that he would send her to one of his other castles, where she would no longer be at the mercy of her step-mother’s fury.

The king, not sure whether she was telling the truth or not, sent and had the log dug up, and much astonished was he at Grognon’s wickedness. Anyone else would have had her buried in its place, but he was a poor, weak man, who had not spirit enough to be really angry. So he petted his daughter a good deal, and had her to sup with him. When Grognon’s minions went and told her that Gracieuse had come back, and that she was supping with the king, she behaved like a madwoman, and running to him, she told him that this was not a time for shilly-shallying; that either he must give up this good-for-nothing girl, or she herself would this moment depart and never come back any more; and that it was a mere supposition that it was Princess Gracieuse. This girl that had come was somewhat like her, but Gracieuse had hanged herself; she had seen her hanged with her own eyes, and that to put any faith in the impostures of this creature was to show a lack of consideration for and trust in herself. The king without a word abandoned the poor princess, believing, or pretending to believe, she was not his daughter.

Grognon, delighted, dragged her by the help of her women into a dungeon, where she made her undress. They took away her pretty clothes, and put on a poor rag of coarse linen, and wooden shoes on her feet, and a rough hood on her head. They grudged her even a bundle of straw to lie on, and black bread to eat. In her distress she wept bitterly, longing to be back in the Fairs' Palace but she dared not call Percinet to come to her help, thinking she had used him too ill, and not sure whether he loved her enough to help her again. Meanwhile wicked Grognon had sent for a fairy who was hardly less malicious than herself. “I have here,” she said to her, “a wicked little girl whom I have great reason to be angry with. I wish to punish her, and to have always very difficult pieces of work to give her to do, which she will never be able to finish, so that I may beat her as much as I like without her having any reason to complain. Help me to find for her every clay a new difficulty.” The fairy said she would think about it, and would come back next day. And so she did, bringing with her a skein of thread as big as any four persons, and so fine that it broke if you but breathed on it, and so tangled that it was all in a bunch, without beginning or end. Grognon was delighted, and sending for the fair prisoner, she said:

“There, good gossip, get ready your great fists to wind this thread, and remember that if you break the least little bit of it you are lost, for I shall flay you alive with my own hands. Now begin when you like, but I must have it wound before sunset.” Then she shut her up in a room under three locks.

No sooner was the princess by herself than she began looking at the huge skein, turning it this way and that, breaking the thread in a thousand places for one knot that she disentangled, till she was so confused that she gave up trying any more to wind it. Throwing it into the middle of the room, she said: “Go, fatal thread! You will be the death of me. Ah, Percinet, Percinet, if my harshness has not too much repelled you, I ask, not your aid, but only that you should Come and receive my last farewell.” Thereupon she began to cry so bitterly that anyone even less tender than a lover would have been touched. Percinet opened the door as easily as if he kept the key in his pocket. “Here I am, my princess,” he said, “ever ready to serve you. I am not capable of forsaking you, though you ill requite my affection.” Striking the skein three times with his wand, the broke threads were immediately joined and with two other strokes the whole was wound with wonderful neatness. He asked her if she wished for anything else from him and if she would never call for him but when she was in distress. “Do not reproach me, fair Percinet,” she said; “I am unhappy enough already.” “But, my princess, it is in your hands to free yourself from the tyranny of which you are the victim. Come with me, and let us be happy together. What are you afraid of?” “That you do not love me enough,” she answered. “I want your affection for me to be strengthened by time.” Percinet, enraged by these suspicions, took leave of her and went away.

The sun was just about to set, and Grognon was waiting for the hour in a fever of impatience. At last she came before her time, with the four furies, who went with her everywhere. She put the three keys into the three locks, and said, as she opened the door: “I wager the pretty idle hussy has not kept her fingers going very fast. She will rather have been sleeping to keep her complexion fresh.” When she came in Gracieuse gave her the ball of thread, beautifully wound. Grognon could not say anything except that she had soiled it, that she was a little slut, and for that she gave her two slaps that turned her pink and white cheeks blue and yellow. Poor Gracieuse bore meekly this insult which she was not able to protect herself against, and they took her back to the dungeon, where she was again locked up.

Grognon, deeply disappointed at having failed with the skein of thread, sent for the fairy, and loaded her with reproaches. “Find something much more difficult,” she said, “so that it will be impossible for her to do it.” The fairy went away, and next day she brought a great barrel full of feathers. There were feathers of all kinds of birds: nightingales, canaries, tarins, goldfinches, linnets, redwings, parrots, owls, sparrows, doves, ostriches, bustards, peacocks, larks, partridges-I should never have done if I were to name them all. These feathers were all mixed in such a way that the birds themselves could not have distinguished them. “Here,” said the fairy to Grognon, “here is something that will test the skill and try the patience of your prisoner. Command her to pick out these feathers, and to put those of the peacocks apart, and those of the nightingales, and to do the same with all the others, making a heap of each kind. A fairy even would find herself at a loss with such a task.” Grognon was beside herself with joy as she pictured the despair of the poor princess. She sent for her, threatened her in the same way as before, and shut her up in the triple-locked room with the barrel, telling her that the whole work must be done by sunset.

Gracieuse began to handle some of the feathers, but, as it was impossible for her to distinguish one kind from another, she threw them back again into the barrel. Again she took some out, and several times she made an attempt, but seeing that it was an impossible thing she was trying, she said, in a tone Of despair: “Let me die. It is my death they wish for, and it will end my sorrows. I must not call again on Percinet to help me; if he cared for me he would be here already.” “And so I am, my princess,” cried Percinet, appearing from the depths of the barrel, in which he was hidden. “Here I am to get you out of the difficulty in which you are struggling. Doubt if you can, after so many proofs of my affection, that I love you better than my life.” With that, he gave three taps with his wand, and the feathers, coming out by thousands from the barrel, arranged themselves in little heaps all round the room. “What do I not owe you, my lord?” said Gracieuse to him. “Without you I should have given up entirely. Rest assured of my gratitude.” The prince tried every means to persuade her to make up her mind to do as he wished, but she asked for time; and however great his sacrifice, he did according to her desire. When Grognon came she was so astonished at what she saw that she did not know what more she could do to torment Gracieuse All the same she beat her, saying her feathers were badly arranged. Again she sent for the fairy, and flew into a horrible temper with her. The fairy did not know what to answer; for she was stupefied. At last she said she would employ all her skill in making a box which would give the princess a good deal of trouble if she took it into her head to open it. A few clays after this she brought a box of a Considerable size. “See,’ she said to Grognon; “tell your slave to carry that Somewhere. Tell her she must not open it. She will not, however, be able to resist, and then you will be satisfied.” Grognon did exactly as she was told. “Carry this box,” she said, to my great castle, and put it on the table in the cabinet. But I forbid you, on pain of death, to look what is inside.” Gracieuse put on her sabots, her coarse linen frock, her woollen hood, and set off. Those who met her by the way said: “That must be some goddess in disguise,” for her marvellous beauty could not be hidden. She had not gone far before she felt very tired, and, while she was passing through a little wood skirting a pleasant meadow, she sat down to rest for a little. As she held the box on her knees, she suddenly felt a strong desire to open it. “What could happen to me?” she said. “I shall take nothing out of it, but at least I shall see what is inside.” And, thinking no more of the consequences, she opened it. Immediately there came out such a number of little men and little women, violins, and other musical instruments, little tables, little cooks, little dishes, and last of all the giant of the troop, who was as high as your finger. They leaped about in the meadow, separating into several bands, and began the prettiest ball that ever was seen. While some were dancing, others were cooking, and others eating, the little violins playing beautifully all the time. At first Gracieuse was amused at seeing such an extraordinary thing; but when she was somewhat tired of it, and wanted to put them into the box again, not one of them would go. The little gentlemen and the little ladies ran away, even the very violins; and the cooks, with their saucepans on their heads and their spits on their shoulders, ran off to the woods as soon as she was in the meadow, and into the meadow when she was in the wood. “O reckless curiosity,” said Gracieuse, weeping, “you have done my enemy but too good a turn! The only misfortune I could have avoided comes from my own fault. No, I cannot reproach myself enough. Percinet! Percinet!” she cried, “if you still can love a princess who is so thoughtless, come and help me in this the most unlucky adventure that has ever befallen me.” She had not to call him thrice before he appeared in his glittering green dress. “Were it not for wicked Grognon,” he said, “fair princess, you would never think of me.” “Ah, do not so misunderstand my feelings towards you. I am neither insensible to worth, nor ungrateful for kindness. It is true that I try your constancy, but only to crown it when I am convinced of it.” Percinet, more pleased than he had ever been before, tapped the box three times with his wand, and immediately the mannikins, the little ladies, the violins, the cooks, the roast meats, everyone of them took their places as if they had never been out of them. Percinet had left his chariot in the wood, and he begged the princess to use it to go to the great castle, arid indeed she had much need of this help, so exhausted was she. Making her invisible, he drove her there himself, thus having the pleasure of bearing her company — a pleasure, my chronicle tells me, to which she was not indifferent at the bottom of her heart, though she carefully hid her feelings.

When she reached the fine castle, and asked, in Grognon’s name, to have the door of the cabinet opened for her, the governor burst out laughing. “What!” he said, “do you think when you leave your sheep you can enter without more ado into such a beautiful place? Be off! Return where you came from. We don’t allow wooden shoes on our fine floors.” Gracieuse begged him to write a word stating his refusal, which he did. Then, leaving the great castle, she found kind Percinet waiting outside, who brought her back to the palace. It would be difficult for me to write all the tender and respectful words he said to her by the way, to persuade her to put an end to her unhappiness; and she told him that if Grognon played her another bad turn she would do as he wished.

When her step-mother saw her come back she threw herself on the fairy, whom she had kept by her, and scratched her, and she would have strangled her if a fairy could be strangled, Gracieuse gave Grognon the governor’s note and the box, but she flung both into the fire without even opening them, and, according to her own tale, she would have liked to have thrown Gracieuse in too. But she did not long put off the princess’s punishment. She had a great hole made in the garden as deep as a well, and over it a large stone was placed. Then she went to walk in the garden, and said to Gracieuse and all who were with her: “Here is a stone under which I am told there is a treasure. Come now, lift it speedily.” Everyone lent a hand, Gracieuse amongst the others, which was just what they wanted. As soon as she was at the edge, Grognon pushed her roughly into the pit, and they let fall the stone that closed it. There was nothing to be hoped for in a case like this. How could Percinet ever find her in the middle of the earth? She saw the hopelessness of her situation, and repented having waited so long to marry him. “How cruel is fate to me!” she cried. “Here I am buried alive, and this kind of death is more terrible than any other. You are revenged for my delays, Precinct, hut I feared lest you should be as fickle as other men, who change just as soon as they are certain of being loved. In short, I wished to he sure of your heart; and my natural suspicions have brought me to my present state. Yet,” she went on, “could I hope that you would feel my loss, I think death would be easier to bear.” She was speaking thus to ease her pain, when suddenly a little door opened, which, in the darkness, she had not seen before. The light streamed through and let her see a garden full of flowers, and fruits, and fountains, grottoes statues, shrubberies, and arbours. Without a moment's hesitation she entered, and going along a broad walk, wondering to herself what end this adventure would have, she saw the Fairy Castle. She had no difficulty in recognising it, quite apart from the fact that there are not many such made of rock crystal, and that she saw her new adventure engraved on its walls. Percinet appeared with his mother and his sisters. "Do not refuse any longer, fair princess," said the queen to Gracieuse. "It is time my son were made happy, and it is time you were released from the terrible condition in which you live under the tyranny of Grognon." The grateful princess threw herself on her knees, and told her she might do with her as she willed; that she would obey her in all things; that she had not forgotten the prophecy of Percinet when she left the Fairy Palace — that this same palace would be among the dead, and that she would not enter it till after she had been buried; that she looked on his fairy lore with admiration, as she did on his virtue; and that she was willing to marry him. The prince, in his turn, threw himself at her feet, and at that moment the palace resounded with the sound of voices and of instruments.

The wedding feast was of unheard-of splendour. All the fairies from a thousand leagues round came with their magnificent equipages; some in cars drawn by swans, others mounted on dragons, others on clouds, others on fiery globes. Amongst them came the fairy who had helped Grognon to torment Gracieuse, and when she saw the princess never was anyone so surprised. She begged her to forget what was past, and promised she would seek means to repair the wrong she had made her suffer. And in truth she would not stay for the feast; but, mounting again on her car drawn by two terrible serpents, she flew to the king's palace, where she sought out Grognon, and wrung her neck before the guards or her attendants could hinder her.

3

THE FAIR WITH GOLDEN HAIR

Once upon a time there was a king’s daughter, who was so handsome, there was nothing in the world to be compared with her for beauty, and she was called the Fair with Golden Hair: because her locks were like the finest gold, marvellously bright, and falling all in ringlets to her feet. She always appeared with her hair flowing in curls about her, crowned with flowers, and her dresses embroidered with diamonds and pearls. However it might be, it was impossible to see her without loving her. There was a young king amongst her neighbours, who was unmarried, very handsome, and very rich. When he heard all that was said about the Fair with Golden Hair, although he had never seen her, he felt so deeply in love with her, that he could neither eat nor drink, and therefore resolved to send an ambassador to ask her hand in marriage. He had a magnificent coach made for this ambassador, gave him upwards of a hundred horses and as many servants, and charged him particularly not to return without the princess. From the moment that the envoy had taken leave of the king, the whole court talked of nothing else; and the king, who never doubted that the Fair with Golden Hair would consent to his proposal, ordered immediately fine dresses and splendid furniture to be prepared for her. While the workmen were hard at work, the ambassador arrived at the Fair one’s court and delivered his little message; but whether she was that day out of temper, or that the compliment was not agreeable to her, she answered the ambassador, that she thanked the king, but had no inclination to marry. The ambassador quitted the court of the princess very low-spirited at not being able to bring her with him. He carried back all the presents he had been the bearer of from the king, for the princess was very prudent, and was perfectly aware that young ladies should never receive gifts from bachelors; so she declined accepting the beautiful diamonds and the other valuable articles, and only retained, in order not to affront the king, a quarter of a pound of English pins.

When the ambassador reached the capital city of the king, where he was so impatiently awaited, everybody was afflicted that he did not bring back with him the Fair with Golden Hair, and the king began to cry like a child. They endeavoured to console him, but without the least success.

There was a youth at court who was as beautiful as the sun, and had the finest figure in the kingdom. On account of his graceful manners and his intelligence he was called Avenant. Everybody loved him, except the envious, who were vexed that the king conferred favours upon him and daily confided to him his affairs.

Avenant was in company with some persons who were talking of the return of the ambassador, and saying he had done no good. “If the king had sent me to the Fair with Golden Hair,” said he to them carelessly, “I am certain she would have returned with me.” These mischief-makers went immediately to the king, and said, “Sire, you know not what Avenant asserts,—That if you had sent him to the Fair with Golden Hair he would have brought her back with him. Observe his malice! He pretends that he is handsomer than you, and that she would have been so fond of him that she would have followed him anywhere.”

At this the king flew into a rage—a rage so terrible, that he was quite beside himself. “Ha, ha!” he cried, “this pretty minion laughs at my misfortune, and values himself above me! Go!—fling him into the great tower, and let him starve to death!”

The royal guards hastened in search of Avenant, who had quite forgotten what he had said. They dragged him to prison, inflicting a thousand injuries upon him. The poor youth had only a little straw to lie upon, and would soon have perished but for a tiny spring that trickled through the foundations of the tower, and of which he drank a few drops to refresh himself, his mouth being parched with thirst. One day, when he was quite exhausted, he exclaimed, with a heavy sigh, “What does the king complain of? He has not a subject more loyal than I am,—I have never done anything to offend him!” The king by chance passed close by the tower, and hearing the voice of one he had loved so dearly, he stopped to listen, notwithstanding those who were with him, who hated Avenant, and said to the king, “What interests you, Sire?—Do you not know he is a rogue?” The king replied, “Leave me alone; I would hear what he has to say.” Having listened to his complaints, the tears stood in his eyes: he opened the door of the tower and called to the prisoner. Avenant came, and knelt before him in deep sorrow, and kissed his feet. “What have I done, Sire, that I am thus severely treated?” “Thou hast made game of me, and of my ambassador,” answered the king. “Thou hast boasted, that if I had sent thee to the Fair with Golden Hair, thou wouldst certainly have brought her back with thee.”

“It is true, Sire,” rejoined Avenant, “that I should have so impressed her with the sense of your majesty’s high qualities, that I feel persuaded she could not have refused you; and in saying that, Sire, I uttered nothing that could be disagreeable to you.” The king saw clearly that Avenant was innocent. He cast an angry look upon the traducers of his favourite, and brought him away with him, sincerely repenting the wrong he had done to him. After giving him an excellent supper he called him into his cabinet and said to him: “Avenant, I still love the Fair with Golden Hair; her refusal has not discouraged me: but I know not what course to take to induce her to marry me. I am tempted to send thee to her to see if thou couldst succeed." Avenant replied that he was ready to obey him in everything, and that he would set out the next day. "Hold," said the king; "I would give thee a splendid equipage." "It is unnecessary," answered Avenant; "I need only a good horse, and letters of credence from your majesty." The king embraced him, for he was delighted to find him prepared to start so quickly.

It was on a Monday morning that he took leave of the king and of his friends to proceed on his embassy, quite alone and without pomp or noise. His mind was occupied solely with schemes to induce the Fair with Golden Hair to marry the king. He had a writing-case in his pocket, and when a happy idea occurred to him for his introductory address, he alighted from his steed and seated himself under the trees to commit it to paper, so that he might not forget anything. One morning that he had set out at the first peep of day, in passing through a large meadow, a charming idea came into his head: he dismounted, and seated himself beside some willows and poplars which were planted along the bank of a little river that ran by the edge of the meadow. After he had made his note, he looked about him, delighted to find himself in so beautiful a spot. He perceived on the grass a large gilded carp gasping and nearly exhausted, for in trying to catch some little flies it had leaped so far out of the water that it had fallen on the grass, and was all but dead. Avenant took pity upon it, and, although it was a fast-day, and he might have carried it off for his dinner, he picked it up and put it gently back into the river. As soon as my friend the carp felt the freshness of the water, she began to recover herself, and glided down to the very bottom, then rising again joyously to the bank of the stream, "Avenant," said she, "I thank you for the kindness you have done me; but for you I should have died. You have saved me; I will do as much for you." After this little compliment she darted down again into the water, leaving Avenant much surprised at her intelligence and great civility.

Another day, as he continued his journey, he saw a crow in great distress. The poor bird was pursued by a large eagle (a great devourer of crows), which had nearly caught it, and would have swallowed it like a lentil if Avenant had not felt compassion for its misfortune. “Thus,” he cried, “do the strong oppress the weak. What right has the eagle to eat the crow?” He seized his bow and arrow, which he always carried with him, and taking a good aim at the eagle, whizz! he sent the shaft right through its body; it fell dead, and the crow, enraptured, came and perched on a tree. “Avenant,” it cried to him, “it was very generous of you thus to succour me, I who am only a poor crow; but I will not be ungrateful, I will do as much for you.”

Avenant admired the good sense of the crow, and resumed his journey. Entering a great wood so early in the morning that there was scarcely light enough for him to see his road, he heard an owl screeching, like an owl in despair. “Hey-day!” said he, “here’s an owl in great affliction. It has been caught, perhaps, in some net.” He searched on all sides, and at last discovered some large nets, which had been spread by fowlers during the night to catch small birds. “What a pity,” said he, “that men are only made to torment each other, or to persecute poor animals which do them no wrong or mischief.” He drew his knife and cut the cords. The owl took flight: but returning swiftly on the wing,—”Avenant,” it cried, “it is needless for me to make a long speech to enable you to comprehend the obligation I am under to you: it speaks plainly enough for itself. The hunters would soon have been here. I had been taken, I had been dead, but for your assistance. I have a grateful heart; I will do as much for you.”

These were the three most important adventures which befel Avenant on his journey. He was so eager to reach the end of it, that he lost no time in repairing to the palace of the Fair with Golden Hair. Everything about it was admirable. There were diamonds to be seen in heaps, as though they were pebbles. Fine clothes, sweetmeats, money,—the most wonderful sight that ever was seen; and Avenant thought in his heart, if he could persuade the princess to leave all this to go to the king his master, he should be very lucky indeed. He dressed himself in a suit of brocade, with a plume of carnation and white feathers; combed and powdered himself, washed his face, put a richly embroidered scarf round his neck, with a little basket, and in it a beautiful little dog which he had bought as he came through Bologna. Avenant was so handsome, so amiable, and did everything with so much grace, that when he presented himself at the palace gate, the guards saluted him most respectfully, and they ran to inform the Fair with Golden Hair, that Avenant, ambassador from the king, her nearest neighbour, requested to be presented to her.

At the name of Avenant, the princess said, “That betokens something agreeable to me. I would wager he is a pretty fellow, and pleases everybody.” “Yes, in sooth, Madam,” exclaimed all her maids of honour; “we saw him from the loft in which we were dressing your flax, and as long as he remained under the windows we could do no work.” “Very pretty,” replied the Fair with Golden Hair; “amusing yourselves with looking at young men!—Here, give me my grand gown of blue embroidered satin, and arrange my fair hair very tastefully; get me some garlands of fresh flowers, my high-heeled shoes, and my fan. Let them sweep my presence-chamber, and dust my throne; for I would have him declare everywhere that I am truly the Fair with Golden Hair.”

All her women hastened to attire her like a queen. They were in such a hurry that they ran against each other, and made scarcely any progress. At length, however, the princess passed into the great gallery of mirrors, to see if anything was wanting, and then ascended her throne of gold, ivory, and ebony, which emitted a perfume like balsam, and commanded her maids of honour to take their instruments, and sing very softly so as not to confuse any one.

Avenant was ushered into the hall of audience. He was so struck with admiration, that he has since declared frequently that he could scarcely speak; nevertheless, he took courage, and delivered his oration to perfection. He beseeched the princess that he might not have the mortification of returning without her. “Gentle Avenant,” she replied, “the arguments you have adduced are all of them exceedingly good, and I assure you I should be very happy to favour you more than another, but you must know that about a month ago I was walking by the river side, with all my ladies in waiting, and in pulling off my glove in order to take some refreshment that was served me I drew from my finger a ring, which unfortunately fell into the stream. I valued it more than my kingdom. I leave you to imagine the grief its loss occasioned me. I have made a vow never to listen to any offers of marriage, if the ambassador, who proposes the husband, does not restore to me my ring. You now see therefore what you have to do in this matter, for though you should talk to me for a fortnight, night and day, you would never persuade me to change my mind.”

Avenant was much surprised at this answer: he made the princess a low bow, and begged her to accept the little dog, the basket, and the scarf; but she replied that she would receive no presents, and bade him go and reflect on what she had said to him. When he returned to his lodgings, he went to bed without eating any supper, and his little dog, whose name was Cabriolle, would take none himself, and went and laid down beside his master. All night long Avenant never ceased sighing. “Where can I hope to find a ring that fell a month ago into a great river?” said he; “it would be folly to attempt looking for it. The princess only named this condition to me because she knew it was impossible for me to fulfil it.” And then he sighed again and was very sorrowful. Cabriolle, who heard him, said, “My dear master, I entreat you not to despair of your good fortune: you are too amiable not to be happy. Let us go to the river side as soon as it is daylight.”

Avenant gave him two little pats, without saying a word, and, worn out with grieving, fell asleep.

Cabriolle, as soon as he saw daybreak, frisked about so that he waked Avenant, and said to him, “Dress yourself, master, and let us go out.” Avenant was quite willing; he arose, dressed, and descended into the garden, and from the garden strayed mechanically towards the river, on the banks of which he strolled with his hat pulled over his eyes, and his arms folded, thinking only of taking his departure, when suddenly he heard himself called by his name—”Avenant! Avenant!” He looked all around him, and could see nobody: he thought he was dreaming. He resumed his walk, when again the voice called, “Avenant! Avenant!” “Who calls me?” he asked. Cabriolle, who was very little and was looking close down into the water, replied, “Never trust me if it be not a golden carp that I see here.” Immediately the carp appeared on the surface, and said to Avenant, “You saved my life in the nettle-tree meadow, where I must have perished but for your assistance. I promised to do as much for you. Here, dear Avenant, is the ring of the Fair with Golden Hair. Avenant stooped and took the ring out of my friend the carp’s mouth, whom he thanked a thousand times. Instead of returning to his lodgings he went directly to the palace, followed by little Cabriolle, who was very glad he had induced his master to take a walk by the river side. The princess was informed that Avenant requested to see her. “Alas! poor youth,” said she, “he is come to take leave of me. He is convinced that I required an impossibility, and he is about to return with these tidings to his master.” Avenant was introduced, and presented her with the ring, saying, “Madam, I have obeyed your commands. Will it please you to accept the king my master for your husband?” When she saw her ring quite perfect she was so astonished—so astonished—that she thought she was dreaming!” Really,” said she, “courteous Avenant, you must be favoured by a fairy, for by natural means this is impossible.” “Madam,” he answered, “I am not acquainted with any fairy, but I was very anxious to obey you.” “As you are so obliging,” continued she, “you must do me another service, without which I never will be married. There is a prince not far from here, named Galifron, who has taken it into his head he will make me his wife. He declared to me his determination, accompanying it by the most terrible threats, that if I refused him he would lay waste my kingdom; but judge if I could accept him. He is a giant taller than a high tower; he eats a man as a monkey eats a chestnut; when he goes into the country he carries in his pockets small cannons which he uses for pistols, and when he speaks very loud those who are near him become deaf. I sent word to him that I did not wish to marry, and that he must excuse me, but he has never ceased to persecute me. He kills all my subjects, and before anything can be done you must fight him and bring me his head.”

Avenant was a little astounded at this proposition; he mused for a few minutes upon it, and then answered, “Well, Madam, I will fight Galifron; I believe I shall be conquered, but I will die as becomes a brave man.” The princess was much surprised at his determination; she said a thousand things to prevent his undertaking the adventure. It was of no use. He withdrew to seek for weapons and everything else he might require. When he had made his preparations, he replaced little Cabriolle in his basket, mounted a fine horse, and rode into the dominions of Galifron. He inquired about him of all he met, and everyone told him he was a very demon whom nobody dared approach. The more he heard of him the more his alarm increased. Cabriolle encouraged him, and said, “My dear master, while you fight him I will bite his legs; he will stoop to rid himself of me, and then you can kill him easily.” Avenant admired the wit of the little dog, but he knew well enough that his help could be of little avail. At length he arrived in the neighbourhood of Galifron’s castle. All the roads to it were strewed with the bones and bodies of men whom he had eaten or torn to pieces. He did not wait long before he saw the monster coming through a wood; his head was visible above the highest trees, and he sang in a terrible voice—

Ho! bring me some babies, fat or lean,
That I may crunch 'em my teeth between!
I could eat so many! so many! so many!
That in the wide world there would not be left any!

Upon which Avenant immediately sang to the same tune—

Ho! Here is Avenant to be seen,
Who comes to draw your teeth so keen;
He's not the greatest man to view,
But he's big enough to conquer you.

The rhymes were not quite adapted to the music, but he made them in a great hurry; and it is really a miracle they were not much worse, for he was in a desperate fright. When Galifron heard these words, he looked about him in every direction, and caught sight of Avenant, who, sword in hand, uttered several taunts to provoke him. They were needless, however. He was in a dreadful rage, and snatching up an iron mace, he would have crushed the gentle Avenant at one blow, had not a crow lighted at that instant on his head, and with its beak most adroitly picked out both his eyes. The blood ran down his face, and he laid about him on all sides like a madman. Avenant avoided his blows, and gave him such thrusts with his sword, running it up to the hilt in his body, that at last he fell bleeding from a thousand wounds. Avenant quickly cut off his head, quite transported with joy at his good fortune; and the crow, who had perched itself on the nearest tree, said to him: “I have not forgotten the service you rendered me in killing the eagle which pursued me. I promised you I would return the obligation. I trust I have done so to-day.” “I owe all to you, Monsieur Crow,” replied Avenant, “and remain your obliged servant;” and forthwith mounted his horse, laden with the horrible head of Galifron. When he reached the city, all the people followed him, crying, “Behold the brave Avenant, who has slain the monster!” So that the princess, who heard a great uproar, and who trembled lest they should come and announce to her the death of Avenant, dared not inquire what had happened. But the next moment she saw Avenant enter, bearing the giant’s head, which still impressed her with terror, although there was no longer any occasion for alarm. “Madam,” said Avenant to the princess, “your enemy is dead: I trust you will no longer refuse the king my master.” “Ah! pardon me,” said the Fair with Golden Hair; “but, indeed, I must refuse him, unless you can find means, before my departure, to bring me some water from the Gloomy Grotto. Hard by there is a deep cavern, full six leagues in extent. At the mouth of it are two dragons, who prevent any one from entering: flames issue from their jaws and eyes. Inside the cavern is a deep pit, into which you must descend: it is full of toads, adders, and serpents. At the bottom of this pit there is a small cavity, through which flows the fountain of Health and Beauty. Some of that water I must absolutely obtain. Whatever is washed with it becomes something marvellous. If persons are handsome, they remain so for ever; if ugly, they become beautiful: if young, they remain always young; if old, they become young again. You may well imagine, Avenant, that I would not quit my kingdom without some of this wonderful water.” “Madam,” he replied, “you are so beautiful already, that this water will be quite useless to you; but I am an unfortunate ambassador, whose death you desire. I go in search of that which you covet, with the certainty that I shall never return.” The Fair with Golden Hair was immovable, and Avenant set out with the little dog Cabriolle to seek in the

Gloomy Grotto the water of beauty. Everybody who met him on the road exclaimed, "'Tis a pity to see so amiable a youth wantonly court destruction. He goes alone to the grotto, when even if he had a hundred men to back him he could not accomplish his object. Why will the princess only demand impossibilities?" Avenant passed on without saying a word, but he was in very low spirits.

Having nearly got to the top of a mountain, he sat down to rest a little, allowing his horse to graze and Cabriolle to run after the flies. He knew that the Gloomy Grotto was not far from that spot, and looked about to see if he could discover it. He perceived a horrible rock, as black as ink, out of which issued a thick smoke; and the next minute one of the dragons, casting out fire from his mouth and eyes. It had a green and yellow body, great claws, and a long tail, coiled round in more than a hundred folds. Cabriolle saw all this, and was so frightened he did not know where to hide himself. Avenant, perfectly prepared to die, drew his sword, and descended towards the cavern, with a phial which the Fair with Golden Hair had given him to fill with the water of beauty. He said to his little dog Cabriolle, "It is all over with me; I shall never be able to obtain the water which is guarded by those dragons. When I am dead, fill the phial with my blood, and carry it to the princess, that she may see what she has cost me. Then go to the king my master, and tell him my sad story." As he uttered these words, he heard a voice calling, "Avenant! Avenant!" "Who calls me?" he asked; and he saw an owl in the hollow of an old tree, who said to him: "You let me out of the fowler's net in which I was caught, and saved my life. I promised I would do you as good a turn, and now is the time. Give me your phial. I am familiar with all the windings in the Gloomy Grotto. I will fetch you some of the water of beauty." Oh, I leave you to imagine who was delighted! Avenant quickly handed the phial to the owl, and saw it enter the grotto without the least difficulty. In less than a quarter of an hour the bird returned with the phial full of water, and tightly stopped. Avenant was in ecstasies! He thanked the owl heartily, and, re-ascending the mountain, joyfully took his way back to the city.

He went straight to the palace and presented the phial to the Fair with Golden Hair, who had no longer an excuse to make. She thanked Avenant, gave orders for everything to be got ready for her departure, and finally set out with him on their journey. She found him an exceedingly agreeable companion, and said to him more than once, “If you had wished it, I would have made you king, and there would have been no occasion for us to quit my dominions.” But his answer was always, “I would not be guilty of such treachery to my master for all the kingdoms on the face of the earth, although you are to me more beautiful than the sun!”

At length they arrived at the king’s capital city, and his majesty, hearing the Fair with Golden Hair was approaching, went to meet her, and made her the most superb presents in the world! The marriage was celebrated with such great rejoicings, that folks could talk of nothing else. But the Fair with Golden Hair, who secretly loved Avenant, was never happy when he was out of her sight, and was always praising him. “But for Avenant,” she would say to the king, “I should never have been here. For my sake he has done impossibilities. You should feel deeply indebted to him. He obtained for me the water of beauty. I shall never grow old, and I shall always remain handsome.” The envious courtiers who heard the queen express herself thus, said to the king, “You are not jealous, and yet you have good cause to be so. The queen is so deeply in love with Avenant, that she can neither eat nor drink. She can talk of nothing but him, and of the obligations you are under to him. As if any one else it had pleased you to send to her would not have done as much!” “That’s quite true,” said the king, “now I think of it. Let him be put in the tower, with irons on his hands and feet.” Avenant was accordingly seized, and in return for his faithful service to the king, fettered hand and foot in a dungeon. He was allowed to see no one but the gaoler, who threw him a morsel of black bread through a hole, and gave him some water in an earthen pan. His little dog Cabriolle, however, did not desert him; but came daily to console him and tell him all the news. When the Fair with Golden Hair heard of Avenant's disgrace, she flung herself at the king's feet, and, bathed in tears, implored him to release Avenant from prison. But the more she entreated, the more angry the king became, for he thought to himself, "It is because she loves him;" so he refused to stir in the matter. The queen ceased to urge him, and fell into a deep melancholy.

The king took it into his head, that perhaps she did not think him handsome enough. He longed to wash his face with the water of beauty, in hopes that the queen would then feel more affection for him. The phial full of this water stood on the chimney-piece in the queen's chamber: she had placed it there for the pleasure of looking at it more frequently: but one of her chamber-maids, trying to kill a spider with a broom, unfortunately threw down the phial, which broke in the fall, and all the water was lost. She swept the fragments of glass away quickly; and not knowing what to do, it suddenly occurred to her, that she had seen in the king's cabinet a phial precisely similar, full of water, as clear as the water of beauty; so, without a word to any one, she adroitly managed to get possession of it, and placed it on the queen's chimney-piece.

The water which was in the king's cabinet was used for the execution of princes and great noblemen who were condemned to die for any crime. Instead of beheading or hanging them, their faces were rubbed with this water, which had the fatal property of throwing them into a deep sleep, from which they never awakened. So it happened one evening that the king took down the phial which he fancied contained the water of beauty, and rubbing the contents well over his face, he fell into a profound slumber and expired. The little dog, Cabriolle, was the first to hear the news of the king's death, and ran with it to Avenant, who begged him to go and find the Fair with Golden Hair, and remind her of the poor prisoner.

Cabriolle slipped quietly through the crowd, for there was great confusion at court, in consequence of the king’s death, and said to the queen, “Madam, do not forget poor Avenant.” She immediately recalled to her mind all that he had suffered on her account, and his extreme fidelity. She left the palace without speaking to any one, and went directly to the tower, where with her own hands she took the irons off the hands and feet of Avenant, and putting a crown of gold upon his head, and a royal mantle over his shoulders, she said, “Come, charming Avenant, I make you king, and take you for my husband.” He threw himself at her feet in joy and gratitude. Everybody was delighted to have him for their master. His nuptials were the most splendid that ever were seen in the world, and the Fair with Golden Hair reigned long and happily with the handsome Avenant.

4

THE BLUE BIRD

Once upon a time there was a king who was exceedingly rich both in lands and money. His wife died, and he was inconsolable. He shut himself up for a week in a little room, where he beat his head against the walls in the extremity of his affliction. Fearing he would kill himself, they put some mattrasses between the tapestry and the wall, so that knock himself about as much as he pleased he could not do himself any mischief. All his subjects agreed amongst themselves, that they would go to him and exert their utmost eloquence to moderate his grief. Some prepared grave and serious orations; others, agreeable, and even lively addresses; but none made the least impression upon his mind, for he scarcely heard a word they said to him. At last a female presented herself before him, so muffled up in black crape, veils, mantles and other long mourning garments, and who wept and sobbed so much and so loudly, that he was perfectly astonished. She told him, she would not attempt, as others had done, to mitigate his sorrow; she came to augment it, as nothing could be more just than to lament the loss of a good wife; that for her own part, having lost the best of husbands, she had made up her mind to weep as long as she had eyes in her head; and thereupon she redoubled her groans, and the king, following her example, began to howl outright. He received this visitor with more attention than the others. He talked to her of the excellent qualities of his dear departed, and she recapitulated all those of her beloved defunct. They talked so much of their sorrow, that at last they were puzzled to know what more to say about it. When the cunning widow saw the subject was nearly exhausted, she raised her veil a little, and the afflicted king refreshed his sight with the contemplation of this poor mourner, who rolled about her large blue eyes fringed with long black lashes in the most effective manner. Her complexion was still blooming. The king examined her with a great deal of attention. By degrees he spoke less and less of his wife: at last he ceased to speak of her altogether. The widow declared that she should never leave off mourning for her husband. The king implored her not to make sorrow eternal. In fine, to the astonishment of everybody, he married her, and the sables were changed into green and rose colour. It is often only requisite to ascertain the particular foibles of persons, to enable you to creep into their confidence, and do just as you please with them.

The king had only had a daughter by his first wife, who was considered the eighth wonder of the world. She was named Florine, because she was so sweet, young, and beautiful. She was seldom seen in splendid attire, she preferred light morning dresses of taffety, fastened with a few jewels, and quantities of the finest flowers, which produced an admirable effect when twined with her beautiful hair. She was only fifteen when the king was re-married.

The new queen sent for her own daughter, who had been brought up by her godmother, the Fairy Soussio, but she was not more graceful or beautiful in consequence. Soussio had laboured hard to make something of her, but had laboured in vain. She loved her dearly, though, notwithstanding. Her name was Truitonne, her face being covered with reddish spots like those on the back of a trout. Her black hair was so greasy and dirty, that no one would venture to touch it, and oil oozed out of her yellow skin. The queen, her mother, doted on her; she talked of nothing but the charming Truitonne, and as Florine possessed so many advantages over her daughter, it exasperated her, and she sought, by every possible means, to injure the poor princess in the eyes of her father. Not a day passed that the queen and Truitonne did not play Florine some mischievous trick. The princess, who was mild as she was sensible, only endeavoured to keep herself out of the reach of their malice.

The king observed one day to the queen, that Florine and Truitonne were of an age to be married, and that they should bestow the hand of one of them on the first prince who visited their court. “I wish,” said the queen, “that my daughter should be married first; she is older than yours, and as she is a thousand times more amiable, there can be no hesitation about the matter.” The king, who disliked argument, answered that he was quite willing it should be so, and that he left her to take any measures she pleased.

A short time after this, it was announced that a visit from King Charmant might be expected. Never was any prince more celebrated for gallantry and magnificence. In mind and person he was charming as his name implied. When the queen heard this news, she employed all the embroiderers, all the tailors, all the work-people of every kind, to make dresses for Truitonne, and requested the king to give nothing new to Florine. She then bribed the waiting women to steal all the princess’s clothes, head dresses, and jewels, the very day King Charmant arrived, so that when Florine went to dress she could not find even a ribbon. She knew well enough who had done her this good turn. She sent to purchase materials for a new dress; but all the tradesmen returned for answer, that they had been forbidden by the queen to furnish her with anything. She was left, therefore, with only the gown she had on her back, and which was very much soiled, and she was so ashamed of her appearance that, when King Charmant arrived, she hid herself in a corner of the hall.

The queen received her royal visitor with great pomp, and presented her daughter to him, a complete blaze of magnificence, which only made her look more ugly than usual. King Charmant turned his eyes from her as soon as possible. The queen endeavoured to persuade herself that he was too much struck with her, and was afraid of committing himself. In this belief, she continually placed Truitonne before him. He inquired if there was not another princess named Florine. “Yes,” said Truitonne, pointing to her with her finger; “there she is, hiding herself, because she is not finely dressed.” Florine blushed, and looked so beautiful, so exceedingly beautiful in her confusion, that King Charmant was perfectly dazzled. He rose immediately and bowed profoundly to the princess. “Madam,” said he, “your incomparable beauty renders the foreign aid of ornament quite unnecessary.” “Sir,” replied she, “I own I am little accustomed to wear so disgraceful a dress as this, and I should have been better pleased to have escaped your notice.” “It would have been impossible,” exclaimed Chamiant, “for a princess so marvellously beautiful to be anywhere without attracting all eyes from the contemplation of any other object.” “Ah,” said the queen, greatly irritated, “it is pretty pastime to hear you pay these compliments! Believe me, Sir, Florine is already vain enough; she stands in no need of such excessive flattery.” King Charmant quickly perceived the queen’s motives for thus speaking, but as he was not at all accustomed to constrain his inclinations, he continued openly to manifest his admiration of Florine, and conversed with her for three whole hours.

The queen in despair, and Truitonne inconsolable that the princess should be thus preferred to her, complained bitterly to the king, and compelled him to consent that, during the residence of King Charmant, Florine should be shut up in a tower, where they could not see each other; and, accordingly, no sooner had she retired to her apartments, than four men in masks seized and carried her to a room at the top of the tower, where they left her in the greatest distress, for she saw clearly that she was thus treated in order to prevent her securing the affections of her royal admirer, with whom already she was much delighted, and would willingly have accepted him for her husband.

As he was not in the least aware of the violence that had been used towards the princess, he awaited with the greatest impatience the hour when he hoped to meet her again. He talked of her to the gentlemen whom the king had placed about his person to do him honour, but, as they had been ordered by the queen, they said all the ill of her they could imagine: — that she was coquettish, inconstant, ill-tempered; that she tormented her friends and her servants; that it was impossible for any one to be more slovenly; and that she was so avaricious, that she would much rather be dressed like a poor shepherdess than spend the money allowed her by the king her father in the purchase of rich apparel befitting her rank. During all these details Charmant was suffering tortures, and could scarcely restrain his anger. “No,” he argued to himself; “it is impossible that Heaven would permit so worthless a soul to inhabit the master-piece of Nature. I admit she “was badly dressed when I first saw her, but the shame she evinced proves that she was not accustomed to be so. What! Can she be ill-tempered and coquettish, with such an enchanting air of mildness and modesty? It is not reconcilable with common sense! I can much more easily imagine that the queen has caused her to be so slandered. She is only her stepmother, and the Princess Truitonne, her own daughter, is such an ugly creature, that it would not be extraordinary if she were envious of the most perfect of human beings.”

Whilst he thus reasoned with himself the courtiers about him readily imagined, from his manner, that he was not best pleased by their abuse of Florine. One, who was more astute than the rest, in order to discover the real sentiments of the prince, changed his tone and language, and began to extol the princess wonderfully. At the first words, Charmant woke up as from a deep sleep. He entered eagerly into the conversation. His features all lighted up with joy. — O Love! Love! how hard thou art to hide! thou art visible everywhere! — on a lover's lips, in his eyes, in the tone of his voice, — when we truly love, silence, conversation, happiness, or misery, are equally demonstrative of the passion which absorbs us.

The queen, impatient to learn if King Charmant was much smitten, sent for those whom she had placed in positions to acquire his confidence, and passed the rest of the night in their interrogation. Everything they reported only served to confirm the opinion she had formed that the king was in love with Florine. But how shall I describe to you the melancholy state of that poor princess? She lay stretched on the floor in the keep of that terrible tower to which the masked ruffians had carried her. "I should be less to be pitied," said she, "if I had been immured here before I had seen that amiable monarch. The recollection of him I cherish only serves to increase my distress. I cannot doubt, but that it is to prevent my seeing him again that the queen has treated me thus cruelly. Alas, how fatal to my peace has been the little beauty it has pleased Heaven to bestow on me!" She then began to weep bitterly, so bitterly that her worst enemy would have pitied her if a witness of her affliction. Thus passed the night.

The queen, who was anxious to win over King Charmant by every attention it was in her power to pay him, sent him presents of the most costly and magnificent dresses, made in the newest fashion of that country, and the Order of the Knights of Cupid, which she had compelled the king her husband to institute the day they were married, in honour of their nuptials. The badge of it was a golden heart, enamelled flame-coloured, surrounded by several arrows, and pierced with one, with the words, "One alone wounds me." The queen had, however, for Charmant a heart cut out of a ruby, as large as an ostrich's egg; each arrow was made of a single diamond about the length of a finger, and the chain to which the badge was appended was composed of pearls, the smallest of which weighed a full pound. In short, ever since the world has been a world, there was never anything like it. Charmant, at the sight of it, was so astonished that it was some time before he spoke a word. In the meanwhile they presented to him a book, the leaves of which were of the finest vellum, beautifully illuminated, and the binding covered with gold and jewels. In it the statutes of the Order of the Knights of Cupid were written in a gallant and tender style. They told him that the princess he had seen, prayed him to be her knight, and had sent him this present. At these words he flattered himself that it came from her he loved. “How! does the lovely Princess Florine,” cried he, “honour me by this splendid and flattering mark of her consideration?” “Sire,” they replied, “you mistake the name; we come from the amiable Truitonne.” “Truitonne! is it she who would have me be her champion?” said the king with a cold and serious air; “I regret that I cannot accept the honour; but a sovereign is not sufficiently his own master to enter into any engagements he pleases. I know the duties of a knight, and would fain fulfil them all. I would, therefore, prefer foregoing the favour she designs me, to proving myself unworthy of it.” At the same time he replaced in the same *corbeille*, the heart, the chain, and the book, and sent them all back to the queen, who, with her daughter, was ready to choke with rage at the contemptuous manner in which the illustrious foreigner had declined so especial a favour. King Charmant visited the king and queen as often as he was permitted the opportunity, in hopes of meeting Florine in the royal apartments. His eyes were everywhere in search of her. The moment he heard any one enter the room he turned sharply round towards the door, and seemed always restless and unhappy. The malicious queen easily guessed what was passing in his mind; but she appeared to take no notice of it. She talked to him only about parties of pleasure; and he returned her the most incongruous answers. At last he asked her plainly, where was the Princess Florine? “Sir,” replied the queen, haughtily, “the king her father has forbidden her to quit her own apartments until my daughter is married.” “And what motive,” inquired King Charmant, “can there be for making such a prisoner of that beautiful princess?” “I know not," said the queen, "and if I did, I should not consider myself bound to inform you."

Charmant felt his anger rising fearfully; he cast an angry glance upon Truitonne, assuring himself in his own mind that little monster was the cause of his being deprived of the pleasure of beholding Florine, and abruptly quitted the queen's presence, which gave him too much pain.

On his return to his own apartments, he requested a young prince who had accompanied him, and to whom he was much attached, to gain over, at any cost, one of the princess's attendants, in order that he might speak to Florine for one moment. The prince soon found some of the ladies of the palace, whom he could venture to admit into his confidence, and one of them promised him that Florine should that very evening be at a little lower window, which looked upon the garden, and from whence she could converse with Charmant provided he was exceedingly careful that no one should be aware of it; "for," added she, "the king and queen are so severe, that they will take my life if they discover I have favoured the passion of Charmant." The prince, delighted that he had so far succeeded in his mission, promised her anything she could desire, and ran to pay his court to his royal master, by announcing to him the hour of assignation; but the false confidante in the meantime went and told the queen what had occurred, and requested to know her commands. She immediately decided to place her daughter at the little window. She gave her particular instructions, and Truitonne attended to them all, notwithstanding her natural stupidity.

The night was so dark it was impossible for King Charmant to discover the imposition, even had he been less confident, so that when he drew near to the window indescribably transported with joy, he poured forth to Truitonne all the tender things he would have said to Florine, to convince her of his affection. Truitonne, profiting by the occasion, told him that she felt she was the most unfortunate person in the world, in having so cruel a stepmother; and that she should never cease to suffer all sorts of annoyances till the queen’s daughter was married. Charmant assured her, that if she would accept him for her husband, he should be enchanted to share with her his heart and crown; and thereupon he drew his ring from his finger, and placing it on one of Truitonne’s, he begged her to receive it as a token of eternal fidelity, and added that she had only to fix the hour for their flight. Truitonne made the best answers she could to his urgent persuasions. He noticed they were not very sensible, and the circumstance would have given him some uneasiness but that he thought it arose from the terror she was in of being surprised by the queen. He left her only on condition that she would meet him again the next night at the same hour, which she promised faithfully to do.

The queen having heard of the happy success of this interview, felt satisfied she should obtain her ends completely. Accordingly, the day being fixed for the elopement, King Charmant prepared to carry off his beloved in a flying chariot, drawn by winged frogs, a present which had been made to him by a friend who was an enchanter. The night was excessively dark, Truitonne stole out mysteriously by a little door, and the king, who was waiting for her, received her in his arms with a hundred vows of everlasting affection. But as he was not anxious to be sailing about in his flying chariot for any long time before he married his beloved princess, he desired her to say where she would prefer their nuptials to be solemnized. She answered that she had a godmother, named Soussio, who was a very celebrated Fairy, and she was of opinion they should go at once to her castle. Although the king was quite ignorant of the road, he had only to mention to his great frogs whither he wished to go. They were perfectly acquainted with the whole map of the world, and in a very short time they wafted Charmant and Truitonne to the abode of Soussio.

The castle was so brilliantly illuminated that the king would have discovered his mistake the moment he entered if the princess had not carefully enveloped herself in her veil. She inquired for her godmother, contrived to see her alone, told her how she had entrapped Charmant, and entreated her to pacify him. “Ah! my child,” said the Fairy; “the task will not be an easy one: he is too fond of Florine: I feel certain he will give us a great deal of trouble.” In the meanwhile the king was awaiting them in a saloon, the walls of which were of diamonds so pure and transparent that through them he could see Soussio and Truitonne in conversation together. He thought he must be dreaming. “How,” said he, “have I been betrayed? Have some demons brought hither this enemy of our peace? Comes she to disturb our nuptials? My dear Florine does not appear! Her father has perhaps pursued her!” He began to be the prey of a thousand distracting conjectures. But matters looked still worse, when entering the saloon, Soussio, addressing him in an authoritative tone, said, “King Charmant, here is the Princess Truitonne, to whom you have plighted your troth; she is my god-daughter, and I desire you will marry her immediately.” “I!” exclaimed he, — “I marry that little monster! You must think me a vastly tractable person to make such a proposition to me. I have made no promise to her whatever, and if she have told you otherwise, she has ——” “Hold,” interrupted Soussio, “and be not rash enough to fail in respect towards me!” “I agree,” replied the king, “to respect you as much as a Fairy can be respected, provided you restore to me my princess.” “Am not I your princess, faithless one?” said Truitonne, showing him his ring. “To whom didst thou give this ring as a pledge of thy truth? With whom didst thou converse at the little window if not with me?” “How then!” he cried, “have I been deceived and imposed upon?” “But no, no, I will not be your dupe! What ho! What ho! my frogs! my frogs! I would away instantly!” “Oho, it is not in your power without my consent,” exclaimed Soussio. She touched him, and his feet were fastened to the floor as if they had been nailed to it. “You may stone me to death, you may flay me alive,” cried the king, “but I will marry no one but Florine. I am resolved. You may therefore exercise your power upon me as you please!” Soussio tried in turn mildness, menaces, promises, prayers. Truitonne wept, shrieked, groaned, stormed, and became calm again. The king uttered not another word, looking on them both with an air of the greatest indignation; he made not the slightest answer to anything they said to him.

Twenty days and twenty nights passed without their ceasing to talk; without eating, sleeping, or sitting down. At length Soussio, quite tired and out of patience, said to the king, “Well, since you are so obstinate that you will not listen to reason, choose at once whether you will marry my god-daughter, or do penance for seven years as a punishment for breaking your word.” The king, who up to this time had been perfectly silent, suddenly exclaimed, “Do what you will with me, provided I am freed from this wretch.” “You are a wretch yourself,” said Truitonne, in a passion. “A petty king like you, with your marsh-bred posters, to come into my country to break your word to me and insult me! Had you a groat’s worth of honour in you, could you behave in this manner?” “What affecting reproaches!” said the king, in an ironical tone; “Behold what a mistake it is not to take so lovely a person for one’s wife!” “No, no, she shall not be your wife,” screamed Soussio, passionately; “you may fly out of that window if you like, for you shall be a Blue Bird for the next seven years!” At the same moment the king’s person undergoes a total change; his arms are covered with feathers and form wings; his legs and feet become black and diminutive, and furnished with crooked talons; his body shrinks, — it is all garnished with long fine thin feathers of celestial blue; his eyes become rounder, and bright as two stars; his nose is but an ivory beak; a white crest rises on his head in the form of a crown; he sings and talks to perfection. In this state, uttering a cry of anguish at beholding himself so metamorphosed, he flies from the fatal palace of Soussio as fast as his wings can carry him.

Overwhelmed with grief, he roams from branch to branch, selecting only the trees consecrated to love or sorrow. Now upon myrtles, now upon cypresses, he sings the most plaintive airs, in which he deplores his sad fate and that of Florine. “Where have her enemies hidden her?” said he. “What has become of that beautiful victim? Has the queen’s barbarity permitted her still to breathe? Where shall I seek her? Am I condemned to pass seven years without her? Perhaps during that period they will compel her to marry, and I shall lose for ever the hope on which alone I live.” These various reflections afflicted the Blue Bird to such a degree that he would have welcomed death.

On the other hand, the Fairy Soussio sent Truitonne back to the queen, who was anxiously waiting to know how the nuptials had gone off. When she saw her daughter, and heard from her lips all that had happened, she put herself in a terrible passion, which recoiled upon the poor Florine. “She shall repent more than once,” said the queen, “her fascination of Charmant!” She ascended the tower, with Truitonne, whom she had dressed in her richest clothes, with a crown of diamonds on her head, a royal mantle, the train of which was borne by three daughters of the richest barons in the realm, and on her thumb King Charmant’s ring, which Florine had noticed the day they conversed together. Florine was greatly surprised to see Truitonne in such pompous apparel. “My daughter has come to bring you a wedding present,” said the queen. “King Charmant has espoused her; he loves her to distraction; never has there been such a happy couple.” Thereupon they displayed to the princess heaps of gold and silver tissues, jewels, lace, and ribbons, contained in large baskets of gold filigree work. In presenting these objects, Truitonne took care Florine should see King Charmant’s brilliant ring, so that not being able to doubt her misfortune, she told them, with an air of desperation, to take from her sight such fatal gifts, that she would wear nothing but black, and, indeed, that she should soon be dead. So saying, she fainted, and the cruel queen, delighted to have succeeded so well, would not permit any one to assist her; but left her alone in the most wretched state imaginable, and went and maliciously reported to the king that his daughter was so madly in love, that nothing could equal the extravagancies she committed, and that great care should be taken to prevent her quitting the tower. The king told her to manage the matter exactly as she pleased, and that he should be perfectly satisfied.

When the princess recovered from her swoon, and began to reflect on the conduct they had pursued towards her, on the ill-treatment of her wicked stepmother, and the utter extinction of her hope one day to become the wife of King Charmant, her anguish became so keen that she wept the whole night long. In this wretched condition she sat at an open window uttering the most tender and touching lamentations. When day began to break she shut the window, but continued to weep. The following night she again opened the window, sobbing and sighing profoundly, and shedding a torrent of tears. Morning dawned, and she hid herself in the recesses of her chamber. In the meanwhile King Charmant, or, to speak more correctly, the beautiful Blue Bird, never ceased flying round the palace. He believed his dear princess was confined in it, and if her lamentations were distressing, his were no less so. He approached the windows as near as he could in order to look into the apartments; but the dread of being perceived and recognised by Truitonne prevented his doing exactly as he wished. “It would cost me my life,” said he to himself. “Should these wicked princesses discover where I am they would be revenged upon me; I must keep aloof, or be exposed to the utmost peril.” For these reasons he took the greatest precautions, and rarely sang except during the night. There happened to be an excessively lofty cypress immediately in front of the window at which Florine usually sat. The Blue Bird perched upon it, and had scarcely done so when he heard some one complaining. “How much longer shall I suffer?” said the mourner; “will not death kindly come to my aid? Those who fear him see him too soon — I long for his coming, and he cruelly flies me. — Oh, barbarous queen! what have I done to thee that thou shouldst detain me in this horrible captivity? Hast thou not ways enough to torment me? Thou hast only to make me witness of the happiness thy unworthy daughter enjoys in the society of King Charmant!” The Blue Bird had not lost one syllable of this complaint. He was so surprised that he awaited daylight with the greatest impatience in order to behold the afflicted lady, but before the morning dawned she had closed her window and retired. The Bird, whose curiosity was awakened, failed not to return the following night. It was moonlight, and he saw a girl at a window of the tower, who commenced her lamentations. “O Fortune!” she exclaimed; “thou who flatteredst me with the prospect of reigning; thou who hadst restored to me a father’s love; what have I done to deserve being plunged thus suddenly into the bitterest grief? Is it at so early an age as mine that mortals begin to experience thy inconstancy? Return, thou cruel one; return, if possible! The only favour I implore of thee is to end my unhappy fate!” The Blue Bird listened attentively, and the more he did so, the more convinced he became that it was his amiable princess who was thus bewailing. “Adorable Florine,” he cried, “wonder of our days, why do you desire so speedily to terminate your own? Your misfortunes are not without remedy!” “Ah! who speaks to me,” cried she, “in such consoling language?” “An unfortunate king,” replied the Bird, “who loves you, and will never love any other than you.” “A king who loves me!” rejoined Florine; “is this a snare set for me by my enemy? But after all, what would she gain by it? If she seeks to discover my sentiments, I am ready to own them to her frankly!” “No, my Princess,” replied the Bird; “the lover who addresses you is incapable of betraying you,” — and as he uttered these words he flew to the window. Florine was at first much alarmed at the appearance of so extraordinary a bird, who spoke with as much sense as if he had been a man, and yet in the small sweet voice of a nightingale. The beauty of his plumage, however, and the words he uttered, soon reassured her. “Am I then permitted once more to behold you, my Princess!” he exclaimed. “Can I taste of such perfect happiness and not die with joy! But, alas! how much is that happiness troubled by your captivity, and the condition to which the wicked Soussio has reduced me for seven years!" "And who are you, charming Bird," inquired the Princess, caressing him. "You have pronounced my name," said the king, "and you pretend you do not know me?" "How! the greatest monarch in the world, King Charmant!" cried the Princess; "can the little bird I hold in my hand be he?" "Alas, beautiful Florine, it is but too true!" replied the Bird; "and if anything can console me, it is the feeling that I preferred this pain to that of renouncing my love for you." "For me!" said Florine; "ah, do not attempt to deceive me. I know, I know that you have married Truitonne. I recognised your ring upon her hand. I saw her blazing with the diamonds you had given to her. She came to insult me in my sad prison, wearing the rich crown and royal mantle she had received from your hands, while I was laden with chains and fetters." "You have seen Truitonne so arrayed?" interrupted the king. "She and her mother have dared to tell you those jewels came from me? — O Heaven! is it possible that I hear such awful falsehoods, and that I cannot instantly avenge myself on the utterers! Know, that they tried to deceive me, that by a base use of your name they succeeded in causing me to carry off the ugly Truitonne; but the instant I discovered my error I endeavoured to fly from her, and eventually preferred being a Blue Bird for seven long years to failing in the troth I had plighted to you."

Florine felt such lively pleasure in listening to the explanation of her amiable lover, that she no longer remembered the misery of her prison. What did she not say to him to console him under his sad circumstances, and to assure him that she would do no less for him than he had done for her! Day dawned, and the majority of the officers of the royal household had risen before the Blue Bird and the princess had ceased conversing. It cost them a thousand pangs to part, after agreeing that they would meet every night in the same manner.

Their delight at having found each other was so great that there are no terms in which it can be expressed. Each, on their own part, offered up their thanks to Love and Fortune; but Florine’s happiness was alloyed by her anxiety respecting the Blue Bird. “Who will preserve him from the sportsmen,” she asked, “or from the sharp talons of some eagle or hungry vulture, who will eat him with as much relish as if he was not a great king? O Heaven! what would become of me if some of his light and delicate feathers, borne on the breeze to my window, announced to me the dreaded disaster?” This idea prevented the poor princess closing her eyes, for when one loves, fancies appear like facts, and what one would at another time think impossible, seems certain to happen; so she passed the day in tears till the hour arrived for her to return to the window.

The charming Bird, hidden in a hollow tree, had been all day occupied by the thought of his beautiful princess. “How happy I am,” said he, “to have found her! — How fascinating she is! — How deeply I appreciate the favour she shows me!” The tender lover counted up every moment of the time he was condemned to pass in the shape which prevented his marrying her, and never was the termination of a period desired more ardently. As he was anxious to pay Florine every attention in his power, he flew to the capital city of his own kingdom, alighted on his palace, entered his cabinet through a broken pane of glass in one of the windows, pounced on a pair of diamond ear-rings, so perfect and beautiful that none in the world could be compared to them, took them that evening to Florine, and begged her to wear them. “I would do so,” she said, “if you visited me by daylight; but as I only see you at night, you must excuse me.” The Bird promised he would contrive to come to the tower whenever she wished; upon which she put the ear-rings in her ears, and the night passed in tender conversation as the preceding had done.

The next day the Blue Bird returned to his kingdom, went to his palace, entered his cabinet by the broken window, and brought away the richest bracelets that had ever been seen. Each was made of a single emerald cut facet-wise, and hollowed in the middle so as to enable the wearer to pass her hands and arms through them. “Do you imagine,” said the Princess to him, “that my affection for you can be measured by presents? Ah, how you misjudge me!” “No, Madam,” replied he; “I do not believe that the trifles I offer you are necessary for the preservation of your love: but mine will not permit me to neglect the least opportunity of evincing my respect for you, and when I am absent these little trinkets will recal me to your mind.” Florine said a thousand kind things to him on the subject, to which he replied by as many no less tender.

The following night the fond Bird brought to his fair one a moderate sized watch, which was encased in a single pearl, the workmanship of which surpassed even the material. “It is useless to present me with a watch,” said the princess, sweetly. “When you are absent the hours seem endless to me, and when you are with me they pass like a dream, so that I cannot exactly measure them.” “Alas, my Princess,” exclaimed the Blue Bird, “I am exactly of your mind, and am certain that I feel the pain of absence and the pleasure of return even more deeply than you do!” “After what you have suffered to keep faith with me,” replied the princess, “I am bound to believe that your affection and respect cannot be carried further.”

As soon as morning appeared, the Bird flew back to his hollow tree, where he lived upon wild fruits. Sometimes he sang the finest airs, to the great delight of all who passed that way. They could see no one, so they fancied it must be the voice of a spirit. This opinion became so prevalent, that at last nobody dared enter the wood. A thousand fabulous adventures were related of those who had done so, and the general alarm ensured the safety of the Blue Bird. Not a day passed without his making Florine some present, either a pearl necklace, or the most brilliant and curiously wrought rings, diamond loops, bodkins, and bouquets of jewels in imitation of natural flowers, entertaining books, interesting medals, till at last she possessed a heap of marvellous valuables. She wore her jewels only by night to please the king, and in the day-time, having no other place to put them in, she hid them carefully in the straw of her mattress.

Two years thus passed away without Florine once complaining of her captivity. How could she? She had the gratification of conversing all night with him she loved. Never were there made so many pretty speeches. Though the Bird never saw any one, and passed the whole day in a hollow tree, they had a thousand new things to tell one another. The matter was inexhaustible. Their love and their wit furnished them with abundant subjects of conversation.

In the meanwhile the malicious queen, who detained her so cruelly in prison, vainly endeavoured to marry off Truitonne. She sent ambassadors with proposals to all the princes she knew the names of: but they were bowed out almost as soon as they arrived. “If your mission was respecting the Princess Florine, you would be received with joy,” was the answer; “but as for Truitonne, she may remain a vestal without any one objecting.”

These tidings infuriated both mother and daughter against the innocent princess whom they persecuted. “How! — does this arrogant creature continue to thwart us notwithstanding her captivity?” cried they. “Never can we forgive the injuries she has done us! She must have private correspondence with foreign governments; she is therefore guilty, at the least, of high treason. Let us act on this suspicion, and use every possible means to convict her.”

They sat so late in council together on this point, that it was past midnight when they determined to ascend the tower to interrogate Florine. She was at the window with the Blue Bird, arrayed in all her jewels, and her beautiful hair dressed with a nicety not usual in afflicted persons. Her apartment and her bed were strewed with flowers, and some Spanish pastilles she had been burning diffused an exquisite perfume. The queen listened at the door. She fancied she heard an air sung by two persons, (Florine had an almost heavenly voice,) and the following words appeared to be given with great expression: —

Oh, how wretched is our lot,
And what pangs endure we not,
Loving thus — thus forced to sever!
But, though deep indeed our woes,
In despite of cruel foes,
Our fond hearts are join'd for ever.

A few deep sighs were heard at the termination of this little concert.

"Ah, my Truitonne! we are betrayed," exclaimed the queen, suddenly opening the door and rushing into the room. Fancy the alarm of Florine at this sight! She promptly pushed open the casement, in order to give the Royal Bird an opportunity to fly off unperceived. She was much more anxious about his preservation than her own; but he felt he had not the power to fly. His piercing eyes had discovered the peril to which the princess was exposed. He had caught sight of the queen and Truitonne. How great his misery to know he was not in a state to defend her! They approached her like furies bent on devouring her. "Your intrigues against the state are detected," cried the queen. "Do not imagine your rank can save you from the punishment you deserve." "Intrigues with whom, Madam?" inquired the princess. "Have you not been my jailor these two years? Have I seen any other persons than those you have sent to me?" Whilst she spoke, the queen and her daughter examined her with unparalleled surprise. Her admirable beauty, and the extraordinary splendour of her attire, completely dazzled them. "And whence have you obtained, Madam," said the queen, "these jewels that outshine the sun? Would you have us believe there are mines in this tower?” “I have found them,” answered Florine; “that is all I know about it.” The queen fixed her eyes upon Florine, with a penetrating look, endeavouring to see what was passing in the very core of her heart. “We are not your dupes,” she cried; “you think you can deceive us: but, Princess, we are aware of what you do from morning till night. These jewels have been given to you with the sole object of inducing you to sell your father’s kingdom.” “I am in a good position to deliver it up,” replied Florine, with a disdainful smile; “an unfortunate princess, who has so long languished in captivity, can be of great service, certainly, in a conspiracy of such a nature.” “And for whom, then,” added the queen, “are your tresses so coquettishly dressed? Your apartment is redolent of perfumes, and your attire so magnificent, that you could not be grander were you going to Court.” “I have plenty of time on my hand,” said the princess; “it is not extraordinary I should strive to while away a few moments of it in the cares of my toilet. I pass so many in weeping over my misfortunes, that the innocent occupation of the others cannot surely be a subject of reproach.” “Aye, aye, indeed! let us see,” said the queen, “if this innocent person is not in treaty with our enemies.” She began to hunt everywhere, and coming to the mattress she emptied it, and found such an immense quantity of diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and topazes, that she could not imagine where they all came from. She had intended to hide in some place documents, the discovery of which would inculpate the princess. So when she thought nobody saw her, she was about to thrust them into the chimney, but by good luck the Blue Bird was perched upon it, who had eyes as sharp as a lynx, and who heard everything. “Beware, Florine!” he cried; “thy enemy is committing some treason against thee.” This voice, so unexpected, frightened the queen so much, that she dared not secrete the papers. “Madam,” said the princess, “you see that the spirits of the air are my friends.” “I believe,” exclaimed the queen, in a paroxysm of rage, “that you are leagued with demons; but, in spite of them, your father will do himself justice.” “Would to heaven,” cried Florine, “I had only to fear the fury of my father! but yours, Madam, is much more terrible.”

The queen left her, greatly disturbed by all she had seen and heard. She consulted with her friends, as to what should be done to the princess. They observed, that, if she were protected by some fairy or enchanter, any further persecution of her would only irritate her powerful friend, and that it would be better, first, to endeavour to discover the mystery. The queen approved of this idea. She sent a young girl, who affected extreme simplicity, to sleep in Florine’s apartment, under the pretence that she was placed there to wait upon her. But it was not likely Florine would fall into so evident a trap. The princess looked on her, of course, as a spy, and it was impossible for her to feel more poignant affliction. “What, then! shall I never be able to converse again with the Bird that is so dear to me!” said she. “He assisted me to support my misfortunes. I consoled him under his. Our affection was everything to us! What will become of him? What will become of me.” Thinking of all these things, she shed rivers of tears. She no longer dared go to the little window, though she heard the Bird fluttering around it. She was dying to open it; but she feared exposing the life of her dear lover. She passed a whole month, without appearing at the casement. The Blue Bird was in despair. What complaints did he not utter! How could he live without seeing his princess! He had never so keenly felt the pangs of absence and the misery of his metamorphosis. Vainly did he endeavour to seek out a remedy for either. After racking his brains, he could find no consolation anywhere, or in anything.

The spy, who had watched day and night for a whole month, felt quite overpowered with drowsiness, and at last sunk into a sound slumber. Florine observed it. She opened her little window and said —

BIRD as blue as cloudless sky,

Hither, hither quickly fly!

We give her own words, without the slightest alteration. The Bird heard them so distinctly that he was at the window in an instant. What delight once more to behold each other! What a quantity of things they had to say to each other! They renewed their vows of love and fidelity a thousand and a thousand times. The princess being unable to restrain her tears, her lover was much affected, and did his best to console her. At last the hour of parting arrived, without the spy awaking, and they bade each other farewell in the most touching manner.

The next day the spy again fell asleep. The princess lost no time in placing herself at the window, and calling as before —

Bird as blue as cloudless sky,
Hither, hither quickly fly!

The Bird immediately arrived, and the night passed, like the preceding one, without noise or discovery, at which the lovers were delighted. They flattered themselves that the spy found so much pleasure in sleeping, that she would do so every night, and, in fact, the third passed as fortunately: but on the one following, the sleeper, being disturbed by some noise, listened, without appearing to be awake, and peeping as well as she could, saw, by the light of the moon, the most beautiful bird in the world, who talked to the princess, caressed her with his claw, and pecked her gently with his bill. She overheard part of their conversation, and was exceedingly surprised; for the Bird spoke like a lover, and the beautiful Florine answered him most tenderly. Day broke. They bade each other adieu; and, as if they had a presentiment of their coming misfortune, they parted with extreme sorrow. The princess threw herself on her bed, bathed in tears, and the king returned to his hollow tree. The spy ran to the queen, and told her all she had seen and heard. The queen sent for Truitonne and her confidants. They talked the matter over for a long time, and arrived at the conclusion that the Blue Bird was King Charmant. “What an affront!” cried the queen. “What an affront, my Truitonne! This insolent princess, whom I fancied was so wretched, was quietly enjoying the most agreeable conversation with that ungrateful prince! Oh, I will have such a terrible revenge, that it shall be the talk of the whole world!” Truitonne begged her not to lose a moment, and as she considered herself more interested in the matter than the queen, she was ready to die with joy at the thought of all that would be done to destroy the happiness of the lover and his mistress.

The queen sent the spy back to the tower, ordering her not to evince any suspicion or curiosity, but to appear more sleepy than ever. She went to bed early, and snored as loudly as she could. The poor deceived princess, opening the little window, called —

Bird as blue as cloudless sky,
Hither, hither quickly fly!

BUT IN VAIN she called him the whole night long. He came not; for the wicked queen had caused swords, knives, razors, and daggers to be attached to the cypress-tree, so that when he flew rapidly into it, these murderous weapons cut off his feet; and he fell upon others which lacerated his wings, and wounded him so, that with great difficulty he reached his own tree, leaving behind him a long track of blood. Why were you not there, lovely Princess, to comfort that Royal Bird? And yet it would have been the death of her to have seen him in so deplorable a condition. He took no care to save his life, persuaded that it was Florine who had been guilty of this cruel treachery. “O barbarous Princess!” he exclaimed, mournfully, “is it thus thou repayest the most pure and tender passion that ever was or will be? If thou wouldst that I should die, wherefore didst thou not thyself perform the deed? Death had been sweet from thy hand. I sought thee with so much love and confidence — I suffered for thee, and suffered without complaining; and thou hast sacrificed me to the most cruel of women, our common enemy! Thou hast made thy peace with her at the price of my life! It is thou, Florine, — thou, who hast stabbed me! Thou hast borrowed the hand of Truitonne, and guided it to my bosom!” This fatal idea overwhelmed him, and he resolved to die.

But his friend the Enchanter, who had seen the flying frogs return with the car, but without the king, was so troubled to think what had become of him, that he went eight times round the world in search of him. He was on a ninth journey for the same purpose, when, in passing through the wood in which the poor king was lying, he, according to his usual custom, blew a long blast on his horn, and then cried five times, in a loud voice, “King Charmant! — King Charmant! where art thou?” The king recognised the voice of his best friend. “Approach,” he cried, “this tree, and behold the wretched king you love, bathed in his blood!” The Enchanter, much surprised, looked about him everywhere, without seeing any one. “I am a Blue Bird,” exclaimed the king, in a feeble and plaintive voice. At these words the Enchanter found him, without more trouble, in his little nest. Another person might have been more astonished, but he was versed in every portion of the necromantic art. It cost him but a few words to stanch the blood which was fast flowing; and with some herbs he found in the wood, and over which he muttered a short spell, he cured the king as perfectly as if he had never been wounded.

He then begged he would inform him through what adventure he had become a bird, and who had wounded him so cruelly. The king satisfied his curiosity, and told him that it must have been Florine who had revealed the amorous mystery of the secret visits he paid her, and who, to make her peace with the queen, had consented to have the cypress-tree filled with the daggers and razors which had hacked him almost to pieces. He exclaimed a thousand times against the treachery of the princess, and said he should have been happy if he had died before he had known the wickedness of her heart. The Magician inveighed against her, and against all the sex: he advised the king to forget her. "What a misfortune it would be," said he, "if you could continue to love the ungrateful girl! After what she has been guilty of towards you, one has everything to fear from her." The Blue Bird could not remain long of that opinion; he still loved Florine too dearly: and the Enchanter, who knew his real sentiments, notwithstanding the pains he took to conceal them, said to him gaily, —

Crush'd by Fortune's cruel blow,
Vainly Reason's voice is heard;
We but listen to our woe,
Deaf to sage or soothing word.
Leave old Time his work to do;
All things have their sunny side;
But till he turns it to our view,
Nought but darkness is descried.

The Royal Bird admitted the truth of the remark, and begged his friend to take him home and to put him in a cage, where he would be safe from a cat's paw, or any murderous weapon. "But," said the Enchanter, "will you still remain five years in a condition so deplorable, and so little suited to your duties and your dignity? For, remember, you have enemies who assert that you are dead. They would seize your kingdom. I much fear you will lose it before you regain your proper form.” “Can I not,” asked the king, “enter my palace, and govern as I used to do?” “Oh,” exclaimed his friend, “the case is altered! Those who would obey a man, will not bow to a parrot: those who feared you while a king, surrounded by grandeur and pomp, would be the first to pluck out all your feathers, now you are a little bird.” “Alas, for human weakness!” cried the king. “Although a brilliant exterior is as nothing compared to merit and virtue, it still possesses a power over the minds of men which it is difficult to combat. Well,” continued he, “let us be philosophers, and despise that which we cannot obtain: our lot will be none the worse for it.” “I do not give up a point so easily,” said the Magician; “I still hope “to hit upon some means for your restoration.”

Florine, — the wretched Florine, — in despair at no longer seeing the king, passed her days and nights at the window, repeating unceasingly, —

Bird as blue as cloudless sky,
Hither, hither quickly fly!

The presence of her watchful attendant did not prevent her; her despair was so great that she was careless of consequences. “What has become of you, King Charmant?” she cried. “Have our mutual enemies caused you to feel the cruel effects of their rage? Have you fallen a sacrifice to their fury? Alas, alas! are you no more? Shall I never again behold you? or, weary of my woes, have you abandoned me to my hard fate?” What tears, what sobs followed these tender complaints! How did the absence of so dear and so amiable a lover lengthen the dreary hours of her captivity! The princess, oppressed, ill, thin, and sadly altered, could scarcely sustain herself; she felt convinced that everything most fatal had occurred to the king.

The queen and Truitonne triumphed. Their revenge gave them more pleasure than the offence had caused them annoyance. And what was this offence, after all? King Charmant had refused to marry a little monster he had a thousand reasons to hate. In the meantime Florine's father, who had reached a considerable age, fell ill and died. The fortunes of the wicked queen and her daughter assumed a new aspect. They were looked upon as favourites, who had abused their influence. The people rose, and ran in a body to the palace, demanding the Princess Florine, whom alone they would recognise as their sovereign. The enraged queen endeavoured to carry matters with a high hand; she appeared in a balcony, and threatened the insurgents. The revolt became general; they broke into her apartments, pillaged them, and stoned her to death! Truitonne fled for protection to her godmother, the Fairy Soussio, or she would have shared the fate of her mother. The grandees of the kingdom met immediately, and ascended the tower, where the princess was lying very ill. She knew neither of the death of her father, nor of the punishment of her enemy. When she heard the noise of persons approaching, she had no doubt but that they were coming to lead her to death. She was not in the least alarmed, for life had become hateful to her since she had lost the Blue Bird. Her subjects, flinging themselves at her feet, informed her of the happy change in her fortunes. She was quite indifferent to it. They carried her to the palace and crowned her. The great care that was taken of her health, and her own desire to seek out the Blue Bird, combined to restore her, and she was soon enabled to nominate a council to govern the kingdom during her absence. She then provided herself with jewels to the value of a thousand millions of francs, and set out on her journey one night quite alone, without any one's knowing whither she was gone. The Enchanter, who managed the affairs of King Charmant, not having sufficient power to undo what Soussio had done, decided upon seeking her and proposing some arrangement, under favour of which she would restore the king to his natural form. He ordered out his frogs and flew to the Fairy, who was at that moment in conversation with Truitonne. Enchanters and fairies are on an equal footing. These two had known each other for five or six hundred years, and during that time had quarrelled and made it up again a thousand times at least. She received him very politely. “What would my Gossip?” said she, (it is thus they all address one another.) “Is there anything in my power that I can do for him?” “Yes, Gossip,” answered the Magician, “you can do everything I desire: it concerns one of my best friends, a king whom you have made very unhappy.” “Aha! I understand you, Gossip!” cried Soussio. “I’m very sorry, but he has no mercy to hope for, unless he consent to marry my god-daughter. There she is in all her beauty, as you may see. Let him consider of it.”

The Enchanter was almost struck dumb at the sight of her, so hideous did she appear to him; nevertheless, he could not resolve to leave, without coming to something like an agreement with Soussio, for the king had run a thousand risks since he had lived in a cage. The nail on which the cage had been suspended had broken, and the cage, of course, had fallen to the ground with a severe shock to his feathered majesty. Minet, the cat, who happened to be in the room when this accident happened, gave the poor king a scratch on the eye, which nearly deprived him of the sight of it. On another occasion, they had neglected to give him any fresh water, and he barely escaped having the pip. A little rogue of a monkey, who had got loose, caught hold of some of his feathers through the bars of the cage, and spared him as little as he would have done a jay or a blackbird. But the worst of all was, that he was on the point of losing his kingdom. His heirs were daily trumping up some stories to prove he was dead. So, finally, the Enchanter came to an understanding with his gossip Soussio, that she should bring Truitonne to King Charmant’s palace, where she should reside for some months, which time the king should be allowed to make up his mind to marry her, and that during that period Soussio would permit him to resume his original form, with the proviso that he should become a Bird again if he ultimately refused to espouse her god-daughter.

The Fairy presented Truitonne with some magnificent dresses, all of gold and silver, then seated her on a pillion behind herself on a dragon, and proceeded directly to the kingdom of Charmant, whom they found there with his faithful friend the Enchanter. Three taps of Soussio's wand, and King Charmant was again the handsome, amiable, intelligent, and munificent sovereign he had been before his transformation; but dearly bought was the reprieve accorded to him. The more thought of marrying Truitonne made him shudder. The Enchanter reasoned with him as well as he was able, but made little impression on his mind. The king was less occupied with the government of his dominions, than with devising means to prolong the period Soussio had allowed should elapse previous to his marriage with Truitonne.

In the meanwhile Queen Florine, disguised as a peasant, with her hair all dishevelled and hanging about her ears to conceal her features, a straw hat on her head, and a sack upon her shoulder, proceeded on her journey, sometimes walking, sometimes riding, now by sea, now by land, making all possible haste; but not being certain of her road, fearing every turn she took might be in the wrong direction, and lead her from her amiable monarch instead of towards him. One day that she had stopped to rest herself beside a fountain, whose silvery waters flowed leaping over the little pebbles, she thought she would take that opportunity of washing her feet. She accordingly sat down upon the grassy bank, tied up her fair locks with a ribbon, and put her feet into the little stream. She looked like Diana bathing on her return from the chase. A little old woman who, bent almost double and leaning on a stout stick, was passing that way, stopped, and said to her, "What are you doing there, my pretty girl, all alone by yourself?" "My good mother," answered the queen, "I have plenty of company, for I am beset by sorrows, anxieties, and misfortunes!” and at these words her eyes filled with tears. “How! so young and weeping,” said the good woman. “Ah, my child, do not give way to sorrow; tell me truly what is the matter, and I hope I may be able to comfort you.” The queen willingly told her all her misfortunes, the conduct of the Fairy Soussio, and how she was at present in quest of the Blue Bird.

The little old woman drew herself up as straight as possible, changed suddenly her whole appearance, became lovely, young, and superbly attired, and smiling graciously on the queen, said, “Incomparable Florine, the king you seek is no longer a bird; my sister Soussio has restored him to his former shape. He is in his own kingdom. Do not afflict yourself; you will reach it, and succeed in your design. Here are four eggs; break one of them whenever you are most in need of assistance, and you will find in it what will be useful.” As she ended these words she disappeared. Florine felt much consoled by what she had heard; she put the eggs in her sack, and resumed her journey towards the kingdom of Charmant.

After walking eight days and nights without stopping, she arrived at the foot of a mountain, prodigiously high, all of ivory, and so steep that one could not keep one’s footing upon it. She made a thousand vain attempts, stepping down every time, till tired out, and in despair at meeting with so insurmountable an obstacle, she laid herself down at the bottom of the mountain, determined to die there, when she recollected the eggs the Fairy had given her.

She took one out of her sack. “Let us see,” she said, “if the giver was not making game of me when she promised that I should find help in them in my need!” She broke it, and found inside some little golden cramps, which she fastened on her hands and feet. By the aid of them she climbed up the ivory mountain without the least trouble, for the points of the cramps entered the ivory, and prevented her slipping. When she had reached the top, she found herself in equal difficulty respecting the descent. All the valley was one sheet of looking-glass, around which upwards of sixty thousand women were standing and admiring themselves in it extremely, for this looking-glass was full two leagues in breadth, and six in height. Every one appeared in it exactly as they wished to be. The carroty-haired seemed to have locks of gold; a bad coarse brown appeared a glossy raven black. The old looked young — the young never looked older; in fine, no fault could be seen in this wonderful mirror, and, consequently, it was resorted to by the fair sex from all parts of the world. It was enough to make you die of laughing to see the airs and graces the majority of these coquettes gave themselves. Nor were the men less eager to consult this magical mirror, which was equally pleasing to them. To some it seemed to give fine curly hair, to others taller stature or better shape, a more martial mien or a nobler deportment; the ladies they laughed at laughed at them no less in return; so that the mountain was called by a thousand different names. No one had ever been able to get to the top of it, and therefore when Florine appeared on the summit, the ladies uttered shrieks of despair! "Where is that mad creature going?" they cried. "No doubt she knows how to walk upon glass, or the first step she takes she will break our mirror to pieces!" — upon which arose a terrible hubbub. The queen knew not what to do, for she saw the imminent danger of descending by that road. She broke another egg, out of which issued two pigeons attached to a car, which at the same time became sufficiently large for her to seat herself in it comfortably. The pigeons then gently descended with the queen, and alighted at the bottom without the least accident. "My little friends," said she to them, "if you will convey me to the spot where King Charmant holds his court, you will not oblige an ungrateful person." The civil and obedient pigeons rested neither day nor night till they arrived at the gates of the city. Florine alighted, and gave each of them a sweet kiss, worth more than a royal diadem.

Oh, how her heart beat as she entered the city! She stained her face that she might not be recognised. She inquired of some passengers where she could see the king. Some of them began to laugh at her. “See the king!” said they; “ho! what dost thou want with him, my young slut? Go, go, and clean yourself! your eyes are not worthy the sight of such a monarch.” The queen made no reply, but passed on quietly, and asked the next persons she met the same question, — where should she place herself in order to see the king. “He is to go to the temple to-morrow with the Princess Truitonne, for he has at last consented to espouse her,” was the answer.

Heavens! what tidings! Truitonne, the worthless Truitonne, on the eve of marriage with the king! Florine felt dying! she had no longer power to speak or move. She sank down on a heap of stones under a gateway, her face covered by her dishevelled hair and her large straw hat. “Unfortunate creature that I am!” cried she; “I have come hither but to swell the triumph of my rival, and witness her delight! It was for her, then, the Blue Bird deserted me! It was for this little monster that he was guilty of the most cruel inconstancy! While, plunged in grief, I trembled for his life, the traitor had already changed, and thinking no more of me than if he had never seen me, left me to lament his absence without a sigh!” When people are very miserable, they rarely have much appetite, so the poor queen sought out a lodging for the night, and went to bed without any supper. She rose with the sun, and hastened to the temple. After repeated rebuffs from the soldiers and attendants, she succeeded in obtaining admission. There she saw the king’s throne and that of Truitonne, whom the people already looked upon as queen. What affliction for so fond, so sensitive a creature as Florine! She approached the throne of her rival, and stood there leaning against a marble pillar. The king arrived first, looking more handsome and more fascinating than ever. Truitonne followed him, richly attired, and ugly enough to frighten everybody. She frowned on perceiving the queen. “Who art thou,” said she, “to dare thus approach our august person and our golden throne?”

“I am called Mie Souillon,” replied Florine; “I come from a great distance to sell you some curiosities!” and so saying, she took out of her sack the emerald bracelets which King Charmant had given to her. “Aha!” said Truitonne; “these are pretty glass ornaments. Will you take a five-sous piece for them?” “Show them, Madam, to some connoisseur,” said the queen, “and then we will make our bargain.” Truitonne, who was as fond of the king as such a creature could be, and delighted to have a reason for addressing him, approached his throne, and showed him the bracelets, requesting his opinion of their value. The sight of them immediately recalled to him those he had given to Florine. He turned pale, sighed, and remained for some time without speaking; at length, fearing the observations that might be made upon the agitation his conflicting emotions had occasioned, he made an effort to compose himself, and answered, “I believe these bracelets to be worth almost as much as my kingdom. I imagined there was but one such pair in the world; but here is certainly another very like it.” Truitonne returned to her throne, seated on which she looked less noble than an oyster in its shell. She asked the queen what was the least price she set upon the bracelets. “You would find it difficult to pay, Madam,” she answered; “I had better propose to you another sort of bargain. If you will obtain permission for me to sleep one night in the Cabinet of Echos, which is in the king’s palace, I will make you a present of my emeralds.” “Willingly, Mie Souillon!” said Truitonne, laughing like an idiot, and showing teeth longer than the tusks of a wild boar.

The king made no inquiry as to whence the bracelets came, less from indifference to the person by whom they were presented, (indeed, her appearance was not such as to inspire much curiosity,) than from the invincible repugnance he felt to Truitonne. Now, it is fit you should know that while he was a Blue Bird, he had told the Princess Florine that beneath his apartments there was a cabinet, which was called the Cabinet of Echos, so ingeniously constructed that the slightest whispers uttered therein could be heard by the king when reposing in his bedchamber; and as Florine's intention was to reproach him for his inconstancy, she could not have imagined a better method.

She was conducted to the cabinet by order of Truitonne, and immediately began her complaints and lamentations.

"The misfortune I would fain have doubted is but too certain, cruel Blue Bird!" she cried. "Thou hast forgotten me! Thou lovest my unworthy rival. The bracelets which I received from thy disloyal hand could awake no remembrance of me, so entirely hast thou banished me from thy recollection!" Her sobs here choked her utterance, and when she was again able to speak, she resumed her lamentations, and continued them till daybreak. The king's valets-de-chambre, who had heard her moan and sigh all night long, told Truitonne, who inquired why she had made such a disturbance. The queen answered that when she slept soundly she was in the habit of dreaming, and often talked aloud in her sleep. As to the king, by a strange fatality he had not heard her. Since he had been so deeply in love with Florine, he never could sleep, so that when he went to bed they gave him a dose of opium, in order to obtain for him some repose.

The queen passed a part of the day in great anxiety. "If he heard me," thought she, "there never yet was such cruel indifference. If he did not hear me, how shall I manage to make him do so?" She possessed no more extraordinary curiosities; she had plenty of beautiful jewels; but it was necessary to find something which should particularly take the fancy of Truitonne. She therefore had recourse to her eggs. She broke one, and out of it came immediately a coach of polished steel, inlaid with gold, drawn by six green mice, driven by a rose-coloured rat, and the postilion, who was also one of the rat tribe, was of a greyish violet colour. In the coach sat four puppets, more lively and sprightly than any that were ever seen at the fairs of St. Germain or St. Laurent. They could do all sorts of wonderful things, particularly two little gipsies, who, for dancing a saraband or a jig, would not have yielded the palm to Leance.

The queen stood enraptured at the sight of this new masterpiece of necromantic art. She remained perfectly quiet till the evening, which was the time Truitonne usually took an airing. She posted herself in one of the walks, and set the mice galloping with the coach, rats, and puppets. This novelty so astonished Truitonne, that she called out two or three times — “Mie Souillon! — Mie Souillon! will you take five sous for your coach and set of mice?” “Ask the men of letters and learned doctors of this kingdom,” said Florine, “what such a wonder is worth, and I will abide by the valuation of the best judge.” Truitonne, who was imperative about everything, replied, “Without offending me longer by thy filthy presence, tell me the price.” “All I ask,” said Florine, “is to sleep again in the Cabinet of Echoes.” “Go, poor idiot,” answered Truitonne, “thou shalt have thy wish;” and, turning to her ladies-in-waiting, “There’s a stupid creature,” said she, “to reap no greater advantage from such curiosities!”

Night came. Florine uttered all the most touching reproaches she could think of; but as vainly as before, for the king never omitted taking his opium. The valets-de-chambre said to one another, “That country wench must surely be mad! What is she muttering about all night?” “Notwithstanding,” observed some, “there is both reason and feeling in what she says.” She waited impatiently for morning, to ascertain what effect her words had produced. “What,” she cried, “has this barbarous man become deaf to my voice? Will he no longer listen to his dear Florine? Oh, how weak am I to love him still! How well do I deserve the scorn with which he treats me!” But in vain did she so reason; she could not divest herself of her affection for him.

There was but one more egg left in her sack, to afford her further assistance. She broke it, and out came a pie composed of six birds, which were larded, dressed, and quite ready for eating; yet, nevertheless, sang admirably, told fortunes, and knew more about medicine than Esculapius himself. The queen was enchanted at the sight of such a wonderful affair, and carried her talking pie into Truitonne's antechamber. While waiting for her to pass, one of the king's valets-de-chambre came up to her, and said, "My friend, Mie Souillon, are you aware that if the king did not take opium to make him sleep, you would disturb him dreadfully? for you chatter all night long in the most extraordinary manner."

Florine was no longer surprised that the king had not heard her: she took a handful of jewels out of her sack, and said, "I fear so little interrupting the king's repose, that if you will prevent his taking opium to-night, presuming that I sleep in the Cabinet of Echoes, all these pearls and diamonds shall be yours." The valet-de-chambre consented, and gave her his word on the matter.

A few minutes afterwards, Truitonne arrived. She perceived the queen, with her pie, which she pretended to be eating. "What dost thou there, Mie Souillon?" said Truitonne to her. "Madam," replied Florine, "I am eating astrologers, musicians, and physicians." At the same moment all the birds began to sing more melodiously than syrens, and then to cry, "Give us a piece of silver, and we'll tell you your fortune." A duck that was particularly prominent, called out, in a voice louder than any of the others, "Quack! quack! quack! quack! I am a physician; I cure all disorders and every sort of madness, except that of love." Truitonne, more surprised at so many wonders than ever she had been in her life, vowed it was an excellent pie, and that she would have it. "Come, come, Mie Souillon, what shall I give thee for it?" "The usual price," answered Florine; "permission to sleep in the Cabinet of Echoes — nothing more." "Hold!" said Truitonne, generously (for she was in a capital humour, in consequence of her acquisition of such a pie), "thou shalt have a pistole into the bargain." Florine, happier than she had yet been, in the hope that the king would at length hear her, took her leave of Truitonne, with many thanks.

As soon as night came, she requested to be conducted to the Cabinet, ardently hoping that the valet-de-chambre would keep his word, and that, instead of giving the king his opium draught, he would substitute for it something that would keep his majesty awake. When she thought everybody else was asleep, she began her usual lamentations. “To how many perils have I exposed myself,” she said, “in search of thee; whilst thou hast fled from me, and wouldst marry Truitonne! What have I done to thee, thou cruel one, that thou shouldst thus forget thy vows? Remember thy metamorphosis, my favours, and our tender conversations!” She repeated them nearly all, her memory sufficiently proving that nothing was dearer to her than such recollections.

The king was not asleep, and so distinctly heard the voice of Florine, and every word she uttered, that he could not imagine whence they proceeded; but his heart, penetrated with tenderness, recalled to him so vividly the person of his incomparable princess, that he felt his separation from her as keenly as he did at the moment the knives had wounded him in the cypress-tree. He began to speak aloud on his part, as the queen had done on hers. “Ah, Princess,” said he, “too cruel to a lover who adored you! Is it possible that you can have sacrificed me to our mutual enemies?” Florine heard what he said, and failed not to answer him, and to inform him that, if he would grant Mie Souillon an audience, he would be enlightened respecting all the mysteries which hitherto he had been unable to penetrate. At these words, the impatient king called one of his valets-de-chambre, and asked him if he could find Mie Souillon, and bring her to him. The valet-de-chambre replied, that nothing could be more easy, as she was sleeping in the Cabinet of Echoes.

The king knew not what to think. How could he believe so great a queen as Florine was disguised as a scullion? And yet, how could he imagine that Mie Souillon had the voice of the queen, and was in possession of such particular secrets, if she were not Florine herself? In this uncertainty he arose and dressed himself in the greatest hurry, and descended by a back staircase to the door of the Cabinet of Echoes, out of which the queen had taken the key: but the king had a master-key which unlocked every door throughout the palace.

He found her arrayed in a light robe of white taffety, which she wore beneath her coarse disguise, her beautiful hair falling about her shoulders. She was lying on a couch, and a lamp at some distance shed on the scene but a feeble light. The king entered suddenly, and his love getting the better of his anger, the moment he recognised her he flung himself at her feet, bathed her hands with his tears, and felt ready to die with joy, grief, and the thousand different thoughts that rushed at once into his mind.

The queen was not less moved. Her heart seemed to stop beating; she could scarcely breathe. She looked earnestly at the king without saying a word, and when she found strength to speak to him, she had no power to reproach him; the joy of beholding him again made her forget, for the time, the cause of complaint she imagined she had against him. At length, they mutually explained, and justified themselves. Their affection revived stronger than ever, and all that embarrassed them was the Fairy Soussio. But at this moment the Enchanter, who was so fond of the king, arrived with a famous Fairy, no other than she who gave the four eggs to Florine. After the first compliments had passed between them, the Enchanter and the Fairy declared that their power being united in favour of the king and queen, Soussio could do nothing against them, and that consequently their marriage would take place without delay.

We may readily imagine the delight of these two young lovers. As soon as it was day the news was spread throughout the palace, and everybody was enchanted to see Florine. The tidings reached Truitonne. She ran to the king’s apartments. What was her surprise to find there her beautiful rival! The moment she attempted to open her mouth to abuse her, the Enchanter and the Fairy appeared, and changed her into a sow, which being called

Truye, in French, she still retained part of her name, and her natural disposition to grumble. She ran out of the room grunting, and thence into the kitchen court-yard, where the long peals of laughter with which she was received, completed her despair.

King Charmant and Queen Florine, delivered from so odious a person, now thought only of the nuptial fête, the taste and magnificence of which were equally conspicuous.

It is easy to conceive how great was their happiness after passing through such prolonged misfortunes.

5

PRINCE SPRITE

Once upon a time there was a king and a queen who had but one son, whom they were passionately fond of, though he was exceedingly deformed. He was as fat as the biggest man, at the same time that he was as short as the smallest dwarf; but the ugliness of his face and the deformity of his body were nothing in comparison with the malignity of his disposition. He was an obstinate brute, who caused the misery of every one about him. The king had observed this from the prince's earliest infancy; but the queen doted upon him, and made him much worse by her outrageous indulgence, which too plainly indicated the power he possessed over her. To find favour in the eyes of this princess, it was necessary to vow that her son was both handsome and witty. She was desirous to give him a name that would inspire respect and fear. After long consideration she called him Furibon.

When he was of an age to require a tutor, the king selected a prince who had a dormant claim to the crown, which he might have maintained like a brave man, had not his estates fallen into decay. As it was, he had long ceased to think of it, and applied himself solely to the education of an only son.

Never was there a youth blessed with a finer disposition. High-spirited, and yet most tractable, there was a peculiar felicity and grace in his every expression. In person he was perfect.

The king having chosen the father of this young nobleman to train up Furibon, expressly commanded the prince to be very obedient to him; but Furibon was so stubborn that an hundred floggings would not cure him of a single fault. His tutor's son was named Leander, and everybody loved him. He was a great favourite with the ladies; but he attached himself to no one in particular. They called him "The handsome indifferent." All these attacks upon him failed to produce any change in his manner. He rarely quitted Furibon; and that association served but to make the latter appear more hideous. The little brute never spoke to a lady but to utter some rudeness. Sometimes he would find fault with their dress. Sometimes he would tell them their manners were coarse and countrified. He would accuse them publicly of being painted, and eagerly carried every scandalous story he could pick up about them to the queen, who would not only reprimand them severely, but make them fast by way of punishment. All this caused them mortally to hate Furibon; this he perceived, and generally resented it on the young Leander. "You are vastly happy," said he, looking at him askance; "the women praise and applaud you; they are not so indulgent to me." "My lord," said Leander, modestly, "their respect for you prevents such familiarity." "They are quite right," rejoined Furibon; "I should beat them into a jelly to teach them their duty."

One day, some ambassadors having arrived at the court from a far country, the prince, accompanied by Leander, went into a gallery to see them pass. As soon as the envoys saw Leander they advanced towards him with profound salutations, evincing by signs their admiration. Then observing Furibon they took him for his dwarf, laid hold of him by the arm and, turned him round and round in spite of all his resistance. Leander was in despair; he exhausted himself with his efforts to make them understand that it was the king's son they were treating so unceremoniously, but all in vain; and unfortunately the interpreter was awaiting them in the hall of audience. Finding that they did not comprehend his signs, Leander humbled himself still more before Furibon; but the ambassadors as well as the persons in their suite, imagining this was in jest, laughed till they were almost in fits, and filliped the prince on his nose, after the fashion of their own country. Furibon, transported with rage, drew his little sword, which was not longer than a lady's fan, and had certainly done some mischief had not the king advanced to meet the ambassadors, and to his great surprise observed the commotion. He apologised to them, for he spoke their language. They answered him, that it was of no consequence; that they saw clearly the hideous little dwarf was out of temper. The king was greatly chagrined, that the ugliness and folly of his son had occasioned such a mistake.

As soon as Furibon was left alone with Leander he seized him by the hair and tore out two or three handfuls. He would have strangled him if he had had the power, and forbade him ever to appear again in his presence. Leander's father, offended at Furibon's conduct, sent his son to a château he had in the country. He was not at a loss for amusement. He was fond of hunting, fishing, and walking; he could draw from nature, read much, and played on several instruments. He rejoiced he was no longer obliged to pay court to a capricious prince; and, notwithstanding the solitude in which he lived, never knew a moment's dulness.

One day, after walking a long time in his gardens, as the heat increased, he entered a little wood, the trees of which were so high and so leafy that they afforded a very agreeable shade. He began to divert himself by playing on the flute, when he felt something twine itself about his leg very tightly; and on looking down, discovered to his surprise a large adder. He took out his handkerchief, and catching the reptile by its head he was about to kill it; but it twisted itself round his arm, and, fixing its eyes upon him, seemed to crave for mercy. One of his gardeners coming up at the time, no sooner saw the adder than he called out to his master, "Hold it fast, my lord, I have been hunting it for an hour, in order to kill it. It is the most cunning creature in the world, and does desperate mischief in the flower-beds.” Leander looked again on the adder, which was spotted with a thousand extraordinary colours, and still gazed at him earnestly without making any effort to defend itself. “As you would have killed it (said he to the gardener) and it ran to me for protection, I forbid you to do it any injury. I shall feed it, and when it has cast its beautiful skin, I shall let it go.” He returned to the château and put the adder into a large room, of which he kept the key, and had bran, milk, flowers and herbs provided for it, to feed on and sport with.

Here was a happy adder for you. Occasionally he paid it a visit. The moment it perceived him it crept to meet him, with all the pretty airs and graces that an adder is capable of. The prince was rather surprised at it; but, nevertheless, did not pay much attention to the circumstance. All the ladies of the court lamented his absence. They talked of nothing but Leander, and wished him back again. “Alas,” said they, “there are no more pleasures at court now Leander has left it. That wicked Furibon was the cause of his departure. Must he needs hate Leander, because he is more amiable and more beloved than himself? Must Leander dislocate his own bones, and split his mouth from ear to ear, in order to resemble him? screw up his eyes, and pull off his nose, to gratify this little baboon? who will never be happy as long as he lives; for he will never find any one so ugly as he is.”

However wicked princes may be, they will always have flatterers, and, indeed, those who are wicked find more parasites than the others. Furibon had his share: his influence over the mind of the queen made them fear him. They told him what the ladies said of him, and put him almost into a frenzy with passion. He rushed into the queen’s chamber in this state, and vowed he would kill himself before her eyes, if she did not instantly find some means of destroying Leander. The queen, who hated the poor youth, because he was handsomer than her monkey of a son, replied that she had long looked upon Leander as a traitor, that she would willingly put him to death with her own hand. She advised Furibon to go out hunting with the most trustworthy of his confidants, that Leander would join the chase, and that then they might teach him how to make himself loved by everybody. Furibon accordingly went out hunting. When Leander heard the hounds and horns in the wood, he mounted his horse and rode to see who the hunters were. He was much surprised at meeting suddenly the prince. He dismounted and saluted him respectfully. Furibon received him more graciously than he could have hoped, and bade him follow in his suite. At the same time, turning to the assassins, he made signs to them to make sure of their blow. He then galloped away, when suddenly a lion of an enormous size rushed out of a cavern, and springing upon him pulled him to the ground. His attendants fled in every direction, leaving Leander alone to combat the furious animal. Sword in hand, he advanced at the hazard of being torn to pieces, and by his courage and skill rescued his most cruel enemy. Furibon had fainted with terror; Leander used every means to revive and reassure him, and as soon as he was sufficiently recovered, offered him his own horse to ride home on. Any one but a monster of ingratitude would have been touched to his heart's core by such great and recent services, and acknowledged them nobly both by words and deeds. Not so Furibon. He did not even deign to look on Leander, and availed himself of his horse but to rally the assassins, and order them instantly to dispatch him. They surrounded Leander, and he must infallibly have been slain but for his undaunted courage. He placed his back against a tree in order to avoid being attacked from behind, and, not sparing one of his enemies, laid about him desperately. Furibon, believing he must be killed, hastened to enjoy the sight of his dead body; but a very different spectacle met his eyes. The villains were all stretched on the earth in their last agonies, and Leander advancing, said to him, “My Lord, if it was by your order these men attacked me, I regret that I defended myself.” “You are an insolent traitor,” answered the prince, in a rage, “and if ever you again appear in my presence, I will have you put to death.”

Leander made no reply. He returned home very sorrowful, and passed the night in thinking what he ought to do, for there was no likelihood of his being able to make a stand against the king’s son. He resolved to go abroad and see the world: but when he was just ready to start upon his travels, he remembered the adder, and took to it some milk and some fruit. On opening the door he perceived an extraordinary light shining in a corner of the room, and to his great astonishment beheld a lady, whose noble and majestic air left no doubt of the greatness of her birth. Her dress was of amaranth satin, bordered with diamonds and pearls. She advanced towards him with a gracious smile, and said, “Young Prince, seek not for the adder you brought hither, it is no longer here; you behold me in its place, to discharge the debt it owes you: but to speak to you more intelligibly, know that I am the Fairy Gentille, celebrated for the amusing and dexterous feats I know how to perform. Our race live an hundred years without growing old, without maladies, without fears or pains. At the expiration of that period, we become adders for the space of a week. It is only during that time that we are in any danger, for then we can neither foresee nor prevent misfortunes, and if we were killed we should never come to life again. The week ended, we return to our usual shapes, with renewed beauty, power and treasures. You now, my lord, can understand the obligations I am under to you. It is but just I should repay them. Think how I can be useful to you, and depend upon my friendship.”

The young prince, who had never before held any communication with fairies, was so astonished, that it was some time before he could speak. But at length, making her a profound bow, — “Madam,” said he, “after the honour I have enjoyed of being of service to you, it appears to me I have nothing more to desire of Fortune.” “I shall be very sorry,” replied she, “if you do not put me in the way of rendering you some service. Consider that I have the power to make you a great king, to prolong your life, to make you still more amiable, to give you mines full of diamonds and houses full of gold. I can make you an excellent orator, poet, musician and painter, the idol of the women; render your nature more ethereal, make you a spirit of air, water and earth." — Leander interrupted her at this point. "Permit me, Madam, to ask you," said he, "what advantage should I derive from becoming a spirit?" "It would enable you to do a thousand useful and agreeable things," replied the fairy. "You are invisible whenever you please, you traverse in an instant the vast expanse of the universe, you rise in the air without wings, you descend to the centre of the earth without dying, you plunge into the depths of the ocean without being drowned, you enter everywhere, though the windows and doors are fastened ever so carefully, and, at any moment you please, you re-appear in your natural form." "Ah, Madam!" exclaimed Leander, "I will be a spirit. I am about to travel; I can imagine an infinite number of pleasures to be enjoyed under such circumstances, and I prefer that gift to all the others which you have so generously offered me." "Be a spirit, then," replied Gentille, passing her hand three times over his eyes and face. "Be a beloved spirit, an amiable spirit, and a frolicksome spirit." She then embraced him, and gave him a little red hat ornamented with two parrot's feathers. "When you put on this cap," continued she, "you will be invisible; when you take it off you appear again." Leander, enraptured, clapped the little red hat on his head, and wished to fly to the forest to cull some wild roses he had observed there. In an instant his body became light, and swift as thought he darted through the window towards the forest, soaring like a bird. He was rather alarmed when he saw himself at a great height and crossing the river. He feared he should fall into it, and that the power of the fairy could not prevent it: but he found himself safe at the foot of the rose-tree, gathered three roses, and returned immediately to the room in which the fairy was still standing. He presented them to her, charmed that his little trial-trip had been so successful. She told him to keep the roses; that one of them would furnish him with any money he might require; that by placing another in his mistress's bosom, he would know if she were faithful to him; and that the third would preserve him from sickness. Then, without waiting to be thanked, she wished him a fortunate journey and disappeared.

Leander was exceedingly delighted with the valuable boon which had been conferred upon him. "Could I ever have imagined," said he, "that for having saved a poor adder from the clutches of my gardener, I should be rewarded by the possession of such rare and great advantages! — Oh, how I shall enjoy myself! — what pleasant moments I shall pass! — how many things I shall become acquainted with! I can be invisible, — I can witness the most secret adventures." It occurred to him also, that it would be a rich treat to him, to take some vengeance upon Furibon. He speedily arranged his affairs, and mounting the handsomest horse in his stables, named Grisdelin, he departed, followed by a few of his servants, wearing his livery, in order that the news of his return to court might be more speedily known.

You must know that Furibon, who was a great story-teller, had reported that but for his own bravery Leander would have assassinated him during the chase, that he had killed all his people, and that justice should be done upon him. The king, importuned by the queen, gave orders for the arrest of Leander, so that when he arrived in such a public manner, Furibon was immediately informed of it. He was, however, too great a coward to encounter Leander himself. He ran to his mother's apartments and told her Leander had returned to court, and entreated her to have him arrested. The queen, eager to do anything her monkey of a son desired, lost no time in seeking the king; and the prince, impatient to learn the result of the interview, stopped, and put his ear against the door, and lifted up his hair to hear more distinctly. Leander entered the grand hall of the palace with his little red cap on his head, and was of course invisible. As soon as he caught sight of Furibon listening, he took a nail and a hammer and nailed his ear to the door-post. Furibon, distracted, raved and thumped at the door like a madman, uttering piercing shrieks. The queen, at the sound of his voice, ran to open the door to him, and in so doing pulled off her son's ear. He bled as if his throat had been cut, and made a hideous grimace. The queen, inconsolable, sat him in her lap, took up his ear, kissed it, and stuck it on again.

Leander took a handful of twigs which were used for whipping the king's little dogs, and rapped the queen's knuckles and the prince's nose with them. The queen called out she was being murdered, massacred. The king stared, the attendants rushed in, no one was to be seen, and it was whispered about that her majesty was out of her wits, and that it must be from grief at seeing Furibon's ear torn off. The king believed the rumour, and avoided the queen when she approached him. The scene was altogether very amusing. The merry Sprite gave Furibon another good switching, and then, quitting the apartment, he went into the garden and became visible. There he boldly gathered the cherries, apricots, and strawberries, and the rarest flowers in the queen's parterre, — those she took special care of herself, and which it was death to touch. The gardener, thunderstruck, ran to tell their majesties that Prince Leander was stripping the fruit-trees and plundering the flower-garden. "What insolence!" exclaimed the queen. "My little Furibon, my dear poppet! — forget, for a moment, the pain of your ear, and run after that wretch; take with you our guards, our musqueteers, our police, our courtiers. Place yourself at their head, and cut the traitor into collops." Furibon, excited by his mother's words, and followed by a thousand men well armed, hurried into the garden, and saw Leander under a tree, who flung a stone at him, which broke his arm, and pelted his troops with oranges. They rushed upon Leander: but he instantly became invisible, and stepping behind Furibon, who was already in a sad plight, passed a cord between his legs, which threw him on his nose. They picked him up, and carried him to bed exceedingly ill.

Leander, satisfied with this revenge, returned to where his people awaited him, distributed money amongst them, and sent them back to his castle, not wishing any one to accompany him who might be acquainted with the secret of the little red hat and the roses. He had not made up his mind whither he would go. He mounted his beautiful horse called Grisdelin, and allowed him to take whatever road he pleased. He passed through woods and plains, over hills and valleys, without number, resting occasionally, and eating and sleeping, without meeting with anything worthy of notice. At length he came to a forest, in which he stopped and dismounted, for the sake of a little shade, the day being very hot. The next moment he heard some one sighing and sobbing: he looked all about him, and saw a man, now running, now stopping, now uttering cries of despair, then silent, tearing his hair, and striking himself violent blows. There was no doubt he must be some miserable madman. The prince, touched with compassion, accosted him. “I see you,” said he, “in so pitiable a condition, that I cannot help inquiring the cause, and offering you any assistance in my power.” “Oh, my lord,” answered the young man, “there is no remedy for my misfortunes. This very day my beloved is to be sacrificed to a jealous old wretch, who is very wealthy, but who will make her the most miserable person in the world.” “She loves you, then?” said Leander. “I may flatter myself she does,” replied he. “And where is she?” continued the prince. “In a castle at the further end of this forest,” answered the lover. “Well,” said Leander, “wait here for me; I will shortly bring you some good news.” So saying, he put on the little red hat, and wished himself in the castle. He had scarcely arrived, when he heard a strain of sweet music; and on entering the building, it echoed with the sound of violins and other instruments. He walked into a grand hall, filled with the relations and friends of the old man and the young lady. Nothing could be more lovely than the latter; but the paleness of her cheeks, the melancholy imprinted on her countenance, and the tears which occasionally filled her eyes, sufficiently expressed her grief. Leander, become an invisible spirit, placed himself in a corner, to watch the persons who were present. He saw the father and mother of this beautiful girl, who in whispers scolded her for the disinclination she manifested, and then returned to their places. The Sprite glided behind the mother, and said in her ear, — “As thou dost constrain thy child to give her hand to this old baboon, assure thyself that within a week thou shalt be punished by death.” The woman, terrified at hearing a voice and seeing no one, and still more so by the threat it uttered, gave a loud shriek, and fell on the floor. Her husband asked what was the matter with her. She explained that she should be a dead woman if her daughter’s marriage took place, and that she would not consent to the match for all the treasures in the world. The husband was inclined to laugh at her, and treat her as a dreamer; but the Sprite approached him, and said, “Incredulous old man, if thou dost not believe thy wife, it will cost thee thy life. Break off this match, and give thy daughter immediately to him she loves.” These words produced an astonishing effect. The intended bridegroom was abruptly bowed out, on the excuse that they broke off the match solely in obedience to commands from heaven. He doubted, and attempted some chicanery, for he was a Normandy man; but the Sprite shouted such a terrible “Aha!” in his ear, that it almost deafened him; and, to settle the matter, trod on his gouty feet hard enough to crush them. So they ran to seek out the lover in the wood. The Sprite awaited his coming with great impatience, — his young mistress alone could feel more. The lovers were ready to die with joy. The banquet which had been prepared for the old man’s nuptials, served for those of this happy pair; and the Sprite, resuming his visible form, appeared suddenly at the hall-door, like a stranger who had been attracted by the sounds of festivity. As soon as the bridegroom perceived him, he ran and flung himself at his feet, calling him by every name his gratitude could suggest. Leander passed two days in their castle, and might have remained there if he had chosen, for they offered him all they were worth in the world. He left such good company with much regret.

He continued his journey, and reached a great city, in which there lived a queen who delighted in filling her court with the handsomest people in her kingdom. Leander, on his arrival, set up the most splendid equipage that was ever seen. He had only to shake his rose, and obtain as much money as he wished for. It is easy to imagine that, being handsome, young, witty, and above all, magnificent, the queen and princesses received him with a thousand marks of esteem and consideration.

This court was one of the most gallant in the universe. Not to be in love was to be ridiculous. Leander desired to be in the fashion, and fancied he could amuse himself by falling in love, and that when he departed he could leave his passion behind him as easily as his equipage. He cast his eyes on one of the queen's maids of honour, who was called the beautiful Blondine. She was a very accomplished person, but so cold and so grave, that he was puzzled how to gain her favour.

He gave enchanting fêtes in her honour; balls and plays every evening; brought her the rarest presents from every part of the globe: but nothing seemed to move her, and the more indifferent she appeared to him, the more he exerted himself to please her. What fascinated him still more was, the belief that she had never loved any one. To be satisfied on this point, it occurred to him to try the power of his rose. He placed it, jestingly, on the bosom of Blondine, and immediately, fresh and blooming as it was, it became faded and withered. It needed nothing further to convince Leander that he had a favoured rival. He felt the mortification keenly, and to have ocular demonstration, he that evening wished himself in Blondine's apartment. He saw a musician introduced, who was one of the ugliest beings possible. He howled three or four verses which he had composed for her, the words and air of which were equally detestable; but she enjoyed them as if they were the finest things she had ever heard in her life. She praised all his frantic grimaces, so much was she taken with him; and finally permitted the filthy fellow to kiss her hand. The outraged Sprite flung himself on the impertinent musician, and, pushing him violently against the balcony, threw him into the garden, knocking out the few teeth he had left in his head.

If a thunderbolt had fallen on Blondine she could not have been more astonished. She thought the musician himself possessed by a demon. The Sprite glided out of the apartment without discovering himself, and returned immediately to his own lodgings, whence he wrote to Blondine, reproaching her as she deserved. Without waiting for her answer, he departed, leaving his splendid carriage and horses to his equerries and gentlemen. He paid the rest of his people handsomely, and mounted his faithful Grisdelin, determined never to love again after the trick that had been played him.

Leander rode away at full speed. He was for a long time a prey to grief, but reason and absence gradually worked a cure. He arrived at another city, where he learned that a great ceremony was about to take place that very day, on the occasion of a young maiden being admitted into the order of Vestals, although contrary to her own inclinations. The prince pitied her. It seemed as if his little red hat was given him expressly to repair public injuries and console the afflicted. He ran to the temple. The young creature was crowned with flowers, dressed in white, with her hair flowing on her shoulders; two of her brothers led her by the hand, and her mother followed her, with a large company of both sexes. The eldest Vestal was in waiting at the gates of the temple. At this moment the Sprite shouted, “Stop! stop! Wicked brothers! Reckless parent! Stop! Heaven is opposed to this unjust ceremony. If you venture to proceed you shall be crushed like frogs.”

They stared about them without being able to discover whence proceeded these terrible threats. The brothers said it was the lover of their sister, who had hidden himself in some hole to play the oracle; but the Sprite in great wrath took a long stick and inflicted a hundred blows on them. The stick was seen to rise and fall on their shoulders like a hammer upon an anvil. Nobody could doubt that the blows were real. Terror seized the Vestals, they fled, and everybody followed their example. The Sprite alone remained with the young victim. He quickly took off his little hat, and begged to know how he could assist her. She told him, with more courage than one would have expected in a girl of her age, that there was a knight to whom she was not indifferent, but that he had no fortune. Leander shook his rose so much that he left with them ten millions; they married and lived very happily.

The last adventure he met with was the most agreeable. On entering a great forest he heard the plaintive cries of a young female. He felt assured some violence was being offered her. He looked about him everywhere, and at length perceived four men well armed carrying off a girl, who appeared to be about thirteen or fourteen years of age. He hastened towards them and exclaimed, “What has this child done to you, that you should treat her like a slave?” “Ha! ha! my little lord,” answered the chief of the party, “what business is that of yours?” “I command you,” added Leander, “to release her instantly!” “Yes, yes; without fail;” they all answered laughingly. The Prince, much irritated, threw himself from his horse, and clapped on his little red hat, for he did not think himself bound to face fairly four men, who were sufficiently powerful to fight twelve. When his little hat was on, they must have been cunning who could have seen him. The robbers cried, “He has fled; it is not worth our while to hunt for him; let us only catch his horse.” One remained as a guard with the young girl, while the other three ran after Grisdelin, who gave them plenty of exercise. The little girl continued her cries and complaints: “Alas, my beautiful Princess,” said she, “how happy was I in your palace! how could I live far away from you! If you knew of my sad misfortune, you would send your Amazons to rescue your poor Abricotine!” Leander heard her, and without delay seized the arm of the robber who held her, and tied him to a tree, before he had time or power to help himself; for he could not see the person who bound him.

Hearing his cries for help, one of his comrades came running quite out of breath, and asked who had bound him. “I don’t know,” he replied, “I have seen no one.” “That’s a story trumped up to excuse thyself,” answered the other, “but I’ve long known thee to be but a coward, and I will treat thee as thou deservest.” So saying he gave him a score of blows with his stirrup-leathers. The sprite amused himself amazingly, with hearing him bellow; and then, approaching the second robber, he seized his arms, and bound him to a tree facing his comrade, saying to him, as soon as he had done it, “Now, then, my brave fellow, who has pinioned thee? Art thou not a great coward to have suffered it?” The rogue had not a word to say for himself, and hung down his head ashamed; not being able to imagine how he had been made a prisoner without seeing any one. In the meanwhile Abricotine took the opportunity of escaping, although she knew not which way to run. Leander missing her, called three times for Grisdelin, who being in a huny to obey his master, got rid of the two robbers that pursued him with a couple of kicks, fracturing the skull of one, and breaking three ribs of the other. The sprite was now only anxious to rejoin Abricotine; for she had appeared to him very pretty. He wished to be where she was, and instantly found himself in the presence of the girl; who was so very much fatigued that she was clinging to the trees every moment for support. When she saw Grisdelin advancing so gaily, she exclaimed, “Good, good; here is a fine horse that will carry Abricotine back to the Palace of Pleasures!” The sprite heard her plainly enough; but she could not see him. He rode close up to her, Grisdelin stopped, and she jumped up. The sprite caught her in his arms, and placed her gently before him. Oh, what a fright Abricotine was in, to feel herself in the grasp of somebody, and see nobody! She did not dare to move; she shut her eyes, fearing to see some fearful goblin. She uttered not the slightest word. The Prince, who had always the nicest sweetmeats in the world in his pockets, tried to put some in her mouth; but she set her teeth, and kept her lips as close as possible.

At length he took off his little red hat, and said to her, “Why, Abricotine, you are very timid, to be so much afraid of me. It is I who released you from the hands of the robbers.” She opened her eyes and recognised him. “Ah! my lord,” said she, “I am greatly indebted to you. It is true, I was much alarmed to find myself in the power of an invisible being.” “I am not an invisible being,” replied he, “but, perhaps, your sight was troubled at the moment, and you did not observe me.” Abricotine believed that it must nave been so, though she was naturally shrewd enough. After having chatted for some time on indifferent subjects, Leander begged she would tell him her age, her country, and by what mischance she had fallen into the hands of robbers. “I am under too much obligation to you,” said she, “to refuse satisfying your curiosity; but I intreat you, my lord, to consider the speed of our journey of more importance than listening to my story.”

“A fairy, who in science never had an equal, fell so desperately in love with a certain prince, that, although she was the first fairy who had ever been weak enough to love, she did not hesitate to marry him, in spite of all the other fairies, who unceasingly represented to her the wrong she did to their order. They would not allow her to dwell amongst them any longer; and all she could do was to build a grand palace near the confines of their kingdom. But the prince she had married became weary of her. He was exasperated at her fore-knowledge of all his actions. The instant he had the least liking for another, she flew out at him like a fury, and changed the object of his admiration from the most beautiful person to the ugliest fright in the world.

“The prince finding such an excess of affection extremely inconvenient, went off one fine morning with post horses, and travelled a very, very great distance, in order to hide himself in a deep cave at the bottom of a mountain, where she should not be able to find him. He was not successful. She followed him, and informed him that she should shortly become a mother; conjured him to return to his palace; promised that she would give him money, horses, dogs, arms, build a riding-school, and a tennis-court, and lay out a mall for his diversion. All this had no effect on him, he was naturally obstinate and a libertine. He said a hundred harsh things to her, and called her an old witch, and a hobgoblin. ‘It is fortunate for thee,’ said she, ‘that I have more sense than thou hast folly; for I could transform thee, were I so inclined, into a cat that should be continually squalling in a gutter, or into a vile toad sputtering in the mud, or into a pumpkin, or a screech owl; but the greatest punishment I can inflict on thee is to abandon thee to thy own humours. Remain in thy hole, in thy gloomy cavern with the bears, call around thee the neighbouring shepherdesses; thou wilt learn in time the difference between beggarly peasants and a fairy, who can render herself as charming as she pleases.’

“She immediately entered her flying chariot, and departed swifter than a bird. The moment she reached home, she transported her palace to an island; turning out of it all the guards and officers, and taking into her service women of the Amazonian race, — whom she set to watch the shores of the island so strictly that no man could possibly enter it. She named this spot the Isle of Peaceful Pleasures, asserting constantly, that it was impossible to enjoy such in the society of the male sex. She brought up her daughter in this opinion. There never was so beautiful a creature. She is the Princess whom I serve; and as all the purest pleasures reign around her, nobody grows old in her palace. Young as I look, I am more than two hundred. When my mistress grew up, her fairy mother gave her the island, with many excellent lessons how to live happily. She then returned to Fairy Land, and the Princess of Peaceful Pleasures governs her state in an admirable manner.

"I do not remember having seen, ever since I was born, any other men than the robbers who carried me off, and you, my lord. Those ruffians told me they were employed by a certain ugly and misshapen person, called Furibon, who was in love with my mistress from seeing only her portrait. They prowled about the island, without daring to set foot on it. Our Amazons are too vigilant to let any one enter it; but as I have charge of the Princess's birds, and accidentally let her beautiful parrot fly away, fearing her displeasure, I imprudently quitted the island in search of it. The men seized me, and would have carried me away with them but for your assistance."

"If you have any gratitude," said Leander, "may I not hope, beautiful Abricotine, that you will enable me to enter the Island of Peaceful Pleasures, and gaze on this wonderful princess, who never grows old?" "Ah, my lord," said she, "we should be lost, both of us, if we attempted such a thing! It is easy for you to forego the enjoyment of a pleasure you never knew. You have never been in that palace; fancy there is none." "It is not so easy as you imagine," replied the Prince, "to root from one's memory things that have so agreeably occupied it; and I do not agree with you that it is certain, that to enjoy peaceful pleasures you must absolutely banish our sex." "My lord," answered she, "it is not for me to decide that point. I will even confess to you, that, if all men resembled yourself, I should be of opinion that the Princess would alter the laws; but as I have only seen five, and found four of them so wicked, I conclude that the bad far out-number the good, and that it is, therefore, better to banish them all."

Thus conversing, they came to the bank of a large river. Abricotine sprang lightly to the ground. "Adieu, my lord," said she to the Prince, making him a profound curtsy; "I wish you so much happiness that the whole world shall be to you but one Island of Pleasures. Retire quickly, for fear our Amazons should observe you." "And I, beautiful Abricotine," said the Prince, “wish you a tender heart, in order that I may now and then be recalled to your memory.”

So saying, he rode away, and entered the thickest part of a wood he saw near the river. He took off Grisdelin’s saddle and bridle, that he might graze at his pleasure. He put on his little red hat, and wished himself in the Island of Peaceful Pleasures. His wish was instantly gratified: he found himself in the most beautiful and the most extraordinary place in the world.

The palace was of pure gold; around the parapets stood statues of crystal, studded with jewels, which represented the signs of the Zodiac, and all the wonders of nature, the sciences, the arts, the elements, the sea with its fishes, the earth with its beasts, Diana hunting with her nymphs, Amazons performing their noble exercises, the amusements and occupations of a country life, shepherdesses with their flocks and their dogs, agriculture, harvest, gardens, flowers, bees; and amongst all these various subjects there was not a male figure to be seen, no men, no boys, — not even a poor little Cupid. The Fairy’s wrath against her truant husband had rendered her merciless to his whole sex.

“Abricotine has not deceived me,” said the Prince to himself. “The very idea of man is banished from this spot.” Let us see if he be much a loser by it. He entered the palace, and beheld at every step such marvels, that having once cast his eyes on them, he could not withdraw them without a struggle. The intrinsic value of the gold and diamonds was trifling compared to that of the art which had been employed upon them. In every direction he met with groups of gentle, innocent, laughing girls, beautiful as day. He passed through a long suite of vast apartments, some filled with the finest China, the perfume of which, joined to its fanciful forms and colours, was exceedingly pleasing; others, the walls of which were made of porcelain, so transparent that the daylight streamed through them; others were of rock crystal, richly engraved; and there were also some of amber and of coral, of *lapis lazuli*, of agate, of cornelian; and the Princess’s own apartment was entirely of looking-glass, for it was impossible to multiply too much so charming an object.

Her throne was formed out of a single pearl, hollowed in the shape of a shell, and in which she could sit with perfect ease. It was hung round with lustres, ornamented with rubies and diamonds; but all this looked less than nothing beside the incomparable beauty of the Princess. Her infantile air combined all the simple grace of the child with the dignified manners of the educated woman. Nothing could equal the softness or the brilliancy of her eyes. It was impossible to find a fault in her. She smiled graciously on her maids of honour, who on that occasion had arrayed themselves as nymphs for her entertainment. As she missed Abricotine, she inquired where she was. The nymphs replied that they had sought in vain for her; she could not be found. Leander, dying to speak, assumed the tiny voice of a parrot (for there were several in the room), and said: “Charming Princess, Abricotine will soon return; she would have been carried off, but for a young prince she met with.” The Princess was surprised at this speech of the parrot’s, for the answer was so much to the purpose. “You are a very pretty little parrot,” said she, “but you are evidently mistaken; and when Abricotine comes, she will whip you.” “I shall not be whipped,” replied Leander, still imitating the voice of the parrot. “She will tell you about the anxiety of the stranger to be permitted to enter this palace, and disabuse your mind of the false notions you entertain respecting his sex.” “Really, parrot,” exclaimed the Princess, “it is a pity you are not always so entertaining; I should love you dearly.” “Ah! if to please you, it be only necessary for me to talk,” replied Leander, “I will never cease speaking.” “Why!” continued the Princess, “would one not swear this parrot was a sorcerer!” “He is more a lover than a sorcerer,” answered Leander. At that moment Abricotine entered, and flung herself at the feet of her beautiful mistress. She related her adventure, and drew the Prince’s portrait in very vivid and favourable colours.

"I should have hated all men," she added, "if I had not seen that one. Oh, Madam! he is so charming! His air, and all his manners, have in them something so noble, so intelligent, and as everything he says is excessively agreeable, I think I have done very right in not bringing him hither." The Princess said not a word about that; but continued to question Abricotine respecting the Prince, — whether she did not know his name, his family, whence he came, whither he was going; and finally she fell into a profound reverie.

Leander narrowly observed everything, and continued to speak as he had begun. "Abricotine is ungrateful, Madam," said he. "This poor stranger will die of grief if he do not see you." "Well, parrot, let him die then," replied the Princess, sighing, "and as thou presumest to talk on this matter like a rational person, and not like a little bird, I forbid thee ever to speak to me again about this stranger." Leander was charmed to see that the words of Abricotine and of the parrot had made such an impression on the Princess. He gazed on her, with a delight which made him forget the oath he had taken never to love again so long as he lived. Certainly, there could be no comparison between the Princess and that coquette, Blondine. "Is it possible," said he to himself, "that this masterpiece of nature, this wonder of our time, should dwell for ever in an island where nobody dares approach her! But," continued he, "what does it signify to me that all other men are banished, since I have the honour to be present; to see, to hear, to admire her, and love her, as I already do to distraction?"

It was late; the Princess passed into a saloon of marble and porphyry, where several sparkling fountains in full play shed around them a delicious coolness. As soon as she entered an overture commenced, and a sumptuous supper was served. On each side of the saloon were aviaries, full of rare birds, of which Abricotine had the care.

Leander had acquired during his travels the art of imitating their various notes; he imitated even such as were not there. The Princess listened, looked, was astonished, and at length rose from the table and approached one of the cages. Leander warbled half as loudly again, and assuming the voice of a canary-bird, he sang the following words to an air which he improvised on the spot: —

Life without love is but a winter's day;
Joyless along its lonely path we stray.
Love, then, — O love a lover who adores thee!
All here invites — e'en Love himself implores thee!

The Princess, still more surprised, sent for Abricotine, and asked her if she had taught one of the canary-birds to sing. She replied, No, but that she thought canaries might fairly be supposed to possess as much intelligence as parrots. The Princess smiled, and believed that Abricotine had given the birds lessons in private, and returned to the table to finish her supper.

Leander had worked sufficiently hard to have acquired a good appetite. He drew near to the banquet, the odour of which alone was invigorating. The Princess had a blue cat, a very fashionable appendage at that period, and which she was exceedingly fond of: one of her maids of honour carried it in her arms. "Madam," said the maid of honour, "it is my duty to inform your highness that Bluet is hungry." They seated the cat at the table with a little gold plate before it, and a napkin of lace, very tastefully folded. The cat had a collar of pearls to which was appended a golden bell; and with the air of a gourmand it began to eat. "Oh, oh!" quoth Leander to himself, "a great blue tom-cat, who probably has never caught a mouse in his life, and who is assuredly not of a better family than I am, has the honour to sup with my beautiful princess! I should like to know if he loves her as well as I do; and if it is fair that I should only enjoy the smell, while he munches the tit bits.” With that he quietly lifted up the blue cat, placed himself in the arm-chair, and took the animal in his lap. Nobody observed him, of course; how could they? — he had on his little red hat. The Princess piled up the golden plate of Bluet with partridge, quail, and pheasant. Partridge, quail, and pheasant, disappeared in a moment. All the court agreed, never had a blue cat been known to have such an enormous appetite. There were some excellent ragouts on the table. Leander took a fork, and holding forth with it the cat’s paw, he helped himself to the ragouts. Sometimes he took rather a large quantity. Bluet did not understand joking; he mewed and tried to scratch like a wild cat. The Princess desired the servants to hand this tart or that fricassee to poor Bluet. “Observe how he cries for it!” Leander laughed in his sleeve at this absurd adventure; but he was very thirsty, not having been accustomed to sit so long at table without drinking. He caught hold, with the cat’s paw, of a great melon, which a little allayed his thirst, and supper being nearly over, he made off to the sideboard, and drank two bottles of delicious nectar.

The Princess entered her closet; she desired Abricotine to follow her, and to shut the door. Leander kept close to her, and made a third in the apartment, unperceived. The Princess said to her confidant, “Acknowledge that thou hast exaggerated in describing to me this unknown; it appears to me impossible that he can be so charming.” “I protest, Madam,” replied she, “that if I have erred in anything it is in not having praised him enough.” The Princess sighed, and was silent for a minute; then, resuming the conversation, “I am obliged to you,” said she, “for having refused to bring him with you.” “But, Madam,” replied Abricotine, (who was a shrewd girl, and saw already the turn her mistress’s thoughts were taking,) supposing he had come hither to admire the wonders of this beautiful place, what harm could it have caused to you? Do you desire to remain for ever unknown in this corner of the world, hidden from all other mortals? Of what value is so much grandeur, pomp, and magnificence, if nobody see it?” “Peace! Peace!

little casuist," cried the Princess; "trouble not the happy repose I have enjoyed these six hundred years. Dost thou imagine, if I had led a restless and turbulent life I could have existed so many years? None but innocent and tranquil pleasures can produce such effects. Have we not read in the best histories the revolutions of great empires, the unforeseen blows of inconstant fortunes, the wild excesses of love, the pangs of absence or of jealousy? What is it that occasions all these terrors and afflictions? Nothing but the intercourse between the sexes. Thanks to the precaution of my mother, I am exempt from all these crosses, I feel no heart-aches, I cherish no vain desires, I know neither envy, love, nor hatred. Ah! for ever, for ever, let us enjoy the happy indifference!" Abricotine did not venture to reply: the Princess waited a short time, and then asked her if she had nothing to say. She answered, that in that case she thought it had been very unnecessary to send miniatures of the Princess to the courts of several foreign sovereigns, where they would only make people miserable; as everybody would be dying to see her, and not being able to do so, would go distracted." "Notwithstanding that," said the Princess, "I confess, I wish that my portrait should fall into the hands of this stranger, whose name I am ignorant of." "Oh, Madam," replied Abricotine, "is not his desire to behold you already sufficiently violent? Would you increase it?" — "Yes!" exclaimed the Princess; "a certain feeling of vanity, unknown to me till now, has given birth to that wish." Leander listened to all this without losing a word. Several expressions gave him the most flattering hopes, while the next moment others seemed to destroy them entirely.

It was late; the Princess entered her bed-chamber to retire for the night. Leander would have been too happy to follow her to her toilette; but, although it was easy for him to do so, the respect he entertained for her was sufficient to prevent him. He felt he ought not to take any liberties beyond what he might fairly be allowed, and his love was of so delicate and refined a nature, that he tormented himself most ingeniously respecting the veriest trifles.

He entered a cabinet, close to the bed-chamber of the Princess, to enjoy at least the pleasure of hearing her voice. She was at that moment asking Abricotine, if she had seen anything extraordinary in her little journey. “Madam,” she replied, “I passed through a forest, in which I saw some animals resembling children; they jumped and danced upon the boughs of the trees like squirrels; they are very ugly, but their dexterity is incomparable.” “Ah, how I should like to have some!” said the Princess; “if they were less agile one might possibly catch some of them.”

Leander, who had also passed through this forest, knew perfectly well Abricotine must mean monkeys. Immediately he wished himself there: he caught a dozen large and small, and of various colours, put them with considerable difficulty into a great sack, then wished himself at Paris, where he had heard say anything could be had for money. He went to Dautel, who is a virtuoso, and bought of him a little coach entirely made of gold, to which he attached six green monkeys, with flame-coloured morocco harness mounted with gold. He then went to Brioché, a celebrated puppet-showman. He found there two very clever monkeys. The most intelligent was called Briscambille, and the other Perceforêt; they were both exceedingly polite and well educated. He dressed Briscambille in royal robes, and put him into the coach. Perceforêt he made the coachman, the other monkeys were attending as pages.

Nothing more elegant was ever seen. He put the coach and the booted monkeys into the same sack, and the Princess was not in bed before she heard in the gallery the sound of little coach-wheels, and her nymphs came to announce to her the arrival of the King of the Dwarfs. At the same moment the little carriage was driven into the room with its monkey-train, and the wild ones played innumerable tricks, which, in their way, were quite equal to those of Briscambille and Perceforêt. Sooth to say, Leander conducted the whole affair. He took the little monkey out of the little gold coach, who had in his hand a box encrusted with diamonds, which he presented with considerable grace to the Princess. She opened it instantly, and found in it a note, in which were written the following lines: —

What beauties, what treasures surround me!
Fair palace, how lovely art thou!
Yet lovelier she who has bound me,
By charms never dreamed of till now!
Peace reigns in this thrice nappy Isle,
But none the poor captive can feel,
Who worships, yet trembles the while
His flame or his form to reveal.

It is easy to imagine her surprise! Briscambille made a sign to Perceforêt to come and dance with him. None of the most celebrated dancing monkeys ever equalled this wonderful pair: but the princess, uneasy at not being able to guess from whom the verses came, dismissed the performers sooner than she would otherwise have done, notwithstanding that they had amused her vastly, and that she had at first laughed at them to such a degree that she nearly fainted. She then gave herself up entirely to her reflections, but without being able to penetrate the mystery.

Leander, satisfied with the attention paid to his verses, and the pleasure the Princess had taken in seeing the monkeys, now thought it was time to take a little rest, of which he was in great need; but he was afraid he might select an apartment belonging to one of the nymphs-in-waiting on the Princess. He remained for some time in the grand gallery of the palace; then, descending, he found an open door. He entered softly one of the lower rooms, more beautiful and commodious than any he had ever seen. There was a bed in it with gold and green gauze furniture, looped up in festoons with ropes of pearls, and tassels of rubies and emeralds. It was already light enough for him to examine and admire the extraordinary magnificence of this piece of furniture. Having fastened the door, he fell asleep; but the thoughts of his beautiful princess disturbed his slumbers, and he awoke frequently sighing forth her name.

He rose so early that he had time to grow impatient before the time arrived that she was visible, and looking about him, he perceived a canvas prepared for painting, and a packet of colours. He immediately remembered what the Princess had said to Abricotine about her portrait; and, without losing an instant, he sat down before a large looking-glass, (for he painted better than the best artists of his time.) and took his own portrait; he then drew in an oval that of the Princess, for her features were so vividly impressed on his heart, that he had no occasion to see her for the first sketch. He finished the portrait afterwards from the fair original without her perceiving him, and as the desire to please her gave a charm to his labour, never was there a picture so admirably painted. He had drawn himself kneeling and holding the portrait of the Princess in one hand, and in the other a scroll, on which was written,

Her image is more perfect in my heart.

When she entered her cabinet she was astonished to see the picture of a man. She riveted her eyes upon it in still greater surprise when she recognised her own, and read the inscription on the scroll, which afforded her ample food for curiosity and conjecture. She was alone at that moment, and could not tell what to think of so extraordinary a circumstance, but persuaded herself that it must be Abricotine who had paid her this delicate attention. She now only wanted to ascertain whether the picture of this cavalier was merely a fancy one, or if Abricotine had really seen such a person. She rose hastily, and ran to call her. Leander was already in the cabinet with his little red hat on, anxious to hear what would be said on the subject.

The Princess desired Abricotine to look at the picture, and to give her his opinion of it. The moment she cast her eyes upon it, she exclaimed, “I protest, Madam, it is the likeness of that generous stranger to whom I owe my life! yes, ‘tis he, I cannot be mistaken. There are his features, his form, his hair, his carriage!” “Thou feignest astonishment,” said the Princess, smiling; “but it was placed here by thyself.” “By me, Madam!” replied Abricotine. “I swear to you I never saw this picture before in my life. Am I capable of concealing anything from you which it would interest you to be acquainted with? And by what miracle could it come into my possession? I have not the least knowledge of painting — no man has ever entered this island, and yet here are your united portraits.” “I tremble with fear,” said the Princess; “some demon must have brought this painting hither!” “Madam,” said Abricotine, “may it not have been Love? If you think I am right, I will venture to give you a little advice. Let us burn the picture immediately.” “It would be such a pity,” said the Princess sighing; “methinks my cabinet could not be better adorned than by this painting.” She looked at Abricotine as she uttered these words; but the girl continued to insist they ought to burn an article that could only have been brought there by magic. “And these words,” said the Princess, “‘Her image is more perfect in my heart,’ must we burn them also?” “We ought to spare nothing,” replied Abricotine, “not even your own likeness.” And so saying, she ran off to fetch a light. The Princess turned away to a window, unable to gaze any longer on a portrait which produced such an impression on her heart; and Leander, who did not choose his picture should be burnt, took this opportunity of removing it unobserved by the Princess. He had scarcely quitted the room with it, when she turned to take another look at the charming form which had so fascinated her. What was her surprise at its disappearance! She hunted all round the room for it. Abricotine returned, and was asked if she had removed it. She assured her she had not, and this last adventure completely terrified them.

As soon as Leander had hidden the portrait he returned to the cabinet. It was exceeding pleasure to him so frequently to hear and see his lovely princess. He dined every day at her table with the blue cat, who was certainly not the gainer by it; there was, however, much still wanting to Leander's happiness, as he dared neither speak in his own voice, nor make himself visible. It is rarely that we love those we have never seen.

The Princess had a taste for everything that was beautiful. In the present state of her heart she needed amusement. One morning when she was surrounded by her nymphs, she observed that she had a great desire to know how the ladies dressed in the various courts throughout the world, in order that she might select the most becoming and tasteful fashion for her own. Leander wanted no other inducement to range the universe. He pushed his little red hat almost over his eyes, and wished himself in China. He bought the richest stuff he could find there, and took copies of all the dresses. From thence he flew to Siam, where he did the same thing. In brief, he visited the four quarters of the world in three days; and as fast as he could load himself he returned to the Palace of Peaceful Pleasures, to hide what he had purchased in one of the apartments. When he had thus collected an infinite number of curiosities, (for money was nothing to him; his rose furnished him with it incessantly,) he went and bought five or six dozen dolls, which he had dressed in Paris; the place of all the world in which fashion has most temples. The dolls exhibited every variety of national habits, and all of unparalleled magnificence. Leander arranged them in the cabinet of the Princess.

When she entered nobody was ever more agreeably surprised. Each doll held a present in its hand; either watches, bracelets, diamond buttons, or necklaces: the most prominent bore a miniature case. The princess opened it, and found the portrait of Leander. Her recollection of the other painting enabled her to recognise it instantly. She uttered a loud exclamation! then looking at Abricotine, said to her, “I am at a loss to understand what has happened in my palace for some time past. My birds talk rationally. I seem to have only to form a wish to have it instantly accomplished. I have been twice presented with the portrait of the person who saved thee from the robbers; and here is a collection of rich stuffs, diamonds, embroideries, lace, and innumerable ether rare and costly things. Who is the fairy, or who is the demon, that takes the trouble to render me all these agreeable services?” Leander hearing her say this, wrote the following lines on his tablets, and threw them at the feet of the Princess: —

I am neither fiend nor fay,
Only an unhappy lover,
Who dare not himself discover —
Pity me, at least, you may!
Prince Sprite.

The tablets were so brilliantly ornamented with gold and jewels that they caught her attention instantly; she opened them, and read with the greatest astonishment what the Prince had written on them. “This invisible being must be a monster,” she exclaimed, “since he dares not show himself; but if it were true that he had some affection for me, the presenting me with so touching a portrait shows he cannot have much delicacy. He must either not love me, to subject my heart to so painful a trial, or he has too good an opinion of himself, and believes that he is far more fascinating.” “I have heard say, Madam,” replied Abricotine, “that sprites are composed of air and fire — that they have no corporeal substance, and that it is only by their intelligence and their desires that their existence is manifested.” “I am right glad to hear it," rejoined the Princess; "such a lover cannot greatly disturb my tranquillity."

Leander was delighted to hear her, and see her so occupied with his portrait. He remembered, that in a grotto to which she frequently repaired, there was a pedestal intended to support a statue of Diana, which was still in the hands of the sculptor. He placed himself on it in an extraordinary habit, crowned with laurels, and holding a lyre in his hand, on which he could play better than Apollo. He waited impatiently for the coming of his Princess, according to her daily custom. It was the spot to which she retired to meditate upon her unknown adorer. Abricotine's account of him, joined to the pleasure which the contemplation of his portrait had occasioned her, combined to rob her heart of rest. She found a charm in solitude, and her joyous disposition had undergone such a change that her nymphs could scarcely recognise their mistress.

As she entered the grotto she made signs to her attendants not to follow her. Her nymphs dispersed themselves in the various avenues. The Princess threw herself on a bank of turf. She sighed and shed a few tears. She even uttered some words, but in so low a tone that Leander could not catch them. He had worn his little red hat, in order that she should not see him on her entrance, but he now took it off. Her surprise was excessive at beholding him. She took him to be a statue, for he stood motionless in the attitude he had assumed. She gazed upon him with a mixed feeling of joy and alarm. His unexpected appearance astonished her, but in her heart pleasure soon conquered fear, and she began to admire a figure so lifelike; when the Prince, to the accompaniment of his lyre, sung the following verses: —

WHAT PERILS lurk in this enchanted spot!
Indifference the heart availeth not!
Vain are the vows I made to love no more;

Hopeless, I give the unequal struggle o’er.’
Why call this realm the Isle of Peaceful Pleasure?
Who treads its shore, a slave thenceforth must sigh.
Vanquished, I cease with Love my strength to measure;
Here, in his chains, I would but live and die!

Melodious as was the voice of Leander, the Princess could not master the terror with which the prodigy inspired her. She turned pale and fainted. Leander alarmed, leaped from the pedestal, and put on his little red hat, that no one might perceive him. He raised the Princess in his arms, and used every means his affection and anxiety could suggest to recover her. She opened her beautiful eyes, and looked around her as if in search of him. She saw no one; but she felt somebody was near her who pressed her hands, kissed them, and bathed them with tears. For some time she did not dare speak. Her mind was agitated between hope and fear. She trembled at the sprite; but she loved the handsome unknown, whose features she believed it had assumed in the statue. At length she exclaimed, “Sprite! charming Sprite! why are you not the person I would have you be?” At these words Leander was on the point of declaring himself, but still hesitated to do so. “If I terrify the object I adore,” thought he, “if she fear me, she will not love me.” These considerations kept him silent, and induced him to retreat into a corner of the grotto.

The Princess, believing herself to be alone, called Abricotine and related to her the prodigy of the animated statue. That its voice was celestial, and that when she fainted the sprite had rendered her the kindest assistance. “What a pity,” she exclaimed, “that this sprite is deformed and hideous, for nothing can be more tender and amiable than its manners.” “And who told you, Madam,” replied Abricotine, “that it is so? Did not Psyche believe that Cupid was a serpent? Your adventure resembles hers.

You are not less beautiful. If it were Cupid who loves you, would you not return his passion?” “If Cupid and the unknown were the same person,” said the Princess, blushing, “I should love Cupid; but such a happiness is not in store for me. I am fascinated by a chimera, and the fatal portrait of that stranger, joined to thy description of him, has caused a revolution in my feelings so opposed to the precepts of my mother, that I dread the punishment it may entail on me.” “Pray, Madam,” said Abricotine, interrupting her, “have you not already trouble enough, without anticipating evils which will never occur?” — It is easy to imagine the delight this conversation gave Leander.

In the meanwhile little Furibon, still in love with the Princess without having seen her, impatiently awaited the return of the four emissaries he had despatched to the Island of Peaceful Pleasures. One alone found his way back, and gave him an account of all that had happened. He informed him also that the island was defended by Amazons, and that unless he was at the head of a large army, he had no chance of setting foot in it.

The king, his father, was just dead, and Furibon was therefore his own master, with absolute power over everything. He raised an army of upwards of four hundred thousand men, and marched at the head of them. There was a fine general! Briscambille or Perceforêt would, either, have made a much better. His charger was not half-a-yard high. When the Amazons perceived this great army advancing, they gave notice to the Princess, who lost not a moment in sending the faithful Abricotine to the kingdom of the Fairies to request her mother’s advice as to the best means of resisting Furibon’s invasion. But Abricotine found the Fairy exceedingly angry. “I am aware of everything my daughter has done,” said she. “Prince Leander is in her palace; he loves her, and is beloved again. All my care has been insufficient to defend her from the tyranny of Cupid; she is in his fatal power. Alas! the cruel god is not satisfied with the mischief he has done me; he exerts his influence over the being I loved dearer than my life! Such are the decrees of destiny! I cannot oppose them. Begone, Abricotine! I will hear no more of this girl, whose sentiments cause me so much affliction.” Abricotine returned to the Princess with these bad tidings. It required little more to drive her to distraction. Leander was beside her, invisible; her extreme distress caused him the greatest pain. He dared not speak to her at that moment; but he recollected that Furibon was very avaricious, and that probably he might be tempted by a large sum of money to abandon his enterprise. He assumed the dress of an Amazon, and wished himself in the forest where he had left his horse. As soon as he called “Grisdelin!” Grisdelin came leaping and prancing to him with great delight, for he had become very weary waiting so long for his dear master; but when he saw him in female attire, he could not recognise him, and feared at first he was deceived. On Leander’s arrival at the camp of Furibon, everybody took him to be really an Amazon; he was so handsome. They informed the king that a young lady demanded an audience on the part of the Princess of Peaceful Pleasures. He hurried on his royal robes, and seated himself on his throne, where one would have thought it was a large toad pretending to be a king.

Leander commenced his address, by informing him that “the Princess preferring a quiet and peaceable life to the troubles of warfare, was willing to give him any sum of money he would name, provided he would not molest her; but that, at the same time, if he refused this offer, she should certainly defend herself to the extent of her power.”

Furibon replied, that “he was willing to take pity on her; that he would honour her by his protection; and that she had only to send him a hundred thousand thousand thousand millions of pistoles, and he would immediately return to his own kingdom.” Leander answered, “that it would take too much time to count a hundred thousand thousand thousand millions of pistoles; but that he had only to say how many rooms full he desired; and that the Princess was too rich and too liberal to calculate so closely.” Furibon was greatly astonished, that instead of endeavouring to bargain for a smaller sum, he was actually offered more; he thought to himself he would take all the money he could get, and then arrest the Amazon and kill her, in order that she should never return to her mistress.

He accordingly told Leander he required thirty very large rooms to be filled completely with gold pieces, and gave him his royal word that he would then retire with his army. Leander was conducted to the apartments selected to be filled with gold. He took the rose and shook it, and shook it, so much, so much, that out of it poured pistoles, quadruples, Louis, gold crowns, rose-nobles, sovereigns, guineas, sequins, in a perfect deluge. There are few things in the world to be seen more beautiful than a shower of gold.

Furibon was in raptures, in ecstasies; and the more gold he saw, the more he longed to seize the Amazon, and catch the Princess. As soon as the thirty chambers were quite full, he called to his guards, “Arrest! arrest that cheat; she has brought me bad money.” All the guards rushed forwards to fling themselves upon the Amazon; but, at the same instant, the little red hat was put on, and Leander had disappeared. They thought he had made his escape, and ran after him, leaving Furibon by himself. Leander immediately seized him by the hair and cut off his head, as if it had been a chicken’s, without the wretched little king ever seeing the hand that dealt the blow.

As soon as Leander had severed the head, he wished himself in the Palace of Pleasures. The Princess was walking in the gardens, meditating sadly on the message she had received from her mother, and on the means by which she could repulse Furibon; a difficult matter, considering she had no other troops but a few Amazons, who could not possibly defend her against four hundred thousand men.

Suddenly she saw a head suspended in the air, without appearing to have anything to sustain it; a prodigy which astonished her so much, that she knew not what to think of it. It was still more astounding when she saw the head laid at her feet by an unseen hand. At the same time she heard a voice which said to her, —

“Fear no more, charming Princess, Furibon will never harm you.”

Abricotine recognised the voice of Leander, and exclaimed, “I protest, Madam, the invisible being who speaks to you is the stranger who rescued me!” The Princess appeared equally surprised and delighted. “Ah!” said she, “if it be true that the sprite and the stranger are one and the same, I confess it would give me great pleasure to prove to him my gratitude.” The Sprite replied, “I will labour still more to deserve it.” With that he returned instantly to the army of Furibon, through which the news of their king’s death was spreading rapidly. The moment he appeared among them in his usual dress, every one ran to him, officers and soldiers surrounded him, uttering loud shouts of joy. They acknowledged him as their king, — that the crown belonged of right to him. He liberally allowed them to share amongst themselves the thirty chambers full of gold, so that the whole army were made rich for ever; and after several ceremonies, which guaranteed to Leander the fidelity of his troops, he flew back again to the Princess, leaving orders with his army to return by easy marches to his own dominions.

The Princess had retired for the night, and the respect which Leander had for her prevented his entering her apartment. He went at once to his own, for he had always slept in the lower one. He was sufficiently fatigued to need repose, and in consequence forgot to fasten the door as carefully as usual. The Princess suffered from heat and anxiety. She rose before dawn, and descended in dishabille to the lower apartment. But what was her astonishment to see Leander asleep on the bed! She had plenty of time to examine his features without being seen, and to convince herself that he was the person whose portrait she possessed in the diamond box. “It is not possible,” said she, “that this should be a sprite; for do sprites sleep? Is this a being composed of air and fire, occupying no space, according to the description of Abricotine?" She gently touched his hair; she listened to his breathing; she could not tear herself away from him. One moment she was in raptures at having found him; the next she was alarmed at the consequences. Just as she was most earnestly gazing upon him, the Fairy, her mother, entered with such a tremendous noise that Leander awoke, and started to his feet. What was his surprise and affliction at seeing his Princess in the depths of despair! Her mother was dragging her away, and loading her with reproaches. Oh, what misery for these young lovers! They saw themselves on the point of being separated for ever. The Princess dared not say a word to the furious Fairy, she looked only at Leander, as if to implore his assistance.

He knew well that it was not possible for him to release her from the grasp of so powerful a person; but he sought, by eloquence and by submission, to touch the heart of the irritated mother. He ran after her, threw himself at her feet, implored her to have pity on a young king whose love for her daughter was unchangeable, and whose greatest felicity would consist in rendering her happy. The Princess, encouraged by his example, embraced her mother's knees, and declared to her, that without the king she could never be happy, and that she was under the greatest obligations to him. "You know not the degradation of love," cried the Fairy, "and the treachery of which these gay deceivers are capable. They captivate but to poison us. I have too dearly proved it! Would you incur a destiny like mine?" "Ah, Madam!" exclaimed the Princess, "is there no exception? The assurances which the king gives you, and which seem so sincere, do they not satisfy you that I may safely trust him?" The obstinate Fairy allowed them to sigh at her feet. In vain her hands were bathed with their tears; she appeared impenetrable; and no doubt would never have forgiven them, if the amiable Fairy, Gentille, had not appeared in the chamber more brilliant than the sun. The Graces accompanied her, and she was followed by a troop of Loves, Sports, and Pleasures, who warbled a thousand new and charming songs, and frolicked about like children.

Gentille embraced the old Fairy. “My dear sister,” said she, “I am sure you have not forgotten the good service I rendered you when you desired to return to our kingdom. Without my assistance you would never have been received in it, and since that time I have never asked you any favour in return; but the moment has arrived when you can grant me an essential one. Pardon this lovely Princess, and consent to her union with the young king. I will answer for his fidelity. Their days will be as a tissue of gold and silk. The alliance will afford you the greatest satisfaction, and I shall never forget the pleasure you will give me.” “I consent to anything you wish, charming Gentille!” cried the Fairy. “Come, my children, come to my arms; receive the assurance of my affection.” With these words she embraced the Princess and her lover. The Fairy Gentille was in raptures of joy, and all her train commenced singing nuptial hymns, the sweet symphonies of which awoke the nymphs of the palace, who came running, in their light robes of gauze, to ascertain what was passing.

What an agreeable surprise for Abricotine! She had scarcely cast her eyes on Leander when she recognised him, and seeing him holding the hand of the Princess, she doubted not an instant of their mutual happiness. The confirmation of it was the declaration of the Fairy mother that she would transport the Island of Peaceful Pleasures, the palace, and all the marvels it contained, into Leander’s dominions; that she would reside there with them; and that she would confer many greater gifts upon them. “Whatever your generosity may suggest to you, Madam,” said the king to her, “it is impossible you can make me a present equal to that bestowed upon me to-day. You have made me the happiest of men, and I feel convinced that you will find me also the most grateful.” This little compliment very much pleased the Fairy. She was one of the old school, in whose time people would compliment each other all day long on some thing as trifling as the leg of a fly.

As Gentille had thought of everything, she had caused to be transported to the palace, by the power of Brelic-breloc, the generals and captains of the army raised by Furibon, in order that they might witness the splendid fête she was about to give on this occasion. She took enormous pains about it, and five or six volumes would not suffice to contain the description of the comedies, operas, runnings at the ring, concerts, combats of gladiators, huntings, and other magnificent diversions, which took place at these charming nuptials. The most singular circumstance was, that each nymph found amongst the brave officers whom Gentille had wafted to these beautiful regions, a husband as passionately attached to her as if he had known her for ten years. It was nevertheless only an acquaintance of four-and-twenty hours, but the little wand of a Fairy could produce effects even still more extraordinary.

6

PRINCESS PRINTANIERE

Once upon a time there was a king and a queen who had several children, but they all died; and the king and queen were so very, very much afflicted, that it was impossible to be more so, for they possessed considerable property, and only wanted children to inherit it. Five years had elapsed since the queen had given birth to her last infant. Everybody believed she could have no more, because she fretted so excessively, when she thought of all the pretty little princes she had lost.

At length, however, the queen found she was likely to have another. Day and night she passed in thinking how she could best preserve the little creature she was about to bring into the world, — what name it should bear, — what dresses, what dolls, what toys she should give to it.

It had been proclaimed by sound of trumpet, and bills had been posted up in all the highways, stating that all the best nurses should present themselves before the queen, that she might choose one for her child. Accordingly, behold them arrive from the four quarters of the world; nothing was to be seen but nurses with their babies. One day as the queen was taking the air in a great forest, she sat down, and said to the king, "Let us send for all the nurses hither, and choose one, for our cows have not milk enough to supply food for all these little children." "Most willingly, my dear," said the king: "come, let the nurses be summoned!" Lo! where they all appear, one after the other, making a fine curtsy to the king and the queen; after which they place themselves in a row, each standing under a tree. When they were all arranged, and their majesties had admired their fresh complexions, white teeth, and fine persons, they beheld, advancing in a wheelbarrow, propelled by two filthy little dwarfs, an ugly little woman, whose feet turned in, whose knees touched her chin, who had a great hump on her back, squinting eyes, and a skin blacker than ink. She held in her arms a little monkey, which she suckled, and spoke a jargon nobody could understand. She approached to offer herself in her turn; but the queen, repelling her, cried, "Hence, you great fright! — You are an ignorant creature to come before me dressed as you are! — If you do not immediately retire, I will have you removed by force." The nasty old woman passed on grumbling excessively, and, dragged by her frightful little dwarfs, went and placed herself in the hollow of a large tree, from whence she could see everything that occurred.

The queen, who had ceased to think about her, chose a handsome nurse: but the instant she was appointed, a horrible serpent, which was concealed beneath some grass, bit her foot, and she fell down as if dead. The queen, much grieved at this accident, cast her eyes on another. Immediately an eagle came flying with a tortoise in its talons, and dropped it on the head of the poor nurse, which was shivered to pieces like a glass. The queen, still more afflicted, called forward a third nurse, who, in her hurry to advance, stumbled against a thicket, full of long thorns, and knocked out one of her eyes. "Ah!" cried the queen, "I am most unfortunate to-day. It is impossible for me to choose a nurse without causing her some mischief. I must leave the affair to my physician." As she arose to return to the palace, she heard peals of laughter. She looked and saw behind her the wicked old humpbacked woman, who sat like an ape with her swaddled monkey in the wheelbarrow, mocking the whole company, and particularly the queen. Her majesty was so enraged that she would have flown at and beaten her, feeling assured that she was the cause of all this mischief to the nurses; but the humpback, with three taps of her wand, changed the dwarfs into winged griffins, the wheelbarrow into a chariot of fire, and rose with it into the air, uttering loud threats and horrible shrieks.

“Alas, my darling, we are lost,” said the king; “it is the Fairy Carabossa! The wicked creature has hated me ever since I was a little boy, on account of a trick I played her, putting some brimstone into her broth. From that moment she has always sought an opportunity to be revenged.” The queen began to weep. “If I could have guessed who she was,” said she, “I would have tried to make a friend of her. I’m sure I wish I were dead!” When the king saw her so deeply afflicted, he said to her, “My love, let us go and consult on what step we should take;” and led her away, supporting her by the arm, for she was still trembling from the fright into which Carabossa had thrown her.

When the king and queen reached their apartments, they summoned their counsellors, caused all the doors and windows to be carefully closed, that nobody might hear a word that was uttered, and came to the resolution to invite all the Fairies for a thousand leagues round to be present at the birth of the child. Couriers were despatched immediately with very polite letters to the Fairies, requesting them to take the trouble to attend the queen’s confinement, and to keep the matter a great secret; for they trembled at the idea of Carabossa’s hearing of it, and coming to make some disturbance. As a reward for their trouble, they were each promised a hongreline of blue velvet, a petticoat of amaranth velvet, a pair of slippers of crimson satin, slashed, a small pair of gilt scissors, and a case full of fine needles.

As soon as the couriers had departed, the queen set to work, with all her maids and servants, to prepare the presents she had promised the Fairies. She knew a great many, but only five answered their invitation. They arrived at the very moment the queen gave birth to a little princess. Behold them quickly closeted to endow her with precious gifts. The first endowed her with perfect beauty; the second bestowed on her infinite wit; the third, the faculty of singing admirably; the fourth, the talent of composition both in prose and verse. As the fifth was about to speak, a noise was heard in the chimney, like that of the falling of a huge stone from the top of a steeple, and Carabossa appeared all begrimed with soot, and shouting as loud as she could, “I endow this little creature

With ill-luck in plenty, until she be twenty!

At these words the queen, who was in bed, began to cry, and beg Carabossa would have pity on the little Princess. All the Fairies said to her, “Alas, my sister! take off your spell again; what has this infant done to you?” But that ugly Fairy kept grumbling to herself, without making any reply; so that the fifth, who had not yet spoken, tried to mend the matter, and endowed the Princess with a long life of happiness after the period of the evil spell had expired. Carabossa only laughed at this, and sang twenty satirical songs, as she climbed up the chimney again. All the Fairies remained in great consternation, but particularly the poor queen. She did not, however, neglect to give them the presents she had promised; she even added to them some ribands, of which they are very fond. They were magnificently feasted; and at their departure the eldest advised that the Princess should be lodged, till she completed her twentieth year, in some place where she could see no one but her own female attendants, and confined strictly to that spot.

Thereupon the king had a tower built without a window, so that you could only see by candlelight. It was entered by a vault that ran a league underground. Through this subterranean passage everything was carried that was required for the nurses and the governesses. Every twenty paces there were massive gates that were kept closely shut, and sentinels were posted in every direction.

The Princess had been called Printaniere, because she had a complexion of lilies and roses, fresher and more blooming than the spring. Everything she said or did was admirable. She acquired a knowledge of the most difficult sciences with the greatest ease, and grew so tall and handsome that the king and queen never saw her without crying for joy. She sometimes begged they would stay with her, or take her with them, for she found herself dull, without well knowing why; but her parents always put her off with some excuse. Her nurse, who had never quitted her, and who did not lack sense, described to her, occasionally, the appearance of the world, and she comprehended her instantly as well as if she had seen it. The king frequently said to the queen, “My darling, Carabossa will be outwitted; we are more cunning than she is. Our Printaniere will be happy in despite of her predictions;” and the queen laughed till she cried at thinking on the vexation of the wicked Fairy. They had had Printaniere’s portrait painted, and copies of it sent all over the world, for the time was approaching for her to leave the tower, and they were desirous that she should be married. She only wanted four days of being twenty. The court and the city were in great delight at the prospect of the speedy liberation of the Princess; and their joy was increased by the news that King Merlin wished her to be the wife of his son, and that he had sent his ambassador, Fanfarinet, to propose for her in due form.

The nurse, who told the Princess all the news, informed her of this, and assured her that nothing in the world could be a finer sight than the entry of Fanfarinet. “Ah! how unfortunate am I!” exclaimed the Princess. “They coop me up here in a dark tower, as if I had committed some great crime. I have never seen the sky, the sun, and the stars, of which they tell so many wonders. I have never seen a horse, a monkey, or a lion, except in a picture.

The king and queen say that they will take me out of this place when I am twenty; but they only say so to make me patient, and I am certain they will let me die here, without my having done anything to offend them.” Thereupon she began to cry so much — so much — that her eyes swelled as big as one’s fist; and the wet-nurse, and the foster-sister, and the cradle-rocker, and the dresser, and the nursery-maid, who all loved her passionately, began also to cry so much — so much — that nothing was to be heard but sobs and sighs. It was a scene of utter despair. When the Princess saw them worked up to such a pitch of grief, she seized a knife, and exclaimed, “There! there! I am determined to kill myself instantly, if you do not find means to let me behold the grand entry of Fanfarinet! The king and queen will never know anything about it. Decide amongst yourselves, whether you had rather I should cut my throat on the spot, than that you should procure me this gratification!” At these words the nurse and all the others recommenced crying still more bitterly, and resolved unanimously that they would enable her to see Fanfarinet, or die themselves in the attempt. They passed the rest of the night in proposing various schemes, without finding any that were feasible, and Printaniere, who was almost out of her wits, continually exclaimed, “Never again try to make me believe that you love me! — you would find plenty of ways if you did. I feel convinced that love and friendship could overcome every obstacle!”

At last they decided they would make a hole in the tower, on the side towards that part of the city by which Fanfarinet would arrive. They moved the bed of the Princess from the wall, and immediately set to work, all together, and without ceasing, day or night. By dint of scraping they removed the plaster, and then the smaller stones. They got out so many, that at last they effected an opening, through which, with considerable trouble, you might have passed a small needle. It was through this aperture that Printaniere saw the daylight for the first time! She was perfectly dazzled by it, and as she continued to peep through this little hole, she saw Fanfarinet appear at the head of all his retinue. He was mounted on a white horse, that pranced to the sound of the trumpets, and curveted admirably. Six flute-players preceded him: they played the finest opera airs, and six hautboys echoed them; after them came the trumpets and kettle-drums, making a great noise. Fanfarinet wore a dress embroidered all over with pearls, boots made of cloth of gold, a plume of scarlet feathers, ribands in profusion, and so many diamonds (for King Merlin had rooms full) that the sun was not to be compared to him for brilliancy. Printaniere at the sight felt so completely beside herself that she could not move; and after pondering upon it for a short time, vowed that she would never have any other husband than the handsome Fanfarinet; that there was no probability of his master being so agreeable; that she had no ambition; that as she had managed to exist in a tower, she could live very happily with him, if it were necessary, in some country château; that she would prefer bread and water with Fanfarinet to chickens and sweetmeats with another. In short, she was so eloquent on the subject, that her women were puzzled to imagine where she had acquired one quarter of the knowledge she displayed; and when they attempted to impress upon her a sense of her own dignity, and of the wrong she would be guilty of to herself as well as to others, she ordered them to be silent, without deigning to listen to them. As soon as Fanfarinet had arrived at the king’s palace, the queen came to fetch her daughter. All the houses were hung with tapestry, and the windows filled with ladies; some had baskets of flowers, others of pearls, or of what was better, excellent sugar-plums, to shower upon the Princess as she passed.

They had commenced attiring her, when a dwarf arrived at the tower, mounted on an elephant. He came from the five good Fairies, who had endowed her on the day she was born. They sent her a crown, a sceptre, a robe of gold brocade, a petticoat of butterflies’ wings of the most wonderful workmanship, with a casket still more marvellous; so stuck full was it with jewels, it was accounted priceless; and such a mass of riches had never been seen before. The queen was ready to faint with admiration; as to the Princess, she looked upon it all with indifference, for she could think only of Fanfarinet. The dwarf was thanked, and had a pistole given him to drink, and upwards of a thousand ells of nonpareil of all sorts of colours, with which he made himself very handsome garters, a bow to his cravat, and another for his hat. This dwarf was so very diminutive, that when he had all this riband on, you could not see him at all. The queen told him she would find something very beautiful to present in return to the Fairies; and the Princess, who was very generous, sent them several German spinning-wheels, with spindles made of cedar.

They dressed the Princess in all the greatest rarities that had been brought by the dwarf, and she appeared so extremely beautiful that the sun hid himself for shame, and the moon, who is not over-bashful, did not dare peep out while the Princess was abroad. She proceeded through the streets on foot, over rich carpets, the people crowding round her, and exclaiming, “Oh, how handsome she is! Oh, how handsome she is!”

As she passed along in this pompous array, with the queen and four or five dozen princesses of the blood-royal, not to mention upwards of ten dozen who had arrived from various neighbouring states to assist at this fête, the sky began to cloud over, the thunder growled, and rain and hail fell in torrents. The queen drew her royal mantle over her head, all the ladies did the same with their upper petticoats, and Printaniere was about to follow their example, when a noise was heard in the air of more than a thousand ravens, screech-owls, crows, and other ill-omened birds, who by their croaking and hooting boded nothing good. At the same moment a horrible owl of prodigious size came flying at full speed, holding in his beak a scarf of spiders-web, embroidered with bats’ wings, and let it fall upon the shoulders of Printaniere, amid long and loud shrieks of laughter, which proved too surely that it was a wicked trick of the Fairy Carabossa.

At this melancholy sight everybody began to weep, and the queen, more afflicted than any one, tried to pull off the black scarf; but it seemed nailed to her daughter’s shoulders. “Ah!” cried she, “this is our enemy’s doing! Nothing can appease her! In vain have I sent her fifty pounds of sweetmeats, as much double-refined sugar, ond two Mayence hams; they have gone for nothing with her!”

Whilst thus the queen gave vent to her sorrow, the whole company got wet through to their skins. Printaniere, thinking of nothing but the ambassador, hastened on without saying a single word. Provided she could but charm him, she cared neither for Carabossa nor her unlucky scarf. She wondered to herself that he did not come to meet her, when suddenly she saw him advancing in company with the king. Immediately the trumpets, drums, and violins executed a lively flourish. The shouts of the crowd were redoubled, and the general manifestations of joy were extraordinary.

Fanfarinet had considerable sense; but when he saw the beautiful Printaniere in all her grace and majesty, he was so enchanted that, instead of speaking, he could do nothing but stutter; one would have thought he was tipsy, although he certainly had taken nothing but a cup of chocolate. He was in despair at finding that he had forgotten, in the twinkling of an eye, an oration he had studied every day for many months, and that he was so perfect in, he could have spoken it in his sleep.

While torturing his memory to recover it, he kept bowing profoundly to the Princess, who, in return, made him half-a-dozen curtsies without any remark. At length she commenced the conversation; and to relieve him from the embarrassment in which she perceived him thrown, she said, “My Lord Fanfarinet, I can easily imagine that all your ideas are of the most charming description. I give you credit for the possession of infinite wit. But let us hasten to the palace. It pours in torrents; it is the wicked Carabossa who is drenching us in this way. When we are once under shelter, we may laugh at her malice.” He replied, with much gallantry, that the Fairy had wisely foreseen the conflagration such bright eyes were certain to cause, and had sent a deluge of water to keep it under. With these words he offered her his hand to lead her to the palace. She said to him, in a whisper, “I entertain sentiments for you which you would never imagine, if I did not express them to you myself. It is not without some pain that I do so: but ‘honi soit qui mal y pense.’ Know, therefore, my Lord Ambassador, that it was with admiration I saw you mounted on your beautiful dancing horse; that I regretted you came hither on any person’s account but your own. If you have as much courage as I have, we will not fail to find a remedy for this evil. Instead of marrying you in the name of your master, I will marry you in your own. I know that you are not a prince; but you please me as much as if you were one. We will fly together to some safe retreat. It will make a great talk for a time, and then some one will do the same thing, or worse, and the world will leave me alone to talk about her, and I shall have the gratification of being your wife.”

Fanfarinet thought he was dreaming, for Printaniere was a princess of such marvellous beauty and accomplishments, that but for this extraordinary fancy, he never could have hoped for such an honour. He was unable even to answer her. Had they been alone, he would have flung himself at her feet; he took, however, the liberty of squeezing her hand so hard that he hurt her little finger desperately; but she did not cry out, she was so exceedingly fond of him.

As she entered the palace, it resounded with the music of a thousand different instruments, with the strains of which, voices almost celestial blended in such exquisite harmony, that the listeners dared scarcely breathe for fear of making so much noise as would drown the softest note of it.

After the king had kissed his daughter on the forehead and on both cheeks, he said to her, “My pretty little lamb, (for he called her by all sorts of endearing names,) will you not be glad to marry the son of the great King Merlin? Here is Lord Fanfarinet, who will be proxy for him, and conduct you to the finest kingdom in the world.” “Certainly, father,” said she, making him a low curtsy, “I will do whatever you please, provided my good mother consents.” “I consent, my darling,” said the queen, embracing her. “So, quick! let them serve up the dinner,” — which they did directly. There were a hundred tables set out in a great gallery, and in the memory of man never did people eat so much, with the exception of Printaniere and Fanfarinet, who cared only to look at each other, and were so lost in their own thoughts that they forgot everything around them.

After the banquet, there was a ball, a ballet, and a play; but it was already so late, and they had eaten so much, that notwithstanding all this, the company slept as they stood. The king and queen, overpowered with sleep, flung themselves on a couch, the majority of the ladies and gentlemen snored, the musicians played out of tune, and the actors did not know what they were saying. Our lovers only were as lively as mice, and made a hundred little signs to each other. The princess, seeing there was nothing to fear, and that the guards, stretched on their straw-beds, were as fast asleep as the rest, said to Fanfarinet, “Take my advice, let us profit by so favourable an opportunity, for if I wait for the marriage ceremony, the king will place ladies in waiting about me, and appoint a prince to accompany me to the court of your King Merlin. We had better therefore be off at once as quick as we can.”

She rose and took the king’s dagger, the hilt of which was encrusted with diamonds, and the queen’s head-dress, which her majesty had taken off in order to sleep more comfortably. She gave her white hand to Fanfarinet for him to lead her forth; he took it, and putting one knee to the ground, “I swear,” said he, “eternal fidelity and obedience to your highness. Great princess, you sacrifice everything for me, what would I not do for you!” They quitted the palace; the ambassador carried a dark-lantern, and through very muddy lanes they made their way to the port. They got into a little boat in which a poor old boatman lay fast asleep. They awoke him, and when he saw the princess so beautiful and finely dressed, with so many diamonds, and her scarf of spider’s web, he took her for the Goddess of the Night, and fell on his knees before her; but as they had no time for trifling, she ordered him to put off immediately. It was at great risk, for there was neither moon nor stars to be seen; the sky was still cloudy with the remains of the storm Carabossa had raised. It is true there was a carbuncle in the queen’s head-dress, which gave more light than fifty flambeaux, and Fanfarinet (according to report) might have dispensed with his dark-lantern. There was also in the head-dress a precious stone which could render the wearer invisible.

Fanfarinet asked the princess whither she wished to go. “Alas!” she replied, “I would go with you; I have no other desire in the world.” “But, Madam,” rejoined he, “I dare not conduct you to the dominions of King Merlin. Hanging would be too good for me there.” “Well,” said she, “let us go to the Island of Squirrels; it is sufficiently distant to prevent your being followed.” She ordered the boatman to make for it, and although his boat was a very little one, he obeyed.

As day began to dawn, the king, the queen, and all the court, having shaken their ears and rubbed their eyes a little, thought of nothing but proceeding to the marriage of the princess. The queen, in a great bustle, asked for the rich head-dress she wanted to put on again. They looked for it in all the cupboards, and hunted for it even in the saucepans; but no head-dress was to be found. The queen, very uneasy about it, ran up stairs and down stairs, into the cellar and into the garret. It was not to be found.

The king, in his turn, wished to wear his brilliant dagger. With the same diligence they rummaged for it every corner, and broke open quantities of chests and caskets, the keys of which had been lost for upwards of a century. They found a thousand curiosities in them; — dolls that shook their heads and moved their eyes; golden sheep with their little lambs; candied lemon-peel and sugared almonds: but all this could not console the king.

His despair was so great that he tore his beard, and the queen, out of sympathy, tore her hair, for, truth to say, the head-dress and the dagger were worth more than ten cities as big as Madrid.

When the king saw there was no hope of finding either again, he said to the queen, “My love, let us take courage and hasten to finish the ceremony which has already cost us so dear.” He inquired for the princess. Her nurse advanced and said, “My liege, I assure you that I have been seeking her these two hours in vain.” These words crowned the grief of the king and queen. The latter began to scream like an eagle that has lost its young, and fell down in a swoon. Never was anything seen so distressing. They flung more than two pails full of Queen-of-Hungary water in her majesty’s face without bringing her to herself. The ladies and maids of honour wept, and all the valets exclaimed, “What, is the king’s daughter, then, lost?” The king, finding that the princess did not appear, said to his state page, “Go, seek Fanfarinet, who is asleep in some corner, that he may come and mourn with us.” The pages sought everywhere, everywhere, and found him no more than they found Printaniere, the head-dress, or the dagger. Here was an additional affliction, which completed their majesties’ despair.

The king summoned all his counsellors and officers; he entered, with the queen, a great hall, which had been hastily hung with black. They had put off their grand robes, and were each clad in a long mourning gown, girt with a cord. When they appeared in this attire, there was not a heart so hard that it was not ready to break. The hall resounded with sobs and sighs, and rivulets of tears ran down the floor. As the king had not had time to prepare a speech, he sat for three hours without uttering a word; at last he began thus: —

“Oyez! great folks and little! I have lost my beloved daughter Printaniere; I cannot tell whether she has melted away or been stolen from me. The queen’s head-gear and my poignard, which are worth their weight in gold, have disappeared with the princess; and what is still worse, the ambassador Fanfarinet is gone too. I much fear that the king his master, not hearing any tidings of him, will come hither to seek for him, and will accuse us of having made him into minced-meat. Notwithstanding all this, I might have endured my misfortunes with resignation, if I had had any money; but I confess to you frankly, that the expenses of this wedding have ruined me. Consider, therefore, my dear subjects, what I can do to recover my daughter, Fanfarinet, et cætera.”

Everybody admired the king’s fine oration. Never before had he displayed so much eloquence. Lord Gambille, the chancellor of the kingdom, arose and spoke as follows: —

“Sire, we are exceedingly vexed at your vexation, and would willingly have sacrificed even our wives and our little children to have saved you from so much annoyance; but apparently this is a trick of the Fairy Carabossa. The princess had not completed her twentieth year; and as the whole truth should be told, I observed that she was constantly looking at Fanfarinet, and he at her. Perhaps Love has played one of his usual pranks on this occasion.”

At these words, the queen, who was very hasty, interrupted him: “Take care what you are saying, my Lord Gambille,” said she; “know that the princess is not the sort of person to fall in love with Fanfarinet; she has been too well brought up.” Upon this, the nurse, who had overheard everything, entered, and flung herself on her knees before the king and queen. “I come,” said she, “to confess the whole affair to you. The princess resolved to see Fanfarinet or die. We made a small aperture, through which she saw him enter the city, and she vowed upon the spot that she would never marry any one else.”

At these tidings, everybody grieved deeply, and acknowledged that the Lord Chancellor Gambille was a person of great penetration. The queen, exceedingly annoyed, rated the nurse, the foster-sister, the dresser, the cradle-rocker, and the nursery-maid so soundly, that another word would have killed them.

Admiral Chapeau-pointu, interrupting the queen, exclaimed, “Come, let us pursue Fanfarinet! There can be no doubt that jackanapes has carried off our princess.” Everybody clapped their hands, and cried, “Let us go!” Off went some to sea; others travelled from kingdom to kingdom, calling the people together by sound of drums and trumpets; and when a crowd had assembled, saying, “Whoever would obtain a beautiful doll, dry and wet sweetmeats, little scissors, a robe of gold stuff, and a handsome satin cap, has only to inform us whither the Princess Printaniere has fled with Fanfarinet.” The answer was always, “Pass on; we have not seen them.”

Those who sought the princess at sea were more fortunate; for after a considerably long cruise, they perceived one night something blazing in the distance like a great fire. They were afraid to approach it, not knowing what it could be; but all of a sudden this light appeared to stop at the Island of Squirrels; for, in fact, it was the princess and her lover with the great carbuncle which shed this wonderful lustre. They disembarked, and having given the good man who had rowed them a hundred golden crowns, bade him adieu, warning him, as he valued the eyes in his head, not to say a word about them to any one.

The first thing he met with was the king’s fleet, which he no sooner caught sight of, than he tried to avoid it; but the admiral, having espied him, sent a boat after him, and the good man was so old and feeble, that he could not pull fast enough to escape. They soon came up with him, and brought him back to the admiral, who had him searched. They found on him a hundred gold crowns, bran new from the mint; for they had issued a new coinage in honour of the marriage of the princess. The admiral interrogated him, and to avoid answering, he pretended to be deaf and dumb. “Aha!” said the admiral, “tie me up this mute to the mainmast, and give him a sound lashing. It’s the best cure in the world for dumbness.”

When the old man found they were in earnest, he gave in, and confessed that a girl, more like a celestial than a human being, accompanied by a gentle cavalier, had commanded him to row them to the uninhabited Island of Squirrels. The admiral, on hearing these words, concluded immediately that it was the princess, and ordered the fleet to make sail for and surround the island.

In the meanwhile, Printaniere, weary after her voyage, finding a spot of green turf under some spreading trees, laid herself down, and fell into a sweet sleep; but Fanfarinet, whose hunger far exceeded his love, did not allow her much time for repose. “Do you imagine, Madam,” said he, waking her, “that I can remain long here? I can find nothing to eat. Though you were fairer than day, I can’t live upon love; I must have some more substantial food. I have good sharp teeth, and a very empty stomach!” “How! Fanfarinet,” replied she, “is it possible that this proof of my affection for you has so little effect? Is it possible that you can think of anything but your good fortune?” “I think much more of my misfortune,” exclaimed the ambassador. “Would to heaven you were in your dark tower again!” “Fair sir,” said the princess, kindly, “be not angry, I pray you; I will go and hunt about everywhere, and perhaps I shall find some fruit.” “I hope you will find a wolf that will eat you up,” said Fanfarinet. The princess, much grieved, ran into the wood, tearing her fine clothes with the brambles, and her white skin with the thorns. She was scratched as if she had been playing with cats. (This is what comes of loving young men; it brings nothing but trouble!) After having searched everywhere, she returned, very sad, to Fanfarinet, and told him she had found nothing. He turned his back on her, and left her, muttering between his teeth.

The next morning they made another fruitless search; in short, they passed three days without eating anything but some leaves and a few cockchafers. The princess did not complain, though she was by far the most delicate. “I should be content,” said she, “if I were the only sufferer, and should not mind being starved provided you had enough to eat." "You might die for what I care," replied he, "if I had but as much as I wanted." "Is it possible," rejoined the princess, "that you would be so little affected by my death? Is this the end of all the vows you have made me?" "There is a vast difference," said he, "between a man perfectly at his ease, who is neither hungry nor thirsty, and an unhappy wretch at the point of death in a desert island." "I am in the same danger," continued she, "and yet I do not murmur." "You would do so with a good grace, truly," answered he, bluntly: "you chose to quit your father and mother, to come rambling about here! — Mighty comfortable we are!" "But it was for love of you, Fanfarinet!" said she, holding out her hand to him. "I could willingly have spared you the trouble," said he; and thereupon he turned away from her.

The princess, pained to the heart, began to weep so bitterly that it would have melted a stone. She sat herself down beneath a bush covered with white and red roses. After having contemplated them for some time, she said to them: "How happy you are, young flowers! The zephyrs caress you, the dew bathes you, the sun embellishes you, the bees love you, the thorns defend you. Everybody admires you! — Alas! must you enjoy more tranquillity than I!" — This reflection caused her tears to flow so plenteously, that the roots of the rose-tree were quite soaked with them: she then perceived, to her great astonishment, that the bush became agitated, the roses expanded into fuller bloom, and the most beautiful one said to her: "If thou hadst not loved, thy lot would have been as enviable as mine. Who loves, incurs the greatest of misfortunes! Poor princess, thou wilt find in the hollow of that tree a honeycomb; take it: but do not be simple enough to give any to Fanfarinet." The princess ran to the tree, scarcely knowing whether she was in a dream or wide awake. She found the honey, and the moment she had it, she took it to her ungrateful lover. "Here," said she, "is a honeycomb; I could have eaten it all by myself, but I preferred sharing it with you." Without thanking, or even looking at her, he snatched it from her and ate it all up, refusing to give her the least morsel of it. He added sarcasm even to his brutality, saying that it was too sweet, and would spoil her teeth, and a hundred similar impertinences. Printaniere, more than ever afflicted, sat down under an oak, and addressed it in much the same strain as she had the rose-bush. The oak, touched with compassion, bent down to her some of its branches, and said, "'Twere pity thou shouldst perish, lovely princess; take that pitcher of milk, and drink it, without giving one drop to thy ungrateful lover." The princess, perfectly astonished, looked behind her, and immediately perceived a large pitcher full of milk. She could think of nothing from that moment, but the thirst which Fanfarinet might be enduring after eating more than fifteen pounds of honey. She ran to him with the pitcher: "Quench your thirst, handsome Fanfarinet," said she; "but don't forget to leave me a little, for I am parched and famishing!" He took the pitcher rudely from her, made but one draught of its contents, and then, flinging it on some stones, broke it to pieces, saying, with a malicious smile, "When one hasn't eaten one isn't thirsty."

The princess clasped her hands, and raising her beautiful eyes to heaven, exclaimed, "Ah! I have well deserved this! I am justly punished for having left the king and queen! — for having so thoughtlessly loved a man of whom I knew nothing! — for having fled with him without considering my rank, or reflecting on the misfortunes with which I was threatened by Carabossa!" She then began to weep more bitterly than she had ever done in her life, and plunging into the thickest part of the wood, she sank, exhausted, at the foot of an elm, on a branch of which sat a nightingale that sang marvellously the following words, flapping his wings, as if he sang them only for Printaniere. He had learned them expressly from Ovid: —

Love is a wicked god. The little knave
Ne'er grants a boon but to secure a slave;

Beneath the cover of deceitful joys,
His poison'd shaft the heart's repose destroys.

"Who can know it better than I!" exclaimed she, interrupting the bird. "Alas! I am too well acquainted with the cruelty of his shafts and that of my fate!" "Take courage," said the amorous nightingale, "and look in this thicket; thou wilt find therein sweetmeats and tartlets from Le Coq's; but do not again commit the imprudence of giving any to Fanfarinet." The princess needed not this prohibition to prevent her doing so. She had not yet forgotten the last two tricks he had played her; and besides, she was so very hungry, that she began at once to eat the almonds and the tartlets. The greedy Fanfarinet, having perceived her eating by herself, flew into such a passion, that he ran to her, his eyes flashing with fury, and his drawn sword in his hand, to kill her. She instantly uncovered the jewel of the head-dress which rendered the possessor invisible, and, keeping out of his reach, reproached him with his ingratitude in terms which sufficiently proved that she could not yet positively hate him.

In the meanwhile, Admiral Chapeau-pointu had despatched Jean Caquet, with his straw boots, Cabinet-courier in ordinary, to tell the king that the princess and Fanfarinet had landed on the Island of Squirrels; but that, being unacquainted with the country, he was afraid of ambuscades.

At these tidings, which gave their majesties much joy, the king sent for a great book, each leaf of which was eight ells long. It was the masterpiece of a learned Fairy, and contained a description of the whole earth. The king learned thereby that the Island of Squirrels was uninhabited. "Go," said he to Jean Caquet, "and order the admiral in my name to land instantly. It was very wrong of him, and of me, to leave my daughter so long with Fanfarinet."

As soon as Jean Caquet had returned to the fleet, the admiral ordered a grand flourish of drums, kettle-drums, trumpets, hautbois, flutes, violins, hurdygurdys, organs, and guitars. There was the most desperate uproar, for all these musical instruments of war and peace were to be heard incessantly throughout the island. Alarmed by the noise, the princess flew to her lover to offer him her assistance. He was by no means brave, and their mutual danger quickly reconciled them. “Keep behind me,” said she to him, “I will go first; I will uncover the jewel that renders the bearer invisible, and with my father’s dagger I will kill all I can of the enemy, while you kill the rest with your sword.”

The invisible princess advanced to meet the soldiers. She and Fanfarinet killed numbers without being seen. Nothing was heard but cries of “I am slain!” “I am dying!” The troops fired in vain; they hit nothing, for the princess and her lover dived like ducks, and the balls passed over their heads. At length, the admiral, concerned at losing so many men in so extraordinary a manner, without knowing who attacked him, or how to defend himself, ordered a retreat to be sounded, and returned to his ships to hold a council of war.

Night was already far advanced. The princess and Fanfarinet took refuge in the thickest part of the wood. Printaniere was so tired that she lay down on the grass, and was just dropping off to sleep, when she heard a sweet little voice whisper in her ear, “Save thyself, Printaniere, for Fanfarinet would murder and devour you!” Quickly opening her eyes, she saw, by the light of the carbuncle, the wicked Fanfarinet, with his arm already raised to pierce her bosom with his sword; for, being very hungry, her whiteness and plumpness had tempted him to kill and eat her. She no longer hesitated about what she should do. She drew the dagger she had kept about her since the battle, and struck him with it such a blow in the eye, that he fell dead on the spot. “Ungrateful wretch!” she cried; “take that as the reward thou hast most deserved. Be thou an example for the future to all perfidious lovers; and may thy treacherous spirit never rest in peace!" When the first transports of her fury had subsided, and she thought of the situation she was in, she became almost as lifeless as him she had just slain. "What will become of me?" she exclaimed, weeping: "I am all alone in this island! wild bears will devour me, or I shall be starved to death." She almost regretted she had not let herself be eaten by Fanfarinet. She sat herself down trembling, waiting for daylight, which she was most anxious to behold, for she was afraid of ghosts, and particularly of the nightmare.

As she leaned her head against a tree, and looked up to the sky, she observed, on one side, a beautiful golden chariot drawn by six great tufted hens, with a cock for coachman, and a fat chicken for postilion. In the chariot was a lady, so handsome — so handsome — that she resembled the sun. Her dress was embroidered all over with gold spangles and bars of silver. She saw also another chariot to which were harnessed six bats. A crow was the coachman, and a beetle the postilion. In it was a frightful little monkey-faced woman, whose dress was made of a serpent's skin, and upon her head a large toad by way of a *fontange*.

Never, no never in the world was any one so astonished as the young princess. As she contemplated these wonders, she suddenly perceived the chariots advance to meet each other; and the lovely lady wielding a golden lance, whilst the ugly one grasped a rusty pike, they commenced a furious combat, which lasted more than a quarter of an hour. At length, the beauty was victorious, and the fright flew away with her bats. The former immediately descended, and addressing Printaniere, said to her: "Fear nothing, amiable princess, I came hither only to serve you. The combat I have fought with Carabossa was only for the love of you. She claimed the right to whip you for having left the tower four days before you were twenty, but you perceive that I took your part and have put her to flight. Enjoy the happiness I have won for you." The grateful princess flung herself at the lady's feet. "Great Queen of the Fairies," said she to her, "your generosity transports me; I know not how to thank you; but I feel that there is not a drop of this blood you have saved which I would not shed to serve you." The Fairy embraced her three times, and made her more beautiful than she was before — supposing such a thing to be possible.

The Fairy ordered the cock to proceed to the royal fleet, and tell the admiral to approach without fear, and sent the fat chicken to her palace to fetch the most beautiful dresses in the world for Printaniere. The admiral was so overjoyed at the tidings brought him by the cock, that he narrowly escaped a fit of illness. He came ashore instantly with all his men, including Jean Caquet, who, observing the hurry in which everybody left the ships, made as much haste himself, and threw upon his shoulder a spit, well loaded with game.

Admiral Chapeau-pointu had scarcely proceeded a league when he perceived in one of the great avenues of the forest the chariot drawn by hens, in which the two ladies were riding. He recognised the princess, and was about to kneel, but she told him that all the honours were due to the generous Fairy, who had saved her from the clutches of Carabossa; on which he kissed the hem of the Fairy's robe, and paid her the finest compliment that was ever uttered upon such an occasion. Before he could finish, the Fairy interrupted him, exclaiming, "I vow I smell roast meat!" "Yes, Madam," said Jean Caquet, displaying the spit loaded with excellent birds; "it is only for your highness to desire to taste." "Most willingly," she replied; "less for my own sake than for that of the princess, who has need to make a good meal." They immediately sent to the fleet for everything that was necessary, and the delight of having found the princess, joined to the good cheer, left nothing to be wished for.

The repast being finished, and the fat chicken having returned, the Fairy dressed Printaniere in a robe of gold and green brocade, powdered with rubies and pearls. She tied up her beautiful hair with strings of diamonds and emeralds, crowned her with flowers, and placing her in the chariot, all the stars that saw her pass thought it was Aurora who had not yet made her appearance, and said as she went by, “Good morning, Aurora.”

After much leave-taking between the Fairy and the princess, the latter said, “Shall I not, Madam, have the pleasure of informing the queen, my mother, who it is that has done me such service?” “Beautiful princess,” replied she, “embrace her for me, and say that I am the fifth Fairy who endowed you at your birth.”

The princess having gone on board the admiral’s ship, they fired all the guns and more than a thousand rockets. She arrived safely in port, and found the king and the queen awaiting her, and who received her with such caresses that she had no time to ask pardon for her past follies, though she had flung herself at their feet the moment she saw them. Paternal tenderness excused her completely, and all the fault was laid upon old Carabossa. At the same moment the son of the great King Merlin arrived, exceedingly anxious at not having heard any news of his ambassador. He came with a thousand horses and thirty servants splendidly dressed in scarlet richly laced with gold. He was a hundred times more amiable than the ungrateful Fanfarinet. They took good care not to say anything to him about the little adventure of the elopement. It might perhaps have awakened a few suspicions. They told him the very plausible story, that his ambassador being thirsty, and endeavouring to draw some water to drink, had fallen into the well and been drowned. He believed it implicitly, and the nuptials were celebrated amidst so much joy that all past sorrow was entirely forgotten.

7

PRINCESS ROSETTE

Once upon a time there was a king and a queen who had two beautiful boys. They grew like the day, so well did they thrive on the excellent food provided for them. The queen never gave birth to a child without sending for the Fairies, and begging them to tell her what would happen to the infant. Her next was a beautiful little girl, so handsome that you could not look on her and not love her. The queen having sumptuously entertained the Fairies who had come to see her, said to them, when they were preparing to depart, “Do not forget your good custom, but tell me what will happen to Rosette” (the name they had given to the little princess). The Fairies replied that they had left their conjuring books at home, and that they would come and tell her another time. “Ah,” said the queen, “that bodes me no good; you do not wish to afflict me by predicting some misfortune: but I entreat you to let me know all — hide nothing from me.” They made every sort of excuse, and only increased the queen’s desire for information. At last the principal Fairy said to her, “We fear, Madam, that Rosette will be the cause of some great misfortune to her brothers; that some affair of hers will cost them their lives. That is all that we can foresee respecting this beautiful little girl, and we are very sorry we cannot tell you anything more agreeable.” They departed, and the queen remained so melancholy that the king could not avoid seeing it in her face. He asked her what was the matter. She answered that she had been sitting too near the fire, and had burnt all the wool off her spindle. “Is that all?” said the king. He went up into the loft, and brought her more wool than she could spin in a hundred years.

The queen continued in low spirits, and the king again asked her what was the matter. She told him that walking by the river-side she had lost one of her green satin slippers. “Is that all?” said the king. He sent an order to all the shoemakers in the kingdom, and they furnished her majesty with ten thousand green satin slippers.

She still continued sad. The king again asked what ailed her. She told him that in eating too hastily she had swallowed her wedding-ring, which had slipped off her finger. The king knew she told him a falsehood, for he had the ring safe in his own possession. “My dear wife,” said he to her, “you are not speaking the truth. Here is your ring, which I put for safety into my purse.” The queen was much confused at being caught telling a falsehood, for lying is the most disgraceful thing in the world, and she saw that the king was angry. She therefore told him what the fairies had predicted about little Rosette, and requested him to say if he could think of any remedy for the evil. The king was so much distressed that he said at once to the queen, “I do not see any other way to save our two sons than by putting to death the little girl whilst she is in her swaddling-clothes.” But the queen exclaimed that she would sooner suffer death herself; that she never would consent to so cruel a deed, and that the king must think of something else.

The minds of their majesties being naturally occupied with this matter entirely, some one informed the queen that in a great forest near the city there was an old hermit who lived in a hollow tree, and who was consulted by people from all parts of the world. “I must seek him also,” said the queen; “the Fairies have told me the danger, but have forgotten the remedy.” She rose very early, and mounted a beautiful little white mule shod with gold, two of her maids of honour accompanying her, each on a handsome horse. When they were near the wood, the queen and her ladies dismounted, out of respect for the hermit, and went on foot to the tree he lived in. He objected to the sight of females, but when he saw it was the queen he said to her, “You are welcome; what is your will with me?” She told him what the Fairies had said about Rosette, and requested his advice. He told her she should put the princess into a tower, out of which she should never be permitted to step. The queen thanked him, made him a good present, and returned with her information to the king.

When the king heard this account he ordered a great tower to be built as quickly as possible; he put his daughter into it, and that she might not feel dull, the king, the queen, and her two brothers went to see her every day. The eldest was called the Great Prince, and the younger the Little Prince. They were passionately fond of their sister, for she was the most beautiful and amiable creature ever seen, and the least of her glances was worth more than a hundred pistoles. When she was fifteen the Great Prince said to the king, “Papa, my sister is old enough to be married, shall we not shortly go to her wedding?” The Little Prince said as much to the queen; and their majesties answered them evasively, saying no word about the marriage.

At length the king and queen were taken very ill, and died almost on the same day. Everybody was very sorry, there was a general mourning, and the bells tolled throughout the city. Rosette was inconsolable for the loss of her good mamma.

After the funerals of the king and queen, the dukes and marquises of the kingdom seated the Great Prince on a throne of gold and diamonds, with a magnificent crown on his head, and robes of violet velvet embroidered all over with suns and moons. The whole court then shouted three times, “Long live the King!” and nothing was thought of but rejoicings.

The King and his brother said to each other, “Now that we are in power, we will take our sister out of the prison in which she has passed so many weary years.” They had but to cross the garden to reach the tower, which had been built in a corner of it, as high as possible, for the late king and queen intended the princess should remain in it all her life. Rosette was embroidering a beautiful robe on a frame before her; but when she saw her brothers, she rose, and took the King’s hand, saying to him, “Good morning, Sire; you are now king, and I your little servant. I beseech you to take me out of this tower, where I am very dull;” and with that she began to weep. The King embraced her, and told her not to cry: that he had come to take her out of the tower, and conduct her to a fine château. The prince had his pockets full of sweetmeats, which he gave to Rosette, saying to her, “Come, let us quit this vile dungeon. The king will soon find a husband for you; don’t afflict yourself any longer.”

When Rosette saw the beautiful garden, all full of flowers, fruits, and fountains, she was so astonished that she could not utter a word, for she had never seen anything of the sort before. She gazed eagerly about her, now walking, now stopping, now gathering fruit from the trees, or flowers from their beds. Her little dog, named Fretillon, who was as green as a parrot, had but one ear, and danced to perfection, ran before her, bow-wow-wowing with a thousand jumps and capers. Fretillon amused the company amazingly. All on a sudden he ran into a little wood. The princess followed him, and never was any one so astonished as she was at seeing in this wood a great peacock with his tail spread, and looking so beautiful, so beautiful — so beautiful, that she could not take her eyes off him!

The king and the prince rejoined her, and inquired what she was amusing herself with. She pointed the peacock out to them, and asked them what it was. They told her it was a bird that was occasionally eaten. “What!” she exclaimed, “do they dare to kill such a beautiful bird and eat it? — I declare to you that I will never marry any one but the King of the Peacocks, and when I am queen I will take good care that none shall be eaten.” Nobody can describe the astonishment of the king. “But, Sister,” said he, “where would you that we should find the King of the Peacocks?” “Wherever you please, Sire, but I will marry nobody else.”

After she had made this resolution, the two brothers conducted her to their château, whither they were obliged to bring the peacock also, and place it in her apartment, for she was exceedingly fond of it. All the ladies, who had never seen Rosette, hastened to salute her and pay their court to her. Some brought her preserves, others sugar, others dresses of gold stuffs, beautiful ribbons, dolls, embroidered shoes, pearls and diamonds. She was entertained everywhere, and she was so well bred, so polite, kissing hands, &c., and curtsying when any pretty thing was given to her, that not a gentleman or lady left her dissatisfied with their reception.

Whilst she was thus keeping the best company, the King and the Prince determined to find the King of the Peacocks, if there was one in the world. They decided that a portrait of the Princess Rosette should be taken, and they had one so finely painted that it did all but speak. They then said to her, “Since you will not marry any one but the King of the Peacocks, we are about to set out together in search of him throughout the world. If we find him we shall be very happy. Take care of the kingdom till we return.”

Rosette thanked them for the trouble they were taking. She said, “She would carefully govern the kingdom, and that during their absence all her pleasure would consist in contemplating the beautiful peacock and making Fretillon dance.” They could not refrain from tears in bidding each other farewell.

Behold these two princes on their journey, inquiring of everybody, “Do you know the King of the Peacocks?” Everybody answered, “No, no.” They travelled on still further, and at last went so far — so far, that nobody has ever been such a distance.

They arrived at the kingdom of Mayflies. Never before were seen so many. They made such a buzzing that the King was afraid he should never hear distinctly again. He asked one who seemed the most sensible amongst them, if he knew whereabouts he could find the King of the Peacocks. “Sire,” said the Mayfly to him, “his kingdom is thirty thousand leagues from this place. You have taken the longest road to it.” “And how do you know that?” said the King. “Because,” replied the Mayfly, “we know you very well, and go every year to pass two or three months in your gardens.” The King and his brother embraced the Mayfly, — they became great friends, and dined together. They saw all the sights of the kingdom, admiring its curiosities, the smallest leaf on any tree in it being worth a pistole; after which they set out again to finish their journey; and, as they had learned the way, they were not long about it. They saw all the trees laden with peacocks, and every part of the kingdom so full of them, that you could hear them scream and talk at a distance of two leagues.

The King said to his brother, “If the King of the Peacocks is a peacock himself, how does our sister mean to marry him? We should be mad to consent. A pretty alliance she would inflict on us. Some little peachicks for nephews!” The Prince was no less troubled about it; “It is a most unfortunate whim,” said he, “that she has taken into her head! What could have induced her to imagine there was a King of the Peacocks in the world?”

When they arrived at the principal city, they perceived it was full of men and women; but that they were dressed in clothes made of peacocks’ feathers, and wore a profusion of them everywhere as very fine ornaments. They met the king, who was driving out in a fine little coach of gold and diamonds, drawn by twelve peacocks fully caparisoned.

This King of the Peacocks was so handsome — so handsome — that the King and the Prince were charmed with him. He had long curly light hair, an exceedingly fair complexion, and wore a crown of feathers from the tail of a peacock. When he saw the two brothers, he judged that, as their dresses were of a different fashion to those worn by the people of the country, they must be foreigners, and to ascertain the fact he stopped his coach and ordered them to be called before him.

The King and the Prince approached him, and having made their obeisance, said to him, “Sire, we have come from a great distance to show you a beautiful portrait.” They took out of their portmanteau the grand portrait of Rosette. When the King of the Peacocks had examined it attentively, “I cannot believe,” said he, “that there is such a beautiful maid in the world!” “She is a hundred times more beautiful,” said the King, her brother. “Oh, you are jesting;” replied the King of the Peacocks. “Sire,” said the Prince, “there is my brother, who is a king as well as you. He is styled the King, and I am called the Prince. Our sister, of whom this is the portrait, is the Princess Rosette. We come to ask you if you will espouse her. She is beautiful and very virtuous, and we will give her a bushel of golden crowns.” “Yes, truly,” said the king, “I will marry her with all my heart. She shall lack for nothing at my court; I will love her excessively; but I declare to you that I expect she is as handsome as her portrait, and that if it flatter her in the slightest degree, I will put you to death.” “Well, we consent,” said the two brothers of Rosette. “You consent!” rejoined the King; “then to prison with you, and there remain until the Princess shall arrive.” The princes made not the slightest difficulty, for they were perfectly certain that Rosette was handsomer than her picture.

When they were in prison the King of the Peacocks had them admirably attended to, and frequently went to see them, keeping in his own castle the portrait of Rosette, on which he so doted that he slept neither night nor day. As the other king and his brother were in prison, they wrote clothes immediately and to come with all speed, as the King of the Peacocks was waiting for her. They did not tell her they were prisoners, for fear of alarming her.

When she received their letter she was so transported with joy that she thought she should die of it. She told everybody that the King of the

Peacocks was found and desired to marry her. They kindled bonfires, fired guns, and made feasts of sweetmeats and sugar throughout the kingdom. Every one who came to see the Princess during three days had given to them a slice of bread and butter with jam on it, some wafers, and a glass of Hypocras wine. After she had been thus liberal she left her beautiful dolls to her best friends, and her brother's kingdom in the hands of the wisest old men in the city. She strongly enjoined them to take great care of everything, to spend very little, and save up money against the King's return. She begged them to preserve her peacock, and would take nobody with her but her nurse, her foster-sister, and her little green dog Fretillon.

They put to sea in a boat, taking with them the bushel of gold crowns, and clothes enough to change their dress twice a-day, for ten years. They did nothing but laugh and sing. The nurse asked the boatman, "Are we nearing — are we nearing the kingdom of Peacocks?" He answered, "No, no." Another time she asked him, "Are we nearing? are we nearing?" He answered, "We shall be soon; we shall be soon." A third time she said to him, "Are we nearing? are we nearing?" He answered, "Yes, yes." And as soon as he had said so, she went to the end of the boat, seated herself beside him, and said to him, "If thou choosest, thou shalt be rich for ever." He answered, "I should like it much." "If thou choosest," she continued, "thou shalt gain some good pistoles." "I desire nothing better;" replied he. "Well," said the nurse, "thou must help me then to-night, when the Princess is asleep, to throw her into the sea. As soon as she is drowned I will dress my daughter in the Princess's fine clothes, and we will conduct her to the King of the Peacocks, who will be happy to marry her; and for thy reward, we will load thee with diamonds."

The boatman was very much surprised at the nurse's proposition. He said, it was a pity to drown so handsome a Princess, — that she excited his compassion. But the nurse produced a bottle of wine and made him drink so much that he could no longer refuse her anything.

As soon as it was dark, the Princess lay down as she was wont; little Fretillon was snugly established at the bottom of the bed, moving neither foot nor paw. Rosette was sleeping soundly, when the wicked nurse, who was wide awake, went to fetch the boatman. She led him into the Princess's cabin; then, without disturbing her, they took her up, with her feather-bed, mattress, sheets, and counterpane, the foster-sister helping them with all her might, and flung the whole into the sea, and the Princess was so fast asleep that she never woke.

But, by good fortune, the feather-bed was stuffed with Phœnix feathers, which are very rare, and possess the property of never sinking in the water, so that she floated on her bed just as if she had been in a boat. The water, however, gradually wetted first the feather-bed and then the mattress, and Rosette, being incommoded by it, turned from side to side, and roused Fretillon. He had an excellent nose, and smelt the soles and the codfish so close to him that he began to bark, and bark so much, that he woke all the rest of the fish. They began to swim about, the great fish running their heads against the bed of the Princess, which having nothing to steady it, spun round and round, like a whirligig. She was very much surprised. "Has our boat taken to dance on the water?" said she; "I have never been so uncomfortable as to-night;" and still Fretillon kept barking, and making a desperate pother. The wicked nurse and the boatman heard him a long way off, and said, "There is that little rogue of a dog drinking with his mistress to our good health. Let us make haste to land;" — for they were just in sight of the city of the King of the Peacocks.

His majesty had sent down to the beach a hundred coaches drawn by all sorts of rare animals. There were lions, bears, stags, wolves, horses, oxen, asses, eagles, peacocks, and the coach intended to convey the Princess Rosette was drawn by six blue monkeys, who could jump, and dance the tight-rope, and play all manner of amusing tricks. They had beautiful harness of crimson velvet plated with gold. There were also sixty young ladies whom the king had selected to entertain the Princess. They were dressed in all sorts of colours; gold and silver were the meanest ornaments about them.

The nurse had taken great pains to deck out her daughter. She had covered her with Rosette’s diamonds, from head to foot, and dressed her in her friend’s robes; but despite her finery she looked more ugly than an ape, with greasy black hair, squinting eyes, crooked legs, a great hump in the middle of her back — an ill-tempered slut, continually grumbling.

When all the servants of the King of the Peacocks saw her come out of the boat, they were so surprised — so surprised, that they could not speak. “What does this mean?” said she, “are you asleep? — Come, come, bring me something to eat; you are a nice set of rascals; I will have you all hanged!” At this threat, they said to each other, “What a vile creature! — she is as wicked as she is ugly! — Here’s a fine wife for our king! — I am not surprised at it! — It was not worth while to send for her from the other end of the world!” All this while she played the mistress, giving slaps on the face, and blows with her fist, for next to nothing, to everybody about her.

As her train was very numerous, she proceeded slowly. She sat in her coach like a queen: but all the peacocks that had perched themselves in the trees to salute her as she passed, and had resolved to cry, “Long live the beautiful Queen Rosette,” when they perceived her to be such a horrible fright, cried, “Fie! fie! how ugly she is!” She was excessively enraged and mortified, and said to her guards, “Kill me those rogues of peacocks who are insulting me.” The peacocks flew away quickly, and made game of her.

The rogue of a boatman, who witnessed all this, said in a whisper to the nurse, “Gossip, all is not well with us. Your daughter should have been handsomer.” She replied, “Hold thy tongue, fool; thou wilt bring some misfortune upon us!”

They sent to inform the king that the Princess was approaching. “Well,” said he, “have her brothers told me the truth? Is she more beautiful than her picture?” — “Sire,” they replied, “it is quite sufficient for her to be as handsome.” “Yes, surely,” said the king, “I shall be perfectly satisfied with that. Let us go and see her,” — for he knew by the great noise they were making in the court, that she had arrived, and he could not distinguish anything they were saying, except, “Fie! fie! how ugly she is!” He thought they must be speaking of some dwarf or animal she might have brought with her, for it never could have entered his head that it actually applied to herself.

The portrait of the Princess was carried at the end of a long staff, uncovered, and the king walked in solemn procession after it, with all his barons, and all his peacocks, followed by the ambassadors from the neighbouring kingdoms. The King of the Peacocks was exceedingly impatient to see his dear Rosette. Mercy! when he did see her, he was nearly dying on the spot! — He flew into the greatest passion in the world. He rent his clothes; — he would not go near her; — she frightened him. “How!” he cried, “the two scoundrels I hold in prison are bold, indeed, to have made sport of me, and to have proposed to me to marry a baboon like that. They shall die. — Go! Lock up instantly that impertinent girl, her nurse, and the fellow who brought them hither. Fling them into the lowest dungeon of my great tower.”

On the other hand, the King and his brother who were prisoners, and who knew the day on which their sister ought to arrive, had put on their best clothes to receive her. Instead of opening their prison and setting them at liberty as they had hoped, the jailor came with some soldiers and made them descend into a cell, perfectly dark, and full of horrid reptiles, where they were up to their necks in water. Nobody was ever more astonished or more miserable. “Alas!” they cried to each other, “this is a sad wedding for us! What can have brought so great a misfortune upon us?” They knew not what in the world to think, except, that they were doomed to die; and they were completely overwhelmed with sorrow. Three days passed without their hearing a word. At the end of the three days, the King of the Peacocks came and insulted them, through a hole in the wall.

“You have assumed the titles of King and Prince,” cried he to them, “in order to impose upon me and engage me to marry your sister; but you are nothing better than vagabonds, who are not worth the water you drink. I will find judges for you, who will quickly try and sentence you. The rope is already twisting which shall hang you both.” “King of the Peacocks,” replied the King in great wrath, “be less hasty in this matter, for you may have cause to repent. I am a king as surely as you are one; I have a fine kingdom, robes, crowns, and good money. Ha! ha! it’s a fine joke truly for you to be talking of hanging us. Have we stolen anything from you, pray?”

When the king heard him speak so boldly, he knew not what to think, and he was tempted, at times, to let them go with their sister, and not put them to death: but his confidant, who was a downright courtier, encouraged him, saying, that if he did not take vengeance on them, everybody would laugh at him, and would think him a mean, petty sovereign, not worth a groat. He swore that he would not forgive them, and ordered their trial to take place. It did not last long. It was only necessary to exhibit the portrait of the real Princess Rosette by the side of the person who had presented herself under that title. Consequently they were condemned to lose their heads, as false traitors, who had promised to give the king a beautiful princess in marriage, and had only offered to him an ugly country wench. The Court went in full state to the prison to read the sentence to the prisoners, and they declared that they had not been guilty of falsehood, that their sister was a princess fairer than the day: that there was some mystery which they could not understand, and that they demanded seven days’ respite of the execution of their sentence, as in that time their innocence would probably be acknowledged. The King of the Peacocks, who was greatly incensed, was very loth to grant them this favour: but eventually he consented.

Whilst all this is passing at Court, we must say a word about the poor Princess Rosette. When day broke, she was greatly astonished, and Fretillon also, to find themselves in the middle of the sea without boat or assistance. She began to cry, and wept so bitterly that all the fishes pitied her. She knew not what to do, or what would become of her. “Assuredly,” said she, “I have been thrown into the sea by order of the King of the Peacocks. He has repented his promise to marry me, and to get fairly rid of me has ordered me to be drowned. What an extraordinary man!” she continued; “I should have been so fond of him; we should have lived so happily together!” Thereupon she wept more bitterly, for she could not help loving him.

She remained thus for two days floating on the ocean, first one side and then the other, soaked to her bones, with a cold enough to kill her, and all but benumbed. If it had not been for little Fretillon, who imparted a little warmth to her heart, she would have died a hundred times over. She was tremendously hungry. She saw the oysters in their shells. She took as many as she chose, and ate them. Fretillon had little liking for them; but he was obliged to eat something. When it grew dark, Rosette became exceedingly frightened, and she said to her dog, “Fretillon, keep on barking, for fear the soles should eat us.” He had barked all night, and the Princess’s bed was not far from the shore. On the coast there was a good old man who lived all alone in a little hut, which nobody ever came near. He was very poor, and cared nothing for worldly goods. When he heard Fretillon bark, he was quite surprised, for dogs seldom passed that way. He thought some travellers had lost their road, and charitably came out of his hut to direct them. All on a sudden he perceived the Princess and Fretillon, who were floating on the water, and the Princess seeing him, stretched out her arms and cried to him, “Good old man, save me, for I am perishing here; I have languished thus for two days!”

When he heard her speak so sorrowfully, he had great compassion for her, and re-entered his dwelling to get a long boathook. He waded into the water up to his neck, and thought, twice or thrice, he should be drowned. At length he contrived to pull the bed to the shore. Rosette and Fretillon were vastly glad to be upon dry land. The Princess thanked the good man warmly, and wrapping herself up in her counterpane, walked barefooted into the hut, where he made a small fire for her with dry leaves, and took out of his chest the best gown of his deceased wife, with stockings and shoes, which the Princess put on. Thus, dressed like a peasant, she looked lovely as the day, and Fretillon danced round her to divert her.

The old man saw plainly that Rosette was some lady of rank, for the coverlid of her bed was of gold and silver, and her mattress of satin. He requested her to tell him her history, and assured her that he would keep it a secret if she wished. She recounted the whole of it, weeping very much, for she was still under the belief that it was the King of the Peacocks who had ordered her to be drowned. “What shall we do, my daughter?” said the old man to her: “you are so great a princess, accustomed to dainties, and I have nothing to give you but black bread and radishes. You will fare badly with me; and if you will take my advice you will let me go and tell the King of the Peacocks that you are here. I am sure that if he had seen you he would have married you.” “Ah,” exclaimed Rosette, “he is a wicked creature, and will put me to death; but if you have a little basket, let us tie it round my dog’s neck, and it will be very unlucky if he do not bring back something to eat.” The old man gave the Princess a basket; she tied it round Fretillon’s neck, and said to him, “Go to the best saucepan in the city and bring me what may be in it.” Fretillon ran to the city, and as there were no saucepans better than the king’s, he entered the royal kitchen, took the lid off the largest, adroitly possessed himself of its contents, and returned to the hut. Rosette said to him, “Go back to the buttery and bring me the best of everything.” Fretillon returned to the buttery and filled his basket with white bread, muscadel wine, and all sorts of fruits and preserves. He was so laden that he could hardly wag.

When the King of the Peacocks called for his dinner there was nothing in the saucepan or in the buttery. The servants all stared at each other, and the king was in a fearful rage. “Very well,” said he, “there is no dinner for me. But take care that the spit is put down this evening, and that I have something very good roasted.” When evening arrived, the Princess said to Fretillon, “Go to the city, enter the best kitchen, and bring me some nice roast meat.” Fretillon did as his mistress ordered him, and knowing no better kitchen than the king’s, stole into it softly, while the cooks’ backs were turned, and took all the roast meat off the spit, so nicely done, that the mere sight of it gave you an appetite. He brought his basket home, quite full, to the Princess. She sent him back immediately to the buttery, and he returned with all the royal preserves and sweetmeats. The king, who had not dined, being very hungry, desired to sup early; but there was nothing to set before him. He put himself into an awful passion, and went to bed supperless. The next day at dinner and supper time it was exactly the same case, so that the king was without eating or drinking, because, when he was ready to sit down to table, it was discovered that everything had been carried off. His confidant, greatly disturbed, fearing the king would die, concealed himself in a little corner of the kitchen, and kept his eyes constantly on the pot that was boiling. He was much surprised to see a little green dog with one ear enter very softly, take off the cover, and put all the meat into his basket. He followed it to see whither it went. He saw it go out of the city, and followed it to the good old man’s. Immediately he returned to tell the king that all his boiled and roast was taken day and night to the hovel of a poor peasant.

The king was much astonished. He ordered the man to be brought before him. The confidant, to pay court to the king, determined to go himself, with the archers of the guard. They found the old man dining with the Princess upon the king’s boiled meat. They seized and bound them with strong cords, and secured Fretillon also.

As soon as they arrived at the palace the king was informed of it, who replied, “To-morrow will be the seventh and last day I granted to those impudent impostors. They shall die with these thieves who have stolen my dinner.” So saying he entered the hall of justice. The old man fell on his knees and said he would confess everything. While he was speaking the king gazed on the beautiful Princess, and pitied her tears, but when the good man declared that she was the Princess Rosette who had been thrown into the sea, notwithstanding the king was so weak and faint for want of food, he jumped three times for joy, ran and embraced her, and untied the cords with which she was bound, assuring her that he loved her with all his heart.

At the same time the princes were sent for, who, imagining that it was for their execution, approached very sadly, hanging down their heads. The nurse and her daughter were also brought out. When they looked at each other, a general recognition took place. Rosette threw herself on the necks of her brothers. The nurse, her daughter, and the boatman flung themselves on their knees and prayed for mercy. The joy was so great that the King and the Princess forgave them. The good old man was richly rewarded, and lived all the rest of his days in the palace. The King of the Peacocks, in short, made every sort of amends to the King and his brother, proving his regret at having ill-treated them. The nurse restored to Rosette her rich clothes and her bushel of gold crowns, and the nuptial festivities lasted fifteen days. Everybody was satisfied, down to Fretillon, who from that day never ate anything but the wings of partridges.

8

THE GOLDEN BRANCH

Once upon a time there was a king whose austere and melancholy disposition inspired terror rather than love. He rarely suffered himself to be seen, and put his subjects to death on the slightest suspicion. They called him King Brun, because he was always frowning. King Brun had a son who was not in the least like him. Nothing could equal his intelligence, his sweet temper, his liberality, and his general capacity; but he had crooked legs, a hunch on his back which was higher than his head, squinting eyes, a wry mouth, in short, he was a little monster, and never had so beautiful a soul animated so deformed a body. Nevertheless, by a singular fate, he was doted upon by everybody whom he wished to please. He was so superior in mind to all around him, that it was impossible to listen to him with indifference. The queen, his mother, chose that he should be called Torticoli, either because she liked that name, or that the prince being actually all of a twist, she considered that she had hit upon the one most appropriate for him. King Brun, who thought more of the greatness than the happiness of his son, cast his eyes upon the daughter of a powerful sovereign, his near neighbour, and whose dominions joined to his own would make him the most redoubtable monarch on the face of the globe. He conceived that this princess was a very suitable wife for the Prince Torticoli, as she could not have any right to reproach him with his deformity and ugliness, being at the least as ugly and deformed as himself. She always went about in a bowl, her legs being out of joint; and was called Trognon. She was the most amiable creature in the world. It appeared as if Heaven had been anxious to compensate her for the injuries of Nature.

King Brun having obtained the portrait of the Princess Trognon, which he had applied for, had it placed in a great hall, under a canopy, and sent for the Prince Torticoli, whom he commanded to look with affection upon that picture, as it was the likeness of Trognon, his intended bride. Torticoli cast his eyes upon it, and turned them away immediately with an air of disdain, which offended his father. “Are you not pleased?” said he, in a sharp and angry tone. “No, my liege,” replied the Prince, “I shall never be pleased to marry a cripple.” “It well becomes you,” said the King, “to find faults in this princess, being yourself a little monster who frightens everybody that looks at you.” “It is for that reason,” added the Prince, “that I object to form an alliance with another monster. I can hardly bear the sight of myself: what would be my sufferings with such a companion?” “You fear to perpetuate the race of baboons,” said the King insultingly; “but your fears are bootless: you shall marry her. It is enough for me to command to be obeyed.” Torticoli made no reply. He bowed profoundly and withdrew.

King Brun was not accustomed to encounter the least opposition. His son’s refusal put him into an awful passion. He locked him up in a tower which had been built expressly as a prison for rebellious princes; but there had been none such for two hundred years, consequently everything was sadly out of order in it — the apartments and the furniture appeared of surprising antiquity. The Prince loved reading; he asked for books, and he was permitted to make choice of any in the tower library. He thought, at first, that permission would be sufficient, but when he attempted to read some he found the language so obsolete that he could not understand a word of it. He laid them down, then took them up again, endeavouring to make out something of their contents, or at all events to amuse himself by their examination.

King Brun, satisfied that Torticoli would soon get tired of his imprisonment, acted as if the prince had consented to marry Trognon. He sent ambassadors to the king, his neighbour, to demand the hand of his daughter, to whom he promised perfect happiness. The father of Trognon was enraptured to find so advantageous an opportunity of getting her married; for everybody is not anxious to burden themselves with a cripple. He accepted the proposals of King Brun, and though, to speak the truth, he had not been greatly struck by the portrait of Prince Torticoli, which had been brought to him, he had it, in its turn, placed in a magnificent gallery. Trognon was brought thither to see it. As soon as she had looked on it, she cast down her eyes, and began to weep. Her father, incensed at the repugnance she evinced, took a looking-glass, and placing it before her, said, “You weep, my daughter! Ah! look at yourself, and then admit that you have no right to complain.” “If I were in any hurry to be married, my liege,” said she, “it would, perhaps, be wrong in me to be so fastidious; but I can bear my shame whilst I am alone. I desire no one to share with me the misery of beholding me. Let me remain the unfortunate Princess Trognon all my life, and I shall be contented — at least I will not complain.” However excellent her reasons, the king would not listen to them. She was compelled to depart with the ambassadors who had been sent to propose for her. Whilst she is travelling in a litter, in which she was stuck like a stump, we must return to the tower, and see what the Prince is about. None of his guards dared to speak to him. They had been ordered to let him grow melancholy, to give him bad food, and vex him with all kinds of ill-usage. King Brun knew how to make himself obeyed. If they did not do it for love, they did it from fear; but the affection they bore to the Prince induced them to alleviate his sufferings as much as they could.

One day as he was walking in a long gallery, musing sadly on the fate which had caused him to be born so ugly and so repulsive, and to meet with a princess even more ill-favoured, he happened to look up at the windows, which he observed to be painted with such brilliant colours, and such well-designed subjects, that, having a particular taste for such beautiful works of art, he stopped to examine them; but he could not comprehend their import, for they represented scenes in stories which had been forgotten for many ages. One thing, however, struck him, which was, that there was a man in them so closely resembling himself that it appeared like his own portrait. This man was represented in the keep of the tower, examining the wall, in which he found a golden ramrod, with which he opened a cabinet. There were many other subjects which took his attention, and in the greater portion of the windows he saw everywhere his portrait. “By what accident,” said he, “have I been made to figure in these scenes; I, who was not born at the time they are supposed to have occurred: and by what fatal idea did it occur to the painter to amuse himself by designing a man like me?” He saw painted on the same glass the figure of a lovely young girl, whose features were so regular, and their expression so intellectual, that he could not take his eyes off it. In short, there were a thousand various subjects, and all the passions were so well expressed, that he seemed absolutely a witness of the events in action, which were only represented by a mixture of colours.

He did not quit the gallery till it was too dark to distinguish anything in the painted glass. On his return to his room he took up the first old manuscript that came to his hand. The leaves were of vellum with illuminated borders, and the binding of gold enamelled with blue, so as to form cyphers. He was much surprised to find in the paintings the same subjects as those depicted on the windows in the gallery. He tried to read the manuscripts, but could not succeed. All on a sudden he observed that in one of the pages where there was an illumination representing musicians, the figures began to sing, and in another page, where there appeared players at at Basset and Tric-trac, the cards and dice were in motion. He turned over leaf, and saw people dancing at a ball; all the ladies in full dress, and of marvellous beauty. He turned again, and smelt the savoury fumes of a capital dinner. The little figures were all eating; the largest was not a quarter of an inch in height; and one of them, turning towards the Prince, said to him, “To your good health, Torticoli! strive to restore our queen to us. If you do so, it will be well for you; if you do not, it will be ill for you.” At these words the Prince was seized with such a violent panic, (for he had been trembling for some time,) that he let the book drop on one side, and fell on the other like a dead man. At the noise of his fall his keepers ran in. They loved him dearly, and neglected nothing to recover him from his swoon. As soon as he was able to speak, they asked what was the matter with him. He replied that he was so weak for want of proper food that his mind wandered; and his imagination being worked upon, he had fancied he had seen and heard such wonderful things in that book that he was panic-struck. His guardians, much afflicted, gave him something good to eat, in spite of the King’s prohibition. When he had eaten, he took up the book again before them, and no longer found anything he had seen in it. This convinced him that he had been under a delusion.

He returned the next day to the gallery. He saw the figures again in the windows, moving, promenading in avenues, hunting stags and hares, fishing, and building tiny houses, for they were very small miniatures, and his portrait was to be seen in every one of them. It had a dress exactly like his own. It ascended into the keep of the tower, and discovered the golden ramrod. As the Prince had eaten a good breakfast, he could no longer imagine this was the work of fancy. “This is too mysterious,” said he, “for me to neglect the means of knowing more. Perhaps I may learn more in the keep.” He ascended to it, and striking against the wall, he fancied that a portion of it sounded hollow. He took a hammer, and knocking down some of the wall near this spot, he found a golden ramrod, very neatly made. He was puzzling himself to think of what use it could be to him, when he perceived in one corner of the room an old worm-eaten wooden press. He tried to open it, but he could find no lock. He turned it about, and hunted on every side; but it was labour in vain. At last he espied a small hole, and suspecting that the ramrod might be useful, inserted the worm of it, and then pulling with all his might he opened the press. But in exact proportion to the age and ugliness of its outside was the beauty and marvellous treasures of its interior. All the drawers were of engraved rock-crystal, amber, or precious stones. When you had taken out one, you found smaller drawers at the sides, above, below, and at the back, separated by partitions of mother-of-pearl. On taking out these partitions and opening the drawers, each appeared full of the most splendid weapons in the world, rich crowns, admirable portraits. Prince Torticoli was enchanted; he was never tired of opening drawers. At length he found a little key made of a single emerald, with which he opened a golden door at the back of the press. He was dazzled by the brilliancy of a carbuncle which formed a large box. He pulled it quickly out of the recess; but what were his feelings when he found it was full of blood, in which was the hand of a man, cut off at the wrist, but still grasping a miniature case!

At this sight Torticoli shuddered; his hair stood on end; his trembling limbs could scarcely support him. He sat down upon the floor still holding the box. Turning his eyes from so shocking a sight, he was greatly tempted to replace the box where he had found it; but it occurred to him, that all these circumstances could not have happened without the existence of some great mysteries. He remembered what the little figure in the book had said to him, that accordingly as he acted, it would be well or ill for him. He had as much to fear from the future as from the present; and finally reproaching himself for a timidity unworthy a great mind, he made an effort, and fixing his eyes on the hand — “Oh, unfortunate hand!” he exclaimed, “canst thou not by some signs acquaint me with thy sad adventure? If I have the power to serve thee, assure thyself of the generosity of my heart!"

The hand at these words appeared agitated, and moving its fingers, made signs to him, the purport of which he comprehended as perfectly as if it had been conveyed in words by the most eloquent lips. "Learn," said the hand, "that thou canst do everything for him from whom the barbarity of a jealous monster has separated me. Thou seest in this miniature the portrait of the adorable beauty, who is the cause of my misfortune. Go straightway to the gallery; notice the spot on which the sun's rays most brightly fall; search, and thou wilt discover my treasure." The hand then ceased to move. The Prince put several questions to it, to which it returned no answer. "What shall I do with you?" he added. The hand made fresh signs, by which he understood that he was to replace it in the press. He did so, and shut up everything again; hid the ramrod in the wall where he had found it; and being now a little accustomed to prodigies, descended to the gallery.

On his entrance the windows began to clatter and make an extraordinary movement. He looked for the spot where the rays of the sun fell brightest; he perceived it was upon the portrait of a youth, so handsome and with so majestic an air that he stood enchanted by it. On lifting the picture, he found the wainscot of ebony with mouldings of gold, as throughout the rest of the gallery. He knew not how to remove it, or whether he ought to do so. He consulted the windows; he saw that the wainscot lifted up. He immediately raised it, and found himself in a vestibule all of porphyry, ornamented with statues. He ascended a large staircase of agate, the balustrade of which was inlaid with gold. He entered a saloon of lapis lazuli, and traversing numberless apartments, in which he was enraptured by the excellence of the paintings and the richness of the furniture, he arrived at last at a little chamber, of which all the ornaments were composed of turquoises, and he saw on a bed of blue and gold gauze a lady, who appeared sleeping. She was of incomparable beauty; her tresses, blacker than ebony, set off the whiteness of her skin. She seemed to be uneasy in her slumbers. Her features had an air of melancholy in them, and like those of an invalid.

The Prince, fearing to wake her, approached softly. He heard her speaking, and listening with great attention to her words, he caught these few sentences, broken by sighs: “Dost thou imagine, perfidious one, that I can love thee, when thou hast separated me from my beloved Trasimene? — What! before my eyes thou hast dared divide a hand so dear, from an arm which must ever be dreaded by thee! Is it by such arts thou pretendest to prove to me thy respect and thy affection? Ah, Trasimene, my dear lover! must I never see thee more?” The Prince observed that the tears found a passage through her closed lids, and trickling down her cheeks resembled those shed by Aurora.

He remained as if immovable at the foot of the bed, not knowing whether he ought to wake her, or leave her still longer in so sad a slumber. It was already clear to him that Trasimene was her lover, and that he had found his hand in the donjon. A thousand confused thoughts were passing through his brain upon so many different subjects, when he heard a charming melody. It was formed by the voices of nightingales and canary birds, who sang with such perfect harmony that they surpassed the most agreeable vocalists. At the same instant an Eagle of extraordinary size entered the apartment. He flew gently, holding in his talons a golden branch laden with rubies, in bunches like cherries. He fixed his eyes steadily on the lovely sleeper. He appeared to gaze on her as though she was the sun, and spreading his great wings hovered before her, now rising, now sinking almost at her feet.

After some few moments, he turned towards the Prince and approached him, placing in his hand the golden branch with its ruby cherries. The singing birds raised their voices till the notes pierced the roof of the palace. The Prince interpreted with so much judgment the various incidents which succeeded each other, that he concluded that the lady was enchanted, and that the honour of so glorious an adventure was reserved for him. He advanced towards her, bent one knee to the ground, touched her with the branch, and said, “Beautiful and charming creature, now sleeping under an influence which is unknown to me, I conjure you, in the name of Trasimene, to resume all those faculties which you appear to have been deprived of.” The lady opened her eyes, perceived the Eagle, and exclaimed, “Stay, dear lover, stay!” But the royal bird uttered a piercing and sorrowful cry, and flew away with his little feathered musicians.

The lady turning, at the same time, towards Torticoli, said to him, “I obeyed the impulse of love before that of gratitude. I am aware that I owe everything to you, and that you have restored me to the light of heaven, which I have been deprived of for two hundred years. The Enchanter who loved me, and has made me suffer so many ills, has reserved for you this great adventure. I have the power to serve you, and passionately desire to do so. Let me know your wishes. I will use all the fairy power, which I possess in a sovereign degree, to render you happy.” “Madam,” replied the Prince, “if your science enables you to penetrate the secrets of the heart, it is easy for you to know that, notwithstanding the misfortunes which overwhelm me, I am less to be pitied than many others.” “That is owing to your good sense,” replied the Fairy; “but after all, do not permit me to incur the shame of ingratitude towards you. What do you desire? My power is unlimited. Ask anything.” “I desire,” replied Torticoli, “to restore to you the handsome Trasimene, for whom you so constantly sigh.” “You are too generous,” said the lady, “to prefer my interests to your own. That great work must be achieved by another person. I cannot explain further; know, only, that that person will not be indifferent to you. But do not longer deny me the pleasure of obliging you. What do you desire?” “Madam,” said the Prince, flinging himself at her feet, “you behold my frightful figure. They call me, in derision, Torticoli. Render me less ridiculous!” “Go, Prince,” said the Fairy, touching him three times with the golden branch; “go, thou shalt be so accomplished and so perfect, that never man before or after this shall be counted thine equal. Henceforth be called Sans-pair; thou wilt be justly entitled to that name."

The grateful Prince embraced her knees, and, by a silence which testified his joy, he left her to guess what was passing in his soul. She compelled him to rise. He gazed at himself in the mirrors with which the chamber was adorned, and Sans-pair could not recognise Torticoli. He was three feet taller; his hair fell in large curls upon his shoulders; his mien was full of grace and dignity; his features were regular; his eyes sparkled with intelligence; in short, it was a transformation worthy of a beneficent and grateful Fairy.

"Why am I not permitted," said she, "to reveal to you your destiny? to warn you of the shoals Fortune will put in your path! to teach you the means of avoiding them! What gratification it would be to me, to add that benefit to the one I have just conferred on you! But I should offend the superior genius that guides you. Away, Prince; fly from this tower, and remember that the Fairy Benigne will always be your friend." At these words the Fairy, the palace, and all the wonders the Prince had seen in it, disappeared. He found himself in a dense forest, more than a hundred leagues from the tower in which the King, his father, had confined him.

Let us leave him to recover from his natural astonishment, and look back to see, first, what is passing amongst the guards which his father had placed around his person, and secondly, what happens to the Princess Trognon. The poor warders, surprised that their Prince did not call for his supper, entered his chamber, and not finding him, searched for him everywhere, in great fear that he had escaped. Their labour being in vain, they were in despair, for they made sure that the King, who was so terrible a tyrant, would put them to death; and after thinking over all the expedients likely to appease him, they decided that one of them should go to bed, and not allow himself to be seen; that they should say that the Prince was very ill; that, shortly afterwards, they should pretend that he was dead; and that the burial of a log of wood would get them out of the scrape. This remedy appeared to them infallible, and they immediately began to put their plan into execution. The smallest of the guards was dressed up with a great hump, and put in the Prince’s bed. The King was informed that his son was very ill. He thought it was only said to move his compassion, and he determined not to relax in the least his severity. This was exactly what the trembling warders wished for, and the more they said on the subject, the more indifference to it was manifested by the King.

As for the Princess Trognon, she arrived in a little machine which was only a cubit in height, and carried in a litter. King Brun went to meet her. When he saw her so deformed, seated in a bowl, her skin covered with scales like that of a cod-fish, her eyebrows meeting, her nose large and flat, and her mouth reaching to her ears, he could not forbear saying, “Truly, Princess Trognon, it becomes you to despise my Torticoli. Know that he is very ugly; but to speak the truth, he is less so than you.” “My liege,” said the Princess, “I am not vain enough to be offended at the rudeness of your speech. I do not know that it may not be, in your opinion, a sure mode of persuading me to love your charming Torticoli; but I declare to you, notwithstanding my miserable bowl, and the defects I am full of, that I will not marry him, and that I prefer the title of Princess Trognon to that of Queen Torticoli.”

The King’s anger was exceedingly heated by this answer. “I tell you plainly,” said he, “I will not be contradicted. The king, your father, should be your master, and I have become so, now that he has placed you in my hands.” “There are matters,” answered the Princess, “in which we have the power to choose. I warn you that I have been brought hither against my will, and that I shall look on you as my most mortal enemy, if you attempt to force me into this marriage.” The King, still more irritated, left her; and assigned to her an apartment in his palace with ladies to attend her, who were commanded to persuade her that the best thing she could do was to marry the Prince.

In the meanwhile the guards, who feared being discovered, and that the King might learn his son had escaped, made haste to tell him that he was dead. At these tidings he was afflicted to a degree they could never have believed of him. He screamed, he howled, and looking upon Trognon as the cause of the loss he had sustained, he sent her to the tower, in the place of his dear departed.

The poor Princess was as full of grief as astonishment at finding herself a prisoner. She was courageous, and commented, as she was justified in doing, on so harsh a proceeding. She imagined they would repeat her words to the King, but nobody dared to speak to him on the subject. She conceived, also, that she would be allowed to write to her father respecting the ill-usage she suffered, and that he would come and deliver her. Her projects on that score were useless; her letters were intercepted, and given to King Brun.

As she lived in that hope, however, she was less afflicted; and every day she went into the gallery to look at the painted windows. Nothing appeared to her so extraordinary as the number of subjects represented in them, and to see herself amongst them, in her bowl. “Since my arrival in this country,” said she, “the painters have taken a strange fancy to depict me. Are there not enough ridiculous figures without mine? or would they, by force of contrast, set off to greater advantage the beauty of that young shepherdess, who appears to me charming?” She then gazed on the portrait of a shepherd, which she could not sufficiently praise. “How much am I to be pitied,” said she, “degraded by nature to such an extent as I am! and how happy are those who are handsome!” In uttering these words, the tears came into her eyes; then, catching a glimpse of herself in a glass, she turned away suddenly; but was much astonished to see behind her a little old woman in a hood, who was half again as ugly as herself, and the bowl in which she pushed herself along had more than twenty holes in it, so much was it worn.

“Princess,” said this little old woman to her, “you may have your choice between virtue and beauty. Your complaints are so touching that I have listened to them. If you choose to be handsome, you will be a coquette, vain and very gay. If you choose to remain as you are, you will be virtuous, respected, and very humble.”

Trognon looked at the person who spoke to her, and asked her if beauty was incompatible with virtue.

“No,” replied the good woman; “but, in your case, it is decreed that you can only possess one of the two.” “Well, then,” exclaimed Trognon firmly, “I prefer my ugliness to beauty.” “How! you had rather frighten all those who look on you?” rejoined the old woman. “Yes, Madam,” said the Princess; “I would rather choose to suffer all the misfortunes in the world than want virtue.” “I brought with me, expressly for this purpose, my white and yellow muff,” said the Fairy. “By blowing on the yellow side, you will become like that admirable shepherdess, who appeared so charming to you, and you will be beloved by a shepherd whose portrait has more than once arrested your attention. By blowing on the white side, you can ensure your continuance in the path of virtue, which you have so courageously entered.” “Ah, Madam,” replied the Princess, “do not refuse me this favour. It will console me for all the contempt with which I am treated.”

The little old woman handed to her the muff of beauty and virtue. Trognon made no mistake about it. She blew upon the white side, and thanked the Fairy, who immediately disappeared.

The Princess was delighted at the good choice she had made; and whatever reason she had to envy the incomparable beauty of the shepherdess in the painted windows, she consoled herself with the thought that beauty passes like a dream; that virtue is a constant treasure, and an unfading charm, enduring longer than this life. She still hoped that the King her father would put himself at the head of a great army, and release her from the tower.

She awaited the moment to behold him with impatience, and she was dying to ascend to the keep of the tower to see the arrival of the succours she expected. But how could she manage to crawl up such a height? She moved about on the floor of her apartment slower than a tortoise, and, to ascend to any place, her women had to carry her.

Notwithstanding, she hit upon a rather peculiar plan: she knew that the clock was in the keep. She took off the weights, and put herself in their place. When they wound up the clock, she was hoisted up to the top. She looked eagerly out of the window that opened towards the country; but she saw nothing coming, and she retired from it to rest herself a little. In leaning against the wall that Torticoli, or, as we should now say, Prince Sans-pair, had pulled down and rebuilt but badly, the mortar fell out, and with it the golden ramrod, which made a tinkling sound as it fell near Trognon. She perceived it, and after having picked it up, examined it to ascertain its use. As she had more sense than people in general, she quickly concluded that it was made to open the press, which had no lock to it. She succeeded in doing so, and was not less enraptured than the Prince had been, at the sight of all the rare and elegant things she found in it. It contained four thousand drawers, all filled with ancient and modern jewels. At length she found the golden door, the box of carbuncle, and the hand swimming in blood. She shuddered, and would have cast it from her; but she had not the power to let it go, a secret influence prevented her. “Alas! what shall I do?” she cried, sorrowfully. “I had rather die than stay longer here with this amputated hand!” At that moment she heard a soft and sweet voice, which said to her, “Take courage, Princess; thy happiness depends upon this adventure.” “Oh! what can I do?” replied she, trembling. “Thou must bear that hand to thy chamber,” said the voice, “and hide it underneath thy bolster, and when thou seest an eagle, give it to him without losing an instant.” Terrified as the

Princess was, there was something in that voice so persuasive, that she did not hesitate to obey. She replaced the drawers and the curiosities as she had found them, without taking a single thing. Her guards, who feared that she had escaped in her turn, not having found her in her room, sought for her, and were struck with surprise at discovering her in a place to which they said she could not possibly have mounted except by enchantment. She passed three days without seeing anything particular. She did not dare to open the beautiful carbuncle box, for the sight of the amputated hand caused her too much alarm. At length, one night, she heard a noise at her window. She got up as well as she could, and, dragging herself across the room, opened the casement. The Eagle flew in, making a great noise with his wings to manifest his joy. She hastened to present him the hand, which he took in his talons, and the next moment she lost sight of him. In his place stood a young man, the handsomest and best made she had ever seen. His forehead was encircled by a diadem; his dress was covered with jewels. He held in his hand a miniature; and commencing the conversation, “Princess,” said he to Trognon, “for two hundred years a perfidious Enchanter has detained me here. We both of us loved the admirable Fairy, Benigne. I was accepted; he was jealous. His art surpassed mine, and determining to use it to my ruin, he commanded me, in an absolute tone, never to see her more. Such a prohibition suited neither my love nor my rank. I threatened him; and the fair one I adored was so offended at the behaviour of the Enchanter, that in her turn she forbade him ever to approach her. The cruel monster resolved to punish both of us.”

“One day that I was by her side, gazing with delight on a portrait she had given me, yet finding it a thousand times less beautiful than the original, the Enchanter appeared, and with one blow of his sabre cut my hand off at the wrist. The Fairy Benigne (so is my queen named) felt more keenly than myself the anguish of this wound. She sank insensible upon her couch, and immediately I found myself covered with feathers. I was transformed into an eagle. I was permitted to come daily to see the queen, without the power of approaching or awaking her; but I had the consolation of hearing her incessantly breathe tender sighs, and talk in her sleep of her dear Trasimene. I knew also that, at the expiration of two hundred years, a prince would restore Benigne to the light of day, and that a princess, by returning me my lost hand, would give me back my original form. A celebrated fairy, who interests herself in your glory, ordained that it should be so. It is she who so carefully locked up my hand in the press of the keep; it is she who has given me the power to prove to you this day my gratitude. Wish for anything, Princess, which can give you the greatest pleasure, and instantly you shall obtain it."

"Great King," replied Trognon, after some moments' silence, "if I have not answered you directly, it is not that I hesitate to do so; but that I confess I am unused to such surprising adventures as the present, and that I fancy it is rather a dream than a reality." "No, Madam," replied Trasimene, "it is not an illusion; you will experience the effects, as soon as you please to tell me what boon you desire." "If I asked for everything I should require to make me perfect," said she, "whatever may be your power, it would be difficult for you to satisfy me; but I will confine myself to the most essential. Make my mind as beautiful as my body is ugly and deformed." "Ah, Princess," exclaimed King Trasimene, "you delight me by so wise and noble a choice; but who is able to do that which is already accomplished? Your body, therefore, shall become as beautiful as your mind and soul." He touched the Princess with the miniature of the Fairy. She hears all her bones go crick crack — they lengthen — get into joint again; she rises, she is tall, handsome, straight; her skin is whiter than milk; all her features are regular; her air is majestic yet modest; her countenance intelligent and agreeable. "What a miracle!" she exclaimed. "Can this be me? Is it possible?" "Yes, Madam," replied Trasimene; "it is you. The wise choice you made of virtue has brought about the happy change you enjoy. What pleasure it is to me, after all I owe you, to think that I was destined to contribute to it! But quit for ever the name of Trognon; take that of Brilliante, to which your intellect and your charms entitle you.” At the same instant he disappeared, and the Princess, without knowing what coach she came by, found herself on the bank of a little river, beneath some shady trees, in the most agreeable spot on earth.

She had not yet seen her face. The water of the river was so clear that she discovered, to her extreme surprise, that she was the very shepherdess whose portrait she had admired so much in the windows of the gallery. In fact, like her, she had on a white dress trimmed with fine lace, neater than any shepherdess had ever been seen in. Her waist was encircled by a band of little roses and jasmine; her hair was adorned with flowers; she found near her a gilt and painted crook, with a flock of sheep that were feeding by the river side, and knew her voice, and even a sheep-dog who appeared to know her and fawned upon her.

What reflections did she not make upon these novel prodigies! She had been born and had lived up to that moment the ugliest of all created beings, but she was a princess. She became fairer than the day, and she was only a shepherdess. She could not help feeling a little the loss of her rank. These various thoughts agitated her till she slept. She had been awake all night, as I have already told you, and the journey she had taken, without being aware of it, was an hundred leagues, so that she felt a little tired. Her sheep and her dog, assembled beside her, seemed to take care of her, and to pay her the attentions she ought to have paid to them. The sun could not cause her any inconvenience, though it was in the full blaze of noon; for the tufted trees screened her from its scorching rays, and the fresh and delicate grass on which she had seated herself seemed proud of so beautiful a burthen. It was there

The gentle violets were seen
Emulating other flowers;
Peering above the herbage green,
To scatter incense round in showers.

The birds performed the sweetest concerts, and the Zephyrs held their breath, fearing to disturb her. A shepherd exhausted by the heat of the sun, having perceived from a distance this shady spot, hastened towards it; but, at the sight of the young Shepherdess Brilliante, he was so struck with astonishment that but for a tree, against which he supported himself, he must have fallen to the earth. In fact, he recognised in her the same being whose beauty he had admired in the windows of the gallery, and in the vellum pages of the illuminated manuscripts; for the reader will not doubt for a moment that this shepherd, was no other than Prince Sans-pair. An unknown power had retained him in this country. He had become the admiration of all who had seen him. His skill in all sorts of exercises, his good looks, and his intelligence, distinguished him no less amongst the other shepherds, than his rank would have done elsewhere.

He riveted his eyes upon Brilliante, with a curiosity and a pleasure which he had never felt before. He knelt beside her. He contemplated that assemblage of charms which rendered her perfection, and his heart was the first to pay that tribute to her beauty which none since had dared to refuse. Whilst he was in deep meditation, Brilliante awoke, and seeing Sans-pair near her in a very elegant shepherd’s dress, she gazed at him, and instantly remembered him, for she had seen his portrait in the tower. “Lovely shepherdess,” said he, “what happy fate has led you hither? You come, no doubt, to receive our worship and our vows! Ah, I feel already that I shall be the most eager to offer to you my homage.” “No, shepherd,” said she; “I do not presume to exact honours which are not due to me; I would remain a simple shepherdess. I love my flock and my dog. Solitude has charms for me, and I desire none other.” “How! young shepherdess, you have come hither with the design of concealing yourself from the mortals who inhabit these lands? Is it possible,” continued he, “that you would do us so much injury? — at least, make me an exception, as I am the first who has offered his service to you!” “No,” replied Brilliante, “I will not see you more frequently than the rest, notwithstanding that I already feel a particular esteem for you. But tell me where I shall find some respectable shepherdess with whom I may dwell, for being a stranger here, and of an age which will not permit me to live alone, I should be glad to place myself under her protection.” Sans-pair was enraptured at being entrusted with this commission. He conducted her to so neat a cottage, that it had a thousand charms in its simplicity. It was inhabited by a little old woman, who rarely crossed the threshold because she could hardly walk. “Here, my good mother,” said Sans-pair, presenting Brilliante to her, “here is an incomparable maiden, whose appearance alone will make you young again.” The old woman embraced her, and told her, with an affable air, that she was welcome, that she regretted she had so poor a lodging to offer her, but that at least she should occupy a good place in her heart. “I did not think,” said Brilliante, “to find here so favourable a reception, and so much politeness; I assure you, my good mother, that I am delighted to be with you. Do not refuse,” continued she, addressing the shepherd, “to tell me your name, that I may know to whom I owe this service.” “They call me Sans-pair,” replied the Prince, “but now I will have no other name than that of your slave.” “And I,” said the little old woman, “I wish also to know the name of the shepherdess to whom I offer hospitality.” The Princess told her she was called Brilliante. The old woman seemed charmed with so lovely a name, and Sans-pair said a hundred pretty things about it. The old shepherdess, fearing that Brilliante was hungry, set before her a very clean bowl full of new milk with brown bread, new-laid eggs, fresh butter, and a cream cheese. Sans-pair ran to his cottage, and brought from it strawberries, nuts, cherries, and other fruits; and in order to stay longer with Brilliante, he asked permission to eat his dinner with her. Alas, how difficult it would have been for her to have refused him! She had great pleasure in beholding him, and whatever coldness she affected, she was well aware that his presence was not indifferent to her.

After he left her, she thought about him for a long time, and he of her. He saw her every day; he led his flock to the spot where she fed her own; he sang beside her the most passionate songs; he played on the flute and the bagpipe while she danced; and she displayed such grace, and kept such perfect time, that he could not sufficiently admire her. Each in their own minds reflected on the surprising chain of adventures which had occurred to them, and each became restless. Sans-pair followed her, assiduously, everywhere —

In short, whene'er he found the maid alone,
So well he painted all the rapture known
By two fond hearts in Cupid's bonds united,
That she discover'd shortly that the flame,
To which she scarcely dared to give a name,
By Love himself had certainly been lighted.
And seeing all the danger that she ran, —
An innocent and unprotected creature, —
She carefully avoided the dear man,
Although it sadly went against her nature;
In secret, too, her heart would oft implore her
To pity so respectful an adorer.
Sans-pair, who could not for his life make out
What caused the change he'd not been told a word of,

Sought her, in vain, to satisfy his doubt:
Brilliante was never to be seen or heard of.

She avoided him carefully, reproaching herself unceasingly with the sentiments she cherished for him. “What!” said she, “I have the misfortune to love! — and to love a miserable shepherd! What a destiny is mine! I preferred virtue to beauty. It appears that Heaven, to reward me for that choice, thought fit to render me handsome: but how unfortunate I consider myself in having become so! But for these idle charms, the shepherd I shun would not have striven to please me, and I should have escaped the shame of blushing at the sentiments I entertain for him!” These sad reflections always ended in tears, and her pain was increased by the state to which she reduced her amiable shepherd. He was, on his part, overwhelmed with affliction. He was tempted to declare to Brilliante the greatness of his birth, in the hope that a feeling of vanity might induce her to listen to him more favourably.

But he persuaded himself that she would not believe him, and that if she demanded a proof of what he asserted, he was not in a position to give her one. “How cruel is my fate!” he exclaimed: “hideous as I was, I must have succeeded to my father. A great kingdom makes up for many defects. It would be useless for me now to present myself to him or to his subjects; there is not one amongst them who could recognise me! and all the good the Fairy Benigne has done me, in taking from me my name and my ugliness, consists in having made me a shepherd, and the slave of an inexorable shepherdess, who cannot abide me! — Barbarous Fortune!” said he, sighing, “become more propitious to me, or restore my deformity together with my previous indifference!”

Such were the sad lamentations which the lover and his mistress indulged in, unknown to each other. But, as Brilliante persisted in avoiding

Sans-pair, one day, having determined to speak to her, and wishing to find an excuse which would not offend her, he took a little lamb and adorned it with ribands and flowers, and put round its neck a collar of painted straw, so neatly made that it was a sort of *chef-d'œuvre*. He was himself attired in a dress of rose-coloured taffety covered with English point, and carried a crook adorned with ribands and a small basket; and thus equipped, no Celadon in the world had dared to appear before him. He found Brilliante seated on the banks of a rivulet, which flowed gently through the thickest part of the wood. Her sheep were scattered about, browsing. The deep melancholy of the shepherdess prevented her attending to them. Sans-pair accosted her with a timid air. He presented to her the little lamb, and gazing on her tenderly — "What have I done, beautiful shepherdess," said he, "to deserve such terrible proofs of your aversion? You are angry with your eyes for the least look they bestow on me! — for my passion so offends you, that you must fly me. Can you desire one more pure or more faithful? Have not my words and actions been always marked by respect as well as ardour? But, no doubt, your affections are placed elsewhere; your heart is prepossessed in favour of another." She replied to him immediately: —

SHEPHERD, if I shun your view,
Should that give alarm to you?
By my flight you sure can tell
I but fear to love too well.
Were my absence caused by hate,
Would my anguish be as great?
Reason would from hence enforce me —
Love from reason would divorce me.
Even now my fluttering heart
Fails me when I should depart.

Oh, when love becomes extreme,
Stern, indeed, doth duty seem;
And how slowly do we move,
When we fly from those we love!
But, adieu! I must away,
Shepherd, from this fatal spot.
Die without you soon I may,
But, if you love me, follow not!

As she said this, Brilliante left him. The amorous and despairing Prince would have followed her, but his grief became so violent that he fell insensible at the foot of a tree.

Ah, severe and too cruel virtue! why should you fear a man who has cherished you from his earliest infancy? He is not capable of misunderstanding you, and his passion is perfectly innocent. But the Princess doubted herself as much as him; she could not help doing justice to the merits of that charming shepherd, and she was well aware that it is necessary to avoid that which appears to us too agreeable.

Never had any one undertaken such a task as she undertook at that moment. She tore herself away from the most tender and best beloved object she had ever seen in her life! She could not resist looking back several times, to see if he followed her. She saw him fall half dead! She loved him, and denied herself the consolation of recovering him. When she reached the open plain, she lifted up her eyes pitifully, and folding her arms, exclaimed, “O Virtue! O Glory! Grandeur! I sacrifice to you my happiness! Destiny! O Trasimene! I renounce my fatal beauty! — Give me back my ugliness, or restore to me the lover I abandon, without a cause to blush at my choice!” After uttering these words, she stood, uncertain whether or not she should retrace her steps. Her heart prompted her to re-enter the wood in which she had left Sans-pair: but her virtue triumphed over her affection. She took the noble resolution never again to behold him.

Since she had been transported to this spot, she had heard talk of a celebrated Enchanter, who lived in a castle which he and his sister had built on the shore of the island. There was nothing spoken of but their science. Every day produced some new wonder. She thought nothing less than magic power could efface from her heart the image of the charming shepherd; and, without saying anything to her charitable hostess, who had received and treated her like a daughter, she set out on her road so absorbed by her sorrow, that she never reflected on the peril she ran, a young and beautiful girl travelling all alone. She rested neither day nor night, she neither eat nor drank — she was so anxious to reach the castle, and be cured of her love. But in passing through a wood, she heard some one singing. She thought she distinguished her own name, and recognised the voice of one of her companions. She stopped to listen, and caught these words: —

Sans-pair, of all the village swains
The handsomest in form and feature,
Wore of a shepherdess the chains,
Brilliante by name as well as nature;
By every gentle art he sought
To move to pity his enslaver;
But the poor innocent knew nought
Of love, despite the hints he gave her.

Still in his absence she would sigh,
As though of peace fate had bereft her;
It wasn't often, by-the-bye,

Because he scarcely ever left her.
Stretched on the green turf at her feet,
He sang and piped in rustic fashion:
The maiden own’d his piping sweet,
And caught the air, if not the passion.

“Ah, this is too much!” exclaimed Brilliante, bursting into tears. “Imprudent shepherd, thou hast boasted of the innocent favours I have accorded thee! Thou hast dared to suppose that my weak heart was influenced by thy passion more than by my own sense of duty. Thou hast made others the confidants of thy mistaken hopes, and art the cause of my being thus made the theme of idle songs throughout the woods and plains!” She was so exceedingly annoyed by this circumstance, that she believed she could look on Sans-pair with indifference, and perhaps with aversion. “It is unnecessary,” continued she, “for me to go further in search of remedies for my pain; I have nothing to fear from a shepherd in whom I see so little merit. I will return to the village in company with the shepherdess whose song I have been listening to.” She called to her as loudly as she could; but nobody answered her, and yet she heard the voice every now and then singing very near her. She became uneasy and alarmed; in fact, the wood belonged to the Enchanter, and nobody could pass through it without meeting with some adventure.

Brilliante, more bewildered than ever, hastened to make her way out of the wood. “Has the shepherd I feared become so little alarming to me that I should venture to see him again? Is it not rather that my heart, in league with him, attempts to deceive me? Oh, let me fly! let me fly! — It is the wiser course for a princess so unfortunate as I am!” She resumed her journey to the Enchanter’s castle, arrived at it, and entered without any obstacle. She traversed several large courts, so overgrown by grass and brambles, that it seemed as if no one had walked in them for a hundred years. She made a way through them with her hands, which got scratched in several places. She entered a hall, into which the light was admitted only through a small hole. The walls were hung with the wings of bats, a dozen live cats were dangling from the ceiling in lieu of chandeliers, squalling enough to drive you crazy; and on a long table were twelve large mice, fastened to it by their tails, each of which had in front of them a piece of bacon which they couldn’t reach; so that the cats saw the mice without being able to eat them, and the mice trembled at the cats, while they were famishing with a tempting piece of bacon before them.

The Princess was contemplating the torture of these animals, when she saw the Enchanter enter in a long black robe. He had on his head a crocodile by way of a cap, and never was there seen so horrible a head-dress. The old man wore spectacles, and carried a whip made of twenty long live serpents. Oh, how frightened the Princess was! — how she regretted at that moment her shepherd, her sheep, and her dog! She thought only of flight; and, without saying a word to this terrible man, she ran to the door: but it was covered with spiders’ webs. As soon as she had lifted one, she found another under it; and on lifting that, a third appeared; she lifted that, and saw a new one, under which was another; in short, these filthy *portières* of spiders’ webs were innumerable.

The poor Princess was worn out with fatigue; her arms were not strong enough to hold up these webs; she would have sat down on the floor to rest herself, but was quickly compelled to rise again by long sharp thorns that issued from it. She attempted again to escape, but still found one web under another. The wicked old man, who observed her, laughed till he was ready to choke himself. At length he called to her, and said, “Thou mayest pass the rest of thy life without succeeding in thy object. Thou seemest to me younger and more beautiful than the fairest I ever saw. If thou wilt marry me, I will give thee these twelve cats that thou seest hung up to the ceiling to do what thou wilt with, and these twelve mice that are on the table here shall be thine also. The cats are so many princes, and the mice as many princesses. The little rogues, at one time or another, had the honour to please me (for I have been always gay and gallant), but none would love me. These princes were my rivals, and more favoured than I was. Jealousy took possession of me; I found means to entice them hither; and as fast as I caught them, I transformed them into cats and mice. The most amusing part of the business is, that they hate, as much as they formerly loved, each other, and it would be scarcely possible to imagine a more complete vengeance." "Oh, my lord!" exclaimed Brilliante, "change me into a mouse; I deserve it no less than these poor princesses." "How! my little shepherdess," said the Magician, "wilt thou not then love me?" "I have resolved never to love," said she. "Oh, how silly thou art!" continued the Magician. "I will cherish thee marvellously; I will tell thee stories; I will give thee the most beautiful dresses in the world. Thou shalt never move but in a coach or a litter; thou wilt be called 'Madam!'" "I have resolved never to love," repeated the Princess." "Take care what thou sayest!" cried the Enchanter, angrily; "thou wilt repent it for many a long day!" "No matter," replied Brilliante; "I have resolved never to love." "Aha, thou too indifferent creature!" said he, touching her; "since thou wouldst be of a particular species, thou shalt for the future be neither flesh nor fish; thou shalt have neither blood nor bones. Thou shalt be green, because thou art still in thy greenest youth; thou shalt be agile and sprightly; thou shalt live in the fields, as thou hast done; and they shall call thee Grasshopper." At the same moment Princess Brilliante became the most beautiful grasshopper in the world, and availing herself of her liberty, skipped quickly into the garden. As soon as she was able to reflect on her situation, she exclaimed mournfully, "Oh, my bowl! my dear bowl! what has become of you? — Behold the result of your promises, Trasimene! This, then, is the fate which has been reserved for me so carefully these two hundred years! — a beauty as fleeting as that of the flowers of spring; and as a conclusion, a dress of green crape, a singular little form, which is neither flesh nor fish, and without blood or bones. I am very unfortunate! — Alas! a crown would have covered all my defects; I should have found a husband worthy of me; and if I had remained a shepherdess, the charming Sans-pair wished but for the possession of my heart! He is but too amply revenged for my unjust disdain. Here am I, a grasshopper! doomed to chirrup day and night, whilst my heart, full of bitterness, invites me to weep!" Thus soliloquized the grasshopper, hidden amongst the tender grass that fringed the borders of a rivulet.

But what was Prince Sans-pair doing, bereft of his adorable shepherdess? The cruel way in which she had left him afflicted him so deeply that he had not the power to follow her. Before he could join her he had swooned, and he remained a long time insensible at the foot of the tree where Brilliante saw him fall. At length the coolness of the ground, or some unknown power, brought him to himself: he did not dare to seek her that day at her own home, and revolving in his mind the words she had said to him,

WERE my absence caused by hate,
Would my anguish be as great?

HE DREW from them more flattering hopes, and trusted time and attention might win for him a little gratitude. But what were his feelings when, on going next day to the old shepherdess with whom Brilliante lodged, he heard that she had never been seen since the previous evening! He was ready to die with anxiety. He wandered away overwhelmed by a thousand conflicting thoughts. He seated himself sadly by the side of the river; he was tempted a hundred times to fling himself into it, and to end his misfortunes with his life. At length he took a bodkin, and scratched the following verses on the bark of a nettle-tree: —

Lovely fountain, river clear,
Smiling valley, fertile plain,
Scenes erewhile to me so dear,
Alas, ye but increase my pain!
The beauteous maid for whom I burn,
To whom your every charm ye owe,
Has left ye, never to return,
And me to weep for ever mo!
When Morning in the East appears,
She brings my spirit no relief;
No sun can dry my ceaseless tears,
No night in slumber lull my grief.
Forgive me, O thou gentle tree,
That on thy breast her name I grave;
How slight the wound to that which she,
The cruel one, my bosom gave!
My steel thy life untouch'd hath left —
Her cipher makes thee seem more fair;
But of his darling's sight bereft,
For death alone sighs poor Sans-pair.

He could not write any more, being accosted by a little old woman, who had a ruff round her neck, and wore a farthingale, a roll under her white hair, and a velvet hood. Her ancient appearance had something venerable in it. “My son,” said she to him, “your lamentations are very grievous. I beg you to let me know the cause.” “Alas, good mother!” answered Sans-pair, “I deplore the absence of a lovely shepherdess who flies me. I have resolved to search through all the world until I find her.” “Go in that direction, my child,” said the old woman to him, pointing towards the castle where poor Brilliante had become a grasshopper; “I have a presentiment that you will not seek her long.” Sans-pair thanked her, and prayed the god of love to befriend him.

The Prince met with no adventure on the road of sufficient consequence to detain him; but, on reaching the wood close to the castle of the Magician and his sister, he thought he saw his shepherdess, and hastened to follow her. She glided away from him. “Brilliante!” he cried, “adorable Brilliante! — stay one instant! — deign to listen to me!” The phantom flitted still faster, and in its pursuit he passed the remainder of the day. When night came on, he saw a great many lights in the castle; he flattered himself his shepherdess might be there. He ran towards it, and entered without any difficulty. He ascended a staircase, and saw, in a magnificent saloon, a tall old Fairy, horribly thin; her eyes resembled two burnt-out lamps; you could see through her jaws. Her arms were like laths, her fingers like knitting-needles, a skin of black shagreen covered her skeleton; yet with all this she wore rouge and patches, pink and green ribands, a mantle of silver brocade, a crown of diamonds on her head, and a profusion of jewels all about her.

“At last, Prince,” said she to him, “you have arrived, where I have long wished to see you. Think no more of your little shepherdess; a passion for one so much your inferior should make you blush. I am the Queen of Meteors. I am your friend, and can be of infinite service to you if you love me.” “Love you!” exclaimed the Prince, looking at her contemptuously; “love you, Madam! — Am I master of my heart? No; I will never be unfaithful; and I feel that even could I change, it is not you who would ever be the object of my affections. Choose amongst your meteors some influence which may suit you. Love the air, — love the winds, — and leave mortals in peace.”

The Fairy was fierce and passionate; with two blows of her wand she filled the gallery with frightful monsters, against whom the Prince was obliged to exert all his skill and courage. Some had several heads and arms, others the forms of centaurs and syrens. There were lions with human faces, sphinxes, and flying dragons. Sans-pair had only his crook and a small boar-spear, that he had armed himself with when he set out on his journey. The tall Fairy interrupted the combat every now and then, and demanded whether he would love her. His answer was always, that he had sworn to be faithful, and could not change.

Provoked by his firmness, she conjured up the form of Brilliante. “‘Tis well!” said she to him; “thou seest thy mistress at the end of this gallery. Think on what thou art about to do. If thou refusest to marry me, she shall be torn to pieces by tigers before your eyes!” “Ah, Madam,” cried the Prince, flinging himself at her feet, “I will die with pleasure to save my beloved mistress! Spare her life, and take mine!” — “I want not thy life, traitor,” said the Fairy; “it is thy heart and thy hand I demand.” Whilst they disputed, the Prince heard the voice of his shepherdess complaining, “Would you let me be devoured?” she asked him. “If you love me, resolve to do as the queen commands you.”

The poor Prince hesitated. “Have you then abandoned me, Benigne,” he exclaimed, “after all your promises? — Come, oh, come to our aid!” He had scarcely spoken, when he heard a voice in the air which pronounced distinctly these words: —

“Leave all to Fate: but be constant, and seek the Golden Branch.”

The tall Fairy, who had made sure of victory through the assistance of so many illusions, was ready to go mad at finding so formidable an obstacle in her path as the protection of Benigne. “Fly my presence!” she exclaimed, “wretched and obstinate Prince! — as thy heart is so full of flame, thou shalt be a cricket that is fond of heat and fire!”

On the instant, the marvellously handsome Prince Sans-pair became a little dingy cricket, who would have burned himself alive in the nearest fireplace or oven, had he not remembered the friendly voice that had encouraged him. “I must seek the Golden Branch,” said he; “perhaps that will uncricket me. Ah! if I find my shepherdess there, what will be wanting to my happiness?”

The cricket hastened to leave the fatal palace, and without knowing which way he should go, commended himself to the protection of the Fairy Benigne, and set off without ceremony or weapons, for a cricket fears neither robbers nor accidents. At his first resting-place, which was a hole in the trunk of a tree, he found a grasshopper, so very melancholy she could not sing. The cricket, never imagining that she was a reasoning and intellectual creature, said to her, “Where art thou bound to, neighbour grasshopper?” “And you, neighbour cricket, where are you going to?” she asked in her turn. This reply astonished greatly the enamoured cricket. “How!” said he; “can you speak?” “Why, you speak well enough,” cried she; “do you think a grasshopper has less right to talk than a cricket?” “I can talk,” said the cricket, “because I am a man.” “And by the same rule,” said the grasshopper, “I ought to talk more than you, because I’m a woman.” “You have then suffered a fate similar to mine?” said the cricket. “No doubt,” answered the grasshopper. “But, once more, whither go you?” rejoined the cricket; “I should be delighted to find we were likely to remain a long time together.” “I heard an unknown voice,” replied she, “in the air; it said, ‘Leave all to Fate, and seek the Golden Branch!’ I fancied this could only be addressed to me, and without pausing, set out on my journey, though I have no idea whither I should go.”

Their conversation was interrupted by two mice, who came running as fast as they could, and making for the hole at the foot of the tree, and flinging themselves in head foremost, nearly smothered neighbour cricket and neighbour grasshopper, who got out of their way as best they could, into a little corner. “Ah, Madam,” exclaimed the biggest mouse, “I have got a pain in my side with running so fast. How fares your highness?” — “I have pulled my tail off,” replied the younger mouse, “otherwise I must still have remained upon the old sorcerer’s table. But did you note how he pursued us? How happy are we to have escaped from his infernal palace!” — “I am rather afraid of the cats and the mousetraps, my princess,” continued the large mouse; “and I pray fervently that we may soon arrive at the Golden Branch.” “You know the road to it then?” said her mousefied highness. “Know it, Madam? — as well as I do that to my own house,” replied the other. “It is a wonderful branch; a single leaf of it is sufficient to make one rich for ever. It supplies you with money, it dispels enchantments, it gives beauty, and preserves youth. We must set out to-morrow before day-break.” “We will have the honour to accompany you, ladies,” said the grasshopper, “if you have no objection; I and an honest cricket whom you see here, for we as well as you are pilgrims to the Golden Branch.” A great many compliments immediately passed between them, for the mice were princesses, whom the wicked Enchanter had tied to his table, and the high breeding of the cricket and the grasshopper was always apparent whatever might be their situation. They all woke very early. They set out in solemn silence, for they were afraid some sportsman on the look out, hearing them speak, would catch them, and put them into a cage; and in due time they arrived at the Golden Branch. It was planted in the middle of a wonderful garden. The walks, in lieu of sand, were strown with small oriental pearls rounder than peas. The roses were crimson-coloured diamonds, and the leaves were emeralds; the blossoms of the pomegranates were garnets; the marigolds were topazes; the jonquils, yellow brilliants; and the violets, sapphires; the blue-bells, turquoises; the tulips, amethysts, opals, and diamonds. In short, the number and variety of these beautiful flowers dazzled more than the sun.

Here, then, (as I have already told you,) was the Golden Branch, the same that Prince Sans-pair received from the Eagle, and with which he touched the Fairy Benigne when she was enchanted. It had grown as high as the highest trees around it, and was covered with rubies in the form of cherries. As soon as the cricket, the grasshopper, and the two mice approached it, they recovered their natural forms. What joy, what transports filled the breast of the fond Prince, at the sight of his beautiful shepherdess! He flung himself at her feet. He was about to express to her all he felt at so agreeable and unhoped-for a surprise, when Queen Benigne and King Trasimene appeared in matchless pomp, for everything corresponded with the magnificence of the garden. Four cupids, armed *cap-à-pié*, with bows at their sides, and quivers on their shoulders, supported with their arrows a little canopy of gold and blue brocade, under which were seen two splendid crowns. “Hither, charming lovers!” said the Queen, extending her arms towards them; “come, and receive from our hands the crowns which your virtue, your birth, and your constancy deserve. Your toils are about to change for pleasures. Princess Brilliante,” continued she, “the shepherd, so alarming to your heart, is the very Prince who was destined for you by your father and his own. He did not die in the tower. Receive him as your husband, and leave to me the care of your happiness and tranquillity.” The Princess, delighted, flung herself into the arms of Benigne, and by the tears which flowed down her cheeks, proved to her that excess of joy had rendered her speechless. Sans-pair knelt before the generous Fairy, respectfully kissed her hands, and uttered a thousand unconnected sentences. Trasimene embraced him heartily; and Benigne, in a few words, informed them that she had hardly ever quitted them, — that it was she who had proposed to Brilliante to blow into the white and yellow muff, — that she had assumed the form of an old shepherdess in order to take the

Princess as a lodger, — and that it was she also who had directed the Prince which way he should go in search of his shepherdess. “It is true,” continued she, “that you have undergone sufferings which I would have spared you had it been in my power; but the pleasures of love must be bought at some cost.”

At this moment they heard some sweet music which floated around them. The cupids hastened to crown the young lovers; the marriage rites were performed; and during the ceremony, the two princesses, who had recovered their forms, implored the Fairy to exert her power to deliver the other unfortunate mice and cats who languished in despair in the Enchanter’s castle. “I can refuse you nothing on such a day as this,” answered the Fairy; so saying, she struck the Golden Branch three times, and all who had been confined in the castle appeared in their natural forms — each lover finding his mistress. The liberal Fairy, desirous that nothing should be wanting to the fête, gave the whole contents of the press in the keep to be divided amongst the company. The value of this present was more than that of ten kingdoms in those days. It is easy to imagine their satisfaction and gratitude. Benigne and Trasimene crowned this great work by a generosity which surpassed all that they had hitherto exhibited. They declared that the Palace and Garden of the Golden Branch should, for the future, be the property of King Sans-pair and Queen Brilliante. A hundred other sovereigns were their tributaries, and a hundred kingdoms their dependencies.

9

THE BEE AND THE ORANGE TREE

There was once upon a time a King and a Queen who wanted nothing to make them happy but children. The Queen was already aged; she had lost all hopes of having any — when she found herself likely to become a mother, and in due time brought into the world the most beautiful girl that was ever seen. Joy was extreme in the palace; each person was endeavouring to find a name for the Princess that would express their feeling towards her. At last they called her Aimée. The Queen had engraved upon a turquoise-heart the name of Aimée, daughter of the King of the Happy Island; she tied it round the Princess's neck, believing that the turquoise would bring her good fortune. But the rule failed in this case; for one day, when, to amuse the nurse, they took her out to sea in the finest summer weather, all at once there arose so tremendous a tempest that it was impossible to land, and as she was in a little boat, which was only used for pleasure trips close in-shore, it soon went to pieces. The nurse and all the sailors perished. The little Princess, who was sleeping in her cradle, remained floating upon the water, and was ultimately thrown by the waves on the coast of a very pretty country, but which was scarcely inhabited since the Ogre Ravagio and his wife Tourmentine had come to live there: they ate up everybody. The Ogres are terrible people: when once they have tasted fresh meat (it is thus they term human flesh), they will hardly ever eat anything else; and Tourmentine always found out some secret manner of attracting a victim, for she was half a fairy.

A league off she smelt the poor little Princess; she ran to the shore in search of her before Ravagio could find her. They were equally greedy, and never were seen such hideous figures, each with one squinting eye in the middle of the forehead, a mouth as large as that of an oven, a nose large and flat, long asses' ears, hair standing on end, and humps behind and before. When Tourmentine, however, saw Aimée in her rich cradle, wrapped in swaddling-clothes of gold brocade, playing with her little hands, her cheeks resembling the white rose mixed with the carnation, and her little vermilion smiling mouth half open, which seemed to smile at the horrid monster who came to devour her, the Ogress, touched with pity she had never felt before, resolved to nurse it, and if she did eat it, not to do so directly. She took the child in her arms, tied the cradle on her back, and in this manner she returned to her cave. "Look, Ravagio," said she to her husband, "here is some fresh meat, very plump, very tender; but, by my head! thou shalt not touch it with teeth, — it is a beautiful little girl. I shall bring it up, and we will marry her to our son; they will have some extraordinary little Ogres, and that will amuse us in our old age." — "Well said," replied Ravagio; "thou art wise, as thou art great. Let me look at the child — it seems wonderfully beautiful!" "Do not eat it!" said Tourmentine, putting the child in his great clutches. "No, no," said he: "I would rather die of hunger." Here, then, were Ravagio, Tourmentine, and the young Ogre, caressing Aimée in so tender a manner that it was miraculous.

But the poor child, who only saw these deformed creatures around her, and not her nurse, began to put up its lip, and then she cried lustily; Ravagio's cavern echoed with it. Tourmentine, fearing the noise would frighten her still more, took and carried her into the wood, her children following her. She had six — each one uglier than the other. She was half a fairy, as I have said before; her power consisted in a little ivory wand, which she held in her hand when she wished for anything. She took the wand then, and said, “I wish, in the name of the royal fairy, Trufio, that the most beautiful hind in our forests, gentle and tame, would leave its fawn, and come hither directly, and nurse this little creature that Fortune has sent me.” Immediately a hind appeared; the little Ogres welcomed her kindly; she drew near, and suckled the Princess. Tourmentine carried her back to her grotto; the hind ran skipping and gamboling after them, and the child looked at it and fondled it. When she was in her cradle and cried, the hind was always ready to feed her, and the little Ogre rocked her.

Thus was the King’s daughter brought up, while they deplored her loss night and day; and believing she was drowned, the King thought of choosing an heir. He spoke to the Queen upon the subject, who told him to do what he judged proper — that her dear Aimée was dead — that she had no hope of any more children — that he had waited long enough — and that, as fifteen years had elapsed since she had the misery of losing her daughter, it would be folly now to expect her return. The King decided upon asking his brother to select amongst his sons the one he thought most worthy to reign, and to send him without delay to him. The ambassadors, having received their credentials and all necessary instruction, departed. It was a great distance off; they were embarked on board some fine vessels. The wind was favourable, and they arrived in a short time at the palace of the King’s brother, who was in possession of a large kingdom. He received them very graciously; and when they asked him permission to take back with them one of his sons to succeed their master the King, he wept for joy; and told them that since his brother left the choice to him, he would send him the one he would have taken for himself; which was the second of his sons, whose inclinations were so well suited to the greatness of his birth, that he found him perfect in everything he could wish him to be. They sent for the Prince Aimé, (so was he called,) and however prejudiced in his favour the ambassadors were previously, they were perfectly astonished when they saw him. He was eighteen years old. Love, the young god of love himself, was less beautiful — but it was a beauty which detracted nothing from that noble and martial air which inspires respect and affection. He was informed of the anxiety of the King his uncle to have him near him; and of the intention of the King his father to hasten his departure. They prepared his equipage. He took his leave, embarked, and put to sea. Let him sail on; let Fortune guide him!

We will now return to Ravagio, and see what is occupying our young Princess. Her beauty increased with her age, and they might well say of her that Love, the Graces, and all the goddesses combined, never possessed so many charms. It appeared, when she was in the dark cavern with Ravagio, Tourmentine, and the young Ogres, that the sun, stars, and skies had descended into it. The cruelty of these monsters had the effect of making her still gentler; and from the moment she was aware of their terrible inclination for human flesh, she was always endeavouring to save the unfortunate people who fell into their hands, so much so that she often exposed herself to their fury. She would have been sacrificed to it had not the young Ogre guarded her like the apple of his eye. Ah! what will not love do? This little monster's nature had become softened by seeing and loving this beautiful Princess; but, alas! what was her grief when she thought she must marry this detestable lover! Although she knew nothing of her birth, she had rightly guessed from her rich clothes, the gold chain, and the turquoise, that she was of good birth, and she believed so still more from the feelings of her heart. She neither knew how to read or write, nor any language; she spoke the jargon of the Ogres; she lived in perfect ignorance of all worldly matters; she possessed, however, as fine principles of virtue, and as sweet and unaffected manners, as though she had been brought up in the most polished court in the universe. She had made herself a tiger-skin dress, her arms were half naked, she wore a quiver and arrows over her shoulder, and a bow at her side. Her fair hair was fastened only by a platted band of sea-rushes, and floated in the breeze over her neck and shoulders. She also wore buckskins, made of the same rush. In this attire, she walked about the woods like a second Diana; and she would never have known she was beautiful if the crystal fountains had not been innocent mirrors for her — which she gazed into without their inducing her to be vain, or think more of herself. The sun had a similar effect upon her complexion, as upon wax; it made it whiter, and the sea air could not tan it. She never ate anything but what she took in hunting or fishing, and under this pretext she often absented herself from the horrible cavern, to avoid looking at the most deformed objects in nature. “Heavens!” cried she, in shedding tears, “what have I done, that thou hast destined me to be the bride of this cruel little Ogre? Why didst thou not leave me to perish in the sea? Why didst thou preserve a life, that must be spent in this deplorable manner? Hast thou not some compassion for my grief?” She thus addressed the gods, and implored their aid.

When the weather was rough, and she thought the sea had cast some unfortunate persons on shore, she would carefully go and assist them, and prevent them from approaching the Ogres’ cavern. It had been blowing fearfully throughout one night: she arose as soon as it was day, and ran towards the sea. She perceived a man, who, with his arms locked round a plank, was trying to gain the shore, notwithstanding the violence of the waves, which continually repulsed him. The Princess was most anxious to help him; she made signs to him, to indicate the easiest landing places; but he neither saw nor heard her. Sometimes he came so close, that it appeared he had but one step to make, when a wave would cover him, and he disappeared. At last he was thrown upon the sand, and lay stretched on it without motion. Aimée drew near him, and, notwithstanding his death-like appearance, she rendered him all the assistance she could. She always carried about her certain herbs, the odour of which was so powerful, it recovered any one from the longest fainting-fit. She pressed them in her hands, and rubbed his lips and temples with some of them. He opened his eyes, and was so astonished at the beauty and the dress of the Princess, that he could hardly determine if it were a dream or reality. He spoke first; she spoke in her turn. They could not understand each other, and looked at one another with much attention, mingled with astonishment and pleasure. The Princess had only seen some poor fishermen that the Ogres had entrapped, and whom she had saved, as I have already said. What must she, then, have thought, when she saw the handsomest and best made man in the world, most magnificently dressed! It was, in short, the Prince Aimé, her cousin-german, whose fleet, driven by a tempest, had gone to pieces on these shoals, and their crews, at the mercy of the winds and waves, had perished, or been cast upon unknown shores. The young Prince, for his part, was astonished at seeing so beautiful a creature, in such savage attire, and in so deserted a country; and the remembrance of the princes and ladies he had so recently quitted, only served to convince him that the being he now beheld far surpassed them all. In this mutual astonishment they continued to talk, without being understood by each other; their looks and their actions being the sole interpreters of their thoughts: when, after some moments, the Princess suddenly recollecting to what danger this stranger was about to be exposed, the deepest melancholy and dejection became expressed in her countenance. The Prince, fearing she was about to faint, evinced great anxiety, and would have taken her hand, but she repulsed him, and endeavoured, as well as she could, to impress upon him that he must go away. She began to run before him; then returned, and made signs to him to do so. He accordingly ran from her, and returned. When he returned, she was angry with him; she took her arrows, and pointed them to her heart, to signify to him that he would be killed. He thought she wished to kill him; he knelt on one knee, and awaited the blow. When she saw that, she knew not what to do, or how to express herself; and, looking at him tenderly, “What,” said she, “must thou, then, be the victim of my frightful hosts? —

must these very eyes, which now gaze on thee with so much pleasure, see thee torn in pieces, and devoured without mercy?” She wept; and the Prince was quite at a loss to comprehend the meaning of her actions. She succeeded, however, in making him understand she did not wish him to follow her. She took him by the hand, and led him into a cave in a rock, the mouth of which opened towards the sea. It was very deep: she often went there to deplore her misfortunes; sometimes she slept there, when the sun was too powerful to return to the Ogres’ cavern; and, as she had great neatness and skill, she had furnished it with hangings of butterflies’ wings, of various colours; and upon canes, twisted and passed one within the other, which formed a sort of couch, she had spread a carpet of sea-rushes. She had placed clusters of flowers in large and deep shells, answering the purpose of vases, which she filled with water, to preserve her bouquets. There were a thousand pretty little things she had manufactured, some with fish-bones and shells, and others with the sea-rush and cane; and these articles, notwithstanding their simplicity, were so exquisitely made, it was easy to judge from them of the good taste and ingenuity of the Princess. The Prince was perfectly surprised at it all, and thought it was in this place that she lived. He was delighted to be there with her; and although he was not happy enough to make her understand the admiration with which she inspired him, it already appeared he preferred seeing and living near her, to all the crowns to which his birth and the will of his relations could call him. She made him sit down; and, to indicate that she wished him to remain till she could procure him something to eat, she unfastened the band from her hair, put it round the Prince’s arm, and tied him to the couch, and then left him. He was dying to follow her, but was afraid of displeasing her, and became lost in reflections, from which he had been diverted by the presence of the Princess. “Where am I?” said he. “Into what country has fortune led me? My vessels are lost, my people are drowned, and I have nothing left. Instead of the crown that was offered me, I find a gloomy rock, in which I seek a shelter. What will become of me here? What sort of people shall I find here? If I am to judge from the person who has assisted me, they are all divinities; but the fear she had that I should follow her — the rude and barbarous language which sounded so badly from her beautiful mouth, induces me to think something still more unfortunate will happen to me than has already occurred.” He then applied himself entirely to reviewing in his mind all the incomparable charms of the young savage: his heart was on fire; he became impatient that she did not return, and her absence appeared the greatest of all evils to him. She returned as quickly as she possibly could. She had thought of nothing but the Prince; and such tender feelings were so new to her, that she was not on her guard against that with which he was inspiring her. She thanked heaven for having saved him from the dangers of the sea, and she prayed it to preserve him from the peril he ran in being so near the Ogres. She was so excited, and she had walked so rapidly that when she arrived she felt rather oppressed by the heavy tiger’s skin which served as a mantle for her. She sat down; the Prince placed himself at her feet, much moved by her sufferings: he certainly was worse than she was. As soon as she recovered from her faintness, she displayed all the little dainties she had brought him; among others, four parrots and six squirrels, cooked by the sun; strawberries, cherries, raspberries, and other fruits. The plates were of cedar and eagle-wood, the knife of stone, the table-napkins of large leaves of trees, very soft and pliable; there was a shell to drink out of, and another filled with beautiful water. The Prince expressed his gratitude to her by all the signs he could of head and of hands, and she with a sweet smile made him understand that all he did was agreeable to her. But the hour of separation having arrived, she made him so perfectly understand that they must part, that they both began to sigh, and hid their tears from each other. She arose, and would have gone, but the Prince uttered a loud cry, and threw himself at her feet, begging her to remain. She saw clearly what he meant, but she repulsed him with a little air of severity; and he felt he must accustom himself by times to obey her.

To tell the truth he passed a miserable night; that of the Princess was not any better. When she returned to the cavern, and found herself surrounded by the Ogres and their children, — when she contemplated the frightful little Ogre, as the monster that would become her husband, and thought of the charms of the stranger she had just quitted, — she felt inclined to throw herself head foremost into the sea; — added to all this, the fear that Ravagio, or Tourmentine, would smell fresh meat, and that they would go straightway to the rock, and devour Prince Aimé.

These various fears kept her awake all night; she arose at daybreak, and went to the seashore; she ran, she flew there, laden with parrots, monkeys, and a bustard; fruits, milk, and everything of the best. The Prince had not taken off his clothes, he had suffered so much from fatigue at sea, and had slept so little, that towards the morning he had fallen into a doze. “What!” said she, in awaking him; “I have thought of you ever since I left you; I have not even closed my eyes, and you are able to sleep!” The Prince looked at her, and listened without understanding her. In his turn he spoke, “What joy, my darling,” said he to her, kissing her hands; “what joy it is to see you again! It appears an age since you left this rock.” He talked some time to her before he remembered she could not understand him; when he recollected it, he sighed heavily, and was silent. She then took up the conversation, and told him she was dreadfully alarmed that Ravagio and Tourmentine would discover him; that she dared not hope he could be in safety in the rock for any length of time; that if he went away she should die, but that she would sooner consent to that than expose him to be devoured; that she entreated him to fly. At this point tears filled her eyes; she clasped her hands before him in the most supplicating manner; he could not understand at all what she meant, he was in despair, and threw himself at her feet. At last she so frequently pointed out the way to him that he understood some of her signs, and he in his turn explained to her that he would rather die than leave her. She was so touched with this proof of the Prince's affection for her, that she took from her arm the chain of gold, with the turquoise heart, that the Queen, her mother, had hung round her neck, and tied it round his arm in the most gracious manner. Transported as he was by this favour, he failed not to perceive the characters engraved on the turquoise. He examined them attentively, and read, "Aimée, daughter of the King of the Happy Island." No astonishment could equal his; he knew that the little Princess who had perished was called Aimée; he had no doubt this heart belonged to her, but he was ignorant if this beautiful savage was the Princess, or whether the sea had thrown this trinket on the sands. He looked at Aimée with the most extraordinary attention, and the more he looked at her the more he discovered a certain family expression and features; and from the particular feelings at his heart, he felt convinced that the savage maiden must be his cousin. She was perfectly astonished at his actions, lifting his eyes to heaven in token of thanks, looking at her and weeping, taking her hands and kissing them vehemently; he thanked her for her generosity, and fastening the trinket again on her arm, signified to her he would rather have a lock of her hair, which he begged of her, and which he had much trouble in obtaining. Four days passed thus; the Princess carried him every morning the food he required. She remained with him as long as she possibly could, and the hours passed quickly away, although they could not converse together. One evening that she returned rather late, and expected to be scolded by the terrible Tourmentine, she was much surprised at being favourably received; and finding a table covered with fruits, she asked to be allowed to take some. Ravagio told her that they were intended for her; that the young Ogre had been gathering them, and that it was now time to make him happy; that three days hence he wished her to marry him. What tidings! Could there be any in the world more dreadful for this amiable Princess! She thought she should die of fright and grief; but, concealing her affliction, she replied she would obey them without repugnance, provided they would give her a little longer time. Ravagio became angry, and said, “What should prevent my instantly devouring you?” The poor Princess fainted with fear in the claws of Tourmentine and the young Ogre, who loved her dearly, and who entreated Ravagio so much that he appeased him. Aimée did not sleep an instant; she waited for daylight with impatience. As soon as it appeared, she flew to the rock, and when she saw the Prince she uttered sad cries, and shed rivers of tears. He remained almost motionless; his love for the beautiful Aimée had increased in four days, more than a common passion would have done in four years; he was dying to ask her what had happened. She knew he could not understand her, and could think of no mode of explanation. At last she untied her long hair — she put a wreath of flowers on her head, and taking Aimé’s hand, she made signs, expressing that they intended she was to do so with another. He comprehended the misery that was threatening him, and that they were going to marry her. He felt he should expire at her feet; he knew neither the roads, nor the means of saving her, nor did she. They shed tears together — looked at each other — and mutually signified it would be better to die together than to be separated. She stayed with him till the evening; but as night advanced sooner than they expected it, and being deep in thought, she did not attend to the paths she took; she entered a part of the wood very little frequented, and where a long thorn pierced her foot through and through: happily for her she was not far from the cavern. She had much trouble in reaching it — her foot was all over blood. Ravagio, Tourmentine, and the young Ogres, came to her assistance. She suffered great pain when they took out the thorn; they gathered herbs, and applied them to her foot; and she retired, very uneasy, as may be imagined, about her dear Prince. “Alas!” said she, “I shall not be able to walk to-morrow; what will he think, if he does not see me? I made him understand they intended marrying me; he will think I have not been able to prevent it; who will feed him?

However he may act, it will be death to him; if he come to seek me, he is lost; if I send one of the young Ogres to him, Ravagio will know of it.” She burst into tears; she sighed; and would rise early in the morning; but it was impossible for her to walk; her wound was too painful; and Tourmentine, who saw her creeping out, stopped her, and said if she took another step she would eat her.

In the meantime the Prince, finding her usual hour for being with him was passed, became distressed and frightened; the faster the time flew, the more his fears increased; all the punishments in the world would have appeared less terrible to him than the anxieties to which his love consigned him. He constrained himself to have patience, but the longer he waited, the less hope he had. At length he determined to die, and rushed out resolved at all risks to seek his amiable princess. He walked on, he knew not whither; he followed a beaten path that he saw at the entrance of the wood; after walking for about an hour, he heard a noise, and perceived the cavern, from whence came a thick smoke; he expected he should obtain some information there. He entered; and he had scarcely taken a step when he saw Ravagio, who, instantly seizing him with immense strength, would have devoured him, had not the cries he uttered in defending himself reached the ears of his dear love. At the sound of that voice she felt nothing could stop her; she rushed out of the hole she slept in, and entered that part of the cavern where Ravagio was holding the poor Prince; she was pale and trembling as though he would have eaten her. She threw herself upon her knees before him, and entreated him to keep this fresh meat for the day of her marriage with the young Ogre, and she herself would eat him. At these words Ravagio was so satisfied to think the Princess would follow their customs, that he let go the Prince, and shut him up in the hole where the young Ogres slept. Aimée begged to be allowed to feed him, that he might not get thin, and that he might do honour to the nuptial repast. The Ogre consented to it; she took the best of everything to the Prince. When he saw her enter his joy diminished his wretchedness, but his grief was renewed when she showed him her wounded foot. They wept together for some time. The Prince could not eat, but his dear mistress cut such delicate pieces with her own hands, and presented them to him with so much kindness, that it was impossible to refuse them. She made the young Ogres bring fresh moss, which she covered with birds' feathers, and caused the Prince to understand it was for his bed. Tourmentine called her; she could only bid adieu to him by stretching out her hand; he kissed it with transports of affection which cannot be described, and in her eyes he read the expression of her feelings. Ravagio, Tourmentine, and the Princess, slept in one of the recesses of the cavern. The young Ogre, and five little Ogres, slept in the other, where the Prince was. It is the custom in Ogreland, that the Ogre, Ogress, and the young Ogres, always sleep in their fine gold crowns. This is the only pomp they indulge in; and they would rather be hung or strangled than forego it. When they were all asleep, the Princess, who was thinking of her lover, remembered, that although Ravagio and Tourmentine had given her their word of honour they would not eat him; if they felt hungry in the night, (which was almost always the case when there was fresh meat near them,) it would be all over with him; and the anxiety occasioned by this horrid thought, wrought on her to such a degree, she was ready to die with fright. After pondering for some time, she arose, hastily threw on her tiger-skin, and groping her way without making any noise, she entered the cavern, where the little Ogres were asleep. She took the crown from the head of the first she came to, and put it upon that of the Prince, who was wide awake, but did not dare appear to be, not knowing who was performing this ceremony. The Princess then returned to her own little bed. She had scarcely crept into it, when Ravagio, dreaming of the good meal he might have made of the Prince, and his appetite increasing while he thought of it, arose in his turn, and went into the hole where the little Ogres were sleeping. As he could not distinctly see, fearing he should make a mistake, he felt about with his hand, and throwing himself upon the one who had no crown on, crunched him, as he would a chicken. The poor Princess, who heard the cracking of the bones of the unfortunate creature he was eating, was faint and dying with fear that it might be her lover; and the Prince, for his part, who was much nearer, was a prey to all the terrors consequent on such a situation. Morning relieved the Princess of her terrible anxiety; she quickly sought for the Prince, and by her signs, made him sufficiently understand her fears, and her impatience to see him safe from the murderous teeth of these monsters. She spoke kindly to him, and he would have uttered a thousand kinder words to her, but for the arrival of the Ogress, who came to look at her children. She perceived the cavern filled with blood, and missed her youngest Ogre. She uttered horrible shrieks. Ravagio soon found out what he had done — but the evil could not be remedied. He whispered to her, that being hungry, he had chosen the wrong, for he thought he had eaten the fresh meat.

Tourmentine pretended to be pacified, for Ravagio was cruel, and if she had not taken his apology in good part, he very likely would have devoured her. But, alas! how much the beautiful Princess suffered from anxiety! She was always thinking by what means she could save the Prince; and he could only think of the frightful place this amiable girl was living in. He could not make up his mind to go away so long as she was there — death would have been preferable to a separation. He made her understand this by repeated signs; — she implored him to fly, and save his own life; they shed tears, pressed each other's hands, and in their respective languages, vowed to each other reciprocal faith and everlasting love. She could not resist showing him the clothes she had on when Tourmentine found her, and also the cradle she was in. The Prince recognised the arms and device of the King of the Happy Island. At this sight he was in raptures; the Princess remarked his transports of joy, which led her to believe that he had learned something of importance from the sight of this cradle. She was dying to know what it meant — but how could he make her aware whose daughter she was, and how nearly they were related? All she could make out was, that she had great reason to rejoice. The hour for retiring was come, and they went to their beds as on the preceding night. The Princess, a prey to the same misgivings, got up quietly, went into the cavern where the Prince was, gently took the crown from one of the little Ogres, and put it on her lover's head, who dared not detain her, however desirous he was to do so. The respect he had for her, and the fear of displeasing her, prevented him. The Princess could not have done better than putting the crown upon Aimé's head. Without this precaution, he would have been lost. The barbarous Tourmentine started up out of her sleep, and thinking of the Prince, whom she considered more beautiful than the day, and very tempting food, she was so frightened that Ravagio would eat him by himself, that she thought she would be beforehand with him. She glided, without uttering a word, into the young Ogres' cavern; she gently touched those that had crowns on their head (the Prince was of the number), and one of the little Ogres was gone in three mouthsful. Aimé and his lady-love heard all, and trembled with fear; but Tourmentine, having accomplished her purpose, now only wanted to go to sleep; so they were safe for the remainder of the night. "Heaven aid us!" cried the Princess. "Suggest to me what we can do in such a pressing extremity!" The Prince prayed as fervently; sometimes he felt inclined to attack these two monsters, and fight with them; but what hope had he of obtaining any advantage over them? — they were as tall as giants, and their skin was proof against pistol-shot; so that he came to the more prudent conclusion, that ingenuity could alone extricate them from this frightful position. As soon as it was day, and Tourmentine found the bones of her little Ogre, she filled the air with fearful howls. Ravagio appeared in as much despair. They were a hundred times very nearly throwing themselves upon the Prince and Princess, and devouring them without mercy. They had hidden themselves in a little dark corner, but the cannibals knew full well where they were, and of all the perils they had encountered, this seemed the most imminent. Aimée, racking her brains, all at once remembered that the ivory wand which Tourmentine possessed performed wonders; why, she herself could not tell. “If, notwithstanding her ignorance,” said she, “these surprising things occur, why should not my words have as much effect?” Filled with this idea, she ran to the cavern in which Tourmentine slept; she looked for the wand, that was hidden in a hole; and as soon as she had it in her hand, she said — “I wish, in the name of the Royal Fairy Trufio, to speak the language of him I love!” She would have made many other wishes, but Ravagio entered — the Princess held her tongue, and putting back the wand, she very quietly returned to the Prince. “Dear stranger,” she said, “your troubles affect me much more than my own do!” At these words the Prince was struck with astonishment. “I understand you, adorable Princess!” said he; “you speak my language, and I hope that you, in your turn, understand that I suffer less for myself than for you; that you are dearer to me than my life, than the light of day, and all that is most beautiful in nature!” “My expressions are more simple,” replied the Princess, “but they are not the less sincere. I feel I would give everything in the rocky cavern on the sea-shore, — all my sheep, lambs, in short all I possess, for the pleasure of beholding you.”

The Prince thanked her a thousand times for her kindness, and begged her to tell him who had taught her in so short a time to speak, in so perfect a manner, a language till then unknown. She told him of the power of the enchanted wand, and he informed her of her birth, and their relation to each other. The Princess was transported with joy; and as nature had endowed her with extraordinary intellect, she expressed it in such choice and well-turned phrases, that the Prince was more in love with her than ever. They had not much time to lose in settling their affairs; it was a question of flight from these irritated monsters, and speedily to seek an asylum for themselves. They promised to love each other for ever; and to unite their destinies, the moment they were able to be married. The Princess told her lover, that as soon as she saw Ravagio and Tourmentine were asleep, she would fetch their great camel, and that they would get on it, and go wherever it pleased heaven to conduct them. The Prince was so delighted he could with difficulty contain his joy, and many things, that still alarmed him, were effaced by the charming prospect of the future. The night so long looked for arrived: the Princess took some meal, and kneaded it with her white hands, into a cake, in which she put a bean; then, she said, holding the ivory wand, "Oh, bean, little bean! I wish, in the name of the royal fairy, Trufio, that you may speak, if it be necessary, till you are baked." She put this cake in the hot cinders, and then went to the Prince, who was waiting most impatiently, in the miserable lodging belonging to the young Ogres. "Let us go," said she, "the camel is tethered in the wood." "May love and fortune guide us," replied the Prince, in a low voice. "Come, come, my Aimée; let us seek a happy and peaceful abode." It was moonlight; she had secured the ivory wand; they found the camel, and went on the road, not knowing whither. In the meantime Tourmentine, who was full of grief, kept turning about without being able to sleep; she put out her arm to feel if the Princess was in her bed yet; and not finding her, she cried out in a voice of thunder, "Where art thou, girl?" "I am near the fire," answered the bean. "Wilt thou come to bed?" said Tourmentine; "Directly," replied the bean; "go to sleep, go to sleep." Tourmentine fearing to wake Ravagio, ceased speaking; but in about two hours afterwards, she again felt in Aimée's little bed, and cried out, "What, thou little jade, thou wilt not come to bed?" "I am warming myself as much as I can," answered the bean. "I wish thou wast in the middle of the fire, for thy pains!" added the Ogress. "I am there," said the bean, "and none ever warmed themselves nearer." They still continued talking, for the bean kept up the conversation, like a very clever bean. Towards the morning, Tourmentine again called the Princess; but the bean was baked, and did not answer. This silence made her uneasy, — she got up very angry; looked about her; called; alarmed everybody; and searched in every direction. No Princess! no Prince! no little wand! She shrieked so loudly, that the rocks and valleys echoed again. “Wake up, my poppet; awake, dear Ravagio; thy Tourmentine is betrayed. Our fresh-meat has run away.” Ravagio opened his eye, and bounded into the middle of the cavern like a lion; he roared, he bellowed, he howled, he foamed. “Quick, quick; give me my seven-leagued boots, that I may pursue our fugitives; I will catch them, and swallow them before long.” He put on his boots, with which at one stride he went seven leagues. Alas! how was it possible to fly fast enough to escape from such a runner? You may be surprised that with the ivory wand they did not go faster than he did; but the beautiful Princess was a novice in Fairy art; she knew not all she could do with such a wand; and it was only in extreme cases that a sudden light broke upon her. Delighted at being together, at understanding each other, and by the hope of not being pursued, they travelled on; when the Princess, who was the first to perceive the terrible Ravagio, cried out, “Prince, we are lost! Behold that frightful monster, who is coming upon us like a thunder-bolt!” “What shall we do?” said the Prince, “What will become of us? Ah, if I were alone, I should not care for my life; but yours, my dear mistress, is threatened.” “I am hopeless, if the wand will not aid us,” added Aimée, weeping. “I wish,” said she, “in the name of the royal fairy, Trufio, that our camel may become a pond, that the Prince may be a boat, and myself an old woman, who is rowing it.” Immediately, the pond, the boat, and the old woman were there, and Ravagio arrived at the water’s edge. “Hola, ho! old mother,” he cried, “have you seen a camel, and a young man and woman, pass by here?” The old woman, who kept her boat in the middle of the pond, put her spectacles on her nose, and looking at Ravagio, made signs to him, that she had seen them, and that they had passed through the meadow. The Ogre believed her; he went to the left. The Princess wished to take her natural form; she touched herself with the wand three times, and struck the boat and the pond.

She and the Prince became young and beautiful again. They quickly mounted the camel, and turned to the right, that they might not meet their enemy.

While proceeding rapidly, and hoping to find some one who could tell them the road to the Happy Island, they lived upon the wild fruit of the country, they drank water from the fountains, and slept beneath the trees, not without fear that the wild beasts would come and devour them. But the Princess had her bow and arrows, with which she would have tried to defend herself. The danger was not so terrible to them as to prevent their feeling the liveliest pleasure in being released from the cavern, and finding themselves together. Since they had been able to understand, they had said the prettiest things in the world to each other. Love generally quickens the wit; but, in their case, they needed no such assistance, possessing naturally a thousand agreeable accomplishments, and an imagination ever suggesting new and original ideas.

The Prince testified to the Princess his extreme impatience to arrive speedily either at his or her royal father’s court, as she had promised, that with the consent of their parents, she would accept him as her husband. What you will have some difficulty perhaps in believing is, that while waiting for this happy day, and being with her in forests and solitudes, where he was at full liberty to make to her any proposals he pleased, he conducted himself in so respectful and prudent a manner, that never in the world has there been known to exist so much love and virtue together.

After Ravagio had scoured the mountains, forests, and plains, he returned to his cavern, where Tourmentine and the young Ogres impatiently awaited him. He was laden with five or six people who had unfortunately fallen into his clutches. “Well,” said Tourmentine, “hast thou found and eaten those runaways, those thieves, that fresh meat? Hast thou not saved for me either a hand or a foot of them?” “I believe they must have flown away,” replied Ravagio; “I ran like a wolf in all directions without meeting with them. I only saw an old woman in a boat upon a pond, who gave me some tidings of them.” “What did she tell thee, then?” impatiently inquired Tourmentine. “That they had gone to the left,” replied Ravagio. “By my head, thou hast been deceived,” said she: “I suspect it was to them thou didst speak. Go back; and if thou findest them, give them not a moment’s grace!” Ravagio greased his seven-leagued boots, and set out again like a madman. Our young lovers were issuing from a wood, in which they had passed the night. When they saw the Ogre they were both greatly alarmed. “My Aimée,” said the Prince, “here is our enemy; I feel I have courage enough to fight with him; have you not sufficient to escape, by yourself?” “No,” cried she, “I will never forsake you — unkind one; do you thus doubt my love for you? But let us not lose a moment; perhaps the wand may be of great service to us. I wish,” cried she, “in the name of the royal fairy, Trufio, that the Prince should be changed into a picture, the camel into a pillar, and myself into a dwarf.” The change was made; and the dwarf began to blow a horn. Ravagio, who approached with rapid strides, said, “Tell me, you little abortion of nature, if you have not seen a fine young man, a young girl, and a camel pass by here?” “Ah, I will tell you,” replied the dwarf; “I know that you are in quest of a gentle Damoiseau, a marvellously fair dame, and the beast they rode on. I espied them here yesterday at this, disporting themselves happily and joyously. The gentle Damoiseau received the praise and guerdon of the jousts and tournaments, which were held in honour of Merlusine, of whom you here behold the lovely resemblance. Many high-born gentlemen and good knights broke their lances here, on hauberks, helmets, and shields; the conflict was rough, and the guerdon, a most beautiful clasp of gold, richly beset with pearls and diamonds. On their departure, the unknown dame said to me, ‘Dwarf, my friend, without longer parley, I crave a boon of thee, in the name of thy fairest lady-love.’ ‘It will not be denied,’ said I to her; ‘and I grant it to you, on the sole condition, that it is in my power.’ ‘In case then,’ said she, ‘that thou shouldst espy the great and extraordinary giant, whose eye is in the middle of his forehead — pray him most courteously, that he go his way in peace, and leave us alone;' and, therewith, she whipped her palfrey, and they departed." "Which way?" said Ravagio. "By that verdant meadow, on the skirts of the wood," said the dwarf. "If thou liest," replied the Ogre, "be assured thou filthy little reptile, that I will eat thee, thy pillar, and thy portrait of Merluche." "There is no villainy or falsehood in me," said the dwarf; "my mouth is no lying one; living man cannot convict me of fraud. But go quickly, if you would kill them before the sun sets." The Ogre strode away. The dwarf resumed her own figure, and touched the portrait and the pillar, which also became themselves again. What joy for the lover and his mistress! "Never," said the Prince, "did I suffer such keen anxiety, my dear Aimée! as my love for you increases every moment, so are my fears augmented when you are in peril." "And I," said she, "seemed to have no fear; for Ravagio never eats pictures, and I was alone exposed to his fury. There was also little in my appearance that was palatable; and, in short, I risked my life to preserve yours."

Ravagio hunted in vain; he could neither find the lover nor his mistress. He was as tired as a dog; he retraced his steps to the cavern. "What! hast thou returned without our prisoners?" exclaimed Tourmentine, tearing her bristling hair. "Don't come near me, or I shall strangle thee!" "I saw nothing," said he, "but a dwarf, a pillar, and a picture." "By my head," continued she, "it was them! I was very foolish to leave my vengeance in thy hands, as though I were too little to undertake it myself. Here! here I go! I will put on the boots this time, and I shall not speed worse than thou." She put on the seven-leagued boots, and started. What chance have the Prince and Princess of travelling so quickly as to escape these monsters, with their accursed seven-leagued boots! They saw Tourmentime coming, dressed in a serpent's skin, the variegated colours of which were wonderful. She carried upon her shoulder a mace of iron, of a terrible weight; and as she looked carefully on all sides, she must have seen the Prince and Princess, had they not been at that moment in the thickest part of a wood. “The matter is hopeless,” said Aimée, weeping; “here comes the cruel Tourmentine, whose sight chills my blood: she is more cunning than Ravagio. If either of us speak to her, she will know us, and eat us up without more ado. Our trial will be soon over, as you may imagine.” “Love, Love, do not abandon us!” exclaimed the Prince. “Hast thou within thy empire fonder hearts or purer flames than ours? Ah, my dear Aimée,” continued he, taking her hands and kissing them fervently, “canst thou be destined to perish in so barbarous a manner?” “No,” said she, “no; I have a certain feeling of courage and firmness that reassures me. Come, little wand, do thy duty. I wish, in the name of the royal fairy, Trufio, that the camel should be a tub, that my dear prince should become a beautiful orange-tree, and that I, metamorphosed into a bee, should hover around him.” As usual, she struck three blows for each; and the change took place so suddenly, that Tourmentine, who had arrived on the spot, did not perceive it. The horrible fury was out of breath, and sat down under the orange-tree. The Princess Bee delighted in stinging her in a thousand places: and although her skin was so hard, the sting pierced it, and made her cry out. To see her roll and lay about her upon the grass, one would have thought her a bull, or a young lion, tormented by a swarm of insects; for this one was worth a hundred. The Prince Orange-tree was dying with fear that she would be caught and killed. At last, Tourmentine, covered with blood, made off; and the Princess was about to resume her own form, when, unluckily, some travellers passing through the wood, having perceived the ivory wand, which was a very pretty-looking thing, picked it up, and carried it away. Nothing could be much more unfortunate than this. The Prince and Princess had not lost their speech, but of how little use was it to them in their present condition! The Prince, overwhelmed with grief, uttered lamentations that greatly added to his dear Aimée’s distress. He would sometimes thus express himself: —

The moment was near, when my lovely Princess
Had promised my wishes to crown.
A hope so enchanting — of joy, such excess,
Defied of misfortune the frown!
O Love, who such wonders can work at thy will;
Who ruleth the world with thy dart;
Preserve my dear Bee from each peril, and still
Unchanged to the last keep her heart.

“How wretched am I,” continued he, “thus pent up within the bark of a tree. Here I am, an Orange-tree, without any power to move. “What will become of me, if you abandon me, my dear little Bee?” “But,” added he, “why will you go so far from me? You will find a most agreeable dew on my flowers, and drops in them sweeter than honey: you will be able to live on it. My leaves invite you to couch in them; there you will have nothing to fear from the malice of spiders!” As soon as the Orange-tree ceased its complaints, the Bee replied to him thus —

Fear not, Prince, that I should range;
Nought my faithful heart can change;
Let the only thought of thine,
Be that thou hast conquer’d mine.

She added to that — “Do not fear that I will ever leave you. Neither the lilies, nor the jasmines, nor the roses, nor all the flowers of the most beautiful gardens, would induce me to commit so much infidelity. You shall see me continually flying around you, and you will know that the Orange-tree is not less dear to the Bee than Prince Aimé was to the Princess Aimée.” In short, she shut herself up in one of the largest flowers, as in a palace; and true love, which is never without its consolations, found some even in this union.

The wood in which the Orange-tree was situated was the favourite promenade of a princess who lived hard by in a magnificent palace. She was young, beautiful, and witty: they called her Linda. She would not marry, because she feared she should not be always loved by the person she might choose for a husband; and as she was very wealthy, she built a sumptuous castle, and received there only ladies, and old men (more philosophers than gallants), permitting no young cavalier to approach it. The heat of the day having detained her a longer time than she wished in her apartments, she went out in the evening, with all her ladies, and came to walk in the wood. The perfume from the Orange-tree surprised her; she had never seen one, and she was charmed to have found it. She could not understand by what chance she had met with it in such a place. It was soon surrounded by all the company. Linda forbade any one to pick a single flower, and they carried the tree into her garden, whither the faithful Bee followed it. Linda, enchanted with its delicious odour, seated herself beneath it. Before returning to the palace, she was about to gather a few of the blossoms, when the vigilant Bee sallied out humming under the leaves, where she remained as sentinel, and stung the princess so severely, that she very nearly fainted. There was an end of depriving the Orange-tree of its blossoms; Linda returned to her palace, quite ill. When the Prince was at liberty to speak to Aimée, “What made you so vexed with young Linda, my dear Bee?” said he to her; “you have stung her cruelly.” “Can you ask me such a question?” replied she. “Have you not sufficient delicacy to understand that you ought not to have any sweets but for me; that all that is yours belongs to me, and that I defend my property when I defend your blossoms?” “But,” said he, “you see them fall without being distressed:

would it not be the same to you if the princess adorned herself with them — if she placed them in her hair, or put them in her bosom?” “No,” said the Bee, in a sharp tone, “it is not at all the same thing to me. I know, ungrateful one, that you feel more for her than you do for me. There is also a great difference between an accomplished person, richly dressed, and of considerable rank in these parts, and an unfortunate princess, whom you found covered with a tigers skin, surrounded by monsters who could only give her coarse and barbarous ideas, and whose beauty is not great enough to enslave you.” And then she cried, as much as any bee is able to cry. Some of the flowers of the enamoured Orange-tree were wetted by her tears, and his distress at having vexed his princess was so great that all his leaves turned yellow, several branches withered, and he thought he should die. “What have I done, then,” exclaimed he, “my beautiful Bee? What have I done to make you so angry? Ah! doubtless, you will abandon me. You are already weary of being linked to one so unfortunate as I am.” The night was passed in reproaches; but at the break of day a kind Zephyr, who had been listening to them, induced them to be reconciled; it could not render them a greater service. In the meantime, Linda, who was dying to have a bouquet of orange-flowers, arose early in the morning, descended to her flower-garden, and flew to gather one. But when she put forth her hand, she felt herself so violently stung by the jealous Bee, that her heart failed her. She returned to her room in a very bad temper. “I cannot make out,” said she, “what this tree is that we have found; for whenever I wish to take the smallest bud, some insects that guard it pierce me with their stings.” One of her maids, who had some wit, and was very lively, said, laughingly: “I would advise you, Madam, to arm yourself as an Amazon, and follow Jason’s example, when he went to win the golden fleece, and courageously take the most beautiful flowers from this pretty tree.” Linda thought there was something amusing in this idea, and immediately she ordered them to make her a helmet covered with feathers, a light cuirass, and gauntlets; and to the sound of trumpets, kettle-drums, fifes, and hautbois, she entered the garden, followed by all her ladies, who were armed like herself, and who called this fête “the Battle of the Bees and Amazons.” Linda drew her sword very gracefully; then, striking the most beautiful branch of the Orange-tree, said: “Appear, terrible Bees, appear! I come to defy you! Are you sufficiently valiant to defend that which you love?” But what became of Linda, and all who accompanied her, when they heard a pitiful “Alas!” issue from the stem of the Orange-tree, and saw that blood flowed from the severed branch? “Heavens!” cried she, I what have I done? — what prodigy is this!” She took the bleeding branch, and vainly attempted to rejoin the portions: she was seized with alarm and an overpowering anxiety.

The poor little Bee, in despair at the sad accident that had happened to her dear Orange-tree, was about to rush out to find death at the point of the fatal sword, in her attempt to avenge her dear Prince; but she preferred living for him, and recollecting a remedy that he needed, she entreated him to let her fly to Arabia that she might bring back some balm for him. After he had consented to her going there, and they had taken a tender and affectionate farewell of each other, she started for that part of the world, with instinct alone for her guide. But to speak more correctly, Love carried her there; and as he flies faster than the swiftest of winged beings, he enabled her rapidly to perform this long journey. She brought back wonderful balm upon her wings, and about her little feet, with which she cured her Prince. It is true, it was not so much by the excellence of the balm, by as the pleasure it afforded him, in seeing the Princess Bee take so much care of his wound. She applied the balm every day, and he had much need of it; for the severed branch was one of his fingers; so had they continued to treat him as Linda had done, he would neither have had legs nor arms. Oh, how acutely did the Bee feel for the sufferings of the Orange-tree! She reproached herself with being the cause, by the impetuosity with which she defended its flowers. Linda, alarmed at what she had seen, could neither sleep nor eat. At last she resolved to send for some Fairies, in the hope of being enlightened upon a matter that seemed so extraordinary. She despatched ambassadors, laden with handsome presents, to invite them to her court.

Queen Trufio was one of the first who arrived at Linda's palace. There never was a person so skilful in Fairy art. She examined the branch and the Orange-tree, she smelt its flowers, and distinguished a human odour, which surprised her. She did not leave a spell untried, and employed some so powerful, that all at once the Orange-tree disappeared, and they perceived the Prince, handsomer and better made than any other man in the world. At this sight Linda became immoveable; she was struck with admiration, and so peculiar a feeling for him, that she had already lost her former indifference, while the young Prince, thinking of his charming Bee, threw himself at Trufio's feet. "Great Queen," said he, "I am infinitely indebted to thee; thou hast given me new life, by restoring me to my original form; but, if thou wouldst that I should owe thee my peace and happiness, a blessing even greater than the life thou hast recalled me to, restore me my Princess!" In uttering these words he took hold of the little Bee, whom he never ceased gazing upon. "Thou shalt be satisfied," answered the generous Trufio. She recommenced her ceremonies, and the Princess Aimée appeared with so many charms that there was not one of the ladies who was not envious of her. Linda hesitated within herself, whether she ought to be pleased or vexed at so extraordinary an adventure; and, particularly, at the metamorphose of the Bee.

At length her reason got the better of her passion, which was only in its infancy; she embraced Aimée a thousand times, and Trufio begged her to relate her adventures. She was under too much obligation to her to refuse what she wished. The graceful and easy manner with which she spoke interested the whole assembly; and when she told Trufio she had performed so many wonders by virtue of her name and her wand, there was an exclamation of joy throughout the hall, and every one entreated the Fairy to complete this great work. Trufio, on her side, felt extreme pleasure at all she had heard. She folded the Princess in her arms.

“Since I was so useful to you, without knowing you,” said she to her, “judge, charming Aimée, now that I do know you, how much I am inclined to serve you. I am a friend of the King your father, and of the Queen your mother: let us instantly go, in my flying chariot, to the Happy Island, where both of you will be received as you deserve.” Linda begged them to remain one day with her, during which she made them very costly presents, and the Princess Aimée left off her tiger’s skin for dresses of incomparable beauty. Let all now imagine the joy of our happy lovers. Yes, let them imagine it, if they can; but to do that, they should have met with the same misfortunes, have been amongst Ogres, and undergone as many transformations. They set out at last; Trufio conducted them through the air to the Happy Island. They were received by the King and Queen as the last persons in the world they had ever expected to see again, but whom they beheld with the greatest pleasure. Aimée’s beauty and prudence, added to her wit, made her the admiration of the age. Her dear mother loved her passionately. The fine qualities of Prince Aimé’s mind were not less appreciated than his handsome person. The nuptials were celebrated; nothing was ever so magnificent. The Graces attended in their festive attire. The Loves were there, without even being invited, and by their express order, the eldest son of the Prince and Princess was named “Faithful Love.” They have given him since then many other titles; and under all these various names it is very difficult to find “Faithful Love,” such as sprang from this charming marriage. Happy they who meet with him unmistakeably.

10

THE GOOD LITTLE MOUSE

Once upon a time there was a King and a Queen, who loved each other so much — so much that they made each other's sole happiness. Their hearts and their sentiments were always in unison. Each day they hunted the hare or the stag, or went fishing for soles and carp, or to the ball to dance the bourée or the pavan, and to great banquets to eat roast meats and sugar-plums, to the play and to the opera. They laughed, they sang, they played a thousand tricks to amuse themselves — in short, it was the happiest of times. Their subjects followed the example of the King and Queen; they emulated each other in their pastimes. For all these reasons they called this kingdom the Land of Joy. It happened that a king who was the neighbour of King Joyeux lived very differently. He was a declared enemy to pleasure. He desired nothing but wounds and blows. He had a grim countenance, a large beard, hollow eyes; he was all skin and bones, always dressed in black, with hair which stood on end, very greasy and dirty. To please him, they knocked down and killed all travellers. He hung all criminals himself, and delighted in torturing them. When a mother was dotingly fond of her little girl or boy, he would send for her, and before her eyes would break the child's arms, or wring its neck. This kingdom was called the Land of Tears.

The wicked King heard of the happiness of King Joyeux; he was very envious of him, and resolved to raise a large army, and kill, wound, or take captive him and all his people. He sent in all directions for men and arms: he ordered cannon to be cast. Everybody trembled with fear. They said, “With whom is he going to war? He will give him no quarter.” “When everything was ready, he marched towards the country of King Joyeux, who at this bad news speedily took measures for his defence. The Queen was frightened to death, and crying said, “Sire, we must fly — let us collect as much money as we can, and go to the other end of the world.” The King replied, “Fie, Madam, I have too much courage for that. It is better to die than be branded as a coward.” He assembled all his men-at-arms, took an affectionate farewell of his wife, mounted his beautiful horse, and departed. When she lost sight of him, she began to weep sadly, and clasping her hands together, said, “Alas! if I should have an infant, and the King should be killed in battle, I shall be a widow and a prisoner, and the wicked King will inflict a thousand cruelties upon me. This thought prevented her from eating and sleeping. She wrote to him every day; but one morning, looking from the battlements, she saw a courier coming at full speed. She called to him, “Ho, Courier, ho! What news?” “The King is dead,” said he; “the battle is lost; the wicked King will be here immediately.” The poor Queen swooned, and they carried her to bed. All her ladies were around her, crying one for her father, another for her son, and tearing their hair: it was the most distressing thing in the world. All on a sudden they heard cries of “Murder! Thieves!” It was the wicked King, who had arrived with all his wretched followers, killing every one they met with. He entered the Royal Palace in complete armour, and ascended to the Queen’s chamber. When she saw him enter, she was so frightened that she hid herself in the bed, and pulled the counterpane over her head. He called to her two or three times, but she never spoke a word. He grew angry, and said very fiercely, “Dost thou make sport of me! dost know that I might strangle thee instantly?” He pulled the bed-clothes off her, and tore off her cap: her beautiful hair fell all about her shoulders; he twisted it three times round his hand, and threw her over his shoulders like a sack of corn; he carried her thus down-stairs, and mounted with her upon his large black horse. She entreated him to have mercy on her, but he only mocked her and said, “Cry and complain! it makes me laugh, and amuses me.” He carried her into his own country, and vowed all the way that he would hang her, but he was told it would be a pity, as she was about to become a mother. When he discovered that, it occurred to him, that if she had a daughter, he would marry his son to her, and to ascertain which it would be, he sent for a Fairy who lived near to his dominions. When she arrived, he entertained her better than was his custom; he then took her up into a tower, at the top of which the poor Queen occupied a very small and ill-furnished room. She was lying on the ground, upon a mattress not worth two-pence, and where she cried day and night. When the Fairy saw her, she could not help pitying her; she curtsied to her, and, embracing her, said in a low voice, “Take courage, Madam, your misfortunes will not last for ever. I hope to hasten the term of them.” The Queen was consoled a little by these words, returned the Fairy’s embraces, and begged her to have pity upon a poor princess who had enjoyed the greatest happiness, and was now equally miserable. They were in close conversation, when the wicked King exclaimed, “Come! no more compliments. I brought you here to tell me if this slave will have a boy or a girl?” The Fairy said, “She will have a girl, who will be the handsomest and best informed princess that was ever seen;” and forthwith she endowed the unborn princess with innumerable virtues and honours.

“Should she not be handsome and well informed,” said the wicked King, “I will hang her to her mother’s neck, and her mother on a tree, and nothing shall prevent me.” So saying, he left the room with the Fairy, not condescending to look at the good Queen, who was crying bitterly, for said she to herself, “Alas! what shall I do? Should I have a beautiful little girl, he will give her to his monkey of a son; and should she be ugly, he will hang us together. To what an extremity am I reduced! Could I not hide my infant somewhere, so that he should never see it?” The time drew near for the little princess to be brought into the world, and the Queen’s anxieties increased — she had no one to complain to, or to console her. The jailor who had the care of her gave her each morning but three boiled peas, with a little piece of black bread. She became as thin as a herring — she was nothing but skin and bone. One evening, as she was spinning (for the wicked King, who was very avaricious, made her work night and day), she saw a very pretty little Mouse come in through a hole. She said to it, “Alas! my little darling, what dost thou come to seek here? I have only three peas for myself the whole day long; if thou wouldst not fast, thou hadst better depart.” The little Mouse ran hither and thither, and danced and capered like a little monkey, and the Queen was so amused at it, that she gave it the only pea that she had left for her supper. “Here, little darling,” said she, “eat this; I have nothing more, and I give it you willingly.” As soon as she had done so, she saw upon the table an excellent partridge, wonderfully well roasted, and two jars of sweetmeats. “Truly,” said she, “a good deed is never unrewarded.” She ate a little, but she had lost her appetite through fasting. She threw some bon-bons to the Mouse, who was still nibbling, and then she began to skip about more than before supper. Early the next morning, the jailor brought the Queen the three peas, which he had put into a large dish out of mockery. The little Mouse came softly and ate them all three and the bread also. When the Queen wanted her dinner, she could not find anything. She was very angry with the Mouse. “It is a wicked little animal,” said she; “if it continues to do this, I shall be starved.” As she was about to put the cover on the empty dish, she saw it fill with all sorts of good things to eat: she was delighted and began to dine on them, but whilst eating she bethought herself that the wicked King would perhaps in a few days order her baby to be killed, and she left the table weeping, and raising her eyes to heaven exclaimed, “Ah! are there no means of saving my child?” As she uttered these words she saw the little Mouse playing with some long bits of straw; she took them up and set to work upon them. “If there is enough straw,” said she, “I will make a covered basket to put my little girl in, and I will give her out of the window to the first charitable person who will take care of her.” She then worked on with renewed spirit. There was plenty of straw, the Mouse always dragging some into the room, where she continued to skip about, and at meal-time the Queen gave it her three peas, and, in exchange, always found a hundred sorts of ragouts. She was much surprised, and was continually wondering who it could be that sent her such excellent things. The Queen, one day, was looking out of the window, to ascertain how long the cord should be, by which she intended letting the basket down. She perceived below a little old woman, who was leaning on a stick, and who said to her, “I know your trouble, Madam; if you like, I will serve you.” “Alas! my dear friend,” said the Queen, “I should be very much obliged to you. Come every evening to the foot of this tower. As soon as my child is born I will let it down to you; you will nurse it, and if I am ever rich, I will handsomely reward you.” “I am not covetous,” answered the old woman, “but I am dainty in my eating; there is nothing I like so much as a plump and fat mouse. If you find any in your garret, kill them, and throw them to me. I shall not be ungrateful for it, and your baby shall be well taken care of.” The Queen, hearing this, began to weep without making any reply, and the old woman, after having waited a little, asked her why she cried. “It is,” she said, “because there is but one mouse that comes into my chamber, which is so pretty — such a very pretty little creature — that I cannot make up my mind to kill it.” “How!” replied the old woman, angrily, “you love a knavish little mouse that gnaws everything, better than the child you are about to have! Very well, Madam, then you are not to be pitied; remain in such good company; I shall have plenty of mice without yours; I care little about it;” and she went away grumbling and muttering. Although the Queen had a good meal set before her, and the Mouse came to dance to her as usual, she never raised her eyes from the ground on which she fixed them — the tears streaming down her cheeks. That same night she was confined of a Princess, who was wonderfully beautiful; instead of crying, as other children do, she laughed at her dear Mamma, and held out her little hands towards her, as though she was quite sensible. The Queen fondled and kissed her most tenderly, sadly thinking, “Poor little darling! dear child! if thou fallest into the wicked King’s hands, thy life will be ended.” She covered her up in the basket with a note tied to her dress, upon which was written, “The name of this unfortunate infant is Joliette.” And when she had left her a few moments without looking at her, she again opened the basket, and found her still handsomer; she kissed her and wept more bitterly, not knowing what to do. But with this comes the little Mouse and gets into the basket. “Oh! thou little creature,” said the Queen, “how dearly has thy preservation cost me! I may, perhaps, lose on thy account my dear Joliette; any one else would have killed thee, and given thee to the dainty old woman, but I could not consent to do that.” The Mouse began to say, “Do not repent of having done so, Madam; I am not so unworthy of your friendship as you think.” The Queen was frightened to death when she heard the Mouse speaking; but her fear increased greatly when she perceived its little muzzle begin to take the form of a human face, that its paws became hands and feet, and that it suddenly grew larger. At length the Queen, hardly daring to look at her, recognised her to be the same Fairy who came to see her with the wicked King, and who was so kind to her. The Fairy said to her, “I wished to try your heart; I have discovered it to be good, and that you are susceptible of friendship. We Fairies, who possess immense wealth and treasures, seek only for friendship to sweeten life, and we rarely find it.” “Is it possible, beautiful lady,” said the Queen, embracing her, “that you have any trouble in finding friends, being so rich and powerful?” “Yes,” replied she, “for they only love us from self-interest, and that affects us but little; but when you loved me as a little mouse, it was not from an interested motive. I wished to prove you still further; I took the form of an old woman; it was I who spoke to you at the foot of the tower, and you were still faithful to me.” At these words she embraced the Queen, then she kissed the vermilion mouth of the little Princess, and said to her, “I endow thee, my child, to be the consolation of thy mother, and to be richer than thy father; to live a hundred years, always beautiful, without sickness, without wrinkles, and without becoming an old woman.” The Queen, enchanted, thanked her, and entreated her to carry Joliette away with her, and to take care of her, adding that she gave her to her to be her own daughter. The Fairy accepted her, and thanked her; she put the baby in the basket, and lowered it to the ground; but having stopped a little, to reassume the form of the little Mouse, when she descended the cord after her, the child was not there, and reascending, much frightened, “All is lost!” said she to the Queen; “my enemy Cancaline has carried off the Princess. You must know she is a cruel fairy who hates me; and, unfortunately, being my senior, she is more powerful than I am. I know not by what means I can recover Joliette from her horrid clutches.”

When the Queen heard such sad news, she thought she should die of grief; she cried very much, and begged her kind friend to try and see the child again, at any price. In the meanwhile the jailor came into the Queen’s apartment, and found she had been brought to bed. He flew to tell the King of it, who ran to ask for the child; but she said that a fairy whose name she did not know had appeared and taken it away by force. The wicked King stamped his foot, and bit his nails to the quick. “I promised to hang thee,” said he; “I will keep my word instantly.” He then dragged the poor Queen into a wood, climbed up a tree, and was going to hang her, when the Fairy, having rendered herself invisible, gave him a violent push, and he fell from the top of the tree, knocking out four of his teeth. Whilst his people were endeavouring to put them in again, the Fairy carried the Queen away in her flying chariot, and conducted her to a beautiful castle. She took great care of her, and if she had had the Princess Joliette with her she would have been perfectly happy; but they could not find out where Cancaline had placed her, although the little Mouse tried all she possibly could. Time passed on, and the Queen's extreme affliction was a little abated. Fifteen years had flown away when it was reported that the wicked King's son had determined to marry his turkey-keeper, notwithstanding the young girl objected to the match. It was very surprising that a turkey-keeper should refuse to become a Queen; however, the wedding-dresses were made, and it was to be so splendid a marriage that they came from a hundred miles about to see it. The little Mouse transported herself thither; she wished to see the turkey-keeper at her ease. She went into the poultry-yard, and found her dressed in coarse linen, with naked feet, and a greasy napkin round her head. There were dresses of gold and silver, — diamonds, pearls, ribands, and lace, all about her on the ground; the turkeys were trampling on them, dirtying them, and spoiling them. The girl was sitting upon a large stone; the wicked King's son, who was crooked, blind with one eye, and lame, was saying to her, roughly, "If you refuse me your heart, I will kill you." She answered him proudly, "I will not marry you, you are too ugly; you resemble your cruel father; leave me in peace with my little turkeys — I love them better than all your fine clothes." The little Mouse looked at her with admiration; for she was as beautiful as the sun. As soon as the wicked King's son was gone, the Fairy assumed the figure of an old shepherdess, and said to her, "Good morning, my darling; your turkeys look very fine ones." The young turkey-keeper looked at the old woman sweetly, and replied, "They want me to leave them for a paltry crown — what would you advise me to do?" "My little girl," said the Fairy, "a crown is very beautiful, you know neither the value nor the weight of it." "But I do know," promptly replied the turkey-keeper, "and, therefore, refuse to accept it; at the same time I know not who I am, nor where my father and mother are. I have neither friends nor relations.” “You are beautiful and virtuous, my child,” said the wise Fairy, “which is worth ten kingdoms. Tell me, I entreat you, who placed you here, since you have neither father nor mother, friends nor relations?” “A fairy named Cancaline is the cause of my being here: she beat me, and knocked me about without cause or reason. I ran away one day, and not knowing where to go, I sat down in a wood. The son of the wicked King came to walk there; he asked me if I would attend to his poultry-yard. I was very willing to do so. I had the care of the turkeys; he frequently came to see them, and he saw me also. Alas! without any wish on my part, he took it in his head to love me so much, that he worries me greatly.”

The Fairy, after hearing this story, began to think that the turkey-keeper was the Princess Joliette; she said to her, “My child, tell me your name?” “I call myself Joliette, at your service,” said she. At this name, the Fairy no longer doubted about it, and throwing her arms round her neck, she thought she should devour her with kisses. She then said to her, “Joliette, I have known you for some time past; I am delighted to find you are so discreet, and so well-informed; but I wish you were cleaner, for you look like a little scullion. Take the beautiful clothes that are here, and dress yourself in them.” Joliette, who was very obedient, threw off, immediately, the greasy handkerchief from her head, and shaking it slightly, she was covered entirely by her hair, which was as fair as light, and as fine as golden thread; it fell in ringlets down to the ground: then, taking in her delicate hands some water from a fountain, which was in the poultry-yard, she washed her face, which became as clear as oriental pearl. Roses seemed to be blooming upon her cheeks and lips; her breath smelt of garden and wild thyme; her form was as strait as a rush. In winter time they might have taken her skin for the snow, and in summer for the lily.

When she was dressed in her diamonds and fine clothes, the fairy considered her a miracle; she said to her, “Who do you think you are, my dear Joliette, now you are so bravely dressed?” She replied, “Truly, it seems to me that I am the daughter of a great king.” “Should you be glad of it?” said the Fairy. “Yes, my good mother,” replied Joliette, curtseying to her; “I should be very glad.” “Well,” said the Fairy, “then be content: I will tell you more to-morrow.” She quickly returned to her splendid castle, where the Queen was busy spinning silk; the little Mouse cried out to her, “Will your Majesty bet your distaff and spindle that I do not bring you the best news you have ever had.” “Alas!” replied the Queen, “since the death of King Joyeux, and the loss of my Joliette, I would not give a pin for all the news in the world.” “There, there! do not grieve yourself any more,” said the Fairy, “the Princess is wonderfully well; I have just seen her; she is so beautiful, so very beautiful, that it only depends upon herself to be a queen.” She related everything from beginning to end, and the Queen cried with joy to know her daughter was so beautiful, and with grief that she had been a turkey-keeper.

“When we were great sovereigns in our own kingdom,” said she, “and lived in such splendour, the poor dear departed and myself never thought our child would be a turkey-keeper!” “It is the cruel Cancaline,” added the Fairy, “who, knowing how I love you, to spite me, has put her in this situation; but she shall not be in it any longer, or I will burn my books.” “I will not agree,” said the Queen, “to her marrying the son of the wicked King. Let us go to-morrow to claim her, and bring her here.” In the meantime, the wicked King’s son, being extremely angry with Joliette, sat down under a tree, where he gave way so to his grief that he quite howled. His father heard him; he went to the window and called out to him, “What art thou crying about, making a fool of thyself?” He answered, “Our turkey-keeper will not love me.” “How! she will not love thee?” said the wicked King, “I will make her love thee, or she shall die.” He called his guards, and said to them, “Go and fetch her, for I will make her suffer so much that she shall repent of her obstinacy.” They went to the poultry-yard, and found

Joliette in a white satin dress, embroidered all over with gold, with pink diamonds, and more than a thousand yards of riband all about it. Never had they seen so fine a lady, in all her grandeur; they did not dare speak to her, taking her for a princess. She said very civilly to them, “Pray tell me whom you seek here?” “Madam,” said they, “we are looking for a miserable little wretch they call Joliette.” “Alas! it is I,” said she; “what do you want with me?” They instantly seized her, and tied her feet and hands with thick cords, for fear she would run away. They led her in this manner to the wicked King, who was with his son. When he saw her so beautiful, he could not avoid being a little moved; and no doubt would have had pity upon her, had he not been one of the most wicked and cruel men in the world. He said to her, “Hah! hah! little rogue! little toad! you will not then love my son? He is a hundred times handsomer than you are! one of his looks is worth more than your whole person. Come, love him directly, or I will have you flayed.” The Princess, trembling like a little pigeon, knelt before him, and said, “Sire, I entreat you not to flay me: that would be too cruel. Let me have two or three days to think what I ought to do, after which, be it as you will.” His son, in a state of fury, insisted on her being flayed. They agreed at last to shut her up in a tower, where she could see nothing but the sky. At this moment the good Fairy arrived in her flying chariot, with the Queen. They heard all the news. The Queen began to cry bitterly, saying, how unfortunate she always was, and that she would rather her child was dead than that she should marry the wicked King’s son. The Fairy said to her, “Take courage; I am going to worry them so much, that you will be satisfied and avenged.” When the wicked King went to bed, the Fairy transformed herself into a little mouse, and hid herself under the bolster of the bed. As soon as he wished to sleep, she bit his ear; he became very angry; he turned on the other side; she bit the other ear. He cried out, “Murder!” He called for some one to come to him; they came; they found his two ears bitten, and bleeding so much, that they could not stop the blood. While they were looking everywhere for the mouse, she went to the wicked King’s son, and served him in like manner. He called up his people, and showed them his ears, which were all skinned, and they put plaisters on them. The little Mouse returned to the wicked King’s room, who had become a little drowsy; she bit his nose, and continued to nibble at it; he put his hands up to it; she bit them and scratched them. He cried out, “Mercy! I am lost!” She got into his mouth, and nibbled his tongue, his cheeks, his lips, his eyes. They came to him; they saw him quite overpowered; he could scarcely speak, his tongue was so bad; he made signs that it was a mouse; they looked for it in the mattress, in the bolster, in every corner; she was no longer there. She ran and served the son still worse, and ate his good eye (for he was already blind with one). He rose like a mad-man, sword in hand; he was quite blind; he ran into his father’s room, who had also taken his sword, storming and swearing that he would kill everybody if they did not catch the mouse. When he saw his son in such a fury, he scolded him; and the latter was so heated by passion that he did not recognise his father’s voice, and fell upon him. The wicked King, much enraged, wounded his son with his sword; he received a wound in return; they both of them fell to the ground, bathed in blood. All their subjects, who hated them mortally, and who only obeyed them through terror, fearing them no longer, tied cords around their feet and dragged them into the river, saying, they were quite delighted to get rid of them. Thus died the wicked King and his son. The good Fairy, who knew what had occurred, sought the Queen, and they hastened to the black tower, where Joliette was shut up under more than forty locks. The Fairy struck the great door three times with a little wand of hazel wood. It flew open, as did also all the others. They found the poor Princess very sad, who did not say a single word. The Queen threw herself upon her neck. “My dear child,” said she to her, “I am thy mother, the Queen Joyeuse.” She then related to her the history of her life. When Joliette heard so much good news, she was nearly dying with pleasure. She fell at the Queen’s feet; she embraced her knees, moistened her hands with her tears, and kissed them a thousand times. She affectionately caressed the Fairy, who had brought her baskets full of valuable jewels, gold, diamonds, bracelets, pearls, and the portrait of King Joyeux, surrounded by precious stones, all of which she placed before her. “Let us lose no time,” said the Fairy, “we must make a coup d’état; let us go into the great hall of the castle, and harangue the people.” She walked first, with a grave and serious face, having on a dress with a train more than ten yards long, and the Queen in one of blue velvet, embroidered in gold, with a much longer train. (They had brought their robes of state with them.) They had also crowns upon their heads, as brilliant as suns. The Princess Joliette followed, distinguished by her marvellous beauty and modesty. They curtsied to all whom they met, gentle and simple. They were followed by crowds, anxious to know who these fine ladies could be. When the hall was quite full, the good Fairy told the wicked King’s subjects that she would give them for a queen King Joyeux’s daughter, whom they saw before them; that they would live very happy under her government; that, if they accepted her, she would find her a husband as perfect as herself, who would be always cheerful, and banish melancholy from every heart. At these words, every one exclaimed, “Yes, yes, she shall be our queen; we have been too long sad and miserable.” At the same moment a hundred different instruments began to play on all sides, every one joined hands and danced a round, singing to the Queen, her daughter, and the good Fairy: — “Yes! yes! she shall be our queen,” &c. Such was their reception, and never was so much happiness known; they spread the tables, they ate, and drank, and then went to bed and slept soundly. When the Princess arose next morning, the Fairy presented to her the handsomest Prince that had ever been seen. She had been to the very end of the world to fetch him, in her flying chariot; he was as amiable as Joliette. The moment she saw him, she loved him. He, on his side, was charmed with her, and the Queen was transported with joy. They prepared a splendid banquet, and wonderfully fine dresses, and the marriage ceremony was performed amidst the greatest rejoicings.

11

THE RAM

In the happy times when Fairies existed, there reigned a King who had three daughters. They were young and beautiful, and all three possessed considerable merit; but the youngest was the most amiable and the best beloved. They called her Merveilleuse. The King her father gave her more gowns and ribands in a month than he gave the others in a year, and she was so good-natured that she shared everything with her sisters, so that there subsisted the best understanding between them.

The King had some very bad neighbours, who, weary of peace, formed so powerful a league against him, that he was compelled to arm in self-defence. He raised a large force, and took the field at its head. The three Princesses remained with their tutors in a castle, where they heard every day good news of the King. At one time he had taken a city, at another he had won a battle; at length he succeeded in completely routing his enemies, and driving them out of his dominions. He then returned with all speed to the castle to see his little Merveilleuse, of whom he was so fond.

The three Princesses had had made for themselves three satin gowns, — one green, one blue, and the third white. Their jewels were selected to match their dresses. The green was enriched with emeralds; the blue with turquoises; and the white with diamonds. Thus attired, they went to meet the King, singing the following verses, which they had written to celebrate his victories: —

With conquest crown'd on many a glorious plain,
What joy to greet our king and sire again!
Welcome him back, victorious, to these halls,
With new delights and countless festivals;
Let shouts of joy and songs of triumph prove
His people's loyalty, his daughters' love!

When the King saw them so lovely, and in such splendid dresses, he embraced them all tenderly, but caressed Merveilleuse more than he did the others.

A magnificent banquet was served up: the King and his three daughters sat down to table; and as it was his habit to draw inferences from everything, he said to the eldest, “Tell me, pray, why have you put on a green gown?” “Sire,” she answered, “having heard of your achievements, I fancied that green would express the joy and hope with which your return inspired me.” “That is very prettily said!” exclaimed the King. “And you, my child,” he continued; “why do you wear a blue gown?” “My liege,” said the Princess, “to indicate that we should unceasingly implore for you the protection of the Gods, and also that the sight of you is to me like that of heaven and all the starry host!” “You speak like an oracle!” said the King. “And you, Merveilleuse; what reason had you for dressing yourself in white?” “Because, Sire,” she answered, “it becomes me better than any colour.” “How!” cried the King, very much offended; “was that your only motive, you little coquette?” “My motive was to please you,” said the Princess; “it appears to me that I ought to have no other.” The King, who loved her dearly, was so perfectly satisfied with this explanation, that he declared himself much pleased by the little turn she had given to her meaning, and the art with which she had at first concealed the compliment. “There! there!” said he, “I have made an excellent supper. I shall not go to bed yet. Tell me what you all dreamed of the night before my return.” The eldest said she dreamed that he had brought her a gown, the gold and jewels of which shone brighter than the sun. The second said she dreamed that he had brought her a golden distaff to spin herself some shifts with. The youngest said she dreamed that he had married her second sister, and that on the wedding-day he held a golden ewer, and said, “Merveilleuse, come hither and wash.”

The King, indignant at this dream, knit his brow, and made an exceedingly wry face. Everybody saw he was very angry. He retired to his chamber, and flung himself into bed. He could not forget his daughter’s dream. “This insolent little creature,” said he, “would degrade me into her servant. I should not be surprised if she had put on white satin without thinking of me at all. She holds me unworthy of consideration. But I will frustrate her wicked designs while there is time.” He rose in a fury; and though it was not yet daylight, he sent for the captain of his guards, and said to him, “You have heard the dream of Merveilleuse: it prognosticates strange things against me. I command you to seize her immediately, to take her into the forest, and kill her; after which, you will bring me her heart and her tongue, that I may be sure you have not deceived me, or I will have you put to death in the most cruel manner possible.” The captain of the guards was astounded at this barbarous order. He dared not remonstrate with the King, for fear of increasing his anger, and causing him to give the horrible commission to another. He assured him he would take the Princess and kill her, and bring him her heart and her tongue.

The captain went directly to the Princess’s apartment, where he found some difficulty in obtaining admission, for it was still very early. He informed Merveilleuse that the King desired to see her. She rose immediately; a little Moorish girl, named Patypata, carried her train. A young ape, and a little dog, who always accompanied her, ran after her. The ape was called Grabugeon, and the little dog, Tintin. The captain of the guards made Merveilleuse descend into the garden, where he told her the King was taking the fresh morning air. She entered it; the captain pretended to look for the King, and not finding him, said, “No doubt his Majesty has walked on into the wood.” He opened a little door, and led the Princess into the forest. It was just getting light: the Princess looked at her conductor; he had tears in his eyes, and was so dejected that he could not speak. “What is the matter?” inquired she in the kindest tone; “you seem very much distressed.” “Ah, Madam!” exclaimed he; “who could be otherwise at the most dreadful order that was ever given! The King has commanded me to kill you in this forest, and to take him your heart and your tongue. If I fail to do so he will put me to death.” The poor Princess turned pale with terror, and began to weep silently. She looked like a little lamb about to be sacrificed. She fixed her beautiful eyes on the captain of the guards, and looking at him without anger, said,” “Will you really have the heart to kill me — me, who never did you any harm, and who always spoke well of you to the King? If I had deserved my father’s hate I could have suffered the consequences without a murmur; but, alas! I have shown him so much respect and affection that he cannot with justice complain of me.” “Fear not, beautiful Princess,” said the captain of the guards; “I am incapable of so barbarous a deed. Rather would I suffer the death he has threatened me with: but should I kill myself you would not be the safer for it. We must find some means by which I can return to the King, and persuade him that you are dead.

“What means can we find?” said Merveilleuse; “for he has ordered you to bring to him my tongue and my heart, and without you do so, he will not believe you.” Patypata, who had heard all that had passed, and of whose presence neither the captain of the guards nor the Princess was aware, so absorbed were they in their affliction, advanced boldly, and threw herself at the feet of Merveilleuse. “Madam,” said she, “I offer you my life. You must kill me. I shall be too happy to die for so good a mistress.” “Oh! I can never permit it, my dear Patypata,” said the Princess, kissing her. “After so touching a proof of thy friendship, thy life must be as dear to me as my own.” Grabugeon then stepped forward, and said, “You have reason, Princess, to love so faithful a slave as Patypata; she can be of much more use to you than I. I offer you my tongue and heart with joy, wishing to immortalize myself in the annals of the Empire of Monkeys.” “Ah, my darling Grabugeon,” replied Merveilleuse, “I cannot bear the idea of taking thy life!” “It would be insupportable to me,” exclaimed Tintin, “good little dog as I am, should any one but myself lay down their life for my mistress. Either I will die, or nobody shall die.” Upon this there arose a great altercation between Patypata, Grabugeon, and Tintin. They came to big words. At last, Grabugeon, more hasty than the others, ran up to the very top of a tree, and flinging herself down head foremost, was killed on the spot. Much as the Princess lamented her, she consented, as the poor thing was dead, that the captain of the guards should cut out her tongue; but it was so small, (for altogether the creature was not bigger than one’s fist,) that to their great grief they felt convinced the King would not be deceived by it.

“Alas! my dear little ape, behold thee dead then,” cried the Princess, “without my life being ensured by the sacrifice of thine!” “It is for me that honour is reserved,” interrupted the Moor, snatching up as she spoke the knife that had been used upon Grabugeon, and plunging it into her bosom. The captain of the guards would have taken her tongue, but it was so black that he could not flatter himself he could cheat the king with it.

“Am I not most unfortunate!” said the Princess weeping. “I lose all those I love, and yet my lot remains unchanged.” “If you would have accepted my offer," said Tintin, "you would only have had to regret my loss, and I should have had the satisfaction of being the only one regretted." Merveilleuse kissed her little dog, weeping so bitterly over him that she was quite exhausted. She turned hastily away, and when she ventured again to look round, her conductor was gone, and she found herself alone with the dead bodies of her Moor, her ape, and her little dog. She could not quit the spot till she had buried them in a hole which she found by chance at the foot of a tree, upon which she afterwards scratched these words: —

Three faithful friends lie buried in this grave,
Who sacrificed themselves my life to save.

She then began to think of her own safety, and as there was none for her in that forest, which was so close to her father's castle that the first person who saw her would recognise her, or where she might be eaten like a chicken by the lions and wolves that infested it, she set off walking as fast as she could. But the forest was so extensive, and the sun so powerful, that she was soon ready to die with heat, fear, and weariness. She gazed about her everywhere, without being able to see the termination of the wood. Everything alarmed her. She fancied continually the King was in pursuit of her, to kill her. It is impossible to repeat all the lamentations she naturally gave utterance to.

She walked on without following any particular path, the thickets tearing her beautiful dress, and scratching her white skin. At length she heard a sheep bleat. "No doubt," said she, "there are some shepherds here with their flocks. They may direct me to some village where I may conceal myself in the dress of a peasant. Alas!" continued she, "sovereigns and princes are not always the happiest persons in the world. "Who in all this kingdom would believe that I am a fugitive, that my father without cause or reason seeks my life, and that to save it I must disguise myself?”

Whilst making these reflections, she advanced towards the spot from whence the bleating proceeded. What was her surprise, on arriving in an open space surrounded by trees, to see a large Ram, whiter than snow, whose horns were gilt, who had a garland of flowers round his neck, his legs entwined with ropes of pearls of prodigious size, and chains of diamonds hung about him, and who was reposing on a couch of orange blossoms. A pavilion of cloth of gold suspended in the air sheltered him from the rays of the sun. A hundred gaily-decked sheep were around him, who in lieu of browzing on the grass, were taking, some, coffee, sherbet, ices, and lemonade; others, strawberries and cream, and sweetmeats. Some were playing at basset, others at lansquenet. Several wore collars of gold, ornamented with gallant devices, earrings, and ribands, and flowers in profusion. Merveilleuse was so astonished that she remained almost motionless. Her eyes wandered in search of the shepherd who had the care of this extraordinary flock, when the beautiful Ram came bounding and frisking up to her. “Approach, divine Princess,” said he to her, “and fear nothing from such gentle and peaceful animals as we are.” “What prodigy is this? — a talking Ram!” exclaimed the Princess. “Eh, Madam,” rejoined the Ram, “your ape and your little dog spoke very prettily. Had you less cause to be surprised at that?” “A Fairy,” replied Merveilleuse, “had bestowed the gift of speech on them, which made the matter less wonderful.” “A similar adventure may perchance have befallen ourselves,” answered the Ram, smiling in a sheepish manner. “But what caused you to turn your steps this way, my Princess?” “A thousand misfortunes, my lord Ram,” said she to him; “I am the most unhappy person in the world. I seek an asylum from the fury of my father.” “Come, Madam,” replied the Ram; “come with me. I offer you one which can be known only to yourself, and you shall be absolute mistress in it.” “It is impossible for me to follow you,” said Merveilleuse; “I am dying with fatigue.”

The Ram with the golden horns ordered his chariot to be sent for. The next moment they led forward six goats harnessed to a pumpkin of such a prodigious size that two persons could sit in it with the greatest ease. The pumpkin was dry, and the inside hollowed out and fitted with capital down cushions, and lined with velvet throughout. The Princess got into it, admiring so novel an equipage. The Master-Ram seated himself in the pumpkin beside her, and the goats took them at full gallop to a cavern, the entrance to which was closed by a large stone. The golden-horned Ram touched the stone with his foot, and it immediately fell. He told the Princess to enter without fear: she believed the cavern to be a horrible place, and had her alarm been less, nothing could have induced her to descend into it; but her apprehensions of pursuit were so great, that she would at that moment have thrown herself into a well.

She followed therefore without hesitation the Ram, who walked before her to show her the way down, which ran so deep, so deep, that she fancied she must be going at least to the antipodes, and sometimes feared he was conducting her to the regions of the dead.

At length she discovered all on a sudden a vast plain, enamelled with a thousand different flowers, whose delicious perfume surpassed that of any she had ever met with; a broad river of orange-flower water flowed around it; fountains of Spanish wine, rossolis, hipocras, and a thousand other sorts of liqueurs formed charming cascades and little rivulets. The plain was covered with singular trees. There were entire avenues of them, with partridges better larded and dressed than you would get them at La Guerbois’ hanging on the branches. In other avenues they were laden with quails, young rabbits, turkeys, chickens, pheasants, and ortolans. In certain parts, where the atmosphere appeared a little hazy, it rained *Bisques d’écrevisse*, and other soups; *foies-gras*, ragouts of sweetbreads, white puddings, sausages, tarts, patties, sweet-meats both wet and dry; besides Louis-d’ors, crowns, pearls, and diamonds. Showers so rare, as well as so useful, would no doubt have attracted very excellent company if the great Ram had been more inclined to mix with society in general; but all the chronicles in which he is mentioned concur in assuring us that he was as reserved as a Roman senator.

As it was in the finest time of the year that Merveilleuse had arrived in these beautiful regions, she saw no other palace than what was formed by long lines of orange-trees, jasmins, honeysuckles, and little musk-roses, whose interlaced branches formed cabinets, halls, and chambers, all hung with gold and silver gauze, and furnished with large mirrors, lustres, and admirable paintings.

The Master-Ram told the Princess to consider herself the sovereign of these regions; that for some years past he had had much cause for sorrow and tears; but that it only depended on her to make him forget all his misfortunes. “There is something so generous in your behaviour, charming Ram,” said she to him, “and everything I see here appears to me so extraordinary, that I know not what to make of it.”

She had scarcely uttered these words when there appeared before her a troop of nymphs of the most admirable beauty. They presented her with fruit in baskets of amber, but when she advanced towards them they insensibly receded; she extended her hands to touch them, but felt nothing, and ascertained that they were only phantoms. “Oh! what means this?” she exclaimed. “Who are these around me?” She began to weep, and King Ram, (for so they called him,) who had left her for a few minutes, returning and finding her in tears, was in such despair that he felt he should die at her feet.

“What is the matter, lovely Princess?” he inquired. “Has any one in these dominions been wanting in the respect due to you?” “No,” answered she; “I do not complain of any one; I only confess to you that I am unaccustomed to live among the dead, and with sheep that talk. Everything here frightens me, and greatly obliged as I am to you for bringing me hither, I shall be more so if you will take me back into the world."

"Do not be alarmed," replied the Ram; "deign to listen to me calmly, and you shall hear my sad history.

"I was born to a throne. A long line of kings, my ancestors, had secured me the possession of the finest kingdom in the universe. My subjects loved me. I was feared and envied by my neighbours, and generally respected, with some justice. It was said that no king had ever been more worthy of such homage. My personal appearance was not without its attractions to those who saw me. I was exceedingly fond of hunting, and the eager pursuit of a stag having separated me from my attendants, I suddenly saw him plunge into a pond. I spurred my horse in after him, as imprudently as boldly, but instead of the coldness of the water I felt an extraordinary heat. The pond dried up, and through an opening, out of which issued terrible flames, I fell to the bottom of a precipice, where nothing was to be seen but fire.

"I thought myself lost, when I heard a voice which said to me, 'No less fire could warm thy heart, ungrateful one!' 'Hah! who is it that complains of my coldness?' said I. 'An unfortunate who adores thee without hope,' replied the voice. At the same moment the flames were extinguished, and I perceived a Fairy whom I had known from my earliest infancy, and whose age and ugliness had always horrified me. She was leaning on a young slave of incomparable beauty; the golden chains she wore sufficiently betokened her condition. 'What prodigy is this, Ragotte,' said I to her, (so is the Fairy named;) can this really be by your orders?' 'By whose orders should it be?' replied the Fairy. 'Is it but now thou hast learned the state of my heart? Must I undergo the shame of explaining myself? Have my eyes, once so certain of their power, lost all their influence? Consider how low I stoop! 'Tis I who make this confession of my weakness to thee, who, great king as thou mayest be, art less than an ant compared to a Fairy like me.' 'I am whatever you please,’ said I to her, impatiently, ‘but what is it you demand of me? is it my crown, my cities, my treasures?’ ‘Ah, wretch!’ she replied, disdainfully, ‘my scullions, if I chose it, could be more powerful than thou. I demand thy heart. My eyes have asked thee for it a thousand and a thousand times. Thou hast not understood them, or rather, thou wouldst not understand them. Hadst thou been desperately in love with another,’ continued she, ‘I would not have interrupted the progress of thy passion; but I had too great an interest in thee not to discover the indifference that reigned in thy heart. ‘Well then, love me!’ added she, pursing up her mouth to make it look more agreeable, and rolling her eyes about; ‘I will be thy little Ragotte, I will add twenty kingdoms to that thou hast already, an hundred towers full of gold, five hundred full of silver, — in a word, all thou canst wish for.’ ‘Madame Ragotte,’ said I to her, ‘it is not at the bottom of a pit in which I expected to be roasted that I should think of making a declaration to a person of your merit; I implore you by all the charms that adorn you to set me at liberty, and then we will consider together what can be done for your satisfaction.’ ‘Hah, traitor!’ she exclaimed, ‘if thou didst love me, thou wouldst not seek the road back to thy kingdom; in a grotto, in a fox-hole, in the woods, in the deserts, thou wouldst be happy. Think not that I am such a novice. Thou hopest to escape, but I give thee notice that thou shalt remain here, and thy first task shall be to keep my sheep. They are intelligent animals, and speak at least as well as thou canst,’

“So saying she advanced with me into the plain where we now are, and showed me her flock. I paid little attention to them; the beauty of the slave beside her appeared to me marvellous; my eyes betrayed me. The cruel Ragotte, noticing my admiration, flew upon her and plunged a bodkin into one of her eyes with such violence that the adorable girl fell dead upon the spot. At this horrible sight I threw myself upon Ragotte, and, sword in hand, would have immolated her to those dear manes, if by her power she had not rendered me motionless. All my efforts were in vain; I fell to the earth, and sought for means to slay myself, to end the agony I was in, when the Fairy said to me with an ironical smile, ‘I will make thee know my power; thou art a lion at present, thou shalt become a sheep.’

“At the same moment she touched me with her wand, and I found myself transformed as you behold me. I have not lost the faculty of speech, nor the sense of affliction which my position occasioned me. ‘Thou shalt be a sheep for five years,’ said she, ‘and absolute master of these beautiful realms, while, far from thee and no longer beholding thy handsome face, I will brood only over the hate I owe thee.’

“She disappeared, and if anything could have lightened my misfortune, it would have been her absence. The talking sheep you see here acknowledged me as their king; they informed me that they were unfortunate mortals who had in various ways given offence to the vindictive Fairy, and had been formed by her into a flock; that the penance of some was of less duration than that of others. In fact,” he added, “every now and then they become what they were before, and leave the flock. As for the shadows you have seen, they are those of the rivals and enemies of Ragotte whom she has deprived of life for a century or so, and who will afterwards return to the world. The young slave I spoke of is amongst them. I have seen her several times with great pleasure, although she did not speak to me, and on approaching her I had the vexation to find it was but her shade; finding however that one of my sheep was very attentive to this little phantom, I discovered that he was her lover, and that Ragotte, out of jealousy, had taken him from her. For this reason, I have since avoided the shade of the slave, and during three years have sighed for nothing but my liberty.

“In the hope of regaining it, I frequently wander into the forest. There I saw you, beautiful Princess,” continued he, “sometimes in a chariot which you drove yourself with more skill than the sun does his own, sometimes following the chase on a steed that seemed as if he would obey no other rider, or contending in the race with the ladies of your court, flying lightly over the plain, you won the prize, like another Atalanta. Ah, Princess, if, during all this time in which my heart paid you its secret homage, I had dared to address you, what should I not have said? But how would you have received the declaration of an unhappy sheep like me?"

Merveilleuse was so agitated by all she had heard, that she scarcely knew how to answer him. She said some civil things to him, however, which gave him a little hope, and told him that she was less alarmed at the ghosts now that she knew their owners would revive again. "Alas!" continued she, "if my poor Patypata, my dear Grabugeon, and the pretty Tintin, who died to save me, could meet with a similar fate, I should not be so melancholy here."

Notwithstanding the degradation of the royal Ram, he possessed some very great privileges. "Go," said he to his grand equerry, (a very good-looking sheep,) "go fetch the moor, the ape, and the little dog; their shades will amuse our Princess." The next moment they appeared, and although they did not approach Merveilleuse near enough for her to touch them, their presence was a great consolation to her.

The royal Ram had all the sense and delicacy which is required for agreeable conversation. He was so passionately fond of Merveilleuse, that she began also to have some regard for him, and at length to love him. A pretty sheep, very gentle, very affectionate, is not unlikely to please one, particularly when it is known he is a king, and that his transformation will shortly terminate. The Princess thus passed her days in peace, awaiting a happier lot.

The gallant Ram thought of nothing but her. He gave fêtes, concerts, hunts; his flock assisted him cordially; even the shades played their parts in the entertainments.

One day, on the arrival of the couriers, — for he regularly sent out for the news, and always had the first and best intelligence, — he learned that the eldest sister of Princess Merveilleuse was about to marry a great prince, and that nothing could be more magnificent than the preparations they were making for the nuptials. “Ah!” said the young Princess, “how unfortunate I am to be deprived of the sight of so many fine things! Here am I underground, amongst ghosts and sheep, whilst my sister is appearing to all the world in queenly splendour. Everybody will pay court to her; I alone shall have no share in her joy.” “What reason have you to complain, Madam?” said the King of the Sheep; “have I refused you permission to go to the wedding? Depart as soon as you please, only give me your word that you will return. If you do not agree to that, you will see me expire at your feet, for my attachment to you is too violent for me to lose you and live.” Merveilleuse, much affected, promised the Ram that nothing in the world should prevent her return. He provided her with an equipage befitting her birth. She was superbly dressed, and nothing was forgotten that could increase her beauty. She entered a chariot of mother-of-pearl, drawn by six Isabella coloured hypogriffins, newly arrived from the antipodes. She was accompanied by a great number of exceedingly handsome officers, richly attired. The royal Ram had sent for them from a great distance, to form the train of the Princess.

She arrived at her father’s court at the moment the marriage was being celebrated. As soon as she appeared, she dazzled everybody by the blaze of her beauty and of the jewels which adorned her. She heard nothing around her but acclamations and praises. The King gazed on her with such eagerness and pleasure that she was afraid he would recognise her; but he was so convinced of her death that he had not the least idea she was his daughter.

The fear, notwithstanding, that she should be detained, prevented her staying to quite the end of the ceremony. She departed abruptly, leaving a little coral box, garnished with emeralds, and with these words on it, in diamond sparks: “Jewels for the Bride.” They opened it immediately, and what did they not find in it! The King, who had hoped to see her again and was burning to know who she was, was in despair at her departure. He gave strict orders that if ever she returned, they should shut the gates upon her and detain her.

Brief as had been the absence of Merveilleuse, it had seemed an age to the Ram. He waited for her by the side of a fountain in the thickest part of the forest. He had immense treasures displayed there, with the intention of presenting them to her in gratitude for her return. As soon as he saw her, he ran towards her, bounding and frisking like a true sheep. He lay down at her feet, he kissed her hands, he told her all his anxiety and his impatience. His passion inspired him with an eloquence which quite charmed the Princess.

Some short time afterwards the King married his second daughter. Merveilleuse heard of it, and entreated the Ram to permit her to witness, as before, a fête in which she took so much interest.

At this request, he felt a pang which he could not suppress. A secret presentiment foretold to him some misfortune; but as we cannot always avoid evil, and his consideration for the Princess overruled every other feeling, he had not the heart to refuse her. “You desire to leave me, Madam,” said he; “for this misfortune I must blame my sad destiny more than you. I consent to your wish, and I can never make you a greater sacrifice.”

She assured him that she would return as quickly as she did the first time: that she should be deeply pained by anything that could keep her from him; and entreated him not to be uneasy about her. She went in the same state as before, and arrived just as they were commencing the marriage ceremony. Despite the attention they were paying to it, her presence caused exclamations of joy and admiration, which drew the eyes of all the princes upon her. They could not cease looking at her, and felt her beauty to be so extraordinary that they were ready to believe she must be something more than mortal.

The King was charmed to see her once more. He never took his eyes off her, except to order all the doors to be closed to prevent her departure. The ceremony being nearly concluded, the Princess rose hastily that she might disappear in the crowd, but she was extremely surprised and distressed to find that all the gates were locked.

The King accosted her with great respect and a submissive air that reassured her. He begged her not to deprive them so soon of the pleasure of seeing her, and that she would remain and grace the banquet he was about to give the princes and princesses who had honoured him with their presence on this occasion. He led her into a magnificent saloon, in which all the court were assembled, and offered to her himself a golden basin and a ewer filled with water, that she might wash her beautiful hands. At this, she could no longer suppress her emotions; she flung herself at his feet, and embracing his knees, exclaimed, “Behold, my dream has come true! You have offered me water to wash with on my sister’s wedding-day without any evil befalling you.”

The King recognised her with less difficulty, as he had more than once been struck by her great resemblance to Merveilleuse. “Ah! my dear daughter,” said he, embracing her with tears in his eyes, “can you forget my cruelty? I sought your life because I thought your dream prognosticated the loss of my crown. It did so, indeed,” continued he, “for here are your two sisters married, and each has a crown of her own, therefore mine shall be yours.” So saying, he rose, and placed his crown on the head of the Princess, crying, “Long live Queen Merveilleuse!” All the court repeated the shout. The two sisters of the young Queen came and threw their arms around her neck, and kissed her a thousand times. Merveilleuse was so happy she could not express her feelings. She cried and laughed at the same moment. She embraced one, talked to another, thanked the King, and in the midst of all this, recollected the captain of the guard to whom she was under so much obligation, and asked eagerly to see him, but they informed her he was dead. She felt his loss deeply.

When they sat down to table, the King requested her to relate all that had happened to her since the day he had issued such fatal orders respecting her. She immediately commenced the narrative, with the most admirable grace, and everybody listened to her attentively.

But whilst she was thus engrossed by the King and her sisters, the enamoured Ram saw the hour fixed for the return of the Princess pass by, and his anxiety became so extreme that he could not control it. “She will never return,” he cried; “my miserable sheep’s face disgusts her. Oh! too unfortunate lover, what will become of me if I have lost Merveilleuse? Ragotte! barbarous Fairy! — how hast thou revenged thyself for my indifference to thee!” He indulged in such lamentations for a long time, and then, finding night approach, without any signs of the Princess, he ran to the city. When he reached the King’s palace, he asked to see Merveilleuse; but as everybody was now aware of her adventures, and by no means desired that she should return to the realms of the Ram, they harshly refused to admit him to her presence. He uttered cries and lamentations capable of moving any one except the Swiss guard who stood sentry at the palace gates. At length, broken-hearted, he flung himself on the ground, and breathed his last sigh.

The King and Merveilleuse knew nothing of the sad tragedy which had taken place. The King proposed to his daughter to mount a triumphal car, and show herself to all the city by the lights of thousands and thousands of flambeaux which illuminated the windows and all the great squares; but what a horrible spectacle for her, to see, as she issued from the palace-gates, her dear Ram stretched breathless on the pavement! She threw herself from the car, she ran to him, she wept, she groaned, she knew that her unpunctuality had caused the death of the royal Ram. In her despair, she felt she should die herself.

It was then admitted that persons of the highest rank are subject, like others, to the blows of Fortune, and that they frequently meet with the greatest misery at the very moment they believe themselves to have attained the height of their wishes.

12

FINETTE CENDRON

Once on a time there was a King and a Queen who had managed their affairs very badly. They were driven out of their kingdom. They sold their crowns to support themselves; then their wardrobes, their linen, their lace, and all their furniture, piece by piece. The brokers were tired of purchasing, for every day something or other was sent for sale. When they had disposed of nearly everything, the King said to the Queen, “We are out of our own country, and have no longer any property. We must do something to get a living for ourselves and our poor children. Consider a little what we can do: for up to this time I have known no trade but a king’s, which is a very agreeable one.” The Queen had much good sense; she asked for eight days to think the matter over; at the end of that time, she said to the King, “Sire, we must not make ourselves unhappy. You have only to make nets, with which you may catch both fowl and fish. As the lines wear out, I will spin to make new ones. With respect to our three daughters, they are downright idle girls, who still think themselves fine ladies, and would fain live in that style without work. We must take them to such a distance — such a distance, that they can never find their way back again, for it will be impossible for us to keep them as fine as they would like to be.”

The King began to weep when he found he must separate himself from his children. He was a kind father; but the Queen was mistress; he therefore agreed to whatever she proposed. He said to her, “Get up early to-morrow morning, and take your three daughters wherever you think fit.” Whilst they were thus plotting together, the Princess Finette, who was the youngest daughter, listened at the key-hole, and when she discovered the design of her father and mother, she set off as fast as she could for a great grotto, at a considerable distance from where they lived, and which was the abode of the Fairy Merluche, who was her godmother.

Finette had taken with her two pounds of fresh butter, some eggs, some milk, and some flour, to make a nice cake for her godmother, in order that she might be well received by her. She commenced her journey gaily enough; but the further she went, the more weary she grew. The soles of her shoes were worn completely through, and her pretty little feet became so sore, that it was sad to see them. She was quite exhausted; she sat down on the grass and cried. A beautiful Spanish horse came by, saddled and bridled. There were more diamonds on his housings than would purchase three cities, and when he saw the Princess he stopped and began to graze quietly beside her. Bending his knees he appeared to pay homage to her; upon which, taking him by the bridle, “Gentle Hobby,” said she, “wouldst thou kindly bear me to my Fairy godmother’s? Thou wouldst do me great service; for I am so weary that I feel ready to die: but if thou wilt assist me on this occasion, I will give thee good oats and good hay, and a litter of fresh straw to lie upon.” The horse bent himself almost to the ground, and young Finette jumping upon him, he galloped off with her as lightly as a bird. He stopped at the entrance of the grotto, as if he had known where he was to go to; and, in fact, he knew well enough; for it was Merluche herself who, having foreseen her goddaughter’s visit, had sent the fine horse for her.

As soon as Finette entered the grotto, she made three profound curtsies to her godmother, and took the hem of her gown and kissed it, and then said to her, “Good day, godmother, how do you do? I have brought you some butter, milk, flour, and eggs, to make a cake with after our country fashion.” “You are welcome, Finette,” said the Fairy; “come hither that I may embrace you.” She kissed her twice, at which Finette was greatly delighted, for Madame Merluche was not one of those fairies you might find by the dozen. “Come, goddaughter,” said she, “you shall be my little lady’s maid. Take down my hair and comb it.” The Princess took her hair down and combed it as cleverly as possible. “I know well enough,” said Merluche, “what brought you hither. You overheard the King and Queen consulting how they might lose you, and you would avoid this misfortune. Here, you have only to take this skein of thread; it will never break. Fasten one end of it to the door of your house and keep the other end in your hand; when the Queen leaves you, you will easily find your way back by following the thread.”

The Princess thanked her godmother, who gave her a bag full of fine dresses all of gold and silver. She embraced her, placed her again on the pretty horse, and in two or three minutes he carried Finette to the door of their majesties’ cottage. “My little friend,” said Finette to the horse, “you are very handsome and clever; your speed is as great as the sun’s. I thank you for your service. Return to the place you came from.” She entered the house softly, and hiding her bag under her bolster went to bed, without appearing to know anything that had taken place. At break of day the King woke his wife: “Come, come, Madam,” said he, “make ready for your journey.” She got up directly, took her thick shoes, a short petticoat, a white jacket, and a stick. She summoned her eldest daughter, who was named Fleur d’Amour; her second, who was named Belle-de-Nuit, and her third, named Fine-Oreille, whom they familiarly called Finette. “I have been thinking all last night,” said the Queen, “that we ought to go and see my sister; she will entertain us capitally. We may feast and laugh as much as we like there.” Fleur d’Amour, who was in despair at living in a desert, said to her mother, “Let us go, Madam, wherever you please; provided I may walk somewhere, I don’t care.” The two others said as much. They took leave of the King and set off all four together. They went so far — so far, that Fine-Oreille was much afraid her thread would not be long enough, for they had gone nearly a thousand leagues. She walked always behind the others, drawing the thread cleverly through the thickets.

When the Queen imagined that her daughters could not find the way back, she entered a thick wood, and said to them, “Sleep, my little lambs, I will be like the shepherdess, who watches over her flock for fear the wolf should devour them.” They laid themselves down on the grass and went to sleep. The Queen left them there, believing she should never see them again. Finette had shut her eyes, but not gone to sleep. “If I were an ill-natured girl,” said she to herself, “I should go home directly and leave my sisters to die here, for they beat me and scratch me till the blood comes. But notwithstanding all their malice, I will not abandon them.” She aroused them, and told them the whole story. They began to cry, and begged her to take them with her, promising that they would give her beautiful dolls, a child’s set of silver plate, and all their other toys and sweetmeats. “I am quite sure you will do no such thing,” said Finette; “but I will behave as a good sister should, for all that.” And so saying she rose, and followed the clue with the two princesses, so that they reached home almost as soon as the Queen. Whilst they were at the door, they heard the King say, “It gives me the heart-ache to see you come back alone.” “Pshaw!” said the Queen, “our daughters were too great an incumbrance to us.” “But,” said the King, “if you had brought back my Finette, I might have consoled myself for the loss of the others, for they loved nothing and nobody.” At that moment they knocked at the door — rap, rap. “Who is there?” said the King. “Your three daughters,” they replied, “Fleur d’Amour, Belle-de-Nuit, and Fine-Oreille.”

The Queen began to tremble. “Don’t open the door,” she exclaimed; “it must be their ghosts, for it is impossible they could find their way back alive.” The King, who was as great a coward as his wife, called out, “It is false; you are not my daughters!” but Fine-Oreille, who was a shrewd girl, said to him, “Papa, I will stoop down, and do you look at me through the hole made for the cat to come through, and if I am not Finette, I consent to be whipped.” The King looked as she told him to do, and as soon as he recognised her, he opened the door. The Queen pretended to be delighted to see them again, and said, “that she had forgotten something, and had come home to fetch it; but that most assuredly she should have returned to them.” They pretended to believe her, and went up to a snug little hay-loft, in which they always slept.

“Now, sisters,” said Finette, “you promised me a doll; give it me.” “Thou mayst wait for it long enough, little rogue,” said they. “Thou art the cause of the King’s caring so little for us;” and thereupon, snatching up their distaffs, they beat her as if she had been so much mortar. When they had beaten her as much as they chose, they let her go to bed, but as she was covered with wounds and bruises, she could not sleep, and she heard the Queen say to the King, “I will take them in another direction, much further, and I am confident they will never return.” When Finette heard this plot, she rose very softly to go and see her godmother again. She went into the hen-yard and took two hens and a cock, and wrung their necks, also two little rabbits that the Queen was fattening upon cabbages, to make a feast of on the next occasion. She put them all into a basket and set off: but she had not gone a league groping her way and quaking with fear, when the Spanish horse came up at a gallop, snorting and neighing. She thought it was all over with her; that some soldiers were about to seize her. When she saw the beautiful horse all alone, she jumped upon him, delighted to travel so comfortably, and arrived almost immediately at her godmother’s.

After the usual ceremonies, she presented her with the hens, the cock, and the rabbits, and begged the assistance of her good advice, the Queen having sworn she would lead them to the end of the world. Merluche told her goddaughter not to afflict herself, and gave her a sack full of ashes. “Carry this sack before you,” said she, “and shake it as you go along. You will walk on the ashes, and when you wish to return you will have only to follow your footmarks; but do not bring your sisters back with you. They are too malicious, and if you do bring them back I will never see you again.” Finette took leave of her, taking away by her order thirty or forty millions of diamonds in a little box, which she put in her pocket. The horse was ready in waiting, and carried her home as before. At daybreak the Queen called the Princesses. They came to her, and she said to them, “The King is not very well; I dreamed last night that I ought to go and gather for him some flowers and herbs in a certain country where they grow in great perfection. They will completely renovate him, therefore let us go there directly.” Fleur d’Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, who never thought their mother intended to lose them again, were much grieved at these tidings. Go, however, they must; and so far did they go that never before had any one made so long a journey. Finette, who never said a word, kept behind, and shook her sack of ashes with such wonderful skill that neither the wind nor the rain affected them.

The Queen being perfectly persuaded that they could not find their way back again, and observing one evening that her three daughters were fast asleep, took the opportunity of leaving them, and returned home. As soon as it was light, and Finette found her mother was gone, she awoke her sisters. “We are alone,” said she; “the Queen has left us.” Fleur d’Amour and Belle-de-Nuit began to cry; they tore their hair, and beat their own faces with their fists, exclaiming, “Alas! what will become of us!” Finette was the best-hearted girl in the world. She had compassion again on her sisters. “See now to what I expose myself,” said she to them; “for when my godmother furnished me with means to return, she forbade me to show you the way, and told me that if I disobeyed her, she would never see me more.” Belle-de-Nuit threw herself on Finette’s neck, Fleur d’Amour did the same, kissing her so affectionately that it required nothing more to bring them all three back together to the King and the Queen.

Their majesties were greatly surprised at the return of the Princesses. They talked about it all night long, and the youngest, who was not called Fine-Oreille for nothing, heard them concoct a new plot, and arrange that the next morning the Queen should again take them on a journey. She ran to wake her sisters; “Alas!” said she to them, “we are lost! The Queen is determined to lead us into some wilderness, and leave us there. For your sakes I have offended my godmother; I dare not go to her for advice as I used to do.” They were in sad trouble, and said one to another, “What shall we do, sister; what shall we do?” At length Belle-de-Nuit said to the two others, “Why should we worry ourselves? old Merluche has not got all the wit in the world — some other folks may have a little. We have only to take plenty of peas with us and drop them all along the road as we go, and we shall be sure to trace our way back.” Fleur d’Amour thought the idea admirable; they loaded themselves with peas, filling all their pockets; but Fine-Oreille, instead of peas, took her bag full of fine clothes, and the little box of diamonds, and as soon as the Queen called them they were ready to go. She said to them, “I dreamed last night that in a country which it is unnecessary to name, there are three handsome princes, who are waiting to marry you. I am going to take you there, to see if my dream is true.” The Queen went first and her daughters followed her, dropping their peas without any anxiety, for they made sure of being able to find their way home.

This time the Queen went further than ever she had gone before; but during one dark night she left the Princesses, and reached home very weary, but very happy to have got rid of so great a burthen as her three daughters.

The three Princesses having slept till eleven o’clock in the morning, awoke, and Finette was the first to discover the Queen’s absence. Although she was perfectly prepared for it, she could not help crying, trusting for her return much more to the power of her fairy godmother than to the cleverness of her sisters. She went to them in a great fright, and said, “The Queen is gone; we must follow her as quickly as possible.” “Hold thy tongue, little mischievous animal,” replied Fleur d’Amour; “we can find our way well enough when we choose; you are making a great fuss at a wrong season, gossip.” Finette durst not make any answer. When, however, they did try to retrace their steps, there were no signs or paths to be found. There are immense flocks of pigeons in that country, and they had eaten up all the peas. The Princesses began to cry and scream with grief and terror. After being two days without food, Fleur d’Amour said to Belle-de-Nuit, “Sister, hast thou nothing to eat?” “Nothing,” she replied. She put the same question to Finette. “Nor have I,” she answered, “but I have just found an acorn.” “Ah! give it to me,” said one; “Give it to me,” said the other. Each insisted on having it. “An acorn will not go far amongst three of us,” said Finette; “let us plant it; there may spring a tree from it which may be useful to us.” They consented, although there was little chance of a tree growing in a country where none were to be seen. They could find only cabbages and lettuces, on which the Princesses lived. If they had been very delicate they must have died a hundred times. They slept almost always in the open air, and every morning and evening they took it by turns to water the acorn, saying to it, “Grow, grow, beautiful acorn!” It began to grow so fast that you could see it grow. When it had got to some size, Fleur d’Amour tried to climb it, but it was not strong enough to bear her; she felt it bend under her weight, and so she came down again. Belle-de-Nuit was not more successful. Finette, being lighter, managed to get up and remain a long time. Her sisters called to her, “Canst thou see anything, sister?” She answered, “No, I can see nothing.” “Ah, then, the oak is not tall enough,” said Fleur d’Amour; so they continued to water it, and say, “Grow, grow, beautiful acorn!” Finette never failed climbing it twice a-day. One morning when she was up in the tree, Belle-de-Nuit said to Fleur d’Amour, “I have found a bag which our sister has hidden from us. What can there be in it?” Fleur d’Amour replied, “She told me it contained some old lace she had got to mend.” “I believe it is full of sugar-plums,” said Belle-de-Nuit. She had a sweet tooth, and determined to ascertain the fact. She opened the bag, and found in it actually a quantity of old lace belonging to the King and Queen, but hidden beneath it were the fine clothes the Fairy had given to Finette, and the box of diamonds. “Well, now! was there ever such a sly little rogue?” exclaimed Belle-de-Nuit; “we will take out all the things, and put some stones in their place.” They did so directly. Finette rejoined them, without observing what they had done, for she never dreamed of decking herself out in a desert; she thought of nothing but the oak, which speedily became the finest oak that ever was seen.

One day that she had climbed up into it, and that her sisters as usual asked her if she could see anything, she exclaimed, “I can see a large mansion, so fine — so fine, that I want words to describe it; the walls are of emeralds and rubies, the roof of diamonds; it is all covered with golden bells and weathercocks that whirl about as the wind blows.” “Thou liest,” said they; “it cannot be as fine as thou sayest.” “Believe me,” replied Finette, “I am no story-teller; come and see for yourselves; my eyes are quite dazzled by it.” Fleur d’Amour climbed up the tree. When she saw the château, she could talk of nothing else. Belle-de-Nuit, who had a great deal of curiosity, failed not to climb in her turn, and was as much enchanted as her sisters at the sight of the château. “We must certainly go to this palace,” they said; “perhaps we shall find in it some handsome princes, who will be only too happy to marry us.” They talked the whole evening long on this subject, and lay down to sleep on the grass; but when Finette appeared to them in a sound slumber, Fleur d’Amour said to Belle-de-Nuit, “I’ll tell you what we should do, sister; let us get up and dress ourselves in the fine clothes Finette has brought hither.” “You are in the right,” said Belle-de-Nuit; so they got up, curled their hair, powdered it, put patches on their cheeks, and dressed themselves in the beautiful gold and silver gowns all covered with diamonds. Never was anything so magnificent. Finette, ignorant of the theft her wicked sisters had committed, took up her bag with the intention of dressing herself, but was vastly distressed to find nothing in it but flints. At the same moment she perceived her sisters shining like suns. She wept, and complained of the treachery they had been guilty of towards her, but they only laughed and made a joke of it. “Is it possible,” said she to them, “that you will have the effrontery to take me to the château, without dressing and making me as fine as you are?” “We have barely enough for ourselves,” replied Fleur d’Amour. “Thou shalt have nothing but blows, an’ thou importunest us.” “But,” continued she, “the clothes you have on are mine; my godmother gave them to me. You have no claim to them.” “If thou sayest more about it,” said they, “we will knock thee on the head, and bury thee without any one being the wiser!” Poor Finette did not dare provoke them; she followed them slowly, walking some short distance behind them, as if she were only their servant.

The nearer they approached to the mansion the more wonderful it appeared to them. “Oh!” said Fleur d’Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, “how we shall amuse ourselves! — what capital dinners we shall get! We shall dine at the King’s table; but Finette will have to wash the dishes in the kitchen, for she looks like a scullion; and if anybody asks who she is, we must take care not to call her our sister; we must say she is the little cowkeeper in the village.” The lovely and sensible Finette was in despair at being so ill-treated.

When they reached the castle-gate they knocked at it. It was opened immediately by a terrific old woman. She had but one eye, which was in the middle of her forehead, but it was bigger than five or six ordinary ones. Her nose was flat, her complexion swarthy, and her mouth so horrible that it frightened you to look at it. She was fifteen feet high, and measured thirty round her body. “Unfortunate wretches!” said she to them; “what brought ye hither? Know ye not this is the Ogre’s Castle, and that all three of you would scarcely suffice for his breakfast? But I am more good-natured than my husband. Come in; I will not eat you all at once. You shall have the consolation of living two or three days longer.” When they heard the Ogress say this, they ran away, hoping to escape; but one of her strides was equal to fifty of theirs. She ran after and caught them, one by the hair, the others by the nape of the neck; and putting them under her arm took them into the castle, and threw them all three into the cellar, which was full of toads and adders, and strewed with the bones of those the Ogres had eaten.

As the Ogress fancied eating Finette immediately, she went to fetch some vinegar, oil, and salt, to make her into a salad, but hearing the Ogre coming, and thinking that the Princesses were so white and delicate that she should like to eat them all herself, she popped them quickly under a large tub, out of which they could only look through a hole.

The Ogre was six times as tall as his wife; when he spoke, the building shook, and when he coughed it was like peals of thunder. He had but one great filthy eye; his hair stood all on end; he leaned on a huge log of wood which he used for a cane. He had a covered basket in his hand, out of which he pulled fifteen little children he had stolen on the road, and swallowed them like fifteen new-laid eggs. When the Princesses saw him they trembled under the tub. They were afraid to cry, lest they should be heard, but they whispered to each other: “He will eat us all alive; is there no way to save ourselves?”

The Ogre said to his wife, “Look ye, I smell fresh meat; give it me.” “That’s good!” said the Ogress; “thou dost always fancy thou smellest fresh meat; it is thy sheep which have just passed by.” “Oh! I am not mistaken,” said the Ogre, “I smell fresh meat for certain, and I shall hunt everywhere for it.” “Hunt,” said she; “thou wilt find nothing.” “If I do find it, and thou hast hidden it from me,” replied the Ogre, “I will cut thy head off, and make a ball of it.” She was frightened at this threat, and said, “Be not angry, my dear little Ogre, I will tell thee the truth. Three young girls came here to-day, and I have got them safe, but it would be a pity to eat them, for they know how to do everything; I am old and want rest; thou seest our fine house is very dirty, that our bread is badly made, and thy soup now rarely pleases thee; that I myself do not appear so handsome in thine eyes since I have worked so hard. These girls will be my servants. I pray thee do not eat them just now; if thou shouldst fancy one of them some other day, they will be always in thy power.”

The Ogre was very reluctant to promise that he would not eat them immediately. “Let me alone,” said he, “I will only eat two of them.” “No, thou shalt not eat them.” “Well then, I will only eat the smallest;” and she replied, “No, thou shalt not touch one of them.” At last, after much contention, he promised he would not eat them. She thought to herself, “When he goes hunting I will eat them, and tell him they have made their escape.”

The Ogre came out of the cellar, and told his wife to bring the girls before him. The poor Princesses were almost dead with fright; the Ogress tried to comfort them. When they were brought before the Ogre, he asked them what they could do. They answered, they could sweep, and sew, and spin, exceedingly well; that they could make ragouts so delicious that you would eat even the plates; and as for bread, cakes, and patties, people had been wont to send to them for a thousand leagues round. The Ogre was dainty. “Aha!” said he, “set these good housewives to work immediately; but,” said he to Finette, “after you have lighted the fire, how do you know when the oven is hot enough?” “My Lord,” she replied, “I throw some butter into it, and then taste it with my tongue.” “Very well,” said he; “light the oven fire, then.” The oven was as big as a stable, for the Ogre and

Ogress ate more bread than would feed two armies. The Princess made a terrific fire. The oven was as hot as a furnace; and the Ogre, who was present, waiting for his new bread, ate in the meanwhile a hundred lambs and a hundred little sucking-pigs. Fleur d’Amour and Belle-de-Nuit were making the dough. “Well,” said the great Ogre, “is the oven hot?” “You shall see, my Lord,” said Finette. She threw in a thousand pounds of butter, and then said to him, “It should be tasted with the tongue, but I am too short to reach it.” “I am tall enough,” said the Ogre; and stooping, he thrust his body so far into the oven that he could not recover himself, and so all the flesh was burnt off his bones. When the Ogress came to the oven she was astounded to find her husband a mountain of cinders!

Fleur d’Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, who saw she was very much distressed, consoled her to the best of their ability, but they feared her grief would too soon subside, and, her appetite returning, she would make a salad of them as she was about to do before. They said to her, “Take comfort, Madam, you will find some king or some marquis who will be delighted to marry you.” She smiled a little, showing her teeth longer than one’s fingers.

When they saw her in such a good humour, Finette said to her, “If you would throw off these horrible bear-skins in which you wrap yourself, and follow the fashion, we will dress your hair to perfection, and you will look like a star.” “Come,” said the Ogress, “let us see what thou wouldst do; but assure thyself that if there be any ladies handsomer than me, I will make minced-meat of thee!” Upon this the three Princesses took off her cap, and began combing and curling her hair, amusing her all the while with their chatter. Finette then taking a hatchet, struck her from behind such a blow that her head was taken clean from her shoulders.

Never was there such delight! The three Princesses mounted upon the roof of the mansion to amuse themselves by ringing the golden bells. They ran into all the apartments, which were of pearls and diamonds, and the furniture so costly, that they were ready to die with pleasure. They laughed, they sang, they wanted for nothing. There were corn, sweetmeats, fruit, and dolls, in abundance. Fleur d'Amour and Belle-de-Nuit went to sleep in beds of brocade and velvet, and said to each other, "Behold us richer than our father was when he was in possession of his kingdom; but we want to be married, and nobody will venture here. This mansion no doubt is considered a cut-throat place, for people are not aware of the death of the Ogre and Ogress. We must go to the nearest city, and show ourselves in our fine dresses, and we shall soon find some honest bankers who will be very glad to marry Princesses." As soon as they were dressed, they told Finette they were going to take a walk; that she must stay at home and cook, and wash and clean the house, so that on their return they might find everything as it should be: if not, she should be beaten within an inch of her life! Poor Finette, whose heart was full of grief, remained alone in the house, sweeping, cleaning, washing, without resting, and crying all the time. "How unfortunate," she said, "that I should have disobeyed my godmother! All sorts of evils happen to me; my sisters have stolen my costly dresses, and array themselves in my ornaments. But for me, the Ogre and his wife would be alive and well at this moment. How have I benefited by destroying them?" When she had said this, she sobbed till she was almost choked. Shortly afterwards her sisters returned laden with Portugal oranges, preserves, and sugar. "Ah!" said they to her, "what a splendid ball we have been to! How it was crowded! The King's son was amongst the dancers; we have had a thousand compliments paid to us. Come, take our shoes off and clean them, as it is your business to do." Finette obeyed them, and if by accident she let a word drop in the way of complaint, they flew at her, and beat her almost to death.

The next day they went out again, and returned with an account of new wonders. One evening that Finette was sitting in the chimney corner on a heap of cinders, not knowing what to do, she examined the cracks in the chimney, and found in one of them a little key so old and so dirty that she had the greatest trouble in cleaning it. When she had done so she found it was made of gold, and presuming that a golden key ought to open some beautiful little box, she ran all over the mansion trying it in all the locks, and at length found it fitted that of a casket which was a masterpiece of art. She opened it, and found it full of clothes, diamonds, lace, linen, and ribands, worth immense sums of money. She said not a word of her good luck to her sisters, but waited impatiently for their going out the next day. As soon as they were out of sight she dressed and adorned herself, till she looked more beautiful than the sun and moon together.

Thus arrayed, she went to the ball where her sisters were dancing, and though she had no mask on, she was so changed for the better that they did not know her. As soon as she appeared a murmur arose throughout the assembly; some were full of admiration, others of jealousy. She was asked to dance, and surpassed all the other ladies in grace as much as she did in beauty. The mistress of the mansion came to her, and making her a profound curtsy, requested to know her name, that she might always remember with pleasure the appellation of such a marvellously beautiful person. She replied civilly that her name was Cendron. There was not a lover who did not leave his mistress for Cendron: not a poet who did not make verses on Cendron. Never did a little name make so much noise in so short a time. The echoes repeated nothing but the praises of Cendron. People had not eyes enough to gaze upon her, nor tongues enough to extol her.

Fleur d’Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, who had previously created a great sensation wherever they appeared, observing the reception accorded to this new comer, were ready to burst with spite: but Finette extricated herself from all ill-consequences with the best grace in the world. Her manners appeared those of one born to command.

Fleur d’Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, who never saw their sister but with her face begrimed with soot from the chimney, and altogether as dirty as a dog, had so completely lost all idea of her beauty that they did not recognise her in the least. They paid their court to Cendron, as well as the rest. As soon as she saw the ball was nearly over, she hastened away, returned home, undressed herself quickly, and put on her old rags. When her sisters arrived, “Ah! Finette,” said they to her, “we have just seen a young princess who is perfectly charming. She is not a young ape such as thou art, she is as white as snow, with a richer crimson than the roses; her teeth are pearls, her lips coral; she had a gown on that must have weighed more than a thousand pounds. It was all gold and diamonds. How beautiful! how amiable she is!” Finette said in a low voice, “So was I; so was I.” “What dost thou mutter there?” said her sisters. She repeated in a still lower tone, “So was I; so was I.” This little game was played for some time. There was scarcely a day that Finette did not appear in a new dress; for the casket was a fairy one, and the more you took out of it the more there came in, and everything so highly fashionable, that all the ladies dressed themselves in imitation of Finette.

One evening that Finette had danced more than usual, and had delayed her departure to a later hour, being anxious to make up for lost time and get home a little before her sisters, she walked so fast that she lost one of her slippers, which was of red velvet, embroidered with pearls. She tried to find it in the road, but the night was so dark, her search was in vain, and she entered the house one foot shod and the other not. The next day, Prince Chéri, the King’s eldest son, going out hunting, found Finette’s slipper. He had it picked up, examined it, admired its diminutive size and elegance, turned it over and over, kissed it, took care of it and carried it home with him. From that day he would eat nothing, he became thin, and altered visibly; was yellow as a quince, melancholy, depressed. The King and Queen, who loved him to distraction, sent in every direction for the choicest game and the best sweetmeats. They were less than nothing to him. He looked at it all without uttering a word in reply to his mother when she spoke to him. They sent everywhere for the first physicians, even as far as

Paris, and Montpellier. When they arrived they saw the Prince, and after watching him for three days and three nights without once losing sight of him, they came to the conclusion that he was in love, and that he would die if they did not find the only remedy for him. The Queen who doted on her son, was nearly dissolved in tears, so great was her grief at not being able to discover the object of his love, that he might marry her. She brought into his apartment the most beautiful ladies she could find. He would not condescend to look at them. At length she said to him, one day, “My dear son, thou wilt kill me with grief, for thou lovest and concealest from us thy passion. Tell us whom thou lovest, and we will give her to thee, though she should only be a simple shepherdess.” The Prince taking courage from the promises of the Queen, drew the slipper from under his bolster, and showing it to her, said, “Behold, Madam, the cause of my malady. I found this little, soft delicate, pretty slipper as I went out to hunt, and I will never marry any one but the woman who can wear it.” “Well, my son,” said the queen, “do not afflict yourself, we will have her sought for.” She hastened to the King with this intelligence. He was very much surprised, and ordered immediately that a proclamation should be made with sound of drum and trumpet, that all single women should come and try on the slipper, and that she whom it fitted should marry the Prince. On hearing this every one washed their feet with all sorts of waters, pastes and pommades, some ladies actually had them peeled, and others starved themselves in order to make their feet smaller and prettier.

They went in crowds to try on the slipper, but not one of them could get it on, and the more they came in vain, the greater was the Prince’s affliction. Fleur d’Amour and Belle-de-Nuit dressed themselves one day so superbly, that they were astonishing to look at. “Where can you be going to?” asked Finette. “We are going to the great city,” replied they, “where the King and Queen reside, to try on the slipper the King’s son has found; for if it should fit either of us, the Prince will marry her, and then my sister or I will be a queen.” “And why should not I go?” said Finette. “Thou art a pretty simpleton, truly,” said they; “go, go, and water our cabbages; thou art fit for nothing better.”

Finette thought directly she would put on her finest clothes, and go and take her chance with the rest, for she had a slight suspicion that she should be successful. What troubled her was, that she did not know her way; for the ball at which she had danced was not given in the great city. She dressed herself magnificently; her gown was of blue satin, covered with stars in diamonds. She had a sun of them in her hair, and a full moon on her back; and all these jewels shone so brightly, that one couldn’t look at her without winking. When she opened the door to go out, she was much surprised to see the pretty Spanish horse which had carried her to her godmother’s. She patted him, and said, “You are most welcome, my little hobby. I am much obliged to my godmother, Merluche.” He knelt down, and she mounted upon him like a nymph: he was all covered with golden bells and ribands. His housings and bridle were priceless, and Finette was thirty times more beautiful than fair Helen of Troy.

The Spanish horse galloped off gaily, his bells went “ting, ting, ting.” Fleur d’Amour and Belle-de-Nuit, hearing the sound of them, turned round and saw her coming; but what was their astonishment at that moment? They knew her to be both Finette and Cendron. They were very much splashed, their fine dresses draggled with mud. “Sister!” cried Fleur d’Amour to Belle-de-Nuit, “I protest here is Finette Cendron.” The other echoed the cry; and Finette passing close to them, her horse splashed them all over, making them a mass of mud. Finette laughed at them, and said, “Your Highnesses, Cendron despises you as you deserve;” then passing them like a shot, she disappeared. Belle-de-Nuit and Fleur d’Amour looked at each other. “Are we dreaming?” said they; “who could have supplied Finette with clothes and a horse? what miracle is this? Good fortune attends her; she will put on the slipper, and we shall have made a long journey in vain.”

Whilst they were distressing themselves, Finette arrived at the palace. The moment she appeared everybody thought she was a Queen. The guards presented arms, the drums beat, and the trumpets sounded a flourish; all the gates were flung open, and those who had seen her at the ball preceded her, crying, “Room! room! for the beautiful Cendron, the wonder of the world!” She entered in this state the apartment of the dying Prince. He cast his eyes on her, and enraptured at her sight, wished fervently that her foot might be small enough for her to wear the slipper. She put it on instantly, and produced its fellow which she had brought with her on purpose. Shouts immediately arose of “Long live the Princess Chérie, long live the Princess who will be our Queen!” The Prince arose from his couch, and advanced to kiss her hand; she found he was handsome and very intelligent. He paid her a thousand delicate attentions. The King and Queen were informed of the event. They came in all haste, and the Queen took Finette in her arms, called her her daughter, her darling, her little Queen! and made her some magnificent presents, to which the liberal King added many more. They fired the guns; violins, bagpipes, every sort of musical instrument was set playing; nothing was talked of but dancing and rejoicing. The King, the Queen, and the Prince, begged Cendron to consent to the marriage taking place immediately. “No,” said she, “I must first tell you my history,” which she did in a few words. When they found that she was a Princess born, there was another burst of joy, which was almost the death of them; but when she told them the names of the King and Queen, her father and mother, they recognised them as the sovereigns whose dominions they had conquered. They imparted this fact to Finette, and she immediately vowed she would not consent to marry the Prince until they had restored the estates of her father. They promised to do so, for they had upwards of a hundred kingdoms, and one more or less was not worth talking about.

In the meanwhile Belle-de-Nuit and Fleur d’Amour arrived at the palace. The first news that greeted them was that Cendron had put on the slipper. They knew not what to do or to say; they determined to go back again without seeing her; but when she heard they were there, she insisted they should come in, and instead of frowning on them and punishing them as they deserved, she rose and advanced to meet them, embraced them tenderly, and then presented them to the Queen, saying to her, “Madam, these are my sisters; they are very amiable, and I request you will love them.” They were so confused at the kindness of Finette, that they could not utter a word. She promised them they should return to their own kingdom, which the Prince would restore to their family. At these words they threw themselves on their knees before her, weeping for joy.

The nuptials were the most splendid that ever were seen. Finette wrote to her godmother and put the letter, accompanied with valuable presents, on the back of the pretty Spanish horse, begging her to seek the King and Queen, to tell them their good fortune, and that they had nothing to do but return to their kingdom. The Fairy Merluche acquitted herself very graciously of this commission. The father and mother of Finette were repossessed of their estates, and her sisters became afterwards queens as well as herself.

13

FORTUNÉE

There was once upon a time a poor husbandman, who, feeling himself at the point of death, did not wish to leave behind him any subjects of dispute between his son and daughter, whom he tenderly loved. So he said to them, “Your mother brought me as a wedding portion two joint-stools and a straw mattrass. There they are with my hen; also a pot of pinks, and a plain silver ring, which were given me by a great lady who once lived in my poor hut. She said to me at parting, ‘My good man, there is a present I make you; be careful to well water the pinks and to lock up safely the ring. In addition to this, your daughter shall be incomparably beautiful. Name her Fortunée, and give her this ring and these pinks to console her for her poverty.’ Thus, continued the good man, my dear Fortunée, you shall have both the one and the other; the rest shall be for your brother.” The two children of the husbandman appeared contented; he died; they wept, and the division of property was made without an appeal to the law.

Fortunée thought that her brother loved her, but one day that she had taken one of the stools for a seat, he said with great fierceness, “Keep your pinks and your ring, but do not disarrange my stools; I like order in my house.” Fortunée, who was very gentle, began to weep silently, and remained standing whilst Bedou (that was her brother’s name) was seated in state like a judge. Supper time arrived. Bedou had an excellent new-laid egg from his only hen, and he threw the shell at his sister. “There,” he said, “I have nothing else to give you; if that does not suit you, go and hunt for frogs: there are plenty in the neighbouring marsh.” Fortunée made no answer; she only raised her eyes to heaven, wept again, and then went to her own room. She found it filled with perfume, and never doubting that it was the scent of the pinks, she approached them sadly and said, “Beautiful pinks, whose variety is so charming to my sight, you who console my afflicted heart by the sweet perfume you exhale, do not fear that I shall let you want for water, or with cruel hand, that I shall tear you from your stem. I shall cherish you, for you are my only treasures.” As she ceased speaking, she looked to see if the plants then required watering — they were very dry. She took her pitcher, and hastened by the light of the moon to the fountain, which was at some distance. As she had walked fast, she sat down by the side of the fountain to rest; but she had scarcely been there a moment when she saw a lady approaching, whose majestic air was in perfect accordance with the numerous attendants who accompanied her; six maids of honour carried her train, she leant on two others; her guards walked before her, richly dressed in amaranth velvet, embroidered with pearls. They carried an arm-chair, covered with cloth of gold, in which she seated herself, and a field-canopy which was quickly arranged; at the same time, they set out the buffet. It was covered with vessels of gold and vases of crystal. They served an excellent supper by the side of the fountain, the sweet murmurs of which seemed to accompany a number of voices that sang these words: —

SOFTEST ZEPHYRS FAN OUR GROVES,
Flora garlands every glade;
Happy birds declare their loves
Deep within the leafy shade;

Listen to their warblings sweet.
And if thy heart with love would beat,
Choose amongst the countless swains
Who would glory in thy chains.

Fortunée remained in a corner, not daring to move, so much was she surprised at all that was passing. In a few moments, this great Queen said to one of her Equerries, “I fancy I see a shepherdess near that thicket; let her approach.” Fortunée immediately advanced, and though she was naturally timid, she did not omit to make a profound curtsey to the Queen with so much grace, that those who saw her were perfectly astonished. She took the hem of the Queen’s robe and kissed it, and then stood erect before her, her eyes modestly cast down, and her cheeks coloured with crimson, which heightened the brilliant whiteness of her complexion. It was easy to remark in her manners that simplicity and sweetness which is so charming in young maidens.

“What are you doing here, pretty girl,” said the Queen; “are you not afraid of robbers?” “Alas! Madam,” replied Fortunée, “I have but a linen gown; what would they take from a poor shepherdess like me.” “You are not rich, then?” said the Queen, smiling. “I am so poor,” answered Fortunée, “that I only inherited from my father a pot of pinks and a silver ring.”

“But you have a heart,” said the Queen. “If any one wished to have that, would you give it them?” “I do not know what it is to give my heart, Madam,” she replied; “I have always understood that without a heart we could not live, that if it is wounded we must die, and notwithstanding my poverty I am not sorry to live.” “You are quite right to defend your heart, my child; but tell me,” continued the Queen, “have you had a good supper?” “No, Madam,” said Fortunée, “My brother ate it all.” The Queen commanded a cover to be laid for her, and, desiring her to be seated, helped her to the very best. The young shepherdess was so lost in admiration, and so charmed with the goodness of the Queen, that she could scarcely eat a morsel.

"I am very anxious to know," said the Queen, "what has brought you so late to the fountain." "Madam, there is my pitcher, I came to fetch water to water my pinks." Saying this, she stooped to pick up the pitcher which was near her, but as she showed it to the Queen, what was her astonishment to find it was a golden one, covered with large diamonds, and filled with water which had a delicious perfume. She dared not take it, thinking it could not be hers. "I give it you, Fortunée," said the Queen; "go and water the flowers you take such care of, and remember that the Queen of the Woods would be numbered amongst your friends." At these words, the shepherdess threw herself at the Queen's feet. "After having offered you my most humble thanks, Madam," she said, "for the honour you have done me, I venture to take the liberty to ask you to remain here a moment. I wish to fetch you the half of my goods — my pot of pinks which can never be in better hands than yours."

"Go then, Fortunée," said the Queen, gently patting her cheek, "I consent to remain here till your return." Fortunée took her golden pitcher and ran to her little room, but during her absence Bedou had entered, taken away her pot of pinks, and put in their place a large cabbage.

When Fortunée saw this wretched cabbage, she was plunged in despair, and hesitated about returning to the fountain at all.

At length she determined she would do so, and throwing herself on her knees before the Queen, said, "Madam, Bedou has stolen my flowers; I have nothing now remaining but my ring; I hope you will accept that in proof of my gratitude." "If I take your ring, fair Shepherdess," said the Queen, "you are completely ruined."

“Ah! Madam,” she answered with an air of great intelligence; “while I possess your good opinion, I can never be ruined.” The Queen took the ring, placed it on her finger, and then mounted a car of coral, enriched with emeralds, and drawn by six white horses more beautiful than the steeds of the sun.

Fortunée gazed after her as long as she could. At last a turn of the road in the forest hid her from her sight, and she then returned to Bedou’s cottage full of this adventure.

The first thing she did, on entering her chamber, was to throw the cabbage out of window, but she was much astonished to hear a voice cry, “Ah! I am killed.” She could not tell what to make of this exclamation, as in general cabbages do not speak. As soon as it was light, Fortunée, uneasy about her pot of pinks, went down into the garden to search for them, and the first thing she found was the unhappy cabbage; she gave it a kick, saying, “What dost thou here, thou that didst presume to take in my chamber the place of my pinks?” “If I had not been carried, it would never have entered my head to go there,” replied the cabbage. Fortunée trembled, for she was very much frightened; but the cabbage said again to her, “If you will carry me to my companions, I can tell you in two words that your pinks are in Bedou’s straw mattrass.” Fortunée, in despair, knew not how to recover them. She kindly planted the cabbage, and then taking up her brother’s favourite hen, she said to it, “Naughty thing, I will now make you pay for all the misery which Bedou has caused me.” “Ah! Shepherdess,” said the hen, “Let me live; and, as my fancy is to cackle, I will tell you some wonderful things.

“Do not imagine yourself the daughter of the husbandman who brought you up; no, beautiful Fortunée, he is not your father; but the Queen who gave you birth had already six girls, and, as if it was in her own power to have a boy, her husband and father-in-law threatened to stab her if she did not bring them a son and heir. The poor Queen was again about to become a mother, they shut her up in a castle, and placed round her guards, or more properly speaking, executioners, who had orders to kill her if she gave birth to another daughter.

“The Queen, trembling at the fate which awaited her, could neither eat nor sleep. She had a sister a fairy. To her she wrote, informing her of her just cause of alarm. The Fairy, who was also near her confinement, knew that she would have a son, and as soon as the boy was born, she loaded the zephyrs with a cradle, in which she put her own son, and ordered them to carry the little prince into the Queen’s chamber, and change him for the daughter which would be born to her; but this forethought was of no avail, for the Queen, receiving no answer from her fairy sister, profited by the good-will of one of her guards, who, out of pity, allowed her to escape by a ladder of ropes.

“As soon as you were in the world, the afflicted Queen, trying to hide herself, came to this cottage nearly dead with grief and fatigue. I was the husbandman’s wife, and a good nurse. She gave you in charge to me, and told me her misfortunes, by which she was so overwhelmed, that she died without having time to give us any directions respecting what was to be done with you. As I loved gossiping all my life, I could not help telling everybody this adventure; and so one day I told all I knew about it to a beautiful lady who came here. She instantly touched me with a wand, and I became a hen, without power to speak any more. My grief was excessive, and my husband, who was absent at the time of the metamorphose, knew nothing of it. On his return, he looked everywhere for me; finally he thought I was drowned, or that the beasts of the forest had devoured me. This same lady who had done me so much mischief passed by here a second time; she then ordered him to call you Fortunée, and made him a present of a pot of pinks and a silver ring; but whilst she was here there arrived five-and-twenty soldiers of the King, your father, who sought you for evil purposes; she uttered some words, and changed them all into green cabbages. It is one of them you threw out of the window yesterday evening. I never heard him speak till now, nor could I speak myself: I know not how our voices came back to us.” The Princess was greatly surprised at the wonders which the hen related to her. She was full of kind feeling towards her, and said, “I pity you very much, my poor nurse, to think you should become a hen! I would gladly restore you to your own form if I could, but do not despair. It appears to me that all the affairs you have just acquainted me with cannot be allowed to remain as they are at present. I shall go now and look for my pinks, for I love them dearly.”

Bedou was gone into the forest, never imagining that Fortunée would think of hunting in his mattrass; she was delighted at his absence, and flattered herself that she would meet with no obstacle, when she suddenly saw an immense number of enormous rats armed for battle. They formed themselves in battalions, having in their rear the famous mattrass and one of the stools on either flank; many great mice formed a corps de reserve, determined to fight like Amazons. Fortunée, struck with surprise, dared not approach. The rats threw themselves on her, and bit her till she was all over blood. “What!” she exclaimed, “my pinks, my dear pinks, must you remain in such bad company?” It suddenly occurred to her that perhaps the perfumed water which was in the golden vase might possess a peculiar virtue. She ran to fetch it, and threw some drops of it on the host of rats and mice. Immediately the rascals ran away, each into his hole, and the Princess quickly laid hands on her beautiful pinks, which were nearly dead for want of water. She at once poured on them all the water she had in her golden vase, and was smelling them with much pleasure, when she heard a sweet voice come from amongst the stalks, which said to her, “Incomparable Fortunée, this is the happy day so long wished for, in which I may declare to you my sentiments. Know that the power of your beauty is so great that it can even inspire flowers with love.” The Princess, trembling and surprised at having heard a cabbage, a hen, and a pink speak, and seen an army of rats, turned pale and fainted.

Bedou came in at the moment: labour and the heat of the sun had put him in such a fever, that when he found Fortunée had come to search for her pinks, and had found them, he dragged her to the door and flung her outside. She had scarcely felt the coldness of the earth, before she opened her beautiful eyes and perceived near her the Queen of the Woods charming and magnificent as usual. “You have a bad brother,” she said to Fortunée. “I saw with what inhumanity he threw you out here; would you like me to revenge you?” “No, Madam,” answered Fortunée; “I have no feelings of anger, and his bad disposition cannot change mine.” “But,” rejoined the Queen, “I have a presentiment which assures me that this rough peasant is not your brother; what do you think?” “All appearances persuade me that he is, Madam,” replied the Shepherdess modestly, “and I ought to believe them.” “What!” continued the Queen, “have you not heard that you were born a princess?” “I have just been told it,” she replied; “but how can I venture to boast of that of which I have no proof?”

“Ah! my dear child,” replied the Queen, “how I like to see you in this mood; I know now that the mean education you have received has not extinguished the nobility of your blood. Yes, you are a princess, and it has not been in my power to save you from the misfortunes which you have suffered up to this hour.” She was here interrupted by the appearance of a youth more beautiful than the day. He was attired in a long robe of gold and green silk, fastened by large buttons of emeralds, rubies, and diamonds. He had a crown of pinks, and his hair covered his shoulders. As soon as he saw the Queen, he bent one knee to the ground and saluted her respectfully. “Ha! my son, my amiable Pink,” she said, “the fatal time of your enchantment is over, thanks to the aid of the beautiful Fortunée; what joy to see you!” She pressed him closely to her bosom, and then turning to the Shepherdess, “Charming Princess,” she said, “I know all that the Hen told you; but what you do not know is, that the zephyrs whom I had ordered to put my son in your place laid him in a bed of flowers whilst they went to find your mother, who was my sister. A fairy, from whose knowledge it was impossible to conceal anything, and with whom I had quarrelled for some time, watched so well for the moment that she had foreseen from the birth of my son, that she changed him on the spot to a pink, and notwithstanding my science, I could not prevent the misfortune. In the grief in which I was plunged, I employed all my art to discover some remedy, and I could find none better than to bring Prince Pink to the place where you were nursed, foreseeing that when you had watered the flowers with the delicious water I had in the golden vase, he would speak; he would love you, and in future nothing would disturb your happiness. I had also the silver ring which it was necessary I should receive from you, being aware that that would be the sign by which I should know that the hour approached when the spell would lose its force, in spite of the rats and mice whom our enemy would place in battle array to prevent your recovering the Pinks. Thus, my dear Fortunée, if my son marries you with this silver ring, your happiness will be permanent. See if this Prince appears sufficiently amiable for you to receive him as a husband." "Madam," replied she blushing, "you overpower me with favours. I know you are my aunt; that, by your power, the guards sent to kill me were metamorphosed into cabbages, and my nurse into a hen; and that in proposing to me an alliance with Prince Pink, it is the greatest honour you can do me, but shall I tell you the cause of my hesitation? I do not know his heart, and I begin to feel for the first time in my life that I could not be happy if he did not love me."

"Banish all uncertainty on that point, sweet Princess," said the Prince. "Long ago you made as much impression on me as you could wish at the present moment, and if the use of my voice had been granted me, what would you not have heard of the passion which consumed me; but I am an unhappy Prince, for whom you can feel only indifference.” He then recited these verses: —

While but a simple flower to sight,
You lavish’d on me every care;
With pleasure mark’d my blossoms bright,
With joy inhaled my fragrance rare.
For you I breathed my sweetest sigh,
For you my gayest tints display’d,

And drooping when you were not nigh
My passion to express essay’d:
Consuming with my secret flame,
In silence doom’d so long to languish:
With gentle touch you thrill’d my frame,
With gentle look assuaged my anguish.
Sometimes those lovely lips would kiss
My leaves, all trembling with emotion.
Oh then, to tell thee all my bliss —
To prove my grateful heart’s devotion —
In those sweet moments how I pray’d
Some magic power, my fate deploring,
Would break the spell upon me laid,
My shape, my speech again restoring.
My prayer was heard; once more I find
The form, the voice, for which I panted;
But thou art changed! — no longer kind!
Ye gods! my prayer why have ye granted?

The Princess seemed well pleased with the Prince’s gallantry. She highly praised the impromptu, and though she was not accustomed to hear verses, she spoke on the subject like a person of good taste. The Queen, who had borne her Shepherdess’s dress with great impatience, touched her, and wished for her the richest clothes that were ever seen. In a moment, her white linen changed to silver brocade, embroidered with carbuncles; from her high head-dress fell a long veil of gauze, mixed with gold; her black hair was ornamented with a thousand diamonds; and her complexion, whose whiteness was dazzling, assumed so rich a colour, that the Prince could scarcely support its brilliancy. “Ah! Fortunée, how beautiful and charming you are!” exclaimed he, sighing; “will you be inexorable to my pain?” “No, my son,” said the Queen; “your cousin will not resist our prayers.”

While they were thus talking, Bedou, returning to his work, passed them, and seeing Fortunée attired like a goddess, he thought he was dreaming. She called him to her with much kindness, and begged the Queen to have pity on him. “What, after having so ill-treated you?” said she. “Ah! Madam,” replied the Princess, “I am incapable of vengeance.” The Queen embraced her, and praised the generosity of her sentiments. “To gratify you,” she rejoined, “I am going to enrich the ungrateful Bedou.” His hut became a palace, well furnished, and full of money; his stools and his mattress remained unchanged to remind him of his former state; but the Queen of the Woods refined his spirit, amended his manners, and improved his appearance. Bedou then found himself possessed of gratitude. What did he not say to the Queen and Princess, to prove it on this occasion. Finally, by a stroke of the Queen’s wand, the cabbages became men, the hen a woman. Prince Pink remained the only person discontented. He was sighing beside the Princess; he conjured her to take a resolution in his favour. At length she consented; she had never before seen any loveable object, and all that was most loveable was less so than this Prince. The Queen of the Woods, delighted at so fortunate a marriage, neglected nothing to make it sumptuous. The fêtes on this occasion lasted many years, and the happiness of this tender couple as long as they lived.

14

BABIOLE

Once upon a time there was a Queen who had nothing on earth to wish for to complete her happiness, except children. She talked of nothing else, and continually said that the Fairy Fanferluche having attended at her birth, and not being contented with the Queen, her mother, had put herself into a passion, and condemned her in consequence to nothing but misfortune.

One day, when she was sitting sadly and alone by the fireside, she saw come down the chimney a little old woman, about the height of your hand, riding on three bits of rushes. She wore on her head a sprig of hawthorn; her dress was composed of flies' wings; two nut-shells served her for boots; she sailed in the air, and after taking three turns in the room, she stopped before the Queen. "For a long time," said the old woman, "you have been complaining of me, accusing me of all your misfortunes, and making me responsible for all that happens to you. You think, Madam, that I am the cause of your having no children. I come now to announce to you that you will have an Infanta, but I fear she will cost you many tears." "Ah! noble Fanferluche," said the Queen, "do not refuse me your pity and your aid. I will render you all the services in my power, provided the Princess you promise me shall be my comfort and not my affliction." "Destiny is more powerful than I," replied the Fairy. "All I can do, to show my affection for you, is to give you this white hawthorn; fasten it to your child’s head the moment she is born; it will preserve her from many perils.” She gave her the sprig, and vanished like lightning.

The Queen remained sad and thoughtful. “Why should I wish,” she said, “for a daughter who will cost me many tears and sighs? should I not be happier without any children?” The presence of the King, whom she loved dearly, a little dissipated her grief, and when she found that she should soon become a mother, all her care was to desire her friends, the moment the Princess should be born, to lay on her head the hawthorn flower, which she kept in a box of gold covered with diamonds, as the most valuable thing she possessed.

At length the Queen gave birth to the most beautiful creature that had ever been seen; they instantly attached to her head the sprig of hawthorn, when, at the same moment, oh! wondrous! she became a little monkey, jumping, running, and skipping about the room just as a monkey would. At this metamorphose all the ladies uttered the most horrible cries, and the Queen, who was more frightened than any one, thought she should have died of despair. She called to them to remove the sprig of hawthorn that they had placed behind the ear; but after the greatest trouble in catching the little ape, they found it useless to remove the fatal flowers; she was a monkey still, a confirmed monkey, refusing to be nursed like a child, and would eat nothing but nuts and chestnuts. “Barbarous Fanferluche,” said the Queen, sadly, “what have I done to thee that thou shouldst use me thus? What will become of me! what a disgrace to me! all my subjects will think I have given birth to a monster. What will be the King’s horror at such a child!” She wept, and prayed the ladies to advise her how to act in such an emergency. “Madam,” said the oldest of her attendants, “you must persuade the King that the Princess is dead, and then shut up this ape in a box, and sink it to the bottom of the sea; for it would be horrible to preserve any longer a little brute of such a kind.” The Queen found it difficult to agree to this proposal, but as they told her the King was coming to her apartments, she was so confused and agitated, that without further deliberation she told her maid of honour to do what she pleased with the monkey.

They took it into another room, shut it up in a box, and desired one of the valets-de-chambre to throw it into the sea. He instantly departed on his errand.

Behold the Princess exposed to extreme danger! The man, however, thinking the box beautiful, was sorry to deprive himself of it; so he seated himself on the sea-shore, and took out the ape, determining to kill it, (for he did not know it was his sovereign,) but whilst he had hold of it, a great noise which startled him obliged him to turn his head, when he saw an open chariot drawn by six unicorns, resplendent with gold and precious stones. It was preceded by a military band. A Queen crowned, and in a royal mantle, was seated in the chariot on cushions of cloth of gold, and she held in her arms her son, a child of four years old.

The valet recognised this Queen as the sister of his mistress. She had come to see and rejoice with her, but when she found the little Princess was dead, she departed sadly to return to her kingdom. She was lost in thought, when her son cried, “I want that monkey! I will have it.” The Queen, looking up, beheld the prettiest monkey that ever was seen. The valet endeavoured to escape, but he was prevented. The Queen ordered a large sum to be given him for the monkey; and finding it gentle and playful, she named it Babiole; thus, notwithstanding her hard fate, the Princess fell into the hands of her own aunt.

When the Queen arrived in her own dominions, the little Prince begged her to give him Babiole for a playmate. He desired she should be dressed like a Princess; so every day they made her new dresses, and they taught her to walk only on her feet. It was impossible to find a prettier or more agreeable little monkey; her little face was as black as a jackdaw’s, with a white ruff round her neck, and tufts of flesh colour at her ears. Her little paws were not bigger than butterflies’ wings, and her sparkling eyes indicated so much intelligence, that there was no need for astonishment at anything she did.

The Prince, who loved her very much, petted her unceasingly; she would never bite him, and when he wept, she wept too. She had been already four years with the Queen, when, one day, she began to stammer like a child trying to talk. Every body wondered at her, and they were still more astonished when she began to speak in a voice so clear and distinct that every word was intelligible. Marvellous! Babiole speaking! Babiole a reasoning creature! The Queen would have her again, to amuse her; they therefore carried her to her Majesty’s apartments, greatly to the grief of the Prince. He began to weep; and, to console him, they gave him cats and dogs, birds and squirrels, and even a pony, called Criquetin, which danced a saraband; but all this was to him not worth one word from Babiole.

On her side, she was under greater constraint with the Queen than with the Prince: they required her to answer like a Sibyl to a hundred ingenious and learned questions to which she could not always reply. When an ambassador or a stranger arrived, they made her appear in a robe of velvet or brocade with bodice and collar. If the Court was in mourning, she had to drag after her a long mantle of crape, which fatigued her very much. They did not allow her to eat what she liked, the physician always ordering her dinner, which did not at all please her, as she was as self-willed as an ape born a princess might be expected to be. The Queen gave her masters who tried the powers of her intellect most thoroughly. She excelled in playing on the harpsichord; they had made her a wonderful one in an oyster shell. Painters came from all quarters of the world, and especially from Italy, to take her likeness. Her renown spread from pole to pole, for no one had ever heard of a monkey endued with speech.

The Prince, as beautiful as the picture of the god of love, graceful and witty, was not less a prodigy. He came to see Babiole, and sometimes amused himself with talking to her; their conversation often changed from gay to grave, for Babiole had a heart, and that heart was not metamorphosed like the rest of her little body. She became, therefore, deeply attached to the Prince, and he in return became only too fond of her.

The unfortunate Babiole did not know what to do; she passed her nights on the top of a window shutter, or on a corner of the chimney-piece, without a wish to enter the basket prepared for her, which was soft, and well lined with wadding and feathers. Her governess (for she had one) often heard her sighing, and sometimes complaining; her melancholy became deeper as her reason increased, and she never saw herself in a looking-glass without trying, out of vexation, to break it, so that people constantly said, “A monkey will always be a monkey; Babiole cannot rid herself of the mischief natural to her species.”

The Prince growing up, became fond of hunting, dancing, plays, arms, and books, and no longer even mentioned the poor little ape. Things were very different on her side of the question; she loved him better at twelve years old than she had at six, and sometimes reproached him with his neglect, while he thought that he made up for everything when he gave her a choice apple or some sugared chestnuts.

At last Babiole’s reputation reached even the kingdom of the monkeys, and King Magot conceived a great wish to marry her. With this intention he sent a notable embassy to obtain her from the Queen; his prime minister had no difficulty in understanding his wishes, but would have been at great trouble in expressing them, had it not been for the assistance of the parrots and pies, vulgarly called “mags,” who chattered not a little, while the jackdaws, who followed in the suite, would not suffer themselves to be outdone in noise.

A huge monkey, named Mirlifiche was chief of the embassy; he had a carriage made for him of cardboard, and on it were painted the loves of King Magot and the ape Monette, well known in the empire of the

Monkeys; she, poor thing, had met a tragic end from the claws of a wild cat, who was by no means accustomed to her tricks. There was painted the happiness of Magot and Monette during their marriage, and the natural grief he had displayed at her death. Six white rabbits, from a capital warren, drew the carriage called by way of distinction the state coach. After this came a chariot made of straw, painted in different colours, and containing the apes destined to attend on Babiole; it was worth anything to see how they were adorned, in fact they looked as if they were going to a wedding. The rest of the cortège was composed of little spaniels, greyhounds, Spanish cats, Muscovy rats, some hedgehogs, cunning weasels, and dainty foxes; some drew the carriages, others carried the baggage. Above all, Mirlifiche, graver than a Roman dictator, and wiser than Cato himself, bestrode a leveret, that ambled along more easily than any English gelding.

The Queen knew nothing of this magnificent embassy until it arrived at her palace, but the shouts of laughter from the guards and people inducing her to put her head out of window, she beheld the most extraordinary sight she had ever seen in her life. Mirlifiche, followed by a considerable number of monkeys, advanced towards the chariot of the apes, and, giving his paw to the largest, called Gigona, assisted her to descend; then letting fly the little parrot, who was to serve as interpreter, he waited until this beautiful bird had presented itself to the Queen and demanded an audience for him.

Perroquet, raising himself gently in the air, came to the window out of which the Queen was looking, and in a tone of voice the prettiest in the world said, “Madam, his excellency the Count De Mirlifiche, ambassador from the celebrated Magot, king of the monkeys, demands an audience of your Majesty, to treat of a most important affair.” “Beautiful parrot,” said the Queen, caressing him, “first take something to eat and to drink, and then I will allow you to go and tell Count Mirlifiche I bid him most welcome to my kingdom, he and all who accompany him. If his journey from Magotia hither has not too much fatigued him, he may shortly enter my audience chamber, where I shall await him on my throne, with all my court." At these words Perroquet kissed his claw twice, flapped his pinions, sang a little air, expressive of his delight, and taking wing again perched on the shoulder of Mirlifiche and whispered to him the favourable reply he had received. Mirlifiche was not insensible of the kindness. He immediately requested one of the Queen's officers, through the magpie, Margot, who had installed herself as sub-interpreter, to show him into an apartment, where he might repose for a few moments. They immediately opened a saloon paved with marble, painted and gilded, which was one of the best in the palace. He entered it with part of his suite, but as monkeys are always great ferreters by profession, they found a certain corner in which had been arranged a quantity of jars of preserves. Behold the gluttons at them. One has a crystal cup full of apricots, another a bottle of syrup — this one a patty, that one some almond cakes. The winged gentry who made up the cortège were much annoyed to be spectators of a feast in which there was neither hempseed nor millet-seed, and a jackdaw, who was a great chatterer, flew to the audience chamber, and, respectfully approaching the Queen, said, "Madam, I am too devoted a servant of your Majesty's to be a willing accomplice in the havoc which is being made in your very nice sweetmeats. Count Mirlifiche himself has already eaten three boxes full. He was crunching the fourth without any respect to your royal Majesty, when, touched to the heart, I came to inform your Majesty of it." "I thank you, my little friend Jackdaw," said the Queen, smiling, "but I can dispense with your zeal about my sweetmeats; I abandon them in favour of Babiole, whom I love with all my heart." The jackdaw, a little ashamed at having made a great noise for nothing, retired without another word. The ambassador with his suite shortly after entered the apartment. He was not dressed precisely in the height of the fashion, for since the return of the famous Fagotin, who had cut such a figure in the world, they had never seen a good model. He had a peaked hat, with a plume of green feathers in it, a shoulder belt of blue paper covered with gold spangles, large canions, and a walking stick. Perroquet, who passed for a tolerably good poet, having composed a very grave harangue, advanced to the foot of the throne where the Queen was seated, and addressed Babiole thus: —

Madam, the wondrous power of your eyes
In great Magot's fond passion recognise!
These apes, these cats, this equipage so rare, —
These birds — all, all, his ardent flame declare!
When 'neath a mountain cat's fierce talons fell
Monette, (the beauteous ape he loved so well,
And who alone could be compared to you,)
When to her spouse she bade a last adieu,
The king a hundred times swore by her shade,
That love should never more his heart invade.
Madam, your charms have from that heart effaced
The tender image his first love had traced.
Of you alone he thinks. If you but knew
The state of frenzy he is driven to;
To pity surely moved, your gentle breast
Would share his pain, and so restore his rest.
He whom we saw of late so fat, so gay,
Now worn to skin and bone, a constant prey
To a consuming care nought can remove.
Madam, he knows too well what 'tis to love!

Olives and nuts, his favourite food of yore,
Insipid seem — are relish'd now no more.

He dies; your help alone we come to crave, —
‘Tis you alone can snatch him from the grave.
I scorn to tempt you by the grosser bait
Of the choice fare within our happy state,
Where grapes and figs are in profusion found,
And all the finest fruit the whole year round.

Perroquet had scarcely finished his oration when the Queen turned her eyes on Babiole, who felt more disconcerted than anybody had ever been before. The Queen wished to ascertain her sentiments before she replied. She told the parrot to make his excellency the ambassador understand that she favoured the King’s pretensions as far as it depended on herself. The audience over, she retired, and Babiole followed her into her closet. “My little ape,” said the Queen to her, “I acknowledge that I shall regret thy absence, but there is no way of refusing Magot, who asks thy hand in marriage, for I have not yet forgotten that his father brought two hundred thousand monkeys into the field against me, and they ate so many of my subjects that we were obliged to agree to a shameful peace.” “That means, then, Madam,” replied Babiole, impatiently, “that you are resolved to sacrifice me to this horrid monster to avoid his anger; but I supplicate your Majesty at least to grant me a few days to make up my mind finally.” “That is but just,” said the Queen; “nevertheless, if you will take my advice, decide promptly; consider the honours prepared for thee, the magnificence of the embassy, and what maids of honour he sends thee. I am sure that Magot never did for Monette what he has done for thee.” “I do not know what he has done for Monette,” said little Babiole, indignantly, “but I know well that I am not greatly touched by the sentiments with which he honours me.” She rose instantly, and with a graceful curtsey went to search for the Prince, to tell him her troubles. As soon as he saw her, he exclaimed, “Well, Babiole, when are we to dance at your wedding?” “I do not know, Sir,” said she, sadly; “but the deplorable state I am in renders me incapable of keeping my own secrets, and however my delicacy may suffer, I must own to you that you are the only person I could take for a husband.” “Me!” said the Prince, bursting into a loud laugh, “for a husband! My little ape, I am charmed at what you tell me, yet I hope you will pardon me if I do not accept your proposal, for, in short, our figures, tastes, and manners are not quite suitable.” “I agree with you,” she said, “and our hearts also are unlike; you are an ingrate; for a long time I have suspected it, and I am very foolish to feel an affection for a prince who so little deserves it.”

“But, Babiole, think of the misery with which I should see you, perched on the top of a sycamore, holding on to a branch by your tail. Take my advice! laugh at this affair, for your honour and mine. Marry King Magot, and for old friendship’s sake, send me your first little monkey.” “It is well for you, my Lord,” added Babiole, “that I have not exactly the disposition of an ape; any other than I would have already scratched out your eyes, bitten off your nose, and torn off your ears, but I abandon you to the reflections that you will one day make on your unworthy conduct.” She could say no more, for her governess came to fetch her; the Ambassador Mirlifiche, having taken to her apartments some magnificent presents. There was a toilette, composed of a spider’s web embroidered with little glowworms; an egg-shell held the combs, and a white-heart cherry served for a pin-cushion, all the linen being trimmed with lace paper. There were besides in a basket several shells neatly arranged; some to serve for earrings, others for bodkins, and all brilliant as diamonds; and what was much better, there were a dozen boxes filled with comfits, and a little glass coffer, containing a nut and an olive, but the key was lost. Babiole, however, cared little about it. The Ambassador informed her in a grumbling tone, the language used in Magotia, that his King was more touched by her charms than by those of any monkey he had ever seen in his life; that he had had a palace built for her in the top of a fir-tree; that he had sent her these presents and also some excellent sweetmeats, as a mark of his attachment, so that the King, his master, could not better testify his affection. “But,” continued he, “the strongest proof of his tenderness, and the one of which you ought to be the most sensible, is, Madam, the care he has taken to have his portrait painted as a foretaste of the pleasure you will have in seeing him.” He thereupon displayed the portrait of the King of the Monkeys, seated on a great log of wood, and eating an apple.

Babiole turned her eyes away, that they might not be longer offended by such a disagreeable figure, and grumbling three or four times she made Mirlifiche understand that she was obliged to his master for his esteem, but that she had not yet determined whether she should marry or not.

Meantime the Queen had resolved not to draw on herself the anger of the monkeys, and not thinking it necessary to stand on much ceremony in sending Babiole where she chose her to go, prepared everything for her departure. At this news despair took complete possession of poor Babiole’s heart; the contempt of the Prince on one hand, the indifference of the Queen on the other, and more than all, such a husband, made her resolve to fly. It was not a very difficult matter; since she had spoken they no longer tied her up; she went out and came in and entered her room as often by the window as by the door. She hurried, therefore, away, jumping from tree to tree, from branch to branch, till she came to the banks of a river. The excess of her despair prevented her from comprehending the peril she should incur by attempting to swim across, and without pausing even to look at it, she flung herself in, and immediately went to the bottom; but as she did not lose her senses, she perceived a magnificent grotto, ornamented with shells. She entered it quickly, and was received by a very old man, whose long white beard descended to his waist: he was reclining on a couch of reeds and flags, and was crowned with poppies and wild lilies, and was leaning against a rock, out of which flowed several fountains which fed the river.

“Ah! what brings thee here, little Babiole?” said he, holding out his hand to her. “My Lord,” she replied, “I am an unfortunate ape! I am flying from a horrible monkey, whom they want me to marry.” “I know more of thy history than thou thinkest,” added the wise old man; “it is true thou dost abhor Magot, but it is no less true that thou lovest a young Prince, who treats thee with indifference.” “Ah, Sir,” cried Babiole, sighing, “do not speak of it; the thought of him augments all my woes.” “He will not always be a rebel to love,” continued the guest of the fishes; “I know he is reserved for the most beautiful princess in the world.” “Unfortunate that I am,” continued Babiole, “he then can never be mine.” The good man smiled, and said to her, “Do not distress thyself, my good Babiole, time is a great master; only take care not to lose the little glass coffer which Magot sent thee, and which by chance thou hast in thy pocket. I cannot say more to thee on the subject: here is a tortoise who goes a very good pace; seat thyself on him, and he will conduct thee whither thou shouldst go.” “After all the obligations you have conferred on me,” said Babiole, “I cannot leave you without inquiring your name.” “They call me Biroquoi,” he said, “father of Biroquie — a river, as you see, large enough and famous enough.” Babiole mounted the tortoise with perfect confidence; they travelled for some time on the water, and at last, after what appeared a long round, the tortoise gained the bank.

It would be difficult to find anything more noble looking than the English saddle and the rest of the harness of the tortoise, complete even to the little pistols in the saddle bow, the pockets of which were made of two bodies of crabs.

Babiole travelled on, entirely confiding in the promises of Biroquoi, when on a sudden she heard a rather loud noise; Alas! alas! it was the ambassador Mirlifiche, with all his followers, who were returning to Magotia, sad and afflicted at the flight of Babiole. A monkey of the troop had climbed a walnut-tree at dinner time, to knock down the nuts to feed the

Magotins; but he had hardly reached the top of the tree when, looking about him, he saw Babiole on the poor tortoise, who was travelling slowly in the open country. At this sight he began to scream so loud that the assembled monkeys asked him in their language what was the matter; he told them, and they immediately let loose the parrots, pies, and jays, who flew to the spot and identified her, and on their report that it really was Babiole, the Ambassador, the apes and the rest of the party ran after and seized her.

What a misfortune for Babiole! It would be difficult to have met with a greater or more grievous one. They made her enter the state coach, which was immediately surrounded by the most vigilant apes, some foxes, and a cock, the latter of whom mounted on the imperial and stood sentinel day and night. A monkey led the tortoise as a rare animal, and thus the cavalcade continued its journey, to the great distress of Babiole, who had no other companion than Madame Gigona, a sour-tempered and ill-natured ape.

At the end of three days, during which nothing particular occurred, the guides having missed their way, the cavalcade arrived at a large and beautiful city totally unknown to them, but perceiving a beautiful garden, the gate of which was open, they entered and ravaged it as if it was a conquered country. One cracked nuts, another swallowed cherries, a third stripped a plum-tree; in short, down to the smallest monkey in the train, there was not one that did not go plundering and pocketing.

Now, you must know that this city was the capital of the kingdom in which Babiole was born, that the Queen her mother, resided in it, and that ever since she had the misfortune to see her daughter changed into an ape by the sprig of hawthorn, she had never suffered in her dominions any ape, monkey, baboon, or anything in fact that could recal the fatal circumstance to her mind. A monkey was looked upon there as a disturber of the public peace. What, then, was the astonishment of the people at the arrival of a card coach, a chariot of painted straw, and all the rest of the most extraordinary equipage that has ever been seen since stories were stories, and fairies fairies.

The news flew to the palace. The Queen was appalled; she imagined that the monkey people had designs against her throne. She called a council immediately, and the whole of the intruders were pronounced guilty of high treason: determined, therefore, to make such an example of them as should be a warning to all for the future, she sent her guards into the garden with orders to seize all the monkeys. They threw large nets over the trees; the hunt was soon over, and notwithstanding the respect due to the quality of an ambassador, the character was sadly outraged in the person of Mirlifiche, whom they consigned without the least remorse to the depths of a dungeon, in which he was placed under a large empty puncheon with the rest of his comrades, together with the lady apes and miss monkeys who accompanied Babiole. Babiole herself experienced a secret gratification in this new misfortune. When unhappiness attains a certain point, nothing further alarms us, and even death, perhaps, is looked forward to as a boon. Such was her situation — her heart, tortured by the recollection of the Prince, who had despised her, and her mind by the frightful image of King Magot, whose wife she was about to become.

Now we must not forget to say that her dress was so pretty and her manners so superior that those who had made her prisoner could not help considering her something wonderful, and when she spoke their surprise was still greater. They had often heard mention of the admirable Babiole. The Queen, who had found her, and was ignorant of the transformation of her niece, had frequently written to her sister that she had a wonderful ape, and begged her to come and see it; but the afflicted mother always skipped such passages in her letters. At length the guards, in ecstasies of delight, carried Babiole into a great gallery where they erected a little throne, on which she seated herself with the air of a sovereign more than that of a captive ape, and the Queen happening to pass through the gallery, was so struck with surprise at her pretty mien, and the graceful salutation she made her, that, despite herself, nature spoke in favour of the Infanta.

The Queen took Babiole in her arms. The little creature, herself agitated by feelings till then unknown to her, threw herself on the Queen’s neck, and said to her such tender and winning things, that all those who heard her were full of admiration. “No, Madam,” she said, “it is not the fear of approaching death (with which I am told you threaten the unfortunate race of monkeys) that induces me to seek means to please and propitiate you; the termination of my existence is not the greatest misfortune that can befal me, and my feelings are so far above the thing I am, that I should regret the least step that might be taken to save me. It is for yourself alone that I love you, Madam; your crown affects me much less than your merits.”

Now what reply, in your opinion, could anybody make to so polite and respectful a Babiole? The Queen, as mute as a fish, opened her two great eyes, imagined she was dreaming, and felt her heart excessively agitated. She carried Babiole into her cabinet. When they were alone she said to her, “Delay not a moment the relation to me of thy adventures, for I feel satisfied that of all the animals that stock my menageries, and that I keep in my palace, I shall love thee the best. I promise thee even, that for thy sake I will pardon the monkeys that accompany thee.” “Ah! Madam,” said Babiole, “I do not intercede for them. It has been my misfortune to be born an ape, and the same cruel fate has given me an understanding which will be my torment as long as I live; for what must I feel when I see myself in a looking glass, a little ugly black creature, with paws covered with hair, a tail, and teeth always ready to bite, and at the same time know that I am not without intelligence, that I possess some taste, refinement, and feeling.” “Art thou susceptible of love?” asked the Queen. Babiole sighed without replying. “Oh!” continued the Queen. “I pray thee tell me if thou lovest a monkey, a rabbit, or a squirrel, for if thou art not positively engaged, I have a dwarf who would be the very husband for thee.” Babiole at this proposition assumed an air of indignation, which made the Queen burst out laughing. “Don’t be angry,” said she; “and tell me by what chance it is that thou hast the power of speech?” “All that I know of my history,” said Babiole, “is that the Queen your sister, had scarcely left you after the birth and death of the Princess your daughter, than she saw, on the sea-shore, one of your valets-de-chambre, who was about to drown me. I was snatched from his grasp by her orders, and by a miracle which astonished everybody I found myself possessed of the power of speech and reason. Masters were given to me to teach me several languages, and how to play on various instruments; at length, Madam, I became aware of my misfortune, and, —but what is the matter, Madam?” cried she, observing the Queen’s face perfectly pallid, and covered with cold perspiration. “I perceive an extraordinary change in your countenance?” “I am dying,” said the Queen, in a feeble voice, and scarcely able to articulate. “I am dying, my dear and too unhappy child! Ah! have I then found thee to-day?” As she uttered these words she fainted. Babiole, much alarmed, ran to call for help. The ladies in waiting on the Queen hastened to give her some water, to unlace her, and put her to bed. Babiole smuggled herself into bed with her. No one noticed it, she was so very little.

When the Queen recovered from the long swoon into which the Princess’s account of herself had thrown her, she desired to be left alone with the ladies who knew the secret of the fatal birth of her daughter. She told them what had occurred; at which they were so amazed that they knew not what advice to give her.

She commanded them, however, to say what they thought it would be best to do in so sad a conjuncture. Some suggested that the ape should be smothered, others were for shutting it up in some hole, and a third party proposed sending it again to be drowned in the sea. The Queen wept and sobbed, and said, “She has so much good sense, what a pity to see her reduced by a magic bouquet to this miserable condition. But after all,” she continued, “it is my child. It is I who have drawn down upon her the wrath of the wicked Fanferluche; is it just she should suffer for the hate that fairy bears to me?”

“Yes, Madam,” said her old maid of honour, “you must protect your own fame. What would the world think of you if you declared yourself the mother of a monkey Infanta. It is not natural for one so handsome as you are to have such children.”

The Queen lost all patience at such reasoning, whilst the old lady and the others all insisted with equal warmth that the little monster ought to be exterminated. Finally the Queen determined to have Babiole locked up in a château, where she could be well fed and well treated for the rest of her days.

When the Princess heard the Queen express her resolution to put her in prison, she slipped quietly out at the side of the bed, and leaping from a window on to a tree in the garden, escaped into the great forest, and left everybody wondering what had become of her.

She passed the night in the hollow of an oak, where she had time to moralize on the cruelty of her destiny; but what gave her the most pain was the necessity she was under of quitting the Queen. Still she preferred a voluntary exile which left her the enjoyment of her liberty, to remaining a captive for ever.

As soon as it was light she continued her journey, without knowing where to go, turning in her mind over and over again a thousand times, this strange, this most extraordinary adventure. “What a difference,” she exclaimed, “between that which I am, and that which I ought to have been!” The tears flowed fast from the little eyes of poor Babiole.

Every morning at daybreak she resumed her flight. She feared the Queen would have her pursued, or that some of the monkeys, escaped from the cellar, would seize and carry her against her will to King Magot. She fled so far without following road or track, that at length she came to a great desert, in which was to be found nor house nor tree, nor fruit, nor herb, nor fountain. She entered upon it without reflection, and when she became hungry, she discovered, but too late, how imprudent it was to travel through such a country.

Two nights and two days elapsed without her being able to catch even a worm or a gnat. The fear of death came over her. She was so weak that she felt fainting. She stretched herself on the ground, and recollecting the olive and the nut that were still in the little glass box, she thought she might make on them a slender meal. Encouraged by this ray of hope she took up a stone, broke the box to pieces, and began to eat the olive.

But scarcely had she bitten it when out ran a flood of fragrant oil, which falling on her paws they became the most beautiful hands in the world. Her surprise was extreme. She took some of the oil in her hands and rubbed herself all over with it. A miracle! She made herself so beautiful that nothing in the universe could be compared to her. She felt she had large eyes, a small mouth, a handsome nose — she was dying to see herself in a glass; at last it occurred to her to make one out of the largest piece of her broken box. Oh, when she saw herself, what delight! What an agreeable surprise! Her clothes had enlarged with herself. Her head was well dressed, her hair was in a thousand curls; her complexion was as blooming as the flowers of spring.

The first moments of her surprise over, the cravings of hunger became more urgent, and her distress on that score greatly increased. “Ah,” said she, “so young and handsome, a princess born as I am, must I perish in this sad spot? Oh, cruel fortune that has brought me hither, what hast thou in store for me? Is it to heap more affliction upon me, that thou hast effected this charming and unhoped-for change in my person? And thou, too, venerable river Biroquoi, who so generously saved my life, wilt thou leave me to perish in this frightful desert?”

The Infanta vainly cried for help. Every power was deaf to her voice, and the torments of hunger increased to such a degree that she took the nut and cracked it: but as she flung away the shell, she was greatly astonished to see coming out of it, architects, painters, masons, upholsterers, sculptors, and workmen in a thousand other crafts. Some drew plans of a palace, others built it, others furnished it. These painted the apartments, those laid out the gardens. Blue and gold met the eye in every direction. A magnificent repast was served up: sixty princesses dressed finer than queens, led by squires, and followed by their pages, came and paid her the highest compliments, and invited her to the banquet which awaited her. Babiole immediately, without waiting to be pressed, entered the saloon, and with the air of a Queen ate as a starving person might be expected to eat.

She had scarcely risen from table, when her treasurers placed before her fifteen thousand chests as big as hogsheads, filled with gold and diamonds. They inquired if it was her pleasure that they should pay the workmen who had built her palace. She answered that it was proper to do so; but bargained that they should also build a city, marry, and remain in her service. They all consented, and the city was built in three quarters of an hour, although it was five times larger than Rome. Here was a number of prodigies to come out of a little nut!

The Princess resolved to send a grand embassy to the Queen her mother, and to convey some reproaches to the young Prince her cousin. Whilst the requisite preparations were being made, she amused herself with runnings at the ring, at which she always distributed the prizes; also with cards, plays, hunting, and fishing; for they had brought a river through the palace gardens.

The report of Babble’s beauty spread throughout the universe, and kings came to her court from the four corners of the earth; — giants taller than mountains and pigmies smaller than rats.

It happened one day, during a grand tournament, after several knights had broken their lances, a quarrel arose between them, and they fought in earnest and wounded each other. The Princess, greatly offended by this conduct in her presence, descended from her balcony to ascertain who were the guilty parties; but when they were unhelmed, what were her feelings when she recognised in one of them the Prince her cousin! If not dead, he was so nearly gone, that she was herself ready to die of grief and alarm at the sight. She had him carried into the handsomest room in the palace, where nothing was wanting that could be necessary for his recovery, — physicians from Chodrai, surgeons, ointments, broths, syrups. The Infanta herself made the bandages and prepared the lint. They were watered with her tears; and those tears should alone have been a balsam to the wounded prince. They were so indeed in more ways than one, for not counting half-a-dozen sword-cuts, and as many lance-thrusts, which had pierced him through and through, he had long been at the court, *incognito*, and had been wounded by the bright eyes of Babiole so desperately, that he was incurable for life. It is easy, therefore, to imagine at present some portion of what he felt, when he was able to read in the countenance of that beautiful princess, that she was in the utmost grief at beholding the condition to which he was reduced.

I shall not stop to repeat all that his heart prompted him to say in thanking her for the kindness she had shown him. Those who heard him were astonished that a man so very ill could express himself with so much warmth and gratitude. The Infanta, who blushed more than once at his words, begged him to be silent, but his agitation and ardour carried him so far, that she saw him suddenly fall into an alarming agony. Up to this time she had evinced great fortitude, but now she lost it so completely that she tore her hair, uttered wild shrieks, and gave her people reason to believe that her heart was vastly susceptible, since she could in so short a time be so desperately in love with an utter stranger, — for little did they know in

Babiola (she had so named her kingdom), that the prince was her cousin, and that she had loved him from her earliest infancy.

It was during his travels that he had arrived at this Court, and as there was no one he knew to present him to the Infanta, he thought that nothing could be better than performing five or six heroic actions before her, that is to say, cutting off the arms or legs of some of the knights in the lists; but he found none polite enough to permit him to do so. There was consequently a furious general combat; the strongest overthrew the weakest, and the weakest, as I have before told you, was the Prince.

Babiole, in a state of distraction, ran out on the high road without coach or guards. She plunged into a wood and fainted away at the foot of a tree. The Fairy Fanferluche, who never slept, and was always on the watch for opportunities to do mischief, came and carried her off in a cloud blacker than ink, and which flew faster than the wind.

The Princess remained for some time perfectly unconscious. At length she came to herself. Never was surprise equal to hers, at finding herself so far from the ground and so near to the pole. The floor of a cloud is not solid, so that as she ran here and there it seemed to her that she was treading on feathers; and the cloud opening a little she had a narrow escape of falling through. She found no one to complain to, for the wicked Fanferluche had made herself invisible. Babiole had leisure to think of her dear Prince, and the condition in which she had left him, and she gave herself up to the most poignant grief that could possess a living soul. “How!” exclaimed she, “am I yet capable of surviving him I love; and can the fear of approaching death find a place in my heart? Oh, if the sun would roast me he would do me a kindness; or if I could drown myself in the rainbow, how happy I should be! but, alas, the whole zodiac is deaf to my voice: the sagittary has no darts, the bull no horns, the lion no teeth. Perhaps the earth will be more obliging, and offer me the sharp point of some rock on which I may kill myself. O Prince, my dear cousin! why are you not here to see me make the most tragic leap that a despairing lover could think of!” As she uttered these words she rushed to the end of the cloud, and sprang from it with the force of an arrow from a bow.

All who saw her thought it was the moon falling; and as it was then in the wane, many who adored it, and who remained for some time without seeing it, went into deep mourning, and were convinced that the sun out of jealousy had played it this wicked trick.

Much as the Infanta desired to kill herself she did not succeed. She fell into the glass-bottle in which the fairies usually keep their ratafia in the sun. But what a bottle! There is not a tower in the world so large. Fortunately it was empty, or she would have been drowned in it like a fly. The bottle was guarded by six giants. They recognised the Infanta immediately. They were the same giants who had been residing at her court and who were in love with her. The malignant Fanferluche, who did nothing without calculation, had transported them thither each on a flying dragon, and these dragons guarded the bottle when the giants slept. Many a day during the time Babiole was in the bottle did she regret her monkey’s skin. She lived like the chameleons on air and dew. The place of her imprisonment was known to none. The young Prince was ignorant of it. He was not dead, and was continually inquiring for Babiole. He saw plainly enough by the melancholy of all his attendants, that a general feeling of sorrow pervaded the Court upon some subject which his natural discretion prevented him from attempting to discover; but as soon as he was convalescent, he entreated them so earnestly to give him some tidings of the Princess, that they had not the courage to conceal her loss from him. Some who had seen her enter the wood, maintained that she had been devoured by the lions; while others believed she had destroyed herself in a fit of despair. Others, again, imagined she had gone out of her mind, and was wandering about the world.

As the last notion was the least dreadful, and kept up in a slight degree the hopes of the Prince, he adopted it, and departed on Criquetin, the horse I have before mentioned, but I omitted to say that he was the eldest son of Bucephalus, and one of the best horses of the age. The Prince let the bridle fall on his neck, and suffered him to take his own road. He called loudly on the Infanta, but the echoes alone replied to him.

At length he came to the banks of a large river; Criquetin was thirsty and went in to drink, and the Prince, as before, shouted, “Babiole, lovely Babiole! where art thou?”

He heard a voice, the sweetness of which seemed to charm the waters. This voice said to him, “Advance, and you shall learn where she is.” At these words the Prince, whose courage was equal to his love, clapped both his spurs into the sides of Criquetin. He plunged into the river and swam till he came to a whirlpool, into which the waves were sucked rapidly. They went down in it, horse and man, and the Prince made sure he should be drowned.

He arrived, however, fortunately, at the abode of the worthy Biroquoi, who was celebrating the marriage of his daughter with one of the richest and deepest rivers in the country. All the aquatic deities were assembled in the Grotto. The Tritons and the Syrens performed the most agreeable music, and the River Biroquie, lightly attired, danced the Hay with the Seine, the Thames, the Euphrates, and the Ganges, who had certainly come a long way to be merry together.

Criquetin, who knew good manners, halted very respectfully at the entrance of the Grotto, and the Prince, who knew better manners even than his horse, making a profound bow, inquired if a mortal like himself might be permitted to make his appearance in so splendid a party.

Biroquoi replied, in an affable tone, that he did them both honour and pleasure. “I have expected you for some days, my lord,” continued he; “I am interested in your fate, and that of the Infanta who is dear to me. You must release her from the fatal spot in which the vindictive Fanferluche has imprisoned her. It is in a bottle.” “Ah, what do I hear!” cried the Prince; “the Infanta is in a bottle?” “Yes,” said the sage old man; “she suffers much; but I warn you, my lord, that it is not easy to conquer the giants and the dragons that guard it, unless you follow my counsels. You must leave your good steed here, and mount on a winged dolphin that I have for some time been breaking in for you.” He had the dolphin brought out, saddled and bridled, who vaulted and curveted so cleverly that Criquetin was jealous of him.

Biroquoi and his friends made haste to arm the Prince. They gave him a brilliant cuirass of the scales of golden carps, and placed on his head the shell of a huge snail, which was overshadowed with the tail of a large cod raised in the form of an aigrette; a naiad girt him with an eel, from which depended a tremendous sword made out of a long fish-bone; and lastly they gave him the shell of a great tortoise for a shield; and, thus armed, there was not the smallest gudgeon that did not take him to be the God of Soles, for to speak the truth, this young Prince had a certain air which is rarely met with in mortals.

The hope of soon recovering the charming Princess he adored inspired him with a joy he had not experienced since her loss, and the faithful chronicle of these events asserts that he ate with an excellent appetite whilst he was staying with Biroquoi, and that he thanked him and all the company with extraordinary eloquence. He then bade adieu to Criquetin, and mounted the flying dolphin, who set off with him immediately. The Prince, towards evening, found himself at such a height, that for the sake of a little rest he entered the kingdom of the Moon. The curiosities he saw there would have detained him for some time had he been less anxious to extricate his beloved Infanta from the bottle in which she had been living for several months.

Morning had scarcely dawned when he discovered her surrounded by giants and dragons, which the Fairy, by the power of her little wand, had kept beside her. She so little imagined that any one would have power to rescue the Princess, that she felt perfectly satisfied with the vigilance of her terrible guards, and their ability to prolong the sufferings of Babiole.

That beautiful Princess had raised her mournful eyes to Heaven, and was addressing to it her sad complaints, when she saw the flying dolphin and the knight who came to her deliverance. She had not believed in the possibility of such an event, although her own experience had taught her that the most extraordinary things become familiar to certain persons. “Is it by the malice of some Fairies,” said she, “that yon knight is borne through the air? Alas! how I pity him if, like me, he is doomed to be imprisoned in some bottle or flagon.”

Whilst she thus ruminated, the Giants, who saw the Prince hovering above their heads, thought it was a boy’s kite, and cried one to the other, “Catch hold, catch hold of the line! — it will amuse us;” but while they were stooping to look for the line, the Prince rushed down upon them, sword in hand, cut them in pieces as you would cut a pack of cards, and scattered them to the winds.

At the noise of this desperate combat the Infanta looked round, and recognised her young Prince. What joy, to be assured he was alive! — but what terror to see the imminent peril he was in amongst those horrible giants and the dragons that were springing upon him. She uttered fearful shrieks, and was ready to die at the sight of his danger.

But the enchanted bone with which Biroquoi had armed the Prince never struck in vain, and the light dolphin flying up or down with him at exactly the right moment, was also of wonderful assistance to him; so that in a very short time the ground was covered with the bodies of these monsters.

The impatient Prince, who saw his Infanta through the glass, would have dashed the bottle to pieces had he not been afraid of wounding her. He decided, therefore, to descend through the neck of it. When he reached the bottom of the bottle, he flung himself at the feet of Babiole, and respectfully kissed her hand. “My Lord,” said she, “it is necessary, in order to retain your good opinion, that I should give you my reasons for the tender interest I took in your preservation. Know that we are near relations: that I am the daughter of the Queen, your aunt, and that very Babiole whom you found in the form of an ape on the sea-shore, and who afterwards had the weakness to evince an attachment for you which you despised.” “Ah, Madam,” said the Prince, “can I believe so miraculous a circumstance? You have been an ape, — you have loved me, I have been aware of it, and was capable of rejecting the greatest of all blessings!” “I should at this moment have a very bad opinion of your taste,” replied the Infanta smiling, “if you could then have felt any affection for me: but let us away, my Lord; I am weary of captivity, and I fear my enemy. Let us seek the Queen, my mother, and tell her all the extraordinary things in which she must be so much interested.” “Come, Madam, let us go,” said the enamoured Prince, mounting the winged dolphin, and taking Babiole in his arms; “let me hasten to restore to her in your person the most lovely princess that the world ever boasted.”

The dolphin rose gently into the air and took his flight towards the capital, where the Queen passed her melancholy life. The disappearance of Babiole had deprived her of repose. She could not cease thinking of her, of the pretty speeches she had made, and, all ape as she was, the Queen would have given half her kingdom to see her once more. As soon as the Prince arrived he assumed the disguise of an old man, and requested a private audience of her Majesty. “Madam,” said he to her, “I have studied from my earliest youth the art of Necromancy: you may judge from that fact that I am not ignorant of the hatred Fanferluche bears you, and its terrible consequences; but dry your tears, Madam; that Babiole, whom you have seen so ugly, is now the most beautiful Princess in the world. She will shortly be beside you, if you will forgive the Queen your sister the cruel war she has made upon you, and cement the peace by the marriage of your Infanta with the Prince your nephew.” “I cannot flatter myself with such hopes,” replied the Queen weeping; “you wish to allay my sorrow, sage old man, but I have lost my dear child, I have no longer a husband, my sister pretends to my kingdom, her son is equally unjust towards me, and I will never seek their alliance.” “Destiny has ordained otherwise,” said the Prince, “I am commissioned to inform you so.” “Alas!” added the Queen, “where would be the advantage of my consenting to their marriage? The wicked Fanferluche has too much power and malice. She would oppose it always.” “Make yourself easy on that score, Madam,” replied the old man; “promise me only that you will not object to the match so much desired.” “I will promise anything,” said the Queen, “on condition that I once again behold my dear daughter.”

The Prince retired and ran to the spot where the Infanta was awaiting him. She was surprised to see him disguised, and he was, therefore, compelled to explain to her that for some time past there had been a confliction of interests between the two Queens, which had caused considerable bitterness; but that he had at length induced his aunt to consent to his wishes. The Princess was delighted: she repaired to the palace. All who saw her pass, were so struck by her perfect resemblance to her mother, that they hastened after her to ascertain who she could be.

As soon as the Queen saw her, her heart was so greatly agitated that she needed no other proof of the truth of the story. The Princess flung herself at the Queen’s feet, and was raised by her into her arms; where, after remaining for some time without speaking, and kissing away each other’s tears, they gave utterance to all that can be imagined on such an occasion. The Queen then, casting her eyes on her nephew, received him very graciously, and repeated to him the promise she had made to the necromancer. She would have said more, but the noise that she heard in the court-yard of the palace induced her to look out of the window, and she had the agreeable surprise of beholding the arrival of the Queen her sister. The Prince and the Infanta, who were looking out also, perceived in the royal suite the venerable Biroquoi, and even good Criquetin was one of the party. All at the sight of each other uttered shouts of joy; they ran to meet each other with transports which cannot be described, and the magnificent nuptials of the Prince and the Infanta were celebrated upon the spot in spite of the Fairy Fanferluche, whose power and malignity were equally confounded.

15

THE YELLOW DWARF

Once upon a time there was a Queen who had only one daughter left out of a very large family, but that one was worth a thousand. Finding herself a widow, and having nothing in the world so dear to her as the young Princess, she was so much afraid of losing her that she never corrected any of her faults; so that this marvellous creature, perceiving that her beauty was celestial rather than mortal, and knowing that she was born to a crown, became so proud and so vain of her nascent charms that she despised everybody.

The Queen, her mother, by her caresses and her indulgence, confirmed her in the belief that there was nothing in the world which could be worthy of her. She appeared nearly always dressed as Pallas or Diana, followed by the principal ladies of the court attired as nymphs; and finally, to pamper her vanity to the utmost, the Queen gave her the name of Toutebelle; and having had her portrait painted by the best artists, sent it to several kings, with whom she was in strict alliance. As soon as they saw this portrait, every one, without an exception, yielded to the inevitable power of her charms. Some fell ill, others lost their wits, and those who were fortunate enough to preserve their health and senses hastened to her court. But no sooner did they behold the fair original, than the poor princes became her devoted slaves.

There never was a court more gallant and polite. Twenty kings vied with each other in their endeavours to please the Princess; and after having spent three or four hundred millions of francs upon a single entertainment, would feel more than repaid if they could only draw from her an admission that “It was pretty.”

The worship that was paid to her delighted the Queen. Not a day passed that the Princess did not receive seven or eight thousand sonnets, as many odes, madrigals, and songs, which were sent by all the poets in the universe. Toutebelle was the sole theme of all the prose and verse written by the authors of her time. All the bonfires were made with these compositions, which sparkled and burned better than any other sort of fuel. The Princess had already reached the age of fifteen. Nobody ventured to pretend to the honour of being her husband, though everybody desired it: but how was it possible to touch a heart of that description? — you might have hanged yourself five or six times a-day to please her, and she would have thought it a mere trifle. Her lovers complained bitterly of her cruelty, and her mother, who wished her to be married, saw no means of inducing her to decide in favour of one of them. “Will you not,” said she sometimes to her, “abate a little of that insupportable pride which causes you to look with disdain upon all the kings who visit our court? I wish to give you one for a husband: — have you no desire to please me?” “I am so happy,” replied Toutebelle. “Pray, permit me, Madam, to enjoy my peaceful indifference. If I were once to lose it, you might be very sorry.” “Yes,” said the Queen, “I should be sorry if you loved any one beneath you; but look at those who sigh for you, and admit that there are none to be found more worthy.”

It was quite true, but the Princess had such an opinion of her own perfections that she considered herself worth some one better still; and after some time, her obstinate determination to remain single so distressed her mother, that she repented, but too late, her extreme indulgence. Not knowing what she ought to do, she went by herself to consult a celebrated

Fairy called the Fairy of the Desert: but it was not easy to see her, for she was guarded by lions. The Queen would have had little chance if she had not been for a long time aware that it was necessary to throw to these beasts some cake made of millet-seed, sugar-candy, and crocodiles’ eggs. She had made one of these cakes herself, and put it into a little hand-basket. As she was tired with walking so far, not being accustomed to it, she laid down at the foot of a tree to take a little rest. Insensibly she fell asleep, but on re-awaking she found her basket empty. The cake was gone! and to complete the misfortune, she heard the great lions coming, roaring tremendously, for they had smelt her.

“Alas, what will become of me!” she exclaimed piteously; “I shall be devoured!” She wept, and not having strength to fly, she clung to the tree under which she had slept. At that moment she heard, “Hist! Hist! A-hem! A-hem!” She looked all about her, and raising her eyes, she saw up in the tree a little man not above a cubit in height. He was eating oranges, and said to her, “Oh! I know you well, Queen, and I know the fear you are in that the lions will devour you; and not without reason are you alarmed, for they have devoured many before you, and to complete your misfortune you have no cake.”

“I must submit to die!” said the Queen, sighing. “Alas, I should do so with less pain if my dear daughter were but married!” “How? you have a daughter!” exclaimed the Yellow Dwarf. (He was so called from the colour of his skin, and his living in an orange-tree.) “Truly, I am delighted to hear it, for I have sought a wife by land and sea. Look now, if you will promise her to me, I will save you from lions, tigers, or bears.” The Queen looked at him, and she was scarcely less frightened at his horrible little figure than she was at the lions. She mused, and made no answer. “What! do you hesitate, Madam?” cried he. “You cannot be very fond of life.” At the same moment the Queen perceived the lions on the brow of a hill running towards her. Each had two heads, eight feet, four rows of teeth, and their skin was as hard as shell, and as red as morocco. At this sight, the poor Queen, trembling more than a dove at the view of a falcon, cried out with all her might — “My Lord Dwarf! Toutebelle is yours.” “Oh!” said he, with a disdainful air, “Toutebelle is too much of a belle; I will have none of her. You may keep her.” “Ah, my Lord,” continued the afflicted Queen, “do not refuse her! — she is the most charming Princess in the world!” “Well,” said he, “out of charity I accept her: but recollect the gift you have made me!” The trunk of the orange-tree, in which he was seated, immediately opened. The Queen rushed headlong into it; it closed, and the lions were balked of their prey.

The Queen was so agitated that she did not notice a door constructed in the tree. At length she perceived it, and opened it: it opened on a field of nettles and thistles surrounded by a muddy ditch. At a little distance stood a very low-roofed cottage, thatched with straw, — the Yellow Dwarf came out of it with a mirthful air. He wore wooden shoes, and a jacket of coarse yellow cloth; had large ears, and no hair, and looked like a thorough little villain. “I am delighted, my Lady Mother-in-law,” said he, “to show you the little château in which your Toutebelle will reside with me. She may keep an ass upon these nettles and thistles to ride about on. This rustic roof will shelter her from the inclemency of the weather; she will drink this water and eat some of the frogs that fatten in it; and she will have me day and night beside her, handsome, gay, and gallant, as you see me, for I should be very sorry if her shadow followed her closer than I.”

The unfortunate Queen, suddenly struck by the wretched life the Dwarf had allotted to her dear daughter, and being unable to support so terrible a picture, dropped insensible to the ground without being able to utter a word in reply to him: but while she was in this state she was transported to the Palace, placed in her own bed, very neatly, with the finest night-caps and the handsomest *fontange* that she had ever worn in her life. The Queen awoke and recollected what had befallen her. She wouldn’t believe it was true; for finding herself in her Palace, amidst her ladies, and her daughter by her side, there was little to show that she had been in the Desert, that she had encountered such great dangers, and that the Dwarf had saved and preserved her from them on so hard a condition as the gift to him of Toutebelle. Nevertheless, the rare lace of the cap, and the beauty of the riband, astonished her as much as the dream she presumed she had had, and in the excess of her anxiety she fell into a melancholy, so extraordinary, that she could scarcely speak, eat, or sleep. The Princess, who loved her mother with all her heart, was very uneasy about her. She implored her frequently to say what was the matter with her: but the Queen, seeking for pretexts, answered sometimes that she was out of health, and at others that one of the neighbouring States threatened to go to war with her.

Toutebelle saw plainly enough that these were plausible reasons, but that there was something else at the bottom of the matter which the Queen studiously concealed from her. Being unable longer to control her anxiety, she resolved to seek out the famous Fairy of the Desert, whose science was so much talked of everywhere. She was also desirous of her advice on the question of marrying or remaining single, for everybody pressed her strongly to choose a husband. She took care to knead the cake herself, which had the power to appease the fury of the lions, and pretending to go to bed early one evening, she went out by a little back staircase, her face covered by a large white veil which came down to her feet; and thus, all alone, took the road to the grotto in which the skilful Fairy resided.

But on arriving at the fatal orange-tree, of which I have already spoken, she found it so covered with fruit and blossoms, that she was seized with an irresistible desire to gather some. She set her basket upon the ground and plucked some oranges, which she ate. When she looked again for her basket and the cake, they had disappeared. She is alarmed, she is distressed, and suddenly she sees beside her the frightful little Dwarf I before described. "What ails you, fair maid? what are you weeping for?" said he. "Alas! who would not weep?" replied she, "I have lost my basket and my cake which were so necessary to insure my safe arrival at the abode of the Desert Fairy."

"Ah! and what would you with her, fair maid?" said the little monkey; "I am her kinsman, her friend, and at least as clever as she is." "The Queen, my mother," replied the Princess, "has lately fallen into an alarming despondency, which causes me to tremble for her life. I fancy I am, perhaps, the cause of it; for she wishes me to marry; and I confess to you that I have not yet seen any one I think worthy of me. It is for this reason I would consult the Fairy." "Don't give yourself that trouble, Princess," said the Dwarf; "I am better fitted than she to enlighten you on such subjects. The Queen, your mother, is sorry that she has promised you in marriage." "The Queen promised me!" cried the Princess, interrupting him. "Oh, you must be mistaken. She would have told me, and I am too much interested in the matter for her to engage me without my previous consent." "Beautiful Princess," said the Dwarf, suddenly flinging himself at her feet, "I flatter myself that her choice will not displease you when I inform you that it is I who am destined to enjoy such happiness." "My mother would have you for her son-in-law!" exclaimed Toutebelle, recoiling some paces; "was there ever any madness like yours?" "I care very little about the honour," said the Dwarf angrily. "Here come the lions, in three bites they will avenge me for your unjust disdain."

At the same moment the poor Princess heard the prolonged roars of the approaching monsters. "What will become of me!" she cried: "must I end my young days thus!" The wicked Dwarf looked at her, and laughing contemptuously said, "You will have at least the glory of dying a maiden, and of having escaped the *mésalliance* of a person of your dazzling worth with a miserable Dwarf like me." "For mercy's sake be not angry," said the Princess, clasping her beautiful hands, "I would rather marry all the dwarfs in the universe than perish in so frightful a manner." "Look at me well, Princess, before you give me your word," replied he, "for I do not wish to take any advantage of you." "I have looked at you more than enough," said she. "The lions are approaching; my terror increases; save me! save me! or I shall die of fright." In fact, she had scarcely uttered these words before she fainted; and without knowing how she got there, found herself, on recovering from her swoon, in her own bed, in the finest linen in the world, with the most beautiful ribands on her dress, and a little ring made of a single red hair, which fitted her finger so closely that the skin might have been taken off sooner than the ring.

When the Princess saw all these things, and remembered what had taken place that night, she fell into a melancholy which surprised and pained the whole Court. Her mother was more alarmed than anybody, and asked her hundreds of times what was the matter; but the Princess persisted in concealing from her the adventure. At length, the great estates of the kingdom, impatient to see the Princess married, assembled in council, and afterwards proceeded to have an audience of the Queen, whom they petitioned to choose a husband for her daughter as soon as possible. She answered them, that she desired nothing better; but that her daughter evinced so much repugnance to marriage, that she advised them to go and talk to the Princess herself upon the subject. They went immediately.

Toutebelle had lost much of her haughtiness since her adventure with the Yellow Dwarf. She saw no better way of getting out of the dilemma, than by marrying some great king with whom the little monkey would not dare to dispute so glorious a prize. She, therefore, returned a more favourable answer than was hoped for; saying, that although she should have esteemed herself happy in remaining single all her life, she consented to marry the King of the Gold Mines, a very powerful and handsome prince, who had loved her passionately for several years, and who up to that moment had never been able to flatter himself that she would make the least return to his affection.

It is easy to imagine the excess of his joy when he received such charming intelligence, and the rage of all his rivals at the utter extinction of the fond hopes they had continued to nourish; but Toutebelle could not marry twenty kings. She had much ado to choose one; for her vanity was as great as ever, and she was still fully persuaded that nobody in the world was a fitting match for her.

Everything was prepared for the celebration of one of the grandest entertainments that had ever been given in the universe. The King of the Gold Mines sent home for such prodigious sums of money that the sea was entirely covered with the ships which returned with them. Agents were despatched to all the most polished and gallant Courts, particularly that of France, to purchase the rarest materials for the wardrobe of the Princess; though she had less need than anybody of ornament to set off her beauty, which was so perfect that it was impossible to add to it; and the King of the Gold Mines, thus upon the eve of happiness, never left the side of his charming Princess.

The obvious importance of becoming acquainted with the character of her future husband, inducing the Princess to study it carefully, she discovered in him so much merit, so much sense, such deep and delicate feeling, — in short, so fine a mind in so perfect a body, that she began to return in some degree his affection. What happy moments were they for both, when, wandering in the most beautiful gardens in the world, they found themselves at liberty to express their mutual sentiments. This pleasure was often heightened by the charms of music. The King, always gallant and amorous, sang verses and songs of his own composition to the Princess. The following is one she was much pleased with: —

THE PROVES, for thee, a richer green put on;
 The flowery meads their brightest colours don;

Where'er thy footsteps fall fresh blossoms spring;
Sweeter within thy bowers, the sweet birds sing.
All nature smiles, around, below, above,
All hail the daughter of the God of Love!

JOY WAS at its height in the palace. The King's rivals, enraged at his success, had quitted it and returned to their own dominions, overwhelmed with the deepest grief, unable to bear the pain of witnessing Toutebelle's marriage. They had taken their leave of her in so touching a manner that she could not help pitying them. "Ah, Madam," said the King of the Gold Mines to her on that occasion, "what an injustice you have done me to-day; you have blest with your pity, lovers who were more than repaid for their sufferings by one glance from your eyes."

"I should be sorry," replied Toutebelle, "if you witnessed with indifference the compassion I have evinced for those princes who have lost me for ever. It is a proof of your sensibility, for which I am indebted to you. But, my Lord, their position is so different from yours; you have so much reason to be satisfied with my conduct towards you, and they have so little cause to congratulate themselves, that you ought not to carry your jealousy further." The King of the Gold Mines, overcome by the kind manner in which the Princess had received a reproach which might have annoyed her, threw himself at her feet, and kissing her hand, asked her pardon a thousand times over. At length, the day so long waited and wished for arrived. Everything being ready for the marriage of Toutebelle, the trumpets and musical instruments announced throughout the city the commencement of this grand fête. The streets were carpeted and strewed with flowers. The people flocked in crowds to the great square in front of the palace. The Queen, in a state of rapture, had scarcely gone to bed before she got up again, long before daybreak, to give the requisite orders and to select the jewels which the Princess was to wear. She was all diamonds down to her very shoes, which were made of them. Her gown of silver brocade was striped with a dozen rays of the sun, which had been bought at an enormous price; but which also could not be surpassed in brilliancy except by the beauty of the Princess. A magnificent crown adorned her head, her hair falling in wavy curls to her feet, and her majestic form distinguished her amongst the crowd of ladies who accompanied her.

The King of the Gold Mines was not less perfect or less magnificent in his appearance. His happiness was visible in all his looks and actions. No one accosted him who did not return laden with his liberalities; for round his banqueting-hall were arranged by his orders a thousand barrels full of gold, and large sacks of velvet embroidered with pearls, crammed with pistoles. Each held an hundred thousand. They were given indiscriminately to all who held their hands for them; so that this ceremony, which was not one of the most useless or least agreeable on this occasion drew many persons to the wedding, who had little taste for other entertainments.

The Queen and Princess were advancing to meet the King, and proceed with him to the altar, when they saw entering a long gallery through which they were passing, two large turkey-cocks, drawing a very clumsily-made box. Behind them came a tall old woman, whose great age and decrepitude were no less remarkable than her extreme ugliness. She leaned on a crutch. She wore a black taffety ruff, a red velvet hood, and a farthingale all in tatters. She took three turns round the gallery with her turkey-cocks before she spoke a word; then, stopping in the centre of it, and brandishing her crutch in a threatening manner, she cried, “Ho! ho! Queen! — Ho! ho! Princess! Do you fancy you can break with impunity your promises to my friend the Yellow Dwarf! I am the Fairy of the Desert! But for him and his orange-tree know you not that my great lions would have devoured ye? We do not put up with such insults in Fairy Land. Consider quickly what you are about to do; for I swear by my coif, that you shall marry him, or I will burn my crutch.”

“Ah! Princess,” exclaimed the Queen, bursting into tears, “what do I hear! — what promise have you made?” “Ah! Mother,” cried Toute-belle, sorrowfully, “What promise have you, yourself, made?” The King of the Gold Mines, enraged at this interruption, and the attempt of the wicked old woman to oppose his marriage, advanced upon her, sword in hand, and placing the point to her throat, cried, “Quit this palace for ever, or with thy life thou shalt atone for thy malice!”

He had scarcely pronounced these words, when the lid of the box flew up with a terrific noise as high as the ceiling, and out of it was seen to issue the Yellow Dwarf, mounted on a large Spanish cat, and who placed himself between the Fairy of the Desert and the King of the Gold Mines.

“Rash youth!” said he to the latter, “think not of assaulting this illustrious Fairy: ‘tis with me alone thou hast to do! I am thy rival, thy enemy; the faithless Princess who would give thee her hand has plighted her troth to me, and received mine. Look, if she have not on her finger a ring of my hair. Try to remove it, and thou wilt learn by that little exertion that thy power is inferior to mine.” “Miserable monster,” said the King to him, “hast thou really the audacity to declare thyself the lover of this divine Princess, and to pretend to the possession of so glorious a treasure? Know that thou art a monkey, whose hideous figure is painful to the sight, and that I had ere this dispatched thee, hadst thou been worthy of dying by my hand.” The Yellow Dwarf, stung to the very quick, struck his spurs into the sides of his cat, who set up a terrific squalling, and flying hither and thither, frightened everybody but the brave King, who pressed the dwarf so closely, that he drew a large cutlass with which he was armed, and defying the King to single combat, descended into the court-yard of the palace amidst an extraordinary uproar. The enraged King followed him with rapid strides. Scarcely had they confronted each other, the whole court being in the balconies to witness the combat, when the sun became suddenly as red as blood, and it grew so dark that they could scarcely see themselves. It thundered and lightened as if there was to be an end of the world, and the two turkey-cocks appeared at the side of the Yellow Dwarf like two giants, taller than mountains, casting out flames from their mouths and eyes in such abundance, that each looked like a fiery furnace. All these horrors were unable to shake the magnanimous heart of the young King. The intrepidity evinced by his every look and action reassured all who were interested in his preservation, and perhaps somewhat embarrassed the Yellow Dwarf; but his courage failed when he saw the Fairy of the Desert, her head covered with long serpents like Tisiphone, mounted upon a winged griffin, and armed with a lance, rush upon his dear Princess, and strike her so fierce a blow, that she fell into the Queen’s arms bathed in her own blood. That tender mother, more deeply-wounded by the blow than was even her daughter, uttered shrieks and lamentations which are indescribable. The King’s courage and reason at that sight abandoned him together. He ceased fighting, and ran to rescue the Princess, or perish with her, but the Yellow Dwarf anticipated his movements: he leaped with his Spanish cat into the balcony, snatched the Princess from the arms of the Queen and of the ladies by whom she was surrounded, and then jumping on to the roof of the palace, disappeared with his prize.

The King, motionless with astonishment, was gazing in utter despair on this extraordinary adventure, which unfortunately he had no power to prevent, when, to complete his misery, he felt his eyesight fail him, and that by some irresistible power he was hurried through the vast expanse of air. What misfortunes! Love! cruel Love! Is it thus thou usest those who acknowledge thee their conqueror? The wicked Fairy of the Desert, who came to assist the Yellow Dwarf to carry off the Princess, no sooner set her eyes upon the King of the Gold Mines than her barbarous heart was touched by the charms of that young Prince. She marked him for her prey, and bore him off to the recesses of a frightful cavern, where she loaded him with chains which she had fastened to a rock. She hoped that the fear of approaching death would make him forget Toute-belle, and induce him to do whatever she desired. As soon as they had arrived there, she restored his sight without setting him at liberty, and, assuming by the power of fairy art the graces and charms which nature had denied her, she appeared before him like a lovely nymph, whom chance had conducted to that spot.

"What do I behold!" she cried. "Can it be you, charming Prince? What misfortune has befallen you, and driven you to languish in this miserable abode?" The King, deceived by her appearance, replied, "Alas, fair nymph, I know not the object of the infernal Fairy who brought me hither; for, although she deprived me of sight when she bore me off, and has not appeared to me since, I know from the tone of her voice that it was the Fairy of the Desert." "Ah, my Lord," exclaimed the false nymph, "if you are in the power of that woman you will not escape without marrying her. She has served more than one hero this trick, and of all persons in the world, she is the most obstinate when she sets her mind upon anything." Whilst she thus pretended to take great interest in the King's affliction, he caught sight of the nymph's feet, which were like those of a griffin. The Fairy of the Desert was always recognised by this peculiarity, which in all her metamorphoses remained unchanged.

The King took no notice of it, and continuing to talk to her as in perfect confidence, "I do not," said he, "entertain any dislike to the Fairy of the Desert, but I cannot endure that she should protect the Yellow Dwarf and keep me in chains like a criminal. What have I done to offend her? I admired a charming princess; but if the Fairy restores me to liberty, I feel that gratitude will induce me to love no one but her." "Do you say that sincerely," asked the deceived nymph. "Doubt it not," replied the King. "I am unacquainted with the art of dissimulation; and I confess to you that my vanity would be more flattered by the regard of a Fairy than by that of a simple Princess; but were I dying for love of her, I would evince nothing but hatred to her, until I had regained my liberty."

The Fairy of the Desert, deceived by these words, resolved to transport the King to a spot which was as beautiful as the cavern he now inhabited was horrible. So compelling him to enter her chariot, to which she had now harnessed swans instead of the bats which usually drew it, she fled with the King of the Gold Mines from one pole to the other.

But what was the Prince's emotion, whilst thus travelling through the boundless regions of air, at beholding his dear Princess in a castle all of steel, the walls of which, reflecting the rays of the sun, became like burning-glasses, and scorched to death all who ventured to approach it. She was reclining in a bower beside a streamlet. One of her hands was beneath her head, and with the other she appeared to be wiping away her tears. As she lifted her eyes to heaven, imploring its aid, she saw the King pass by with the Fairy of the Desert, who, having taxed the magic power she was so skilled in, to appear beautiful in the eyes of the young monarch, seemed to those of the Princess the most admirable creature in the world! "How!" she exclaimed, "am I not sufficiently wretched in this inaccessible castle, to which the frightful Yellow Dwarf has transported me? Must the demon of jealousy come to torture me, to complete my misery? Must I learn by this extraordinary occurrence the infidelity of the King of the Gold Mines? He has supposed that once out of sight he was absolved from all the vows that he has made me! But who is this formidable rival, whose fatal beauty surpasses mine?"

Whilst the Princess was thus speaking, the enamoured King was in mortal agony at being so rapidly borne away from the dear object of his affections. If he had not been so fully aware of the power of the Fairy, he would have attempted, at any hazard, to escape from her, either by killing her, or some other means which his love or his courage might have suggested; but what could be done against so powerful a being? Opportunity and stratagem could alone release him from her clutches.

The Fairy had perceived Toute-belle, and sought to discover in the eyes of the King the effect which the sight of his darling had produced in his heart. “No one,” said the King, interpreting her glances, “can better than myself furnish you with the information you desire; this unexpected meeting with an unhappy Princess, for whom I entertained a previous attachment, has caused me some little emotion; but you possess so great an ascendency over her in my mind, that I would rather die than be faithless to you.” “Ah! Prince,” said the Fairy, “may I flatter myself that I have inspired you with sentiments so favourable to me?” “Time will convince you, Madam,” he replied; “but if you would persuade me that I have some share in your good graces, you will not refuse me when I ask your protection for Toute-belle.” “Do you know what you ask me?” said the Fairy, frowning and looking askance at him. “Would you have me employ my science against the Yellow Dwarf, who is my best friend, and release from his power a proud princess whom I cannot cease to regard as my rival?” The King sighed, without replying. What answer could he make so astute a personage? They reached an extensive meadow, enamelled with a thousand various flowers. A deep river surrounded it, and streams from many fountains flowed gently beneath tufted trees, affording ever a refreshing shade. In the distance arose a superb palace, the walls of which were of transparent emeralds. As soon as the swans that drew the Fairy’s chariot had descended beneath a portico roofed with rubies, and paved with diamonds, thousands of lovely nymphs appeared on all sides, and advanced to receive them with loud acclamations of joy. They sang the following words: —

When Love o’er the heart would a triumph obtain,
Defiance is idle — we struggle in vain.

Resistance gives force to the weapons he wields;
The greater the hero, the sooner he yields.

THE FAIRY of the Desert was delighted at hearing this allusion to her conquest. She led the King into the most superb apartment that had ever existed in the recollection of fairies, and left him there for a few minutes alone, that he might not fancy himself positively a prisoner. He felt assured that she was not far off, and that wherever she might hide herself, she had an eye upon all his actions. He therefore advanced towards a large looking-glass, and, addressing it, he said, "Faithful counsellor, allow me to see what I can do to render myself more agreeable to the charming Fairy of the Desert, for my anxiety to please her is unceasing." So saying, he combed and powdered his hair, put a patch upon his cheek, and seeing on a table a suit of clothes more magnificent than his own, he dressed himself in them as quickly as possible. The Fairy reentered, so transported with joy, that she could not control it. "I appreciate," said she, "the pains you take to please me. You found the way without intending it. Judge then, Sir, if it will be a difficult task when you are anxious to do so."

The King, who had his reasons for saying sweet things to the old Fairy, was not sparing of them, and by degrees obtained permission to take a daily walk by the sea-side. She had, by the exercise of her art, rendered that coast so dangerous that no pilots were sufficiently adventurous to approach it, so that she had nothing to fear from the favour she had granted to her captive. It was, however, some comfort to him to indulge in solitary musings, uninterrupted by the presence of his wicked gaoler.

After having strolled for some time on the sands, he stooped and wrote the following lines in them with a cane which he carried: —

At length I am at liberty to weep:
My tears in torrents now uncheck'd may pour,
And ease my labouring bosom's anguish deep.
Alas! my love I shall behold no more.
O thou that makest this rock-girted shore
To mortals inaccessible! dread Sea,
Whose mountain billows as the wild winds roar:
Now high as heaven, now low as hell, can flee;
Thy state, compared to mine, is calm tranquillity.

Toute-belle! O cruel destiny! For ever,
For ever lost! The idol of my heart!
Ye Gods, when dooming me from her to sever,
Why bade ye not my life as well depart?
Spirit of Ocean! whatsoe'er thou art —
If it be true that e'en beneath the wave
Love hath the power to reach thee with his dart —
Rise from thy pearly grot, thy coral cave,
And from despair a fond and faithful lover save.

As he finished writing, he heard a voice which irresistibly attracted all his attention, and perceiving the tide rising in an extraordinary manner, he looked rapidly around him and saw a female of extraordinary beauty, whose body to the waist was covered only by her long hair, which, gently agitated by the breeze, floated upon the water. She held a looking-glass in one hand, and a comb in the other. Her form terminated in a long fish's tail, furnished with fins. The King was much surprised at so extraordinary an appearance. As soon as she was near enough to speak to him, she said, "I know the sad state to which you are reduced by the loss of your Princess, and by the extravagant passion which the Fairy of the Desert entertains for you. If you are willing, I will convey you from this fatal spot, where you may otherwise languish for more than thirty years longer.” The King knew not how to reply to this proposal; not that he wanted any temptation to escape from captivity, but that he feared the Fairy of the Desert had taken this form to deceive him. As he hesitated, the Syren, who could read his thoughts, said, “Do not imagine I am laying a snare for you; I am of too honest a nature to wish to serve your foes. The conduct of the Fairy of the Desert and of the Yellow Dwarf has incensed me against them. I see your unhappy Princess daily; her beauty and merit equally excite my compassion, and I repeat to you, if you will have confidence in me, I will save you.” “I have such perfect confidence in you,” said the King, “that I will do whatever you command; but as you have seen my Princess, pray give me some news of her.” “We should lose too much time in conversation, here,” said the Syren. “Come with me, I will convey you to the Steel Castle, and leave on the shore a figure so perfectly resembling you, that it shall deceive the Fairy.

She immediately cut some sea-rushes, and making a large bundle of them, blew three times upon them, and said, “Sea-rushes, my friends, I order you to lie stretched on the sand, without motion, until the Fairy of the Desert comes to take you away.” The rushes became covered with skin, and so like the King of the Gold Mines, that he had never seen so astonishing a transformation. They were dressed in clothes exactly resembling his, and the countenance was pale and wasted, as if he had been drowned. The friendly Syren then made the King seat himself upon her great fish’s tail, and thus they ploughed the sea together with mutual satisfaction.

“I will now willingly inform you,” said the Syren, “that when the wicked Yellow Dwarf carried off Toute-belle, notwithstanding the wound the Fairy of the Desert had inflicted on her, he placed her behind him on the crupper of his horrible Spanish cat. She lost so much blood, and was so terrified by the whole occurrence, that her strength failed her, and she was in a swoon during the entire journey; but the Yellow Dwarf would not stop to give her the least assistance until he had safely arrived in his terrible Steel Palace. He was received on his entrance by the most beautiful nymphs in the world whom he had transported thither. They emulated each other in their eagerness to serve the Princess. She was put into a bed, the furniture of which was of cloth of gold, covered with pearls as big as walnuts." "Hah!" exclaimed the King of the Gold Mines, interrupting the Syren, "he has married her, then? I faint! I die!" "No," said she, "compose yourself, my Lord, the constancy of Toute-belle has preserved her from the violence of that hideous dwarf." "Proceed then," said the King. "What more have I to tell you?" continued the Syren. "She was in the grove when you passed over it. She saw you with the Fairy of the Desert, who was so disguised that she appeared to the Princess to possess greater beauty than herself. Her despair is not to be conceived. She believes you love the Fairy." "She believes that I love the Fairy! Just Heavens!" cried the King, "into what a fatal error has she fallen, and what must I do to undeceive her?" "Consult your own heart," replied the Syren, with a gracious smile. "When we are deeply in love, we need no advice in such a matter." As she uttered these words, they arrived at the Steel Castle. The side that faced the sea was the only part of it that the Yellow Dwarf had not fortified with those formidable walls which burned everybody who approached them.

"I know well enough," said the Syren to the King, "that Toute-belle is beside the same fountain that you saw her seated near when you passed over the castle gardens; but as you will have some enemies to contend with before you can approach her, here is a sword, armed with which you may dare any encounter, and brave the greatest dangers; but beware that you never let it fall. Adieu; I go to repose beneath the rock you see yonder. If you need my assistance to convey you and your dear Princess any further, I will not fail you; for the Queen, her mother, is my best friend, and it was for her sake that I came to seek you.” So saying, she presented the King with a sword, made of a single diamond. The rays of the sun were less brilliant. The King comprehended all its value, and unable to find terms in which to express his gratitude to the Syren, he implored her to supply his deficiency by imagining all that an honest heart was capable of feeling, under such great obligations.

We must now say a word about the Fairy of the Desert. When she found her amiable lover did not return, she hastened in search of him. She went down to the sea-shore with an hundred maidens in her train, all bearing magnificent presents for the King. Some carried large baskets filled with diamonds; others golden vases of marvellous workmanship; many bore ambergris, coral, and pearls; others carried on their heads bales of inconceivably rich stuffs; whilst others again carried fruit, flowers, and even birds. But what were the feelings of the Fairy, who followed this fair and numerous troop, when she saw the sea-rushes looking so like the King of the Gold Mines, that it was impossible to distinguish the least difference between them? At this sight, struck with astonishment and the deepest grief, she uttered so fearful a shriek that it pierced the skies, made the hills tremble, and was echoed even in the infernal regions. The Furies, Megara, Alecto, and Tisiphone, could not assume a more terrible appearance than did the Fairy of the Desert at that moment. She threw herself on the seeming body of the King; she wept, she howled, she tore to pieces fifty of the most beautiful maidens who had accompanied her, immolating them to the manes of the dear departed. After this she invoked the presence of eleven of her sister fairies, and requested them to aid her in the construction of a superb mausoleum, in which she might deposit the remains of the young hero. Every one of the eleven was, like the Desert Fairy, deceived by the appearance of the sea-rushes. This circumstance is enough to surprise one, for fairies in general know everything; but the clever Syren proved in this case that she knew more than they did.

While they were collecting porphyry, jasper, agate, and marble, statues, devices, gold and bronze to immortalise the memory of the King they believed to be dead, he was thanking the amiable Syren, and conjuring her to continue to protect him. She pledged herself to do so in the kindest manner possible, and vanished from his sight. There was nothing left for him to do, but to advance towards the Steel Castle.

So, guided by his love, he strode on rapidly, narrowly examining every part of the castle in hopes of discovering his adorable Princess; but he was not long without other occupation. Four terrible sphinxes surrounded him, and flying on him with their sharp talons would quickly have torn him in pieces, if the diamond sword had not proved as useful to him as the Syren had predicted. He had scarcely flashed it in the eyes of these monsters before they fell powerless at his feet. He dealt each of them its death-blow, then advancing again, he encountered six dragons, covered with scales, harder to pierce than iron. Alarming as was this adventure, his courage remained unshaken, and making good use of his redoubtable sword, there was not one that he did not cut in half at a blow. He was in hopes he had surmounted the greatest obstacles, when a most embarrassing one presented itself. Twenty-four beautiful and graceful nymphs advanced to meet him with long garlands of flowers, which they stretched across his path to impede his progress. “Whither would you go, Sire?” said they, “we are entrusted with the guardianship of these regions. If we permit you to pass, innumerable misfortunes will befal both you and us. For mercy’s sake do not persist in this resolution. Would you stain your victorious hand with the blood of twenty-four innocent maidens, who have never done anything to displease you?” The King at this sight stood amazed and irresolute. He did not know what course to take. He, who professed such extreme respect for the fair sex, and his eagerness to be their champion to the death on every occasion, was in the present case about to destroy some of the fairest! But whilst he was hesitating, he heard a voice which instantly determined him.

“Strike! strike!” said this voice to him, “or thy Princess is lost to thee for ever!”

At these words, without uttering a syllable in reply to the nymphs, he rushed upon them, broke through their garlands, attacked them without mercy, and scattered them in a moment. This was the last obstacle he had to encounter. He entered the grove in which he had previously seen Toutebelle. She was seated beside the fountain, pale and suffering. He accosted her tremblingly. He would have thrown himself at her feet: but she fled from him as hastily and indignantly as if he had been the Yellow Dwarf. “Condemn me not unheard, Madam,” said he, “I am neither faithless nor guilty of any intentional wrong towards you. I am an unhappy lover, who has been compelled, despite himself, to offend you.” “Ah, cruel Prince,” she exclaimed, “I saw you sail through the air with a lady of extraordinary beauty; was it despite yourself you made that voyage?” “Yes, Princess,” replied he, “it was despite myself; the wicked Fairy of the Desert was not satisfied with chaining me to a rock, she wafted me in a car to one of the ends of the world, where I should still have languished in captivity, but for the unhoped-for assistance of a beneficent Syren who brought me hither. I come, my Princess, to snatch you from the power of him who holds you a prisoner. Do not reject the aid of the most faithful of lovers!” He flung himself at her feet and caught the skirt of her gown to detain her: but in so doing he unfortunately let fall the formidable sword. The Yellow Dwarf, who had lain hidden beneath the leaves of a lettuce, no sooner saw it out of the King’s hands than, being aware of its power, he sprang upon and seized it.

The Princess uttered a terrible shriek at the sight of the Dwarf; but her anguish only exasperated the little monster: with two cabalistic words he conjured up two giants, who loaded the King with chains and fetters. “Now,” said the Dwarf, “I am master of my rival’s fate; but I will spare his life, and give him liberty to leave this place, provided you consent to marry me immediately.” “Oh, let me rather die a thousand deaths!” exclaimed the amorous King. “You die! — alas, my Lord!” said the Princess, “what can be more terrible to me than such a calamity!” “Your becoming the victim of this monster,” replied the King; “can any horror exceed that?” “Let us die together then,” continued she. “Nay, Princess,” rejoined the King, “grant me the consolation of dying for you.” “Sooner than that,” said the Princess to the Dwarf, “I consent to your wishes.” “Before my eyes!” exclaimed the King; “before my eyes, will you make him your husband? — Cruel Princess, — life will be hateful to me!” “No,” said the Yellow Dwarf. “You shall not see me become her husband: — a beloved rival is too dangerous to be endured!”

With these words, despite the tears and shrieks of Toute-belle, he stabbed the King to the heart, and laid him dead at his feet. The Princess, unable to survive her lover, fell upon his body, and her spirit quickly fled to join his. Thus perished this illustrious but unfortunate pair, without the possibility of assistance from the Syren; for the power of the spell was centred in the diamond sword.

The wicked Dwarf preferred seeing the Princess dead to beholding her in the arms of another, and the Fairy of the Desert becoming informed of this event, destroyed the mausoleum she had erected, conceiving as much hatred of the memory of the King of the Gold Mines as she had formerly entertained passion for his person.

The friendly Syren, overwhelmed with grief at so great a misfortune, could obtain no other favour from Fate than the permission to change the two lovers into palm-trees. Their two bodies, so perfect during life, became two beautiful trees; still cherishing a faithful love for each other, they joined their branches in fond embraces, and immortalised their passion by that tender union.

16

GREEN-SERPENT

Once upon a time there was a great Queen, who, on giving birth to twin daughters, invited twelve fairies, residing in her neighbourhood, to come and see them, and endow them, as was the custom in those days, — and a very convenient custom too, for the power of the fairies generally made up the deficiencies of nature, though it certainly did sometimes spoil what nature had done her best to make perfect.

When the fairies had all assembled in the banquet chamber, a magnificent collation was served up to them. They were just seating themselves at the table, when Magotine entered the apartment. She was the sister of Carabosse, and no less malicious. The Queen shuddered at the sight of her, fearing some disaster, as she had not invited her to the entertainment; but, carefully concealing her uneasiness, she placed, herself, an arm-chair for the Fairy, which was covered with green velvet embroidered with sapphires. As Magotine was the eldest of the fairies, all the rest made way for her to pass, and whispered to each other, “Let us hasten, sister, to endow the little Princesses, so that we may be beforehand with Magotine.”

When the arm-chair was placed for her, she rudely said she would not have it, and that she was big enough to eat standing. But she made a mistake, for the table being rather a high one, she was not tall enough even to see over it; and this annoyance increased her ill-humour. “Madam,” said the Queen, “I beg you will take your seat at the table.” “If you had wished me to do so,” replied the Fairy, “you would have sent an invitation to me, as you did to the others; but you would only have handsome persons at your court, with fine figures and fine dresses, like my sisters here. As for me I am too ugly and too old; but, for all that, I have no less power than they — and, without boasting of it, I may perhaps have more.” All the fairies pressed her so much to sit down to table, that at length she consented. A golden basket was placed before them, containing twelve bouquets composed of jewels. The fairies who had arrived first, each took her bouquet; so that there was not one left for Magotine, who began to mutter between her teeth. The Queen ran to her cabinet, and brought her a casket of perfumed Spanish morocco, covered with rubies and filled with diamonds, praying her acceptance of it; but Magotine shook her head, and said to her, “Keep your jewels, Madam; I have enough and to spare. I only came to see if you had thought of me. You have neglected me shamefully.” Thereupon she struck the table with her wand, and all the dainties with which it was loaded turned into fricaseed serpents; at which the fairies were all so horrified, that they flung down their napkins, and left the table.

Whilst they were talking together respecting the sad trick Magotine had played them, that cruel little Fairy approached the cradle in which the Princesses were lying wrapped in their swaddling clothes of cloth of gold, and looking the loveliest children in the world. “I endow thee,” said she rapidly to one of them, “with perfect ugliness.” She was about to utter some malediction on the other, when the fairies, in great agitation, ran and stopped her; on which the mischievous Magotine broke one of the window-panes, and, darting through it like a flash of lightning, vanished from their sight.

All the good gifts which the benevolent fairies could bestow on the Princess were insufficient to alleviate the wretchedness of the Queen, at finding herself the mother of the ugliest being in the universe. She took the infant in her arms, and had the misery to see it grow more hideous every instant. She struggled in vain to suppress her tears in presence of their fairy ladyships; she could not prevent their flowing, and it is impossible to imagine the compassion they felt for her. “What shall we do, sisters?” said they to each other; “what shall we do to console the Queen?” They held a grand council on the subject, and, on its conclusion, told the Queen not to give way so much to grief, as there was a time coming when her daughter would be very happy. “But,” interrupted the Queen, “will she become beautiful again?” “We cannot give you any further information,” replied the fairies. “Be satisfied, Madam, with the assurance that your daughter will be happy.” She thanked them very much, and did not neglect loading them with presents; for, although the fairies were very rich, they always liked people to give them something; and the custom has descended from that day to this, through all the nations of the earth, without time having had the least effect upon it.

The Queen named her eldest daughter Laidronette, and the youngest Bellotte. These names suited them perfectly; for Laidronette became so frightful, that, in spite of all her intelligence, it was not possible to look at her; while her sister’s beauty increased hourly, and her appearance was altogether charming. The consequence was, that Laidronette, having arrived at twelve years of age, went and threw herself at the feet of the King and Queen, and implored them to permit her to go and shut herself up in the Lonely Castlel that she might afflict them no longer with the contemplation of her ugliness. As, notwithstanding her hideous appearance, they could not help being fond of her, it was not without some pain they consented to let her depart; but Bellotte remained with them, and that was a sufficient consolation.

Laidronette beseeched the Queen to send nobody with her, but her nurse and a few officers to wait on her. “You need not be under any apprehension, Madam, of my being run away with,” said she; “and I can assure you that, being what I am, I would willingly avoid even the light of day.” The King and Queen acceded to her wishes, and she was conducted to the Castle she had chosen to reside in. It had been built many ages. The sea came in close under its windows, and served it for a canal. There was a large forest in the vicinity, to walk or ride in, and several meadows terminated the prospect. The Princess played various instruments, and sang divinely. She passed two years in this agreeable solitude, and even wrote in it some volumes of reflections; but the desire to see the King and Queen again induced her to take coach and revisit the Court. She arrived just as they were about to celebrate the marriage of Bellotte. The joy was universal; but the moment they beheld Laidronette, everybody looked distressed. She was neither embraced nor caressed by any of her relations, and the only thing they had to say to her was, that she had grown very much uglier, and that they advised her not to appear at the ball; but that if she wished to see it, they would manage to find some hole for her to peep through. She replied that she had come there neither to dance nor to hear the music; that she had been so long in the Lonely Castle, that she could not resist quitting it, to pay her respects to the King and the Queen; that she was most painfully aware they could not endure the sight of her, and that she would therefore return to her wilderness, where the trees, the flowers, and the fountains did not reproach her with her ugliness, when she wandered amongst them. When the King and Queen saw she was so much hurt, they told her, with some reluctance, that she might stay two or three days with them; but, as she was a girl of high feeling, she answered that it would give her more pain to leave them if she passed so much time in their good company. They were too anxious for her departure, to press her to stay, and therefore coldly observed that she was quite right.

The Princess Bellotte, for a wedding gift, presented her with an old riband, which she had worn all the winter in a bow on her muff, and the king Bellotte was going to marry gave her some zinzolin taffety to make a petticoat with. If she is to be believed, she would willingly have thrown the riband and the rag of zinzolin in the faces of the generous donors; but she had so much good sense, prudence, and judgment, that she exhibited no ill-temper. So, with her faithful nurse, she left the Court to return to her Castle, her heart so full of grief, that she never spoke a word the whole journey.

One day, as she was walking in one of the most gloomy avenues in the forest, she saw at the foot of a tree a large green serpent, which, rearing its head, said to her: “Laidronette, thou art not the only unhappy creature. Look at my horrible form, and know that I was born handsomer even than thou wert,” The Princess, greatly terrified, heard not one half of these words. She fled from the spot, and for many days did not venture to leave the castle, so much was she afraid of meeting with such another adventure. At last, weary of sitting alone in her chamber, she came down one evening, and walked on the sea-beach. She was pacing it slowly, musing on her sad fate, when she perceived sailing towards her a little barque, gilt and painted all over with a thousand, various devices. The sail was of gold brocade, the mast of cedar, the oars of eagle-wood. It appeared to be drifting at random, and, coming close in shore, the Princess, curious to inspect all its beautiful decorations, stepped on board of it. She found it fitted up with crimson velvet, on a gold ground, the nails being all diamonds. But suddenly the barque was borne to sea again, and the Princess, alarmed at the impending danger, caught up the oars, and endeavoured to row back to the beach; but her efforts were in vain. The wind rose, and the waves ran high: she lost sight of land, and, perceiving nothing round her but sea and sky, she resigned herself to her fate, fully assured that it was little likely to be a happy one, and that this was another malicious trick of the Fairy Magotine. “I must die,” she said, “and wherefore this secret dread of death? Alas! have I ever yet enjoyed any of those pleasures of life which might cause me to regret leaving it? My ugliness disgusts even my nearest relatives. My sister is a great queen, and I am consigned to exile in the depths of a wilderness, where the only companion I have found is a serpent who can speak. Is it not better I should perish, than drag on so miserable an existence?” With these reflections, she dried up her tears, and courageously looked out for the quarter from which death would come. She appeared to invite his speedy approach; when over the billows she saw a serpent making towards the vessel, and which, on nearing it, said to her: “If you were willing to receive some assistance from a poor green serpent like me, I am able to save your life.” “Death is less frightful to me than thou art,” exclaimed the Princess; “and if thou seekest to do me some kindness, never let me set eyes on thee again.” The green serpent gave a long hiss (the manner in which serpents sigh), and without answering a word, went immediately under water. “What a horrible monster!” said the Princess to herself. “He has green wings, a body of a thousand colours, ivory claws, fiery eyes, and on his head is a bristling mane of long hair. Oh, I would much rather die than owe my life to him! But,” continued she, “what motive has he in following me? and by what accident has he the power of speaking like a rational being?” She was thus musing, when a voice, in answer to her thoughts, said to her: “Learn, Laidronette, that Green-Serpent is not to be despised; and, were it not a harsh thing to say to thee, I might assure thee he is less hideous in the sight of his species than thou art in the eyes of thine. But, far from desiring to annoy thee, our wish is to lighten thy sorrows, provided thou dost consent.” This voice greatly surprised the Princess, and the words it uttered appeared to her so unjustifiable, that she could not suppress her tears; but a sudden reflection striking her, she exclaimed: “How is this? Do I grieve to die, because I am reproached with my ugliness? Alas! should I not perish as certainly, were I the handsomest person in the world? It should rather console me, and prevent my regretting the speedy termination of my existence.” Whilst she thus moralized, the vessel, completely at the mercy of the winds, drifted on till it struck upon a rock, and went immediately to pieces. The poor Princess felt that all her philosophy could not support her in such an extremity. She caught at some pieces of the wreck, and clung, as she imagined, to them; she felt herself supported in the water, and happily reached the shore at the foot of a great rock. Alas! what was her horror, when she discovered that her arms were tightly locked round the neck of the green serpent! Perceiving her dreadful terror, he retired a short distance from her, and said: “You would fear me less, if you knew me better; but it is my hard fate to terrify all who see me.” With that he plunged into the waves, and Laidronette remained alone upon the rock, which soared to a prodigious height above her.

On whichever side she cast her eyes, she saw nothing to save her from despair. Night was approaching; she was without food, and knew not where to go. “I thought,” said she, sadly, “to perish in the ocean, but here, doubtless, is the end reserved for me. Some sea-monster will come and devour me, or I shall die of hunger.” She climbed up, and seated herself on the summit of the rock. As long as it was light, she gazed upon the ocean; and when it was quite dark, she took off her taffety petticoat, covered her head with it, and remained in trembling expectation of what might befal her. Sleep at length overpowered her; and presently she thought she heard the music of several instruments. She was perfectly persuaded that she was dreaming; but a moment afterwards she heard some one sing the following verses, which seemed to have been composed expressly for her: —

SUFFER CUPID here to wound thee,
Here his gentle sway we own;
Love with pleasure will surround thee,
In this isle no grief is known.

THE ATTENTION she paid to these words had the effect of waking her completely. “What good or ill fortune now awaits me?” she exclaimed. “Can there yet be happy days in store for one in my wretched condition?” She opened her eyes timidly, under the apprehension of seeing herself surrounded by monsters; but what was her astonishment when, in place of the rude and terrible rock, she perceived an apartment, the walls and ceiling of which were entirely of gold. She was lying in a bed, which perfectly corresponded in its magnificence with the rest of this most splendid palace in the universe. She asked herself a hundred questions respecting this extraordinary sight, not being able to believe she was wide awake. At length, she got up, and ran to open a glass door that gave access to a spacious balcony, from which she beheld all the beauties nature, assisted by art, could create upon earth. Gardens, filled with flowers, fountains, statues, and the rarest trees; distant woods; palaces, the walls of which were ornamented with jewels, and the roofs composed of pearls, so wonderfully constructed that each was a masterpiece of architecture. A calm and smiling sea, covered with thousands of vessels, whose sails, pendants, and streamers, fluttering in the breeze, completed the charm of the prospect.

“Ye gods! — ye just gods!” exclaimed the Princess, “what do I behold? Where am I? What an astounding tranformation! What has become of the terrible rock, that seemed to threaten the skies with its lofty pinnacles? Can I be she who was shipwrecked last night, and saved by a serpent?” She continued thus talking to herself — walking about, then stopping, perfectly bewildered. At length, she heard a noise in her apartment. She re-entered it, and saw advancing towards her a hundred Pagods, formed and dressed in a hundred different fashions. The tallest were about a cubit in height, and the shortest not above four inches, — some beautiful, graceful, and agreeable; others hideous, alarmingly ugly. Their bodies were of diamonds, emeralds, rubies, pearls, crystal, amber, coral, porcelain, gold, silver, brass, bronze, iron, wood, and clay; some without arms, others without feet, others had mouths extending to their ears, eyes all askew, broken noses; in a word, there is not more variety amongst all the creatures that inhabit the world than there was amongst these pagods.

Those who presented themselves before the Princess were the deputies of the kingdom. After an oration, which contained some very judicious reflections, they entertained her by the information, that for some time past they had travelled about the world; but that, in order to obtain their sovereign’s permission to do so, they took an oath not to speak during their absence; that some there were, indeed, so scrupulous, they would not even shake their heads, or move their hands or feet, but that the majority of them could not help it. That in this way they traversed the universe; and when they returned, they amused the king by telling him everything that had occurred, even the most secret transactions and adventures in all the courts they had visited. “A pleasure, Madam,” added one of the deputies, “which we shall have the honour of occasionally affording you; for we are commanded to neglect nothing which can entertain you. In lieu of bringing you presents, we now come to amuse you with our songs and dances.” They began immediately to sing the following words, dancing at the same time a round, to the music of tambourines and castagnets: —

Sweet are pleasures after pains,
Lovers, do not break your chains;
Trials though you may endure,
Happiness they will ensure.
Sweet are pleasures after pains,
Joy from sorrow lustre gains.

When they ceased dancing and singing, the deputy who had been spokesman said to the Princess: “Here, Madam, are a hundred pagodines, who have been selected to have the honour of waiting on you. Every wish you can have in the world will be gratified, provided you consent to remain amongst us.” The pagodines appeared in their turn; they carried baskets, proportioned to their own size, filled with a hundred different articles, so pretty, so useful, so well made, and so costly, that Laidronette was never weary of admiring and praising them, uttering exclamations of wonder and delight at all the marvels they displayed to her. The most prominent pagodine, who was a little figure made of diamonds, recommended her to enter the Grotto of the Baths, as the heat of the day was increasing. The Princess proceeded in the direction indicated, between two ranks of body-guards, whose forms and appearance were enough to make one die with laughter.

She found in the grotto two baths of crystal, ornamented with gold, full of scented water, so delicious and uncommon, that she was perfectly astonished at it. The baths were under a pavilion of green and gold brocade. The Princess inquired why there were two. They answered, that one was for her, and the other for the King of the Pagods. “But where is he, then!” exclaimed the Princess. “Madam,” they replied, “he is at present with the army, making war on his enemies. You will see him as soon as he returns.” The Princess then inquired if he were married. They answered, no; and that he was so charming, no one had ever yet been found worthy of him. She indulged her curiosity no further, but undressed and entered the bath. All the pagods and pagodines began immediately to sing and play on various instruments. Some had theorbos made out of nut-shells — others, bass-viols made out of almond-shells; for it was, of course, necessary that the instruments should be proportioned to the size of the performers. But everything was so perfect, and harmonized so completely, that nothing could surpass the delight experienced at their concerts.

When the Princess came out of her bath, they presented her with a magnificent dressing-gown. Several pagods who played the flute and the hautbois marched before her, and a train of pagodines followed her, singing songs in her praise. In this state, she entered an apartment, where her toilet was set out. Immediately the pagodines in waiting, and the pagodines of the bed-chamber, bustled about, dressed her hair, put on her robes, praised her, admired her. There was no longer talk of her ugliness, of zinzolin petticoats, or greasy ribands.

The Princess was truly astounded. “To whom can I be indebted for such extraordinary happiness?” said she to herself. “I was on the brink of destruction — I awaited death, and could hope for nothing else; and, notwithstanding, I suddenly find myself in the most beautiful and magnificent place in the world, and where I am received with the greatest joy!” As the Princess was endued with great good sense and good nature, she conducted herself in such a manner that all the little creatures who approached her were enchanted at her behaviour.

Every morning, at her levée, she was presented with new dresses, new lace, new jewels. It was a great pity she was so ugly; but, notwithstanding, she who could not abide herself, began to fancy she was less disagreeable, in consequence of the great pains they took in attiring her. She scarcely passed an hour without some pagods coming to visit her, and recounting to her all the most curious and private circumstances that occurred in the world. Treaties of peace, leagues offensive and defensive, treasons and quarrels of lovers, infidelities of mistresses, distractions, reconciliations, heirs disappointed, matches broken off, old widows remarrying very foolishly, treasures discovered, bankruptcies declared, fortunes made in a minute, favourites disgraced, place-hunters, jealous husbands, coquettish wives, naughty children, ruined cities; in short, what did they not talk of to amuse or interest the Princess? She occasionally saw some pagods, who were so exceedingly corpulent, and had such puffed-out checks, that they were wonderful to look at. When she asked them the cause, they answered: “As we are not permitted to laugh or to speak during our travels, and are constantly witnessing all sorts of absurdities and almost intolerable follies, our inclination to laugh is so great, that the suppression of it swells us up, and causes what may properly be called risible dropsy, of which we cure ourselves as soon as we get home.” The Princess admired the good sense of the pagodine people; for really we might be ready to burst with laughter, if we laughed at all the extravagancies we are daily beholding.

There was scarcely an evening without a performance of one of the best plays of Corneille or Moliere. There were frequent balls. The most diminutive pagods danced on the tightrope, in order to be better seen. Finally, the banquets given to the Princess might have served for feasts at the greatest solemnities. They brought her books of every description, serious, amusing, historical: in short, the days ran away like minutes; although, to speak the truth, all these ingenious pagods appeared to the Princess intolerably little, for it often happened that when she went out walking, she had to put some thirty or so into her pockets, in order to take care of them. It was the most amusing thing in the world to hear the chattering of their little voices, shriller than those of the puppets in a show at the fair.

It happened one night that the Princess not being able to sleep, said to herself, “What is to become of me? Shall I always remain here? I pass my days more agreeably than I could have ventured to hope; yet something is wanting to my heart. I know not what it is; but I begin to feel that this round of pleasures, unvaried by a single event, is rather insipid.” “Ah Princess,” said a voice, as in answer to her thoughts, “is it not your own fault? If you would consent to love, you would soon know that it is possible to remain with a beloved object, not only in a palace, but in a frightful wilderness, for ages without wishing to leave it.”

“What pagodine speaks to me?” inquired the Princess. “What pernicious advice does she give me, — inimical to my future peace?” “It is not a pagodine,” replied the voice, “who forewarns you of what will sooner or later occur. It is the unhappy sovereign of this realm, who adores you, Madam, and who cannot tell you so without trembling.” “A king who adores me,” replied the Princess. “Has that king eyes, or is he blind? Can he know that I am the ugliest person in the world.” “I have seen you, Madam,” answered the invisible being, “and have not found you what you represent yourself. Be it for your person, your merit, or your misfortunes, I repeat, I adore you; but my respectful and timid affection obliges me to conceal myself.” “I am indebted to you for so doing,” rejoined the Princess; “for alas, what would be my fate should I love any one?” “You would make the happiness of him who cannot live without you,” said the voice, “but he will not venture to appear before you without your permission.” “No, no,” said the Princess; “I would avoid seeing any object that might too powerfully interest me.” The voice was silent, and the Princess remained all the rest of the night in deep meditation on this adventure.

However she might have resolved not to say the least word to any one respecting it, she could not resist asking the pagods if their king had returned. They answered in the negative. This reply, so ill-agreeing with what she had heard, disturbed her. She continued her inquiries as to whether their king was young and handsome. They told her he was young, handsome, and very amiable. She asked if they frequently received intelligence of him. They replied, “Every day.” “But,” added she, “does he know that I am in his palace?” “Yes, Madam,” answered her attendants, “he knows everything that occurs here concerning you: he takes great interest in it, and every hour a courier is sent off to him with an account of you.” She was silent, and became much more thoughtful than she had formerly been. Whenever she was alone, the voice spoke to her. Sometimes she was alarmed at it: but at others, she felt pleased; for nothing could be more polite than its language to her. “Although,” said the Princess, “I have resolved never to love, and have every reason to defend my heart against an attachment which could only be fatal to it, I nevertheless confess to you that I should much like to behold a king who has so strange a taste; for if it be true that you love me, you are perhaps the only being in the world who could be guilty of a similar weakness for a person so ugly as I am.” “Think of me whatever you please, adorable Princess,” replied the voice. “I find in your merit a sufficient justification for my passion; nor is it from singularity of taste that I conceal myself. I have motives so melancholy, that if you knew them you could not refrain from pitying me.” The Princess then pressed the voice to explain itself; but it ceased to speak, — she only heard long and heavy sighs. All these circumstances made her very uneasy. Although her lover was unknown and invisible to her, he paid her a thousand delicate attentions. Add to this, the beautiful place she was in induced her to desire society more suitable to it than that of the pagods. She consequently began to feel tired and dull everywhere. The voice of her invisible admirer alone had power to please her. Waking suddenly one exceedingly dark night, she found that somebody was seated beside her bed. She thought it was the Pagodine of Pearls, who, having more wit than the others, used sometimes to come and keep her company. The Princess stretched out her arm to take hold of her; but the person seized her hand, pressed it, kissed it, dropped some tears upon it, and was evidently too much affected to speak. She was convinced it was the invisible monarch. “What would you of me?” said she to him, sighing. “Can I love you without knowing or seeing you?” “Ah, Madam,” replied he, “by what conditions do you fetter the delight of obeying you? It is impossible for me to appear before you. The same wicked Magotine who has so illtreated you, has condemned me to suffer for seven years. Five have already elapsed: two yet remain, the misery of which you could entirely relieve by accepting me for your husband. You will think me a rash fool, and that I am asking an absolute impossibility; but if you knew, Madam, the excess of my passion and the extent of my misfortunes, you would not refuse me the favour I implore of you."

Laidronette, I have already told you, had began to feel very dull; she found the invisible king everything that could be most charming in conversation, and love took possession of her heart, under the specious disguise of generous commiseration. She replied, that she must be allowed some days to consider of it. It was a great thing to have brought her to require only a few days to decide on a matter which he had not ventured to flatter himself she would ever listen to. The fêtes and the concerts recommenced with increased splendour. Nothing was to be heard but hymeneal strains. Presents were continually brought her, surpassing all that had ever been seen. The enamoured voice assiduously wooed her in the sweetest accents, as soon as it was dark; and the Princess retired at an earlier hour, in order to have more time to listen to it.

At length she consented to marry the invisible king, and gave him her promise that she would not attempt to see him till the full term of his penance had expired. "It is of vital importance," said the King to her, "both to you and to me. Any imprudent curiosity you might indulge in, would entail on me a recommencement of my penance, and involve you in a like misfortune: but if you can resist the evil counsels that will be given to you, you will have the satisfaction of finding me all your heart desires, and of regaining, at the same time, the marvellous beauty of which the malicious Magotine deprived you." The Princess, enraptured at this new hope, vowed a thousand times to her husband that she would indulge in no curiosity without his permission. So the nuptials took place without any public demonstrations; but the heart and the mind were not less gainers by that arrangement.

As all the pagods were eager to amuse their new queen, one of them brought her the history of Psyche, written in a charming style by one of the most popular authors of the day. She found in it many passages bearing a strong resemblance to her own adventures, and it inspired her with such an anxiety to behold her father, mother, sister, and brother-in-law, that all the King could say to her would not suffice to combat this fancy. “The book you are reading,” said he, “displays to you the misfortunes which befel Psyche. Oh, for mercy’s sake, profit by the warning, and avoid them!” She promised more than he even required of her; and finally a vessel, manned by pagods, and laden with presents, was despatched with letters from Queen Laidronette to the Queen her mother, conjuring her to come and pay a visit to her daughter in her own dominions; and the pagods who were charged with this mission were permitted, on this occasion only, to speak in a foreign land. The loss of the Princess had not been entirely unfelt by her relations: they believed she had perished; consequently her letter gave great delight to the Court. The Queen, who was dying to see Laidronette again, lost not a moment in setting out, with her other daughter and her son-in-law. The pagods, who alone knew the way to their kingdom, safely conducted thither the whole royal family; and when Laidronette saw her relations, she was ready to expire with joy. She read the story of Psyche over and over again, to be completely on her guard respecting any questions that might be put to her, and to regulate her answers to them; but the pains she took were all in vain — she made a hundred mistakes. Sometimes the King was with the army; sometimes he was ill, and in no mood to see any one; sometimes he was on a pilgrimage; and at others, hunting or fishing. At last, it seemed as if she was pledged to talk nothing but nonsense, and that the barbarous Magotine had unsettled her wits.

Her mother and sister consulted together on the subject, and came to the conclusion that she was deceiving them, and might probably be deceived herself. They, therefore, with ill-directed zeal, resolved to tell her so, and managed very skilfully to infect her mind with a thousand doubts and fears. After having refused for a long time to acknowledge the justice of their suspicions, she at last confessed that up to that period she had never seen her husband; but that his conversation was so charming, that it was sufficient happiness to listen to it: that he had yet two years to pass in this state of penance, but that at the end of that time, not only should she behold him, but become, herself, beautiful as the orb of day. “Oh, unfortunate creature!” exclaimed the Queen; “how gross is the snare they have laid for thee! Is it possible that thou couldst have listened with such extreme simplicity to such fables? Thy husband is a monster; and how could it be otherwise, for all the pagods, of whom he is the King, are downright monkeys.” “I believe, rather,” replied Laidronette, “that he is the God of Love himself.” “What a delusion!” cried Queen Bellotte. “They told Psyche that she had married a monster, and she discovered that it was Cupid. You are positive that Cupid is your husband, and to a certainty he is a monster! At least, satisfy your mind on this point; enlighten yourself on the matter, as you may so easily.” The Queen said as much, and her son-in-law still more.

The poor Princess was so confused and so agitated, that, after having sent all her family home, laden with presents, which sufficiently repaid the zinzolin taffety and the muff-riband, she resolved, come what would, to obtain a sight of her husband. Oh, fatal curiosity, which a thousand fearful examples fail to correct in us, how dearly art thou about to cost this unfortunate Princess! She would have thought it a great pity not to imitate her predecessor, Psyche; so she concealed a lamp in the same manner, and by the aid of its light gazed upon the hitherto invisible king, so dear to her heart. But what frightful shrieks did she not utter, when, instead of the tender Cupid, fair, white, young, and every way charming, she beheld the horrible green serpent, with his long bristling mane. He awoke in a paroxysm of rage and despair. “Cruel woman,” cried he, “is this the reward of so much affection?” The Princess heard him not — she had fainted with terror; and the serpent in an instant was far away.

At the disturbance caused by this tragical scene, some pagods ran to the spot; they carried the Princess to her couch, and gave her every assistance. Imagination cannot paint the distress of Laidronette, upon returning to her senses. How did she reproach herself for the affliction she had brought upon her husband! She loved him tenderly, but she was horrified at his form, and would have cheerfully given half the remainder of her days never to have seen him.

But these sad reflections were interrupted by the entrance of some pagods into her chamber, with alarm in their countenances. They came to inform her that several ships full of puppets, with Magotine at their head, had entered the harbour, without meeting any resistance. The puppets and the pagods have been enemies from the earliest periods. They are opposed to each other in a thousand ways; and the puppets enjoy the privilege of talking wherever they go, which is denied the pagods. Magotine was their queen. Her hatred of poor Green-Serpent, and of the unfortunate Laidronette, prompted her to assemble her forces, with the intention to come and harass them at the moment they were in the greatest affliction.

She succeeded easily enough in her object; for the Queen was in such despair, that, although they urged her to give the requisite directions, she excused herself on the plea that she knew nothing of the art of war. They called together, by her desire, such pagods as had been in besieged cities, or in the cabinets of the greatest commanders. She ordered them to see to everything, and went and shut herself up in her cabinet, looking with an indifferent eye upon all the events of life.

Magotine had for her general that celebrated puppet Punch, who knew his business well, and who had in reserve a large body of wasps, mayflies, and butterflies, who performed wonders against some light armed frogs and lizards. The latter had been for many years in the pay of the pagods, and were, in truth, much more terrible in name than in action.

Magotine amused herself for some time in witnessing the combat. The pagods and pagodines surpassed themselves in their exertions; but the Fairy, with a stroke of her wand, dissolved all their superb edifices. Those charming gardens, those woods, those meadows, those fountains were overwhelmed with their own ruins, and Queen Laidronette could not escape the sad fate of becoming the slave of the most malignant fairy that ever was or will be. Four or five hundred puppets forced her into the presence of Magotine. "Madam," said Punch to the Fairy, "behold the Queen of the Pagods, whom I have taken the liberty to bring before you." "She has been long known to me," said Magotine. "She was the cause of my being insulted on the day she was born, and I will never forget it." "Alas, Madam," said the Queen to her, "I believed you were sufficiently revenged. The gift of ugliness which you bestowed upon me in so supreme a degree might have satisfied any one less vindictive than you." "How she argues!" said the Fairy. "Here is a learned doctor of a new sort! Your first employment shall be teaching philosophy to my ants. Prepare yourself to give them a lesson every day." "How shall I set about it, Madam?" replied the afflicted Queen. "I am ignorant of philosophy, and were I even well versed in it, are your ants capable of understanding it?" "Hear, hear this logician!" exclaimed Magotine. "Very well, Queen. You shall not teach them philosophy; but in spite of yourself you shall set the whole world an example of patience which it will be difficult to imitate."

Thereupon she had brought to her a pair of iron shoes so small that she couldn't get half her foot into either of them; but notwithstanding that, she was compelled to put them on. The poor Queen could only weep and suffer. "Here!" said Magotine, "there is a spindle full of spider's web. I expect you to spin it as fine as your hair, and I give you but two hours to do it in." "I have never spun, Madam," said the Queen; "but though what you desire appears to me to be impossible, I will endeavour to obey you." She was led immediately into the depths of a very dark grotto, the entrance to which was closed with a great stone, after they had given her some brown bread and a pitcher of water.

In trying to spin this filthy spider's web, she dropped her too heavy spindle a hundred times. She had the patience to pick it up again as many, and to begin her work over again, but always in vain. "Clearly do I now perceive," said she, "the extent of my misery. I am consigned to the power of the implacable Magotine, who is not satisfied with having deprived me of all my beauty, — she would find some pretext to kill me." She began to weep, recalling to her memory the happiness she enjoyed in the kingdom of Pagodia, and casting away her spindle, exclaimed, "Let Magotine come when she will! I cannot do impossibilities." A voice answered, "Ah Queen, your too imprudent curiosity has caused you these tears; but one cannot see those suffer whom we love. I have a friend whom I have not mentioned to you before. She is called the Fairy Protectrice. I trust she will be of great service to you." Immediately she heard three taps, and without seeing any one, she found her web spun and wound into a skein.

At the expiration of the two hours, Magotine, who was eager for a fray, had the stone rolled from the mouth of the grotto, and entered it, followed by a numerous train of puppets. "Come, come, let us see," said the Fairy, "the work of this idle hussy, who neither knows how to sew nor to spin." "Madam," said the Queen, "it is quite true I did not; but I was obliged to learn." When Magotine saw the extraordinary result, she took the skein of spider's web, and said, "Verily, you are too skilful, it would be a great pity not to keep you employed. Here, Queen, make me some nets with this thread strong enough to catch salmons in." "Nay, for mercy's sake," replied the Queen, "remember that it is barely strong enough to hold flies." "You are a great casuist, my pretty friend," said Magotine, "but it will avail you nothing." She quitted the grotto, had the stone replaced at the mouth of it, and assured Laidronette that if the nets were not finished in two hours, she was a lost creature.

“Oh, Fairy Protectrice!” exclaimed the Queen, “if it be true that my sorrows can move your pity, do not deny me your assistance.” As she spoke, the nets were made. Laidronette was extremely surprised. She thanked, with all her heart, the friendly fairy who had conferred on her such a benefit, and thought with delight that it was undoubtedly her husband who had secured for her such a friend. “Alas, Green-Serpent,” said she, “you are very generous, to continue to love me after the injuries I have done you.” No reply was made, for Magotine entered, and was much astonished to find the nets so exceedingly well made, that no common hands were capable of executing such a work. “What!” she cried, “will you have the audacity to maintain that you have woven these nets?” “I have no friend in your Court, Madam,” said the Queen; “and even if I had, I am so carefully imprisoned that it would be difficult for any one to speak to me without your permission.” “As you are so clever and skilful, you will be of great use to me in my kingdom,” rejoined the fairy.

She immediately ordered her fleet to be got ready for sea, and all the puppets to be prepared to go on board. She had the Queen heavily chained down, fearing that in some fit of despair she might fling herself overboard. One night as the unhappy Princess was deploring her sad fate, she perceived, by the light of the stars, the green serpent, who quietly approached the vessel. “I am always afraid of alarming you,” said he, “and despite the reasons I have for not sparing you, you are infinitely dear to me.” “Can you pardon my imprudent curiosity?” replied she, “and may I say to you without offence, —

Is it thou? Is it thou, love? Again art thou near!
My own royal Serpent, so faithful and dear!
Again dare I hope a fond husband I see?
Oh, what have I suffer’d since parted from thee!

THE SERPENT REPLIED AS FOLLOWS: —

TO HEARTS THAT LOVE TRULY, to part is a pain,
With Hope e'en to whisper of meeting again;
In Pluto's dark regions what torture above
Our absence for ever from those whom we love?

MAGOTINE WAS NOT one of those fairies who occasionally sleep. The desire to do mischief kept her continually awake. She did not fail to overhear the conversation between the Serpent-King and his wife. She flew to interrupt it like a fury. “Aha!” said she; “you amuse yourselves with tagging rhymes, do you? and complain in heroics of your destiny? Truly, I am delighted to hear it. Proserpine, who is my best friend, has begged me to send her a poet on hire. Not that there is a dearth of poets below; but because she wants more. Green-Serpent! I command thee to go finish thy penance in the Shades, and to give my compliments to the gentle Proserpine.”

The unfortunate serpent departed, uttering prolonged hisses, leaving the Queen in the deepest affliction. She felt she had no longer anything to care for. In her passion she exclaimed, “By what crime have we offended thee, Magotine? I was scarcely born when thy fiendish malediction robbed me of my beauty and rendered me horrible. Canst thou accuse me of any crime, when I had not at that time attained the use of reason? when I did not know myself? I am convinced that the unhappy King, whom thou hast just consigned to the infernal regions, is as innocent as I was. But finish thy work. Give me instant death. It is the only favour I ask of thee.” “Thou wouldst be too happy if I granted thy prayer," said Magotine. "Thou must first draw water for me from the bottomless spring."

As soon as the ships had reached the kingdom of puppets, the cruel Magotine took a millstone, and tied it round the Queen's neck, ordering her to ascend with it to the summit of a mountain which soared high above the clouds. When there, she was to gather four-leaved trefoils enough to fill a basket, and then she was to descend into the depths of the valley, to draw the Water of Discretion in a pitcher with a hole in the bottom of it, and to bring her as much as would fill her large glass. The Queen told her it was out of her power to obey her: that the millstone was more than ten times her own weight; that the pitcher with a hole in it could never retain the water she wished to drink; and that she could not resolve to attempt anything so impossible. "If thou dost not," said Magotine, "rest assured thy Green-Serpent shall suffer for it." This threat so frightened the Queen, that without considering her weakness, she endeavoured to walk; but, alas! the effort would have been idle, if the Fairy Protectrice, whom she invoked, had not come to her assistance. "Behold," said the Fairy to her, "the just punishment of your fatal curiosity. Blame no one but yourself for the state to which Magotine has reduced you." So saying, she transported her to the top of the mountain, and filled her basket for her with four-leaved trefoils, despite the terrible monsters that guarded the spot, and made supernatural efforts to defend it; but were rendered more gentle than lambs by one tap of the wand of the Fairy Protectrice.

She waited not for the grateful Queen to thank her, before she completed her good offices as far as it laid in her power. She gave her a little car drawn by two white canary-birds, who spoke and whistled to admiration. She told her to descend the mountain, and to fling her iron shoes at two giants armed with clubs who guarded the fountain, who would thereupon fall senseless; that she must then give her pitcher to the little canaries, who would easily find means to fill it with the water of Discretion;

that as soon as she was in possession of it, she should wash her face with it, and she would become the most beautiful person in the world. She also advised her not to remain at the fountain, nor to reascend the hill, but to stop in a very pleasant little grove she would find on her road; that she might remain there for three years, as Magotine would only imagine that she was endeavouring to fill her pitcher with water, or that she had fallen a victim to some of the other perils of the journey.

The Queen embraced the knees of the Fairy Protectrice, and thanked her a hundred times for the special favours she had conferred on her. “But,” added the Queen, “neither the success I may achieve, nor the beauty, Madam, which you promise me, can give me the least pleasure, until my serpent is unserpented.” “That will not be till after you have passed three years in the mountain grove,” said the Fairy, “and have returned to Magotine with the trefoils and the water in the leaky pitcher.”

The Queen promised the Fairy Protectrice she would scrupulously follow her directions. “But, Madam,” she added, “shall I be three years without hearing tidings of King-Serpent?” “You deserve never to hear of him again as long as you live; for can anything be more shocking than to have caused him to recommence his penance?” The Queen made no reply, — the tears that flowed down her cheeks, and her silence, sufficiently proved the pain she suffered. She got into her little car; the canary-birds did their duty, and conducted her to the bottom of the valley, where the giants guarded the fountain of Discretion. She quickly took off her iron shoes, and threw them at their heads. The moment the shoes touched them, they fell lifeless as colossal statues. The canaries took the leaky pitcher, and mended it with such wonderful skill, that there was no appearance of its having ever been broken. The name given to this water made her anxious to drink some of it. “It will make me,” said she, “more prudent and more discreet than I have been. Alas, if I had possessed those qualities I should still be in the kingdom of Pagodia.” After she had drunk a long draught of the water, she washed her face with some of it, and became so beautiful — so beautiful, you would have taken her rather for a goddess than a mortal.

The Fairy Protectrice immediately appeared, and said to her, “You have just done that which has pleased me exceedingly. You knew that this water could embellish your mind as well as your person. I wished to see to which of the two you would give the preference, and it has been to your mind. I laud you for it, and this act will shorten the term of your punishment by four years.” “Diminish none of my sufferings,” replied the Queen; “I deserve them all; but comfort Green-Serpent, who deserves none of his.” “I will do all in my power,” said the Fairy, embracing her; “but since you are now so beautiful, I desire you will drop the name of Laidronette, which no longer suits you; you must be called Queen Discrète.” So saving she vanished, leaving the Queen a pair of little shoes, so pretty and so nicely embroidered, that she thought it almost a pity to wear them.

When she had re-entered her car, with her pitcher full of water, the canaries flew with her straight to the Grove of the Mountain. There never was a more agreeable spot. The myrtle and orange-trees interlaced their branches to form long covered walks and bowers, into which the sun could not penetrate. A thousand rills, from gently-flowing fountains, shed a refreshing coolness through this beautiful abode; but what was most curious, all the animals in it spoke, and gave the warmest welcome in the world to the little canaries. “We thought you had deserted us,” said they. “The term of our penance is not yet completed,” replied the canaries; “but here is a Queen whom the Fairy Protectrice has ordered us to bring to you. Take all the pains you can to amuse her.” She was immediately surrounded by all sorts of animals, who paid her their best compliments. “You shall be our Queen,” said they to her: “you shall find no attention or respect wanting on our parts.” “Where am I?” she exclaimed. “By what supernatural power are you enabled to speak to me?” One of the little canary birds, who had remained beside her, whispered in her ear, “You must know, Madam, that several fairies being on their travels, were distressed to see persons fall into bad habits. They at first imagined it would be sufficient to advise them to correct themselves, but their warnings were in vain, and, becoming at length quite vexed with them, they imposed penances upon them. Some who talked too much they changed into parrots, magpies, and hens; lovers and their mistresses they transformed into pigeons, canary birds, and lap-dogs; those who ridiculed their friends, into monkeys; gormandizers, into pigs; and passionate people into lions. In short, the number of persons they made to do penance was so great that this grove is full of them, and you will therefore find in it folks of all qualities and humours." "From what you have just told me, my dear little canary," said the Queen, "I have reason to believe that you are here only because you were too loving." "It is quite true, Madam," replied the canary. "I am the son of a Spanish Grandee. Love in our country has such absolute power over all hearts, that one cannot resist it without incurring the charge of rebellion. An English Ambassador arrived at the court. He had a daughter who was extremely beautiful, but insupportably haughty and satirical. Notwithstanding this, I was caught by her; I loved her to idolatry. Sometimes she seemed touched by my attentions, and at others repulsed me with such disdain that I lost all patience with her. One day that she had exasperated me, a venerable old woman accosted me, and reproached me for my weakness; but all she could say to me only made me more obstinate; she perceived it, and became angry. 'I condemn thee,' said she, 'to be a canary bird for three years, and thy mistress to be a wasp.' Instantly I felt a change take place in me of the most extraordinary description. Despite my affliction, I could not forbear flying into the Ambassador's garden, to ascertain what was the fate of his daughter. But I had hardly arrived there when I saw her approach in the form of a large wasp, buzzing four times louder than any other. I hovered round her with the devotion of a lover, that nothing can destroy. She tried several times to sting me.

"'Would you kill me, beautiful wasp?' said I. 'It is unnecessary you should use your sting. You have but to command me to die, and I will obey you.' The wasp made no answer. She alighted on some flowers, that had to endure her ill-temper.

"Overwhelmed by her contempt, and the situation to which I was reduced, I flew away without caring whither my wings would take me. I arrived at length at one of the most beautiful cities in the universe, and which they call Paris. I was weary; I flung myself on a tuft of large trees, enclosed within some walls, and before I knew who had caught me, I found myself behind the door of a cage, painted green, and ornamented with gold. The apartment and its furniture were of a magnificence that surprised me. A young lady came immediately and caressed me, and spoke to me so sweetly that I was charmed with her. I was not long a resident in her chamber without learning the secret of her heart. I saw a sort of Matamore visit her, who was always in a rage that nothing could appease, and who, not contented with unjustly accusing her, beat her till he left her for dead in the arms of her women. I was not a little afflicted to see her suffer this unworthy treatment, and what distressed me still more was, that the blows he dealt her seemed to have the power of increasing the affection of that lovely lady.

"Night and day I wished that the fairies who had changed me into a canary bird would come and set to rights such ill-assorted lovers. My desires were at length fulfilled. The fairies suddenly appeared in the apartment just as the furious gallant began his usual uproar. They loaded him with reproaches, and condemned him to become a wolf. As to the patient person who had allowed him to beat her, they turned her into a ewe, and sent her into the Grove of the Mountain. With respect to myself, I easily found means of escape. I wished to see the various courts of Europe. I flew into Italy, and fell into the hands of a man who, having frequent business in the city, and not choosing that his wife, of whom he was very jealous, should see any one in his absence, took care to lock her up from morning till night, so that to me was accorded the honour of amusing this lovely captive; but she had other occupation than attending to me. A certain neighbour, who had long loved her, came in the evening to the top of the chimney, and slid down it into the room, looking blacker than a devil. The keys which the jealous husband had charge of, served only to keep his mind at ease. I was constantly fearing some fatal catastrophe, when one day the fairies entered by the keyhole, and not a little surprised the two lovers. ‘Go and do penance!’ said the fairies, touching them with their wands. ‘Let the chimney sweeper become a squirrel, and the lady an ape, for she is a cunning one; and the husband, who is so fond of keeping the keys of his house, become a mastiff for ten years.’

“It would be too much to tell you,” added the canary, “all the various adventures I met with. I was obliged occasionally to visit the Grove of the Mountain, and I rarely returned to it without finding fresh animals, as the fairies continued to travel, and were incessantly irritated by the numberless faults of mankind; but during your residence here, you will have time enough to divert yourself by listening to the recital of all the adventures of the inhabitants.” Several of them immediately offered to relate theirs whenever she pleased. She thanked them very politely, but as she felt more inclined to muse than to talk, she sought a retired spot, where she could remain alone. As soon as she had fixed on one, a little palace arose in it, and the most sumptuous banquet in the world was served up to her. It consisted only of fruits, but they were of the rarest description; they were brought to her by birds, and during her stay in the grove she wanted for nothing.

There were entertainments occasionally, which pleased her more from their singularity than anything else. Lions were seen to dance in them with lambs; bears whispered tender things to doves, and serpents softened for linnets. A butterfly might be seen courting a panther; in short, there was no classification of species, for it was not that one was a tiger and another a sheep, but simply that they were persons whom the fairies had chosen to punish for their faults.

They all loved Queen Discrète to adoration. Every one made her their umpire in any difference. Her power was absolute in this little republic, and if she had not continually reproached herself as the cause of Green-Serpent's misfortunes, she might have borne her own with some degree of patience; but when she thought of the state to which he was reduced, she could not forgive herself for her imprudent curiosity. The time having arrived for her to leave the Grove of the Mountain, she gave notice of it to her little conductors, the faithful canaries, who promised her a happy return. She left secretly in the night-time, to avoid the leave-takings and lamentations which would have cost her some tears, for she was affected by the friendship and respect which all these rational animals had testified for her.

She forgot neither the pitcher full of the water of Discretion, nor the basket of trefoil, nor the iron shoes; and at the moment when Magotine believed her to be dead, she presented herself suddenly before her, the mill-stone round her neck, the iron shoes on her feet, and the pitcher in her hand. The Fairy, at sight of her, uttered a loud cry, and then inquired whence she came. "Madam," said the Queen, "I have passed three years drawing water in the broken pitcher, at the end of which time I found the way to make it hold water." Magotine burst into a fit of laughter, thinking on the fatigue the poor Queen must have undergone; but, looking at her more attentively, "What's this I see!" she exclaimed. "Laidronette has become quite lovely! How came you by this beauty?" The Queen informed her that she had washed herself with the water of Discretion, and that this miracle had been the consequence. At these tidings Magotine dashed the pitcher on the ground. "Oh, thou power that defiest me!" she exclaimed, "I will be revenged. Get your iron shoes ready," said she to the Queen. "You must go for me to the infernal regions, and demand of Proserpine the Essence of long life; I am always afraid of falling sick, and perhaps dying; when I am possessed of that antidote, I shall have no more cause for alarm. Take care, therefore, you do not uncork the bottle, nor taste the liquor she gives you, or you will diminish my portion."

The poor Queen had never been so astonished as she was by this order. "Which is the way to the infernal regions?" said she. "Can those who go to them return? Alas, Madam, will you never weary of persecuting me? Under what luckless star was I born? My sister is much happier than I. It must no longer be thought that the constellations are equally favourable to everybody." She began to weep, and Magotine exulting at the sight of her tears, laughed loudly, and cried, "Go! go! Do not delay a moment your departure on a voyage from which I shall reap so much gratification." She filled for her a wallet with old nuts and black bread, and with this handsome provision the poor Queen started, determined to dash her brains out against the first rock she came to, and terminate her sorrows.

She walked for some time at random, now turning one way and now another, and thinking it was a most extraordinary affair to be thus sent to the infernal regions. When she was tired, she laid down at the foot of a tree, and began to think of the poor serpent, forgetting all about her own journey, when suddenly she beheld the Fairy Protectrice, who said to her, "Know you not, beautiful Queen, that to release your husband from the shades in which the commands of Magotine detain him, it is necessary you should seek the home of Proserpine?" "I would go much further, if it were possible, Madam," replied she; "but I do not know the way by which I can descend into that dark abode." "Hold," said the Fairy Protectrice. "Here is a green branch; strike the earth with it, and repeat these lines distinctly." The Queen embraced the knees of this generous friend, and then said after her: —

THOU WHO CANST wrest from mighty Jove the thunder!

Love, listen to my prayer!
Come, save me from despair,
And calm the pangs that rend my heart asunder!
Be to the realms of Tartarus my guide.
E'en in those drear abodes they own thy sway.
Pluto for Proserpine, thy subject, sigh'd;
Open for me then to their throne the way;
A faithful husband from my arms they tear!
My fate is harder than my heart can bear;
More than mortal is its pain;
Yet for death it sighs in vain!

SHE HAD SCARCELY FINISHED this prayer, when a young child, more beautiful than anything we can behold, appeared in the midst of a gold and azure cloud. He flew down at her feet; a crown of flowers encircled his brow. The Queen knew by his bow and his arrows, that it was Love. He addressed her thus: —

I HAVE HEARD thy tender sighs,
And for thee have left the skies;
Love will chase thy tears away,
All for thee will Love essay.
Shortly shall thine eyes be blest
With his sight thou lovest best;
And the penance that shall be
Of thy cruel enemy.

THE QUEEN, dazzled by the splendour that surrounded Love and delighted at his promises, exclaimed,

DOWN TO THE realms of woe,
I'll fearless follow thee;
Bliss even there to know,
If there my love I see.

LOVE, who rarely speaks in prose, struck the earth three times, whilst he sang, in the most, enchanting manner, these words: —

EARTH! my voice obey!
The power of Cupid own!
Ope for Love the way
To Pluto's gloomy throne!

THE EARTH OBEYED. She opened her bosom; and by a dark passage, in which the Queen needed a guide as brilliant as he who had taken her under his protection, she reached the infernal regions. She dreaded meeting her husband in them under the form of a serpent; but Love, who sometimes employs himself in rendering good offices to the unfortunate, having foreseen all that was to be foreseen in the matter, had already ordered that Green-Serpent should become what he was previous to his penance. Powerful as Magotine was, alas, what could she do against Love? The consequence was, that the first sight that met the Queen's eyes was that of her amiable husband. She had never beheld him in such a charming form, and he had never seen her as beautiful as she had become; but notwithstanding this, a presentiment, and perhaps Love, who made a third in the party, caused each of them to guess who the other was. The Queen said to him, with extreme tenderness, —

I come to share thy prison and thy pain;
Though doom’d no more the light of Heaven to see,
Here let but Love unite our hearts again,
No terrors these sad Shades will have for me!

The King, transported by the violence of his passion, said, in reply to his wife, everything that could prove his ardour and delight; but Love, who is not fond of losing time, pressed them to approach Proserpine. The Queen gave Magotine’s compliments to her, and requested she would entrust her with the Essence of long life. It was the watchword between these good people. Proserpine immediately gave the Queen a phial very badly corked, in order to induce her to open it. Love, who is no novice, warned the Queen against the indulgence of a curiosity which would again be fatal to her; and quickly leaving those dreary regions, the King and Queen returned to the light of day. Love would not abandon them. He led them back to Magotine, and that she might not see him, he hid himself in their hearts. His presence nevertheless inspired the fairy with such humane sentiments, that although she knew not the reason, she received these illustrious unfortunates very graciously. With a supernatural effort of generosity she restored to them the kingdom of Pagodia. They returned to it immediately, and passed the rest of their days in as much happiness as they had previously endured afflictions and anxieties.

17

THE PRINCESS CARPILLON

There was an old king, who, to console himself for a long widowhood, married a beautiful princess, with whom he was very much in love. By his first wife he had one son, who was crooked and who squinted, and was very much vexed at his father’s marrying a second time. “Being an only son,” said he, “makes me both loved and feared; but if the young queen should have children, my father, who can dispose of his kingdom, will not consider that I am the eldest: he will disinherit me in their favour.” He was ambitious, full of malice and dissimulation; so much so, that without showing his uneasiness, he went secretly to consult a fairy, who was considered the cleverest in the world. The moment he appeared, she guessed his name, his rank, and what he wanted. “Prince Bossu,” said she — thus he was named — “you have come too late: the Queen will have a son. I will not harm it; but should it die, or any accident happen to it, I promise you that I will prevent there being any other.” This promise slightly consoled the humpback. He entreated the fairy to remember him; and resolved within himself to do some mischief to his little brother as soon as he was born. At the end of nine months the Queen had a son, the handsomest in the world; and they remarked, as an extraordinary thing, that he had the figure of an arrow imprinted upon his arm. The Queen loved her child so much, that she would nurse it herself;

which annoyed Prince Bossu exceedingly, for the care of a mother is greater than that of a nurse, and it is much more easy to deceive the one than the other. However, the humpback, who was solely bent on gaining his end, evinced so much affection for the Queen, and love for the little Prince, that the King was delighted. “I should never have thought,” said he, “my son was so good-natured; and if he continue so, I shall leave him a portion of my kingdom.”

These promises were not sufficient for the humpback, — he would have all or none; so one night he presented the Queen with some sweetmeats that had opium in them. She went to sleep; immediately the Prince, who had hidden himself behind the tapestry, softly took the little Prince, and put in his place a large cat, enveloped in swaddling clothes, that the rockers might not perceive the theft. The cat squalled, the rockers rocked: at last it made such a racket, that they thought it was hungry. They awoke the Queen, who, still overpowered with sleep, and thinking she had hold of her dear baby, began to suckle it; but the savage cat bit her: she screamed out, and looking at it, what was her horror when she saw a cat’s head instead of her son’s! Her grief was so intense, that she thought she should die upon the spot. The Queen’s ladies disturbed the whole palace by their screams. The King put on his dressing-gown, and ran to the Queen’s apartments. The first thing he saw was the cat, in the swaddling clothes of cloth-of-gold, worn usually by his infant son. They had thrown it on the ground, where it was squalling wonderfully. The King was much alarmed, and inquired what it meant. They told him that they knew nothing at all about it, but that the little Prince was not to be seen, — that they sought for him in vain, and that the Queen was much hurt. The King entered the Queen’s bedroom: he found her in sad affliction, and not wishing to increase it by his own, he did violence to his feelings to console this poor princess.

In the meanwhile the humpback had given his little brother to one of his own people. “Carry him to a distant forest,” said he to him, “and leave him quite naked in the most exposed situation, that the wild beasts may devour him, and we may never hear any more of him. I would carry him there myself, so much do I fear you will not strictly execute my orders; but I must appear before the King: go, then, and be sure that if I should reign, I shall not be ungrateful.” He put the poor child himself into the covered basket; and as he was accustomed to fondle him, the infant already knew him, and smiled at him, but the merciless humpback was less moved by it than a rock. He went instantly into the Queen’s chamber half-dressed, from being in so much haste, he said. He rubbed his eyes, as if scarcely awake, and when he learned the sad news of his stepmother’s injury, of the loss of the Prince, and saw the cat in the swaddling clothes, he uttered such sad cries, that they were as much occupied in consoling him, as if he really had been greatly afflicted. He took the cat and wrung its neck with a ferocity that was quite natural to him, but which he made them believe was excited by the mischief the animal had done to the Queen. Although he was notoriously wicked enough to perpetrate such a deed, no one suspected him of being the culprit, — his guilt was so artfully concealed by his feigned affliction. The King and Queen felt quite grateful to this wretch, and commissioned him to send to all the fairies, and find out what had become of their child.

Impatient to put an end to their researches, he brought them several different and very enigmatical answers, that all tended to the same point: — that the Prince was not dead, — that he had been taken away for a time for some inscrutable reason, — that he would be restored to them, perfect in every respect, — and that they should seek him no longer, as it would be only labour in vain. He imagined that by such answers he should keep them quiet; and he was right in his conjecture.

The King and Queen flattered themselves they would one day see their son again; in the meanwhile the bite that the cat had given the Queen proved so venomous, that she died of it, and the King, overwhelmed with grief, shut himself up for a whole year in his palace. He expected still to have news of his son, and expected in vain.

The man who took the child away walked all night without stopping; when morning began to dawn, he opened the basket, and the sweet infant smiled at him, as he used to do at the Queen when she took him in her arms. “Oh, poor little Prince,” said he; “how unfortunate is thy destiny! Alas, thou art to be food, like some gentle lamb, to a famishing lion! Why did the humpback choose me to help him to destroy thee?” He shut the basket, that he might no longer behold so pitiable an object; but the child, who had passed the night without nourishment, began to cry lustily. The man who carried him gathered some figs, and put them in his mouth; the sweetness of the fruit quieted him a little, and thus the man continued to carry him till the following night, when he came to a large and dark forest. He would not enter it at that hour, for fear of being devoured himself, but the next morning he resumed his journey, still carrying the basket. The forest was so large that whichever way he looked he could see no end to it, but in a spot thickly surrounded with trees, he perceived a rock, terminating in several rugged peaks. “Here, no doubt,” said he, “is the retreat of the most savage beasts. I must leave the infant here, since I am not in a situation to save it.” He approached the rock. Immediately an eagle, of a prodigious size, rushed out, flying round and round, as though she had left something in her nest; in fact it was her young ones, whom she was feeding, at the bottom of a sort of grotto. “Thou wilt be the prey of these birds, who are the kings of others, poor child,” said the man. With that he unswathed it, and laid it down beside the three eaglets. Their nest was large, and sheltered from the inclemency of the weather. He had much trouble in putting the Prince there, because the side of the rock by which it could be approached was very rugged and overhung a frightful precipice. He withdrew sighing, and saw the eagle returning swiftly to its nest. “Ah,” said he, “there is an end of it! the child will soon be no more.” He hurried away, that he might not hear its last cries. He returned to the humpback, and assured him that he no longer had a brother. At this news the barbarous Prince embraced his faithful minister, and gave him a diamond ring, assuring him that when he became king he would make him captain of his army. The eagle, on returning to her nest, was perhaps surprised to find the new guest in it; surprised or not, she exercised the rights of hospitality better than many people could have done. She nestled close to her nursling, covered him with her wings, and warmed him. It seemed as if she had no longer any care but for him; a peculiar instinct induced her to seek fruits for him, to peck them, and to pour the juice into the rosy mouth of the little Prince; in short, she fed him so well that his royal mother could not have nursed him better. As soon as the eaglets became stronger, the eagle took them out by turns, sometimes on her wings, sometimes in her talons, and thus accustomed them to look at the sun, without shutting their eyelids. The eagles sometimes left their mother, and flew a little around her, but the little Prince could do nothing of this sort, and when she carried him in the air, he ran great risks of falling and killing himself. Fortune befriended him. It was she who had provided so extraordinary a nurse for him; it was she who prevented his falling. Four years passed in this manner. The eagle lost all her young ones, they flew away when they were big enough; they never returned to see their mother or their nest. The Prince, who had not strength to go far, remained upon the rock, for the prudent and anxious eagle, apprehensive of his falling down the precipice, carried him to the other side, and lodged him in so narrow a cleft that the wild beasts could not get to him. Love, whom they paint as perfect, was far less so than this young Prince. The heat of the sun could not tarnish the lilies and roses of his complexion; there was so much regularity in all his features, that the finest painters could not imagine anything to equal them; his hair was already long enough to fall over his shoulders, and he had so lofty a mien that there had never been seen in a child anything so noble and grand. The eagle loved him with an overwhelming affection; she fed him with nothing but fruit, making this difference between him and her eaglets, to whom she gave only raw flesh. She ruined all the shepherds around in carrying away all their lambs, without mercy; nothing was talked of but the ravages of the eagle. At last, tired of feeding her at the expense of their flocks, they resolved amongst themselves to discover her retreat. They separated in several parties, following her flight; roaming the mountains and the valleys for a long time without success; but one day they saw her alight upon a great rock; the most courageous of the party ventured to ascend it, although surrounded by a thousand dangers. The bird had at that time two little eaglets that she carefully tended, but dear as they were to her, her affection was still stronger for the young Prince, with whom she had been longer acquainted. As she was not in her nest when the shepherds discovered it, they had not much difficulty in pulling it to pieces, and carrying off its contents; but what was their surprise at beholding the Prince! There was something in the circumstance so wonderful that their limited reason could not at all understand it.

They carried away the child and the eaglets, all three screaming together. The eagle heard them, and came swooping down upon the ravishers of her property. They would have felt the effects of her fury if she had not been shot dead by an arrow which one of the shepherds let fly at her. The young Prince, full of natural feeling, seeing her fall, uttered pitiful cries, and wept bitterly. After this adventure the shepherds returned to their villages. A cruel ceremony was to take place the next morning, for the following reason: — This country, for a long time past, had been the resort of ogres. The inhabitants, alarmed at such dangerous neighbours, had tried every means to get rid of them, without success. These terrible ogres, incensed by the hatred that was manifested towards them, redoubled their cruelties, and devoured, without exception, all who fell into their hands.

One day that the shepherds had assembled to deliberate on the steps that should be taken against the ogres, all at once, in the midst of them appeared a man of tremendous size; half of his body was like that of a stag, covered with a blue skin. He had the feet of a goat, a club over his shoulder, and a buckler in his hand. He said to them, “Shepherds, I am the Blue Centaur; if you give me a child every three years, I promise to bring here a hundred of my brothers, and make such fierce war upon the ogres, that we will drive them out, whatever may be their numbers.”

The shepherds hesitated to agree to do anything so cruel, but the most venerable amongst them said, “What then, my friends, is it more advantageous to us that the ogres should each day eat our fathers, our children, and our wives? By sacrificing one we should save many. Do not let us then refuse the offer the Centaur has made us.” Upon this they all consented to it. They pledged themselves by sacred oaths to keep their word with the Centaur, and that the child should be ready for him.

He departed, and returned, as he promised, with his brothers, who were all as monstrous as himself. The ogres were as brave as they were cruel. They fought several battles, in which, however, the Centaurs were always victorious, and at last obliged them to fly. The Blue Centaur appeared to claim his reward. Every one said nothing could be more just; but when they came to select the promised child, there was not a family who would make up their minds to give one of theirs; the mothers hid their infants almost in the bosom of the earth. The Centaur, who would not be trifled with, after having waited twice four-and-twenty hours, told the shepherds that he expected they would give him as many children as he stayed days with them, and the delay cost them six little boys and six little girls. From that time forth they regulated this serious affair, and every third year they made a solemn ceremony on the delivery of the poor child to the Centaur.

It was, then, the following morning after the Prince had been taken from the eagle’s nest that this tribute was due, and although the child had been already chosen, it is easy to believe the shepherds willingly substituted the Prince: the uncertainty of his birth — for they were so simple they sometimes believed the eagle was his mother — and his wonderful beauty, decided them absolutely to present him to the Centaur, for he was so dainty he would not eat children that were not very pretty. The mother of the infant they had selected, relieved from the horror of contemplating the death of her child, found her despair thus suddenly changed into joy. They desired her to adorn the young Prince for the sacrifice, as she had previously her son. She carefully combed his long hair, and made him a crown of little red and white hedge-roses. She dressed him in a long robe of fine white linen, with a girdle of flowers; thus adorned, he marched at the head of several children who were to accompany him; but how can I describe his lofty air, or the nobleness that already sparkled in his eyes. He who had never seen anything but eagles, and who was still of so tender an age, appeared neither frightened nor wild; it seemed to him that all those shepherds had assembled merely to please him. "Ah, what a pity!" said they to each other; "what, is this child going to be devoured? can we not save it?" Many wept, but it was impossible to avoid making the sacrifice.

The Centaur was in the habit of appearing upon the top of the rock, his club in one hand, his buckler in the other, and from thence, in a dreadful voice, he cried out to the shepherds, "Leave me my prey, and retire." The moment he saw the child they had brought him, he was greatly delighted, and, shouting so loud that the mountains trembled, he exclaimed, "This is the best breakfast I ever had in all my life. I shall want neither pepper nor salt to eat this little boy." The shepherds and shepherdesses looked at the poor child, saying to themselves, "The eagle has spared it, but here is the wretch that will end its days." The oldest shepherd took it in his arms, and kissed it often. "Oh, my child, my dear child," said he, "I do not know thee, but yet I feel that I have seen too much of thee! Must I assist at thy funeral? Why did fortune defend thee from the talons of the eaglets and from the hooked-beak of the eagle, since she abandons thee to-day to the voracious appetite of this horrible monster?"

While the shepherd was moistening the rosy cheeks of the Prince with tears which flowed from his eyes, the sweet innocent passed his little hands through his grey hairs, smiling at him in a sweet infantile manner, and the more he inspired him with pity, the more he hesitated to advance with him. “Make haste,” exclaimed the hungry Centaur; “if you make me come down, — if I have to come to you, I will eat more than a hundred.” His patience, in fact, began to fail him; he rose and flourished his club, when there appeared in the air a large globe of fire, surrounded by an azure cloud. As every one was attentively looking at this extraordinary sight, the cloud and the globe descended by degrees, and then the latter opened, and out of it issued immediately a chariot of diamonds, drawn by swans, in which was seated the most beautiful lady in the world. On her head was a helmet of pure gold, surmounted with white feathers, the vizor was up, and her eyes were as brilliant as the sun. She wore a rich cuirass, and the fiery lance she wielded betokened she was an Amazon.

“What! shepherds, “cried she, “have you the inhumanity to sacrifice such a child to a cruel centaur? It is time to liberate you from your promise. Justice and reason are opposed to such barbarous custom. No longer fear the return of the ogres; I will guarantee your safety. I am the Fairy Amazon, and from this moment I take you under my protection.” “Ah! Madam,” said the shepherds and shepherdesses, lifting up their hands to her, “it is the greatest happiness that could happen to us.” They could say no more, for the infuriated Centaur defied the Fairy to the combat. It was fierce and obstinate; the fiery lance burnt the monster wherever it struck him, and he uttered horrible yells, which ceased only with his life. He fell completely roasted, and you would have said it was a mountain that had been overthrown; so tremendous was the shock. The frightened shepherds hid themselves — some in a neighbouring forest, others at the bottom of the rocks, in cavities where they could see all, without being seen.

It was there the wise shepherd, who held the little Prince in his arms, took refuge; much more uneasy about what would happen to this amiable child, than what might be the issue to him or to his family, though the latter well deserved consideration. After the death of the Centaur, the Fairy Amazon took a trumpet, which she blew so melodiously that the sick who heard it arose in perfect health, and others felt a secret joy which they could not tell the meaning of.

The shepherd and shepherdesses, at the sound of the harmonious trumpet, reassembled. When the Fairy Amazon saw them, in order to reassure them entirely, she advanced towards them, in her chariot of diamonds, descending by degrees, till she came within three feet of the earth. The cloud on which the chariot rolled was so transparent that it appeared like crystal. The old shepherd, whom they called Sublime, advanced, holding the little Prince in his arms. “Approach, Sublime,” said the Fairy, “fear nothing more. I intend peace to reign for the future in these regions, and that you shall enjoy the repose you came to seek in them; but give me this poor child, whose fate is already so extraordinary.” The old man, having made a profound reverence, raised his arms, and put the Prince in hers. She kissed and embraced him a thousand times, set him on her knees and talked to him. She knew, nevertheless, that he could neither speak nor understand any language; he uttered cries of joy or of grief, heaved sighs, and made inarticulate noises; for he had never heard any one speak.

He was, however, quite dazzled by the brilliant armour of the Fairy Amazon. He got up on her knee, to reach her helmet, that he might touch it. The fairy laughed at him, and told him, as though he could understand her, “When thou art able to carry arms, my son, thou shalt not be without them.” After she had again caressed him very much, she returned him to Sublime. “Good old man,” said she to him, “you are not unknown to me; do not disdain to take care of this child; teach him to have a contempt for the pomps of the world, and to be above the frowns of fortune — he is, perhaps, born to a very brilliant one; but I maintain, that wisdom will make him happier than power. Man's happiness ought not to consist of outward grandeur; to be happy, one must be wise, and to be wise one must know oneself — be able to limit one's desires, be content in poverty as in opulence, seek the esteem of men of merit, despise no one, and be always prepared to quit the riches of this wretched life without sorrow. But what am I thinking about, venerable shepherd? I talk to you of matters you are much better acquainted with than I am; but, it is also true, I am speaking more to the other shepherds, who are listening to me, than to you. Adieu, herdsmen; adieu, shepherds; call me in your need; this same lance and hand, which have just exterminated the Blue Centaur, will be always ready to protect you." Sublime and all who were with him, as much astonished as delighted, could make no answer to the obliging words of the Fairy Amazon; in their excitement and joy they humbly prostrated themselves before her; and while they were in that position, the globe of fire gently rising to the regions above, disappeared with the Amazon and the chariot.

The timid shepherds dared not at first approach the Centaur, for dead as he was, they were afraid of him; by degrees they became accustomed to him, and agreed among themselves, that they must make a great pile, and burn him to ashes, for fear his brothers, aware of what had happened, should come and avenge his death upon them. This opinion having been adopted, they lost not a moment in setting about it, and ridding themselves of the odious carcass.

Sublime carried the little Prince to his hut; his wife was at home ill, and his two daughters had not been able to leave her to attend the ceremony. "Here, shepherdess," said he, "here is a child, cherished by the gods, and protected by a Fairy Amazon; we must look on him for the future as our son, and give him an education that may render him happy." The shepherdess was delighted with the present he made her; she took the Prince on her bed. "At least," said she, "if I cannot give him such good lessons as you can, I shall bring him up from childhood, and cherish him as my own son." "That is what I ask of you," said the old man; and thereupon he gave him to her. The two daughters ran to look at him; they were charmed with his incomparable beauty, and all the graces of his little person. From that moment they began to teach him their language, and never could there be found a prettier or more intelligent pupil; he learned the most difficult things with a facility which astonished the shepherd; so that he was very soon sufficiently advanced to receive lessons from him only. This wise old man was able to give him the best advice; for he had been a king of a fine and flourishing kingdom, but a usurper, a neighbour and an enemy, successfully conducted his secret intrigues, and gained over certain factious spirits, who rose in rebellion, and enabled him to surprise the king and all his family, whom he immediately ordered to be shut up in a fortress, where he intended them to perish miserably.

So strange an alteration had no effect upon the virtue of the king and queen; they resolutely suffered all the outrages that the tyrant ordered to be executed upon them; and the queen, who was with child when this disgrace occurred, was confined with a girl, whom she nursed herself; she had two other very amiable children, who shared her troubles as much as their age would permit of. At the end of three years the king gained over one of his guards, who agreed to bring a small boat for him to cross the lake, in the middle of which the fortress was built. He provided them with a file to cut the iron bars of their rooms, and with cords to descend by. They fixed upon a very dark night. Everything was favourable; and without any noise, the guard assisted them to slide down the walls, that were frightfully high: the king went down first, then followed the daughters, afterwards the queen, then the little princess in a large basket; but, alas! they had tied her in badly, and suddenly they heard her fall into the lake. If the queen had not fainted from grief, she would have awakened all the garrison by her shrieks and lamentations. The king, distressed at this accident, sought for the child as much as it was possible in so dark a night: he found the basket, and hoped the princess was in it; but she was not there, and he was obliged to row to save himself and the rest of the family. At the border of the lake they found horses ready for them, that the guard had ordered to be there to take the king wherever he would like to go. During his imprisonment he and his queen had had time to moralize, and perceive that the greatest benefits of this world are as nothing when estimated at their true value; this, added to the misfortune that had just occurred to them of losing their little girl, made them resolve not to take refuge among the kings, their neighbours and their allies, where perhaps they would have been considered a burden; so, taking their own course, they established themselves in a fertile plain, the most agreeable of any spot they could have chosen. In this place the king, changing his sceptre for a sheephook, bought a large flock, and became a shepherd. He built a little country-house, sheltered on one side by mountains, and having on the other a stream well filled with fish. Here they enjoyed more peace than they had on their throne; no one envied them their poverty, they feared neither traitors nor flatterers; their days flew by without sorrow, and the king often said, “Ah! if men could cure themselves of ambition, how happy they would be! I have been a king, now I am become a shepherd, — I prefer my cottage to the palace in which I reigned.”

It was with this great philosopher that the young Prince studied; he knew not his master’s rank, neither did the master know the parentage of his pupil; but he saw in him such noble feelings, that he could not believe him to be an ordinary child. He remarked with pleasure, that he placed himself nearly always at the head of his companions, with an air of superiority that commanded their respect. He was continually forming little armies; he built forts, and attacked them. He went hunting, also, and braved the greatest perils, notwithstanding all the remonstrances the shepherd could make. All these things convinced him, that he was born to command. But, while he is being educated, and till he has attained the age of fifteen, let us return to the King his father’s court.

Prince Bossu, finding his father becoming very old, had scarcely any respect for him — he was impatient at waiting so long for the succession. To console himself, he asked the King for an army that he might invade a neighbouring kingdom, the fickle population of which had made overtures to him. The King agreed to it, on condition that, before his departure, he would witness the signing of an act by the lords of his kingdom to this effect, — that if ever the Prince, his youngest brother, returned, and they were satisfied it was he, by finding the mark of the arrow upon his arm, he should be recognised as sole heir to the crown. The humpback not only willingly assisted at this ceremony, but would sign the act himself, though his father thought it too much to expect from him; but as he felt sure of the death of his brother, he hazarded nothing, while he assumed great credit to himself for this proof of his complacency; in consequence of which the King assembled the states, addressed them, shed many tears, when speaking of the loss of his son — moving all those to pity who heard him, and after having signed the instrument, and caused the principal nobles to sign it, he commanded them to place it in the royal treasury, and that several authenticated copies should be made for the better recording of it.

Prince Bossu then took leave of him, to head a fine army, and attempt the conquest of the kingdom to which he was invited; and after many battles, he killed his opponent with his own hand, took the capital city, placed garrisons and appointed governors in every direction, and returned to his father, to whom he presented a young princess named Carpillon, whom he had taken prisoner.

She was so extremely beautiful, that all that nature had ever previously created, and all that the imagination could fancy, could not be compared to her. The king was enchanted at the sight of Carpillon; and the humpback, who had been acquainted with her some time, had fallen so deeply in love with her, that he knew not a moment's rest; but as much as he loved her, so much she hated him, as he never spoke to her but as her master, and reminded her always that she was his slave. Her heart so revolted at his coarse manners, that she tried to avoid him as much as possible.

The King had given her an apartment in his palace, and women to wait upon her; he felt for the misfortunes of so young and beautiful a princess. When the humpback told him he intended to marry her, "I consent to it," replied he, "provided she is not averse to it; for it appears to me, that when you are near her, she is always melancholy." "It is because she loves me," said the humpback, "and dares not acknowledge it. The constraint causes her to feel embarrassed; as soon as she is my wife, you will see her happy." "I should like to believe it," said the King; "but do you not flatter yourself a little too much?" The humpback was much annoyed by his father's doubts. "You are the cause, madam," said he to the Princess, "of the King's treating me with a severity which is not usual with him. Perhaps he loves you: tell me so candidly, and choose between us, — provided I see you reign, I shall be satisfied." He spoke thus to ascertain her sentiments; for he had no idea of altering his own intentions. The young Carpillon, who knew not yet that the greater number of lovers are artful and deceitful creatures, fell into the trap. "I own, my lord," said she to him, "that if I were my own mistress, I should neither choose the King nor you; but if my ill fortune compels me to this sad necessity, I prefer the King." "And why?" replied the humpback, endeavouring to constrain himself. "Because," added she, "he is milder than you are, that he reigns at present, and that perhaps he may not live so long." "Ah! little wretch," replied the humpback, "you would marry my father in order to be queen-dowager after a little while. Most assuredly you shall not, — he does not think of you; it is I who am good enough to do so — goodness, to speak the truth, ill-bestowed, for you are insupportably ungrateful; but, were you a hundred times more so, you shall be my wife."

The Princess Carpillon learned, but a little too late, that it is sometimes dangerous to say all one thinks; and, to make amends for what she had just said, “I wished to ascertain your sentiments,” replied she to him; “I am very glad that you love me sufficiently to resent the harshness that I have affected. I esteem you already, my lord; endeavour to make me love you.” The Prince, in his turn, fell headlong into the trap, obvious as it was; but people are generally very foolish when they are much in love, and have an inclination to flatter themselves, which it is difficult to correct. Carpillon’s words made him milder than a lamb, he smiled, and pressed her hands till he hurt them.

As soon as he had left her she ran to the King’s apartment, and throwing herself at his feet, “Protect me, Sire,” said she, “from the greatest of misery: Prince Bossu insists upon marrying me. I confess that he is odious to me: do not be so unjust as he is; my rank, my youth, and the misfortunes of my family merit the compassion of so great a king as you are.” “Beautiful Princess,” said he, “I am not surprised that my son loves you — it must be the case with all who see you; but I will never forgive him, for failing in the respect due to you.” “Ah! Sire,” replied she, “he looks upon me as his prisoner, and treats me as his slave.” “It is with my army,” replied the King, “that he conquered the conqueror of the King your father: if you are a captive, you are my captive, and I restore you to liberty; happily my advanced age and my white hairs preserve me from becoming your slave.” The grateful Princess thanked the King a thousand times, and retired with her ladies.

The humpback, having learned what had just passed, resented it deeply; and his fury increased when the King desired him not to think of the Princess, until by great and constant kindness he should overcome her dislike. “I shall have to labour then all my life, and perhaps uselessly,” said he; “I do not like losing my time.” “I am sorry on your account,” replied the King, “but it can be upon no other terms.” “We shall see;” insolently answered the humpback, as he quitted the room. “You presume to take away my prisoner from me — I will lose my life sooner.” “She whom you call your prisoner, was mine,” added the irritated King. “She is now at liberty; she shall be her own mistress, and not dependent upon your caprice.”

So sharp a conversation might have led to higher words still, had not the humpback thought proper to retire. He forthwith resolved to make himself master of the kingdom, and of the Princess. He had ingratiated himself with the troops, while he commanded them, and there were seditious men who willingly seconded his bad designs. The King was warned that his son was endeavouring to dethrone him; and, as the Prince was the strongest, the King could take no other course than that of mildness. He sent for him and said to him; “Is it possible that you are so ungrateful that you wish to dethrone me, and seat yourself in my place? you see I am at the brink of the grave; do not hasten the end of my life. Have I not been sufficiently afflicted, by the death of my wife, and the loss of my son? It is true, I am opposed to your designs on the Princess Carpillon; but it’s out of consideration for you, as much as for her; for, can one be happy with a person who does not love him? But since you will run the risk, I consent to it; allow me time to speak to her, and reconcile her to this marriage.”

The humpback wished for the Princess more than for the kingdom; for he already ruled over the one he had just conquered, and he told the King, he was not so eager to reign as he imagined, since he had himself signed the agreement that disinherited him in case his brother should ever return, and that he would respect his father’s authority, provided he was not prevented marrying Carpillon. The King embraced him, and went to seek the poor Princess, who was in great anxiety respecting the result of the interview. Her governess was still with her. She took her into her closet, and crying bitterly; “Is it possible,” said she to her, “that after all the promises the King made me, he will have the cruelty to sacrifice me to this humpback?

Certainly, my dear friend, if I must marry him, the day of my marriage will be the last of my life; for it is not so much his deformity that shocks me, as the badness of his heart." "Alas! my Princess," replied the governess, "you are ignorant, no doubt, that the daughters of the greatest kings are victims, whose inclination they seldom if ever consult; if they do marry an amiable and handsome Prince, they may thank fortune for it; but between one monkey and another, nothing is considered but the interest of the State." Carpillon was about to reply, when it was announced that the King was waiting for her in her chamber. She raised her eyes to heaven, to ask for help.

As soon as she saw the King, it was unnecessary for him to explain the resolution he had arrived at; for she had great penetration, and the qualities of her mind far surpassed those of her person. "Ah! Sire," she exclaimed, "what are you going to tell me?" "Beautiful Princess," said he, "do not look upon your marriage with my son as a misfortune; I entreat of you to consent to it with a good grace; the violence he does to your feelings sufficiently proves the ardour of his own. He could find more than one Princess, who would be enchanted to share with him the kingdom he has already, and the one he hopes for after my death; but he will have none but you. Your disdain, your contempt for him, does not dishearten him; and you must believe, that he will never omit anything he can do to please you." "I flattered myself I had found a protector in you," replied she; "my hope is gone, you have abandoned me; but the gods — the just gods — will not abandon me." "If you knew all that I have done to defend you from this marriage," added he, "you would be convinced of my friendship. Alas! Heaven gave me a son, whom I dearly loved; his mother nursed him. He was stolen one night from his cradle, and a cat was put in his place, who bit the Queen so cruelly that she died of it. If this sweet child had not been taken from me, he would now be the consolation of my old age; my subjects would fear him, and I should offer you my kingdom with him: the humpback, who now assumes the master, would have been happy to be allowed to remain at Court. I have lost that dear son, Princess, and the misfortune extends to you.” “It is I alone,” replied she, “who am the cause of what has happened to him. As his existence would have served me, he has perished. Sire, look upon me as guilty; and take my life, rather than marry me.” “You were not of an age, beautiful Princess,” said the King, “at that time, to do either good or ill to any one; I do not accuse you of causing my misfortunes; but if you would not increase them, prepare to receive my son kindly; for he has made himself the strongest here, and could do you most serious injury.” She answered only by her tears. The King left her; and as the humpback was impatient to know what was passing, the King found him waiting in his chamber, and told him the Princess Carpillon consented to the marriage, and that he had given the necessary orders for it to be solemnised. The Prince was transported with joy; he thanked the King, and immediately sent for jewellers, merchants, and embroiderers. He bought the handsomest things in the world for his mistress, and sent her large golden baskets, filled with a thousand curiosities. She received them with some appearance of pleasure. He then paid her a visit and said to her, “Were you not very silly, Madam Carpillon, to refuse the honour I intended you? for, not to say anything of my amiability, I am considered very clever. I will give you so many dresses, so many diamonds, and so many fine things, that no queen in the world shall be comparable to you.”

The Princess coolly replied, that the misfortunes of her royal house did not allow her to be adorned so much as others were, and therefore she begged of him not to make her such handsome presents. “You would be right,” said he to her, “not to adorn yourself, if I did not give you permission; but it is your duty to please me; all will be ready for our marriage in four days; amuse yourself, Princess, and give your orders, as you are already absolute mistress here.”

After he had left her, she shut herself up with her governess, and told her, that she might choose whether she would find her the means of escape, or those by which she could kill herself the day of her marriage. The governess represented the impossibility of her escaping, and the culpable weakness of killing herself to avoid the evils of this life. She tried to persuade her, that her virtue would contribute to her tranquillity, and without being desperately in love with the humpback, she would esteem him sufficiently to live contentedly with him.

Carpillon would not listen to any of her remonstrances; she told her, till now she had relied upon her, she now knew what she had to trust to; that if all the world failed her, she would not fail herself; and that great remedies were required for great evils. After which, she opened the window, and every now and then looked out, without uttering a word. Her governess, who feared she would throw herself out, fell at her feet, and looking affectionately at her, “Well, Madam,” said she, “what do you wish me to do? I will obey you, though it be at the risk of my life.” The Princess embraced her, and said, she wished her to purchase for her a shepherdess’s dress and a cow; that she would seek refuge wherever she could. That she must not try to turn her from her purpose, because it was losing time, and she had none to spare; that she must also, to enable her to get beyond pursuit, dress up a doll, put it in her bed, and say that she was not well.

“You must see, Madam,” said the poor governess, “to what I am about to expose myself. Prince Bossu will be certain that I seconded you in your plans; he will inflict a thousand tortures upon me to extort from me where you are, and then he will burn me, or flay me alive. Say after that, that I do not love you.”

The Princess was very much distressed: “I wish,” replied she, “that you should escape yourself, two days after me; it will be very easy to deceive everybody till then.” In short, they contrived so well, that the same night, Carpillon had a dress and a cow.

All the goddesses that ever descended from the summit of Olympus, those who sought the shepherd Paris, and a hundred dozen of others, would have appeared less beautiful than Carpillon in this rustic attire. She set out alone, by moonlight, sometimes leading her cow with a cord, sometimes making it carry her; she proceeded at random half dead with fear. If a breath of wind rustled through the bushes, — if a bird flew from its nest, or a hare started from its form, she thought thieves or wolves were about to attack her. She walked all night, and would have walked all day, but her cow stopped to feed in a meadow, and the Princess, fatigued with her thick wooden shoes, and the weight of her coarse grey cloth dress, sat down upon the grass by the side of a stream, where she took off her yellow linen cap, to arrange her fair hair, which had escaped from all sides, and fell in curls down to her feet. She looked about to see if any one was near her, that she might conceal herself quickly; but, notwithstanding the precaution she took, she was surprised by a lady in complete armour, excepting her head, from which she had taken a golden helmet covered with diamonds. “Shepherdess,” said she, “I am fatigued; will you give me some milk from your cow to quench my thirst?” “Willingly, Madam,” replied Carpillon, “if I had something to put it into.” “Here is a cup,” said the warrior lady, presenting her a very handsome china one; but the Princess knew not how to milk her cow. “How is this?” said the lady; “does your cow give no milk, or do you not know how to milk her?” The Princess began to cry, being quite ashamed of appearing so awkward before so extraordinary a person. “I confess, Madam,” said she to her, “I have only been a short time a shepherdess; all my business is to take my cow out to feed — my mother does the rest.” “You have, then, a mother,” continued the lady, “and what may she be?” “She keeps a farm,” said Carpillon. “Near here?” inquired the lady. “Yes,” replied the Princess. “Really I feel an affection for her, and am obliged to her for having given birth to so beautiful a daughter. I should like to see her; take me to her.” Carpillon did not know how to answer — she was unaccustomed to tell falsehoods, and knew not that she was speaking to a fairy. Fairies were not so common in those days as they have since become. She cast down her eyes; her face was suffused with deep blushes; at last she said, “When I am sent out into the fields, I dare not go home again till night. I beg of you, Madam, not to oblige me to do what would make my mother angry, who will beat me, perhaps, if I disobey her.”

“Ah! Princess, Princess,” said the Fairy smiling, “you cannot support a falsehood — neither can you play the part you have assumed if I do not assist you; take this — it is a bouquet of gillyflowers; be sure that as long as you hold it, the humpback, who is seeking you, will not know you; remember, when you reach the Great Forest, to ask the shepherds, who feed their flocks there, where Sublime lives; go to him, and tell him that you come from the Fairy Amazon, who begs he will place you with his wife and daughters. Adieu, beautiful Carpillon, I have been one of your friends for a long time.” “Alas! Madam,” exclaimed the Princess, “since you know me, and love me, and I have so much need of your assistance, will you abandon me?” “The bouquet of gillyflowers will not fail you,” replied she; “my moments are precious; I must leave you to fulfil your destiny.” In saying these words, she vanished from Carpillon’s sight, who was so frightened, she thought she should die of it. After recovering herself a little, she continued her journey; not knowing at all where the Great Forest was; but she said to herself, “This clever Fairy, who appears and disappears, who knows me in a peasant’s dress, without ever having seen me, will conduct me whither she wishes me to go.” Walking or resting, the Princess always held her bouquet; she advanced, however, but slowly. Her courage was greater than her strength. Where the road was stony she often stumbled; her feet began to bleed; she was forced to lie down upon the ground under the shelter of some trees; she feared everything, and often thought, with great anxiety, of her governess. It was not without reason that she did think of that poor woman — her zeal and her fidelity have been rarely equalled. She dressed up a large doll, in the Princess’s lace pinners, *fontanges*, and fine linen; she went very softly about the chamber, for fear, she said, of disturbing her; and when any noise was made, she scolded everybody. They ran to tell the King that the Princess was ill; that did not surprise him: he attributed it to her vexation, and the violence she was doing her own feelings; but, when Prince Bossu heard this sad news, he felt inconceivably grieved, and wanted to see her. The governess with difficulty prevented him; “At all events,” said he, “let my physician see her.” “Ah! my Lord,” cried the governess, “it would be enough to kill her — she detests doctors and their remedies; but do not alarm yourself, she only requires a few days’ rest — it is a headache, which she will soon sleep off.” She managed thus to make him promise not to disturb her mistress, and still kept the doll in the bed. But one night when she was preparing to escape, — for she felt assured the impatient Prince would soon renew his attempts to enter — she heard him raving like a madman at the door, which he burst open without waiting for her to unlock it.

The cause of this violence was, that the Princess’s ladies had discovered the fraud, and fearing they should suffer for it, they instantly went and informed the humpback. It would be impossible to describe the excess of his fury. He rushed to the King, thinking he was in the plot; but by the surprise he evinced, he was sure he was ignorant of it. As soon as the poor governess appeared, he flew at her, and taking her by the hair of her head, “Restore Carpillon to me,” said he, “or I will tear out your heart.” She only answered by her tears, and throwing herself at his feet, she entreated him to listen to her, but in vain. He dragged her himself into a deep dungeon, where he would have stabbed her a thousand times, if the King, who was as good as his son was wicked, had not obliged him to let her live in this frightful prison.

The amorous and violent Prince issued immediate orders to pursue her over land and sea; he set out himself and rushed in all directions like a man out of his wits. One day, as Carpillon was taking shelter under a large rock with her cow, for the weather was frightfully bad, and the thunder, lightning and hail made her tremble, Prince Bossu, and all his followers, who were soaked through by the rain, came and took refuge under the same rock. When she saw him so near her, alas! he frightened her much more than the thunder, — she grasped her bunch of gillyflowers with both hands, fearing that one would not be sufficient, and remembering the Fairy, exclaimed to herself, “Do not abandon me, charming Amazon.” The humpback cast his eyes upon her. “What hast thou to fear, decrepit old wretch,” said he to her; “if the thunder should kill thee, what wrong would it do thee? art thou not on the brink of thy grave?” The young Princess was not less delighted than astonished to hear herself called old; “No doubt,” thought she, “that my little bouquet has worked this wonder,” and to avoid being drawn into conversation, she pretended to be deaf. The humpback finding she could not hear, said to his confidant, who never quitted him, “If I were in better spirits, I would take this old woman to the top of the rock, and precipitate her from it, that I might have the pleasure to see her break her neck; for nothing would be more amusing to me.” “But, my Lord,” replied the villain, “if that would at all rejoice you, I will take her there, willingly or by force, and you shall see her body bound like a ball from all the points of the rock, and her blood run close to you.” “No,” said the Prince, “I have not the time; I must continue to seek for this ungrateful woman, who has made my life miserable.”

So saying, he put spurs to his horse, and was soon out of sight. It is easy to imagine the Princess’s joy at his departure; for, most assuredly, the conversation he had just had with his confidant was enough to alarm her: she did not forget to thank the Fairy Amazon, of whose power she had just had a proof; and continuing her journey she arrived in the plain where the shepherds had built their small cottages; they were very pretty, each of them, with its garden and its fountain: the Valley of Tempé, and the borders of the Lignon, have boasted nothing more elegant. The shepherdesses were mostly beautiful, and the shepherds omitted nothing to please them; all the trees were engraved with a thousand different cyphers, and love verses. When Carpillon appeared, they left their flocks and followed her respectfully; for they were prepossessed by her beauty and her majestic air; but they were astonished at the poverty of her dress: for, though they lived in a simple and rustic manner, they prided themselves on the neatness of their attire. The Princess begged them to inform her which was the house of the shepherd Sublime; they hastened to conduct her thither. She found him seated in a valley with his wife and daughter; a little river flowing at his feet making a soft murmuring noise; he had some sea rushes in his hand, with which he was making a basket to hold fruit; his wife was spinning, and his two daughters were fishing. When Carpillon drew near to them, she was impressed with a respect and affection which surprised her; and when they saw her, they were so affected that they changed colour several times. "I am a poor shepherdess," said she, humbly accosting them, "come to offer you my services from the Fairy Amazon whom you know. I hope, out of consideration for her, you will willingly receive me." "My daughter," said the King rising, and in his turn greeting her, "that great fairy is quite right in believing we have the greatest respect for her; you are, therefore, welcome; and if you had no recommendation but your own, our house would certainly be open to you." "Come hither, beautiful girl," said the Queen, holding out her hand, "come, and embrace me. I feel fully disposed to love you; I wish you to look upon me as your mother, and my daughters as your sisters." "Alas! my kind mother," said the Princess, "I do not deserve this honour; it is sufficient that I should be your shepherdess, and take charge of your flock." "My daughter," said the King, "we are all equal here; you come with too good a recommendation for us to make any difference between you and our children; come and sit with us, and let your cow feed with our sheep." She made some objection, perseveringly insisting that she only came to take care of the house for them; she would have been very much perplexed had they taken her at her word; but, in fact, it was sufficient to see her, to be satisfied that she was more fit to command than to obey; and they were also certain that one of so much importance as the Fairy Amazon would not take such interest in an ordinary person.

The King and Queen looked at her with astonishment mixed with admiration, difficult to comprehend; they asked her, if she came from a great distance? She said, “Yes;” “Whether she had a father and mother?” she said, “No.” And to all their questions she answered by monosyllables, as far as respect would permit her. “And what do you call yourself, my child?” said the Queen. “They call me Carpillon,” said she. “The name is singular,” replied the King, “and, perhaps, some adventure gave rise to it; it is seldom any one receives such an appellation.” She did not reply, and took one of the spindles from the Queen, to wind off the thread. When they saw her hands, they thought she was taking out of her sleeves two balls of snow formed in that shape; they were so brilliantly white. The King and Queen looked at each other very significantly, and said to her, “Your dress is very warm, Carpillon, for the climate we live in, and your wooden shoes are very hard for so young a person as you are; you must be dressed differently.” “In my country,” replied Carpillon, “they are dressed as I am; but if it pleases you, mother, to order me to do so, I will dress otherwise.” They admired her submission, and above all the modesty which appeared in her eyes and pervaded her whole countenance.

Supper time had arrived; they arose, and all entered the house. The two Princesses had caught some nice little fish; they had also some new-laid eggs, some milk, and some fruit.

“I am surprised,” said the King, “that my son has not returned yet; his love of hunting takes him farther than I like, and I am always fearful some accident will happen to him.” “I am as much alarmed as you are,” said the Queen; “but, if you like, we will wait supper for him.” “No,” said the King, “we will do nothing of the sort; on the contrary, I beg, when he returns, that no one will speak to him, and that everybody will be very cold to him.” “You know how affectionate he is,” said the Queen, “and that it will distress him so much; he will be ill in consequence.” “I cannot help it,” said the King; “he must be corrected.” They sat down to table, and some time afterwards the Prince came in; he had a roebuck on his shoulders, his hair was wet with perspiration, and his face covered with dust. He leaned upon a small spear which he usually carried, his bow was fastened on one side, and his quiver full of arrows on the other. In this state there was something so noble and so haughty in his countenance and in his appearance, that no one could see him without attention and respect. “Mother,” said he, addressing the Queen, “my wish to bring you this roebuck, has caused me a good run over hill and dale to-day.” “My son,” said the King, seriously, “you cause us more anxiety than pleasure. You know all that I have already said about your love for the chase, but you do not seem inclined to correct yourself.” The Prince reddened; and what annoyed him more was, that he perceived a stranger was present. He replied that another time he would return earlier, or that he would not go hunting any more till they wished it. “That is sufficient,” said the Queen, who loved him dearly; “my son, I thank you for your present; come and sit by me and sup, for I am sure you are hungry.” He was a little disconcerted at the serious air with which the King spoke to him and he scarcely dared to raise his eyes, for although he was intrepid in the midst of dangers, he was tractable, and stood in great awe of those to whom he owed respect. However, he recovered from his confusion, placed himself next to the Queen, and looked at Carpillon, who had not waited so long to look at him. As soon as their eyes met, their hearts beat so wonderfully that they could not account for their agitation. The Princess blushed and looked down; the Prince continued to gaze at her; again she raised her eyes gently, and looked at him a longer time, they were each of them equally surprised, and thought that nothing in the world could surpass what they beheld. “Is it possible,” said the Princess, “that seeing so many persons as I have at court, I know not one who could be compared to this young shepherd!” “How is it,” said he, in his turn, “that this wonderful girl is a simple shepherdess! Ah, would that I were a king to place her on the throne, to make her mistress of my dominions as she would be of my heart!” Thus musing, he ate nothing; the Queen, believing that it was in consequence of his having been unkindly received, loaded him with caresses; she herself handed him some exquisite fruits, of which she was very choice. He begged Carpillon to taste some; she thanked him, and he, without thinking from whose hand he had received them, said sorrowfully, “I don’t want them,” and coldly left them on the table. The Queen did not notice it; but the eldest Princess, who by no means disliked him, and could have loved him dearly, but for the difference she believed existed between his condition and hers, remarked it with some degree of vexation.

After supper the King and Queen retired; the Princesses, as was their custom, arranged everything about the house: the one milked the cows, the other made some cheese; Carpillon was anxious to work also, as the others did, but she had not been so accustomed to it. She could do nothing well, and the two Princesses laughingly called her the awkward beauty; but the Prince, already in love, assisted her. He went to the well with her, he carried her pitchers, he drew the water for her, and returned heavily laden, for he would not allow her to carry anything. “But what do you mean, shepherd,” said she to him; “must I be the young lady here — I, who have worked all my life, am I come here to do nothing?” “You shall do whatever you like, charming shepherdess,” replied he; “but do not refuse to accept my poor assistance on these occasions.” They returned together, sooner than they wished, for although he hardly dared to speak to her, he was delighted to be with her.

They each of them passed a sleepless night, which their inexperience prevented them from imagining the cause of: but the Prince anxiously waited for the hour that he might again behold the shepherdess, while she already feared the time she should again see the shepherd. This new trouble, that the sight of him had thrown her into, diverted her attention from the other sorrows which oppressed her. She thought of him so often, that she scarcely remembered Prince Bossu. “Fickle Fortune!” she exclaimed, “why hast thou bestowed so many graces, so fair a countenance, and such charms on a young shepherd, who is only destined to watch his flock; and on a great Prince, who has to govern a kingdom, so much malice, ugliness, and deformity?”

Carpillon had never had the curiosity to look at herself since her metamorphosis from a princess into a shepherdess, but now a certain desire to please induced her to seek for a mirror. She found the Princesses’, and when she saw her head-dress, and her gown, she was quite confused. “What a figure!” said she; “what am I like? It is impossible that I can remain any longer buried in this coarse stuff.” She took some water, and washed her hands and face. They became whiter than lilies. After this she sought the Queen, and kneeling before her, she presented her with a beautiful diamond ring (for she had brought some jewels with her). “My good mother,” said she, “some time ago I found this ring; I do not know its value; but I suppose it is worth some money: I beg of you to accept it, as a proof of my gratitude for your charity towards me, and I further entreat you to buy me some dresses and linen, that I may appear like the shepherdesses of this country.” The Queen was surprised to see so beautiful a ring in the possession of this young girl. “I will take care of it for you,” said she, “but not accept it; be assured you will have from this morning all that is requisite for you.” She then sent to a small town, not very far off, and desired them to bring the prettiest peasant’s dress that had ever been seen. The head-dress, the shoes, all was complete; thus attired, she appeared more charming than Aurora. The Prince also had not been neglectful of himself; he had put round his hat a wreath of flowers; the scarf by which his scrip was tied and his hook were also ornamented with them. He carried a bouquet to Carpillon, and presented it with the timidity of a lover; she received it with much embarrassment, although she had infinite good sense. Whenever she was with him, she hardly ever spoke, and was always in deep thought. It was much the same with him. When he went hunting, instead of pursuing the hinds and the deer that he met with, if he found a fitting spot for indulging in thoughts of the charming Carpillon, he would suddenly stop and remain in that solitary place, making verses, singing couplets in praise of his shepherdess, talking to the rocks, to the woods, to the trees; he had lost all that joyous spirit which had caused the shepherds so eagerly to seek his company.

But as it is difficult to be much in love and not to fear those whom we love, he was so dreadfully afraid he should offend his shepherdess by declaring his passion for her, that he dare not speak; and although she saw plainly enough, that he preferred her to every one else, and that this preference ought to assure her of his sentiments, she was sometimes troubled at his silence, and sometimes she was pleased at it. “If it be true,” said she, “that he loves me, how ought I to receive such a declaration? If I am angry with him, I shall perhaps kill him; and if I am not angry with him, I shall die myself of shame and grief. What! born a Princess, should I listen to a shepherd? Ah, what unworthy weakness! I will never consent to it; my heart should not change, as I change my dress; and I have already many things to reproach myself with since I have been here.”

As the Prince’s natural voice possessed a thousand charms, and as, even if he could not have sung so well, the Princess was so prepossessed in his favour she would not have been less pleased to hear him, she often asked him to sing some little songs; and what he sang was so tender, and his accents so touching, she could not break herself of the desire to listen to him. He had written some words, that he repeated incessantly, she being fully aware that she was the subject of them. They are as follow: —

If a goddess found could be
Who in beauty equall'd thee,
Would she give, my love to win,
All the wealth the world within,
I with scorn would her deny,
At thy feet to live and die.

Although she pretended she paid no more attention to that than she did to others, she could not help evincing a preference for it which gratified the Prince. That inspired him with a little more boldness; he purposely repaired to a part of the river-side, shaded by willows and lote-trees, where he knew Carpillon led her lambs every day: he took a bodkin and he wrote upon the bark of a tree, —

In this spot I view in vain,
Peace with all the Pleasures reign;
Even here, Love robs my breast
Both of happiness and rest.

The Princess surprised him as he finished these words; he affected to be embarrassed, and after some moments of silence, "You see," said he to her, "an unhappy shepherd, who reveals to the most insensible things, the sufferings which he ought to complain of to you only." She did not answer, and casting down her eyes, she afforded him all the time he needed to declare his sentiments. While he was speaking, she considered within herself how she ought to receive that which she heard from lips that were not indifferent to her, and her liking for him readily found an excuse — “He is ignorant of my birth,” said she; “his temerity is pardonable; he loves me, and thinks not that I am his superior. Even if he knew my rank, the gods, who are so high above us, do they not covet human hearts? Are they angry because men love them?” — “Shepherd,” said she, when he had ceased speaking, “I pity you, it is all I can. I will not love you; I have already too many other troubles. Alas! what would become of me, if, to complete my misfortunes, the troubles of love should be added to them?” “Ah, shepherdess, say rather,” cried he, “that if you have sorrows, nothing would more surely alleviate them; I should share them all with you, my only thought would be to please you, and you could trust me with the care of your flock.” “Would to heaven,” said she, “I had no other cause for uneasiness!” “Can you have any others?” said he, most earnestly; “a being so beautiful, so young, without ambition, unacquainted with the vain grandeurs of a court? But no doubt you love some one here; a rival makes you inexorable to me.” In uttering these words, he changed colour; he became sad, for this thought distressed him cruelly. “I will admit you have a hated and detested rival; you would never have seen me, had I not been obliged to fly from his pressing importunities.” “Perhaps, shepherdess, you will fly from me, for the same reason; for if you hate him simply for loving you, I must be in your eyes the most hateful of men.” “Whether I do not think so,” replied she, “or that I look upon you more favourably, I feel I should not go so far to avoid you, as I should to avoid him.” The shepherd was transported with joy by these kind words, and from that day, what pains he took to please the Princess!

Every morning he employed himself in seeking for the most beautiful flowers to make into garlands for her; he adorned her crook with a thousand different coloured ribands; he would not allow her to be exposed to the sun; as soon as she came with her flock to the river-side, or in the woods, he twined branches, tied them quickly together, and made arbours with them, under which the turf formed natural couches to repose on. All the trees bore her ciphers; he had carved verses upon them, that spoke but of Carpillon's beauty; he sang but of her; and the young Princess observed all these tokens of the shepherd's passion for her sometimes with pleasure, sometimes with much uneasiness. She loved him, without being quite aware of it; she dared not question herself on the subject, fearing she should find herself too fond of him: but when we entertain such fear, are we not already certain of the fact?

The attachment of the young shepherd for the young shepherdess was no secret; everybody saw it, and approved of it; who could blame it, in a place where all the world loved. They appeared, it was said, born for each other; they were both perfect; they were master-pieces of the gods, which fortune had confided to their little country, and everything should be done to retain them in it. Carpillon felt a secret joy in hearing from every one the praises of the shepherd she thought so charming; and whenever she reflected on the difference of their rank she grieved, and resolved to remain unknown, that her heart might be more at liberty.

The King and Queen, who loved her very much, were not at all displeased at this growing affection; they looked upon the Prince as though he were their son, and the many perfections of the Princess were scarcely less charming to them than to him. “Was it not the Amazon who sent her to us,” said they; “and did she not also come and fight the Centaur in favour of the boy? No doubt this wise Fairy has destined them for each other; we must wait her orders thereupon, and follow them.”

Matters were in this condition, the Prince still complaining of Carpillon's indifference to him — for she carefully concealed her sentiments from him, — when, as he was hunting one day, he was unexpectedly attacked by a ferocious bear, who rushing suddenly from the cavity of a rock, threw himself upon him, and would have devoured him had he not been as dexterous as he was brave. After struggling for a long time upon the summit of the mountain, they rolled to the bottom without quitting their hold. Carpillon was standing near the spot with several of her companions. They could not see what was passing above them; but what was the terror of these young girls, when they perceived a man and a bear falling headlong down together! The Princess immediately recognised her shepherd. She uttered shrieks of terror and anguish. All the shepherdesses took flight; she remained sole spectatress of the combat; she even boldly thrust the iron of her crook in the terrible animal’s mouth, and love gave her strength to render some assistance to her lover. When he saw her, the fear she might be involved in his danger augmented his courage to such a degree, that he thought not of his own life, provided that he could save that of his shepherdess. At last he killed the bear close to her feet, but he felt himself half dead with the wounds which he had received. Ah, what was her misery when she saw his clothes stained with his flowing blood! She could not speak; the tears gushed from her eyes; she placed his head upon her knees, then with a sudden effort, “Shepherd,” said she to him, “if you die, I shall die with you. In vain have I concealed from you the secrets of my heart; know them now, and be assured that my life is devoted to you.” “What can I wish for more, lovely shepherdess?” said he; “whatever may now befal me, my fate must still be a happy one.”

The shepherdesses who had fled now returned with several shepherds, to whom they had related what they had just seen. They hastened to assist the Prince and Princess; for she needed assistance nearly as much as he did. Whilst they were cutting the branches of trees to make a kind of litter, the Fairy Amazon appeared in the midst of them. “Do not be uneasy, said she to them; “let me touch the young shepherd.’“ She took him by the hand, and placing her gold helmet on his head, “I forbid thee to be ill, dear shepherd,” said she to him. He arose instantly; and the vizor of the helmet being open, displayed to them his fine features full of heroic expression, and his keen and brilliant eyes confirming the hopes the Fairy had inspired them with. He was astonished at the manner in which she had just cured him, and at her majestic appearance. Transported with admiration, with joy, and with gratitude, he threw himself at her feet. “Great Queen,” said he to her, “I was dangerously wounded: a look from you, a word from your mouth, has cured me: but, alas! I have a wound in my heart of which I would not be cured: deign but to assuage its pain, and improve my fortune, that I may be able to share it with this lovely shepherdess.” The Princess blushed at hearing him speak thus; for she was aware the Fairy Amazon knew her, and she was afraid she should be blamed by her, for holding out hopes to a lover so much beneath herself: she dared not look at her. The sighs that escaped her moved the Fairy’s compassion. “Carpillon,” said she, “this shepherd is not unworthy of your esteem; and you, shepherd, so desirous to change your state, rest assured that in a short time a very great change will take place in it.” Having uttered these words, she disappeared as usual.

The shepherds and shepherdesses, who had hastened to assist them, conducted them in triumph to their village. They placed the lovers in the midst of them, and having crowned them with flowers, in honour of the victory they had just achieved over the terrible bear, — which they dragged after them, — they sang these words upon the affection Carpillon had shown for the Prince: —

Greater pleasure yet will reign
In these enchanting groves;
Here a shepherd’s charms detain
The daughter of the Loves.

In this manner they brought them home to Sublime, to whom they related all that had just happened, — with what courage the shepherd had defended himself against the bear; and how nobly the shepherdess had aided him in the combat; and lastly, what the Fairy Amazon had done for him. The King, delighted at this recital, ran to tell the Queen. “Undoubtedly,” said he, “this boy and girl have no common blood in them; their eminent perfections, their beauty, and the care that the Fairy Amazon takes of them, prove there is something extraordinary relating to them.” All at once the Queen remembered the diamond ring Carpillon had given her. “I always forgot,” said she, “to show you a ring that this young shepherdess put into my hands with an air of uncommon dignity, begging me to accept it, and to give her in exchange for it some dresses like those they wear in this country.” “Is the stone a fine one?” inquired the King. “I have scarcely looked at it,” added the Queen; “but here it is.” She presented him with the ring; and as soon as he looked at it, “Ye gods, what do I see!” cried he. “What! did you not remember a gift I received from your own hands?” At the same time he pressed a little spring, of which he knew the secret. The diamond flew up, and the Queen saw her portrait, that she had had painted for the King, and that she had tied round the neck of her little daughter to play with, when she was nursing her in the tower. “Ah! sire,” said she, “what strange adventure is this? It renews all my griefs. However, let us speak to the shepherdess; we must try to know more about it.”

She called her, and said, “My child, I have waited till this time for an admission from you, which would have given us much greater pleasure if you had made it without being urged to do so; but since you continue to hide from us who you are, it is right to tell you that we know, and that the ring you gave us has solved the enigma.” “Alas, my mother,” replied the Princess, throwing herself upon her knees before her, “it was not from a want of confidence that I persisted in hiding my rank from you: I thought it would distress you to see a princess in the condition that I am. My father was king of the Peaceful Islands: his reign was troubled by a usurper, who confined him in a tower, with the Queen my mother. After three years of captivity, they procured means of escape; one of the guards assisted them. They lowered me, favoured by the darkness of the night, in a basket. The cord broke. I fell into the lake, without their knowing whether I was drowned or not. Some fishermen who had thrown out their nets to catch carp, found me entangled in them. My size and weight induced them to think it was one of the largest carps that was in the lake. These hopes vanished when they saw me. They thought they would throw me into the water again to feed the fishes, but finally they left me in the nets and carried me to the tyrant, who instantly knew by the flight of my family that I was an unfortunate little princess, quite forsaken. His wife, who had never had any children, had pity on me. She took me herself, and brought me up under the name of Carpillon. She perhaps wished me to forget my birth, but my heart always told me who I was; and sometimes it is a misfortune to possess feelings that conform so little to one's situation. However that might be, a prince, named Bossu, came and conquered the usurper who deprived my father of the kingdom he was enjoying so peacefully. This removal of the tyrant made it worse for me. Prince Bossu carried me off as one of the brightest ornaments of his triumph, and resolved to marry me against my inclination. In so great an extremity I determined to fly by myself, dressed as a shepherdess, and leading my cow. Prince Bossu, who sought for me everywhere, and who overtook me, would no doubt have known me, if the Fairy Amazon had not generously given me a bouquet of gillyflowers, on purpose to protect me from my enemies. She was equally kind in sending me to you, my good mother," continued the Princess; "and if I did not declare my rank sooner to you, it was not from want of confidence, but only with the view of sparing you trouble. Not that I complain," continued she; "I never knew happiness till the day you received me; and I assure you I find a rural life so sweet and innocent, that I do not hesitate to prefer it to that which they lead at court."

She spoke so earnestly she did not perceive that the Queen was dissolved in tears, and the King's eyes were also full of them; but as soon as she had finished, they hastened to embrace her, and held her in their arms some time without speaking a word. She was as much affected as they were; she wept as they did; and it would be difficult to describe the mingled pain and pleasure that agitated these three illustrious and unfortunate persons. At last the Queen, making an effort to speak, said to her, "Is it possible, dear child of my soul, that after having so long and deeply regretted thy sad loss, the gods have restored thee to thy mother, to console her in her misfortunes? Yes, my daughter, thou seest her who bore thee, and nursed thee in thy earliest infancy. Behold the author of thy being. Oh, light of our eyes! O Princess! whom the wrath of heaven deprived us of; with what transports shall we celebrate thy blessed return!" "And I, my illustrious mother, and I, my dear Queen," cried the Princess, throwing herself at her feet, "by what words, by what actions can I express to you both, all that the respect and love I owe you causes me to feel at this moment? Thou dear refuge from all my troubles, I find thee, just as I had ceased to flatter myself with hope!" They renewed their embraces, and thus they passed some hours. Carpillon then withdrew. Her father and mother desired her not to mention what had just transpired; for they were apprehensive of the curiosity of the shepherds of that country; and as they were for the most part rather unpolished, it was to be feared they would try to discover secrets which did not concern them.

The Princess was silent on the subject to her companions in general, but she could not keep the secret from her young shepherd. How can we refrain from trusting those we love? She had reproached herself a thousand times, for concealing from him her birth. "What obligations," said she, "would he not have felt under to me, had he known that, being born to a throne, I had humbled myself to him? Yet, alas! love makes little difference between the sceptre and the crook! Can the imaginary greatness, so much boasted of, actually possess the soul and satisfy it? No; virtue alone has the right to do so. She places us above the throne, and can detach us from it; the shepherd who loves me is wise, witty, and amiable. In what can a prince be superior to him?"

As she indulged in these reflections, she saw him at her feet; he had followed her to the river-side: and presenting her with a garland of flowers of a charming variety, he said, "Whence came you, lovely shepherdess? For hours have I been seeking you, and impatiently awaiting your arrival." "Shepherd," said she, "I have been occupied by a wonderful adventure. I should reproach myself did I conceal it from you; but remember, that this mark of my confidence binds you to everlasting secresy. I am a princess, my father was a king, whom I have just discovered in the person of Sublime."

The Prince was so astounded and agitated at this revelation, that he had not the power to interrupt her, while she related to him, in the kindest manner, her whole history. What reason had he not to fear that the good shepherd who had educated him would, being a king, refuse him his daughter, or that she herself reflecting upon the difference between a great Princess and himself, would one day withdraw from him the kindness she had at first shown him. "Ah, Madam," said he mournfully, "I am a lost man: I must die! You are born to a throne; you have found your parents: and I am an unfortunate being who knows neither his country nor his kindred. An eagle was my foster-mother, and her nest my cradle; if you have deigned to look upon me favourably, you will be advised to think of me no longer." The Princess mused for a moment, and, without answering him, she took a bodkin which kept up part of her beautiful hair, and wrote upon the bark of a tree —

Canst thou love for love return?

The Prince instantly wrote these words —

With a thousand flames I burn.

The Princess added underneath —

Cease then, shepherd, to complain;
Love, and be beloved again.

The Prince, transported with joy, threw himself at her feet, and seizing one of her hands said, “You ease my afflicted heart, adorable Princess, and by these new acts of kindness, you preserve my life. Remember what you have just written in my favour.” “I am not likely to forget it,” said she with a gracious smile; “rely upon my heart, it is more interested in your behalf than in my own.” Their conversation would have lasted much longer, if they had had more time; but, as they had to collect the flocks they were tending, they hastened to return.

Meanwhile, the King and Queen were conferring together on the course they should pursue respecting Carpillon and the young shepherd. As long as she was a stranger to them, they approved of the gentle flame that was gradually kindling in their bosoms. The perfect beauty with which heaven had endowed them, their intellect, the grace which distinguished all their actions, made them desire that their union should be lasting; but they looked upon it with a very different eye, when they considered she was their daughter, and that the shepherd was without doubt only an unfortunate child, whose parents had exposed him to wild beasts, to save themselves the trouble of bringing him up. Finally, they resolved to tell Carpillon she must no longer encourage the hopes the youth had flattered himself with; and that she must even seriously declare to him, that it was not her wish to establish herself in that country.

The Queen called her early in the morning, and spoke with much kindness to her. But what words are capable of calming a grief so violent? The Princess vainly endeavoured to constrain her feelings; her face now suffused with burning blushes, now paler than if she had been on the point of death; her eyes lustreless from sorrow, too plainly indicated the state of her heart. Ah! how much she regretted her confession! She assured her mother, however, with great submission, that she would follow her injunctions. She had scarcely strength to throw herself on her bed, where, bathed in tears, she uttered a thousand complaints and a thousand regrets. At last she arose to lead her sheep to feed; but instead of going near the river, she plunged into the wood, where, lying down upon some moss, she leaned her head upon her hand and fell into a deep reverie. The Prince, who could not rest without her, ran to seek her, and suddenly stood before her. At sight of him she uttered a loud shriek, as if taken by surprise, and rising hastily rushed from him without looking at him; he remained for a moment motionless at so unusual a proceeding, then following and stopping her, said, “How, shepherdess! after giving me my death-blow, would you deprive yourself of the pleasure of seeing me die? You have already changed towards your shepherd; do you no longer remember what you promised him yesterday?” “Alas,” said she, looking mournfully at him, “alas, what crime do you accuse me of! I am wretched. Commands have been laid upon me which it will be impossible to evade. Pity me! and do not approach me wherever I may be. It must be so.” “It must be so,” cried he, folding his arms in despair. “Must I fly from you, divine Princess? Can so cruel and so unjust an order be pronounced by you to me? Would you drive me mad? And this flattering hope, to which you allowed me to abandon myself, can it be extinguished while I live?” Carpillon, as heart-stricken as her lover, sank on the ground speechless and motionless; at this sight he was agitated by a thousand different thoughts. The state in which he saw his mistress sufficiently proved the compulsion under which she acted, and this certainly in a great measure diminished his grief.

He lost not a moment in endeavouring to revive her; a spring that flowed gently amongst the grass provided him with water to sprinkle on the face of his shepherdess, and some Cupids who were hidden behind a bush, have asserted to their companions, that he dared to steal a kiss. However that might be, she soon opened her eyes, then repulsing her amiable shepherd, “Fly! Avoid me!” said she; “if my mother should come, would she not have cause to be angry?” “Should I then have left you to be devoured by bears and wolves,” said he; “or during a long swoon, alone in these solitary places, to be stung by some asp, or serpent?” “I must risk everything,” she said, “rather than displease the Queen.”

During this affecting and tender interview, the Fairy, their protectress, suddenly appeared in the King’s chamber: she was armed as usual; the gems with which her cuirass and helmet were covered, were less brilliant than her eyes: addressing herself to the Queen, she said, “You are not too grateful, Madam, for the present I made you, in restoring you your daughter, who would have been drowned in the nets without my assistance, since you are about to cause the death of the shepherd I confided to your care. Think no longer of the difference that may perhaps exist between him and Carpillon; it is time they should be united. Prepare, illustrious Sublime,” said she to the King, “for their marriage — I desire it — and you will never have cause to repent it.” With these words, and not waiting for their reply, she left them, leaving only a long stream of light behind her as she disappeared, resembling the rays of the sun.

The King and Queen were equally astonished and delighted that the Fairy’s commands were so positive. “One cannot doubt,” said the King, “that this unknown shepherd is of an equal birth with Carpillon: his protectress is too noble to wish to unite two persons unsuitable to each other. It is she, as you perceive, who saved our daughter from perishing in the lake. How have we deserved her favour?” “I have always heard say,” replied the Queen, “there are good and bad fairies, that they take a liking or an aversion to a family according to their humour, and evidently the Fairy Amazon favours us.” They were still in conversation, when the Princess returned dejected and suffering. The Prince, who dared not follow her but at a distance, arrived some time after, so melancholy, that a glance at his features was sufficient to show what was passing in his mind. During the whole meal these poor lovers, who were wont to be the joy of the house, did not utter a word; nor even venture to raise their eyes.

As soon as they rose from table, the King went into his little garden, and desired the shepherd to follow him. At this order, he turned pale. A strange shivering ran through all his veins, and Carpillon believing her father was going to send him away, was no less alarmed than he was. Sublime entered an arbour, seated himself, and looking at the Prince, he said, “My son, you know with what affection I have brought you up. I have looked upon you as a present from the gods, to support and console me in my old age; but what will best prove my regard for you, is the choice I have made of you for my daughter Carpillon; she of whom you have often heard me deplore the loss. Heaven, who has restored her to me, wills that she should be your wife. I desire it also with all my heart. Will you be the only one to object to it?” “Ah, my father,” cried the Prince, throwing himself at his feet, “dare I flatter myself with what I hear? Am I so happy, that your choice falls upon me? or do you merely wish to discover my sentiments with respect to this lovely shepherdess?” “No, my dear son,” said the King, “do not hesitate between hope and fear; I am resolved in a few days to celebrate your nuptials.” “You overwhelm me with kindness,” replied the Prince, embracing his knees; “and if I but poorly express my gratitude to you, it is from the excess of my joy.” The King forced him to rise, said a thousand kind things to him, and although he did not tell him of his high rank, he gave him to understand his birth was far above the condition fortune had reduced him to.

But Carpillon, a prey to her anxiety, could not refrain from following her father and her lover into the garden. She watched them at a distance, hidden behind some trees: when she saw him at the King’s feet, she so fully believed he was entreating him not to sentence him to so cruel a separation, that she would stay to learn no more; she flew into the depths of the forest, running like a fawn, that the hounds and hunters were pursuing; she feared nothing, — neither the ferocity of the wild beasts, nor the thorns, which caught her on all sides. The echoes repeated her sad lamentations; she seemed only bent on seeking death; when the shepherd, impatient to impart to her the good tidings he had just heard, hastened in search of her. “Where are you, my shepherdess, my charming Carpillon!” cried he; “if you hear me, fly not. Happiness awaits us.”

As he uttered these words, he perceived her far down in a valley, surrounded by several huntsmen, who were endeavouring to place her on a horse behind a little humpbacked and deformed man. At this sight, and the shrieks of his mistress for assistance, he flew towards her like an arrow from a bow; having no arms but his sling, he hurled a stone, which struck the man who was carrying off the shepherdess so direct and terrible a blow, that he fell from his horse, with a dreadful wound in the head.

Carpillon fell with him; the Prince was already near her, trying to defend her against her ravishers; but all his resistance was in vain; they seized him, and would have strangled him upon the spot, if Prince Bossu —

for it was he — had not made signs to spare him: “For,” said he, “he shall be put to death with every variety of torture.” They contented themselves, therefore, with binding his arms with thick cords; and the same cords served to secure the Princess, so that they were enabled to talk to each other.

At the same time they made a sort of litter to carry the wicked humpback upon. As soon as it was finished, they all departed, without any of the shepherds being aware of the misfortune that had happened to our young lovers, and so giving information to Sublime. It is easy to imagine his uneasiness when night came and they did not return. The Queen was equally alarmed, and they passed several days in company with all the shepherds of the country in seeking and deploring them in vain.

You must know that Prince Bossu had never forgotten the Princess Carpillon, but time had weakened his passion; and when he was not amusing himself by committing a few murders, and cutting without distinction the throats of all those who displeased him, he went hunting, and it was sometimes seven or eight days before he returned. He was out on one of these long hunting expeditions, when he suddenly caught sight of the Princess crossing a path. Her grief was so acute, and she cared so little what might happen to her, that she had not taken with her her bouquet of gillyflowers, consequently he knew her the moment he saw her.

“Oh, of all the misfortunes this is the greatest!” said the shepherd, in a low voice, to his shepherdess. “Alas! we were just upon the eve of being united for ever.” He then related what had passed between Sublime and himself. It is easy to comprehend Carpillon’s regret. “I have then cost you your life,” said she, bursting into tears. “I lead you myself to death, you for whom I would shed my last drop of blood. I am the cause of the misfortune that overwhelms you, and through my own imprudence I have again fallen into the barbarous hands of my most cruel persecutor!”

They talked thus to each other till they reached the city, where the good old King resided, the father of the horrible humpback. He was informed they had brought his son home on a litter, as a young shepherd, in defending his shepherdess, had struck him with a stone from his sling with so much force, that he was dangerously wounded. At these tidings the king, shocked to learn his only son was in this state, ordered them to put the shepherd in prison. The humpback gave a secret order that Carpillon should be treated in like manner. He had resolved, either that she should marry him, or that she should be tortured to death, so that the lovers were separated only by an ill-made door, through the chinks of which they had the sad consolation of seeing each other while it was broad daylight, and the rest of the day and night they could converse together.

What did they not say that was affectionate and loving to each other! All that the heart could feel, or the mind imagine, they expressed in such touching terms, that they were bathed in tears; and perhaps the reader would be equally affected if we repeated them.

The confidants of the humpback came every day to see the Princess, and threaten her with speedy execution if she did not purchase her life by consenting with a good grace to marry him. She received these propositions with a firmness, and an air of defiance, that made them despair of their undertaking; and as soon as she could speak to the Prince she said, “Fear not, my shepherd, that the dread of the most cruel tortures will shake my constancy; we will die, since we cannot live together.” “Do you hope then to comfort me, beautiful Princess?” said he. “Alas! would I not rather see you in that monster’s arms than in the hands of the executioner with which he threatens you?” She chided him for such sentiments, accused him of weakness, and assured him again and again that she would show him how to die with courage.

The humpback’s wound being nearly healed, his love, irritated by the continual refusals of the Princess, made him determined to sacrifice to his rage the shepherd who had ill-used him. He fixed the day for this dismal tragedy, and invited the King, with all his senators, and the grandees of the kingdom, to come and witness it. He was there in an uncovered litter to feast his eyes upon all the horrors of the spectacle. The King, as I said before, did not know that the Princess Carpillon was a prisoner; so that when he saw her dragged to execution, with her poor governess, whom the humpback had condemned also, and the young shepherd more beautiful than the day, he commanded that they should be brought upon the terrace, where he was surrounded by the whole court.

He did not wait for the Princess to complain of the unworthy treatment she had received, but hastened to cut the cords with which she was bound; and then, looking at the young shepherd, he felt a yearning of tenderness and pity for him. “Rash youth,” said he, endeavouring to speak harshly to him, “who inspired thee with boldness enough to attack a great Prince, and nearly deprive him of existence!” The shepherd, at the sight of this venerable old man in his royal robes, was on his part inspired with feelings of respect and confidence that he had never experienced before. “Great monarch,” said he, with admirable calmness, “the peril in which I saw this beautiful Princess was the cause of my rashness. I did not know your son, and how should I recognise a Prince in an action so violent and unworthy his rank?” As he spoke his voice and action became more animated, his arm was uncovered, the mark of the arrow that was on it was too visible for the King not to observe it, “O heavens!” cried he, “am I deceived, or do I find in thee the dear son that I had lost?” “No, great King,” said the Fairy Amazon, appearing high in the air, and mounted upon a superb winged horse, “no, you are not deceived; behold your son; I protected him, in the eagle’s nest, where his cruel brother caused him to be placed. Let that son now console you for the loss of the other.” With these words she rushed upon the guilty humpback, and, piercing him to the heart with her fiery lance, she did not allow him much time to contemplate the horrors of death, for he was consumed as though it had been by lightning.

She then approached the terrace, and presented the Prince with weapons and armour. “I promised them to thee,” said she; “thou shalt be invulnerable with them, and the greatest warrior in the world.” Immediately was heard the flourish of a thousand trumpets and all sorts of warlike instruments imaginable; but these sounds were shortly succeeded by a soft symphony, to which melodious voices sang the praises of the Prince and Princess. The Fairy Amazon dismounted from her horse, placed herself beside the King, and begged him to order immediately all that was required for the celebration of the marriage of the Prince and Princess. She commanded a little fairy, who appeared as soon as she called her, to go for the Shepherd King, the Queen and her daughters, and to return with them instantly. Immediately the Fairy disappeared, and returned as quickly with the illustrious exiles. What happiness after so many afflictions! The palace resounded with shouts of joy, and nothing was ever equal to that of these sovereigns and their children. The Fairy Amazon gave her orders in every direction. One word of hers did more work than a hundred thousand people. The nuptials were celebrated with greater magnificence than had ever been seen previously. King Sublime returned to his dominions; Carpillon had the gratification of conducting him thither with her husband. The old King, enchanted to have a son so worthy of his affection, became young again; at all events, he was so happy in his old age, that he lived much longer in consequence.

18

THE FRIENDLY FROG

Once upon a time there was a King, who for a long while maintained a war against his neighbours. After several battles, they besieged his capital city. He was anxious about the Queen, who was near her confinement, and he entreated her to retire to a castle that he had fortified, and where he had never been but once. The Queen employed prayers and tears to persuade him to allow her to remain near him. She wished to share his fate, and uttered piercing cries when he placed her in her chariot to depart. However, he commanded his guards to accompany her, and promised her to steal away as secretly as he could to visit her. He flattered her with this hope; for the castle was far off, surrounded by a thick forest, and without knowing the roads well, there was no getting to it.

The Queen set out, very sorrowful at leaving her husband to the dangers of the war; they travelled with her by short stages, fearing she would be fatigued by so long a journey; at length she arrived at her castle very uneasy and melancholy. After she was sufficiently rested, she wished to make excursions in the neighbourhood; but she found nothing that could amuse her. She looked all around her; she saw immense deserts, which rather increased than diminished her sorrow. She looked at them sadly, and sometimes said, “What a difference between this abode and the one I have been in all my life. If I stay here much longer, I shall die. Who is there to talk to in these solitary places? To whom can I unburden my heart? and what have I done to the King that he should banish me? It seems as though he would make me feel all the bitterness of his absence, when he sends me away to this horrid castle."

Such were the lamentations she indulged in; and although the King wrote to her every day, and gave her good news of the siege, she became more and more miserable, and was determined to return to him; but as the officers he had placed about her were ordered not to return with her unless he sent a cornier expressly for her, she gave them no hint of her intention. She had a little chariot made just large enough for herself, on the pretence that she meant to hunt occasionally. She drove it herself, and followed the dogs so close, that the huntsmen could not keep up with her. By these means she became perfect mistress of her chariot, and was in a position to go whenever she liked. There was but one difficulty, which was her ignorance of the roads in the forest; but she flattered herself the gods would protect her on her journey: and after offering them a few sacrifices, she announced her intention to have a grand hunt, at which she requested everybody would be present; that she would go in her chariot, and that each person should take a different route, that there should be no escape for the wild beasts. They separated accordingly. The young Queen, who thought she should soon see her husband again, had dressed herself to great advantage. Her capeline was covered with feathers of different colours, her vest ornamented with jewels; and her beauty, which was uncommon, made her appear like a second Diana. While her suite were occupied by the pleasures of the chase, she gave her horses their heads, urging them to speed by her voice, and a few touches of the whip. From a fast trot they soon broke into a gallop, and finally took the bits between their teeth. The chariot seemed whirled onward by the winds. The eye could scarcely follow it. The poor Queen too late repented her temerity. "What have I undertaken?” said she: “how is it possible for me to guide horses so spirited and unmanageable? Alas! what will become of me? Ah, if the King thought I was in such danger as this, what would be his feelings! he who loves me so dearly, and who only sent me from the capital to place me in greater security. How have I repaid his tender care of me! and this dear child yet unborn will be also the victim of my imprudence.” The air resounded with her sad lamentations. She invoked the gods, she called the fairies to her assistance; but the gods and the fairies had abandoned her. The chariot was overturned; she had not strength enough to jump out quickly; her foot was caught between the wheel and the axletree. It may be easily imagined that it was by nothing less than a miracle that she escaped with life from so terrible an accident.

She was left prostrate on the ground at the foot of a tree, insensible and speechless, her face covered with blood. She remained in this condition for a long time. When she opened her eyes, she saw standing beside her a woman of a gigantic size, clothed only in a lion’s hide. Her arms and legs were naked, her hair tied together with the dried skin of a serpent, the head of which hung upon her shoulders. She had a stone club in her hand, which served as a staff for her to lean upon; and a quiver full of arrows at her side. So extraordinary a figure convinced the Queen that she was dead; for after so serious an accident, she did not imagine she could be still alive; and in a low tone she said, “I am not at all surprised that mortals are so unwilling to die; what one sees in the other world is very frightful.” The giantess, who was listening to her, could not help laughing at the idea of the Queen’s thinking she was dead. “Recover thy senses,” said she to her; “know that thou art still among the living, but thy fate will scarcely be less sad. I am the Fairy Lioness, who dwells hardby; you must come and pass your days with me.” The Queen looked sorrowfully at her, and said, “If you would take me back to my castle, Madam Lioness, and inform the King what price he must pay for my ransom, he loves me so dearly that he would not even refuse you the half of his kingdom." "No," replied the Fairy; "I am sufficiently rich. I have for some time been very dull, living alone: thou hast some wit, perhaps thou mayest amuse me." In saying this, she changed herself into a lioness, and placing the Queen upon her back, she carried her down to the bottom of her terrible grotto. As soon as she reached it, she cured her of the hurts she had received, by rubbing her with a peculiar liquid.

How astonished and distressed was the poor Queen to find herself in this frightful abode! The descent to it was by ten thousand steps, which led to the very centre of the earth. There was no other light there, but that from several large lamps, which was reflected by a lake of quicksilver. This lake was covered with monsters, whose various forms might have terrified a more courageous queen. Great owls, screech-owls, ravens, and other birds of sinister omen, were to be heard there; and in the distance could be seen a mountain, from which trickled waters into an all but stagnant pool. These were all the tears that had ever been shed by unfortunate lovers, and collected in reservoirs by compassionating Cupids. The trees had neither leaves nor fruit; the ground was covered with briars and nettles. The food was suitable to the climate of so hateful a country. Dried roots, horse-chestnuts, and the berries of the wild briars, were all that could be found to relieve the hunger of the unfortunate beings who fell into the hands of the Fairy Lioness.

As soon as the Queen was able to work, the Fairy told her she might build herself a hut, as she would have to remain with her all her life. At these words the Queen could not refrain from crying. "Ah! what have I done to you," exclaimed she, "that you should keep me here? If my death, which I feel approaching, will afford you any pleasure, kill me at once, it is all I venture to hope for from your pity; but do not condemn me to a long and wretched existence apart from my husband." The Lioness ridiculed her distress, and told her she would advise her to dry up her tears, and try to please her; that if she did otherwise, she would be the most miserable person in the world. “What must I do then,” said the Queen, “to soften your heart?” “I am very fond,” said the Fairy, “of fly-pies. It is my desire that you find means of catching enough flies to make a large and excellent pie.” “But,” said the Queen, “I do not see any here; and if there were any, it is not light enough to catch them; and if I had caught them, I never made pastry: so that you give me an order that I cannot execute.” “No matter,” said the merciless Lioness, “I will have what I order.”

The Queen made no reply. She thought that in spite of the cruel Fairy, she had but one life to lose, and in her wretched situation, what had she to fear? Instead then of seeking for flies, she sat herself down under a yew-tree, and thus began her sorrowful lamentations: “What will be your distress, my dear husband,” said she, “when you seek and cannot find me! You will imagine I am dead, or unfaithful; and I would rather you deplored the loss of my life, than of my affection. They will find perchance in the forest, the fragments of my chariot, and all the ornaments that I wore in the hope of pleasing you; at such a sight you will no longer doubt that I am dead; and how can I be certain that you will not give to another my place in your heart? But at all events, I shall not know it, for I am never to return to the world.” She would have continued a long time, lamenting in this manner, if she had not heard over her head the mournful croaking of a raven. She raised her eyes, and by favour of the little light that glimmered on the bank, she saw a large raven with a frog in its claws, and evincing a decided intention of eating it quickly. “Although there is nothing here to relieve me,” said she, “I will not neglect to save a poor frog, who is in as much distress in its way as I am in mine.” She caught up the first stick she could find, and made the raven abandon its prey. The Frog fell to the ground, remained for some time stupefied, then, recovering its frogish senses, said, “Beautiful Queen, you are the only kind-hearted person I have seen in these regions since my curiosity led me to them.” “By what miracle are you able to speak, little Frog," said the Queen; "and who are the persons you have seen here, for as yet I have not seen any?" "All the monsters with which this lake is covered," replied the little Frog, "have once been in the world; some of them kings, others in the confidence of their sovereigns; there are even some here who have been the mistresses of kings, and cost the state much precious blood. They are those whom you see metamorphosed into leeches. Fate sends them hither for a certain time, but none of them return any better, or correct themselves of their faults." "I can easily understand," said the Queen, "that the herding of many wicked people together, would not tend to their reformation; but with regard to yourself, good gossip Frog, what do you do here?" "Curiosity induced me to come hither," replied she; "I am half a fairy; my power is limited in certain things, and very extensive in others; if the Fairy Lioness recognised me in her dominions, she would kill me."

"How is it possible," said the Queen, "that being a fairy, or half a fairy, a raven was about to eat you?" "Two words will make you understand it," replied the Frog; "when I have my little hood of roses on my head, in the which consists my greatest power, I fear nothing; but unfortunately I had left it in the marsh, when this wicked raven pounced upon me. I confess, Madam, but for you I should be no more; and since I owe my life to you, if I can do anything to comfort yours, you may command me in any way you please." "Alas! my dear Frog," said the Queen, "the wicked Fairy, who holds me captive, wants me to make her a fly-pasty; there are no flies here, and even were there any, one cannot see well enough to catch them, and I run a great risk of being beaten to death." "Leave it to me," said the Frog, "I will provide you with plenty before long." She immediately rubbed herself with sugar, and more than six thousand frogs, friends of hers, did the same; she then went into a place filled with flies — the wicked Fairy had a storehouse for them expressly to torment certain unfortunate beings. — As soon as the flies smelt the sugar they settled upon it, and the friendly frogs returned at full gallop to the Queen. There had never been such a take of flies, nor a better pasty than she made for the Fairy Lioness. When she presented it to her, she was very much surprised, not at all understanding by what means she could have caught them.

The Queen, who was exposed to all the influences of the air, which was poisonous, cut down some cypress-trees, to begin building her hut with. The Frog generously came to offer her services, and putting herself at the head of all those who went fly-catching, they assisted the Queen in erecting her little edifice, which was the prettiest in the world; but she had scarcely gone to bed in it, when the monsters from the lake, envious of her repose, came to torment her, by the most horrible clamour that had ever been heard. She arose quite terrified, and fled from the building, which was just what the monsters wanted. A dragon, in former days the tyrant of one of the finest kingdoms in the world, took immediate possession of it.

The poor afflicted Queen complained of this outrage, but she was only laughed at. The monsters hooted her, and the Fairy Lioness told her, that in future, if she stunned her with her lamentations, she would break every bone in her body. She was obliged to hold her tongue, and have recourse to the Frog, who was certainly the best creature in the world. They wept together, for as soon as she possessed her hood of roses, she was able to laugh and to cry like any one else. “I have,” said she, “so much affection for you, that I will rebuild your habitation, let all the monsters of the lake be ever so furious about it.” She began cutting the wood on the spot, and the Queen’s little rustic palace was built so quickly that she slept in it the same night.

The Frog, attentive to all that was necessary for the Queen, made her a bed of creeping-thyme and wild-thyme. When the wicked Fairy found that the Queen no longer slept upon the bare earth, she sent for her. “Who are the men or the gods that protect you?” said she. “This land, on which no showers fall, save of sulphur and fire, has never produced as much as a leaf of sage, and I learn, notwithstanding, that odoriferous herbs grow in your path.” “I am ignorant of the cause of it, Madam,” said the Queen; “if I may attribute it to anything, it is to my infant, yet unborn, who will perhaps be less unfortunate than myself.” “I have a fancy,” said the Fairy, “to have a bouquet of the rarest flowers; try if your little brat’s good fortune will supply them for you; if it fail to do so, stripes will not fail you; for I often administer them, and administer them wonderfully well.” The Queen began to weep; such threats were anything but agreeable to her; and the impossibility of finding any flowers threw her into despair.

She returned to her little dwelling: her friend the Frog came to her. “How melancholy you seem!” said she to the Queen. “Alas! my dear gossip, who could be otherwise? The Fairy wants a nosegay of the finest flowers; where shall I find them? You see those which grow here, and yet my life is in danger if I do not satisfy her.” “Amiable Princess,” said the Frog, graciously, “I must endeavour to get you out of this difficulty; there is a bat here, the only one I have had any dealings with; she is a good creature, she will go faster than I can, I will give her my hood of roses, and with this assistance she will find you some flowers.” The Queen made her a low curtsy, for there was no way of embracing the little Frog.

The latter went immediately to speak to the bat, who in a few hours returned, hiding some beautiful flowers under her wings. The Queen quickly carried them to the wicked Fairy, who was more surprised than she had ever been, being unable to understand by what miracle the Queen was so befriended.

The Princess was incessantly looking for the means to escape. She acquainted the good Frog with her wish, who said, “Madam, permit me first of all to consult my little hood, and we will act according to its advice; she took it, and having placed it on a rush, she burned some slips of juniper wood, some capers, and two little green peas; she then croaked five times, after which ceremony, putting the hood of roses on, she began to speak like an oracle.

"Destiny, ruler of everything," said she, "forbids, you to quit these regions; you will give birth here to a princess more beautiful than the mother of the Loves; for the rest, do not trouble yourself. Time alone can relieve you."

The Queen cast down her eyes, and tears fell from them, but she resolved to trust her friend. "At all events," said she, "do not desert me; be at my confinement, since it is decreed that it must take place here." The good Frog promised to be her Lucina, and consoled her as much as she could.

But it is time to return to the King. While his enemies were besieging him in his capital city, he could not regularly send couriers to the Queen; having however made several sallies, he compelled them to raise the siege, and felt less happy at this success on his own account than on that of his dear Queen, whom it enabled him to fetch home without fear. He was ignorant of her disaster; none of his officers ventured to inform him of it; they had found in the forest the remains of the chariot, the runaway horses, and all the Amazonian ornaments she had put on in the idea of rejoining him.

As they had no doubt of her death, and believed her body to have been devoured by wild beasts, they agreed among themselves to persuade the King that she had died suddenly. At this sad news he thought he should die of grief himself — hair torn, tears shed, mournful exclamations, sobs, sighs, and other small duties of widowhood, — nothing was wanting on this occasion.

After passing several days without seeing any one, or wishing to be seen, he returned to his capital city dressed in deep mourning, which he felt more at heart than his attire could testify. All the ambassadors of the neighbouring kings came to condole with him, and after the ceremonies which are inseparable from such occurrences, he applied himself to giving repose to his subjects, exempting them from war, and procuring for them an extensive commerce.

The Queen was ignorant of all these matters; the time for her confinement arrived; she was safely put to bed, and Heaven blessed her with a little princess, as beautiful as the Frog predicted. They named her Moufette, and the Queen with much difficulty obtained permission from the Fairy Lioness to nurse it; for the ferocious and barbarous Fairy had a great desire to eat it.

Moufette, the wonder of her age, was already six months old, and the Queen looking at her with affection mingled with pity, would incessantly say, “Ah! if the King, thy father, could see thee, my poor little baby, how delighted he would be! How dear thou wouldst be to him! But perhaps at this moment he is beginning to forget me: he thinks we are for ever buried in the horrors of death; perhaps at this moment another occupies that place in his heart which he once accorded to me.”

These sad reflections cost her many tears. The Frog, who truly loved her, seeing her weep, said to her one day, “If you wish it, Madam, I will go and find the King, your husband; the journey is long, I travel slowly, but at last, a little sooner or later, I hope to accomplish it.” This proposal could not have been more agreeably received than it was by the Queen, who clasped her hands, and even made Moufette join hers, to show Madam Frog how obliged she would be if she would undertake the journey. She assured her the King would not be ungrateful to her. “But,” continued she, “of what utility will it be to him to know I am in this sad abode? it will be impossible for him to rescue me from it.” “Madam,” replied the Frog, “we must leave that care to the gods, and attend to what depends upon ourselves.”

They took leave of each other immediately; the Queen wrote to the King with her own blood upon a small piece of linen, for she had neither ink nor paper. She begged him to trust the worthy Frog in all respects, who would give him news of her.

The Frog was a year and four days ascending the ten thousand steps from the black plain, where she had left the Queen, up into the world, and she was another year preparing her equipage, for she was too proud to appear in a great court like a paltry little frog from the marshes. She ordered a litter to be made large enough to hold conveniently two eggs; it was entirely covered with tortoiseshell outside, and lined with the skin of young lizards. She had fifty maids of honour; they were some of those little green queens who leap about the meadows, — each of them was mounted on a snail, with an English saddle, her leg placed on the bow with a wonderful air; several water-rats dressed as pages preceded the snails, to whom she had confided the care of her person; in short, nothing was ever so pretty; above all, her hood of marvellous roses, always fresh and blooming, became her better than anything. She was rather a coquette in her way, which induced her to use rouge and patches; they even said she painted, as the greater number of the ladies did in that country, but the matter being looked into, it was found to be the mere scandal of her enemies.

She was seven years on her journey, during which time the poor Queen suffered inexpressible pains and hardships, and without the beautiful Moufette to console her she would have died a hundred, and a hundred times over again. This wonderful little creature never opened her mouth, nor spoke a word that she did not charm her mother; she even tamed the heart of the Fairy Lioness, — and in short, after the Queen had passed six years in this horrible abode, she allowed her to go hunting, on condition that all she killed should be for her.

How delighted was the poor Queen, once more to behold the sun; she was so unaccustomed to it that she was fearful of becoming blind. As to Moufette, she was so skilful, though only five or six years old, that nothing escaped her that she shot at, and by this means the mother and daughter tamed down a little the ferocity of the Fairy Lioness.

The little Frog travelled day and night over hill and dale, and at last arrived in the vicinity of the capital city, where the King held his court; she was surprised at seeing everywhere nothing but dancing and feasting. People laughed and sang, and the nearer she approached the city, the greater appeared the joy and the merrymaking. Her marshy equipage surprised everybody — every one followed her, and the crowd became so great when she entered the city, that she had much difficulty in reaching the palace. There everything was magnificent. The King, who had been nine years a widower, had at last yielded to the prayers of his subjects, and he was on the point of marrying a princess certainly less beautiful than his wife, but who was nevertheless very charming. The good Frog, having alighted from her car, entered the King's palace followed by her retinue. She had no occasion to demand an audience; the monarch, his betrothed, and all the princes were too anxious to learn the reason of her coming to interrupt her. "Sire," said she, "I know not whether the news I bring you will give you pain or pleasure; the wedding which is about to take place convinces me of your infidelity to the Queen." "Her memory is always dear to me," said the King, shedding tears from which he could not refrain; "but you must know, pretty Frog, that kings cannot always do as they wish. It is now nine years that my subjects have been urging me to marry again. They require from me an heir to the throne. I have therefore chosen this young princess, who appears to me most charming." "I advise you not to marry her," said the Frog, "for polygamy is a hanging matter. The Queen is not dead; here is a letter written in her own blood which she has entrusted to me; you have a little princess called Moufette, who is more beautiful than all the goddesses combined."

The King took the little piece of linen on which the Queen had scribbled a few words, kissed it, and bathed it with his tears; he showed it to all the assembly, saying he recollected perfectly her handwriting; he asked a thousand questions of the Frog, to all of which she answered with as much sense as vivacity. The affianced princess, and the ambassadors who were appointed to witness the celebration of her marriage, made very wry faces. “How, Sire,” said the most eminent amongst them, “can you, upon the assertion of a little toad like this, break off so solemn a marriage? This scum of the marsh has the impertinence to come with a falsehood to your court, and enjoy the pleasure of being listened to!” “Mister Ambassador,” said the Frog, “learn that I am not the scum of the marsh; and since I must here display my science, Come, Fairies and vassals, appear!” All the little frogs, rats, snails, lizards, with herself at their head, appeared accordingly, but no longer in the form of such nasty little animals; their figures were lofty and majestic, their countenances pleasing, with eyes more brilliant than the stars; each of them wore a crown of jewels on its head, and upon the shoulders a royal mantle of velvet, lined with ermine, with a long train which was carried by a male or female dwarf. At the same time, behold, trumpets, kettle-drums, hautboys and drums pierced the air with their lively and martial sounds; all the fairies and vassals began to dance a ballet, so lightly that the least jump carried them up to the ceiling. The attentive King and the intended Queen were not less astonished, when they saw all at once these honourable dancers metamorphosed into flowers — jasmine, jonquils, violets, pinks, and tuberoses. It was an animated parterre, the evolutions of which exhilarated the senses as much by their perfume as by their grace.

A moment afterwards the flowers vanished, and several fountains appeared in their places; they rose rapidly and fell into a large canal, which flowed at the foot of the castle. It was covered with little painted and gilded galleys, so pretty and gay, that the Princess invited her ambassadors to go in with her to sail about. They did so willingly, considering it to be an entertainment that would be followed by a happy wedding.

As soon as they were embarked, the galley, the stream, and all the fountains disappeared, and the frogs became frogs again. The King inquired what had become of his Princess. The Frog replied, “Sire, you have no right to any one but the Queen your wife; if I were not so great a friend of hers I should not give myself any trouble about your intended marriage, but she is so good, and your daughter Moufette is so lovely, that you ought not to lose a moment in trying to set them free.” “I confess to you, Madam Frog,” said the King, “that if I could believe my wife was not dead, there is nothing in the world I would not do to recover her.” “After all the wonders I have performed in your presence,” replied she, “it appears to me that you ought to be convinced of what I tell you. Leave your kingdom in good hands, and do not delay your departure. Here is a ring which will enable you to see the Queen, and to speak to the Fairy Lioness, although she is the most terrible creature in the world.”

The King, no longer caring for the Princess who had been selected for him, felt that as his passion for her diminished, his former love for the Queen became stronger than ever.

He set out, without permitting any one to accompany him, and made some very valuable presents to the Frog. “Do not be discouraged,” said she to him; “you will have some tremendous difficulties to surmount, but I hope you will succeed in accomplishing your object.” The King, fortified by these promises, departed in search of his dear Queen, with no other guide but his ring.

As Moufette became older, her beauty so greatly increased, that all the monsters of the quicksilver lake became in love with her. Dragons of the most hideous form were seen to come and crawl at her feet. Although she had beheld them from infancy, her beautiful eyes could not get accustomed to them; she would fly and hide herself in her mother’s arms. “Shall we be a long time here?” she asked her. “Will our miseries never be ended?” The Queen would give her hopes, to console her, but at heart she had none herself. The absence of the Frog, her profound silence, so long a time having elapsed without any news of the King, — all this, I say, afflicted her severely.

The Fairy Lioness by degrees accustomed herself to take them out with her when she went hunting. She was fond of good eating; she liked the game they killed for her, and though all she gave them in reward for their trouble was the feet or the head, still it was a great thing for them to be permitted again to behold the light of day. The Fairy took the form of a Lioness, the Queen and her daughter rode upon her, and thus hunted through the forest.

The King, conducted by his ring, having stopped to rest in a forest, he saw them pass like an arrow from a bow. They did not see him. He endeavoured to follow them, but lost sight of them completely.

Notwithstanding the Queen's incessant troubles, her beauty was not at all diminished. She appeared more lovely than ever. All his affection for her was rekindled; and feeling sure the young Princess who was with her was his dear Moufette, he determined to perish a thousand times sooner than abandon his attempt to recover them.

The kind ring conducted him to the dark abode in which the Queen had resided for so many years. He was not a little surprised at descending to the centre of the earth, but what he saw there astonished him still more. The Fairy Lioness, who knew everything, was aware of the day and the hour that he would arrive. What would she not have given if Fate, in league with her, would have ordered it otherwise? But she resolved at least to resist the power of the King with all her might.

In the middle of the quicksilver lake she built a crystal palace, which floated on the waves. She shut up the poor Queen and her daughter in it; and then she harangued all the monsters who were in love with Moufette. "You will lose this beautiful Princess," said she to them, "if you do not assist me in defending her against a knight who comes to carry her off."

The monsters promised to leave nothing undone that they could do: they surrounded the crystal palace; the lightest of them placed themselves upon the roof and on the walls, others at the doors, and the rest in the lake.

The King, guided by his faithful ring, went first to the mouth of the Fairy’s cavern. She waited for him under her form of a Lioness. The moment he appeared, she flew upon him. He drew his sword with a courage she was not prepared for; and as she thrust out her paw to drag him to the ground, he lopped it off at the joint, which was exactly that of her elbow. She uttered a loud cry, and fell. He approached her, and put his foot upon her throat: he swore by his faith he would kill her; and notwithstanding her unconquerable fury she could not help being afraid of him. “What wouldest thou?” said she to him; “what dost thou ask of me?” “I would punish thee,” replied he fiercely, “for carrying away my wife; and I will compel thee to restore her to me, or I will strangle thee directly.” “Cast thine eyes upon that lake,” said she; “see if she be in my power.” The King looked in the direction she pointed. He perceived the Queen and her daughter in the crystal castle, which though it had neither oars nor rudder, glided like a galley over the quicksilver lake. He felt ready to die of mingled joy and grief; he called to them as loudly as he could, and they heard him, but how could he reach them? While he was endeavouring to find out some way, the Fairy Lioness disappeared. He ran along the edge of the lake; but when he had nearly reached the transparent palace on one side, it receded from him with an astonishing swiftness to the other, and his expectations were thus continually frustrated. The Queen, fearing that he would at last become weary of this work, cried out to him not to lose courage; for the Fairy’s object was to tire him, but that true love was not to be rebutted by any difficulties; and with that she and Moufette stretched out their hands to him, and made all manner of supplicating actions. At this sight the King was more than ever affected. He raised his voice, and swore by the rivers Styx and Acheron to remain for the rest of his life in those miserable regions, rather than return without them.

He must have been endued with wonderful perseverance. He passed his time as sadly as any king in the world. The ground, full of brambles and covered with thorns, was his bed; he had nothing to eat but the wild fruits, bitterer than gall; and he had continually to defend himself against assaults from the monsters of the lake. A husband who could go through all this in order to recover his wife, must certainly have lived in the time of Fairies; and his proceedings sufficiently mark the epoch of my story.

Three years passed without the King's perceiving any hope of success. He was nearly mad. A hundred times he was on the point of throwing himself into the lake; and he would have done so, if he could have imagined this last step would have released the Queen and Princess from their sorrows. He was running one day as usual, first on one side of the lake and then on the other, when a horrible Dragon called to him, and said, "If you will swear to me by your crown and by your sceptre, by your royal mantle, by your wife and your daughter, to give me a certain tit-bit to eat, which I am very fond of, and will ask you for when I want it, I will take you on my wings, and in spite of all the monsters who cover the lake, and who guard this crystal castle, I promise you that we will carry away the Queen and Princess Moufette."

"Ah, thou dear Dragon of my soul!" cried the King, "I swear to you, and to all your dragon-kind, that I will feed you to your heart's content, and still remain your humble servant." "Do not pledge your word," replied the Dragon, "if you do not intend to keep it; for such terrible evils will befal you, that you will rue it for the rest of your life." The King redoubled his protestations: he was dying with impatience to release his dear Queen; he mounted on the Dragon's back as he would have done upon the finest horse in the world. At the same time the monsters advanced to intercept him. They fought. Nothing could be heard but the sharp hissing of serpents;

nothing could be seen but fire. Sulphur and saltpetre came down pell-mell! At length the King reached the castle. The monsters redoubled their efforts, — bats, owls, ravens, all attempted to prevent his entrance; but the dragon, with his claws, his teeth, and his tail, tore in pieces the boldest of them. The Queen, on her part, who witnessed this great battle, broke her prison walls by kicking at them, and armed herself with the pieces, to assist her dear husband. They were at last victorious. The King and Queen reached each other; and the enchantment was ended by a thunderbolt, which fell into the lake, and dried it up.

The kind Dragon had disappeared with all the others; and without the King being able to guess by what means he had been transported into his capital city, he found himself there, with the Queen and Moufette, seated in a magnificent hall, with a banquet table before them, covered with delicious dishes. Never was there astonishment equal to theirs, nor greater rejoicings. All their subjects ran to gaze on their Queen and the young Princess, who, by a succession of miracles, were so superbly dressed, that the crowd was completely dazzled by the brilliancy of their jewels.

It is easy to imagine that this fine court was speedily occupied with every sort of pleasure. They had masquerades, runnings at the ring, and tournaments, which attracted thither the greatest princes in the world; and Moufette’s lovely eyes riveted them all to the spot. Amongst the handsomest and most skilful, Prince Moufy was particularly distinguished. Nothing was heard but his praises: everybody admired him, and the young Moufette, who had passed all her previous days amongst the serpents and dragons of the lake, did not hesitate to render justice to Moufy’s merit. Not a day passed that he did not invent some new piece of gallantry to please her; for he loved her passionately; and having entered the lists to establish his pretensions, he made known to the King and to the Queen that his principality was so beautiful and so extensive that it deserved their particular attention.

The King told him that Moufette was at liberty to choose her own husband, and that he would not constrain her inclination in anything; that the Prince should do his best to please her; and that such was his only way to happiness. The Prince was delighted with this answer. He had gathered from her, during several interviews, that she was not indifferent to him; and after having at last come to an explanation with her, she told him, if he were not to be her husband, she would never have any other. Moufy, transported with joy, threw himself at her feet, and conjured her in the most affectionate terms to remember the promise she had just given him.

He ran instantly to the King and Queen's apartment, and related to them the progress he had made in his suit with Moufette, and entreated them not to defer his happiness. They consented to it with pleasure. Prince Moufy was gifted with so many excellent qualities, that he alone seemed worthy to possess the admirable Moufette. The King wished very much to affiance them before he returned to Moufy, whither he was obliged to go, to give orders for his marriage; but he would rather never have left, than depart without full assurance of happiness on his return. The Princess Moufette did not say farewell without shedding many tears. She had I know not what sort of a presentiment that afflicted her; and the Queen, perceiving the Prince overwhelmed with grief, gave him her daughter's portrait, begging him, for the love of them both, that he would forego some of the magnificence of his solemn entry, rather than allow it to prevent his speedy return. He said, "Madam, I have never had so much pleasure in obeying you as I shall have on this occasion; my heart is too much interested in it for me to neglect anything so necessary to my happiness."

He posted off; and the Princess Moufette, while waiting his return, occupied herself with singing and playing on various instruments she had been learning for several months past, and upon which she performed admirably. One day when she was in the Queen's room the King entered, with his cheeks bathed in tears, and embracing his daughter, exclaimed, "Oh, my child! oh, unfortunate father! oh, unhappy king!" He could say no more, — sighs choked his utterance. The Queen and the Princess, much terrified, inquired what was the matter. He at length told them that a giant of an enormous size had just arrived, who said he was an ambassador from the Dragon of the Lake, who, in discharge of the promise that he had exacted from the King as the condition on which he would assist him to fight and conquer the monsters, had sent to demand the Princess Moufette, that he might eat her in a pie; that the King had bound himself by the most awful oaths to give the Dragon whatever he desired: and in those days kings knew not how to break their words.

The Queen, hearing these sad tidings, uttered piercing cries, and strained the Princess in her arms. "They shall take my life sooner," said she, "than make me give up my daughter to this monster; let him take our kingdom, and all that we possess! Unnatural father, could you be a party to such a barbarous act? What! Put my child into a pie? Ah, I cannot bear the thought of it! Send this cruel ambassador to me, perhaps my affliction may move him to pity."

The King did not reply; he went to the giant, and brought him immediately to the Queen, who threw herself at his feet, and with her daughter entreated him to have pity upon them, and to persuade the Dragon to take all that they had, and to save Moufette's life; but he told them it did not depend upon him at all; that the Dragon was too obstinate, and too fond of good living; that when he took it into his head to eat some little tit-bit, all the gods put together could not change his fancy: that he advised them as a friend to submit with a good grace, or still greater misfortunes might befal them. At these words the Queen fainted, and so would the Princess have done had she not been obliged to assist her mother.

This sad news was scarcely spread through the palace, before everybody in the city knew it, and nothing was to be heard but sighs and lamentations; for Moufette was adored. The King could not make up his mind to give her to the giant, and the giant, who had already waited several days, began to be tired, and threatened him in a terrible manner. In the meantime, the King and the Queen said, “Could anything have happened to us worse than this? If the Dragon of the Lake came to eat all of us up, we could not be more distressed; if they put our Moufette into a pie, we are lost.” Upon which the giant told them, he had received news from his master, and that if the Princess would marry a nephew of his, he consented to let her live; that as to the rest, this nephew was handsome and well made; that he was a Prince, and that she might live very happily with him.

This proposal slightly ameliorated their majesties’ grief; the Queen spoke to the Princess, but she found her more averse to this marriage than to her death. “I will not be guilty, Madam,” said she, “of preserving my life by an act of infidelity; you have promised me to Prince Moufy, I will never be another’s; let me die, the sacrifice of my life will ensure the peace of yours.” The King followed the Queen; he spoke to his daughter upon the subject with the greatest affection imaginable; she remained firm in her decision, and finally he agreed to conduct her to the top of a mountain, whither the Dragon of the Lake was to come for her.

Everything was prepared for this sad sacrifice; not even those of Iphigenia and Psyche were so mournful; nothing but black dresses, pale faces and consternation was to be seen. Four hundred young girls of the first distinction, dressed in long white robes, and cypress wreaths on their head, accompanied her. They carried her in a black velvet litter, uncovered, in order that every one might see the masterpiece of the gods; her dishevelled locks lay scattered upon her shoulders, here and there tied with crape, and the wreath she wore upon her head was of jasmine mixed with marigolds. She seemed to be affected only by the grief of the King and Queen, who followed her, overwhelmed by their deep affliction. The giant, armed from top to toe, walked by the side of the litter containing the Princess, and looking at her with a longing eye, seemed as if he was sure of having his share of her to eat; the air was filled with sighs and sobs, and the road was inundated by the tears that were shed.

"Ah, Frog! Frog!" cried the Queen, "you have quite forsaken me. Alas! why did you give me your assistance in that gloomy plain, since you now refuse it to me? How happy I should be, had I then died! I should not to-day see all my hopes destroyed; I should not see my dear Moufette on the point of being devoured!"

While she was uttering these complaints, they were still advancing, however slowly they walked, and at last they reached the summit of the fatal mountain. At this spot, the shrieks and lamentations were redoubled so violently, that nothing had ever been heard so distressing. The giant bade them all to take their leave and retire. They did so accordingly; for in those times people were very simple, and never sought a remedy for anything.

The King and Queen having retired, ascended another mountain with all their court, whence they could see what was about to happen to the Princess, and in fact they had not been there a long time before they perceived in the air a Dragon, with a tail nearly half a league in length; he had also six wings. He could scarcely fly, his body was so heavy, entirely covered with large blue scales and long fiery darts; his tail was in fifty curls and a half, each of his claws were as large as a windmill, and his wide open mouth displayed three rows of teeth, as long as the tusks of an elephant.

But while he was slowly approaching, the dear and faithful Frog, mounted on a sparrow-hawk, flew rapidly to the Prince Moufy. She wore her hood of roses, and although he was locked up in his closet, she entered it without a key. "What are you doing here, unfortunate lover?" said she to him; "you are dreaming of Moufette's charms, who is at this moment exposed to a most frightful catastrophe. Here is a rose leaf; by blowing upon it I can transform it into a beautiful horse, as you will see." At the same instant appeared a horse, entirely green. It had twelve feet and three heads. The mouth of one head emitted fire, that of another bomb-shells, and the third, cannon balls. She gave him a sword that was eighteen yards long, and lighter than a feather; she armed him in one single diamond, which he got into as if it were his coat, and although it was as hard as a rock, it was so flexible, that it did not incommode him in the least. “Away!” said she to him, “run, fly to defend her whom you love; the green horse which I give you will carry you to her; when you have rescued her, let her know what share I have had in her deliverance.”

“Generous Fairy,” cried the Prince, “I cannot at present express all my gratitude to you, but I declare myself for ever your most faithful slave.” He mounted his three-headed horse, which immediately set off full gallop with its twelve feet, and made more haste than three of the finest horses; so much so, that in a very short time he arrived at the top of the mountain, where he saw his dear Princess all alone, and the frightful Dragon slowly approaching towards her. The green horse belched fire, bombs, and cannon balls, which not a little astonished the monster; he received twenty cannon balls in his throat, which damaged his scales a little, and the bombs knocked out one eye. He became furious, and would have rushed upon the Prince; but his sword, eighteen yards long, was of such fine tempered steel, that he wielded it as he pleased, thrusting it sometimes up to the hilt, or lashing him with it as with a whip. The Prince would not, however, have escaped feeling the force of this monster’s claws, but for the diamond armour, which was impenetrable.

Moufette recognised him from afar, for the diamond which completely encased him was exceedingly brilliant and clear; she was consequently seized with the most mortal fright that a fond woman could suffer under such circumstances; but the King and Queen began to feel in their heart some ray of hope; for it was very extraordinary to see a horse with twelve feet and three heads, out of which came fire and flames, and a Prince in a case of diamonds, and armed with so formidable a sword, arrive at so critical a moment and fight with so much valour. The King placed his hat upon his cane, and the Queen tied her handkerchief to the end of a stick, to make signs to the Prince and encourage him. All their retinue did the same; but he did not require it, for his heart alone, and the peril in which he saw his mistress, was sufficient to animate him.

What efforts did he not make! The earth was covered with darts, claws, horns, wings, and scales of the Dragon. The monster’s blood flowed in a thousand places, which was quite blue, while that of the horse was green, which made a singular mixture upon the ground. The Prince fell five times, but always recovered himself; he seized his opportunity to remount his horse, and then followed such showers of cannon balls and floods of Greek fire, that never was anything like it before. At last the Dragon lost his strength; he fell, and the Prince gave him a thrust in the belly which caused a frightful gash; but what one would have some difficulty in believing, and yet is quite as true as the rest of the story, is, that from this large wound issued the handsomest and most charming Prince that had ever been seen. His dress was of blue cut velvet, with a gold ground, embroidered with pearls; he had on his head a little Greek morion covered with white feathers. He ran with open arms to embrace Prince Moufy: “How much I am indebted to you, my generous benefactor!” said he; “you have just delivered me from the most frightful prison that a sovereign could have been shut up in. I was condemned to it by the Fairy Lioness. Sixteen years I have been pining therein, and her power was such, that against my inclination she would have compelled me to devour this beautiful Princess; lead me to her feet, that I may explain my misfortunes to her.”

Prince Moufy, surprised and delighted by so astonishing an adventure, paid the Prince the greatest attention. They hastened to join the lovely Moufette, who on her part returned the gods a thousand thanks for so unexpected a happiness. The King and Queen and all the court were already with her; every one spoke at once, no one was heard, they cried nearly as much for joy as they had done for sorrow. In short, that nothing should be missing at the fête, the good Frog appeared in the air, mounted on a sparrow-hawk, which had golden bells at its feet. When they heard the tinkle, tinkle, they all looked up; they saw the hood of roses, shining like the sun, and the Frog as beautiful as Aurora. The Queen advanced towards her, and took one of her little paws; instantly the wise Frog transformed herself, and appeared as a noble Queen, with the most agreeable countenance in the world. “I come,” said she, “to crown Princess Moufette’s constancy. She preferred sacrificing her life to being unfaithful; this is a rare example in the age in which we live, but it will be much more so in future times.” She then took two myrtle wreaths, which she placed upon the head of the happy lovers, and striking with her wand three times, they saw all the Dragon’s bones rise to make a triumphal arch, in commemoration of the great event that had just taken place. At length this beautiful and numerous company advanced towards the city, singing nuptial hymns, as joyfully as they had chanted mournful dirges when proceeding to the sacrifice of the Princess. Their marriage was only deferred till the next day — it is easy to imagine the happiness that accompanied it.

19

THE HIND IN THE WOOD

Once upon a time there was a King and a Queen who were perfectly happy together; they loved each other most affectionately, and their subjects adored them; but the regret was universal, that there was not an heir to the crown. The Queen, who felt persuaded that the King would love her still more if she brought him one, went in the spring to drink the waters at some baths that were in high estimation. People flocked to them in crowds, and the number of strangers was so great, that persons from all parts of the world were to be found there.

There were several fountains, in a large wood, that the visitors went to drink from; they were surrounded by marble and porphyry; for every one was anxious to ornament them. One day that the Queen was sitting at the edge of one of the fountains, she desired all her ladies to retire and leave her by herself. She then began to complain as usual. “Am I not very unfortunate,” said she, “to have no offspring? The poorest women have some children; it is now five years since I have prayed for one, and I have not yet obtained my wish! Shall I die without this gratification!”

As she thus spoke, she remarked that the water in the fountain was agitated. Presently a large Crab appeared, and said, “Great Queen, you shall have your wish. I must inform you, that hardby there is a superb palace, which the fairies have built; but it is impossible for you to find it, because it is surrounded by thick clouds, that no mortal eye could penetrate; however, I am your very humble servant; if you will trust yourself to the conduct of a poor crab, I offer to lead you there.”

The Queen listened without interrupting her, the novelty of hearing a crab talk being so surprising. She told her that she would accept her offer with pleasure; but that she could not walk backwards as she did. The Crab smiled, and immediately took the figure of a handsome little old woman.

“Very well, Madam,” said she, “we will not walk backwards, I consent to that: but, at all events, look upon me as one of your friends, who would be of service to you.”

She walked out of the fountain without being wetted. Her dress was white, lined with crimson, and her grey hair was dressed with knots of green riband; scarcely was ever seen an old woman with so sprightly an air. She saluted the Queen, and was embraced by her; and, without delaying any longer, she conducted her through a path in the wood, which astonished that princess; for, although she had been in the wood a thousand and a thousand times, she had never entered that particular path. How could she have entered it? It was the road by which the fairies went to the fountain, and was generally closed by brambles and thorns; but when the Queen and her conductress presented themselves, roses immediately appeared upon the brambles, jasmine and orange-trees interlaced their branches, to form an arbour covered by leaves and flowers. The ground was mantled with violets; a thousand different birds sang in emulation of each other upon the trees.

The Queen had not recovered from her astonishment, when her eyes were struck by the unequalled lustre of a palace of diamonds, — the walls, the roofs, the platforms, the floors, the stairs, the balconies, even the terraces, were all diamonds. In the excitement of her admiration, she could not help uttering a loud cry; and asked the fine old lady who accompanied her, if what she saw was a dream, or reality. “Nothing can be more real, Madam," replied she. Immediately the gates of the palace opened, six fairies issued forth, — but what fairies! the most beautiful and the most magnificent that had ever been seen in their empire. They all came and made a profound courtesy to the Queen, and each presented her with a flower of precious stones, to make her a bouquet. There was a rose, a tulip, an anemone, a columbine, a carnation, and a pomegranate. "Madam," said they, "we cannot give you a greater mark of our esteem than that of permitting you to come here to see us; but we are delighted to announce to you, that you will have a beautiful princess, whom you will call Désirée; for it must be admitted it is a long time that you have desired her. Do not fail to send for us the moment she is born, for we wish to endow her with all kinds of good qualities; you have only to hold the bouquet that we have given you, and name each flower, thinking of us, and be sure that we shall be instantly in your chamber.

The Queen, transported with joy, threw her arms round their necks, and embraced them for more than half-an-hour. After which they begged the Queen to enter their palace, the beauty of which it is not possible sufficiently to describe. They had chosen for the builder of it the architect of the sun; he had executed in miniature all that which is on a grand scale in that luminary. The Queen, who could not support the brilliancy without pain, shut her eyes at every instant. They conducted her to their garden; there had never been such fine fruit: the apricots were bigger than your head, and they could not, without cutting it in quarters, eat a cherry of such exquisite flavour, that after the Queen had tasted it, she never wished to eat anything else. There was also an orchard of artificial trees, which notwithstanding had life, and grew like the others.

To relate all the Queen's delight, — how she talked of the little Princess Désirée, how she thanked the kind persons who announced such agreeable news to her, — is more than I can undertake to do; but, in short, there were no terms of affection and gratitude forgotten. The Fairy of the Fountain received the full share she deserved of them. The Queen remained in the palace till night; she loved music, they entertained her with voices that seemed celestial, they loaded her with presents, and, after thanking these excellent ladies very much, she returned with the Fairy of the Fountain.

All her household were in great distress about her; they sought for her, with much anxiety; they could not imagine where she could be; they even feared some audacious stranger had carried her off, for she was young and beautiful; so that every one was extremely rejoiced at her return: and as she felt on her part an infinite satisfaction at the good news that had just been announced to her, her agreeable and sparkling conversation charmed everybody.

The Fairy of the Fountain parted with her close by her own home; compliments and caresses were redoubled at their separation, and the Queen remaining eight days longer at the baths, did not fail to revisit the palace of the fairies with her coquettish old lady, who always appeared first as a crab and then took her natural form.

The Queen returned to court, and was in due time confined of a Princess, to whom she gave the name of Désirée; she immediately took the bouquet she had received, and named all the flowers, one after the other, and forthwith all the fairies arrived. Each of them had a different sort of chariot; one was of ebony drawn by white pigeons, others were of ivory drawn by young ravens, others of cedar and eagle-wood. This was their equipage of alliance and peace; for, when they were angry, they had nothing but flying-dragons, adders which darted fire from their mouths and eyes, lions, leopards, and panthers, upon which they transported themselves from one end of the world to another, in a shorter time than one could say “Good day,” or “Good night;” but at this moment they were in the best possible humour.

The Queen saw them enter her chamber with a lively and majestic air; their dwarfs followed them, loaded with presents. After they had embraced the Queen, and kissed the little Princess, they displayed the baby’s clothes; the linen of which was so fine and so good, that it might be used for a hundred years without wearing it out — the fairies had spun it themselves in their leisure hours. As to the lace, it surpassed even what I have said of the linen; all the history of the world was represented either in point or in bone-lace.

After that, they showed her the blankets and coverlids which they had embroidered expressly for the princess with representations of a thousand different games that children play at. Since the existence of embroiderers and embroideresses nothing so wonderful was ever seen; but, when the cradle appeared, the Queen positively screamed with admiration; for it surpassed everything they had shown her before: it was made of a wood so rare that it cost a hundred thousand crowns a pound; four little Cupids supported it; they were four masterpieces, wherein art had so far surpassed the material, although it was of diamonds and rubies, that no one could say enough about them. These little Cupids had been animated by the fairies, so that when the child cried they rocked it, and made it sleep; a wonderful convenience for the nurses.

The fairies themselves took the little Princess upon their knees, they swathed her, and gave her more than a hundred kisses; for she was already so beautiful that no one could look at her without loving her. They said that she was hungry, and instantly they struck the ground with their wands; a nurse appeared — such a one as befitted this lovely babe. It now only remained to endow the infant, and the fairies hastened to do so. One endowed her with virtue, another with wit, a third with wonderful beauty, the next with good fortune, the fifth with continual health, and the last with the gift of doing everything well which she undertook.

The Queen, enchanted, thanked them a thousand and a thousand times for the favours they had just conferred upon the little Princess; when they perceived, entering the chamber, so large a crab, that the door was scarcely wide enough for her to pass through. “Ah! too ungrateful Queen,” said the Crab, “you have not then deigned to remember me! Is it possible you have so soon forgotten the Fairy of the Fountain, and the services I rendered you, by introducing you to my sisters! What! you have summoned them all — I am alone neglected! Certainly I had a presentiment of it, and it was that which obliged me to take the form of a crab when I first spoke to you, to signify thereby that your friendship, instead of progressing, would retrograde.

The Queen, inconsolable at seeing the fault she had committed, interrupted her, and asked her pardon. She told her she thought she had named her flower with the others; that it was the bouquet of precious stones that had deceived her; that she had not been guilty of forgetting the obligations she was under to her; that she supplicated her not to deprive her of her friendship, and particularly to befriend the Princess. The fairies, who feared she would but endow the child with misery and misfortune, seconded the Queen’s endeavours, to appease her. “My dear sister,” said they, “let not your highness be angry with a queen who never had an idea of displeasing you. For mercy’s sake quit this form of a crab, and let us behold you with all your charms.”

I have already said that the Fairy of the Fountain was rather a coquette; the praises of her sisters softened her a little. “Very well,” said she; “I will not do all the mischief to Désirée I had intended; for assuredly I had a mind to destroy her, and nothing could have prevented my doing so. However, I give you warning, that if she sees the light of day before she is fifteen years old, it will perhaps cost her her life.” The Queen’s tears, and the prayers of the illustrious fairies, could not alter the decree she had just pronounced. She retired, walking backwards, for she had not chosen to put off her crab’s dress.

As soon as she had quitted the chamber, the sorrowful Queen asked the fairies to point out some way of preserving her daughter from the evils that threatened her. They immediately consulted together; and at last, after discussing several different opinions, they decided upon this one; which was, to build a palace without either doors or windows, to make a subterraneous entry to it, and to educate the Princess in this place, till the fatal period during which she was threatened with misfortune should have expired. Three taps of a wand began and finished this grand edifice. The exterior was of white and green marble; the ceilings and the floors were of diamonds and emeralds, placed in the form of flowers, birds, and a thousand agreeable objects. All the furniture and hangings were of different coloured velvets, embroidered by the hands of the fairies; and, as they were learned in history, it had been a pleasure to them to work representations of the greatest and most remarkable adventures; the future was depicted as well as the past. The heroic actions of the greatest king in the world filled many of the pieces.

Here of the Thracian god he bore the mien;
Fierce lightnings flashing from his eyes were seen:
There over France he ruled in peace profound;
Her lot the envy of the world around.
The arts he fosters, grateful for his care,
His form august had pictured everywhere:
To fierce assaults victorious legions leading,
Or, generously, peace to vanquished foes conceding.

These wise fairies had hit upon this mode of making the young Princess more easily acquainted with the different events in the lives of heroes and other celebrated men.

In her palace there was no light to see by but that of wax candles; but of them there was so great a number, that they made it one perpetual day. All the masters whom the Princess required to perfect her education were conducted to this place. Her intelligence, her quickness, and her skill enabled her generally to comprehend beforehand what they intended teaching her; and they were all of them in one continual admiration of the surprising things she said, at an age when others were hardly able to pronounce the name of their nurse; but certainly one who is endowed by fairies is not expected to be stupid and ignorant.

If her wit charmed all who approached her, the effects from her beauty were not less powerful. She enraptured the most insensible people; and the Queen her mother would never have lost sight of her, if her duty had not obliged her to be near the King. The good fairies every now and then went to see the Princess; they took her matchless rarities — dresses so cleverly invented, so costly, and so elegant, that they seemed to have been made for the nuptials of a young princess not less amiable than she of whom I speak. But of all the fairies, who protected her, Tulip loved her the most, and most carefully impressed upon the Queen the necessity of not allowing her to see daylight before she was fifteen years old. “Our sister of the fountain is vindictive,” said she; “whatever care we may take of this child, she will do it some mischief, if she can. Therefore, Madam, you cannot be too vigilant in that matter.” The Queen promised to be incessantly watchful upon such an important affair; but as the time drew near for her dear daughter to leave the palace, she made her sit for her picture, and her portrait was taken to the greatest courts of the universe. There was not a prince who could avoid being struck with admiration at the sight of it; but there was one who was so moved by it that he could never leave it. He placed it in his closet, shut himself up with it, and talked to it, as though it were sensible and could understand him; he said the most passionate things in the world to it.

The King, who now hardly ever saw his son, inquired how he was occupied, and what it could be that prevented his appearing as cheerful as usual. Some of the courtiers, too eager to speak, — for there are many of that sort, — told him they feared that the Prince would go out of his mind; for he remained whole days together shut up alone in his closet, where they could hear him talking, as though he had some lady with him.

The King received this information with much uneasiness. “Is it possible,” said he to his confidants, “that my son has lost his reason? he has always evinced so much. You know how greatly he has been admired up to this moment; and I do not see anything wild in his looks. He appears to me to be only a little melancholy: I must talk to him; I may, perhaps, be able to discover what sort of madness has seized him.”

Consequently he sent for him, ordered every one else to withdraw, and, after several things to which the Prince paid little attention, and to which he answered very indifferently, the King asked him, what was the cause of the alteration in his manner and person. The Prince, believing this to be a favourable opportunity, threw himself at his father’s feet, and said: “You have resolved that I shall wed the Black Princess; you will find some great advantages in this alliance that I could not promise from that with the Princess Désirée; but, Sire, I discover charms in the latter, that I shall not meet with in the former.” “And where have you discovered them?” said the King. “The portraits of the one and the other have been brought to me,” replied Prince Guerrier (for thus he was named after having won three great battles). “I confess that I am desperately in love with Princess Désirée; and, if you do not retract the promise you have given to the Black Princess, I shall die! — happy in ceasing to live, losing the hope of being hers I love.”

“It is with her portrait, then,” gravely answered the King, “that you have chosen to hold conversations which have rendered you ridiculous in the eyes of all the courtiers? They believe you to be mad; and if you knew what has been said to me on the subject, you would be ashamed of showing so much weakness.” “I cannot reproach myself for entertaining so worthy a passion,” answered the Prince. “When you have seen the portrait of this charming Princess, you will approve of my affection for her.” “Go for it, then, directly:” said the King, with an impatient air, which evidently indicated his vexation. The Prince would have been much distressed at it, if he had not felt certain that nothing could be equal to Désirée’s beauty. He ran into his closet for the portrait, and returned with it to the King, who was nearly as much enchanted as his son. “Ah, ah! my dear Guerrier,” said he, “I consent to your wish. I shall become young again, when I shall have so lovely a princess in my court. I shall immediately despatch ambassadors to the court of the Black Princess, to retract my word; though it should occasion a sharp war with her, I prefer that alternative.”

The Prince respectfully kissed his father’s hand, and more than once fell at his feet; he was so delighted, they hardly knew him again. He begged the King to hasten the departure of his ambassadors, not only to the Black Princess, but to Princess Désirée; and desired that he would choose for the latter mission the most able and wealthy person, as it was necessary that he should appear in great state upon so celebrated an occasion, and possess the power of persuasion in the highest degree. The King fixed upon Becafigue, a very eloquent young nobleman with a hundred millions a-year. He was exceedingly fond of Prince Guerrier, and, to gratify him, ordered the most magnificent equipage and the richest liveries that could be imagined. His preparations were made with all speed, for the Prince’s love increased every day, and incessantly he was imploring the ambassador to set out. “Remember,” said he in confidence to him, “that my life depends upon it; that I am perfectly distracted when I think the father of my princess may enter into engagements with some one else that he would not be inclined to break off in my favour, and that I may lose her for ever!” Becafigue endeavoured to encourage him, that he might gain time; for he was exceedingly anxious his appearance should do him honour. He took with him four-and-twenty coaches all blazing with gold and diamonds; the highest finished miniature could not compare to the paintings with which they were ornamented. There were also fifty other coaches; twenty-four thousand pages on horseback, dressed finer than princes; and the rest of this grand procession was of equal magnificence.

When the ambassador took his leave of the Prince, he warmly embraced him. “Remember, my dear Becafigue,” said he, “my life depends upon the marriage you are going to negotiate for me. Omit no means of persuading and bringing back with you the lovely princess whom I adore.” He loaded him also with a thousand presents for the Princess, the gallantry of which equalled their magnificence. There were quantities of amorous devices engraven upon diamond seals; watches contained in carbuncles with Désirée’s cypher upon them; bracelets of rubies cut in the shape of hearts: in short, what had he not thought of to please her!

The ambassador took the portrait of this young prince, which had been painted by so skilful an artist, that it spoke, and paid the most charming little compliments. It did not absolutely reply to all that was said to it, but it very nearly did so. Becafigue promised the Prince he would neglect nothing that could give him satisfaction; and he added, that he had taken so much money with him that, if they refused him the Princess, he would find the means of bribing one of her women, and carry her off. “Ah!” cried the Prince, “I cannot agree to that; she would be offended by so disrespectful a proceeding.” Becafigue made no answer to that remark, and took his departure. The rumour of his voyage preceded his arrival. The King and Queen were enchanted; they highly esteemed his master, and had heard of Prince Guerrier’s great achievements, but what they were much better acquainted with were his personal merits, so that, had they sought all over the world for a husband for their daughter, they would not have found one more worthy of her. They prepared a palace for Becafigue, and they gave all the necessary orders for the court to appear in the greatest splendour.

The King and Queen resolved that the ambassador should see Désirée, but the Fairy Tulip came to the Queen and said, “Take care, Madam, that you do not introduce Becafigue to our child,” — it was thus she called the Princess, — “he must not see her yet; and do not consent to let her go to the King, who demands her hand for his son, until she is fifteen years old; for I am convinced, if she quit her palace before then, some misfortune will befal her.” The Queen embraced the good Tulip, promising to follow her advice, and they went immediately to see the Princess.

The ambassador arrived; his procession was twenty-three hours in passing, for he had six hundred thousand great mules, the bells and shoes of which were of gold, their housings of velvet and brocade embroidered with pearls. The confusion it caused in the streets was unequalled; every one was running to look at it. The King and Queen went to meet him, so delighted were they at his coming. It is useless to talk of the speeches that were made, and of the ceremonies which passed on one side and the other. They can be imagined well enough; but, when he asked to be allowed to make his bow to the Princess, he was very much surprised to find that favour was denied him. “It is no caprice of our own, my Lord Becafigue,” said the King, “that induces us to refuse a request which you are perfectly justified in making; but, in order that you should understand our reasons, I must relate to you our daughter’s extraordinary adventure.

“A Fairy took an aversion to her from the moment of her birth, and threatened her with some very great misfortune if she saw the light of day before the age of fifteen; we keep her in a palace the most beautiful apartments of which are underground. We had determined to take you there, when the Fairy Tulip forbade our doing so.” “Ah, Sire!” replied the ambassador, “shall I have the misery of returning without her Highness? You have given her to the King, my master, for his son; she is waited for with the greatest impatience; is it possible that you hesitate on such trifling grounds as the predictions of fairies? Here is Prince Guerrier’s portrait that I was desired to present her with, — it is so like him, that I think I see him before me when I look at it.”

He immediately produced it. The portrait, which had only been taught to speak to the Princess, said, “Beautiful Désirée, you cannot imagine how ardently I await you; come quickly to our court, and ornament it by those graces which render you incomparable.” The portrait ceased speaking. The King and Queen were so perfectly astonished, that they entreated Becafigue to give it them; he was delighted to do so, and placed it in their hands.

The Queen had not yet spoken to her daughter of what was passing; she had even forbidden the ladies who were near her to say anything of the ambassador’s arrival. They had not however obeyed her, and the Princess knew a great marriage was in agitation for her, but she was so prudent that she took no notice of it to her mother. When she showed her the Prince’s portrait, which spoke and paid her a compliment as affectionate as it was polite, she was indeed surprised, for she had never seen anything to equal that, and the fine appearance of the Prince, the intellectual expression and regularity of his features, astonished her no less than the words of the portrait.

“Should you be sorry,” said the Queen laughingly, “to have a husband who resembled this Prince?” “Madam,” replied she, “it is not for me to choose, therefore I shall be content with whomsoever you please to appoint for me.” “But in a word,” added the Queen, “if the chance fell upon him, would you not esteem yourself very happy?” She blushed, looked down, and said nothing. The Queen embraced her, and kissed her several times; she could not help shedding tears, when she thought she was on the point of losing her, for she wanted but three months of being fifteen; and, concealing her grief, she related all that concerned the Princess in the embassy of the celebrated Becafigue; she even gave her all the rarities he had brought to present to her. She admired them; she praised with good taste that which was the most curious, but from time to time she turned to gaze upon the portrait of the Prince with a pleasure she had never known till then.

The ambassador finding that his endeavours to obtain the Princess were useless, and that he must be contented with her parents’ solemn promise, which he had no reason to doubt, took leave of the King, and returned post to give an account of his mission to his masters.

When the Prince found he could not hope to see his dear Désirée for more than three months, he uttered lamentations which distressed the whole court; he could no longer sleep; he could eat nothing; he became sad and thoughtful; the brightness of his complexion changed to the pallid hue of care; he passed whole days, lying on a couch in his cabinet, gazing on the portrait of his princess; he wrote to her continually, and presented the letters to the portrait, as though it was able to read them; at last, becoming gradually weaker, he fell dangerously ill, and it required neither physicians nor doctors to tell the reason.

The King was in despair, — he loved his son more tenderly than ever father loved one before. He was on the point of losing him! what an affliction for a parent! He saw no remedy for the malady of the Prince. He languished for Désirée; without her he must die. The King resolved therefore, in such an extremity, to go to the King and Queen, who had promised her to him, to entreat them to have pity upon the situation the Prince was reduced to, and defer no longer a marriage which would never happen, if they were determined to wait till the Princess arrived at the age of fifteen.

This was an extraordinary step to take, but it would have been more extraordinary if he had allowed so amiable and dear a son to perish. Notwithstanding, he met with an insurmountable difficulty, for his age was so great he could only travel in a litter, and this mode accorded very badly with the impatience of his son; so that he desired his faithful Becafigue to travel post, and sent by him the most affecting letters in the world, to induce the King and Queen to accede to his wishes.

During all this time Désirée had scarcely less pleasure in looking at the Prince's portrait than he had in gazing at hers. Every instant she sought the room in which it was placed; and, however careful she was in disguising her feelings, her attendants did not fail to discover them. Amongst others, Giroflée and Longue-épine, who were her maids of honour, perceived the little anxieties that began to torment her. Giroflée loved her dearly, and was faithful to her. Longue-épine had always nourished a secret jealousy of her merit and her rank. Her mother had educated the Princess, and after having been her governess, became her first lady-in-waiting; she ought to have loved her better than anything in the world, but she doted on her own daughter ridiculously, and perceiving her hatred to the lovely Princess, she could not wish her well.

The ambassador who had been despatched to the Black Princess, was not well received when she learned the message with which he was charged. The Ethiopian was the most vindictive creature in the world; she thought she was treated very cavalierly, in being thus politely put off, after engagements had been actually entered into with her. She had seen a portrait of the Prince, with which she was infatuated, and Ethiopians, when they do love, love to a greater excess than any one else. "How, Sir!" said she; "does your master think I am neither rich enough, nor beautiful enough? Travel through my dominions, you will find there are few more extensive. Visit my royal treasury, and you will see more gold than all the mines of Peru have ever yielded; and then look at the blackness of my complexion — this flattened nose, these thick lips: is it not thus one should be, to be beautiful?" "Madam," answered the ambassador, (who feared the bastinado more than any they sent to the Sublime Porte,) "I blame my master as much as a subject is permitted to do; and, if I had been placed upon the first throne in the universe, I know very well with whom I should have offered to share it." "That speech has saved your life," said she; "I had determined to commence my revenge upon you; but that would have been unjust, since you are not to blame for the base conduct of your prince. Go and tell him, that I am delighted he has broken off with me, because I abhor dishonest people." The ambassador, who wished for nothing better than leave to depart, profited by it as soon as he obtained it.

But the Ethiopian was too much offended with Prince Guerrier to pardon him. She mounted an ivory car drawn by six ostriches that went at the rate of ten leagues an hour; she repaired to the palace of the Fairy of the Fountain, who was her godmother, and her best friend; she gave an account of her adventure, — and entreated her, with the greatest importunity, to revenge her. The Fairy felt for her god-daughter's grief — she looked in the book that tells everything, and she instantly knew that Prince Guerrier had abandoned the Black Princess for the Princess Désirée; that he was passionately in love with her; and that he was even ill from his impatience to see her. This knowledge rekindled her anger, which was nearly extinguished; and, as she had never seen Désirée from the moment of her birth, it is likely that would not have harmed her, if the vindictive Blackamoor had not induced her to do so. "How!" cried she; "is this miserable Désirée to be always vexing me? No, charming Princess; no, my darling, I will not allow thee to be thus insulted. The heavens and all the elements are interested in this affair; return home, and depend upon thy dear godmother." The Black Princess thanked her, and made her presents of flowers and fruit, which she received with much pleasure.

The ambassador Becafigue posted with the greatest speed to the city where Désirée's father resided; he threw himself at the feet of the King and Queen, he shed many tears, and assured them, in the most affecting terms, that Prince Guerrier would die, if they refused him any longer the pleasure of seeing the Princess their daughter: that she was fifteen years old all but three months, that nothing serious could happen in so short a space of time;

that he took the liberty of making known to them, that so great a belief in these insignificant fairies was an injury to royal majesty; in short, he pleaded so well that he had the gift of persuasion.

They wept with him at his representation of the sad condition to which the young Prince was reduced, and they then told him, that they must have some days to decide upon their answer. He replied, that he could only give them a few hours; that it was an extreme case with his master; that he imagined the Princess hated him, and that it was she herself who delayed the journey. They then assured him, that before evening he should know what could be done in the matter.

The Queen ran to her dear daughter’s palace, and told her all that had passed. Désirée’s grief was unequalled; her heart failed her, she fainted, and the Queen became convinced of her sentiments for the Prince. “Do not distress yourself, my dear child,” said she, “you are able to cure him. I am only uneasy on account of the threats of the Fairy of the Fountain at your birth.” “I flatter myself, Madam,” replied she, “that there are some means by which we could outwit the wicked Fairy; for instance, could I not go in a coach so closely shut up that I could not see daylight? They might open it at night, to give me something to eat, and I should thus arrive safely at the palace of Prince Guerrier.”

The Queen fancied this expedient very much; she told the King, who approved of it also; they then sent for Becafigue to come to them directly, and they assured him that the Princess should set out instantly — therefore he had nothing more to do than return with this good news to his master; and that, to expedite the matter, they would dispense with the equipage, and the rich dresses suitable to her rank. The ambassador, transported with joy, again threw himself at their Majesties’ feet to thank them, after which he departed without having seen the Princess.

The separation from the King and Queen would have appeared insupportable to her, if Désirée had been less prepossessed in favour of the

Prince; but there are some feelings which can stifle nearly all the others. They built her a coach with green velvet outside ornamented with large plates of gold, and lined it with pink and silver brocade embroidered. There were no glass windows in it; it was very large; it shut closer than a box, and one of the first noblemen in the kingdom had charge of the keys which opened the locks they had placed on the doors.

Around her were the Graces seen,
And Love himself was fain
To follow with respectful mien,
A vassal in her train.
With the most majestic air
Heavenly softness blending,
All the willing captives were
Of beauty so transcending.
In brief, like charms, it may be said,
Did Adelaide reveal,
When hither Hymen led the maid,
The bond of peace to seal.

They selected but a few officers to accompany her, that a numerous suite might not be a hindrance on the journey, and, after giving her the most beautiful jewellery in the world, and some very rich dresses, — after a leave-taking which, I may say, nearly choked the King, the Queen, and all the court, so violently did they weep — they locked her up in the coach, with her principal lady-in-waiting, Longue-épine and Giroflée.

Perhaps it has been forgotten that Longue-épine did not like the Princess at all; but she was much in love with Prince Guerrier, for she had seen his speaking likeness. The shaft of Cupid had wounded her so acutely, that upon the point of setting out she told her mother that she should die if the Princess's marriage took place; and that, if she wished her to live, she must absolutely find out some means to break it off. The lady-in-waiting begged she would not distress herself, that she would endeavour to relieve her pain and make her happy.

When the Queen sent her dear child away, she recommended her above all things to the care of this wicked woman. "With what have I not trusted you!" said she, "with more than my life! Take care of my daughter's health; but, above everything, be careful she does not see daylight, or all will be lost; you know with what evils she is threatened, and I have stipulated with Prince Guerrier's ambassador, that until she is fifteen, they will place her in a castle where she will see no light but that from wax candles." The Queen loaded the lady with presents, to ensure her most scrupulous attention. She promised to watch over the Princess's safety, and to send the Queen a good account of her the moment they had arrived at their destination.

Thus the King and Queen, confiding in her care, felt no uneasiness for their dear daughter, which in some degree moderated their grief at her separation from them: but Longue-épine, who learnt each night from the Princess's officers, who opened the coach to give her her supper, the progress they were making towards the city where they were expected, urged her mother to execute her intentions, fearing the King or the Prince would come to meet the Princess, and that the opportunity would be lost. So about the middle of the day, when the sun's rays were at their height, she suddenly cut the roof of the coach in which they were shut with a large knife, made expressly for the purpose, which she had brought with her. Then, for the first time, Princess Désirée saw the light of day. She had scarcely looked at it, and heaved a deep sigh, when she sprang from the coach in the form of White Hind, and bounded off to the nearest forest, where she hid herself in a dark covert, there to lament unseen the loss of the beautiful form she had so suddenly been deprived of.

The Fairy of the Fountain, who had brought about this extraordinary event, seeing all those who accompanied the Princess in commotion, some following her, others hastening to the city to announce to Prince Guerrier the misfortune that had just occurred, seemed bent on the sudden destruction of creation. The thunder and lightning terrified the boldest, and by her wonderful skill she transported all these persons to an immense distance from the spot, where their presence was objectionable to her.

No one remained but the lady-in-waiting, Longue-épine, and Giroflée. The latter ran after her mistress, making the woods and rocks resound with her name and her own lamentations. The two others, enchanted at being at liberty, lost not a moment in executing their project. Longue-épine dressed herself in Désirée's richest apparel. The royal mantle, which had been made for her nuptials, was of unequal costliness, and the crown had diamonds in it twice or thrice as big as one's fist; the sceptre was composed of one single ruby; the globe which she held in her other hand, of a pearl larger than one's head: this was curious, and very heavy to carry; but it was necessary to persuade everybody that she was the Princess, and not omit displaying any one of the royal ornaments.

In this attire, followed by her mother, who held the train of her mantle, she set forth towards the city. The counterfeit princess walked gravely, not doubting some persons would come to receive them, and indeed they had scarcely made any progress when they perceived a large body of cavalry, and in the middle two litters glittering with gold and precious stones, drawn by mules ornamented with high plumes of green feathers — that was the Princess's favourite colour. The King who was in one, and the sick Prince in the other, knew not what to make of the ladies they perceived approaching them. The most eager of the royal train galloped forward, and judged by the magnificence of their dress that they ought to be persons of distinction.

They alighted, and accosted them respectfully. “Oblige me by informing me,” said Longue-épine to them, “who are in these litters?” “Ladies,” replied they, “it is the King, and the Prince his son, who come to meet the Princess Désirée.” “Go, I beg of you, and tell them she is here,” continued she; “a fairy jealous of my good fortune, has dispersed all those who accompanied me by a hundred claps of thunder, lightning, and supernatural prodigies; but here is my lady-in-waiting, who has charge of letters from the King my father, and of my jewellery.”

The cavaliers immediately kissed the hem of her robe, and hastened to inform the King of the Princess’s arrival. “How!” cried he, “she comes on foot in broad daylight!” They related all she had told them. The Prince, burning with impatience, called them to him, and without asking them any questions, “Acknowledge,” said he, “that she is a prodigy of beauty, a miracle, a most accomplished princess.” They made no answer, which astonished the Prince. “Having too much to say in praise of her,” continued he, “you prefer remaining silent?” “My lord, you will see her yourself,” said the boldest among them. “The fatigue of travelling has apparently altered her.” The Prince was much surprised; had he not been so weak, he would have precipitated himself from his litter, to satisfy his impatience and his curiosity. The King descended from his litter, and, advancing with all his court, he joined the false Princess; but, the moment that he cast his eyes upon her, he gave a loud cry, and fell back some paces. “What do I see?” said he; “what perfidy?” “Sire,” said the lady-in-waiting, boldly advancing, “this is the Princess Désirée with letters from the King and Queen. I also deliver into your hands the casket of jewels which they gave me on setting out.”

The King heard all this in a sullen silence, and the Prince, leaning upon Becafigue, approached Longue-épine — Oh, ye gods! what became of him upon seeing this girl, whose extraordinary figure frightened him? She was so tall that the Princess’s robes scarcely reached to her knees; she was frightfully thin; her nose, more hooked than that of a parrot, glowed with a fiery red; never had any teeth been blacker or more irregular; in short, she was as ugly as Désirée was beautiful.

The Prince, who was fully possessed with the charming notion of his Princess, was transfixed and immoveable at the sight of this woman — he had no power to speak a word, he looked at her with astonishment, and addressing himself to the King — “I am betrayed!” said he. “The wonderful portrait by which I was captivated is nothing like the person they have sent us; they have endeavoured to deceive us, and they have so far succeeded that it will cost me my life.” “What do you mean, my Lord?” said Longue-épine; “they have sought to deceive you? — know that you will never be deceived in marrying me.” Her effrontery and her pride were unexampled. The lady-in-waiting went even beyond this. “Ah! my beautiful Princess!” cried she, “where are we come to? Is this the way to receive a personage of your rank? What inconstancy, what behaviour! the King, your father, will have satisfaction for this.” “It is we who will have satisfaction,” replied the King; “he promised us a beautiful Princess; he has sent us a skeleton, a mummy that frightens us. I am no longer surprised that he has kept this lovely treasure hidden for fifteen years, that he might entrap some dupe. The chance has fallen upon us, but revenge is not impossible.” “What outrages!” cried the mock Princess; “am I not unfortunate to have come here upon the word of such people? See how very wrong it is to be flattered in one’s picture; yet does it not happen every day? If for such absurdities princes sent back their affianced brides, few would marry.”

The King and the Prince, transported with rage, did not deign to answer her; they each remounted their litters, and without further ceremony, one of the body-guards placed the Princess behind him, and the lady-in-waiting was similarly treated; they carried them into the city by order of the King; they were shut up in the Castle of the Three Points.

Prince Guerrier was so overwhelmed by the shock he had just received, that his affliction could not find vent, though it filled his heart almost to bursting. When he was able to give utterance to it, what did he not say of his cruel destiny! He was still in love, and the object of his passion was only a picture! His hopes no longer existed; all the charming ideas he had indulged in of the Princess Désirée had been destroyed; he would rather have died than have married the person whom he now believed to be that Princess; in short, no despair had ever equalled his. He could no longer endure the court, and he determined to leave it secretly as soon as his health would permit him, and seek out some solitary place wherein to pass the remainder of his sad life.

He only communicated his plan to the faithful Becafigue; he felt persuaded that he would follow him anywhere, and he preferred talking with him oftener than with any one of the shameful trick they had played him. He scarcely felt better before he departed, and left upon the table in his cabinet a long letter for the King, assuring him that the moment his mind was more at ease he would return to him; but he entreated him in the meantime to think of their mutual revenge, and still to detain the ugly princess a prisoner.

It is easy to imagine the King's grief when he received this letter. The separation from so dear a son nearly killed him. While everybody was endeavouring to console him, the Prince and Becafigue were speeding away, and at the end of three days they found themselves in a vast forest, so dark from the thickness of the trees, so agreeable from the freshness of the grass, and from the rivulets which flowed in all directions, that the Prince, fatigued by the length of his journey, for he was still ill, dismounted, and threw himself dejectedly upon the ground with his hand under his head, hardly able to speak, he was so weak. “My lord,” said Becafigue, “while you are reposing I will seek for fruits to refresh you, and reconnoitre the place a little which we have arrived at.” The Prince did not answer, he only acknowledged by a sign that he could do so.

It is a long time since we left the Hind in the wood; I will now speak of the incomparable Princess. She wept like a disconsolate hind, when she saw herself in a fountain, which served as a mirror for her.” “What! can this be me?” said she. “Now do I find myself subjected to the strangest fate that could happen in all Fairy-land to so innocent a princess as I am. How long will my transformation last? — Where shall I conceal myself from the lions, bears, and wolves, that they may not devour me? How can I eat grass?” In short, she asked herself a thousand questions, and was in the greatest possible grief. It is true, that if anything could console her, it was that she was as beautiful a hind as she had been a beautiful princess.

Becoming very hungry, Désirée nibbled the grass with a good appetite, and was surprised she could do so. Afterwards she laid down on the moss; night overtook her; she passed it in inconceivable alarm. She heard the wild beasts close to her, and often forgetting that she was a hind, she tried to climb some tree. The light of day somewhat reassured her; she admired its beauty, and the sun appeared something so wonderful to her, that she was never wearied with looking at it; all she had ever heard of it appeared to her much below what she now beheld; it was the only consolation she could find in that desert place; she remained there for several days quite by herself.

The fairy Tulip, who had always loved this Princess, deeply felt for her misfortune; but she was extremely vexed that both she and the Queen had paid so little attention to her advice; for she had told them several times, that if the Princess set out before she was fifteen, she would meet with some evil. However, she would not abandon her to the fury of the Fairy of the Fountain; and it was she who conducted Giroflée towards the forest, that this faithful confidant might console the Princess in her misfortune.

This lovely Hind was quietly grazing by the side of a brook, when Giroflée, who could scarcely walk, lay down to rest herself. She was looking very mournfully which way she should go to find her dear Princess. When the Hind saw her, she suddenly leaped the brook, which was wide and deep, and came and threw herself upon Giroflée, and caressed her a thousand times. She was quite surprised at it; she did not know whether the animals in this province had any particular friendship for people which humanised them, or whether this one knew her — for in fact it was very singular, that a hind should think of doing the honours of the forest so well.

She looked at it earnestly, and saw, with much surprise, large tears falling from its eyes. She no longer doubted that it was her dear Princess; she took her feet, and kissed them, with as much respect and affection as though she was kissing her hands. She spoke to her, and was convinced that the Hind understood her, but that she could not answer her; their tears and sighs were redoubled. Giroflée promised her mistress that she would not leave her any more. The Hind made a thousand little signs with her head and her eyes, which meant, she should be very glad of it, and that it would console her for some of her troubles.

They remained together nearly all the day. The Hind, fearing that her faithful Giroflée would want something to eat, led her to a place in the forest where she had remarked there was some wild fruit that was very good. Giroflée ate a great quantity of it, for she was dying with hunger; but after she had finished her meal, she became very uneasy, not knowing where they should retire for the night — for it was impossible to resolve on remaining in the middle of the forest, exposed to all the perils that might overtake them.

“Are you not afraid, charming Hind,” said she, “to pass the night here?”

The Hind raised her eyes to heaven, and sighed.

“But,” continued Giroflée, “you have already perambulated a part of this vast desert; — Are there no cottages here? — no charcoal-burner? —

no wood-cutter? — no hermitage?”

The Hind indicated by the movement of her head that she had not seen any.

“Oh, ye gods!” cried Giroflée, “I shall not be alive in the morning: even should I be fortunate enough to escape the tigers and bears, I am certain that fright will be sufficient to kill me! And do not imagine, either, my dear Princess, that I regret perishing on my own account; it is for your sake. Alas! to leave you here destitute of all consolation, — what can be more distressing?”

The little Hind began to weep, she sobbed almost like a human being.

Her tears affected the fairy Tulip, who loved her tenderly, notwithstanding her disobedience. She had always watched over her preservation, and suddenly appearing, she said to her, — “I will not scold you, the situation in which I see you distresses me too much.”

The Hind and Giroflée interrupted her, by throwing themselves at her feet; the former kissed her hands, and caressed her in the prettiest manner possible; the other entreated her to have pity upon the Princess, and restore her to her natural form.

“That does not depend upon me,” said Tulip; “she who has done her so much mischief is very powerful: but I can shorten her term of punishment; and to mollify it, as soon as day gives place to night, she shall quit the form of a hind — but, as soon as it is dawn, she must return to it, and roam the plains and forests like the other animals.”

It was a great relief to cease from being a hind even during the night; the Princess expressed her joy by leaping and frisking about, which delighted Tulip. “Proceed,” said she to them, “by this little path; you will come to a hut, as good a one as you could expect to find in such a country.” So saying, she disappeared. Giroflée followed her directions; she entered with the Hind the path before them, and found an old woman seated upon the step of her door finishing an osier basket. Giroflée accosted her. “My good mother, would you let me in here with my hind? — I want a small room.”

“Yes, my pretty girl;” replied she; “I will willingly give you shelter here; come in with your hind.” She led them directly into a very pretty room, wainscoted with cherry-tree wood; in it were two little white dimity beds, and fine sheets, and all appeared so simple and clean, that the Princess has since declared that she never saw anything more to her taste.

As soon as it was quite dark, Désirée ceased to be a hind; she embraced her dear Giroflée a hundred times; she thanked her for her affection, which induced her to follow her fortunes, and promised her, she would make her very happy the moment her penance had ended.

The old woman knocked gently at their door, and without entering, gave Giroflée some excellent fruit, which the Princess ate with a good appetite. They then went to bed, and as soon as daylight appeared Désirée, having become a hind again, began to scratch at the door, that Giroflée might open it for her. They were both very sorry to be separated, although for so short a time; and the Hind, having plunged into the thickest part of the wood, commenced running about there as usual.

I have already said that Prince Guerrier had halted in the forest, and that Becafigue was hunting through it in all directions for some fruit. It was already late when he arrived at the cottage belonging to the good old woman of whom I have spoken. He spoke politely to her, and asked her for several things his master wanted. She hastened to fill a basket, and gave it him. “I fear,” said she, “that if you pass the night here without shelter some accident will happen to you. I can offer you a very humble one, but at all events it will save you from the lions.”

He thanked her, and said he was with one of his friends, to whom he would go back and propose their coming to her house. In short, he knew so well how to persuade the Prince, that he allowed himself to be conducted to the old woman’s cottage: she was still at the door, and without making any noise, she led them to a room like the one the Princess occupied, and from which it was only separated by a wooden partition.

The Prince passed the night a prey to his usual anxieties. As soon as the first rays of the sun were shining in at his windows, he rose, and to divert his sadness, he went into the forest, telling Becafigue not to follow him. He walked for some time without taking any certain path, at length he arrived at rather a spacious place, thickly covered with trees and moss. Instantly a hind started off. He could not help following it — his dominant passion was the chase, but he cared less for it since love had taken possession of his heart. Notwithstanding that, he pursued the poor Hind, and from time to time he let fly an arrow at her, which frightened her to death, although she was not wounded, for her friend Tulip preserved her from that; and nothing less than the guardian hand of a fairy could have saved her from perishing from shafts so truly aimed. No one had ever felt so tired as the Princess of Hinds; such exercise was quite new to her. At last she fortunately took a turn by which the dangerous hunter lost sight of her, and being extremely fatigued himself, gave up the pursuit.

The day having passed in this manner, the Hind was delighted when the hour for retiring drew near. She turned her steps towards the house, where Giroflée was impatiently awaiting her. As soon as she was in her chamber, she threw herself upon the bed, quite out of breath, and in a great perspiration. Giroflée caressed her a thousand times, she was dying to hear what had happened to her. The hour for transformation had arrived, and the lovely Princess resumed her proper form. “Alas!” said she, “I thought I had nothing to fear but the Fairy of the Fountain, and the cruel inhabitants of the forests; but to-day I have been pursued by a young hunter, whom I scarcely saw, so hasty was my flight. A thousand arrows, shot after me, threatened me with inevitable death; I am still ignorant by what good fortune I could have been able to escape.” “You must not go out any more, my Princess,” replied Giroflée; “pass in this chamber the fatal time of your penance. I will go to the nearest city, to purchase books to amuse you, we will read the new stories that have been written about the fairies, we will compose verses and songs." "Peace, dear girl," replied the Princess, "the charming thought of Prince Guerrier is sufficient to occupy me pleasantly; but the same power which reduces me during the day to the sad condition of a hind, compels me to do as hinds do — I run, I skip, and I eat grass like them. At such times a room would be insupportable to me." She had been so harassed by the chase, that she required something to eat immediately; she then closed her two beautiful eyes till the dawn of day. As soon as she perceived it, the usual transformation took place, and she returned to the forest.

The Prince, on his part, had returned in the evening, and rejoined his favourite. "I have spent my time," said he, "in running after the most lovely hind I ever saw; she eluded me a hundred times with wonderful dexterity; I took so true an aim at her, that I cannot understand how she could escape untouched. As soon as it is daylight, I shall look for her again, and I will not miss her the next time." In short, the young Prince, who wished to drive from his heart the idea of a being he believed to be imaginary, was not sorry that his love for hunting amused him, and returned betimes to the spot where he had found the Hind; but she took good care not to go there again, fearing a similar accident to the one she had met with. He looked all around him, and walked about for some time, and, being very much heated, he was delighted to find some apples, the colour of which pleased him; he gathered some, and ate them, and almost immediately he fell into a sound sleep, stretched on the cool grass under some trees, which thousands of birds seemed to have fixed on for their assignations.

While he was sleeping, our timid Hind, eager to find a sequestered spot, came to the one in which he was reposing. Had she perceived him sooner, she would have fled: but she found herself so close to him, that she could not help looking at him; and his heavy sleep so emboldened her, that she stood and contemplated his features at her leisure. Oh, ye gods! what became of her when she recognised him! her mind had been too deeply impressed by his charming form for her to have forgotten it in so short a time. Love, Love, what wouldest thou, then? Must the Hind run the risk of being slain by the hand of her lover? Yes, she exposes herself to that peril; she no longer thinks of her safety. She couched down a little distance from him, with her eyes fixed upon him, not turning them away for an instant. She sighed, she uttered some little plaintive sounds, and at last, becoming bolder, she approached still nearer; she touched him, and he awoke.

His surprise was excessive; he saw it was the same hind that had given him so much exercise and that he had been seeking so long a time for; but to find her so familiar appeared most extraordinary to him. She did not wait long enough for him to seize her, but ran off with all her might, and he followed with all his. From time to time they stopped to take breath, for the lovely Hind was tired from having run so much the evening before, and the Prince was not less fatigued than she was. But what caused the Hind to slacken her flight? Alas! must I own it? It was the fear of separating herself too far from him, who had wounded her much more by his merit than by the arrows which he shot at her. He remarked she very often turned her head, as though to ask him if he wished her to die by his hand; and when he was on the point of overtaking her, she renewed her efforts to escape. “Ah, if thou couldst understand me, little Hind,” cried he, “thou wouldst not shun me; I love thee, and would cherish thee; thou art charming; I will take care of thee.” The air carried away his words, they did not reach her.

At length, after making the round of the forest, our Hind could not run any longer, and slackened her pace. The Prince redoubling his, came up with her with a delight which he could scarcely believe it possible he could feel. He evidently saw she had lost all her strength; she was lying down like a poor half-dead little animal, and only expecting her life to be taken by the hands of her conqueror; but instead of being so cruel, he began to caress her. “Beautiful Hind,” said he, “do not be afraid; I will take thee with me, and thou shalt follow me everywhere.” He cut some branches from the trees, twisted them skilfully, and covered them with moss; scattered roses upon them, which he gathered from some bushes in full blossom, then took the Hind in his arms, laid her head upon his neck, and placed her gently upon the boughs; after which he sat down near her, seeking from time to time the finest grass, which he gave to her, and which she ate from his hand.

The Prince continued to talk to her, although he was persuaded she did not understand him. Notwithstanding the pleasure she felt in looking at him, she became very uneasy as night was approaching. “What will be the consequence,” said she to herself, “should he see me suddenly change my form? he will be alarmed and fly from me; or if he do not fly from me, what have I not to fear then alone in this forest?” She could think of nothing but how to escape, when he furnished her with the means himself; for fearing she might want to drink, he went to find some streamlet that he could lead her to. While he was seeking it, she quickly stole away, and safely reached the cottage where Giroflée was waiting for her. She again threw herself upon her bed, night came, her transformation ended, and she appeared in her own form. “Wouldst thou believe it, my dear Giroflée,” said she, “my Prince Guerrier is in this forest; it is he who has been hunting me for the last two days, and who, having caught me, caressed me a thousand times. Ah, how untruthful is the portrait they have brought me of him! he is a hundred times handsomer. All the disorder of an eager huntsman’s dress, far from detracting from his appearance, gives a charm to it which I cannot explain. Is it not most unfortunate, that I am compelled to fly from this Prince, — he whom my parents have chosen for me, — he who loves me, and whom I love? A wicked fairy must needs take a dislike to me, from the day I was born, and afflict me for the rest of my life.” She began to weep; Giroflée tried to console her, and encourage a hope that her sorrow would soon be changed to happiness.

The Prince returned to his dear Hind, as soon as he had found a spring, but she was no longer where he had left her. He sought for her everywhere, but in vain; he felt as much vexed with her as though she possessed reason. “What,” exclaimed he, “shall I always have cause to complain of this deceitful and unfaithful sex?” He returned to the good woman’s cottage very melancholy; he related to his friend the adventure with the Hind, and accused her of ingratitude. Becafigue could not help laughing at the Prince’s rage; he advised him to punish the Hind when he met with her again. “I shall only remain here for that purpose,” replied the Prince; “we will afterwards continue our journey.”

Daylight returned, and with it the Princess resumed her form of the White Hind. She knew not what to do, whether to seek the places the Prince generally frequented, or to take an opposite direction and avoid him. She decided upon the latter, and went very far away; but the young Prince, who was as cunning as she was, did the same thing, firmly believing she would adopt this little *ruse*, so that he discovered her in the thickest part of the forest. She was just fancying herself perfectly safe, when she caught sight of him. She instantly bounded up, and jumped over the bushes, and, as if she feared him still more on account of the trick she had played him the preceding evening, she flew faster than the winds; but at the moment she was crossing a path, he took so good an aim at her, that he lodged an arrow in her leg. She was in violent pain, her strength failed her, and she fell.

Cruel and barbarous Cupid, where wert thou then? What! couldst thou suffer an incomparable girl to be wounded by her affectionate lover? The sad catastrophe was inevitable, for the Fairy of the Fountain intended this to be the end of the adventure. The Prince came up; he was sensibly affected to see the Hind bleeding. He gathered some herbs, bound them round her leg, to alleviate the pain of the wound, and made her a new bed of branches. He placed the Hind’s head upon his knees. “Dost thou not deserve what has happened to thee, little runaway?” said he. “What did I yesterday, that thou shouldst have abandoned me? It shall not happen again to-day; I will take thee with me.” The Hind did not answer: what could she say? She was wrong, and could not speak; for it does not always follow that those who are wrong will be silent. The Prince lavished a thousand caresses on her. “How grieved I am that I have wounded thee!” said he; “thou wilt hate me, and I would thou shouldst love me.” To hear him, it seemed as if some genius secretly inspired him with all he said to the Hind. At last the time arrived for returning to the old woman’s; he lifted up his game, and was much inconvenienced by carrying it, leading it, and sometimes by dragging it.

She had not the slightest wish to go with him. “What will become of me,” said she, “alone with this Prince? Ah! I would rather die!” She made herself as heavy as she could and burdensome to him: he was streaming with perspiration, from fatigue; and although he was now not far from the cottage, he felt that without assistance he could not get his captive home. He went to seek his faithful Becafigue; but before he quitted the Hind, he tied it by several ribands to the foot of a tree, that it might not get away.

Alas! who could have thought that the most beautiful Princess in the world should have been treated thus by a Prince who adored her! She tried in vain to break the ribands; her efforts in doing so drew the knots still tighter, and she had nearly strangled herself with a slip-knot he had unluckily made; when Giroflée, tired of being so long shut up in her chamber, walked out for a little air, and passed by the spot where the White Hind was struggling. What was her distress when she perceived her dear mistress! She could not untie the ribands fast enough, which were knotted in different places; and the Prince arrived with Becafigue just as she was about to lead away the Hind. “Whatever respect I may have for you, Madam,” said the Prince to her, “you must permit me to object to the robbery you would commit. I have wounded this Hind; she is my property; I love her. I entreat you to leave her to me.” “My lord,” civilly replied

Giroflée (for she was very polite and gracious), “this Hind belonged to me before she did to you. I would much sooner give up my life than her; and if you would be convinced how well she knows me, I only beg of you to give her a little liberty. Come, my little white darling,” added she, “embrace me;” the Hind jumped on her neck. “Kiss my right cheek;” she obeyed. “Feel my heart;” she put her foot there. “Sigh;” she sighed. The Prince could no longer doubt what Giroflée told him. “I restore her to you,” said he, generously, “but, I own, not without much regret.” She instantly departed with the Hind.

They knew not that the Prince lived in their house; he followed them at a distance, and was surprised to see them enter the good old woman’s habitation. He went in very shortly after them, and, urged by a movement of curiosity which the White Hind had given rise to, he inquired who the young woman was. The old dame replied, that she did not know; that she had taken her to lodge there with her Hind; that she paid her well; and that she lived very retired. Becafigue asked, which was her chamber. She told him it was so close to his, that it was only separated by a partition.

When the Prince withdrew, his confidant told him he was the most mistaken of men, if that girl had not lived with the Princess Désirée; that he had seen her at the palace, when he was there as ambassador. “What sad recollections you awake in my mind!” said the Prince; “and by what chance is she here?” “I am ignorant of that, my Lord,” added Becafigue; but I wish to see her again, and as it is merely a slight piece of carpenter’s work that separates us, I am going to make a hole in it.” “Mere useless curiosity,” sadly replied the Prince; for Becafigue’s words had renewed all his grief: and with that he opened the window, which looked into the forest, and sat at it, ruminating.

In the meanwhile Becafigue set to work, and in a very short time had made a hole sufficiently large to perceive the charming Princess, dressed in a robe of silver brocade, with crimson flowers embroidered with gold and emeralds. Her hair fell in large curls upon the most beautiful neck in the world, her complexion was brilliant, and her eyes were entrancing. Giroflée was on her knees before her, binding up her arm, from which the blood was flowing profusely. They both of them appeared much perplexed by this wound. “Leave me to die,” said the Princess; “death would be sweeter to me than the deplorable life I lead. What! must I become a Hind every day, to see him to whom I am betrothed, without speaking to him, without informing him of my fatal accident? Alas! if thou knewest all the tender things he said to me while in my other shape; how sweet the tone of his voice; how noble and fascinating his manners; thou wouldst pity much more than thou dost now my inability to enlighten him as to my fate.”

One may easily imagine Becafigue’s astonishment at all that he saw and heard. He ran to the Prince — he dragged him from the window, with inexpressible transports of joy. “Ah! my Lord,” said he, “lose no time in approaching that partition; you will then see the real original of the portrait which charmed you.” The Prince looked through the aperture, and immediately recognised the Princess. He would have died with delight, if he had not feared he was deceived by some enchantment; for how could he reconcile such a surprising adventure with the existence of Longue-épine and her mother, who were imprisoned in the Castle of the Three Points, and who had taken the name, one of Désirée, and the other of her lady-in-waiting.

His passion, however, flattered him. We are naturally inclined to persuade ourselves of the truth of that which we desire; and upon such an occasion, one must die with impatience, or obtain an explanation. Without a moment’s delay, he went and knocked gently at the door where the Princess was. Giroflée, never doubting but that it was the good old woman, and needing her assistance to bandage her mistress’s arm, hastened to open the door; and was much surprised to see the Prince, who entered, and threw himself at the feet of Désirée. The transports which excited him interfered so much to prevent his making any connected speech, that, notwithstanding the pains I have taken to ascertain exactly what he said in these first moments, I have found no one who could much enlighten me on the subject. The Princess felt equally perplexed to answer him; but Love, who often acts as interpreter to dumb people, became a third in the party, and persuaded them both that nothing had ever been said so well, or at least nothing so touching and so tender. Tears, sighs, vows, and even some sweet smiles, succeeded. Thus passed the night. Daylight appeared without Désirée ever thinking about it; and she did not, as usual, take the form of a Hind. Nothing could equal her joy at this discovery; she was too fond of the Prince not to make him the partaker of her delight. She then recited her history to him, which she did with a natural grace and eloquence that far surpassed that of the most skilful narrator.

“What!” exclaimed the Prince, “my charming Princess! is it you I wounded under the form of a white hind? What can I do to expiate so great a crime? Will it suffice to die with grief before your eyes?” He was so sadly afflicted that his distress was painfully visible in his countenance. Désirée suffered more from that than from her wound. She assured him it was a mere trifle, and that she could not help blessing an accident which procured her so much happiness.

The manner in which she spoke to him was so kind, that he could not doubt of her love for him. To explain everything in his turn, he told her the trick that Longue-épine and her mother had played him; adding, that he must hasten to send and tell the King his father the happiness that had occurred to him in finding her; for that he was going to war, on account of the insult he believed had been offered him. Désirée begged him to write by Becafigue, — he was about to obey her, when a shrill noise of trumpets, clarions, kettle and other drums, echoed through the forest; they heard also the tramp of many people passing near the cottage. The Prince looked out of the window; he recognised several officers, his own colours and standards. He ordered them to halt and wait for him.

Never was any surprise more agreeable than that experienced by this army; they all imagined that their Prince was going to lead them, and be revenged upon Désirée’s father. The Prince’s father, notwithstanding his great age, was at their head. He travelled in a litter of velvet embroidered in gold, followed by an open chariot, in which was Longue-épine and her mother. Prince Guerrier, catching sight of the litter, ran to it; and the King, holding out his arms to him, embraced him with a thousand tokens of paternal affection. “And whence come you, my dear son?” cried he. “How could you possibly deliver me up to the grief your absence has caused me?” “My Lord,” said the Prince, “deign to listen to me.” The King immediately descended from his litter, and retiring into a side path, his son told him of his fortunate meeting with the Princess, and Longue-épine’s imposture.

The King, enchanted at this event, raised his hands and eyes gratefully to Heaven; at the same moment he saw the Princess Désirée, more beautiful and more brilliant than all the stars together. She was mounted on a superb horse, which curvetted at every step; a hundred various-coloured feathers adorned her head, and her dress was enriched with the largest diamonds in the world. She was attired as a huntress. Giroflée, who followed her, was scarcely less splendid. All this was the effect of the fairy Tulip’s protection: she had managed it all with care and success. The pretty house in the wood was built by her, expressly for the Princess; and, under the disguise of an old woman, she had entertained her for several days.

As soon as the Prince had recognised his troops, and gone to seek the King his father, the Fairy entered Désirée’s chamber. She breathed upon her arm and cured her wound. She then gave her the rich dress in which she appeared before the King, who was so charmed he could scarcely believe her to be mortal. He said all that one can imagine most courteous upon such an occasion, and entreated her not to delay making his subjects happy by becoming their Queen. “For,” continued he, “I am resolved to give up my kingdom to Prince Guerrier, to render him more worthy of you.” Désirée replied with all the politeness that might be expected from so well-bred a person; then, casting her eyes upon the two prisoners who were in the chariot, and who hid their faces with their hands, she had the generosity to ask for their pardon, and that they might be sent in the same chariot wherever they would wish to go. The King consented to her request; not without admiring and praising her for her kindness of heart.

The army was ordered to march back again. The Prince mounted a horse, that he might accompany his lovely Princess. They were received in the capital city with a thousand shouts of joy; everything was prepared for the nuptials, which were rendered more solemn by the presence of the six benignant fairies who loved the Princess. They made her the richest presents that could possibly be imagined; among others, the magnificent palace, where the Queen had been to see them, appeared suddenly in the air, carried by fifty thousand Cupids, who placed it in a beautiful plain on the bank of the river. No greater gift could possibly be bestowed upon her.

The faithful Becafigue entreated his master to speak to Giroflée for him, that he might be united to her when he married the Princess. The Prince did so willingly; that amiable girl was very happy to meet with so advantageous an establishment on her arrival in a foreign kingdom. The fairy Tulip, who was even more liberal than her sisters, presented her with four gold mines in the Indies, that her husband should not be able to say he was richer than herself. The Prince’s wedding festivities continued for several months — each day produced a fresh amusement, — and the adventures of the White Hind were sung throughout the world.

20

THE WHITE CAT

Once upon a time there was a King, who had three brave and handsome sons. He was afraid they might become anxious to reign during his lifetime. There were even some whispers in circulation that they sought to make partizans with a view of depriving him of his kingdom. The King felt he was growing old; but his mental capacity being undiminished, he had no fancy for vacating in their favour a place he filled so worthily. He thought, therefore, that the best way to live in peace, was by amusing them with promises which he could always elude the performance of. He called them into his closet, and after having spoken very kindly to them he added, “You will agree with me, my dear children, that my great age forbids my applying myself to the business of the State with so much assiduity as formerly. I fear my subjects may suffer from this circumstance. I wish to transfer my crown to one of you; but to deserve such a gift, it is but just that you should on your parts seek to please me. Now, as I contemplate retiring into the country, it appears to me that a pretty, faithful, and intelligent little dog would be an excellent companion for me. So in lieu of preferring my eldest to my youngest son, I declare to you, that whichever of you three shall bring me the handsomest little dog shall forthwith become my heir.”

The Princes were exceedingly surprised at the inclination the King expressed for a little dog; but the two youngest saw they might find their account in it, and accepted with pleasure the commission to go in search of one. The eldest was too timid or too respectful to urge his own right. They took leave of the King, who distributed amongst them money and jewels, adding that the following year, without fail, on the same day and hour they would return and bring him their little dogs.

Before setting out, they repaired to a castle within a league of the city, assembled therein their most intimate friends, and gave splendid banquets, at which the three brothers pledged to each other an eternal friendship, and declared that they would act in the affair in question without jealousy or mortification, and that the successful candidate would be always ready to share his fortune with the others. At length they departed, agreeing to meet on their return at the same castle, thence to proceed together to the King. They declined having any followers, and changed their names that they might not be known.

Each took a different road: the two eldest met with many adventures; but I shall only recount those of the youngest. He was well-mannered, of a gay and joyous temperament, had an admirable head, a noble figure, regular features, fine teeth, was very skilful in all exercise that became a prince, sang agreeably, touched the lute and the theorbo with a delicacy that charmed every one; could paint; in one word, was highly accomplished; and as to his courage, it amounted to intrepidity.

Scarcely a day passed that he did not buy dogs, big or little: greyhounds, mastiffs, bloodhounds, pointers, spaniels, water-dogs, lap-dogs; the instant he found one handsomer than the other, he let the first go to keep the new purchase; for it would have been impossible for him to lead about by himself thirty or forty thousand dogs, and he persevered in his determination to have neither gentlemen, nor valets de chambre, nor pages in his train. He continued his journey without having any fixed point to proceed to, when night, accompanied with thunder and rain, surprised him in a forest through which he was no longer able to trace a path.

He took the first he could find, and after having walked a long way, he saw a glimmer of light, which convinced him that there was some habitation near him in which he might find shelter till the morning. Guided by the light he came to the gate of the most magnificent castle that could ever be imagined. This gate was of gold covered with carbuncles, the pure and vivid light of which illuminated all the neighbourhood. It was this light which the Prince had perceived at a great distance. The walls were of transparent porcelain, of several colours, on which were represented the histories of all the Fairies from the beginning of the world to that day. The famous adventures of Peau d’Ane, Finette, the Orange-tree, Gracieuse, the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, Green Serpent, and a hundred others, were not forgotten. He was delighted to meet amongst them, with Prince Sprite; for he was his uncle, according to the fashion of Brittany. The rain and storm prevented his staying longer on a spot where he was being wetted to the skin; besides which he could not see anything beyond where the light of the carbuncles extended to.

He returned to the golden gate. He saw a kid’s foot attached to a chain of diamonds. He admired all this magnificence, and the security in which the owners of the castle appeared to live. “For, after all,” said he, “what is to prevent thieves from coming and cutting down this chain and pulling the carbuncles off the gate? They would enrich themselves for ever.”

He pulled the kid’s foot and immediately heard a bell ring, which seemed by its sound to be of gold or of silver; a moment after, the gate was opened without his perceiving anything except a dozen of hands in the air, each of which held a flambeau. He was so astonished that he hesitated to advance; when he felt other hands which pushed him forwards with gentle violence. He moved on, therefore, with some distrust, and at all risks, keeping his hand on the hilt of his sword; but on entering a vestibule entirely encrusted with porphyry and lapis lazuli, he heard two enchanting voices which sang these words:

START NOT at the hands you see,
Nor fear in this delightful place
Aught, except a lovely face,
If from Love your heart would flee.

HE COULD NOT BELIEVE that he was invited so graciously for the purpose of eventually injuring him; so that, feeling himself pushed towards a large gate of coral, which opened directly that he approached it, he entered a saloon of mother-of-pearl, and afterwards passed through several apartments variously ornamented, and so rich with paintings and jewels, that he was perfectly enchanted with them. Thousands and thousands of lights, from the vaulted roof of the saloon down to the floor, illuminated a portion of the other apartments, which were also filled with chandeliers, girandoles, and stages covered with wax-candles; in fact, the magnificence was so great that it was not easy to imagine the possibility of it.

After having passed through sixty rooms, the hands that conducted him stopped him. He saw a large easy-chair moving by itself towards the fireplace. At the same moment the fire was lighted, and the hands, which appeared to him very handsome, white, small, plump, and well-shaped, began to undress him; for he was wet through, as I have already told you, and they were afraid he would catch cold. They presented him, still without his seeing any one, with a shirt as fine as if it was for a wedding-day, and a morning gown of some rich stuff shot with gold, and embroidered with little emeralds in cyphers. The bodiless hands moved a table close to him on which his toilette was set out. Nothing could be more magnificent. They combed him with a lightness and a skill which was very agreeable to him. Finally, they dressed him again, but not in his own clothes; they brought him others much richer. He observed with silent wonder all that took place, and occasionally felt some slight alarm, which he could not altogether conquer.

After they had powdered, curled, perfumed, adorned, attired, and made him look handsomer than Adonis, the hands led him into a hall superbly gilt and furnished; around it were represented the stories of all the most famous cats, Rodillardus hung by the heels in the Council of Rats, Puss in Boots, Marquis of Carabas, The Writing Cat, The Cat that became a Woman, Witches in the shape of Cats, their Sabbat, and all its ceremonies. In short, nothing was ever more curious than these paintings.

The cloth was laid, and there were two covers, each accompanied by its golden *cadenas*. The buffet astonished him, by the quantity of cups upon it of rock crystal and a thousand rare stones. The Prince could not imagine for whom the two covers were placed, when he saw several cats take their places in a small orchestra, fitted up expressly for them. One held a music-book, the notes in which were of the most extraordinary kind; another a roll of paper to beat time with; and the rest had little guitars.

Suddenly each began to mew in a different tone, and to scratch the strings of their guitars with their claws. It was the strangest music that had ever been heard. The Prince would have thought himself in the infernal regions if he had not found the palace too marvellously beautiful to permit him to fall into such an error; but he stopped his ears and laughed heartily at the sight of the various postures and grimaces of these novel musicians.

He was meditating on the different things that had already happened to him in the chateau, when he saw a little figure enter the hall, scarcely a cubit in height. This poppet was covered with a long black crape veil. Two cats preceded it dressed in deep mourning and wearing cloaks and swords; a numerous train of cats followed, some carrying rat-traps full of rats, and others mice in cages.

The Prince could not recover from his astonishment; he knew not what to think. The little black figure approached, and lifting its veil he perceived the most beautiful little white cat that ever was or ever will be. She had a very youthful and very melancholy air, and commenced a mewing so soft and sweet, that it went straight to the heart. “Son of a King,” said she to the Prince, “thou art welcome; my mewing majesty beholds thee with pleasure.” “Madam Cat,” said the Prince, “it is very generous of you to receive me with so much attention; but you do not appear to me to be an ordinary little animal. The gift you have of speech, and the superb castle you inhabit, are sufficient evidence to the contrary.” “Son of a King,” rejoined the White Cat, “I pray thee cease to pay me compliments. I am plain in my language and my manners; but I have a kind heart. Come,” continued she, “let them serve supper and bid the concert cease; for the Prince does not understand what they are singing.” “And are they then singing any words, Madam?” inquired he. “Undoubtedly,” she answered; “we have poets here of considerable talent, and if you remain amongst us some little time, you will be convinced of the fact.” “It is only for you to say so and to be believed,” replied the Prince politely; “but I must also consider you, Madam, a cat of a very rare description.”

The supper was served up. It was placed on the table by the hands of invisible bodies. First, there were two soups, one of pigeons and the other of very fat mice. The sight of the latter prevented the Prince from touching the former, believing that the same cook had concocted both; but the little cat, who guessed from the face he made, what was passing in his mind, assured him that their meals had been cooked separately, and that he might eat what was set before him with the perfect assurance that there were neither rats nor mice in it.

The Prince did not wait to be told twice, feeling satisfied that the pretty little cat had no wish to deceive him. He observed that she had on her paw a miniature set in a bracelet. This surprised him. He begged her to show it to him; supposing it to be that of Master Minagrobis. He was astonished to find it the portrait of a young man so handsome, that it was almost incredible nature could have formed such a being, and who resembled himself so greatly, that he could not have been better painted. The White Cat sighed, and becoming still more melancholy, she observed a profound silence. The Prince saw clearly that there was something extraordinary connected with the portrait, but did not venture to ask any questions, for fear of displeasing the cat or afflicting her. He entertained her with the relation of all the news he was in possession of, and found her intimately acquainted with the various interests of princes and other things passing in the world. After supper the White Cat invited her guest to enter a saloon, in which there was a theatre, wherein twelve cats and twelve monkeys danced a ballet. One party was dressed as Moors, the other as Chinese. It is easy to imagine the leaps and capers they executed; and every now and then they gave each other a scratch or two. Thus finished the evening. The White Cat said "Good night" to her guest; the hands who had been his conductors so far, took hold of him again and led him into an apartment quite different from any he had seen. It was not so magnificent as it was elegant. The hangings were all of butterflies' wings; the various colours of which formed a thousand different flowers. There were also the feathers of exceedingly rare birds, and which, perhaps, have never been seen elsewhere. The bed-furniture was of gauze, tied up with a thousand bows of riband. There were large mirrors from the ceiling to the floor, with frames of chased gold, representing a thousand little Cupids.

The Prince went to bed without saying a word, for there were no means of talking with the hands that waited upon him; he slept little, and was awakened by a confused noise. The hands immediately lifted him out of bed, and dressed him in a hunting habit. He looked into the court-yard of the castle, and perceived more than five hundred cats, some of whom led greyhounds in the slips, others were blowing the horn. It was a grand fête-day. White Cat was going to hunt, and wished the Prince to accompany her. The officious hands presented him with a wooden horse, which went full gallop and kept up the pace wonderfully. He made some objection to mounting it, saying that it wanted but little to make him a knight-errant like Don Quixote; but his resistance was useless; they placed him on the wooden horse. The housings and saddle of it were embroidered with gold and diamonds. White Cat rode a monkey, the handsomest and proudest that had ever been seen. She had thrown off her long veil, and wore a dragoon's cap, which made her look so bold that she frightened all the mice in the neighbourhood. Never was there a more agreeable hunting party. The cats outran the rabbits and hares, and as fast as they caught them White Cat had the *curée* made in her presence, and a thousand skilful feats were performed, to the great gratification of the whole company. The birds, on their part, were by no means safe, for the kittens climbed the trees, and the great monkey carried White Cat up even to the nests of the eagles, to place at her mercy their little highnesses the eaglets.

The hunt being over, the White Cat took a horn, about the length of one's finger, but which gave out a tone so clear and loud that it was easily heard ten leagues off. As soon as she had sounded two or three flourishes, she was surrounded by all the cats in the country. Some appeared in the air, riding in chariots; others came in boats by water; in short, so many were never seen together before. They were nearly all dressed in different fashions, and, attended by this splendid train, she returned to the castle, requesting the Prince to accompany her. He was perfectly willing to do so, notwithstanding that so much caterwauling smacked a little of a witch's festival, and that the talking cat astonished him beyond all the rest.

As soon as she reached home, she put on her great black veil. She supped with the Prince, who was hungry, and did justice to the good cheer. They brought him some liqueurs, which he sipped with much satisfaction, and they immediately effaced all recollection of the little dog he was to find for the King. He no longer thought of anything but mewing with White Cat, that is to say, remaining her kind and faithful companion. He passed his days in agreeable amusements, sometimes fishing, sometimes hunting. After which, there were ballets, carousals, and a thousand other things which entertained him exceedingly. Even the beautiful cat herself frequently composed verses and sonnets so full of passionate tenderness, that it seemed as if she had a susceptible heart, and that no one could speak as she did without being in love. But her secretary, who was an old cat, wrote such a vile scrawl, that, although her works have been preserved, it is impossible to read them.

The Prince had forgotten even the land of his birth. The hands, of which I have spoken, continued to wait upon him. He regretted sometimes that he was not a cat, to pass his whole life in such excellent company. “Alas,” said he to White Cat, “how wretched it will make me to leave you! I love you so dearly! — Either become a woman, or make me a cat.” She was amused by his wish, and returned him some mysterious answers, out of which he could scarcely make anything. A year flies away quickly when one has neither care nor pain, when one is merry and in good health. White Cat knew the time at which the Prince was bound to return, and as he thought no more of it, she reminded him. “Dost know,” said she, “that thou hast only three days left to look for the little dog that the King, thy father, wishes for, and that thy brothers have already found several very beautiful?” The Prince’s memory returned to him, and, astonished at his negligence, “What secret spell,” he exclaimed, “could have made me forget a thing, the most important to me in the world? — My honour and my fortune are staked upon it. Where shall I find such a dog as will win a kingdom for me, and a horse swift enough to perform such a journey in so short a time?” He began to be very anxious and sorrowful.

White Cat said to him, with much sweetness, “Son of a King, do not distress thyself, I am thy friend. Thou mayest yet remain here one day longer; and, although it is five hundred leagues from this to your country, the good wooden horse will carry you there in less than twelve hours.” “I thank you, beautiful Cat,” said the Prince; “but it is not sufficient for me merely to return to my father; I must take him a little dog.” “Hold,” said White Cat, “here is an acorn which contains one more beautiful than the dog-star.” “Oh, Madam Cat,” cried the Prince, “your majesty jests with me.” “Put the acorn to your ear,” rejoined she, “and you will hear it bark.” He obeyed her, and immediately the little dog went “bow, wow,” which transported the Prince with delight, for such a dog as could be contained in an acorn was certain to be very diminutive indeed.

He was going to open the acorn, so eager was he to see the dog, but White Cat told him that it might catch cold on the journey, and it would be better for him to wait till he was in the presence of his royal father. He thanked her a thousand times, and took a most tender leave of her. “I assure you,” he added, “that the days I have passed with you have flown so quickly, that I regret in some measure leaving you behind me; and although you are a sovereign here, and all the cats that compose your court possess much more wit and gallantry than ours, I do not hesitate to invite you to come with me.” The Cat replied to this invitation only by a deep sigh.

They parted: the Prince was the first to reach the castle where he had appointed to meet his brothers. They arrived shortly after him, and were surprised to see a wooden horse in the court-yard which curvetted with more grace than any one sees in the riding schools.

The Prince came forward to receive them, they embraced several times, and recounted their travels to each other; but our Prince kept his principal adventures a secret from his brothers, and showed them an ugly turnspit, observing, that he thought it so beautiful that he had selected it for presentation to the King. Notwithstanding the friendship that existed between the brothers, the two eldest felt a secret joy at the bad taste of their younger brother. Being seated at table, they trod on each other's toes, by way of signifying that they had not much to fear on that account.

The next morning they set out together in the same coach. The King's two eldest sons carried in baskets some little dogs, so beautiful and delicate that one could scarcely venture to touch them. The youngest son carried the poor turnspit, which was so filthy that nobody could bear the sight of it. As soon as they set foot in the palace, everybody surrounded them to welcome them back to court. They entered the King's apartment. He was puzzled in whose favour to decide, for the little dogs which were presented to him by the two eldest were so nearly equal to each other in beauty; and they had already begun to dispute the right of succession, when their younger brother reconciled them by taking out of his pocket the acorn which the White Cat had given him. He opened it immediately, and then everybody beheld a little dog lying upon cotton. It passed through a ring without touching any part of it. The Prince placed it on the floor, and it began directly to dance a saraband with the castagnettes, as lightly as the most celebrated Spanish dancer. It was of a thousand different colours; its hair and its ears swept the ground. The King was dumbfounded, for it was impossible to find a word to say against the beauty of Toutou. Nevertheless, he was by no means inclined to resign his crown. The smallest fleur-de-lis in its circle was dearer to him than all the dogs in the universe. He told his children, therefore, that he was gratified by the trouble they had taken; but that they had succeeded so well in fulfilling the first request he had made to them, that he should test their ability again before he performed his promise. He therefore gave them a year to travel over land and sea, in quest of a piece of cloth so fine that it would pass through the eye of a needle used to make Venetian point-lace with. They were all three exceedingly chagrined to be obliged to go upon a new voyage of discovery. The two Princes, whose dogs were less beautiful than that of the youngest, consented. Each took his own way, without so many professions of friendship as before, for the turnspit had rather cooled their ardour.

Our Prince remounted his wooden horse, and without wishing to find other assistance than he might hope for from the friendship of White Cat, he set out at full speed, and returned to the castle where he had been so kindly received by her. He found all the doors open. The windows, the roofs, the towers, and the walls were all illuminated by a hundred thousand lamps, which produced a wonderful effect. The hands which had waited so well upon him advanced to meet him, and took the bridle of the excellent wooden horse, which they led to the stable, while the Prince entered White Cat’s apartments.

She was lying in a little basket on a very neat mattrass of white satin. She was in her morning cap, and seemed low-spirited, but when she perceived the Prince she cut a thousand capers, and played as many gambols to testify her delight to him. “Whatever reason I had to hope you would return,” said she to him, “I confess, Son of a King, that I dared not flatter myself by indulging in it, and I am generally so unfortunate in matters that concern me that this is an agreeable surprise.” The grateful Prince caressed her a thousand times. He recounted to her the success of his journey, which she knew perhaps better than he did, and that the king wanted a piece of cloth which could pass through the eye of a needle; that in truth he believed it was impossible to find such a thing, but that he had not hesitated to make the attempt, relying implicitly upon her friendship and assistance. White Cat, assuming a more serious air, told him it was a matter that demanded consideration; that, fortunately, there were some cats in her castle who spun exceedingly well; that she would put a claw to it herself, and forward the work as much as possible, so that he might rest contented without going further in search of what he would more readily find in her castle than in any other place in the world.

The hands appeared, bearing flambeaux, and the Prince, following them with White Cat, entered a magnificent gallery running along the side of a large river, on which there was an astonishing display of fireworks. Four cats were to be burnt there, that had been tried and sentenced in due form. They were accused of having eaten the roast meat provided for the White Cat’s supper, her cheese, her milk, and even of having conspired against her life with Martafax and L’Hermite, two famous rats of that country, and held as such by La Fontaine, a very faithful historian: but with all that, it was well known there was a great deal of cabal in the matter, and that the majority of the witnesses had been tampered with. However this might be, the Prince obtained their pardon. The fireworks did no injury to any one, and never yet were seen such splendid sky-rockets.

After this, a very nice supper was served, which gave the Prince more gratification than the fireworks, for he was very hungry, and the wooden horse had brought him at such a pace that he had never ridden so hard before in his life. The following days were passed like those that had preceded them, in a thousand various entertainments with which the ingenious White Cat regaled her guest. Our Prince is probably the first mortal who ever found so much amusement amongst cats, without any other society.

It is true that White Cat was possessed of agreeable, sweet, and almost universal talent. She was wiser than a cat is allowed to be. The Prince was sometimes astonished at her knowledge. “No,” said he, “it is not natural for you to possess all these wonderful qualities I discover in you. If you love me, charming Pussy, explain to me by what miracle you are enabled to think and speak so perfectly, that you might be elected a member of the most famous Academy of Arts and Sciences?” “Cease to question me, Son of a King,” said she to him; “I am not allowed to answer; and thou mayest carry thy conjectures as far as thou wilt without my contradicting thee. Let it suffice that I have always a velvet paw for thee, and that I take an affectionate interest in all that concerns thee."

The second year slipped away as insensibly as the first. The Prince could scarcely think of anything that the diligent hands did not instantly provide him with, whether books, jewels, pictures, antique medals; in short, he had but to say, I want a certain gem that is in the cabinet of the Great Mogul or of the King of Persia, or such a statue in Corinth or any part of Greece, and he saw it instantly before him, without knowing how it came or who brought it. This was not without its charms, and as a relaxation, it is sometimes very agreeable to see oneself the possessor of the finest treasures in the world.

White Cat, who was ever watchful for the Prince's welfare, warned him that the hour of departure was approaching, that he might make himself easy about the piece of cloth which he required, and that she had made a most wonderful one for him. She added, that it was her intention, this time, to furnish him with an equipage worthy his birth; and, without waiting for his reply, she compelled him to look into the great court-yard of the castle. He saw in it an open calêche, of gold, enamelled flame-colour, with a thousand gallant devices, which satisfied the mind as much as the eye. It was drawn by twelve horses as white as snow, four-and-four abreast, their harness being of flame-coloured velvet embroidered with diamonds and plated with gold. The calêche was lined to match, and a hundred coaches, each with eight horses, filled with noblemen of high bearing, very superbly attired, followed the calêche. There was also an escort of a thousand body-guards, whose uniforms were so covered with embroidery that you could not see the stuff they were made of. It was a remarkable feature of this cavalcade that the portrait of White Cat was to be observed in every part of it, either in the devices on the calêche or on the uniforms of the body-guard, or attached by a riband to the doublets of those who formed the train, as if it were a new order with which she had decorated them.

“Go,” said she to the Prince, “go and appear at the court of the king, thy father, in such sumptuous state, that thy magnificence may make an impression upon him and prevent his again refusing to bestow on thee the crown thou deservest. Here is a walnut. Crack it but in his presence, and thou wilt find in it the piece of cloth thou hast asked me for.” “Amiable White Cat,” said he to her, “I protest to you that I am so penetrated by your bounties, that, if you would consent, I should prefer passing my life here with you to all the grandeur which I have reason to expect elsewhere.” “Son of a King,” replied she, “I am convinced of the kindness of thy heart. It is a rare article amongst princes. They would be loved by everybody, yet not love any one themselves. But thou art a proof that the rule has its exception. I give thee credit for the affection thou displayest for a little White Cat that after all is good for nothing but to catch mice.” The Prince kissed her paw and departed. We should have some difficulty in believing the speed with which he travelled if we were not already aware of the way in which the wooden horse had carried him in less than two days a distance of five hundred leagues from the castle; so that, impelled by the same power, these other steeds travelled so swiftly that they were only four and twenty hours on the road, stopping nowhere till they reached the King’s palace, to which the two elder brothers had already repaired, and, not seeing their youngest, congratulated themselves on his negligence, and whispered to each other, “Here’s a piece of good luck! He is either dead or very ill. He will not be our rival in the important business which is about to be decided.” They immediately displayed their cloths, which were, in truth, so fine, that they could pass them through the eye of a large needle, but not through that of a small one; and the King, very glad of this pretext for refusal, produced the needle he had previously selected, and which the magistrates, by his order, had brought out of the City Treasury, wherein it had been carefully kept in the meanwhile.

There was much murmuring at this objection. The friends of the Princes, and particularly those of the eldest, for his cloth was of the finest texture, protested that it was a downright piece of chicanery, in which there was equal ingenuity and Normanism. The King's parasites contended that he was only bound by the conditions he had proposed. At length, to settle the matter, a fine flourish was heard of trumpets, kettle-drums, and hautbois: it announced the arrival of our Prince in all his pomp and paraphernalia. The King and his two other sons were all equally astonished at such great magnificence.

After the Prince had respectfully saluted his father and embraced his brothers, he took out of a box covered with rubies, the walnut, which he cracked, expecting to find in it the boasted piece of cloth; but in lieu of it there was a hazel nut. He cracked that also, and was surprised to see in it a cherry-stone. Everybody looked at one another, and the King laughed in his sleeve, and jeered at the notion of his son being credulous enough to believe he could bring a whole piece of cloth in a walnut; but why should he not have believed it, when he had already given him a little dog that had come out of an acorn? He therefore cracked the cherry-stone, which was filled with its kernel. A great murmur then arose in the apartment. Nothing was heard but the opinion that the young Prince had been duped in this adventure. He made no answer to the raillery of the courtiers: he opened the kernel and found in it a grain of wheat, and in the grain of wheat a millet seed. Ah! In truth, he began to doubt, and muttered between his teeth, "White Cat, White Cat, thou hast fooled me!" At that moment he felt a cat's claw upon his hand, which gave him such a scratch that the blood came. He knew not whether this scratch was given to encourage or to dishearten him; nevertheless, he opened the millet seed, and great was the astonishment of the whole company when he drew out of it a piece of cloth four hundred ells in length, so wonderfully wrought, that all the birds, beasts, and fishes were seen in their natural colours, with the trees, fruits, and plants of the earth; the rocks, curiosities, and shells of the ocean; the sun, the moon, the great and lesser stars and planets of the sky. There were also the portraits of all the kings and other sovereigns at that time reigning in the world, with those of their wives, of their mistresses, of their children, and of all their subjects, not forgetting the tiniest little urchin; — every one, in his particular class of life, accurately represented, and dressed in the habit of his country.

When the King saw this piece of cloth, he became as pale as the Prince had become red with confusion at having been so long finding it. The needle was produced, and the Prince passed and repassed the cloth through the eye of it six times. The King and the two eldest Princes looked on in sullen silence, except when the beauty and curiosity of the cloth forced them occasionally to acknowledge there was nothing that could be compared to it in the universe.

The King heaved a deep sigh, and, turning towards his children, “Nothing,” said he, “could give me so much consolation in my old age as observing the deference paid by you to my wishes. I am therefore desirous to put your obedience to a new test. Go and travel for another year, and he who, at the end of it, brings back with him the most beautiful maiden, shall marry her, and be crowned King on his wedding day. It is, besides, necessary that my successor should marry, and I swear, I pledge my honour, that I will no longer defer bestowing the reward I have promised.”

All the injustice of this proceeding fell upon our Prince. The little dog and the piece of cloth were worth ten kingdoms rather than one, but he was so well bred that he would not dispute the will of his father, and without hesitation he reentered his calêche. All his train followed him, and he took the road back to his dear White Cat. She knew the day and the moment he would arrive. All the way was strewn with flowers; thousands of vases of perfume smoked on all sides, and particularly within the castle. White Cat was seated on a Persian carpet, under a pavilion of cloth of gold, in a gallery, from whence she could see him approach. He was received by the hands that had always attended upon him. All the cats climbed up into the gutters to welcome him with a desperate squalling.

“So, Son of a King,” said White Cat to him, “thou hast returned once more without the crown.” “Madam,” he replied, “your bounties placed me in a position to gain it; but I am convinced that it would have given the King more pain to part with it than I could have received pleasure from its possession.” “No matter,” said she, “thou must neglect nothing to deserve it. I will assist thee in this matter, and as thou art bound to take back with thee a beautiful maid to thy father’s court, I will find one for thee who shall gain thee the prize. In the meanwhile let us be merry. I have ordered a naval combat between my cats and the terrible rats of this country. My cats will perhaps be a little embarrassed, for they are afraid of the water; but otherwise they would have had too much the advantage, and one ought, as much as possible, to equalize matters.” The Prince admired the prudence of Madam Puss. He praised her exceedingly, and accompanied her to a terrace which overlooked the sea.

The ships in which the cats were embarked were large pieces of cork, on which they sailed conveniently enough. The rats had joined together several egg-shells, and of these their navy consisted. The battle was cruelly obstinate. The rats flung themselves into the water, and swam much better than the cats, so that they were victors and vanquished alternately twenty times; but Minagrobis, admiral of the feline fleet, reduced the rattish race to the greatest despair. He devoured the general of their forces, an old rat, of great experience, who had been round the world three times, in capital ships, in which he was neither captain nor common sailor, but simply a lickspit.

White Cat would not permit the utter destruction of all these poor unfortunate creatures. She was an acute politician, and calculated that if there were no more rats or mice left in the country, her subjects would live in a state of idleness, which might become highly prejudicial to her. The Prince passed this year as he had the two preceding, that is to say, in hunting, fishing, or chess, at which White Cat played exceedingly well. He could not help occasionally questioning her anew as to the miraculous power by which she was enabled to speak. He asked her whether she was a Fairy, or whether she had been transformed into a Cat; but as she never said anything but what she chose, she also never made answers that were not perfectly agreeable to her, and consequently her replies consisted of a number of little words which signified nothing particular, so that he clearly perceived she was not inclined to make him a partaker of her secret.

Nothing runs away faster than time passed without trouble or sorrow, and if the Cat had not been careful to remember the day when it was necessary the Prince should return to Court, it is certain that he would have absolutely forgotten it. She informed him on the evening preceding it that it only depended on himself to take home with him one of the most beautiful Princesses in the world: that the hour to destroy the fatal work of the Fairies had at length arrived, and for that purpose he must resolve to cut off her head and her tail, and fling them quickly into the fire. “I!” exclaimed the Prince, “Blanchette! — My love! — I be so barbarous as to kill you! Ah! you would doubtless try my heart; but rest assured it is incapable of forgetting the love and gratitude it owes you.” “No, Son of a King,” continued she, “I do not suspect thee of ingratitude. I know thy worth. It is neither thou nor I who in this affair can control our destiny. Do as I bid thee. We shall both of us begin to be happy, and, on the faith of a Cat of reputation and honour, thou wilt acknowledge that I am truly thy friend.”

The tears came several times into the eyes of the young Prince, at the mere thought of being obliged to cut off the head of his little kitten, so pretty and so amiable. He continued to say all the most tender things that he could think of, in order to induce her to spare him such a trial. She persisted in replying that she desired to die by his hand, and that it was the only means of preventing his brothers' obtaining the crown. In a word, she pressed him so earnestly, that all in a tremble he drew his sword, and, with a faltering hand, cut off the head and tail of his dearly beloved Cat. The next moment he beheld the most charming transformation that can be imagined. The body of White Cat increased in size and changed suddenly into that of a young maiden — one that cannot be described; there has never been any so perfect. Her eyes enraptured all hearts, and her sweetness held them captive. Her form was majestic, her carriage noble and modest, her spirit gentle, her manners engaging; in fact, she exceeded everything that was ever most amiable.

The Prince, at her sight, was so struck with surprise, and that surprise was so agreeable, that he fancied himself enchanted. He could not speak nor open his eyes wide enough to look at her. Tongue-tied, he was unable to express his astonishment; but it was still greater when he saw an extraordinary number of lords and ladies enter the apartment, who, each having his or her cat's skin flung over the shoulders, advanced, and threw themselves at the feet of their Queen, and testified their delight at beholding her restored to her natural form. She received them with marks of affection that sufficiently indicated the goodness of her heart, and after passing a short time in the circle, she desired them to leave her alone with the Prince, to whom she spoke as follows.

“Think not, my Lord, that I have been always a Cat, nor that my birth is an obscure one in the eyes of men. My father was king of six kingdoms; he loved my mother tenderly, and allowed her full liberty to do whatever she liked. Her ruling passion was travelling, and shortly before I was born she undertook a journey to a certain mountain of which she had heard a most surprising account. Whilst on her road thither she was told that near the spot she was then passing there was an old Fairy Castle, the most beautiful in the world; — at least so it was believed to be, from a tradition concerning it; for as no one entered it, they could not form an opinion; but they knew for certain that the Fairies had in their garden the finest, the most delicious and most delicate fruit that was ever eaten.

“The Queen, my mother, immediately took such a violent fancy to taste it, that she turned her steps towards the Castle. She arrived at the gate of that superb edifice, which blazed with gold and azure on all sides: but she knocked in vain. Nobody appeared to answer her; it seemed as if everybody in the Castle was dead. Her desire was increased by the difficulty. She sent for ladders in order that her attendants might get over the garden walls, and they would have succeeded in doing so if the said walls had not visibly increased in height though no one was seen to work at them. They lengthened the ladders by tying two or three together, but they broke under the weight of those who mounted them, and who either lamed or killed themselves.

“The Queen was in despair. She saw the great trees laden with fruit which looked delicious. She was determined to eat some, or die. She therefore had some very splendid tents pitched before the Castle, and remained there six weeks with all her court. She neither slept nor ate; she sighed unceasingly, she talked of nothing but the fruit of the inaccessible garden. At length she fell dangerously ill, without any one soever being able to find the least remedy for her complaint, for the inexorable Fairies had never so much as even appeared since she had established herself in front of the Castle. All her officers afflicted themselves exceedingly. Nothing was to be heard but sobs and sighs, while the dying Queen kept asking for fruit from her attendants, but cared for none except that which was denied her.

“One night, having felt a little drowsy, she saw on re-opening her eyes, a little old woman, ugly and decrepit, seated in an armchair at the head of her bed. She was surprised that her women had suffered a stranger to come so near her, when the old woman said to her, ‘We think thy majesty very obstinate in persisting in thy desire to eat of our fruit: but since thy precious life depends upon it, my sisters and I consent to give thee as much as thou canst carry away with thee, as well as what thou mayest eat upon the spot, provided thou wilt give us something in exchange.’ ‘Ah! my good mother,’ exclaimed the Queen; ‘speak! I will give you my kingdoms, my heart, my soul! I cannot purchase such fruit at too high a price.’ ‘We wish,’ said the Fairy, ‘for the daughter that thou art about to bring into the world. As soon as she is born, we will come and fetch her: she will be brought up amongst us. There are no virtues, no charms, no accomplishments, with which we will not endow her. In a word, she will be our child; we will make her happy: but observe, that thy majesty will see her no more until she be married. If this proposal is agreeable to thee, I will cure thee instantly, and lead thee into our orchard. Notwithstanding that it is night, thou wilt be able to see well enough to pick the fruit thou mayest fancy. If what I have said do not please thee, good night, Queen; I am going to bed.’

“‘Hard as the condition may be which you impose upon me,’ replied the Queen, ‘I will accept it sooner than die, for I am satisfied I could not live another day, and my infant would therefore perish with me. Cure me, wise Fairy,’ continued she, ‘and delay not a moment my enjoyment of the privilege you have promised to grant me.’

“The Fairy touched her with a little golden wand, saying, ‘Let thy majesty be free from all the ills that confine thee to this bed!’ It seemed immediately to the Queen as if some one were divesting her of a heavy and stiff robe which had oppressed her, and that some portions of it clung to her still. This was apparently in the places most affected by her disorder. She sent for all her ladies, and told them, with a smiling countenance, that she was quite well, that she was going to get up, and that at length the gates, so well bolted and barred, of the Fairy Palace, would be opened for her to enter and eat the fine fruit, and take away with her as much as she liked.

"There was not one of her ladies who did not believe the Queen to be delirious, and that her mind was at that moment running on the fruit she had so much wished for, so that instead of answering her, they began to weep, and went and woke all the physicians, that they might come and see the state her majesty was in.

"This delay exasperated the Queen. She ordered them to bring her clothes to her directly. They refused. She flew in a passion, and became scarlet with rage. They attributed it to the effect of fever: but the physicians having arrived, after feeling her pulse and going through the usual ceremonies, could not deny that she was in perfect health. Her women, who perceived the error into which their zeal had betrayed them, endeavoured to atone for it by dressing her as quickly as possible. Each of them asked her majesty's pardon; peace was restored, and the Queen hastened to follow the old Fairy, who was still waiting for her.

"She entered the palace, which required no addition to make it the most beautiful place in the world.

"You will easily believe it, my lord," added Queen White Cat, "when I tell you it was that in which we are at present: two other Fairies, a little younger than the one who conducted my mother, received her at the gate, and welcomed her very graciously. She begged they would lead her directly into the garden, and to those espaliers where she would find the best fruit. 'It is all equally good,' said they to her, 'and if it were not that you desired to have the pleasure of picking it yourself, we have only to call the fruit we wish for, and it would come to us here.' 'I implore you, ladies,' said the Queen, 'to gratify me by so extraordinary a sight.' The eldest Fairy put her finger into her mouth and whistled three times, then cried, 'Apricots, peaches, nectarines, brunions, cherries, plumbs, pears, begaroons, melons, muscatel grapes, apples, oranges, lemons, gooseberries, strawberries, raspberries, come at my call!’ ‘But,’ said the Queen, ‘all the fruit you have summoned is not to be found at the same season.’ ‘In our orchard,’ they replied, ‘we have all the fruits of the earth, always ripe, always excellent, and they never spoil or rot.’

“Meanwhile the fruit came rolling in over the floor pell-mell, but without being bruised or dirtied; so that the Queen, impatient to satisfy her longing, threw herself upon it, and took the first that came to hand, devouring rather than eating it.

“After having partly satisfied her appetite, she begged the Fairies to let her proceed to the espaliers, that she might have the pleasure of choosing the fruit on the tree, and then gathering it. ‘We give thee free permission,’ said they, ‘but remember the promise thou hast made us, thou wilt not be allowed to recall it!’ ‘I am convinced,’ said she, ‘that you live so well here, and this palace appears to me so handsome, that if I did not love the King my husband dearly, I should propose to remain here with you as well as my daughter; you need have no fear, therefore, of my retracting my word.’

“The Fairies, perfectly satisfied, opened all their gardens and enclosures to her; she remained in them three days and three nights without wishing to go out again; so delicious did she find them. She gathered fruit to take home with her, and as it would not spoil, she had four thousand mules laden with it. The Fairies, in addition to the fruit, gave her golden baskets of the most exquisite make to put it in, and many rarities of exceeding value. They promised her that I should be educated like a princess, that they would make me perfection, and choose a husband for me; that she should receive notice of the nuptials, and that they hoped for her presence at them.

“The King was enraptured at the return of the Queen. All the Court testified its delight to her. There were nothing but balls, masquerades, runnings at the ring, and banquets, at which the Queen’s fruit was served as a delicious treat. The King ate of it in preference to anything that could be presented to him. He knew not of the bargain the Queen had made with the

Fairies, and often asked her into what country she had travelled to find such good things.

“At one time she told him they were found on an almost inaccessible mountain; at another she said they grew in some valleys; and at others, again, in a garden or in a great forest. The King was surprised at so many contradictions. He questioned those who had accompanied her: but she had so strictly forbidden them to tell any one of her adventure, that they dared not speak of it. At length the Queen, becoming uneasy respecting her promise to the Fairies, as the time approached for her confinement, fell into an alarming melancholy. She sighed eternally, and looked daily worse and worse. The King grew anxious; he pressed the Queen to reveal to him the cause of her sadness, and after a great deal of trouble she informed him of all that had passed between her and the Fairies, and how she had promised to give them the daughter she was about to bring into the world. ‘What!’ said the King, ‘we have no children, you know how much I desire to have some, and for the sake of eating two or three apples you are capable of having given away your daughter? You can have no affection for me!’ Thereupon he overwhelmed her with a thousand reproaches, which were almost the death of my poor mother; but that did not satisfy him, he had her locked up in a tower, and surrounded it with soldiers to prevent her having communication with anybody in the world except the officers of her household, and of these he changed such as had been with her at the Fairy Castle.

“The misunderstanding between the King and the Queen threw the whole Court into infinite consternation. Everybody changed their fine clothes for such as were more suitable to the general sorrow. The King, on his part, appeared inexorable. He never saw his wife, and as soon as I was born he had me brought into the palace to be nursed, while she remained a most unhappy prisoner. The Fairies knew all that took place; they became irritated, they would have me, they looked upon me as their property and my detention as a theft.

“Before they sought for a vengeance proportionate to their vexation, they sent a grand embassy to the King to warn him to set the Queen at liberty, to restore her to his favour, and to beg him also to deliver me up to their ambassadors in order that I might be nursed and brought up by the Fairies. The ambassadors were so little and so deformed (for they were hideous dwarfs) that they had not the power of persuading the King to comply with their request. He refused bluntly, and if they had not taken their departure instantly something worse might have happened to them. When the Fairies heard of my father’s conduct, they were indignant to the greatest degree, and after having desolated his six kingdoms by the infliction of every ill they could think of, they let loose a terrific Dragon, that poisoned the air wherever he passed, devoured man and child, and killed all the trees and plants he breathed on.

“The King was in the deepest despair. He consulted all the wise men in his dominions, as to what he ought to do to protect his subjects from the misfortunes with which he saw them overwhelmed. They advised him to seek throughout the world for the best physicians and the most excellent remedies; and on the other hand, to offer a free pardon to all malefactors under sentence of death who would undertake to fight the Dragon. The King, approving this advice, acted upon it directly; but without success, for the mortality continued, and the Dragon devoured all who attacked him: so that at last the King had recourse to a Fairy who had been his friend from his earliest infancy. She was very old, and scarcely ever left her bed. He went to see her, and reproached her a thousand times over for permitting Fate to persecute him without coming to his assistance. ‘What would you have me do?’ said she. ‘You have irritated my sisters. They are as powerful as I am, and we rarely act against one another. Try to appease them by giving up your daughter to them. The little Princess belongs to them of right. You have put the Queen into prison. What has that amiable woman done to you that you should treat her so severely? Make up your mind to redeem her pledge to the Fairies; I assure you, you will be greatly rewarded for it.’

“The King my father loved me dearly; but seeing no other mode of saving his kingdoms and delivering himself from the fatal Dragon, he told his friend he would take her advice; that he was willing to give me up to the Fairies, as she had assured him that I should be cherished and treated as a princess of my rank ought to be; that he would also take the Queen back to Court, and that she had only to name the person to whom he should confide the task of carrying me to the Fairy Castle. ‘You must take her,’ she said, ‘in her cradle, to the top of the Mountain of Flowers. You may even remain in its vicinity, if you please, to witness the entertainment that will take place there.’ The King told her that in the course of a week he would proceed thither with the Queen, and begged she would give notice to her sister Fairies of his intention, that they might make whatever arrangements they considered necessary.

“As soon as he returned to the palace he sent for the Queen, and received her with as much affection and distinction as he had exhibited haste and anger in her imprisonment. She was so wasted and depressed that he would scarcely have recognised her, had not his heart assured him she was the same person he had formerly loved so tenderly. He implored her, with tears in his eyes, to forget the misery he had caused her, assuring her it was the last she should ever experience on his account. She replied that she had brought it upon herself by her imprudence in promising her daughter to the Fairies, and if anything could plead in her favour it was only the condition to which she was reduced. The King then informed her that he had determined to place me in the hands of the Fairies. The Queen, in her turn, opposed this intention. It seemed as if some fatality attended the affair, and that I was doomed to be always a subject of dissension between my father and mother. After she had groaned and wept for a considerable time without obtaining her object, (for the King saw too clearly the fatal consequences of hesitating, and our subjects continued to perish as if they were answerable for the faults of our family,) she consented to all he desired, and every preparation was made for the ceremony.

“I was placed in a cradle of mother-of-pearl, ornamented with everything art could imagine that was most elegant. It was hung round with garlands and festoons of flowers, composed of jewels, the different colours of which reflected the rays of the sun with such dazzling splendour, that you could scarcely look at them. The magnificence of my clothing surpassed, if it could be possible, that of the cradle. All the bands of my swaddling clothes were formed of large pearls. Four-and-twenty princesses of the blood-royal carried me on a sort of very light litter. Their dresses were all different, but they were not allowed to wear any colour but white, in token of my innocence. All the Court accompanied me according to the order of precedence.

“While we were ascending the mountain a melodious symphony was heard more and more distinctly. At length the Fairies appeared to the number of thirty-six. They had invited their friends to accompany them. Each was seated in a pearly shell, larger than that in which Venus arose out of the ocean. Sea-horses, that seemed rather awkward in getting over the ground, drew these pearly cars, the occupants more sumptuous in appearance than the greatest queens in the universe, but at the same time excessively old and ugly. They carried olive branches, to signify to the King that his submission had found favour with them; and when I was presented to them, their caresses were so extraordinary, that it seemed as if they had no object in living, except to make me happy. The Dragon they had made the instrument of their vengeance on my father followed them in chains of diamonds. They took me in their arms, kissed me a thousand times, endowed me with various qualifications, and then began to dance the Fairy

Brawl. It is a very lively dance, and you would scarcely believe how well these old ladies jumped and capered. After this, the Dragon that had devoured so many people crawled forward. The three Fairies to whom my mother had promised me seated themselves on it, placed my cradle between them, and striking the Dragon with a wand, it immediately spread its great scaly wings, finer than gauze, and glittering with all sorts of extraordinary colours, and in this way they returned to their castle. My mother, on seeing me in the air, upon this terrible Dragon, could not help screaming loudly. The King consoled her with the assurance his friend the old Fairy had given him, that no accident would happen to me, and that I should be taken as much care of as if I had remained in his own palace. She was pacified by this assurance, though she felt much distressed at the idea of being separated from me for so long a time, and having only herself to blame for it; for if she had not insisted on eating the fruit of that garden, I should have been brought up in my father's dominions, and never have suffered the misfortunes which I have still to relate to you.

"Know then, Son of a King, that my guardians had built a tower, expressly for my habitation, in which there were a thousand beautiful apartments suitable for each season of the year, magnificent furniture, and amusing books; but without a door, so that it could only be entered by the windows, which were placed prodigiously high. On the top of the tower was a beautiful garden, ornamented with flowers, fountains, and green arbours, where you might be cool in the hottest of the dog-days. In this place I was brought up by the Fairies with a care even beyond all they had promised the Queen. My dresses were made in the highest fashion, and so magnificent that any one to see me would have thought it was my wedding day. I was taught everything befitting my age and my rank. I did not give them much trouble, for there were few things I did not learn with the greatest ease. My docility was very agreeable to them, and as I had never seen, any other persons, I might have lived there in perfect tranquillity all the rest of my life.

“They always came to see me, mounted on the terrible Dragon I have already spoken of. They never talked to me about the King or the Queen. They called me their daughter, and I believed myself to be so. Nobody lived with me in the tower, but a parrot and a little dog, which they had given me to amuse me; for the creatures were endowed with reason, and spoke admirably.

“On one side of the tower was a hollow way, full of deep ruts and trees which choked up the road, so that I had not seen any one pass by since I had been shut up there. But one day that I was at the window, talking with my parrot and my dog, I heard a noise; I looked all about, and perceived a young cavalier who had stopped to listen to our conversation. I had never seen a young man before but in a painting. I was not sorry that an unlooked-for accident had afforded me this opportunity; so that, not dreaming of the danger that attends the gratification of contemplating a charming object, I came forward to gaze upon him, and the more I looked at him the more was I delighted. He made me a profound bow, fixed his eyes on me, and appeared greatly embarrassed to find some way of conversing with me, for my window was very high, and he feared being overheard, for he knew well enough that I was in the Fairies’ Castle.

“The night came suddenly upon us, or, to speak more correctly, it came without our perceiving it; he blew his horn twice or thrice, and entertained me with a few flourishes upon it, and then took his departure without my being able to ascertain which way he went — so dark was the night. I remained very thoughtful; I no longer felt the same pleasure in talking to my parrot and my dog that I had been wont to do. They said the prettiest things in the world to me, for fairy creatures are very witty; but my mind was preoccupied, and I was too artless to conceal it. Perroquet remarked it. He was a shrewd bird; he betrayed no sign of what was running in his head.

“I did not fail being up as soon as it was light. I ran to my window, and was most agreeably surprised to perceive the young knight at the foot of the tower. He was magnificently attired. I flattered myself it was partly on my account, and I was not mistaken. He addressed me through a sort of speaking trumpet, by the aid of which he informed me, that having been up to that time insensible to the charms of all the beauties he had seen, he suddenly felt himself so strongly smitten by mine, that he could not imagine it was possible for him to live without seeing me every day of his life. I was mightily pleased with this compliment, and very much vexed that I did not dare reply to it, for I should have been compelled to bawl with all my might, and still run the risk of being better heard by the Fairies than by him. I threw him some flowers I had in my hand, which he received as a signal favour, kissing them several times, and thanking me. He then asked me if I should approve of his coming every day at the same hour under my windows, and if so, to throw him something else. I had a turquoise ring on my finger, which I pulled off instantly, and flung to him in all haste, making signs to him to decamp as quickly as possible, for I heard on the other side of the tower the Fairy Violent, who was mounting her Dragon to bring me my breakfast.

“The first words she uttered on entering my apartment were, ‘I smell the voice of a man here. Search, Dragon!’ Oh, what a state was I in! I was sinking with fear that the monster would fly out at the opposite window, and follow the cavalier, for whom I already felt deeply interested. ‘Indeed, my good Mamma,’ said I, (for the old Fairy would have me call her so,) ‘you are jesting, surely, when you say you smell the voice of a man. Is it possible to smell a voice? And if so, what mortal would be rash enough to venture climbing this tower?’ ‘What you say is true, daughter,’ replied she; ‘I am delighted to hear you argue so nicely, and I fancy it is the hatred I have of all men that makes me sometimes imagine they are near me.’ She gave me my breakfast and my spindle. ‘When you have breakfasted do not forget to spin,’ said she, ‘for you did nothing yesterday, and my sisters will be angry with you.’ In fact, I had been so occupied with the stranger that I had found it quite impossible to spin.

“As soon as the Fairy was gone, I flung away my spindle with a little rebellious air, and ascended the terrace to look out as far as I could. I had an excellent telescope; there was nothing to interrupt the view. I looked in every direction, and discovered my cavalier on the summit of a mountain. He was reposing beneath a rich pavilion of cloth of gold, and surrounded by a very numerous Court. I felt satisfied he was the son of some king who reigned in the vicinity of the Fairies’ Palace. As I feared that if he returned to the tower he would be discovered by the terrible Dragon, I went and fetched my parrot, and told him to fly to that mountain, where he would find the person who had spoken to me, and beg him in my name never to come again, as I was alarmed at the vigilance of my guardians, and the probability of their doing him some mischief. Perroquet executed his commission like a parrot of sense. The courtiers were all surprised to see him come flying at full speed, perch upon their master’s shoulder and whisper in his ear. The King (for such he proved to be) was both delighted and troubled by this message. My anxiety on his account was flattering to his heart; but the many difficulties there were in the way of his speaking with me, distressed without being able to dissuade him from the attempt to make himself agreeable to me. He asked Perroquet a hundred questions, and Perroquet asked him as many in return, for he was naturally inquisitive. The King gave him a ring to bring me in return for my turquoise. It was a turquoise also; but much finer than mine, and cut in the shape of a heart, and surrounded with diamonds. ‘It is fit,’ said he to the parrot, ‘that I should treat you as an ambassador. I therefore present you with my portrait. Show it to no one but your charming mistress.’ He tied the miniature under the bird’s wing, who brought the ring to me in his beak.

“I awaited the return of my little green courier with an impatience I had never known before. He told me that the personage to whom I had sent him was a great king; that he had been most kindly received by him, and that I might rest assured he only lived for my sake; that, notwithstanding there was much danger in coming to the foot of the tower, he was resolved to brave everything sooner than renounce the pleasure of seeing me. These tidings perplexed me sadly, and I began to weep. Perroquet and my little dog Toutou did their best to console me, for they loved me tenderly; and then Perroquet gave me the King’s ring, and showed me his portrait. I confess I had never been so delighted as I was by being thus enabled to contemplate closely the image of him I had only seen at a distance. He appeared to me much more charming than I had supposed. A hundred ideas rushed into my mind, some agreeable, some distressing, and gave an expression of great anxiety to my features. The Fairies who came to see me perceived it. They observed to each other that I was no doubt tired of my dull life, and that it was time for them to find a husband for me of Fairy race. They named several, and fixed at last upon little King Migonnet, whose kingdom was about five hundred leagues off; but that was a trifle. Perroquet overheard this fine council. He flew to give me an account of it, and said to me, ‘Ah, how I pity you, my dear mistress, if you should become the Queen of Migonnet! He is a monkey that would frighten you! I am sorry to say so; but in truth, the King who loves you would not condescend to have him for his footman!’ ‘Have you seen him, Perroquet?’ ‘I believe so, indeed!’ continued the bird; ‘I was brought up on the same branch with him.’ ‘How! on a branch!’ I exclaimed. ‘Yes,’ said he, ‘he has feet like an eagle.’

“Such an account as this afflicted me extremely. I gazed on the charming portrait of the young King. I felt sure he had only bestowed it on Perroquet to give me the opportunity of seeing it, and when I compared it with the description of Migonnet, I felt I had nothing more to hope for in life, and I resolved to die rather than marry the latter.

“I had no sleep all night. Perroquet and Toutou talked matters over with me. I dozed a little towards daybreak, and as my dog had a good nose he smelt that the King was at the foot of the tower. He woke Perroquet; ‘I will lay a wager,’ said he, ‘the King is below.’ Perroquet replied, ‘Hold thy peace, babbler; because thine own eyes and ears are almost always open, thou enviest the repose of others.’ ‘But bet something, then,’ insisted the good Toutou; ‘I am sure he is there.’ ‘And I am sure he is not there,’ replied Perroquet. ‘Have I not forbidden him to come here in my mistress’s name?’ ‘Oh! truly thou art amusing, with thy forbiddings,’ exclaimed my dog, ‘a man in love consults only his heart;’ and therewith he began to pull Perroquet by the wings so roughly that he made him angry. The noise they both made woke me; they acquainted me with the cause of it. I ran, or rather flew, to my window. I saw the King, who extended his arms towards me, and said through his trumpet that he could no longer live without me; that he implored me to find means to escape from my tower, or to enable him to enter it. That he called all the gods and all the elements to witness that he would marry me immediately, and that I should be one of the greatest queens in the world.

“I ordered Perroquet to go and tell him that what he desired appeared to me an impossibility; but, nevertheless, relying on the word he had pledged to me, and the oath he had taken, I would endeavour to accomplish his wishes. That I conjured him not to come every day, as he might at length be observed, and that the Fairies would have no mercy upon him.

“He retired full of joy at the hope I had flattered him with, and I found myself in the greatest embarrassment when I began to reflect on the promise I had made to him. How was I to escape from that tower in which there were no doors? And to have no one to help me but Perroquet and Toutou! I, so young, so inexperienced, so timid! I resolved therefore not to make an attempt I could never succeed in, and I sent word to that effect by Perroquet to the King. He was at first about to kill himself before the bird's eyes; but at length he charged him to persuade me either to come and witness his death or to bring him some comfort. 'Sire,' exclaimed my feathered ambassador, 'my mistress is sufficiently willing: she only lacks the power.'

"When the bird repeated to me all that had passed, I felt more wretched than ever. The Fairy Violente came to see me. She found me with my eyes red and swollen; she observed that I had been crying, and said, that unless I told her the cause she would burn me alive: her threats were always terrible. I replied, trembling, that I was tired of spinning, and that I wanted to make some little nets to catch the young birds in that came and pecked the fruit in my garden. 'Thou shalt cry no longer for that, daughter,' said she, 'I will bring thee as much twine as thou needest;' and in truth I received it that very evening; but she advised me to think less of working than of attending to my personal appearance, as King Migonnet was shortly expected. I shuddered at those fatal tidings, and made no reply.

"As soon as she was gone, I began to make two or three pieces of net; but my object was to construct a rope ladder, which I succeeded in doing very well, though I had never seen one. The Fairy, in fact, did not furnish me with as much twine as I wanted, and continually said to me, 'Why daughter, thy work is like that of Penelope; it never progresses, and yet thou art still asking for more material.' 'Oh, my good Mamma,' I replied, 'it is easy for you to talk. Don't you see that I am very awkward at my work, and burn a great deal of it. Are you afraid I shall ruin you in packthread?' My air of simplicity amused her, though she was a very ill-tempered and cruel creature.

"I sent Perroquet to tell the King to come on a certain evening under the window of the tower, where he would find the ladder, and that he would learn the rest when he arrived. In fact, I fastened it as securely as possible, being determined to make my escape with him; but the moment he saw it, without waiting for me to descend, he mounted it eagerly, and jumped into my apartment just as I was preparing everything for my flight.

"The sight of him delighted me so much that I forgot the peril in which we were placed. He renewed all his vows, and implored me not to delay becoming his wife. We took Perroquet and Toutou as witnesses of our marriage. Never was a wedding between two persons of such exalted rank celebrated with less publicity or noise, and never were two hearts so perfectly happy as ours.

"Day had not dawned when the King left me. I had related to him the dreadful intention of the Fairies to marry me to little Migonnet. I described to him his person, which horrified him as much as it had me. The hours seemed long years to me after the King's departure. I ran to the window, and followed him with my eyes, notwithstanding the darkness; but what was my astonishment at seeing in the air a fiery chariot drawn by winged salamanders, whose flight was so rapid the eye could scarcely follow them. The chariot was escorted by several soldiers mounted on ostriches. I had not time enough to distinguish who the ugly creature was thus posting through the sky; but I readily imagined that it must be either a fairy or an enchanter.

"Shortly afterwards, the Fairy Violent entered my apartment. 'I bring thee good news,' said she to me. 'Thy lover has arrived within these few hours; prepare to receive him. Here are dresses and jewels for thee!' 'And who has told you,' I exclaimed, 'that I desire to be married? It is very far from my intention. Send King Migonnet away again, I will not add a pin to my dress; let him think me handsome or ugly, I am not going to be his.' 'Hey day! Hey day!' rejoined the Fairy, 'Here's a little rebel! Here's a head without any brains in it! I am not to be trifled with, and I warn thee — ' 'What will you do to me,' cried I, reddening at the names she had called me; 'can I be more miserably situated than I am already in this tower, with only a dog and a parrot, and seeing several times a day the horrible form of a dreadful Dragon!' 'Hah, thou ungrateful little wretch,' said the Fairy, 'dost thou deserve so much care and pains as we have taken with thee? I have too often told my sisters we should reap a sorry reward for it.' She departed to seek them; she related to them our quarrel; they were as much surprised at it as she was.

"Perroquet and Toutou remonstrated with me, and assured me, that if I continued refractory, they foresaw that I should suffer some terrible misfortunes. I felt so proud of possessing the heart of a great king, that I despised the Fairies and the advice of my poor little companions. I did not dress myself, and I took pleasure in combing my hair the wrong way, in order that Migonnet might think me ugly. Our interview took place on the terrace. He came in his fiery chariot. Never since dwarfs have existed has there been seen one so diminutive. He walked upon his eagle's feet and on his knees at the same time, for he had no bones in his legs, so that he was obliged to support himself on a pair of diamond crutches. His royal mantle was only half an ell long, and yet more than a third of it dragged on the ground. His head was as large as a peck measure, and his nose was so big, that a dozen birds sat upon it, whose warbling entertained him. He had such a bushy beard, that canary-birds made their nests in it, and his ears rose a cubit higher than his head; but they were not very perceptible, in consequence of the high-pointed crown that he wore to make him appear taller. The flames of his chariot roasted the fruit, scorched the flowers, and dried up the fountains in my garden. He approached with open arms to embrace me. I held myself bolt upright, and his principal equerry was compelled to lift him; but as soon as he was brought near me, I fled into my apartment, and fastened the door and the windows, so that Migonnet returned to the Fairies highly incensed against me.

"They begged his pardon a thousand times for my rudeness, and to appease him, for he was much to be feared, they determined to bring him into my chamber at night while I slept, to tie me hand and foot, and place me in his fiery chariot, to be taken away by him. Having decided on this plan, they scarcely said a cross word to me about my rude behaviour to him, but merely advised me to think of making amends for it. Perroquet and Toutou were astonished at such great kindness. ‘Do you know, Mistress,’ said my dog, ‘my heart misgives me. My lady Fairies are strange personages, and particularly Violent.’ I laughed at these fears, and awaited my dear husband’s arrival with the greatest anxiety. He was too impatient to see me, to keep me long waiting. I threw him the rope-ladder, fully resolved to fly with him. He mounted it lightly, and said such tender things to me, that I dare not even now recall them to mind.

“While we were conversing together as calmly as if we had been in his own palace, the windows of my room were suddenly burst in. The Fairies entered upon their terrible Dragon. Migonnet followed them in his fiery chariot, attended by all his guards on their ostriches. The King fearlessly drew his sword, and only thought of saving me from the most dreadful fate that ever awaited mortal; for, in short, must I speak it, my Lord, those barbarous creatures urged their Dragon upon him, which devoured him before my eyes.

“Distracted at his fate and my own, I flung myself into the jaws of the horrible monster, hoping he would swallow me, as he had already swallowed all I loved in the world. He was equally willing to do so; but the Fairies, still more cruel than the Dragon, would not permit it. ‘She must be reserved,’ they cried, ‘for more protracted agony; a speedy death is too mild a punishment for this unworthy creature!’ They touched me, and I immediately found myself assume the form of a White Cat. They conducted me to this superb palace, which belonged to my father. They transformed all the lords and ladies of the kingdom into cats, left only the hands visible of the rest of his court, and reduced me to the deplorable condition in which you found me, after informing me of my birth, the death of my father and mother, and that I could only be released from my cat-like form by a prince, who should perfectly resemble the husband they had deprived me of. It is you, my Lord, who bear that resemblance,” continued she; “you have the same features, the same air, the same voice. I was struck by it the moment I saw you. I was aware of all that has happened, and I am equally so of all that will happen. My troubles are about to end.” “And mine, lovely Queen,” said the Prince, flinging himself at her feet; “how long are they to last?” “I already love you more than my life, my Lord,” said the Queen; “you must return to your father; we will ascertain his sentiments respecting me, and whether he will consent to what you desire.”

She went out of the castle, the Prince gave her his hand; she got into a chariot with him. It was much more magnificent than those she had previously provided for him. The rest of the equipage corresponded with it to such an extent, that the horses were all shod with emeralds, the nails being diamonds; such a thing has perhaps never been seen except on that occasion. I shall not repeat the agreeable conversation that took place between the Queen and the Prince on their journey. If her beauty was matchless, her mind was no less so, and the young Prince was equally perfect, so that they interchanged all sorts of charming ideas.

When they reached the neighbourhood of the castle, in which the Prince was to meet his two elder brothers, the Queen entered a little rock of crystal, the points of which were ornamented with gold and rubies. It was completely surrounded by curtains, in order that no one should see it, and carried by some very handsome young men superbly attired. The Prince remained in the chariot. He perceived his brothers walking with two Princesses, who were exceedingly beautiful. As soon as they recognised him, they advanced to receive him, and inquired, if he had brought a lady with him. He replied, that he had been so unfortunate throughout his journey as to have met with none but very ugly ones, and that the only rarity he had brought back with him was a little white cat. They began to laugh at his simplicity. “A cat!” they exclaimed; “are you afraid the mice will eat up our palace?” The Prince admitted that he had been rather unwise in selecting such a present for his father; and thereupon they each took their road to the city.

The elder Princes rode with their Princesses in open carriages, all of gold and azure. Their horses’ heads were adorned with plumes of feathers and aigrettes. Nothing could be more brilliant than this cavalcade. Our young Prince followed them, and behind him came the crystal rock, which everybody gazed at with wonder.

The courtiers hastened to inform the King, that the three Princes were coming. “Do they bring with them beautiful ladies?” asked the King. “It is impossible to find any that could surpass them,” was the answer, which appeared to displease him. The two Princes eagerly ascended the palace-stairs with their wonderful Princesses. The King received them graciously, and could not decide which deserved the prize. He looked at his youngest son, and said to him, “Have you returned alone this time?” “Your majesty will perceive in this rock a little white cat,” replied the Prince, “that mews so sweetly, and has such velvet paws, you will be delighted with it.” The King smiled, and went to open the rock himself: but as soon as he approached it, the Queen, by means of a spring, made it fly in pieces, and appeared like the sun after it had been some time hidden in the clouds. Her fair hair fell in loose ringlets over her shoulders down to her very feet; she was crowned with flowers; her gown was of thin white gauze lined with rose-coloured. She rose, and made a profound curtsy to the King, who could not resist exclaiming in the excess of his admiration, “Behold the incomparable beauty who deserves the crown!”

“My Liege,” said she to him, “I come not to deprive you of a throne you fill so worthily. I was born the heiress to six kingdoms; permit me to offer one to you, and to give one to each of your eldest sons. I ask of you no other recompense than your friendship and this young Prince for my husband. Three kingdoms will be quite enough for us.” The King and all the court joined in shouts of joy and astonishment. The marriage was celebrated immediately, as well as those of the other two Princes, and the court consequently passed several months in entertainments and pleasures of every description. Finally, each couple departed to reign over their own dominions. The beautiful White Cat immortalized herself in her’s, as much by her goodness, and liberality, as by her rare talent and beauty.

21

BELLE-BELLE

Once upon a time, there was a very good, very mild, and very powerful King; but the Emperor Matapa, his neighbour, was still more powerful than he. They had waged great wars with one another. The Emperor had gained a considerable battle in the last war; and after killing or taking prisoners the greater portion of the King's officers and soldiers, he besieged his capital city, and took it thereby, making himself master of all the treasures in it. The King had scarcely time to save himself with the Dowager Queen, his sister. This Princess became a widow at a very early age; she was clever and beautiful; it is true she was proud, violent, and difficult of access.

The Emperor transported all the jewels and furniture belonging to the King to his own palace; he carried away an extraordinary number of soldiers, women, horses, and everything else that would be useful or agreeable to him: after he had depopulated the greater part of the kingdom, he returned triumphant to his own, — where he was received by the Empress and the Princess, his daughter, with a thousand demonstrations of joy. In the meantime, the defeated King was not inclined to sit down patiently under his misfortunes. He called round him a few troops, and formed by degrees a small army, to increase which as quickly as possible, he issued a proclamation, requiring all the gentlemen of his kingdom to come and serve in person, or to send one of their sons well mounted and armed, and disposed to second all his enterprises.

There lived on the frontier an old nobleman, eighty years of age, a clever and prudent man, but so ill-used by fortune, that after having possessed much wealth, he found himself reduced almost to poverty, which he would have endured patiently, had it not been shared with him by three beautiful daughters. They were so sensible, that they never murmured at their misfortunes; and if by chance they spoke of them to their father, it was more to console him than to add to his troubles.

They lived with him free from ambition under a rustic roof. When the King's proclamation reached the ears of the old man, he called his daughters to him, and looking at them sorrowfully, said, "What can we do? The King orders all the distinguished people of his kingdom to join him, to fight against the Emperor, or condemns them to a very heavy fine, if they fail to do so. I am not in a position to pay the tax, and am therefore in a terrible dilemma; between death and ruin!" His three daughters were as much distressed as himself, but they entreated him to have a little courage, as they felt persuaded they should find some remedy for his affliction.

The next morning, the eldest daughter went to seek her father, who was walking sorrowfully in an orchard, which he attended to himself. "Sire," said she, "I am come to entreat you to permit me to set out for the army. I am of a good height, and strong enough; I will dress myself in male attire, and pass for your son; if I do not perform any heroic actions, I shall at least save you the journey, or the tax, and that is, a great deal in our situation." The Count embraced her affectionately, and at first objected to so extraordinary a proposition, but she told him so decidedly that she could see no other resource, that he at last consented.

There was nothing to be done now, but to provide clothes suitable to the personage she was to represent. Her father furnished her with arms, and gave her the best out of four of the horses he used to plough with. The adieus and regrets were affecting on each side. After travelling some days, she passed through a meadow, bordered by a quickset hedge. She saw a shepherdess in great trouble, who was endeavouring to drag one of her sheep out of a ditch, into which it had fallen. "What are you about there, good shepherdess?" said she. "Alas!" replied the shepherdess, "I am trying to save my sheep, which is nearly drowned, and I am so weak that I have not the strength to drag it out." "I am sorry for you," said she, and without offering her any assistance rode off. The shepherdess immediately cried out — "Good-bye, disguised beauty!" The surprise of our lovely heroine is not to be expressed. "How! is it possible," said she, "that I could be so easily detected? This old shepherdess scarcely saw me for a moment, and she knows that I am disguised! Whither am I about to go, then? I shall be found out by everybody, and if by the King, what will be my shame, and his anger? — He will think my father is a coward, who shrinks from danger." After much reflection, she determined that she would return home.

The Count and his daughters were talking of her, and counting the days of her absence, when they saw her enter. She related to them her adventure. The good man told her that he had warned her of it, and that if she had believed him, she would never have set out, because it was impossible not to discover a girl in man's clothes. All this little family was thrown into fresh embarrassment, not knowing what to do, when the second daughter, in her turn, came to seek the Count. "My sister," said she, "had never been on horseback, it is not surprising that she was discovered; with respect to myself, if you will permit me to go in her place, I dare promise that you will be satisfied with me."

All the old man could say in opposition to her intention had no effect upon her; he was forced to consent to her going; she put on another dress, took other arms, and another horse. Thus equipped, she embraced her father and sisters a thousand times, resolving to serve the King bravely: but in passing through the same meadow, where her sister had seen the shepherdess and her sheep, she perceived it at the bottom of the ditch, and the shepherdess occupied in getting it out.

“Unfortunate creature that I am,” cried the old woman, “half my flock perish in this manner; if any one would but help me, I could save this animal, but everybody flies from me.” “How is it, shepherdess, that you take so little care of your sheep, that you let them fall into the water?” said the fair cavalier, and without giving her any other consolation, she spurred her horse, and rode on. The old woman called out after her with all her might, “Good-bye, disguised beauty!” These few words distressed our Amazon very much. “What a fatality,” said she, “that I also should be recognised! What happened to my sister has occurred to me. I am not more fortunate than she was; and it would be ridiculous for me to join the army with so effeminate an appearance that everybody will know what I am!” She immediately returned to her father’s house, much vexed at having made so unsuccessful a journey.

Her father received her affectionately, and praised her for having had the prudence to return; but that did not prevent the renewal of his grief, with the additional reason, that he had already been put to the expense of two useless suits of clothes, and several other things. The good old man, however, kept his sorrow to himself, that he might not add to that of his daughters.

At last the youngest girl begged him in the most urgent manner to grant her the same favour he had to her sisters. “Perhaps,” said she, “it is presumption in me to hope I shall succeed better than they have; but notwithstanding I should like to try. I am taller than they are; you know that I go every day hunting; this exercise qualifies one in some degree for war; and the great desire I feel to relieve you in your distress inspires me with extraordinary courage.” The Count loved her much better than he did either of her sisters; she was so attentive to him that he looked upon her as his chief consolation. She read interesting stories to amuse him, nursed him in his illness, and all the game she killed was for him; so that he did all he could to change her determination, and much more so than he had done with her sisters. “Would you leave me, my dear child?” said he. “Your absence will be the death of me: if fortune should really favour you, and you should return covered with laurels, I shall not have the pleasure of witnessing them; my advanced age, and your absence, will terminate my existence.” “No, my dear father,” said Belle-belle, (it was thus she was named:) “do not think I shall be long away: the war will soon be over; and if I find any other means of fulfilling the King’s orders, I shall not neglect them, for I venture to assert, if my absence distress you, it will be still more distressing to me.” He at last consented to her request. She made herself a very plain suit of clothes, for those of her sisters cost so much, and the poor old Count’s finances could not allow of much more expense; she was compelled also to take a very bad horse, because her two sisters had nearly crippled the two others; but all this did not discourage her. She, embraced her father; respectfully received his blessing; and mingling her tears with his, and those of her sisters, she departed.

In passing through the meadow I have already mentioned, she found the old shepherdess, who had not yet recovered her sheep, or was trying to pull another out of the middle of a deep ditch. “What are you doing there, shepherdess?” said Belle-belle, stopping. “I cannot do anything more, my Lord,” replied the shepherdess. “Ever since daylight I have been trying to save this sheep; my labour has been in vain: I am so weary, I can scarcely breathe; there is hardly a day that some new misfortune does not happen to me, and I find no one to assist me.”

“I am truly sorry for you,” said Belle-belle; “and to prove that I pity you, I will help you.” She dismounted instantly from her horse, which was so quiet, that she did not take the trouble to fasten it to anything to prevent its running away; and jumping over the hedge, after receiving a few scratches, she plunged into the ditch, and worked so well, that she succeeded in recovering the favourite sheep. “Do not cry any more, my good mother,” said she to the shepherdess: “there is your sheep; and considering the long time it has been in the water, I think it is very lively.”

“You have not obliged an ungrateful person,” said the shepherdess. “I know you, charming Belle-belle. I know where you are going, and all your intentions. Your sisters have passed through this meadow. I knew them also, and I was not ignorant of what was passing in their minds; but they appeared so heartless, and their conduct to me was so ungracious, that I took means to interrupt their journey. The case is very different with you. I will prove it to you, Belle-belle; for I am a fairy, and take pleasure in heaping benefits upon those who deserve them. You have a miserably poor horse; I will give you one.” She struck the ground as she spoke with her crook, and immediately Belle-belle heard a neighing behind a bush; she turned quickly, and saw the most beautiful horse in the world: it began to run and bound about in the meadow.

Belle-belle, who was fond of horses, was delighted to see one so perfect. The Fairy called this fine courser to her, and touching it with her crook, she said, “Faithful Comrade, be better harnessed than the Emperor Matapa’s best horse.” Instantly Comrade had on a saddle-cloth of green velvet, embroidered with pearls and rubies, a saddle to match, and a bridle of pearls, with a bit and studs of gold: in short, there was nothing to be found so magnificent. “What you see,” said the Fairy, “is the least thing to admire in this horse. He has many other qualities which I will detail to you. In the first place, he only eats once in eight days. You need not be at the trouble of looking after him; he knows the present, the past, and the future. I have had him a long time, and I have trained him as for myself. Whatever you wish to know, or whenever you need advice, you have but to address yourself to him; he will give you such good counsel, that sovereigns would be happy to have ministers like him; you must therefore consider him more as your friend than your horse. Lastly, your dress is not to my liking; I will give you one more becoming.”

She struck the ground with her crook, and there appeared a large trunk covered with Turkey leather, studded with gold nails: Belle-belle’s initials were upon it. The Fairy sought amongst the grass for a golden key made in England. She opened the trunk; it was lined with Spanish leather, profusely embroidered. There were twelve suits of clothes in it, twelve cravats, twelve swords, twelve feathers, — and so on, everything in dozens. The coats were so covered with embroidery and diamonds, that Belle-belle could scarcely lift them. “Choose the suit that pleases you the most,” said the Fairy, “and the others shall follow you every where. You have only to stamp your foot, saying, ‘Turkey-leather trunk, come to me full of linen and lace; Turkey-leather trunk, come to me full of jewels and money:’ it will instantly be before you, whether you are out-of-doors or in your chamber. You must also assume a name, for Belle-belle will not suit the profession you are about to enter. It strikes me you might call yourself the Chevalier Fortuné. But you ought to know who I am; I shall therefore appear to you in my usual form.” At the same moment her old woman’s skin fell from her, and she appeared so wonderfully beautiful, that she dazzled the eyes of Belle-belle. Her dress was of blue velvet, trimmed with ermine; her hair entwined with pearls, and on her head was a superb crown.

Belle-belle, transported with admiration, threw herself at her feet, testifying by that attitude her respect and unutterable gratitude. The Fairy raised her up, and embraced her affectionately. She told her to put on a suit of green and gold brocade. She obeyed her orders, and mounting her horse, continued her journey, so overwhelmed by all the extraordinary things that had just happened, that she could think of nothing else.

At length she began to ask herself, by what unlooked-for good fortune she could have attracted the kindness of so powerful a fairy, “Because really,” said she, “I was not required to recover the sheep, for a simple stroke of her wand would have brought a whole flock back from the antipodes, had it gone there. It was very lucky I was so disposed to oblige her. The trifling service I did her is the cause of all she has done for me; she knew my heart, and approved of my sentiments. Ah! if my father could see me now, so magnificent and so rich, how delighted he would be! but at all events, I shall have the pleasure of sharing with my family the fortune she has given me."

As she finished making these various reflections, she arrived in a fine and very populous city. She drew all eyes upon her; they followed her and surrounded her, and every one cried out, "Was there ever seen a cavalier more handsome, better made, or more beautifully dressed? How gracefully he manages that superb horse?" They saluted him most respectfully, which he returned with a kind and courteous air. As soon as he entered the inn, the governor, who was walking, and had admired him in passing, sent a gentleman to say, that he hoped he would come and take up his lodgings in his castle. The Chevalier Fortuné (for in short we must henceforth speak of Belle-belle as such) replied, that not having the honour of being known by him, he would not take that liberty; that he would go and pay his respects to him, and begged he would give him one of his people, whom he could entrust with something of consequence he wished to send to his father. The governor sent him immediately a very trusty messenger, and Fortuné desired him to come again, as his despatches were not yet ready.

He shut himself in his chamber; then, stamping with his foot, said, "Turkey-leather trunk, come to me filled with diamonds and pistoles!" It appeared that instant; but there was no key, and where was he to find it? What a pity to break a lock of enamelled gold of several colours; and moreover, was there not much to fear from the indiscretion of a locksmith? He would scarcely have spoken of the Chevalier's treasures before thieves would assemble to rob him, and perhaps they might kill him.

He then looked for the key everywhere, and the more he sought it the less he could find it. “How troublesome!” cried he; “I shall not be able to make use of the Fairy’s bounty, nor send my father any of the property she has given me.” While he was thus musing, it occurred to him, that the best thing to do would be to consult his horse; he went into the stable, and said in a whisper, “I entreat you, Comrade, tell me where I shall find the key of the Turkey-leather trunk.” “In my ear,” replied the horse. Fortuné looked in the horse’s ear; he espied a green ribbon, — he drew it out, and saw the key he wished for; he opened the Turkey-leather trunk, wherein were more diamonds and pistoles than would fill a bushel. The Chevalier filled three caskets — one for his father, and two others for his sisters; he then gave them to the man the governor had sent to him, and begged him not to stop, either night or day, until he arrived at the Count’s house.

This messenger made the greatest speed, and when he told the old man that he came from his son, the Chevalier, and that he had brought him a very heavy casket, he wondered what could be in it; for he had started with so little money, that he did not think he was in a condition to buy anything, nor even to pay the journey of the man who had charge of his present. He first of all opened his letter, and when he had read all that his dear daughter had written, he thought he should die with joy; the sight of the jewels and gold still further confirmed the truth of the story; the most extraordinary thing was, that when Belle-belle’s two sisters opened their caskets, they found bits of glass instead of diamonds, and false pistoles, — the Fairy not choosing that they should partake of her kindness; they therefore thought their sister was laughing at them, and they felt extremely vexed at her; but the Count, perceiving how angry they were with her, gave them the greater part of the jewels he had just received. As soon as they touched them they changed like the others; they concluded, therefore, that an unknown power was working against them, and begged their father to keep the remainder for himself. The handsome Fortuné did not wait the return of his messenger before he quitted the city — his business was too urgent; he was bound to obey the King’s orders. He paid his visit to the governor, at whose house all the people had assembled to see him. There was in his person and all his actions such an air of goodness, that they could but admire and love him. He said nothing but what was pleasant to hear; and the crowd was so great around him, he did not know how to account for so extraordinary a circumstance; for, having lived always in the country, he had seen very few people.

He continued his journey on his excellent horse, which amused him with a thousand stories, or by recounting to him the most remarkable events in ancient and modern history. “My dear Master,” said he, “I am delighted to be your property. I know you possess much frankness and honour. I am disgusted with certain people with whom I have lived a long time, and who made me weary of my life, their society was so insupportable. Among them was a man who professed great friendship for me, who ranked me above Pegasus and Bucephalus when he spoke in my presence; but as soon as I was out of sight, he treated me as a jaded and sorry horse; he affected an admiration of my faults, in order to induce me to commit greater. It is true, that one day, being tired of his caresses, which properly speaking were treacheries, I gave him so severe a kick, that I had the pleasure of knocking out nearly all his teeth; and I have never seen him since, that I do not tell him with great sincerity, it is not right that a mouth that is opened so often to abuse those who do you no harm, should be as handsome as others.” “Ho! ho!” cried the Chevalier; “thou art very mettlesome; dost thou not fear that this man will some day in a passion pass his sword through your body?” “It would not signify, my Lord,” replied Comrade; “besides, I should know his intention as soon as he could form it.”

They were thus talking when they approached an extensive forest. Comrade said to the Chevalier, “Master, there is a man who lives here that may perhaps be of great service to us; he is a woodcutter, and one who has been gifted.” “What dost thou mean by that term?” interrupted Fortuné. “Gifted means, that he has received one or more gifts from fairies,” added the horse; “you must engage him to go with us.” At the same time, advancing to where the woodcutter was at work, the young Chevalier accosted him with a gentle and winning air, and asked him several questions about the place they were in; whether there were any wild beasts in the forest, and if he would be permitted to hunt in it. The woodcutter replied to everything like an intelligent man. Fortuné then inquired, where the men were gone, who had been helping him to fell so many trees. The woodcutter replied that he had felled them all by himself, that it had been the work of a few hours, and that he must cut down many others to make a load for himself. “What! Do you pretend you will carry all this wood to-day?” said the Chevalier. “Oh, my Lord,” replied Strong-back (for thus people called him,) “my strength is extraordinary.” “You make a great deal of money, then,” said Fortuné. “Very little,” replied the woodcutter, “for they are poor in this place; here every one works for himself, without begging his neighbour’s assistance.” “Since you live in so poor a country,” added the Chevalier, “you have only to choose, to go to another. Come with me, you shall not want for anything, and when you would wish to return, I will give you money for your journey.” The woodcutter thought he could not do better; he forsook his axe and followed his new master. As soon as they had passed through the forest, they saw a man in the plain, who appeared to be tying his legs together with some riband so closely, that he would scarcely be able to walk. Comrade stopped, and said to his master, “My Lord,” here is another gifted man: you will want him; you must take him with you.” Fortuné drew near him, and with his usual grace, asked him, “Why he was thus tying his legs.” “I am going to hunt,” said he. “How?” said the Chevalier, smiling, “Do you mean to say you can run better when you are thus fettered?” “No, my Lord,” replied he, “I am aware that my speed will not be so great, but that is my object; for there is not a stag, roebuck, or hare, that I do not outrun when my legs are at liberty, so that by leaving them continually behind me they escape, and I scarcely ever have the pleasure of catching them!” “You seem an extraordinary man,” said Fortuné; “what is your name?” “They have given me the name of Swift,” said the hunter, “and I am well known in this country.” “If you would like to see another,” added the Chevalier, “I should be very happy for you to go with me; you will not have so much fatigue, and I will treat you well.” Swift was not particularly well off, so he willingly accepted the offer proposed to him; and Fortuné, followed by his new servants, continued his journey.

The next morning he saw a man on the border of a marsh, binding his eyes. The horse said to his master, “My Lord, I advise you to take this man also into your service.” Fortuné immediately asked him, why he bound his eyes. “I see too clearly,” said he; “I spy the game more than four leagues off, and I never shoot without killing more than I wish. I am therefore obliged to bind my eyes; for, though I got but a glimpse, there would be neither partridges nor any other little birds left in the country in less than two hours.” “You are very clever,” replied Fortuné. “They call me the Good-marksman,” said the man; “and I would not leave this occupation for anything in the world.” “I have, notwithstanding, a great inclination to propose to you to travel with me,” said the Chevalier; “it will not prevent your exercising your talent.” The Good-marksman made some objections, and the Chevalier had more difficulty in winning him over than with the others; for sportsmen are generally fond of liberty. However, he at length succeeded, and left the marsh in which he had halted with his additional attendant.

Some days after this, he passed by a meadow, in which he saw a man lying on his side. Comrade said, “Master, this man is gifted; I foresee that he will be very necessary to you.” Fortuné entered the meadow, and desired to know what he was doing. “I want some simples,” replied he; “and I am listening to the grass as it grows, to find out those which I require.” “How!” said the Chevalier, “have you ears so quick, that you can hear the grass grow, and guess that which will come up?” “It is for that reason,” said the listener, “they call me Fine-ear.” “Very well, Fine-ear,” continued Fortuné, “are you inclined to follow me? I will give you such high wages, that you will have no reason to regret it.” The man, delighted at so agreeable a proposition, joined without hesitation the other followers.

The Chevalier, continuing his journey, saw by the side of a high-road a man whose cheeks were so inflated that it had a very droll effect; he was standing with his face towards a lofty mountain, two leagues off, upon which were fifty or sixty windmills. The horse said to his master, “There is another of our gifted ones; do all you can to take him with you.” Fortuné, who had the power of fascinating every one he saw or spoke to, accosted this man, and asked him, what he was doing there. “I am blowing a little, my Lord,” said he, “to set all those mills at work.” “It appears to me, you are too far off,” replied the Chevalier. “On the contrary,” replied the blower, “I find I am too near; and if I did not retain the half of my breath, I should upset the mills, and perhaps the mountains they stand on. I do a great deal of mischief in this way without intending it; and I can tell you, my Lord, that, having been very ill-treated once by my mistress, as I went into the woods to indulge my sorrow, my sighs tore the trees up by the root, and created great confusion; so that in this province they never call me anything but Boisterous.” “If they are tired of you,” said Fortuné, “and you would come with me, here are some who will keep you company; they also possess extraordinary talent.” “I have so natural a curiosity for everything that is uncommon,” replied Boisterous, “that I accept your offer.”

Fortuné, much pleased, proceeded; and, after passing through a well-wooded country, came to a large lake, fed by several springs; at the side of it was a man, who looked at it very attentively. “My Lord,” said Comrade to his master, this man is wanting to complete your train. If you could induce him to follow you, it would be as well.” The Chevalier approached him immediately. “Will you tell me,” said he, “what you are doing there?” “My Lord,” replied the man, “you shall see as soon as this lake is full; I shall drink it at one draught, for I am still thirsty, although I have already twice emptied it.” And accordingly he stooped down, and in a few minutes left scarcely sufficient water for the smallest fish to swim in. Fortuné was not more surprised than all his followers. “What!” said he, “are you always so thirsty?” “No,” said the water-drinker; I only drink like this when I have eaten anything too salt, or in case of some wager. I have been known for some time past by the name of the Tippler.” “Come with me, Tippler,” said the Knight; “I will give you wine to tipple, which you will find better than spring-water.” This promise pleased the man very much, and he forthwith took service with the others.

The Chevalier had now arrived within sight of the place fixed on for the general rendezvous of the King’s forces, when he perceived a man eating so greedily, that, although he had more than sixty thousand loaves of Gonesse bread before him, he seemed resolved not to leave the smallest morsel of it. Comrade said to his master, “My Lord, you want but this man; pray make him come with you.” The Chevalier accosted him, and, smiling, said to him, “Are you determined to eat all this bread for your breakfast?” “Yes,” replied he: “all I regret is, that there is so little; but the bakers are arrant lazy fellows, and give themselves very little trouble, whether you are hungry or not.” “If you require so much every day,” added Fortuné, “there is hardly a country you would not put in a state of starvation.” “Oh! my Lord,” replied Eater (as the people called him), “I should be very sorry to have always so great an appetite; neither my property nor that of my neighbours would be sufficient to satisfy it. It is true that now and then I take a fancy to feast in this fashion.” “My friend Eater,” said Fortuné, “follow me; I will give you good cheer, and you will not be dissatisfied with having chosen me for a master.”

Comrade, who wanted neither for sense nor forethought, warned the Chevalier to forbid all these people from boasting of the extraordinary gifts which they possessed. He lost no time in calling them to him, and said: “Listen to me, Strong-back, Swift, Good-marksman, Fine-ear, Boisterous, Tippler, and Eater. I give you notice, that, if you would please me, you will keep as an inviolable secret the talents you possess; and I assure you I shall endeavour to make you so happy, that you will be perfectly satisfied.” Each bound himself by an oath to obey his orders implicitly; and, soon after, the Chevalier, more adorned by his beauty and his graceful demeanour than by his magnificent dress, entered the capital city, mounted upon his excellent horse, and followed by the finest serving-men in the world. He lost no time in procuring liveries for them, laced all over with gold and silver; he gave them horses: and, having taken apartments in the best inn, he awaited the day fixed for the review. Nothing, however, was talked of but him in the city; and the King, prepossessed in his favour by the general rumour, was very anxious to see him.

All the troops assembled in a great plain. The King came there, with the Queen-dowager his sister, and all their court. The Queen abated no jot of her pomp, notwithstanding the misfortunes of the kingdom; and Fortuné was dazzled by so much splendour. But if they attracted his attention, their observation was equally drawn towards his incomparable beauty. Every one was asking, who that handsome and graceful young gentleman could be; and the King, passing close by him, made him a sign to approach.

Fortuné instantly alighted from his horse to make the King a low bow; he could not help blushing at being looked at so earnestly; this additional colour heightened the brilliancy of his complexion. “I should be glad,” said the King, “to learn from yourself who you are, and what is your name?” “Sire,” replied he, “I call myself Fortuné, without having, up to the present moment, any reason for bearing this name; for my father, who is a count of the frontier, passes his life in great poverty, although he was born of a rich and noble family." "Fortuné, who has been your godmother," replied the King, "has not done so badly for you in bringing you hither; I feel a particular affection for you, and I remember that your father rendered mine great service. I will reward him by my favour to his son." "That is quite just, brother," said the Queen-dowager, who had not yet spoken; "and as I am your elder, and know more particularly than you do all the service that the Count of the Frontier has rendered the state, I beg you will entrust to me the care of rewarding this young Chevalier."

Fortuné, enchanted at his reception, could not sufficiently thank the King and Queen; he did not, however, venture to enlarge greatly upon his feeling of gratitude, believing it to be more respectful to be silent, than to talk too much. The little he did say was so correct, and so much to the purpose, that every one applauded him. He afterwards remounted his horse, and mixed among the noblemen, who accompanied the King; but the Queen called him away every minute, to ask him a thousand questions, and, turning herself towards Floride, who was her favourite confidant, said to her softly, "What dost thou think of this Chevalier? Could any one display a more noble air, or more regular features? I own to thee I never saw anything more charming." Floride quite agreed with the Queen, adding much encomium upon him, for the Chevalier was no less charming to her than to her mistress.

Fortuné could not help fixing his eyes from time to time upon the King. He was the handsomest prince in the world, and his manners were most fascinating. Belle-belle, who had not renounced her sex with her dress, felt a sincere attachment for him.

The King told Fortuné, after the review, that he feared the war would be a very sanguinary one, and that he had determined to keep him close to his own person. The Queen-dowager, who was present, exclaimed, "She had also been thinking the same thing, that he ought not to be exposed to a long campaign, that the place of premier maitre d'hôtel was vacant in her household, and that she would give it to him.” “No,” said the King, “I shall make him grand equerry to myself.” They thus disputed one with the other for the pleasure of advancing Fortuné, and the Queen, afraid of making known the secret emotions that were already agitating her heart, acceded to the King the gratification of appropriating the services of the Chevalier.

Hardly a day passed that he did not call for his Turkey-leather trunk, and take out a new dress. He was certainly the most magnificent prince at court, insomuch that the Queen asked him sometimes, by what means his father could be at such an expense for him; at other times she would banter him, “Own the truth,” she said, “you have a mistress; it is she who sends you all the beautiful things we see.” Fortuné blushed, and respectfully replied to all the various questions the Queen put to him.

On the other hand, he acquitted himself of his duties admirably. Sensibly alive to the King’s merits, he attached himself more to him than he wished to do. “What is my fate?” said he, “I love a great King, without any hope of his loving me, or that he will ever know what I suffer.” The King, on his part, loaded him with favours; nothing was well done that was not done by the handsome Chevalier. The Queen, deceived by his dress, seriously thought of the means of contracting a secret marriage with him. The inequality of their birth was the only thing which troubled her.

She was not the only one entertaining such feelings for Fortuné; the handsomest women of the court were taken with him. He was overwhelmed with tender epistles, with assignations, with presents, and a thousand gallantries, to all of which he replied with so much indifference, that they doubted not he had a mistress in his own country. It was in vain that, at the great entertainments of the court, he took no pains to distinguish himself. He carried away the prize at all the tournaments; in hunting, he killed more game than any one else; he danced at all the balls with more grace and skill than any of the courtiers; in short, it was delightful to see or to hear him.

The Queen, anxious to be spared the confusion of declaring her sentiments to him herself, desired Floride to make him understand, that so many marks of kindness from a young and beautiful queen ought not to be a matter of indifference to him. Floride was very much embarrassed by this commission, for she had been unable to avoid the fate of all who had seen the Chevalier, and she thought it would be too amiable on her part to prefer her mistress's interests to her own; so that, at each opportunity the Queen gave her of talking to him, instead of speaking of the beauty and great qualifications of that princess, she told him only of her ill-humour, and of what her women endured from her; of the injustice she did them, of the bad use she made of the power she usurped in the kingdom; and, finally, drawing a comparison between their sentiments, she said, "I am not born a queen, but really I ought to have been one. I have so much generosity in my nature, that I am anxious to do good to everybody. Ah! if I were in that high station," continued she, "how happy would I make the handsome Fortuné. He would love me out of gratitude, if he could not love me from inclination."

The young Chevalier was quite dismayed at this conversation, and knew not what to answer, and therefore carefully avoided these tête-à-têtes with her; and the impatient Queen never failed to ask her, what impression she had made for her upon Fortuné. "He thinks so little of himself," said she, "and is so bashful, that he will not believe anything I tell him of you, or he pretends not to believe it, because he is preoccupied by some other passion." "I believe so too," said the alarmed Queen; "but is it possible he will not yield to his ambition?" "And is it possible," replied Floride, "that you would owe his heart to your crown? so young and beautiful as you are, possessing a thousand attractions; is it necessary to have recourse to the splendour of a diadem?" "One has recourse to everything," replied the Queen, "when it is to subdue a rebellious heart."

Floride saw clearly that it was impossible to cure her mistress of her infatuation for him. The Queen each day expected some happy result from the labours of her confidant, but she made so little progress with Fortuné, that she was at length compelled to seek the means of obtaining a personal interview with him. She knew that he was accustomed very early every morning to walk in a little wood in front of the windows of her apartment. She arose at daybreak, and, watching the path he was likely to take, saw him approaching with a melancholy and abstracted air. She instantly called Floride. “Thou hast spoken too truly,” said she; “Fortuné is without doubt in love with some lady in this court, or in his own country — see how sad he looks.” “I have observed this sadness in all his conversations,” replied Floride; “and if it were possible for you to forget him, you would do well.” “It is too late,” exclaimed the Queen, sighing deeply; “but, as he has entered that green arbour, let us go there; I will have thee only to follow me.” The girl did not dare to stop the Queen, however much she wished to do so; for she feared she would induce Fortuné to fall in love with her, and a rival of such exalted rank is always very dangerous. As soon as the Queen had taken a few steps in the wood, she heard the Chevalier singing; his voice was very sweet; he had composed these words to a new air: —

How rare a thing it is for Love and Peace
To dwell together in the same fond heart!
For ever with my joys, my fears increase,
To see them, like a morning dream, depart!
Dread of the future robs my soul of rest,
Then most unhappy when it most is blest!

Fortuné had made these verses in consequence of his sentiments for the King, the favour he had shown him, and from the fear he was in of being recognised, and forced to leave a court he preferred living in to any other in the world. The Queen, who stopped to listen, was extremely distressed, “What am I going to attempt?” said she softly to Floride. “This ungrateful young man despises the honour of pleasing me; he thinks himself happy — he seems satisfied with his conquest — and he sacrifices me to another.” “He is at that age,” replied Floride, “when reason has not yet established its rights; if I dared advise your Majesty, it would be to forget a giddy little fellow, who is not capable of appreciating his good fortune.” The Queen would much rather her confidant had spoken to her in a different manner; she cast an angry look at her, and, hastily advancing, she quickly entered the arbour where the knight was; she pretended to be surprised to find him there, and to be vexed at his seeing her in déshabille, although she had taken great pains to make herself magnificent and attractive.

As soon as she appeared, from respect to her, he would have retired, but she desired him to remain, that he might assist her in walking, “I was awoke this morning, most agreeably, by the singing of the birds. The fine weather, and the pure air, invited me to hear them warbling nearer. How happy they are; alas! they know nought but pleasure: grief does not trouble them!” “It appears to me, Madam,” replied Fortuné, “that they are not entirely exempt from pain and sorrow; they are always in danger of the murderous shot, or the deceitful snares of sportsmen, besides the birds of prey which war against these little innocent ones. When a hard winter comes, and freezes the ground, and covers it with snow, they die for want of hemp or millet-seed, and every year they have the trouble of seeking a fresh mistress.”

“You think, then, Chevalier,” said the Queen, smiling, “that it is a trouble? There are men who have a fresh one each month in the year; but you appear surprised at it,” she continued, “as if your heart was not of the same stamp, and that you have not yet been given to change!” “I am not able, Madam, to know of what I should be guilty," said the Chevalier, "for I have never yet loved; but I dare believe, if I had an attachment, it would end but with my life." "You have never loved? "cried the Queen, looking so earnestly at him, that the poor Chevalier changed colour several times; "you have never been in love? Fortuné, can you assert this to a Queen, who reads in your face and your eyes the passion that occupies your heart? and who has heard the words which you sang to the new air, which is just now so popular." "It is true, Madam," replied the Chevalier, "that those lines are my own; but it is likewise true, that I made them without any particular design; my friends ask me every day to write drinking-songs for them, although I never drink anything but water; there are others who prefer love-songs: thus I sing of Love, and of Bacchus, without being a lover or a drinker."

The Queen listened to him with so much emotion that she could scarcely support herself; that which he had told her, rekindled the hope in her bosom that Floride would have deprived her of. "If I could think you sincere," said she, "I thould indeed be surprised, that you have not seen a lady in this court sufficiently lovely for you to fix upon." "Madam," replied Fortuné, "I endeavour so earnestly to fulfil the duties of my office, that I have no time for sighing." "You love nothing, then?" added she, with vehemence. "No, Madam," said he; "I have not a heart of so gallant a character; I am a kind of misanthrope, who loves his liberty, and who would not lose it for all the world." The Queen sat down, and fixing upon him the kindest of looks — "There are some chains, so beautiful and glorious," replied she, "that anyone might feel happy to wear them; if Fortuné has destined such to you, I would advise you to renounce your liberty." In speaking thus, her eyes explained her meaning too intelligibly, for the Chevalier, who had already very strong suspicions, not to be now entirely confirmed in them. Fearing the conversation might go still further, he looked at his watch, and setting the hand on a little — "I must beg your Majesty," said he, "to allow me to go to the palace; it is time for the King to arise, and he desired me to be in attendance.” “Go, indifferent youth,” said she, sighing profoundly; “you are right to pay court to my brother, but remember you would not have done wrong to dedicate some of your attentions to me.”

The Queen followed him with her eyes, then let them fall, and reflecting upon what had just passed, blushed with shame and rage. That which added still more to her grief, was that Floride had witnessed it all, and she remarked upon her face an expression of joy, which seemed to tell her, she would have done better had she taken her advice instead of speaking to Fortuné; she meditated sometime, and taking her tablets, she wrote these lines, which she caused to be set to music by the Lully of the court: —

Behold! behold! the torment I endure!
The victor knows it: but it moves him not.
My heart displays the wound no time can cure,
Still rankling with the shaft too truly shot.

As unconceal’d, his coldness, his disdain,
He hates me, and his hate I would return;
But ah! my foolish heart essays in vain
With aught but fondest love for him to burn!

Floride played her part very well with the Queen; she consoled her as much as she could, and gave her some few flattering hopes, which she needed to support her. “Fortuné thinks himself so beneath you, Madam,” said she, “that he did not perhaps understand what you meant; and it appears to me that he has already said much in assuring you that he loves no one.” It is so natural for us to flatter ourselves, that the Queen at length took heart a little. She was ignorant that the malicious Floride, aware of the Chevalier’s indifference for her, wished to induce him to speak still more explicitly, that he might offend her by his cool answers.

He was, on his part, in the greatest perplexity. His situation appeared cruel to him; he would not have hesitated to leave the court, if his love for the King had not detained him in spite of himself. He never went near the Queen but when she held her court, and then always in the King’s suite: she perceived this alteration in his conduct instantly; she several times gave him the opportunity of paying attentions to her, without his profiting by it; but one day, as she descended into her gardens, she saw him cross one of the grand avenues, and suddenly enter the little wood. She called to him; he feared to displease her in pretending not to hear her, and approached her respectfully.

“Do you remember, Chevalier,” said she, “the conversation we had together some time ago in the green arbour?” “I am not capable, Madam,” answered he, “of forgetting that honour.” “No doubt the questions I put to you then,” said the Queen, “were distressing; for since that day you have not placed yourself in a situation for me to ask you any more.” “As chance alone procured me that favour,” said he, “I thought it would be presuming to seek any other.” “Rather say, ungrateful man,” continued she, blushing, “that you have avoided my presence; you know too well my sentiments.” Fortuné cast down his eyes in an embarrassed and modest manner, and as he hesitated to reply to her, she continued — “You seem very much disconcerted — go, do not endeavour to answer me; I understand you better than though I heard you speak.” She would perhaps have said more, but she perceived the King coming that way. She advanced towards him, and seeing him look very melancholy, she begged him to tell her the reason. “You know,” said the King, “that about a month ago tidings were brought me that a dragon of prodigious size was ravaging the country. I thought they could kill him, and issued for that purpose the necessary orders; but they have tried every means in vain. He devours my subjects, their flocks, and all that he meets with; he poisons all the rivers and springs wherever he quenches his thirst, and withers the grass and the herbs that he lies down upon.” While the King was talking to her, it entered the mind of the irritated Queen, that there was an opportunity afforded to her of sacrificing the Chevalier to her resentment. “I am not ignorant,” said she, “of the bad news you have received. Fortuné, whom you saw with me, has just given me an account of it; but, brother, you will be surprised at what I have to tell you, — he has entreated me, with the greatest importunity, to ask you to permit him to go and fight this terrible dragon; he is indeed so skilled in the use of arms, that I am not surprised he presumes so much; besides, he has told me he has a secret, by which he can put the most wakeful dragon to sleep, but that must not be mentioned, because it does not show much courage in the action.” “In whatever manner he may do it,” replied the King, “it will be very glorious for him, and of great service to us, if he could succeed; but I fear this proceeds from an indiscreet zeal, and that it will cost him his life.” “No, brother,” added the Queen, “fear not; he has related very surprising things on this subject. You know that he is naturally very sincere, and then what honour can he hope for, in dying so rashly. In short,” said she, “I have promised to obtain for him what he so much desires, that if you refuse him, it will kill him.”

“I consent to what you wish,” said the King, “but I own to you, not without much repugnance: but let us call him.” He then made a sign for Fortuné to approach, and said kindly to him, “I have just learnt from the Queen the desire you have to fight the dragon that is devastating our country. It is so bold a resolution, that I can scarcely believe you have considered all the danger.” “I have represented this to him,” said the Queen; “but he is so zealous in your service, and so desirous to signalize himself, that nothing can dissuade him from it; and I foresee that he will be successful.” Fortuné was much surprised at what the King and Queen said to him. He had sense enough to penetrate the wicked intentions of this princess, but his timidity would not permit him to explain it; and, without answering, he let her continue to talk, contenting himself with making low bows, so that the King imagined he was renewing his entreaties to grant him what he so much desired. “Go, then,” said he, sighing, “go where glory calls you. I know you are so skilful in all you do, and more particularly in the use of weapons, that, perhaps this monster will have much difficulty in avoiding your blows.” “Sire,” replied the Chevalier, “whatever may be the issue of this combat, I shall be satisfied; I shall deliver you from a terrible scourge, or I shall die for you; but honour me with one favour, which will be infinitely dear to me.” “Ask for whatever you wish,” said the King. “I am bold enough,” continued Fortuné, “to ask for your portrait.” The King was much pleased he should think of his portrait at a time when he might have been occupied with other things, and the Queen was grieved afresh, that he had not made the same request of her, but he must have had a superabundance of goodnature, to wish for the portrait of so wicked a woman.

The King returned to his palace, and the Queen to her’s: Fortuné, much embarrassed by the promise he had made, went to seek his horse, and said, “My dear Comrade, there is a great deal of news for you.” “I know it already, my Lord,” replied he. “What shall we do, then?” added Fortuné. “We must set off directly,” said the horse; “get the King’s order, by which he desires you to go and fight the dragon, we will then do our duty.” These few words consoled our young Chevalier; he failed not the next morning to wait on the King, in a riding-dress, as handsome as the others that he had taken from the Turkey-leather trunk.

As soon as the King saw him, he exclaimed, “What! you are ready to go?” “Your commands cannot be too quickly executed, Sire;” replied he, “I come to take my leave of your Majesty.” The King could not help relenting, seeing so young, so handsome, so accomplished a gentleman, upon the eve of exposing himself to the greatest danger man could ever place himself in.

He embraced him, and gave him his portrait surrounded by large diamonds. Fortuné received it with extraordinary joy, for the King's noble qualities had made such an impression on him, that he could not imagine anything in the world more charming; and if he suffered at leaving him, it was much less from the fear of being devoured by the dragon, than from being deprived of the presence of one so dear to him.

The King would have a general order included in Fortuné's commission, for all his subjects to aid and assist him whenever he should stand in need; after which he took leave of the King, and that nothing might be remarked in his behaviour, he went to the Queen, who was sitting at her toilette, surrounded by several of her ladies. She changed colour when he appeared; what had she not to reproach herself with on his account? He saluted her respectfully, and asked her, if she would honour him with her commands, as he was on the point of departing. These last words completely disconcerted her; and Floride, who knew not what the Queen had plotted against the Chevalier, was thunderstruck. She would willingly have had some private conversation with him, but he avoided carefully so embarrassing an interview.

"I pray the gods," said the Queen, "that you may conquer, and return triumphant." "Madam," replied the Chevalier, "your Majesty does me too much honour, and is sufficiently aware of the danger to which I shall be exposed; however, I am full of confidence — perhaps, upon this occasion, I am the only one who does hope." The Queen understood very well what he meant; no doubt she would have replied to this reproach, had there been fewer persons present.

The Chevalier returned to his lodgings, and ordered his seven excellent servants to take horse, and follow him, as the time had arrived to prove what they could do. There was not one who did not rejoice at being able to serve him. In less than an hour everything was ready, and they set out with him, assuring him they would do their utmost to fulfil his command. In short, as soon as they had reached the open country, and had no fear of being seen, each one gave proof of his address. Tippler drank the water from the lakes, and caught the finest fish for his master's dinner. Swift, on his part, hunted the stags, and caught the hares by their ears, whatever doubles they made. The Good-marksman gave no quarter to either partridges or pheasants; and when the game was killed by one party, the venison by another, and the fish taken out of the water, Strong-back carried it all cheerfully. Even Fine-ear made himself useful; he found truffles, morelles, mushrooms, salads, and fine herbs, by hearing them grow in the ground. So Fortuné hardly ever had occasion to draw his purse-strings, to defray the expenses of his journey. He would have been very much amused at the sight of so many extraordinary things, if his heart had not been so full of all that he had just left. The King's merit was ever present to him, and the Queen's malice appeared to him so great, that he could not help hating her. He was riding along lost in thought, when he was aroused from his reverie by the piercing cries of several people. They were those of the poor peasants, whom the dragon was devouring. He saw some, who having escaped, were running away with all their might: he called to them, but they would not stop; he followed, and spoke to them, and he learnt from them that the monster was not far off. He asked them, how they had managed to escape; they told him that water was very scarce in the country, that they had only rain-water to drink, to preserve which, they had made a pond — that the dragon, after going his rounds, went to drink there — that he uttered such tremendous yells when he arrived at it, he might be heard a league off, and that then everybody was so alarmed that they hid themselves, and fastened their doors and windows.

The Chevalier entered an inn, not so much to rest himself, as to get some good advice from his pretty horse. When every one had retired, he went into the stable, and said, “Comrade, how shall we conquer this dragon?” “My Lord,” said he, “I will dream of it to-night, and tell you what I think about it to-niorrow morning.” Accordingly, the next morning when the Chevalier came again, the horse said, “Let Fine-ear listen if the dragon is near at hand.” Fine-ear laid himself down on the ground, and heard the yells of the dragon, who was about seven leagues off. When the horse was informed of this, he said to Fortuné, “Desire Tippler to go and drink up all the water out of the great pond, and make Strong-back carry wine enough there to fill it. You must put around the pond dried raisins, pepper, and several things that will make the dragon thirsty; order all the inhabitants to shut themselves up in their houses; and you, my Lord, must not leave the one you may choose to lay wait in with your attendants. The dragon will not fail to go and drink at the pond, the wine he will like very much, and you will then see what will be the end of it all.”

As soon as Comrade had arranged what was to be done, everybody set about what they had to do. The Chevalier went into a house which overlooked the pond. He had scarcely done so, when the frightful dragon came and drank a little, then he ate some of the breakfast they had prepared for him, and then he drank more and more, till he became quite intoxicated. He was unable to move, he laid upon his side, his head hanging down, and his eyes closed. When Fortuné saw him in this state, he felt he had not a moment to lose, he issued forth, sword in hand, and attacked him most courageously. The dragon, finding himself wounded on all sides, would have got up and fallen upon the Chevalier, but he had not the strength, he had lost so much blood. The Chevalier, overjoyed that he had reduced him to this extremity, called his attendants to bind the monster with cords and chains, that the King might have the pleasure and glory of ending his life; so that, having nothing more to fear from the beast, they dragged him into the city.

Fortuné marched at the head of his little troop. On approaching the palace, he sent Swift to the King with good news of his great success; but it seemed incredible, till they actually saw the monster fast bound upon a machine constructed for the purpose.

The King descended, and embraced Fortuné. “The gods have reserved this victory for you,” said he, “and I feel much less joy at the sight of this horrible dragon reduced to this condition, than at your safe return, my dear Chevalier.” “Sire,” replied he, “may it please your Majesty to give the monster his death-blow; I brought him here to receive it at your hand.” The King drew his sword, and terminated the existence of one of his most cruel enemies. Everybody uttered shouts of joy at such unhoped-for success.

Floride, who had been in continual anxiety, was not long before she heard of the return of her handsome Chevalier. She ran to tell the Queen of it, who was so astonished and confounded by her love and her hatred, that she could return no answer to what her confidant told her; and she reproached herself a hundred and a hundred times for the malicious trick she had played him, but she would rather have seen him dead than so indifferent to her. She knew not whether to be pleased or sorry that he had returned to the court, where his presence would again disturb her peace.

The King, impatient to impart to his sister the success of such an extraordinary event, entered her chamber, leaning on the Chevalier’s arm. “Here is the conqueror of the dragon,” said he, “who has rendered me the greatest service I could have received from a faithful subject; it was to you, Madam, he first expressed his desire to fight this monster; I hope you will appreciate the courage with which he exposed himself to the greatest danger.” The Queen, composing her countenance, honoured Fortuné with a gracious reception, and a thousand praises; she thought him handsomer than when he went away, and her earnest look at him was to make him understand that her heart was not cured of its wound.

She would not trust to her eyes alone the task of explanation; and one day that she was hunting with the King, she gave up following the hounds on the plea of sudden indisposition; then, turning to the young Chevalier, who was near her, “You will do me the pleasure,” said she, “of remaining with me; I wish to alight, and rest a little while. Go,” she continued, to those who accompanied her, “do not leave my brother!” She alighted instantly with Floride, and seated herself by the side of a stream, where she remained for some time in profound silence, thinking how she could best commence the conversation.

At length, raising her eyes, she fixed them upon the Chevalier, and said, “As good intentions are not always obvious, I fear you have not been able to penetrate the motives which induced me to press the King to send you to fight the dragon; I felt sure, from a presentiment that never deceives me, that you would acquit yourself like a brave man; and your enemies thought so lightly of your courage, because you did not go to the army, that it was necessary you should perform some such action to stop their mouths. I should have informed you of what they said upon this subject,” continued she, “and ought perhaps to have done so, but I feared the consequences which might result from your resentment, and thought it would be better for you to silence such ill-intentioned people by your intrepid conduct in danger, than by the exertion of an influence which would rather mark the favourite than the soldier. You perceive now, Chevalier,” added she, “that I took a lively interest in all that could conduce to our glory, and that you would be very wrong were you to judge otherwise.” “The distance is so great between us, Madam,” replied he, modestly, “that I am not worthy of the explanation you have been so good as to give me, nor the care you took to imperil my life for the sake of my honour. The gods protected me with more beneficence than my enemies hoped for, and I shall esteem myself always happy to employ in the King’s service, or in yours, a life, the loss of which is a matter of more indifference to me than may be imagined.” This respectful reproach from Fortuné perplexed the Queen: she perfectly comprehended the meaning of his words: but he was still too agreeable to her to be got rid of entirely by too sharp a reply; on the contrary, she pretended to enter completely into his feelings, and made him again relate to her how skilfully he had conquered the dragon.

Fortuné had taken good care not to tell any one it was through the assistance of his attendants he had done so; he boasted of having faced this redoubtable enemy alone, and that his own skill, and his courage, even to rashness, had secured his victory; but the Queen, scarcely thinking of what he was saying to her, interrupted him, to ask him if he was now convinced of the interest she felt in all that related to him; and would have pressed the subject further upon him, when he said: “Madam, I hear the sound of the horn, the King is approaching; will your Majesty mount your horse to go and meet him?” “No,” said she, spitefully; “it is sufficient for you to do so.” “The King would blame me, Madam,” added he, “should I leave you by yourself in a place exposed to danger.” “I will dispense with your attention,” replied she, in an imperative tone. “Begone! — Your presence annoys me!”

At this command, the Chevalier made her a profound bow, mounted his horse, and disappeared from her sight, very uneasy at what might be the result of this fresh offence. He thereupon consulted his fine horse — “Let me know, comrade,” said he, “if this too loving, too angry Queen, will find another monster to give me up to?” “No other but herself,” replied the pretty horse; “but she is more of a dragon than the one you have killed, and will sufficiently put your patience and your virtue to the test.” “Will she not cause me the loss of the king’s favour?” cried he; “that is all I fear.” “I will not reveal the future to you,” said Comrade; “you must be satisfied that I am always on the watch.” He said no more, for the King appeared at the end of an avenue. Fortuné joined him, and told him the Queen was not well, and had commanded him to stay near her. “It appears to me,” said the King, smiling, “you are very much in her good graces, and that it is to her you speak your mind, in preference to me, for I have not forgotten that you entreated her to procure you the glory of going to fight the dragon.” “I dare not contradict you, Sire,” replied the Chevalier; “but I assure your Majesty I make a great distinction between your favours and those of the Queen, and if a subject were permitted to make a confidant of his sovereign, it would be a most delightful pleasure to me to declare my sentiments to you.” The King interrupted him by asking him where he had left the Queen.

Meanwhile, the Queen was complaining to Floride of Fortuné’s indifference to her — “The sight of him becomes hateful to me,” cried she; “he must quit the Court, or I must retire from it; I can no longer suffer the presence of an ungrateful youth, who dares show me so much contempt. What other human being would not esteem himself happy to please a Queen, all-powerful in this kingdom? He is the only one in the world. Ah! the gods have reserved him to disturb the repose of my life!”

Floride was not at all sorry that her mistress was so displeased with Fortuné, and far from endeavouring to oppose her displeasure, she increased it by recalling to her mind many little circumstances, that perhaps she would not have chosen to remark. Her rage thus augmented, made her think of some new device to ruin the poor Chevalier.

As soon as the King had rejoined her, and expressed his concern for her health, she said, “I own I was very ill, but it is difficult to remain so with Fortuné, he is so cheerful, and his ideas so amusing; you must know,” continued she, “he has entreated me to obtain another favour from your Majesty. He has asked, with the greatest confidence of success, to be allowed to undertake the rashest enterprise in the world.” “What, sister,” cried the King, “does he wish to fight with a fresh dragon?” “With several at once,” said she, “and is sure of conquering — shall I tell you? Well, then, he boasts he will compel the Emperor to restore all our treasures; and to effect this, he does not require an army.” “What a pity,” replied the King, “that this poor boy should be guilty of so much extravagance!” “His fight with the dragon,” added the Queen, “has caused him to think of nothing but great adventures; and what hazard do you run in permitting him again to expose himself in your service?” “I hazard his life, which is dear to me,” replied the King. “I should be extremely sorry to see him throw it away so wantonly.” “Decide as you may, he is certain to die,” said she; “for I assure you his desire is so strong to go and recover your treasures, that he will pine to death if you refuse him permission.”

The King felt deeply distressed. “I cannot imagine,” said he, “what has filled his head with all these chimeras; it pains me exceedingly to see him in this condition.” “The fact is,” replied the Queen, “he has fought with the dragon; he has vanquished him, perhaps he will be equally successful in this adventure. I am seldom deceived by my presentiments; my heart tells me his enterprise will be fortunate: pray, brother, do not oppose his zeal.” “Let him be called,” added the King; “at all events I must represent to him the risk he runs.” “That is just the way to exasperate him,” replied the Queen; “he will think you will not let him go, and I assure you he will not be deterred by any consideration for himself, for I have already said all that can be thought of on the subject.” “Well,” cried the King, “let him go then: I consent.” The Queen, delighted with this permission, sent for Fortuné. “Chevalier,” said she, “thank the king; he grants you the permission you so much desire, — to seek the Emperor Matapa, and by fair words, or by force, recover from him the treasures which he has despoiled us of. Prepare to depart with as much expedition as when you went to fight the dragon.”

Fortuné, much surprised, recognised in this piece of malice, the excess of the Queen’s fury against him. However, he felt pleasure in being able to lay down his life for a King who was so dear to him; and without making any objection to this extraordinary commission, he knelt, and kissed the King’s hand, who, on his part, was very much affected. The Queen felt a degree of shame to witness with what respect he received this order to encounter certain death. “Is it possible,” said she, “that he has some affection for me, and that rather than contradict what I have advanced, he suffers the injury I have done him without a complaint? Ah! if I could so flatter myself, how much mischief would I wish myself for having caused so much to him!” The King said but little to the Chevalier. He remounted his horse, and the Queen entered her chariot again, feigning a return of her indisposition.

Fortuné accompanied the King to the end of the forest: then re-entering it to have some conversation with his horse, “My faithful Comrade,” said he, “it is all over. I must die; the Queen has contrived it in a manner I should never have expected.” “My charming master,” replied the horse, “do not alarm yourself: although I was not present at all that passed, I have known it for some time; the embassy is not so terrible as you imagine.” “Thou dost not then know,” continued the Chevalier, “that this Emperor is the most passionate of men, and that if I suggest he should restore all that he has taken from the King, he would answer me only by having me strangled and thrown into the river.” “I have been told of his violent conduct,” said Comrade; “but let not that prevent your taking your attendants with you, and departing. If you perish there, we will all perish together; I hope, however, for better fortune.”

The Chevalier, a little consoled, returned home, issued the necessary orders, and afterwards went and received those of the King, together with his credentials. “You will tell the Emperor from me,” he said, “that I demand my subjects whom he holds in bondage, my soldiers who are prisoners, my horses which he rides, my goods, and my treasures.” “What shall I offer him in exchange for all these things?” said Fortuné. “Nothing,” replied the King, “but my friendship.” The young ambassador’s memory was not overburthened by his instructions. He departed without seeing the Queen. She was offended at it; but he had little occasion to regard that. What could she do more in her greatest rage than she had already accomplished in the transports of her greatest love for him. An affection of this kind appeared to him the most dreadful thing in the world. Her confidant, who knew the whole secret, was exasperated with her mistress, for striving to sacrifice the flower of all chivalry.

Fortuné took in the Turkey-leather trunk all that was necessary for his journey. He was not satisfied with dressing himself magnificently; he wished his seven attendants who accompanied him to make as good an appearance: and as they had all of them excellent horses, and Comrade seemed rather to fly through the air, than to gallop over the ground, they arrived in a very little time at the capital city in which the Emperor Matapa resided. It was larger than Paris, Constantinople, and Rome put together, and so populated, that all the cellars, garrets, and lofts were inhabited.

Fortuné was surprised to see a city of such a prodigious extent. He demanded an audience of the Emperor; but when he announced the subject of his embassy, although with a grace which added much to the effect of his arguments, the Emperor could not help smiling. “If you were at the head of five hundred thousand men,” said he, “one might listen to you; but they tell me you have but seven.” “I never undertook, my Lord,” said Fortuné, “to make you restore what my master wishes by force, but by my very humble remonstrances.” “Neither one way nor the other,” added the Emperor. “You will never succeed, unless you can accomplish something that has just occurred to me. It is, that you should find a man who has so good an appetite, that he can eat for his breakfast all the hot bread baked for the inhabitants of this great city.”

The Chevalier was most agreeably surprised at this proposition; but as he did not answer directly, the Emperor burst into a fit of laughter. “You see,” said he, “it is natural to return a ridiculous answer to a ridiculous request.” “Sire,” said Fortuné, “I accept your offer. To-morrow I will bring a man who shall eat all the new bread, and likewise all the stale bread in this city. Order it to be brought into the great square, and you will have the pleasure of seeing him demolish it all, to the very crumbs.” The Emperor gave his assent. Nothing was talked of for the rest of the day, but the folly of the new ambassador; and Matapa swore he would put him to death, if he did not keep his word.

Fortuné, having returned to the ambassador’s hotel, where he had taken up his abode, called Eater to him, and said, “Now is the time for thee to prepare thyself to eat bread: everything depends upon it.” He thereupon told him what he had promised the Emperor. “Do not make yourself uneasy, master,” said Eater; “I shall eat till they will be tired of feeding me.” Fortuné, however, could not help fearing the result of his exertions, and forbade them to give him any supper, that he might eat his breakfast the better; but this precaution was useless.

The Emperor, the Empress, and the Princess, placed themselves in a balcony, that they might better see all that took place. Fortuné arrived with his little retinue; and he perceived in the great square six large mountains of bread, higher than the Pyrennees: he could not avoid turning pale. With Eater it had a contrary effect; for the anticipation of eating so much good bread delighted him: he begged they would not keep the smallest morsel from him, declaring he would not leave a bit for a mouse. The Emperor and all the Court amused themselves at the expense of Fortuné and his attendants; but Eater, becoming impatient, demanded the signal to commence. It was given to him by a flourish of drums and trumpets: at the same instant he threw himself upon one of the mountains of bread, which he devoured in less than a quarter of an hour, and gulped down all the rest at the same rate. Never was greater astonishment. Everybody asked if their eyes had not deceived them, and went, to satisfy themselves, by touching the place where they had placed the bread. Every creature that day, from the Emperor to the cat, was compelled to dine without bread.

Fortuné, delighted with his great success, approached the Emperor, and very respectfully asked if it was agreeable for him to keep his word with him. The Emperor, rather irritated at being so duped, said, “Mr. Ambassador, it will not do to eat so much without drinking, therefore you, or some one of your people, must drink all the water out of the fountains, aqueducts, and reservoirs that are in the city, and all the wine that can be found in the cellars.” “Sire,” said Fortuné, “you are endeavouring to make it impossible for me to obey your orders: however, I would not mind attempting the adventure, if I might flatter myself you would restore to the King, my master, what I have asked for him.” “I will do it,” said the Emperor, “if you succeed in your undertaking.” The Chevalier asked the Emperor if he would be present; he replied, it would be so extraordinary a thing, that it deserved his attention, and getting into a magnificent chariot, he drove to the Fountain of Lions: there were seven marble lions, which threw from their mouths torrents of water, which formed a river, upon which the inhabitants traversed the city in gondolas. Tippler approached the great bason, and without taking breath, he drained it as dry as though there had never been any water in it. The fish in the river cried vengeance against him, for they knew not what had happened; in like manner he did by all the other fountains, aqueducts, and reservoirs; in fact, he could have drunk the sea, he was so thirsty. After such an example the Emperor did not doubt but that he could drink the wine as easily as the water, and everybody was too much provoked to be willing to give him their own. But Tippler complained of the great injustice they were doing him; he said he should have the stomach-ache, and that he not only expected the wine, but that the spirits were also his due; so that Matapa, fearing he might appear covetous, consented to Tippler’s request. Fortuné took his opportunity of begging the Emperor to recollect his promise. At these words he looked very stern, and told him he would think of it. In fact he called his council together, and expressed his extreme vexation at having promised this young ambassador to return all he had won from his master; that he had considered the conditions he had attached thereunto were impossible to be accomplished, and quite sufficient to prevent his compliance. The Princess, his daughter, who was one of the most lovely creatures in the world, having heard him speak thus, said, “You are aware, Sire, that up to the present moment I have beaten all those who have dared to dispute the prize in a race with me. You must tell the ambassador that if he can reach before me a certain spot that shall be marked out, you will no longer hesitate to keep your word with him.” The Emperor embraced his child, thought her advice admirable, and the next morning received Fortuné very graciously.

“I have one more condition to make,” said he, “which is, that you, or one of your people, should run a race with the Princess, my daughter. I swear by all the elements, that if she be beaten I will give every satisfaction to your master.” Fortuné did not refuse this challenge; he told the Emperor that he accepted it, and Matapa immediately added that it should be in two hours. He sent to his daughter to get ready — it was an exercise she was accustomed to from her earliest infancy: she appeared in an avenue of orange-trees three leagues long, and which was so beautifully gravelled, that not a stone the size of a pin’s head could be seen in it: she had on a light rose-coloured taffety dress, embroidered down the seams with gold and silver spangles; her beautiful hair was tied by a ribbon at the back, and fell carelessly upon her shoulders; she wore extremely pretty little shoes without heels, and a girdle of jewels, which displayed her figure sufficiently to prove there had never been seen one more beautiful — the young Atalanta could never have disputed it with her.

Fortuné arrived, followed by the faithful Swift, and his other attendants. The Emperor took his seat with all his Court. The ambassador announced that Swift would have the honour of running against the Princess. The Turkey-leather trunk had furnished him with a Holland cloth suit trimmed with English lace, flame-coloured silk stockings, feathers to match, and some beautiful linen. In this dress he looked very handsome; the Princess accepted him as her competitor, but before they set off she had some sort of liqueur brought her, which would strengthen, and give her additional speed. Swift said he ought to have some as well, and that the advantages ought to be equal. “Willingly,” said she, “I am too just to refuse you.” She immediately poured some out for him, but as he was not accustomed to this water, which was very strong, it mounted suddenly into his head; he made two or three turns, and falling down at the foot of an orange-tree, went fast asleep.

In the meanwhile the signal was given for starting. They had already given it three times; the Princess kindly waited for Swift to awake; she thought at last that it was of great consequence to free her father from the perplexity he was in, and accordingly she set off with wonderful grace and speed. As Fortuné was at the other end of the avenue, with all his people, he knew nothing of what was passing, till he saw the Princess running alone, and hardly half a league from the winning place. “Ye gods!” cried he, speaking to his horse, “we are lost; I see nothing of Swift.” “My lord,” said Comrade, “Fine-Ear must listen, perhaps he will be able to tell us what he is about.” Fine-Ear threw himself upon the ground, and although he was two leagues from him, he could hear him snoring. “Truly,” said he, “he has no thoughts of coming; he sleeps as though he was in bed.” “Ah! what shall we do then?” again cried Fortuné. “Master,” said Comrade, “the good Marksman must let fly an arrow at the tip of his ear, to awake him.” The good Marksman took his bow, and aimed so truly, that he pierced Swift’s ear: the pain woke him, he opened his eyes, he saw the Princess nearly at the goal, and heard nothing but shouts of joy, and great applause. He was at first astonished, but he soon regained the ground he had lost by sleeping. It appeared as though the winds were carrying him along, and they could not follow him with their eyes — in short, he arrived first, with the arrow still in his ear, for he had not had the time to take it out.

The Emperor was so astonished at the three events which had come to pass since the arrival of the ambassador, that he believed the gods favoured him, and that he could no longer defer keeping his word. "Approach," said he to Fortuné, "that you may learn from my own lips, that I consent that you shall take from hence as much as you, or one of your men can carry, of your master's treasures; for you cannot suppose I would ever do more than that, nor that I would let either his soldiers, his subjects, or his horses go." The ambassador made him a profound bow; he told him that he was much obliged to him, and that he begged he would give his orders thereupon.

Matapa, excessively mortified, spoke to his treasurer, and then went to a palace that he had just without the walls of the city. Fortuné and his attendants immediately asked for admission into all the places where the king's furniture, curiosities, money, and jewels were deposited. They hid nothing from him, but it was on condition that but one man should be laden with them. Strong-back made his appearance, and with his assistance the ambassador carried off all the furniture that was in the Emperor's palace, five hundred statues of gold taller than giants, coaches, chariots, and all sorts of things, without exception, with which Strongback walked so swiftly, it seemed as though he had not a pound weight upon his back.

When the Emperor's ministers saw that the palace was dismantled to such an extent that there were neither chairs, nor chests, nor saucepans, nor a bed to lie upon, they hastened to warn him of it — and one may judge of his surprise, when he learned that one man carried everything. He exclaimed that he would not suffer it, and commanded his guards and musqueteers to mount, and speedily follow the robbers. Although Fortuné was more than ten leagues off, Fine-Ear told him that he heard a large body of cavalry galloping towards them, and the good Marksman, who had an excellent sight, saw them at that distance. Fortuné, who with his men had just arrived on the banks of a river, said to Tippler, "We have no boats; if thou couldst drink some of this water, we might be able to ford the river." Tippler instantly performed his duty. The ambassador was anxious to make the best use of his time, and get away; his horse said to him, "Do not be uneasy, let our enemies approach.” They appeared upon the opposite bank, and knowing where the fishermen moored their boats, they speedily embarked in them, and rowed with all their might, when Boisterous inflated his cheeks, and commenced blowing; the river became agitated, the boats were upset, and the Emperor’s little army perished, without a single man escaping to tell the news.

Rejoiced at so favourable an event, each thought only of demanding the reward he considered he had deserved. They wanted to make themselves masters of all the treasures they had brought away, and a great dispute arose between them upon the division.

“If I had not won the prize,” said the runner, “you would have had nothing.” “And if I had not heard you snoring,” said Fine-ear, “where should we have been then?” “Who would have awakened thee without me?” responded the Good Marksman. “In truth,” added Strongback, “I admire your arguments: who ought to dispute the right of first choice with me, since I have had the trouble of carrying it all? Without my assistance, you would not have had the opportunity of sharing it.” “Say, rather, without mine,” rejoined Tippler; “the river that I drank like a glass of lemonade would have puzzled you a little.” “You would have been much more puzzled, if I had not upset the boats,” said Boisterous. “I have been silent till now,” interrupted Eater, “but I must remark that it was I who opened the ball in the great events which have passed; and that if I had left but a crust of bread, all would have been lost.”

“My friends,” said Fortuné, with a commanding air, “you have all done wonders; but we ought to leave it to the King to acknowledge our services. I should be very sorry to be rewarded by any other hand than his. Believe me, let us leave all to his will; he sent us to recover his treasures, and not to steal them. The thought of it even is so shameful, that I am of opinion it should never be mentioned again; and I assure you, I myself will do so much for you, that you will have nothing to regret, if it be possible the King should neglect you."

The seven gifted men, deeply penetrated by their master's remonstrance, fell at his feet, and promised him that his will should be theirs; and with this determination they finished their journey. But the charming Fortuné, as he approached the city, felt agitated by a thousand various anxieties; — the joy at having rendered such a considerable service to the King, — to him for whom he felt so much affection, — the hope of seeing him — of being favourably received, — all this flattered him delightfully. On the other hand, the fear of again irritating the Queen, and experiencing renewed persecutions from her, and from Floride, distressed him very much. At length he arrived; and all the people, overjoyed to see the immense quantity of valuables he had brought back with him, followed him with a thousand acclamations, the noise of which reached the palace.

The King could not believe in so extraordinary an event, and ran to the Queen, to inform her of it. She was at first quite thunderstruck, but afterwards recovered herself a little. "You see," said she, "that the gods protect him: he has fortunately succeeded, and I am not surprised that he undertakes that which appears impossible to others." As she uttered these words, she saw Fortuné enter. He informed their majesties of the success of his journey, adding that the treasures were in the park, as there was so much gold, jewels, and furniture, there were no places sufficiently large to put them in. It is easy to believe that the King evinced much affection for so faithful, zealous, and charming a subject.

The presence of the Chevalier, and all the successes he had achieved, reopened the wound in the Queen's heart, that had never been quite healed. She thought him more charming than ever; and as soon as she was at liberty to speak to Floride, she recommenced her complaints. "Thou hast seen what I have done to ruin him," said she; "I thought it the only means of forgetting him. An unequalled fatality brings him back to me again; and whatever reasons I had to despise a man so much my inferior, and who returned my affections with the blackest ingratitude, I cannot help loving him still, and I am resolved to marry him privately.” “To marry him?” cried Floride; “is it possible? — have I heard rightly?” “Yes,” replied the Queen, “thou hast heard my intentions; thou must aid me. I desire thee to bring Fortuné this evening to my chamber; I will myself declare to what extent my love for him will carry me.” Floride, in despair at being chosen to assist in forwarding the marriage of her mistress and her lover, tried every means to dissuade the Queen from seeing him; she represented the King’s anger, if he came and discovered this intrigue; that perhaps he would order the Chevalier to be executed, or at least condemn him to perpetual imprisonment, and she would never see him more. All her eloquence was in vain; she saw the Queen was beginning to be angry; — she had nothing, therefore, to do but obey her.

She found Fortuné in the gallery of the palace, where he was having the golden statues arranged that he had brought from Matapa. She told him to come in the evening to the Queen. This order made him tremble. Floride perceived his distress. “Oh,” said she, “how I pity you! By what unlucky fate did the Princess lose her heart to you! Alas! I know one less dangerous than hers, that dare not declare itself.” The Chevalier was not anxious for another explanation, — he had already too much to endure; and as he did not seek to please the Queen, he dressed himself very plainly, that she might not imagine he endeavoured to set himself off; but though he could dispense with his diamonds and his embroideries, he could not get rid of his personal charms — he was still lovely, still admirable, whatever humour he was in. There was no one to be compared to him.

The Queen took great pains to heighten the lustre of her appearance by an extraordinary display of dress; she saw with pleasure that Fortuné was astonished. “Appearances,” said she, “are sometimes so deceitful, that I am delighted to justify myself from the charges you no doubt brought against me in your heart. When I induced the King to send you to the Emperor, it seemed as though my object was to destroy you. Nevertheless, depend upon it, handsome Chevalier, that I knew all that would happen, and that I had no other view than your immortal honour.” “Madam,” said he, “you are too much above me to render it necessary you should condescend to any explanation. I do not presume to inquire into the motives that induced you to act thus; it was sufficient for me that I should obey the King.” “You set too light a value on the explanation I wish to give you,” added she; “but the time has arrived to convince you of my favour. Approach, Fortuné, approach; receive my hand as a pledge of my faith.”

The poor Chevalier was more thunderstruck than anybody had ever been in the world. Twenty times he was on the point of declaring his sex to the Queen, but durst not do so, and only responded to her tokens of love by an excessive coldness of manner. He pointed out to her the numberless reasons for the King’s anger, when he should hear that a subject, in the midst of his Court, should have ventured to contract so important a marriage without his sanction. After the Queen had vainly endeavoured to remove the obstacles that appeared to alarm him, she all at once assumed the voice and countenance of a fury; she flew into the most violent passion; she threatened him with a thousand punishments; she loaded him with abuse; she fought and scratched him; and then, turning her rage upon herself, she tore her hair, made her face and throat bleed, rent her veil and her lace; then crying out, “Help, guards! — help!” called them into her chamber, and commanded them to fling that wretch into some dungeon; and ran herself to the King, to demand reparation for the violence of that young monster.

She told her brother, that for some time past he had had the audacity to declare his passion for her, that in the hope that absence, and her severity towards him, might have cured him, she had allowed no opportunity to pass of having him removed from the Court, as the King might have observed;

but that he was a villain that nothing could alter, that the King could see the extremities to which he had proceeded against her, that she insisted on his being brought to justice; and that if that satisfaction was denied her she would know the reason of it.

The manner in which she spoke to the King alarmed him, for he knew her to be one of the most violent women in the world; she had much power, and she was quite capable of overturning the kingdom. Fortuné's boldness merited an exemplary punishment; everybody was already aware of what had occurred, and his own feelings ought to prompt him to avenge his sister. But, alas! upon whom was this vengeance to alight? — upon a gentleman who had exposed himself to so many perils in his service, to whom he was indebted for peace, and all his treasures, and for whom he had a particular affection, — he would have given half his life to have saved his dear favourite. He represented to the Queen how useful he had been to him, the services he had rendered the kingdom, his youth, and everything that might induce her to pardon him. She would not hear of it, — she demanded his death. The King, finding he could not possibly avoid having him tried, appointed the mildest and most tender-hearted judges, in hopes they would visit the offence as light as possible.

But he was mistaken in his conjectures; the judges were for establishing their reputation at the expense of this unfortunate prisoner; and as it was an affair that would make much noise in the world, they armed themselves with the utmost severity, and condemned Fortuné without deigning to hear him. His sentence was, that he should be stabbed three times to the heart with a poignard, because it was his heart that was guilty.

The King trembled at this sentence as though it had been passed upon himself; he banished all the judges who had pronounced it, but could not save his beloved Fortuné; and the Queen triumphed in the punishment he was to suffer — her eyes thirsting for blood demanded that of her illustrious victim. The King renewed his intercessions, but they only served to exasperate her. At length, the day fixed for this terrible execution arrived. They came to lead the Chevalier from the prison in which they had placed him, and where he had been living without a single person in the world to speak to. He was therefore ignorant of what crime the Queen had accused him, and merely imagined it some new persecution his indifference to her had brought upon him; and that which distressed him the most was, that he believed the King participated with the Princess in her rage against him. Floride, inconsolable at seeing the situation in which her lover was placed, took a most violent resolution, which was to poison the Queen and herself if Fortuné should be doomed to a cruel death. From the moment she knew the sentence, despair seized her; she thought but of how to put her intentions into effect. The poison she procured, however, was not as powerful as she desired, for although she had given it to the Queen, that Princess, not feeling the effects of it, caused the charming Chevalier to be brought into the great square of the palace, that the execution might take place in her presence. The executioners brought him from his dungeon according to their custom, and led him like a tender lamb to the slaughter. The first object that struck his sight was the Queen in her chariot, who could not be too near him, wishing if possible that his blood might spurt out upon her. The King shut himself up in his chamber, that he might lament unchecked the fate of his beloved favourite.

When they had tied Fortuné to the stake, they tore off his robe and his vest to pierce his heart, but what was the astonishment of this numerous assembly, when they uncovered the alabaster bosom of Belle-belle! Everybody saw it was an innocent girl, unjustly accused. The Queen was so agitated and confused at such a sight that the poison began to take extraordinary effect. She fell into long convulsions, from which she only recovered to utter agonising lamentations. The people who loved Fortuné had already given her her liberty. They ran to announce this wonderful news to the King, who had abandoned himself to the deepest grief. Joy now took the place of sorrow; he ran into the square, and was delighted to perceive Fortuné’s transformation.

The last sighs of the Queen somewhat subdued his raptures, but when he reflected upon her malice he could not regret her. He resolved to marry Belle-belle, to repay her for the great obligations he was under to her, and declared his intentions to her. It is easy to believe she was at the height of her wishes, not so much for the sake of the crown as for the sake of so worthy a monarch, and one for whom she had so long entertained the greatest affection.

The day being fixed for celebrating the King’s marriage, Belle-belle reassumed her female attire, and appeared a thousand times more charming than in the garb of the Chevalier. She consulted her horse, as to her future adventures, and he promised her nothing but what would be agreeable; and in gratitude for all the good services he had done her, she had a stable built for him of ebony and ivory, and there was nothing meaner than a satin mattrass for him to lie down on. As for her seven followers, they were rewarded in proportion to their services. Comrade, however, disappeared; they came and told Belle-belle. This loss distressed the Queen, for she adored him; she ordered her horse to be sought for in every direction, which they did in vain for three whole days; the fourth day she was so uneasy, she was obliged to rise before it was light. She descended into the garden, traversed the wood, and entered a large meadow, calling, from time to time, “Comrade! my dear Comrade! what has become of you? — have you deserted me? I still require your sage advice; come back, come back, and give it me!” As she thus spoke, she suddenly perceived a second sun rising in the west, she stopped to admire this prodigy; her astonishment was without bounds to see it advancing towards her by degrees, and in the course of a few minutes, to recognise her horse, whose trappings were all covered with jewels, and who pranced before a chariot of pearls and topazes, which was drawn by twenty-four sheep; their wool was of gold thread and purl, exceedingly brilliant; their traces were of crimson satin, covered with emeralds; and their horns and ears were ornamented with carbuncles. Belle-belle recognised in the chariot the Fairy her protectress, accompanied by the Count, her father, and her two sisters, who called out to her, clapping their hands, and making affectionate signs to her intimating that they had come to her wedding. She thought she should die with joy; she knew not what to do, or to say, to prove her delight. She placed herself in the chariot, and this pompous equipage entered the palace, where everything had already been prepared to celebrate the grandest ceremony which could take place in the kingdom. Thus the enamoured King united his fate to that of his mistress, and this charming adventure has passed from age to age down to the one we live in.

22

THE PIGEON AND THE DOVE

Once upon a time there was a King and a Queen, who loved each other so dearly, that they served as an example to all their wedded subjects; and it would have surprised any one to find a disunited family in their kingdom, which was called the Kingdom of Deserts.

The Queen had had several children, but they had all died except a daughter, whose beauty was so great, that if anything could have consoled her for the loss of the others, it would have been the charms that distinguished the survivor. The King and Queen educated her as their only hope; but the happiness of the royal family was of short duration. The King being out hunting one day on a skittish horse, the animal took fright at some shots that were fired, and started off with him like lightning. The King endeavoured to pull him up as he was approaching the brink of a precipice; he reared and fell with the King under him, who received such severe injury, that he died before any of his suite could come up to his assistance.

The fatal intelligence reduced the Queen to the greatest extremity. She could not control her grief; she felt it was too violent for her to attempt resisting its effects; and thought only of settling the affairs of the kingdom in such a manner, that she might die in peace as far as regarded the future welfare of her daughter. She had a friend who was called the Sovereign

Fairy, because she had great authority over all empires, and was exceedingly skilful. She wrote to her, with her dying hand, to express her desire to breathe her last in the Fairy’s arms; to tell her that she must come quickly if she wished to see her once more alive, and that she had something of consequence to say to her.

Though the Fairy was extremely busy, she left everything she was about, and, getting into her fiery chariot, which went faster than the sun, she came to the Queen, who was impatiently awaiting her. She consulted the Fairy on several matters touching the regency of the kingdom, begging her to accept it, and take charge of the little Princess Constancia. “If anything,” she added, “can calm the anxiety I feel at leaving her an orphan at so early an age, it is the hope that you will prove the friendship which you have always manifested for me by extending it to my child; that she will find in you a mother, who has the power of rendering her much more happy and perfect than I could have done, and that you will select a husband for her so charming, that she will never love anybody but him.” “Great Queen,” said the Fairy, “thou desirest nothing that thou art not justified in desiring, and I will neglect no means of befriending thy daughter; but I have cast her nativity, and it appears as if Fate, angry with Nature for having exhausted all her treasures in the formation of the Princess, had resolved to make her suffer; and thy royal Majesty must be aware, that Destiny pronounces some sentences so imperatively, that it is impossible to evade their execution.” “At least,” rejoined the Queen, “alleviate her misfortunes, and do all in your power to prevent them. By vigilant attention, the greatest evils may sometimes be avoided.” The Sovereign Fairy promised to do all she desired; and the Queen, having embraced her dear Constancia a hundred times over, expired in tolerable tranquillity.

The Fairy read the stars as easily as we do the new stories that every day issue from the press. She saw that the Princess was threatened with the fatal love of a giant, whose dominions were not far distant from the Kingdom of

Deserts. She was fully aware that it was above all things necessary to avoid him, and she saw no better mode of doing so, than by concealing her dear ward at some extreme corner of the earth, so far distant from the territory over which the Giant ruled, that there would be little probability of his coming to trouble their repose.

As soon as the Sovereign Fairy had selected ministers capable of governing the state she intended to confide to them, and had established such excellent laws, that all the sages of Greece could not have devised any comparable to them, she entered, one night, the chamber of Constancia, and without waking her, carried her off on her fiery camel to a fertile country, where people lived without ambition or trouble; it was a real valley of Tempè, where no one was to be found but shepherds and shepherdesses, who dwelt in cottages of their own construction.

The Fairy was aware, that if the Princess passed sixteen years without seeing the Giant, she had only to return in triumph to her kingdom: but that if he set eyes on her sooner, she would be exposed to great sufferings. The Fairy, therefore, took every precaution to conceal the Princess from the sight of everybody, and that she might appear less handsome, she dressed her like a shepherdess, with coarse caps always pulled over her forehead; but as the sun darts its long rays of light through the cloud that envelopes it, this lovely princess could not be so shrouded but that some of her charms must be observable; and notwithstanding all the Fairy’s care, Constancia was spoken of as a master-piece of the gods, that enchanted all hearts. Her beauty was not the only thing that rendered her a wonder; the Sovereign Fairy had endowed her with so admirable a voice, and such skill in touching any instrument she fancied playing on, that without having ever been taught music, she was capable of giving lessons to the Muses, and even to celestial Apollo himself: she was not dull, therefore, in her solitude. The Fairy had explained to her the reasons she had for bringing her up in such obscurity. As she had great good sense, she comprehended them so perfectly, that her protectress was astonished that any one so young could display so much docility and intelligence. She had not visited the Kingdom of Deserts for some months, as it was always painful for her to leave the Princess; but her presence there had become necessary, as they only acted by her orders, and the ministers were not equally attentive to their duties. She departed, therefore, strictly advising Constancia to lock herself up until she should return.

The fair Princess had a little ram she was very fond of. She amused herself with making garlands of flowers for him, or sometimes with dressing him up with bows of riband; she called him Ruson. He was more intelligent than any of his companions. He knew the voice, and understood the commands of his mistress, and obeyed her implicitly. “Ruson,” she would say to him, “fetch me my spindle;” he would run into her room, and bring it to her immediately, cutting a thousand capers. He frisked about her, he would eat nothing but the herbs she gathered for him, and would rather have died with thirst, than drink anywhere except out of the hollow of her hand. He would shut the door, beat time when she sang, and bleat in tune. Ruson was charming; Ruson was beloved; Constancia talked to him eternally, and lavished on him a thousand caresses.

Notwithstanding all this, a pretty ewe in the neighbourhood was not less agreeable to Ruson than his mistress. Sheep are but sheep, and the meanest ewe was, in Ruson’s eyes, more beautiful than the mother of love. Constancia often reproached him for his gallantries. “Little libertine,” said she to him, “canst thou not stay with me? Thou art so dear to me that I neglect all my flock for thee, and yet thou wilt not forsake that sorry ewe to please me.” She tied him up with a chain of flowers, at which he seemed very much vexed, and pulled and pulled till he broke it. “Ah!” said Constancia, angrily, to him, “The Fairy has often told me that men are wilful as thou art; that they cannot endure the slightest constraint, and are the most refractory creatures in the world. Since thou wouldst be like them, naughty Ruson, Go, find thy beautiful beast of a ewe! If the wolf devour thee, devoured thou must be; I may not be able to help thee.”

The amorous ram paid no attention to the advice of Constancia. Having been all day long with his dear ewe, close by the cottage in which the Princess sat alone at her work, she suddenly heard him bleat so loudly and pitifully, that she felt sure some fatal accident had happened to him. She rose in great agitation, looked out, and saw a wolf carrying off poor Ruson. She no longer thought of all the Fairy had said to her at parting. She ran after the robber, crying, “A wolf! A wolf!” She pursued him, flinging stones, and even her crook, at him without making him quit his prey; but alas! in passing near a wood, there came out of it another sort of wolf — a horrible giant! At the sight of this dreadful colossus, the Princess, paralyzed with fright, raised her eyes to heaven for succour, and prayed the earth to open and swallow her. Neither earth nor heaven listened to her prayer; she deserved to be punished for not having obeyed the Sovereign Fairy.

The Giant spread out his arms to prevent her passing, but terrible and furious as he was, he felt the effect of her beauty. “What rank holdest thou amongst the goddesses?” said he, in a voice louder than thunder. “For think not I can be mistaken; — thou art no mortal. Tell me but thy name, and if thou art the daughter or the wife of Jupiter? Who are thy brothers? What are thy sisters? I have long sought for a goddess to make her my wife, and happily I have now met with thee!” The Princess felt tongue-tied with terror; the accents died away upon her lips.

As he found she made no answer to his gallant questions, “For a divinity,” said he, “thou hast but little wit;” and without more words he opened a great sack and flung her into it.

The first thing she saw at the bottom of it was the wicked wolf and the poor ram; the giant had amused himself by catching them. “Thou wilt die with me, my dear Ruson,” said she, kissing him. “‘Tis a poor consolation; it would be much better if we could escape together.”

This sad reflection made her weep bitterly; she sobbed and sighed aloud. Ruson bleated; the wolf howled; this noise awoke a dog, a cat, a cock, and a parrot, who had been all asleep, and they began in their turn to make a frantic noise. Here was a strange uproar in the Giant's game-bag. At last, being tired with hearing them, he determined to kill them all; but on second thoughts, contented himself with tying the mouth of the sack and throwing it on the top of a tree, after having marked it, that he might know where to look for his spoil again. He was on his road to fight a duel with another giant, and all this outcry displeased him.

The Princess felt sure that, let him but have taken a step or two, he was already a long way off; for a horse at full speed could not overtake him when he was but sauntering. She drew out her scissors and cut the cloth of the sack, then let out her dear Ruson, the dog, the cat, the cock, and the parrot; and lastly got out herself, leaving the wolf behind, to punish him for eating poor little sheep. The night was very dark; it was strange for her to find herself alone, in the midst of a forest, without knowing which way to turn her steps; not being able to catch a glimpse of earth or sky, and dreading every instant to meet the Giant again.

She walked as fast as she could, and would have fallen a hundred times over, but the animals she had set at liberty, grateful for the favour they had received at her hands, would not forsake her, and were very serviceable to her on her journey. The cat's eyes were so bright that they lighted her like a flambeau; the dog by his barking acted as sentinel; the cock crowed to frighten the lions; the parrot chattered so loudly, that, to hear him, you would have thought twenty people were talking together — so that the robbers slunk away and left the road free for the passage of our fair traveller; and the ram, walking a little in advance of her, preserved her from tumbling into some great holes, which he had considerable difficulty himself in scrambling out of.

Constancia walked at random, recommending herself to her good friend the Fairy, from whom she hoped to receive some assistance, although she reproached herself severely for not having obeyed her commands; but sometimes she feared she was forsaken by her. She would have been very glad if chance could have led her back to the cottage in which she had been secretly brought up; but, as she knew not the way, she did not venture to flatter herself that anything but an especial interposition of Providence could procure her that happiness.

She found herself at daybreak on the bank of a river that watered one of the most agreeable meadows in the world. She looked about her, and saw neither dog, nor cat, nor cock, nor parrot; Ruson was her sole remaining companion.

“Alas! where am I?” said she: “This beautiful spot is unknown to me. What will become of me? Who will protect me? Ah! little ram, how dearly hast thou cost me! If I had not run after thee, I should still be with the Sovereign Fairy, I should neither be in fear of the Giant nor of any unfortunate adventure.” Ruson seemed to tremble as he listened to her, and to be aware of his fault. At last the Princess, weary and depressed, left off chiding him, and seated herself beside the water; and as she was very tired, and the shade of several trees protected her from the heat of the sun, her eyes closed gently, her head sank on the grass, and she fell into a deep slumber.

She had no one to guard her but the faithful Ruson. Suddenly he trod upon her, and pulled her; and what was her astonishment on waking, to perceive, about twenty paces from her, a young man behind some bushes, where he had hidden himself to see without being seen. The beauty of his form and face, the nobleness of his manner, and the magnificence of his dress so surprised the Princess, that she rose hastily, with the intention of hurrying away. I know not what secret spell arrested her flight. She cast a timid glance on the stranger; the Giant had scarcely caused her so much alarm; but fear arises from various causes. The looks and actions of this youthful pair sufficiently indicated the sentiments with which they had already inspired each other.

They would have remained, perhaps, a long time without speaking, except with their eyes, if the Prince had not heard the sound of horns, and the cry of the hounds approaching. He saw that the Princess was astonished at it. “Fear nothing, beautiful shepherdess,” said he to her; “you are safe in this spot: would to Heaven those who see you here were equally so.”

“My Lord,” said she, “I implore your protection. I am a poor orphan, who has no other course left her but to become a shepherdess. Obtain for me the charge of a flock; I will tend it most carefully.” “Happy will be the sheep,” said he smiling, “that you lead to the pastures; but in short, lovely shepherdess, if you desire it, I will speak to the Queen, my mother, and shall feel delighted to begin from this day to render you all the service in my power.” “Ah, my Lord,” said Constancia, “I crave your pardon for the liberty I have taken; I should not have dared so much had I known your rank.”

The Prince heard her with the utmost astonishment. He discovered in her, great intelligence and polished manners. Nothing could accord better with her exquisite beauty; but nothing could be less expected from the plainness of her attire, and her condition of a shepherdess. He even endeavoured to induce her to make choice of some other employment. “Have you reflected,” said he, “that you expose yourself to pass the day all alone in a wood, or on some downs, with no company but your simple sheep? Will the delicate bearing I remark in you accommodate itself to such solitude? Who knows, besides, if the fame of your charms, when it shall spread through the country, will not attract to you a thousand importunate lovers? I, myself, adorable shepherdess, will leave the court to follow you, and what I do, others will do also.”

“Cease, my Lord,” said she, “to flatter me by praises so far beyond my desert. I was born in a village; I have never known any other than a rustic life, and I hope you will allow me quietly to keep the Queen’s sheep, if she will deign to confide them to my care. I would even beseech her to place me under some more experienced shepherdess, and then, as I should be always with her, it is quite certain I should never feel dull.”

The Prince was prevented from replying; his attendants appeared on the brow of a little hill. “I leave you, charming creature,” he cried, hurriedly; “I cannot allow so many to share the happiness I enjoy in beholding you. Go to the end of this meadow; you will find a house there, in which you may dwell in safety, if you say you come from me.” Constancia, who would have been much troubled at finding herself in such a numerous company, hastened towards the spot to which Constancio (such was the Prince’s name) had directed her.

He followed her with his eyes; he sighed tenderly, and, mounting his horse, placed himself at the head of his company, and discontinuing the chace, returned to the palace. He found the Queen exceedingly irritated against an old shepherdess, who had given her a very bad account of her lambs. After the Queen had well scolded her, she ordered her never to appear in her presence again.

This was a favourable opportunity for Constancio; he told his mother he had met a young girl who was very desirous of entering her service, that she looked like a careful person, and did not seem mercenary. The Queen was much pleased with her son’s account of this shepherdess; she accepted her offer without seeing her, and desired the Prince to give orders for her to be sent, with the rest, to the pastures belonging to the crown. He was enchanted that the Queen dispensed with the appearance of the shepherdess at the palace. Certain busy and jealous feelings made him apprehensive of rivals, notwithstanding there were none who could dispute with him, either in rank or in merit. In point of fact, he was less afraid of the nobles than of the humbler persons about the court, and imagined her more likely to take a fancy to a simple shepherd than to a prince who was so near to the throne. It would be difficult to recount all the reflections to which this gave rise. How he reproached his heart — that heart which till now had never loved, which had never thought any one worthy of him, had now bestowed itself on a girl of such obscure origin, that he could never own his passion without a blush. He determined to struggle with it; and, persuading himself that absence was an unfailing remedy, particularly in the case of a dawning affection, he avoided the sight of the shepherdess. He followed his favourite amusement of hunting, and other sports. Wherever he caught sight of sheep, he turned from them as though they had been serpents; so that, after some little time, the wound he had received appeared less painful to him. But on one of the hottest of the dog-days, Constancio, fatigued by a long run with the hounds, finding himself on the banks of the river, followed its course under the shade of the lote-trees, that mixed their branches with the willows, and rendered this spot as cool as it was lovely. He fell into a profound reverie; he was alone, and he thought no longer of all those who were waiting for him; when suddenly he was struck by the charming tones of a voice, which seemed to him celestial. He stopped to listen, and was not a little surprised to hear these words: —

Alas! I had vowed I would live without Love,
But perjured the God has resolved I should prove,
I feel in my bosom his torturing dart,
Constancio, master he makes of my heart!

When weary with hunting, oppress’d by the heat,
He sought the cool shade of this tranquil retreat,

Methought, as I breathlessly gazed on him there,
My eyes ne’er had feasted on vision so fair.

Mute, motionless, lost, in that moment of bliss,
The treacherous archer his mark could not miss;
Too sweet is the pain that I since have endured,
I joy in a wound that can never be cured.

His curiosity prevailed over the pleasure he experienced in listening to so sweet a voice; he advanced quickly. He had caught the name of Constancio; but though it was his own, it might be that of a shepherd as well as of a prince; and he was therefore uncertain, whether it was for him, or for some other, those verses had been composed. He had scarcely mounted a little eminence, covered with trees, when he perceived, at the foot of it, the lovely Constancia; she was seated by the side of a streamlet, the rapid fall of which caused so agreeable a sound, that it appeared as if intended to harmonise with her voice. Her faithful ram crouched on the grass, kept, like the favourite of the flock, much closer to her than any of the others. Constancia gave him occasionally little taps with her crook, caressing him with childish affection; and every time she touched him, he kissed her hand, and looked up in her face with eyes beaming with intelligence. “Ah! how happy wouldst thou be,” said the Prince, in an undertone, “if thou didst but know the value of the caresses lavished on thee!” Surely, this shepherdess is more beautiful than when I first saw her. Love! Love! what wouldst thou with me? Ought I to love her? or, rather, am I longer in a condition to resist it? I have studiously avoided her, because I knew full well the danger of seeing her. Ye gods! what emotions did I not suffer from the first! Reason essayed to help me, and I fled so enchanting an object. Alas! I meet with her but to hear her sing of the happy youth she has chosen!”

Whilst he thus meditated, the shepherdess rose to collect her flock, and drive them into another meadow, where she had left her companions. The Prince feared to lose this opportunity of speaking to her; he advanced towards her eagerly. “Charming shepherdess,” said he to her, “will you not allow me to ask, if the little service I have rendered you has given you some gratification?” At the sight of the Prince, Constancia blushed; her cheeks became tinged with the deepest crimson. “My Lord,” said she to him, “I should have taken care to offer you my very humble thanks, if it could have befitted a poor girl like me to approach a Prince like you; but though I have not done so, heaven is my witness that I am not ungrateful for your kindness, and that I pray the gods to crown your days with happiness.” “Constancia,” replied he, “if it be true that my endeavours to serve you have inspired you with so much gratitude as you profess, it is easy for you to prove it to me.” “Ah, what can I possibly do for you, my Lord?” inquired Constancia, eagerly. “You can tell me,” added he, “to whom the words applied which I have just heard you sing.” “As they are not mine,” she answered, “it would be difficult for me to give you any information on that subject.” While she spoke, he examined her countenance narrowly; he saw she blushed, that she was confused, and kept her eyes fixed on the ground. “Why would you conceal your feelings from me, Constancia?” said he. “Your face betrays the secret of your heart — you love!” He paused, and riveted his glances still more earnestly upon her. “My Lord,” said she, “that which interests me so little deserves the attention of a great Prince; and I am so unused to talking while I tend my dear sheep, that I beseech you to pardon me if I do not answer your questions.” She made so hasty a retreat, that he had not time to stop her.

Jealousy will sometimes rekindle the torch of Love. The Prince’s passion at this moment burst into such a flame, that nothing could ever extinguish it. He discovered a thousand graces in that young maiden which he had not remarked the first time he saw her. The manner in which she had left him, convinced him as much as her words that she was partial to some shepherd; a deep melancholy took possession of his soul. He dared not follow her, great as was his anxiety to renew the conversation. He flung himself upon the spot she had just quitted, and after recalling to his memory the verses he had heard her sing, he wrote them down in his tablets, and examined them carefully. "It is only within these few days," said he, "she has seen this Constancio, who so occupies her thoughts. Must I bear the same name, and be so far from his good fortune? How coldly she looked on me! she seemed more indifferent to-day than when I first met with her. Her chief care was to find some pretext for leaving me." These thoughts afflicted him deeply, for he could not comprehend how a simple shepherdess could be so indifferent to a powerful prince.

As soon as he returned to the palace, he sent for a youth who was his companion in all his pleasures; he was of high birth, and very amiable. He ordered him to assume the dress of a shepherd, obtain a flock, and lead it every day to the Queen's pastures, in order to observe Constancia without being suspected by her. Mirtain (so was the young gentleman named) was too anxious to please his master to neglect an opportunity of so doing in a matter which appeared so much to interest him. He promised to obey his commands to the best of his ability; and the very next morning he was ready to proceed to the pastures. The keeper of them would not have admitted him, had he not produced an order from the Prince, in which it was stated that he was the Prince's shepherd, and had charge of his flock.

He was immediately permitted to mix with the rural company. He was very gallant, and easily succeeded in making himself agreeable to the shepherdesses generally; but with regard to Constancia, he found she possessed a spirit so far above what she appeared to be, that he could not reconcile the existence of so much beauty, wit, and merit with the rude and country life she led. It was in vain be followed her; he always found her alone in the depths of the forest, singing abstractedly. He observed no shepherd venture to attempt to please her; it seemed to be too difficult a task. Mirtain made that great attempt himself; he courted her assiduously, and learned from his own experience that she declined forming any engagement. Every evening he reported to the Prince the state of affairs; all the information he gave him had only the effect of distracting him. “Do not deceive yourself, my Lord,” said Mirtain one day to him; “if this beautiful girl does love, it must be some one in her own country.” “If that were the case,” said the Prince, “would she not return to it?” “How do we know,” rejoined Mirtain, “that she has not some reasons which prevent her returning to her native land? She may have quarrelled with her lover.” “Alas!” exclaimed the Prince, “she sang with too much tenderness the words I heard.” “It is a fact,” continued Mirtain, “that all the trees are covered with the initials of their names; and as no one seems to please her in these parts, some one undoubtedly must have done so elsewhere.” “Ascertain,” said the Prince, “her sentiments for me. Speak well or ill of me, thou mayest in some measure arrive at what she thinks of me.”

Mirtain failed not to find an opportunity to speak to Constancia. “What ails you, fair shepherdess?” said he to her; “you appear melancholy, notwithstanding all the reasons you have to be more joyous than any other.” “And what reasons do you consider I have for being joyous?” she inquired. “I am reduced to tend sheep, far from my own land, hearing nothing of my relations: is all this so very agreeable?” “No,” replied Mirtain; “but you are the most charming person in the world: you have much wit, you sing exquisitely, and nothing can be compared to your beauty.” “Supposing I possessed all these advantages, they would be of little value to me,” said she, heaving a deep sigh. “Nay, then,” said Mirtain, “you are ambitious; you believe one must be born to a throne, or descended from the gods, to live happily. Ah! undeceive yourself; I serve Prince Constancio, and, notwithstanding the disparity of our rank, I am frequently permitted to approach him. I have studied him; I can see what is passing in his mind, and I know that he is far from happy.” “And what disturbs his peace?” said the Princess. “A fatal passion,” continued Mirtain. “He is in love!” exclaimed Constancia, with an air of anxiety. “Alas! how I pity him! But what am I saying?” she continued, blushing deeply: “he is too amiable not to be beloved.” “He dares not so much flatter himself, fair shepherdess,” said Mirtain; “but if you would kindly assure him of that fact, he would have more faith in your words than in those of any other.” “It would not befit me,” said she, “to meddle in the affairs of a great prince. Those of which you speak are too delicate for me to think of entering upon. Adieu, Mirtain,” she added, quitting him hastily: “if you would oblige me, you will speak no more to me about your Prince, or his amours.”

She hurried away, greatly agitated. She could not have been insensible to the merits of the Prince; her first meeting with him had never been effaced from her mind, and but for the secret spell which detained her despite herself, it is certain she would have risked everything to find once more the Sovereign Fairy. We might, indeed, feel surprised that that skilful person, who knew everything, did not fly to her assistance; but it no longer depended upon her to do so. From the moment the Giant had met the Princess, the latter was subjected to the influence of the stars for a certain period: her destiny had to be fulfilled; so that the Fairy was obliged to be contented with going to see her occasionally in a sunbeam. Constancia’s eyes were not able to look at it steadily enough to discover her protectress in it.

The charming girl had observed, with some mortification, that the Prince had neglected her so completely, that he might never have seen her again, had not chance led him to the spot where she was singing. She endeavoured to stifle her inclination for him; and if it be possible to love and hate a person at the same time, I may say she hated him because she loved him too well! How many tears did she shed in secret! Ruson was the only witness of them; to him she frequently confided her sorrows, as if he were capable of understanding her; and when he frisked about the fields with the ewes, she would say to him, “Beware, Ruson! — beware! Let not love inflame thy heart; of all evils, ‘tis the greatest: and shouldst thou love, and not be loved in return, poor little ram, what wouldst thou do!”

These reflections were followed by a thousand reproaches, which she heaped upon herself for cherishing an affection for a Prince who manifested so much indifference for her. She had determined to forget him, when she accidentally found him in that pleasant spot, to which he had retired to muse uninterruptedly on the lovely shepherdess he avoided. Sleep had stolen upon him, and he had stretched himself on the grass. She saw him, and her affection for him received fresh force. She could not resist stringing together the words which had caused so much anxiety to the Prince; but what did she not suffer in her turn, when Mirtain informed her that Constancio was in love! All the command she could exercise over herself could not prevent her frequently changing colour. Mirtain, who had his reasons for observing her, noticed and was delighted at it, and hastened to report what had passed to his master.

The Prince was much less inclined to flatter himself than his confidant was. He saw nothing but indifference in the conduct of the shepherdess. He attributed it to the happy Constancio whom she loved, and the next morning he went in search of her. The instant she perceived him, she flew from him as though she had seen a tiger or a lion. Flight was the only remedy she could imagine for her pain. Ever since her conversation with Mirtain she felt she ought to neglect no means of tearing the Prince from her heart, and that the only hope of doing so lay in her avoiding the sight of him.

What were the feelings of Constancio when his shepherdess fled from him so abruptly. Mirtain was with him. “Thou seest,” said the Prince to him, “thou seest the effect of thy labours. Constancia hates me: I dare not follow her to obtain an explanation from her myself.”

“You have too much consideration, my Lord, for a mere country girl,” replied Mirtain; “and if you will permit me, I will go and order her, in your name, to come back to you.” “Ah! Mirtain,” exclaimed the Prince, “What a difference exists between the lover and the confidant! I think only of doing everything to please this charming girl; I have observed in her a sort of refinement, which would ill accord with the rough measures thou art for adopting. I had rather continue to suffer than offend her.” As he uttered these words, he turned his steps in another direction, with so melancholy an air, that one who was much less interested in him than Constancia might have pitied him.

As soon as he was out of sight, she retraced her steps to have the pleasure of being on the spot he had just quitted. “‘Tis here,” said she, “he stood; ‘twas from thence he looked at me: but, alas! in every place I find how little he thinks of me. He comes hither but to muse in freedom upon her he loves; and yet,” continued she, “have I a right to complain? What chance was there that he should attach himself to a girl he thinks so much beneath him?” She felt disposed sometimes to relate her adventures to him; but the Sovereign Fairy had so strictly forbidden her to speak of them, that her duty always prevailed over her inclination, and she eventually determined to keep her secret.

In the course of a few days, the Prince again made his appearance. She avoided him carefully. He was much distressed at it, and desired Mirtain to reproach her with her behaviour. She pretended she had acted unconsciously; but as the Prince had condescended to remark it, she would not do so in future. Mirtain, much gratified by having obtained this promise from her, informed his master, and the next morning he went in search of her. On his accosting her she appeared speechless and motionless; and her confusion if possible increased when he declared his passion. Much as she desired to believe him, she was afraid of being deceived, and that forming his opinion of her from appearances, he only sought to amuse himself by dazzling her with professions which would not be seriously addressed to a poor shepherdess. Nettled by this idea, her pride restored her composure, and she received the assurances of his affection with so much coldness, that it confirmed all his suspicions.

“Your heart is gone!” said he; “another has succeeded in charming you. But I call the gods to witness, that if I can discover him, he shall feel the full effects of my wrath!” “I ask no favour for any one, my Lord,” she replied. “If you should ever know my sentiments, you will find they are far different from those you attribute to me.” The Prince at these words felt his hopes revive, but they were soon destroyed by the conversation that followed; for she protested to him, that her indifference was not to be overcome, and that she felt convinced she should never love any one. These last words cast him into inexpressible grief; he exercised the greatest constraint over himself to prevent her observing the extent of his affliction. Either from the violence he thus did to his feelings, or from the excess of his passion, which was only increased by the obstacles which presented themselves to it, he fell so dangerously ill that the physicians, not knowing the cause of his disorder, soon began to despair of his recovery. Mirtain, who by his orders still remained in attendance on Constancia, communicated to her the sad tidings. She listened to them with a confusion and agitation difficult to describe. “Do you know any remedy,” he asked her, “for fever, and violent pains in the head and heart?” “I know one,” she replied; “it consists of simples and flowers; but everything depends on the manner in which they are applied.” “Will you not go to the palace and apply them yourself?” added Mirtain. “No;” said she, blushing, “I should be too much afraid of not succeeding.” “How!” continued he; “is it possible you will neglect anything that might restore him to us? I believed you to be very hard-hearted; but you are a hundred times more so than I had imagined.”

Mirtain's reproaches gratified Constancia. She was delighted to be pressed by him to see the Prince. It was only to obtain that satisfaction that she had boasted of being acquainted with a remedy for his complaint; for the truth is, that she knew of none.

Mirtain went and told the Prince all that the shepherdess had said, and how ardently she desired the restoration of his health. "Thou seekest to flatter me," said Constancio to him; "but I forgive thee, — and I would fain, even though I should deceive myself, endeavour to fancy that this lovely girl has some affection for me. Go to the Queen; tell her that one of her shepherdesses possesses a wonderful secret which may cure me. Obtain permission to bring her hither. Run, fly, Mirtain! minutes will appear ages to me!"

The Queen had never seen the shepherdess of whom Mirtain spoke; and answered that she had no faith in the knowledge affected by such ignorant little girls; and that it was mere folly to think of it. "It is certain, Madam," said he, "that one may sometimes find more relief from the application of simples than from all that is contained in the pages of Esculapius. The Prince suffers so much that he is anxious to test the effect of what this young girl proposes." "Be it so," said the Queen; "but if she do not cure him, I will punish her so severely, that she will never have the audacity to boast of her pretended remedies again." Mirtain returned to his master, and informed him of the Queen's ill-humour, and that he feared the result of it to Constancia. "I would rather die!" exclaimed the Prince. "Return instantly; tell my mother, I entreat her to let that lovely girl remain with her innocent sheep. What a recompense is this," he continued, "for the trouble she would take! The very idea of it redoubles my disorder."

Mirtain ran to the Queen, to beg her, in the Prince's name, not to send for Constancia; but as she was naturally very hasty, she flew into a passion at his vacillation. "I have already sent for her," said the Queen: "if she cure my son I will make her some present; if she fail, I know what I have to do.

Return to him, and endeavour to amuse him; the state of melancholy he is in distracts me.” Mirtain obeyed her commands, and took care not to tell his master the temper the Queen was in, for his anxiety about his shepherdess might have killed him.

The royal pastures were so near the city that she was not long coming, let alone the impulse she received from a passion which generally increases one’s speed. As soon as she reached the palace, the Queen was informed of her arrival; but she did not condescend to see her; she contented herself with ordering her to be told to take care what she was about: for that if she failed to cure the Prince, she would have her sown up in a sack and flung into the river. At this threat, the beautiful Princess turned pale, and felt her blood run cold. “Alas,” said she to herself, “I well deserve this punishment! I spoke falsely when I boasted of my skill; and my desire to see Constancio was too unreasonable to secure me the protection of the gods.” She hung her head, and her tears flowed down her cheeks in silence.

The standers-by admired her greatly. She appeared to them more like an angel from Heaven than a mortal maiden. “What are you afraid of, lovely shepherdess?” said they to her. “Your eyes have in them the power of life and death; one glance of them may preserve our young Prince. Come to his apartment, dry your tears, and administer your remedy without alarm.”

The manner in which they spoke to her, and the extreme desire she had to see the Prince, gave her fresh confidence. She begged to be allowed to go into the garden, that she might herself cull the simples she required. She gathered myrtle, trefoil, and other herbs and flowers, some of which are dedicated to Cupid, and some to his mother; and added to them some doves’ feathers, and a few drops of pigeons’ blood. She invoked the aid of all the gods and fairies, then, trembling more than a turtle-dove at the sight of a falcon, she told them she was ready to be led to the Prince’s chamber. He was in bed; his face palid, and his sight feeble; but the moment he saw her, his complexion improved; which she observed to her great joy.

“My Lord,” said she, “I have for many days past offered up my prayers for the restoration of your health. My anxiety even induced me to tell one of your shepherds that I knew some little remedies, and that I would most willingly endeavour to assuage your pains: but the Queen has sent me notice, that if Heaven does not assist my undertaking, and you should not be cured, I am to be drowned. Imagine, my Lord, the alarming situation I am placed in; but be assured that I am interested in your preservation more on your account than on mine.” “Fear nothing, charming “said he; “the kind interest you take in my life will render it so dear to me, that I will take greater care for it. I had ceased to prize existence: alas! could I be happy under the recollection of the sentiments I heard you express for Constancio? Those fatal verses, and your coldness, have reduced me to the wretched state in which you see me; but, lovely shepherdess, you have desired me to live! Let me live then, and live but for you!”

Constancia had much difficulty in concealing the pleasure this flattering declaration gave her. Fearing that somebody might be listening to what the Prince was saying to her, she interrupted him by asking, if he would permit her to put on some bandages of the herbs she had gathered. He stretched his arms out to her with so much tenderness of expression, that she hastily bound on one of the bandages, in order that nobody should perceive what was passing between them, and having gone through several little ceremonies, the better to impose on the Prince’s attendants, he exclaimed, after a few minutes, that he felt in less pain. It was quite true; he did. The physicians were summoned, and were surprised at the efficacy of the remedy and the promptitude of its effects; but when they saw the shepherdess who had applied it, they ceased to wonder at anything, and said to one another in their own jargon, that one of her looks was a more powerful dose than any in the whole Pharmacopœa.

The shepherdess was so little affected by all the praises they lavished on her, that those who did not know her, took for stupidity what arose from a very different cause. She crept into a corner of the room, concealing herself from everybody but her patient, whom she approached occasionally to press his forehead or feel his pulse; and in these brief moments they said to each other a thousand charming things with which the heart had much more to do than the head. "I trust, my Lord," said she, "that the sack which the Queen has ordered for me to be drowned in, will not be required for so fatal a purpose. Your health, which is so precious to me, is undoubtedly improving." "It depends wholly upon you, lovely Constancia!" he replied; "a share in your heart can do everything for my peace, and the preservation of my life."

The Prince arose, and repaired to the Queen's apartment. When he was announced, she would not believe it; she advanced hastily, and was struck with astonishment at seeing him at her chamber-door. "What! Is it you, my son? my dear son!" she exclaimed. "To whom am I indebted for this marvellous resurrection?" "You owe it to your own kindness, Madam," said the Prince; "you have sent to me the most skilful person in the world, I beseech you to reward her in proportion to the service she has rendered me!" "There is no hurry for that," said the Queen, sharply; "she is a poor shepherdess, who will think herself too happy in being still permitted to tend my sheep."

At this moment the King arrived. They had been to tell him the good news of the Prince's recovery; and as he was proceeding towards the Queen's apartments, he caught sight of Constancia: her beauty, brilliant as the sun with its countless rays, dazzled him to such an extent, that he stood some few moments without the power of asking those who were near him, who that wonderful creature was, and how long goddesses had taken up their abode in his palace. At length, recovering himself, he approached her, and learning that she was the enchantress who had cured his son, he embraced her, and politely said that he felt very ill himself, and requested she would cure him also.

He entered the Queen’s apartments followed by Constancia. The Queen had never seen her before. Her astonishment cannot be described. She uttered a loud shriek and fainted; casting, as she fell, a look of fury on the shepherdess. Constancio and Constancia were terrified at this event; the King knew not how to account for so sudden a seizure; all the court was in consternation. At length the Queen returned to herself; and the King pressed her to tell him what she had seen to affect her in so extraordinary a manner. She dissembled her vexation, and said it was a fit of the vapours; but the Prince, who knew her well, was exceedingly uneasy. She spoke to the shepherdess with some degree of kindness; telling her that she would retain her near her person, and give her the care of the flowers in her private garden. The Princess was delighted to think she should remain where she could see Constancio every day.

The King, however, induced the Queen to enter his cabinet, and then tenderly inquired what had occurred to vex her. “Ah, Sire,” she exclaimed, “I have had a frightful dream. I had never seen this young shepherdess, when my imagination portrayed her to me so faithfully, that the instant I cast my eyes upon her I recognised the features. I thought she was married to my son. I am much deceived if this wretched country girl does not cause me a great deal of sorrow.” “You place too much trust in things the most delusive in the world,” said the King. “I advise you not to act from such motives. Send this shepherdess back to tend your flocks again, and do not afflict yourself unseasonably.”

The King’s advice was by no means agreeable to the Queen; far from following it, she thought of nothing but how to discover her son’s sentiments for Constancia.

The Prince lost no opportunity of seeing her. As she had charge of the flowers, she was frequently in the garden, watering them; and it seemed as if they became more brilliant and beautiful when she touched them. Ruson was still her companion; she talked to him sometimes about the Prince, although he could not understand her; and when Constancio himself accosted her, she was so embarrassed, that her eyes sufficiently betrayed to him the secret of her heart. He was enchanted, and said everything to her that the tenderest passion could dictate.

The Queen, on the strength of her dream, and still more on account of Constancia's incomparable beauty, became so uneasy she could no longer sleep in peace. She rose before daybreak; she hid herself behind the palisades, sometimes in the recesses of a grotto, to overhear what her son said to that beautiful girl; but they were both prudent enough to speak so low, that she could only act upon suspicion. This but increased her anxiety; she looked on the Prince with perfect contempt, thinking day and night that he would place that shepherdess on the throne.

Constancio was as guarded as he possibly could be; but in spite of all he could do, everybody perceived he loved Constancia; and whether he praised her naturally because he admired her, or pretended to find fault with her, in either case he spoke like an interested person. Constancia, on her side, could not refrain from talking of the Prince to her companions, and as she often sang songs which she had made about him, the Queen, who heard her, was no less surprised at her admirable voice than at the subject of the verses. "Just Heaven!" she exclaimed; "what have I done, that I should be punished in the most cruel way to me in the world? Alas! I had intended my son for my niece; and to my desperate annoyance, I perceive he has attached himself to a wretched shepherdess, who will, perhaps, excite him to rebel against my pleasure."

While she was thus distressing herself, and forming a thousand schemes in her fury to punish Constancia for being so beautiful, so charming; love was unremittingly making fresh progress in the hearts of the young couple. Constancia, convinced of the Prince's sincerity, could no longer conceal from him her rank or her affection. So tender an avowal, and such a proof of confidence, enraptured him to such an extent, that anywhere but in the

Queen’s garden he would have cast himself at her feet to thank her. It was not without difficulty he restrained himself even there. He ceased to struggle with his passion. He had loved the shepherdess Constancia: it is easy to imagine that he adored her when he was informed of her rank, and if he was easily persuaded of the truth of so extraordinary a thing (as it appears to us,) of a great princess wandering about the world, by turns a shepherdess and a gardener, it was simply because, in those days, such adventures were common enough; and that he discovered something in her air and manners that warranted to him the truth of her story. Constancio, moved by love and respect, swore eternal fidelity to the Princess, and she vowed no less to him. They agreed that their marriage should take place as soon as they could obtain the consent of the persons on whom they depended. The Queen observed their growing passion; her confidante, who sought as eagerly as herself to discover something which might gain her favour with her mistress, came to her one day with the information, that Constancia sent Ruson every morning to the Prince’s apartment. That the little ram carried two baskets which she had filled with flowers, and that Mirtain was his conductor. The Queen at this news lost all patience; she saw Ruson pass; she ran and laid wait for him herself, and despite the prayers of Mirtain, she dragged the ram to her own chamber, tore the baskets and flowers to pieces, and examined them so narrowly that she discovered, in a large carnation that was not fully blown, a little scrap of paper which Constancia had inserted with much ingenuity. In it she had reproached the Prince tenderly with the perils to which he daily exposed himself in hunting. The note contained these verses:

‘Midst all my joy, I tremble with alarm
  To see thee daily to the chace repair.
  O Heaven! wherein consists the wondrous charm

Of tracking savage monsters to their lair?
Leave the gaunt lion, and the grisly bear,
And turn to conquer in a sweeter field, —
The tender heart that but desires to yield.

WHILST THE QUEEN was raving against the shepherdess, Mirtain had hastened to inform his master of the unfortunate adventure of the ram. The Prince very uneasy ran to his mother's apartment, but she had already gone to the King's. "Behold, my Liege," said she, "behold the noble inclinations of your son; he loves this miserable shepherdess, who persuaded us she knew a certain cure for his malady. Alas! she knew one but too well. In short," continued she, "it is love that instructed her. She has restored him to health only to inflict on him greater evils; and if we do not take immediate steps to ward off the misfortunes that threaten us, my dream will prove but too true." "You are naturally severe," said the King, "you expected that your son would think of no one but the Princess you had selected for him. It was not so easy a thing to do. You must make some allowance for his youth." "I cannot endure your prepossession in his favour," cried the Queen; "you can never find fault with him. All I ask of you, Sir, is to consent to his being removed from court for a short time. Absence will have more effect on him than all my arguments."

The King hated contention; he acceded to everything his wife desired, and she returned immediately to her own apartments.

She found the Prince there: he was awaiting her in the utmost anxiety. "My son," said she to him, before he could say a word to her, "the King has just shown me letters from the King my brother, begging him to send you to his court, in order that you may become acquainted with the Princess who has been destined to you from infancy, and also that she may have a similar advantage. Is it not just that you should be allowed an opportunity of forming your own opinion of her merits, and that you should love her before you are united to each other for ever?” “I have no right to desire that special rules should be made in my favour,” said the Prince. “It is not customary for royal personages to visit each other, and consult their own hearts in preference to the reasons of state which render it necessary for them to contract a certain alliance. The lady you have selected for me may be beautiful or ugly, intelligent or stupid; I shall obey you in either case.” “I understand thee, wretch!” cried the Queen, flying out suddenly; “I understand thee! Thou adorest a worthless shepherdess; thou fearest leaving her. Thou shalt leave her, or I will have her dispatched before thine eyes! But if thou wilt depart without hesitation, and strive to forget her, I will retain her near my person, and love her as much as I now hate her.”

The Prince, as pale as if he were about to die, consulted in his own mind what course he should take. On either hand he could see nothing but frightful agony. He knew his mother to be the most cruel and vindictive Princess in the world. He feared resistance would irritate her, and that the consequences would fall upon his dear mistress. At length, pressed by the Queen to say whether he would go or not, he consented to do so, with the same feeling that a man consents to drink the glass of poison that is to destroy him.

He had scarcely given her his word that he would depart, when, leaving his mother’s chamber, he entered his own, his heart so wrung, that he thought it would break. He confided his affliction to the faithful Mirtain; and, impatient to inform Constancia, he went in search of her. She was in the deepest part of a grotto, where she occasionally took refuge, when the heat of the sun was too powerful for her in the garden. There was a little bank of turf by the side of a streamlet, which fell from the top of a rock of shell-work. In this peaceful retreat she unbound the tresses of her hair; they were fair as silver, finer than silk, and all in wavy curls. She sat with her naked feet in the water, the agreeable murmur of which, together with the fatigue of gardening, insensibly lulled her into a sweet sleep. Though her eyes were closed, they had still a thousand attractions; their long black lashes gave more brilliancy to the whiteness of her skin; the Loves and Graces seemed to hover around her, and modesty and gentleness added to the charm of her beauty.

‘Twas there the enamoured Prince found her. He recollected that the first time he had seen her she was thus asleep; but the sentiments she had since inspired him with had become so tender, that he would willingly have given half his life to pass the other half beside her. He gazed on her some time with a pleasure that suspended his grief; his eyes, running eagerly over her charms, rested on her foot, whiter than snow: he felt he could never cease admiring it. He knelt, and took her hand; she woke instantly, appeared vexed that he had seen her foot, and hid it, blushing like a rose, as it opens to the dawning day.

Alas! how soon did that beautiful colour fade! She remarked an unwonted melancholy in the countenance of the Prince. “What ails you, my Lord?” she inquired, with much alarm. “I can tell by your eyes that you are in some affliction.” “Ah, who would not be so, dearest Princess,” said he to her, shedding tears which he had not the power to suppress; “they are about to part us! I must either leave, or expose you to all the fury of the Queen. She knows of my attachment to you; she has even seen the note you wrote to me — one of her women assures me so — and without the least consideration for my anguish, she cruelly insists on my immediate departure for the court of the King her brother.” “What do you tell me, Prince?” exclaimed Constancia; “you are on the point of forsaking me, and you believe that to be necessary for the preservation of my life! Can you possibly entertain such an idea? Let me perish before your eyes; I shall be less to be pitied than if I am condemned to live without you.”

So affecting a conversation could not fail of being often interrupted by sobs and tears. Those young lovers had never yet endured the pangs of absence; they had never foreseen such a misfortune, and this gave additional weight to the blow which had fallen upon them. They exchanged a thousand vows of eternal fidelity. The Prince promised Constancia to return with the greatest speed. “I go,” said he, “but to affront my uncle and his daughter, so that they shall abandon all idea of giving her to me for a wife. I will do everything to disgust the Princess, and I shall succeed in my object.” “You must not show yourself, then,” said Constancia, “or you will please her, do what you will to prevent it.” They both wept so bitterly, gazed on each other so mournfully, interchanged such passionate promises, that their only consolation was the perfect confidence they had in each other’s affection, and that nothing could ever alter such deep and tender feelings.

The time had passed so rapidly in this sweet conversation, that night had already closed around them before they thought of separating; but the Queen, wishing to consult the Prince respecting the equipage he would require, Mirtain hastened in search of him. He found him still at the feet of his mistress, holding her hand in both of his. When they perceived him, they were seized with such apprehensions that they could scarcely speak. He told his master that the Queen was asking for him. Her commands might not be disobeyed. The Princess retired alone through another part of the gardens.

The Queen found the Prince so melancholy and altered, that she easily divined the cause. She would not speak to him any more on the subject; it was enough that he should depart. In short, everything was prepared with so much diligence, that it seemed as if the fairies had had a hand in it. As to the Prince, he occupied himself only with what related to his passion. He desired Mirtain to remain at court, and send him daily news of the Princess. He left with him his finest jewels, in case he should be in want of funds; and his foresight neglected nothing in a matter of such moment to him.

At last he was compelled to go. The despair of our young lovers cannot be described. Constancia then first comprehended the whole extent of her misfortune. To be a king’s daughter, rightful owner of immense dominions, and to languish in the power of a cruel queen, who banished her son for fear of his affection for her — a princess who was his equal every way, and whose hand would be ardently desired by the greatest sovereigns in the world! But her star had decided it should be so.

The Queen, delighted at the absence of her son, thought only of intercepting the letters that might be written to him. She succeeded, and discovered that Mirtain was his confidant. She had him arrested on some false pretence, and sent to a fortress, where he was subjected to a strict imprisonment. The Prince was greatly incensed at this news. He wrote to the King and Queen demanding the release of his favourite. His applications had no effect: but it was not only by this that they sought to distress him.

One morning that the Princess had risen with the dawn, and gone into the garden to gather flowers as usual for the Queen’s toilette, she saw the faithful Ruson, who was preceding her at some distance, suddenly run back in great alarm. As she advanced to see what had frightened him so much, he pulled her by the skirt of her gown in order to prevent her, for he was a most intelligent animal, and she suddenly heard the sharp hissing of a number of serpents, and found herself almost immediately beset by toads, vipers, scorpions, asps, and snakes, that encircled, without stinging her. They raised themselves to dart at her, but invariably fell back on the spot without power to touch her.

Notwithstanding the terror she was in, she could not fail to notice this prodigy, and she could attribute it to nothing except the virtue of a ring made under the influence of certain constellations, and given to her by her lover. Whichever way she turned, she saw these venomous reptiles running towards her. The walks were full of them, and they swarmed upon the flowers and under the trees. The lovely Constancia knew not what to do. She perceived the Queen at her window, laughing at her alarm. She knew directly that she had no hope of being saved by her orders. “I must die,” said she, nobly; “those horrid monsters that surround me came not here of their own accord. The Queen has had them brought hither, and there she stands to be the spectatress of this miserable termination to my existence. It has certainly been so sad a one up to this very hour, that I have no reason to cling to it; and if I regret its loss, the gods, the just gods, can testify why I do so at this moment.”

Having thus spoken, she advanced, and all the snakes and their companions retreated as fast as she approached them. She quitted the garden in this way unhurt, as much to her own astonishment as to the Queen’s, who had for a long time past been collecting these dangerous reptiles with the intention of having the shepherdess stung to death by them. She imagined such a circumstance would not arouse the suspicions of her son; that he would attribute Constancia’s death to a natural cause, and that she should escape his reproaches: but her project having failed, she had recourse to another expedient.

At the other end of the forest there dwelt a Fairy whose abode was inaccessible, for she was guarded by elephants that unceasingly roamed round the forest, and devoured the poor travellers, their horses, and even the iron the latter were shod with, so insatiable was their appetite. The Queen had come to an agreement with her, that if by some unheard-of chance, any one in the Queen’s name should reach the Fairy’s palace alive, she would give the messenger something fatal to take back to her.

The Queen sent for Constancia: gave her her orders, and told her to set out immediately. She had heard all her companions talk of the danger there was in passing through that forest; and an old shepherdess had even told her how she had fortunately escaped by the aid of a little sheep she had taken with her, for, furious as the elephants may be, the moment they see a lamb they become as gentle themselves. The same shepherdess had also told her, that being ordered to take a burning girdle back to the Queen, under the apprehension that she would make her put it on, she put it round several trees which were all consumed by it, so that the girdle at last had no power to hurt her, as the Queen had hoped it would.

When the Princess listened to this story she little thought it would be, one day, of such service to her: but when the Queen had issued her commands with so imperative an air that the sentence was evidently irrevocable, she prayed the gods to assist her. She took Ruson with her, and departed for the perilous forest. The Queen was enchanted: “We shall see her no more!” said she to the King. “This odious object of our son’s attachment! — I have sent her to a spot where a thousand such as she would not be sufficient to make a quarter of a breakfast for the elephants.” The King told her she was too vindictive, and that he could not help regretting the destruction of the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. “Indeed!” replied the Queen. “I advise you to fall in love with her then, and weep for her death as the unworthy Constancio does for her absence!”

Constancia had scarcely entered the forest when she saw herself surrounded by elephants. These colossal monsters, delighted at the sight of the beautiful ram, who walked with a much bolder step than his mistress, caressed him as gently with their formidable trunks as a lady could have done with her hand. The Princess was so afraid that the elephants would make a distinction between her and Ruson, that she took him up in her arms, although he had already become rather heavy, and whichever way she turned took care to present him to the monsters, and in this manner made the best of her way towards the palace of the inaccessible old Fairy.

She reached it at length, after much alarm and trouble: the place seemed very untidy; the Fairy who inhabited it was no less so. She could not entirely conceal her astonishment at seeing Constancia, for it was a long time since any living creature had succeeded in arriving there. “What is your will, fair child?" said the Fairy to her. The Princess humbly presented to her the Queen's compliments, accompanied by the request that she would send her the Girdle of Friendship. "She shall not be denied," said the Fairy; "no doubt it is for you she desires it." "I do not know that, Madam," replied Constancia. "Oh, but I know it well enough," said the Fairy; and taking out of her casket a girdle of blue velvet, with long cords attached to it, on which to hang a purse, a knife, and a pair of scissors, she presented her with the handsome ornament. "Take it," said she, "this girdle will render you perfectly charming, provided you put it on as soon as you are in the forest."

After Constancia had thanked, and taken leave of her, she caught up Ruson in her arms again, who was of more consequence to her than ever. The elephants made much of him, and let her pass freely, notwithstanding their voracious propensities. She did not forget to put the girdle round a tree, which began to burn immediately, as if it had been in the fiercest fire in the world. She took the girdle off again, and put it on another tree, and so, from tree to tree, until it ceased to ignite them. At length she reached the palace very much fatigued.

When the Queen saw her, she was so struck with astonishment that she could not hold her peace. "You are a cheat!" she cried; "you have not been to my friend, the Fairy?" "Pardon me, Madam!" replied the fair Constancia. "I am the bearer of the Girdle of Friendship, which I requested her to give me in your name." "Have you not put it on?" asked the Queen. "It is too fine for a poor shepherdess like me," replied Constancia. "No, no," said the Queen, "I give it you for your trouble; do not omit to wear it: but, tell me, what did you see on your road?" "I saw," she replied, "some elephants, who were so intelligent, and displayed so much ingenuity, that there is not a country in the world where they would not excite admiration. It seems that forest is their kingdom, and that there are in it some that rule the rest." The Queen was greatly mortified, and did not say all she thought, but she was still in hopes that nothing on earth would prevent the girdle from burning the Princess. “Though the elephants have spared thee,” she muttered to herself, “the girdle will avenge me! Thou shalt see, wretch, the friendship I bear thee, and the reward due to thee for having fascinated my son.”

Constancia had retired to her little chamber, where she wept the absence of her dear Prince. She dared not write to him, for the Queen had spies abroad who stopped the couriers, and she had already, by these means, intercepted her son’s letters. “Alas! Constancio,” said she, “you will shortly receive sad tidings of me. You ought not to have gone and abandoned me to the fury of your mother! — you might have protected me, or you would have received my last sigh in lieu of my being delivered over to her tyrannical power, and bereft of every consolation!” She went to her work in the garden at day-break as usual; she found in it still a thousand venomous reptiles, from which, however, her ring preserved her. She had put on the blue velvet girdle, and when the Queen saw her gathering flowers as calmly as if she had only a thread round her waist; nothing had ever equalled her vexation. “What mysterious power interests itself for this shepherdess!” cried she; “she bewitches my son by her beauty, and restores him to health by the application of innocent simples. Snakes and asps crawl at her feet without stinging her. The wild elephants become gentle and kind at her sight. The fairy-girdle, which should have reduced her to ashes, serves but to adorn her. I must have recourse, then, to more certain remedies.”

She sent immediately the captain of her guard, in whom she placed great confidence, down to the harbour, to see if there were not any ships ready to sail for very distant parts. He found one that was to sail at nightfal. The Queen was greatly delighted at this, and had a proposal made to the master, to sell him the most beautiful slave in the world. The merchant was enchanted; he came to the palace and was shown poor Constancia in the garden without her being in the least aware of it. He was struck with astonishment at the beauty of that incomparable girl; and the Queen, who knew well how to make a good bargain, for she was very avaricious, sold her to him at an exceedingly high price.

Constancia, ignorant of the fresh misfortunes that were in store for her, retired early to her little chamber to have the pleasure of thinking undisturbed of Constancio, and of answering one of his letters which she had at last contrived to receive. She was reading it over and over again, unable to desist from so agreeable an occupation, when she saw the Queen enter the room. She had a key which opened all the locks in the palace. She was followed by two mutes and the captain of the guard. The mutes stuffed a handkerchief into Constancia's mouth, bound her hands, and carried her off. Ruson tried to follow his dear mistress; the Queen flung herself on him and held him fast; for she feared his bleating would be heard, and she wished the whole affair to be conducted with the greatest silence and secresy. Constancia, therefore, finding no help, was carried on board the vessel; and, as they only waited for her, they put to sea immediately.

We must leave her on her voyage. Such was her sad fate, for the Sovereign Fairy had not been able to move destiny in her favour, and all she could do was to follow her everywhere in a thick cloud, invisible to mortal eyes. In the meanwhile, Prince Constancio, engrossed by his passion, kept no terms with the princess they had chosen for him. Though he was naturally the most courteous of men, he was continually so rude to her that she often complained of him to her father, who could not avoid quarrelling with his nephew about it, so that the marriage was postponed almost indefinitely. When the Queen thought proper to write to the Prince that Constancia was dangerously ill, his anguish was inexpressible. He could not stand any longer on ceremony in a matter which affected his life as much as that of his mistress, and therefore returned home with the speed of lightning. Notwithstanding all his exertion, however, he arrived too late. The Queen, who had foreseen his return, had circulated a report some days previously that Constancia was ill. She placed in her apartments women who knew when to speak and when to be silent according to their instructions. The rumour of Constancia's death was then spread abroad, and a wax figure was finally buried as the body of that unfortunate girl. The Queen, who left no means unemployed to convince the Prince of the truth of this story, released Mirtain from prison, that he might attend the funeral; so that the day for that ceremony being publicly announced, everybody came to lament the loss of that charming girl, and the Queen, who could throw any expression into her features she chose, pretended to feel this loss deeply on her son's account.

He reached the city in the greatest anxiety that can be imagined, and on entering it, could not resist asking the first persons he met, the news about his beloved Constancia. Those who answered him did not know who he was, and without the slightest preparation told him she was dead. At these fatal words he was no longer master of his emotion. He fell from his horse speechless, pulseless. A crowd gathered round him — they discovered that it was the Prince; everybody pressed to assist him, and they carried him almost dead to the palace.

The King was greatly affected by the deplorable state of his son. The Queen had prepared herself for such an event, and thought that time and the extinction of his fond hopes would cure him; but he was too deeply smitten to be so easily consoled. His distress, far from diminishing, increased every minute. He passed two days without seeing or speaking to any one. He then went to the Queen's apartments, his eyes full of tears, his looks wild, his face pale. He told her it was she who had been the death of his dear Constancia; but that she would be speedily punished, as he could not survive the loss of his beloved, and that he desired to be shown the place where they had buried her.

The Queen, not being able to combat this resolution, determined to conduct him herself to a cypress grove, in which she had caused a tomb to be erected. When the Prince fancied himself at the spot where his mistress reposed in death, he uttered such tender and passionate expressions that no one has ever spoken so touchingly. Even the hard-hearted Queen could not help melting into tears. Mirtain was as much afflicted as his master; and all who heard him sympathised in his despair. All on a sudden, in a fit of frenzy he drew his sword, and approaching the marble which he believed covered the beautiful body of Constancia, he would have slain himself if the Queen and Mirtain had not caught his arm. “No!” said he, “nothing in the world shall prevent my rejoining in death my dear Princess!” The title of Princess which he gave to the shepherdess surprised the Queen. She fancied her son was raving, and would have thought he had lost his senses completely if in all other respects he had not expressed himself rationally.

She asked him wherefore he called Constancia a Princess. He replied, that she was so; that her kingdom was called the Kingdom of Deserts; that she was the sole heir to it: and that he should never have named it but that there were no longer any reasons for secrecy. “Alas, my son!” said the Queen, “since Constancia is of equal rank with yourself, be comforted, for she is not dead. I will confess to you, in order to appease your sorrow, that I sold her to some merchants, who have carried her off as a slave.” “Ah!” said the Prince, “you tell me this to shake the resolution I have made to die, but my mind is made up, and nothing can change it.” “Then,” said the Queen, “your own eyes must convince you;” and thereupon she ordered them to dig up the waxen figure. As at first sight he took it to be the body of his charming Princess, he fell into a deep swoon, from which they had great difficulty in recovering him. The Queen in vain assured him that Constancia was not dead. After the wicked trick she had played him he would not believe her: but Mirtain succeeded in persuading him of the fact. He knew his attachment to him, and that he was not capable of telling him a falsehood.

He felt in some degree relieved, for of all misfortunes her death appeared to him the most terrible, and he could now flatter himself with the hope of seeing his mistress once again. But where should he seek her? — the merchants who had bought her were strangers; they had not said whither they were bound. These were great difficulties: but there are few which true love cannot surmount. He preferred perishing in the attempt to recover his mistress to living without her.

He heaped a thousand reproaches on the Queen for her implacable hatred. He added that she would have time to repent the cruel trick she had played him; that he was about to leave her, never to return; so that in plotting the loss of one she had lost both. The afflicted mother threw herself on her son’s neck, bathed him with her tears, and conjured him by the grey hairs of his father, and the love that she bore him, not to abandon them; that if he deprived them of the consolation of seeing him he would be the cause of their death; that he was their only hope, and if he failed them, the neighbouring princes, who were their enemies, would seize upon the kingdom. The Prince listened to her coldly and respectfully: but he had always before his eyes her harsh treatment of Constancia, without whom all the kingdoms of the earth had no temptations for him: so that he persisted with astonishing firmness in his resolution, to depart the following morning.

The King strove in vain to detain him. He passed the night in giving directions to Mirtain; he confided to his care the faithful ram. He took a great number of jewels, and told Mirtain to keep the rest, and that he would be the only person to whom he would write, and that only on condition that he spoke of him to no one, as he was determined to make his mother suffer all the anxiety about him that was possible.

Day had not dawned before the impatient Constancio was on horseback, trusting to Fortune, and praying her to assist him to recover his mistress. He knew not what road to take, but as he understood she had been carried off in a ship, he thought the best way to find her was to go on board one also. He made all speed, therefore, to the most noted port, and without a single attendant, and unknown to every one, he set about informing himself which was the most distant country he could get a passage to, and what coasts, roads, and harbours the vessel could touch at or put into on its voyage. After which he embarked with the hope, that so strong and pure a passion as that which he cherished could not always be an unfortunate one. As soon as they saw land, he took the ship's boat and rowed along the coast, shouting, "Constancia! Fair Constancia! where are you? — I seek for you, and call on you in vain! — How much longer must we be separated?" His lamentations and complaints were wasted on the empty air. He returned to the ship, his heart pierced with grief, and his eyes full of tears.

One evening, that they had cast anchor under a great rock, he landed as usual on the beach; but as the country was unknown, and the night very dark, those who accompanied him refused to advance far inland, fearing they might perish there. The Prince, who cared little for his life, however, set forward, falling and scrambling up again a hundred times; at length he perceived a great light, which appeared to proceed from some fire. As he approached he heard much noise, and the sound of hammers, which seemed to be giving tremendous blows. Far from feeling alarmed, he hastened onwards, and came to a large forge, open on all sides, and in which there was a furnace glowing so intensely, that it seemed as if the sun was blazing in the centre of it; thirty giants, each with only one eye in the middle of their foreheads, were at work fabricating armour and weapons.

Constancio approached, and said to them, "If you can feel compassion, amongst all the iron and fire that surround you; if, by accident, you have seen the fair Constancia, who has been carried off as a slave by some merchants, land on this coast, tell me where I can find her, and ask all I possess in the world, I will give it you with pleasure." He had scarcely finished his little oration, when the noise, which had ceased on his appearance, recommenced louder than ever. "Alas!" said he, "my sorrow moves ye not! Barbarians! — I have nothing to hope from you!"

He was turning away, when he heard a sweet symphony which enchanted him; and looking towards the furnace he saw, issuing from it, the most beautiful Boy that imagination could picture; he was more brilliant than the fire out of which he came. As soon as Constancio had remarked his charms, the bandage that covered his eyes, the bow and arrows that he bore, he felt sure it was Cupid; and so, in fact, it was, who called to him: “Stay, Constancio! thou burnest with too pure a flame for me to refuse thee my assistance. I am Virtuous Love. It was I who wounded thee for the fair Constancia, and it is I who now defend her from the Giant who persecutes her. The Sovereign Fairy is my most intimate friend: we have combined our powers to preserve Constancia for thee, but I must try the strength of thy passion before I reveal to thee where she is.” “Command, Love! Command what thou wilt,” exclaimed the Prince; “there is nothing in which I will not obey thee.” “Fling thyself into this fire,” replied the Boy, “and remember, that if thou lovest not truly, and one alone, thou art lost.” “I have no reason to fear,” said Constancio; throwing himself instantly into the furnace. All sensation left him; he knew not where or what he was.

He remained in this trance for thirty hours, and on awaking found himself the most beautiful Pigeon in the world. Instead of being in a horrible furnace, he was lying in a little nest of roses, jasmines, and honeysuckles. He was as much surprised as anybody could be; his rough feet, the various colours of his feathers, and his fiery-red eyes, astonished him exceedingly. He saw himself in a rivulet; and when he attempted to complain of his sad fate, he found he had lost the use of speech, though he had retained the power of thought.

He looked upon this transformation as the greatest of all misfortunes. “Oh, perfidious Love!” said he, in his own mind; “is this the reward thou hast bestowed on the truest of lovers? — must one be fickle, treacherous, and perjured, to find favour in thy sight? I have seen many such whom thou hast crowned with triumph, whilst thou heapest affliction on the really faithful. What hope remains for me under such a form as this? — Behold me, a Pigeon! Could I but speak as the Blue Bird did of yore, and whose story I have always delighted in, I would fly high and low, near and far, through every region, in search of my beloved mistress, and question every mortal creature till I found her; but I have not the power even to pronounce her name, and the only remedy left me for my misfortunes is to precipitate myself into some abyss, and end them with my life.” Full of his fatal design, he flew to the top of a high mountain, from which he endeavoured to cast himself down: but his wings sustained him in spite of himself. He was astonished at this; for, having never been a Pigeon before, he was not aware of the undesired help his pinions would afford him. He took the resolution, therefore, of pulling out all his feathers, and began at once to pluck himself without mercy.

In this bare state he was about to try another somerset from the crest of a rock, when two girls came suddenly upon him. The moment they saw this unfortunate bird, one said to the other, “Where can this unhappy pigeon have come from? Has it just escaped from the sharp talons of some bird of prey, or out of the jaws of a weasel?” “I don’t know where it comes from,” replied the younger girl; “but I know where it will go to;” and advancing upon the quiet little creature, “it will go,” she continued, “to keep company with five others that I mean to make a pie of for the Fairy Sovereign.” Prince Pigeon, hearing her speak thus, far from attempting to escape, came towards her in the hope that she would do him the favour to kill him directly: but, instead of causing his death, it saved his life; for the girls found him so tame and prettily mannered, that they determined to make a pet of him. The handsomest put him into a covered basket, in which she usually carried her work, and they continued their walk.

“For some days past,” said one of them, “our mistress has seemed to be very busy; she is continually mounting her Fiery Camel, and flies night and day from pole to pole without stopping.” “If thou wert to be trusted with a secret," replied her companion, "I would tell thee the reason, for she has chosen to make me her confidant." "Do, and I will be dumb," cried she who had first spoken; "rest assured of my keeping the secret." "Know, then," rejoined the other, "that her Princess Constancia, that she is so fond of, is persecuted by a giant who would marry her. He has shut her up in a tower, and to prevent his forcing her into this match, the Fairy must do some wonderful things."

The Prince listened to their conversation as he sat in the bottom of the basket. He had thought, up to that moment, nothing could increase his misfortunes; but he felt, with the keenest grief, that he had much deceived himself; and one can easily imagine so after all I have said of his passion, and from the position in which he found himself. To have become a pigeon at the very moment when his assistance was so necessary to the Princess, plunged him into perfect despair. His imagination, ingenious in tormenting him, pictured to him Constancia in the fatal tower, subjected to the importunities, the violences, and the fury, of a dreadful giant; he feared her courage would fail her, and that she would give her consent to the marriage. The next moment, his fear was, that she would brave him and lose her life from the rage of such a lover! It would be difficult to describe the condition the poor Prince was in.

The young person, who carried him in her little basket, having returned with her companion to the palace of the Fairy, whose servants they were, found their mistress walking in a shady avenue in her garden. They first knelt at her feet, and then said, "Great Queen, here is a pigeon we have found: it is gentle and tame, and if it had feathers would be very handsome; we have determined to bring it up in our own room; but if agreeable to you it shall be sent occasionally to yours, to amuse you." The Fairy took the basket in which the bird was confined, drew it out, and made some serious observations on worldly grandeur: for it was extraordinary to see such a prince as Constancio under the form of a pigeon ready to be stewed or roasted; and, although it was she herself, who had up to that time arranged the whole affair, and that nothing had happened but by her orders, she was addicted to moralizing on all that occurred, and this incident made a great impression upon her. She caressed the little pigeon, and he neglected nothing, on his part, to attract her attention in order to induce her to alleviate the misery he suffered from this sad adventure. He made her a low bow, after the fashion of a pigeon, drawing back one of his feet a little. He billed and cooed affectionately, and though but a novice, proved himself already as clever at it as the oldest ring-dove or wood-pigeon in the country.

The Sovereign Fairy carried him into her cabinet, shut the door, and said to him, “Prince, the sad condition in which I now see thee does not prevent my recognising and loving thee for the sake of my daughter Constancia, who fully returns thy affection. Blame no one but me for thy transformation. I caused thee to enter the furnace to try the truth of thy love; it is pure — it is ardent. I give thee full credit for an act that redounds to thine honour.” The Pigeon bowed three times in token of his gratitude, and listened attentively to what the Fairy said to him.

“The Queen, thy mother,” continued she, “had scarcely received the money and jewels given her in exchange for the Princess, than she had her taken by force to the merchants, who had bought her, and as soon as they had her on board they set sail for the Indies, where they were certain to make a fine profit by the precious gem they had obtained possession of. Her tears and prayers could not alter their determination. In vain she assured them that Prince Constancio would ransom her with all he possessed in the world; the more she convinced them of the value he set upon her, the greater was the speed they made in the fear that he would be informed of her abduction, and that he would overtake and snatch from them their prey. At length, after having sailed half over the globe, they encountered a terrific storm: the Princess, overwhelmed by her grief, and the effects of her voyage, was almost dying. They feared they should lose her, and took refuge in the nearest port; but as they were landing they saw approaching them, a Giant of the most tremendous size. He was followed by several others, who all cried out in a breath, that they wanted to see what curiosities were on board the ship. The first thing that struck the giant’s sight, on stepping aboard, was the young Princess. They knew each other again immediately. ‘Hah! little wretch,’ exclaimed the monster, ‘the just and merciful gods have placed thee again in my power! Dost thou remember the day I found thee, and that thou didst cut open my sack? I am much mistaken if thou playest me such a trick this time.’ So saying, he pounced on her as an eagle would on a chicken, and, despite the resistance and entreaties of the merchants, carried her off in his arms, running as fast as he could to his great tower. This tower is on a high mountain. The Enchanters, who built it, have neglected nothing that could make it beautiful and curious. It has no door; it is entered by the windows, which are placed very high; the walls are of diamonds, which sparkle like the sun, and are impervious to any force. In short, all that art and nature combined could display of splendour, is outshone by what is to be seen there. When the furious giant had secured Constancia, he told her that he would marry her, and render her the happiest creature in the universe; that he would make her mistress of all his treasures; that he would do her the favour to love her, and that he did not doubt but that she would be enchanted at her good fortune in meeting with him. She gave him to understand, by her tears and her lamentations, the excess of her despair; and as in secret I was exerting all my power in her favour, I inspired the Giant with a feeling of compassion, which he had never known in his life before; so that in lieu of growing angry, he told the Princess he would give her a year, during which time he would use no violence; but that, if at the end of that period she did not consent to his proposal, he would marry her in spite of herself and kill her afterwards, so that she might consider which course would be the best for her to take.

“After this fatal declaration, he shut up with her some of the most beautiful girls in the world, that they might be her companions, and wile away the profound sorrow in which she was plunged. He posted giants all round the tower, to prevent any one whatever from approaching it; and in fact, should any one have the temerity to do so, they would speedily meet the reward of their rashness, for the giant sentinels are merciless as they are mighty.

“At length, the poor Princess, not seeing the least prospect of relief, and knowing that the year has expired all but one day, has resolved to throw herself from the battlements of the tower into the sea. Such, my Lord Pigeon, is the state to which she is reduced. The only remedy I can see for this evil is, that you should fly to her, carrying in your beak a little ring I have here. The moment she puts it on her finger, she will become a Dove, and you can then fly away together.”

The little Pigeon was in the greatest hurry to be off: he did not know how to make her understand him; he pulled the ruffles, and the flounced apron of the Fairy; he then moved to the window, and tapped the panes two or three times with his beak. All this meant, in pigeon tongue, “I beseech thee, Madam, to send me instantly with the enchanted ring to comfort our lovely Princess!” The Fairy understood his language, and, responding to his wishes, “Go! Fly, charming Pigeon,” said she to him. “Here is the ring, which will be your guide; take great care not to lose it, for you alone can extricate Constancia from the strait she is in.”

Prince Pigeon, as I have already told you, had not left himself a single feather. He had torn them all out in his extreme despair. The Fairy rubbed him all over with a wonderful essence, that clothed him immediately with plumage so beautiful and extraordinary that the doves of Venus were not worthy to be compared to him. He was delighted to see himself in such fine feathers again, and taking wing directly, he reached by break of day the top of the tower, the diamond walls of which glittered so brightly that the sun in his splendour could not outshine them. On the summit of the keep there was an extensive garden, in the midst of which rose an orange-tree laden with flowers and fruit. The rest of the garden was very curious, and Prince Pigeon would have taken considerable pleasure in its contemplation had not his mind been occupied by more important matters.

He perched on the orange-tree, holding the ring in his claw, and was getting terribly anxious, when the Princess entered the garden. She wore a long white robe, her head was covered with a great black veil embroidered with gold. It was drawn close over her face, and trailed on the ground all around her. The enamoured Pigeon could not doubt that it was she, had it been possible even for another to possess a form so fine, or an air so majestic. She advanced and seated herself under the orange-tree; and suddenly throwing up her veil, the Pigeon was for a few minutes perfectly dazzled with her beauty.

“Sad regrets, melancholy thoughts!” she exclaimed, “ye are now useless. My woeful heart has passed a whole twelve-month between hope and fear; but the fatal period has arrived. To-day — in a few hours — I must die, or marry the giant. Alas! is it possible that the Sovereign Fairy and Prince Constancio can have so utterly abandoned me? What have I done to them to deserve it? But to what end are these reflections? Is it not better for me to take at once the great step I have resolved on?” She rose with a determined air, to precipitate herself from the battlements; but as the slightest noise alarmed her, and she heard the young Pigeon flutter in the tree, she looked up to ascertain the cause, and the bird at the same moment alighted on her shoulder and dropped the important ring into her bosom. The Princess, surprised at the caresses of this beautiful bird and his charming plumage, was equally so at the present he had made her. She examined the ring: she observed upon it some mysterious characters, and was still holding it in her hand when the giant, unobserved by her, entered the garden.

One of the women who waited on her had informed this dreadful lover of the despair of the Princess, and that she had resolved to kill herself rather than marry him. When he heard that she had ascended to the top of the tower so early in the morning, he anticipated some fatal catastrophe. His heart, which till then had never been agitated by any but the most barbarous passions, was so enchanted by the beautiful eyes of that amiable maiden that he loved her tenderly. Ye gods! what were her feelings at the sight of him. She dreaded that he would deprive her of the opportunity of destroying herself. The poor Pigeon was not a little alarmed at this formidable Colossus. In her confusion the Princess slipped the ring on her finger, and, oh, wonderful to relate, she was instantly changed into a dove, and flew off with the faithful Pigeon as fast as her wings could carry her.

Never was anybody so astonished as the Giant. After staring at his mistress, who in the form of a dove was cleaving the vast expanse of air, he stood for some time perfectly motionless. Then uttered such yells and howls that the very mountains shook with them. They ended only with his life, which he terminated by flinging himself into the sea, wherein it was much fitter he should be drowned than that charming Princess. She, in the meanwhile, was flying far away with her guide; but when they had got to a sufficient distance to feel out of danger, they alighted gently in a woodland spot, shaded with many trees, and carpeted with grass and flowers.

Constancia was still ignorant that the Pigeon was her lover. He was exceedingly distressed that he could not inform her of the fact by word of mouth, when suddenly he felt an invisible hand loosen his tongue. In great delight at this, he said directly to the Princess, “Has not your heart told you, charming Dove, that you are with a Pigeon who still burns with the flame you kindled?” “My heart sighed for such a happiness,” replied she, “but dared not flatter itself with the hope of obtaining it. Alas! who could have imagined it! I was on the point of perishing under the blow of my strange destiny. You came to snatch me from the arms of death, or those of a monster which I still more dreaded."

The Prince, delighted to hear his dove talk, and to find her still as affectionate as he could desire, said to her everything the most tender and ardent passion could suggest. He related to her all that had happened since the sad moment when they parted, particularly his wonderful meeting with Love at the forest, and the Fairy in her palace. She was much delighted to hear that her best friend still took an interest in her. "Let us seek her, dear Prince," said she to Constancio, "and thank her for all the favour she has shown us. She will restore us to our proper forms, and we will return to your kingdom or to mine."

"If you love me as much as I love you," replied the Prince, "I will make a proposal to you in which love alone is concerned; but, charming Princess, you will say I am a madman." "Do not struggle to preserve your reputation for sense at the expense of your heart," replied she; "speak boldly, I shall listen to you with pleasure." "I am for retaining our present forms — you as a Dove, and I as a Pigeon, may still burn with the same flames as Constancia and Constancio. I am convinced that, free from the cares of an empire, having neither council to hold, nor war to wage, nor audience to give, exempted from acting everlastingly an important part on the great stage of the world, it will be delightful to live solely for each other in this charming retreat." "Ah!" exclaimed the Dove, "how much grandeur and tenderness is there in that idea! Young as I am, alas! I have seen much sorrow! Fortune, jealous of my innocent beauty, has so obstinately persecuted me, that I should be enchanted to renounce all the wealth she could give me for the happiness of living only for you. Yes, my dear Prince, I consent. Let us fix on some pleasant place, and pass our best days under this transformation. Let us lead an innocent life without ambition, without a wish, beyond that which virtuous love inspires."

"I will be your guide!" exclaimed Love, descending from the summit of Olympus; "so fond a design deserves my protection." "And mine also," said the Sovereign Fairy, appearing suddenly; "I came to seek you in order to anticipate by some few moments the pleasure of beholding you."

The Pigeon and the Dove were as much delighted as surprised by this new event. "We place ourselves under your guidance," said Constancia to the Fairy. "Do not abandon us," said Constancio to Cupid. "Come, then," said the latter, "to Paphos; my mother is still honoured there — and they continue to love the birds that were consecrated to her." "No," said the Princess, "we desire not the society of mankind; happy are those who can renounce it! We ask but for a beautiful solitude."

The Fairy immediately struck the ground with her wand, and Love touched it with a golden arrow. At the same moment they beheld the most exquisite wilderness in Nature, richly adorned with groves, flowers, meadows, and fountains. "Live here millions of years," cried Love. "Swear to each other eternal fidelity in presence of this great Fairy." "I swear it to my Dove," said the Pigeon; "I swear it to my Pigeon," said the Dove. "Your marriage," said the Fairy, "could not be blest by a divinity more competent to render you happy. In addition, I promise, that if you should grow weary of this metamorphosis, I will not forsake you; but restore you to your original forms." The Pigeon and the Dove both thanked the Fairy; but assured her they should not invoke her with that object; that they had known too much sorrow as human beings; they only requested her to send to them Ruson, if he were still alive. "He has changed his condition," said Love; "it was I who had condemned him to take the form of a ram; I have had compassion on him, and replaced him on the throne I tore him from." Constancia no longer wondered that she had seen Ruson display so much grace and intelligence. She entreated Love to relate to her the adventures of an animal that had been so dear to her. "I will tell you some day," said Cupid, kindly; "but at this moment I am wanted and wished for in so many places, that I hardly know where to fly first. Farewell!” he continued, “fond and happy pair; you may boast of being the wisest couple in my empire.”

The Sovereign Fairy remained some time with the newly married birds. She could not sufficiently applaud the contempt they had shown for worldly grandeur. It cannot be doubted that they took the surest means to enjoy a peaceful existence. At length she took her leave of them, and it is well known from her account, and from Cupid’s, that Prince Pigeon and Princess Dove loved each other faithfully for ever.

23

PRINCE MARCASSIN

There was once upon a time a king and a queen who lived in great sorrow because they had no children. The queen, though still beautiful, was no longer young, so that she did not dare look forward to having any. This made her very sad. She slept little, and was always sighing and praying to the gods and all the fairies to give her what she wished. One day when she was walking in a little wood, after gathering violets and roses she picked some strawberries too, but no sooner had she eaten them than she became very drowsy, and lying down at the foot of a tree, she fell asleep.

She dreamt while she slept that she saw passing through the air three fairies, who stopped just over her head. The first one looking pityingly at her, said: “Here is a lovely queen to whom we should be doing a real service if we were to give her a child”. “Very well,” said the second, “do so, since you are the eldest of us.” “My gift to her,” she went on, “is a son, the handsomest, the most amiable, and the best loved in the world.” “And mine,” said the other, “is that she may see this son happy in whatever he undertakes, always powerful, full of understanding and of justice.” The third fairy, when her turn came to name her gift, burst out laughing, and mumbled some words between her teeth that the queen did not hear.

That was her dream. Waking up after a few minutes, she saw nothing in the air nor in the garden. “Alas” she said, “I am not fortunate enough to justify the hope that my dream may come to pass. What thanks would I not give to the gods and to the good fairies if I had a son!” Gathering some more flowers she returned to the palace more cheerful than usual. The king noticed this, and begged her to tell him the reason. She denied him, but he pressed her. “It is not,” she said to him, “a thing deserving of your curiosity; it is nothing but a dream, and you will think me very silly to attach any kind of belief to it.” Then she told him that while she was asleep she had seen three fairies in the air, and what two of them had said, and that the third had burst out laughing without her being able to hear what she muttered.

“This dream,” said the king, “is gratifying to me as it is to you, but that merry-humoured fairy makes me uneasy, for the most of them are mischievous, and it is not always a good sign when they laugh.” “As for me,” replied the queen, “I believe that signifies neither good nor ill; my mind is filled with my desire to have a son, and a hundred fancies rise out of that. Besides, what could happen to him, supposing there were anything true in what I have dreamt? Is he not endowed with all that can be most advantageous to him? Heaven grant that I may have this consolation!” Thereupon she fell a-weeping. The king assured her that she was so dear to him that she made up for everything.

When some months had passed the queen knew that she was to have a child. Word went round the whole kingdom to send up prayers for her; the altars smoked only with the sacrifices offered to the gods for the preservation of so dear a treasure. The assembled states sent deputies to compliment their majesties; all the princes of the blood, the princesses, and the ambassadors were at the court when the queen was brought to bed. The layette for the precious child was of wonderful beauty, and the nurse excellent. But how was the public joy changed to sadness when instead of a fine prince there was born — a little wild boar! Everybody shrieked, which frightened the queen very much. She asked what was the matter, but they did not wish to tell her for fear she should die of grief. So, on the contrary, they assured her she was the mother of a fine boy, and that she had cause for rejoicing.

But the king was terribly cast down. He ordered them to put the Marcassin in a sack and to throw him to the bottom of the sea, so that the memory of an event so grievous might be lost entirely. But afterwards he had pity, and thinking it right to consult the queen on the matter, he gave orders for him to be fed, and said not a word to his wife till the danger was past of a great disappointment causing her death. Every day she asked to see her son. They told her he was too, delicate to be brought from his room to her own, and with that explanation she was satisfied.

As for Prince Marcassin, he fed like a wild boar in whom the desire of life is strong. They had to provide six nurses for him, three of them dry nurses, in the English fashion. These would always be giving him Spanish wines and cordials to drink, which taught him early to be a judge of the best wines. The queen, impatient to caress her baby, told the king that she was well enough to go as far as the child’s room, and that she could no longer live with out seeing her son. The king heaved a deep sigh, and ordered them to bring hither the heir to the crown. He was swaddled like a child in robes of gold brocade. The queen took him in her arms, and lifting a frill of lace that covered his head . . . Alas! what was her dismay at the fatal sight? That moment seemed as if it must be the last of her life. She looked with sad eyes at the king, not daring to utter a word.

“Do not grieve, my dear queen,” he said to her. “I impute no blame to you on account of our misfortune. It is, no doubt, a trick played by some wicked fairy, and if you will give your consent, I shall carry out my first plan, which was to have the little monster drowned.” “Ah, sire!” she said, “do not make me your confidant in respect to so cruel a deed. I am the mother of this unfortunate Marcassin. I feel the tenderness within me making appeal for him. Do him no harm, I beg of you. He has already suffered too much in being born a wild boar when he should have been a man.”

So deeply did she move the king by her tears and her reasoning that he promised what she desired. The ladies, therefore, who had charge of Marcassin, began to take much more care of him; for till now they had looked on him as an unholy beast soon to serve as food for fishes. It is true that in spite of his ugliness his eyes were seen to be full of intelligence. They had taught him to give his little foot to those who came to salute him as others give their hand. They decked him with diamond bracelets. And in all his ways there was a certain grace.

The queen could not help loving him. She had him often in her arms, at the bottom of her heart thinking him pretty, though she dared not utter this for fear they should think her crazy. But she did say to her friends that her son seemed to be of an amiable disposition. She covered him with endless knots of rose-coloured ribbons, and his ears were pierced. He had a string with which they held him up to teach him to walk on his hind legs. They put shoes on him, and silken stockings fastened over the knee to make his legs look longer. He was beaten when he grunted. In short, in so far as it was possible, they weaned him from his wild-boar habits.

One evening, when the queen was out walking and carrying him in her arms, she passed under the same tree where she had fallen asleep and where she had dreamt all I have already told. The remembrance of that adventure came back to her mind with great vividness. “Here, then,” she said, “is the prince so handsome, so perfect, and so happy, that I was going to have! O vain dream! fatal vision! O fairies, what had I done that you should mock me?” She was murmuring those words under her breath, when all of a Sudden she saw an oak spring up; and from it there appeared a lady richly dressed, who looking at her in a kindly manner, said: “Do not grieve, great queen, at having given birth to Marcassin. I assure you there will come a time when he will seem beautiful to you.” The queen recognised her as one of the three fairies who passing through the air while she slept, had stopped and had willed she might have a son. “It is difficult for me to believe you, madam,” she answered. “No matter what intelligence my son may possess, who can love him with such a face?” Once again the fairy answered: “Do not grieve, great queen, at having given birth to Marcassin. I assure you there will come a time when he will seem beautiful to you.” She disappeared immediately into the tree, and the tree into the earth, without its even appearing that there ever had been one in that place.

Much astonished at this new adventure, the queen could not help hoping that the fairies would take some care of the royal beast. Quickly did she return to the palace to let the king know what had occurred; but he thought she had invented this means of making his son seem less hateful to him. “I see quite well,” she said, “from the way you are listening to me that you do not believe what I am saying. Yet nothing is truer than what I have just told you.” “It is very hard,” said the king, “to endure the fairies’ mockeries. By what means could they ever make anything else of our child than a wild boar? Never do I think of him without being overwhelmed by grief.” The queen went out from him more sorrowful than ever. She had hoped that the fairy’s promises would soften the king’s sadness; yet he would hardly listen to them. So she with drew, having made up her mind to speak no more to him about her son, and to leave to the gods the task of consoling her husband.

Marcassin began to speak. Like other children he lisped a little; but that did not diminish the queen’s pleasure in hearing him, for she had doubted whether he would ever speak at all. He grew very tall, and used often to walk on his hind feet. He wore long garments covering his limbs, and an English cap of black velvet to conceal his head, his ears, and a part of his snout. His tusks, it must be confessed, were terrible; and his bristles stood up in a fearsome way. His look was proud, and his presence betokened a power of absolute command. He ate out of a golden trough, in which truffles, and acorns, and morels, and grass were prepared for him, and no pains were spared to teach him dainty ways and good manners. His mind was naturally superior, and he was of dauntless courage. The king recognising his qualities, began to care more for him than he had done before, and sought out good masters to teach him all they could. Marcassin was not successful with figure dances, but in round dances and the minuet, where speed and lightness are wanted, he did wonderfully. As to musical instruments, he knew well enough that the lute and the theorbo were not suitable to him; he liked the guitar, and played beautifully on the flute. He rode on horseback with astonishing talent and grace. Hardly a day passed that he did not go to the hunt, attacking furiously with his teeth the fiercest and the, most dangerous beasts. His masters perceived in him a quick wit and every possible facility for gaining an accurate knowledge of the sciences. But very bitterly did he feel the ridicule which his wild-boar's face brought upon him, so that he avoided appearing in large assemblies.

His life was passing in happy unconcern, when one day while he was with the queen, he saw a lady enter. She was good-looking, and was followed by three very lovely young girls. Throwing herself at the feet of the queen, she told her she had co to beg her to give them shelter at her court. The death of her husband and great misfortunes had reduced her to extreme poverty, and her birth and her unhappy condition were well enough known to her majesty to justify the hope that she would willingly receive her. The queen was deeply touched at seeing them thus kneeling before her. She embraced them, and said she would gladly receive the three girls; the eldest of whom was called Ismene, the second Zelonide, and the youngest Marthesie. She promised to take care of them, assured the mother she need not be discouraged, that she might remain in the palace where she would be treated with much regard, and might count on the queen's friendship. The mother, charmed with the goodness of the queen, kissed her hand a thousand times, and felt a sudden calm such as she had not known for long.

The fame of Ismene's beauty spread through the court, and very deeply affected a young knight named Coridon, who was no less famous in his own way than she was in hers. Almost at the same time they felt a secret sympathy linking them to each other. The knight was of an amiability untold. He charmed every one, and every one loved him. And as this was an engagement with many advantages for Ismene, the queen saw with pleasure the attentions he paid her, and the favour with which she regarded him. At last their marriage was spoken of; everything seemed pointing that way. They were born for one another, and Coridon neglected nothing in the way of those gay entertainments and all those tender attentions which firmly bind a heart already affected.

But the prince had felt the power of Ismene as soon as he had seen her, without daring to declare his passion. "Ah! Marcassin, Marcassin," he cried, looking at himself in a glass, "could you possibly, with a face so hideous, dare to hope that the fair Ismene would think well of you? I must conquer my passion, for of all misfortunes the greatest is to love without return." He avoided her presence with great care; but as he thought of her none the less he became the prey of a terrible melancholy, and he grew so thin that his bones were sticking through his skin. But his trouble greatly increased when he learnt that Coridon was openly wooing Ismene, that she held him in much esteem, and that ere long the king and the queen would be preparing the wedding feast.

Hearing this, he felt his love growing stronger and his hope fading away, for it seemed easier to please Ismene while she was merely indifferent than now when her heart was given to Coridon. He understood that silence on his part would be fatal to him, so having watched for a favourable opportunity to speak with her, he found one. One day as she was sitting under some pleasant trees singing the words of a song that her lover had made for her, Marcassin approached her, very much overcome, and sitting down beside her, he asked if it were true, as he had been told, that she was going to marry Coridon. She answered that the queen had commanded her to receive his attentions, and naturally that must end as he had suggested. “Ismene,” said he, more gently, “you are so young that I did not think they -were planning your marriage. Had I known it I should have proposed to you as a husband the only son of a great king who loves you and who would be delighted to make you happy.” At these words Ismene grew pale. Already she had remarked that Marcassin, who naturally was rather shy, used to talk to her with evident pleasure, to give her all the truffles which his wild-boar instinct enabled him to find in the forest, and to present her with the flowers with which his cap was generally decked. She was much afraid lest he himself was the prince of whom he spoke, and she answered: “I am very glad, my lord, to have been in ignorance of the sentiments of the son of this great king. It may be that my family, more ambitious than I myself, would have wished to force me to marry him, and in confidence I tell you that my heart is so entirely Coridon’s that it can never belong to any one else.” “What!” he replied, “you would refuse the crowned head of him who would put his fortune at your disposal?” “There is nothing I would not refuse,” she said. “I have more tenderness than ambition; and I beg of you, my lord, seeing that you have dealings with this prince, to make him promise to leave me alone.” “Ah, cruel one!” cried the impatient Marcassin, “you know only too well the prince I mean! His face does not please you. You would not like to bear the name of Queen Marcassin. You have sworn eternal faithfulness to your knight, but think, think of the difference between us. I am not an Adonis, I admit, but I am a formidable wild boar; supreme force is surely worth as much as some trivial graces of manner. Ismene, think of this. Do not drive me to despair!” While he was speaking, his eyes seemed to be on fire, and his long tusks clacked one against the other with a noise which set the poor girl all of a tremble.

Marcassin went away. Ismene, in great trouble, was shedding a torrent of tears when Coridon approached her. Till now they had only known the delights of a mutual tenderness. Nothing had come in the way of these, and they had ground for hoping that very soon their love would be happily crowned. What then was this young lover’s despair when he saw the grief of his fair mistress? He begged her to tell him the reason of it. She did so; and it is not possible to describe the sorrow which the news caused him. “I cannot,” he said, “secure my happiness at the cost of yours. A crown is offered to you — you must accept it.” “Accept it, great gods!” she cried; “forget you, and wed a monster! What have I done, alas! that you should give me advice so opposed to our love and our happiness?” Coridon was overcome to such a degree that he could answer nothing, but the tears flowing from his eyes were enough to show the condition of his soul. Ismene, deeply sensible of their common sorrow, said to him hundreds and hundreds of times that she would never change if all the kings of the earth were in question; and touched by this generosity, he told her hundreds and hundreds of times that it would be best to leave him to die of sorrow and ascend the throne that was offered to her.

While they were disputing this, Marcassin was with the queen, to whom he said that the hope of curing his passion for Ismene had forced him to silence, but that he had struggled in vain; that she was on the eve of her marriage; that he felt he had not the strength to bear up under such a misfortune; and that, in short, he wished to marry her or to die. The queen was much astonished to hear that the wild boar was in love. “Who would have you, my son; and what kind of children could you hope for?” “Ismene is so beautiful,” said he, “that she could not have ugly children, and even should they take after me, I would face all rather than see her in another’s arms.” “Have you so little sense of your position,” the queen went on, “as to desire a girl whose birth is inferior to your own?” “And what royal lady is there,” he replied, “with so little daintiness as to be willing to marry a wretched pig like me?” “My son, you are mistaken,” answered the queen; “princesses less than anybody else are free to choose. “We shall have you described as fairer than love itself. When the marriage is accomplished, and we have the lady in our keeping, she will be-forced to remain with us.” “I am not capable,” he said, “of such a piece of trickery. I should he in despair at making my wife unhappy.” “Can you believe,” cried the queen, “that she whom you desire would not be so with you? Her lover is worthy of her love, and if there is a difference of rank between a sovereign and a subject, there is no less between a wild boar and a most charming man of the world.” “So much the worse for me, madam,” replied Marcassin, vexed at the reasons she was urging. “It seems to me that you less than any other should insist upon my misfortune. Why did you make me a pig? Is it not unjust to reproach me with a thing which I did not bring about?” “I am not reproach. ing you,” answered the queen, deeply moved. “I only want to show you that if you marry a wife who does not love you, you will be unhappy, and you will bring her sorrow. If you could but understand what suffering those forced marriages are the cause of you would not wish to run the risk of one. Is it not better to live alone in peace?” “To do that would want more indifference than I have, madam,” he said. “Ismene has touched my heart. She is gentle, and I flatter myself that a delicate handling of her, together with the crown she must hope for, will make her yield. But, however it turns out, if it is my fate to be loveless I shall have the happiness of possessing a wife whom I love.”

The queen found his mind was so firmly fixed that she gave up the thought of turning him away from it. She promised to work for the end he de sired, and without any delay she sent for Ismene’s mother. She knew her disposition — that of an ambitious woman, who would have sacrificed her daughters for an advantage even below that of a crown. As soon as the queen told her that it was her will that Marcassin should marry Ismene, she threw herself at her feet, and assured her that the wedding-day was for her to choose. “But,” said the queen, “her affections are engaged: we have commanded her to look on Coridon as her destined husband.” “Well, madam,” answered the old mother, “we shall command her to look on him henceforth as the man she shall not marry.” “The heart does not always consult the reason,” replied the queen. “once it is really attached, it is difficult to subdue it.” “If her heart had other desires than mine,” said she, “I should tear them from her without mercy.” The queen seeing her so determined, felt that she might safely impose on her the task of rendering her daughter submissive.

And, in truth, she hastened to Ismene’s chamber, where the poor girl, knowing that the queen had sent for her mother, was anxiously awaiting the return of the latter. And one may easily imagine how her anxiety increased when she was told in a hard and resolute manner that the queen had chosen her for her daughter-in-law, that she must never speak to Coridon any more, and that if she were lacking in obedience she would be strangled. Ismene did not dare answer this threat, but she wept bitterly, and the report was spread abroad very soon that she was going to wed the royal wild boar; for the queen, who had made the king consent, sent her precious stones with which to deck herself when she should come to the palace.

Coridon, in desperation, in spite of all that had been done to prevent his entrance, sought her and spoke to her. When he reached her own private apartment he found her reclining on a couch, the tears streaming down her face. Falling on his knees by her side, and taking her hand: “Alas,” said he, “charming Ismene, you are weeping for my sorrows “. “They are my sorrows too,” she replied. “You are aware, dear Coridon, to what I am condemned. Death is the only possible escape from the outrage they mean to subject me to. Yes, I assure you, I could die more easily than I could give myself to any one else.” “No,” said he, “live: you will be a queen. It may be that you will grow used to this hideous prince.” “That I could not do,” she said. “I can imagine nothing in the world more terrible than such a husband.

His crown does not lessen my sorrows.” “The gods preserve you,” he continued, “from so fatal a resolution, beloved Ismene — one which only befits my lot. I am about to lose you; you cannot forbid the step my anguish drives me to.” “If you die,” she answered, “I shall not survive you; and I feel a certain consolation in the thought that death at least will bring us together.”

While they were talking thus, Marcassin took them by surprise. The queen having told him what she had done in his favour, he hastened to express his joy to Ismene but the presence of Coridon annoyed him to the last degree. He was in a jealous and impatient humour. In a fashion that strongly suggested the wild boar, he ordered him to be gone and never again appear at the court. “What do you mean, cruel prince?” cried Ismene, stopping her lover as he went away. “Do you think you can banish him from my heart as you do now from my presence? No, he is too well planted there. In bringing sorrow on me do not overlook what you are bringing on yourself. Here is the man whom I can love For you I feel only horror And as for me cruel one said Marcassin, “I am all love for you. It is useless to confess all your hate for me. None the less will you be my wife, and you will only suffer the more.”

Coridon, in despair at having brought this fresh unhappiness on his mistress, went away just at the moment when Ismene’s mother came to scold her. She assured the prince that her daughter would forget Coridon altogether, and that there was no reason to delay so charming a wedding. Marcassin, no less eager, said he was going to arrange the day with the queen, the king having left the care of this great festivity in her hands, the truth being that he did not want to have anything to do with it, for this marriage seemed displeasing and ridiculous to him, persuaded as he was that the Marcassin race would be perpetuated in the royal house. The blind indulgence with which the queen regarded her son was a grief to him.

Marcassin feared lest the king should repent of the consent he had given to his desires, so all the preparations for the ceremony were hastened. He had knee breeches made for him, with bunches of ribbon at the knee, and a perfumed doublet, for there was always a slight odour about him which it was difficult to endure. His mantle was embroidered with jewels, his wig was fair as a child's curls, and his hat covered with feathers. Perhaps a more extraordinary figure than he presented was never seen, and no one except her who was condemned to the misfortune of marrying him could look at him without laughing. But, alas! young Ismene had little heart to laugh. In vain they promised her magnificence. She despised it, and was only conscious of the unlucky star she had been born under.

Coridon saw her passing on her way to the temple, looking like a beautiful victim about to be slaughtered. Marcassin, transported with delight, prayed her to banish the deep sadness with which she was overcast; for he wished to make her so happy that all the queens of the earth would envy her. "I confess," he said, "that I am not handsome, but it is said that every man is like some animal. Well, I am most like a wild boar. That is my beast. There is no reason to consider me less amiable on that account, for my heart is full of tender ness and possessed by a strong passion for you." Ismene,' without answering, looked at him with a disdainful air, shrugged her shoulders, and let him guess all the horror she felt for him. Her mother was behind her, threatening her in a thousand different ways. "Wretched girl," she said, "do you wish to ruin us along with yourself? Have you no fear lest the prince's love may turn to fury?" But Ismene, occupied with her own trouble, paid not the least attention to these words. Marcassin, who had her hand in his, could not keep from leaping and dancing, whispering in her ears a thousand tender words.

At last the ceremony was over. After the guests had cried three times, "Long live Prince Marcassin! Long live Princess Marcassin," the bridegroom brought his bride to the palace, where all the preparations had been made for a magnificent repast. The king and queen having taken their places, the bride sat down opposite the wild boar, who devoured her with his eyes, so beautiful did he find her; but she was buried in such deep sadness that she saw nothing of what was going on and heard nothing of the loud sounds of the music.

The queen plucked her dress and whispered in her ear: “My child, cast off that cloud of melancholy from you if you wish to please us. You look as if this were your burial rather than your wedding-day.” “May the gods but grant that this be the last day of my life!” she answered. “You commanded me to give my heart to Coridon. It was rather from your hand than my choice he received it; but, alas! if you have changed towards him, I have not done so.” “Do not speak thus,” replied the queen; “it makes me blush for shame and vexation. Think of the honour my son is doing you, and the gratitude you owe him.” Ismene answered not a word, but let her head fall gently on her breast as she plunged again into her former reverie.

Marcassin ‘as much distressed at seeing the aversion in which his wife held him. There were, indeed, moments when he wished his marriage had not taken place, when he even wished to dissolve it on the spot, but his heart refused con sent to any such renunciation. The ball opened. Ismene’s sisters shone in splendour. Little did they care for her sorrows in their delight at the brilliant position which the alliance gave them. The bride danced with Marcassin; and really it was frightful to see his face, and still more so to be his wife. The whole court was so sad that it was impossible to counterfeit joy. The ball did not last long. The princess was conducted to her apartment; and after the ceremony of disrobing, the queen withdrew. Marcassin, the impatient lover, retired to bed with much speed. Ismene said she wished to write a letter, and entering her inner chamber she shut the door, though Marcassin cried out to her to write quickly, and that this was hardly an hour at which to begin correspondence.

Alas! on entering this inner chamber, what was the sight that fell suddenly on Ismene’s eyes? There was the unhappy Coridon, who had bribed one of her women to open the door of the secret stair by which he entered. In his hand was a dagger. “Think not, my charming princess,” he said, “that I am come to reproach you for forsaking me. When we first plighted troth you swore that your heart would never change; nevertheless you have consented to leave me, and I blame the gods more than I do you. But neither you nor the gods can make me bear so great a sorrow. Losing you, princess, there is nothing left me but to die.” Hardly had he uttered these words before he plunged the dagger in his heart.

Ismene had no time to answer him. “You die, dear Coridon!” she cried in sore grief. “Then have I nothing left to care for in the world! Its splendours would be hateful to me; the light of day would be insupportable.” She said no more, but plunging the same dagger into her bosom which smoked still with the blood of Coridon, she fell lifeless to the ground.

Marcassin was waiting too impatiently for the fair Ismene not to be aware that she delayed her return. He called her as loud as he could, but there came no answer. He became very angry. Rising and putting on his dressing-gown, he ran to the cabinet door and had it forced. He was the first to enter. Alas! what was his astonishment to find Ismene and Coridon in such a terrible condition! He was like to die of grief and rage. Mingled feelings, now of love, now of hate, maddened him. He adored Ismene, but he knew that she had only killed herself in order to put a sudden end to the union they had just contracted. They ran to the king and queen with the news of what had happened in the prince’s apartment. The whole palace rang with laments, for Ismene was beloved and Coridon held in high esteem. The king did not rise; he could not enter with such tenderness as the queen into Marcassin’s adventures, and left to her the care of consoling him.

She made Marcassin go to bed. She mingled her tears with his, and when he let her have an Opportunity of speaking, and ceased his laments for a moment, she tried to make him see that he was fortunate in being free of one who would never have loved him, and whose heart was already filled with a strong affection that to kill a great passion was well-nigh impossible, and that she was persuaded he ought to think himself fortunate in her loss. “What matter “he cried. “I wished to have her for my own, even had she been unfaithful to me. I cannot say she sought to deceive me by feigned caresses; she always showed her horror for me. It is I that have caused her death, and what have I not to reproach myself with on this head?” The queen saw that he was in such deep trouble that she left him with those persons who pleased him most, and withdrew to her own room.

In bed she called to mind all that had happened since the dream in which she had seen the three fairies. “What harm did I do to them,” she said, “to make them send such bitter griefs to afflict me? I was hoping for an amiable and charming son; they made him like a wild boar. He is a monstrosity. Poor Ismene preferred to kill herself rather than live with him. The king has never had a happy moment since this unfortunate prince was born; and as for me, I am overpowered with sadness every time I see him.”

While she was speaking thus to herself she saw a great light in her room, and near her bed she recognised the fairy who had come out of the trunk of a tree in the wood. The fairy said to her: “O queen! why will you not believe me? Did I not assure you that your Marcassin would bring you much satisfaction Have you not faith in my sincerity?” “Ah! who could believe?” said the queen. “Nothing have I seen as yet answering in the least degree to your words. Why did you not leave me for the rest of my life without an heir rather than give me one like him?” “We are three sisters,” answered the fairy. “Two of us are good; the other one nearly always spoils the good we do. It was she you saw laughing while you slept. Without us your troubles would last even longer, but they will have an end.” “Alas! it will be by my death or Marcassin's," said the queen. "I may not tell you," replied the fairy. "I am only allowed to bring you the comfort of some hope." Then she vanished. In the room a pleasant fragrance lingered, and the queen flattered herself that a change for the better was to come.

Marcassin went into deep mourning; he passed many days shut up in his chamber, and covered many a page with the record of his keen regrets for the loss he had sustained. He even desired that these verses should be carved on the tombstone of his wife: —

O FATE UNYIELDING, harsh decree,
That banished Ismene everlastingly!
Veiled are her eyes in the eternal night,
Her eyes that were our light.
O fate unyielding, harsh decree,
That banished Ismene everlastingly!

EVERYBODY WAS ASTONISHED at his remembering so tenderly one who had shown so much aversion for him. But gradually he began to frequent the society of ladies, and was struck with the charms of Zelonide, Ismene's sister, who was no less charming than she had been, and who bore a great resemblance to her. This resemblance pleased him. When he talked to her he found her full of wit and vivacity. It seemed to him that if anything could console him for the loss of Ismene it would be young Zelonide. She did him many kind nesses, for it never entered her mind that he wished to marry her. Nevertheless he was determined to do so. And one day when the queen was alone in her own apartment, he betook himself there with a livelier air than usual. "Madam,' said he, "I have come to ask a favour of you, and at the same time to beg of you not to dissuade me from what is in my mind; for nothing in the world could quench the desire I feel to marry again. Give me your hand upon it, I pray you. It is Zelonide I wish to marry; speak to the king, so that the matter may be arranged without delay.” “Ah! my son,” said the queen, “what have you then determined on? Have you already forgotten Ismene’s despair and her tragic death? How can you hope that her sister will love you better? Are you more lovable than you were, less of a wild boar, less hideous? Be reasonable, my son; do not expose yourself anew every day. Fashioned as you are, it would become you to be retiring.” “I agree with you, madam,” replied Marcassin; “that is why I wish for a companion. The owls and the toads and the serpents find mates. Am I then inferior to vile beasts? But you are bent on vexing me. Surely a wild boar is worth more than any of those I have named.”

“Alas, dear child,” said the queen, “the gods will testify to the love I bear you, and to the sorrow with which I am overwhelmed when I look on you. When I set forth all these reasons it is not because I am bent on vexing you. When you have a wife I hope she may love you as much as I do; but there is a difference between the feelings of a wife and those of a mother.”

“My mind is made up,” said Marcassin. “I beg you, madam, to speak to day to the king and to Zelonide’s mother, so that my marriage may take place as soon as possible.” The queen promised, but when she talked to the king of the matter he told her that in respect of her son she was contemptibly weak, and that most certainly still further catastrophes would happen from so unsuitable a marriage. Although the queen was as much persuaded of the truth of this as he was, she did not therefore yield, being desirous of keeping the promise she had given to her son. She accordingly pressed the king so sorely that, wearied of the matter, he told her she might do what she wished, but that if trouble came of it she could only blame her own weakness.

On going back to her own room the queen found Marcassin there awaiting her with the greatest impatience. She told him he might declare his affection to Zelonide, the king having given his consent provided she gave hers, for he did not want the authority with which he was clothed to bring misfortune. “I assure you, madam,” said Marcassin, with a swaggering air, “you are the only person that thinks so meanly of me. Every one else praises me, and points to a thousand good qualities which I possess.” “Courtiers always do so,” said the queen, “and princes are always treated in that fashion. The former do nothing but sing praises, the latter hear nothing but praises sung. How is it possible ever to know one’s faults in such a labyrinth? Ah! how happy might the great be if they had friends more attached to their persons than their fortunes.” “I am not sure, madam,” rejoined Marcassin, “that they would be pleased to hear unpleasant truths. Nobody likes these, no matter to what condition of life they belong. Why, for instance, do you always insist that there is no difference between a wild boar and me, that I inspire terror, and that I should go and hide myself? Have I no obligation towards those who bring me solace, who tell me flattering untruths, and who hide the faults you are so anxious to point out?”

“Oh, well-spring of vanity!” cried the queen, “we find you wherever we turn our eyes! Yes, my son, you are fair and handsome; I advise you to continue your gifts to those who tell you so.” “Madam,” said Marcassin, “I am well enough aware of my misfortunes. I am perhaps more keenly aware of them than any one else is, but it does not rest in my hands to add an inch to my stature, nor to straighten my figure, nor to exchange my boar’s head for a man’s with flowing locks. I am willing to be taken to task for ill-temper, impatience, or avarice — in fact, for any defect that can be remedied. But as for my person, you must own, surely, that I am to be pitied and not blamed.” Seeing that he was growing angry, the queen told him that since he was so resolved to marry, he might see Zelonide, and come to terms with her.

He was too eager to bring this conversation to an end to stop longer with his mother. Hastening to Zelonide, he entered her room unceremoniously, and finding her in the inner room, he kissed her, saying "Little sister, I bring news which I cannot think will be displeasing to you. I am desirous that you should marry." "My lord," she said, "if I marry by your direction I am content." "The bridegroom in question," he replied, "is one of the greatest princes in the kingdom, but he is not handsome." "What matter?" said she. "My mother is so cruel that I shall only be too glad to change my condition." "He whom I speak of," added the prince, "is very much like me." Zelonide looked at him fixedly, and with astonishment in her eyes. "You do not answer, little sister," he said; "is it joy or grief that makes you silent?" "I do not call to mind, my lord," she replied, "having seen any one at the court like you." "What!" he said, "you cannot guess that I mean myself? Yes, dear child, I love you, and I am come to offer to share my heart and my crown with you." "Ye gods! what do I hear?" cried Zelonide, in grief. "What do you hear, ungrateful one?" said Marcassin. "You hear what should give you more satisfaction than anything else in the world. Can you ever otherwise hope to be a queen? I am gracious enough to cast my eyes on you. Strive to merit my love, and do not imitate the follies of Ismene.' "No," she said, "do not fear that I shall take my life as she did. But, my lord, there are so many persons more amiable and more ambitious than I am. Why do you not choose some one who would appreciate better the honour you destine for me? I confess to you that my only desire is for a quiet and retired life. Let me arrange my own lot." "You hardly deserve that I should raise you to the throne by violence," he cried, "but a fatal impulse which is beyond my understanding urges me to marry you." Zelonide's only answer was her tears.

He left her full of sadness, and went to seek his mother-in-law to tell her of his intentions, in order that she might persuade Zelonide to do what he desired with a good grace. He told her of the interview that he had just had with her, and the repugnance she had shown for this marriage which was to make her for tune and that of all her house. The ambitious mother knew well enough the advantages she might derive from it; and when Ismene had killed herself she was much more distressed on account of her own interest than because of any tenderness she had for her. She was beyond measure delighted that this loath some Marcassin wished to form a new alliance with her family. She threw her self at his feet; she embraced him, and thanked him a thousand times for an honour which affected her so deeply. She assured him that Zelonide would be obedient, or if not she would plunge a dagger in her eyes. “I must confess,” said Marcassin, “that it grieves me to do violence to her; but if I wait till hearts are thrust on me I may wait for the rest of my life. All the beauties think me hideous — yet, nevertheless, I have made up my mind to wed a lovely maiden.” “You are right, my lord,” replied the wicked old woman. “You must have your own way. If they are not pleased, it is only because they do not know what is to their real advantage.”

So strongly did she uphold Marcassin that he told her that the matter was now therefore fully arranged, and that he would turn a deaf ear to the weeping and beseeching of Zelonide. Going home he selected his most magnificent possessions and sent them to his mistress. As her mother was by when they brought her the golden baskets full of jewels, she did not dare refuse them, but she showed the utmost indifference to all they brought her except to a dagger with a handle set in diamonds. She took it in her hand several times, and put it in her girdle, for the ladies of that country were in the habit of carrying them.

Then she said: “I am mistaken if this is not the same dagger that pierced the bosom of my poor sister”. “We do not know if that be so, madam,” said they to whom she spoke, “but if you think it is, you should never look at it.” “On the contrary,” she answered, “I admire her courage. Happy is she who is brave enough to do likewise!” “Ah my sister,” cried Marthesie, “what fatal thoughts are passing through your mind? Do you wish to die?” “No,” replied Zelonide, firmly. “The altar is not worthy of such a victim, but I take the gods to witness that . . .”She could say no more, for her tears choked her laments and her words.

The amorous Marcassin, on being told how Zelonide had received his gift, was so very angry that he was on the point of breaking off the marriage, never to see her in his life again. But whether from love or from pride, he could not bring his mind to do so, and determined to follow out his first intention with the greatest possible speed. The king and the queen gave him the charge of arranging for the great feast. He ordered it on a magnificent scale; yet there was always in whatever he did a certain smack of the wild boar, which was very extraordinary. The ceremony took place in a vast forest, where tables were placed loaded with venison for all the fierce and savage beasts that might want to come and eat, so that they might share in the feast.

It was here that Zelonide, being conducted hither by her mother and sister, found the king, the queen, their wild-boar son, and all the court, under the thick dark foliage, and here the newly-wedded pair swore to each other eternal love. Marcassin would not have found it difficult to keep his word. As to Zelonide, it was easy to see she obeyed with the greatest unwillingness, though she was able to control herself and partly hide her displeasure. The prince, who liked to look at the hopeful side, thought she was yielding to the force of necessity, and that she would only think henceforth how to please him. This idea made him quite good-tempered again. And when the ball was about to begin he hastened to disguise himself as an astrologer with a long robe. Two court ladies only were of the masquerade besides. He wished all of them to be so much alike that it would be impossible to distinguish them, and it was no easy task to make such well-favoured ladies resemble a hideous pig like him.

One of these ladies was the confidant of Zelonide, and Marcassin was not ignorant of this. It was only out of curiosity that he planned the disguise. After they had danced a very short “entree de ballet,” for nothing was more fatiguing to the prince, he went up to his new bride, and, making certain signs, pointed to one of the masked astrologers, which made Zelonide think it was her friend who was by her side, and that she was pointing to Marcassin. “Alas!” she said, “I know it only too well. There is that monster whom the gods in their anger have given me for a husband; but if you love me, we shall rid the earth of him this night.” Marcassin understood from her words that she referred to some plot which very nearly concerned him. He whispered low to Zelonide: “I will dare all to serve you “. “Hold then,” she answered. “Here is a dagger he sent me. You must hide it in my room and help me to kill him.” Marcassin said little in reply, for fear she should recognise the jargon he talked, which was somewhat extraordinary. He took the dagger quietly and left her for a moment.

Afterwards he returned without a mask, presenting his compliments to her, which she received with rather an embarrassed air, for she was turning over in her mind the plan for his ruin; and at that moment he was hardly less anxious than herself. “Is it possible,” said he to himself, “that any one so young and beautiful should be so wicked? What have I done to her that she should kill me? True, I am not handsome. I eat in a barbarous fashion. I have some faults, but who has not? With the face of a beast, I am yet a man! How many beasts are there with human faces! Is not this Zelonide, whom I thought so charming, a tigress, a lioness? Ah! how little trust is to he put in appearances!” All this he was muttering between his teeth when she asked him what was the matter. “You are sad, Marcassin. Are you not regretting the honour you have done me?” “No,” said he; “I do not change easily. I was thinking of a means of closing the ball before long. I am sleepy.

The princess was delighted to see him drowsy, thinking that she would have less trouble in carrying out her project. The festival ended, Marcassin and his wife were borne away in a stately chariot. The whole palace was lit with lamps in the shape of little pigs, and there was much ceremony in conducting the wild boar and his bride to their apartment. She had no doubt but that her confidant was behind the tapestry, so she went to bed with a silken cord below her pillow. With this she meant to revenge the death of Ismene and the wrong they had done herself in forcing her to a marriage so distasteful to her. Marcassin, profiting by the deep silence that reigned, made pretence of sleeping, and snored till all the furniture in the room shook. “You are asleep at last, you ugly pig!’ said Zelonide. “The time has come to take revenge on you for your fatal affection. You will die in the dark night.” Softly she rose, and ran to all the corners calling her friend; but, of course, she was not there, since Zelonide’s plan was quite unknown to her.

“Ungrateful friend!” she cried, in a low voice. “You abandon me. After giving me so absolute a promise you do not keep it; but my courage will stand me instead.” Having uttered these words, she passed the silken cord softly round Marcassin’s neck, who had only waited for that to spring on her. Two blows of his great tusks on her throat, and she died almost immediately.

Such a catastrophe could not take place without a great stir. Everybody ran and beheld with the utmost astonishment the dying Zelonide. They would have come to her assistance, but he placed himself between with a furious air. And when the queen whom they had gone to fetch arrived, he told her what had happened and what had forced him to extreme violence against the unhappy princess.

The queen could not help lamenting her. “I foresaw only too well the trouble inseparable from your alliance. Let it, at least, serve to cure you of this marriage frenzy by which you are possessed. We could not always be having a wedding-day end with a funeral ceremony.” Marcassin did not answer. He had fallen into a deep reverie. He went to bed but could not sleep, reflecting continually on his misfortunes. Secretly he reproached himself with the death of two of the loveliest beings in the world, and the passion he had for them would awake again ceaselessly to torment him.

“Unhappy wretch that I am!” he said to a young lord whom he loved. “I have never tasted happiness in the whole course of my life. If the throne I am to occupy is spoken of, every one says what a pity it will be to see so fair a realm in the possession of a monster. If I share my crown with a poor girl, instead of considering herself happy, she seeks the means of killing herself or me. If I seek solace from my father and mother they abhor me, and cast none but angry looks at me. What must I do in this despair that overwhelms me? I want to leave the court. I shall go to the deepest paths of the forest and lead the life which befits a wild boar of might and spirit. I shall never play the gallant any more. The animals will not reproach me for being uglier than they. It will be easy to be king over them, for I have reason to my share, which will serve me as a means of mastering them. I shall live more peacefully with them than I do now in a court over which I am destined to rule, and I shall not suffer the indignity of marrying a mate ‘ho stabs herself, or one that wants to strangle me. Ha! let us flee, let u flee to the woods; let us despise the crown they think I am not fit to wear.’

His friend at first wished to dissuade him from so extraordinary a resolution but he saw that he was so overpowered by his continual strokes of ill-luck that finally he pressed him no longer to remain; and one night when they had for gotten to keep guard round his palace, he made his escape without being seen, to the depths of the forest, where he began to lead the life of his wild-boar kindred.

The king and the queen could not help being touched by a flight which despair alone had driven him to. They sent out hunters to look for him; but how were they to recognise him? Two or three fierce boars were caught and brought home after much danger, but they made such ravage at the court that it was decided not to run any further risks. A general order was given that no more boars should be killed, for fear of meeting the prince.

Marcassin, when he went away, had promised his friend to write to him sometimes. He had taken writing materials with him; and from time to time they found a very illegible letter at the gate of the town, addressed to the young lord. This was a consolation to the queen, informing her as it did that her son still lived.

The mother of Ismene and Zelonide felt deeply the loss of her two daughters. All her magnificent dreams had vanished when they died. She had to bear the reproach of sacrificing them to her ambition, and the thought that only her threat had forced them to give their consent to marry Marcassin. The queen no longer looked on her so favourably as she had done. So she resolved to live in the country with Marthesie, her only daughter, who was much more beautiful than her sisters had been, and in whose gentle manners there was so much charm that no one could look on her with indifference. One day when this maiden was walking in the forest followed by two waiting women, not far from her mother's house, she saw all at once, about twenty paces off, a boar of an enormous size. Her attendants left her and fled. As for Marthesie, she was so terrified that she remained motionless as a statue unable to escape.

Marcassin, for it was he, knew her at once, and by the way she was trembling he saw that she was nearly dead of fright. He did not wish to terrify her more, so, stopping, he said: "Have no fear, Marthesie. I love you too well to do you any hurt. It rests only with you whether I do not serve you. You know what injuries I suffered at the hands of your sisters; a miserable return for my affection, though I must confess that I had deserved their hatred by my obstinacy in determining to have them against their will. Since I have lived in these forests I have learnt that nothing in the world demands more freedom than the heart. I see that all the animals are happy because they live without constraint. I did not know their maxims before. I know them now, and I feel that I should far rather die than enter on an enforced marriage. If the gods who are angry with me would at last be appeased, if they would make you think favourably of me, I confess, Marthesie, that I should be delighted to unite my fortunes to yours. But, alas! what am I saying? Would you come with a monster like me inside my cavern?”

While Marcassin was speaking Marthesie summoned up strength enough to answer him. “What, my lord!” she cried “is it possible that I see you in a condition so ill-becoming your birth? The queen, your mother, never lets a day pass without weeping for your griefs.” “My griefs!” said Marcassin, interrupting her. “Do not speak thus of my present condition. My lot is cast. It has hot been easy to makeup my mind to it, but it is done. Do not think, young Marthesie, that a brilliant court will always ensure our most lasting happiness. There are joys more entrancing, and I say again, you could make me know them if you were inclined to join me in this wild life.” “And why,” she asked, “will you not come back again to a place where you are still beloved?” “Still beloved?” cried he. “No, no, princes covered with disgrace are not beloved. Just as people look for no end of benefits which the great are not in a position to render, so princes are made responsible when evil fortune happens, and are hated more than other people.

“But why am I trifling in this way?” he cried. “If any of the bears or lions of my neighbourhood were to pass by and to hear me speak, I should be ruined. Make up your mind, therefore, to come without any other thought than that of passing your best days in the narrow retreat of an unfortunate monster, unfortunate no longer if he has you.” “Marcassin,” she said, “I have had till now no reason to love you. Without you I should still have two sisters who were clear to me. Let me have time before making up my mind to a course so extraordinary.” “You may be asking me for time,” he said, “only to betray me.” “I am not capable of that,” she answered; “and I assure you that from this moment no one will know I have seen you.” “Will you come back?” he asked. “Certainly,” she replied. “Ah! but your mother will forbid it. They will tell her you met a terrible boar. She will not be willing to let you run any further risk. Come then, Marthesie; come with me.” “Where will you take me?” she asked. “Into a deep grotto,” he answered. “A stream clearer than crystal runs slowly through it, its banks covered with moss and green grasses. A hundred echoes send back the plaints of love-stricken and forsaken shepherds. There shall we live together.” “Say rather,” she answered, “there shall I be devoured by one of your best friends. They will come to see you and find me, and my last moment will have come. Besides that, my mother, in despair at having lost me, will have me sought for everywhere. These woods are too near her house. I should be discovered.”

“Let us go wherever you like,” he said. “The preparations of a poor wild boar are soon made ready.” “No doubt,” she answered, “but mine are more troublesome. I want garments for every season, and ribbons and jewels.” “You want loads of trifles and useless things for your toilet! When one has intelligence and reason can one not raise oneself above those petty arrangements? Believe me, Marthesie, they will add nothing to your beauty, and I feel sure they will tarnish its brilliancy. Seek nothing for your complexion but the fresh clear water of the streams. Let your hair, with its curls and its exquisite colour, its texture finer than the spider’s web where the silly fly is caught, he your adornment. Your teeth are as white as pearls, and more regular. Be content with their brightness, and leave trinkets to those who are not so fair as you.”

“I am well pleased with all you say to me,” she answered, “but you will never be able to persuade me to bury myself in the depths of a cavern with only lizards and snails to bear me company. Would it not be better for you to come home with me to your father, the king? I promise you that they ‘ill give their consent to our marriage. I shall he delighted. And if you loved me would you not desire to make me happy and to place me in a lofty station?” “I love you, fair mistress,” he replied, “but you do not love me. It is ambition that would induce you to take me for a husband, and I have too much delicacy of feeling to reconcile myself to that sort of regard.”

“You are naturally inclined to think ill of our sex,” replied Marthesie; “but, my lord Marcassin, surely it is yet something that I promise to cherish a sincere friendship for you. Think of this. You will see me again in a few days in this place.”

The prince took leave of her and withdrew into his dark grotto, much occupied with what she had said to him. His evil star had made him so hateful to those he loved that till to-day he had never been flattered by a gracious word. This made him much more sensible of Marthesie’s kindness. Striving for some means to express his love, the idea occurred to him of preparing a repast for her, and several lambs and roe-bucks felt the force of his carniverous tooth. Then he ranged them in his cavern, waiting for the moment when Marthesie would come to keep her appointment.

She, on her side, did not know how to decide. Had Marcassin been as handsome as he was hideous, had they loved each other as much as Astrea and Celadon did, it would have been all she could do to spend her best days thus in a terrible solitude, and then Marcassin would have had to be Celadon. However, she was not engaged. No one up till now had had the honour of pleasing her; and she was inclined to live with perfect willingness with the prince if he would hut leave the forest. She stole out to come and see him, and found him at the appointed meeting He had never failed to go there several times a-day for fear of missing the moment when she would come. As soon as he saw her he ran to her, crouching at her feet, to let her know that wild boars when they wish have most courteous forms of salutation.

Then they withdrew to a place apart, and Marcassin looking at her with his little eves full of fire and passion, said: “What may I hope from your tenderness?” “You may have great hopes,” she replied, “if you are of a mind to return to court, but I own to you that I do not feel capable of passing the rest of my life far away from all society.” “Ah,” said he, “it is because you do not love me. True, I am not lovable, but I am unhappy, and from pity and generosity you might do for me what for another you would do from inclination.” “And how do you know,” she answered, “that those feelings have no part in the friendship I have for you? Believe me, Marcassin, I am giving good proof of this in consenting to follow you to your father, the king.” “Come to my grotto,” said he, “and judge for yourself what you want me to leave for your sake.”

At this proposal she hesitated a little, fearing he might keep her against her will. Divining what was in her mind, he said: “Do not be afraid; I shall not seek my happiness by violent means”. Marthesie trusted his word. He led her to the farther end of the cavern, where she found all the animals he had slaughtered to regale her. This kind of butchery made her sick. At first she turned away her eyes, and after a moment she would have gone out, but Marcassin, putting on a masterful air and tone, said: “Lovely Marthesie, I am not so indifferent to you as to let you leave me. I take the gods to witness that you will ever reign in my heart. Insuperable difficulties prevent me from going back to my father, the king. Accept here my love and trust. Let this flowing stream, these evergreen vines, this rock, these woods and all that dwell therein, bear witness to our mutual oaths

She was not so desirous as he was of plighting troth; but she was shut into the grotto without any means of getting out. Why had she come in? Should she not have foreseen what would happen? She began to weep and to reproach Marcassin. “How can I trust your promises,” she asked, “since you break your first one?” “There must be,’ he said to her, with a wild-boar smile, “something human mingled with the animal in me. This breaking of my promise for which you blame me, this little trick by which I gained my end, these show the man in me, for, to speak frankly, there is more honour amongst animals than amongst men.” “Alas!” she answered, “you have the worst part of both — the heart of a man, and the face of a beast. Be then either the one or the other, and after that I shall make up my mind to what you desire.” “But, fair Marthesie,” he said, “would you wish to stay with me without being my wife? for you may take for granted that I shall not allow you to go out of here. Her tears and prayers were redoubled, hut he was not affected by them; and after a long struggle she consented to take him as a bridegroom, and assured him she would love him as fondly as if he were the most comely prince in the world.

He was delighted by her pleasant ways. He kissed her hand a thousand times, and assured her in his turn that she would not be so unhappy as she had reason to think. Then he asked her if she would eat of the animals he had killed. “No,” said she, “that is not according to my taste. If you could bring me some fruit I should like it.” When he went out he closed the entrance to the cavern so securely that it was impossible for Marthesie to run away. But she had made up her mind as to her lot, and she would not have escaped even had she been able to.

Marcassin loaded three hedgehogs with oranges, sweet limes, citrons, and other fruits. He goaded them by the prickles with which they are covered, and the load reached the grotto quite safely. He entered and begged Marthesie to partake. “Here is your wedding-feast: not like the feasts made for your two sisters, but I hope that the less magnificence there is the more enjoyment there will be.” “The gods grant it may be so,” she answered. Then taking some water in her hand she drank to the health of the wild boar, which filled him with delight.

The repast was as short as it was frugal. Being over, Marthesie gathered all the moss and grass and flowers that Marcassin brought her and made a bed of it, hard enough to be sure, on which she and the prince lay down. She was most careful to ask him if he liked his pillow high or low, if he had room enough, and on what side he slept best. The good Marcassin thanked her tenderly, and exclaimed from time to time: ‘‘I would not change my lot with that of the greatest men. At last I have found what I sought. I am beloved by her whom I love.” A hundred pretty things did he say to her, at which she was not astonished, for he was witty, but she rejoiced all the same that he was none the less so because of the solitude in which he lived.

Both fell asleep; but Marthesie, waking up, had the feeling that her bed was softer than when she lay down. Then touching Marcassin gently she found that his head was fashioned like a man's, that his hair was long, that he had arms and hands. She could not help wondering, but she fell asleep again, and when it was day she found that her husband was as much of a wild boar as ever.

They passed the next clay like the one before. Marthesie said nothing to her husband of what she had suspected during the night. The hour for retiring came. She touched his head while he was asleep, and again found the same change she had found before. Now she was really in trouble. She could hardly sleep at all; she was filled with continual anxiety, and was always sighing. Marcassin saw this with real despair. "You do no love me," he said, "my dear Marthesie. I am an unfortunate wretch whose face disgusts you. I shall die, and yours will be the fault." "Say rather, cruel wretch, that you will be the death of me," she replied. "The wrong you are doing me affects me so deeply that I cannot endure it." "I do you a wrong?" he cried. "I am cruel wretch? What do you mean? You certainly have no reason to complain." "Do you think I am ignorant that every night you give up your place to a man?" "Wild boars," he said, "and especially those like me, are not of such an easy disposition. Do not harbour a thought so offensive to both of us, dear Marthesie, for, be assured, I should be jealous of the gods themselves. But perhaps you imagine this absurdity in your sleep." Marthesie, ashamed at having spoken of a thing so improbable, replied that she had such faith in his words that, though she had reason to think she was awake when she was touching arms and hands and hair, she would refuse to believe her judgment, and would never again speak of the matter to him.

And in truth she cast aside all the suspicious thoughts that came to her. Six months passed away with little enjoyment on Marthesie’s side, for she never left the cavern in case she should meet her mother or the servants of her household. Since the poor mother had lost her daughter she never ceased lamenting. She made the woods resound with her griefs and with the name of Marthesie. At the sound of her voice, which fell well-nigh every day on her ears, she sighed in secret to cause so much pain to her mother and to be help less to console her; but Marcassin had given her due warning, and she feared him as much as she loved him.

As she was all gentleness, she continued to show great tenderness to the wild boar, who loved her too, in the most passionate way. Yet when she knew that the Marcassin race was to be perpetuated, her sorrow knew no bounds.

One night as she lay awake, weeping softly, she heard talking so near her that though the voices were low, not a word that was said escaped her. It was the good Marcassin, who was praying some one to be less cruel, and to give hull the permission he had long been asking. And the answer always came: “No, no: I will not”. Marthesie was more troubled than ever. “Can I enter this cavern?” she said. “My husband has not revealed this secret to me.” She had no desire to fall asleep again: she was too full of curiosity. The conversation ended, she heard the person who had been speaking to the prince go out of the cavern, and shortly afterwards Marcassin was snoring like a pig. Very soon she got up to see if it were easy to take away the stone that closed up the entrance to the grotto, but she could not move it. Coming hack softly, and without a light, she felt something under her feet, and discovered that it was a wild boar’s skin. She took it up and hid it, and waited in silence for the outcome of the affair.

The dawn had hardly appeared when Marcassin got up, and she heard him fumbling about on all sides. While he was searching anxiously the clay broke. She saw him so extraordinarily handsome and well made that never was any surprise more delightful than hers. “Ah!” she cried, “do not keep me in ignorance of my happiness any longer. I know it. I feel it deep down in my heart. Dear prince, by what good fortune have you become the handsomest of all men?” At first he was surprised at the discovery she had made, but composing himself, he said: “I am about to explain everything to you, dear Marthesie, and, at the same time, to confess that it is to you I owe this delightful metamorphosis.

“You must know that the queen, my mother, was asleep one day in the shade of some trees, when three fairies passed over her head. They recognised her and they stopped. The eldest one gave her a son who was to be witty and handsome. The second improved on this gift, adding in my favour no end of fine qualities. The youngest, with a burst of laughter, said: ‘We must vary this affair somewhat. Spring would not be so pleasant if winter did not come before. In order, therefore, that the prince, whom you desire should be charming, may appear more so, my gift to him is that he be a wild boar until he marry three wives, and till the third one find his wild boar’s skin.’ At these words the three fairies vanished. The queen had heard what the two first had said very distinctly, but as for the one who was injuring me, she was laughing so much that it was impossible to distinguish her words. It is only since our wedding-day that I have been aware of what I have just now told you. When I was going in search of you, thinking only of my passion, I stopped to drink at a stream that flows near my grotto. Whether it was clearer than usual, or whether I was looking at my reflection more attentively, because of my desire to please you, I felt myself to be so hideous that my eyes filled with tears. Without exaggeration, I shed enough to swell the current of the stream, and I said to myself it was impossible that I should please you.

“Desponding at this thought, I made up my mind to go no further. ‘I can not be happy,’ I said, ‘if I am not beloved, and I can never be loved by any reasonable creature.’ I was muttering these words when I saw a lady approach with a boldness that surprised me, for to those who do not know me I have a fearsome look. ‘Marcassin,’ she said, ‘the hour of your happiness draws near, provided that you marry Marthesie, and that she loves you as you are. Be assured that before long you will put off the guise of a wild boar. From your wedding-night even, you will doff that skin that is so hateful to you. But put it on again before daybreak, and say nothing to your wife. Be careful to prevent her knowing anything of it till the time of the great discovery shall arrive.’

“She told me,” he continued; “all I have already related to you about my mother, the queen. I thanked her very humbly for the good news she brought me, and went to seek you with feelings of mingled joy and hope such as I had never before experienced. And when I was so happy as to receive proofs of friendship from you my satisfaction increased in every way, and my impatience to share my secret with you was difficult to restrain. The fairy, who knew this, used to come at night and threaten me with the greatest misfortunes if I could not keep silent. ‘Ah, madam,’ I said to her, ‘you surely have never loved, else you would not oblige me to hide anything so delightful from her I love best in the whole world.’ She laughed at my distress, and told me not to grieve, for all would turn out well. Yet,” he added, “give me back my boar’s skin. I must put it on again, in case the fairies are angry.” “Whatever happens, dear prince,” said Marthesie, “I shall never change towards you. The charming picture of your metamorphosis will always rest with me.” “I feel assured,” he said, “that the fairies will not make us suffer long. They have charge of us. This bed which seems to you to be of moss is of excellent down and fine wool. It was they who placed all the fine fruits you have eaten at the entrance to the grotto.” Marthesie did not neglect to thank the fairies for so many favours.

While she was expressing her gratitude to them Marcassin was making the utmost efforts to get into the skin, but it had grown so small that it would not even cover one of his legs. He pulled it this way and that way with his teeth and his hands, but in vain. He was very sad and was lamenting his misfortune, for he feared with reason lest the fairy who had so effectually turned him into a wild boar should come and clothe him with the skin again for yet a long while. “Alas my dear Marthesie,” said he, “why did you hide this fatal skin? Perhaps it is to punish us for that I cannot use it as I did. If the fairies are angry, how can we pacify them?” Marthesie wept also. It was a very strange thing to weep for, that he could no longer be a wild boar.

At that moment the grotto shook; then the roof opened. They saw six distaffs fall, filled with silk, three of them white, and three black, and they all danced together. A voice came from them which said “If Marcassin and Marthesie can guess what these white and black distaffs mean they will be happy “. The prince pondered for a while, and then he said “I guess that the three white distaffs mean the three fairies who gave me gifts at my birth”. “And I,” said Marthesie, “guess that the three black ones signify my two sisters and Coridon.” At that moment the three fairies took the place of the white distaffs. Ismene, Zelonide, and Coridon appeared also. Never was anything so terrifying as this return from the other world. “We do not come from so far away as you think,” they said to Marthesie. “The watchful fairies have had the goodness to take care of us; and while you were weeping for our death, we were being led into a castle where no delight was wanting save your company.”

“What!” said Marcassin. “Did I not see Ismene and her lover lifeless, and did not Zelonide perish by my hand?” “No,” said the fairies. “A charm was on your eyes that we might deceive you as we wished. Every day that kind of thing occurs. Here a husband thinks his wife is at the ball with him, while she is lying asleep in bed; there a lover dotes on his fair mistress, while in truth she is as hideous as an ape; and again, another believes he has killed his enemy, who is living safely in another country.” “My mind is in a whirl of doubt,” said Prince Marcassin. “It would seem, from what you say', that one must not even believe what one sees." "The rule is not a general one," answered the fairies, "but it cannot be denied that one should suspend one's judgment about many things, and believe that some portion of Faërie may enter into what seems to us most certain."

The prince and his wife thanked the fairies for the lesson they had just received, and for preserving the lives of those who were so dear to them. "But," added Marthesie, throwing herself at their feet, "may I not hope that you will no more make my faithful Marcassin wear that hideous skin?" "We come to assure you of it," they said, "for it is time to return to the court." Immediately the grotto took the form of a magnificent tent, where the prince found several valets to dress him in gorgeous attire. There were attendants for Marthesie too, and a costume of exquisite work. Nothing was lacking for the adornment of her hair, and of her whole person. Then the dinner was served as a repast ordered by the fairies. What need to say more?

Never was there such perfect joy. All the grief Marcassin had suffered did not equal the pleasure of seeing himself not only a man, but a wondrous hand some one. After they had risen from table several magnificent carriages, to which the finest horses in the world were harnessed, came up at full speed. The ladies got into them with the rest of the little company, horse guards marching before and behind. And so did Marcassin return to the palace.

At the court they did not know where this splendid equipage came from. Still less did they know who was in it, till a herald published it in a loud voice, to the sound of trumpets and of kettle-drums. The whole people ran in great delight to meet their prince. Every one was charmed with him, and no one wished to doubt the reality of an event which seemed nevertheless almost incredible. The news was carried to the king and the queen, who came down at once to the courtyard. Prince Marcassin was so much like his father that it would have been difficult to mistake him. And no one did so.

And never was there more widespread delight. After some months this was still further increased by the birth of a son, in whose face and character there was not a trace of the wild boar.

24

THE DOLPHIN

There was once upon a time a king and a queen to whom heaven had given several children; but they loved them only so far as they were good and beautiful. Among the others was a young son called Alidor, whose figure, indeed, was passable, but who, nevertheless, was unbearably ugly. The king and the queen regarded him with much repugnance, and were always telling him to go out of their sight. And as he began to find that all the caresses were for others, and there was nothing but severity for him, he saw that the only thing left for him to do was to go away secretly. He carefully arranged his plans for leaving the kingdom without any one knowing where he was bound for, in hopes that fortune would treat him better in another country than in his own.

When the king and the queen found he had gone they did not know what to do. They considered that he would not appear in that splendour which befits a prince, and that unpleasant things might happen to him, which concerned them more on account of their own reputation than for his sake. They sent couriers after him with orders to bring him back at once, but he was so careful to choose the most out-of-the-way roads that they followed him in vain; and those who had been ordered to seek for him had not returned to the court before he was forgotten there. Every one knew too well how little the king and the queen cared for him to love him as they would have done a happy prince. Alidor was no longer spoken of. Besides, who was there to speak of him? Luck was against him; his kinsfolk hated him; and little thought was given to any merit he might have.

Alidor was just setting out to seek his fortune without knowing very well whither he wished to go, when he met a young man, handsome and well mounted, and who looked as if he were on a journey. They greeted each other and exchanged some courteous words, for a while speaking only of general matters. After some time the traveller learned from Alidor where he was going. “But you yourself,” he said, “will you tell me your destination?” “My lord,” he answered, “I am a squire in the service of the King of the Woods. I am sent to fetch some horses from a place not far from here.” “Is he a savage king?” said the prince. “You call him King of the Woods, and I picture him to myself as living there.” “His forefathers;’ said the squire, “probably lived as you say, but, as for him, he has a great court. The queen, his wife, is one of the loveliest ladies in the world, and their only daughter, Princess Livorette, is endowed with a thousand charms, which delight all who look on her. True, she is still so young that she is not aware of all the attentions paid her, but, nevertheless, no one can help paying homage to her.” “You make me very curious to see her,” said the prince, “and to spend some time in so delightful a court. But do they look on strangers with favour? I do not flatter myself. I know that nature has not blest me with a handsome face, but in compensation she has given one a good heart.” “A very rare possession,” said the traveller, “and I rate it much higher than the other. Everything is given its true value in our court, so you may go there perfectly certain of being favourably received.” Thereupon he gave him directions as to the road he should take to reach the Kingdom of the Woods, and as he was of an obliging disposition, and marked in his companion an air of nobility which not all his ugliness could mar, he gave him the address of some of his friends who would present him to the king and queen. The prince was much pleased with the courtesy shown him. It promised well for a country if such politeness were native to it, and, as he was only seeking for a spot where he might dwell unknown, he preferred to choose the one now suggested to him to any other. He even felt a particular leading of fortune urging him to choose it. After having taken leave of the traveller he went on his way, thinking at times of the Princess Livorette, in regard to whom he already felt the liveliest curiosity.

When he arrived at the court of the King of the Woods, the friends of his companion by the way received him hospitably, and the king gave him a hearty welcome. He was delighted at having left his own country, for though he was unknown, he could not but be gratified at all the marks of regard shown towards him. It is true things were far otherwise in the queen's apartment, where he had hardly entered before there burst out from all sides long peals of laughter. One lady hid her face so as not to look at him; another ran away. But most clearly of all did the young Livorette, to whom such an example of ill-manners was being given, let the prince see what she thought of his ugliness.

It seemed to him that a princess who laughed in this fashion at a stranger's defects was not very well-bred. Secretly he pitied her. "Alas!" he said, "this is how I was spoiled in my father's house. Princes, it must be confessed, are unfortunate, seeing how their faults are tolerated, Yes, now I understand the poison we drink deep draughts of every day. Should not this fair princess think shame to laugh at me? I come from a distance to pay my respects to her, and to attach myself to her court. It is open to me to journey farther and declare her good qualities or her bad ones. I was not born her subject, and nothing need bind my tongue save her civility. Yet hardly has she cast her eyes on me before she insults me with her mocking airs. But alas!" he went on looking at her with admiration, "how safe she is from evil words of mine! Never was anything so beautiful revealed to my sight. I admire her, I admire her only too much, and I know only too well that I shall do so all my life."

While he was making these sad reflections, the queen, who was of a kindly disposition, ordered him to come to her, and wishing to appease him she spoke pleasantly to him, asking about his country, his name, and his adventures, and to all her inquiries he replied like a man of intelligence, reads' with his answers. His character pleased her, and she told him that whenever he wished to pay his respects to her she would see him with pleasure. She even asked whether he played at any game, and told him to come and play basset with her. As his desire was to please, he made a point of being present when the queen played. He had plenty of money and jewels. In all his actions there was an air of nobility, which counted for not a little in the distinction he gained for himself. And though no one knew who he was, for he took great pains to conceal his birth, they judged of him none the less favourably. The princess was the only one who could not endure him. She burst out laughing in his face; she made faces at him, and was guilty of every trick which her age suggested to her, and which would not have mattered from any one else. But from her it was very different. He took it very seriously, and when he knew her a little better he uttered his complaints. "Don't you think, madam,'' he said, "that it is somewhat unjust to laugh at me? The same gods that made you the most beautiful princess in the world made me the ugliest of men, and I am their work as well as you." "I know it, Alidor," she said, "but you are the worst bit of work that ever came out of their hands." Thereupon she looked at him fixedly, without taking her eyes off him for a long time, and then she laughed enough to make herself ill.

The prince, who all this time was looking at her, drank long draughts of the poison love was preparing. "I must die," be said to himself, "since I cannot hope to please, and I cannot live without enjoying the favour of' Livorette." At last he grew so melancholy that everybody was sorry for him. The queen saw it, for he did not play as he used to. She asked him what was the matter, but could draw nothing more out of him than that he felt a strange langour, which he thought the change of climate had something to do with, and that he meant to go into the country often to take the air. The fact was, he could no longer bear to see the princess every day without hope. He believed he might be cured if he avoided her, but wherever he went his passion followed him. He sought out solitary places, and there he gave himself up to a profound reverie. The sea being near he used often to go fishing, but in vain did he cast his hook and his nets, for he caught nothing. On his return Livorette was nearly always at the window, and when she saw him coming she used to call out with a sly little air: “Well, Alidor, and have you brought me some nice fish for my supper?” “No, madam,” he answered, bowing low, and then passing sadly on. The beautiful princess laughed at him. “Oh, how stupid he is!” she said; “he can’t even catch a single sole.”

He was miserable at his want of luck and at being constantly laughed at by the princess, and he wanted very much to catch something worth offering to her. He used often to go out in a little sloop, taking with him various kinds of nets, and because of Livorette he took endless pains to do his best. “Am I not indeed unfortunate,” he said, “to find in this amusement a new disappointment? I was only seeking to forget the princess; and now she takes a fancy to eat the fish I catch, and fortune is so unkind as to refuse to let me gratify this desire.”

Full of sadness he sailed out into the sea further than he had ever done before, and, throwing out his nets in a determined fashion, he was suddenly aware they were so laden that he made haste to draw them back for fear of breaking them. When he had hauled the net on board he looked eagerly to see what was struggling inside it, and he found a fine dolphin, which he took up in his arms, delighted at his success. The dolphin tried hard to get away, struggled violently, and then feigned to be dead, so that Alidor might be put off his guard; but it was no use. “My poor dolphin,” said he, “do not torment yourself further. For a certainty I shall take you home to the princess, and you will have the honour of being served up this evening on her table.”

“You will be playing me a very bad turn,” said the dolphin. “What!” cried the prince, in astonishment, “you can speak! Just gods, what marvel is this!” “If you will be so good and generous as to let me free,” the dolphin went on, “I shall render you such real services in the course of my life that you will never need to repent of your kindness.” “And what will the princess have for her supper?” said Alidor. “Don’t you know the mocking tone she puts on with me? She calls me awkward, stupid, and a hundred other things, and for the sake of my reputation I am forced to sacrifice you.” “And so, because the princess sets up as a judge of the gentle art,” said the dolphin, “when you are not successful in your haul you think you have no honour and nobility left! Let me live, I pray you. Put back your most humble servant, the dolphin, in the water. There are good deeds whose reward follow hard on their steps.”

“Well, be off with you,” said the prince, thro the creature into the sea. “I expect neither good nor ill from you, but you seem to have a strong desire to live. Livorette may acid, if she will, still further insults to those she has already heaped on me. What does it matter? You are a remarkable animal, and I shall do as you wish.’

The dolphin disappeared from his sight, and at that moment the prince felt that all hope of success had vanished too. Sitting down in the boat, and drawing in the oars, which he placed under his feet, he folded his arms and gave himself up to a deep reverie, out of which he was awakened by a pleasant voice, which seemed to crisp the waves as it rose from the sea. “Alidor, Prince Alidor,” said the voice, “here is a friend.” Looking clown he saw the dolphin turning somersaults on the surface of the water. “Every one must have their turn, that is hut just,” said the dolphin. “Only a quarter of an hour ago you did me a great kindness. Now ask me to do you a service, and you will see what will happen.” “I ask but a small reward for a great service," said the prince. "Send me the best fish in the sea." No sooner said than done. Without casting a net there came bounding into the boat such a quantity of salmon, soles, turbots, oysters, and other shell fish, that Alidor had reason to fear on account of the overloading of the boat. "Stop, stop, my dear dolphin," he cried; "I am overwhelmed by all you are doing for me, but I fear lest your generosity may prove dangerous. Save me, for you see that the situation is serious."

The dolphin pushed the boat to shore, where the prince arrived with all his fish. Four mules could not have carried the amount, so he sat down, and was choosing out the best when he heard the dolphin's voice: "Alidor," it said, thrusting up its big head, "are you at all satisfied with what I have done for you?" "I could not be more so," he answered. "Oh, but you must know that I am also most grateful for your treatment of rue, and for your having saved my life. I have, therefore, come to tell you that every time you wish to command my services I shall be ready to obey you. I have more than one kind of power, and if you believe me you may have a proof of it." "Alas!" said the prince, "what should I wish for? I love a princess, and she hates me." "Do you want to love her no longer?" said the dolphin. "No," replied Alidor, "I could not make up my mind to that. Make it possible for me to please her, or let rue die." "Will you promise me," continued the dolphin, "never to have any other wife but only Livorette?" "Yes, I promise you," cried the prince. "I have sworn to be faithful to the love I bear to her, and nothing within my power shall ever be wanting on my part to give her pleasure." "We must practise a deception on her," said the dolphin, "for she does not wish to marry you, thinking you ugly, and not really knowing you." "I give my consent to such a deception," replied the prince, "though I have made up my mind that she can never give herself to any one like me." "Time might bring her to reason," said the dolphin, "but let me change you into a canary bird; you may put off the guise whenever you like." "You are master, dear dolphin," answered Alidor. "Well, then," continued the fish, "I desire that you be a canary!” And in that moment the prince saw himself with feathers, and birds’ claws, and a tiny beak; and he could whistle and sing admirably. Then, wishing himself Alidor again, he found he was the same as before.

Never was any one more joyful. Burning with impatience to be with the young princess, he called to his attendants, loaded them with the fish, and took the road to the town. Of course Livorette was on her balcony, calling out to him “Well, Alidor, have you had better luck this time?” “Yes, madam,” he said, showing her the great baskets filled with the finest fish in the world. “Oh!” she cried, pouting like a child, “I am quite sorry you have caught so many fish, for I shall never be able to laugh at you again.” “You will never want for a pretext, when you wish for one, madam,” he answered, and he went on his way, giving orders for all the fish to be sent to her. Then after a moment he took the form of a little canary, and flew on her window sill. As soon as she noticed the bird she came softly forward, holding out her hand to take hold of it, but it flew away from her into the air.

“I came from one of the ends of the earth,” it said, “where the fame of your beauty has reached. But, dear princess, it would not be fair that I should come on purpose such a distance and be treated like an ordinary canary. You must promise never to put me in a cage, to let me come and go, and to have no other prison than your sweet eyes.” “Ah, dear little bird “cried Livorette, “ask me whatever you like; I promise never to break one of the conditions you put on me, for there was never seen anything so pretty as you. You speak better than a parrot, and you whistle exquisitely. I love you so much — much that I am dying to have you for my own.” The canary flew down, and lighted on Livorette’s head, then on her finger, not only whistling airs, but singing words with the accuracy and in the style of the most skilful musician.

Fickle my nature is and light,
Yet is my chief desire to bide by thee;
No gates or bars prepare to stay my flight,
If love my gaoler be.
It is a service sweet, thy yoke to bear,
Since it is thine;
Happier my lot thy livery to wear,
Than were an empire mine!

"I am enchanted," she said to all the ladies, "by the gift that fortune has just sent me." She ran to her mother's room to show her beautiful canary. The queen would have given anything to hear it speak, but not a word would it say except for the princess, and it seemed to have no thought of pleasing any one else.

When night was come Livorette went to her room with the pretty bird, whom she called Bébé. When she began her toilette the canary perched on her mirror, taking the liberty to peck at her ear or her hands every now and again. This delighted her, and Alidor, who up till now had never known any pleasure in his life, felt supremely happy, and had no other desire to be ever anything else than Bébé the canary. True, he was sad to think that they left him in a room ‘here Livorette's dogs, monkeys, and parrots generally slept. "And so," he said, sorrowfully, "you think so little of me that you cast me off like this!" "It is not casting you off, dear Bébé," she answered, "to put you with what I like best." Then she went out, but the prince remained perched on the mirror. As soon as it was day he flew away to the sea-shore. "Dolphin, dear dolphin," he cried, "let me have a word or two with you. Do not refuse to listen to me." The friendly fish appeared, gravely riding on the water. When Bébé saw him he flew towards him and perched on his head.

"I know all you have done, and all you wish me to do," said the dolphin, "but I declare that you shall not enter Livorette's room till she is betrothed to you, and till the king and the queen have given their consent. After that I shall look upon you as her husband." The prince had so much regard for the fish that he did not insist, but thanked the dolphin a thousand times for the charming disguise he had procured for him, and begged that he would still remain his friend.

Coming back to the palace in his feathered shape, he found the princess in her dressing-gown. She had been searching for him everywhere, and, not having found him, she was now weeping bitterly. "Ah, you little traitor!" she said, "already you have left me! Did I not treat you well enough? Have I not petted you — given you biscuits and sugar and sweets?" "Yes, yes, my princess," said the canary, who was listening through a little hole, "you have shown me some kindness, but you have neglected me too. Do you think I am satisfied to sleep near your ugly cat? He would have eaten me fifty times if I had not taken the precaution to keep awake all night to save myself from his claws." Livorette, moved by his words, looked at him tenderly. Holding out her finger, she said "Come, come and be friends". "Oh! I don't make up so easily," he answered. "I wish the king and the queen to know of this." "Very well," said she, "I shall take you to their room."

She went at once to find them. They were still in bed, talking of an advantageous marriage which had been proposed for their daughter. "Well, dear child," said the queen, "what do you want this morning?" "I bring my little bird," she answered. "It wants to speak to you." "That is most important," said the queen, laughing. But are we in a condition to give a serious audience?" "Yes, your majesty," replied the canary. "Neither do I appear in your court with all the pomp that befits me, for, the fame of the beauty and the charms of the young princess having reached me, I set off speedily to beg you to give me her hand in marriage. Such as you see me, I am king of a little grove, where oranges and myrtles and honeysuckles grow, the most charming spot in all the Canary Isles. I have a great number of subjects of my own kind, who are forced to pay me a large tribute of flies and worms. The princess might eat her fill, and she would never want for music, for I have even amongst my kinsmen some nightingales that would sing their best for her. We should live here in your court as long as you liked. I only need, your majesty, a little millet, some rape-seed, and fresh water. When you give the word for us to retire to our own states, distance will be no bar to our receiving news of you, and sending you ours in return. We shall have flying couriers to serve us, and I think I may say without vanity that you will get a great deal of satisfaction from a son-in-law like me." He ended up by whistling two or three airs, and chirping pleasantly. The king and the queen laughed till they could laugh no longer. "We have no wish," said they, "to refuse Livorette to you. Yes, pretty canary bird, we give her to you, provided she consents." "With all my heart," she said. "I have never been so happy in my life as I am now to marry Prince Bébé. Thereupon he plucked one of the finest feathers from his tail and offered it to her as a wedding present. Livorette accepted it graciously, and stuck it in her hair, which was wonderfully beautiful.

When she went back to her own apartment she told her ladies-in-waiting that she had a great piece of news for them — that the king and the queen had just betrothed her to a reigning prince. On hearing this, one flew towards her and embraced her knees, another kissed her hands. They asked her with the utmost eagerness who the prince was to whom the most beautiful princess in all the world was to be given. "Here he is," said she, drawing out the little canary from the inside of her sleeve, and showing them her betrothed. At the sight of him they laughed heartily, and many a jest was made about the perfect innocence of their fair mistress.

Livorette made haste to dress and return to her mother's room, for the queen loved her so dearly that she always liked to have her near her. But the canary flew away, and assumed his ordinary shape as Alidor, that he might pay his court to the queen. “Come,” cried the queen when she saw him, “come and congratulate my daughter on her marriage with Bébé. Do you not think that we have found a fine lord for her?” Alidor entered into the spirit of the jest, and as he was gayer than he had ever been in his life he said a hundred pretty things. and the queen was much entertained. But Livorette continued to laugh at him, and contradicted every word he said to her. It would have made him very melancholy to see her in this mood if he had not remembered that his friend, the fish, was going to help him to overcome this aversion.

When the princess went to bed, she would have left her canary in the room with the animals, but he began to grumble, and, flying round her, followed her into her own, and perched himself neatly on a piece of porcelain, from which they dared not chase him for fear of breaking it. “If you begin to sing too early in the morning, Bébé,” said Livorette, “and waken me, I shall not forgive you.” He promised her to be quiet till she should order him to sing his little song, and with that assurance they retired for the night. Hardly was the princess in bed before she fell into so deep a sleep that there can be no doubt the dolphin had a hand in it. She snored even like a little pig, which is not natural in a child. But Bébé did not snore. To do so he would first have had to shut his eyes. Leaving the porcelain vase, he came and placed himself near his charming bride, so quietly that she did not wake. As soon as day had come he again took his canary shape, and flew away to the edge of the sea, where, as Alidor, he sat down on a little rock, the surface of which was smooth and covered with samphire. Then he looked all round to see if his dear friend, the dolphin, were near. He called him several times, and while he waited he was reflecting with pleasure on his happiness. “Oh, fairies,” he said, “whose praises we sing, and whose power is indeed so extraordinary, could your art make any other mortal as happy as I am?" This thought suggested to him the following words: —

Good friend, to whose staunch aid I owe
That the full bliss of love I know,
My perfect happiness in other's ear
I may not say.
For at my heart there gnaws the horrid fear
The jealous gods should wrest my love away.

When he was murmuring these words he felt the rock shaking violently. Then through an opening there came out a little old dwarf woman, leaning her tottering frame on a crutch. It was Grognette the fairy, who was no better than Grognon. "Really, my lord Alidor," she said, "I think you are taking a great liberty in seating yourself on my rock. I do not know what should hinder me from throwing you to the bottom of the sea just to teach you that, if the fairies cannot make a happier mortal than you, they can at least make an unhappy one whenever they like." "Madam," replied the prince, astonished at this adventure, "I did not know you lived here. I should certainly have been very careful not to fail in the respect due to your palace." "Excuses will avail you nothing," she continued. "You are ugly and presumptuous, and I want the pleasure of seeing you suffer." "Alas!" said he, "what have I done to you?" "I don't know," she answered, "but I shall treat you as if I did." "The dislike you bear to me is very extraordinary," said he, "and if I did not hope that the gods would protect me against you, I would anticipate the ills with which you threaten me by taking my own life." Grognette went on muttering threats, and then retired into her rock again, which closed up.

The prince, in deep distress, did not wish to sit down, having no desire for a fresh quarrel with an ill-omened dwarf. “I was too satisfied with my lot,” said he, “and now comes a little fury to trouble it. What harm will she do me? Ah, doubtless, it will not be on me that she will vent her anger. It will rather be on the fair lady whom I love. O dolphin, dolphin, I beg you to come and console me!” At that moment the fish appeared near the shore. “Well, what do you wish?” it said. “I was coming to thank you for all the kindnesses you have done me. I am now married to Livorette, and, in the ardour of my joy, I was hastening so that you might share it with me when a fairy…” “I know,” said the dolphin, interrupting him. “It was Grognette, the most malicious and strangest creature on earth. For any one to be happy is quite enough to displease her. But what annoys me most of all is that she has power, and that she means to oppose my plans for your good.” “What a strange creature!” replied Alidor; “how have I offended her?” “What, you a man, and wonder at human injustice! In truth, you men never think of justice. It would be all you could do were you fish, and even we in our kingdom of the seas are not too just. Every day we see the big ones swallowing up the little. It should not he endured, for the smallest herring has its right as a citizen of the water as much as a terrible whale.”

“If I interrupt you,” said the prince, “it is only to ask if I may never let Livorette know that I am her husband.” “Enjoy the time that is,” answered the dolphin, “without taking thought for the future.” And, having said these words, he disappeared below the water. The prince became a canary again, and flew to his dear princess, who was searching everywhere for him. “Will you always make me anxious in this way, you little runaway?” she said as soon as she saw him. “I fear lest you should be lost, and then I should die of sorrow.” “No, my Livorette,” he replied, “I shall never get lost, for your sake.” “Can you answer for it?” she continued. “Might they not lay snares and spread nets for you? Or, if you fell into the trap laid for you by some fair lady, how do I know you would return?” “Oh, what an unjust suspicion!” said he; “you do not know me.” “Forgive me, Bébé,” said she, smiling. “I have heard it said that little importance is attached to being loyal to a wife, and since I am yours I fear lest you should change.”

Conversations like these delighted the canary, for they showed him that he was loved. And yet he was so only as a little bird. At times a keen pang would shoot through his heart. “Is it justifiable, the trick I have played on her?” he said to the dolphin. “I know that the princess does not love me, that she thinks me ugly, and that none of my faults have escaped her. I have every reason to think that she would not wish me for a husband, and, nevertheless, I have become so. If she comes to know it one day, what reproaches will she not heap on me? What shall I say to her? I should die of sorrow if I were to displease her.” But the fish said to him: “Your reflections do not pull together with your love. If every lover were to make such, there would never any more be ladies carried off or disappointed. Enjoy the present time, for less happy days are in store for you.”

Alidor was very much troubled by this warning. He knew quite well that Grognette the fairy still had a grudge against him for having sat down on her rock when she was underneath. He prayed the dolphin still to help him as before.

There was a great deal of talk about the marriage of the princess with a handsome young prince whose states were not far away. Ambassadors came from him to ask for her hand, and received a cordial welcome from the king. This news was most alarming to Alidor, who, without delay, betook himself to the sea-shore, and, calling his good friend the fish, he told him what he feared. “Think,” said he, “how desperate is my situation! Either I must lose my wife and see her married to another, or declare my marriage and be separated from her for the remainder of my life.” “I have no power to prevent Grognette doing you an injury,” said the dolphin. “I am no less grieved than you are, and you yourself cannot be more occupied with your affairs than I am. Yet pluck up courage. I can tell you nothing more at present, but you may count on my goodwill as on something which will never fail you.” The prince thanked him with all his heart, and went back to the princess.

He found her in the midst of her women, one holding her head, and another her arm, while she was complaining of illness. As at that moment he was not in his canary guise he dared not go near her, though her illness made him very anxious. As soon as she saw him she smiled in spite of all she was suffering. “Alidor,” she said, I think I am going to die. It is a great grief to me now that the ambassadors have come, for I hear all kinds of good reports bf the prince who asks me to marry him.” “But, madam,” he replied, with a forced smile, “have you forgotten that you have chosen a husband?” “What, my canary?” said she. “Ha, ha! I know he will not be angry, though I love him tenderly all the same.” “To share your heart with another would perhaps not content him,” said Alidor. “Well, no matter,” added Livorette. “I shall be very pleased to be queen over a great kingdom.” “But, madam,” he went on, “he offered you one.” “Oh, what a fine kingdom I “she answered, “a little jasmine wood! That might do for a bee or a linnet — -but not for me.”

Her waiting-women, thinking that she was talking too much for her health, begged Alidor to withdraw. Then they made her lie down, and Bébé came and chided her gently for her want of faithfulness. As she was not very ill, she went to see the queen. But from that day there scarcely passed one in which she did not suffer. Her languor changed her appearance; and she grew thin and discontented. Months passed away in this fashion. They did not know what to do; and what more especially troubled the court was that the ambassadors who had come with the demand for her hand were urging her parents to give her into their charge. The queen heard of a very skilful physician who might be able to cure her. She sent an equipage for him, and forbade them to tell him the rank of the sick princess, so that he might speak out more freely. When he arrived the queen hid herself in order to listen. But he, seeing her, looked at her for a little and said with a smile: “Is it possible that your court doctors did not know what ailed this little lady? The fact is, before long she will bestow a fine boy on her family.” They did not give him time to finish what he was going to say. All the court ladies loaded him with reproaches, and taking him by the shoulders they pushed him out, hooting him loudly the while.

Bébé who was in Livorette’s room, did not, like the others, think that this country doctor was a fool. Several times it had occurred to him that the princess was to bear a child, and so he went to the sea-shore to consult his friend the fish, who seemed to be of the same opinion. “I advise you,” said he, “to go away; for I fear lest they should find you by her when she is asleep, and you would both be lost.” “Ah!” said the prince, mournfully, “do you think I can live apart from her who is clearer than all in the world? Why should I be careful of my life? The time is coming when it will be hateful to me. I must see Livorette, or die I” The dolphin felt pity for him, and shed some tears, though dolphins have not the habit of weeping, and he did what he could to console his dear friend. It was all Grognette’s doing without a doubt.

The queen related to the king the leech’s fancy. Livorette was called. To the questions they asked she answered with as much sincerity as innocence. They spoke even to her waiting-women, whose evidence was satisfactory in every way. So their majesties’ minds were set at rest till the day when the princess gave birth to the prettiest baby that ever was. How can we possibly describe the astonishment, the anger of the king, the grief of the queen, the anxiety of Alidor, the surprise of the ambassadors and of all the court? Where did the child come from? Who was its father? No one could tell, and young Livorette knew as little as the child itself. But the king treated the matter with the utmost seriousness. His daughter’s tears and vows were of no avail. He made up his mind to have her thrown along with her son from the top of a mountain into a precipice with jagged sides, where she would die a cruel death. He told the c of his intention, but she was so terribly distressed at the thought that she fell as if dead at his feet. He was touched by her sad condition, and when she had come to herself somewhat he tried to console her, hut she told him she would never know a moment of joy or of health till he had revoked so terrible an order. Throwing herself on her knees, the tears streaming dawn her cheeks, she begged him to kill her, and spare the lives of Livorette and her son. She had had the infant fetched on purpose that the king might he touched by his innocence. The lamentations of the queen, and the cries of the little child, moved him with compassion. Throwing himself into an armchair, he covered his face with his hands, and pondered and sighed for long before he could utter a word. At last he said to the queen that for her sake he was willing to put off the death of the princess and her son, but that she must understand it was only deferred; that nothing but blood could wash away a stain so shameful to their house. The queen thought that much had already been gained in getting the death of her dear daughter and her grandson deferred: so she made no further stipulations, and gave her consent to the princess being shut up in a tower, where the light of the sun did not even come to gladden her eyes. In that sad place she was left to mourn her cruel fate. If anything could have comforted her in her sorrows it would have been her perfect innocence. She never saw her child, and was given no news of it. “Just heaven!” she cried, “what have I done to be overwhelmed with such bitter griefs?”

Alidor, in deepest sorrow, was at the end of his powers of endurance. Gradually his mind gave way, and at last he went mad altogether. His moans and cries were heard ceaselessly in the woods. He would throw away money and jewels on the road. His clothes were in lags, his hair in tangles, his beard unshaven; and all this, added to his natural ugliness, made him almost horrible to look on. Every one pitied him greatly, and would have done so even more had not the princess’s misfortune filled the minds of everybody in the land. The ambassadors who had come to ask her in marriage heartily wished them selves at home again, for they were, in a manner, ashamed at having come for her. The king, for his part, saw them go willingly enough, for their presence was a grief to him. And as for the dolphin, hidden in the depths of the sea, he appeared no more, leaving the field free to Grognette the fairy to do all the harm she could to the prince and the princess.

Although the little prince grew lovelier than a sunny day, the king had only preserved his life that he might be the means of proving who was his father. He said nothing to the queen; but one day he announced that all the courtiers should bring a gift to rejoice the heart of his grandson. They all obeyed; and, when the king was told that a large number were assembled, he led the queen into the great audience-chamber. They were followed by the nurse carrying in her arms the lovely child clad in brocade of gold and silver. They each came forward to kiss his little hand, and to give him, one a jewelled rose, one artificial fruits, another a golden lion, an agate wolf, an ivory horse, a spaniel, a parrot, a butterfly. He accepted everything with indifference. The king, apparently quite careless, was nevertheless watching what the child was doing. He noticed that he did not show any affection to one more than to the other. He gave orders for a further announcement: that if any one failed to come he would be judged guilty and punished as such. At these threats there was greater haste than ever; and the king's squire, who had met Alidor on his travels and who was the cause of his having come to the court, finding him in the depths of a cave, in which he generally hid himself since his reason had gone, called to him: "Come, Alidor, do you wish to be the only one to give nothing to the little prince? Have you not heard the proclamation? Do you wish the king to sentence you to death?" "Yes, then, I do," replied the poor prince, with a wandering look. "Why should you come and disturb my peace?" "Do not be angry," said the squire; "I only speak for the purpose of urging you to make an appearance." "Yes; I am most becomingly dressed," said Alidor, laughing, "for paying a visit to the royal monkey!” “If it is only a question of providing you with clothes,” said the squire, “I can furnish you with very fine ones.” “Very well,” said the other; “it is long since I have seen myself in stately apparel.”

He came out of the cave and betook himself quietly enough to the squire’s house; who, being one of the grandest courtiers, gave him a choice of several magnificent dresses. But he would only wear a black one, and in spite of all remonstrances went without cravat, or hat, or shoes. Till he had reached the door he forgot about the gift to be presented to the prince; but he did not trouble himself long about the matter. Seeing a pin lying on the ground he picked it up to serve as his gift, and went hopping into the hall, rolling his eyes, and hanging out his tongue in such a way that, added to his natural ugliness, one could hardly bear to look at him. The nurse, fearing lest the little prince should be terrified, would have turned his face the other way, and signed to Alidor to go away; but as soon as the child saw him he held out his arms, laughing, and showing such extraordinary delight that Alidor had to be brought to him. Then the child threw his arms round his neck, kissed him again and again, and refused to be taken away from him. And Alidor, in spite of his madness, was no less tender towards the child.

The king stood transfixed with astonishment at this most strange event. He hid his anger from the assembly, but as soon as the audience was ended, without saying a word to the queen, he gave commands to two lords, whom he honoured with especial confidence, to go and fetch the Princess Livorette from the tower in which she had been languishing for four years, and to put her into a barrel along with Alidor and the little prince, to provide them with a pot of milk, a bottle of wine and a loaf, and to fling them to the bottom of the sea.

The lords, horrified at receiving so cruel an order, fell at his feet and humbly begged him to spare his daughter and his grandson. “Alas, sire!” said they, “if your majesty had but allowed yourself to know what she has suffered for four years past, you would think she had been sufficiently punished, without now adding so cruel a death. Consider, she is your only daughter, intended by the gods to wear your crown one day. You are accountable for her life to your subjects. There is great promise in her son. Will you cut him off in his infancy?” “Yes, I will,” said the king, wrathful at the resistance shown to his command, “and if you do not carry out my orders you will die along with her.”

The courtiers knew with sorrow that their struggles against the king’s determination were in vain, so they withdrew with downcast heads and tears in their eyes. They gave orders that a barrel large enough to contain the princess, her son, and Alidor, and the little supply of provisions, should be procured. Then, repairing to the tower, they found her lying on some straw, with irons on her feet and hands. For four years she had not seen the light of day. With profound respect did they greet her, telling her the command they had received from her father. So loud was her sobbing that she could hardly hear what they said. And yet she well understood their message, and mingled her tears with theirs. “Alas!” she said, “the gods are witnesses of my innocence. I am only sixteen years old. I was destined to wear more crowns than one, and now you are going to cast me to the bottom of the sea like the guiltiest of creatures. But do not think I am seeking to corrupt your fidelity or begging you to find some pretext by which my life may be saved. For many a day the king has accustomed me to long for death. I would willingly die could my poor child be saved. What crime is he guilty of? Is not his innocence enough to save him from the fury of the king? Is it possible he is doomed to perish with me? Is it not enough for my father to take my life? Does one victim not satisfy him?”

The lords who were listening to her could not say a word in reply. They could only obey, they said to the princess. “Well,” she answered, “break the chains that bind me; I am ready to follow you.” The guards came. They filed off the irons with which her hands and feet were loaded, causing her a great deal of pain the while, but she bore all with wonderful patience. She went out of the prison lovely as the sunbeam from the bosom of the wave, and all who saw her wondered no less at her courage than at her bewitching beauty, which, in spite of all her sorrows, was greater than ever, her languid air becoming her no less than her former vivacity.

Alidor and the little prince were waiting at the sea-shore, where they had been brought by the guards, the one knowing just as little as the other what was to be done to them. When the princess saw her son she took him in her arms, kissing him a thousand times with the utmost tenderness. When she was told that it was on account of Alidor she was to be drowned, she said she was very glad they had named the man whom she cared for least in the whole world, and that while preparing her destruction they were none the less justifying her. Alidor began laughing as soon as he saw her. "Ha, little princess, where do you come from?" he said. "We have had fine doings since you left. Livorette is no longer at the palace, and I have been raving mad. They say," he went on, "we are to voyage together to the bottom of the sea. Listen, princess: you must wake me every morning, for I shall sleep till mid-day if you don't take care."

And he would have said more had not Livorette, as with a last effort, entered the first into the barrel, clasping her son in her arms. Alidor threw him self headlong in, leaping for joy at being on his way to the kingdom of the soles, where the turbot is king, and uttering a stream of nonsense. Then they closed up the barrel, and from the top of a rock that jutted into the sea they threw it down. All the spectators were sobbing and uttering long cries of despair, and as they withdrew their hearts were full of deepest sadness. As for Alidor, he was wonderfully calm. The first thing he did was to seize the loaf and eat the whole of it. Then he found the bottle of wine, and began to drink it in a cheerful way, singing songs just as if he had been present at some merry feast. "Alidor," said the princess, "leave me at least to die in peace, and do not daze me with your mistimed joy." "What harm have I done you, princess," he asked, "that you should wish me to be sad? Do you know I have a secret to tell you? Somewhere here about, where exactly I do not know, there is a certain fish called a dolphin. He is my best friend, and has promised to obey me when ever I command. That is why, my beautiful Livorette, I am not uneasy, for I shall call to him to help us as soon as we are either hungry or thirsty, or whenever we feel we should like to sleep in some superb palace. He will build one expressly for us." "Call him then, you silly," said the princess. "Why do you put off what cannot brook delay? If you wait till I am hungry you will wait a long time. Alas! my heart is too sad for me to think of food. But my son here is dying. He will be suffocated in this vile barrel. Make haste then, I beg of you, so that I may see if you are telling the truth, for a madman like you may well be deceived."

Alidor immediately called the dolphin. "Dolphin, my fishy friend, come here at once, I command you, and do all that I tell you." "Here I am," said the dolphin; "speak." "Are you there?" asked the prince. "This barrel is so well closed that I cannot see." "Only say what you desire," said the dolphin. "I should like to listen to beautiful music," Alidor replied, and at that moment the music began. "What!" said the princess with impatience, "are you laughing at me with your music? Isn't it rather a useless thing to hear fine music when you are drowning?" "But, princess, you were neither hungry nor thirsty. What do you wish for?" "Give me your power of commanding the dolphin," she answered. "Dolphin, dolphin," cried Alidor, "I command you to do all that Princess Livorette desires, without failing in one particular." "Very well," said the dolphin, "I shall do so." And without a moment's delay she told him to bear them away to the loveliest island in the world, and to build on it the finest palace that ever was seen, with exquisite gardens, surrounded by streams, one full of wine and another of water, with a garden full of flowers and a tree in the middle, whose stem should be silver and its branches gold, with three oranges growing on it, one of diamond, another of ruby, and a third of emerald. The palace was to be painted and gilded, and all her story represented on its walls. "Is that all?"

said the dolphin. “It is a good deal,” she answered. “Not very much,” he replied, “seeing that it is done already.” “Well, then, I wish you,” she said, “to tell me one thing I do not know and which perhaps you do.” “I understand,” said the dolphin. “You want to know who is the father of your little prince. It is Bébé the canary, and Bébé is none other than Prince Alidor who is with you.” “Ah, my lord Dolphin!” cried Livorette, “you are laughing at me.” “I swear,” said he, “by Neptune’s trident, by Scylla and Charybdis, by all the caverns of the sea, by its shells, by its treasures, by its tritons, by its naiads, by the happy omens that the pilot draws at sight of me. Lastly, I swear by your self, dear Livorette, that I am true and honourable, and that I do not lie.” “After so many oaths,” she said, “I cannot but believe you, though, to tell the truth, what I have just heard is one of the most astonishing things in the world. I order you then to restore Alidor to reason, to give him all the intelligence possible, and to endow his conversation with charm. Let him be a hundred times handsomer than he was ugly, and tell me why you called him prince, for that title sounds pleasantly in my ears.” The dolphin obeyed in these particulars as he had done before. He told Livorette the prince’s adventures, who was his father, who was his mother, and all about his ancestors and kinsfolk; for he had absolute knowledge of the past, the present, and the future, and was as good as a professional genealogist. Such fish are not to be found every day. Dame Fortune has her say in the making of them.

While they were talking, the barrel struck on an island. The dolphin, having raised it gradually, threw it on the shore; and as soon as it was there it opened. The princess, the prince, and the child were at liberty to come out of their prison. The first thing that Alidor did was to cast himself at Livorette’s feet. He had quite recovered his reason, and his wit was ever so much brighter than it had been before. He had grown so handsome: all his features were so much changed for the better that she hardly recognised him. With the utmost gentleness he begged to be forgiven for his metamorphosis into the canary, excusing himself in a way which was both respectful arid affectionate. At last she gave her pardon for a marriage, to which, perhaps, she would not have consented if he had taken other means of bringing it about. It is true the dolphin had given him such a comely shape that she had never seen his equal at her father's court. He confirmed all the dolphin had told her about his rank, a matter most essential to the satisfaction of this princess; for, in fact, what would it avail to be the friend of the fairies when one cannot change one's birth? When heaven does not place us in that position in which we would have desired to be born, only virtue and merit can repair the loss: but often it is repaired with such generosity as to bring abundant consolation.

The princess was in the best of humours. From the midst of terrible danger she had been saved, and she was deeply sensible of it, and gave thanks to the gods. Then she looked out towards the sea for their good friend, the dolphin. There he was, and she thanked him, as was her duty, for having pre served her life. The prince was no less grateful. Their son, who spoke very prettily, and was much more intelligent than children of his age generally are, complimented him too in a way that delighted the good dolphin, who turned somersaults over and over and over again to please the little boy.

But suddenly they heard a loud sound of trumpets, fifes, and hautboys, and the neighing of horses. It was the prince and princess's equipage and their guards, all in gorgeous attire. There were ladies in the carriages who alighted as soon as they came in sight, to kiss the hem of the princess's robe. She would have prevented it, seeing in them evident marks of rank which deserved her consideration. But they told her that the orders from the dolphin were to acknowledge the prince and princess king and queen of the island, where were many obedient subjects and much happiness in store for them. Alidor and Livorette were delighted to see the honour paid them by such courteous and agreeable persons, and responded to the homage with as much graciousness as dignity. Then they got into an open carriage, drawn by eight winged horses, who bore them away, now mounting to the clouds, now coming down so gradually that they were hardly aware of the descent. This way of driving is pleasant: you are not jolted, and need fear no fatigue.

They were still near the middle region of the air when they saw on the Slope of a hill lying along the sea-coast, a palace of so marvellous a structure that, though all the walls were made of silver, they could yet see right through the rooms, which were furnished, they saw, in the most superb style and with the most exquisite taste imaginable. The gardens were still more beautiful. There were countless fountains, and nature had scattered delicious springs all about in profusion. The prince and his wife were at a loss where to bestow their greatest praise, so perfect did each thing seem to them. When they had entered the palace, from all sides cries rose of" Long live Prince Alidor! Long live the Princess Livorette! May pleasures surround them while they dwell here!" The music of instruments and of sweet voices made a pleasant symphony the while.

Before long they were served with an excellent repast, of which they stood in much need, the sea air and the way they had been cast adrift having fatigued them terribly. So, sitting down, they partook of the repast with appetite. When they had finished the warden of the royal treasure entered and asked them if they would be pleased to spend some little time after their meal in the neighbouring gallery. They went, and saw along the walls large wells and buckets made of perfumed Spanish leather, ornamented with gold. They asked what they were for, and the warden told them that streams of metal flowed into these wells, and when money was wanted one had nothing to do but to let down a bucket and to say: "I wish to draw up louis, pistoles, quadruples, crowns, or other coins ". At the word the water took the wished-for form, and the bucket came up full of gold or silver or coins, and yet the spring never dried up for those who made good use of it. But, as had happened several times, when misers let down the bucket with the sole intention of amassing gold and keeping it locked up, they drew it up full of frogs and adders, to their great terror, and sometimes to their great hurt, according to the degree of their avarice. The prince and princess admired these wells, looking on them as one of the finest and rarest things in the whole world. To test the result they let down the bucket, and back it came filled with little grains of gold. When they asked why the gold was not already coined, the warden told them they were waiting to know the arms of the prince and princess so as to stamp them. “Ah!” said Alidor, “we are too much indebted to the generous dolphin to have any other image on them than his.” In an instant all the grains were changed into gold pieces, with a dolphin on each.

The hour for retiring having come, Alidor, timid and respectful, went to his own room, and the princess and her son to theirs. At past eleven o’clock next morning the princess was still asleep. The prince had risen early to go to the hunt, and to be back again before she should be awake. When he learnt he might see her without disturbing her he went to her room, followed by a train of gentlemen carrying great golden vessels filled with the game he had killed. He presented them to his dear princess, who accepted them graciously, thanking him again and again for his goodness to her, which gave him the opportunity of telling her that never had he loved her with more ardour than now, and that he prayed her to name the time when their marriage would be celebrated with porn p.

“Ah! my lord,” she said, “my mind is made up on that point. I shall never consent except with the permission of my royal father and mother.” Never did lover receive a crueller blow. “Fair princess, to what fate do you condemn me?” he said. “Do you not know that what you desire is impossible? Hardly have we escaped from the horrible barrel into which they had put us for our destruction, and you are already imagining that they will consent to my desires. Ah, perhaps you wish to punish me for the strong passion I feel for you. I am aware that you mean to give your heart and your hand to the prince who sent ambassadors to you at the time when I changed myself into a canary.” “You are quite wrong in your judgment of my feeling,” she said. “I respect you, I love you, and I have forgiven all the ills you drew down on me by a disguise which you should not have assumed; for, being the son of a king, might you not have felt assured that my father would have been pleased to make an alliance with you?”

“A great affection does not reason so coolly,” he answered. “I have taken the first step which has led me to happiness, but you are so hard, and if you do not take back the cruel word you have just uttered it is all up with me.” “I cannot take it back,” she said. “You must know that this night while I was sleeping quietly I felt myself being roughly pulled. Opening my eyes, I saw by a torch, which cast a sombre light, the most hideous little creature in the world looking at me steadily with angry eyes. ‘Do you know me?’ she said. ‘No, madam,’ I answered, ‘nor do I wish to.’ ‘Ah! you are laughing,’ said she. ‘No,’ I replied, ‘I swear I am telling the truth.’ ‘My name is Grognette, the fairy,’ said she. ‘I have good reason to be angry with Alidor, who sat down on my rock. In fact, he has a particular faculty for displeasing me. I forbid you, therefore, to consider him as your husband till you have your father and mother’s consent, and if you disobey me I shall take my revenge on your son. He shall die, and his death will be followed by a thousand other misfortunes which you will not be able to escape.’ At these words she blew flames of fire on me. They covered me, and I thought I was going to be burnt, when she said ‘I spare you on condition that you obey my orders’.”

The prince knew well from the name and the description of Grognette that the princess’s story was true. “Alas “he said, “why did you ask our friend, the fish, to cure my madness? I was less to be pitied then than now. Mind and reason, what purpose do they serve except to make me suffer? Let me go and beg him to take away my reason again. It is an irksome good.” The princess was deeply moved. She truly loved the prince, finding in him all kinds of fine qualities, and thinking all he did and said perfect in grace. She wept, and he could not help feeling joy at the sight of her tears flowing for his sake. It gave him much more pleasure to know her feelings for him than his own for her had given him when he was the canary, and this so comforted him in his sadness that he threw himself at her feet and kissed her hands. "My dear Livorette," he said, "be assured I have no will where you are concerned. I own you as the absolute mistress of my fate."

Livorette was deeply conscious of what this submission had cost him, and ceaselessly did she turn over in her mind the means whereby she might obtain the permission so necessary to their happiness. It was, in fact, the one thing lacking, for there were no pleasures imaginable that the inhabitants of the island did not try to give them. Their rivers were full of fish, their forests of game, their orchards of fruit, their fields of wheat, their meadows of grass, their wells of gold and silver. There were no wars and no law-suits. It was a land where youth, health, beauty, wit, books, pure water, good wine abounded, and where snuff-boxes never gave out! And Livorette was as much in love with Alidor as Alidor with Livorette.

Every now and again they would go to pay their respects to the dolphin, who was always glad to see them. When they spoke of Grognette, the fairy, and of the commands she had put upon the princess, and when they begged him to be their friend in this matter, he always had some comforting words with which to console them. Yet he would give no absolute promise. So two years passed away. Alidor wished to send ambassadors to the King of the Woods, and asked the dolphin's advice on the subject, but the dolphin said that Grognette would kill them without any doubt, and that perhaps the gods them selves would in the end interfere in favour of the prince and princess.

But meanwhile the queen had learnt the sad fate prepared for her daughter, her grandson, and Alidor. Never was sorrow greater than hers. Joy and good health were hers no more. Every spot where she had once seen the princess recalled her sorrow, and she could not keep from heaping endless reproaches on the king. “Cruel father!” she said, “how could you make up your mind to drown the poor child? She was our only one, and the gods had given her to us. We should have waited till the gods had taken her from us.” For some time the king took these words coolly, but at last he himself began to feel the full extent of his loss. He missed his daughter no less than his wife did, and secretly he was bitten by remorse for sacrificing his tenderness to his reputation. Unwilling that the queen should know how he suffered, he endeavoured to hide his sorrow under an air of hardness. But as soon as he found himself alone he would cry out: “My daughter, my dear daughter, where are you? Have I then lost you, the only consolation of my old age? And I have lost you by my own doing!”

At last, overcome one day by the queen’s grief and his own, be confessed to her that since that fatal day when he had given orders for Livorette and her son to be cast into the sea he had not had a moment’s peace. Her plaintive shadow followed him wheresoever he went; the innocent cries of her son rung in his ears, and he feared he would die for the sorrow of it all. This news made the queen much more unhappy than before. “Now I shall suffer your grief as well as my own. What shall bring us comfort, sire?” The king said he had heard tell of a fairy who for some little time back had been living in the forest of the bears, and that he would go and consult her. “I will gladly go with you,” said the queen, “though I am not quite clear what I want to ask her; for the death of our dear Livorette and of the little prince is only too certain.” “All the same,” said the king, “we must see her.” So he ordered them to make ready his state carriage at once, and all that might be necessary for a journey of thirty leagues. They set off early next day and soon arrived at the dwelling of the fairy; who, having read by the stars that the king and queen were coming to visit her, came hastily forward to greet them.

As soon as their majesties saw her they got down out of their carriage, and, having embraced her with every sign of friendship, they could not keep from weeping bitterly. “Sire,” said the fairy, “I know why you have come. You are in deep distress at having brought about the death of the princess, your daughter. I know no other remedy for your sorrow than to advise both of you to set out in a fair ship for the dolphin’s isle. It is a long way from here, but you will find there a fruit which will make you forget your grief. I counsel you to lose no time. It is your only means of consolation. As for you, madam,” she said to the queen, “your condition moves me so deeply that your troubles seem as if they were my own.” The king and queen thanked the fairy for her good counsel, bestowed valuable gifts on her, and begged her to have the good ness, during their absence, to take an especial charge of their kingdom, so that no neighbours might bethink themselves of making war. She promised all they asked, and they went back to their capital comforted in some degree, in that they could look forward to a mitigation of their sorrow.

A ship was fitted out. They went on board, and set sail for the high sea guided by a pilot who had been in the dolphin’s isle. For some days the wind was favourable; but afterwards it became so contrary and the storm rose to such a pitch, that after being tossed about by it the vessel split on a rock without there being a chance of saving it. All those who were on board were suddenly separated from each other, with no hope of escaping from the terrible danger.

All this time the king was only thinking of his daughter. “I am fully deserving of the punishment which the gods send me,” he said, “since it was I that exposed Livorette and her son to the fury of the waves.” These thoughts so tortured him that he had given up all thoughts of seeking to prolong his life, when he saw the queen on a dolphin’s back, where she had found a refuge on falling from the ship. She was holding out her arms to him in her eagerness to join him, and praying that the good dolphin might reach him and save him along with her. And that is just what happened; for at the moment when the king was on the point of sinking, the good fish approached him, and with the queen’s aid he got on its back. She was full of joy at finding him again, and begged him to pluck up heart, since there was every evidence that heaven had their safety in its keeping. And, in fact, towards the close of day, the ever serviceable dolphin carried them to a pleasant shore on which they landed, no more fatigued than if they had but just come from their berths in the Stern.

It was the very island over which Livorette and Alidor were reigning. They were walking along the shore, Livorette holding her son by the hand, and a numerous retinue following them, when they saw to their great surprise two persons on the dolphin’s back. They went forward, naturally, to offer hospitality to them. But what was the surprise of the prince and princess to recognise the king and queen! They saw, however, that they were not recognised in their turn; which was not extraordinary seeing that the king and queen had not set eyes on their daughter for six years. A girl changes greatly in such a time. And Alidor, from being ugly and mad, had now become handsome, and his reason was restored to him. The child too had grown. So their majesties were far from being aware that they saw before them their dear daughter and their grandson.

Livorette could hardly restrain her tears. At every word she said to her father and mother, or that she heard them say, her bosom swelled, and her voice, changing its tone every minute, was trembling with agitation. “Madam,” said the king to her, “see at your feet a monarch in deep distress, a queen in despair. We were shipwrecked near by. All those who were with us have perished. We are alone, stripped of all our treasures and with none to help us. Sad examples are we of the fickleness of fortune.” “Sire,” said the princess, ‘you could have landed in no country where help would have been given to you with more pleasure. Forget your misfortunes, I beg of you. And you, madam,” she said to the queen, “let me embrace you.” And at the word she threw herself on her neck, while the queen pressed her in her arms with such extraordinary tenderness, because of her likeness to her dear Livorette, that she all but fainted.

Alidor invited them to ride in his chariot, which they agreed to, and they were driven to the castle, where all the beauty and the magnificence filled the king with surprise. Never a moment passed but some pleasure was prepared for them; but what gave them most joy was that the prince’s vessels, which had been not far away from the spot where the shipwreck of the king had taken place, had saved the ship and all on board, and brought the crew to the dolphin’s isle, even while the king was lamenting their death.

At last, one day after they had spent some time with the prince and princess, the king begged them to give them the means of returning to their own kingdom. “Alas!” said the queen, “I shall not conceal from you our misfortune, the saddest that could ever happen to a father and mother.” Thereupon she told the story of Livorette; the griefs that overwhelmed them ever since the cruel torture to which the king had doomed her; the advice of the fairy who dwelt in the forest of the bears, and their intention of going to the dolphin’s isle. “And here we have reached it by the strangest navigation possible. But beyond the pleasure of seeing you we have found nothing here to comfort us, and the fairy who induced us to come has not foretold correctly what would happen.”

The princess had listened to her dear mother with such pity and filial feeling that she could not keep her tears hack. The queen was indeed grateful to seen how keenly she felt her sorrows. She begged the gods to reward her, and, embracing her again and again, she called her her daughter and her child without knowing why.

At last, the ship being ready, the departure of the king and the queen was fixed for the next day. The princess had been keeping one of the most beautiful things about the palace for them to see as they were going away. It was the rare tree in the flower-bed, whose stern was of silver and the branches of gold, and from which hung three oranges of diamonds, rubies and emeralds. There were three guardians whose duty it was to watch it night and day, lest an attempt should be made to take it, and the fruit should really be carried off. When Alidor and Livorette had taken the king and queen to this place, they let them for some time remain admiring at their leisure the beauty of this wonderful tree, which had not its like in the world. After they had spent more than four hours inspecting it, they returned to the place where the prince and the princess were waiting for them to partake of a magnificent repast. In the room there was a table with only two covers, and when the king asked why, they told him that they wished to have the honour of serving them. So they begged their majesties to be seated. Livorette and Alidor and their child brought wine to the king and queen, serving them on their knees, carving the meat for them, placing it neatly on their majesties' plates, choosing the best and the most delicate portions. Soft and pleasant harmonies were heard the while. Suddenly the three guardians of the rare tree entered with a terrified air, with sad news to tell: the fine diamond and ruby oranges had been stolen, and it could only have been by those persons who had just been to see them — which meant the king and the queen. They were of course offended, and, both rising from the table, they said they are willing to be searched before the whole court. At the same time the king undid his scarf and opened his vest, while the queen undid her bodice. But what was the astonishment of one and the other to see the diamond and the ruby oranges fall down. "Ah sire," cried the princess, "what a reward is this for the kind and respectful treatment you have received in our island! It is an evil return for a good welcome from hosts who paid you all respect." The king and the queen, in confusion at these reproaches, tried all sorts of means in order to justify themselves, protesting that they were incapable of committing the theft, that those who accused them did not know them, and that they themselves could not understand how it had all happened.

At these words the princess, throwing herself at the feet of her father and mother, said: “Sire, I am the unhappy Livorette you placed in the barrel along with Alidor and my son. You accused me of a crime to which I had never consented. Misfortune came upon me without more knowledge on my part than your majesties had when the oranges were hidden in your bosoms. I dare beseech you to believe and to pardon me!” The hearts of the king and queen were pierced by these words. They lifted their daughter up, and all but strangled her, so closely did they clasp her in their arms. She presented Prince Alidor and the little prince to them. It is easier to imagine than to describe the joy of these illustrious personages.

The wedding of the prince and princess was celebrated with great pomp. The dolphin was present in the shape of a young monarch of marvellous beauty and wit. Ambassadors were sent to the father and mother of Alidor with precious gifts, and charged to relate all that had happened. The life of the prince and princess was as long and happy after this as it had been full of sorrow and complications in the beginning. Livorette returned with her husband to her father’s kingdom, but her son stayed behind in the dolphin’s isle.

25

THE WONDERFUL SHEEP

Once upon a time — in the days when the fairies lived — there was a king who had three daughters, who were all young, and clever, and beautiful; but the youngest of the three, who was called Miranda, was the prettiest and the most beloved.

The King, her father, gave her more dresses and jewels in a month than he gave the others in a year; but she was so generous that she shared everything with her sisters, and they were all as happy and as fond of one another as they could be.

Now, the King had some quarrelsome neighbors, who, tired of leaving him in peace, began to make war upon him so fiercely that he feared he would be altogether beaten if he did not make an effort to defend himself. So he collected a great army and set off to fight them, leaving the Princesses with their governess in a castle where news of the war was brought every day — sometimes that the King had taken a town, or won a battle, and, at last, that he had altogether overcome his enemies and chased them out of his kingdom, and was coming back to the castle as quickly as possible, to see his dear little Miranda whom he loved so much.

The three Princesses put on dresses of satin, which they had had made on purpose for this great occasion, one green, one blue, and the third white; their jewels were the same colors. The eldest wore emeralds, the second turquoises, and the youngest diamonds, and thus adorned they went to meet the King, singing verses which they had composed about his victories.

When he saw them all so beautiful and so gay he embraced them tenderly, but gave Miranda more kisses than either of the others.

Presently a splendid banquet was served, and the King and his daughters sat down to it, and as he always thought that there was some special meaning in everything, he said to the eldest:

“Tell me why you have chosen a green dress.”

“Sire,” she answered, “having heard of your victories I thought that green would signify my joy and the hope of your speedy return.”

“That is a very good answer,” said the King; “and you, my daughter,” he continued, “why did you take a blue dress?”

“Sire,” said the Princess, “to show that we constantly hoped for your success, and that the sight of you is as welcome to me as the sky with its most beautiful stars.”

“Why,” said the King, “your wise answers astonish me, and you, Miranda. What made you dress yourself all in white?

“Because, sire,” she answered, “white suits me better than anything else.”

“What!” said the King angrily, “was that all you thought of, vain child?”

“I thought you would be pleased with me,” said the Princess; “that was all.”

The King, who loved her, was satisfied with this, and even pretended to be pleased that she had not told him all her reasons at first.

“And now,” said he, “as I have supped well, and it is not time yet to go to bed, tell me what you dreamed last night.”

The eldest said she had dreamed that he brought her a dress, and the precious stones and gold embroidery on it were brighter than the sun.

The dream of the second was that the King had brought her a spinning wheel and a distaff, that she might spin him some shirts.

But the youngest said: “I dreamed that my second sister was to be married, and on her wedding-day, you, father, held a golden ewer and said: ‘Come, Miranda, and I will hold the water that you may dip your hands in it.’”

The King was very angry indeed when he heard this dream, and frowned horribly; indeed, he made such an ugly face that everyone knew how angry he was, and he got up and went off to bed in a great hurry; but he could not forget his daughter’s dream.

“Does the proud girl wish to make me her slave?” he said to himself. “I am not surprised at her choosing to dress herself in white satin without a thought of me. She does not think me worthy of her consideration! But I will soon put an end to her pretensions!”

He rose in a fury, and although it was not yet daylight, he sent for the Captain of his Bodyguard, and said to him:

“You have heard the Princess Miranda’s dream? I consider that it means strange things against me, therefore I order you to take her away into the forest and kill her, and, that I may be sure it is done, you must bring me her heart and her tongue. If you attempt to deceive me you shall be put to death!”

The Captain of the Guard was very much astonished when he heard this barbarous order, but he did not dare to contradict the King for fear of making him still more angry, or causing him to send someone else, so he answered that he would fetch the Princess and do as the King had said. When he went to her room they would hardly let him in, it was so early, but he said that the King had sent for Miranda, and she got up quickly and came out; a little black girl called Patypata held up her train, and her pet monkey and her little dog ran after her. The monkey was called Grabugeon, and the little dog Tintin.

The Captain of the Guard begged Miranda to come down into the garden where the King was enjoying the fresh air, and when they got there, he pretended to search for him, but as he was not to be found, he said:

“No doubt his Majesty has strolled into the forest,” and he opened the little door that led to it and they went through.

By this time the daylight had begun to appear, and the Princess, looking at her conductor, saw that he had tears in his eyes and seemed too sad to speak.

“What is the matter?” she said in the kindest way. “You seem very sorrowful.”

“Alas! Princess,” he answered, “who would not be sorrowful who was ordered to do such a terrible thing as I am? The King has commanded me to kill you here, and carry your heart and your tongue to him, and if I disobey I shall lose my life.”

The poor Princess was terrified, she grew very pale and began to cry softly.

Looking up at the Captain of the Guard with her beautiful eyes, she said gently:

Will you really have the heart to kill me? I have never done you any harm, and have always spoken well of you to the King. If I had deserved my father’s anger I would suffer without a murmur, but, alas! he is unjust to complain of me, when I have always treated him with love and respect.”

“Fear nothing, Princess,” said the Captain of the Guard. “I would far rather die myself than hurt you; but even if I am killed you will not be safe: we must find some way of making the King believe that you are dead.”

“What can we do?” said Miranda; “unless you take him my heart and my tongue he will never believe you.”

The Princess and the Captain of the Guard were talking so earnestly that they did not think of Patypata, but she had overheard all they said, and now came and threw herself at Miranda’s feet

“Madam,” she said, “I offer you my life; let me be killed, I shall be only too happy to die for such a kind mistress.”

“Why, Patypata,” cried the Princess, kissing her, “that would never do; your life is as precious to me as my own, especially after such a proof of your affection as you have just given me.”

“You are right, Princess,” said Grabugeon, coming forward, “to love such a faithful slave as Patypata; she is of more use to you than I am, I offer you my tongue and my heart most willingly, especially as I wish to make a great name for myself in Goblin Land.”

“No, no, my little Grabugeon,” replied Miranda, “I cannot bear the thought of taking your life.”

“Such a good little dog as I am,” cried Tintin, acould not think of letting either of you die for his mistress. If anyone is to die for her it must be me.”

And then began a great dispute between Patypata, Grabugeon, and Tintin, and they came to high words, until at last Grabugeon, who was quicker than the others, ran up to the very top of the nearest tree, and let herself fall, head first, to the ground, and there she lay — quite dead!

The Princess was very sorry, but as Grabugeon was really dead, she allowed the Captain of the Guard to take her tongue; but, alas! it was such a little one — not bigger than the Princess’s thumb — that they decided sorrowfully that it was of no use at all: the King would not have been taken in by it for a moment!

“Alas! my little monkey,” cried the Princess, “I have lost you, and yet I am no better off than I was before.”

“The honor of saving your life is to be mine,” interrupted Patypata, and, before they could prevent her, she had picked up a knife and cut her head off in an instant.

But when the Captain of the Guard would have taken her tongue it turned out to be quite black, so that would not have deceived the King either.

“Am I not unlucky?” cried the poor Princess; “I lose everything I love, and am none the better for it.”

“If you had accepted my offer,” said Tintin, “you would only have had me to regret, and I should have had all your gratitude.”

Miranda kissed her little dog, crying so bitterly, that at last she could bear it no longer, and turned away into the forest. When she looked back the Captain of the Guard was gone, and she was alone, except for Patypata, Grabugeon, and Tintin, who lay upon the ground. She could not leave the place until she had buried them in a pretty little mossy grave at the foot of a tree, and she wrote their names upon the bark of the tree, and how they had all died to save her life. And then she began to think where she could go for safety — for this forest was so close to her father’s castle that she might be seen and recognized by the first passer-by, and, besides that, it was full of lions and wolves, who would have snapped up a princess just as soon as a stray chicken. So she began to walk as fast as she could, but the forest was so large and the sun was so hot that she nearly died of heat and terror and fatigue; look which way she would there seemed to be no end to the forest, and she was so frightened that she fancied every minute that she heard the King running after her to kill her. You may imagine how miserable she was, and how she cried as she went on, not knowing which path to follow, and with the thorny bushes scratching her dreadfully and tearing her pretty frock to pieces.

At last she heard the bleating of a sheep, and said to herself:

“No doubt there are shepherds here with their flocks; they will show me the way to some village where I can live disguised as a peasant girl. Alas! it is not always kings and princes who are the happiest people in the world. Who could have believed that I should ever be obliged to run away and hide because the King, for no reason at all, wishes to kill me?”

So saying she advanced toward the place where she heard the bleating, but what was her surprise when, in a lovely little glade quite surrounded by trees, she saw a large sheep; its wool was as white as snow, and its horns shone like gold; it had a garland of flowers round its neck, and strings of great pearls about its legs, and a collar of diamonds; it lay upon a bank of orange-flowers, under a canopy of cloth of gold which protected it from the heat of the sun. Nearly a hundred other sheep were scattered about, not eating the grass, but some drinking coffee, lemonade, or sherbet, others eating ices, strawberries and cream, or sweetmeats, while others, again, were playing games. Many of them wore golden collars with jewels, flowers, and ribbons.

Miranda stopped short in amazement at this unexpected sight, and was looking in all directions for the shepherd of this surprising flock, when the beautiful sheep came bounding toward her.

“Approach, lovely Princess,” he cried; “have no fear of such gentle and peaceable animals as we are.”

“What a marvel!” cried the Princess, starting back a little. “Here is a sheep that can talk.”

“Your monkey and your dog could talk, madam,” said he; “are you more astonished at us than at them?”

“A fairy gave them the power to speak,” replied Miranda. “So I was used to them.”

“Perhaps the same thing has happened to us,” he said, smiling sheepishly. “But, Princess, what can have led you here?”

“A thousand misfortunes, Sir Sheep,” she answered.

“I am the unhappiest princess in the world, and I am seeking a shelter against my father’s anger.”

“Come with me, madam,” said the Sheep; “I offer you a hiding-place which you only will know of, and where you will be mistress of everything you see.”

“I really cannot follow you,” said Miranda, “for I am too tired to walk another step.”

The Sheep with the golden horns ordered that his chariot should be fetched, and a moment after appeared six goats, harnessed to a pumpkin, which was so big that two people could quite well sit in it, and was all lined with cushions of velvet and down. The Princess stepped into it, much amused at such a new kind of carriage, the King of the Sheep took his place beside her, and the goats ran away with them at full speed, and only stopped when they reached a cavern, the entrance to which was blocked by a great stone. This the King touched with his foot, and immediately it fell down, and he invited the Princess to enter without fear. Now, if she had not been so alarmed by everything that had happened, nothing could have induced her to go into this frightful cave, but she was so afraid of what might be behind her that she would have thrown herself even down a well at this moment. So, without hesitation, she followed the Sheep, who went before her, down, down, down, until she thought they must come out at the other side of the world — indeed, she was not sure that he wasn't leading her into Fairyland. At last she saw before her a great plain, quite covered with all sorts of flowers, the scent of which seemed to her nicer than anything she had ever smelled before; a broad river of orange-flower water flowed round it and fountains of wine of every kind ran in all directions and made the prettiest little cascades and brooks. The plain was covered with the strangest trees, there were whole avenues where partridges, ready roasted, hung from every branch, or, if you preferred pheasants, quails, turkeys, or rabbits, you had only to turn to the right hand or to the left and you were sure to find them. In places the air was darkened by showers of lobster-patties, white puddings, sausages, tarts, and all sorts of sweetmeats, or with pieces of gold and silver, diamonds and pearls. This unusual kind of rain, and the pleasantness of the whole place, would, no doubt, have attracted numbers of people to it, if the King of the Sheep had been of a more sociable disposition, but from all accounts it is evident that he was as grave as a judge.

As it was quite the nicest time of the year when Miranda arrived in this delightful land the only palace she saw was a long row of orange trees, jasmines, honeysuckles, and musk-roses, and their interlacing branches made the prettiest rooms possible, which were hung with gold and silver gauze, and had great mirrors and candlesticks, and most beautiful pictures. The Wonderful Sheep begged that the Princess would consider herself queen over all that she saw, and assured her that, though for some years he had been very sad and in great trouble, she had it in her power to make him forget all his grief.

“You are so kind and generous, noble Sheep,” said the Princess, “that I cannot thank you enough, but I must confess that all I see here seems to me so extraordinary that I don’t know what to think of it.”

As she spoke a band of lovely fairies came up and offered her amber baskets full of fruit, but when she held out her hands to them they glided away, and she could feel nothing when she tried to touch them.

“Oh!” she cried, “what can they be? Whom am I with?” and she began to cry.

At this instant the King of the Sheep came back to her, and was so distracted to find her in tears that he could have torn his wool.

“What is the matter, lovely Princess?” he cried. “Has anyone failed to treat you with due respect?”

“Oh! no,” said Miranda; “only I am not used to living with sprites and with sheep that talk, and everything here frightens me. It was very kind of you to bring me to this place, but I shall be even more grateful to you if you will take me up into the world again.”

“Do not be afraid,” said the Wonderful Sheep; “I entreat you to have patience, and listen to the story of my misfortunes. I was once a king, and my kingdom was the most splendid in the world. My subjects loved me, my neighbors envied and feared me. I was respected by everyone, and it was said that no king ever deserved it more.

“I was very fond of hunting, and one day, while chasing a stag, I left my attendants far behind; suddenly I saw the animal leap into a pool of water, and I rashly urged my horse to follow it, but before we had gone many steps I felt an extraordinary heat, instead of the coolness of the water; the pond dried up, a great gulf opened before me, out of which flames of fire shot up, and I fell helplessly to the bottom of a precipice.

"I gave myself up for lost, but presently a voice said: 'Ungrateful Prince, even this fire is hardly enough to warm your cold heart!'

"'Who complains of my coldness in this dismal place?' I cried.

"'An unhappy being who loves you hopelessly,' replied the voice, and at the same moment the flames began to flicker and cease to burn, and I saw a fairy, whom I had known as long as I could remember, and whose ugliness had always horrified me. She was leaning upon the arm of a most beautiful young girl, who wore chains of gold on her wrists and was evidently her slave.

"'Why, Ragotte,' I said, for that was the fairy's name, 'what is the meaning of all this? Is it by your orders that I am here?'

"'And whose fault is it,' she answered, 'that you have never understood me until now? Must a powerful fairy like myself condescend to explain her doings to you who are no better than an ant by comparison, though you think yourself a great king?'

"'Call me what you like,' I said impatiently; 'but what is it that you want — my crown, or my cities, or my treasures?'

"'Treasures!' said the fairy, disdainfully. 'If I chose I could make any one of my scullions richer and more powerful than you. I do not want your treasures, but,' she added softly, 'if you will give me your heart — if you will marry me — I will add twenty kingdoms to the one you have already; you shall have a hundred castles full of gold and five hundred full of silver, and, in short, anything you like to ask me for.'

"'Madam Ragotte,' said I, 'when one is at the bottom of a pit where one has fully expected to be roasted alive, it is impossible to think of asking such a charming person as you are to marry one! I beg that you will set me at liberty, and then I shall hope to answer you fittingly.’

“‘Ah!’ said she, ‘if you really loved me you would not care where you were — a cave, a wood, a fox-hole, a desert, would please you equally well. Do not think that you can deceive me; you fancy you are going to escape, but I assure you that you are going to stay here and the first thing I shall give you to do will be to keep my sheep — they are very good company and speak quite as well as you do.

“As she spoke she advanced, and led me to this plain where we now stand, and showed me her flock, but I paid little attention to it or to her.

“To tell the truth, I was so lost in admiration of her beautiful slave that I forgot everything else, and the cruel Ragotte, perceiving this, turned upon her so furious and terrible a look that she fell lifeless to the ground.

“At this dreadful sight I drew my sword and rushed at Ragotte, and should certainly have cut off her head had she not by her magic arts chained me to the spot on which I stood; all my efforts to move were useless, and at last, when I threw myself down on the ground in despair, she said to me, with a scornful smile:

“‘I intend to make you feel my power. It seems that you are a lion at present, I mean you to be a sheep.’

“So saying, she touched me with her wand, and I became what you see. I did not lose the power of speech, or of feeling the misery of my present state.

“‘For five years,’ she said, ‘you shall be a sheep, and lord of this pleasant land, while I, no longer able to see your face, which I loved so much, shall be better able to hate you as you deserve to be hated.’

“She disappeared as she finished speaking, and if I had not been too unhappy to care about anything I should have been glad that she was gone.

“The talking sheep received me as their king, and told me that they, too, were unfortunate princes who had, in different ways, offended the revengeful fairy, and had been added to her flock for a certain number of years; some more, some less. From time to time, indeed, one regains his own proper form and goes back again to his place in the upper world; but the other beings whom you saw are the rivals or the enemies of Ragotte, whom she has imprisoned for a hundred years or so; though even they will go back at last. The young slave of whom I told you about is one of these; I have seen her often, and it has been a great pleasure to me. She never speaks to me, and if I were nearer to her I know I should find her only a shadow, which would be very annoying. However, I noticed that one of my companions in misfortune was also very attentive to this little sprite, and I found out that he had been her lover, whom the cruel Ragotte had taken away from her long before; since then I have cared for, and thought of, nothing but how I might regain my freedom. I have often been in the forest; that is where I have seen you, lovely Princess, sometimes driving your chariot, which you did with all the grace and skill in the world; sometimes riding to the chase on so spirited a horse that it seemed as if no one but yourself could have managed it, and sometimes running races on the plain with the Princesses of your Court — running so lightly that it was you always who won the prize. Oh! Princess, I have loved you so long, and yet how dare I tell you of my love! what hope can there be for an unhappy sheep like myself?"

Miranda was so surprised and confused by all that she had heard that she hardly knew what answer to give to the King of the Sheep, but she managed to make some kind of little speech, which certainly did not forbid him to hope, and said that she should not be afraid of the shadows now she knew that they would some day come to life again. "Alas!" she continued, "if my poor Patypata, my dear Grabugeon, and pretty little Tintin, who all died for my sake, were equally well off, I should have nothing left to wish for here!"

Prisoner though he was, the King of the Sheep had still some powers and privileges.

“Go,” said he to his Master of the Horse, “go and seek the shadows of the little black girl, the monkey, and the dog: they will amuse our Princess.”

And an instant afterward Miranda saw them coming toward her, and their presence gave her the greatest pleasure, though they did not come near enough for her to touch them.

The King of the Sheep was so kind and amusing, and loved Miranda so dearly, that at last she began to love him too. Such a handsome sheep, who was so polite and considerate, could hardly fail to please, especially if one knew that he was really a king, and that his strange imprisonment would soon come to an end. So the Princess’s days passed very gaily while she waited for the happy time to come. The King of the Sheep, with the help of all the flock, got up balls, concerts, and hunting parties, and even the shadows joined in all the fun, and came, making believe to be their own real selves.

One evening, when the couriers arrived (for the King sent most carefully for news — and they always brought the very best kinds), it was announced that the sister of the Princess Miranda was going to be married to a great Prince, and that nothing could be more splendid than all the preparations for the wedding.

“Ah!” cried the young Princess, “how unlucky I am to miss the sight of so many pretty things! Here am I imprisoned under the earth, with no company but sheep and shadows, while my sister is to be adorned like a queen and surrounded by all who love and admire her, and everyone but myself can go to wish her joy!”

“Why do you complain, Princess?” said the King of the Sheep. “Did I say that you were not to go to the wedding? Set out as soon as you please; only promise me that you will come back, for I love you too much to be able to live without you.”

Miranda was very grateful to him, and promised faithfully that nothing in the world should keep her from coming back. The King caused an escort suitable to her rank to be got ready for her, and she dressed herself splendidly, not forgetting anything that could make her more beautiful. Her chariot was of mother-of-pearl, drawn by six dun-colored griffins just brought from the other side of the world, and she was attended by a number of guards in splendid uniforms, who were all at least eight feet high and had come from far and near to ride in the Princess's train.

Miranda reached her father's palace just as the wedding ceremony began, and everyone, as soon as she came in, was struck with surprise at her beauty and the splendor of her jewels. She heard exclamations of admiration on all sides; and the King her father looked at her so attentively that she was afraid he must recognize her; but he was so sure that she was dead that the idea never occurred to him.

However, the fear of not getting away made her leave before the marriage was over. She went out hastily, leaving behind her a little coral casket set with emeralds. On it was written in diamond letters: "Jewels for the Bride," and when they opened it, which they did as soon as it was found, there seemed to be no end to the pretty things it contained. The King, who had hoped to join the unknown Princess and find out who she was, was dreadfully disappointed when she disappeared so suddenly, and gave orders that if she ever came again the doors were to be shut that she might not get away so easily. Short as Miranda's absence had been, it had seemed like a hundred years to the King of the Sheep. He was waiting for her by a fountain in the thickest part of the forest, and the ground was strewn with splendid presents which he had prepared for her to show his joy and gratitude at her coming back.

As soon as she was in sight he rushed to meet her, leaping and bounding like a real sheep. He caressed her tenderly, throwing himself at her feet and kissing her hands, and told her how uneasy he had been in her absence, and how impatient for her return, with an eloquence which charmed her.

After some time came the news that the King’s second daughter was going to be married. When Miranda heard it she begged the King of the Sheep to allow her to go and see the wedding as before. This request made him feel very sad, as if some misfortune must surely come of it, but his love for the Princess being stronger than anything else he did not like to refuse her.

“You wish to leave me, Princess,” said he; “it is my unhappy fate — you are not to blame. I consent to your going, but, believe me, I can give you no stronger proof of my love than by so doing.”

The Princess assured him that she would only stay a very short time, as she had done before, and begged him not to be uneasy, as she would be quite as much grieved if anything detained her as he could possibly be.

So, with the same escort, she set out, and reached the palace as the marriage ceremony began. Everybody was delighted to see her; she was so pretty that they thought she must be some fairy princess, and the Princes who were there could not take their eyes off her.

The King was more glad than anyone else that she had come again, and gave orders that the doors should all be shut and bolted that very minute. When the wedding was all but over the Princess got up quickly, hoping to slip away unnoticed among the crowd, but, to her great dismay, she found every door fastened.

She felt more at ease when the King came up to her, and with the greatest respect begged her not to run away so soon, but at least to honor him by staying for the splendid feast which was prepared for the Princes and Princesses. He led her into a magnificent hall, where all the Court was assembled, and himself taking up the golden bowl full of water, he offered it to her that she might dip her pretty fingers into it.

At this the Princess could no longer contain herself; throwing herself at the King's feet, she cried out:

"My dream has come true after all — you have offered me water to wash my hands on my sister's wedding day, and it has not vexed you to do it."

The King recognized her at once — indeed, he had already thought several times how much like his poor little Miranda she was.

"Oh! my dear daughter," he cried, kissing her, "can you ever forget my cruelty? I ordered you to be put to death because I thought your dream portended the loss of my crown. And so it did," he added, "for now your sisters are both married and have kingdoms of their own — and mine shall be for you." So saying he put his crown on the Princess's head and cried:

"Long live Queen Miranda!"

All the Court cried: "Long live Queen Miranda!" after him, and the young Queen's two sisters came running up, and threw their arms round her neck, and kissed her a thousand times, and then there was such a laughing and crying, talking and kissing, all at once, and Miranda thanked her father, and began to ask after everyone — particularly the Captain of the Guard, to whom she owed so much; but, to her great sorrow, she heard that he was dead. Presently they sat down to the banquet, and the King asked Miranda to tell them all that had happened to her since the terrible morning when he had sent the Captain of the Guard to fetch her. This she did with so much spirit that all the guests listened with breathless interest. But while she was thus enjoying herself with the King and her sisters, the King of the Sheep was waiting impatiently for the time of her return, and when it came and went, and no Princess appeared, his anxiety became so great that he could bear it no longer.

"She is not coming back any more," he cried. "My miserable sheep's face displeases her, and without Miranda what is left to me, wretched creature that I am! Oh! cruel Ragotte; my punishment is complete."

For a long time he bewailed his sad fate like this, and then, seeing that it was growing dark, and that still there was no sign of the Princess, he set out as fast as he could in the direction of the town. When he reached the palace he asked for Miranda, but by this time everyone had heard the story of her adventures, and did not want her to go back again to the King of the Sheep, so they refused sternly to let him see her. In vain he begged and prayed them to let him in; though his entreaties might have melted hearts of stone they did not move the guards of the palace, and at last, quite broken-hearted, he fell dead at their feet.

In the meantime the King, who had not the least idea of the sad thing that was happening outside the gate of his palace, proposed to Miranda that she should be driven in her chariot all round the town, which was to be illuminated with thousands and thousands of torches, placed in windows and balconies, and in all the grand squares. But what a sight met her eyes at the very entrance of the palace! There lay her dear, kind sheep, silent and motionless, upon the pavement!

She threw herself out of the chariot and ran to him, crying bitterly, for she realized that her broken promise had cost him his life, and for a long, long time she was so unhappy that they thought she would have died too.

So you see that even a princess is not always happy — especially if she forgets to keep her word; and the greatest misfortunes often happen to people just as they think they have obtained their heart’s desires!

26

THE WHITE DOW

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen who loved each other dearly, and would have been perfectly happy if they had only had a little son or daughter to play with. They never talked about it, and always pretended that there was nothing in the world to wish for; but, sometimes when they looked at other people's children, their faces grew sad, and their courtiers and attendants knew the reason why.

One day the queen was sitting alone by the side of a waterfall which sprung from some rocks in the large park adjoining the castle. She was feeling more than usually miserable, and had sent away her ladies so that no one might witness her grief. Suddenly she heard a rustling movement in the pool below the waterfall, and, on glancing up, she saw a large crab climbing on to a stone beside her.

'Great queen,' said the crab, 'I am here to tell you that the desire of your heart will soon be granted. But first you must permit me to lead you to the palace of the fairies, which, though hard by, has never been seen by mortal eyes because of the thick clouds that surround it. When there you will know more; that is, if you will trust yourself to me.'

The queen had never before heard an animal speak, and was struck dumb with surprise. However, she was so enchanted at the words of the crab that she smiled sweetly and held out her hand; it was taken, not by the crab, which had stood there only a moment before, but by a little old woman smartly dressed in white and crimson with green ribbons in her grey hair. And, wonderful to say, not a drop of water fell from her clothes.

The old woman ran lightly down a path along which the queen had been a hundred times before, but it seemed so different she could hardly believe it was the same. Instead of having to push her way through nettles and brambles, roses and jasmine hung about her head, while under her feet the ground was sweet with violets. The orange trees were so tall and thick that, even at mid-day, the sun was never too hot, and at the end of the path was a glimmer of something so dazzling that the queen had to shade her eyes, and peep at it only between her fingers.

‘What can it be?’ she asked, turning to her guide; who answered:

‘Oh, that is the fairies’ palace, and here are some of them coming to meet us.’

As she spoke the gates swung back and six fairies approached, each bearing in her hand a flower made of precious stones, but so like a real one that it was only by touching you could tell the difference.

‘Madam,’ they said, ‘we know not how to thank you for this mark of your confidence, but have the happiness to tell you that in a short time you will have a little daughter.’

The queen was so enchanted at this news that she nearly fainted with joy; but when she was able to speak, she poured out all her gratitude to the fairies for their promised gift.

‘And now,’ she said, ‘I ought not to stay any longer, for my husband will think that I have run away, or that some evil beast has devoured me.’

In a little while it happened just as the fairies had foretold, and a baby girl was born in the palace. Of course both the king and queen were delighted, and the child was called Desiree, which means ‘desired,’ for she had been ‘desired’ for five years before her birth.

At first the queen could think of nothing but her new plaything, but then she remembered the fairies who had sent it to her. Bidding her ladies bring her the posy of jewelled flowers which had been given her at the palace, she took each flower in her hand and called it by name, and, in turn, each fairy appeared before her. But, as unluckily often happens, the one to whom she owed the most, the crab-fairy, was forgotten, and by this, as in the case of other babies you have read about, much mischief was wrought.

However, for the moment all was gaiety in the palace, and everybody inside ran to the windows to watch the fairies' carriages, for no two were alike. One had a car of ebony, drawn by white pigeons, another was lying back in her ivory chariot, driving ten black crows, while the rest had chosen rare woods or many-coloured sea-shells, with scarlet and blue macaws, long-tailed peacocks, or green love-birds for horses. These carriages were only used on occasions of state, for when they went to war flying dragons, fiery serpents, lions or leopards, took the place of the beautiful birds.

The fairies entered the queen's chamber followed by little dwarfs who carried their presents and looked much prouder than their mistresses. One by one their burdens were spread upon the ground, and no one had ever seen such lovely things. Everything that a baby could possibly wear or play with was there, and besides, they had other and more precious gifts to give her, which only children who have fairies for godmothers can ever hope to possess.

They were all gathered round the heap of pink cushions on which the baby lay asleep, when a shadow seemed to fall between them and the sun, while a cold wind blew through the room. Everybody looked up, and there was the crab-fairy, who had grown as tall as the ceiling in her anger.

'So I am forgotten!' cried she, in a voice so loud that the queen trembled as she heard it. 'Who was it soothed you in your trouble? Who was it led you to the fairies? Who was it brought you back in safety to your home again? Yet I— I— am overlooked, while these who have done nothing in comparison, are petted and thanked.’

The queen, almost dumb with terror, in vain tried to think of some explanation or apology; but there was none, and she could only confess her fault and implore forgiveness. The fairies also did their best to soften the wrath of their sister, and knowing that, like many plain people who are not fairies, she was very vain, they entreated her to drop her crab’s disguise, and to become once more the charming person they were accustomed to see.

For some time the enraged fairy would listen to nothing; but at length the flatteries began to take effect. The crab’s shell fell from her, she shrank into her usual size, and lost some of her fierce expression.

‘Well,’ she said, ‘I will not cause the princess’s death, as I had meant to do, but at the same time she will have to bear the punishment of her mother’s fault, as many other children have done before her. The sentence I pass upon her is, that if she is allowed to see one ray of daylight before her fifteenth birthday she will rue it bitterly, and it may perhaps cost her her life.’ And with these words she vanished by the window through which she came, while the fairies comforted the weeping queen and took counsel how best the princess might be kept safe during her childhood.

At the end of half an hour they had made up their minds what to do, and at the command of the fairies, a beautiful palace sprang up, close to that of the king and queen, but different from every palace in the world in having no windows, and only a door right under the earth. However, once within, daylight was hardly missed, so brilliant were the multitudes of tapers that were burning on the walls.

Now up to this time the princess’s history has been like the history of many a princess that you have read about; but, when the period of her imprisonment was nearly over, her fortunes took another turn. For almost fifteen years the fairies had taken care of her, and amused her and taught her, so that when she came into the world she might be no whit behind the daughters of other kings in all that makes a princess charming and accomplished. They all loved her dearly, but the fairy Tulip loved her most of all; and as the princess's fifteenth birthday drew near, the fairy began to tremble lest something terrible should happen — some accident which had not been foreseen. 'Do not let her out of your sight,' said Tulip to the queen, 'and meanwhile, let her portrait be painted and carried to the neighbouring Courts, as is the custom in order that the kings may see how far her beauty exceeds that of every other princess, and that they may demand her in marriage for their sons.'

And so it was done; and as the fairy had prophesied, all the young princes fell in love with the picture; but the last one to whom it was shown could think of nothing else, and refused to let it be removed from his chamber, where he spent whole days gazing at it.

The king his father was much surprised at the change which had come over his son, who generally passed all his time in hunting or hawking, and his anxiety was increased by a conversation he overheard between two of his courtiers that they feared the prince must be going out of his mind, so moody had he become. Without losing a moment the king went to visit his son, and no sooner had he entered the room than the young man flung himself at his father's feet.

'You have betrothed me already to a bride I can never love!' cried he; 'but if you will not consent to break off the match, and ask for the hand of the princess Desiree, I shall die of misery, thankful to be alive no longer.'

These words much displeased the king, who felt that, in breaking off the marriage already arranged he would almost certainly be bringing on his subjects a long and bloody war; so, without answering, he turned away, hoping that a few days might bring his son to reason. But the prince's condition grew rapidly so much worse that the king, in despair, promised to send an embassy at once to Desiree's father.

This news cured the young man in an instant of all his ills; and he began to plan out every detail of dress and of horses and carriages which were necessary to make the train of the envoy, whose name was Becasigue, as splendid as possible. He longed to form part of the embassy himself, if only in the disguise of a page; but this the king would not allow, and so the prince had to content himself with searching the kingdom for everything that was rare and beautiful to send to the princess. Indeed, he arrived, just as the embassy was starting, with his portrait, which had been painted in secret by the court painter.

The king and queen wished for nothing better than that their daughter marry into such a great and powerful family, and received the ambassador with every sign of welcome. They even wished him to see the princess Desiree, but this was prevented by the fairy Tulip, who feared some ill might come of it.

‘And be sure you tell him,’ added she, ‘that the marriage cannot be celebrated till she is fifteen years old, or else some terrible misfortune will happen to the child.’

So when Becasigue, surround by his train, made a formal request that the princess Desiree might be given in marriage to his master’s son, the king replied that he was much honoured, and would gladly give his consent; but that no one could even see the princess till her fifteenth birthday, as the spell laid upon her in her cradle by a spiteful fairy, would not cease to work till that was past. The ambassador was greatly surprised and disappointed, but he knew too much about fairies to venture to disobey them, therefore he had to content himself with presenting the prince’s portrait to the queen, who lost no time in carrying it to the princess. As the girl took it in her hands it suddenly spoke, as it had been taught to do, and uttered a compliment of the most delicate and charming sort, which made the princess flush with pleasure.

‘How would you like to have a husband like that?’ asked the queen, laughing.

‘As if I knew anything about husbands!’ replied Desiree, who had long ago guessed the business of the ambassador.

‘Well, he will be your husband in three months,’ answered the queen, ordering the prince’s presents to be brought in. The princess was very pleased with them, and admired them greatly, but the queen noticed that all the while her eyes constantly strayed from the softest silks and most brilliant jewels to the portrait of the prince.

The ambassador, finding that there was no hope of his being allowed to see the princess, took his leave, and returned to his own court; but here a new difficulty appeared. The prince, though transported with joy at the thought that Desiree was indeed to be his bride, was bitterly disappointed that she had not been allowed to return with Becasigue, as he had foolishly expected; and never having been taught to deny himself anything or to control his feelings, he fell as ill as he had done before. He would eat nothing nor take pleasure in anything, but lay all day on a heap of cushions, gazing at the picture of the princess.

‘If I have to wait three months before I can marry the princess I shall die!’ was all this spoilt boy would say; and at length the king, in despair, resolved to send a fresh embassy to Desiree’s father to implore him to permit the marriage to be celebrated at once. ‘I would have presented my prayer in person, he added in his letter, ‘but my great age and infirmities do not suffer me to travel; however my envoy has orders to agree to any arrangement that you may propose.’

On his arrival at the palace Becasigue pleaded his young master’s cause as fervently as the king his father could have done, and entreated that the princess might be consulted in the matter. The queen hastened to the marble tower, and told her daughter of the sad state of the prince. Desiree sank down fainting at the news, but soon came to herself again, and set about inventing a plan which would enable her to go to the prince without risking the doom pronounced over her by the wicked fairy.

‘I see!’ she exclaimed joyfully at last. ‘Let a carriage be built through which no light can come, and let it be brought into my room. I will then get into it, and we can travel swiftly during the night and arrive before dawn at the palace of the prince. Once there, I can remain in some underground chamber, where no light can come.’

‘Ah, how clever you are,’ cried the queen, clasping her in her arms. And she hurried away to tell the king.

‘What a wife our prince will have!’ said Becasigue bowing low; ‘but I must hasten back with the tidings, and to prepare the underground chamber for the princess.’ And so he took his leave.

In a few days the carriage commanded by the princess was ready. It was of green velvet, scattered over with large golden thistles, and lined inside with silver brocade embroidered with pink roses. It had no windows, of course; but the fairy Tulip, whose counsel had been asked, had managed to light it up with a soft glow that came no one knew whither.

It was carried straight up into the great hall of the tower, and the princess stepped into it, followed by her faithful maid of honour, Eglantine, and by her lady in waiting Cerisette, who also had fallen in love with the prince’s portrait and was bitterly jealous of her mistress. The fourth place in the carriage was filled by Cerisette’s mother, who had been sent by the queen to look after the three young people.

Now the Fairy of the Fountain was the godmother of the princess Nera, to whom the prince had been betrothed before the picture of Desiree had made him faithless. She was very angry at the slight put upon her godchild, and from that moment kept careful watch on the princess. In this journey she saw her chance, and it was she who, invisible, sat by Cerisette, and put bad thoughts into the minds of both her and her mother.

The way to the city where the prince lived ran for the most part through a thick forest, and every night when there was no moon, and not a single star could be seen through the trees, the guards who travelled with the princess opened the carriage to give it an airing. This went on for several days, till only twelve hours journey lay between them and the palace. The Cerisette persuaded her mother to cut a great hole in the side of the carriage with a sharp knife which she herself had brought for the purpose. In the forest the darkness was so intense that no one perceived what she had done, but when they left the last trees behind them, and emerged into the open country, the sun was up, and for the first time since her babyhood, Desiree found herself in the light of day.

She looked up in surprise at the dazzling brilliance that streamed through the hole; then gave a sigh which seemed to come from her heart. The carriage door swung back, as if by magic, and a white doe sprang out, and in a moment was lost to sight in the forest. But, quick as she was, Eglantine, her maid of honour, had time to see where she went, and jumped from the carriage in pursuit of her, followed at a distance by the guards.

Cerisette and her mother looked at each other in surprise and joy. They could hardly believe in their good fortune, for everything had happened exactly as they wished. The first thing to be done was to conceal the hole which had been cut, and when this was managed (with the help of the angry fairy, though they did not know it), Cerisette hastened to take off her own clothes, and put on those of the princess, placing the crown of diamonds on her head. She found this heavier than she expected; but then, she had never been accustomed to wear crowns, which makes all the difference.

At the gates of the city the carriage was stopped by a guard of honour sent by the king as an escort to his son’s bride. Though Cerisette and her mother could of course see nothing of what was going on outside, they heard plainly the shouts of welcome from the crowds along the streets.

The carriage stopped at length in the vast hall which Becasigue had prepared for the reception of the princess. The grand chamberlain and the lord high steward were awaiting her, and when the false bride stepped into the brilliantly lighted room, they bowed low, and said they had orders to inform his highness the moment she arrived. The prince, whom the strict etiquette of the court had prevented from being present in the underground hall, was burning with impatience in his own apartments.

‘So she had come!’ cried he, throwing down the bow he had been pretending to mend. ‘Well, was I not right? Is she not a miracle of beauty and grace? And has she her equal in the whole world?’ The ministers looked at each other, and made no reply; till at length the chamberlain, who was the bolder of the two, observed:

‘My lord, as to her beauty, you can judge of that for yourself. No doubt it is as great as you say; but at present it seems to have suffered, as is natural, from the fatigues of the journey.’

This was certainly not what the prince had expected to hear. Could the portrait have flattered her? He had known of such things before, and a cold shiver ran through him; but with an effort he kept silent from further questioning, and only said:

‘Has the king been told that the princess is in the palace?’

‘Yes, highness; and he has probably already joined her.’

‘Then I will go too,’ said the prince.

Weak as he was from his long illness, the prince descended the staircase, supported by the ministers, and entered the room just in time to hear his father’s loud cry of astonishment and disgust at the sight of Cerisette.

‘There was been treachery at work,’ he exclaimed, while the prince leant, dumb with horror, against the doorpost. But the lady in waiting, who had been prepared for something of the sort, advanced, holding in her hand the letters which the king and queen had entrusted to her.

‘This is the princess Desiree,’ said she, pretending to have heard nothing, ‘and I have the honour to present to you these letters from my liege lord and lady, together with the casket containing the princess’ jewels.’

The king did not move or answer her; so the prince, leaning on the arm of Becasigue, approached a little closer to the false princess, hoping against hope that his eyes had deceived him. But the longer he looked the more he agreed with his father that there was treason somewhere, for in no single respect did the portrait resemble the woman before him. Cerisette was so tall that the dress of the princess did not reach her ankles, and so thin that her bones showed through the stuff. Besides that her nose was hooked, and her teeth black and ugly.

In his turn, the prince stood rooted to the spot. At last he spoke, and his words were addressed to his father, and not to the bride who had come so far to marry him.

‘We have been deceived,’ he said, ‘and it will cost me my life.’ And he leaned so heavily on the envoy that Becasigue feared he was going to faint, and hastily laid him on the floor. For some minutes no one could attend to anybody but the prince; but as soon as he revived the lady in waiting made herself heard.

‘Oh, my lovely princess, why did we ever leave home?’ cried she. ‘But the king your father will avenge the insults that have been heaped on you when we tell him how you have been treated.’

‘I will tell him myself,’ replied the king in wrath; ‘he promised me a wonder of beauty, he has sent me a skeleton! I am not surprised that he has kept her for fifteen years hidden away from the eyes of the world. Take them both away,’ he continued, turning to his guards, ‘and lodge them in the state prison. There is something more I have to learn of this matter.’

His orders were obeyed, and the prince, loudly bewailing his sad fate, was led back to bed, where for many days he lay in a high fever. At length he slowly began to gain strength, but his sorrow was still so great that he could not bear the sight of a strange face, and shuddered at the notion of taking his proper part in the court ceremonies. Unknown to the king, or to anybody but Becasigue, he planned that, as soon as he was able, he would make his escape and pass the rest of his life alone in some solitary place. It was some weeks before he had regained his health sufficiently to carry out his design; but finally, one beautiful starlight night, the two friends stole away, and when the king woke next morning he found a letter lying by his bed, saying that his son had gone, he knew not whither. He wept bitter tears at the news, for he loved the prince dearly; but he felt that perhaps the young man had done wisely, and he trusted to time and Becasigue's influence to bring the wanderer home.

And while these things were happening, what had become of the white doe? Though when she sprang from the carriage she was aware that some unkind fate had changed her into an animal, yet, till she saw herself in a stream, she had no idea what it was.

'Is it really, I, Desiree?' she said to herself, weeping. 'What wicked fairy can have treated me so; and shall I never, never take my own shape again? My only comfort that, in this great forest, full of lions and serpents, my life will be a short one.'

Now the fairy Tulip was as much grieved at the sad fate of the princess as Desiree's own mother could have been if she had known of it. Still, she could not help feeling that if the king and queen had listened to her advice the girl would by this time be safely in the walls of her new home. However, she loved Desiree too much to let her suffer more than could be helped, and it was she who guided Eglantine to the place where the white doe was standing, cropping the grass which was her dinner.

At the sound of footsteps the pretty creature lifted her head, and when she saw her faithful companion approaching she bounded towards her, and rubbed her head on Eglantine's shoulder. The maid of honour was surprised; but she was fond of animals, and stroked the white doe tenderly, speaking gently to her all the while. Suddenly the beautiful creature lifted her head, and looked up into Eglantine’s face, with tears streaming from her eyes. A thought flashed through her mind, and quick as lightning the girl flung herself on her knees, and lifting the animal’s feet kissed them one by one. ‘My princess! O my dear princess!’ cried she; and again the white doe rubbed her head against her, for thought the spiteful fairy had taken away her power of speech, she had not deprived her of her reason!

All day long the two remained together, and when Eglantine grew hungry she was led by the white doe to a part of the forest where pears and peaches grew in abundance; but, as night came on, the maid of honour was filled with the terrors of wild beasts which had beset the princess during her first night in the forest.

‘Is there no hut or cave we could go into?’ asked she. But the doe only shook her head; and the two sat down and wept with fright.

The fairy Tulip, who, in spite of her anger, was very soft-hearted, was touched at their distress, and flew quickly to their help.

‘I cannot take away the spell altogether,’ she said, ‘for the Fairy of the Fountain is stronger than I; but I can shorten the time of your punishment, and am able to make it less hard, for as soon as darkness fall you shall resume your own shape.’

To think that by-and-by she would cease to be a white doe — indeed, that she would at once cease to be one during the night — was for the present joy enough for Desiree, and she skipped about on the grass in the prettiest manner.

‘Go straight down the path in front of you,’ continued the fairy, smiling as she watched her; ‘go straight down the path and you will soon reach a little hut where you will find shelter.’ And with these words she vanished, leaving her hearers happier than they ever thought they could be again.

An old woman was standing at the door of the hut when Eglantine drew near, with the white doe trotting by her side.

‘Good evening!’ she said; ‘could you give me a night’s lodging for myself and my doe?’

‘Certainly I can,’ replied the old woman. And she led them into a room with two little white beds, so clean and comfortable that it made you sleepy even to look at them.

The door had hardly closed behind the old woman when the sun sank below the horizon, and Desiree became a girl again.

‘Oh, Eglantine! what should I have done if you had not followed me,’ she cried. And she flung herself into her friend’s arms in a transport of delight.

Early in the morning Eglantine was awakened by the sound of someone scratching at the door, and on opening her eyes she saw the white doe struggling to get out. The little creature looked up and into her face, and nodded her head as the maid of honour unfastened the latch, but bounded away into the woods, and was lost to sight in a moment.

Meanwhile, the prince and Becasigue were wandering through the wood, till at last the prince grew so tired, that he lay down under a tree, and told Becasigue that he had better go in search of food, and of some place where they could sleep. Becasigue had not gone very far, when a turn of the path brought him face to face with the old woman who was feeding her doves before her cottage.

‘Could you give me some milk and fruit?’ asked he. ‘I am very hungry myself, and, besides, I have left a friend behind me who is still weak from illness.’

‘Certainly I can,’ answered the old woman. ‘But come and sit down in my kitchen while I catch the goat and milk it.’

Becasigue was glad enough to do as he was bid, and in a few minutes the old woman returned with a basket brimming over with oranges and grapes.

‘If your friend has been ill he should not pass the night in the forest,’ said she. ‘I have room in my hut — tiny enough, it is true; but better than nothing, and to that you are both heartily welcome.’

Becasigue thanked her warmly, and as by this time it was almost sunset, he set out to fetch the prince. It was while he was absent that Eglantine and the white doe entered the hut, and having, of course, no idea that in the very next room was the man whose childish impatience had been the cause of all their troubles.

In spite of his fatigue, the prince slept badly, and directly it was light he rose, and bidding Becasigue remain where he was, as he wished to be alone, he strolled out into the forest. He walked on slowly, just as his fancy led him, till, suddenly, he came to a wide open space, and in the middle was the white doe quietly eating her breakfast. She bounded off at the sight of a man, but not before the prince, who had fastened on his bow without thinking, had let fly several arrows, which the fairy Tulip took care should do her no harm. But, quickly as she ran, she soon felt her strength failing her, for fifteen years of life in a tower had not taught her how to exercise her limbs.

Luckily, the prince was too weak to follow her far, and a turn of a path brought her close to the hut, where Eglantine was awaiting her. Panting for breath, she entered their room, and flung herself down on the floor.

When it was dark again, and she was once more the princess Desiree, she told Eglantine what had befallen her.

‘I feared the Fairy of the Fountain, and the cruel beasts,’ said she; ‘but somehow I never thought of the dangers that I ran from men. I do not know now what saved me.’

‘You must stay quietly here till the time of your punishment is over,’ answered Eglantine. But when the morning dawned, and the girl turned into a doe, the longing for the forest came over her, and she sprang away as before.

As soon as the prince was awake he hastened to the place where, only the day before, he had found the white doe feeding; but of course she had taken care to go in the opposite direction. Much disappointed, he tried first one green path and then another, and at last, wearied with walking, he threw himself down and went fast asleep.

Just at this moment the white doe sprang out of a thicket near by, and started back trembling when she beheld her enemy lying there. Yet, instead of turning to fly, something bade her go and look at him unseen. As she gazed a thrill ran through her, for she felt that, worn and wasted though he was by illness, it was the face of her destined husband. Gently stooping over him she kissed his forehead, and at her touch he awoke.

For a minute they looked at each other, and to his amazement he recognized the white doe which had escaped him the previous day. But in an instant the animal was aroused to a sense of her danger, and she fled with all her strength into the thickest part of the forest. Quick as lightning the prince was on her track, but this time it was with no wish to kill or even wound the beautiful creature.

‘Pretty doe! pretty doe! stop! I won’t hurt you,’ cried he, but his words were carried away by the wind.

At length the doe could run no more, and when the prince reached her, she was lying stretched out on the grass, waiting for her death blow. But instead the prince knelt at her side, and stroked her, and bade her fear nothing, as he would take care of her. So he fetched a little water from the stream in his horn hunting cup, then, cutting some branches from the trees, he twisted them into a litter which he covered with moss, and laid the white doe gently on it.

For a long time they remained thus, but when Desiree saw by the way that the light struck the trees, that he sun must be near its setting, she was filled with alarm lest the darkness should fall, and the prince should behold her in her human shape.

‘No, he must not see me for the first time here,’ she thought, and instantly began to plan how to get rid of him. Then she opened her mouth and let her tongue hang out, as if she were dying of thirst, and the prince, as she expected, hastened to the stream to get her some more water.

When he returned, the white doe was gone.

That night Desiree confessed to Eglantine that her pursuer was no other than the prince, and that far from flattering him, the portrait had never done him justice.

‘Is it not hard to meet him in this shape,’ wept she, ‘when we both love each other so much?’ But Eglantine comforted her, and reminded her that in a short time all would be well.

The prince was very angry at the flight of the white doe, for whom he had taken so much trouble, and returning to the cottage he poured out his adventures and his wrath to Becasigue, who could not help smiling.

‘She shall not escape me again,’ cried the prince. ‘If I hunt her every day for a year, I will have her at last.’ And in this frame of mind he went to bed.

When the white doe entered the forest next morning, she had not made up her mind whether she would go and meet the prince, or whether she would shun him, and hide in thickets of which he knew nothing. She decided that the last plan was the best; and so it would have been if the prince had not taken the very same direction in search of her.

Quite by accident he caught sight of her white skin shining through the bushes, and at the same instant she heard a twig snap under his feet. In a moment she was up and away, but the prince, not knowing how else to capture her, aimed an arrow at her leg, which brought her to the ground.

The young man felt like a murderer as he ran hastily up to where the white doe lay, and did his best to soothe the pain she felt, which, in reality, was the last part of the punishment sent by the Fairy of the Fountain. First he brought her some water, and then he fetched some healing herbs, and having crushed them in his hand, laid them on the wound.

‘Ah! what a wretch I was to have hurt you,’ cried he, resting her head upon his knees; ‘and now you will hate me and fly from me for ever!’

For some time the doe lay quietly where she was, but, as before, she remembered that the hour of her transformation was near. She struggled to her feet, but the prince would not hear of her walking, and thinking the old woman might be able to dress her wound better than he could, he took her in his arms to carry her back to the hut. But, small as she was, she made herself so heavy that, after staggering a few steps under her weight, he laid her down, and tied her fast to a tree with some of the ribbons of his hat. This done he went away to get help.

Meanwhile Eglantine had grown very uneasy at the long absence of her mistress, and had come out to look for her. Just as the prince passed out of sight the fluttering ribbons dance before her eyes, and she descried her beautiful princess bound to a tree. With all her might she worked at the knots, but not a single one could she undo, though all appeared so easy. She was still busy with them when a voice behind her said:

‘Pardon me, fair lady, but it is MY doe you are trying to steal!’

‘Excuse me, good knight’ answered Eglantine, hardly glancing at him, ‘but it is MY doe that is tied up here! And if you wish for a proof of it, you can see if she knows me or not. Touch my heart, my little one,’ she continued, dropping on her knees. And the doe lifted up its fore-foot and laid it on her side. ‘Now put your arms round my neck, and sigh.’ And again the doe did as she was bid.

‘You are right,’ said the prince; ‘but it is with sorrow I give her up to you, for though I have wounded her yet I love her deeply.’

To this Eglantine answered nothing; but carefully raising up the doe, she led her slowly to the hut.

Now both the prince and Becasigue were quite unaware that the old woman had any guests besides themselves, and, following afar, were much surprised to behold Eglantine and her charge enter the cottage. They lost no time in questioning the old woman, who replied that she knew nothing about the lady and her white doe, who slept next the chamber occupied by the prince and his friend, but that they were very quiet, and paid her well. Then she went back to her kitchen.

‘Do you know,’ said Becasigue, when they were alone, ‘I am certain that the lady we saw is the maid of honour to the Princess Desiree, whom I met at the palace. And, as her room is next to this, it will be easy to make a small hole through which I can satisfy myself whether I am right or not.’

So, taking a knife out of his pocket, he began to saw away the woodwork. The girls heard the grating noise, but fancying it was a mouse, paid no attention, and Becasigue was left in peace to pursue his work. At length the hole was large enough for him to peep through, and the sight was one to strike him dumb with amazement. He had guessed truly: the tall lady was Eglantine herself; but the other — where had he seen her? Ah! now he knew — it was the lady of the portrait!

Desiree, in a flowing dress of green silk, was lying stretched out upon cushions, and as Eglantine bent over her to bathe the wounded leg, she began to talk:

‘Oh! let me die,’ cried she, ‘rather than go on leading this life. You cannot tell the misery of being a beast all the day, and unable to speak to the man I love, to whose impatience I owe my cruel fate. Yet, even so, I cannot bring myself to hate him.’

These words, low though they were spoken, reached Becasigue, who could hardly believe his ears. He stood silent for a moment; then, crossing to the window out of which the prince was gazing, he took his arm and led him across the room. A single glance was sufficient to show the prince that it was indeed Desiree; and how another had come to the palace bearing her name, at that instant he neither knew nor cared. Stealing on tip-toe from the room, he knocked at the next door, which was opened by Eglantine, who thought it was the old woman bearing their supper.

She started back at the sight of the prince, whom this time she also recognised. But he thrust her aside, and flung himself at the feet of Desiree, to whom he poured out all his heart!

Dawn found them still conversing; and the sun was high in the heavens before the princess perceived that she retained her human form. Ah! how happy she was when she knew that the days of her punishment were over; and with a glad voice she told the prince the tale of her enchantment.

So the story ended well after all; and the fairy Tulip, who turned out to be the old woman of the hut, made the young couple such a wedding feast as had never been seen since the world began. And everybody was delighted, except Cerisette and her mother, who were put in a boat and carried to a small island, where they had to work hard for their living.

11. ELSIE SPICER EELLS

CONTENTS

Preface

1. How Night Came
2. How the Rabbit Lost His Tail
3. How the Toad Got His Bruises
4. How the Tiger Got His Stripes
5. Why the Lamb Is Meek
6. Why the Tiger and the Stag Fear Each Other
7. How the Speckled Hen Got Her Speckles
8. How the Monkey Became a Trickster
9. How the Monkey and the Goat Earned Their Reputations
10. How the Monkey Got a Drink When He Was Thirsty
11. How the Monkey Got Food When He Was Hungry
12. Why the Bananas Belong to the Monkey
13. How the Monkey Escaped Being Eaten
14. Why the Monkey Still Has a Tail
15. How Black Became White
16. How the Pigeon Became a Tame Bird
17. Why the Sea Moans
18. How the Brazilian Beetles Got Their Gorgeous Coats
19. Princess Bluegreen of the Seven Cities
20. The Islands of Flowers
21. Why Dogs Sniff
22. Longstaff, Pinepuller and Rockheaver
23. The Table, the Sifter and the Pinchers
24. Linda Branca and Her Mask
25. Fresh Figs
26. Peter-of-the-Pigs

27. The Princess Who Lost Her Rings
28. The Master of Magic
29. St. Anthony’s Godchild
30. Trouble When One’s Young
31. The Little Maid Who Was Wise
32. Manoel Littlebean
33. The Necklace of Pearls
34. The Daughter of the King of Naples
35. Maria-of-the-Forest
36. The Seven Enchanted Princes
37. The Listening King
38. José the Beast Slayer
39. The Princess of the Lost Island
40. Why the Alvéloa Bird Received a Blessing
41. Why the Codorniz Bird Received a Curse
42. Outside the Door Like the Mother of St. Peter
43. Why the Owl Flies at Night
44. The Laborer and His Master
45. ‘Tis Faith Which Saves
46. St. Brendan’s Island
47. The Silent Cavalier
48. The Enchanted Palace
49. The Friend of the Devil
50. The Miller’s Cloak
51. The Magic Mouthful
52. The Messengers

PREFACE

EELLS, ELSIE SPICER

Born Eusebeia Spicer in West Winfield, New York on September 21, 1880, Eells was an American author who traveled and collected many tales. Married to Burr Gould Eells, she was a faithful collector of stories and published several books of fairy tales. Many of her tales are from South America, Spain, and the Azores, all “far off” distant lands that held a magic for many in the states, collected as she traveled. Her collections include *Fairy Tales from Brazil* and *The Islands of Magic: Legends, Folk and Fairy Tales from the Azores*.

In the introduction of *Tales of Giants from Brazil*, her second collection of stories, Eells explains that the Portuguese settlers traveled to Brazil, bringing with them not only goods, but tales. Over time, the Brazillian culture built upon and expanded the folk tales of the “old world” giving them new life.

1

HOW NIGHT CAME

Years and years ago at the very beginning of time, when the world had just been made, there was no night. It was day all the time. No one had ever heard of sunrise or sunset, starlight or moonbeams. There were no night birds, nor night beasts, nor night flowers. There were no lengthening shadows, nor soft night air, heavy with perfume.

In those days the daughter of the Great Sea Serpent, who dwelt in the depths of the seas, married one of the sons of the great earth race known as Man. She left her home among the shades of the deep seas and came to dwell with her husband in the land of daylight. Her eyes grew weary of the bright sunlight and her beauty faded. Her husband watched her with sad eyes, but he did not know what to do to help her.

“O, if night would only come,” she moaned as she tossed about wearily on her couch. “Here it is always day, but in my father’s kingdom there are many shadows. O, for a little of the darkness of night!”

Her husband listened to her moanings. “What is night?” he asked her. “Tell me about it and perhaps I can get a little of it for you.”

“Night,” said the daughter of the Great Sea Serpent, “is the name we give to the heavy shadows which darken my father’s kingdom in the depths of the seas. I love the sunlight of your earth land, but I grow very weary of it. If we could have only a little of the darkness of my father’s kingdom to rest our eyes part of the time.”

Her husband at once called his three most faithful slaves. “I am about to send you on a journey,” he told them. “You are to go to the kingdom of the Great Sea Serpent who dwells in the depths of the seas and ask him to give you some of the darkness of night that his daughter may not die here amid the sunlight of our earth land.”

The three slaves set forth for the kingdom of the Great Sea Serpent. After a long dangerous journey they arrived at his home in the depths of the seas and asked him to give them some of the shadows of night to carry back to the earth land. The Great Sea Serpent gave them a big bag full at once. It was securely fastened and the Great Sea Serpent warned them not to open it until they were once more in the presence of his daughter, their mistress.

The three slaves started out, bearing the big bag full of night upon their heads. Soon they heard strange sounds within the bag. It was the sound of the voices of all the night beasts, all the night birds, and all the night insects. If you have ever heard the night chorus from the jungles on the banks of the rivers you will know how it sounded. The three slaves had never heard sounds like those in all their lives. They were terribly frightened.

“Let us drop the bag full of night right here where we are and run away as fast as we can,” said the first slave.

“We shall perish. We shall perish, anyway, whatever we do,” cried the second slave.

“Whether we perish or not I am going to open the bag and see what makes all those terrible sounds,” said the third slave.

Accordingly they laid the bag on the ground and opened it. Out rushed all the night beasts and all the night birds and all the night insects and out rushed the great black cloud of night. The slaves were more frightened than ever at the darkness and escaped to the jungle.

The daughter of the Great Sea Serpent was waiting anxiously for the return of the slaves with the bag full of night. Ever since they had started out on their journey she had looked for their return, shading her eyes with her hand and gazing away off at the horizon, hoping with all her heart that they would hasten to bring the night. In that position she was standing under a royal palm tree, when the three slaves opened the bag and let night escape. “Night comes. Night comes at last,” she cried, as she saw the clouds of night upon the horizon. Then she closed her eyes and went to sleep there under the royal palm tree.

When she awoke she felt greatly refreshed. She was once more the happy princess who had left her father’s kingdom in the depths of the great seas to come to the earth land. She was now ready to see the day again. She looked up at the bright star shining above the royal palm tree and said, “O, bright beautiful star, henceforth you shall be called the morning star and you shall herald the approach of day. You shall reign queen of the sky at this hour.”

Then she called all the birds about her and said to them, “O, wonderful, sweet singing birds, henceforth I command you to sing your sweetest songs at this hour to herald the approach of day.” The cock was standing by her side. “You,” she said to him, “shall be appointed the watchman of the night. Your voice shall mark the watches of the night and shall warn the others that the *madrugada* comes.” To this very day in Brazil we call the early morning the *madrugada*. The cock announces its approach to the waiting birds. The birds sing their sweetest songs at that hour and the morning star reigns in the sky as queen of the *madrugada*.

When it was daylight again the three slaves crept home through the forests and jungles with their empty bag.

“O, faithless slaves,” said their master, “why did you not obey the voice of the Great Sea Serpent and open the bag only in the presence of his daughter, your mistress? Because of your disobedience I shall change you into monkeys. Henceforth you shall live in the trees. Your lips shall always bear the mark of the sealing wax which sealed the bag full of night.”

To this very day one sees the mark upon the monkeys’ lips, where they bit off the wax which sealed the bag; and in Brazil night leaps out quickly upon the earth just as it leapt quickly out of the bag in those days at the beginning of time. And all the night beasts and night birds and night insects give a sunset chorus in the jungles at nightfall.

2

HOW THE RABBIT LOST HIS TAIL

Once upon a time, ages and ages ago, the rabbit had a long tail, but the cat had none. She looked with envious eyes at the one which the rabbit had. It was exactly the sort of a tail she longed to have.

The rabbit was always a thoughtless careless little beast. One day he went to sleep with his beautiful long tail hanging straight out behind him. Along came Mistress Puss carrying a sharp knife, and with one blow she cut off Mr. Rabbit's tail. Mistress Puss was very spry and she had the tail nearly sewed on to her own body before Mr. Rabbit saw what she was doing.

"Don't you think it looks better on me than it did on you?" asked Mistress Puss.

"It surely is very becoming to you," replied the generous unselfish rabbit. "It was a little too long for me anyway and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll let you keep it if you will give me that sharp knife in exchange for it."

The cat gave Mr. Rabbit the knife and he started out into the deep forest with it. "I've lost my tail but I've gained a knife," said he; "I'll get a new tail or something else just as good."

Mr. Rabbit hopped along through the forest for a long time and at last he came to a little old man who was busily engaged in making baskets. He was making the baskets out of rushes and he was biting them off with his teeth. He looked up and spied Mr. Rabbit with the knife in his mouth.

"O, please, Mr. Rabbit," said he, "will you not be so kind as to let me borrow that sharp knife you are carrying? It is very hard work to bite the rushes off with my teeth."

Mr. Rabbit let him take the knife. He started to cut off the rushes with it, when *snap* went the knife! It broke into halves.

"O, dear! O, dear!" cried Mr. Rabbit. "What shall I do! What shall I do! You have broken my nice new knife."

The little old man said that he was very sorry and that he did not mean to do it.

Then Mr. Rabbit said, "A broken knife is of no use to me but perhaps you can use it, even if it is broken. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll let you keep the knife if you will give me one of your baskets in exchange for it."

The little old man gave Mr. Rabbit a basket and he started on through the deep forest with it. "I lost my tail but I gained a knife. I've lost my knife but I've gained a basket," said he. "I'll get a new tail or something else just as good."

Mr. Rabbit hopped along through the deep forest for a long time until at last he came to a clearing. Here there was an old woman busily engaged in picking lettuce. When she had gathered it she put it into her apron. She looked up and spied Mr. Rabbit hopping along with his basket.

"O, please, Mr. Rabbit," said she, "will you not be so kind as to let me borrow that nice basket you are carrying?"

Mr. Rabbit let her take the basket. She began to put her lettuce into it when out fell the bottom of the basket.

"O, dear! O, dear!" cried Mr. Rabbit. "What shall I do! What shall I do! You have broken the bottom out of my nice new basket."

The old woman said that she was very sorry and that she did not mean to do it.

Then said Mr. Rabbit, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll let you keep that broken basket if you will give me some of your lettuce.”

The old woman gave Mr. Rabbit some lettuce and he hopped along with it, saying, “I lost my tail but I gained a knife. I lost my knife but I gained a basket. I lost my basket but I gained some lettuce.”

The rabbit was getting very hungry and how nice the lettuce smelled! He took a bite. It was just the very best thing he had ever tasted in all his life. “I don’t care if I did lose my tail,” said he, “I’ve found something I like very much better.”

From that day to this no rabbit has ever had a tail. Neither has there ever been a rabbit who cared because he had no tail. From that time to this there has never been a rabbit who did not like lettuce to eat and who was not perfectly happy and contented if there was plenty of it.

3

HOW THE TOAD GOT HIS BRUISES

Once upon a time, ages and ages ago, the toad had a smooth skin. In those days he was a great gad about. He never could be found in his own house. If any one had a party he was sure to go, no matter how far away from home it was held, or how long it took to get there.

One day the toad received an invitation to attend a party in the sky. “You never can get to this party,” said his friend, the armadillo. “You know how slowly you travel here upon earth.”

“Wait and see whether or not I go to the party,” said the toad.

Not far from the toad’s house there lived a big black buzzard. No one liked the buzzard. He was very unpopular with all the birds and beasts. The toad hopped over to the buzzard’s house. The buzzard was outside the door making music on his violin.

“Good morning, Friend Buzzard,” said the toad. “Are you going to attend the party in the sky?”

The buzzard replied that he was planning to go.

“That is good,” said the toad. “May I have the pleasure of your company for the trip?”

The buzzard was delighted to have the toad seek his company. It was a new experience.

“I’ll be charmed to go to the party with you,” replied the buzzard. “What time shall we start?”

“We’ll start at four o’clock,” said the toad. “Come to my house and we’ll go on from there. Be sure to bring your violin with you.”

Promptly at four o’clock the buzzard arrived at the toad’s house. He had his violin with him, of course, because the toad had asked him to bring it.

“I’m not quite ready to go,” the toad called out. “Just leave your violin there by the door and step inside. It will take me only a minute to finish my toilet.”

The buzzard laid his violin carefully outside the door and went inside the toad’s house. The toad jumped through the window and hid himself inside the violin.

The buzzard waited and waited for the toad to get ready but he did not hear a word from the toad. Finally he got tired of waiting. He picked up his violin and started.

When he arrived at the party he was a trifle late but he explained how he had waited for the toad.

“How foolish to wait a minute for the toad,” said his hosts. “How could the toad ever get to a party in the sky? We just asked him as a joke because he is such a great gad about. Lay down your violin and come to the feast.”

The buzzard laid down his violin. As soon as there was no one looking, out hopped the toad. He was laughing from ear to ear. “So they thought I would not come to the party! What a joke! How surprised they will be to see me here!” he said.

There was nobody at the feast who was as gay as the toad. When the buzzard asked how he arrived he said: “I’ll tell you some other day.” Then he went on eating and dancing.

The buzzard did not have a very good time at the party. He decided that he would go home early. He went away without saying good-bye to his hosts and without taking his violin with him.

At the end of the party the toad hopped inside the violin and waited and waited for the buzzard to take him home. Nobody picked up the violin and the toad began to be very much worried. He almost wished he had not come.

After a while the falcon noticed the violin. “That violin belongs to the buzzard. He must have forgotten to take it home. I’ll carry it back for him,” he said.

The falcon flew towards earth with the violin. The toad shook about terribly inside of the violin. He got very tired. The falcon got tired, too.

“I’m not going to carry this heavy old violin of the buzzard’s another minute,” said the falcon. “I was foolish to offer to carry it in the first place. The buzzard is no friend of mine.”

He let the violin fall. Down, down toward earth it fell.

“O, little stones, O, little stones, get out of my way,” called the toad as he fell. The little stones had deaf ears. They did not get out of the way.

When the toad crawled out of the wrecked violin he was so covered with bruises that he could hardly hop home.

The buzzard never knew what became of his violin or why the toad had lost his good looks. To this very day the toad shows his bruises. And he is entirely cured of being a gad about.

4

HOW THE TIGER GOT HIS STRIPES

Once upon a time, ages and ages ago, so long ago that the tiger had no stripes upon his back and the rabbit still had his tail, there was a tiger who had a farm. The farm was very much overgrown with underbrush and the owner sought a workman to clear the ground for him to plant.

The tiger called all the beasts together and said to them when they had assembled, “I need a good workman at once to clear my farm of the underbrush. To the one of you who will do this work I offer an ox in payment.”

The monkey was the first one to step forward and apply for the position. The tiger tried him for a little while but he was not a good workman at all. He did not work steadily enough to accomplish anything. The tiger discharged him very soon and he did not pay him.

Then the tiger hired the goat to do the work. The goat worked faithfully enough but he did not have the brains to do the work well. He would clear a little of the farm in one place and then he would go away and work on another part of it. He never finished anything neatly. The tiger discharged him very soon without paying him.

Next the tiger tried the armadillo. The armadillo was very strong and he did the work well. The trouble with him was that he had such an appetite.

There were a great many ants about the place and the armadillo could never pass by a sweet tender juicy ant without stopping to eat it. It was lunch time all day long with him. The tiger discharged him and sent him away without paying him anything.

At last the rabbit applied for the position. The tiger laughed at him and said, “Why, little rabbit, you are too small to do the work. The monkey, the goat, and the armadillo have all failed to give satisfaction. Of course a little beast like you will fail too.”

However, there were no other beasts who applied for the position so the tiger sent for the rabbit and told him that he would try him for a little while.

The rabbit worked faithfully and well, and soon he had cleared a large portion of the ground. The next day he worked just as well. The tiger thought that he had been very lucky to hire the rabbit. He got tired staying around to watch the rabbit work. The rabbit seemed to know just how to do the work anyway, without orders, so the tiger decided to go away on a hunting trip. He left his son to watch the rabbit.

After the tiger had gone away the rabbit said to the tiger’s son, “The ox which your father is going to give me is marked with a white spot on his left ear and another on his right side, isn’t he?”

“O, no,” replied the tiger’s son. “He is red all over with just a tiny white spot on his right ear.”

The rabbit worked for a while longer and then he said, “The ox which your father is going to give me is kept by the river, isn’t he?”

“Yes,” replied the tiger’s son.

The rabbit had made a plan to go and get the ox without waiting to finish his work. Just as he started off he saw the tiger returning. The tiger noticed that the rabbit had not worked so well when he was away. After that he stayed and watched the rabbit until the whole farm was cleared. Then the tiger gave the rabbit the ox as he had promised.

“You must kill this ox,” he said to the rabbit, “in a place where there are neither flies nor mosquitoes.”

The rabbit went away with the ox. After he had gone for some distance he thought he would kill him. He heard a cock, however, crowing in the distance and he knew that there must be a farm yard near. There would be flies of course. He went on farther and again he thought that he would kill the ox. The ground looked moist and damp and so did the leaves on the bushes. Since the rabbit thought there would be mosquitoes there he decided not to kill the ox. He went on and on and finally he came to a high place where there was a strong breeze blowing. “There are no mosquitoes here,” he said to himself. “The place is so far removed from any habitation that there are no flies, either.” He decided to kill the ox.

Just as he was ready to eat the ox, along came the tiger. “O, rabbit, you have been such a good friend of mine,” said the tiger, “and now I am so very, very hungry that all my ribs show, as you yourself can see. Will you not be a good kind rabbit and give me a piece of your ox?”

The rabbit gave the tiger a piece of the ox. The tiger devoured it in the twinkling of an eye. Then he leaned back and said, “Is that all you are going to give me to eat?”

The tiger looked so big and savage that the rabbit did not dare refuse to give him any more of the ox. The tiger ate and ate and ate until he had devoured that entire ox. The rabbit had been able to get only a tiny morsel of it. He was very, very angry at the tiger.

One day not long after the rabbit went to a place not far from the tiger’s house and began cutting down big staves of wood. The tiger soon happened along and asked him what he was doing.

“I’m getting ready to build a stockade around myself,” replied the rabbit. “Haven’t you heard the orders?” The tiger said that he hadn’t heard any orders.

“That is very strange,” said the rabbit. “The order has gone forth that every beast shall fortify himself by building a stockade around himself. All the beasts are doing it.”

The tiger became very much alarmed. “O, dear! O, dear! What shall I do,” he cried. “I don’t know how to build a stockade. I never could do it in the world. O, good rabbit! O, kind rabbit! You are such, a very good friend of mine. Couldn’t you, as a great favour, because of our long friendship, build a stockade about me before you build one around yourself?”

The rabbit replied that he could not think of risking his own life by building the tiger’s fortifications first. Finally, however, he consented to do it.

The rabbit cut down great quantities of long sharp sticks. He set them firmly in the ground about the tiger. He fastened others securely over the top until the tiger was completely shut in by strong bars. Then he went away and left the tiger.

The tiger waited and waited for something to happen to show him the need of the fortifications. Nothing at all happened.

He got very hungry and thirsty. After a while the monkey passed that way.

The tiger called out, “O, monkey, has the danger passed?”

The monkey did not know what danger the tiger meant, but he replied, “Yes.”

Then the tiger said, “O, monkey, O, good, kind monkey, will you not please be so kind as to help me out of my stockade?”

“Let the one who got you in there help you out,” replied the monkey and he went on his way.

Along came the goat and the tiger called out, “O, goat, has the danger passed?”

The goat did not know anything about any danger, but he replied, “Yes.”

Then the tiger said, “O, goat, O, good kind goat, please be so kind as to help me out of my stockade.”

“Let the one who got you in there help you out,” replied the goat as he went on his way.

Along came the armadillo and the tiger called out, “O, armadillo, has the danger passed?”

The armadillo had not heard of any danger, but he replied that it had passed.

Then the tiger said, “O, armadillo, O, good, kind armadillo, you have always been such a good friend and neighbour. Please help me now to get out of my stockade.”

“Let the one who got you in there help you out,” replied the armadillo as he went on his way.

The tiger jumped and jumped with all his force at the top of the stockade, but he could not break through. He jumped and jumped with all his might at the front side of the stockade, but he could not break through. He thought that never in the world would he be able to break out. He rested for a little while and as he rested he thought. He thought how bright the sun was shining outside. He thought what good hunting there was in the jungle. He thought how cool the water was at the spring. Once more he jumped and jumped with all his might at the back side of the stockade. At last he broke through. He did not get through, however, without getting bad cuts on both his sides from the sharp edges of the staves. Until this day the tiger has stripes on both his sides.

5

WHY THE LAMB IS MEEK

Once upon a time there was a little lamb frisking gaily about the pasture. The bright sunshine and the soft breezes made him very happy. He had just finished a hearty meal and that made him happy too. He was the very happiest little lamb in all the world and he thought that he was the most wonderful little lamb.

A big toad sat on the ground and watched him. After a while the toad said: “O, little lamb, how are you feeling today?”

The lamb replied that he had never felt better in all his life.

“Even though you are feeling very strong I can pull you into the sea,” said the toad.

The little lamb laughed and laughed until he rolled over on the ground.

“Just take hold of this rope and I’ll show you how easy it is to pull you into the sea,” said the toad.

The lamb took hold of the rope. Then the toad said, “Please wait a minute while I get a good long distance away from you. I can pull better when I’m not too near you.”

The lamb waited and the toad hopped down to the sea. He hopped up into a tree which hung over the water’s edge and from there he hopped on to the whale’s back. He fastened the end of the rope around the whale and then he called out to the lamb: “All ready. Now we’ll see how hard you can pull.”

When the whale felt the lamb pulling at the rope he swam away from the shore. No matter how hard the lamb pulled or how much force he exerted it did not do one bit of good. He was dragged down to the water’s edge as easily as could be.

“I give up,” said the lamb as he reached the water’s edge.

After that, although the sunshine was just as bright as ever, any one who watched that little lamb could see that he was a little more meek.

One day not long afterwards the sunshine was again very bright and the little lamb was again feeling frisky. He was so happy and gay that he had forgotten all about how the toad had pulled him down to the water until the toad spoke to him. Then he remembered.

“O, little lamb, how are you feeling today?” asked the toad. The little lamb replied that he was very well.

“Let us run a race,” said the toad, “I think I can beat you.”

“You may be strong enough to pull me into the sea,” said the lamb, “but surely I can run faster than you. I’ve watched you hopping about my pasture. You can’t run fast at all. However, I’ll gladly run a race with you to prove what I say.”

The toad set a goal and told the lamb to call out every little while during the race so he could see how much farther ahead the lamb was. Then the toad and the lamb started.

The toad had assembled all his brothers and his sisters and his cousins and his uncles and his aunts before the race and had stationed them at various points along the path of the race. He had told them that whenever any of them should hear the lamb calling out, “Laculay, laculay, laculay,” the toad which was nearest should answer, “Gulugubango, bango lay.”

The lamb ran and ran as fast as he could. Then he remembered his promise and called out, “Laculay, laculay, laculay.” He expected to hear the toad answer from a long, long distance behind him. He was much surprised to hear some one near him answer, “Gulugubango, bango lay.” After that he ran faster than ever.

After running on for some distance farther the lamb again called out, “Laculay, laculay, laculay.” Again he heard the answer at only a short distance away, “Gulugubango, bango lay.” He ran and ran until his little heart was beating so fast that it seemed as if it would burst. At last he arrived at the goal of the race which the toad had set and there sat the toad’s brother who looked so much like him that the lamb couldn’t tell them apart. The lamb went back to his pasture very meekly and quietly. He acknowledged that he had been beaten in the race.

The next morning the toad said to him, “Even though you did not run fast enough to win the race, still you are a very fast runner. I have told the daughter of the king about you and I have said to her that some day she shall see me riding on your back with a bridle in your mouth as if you were my horse.”

The lamb was very angry. “Perhaps you are strong enough to pull me into the sea, and perhaps you can beat me when we run a race,” said the lamb, “but never, never in the world will I be your horse.”

Time passed and the sunshine was very bright and the soft, gentle breezes were very sweet. The lamb was so happy again that he forgot all about how the toad had pulled him into the sea, and how the toad had beaten him at running the race. He was very sorry for the toad when he saw him all humped up in a disconsolate little heap one day. “O, poor toad, are you sick?” he asked. “Isn’t there something I can do to help you?”

The toad told him how very sick he was. “There is something you could do to help me,” he said, “but I don’t believe that you are quite strong enough or can travel quite fast enough.”

The lamb took a deep breath and blew out his chest. “I’ll show you,” he said. “Just tell me what it is.”

The toad replied that he had promised to be at a party that afternoon at the house of the king’s daughter and he did not see how he could possibly get there unless some one would carry him.

“Jump on my back,” said the lamb. “I’ll carry you.”

The toad shook about on the lamb’s back after they had started so that it seemed as if he would surely fall off. After a little he said, “I can not possibly stand riding like this. It jars all my sore spots. I’ll have to get off.” He tried it a little while longer and shook about worse than ever. Then he said, “Do you know, I think I could endure this painful ride a little better if only I had something to hold myself by? Do you mind if I take a piece of grass and put it in your mouth? I can hold on to that when I shake about and my sore spots will not hurt so much.”

The lamb let the toad put a piece of grass in his mouth.

After a while the toad asked for a little stick. “The flies and mosquitoes annoy me terribly,” he said. “If only I had a little stick I could wave it about over my head and frighten them away. It is very bad for any one in my weak, nervous condition to be bothered by flies and mosquitoes.” The lamb let the toad have a little stick to wave over his head.

At last the lamb and the toad drew near to the palace of the king. The king’s daughter was leaning out of the window watching for them. The toad dug his feet into the lamb’s sides, pulled hard on the piece of the grass in the lamb’s mouth and waved the little stick about over the lamb’s head. “Go on, horse,” he said and the king’s daughter heard him. She laughed and laughed, and when all the rest of the people in the palace saw the toad arriving mounted on the lamb’s back and driving him like a horse they laughed too. The lamb went meekly home to his pasture and from that day to this when one wishes to speak of meekness one says “as meek as a lamb.”

6

WHY THE TIGER AND THE STAG FEAR EACH OTHER

Once upon a time there was a large handsome stag with great branching horns. One day he said to himself, “I am tired of having no home of my own, and of just living anywhere. I shall build me a house.” He searched on every hill, in every valley, by every stream, and under all the trees for a suitable place. At last he found one that was just right. It was not too high, nor too low, not too near a stream and not too far away from one, not under too thick trees and not away from the trees out under the hot sun. “I am going to build my house here,” he said, and he began to clear a place for it at once. He worked all day and did not go away until night.

Now in that same country there lived a large handsome tiger, with sharp, sharp teeth and bright, cruel eyes. One day the tiger said to himself, “I am tired of having no home of my own, — of just living around anywhere! I shall build me a house.” Accordingly the tiger searched for a place to build his house. He searched on every hill, in every valley, by every stream, and under all the trees. At last he found a place which was just right. It was not too high nor too low, not too near a stream and not too far away from one, not under too thick trees and yet not away from the trees out in the hot sun. The tiger said to himself, “I am going to build my house here. The place is all ready for me for there isn’t very much underbrush here.” He began at once and finished clearing the place. Then it became daylight and he went away.

At daylight the stag came back to do more work on his new house. “H’m,” he said when he looked at the clearing. “Somebody is helping me. The place is cleared and ready for me to build the foundation.”

He began to work at once and worked all day. At night when the foundation was laid, he went away.

At night the tiger came to work at his new house. “H’m,” he said when he looked at it. “Somebody is helping me. The foundations of my house are all laid.” He began to work at once and built the sides of the house. He worked all night and went away at daybreak, leaving the house with the sides completed. There was a big door and a funny little window in the side.

At daybreak the stag came back to work on his house. When he saw it he rubbed his eyes for he thought that he must be dreaming. The sides of the house were completed with a big door and a funny little window. “Somebody must surely be helping me,” he said to himself as he began to work to put on the roof. He worked hard all day and when the sun went down, there was a roof of dried grass on the house. “I can sleep in my own house to-night,” he said. He made his bed in the corner and soon was sound asleep.

At night the tiger came back to work on his new house. When he saw it he rubbed his eyes for he thought that he must be dreaming. There was a roof of dried grass on the house.

“Somebody must surely be helping me,” he said to himself as he entered the door. The first thing he saw when he entered the door was the stag sound asleep in his bed in the corner. “Who are you and what are you doing in my house?” he said in his deepest voice.

The stag woke up with a start. “Who are you and what are you doing in my house?” said the stag in his deepest voice.

“It is not your house. It is mine. I built it myself,” said the tiger.

“It is my house,” said the stag. “I built it myself.”

“I made the clearing for the house,” said the tiger, “I built the sides and made the door and window.”

“I started the clearing,” said the stag. “I laid the foundations and put on the roof of dried grass.”

The stag and the tiger quarrelled all night about whose house it was. At daybreak they decided that they would live together there.

The next night the tiger said to the stag, “I’m going hunting. Get the water and have the wood ready for the fire. I shall be almost famished when I return.”

The stag got the wood and water ready. After a while the tiger came back. He brought home for dinner a great handsome stag. The stag had no appetite at all and he didn’t sleep a wink that night.

The next day the stag said that he was going hunting. He told the tiger to have the wood and water ready when he got back. The tiger got the wood and water ready. By and by the stag came back bringing with him the body of a great tiger.

“I am nearly famished,” said the stag. “Let’s have dinner right away.” The tiger hadn’t any appetite at all and he could not eat a mouthful.

That night neither the tiger nor the stag could sleep a wink. The tiger was afraid the stag would kill him if he shut his eyes for a minute, and the stag was afraid the tiger would kill him if he slept or even pretended to be asleep. Accordingly he kept wide awake too.

Toward morning the stag got very cramped from keeping in one position so long. He moved his head slightly. In doing this his horns struck against the roof of the house. It made a terrible noise. The tiger thought that the stag was about to spring upon him and kill him. He made a leap for the door and ran out of it as fast as he could. He ran and ran until he was far, far away from the house with the roof of dried grass.

The stag thought that the tiger was about to spring upon him and kill him. He, too, made a leap for the door and ran and ran until he was far, far away from the house with the roof of dried grass. The tiger and the stag are still running away from each other until this very day.

The house with the roof of dried grass waited and waited there in the place which was neither too high nor too low, too near the river nor too far away, not under too thick trees nor out in the hot sun. It waited and waited until it go so tired it fell down in a heap.

7

HOW THE SPECKLED HEN GOT HER SPECKLES

Once upon a time, ages and ages ago, there was a little white hen. One day she was busily engaged in scratching the soil to find worms and insects for her breakfast. As she worked she sang over and over again her little crooning song, “Quirrichi, quirrichi, quirrichi.” Suddenly she noticed a tiny piece of paper lying on the ground. “Quirrichi, quirrichi, what luck!” she said to herself. “This must be a letter. One time when the king, the great ruler of our country, held his court in the meadow close by, many people brought him letters and laid them at his feet. Now I, too, even I, the little white hen, have a letter. I am going to carry my letter to the king.”

The next morning the little white hen started bravely out on her long journey. She carried the letter very carefully in her little brown basket. It was a long distance to the royal palace where the king lived. The little white hen had never been so far from home in all her life.

After a while she met a friendly fox. Foxes and little white hens are not usually very good friends, you know, but this fox was a friend of the little white hen. Once upon a time she had helped the fox to escape from a trap and the fox had never forgotten her kindness to him.

“O, little white hen, where are you going?” asked the fox.

“Quirrichi, quirrichi,” replied the little white hen, “I am going to the royal palace to carry a letter to the king.”

“Indeed, little white hen,” said the fox, “I should like to go with you. Give me your permission to accompany you on your journey.”

“I shall be glad to have you go with me,” said the little white hen. “It is a very long journey to the royal palace where the king lives. Wouldn’t you like me to carry you in my little brown basket?”

The fox climbed into the little brown basket. After the little white hen had gone on for some distance farther she met a river. Once upon a time the little white hen had done the river a kindness. He had, with great difficulty, thrown some ugly worms upon the bank and he was afraid they would crawl back in again. The little white hen had eaten them for him. Always after that the river had been her friend.

“O, little white hen, where are you going?” the river called out as soon as he saw her.

“Quirrichi, quirrichi, I am going to the royal palace to carry a letter to the king,” replied the little white hen.

“O, little white hen, may I go with you?” asked the river.

The little white hen told the river that he might go with her and asked him to ride in the little brown basket. So the river climbed into the little brown basket.

After the little white hen had journeyed along for a time she came to a fire. Once upon a time, when the fire had been dying the little white hen had brought some dried grass. The grass had given the fire new life and always after that he had been the friend of the little white hen.

“O, little white hen, where are you going?” the fire asked.

“Quirrichi, quirrichi, I am going to the royal palace to carry a letter to the king,” replied the little white hen.

“O, little white hen, may I go with you?” asked the fire. “I have never been to the royal palace and I have never had even a peep at the king.”

The little white hen told the fire that he might go with her and asked him to climb into the little brown basket. By this time the little brown basket was so full, that, try as they might, they couldn’t make room for the fire. At last they thought of a plan. The fire changed himself into ashes and then there was room for him to get into the basket.

The little white hen journeyed on and on, and finally she arrived at the royal palace.

“Who are you and what are you carrying in your little brown basket?” asked the royal doorkeeper when he opened the door.

“I am the little white hen and I am carrying a letter to the king,” replied the little white hen. She didn’t say a word about the fox and the river and the fire which she had in her little brown basket. She was so frightened before the great royal doorkeeper of the palace that she could hardly find her voice at all.

The royal doorkeeper invited the little white hen to enter the palace and he led her to the royal throne where the king was sitting. The little white hen bowed very low before the king — so low, in fact, that it mussed up all her feathers.

“Who are you and what is your business?” asked the king in his big, deep, kingly voice.

“Quirrichi, quirrichi, I am the little white hen,” replied the little white hen in her low, frightened, little voice. “I have come to bring my letter to your royal majesty.” She handed the king the piece of paper which had remained all this time at the bottom of the little brown basket. There were marks of dirt upon it where the friendly fox’s feet had rested. It was damp where the river had lain. It had tiny holes in it where the fire had sat after he had turned himself into hot ashes.

“What do you mean by bringing me this dirty piece of paper?” shouted the king in his biggest, deepest, gruffest voice. “I am highly offended. I always knew that hens were stupid little creatures but you are quite the stupidest little hen I ever saw in all my life.”

“Here,” and he turned to one of the attendants standing by the throne, “take this stupid, little white hen and throw her out into the royal poultry yard. I think we will have her for dinner to-morrow.”

The little white hen was roughly seized by the tallest royal attendant and carried down the back stairs, through the back gate, out into the royal poultry yard. She still clung to the little brown basket which she had brought with her on her long journey to the royal palace and through all the sad experiences she had met there.

When the little white hen reached the royal poultry yard all the royal fowls flew at her. Some plucked at her rumpled white feathers. Others tried to pick out her eyes. One pulled off the cover of the little brown basket.

Out sprang the fox from the little brown basket and in the twinkling of an eye he fell upon the fowls of the royal poultry yard. Not a single fowl was left alive.

There was such a great commotion that the king, the queen, the royal attendants and all the royal servants of the palace came rushing out to see what was the matter. The fox had already taken to his heels and the little white hen lost no time in running away too. She did not, however, forget to take her little brown basket with her.

The royal household all ran after her in swift pursuit. They had almost caught her when the river suddenly sprang out of the little brown basket and flowed between the little white hen and her royal pursuers. They couldn’t get across without canoes.

While they were getting the canoes and climbing into them the little white hen had time to run a long way. She had almost reached a thick forest where she could easily hide herself when the royal pursuers again drew near. Then the fire which had changed itself into hot ashes jumped out of the little brown basket. It immediately became dark, so dark that the royal household could not even see each other’s faces and, of course, they could not see in which direction the little white hen was running. There was nothing for them to do but to return to the royal palace and live on beef and mutton.

The fire which had turned itself into ashes sprang out of the little brown basket so suddenly that it scattered ashes all over the little white hen. From that day she was always speckled where the ashes fell upon her. The chickens of the little white hen (who was now a little speckled hen) were all speckled too. So were their chickens and their chickens and their chickens’ chickens, even down to this very day. Whenever you see a speckled hen you may know that she is descended from the little white hen who carried a letter to the king, and who, in her adventures, became the first speckled hen.

8

HOW THE MONKEY BECAME A TRICKSTER

Once upon a time there was a beautiful garden in which grew all sorts of fruits. Many beasts lived in the garden and they were permitted to eat of the fruits whenever they wished. But they were asked to observe one rule. They must make a low, polite bow to the fruit tree, call it by its name, and say, “Please give me a taste of your fruit.” They had to be very careful to remember the tree’s correct name and not to forget to say “please.” It was also very important that they should remember not to be greedy. They must always leave plenty of fruit for the other beasts who might pass that way, and plenty to adorn the tree itself and to furnish seed so that other trees might grow. If they wished to eat figs they had to say, “O, fig tree, O, fig tree, please give me a taste of your fruit;” or, if they wished to eat oranges they had to say, “O, orange tree, O, orange tree, please give me a taste of your fruit.”

In one corner of the garden grew the most splendid tree of all. It was tall and beautiful and the rosy-cheeked fruit upon its wide spreading branches looked wonderfully tempting. No beast had ever tasted of that fruit, for no beast could ever remember its name.

In a tiny house near the edge of the garden dwelt a little old woman who knew the names of all the fruit trees which grew in the garden. The beasts often went to her and asked the name of the wonderful fruit tree, but the tree was so far distant from the tiny house of the little old woman that no beast could ever remember the long, hard name by the time he reached the fruit tree.

At last the monkey thought of a trick. Perhaps you do not know it, but the monkey can play the guitar. He always played when the beasts gathered together in the garden to dance. The monkey went to the tiny house of the little old woman, carrying his guitar under his arm. When she told him the long hard name of the wonderful fruit tree he made up a little tune to it, all his own, and sang it over and over again all the way from the tiny house of the little old woman to the corner of the garden where the wonderful fruit tree grew. When any of the other beasts met him and asked him what new song he was singing to his guitar, he said never a word. He marched straight on, playing his little tune over and over again on his guitar and singing softly the long hard name.

At last he reached the corner of the garden where the wonderful fruit tree grew. He had never seen it look so beautiful. The rosy-cheeked fruit glowed in the bright sunlight. The monkey could hardly wait to make his bow, say the long hard name over twice and ask for the fruit with a “please.” What a beautiful colour and what a delicious odour that fruit had! The monkey had never in all his life been so near to anything which smelled so good. He took a big bite. What a face he made! That beautiful sweet smelling fruit was bitter and sour, and it had a nasty taste. He threw it away from him as far as he could.

The monkey never forgot the tree’s long hard name and the little tune he had sung. Nor did he forget how the fruit tasted. He never took a bite of it again; but, after that, his favourite trick was to treat the other beasts to the wonderful fruit just to see them make faces when they tasted it.

9

HOW THE MONKEY AND THE GOAT EARNED THEIR REPUTATIONS

Once upon a time the tiger sent an invitation to the goat asking the goat to accompany him on a visit. The goat promptly accepted the invitation and at the appointed day they started on their journey to the house of the tiger’s friend. On the way there they came to a dangerous marsh. The tiger was afraid to cross it, but he pretended to be very brave. He said to the goat: “Friend Goat, how very pale you look when you think about crossing the marsh. Don’t be afraid. Just go ahead.”

The goat assured the tiger that he was no coward. He thrust out his chest and marched along toward the marsh like a brave soldier. As soon, however, as he stepped into the marsh, he fell into the mud and barely got through it alive. The tiger went around the marsh and walked on dry ground.

After the tiger and the goat had come together again they came to some banana trees. The tiger said to the goat: “Friend Goat, aren’t you hungry? Let us stop here and eat some bananas. You climb up and pluck the bananas. Give me the ripe ones, and keep the green ones yourself.” The goat climbed up and picked the bananas. He gave the ripe ones to the tiger and the tiger had a good meal. The goat went hungry.

The tiger and the goat walked along and after going for some distance they saw a cobra lying in the path. “Friend Goat,” said the tiger, “here you have the opportunity to procure a beautiful necklace for your daughter, free of cost. Just pick it up and it is yours.” The goat started forward to pick up the snake, but the tiger told him to let it alone if he did not want to be killed.

When the tiger and the goat arrived at the house of the tiger’s friend it was very late. They soon went to bed in hammocks hung close together. At midnight the tiger rose quietly, walked on tip toe to the door, opened it, and went out. He hurried to the place where the sheep were kept, killed the fattest lamb of the flock, and had a feast. Then he went back to the hammock, wiped the blood on the goat, and went to sleep.

Early the next morning the host discovered that one of his lambs was missing. He hastened to the room where the tiger and the goat were sleeping and accused the tiger of having killed the lamb. The tiger looked up at him with an innocent expression and asked, “Do you see any blood on me?” There was no blood on the tiger, but the host looked into the next hammock and saw the goat all covered with blood. “I know now who killed my fattest lamb,” he said, and he gave the goat such a beating that the poor goat barely escaped with his life. From that day to this when one speaks of a person who has been easily imposed upon he calls him “the goat.”

Things happened very differently with the monkey. One day not long afterward the tiger invited the monkey to accompany him when he went to visit his friend. The monkey accepted, and the tiger and the monkey set out on the journey. When they came to the marsh the tiger said to the monkey, “Friend Monkey, how very pale you look when you think about crossing the marsh. Don’t be afraid. Just go ahead.”

“You go ahead yourself,” replied the monkey. The tiger went through the marsh and fell into the mud so that he was barely able to get out again. The monkey went around the marsh and walked on dry ground.

After a while the tiger and the monkey came to the banana trees. “Friend Monkey,” said the tiger, “aren’t you hungry? Let us stop here and eat some bananas. You climb up and pluck the bananas. Give the ripe ones to me and you may keep the green ones for yourself.” The monkey climbed up and picked the bananas but he ate all the ripe ones himself and threw the green ones down to the tiger. The tiger was forced to go hungry but the monkey had a good meal.

Finally the tiger and the monkey came to a cobra lying in the path. “Friend Monkey,” said the tiger, “here you have the opportunity to procure a beautiful necklace for your daughter, free of cost. Pick it up and it is yours.”

“Pick it up yourself,” replied the monkey.

When the tiger and the monkey arrived at the house of the tiger’s friend it was very late. They went to bed in hammocks hung up close together. The monkey had seen enough of the tiger that day to make him decide that he had better sleep with one eye open. Accordingly he pretended he was asleep, but he was really awake. At midnight he saw the tiger crawl quietly out of his hammock, walk on tip toe to the door, open it gently, and go out. The monkey decided to watch and see what happened when the tiger came back.

The tiger went to the place where the sheep were kept, killed the fattest lamb of the flock and had a feast. When he came back he tried to wipe the lamb’s blood on the monkey. The monkey saw him and gave him a push so that he spilled the blood all over himself and his own hammock. Not a single drop went on the monkey.

Early the next morning when the host missed one of his lambs he came to the room where his guests were sleeping. He saw the tiger all covered with blood and he cried, “O ho, I have at last caught the one who kills my lambs.” Then he gave the tiger such a beating that he barely escaped with his life. It was all he could do to crawl home again.

10

HOW THE MONKEY GOT A DRINK WHEN HE WAS THIRSTY

Once upon a time the monkey made the tiger very angry. This is how it happened. The monkey was seated high up among the leafy branches of a mango tree playing upon his guitar. The tiger passed that way and lay down under the tree to rest. Just to tease him the monkey played and sang this little song:

Tango ti tar, tango ti tar,
The tiger's bones are in my guitar.
Tee hee, Tee hee.

The tiger was very angry. "Just wait until I catch you, Mr. Monkey," he said. "Then I'll show you a trick or two with bones."

The monkey leaped from one tree to another keeping himself so well hid by the foliage that the tiger could not see him. Then he came down out of the trees and hid himself in a hole in the ground. When the tiger came near he again played and sang his little song:

Tango ti tar, tango ti tar,
The tiger's bones are in my guitar.
Tee hee, Tee hee.

The tiger put his paw into the hole and caught the monkey's leg. "Oh, ho, Mr. Tiger!" said the monkey. "You think that you have caught my leg but what you really have is just a little stick. Oh, ho! Oh, ho!" Then the tiger let go of the monkey's leg.

The monkey crawled farther back into the hole in the ground where the tiger's paw could not reach him. Then he said: "Thank you so much, Mr. Tiger, for letting go of my leg. It really was my leg, you know." Again he played and sang his little song:

Tango ti tar, tango ti tar,
The tiger's bones are in my guitar.
Tee hee, Tee hee.

The tiger was angrier than ever. He waited and waited for the monkey to come out of the hole in the ground but the monkey did not come. He had discovered another way out and once more from the high tree tops he sang down to the waiting tiger:

Tango ti tar, tango ti tar,
The tiger's bones are in my guitar.
Tee hee, Tee hee.

THERE HAD BEEN a great drought in the land and there was only one watering place where the beasts could drink. The tiger knew that the monkey would have to go there when he was thirsty so he decided to wait for him and catch him when he came to drink.

When the monkey went to the watering place to get a drink he found the tiger there waiting for him. He ran away as fast as the wind for he was really very much afraid of the tiger.

He waited and waited until he thought he should die of thirst, but the tiger did not go away from the watering place for a single minute. At last the monkey thought of a trick by which he would be able to get a drink.

He lay down by the side of the pathway as if he were dead. After a while an old woman came along the path carrying a dish of honey in a basket upon her head. She saw the monkey lying there by the path and, thinking that he was dead, she picked him up and put him into the basket with the dish of honey. When the monkey saw that it was honey in the dish he was very happy. He opened the dish and covered himself all over with the soft sticky honey. Then as the old woman walked under the trees he lightly sprang out of the basket into the trees. The old woman did not miss him until she got home and found only part of her dish of honey in the basket. “Why, I thought I had brought home a dead monkey in my basket,” she said to her children. “Now there is no monkey here and my dish is only half full of honey. The monkey must have been playing one of his tricks.”

The monkey had, in the meantime, stuck leaves from the trees into the honey all over his body so that he was completely disguised. His own mother would never have recognised him. He looked something like a porcupine; but instead of sharp quills there were green leaves sticking out all over him. In this fashion he went to the drinking place and the tiger did not recognise him. He took a long, deep drink. He was so thirsty and the water tasted so good that he stayed in the drinking place too long. The leaves came out of the honey which had held them and the tiger saw that it was really the monkey. The monkey was barely able to escape.

He was so badly frightened that he waited and waited a long, long time before he again went to the drinking place. At last he got so thirsty that he couldn’t wait any longer. He went to the resin tree and covered himself with resin. Then he stuck leaves into the resin and again went to the drinking place.

The tiger saw him, but as the tiger expected to see the leaves come off just as soon as the monkey got into the water, he thought he would wait and catch him in his bare skin. This time the leaves did not come off, for the resin held them fast and was not in the least affected by the water. The tiger thought that it was not the monkey and that he must have made a mistake. The monkey drank all he wished and then strolled away leisurely without the tiger’s attacking him. He used the resin and leaves every time he wanted a drink after that. He kept up the trick until the rainy season arrived and he could find plenty of water in other places than the big drinking place.

11

HOW THE MONKEY GOT FOOD WHEN HE WAS HUNGRY

Once upon a time the monkey was hungry. He wanted to make some porridge, but he did not have any money to buy meal to make the porridge. So he went to the house of the hen to borrow some meal. The hen gave him some meal.

“Come to my house to-morrow at one o’clock,” he said to the hen, “I’ll pay back the meal then.”

Then the monkey went to the house of the fox and said, “O, friend fox, please lend me some meal. Come to my house to-morrow at two o’clock and I’ll pay you then.” The fox gave him some meal.

Then the monkey went to the house of the dog and said, “O, friend dog, please lend me some meal. Come to my house to-morrow at three o’clock and I’ll pay you back then.” The dog gave him some meal.

Then the monkey went to the house of the tiger and said, “O, friend tiger, please lend me some meal. Come to my house to-morrow at four o’clock and I’ll pay you back then.” The tiger gave the monkey some meal.

The monkey went home and made a great pot of porridge. He feasted and feasted until he couldn’t eat any more, but there was still plenty of porridge left in the pot. Then the monkey made his bed and took care to fix it high up from the floor.

The next day, at midday, he ate some more of the porridge. Then he bound a cloth about his head and went to bed pretending that he was sick.

At one o’clock the hen came and knocked at the door. The monkey in a low, weak voice asked her to enter. He told her how very sick he was and the hen was very sorry for him.

At two o’clock the fox came and knocked at the door. The hen was frightened almost to death. “Never mind,” said the monkey, “you can hide here under my bed.”

The hen hid under the monkey’s bed and the monkey in a weak, low voice invited the fox to enter. The monkey told the fox how very ill he was and the fox was very sorry for him.

At three o’clock the dog came and knocked at the door. The fox was frightened almost to death. “Never mind,” said the monkey; “hide here under my bed and everything will be all right.”

The fox hid under the monkey’s bed and the monkey, in a low, weak voice, invited the dog to enter. The monkey told the dog how very sick he was and the dog was very sorry for him.

At four the tiger came and knocked at the door. The dog was frightened almost to death. “Never mind,” said the monkey. “Hide here under my bed and everything will be all right.”

The dog hid under the monkey’s bed. Then the monkey invited the tiger to enter. He told, the tiger how very sick he was but the tiger was not at all sorry for him. He sprang at the bed, demanding in a loud, fierce voice that the monkey pay back the meal at once, as he had promised to do. The monkey escaped to the tree tops, but the bed broke down under the tiger’s weight.

Then the fox ate up the hen and the dog ate up the fox and the tiger ate up the dog. The tiger is still trying to catch the monkey.

12

WHY THE BANANAS BELONG TO THE MONKEY

Perhaps you do not know it, but the monkeys think that all the bananas belong to them. When Brazilian children eat bananas they say, “I am a monkey.” I once knew a little boy in Brazil who was very, very fond of bananas. He always said, “I am *very much* of a monkey.” If you are fond of bananas the Brazilian children would tell you that you are a monkey, too. This is the story they tell to show us how it all came about.

Once upon a time when the world had just been made and there was only one kind of banana, but very many kinds of monkeys, there was a little old woman who had a big garden full of banana trees. It was very difficult for the old woman to gather the bananas herself, so she made a bargain with the largest monkey. She told him that if he would gather the bunches of bananas for her she would give him half of them. The monkey gathered the bananas. When he took his half he gave the little old woman the bananas which grow at the bottom of the bunch and are small and wrinkled. The nice big fat ones he kept for himself and carried them home to let them ripen in the dark.

The little old woman was very angry. She lay awake all night trying to think of some way by which she could get even with the monkey. At last she thought of a trick.

The next morning she made an image of wax which looked just like a little black boy. Then she placed a large flat basket on the top of the image's head and in the basket she placed the best ripe bananas she could find. They certainly looked very tempting.

After a little while the biggest monkey passed that way. He saw the image of wax and thought that it was a boy peddling bananas. He had often pushed over boy banana peddlers, upset their baskets and then had run away with the bananas. This morning he was feeling very good-natured so he thought that he would first try asking politely for the bananas.

"O, peddler boy, peddler boy," he said to him, "please give me a banana." The image of wax answered never a word.

Again the monkey said, this time in a little louder voice, "O, peddler boy, peddler boy, please give me a banana, just one little, ripe little, sweet little banana." The image of wax answered never a word.

Then the monkey called out in his loudest voice, "O, peddler boy, peddler boy, if you don't give me a banana I'll give you such a push that it will upset all of your bananas." The image of wax was silent.

The monkey ran toward the image of wax and struck it hard with his hand. His hand remained firmly embedded in the wax.

"O, peddler boy, peddler boy, let go my hand," the monkey called out. "Let go my hand and give me a banana or else I'll give you a hard, hard blow with my other hand." The image of wax did not let go.

The monkey gave the image a hard, hard blow with his other hand. The other hand remained firmly embedded in the wax.

Then the monkey called out, "O, peddler boy, peddler boy, let go my two hands. Let go my two hands and give me a banana or else I will give you a kick with my foot." The image of wax did not let go.

The monkey gave the image a kick with his foot and his foot remained stuck fast in the wax.

"O, peddler boy, peddler boy," the monkey cried, "let go my foot. Let go my two hands and my foot and give me a banana or else I'll give you a kick with my other foot." The image of wax did not let go.

Then the monkey who was now very angry, gave the image of wax a kick with his foot and his foot remained stuck fast in the wax.

The monkey shouted, "O, peddler boy, peddler boy, let go my foot. Let go my two feet and my two hands and give me a banana or else I'll give you a push with my body." The image of wax did not let go.

The monkey gave the image of wax a push with his body. His body remained caught fast in the wax.

"O, peddler boy, peddler boy," the monkey shouted, "let go my body! Let go my body and my two feet and my two hands or I'll call all the other monkeys to help me!" The image of wax did not let go.

Then the monkey made such an uproar with his cries and shouts that very soon monkeys came running from all directions. There were big monkeys and little monkeys and middle-sized monkeys. A whole army of monkeys had come to the aid of the biggest monkey.

It was the very littlest monkey who thought of a plan to help the biggest monkey out of his plight. The monkeys were to climb up into the biggest tree and pile themselves one on top of another until they made a pyramid of monkeys. The monkey with the very loudest voice of all was to be on top and he was to shout his very loudest to the sun and ask the sun to come and help the biggest monkey out of his dreadful difficulty.

This is what all the big-sized, little-sized, middle-sized monkeys did. The monkey with the loudest voice on top of the pyramid made the sun hear. The sun came at once.

The sun poured his hottest rays down upon the wax. After a while the wax began to melt. The monkey was at last able to pull out one of his hands. The sun poured down more of his hottest rays and soon the monkey was able to pull out his two hands. Then he could pull out one foot, then another, and in a little while his body, too. At last he was free.

When the little old woman saw what had happened she was very much discouraged about raising bananas. She decided to move to another part of the world where she raised cabbages instead of bananas. The monkeys were left in possession of the big garden full of banana trees. From that day to this the monkeys have thought that they own all the bananas.

13

HOW THE MONKEY ESCAPED BEING EATEN

Once upon a time, ages and ages ago, people ate fruits and nuts. Then there came a time when the fruits and nuts became scarce. People had to eat meat. So they began killing the various beasts to see which ones were the best to eat. They skinned them and cut them in pieces and cooked them over the fire. Some of the beasts were good to eat and others were not good at all.

The ox was found to be very good, and so was the sheep, and the armadillo. Then one day a man thought that he would try to eat the monkey.

The monkey was playing his guitar. “Lee, lee, lee, lee, lee lay, lee lay, lee ray, lee ray.” The man came close to him and said, “Come here, little monkey, and let me hear your music. I enjoy it very much.” All the time the man was coming closer and closer to the monkey. Just as he was about to stretch out his hand and seize the monkey, the monkey gave a sudden leap to the tree and hurried away to the tree top.

After that every time the man heard the monkey play the guitar he would come near and try to catch him. The monkey grew afraid of the man, so afraid that he gave up playing his guitar at all. For a long, long time he did not play upon it. One day he felt that he just *must* have some music. He hid in a hole in the ground and there he played upon his guitar. He did not think that the man would hear him, but the man had very sharp ears. When he got through playing he started to come out of the hole in the ground. There was the man waiting for him! He crawled quickly back, — so far back that the man could not catch him. The monkey waited and waited for the man to go away, but the man did not go away.

After a while the man became thirsty and went to get a drink. He left his little boy in his place to watch for the monkey. After the man had gone away the monkey called out to the little boy, “O, little boy, O, little boy, don’t you wish that you could see the monkey dance?”

The little boy replied that he wished he could.

“Just put your eyes down to the door of my little cave, and I’ll let you see the monkey dance, little boy,” said the monkey.

The little boy put his eyes down close to the hole in the ground. No sooner had he done so than the monkey threw dirt into the little boy’s eyes. When the little boy was rubbing his eyes to get the dirt out of them the monkey made a sudden dash out of the cave and escaped to the tree tops. When the man returned the little boy did not dare to tell him that the monkey had escaped. The man waited and waited and waited there by the hole in the ground. At last he became tired of waiting and went away.

After that the man tried harder than ever to catch the monkey. If he had not had the good luck to catch the monkey napping one day there is no knowing when he would have got his hands upon him. One day, however, he caught the monkey napping. He shut him up in a box and carried him home to the children for supper.

The man put a big dish full of water over the fire ready to cook the monkey. Then he went away to collect more fuel for the fire. The monkey and his guitar were shut up in the box, and there, inside the box, the monkey played on his guitar. “Lee, lee, lee, lee, lee lay, lee lay, lee ray, lee ray.” The children came crowding close to the box.

“O, children, O, children,” said the monkey, “don’t you wish that you could see the monkey dance?”

The children replied that they wished they could.

“This box is so small that there is not room enough for me to dance here,” said the monkey. “Just let me out and I’ll show you how well I can dance.”

The children opened the box and let the monkey out into the room. The monkey played on his guitar, “Lee, lee, lee, lee, lee lay, lee lay, lee ray, lee ray,” and he danced about the room. Then he said, “O, children! O, children! You have nothing at all cooking in that pot over the fire. Let us put something into the pot to cook.”

The children thought that it would not be polite to tell the monkey what the pot of water was waiting for, so they let the monkey fill the pot as he liked. He put into it some little dry sticks and an empty cocoanut shell. Then he said, “O, children, O, children, I cannot dance any more. It is so hot here in this room.”

The children begged him to dance some more.

“If you will open the door a little bit so that I can have more air to breathe I’ll show you a new dance,” said the monkey.

The children opened the door. The monkey danced over to the door and out of the door away to the tree top. That was the last they ever saw of him. He moved to another part of the country after that experience.

When the man came home with fuel for the fire the children did not dare to tell him that the monkey had escaped. They let him think that the sticks and the cocoanut shell in the pot was the monkey. He built a big roaring fire under the pot and soon it was boiling merrily. After the pot had boiled a while he called the children to come to supper with him. The children let him taste first. He fished a hard stick out of the pot and bit into it. “This is not the monkey’s leg. It is just a dry stick,” he said, as he made a wry face. Then he fished the empty cocoanut shell out of the pot. “That is not the monkey’s head,” he said as he tasted it, “That is just an empty cocoanut shell.” He couldn’t find a single trace of the monkey in that monkey stew. He never wished to make a monkey stew again.

14

WHY THE MONKEY STILL HAS A TAIL

Once upon a time the monkey and the rabbit made a contract. The monkey was to kill all the butterflies and the rabbit was to kill all the snakes.

One day the rabbit was taking a nap when the monkey passed that way. The monkey thought that he would play a trick on the rabbit so he pulled the rabbit’s ears, pretending that he thought they were butterflies. The rabbit awoke very angry at the monkey and he plotted how he might revenge himself on the monkey.

The rabbit and the armadillo are very good friends. The armadillo is very, very strong, you know, so it was he whom the rabbit asked to help him.

One day the rabbit caught the monkey napping. He had watched and waited a long, long time to catch the monkey napping, but at last he succeeded. Even the monkey sometimes takes a nap. The rabbit called the armadillo at once and together they rolled a big stone upon the monkey’s tail. The monkey pulled so hard to get his tail out from under the stone that it broke off. The cat, who at that time had no tail of her own, spied the tail and ran away with it. The monkey was very angry at the rabbit. “O, we thought it was just a snake lying there,” said the rabbit. “When you pulled my ears, you know, you thought they were butterflies.”

That did not help the monkey to feel any better. How was he to live without his tail! How could he climb without it! He simply had to have it back so he at once set out to find the cat.

At last he found the cat and said to her, “O, kind cat, please give me back my tail.”

“I will give it to you,” replied the cat, “if you will get me some milk.”

“Where shall I get the milk?” asked the monkey.

“Go ask the cow for some,” replied the cat.

The monkey went to the cow and said, “O, kind cow, please give me some milk that I may give the milk to the cat so that the cat will give back my tail to me.”

“I will give you the milk,” replied the cow, “if you will get me some grass.”

“Where shall I get the grass?” asked the monkey.

“Go ask the farmer,” responded the cow.

The monkey went to the farmer and said, “O, kind farmer, please give me some grass that I may give the grass to the cow so that the cow will give me some milk so that I may give the milk to the cat so that the cat will give back my tail to me.”

The farmer said, “I will give you some grass if you will give me some rain.”

“Where shall I get the rain?” asked the monkey.

“Go ask the clouds,” responded the farmer.

The monkey went to the clouds and said, “O, kind clouds, please send me down some rain that I may give the rain to the farmer so that the farmer will give me some grass so that I may give the grass to the cow so that the cow will give me some milk so that I may give the milk to the cat so that the cat will give me back my tail.”

“I will give you some rain,” replied the clouds, “if you will get me some fog.”

“Where shall I get the fog?” asked the monkey.

“Go ask the rivers,” replied the clouds.

The monkey went to the river and said, “O, kind river, please give me a fog that I may give the fog to the clouds so that the clouds will give some rain so that I may give the rain to the farmer so that the farmer will give me some grass so that I may give the grass to the cow so that the cow will give me some milk so that I may give the milk to the cat so that the cat will give me back my tail.”

“I will give you a fog,” replied the river, “if you will find a new spring to feed me.”

“Where shall I find a spring?” asked the monkey.

“Go search for one among the rocks upon the hillside,” replied the river.

Then the monkey climbed up the steep hill and searched and searched among the rocks until at last he found a little spring to feed the river. He brought the spring to the river and the river gave him a fog. He took the fog to the clouds and the clouds gave him rain. He took the rain to the farmer and the farmer gave him grass. He took the grass to the cow and the cow gave him milk. He took the milk to the cat and the cat gave him back his tail. The monkey was so glad to have his tail again that he danced and danced with glee. Ever since that time the monkey has been very careful to guard his tail. He still has one and he is still happy because of it.

15

HOW BLACK BECAME WHITE

One often hears the saying that one cannot make black white or white black. I said something about it once upon a time to my Brazilian *ama* and she stared at me in surprise. “O, yes, one can,” she said. “It happened once and no one can ever tell but that it may happen again. Perhaps the *Senhora* has not heard the story?” I begged her to tell me the story and this is the tale:

Once upon a time there was a little old woman who lived all alone with her little black son who was just as black as black can be. The little old woman had not always lived alone with the little black boy. She had once been the mother of three beautiful daughters, the very loveliest maidens in all the country round. They were so handsome that they attracted the attention of the wicked fairy who lived in an enchanted castle nearby, and this fairy had been very jealous of them. By the aid of magic she tied them up in sacks which could be opened only by burning the sacks over a fire built from magic wood. The little old woman and her little black son searched long and diligently for magic wood, but they were never able to find any.

It was a terrible thing to have one’s daughters shut up in magic sacks. The little old woman had grown bent and weak and cross in her search to find the magic wood. If it had not been for the little black boy she would have given up entirely. The little black boy was always gay and cheerful and always sure that some day they would succeed in finding the magic wood.

One day the little old woman took her big water jar upon her head and carried it down to the stream to fill. It was so very heavy when she had filled it with water that she could not lift it to her head even with the help of the little black boy. Three fine looking *cavalheiros* happened to be passing on horseback. She sent the little black boy to ask them if they would help her. They said they couldn't possibly stop. The little old woman was very angry. She did not know that they were on their way to the magic castle and *couldn't* stop. The same wicked fairy who had shut the little old woman's beautiful daughters up in the sacks, was leading them on.

If the little old woman had known all about the three *cavalheiros* she would not have been angry. She would have wanted to help them instead. The three *cavalheiros* were very good and very wise, so they managed to get along very well. As soon as they reached the enchanted castle the fairy showed them to their beds. She had marked each bed with a candle. No one before had ever been wise enough to blow out these candles. These *cavalheiros* blew out the candles and that took away the fairy's power over them. They were able to escape from the palace. When the wicked fairy came to put them in her magic sacks she found the beds empty.

The three *cavalheiros* took their horses and rode back by the same road by which they had come. They stopped at a little shop on a corner which was kept by a good fairy and bought one *vintem's* worth of ashes, one *vintem's* worth of salt and one *vintem's* worth of pins.

After a while the three *cavalheiros* approached the house of the little old woman and the little black boy. The little old woman was still angry because they had refused to stop and help her lift her water jar to her head. When she saw them coming she threw stones at them. Of course that was a very stupid thing to do.

When the three *cavalheiros* saw what was happening they were greatly surprised. They had forgotten all about the little black boy and the little old woman whom he had asked them to help. When they saw her coming with the stones they thought that she must be a wicked fairy in the form of a little old woman.

The *cavalheiro* who had one *vintem's* worth of ashes in his pocket threw the ashes at her. It became night. The little old woman came on with her stones just the same.

The *cavalheiro* who had one *vintem's* worth of salt in his pocket threw the salt at her. Immediately a sea of salt water appeared between the three *cavalheiros* and the little old woman. The little old woman came on with her stones just the same.

The *cavalheiro* who had one *vintem's* worth of pins in his pocket threw the pins at her. Immediately a high, thorny hedge sprang out of the ground between the little old woman and the three *cavalheiros*.

The little old woman was too angry to think clearly. If she had not been so angry she would have known at once that this must be magic wood. The little black boy, however, had his wits about him. He hastened to gather the branches even though the thorns tore his hands. Soon he had brought together a great pile of wood like the piles which they make in the streets to burn on a *festa* night.

The little old woman saw what he was doing and ran to get the magic sacks in which her daughters were imprisoned. They laid the sacks on top of the pile of magic wood and lighted the fire. There was a great noise like thunder. Out of the three magic sacks there sprang three beautiful maidens who had been preserved alive in the sacks by a miracle of *Nossa Senhora*.

The little old woman and her three beautiful daughters turned to thank the little black boy for what he had done. The little black boy was no longer black. He had been turned white.

The three *cavalheiros* married the three beautiful maidens and the little boy who was now white, grew up to be the greatest *cavalheiro* of them all.

16

HOW THE PIGEON BECAME A TAME BIRD

Once upon a time there was a father with three sons who had reached the age when they must go out into the world to earn their own living. When the time for parting came he gave to each of them a large melon with the advice that they open the melons only at a place where there was water nearby.

The three brothers set out from their father’s house, each taking a different path. As soon as the eldest son was out of sight of the house he opened his melon. A beautiful maiden sprang out of the melon saying, “Give me water or give me milk.” There was no water nearby and neither did the young man have any milk to give her. She fell down dead.

The second son left his father’s house by a path which led over a steep hill. The large melon was heavy to carry and in a little while he became very tired and thirsty. He saw no water nearby and feared that there was no possibility of finding any soon, so he thought he would open the melon and use it to quench his thirst. Accordingly he opened his melon. To his great surprise, a beautiful maiden sprang forth saying, “Give me water or give me milk.” Of course he had neither to give her and she fell down dead.

The third son also travelled by a path which led over a steep hill. He, too, became very tired and thirsty and he often thought how much he would like to open his melon. However, he remembered his father’s advice to open it only where there was water nearby. So he travelled on and on hoping to find a spring of water on the hillside. He did not have the good fortune to pass near a spring either going up the hill or coming down on the opposite side. At the foot of the hill there was a town and in the centre of the town there was a fountain. The young man hurried straight to the fountain and took a long refreshing drink. Then he opened his melon. A beautiful maiden sprang forth saying, “Give me water or give me milk.” The young man gave her a drink of water. Then he helped her to a hiding place among the thick branches of the tree which grew beside the fountain and went away in search of food.

Soon a little black servant girl came to the fountain to fill a big water jar which she carried on her head. The maiden in the tree above the fountain peeped out through the branches. When the little black servant girl bent over the water to fill her jar she saw the reflection of a charming face in the water. “How beautiful I have become,” she said to herself. “How ridiculous that any one as beautiful as I am should carry water on her head.” She threw her water jar upon the ground in disdain and it broke into a thousand pieces.

When the little maid reached home with neither water nor water jar her mistress punished her severely and sent her again to the fountain with a new water jar to fill. This time the maiden in the tree gave a little silvery laugh when the black servant girl bent over the water. The little maid looked up and spied her in the tree. “O, it is you, is it, who are responsible for my beating?” she said. She pulled a pin out of her camisa and, reaching up, she stuck it savagely into the beautiful maiden in the tree. Then a strange thing happened. There was no longer any beautiful maiden in the tree. There was just a pigeon there.

At that moment the young man came back to the tree with the food he had procured. When the little black maid heard his footsteps she was frightened nearly to death. She hid herself quickly among the thick branches of the tree. The young man was very much surprised to find a little black maid in the tree in the place of the beautiful maiden he had left there. “What has happened to you during my absence” he asked in horror as soon as he saw her. “The sun has burned my complexion. That is all. It is nothing. I shall be myself again when I get away from this hot place,” the little maid replied.

The young man married the little black maid and took her away out of sunny places hoping that she would soon be again the beautiful maiden she was when he left her by the fountain in search of food. But she always remained black.

Years passed and the young man became very rich. He lived in a beautiful mansion. All around the house there was a wonderful garden full of lovely flowers and splendid trees where birds loved to sing sweet songs and build their nests. In spite of his beautiful home the young man was not very happy. It was a great trial to have a wife who was so black. He often walked up and down the paths in his garden at the close of the day and thought about how beautiful his wife had been the first time he ever saw her. As he walked in the garden there was always a pigeon which followed him about. It flew about his head in a way that annoyed him, so one day when his wife was sick and asked for a pigeon to be roasted for her dinner he commanded that this particular pigeon should be killed.

When the cook was preparing the pigeon for her mistress to eat for dinner she noticed a black speck on the pigeon’s breast. She thought that it was a speck of dirt and tried to brush it away. To her surprise she could not brush it off easily because it was a pin firmly embedded in the pigeon’s breast. She pulled and pulled but could not pull it out so she sent for her master to come and see what he could do to remove it. He at once pulled out the pin and then a wonderful thing happened. The pigeon was transformed into a beautiful maiden. He at once recognised her as the same lovely maiden who had sprung forth from his melon by the fountain and whom he had left hidden in the tree.

When the young man’s black wife learned that her husband had found the beautiful maiden again after all these years she confessed her deceit and soon died. The young man married the beautiful maiden who was still just as beautiful as she was the first time he saw her. They were very happy together but the wife never forgot about the time she had been a pigeon.

Up to that time pigeons had been wild birds who built their nests in the deep forest. The wife often wished that they would build their nests in her beautiful garden so she had little bird houses built and set up there.

One day a pigeon, bolder than the rest, flew through the garden and spied the little bird houses. He moved his family there at once and told the other pigeons that there were other houses there for them too. The other pigeons were timid and so they waited to see what terrible calamity might happen to the bold pigeon and his family, but not a single unpleasant thing occurred. They were just as happy as happy could be in their new home.

After a while other pigeon families moved into the garden and were happy too. Thus it came about that after years and years the pigeons no longer build their nests in the deep forest, but they always make their homes near the homes of men. The pigeons, themselves, do not know how it all came about, but the beautiful woman who was once a pigeon, when she had children of her own, told them about it, and they told their children. Thus it happens that the mothers in Brazil tell their children this story about the pigeon.

17

WHY THE SEA MOANS

Once upon a time there was a little princess who lived in a magnificent royal palace. All around the palace there was a beautiful garden full of lovely flowers and rare shrubs and trees. The part of the garden which the princess liked most of all was a corner of it which ran down to the sea. She was a very lonely little princess and she loved to sit and watch the changing beauty of the sea. The name of the little princess was Dionysia and it often seemed to her that the sea said, as it rushed against the shore, “Di-o-ny-si-a, Di-o-ny-si-a.”

One day when the little princess was sitting all alone by the sea she said to herself, “O! I am so lonely. I do so wish that I had somebody to play with. When I ride out in the royal chariot I see little girls who have other little boys and girls to play with them. Because I am the royal princess I never have anybody to play with me. If I have to be the royal princess and not play with other children I do think I might have some sort of live thing to play with me.”

Then a most remarkable thing happened. The sea said very slowly and distinctly and over and over again so there couldn’t be any mistake about it, “Di-o-ny-si-a, Di-o-ny-si-a.”

The little princess walked up close to the sea, just as close as she dared to go without danger of getting her royal shoes and stockings wet. Straight out of the biggest wave of all there came a sea serpent to meet her. She knew that it was a sea serpent from the pictures in her royal story books even though she had never seen a sea serpent before, but somehow this sea serpent looked different than the pictures. Instead of being a fierce monster it looked kind and gentle and good. She held out her arms to it right away.

“Come play with me,” said Dionysia.

“I am Labismena and I have come to play with you,” replied the sea serpent.

After that the little princess was very much happier. The sea serpent came out of the sea to play with her every day when she was alone. If any one else came near Labismena would disappear into the sea so no one but Dionysia ever saw her.

The years passed rapidly and each year the little princess grew to be a larger and larger princess. At last she was sixteen years old and a very grown-up princess indeed. She still enjoyed her old playmate, Labismena, and they were often together on the seashore.

One day when they were walking up and down together beside the sea the sea serpent looked at Dionysia with sad eyes and said, “I too have been growing older all these years, dear Dionysia. Now the time has come that we can no longer play together. I shall never come out of the sea to play with you any more, but I shall never forget you and I shall always be your friend. I hope that you will never have any trouble, but if you ever should, call my name and I will come to help you.” Then the sea serpent disappeared into the sea.

About this time the wife of a neighbouring king died and as she lay upon her death bed she gave the king a jewelled ring. “When the time comes when you wish to wed again,” she said, “I ask you to marry a princess upon whose finger this ring shall be neither too tight nor too loose.”

After a while the king began to look about for a princess to be his bride. He visited many royal palaces and tried the ring upon the finger of many royal princesses. Upon some the ring was too tight and upon others it was too loose. There was no princess whose finger it fitted perfectly.

At last in his search the king came to the royal palace where the princess Dionysia lived. The princess had dreams of her own of a young and charming prince who would some day come to wed her, so she was not pleased at all. The king was old and no longer handsome, and when he tried the ring upon Dionysia’s finger she hoped with all her heart that it would not fit. It fitted perfectly.

The princess Dionysia was frightened nearly to death. “Will I really have to marry him?” she asked her royal father. Her father told her what a very wealthy king he was with a great kingdom and a wonderful royal palace ever so much more wonderful and grand than the palace the princess Dionysia had always had for her home. Her father had no patience at all with her for not being happy about it. “You ought to consider yourself the most fortunate princess in all the world,” he said.

Dionysia spent her days and nights weeping. Her father was afraid that she would grow so thin that the ring would no longer fit her finger, so he hastened the plans for the wedding.

One day Dionysia walked up and down beside the sea, crying as if her heart would break. All at once she stopped crying. “How stupid I have been,” she said. “My old playmate Labismena told me that if ever I was in trouble she would come back and help me. With all my silly crying I had forgotten about it.”

Dionysia walked up close to the sea and called softly, “Labismena, Labismena.” Out of the sea came the sea serpent just as she used to come. The princess told the sea serpent all about the dreadful trouble which was threatening to spoil her life.

“Have no fear,” said Labismena, “tell your father that you will marry the king when the king presents you with a dress the colour of the fields and all their flowers and that you will not marry him until he gives it to you.” Then the sea serpent disappeared again into the sea.

Dionysia sent word through her father to her royal suitor that she would wed him only when he procured her a dress the colour of the fields and all their flowers. The king was very much in love with Dionysia, so he was secretly filled with joy at this request. He searched everywhere for a dress the colour of the fields and all their flowers. It was a very difficult thing to find but at last he procured one. He sent it to Dionysia at once.

When Dionysia saw that the king had really found the dress for her she was filled with grief. She thought that there was no escape and that she would have to marry the king after all. As soon as she could get away from the palace without being noticed she ran down to the sea and again called, “Labismena, Labismena.”

The sea serpent at once came out of the sea. “Do not fear,” she said to Dionysia. “Go back and say that you will not wed the king until he gives you a dress the colour of the sea and all its fishes.”

When the king heard this new request of Dionysia’s he was rather discouraged. However he searched for the dress and, at last, after expending a great sum of money, he procured such a gown.

When Dionysia saw that a dress the colour of the sea and all its fishes had been found for her she again went to seek counsel from her old playmate. “Do not be afraid,” Labismena again said to her. “This time you must ask the king to get you a dress the colour of the sky and all its stars. You may also tell him that this is the last present you will ask him to make you.”

When the king heard about the demand for a dress the colour of the sky and all its stars he was completely disheartened, but when he heard that Dionysia had promised that this would be the last present she would ask he decided that it might be a good investment after all. He set out to procure the dress with all possible speed. At last he found one.

When Dionysia saw the dress the colour of the sky and all its stars she thought that this time there was no escape from marrying the king. She called the sea serpent with an anxious heart for she was afraid that now even Labismena could do nothing to help her.

Labismena came out of the sea in answer to her call.

“Go home to the palace and get your dress the colour of the field and all its flowers,” said the sea serpent, “and your dress the colour of the sea and all its fishes, and your dress the colour of the sky and all its stars. Then hurry back here to the sea for I have been preparing a surprise for you.”

All the time the king had been procuring the wonderful gowns for Dionysia the sea serpent had been building a ship for her. When Dionysia returned from the royal palace with her lovely dresses all carefully packed in a box there was a queer little boat awaiting her. It was not at all like any other boat she had ever seen and she was almost afraid to get into it when Labismena asked her to try it. “This little ship which I have built for you,” said Labismena, “will carry you far away over the sea to the kingdom of a prince who is the most charming prince in all the world. When you see him you will want to marry him above all others.”

“O, Labismena! How can I ever thank you for all you have done for me?” cried Dionysia.

“You can do the greatest thing in the world for me,” said Labismena; “though I have never told you and I do not believe that you have ever suspected it, I am really an enchanted princess. I shall have to remain in the form of a sea serpent until the happiest maiden in all the world, at the hour of her greatest happiness, calls my name three times. You will be the very happiest girl in all the world on the day of your marriage, and if you will remember to call my name three times then you will break my enchantment and I shall once more be a lovely princess instead of a sea serpent.”

Dionysia promised her friend that she would remember to do this. The sea serpent asked her to promise three times to make sure. When Dionysia had promised three times and again embraced her old playmate and thanked her for all that she had done she sailed away in the little ship. The sea serpent disappeared into the sea.

Dionysia sailed and sailed in the little ship and at last it bore her to a lovely island. She thought that she had reached her destination, so she stepped out of the boat not forgetting to take her box of dresses with her. As soon as she was out of the boat it sailed away. “Now what shall I ever do?” said Dionysia. “The ship has gone away and left me and how shall I ever earn my living? I have never done anything useful in all my life.”

Dionysia surely had to do something to earn her living immediately, so she at once set out to see what she could find to do. She went from house to house asking for food and work. At last she came to the royal palace. Here at the royal palace they told her that they had great need of a maid to take care of the hens. Dionysia thought that this was something which she could do, so she accepted the position at once. It was, of course, very different work from being a princess in a royal palace but it provided her with food and shelter, and when Dionysia thought of having to marry the old king she was never sorry that she had left home.

Time passed and at last there was a great feast day celebrated in the city. Everybody in the palace went except the little maid who minded the hens. After everybody had gone away Dionysia decided that she would go to the *festa* too. She combed her hair and put on her gown which was the colour of the fields and all their flowers. In this wonderful gown she was sure nobody would ever guess that she was the little maid who had been left at home to mind the hens. She did want to go to the *festa*! She hurried there as fast as she could and arrived just in time for the dances.

Everybody at the *festa* noticed the beautiful maiden in her gown the colour of the fields and all their flowers. The prince fell madly in love with her. Nobody had ever seen her before and nobody could find out who the beautiful stranger was or where she came from. Before the *festa* was over Dionysia slipped away, and, when the rest of the royal household returned home there was the little maid minding the hens just as they had left her.

The second day of the *festa* everybody went early except the little maid who looked after the hens. When the others had gone she put on her dress the colour of the sea and all its fishes and went to the *festa*. She attracted even more attention than she had the day before.

When the *festa* was over and the royal household had returned to the royal palace, the prince remarked to his mother, “Don’t you think that the beautiful stranger at the *festa* looks like the little maid who minds our hens?”

“What nonsense,” replied his mother. “How could the little maid who minds our hens ever get such wonderful gowns to wear?” Just to make sure, however, the prince told the royal councillor to find out if the little maid who minds the royal hens had been to the *festa*. All the servants told about leaving her at home with the hens and coming back and finding her just as they had left her.

“Whoever the beautiful stranger at the *festa* may be,” said the prince, “she is the one above all others whom I want for my wife. I shall find her some way.”

The third day of the *festa* Dionysia went attired in her gown the colour of the sky and all its stars. The prince fell more madly in love with her than ever. He could not get her to tell him who she was or where she lived but he gave her a beautiful jewel.

When the prince returned home he would not eat any food. He grew thin and pale. Every one around the palace tried his best to invent some dish which would tempt the prince’s appetite.

Finally the little maid who took care of the hens said that she thought she could prepare a dish which the prince would eat.

Accordingly she made a dish of broth for the prince and in the bottom of the dish she dropped the jewel which the prince had given her.

When the broth was set before the prince he was about to send it away untouched, just as he did everything else, but the sparkling jewel attracted his attention.

“Who made this dish of broth?” he asked as soon as he could speak.

“It was made by the little maid who minds the hens,” replied his mother.

“Send for the little maid to come to me at once,” cried the prince. “I knew that the beautiful stranger at the *festa* looked like our little maid who minds the hens.”

The prince married Dionysia the very next day and Dionysia was the very happiest girl in all the world, for from the first moment that she had seen the prince, she had known that he was the one above all others whom she wished to marry.

Alas! In Dionysia’s excitement she forgot all about calling the name of her old playmate, Labismena, at the hour of her marriage as she had promised to do. She thought of nothing but the prince.

There was no escape for Labismena. She had to remain in the form of a sea serpent because of Dionysia’s neglect. She had lost her chance to come out of the sea and become a lovely princess herself and find a charming prince of her own. For this reason her sad moan is heard in the sea until this very day. Perhaps you have noticed it.

You will often hear the call come from the sea as it breaks against the shore, “Dionysia, Di-o-ny-si-a.” No wonder that the sea moans. It is enough to make a sea serpent sad to be forgotten by the very person one has done most to help.

18

HOW THE BRAZILIAN BEETLES GOT THEIR GORGEOUS COATS

In Brazil the beetles have such beautifully coloured, hard-shelled coats upon their backs that they are often set in pins and necklaces like precious stones. Once upon a time, years and years ago, they had ordinary plain brown coats. This is how it happened that the Brazilian beetle earned a new coat.

One day a little brown beetle was crawling along a wall when a big grey rat ran out of a hole in the wall and looked down scornfully at the little beetle. “O ho!” he said to the beetle, “how slowly you crawl along. You’ll never get anywhere in the world. Just look at me and see how fast I can run.”

The big grey rat ran to the end of the wall, wheeled around, and came back to the place where the little beetle was slowly crawling along at only a tiny distance from where the rat had left her.

“Don’t you wish that you could run like that?” said the big grey rat to the little brown beetle.

“You are surely a fast runner,” replied the little brown beetle politely. Her mother had taught her always to be polite and had often said to her that a really polite beetle never boasts about her own accomplishments. The little brown beetle never boasted a single boast about the things she could do. She just went on slowly crawling along the wall.

A bright green and gold parrot in the mango tree over the wall had heard the conversation. “How would you like to race with the beetle?” he asked the big grey rat. “I live next door to the tailor bird,” he added, “and just to make the race exciting I’ll offer a bright coloured coat as a prize to the one who wins the race. You may choose for it any colour you like and I’ll have it made to order.”

“I’d like a yellow coat with stripes like the tiger’s,” said the big grey rat, looking over his shoulder at his gaunt grey sides as if he were already admiring his new coat.

“I’d like a beautiful, bright coloured new coat, too,” said the little brown beetle.

The big grey rat laughed long and loud until his gaunt grey sides were shaking. “Why, you talk just as if you thought you had a chance to win the race,” he said, when he could speak.

The bright green and gold parrot set the royal palm tree at the top of the cliff as the goal of the race. He gave the signal to start and then he flew away to the royal palm tree to watch for the end of the race.

The big grey rat ran as fast as he could. Then he thought how very tired he was getting. “What’s the use of hurrying?” he said to himself. “The little brown beetle can not possibly win. If I were racing with somebody who could really run it would be very different.” Then he started to run more slowly but every time his heart beat it said, “Hurry up! Hurry up!” The big grey rat decided that it was best to obey the little voice in his heart so he hurried just as fast as he could.

When he reached the royal palm tree at the top of the cliff he could hardly believe his eyes. He thought he must be having a bad dream. There was the little brown beetle sitting quietly beside the bright green and gold parrot. The big grey rat had never been so surprised in all his life. “How did you ever manage to run fast enough to get here so soon?” he asked the little brown beetle as soon as he could catch his breath.

The little brown beetle drew out the tiny wings from her sides. “Nobody said anything about having to run to win the race,” she replied, “so I flew instead.”

“I did not know that you could fly,” said the big grey rat in a subdued little voice.

“After this,” said the bright green and gold parrot, “never judge any one by his looks alone. You never can tell how often or where you may find concealed wings. You have lost the prize.”

Until this day, even in Brazil where the flowers and birds and beasts and insects have such gorgeous colouring, the rat wears a plain dull grey coat.

Then the parrot turned to the little brown beetle who was waiting quietly at his side. “What colour do you want your new coat to be?” he asked.

The little brown beetle looked up at the bright green and gold parrot, at the green and gold palm trees above their heads, at the green mangoes with golden flushes on their cheeks lying on the ground under the mango trees, at the golden sunshine upon the distant green hills. “I choose a coat of green and gold,” she said.

From that day to this the Brazilian beetle has worn a coat of green with golden lights upon it.

For years and years the Brazilian beetles were all very proud to wear green and gold coats like that of the beetle who raced with the rat.

Then, once upon a time, it happened that there was a little beetle who grew discontented with her coat of green and gold. She looked up at the blue sky and out at the blue sea and wished that she had a blue coat instead. She talked about it so much that finally her mother took her to the parrot who lived next to the tailor bird.

“You may change your coat for a blue one,” said the parrot, “but if you change you’ll have to give up something.”

“Oh, I’ll gladly give up anything if only I may have a blue coat instead of a green and gold one,” said the discontented little beetle.

When she received her new coat she thought it was very beautiful. It was a lovely shade of blue and it had silvery white lights upon it like the light of the stars. When she put it on, however, she discovered that it was not hard like the green and gold one. From that day to this the blue beetles’ coats have not been hard and firm. That is the reason why the jewellers have difficulty in using them in pins and necklaces like other beetles.

From the moment that the little beetle put on her new blue coat she never grew again. From that day to this the blue beetles have been much smaller than the green and gold ones.

When the Brazilians made their flag they took for it a square of green the colour of the green beetle’s coat. Within this square they placed a diamond of gold like the golden lights which play upon the green beetle’s back. Then, within the diamond, they drew a circle to represent the round earth and they coloured it blue like the coat of the blue beetle. Upon the blue circle they placed stars of silvery white like the silvery white lights on the back of the blue beetle. About the blue circle of the earth which they thus pictured they drew a band of white, and upon this band they wrote the motto of their country, “*Ordem e Progresso*, order and progress.”

19

PRINCESS BLUEGREEN OF THE SEVEN CITIES

Once upon a time in the lost kingdom of Atlantis there ruled a king whose name was Graywhite. He had married the beautiful Queen Rosewhite. They lived in a magnificent palace, but it was a sad place because there were no little children in it.

“There are plenty of babies in the homes of the poor peasants who can scarcely find food for them,” mourned King Graywhite. “Why is it that I, the ruler of this vast rich kingdom, can have no child to inherit my wealth and my domains?”

“Women in tiny hovels have their arms full of rosy dimpled darlings,” sighed Queen Rosewhite. “Why is it that I, the queen of this magnificent palace, can have no baby of my own?”

Queen Rosewhite passed her days and nights in weeping, while King Graywhite grew ugly and cruel to his subjects. Once he had been the kindest ruler in the world.

Things went on like this for several years. Queen Rosewhite’s lovely face grew pale and wan, and her beautiful eyes became so sad that it hurt the hearts of her faithful subjects. The king’s face lost its expression of jolly kindness and became sour and cruel. They offered prayers and solemn vows before all the holy shrines in the whole kingdom of Atlantis, but no child was born into the royal palace. King Graywhite grew so harsh and ugly to his subjects that the entire kingdom offered prayers and vows, too. As things were, life was not worth living in the kingdom of Atlantis.

In front of the royal palace there was a beautiful terrace where King Graywhite and Queen Rosewhite had loved to walk in the days before they had grown cross and sad. One night when they were sitting upon the terrace enjoying the fresh soft evening air and the bright starlight there suddenly appeared a dazzling light which almost blinded them. Queen Rosewhite covered her face with her hands and the king bowed his proud head upon his breast.

“Do not fear to look at me,” said a gentle voice.

King Graywhite and Queen Rosewhite glanced up. They saw a tiny fairy standing before them with a circle of bright light dancing about her.

“King and Queen of Atlantis,” said the gentle voice. “You shall have a child, a little daughter, prettier than the sunlight. I have heard your prayers and vows, but I have also heard the prayers and vows of your poor subjects, too.”

The glad news had brought a happy light into Queen Rosewhite’s beautiful eyes, but now it faded out and a look of fear crept in. It had hurt the queen’s loving heart to have her husband so cruel to his subjects. She often had told him that punishment would surely come upon him because of his harsh deeds.

“When the little princess is born,” went on the fairy’s voice, “I shall take her away from you for twenty years. No harm will come to her. I shall hide her away from you and all the world within seven beautiful cities which I shall construct in the loveliest part of your whole kingdom. Around these seven cities I shall place strong walls. At the end of twenty years, if your heart, King Graywhite, is free from sin and you have made proper restitution for all your wrongdoing, you shall receive the princess into your arms.”

"Twenty years is a long time," said King Graywhite sadly. Tears were running down Queen Rosewhite's cheeks and she could not speak.

"You must wait until the twenty years are over," continued the fairy. "If you attempt to enter the strong walls before that time you shall fall dead and your kingdom shall be consumed by fire. Swear to me now in the presence of your faithful queen that you will not try to enter these strong walls which I shall construct about the seven cities."

"I swear it," said the king in a voice which trembled as he solemnly lifted his right hand.

The vision disappeared as suddenly as it had come, and King Graywhite and Queen Rosewhite sat alone in the bright starlight on the terrace before the royal palace.

"Have I been dreaming?" asked the king.

"It was not a dream," replied the queen.

Time passed and a beautiful baby daughter was born to the king and queen of Atlantis. They gave her the name of Princess Bluegreen. There was great rejoicing throughout the entire kingdom. Her birth was celebrated by lavish feasts and gay songs and dances.

When the little Princess Bluegreen was only three days old she disappeared from the royal palace. She had been carried away by the fairy to the seven cities which had been constructed to receive her.

Years passed. Every day the king and queen received reports from the fairy. They heard that the little Princess Bluegreen was well, and that each hour she grew lovelier. Sometimes there was almost joy in the palace when King Graywhite chuckled over the quaint sayings of the little princess which were repeated to him, and the queen heard with a tender smile of the tiny blue slippers and the green parasol which the fairy had given her. That day Queen Rosewhite bought new slippers for many little maids in the city.

As time went on, however, the royal palace of Atlantis grew almost as sad as it had been before the Princess Bluegreen had been born. Only to receive reports of their daughter was not enough to make the king and queen happy. They longed to see her with their own eyes and to clasp her in their arms.

As the weeks and months and years rolled by without seeing the little princess, King Graywhite resumed his cruel treatment of his subjects. He was growing old and his nature grew sour with the years. Queen Rosewhite tried to reason with him.

“We must bear this thing with patience,” she told him. “We brought it upon ourselves.”

The king kept raging against the fairy and did not notice Queen Rosewhite’s politeness in saying “we” instead of “you.” It was the king who was responsible for all the cruelty. Good Queen Rosewhite had never had a cruel thought in her whole blameless life.

At last the day of the eighteenth birthday of the Princess Bluegreen grew near.

“Are you sure that it is not eighteen years which the fairy said, instead of twenty years?” asked King Graywhite querulously.

Queen Rosewhite assured him that it was twenty years as he well knew. The king’s anger broke out fiercely.

“I will no longer be kept from my daughter!” he cried.

“Would you break the vow which you solemnly made to the fairy in my presence?” asked Queen Rosewhite trembling. She had never dreamed that he would dare to break it. Now, however, she was thoroughly frightened at the thought which came to her.

“I’ll break that foolish vow!” shouted the king savagely.

Tears rolled down the cheeks of good Queen Rosewhite.

“No good will come of this,” she mourned. “Be prudent, dear king. It is only two years more which we have to wait.”

“The last two years will be the hardest ones of all!” raged King Graywhite. “I cannot endure it!”

That very day he started to prepare the army for the expedition to the Seven Cities, amid the queen's lamentations and in spite of her fears and warnings.

"Be wise and patient, dear king. Give up this wild expedition," were her last words to him; when, at length, all the preparations completed, he set out with his great army upon the dangerous quest of the seven cities surrounded by their strong walls in the loveliest part of the whole kingdom of Atlantis.

King Graywhite marched on and on. It was a long and perilous journey and the army suffered many hardships on the way. It seemed as if they would never arrive, but at last they drew near to what everybody knew to be the most beautiful part of the whole kingdom, where the fairy had taken the Princess Bluegreen to conceal her.

Storms raged; lightning flashed; ominous roarings and rumblings sounded from the depths of the earth.

"Let us hasten back to the royal palace before it is too late," besought the generals of King Graywhite's army.

"On! On!" cried the king. "Do you think I would abandon this expedition now?"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a huge rock fell from its place near where he stood and rushed away down the mountainside. The earth trembled violently beneath their feet. Fearful rumblings and roarings sounded all about them.

"On! ON!" shouted the maddened king.

Before them rose the great walls which the fairy had built around the seven cities. Within these walls was the Princess Bluegreen radiant with the beauty of her eighteen winters and summers passed in peace and happiness under the watchful care of the kind fairy. The thought of her thrilled the heart of King Graywhite.

"On! On!" he shouted to the generals about him.

“On! On!” they, in turn, passed the word along to the trembling soldiers which composed the royal army.

With the fearful sounds and shakings about them, the poor men heartily wished they were safe at home. They rallied, however, for a final charge and swept up to the walls which surrounded the seven cities.

King Graywhite struck his royal sword against the great wall. At that moment the walls fell. The earth beneath their feet rose. Great flames swept up towards the sky and rushed over the land, sweeping everything before them. Then the sea raged over the earth in violence until it had covered the whole kingdom of Atlantis.

The fairy’s curse had been fulfilled. The king was dead. His kingdom was consumed by fire.

When at last the waters grew calm again all that remained of the great rich kingdom of Atlantis was the group of nine rocky islands which to-day is called the Azores. In the largest of these islands, St. Michael, there is still an enchanted spot called Seven Cities. Great wall-like mountains tower toward the sky. In the crater valley amid the wall-like mountains there is a lake of green and one of blue. The blue lake is where the beautiful Princess Bluegreen left her little blue slippers, they say, and the green lake is where she left her lovely green parasol.

20

THE ISLANDS OF FLOWERS

Paradise is, of course, ruled by loving law. All places good to live in are governed by laws.

Long, long ago there was a little angel who broke one of the rules of Paradise. Of course she had to be punished. Punishment always follows broken laws. She was banished from her heavenly home. Never again could she join in the chorus of celestial music. Never again could she look up into the face of the great King.

Now it happened that this little angel loved the flowers of Paradise especially. For the last time she walked through the heavenly gardens.

“Oh, my exquisite ones, I cannot bear to leave you!” she sobbed to her favorite blossoms. “It breaks my heart!”

The flowers lifted their fair faces to hers in loving sympathy. They breathed out their sweetest perfume at her gentle touch. They stretched out their hands to catch her trailing garments as she passed them.

“My best beloveds! You are asking me to take you with me!” cried the little angel.

She filled her arms with the lovely blossoms of Paradise. Now the angel was a very little angel and the flowers she gathered made a very large armful indeed. She could not bear to leave any of her favorites behind.

Slowly and sorrowfully she left the heavenly gardens. Slowly and sorrowfully she passed outside the celestial gate.

When she had left the gates of Paradise far behind the lovely blossoms in her grasp were all that remained of Heaven to her. They filled her arms so full that she could not hold them all. Some of them fell. Down, down to earth they floated. They came to rest on the smiling blue waters of the broad Atlantic.

“Oh, what shall I do! I have lost my exquisite ones!” sobbed the little angel.

The flowers of Paradise smiled up at her from the place where they had fallen. Never had they looked lovelier.

“My best beloveds are beautiful and happy!” she cried as she smiled through her tears. “I still have all I can carry! I’ll leave them where they are!”

There are nine of the flowers of Paradise which the angel dropped. They have always remained in the blue Atlantic where she left them. After many years Portuguese mariners found them and Portugal claimed them as her own. She named them the Azores.

To this very day, however, one of the islands is called Flores, which means flowers.

21

WHY DOGS SNIFF

Once upon a time the dogs gave a dinner party. All the dogs were invited and all the dogs accepted the invitation. There were big dogs and little dogs and middle-sized dogs. There were black dogs and white dogs and brown dogs and gray dogs and yellow dogs and spotted dogs. There were dogs with long tails and dogs with short tails and dogs with no tails at all. There were dogs with little sharp-pointed ears and dogs with big flat drooping ears. There were dogs with long slender noses and dogs with short fat turn-up noses. All these dogs came to the party.

Now the dinner was a most elaborate affair. Everything had been arranged with the utmost care. All the good things to eat were spread out upon the rocks by the sea. A gay sparkling little brook brought water to drink. The sun was shining brightly and a soft gentle little breeze was blowing. Everything seemed absolutely perfect.

But there was a cross fussy old dog who came to the party. She was a yellow dog, they say. Nothing ever suited her. Whenever she went to a party she always found fault with something. Sometimes there was too little to eat and sometimes there was too much. Sometimes the hot things were not hot enough and sometimes the cold things were not cold enough. Sometimes the hot things were so hot they burned her mouth and the cold things so cold that they gave her indigestion. There was always something wrong.

At this party, however, there was not too much to eat and there was not too little to eat. The hot things were all just hot enough and the cold things were all just cold enough. Everything seemed to be exactly as it should be.

“How good everything tastes!” remarked the big black dog between polite mouthfuls.

“Everything is seasoned exactly right,” added the black and white spotted dog between mouthfuls which were entirely too large to be polite.

That was an unfortunate remark. The cross fussy yellow dog heard it. She noticed immediately that the big juicy bone she was eating had not been seasoned with pepper.

“Will somebody please pass the pepper?” she asked.

All the black dogs and white dogs and brown dogs and yellow dogs and gray dogs and spotted dogs fell over each other trying to find the pepper to pass. There was not a single bit of pepper at that dinner party.

“I can’t eat a mouthful until I have some pepper,” whined the yellow dog.

“I’ll go into the city and get some pepper,” said one of the dogs. Nobody ever knew which dog it was.

The dog who went into the city to get the pepper never came back. Nobody ever knew what became of him.

Whenever two dogs meet they always sniff at each other. If one of them should happen to be the dog who went into the city to get the pepper, he would surely smell of pepper.

22

LONGSTAFF, PINEPULLER AND ROCKHEAVER

Long ago there lived a blacksmith upon whose strong right arm there swelled great muscles and whose big hairy fist was capable of delivering so heavy a blow that all the men in the village and nearby countryside stood in awe of him. He had a hot temper as well as a strong right arm and his pretty young wife grew so afraid of him that she ran away into the forest, taking her baby son with her. The blacksmith had become crosser and crosser of late because the baby sometimes cried at night and disturbed his rest.

In the deep forest the young wife found nuts and herbs and wild fruits to eat. The baby boy thrived most marvelously. Soon he was big and strong, able to kill wild beasts to add to their food. At last his strength was so great that he could lift big rocks and pull up huge trees.

One day he said to his mother, “Dearest one, I’d like to leave you for a little while. I want to go back to the village where I was born. The stories you have told me about it keep ringing in my ears. I must see the place for myself. Do you mind, mother dear, if I take this journey?”

His mother had long foreseen that a day would come when he would no longer be content to live alone with her in the deep forest. Her heart ached but she gave her consent to the expedition.

When the lad reached the village he went straight to the shop of the blacksmith. His mother had described it to him so often that he had no difficulty in finding it. He knew at once that the man at the forge was his father. He looked exactly as he had always imagined his father looked.

“Good day,” said he. “I’d like you to weld an iron bar for me, a bar as tall as the tallest tree in front of your shop.”

The blacksmith glanced at the lad and then at the tree.

“You must have made a mistake in your measurements,” he replied. “You don’t know what you are talking about.”

The boy from the forest smiled quietly and stepped a trifle nearer to the blacksmith.

“You are quite right,” he admitted. “Thank you for pointing out to me my mistake. I should have said that I want this iron bar made twice as tall as the tallest tree before your door. I want it to be of good thickness, too. I plan to use it as my staff.”

The blacksmith looked the lad over more carefully. In truth he appeared as if he might be able to use the staff after all. The blacksmith hastily agreed to make it at once, and he didn’t say a word about arranging the price in advance according to his custom.

“Have my staff ready for me next week,” commanded the boy as he bade the blacksmith good-by.

When at last the lad was once more with his mother in the deep forest he told her all that had passed. “When I return for my staff I want you to go with me, dear mother,” were his words when he had ended his story.

“I!” cried the woman in alarm. “I’d be afraid to go! From your description I am sure the blacksmith is in truth your father, and I fear that his disposition has not improved with the years.”

“Don’t be afraid, dear heart,” said the son. “I’ll be there and I’ll take care of you. I’ll see that he does you no harm.”

They started out on their journey, and just a week from the day of the lad’s first visit to the blacksmith shop he stood once more in the door. He had left his mother hidden behind the bushes and shrubs.

“Good day,” he said to the blacksmith. “Is my staff ready?”

“Yes, indeed. It is entirely completed,” replied the blacksmith more politely than he was in the habit of speaking even to the parish priest himself. “I have just sent for two yokes of oxen and enough men to drag it out of my shop.”

“That is quite unnecessary,” responded the boy. “I’m sorry indeed to hear that you have inconvenienced yourself.”

He picked up the staff and tossed it about as jauntily as if it had been a slender cane. The blacksmith stared at him in amazement, his mouth wide open and his eyes bulging out of his head.

“May I ask who you are?” he asked as soon as he could catch his breath.

“My name from this day forth shall be Longstaff,” replied the lad. “And it so happens that I am your own son.”

The blacksmith listened in surprise while the boy told the story of the years he and his mother had lived in the deep forest. He embraced his son tenderly.

“You are indeed a son to be proud of!” he cried. “Come and live with me. We shall have a happy life together.”

The blacksmith was thinking that a strong young man like this would be a great help around the shop.

Longstaff shook his head. “Thank you, but I cannot tarry here,” he said. “I must go away and see the world a bit. My mother, however, is waiting behind the bushes. I fear she will be very lonely while I am away.”

When Longstaff’s mother came in response to his call her husband embraced her lovingly and kissed her. “I’ve really missed you about the house while you have been away,” he told her.

“If you are not good to her you’ll hear from me,” said, his son as he looked him straight in the eye.

Longstaff then set out to see the world, travelling from one country to another. After a time he came to a place where there was a man pulling up pine trees by the roots as easily as if they were the weeds in your garden.

“Good day,” said Longstaff. “What is your name?”

“I am called PINEPULLER,” was the reply. “I’m very strong, as you can see for yourself, but I’ve heard that there is somebody stronger than I am. His name is LONGSTAFF, I am told.”

Longstaff gave his iron staff a gay toss into the air and caught it again in his hand.

“That happens to be my name,” he said. “I like you. Won’t you join me in my travels about the country? We two would have a jolly time together.”

Pinepuller accepted the invitation and together they journeyed on. Soon they came to a place where there was a man picking up great rocks and tossing them about as lightly as if they had been rubber balls.

“Good day,” said Longstaff. “What is your name?”

“My name is ROCKHEAVER,” replied the other. “You can see for yourself that I am very strong. I’ve heard, however, that there is somebody stronger than I am. His name is LONGSTAFF, I am told.”

“That happens to be my name,” said Longstaff, “and this is my friend Pinepuller. You are just the man to complete our little party. Won’t you join us as we travel about the country?”

Rockheaver accepted the invitation with glee and the three friends journeyed on together from that hour. Everywhere they went they had everything their own way because of their great strength.

One day Longstaff, Pinepuller and Rockheaver sat on a rock by the sea. Suddenly they spied two pretty girls tossing glass balls back and forth and catching them. They had not stood there on the sand a moment before when the three friends had passed that way. Possibly they had been bathing and had only just come out of the water. Longstaff ran to speak to them. He put out his hand and caught their two glass balls at once. Then a strange thing happened. The two beautiful maidens disappeared the very minute Longstaff put their two glass balls into his pocket, and he was left standing alone on the sand by the sea.

“That is queer,” he complained as he told Pinepuller and Rockheaver what had happened.

Not far away there was a little house. There were no signs of life about the place and consequently the three friends entered. Inside the house there were beds, beautiful furniture and a kitchen completely furnished with pots and pans.

“I like this house,” said Longstaff, as he seated himself in the largest chair. “I’m going to rest a bit and you two can go hunting. When you return I’ll have the dinner cooked for you.”

Accordingly, Pinepuller and Rockheaver went away to hunt for game. Longstaff rested for a while in the big chair and then he went into the kitchen to light the fire. Soon the fire was burning merrily and the water in the kettle was bubbling away cozily. Longstaff cooked the dinner exactly as his mother had taught him long ago in the deep forest. Just for a minute he turned his back to hunt for the salt. When he turned around the pots and the frying pan were gone from the fire. There was a tiny dwarf with red boots disappearing through the kitchen floor with Longstaff’s good dinner.

Longstaff gasped. He was not at all accustomed to having his dinner stolen from under his very nose, as it were.

Soon Pinepuller and Rockheaver came back with the hares they had killed in the hunt. They looked at the dying fire, at the empty pots and frying pan, and at the dazed expression on Longstaff’s face.

“Where’s the dinner?” asked Pinepuller. “I’m as hungry as a bear. You said you’d have it ready when we got back.”

“I know what he’s done!” cried Rockheaver. “He has eaten all the dinner and hasn’t left a single mouthful for us!”

When Longstaff told them the story of the dwarf with red boots who had stolen the dinner it was difficult to make them believe it.

“Very well,” said he, “if you won’t take my word for it, why doesn’t Pinepuller stay in the kitchen and cook these hares? Rockheaver and I will go away and you can see what happens.”

Accordingly, Longstaff and Rockheaver went away and Pinepuller made a stew of the hares. While he was hunting for the salt the little dwarf with red boots came out from under the table and stole the stew. Pinepuller turned around just in time to catch him at it. He raised his big arm to seize him, but the dwarf, in the twinkling of an eye, vanished into the floor, taking the stew with him.

When Longstaff and Rockheaver returned Pinepuller told what had happened. “I believe you now,” said he to Longstaff. “I ask your pardon for doubting your word.”

However, Rockheaver was not convinced. “I know what has happened,” said he. “You were so hungry you couldn’t wait for us and you ate up the stew. You and Longstaff have plotted that I shall go with an empty stomach this day.”

“Let Rockheaver, then, be the one to stay in the kitchen,” suggested Longstaff. “We have brought back other hares from the hunt. Let him cook them and see what happens.”

Longstaff and Pinepuller went away, leaving Rockheaver to cook the hares. Again the dwarf with red boots jumped out from under the table and stole the dinner. When his two friends returned Rockheaver begged their pardon for his moments of distrust.

“These are surely queer doings,” said Longstaff. “I’m going to make an investigation. I’ll not rest in peace until I find out where this red-booted dwarf lives and where these three dinners have gone. Come and help me dig up the ground under the kitchen.”

At once Rockheaver dug up the floor of the kitchen and Pinepuller pulled out the earth beneath. Soon they had a deep well-like hole reaching down into the ground. While they had been digging, Longstaff had made a ladder out of the branches of the trees, a ladder so long that it could reach very far into the earth.

“I’m going to be the one to descend into this hole,” remarked Longstaff when he thought that it was quite deep enough.

Indeed his two friends were entirely willing that he should.

He lowered the ladder he had made and very cautiously he crept down into the earth. At the foot of the ladder he came to what looked like a heavy barred door. He had brought his big iron staff with him, of course, and with this he knocked hard at the door.

“Who is there?” called out a voice from within.

“I am Longstaff.” “Open.”

“Go away as fast as you can,” said the voice. “This is the home of the seven-headed serpent. If he catches you it will be serious. You’ll be enchanted and can never get away.”

“I’d like to meet this serpent for a minute or two,” said Longstaff.

The heavy door swung open and Longstaff stepped inside. Immediately he heard a rushing like a great wind. With his big iron staff he struck a mighty blow at the seven-headed serpent. He hit him just in time to avoid being enchanted. The huge seven-headed serpent fell to the ground completely stunned by Longstaff’s blow.

At the first drop of blood which fell from the wounded monster a beautiful maiden appeared near the door. Longstaff recognized her at once as one of the two girls he had seen on the seashore tossing and catching the two glass balls. He took the balls out of his pocket.

“Do you recognize these?” he asked the maiden.

“Indeed I do,” she replied. “One of these glass balls belongs to me and the other belongs to my sister. She, too, has been enchanted and is behind the next door you see ahead of you.”

“I’ll get you away from this evil place,” said Longstaff, “and then I’ll see what I can do to help your sister.”

He lifted her in his arms and started to carry her up the ladder.

“Wait just a minute,” she said. “I think I’d better give you back this glass ball. I’ll not be able to speak a word while you have it, but I think you need it more than I.”

She gave him back the glass ball and then they hastened up the long ladder. When Pinepuller and Rockheaver saw the lovely maiden in Longstaff’s arms they were filled with amazement.

“She is a princess who has been enchanted,” explained Longstaff. “Take good care of her while I return for her sister. Then we will restore these fair damsels to their father, the king, who has long mourned them as dead.”

Once more Longstaff crept down the ladder into the depths of the earth. The seven-headed serpent was still lying where he had fallen and Longstaff stepped past him and knocked at the door which barred his way.

“Who is there?” called out a voice from within.

“This is Longstaff! Open!”

“Hurry away as fast as you can. This is the home of the dwarf with red boots,” said the voice.

“That red-booted dwarf is exactly the person I want to see,” answered Longstaff, holding fast to his heavy iron bar which his father had made him long ago in the blacksmith’s shop.

The door slowly swung open and Longstaff stepped inside. At once he heard the footsteps of the red-booted dwarf. The tiny dwarf looked up at him in surprise.

“We’ll fight and see who is the best man,” stormed he. “You fight with the black sword and I’ll use the white one.”

“No indeed,” said Longstaff. “I’ll use the white sword and you the black. Otherwise I’ll not wait to fight with swords but will choose my own weapon which happens to be this iron staff of mine.”

The little red-booted dwarf looked up at the heavy iron staff in Longstaff’s hand. It could crush him very easily indeed.

“Very well!” said he. “Just as you like!”

Longstaff fought with the white sword and the dwarf with the black one, and soon the dwarf had fallen, though his great agility made up for his lack of size. With the first drop of blood which fell from the red-booted dwarf the beautiful princess was disenchanted.

She gave her glass ball back to Longstaff after she had recognized it as her own; and, safe in his arms, she was borne up the long ladder to the place where her sister was awaiting her with Pinepuller and Rockheaver.

“I’ve left my staff behind!” cried Longstaff in alarm. “I must go down once more and get it.”

He had never been without his staff near at hand even when he was asleep. Hastily he again descended the ladder. There was his staff lying where he had dropped it when he took the white sword. When he turned around to go up the ladder again, it had disappeared. His friends had forgotten all about him, so interested had they become in the two beautiful maidens. Even at that moment they were on their way to the king’s palace. They had pulled up the ladder, never giving another thought as to how Longstaff was going to get out of the hole.

Longstaff shouted in vain. Then he remembered how the dwarf had appeared in the kitchen. Evidently the red-booted dwarf knew how to get up to the surface of the earth. A drink from Longstaff’s flask quickly revived him. He reached for the white sword ready to fight again.

“Wait a minute, my friend,” said Longstaff. “You are now my prisoner. I’ll let you go as soon as you perform a little service for me. Just take me up to the surface of the earth.”

“That is easy,” answered the dwarf. “Take hold of my hand.”

As soon as Longstaff had taken the hand of the red-booted dwarf he felt himself rise. In a moment he was safe outside the hole.

“There’s another thing I want you to do for me before I let you go,” he said. “Take me to the king’s palace.”

Longstaff took hold of the dwarf’s hand and in a moment more they were at the palace. It was only a minute after the king’s daughters had been restored to him. The royal palace was wild with joy. Even the fact that the two lovely maidens were dumb was almost overlooked.

When Pinepuller and Rockheaver saw Longstaff’s angry eyes they ran away as fast as they could. They were never seen near the royal palace again.

Longstaff drew the two glass balls from his pocket and gave one to each of the two beautiful princesses. At once they could speak, and together they told their story to their father, the king.

“You may wed whichever princess you prefer,” said the king to Longstaff when he had heard how he had made the bold rescue.

Longstaff wedded the princess who was more beautiful than her sister, and when the king died he reigned over the whole kingdom.

23

THE TABLE, THE SIFTER AND THE PINCHERS

Once upon a time there was a man who was very poor. He had so many children it was difficult to earn money enough to provide for them all. Accordingly, he left home and hired out to the king of a distant land.

At the end of a year's time he went to the king and said: "I have served you faithfully for a whole year. Now I wish to return to my wife and children. Pay me, I pray you, what you owe me for my work."

The king said: "I will not reward you in money. I will give you something better than money. Here is a table. When you are hungry all you have to do is to say, 'Table, set yourself.' Then the table will immediately be spread with food."

"Thank you, good king," replied the man. "With this table it will be easy enough to provide food even for all my large family."

When the man had started home with his table he soon grew hungry. He put it down by the roadside under a leafy tree and said, "Table, set yourself." Immediately it was full of the most delicious food. The man ate all he could and gave the rest away to some beggars who passed that way.

"It is a lucky day for us," said the beggars as they thanked him.

That night the man stopped at an inn. He was so delighted with the magic powers of his table that he foolishly told the innkeeper about it.

“That would be a most excellent table for me to possess,” thought the innkeeper. “With this in my possession I would soon be a rich man. I could charge my guests a price in proportion to the rich food I would serve them, and I’d never have to spend a cent of my money to buy supplies.”

That night the innkeeper stole the table and substituted another for it which looked exactly like it. Early in the morning the man loaded the table on his back and hurried home to his wife and children.

“We’ll never be hungry again!” he cried as he embraced his wife. “Never again shall our children call for food when we have nothing to give them!”

“How much did the king pay you?” asked his wife in surprise. The good woman well knew how much it cost to buy food enough to keep all their children from going hungry.

“The king did not pay me in money. He gave me something better than money,” replied the man. “Do you see this table? Call the children. I want to show you something.”

The man’s wife and children all gathered about the table, watching it curiously.

“Table, set yourself,” said the man.

The table remained standing in the center of the floor just as it was.

“What trick is this?” asked the good wife. She had been a bit suspicious from the moment she had heard that there was no money in her husband’s pockets.

“I’ll get the beggars I fed to prove to you what this table provided yesterday,” he said when he had told all the story.

“You’d better go back to the king as fast as you can,” advised the wife. “Take back this good-for-nothing table which he has imposed upon you and ask for some real money instead.”

The man did as his wife advised. The king was thoughtful for a moment. He guessed that the man had been robbed.

At last he said: “I’ll give you a sifter this time. Then when you need money all you have to do is to say, ‘Sifter, sift!’ It will sift out money as freely as if it were flour.”

The man was delighted with the sifter. He sifted his pockets full of money immediately and hurried home. On the way he again spent the night at the inn.

“When I brought my table home it wouldn’t work,” he told the innkeeper. “I took it back and got something in its place which is all right.”

The innkeeper watched him sift out money.

“Why don’t I get that sifter?” thought the innkeeper. “I work very hard serving my guests even though the table provides the food for them. If I had this sifter I wouldn’t have to work. I’d close the inn and pass the rest of my life enjoying the money I’d sift into my pockets so easily.”

That night he stole the sifter and substituted another which looked exactly like it.

When the man reached home there was plenty of money in his pockets and his wife and children were happy for a little while. However, he soon wanted to display the magic gifts of his new sifter. Accordingly, he called his family together.

“Sifter, sift,” he commanded.

The sifter behaved just like any ordinary sifter.

“You have been tricked again!” cried his wife. She was very cross indeed and told her husband exactly what she thought of him.

Home was not a comfortable place for him that day, so he decided to hurry back to the king after he had emptied all the money in his pockets into his wife’s lap.

“This will supply you for a while,” he said. “It is quite as much as any ordinary husband would have brought home for a year’s work.”

“A woman hates to have her husband made a fool of,” replied the woman as she rolled up the money and tucked it away carefully.

When the king had heard the story he was entirely convinced that the man had an enemy who had stolen both the table and the sifter.

“Where did you spend the night?” he asked.

The man told of passing the night in the inn.

“I’ve heard that innkeeper is going to retire from business, he has become so rich,” said the king. “You’d better hurry there as fast as you can before he leaves town.”

The laborer nodded his head thoughtfully, a wise look creeping into his eyes.

“Take these pinchers,” ordered the king. “Use them on that innkeeper until he gives back the table and the sifter.”

When the innkeeper was sore and black and blue from the pinchers he gave back the table and the sifter.

After that there were prosperous days indeed for the king’s laborer. Whenever the children were hungry, he would say: “Table, set yourself,” and immediately the table would be full of the most delicious food. Whenever his wife said, “I need some money,” he would call out, “Sifter, sift,” and the sifter would sift out money as freely and easily as if it were flour.

As for the pinchers, they proved to be quite as useful as the other gifts he received from the king. Whenever the children were naughty he had only to glance in the direction of those pinchers. The children would immediately behave as they should.

24

LINDA BRANCA AND HER MASK

Long ago there lived a girl who was so pretty she grew tired of being beautiful and longed to be ugly. She was so attractive that all the young men in the whole city wanted to marry her. Every night the street in front of her house was full of youths who came to sing beneath her balcony.

Linda Branca, that was the girl's name, grew tired of being kept awake nights. It is well enough for a little while to hear songs about one's pearly teeth and snowy arms, one's flashing eyes and waving hair, one's rosebud mouth and fairylike feet; but a steady diet of it becomes decidedly wearing.

"I wish I were as homely as that girl who is passing by," she remarked one day. "Then I could sleep nights." "If I were as ugly looking as that I'd have a chance to select a really good husband perhaps. With so many to choose from it is terribly confusing. I'll never be able to make any choice at all as things are now. I'm afraid I'll die unwedded," she added as she carefully surveyed the girl's coarse hair, her large feet and hands, her ugly big mouth and ears and small red-lidded eyes. "That girl has a much better chance of a successful marriage than I have, with all this tiresome crowd of suitors to drive me distracted!"

The girl in the street heard her words and looked up. When she saw how lovely Linda Branca was she was amazed indeed at the words she had heard. She thought that she must have made a mistake and asked Linda Branca to say it all over again.

“You can be exactly as homely as I am,” declared the girl when at last she had sufficiently recovered from her surprise to find her tongue. “I am an artist. I can prepare a mask for you which will make you just as ugly as I am.”

“Go on and make it as soon as you can!” cried Linda Branca, clapping her little hands in joy.

That evening the suitors in the street under the balcony thought that the lovely Linda Branca had become very gracious. She was frequently to be seen on the balcony looking eagerly up and down the street as if she were expecting some one. Her dark eyes were sparkling and her fair cheek had a rosy flush upon it which they had never seen before.

“The beautiful Linda Branca is more charming than ever,” was the burden of their songs that night.

Linda Branca was so excited about her new mask that she could not have slept even if there had been no suitors to disturb her with their songs. When at last she fell asleep towards morning it was only to dream that the new mask had the face of a donkey.

It was not until the next week that the mask finally arrived. Linda Branca had grown very impatient and was almost in despair lest she should never receive it. When at last the girl brought it one could easily see why it had taken a whole week to prepare it. So like a human face it was that it was plain that the making of it had called forth great patience and skill as well as necessary time.

“It is even uglier than I had hoped it would be!” cried Linda Branca in delight when she saw it.

Surely, when she tried it on no one of her suitors would ever have recognized the fair Linda Branca of their songs.

Now Linda Branca had no mother, and her father was away on business, so it was an easy matter to prepare for her departure.

Linda Branca’s father was a man of wealth who spared no money in giving his daughter beautiful gowns to enhance her rare beauty. She had one dress of blue trimmed with silver and another of blue embroidered in gold. As she packed up a few belongings to take with her, she decided to add these two favorite garments.

“Who knows but I may need them sometime?” she mused as she rolled them up carefully.

With the ugly mask upon her face, and dressed in a long dark cloak, she quietly stole out of the house. She went to the king’s palace in a neighboring city and inquired if they were in need of a maid.

“Ask my son. It is he who rules here,” said the king’s mother.

The king looked at Linda Branca with a critical eye.

“I hired my last servant because she was so pretty,” he remarked. “I think I’ll hire this one because she is so ugly.”

Accordingly, Linda Branca became a servant in the royal palace. She soon discovered, however, that it was the pretty maid who received all the favors. It was good to sleep nights without being disturbed by the songs of suitors under her window. Nevertheless, after a time, Linda Branca could not fail to see that it was the pretty maid who had the happy life.

“I believe I’d almost be willing to be pretty again,” said Linda Branca to herself. “Perhaps it has some advantages.”

She knew very well that the pretty maid was not as tired as she that night.

The next day there was to be a great feast which was to last for two days. Linda Branca asked the queen if she might be allowed to attend.

“Ask my son,” said the queen. “It is he who rules here.”

“May I go to the feast?” asked Linda Branca when she was blacking the king’s boots.

“Look out or I’ll throw my boot at you,” said the king.

That night when the feast had already begun, she dressed herself carefully in the robe of blue trimmed with silver. It was indeed a pleasure to remove the ugly mask and find that she was still just as lovely as when the crowds of suitors sang about her great beauty.

That night at the feast every one talked about the beauty of the mysterious stranger in the dress of blue trimmed with silver. The king himself danced with her. He was completely captivated by her charm.

“Where do you come from, lovely lady?” he asked.

“I come from the land of the boot,” replied Linda Branca with a gay laugh.

The king was completely mystified, for he did not know where the land of the boot was. He asked the queen and all the wisemen of the court, but there was not a single one of them who had ever heard of that country. The next day they hunted through all the books and all the maps, but there was no book or map which mentioned it.

“She is the most beautiful maiden I have ever seen!” cried the king. “I’d like to marry her, but how can I ever see her again if I can’t find out the location of the land she comes from!”

He was in deep despair, and every one in the royal palace was nearly distracted. It was decidedly embarrassing to have the king fall in love with a stranger from a country nobody could find on a map or in a book.

When the king returned from the feast he saw the ugly little maid he had hired busy at her work about the palace. The next day she again asked the queen’s permission to go to the feast that night.

“Ask my son,” was the queen’s reply.

When Linda Branca asked the king’s permission, he replied: “Look out or I’ll hit you with my hairbrush.”

That night Linda Branca again removed her ugly mask and dressed herself in the beautiful gown of blue embroidered in gold. She was even lovelier than the night before.

When she entered the grand ball room the king was almost wild with joy. He ran to her side at once and kept dancing with her the entire evening.

“What country do you come from?” he asked again.

“I’m from the land of the hairbrush,” replied Linda Branca.

“Where is that land?” asked the king, but Linda Branca would not tell him.

“Where is the land of the hairbrush?” asked the king of the queen mother, and of all the wise men of the court.

Nobody could tell him, and nobody could find the land of the hairbrush upon any map or in any book.

“Stupid ones!” cried the king. “I don’t believe you have half tried to find it!”

He looked through all the maps and books himself and at last he grew ill from so much studying. His friends all gathered about him in the royal bedchamber and sought to console him. However he refused consolation.

“I do not care whether I live or die!” he cried. “I care for nothing except the beautiful stranger who came to my feast.”

Linda Branca knew that the king was ill, and when these words were reported to her she quickly dressed herself in the robe of blue trimmed with silver, which she had worn the first night of the feast. When she took off her ugly mask and looked at herself in the glass she was really pleased with her reflection.

“It is not so bad after all to be pretty,” she said as she smiled.

Linda Branca stole out of the palace and peeped into the window of the royal bedchamber. One of the king’s counsellors saw her.

“Whose lovely face is that at the window?” he asked.

“It is surely the beautiful stranger from the land of the boot,” said one.

“It is the charming maiden from the land of the hairbrush,” disputed another.

By the time the king himself had reached the window there was no one to be seen. He called for the queen, his mother.

“Tell me, mother, who was outside my window a moment ago?” he asked.

“No one unless a masquerader,” replied the queen.

The poor queen was nearly worn out with worry over her son. She was afraid he was so sick that he was going to die.

The next day the king had in truth grown most decidedly worse. The court physicians went about with anxious faces and the whole palace had become a place of deepest gloom.

Linda Branca put on her dress of blue embroidered with gold and again peeped into the window of the royal bedchamber.

Now the king had lain upon his richly carved bed with his eyes fixed every moment upon the window where the face had appeared. He did not close his eyes at all.

“He can’t live long if this keeps up,” one court physician whispered to another.

He had just finished saying these words when the king gave a loud cry and sprang from his bed. He ran to the window and reached it just in time to catch a piece of the skirt of blue embroidered in gold. He held it tight.

“Masquerader, unmask!” he cried.

Linda Branca had hastily put on the mask which she had brought with her, and now she looked up at the king with the face of the little servant he had hired. She took off the mask and smiled into his eyes.

“Now at last I know who is the beautiful stranger from the land of the boot and the land of the hairbrush!” cried the king.

When Linda Branca had told the king, the queen mother and all the courtiers her whole story everybody laughed.

“Who ever before heard of a maiden who wanted to be less beautiful than Nature had made her!” cried the wise men.

“I always knew that when my son saw fit to select his bride he would choose a rare woman,” said the queen mother proudly.

The king himself did not say a single word, but gazed and gazed at the lovely face of Linda Branca with such joy in his eyes that she knew in her heart that at last she was glad to be beautiful.

“Stay pretty,” is a parting greeting between women in the Azores. Perhaps it was Linda Branca herself who began saying it in the beginning.

25

FRESH FIGS

Long ago there lived a little maid who fell ill. Her father was very rich and he did everything he could for her.

One day she said: “If I only had some fresh figs I’m sure I’d feel better.”

Now it was in the month of January. It would be many long months before the fresh figs would be ripe. The rich man was greatly worried. Not even his fortune could ripen the figs, as he well knew.

Nevertheless he decided to advertise and therefore said: “Whoever shall bring fresh figs to my daughter shall marry her if he be young. If he be old he shall receive his reward in money.”

This announcement was spread abroad throughout the whole country, but no one had any fresh figs in the month of January. At last, however, there was a woman found who had a fig tree close by the side of her house, protected from the cold winds by the house and by the high wall of her garden. This woman had a few fresh figs, but they were small and not very good.

“Send them to the little maid who is sick,” advised her neighbors.

“Indeed I’ll send them as soon as my son can get ready to start,” replied the good woman.

Now the woman had two sons. One of them was foolish, but the other was considered one of the cleverest youths in the whole countryside. He left home immediately with the best of the figs in his basket.

On the way he met a woman dressed in blue with a child in her arms. It was really the Holy Mother and her Child but he did not recognize them.

"What are you carrying in your basket?" asked the woman.

"I am carrying horns," replied the clever youth.

"Yes, you are carrying horns," replied the woman.

The young man went on to the rich man's house supposing that he was carrying figs in his basket just as when he started out. The basket had grown heavy.

"What have you in your basket?" asked the rich man when he saw the youth at his door.

"I have brought some fresh figs from my garden to your daughter who is ill," replied the clever one.

The rich man was delighted. He opened the basket. Then he shook the boy roughly by the collar and pushed him away down the steep steps. There were horns in the basket.

"What do you mean by playing such a trick on me?" called the rich man after him. "Never let me see your face in these parts again!"

There were still a few of the poorest of the fresh figs remaining on the tree. The foolish son begged his mother for permission to carry them to the little maid who was sick.

"Yes. Go with them," replied his mother. "Who knows but what you may wed the rich man's daughter!" She laughed as she said it.

The boy who was foolish started for the rich man's house with the figs in his basket. They were only a very few, and poor little things indeed.

On the way he met a woman dressed in blue with a child in her arms.

"What are you carrying in your basket?" asked the woman.

"Fresh figs for a little maid who is sick," replied the boy.

"Yes, you are carrying figs," said the woman.

The boy opened his basket. "Here, take one for the baby," he said. "He's a lovely child."

He gave one of the best figs to the baby and went on his way to the rich man's house.

"What have you in your basket?" asked the rich man.

"Fresh figs from my garden for your daughter who is sick," replied the boy.

The rich man opened the basket with a scowl upon his face. He well remembered how he had been tricked before. Then his eyes grew wide with surprise.

"What, figs like these in January!" he cried in amazement.

The figs had grown large and beautiful on the road to the rich man's house. They filled the whole basket. The little maid was so happy when she saw them that she began to grow better immediately.

When her father saw that the youth was foolish, he repented of his promise to give his daughter in marriage to any young man who brought fresh figs to her. However, he had given his word and it was not a thing to be lightly broken.

"I'll tell you what to do to get out of your difficulty," said his friend to whom he told his trouble. "Turn two lively rabbits out on the mountain and tell the boy that he'll lose his life if he doesn't catch them and bring them back at night."

That is exactly what the rich man did. The poor youth tried in vain to catch the rabbits. He got very tired and hot; and, foolish as he was, he knew enough to realize that the task set for him was quite impossible.

Suddenly he saw the woman dressed in blue standing before him with the child in her arms.

"What is the matter?" she asked him.

The boy told her how he would lose his life if he did not catch the rabbits and bring them back to the rich man at nightfall.

The woman cut a reed and made a pipe of it.

“Play on this pipe,” she said, “and the rabbits will come back to you of their own accord.”

The youth played such sweet music on his pipe that the two rabbits came running up to him immediately. It was all he could do to keep away the other beasts and birds. Everything which heard the music was charmed by it.

On his way back to the rich man’s house he met two men who had been sent to kill him. No one had dreamed, of course, that he’d really catch the rabbits. The two men were so surprised when they saw them in the bag that their eyes stuck out. The rich man was even more amazed.

As for the little maid who had been sick, when she heard the sweet music which the youth played upon the pipe, she was quite ready to marry him. The wedding was celebrated with great joy.

26

PETER-OF-THE-PIGS

Long ago there lived a man who employed a boy to take care of his pigs. The lad’s name was Peter and he was commonly called by every one in the countryside Peter-of-the-pigs.

One day a man came up to him and said:

“Sell me these seven pigs.”

“I can’t sell but six of them,” said Peter. “I must keep one, but you may buy the other six if you will cut off their tails and ears and leave them for me.”

The man promised to do this, and the boy pocketed the money. The six pigs looked sad enough without their tails and ears as they were driven away by their new master.

Peter led his one remaining pig down to the sand pit. He buried it halfway in the sand. He buried the tails and ears of the other six pigs, too, so that part of them stuck out. Then he ran with all speed for his master.

“Come and help me get the pigs out of the sand pit!” he called out.

His master ran as fast as he could to the sand pit. There he saw one of the pigs halfway out of the sand. He and Peter together soon pulled it out completely. Then he took hold of the tail nearby. To his horror it appeared to break off in his hand.

"Run to the house and ask my wife to give you two shovels!" cried the owner of the pigs. "With the shovels we can dig out the rest of the pigs."

The boy ran to the house. He knew that his master kept his money in two big bags.

"My master says that you shall give me his two money bags," said Peter to his mistress.

The woman did not approve of doing this. "Are you sure he said both of them?" she asked.

"Yes, both of them," said Peter. "Go ask him yourself."

Accordingly, the woman ran out of the house.

"Did you say both of them?" she called to her husband.

"Yes, both of them," he replied. "Be quick about it, too."

Of course the poor man thought that she was asking about the two shovels which he had sent Peter to get.

Thus Peter received his master's two bags of money, and set out into the world with the bags on his shoulder and his pockets full of the money he had obtained from the sale of the six pigs.

After a time Peter-of-the-pigs met a robber. The robber stole one of his money bags and ran away with it. Peter ran after him.

Now it happened that the robber had just killed a deer. He was carrying the liver inside his blouse. As he ran he threw it back so that he could run faster. Peter saw what he had done.

"If you want to catch me, you'll have to throw away your liver, too," called out the robber over his shoulder.

Peter-of-the-pigs pulled out his knife and cut out his liver. Of course he dropped dead at once.

When at last Peter's master found out that he had been deceived he ran after the lad. As he found him lying dead there by the wayside, he said:

"Oh, Peter-of-the-pigs! You were sharp, but you found some one who was sharper."

Thus it is in life.

27

THE PRINCESS WHO LOST HER RINGS

Long ago there lived a lovely princess who owned the most beautiful rings in the whole world. She had rings set with diamonds and rings set with pearls. She had rings set with rubies and rings set with sapphires. She had rings set with emeralds and turquoises and amethysts and every other kind of precious stone. She had rings which had no precious stones in them, but which were wonderfully decorated with fine and delicate carving, wrought with great skill.

This princess lived in a magnificent palace surrounded by a high wall. Her own apartments opened upon a pleasant balcony. From the balcony she could see the blue waters of the ocean and the tall trees of the forest. Here she liked to pass her days.

In a corner of the balcony there was a basin and pitcher of silver always kept filled with water in order that the princess might wash her hands on the balcony instead of having to go inside the house. Whenever she washed her hands she always removed the ring she was wearing that day. Some days it was one ring and other days it was another, but, whatever ring it happened to be, the princess always took it off carefully when she washed her hands.

One day a pretty white rabbit came up to the balcony to play with the princess. That day the princess was wearing her best diamond ring. She removed it very carefully when she washed her hands. Then it disappeared. She knew that the rabbit must have stolen it.

The next day the rabbit came again and that day the princess lost her best emerald ring. She was very sure that the rabbit must have stolen that, too. However, she liked to play with the rabbit, so she said nothing to her father, the king, about the lost rings.

Every day the rabbit came and every day there was a ring missing. The princess had a large box full of rings, in the beginning, but one morning she opened the box and saw that it was entirely empty. She remembered then that she had put on her last ring, one set with a sapphire, the morning before.

The princess became so sad that she would not go out to the balcony to play with the white rabbit. Every day she grew sadder and sadder. At last her father, the king, noticed it.

“What is the matter with our daughter, the princess?” he asked the queen. “She is sad now, and once she was the very jolliest, happiest princess in the whole world.”

“I cannot imagine what the trouble is,” replied the queen. “Perhaps she is lonely. Let us send for the storytellers of the kingdom to come and tell their stories to entertain her.”

Accordingly, the king sent for all the storytellers in the whole kingdom. All the storytellers had to come to the palace even if they were old and lame.

Now it so happened that in the kingdom there were two old women who were very lame. They knew the most interesting stories of anybody, but it took them so long to reach the palace that they forgot all their best stories on the way.

“What story are you going to tell the princess?” one of the lame old women asked the other.

“I can’t remember a single one of my stories,” said the other old woman. “It has taken my lame old legs so long to travel the road to the palace that now that we are almost there I can’t think of a single story.”

The two old women tried to remember some of their stories, but they could not think of any. They were almost at the royal palace, too.

“What shall we do if we can’t remember our stories?” asked the first old woman.

“We’ll have to learn some new stories,” replied the other.

Just then they spied a queer sight. There was a little donkey without any feet traveling along the road. On his back was a load of wood.

“What a queer donkey!” cried the first old woman.

“Let us follow along after him. Perhaps we shall be able to tell a story about him,” replied the other.

The two old women followed the donkey into the forest. There was a little thatched-roofed house in the forest and before the house there was a fire burning. A kettle of something which smelled good was boiling merrily over the fire.

The donkey which had no feet stopped beside the fire and left his load of wood. The two old women stopped beside the fire, too.

“What do you suppose is cooking in this kettle?” asked one of the old women.

“It smells so good I’m going to taste and see,” said the other.

She started to taste, but as she was about to stick in her finger she heard a strange deep voice which seemed to come out of the little thatched house.

“Do not touch. It is not yours,” is what the voice said.

The two old women went up to the door of the house and one of them peeped through the keyhole.

Inside the house she saw a pretty white rabbit playing with a box full of rings. Suddenly the white rabbit pulled off his skin and changed into a handsome prince.

“What wouldn’t I give to see the owner of these rings!” cried the prince.

The two lame old women hurried away from the little house in the forest. They were frightened at the queer doings there.

“I know a story to tell the princess!” cried one of the old women when she had recovered from her fright. “I’ll tell her how I peeped through the keyhole and saw the rabbit change his skin.”

“I know what I’ll tell the princess,” said the other old woman. “I’ll tell her how I followed the donkey without any feet and what that strange voice said to me when I tried to taste the good-smelling broth in the kettle.”

“We must keep saying over our stories so we won’t forget them,” said the first old woman.

“We must hurry on our way to the royal palace and get there while we remember them,” said the other.

The two old women hurried on their way to the palace as fast as their lame old legs could carry them. They rehearsed their stories over and over along the way so they would not forget them.

Many storytellers had told their tales to the princess. They were jolly tales, too, but the princess was not in the least cheered by them. She remembered her lost rings even when she was listening to the stories.

“If the storytellers cannot make the princess happy, who can?” asked the king in despair.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” replied the queen. “She always used to like stories.”

Finally the two old women reached the royal palace and went to tell their tales to the princess.

The first old woman told the story of the donkey without any feet and the broth in the kettle. The princess did not appear to be particularly interested even when the old woman told about the strange deep voice which said, “Do not touch. It is not yours.” Cold chills, however, ran up and down the spines of the king and queen and all the courtiers when she came to that part of the tale.

Next the other old woman told how she peeped through the keyhole of the little thatched house in the forest and saw the white rabbit change his skin.

The pretty dark eyes of the princess sparkled when the old woman mentioned the rabbit and she leaned forward in her chair eagerly.

"Our dear little princess looks like her own happy self again for the first time in ages," whispered the king to the queen.

When the old woman told of the rabbit's words, "What would I not give to see the owner of these rings!" the princess clapped her hands.

"Take me to see this rabbit at once!" she cried.

The king and queen and all the courtiers went with the princess to find the white rabbit. The two old women went first to point out the way, and as these old women were so lame the whole procession moved very slowly.

At last they drew near the forest. There was the donkey without any feet moving along the road with a load of wood on his back. The two old women, the princess, the king and queen and all the courtiers followed the donkey into the deep forest to the door of the little thatched house. Before the house the fire was burning and something which smelled good was boiling in the kettle. The princess stuck in her finger to try it.

"Take it. It is yours," said the strange deep voice from the little house.

The princess was so surprised that she forgot to taste the good-smelling broth. She ran to the door of the house and peeped through the keyhole. There was the white rabbit playing with a box full of rings set with diamonds and pearls, rings set with rubies and sapphires, rings set with emeralds and amethysts and turquoises, and rings set with no precious stones at all, but carved delicately, with great skill.

"What wouldn't I give to see the owner of these rings!" said the rabbit as he pulled off his skin and changed into a handsome prince.

“Here’s the owner of the rings!” cried the princess. “She is here at your very door!”

The door of the little thatched house in the deep forest swiftly opened and the prince received the princess in his arms.

“Your words have broken my enchantment!” he cried. “Now that at last the voice of the owner of these rings is heard at my door, I’ll never have to put on my rabbit skin again.”

28

THE MASTER OF MAGIC

Once upon a time there lived a man who had three sons. The two older ones worked in the fields, but the youngest one went to school. He learned how to read and write and do sums and make drawings. At last he even learned magic.

The two elder brothers complained to their father about him one day. Their hearts were bitter against him.

“It is not fair, father,” they said. “We work hard every day in the fields and bring home money to enrich the family. Why shouldn’t our brother work, too? He does nothing except study.”

The youngest son heard their words of complaint.

“Will you go hunting with me to-morrow, father?” he asked. “I have learned much magic. In fact, I have become a master of magic. I will turn myself into a hunting dog if you will go into the fields with me.”

The next day the young man changed himself by magic into a hunting dog, and his father went into the fields with him. He bagged many rabbits that day. As they returned home, he met one of his friends.

“What luck to-day?” asked his friend.

The hunter proudly displayed the rabbits he had in his bag. “I have them, thanks to my dog,” he said.

“I’d like to buy that dog of yours,” said his friend. “What will you take for him?”

The father named an enormous price, and to his great surprise his friend accepted it. The money was passed over at once, and the hunting dog went home with his new master.

The next day they went on a hunting expedition into the deep forest. Suddenly the dog disappeared. His master called and whistled to him in vain. Finally he was obliged to return home without him. He had lost both the dog and the money he had paid for him.

“Have you seen my hunting dog?” were his words for many weeks to every one he met.

His hunting dog had fled into a deep forest and once more resumed his original form. He returned home and told his two brothers that in a single day he had earned for his father more than their combined efforts for many weeks. Indeed it was quite true.

The next day the young man said to his father: “Will you buy a saddle and bridle for me if I turn myself into a horse?”

His father made the purchase, and then the young man changed into a handsome black horse. His father rode him up and down the streets very proudly. The Great Magician noticed the beautiful beast.

He called the man to him and said: “That is a very good horse you are riding. What will you sell him for?”

The father named an enormous price, but he at once paid it cheerfully. He ordered the horse placed in his stables.

Now this Great Magician had a beautiful daughter who was very fond of horses. She went out to inspect his new purchase as soon as it was brought home. She noticed that the horse ate nothing.

“What a beauty!” she cried as she stroked his glossy black coat. “You are the handsomest horse in the stable. Why don’t you eat? I believe your bridle is hurting you. I’m going to take it off.”

As soon as the bridle was removed it was changed into a bird and flew out the window. The Great Magician at that moment changed himself into a hawk and killed the bird, never dreaming that it was the bridle of the new horse he had purchased.

The next morning when the Great Magician went to mount his beautiful black steed there was no new horse to be found in the stable. The horse had changed into a kernel of corn.

The Great Magician transformed himself into a hen to eat up the corn, but the youth was too quick for him. He changed into a dog and seized the hen between his teeth and gave it a good shaking. Then he returned to his own form and explained the whole affair to the Great Magician.

“You are surely a master of magic,” was the comment of the magician.

When the Great Magician had forgiven him for the shaking he had received when he was in the form of a hen, he gladly gave his consent to his daughter’s marriage to the master of magic.

29

ST. ANTHONY’S GODCHILD

Long ago there lived a man who had so many children that he could scarcely find godfathers for them all. He had requested so many of his friends to serve, that when his last baby was born, a little dark-eyed daughter, he vowed that he’d ask the first man he met upon the street.

As luck would have it, he happened to meet the good St. Anthony.

“Will you be godfather to my baby daughter?” he asked.

Kind St. Anthony gladly consented. He named the baby Antonia, and said to the father:

“Train up this child in the way she should go. Teach her all you can. When she is thirteen years old I’ll come to get her and I’ll give her a good start in life.”

The years flew by and soon little Antonia was thirteen years old. The father was afraid that St. Anthony had forgotten his promise, but one day the saint appeared.

“Is this my godchild?” he asked as he looked at Antonia. “Surely she has grown prettier each year of her life.”

Antonia blushed shyly and looked even more attractive than before.

“Dress yourself in your brother’s garments,” he said to her. “I am going to take you to the king’s court and you are entirely too pretty to go there in your own dresses.”

Accordingly, Antonia put on her brother’s clothes and went to serve as a page to the king. She was now called Anthony instead of Antonia.

Now the king had a sister who grew very fond of the little page. She became angry that the page did not love her in return and plotted against him.

One day she went to the king and said:

“Your little page says that he can separate all the chaff from the wheat in a single night.”

“Let him try,” responded the king.

When Anthony heard what the king required he was decidedly worried. Then he remembered that he was the godchild of St. Anthony and that the saint was always ready to aid those in need. He called upon St. Anthony to help him fulfill the king’s command. In the morning the king’s wheat was entirely free from chaff.

The king loved his little page more and more, and the king’s sister was angrier than before that she could not win the affection of the youth. She made a new plot against him.

“What do you suppose that page is saying now?” she asked her brother. “He boasts that he can go to the palace of the king of the Moors and steal the purse of gold pieces from beneath his pillow.”

The king sent Anthony to the palace of the king of the Moors. With St. Anthony’s help he climbed up the high wall of the palace and crept in through a window. The king of the Moors was so sound asleep that Anthony had no difficulty whatever in slipping his hand under the pillow and stealing the purse. Then he crept out again without awakening the king.

“That young page, Anthony, has grown so very boastful,” remarked the king’s sister a few days after his return, “that he now claims that he can carry away the king of the Moors himself.”

Then she added, “I’ll marry him if he fulfills this boast.”

“Bring home the king of the Moors as your captive,” were the king’s orders to Anthony.

The page was very much worried for he thought that it would be more difficult to capture the king of the Moors than it had been to capture his purse.

“Not at all, dear godchild,” said the kind St. Anthony when he had heard about the king’s new command.

Anthony climbed quietly up the wall as before and crept in through the window. Then he rolled the king of the Moors up in the bedclothes and tossed him out of the window. By the time the king was really awakened from his sleep he was in the boat ready to sail away.

When Anthony returned to the palace with his captive, the king said:

“My best and bravest page, you are worthy indeed of any honor. You shall wed my sister.”

“I can’t marry her,” said Anthony. “My name is Antonia.”

“In that case,” said the king, “I’ll marry you myself.”

30

TROUBLE WHEN ONE'S YOUNG

Long ago there lived a beautiful maiden whose name was Clarinha. She had been betrothed to a prince whom she had never seen. When at last he should be old enough to receive the rule of the kingdom he was coming to claim her as his bride.

Clarinha lived in a magnificent palace surrounded by a beautiful garden. Every day she spent many hours among the lovely flowers and trees.

One day an eagle alighted on the tallest tree in the garden.

"Good morning, fair Clarinha," he said to her.

"Good morning," she replied in surprise. Never before had an eagle spoken to her.

"Which do you prefer, trouble when you are young or when you are old?" asked the eagle.

Clarinha did not know what to say. That night she asked her mother which would be better to choose.

"Choose trouble when you're young, dear child," advised her mother. "When you are young it is easy to bear anything, but when you are old you can endure nothing."

She remembered her mother's words. Next day when the eagle again addressed the same question to her, she answered: "Trouble when I'm young."

Clarinha had hardly said these words when the eagle lifted her up by the pink skirt she was wearing and carried her away. On he flew over seas and mountains. Clarinha was frightened nearly to death.

At last the eagle set her down in a strange land. She was hungry, and, accordingly, hired out in a bakeshop to earn her living. She would have been happier if the eagle had flown away, but he remained in a nearby tree-top.

The baker went out, leaving Clarinha to bake the dough which he had left ready to put into the oven. The little maid carefully closed the door and all the windows so that the eagle would not be able to get inside. As soon as the baker was out of sight, however, he flew down the chimney. He tore about the bakeshop, spilling all the dough on the floor and breaking the dishes. Then he went back up the chimney when he had completed all the damage there was to be done.

When the baker returned he flew into a terrible rage. He gave poor Clarinha a beating and turned her out into the street.

She walked about the city and at last found work as shopkeeper in a little shop on a corner. The owner of the business went away next day, leaving her in charge of everything. As soon as he was gone she shut the door and all the windows, but the eagle flew down the chimney and broke the cups and glasses and plates which were set out for sale in neat rows upon the shelf.

“What have you been doing in my shop?” cried the owner in anger when he returned and saw the destruction which the eagle had left behind.

He didn’t give the poor girl a chance to reply, but seized her roughly and threw her out into the street.

Clarinha walked and walked seeking work, and at last she arrived at the door of the royal palace.

“Do you happen to need a servant?” she asked the queen.

“I have all the servants I need,” replied the queen.

The prince was standing nearby.

“Hire her, mother,” he advised. “She’ll do to take care of the ducks.”

Accordingly, the queen hired Clarinha to care for the ducks. The next morning all the ducks in the royal duckyard were dead. The eagle had killed them all.

“Hire her for a seamstress, mother,” said the prince. “The poor little thing is crying as if her heart would break. I’m sorry for her.”

The queen hired Clarinha to be a seamstress in the royal palace.

That very day the prince left home to visit his betrothed. He was going to marry a beautiful maiden in a neighboring land, whom he had never seen. As he left the palace he asked each one of the servants what gifts he should bring at his return.

When he came to Clarinha, her reply was, “Bring me a stone from the palace wall of your betrothed.”

The prince thought it a strange request, but he promised to fulfill it.

As soon as the prince arrived in the land where his betrothed lived, he found out that the palace was in mourning because of her mysterious disappearance one day from the garden.

He was so sad that he could not linger in that land. He stayed only long enough to buy the gifts which he had promised to bring to the servants. Along with the other gifts he carried a stone from the palace garden of his betrothed.

When Clarinha received her gift she heard the story of the mysterious disappearance of the prince’s bride. As soon as she held the stone in her hand she knew that it came from the wall of her own loved garden. Joy shone in her beautiful eyes.

For the first time the prince noticed how very lovely Clarinha was. He had always liked the little maid even when her face was sad, but now that she was happy he saw that she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

“What does that pretty little maid intend to do with that stone?” he asked the queen.

“I cannot guess,” replied the queen. “She seemed happy enough to receive it. I never saw her look happy before. Trouble seems to follow whatever she undertakes. I was on the point of discharging her. She’s caused me nothing but endless annoyance. I hired her only to please you.”

The prince followed Clarinha and listened at her door. Inside her room she was talking to the stone.

“Oh, stone from my garden wall,” she was saying. “How are the flowers of my garden?”

The prince could hardly believe his ears. Suddenly he guessed what the truth might be. He burst into the room.

“Are you my betrothed who has disappeared from her own land?” he asked Clarinha.

She smiled into his eyes.

“Trouble when one’s young is hard enough to bear,” she said when she had told all her story. “I’ve had quite enough to last me all my life.”

“Your woes are ended now and a happy life lies before you,” said the prince. “Our wedding shall be celebrated at once.”

31

THE LITTLE MAID WHO WAS WISE

Long ago there lived a merchant who had three daughters. Every year at a certain day of a certain month he went away to a distant city to collect money on an account. His wife and daughters remained at home, and all went well until one sad day the wife died. That year the merchant looked forward to his journey with dread for he would have to leave his daughters alone.

"I cannot bear to go away," he said to them. "My heart is filled with fear lest some evil may befall you during my absence."

He worried about the matter night and day. The business was most important and there was no one whom he could send to transact it for him.

However, the question of leaving three such pretty girls unprotected was a thing not to be regarded lightly.

"Do not be afraid to leave us, dear father," said his daughters. "Nothing will harm us while you are away."

"How do you know?" asked their father. "I am older and wiser than you are and I know that there are many evils which might come upon you. There are many bold thieves in this city, for instance, who would be only too ready to take advantage of my absence and rob my home of all I possess."

“We can lock ourselves securely in the house and not let any one enter,” said the three daughters.

“Be sure that you admit no one,” commanded the merchant.

They gave him their promise and he started on his journey. Nevertheless, he went with an anxious heart.

Now, outside this city there was a band of bold robbers. The captain of the band had watched the merchant’s departure, and when he was safely away the thief dressed himself in the disguise of an old beggar. When it was evening he led his band into a nearby street and in his disguise approached the merchant’s house. He knocked at the door.

“Have pity upon a poor unfortunate one!” he called out. “It is raining outside, and no one with mercy in his heart could turn away one who begs shelter from the storm. Let me enter, I pray you, to pass the night under your roof.”

“It’s surely a terrible storm outside,” said the merchant’s eldest daughter, as the wind rattled the tiles of the roof and the rain beat in torrents against the doors and windows. “I think we ought to take pity on a poor beggar a night like this.”

The second daughter peeped out of the window at the beggar.

“He is old as well as poor,” she said. “Our father has always taught us to show mercy and kindness to the aged.”

“Remember our promise to our father!” cried the youngest one. “We gave him our word that we would admit no one. We can give this poor beggar some alms and send him away with a blessing.”

The eldest daughter frowned. “It is not for the youngest and most childish one of us to make the plans,” she said.

The second daughter added. “We two are older and wiser than you are. It is for us to determine what shall be done. If we decide to show mercy to this poor beggar it is not for you to oppose it.”

“Bui we should not forget our promise to our father!” cried the youngest daughter.

However, in spite of all she could say, the elder sisters opened the door and admitted the beggar. They led him into the kitchen to dry his clothes. Then they made ready a bed for him to sleep upon. They gave him his supper in the kitchen and then they ate their own.

“It is a fearful night to send away a beggar,” said the eldest sister while they were eating.

“I am glad we have made him comfortable for the night,” remarked the middle sister.

“I am thinking that our dear father would be anxious if he knew that we had broken our promise so easily,” said the youngest sister.

“For shame!” cried the eldest.

“I don’t think it was breaking our promise to show kindness to a poor old beggar,” said the middle one.

“A promise is a promise, nevertheless,” said the youngest.

While they were talking, the beggar had taken the apples which the girls were to eat for dessert and had sprinkled a sleeping powder over them. The two eldest ate their apples, but the youngest could not eat that night. She threw the apple away.

As soon as they had eaten, the girls went to their room, and the two eldest were overcome with sleep almost before they had time to get into bed. The youngest one was so frightened that she could not sleep a single wink.

Soon she heard footsteps. The beggar entered the room. The youngest one pretended that she, too, was asleep. The man went to the bed of the eldest sister and stuck a pin into her foot to see if she were completely unconscious. She did not stir and he knew that the sleeping powder had thoroughly done its work. Then he went to the bed of the second sister and did the same. She was as completely unconscious as her sister. It hurt terribly when he stuck the pin into the foot of the youngest, but she did not stir. The robber thought that she was as completely overcome by the sleeping powder as the others.

The youngest sister peeped through her long heavy eyelashes and watched the beggar. She saw to her surprise that he had laid aside the heavy ragged old coat which he had kept wrapped about him even while he ate. Underneath he was dressed like a robber with a sword, pistols and dagger. She was so terribly frightened that it was all she could do to keep her teeth from chattering.

She heard the robber go about the house picking out the valuables which he wanted to steal. Then she heard him go down the stairway and unbolt the heavy doors which led into the store. She quietly got up and crept out of the room to hear him more distinctly.

On a chair in the dining room she saw the sword which he had taken off. He had evidently thought that, with all three girls so sound asleep, he'd not need to use his weapons.

Soon she heard the heavy outer doors of the store unbolted. The robber had gone outside to call the rest of the band. The little girl flew down the stairs and closed the doors of the store securely. They were big and heavy, but her great fear gave her strength.

"He'll find it difficult to get into our house again," she said to herself as she waited to see if the robber returned.

Soon she heard footsteps outside. She knew that the thief had brought back others with him.

There were frightful words said when they found that the door was shut.

"It was the youngest one who deceived me!" cried the robber chieftain. "I knew all the time that she did not want to let me in. I was suspicious of her from the first."

"Perhaps you can outwit her yet!" cried another. "She may not be so wise as she appears. You never can tell."

The leader of the band of thieves went up close to the keyhole and whispered: “Kind lady of the house, have pity on me.”

The merchant’s daughter at first did not answer; but, as he kept on calling to her, she finally asked him what it was that he wanted.

“I have left my charm behind!” he cried. “Pray let me enter to get it. I promise you I will do you no harm.”

“I do not trust your promises,” replied the little maid. “You shall not come into my father’s house.”

“Pass the charm out to me, then,” said the robber.

“It’s in the fire,” replied the girl.

“Go throw vinegar on the fire and put it out,” said the captain of the thieves. “Then you can pull my charm out in safety.”

Now it happened that there was a little hole in the door just large enough for a man’s hand to enter. It is the hole through which beggars often thrust outstretched hands, asking for alms.

“Put your hand through the hole in the door,” replied the little maid. “Then I’ll give you your charm.”

She quickly ran upstairs and got the robber’s sword which he had left on a chair in the dining room. When she returned, his hand was sticking through the hole in the door. She struck it with all her might with the great sword and cut it off.

The cries and curses of the robbers filled the air. They tried in vain to break down the great doors. The doors were strong and held securely. At last it was daylight and the band of thieves had to flee.

In the morning the effect of the sleeping powder wore off and the two elder sisters awoke. When they heard their sister’s story they were filled with amazement.

“I don’t believe a word of it!” cried the oldest. “You are making it up.”

“You had a bad dream,” said the second. “I had such a nightmare myself that I have a headache this morning.”

It was not until their little sister had shown them the robber’s hand and the great sword that they were convinced that she had told them the truth.

“Oh, why did we ever let the man into our house!” cried the eldest.

“Oh, why didn’t we keep our promise to our father!” cried the middle one.

When at last the merchant returned from the distant city where he had been to collect money he was delighted to find his house and his three daughters safe.

“I see that no harm befell you in my absence,” he said as he embraced them fondly. “All my worries about you were foolish.”

The eldest daughter blushed and hung her head. “Great danger threatened us while you were away,” she said. “Thanks to our youngest sister, we are safe.”

“Our little sister was wiser than we were,” said the middle daughter.

When the merchant had heard the whole story, he said: “After this we must all give ear to the wisdom of this little maid. She is wise beyond her years.”

32

MANOEL LITTLEBEAN

Long ago there lived a man and his wife who had no children.

"I wish I had a little boy," said the man.

"I'd like a son of my own even if he were not any larger than a little bean," said the woman.

Time passed and a son was born to this worthy couple. He was no larger than a little bean and as the years went by he never grew any bigger. His name was Manoel Littlebean. He caused his mother endless trouble by constantly getting lost. Sometimes she'd nearly step on him. Other times he'd fall into the food and she would almost swallow him.

One day his mother couldn't find him.

"Manoel Littlebean! Manoel Littlebean!" she called.

There was no answer.

She went outside the house and called his name anxiously. There was no reply. She asked all the neighbors if they had seen the child, but there was nobody who had noticed him that day. His poor mother was nearly wild with anxiety.

"I'm afraid I'll never see the dear child again," she mourned. "I'm sure I have either stepped on him or swallowed him!"

"You never stepped on him or swallowed him yet," comforted her husband. However, he added anxiously, "I can't see what has become of my

Manoel.”

The truth of the matter was that Manoel Littlebean had been swallowed by the goat. He was a most active youngster in spite of his small size and he caused the goat a terrible attack of indigestion.

The goat did not know what was the matter and he tore around so wildly and caused so much destruction that his master decided to kill him.

“I simply can’t be bothered with that goat any longer,” he said. “I have quite enough to worry about already with Manoel Littlebean lost and my poor wife nearly sick with anxiety because of it.”

He never dreamed that it was his son who was making the goat so wild with misery. When the goat was dead he threw it out into the street.

That night a wolf came and ate the goat. He swallowed the goat’s stomach so greedily that Manoel Littlebean had no time to escape. However he jumped about just as actively inside the wolf as he had done when the goat had swallowed him. The wolf was just as uncomfortable as the goat had been.

“What is the matter with me?” thought the wolf. “Never in my life have I had such a stomachache. I believe I’m going to die.”

He ran away into the forest and crept into a cave to await his end. Inside the cave was a robbers’ den. Three of the robbers were there counting over the gold they had just brought back.

When they saw the wolf they were so frightened that they dropped their bags of gold and ran away as fast as they could, leaving everything behind them.

Manoel Littlebean guessed that he was making the wolf sick.

“If I can only make him so ill that he will spit me up!” said Manoel to himself as he jumped about his liveliest.

That is exactly what happened. The wolf spit Manoel Littlebean out.

He was decidedly dirty and unattractive, but he didn’t mind in the least. He saw the quantities of gold in the robbers’ cave and his eyes shone.

“If I can only find my way home to tell my father about it, he will be a rich man!” he cried.

It was a long distance home and several times he thought that he had lost his way. Finally, however, he saw his own mother’s light in the window. He ran toward it as fast as he could run.

“Manoel Littlebean, what have you been doing?” cried his mother when she saw him. “Where did you get so dirty? Come, let me give you a bath the first thing!”

“Never mind about the bath, mother,” said Manoel. “I have more important things to attend to. Where is father?”

His mother called her husband and they both forgot how dirty the child was when they heard his story.

“Let us hurry to the robbers’ cave, father,” he said. “We must get there before they return.”

“What about the wolf?” asked his mother anxiously.

Manoel Littlebean laughed.

“The wolf doesn’t have any stomachache now,” he said. “He went home long ago.”

They went to the robbers’ cave and brought home the huge sacks full of gold. It was enough to make them live like princes for a lifetime.

“I have the best and cleverest son in the world,” said the father.

“Never in the world was there a son who was such a joy and comfort to his parents,” said his mother.

Manoel Littlebean was treated by every one as politely as if he had been big.

33

THE NECKLACE OF PEARLS

In a tiny cottage on the steep rocky hillside of one of the islands of the Azores there lived a poor woman and her only son whose name was Francisco. Every day the boy went fishing in his little boat, and every night he brought home fish for his mother to cook for their evening meal and to carry into the market to sell. In this way they lived very comfortably, and they loved each other so dearly that they were as happy as happy can be.

Francisco, with his fair skin, blue eyes and thatch of curly golden hair, was the handsomest boy in the whole parish, and by the time he was sixteen years old there was many a rich man’s daughter who had smiled upon him. However, the lad thought only of his fishing boat and his mother and did not notice the smiles.

One night the moon was so bright that Francisco could not sleep. He awakened his mother who was dozing comfortably in her bed.

“I’m going fishing, mother dear,” he said as he kissed her. “The moonlight is calling me.”

His mother started up from her bed in terror and amazement.

“Why, my boy, do you do such a thing as this?” she asked. “You have never been fishing in the night before. Some evil will surely befall you.”

“Don’t worry about me, dear mother,” replied Francisco, laughing at her fears. “I know how to take care of myself. It is as light as day. Think how many fish I’ll bring back for you to sell in the market to-morrow.”

His mother shook her head anxiously, but, with another loving kiss, the lad ran out into the bright moonlight. He quickly launched his little fishing boat and soon was floating smoothly along on the peaceful waters of the bay which gleamed like a silver pathway in the moonlight. The soft air, the gentle rocking of the little boat, and the face of the moon upon which his blue eyes were fixed combined to send sleep to his eyelids. Soon he was nodding in the little boat. A few moments later and he was fast asleep. The moon’s rays upon his curls made them shine as if they were indeed made of gold.

Now the village maidens were not the only ones who had noticed Francisco’s blue eyes and handsome face. A water-nymph who dwelt in the depths of the sea had often observed him. In the daytime she was invisible to the eye of humans and so the lad had never seen her though she often spent long hours near him, never taking her eyes from his face.

“Here comes the beautiful youth in his little fishing boat!” cried the nymph as she saw the moonlight gleaming upon his bright curls. “At last my wish has come true. Now at night he’ll be able to see me.”

She hastily arranged her own beautiful hair before a little mirror she carried. Some of the strands of priceless pearls which decked her lovely head were a trifle awry. These and the necklaces of rare pearls which hung about her fair throat surrounded her with a gleam of soft light almost like the light of the moon. As she approached nearer to the little boat she saw that Francisco was fast asleep. She swam in the direction of the lad with all possible speed, a wild terror in her eyes.

“What madness is this?” she asked as she looked down upon his bowed head. “This frail boat will drift upon the dangerous rocks and be dashed to pieces. I’ll take him home to my own palace without awakening him. Perhaps when he sees how lovely it is he’ll even like me a little bit.”

Just for a moment she hesitated, thinking how far from home Francisco would be in the palace of mother-of-pearl in the depths of the sea.

“The rocks are really very dangerous,” she said to herself as she gently drew his sleeping form into her arms.

The next morning Francisco’s empty fishing boat was found by the fishermen. For hours his mother had watched in vain for his return. When at last she heard that the empty boat had been found she was nearly wild with grief.

“He was the best son a mother ever had,” she moaned over and over again. “How can I live without him!”

Indeed, as the days and weeks went by it was increasingly difficult for the poor woman to live. She not only missed her boy’s loving smile, but she also missed the fish he caught so skillfully. There was little for the poor woman to eat if she had any appetite for food.

“Why don’t you go to the Wiseman of the Sea and tell him your troubles?” asked one of the neighbors.

Francisco’s mother knew that it was a long and difficult journey to reach the Wiseman of the Sea. She decided, however, it would be worth the effort just to gaze into his wise eyes. He knew so much, perhaps he would know how to say something to comfort her in her great sorrow and loneliness. She had shrugged her shoulders when her neighbor had spoken of it but she could not get the idea out of her mind. She knew that she would never rest in peace until she had made this journey. Accordingly, she launched Francisco’s fishing boat, and, thanks to smooth seas, reached the little rocky island in the midst of the sea where the Wiseman of the Sea lived.

His tall form was outlined above the cliff even as she tied her little boat. He was very tall, far taller than anybody she had ever seen, and his snow-white beard fell to his feet. He was clothed in fish scales which gleamed in the sunlight.

“Well, little mother, what can I do for you to-day?” he asked, as she came up the path to the summit of the rock.

The eyes of the Wiseman of the Sea were very kind as well as full of great wisdom. Francisco’s mother forgot to be afraid of him as she had expected to be. She told him the story of her lost son. The Wiseman listened carefully to her words and then he said:

“Good mother, I am glad to tell you that I know where your Francisco is. He is in the power of a water-nymph who has carried him away to her castle of mother-of-pearl in the depths of the sea.”

Francisco’s mother felt the tears of joy well up into her eyes. “Is my boy happy there and is he well?” she asked eagerly.

“He is entirely well and happy. The water-nymph gave him a philtre which has made him forget his past life entirely.”

“I’m glad you told me that,” said the boy’s mother. “I was just wondering how my dear lad could be happy while he was causing me so much sorrow. He has always been the best and kindest son with which a mother ever was blessed.”

The Wiseman of the Sea started to say something, but the woman interrupted as a new thought flew into her mind. “Tell me,” she cried, “is there no way of getting him back? With all your wisdom can’t you think of some way to make him once more remember the mother who loves him and the little home in which we have passed so many happy days together? Do you not know some means of breaking the power which this water-nymph has over him?”

The Wiseman looked out across the sea in silence for at least a minute and a half. He thought hard. Francisco’s mother watched him with eager eyes. She could hardly wait for his answer. At last these were the words which fell from his lips:

“You have shed many tears, good woman, but tears are still to flow if you are to bring back your son.”

“Oh, must I suffer more?” cried the heart-broken mother. “It seems that I have already lived a lifetime since my dear lad kissed me in the moonlight. I have endured all that I can bear.”

The Wiseman smiled gently as he raised his hand. “Listen, my child,” he said. “Your tears must be shed upon the bosom of the waters. If, perchance, one of them should fall upon your son’s heart there in the palace of the water-nymph in the depths of the sea, the power of her philtre will be broken.”

“I’ll shed whole oceans of tears if I can break the power of that water-nymph and bring back my Francisco,” said his mother.

The fact is that she began to shed tears then and there, even before she had thanked the Wiseman of the Sea for what he had told her.

Now it happened that Francisco had grown to love the beautiful palace of mother-of-pearl in the depths of the sea. He never tired of all its beauty. About the palace there were lovely gardens filled with flowers made of precious gems. Each tiny bud of that garden was worth a king’s ransom, so rich were the jewels which composed it. The water-nymph often gathered her arms full of these rare blossoms and wove them into a garland to crown Francisco’s golden curls. He never had a thought of the old life at home with his mother, so completely had the nymph’s philtre done its work.

There was always a big fish swimming about the palace. On its back there was a cushion of seagreen satin embroidered with lovely pearls.

“This is your riding horse,” said the water-nymph to Francisco the first day he had seen it. “If you should ever get tired of the palace and find the life here a bit monotonous, just mount this horse and ride about for a little.”

The water-nymph had shaken out her long fair tresses so that they covered as much as possible of the fishtail she had instead of feet. She was very sensitive about the fact that she had no feet upon which to wear pretty little slippers like those of the maidens she had seen so often as they called out gay greetings to the handsome fisher-lad.

Francisco had smiled into her eyes. “How absurd,” he cried, “to think of such a thing as getting tired of this wonderful place!”

In fact the days had slipped by all too fast for the happy youth. Then it suddenly happened one day while the water-nymph was asleep that he thought of his mother, the little house which had been his home for sixteen years and more, the fishing boat which was his pride and joy, the moonlight night when he had gaily kissed his mother’s cheek and gone away never to return. He did not stop to waken the sleeping nymph. He said no word to the servants of the palace. He thought only of the fish with the cushion of sea-green satin embroidered with rare pearls.

“Quick!” he cried to it. “Take me home as fast as you can! My mother’s heart is breaking! She has shed so many tears for me, I know, that by this time she may be entirely blind.”

In another hour Francisco was safe at home with his mother’s arms about him. She had shed so many tears that her eyes were swollen almost shut, but they were not closed so completely that they could not shine with the great joy which once more filled her heart.

“Promise me one thing,” she said to him. “Give me your word that you’ll never go fishing again. I don’t trust that water-nymph even in the daytime.”

Accordingly, Francisco gave up being a fisherman and became a hunter. To make his spears, he gathered the young sapling which grew on the hillside even down to the edge of the water. He had grown still handsomer while he had lived in the palace of mother-of-pearl in the depths of the sea, and there were twice as many pretty maidens who cast smiling glances in his direction.

It was the daughter of the rich man of the village who at last won the heart of Francisco. When he went a-wooing, however, he had no gift to take except the birds he had killed with his own hand. The rich man laughed at him. These were his words:

“When my daughter marries it shall be only to a youth who can bring her rich gifts.”

Francisco went away with a sad heart and sat upon the rocks at the edge of the sea, gazing out over the water with eyes so full of tears that they saw nothing.

The water-nymph was not far away from the shore those days. She was always seeking for a glimpse of the golden head which she had so often crowned with flowers. Her joy now at the sight of him was buried by her sorrow when she saw that his heart was full of woe. She knew at once the cause of his grief.

The next morning when Francisco went to get wood to make a new spear, he found a necklace of priceless pearls lying on the shore. It was the gift of the water-nymph, but since his heart had been touched by his mother’s tears he had entirely forgotten her. He took the gift to the maid he loved with never a thought of the giver.

34

THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF NAPLES

There was once a king who had an only son. The years passed by and he did not marry, so one day his father called him before him and said:

“The time has come when you should marry, my son. You are now at the age when you should no longer wait to choose your bride. Why is it that you have not already done this?”

The prince replied:

“I will wed no one except the daughter of the king of Naples.”

“Do you know that the king of Naples has a daughter?” asked the father.

“No,” answered the son. “I do not know.”

“I should advise you to find out whether or not the king of Naples happens to have a daughter before you decide to marry her,” remarked the king dryly.

“That is good advice,” replied the prince. “I thank you.”

Accordingly, he asked everybody he met whether the king of Naples had a daughter. There was no person to be found who knew anything about it.

“You’ll have to go to Naples to obtain this information,” advised the king. “It is a long journey, but if you are determined to marry nobody except the daughter of the king of Naples there seems to be no way except to go there and learn whether or not he has a daughter.”

Accordingly, a ship was prepared and the prince sailed for Naples. It was a difficult, stormy voyage, but finally they arrived safely. The moment they landed the beggars came crowding about them. The prince distributed alms among them most generously.

Then he asked: “Does any one know whether or not the king of Naples has a daughter?”

There was nobody who knew. Finally, however, an old woman said that once she passed by the royal palace and there was a beautiful face at the window.

“I think that perhaps this was the daughter of the king of Naples, but I do not know,” she added.

“Go at once and find out,” ordered the prince. “You shall be richly rewarded.”

The old woman hastened to the royal palace. She saw the same lovely face at the window which she had seen before.

“Lovely lady, I want to talk to you!” she called out.

Now it happened that day that the princess was feeling decidedly bored and out of tune with life. It looked like an interesting diversion to talk with the old woman. Thus it came to pass that she opened the window graciously.

“What do you wish, good mother?” she asked.

“Are you the daughter of the king of Naples?” questioned the old woman.

“I am,” replied the princess.

“May I come some day to sell you pretty things?” asked the old woman.

The princess appointed an hour the next day when she might come with her wares. Then the old woman hurried back to the waiting prince.

"The king of Naples has a daughter!" she cried. "A very beautiful daughter, too!"

The prince showered the old woman with gold. He was so delighted that at last he had found this out that he could well afford to be generous.

The old woman thanked him. "I did something else for you, kind sir," she said. "I made an appointment to see the princess to-morrow. I am going to the palace at four o'clock to sell pretty things to her."

"Well done, good mother!" cried the prince, again thrusting his hand into his purse. "Let me go in your place!"

The old woman gladly consented, and the prince dressed himself as a peddler. The next afternoon at four o'clock he went to the palace of the king of Naples.

"It is a peddler with many interesting wares for sale," said the servant who answered his knock. "He speaks of an appointment with your Royal Highness."

"Yes," said the princess. "A peddler was to come to-day at four o'clock with pretty things for me to buy."

Accordingly, the prince was admitted to the presence of the daughter of the king of Naples. If she were surprised to find the peddler a handsome young man instead of the old woman with whom she had talked the day before she did not show it.

"What lovely things you have!" she cried as she examined the tray full of ribbons and beads and trinkets.

She selected a number of the wares and then she asked, "What is the price of these?"

The prince would not set a price.

"If your Royal Highness is pleased with these," said he, "I have many more things at home which you will like even better. I'll bring them to you to-morrow."

“That will be splendid!” cried the princess. “Come again to-morrow at this hour.”

The next day the prince again dressed himself as a peddler, but underneath the outer garments he wore his own rich clothing. When he was admitted to the royal palace he laid aside his peddler’s disguise and stood before the princess looking like the true prince he was. He was very handsome in his rich suit of crimson velvet, with his hat with the long plume in his hand. The princess was so surprised that she turned pale.

“Who are you?” she cried. “You surely are not the peddler who came here yesterday!”

The prince smiled into her eyes, and, even without the peddler’s garments which were rolled up on the tray, she would have recognized him.

He told her of the quest which had led him there, and she admired all the patience and diligence he had shown in finding out her existence. When he asked her to marry him at once, she readily consented. They planned that she should steal down the staircase at night and go away with him on his ship.

All this sounded very romantic to the daughter of the king of Naples. She had never dreamed that a thing like this would ever happen. All her life she had been so closely guarded that stealing out of the palace and sailing away in the prince’s ship seemed the most wonderful thing in the world.

The next night had been agreed on, and long ahead of the appointed hour the prince sat on horseback at the foot of the stairway down which the princess would steal. He was very weary with all the excitement of the past three days, and as he waited he fell asleep. A robber passed by and saw his sleeping form hanging limply on the saddle.

“I’ll gently deposit him on the ground and get away with his horse and saddle,” thought the thief, as he stopped and regarded the horse with a critical eye.

Just then, however, he saw something which made him change his mind about hurrying away after he had deposited the prince’s sleeping form beneath a tree. There was the loveliest maiden he had ever seen creeping silently down the stairway. She came straight up to him.

“I’m ready, beloved,” were her words.

The robber silently lifted her behind him on the horse’s back and together they rode away.

“Where is your boat?” asked the princess after they had ridden together for some time without speaking.

“So it is a boat which the fair lady is looking for,” thought the thief. “I was expecting this good horse to carry us the whole distance. A boat is a bit difficult to arrange, but it can be done if necessary. There ought to be a boat around somewhere for me to steal.”

He left the daughter of the king of Naples on the shore while he went to steal a boat. When he returned the light shone upon his face and the girl thought that he did not look the same as the day before.

“Of course, I’ve seen him only twice,” she told herself in an effort to gain assurance. “It must be the prince, my own true love.”

“Here is our boat,” said the robber, and together they embarked.

As the morning light shone upon the robber the princess saw that he was not in the least like the prince who had come a-peddling. The robber laughed.

“Does my lady know with whom she is going away?” he asked.

“I thought I was going with the prince who is my lover,” she replied, bursting into bitter tears.

Running away was not half so romantic and delightful as she had pictured it. She heartily wished that she were back in the royal palace.

As for the prince, he soon awoke and looked about the palace garden where he was lying under the tree.

“How did I get here?” he asked as he rubbed his eyes sleepily.

There was none to tell him, so he decided that his horse must have thrown him off and run away.

"It is queer that my fall did not awaken me," he said to himself. "It is a bit awkward to lose my horse. However, if the princess only keeps her promise and comes to me we shall manage to get to our ship somehow."

He waited very patiently for a time and then he began to fear that the princess had repented of her promise to run away. He did not give her up, however, until it was almost daylight. Then he sorrowfully returned to his waiting ship.

"I have at least found out that the king of Naples has a daughter and that she is the most beautiful princess in the whole world," he said. "If she prefers not to have a run-away marriage it will doubtless be better for me to sail home and tell my father to make arrangements with the king of Naples for our wedding. There are some advantages in this more dignified method."

Thus it happened that the prince sailed away for his own country, never dreaming that the princess had kept her promise to steal down the stairway in the night and that she was then in the hands of the wicked robber.

The daughter of the king of Naples sobbed and cried so loud when she found that it was not her own prince with whom she was sailing that the robber became quite disgusted with her.

"I thought you were a pretty little maid," he said, "when I first saw you, but now I've changed my mind about you."

Indeed no person with good eyesight would have called the princess pretty at that moment, with her face all red and swollen with much weeping.

The robber decided that he did not want to bother with her any longer, so he landed in the country of the Junqueiras and left her there. The princess wandered about the place until night came without seeing a single soul, —nothing but the sea, sky and rocks.

She was really, however, not far from the hut in which there lived the wife and daughter of a poor fisherman. In the stillness of the night they heard a cry.

“Some one is in trouble outside, mother,” said the daughter.

“Perhaps the pirates have come and by this cry are trying to lure us out,” answered her mother cautiously. There were often pirate ships which stopped there. The daughter listened carefully.

“No, mother,” she insisted. “I’m sure this is a girl’s cry.”

The two women opened their door and crept out in the darkness. The sobs of the princess soon led them to the place upon the rocks where she lay crying as if her heart would break. They lifted her tenderly and carried her home.

The fisherman’s daughter gave the princess some of her own clothes to wear and they lived together as if they were sisters. Together they did all the work of the little house and the princess was too busy to weep. Sometimes, however, she cried in the night when the fisherman’s wife and daughter were asleep. She wept for her lost love and for the royal palace of the king of Naples which had always been her home.

Now it happened that the prince’s ship encountered a great storm and was driven about by the sea. At last it was blown by the gales to the land of the Junqueiras.

The prince saw the fisherman’s daughter and the princess standing on the rocks by the sea. He stared hard at the princess. Then he spoke in a voice which shook.

“You remind me of some one I used to know,” he said. “Tell me your name, I pray you, fair maid.”

The princess looked down at the garments of the fisher maid which she wore. She blushed. The prince she had recognized the very moment she had seen him.

“I am the daughter of the king of Naples,” she said.

The fisherman’s daughter stared at her in amazement.

“She is no king’s daughter!” she cried. “She is a poor abandoned maid who came to us out of the sea. We found her upon these very rocks. It is my own dress that she is wearing. A king’s daughter, indeed! She is no more the daughter of the king of Naples than I am!”

But the prince had taken the daughter of the king of Naples in his arms. As soon as they returned to the palace their wedding was celebrated with great joy and they lived together as God lives with the angels.

35

MARIA-OF-THE-FOREST

Once upon a time there was a young king who went into the deep forest on a hunting expedition. He and his favorite page became separated from the rest of the party and soon they realized that they were lost. As night approached they found the rude hut of a charcoal burner and begged for permission to pass the night there. They were received most hospitably.

Just at the hour of midnight the king was awakened from his sleep by a voice. This is what it said:

Here in this hut is born to-night
The maiden of your fate:
You can’t escape your lot, young king;
Your fate for you will wait.
‘Tis fate — ‘tis fate — ‘tis fate.

The king turned over on his pillow and tried to sleep, but the strange voice kept ringing in his ears. He rose early.

As soon as he saw the charcoal burner the man said: “A baby daughter was born to me last night.”

“At what time?” asked the king.

“It was just midnight,” replied the charcoal burner.

The king awakened his page and told him what had happened.

“I refuse to wed any maid born in this poor hut,” he said. “You must help me to escape this fate.”

“What can I do about it?” asked the page, yawning.

“You must steal this babe this very day and put it to death,” said the king sternly.

The page did not dare refuse, and easily obtained possession of the baby when no one was looking. He carried her away into the deep forest, but he did not have the heart to put an innocent babe to death. He left her in a hollow tree, wrapped up in the bright red sash he wore.

When he had returned to the king he confessed that he had been too tender-hearted to slay the baby. The king was angry.

“Take me to the baby,” he said. “I’ll do the deed myself.”

Though they searched long and faithfully they were unable to find the hollow tree where the baby had been left. They, of course, did not wish to return to the hut of the charcoal burner, and at length they found their way out of the deep forest.

“No one will ever discover that baby if I could not find it myself! She will soon die without food,” said the page.

The king agreed that it was quite impossible for the babe to escape death, but he could not forget the strange voice which had said:

Here in this hut is born to-night
The maiden of your fate:
You can’t escape your lot, young king;

Your fate for you will wait.
'Tis fate — 'tis fate — 'tis fate.

Now it happened that very day that a woodcutter was working in the forest. Suddenly he heard what sounded like the cry of a baby.

"There can't be a child here in the deep forest," he said to himself and went on with his work.

The cry continued, however, and it sounded very near, almost under the woodcutter's feet. He looked into the hollow log and there he found a dimpled baby girl wrapped in a bright red sash.

"Poor little thing! Her own mother has abandoned her. My good wife will be a mother to her," he said.

The woodcutter's wife had no children of her own and received the baby gladly. She named her Maria-of-the-forest. As the days flew by and the babe thrived under her care, she could not have loved her more had she been her own child.

The weeks and months passed and soon the little Maria-of-the-forest had grown into a lovely little girl five years old. Her kind foster mother made a bonnet for her out of the bright red sash which she had found wrapped about her the first time she saw her. It made Maria's dark eyes look even brighter than before.

Now it happened that the king and his page were again hunting in the forest and passed by the house of the wood cutter. The page noticed the pretty little girl and the red bonnet she wore. He called her to him and examined it carefully.

"There can be no doubt that material is from my own red sash," he confessed to the king. "This woodcutter's daughter could have such a bonnet as this in no other way."

The king bade him make inquiries about the child and soon the page found out that the little maid was in truth the baby he had left in the hollow tree. The king ordered him again to steal her. This time the king plotted her death by drowning. He had a box made for her, put her in it, and threw her into the sea with his own hand.

"I refuse to wed any girl brought up in a woodcutter's hut," he raged. "I'll escape that fate."

Nevertheless he could not escape the memory of the strange voice which had said:

Here in this hut is born to-night
The maiden of your fate:
You can't escape your lot, young king;
Your fate for you will wait.
'Tis fate — 'tis fate — 'tis fate.

It was most annoying to remember it.

It happened soon after that a ship encountered the box floating upon the sea. The sailors rescued it and opened it with interest. Inside they were surprised to find a pretty little dark-eyed girl with a bright red bonnet on her head. She could not tell them where she had come from but she said her name was Maria-of-the-forest.

When the sailors arrived in their own country they told the story of finding the child and the king asked to see her. He and the queen were so pleased with her lovely face and gentle manners that they received her into the royal palace. She was brought up as a lady-of-waiting to their own little daughter of about the same age.

When, after a dozen years, the princess was wedded, all the kings of near-by countries were invited to the marriage feast. The king who had been lost in the forest came with the others. At the feast there was no one more beautiful than Maria-of-the-forest. The king danced with her.

“Who is the girl?” was his eager question.

“She has been reared in the royal palace as if she were in truth the sister of the bride,” was the reply.

The king fell in love with the beautiful maid and gave her a ring. The page, however, was suspicious when he heard her name. He lost no time in making inquiries about her. What he found out made him very sure that she was in truth the daughter of the charcoal burner. He reported his suspicions to the king.

“Never mind,” said the king. “I’ll wed the maid anyway. One can’t escape from one’s fate.”

36

THE SEVEN ENCHANTED PRINCES

Long ago there was a little maid who lived all alone with her grandmother. They were very poor. The girl's name was Honoria.

One day the grandmother sent the girl out to sell some of the oranges from their orange tree.

"You must bring home at least three vintens to me," she said. "Don't dare return without at least that small amount of money."

Honoria went from door to door trying to sell the oranges. Every one seemed to have plenty of them that day. There was nobody who would purchase a single one.

She walked on and on through the town, everywhere obtaining the same answer, "We do not wish to purchase any oranges to-day."

Finally she found herself outside the town and in the forest. There was a house with the door wide open and on the table in front of the door lay three vintens. There was no one in sight and nobody answered Honoria's knock at the door.

"I'll take the money and leave some oranges in place of it," said Honoria. "That will not be stealing."

Accordingly, she selected some of the largest and finest of her oranges and placed them on the table. She put the money away carefully to take to her grandmother. Then she turned to leave, but found that the door was closed.

She tried her best to open it but could not. Neither could she open any of the windows to climb out by that means. The windows were all fastened just as securely as the door.

“What shall I do?” cried the girl, who was now thoroughly frightened.

She did not like the idea of remaining a prisoner in the house in the forest. All day she tried to find some way of escape, but there seemed nothing to do except to wait until somebody came to her aid.

“This house is not far from the city. Surely some one will be passing this way and will come and help me get out,” said Honoria. “I hope they’ll come before night.”

There was nothing to eat in the house and she was thankful enough for the big basket full of juicy oranges.

At last it grew dark. Then Honoria heard footsteps outside the house. She could not see who was coming, but a key was turned in the lock and some one entered. She was so frightened that she hid under the table.

A lighted candle showed that seven dwarfs had entered the house. They had brought food with them, and they at once went to work to prepare their evening meal.

“Who left us all these fine oranges?” asked one of the dwarfs.

“I do not know,” replied another. “Some one has surely been here and it must have been a kind friend.”

Honoria was almost tempted to crawl from under the table and show herself, but she decided that it would be better to stay where she was and go home the next day when it was light.

When morning came, however, she found that she had been sleeping so soundly that she had not heard the seven dwarfs when they left the house. The door was fastened just as securely as before.

Honoria looked about the house and saw that there was enough work to keep her busy all day. There were dishes to wash and floors to sweep and beds to make. Fortunately the dwarfs had left plenty of food.

When night came she heard the footsteps approaching and again hid under the table. As soon as the seven dwarfs came into the house they saw that it had been changed wonderfully during their absence.

“Our dishes are all washed!” cried one of the dwarfs. “Last night we forgot to wash them after supper!”

“Our beds are all made!” cried another. “We left home so early this morning we did not have time to make them!”

“Our floors are all swept and everything is in order!” cried another. “We never have looked so neat and clean!”

“Somebody must have been here,” said one of the dwarfs.

“It is surely a kind friend,” said another.

“Perhaps they are here yet!” cried another.

“If they are men we’ll treat them like brothers and if they are women we’ll treat them like sisters,” said the seventh dwarf who had not spoken before. He had been looking around the house carefully, but he had seen no one.

Honoria crawled out from under the table. The dwarfs joined hands and danced around her in a circle.

“We have a big sister now!” they cried. “A big sister to take care of us!”

Honoria knew that if she said anything about leaving the dwarfs they would be heartbroken. She knew, too, that her grandmother would give her a terrible beating for staying away from home so long. The easiest thing seemed to be to remain in the forest and keep house for the seven dwarfs.

Weeks and months went by and Honoria led a happy life in the forest. The dwarfs brought home plenty of delicious food and they also brought her the prettiest dresses she had ever seen. They were green like the moss and the leaves of the forest and brown like the rich earth about the house.

There was a little hat with red berries upon it which Honoria thought the most charming hat in the world. She tried it on and ran to the brook to look at her reflection, for there was not a single mirror in the house.

One day the king passed by with his gay hunting party. That day Honoria had on her prettiest moss-green dress and the king thought her the loveliest maiden he had ever seen. He stopped to chat with her.

“Do you live here in the forest all alone?” he asked.

“No, I keep house for my seven brothers,” was Honoria’s answer.

“What a lovely little housekeeper!” cried the king. “Marry me and come to live in the royal palace!”

“I must ask my brothers first,” responded Honoria. “I will tell you to-morrow what they say.”

That night when the seven dwarfs came home Honoria told them about her visit from the king.

“How can we spare our big sister?” cried one of the dwarfs.

“Who will keep house for us when she goes away?” cried another.

“Who will make the beds so nicely?” asked another.

“Who will sweep our floors?”

“Who will wash our dishes?”

“Who will sew on our buttons?”

“I have known that our big sister would marry sometime,” said the seventh dwarf who had not spoken, but who had been thinking quietly. “Why shouldn’t she marry the king?”

“We must let her marry the king! We must not be selfish!” cried all the dwarfs together.

They decided that Honoria should marry the king, but they asked her not to let him kiss her until he had first said these words: “By permission of the seven enchanted princes.” He would have to remember it without being reminded by Honoria.

Honoria told the king what her brothers had said and the wedding was celebrated with great joy.

When the king tried to kiss Honoria she burst into tears. He had forgotten all about saying: “By permission of the seven enchanted princes.”

Honoria would not let the king kiss her, and she cried so much and struggled so hard that the king thought she had gone crazy. He ordered her shut up in the dark cell underneath the palace. Then he married a new queen.

Now it happened that there was a faithful servant who was quite sure that Honoria was not crazy. When Honoria told her of the words which the king must say before he kissed her this servant tried to think of some way to help her. She was very angry at the fact that there was a new queen.

One day she went to the queen and said: “Queen Honoria who is shut up in the dark cell underneath the palace is much more clever than you are.”

“What does Queen Honoria do that is so clever?” asked the new queen.

“Queen Honoria will take a sword and cut off her head. Then she will put it back on again so that it is as good as new. I don’t believe you are clever enough to do that.”

“I never tried it,” answered the new queen, “but just to show you that I’m as clever as Queen Honoria I’ll do it.”

With these words she seized a sword and cut off her head. Of course she fell dead immediately. The king married a new queen.

Then the servant went to the new queen and said: “Queen Honoria who is shut up in the dark cell underneath the palace is more clever than you are.”

The new queen was indignant at this remark. “Why is she more clever than I am?” she asked. “What can she do that I can’t do?”

“She can take a sword and cut off her hand. Then she’ll stick the hand on again and it will be as good as new.”

“I’ve never tried it, but I’ll do it just to convince you that I am clever too,” said this new queen.

She took up a sword and cut off her right hand. Then she fainted away. The arm grew full of poison and the queen soon died, but not until she had told the king what the servant had said to her.

The king was very angry at the servant and called her to him.

“What do you mean,” he thundered, “by telling such a story about Queen Honoria’s magic powers?”

“I wanted you to remember where you had found Queen Honoria,” replied the servant.

Then the king suddenly remembered how he had first seen Queen Honoria when she was in the house in the forest. He thought of how pretty she had been in the dress which looked like soft green moss. Then he thought of how she had said that she must ask permission of her seven brothers before she consented to become his queen.

“By permission of the seven enchanted princes!” he cried. “I forgot to say these words before I kissed my dear Queen Honoria!”

He quickly ran to the dark cell underneath the palace where she was confined. He said the magic words and kissed his fair queen who was just as beautiful as before she had been shut up in the cell, though a trifle paler.

In the house in the forest the seven dwarfs who were in truth seven enchanted princes suddenly were disenchanted.

“Our dear sister Honoria did not forget us after all,” they cried in joy.

37

THE LISTENING KING

Once upon a time there lived a king who liked to walk in disguise about the streets of the city, listening at people’s doors. It was, in fact, his favorite amusement. Other kings of that land had been fond of war or hunting or fishing or games, but there had never before been one who liked to listen at doors. For this reason he was called “the listening king.”

“It is the greatest fun I have,” he often said to his counsellors. “Being a king would be a stupid life if one didn’t have some diversion.”

“Be careful that it does not get you into trouble,” said the wise men. “We have often heard that listening to other people’s secrets is a dangerous practice.”

“I’ve had nothing but pleasure from it, anyway,” the king would reply. Then he would add, “So far, at least.”

Sometimes he would take a friend or two with him, and sometimes he would go alone. The habit of listening at doors became more and more a favorite one to him as the months and years passed.

Now in that city there lived a man of humble station who had three pretty daughters. One evening the king passed his house and stopped at the door to listen.

“Whom would you like to marry?” one of the girls was asking. It happened to be the youngest one.

“I’d like to marry the royal baker,” the eldest sister replied.

“Why?” asked the youngest one.

“So that I might always eat fresh bread,” was the reply.

“Whom would you like to marry?” the youngest sister asked the middle one.

“I’d like to marry the royal meat cook so that I might always eat meat roasted just to a turn,” was her answer.

“Whom would you like to marry?” asked the eldest and the middle sister together.

“I’d like to marry the listening king himself,” was the reply which their youngest sister made.

“Silly! Silly!” cried her two sisters. “We have perhaps a chance of getting our wishes, but what chance have you?”

“If one wishes for nothing splendid one never gets anything splendid,” replied the youngest sister with a blush which made her look very charming to the king as he peeped through the keyhole.

The king went away with a shrewd smile upon his face. The next day he sent for the three sisters to come to the palace. They were very much frightened.

“Well,” said the king to the eldest girl, “do you want to marry the royal baker?”

“Yes, your majesty,” she replied. “I have no objections.”

The king turned to her sister.

“How is it with you?” he asked. “What do you say to marrying the royal meatcook?”

“I’ll be most happy to marry him, your majesty,” she answered.

The youngest girl was blushing like a rose and her heart was thumping so that she could scarcely breathe. The king smiled as he noticed her fair head bowed upon her breast.

“Would you like to marry the listening king?” he asked her gently.

“Yes, your majesty,” she responded, so low that the king could hardly hear her.

“Very well,” said the king. “I’ll have all these weddings celebrated at once.”

Thus it happened that the two eldest sisters got their wishes and married the royal baker and the royal meatcook, while the youngest one wedded the listening king himself. The others were very angry at her luck and their hearts were filled with envy.

“Why didn’t we wish to be queens or at least princesses?” one asked the other. “It would have been just as easy to have had our wishes granted!”

“Why didn’t we! Why didn’t we! How stupid we were!” cried the other.

They passed the time in plotting against their youngest sister, the queen.

A year flew by and twin sons were born to the royal pair. They had gold stars on their foreheads. The whole kingdom was filled with rejoicing. As for the listening king, he was so happy that he forgot to listen at people’s doors.

The only persons in the whole country who were not happy were the two jealous sisters. They stole the tiny babies out of the palace and threw them into the river.

“Trouble has at last come to our listening king,” said the wise men, when the loss was discovered.

The basket in which the twins had been placed floated away down the stream. It was found by a miller.

“What have we here?” he asked his wife as together they removed the cover from the basket.

“I guess it is something good to eat,” said his wife. “What do you think it is?”

"I guess it is a poor little puppy which some one wanted to drown," replied the miller.

Then they took the cover off the basket. The two babies opened their eyes and smiled just then. The miller and his wife were the most surprised people in the whole country and also the happiest ones.

"What beautiful children!" cried the miller.

"Let's keep them!" cried his wife.

"Of course we'll keep them," replied the miller. "The good God himself must have sent them to us in answer to our prayers."

Just then the miller's wife noticed the golden stars upon their foreheads.

"What does this mean?" she asked.

"I don't know," answered her husband as he examined them carefully. "Perhaps it is just a sign that they are truly the gift of God."

The miller and his wife cared for the two children as if they had been their own. They lived such a long distance from the palace that they never heard the news that the royal babes were missing.

As the two boys grew older they became the handsomest, cleverest lads in the whole kingdom. The gold stars shone and twinkled upon their foreheads. At last the miller's wife made little caps for them to wear to hide the stars. They were altogether too conspicuous.

Then one sad summer a pestilence came upon the land and the good miller and his wife died. The two children were left alone in the world. The listening king had decreed all the orphaned children in the kingdom should be brought to the royal city that they might be fed and cared for. The miller's two orphans went with the others, and the king's wicked sister-in-laws saw them. They recognized them at once because of the golden stars upon their foreheads.

"We must make a new plot to destroy the royal children," said one sister to the other. "And we must be quick about it or the king or queen will see them and recognize them, too, by the golden stars."

“Are you quite sure these are the two royal babes we threw into the river?” asked the other sister doubtfully. “It is a bit difficult for me to believe that our sister’s children can be so handsome.”

“I’m entirely certain of it,” assured her sister. “There is no one except the royal babes who could have those golden stars.”

While the wicked sisters plotted, the two children had approached the royal gardens. Inside the garden there was a beautiful parrot with feathers of green and gold.

“I’m going to catch that bird,” said one of the brothers. “Wait here while I go inside the gates.”

He could not catch the parrot and he called his brother to come and help him. Together they succeeded; and, with the beautiful green-and-gold parrot tightly clutched, they tried to slip outside the gate of the royal gardens.

Just as they were almost out, the great gates swiftly closed and caught their garments.

“We’re caught! We’re caught!” cried the two children. “How can we ever get the gates unfastened!”

At the sound of their cries, the royal gardeners, the courtiers and the listening king himself came to the rescue.

When the king saw the golden stars upon their foreheads he leaned against the nearest tree for support.

“What children are these?” he asked in a voice which shook.

“I never saw them before,” replied the head gardener. “I think they are some of the orphan children which the great mercy and clemency of your royal majesty have caused to be rescued from the plague.”

“Who are your parents, my children?” asked one of the courtiers.

“We are the children of the good miller and his wife,” they replied. “Our kind foster parents are now dead with the plague.”

“Where did this miller and his wife find you?” asked the king eagerly.

Then the two children told the story of how the miller had found them in a basket in the river. They knew it well, for it was their favorite story of all the ones which the miller's wife had told them.

The courtiers looked at each other in amazement. Every one had noticed the bright stars shining on the children's brows.

"I believe you are the two dear babes lost from this palace!" cried the king as he took them in his arms.

"Who put them in that basket?" asked the king's counsellors.

"If I knew you may be sure that fitting punishment would be visited upon them!" cried the king.

The beautiful green-and-gold parrot had escaped from the children's arms and had flown back to a tree near the gates of the royal gardens. Suddenly he was heard to speak.

"Go find the king's sisters-in-law," were the words he said.

The king's sisters-in-law were quickly brought into the garden. A look at their guilty faces convinced every one that they were the ones who had placed the royal babes in the basket and had thrown them into the river.

"You shall now receive the punishment which you have so richly deserved!" cried the king as he frowned upon them sternly.

"Where is the good queen?" some one asked.

The queen had been sleeping in her own apartments and had not heard the noise in the garden. When the courtiers brought her there and she saw the two handsome boys with the bright stars shining on their foreheads, she fainted with the joy of it.

38

JOSÉ THE BEAST SLAYER

There was once a king who had a little daughter. He went to the Wise Man of the Forest to learn how best to bring her up, and this is what he was told:

"For twelve years you must keep your daughter in a tower in the forest. It should have no door, only a little window through which you may pass food to her. You must give her meat which has no bones in it."

The king ordered a tower constructed in the deep forest. It had no door, and only a little window. Here the princess was placed. Every day food was passed to her through the little window. The king himself took charge of this, so that he might be sure that there was no meat given her which had bones in it.

The years flew by, and at last the twelve year period was nearly up. Then the king went away one day and left the servants to carry food to the princess. They were careless, and gave her meat which had a bone in it.

The little princess had grown very tired of being shut up in the tower of the forest.

"Ah," said she when she discovered the bone in her meat. "At last I have something with which to make this little window larger. I've tried in vain to make it bigger with my fingers."

She used the bone to dig away the wall each side of the window and soon the little opening had grown so large that the princess could lean her head out of it and look up at lofty trees. That very day a duke passed that way on a hunting expedition and saw the beautiful princess in the tower. He fell in love with her immediately.

Now that the princess had some one to help her make the hole larger it was an easy matter to make it big enough to escape. That very night she ran away with the duke.

When the king returned from his journey he found the tower in the forest entirely empty. There was nothing but the yawning hole to tell him of his daughter’s escape. He tried in vain to find out what had become of her, but there was no person who could tell him anything about her.

The princess had gone with the duke across a great river which no one else knew how to cross. She lived in a big cave in the rocks, and after all the years in the tower it seemed a wonderful home indeed. She was never tired of admiring the trees and flowers of the forest and listening to the songs of the birds. When at last her baby son was born she thought that she was the very happiest person in the whole world.

Now when the baby was two years old, the duke decided that they must take him to a hermitage to be baptized. They went down to the great river and he carried his little son across it in safety. Then he returned for the princess, but on the way his foot slipped and he fell into the river. The strong current bore him swiftly away, leaving the princess on one side of the river and her little son on the other.

“How shall I get across?” cried the princess when she saw what had happened.

“Don’t worry, mother,” replied the child. “I’ll come and get you.”

To her amazement he crossed the great river in safety and bravely escorted his mother to the other bank in spite of her tears and cries of fear.

“Well done, my son!” she said when on the other bank. “You are indeed a son to be proud of!”

They went to a church and the boy was baptized. José the Beast Slayer was the name he chose. Then they wandered on until at last they came to a house with a door in which a little window had been cut. The boy thrust in his arm and opened the door as if it had been his own.

“Walk in, mother dear,” were his words.

Together they entered the house and together they explored the various rooms. There was nobody there and there was nothing to eat. Accordingly, José went out begging. He asked alms at the royal palace and there he was given money to buy food. There was even enough left over to pay for a gun.

Now that he owned a gun there was no need of begging any more. He shot plenty of game for his mother and what was left he carried to the royal palace to give to the king.

One day in the deep forest he entered a cave where the giant of the forest lived.

“What are you doing here, little penny chicken?” asked the huge giant as he frowned down at José.

“I may be a little penny chicken, but I’m not in the least afraid of giants,” replied the boy boldly.

“What, a little penny chicken like you not afraid of me!” cried the giant as he picked him up roughly and set him on his neck.

José seized the giant’s long beard and drew it around his neck so tightly that the giant fell to the floor dead. Then José seized one of the money-bags and ran home with it to his mother.

“You must carry some of this to the king,” said his mother when she saw it and had heard his story.

Accordingly, José carried the money as a gift to the king.

“Who is bringing me all this?” asked the king when he saw it.

“A little lad,” replied the king’s servants.

“Lead him in to me,” said the king. “I’d like to see him.”

Accordingly, the boy was led before the throne.

“What is your name, my lad?” asked the king kindly.

“I am called José the Beast Slayer, your majesty,” replied the boy as he bowed low before the throne.

“Who are your parents?” asked the king.

“My father is dead,” replied José, “and my mother is a princess who ran away from a tower in the forest.”

José had often heard the story of his mother’s life in the tower. It was the tale he liked best of all.

At the boy’s words the king started and looked at him sharply.

“Tell me about this tower,” he said eagerly.

“It was a tower in the deep forest,” replied José. “It had no door, only a little window through which food was passed to her. She could never have any meat with a bone. This was because the Wise Man of the Forest had told her father that it was the best way to bring her up. One day her father went away and the servants gave her meat with a bone in it and — “

“I always suspected something like that,” interrupted the king.

José looked at him in surprise.

“Were you there?” he asked.

The king nodded. “Go on with your story, my boy,” he said.

José told all the circumstances of his mother’s escape from the tower, just as she had so often described them to him. Tears were running down the king’s cheeks when at last the story was ended.

“My lad, you are my own grandson!” cried the king as he took him in his arms. “Proud am I, too, that I have a grandson like you! Where is your mother now?”

“My mother is in the house in the forest,” replied José. “It is she who told me to carry the money to the king.”

“Why did she never come to me?” asked the father.

“I think she was afraid she’d be punished for running away from the tower without any door,” was José’s reply.

When the princess was brought home to the royal palace there was a great feast held which lasted for three days and three nights. Then the king sent his men with José into the forest to the cave where the giant had lived. They brought home so many bags of gold that it required the entire royal army to transport it.

Years passed, and when the old king died it was José the Beast Slayer who was king of the land.

39

THE PRINCESS OF THE LOST ISLAND

Euphemia was the daughter of King Atlas and the granddaughter of the great god Jupiter. She was more beautiful than her fifteen sisters, though they were all lovely.

All the ten sons of Neptune admired her charms and sought to marry her, but she would wed none of them. There was, in truth, no one in all the world who was worthy of her. Euphemia herself knew this and preferred to remain a star in the constellation of the Hyades, her sisters, rather than wed an unworthy husband.

Euphemia became a Christian, they say, through the efforts of the cherubim. She decided to come down to earth and go about doing good deeds. Accordingly, she came to the island called Seven Cities.

Now in the island of Seven Cities there lived a rich and venerable Christian prince. He adopted Euphemia as his own daughter. She was called Princess Euphemia of the island of Seven Cities.

As soon as she came to the island all pain and misery vanished from it. Joy reigned. Banquets were held, songs were sung, gay dances were danced. It was as if every day were a feast day.

Time passed. Many changes came to the island, but Euphemia herself remained always young, always beautiful.

One day two priests from the outside world visited the island. They saw the magnificent palaces, the beautiful gardens. Two tame lions followed them about. They were as gentle as if they had been dogs.

“We are in the celestial regions,” said one priest to the other.

“Let us stay here forever,” said the other priest. “It is indeed the Paradise of which we have dreamed.”

The two priests had come in a tiny launch from a large boat.

“We should return and tell our friends about this celestial region,” they agreed. “To-morrow we will all explore this wonderful country.”

It was almost dark when the two priests reached their ship by the little launch. They reported all the things they had heard and seen in the new land.

The next morning, however, the island had entirely disappeared. The water stretched before their gaze with an unbroken rippling blue surface.

“What has become of our beautiful island,” the good priests asked in amazement.

“We were anchored off the shore of one of the enchanted islands,” was the opinion of everybody.

Euphemia, they say, has not yet disappeared entirely. She has changed her form. She is still found in the Azores in the plant called SOLANEA, the flower of St. Cosmo. She is still doing good deeds. Pain disappears when she comes, just as it did in the lost island. St. Cosmo, the patron saint of all good physicians, could never have gained his reputation without her good deeds.

40

WHY THE ALVÉLOA BIRD RECEIVED A BLESSING

In the Azores there is a little bird which is loved and protected by every one. Its name is the Alvéloa. It has a gray back, white breast, head and throat, and black and white wings. The tail of this little bird is always in motion. This is the reason:

Long ago when the wicked king Herod ordered all the babies to be killed, the Holy Virgin fled into Egypt with the Christ child safe in her arms. They rode upon an ass.

The Virgin glanced fearfully behind her as they went along the way. At any moment Herod’s messengers might come in pursuit. The tracks of the ass showed plainly in the dusty road.

“Oh!” cried the Holy Mother, “Our enemies will see our tracks! They will know in what direction we have fled!”

The Alvéloa was nearby and heard. She spread out her tail like a fan and shook it about in the dusty road. The tracks of the ass were completely brushed away.

The Holy Mother smiled upon her.

“For this kind deed, little bird, your tail shall be always in motion. By this sign you shall be known and your life shall be spared.”

To this very day the tail of the Alvéloa is in motion. St. Michael, himself, the patron of the island of S. Miguel, has asked a special protection for the little bird in his island.

The Alvéloa flew all the way before the Virgin, showing her the road into Egypt.

“My blessing upon you, little bird,” said the Virgin. “May you always have the strength to slay your enemy.”

To this very day the Alvéloa is able to slay birds much larger than herself.

“The Alvéloa kills the hawk,” is a saying in the Azores.

If one wakes in the morning and sees this little gray and white bird before his window he will have a lucky day.

On the way into Egypt the Virgin pointed to the lupine which grew by the wayside.

“Eat, little bird,” she said. “Eat until your hunger is satisfied. Blessings be upon you for your kind deeds to me and to the Holy Child. May good fortune and plenty always attend you.”

To this very day this bird blessed by the Virgin is an emblem of good luck.

41

WHY THE CODORNIZ BIRD RECEIVED A CURSE

When the Holy Virgin was fleeing into Egypt to escape the persecutions of Herod, the Codorniz bird flew about making a great racket, calling out, “Come this way.”

“Keep quiet!” cried the Virgin. “Our enemies will hear you! They will come in pursuit!”

In spite of her words the Codorniz kept up its noise.

“My curse be upon you,” said the Virgin. “You shall always walk humbly. You shall never fly high and smile at the sun.”

To this very day the Codorniz bird walks humbly. It has many enemies who love to slay it to devour.

42

OUTSIDE THE DOOR LIKE THE MOTHER OF ST. PETER

If there is no response when you ring the bell or knock at a door in the Azores, you have to stay “outside the door like the mother of St. Peter,” they say. This is the story which tells why the mother of St. Peter had to stay outside:

The very stingiest woman in the whole city was St. Peter’s mother. She was so stingy that she never gave away a single thing to a beggar. No matter if the beggar were old or sick or blind or crippled or even a mother with a babe in her arms, she always made the same reply, “I have nothing to give away.”

Not even when there was famine in the land, but plenty in her own home, would the mother of St. Peter share with the unfortunate.

When St. Peter was made the guardian of the keys of Heaven, of course he tried to bring his mother inside the celestial gate.

“When your mother lived upon the earth did she ever share her plenty with any of my poor unfortunate children?” was the question.

St. Peter thought hard. His mother had been a worthy, virtuous woman in many respects, but he could recall nothing which she had ever given to the poor and the unfortunate.

At last he remembered a day when she had gone into the garden to get vegetables for the soup.

A poor beggar woman had stood outside the garden gate, crying: “Alms! Alms, for the love of God!”

“Get away from my garden,” said St. Peter’s mother. “I have no alms to give you. If I give away the vegetables from my garden, I’d soon have nothing left to feed my own family. I’d be begging myself.”

The poor beggar woman started to turn away with tears in her eyes. An onion stalk fell from the hand of St. Peter’s mother. It was bruised by its fall and covered with mud, but the beggar seized it eagerly.

“Keep it. I wouldn’t use it anyway,” snapped St. Peter’s mother.

St. Peter could remember nothing else to tell, so he related this story.

“Go and find the onion,” was the comment.

When St. Peter at last found that onion stalk, it was still dirty with the mud of the garden and crumpled by its fall, just as it had been when his mother had given it to the beggar.

“Hold out the onion and pull your mother in,” was the order.

St. Peter held out the onion stalk. It did not reach very far down into Purgatory, but his mother jumped up as high as she could and seized it eagerly.

Slowly and very carefully he pulled her up by it to the Heavenly Gate. Just as she was about to enter the door the onion stalk broke.

“I’m sorry. You’ll have to stay outside,” said St. Peter. “I’ve done the best I could for you. The onion stalk was not strong enough to pull you through.”

Thus it happens that the mother of St. Peter has to stay outside the door of Heaven.

43

WHY THE OWL FLIES AT NIGHT

Long ago there was an image of the good St. Anthony washed ashore by the rough waves of the Bay of Angra. A little chapel was built to receive it on the steep slopes of Monte Brasil overlooking the bay and here it still remains.

Once upon a time a little boy named Pedro lived in a tiny cottage near St. Anthony’s shrine. His mother had died and his father had married a new wife who was often cruel to him. She dressed him in ragged, shabby clothes and the other children of the parish often pointed their fingers at him in scorn because of his poor garments.

One day as Pedro knelt before the image of the good saint a strange thing happened. His clothing became new and whole. He was dressed as well as any boy in the parish.

“Where did you get clothes like this?” asked the stepmother when he came home that night. “I always knew you were a good-for-nothing. I believe you have stolen them.”

Little Pedro told what had happened, but the woman would not believe him.

“Don’t stand there talking any longer!” she cried. “Take the water jars and go to the spring and fill them for me. Hurry, I don’t want to be kept waiting for the water!”

Pedro lifted the two great water jars which stood on the floor and slowly climbed up the hill to the little spring which supplied water for the family needs during the greater part of the year. Just now the spring had failed, as the stepmother had found out that very day.

"There is no water in the spring now," said an old man whom little Pedro met on the way. The boy had almost reached the spring and the big jars were growing heavy even though they were empty.

"I'm so nearly there I'll go on and see for myself," decided the lad. "The other spring is so far away and the jars will be so heavy that I can never carry them all the long distance. Perhaps there is still a little water here."

When he reached the spring he was surprised to see the water flowing faster than in many a day. He remembered, too, the new suit of clothes he was wearing.

"Luck is with me to-day!" he cried as he filled the water jars. "The good saint Anthony is my friend. He it is who has given me my handsome clothing and he it is who has blessed the spring for me."

When he returned home with the jars full of water his stepmother stared at him in amazement. He had not been gone long enough to obtain it from the farther spring.

"Where did you get this water?" she asked, as soon as she could find words with which to speak.

Pedro told her that it came from the spring just as it always did.

"That spring is dry to-day!" she cried. "Now I know that you are a liar as well as a thief. Just wait until your father comes home! I'll see that you get the beating you deserve."

Pedro wondered why she had sent him to the spring if she had believed it to be dry, and while he was thinking of this the angry woman gave him a big basket.

“Here,” she said. “Go out in the garden and pick up some wood for me. Hurry. Don’t keep me waiting. Your slow ways drive me mad.”

Pedro knew that all the wood in the garden had been picked up long ago. Now there was nothing in the garden except roses. There were red roses and pink roses and yellow roses and white roses, but not a single stick of wood. High up on the steep slopes of Monte Brasil there might be wood to gather, but the night was dark and the path was steep and long. Little Pedro was very tired, so tired that two great tears rolled down his cheeks.

Suddenly the good saint Anthony from the little chapel stood before him. He smiled kindly at the child. “Why are you crying, my boy?” asked the saint. “I have watched you carefully for a long time and I know you seldom give way to tears, though often your burdens are so heavy that a boy less brave would do little else than weep.”

“I have to fill my basket with wood and there is nothing except roses in our garden,” replied Pedro. “I’m tired and it is very dark on Monte Brasil to search there for wood.”

“Here, dear boy,” said the saint, smiling. “Just pick the roses and fill your basket with them. Then take them to your stepmother and see what she will say to you. I’ll be with you.”

Pedro filled his big basket with the lovely red and yellow and pink and white roses which grew in the garden in such rich abundance. Then he ran into the house with them. As the light from the candles fell upon them, to his amazement he saw that they were no longer roses. The basket was full of wood.

“Where did you get this wood?” cried the woman angrily. “There are only roses in the garden. Where have you been?”

She seized Pedro roughly by the collar of his new coat and shook him until his teeth chattered. He looked up into the saint’s eyes. St. Anthony’s face was stern.

“Stop, woman!” cried the voice which a moment before had been so kind and gentle. Now it thundered forth in stern accents. “This little lad has done no harm. You have been guilty of a desire to bring harm to him, for this cruelty take the punishment which you so richly merit. It is you who have sent this child out into the night. Now it is I who sends you out into the night.”

From that moment Pedro’s stepmother was no longer a woman. She was changed into an owl with her eyes the big round circles they had looked when she had gazed up into the fierce face of angry St. Anthony. To this very day the owl has to fly by night.

44

THE LABORER AND HIS MASTER

Once upon a time there was a laborer who said to his master:

“It is time to plant the fields.”

“Very well,” said his master. “The part which grows above the ground shall be mine and you shall have in payment for your labor the part which grows below the ground.”

“Agreed,” said the laborer.

He planted the fields with potatoes. His master had nothing but the tops outside the earth. The laborer harvested many baskets of potatoes that year and sold them for a goodly sum. The master was angry because of this.

“Next harvest time,” said he, “we’ll see about things! You shall give me what grows below the ground and keep for yourself what grows above.”

“Agreed,” said the laborer. “That is perfectly fair to me.”

The laborer planted the fields with wheat. His master had nothing but the roots, while he harvested a rich crop of wheat which he sold for much money.

“I’ll settle with you,” said his master.

The laborer was frightened.

“Don’t be afraid,” said his wife. “When your master comes let me talk to him.”

The woman gashed her face and hands with the pruning knife.

The master came to the door and she opened it.

“Where is your husband?” he asked.

“He is sharpening his nails,” said she. “See what ugly scratches I already have upon my hands and face.”

The master went away without punishing the laborer.

45

‘TIS FAITH WHICH SAVES

45. ‘Tis Faith Which Saves

THERE WAS ONCE upon a time a fair maid who lived in the island of Fayal. She was betrothed to a young man of the same island. One day she fell ill with a disease which baffled the skill of all the physicians. Their arts, the mourning of her betrothed, the prayers and tears of her mother, all seemed of no avail. It appeared that the fair maid would die.

Now it happened that in one of the nearby islands, St. Michael, there was a miracle-working image called the Santo Christo. The fair maid begged of her betrothed that he would go to St. Michael and procure some of the mysterious miracle-working sweat of the Santo Christo or some of the miraculous parings of the nails of the image, which had the power to heal any disease.

The young man gladly set out on the quest. On the boat which conveyed him to St. Michael, however, he met a maid with beauty and charm, a maid whose bright eyes made him forget the sad eyes of his betrothed.

When he arrived at his destination he thought only of singing gay songs beneath the balcony of his new love. The days flew by, and soon it was time for the boat to return to Fayal. He had forgotten the mission on which he had come, and he returned to the boat with no relics of the miracle-working Santo Christo.

The homeward journey was rough and stormy. Filled with fear of death at any moment, the young man remembered the fair maid of Fayal who even at that very hour might be dying. His conscience smote him.

“Oh, why did I allow another fair face to crowd out from my heart the image of my beloved?” he asked himself. “Faithless wretch that I am, what shall I say to my betrothed if good fortune and the sea permit me to stand once more at her side?”

The rough waves beat angrily against the side of the boat in answer. That night the storm ceased and in the morning it was fair and clear as the boat entered the beautiful harbor of Fayal under the shadow of Mt. Pico. With clear skies and smooth seas the young man’s conscience became less troublesome. He resolved that he would not confess his deceit to his betrothed.

“If I told her it might make her grow worse so rapidly that she would die because of it,” he said to himself.

Indeed, it was quite enough to have made the girl die of a broken heart, had she known the whole story.

Suddenly the youth’s face clouded.

“What shall I say to my beloved as the reason why I have brought back to her neither the miracle-working sweat of the Santo Christo nor the miraculous nail parings?” he was asking.

His eye fell upon the boat’s wooden side. Quickly he shaved off some fine parings of this wood. He wrapped them up carefully and took them to the fair maid of Fayal as if they were parings from the nails of the miracle-working image.

His betrothed’s face shone with joy at his return. Tears of thankfulness filled her eyes when she saw the parings which he had brought her.

“How can I ever thank you for your faithfulness in this quest in my behalf, and the great love which prompted you to undertake this stormy, dangerous journey on the rough seas that I might once more be well?”

The young man did not enjoy hearing her speak of his love and faithfulness. He did not reply.

“No maid was ever blessed with so wonderful a lover,” went on the happy girl.

“You are forgetting to take the parings,” said the mother. “They will not cure you if you do not take them.”

The fair maid of Fayal took the parings in a gourd full of water. She began to improve immediately and the next day she was entirely well.

“‘Tis faith which saves and not parings,” said her betrothed.

46

ST. BRENDAN’S ISLAND

There was once an Irish monk called St. Brendan. One day he received a visit from a hermit who told him of a most marvelous island.

“Come and visit this earthly Paradise,” said the hermit. “There the sun always shines. The birds wear golden crowns upon their heads and speak like humans.”

The perfume of the island clung to the garments of the hermit for forty days.

Good St. Brendan asked many questions about the mysterious island and at last resolved to visit it and see for himself if all the wonders of which he had heard were really true. Accordingly, he built a coracle of wattle covered with hides tanned in oak bark and softened with butter. He loaded it with provisions to last for forty days. Then he persuaded some of his disciples to accompany him. This was somewhat difficult for they were timid about embarking upon this dangerous expedition in the frail boat. St. Brendan, however, succeeded in overcoming their fears and set out with a little group of his most devoted followers.

It was seven years before they returned to their native land. They were even more enthusiastic about their wonderful island than the hermit had been. They urged others to go and find out its marvels but nobody else was ever able to locate it.

They say that the island of St. Brendan was a floating island in the Atlantic. Good St. Brendan did not die but kept on living in the earthly Paradise of his isle. When the Christians were hard pressed in their battles with the Moors and were about to be pushed back into the sea the island of St. Brendan appeared upon the horizon, and the good saint himself came to fight against the Moors and bring victory to the Christians.

In the middle of the fifteenth century there was a little maid called Maria who lived in the island of Terceira. She heard the story of St. Brendan's isle from a Franciscan brother. Day and night she dreamed of it. She often sat upon the hillside of Monte Brasil, looking eagerly out over the broad expanse of sea, hoping with all her heart that the island would appear to her.

One day there landed in Terceira a cavalier of Rhodes named Vital. From his grandfather he had inherited some of the sacred relics of St. Brendan. He had come to the Azores in his search for the mysterious island. On his doublet he wore an eight-pointed star and a band upon which was embroidered in scarlet silk the motto, "By Faith." It was indeed "by faith" that he had embarked upon his quest.

The little maid, Maria, fell in love with him the moment she heard of him and his errand. She worshiped him as if he had been the good St. Brendan himself, but when she was with him she sat with downcast eyes, her long dark eyelashes sweeping her delicate cheek, and did not give him a glance, much less a word.

The young cavalier loved the little maid. He divided his holy relics of St. Brendan with her, and in return he begged of her that she might speak a word of love.

"To tell my love to you," said Maria, "I'd have to be where nobody but God could hear."

Indeed it was quite true that Maria needed to be where nobody but the good God could hear her when she spoke of her love for the cavalier Vital. The son of the wealthy Captain of the district had long admired her delicate beauty. He had already sought her for his bride. His jealousy against Vital rose up like a burning flame. He went to Maria and demanded that she should marry him at once.

Maria firmly refused.

“If you do not wed me,” said the captain’s son, “I shall have my father lock you up in the stronghold of St. Louis on the hillside.”

“I should prefer to spend all my days confined in the castle of St. Louis rather than be your wife,” said she. “Why can’t you leave me in peace with my relics of the good St. Brendan!”

The mention of St. Brendan’s relics stirred the young man’s wrath even more. He well knew who it was who had given her the holy relics. His threat was fulfilled, and she was taken that very day to the castle of St. Louis and locked up in that stronghold.

Her room had a window, and there she sat high up in the tower of the castle looking down at the city of Angra beneath her.

“I had longed to serve the good God,” she cried. “Why is it that my life has been made useless!”

At that very moment the earth trembled. The strong walls of the castle shook as if they had been built of paper.

Near the fort two doves were sitting on the branches of a cedar tree.

“Let us rescue this fair maid,” said one dove to the other.

“Yes, let us carry her away on our wings,” agreed the other.

That instant the earth shook so that the walls of the stronghold fell to the ground. The two doves spread out their snow-white wings and bore Maria away in safety.

Over houses and churches they flew. Over treetops and the broad expanse of the sea they rose. The city, the island, the sea, all disappeared from Maria’s sight. She felt so dizzy that she closed her eyes.

When she opened them again she was in an island of such beauty as she had never dreamed. It was indeed a garden of Paradise. The good St. Brendan himself, she saw, was the gardener.

The earthquake caused much damage in the island of Terceira. When the disappearance of Maria was known throughout the little city; of Angra nobody mourned for her as did the young cavalier Vital.

“What is the island to me without Maria?” he asked in sorrow.

Once more he embarked upon the sea in his search for the island of St. Brendan. Long days and long nights he tossed about on the ocean.

One evening just at sunset he saw the clouds of heaven descending to earth like a white ladder. Then he observed, far away upon the horizon, an island. He knew in his heart that he had at last a glimpse of St. Brendan’s isle.

A gentle breeze swelled his sails and sent him rapidly toward it. As he drew near he saw his loved Maria standing with her arms outstretched. A bright light shone about her.

“To speak of my love to you,” said she, “I have to be where nobody but God can hear — God and the gardener of this island, St. Brendan.”

47

THE SILENT CAVALIER

In the early days when the Azores had just been discovered there were many Flemish settlers who came to the islands. Among them there was a young cavalier of the order of St. George of Borgonha. His name was Jesus Maria and the reason why he had come was because a wise monk had told him that his path in life lay by way of the sea.

“Your name given to you in Holy Baptism,” said the monk, “is Iesvs Maria. Transpose the letters and it says in Latin, *Maris es via*.”

The young cavalier agreed that the sea must be his path of destiny and he at once set sail upon a long voyage which finally led him to the island of Fayal. He loved the rocky coast where the waves beat. He loved the deep ravine where the laughing brook ran, the lake in the ancient crater, the snow-capped summit of Mt. Pico which smiled down in stately majesty from the opposite island. He decided that this was to be his home.

“My path of Destiny was indeed the sea,” he said. “The sea has brought me to a country which is very fair.”

In the island of Fayal there were already some Portuguese settlers. One of these had a beautiful daughter Ida. The young Flemish cavalier thought that she was the fairest maid he had ever seen. He fell deeply in love with her.

Now the cavaliers of the order of St. George of Borgonha had vowed that they would never wed. Jesus Maria could not break the solemn pledge which he had given when he joined the order. Neither could he forget the bright eyes of the Portuguese maiden Ida. It seemed as if his heart would break.

“I will leave this island and return to my own country,” he thought.

Then he remembered the words which the wise monk had said about the sea being his path. He had followed that road and it had led him to a fair island home. He decided that he could not return to his native land of Flanders. Over across the shining blue water he looked up at the peaceful snow-capped summit of Mt. Pico. The sight of its majestic stillness seemed to give him strength to hold his tongue and keep him from speaking words of love to the beautiful Portuguese maiden. Never a word of love broke from him. The maiden Ida never knew the shrine she occupied in the heart of the Flemish cavalier.

The days dragged slowly by. The young man could bear no more. He felt that his strength could no longer endure on the same island with Ida. If he stayed near her he would break his vow.

One morning in a little boat he crossed the blue waters to the island of Pico. At the foot of the majestic mountain he loved, he built the little hut which was to be his home. He never returned to the island of Fayal, and as the years went by he was spoken of as the good hermit of Pico. Nobody knew his secret.

When at last the Cavalier Jesus Maria died, a peach tree grew from his tomb, — the emblem of silence. The leaf of this tree has the form of the human tongue. Its fruit has a stone shaped somewhat like the human heart. From this stone there comes a seed which when planted produces a new tree. Thus it is that words which bear fruit spring from the heart. It is silence which teaches one the gift of fruitful words, they say in the Azores.

48

THE ENCHANTED PALACE

In the village of Altos Ares in the island of Terceira there lived once upon a time a fair maid who had been baptized Perola, which means Pearl. As she grew older she was indeed like a rare pearl among the other maidens of the village, so great was the charm of her unusual beauty. She was the joy of her home and of the whole community for her disposition was as lovely as her face.

One bright spring morning Perola leaned over the cistern where she had gone to get water. Her reflection showed so plainly in the water that she paused to gaze into the smiling eyes of her own mirrored face. As she did so a magic spell was woven about her. The water fairy who had come to the cistern had seen her great beauty and had thrown a charm over her. In a moment more she fell into the cistern to join her reflection there.

When Perola could not be found there was great excitement in the little village. Nobody could guess what had become of her. Her mother prayed devoutly for her safety in the church of St. Roque. All the villagers sought for her in every possible place.

Now at the north of the island of Terceira there are groups of tiny rocks in the sea which are called the Biscoitos or biscuits. Here there lived a wise old woman who had a great reputation among all the people of the island for her knowledge.

“Let us go to consult the wise woman of Biscoitos,” said one of the village youths when they had sought long and faithfully for a trace of the hiding-place into which Perola might have vanished.

Accordingly, the young men of Altos Ares went to the wise woman, and this is what she told them:

“The fair pearl of your village is safe from the fishers of pearls. She is hidden away in an enchanted palace of marble and ivory and tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl.”

The water fairy had taken Perola through an underground passage which led from the cistern to the beautiful enchanted palace in the lake of Ginjal. There she was kept in hiding. The fairies never dreamed that anybody would ever be able to guess where she was.

Now, with the words of the wise woman of Biscoitos to guide them, the youths of Altos Ares organized an expedition to search for their lost playmate. The sons of the magistrate, the rich men, the learned men of the island of Terceira joined this expedition. They searched through the whole island for a place where an enchanted palace might be located.

At last, upon St. John’s Day when the days and nights are of equal length, this band of the brave youths of Terceira came to the shores of Lake Ginjal in the interior of the island.

“This is surely the enchanted place. Here in this lake must lie the fairies’ palace of marble and ivory and tortoise shell and mother-of-pearl!” somebody cried.

“How shall we be able to approach this magic palace and rescue Perola?” asked one.

“How shall we be able to break her enchantment?” asked another.

“Let us camp here upon the border of the lake and consider how best to proceed,” said the leader of the expedition.

Now at that very hour on St. John’s Day the mother of Perola was in the church of St. Roque in Altos Ares praying devoutly for her daughter’s safe return.

Suddenly she heard a strange voice. These were the words which fell upon her ears:

“Your prayers and the perseverance of the youths of the island have at last triumphed. Go in peace. On the day of St. Peter at the hour of sunset your daughter shall be restored to you. Her enchantment shall be broken and she shall be brought to the bank of Lake Ginjal in a boat of ivory, drawn by a snow-white swan.”

When the youths encamped upon the shore of the lake heard these tidings they set up such a shout of joy that it was indeed enough to break any enchantment.

At the time appointed Perola was brought to the bank of the lake in a boat of ivory drawn by a snow-white swan, just as fair and lovely as upon the day when she had vanished from the little village of Altos Ares.

This is the story of the Lake of Ginjal. It is quite probable that the enchanted palace of the water fairies is still there.

49

THE FRIEND OF THE DEVIL

Once upon a time there was a handsome Flemish youth who came to the island of Fayal. His name was Fernâo de Hutra. He fell in love with a beautiful nun in the convent of the Gloria in the city of Horta.

One day the Devil appeared to him.

“Since you fell in love with this fair nun, I see you are a friend of mine,” said the Devil.

The young man had not known this, but he replied:

“Say rather that I will be your friend if you help me get possession of this nun I love.”

“Very well,” said the Devil, “but you will have to make a bargain with me.”

“What is it?” asked Fernâo, rather anxiously.

“Grant me your solemn pledge that you’ll give me all your children,” responded the Devil.

“Agreed,” said Fernâo.

After that he saw much of the Devil. The nun, however, was as devout as she was beautiful. She refused to break the vows she had made and flee with the Flemish youth. She firmly resisted both him and the Devil.

“You are not a true friend to me after all,” said Fernâo to the Devil sadly.

“But you are my friend,” said the Devil in reply.

Soon after, Fernâo de Hutra left the city of Horta and the island of Fayal and went to join his kinsmen who had settled in Angra in the island of Terceira. Here his handsome face won many friends for him among the youth of the city. To some of these he confided the story of his relations with the Devil.

Now it happened that in the year 1666 the first bull fight was held in Angra. To this very day the island of Terceira is the only one in the Azores which has bull fights.

Fernâo had taken part in this. He was one of the chief organizers of the bull fight held on St. John’s Day of the following year. That day all the men and women and children of the city of Angra assembled in the public square before the fort. The bullfighters, richly clad, rode forth upon prancing steeds decked in costly velvets with streamers and ribbons of gold and silver which sparkled in the bright sunlight. The youths were resplendent in their garments of crimson or purple or blue velvet, richly embroidered. Fernâo de Hutra was radiant in his jacket of blue decked with pearls, with a plumed hat upon his handsome head. He carried a yellow banner embroidered with the arms of his family.

Gay music sounded. The bulls were brought into the ring. The bullfighters saluted and the fight began.

In the windows of the castle the daughters of the chief magistrate of the city of Angra were seated among their friends. The eldest daughter, Sophia, was the most beautiful maid of the whole city. The magistrate watched her anxiously as her fair cheek alternately paled and flushed as the struggle went on. There could be no doubt about the fact that there was love in her eyes as they rested upon the handsome young Flemish cavalier, Fernâo de Hutra. She was wearing his colors and in her hand she carefully held his bouquet of flowers. The ribbon which tied them secured also a piece of paper upon which were written these words:

Oh, beautiful maid of my heart's desire,
For your dear sake I'd go through fire.

The magistrate withdrew from the gay scene into the silence of the great hall of the castle. He bowed his head upon his hands.

"This youth is the friend of the Devil," he groaned. "I cannot consent to my daughter's marriage to him. He has promised to give all his children to the Devil, they say. I cannot allow my own grandchildren to be given to the Devil."

That very day he began to plot how to get rid of the handsome young Fernâo.

Now in the bay before the city of Angra there are two rocky islands called to-day just as they were then, the Ilheos de Cabras, the islands of goats. The brother-in-law of the magistrate was the owner of these barren islands. There were a few goats there, a few mulberry bushes, and a tiny spring of fresh water. The magistrate called his brother-in-law to him as soon as the bull fight was over. He told him all his fears and asked if he might use the islands as a place of banishment for the young Flemish cavalier who was the friend of the Devil.

"You are quite welcome to use these islands for so worthy a purpose," replied his brother-in-law. "Indeed, I have often thought that the deep cave on the island led into Inferno. It is a most fitting spot for the habitation of the Devil's friend."

Thus it happened that the handsome young Flemish cavalier was seized and borne away to the barren rocky islands in the Bay of Angra. When he was received there a great earthquake shook the whole island of Terceira. When at last the people of the city of Angra were through contemplating all the destruction which had been wrought, some one looked in the direction of the island of goats. They saw that a great piece had been broken away from one of the islands.

Thus it was that the Devil received his friend.

50

THE MILLER'S CLOAK

There was once a pious miller. He was always to be found in the church praying. He prayed for the dead. He prayed for those who were alive. He prayed for all who suffered, for the homeless ones, for the hungry ones. He prayed for those upon the sea and those upon the land.

Now it happened that a terrible storm smote the island. The sea beat high against the rocky coast. Lightning flashed. Thunder roared. The wind howled. The rain fell in torrents as if it were a flood.

“Don’t go out in the storm to-night,” counselled his wife. “It is not a suitable night for one to go to church.”

“I agree with you,” replied the miller. “I do not need to go to the church in this fierce storm. Surely my prayers of other days and nights have been so many that to-night I have earned rest in my own dry house. The good God will pardon me.”

The miller wrapped his heavy brown cloak about him and lay down upon his bed. The wind shrieked. Thunder shook the earth. Unseen hands pulled the miller’s cloak from off his bed.

“The wind has blown out the candle! Light another!” cried the miller to his wife.

By the dim light of the candle the good miller again arranged his bed. He wrapped his heavy mantle about him and once more tried to sleep. Again his cloak was pulled from off his bed as if by unseen hands.

There was no rest for the miller that night. His cloak could not be made to cover him as he lay upon his bed.

“I might as well go to church and pray,” he told his wife. “I can’t rest here.”

He wrapped himself in the brown cloak and went out to the church through the fierce blinding storm. He prayed for the dead. He prayed for those who were alive. He prayed for all who suffered, for the homeless ones, the hungry ones. He prayed for those upon the sea, for those upon the land.

“Surely the prayers of the pious are needed this night,” said the miller to his wife when he came in out of the fierce storm.

Lightning flashed. Thunder roared. The rain fell in torrents. The wind howled and drove the pouring rain against the windows. It blew in sheets through the door before the miller had time to close it behind him. The storm beat upon the thatched roof as if it would carry it away.

“Quick, your cloak!” cried the miller’s wife. “Take it off that I may dry it by the fire!”

The good man started to obey. As he touched his cloak, however, his eyes opened wide in amazement. It was entirely dry.

“Feel it yourself!” said he to his wife. “There is not a drop of rain upon it!”

The miller’s wife discovered that his words were true.

“It is a miracle of God!” cried she as she crossed herself.

51

THE MAGIC MOUTHFUL

Once upon a time there was a woman who lived a most unhappy life. She and her husband were always quarreling. Every day when he came home from work he was cross, and said harsh words to her. She would respond with bitter words, and things would go from bad to worse until at last he would beat her.

One day the woman took her water jar and went to the fountain to fill it as usual. She was so unhappy that great tears were rolling down her cheeks.

There was a little old woman standing by the fountain.

“What is the matter, my daughter?” she asked as she saw the tears upon the poor woman’s cheeks.

When she had heard all the story, the little old woman took the water jar and filled it at the fountain.

“Go home, my daughter,” she said. “Keep this water in the jar. The moment your husband says a cross word to you, fill your mouth with the water.”

The sad woman thanked her and went to her own house.

The next day when her husband came home he began to scold as usual. She was about to reply when she suddenly remembered the old woman’s advice. She ran to the water jar and filled her mouth with water.

To her great amazement her husband soon stopped scolding. That night, for the first time in many weeks, she went to sleep without a beating.

Things kept on going well for several days. Just as soon as her husband came home cross and said unpleasant things she would fill her mouth with water from the jar. Then he would get over being cross. Now there were smiles instead of tears on the woman’s face.

At last, however, the water jar grew empty.

Once more the woman went to the fountain, hoping that she would again find the little old woman who had given her the magic water. She found her waiting at the fountain.

“How did my prescription succeed, dear daughter?” she asked as soon as she saw her.

“How can I ever thank you for all you have done for me!” cried the woman. “Now I am happy once more. My husband no longer beats me. I did not dream that my life could ever be so full of joy. Give me, I pray you, some more of the magic water.”

The little old woman smiled gently.

“Dear daughter,” she said, “the water which I put in your jar is nothing but the water from this fountain. It is the very same which you always carry home. This is the secret: When your mouth is full of water you cannot reply when your husband says cross words to you. If you do not keep up the quarrel it soon ends. That is why your life is happy now instead of sad. Go home, and whenever your husband says an unkind word pretend that your mouth is full of water and do not reply. Go in peace, my child.”

The woman always remembered this good advice and never again quarreled with her husband. When she had children of her own she passed on to them the secret.

Now it is generally known in the Azores that if one does not want to keep up a quarrel it is well to pretend that his mouth is full of water. This is the reason why the people of the islands are so peaceful and happy.

52

THE MESSENGERS

There lived once upon a time in the island of Terceira a youth whose name was Vladmiro. He had come from Flanders, a cavalier of the order of St. John. He was betrothed to a fair maid of the island.

One morning he was hunting in the forest of cedars when he suddenly saw Death standing before him. He fell upon his knees and sent up a fervent prayer to the Holy Virgin.

Then he said to Death: “O Death, why is it that you have come in search of me so soon? I am young, rich, happy. I am betrothed to a maid who loves me. Life looks very bright and fair.”

Death stepped back a pace.

“Your prayer to the Holy Mother has saved you,” he said. “I had indeed come in search of you. You were about to die from an accident with your hunting arms. See, I have already retreated a pace. I have decided not to take you with me this time.”

Vladmiro returned a prayer of thanksgiving. Then he said:

“O Death, I am going to make a request of you. Please do not come up to me so suddenly again. It gives me a fright. Next time you come for me will you please be so kind as to send messengers in advance to give me a little warning?”

"Yes, young cavalier," responded Death. "I will gladly do what you ask. I give you my promise that next time I will send my messengers ahead of me to warn you that I am approaching."

With these words Death withdrew and went on alone through the forest of cedars.

The spring of that very year the young cavalier married the fair maid who loved him. Life was full of joy. Many children were born to the worthy couple. Riches and honors came, too. The years sped by as if they flew on wings.

At last a half century had passed. Vladmiro held his grandchildren upon his knees and told them the story of the day he met Death in the forest of cedars.

"We are glad that Death passed on and left you," said the children.

"If he hadn't we could not have had you for our grandfather," said the namesake grandson Vladmiro, snuggling closer in his arms.

"You do not have to fear Death now, grandfather, do you?" asked the little Maria. "He will keep his promise and send his messengers, don't you think so?"

"Yes, Death is a good Christian and will keep his word," replied the aged cavalier.

The next morning he set sail for the island of Fayal where there were other grandchildren to visit in the home of his married daughter, Francisca.

On the voyage a fierce storm arose. The small boat was buffetted about by the gales. Suddenly Vladmiro was startled to see Death standing beside him just as in the forest years ago when he had been young.

"Why have you come to-day?" he cried in alarm. "Why is it that you have not kept your word? You gave me your promise that you would send your messengers, next time you came, to warn me of your approach."

"I have kept my word," said Death. "I have sent my messengers."

"Where are they?" asked the old man in amazement.

Death pointed to Vladmiro’s snowy hair.

“I have sent my messengers in your white locks, your failing eyesight and hearing, the wrinkles on your cheeks. Can it be that you have failed to recognize them?”

Vladmiro bowed his head in silence and without a murmur went with Death.

In truth, Death had been a good Christian and had kept his word.

12. PETER HENRY EMERSON

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Fairies of Caragonan
2. The Craig-y-don Blacksmith
3. Old Gwilym
4. The Baby-Farmer
5. The Old Man and the Fairies
6. Tommy Pritchard
7. Kaddy’s Luck
8. The Story of Gelert
9. Origin of the Welsh
10. Crows
11. Robert Roberts and the Fairies
12. The Fairy of the Dell
13. Ellen’s Luck
14. The Fairies’ Mint
15. The Pellings
16. The Long-Lived Ancestors
17. The Giantess’s Apron-Full
18. Gwrgan Farfdrwch’s Fable
19. The Story of the Pig-Trough
20. Billy Duffy and the Devil
21. The Story of John O’ Groats
22. Eva’s Luck
23. The Fishermen of Shetland

PREFACE

EMERSON, PETER HENRY

Peter Henry Emerson, better known as P. H. Emerson, was a prolific author of a diverse collection of books, and was also a renowned photographer. Born May 13, 1856 in Cuba, he was the child of an American father and British mother. Noted poet Ralph Waldo Emerson was a distant relation. Emerson grew up on his father's estate, La Palma Estate, a sugar plantation, and also received schooling in Delaware, eventually moving to England to attend Cranleigh School in 1869 after his father passed away. In 1885, he earned his medical degree at Clare College in Cambridge.

The product of wealth and an outstanding education, Emerson was eager to share his opinions. This led to many books, the first of which, *Paul Ray at the Hospital: a Picture of Student Life*, was published in 1882. He wrote it while on his honeymoon with his new wife Miss Edith Amy Ainsworth. Emerson is also known for his photographs celebrating nature, and he published books of his photography, including *Life and Landscape on the Norfolk Broads*. For him, photography was about capturing the simplicity of the world. While staying in Anglesey in the winter of 1891-1892, Emerson was told a number of stories about fairies by the Welsh people and wrote them down. Eventually he compiled a collection of fairy tales, *Welsh Fairy-Tales and Other Stories*. Nearly all of the stories collected within are concerned about the finding and loss of money. In his author’s note Emerson says he preferred to share the tales as is, and didn’t edit them for content. He would go on to write more about photography, and even began a history of the medium, completing it just within his death. He died one day before his 80th birthday on May 12, 1936.

1

THE FAIRIES OF CARAGONAN

Once upon a time a lot of fairies lived in Mona.

One day the queen fairy's daughter, who was now fifteen years of age, told her mother she wished to go out and see the world.

The queen consented, allowing her to go for a day, and to change from a fairy to a bird, or from a bird to a fairy, as she wished.

When she returned one night she said:

"I've been to a gentleman's house, and as I stood listening, I heard the gentleman was witched: he was very ill, and crying out with pain."

"Oh, I must look into that," said the queen.

So the next day she went through her process and found that he was bewitched by an old witch. So the following day she set out with six other fairies, and when they came to the gentleman's house she found he was very ill.

Going into the room, bearing a small blue pot they had brought with them, the queen asked him:

"Would you like to be cured?"

"Oh, bless you; yes, indeed."

Whereupon the queen put the little blue pot of perfume on the centre of the table, and lit it, when the room was instantly filled with the most delicious odour.

Whilst the perfume was burning, the six fairies formed in line behind her, and she leading, they walked round the table three times, chanting in chorus:

Round and round three times three,
We have come to cure thee.

At the end of the third round she touched the burning perfume with her wand, and then touched the gentleman on the head, saying:

"Be thou made whole."

No sooner had she said the words than he jumped up hale and hearty, and said:

"Oh, dear queen, what shall I do for you? I'll do anything you wish."

"Money I do not wish for," said the queen, "but there's a little plot of ground on the sea-cliff I want you to lend me, for I wish to make a ring there, and the grass will die when I make the ring. Then I want you to build three walls round the ring, but leave the sea-side open, so that we may be able to come and go easily."

"With the greatest of pleasure," said the gentleman; and he built the three stone walls at once, at the spot indicated.

~

Near the gentleman lived the old witch, and she had the power of turning at will into a hare. The gentleman was a great hare hunter, but the hounds could never catch this hare; it always disappeared in a mill, running between the wings and jumping in at an open window, though they stationed two men and a dog at the spot, when it immediately turned into the old witch. And the old miller never suspected, for the old woman used to take him a peck of corn to grind a few days before any hunt, telling him she would call for it on the afternoon of the day of the hunt. So that when she arrived she was expected.

One day she had been taunting the gentleman as he returned from a hunt, that he could never catch the hare, and he struck her with his whip, saying “Get away, you witchcraft!”

Whereupon she witched him, and he fell ill, and was cured as we have seen.

When he got well he watched the old witch, and saw she often visited the house of an old miser who lived near by with his beautiful niece. Now all the people in the village touched their hats most respectfully to this old miser, for they knew he had dealings with the witch, and they were as much afraid of him as of her; but everyone loved the miser’s kind and beautiful niece.

~

When the fairies got home the queen told her daughter:

“I have no power over the old witch for twelve months from to-day, and then I have no power over her life. She must lose that by the arm of a man.”

So the next day the daughter was sent out again to see whether she could find a person suited to that purpose.

In the village lived a small crofter, who was afraid of nothing; he was the boldest man thereabouts; and one day he passed the miser without saluting him. The old fellow went off at once and told the witch.

“Oh, I’ll settle his cows to-night!” said she, and they were taken sick, and gave no milk that night.

The fairy's daughter arrived at his croft-yard after the cows were taken ill, and she heard him say to his son, a bright lad:

"It must be the old witch!"

When she heard this, she sent him to the queen.

So next day the fairy queen took six fairies and went to the croft, taking her blue pot of perfume. When she got there she asked the crofter if he would like his cows cured?

"God bless you, yes!" he said.

The queen made him bring a round table into the yard, whereon she placed the blue pot of perfume, and having lit it, as before, they formed in line and walked round thrice, chanting the words:

Round and round three times three,
We have come to cure thee.

Then she dipped the end of her wand into the perfume, and touched the cows on the forehead, saying to each one:

"Be thou whole."

Whereupon they jumped up cured.

The little farmer was overjoyed, and cried:

"Oh, what can I do for you? What can I do for you?"

"Money I care not for," said the queen, "all I want is your son to avenge you and me."

The lad jumped up and said:

"What I can do I'll do it for you, my lady fairy."

She told him to be at the walled plot the following day at noon, and left.

~

The next day at noon, the queen and her daughter and three hundred other fairies came up the cliff to the green grass plot, and they carried a pole, and a tape, and a mirror. When they reached the plot they planted the pole in the ground, and hung the mirror on the pole. The queen took the tape, which measured ten yards and was fastened to the top of the pole, and walked round in a circle, and wherever she set her feet the grass withered and died. Then the fairies followed up behind the queen, and each fairy carried a harebell in her left-hand, and a little blue cup of burning perfume in her right. When they had formed up the queen called the lad to her side, and told him to walk by her throughout. They then started off, all singing in chorus:

Round and round three times three,
Tell me what you see.

When they finished the first round, the queen and lad stopped before the mirror, and she asked the lad what he saw?

I see, I see, the mirror tells me,
It is the witch that I see,

said the lad. So they marched round again, singing the same words as before, and when they stopped a second time before the mirror the queen again asked him what he saw?

I see, I see, the mirror tells me,
It is a hare that I see,

SAID THE LAD.

A third time the ceremony and question were repeated.

I see, I see, the mirror tells me,
The hares run up the hill to the mill.

“NOW,” said the queen, “there is to be a hare-hunting this day week; be at the mill at noon, and I will meet you there.”

And then the fairies, pole, mirror, and all, vanished and only the empty ring on the green was left.

~

UPON THE APPOINTED day the lad went to his tryst, and at noon the Fairy Queen appeared, and gave him a sling, and a smooth pebble from the beach, saying:

“I have blessed your arms, and I have blessed the sling and the stone.

NOW AS THE clock strikes three,
Go up the hill near the mill,
And in the ring stand still
Till you hear the click of the mill.
Then with thy arm, with power and might,

You shall strike and smite
The devil of a witch called Jezabel light,
And you shall see an awful sight.”

THE LAD DID as he was bidden, and presently he heard the huntsman’s horn and the hue and cry, and saw the hare running down the opposite hill-side, where the hounds seemed to gain on her, but as she breasted the hill on which he stood she gained on them. As she came towards the mill he threw his stone, and it lodged in her skull, and when he ran up he found he had killed the old witch. As the huntsmen came up they crowded round him, and praised him; and then they fastened the witch’s body to a horse by ropes, and dragged her to the bottom of the valley, where they buried her in a ditch. That night, when the miser heard of her death, he dropped down dead on the spot.

As the lad was going home the queen appeared to him, and told him to be at the ring the following day at noon.

~

NEXT DAY all the fairies came with the pole and mirror, each carrying a harebell in her left-hand, and a blue cup of burning perfume in her right, and they formed up as before, the lad walking beside the queen. They marched round and repeated the old words, when the queen stopped before the mirror, and said:

“What do you see?”

I SEE, I see, the mirror tells me,
It is an old plate-cupboard that I see.

A SECOND TIME they went round, and the question, was repeated.

I SEE, I see, the mirror tells me,
The back is turned to me.

A THIRD TIME was the ceremony fulfilled, and the lad answered

I SEE, I see, the mirror tells me,
A spring-door is open to me.

“BUY that plate-cupboard at the miser’s sale,” said the queen, and she and her companions disappeared as before.

~

UPON THE DAY of the sale all the things were brought out in the road, and the plate-cupboard was put up, the lad recognising it and bidding up for it till it was sold to him. When he had paid for it he took it home in a cart, and when he got in and examined it, he found the secret drawer behind was full of gold. The following week the house and land, thirty acres, was put up for sale, and the lad bought both, and married the miser’s niece, and they lived happily till they died.

2

THE CRAIG-Y-DON BLACKSMITH

Once upon a time an old blacksmith lived in an old forge at Craig-y-don, and he used to drink a great deal too much beer.

One night he was coming home from an alehouse very tipsy, and as he got near a small stream a lot of little men suddenly sprang up from the rocks, and one of them, who seemed to be older than the rest, came up to him, and said,

“If you don’t alter your ways of living you’ll die soon; but if you behave better and become a better man you’ll find it will be to your benefit,” and they all disappeared as quickly as they had come.

The old blacksmith thought a good deal about what the fairies had told him, and he left off drinking, and became a sober, steady man.

One day, a few months after meeting the little people, a strange man brought a horse to be shod. Nobody knew either the horse or the man.

The old blacksmith tied the horse to a hole in the lip of a cauldron (used for the purpose of cooling his hot iron) that he had built in some masonry.

When he had tied the horse up he went to shoe the off hind-leg, but directly he touched the horse the spirited animal started back with a bound, and dragged the cauldron from the masonry, and then it broke the halter and ran away out of the forge, and was never seen again: neither the horse nor its master.

When the old blacksmith came to pull down the masonry to rebuild it, he found three brass kettles full of money.

3

OLD GWILYM

Old Gwilym Evans started off one fine morning to walk across the Eagle Hills to a distant town, bent upon buying some cheese. On his way, in a lonely part of the hills, he found a golden guinea, which he quickly put into his pocket.

When he got to the town, instead of buying his provisions, he went into an alehouse, and sat drinking and singing with some sweet-voiced quarrymen until dark, when he thought it was time to go home. Whilst he was drinking, an old woman with a basket came in, and sat beside him, but she left before him. After the parting glass he got up and reeled through the town, quite forgetting to buy his cheese; and as he got amongst the hills they seemed to dance up and down before him, and he seemed to be walking on air. When he got near the lonely spot where he had found the money he heard some sweet music, and a number of fairies crossed his path and began dancing all round him, and then as he looked up he saw some brightly-lighted houses before him on the hill; and he scratched his head, for he never remembered having seen houses thereabouts before. And as he was thinking, and watching the fairies, one came and begged him to come into the house and sit down.

So he followed her in, and found the house was all gold inside it, and brightly lighted, and the fairies were dancing and singing, and they brought him anything he wanted for supper, and then they put him to bed.

Gwilym slept heavily, and when he awoke turned round, for he felt very cold, and his body seemed covered with prickles; so he sat up and rubbed his eyes, and found that he was quite naked and lying in a bunch of gorse.

When he found himself in this plight he hurried home, and told his wife, and she was very angry with him for spending all the money and bringing no cheese home, and then he told her his adventures.

“Oh, you bad man!” she said, “the fairies gave you money and you spent it wrongly, so they were sure to take their revenge.”

4

THE BABY-FARMER

Old Kaddy was a baby-farmer, and one day she went to the woods to gather sticks for her fire, and whilst she was gathering the sticks she found a piece of gold, and took it home; but she never told anyone she had found the money, for she always pretended to be very poor.

But though she was so poor, she used to dress two of her children in fine clothes; but the others, whom she did not like, she kept in the filthiest rags.

One day a man knocked at her door, and asked to see the children.

He sat down in her little room, and she went and brought the ragged little boy and girl, saying she was very poor, and couldn't afford to dress them better; for she had been careful to hide the well-dressed little boy and girl in a cockloft.

After the stranger had gone she went to the cockloft to look for her well-dressed favourites, but they had disappeared, and they were never seen afterwards, for they were turned into fairies.

5

THE OLD MAN AND THE FAIRIES

Many years ago the Welsh mountains were full of fairies. People used to go by moonlight to see them dancing, for they knew where they would dance by seeing green rings in the grass.

There was an old man living in those days who used to frequent the fairs that were held across the mountains. One day he was crossing the mountains to a fair, and when he got to a lonely valley he sat down, for he was tired, and he dropped off to sleep, and his bag fell down by his side. When he was sound asleep the fairies came and carried him off, bag and all, and took him under the earth, and when he awoke he found himself in a great palace of gold, full of fairies dancing and singing. And they took him and showed him everything, the splendid gold room and gardens, and they kept dancing round him until he fell asleep.

When he was asleep they carried him back to the same spot where they had found him, and when he awoke he thought he had been dreaming, so he looked for his bag, and got hold of it, but he could hardly lift it. When he opened it he found it was nearly filled with gold.

He managed to pick it up, and turning round, he went home.

When he got home, his wife Kaddy said: “What’s to do, why haven’t you been to the fair?”

“I’ve got something here,” he said, and showed his wife the gold.

“Why, where did you get that?”

But he wouldn’t tell her. Since she was curious, like all women, she kept worrying him all night — for he’d put the money in a box under the bed — so he told her about the fairies.

Next morning, when he awoke, he thought he’d go to the fair and buy a lot of things, and he went to the box to get some of the gold, but found it full of cockle-shells.

6

TOMMY PRITCHARD

Tommy Pritchard was going to school one day, and on his way he thought he heard somebody singing on the other side of a stone wall by the road, so he climbed up and looked over, and there underneath a stone he saw a sixpence, so he took it.

Every morning after that, when he went to school, he used to look in the same place, and he always found a sixpence.

His father noticed he was always spending money in the sweet-shop, so he began to think Tommy was stealing from somebody, and one day he asked him where he got the money. Tommy wouldn’t tell at first, but his father threatened to beat him, so he told him where he got his sixpences.

Next morning he went to look in the same place for his sixpence, and he found nothing but a cockle-shell. And he never saw anything but a cockle-shell there afterwards.

7

KADDY’S LUCK

There was a tall young woman whom the fairies used to visit, coming through the keyhole at night. She could hear them dancing and singing in her room, but in the morning they used to go the way they had come, only they always left her some money.

When she got married she chose a tall husband like herself, and they had a fine big child.

One night they went to a fair, and they got to one side to hear the fairies; for some people could tell when the fairies were coming, for they made a noise like the wind. Whilst they were waiting she told her husband how the fairies used to leave her money at night.

When they got home they found their baby all right, and went to bed. But next morning the young mother found her child had been changed in the night, and there was a very little baby in the cradle. And the child never grew big, for the fairies had changed her child for spite.

8

THE STORY OF GELERT

It was somewhere about 1200, Prince Llewellyn had a castle at Aber, just abreast of us here; indeed, parts of the towers remain to this day. His consort was the Princess Joan; she was King John’s daughter. Her coffin remains with us to this day. Llewellyn was a great hunter of wolves and foxes, for the hills of Carnarvonshire were infested with wolves in those days, after the young lambs.

Now the prince had several hunting-houses — sorts of farm houses, one of them was at the place now called Beth-Gelert, for the wolves were very thick there at this time. Now the prince used to travel from farm-house to farm-house with his family and friends, when going on these hunting parties.

One season they went hunting from Aber, and stopped at the house where Beth-Gelert is now — it’s about fourteen miles away. The prince had all his hounds with him, but his favourite was Gelert, a hound who had never let off a wolf for six years.

The prince loved the dog like a child, and at the sound of his horn Gelert was always the first to come bounding up. There was company at the house, and one day they went hunting, leaving his wife and the child, in a big wooden cradle, behind him at the farm-house.

The hunting party killed three or four wolves, and about two hours before the word passed for returning home, Llewellyn missed Gelert, and he asked his huntsmen:

"Where's Gelert? I don't see him."

"Well, indeed, master, I've missed him this half-hour."

And Llewellyn blew his horn, but no Gelert came at the sound.

Indeed, Gelert had got on to a wolves' track which led to the house.

The prince sounded the return, and they went home, the prince lamenting Gelert. "He's sure to have been slain — he's sure to have been slain! since he did not answer the horn. Oh, my Gelert!" And they approached the house, and the prince went into the house, and saw Gelert lying by the overturned cradle, and blood all about the room.

"What! hast thou slain my child?" said the prince, and ran his sword through the dog.

After that he lifted up the cradle to look for his child, and found the body of a big wolf underneath that Gelert had slain, and his child was safe. Gelert had capsized the cradle in the scuffle.

"Oh, Gelert! Oh, Gelert!" said the prince, "my favourite hound, my favourite hound! Thou hast been slain by thy master's hand, and in death thou hast licked thy master's hand!" He patted the dog, but it was too late, and poor Gelert died licking his master's hand.

Next day they made a coffin, and had a regular funeral, the same as if it were a human being; all the servants in deep mourning, and everybody. They made him a grave, and the village was called after the dog, Beth-Gelert — Gelert's Grave; and the prince planted a tree, and put a gravestone of slate, though it was before the days of quarries. And they are to be seen to this day.

9

ORIGIN OF THE WELSH

Many years ago there lived several wild tribes round the King of Persia’s city, and the king’s men were always annoying and harassing them, exacting yearly a heavy tribute. Now these tribes, though very brave in warfare, could not hold their own before the Persian army when sent out against them, so that they paid their yearly tribute grudgingly, but took revenge, whenever they could, upon travellers to or from the city, robbing and killing them.

At last one of the tribesmen, a clever old chieftain, thought of a cunning plan whereby to defeat the Persians, and free themselves from the yearly tribute. And this was his scheme:

The wild wastes where these tribes lived were infested with large birds called “Rohs”, which were very destructive to human beings — devouring men, women, and children greedily whenever they could catch them. Such a terror were they that the tribes had to protect their village with high walls, and then they slept securely, for the Roh hunted by night. This old chieftain determined to watch the birds, and find out their nesting-places; so he had a series of towers built, in which the watchmen could sleep securely by night. These towers were advanced in whatever direction the birds were seen to congregate by night. The observers reported that the Roh could not fly, but ran very swiftly, being fleeter than any horse.

At length, by watching, their nesting-places were found in a sandy plain, and it was discovered that those monstrous birds stole sheep and cattle in great numbers.

The chieftain then gave orders for the watchmen to keep on guard until the young birds were hatched, when they were commanded to secure fifty, and bring them into the walled town. The order was carried out, and one night they secured fifty young birds just out of the egg, and brought them to the town.

The old chieftain then told off fifty skilful warriors, a man to each bird, to his son being allotted the largest bird. These warriors were ordered to feed the birds on flesh, and to train them for battle. The birds grew up as tame as horses. Saddles and bridles were made for them, and they were trained and exercised just like chargers.

When the next tribute day came round, the King of Persia sent his emissaries to collect the tax, but the chieftains of the tribes insulted and defied them, so that they returned to the king, who at once sent forward his army.

The chieftain then marshalled his men, and forty-six of the Rohs were drawn up in front of the army, the chief getting on the strongest bird. The remaining four were placed on the right flank, and ordered at a signal to advance and cut off the army, should they retreat.

The Rohs had small scales, like those of a fish, on their necks and bodies, the scales being hidden under a soft hair, except on the upper half of the neck. They had no feathers except on their wings. So they were invulnerable except as to the eyes — for in those days the Persians only had bows and arrows, and light javelins. When the Persian army advanced, the Rohs advanced at lightning speed, and made fearful havoc, the birds murdering and trampling the soldiers under foot, and beating them down with their powerful wings. In less than two hours half the Persian army was slain, and the rest had escaped. The tribes returned to their walled towns, delighted with their victory.

When the news of his defeat reached the King of Persia he was wroth beyond expression, and could not sleep for rage. So the next morning he called for his magician.

“What are you going to do with the birds?” asked the king.

“Well, I’ve been thinking the matter over,” replied the magician.

“Cannot you destroy all of them?”

“No, your majesty; I cannot destroy them, for I have not the power; but I can get rid of them in one way; for though I cannot put out life, I have the power of turning one life into some other living creature.”

“Well, what will you turn them into?” asked the king.

“I’ll consider to-night, your majesty,” replied the magician.

“Well, mind and be sure to do it.”

“Yes, I’ll be sure to do it, your majesty.”

* * *

THE NEXT DAY, at ten, the magician appeared before the king, who asked:

“Have you considered well?”

“Yes, your majesty.”

“Well, how are you going to act?”

“Your majesty, I’ve thought and thought during the night, and the best thing we can do is to turn all the birds into fairies.”

“What are fairies?” asked the king.

“I’ve planned it all out, and I hope your majesty will agree.”

“Oh! I’ll agree, as long as they never molest us more.”

“Well, your majesty, I’m going to turn them to fairies — small living creatures to live in caves in the bowels of the earth, and they shall only visit people living on the earth once a year. They shall be harmless, and hurt nothing; they shall be fairies, and do nothing but dance and sing, and I shall allow them to go about on earth for twenty-four hours once a year and play their antics, but they shall do no mischief."

"How long are the birds to remain in that state?" asked the king.

"I'll give them 2,000 years, your majesty; and at the end of that time they are to go back into birds, as they were before. And after the birds change from the fairy state back into birds, they shall never breed more, but die a natural death."

So the tribes lost their birds, and the King of Persia made such fearful havoc amongst them that they decided to leave the country.

They travelled, supporting themselves by robbery; until they came to a place where they built a city, and called it Troy, where they were besieged for a long time.

At length the besiegers built a large caravan, with a large man's head in front; the head was all gilded with gold. When the caravan was finished they put 150 of the best warriors inside, provided with food, and one of them had a trumpet. Then they pulled the caravan, which ran upon eight broad wheels, up to the gates of the city, and left it there, their army being drawn up in a valley near by. It was, agreed that when the caravan got inside the gates the bugler should blow three loud blasts to warn, the army, who would immediately advance into the city.

The men on the ramparts saw this curious caravan, and they began wondering what it was, and for two or three days they left it alone.

At last an old chieftain said, "It must be their food."

On the third day they opened the gates, and attaching ropes, began to haul it into the city; then the warriors leaped out, and the horn blew, and the army hurried up, and the town was taken after great slaughter; but a number escaped with their wives and children, and fled on to the Crimea, whence they were driven by the Russians, so they marched away along the sea to Spain, and bearing up through France, they stopped. Some wanted to go across the sea, and some stayed in the heart of France: they were the Bretoons. The others came on over in boats, and landed in England, and they were the first people settled in Great Britain: they were the Welsh.

10

CROWS

One black crow, bad luck for me.
Two black crows, good luck for me.
Three black crows, a son shall be born in the family.
Four black crows, a daughter shall be born in the family.
Five black crows shall be a funeral in the family.
Six black crows, if they fly head on, a sudden death.
Seven black crows with their tails towards you, death within seven years.

THERE WAS A YOUNG MAN, not so very long ago, who had been to sea for years. He was married, but had no children. He was one of the most spirited men you ever saw. He used to complain of his dreams. He said, “All at once last Sunday I was up in the air, and I saw the vessel I was in going at great speed, making for a mountain, and I tried as hard as I could to keep her from the mountain. I don’t believe I was asleep at all, I could see it so plainly. I went along in the air, looking at seven black crows all the time. I got dizzy, and the vessel seemed to lower on to the earth. The vessel lowered within a few hundred feet of the earth, and I saw what I thought were fairies. I thought I had been there for days; in truth, it seemed to me I had been up there for three days, and that I could hear the fairies with mournful sounds drawing a coffin. I watched and watched, and saw seven crows on the coffin. It seemed as if they were going to bury someone. Whilst the coffin was going the seven crows flew up and bursted, and the heavens were illuminated more strongly than by the sun. Then I lost sight of the fairies, but saw some big giants in white walking about, and there was a big throne with a roof to it. And all at once I was in total darkness, but I could hear things flapping about, flying through the air. Then I saw the moon rising and all the stars, and all sorts of objects flying through the air. And one came to me, and put his hand upon my shoulder, saying: *'Prepare to meet us to-morrow.'* After that everything went dark again. The first thing I knew I was in a ship steering, and the seven black crows were in front of me. I had a great trouble to steer my vessel. And as I went on the vessel struck a steeple, and exploded, and I awoke. Whereupon I jumped out of bed, looking very pale."

I left him on the beach at 11.30, after he told me this, when he went home. When he got home he could see seven black crows on the house. Other people could see the crows, but could not count them. He saw them all perched head on. He went into the house, and said,

"There is something in these crows, Jane; see them on the roof."

She cried out and ran out and looked, but could not see the seven. After that he didn't seem to be himself, though there was nothing the matter with him. A week afterwards, I went out on the Sunday morning after breakfast, and there was a seat on the beach, and on it sat this man, Johnny, and another man.

"Why, Johnny, you look very pale," I said.

"Do I?" he said.

"Yes! indeed you do," I replied.

"Well, I don't know, I have had such dreams."

"What will they have been, then?" I asked.

“That I was in a full-rigged ship, with all sails set; I was all alone, but could see nothing, only seven black crows. I counted them, but my wife could see nothing, but she could hear something.”

That same day, when he went home, he said to his wife:

“Ah, Jane, there is something coming over me,” and he fell down dead.

11

ROBERT ROBERTS AND THE FAIRIES

Robert Roberts was a carpenter who worked hard and well; but he could never keep his tongue still. One day, as he was crossing a brook, a little man came up to him and said:

“Robert Roberts, go up to the holly tree that leans over the road on the Red-hill, and dig below it, and you shall be rewarded.”

The very next morning, at daybreak, Robert Roberts set out for the spot, and dug a great hole, before anyone was up, when he found a box of gold. He went to the same place twice afterwards, and dug, and found gold each time. But as he grew rich, he began to boast and hint that he had mysterious friends. One day, when the talk turned on the fairies, he said that he knew them right well, and that they gave him money. Robert Roberts thought no more of the matter until he went to the spot a week afterwards, one evening at dusk. When he got to the tree, and began to dig as usual, big stones came rolling down the bank, just missing him, so that he ran for his life, and never went near the place again.

12

THE FAIRY OF THE DELL

In olden times fairies were sent to oppose the evil-doings of witches, and to destroy their power. About three hundred years ago a band of fairies, sixty in number, with their queen, called Queen of the Dell, came to Mona to oppose the evil works of a celebrated witch. The fairies settled by a spring, in a valley. After having blessed the spring, or “well”, as they called it, they built a bower just above the spring for the queen, placing a throne therein. Near by they built a large bower for themselves to live in.

After that, the queen drew three circles, one within the other, on a nice flat grassy place by the well. When they were comfortably settled, the queen sent the fairies about the country to gather tidings of the people. They went from house to house, and everywhere heard great complaints against an old witch; how she had made some blind, others lame, and deformed others by causing a horn to grow out of their foreheads. When they got back to the well and told the queen, she said:

“I must do something for these old people, and though the witch is very powerful, we must break her power.” So the next day the queen fairy sent word to all the bewitched to congregate upon a fixed day at the sacred well, just before noon.

When the day came, several ailing people collected at the well. The queen then placed the patients in pairs in the inner ring, and the sixty fairies in pairs in the middle ring. Each little fairy was three feet and a half high, and carried a small wand in her right hand, and a bunch of fairy flowers — cuckoo's boots, baby's bells, and day's-eyes — in her left hand. Then the queen, who was four feet and a half in height, took the outside ring. On her head was a crown of wild flowers, in her right hand she carried a wand, and in her left a posy of fairy flowers. At a signal from the queen they began marching round the rings, singing in chorus:

We march round by two and two
The circles of the sacred well
That lies in the dell.

When they had walked twice round the ring singing, the queen took her seat upon the throne, and calling each patient to her, she touched him with her wand and bade him go down to the sacred well and dip his body into the water three times, promising that all his ills should be cured. As each one came forth from the spring he knelt before the queen, and she blessed him, and told him to hurry home and put on dry clothes. So that all were cured of their ills.

~

Now the old witch who had worked all these evils lived near the well in a cottage. She had first learned witchcraft from a book called *The Black Art*, which a gentleman farmer had lent her when a girl. She progressed rapidly with her studies, and being eager to learn more, sold herself to the devil, who made compact with her that she should have full power for seven years, after which she was to become his. He gave her a wand that had the magic power of drawing people to her, and she had a ring on the grass by her house just like the fairy's ring. As the seven years were drawing to a close, and her heart was savage against the farmer who first led her into the paths of evil knowledge, she determined to be revenged. One day, soon after the Fairy of the Dell came to live by the spring, she drew the farmer to her with her wand, and, standing in her ring, she lured him into it. When he crossed the line, she said:

Cursed be he or she
That crosses my circle to see me,

and, touching him on the head and back, a horn and a tail grew from the spots touched. He went off in a terrible rage, but she only laughed maliciously. Then, as she heard of the Queen of the Dell's good deeds, she repented of her evil deeds, and begged her neighbour to go to the queen fairy and ask her if she might come and visit her. The queen consented, and the old witch went down and told her everything — of the book, of the magic wand, of the ring, and of all the wicked deeds she had done.

"O, you have been a bad witch," said the queen, "but I will see what I can do; but you must bring me the book and the wand;" and she told the old witch to come on the following day a little before noon. When the witch came the next day with her wand and book, she found the fairies had built a fire in the middle ring. The queen then took her and stood her by the fire, for she could not trust her on the outer circle.

"Now I must have more power," said the queen to the fairies, and she went and sat on the throne, leaving the witch by the fire in the middle ring. After thinking a little, the queen said, "Now I have it," and coming down from her throne muttering, she began walking round the outer circle, waiting for the hour of one o’clock, when all the fairies got into the middle circle and marched round, singing:

At the hour of one
The cock shall crow one,
Goo! Goo! Goo!
I am here to tell
Of the sacred well
That lies in the dell,
And will conquer hell.

On the second round, they sang:

At the hour of two
The cock crows two,
Goo! Goo! Goo!
I am here to tell
Of the sacred well
That lies in the dell;
We will conquer hell.

At the last round, they sang:

At the hour of three
The cock crows three,

Goo! Goo! Goo!
I am here to tell
Of the sacred well
That lies in the dell;
Now I have conquered hell.

Then the queen cast the book and wand into the fire, and immediately the vale was rent by a thundering noise, and numbers of devils came from everywhere, and encircled the outer ring, but they could not pass the ring. Then the fairies began walking round and round, singing their song. When they had finished the song they heard a loud screech from the devils that frightened all the fairies except the queen. She was unmoved, and going to the fire, stirred the ashes with her wand, and saw that the book and wand were burnt, and then she walked thrice round the outer ring by herself, when she turned to the devils, and said:

"I command you to be gone from our earthly home, get to your own abode. I take the power of casting you all from here. Begone! begone! begone!" And all the devils flew up, and there was a mighty clap as of thunder, and the earth trembled, and the sky became overcast, and all the devils burst, and the sky cleared again.

After this the queen put three fairies by the old witch's side, and they constantly dipped their wands in the sacred spring, and touched her head, and she was sorely troubled and converted.

"Bring the mirror," said the queen.

And the fairies brought the mirror and laid it in the middle circle, and they all walked round three times, chanting again the song beginning "At the hour of one." When they had done this the queen stood still, and said:

"Stand and watch to see what you can see."

And as she looked she said:

The mirror shines unto me
That the witch we can see
Has three devils inside of she.

Immediately the witch had a fit, and the three fairies had a hard job to keep the three devils quiet; indeed, they could not do so, and the queen had to go herself with her wand, for fear the devils should burst the witch asunder, and she said, "Come out three evil spirits, out of thee."

And they came gnashing their teeth, and would have killed all the fairies, but the queen said:

"Begone, begone, begone! you evil spirits, to the place of your abode," and suddenly the sky turned bright as fire, for the evil spirits were trying their spleen against the fairies, but the queen said, "Collect, collect, collect, into one fierce ball," and the fiery sky collected into one ball of fire more dazzling than the sun, so that none could look at it except the queen, who wore a black silk mask to protect her eyes. Suddenly the ball burst with a terrific noise, and the earth trembled.

"Enter into your abode, and never come down to our abode on earth any more," said the queen.

And the witch was herself again, and she and the queen fairy were immediately great friends. The witch, when she came out of the ring, dropped on her knee and asked the queen if she might call her the Lady of the Dell, and how she could serve her.

"We will see about that," said the queen.

"Well, how do you live?" asked the woman who had been a witch.

"Well, I'll tell you," said the queen. "We go at midnight and milk the cows, and we keep the milk, and it never grows less so long as we leave some in the bottom of the vessel; we must not use it all. After milking the cow, we rub the cow’s purse and bless it, and she gives double the amount of milk.”

“Well, how do you get corn?”

“Well, we were at the mill playing one day, and the miller came in and saw us, and spoke kindly to us, and offered us some flour. ‘We never take nothing for nothing,’ I said, so I blessed the bin: so in a few minutes the bin was full to the brim with flour, and I said to the miller, ‘Now don’t you empty the bin, but always leave a peck in it, and for twelve months, no matter how much you use the bin, it will always be full in the morning.’ Now I have told you this much, and I will tell further, ‘You must love your neighbour, you must love all mankind.’ Now here is a purse of gold, go and buy what you want, eggs, bacon, cheese, and get a flagon of wine and use these things freely, giving freely to the aged poor, and if you never finish these things, there will always be as much the next morning as you started with. And I shall make a salve for you, and you must use the water from the sacred well. That will be as a medicine, and people shall come from far and wide to be cured by you, and you shall be loved by all, and you shall be known to the poorest of the poor as Madame Dorothy.”

And the woman did as she was told, and she became renowned for her medical skill, especially in childbirth, for her salve eased the pains, and her waters brought milk. By-and-by, she got known all over the island, and rich people came to her from afar, and she always made the rich pay, and the poor were treated free.

Madame Dorothy used to see the queen fairy at times, and one day she asked her, “Shall we meet again?”

“We cannot tell,” said the queen, “but I will give you a ring — let me place it on your finger — it is a magic ring worked by fairies. Whenever you seek to know of me, make a ring of your own, and walk round three times and rub the ring; if it turns bright I am alive, but if you see blood I am dead.”

“But how can that be? You are much younger than I am.”

“Oh, no! we fairies look young to the day of our death; we live to a great age, but die naturally of old age, for we never have any ailments, but still our power fades. Men fade in the flesh and power, but we fade only in power. I am over seventy now.”

“But you look to be thirty.”

“Well, we will shake hands and part, for I must go elsewhere; as I have no king, I do not stop in one place.”

And they shook hands and parted.

13

ELLEN’S LUCK

Ellen was a good girl, and beautiful to look upon. One Sunday she was walking by an open gutter in a town in North Wales when she found a copper. After that day Ellen walked every Sunday afternoon by the same drain, and always found a copper. She was a careful girl, and used to hoard her money.

One day her old mother found her pile of pennies, and wished to know where she got them.

Ellen told her, but though she walked by the gutter for many a Sunday after, she never found another copper.

14

THE FAIRIES’ MINT

Once upon a time there was a miller, who lived in Anglesey. One day he noticed that some of his sacks had been moved during the night. The following day he felt sure that some of his grain had been disturbed, and, lastly, he was sure someone had been working his mill in the night during his absence. He confided his suspicions to a friend, and they determined to go the next night and watch the mill. The following night, at about midnight, as they approached the mill, that stood on a bare stony hill, they were surprised to find the mill all lit up and at work, the great sails turning in the black night. Creeping up softly to a small window, the miller looked in, and saw a crowd of little men carrying small bags, and emptying them into the millstones. He could not see, however, what was in the bags, so he crept to another window, when he saw golden coins coming from the mill, from the place where the flour usually ran out.

Immediately the miller went to the mill door, and, putting his key into the lock, he unlocked the door; and as he did so the lights went out suddenly, and the mill stopped working. As he and his friend went into the dark mill they could hear sounds of people running about, but by the time they lit up the mill again there was nobody to be seen, but scattered all about the millstones and on the floor were cockle-shells.

After that, many persons who passed the mill at midnight said they saw the mill lit up and working; but the old miller left the fairies alone to coin their money.

15

THE PELLINGS

In a meadow belonging to Ystrad, bounded by the river which falls from Cwellyn Lake, they say the fairies used to assemble, and dance in fair moonlight nights. One evening a young man, who was the heir and occupier of this farm, hid himself in a thicket close to the spot where they used to gambol. Presently they appeared, and when in their merry mood, out he bounced from his covert, and seized one of their females; the rest of the company dispersed themselves, and disappeared in an instant. Disregarding her struggles and screams, he hauled her to his home, where he treated her so very kindly that she became contented to live with him as his maid-servant, but he could not prevail upon her to tell him her name. Some time after, happening again to see the fairies upon the same spot, he heard one of them saying, "The last time we met here our sister Penelope was snatched away from us by one of the mortals." Rejoiced at knowing the name of his incognita, he returned home; and as she was very beautiful and extremely active, he proposed to marry her, which she would not for a long time consent to; at last, however, she complied, but on this condition, "That if ever he should strike her with iron, she would leave him, and never return to him again." They lived happy for many years together, and he had by her a son and a daughter; and by her industry and prudent management as a housewife he became one of the richest men in the country. He farmed, besides his own freehold, all the lands on the north side of Nant y Bettws to the top of Snowdon, and all Cwm brwynog in Llanberis, an extent of about five thousand acres or upwards.

Unfortunately, one day Penelope followed her husband into the field to catch a horse, and he, being in a rage at the animal as he ran away from him, threw at him the bridle that was in his hand, which unluckily fell on poor Penelope. She disappeared in an instant, and he never saw her afterwards, but heard her voice in the window of his room one night after, requesting him to take care of the children, in these words: —

Rhag bod anwyd ar fy mâb,
Yn rhodd rhowch arno gôb ei dâd:
Rhag bod anwyd ar liw'r cann,
Rhoddwch arni bais ei mam.

That is,

Oh! lest my son should suffer cold,
Him in his father's coat infold:
Lest cold should seize my darling fair,
For her, her mother's robe prepare.

These children and their descendants they say were called Pellings, a word corrupted from their mother's name Penelope.

16

THE LONG-LIVED ANCESTORS

The Eagle of Gwernabwy had been long married to his female, and had by her many children; she died, and he continued a long time a widower; but at length be proposed a marriage with the Owl of Cwm Cwmlwyd; but afraid of her being young, so as to have children by her, and thereby degrade his own family, he first of all went to inquire about her age amongst the aged of the world. Accordingly he applied to the Stag of Rhedynfre, whom he found lying close to the trunk of an old oak, and requested to know the Owl's age.

"I have seen," said the Stag, "this oak an acorn, which is now fallen to the ground through age, without either bark or leaves, and never suffered any hurt or strain except from my rubbing myself against it once a day, after getting up on my legs; but I never remember to have seen the Owl you mention younger or older than she seems to be at this day. But there is one older than I am, and that is the Salmon of Glynllifon."

The Eagle then applied to the Salmon for the age of the Owl. The Salmon answered, "I am as many years old as there are scales upon my skin, and particles of spawn within my belly; yet never saw I the Owl you mention but the same in appearance. But there is one older than I am, and that is the Blackbird of Cilgwri."

The Eagle next repaired to the Blackbird of Cilgwri, whom he found perched upon a small stone, and enquired of him the Owl’s age.

“Dost thou see this stone upon which I sit,” said the Blackbird, “which is now no bigger than what a man can carry in his hand? I have seen this very stone of such weight as to be a sufficient load for a hundred oxen to draw, which has suffered neither rubbing nor wearing, save that I rub my bill on it once every evening, and touch the tips of my wings on it every morning, when I expand them to fly; yet I have not seen the Owl either older or younger than she appears to be at this day. But there is one older than I am, and that is the Frog of Mochno Bog, and if he does not know her age, there is not a creature living that does know it.”

The Eagle went last of all to the Frog and desired to know the Owl’s age. He answered, “I never ate anything but the dust from the spot which I inhabit, and that very sparingly, and dost thou see these great hills that surround and overawe this bog where I lie? They are formed only of the excrements from my body since I have inhabited this place, yet I never remember to have seen the Owl but an old hag, making that hideous noise, Too, hoo, hoo! always frightening the children in the neighbourhood.”

So the Eagle of Gwernabwy, the Stag of Rhedynfre, the Salmon of Glynllifon, the Blackbird of Cilgwri, the Frog of Mochno Bog, and the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd are the oldest creatures in the whole world!

17

THE GIANTESS’S APRON-FULL

A huge giant, in company with his wife, travelling towards the island of Mona, with an intention of settling amongst the first inhabitants that had removed there, and having been informed that there was but a narrow channel which divided it from the continent, took up two large stones, one under each arm, to carry with him as a preparatory for making a bridge over this channel, and his lady had her apron filled with small stones for the same purpose; but, meeting a man on this spot with a large parcel of old shoes on his shoulders, the giant asked him how far it was to Mona. The man replied, that it was so far, that he had worn out those shoes in travelling from Mona to that place. The giant on hearing this dropped down the stones, one on each side of him, where they now stand upright, about a hundred yards or more distant from each other; the space between them was occupied by this Goliah’s body. His mistress at the same time opened her apron, and dropped down the contents of it, which formed this heap.

18

GWRGAN FARFDRWCH’S FABLE

Hear me, O ye Britons! On the top of a high rock in Arvon there stood a goat, which a lion perceiving from the valley below, addressed her in this manner: —

“My dearest neighbour, why preferrest thou that dry barren rock to feed on? Come down to this charming valley, where thou mayest feed luxuriously upon all sorts of dainties, amongst flowers in shady groves, made fruitful by meandering brooks.”

“I am much obliged to you, master,” replied the goat; “perhaps you mean well, and tell me the truth, but you have very bad neighbours, whom I do not like to trust, and those are your teeth, so, with your leave, I prefer staying where I am.”

19

THE STORY OF THE PIG-TROUGH

In the beginning of the century, Hughes went as military substitute for a farmer’s son. He got £80, a watch, and a suit of clothes. His mother was loath to let him go, and when he joined his regiment, she followed him from Amlych to Pwlheli to try and buy him off. He would not hear of it. “Mother,” he said, “the whole of Anglesey would not keep me, I want to be off, and see the world.”

The regiment was quartered in Edinboro’, and Hughes married the daughter of the burgess with whom he was billeted. Thence, leaving a small son, as hostage to the grandparents, they went to Ireland, and Hughes and his wife were billeted on a pork-butcher’s family in Dublin. One day, the mother of the pork-butcher, an old granny, told them she had seen the fairies.

“Last night, as I was abed, I saw a bright, bright light come in, and afterwards a troop of little angels. They danced all over my bed, and they played and sang music — oh! the sweetest music ever I heard. I lay and watched them and listened. By-and-bye the light went out and the music stopped, and I saw them no more. I regretted the music very much. But directly after another smaller light appeared, and a tall dark man came up to my bed, and with something in his hand he tapped me on the temple; it felt like some one drawing a sharp pin across my temple then he went too. In the morning my pillow was covered with blood. I thought and thought, and then I knew I had moved the pig’s trough and must have put it in the fairies’ path and the fairies were angered, and the king of the fairies had punished me for it.” She moved the trough back to its old place the next day, and received no more visits from the wee folk.

20

BILLY DUFFY AND THE DEVIL

Billy Duffy was an Irishman, a blacksmith, and a drunkard. He had the Keltic aversion from steady work, and stuck to his forge only long enough to get money for drink; when that was spent, he returned to work.

Billy was coming home one day after one of these drinking-bouts, soberer than usual, when he exclaimed to himself, for the thirst was upon him, “By God! I would sell myself to the devil if I could get some more drink.”

At that moment a tall gentleman in black stepped up to him, and said, “What did you say?”

“I said I would sell myself to the devil if I could get a drink.”

“Well, how much do you want for seven years, and the devil to get you then?”

“Well, I can’t tell exactly, when it comes to the push.”

“Will £700 do you?”

“Yes; I’d take £700.”

“And the devil to get you then?”

“Oh, yes; I don’t care about that.”

When Billy got home he found the money in his smithy. He at once shut the smithy, and began squandering the money, keeping open house.

Amongst the people who flocked to get what they could out of Billy came an old hermit, who said, “I am very hungry, and nearly starved. Will you give me something to eat and drink?”

“Oh, yes; come in and get what you like.”

The hermit disappeared, after eating and drinking, and did not reappear for several months, when he received the same kindly welcome, again disappearing. A few months afterwards he again appeared.

“Come in, come in!” said Billy.

After he had eaten and drunk his full, the hermit said to Billy: “Well, three times have you been good and kind to me. I’ll give you three wishes, and whatever you wish will be sure to come true.”

“I must have time to consider,” said Billy.

“Oh, you shall have plenty of time to consider, and mind they are good wishes.”

Next morning Billy told the hermit he was ready. “Well, go on; be sure they’re good wishes,” said the hermit.

“Well, I’ve got a big sledge-hammer in the smithy, and I wish whoever gets hold of that hammer shall go on striking the anvil, and never break it, till I tell him to stop.”

“Oh, that’s a bad wish, Billy.”

“Oh, no; you’ll see it’s good. Next thing I wish for is a purse so that no one can take out whatever I put into it.”

“Oh, Billy, Billy! that’s a bad wish. Be careful now about the third wish,” said the hermit.

“Well, I have got an armchair upstairs, and I wish that whoever may sit in that armchair will never be able to get up till I let them.”

“Well, well, indeed; they are not very good wishes.”

“Oh, yes; I’ve got my senses about me. I think I’ll make them good wishes, after all.”

The seven years, all but three days, had passed, and Billy was back working at his forge, for all his money was gone, when the dark gentleman stepped in and said:

“Now, Billy, during these last three days you may have as much money as you like,” and he disappeared.

On the last day of his seven years Billy was penniless, and he went to the taproom of his favourite inn, which was full.

“Well, boys,” said Billy, “we must have some money to-night. I’ll treat you, and give you a pound each,” and rising, he placed his tumbler in the middle of the table, and wished for twenty pounds. No sooner had he wished than a ball of fire came through the ceiling, and the twenty sovereigns fell into the tumbler. Everyone was taken aback, and there was a noise as if a bomb had burst, and the fireball disappeared, and rolled down the garden path, the landlord following it. After this they each drank what they liked, and Billy gave them a sovereign apiece before he went home.

The next morning he was in his smithy making a pair of horseshoes, when the devil came in and said:

“Well, Billy, I’ll want you this morning.”

“Yes; all right. Take hold of this sledge-hammer, and give me a few hammers till I finish this job before I go.”

So the devil seized the hammer and began striking the anvil, but he couldn’t stop.

So Billy laughed, and locked him in, and was away three days. During this time the people collected round the smithy, and peeped through the cracks in the shutter, for they could hear the hammer going night and day.

At the end of three days Billy returned and opened the door, and the devil said, “Oh, Billy, you’ve played a fine trick to me; let me go.”

“What are you going to give me if I let you go?”

“Seven years more, twice the money, and two days’ grace for wishing for what you like.”

The devil paid his money and disappeared, and Billy shut the smithy and took to gambling and drinking, so that at the end of seven years he was without a penny, and working again in his smithy.

On the last night of the seven years he went to his favourite public-house again, and wished for five pounds.

After he wished, a little man entered and spat the sovereigns into the tumbler, and they all drank all night.

Next morning Billy went back to his smithy. The devil, who had grown suspicious, turned himself into a sovereign and appeared on the floor. Billy seized the sovereign and clapped it into his purse. Then he took his purse and lay it upon the anvil, and began to beat it with his sledge-hammer, when the devil began to call out, “Spare my poor limbs, spare my poor limbs!”

“How much now if I let you go?” asked Billy

“Seven more years, three times the money, and one day in which to wish for what you like.”

Billy took the sovereign out of his purse and threw it away, when he found his money in the smithy.

Billy carried on worse than ever; gambled and drank and raced, squandering it all before his seven years was gone. On the last day of his term he went to his favourite inn as usual and wished for a tumbler full of sovereigns. A little man with a big head, a big nose, and big mouth, a little body, and little legs, with clubbed feet and a forked tail, brought them in and put them in the tumbler. The drunkards in the room got scared when they saw the little man, for he looked all glowing with fire as he danced on the table. When he finished, he said, “Billy, to-morrow morning our compact is up.”

“I know it, old boy, I know it, old boy!” said Billy. Then the devil ran out and disappeared, and the people began to question Billy:

“What is that? I think it is you, Mister Duffy, he is after.”

“Oh, it is nothing at all,” said Billy.

"I should think there was something," said the man.

"I am afraid my house will get a bad name," croaked the landlord.

"Not in the least! You are only a coward," said Billy.

"But in the name of God, what is it all about?" asked an old man.

"Oh, you'll see by-and-bye," said Billy; "it is nothing at all."

Next morning Billy went to his smithy, but the devil would not come near it.

So he went to his house, and began to quarrel with his wife, and whilst he was quarrelling the devil walked in and said:

"Well, Mr. Duffy, I am ready for you."

"Ah, yes; just sit down and wait a minute or two. I have some papers I want to put to rights before I go."

So the devil sat down in the arm-chair, and Billy went to the smithy and heated a pair of tongs red-hot, and coming back, he got the devil by the nose, and pulled it out as though it had been soft iron. And the devil began yelling, but he could not move, and Billy kept drawing the nose out till it was long enough to reach over the window, when he put an old bell-topper on the end of it. And the devil yelled, and snorted fire from his nose.

The whole of the village crowded round Billy's, house — at a safe distance — calling out, "Billy and the devil! The devil and Billy Duffy!"

The devil got awful savage, and blackguarded Billy Duffy terribly; but it was useless. Billy kept him there for days, till he got civil and said:

"Mr. Duffy, what will you let me go for?"

"Only one thing: I am to live the rest of my life without you, and have as much gold as I like."

The devil agreed, so Billy let him go; and immediately he grew rich. He lived to a good old age squandering money all the time, but at last he died and when he got to the gates of hell the clerk said "Who are you?" "Billy Duffy," said he. And when the devil, who was standing near, heard, he said:

“Good God! bar the gates and double-lock them for if this Billy Duffy the blacksmith gets in he will ruin us all.”

Old Billy saw a pair of red-hot tongs, which he picked up, and seized the devil by the nose. When the devil pulled back his head he left a red-hot bit of his nose in the tongs.

Then Billy Duffy went up to the gates of heaven and St. Peter asked him who he was.

“Billy Duffy the blacksmith,” he answered.

“No admittance! You are a bold, bad man,” said St. Peter.

“Good God! what will I do?” said Billy, and he went back to the earth, where he and the piece of the devil’s nose melted into a ball of fire, and he roves the earth till this day as a will-o’-the-wisp.

21

THE STORY OF JOHN O’ GROATS

He was an old seaman, with weather-beaten face and black eyes, that had looked upon many lands and many sights.

“Well, indeed, I’ll tell you about Johnny Groats as it was told to me one night in the trades,” he said, blowing a whiff of smoke from his wheezy pipe.

“Well, in olden times there was a rich lord, who owned all the property looking on to the Pentlands — an awful place in bad weather; indeed, in any weather.

“He was a lone man, for his wife was dead, and his son had turned out to be a rake and a spendthrift, spending all his substance upon harlots and entertainments.

“Now this lord had a factor, by name John o’ Scales, a stingy, cunning man, who robbed his master all he could during the week, and prayed hard for forgiveness on the Sabbath.

“The lord, who was getting very old, was much grieved on account of his son’s behaviour. ‘He’ll spend everything when I am gone, and the estates will go into other hands,’ the old man said to himself.”

* * *

“One fine morning in summer the factor received orders to build a hut by the sea, and plant bushes and trees round about it. ‘But don’t make the door to fit close; leave the space of a foot at the bottom, so the leaves can blow in, for I want the hut to shoot sea-fowl as they flight, and it is cold standing on the bare ground,’ said the old man.

“The factor carried out his master’s instructions, but not without suspicion of ulterior motives on his master’s part. However, when he saw my lord shooting the birds and stuffing many of them his suspicions were allayed, and the factor thought that, after all, though his master wanted the hut for flight-shooting, still he must be getting softening of the brain, for it was very eccentric that he should take up this new hobby in his old age.

“So the old lord was never disturbed in his hut by curious and ill-timed visits.

“After a time the lord died, and was laid with his fathers, the prodigal inheriting the property.

“The old castle was then the scene of perpetual feastings and card parties, so that in a few years the property was heavily mortgaged, the old factor advancing the money.

“Things went apace, until one day the factor informed the young spendthrift that he had spent everything, and the estates were no longer his, so he gave him a few pounds, and turned him out.

“When the news spread round the countryside his old friends began to drop off, until at last the spendthrift found every door closed against him.

“When he had spent his last penny, the prodigal thought of the key which his father had given him, saying, ‘When you have spent everything, take this key, and go to the hut.’

“But he had lost the key long before.

“Nevertheless, he went to the hut. It had a deserted appearance, being overgrown with moss and lichens.

“He managed to squeeze himself under the door, and when he stood up he saw a rope, with a noose hanging from the centre of the roof. Pursuing his investigations, he found a parchment nailed to the back of the door, and in one corner stood an old three-legged stool. There was nothing else in the damp, mouldy room, so he began to read the parchment.

“‘Thou art come to beggary; end thy miserable existence, for it is thy father’s wish,’ he read.

“He was dazed, and looked from the parchment to the rope, and from the rope to the parchment, saying to himself: ‘Well, I have come to that, I must follow my father’s wish.’

“So he got the stool and put it under the noose, and standing upon it, adjusted the rope with trembling fingers round his neck, when he said, hoarsely: ‘Father, I do thy bidding,’ and he kicked the stool from under him.

“Immediately he heard a crash, and found himself lying upon the leaves, with a feeling that his neck had been jerked off. However, he soon recovered, and, taking the noose from his neck, he looked up and saw an open trap-door in the ceiling. Placing the stool beneath the opening, he got on to it, and lifted himself through the trap-door, when he found himself in a loft, a parchment nailed to the wall facing him, and on the parchment was written, ‘This has been prepared, for your end was foreseen, and your foolish father buried three chests of gold one foot below the surface of the floor of the hut. Go and take it and buy back your estate: marry, and beget an heir.’

“‘Good God! is this a ghastly joke?’ said the prodigal. But the words looked truthful; so he tore down the parchment, dropped through the trap-door, shut it, and readjusted the rope. He left the hut and borrowed a pick and shovel, and returning to the hut, he began to dig, and found one chest full of gold. When he made this discovery he closed the chest, filled in the hole, and spread leaves over the spot. He then ran off to his father’s best friend, and told him of his good luck. They then called in two other friends, and consulted together how the old lord’s wish was best to be carried out. ‘I’ll tell you,’ said his father’s oldest friend. ‘Mr. John o’ Scales gives a great dinner party once a month, and three of us here are invited as usual. You must come in in the middle of dinner in your ordinary beggar clothes and beg humbly for some food, when he will give orders to have you turned out. Then you must begin to call him a liar and a thief, and accuse him of robbing your father and yourself of your inheritance. You’ll see he’ll get angry, and offer to let you have it back.’

“So the prodigal dug up the chests, and carted the money away in canvas bags, storing it at his friend’s house.”

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“When the night of the dinner party came, the prodigal drove up to the castle in a cart filled with canvas bags. Jumping off his seat by the driver, he went into the feast in his beggar’s clothes, and going up to the host, he begged humbly for some food.

“‘Go from this house! What business have you here?’ asked the host.

“Most of the gentlemen and ladies began to frown upon him, and murmur against him, as he walked to the lady of the house and begged her to give him some food, but she replied:

“‘Oh, thou spendthrift! thou fool of fools! if all fools were hanged, as they ought to be, you’d be the first.’

“Then the beggar’s countenance changed, a deep flush of anger overspread his features, and drawing himself up to his full height, he said, with solemn voice, addressing the host:

“‘Thou hast robbed my father all the days of his life, and thou hast robbed the orphan. May the curse of God be upon you!’

“The host grew furious; then he looked ashamed, and shouted angrily:

"'Bring me £40,000, and you shall have your estate back. I never robbed you, but you lost your inheritance by your own follies.'

"'Gentlemen,' said the beggar, 'I take you all to witness that this thief says I can have my estate back for £40,000.'

"The people murmured, and the three friends said: 'We are witnesses.'

"The beggar ran out into the night, and returned with a man laden with sacks, and they began to count out £40,000 upon a side-table, where a haunch of venison still smoked.

"When they had counted out the money, the beggar said:

"'There is your £40,000; sign this receipt.'

"The amazed factor drew back, when the three friends said:

"'You must sign; you are a gentleman of your word, of course.'

"Mechanically John o' Scales signed the paper.

"'And now,' said the former beggar, 'leave my house at once, with your wife — you coward! you cur! You robbed my father, and then cheated me when I was a spendthrift. Begone, and may your name be accursed in the land!'

"And the son turned all out except his three friends.

"In a few months he married the daughter of one of his friends; but he never gambled again, only entertaining his three friends and their families, who came and went as they liked.

"And from that day John o' Scales was called John o' Groats."

22

EVA’S LUCK

As black-eyed, black-haired Eva Sauvet was walking one day in Jersey she saw a lozenge-marked snake, whereupon she ran away frightened.

When she got home and told her mother, the old woman said:

“Well, child, next time you see the snake give it your handkerchief.”

The next day Eva went out with beating heart, and ere long she saw the snake come gliding out from the bushes, so she threw down her handkerchief, for she was too frightened to hand it to the snake.

The snake’s eyes gleamed and twinkled, and taking the handkerchief into his fangs, he made off to an old ruin, whither Eva followed.

But when they got to the ruin the snake disappeared, and Eva ran home to tell her mother.

Next day, Père Sauvet and some men went to the ruin, where Eva showed the hole where the snake had disappeared.

Old Père Sauvet lit a fire, and smoked the snake out, killing it with a stick as it glided over the stones.

After that they dug out the hole, when they found the handkerchief. Digging still further along, they came upon a hollow place, at the bottom of which they found a lot of gold.

23

THE FISHERMEN OF SHETLAND

There was a snug little cove in one of the Shetland Islands. At the head of the cove stood a fishing hamlet, containing some twenty huts. In these huts lived the fisher-folk, ruled by one man — the chief — who was the father of two beautiful daughters.

Now these fishermen for some years had been very lucky, for a fairy queen and her fairies had settled there, and she had given her power over to a merman, who was the chief of a large family of mermaids. The fairy queen had made the merman a belt of sea-weed, which he always wore round his body. The merman used to turn the water red, green, and white, at noon each day, so that the fishermen knew that if they cast their nets into the coloured waters they would make good hauls.

Amongst these fishermen were two brave brothers, who courted the chief's daughters, but the old man would not let them get married until they became rich men.

Whenever the fishermen went off in the boats the merman was used to sit on a rock, and watch them fishing.

Close by the hamlet was a great wood, in which lived a wicked old witch and a dwarf.

Now this witch wished to get possession of the merman's belt, and so gain the fairy's power. Telling her scheme to the dwarf, she said to him:

“Now you must trap the merman when he is sitting on the rocks watching the fishing fleet. But I must change you into a bee, when you must suck of the juice in this magic basin, then fly off and alight on the merman’s head, when he will fall asleep.”

So the dwarf agreed, and it happened as she had said; and the merman fell asleep, and the dwarf stole the belt and brought it to the witch.

“Now you must wear the belt,” said the witch to the dwarf, “and you will have the power and the fairy will lose her power.”

They then translated the sleeping merman to the forest and laid him before the hut, when the witch got a copper vessel, saying:

“We must bury him in this.”

Then she got the magic pot, and told the dwarf to take a ladleful of the fluid in the pot, and pour it over the merman, which he did, and immediately the merman turned into smoke, that settled in the copper vessel. Then they sealed the copper vessel tightly.

“Now take this vessel, and heave it into the sea fifty miles from the land,” said the witch, and the dwarf did as he was bid.

“Now we’ll starve those old fishermen out this winter,” said the witch; and it happened as she had said — they could catch nothing.

In the spring the queen fairy came to one of the young fishermen who was courting one of the chief’s daughters, and said:

“You must venture for the sake of your love, and for the lives of the fishermen, or you will all starve — but I will be with you. Will you run the risk?”

“I will,” said the brave fisherman.

“Well, the dwarf has got my belt, he stole it from the merman, and so I have lost power over the world for twelve months and a day; but if you get back the belt I can settle the witch; if not, you will all starve and catch no fish.”

So the bold fisherman agreed to try.

“Now I must transform you into a bear, and you’ll have to watch the witch and the dwarf, and take your chance of getting the belt; and you must watch where he hides his treasure, for he is using the belt as a means to get gold, which he hides in a cave.”

And so the sailor was turned into a bear, and he went to the wood and watched the dwarf, and saw that he hid his treasure in a cave in some crags.

The bear had been given the power of making himself invisible, by sitting on his haunches and rubbing his ears with his paws.

One night, when it was very boisterous, the bear felt like going to see his sweetheart. So he went, and knocked at the door. The girl opened the door, and shrieked when she saw the bear.

“Oh, let him in,” said her old mother.

So the bear came in and asked for shelter from the storm, for he could speak.

And he went and sat by the fire, and asked his sweetheart to brush the snow from his coat, which she did.

“I won’t do you any harm,” he said; “let me sleep by the fire.”

He came again the next night, and they gave him some gruel, and played with him; for he was just like a dog.

So he came every night until the springtime, when, one morning, as he was going away, he said:

“You mustn’t expect me any more. Spring has come, and the snows have melted. I can’t come again till the summer is over.”

So he returned to the wood and watched the dwarf, but he could never catch him without his belt, until one day he saw him fishing for salmon without the belt, and at the same time his sweetheart and her sister came by picking flowers.

So the bear went up to the dwarf, and the dwarf, when he saw him coming, said:

“Ah! good bear! good bear! let me go. These two girls will be a more dainty morsel for you.”

But the bear smote him with his paw and killed him, and immediately the bear was turned into his former self, and the girls ran up and kissed him, and talked.

Then he took the two girls to the dwarf’s cave, and gave each of them a bag of treasure, keeping one for himself. And taking the belt, he put it on, and they all walked back to the hamlet, when he told the fishermen that their troubles would soon be over — but that he must kill the witch first.

Then he turned the belt three times, and said:

“I wish for the queen fairy.”

And she came, and was delighted, and said: “Now you must come and slay the witch,” and she handed him a bow and arrow, telling him to use it right and tight when he got to the hut.

So he went off to the wood, and found the witch in her hut, and she begged for mercy.

“Oh no, you have done too much mischief,” he said, and he shot her.

Then the queen fairy appeared, and sent him to gather dry wood to make a fire. When the fire was made she sent him to fetch the witch’s wand, which she cast into the flames, saying:

“Now, mark my word, all the devils of hell will be here.”

And when the wand began to burn all the devils came and tried to snatch it from the fire, but the queen raised her wand, saying:

THROUGH THIS POWERFUL wand
That I hold in my hand,
Through this bow and arrow
I have caused her to be slain,
That she may leave our domain.

Now take her up high
Into the sky,
And let her burst asunder
As a clap of thunder.
Then take her to hell
And there let her dwell,
To all eternity.

AND THE WAND WAS BURNT, and the devils carried the witch off in a noise like thunder.

The twelve months were up on that day, and the fairy said to the fisherman:

“Take your chief and your brother, and put out to sea half-a-mile, where you’ll see a red spot, bright as the sun on the water; cast in your net on the sea-side of the spot, and pull to the shore.”

They did as the queen commanded, and when they pulled the net on the shore they found the copper vessel.

“Now open it,” said the queen to the fisherman with the belt, “but cover your belt with your coat first.”

And he did so, and when he opened the copper a ball of smoke rose into the air, and suddenly the merman stood before them, and said:

THE FIRST FOUR months that I was in prison,
I swore I’d make the man as rich as a king,
The man who released me.
But there was no release, no release, no release.

The second four months that I was in prison,
I swore I'd make the water run red,
But there was no release, no release, no release.

The last four months that I was in prison,
I swore in my wrath I'd take my deliverer's life,
Whoever he might be.

Whereupon the fisherman opened his coat and showed him the belt. Then the merman immediately cooled down, and said:

"Oh, that's how I came into this trouble."

Then he asked the fisherman with the belt what had happened, and he told him the whole story.

Then the queen told the fisherman to take the girdle off and put it back on the merman, and he did so; and suddenly the merman took to the sea, and began to sing from a rock:

As I sit upon the rock,
I am like a statue block,
And I straighten my hair,
That is so long and fair.
And now my eyes look bright,
For I am in great delight,
Because I am free in glee,
To roam over the sea.

After that the hamlet was joyful again, for the fishermen began to catch plenty of fish; for the merman showed them where to cast their nets, by colouring the water as of old.

And the two brothers married the chief's two beautiful daughters, and they lived happily ever afterwards.

13. MARY H FOSTER AND MABEL H CUMMINGS

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Story of the Beginning
2. Odin’s Reward
3. Tyr and the Wolf
4. Freyja’s Necklace
5. The Hammer of Thor
6. Thor’s Wonderful Journey
7. How Thor Lost His Hammer
8. A Gift from Frigga
9. The Stealing of Iduna
10. Skadi
11. Baldur
12. Aegir’s Feast
13. The Punishment of Loki
14. The Twilight of the Gods

PREFACE

FOSTER, MARY H. & CUMMINGS, MABEL H.

Mary H. Foster and Mabel H. Cummings are the authors of *Asgard Stories: Tales from Norse Mythology*. The stories for children feature the familiar Norse figures including Odin, Thor, and Loki. The authors created the mythology because they felt the myths needed to adapt for young readers, as most books on Norse myths were detail-heavy and hard for children to read. They also believed that teaching of mythology should begin with the Norse myths, followed by the Greek myths for comparison. According to Foster and Cummings, they believed the moral tone of the Norse myth and folk tales were higher than those of the Greeks. Their main interest was to make the stories interesting, easy to read, and a catalyst for sparking children's imaginations.

1

THE STORY OF THE BEGINNING

The people who lived long ago, in the far-off lands of the north, watched the wonderful things that happened out of doors every day, just as we do; but they did not know about the one loving God, who is the Father of all, who made them and the world, and rules it by his wise laws; so they thought there must be a great many unseen powers, living in the clouds, in the wind, in the storms, and the sunshine, and doing all those wonders that no man could do.

And so those northern people, who were our own forefathers, came to believe in many gods — one for the sun, another for the thunder, another for the flowers, and so on.

In the long, dark winters, when the bright sun had gone away from them, these northmen had time to think many thoughts about the powers of frost, and wind, and storms, which they called giants, and they used to tell stories and sing songs about the short, bright summer, the thawing out of the streams and lakes, the coming of the birds and flowers.

With great joy the people saw the bright sun-god, Baldur, come back to them in the spring, after the long darkness, and knew that they owed their lives to his friendly warmth and light.

As we read the stories, or myths, told by those people long ago, we can see that they were meant to tell about the world around us. At first the stories were told and sung from father to son — that is, from one generation to another; but later, when people learned how to write, these myths were written down, and kept with great love and care.

This is the story they told of the Beginning. At first, before living creatures were in the world, it was all rough and without order. Far to the north it was very cold, for ice and snow were everywhere. Toward the south there was fire, and from the meeting of the fire and the cold a thick vapor was formed, from which sprang a huge giant. On looking about for some food, he saw a cow, who was also searching for something to eat. The ice tasted salt, and when the cow began to lick it, a head appeared, and at last the whole figure of a god stood before her.

From these two, the giant and the god, came the two great races of giants and gods, who were always enemies to each other. The giants were constantly trying to break into Asgard, the home of the gods, in the sky; the gods, on the other hand, watched and planned to keep out the giants, and to drive them back to their own stronghold, Utgard. Our world, where men and women lived, was between Utgard and Asgard; it was called Midgard, and around this Midgard world, under the ocean, was coiled a monstrous serpent, who grew so long that his tail grew down his throat. He was called the Midgard serpent.

A wonderful tree, named “Yggdrasil,” connected all the worlds. This great ash tree had its roots in Utgard, and the tops of its branches reached up so high as to overshadow Asgard. Its three main roots were watered by three fountains, and near one of them sat the wise giant Mimir, of whom we shall hear later. The Norns, three sisters, also lived at the roots of Yggdrasil, and were careful to see that it was watered every day.

A little gray squirrel was always running up and down the tree, jerking his tail and hurrying to tell the news to every one along the way. He was so anxious to be the first one to carry the news, that many times he brought trouble to himself and to others, because he was not always careful to tell a story just as he had heard it, and often every one would have been happier if the squirrel had kept the story quite to himself.

The gods and goddesses, all together, were called the Aesir, and the chief and father of them all was Odin. His lofty throne rose high in the midst of Asgard, the sacred city, which the gods had built for their beautiful home.

From Asgard, arching over and down to the lower world, was a rainbow bridge, called Bifröst — “the trembling bridge”; upon this the dwellers in Asgard could travel every day, all except the mighty Thor. His thunder chariot was too heavy for “the trembling bridge,” so he had to go around a longer way.

After the gods had made men and women, and had taught them to dwell on the earth, in the world of Midgard, Odin looked forth one morning from his heavenly seat, to see what further work was waiting for his helping hand.

He noticed, far away below him, a race of small beings, some of them busy, doing mischievous deeds, while others sat idle, doing nothing. Odin sent for all these little people to come to him, and when they had reached Asgard, and were admitted to his palace of Gladsheim, they entered the great judgment hall, where they found all the Aesir sitting, with Father Odin at their head.

The little people waited in a crowd near the door, wondering what was going to happen to them, while Hermod, the messenger of the gods, ran to his master to say that they had come.

Then the Allfather spoke to the little dwarfs about their evil deeds among men, and he told the naughtiest ones that they must go and live down underground, and look after the great furnace fire in the middle of the earth, to keep it always burning. Some must get coal to feed the fire, and others still were to have charge of the gold, and silver, and precious stones, under the rocks. Not one of these busy dwarfs must ever appear during the day; only by night might they venture to leave their tasks.

“And now,” said Odin, turning to the idle ones, “what have you been doing?”

“We were doing nothing at all, so we could not have harmed any one, and we pray you to spare us!” cried they.

“Do you not know that those who sit idle when they should be doing good deserve punishment, too?” said Odin. “I shall put you in charge of all the trees and flowers, and shall send one of the Aesir to teach you, so that you may be doing some good in the world.”

Then the little elves went to work among the flowers, and Frey, the bright god of summer and sunshine, was a kind master to them. He taught them how to open the folded buds in the sunshine, to fill the honey cups, and lead the bees along the flower passages to find their food, to hatch the birds’ eggs, and teach the little ones their songs, and then each night to fetch the water for dewdrops, to be hung on every leaf and blade of grass.

When their work was finished, and the moon had risen, these busy elves and fairies enjoyed many a happy evening, dancing and frisking on the green by moonlight. And so our world of Midgard was filled with busy work and play.

Even now, in our time, the people in the lands of the north, and in Germany, have many old sayings and stories that have come down to them from the days long ago. There is a beautiful white flower in the north, which is called Baldur’s Brow, because it is so pure and bright, like the face of the dear sun-god, Baldur; and in some places, when the farmers gather in their harvest of grain, they leave a little bunch of it standing in the field, for Father Odin’s horse.

We have some English names to remind us of those old tales of our forefathers, for we have Tuesday named for Tyr, or Tiu, the brave god who gave his right hand to save his friends; Wednesday, or Wodensday, named for Odin; Thursday, for Thor, the thunder-god; and Friday, for either the goddess Frigga, or Freyja, or for Frey, the god of summer, who ruled the fairies.

2

ODIN’S REWARD

One night when all was quiet in Asgard and the Aesir had gone to rest, Odin, the Allfather, sat awake on his high throne, troubled with many thoughts. At his feet crouched his two faithful wolves, and upon his shoulders perched the two ravens of thought and memory, who flew far abroad every day, through the nine worlds, as Odin’s messengers.

The Allfather had need of great wisdom in ruling the worlds; after thinking a long time on the matters which needed his care, he suddenly started up, and went forth with long strides from his palace of Gladsheim into the night. He soon returned, leading his beautiful, eight-footed steed, Sleipnir, and it was plain that Odin was going on a journey. He quickly mounted Sleipnir, and rode swiftly away toward Bifröst, the rainbow bridge, which reached from Asgard, the city of the gods, down through the air to the lower worlds.

When Sleipnir stepped upon the bridge it trembled, and seemed hardly strong enough to bear the horse and his rider; but they had no fear of its giving way, and Sleipnir galloped swiftly onward.

Soon Odin saw Heimdall, the watchman of the bridge, riding toward him on a fine horse, with a golden mane that reflected light upon the noble face of his rider.

“You must be bound on some important errand, Father Odin, to be riding forth from Asgard so late at night,” said Heimdall.

“It is indeed a most important errand, and I must hasten on,” replied Odin. “It is well for us that we have such a faithful guardian of the ‘trembling bridge’; if it were not for you, Heimdall, our enemies might long ago have taken Asgard by storm. You are so watchful, you can hear the grass grow in the fields, and the wool gather on the backs of the sheep, and you need less sleep than a bird. I myself stand in great need of wisdom, in order to take care of such faithful servants, and to drive back such wicked enemies!”

They hurried over the bridge until they came to Heimdall’s far-shining castle, at the farther end of it. This was a lofty tower which was placed so as to guard the bridge, and it sent forth into the land of the giant enemies such a wonderful, clear light, that Heimdall could see, even in the darkest night, any one who came toward the bridge. Here Odin stopped a few moments to drink the mead which the good Heimdall offered him.

Then said Odin, “As I am journeying into the land of our enemies, I shall leave my good horse with you; there are not many with whom I would trust him, but I know that you, my faithful Heimdall, will take good care of him. I can best hide myself from the giants by going on as a wanderer.”

With these words the Allfather quitted Heimdall’s castle, and started off toward the north, through the land of the fierce giants.

During all the first day there was nothing to be seen but ice and snow; several times Odin was nearly crushed as the frost giants hurled huge blocks of ice after him.

The second day he came to mountains and broad rivers. Often when he had just crossed over a stream, the mountain giants would come after him to the other bank, and when they found that Odin had escaped them, they would send forth such a fierce yell, that the echoes sounded from hill to hill.

At the end of the third day, Odin came to a land where trees were green and flowers blooming. Here was one of the three fountains which watered the world tree, Yggdrasil, and near by sat the wise giant, Mimir, guarding the waters of this wonderful fountain, for whoever drank of it would have the gift of great wisdom.

Mimir was a giant in size, but he was not one of the fierce giant enemies of the gods, for he was kind, and wiser than the wisest.

Mimir’s well of wisdom was in the midst of a wonderful valley, filled with rare plants and bright flowers, and among the groves of beautiful trees were strange creatures, sleeping dragons, harmless serpents, and lizards, while birds with gay plumage flew and sang among the branches. Over all this quiet valley shone a lovely soft light, different from sunlight, and in the center grew one of the roots of the great world tree. Here the wise giant Mimir sat gazing down into his well.

Odin greeted the kind old giant, and said, “Oh, Mimir, I have come from far-away Asgard to ask a great boon!”

“Gladly will I help you if it is in my power,” said Mimir.

“You know,” replied Odin, “that as father of gods and men I need great wisdom, and I have come to beg for one drink of your precious water of knowledge. Trouble threatens us, even from one of the Aesir, for Loki, the fire-god, has lately been visiting the giants, and I fear he has been learning evil ways from them. The frost giants and the storm giants are always at work, trying to overthrow both gods and men; great is my need of wisdom, and even though no one ever before has dared ask so great a gift, I hope that since you know how deep is my trouble, you will grant my request.”

Mimir sat silently, thinking for several moments, and then said, “You ask a great thing, indeed, Father Odin; are you ready to pay the price which I must demand?”

“Yes,” said Odin, cheerfully, “I will give you all the gold and silver of Asgard, and all the jeweled shields and swords of the Aesir. More than all, I will give up my eight-footed horse Sleipnir, if that is needed to win the reward.”

“And do you suppose that these things will buy wisdom?” said Mimir. “That can be gained only by bearing bravely, and giving up to others. Are you willing to give me a part of yourself? Will you give up one of your own eyes?”

At this Odin looked very sad; but after a few moments of deep thought, he looked up with a bright smile, and answered, “Yes, I will even give you one of my eyes, and I will suffer whatever else is asked, in order to gain the wisdom that I need!”

We cannot know all that Odin bravely suffered in that strange, bright valley, before he was rewarded with a drink from that wonderful fountain; but we may be quite sure that never once was the good Allfather sorry for anything he had given up, or any suffering he had borne, for the sake of others.

3

TYR AND THE WOLF

Odin, the Allfather, sat one day on his high air-throne, and looking around him, far and wide, saw three fierce monsters. They were the children of the mischievous fire-god Loki, and Odin began to feel anxious, for they had grown so fast and were getting so strong that he feared they might do harm to the sacred city of Asgard. The wise father knew Loki had given strength to these dreadful creatures, and he saw that all this danger had come upon the Aesir from Loki's wickedness.

One of these monsters was a huge serpent, that Odin sent down into the ocean, where he grew so fast that his body was coiled around the whole world, and his tail grew into his own mouth. He was called the Midgard serpent.

The second monster was sent to Niflheim, the home of darkness, and shut up there.

The third, a fierce wolf, named Fenrir, was brought to Asgard, where Odin hoped he might be tamed by living among the Aesir, and seeing their good deeds, and hearing their kind words; but he grew more and more fierce, until only one of all the gods dared to feed him. This was the brave god, Tyr. He was a war-god, like Thor, and is sometimes called the Sword-god. Tyr was loved by all because he was so true and faithful.

Each day the dreadful wolf grew larger and stronger, till all at once, before the Aesir thought about it, he had become a very dangerous beast.

Father Odin always looked troubled when he saw Fenrir, the wolf, come to get his evening meal of meat from Tyr's hand, and at last one night, after the wolf had gone growling away to his lair, Odin called a meeting of the Aesir. He told them of his fears, saying they must find some plan for guarding themselves and their home against this monster. They could not slay him, for no one must ever be killed, and no blood must be shed, within the walls of the sacred city.

Thor was the first to speak: "Do not fear, Father Odin, for by to-morrow night we shall have Fenrir so safely bound that he cannot do us any harm. I will make a mighty chain, with the help of my hammer, Miölnir, and with it we will bind him fast!"

When the Aesir heard these words of Thor, they were glad, and all went home rejoicing — all save the Allfather, who was still troubled, for he well knew the danger, and feared that even the mighty Thor would find this task too much for him. But Thor seized his hammer, and strode off to his forge. There he worked the whole night long, and all through Asgard were heard the blows of Miölnir and the roaring of the bellows.

The next night, when the Aesir were gathered together, Thor brought forth his new-made chain, to test it. In came Fenrir, the wolf, and every one was surprised to see how willingly he let himself be bound with the chain. When Thor had riveted the last links together, the gods smiled, and began to praise him for his wonderful work; but all at once the wolf gave one bound forward, broke the great chain, and walked off to his lair as if nothing had happened.

Thor was much disappointed, still he did not lose courage. He said to the Aesir that he would make another chain, yet stronger. Again he set to work, and for three nights and three days the great Thor worked at his forge without resting.

While he worked his friends did not forget him. They came and looked on while he was busy, and, as they watched the mighty hammer falling with quick blows upon the metal, they talked to Thor or sang noble songs to cheer him; sometimes they brought him food and drink. One visitor, who was no friend, fierce Fenrir, the wolf, sometimes put his nose in at the door for a moment, and watched Thor at work; then, as he went away, Thor heard a strange sound like a wicked laugh.

At last the chain was finished, and Thor dragged it to the place of meeting. It was so heavy that even the mighty Thor could hardly lift it, or drag it as far as Odin's palace of Gladsheim. This time Fenrir was not so willing to be bound; but the gods coaxed him, and talked of his great strength, and told him they were sure he would easily break this chain also. After a while he agreed to let them put it around his neck.

This time Thor was sure the chain would hold firm, for never before had such a strong one been made. But soon, with a great shake and a fierce bound, the wolf broke away, and went off to his lair, snarling and showing his wicked teeth, while the broken chain lay on the ground.

Sadly the Aesir came together that night in Odin's palace, and this time Thor was not the first to speak; he sat apart and was silent.

First spoke Frey, the god of summer and king of the fairies. "Hearken to me, O lords of Asgard!" he said. "I have not won a brave name in battle, like the noble Tyr, neither have I done such mighty deeds as the great Thor and others of our heroes. Instead of fighting giants and monsters, I have spent most of my life in the woods, among the flowers, listening for hours to the birds. Many things have I watched, some perhaps that my brothers thought too small to be worthy of notice. I have learned many lessons, and the greatest of them all is to know how much power there is in little things, and to see how often the work, done quietly, and hidden from the eyes of men, is the finest and the most wonderful. Since we cannot make a chain strong enough to bind Fenrir, let us go to the little dwarfs, who work in silence and in darkness, and ask them to make us a chain!”

The Allfather’s troubled face grew brighter as he heard Frey speak, and he bade him send a messenger quickly to the dwarfs, to order a chain made as soon as possible.

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So Frey went out, leaving the Aesir in their trouble, and came to his own lovely home, Alfheim. There everything was bright and peaceful, and the little elves were busy and happy. Frey found a trusty messenger, and sent him with all speed to the dwarfs underground, to order the new chain, and to return as soon as he could bring it. The faithful servant found the funny little dwarf workmen all busy in their dark rock chambers, far down inside the earth, while at one side, in a lighter place, sat their king. The messenger bowed before him, and told him his errand.

The dwarfs were a wicked race, but they were afraid of Odin, for they had not forgotten the talk he once had with them, when he sent them down to work in darkness underground, and since that time they never had dared disobey him. The dwarf king said it would take two days and two nights to make the chain, but it would be so strong that no one could break it.

While the busy dwarfs were at work, the messenger looked about at the many wonderful things: the great central fire which burns always in the middle of the earth, watched and fed with coal by the dwarfs; above this, the beds of coal, and bright precious diamonds, which the dwarfs took from the ashes of the fire. In another place he watched them putting gold and silver, tin and copper, into the cracks in the rocks, and he drank of the pure, underground water, which gives the Midgard people fresh springs.

After two days this messenger returned to the dwarf king. The king, holding out in his hand a fine, small chain, said to the messenger: “This may seem to you to be small and weak; but it is a most wonderful piece of work, for we have used in it all the strongest stuff we could find. It is made of six kinds of things: the noise made by the footfall of cats, the roots of stones, the beards of women, the voice of fishes, the spittle of birds, the sinews of bears. This chain can never be broken; and if you can once put it on Fenrir, he will never be able to throw it off.”

Odin’s messenger was glad to hear this, so he thanked the dwarf king, and promising him a large reward, he went on his way back to Asgard, where the Aesir were longing for his return, and were all rejoiced to see him with the magic chain.

Now Father Odin feared that Fenrir would not let them bind him a third time, so he proposed they should all take a holiday, and go out to a beautiful lake to the north of Asgard, where they would have games and trials of strength. The other gods were pleased with this plan, and all set out in Frey’s wonderful ship, which was large enough to hold all the Aesir with their horses, and yet could be folded up small enough to go in one’s pocket.

They landed on a lovely island in the lake, and after the races and games were over, Frey brought out the little chain, and asked them all to try to break it. Thor and Tyr tried in vain; then Thor said, “I do not believe any one but Fenrir can break it.”

Now the wolf did not want to be bound again; but he was very proud of his strength, and, for fear of being called a coward, said at last he would let them do it, if he might hold the right hand of one of the Aesir in his mouth while they bound him, as a sign that the gods did not mean to play any tricks.

When the gods heard this, they looked at each other, and all but one of them drew back. Only the brave, good Tyr stepping forward, quietly put his hand into Fenrir’s mouth. The other gods then put the chain around the beast, and fastened it to a great rock. The fierce creature gave a leap to free himself, but the more he struggled the tighter grew the chain. The Aesir gathered about him in joy to see this, but their hearts were filled with sorrow when they saw that their noble Tyr had lost his right hand; the dreadful wolf had shut his teeth together in his rage, when he found he could not get free.

Thus the brave Tyr dared to risk danger for the sake of saving others, and gave up even his right hand to gain peace and happiness for Asgard.

4

FREYJA'S NECKLACE

"Yes, I really must have some flowers to wear to the feast to-night," said Freyja to her husband, Odur.

Freyja was the goddess of love and beauty; she was the most beautiful of all the Aesir, and every one loved to look at her charming face, and to hear her sweet voice.

"I think you look quite beautiful enough as you are, without flowers," Odur replied, but Freyja was not satisfied; she thought she would go and find her brother Frey, the god of summer, for he would give her a garland of flowers. So she wandered forth from Asgard on her way to Frey's bright home in Alfheim, where he lived among his happy, busy little elves. As Freyja walked along she was thinking of the feast to be given that night in Asgard, and knowing that all the gods and goddesses would be there, she wished to look her very best.

On and on she wandered, not thinking how far she was getting away from home. Finally the light began to grow fainter and fainter, and Freyja found herself in a strange place. The sunlight had faded away, but there was still a little light that came from lanterns carried by funny little dwarfs, who were busily working. Some were digging gold and gems, others were cleaning off the dirt from the precious stones, and polishing them to make them bright, while four little fellows were seated in one corner, putting the sparkling stones together into a wonderful necklace.

"What can that beautiful thing be?" thought Freyja. "If only I had that, it would surely make me look more beautiful than any one else at the feast to-night!" And the more she thought about it, the more she longed to get it. "Oh, I really must have it!" she said to herself, and with these words she stepped nearer to the four little men. "For what price will you sell me your necklace?" she asked.

The dwarfs looked up from their work, and when they saw Freyja's lovely face and heard her sweet voice, said, "Oh, if you will only look kindly upon us, and be our friend, you may have the necklace!"

Then a mocking laugh echoed again and again through the dark cavern, seeming to say, "How foolish you are to wish for these bright diamonds; they will not make you happy!" But Freyja snatched the necklace and ran out of the cavern. It did not please her to hear the teasing laugh of the dwarfs, and she wanted to get away from them as soon as possible.

At last she was once more out in the open air; she tried to be free and happy again, but a strange feeling of dread came over her, as if something were going to happen. Soon she came to a still pool of water, and, putting on the necklace, she bent over to look at her picture in the clear water. How beautiful the diamonds were! and how they sparkled in the sunshine! She must hasten home to show them to Odur.

The fair goddess soon reached Asgard, and hurried to the palace to find her husband. But Odur was not there. Over and over again she searched through all the rooms in vain; he had gone, and although Freyja had her beautiful necklace, she cared little for it without her dear husband.

Soon it was time to go to the feast, but Freyja would not go without Odur. She sat down and wept bitter tears; she felt no joy now for having the necklace, and no sorrow because she could not feast with the Aesir

If only Odur would come back, all would be well again. “I will go to the end of the world to find him!” said Freyja, and she began to make ready for her journey. Her chariot, drawn by two cats, was soon ready; but before she could start, she must first ask Father Odin to allow her to go.

“Allfather, I beg you give me leave to go to look for my Odur in every corner of the world!”

The wise father replied, “Go, fair Freyja, and may you find whom you seek.”

Then she started forth. First to the Midgard world the goddess of beauty went, but no one in all the world had seen or heard of Odur. Down under the earth, to Niflheim, and even to Utgard, the land of giants, she wandered, but still no one had seen or even heard of her husband. Poor Freyja wept many tears, and wherever the teardrops fell, and sank into the ground, they turned into glistening gold.

At last the sad goddess returned to her own palace alone. She still wore the wonderful necklace, which was called Brisingamen.

One night, when the hour was late, all the Aesir were asleep, except the ever watchful Heimdall, who heard soft footsteps, like those of a cat, near Freyja’s palace. He listened, and thought, “That is surely some one bent on mischief; I must follow him.”

When Heimdall reached the palace, he found it was Loki, changed into another form, creeping softly about. Heimdall quietly watched him, and saw him glide in to Freyja’s bedside, where the fair goddess lay asleep, wearing her beautiful necklace. Loki had come to steal the necklace, but when he saw that she was lying on the clasp of the chain, so that he could not undo it without waking her, he changed himself into a gnat, and, crawling along on the pillow, stung her just enough to make her turn over, but not enough to wake her. Then he unclasped the chain and ran off with it as fast as he could.

But Heimdall was not going to let the thief get away. As soon as Loki found that he was followed, he took his other form, a little flame of fire; Heimdall then took his other shape, and became a shower of rain, to put out the fire; but Loki, quick and watchful, changed himself into a bear, to catch the rain. Then Heimdall too became a bear, and a fierce fight began. At last the rain-god conquered, and forced wicked Loki to give back the necklace to Freyja.

The whole land seemed to feel sorry for poor, lonely Freyja; the leaves fell from the trees, the bright flowers faded, and the singing birds flew away.

Once more the fair goddess went forth from Asgard to seek Odur. Away, away to the far-off sunny south she wandered, and there, where the myrtle trees and the oranges grow, at last she found her long-lost husband.

Then hand in hand the two turned northward again, to their home, and so happy were they together, that they spread joy and happiness around them as they passed along. Everywhere the ice and snow thawed before them, green grass and sweet flowers sprang up behind their footsteps, the birds sang their sweetest songs, the warm summer came back to the north lands, and every one was glad and joyful, for lovely, smiling Freyja was at home again.

5

THE HAMMER OF THOR

Sif was the wife of mighty Thor, the thunder-god, and she was very proud of her beautiful golden hair, which she combed and braided with great care. One morning when she awoke she was filled with grief and dismay to find that her lovely hair had been cut off in the night, while she slept. Her husband happened to be away that day, but when he came home late at night, Sif was careful to keep out of his sight, she felt so ashamed of her shorn head.

Thor, however, soon called for Sif, and when he saw what had been done to her, he was very angry. Now Thor had a quick temper; every one feared his fierce anger. “Who could have done this wicked deed?” thought he. “There is only one among all the Aesir who would think of doing such a thing!”

Thor lost no time in finding Loki, and that mischief-god had to admit that he was the guilty one, but he begged Thor to give him just a few days, and he promised to get something for Sif that would make her look more beautiful than ever. So Thor decided to give him a chance to try, and commanded him to give back to Sif her golden hair.

Now Loki knew a place where some wonderful workmen lived, so he went off, as fast as he could go, to Niflheim, the home of the dwarfs, under the earth, and asked one of them to make quickly some golden hair for Sif.

Besides this, he asked for two gifts to carry to the gods Odin and Frey, so that they might be on his side if Thor should bring his complaint before the Aesir.

Loki did not have to wait long before the dwarf brought him a quantity of beautiful hair, spun from the finest golden thread. It had the wonderful power of growing just like real hair, as soon as it touched any one’s head. Besides this, there was a spear for Odin, which never missed its aim, no matter how far it was thrown, and for Frey, a ship that could sail through the air as well as the sea. Although it was large enough to hold all the gods and their horses, yet it could be folded so that it was small enough to put in one’s pocket.

Loki was greatly pleased with these wonderful presents, and declared that this dwarf must be the most skillful workman of them all. Now it happened that another dwarf, named Brock, heard him say this, and he told Loki that he was sure he and his brother could make more wonderful things than these.

Loki did not believe that could be done, but he told Brock to try his skill; the Aesir should judge between them and the one who should fail in the trial must lose his head.

Then Brock called his brother, Sindri, and they set to work at once. They first built a great fire, and Sindri threw into it a lump of gold; then he told Brock to blow the bellows while he went out, and be sure not to stop blowing until he should come back.

Brock thought this an easy task, but his brother had not long been gone when a huge fly came in and buzzed about his face, and bothered him so that he could hardly keep on blowing; still he was able to finish his work, so that when Sindri came back, they took out of the fire an enormous wild boar, which gave out light, and could travel through the air with wonderful speed.

On the second day Sindri threw another lump of gold into the fire, and left his brother to blow the bellows. Again the buzzing, stinging fly came, and was even more troublesome than before; but Brock tried very hard to be patient, and was able to bear it without stopping his work until Sindri returned. Then they took from the fire a magic ring of gold, from which eight new rings fell off every week.

The third day a lump of iron was put into the fire, and Brock was again left alone. In came the cruel fly, — have you guessed that it was really that mischief-maker Loki? He bit the poor little dwarf so hard on the forehead that the blood ran down into his eyes, and blinded him so that he could no longer see to do his work.

Poor Brock had to stop just before Sindri came home, but not before the hammer which they were making in the fire was nearly finished, only the handle came out rather too short. This magic hammer was named Miölnir. It had the power of never missing its mark, and would always return to the hand which threw it.

When Loki appeared at last before the Aesir, with the two dwarf brothers and their gifts, it was declared that they had made the finest things, for the hammer, which was given to Thor, would surely be most useful in keeping the giants out of Asgard.

When Loki found that the judgment was against him, he started to run away; but Thor soon made him turn back by threatening to throw his hammer after him.

Then Loki had to collect his wits, and think of some way to escape losing his head, instead of making the dwarfs pay the forfeit, as he had expected. At last he told Brock and Sindri that they could have his head, according to the agreement, but as nothing had been said about his neck, they could not, of course, touch that.

Thus the wily Loki, by his wit, saved his life.

6

THOR’S WONDERFUL JOURNEY

One morning Thor asked Loki, the fire-god, if he would like to go forth with him to Utgard, the stronghold of the giants, where he was going to try, with his mighty hammer, to conquer those fierce enemies of Asgard. Loki was glad to go with him, and the two gods started forth in Thor’s chariot, drawn by two goats.

Thor often went on a journey, so the dwellers in Asgard did not wonder to see him getting ready for a long drive. As Thor and Loki drove along, the heavy chariot rattled, and made the thunder echo among the hills. People in our world, down below in Midgard, heard the rumbling, and said: “What a heavy thunderstorm! How the thunder crashes and rumbles!”

Toward evening the travelers stopped at a peasant’s hut, and Thor, alighting from his chariot, went to the door of the house, to ask shelter for the night.

“I will gladly give you a room, but I have no food in the house,” said the man who opened the door.

“Oh, never mind that,” said Thor; “I will provide the food.” So Thor and Loki stopped for the night at the peasant’s hut. They found the family within, the man, his wife, and two children, a boy and a girl. All looked on in great surprise to see Thor kill his two goats and cook them for the evening meal. “Eat all you wish of the meat,” said Thor, “but be careful not to break any of the bones; throw them all into the two skins which I have spread upon the floor."

Now the boy, whose name was Thialfe, wondered why Thor should say this, and as he happened to have a piece of the leg-bone, he thought there could be no harm in breaking it open, to get out the soft marrow to eat. Thor was just then talking to Loki, and did not notice what had been done; but next morning the boy learned a lesson that he never forgot.

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THE FOUR STARTED OFF, after saying good-by to the peasant and his wife, leaving in their charge the chariot and goats, for it seemed best to finish the journey on foot.

At nightfall they entered a thick forest, through which they wandered on for miles, when all at once they came upon a house, and a strange-looking house it was. The wide front door opened into a big room; at the left was a small room, and just opposite the front door were four long, narrow rooms.

The travelers wondered to find a house in the depths of a forest, but they were glad to have shelter for the night, and all lay down for a good rest. Soon after midnight they were awakened by groans and strange sounds, and the earth began to tremble. Thor sent his companions into the farthest room, grasped his hammer, and stood on guard by the door. At daybreak he started forth to find out what had caused the noise. He had not gone far when he came upon a huge giant, lying on the ground asleep, and Thor found that he was making the earth tremble with his snoring, which must have been the sound they had heard in the night.

While Thor was looking at the giant, he awoke, and spoke to the god. "Ho, ho! I think you little fellow must be Thor, of whom I have often heard, but really, I did not think you were quite so small! Now the sun is up, and I must be off; but where is my other glove? Oh, here it is, on the ground!"

And the giant stooped and picked up his glove, which was the very house in which our four travelers had spent the night, with the big front door where the hand went in, the thumb for the one side-room, and the four narrow finger-rooms opposite the door.

“If you are going my way, you may come along with me,” said the giant. So they journeyed together for one day, but even mighty Thor could hardly keep up with the giant’s long strides.

When night came, the giant stopped under a large oak tree, and said, “I am going to sleep; you may eat your supper, if you wish; here is a bag full of things.” Saying this, he fell asleep, and was soon snoring. But when Thor tried to open the bag of food, he could not untie the cord. This made him angry, for the giant had tied up their food with his own. He looked at the huge figure lying before him asleep, and when he thought what a mean trick the giant had played upon them, Thor seized the magic hammer, and threw it at him.

“Did a leaf fall on me?” said the giant, sleepily. “Haven’t you eaten your supper yet? Well, I am going to sleep again.” And soon he was snoring louder than before. Thor grasped his hammer tighter than ever, and threw it with such strength that it seemed as though it must surely have killed the giant; but again he rubbed his eyes, and said, “I thought an acorn fell on my head!” He had hardly spoken when he was asleep again.

Then a third time Thor hurled his hammer with all his strength, and it seemed to hit his enemy in the forehead, and was buried out of sight, but the giant only said: “I think there must be birds overhead in this tree; I thought a feather dropped down on me. Are you awake, Thor? I think we’d better be going on with our journey, and if you are bound to go to Utgard, I will show you the way, but I advise you to go home instead; you will find bigger fellows than I in Utgard!”

ut Thor had made up his mind to go on, and nothing could make him change. At noontime the four friends left their giant guide, whose path led another way. They had not traveled far when Thor spied a large city looming up before them, and soon they came to Utgard, the home of the fierce giants.

Although it was surrounded by high walls, Thor and his friends were able to creep through the bars of the great gate. When they came to the palace and found its door open, they went in, and there sat all the giants with their king, Utgard-Loki, at their head. A quite different Loki was this giant king from the mischievous fire-god, the Loki from Asgard, who now stood before him.

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UPON SEEING THE FOUR STRANGERS, the king of the giants said: “Why, this must be the god Thor. I really did not suppose that you were such a little fellow, Thor! but probably you are stronger than you look. Now, before you sit down at our table, you must each show some proof of your strength!”

Then Loki, who was very hungry, said he was sure he could eat more than any one else; so the king called one of the giants to come forth, saying to Loki, “If you can indeed eat more than one of my men, you will perform a great feat.”

A huge trough, full of meat, was brought in, and Loki began eating at one end, while the giant began at the other. They reached the center together; but Loki had eaten only the meat, while the giant had devoured meat, bones, trough, and all.

Thialfe, the peasant boy, took his turn next, and boasted that he was the fastest runner of them all. “Oh,” said the king, “it will be a most wonderful feat if you can win a race against one of my men!” The first time Thialfe ran the course he kept ahead until near the end, and was beaten by only a few yards. The second time he came off worse, and the third time he was only halfway around when the giant had reached the goal.

Thor, however, was not at all cast down by the failure of the others, and he proposed to try a drinking match. So the king brought forth a long drinking horn, saying, “My men usually empty this in one draught, if they are very thirsty, though sometimes they have to take it in two swallows, or even three.”

Then Thor put his lips to the drinking horn, and took one long, deep pull, thinking he had surely emptied it, but to his surprise, the water had lowered only a few inches. Again he lifted the horn, feeling sure he should empty it this time, yet he did no better than before. The king said, “You have left a great deal for your last drink!”

This made Thor try his very best; but it was of no use, he could not empty the horn.

“So you are not as strong as you seemed, after all! Do you care to try anything else?” said the king of the giants, in a mocking tone.

“Oh, certainly, anything you like!” replied Thor.

“Well,” said the king, “I will give you something easy this time, since I see you are not as strong as I expected. You may try to lift this cat from the floor; it would be mere child’s play for one of my men.”

Thor put out his hand to lift the cat, but he could raise only one paw, though he used all his strength.

“Well, it is no more than I expected!” said the king; “you boast of your strength, but you do not show it to us.”

By this time Thor was getting very angry, and he spoke fiercely, “I will challenge any one of you to fight with me!”

The king looked about the hall to find some one small enough to wrestle with Thor. Then he said, “All my men are too large, I shall have to send for one of the women!” Soon a bent old woman came hobbling in, and Thor thought it would be nothing to overcome her; but the longer they wrestled, the stronger the old woman became, and at last, when it was plain that she was going to win, and Thor had been thrown down upon the floor, the king called to them to stop.

Thor and his friends were then invited to sit down at the feast, and the next morning, after a good breakfast, they started on their journey homeward. Utgard-Loki, the giant king, went with them to the city gate, and when he was about to leave them, said, “Do you find it as easy as you expected to overthrow the giants?”

“No,” said Thor, who was too honest to hide his shame, “I am vexed that I have done so little, and I know that after this failure, you will all laugh at my weakness.”

“No, indeed,” replied the king; “since you are now well outside our stronghold I will tell you the truth about what you saw there, and I will take good care not to let you get in again. You have greatly surprised us all, for we did not dream that you were so strong, and I have had to use magic to hold out against you.

“When you met the first giant in the forest you would have killed him with your hammer, if he had not put a mountain between himself and you. Loki was a wonderful eater, but we matched him against fire, and who can devour more than fire? The boy was a swift runner, and I had to make him race against thought, in order to beat him; what can be swifter than thought? The horn, from which you drank, was the ocean, and you took such a mighty draught, that the people in Midgard saw the tide ebb. It was really not a cat you tried to lift, but the Midgard Serpent, and you pulled him so far that we feared he would let go his hold. Then you wrestled with Old Age, and who is there that can overcome Old Age?”

With these words the giant king vanished, and Thor, upon looking around, saw the city of Utgard was also gone.

Then silently, but with many thoughts of these strange things, Thor and Loki, with the boy and the girl, made their way back to Asgard.

7

HOW THOR LOST HIS HAMMER

“Come, Loki, are you ready? My goats are eager to be off!” cried Thor, as he sprang into his chariot, and away they went, thundering over the hills. All day long they journeyed, and at night they lay down to rest by the side of a brook.

When Baldur, the bright sun-god, awoke them in the morning, the first thing Thor did was to reach out for Miölnir, his magic hammer, which he had carefully laid by his side the night before.

“Why, Loki!” cried he. “Alas, my hammer is gone! Those evil frost giants must have stolen it from me while I slept. How shall we hold Asgard against them without my hammer? They will surely take our stronghold!”

“We must go quickly and find it!” replied Loki. “Let us ask Freyja to lend us her falcon garment.”

Now the goddess, Freyja, had a wonderful garment made of falcon feathers, and whoever wore it looked just like a bird. As you may suppose, this was sometimes a very useful thing. So Thor and Loki went quickly back to Asgard, and drove with all speed to Freyja’s palace, where they found her sitting among her maidens. “Asgard is in great danger!” said Thor, “and we have come to you, fair goddess, to ask if you will lend us your falcon garment, for my hammer has been carried off, and we must go in search of it.”

“Surely,” answered Freyja, “I would lend you my falcon cloak, even if it were made of gold and silver!”

Then Loki quickly dressed himself in Freyja’s garment and flew away to the land of the frost giants, where he found their king making collars of gold for his dogs, and combing his horses. As Loki came near, he looked up and said, “Ah, Loki, how fare the mighty gods in Asgard?”

“The Aesir are in great trouble,” replied Loki, “and I am sent to fetch the hammer of Thor.”

“And do you think I am going to be foolish enough to give it back to you, after I have had all the trouble of getting it into my power?” said the king. “I have buried it deep, deep, down in the earth, and there is only one way by which you can get it again. You must bring me the goddess Freyja to be my wife!”

Loki did not know what to say to this, for he felt sure that Freyja would never be willing to go away from Asgard to live among the fierce giants; but as he saw no chance of getting the hammer, he flew back to Asgard, to see what could be done.

Thor was anxiously looking out for him. “What news do you bring, Loki?” cried he. “Have you brought me my hammer again?”

“Alas, no!” said Loki. “I bring only a message from the giant king. He will not give up your hammer until you persuade Freyja to marry him!”

Then Thor and Loki went together to Freyja’s palace, and the fair goddess greeted them kindly, but when she heard their errand, and found they wished her to marry the cruel giant, she was very angry, and said to Thor, “You should not have been so careless as to lose your hammer; it is all your own fault that it is gone, and I will never marry the giant to help you get it again.”

Thor then went to tell Father Odin, who called a meeting of all the Aesir, for it was a very serious matter they were to consider. If the king of the giants only knew the power of the mighty hammer, he might storm Asgard, and carry off the fair Freyja to be his bride.

So the Aesir met together in their great judgment hall, in the palace of Gladsheim; long and anxiously they talked over their peril, trying to find some plan for saving Asgard from these enemies. At last Heimdall, the faithful watchman of the rainbow bridge, proposed a plan.

“Let us dress Thor,” said he, “in Freyja’s robes, braid his hair, and let him wear Freyja’s wonderful necklace, and a bridal veil!”

“No, indeed!” cried Thor, angrily, “you would all laugh at me in a woman’s dress; I will do no such thing! We must find some other way.” But when no other way could be found, at last Thor was persuaded to try Heimdall’s plan, and the Aesir went to work to dress the mighty thunder-god like a bride. He was the tallest of them all, and, of course, he looked very queer to them in his woman’s clothes, but he would be small enough beside a giant. Then they dressed Loki to look like the bride’s waiting-maid, and the two set off for Utgard, the stronghold of the giants.

When the giant king saw them coming he bade his servants make ready the wedding feast, and invited all his giant subjects to come and celebrate his marriage with the lovely goddess Freyja.

So the wedding party sat down to the feast, and Thor, who was always a good eater, ate one ox and eight salmon, and drank three casks of mead. The king watched him, greatly surprised to see a woman eat so much, and said: —

WHERE HAST THOU seen
Such a hungry bride!

BUT THE WATCHFUL LOKI, who stood near by, as the bride's waiting-maid, whispered in the king's ear, "Eight nights has Freyja fasted and would take no food, so anxious was she to be your bride!"

This pleased the giant, and he went toward Thor, saying he must kiss his fair bride. But when he lifted the bridal veil, such a gleam of light shot from Thor's eyes that the king started back, and asked why Freyja's eyes were so sharp.

Again Loki replied, "For eight nights the fair Freyja has not slept, so greatly did she long to reach here!" This again pleased the king, and he said, "Now let the hammer be brought and given to the bride, for the hour has come for our marriage!"

All this time Thor was so eager to get his treasure back that he could hardly keep still, and if it had not been for what the wily Loki said, he might have been found out too soon. But at last the precious hammer was brought and handed to the bride, as was always the custom at weddings; as soon as Thor grasped it in his hand, he threw off his woman's robes and stood out before the astonished giants.

Then did the mighty Thunderer sweep down his foes, and many of the cruel frost giants were slain. Once more the sacred city of Asgard was saved from danger, for Thor was its defender, and he was careful never again to let his magic hammer be taken from him.

Besides the hammer, Thor had two other precious things, his belt of strength, which doubled his power when he tightened it, and his iron glove, which he put on when he was going to throw the hammer.

8

A GIFT FROM FRIGGA

Long years ago there lived a peasant and his wife, who led a quiet, busy life on their little farm at the foot of a mountain. While the wife was busy indoors with her housework, her husband watched his flocks in the fields, or sometimes wandered up the mountain-side to hunt for game, which he would carry home for dinner.

One day he had strayed farther than usual, and found himself on the top of the mountain, where the ground was covered with ice and snow. All at once he came upon a high arched doorway opening into a great glacier, and he passed through to see whither it might lead.

The passageway widened out into a wonderful cavern, like a broad hall, sparkling with precious stones, and long, shining stalactites, that looked like icicles of marble. In the midst stood a beautiful goddess, surrounded by fair maidens, all dressed in silvery robes, and crowned with flowers.

The shepherd was so overcome by the wonder of this sight that he sank upon his knees. Then the goddess stretched forth her hands and gave him her blessing, telling him to choose whatever he wished, to carry home from the cavern. The man was no longer afraid when he heard her kind voice speaking to him, so he looked about, and at last humbly asked to have the pretty blue flowers which the fair one held in her hand.

The lovely goddess Frigga, or Holda, as the German people called her, smiled kindly, and told the poor shepherd he had made a wise choice. She gave him her bunch of blue flowers, with a measure of seed, saying to him, “You will live and be prosperous so long as the flowers do not fade.”

The peasant bowed thankfully before the goddess, and when he rose she had vanished, and he was alone on the mountain-side, just as usual, with no cavern, no sparkling stones, and no fair maidens to be seen. If it had not been for the pretty blue flowers and the measure of seed in his hand, he would have thought it all a dream.

He hurried homeward to tell his wife, who was angry when she heard the story, for she thought he had made such a foolish choice. “How much better it would have been,” said she, “if you had brought home some of those precious stones you tell about, which are worth money, instead of these good-for-nothing flowers!”

The poor man bore her angry words quietly, and made the best of what he had. He went to work at once to sow his seeds, which he found, to his surprise, were enough to plant several fields.

Every morning before he led his flock to pasture, and on his way home at night, he watched the little green shoots growing in his fields. Even his wife was pleased when she saw the lovely blue blossoms of the flax opening; then, after they had withered and fallen, the seeds formed. Sometimes it seemed to the good man, as he stood in the twilight looking over his field, that he saw a misty form, like the beautiful goddess, stretching out her hands over the field of flax, to give it her blessing.

When at length the seeds had ripened, Frigga came again to show the peasant how to gather his harvest of flax, and to teach his wife to spin and weave it into fine linen, which she bleached in the sun. The people came from far and near to buy the linen, and the peasant and his wife found themselves busy and happy, with money enough and to spare.

When they had lived many years, and were growing old among their children and grandchildren, the peasant noticed one day that the bunch of blue flowers, given to him so many years before, and which had always kept bright, were beginning to fade; then he knew he had not much longer to stay.

He climbed slowly up the mountain-side, and found the door of the cavern open. A second time he went in, and the kind goddess Frigga took the peasant by the hand, and led him away to stay with her, where she always took care of him.

Frigga was the queen of the gods, and she helped her husband, Odin, govern the world. It was her part to look after the children, and help the mothers take care of their families.

9

THE STEALING OF IDUNA

Odin, the wise father of the gods, started off one day on a journey through Midgard, the world of men, to see how his people were getting on, and to give them help. He took with him his brother Hönir, the light-giver, and Loki, the fire-god. Loki, you know, was always ready to go wherever he could have any fun or do any mischief.

All the morning they went about among the homes of Midgard, and whenever Odin found busy, faithful workers, he was sure to leave behind some little thing which would hardly be noticed, a straw in the farmer's barn, or a kernel of grain in the furrow by the plow, or a bit of iron at the blacksmith's forge; but always happiness and plenty followed his little gift.

At noontime Loki was so hungry that he begged Odin to stop for dinner; so when they came to a shady spot by the bank of a river, the three gods chose it for their resting-place.

Odin threw himself down under a tree and began to read his little book of runes, or wise sayings, but Loki began to make a fire and get ready for the feast. Then he started off to a farmhouse near by, leaving Hönir to cook the meat which they had brought.

As Loki came near the farmhouse, he thought to himself, "I will change myself into a cat, and then I can have a better chance to spy about." So he changed himself into a black cat, and jumping upon the kitchen window-sill, he saw the farmer’s wife taking some cakes out of the oven. They smelled so good and looked so tempting that Loki said to himself, “What a prize those cakes would be for our dinner!”

Just then the woman turned back to the oven to get more cakes, and Loki snatched those which she had laid on the table. The good housewife soon missed her cakes; she looked all about, and could not think what had become of them, but just as she was taking the last lot from the oven, she turned quickly around, and saw the tail of a cat whisking out of the window.

“There!” cried she, “that wicked black cat has stolen my nice cakes. I will go after him with my broom!” But by the time she reached the door all she could see was a cow walking in her garden, and when she came there to drive her away, nothing was to be seen except a big raven and six little ones flying overhead.

Then the mischievous Loki went back to the river bank, where he had left his two friends, and showed them the six cakes, boasting of the good joke he had played upon the poor woman. But Odin did not think it was a joke. He scolded Loki for stealing, and said, “It is a shame for one of the Aesir to be a thief! Go back to the farmhouse, and put these three black stones on the kitchen table.”

Loki knew that the stones meant something good for the poor woman, and he did not wish to go back to the house; but he had to do as the Allfather told him. As he went along he heard his friends the foxes, who put their heads out of their holes and laughed at his tricks, for the foxes thought Loki was the biggest thief of them all.

Changing himself into an owl, Loki flew in at the kitchen window, and dropped from his beak the three stones, which, when they fell upon the white table, seemed to be three black stains.

The next time the good woman came into her kitchen, she was surprised to find that the dinner was all cooked. And so the wonderful stones that Odin had sent brought good luck; the housewife always found her food ready cooked, and all her jars and boxes filled with good things to eat, and never again was in need.

The other women all said she was the best housekeeper in the village, but one thing always troubled her, and that was the table with the three black stains. She scrubbed, and scrubbed, but could never make it white again.

And now we must go back to Loki. He was very hungry by this time, and hoped that Hönir would have the meat nicely cooked when he came back to the river bank, but when they took it out of the kettle, they found it was not cooked at all. So Odin went on reading his book of runes, not thinking about food, while Hönir and Loki watched the fire, and at the end of an hour they looked again at the meat.

“Now, it will surely be done this time!” said Loki, but again they were disappointed, for the meat in the kettle was still raw. Then they began to look about to see what magic might be at work, and at last spied a big eagle sitting on a tree near the fire. All at once the bird spoke, and said, “If you will promise to give me all the meat I can eat, it shall be cooked in a few minutes.”

The three friends agreed to this, and in a short time, as the bird had promised, the meat was well done, Loki was so hungry he could hardly wait to get it out of the kettle, but suddenly the eagle pounced down upon it, and seized more than half, which made Loki so angry that he took up a stick to beat the bird, and what do you think happened? Why, the stick, as soon as it touched the bird’s back, stuck fast there, and Loki found he could not let go his end of it. Then away flew the eagle, carrying Loki with him, over the fields and over the tree-tops, until it seemed as though his arms would be torn from his body. He begged for mercy, but the bird flew on and on. At last Loki said, “I will give you anything you ask, if you will only let me go!”

Now the eagle was really the cruel storm giant Thiassi, and he said, “I will never let you go until you promise to get for me, from Asgard, the lovely goddess Iduna, and her precious apples!”

When Odin and Hönir saw Loki whisked off through the air, they knew that the eagle must be one of their giant enemies, so they hurried home to Asgard to defend their sacred city. Just as they came to Bifröst, the rainbow bridge, Loki joined them; but he took care not to tell them how the eagle came to let him go.

Odin felt sure that Loki had been doing something wrong, but knowing very well that Loki would not tell him the truth, he made up his mind not to ask any questions.

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The goddess Iduna, whom Loki was to tempt away out of Asgard, was the dearest of them all. She was the fair goddess of spring and of youth, and all the Aesir loved her. Her garden was the loveliest spot, with all sorts of bright, sweet flowers, birds singing by day and night, little chattering brooks under the great trees, and everything happy and fresh. The gods loved to go and sit with Iduna, and rest in her beautiful garden, within the walls of Asgard.

There was another delightful thing in the garden, and that was Iduna’s casket. This was a magic box filled with big, golden-red apples, which she always gave her friends to taste. These wonderful apples were not only delicious to eat, but whoever tasted them, no matter how tired or feeble he might be, would feel young and strong again. So the dwellers in Asgard ate often of this wonderful fruit, which kept them fresh and young, fit to help the people in the world of Midgard. The casket in which Iduna kept her apples was always filled, for whenever she took out one, another came in its place; but no one knew where it came from, and only the goddess of youth, herself, could take the apples from the box, for if any one else tried, the fruit grew smaller and smaller, as the hand came nearer, until at last it vanished away.

A few days after Loki's bargain with the giant Thiassi, Iduna was in her bright garden one morning, watering the flowers, when her husband, Bragi, came to say good-by to her, because he must go on a journey.

Loki watched him start off, and thought, "Now, here is my chance to tempt Iduna away from Asgard." After a while he went to the garden, and found the lovely goddess sitting among her flowers and birds. She looked up at Loki with such a sweet smile, as he came near, that he felt almost ashamed of his cruel plan; but he sat down on a grassy bank, and asked Iduna for one of her magic apples.

After tasting it, he smacked his lips, saying, "Do you know, fair Iduna, as I was coming home toward Asgard one day, I saw a tree full of apples which were really larger and more beautiful than yours; I do wish you would go with me and see them."

"Why, how can that be?" said Iduna, "for Father Odin has often told me that my apples were the largest and finest he ever saw. I should so like to see those others, and I think I will go with you now, to compare them with mine."

"Come on, then!" said Loki; "and you'd better take along your own apples, so that we can try them with the others."

Now Bragi had often told Iduna that she must never wander away from home, but, thinking it would do no harm to go such a little way, just this once, she took the casket of apples in her hand and went with Loki. They had hardly passed through the garden gate, when she began to wish herself back again, but Loki, taking her by the hand, hurried along to the rainbow bridge.

They had no sooner crossed over Bifröst than Iduna saw a big eagle flying toward them. Nearer and nearer he came, until at last he swooped down and seized poor Iduna with his sharp talons, and flew away with her to his cold, barren home. There she stayed shut up for many long dreary months, always longing to get back to Asgard, to see Bragi and her lovely garden.

The giant Thiassi had long been planning that if he could only once get the fair goddess of youth in his power, he would eat her magic apples, and so get strength enough to conquer the Aesir; but now, after all, she would not give him even one of them, and when he put his hand into the casket, the apples grew smaller and smaller, until at last they vanished, so that he could not get even a taste.

This cruel storm giant kept poor Iduna closely shut up in a little rock chamber, hoping that some day he could force her to give him what he wanted. All day long she heard the sea beating on the rocks below her gloomy cell, but she could not look out, for the only window was a narrow opening in the rock, high up above her head. She saw no one but the giant, and his serving-women, who waited upon her.

When these women first came to her, Iduna was surprised to see that they were not ugly or stern-looking, and, when she looked at their fair, smiling faces, she hoped they would be friendly and pitiful to her in her trouble. She begged them to help her, and, with many tears, told them her sad story; but still they kept on smiling, and when they turned their backs, Iduna saw that they were hollow. These were the Ellewomen, who had no hearts, and so could never be sorry for any one. When one is in trouble, it is very hard to be with Ellewomen.

Every day the giant came to ask Iduna, in his terrible voice, if she had made up her mind to give him the apples. Iduna was frightened, but she always had courage enough to say “No,” for she knew it would be false and cowardly to give to a wicked giant these precious gifts which were meant for the high gods. Although it was hard to be a prisoner, and to see no one but the cold, fair Ellewomen who kept on smiling at her tears, she knew it was far better to belong to the bright Aesir, even in prison, than to be a giant, or an Ellewoman, no matter how free or smiling they might be.

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ALL THIS WHILE the dwellers in Asgard were sad and lonely without their dear Iduna. At first they went to her garden, as before, but they missed the bright goddess, and soon the garden itself grew dreary. The fresh green leaves turned brown and fell, the flowers faded, no new buds opened. No bird-songs were heard, and the saddest thing of all was that now the gods had no more of the wonderful apples to keep them fresh and strong, while two strangers, named Age and Pain, walked about the city of Asgard, and the Aesir felt themselves growing tired and feeble.

Every day they watched for Iduna's return; at last, when day after day had passed, and still she did not come, a meeting of all the gods and goddesses was called to talk over what they should do, and where they should search for their lost sister.

Loki, you may be sure, took care not to show himself at the meeting; but when it was found out that Iduna had last been seen walking with him, Bragi went after him, and brought him in before all the Aesir.

Then Father Odin, who sat on his high throne, looking very tired and sad, said: "Oh, Loki, what is this that you have done? You have broken your promise of brotherhood, and brought sorrow upon Asgard! Fail not to bring home again our sister, or else come not yourself within our gates!"

Loki knew well that this command must be obeyed, and besides, even he was beginning to wish for Iduna again; so, borrowing the cloak of falcon feathers which belonged to the goddess Freyja, he put it on and set out for Utgard and the castle of the giant Thiassi, which was a gloomy cave in a high rock by the sea, and there he found poor Iduna shut up in prison.

By good luck, the giant was away fishing when Loki arrived, so he was able to fly in, without being seen, through the narrow opening in Iduna’s rock cell. You would have taken him to be just a falcon bird, but Iduna knew it was really Loki, and was filled with joy to see him. Without stopping to talk, Loki quickly changed her into a nut, which he held fast in his falcon claws, and flew swiftly northward, over the sea, toward Asgard. He had not gone far when he heard a rushing noise behind them, and he knew it must be the eagle. Faster and faster flew the falcon with his precious nut; but the fierce eagle flew still faster after them.

Meanwhile, for five days, the dwellers in Asgard gathered together on the city walls, gazing southward, to watch for the coming of the birds, while Loki and Iduna, chased by Thiassi, the eagle, flew over the wide sea separating Utgard, the land of the giants, from Asgard. Each night the eagle was nearer his prey, and the watchers in the city were filled with fear lest he should overtake their friends.

At last they thought of a plan to help Iduna: gathering a great pile of wood by the city walls, they set fire to it. When Loki reached the place he flew safely through the thick smoke and flame, for you know he was the god of fire, and dropped down into the city with his little nut held fast in his falcon claws. But when the heavy eagle came rushing on after them, he could not rise above the heat of the fire, and, smothered by the smoke, fell down and was burned to death.

There was great joy in Asgard at having the dear Iduna back again; her friends gathered around her, and she invited them all into her garden, where the withered trees and flowers began to sprout and blossom; the gay birds came back, singing and building their nests, and the happy little brooks went dancing under the trees.

Iduna sat with Bragi among her friends, and they all feasted upon her golden apples; she was so thankful to be free, and at home in her garden again. Once more the Aesir became young and strong, and the two dark strangers went away, for happiness and peace had come back to Asgard.

10

SKADI

While Iduna's friends were still crowding about her, all joyful and glad at getting her home again, they spied some one afar off, coming toward Asgard.

As the figure drew nearer, they saw it was Skadi, the tall daughter of the frost giant Thiassi, who had chased Iduna; she was dressed all in white fur, and carried a shining hunting-spear and arrows. Slung over her shoulder were snowshoes and skates, for Skadi had come from her mountain home in the icy north. Very angry about the loss of her father, she had come to ask the Aesir why they had been so cruel to him.

Father Odin spoke kindly to her, saying, "We will do honor to your father by putting his eyes in the sky, where they will always shine as two bright stars, and the people in Midgard will remember Thiassi whenever they look up at night and see the two twinkling lights. Besides this, we will also give you gold and silver." But Skadi, thinking money could never repay her for the loss of her father, was still angry.

Loki looked at her stern face, and he said to himself, "If we can only make Skadi laugh, she will be more ready to agree to the plan," and he began to think of some way to amuse her. Taking a long cord he tied it to a goat; it was an invisible cord, which no one could see, and Loki himself held the other end of it. Then he began to dance and caper about, and the goat had to do just what Loki did. It really was such a funny sight, that all the gods shouted with laughter, and even poor, sorrowful Skadi had to smile.

When the Aesir saw this, they proposed another plan: Skadi might choose one of the gods for her husband, but she must choose, from seeing only his bare feet. The giantess looked at them all, as they stood before her, and when she saw the bright face of Baldur, more beautiful than all the rest, she agreed to their plan, saying to herself, “It might be that I should choose him, and then I should surely be happy.”

The gods then stood in a row behind a curtain, so that Skadi could see nothing but their bare feet. She looked carefully at them all, and at last chose the pair of feet which seemed to her the whitest, and of the finest shape, thinking those must be Baldur’s; but when the curtain was taken away, she was surprised and sorry to find she had chosen Niörd, the god of the seashore.

The wedding took place at Asgard, and when the feasting was over, Skadi and Niörd went to dwell in his home by the sea. At first they were very happy, for Niörd was kind to his giant bride; but how could you expect one of the Aesir to live happily very long with a frost giantess for his wife?

Skadi did not like the roar of the waves, and hated the cries of the sea-gulls and the murmur of gentle summer winds. She longed for her frozen home, far away in the north, amid ice and snow.

And so they finally agreed that, for nine months of the year, Niörd should live with Skadi among her snowy mountains, where she found happiness in hunting over the white hills and valleys on her snowshoes, with her hunting dogs at her side, or skating on the ice-bound rivers and lakes. Then for the three short months of summer Skadi must live with Niörd in his palace by the sea, while he calmed the stormy ocean waves, and helped the busy fishermen to have good sailing for their boats.

Niörd loved to wander along the shore, his jacket trimmed with a fringe of lovely seaweeds and his belt made of the prettiest shells on the beach, with the friendly little sandpipers running before him, and beautiful gulls and other sea birds sailing in the air above his head. Sometimes he loved to sit on the rocks by the shore, watching the seals play in the sunshine, or feeding the beautiful swans, his favorite birds.

There is a kind of sponge, which the people in the north still call Niörd’s glove, in memory of this old Norse god.

11

BALDUR

Baldur was the best beloved of all the gods. Odin was their father and king; to him they turned for help and wise advice, but it was to Baldur they went for loving words and bright smiles. The sight of his kind face was a joy to the Aesir, and to all the people of Midgard. They sometimes called him the god of light, a good name for him, because he truly gave to the world light and strength.

Baldur was the son of Odin and Frigga; he was the most gentle and lovely of all the gods. His beautiful palace in Asgard was bright and spotless; no evil creature could enter there; no one who had wrong thoughts could stay in that palace of love and truth.

At last, after the bright summer was over, for many days Baldur had looked sad and troubled. Some of the Aesir saw it, but most of all, his loving, watchful mother, Frigga. Baldur could not bear to worry his mother, so he kept his sorrow to himself, saying nothing about it; but at last Frigga drew his secret from him, and then his friends knew that Baldur had had dreams which told of coming trouble, dreams of his leaving all his friends and going away from Asgard, to dwell in another land.

Odin and Frigga, fearing the dreams might come true and they must lose their beloved son, began to think what they could do to prevent it.

Then the loving mother said, “I will make all things in the world promise not to hurt our son.” And so Queen Frigga sent out for everything in the whole world, and everything came trooping to Asgard, to her palace. All living creatures came from the land, from the water, and from the air. All plants and trees came; all rocks, stones, and even the metals under the earth, where the busy dwarfs worked. Fire came, and water, as well as all poisons, and sickness. Everything promised not to harm the good Baldur, except one little plant called mistletoe, which was so small that Frigga did not send for it, feeling sure it could not do any harm.

“Now I am happy once more,” said the queen, “for our Baldur is safe!” And she sat at peace in her beautiful palace, rejoicing that her dear son was free from all danger.

But Odin, the wise Allfather, still felt uneasy, even after all these promises, fearing what might happen. So he took his eight-footed steed, Sleipnir, and rode forth from Asgard to the underworld to find Hela, the wise woman who ruled over that far-off land. She could tell everything that was going to happen, and she knew the names of all those who were coming to dwell with her. Odin was the only one wise enough to speak with Hela, for no one else knew the words that would call her forth from her dwelling; but when Odin called, she came to answer.

“Tell me,” said he, “for whom are you making ready this costly room?”

“We make ready for Baldur, the god of light,” replied Hela.

“Who, then, will slay Baldur, and bring such darkness and sorrow to Asgard?”

Again said the wise woman, “It is Hodur, Baldur’s twin brother, who will slay the sun-god.” And with these words she vanished.

Sadly Father Odin returned to Asgard, and told his wife the words of Hela; but Frigga was not troubled in her heart, for she felt sure that nothing would hurt her dear son.

* * *

One beautiful sunny day at the end of summer the gods had all gone out to an open field beyond Asgard to have some sports. As they all knew that nothing could hurt Baldur, they placed him at the end of the field for a target, and then took turns throwing their darts at him, just for the fun of seeing them fall off without hurting him. They thought this was showing great honor to Baldur, and he was pleased to join in the sport.

Loki happened to be away when they began to play, and when he came was angry in his heart that nothing could hurt Baldur.

“Why should he be so favored? I hate him!” said Loki to himself, and began at once to plan some evil.

All this while Queen Frigga sat in her palace, thinking of all her dear sons, and of how much good they did to men. As she sat thus, thinking, and spinning with her hands, there came a knock at the door. The queen called, “Come in!” and an old woman stood before her.

Frigga spoke kindly to her, and soon the old woman said she had passed by the field where the gods were playing, and throwing sharp weapons at Baldur.

“Oh, yes,” said Frigga; “neither metal nor wood can hurt him, for all things in the world have given me their promise.”

“What!” said the old woman; “do you mean that all things have really vowed to spare Baldur?”

“All,” replied the queen, “except one little plant that grows on the eastern side of Asgard; it is called mistletoe, and I thought it too small and soft to do any harm.”

Before long the old woman went away, and when she was quite out of sight of Frigga’s palace, threw off her woman’s clothes, and who do you suppose it was? Why, no woman at all, but that wicked Loki, of course, who hurried away out of Asgard, to find the poor little plant that did not know about Baldur’s danger. When he came to the place where the plant grew, Loki cutting off a branch, quickly made a sharp arrow, which he carried back to the playground, where the Aesir were still at their game, all but one, Hodur, the god of darkness, Baldur’s blind twin brother.

Then Loki went up to Hodur, and said to him in a low voice, “Why do you not join with the others in doing honor to Baldur?”

“I cannot see to take aim, you know, and besides, I have no weapon,” said Hodur.

“Come, then, here is a fine new dart for you, and I will guide your hand,” whispered wicked Loki; then he slipped the arrow of mistletoe wood into Hodur’s hand and aimed it himself at Baldur, who stood there so bright and smiling.

Then poor blind Hodur heard a dreadful cry from all the gods: Baldur the Beautiful had fallen, struck by the arrow; he would now be taken away from them, to live with Hela in the underworld.

Every heart was filled with sorrow for this dreadful loss; but no one tried to punish him who had done the wicked deed, for they stood upon sacred ground, and the field was named the Peace-stead, or Place of Peace, where no one might hurt another. Besides, the gods did not know it was the false Loki who hated Baldur, that had struck him down.

When Frigga heard the sad news, she asked who would win her love by going to the underworld and begging Hela to let Baldur come back to them.

Hermod, the swift messenger-god, ready to do his mother’s bidding, set forth at once on the long journey. Nine days and nights he traveled without resting, until he came to Hela’s underworld. There he found Baldur, who was glad to see him, and sent messages to his friends in Asgard. Hela said Baldur might return to them on one condition: that every living creature, and everything in the world must weep for him.

So Hermod hastened back to Asgard, and when the Aesir heard Hela’s answer, they sent out messengers over the world to bid all things weep for

Baldur, their bright sun-god. Then did the beasts, the birds, the fishes, the flowers and trees, even stones and metals weep; as indeed we can see the teardrops come to all things when they are changed from heat to cold.

As the messengers were coming back to Asgard they met an old woman, whom they bade weep, but she replied, “Let Hela keep Baldur down below; why should I care?” When the Aesir heard of this, they thought it must have been the same old woman who went before to Frigga’s palace, and we know who that was.

And so Baldur the beautiful, Baldur the bright, did not come back, and all the dwellers in Asgard were sad and sorrowful without him.

12

AEGIR’S FEAST

Aegir was the ruler of the ocean, and his home was deep down below the tossing waves, where the water is calm and still. There was his beautiful palace, in the wonderful coral caves; its walls all hung with bright-colored seaweeds, and the floor of white, sparkling coral sand. Such wonderful sea-plants grew all about, and still more wonderful creatures, some, which you could not tell from flowers, waving their pretty fringes in the water; some sitting fastened to the rocks and catching their food without moving, like the sponges; others darting about and chasing each other.

Deep in the wave is a coral grove,
Where the purple mullet and goldfish rove;
Where the sea-flower spreads its leaves of blue,
That never are wet with falling dew,
But in bright and changeful beauty shine
Far down in the green and glassy brine.
The floor is of sand, like the mountain drift,
And the pearl-shells spangle the flinty snow;
From coral rocks the sea-plants lift

Their boughs where the tides and billows flow.
The water is calm and still below,
For the winds and waves are absent there,
And the sands are bright as the stars that glow
In the motionless fields of upper air.
Percival.

IN THAT OCEAN home lived the lovely mermaids, who sometimes came up above the waves to sit on the rocks and comb their long golden hair in the sunshine. They had heads and bodies like beautiful maidens, with fish-tails instead of feet.

One day the gods in Asgard gave a feast, and Aegir was invited. He could not often leave home to visit Asgard, for he was always very busy with the ocean winds and tides and storms; but calling his daughters, the waves, he bade them keep the ocean quiet while he was away, and look after the ships at sea.

Then Aegir went over Bifröst, the rainbow bridge, to Asgard, where they had such a gay party and such feasting that he was sorry when the time came to go home; but at last he said good-by to Father Odin and the rest of the Aesir. He thanked them all for the pleasure they had given him, saying, “If only I had a kettle that held enough mead for us all to drink, I would invite you to visit me.”

Thor, who was always glad to hear about eating and drinking, said, “I know of a kettle a mile wide and a mile deep; I will fetch it for you!”

Then Aegir was pleased, and set a day for them all to come to his great feast.

So Thor took with him his brother, the brave Tyr, who knew best how to find the kettle; and together they started off in Thor’s thunder chariot, drawn by goats, on their way to Utgard, the home of the giants.

When they reached that land of ice and snow, they soon found the house of Hymir, the giant who owned "Mile-deep," as the big kettle was called. The gods were glad to find that the giant was not at home, and his wife, who was more gentle than most of her people, asked them to come in and rest, advising them to be ready to run when they should hear the giant coming, and to hide behind a row of kettles which hung from a beam at the back end of the hall. "For," said she, "my husband may be very angry when he finds strangers here, and often the glance of his eye is so fierce that it kills!"

At first the mighty Thor and brave Tyr were not willing to hide like cowards; but at last they agreed to the plan, upon the good wife promising to call them out as soon as she had told her husband about them.

It was not long before they heard the heavy steps of Hymir, as he came striding into his icy home; and very lucky it was for Thor and Tyr that the giantess had told them to hide, for when the giant heard that two of the Aesir from Asgard were in his home, so fierce a flash shot from his eyes that it broke the beam from which the kettles hung, and they all fell broken on the floor except Mile-deep.

After a while the giant grew quiet, and at last even began to be polite to his guests. He had been unlucky at his fishing that day, so he had to kill three of his oxen for supper. Thor being hungry, as usual, made Hymir quite angry by eating two whole oxen, so that, when they rose from the table the giant said, "If you keep on eating as much at every meal, as you have to-night, Thor, you will have to find your own food."

"Very well," said Thor; "I will go fishing with you in the morning!"

* * *

NEXT MORNING THOR set forth with the giant, and as they walked over the fields toward the sea, Thor cut off the head of one of the finest oxen, for bait. Of course you may know that Hymir was not pleased at this, but Thor said he should need the very best kind of bait, for he was hoping to catch the Midgard serpent, that dangerous monster who lived at the bottom of the ocean, coiled around the world, with his tail in his mouth.

When they came to the shore where the boat was ready, each one took an oar, and they rowed out to deep water. Hymir was tired first, and called to Thor to stop. “We are far enough out!” he cried “This is my usual fishing-place, where I find the best whales. If we go farther the sea will be rougher, and we may run into the Midgard serpent.”

As this was just what Thor wanted, he rowed all the harder, and did not stop until they were far out on the ocean; then he baited his hook with the ox’s head, and threw it overboard. Soon there came a fierce jerk on the line; it grew heavier and heavier, but Thor pulled with all his might. He tugged so hard that he broke through the bottom of the boat, and had to stand on the slippery rocks beneath.

All this time the giant was looking on, wondering what was the matter, but when he saw the horrid head of the Midgard serpent rising above the waves, he was so frightened that he cut the line; and Thor, after trying so hard to rid the world of that dangerous monster, saw him fall back again under the water; even Miölnir, the magic hammer, which Thor hurled at the creature, was too late to hit him. And so the two fishermen had to turn back, and wade to the shore, carrying the broken boat and oars with them.

The giant was proud to think he had been too quick for Thor, and after they reached the house he said to the thunder-god, “Since you think you are so strong, let us see you break this goblet; if you succeed, I will give you the big kettle.”

This was just what Thor wanted; so he tightened his belt of strength, and threw the goblet with all his might against the wall; but instead of breaking the goblet he broke the wall.

A second time he tried, but did no better. Then the giant’s wife whispered to Thor, “Throw it at his head!” And she sang in a low voice, as she turned her spinning-wheel, —

Hard the pillar, hard the stone,
Harder yet the giant’s bone!
Stones shall break and pillars fall,
Hymir’s forehead breaks them all!

Yet again Thor threw the goblet, this time against the giant’s head, and it fell, broken in pieces.

Then Tyr tried to lift the Mile-deep kettle, for he was in a hurry to leave this land of ice and snow; but he could not stir it from its place, and Thor had to help him, before they could get it out of the giant’s house.

When Hymir saw the gods, whom he hated, carrying off his kettle, he called all his giant friends, and they started out in chase of the Aesir; but when Thor heard them coming he turned and saw their fierce, grinning faces glaring down at him from every rocky peak and iceberg.

Then the mighty Thunderer raised Miölnir, the hammer, above his head, and hurled it among the giants, who became stiff and cold, all turned into giant rocks, that still stand by the shore.

* * *

Aegir was very glad to get Mile-deep; so he set to work to make the mead in it, to get ready for the great feast, at the time of the flax harvest, when all the Aesir were coming from Asgard to visit him.

Before the day came, all light and joy had gone from the sacred city, because the bright Baldur had been slain, and the homes of the gods were dark and lonely without him. So they were all glad to visit Aegir, to find cheer for their sadness.

There was Father Odin, with his golden helmet, and Queen Frigga, wearing her crown of stars, golden-haired Sif, Freyja, with Brisingamen, the wonderful necklace, and all the noble company of the Aesir, all except mighty Thor, who had gone far away to the giant-land.

As they all sat in Aegir’s beautiful ocean hall, drinking the sweet mead, and talking together, Loki came in and stood before them; but, finding he was not welcome, and no seat saved for him, he began saying ugly things to make them all angry, and at last he grew angry himself, and slew Aegir’s servant because they praised him. The Aesir drove him out from the hall, but once more he came in, and said such dreadful things that at last Frigga said, “Oh, if my son Baldur were only here, he would silence thy wicked tongue!”

Then Loki turned to Frigga, and told her that he himself was the very one who had slain Baldur. He had no sooner spoken than a heavy peal of thunder shook the hall, and angry Thor strode in, waving his magic hammer. Seeing this, the coward Loki turned and fled, and Asgard was rid of him forever.

13

THE PUNISHMENT OF LOKI

When Loki was driven out by the mighty Thor from Aegir's palace-hall he knew that he could never again be allowed to come among the gods in Asgard. Many times had this mischievous fire-god brought trouble and sorrow to the Aesir, but now he had done the most cruel deed of all, he had slain Baldur the Good, and had driven all light and joy from Asgard.

Far away he fled, among the mountains, hoping that no one would find him there; and near a lovely mountain stream he built for himself a hut with four doors looking north, east, south, and west, so that if the wise Allfather, on his high air throne in Asgard, should see him, and send messengers to punish him, the watchful Loki could see them coming and escape by the opposite door.

He spent most of the days and nights thinking how he could get away from the Aesir. "If I ran to the stream and turned myself into a fish," he thought, "I wonder if they could catch me. I could keep out of the way of a hook; but then there are nets; Aegir's wife has a wonderful thing like a net, for catching fish, and that would be far worse than a hook!"

When Loki thought of the net, he began to wonder how it was made, and the more he thought, the more he wished he could make one so as to see how a fish could keep from getting caught in it. He sat down by the fire in his little hut, took a piece of cord and began to make a fish-net. He had nearly finished it when, looking up through the open door, he saw three of the Aesir in the distance, coming toward his hut. Loki well knew that they were coming to catch him, and, quickly throwing his net into the fire, he ran to the stream, changed himself into a beautiful spotted salmon, and leaped into the water.

A moment later the three gods entered the hut, and one of them spied the fish-net burning in the fire. “See!” cried he, “Loki must have been making this net to catch fish; he always was a good fisherman, and now this is just what we want for catching him!”

So they snatched the last bit of the net from the fire, and by looking at it found out how to make another, which they took with them to the bank of the stream.

The first time the net was put into the water, Loki hid between two rocks, and the net was so light that it floated past him; but the next time it had a heavy stone weight, which made it sink down, till Loki saw he could not get away unless he could leap over the net. He did this, but Thor, seeing him, waded out into the stream, where he threw the net again, so that Loki must jump a second time, or else go on out into the deep sea.

As he leaped, Thor stooped and caught him in his hand, but the fish was so slippery that Thor could hardly hold it. In the struggle the salmon’s tail was pinched so tightly by the thunder-god’s strong fingers that it was drawn out to a point, and the old stories say that is why salmon tails are so pointed ever since.

Thus was Loki caught in his own trap, and dreadful was his punishment. The Aesir chained him to a high rock, and placed a great, poisonous serpent, hanging over the cliff above his head.

If it had not been for Loki’s good, faithful wife, he would have died of the poison that dropped from the snake’s mouth. She watched by her husband, holding a cup above him to catch the poison. Only when she had to turn aside to empty the cup did the drops fall upon Loki; then they gave him such terrible pain that he shook the earth with his struggles, and the people in Midgard fled from the dreadful earthquake, in Iceland the great geysers, springs of hot water, burst through the earth, and in the south-lands burning ashes and lava poured down the mountain-sides.

There, chained to the cliff, the cruel, mischievous Loki was to lie until the Twilight of the gods, the dark day of Ragnarök, when all the mighty evil monsters and beasts would get free, and the terrible battle be fought between them and the gods of Asgard.

14

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Loki and Fenrir, the wolf, were safely bound, each to his separate cliff, but still happiness and peace did not return to Asgard, for Baldur was no longer there, and light and joy had gone from the home of the gods. The Aesir felt that the Twilight of the gods, which Odin knew was to come, must be near.

Soon began a long cold winter; surely it must be the beginning of the Fimbulwinter, which was to come before the last great battle. From the north came cold blasts of freezing wind; snow and ice covered the earth; men could not see the face of the sun or the moon. Everywhere there was darkness; the people grew fierce and unhappy and wicked, for they seemed no longer to love each other. So the evil deeds of men kept on, and the fierce frost giants grew stronger and stronger. They killed the trees and flowers, and bound the lakes and rivers with icy bands.

Even when summer time came, the cold still held on, and no one could see the green grass or the beautiful golden sunlight. The frost giants were pleased to see the trouble they had brought upon men, and hoped they soon could destroy Asgard and the gods.

Three long winters passed, with no light to warm and brighten the world; after that still three other dreary winters, and then the eagle who sat on the top of the great world tree, Yggdrasil, gave a loud, shrill cry; at that the earth shook, the rocks crumbled and fell, so that Loki and the wolf were freed from their chains.

The waters of the deep ocean rose and rolled high over the land, and up above the waves writhing out of the deep, came the monster Midgard serpent to join in the last battle. Now the enemies of the gods were gathering from all sides, — the frost giants, the mountain giants, with Loki, Fenrir, and the Midgard serpent.

Heimdall, the faithful watchman, looked from his watch-tower by the rainbow bridge, and when he saw the host of monsters appearing and raging toward Asgard, he blew his magic horn, Giallar, which was the signal of warning to the gods.

When Father Odin heard the blast of Heimdall’s horn, he hastened to arm himself for the battle; once again it is said the Allfather sought wisdom at Mimir’s fountain, asking to know how best to lead the Aesir against their enemies. But what Mimir said to him no one ever knew, for a second call sounded from the Giallar horn, and the gods, with Odin at their head, rode forth from Asgard to meet their foes.

Thor took his place beside Odin, but they were soon parted in the struggle. The thunder-god fell upon his old enemy, the serpent, whom twice before he had tried to slay, and after a fierce fight, he at last conquered and slew the monster; but the poisonous breath from the serpent’s mouth overcame the mighty Thor, and he also fell.

Heimdall and Loki came face to face, and each slew the other. Thus every one of the gods battled each with his foe, till at last the darkness grew deeper, and all, both gods and giants lay dead. Then fire burst forth, raging from Utgard to Asgard — and all the worlds were destroyed in that dreadful day of Ragnarök.

But this was not the end of all: after many months, and years, and even centuries had passed, a new world began to appear, with the fair ocean, and the beautiful land, with a bright, shining sun by day, and the moon and stars by night. Then once more the light and heat from the sun made the grass and trees grow, and the flowers bloom.

Baldur and Hodur came to this beautiful new world, and walked and talked together. Thor’s sons were there, too, and with them, the hammer, Miölnir, no longer for use against giants, but for helping men build homes.

Two people, a man and a woman, who were kept safe through the raging fire, now came to dwell on the earth, and all their children and grandchildren lived at peace with each other in this beautiful new world.

Baldur and Hodur talked often of the old days when the Aesir dwelt in Asgard, before Loki, the wicked one, brought darkness and trouble to them. With loving words they spoke of Odin and Frigga; and the brave Tyr, who gave his right hand to save the Aesir; of mighty Thor; and faithful Heimdall; of lovely Freyja, with her beautiful necklace; and of fair Iduna’s garden, where they used to sit and eat her magic apples. “But still,” they said, “we know now that this new world is fairer than the old, and here, also, the loving Allfather watches over his children.”

14. WILLIAM HENRY FROST

CONTENTS

Preface

1. O’Donoghue
2. The Big Poor People
3. The Little Good People
4. The Cleverness of Mortals
5. The Time for Naggeneen’s Plan
6. Little Kathleen and Little Terence
7. A Chapter That You Can Skip
8. The Stars in the Water
9. A Year and a Day
10. The Iron Crucifix
11. The Old King Comes Back

PREFACE

FROST, WILLIAM HENRY

William Henry Frost was born in 1863 in North Providence, Rhode Island, and was a reporter for the *New York Tribune*, beginning in 1887. In 1889, he was the reporter of “dramatic news,” and received his A.M. from Brown University the same year. Frost authored four books of stories for children, including *The Wagner Story Book*, *The Knights of the Round Table*, and *Fairies and Folk of Ireland*. According to an obituary, he died in New York City at the age of 39, in 1902.

1

O’DONOGHUE

It was in a poor little cabin somewhere in Ireland. It does not matter where. The walls were of rough stone, the roof was of thatch, and the floor was the hard earth. There was very little furniture. Poor as it was, the whole place was clean. It is right to tell this, because, unhappily, a good many cabins in Ireland are not clean. What furniture there was had been rubbed smooth and spotless, and the few dishes that there were fairly shone. The floor was as carefully swept as if the Queen were expected.

The three persons who lived in the cabin had eaten their supper of potatoes and milk and were sitting before the turf fire. It had been a poor supper, yet a little of it that was left — a few potatoes, a little milk, and a dish of fresh water — had been placed on a bench outside the door. There was no light except that of the fire. There was no need of any other, and there was no money to spend on candles that were not needed.

The three who sat before the fire, and needed no other light, were a young man, a young woman, and an elderly woman. She did not like to be called old, for she said, and quite truly, that sixty was not old for anybody who felt as young as she did. This woman was Mrs. O’Brien. The young man was her son, John, and the young-woman was his wife, Kitty.

“Kitty,” said John, “it’s not well you’re lookin’ to-night. Are ye feelin’ anyways worse than common?”

“It’s only a bit tired I am,” said Kitty, “wid the work I was afther doin’ all day. I’ll be as well as ever in the morning.”

“It’s a shame, that it is,” said John, “that ye have to be workin’ that way, day afther day, and you not sthrong at all. It’s a shame that I can’t do enough for the three of us, and the more, maybe, that there’ll be, but you must be at it, too, all the time.”

“What nonsinse ye’re talkin’, John,” Kitty answered. “What would I be doin’, settin’ up here like a lady, doin’ nothin’, and you and mother workin’ away like you was my servants? Did you think it was a duchess or the daughter of the Lord Lieutenant ye was marryin’, that ye’re talkin’ that way?”

“And it’ll be worse a long time before it’s betther,” John went on. “Wid the three of us workin’ all the time, we just barely get along. And it’s the end of the summer now. What we’ll do at all when the winter comes, I dunno.”

The older woman listened to the others and said nothing. Perhaps she had heard such talk as this so many times that she did not care to join in it again, or perhaps she was waiting to be asked to speak. For it was to her that these younger people always turned when they were in trouble. It was her advice and her opinion that they always asked when they felt that they needed a better opinion than their own. The three sat silent now for a time, and then John broke out, as if the talk had been going on in his mind all the while: “What’s the good of us tryin’ to live at all?” he said. “Is livin’ any use to us? We do nothin’ but work all day, and eat a little to give us the strength to work the next day, and then we sleep all night, if we can sleep. And it’s that and nothing else all the year through. Are we any better when the year ends than we were when it began? If we’ve paid the rent, we’ve done well. We never do more.”

“John,” the old woman answered, “it’s not for us to say why we’re here or what for we’re living. It’s God that put us here, and He’ll keep us here till it’s our time to go. He has made it the way of all His creatures to provide for themselves and for their own, and to keep themselves alive while they can. When He’s ready for us to die, we die. That’s all we know. The rest is with Him.”

“I know all that’s true, mother,” said John; “but what is there for us to hope for, that we’ld wish to live? It’s nothing but work to keep the roof over us. We don’t even eat for any pleasure that’s in it — only so that we can work. If we rested for a day, we’ld be driven out of our house. If we rested for another day, we’ld starve. Is there any good to be hoped for such as us? Will there ever be any good times for Ireland? I mean for all the people in it.”

“There will,” the old woman said. “Everything has an end, and so these troubles of ours will end, and all the troubles of Ireland will end, too.”

“And why should we believe that?” John asked again. “Wasn’t Ireland always the poor, unhappy country, and all the people in it, only the landlords and the agents, and why should we think it will ever be better?”

“Everything has an end,” the old woman repeated. “Ireland was not always the unhappy country. It was happy once and it will be happy again. It’s not you, John O’Brien, that ought to be forgetting the good days of Ireland, long ago though they were. For you yourself are the descendant of King Brian Boru, and you know well, for it’s many times I’ve told you, how in his days the country was happy and peaceful and blessed. He drove out the heathen and saved the country for his people. He had strict laws, and the people obeyed them. In his days a lovely girl, dressed all in fine silk and gold and jewels, walked alone the length of Ireland, and there was no one to rob her or to harm her, because of the good King and the love the people had for him and for his laws. And you, that are descended from King Brian, ask if Ireland wasn’t always the poor, unhappy country.”

“But all that was so long ago,” said John; “near a thousand years, was it not? Since then it’s been nothing but sorrow for the country and for the people. What good is it to us that the country was happy in King Brian's time? Will that help us pay the rent? And how we'll pay the rent when the winter comes, I dunno, and if we don't pay it we'll be evicted."

"Shaun," said his mother, calling him by the Irish name that she used sometimes — "Shaun, we'll not be evicted; never fear that. Things are bad, and they may be worse, but take my word, whatever comes, we'll not be evicted."

"Mother," said the young man, "you never spoke the word, so far as I know, that wasn't true, but I dunno how it'll be this time. We've been workin' all we can and we only just manage to pay the rent and live, and here's the summer over and the winter coming, and how will we pay the rent then?"

The mother did not answer this question directly. She began talking in a way that did not seem to have anything to do with the rent, though it really had something to do with it, in her own mind, and perhaps in her son's mind too.

"It's over-tired that you are with your hard day's work, Shaun," she said, "and that and seeing Kitty so tired, too, has maybe made you look at things a little worse than they are. We've never been so bad off as many of our neighbors; you know that. And yet I know it's been worse of late and harder for you than it might have been, and you can't remember the better times that our family had, and that's why you forget that the times were ever better. No, you wasn't born then, but the time was when good luck seemed to follow your father and me everywhere and always. Yes, and the good luck has not all left us yet, though we had the bad luck to lose your father so long ago. We could not hope to be rich or happy while the whole country was in such distress as it's been sometimes, yet there were always many that were worse off than we, and when I think of those days of '47 and '48 it makes the sorrows seem light that we're suffering now. And I always know that whatever comes, there'll be some good for me and mine while I live. I’ve told you how I know that, but you always forget, and I must tell you again.”

They had not forgotten. They knew the story that was coming by heart, but they knew that the old woman liked to tell it, so they let her go on and said not a word.

For a little while, too, the old woman said not a word. She sat with her eyes closed, and smiling, as if she were in a dream. Then she began to speak softly, as if she were still only just waking out of a dream. “Blessed days there were,” she said — “blessed days for Ireland once — long ago — many hundreds of years. O’Donoghue — it was he was the good King, and happy were his people. A fierce warrior he was to guard them from their enemies, and a just ruler to those who minded his laws. It was in the West that he ruled, by the beautiful Lakes of Killarney. The rich and the poor among his people were alike in one thing — they all had justice. He punished even his own son when he did wrong, as if he had been a poor man and a stranger.

“He gave grand feasts to his friends, and the greatest and the best men of all Erin came to sit at his table and to hear the wise words that he spoke. And the greatest bards of all Erin came to sing before him and his guests of the brave deeds of the heroes of old days and of the greatness and the goodness of O’Donoghue himself. At one of these feasts, after a bard had been singing of the noble days of Erin long ago, O’Donoghue began to speak of the years that were to come for Ireland. He told of much good and of much evil. He told how true and brave and noble men would live and work and fight and die for their country, and how cowards would betray her. He told of glory and he told of shame. He spoke of riches and honor, and poetry and beauty; he spoke of want and disgrace, and degradation and sorrow.

“Those who sat at his table listened to him in wonder. Sometimes their hearts swelled with pride at the noble lives and deeds of those who were to come after them, sometimes they wept at the sufferings that their children were to feel, and sometimes they hid their faces from each other in shame at the tales of cowardice and of treachery.

“As he finished speaking he rose from the table, crossed the hall, and walked out at the door and down to the shore of the lake. The others followed him and watched him, full of wonder. They saw him go to the edge of the lake and then walk out upon it, as if the water had been firm ground under his feet. He walked far and far out on the bright lake as they stood and gazed at him. Then he turned toward them, he waved his hand in farewell, and he was gone. They saw him no more.”

The old woman paused for a moment and the dreaming look came back to her face. Then she went on. “They saw him no more — but others saw him — and I have seen him. Every year, on the 1st of May, just as the sun is rising, he rides across the lake on his beautiful white horse. He is not always seen, but sometimes a few can see him. And it always brings good luck to see O’Donoghue riding across the lake on May morning. And I saw him.”

Again there was a pause, but she had no look of dreaming now. Her eyes were open and she seemed to be looking at something wonderful and beautiful that was far off. Slowly and softly she began speaking again. “I was a girl then. My father lived by the Lakes of Killarney. On that May morning I was standing at the door as the sun was rising. I was looking out upon the lake, far away to the east. The first that I saw was that the water, far off toward the sun, was ruffled, and then all at once a great, white-crested wave rose, as if a strong wind had struck the water, only all the air was still, and no wind ever raises such a wave as that on the lake. The wave came swiftly toward me, and I drew back, in a kind of dread, though I knew that it could not reach me where I stood. But still I looked — and then I saw him.

“Through the flying water and foam and mist I saw the old King, on his white horse, following the great wave across the lake. The sun made all his armor gleam like the silver of the lake itself, and the plume of his helmet streamed away behind him like the spray that a strong wind blows back from the crest of a breaker. After him came a train of glowing, beautiful forms — spirits of the lake or of the air, or some of the Good People — I do not know. They wore soft, flowing garments, that were like the morning mists; they carried chains of pearls and they scattered other pearls about them, that glistened like the drops of a shower when the sun is shining through it. They had garlands of flowers, and they plucked the flowers out and threw them high in the air, so that they fell before the King. They looked like flecks of foam from the waves, turned rosy and violet by the rising sun, but they were flowers. And there was a sound of sweet, soft music, like harps and mellow horns.

“The King and his train came nearer and I saw them plainer, and the music sounded louder. Then they passed me and moved far away again on the lake. The sight of them grew dim and the music grew faint, and I strained my eyes and my ears for the last of them, and they were gone. Then I could move and speak and breathe again, for it had seemed to me that I could not do any one of these things while the King was passing, and I knew that I had seen O’Donoghue.”

The old woman stopped, as if the story were ended, but the younger people did not speak, for they knew that she had something else to tell. “O’Donoghue had passed and was gone,” she said, “but he always leaves good luck behind him, and he left the good luck with me. That summer some rich young ladies came from Dublin to see the Lakes of Killarney. They heard the story of O’Donoghue, and the people told them that I was the last who had seen him. They came to my father’s house and asked me to tell them what I had seen. They seemed pleased with what I told them, or with something that they saw in me, and they asked my father to let them take me back to the city with them, for a lady’s maid. He did not like to let me go, but they said that they would pay me well and would have me taught better than I could be at home. He was poor, there were others at home who needed all that he could earn, I wished to go, and at last he said I might.

“So I went to Dublin and lived in a grand house, among grand people. I tried to do my duties well, and they were kind to me. They kept the promise that they had made to my father. They gave me books and allowed me time to study them, and they helped me in things that I could not well have learned by myself, even with the books. I was quick at study, and in the little time that I had, I learned all that I could. Three times they took me to London with them, and I saw still grander people and grander life.

“Those were happy days, but happier came. Your father came, Shaun. He was a servant of the family, like myself — a coachman. But he was wiser than I, and he talked with me and showed me that there was something better for us than to be servants always. We saved all the money that we could, and when we had enough we came here, where your father had lived before, and took a little farm. The luck of O’Donoghue was always with us. We had a good landlord, who asked a fair rent. We both worked hard, we saved more money and took more land, and all our neighbors thought that we were prosperous, and so we were.

“Then came ‘47. Nobody could be prosperous then. Nobody that had a heart in him at all could even keep what he had saved then. What we had and what our neighbors had belonged to all, and little enough there was of it. It is well for you young people to talk of these times being hard. Harder than some they may be, but good and easy compared with those days of ‘47 and ‘48. You talk of injustice and wrong to Ireland! What think you of those times, when every day great ships sailed away from Ireland loaded down with food — corn and bacon, and beef and butter — and Ireland’s own people left without the bit of food to keep the life in them? All summer long was the horrible wet weather, and the potatoes rotting in the ground before they'ld be ripe, and never fit to eat. To add to all that was the fever, that killed its thousands, and then the cold. And when the days came again that the crops would grow, many and many of the people were so weak with the hunger and the sickness that they could not work in the fields. Ah! and you call these hard times!

"Those were the bad days for Ireland, those days of '47. Not even the luck of O'Donoghue could make us prosper or give us comforts then. But we lived through the time, as many others did. The poor helped those who were poorer than themselves; the sick tended those who were sicker; the cold gave clothes and fire to those who were colder. The little money that we had saved helped us and some of our neighbors. And we lived through it all.

"Better times came, though never again so good as the old. We worked again and we saved a trifle. Then you were born to us, John. We had a worse landlord now. He was of the kind that cared nothing for his tenants and nothing for his land, but to get the last penny off it. The rent was raised, and we never could have paid it but for the care and the skill and the hard work of your father. And then, John, you know that when you were hardly old enough to take his place with the work, let alone knowing how to work as well as he, he died and left us — Heaven rest his soul!"

For a long time the old woman said no more, and neither of the others spoke. Then she said: "John, the country is in trouble enough and the times are hard enough for you and for Kitty, here, and for all of us, I know. But don't be cast down. There have been worse days than these; there have been better days, too, and there will be better again."

2

THE BIG POOR PEOPLE

There was a knock at the door, and John opened it. “God save all here except the cat!” said a voice outside.

“God save you kindly!” John answered.

A young man and a young woman came in. They were neighbors — Peter Sullivan and his wife, Ellen. “Good avenin’ to you, Pether,” said John; “you’re lookin’ fine and hearty, and it’s like a rose you’re lookin’, Ellen.”

“It’s more like nettles than roses we’re feelin’,” Ellen answered, “but something with prickles anyway, wid the bother we have every day and all day.”

“Thrue for you, it’s hard times,” said John; “we was speaking about them just the minute before you came in; but we all have to bear them. It’s not you ought to complain, as long as you’ve good health; now here’s Kitty — I dunno how —”

“It’s not the hard times I’m speakin’ of now,” said Ellen; “they’re bad enough, goodness knows; but it’s the bother we have all the time, and we can’t tell how or why. Half the time the cow gives no milk, and when she does, you can make no butther wid it. The pig, the crathur, won’t get fat; he ates everything he can reach, and still he looks like a basket wid a skin over it. The smoke of the fire comes down the chimney, the dishes are thrown on the floor, wid nobody near them, and such noises are goin' on all night long that never a wink of sleep can a body get. What we'll do at all if it goes on, I dunno."

"By all the books that ever was opened and shut," Peter added, "it's all thrue what she says, and more. What wid all that and what wid the throubles that's on the whole counthry, if I only had the money saved to do it, I'ld lave it all to-morrow and go to the States — I would so."

"Leave off the things you do that make you all these troubles," said the older Mrs. O'Brien, "and you'll have no more need to go to the States than others."

"What things are them that we do?" Ellen asked.

"Haven't I told you before this," said Mrs. O'Brien, "that it's the Good People that trouble you? If you'ld treat them well, as we do, they'ld never bother you. If you'ld even take good care never to harm them, it's likely they'ld never come near you."

"It's the fairies you're speakin' of," said Peter. "Sure I don't believe in them at all. It's old woman's nonsense that your head's full of, savin' your presence, Mrs. O'Brien. There's no fairies at all. Don't talk to me."

"You'ld better be more respectful to them, Peter," Mrs. O'Brien answered. "Say less about not believing in them and don't call them by that name, that they don't like. Call them 'the Good People' or 'the gentry.' They don't like the name that you called them, any more than they like those who disbelieve in them or those who try to know too much about them. Speak well about them and treat them well, as we do, and they'll not trouble you; maybe they'll even help you. Didn't you see, as you came in, how we left something for them to eat and drink outside the door there? We've not much, but they like fresh milk and clean water, and we always give them these, and they hold nothing but friendliness for us. Look and see now if they've taken what we left there for them after supper."

Peter went to the door and looked. “There’s nothing in the dishes there,” he said; “but how do we know it wasn’t the pig that ate it, or some poor dog, maybe?”

“You don’t know,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “only as I tell you, and you’ld better be attending to them that know more than yourself. If you did chance to give a meal to some poor dog, instead of to the Good People, there’ld be no great harm done, but it’s the Good People that get what we put there. We always leave it for them and they always come and take it, and it’s that makes them friendly, and so they would be to you, if you did the same. But you do nothing for them, because you say you don’t believe in them, and you do worse than nothing. Didn’t I see Ellen the other evening throwing out some dirty water and never saying ‘Take care of the water?’”

“And what if I did?” said Ellen. “Can’t I throw out wather when I plase, widout talkin’ about it?”

“You can if you like,” said the old woman, “but when you throw out water without warning, it’s as likely as not some of the Good People may be passing, and they don’t like dirty water to be thrown on them; and so after that your cow gives no milk, your pig is thin, and your dishes are thrown around the room. Do as you like with your water, or with anything else, but if you anger the Good People, be sure they’ll do you harm.”

“It’s superstitious you are. Mrs. O’Brien,” said Peter; “I dunno what it is that’s throubling us, but there’s no fairies at all.”

“Superstitious, is it?” said the old woman. “And so you’re not superstitious at all, and you don’t believe in the Good People! Now tell me, Peter Sullivan, when you came to that door just now and said ‘God save all here,’ like a decent man, why did you add ‘except the cat?’ What did you mean by those words ‘except the cat?’ Tell me that now.”

“Why, sure, Mrs. O’Brien,” Peter answered, just a bit confused, “sure, we’re told that cats is avil spirits, so we mustn’t put blessings on them, and when we say ‘God save all here,’ we add onto it ‘except the cat,’ so as not to be calling down a blessing on an avil spirit.”

“Ah!” said Mrs. O’Brien, “it’s not the likes of you that’s superstitious. You can’t put a blessing on the poor cat, when you’re blessing everybody and everything else in the house, for fear you’ld be putting it on an evil spirit; but you’re not superstitions, and so you throw dirty water on the Good People as they’re passing, and you call them by names that they don’t like, and then you wonder what it is that’s troubling you.”

“No, Mrs. O’Brien,” said Peter, again, “I dunno what it is at all. It may be the avil spirits themselves, for what I know, and whatever it is. I’ld go away and leave it and leave the country, if I had the money to get to the States. I heard once of a man that was druv out of the counthry by a monsther that I suppose was maybe something like the fairies — like them in making trouble for the man, anyway. It was a great conger that lived in a hole in the Sligo River, and I suppose he was ten yards long, and the man was a diver. He was gettin’ stones out of the bottom of the river, and the conger says to him, ‘What are you afther there?’ says he. ‘Stones, sor,’ says the diver. ‘Hadn’t you betther be goin?’ says the conger. ‘I think so, sor,’ says the diver, and afther that he never stopped goin’ till he got to the States.”

“That’s you, Peter,” said the old woman; “you don’t believe in the Good People or strange monsters or anything of the sort, but you want to run away from them.”

If Peter had been quite honest about it, he could scarcely have said, even to himself, whether he believed that there were any fairies or not; but he was really afraid of them, though he put on such a bold front and said that he did not believe in them, to make people think that he was uncommonly knowing. “Mrs. O’Brien,” he said, “do you think it’s true, what they say, that in the States you can pick up goold everywhere in the streets?”

“What good would it do you if it was true?” she asked.

“What good would it do me? Are ye askin’ what good would goold do me? Sure, then, wouldn’t I pick up all of it I could carry, and wouldn’t I take land wid it and pay rent and buy stock for a big farm and grow as rich as Damer? What good would goold be? Ha! Ha! What couldn’t you do in a country where ye could be pickin’ up goold in the street?”

“There’s no gold to be picked up in the streets there, any more than here,” said the old woman, “and if there was, it would be no use to you. Only suppose, now, that you had picked up all the gold you could carry, and that you wanted to buy a loaf of bread with it. And suppose you went into a baker’s shop and chose even the smallest loaf of bread you could find, and threw down a whole gold sovereign for it — aye, or a hundred gold sovereigns. Would the baker sell you the bread for your gold, do you think? Wouldn’t he say to you: ‘Go on out of this, for the silly Irishman that you are! What for would I be giving you good bread for that gold of yours, when I can pick up as much and as good as that any minute here before my own door and keep my bread as well?’ If you could find gold in the street, it would be worth no more than the stones that you find there.”

“I don’t know how that is, Mrs. O’Brien,” said Peter, “but I can’t see why goold wouldn’t be goold, wherever you could find it.”

“It’s not sensible,” said John, “to be talkin’ of findin’ gold in the streets, but there’s a deal in what Peter says, for all that, and it’s often I’ve thought, too, that I’ld go to the States and be away from all these throubles, if only we could save up the money to take us all there. It’s not any gold or any riches I’m thinkin’ about, but what I want to know, mother, is this: Could a man in the States, if he was strong and if he worked hard — and if he didn’t drink a great deal — could he make enough to keep himself and his wife both, so that she needn’t work too hard — not so that she would sit idle, I don’t mean, but so that she needn’t be doin’ hard work and doin’ it all the time — could he do that?”

“That’s the sensible and the honest talk,” said his mother; “he could do that. Those that do nothing get nothing, in the States the same as anywhere else. But I’ve talked with them that know, and they tell me that in the States those that will work are paid for their work, and those that are strong and industrious and honest can keep their families from want, and that’s more than some can do here, God help them!”

“It would be a great thing,” said John, speaking slowly, as if he were trying to make himself believe this dream of a land where a man’s work could make his wife and his children sure of a home and food — “a great thing. And do you think, mother — but no, no — I suppose not — do you think, if we was once there — do you think that I could work enough to make it so that it would be easier for you and for Kitty both? Could one do enough for three?”

“It would be easier than here, maybe,” was all that the old woman said in answer to this. She had heard this talk of America many times before, and she did not like it. She would rather believe, and make others believe, that better times were coming for Ireland. She was not so young as the others and not so ready to leave her old home, yet lately she had seen how it was growing harder and harder to stay, and there seemed to be little left of the good luck of which she boasted.

She was thinking of all this now, and John knew her thoughts, though she did not speak them, and he said: “You always tell us that there’s betther times comin’, mother, and I’ve learned to know that all you say is true. She was sayin’ it just before you came in, Pether. But how can we believe in the betther times? They don’t come. They get worse and worse. How do we know they’ll ever come?”

Again Mrs. O’Brien seemed lost in deep thought, or in a dream, just as when, a little while before, she had told them of O’Donoghue. What she told them now was a sort of answer to John’s question, but perhaps she told it quite as much to draw their thoughts away from America. She was silent for a little while, and they all waited for her to speak.

“Good times for Ireland there will be again,” she said, “when Earl Gerald comes back. It was hundreds of years ago that Earl Gerald lived in his great castle of Mullaghmast. He was a strong warrior and he fought many a good fight for his people against their foes. More than that, he was powerful in magic. He could work mighty charms and he could change himself into any form he liked.

“His wife knew that he could do this, but he had never shown himself to her in any form but his own. She often begged him to let her see what his magic could do, and to change himself to some other form for her. But he knew there was danger in it, and he put her off with one reason and another. But at last, she asked him so many times, he told her that if she took any fright at all while he was in any form but his own he could never live in the world again in his own form till all the people of the country had passed away many times. ‘I’ld not be a fit wife for you,’ she said, ‘if I’ld be easily frightened.’

“‘You might not be easily frightened,’ he said, ‘but you might have great cause, and if you were only a little frightened you would never see me like myself again.’

“Then one day, as they were sitting together, the Earl turned away his head and muttered some words which his wife could not understand, and that instant he was gone, and instead of him sitting beside her she saw a little goldfinch flying around the room. The goldfinch flew out at the window into the garden; then it flew back and sat on the lady’s shoulder and on her hand and on her head, and it sang to her, and so they played together for a time. Then it flew out into the open air once more, but in a second it darted back through the window and straight into the lady’s bosom. The next instant she saw a wild hawk, that was chasing the little bird and was coming straight through the window after it. She put both her hands over her bosom, to save her husband's life, but she was frightened and she gave one scream as the hawk darted into the room, dashed itself against a table, and was killed. Then she looked where the little bird had been, and it was gone. She never saw Earl Gerald again.

"But Earl Gerald was not dead, and he is not dead, though all this was hundreds of years ago. He is sleeping, down under the ground, just beneath where his old castle used to stand. His warriors are there with him. They are in a great hall. The Earl sits at the head of a long table and the men sit down the sides. All rest their heads upon the table and all are asleep. Against the wall there are rows of stalls, and behind each man, in one of the stalls, is his horse.

"Once in every seven years Earl Gerald wakes at night. He rises and mounts his horse. A door of the hall opens. He rides out into the free air. He rides around the Curragh of Kildare and then back into the cave, to sleep again for seven years.

"While he is out the door is open. Once, long ago, a horse-dealer was going home late, and he had been drinking a little. He saw the door in the hill open and he walked in. And there he found himself in a hall, dim and high. A row of dim lamps hung along the hall, and he saw the smoke of them rise up to the roof, where many old banners, faded and torn, stirred a little in the light breeze that came in by the open door. And the light of the lamps shone down and glistened on the bright armor of rows of men who sat with their steel helmets bowed upon the table, and behind them were rows of horses, with their saddles and their bridles on, ready for their riders.

"There was no sound in the cave but the shuffle of his own foot, and the stillness and the sight that he saw made him afraid. His hand trembled, and a bridle that he had fell upon the floor. The noise echoed and echoed through the cave, and the warrior who sat nearest to the poor man raised his head. 'Is it time?' the warrior said.

"'Not yet, but soon will be,' the man answered, and the warrior's head sank again upon the table. The man went out of the cave as quickly as he could, and he never could find the door of it again.

"They say that Earl Gerald's horse has silver shoes. They were half an inch thick when the Earl's sleep began. When they are worn as thin as a cat's ear it will be time. Then a miller's son, who will have six fingers on each hand, will blow a trumpet, and Earl Gerald and all his warriors will come out of the cave. They will fight a great battle and will conquer the enemies of Ireland. Then the country will be peaceful and prosperous and happy, and Gerald will be its King for forty years."

Peter's mind could not be set at rest by any such stories as this to-night. "What's the good of all thim old tales to us?" he asked, "Can we pay our rint wid the knowledge that Earl Gerald will be King of Ireland for forty years? They do be all the time fortellin' and prophesyin' and predictin' this thing and that thing and the other thing in thim old tales, and nothin' ever comes o' thim. Did you ever know, now, Mrs. O'Brien — I ask you — will you tell me this — did ye ever know of any of the prophecies in any of thim old woman's tales comin' thrue?"

"It's surprised I am," said the old woman, "to hear you, Peter Sullivan, talking that way — you, that had a decent man for your father, and that's a decent man yourself, all but knowing nothing — you, that have heard the stories of your people. Tell me now, did you ever hear what was foretold of the children of Lir, and did you ever hear if it came true or not?"

Perhaps Peter had never heard about the children of Lir, or perhaps he had heard and did not like to say so, because the story would be proof that a prophecy had come true. At any rate, he said nothing. But the old woman seemed resolved that if he had never heard about the children of Lir he should hear about them now.

"Lir was a powerful man in the old days of Ireland," she said, "He had three sons and one daughter, and their mother was dead. The names of the sons were Hugh, Fiachra, and Conn, and the name of the daughter was Fair-shoulder, and beautiful and good children were they all. Lir was visiting once at the castle of Bogha Derg, the King of Conacht, and he saw the daughter of the King, and he fell in love with her and married her.

“For a time they were happy, and then the new wife began to be jealous of the love of her husband for his four children. It troubled her so much that she began to lose her beauty and her health, and at last she took to her bed and did not leave it for a year. And after that time there came a great Druid to visit her. You know who and what the Druids were, I think. They were the priests of the old religion of Ireland, before St. Patrick came and made the people Christians. They were powerful in magic; they could bring storms and could drive them away; they could foretell the future; they could work powerful enchantments on people and beasts, and trees and stones, and they could do many other marvellous things.

“This Druid talked with the wife of Lir for a long time alone. He made her tell him all that troubled her, and then he told her what she could do to be rid of her husband’s children. He gave her a magic wand and went on his way.

“Then she rose from her bed and took the four children with her in her chariot and set out for her father’s castle. On the way she ordered the driver of the chariot to kill the children, but he refused. Then they passed near a lake, and the step-mother told the children to go into the water and bathe. But Fair-shoulder believed that she meant them some harm, and she refused to go, and begged her brothers not to go. So the step-mother called her men, and she and they forced the children out of the chariot and pushed them into the water. Then she touched each of them on the head with the Druid’s wand, and they were changed into four beautiful white swans.

“After she had done that, she went on to her father’s castle. When her father had welcomed her, he said, ‘Where are your husband’s children?’

“‘They are at home,’ she answered, ‘in their father’s castle.’

"'And are they well?'

"'They are well.'

"Now the King himself was a Druid, and more powerful than the one who had given his daughter the wand. More than that, he was a good man, and the other was a wicked one. He did not believe what his daughter told him about the children, and so he put her into a magic sleep. When she was asleep he said to her, 'Where are your husband's children?'

"And she answered, 'They are in the lake which we passed by the way as we came here.'

"'And what did you do to them?'

"'I changed them into white swans.'

"'Why did you do that?'

"'Because my husband loved them more than he loved me.'

"He woke her out of the magic sleep and called all his people together. Before them all he told her that she should be punished for her wickedness, and then he changed her, by his Druidic power, into a gray vulture. Then he said to the people: 'This creature that was my daughter has laid a wicked enchantment on her husband's children. She has changed them into swans. They must keep that shape for many hundreds of years; they must swim in the lakes and the seas and fly over the land, and they must travel far and must suffer much. But there is a hope for them. Many, many hundred years will pass away — so many that even the Druid's eye can scarcely see what is at the end of them. But at last there shall come strange men across the sea to Erin — men with shaven heads. They shall build houses and shall set up tables in the east ends of their houses, and they shall ring bells. And when the swans that were the children of Lir shall hear the first sound of these bells, they shall have their human shape again, and then they shall be happy forever. But she — the gray vulture — she shall fly in the sky, where it is stormy and cold. Where there are thick clouds and where the rain is made, there shall be her home. She shall not fly where the heaven is blue and where the sun shines warm. The bells of the good men from over the sea shall bring her no peace. Her way shall be with the wind and the hail. If she has any rest it shall be on the peak of some wet crag, where the snow whirls around her, or the fog drives past her, or the sleet cuts against her, or the cold spray of the sea dashes over her. And it shall be so with her till the Day of Doom.'

"When the King had finished speaking the gray vulture flew away, and she was never seen again. But the King and all the court rode in chariots to the lake where the white swans were, and Lir and all his people came there, too, when they heard what had been done. And there they all stood and listened to the singing of the four swans. So beautiful was the song that those who listened could think of nothing else while they heard it. They left their horses and their chariots and stood on the shore of the lake and listened to the enchanting music, and never thought of food, or of drink, or of sleep. Even the horses listened to the song as the people did. Day and night they stood there, and many days and nights, and no hunger came upon them, and they felt no cold and no heat, and no wind and no wet.

"But the time came when the enchantment that was upon them compelled the four white swans to leave the place. They rose up into the air and flew away and out of sight into the sky. Then the King and his people, and Lir and his people, went back to their castles, and they never saw the four white swans again.

"The four white swans flew to Loch Derg, and there for many years they swam on the lake, and fed and slept among the rushes along the shores. In the summer the lake was pleasant and cool, the air was clear and mild, the sky was blue, and the sun was bright and beautiful. Then Fair-shoulder and her brothers forgot that they were unhappy. They sang songs to one another and scarcely remembered that they had ever been anything but swans, swimming on this peaceful water. But when the winter came and the ice was all around, and the wind from the north blew the snow against them, so that it froze among their feathers and they could scarcely move, they were so stiff and so cold — then they remembered how happy they had been in their father’s castle. They could not sing now — not even sad songs. They only longed to have their human shape again and to be back in their old home.

“But after many, many years more had passed they ceased to wish for home. They had been swans so long now that it did not seem to them that they had ever been anything else. When the winter came again and again and again, and the days of chilling storm and the nights of freezing darkness were upon them, the poor brothers longed for nothing but the end of it all. The thought of the old castle hall, with its bright fires and its feasts and its music of minstrels and its dances and its games, was only another pain to them, and they wished only to die and to leave their sorrows.

“Then they crowded close together, to be as warm as they could, and Fair-shoulder tried to spread her wings over her brothers, to keep the storm from them. She tried to comfort them, and she told them again and again the story that she had heard from the people who stood by the lake to hear them sing, the story that the King had told, that, after many hundreds of years, strange men should come across the sea to Erin — men with shaven heads; that they should build houses and set up tables in the east ends of their houses, and that they should ring bells; and when the swans should hear the first sound of those bells they should have their human shape again, and then they should be happy forever.

“For three hundred years they were at Loch Derg, and then, by the power of their enchantment, they were compelled to leave it. They flew to the sea of Moyle, and there they stayed, through the summer’s heat and the winter’s cold, for three hundred years more. Still the sister told her brothers of the strange men who were to come to Erin and of the bells that were to free them. But they could not be comforted. The strange men were too long in coming.

“When the three hundred years were past they had to fly away again to another sea. As they flew, they passed over the spot where their father’s castle had stood and where they had been happy children together. Not a stone of the beautiful castle could they see. It had all crumbled down, and the grass had grown over it for many a year. They saw the fox that had its hole where their father’s bright hearth fire had been, and they saw the ditch of dirty water where their father used to welcome kings and bards and wise men at his gate. They kept their way through the air and saw no more; yet they had seen all that there was to see. It gave the poor swans only a little ache at the heart, for they were past hope now. They had suffered too much to believe anything or to think of anything but the suffering that was past and the more suffering that was to come.

“The end of their journey came and they swam in a new sea. Again the sister tried to cheer her brothers, but they could not be cheered. The strange men with the shaven heads would never come, they thought. They had waited for them too long.

“But the hundreds of years that had passed had done more than to bring sorrow to the poor swans. In lands far away a new faith had grown up, not like the Druids’ faith. And at last across the sea to Erin came the holy St. Patrick. He brought monks with him, and they had shaven heads. They went about the island and preached, and built chapels. In the east end of each chapel they set up an altar, and they said masses and rang bells. And they built a chapel on the island that has since been called the Isle of Glory.

“And so, one bright morning, Fair-shoulder and her brothers were swimming near the Isle of Glory, when, of a sudden, there came to them from the shore the sweet sound of a bell. Then Fair-shoulder called to her brothers, and they all swam to the shore. And as soon as they were on shore their form of swans was gone. Fair-shoulder was a beautiful young girl again, and the brothers were strong, beautiful boys. They walked up to the little chapel together, and there a monk baptized them.

"And as soon as they were baptized they were young and strong no longer. Fair-shoulder was an old, old woman, and her brothers were old, old men. They were so weak with the age of a thousand years that they fell upon the floor of the chapel. The monks took them up and cared for them for a few days, and then they died. And so the word of the Druid came to pass, that when the strange men should ring their bells the children of Lir should be swans no longer, and should be happy forever."

They all waited for a few minutes, to be sure that there was no more of the story, and then John said: "Mother, it's easy for you to be tellin' us them tales, and they may be all thrue enough, and I'm not sayin' they're not. But what good are they to us? The word of the Druid came thrue, but how long was it in comin' thrue? A thousand years?"

"A thousand years or more," said his mother; "but the stories can teach us to be patient, if they can do nothing else."

"They may do that," said John; "the blessed Lord He knows you've been patient, and He knows the rest of us have tried to be. But what does it all come to? We can't wait a thousand years for the betther times. Pether, here, is right. The States would be a betther place for all of us. If we had the money I'ld say that we ought to go there."

"It's not the bad times alone that's in it," said Peter. "As I told you before, I could stand them. It's the bother that we're put to all the time. It's that would make us go to the States this minute, if we had the chance. But I suppose your mother could never be leavin' Ireland now, John; she's gettin' so old now, maybe she couldn't stand the journey."

"Have no fear about that," John answered; "mother's not so old as you'ld make out, and she's likely to live longer now than some others that's here this minute."

As he said this John felt Kitty's hand suddenly holding his closer, and he knew that he ought not to have said it. "Don't mind what I'm sayin'," he said to her in a whisper; "I dunno what I'm talkin' about, but I didn't mean you at all, darlin', nor anybody particular. It'll all come right somehow, and we'll soon see the roses back in your cheek, and the smile on your lips, and the light in your eyes. Don't mind what I said."

"But what's the use talkin' of it at all?" said Peter. "You've no money and we've less. We might as well be talkin' of goin' to the moon as to the States."

The old woman did not seem to be paying any attention to what the others were saying, and now nobody at all said anything for a little while. Then Mrs. O'Brien began: "John and Kitty, I think sometimes it's true I'm getting old and foolish. I don't know what has made me talk the way I have to-night I've seen it coming — oh, I've seen it coming all along — yes, longer than any one of you has seen it — and I knew I couldn't stand in the way. And yet to be leaving the old places — the old fields and hills and paths — the old streams and trees and rocks — the old places where your father and I walked and sat and talked so often together, where you were born and where he lies — I couldn't bear to think of it. It's old and weak and foolish I'm getting, and I couldn't bear to think of it. And so I've tried to make you think of other things and to make you think that it would be better somehow, some time. Maybe I've said too much, and maybe I've kept you from going when you ought to have gone, but you'll know that it was because I couldn't bear to think of leaving all the dear places, and you'll forgive me; John and Kitty, you'll forgive me. I can say no more. If I couldn't think of it, yet I must do it. It is right that we should go, and we will go."

"And why should you be talkin' that way, mother?" said John. "Was it what you said that kept us from goin' to the States long ago? Sure, if you had said nothing at all, we hadn't the money to go, and so what difference was it what you said?"

"Listen to me, John," said his mother; "it was all through me that you didn't leave this land of sorrow long ago. It was because it had been a land of joy as well to me that we all stayed here; and now, since you're sure that it's right and best for you to go, it's not the want of money that shall stand in your way. It's yourself knows, John, that your father — Heaven be his bed! — was always the careful and the saving man, and I always tried to help him the best I could. The times got a little better with us, as you know, after those worst ones in '47 and '48, and we saved a little again — it was not much, but it was something. Your father left it with me before he died, and he said: 'Keep it always by you till you need it most. Don't use it till the time comes when you can say, "I shall never need this money more than I need it now."' So I have always kept it, and I have it now. That was why I told you not to fear about the winter. It would have paid our rent if all else had failed, and it would have taken us all through the winter. But it's better that it should take us to the States. If we stayed here and used the money, we'ld be as bad off in another year. Kitty will be getting strong again there, and it'll be better for all of us. The time that your father said has come; I'm sure we'll never be needing the money that he left more than we're needing it now. There's no more to be said; we'll go."

For a little while no more was said. John and Kitty gazed at the old woman in wonder. The thing that they had thought about for so long, and wished for as a happiness that could never be, was come to them. And now it scarcely seemed a happiness; it was half a sorrow. Then Ellen spoke: "Oh, Mrs. O'Brien, it was always you was the good neighbor to us! It was always you was with us in joy and in sorrow! What'll we ever do at all when you're gone and we're left here alone, with none to be so kind to us as you've always been?"

And Peter said: "I was thinkin' that same. The Lord go wid you and keep you, wherever you go, but it'll be the sad day for us when you go away."

"Peter and Ellen," said the old woman "how could you think that we'ld do a thing like that? You may be a fool sometimes, Peter, but you're your father's son. Do you know what your father did for us, Peter? When my John was dying with the fever, he sat and watched with him, and brought him the water and the whey all night, and night after night, when I was so worn out that I could watch no longer. He might have taken the fever himself, and he might have died with it, and he did take it, but the Lord spared his life for a while after that, Heaven rest his soul! And another thing that John said to me before he died was this: 'As long as you have a bit to eat or a drop to drink or a penny to buy, never let Tom Sullivan or any of his want more than you want yourself.'

"And so, Peter and Ellen, when we go to the States, you'll both go too. There's enough of the money to take us all there. If you're ever able to pay it back, you can do it, if you like; but if not, we'll never ask you for it. If we went away from here without you, my husband would look down from Heaven and see me doing what he told me, with his dying breath, never to do. He would come to me at night and he would say: 'Mary, you are deserting in their sorrow the children of them that never deserted us in our sorrow.' Do you think that I could bear that? Do you think that I would do that?"

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Now I have told you all the talk that went on in the O'Briens' house that night. Perhaps you think that I have been a good while in doing it. If you will forgive me, I will try to get on with the story a little faster after this. Only one word more about this talk: you must not think that this was the first time that these five people had ever gone over and over this subject of America, or "the States," as they called it. They had talked of it many times, but Mrs. O'Brien had never given the word that they should go. The rest of them talked on and on of what they wished. But when she spoke, they all knew that she spoke of what was to be. They knew now that they should never talk of going again, but they should go.

3

THE LITTLE GOOD PEOPLE

There was a good deal of commotion that night in the rath near where the O'Briens and the Sullivans lived. Do you know what a rath is? I suppose not. It is hard work to tell stories to you, you are so ignorant. I will tell you what a rath is. First I will tell you what it looks like. It looks like a mound of earth, in the shape of a ring, covered with turf, and perhaps with bushes. They are found all over Ireland. Some people, who have studied so much that they have lost all track of what they know and of what they don't know, say that these raths were made by the people who lived in Ireland many hundreds of years ago, and that they were strongholds to guard themselves and their sheep and their cattle from their enemies or from wild beasts. But people who know as much as Mrs. O'Brien, know that they are the places where the fairies live, or the Good People, as she would call them.

On this night that I have been telling you about, the Good People inside the rath were eating and drinking and dancing and making merry generally, as they do, you know, the most of the time. Perhaps you would like to have me tell you how the inside of the rath looked too. I will do the best I can. In the first place, the walls were all of silver and the floor was all of gold. Perhaps you don't know — no, I suppose you don't know — still you may happen to have heard of this before: the fairies know just where to find pretty much all the gold and silver and precious stones that there are in the world, if they happen to want them. They don’t want much of them, of course — only just enough to make the walls and the roofs and the floors of their houses of, and to put all over their clothes and to make all their furniture and dishes of, and all their carriages and their boats, and a few other things — but they know where to find plenty of gold and silver, if they want it.

Now I think that I had better give you a little science. I believe that a book which children are to read, always ought to teach something, so I mean to teach you as much as I can. You must know, then, that gold is one of the heaviest things in the world. Now you know that the earth is always whirling round and round, so that the things that it is made of naturally get shaken up more or less. Besides that, it was once a good deal softer than it is now, so that the things that it is made of could move about more than they can now. And so the most of the gold, being, as I said, one of the heaviest things, got sifted down toward the bottom — that is, toward the centre of the earth. Only a little of it was left near the top, compared with what went to the bottom. It would not be at all surprising if the middle of the earth were a solid lump of gold, a thousand miles thick. But we poor men cannot dig down very deep into the earth. We can only scratch a little dirt off the top, and if we happen to grub up a few pounds of gold we think that we are rich, and the rest of the world thinks so too.

But the fairies laugh at us. They know how to go as deep into the earth as they choose, and so any fairy who chooses can give away gold all his life, and still have more of it in his dust-bin all the time than all the kings in the world have in their treasuries. And the other fairies don’t call him rich.

But now we will go back to the rath. Of course it was all under the ground, so that there was no daylight. At the time we are talking about, there would not have been any anyway, for it was night. The place was lighted up with thousands of diamonds and rubies and emeralds, which were set all over the ceiling and shone like lamps. Now I won’t call you ignorant just because you say that you don’t understand how diamonds could light up anything, for I don’t understand it myself. Let us talk about it together and try to decide. Suppose you try the experiment. Some night, after dark, take all the diamonds you have — every one of them — and carry them into a dark room and spread them out, and see if they light up the room at all. I am sure that you will find that they do not. On the contrary, if you let go of them, you will have to go and get a light to hunt for them by. But I suppose the fairies have some other kind of diamonds than ours, or else they know some other way of using the same kind. Sometimes they use fireflies, caught in spider-web nets, but these are generally for out of doors. To light up their houses they almost always use diamonds.

There were two tiny bits of turf fire in the rath. One of them was at one end of the hall, where the King sat, for the King to light his pipe by, and the other was at the other end, for the other fairy men to light their pipes by. Fairies do not like fire, as a rule, and they would never have any more of it about than they could help. But I know that they must have had some, for I know that Irish fairies smoke pipes, and how could they light them unless they kept a little fire on hand?

Now, I know what you will say to that. You will say: “If they could light a room with diamonds, why couldn’t they light pipes with them?” Well, that is not very easy to answer, but I feel sure that even a fairy would never think of lighting a pipe with a diamond. I have owned up already that I don’t know exactly how they light rooms with them, but it is easier for me to imagine a diamond giving light than giving heat. Isn’t it for you? Now, be honest about it.

At one end of the hall sat the King and the Queen, on their thrones. Near them were half a dozen fairy men who were playing on pipes and fiddles. All over the floor there were dozens and scores of fairies, men and women, dancing to the music. All around the walls stood or sat many more of them, looking at the dancers, and now and then applauding and shouting at particular ones, or talking together, or simply smoking their pipes.

Suddenly two fairies rushed into the hall, with a little sound like the noise of a humming-bird’s wings when it passes close to you. From the lower end of the hall, where they came in, they went straight through the crowd to where the King and Queen sat. They dropped on their knees before them for an instant, and then rose and spoke to them. In a moment the King clapped his hands, with a sign for the pipers and the fiddlers to stop playing. The instant that they stopped, everybody in the hall was still.

The King stood up and said to them: “Will ye be still now and listen, all of ye, to the news that’s come to me this minute, and then will ye help me to think what we’re to do about it at all? Here’s these two that’s just come in, and they’re just afther tellin’ me that they’ve been at the O’Briens’ house this evenin’, and there they heard talk betune the O’Briens and the Sullivans, and it’s all decided that both the O’Briens and the Sullivans is goin’ to the States. And it’s sorry I’ll be to see the O’Briens lavin’ the counthry. I don’t care so much for the Sullivans.”

“It was the O’Briens,” said the Queen, “that always put the bit and sup outside the door for us, and what we’ll be doin’ widout the milk and the pertaties and the fresh wather, I dunno.”

“Ye needn’t be throubled about that,” the King answered; “haven’t we always enough to eat and drink of our own, whatever happens?”

“Thrue for you,” said the Queen, “we have our own food and drink, but it’s not the same that we get from human people. Ye know that same yourself, and it’s you as much as any that’ll be missin’ them things when the O’Briens is gone.”

“That’s the thrue word too,” said the King; “it’ll be the bad day for us all out, when they go. What for are they lavin’ the counthry at all?”

“If ye plase, Your Majesty,” said one of the fairies who had brought the news, “we heard all that too. It’s the hard times that’s in it. It’s that makes them all want to go, and then, more than that, it’s the bother the Sullivans are put to all the time, wid the cow givin’ no milk and the pig not gettin’ fat, and all that, and they’re bound that they’ll go away and stand it no longer.”

“Is that it?” said the King. “It’s that divil Naggeneen that’s in it. I told him he could bother them a little if he liked, but not to bother them too much, and now he’s drivin’ them and their neighbors out of the counthry, and we all have to suffer for it. He’ll make it up to us in some way, if they go, or I’ll take it out of him. Come here, Naggeneen! What are ye doin’ down there by yourself? Come up here and stand forninst me, till I give ye a piece of me mind. Now, what’s all this about the O’Briens and the Sullivans lavin’ the counthry? What have ye been about wid them?”

A fairy who had not been in the hall before had just come in at the far end from the King, who had caught sight of him. He was smoking a pipe. He had his hands in the pockets of his little green breeches, he wore a red jacket, and on his head was a red cap. He came slowly up the hall, when the King called him, and stood before the throne. “Take off your cap, ye worthless vagabone,” said the King, “when you speak to me.”

“I wasn’t spakin’ to you,” said Naggeneen; “it was you that spoke to me. You called me, and here I am to the fore, though I don’t belong to your pitiful little thribe, and I needn’t come when you call, if I don’t like.”

“Oh, needn’t ye?” said the King. “Take off your cap now, or it’ll be taken off for ye.”

Naggeneen took off his cap.

“Now,” said the King, “what have ye been doin’ to the Sullivans, that they’re lavin’ the counthry and persuadin’ the O’Briens to go wid them?”

“I’ve been doin’ nothin’,” said Naggeneen, “but what you said I might do.”

“Oh, haven’t ye?” said the King. “And what was that?”

“Oh,” said Naggeneen, “I just took all the cream and the most of the milk from their cow, and you yourself had a share of it, as you know well; and I put a charm on their pig, so that it wouldn’t get fat, no matter how much it ‘uld be atin’; and then I druv the smoke of their fire down the chimney, and I threw the dishes and the pans around in the night, just so they wouldn’t get lazy wid restin’ too well, and a few more little things like that.”

“Was that all ye did?” said the King. “And how long have ye been at it that way?”

“Ever since the day that Mrs. Sullivan threw the dirthy wather on me, as I was passin’ the house. But I’m not the only one that’s in it. Some of your own people here have helped me, and good they are at divilment too.”

“And those things was all you did, was they?” said the King. “And didn’t I tell ye ye could bother them a little, but not too much? What would ye have done if I had told ye to do what ye liked wid them?”

“What would I have done then? Oh, I’ld have shown ye the real fun then. What would I have done then? I’ld have pinched them and stuck pins in them all day and all night. I’ld have put charms on themselves, so that they’ld grow thinner than the pig. I’ld have took the pertaties out of the creel when they were put to drain at the door. If they went away from home I’ld make them think that they saw their house burning up, and so I’ld scare them to death. What would I do if you gave me leave? What wouldn’t I do?”

“Well, you’ve done enough as it is,” said the King, “to get the whole of us into throuble, and now let’s hear what you’re goin’ to do to get us out of it. Here they are lavin’ the counthry and takin’ the O’Briens wid them, that was always the good neighbors to us, and they themselves were sometimes useful in their own way, in spite of themselves. And now I ask ye, Naggeneen, what are ye goin’ to do to get us out of the throuble ye’ve got us into?”

“I’m in no throuble meself,” Naggeneen answered, “and I dunno what I have to do wid any throuble that you may be in.”

“You’re in no throuble yourself? Haven’t ye been as good as livin’ on the Sullivans all this time? And now what are ye goin’ to do widout them?”

“I’m goin’ to do nothin’ widout them; I’m goin’ wid them.”

“Goin’ wid them! Goin’ wid them!”

“Them was me words; you and your silly little thribe can do what ye like; I’m goin’ wid them. It’s a stuffy little place, this rath of yours, and I’ve a notion thravellin’ would be good for me health, any way.”

“But how can ye go wid them?”

“It’s not hard at all,” said Naggeneen, “and it’s been done before this. I was near doin’ it meself once. I don’t suppose ye remember me old friend MacCarthy.”

“MacCarthy of Ballinacarthy?” the King asked.

“The same,” said Naggeneen, “and it was he was the good friend to mortal or fairy. It was he kept the good house and the good table and the good cellar — more especially the good cellar. That was not so many years ago — a hundred and odd, maybe. A fine man he was; we don’t see his like now. I lived wid him the most of the time — in the cellar. And the strange thing about him was that, though nobody ever had a bad word for him, though all his servants said that he was the kindest and the best masther that ever stepped, he could get nobody to stay in the place of butler. It was all well enough wid the rest — cooks, maids, hostlers, stable boys — but the first time ever a new butler went into that beautiful wine cellar for wine, back he’ld come in a hurry and say that he’ld lave his place the next day, and nothing on earth would keep him in it. Now, wasn’t that strange?”

“Did you say you lived in that cellar?” the King asked.

“The most of the time,” said Naggeneen.

“Then it was not strange,” said the King.

“Any way, strange or not strange,” Naggeneen went on, “it was the truth. Never a butler could he keep in his service. A new butler would come and he’ld think he was a made man, old MacCarthy was that well known and that well liked all over the counthry. He’ld wait once at dinner and then down he’ld go to the cellar for wine. Sometimes he’ld come back wid the wine and oftener he’ld come back widout it, but every time he’ld say: ‘Mr. MacCarthy, sir, it’s much obliged to you I am for all your kindness, but I’ll have to be lavin’ your service to-morrow.’ And nobody could see the why of it.

“And at long last there was young Jack Leary, that had been all his life in old MacCarthy’s stable, and he knew how the old man was bad off for a butler, and he made bold to ask for the place. ‘If I make ye me butler,’ says the old man, ‘will ye go into the cellar and bring the wine when I ask ye, and make no throuble about it?’

“‘Is that all?’ says Jack; ‘sure, yer honor, I’ld be glad to spend all me time, day and night, in the cellar, only ye might be wantin’ me somewhere else now and then.’

“‘Then look sharp,’ says old MacCarthy, ‘for there’s gintlemin comin’ to dinner to-day. Wait on the table the best ye know how, and at the end of it, when I ring the bell three times, do ye go to the cellar and bring plenty of wine, and let’s have no more nonsinse about it.’

“‘Niver say it twice,’ says Jack; ‘yer honor can depind on me.’

“Well, ye may belave I was listenin’ to all this, for I wasn’t in the cellar all the time. ‘His honor may say it twice,’ says I to meself, ‘or as many times as he likes, but you’ll never go into that cellar twice, Jack, me fine boy.’

“So Jack went about his work, and the dinner went all well enough, till late in the evenin’, when old MacCarthy rang the bell three times, and off started Jack for the cellar, wid a basket to bring back the wine. ‘It’s the silly lot they war,’ says he to himself, ‘thim butlers, that they’ld be afraid to go to the cellar and bring back a bit of a basket full of wine. The only thing I don't like about it is that I can't bring it back in me skin instead of in the basket.'

"He was thinkin' like this in his mind as he went down the long, dark stairs wid his candle, and you may depend I was ready for him, by the time he got to the bottom. So no sooner did he touch the key to the lock than I give him a sort of a laugh and a scream that set the empty wine bottles that stood outside the door a-dancin' together. Jack was a good bold boy, sure enough, and he got the key into the lock and turned it. Wid that I swung the door open for him, so hard that it crashed against the wall and near shook the house down. And then me fine boy saw all the casks and the hogsheads in the cellar a-swingin' and a-rockin' and a-whirlin' around, as if all the wine had been in him instead of in them.

"You may be sure he didn't wait long afther that, but he just dropped his basket and fell all the way up the stairs and into the room where the gintlemin was waitin' for their wine. Well, it was then that old MacCarthy was in the towerin' rage. Never a word could Jack say to tell where he'd been or how he came back, or why.

"'Gintlemin,' says MacCarthy, 'ye'll get your wine, if I have to go to the cellar for it meself. But this I tell ye: I'll live no longer in this house, where I can't get servants to serve me. I'll be lavin' it to-morrow, and no later. The next time ye find me at home, ye'll find me in a place where I can keep a butler and have him do his work.'

"Wid that he took the lantern and started for the cellar himself. Ye'll guess that I was in the dining-room as soon as Jack and heard all this, and I was back in the cellar, too, before MacCarthy got there. I was sittin' on a cask of port, when he came in and saw me be the light of the lantern. I was sittin' there, wid a spiggot over me shoulder. 'Are ye there?' says MacCarthy. 'Who are ye, anyway, and what are ye doin' there?'

"'Sure, your honor,' says I, 'a'n't we goin' to move to-morrow, and it's not the likes of a kind man like you that would be wishin' to lave poor little Naggeneen behind.'

"'Is that the way of it?' says MacCarthy. 'Well, if you're agoin' to move wid us, I see no use in movin' at all. If I'm to have you in me cellar, wherever it is, it may as well be at Ballinacarthy as anywhere.'

"And from that day till the day of his death me and old MacCarthy was the best of friends. And he always brought all his wine from the cellar himself."

"And what has all that to do wid us?" said the King.

"What has it to do wid ye?" said Naggeneen. "It has nothin' to do wid ye, unless ye want to make it, and never a care I care whether ye do or not. But it has a good deal to do wid me. It shows, doesn't it, that I was ready to go wid old MacCarthy, and him runnin' away from me; and just so I'm ready to go wid the Sullivans, now that they're runnin' away from me. I've given ye a good hint. Ye can do as ye plase."

"It's glad I'ld be," said the Queen, "if we could be rid of the Sullivans and Naggeneen both at once, but I dunno what we'll do at all if the O'Briens go away."

"I'm not over-fond of Naggeneen meself," said the King, "but it's a sharp bit of a boy he is, and I'm thinkin' he may not be far from right this time. It might be that a new counthry would be as good for us as for the O'Briens or the Sullivans, and, anyway, we'ld still be near to them."

"Do ye mean," the Queen said, "that ye think we might all go to the States along wid the O'Briens and the Sullivans and Naggeneen?"

"If Naggeneen goes," the King replied, "he'll go along wid us; we'll not go wid him; but it was just that same that I was thinkin'. And yet we couldn't do a thing like that widout the lave of the King of All Ireland."

When the King spoke of the King of All Ireland, of course he meant the King of all the fairies in Ireland. He was himself only the King of this rath.

Of course you know that the people of Ireland have no kings of their own any more.

“Naggeneen, me boy,” said the King, “just take your fut in your hand and go to the King of All Ireland. Give him me compliments and ask him would he think there was anything against the whole of us goin’ to the States.”

“Is it me that would be runnin’ arrants to the King of All Ireland,” Naggeneen answered: “me, that don’t belong to your thribe at all, and forty lazy spalpeens around here wearin’ their legs off wid dancin’ or rustin’ them off wid doin’ nothin’ at all?”

“It’s thrue you don’t belong to me thribe,” said the King, “and glad I am of that same. But while ye stay in me rath ye’ll do what I bid ye. Why would I kape a dog and bark meself? Go on, now, and do what I tell ye, or ye know what I’ll do to ye. Be off now!”

Naggeneen was off.

Now, while Naggeneen is gone with his message to the King of All Ireland, I will just take a minute to say something that I have felt like saying for quite a little while. He will not be gone much more than a minute. What I have to say is this: Nearly all the people in this story, mortals and fairies, too, had the way of speaking that most Irish people have, which we call a brogue. Mrs. O’Brien had only a little of it — just the bit of a soft brogue that comes from Dublin, where she had lived for a long time. The most of the others had a good deal more. But as I go on with the story from here, I see no use in trying to write the brogue. It is hard to spell and confusing to read. If you do not know what a good Irish brogue is, you would never learn from any attempt of mine to spell it out for you; and if you do know what it is, you can put it in for yourself. I may have to try to write a little of it now and then, for there is some Irish that does not look like Irish when it is written in English, but I shall use as little of it after this as I can. Naggeneen is back by this time.

Naggeneen sauntered into the hall where the King and the Queen and all the company were waiting for him, with his hands in his pockets, quite as if he had been out for a quiet stroll and had come back because he was tired of it. “Well,” said the King, “did you see the King of All Ireland?”

“I saw him with my good-looking eyes,” Naggeneen answered.

“And what did he say?”

“He said he’ld come here and talk to you himself, and, by the look of him, I think it’s a pleasant time he’ll be giving you.”

“Then why is he not here as soon as you?” the King asked.

“Oh, nothing would do for him,” said Naggeneen, “but that he and his men must come on horseback. They can come no faster that way, but they think it’s due to their dignity. They had to wait for the horses to be ready, and so I beat them.”

Naggeneen had scarcely said this when the door flew open at the end of the hall, and, with a rush and a whirl, in came a great troupe of fairies on horseback — the King of All Ireland and his men. They all leaped down from their horses, and instantly every horse turned into a green rush, such as grows beside the bogs. The King of All Ireland walked quickly up to the King of the rath and stood before him, with an awful frown on his face. The King of the rath was plainly nervous. “Will you have a light for your pipe, Your Majesty?” he asked.

“Never mind my pipe now,” said the King of All Ireland. “Tell me first of all, who is this messenger that you sent to me?” The King of All Ireland had only a little bit of brogue — the Dublin kind.

“Sure,” said the King of the rath, “that’s only poor Naggeneen.”

“Only poor Naggeneen!” cried the King of All Ireland. “And what are you doing with him? Do you see the red jacket he has on? Why doesn’t he wear a green jacket, like your people? You know what his red jacket means as well as I. He belongs to the fairies who live by themselves, not to those who live together honestly in a rath. Why do you have him with your honest green jackets?"

"Sure, Your Majesty," said the King of the rath, "I thought it was no harm. He said he was tired of being by himself, and you know how handy he is with the fiddle or the pipes. If he'd been a fir darrig, that's always playing tricks and making trouble everywhere, why, then, of course — but he was only a poor cluricaun —"

"Yes," the King of All Ireland interrupted, "only a poor cluricaun, that does nothing but rob gentlemen's wine cellars and keep himself so drunk that he's of no use when he's wanted for any good. And hasn't he made you as much trouble as any fir darrig could do?"

"I was a lepracaun, too, once, Your Majesty," Naggeneen said.

"A lepracaun, were you? What did you do then? And when was it and how did it happen that a lazy lump like you was ever a lepracaun?"

"It was a long time ago," said Naggeneen, ready enough to talk about anything to draw the King's thoughts away from the trouble that he had made. "After old MacCarthy, of Ballinacarthy, died, those that came after him did not keep up his cellar well, and I felt lonely and sad, and I didn't care to drink any more —"

"Lonely and sad you must have been," said the King of All Ireland; "but you did drink still, did you not, though you didn't care for it?"

"True for you, Your Majesty," said Naggeneen, "I did a little, just for my health. But I was so lonely and so falling to pieces with idleness —"

"Falling to pieces with idleness!" the King interrupted again. "If idleness could make you fall to pieces, there wouldn't have been a piece of you left big enough to make trouble in a fly's eye, these last seven hundred years."

"As you say, Your Majesty," Naggeneen went on, "but, anyway, I was a lepracaun, and I did what any other lepracaun does: I sat in the field or under a tree and made brogues. But it was sorry work and people was always trying to catch me, to make me show them the gold they thought I had. And one time a great brute of a spalpeen did catch me, and he nearly broke me in two with the squeeze he gave me, so that I wouldn't get away till I'd showed him the gold. And I nearly had to show it to him, but I made him look away for a second, and then of course I was off. And after that my friend the King here let me come and live in the rath, just for company — not that I belong to his little tribe at all."

"And now you see," said the King of All Ireland, turning from Naggeneen to the King of the rath, "what trouble comes to you from taking those into your rath that have no right there. He's sending people out of Ireland that might be of use to you and to all of us. He wants to go with them, and that is no loss, but you want to go, too and to take all your people. That might be a loss, though I don't know that it would."

"We think it's best that we should go, Your Majesty," the King of the rath answered, meekly, "if you see no reason why not."

"I see reasons enough why not," said the King of All Ireland. "You don't know where you are going, nor what you'll find there. You don't know how you're to live, nor whether it'll be any fit place to live. You don't know whether the people there will help you or hinder you."

"Wherever the O'Briens go, they'll help us," the King of the rath answered. "We don't like to have them leave us here."

"You've gone contrary to the law enough already," said the King of All Ireland, "in taking in this fellow with the red coat. Now you may take all the consequences of it and go where you like. I don't care where you go and I think nobody cares, only I think it may be best for all the Good People in Ireland to have you out of it. Mount your horses," he shouted to his men, "and we'll be off out of this!"

He took one of the little green rushes from the floor and sat astride it, as a little boy rides on his father's cane. "Borram, borram, borram!" he said, and instantly the rush was a beautiful white horse. Every one of his men did the same. Each one took one of the rushes and sat astride of it and said, “Borram, borram, borram!” and every one of the rushes grew into a horse. There was a little whirring sound, like that of a swarm of bees, and they were all gone.

Everybody in the rath was silent for a few minutes. The King and the Queen looked at each other and were much troubled. Naggeneen, without making a bit of noise, scuttled down to the farthest corner of the hall. The others seemed not to know where to look or what to do or to think. Then the King turned toward them and said; “It’s all over; we couldn’t stay here now. Wherever has Naggeneen got to?”

The fairies who were nearest to Naggeneen hustled him forward and he stood before the King again. “Naggeneen,” said the King, “it’s trouble enough you’ve made for all of us, and it’s ballyragging enough you and all the rest of us have got for it, and we don’t know, as His Majesty said, what more is to come. So now do the only thing you was ever good for and give us a tune out of the fiddle.”

It was the only thing that Naggeneen was good for, and the only thing that was not mischief that he liked to do. He took a fiddle from one of the fairies who had been playing for the dancing before all the confusion began. He held the fiddle under his chin for a moment, while everybody waited, and then he began to play.

He played first some old tunes that every fairy in Ireland knows well. But not every fairy in Ireland can play them as Naggeneen did. They were tunes which everybody listening in that rath had known for hundreds of years. There were wild and strange airs that made them remember days when Ireland was a strange country, even to them; then the music was full of wonder and mystery, like the spells of the old Druids; then it was strong and free and fierce, and they thought of Finn McCool and the Fenians, and the days when Erin had heroes to guard her from her foes. The fiddle was telling them the story of their own lives and of all that they had ever seen and known. Now it was a strange music, which they could not understand — which the player could understand as little as the rest — but it was soft and sweet, and yet deep and bold, and the fairies trembled as they remembered the holy Patrick and a mighty power in the worlds of the seen and of the unseen. This passed away and the music came with the stir and the swing of marching men, and the fairies were again in the days of King Brian Boru, with Ireland free and brave and strong. It grew sad; it gushed out like sobs from a broken heart; then it was quieter, but still full of a softer sorrow; now it was merry and reckless. It made the fairies remember all that they had ever seen in the lives of the people whom they had known so long — the cruel hardship, war, sickness, hunger, and then, besides, the faith, the kindliness, the light-heartedness that had saved them through it all. There were tunes that every man and woman in Ireland knows — tunes that you know — old airs that every Irish fiddler or piper or singer learns from the older ones, that the oldest ones of all learned, they say, from the fairies. And under all the music, whether grave or gay, there went a strain of grief, sometimes almost harsh and sometimes scarcely heard, and as the fairies listened to it they grew pale at the thought that now they were to go away from all that they had known, to find something which they did not know. While they were thinking of this the music changed again. It was a soft murmur, like the sound of the sea that is kept forever in a sea-shell. Then it grew loud and rough, with the rush of winds and the crash of waves. The fairies were filled with fright, and before they knew that they were afraid, the music was singing a song of hope, and then, all at once, it grew as merry as if there had never been a sad thought in the world.

For a moment the fairies listened to it and all their feet began to stir restlessly on the floor. One of the fairy men caught the hand of a fairy girl — a fairy girl with cheeks like the tiny petals in the heart of a rose, with a white gown like a mist, and hair like fine sunbeams falling on the mist; he threw his arm about her waist, and they danced away down the hall. In an instant all the rest were dancing, too, alone, in pairs, and in rings. Naggeneen looked on and laughed till he could scarcely play. All this time his music had moved him less than anybody else who heard it. He did not feel what he had made the others feel, but he knew how to pour it all out of his fiddle.

The King made a sign for him to stop. All the dancers were still in an instant. The lights in the hall went out. The next minute, if you had been outside the rath and had laid your ear down on the turf which covered it, you would have heard nothing more than you might hear under the turf at any other time or in any other place.

4

THE CLEVERNESS OF MORTALS

If you live in the city of New York, or if you have ever been in the city of New York for any long time, you know how disheartening, how terrible, and how altogether unreasonable the climate can be at times. But you also know how heavenly it can be on an autumn day, when the sky and the air and the water are all in a good humor. To see and to feel the best of it, you must be down in the Narrows, or somewhere near there. The fierce heat has gone out of the air, but there is a gentle warmth left in it. All the shores near you are turning from green to brown and yellow, with here and there a dash of red. The sun makes every sail in the bay a gleaming spot of white. Far up the bay you see just an end of the city, with the tall buildings standing so close that it looks like one great castle, built all over a hill that slopes steeply down to the water on both sides. The Bridge looks like a spider's web, spun across to the other shore. Beyond it all the hills look purple, through the thin mist. If, instead of having seen all this often, you saw it for the first time — if you were coming from a far country, where you had always been poor — if you had toiled all your life to pay your rent, never expecting to do more — then perhaps you would look, more than anything else, at the giant woman standing before you and holding her torch high into the sky to light the world.

It was on such a day as this that the O’Briens and the Sullivans saw New York first. It was on the same day that the fairies who had left the rath and followed them saw it too. The O’Briens and the Sullivans had left their old home and gone to Queenstown, and the fairies had followed them. Cork and Queenstown had rather alarmed the fairies. They did not like the look of a city. It looked cold and stony and uncomfortable. It did not look like a good place to dance out of doors at night. They almost wished that they had stayed at home and let the O’Briens and the Sullivans go where they liked without them. Some of them even wanted to go back, but Naggeneen laughed at them, and fairies can stand being laughed at even less than human beings. But they all hoped that when the O’Briens and the Sullivans got wherever they were going, it would not prove to be in a city.

Then the O’Briens and the Sullivans went on board a ship and were stowed away in a place forward, with many other people, which the fairies did not think roomy or airy or pleasant in any way. But they were not obliged to stay in it. They found better places on the ship. Nobody could see them, so they went where they liked. They went out on the bow, where the lookout stood, and watched with him for sails and for tiny puffs of smoke by day and for little glimmers of light by night. They ran about the bridge and swarmed up the rigging. They even danced on the deck, as if they were in a field at home; and the deck was dewy at night, just like the field. They fluttered and whirled in circles around the red light on the one side of the ship and the green light on the other side, and they reminded them of the rubies and the emeralds that had helped to light their own rath.

One day they saw swimming in the water beside the ship an ugly creature, like a man, with a red nose, tangled green hair, green teeth, and fingers with webs between them, like a duck’s foot. There was another creature, like a woman, very beautiful, but with green hair, like the man. These were merrows — sea fairies.

“Where are you bound in that ship?” the merrows called to them.

“Where would we be bound at all,” the King answered, “but to the States, where the ship’s bound?”

“And what are ye goin’ there for?” the merrows asked again.

“Sure,” said Naggeneen, “it’s followin’ the O’Briens and the Sullivans we are, and it’s the long way they’re takin’ us.”

“Could you tell us what the States is like at all?” asked the King. “Is it like Cork?”

“There’s parts of them,” said the man merrow, “that’s more like Cork than Cork itself, and there’s other parts of them that’s no more like Cork than the sea here is like Cork Harbor.”

“But are there no places there,” the King asked again, “like the country parts of Ireland, with the fields and the bogs and all?”

“I can’t tell you that,” the merrow answered. “We’ve never been far on the land. Deep down under the sea it’s the same way it is under the sea about Ireland. There’s the land at the bottom, with the sand all fine and firm, like a floor, and there’s the water above, like a green sky, and there are the shells and the sea-flowers, and there are the weeds that wave around you and over you, like red and green and purple curtains to your house, and it’s all as cool and as neat as any of the sea-places around Ireland. And if you like to go up to get the warmth of the sun or the light of the stars, there’s white sand where you can lie at your ease, and there’s great rocks where you can sit and look out over the sea and get the fresh breeze. And that’s all we know of it; we’ve not been away from the sea.”

And after a week of voyaging through the sea — after going on and on for so long and so far that both fairies and mortals began to think that they must soon fall over the edge of the earth — the ship suddenly stood up straight, instead of rolling and pitching about, and a little later they saw the giant woman before them, holding up her torch, and beyond her they saw the city. And then it was only a bit of a while longer till they came close to the city.

“Look at it!” cried the King to all the fairies, who were crowded at the bow; “it’s like the country, after all! Look at all the grass and the trees! But it has an iron chain all around it. I don’t like the look of that.” All fairies hate iron. They more than hate it; they simply cannot endure it. To touch any iron at all would hurt a fairy more than it would hurt you to touch it when it was red hot.

“But it’s only a small place, anyway,” said Naggeneen. “Look at the houses beyond there! There was nothing like them in Cork! And do you mind them strings of coaches, running along up in the air?”

“I was takin’ note of them,” said the King; “sure it’s the strange country!”

The fairies all followed the O’Briens and the Sullivans. They were resolved not to lose sight of their only friends, in a land like this. They found that the O’Briens and the Sullivans were quickly taken to a big round house, in the very bit of a place like the country that they had first seen. The fairies did not like the inside of the big round house, so the King left a few to watch the O’Briens and the Sullivans, and to bring word if they made any important move, and the rest went out and found pleasanter places on the grass and under the trees. They had managed to get into the Battery Park without touching any of the horrible iron chains that were around it. They would have been a very sorry-looking company, if anybody could have seen them.

“I don’t like it at all,” the King said, “and nothing would please me better than to be at home again. If they’re going to live in that big round house, I dunno what we’ll do. We want to be near to them, and yet this is no place for us. We could stand it a little while, maybe. The grass is fine and smooth for dancing, but these lights, like suns, that they have all around on the tops of the poles, are terrible. Do they want no night at all here? And then what a noise there is! It’s nothing but rattle and roar all day, and then the boats do be screeching around all night.”

“Have no fear,” said the Queen. “The O’Briens would never live in a place like this. They’ll soon be out of it, and then we’ll follow them and find a better place near where they go.”

It proved that the Queen was right. Before long there came an alarm from those who had been left to watch, that the O’Briens and the Sullivans were coming out. In a moment more they came, and the whole tribe followed them. Old Mrs. O’Brien, who never forgot anything that was worth remembering, had not forgotten to write to some old friends who had come to America years before, that she and her son and his wife and their neighbors were coming. These old friends had found tenements for them, and soon they were in new homes. There was enough of Mrs. O’Brien’s money to keep them for a little while, and they hoped that before it was gone, John and Peter would find work and would be getting more money.

The fairies followed them, filled with more and more wonder. For miles they followed, and then for more miles. It was not that the distance troubled them. They could have gone a hundred times as far without thinking of being tired. But they could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw these never-ending stone roads and these never-ending rows of stone and brick houses, all built so that they touched one another. They could not understand how people could live so close together, nor why they should want to do it, if they could. Perhaps you have never thought of it, but it is really true that the ways of mortals are just as wonderful to fairies as the ways of fairies are to mortals.

Indeed, the place where they found themselves at last was not a pleasant one for fairies. It was two places, in fact, but they were so much alike that there was nothing to choose between them. A tenement had been found for the O’Briens, up many flights of stairs, in a house with many other tenements. There was barely enough room in it for them to live, though it was better, in that respect, than their old cabin in Ireland. The stairs and the passage were far from clean, and they led down to a street that was just as far from clean.

It was hard all over with square stones, which had sunk, in places, and made hollows, which were filled with muddy water. Lean cats scuttled about here and there, and ran away, if anybody came near them, as if they expected to have stones thrown at them, and then, when the danger seemed past, they rummaged in the ash-barrels for scraps of meat or fish or bread. The people who lived in the houses sat on the doorsteps and on the curbstones, and chattered and laughed and quarrelled and slept. The sun shone into the street, but it could not shine between the houses. A breeze blew up from the East River, which was not far away, but the air was none too fresh, for all that. The place that had been found for the Sullivans was in another street, not far away. It was much the same, as I have said, but it was even smaller, for there were only two of the Sullivans, and they could get on with less space.

The fairies were fairly terrified at all this. And was it any wonder? The poor little Good People! They had been used to a beautiful, bright hall, to green, fresh grass to dance on in the quiet, misty moonlight, and to cool shade for the day. What could they do in such a place as this? They remembered how the King of All Ireland had told them that they did not know whether the place where they were going was a place fit for them to live in.

The first thing that the King did was to send some of the fairies in all directions to see if they could spy out any place where the whole tribe could live in a decent and comfortable manner. The street, he was sure, would never do. Of course, if the Fairy King wanted a rock or a hill to open and let him into it, it would open, and he could live in it, if he chose, just as he used to in his own old rath. And no mortal who might happen to be about would know that anything unusual was happening. And just so the street would open for him, if he wanted it to. But before he had decided to try it he saw a place where some men had opened it, and that was quite enough for him. If you have ever seen a New York street opened, you know what it was like; if you have not, it is of no use to try to tell you.

But the messengers whom the King had sent in all directions were scarcely gone when those who had started toward the west were back with joyful news. “We have found a beautiful place,” they said. “It’s only a bit of a way from here, and if we live there we’ll not be far from the O’Briens. Ye never saw grass smoother in your life, though it’s not quite so green, maybe, as it is at home. And then there’s tall trees of all kinds, and there’s bushes that’ll have flowers on them, belike, in the right time of the year. And there’s smooth roads and walks, and there’s hills and great rocks, that we could live inside of as easy as in a rath itself. It’s a much quieter place than here, too, and the air is better, though it’s so near. It’s not wide toward the west, but off to the south it reaches as far as we can see, like a forest.”

The King left a guard to watch, lest the O’Briens should like the place as little as himself and should leave it and be lost, and then he hurried with the rest to see the new country that had been discovered. If you know New York very well indeed, you have guessed already that it was the north end of Central Park which the fairies had found. But you may know New York pretty well and not know, as a good many people who live in it do not, that there is any north end to Central Park, still less that it is far prettier than the south end.

After all the distressing streets and houses that he had seen, the King was delighted with it. He found a big rock, which was the base of a hill, and at the top of it stood a queer little square stone house. Back in this hill, he declared, behind the rock and under the stone house, would be as pleasant a place to live as ever the rath was. He made the rock open, and he and all the fairies with him went in, although the policemen and the men and women in carriages and on horses and on bicycles and on foot who were all about, did not see that the rock looked at all different.

“A fine place for us it will make,” said the King; “we couldn’t be asking for a better. Get to work now, all of you. Hollow out the inside of the hill, only leave pillars to hold up the roof, and go and find gold for the floor and silver for the walls, and you can have every other pillar gold and every other one silver, after you get the rest done, and take down the rock that you left. And then find diamonds and rubies and emeralds to light it with.”

No, I am not going to explain to you how the fairies did all this. I shall not tell you how they got the rock out nor what they did with it after they got it out. I will tell you all that there is any need of your knowing about it, and that is that in a very short time it was all done; that the new fairy palace was as much larger and finer and better than any fairy palace in Ireland ever was as we Americans intend that everything here shall be larger and finer and better than anything anywhere else. And it was all done before the most of the messengers who had been sent in other directions got back to tell what they had found.

These fairies went straight to where the O’Briens lived, and there the fairies who had been left on guard told them where to find the King, and asked them to say to him that they were tired of their duty and they wished that he could send somebody else to take their places.

The fairies were not much surprised when they found the King and all the tribe settled in a new palace, as comfortably as if they had never moved. The building of a palace in a night is no more to a fairy than it is to a New York man to come back after he has been out of town for a month and find a house twenty stories high in a place where there was a hole in the ground when he went away.

“What’s the use at all to be tellin’ Your Majesty what we’ve found in the places we’ve been,” said one of the first who came back, “and you livin’ this minute in the finest palace that was ever dug out of a hill?”

“You may tell us all the same,” said the King.

“Well and good,” said the fairy. “It’s to the south I’ve been. First there’s all this island that we’re on, down to the place with the grass and the iron chain around it. Then there’s the bay, with the ships. Then there’s another island, with hills and trees, and then there’s the sea, and a long shore, all sand, and hundreds of houses, big and little, where people live. And that’s all.”

Another fairy said: “I went farther to the west than this, but not much farther till I came to a great river. Of course I couldn’t be crossin’ the runnin’ water, so I went round the mouth of it and then kept on. The country was all flat for a good way, and bars of iron everywhere, laid two and two, so many of them that I didn’t dare rest anywhere, and there were towns and plenty of people, and then at long last I came to hills.”

I suppose you know, without my telling you, that fairies cannot bear to cross running water, any more than they can bear to touch iron, and that was why this fairy had to go around the mouth of the Hudson River instead of going across it.

Then came another fairy, who had been to the north, and he said: “It beats everything, the lovely country I’ve seen. Never a better did I see anywhere. Hills and woods and mountains, and the trees all yellow and red and green and brown. I went up the big river on this side for a long way, and then I saw great mountains on the other side. So beautiful they looked, I wanted to go to them, only, sure, I couldn’t cross the river. So I went round the head of it and came down back to the mountains. And there I found that they were full of fairies already. But they seemed to be Dutch, and it’s little English they could talk, let alone Irish. Still we got along, and they gave me some mighty fine drink that they had. And they said that we could come there, the whole tribe, and welcome kindly, and I’ld say it was a good place to go, only it’s farther off than this from them we want to be near.”

“We’ll stay where we are,” said the King. “It’s as well that we know what’s all around us, but here we’ll be more to ourselves, as many people as there are, for I’m thinkin’ there’s no fairies but us here.”

Then slowly out of the crowd of fairies one came forward and said: “Your Majesty, could I be saying something that’s breakin’ my heart? It’s hard for me to say and it’ll maybe be harder for you to hear; but it’s on my mind and I can’t get it off my mind. Will you forgive me if I say it?”

And the King answered: “It’s much that’s bad and a little that’s good we’ve heard since we left our own home. But it’s best that we know all there is to know, bad or good. Say what you have to say.”

“It’s not far I’ve been,” said the fairy; “only around here in the city that’s all about us; but many things I’ve seen, and wonderful things. Ah, Your Majesty, don’t blame me for what I’m saying, but what’s to become of us all and of you yourself, I dunno. We know all about magic; we’ve known all about it for years — aye, for ages. And we thought that made us better than mortals. We thought they could never do the things we could do; maybe they never can. But oh, Your Majesty, they’re doing things as good as we can do, or better. You wouldn’t believe what the mortals in this country do, if you wasn’t after seein’ it. They do things as wonderful as we ourselves, and it’s iron, iron, iron everywhere. We can do nothing with iron — we can’t touch it — and what will we do at all to be ahead of them, or even up with them?”

“What’s all this they do?” said the King.

“You saw yourself,” the fairy said, “the coaches that went along up in the air. They go on bridges, miles long, built of iron. And they run on bars of iron. You saw for yourself that they had no horses, and the coach in front that pulls them is all made of iron, and men ride in them, as if it was no harm at all to touch iron. And that’s not all. There are other coaches that go in the streets without horses. They have no iron coach in front to pull them. They go in different ways. Sometimes there’s an iron rope, that’s all the time moving and moving along under the street, and there’s a gripping iron under the coach that takes hold on it, and so it’s pulled along. And sometimes there’s only a little string — not iron, I think, but some other metal — and something just reaches down from the coach and touches it, and that makes it go. I dunno how it is, but it makes it go. And sometimes there’s fire comes out of it.”

Then another fairy came out of the crowd and stood before the King. “Your Majesty,” he said, “I can tell you more than that. I have been about the city, too, and I went into some of the houses. I saw a man talking to a little box on the wall. I came close and I heard that the box was talking to him too. I thought there was a fairy inside it, but I looked inside, and there was nothing there but iron and strange works that I couldn’t understand. There were little strings of copper coming out of the box, and then a long string of iron, that led away over the tops of the houses.”

The fairy stopped and shivered as he thought of the horrible string of iron. Then he went on: “I followed it and it came into another house, where there was so much iron that I couldn’t stay there. But the strings of iron came out of this house and led in all directions. I followed them and I listened everywhere and I found what they were for, though how they do it all I dunno. And it’s this way: Anywhere that there’s a box you can talk to them that’s in the house where all the iron strings go. And if they like to help you, you can talk to anybody else where there’s a box. It may be a mile off or it may be a dozen miles off. Many a time those in the house where all the strings are will not help them that wants to talk, but when they will, it’s easy. Yes, Your Majesty, one man talks to another ten miles off, as if he was standing by his side.”

“Your Majesty,” said another fairy, “you saw yourself the bright lights that were at the place where the grass was, that we came to first, and you’ve seen thousands more of them since. Do you know that they’re not candles, and they’re not lamps, and that there’s no fire to them at all? There’s strings of something, whatever it is, from one of them to another, and the light goes through that, whatever it is.”

“There’s another thing that they do with strings like that,” said still another fairy. “I saw men doing it not far from here. They made a hole in a rock and they put one end of a string in it. Then where the other end was, a man pushed a thing like a sort of handle, and the rock was all burst open, and nobody had touched it.”

And another fairy said: “Your Majesty, there are boats all the time going across the rivers — across the running water. Of course we always knew that mortals could cross running water, but these boats go without sails or oars, like the ship that we came here on. To be sure I couldn’t go on one, because it was across running water, but I went near one, when it was at the shore, and it was all full of iron, and I got the most awful pains from being near it. It was as bad, almost, as I felt coming here, when I’ld get too near the iron sides of the ship.”

“And a strange thing it was that I saw too,” said another fairy. “I saw people looking into little boxes of wood, so I looked in too. And in one I saw a woman dancing, and in another there were horses running, and in another I saw two men fighting. And it was not a real woman or real horses or real men, but only pictures that moved and did the things that real people and horses would do.”

The King listened to all this and then he sat and thought. “What is there in it that I can’t do?” he asked. “Do you not all know of the coaches in Ireland that are drawn by horses without heads and driven by coachmen without heads?”

All the fairies looked at one another and nodded and said, “Yes, yes, we know.”

But Naggeneen came forward and stood before the throne. Nobody had noticed that he had been listening or that he was there. “And what if those coaches were in Ireland?” he said. “They had horses, though the horses had no heads. Can you make iron coaches go without any horses at all?”

The King was trying to talk boldly, but he stammered and grew pale at the very thought of having anything to do with an iron coach, and he did not answer. He went on instead: “Can I not send any one of you on a message, as fast as the wind?”

“But can you talk for ten miles,” Naggeneen asked, “and will the very voice of you go as fast as the lightning?”

“Why would I want to be doin’ that,” said the King, “when I can send a messenger as fast as I like?”

“That’s not the question,” said the cruel Naggeneen; “can you do it?”

“I never tried,” said the King. “And can I not light up this palace,” he went on, “or any other palace, with diamonds? Can I not make a light so that a man who looks behind him when he is going on a journey or at work in the fields will think his house is on fire and run back?”

“And when he has run back,” said Naggeneen, “will he find that his house is on fire? You know that he will not. It’s only glamour, and he’ll soon be laughing at you. Oh, we can catch a few firebugs in spiders’ webs and deceive a boy or a girl that’s passing, and maybe make them turn aside and dance with us, but can you put real lights all over the country for miles — lights that will burn on and on and show real things? Our lights are lies themselves and they can no more than lead a silly mortal astray for a time; their lights tell the truth. What else can you do?”

The King had lost the most of his boldness. “They say,” he said, “that men can burst open the rock. Can I not do that as well?”

“You can open this rock for us to pass through,” said Naggeneen; “and what then? A man can see it open for a moment, if you choose to let him, and the next minute it’s all as one as if you had never touched it. And the man thinks that’s wonderful, for he doesn’t know that you can do it no other way. All glamour again! Can you burst the rock open and leave it open, so that it will always be so, for mortal and for fairy?”

“Why should I want to be doin’ that?” said the King.

"For the same reason makes the men want to do it, but you couldn't. And those boats that cross the river, full of iron — can you make them, and can you cross the running water in them?"

The King had no voice to answer. "And the pictures in the boxes," Naggeneen went on; "can you make pictures dance?"

"Sure," said the King, "I can make a man think he sees anything I like — a woman dancing or a horse running, or anything."

"Glamour! Glamour! Glamour!" cried Naggeneen. "You can make him think he sees! Yes, but he does not see. You can no more make a picture dance than you can cross a river!" And Naggeneen turned on his heel and walked off, as if he thought the King a poor creature that was not worth talking to.

The King had no more courage left in him than if he had been talking to the King of All Ireland instead of to Naggeneen. "Naggeneen," he cried, "come back and tell us something better nor all this. It's not pleasant you are in your talk, and it's often you make me angry with you, but after all you're cleverer than any of us. Tell us what to do. It was not like this where we lived before. There we could do all manner of things that mortals could not, and they were afraid of us."

"And so here too," said Naggeneen, "you can do all manner of things that mortals cannot, but they can do as many that you cannot — as many and better."

"But what are we to do," the King went on, "to show them that we're their masters? Sure we're cleverer than them all out, and we can prove it in some way."

"King," said Naggeneen, speaking as boldly as if he were himself a greater king, "you can never prove that you're cleverer than men, for you're not cleverer. It was a poor, wasted, weak, and sorrowful country that we came from, and it's a rich, new, strong, and happy country that we've come to. There's the differ. Clever you are, maybe, and your people, too, and I may be clever in my own way, and we may play our little tricks on mortals, as I did on the Sullivans, if they're as stupid as them. But mortals can be cleverer than we ever can when they are clever, and they can beat us every time if they know how. And do you know why? Because they have what we have not — because they have souls. I heard a school-master say once that the word 'mortal' was made from a word that meant death. And they call mortals that, I'm thinkin', because they never die. But you will die, King, and all your people, and I. We live on and on for thousands of years, and men come and change and pass away, but at the last day we shall be gone, as a bit of cloud up in the sky is gone when the sun shines on it. That's why men will always be greater and finer and stronger than us, with all our magic."

The fairies were all so terrified that they shrank away from Naggeneen and clung together and shook, in their fright, for this fear of living for a long time and then going out like a candle is their greatest fear. There was not a bit of color left in the King's face now. It was almost with a sob that he spoke again, and there was a kind of beseeching in his tone as he said: "Naggeneen, don't talk like that to us! We don't know it! It may be so, but we don't know it! We've tried many a time to find out, but no one that knew would ever tell us! We may have souls! We don't know that we've not! We may be saved!"

"You do know it!" Naggeneen cried. "Why will you try to deceive yourselves? You've no soul and I've no soul, and there's no way that we can have them. If there'd been any way, I'ld have had one long ago. But we'll never have them, and mortals will always outwit us, if they half know how. Shall I tell you how one of them outwitted me — a big, lazy, stupid gommoch, with not enough brains to keep his neck safe?"

The fairies were far past caring whether they heard a story or not, but they listened as Naggeneen went on. "I'm after tellin' you," he said, "that if there was any way that one of us could be gettin' a soul, I'ld have had one long ago. This was the way I tried it, and a silly mortal outwitted me. Guleesh na Guss Dhu was the name that was on him. I had heard — and I believed it — that if I could get a mortal woman married to me — a woman with a soul — that I would get a soul, too, that way. Well, I was never over-modest in my tastes, you know, and I thought that the daughter of the King of France was about right for me. A beautiful girl she was, with the rose and the lily fighting in her cheeks, and she was eighteen years old. But sure I thought that the differ of a few thousand years in our ages would be nothing to me, and I hoped it would be nothing to her either.

"I was living in a rath and wearing a green jacket then. All the others in the rath promised that they'ld help me. The King's daughter was to be married to the son of the King of another country on November Eve; and you know there's no better time to steal a girl than the night she's to be married, and November Eve is a fine time, too, so it was settled that we'ld go over to France and steal her on that night. But, as you know, we needed a mortal to help us. How else could we be bringin' her across from France? If we could put her on a horse behind a man, she'ld have flesh and blood to take a grip of, but if she was put up behind one of us, she might as well try to hold to a puff of smoke. You know that.

"We got ready, making sure that we'ld find some fool of a mortal ready for us when the time came, and sure enough, when we'd been out for a little look at the country before starting, and were coming back, there sat this same Guleesh na Guss Dhu, between the rath and the gable of his father's house, that was near by, staring up at the moon, like he'd never seen one before. There was no need to try to catch him or to bring him with us, or the likes of that. All we had to do was to let him hear us as we passed and let him see the door of the rath open, and in he came of himself to see what it was all about. We hadn't let him see ourselves yet, but he heard us all calling: 'My horse and bridle and saddle! My horse and bridle and saddle!' and what did he do but call out after us: 'My horse and bridle and saddle!'

"There was the beam of a plough lying near, and I changed it into a horse for him, and pleased he was when he saw it standing forninst him, with its bridle of gold and saddle of silver and all. The minute he saw it he jumped on it, and then we let him see all ourselves and our horses, and he nearly fell off again, with the sight of the crowd of us.

"Then I said to him: 'Are you coming with us to-night, Guleesh?'

"'I am,' he said.

"And with that we set off, and we overtook the wind that was before us, and the wind that was behind us did not overtake us. And we never stopped till we came to the sea. Then every one of us said: 'Hie over cap! Hie over cap!' and Guleesh said it after us, and the next second we was all up in the air, and we never stopped till we was in Rome. And why the whole tribe wanted to go by the way of Rome, never a know I know, for it's not on the way from Ireland to the palace of the King of France at all.

"Then I spoke up to Guleesh and says I: 'Do you know why we brought you here?' says I. 'The daughter of the King of France is to be married this night, and we mean to carry her off, and we need you so that she can sit behind you on the horse, for you are flesh and blood and she'll have something to hold to. Will you do that for us now?'

"'I'll do whatever you say,' says Guleesh; 'and where are we now, if you please?'

"'We're in Rome,' says I.

"'Oh, in Rome is it?' says Guleesh. 'Sure, then, I'm glad of that. The priest of our parish lost his place a little while ago, only because they said he drank too much, as if there'ld be any harm in that, and now is the fine time to go to the Pope and get a bull to put him back in his place.'

"'Ah, we've no time for that, Guleesh,' says I, 'and we must be gettin' to the palace of the King of France before we lose any more.'

"'Not a foot will I go,' says Guleesh, 'till I get the bull for the priest. You can go on and leave me here if you like, and you can stop for me when you come back.’

“Well, we had more talk about it, and then one of the others says: ‘Sure, Naggeneen, we can’t go without him and we can’t get him to come with us, so we’ll have to try to get the Pope’s bull for him. Go with him to the Pope and help him all you can, and we’ll wait for you.’

“‘Come with me, then,’ says I, and I took him by the hand, and before he knew how I did it, I had him in the room where the Pope was. The Pope was sitting by himself, reading a book, and he had a tumbler of hot whiskey, with a little bit of sugar, beside him on the table, all as comfortable as you please. ‘Now, Guleesh,’ says I, ‘ask him for the bull, and tell him that if he won’t give it to you, you’ll set the house on fire. Then leave the rest to me.’

“So Guleesh walked up to him as bold as you please, and when the Pope saw him he was near scared to death, because he thought that nobody could get into the room where he was. Then Guleesh says to him: ‘Don’t be afraid, Your Honor; all I want of you is your bull to put our parish priest back in his place, that lost it some time ago, because somebody told lies about him and said that he drank too much. And when I have your bull I’ll be leavin’ you in peace again.’

“‘Go on out o’ this,’ says the Pope; ‘where are all my servants?’ and he began calling for them, but Guleesh put his back against the door, so that nobody could open it on the other side, and then he began telling the Pope all about the priest, and the Pope had nothing to do but listen.

“And when he was done the Pope refused up and down to give him any pardon for the priest. ‘Then,’ says Guleesh, ‘unless you give it to me at once I’ll burn your house.’ And with that I began blowing fire out of my mouth all around the room.

“‘Oh, stop the fire,’ cries the Pope, ‘and I’ll give you the pardon or anything else you ask!’

“So then I stopped the fire, and the Pope sat down and wrote the pardon for the priest, giving him back his old place, and gave it to Guleesh. That second I caught him by the hand and we were off again through the keyhole to where the other fairies were. In another minute we were all on our horses and away again. We overtook the wind that was before us, and the wind that was behind us did not overtake us till we were at the palace of the King of France. And there my fine boy Guleesh saw sights that he never saw the like of before.

"The place was almost as fine as this of yours here. There were long tables all about it, with everything on them that a body would be wanting to eat and drink, and as fast as any of it was eaten or drunk, there was more put in its place. Then there were hundreds of noblemen and ladies, all in clothes of silk and velvet and gold and silver, and all covered with jewels, till they shone in the light of the gold chandeliers, almost like they'd been chandeliers themselves. And they were talking and laughing and singing and playing, and some of them were dancing — not so well as we dance, of course, when we've a mind, but enough to make Guleesh think he was seeing the grandest sight that ever was in the world entirely. And up at one end of the hall was an altar and two bishops, ready to marry the Princess to the King's son as soon as it would be the right time.

"'And which of them all is the Princess?' says Guleesh to me.

"'That one there near to ye,' says I, pointing her out."

Naggeneen stopped in his story and seemed to forget for a moment that he was telling it. "Oh, but she was the beauty of the world!" he went on, speaking so low that the fairies could scarcely hear him. "There was the lily and the rose in her cheeks, and her arms like snow, and her hair like soft gold. Not like the gold that you dig out of the ground for your palace, but gold with life in it. And her eyes were like two big violets with the dew on them. And there stood the others all around her, all merry and happy, and she —

"'What is she crying for?' says Guleesh to me. 'Sure it's not right that eyes like those would have tears in them.'

"'True for you, it's not, Guleesh,' said I, 'and it's because there's no love in her heart for the man that she's to be married to. It's her father that's compelling her, for he has some arrangement of the sort with the other King, that's the father of the young man. And it's for that,' I said, 'that we're going to carry her off, and it's the best thing we could be doing for her as well as ourselves.'

"Just that minute the young Prince came and offered her his hand, and away they went in the dance, and the tears in her eyes all the time. And as soon as the dance was over, the King, her father, and the Queen, her mother, came and said that it was time they were married, and the two bishops waiting there all the time. So they led the Prince and the Princess up toward the altar, and she with the rose all gone out of her cheeks and only the lily left. But when they were not more than four yards from the altar I put out my foot before the Princess, and she fell, and then, with a word of a charm, I made her invisible to all but Guleesh and ourselves. Then I made a sign to Guleesh, and he took up the Princess and ran with her out of the hall, and all the rest of us after them. 'My horse and bridle and saddle!' says every one of us, and the same says Guleesh. He lifted the Princess up behind him on his horse and we were away again. We overtook the wind that was before us, and the wind that was behind us did not overtake us till we came to the sea. 'Hie over cap!' cried every one of us, and 'Hie over cap!' cried Guleesh, and in a moment we were in Ireland again.

"Another minute and we were close to our own rath, and it was then that all the work of the night was lost. For then what did the fool Guleesh do but take the Princess in his arms and leap down off his horse, and he cried: 'I call you to myself, in the name of —' Oh, now, you little cowards, you've no call to shrink away like that and to try to be hiding in the dark corners! You know I can't say the name that he said. But he said it, and then the enchantment was all gone, and he saw that the horse he'd been riding was nothing but the beam of a plough and that the horse that each of the others had was only an old broom, or maybe a rag weed, or the like of that.

“And you know that there was no getting the Princess away from him after the words that he said. But I came close to her and struck her on the mouth. ‘Now, Guleesh,’ said I, ‘you may keep her if you will, but she’ll be dumb forever.’ And with that we all disappeared from them.

“But you may be sure I watched them. They stood there together and Guleesh talked to her and tried to make her talk back, but it was of no use at all, and he soon found that she was dumb completely. Then he stood thinking what would he do with her, and at last he took her by the hand and started toward the priest’s house. It was getting near day now, and the priest was up by the time they came to the door, and he opened it himself. And when he saw Guleesh and the girl, sure he thought they were come to be married, and he said: ‘Ah, Guleesh, isn’t it the nice boy ye are, that ye can’t wait till a decent hour to be married, but ye must be comin’ to me this early? And don’t ye know I can’t marry ye lawfully anyway, and I put out of my place?’

“Then says Guleesh: ‘Sure, father, you can marry me or anybody else you like, for you have your place back again, and here’s the Pope’s bull for that same. But it’s not that I come for, but to ask you to give shelter to this young lady, the daughter of the King of France.’

“And with that he takes the Pope’s bull out of his pocket and gives it to the priest, and the priest looked at the writing and the seal and saw that there was no doubt but it was right. And so he made Guleesh and the Princess come in and sit down, while Guleesh told him the whole story, and not a word of it would he have believed only there was the Pope’s bull that he couldn’t deny, and so at long last he had to believe all that Guleesh told him. And the end of it was that the Princess stayed at the priest’s house, for they didn’t know how to send her back to her father’s palace, and they had no money, and she couldn’t speak to help them. And the priest gave out that she was the daughter of his brother, that lived in another county, and that she was making him a visit. And Guleesh went home and said how he'd been sleeping beside the rath all night."

Naggeneen paused in his story, while all the fairies drew quietly closer to him. "Do you see," he said, "how I was tricked by a fool of a mortal? Oh, she was the beauty of the world, and he took her from me with a word, as easily as you'ld steal the butter out of a churn. And that was not all.

"I said to myself that I was not done with my revenge on them yet. She could not speak and it was a sore punishment on the both of them. Yet she stayed on at the priest's house. The priest wrote letters to her father, as I heard, and gave them to merchants who were travelling, but none of them ever reached him. And Guleesh got mighty serious about his soul all at once, so that he had to be at the priest's house every day, and every day he saw the Princess. She could never talk to him, but she learned to make signs that he could understand. And so it went on for a year.

"And then, when it was November Eve again, and we had been out of the rath and were all coming into it again in a great crowd, there sat Guleesh, the same as before. He couldn't see us, but he must have heard us, for you could see that he was listening with all his ears. And I thought now was the fine time to be having the laugh on him. By that time everybody was shouting: 'My horse and bridle and saddle! My horse and bridle and saddle!' and Guleesh shouted as before: 'My horse and bridle and saddle! My horse and bridle and saddle!'

"'Now is my chance to be even with him,' thought I, and I said: 'Ah, Guleesh, my boy, is that yourself that's to the fore again? You'll get no horse to-night and you'll play no more tricks on us. How are you getting on with your Princess? Does she talk to you much? Or do you just like to sit and look at her?'

"And when I said that, he looked so pale and so sad that I almost screamed with joy, and I couldn't keep myself from whispering to the man that was next to me: ‘And isn’t he the stupid omadhaun, not to know that there’s an herb growing close to his own door that would give her back her speech if he’d only boil it and give it to her?’

“‘It’s the stupid omadhaun he is,’ said the other man.

“Oh, and it was me that was the omadhaun, to be saying it at all. Oh, why couldn’t I hold my jaw? But it was like some spell was on me, and I had to say it. I had to say it! I couldn’t have kept it back if I’d tried. And he heard every word!

“It’s little more there is to tell. The next morning, as soon as there was light, there was Guleesh searching for any herb that was strange to him around the door. And it was not long till he found it. Then he boiled it, and he drank some of it himself, to see whether it might be poison, and it put him into a deep sleep. And when he woke he went to the priest’s house and told the whole story and gave the Princess some of the drink, and then she went to sleep and did not wake till the next day. And when she woke she had her speech back.

“Ah, well, by this time they was both in love with each other, and all that I did for myself or against them had only helped them. But it was not long before the Princess was saying that she must be off to her father, and nothing that the priest and Guleesh could do would make her stay. So the priest took the jewels that she had on her when Guleesh first brought her, and he sold them and gave her the money, and she took it and paid her way back to France.

“And after that great grief and melancholy came over Guleesh, and nothing would do him but he must start off for France to find the Princess again. Start off he did, and that was the last that I ever saw of him, only I heard that he found the Princess at her father’s court and that at long last they were married.”

There was nothing strange in the last that Naggeneen had told — nothing more strange, I mean, than that a peasant boy should marry the daughter of the King of France — but his voice, before he had ended, was so low and so full of grief that all the other fairies kept very still to listen, and when he had told his story none of them spoke for a little while. At last the King said: “How long was all this ago, Naggeneen?”

“Many years,” Naggeneen answered; “I couldn’t be counting how many.”

“Then what is it to you now?” said the King. “Sure they’re both dead long ago, and here are you as sound as ever.”

“Yes,” Naggeneen cried, “as sound as ever and as sound as I’ll ever be. They’re not dead. They had souls. They’re alive now, and when what they call ‘the Last Day’ comes, they’ll live still, forever. And then I shall go out, like a shadow when the light falls on it. There’s no more of me that can last than a shadow. And you will go out that way, too, and all of us. It was not her that I wanted so much. It was the soul that I thought I’ld get, and her married to me. That was it. And a stupid mortal had tricked me twice. It was then I left the rath. It was then I could bear to look at nobody, man or fairy. Then I put on the red jacket and went by myself. After a time I was a lepracaun, and a cluricaun, and nothing at all, as it suited me, and sometimes I lived in a rath with others, as I have in yours, and other times I went by myself. But I never forgot how I was tricked by a mortal, and I’ve never forgot how I missed getting a soul when I was near to it.

“You’ve never liked me; you’ve always thought me sour and harsh and cruel. Do you see why now? Since that time I’ve always hated all men, because of the one that tricked me; and I’ve always hated all women, because of the one I lost; and I’ve always hated all fairies, because they are all as weak and helpless and pitiful as myself. I hate myself and I hate all of you, because there’s no good for any of us in all the world forever.”

“Naggeneen,” said the King, “we’ve never been too fond of you, it’s true, but maybe we’ld have liked you better if you’d told us this before. But you’re cleverer than all of us. Tell us what we’ll do now, so that these mortals won’t be getting the better of us all out.”

“What’ll you do?” Naggeneen answered; “there’s nothing you can do. They’ll outwit you, whatever you do.”

“But there must be some way. Tell us what to do, Naggeneen,” the King pleaded.

“I’ll tell you what to do, then,” said Naggeneen; “send out your people and let them learn the ways of men. Let them learn to make the iron coaches that go up in the air; let them learn to make the coaches that go on the ground, with the iron ropes; let them learn to talk miles away through iron strings; let them learn to make the bright lights that you see; let them learn to open the rock so that it will not close again; let them learn to cross running water in boats full of iron; let them learn to handle iron and do what they like with it, as if it were only gold, and then, maybe, they’ll be able to do all the things that men do.”

The fairies were simply cowering away from the King and Naggeneen and shivering and squealing with fright at the talk of handling iron and crossing running water. “Ah, Naggeneen,” said the King, “you know we can’t do all that. Tell us what we’ll do at all.”

“There’s nothing that you can do,” said Naggeneen. “There’s only one thing I know you can try, and I think that’ll do no good either.”

“But what is it?” said the King. “We’ll try it, anyway.”

“It’s not the time to try it yet,” Naggeneen answered. “When the time comes I’ll tell you.”

“Then, Naggeneen,” said the King, “give us a tune out of the fiddle.”

And Naggeneen took the fiddle and played. But there was no merriment in it now. It was only the breath of sorrow and loss and disappointment that breathed from the shivering strings. The fairies did not dance; they only stood and listened, pale and still. In a few moments the King gave the sign for Naggeneen to stop, and in a minute more the lights were out and the whole palace was as quiet as the hill, before any palace was there.

5

THE TIME FOR NAGGENEEN’S PLAN

Little happened that needs to be told in the next few months, either to the fairies or to the human people. John O’Brien and Peter Sullivan were not long in finding work to do, and they were paid for it, and the two families got on better than they had in Ireland. The O’Briens got on better than the Sullivans. John was a better workman than Peter. Peter could do the work that was set before him in the way that he was told. But John could do better than that. He could see for himself how the work ought to be done, and he saw that if he did it well he might get better work to do. In Ireland, work as he would, he could no more than live, and so he had come to care little what he did or how he did it. But it was different here. The men who employed him saw that he was not a common workman, and soon they gave him better than the common work and more than the common pay.

But Peter was a common workman. Then, too, John’s mother knew how to care for the house better than Ellen did, and because of that, too, the O’Briens did better. Every day, just as she used to do in Ireland, Mrs. O’Brien left something to eat and drink outside the house for the Good People. She said that she did not know whether there were any Good People here, but if there were they must be well treated. And when she found that what she left for them was taken, she said that she knew that there were

Good People here. Of course she did not know that they were the same ones who had lived near them in Ireland. She put the milk and the water and the bread, or whatever she had for them, on the fire-escape, at the back of the rooms where they lived. And first she always laid down a little piece of carpet to put the dishes on, so that the fairies could come and get the food without touching the iron, for she knew that they could never do that. There was only one thing that did not go well with the O'Briens. Kitty's health did not come back to her, as they had hoped that it would. She did not need to do any work now, though she would do some, and the rest was good for her, but she was still pale and still weak.

Though the Sullivans did not find their fortunes so much improved in the new country as the O'Briens did, yet they felt that they had gained, too, and in one way especially. For the King of the fairies had forbidden Naggeneen to trouble them any more. Naggeneen asked what for at all he had come over all the sea, if he was not to trouble the Sullivans. The King was always ready enough to have Naggeneen's help, when he thought that his cleverness would be of use; but there were times when he would be obeyed, and this was one of them, so Naggeneen had to do as he was told.

The King tried all the things that Naggeneen had told him to do, to make his people learn all the wonderful magic that the human people knew so well. Naggeneen had told him at first that it would all be of no use, and so the King found it. The fairies were sent out to watch the men, to see all that they did, and to learn how to do it. It was all in vain.

The King often asked Naggeneen what was the one other way that he had said they might try. Naggeneen would never tell. When the time came to try it, he said, he would tell what it was, but it would be of no more use than the rest that they had done. Naggeneen laughed at all the others when they came home baffled and out of sorts. "You'll never do the things that men do," he said, "any more than they'll ever do the things that you do. And their wonders are more and better than yours."

After a time they ceased to try to learn any more. They began to live much as they had lived in Ireland. They had found a green place where they could dance, near the palace, but it was winter now, and the snow was over everything much of the time. They went to the O'Briens every day for the food that was left outside the window for them, and, for the most part, they spent the rest of the time in the palace. Often Naggeneen played the fiddle or the pipes for them. Then they forgot that it was his fault that they had ever come here, but when he stopped playing they remembered it and hated him again. And Naggeneen laughed at them. He had a strange laugh, without a bit of merriment or good-humor in it. There was something sad in his laugh and something sour, but nothing that it was pleasant to hear.

Then the spring began to come. The grass was looking a bit green and the air was warmer. They could dance on the grass now, whenever they liked. They had given up trying to learn the ways of men, and they were beginning to feel as if they had always lived here. Then Naggeneen came one evening and stood before the King and said: "It is the time now to try my plan, if you want to try it, but it's no good."

"What's the plan, then, at all?" the King asked.

"You know well," said Naggeneen, "that your people can find out nothing by going out and watching what men do. Now, what you want is to get a human child here, or maybe two of them, and keep them and let them grow up with you here, and then send them out to learn everything that men do, and come back and teach it to your people. Then you'll learn all these things that men do, and you can do the like."

"Ah, Naggeneen," said the King, "it's yourself was always the clever boy. We'll do that same."

"You will so," Naggeneen replied, "and no good will it ever do you. I've told you before and I tell you again, you'll never do the things that men do. But it's crazy you are to try all ways, and I have to be telling you the ways to try. Go on and do it, if it divarts you."

“And where’ll we get the human child at all?” the Queen asked.

“Sure then,” said Naggeneen, “and haven’t you heard the news? Why, there’s a baby at the Sullivans’ since this morning, and one at the O’Briens’ since this afternoon. The one at the Sullivans’ is a boy and the one at the O’Briens’ is a girl. Go and get them and leave two of your own people in their places. You know how to do that; it’s nothing new to you.”

“Take a child from the O’Briens!” the Queen cried. “From them that’s always been so good to us and always given us the bit and sup, when they scarcely had it themselves? I’d never do such a thing.”

“But you’ld be leaving one of your own people in the place of it,” Naggeneen answered, “and they’ld never know the differ. Or if they did, it would be no matter. A woman makes a great hullabaloo when her child looks sick and she thinks it’s dying on her, but she doesn’t care at all after a little. And then, it doesn’t die, and she thinks it’s her own child all the time, and there’s no harm done. And His Majesty here thinks it’s going to do a power of good for all of you. It’s not, but he thinks it is.”

“We’ll never take a child from the O’Briens if I can help it,” the Queen said. “From the Sullivans I don’t care, but not from the O’Briens.”

“We’ll have to do it,” said the King. “I don’t like to hurt the O’Briens myself, but it’s for the good of us all, and it’s our only chance. These mortals are getting ahead of us that far, and they’ll be doing something next that will exterminate us entirely. We’ll send and get both the children.”

The Queen urged again that the O’Briens had always been good to the Good People and must not be harmed, but the King had his mind set on Naggeneen’s plan and he would hear of nothing else. It was settled and it could not be changed. They must have both children. They should live among the fairies till they were old enough to be sent out to learn the ways of men. And they should always come back and teach the fairies the ways of men that they had learned.

"And it's to-night we'd better be doing it, if we're to do it at all," said the King. "Now, who'll be the ones to go and be put in the place of the children?"

Nobody seemed to care about going to play the part of a baby with the Sullivans, or even with the O'Briens. Everybody was trying to get out of the King's sight behind the others. "We'ld have to be lyin' still all day," one whispered, "with never a dance to rest ourselves with."

"They might be puttin' holy water on us," said another, and all who heard him shivered.

"There'll be all sorts of unpleasantness, anyway," said a third.

"Maybe they'ld find us out," said a fourth, "and then they'ld be puttin' all sorts of horrible charms on us to be rid of us."

But the King called one of the women and told her that she must go and stay in the place of the baby at the O'Briens. She whimpered a little, but she knew that what the King said must be done. Then the King looked around him and said, "Where's Naggeneen got to at all now?"

"Here I am to the fore," said Naggeneen.

"You'll go," said the King, "and you'll be put in the place of the boy that's at the Sullivans."

"I go!" said Naggeneen. "Never a step. Didn't I tell you of the plan? And that's enough. Now do it for yourself. I don't belong to you and you know it. Do your own work."

"I'll not be disputin' with you," said the King. "Whether you belong to me or no, you're in my palace along with my tribe, and you'll do what I tell you. It's tired of you I've been this great while, and now I've a chance to be rid of you. You'll go to the Sullivans and you'll stay there and you'll grow up like their child. And mind you play your part well and don't let them know what you are. If you do, they'll work some charm on you and be rid of you, and then we'll have to send back the real child, and all your own plan will be lost."

“And how will you carry out my plan without me?” Naggeneen asked. “Don’t I always tell you what to do? You’ll want me a dozen times a day.”

“We’ll not want you at all. You do tell us what to do and we do it when we like, and it’s small good ever came of it. And then, if we do want anything of you, we know where to find you, and we’ll easily come to you. It’s been done before. You was left in the place of a young man that was taken away once before, and when the tribe that you was with then wanted to talk to you they came to you, and we can do the same if we like, but I don’t think we shall like.”

“That’s just it,” Naggeneen cried; “did you know about that time? This time would be just like it. Do you know how they drove me off? I couldn’t help it then and I couldn’t help it again. There’s times when it seems like there’s a charm on me, and so there is, belike, and I have to do a thing that it’s bad for me to do. Do you know the whole of it, how it was that time?

“It was a man that time, as you say, and not a child. Rickard the Rake he was called, I remember, and a fine rake he was. Never a bit of work would he do, but he’ld always be at every fair or wake or the like of that. And so little good there was in him that the fairies in the rath where I was then said: ‘It’s an easy thing it’ll be stealing him away, and serve him right, too, and he’ll be handy for us, he’s so good a dancer.’

“I was ordered to be the one to be left in his place, though I knew no good would come of it. And so one night, when he was dancing, we struck him with a dart in the hip, and he fell down where he was. And then, in all the bother and the noise that there was, it was easy to get him away and to leave me in the place of him. So they took me up and put me in bed and nursed me and did all they could think of for me, and me all the time squirming and squealing, like it was dying I was.

“They gave me everything I could think of to eat, and that was not so bad, for I never lived better in my life; but it was worn out I was getting, with lying there all the time and playing sick, and never a chance to stir about or get any air or a minute to myself. And the thing I was spoiling for was a tune out of the pipes or the fiddle. Then they brought a fairy-man to look at me, and he said it was a fairy and not Rickard at all that was in it, and I couldn't be telling you all the bad names he put on me and the things he said about me. And he said: 'Leave a pair of bagpipes near him, and maybe he'll play them. You know well Rickard never could play at all, and so if he plays them we'll know that it's not Rickard, but a fairy changeling, and then we'll know what to do.'"

Just here I must stop Naggeneen in his story for a minute, to tell you that when people in Ireland speak of a "fairy-man" they do not mean a man fairy. They mean a man who knows all about fairies. The fairy-men know all that the fairies can do, and they know the charms against them and the ways to cure a sickness that the fairies have brought upon anyone, and the ways to keep them from stealing the cream from the milk and the milk from the cow. So the people have great respect for a fairy-man or a fairy-woman, and they often send to one of them for help, when they think that the fairies may have done them a mischief.

"They left the pipes beside me," Naggeneen went on, "and then they went away. Oh, it was then I had the terrible time all out. Oh, may I never long for anything again as I longed to play them pipes! But I knew that they'ld be listening and watching, and if they caught me at it, I'ld have to pay for it, if they could make me. So I kept my hands off them and only groaned and took on as if the dart in my hip was killing me entirely.

"Then there was one hot afternoon, and everything was still about the house, and it was the harvest time, and they all had a right to be in the fields at work. And sure I thought it was there they were. And then the wish to play the pipes came on me worse than ever before. And it was then that it was like there was a charm on me, as I was telling you. I had to do what I did. I could no more help doing it than a girl can help dancing with us, when we get her in our ring on May Eve. But first I opened the door a crack and looked out into the kitchen, to see was there anybody there, and there was nobody. But they were all in another room, as I found out after, waiting and listening. There was the fairy-man and a fairy-woman and all the people of the house, and some of the neighbors.

"But if I'd seen them all I dunno if I could have done other than I did, the power, whatever it was, was on me that strong. And I took the pipes and played. It was soft I played at first, and then the music got the better of me and I went on more and louder, and I played tunes and tunes. I could play as well then as I can now, and so the other fairies, that had been without me for some time, must have heard me playing, for soon I heard the rustle and the whisper and the patter of their coming, and then they gathered round me, and I had been left there lonely for so long that I kept on playing, to keep them with me.

"It was then the fairy-man and the fairy-woman began talking, and I heard every word they said, as no doubt they meant I should. 'What'll we do with the little beast at all?' says she.

"'We'll do something that's not too unpleasant at first,' says he. 'We'll take him and hold his head under the water, and see will that drive any of the devilment out of him.'

"'Oh, the thief!' says she. 'That's not the way to treat him at all. Let's heat the shovel and put him on it and throw him out the window.'

"'Ah, why will you be that cruel?' says he. 'Just let me heat the tongs red hot in the fire and then I'll catch him by the nose with them, and we'll find out will that make him go home and send poor Rickard back to us.'

"'That's not enough,' says she. 'I'll go and bring some of the juice of the lussmore that I have, and we'll make him drink it, and then if he's a fairy he'll wish that he was a man, so that he could die, it'll make that consternation inside him.'

"'We'll do the both of them things,' says he, and with that they both started into the kitchen, and all the rest of the people after them. But you may believe that by that time I was not there at all. I'd had enough of their kindness and I didn't think it was right to wait for any more of it. But I looked in at the window for a last glimpse of them, and one of the women saw me, and she screamed, and then the fairy-man made after me with the tongs, and I had to vanish completely. And you know what would happen then. When they drove me off, of course we had to send back Rickard, and there they found him the next morning, asleep in his bed, as sound as ever he was in his life.

"And that was not all. The lesson that he'd had was enough for him, and he left drinking and fighting and swearing, and he helped his old father and his brothers on the farm, and he was another man altogether. And so it's as I told you. You can never get the better of men, if they know anything, and all you do to hurt them only helps them. And so it will be if you send me to the Sullivans."

"If you're done talking about it now," said the King, "you'll go to the Sullivans and stay in the place of the child that we're to carry off. It's not likely they'll be leaving any pipes or any fiddle about for you to play on, and you can stay there quite comfortable.

"Off with him now!" the King cried to a dozen of his men, "and mind you don't come back without the child. And the same to you," he said again to others of his men; "take the woman and leave her in the place of the child at the O'Briens'."

The two parties were off, like two little swarms of bees, the one with Naggeneen and the other with the woman. The rest of the fairies waited. The Queen sat on her throne, with her face turned away from the rest and hidden in her hands. The King, with a troubled face, sat looking straight before him, not moving an eye or a hand. The others stood as far off as they could go. Nobody played; nobody danced; nobody laughed or whispered. They waited and watched and listened. Then there was a little murmur and buzz of one of the parties coming back. It was the one that had been to the Sullivans.

The King looked up and seemed to look through the fairies without seeing them. “Have you the child with you?” he asked.

“We have,” said the leader.

“And where’s Naggeneen?” the King asked.

“Lying in the bed beside Mrs. Sullivan,” the leader answered, “and squealing like a pig under a gate.”

“Give the child something to eat and make him comfortable,” said the King.

The Queen turned suddenly around. “Don’t give him anything to eat yet,” she said. “We’ve nothing here but our own food. You couldn’t give him that. What did you bring him here for? Was it not so that you could send him out again, as he grows up, to learn to do the things that men do? And if he touched a bit of our food or our drink, you know he could never leave us.”

“That’s the true word,” said the King. “Here! Some of you go to the O’Briens’ and see is there any milk left out of the window. And bring back enough so there’ll be some for the other child, when we get her.”

As the fairies set off on this errand there came a sound like the whistling of the wind through the door, and those who had gone to bring the O’Briens’ child were back. They were back in a whirl and a rush and a scramble and a rout. They were all screaming and crying and whimpering and gabbling and gibbering together, and they all fell and sprawled together in a heap before the King. In the midst of them was the woman who had been sent to take the place of the O’Briens’ child.

“What for are you here without the child?” the King cried. “And what are you all doing there on the floor, like fish tumbled out of a basket? Get up and tell me what’s wrong with you! Where is the child?”

The fairies all choked and gasped and groaned and tried to speak. Then the leader of the party staggered up to his feet and stammered out: “The child is where it was before we went for it. We could not bring it; we could not take it; we could not touch it. You might as well be asking us to bring a lily from the fields of heaven.”

“And why could you not take it?” the King asked. “Was the mother holding it so fast in her arms? Could you not make her look the other way while you’ld be taking it? Could you not put some charm on her so that she’ld let it go? Or was she praying all the time, so that you could do nothing with her? Or was she making those signs over it that none of us can stand?”

“No, no,” said the leader, so low that they could scarcely hear him; “no, it wasn’t that; the mother was doing none of them things. The mother was dead!”

For a minute everybody was still. The Queen started and looked at the leader of the party and leaned toward him. All the others gazed at him too. Then the King said, “And why did you not bring the child?”

“I’m after telling you we couldn’t touch the child,” the leader answered. “I went to take it, and all at once I felt burning hot, and like I was all dried up into a cinder, and I think they must have drawn a circle of fire round the child. And then I had that fearful feeling that you have when you’re near a horseshoe nail. There must have been one somewhere about. You couldn’t mistake that feeling — as if needles of ice were going all through and through you. And so I was driven back and could get no nearer to the child.”

The woman who had been sent to take the place of the child was standing near the King now, though she could scarcely stand at all, and her face was all wet with tears. “But they made me go nearer to the child than that,” she cried. “These others pushed me close to her, so that I’ld take her place and give the child to them. And I felt burned up like a cinder, too, and then I felt the icy needles, and then worse than that. I felt as if I was all cut across and across and through and through with flaming swords, and torn with red-hot saws. Not the way it is when you divide yourself, so that you can be in two places at once. Anybody can do that, and it hurts no more than cutting a lock of hair, but this was — oh! there's only one thing could do this. There was a pair of open scissors lying close to the child, and I almost touched them!"

She could say no more, and there was no more to be said. "You couldn't get the child, then," said the King, "and there's the end of it. Nobody could, if they did all them things. I dunno how it is," the King went on, half to himself, "a child lies there with a pair of scissors open near by, and a horseshoe nail close to it — maybe hung around its neck — and a circle drawn around it with a coal of fire, and it never minds it at all. It sleeps and wakes and lies there as peaceful and happy and quiet as if there was nothing at all out of the common about it. I dunno how they can do it. They're queer people, these mortals. We can't get the girl. They was too clever for us. But we've got the boy, and we'll do the best we can with him."

6

LITTLE KATHLEEN AND LITTLE TERENCE

The next morning John O’Brien was sitting alone, when there was a knock at the door. Then Peter Sullivan opened it, said “God save all here!” and came in.

“God save you kindly!” John answered.

“It’s distressed we are,” said Peter, “to hear of the death of poor Kitty. Ellen would be here with me to tell you so, only bein’ in bed herself and not able to stir, and what’ll come to all of us I dunno. I’m that disturbed about her I dunno what I’ll do at all. I left her with one of the neighbors and came to see your mother about her. But sure it’s you has the great grief on you already, whatever comes to us. It’s not only you I’m thinkin’ of, but it’s the child, left with no mother. Oh, it’s a terrible thing.”

“My own mother can bring up any child,” John answered. “Have no fear of that. It’s us that knew Kitty that’ll feel the loss of her.”

“And how is the child doing, anyway?” Peter asked.

“She looks fine and healthy, glory be to God!” said John.

“It’s a girl, they tell me.”

“It is.”

“Do you know yet what you’ll call her?”

“We’ll name her Kathleen, after her mother,” said John.

“Then you’ll be calling her Kitty, like her mother, I suppose.”

"No — no," John answered, slowly; "I don't think I'll call her that. The child will be always Kathleen. I dunno if I can tell you how I feel about that. It was a name for a child, more than a woman — Kitty — and yet, now that she's gone from me, I've a feeling like it was something more than the name of a woman — like it was something holy, like the name of the blessed Mother of God. When I think of that name now, I want to think only of her, and I wouldn't like to be calling even her own child by it. It's Kathleen I'll call her — nothing else."

"You're right about all that, no doubt," said Peter; "but I can't be staying here, and Ellen and the child at home the way they are. You have your child left, and you say it's healthy — thank God for that same! — but it looks like I might have neither wife nor child."

"Don't say that, man alive," said John; "what's the matter at all then?"

"I can't stop discoursin' here," Peter answered. "I came to ask would your mother, being a knowledgable woman, step over for a bit and see can she tell at all what's the matter with Ellen and the child. There was a doctor there, but he seemed to do no good, and Ellen said your mother would know more than all the doctors, so I came to ask would she come. And if you care to come yourself, I'll be telling you how they are as we go along, but I can't stay here; it's too long to be away from them."

"Mother is with the child," said John; "I'll speak to her."

He went into another room, where the baby was sleeping and his mother was sitting beside her. He told her why Peter had come. "Step downstairs," said Mrs. O'Brien, "and ask Mrs. Mulvey will she sit by the baby till I'm back. Then I'll go with him. And you'd better come, too, John; the air will do you good."

John went down to another of the tenements in the house and came back with their neighbor, Mrs. Mulvey. "If you'll be so kind," Mrs. O'Brien said, "sit here by the baby till I'm back, and I'll not be long. And mind you keep everything as it is, unless she wakes, and then you'll know what to do as well as I, for you've children of your own. But don't disturb the pair of scissors that's there beside her, and don't take off the horseshoe nail that's hung round her neck."

"And what's them things for?" Mrs. Mulvey asked, with wonder in her eyes.

"Why, to keep the Good People from stealing the child," Mrs. O'Brien answered. "Did you never hear of those things? Don't you know the Good People can't stand the touch of iron, or even to be near it? And especially a horseshoe nail they can't stand. And the scissors, too, they couldn't come near, and then leaving them open they make a cross, and that keeps the child all the more from the Good People."

John and his mother left Mrs. Mulvey with little Kathleen and went with Peter. "And what's wrong with Ellen, then?" Mrs. O'Brien asked.

"I dunno that there's so much wrong with herself, as you might say," Peter answered. "I think it's more than anything else that she's worried about the child."

"And what's wrong with the child, then?"

"There's everything wrong with the child," said Peter. "It's not like the same child at all. Last night he was as healthy a boy as you'ld wish to see — quiet and peaceable and good-tempered and strong-looking, for his age. And now this morning he's thin and sick-looking, and there's black hair all over his arms, and his face is wrinkled, like he was a little old man, and he does nothing but cry and scream till you can't bear it, and twist and squirm till you can't hold him. It's like he was fairy-struck, only I don't believe in them things at all."

"Did you watch him close last night?" Mrs. O'Brien asked.

"Part of the time," Peter answered, "but I dare say we was both asleep other times."

"Was Ellen careful about her prayers last night, and were you so, too?"

“I can’t say about that,” Peter said. “We might be letting some of them go, such a time as that, you know, and make it up after.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “make it up after by losing your child! Was there any iron anywhere about him?”

“I don’t know that there was.”

“And did you make a circle of fire about the place where he was lying?”

“I did not.”

“The child’s not been struck,” said Mrs. O’Brien; “not the way you mean. It’s not your child at all, but one of the Good People themselves, that’s in it. They’ve stolen your child and left a changeling in the place of it.”

“It’s the same way you always talked, Mrs. O’Brien,” said Peter. “I don’t believe them things.”

They had come to Peter’s door by this time. They found Ellen lying in bed, looking frightened half to death, and beside her was the baby, or the fairy, or whatever it was. It was not crying loudly now, but it was keeping up a little whining and whimpering noise that was quite as unpleasant to listen to as a good, honest cry. Its face looked thin and pinched and old; it had a little thin, wispy hair on its head where no baby of the age that this one was supposed to be has a right to have any. Its arms and hands were thin and bony. It looked weak and sick, but it was rolling and wriggling about in the liveliest way. It would give a spring as if it were going straight off the bed upon the floor, and when poor Ellen caught at it to save it, it would roll back toward her, stop its crying for a second, and seem to be laughing at her, and then it would do the same thing again.

“It’s plain enough,” Mrs. O’Brien said, as soon as she saw it. “It’s one of the Good People. But it’s quick enough we’ll be rid of it and have back your own child. Bring me some eggs.”

“I’ll have nothing of the sort now,” said Ellen. “It’s bad the poor child is with some sickness or other, but it’s my own child, and I’ll have nothing done to it that’s not to do it good. If you know anything that’ll help it, Mrs. O’Brien, tell me that, but don’t be sayin’ it’s not my child.”

“I’ll not hurt the child, whatever it is,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “but there are ways to tell whether it’s your own child at all or one of the Good People. If you find it’s one of them, then it’s easy to do more, but in the meantime it’s not harmed.”

“I’ll not have you trying any of them things,” said Ellen. “I’ll not have you saying it’s not my child, and I’ll not be thinking of such a thing myself. You see how poor and sick it’s looking. If there’s anything you can do for the child, do it, but don’t be talking that way any more.”

“Ellen,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “you don’t know what you’re talking about at all. Wait now till I tell you what was told to me when I lived in Dublin, and I think that it was not far from there that it happened. It’s about a woman that talked as you do. A sailor’s wife she was, and there was a child born to her while her husband was away at sea. She thought he’ld be home soon, and so she wanted to put off the christening of the child till he’ld be back. So she waited and waited for a long time, and her husband did not come. The neighbors told her she was doing wrong to wait so long and she ought to have the child christened before anything would happen to it. But she wouldn’t listen to them.

“So it went on for a year and a half, and still the father didn’t come home. But the boy was healthy and happy, and the mother never had any trouble with him. But the trouble came. One day she’d been working in the field, and she came home, and as soon as she was in the house she heard crying from the bed where the child used to sleep. She ran to look at him, and he lay there, looking sick and thin and weak, the way your boy does, and crying that he was hungry. He was like her child and he was not like him. He’d grown so pale and bad-looking that she thought he’d had a stroke from the Good People. But she went to get him some bread and milk, and she asked her other boy, that was about seven years old, when it was and how it was that he began to be sick.

"'I left him playing near the fire,' the boy said, 'and I was in the other room. And I heard a rushing noise, like a great flock of birds flying down the chimney, and then I heard a cry from my brother and then again the noise, like the birds were flying out at the chimney again. And then I ran in and found him there the way you see him now.'

"Well, if the poor woman had never had trouble with the child before, she had nothing but trouble now. Crying and squalling it was all the time, and it nearly ate her out of house and home, and yet it seemed always sick and weak and thin. The neighbors came and they told her it was not her child at all, but one of the Good People that had been put in the place of it, and it was all her own fault for not having it christened in the right time. But not a word of it all would she listen to, and she said all the time that, whatever was wrong with it, it was her own child and she'ld hear nothing to the contrary.

"It was an out-of-the-way place where they lived, and there was no priest near, or she never could have kept it from being christened as long as she did. But at last the neighbors themselves said that if she didn't see to it, they would. And they said to her: 'It's not your child at all that's in it, and if you'll have it christened you'll see. And if you won't take the child to the priest with us now, we'll go to him ourselves and tell him all about it. It's not right to keep it from him longer.'

"So with that she thought it was no use and she'ld have to do as they said, and she took the child and tried to dress him, ready to take him to the priest to be christened. But the roars and the screams that he let out of him were more than anybody could bear, and at the last she said: 'Oh, I can't do it; it's too terrible a thing for him; he won't bear it, and how can I make him?'

“The next day when she came in from her work the other boy said to her: ‘Mother, it was uncommon quiet he was while you was away to-day. And by and by I went in to see what was ailing him. And there he sat, looking so like an old man that I was near afraid of him. And he looked at me and he spoke as plain as an old man, and he says: “Pat,” says he, “bring me a pipe, till I have a bit of a smoke. It’s tired of life I am, lying here without it.”’

“‘“Ah,” says I, “wait till my mother gets home and I’ll tell her of this.”’

“‘“Tell her,” says he, “and she’ll not believe a word from you.”’

“‘And no more do I believe a word from you,’ says the woman.

“Well, soon after that there came a letter from the father, saying that he’ld be at home now in a few days. With that the woman set off to town to buy things to eat and drink to welcome her husband home, and she said: ‘Now we’ll have the christening, as soon as ever he comes.’

“Then as soon as she was off, the neighbors said: ‘Now is the time that we’ll be done with that imp. We’ll take him and have him christened while she’s away, and we’ll not give her the chance to put it off again because he cries.’

“So they went to the house and one of the women came up to the bed and clapped a quilt over him and had him wrapped up in it before he knew what was happening to him, and away they all went down toward the brook, on the way to the priest. Well, he kicked and he struggled to get free, but the woman held him so tight it was no use. But when they came to the running water, it was then he began bellowing like a herd of bulls, and kicking and pulling so that it was all she could do to hold him.

“She got her foot on the first of the stepping-stones, and it was then he began to get heavy, as if it was a stone that she was carrying. But she held hard and reached the second stone, and it seemed to her that he was nothing but a lump of lead, only still roaring and struggling; and, what with that and the rushing of the water below her, she began to get dizzy, but still she held on, and she had her foot on the stone in the middle of the stream when plump down he fell through the quilt that he was wrapped in, as if it had been nothing but a muslin handkerchief.

“And there he went floating down the stream, and shouting and laughing at them. For, you know, it’s not being in running water that can hurt one of the Good People, but only crossing it, and if they tried to cross it they’ld be in awful pain till they got to the middle, and then nothing could keep them from falling in.

“So they were rid of him, and you know when you’re rid of a changeling the Good People must send your own child back. And so the neighbors had not got back to the house when they met the mother running to meet them and bringing her own child, that she had found in its bed, when she got back from the town, sleeping, as well and as sound as ever it was.

“And now, Ellen,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “will you let me try, in ways that I know, that can do no harm, whether this is your own child or not? And if it’s not, you’ll have your own back, as well as it was last night.”

“This is my own child,” Ellen answered, “and it’s not by any silly tales like that that you can make me believe it isn’t. I’ll not have you doing anything of the sort. If you know anything that can help a baby when it’s sick, you may do that, but nothing else.”

“I do know one thing that can help a sick baby,” Mrs. O’Brien answered “and that I’ll do, if you like it or not. If that thing there is one of the Good People, as I think, it’s not sick, and it will live for thousands of years after we are dead. We can neither help it nor much hurt it. But if that is your child, it doesn’t look to me as if it would live an hour. I’ll not try whether it’s yours or not, but if it’s yours I’ll not stand by and see its soul die, that ought to be the soul of a Christian. Ellen Sullivan, that child will be christened before I leave this house.”

“Christened!” poor Ellen cried in amazement. “And who’s to christen him? We couldn’t get a priest here in an hour — maybe not to-day.”

“There’s no need of a priest,” Mrs. O’Brien said; “I’ll christen him myself. Bring me some water there, Peter.”

“But sure you can’t do that,” Peter protested. “Nobody but a priest could christen a child.”

“I can christen the child as well as a priest,” said Mrs. O’Brien; “you take a child to the priest to be christened, when it’s easy and convenient, but when there’s no priest near, and the child is sick and seems likely to die before one can come, anybody can christen it; and that christening stands, and it never has to be christened after. That’s the law of the Church. Bring me the water. I never saw a child that seemed more likely to die than this one, if it’s a child at all.”

And Peter brought the water.

“What do you call the child?” Mrs. O’Brien asked.

“I think we’ll call him Terence,” Peter answered. “That was my grandfather’s name, on my mother’s side, and a decent man he was, and uncommon fond of myself when I was a bit of a gossoon, till he died, Heaven rest his soul! and I think I’d like to name the boy after him.”

Now all that the child had been doing and all the noise that he had been making before were simply nothing to what he had been doing ever since Mrs. O’Brien first said the word “christen.” He was screaming so that all this talk could scarcely be heard, and it was almost more than Mrs. O’Brien could do to hold him, when she took him in her arms. But she did hold him for a moment with one arm, while she dipped up some water with her hand and sprinkled it over him. Then the creature gave one great jump and was away from her and fell on the floor.

Before anybody else could move, Mrs. O’Brien herself picked him up and laid him on the bed. There was no sign that he was hurt. No child that was hurt could have screamed as he did. “Come, John,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “we’ve done all that we can.”

“May I walk back with you a piece?” said Peter. “There was something more that I was thinking I would say.”

“Come back with us, of course, and welcome,” said John.

They left the house and walked along the street.

“I think it was right, what you done, Mrs. O’Brien,” said Peter. “I can’t think about the child the way you think, but it was right what you done.”

Mrs. O’Brien made no answer. “John,” said Peter, “there’s something that I was thinking of last night and this morning, and it was this: You have a girl and I have a boy, that was both born on the one day. It’s good friends we’ve always been, and your father and your mother and my father and my mother before us. And I was just thinking when your girl and my boy grows up, supposing that they like each other well enough, it might be pleasant to all of us that they’ld be married some time.

“There’s no man’s son that I’d rather see a daughter of mine married to than yours, Peter,” said John, “if she herself was pleased. I’ld not ask her to take anybody she didn’t like, but if she came to love him, and he came to love her, I’ld be as pleased as yourself.”

“It was that I wanted to say,” said Peter, “and I’d better go back to Ellen now.”

John and his mother said no more till they were at home. They both went into the room where little Kathleen was. Mrs. Mulvey sat watching the baby. She went out and left them. The child was sleeping as peacefully as if there were no such thing in the world as sorrow or loss or doubt, or a fairy to help or harm.

“John,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “I’d think I might have done harm to that child in trying to christen it, only I’m as sure as ever I was of anything that it’s not a child at all, but one of the Good People, so I think there’s no harm done. I don’t know what would happen any of the Good People if he was to be rightly christened. I think he’ld not be able to stand it and would be driven out, so that they’ld have to send back the real child. Now, if a priest ever sees that creature that we’ve just seen, and asks: ‘Has this child been christened?’ they’ll have to answer ‘Yes,’ and he cannot be christened again. And yet, with the jump that he gave out of my arms when I sprinkled the water, it’s not sure I am that a drop of it touched him.”

7

A CHAPTER THAT YOU CAN SKIP

This is a chapter that you can skip, if you want to. And really I should advise you to. Nothing of importance happened in the next eighteen years. Of course I am obliged to write a little something to fill in all that time, but you are not obliged to read it. That is where you have such an advantage. I think it is much better for a book to have some parts that can be skipped just as well as not, you get through it so much faster. I have often thought what a good thing it would be if somebody would write a book that we could skip the whole of. I think a good many people would like to have such a book as that. I know I should.

Then there is another reason why it will be well for you to skip a little about here. When you get farther on, if you happen to come to something that you don’t understand, you can say: “Oh, this is probably all explained by something in that part that I skipped,” and you can go right on. But if you had not skipped anything and then came to something that you did not understand, you would have to say: “There, now, I must have been reading carelessly and missed something,” and you would have to go back and read the book all through again.

In these eighteen years Kathleen O’Brien and Terence Sullivan were growing up. I don’t suppose there ever was another such child as Kathleen. And I should hope there never was another such child as Terence. Kathleen’s grandmother had the most of the care of her, of course, but it was really no care at all. It would have been a pleasure for anybody to have the care of Kathleen. Even when she was a baby she was a perfect delight, and you know what babies are sometimes. At any rate, you would know, if you had known Terence. And when she got to be a few years older, say seven or eight —

Well, it is perfectly impossible for me to tell you how good and lovely Kathleen was. It is all very well to try to describe snow-capped mountains at sunrise, or a storm at sea, or moonlight at Niagara, or a prairie on fire, or anything of that sort, but nobody could tell you how good and lovely Kathleen was, so that you could understand it. I suppose she was a good deal the sort of child that you would be if you didn't put your elbows on the table, or your spoon in your mouth, or slam the doors, or cry when your hair is combed, or tease for things that you ought not to have, or whisper in company, or talk out loud when there are older persons present, or leave your playthings about when you are done with them, or get your clothes soiled when you play out of doors, or want to play at all when you ought to study your lessons, or ask to be allowed to sit up after bed-time, or bite your nails, or cut your bread, or leave your spoon in your cup instead of in your saucer, or take the biggest apple.

I don't say that Kathleen never did any of these things. I only say that she was so good that you would have to leave off every one of them or you would never catch up with her. If Kathleen had a fault, it was that she was too good. If I were going to have anything to do with her I would rather she should be a little bit worse than a single bit better. I am so glad you are skipping this part, because I shouldn't want you to try to be a bit worse than you are just for the sake of pleasing me. And I don't mean by all this that Kathleen was one of those children who are a bother all the time because they are so good. She may have done things that she ought not to do sometimes. I dare say she did. I know she did once. I will tell you all about that in the next chapter. She was just a dear, sweet little girl, as bright and merry and healthy as any little girl in the world ever was. And you would think so yourself, if you had known her and were not so jealous. If I should tell you that she was as pretty as she was good, I don't suppose you would believe me. But she was, just as surely as I am writing this book and you are reading it. I mean just as surely as I am writing it. I am not sure yet whether you are reading it or not.

But Terence! Well, the less said about him the better. Still, I suppose, I shall have to say something. He did every one of the things that I have just mentioned. And it wasn't because he didn't know any better; he seemed to like to do them, just because he knew that they were wrong. When he was a baby he was more trouble than twins, and bad twins at that. He cried all the time, except when he was eating or sleeping, and he slept only a little of the time and ate a great deal of it. He always seemed to be just about so sick, but it never hurt his appetite and he never got any sicker. After a while Ellen got used to his being sick, and she always said that he was delicate, poor child, and that was why he was so cross and so much trouble.

"And is that why he eats so much?" Mrs. O'Brien would ask.

"I dunno about that," Ellen would answer; "I think it's the kind of sickness that's on him that makes him eat so much."

"More likely it's eating so much that gives him the kind of sickness that's on him," Mrs. O'Brien would say. "But I tell you again, it's no sickness at all he has. He's just one of the Good People, and you could be rid of him and have your own child back any time you would do any of the things I would tell you."

But not a word of this would Ellen ever heed. Terence was her own child, and he might be a bit troublesome, as any child might, but he was not really bad at all, and it was Kathleen, that was always so good, the Lord knew why, that made Mrs. O'Brien think that every child ought to be that way. But there was one strange thing about Terence, and Ellen herself had to admit it. After that very hour, when he was one day old, when Mrs. O'Brien came to see him and christened him, or tried to — she never felt sure till long afterward whether she had done it or not — he was always quiet when she was near. He would drive poor Ellen nearly crazy, in spite of all her excuses for him, when he was alone with her, but the moment that Mrs. O'Brien came into the house he would get as far away from her as he could, and then lie perfectly still and watch her, for all the world, as John said once, like a rat in a trap watching a cat. Ellen said that it was because he always remembered that it was Mrs. O'Brien who had dropped him once. To this John replied: "Then maybe he'ld be making you less trouble, Ellen, if you was to drop him yourself once or twice." But Mrs. O'Brien said that it was just because he knew what she would do to him if she had the chance.

And there was another strange thing about Terence. As he grew a little older, he never could be got inside a church. Father Duffy had never even seen him, except when he came to the house while he was still a baby, and then Terence would scream and kick so, when the good priest came near him, that he never dared touch him. The first time that he came, Ellen told him about Mrs. O'Brien's christening the child, and asked him if it was right for her to do it.

"Was the child looking sick, and as if he was likely to die?" Father Duffy asked.

"He was, father," Ellen answered; "I couldn't deny that."

"Then it was right for her to christen him," the priest answered, "and he'll not need to be christened again. In fact, he can't be christened again."

But long after that, when they tried to take him to church, he would never go. If Peter and Ellen started for church with him he would run away from them. They could not even hold him. He would get away from them, and sometimes they could not tell how he did it, only he would be gone. And then the only way that they could find him was to go home again, and there he was sure to be, as safe as ever, only he had not been at church. And so, after a while, they stopped trying to make him go.

When the two children were old enough to play together, Terence never seemed to be happy except when he was with Kathleen. He did not care in the least to play with other boys. He did not seem to care in the least to play at all. All he wanted was to be with Kathleen. Kathleen never liked him, and she did not like to have him with her so much of the time. But she was too kind-hearted to hurt anybody in any way, even a boy whom she did not like, so she tried to treat him as nicely as she could, and she told nobody but her grandmother, to whom she told everything, that she was not as pleased to be with him as he was to be with her.

Terence, in his turn, did not always treat Kathleen well, any more than he did anybody else. He was ill-natured with her and he played tricks on her that were not pleasant at all, and yet he wanted to be always with her. Perhaps it was partly because she was more kind to him than anybody else, except Ellen. For nobody else liked him. And if he was bad-tempered and unkind to other people, it made other people unkind and bad-tempered to him, but nothing could make Kathleen unkind to anybody.

“It’s not fair you all are to Terence,” Ellen said once to Mrs. O’Brien, “to think bad of him the way you do. There’s things about him that don’t seem right, I know, but those things don’t show the way he really is. I dunno if I’m making you understand me. I’m his mother and I know him better nor anybody else, and I know he’s different from the way he seems to you, and even the way he seems to me sometimes. And I’ll tell you how I know that. When I’m asleep I often dream about him. And when I dream about him, he looks a little the way he does other times, but he’s taller and he’s better-looking in the face, and he looks stronger and brighter and healthier like. And he speaks to me, and his voice is lower and pleasanter in the sound of it. And that’s the way he’ld be, I know, if he had his health, poor child, and if everything was right with him. And you’ld all know that and you’ld feel more for him, if you knew him the way I do.”

This was when Terence was six or seven years old. And Ellen often spoke in this way afterward. She saw Terence in her dreams, and he was a very different Terence from the one who made her so much trouble when she was awake, and yet he was partly the same.

And there was one thing that Terence did that almost everybody liked. I might as well say everybody except Kathleen. He played the fiddle. Nobody knew how he learned. There was a neighbor of the Sullivans who came from the same county in Ireland that they did, and he played a fiddle in an orchestra at a cheap theatre. One day Peter had gone to see this man and had taken little Terence with him. The fiddle was lying on the table. The two men went into another room and left Terence by himself. They were talking busily and they forgot about him. Then they heard a soft little tune played on the fiddle. “Who’s that playing my fiddle?” said the owner of it.

“Sure,” said Peter, “we left nobody there but Terence.”

They went quickly back into the room and found Terence hastily laying the fiddle down where he had found it. “Ah, can’t I leave you alone a minute,” said Peter, “but you must be meddling with things that don’t belong to you? What’ll I do now if you’ve gone and hurt the fiddle?”

“Don’t be talking that way to the child,” said the musician; “sure he did it no harm. But where at all did he learn to play that way? That’s what I’m thinking. Have you been letting him learn all this time and never told me?”

“He never learned at all that I know of,” Peter answered. “I never saw him have a fiddle in his hand till this minute.”

“It’s a strange thing, then,” the musician said. “Anybody that can play a tune like he did that one has a right to play more and better. Where did you learn it, my boy?”

“I never learned it at all,” Terence answered; “I just saw the fiddle there and I thought I’ld see could I play it. But it’s little I could be doing with it, I’m thinking.”

Peter was surprised enough to find that Terence could play a tune on a fiddle, and so was Ellen, when she heard about it. But they did not wonder at it so much as they would have done if they had known more about such things. They had a sort of notion that one person could play the fiddle and another could not, much as one person can move his ears and another cannot. So they thought little about it. But when Terence begged them to buy him a fiddle of his own, they saved up money a little at a time, and at last they bought him one.

Then for days Terence did nothing but play. He played simple little tunes at first, but soon he began to play harder ones. Then he got impatient with himself, as it seemed, and he began to play such music as nobody who heard him had ever heard before. Often he would not play when he was asked, but he would play for hours by himself, when he thought that no one was listening. His father brought his friend the musician to hear him, and he said that it was wonderful. He had never heard the fiddle played so well. Nobody had ever heard the fiddle played so well.

And Kathleen never cared to hear Terence play. She did hear him play, many times, of course, and she listened politely, but she told her grandmother that she did not care about it at all. She would much rather hear the poor fiddler of the little orchestra, who had come from their county in Ireland. Their neighbor the fiddler himself was as much shocked as anyone to hear Kathleen talk like this. “Did you ever hear anybody play the fiddle like Terence plays it?” he asked her, when she said something of the sort to him.

“No,” Kathleen answered. “I never heard anybody play it like Terence, but I have heard some play it better than Terence. You play it better.”

“Oh, child,” he said, “I’ld give all the money I’ll be earning in the next ten years if I could play like he does. Don’t you see I can’t do half the things he does with it?”

“I know that,” Kathleen said; “it isn’t the way he plays a bit that makes everybody talk so about him; it’s just the things he does. When he plays a tune it just doesn’t mean anything, and when you play a tune it does.”

And that was as near as Kathleen could ever come to telling why she did not care about Terence’s playing. Everybody else said that it was wonderful, but she said that it didn’t mean anything. And when Kathleen talked in this way they said that she was too critical. That is what people will always tell you when you can see through a fraud and they cannot.

You will suppose, without my telling you, that as soon as Kathleen was old enough to listen to them, her grandmother began telling her the old stories of Ireland. Often Terence would come and listen to them, too, for he seemed to be less afraid of Mrs. O'Brien as he grew a little older. But it never seemed to be because of the stories that he came; he only wanted to be near Kathleen.

Mrs. O'Brien told the children stories about the Good People, and about the old heroes and kings of Ireland who had fought to save the country from its enemies. Terence never liked the stories about the Good People. "Don't be telling us about them fairies all the time," he would say. "Tell us about men; that's what I like better."

"Don't call them by that name," Mrs. O'Brien would answer. "They don't like it, and if you call them by it they may do you harm."

"I'll call them what I like," Terence would say, "and they'll do me no harm. It's a worthless lot they are, and you know that same yourself, Mrs. O'Brien, if you'ld only think so. They can do no harm to you, or to any woman or man that knows how to deal with them. Why will you bother with them all the time?"

And all this made Mrs. O'Brien think the more that Terence was one of them.

One day Mrs. O'Brien happened to tell the children a ghost story. I don't know whether your mother allows you to read ghost stories. I don't see any harm in them myself, any more than Mrs. O'Brien did, but some people do, and if your mother does, then it is lucky that you are skipping this part. I think that your mother will be very glad that you skipped this part with the ghost story in it. That is, of course, she won't really be glad, because, since you are skipping it, you won't know that there is any ghost story here, and so you won't tell your mother that you skipped a ghost story, and so she won’t really care whether you skipped it or not. What I mean is that if you had read it instead of skipping it, so that you could tell your mother that there was a ghost story, she would be glad that you had skipped — well, what is the use of my trying to tell you what I mean, as long as you are skipping it, anyway? I had better go on with the story.

“Once a man was coming home from a funeral,” said Mrs. O’Brien. “As he was walking along the road, near a churchyard, he found the head of a man. He took it up and left it in the churchyard. Then he went on his way, and soon he met a man who looked like a gentleman.

“‘Where have you been?’ said the gentleman.

“‘I was at a funeral,’ said the man, ‘and as I came back I found the head of a man, and I left it in the churchyard.’

“‘It was well for you that you did that,’ said the gentleman. ‘That was my head, and if you had done any wrong by it, it would be the worse for you.’

“‘And how did you lose your head, then?’ the man asked.

“‘I did not lose it,’ the gentleman answered; ‘I left it on the road, where you found it, to see what you would do with it.’

“‘Then you must be one of the Good People,’ said the man, ‘and it’s sorry I am that I met you.’

“‘Don’t be afraid,’ said the gentleman. ‘I’ll do you no harm, and I may do you good.’

“‘I’m obliged to you,’ said the man; ‘will you come home with me to dinner?’

“They went to the man’s house, and the man told his wife to get dinner ready for them. When they had eaten dinner they played cards, and then they went to bed and slept till morning. In the morning they had breakfast, and after a while the gentleman said: ‘Come with me.’

“‘Where am I to come with you?’ the man asked.

“‘I want you to see the place where I live,’ the gentleman said.

“They went together till they came to the churchyard. The gentleman pointed to a tombstone and said: ‘Lift it up.’

“The man lifted it up, and there was a stairway underneath. They went down the stairs together till they came to a door, and it led into a kitchen. Two women were sitting by the fire. Said the gentleman to one of the women: ‘Get up and get dinner ready for us.’

“The woman got up and brought some small potatoes. ‘Are those all you have for us?’ the gentleman asked.

“‘Those are all I have,’ the woman answered.

“‘As those are all you have,’ said the gentleman, ‘keep them.’

“Then he said to the other woman: ‘Get up and get dinner ready for us.’

“The woman got up and brought some meal and husks. ‘Are those all you have?’ the gentleman asked.

“‘Those are all I have,’ the woman answered.

“‘As those are all you have,’ said the gentleman, ‘keep them.’

“He led the man up the stairs and knocked at a door. A beautiful woman opened it. She was dressed in a gown of silk, and it was all trimmed with gold and jewels. He asked her if she could give him and the stranger a dinner. Then she placed before them the finest dinner that was ever seen. And when they had eaten and drunk as much as they liked, the gentleman said: ‘Do you know why this woman was able to give us such a dinner?’

“‘I do not know,’ said the man, ‘but I should like to know, if you care to tell me.’

“‘When I was alive,’ said the gentleman, ‘I had three wives. And the first wife I had would never give anything to any poor man but little potatoes. And now she has nothing but little potatoes herself, and she can give nothing else to anyone, till the Day of Judgment. And my second wife would never give anything to the poor but meal and husks, and now she has nothing but meal and husks herself, and she can give nothing else to anyone, till the Day of Judgment. But my third wife always gave to the poor the best that she had, and so she will always have the best that there is in the world, and she can always give the best in the world to anyone, till the Day of Judgment.'

"Then the gentleman took the man about and showed him his house, and it was a palace, more beautiful than anything that he had ever seen. And while he was walking about it he heard music. And he thought that he had never heard music so beautiful. And while he was listening to the music he felt like sleeping, so he lay down and slept. And when he woke he was in his own home. He never saw the gentleman again and he could never find the place where he had been."

"It's all the time fairies and ghosts with you, Mrs. O'Brien," Terence said. "Who cares what they do? It's what men do that counts. I'll tell you a story now."

So Mrs. O'Brien and Kathleen listened to Terence's story.

"There was three men," Terence began, "that lived near together, and their names was Hudden and Dudden and Donald. Each one of them had an ox that he'ld be ploughing with. Donald was a cleverer man than the others and he got on better. So the other two put their heads together to think what would they do to hurt Donald and to ruin him entirely, so that he'ld have to give up his farm and they could get it cheap. Well, after a while they thought that if they could kill his ox he couldn't plough his land, and then he'ld lose the use of it and he'ld have to give it up. So one night they went and killed Donald's ox.

"And to be sure, when Donald found his ox killed, he thought it was all over with him. But he wasn't the man to be thinking that way long. So he thought he'd better make the best he could of it, and he took the skin off the ox and started with it to the town to sell it. And as he was going along a magpie perched on the skin and began pecking at it, and all the time chattering, for it had been taught to talk. With that Donald put round his hand and caught the magpie and held it under his coat.

“He went on to the town and sold the skin, and then he went to an inn for a drink. He followed the landlady down into the cellar, and while she was drawing the liquor he pinched the magpie and it began chattering again. ‘By the powers,’ says the landlady, ‘who’s that talking and what’s he saying at all?’

“‘It’s a bird,’ says Donald, ‘that I carry around with me, and it knows a great deal and tells me many a thing that it’s good for me to know. And it’s after telling me just now that the liquor you’re giving me is not the best you have.’

“‘It’s the wonderful bird all out,’ says the landlady, and with that she went to another cask for the liquor. Then said she: ‘Will you sell that bird?’

“‘I wouldn’t like to do that,’ says Donald. ‘It’s a valuable bird, and then it’s been my friend a long time, and I dunno what it would be thinking of me if I’d sell it.’

“‘Maybe I’ld make it worth your while.’ said the landlady.

“‘I’m a poor man,’ says Donald.

“‘I’ll fill your hat with silver,’ says the landlady, ‘if you’ll leave me the bird.’

“‘I couldn’t refuse that,’ says Donald; ‘you may have the bird.’

“So she filled his hat with silver, and he left her the bird and went on his way home.

“It wasn’t long after he got home till he met Hudden and Dudden. ‘Aha!’ says he to them, ‘you thought it was the bad turn you was doing me, but you couldn’t have done me a better. Look what I got for the hide of my ox, that you killed on me.’ And he showed them the hatful of silver. ‘You never saw such a demand for hides in your life,’ says he, ‘as there is in the town this present time.’

“No sooner had he said that than Hudden and Dudden went home and killed their own oxen and set off for the town to sell the hides. But when they got there they could get no more for them than the common price of hides, and they came home again vowing vengeance on Donald.

"This time they were bound there would be no mistake about it, so they went to his house and they seized him and put him into a sack and tied up the top of it. 'Now,' says one of them, 'you'll not be doing us any dirty turn this time, I'm thinking. We're going to take you to the river and throw you in and drown you; that's what we're going to do and I'm telling you of it now, so that you'll have the pleasure of thinking that all your sorrows are nearly over, as you go along.'

"Well, Donald said never a word, but he kept thinking, and those words 'all your sorrows are nearly over' gave him something particular to think about, and it wasn't long till he began to see his way, if he could only get a chance to do what he was thinking of.

"They took up the sack and they carried it by turns for a time, but both of them soon began to get mighty tired and thirsty. Then they came to a tavern, and they left the sack outside, and Donald in it, and went in to get a drink. Donald knew that if they once began drinking they would stay inside for some time. Then presently he heard a great trampling sound, and he knew it must be a herd of cattle coming, and he knew there must be somebody driving them. With that he began singing, like he was the happiest man in the world.

"The man that was driving the cattle came up to him and he says: 'Who's inside the sack there, and what are you singing like that for?'

"'I'm singing because I'm the happiest man alive,' says Donald. 'I had plenty of troubles in my life, but I'm going to heaven now, and they're all over. There's a blessing on this same sack, you must know, and whoever's in it goes straight to heaven, and isn't it myself that's a right to be singing?'

"'Surely you have,' says the man, 'and it's glad I'ld be to take your place. What would you take from me now to let me get in that sack in your place?'

"'There's not money enough in the world to make me do it,' says Donald, and he began singing again.

"'Ah, be reasonable!' says the man. 'I'll pay you well.'

"'I tell you the whole world couldn't do it,' says Donald. 'It's not every day a man gets a chance to go to heaven. Think of being over with all the sorrows and the troubles of this world, and nothing but happiness any more forever. Sure I'ld be a fool if I'ld give it up.'

"'Oh, but think of me,' says the man. 'It's me that has the sorrows on me so that I can't bear them. There's my wife died three months ago, and all the children was dead before her, and it was she always helped me with the farm and knew how to manage better nor myself, so that now she's gone I can do nothing with it. And I've lost money on it till I can't pay the rent, and now I'll lose the farm itself, and here I am driving these cattle to town to sell them to get money to take another piece of land and keep the life in me, and yet I don't want to live at all. Oh, give me your place in that sack and you'll go to heaven in your own time, if it was only for that one good deed. Give me your place and I'll give you these twenty fine cattle, and you'll have better luck nor me and you'll surely do well with them.'

"'I can't resist you,' says Donald; 'sure it's you needs to go to heaven more nor me. It's the truth I hate to do it, but I'll give you my place.'

"So with that the man untied the sack and Donald got out of it and he got into it, and Donald tied it up again. Then Donald went away home, driving the cattle before him.

"It was not long then till Hudden and Dudden came out of the inn, and they took up the sack, thinking that Donald was still inside it, and they took it to the river and threw it into a deep place. Then they went home, and there they found Donald before them, and a herd of the finest cattle they ever saw. 'How is this, Donald?' they said. 'We drowned you in the river, and here you are back home before us. And where are you after getting all these cattle?'

"'Oh, sure,' says Donald, 'it's myself has the bad luck all out. Here I've only twenty of these cattle, and if I'd only had help I could have had a hundred — aye, or five hundred. Sure in the place where you threw me in, down at the bottom of the river, there was hundreds of the finest cattle you ever saw, and plenty of gold besides. Oh, it's the misfortunate creature that I am, not to have any help while I was down there. Just these poor twenty was all I could manage to drive away with me, and these not the best that was there.'

"Then they both swore that they would be his friends if he would only show them the place in the river where they could get cattle like his. So he said he'ld show them the place and they could drive home as many of them as they liked. Well, Hudden and Dudden was in such a hurry they couldn't get to the river soon enough, and when they were there Donald picked up a stone, and said he: 'Watch where I throw this stone, and that's where you'll find the most of the cattle.'

"Then he threw the stone into a deep part of the river, and he said: 'One of you jump in there now, and if you find more of the cattle than you can manage, just come to the top and call for help, and the other two of us will come in and help you.'

"So Hudden jumped in first and he went straight to the bottom. In a minute he came up to the top and shouted: 'Help! help!'

"'He's calling for help,' says Donald; 'wait now till I go in and help him.'

"'Stay where you are,' says Dudden; 'haven't you cattle enough already? It's my turn to have some of them now.' And in he jumped, and Hudden and Dudden was both drowned. And then Donald went home and looked after his cattle and his farm, and soon he made money enough to take the two farms that Hudden and Dudden had left, besides his own.

"And that's the way," said Terence, "to get on in this world or any world. Get the better of them that's trying to get the better of you, and don't hope for any help from fairies or ghosts."

"Terence," said Mrs. O'Brien, "there's a little that's right in what you say, and there's more that's wrong. Depend on yourself and don't look for help from Good People or ghosts. So much of what you say is right. But Donald was not honest and he got on by tricks, and I don't want you or Kathleen to be that way. You'll not get on that way; you'll only come to grief. But I want you to be kind and helpful to mortals and Good People because it's right to be so, not to get any reward. The reward you may get or you may not in this world, but it's not that I want you to work for. And I'll tell you a story now to show you what I mean.

"There was a poor little bit of a boy once, and he had a hump on his back. He made his living by plaiting rushes and straw into hats and baskets and beehives, and he could do it better than anybody else for miles around. I don't know what his right name was, but the people called him Lusmore, after the flower of that name. The flower, you know, is the one that some call fairy-cap — the Lord between us and harm! — and others call it foxglove. And they called him after it, because he would always be wearing a sprig of it in his cap. And in spite of having a crooked back, which often makes a body sulky, he was a good-natured little fellow, and never had a bad word or a bad thought for anybody.

"One day he had been at a fair to sell some of the things that he made out of straw and rushes, and as he was coming home he felt tired with the long walk. So he sat down to rest for a little, and he leaned his back on a bank of earth, not thinking that it was a place that was said to be a rath of the Good People. He sat there for a long time, and at last he began to hear music. It was very soft at first, and he had to listen hard to catch it at all. Then it sounded clearer, and after a little he could tell that there were fiddlers and pipers. Then he thought that he could hear the feet of dancers, and finally singers, and he could hear the words of the song that they sang. And these were the words:

Da Luan, da Mort,
Da Luan, da Mort,
Da Luan, da Mort.

"And there were no other words but these, and these the singers sang over and over and over again. And all they mean is, 'Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday.' After the singers had sung these words they would make a little pause and then they would go on with them. Lusmore knew now that the music came from inside the rath, and he knew well enough that it was the Good People he was listening to. He kept very quiet and listened, and it seemed a wonderfully sweet song to him, only after a while he got tired of hearing no other words. And he thought: 'Maybe they'd like the song better themselves if there was more of it, and I wonder couldn't I help them with it.'

"But he knew he must not disturb the Good People, so he waited till one of the little pauses, and then he sang very softly: 'Augus da Cadine.'

"Then he kept on singing all the words, along with the singers inside the rath, adding on his own new line every time:

Da Luan, da Mort,
Da Luan, da Mort,
Da Luan, da Mort,
Augus da Cadine.

“And that means: ‘Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday too.’

“As he went on he sang a little louder and a little louder, till by and by the Good People in the rath began to listen to hear who or what it was that was singing their song with them, and then they caught the line that Lusmore had added. Then they were so pleased that they scarcely knew what to do, for they were more tired of the song than he was, only they did not know what to do to make it any better. And when they found it was somebody outside the rath that was singing it and was making more out of it than they ever did, they wanted to have him inside as soon as possible.

“So all at once Lusmore saw a door open in the rath, close beside him, and a great light streaming out, and then there was the sound of wings all around him, and next he saw the forms of the Good People pouring out and flying and whirling around him like a swarm of butterflies. They caught him up and carried him inside the rath, so lightly that he could not tell what was holding him, and he felt as if he was floating in the air. He was a little frightened at first, but when they had him inside the rath they set him up above all the musicians and thanked him for mending their song, and did him all sorts of honor.

“Then he saw some of the Good People talking together in a little group, and presently they came up to him, and one of them said: ‘Lusmore, we’ve been thinking what will we do for you as a reward for mending our song, and we’ve decided to ask yourself what it is that you’ld rather we’ld give you. Think, now, what it is that you’ld rather have than anything else in the world.’

“‘It’s obliged to you I am for your kindness, gentlemen,’ said Lusmore, ‘but if you’ld do what would please me most in all the world, it’s not giving me anything you’ld be, but taking something from me, and that’s this hump that I have on my back.’

“‘That’s easy done,’ said the one of them that had spoken before; ‘come on now and dance with us.’

“Well, Lusmore, being crooked the way he was, and always weak, had never danced before in his life, and he never thought he could; but when they took hold of him on both sides and led him out, he found that he was dancing with the best of them, and he felt so light and he moved so easily that it seemed to him as if he was no more than a feather that the wind was blowing about. Then one of the Good People said to him, ‘Lusmore, where is your hump now?’

“And he felt behind him for it, and it was not on his back at all. ‘Look down on the floor,’ said the one that had spoken to him, again. And he looked down, and there was his hump, lying on the floor before him.

“Then they all began dancing again and Lusmore with them, till he felt tired and then dizzy, and then he fell to the ground, and he knew nothing more till he awoke in the morning and found himself lying on the ground outside the rath, where he had sat down to rest the night before. The first thing he thought was that it was a dream that he had had, but he never had felt so well and so strong in his life as he did that minute. So he put his hand behind him, and there was no hump there. And, what was more, he had on a new suit of clothes that the Good People had given him. Then he went home and told his neighbors what had happened to him, and they could scarcely believe it. But everyone knew that there were Good People in that rath, and there was himself, too, the same boy as before, only without the hump, and so, at long last, they had to believe the whole story.

“Well, the news of Lusmore’s wonderful cure was told all through the country, and at last it came to a place a long way off, where there was another boy lived that had a hump on his back. And a different sort of boy he was from Lusmore. His temper was as bad as his body. He was ill-natured and spiteful and lazy, and he would always rather be making trouble than saving it. So when his mother heard the way Lusmore had had the hump taken off him, she thought maybe her boy could get rid of his own in the same way.

“With that she set off with the boy and a neighbor of hers, and they came to where Lusmore lived, and asked him would he tell them all about how it was that he had the hump taken off him. And he went over it all with them and told them everything that he did and everything that happened to him. And in the end he went with them to show them the very spot where he had sat down beside the rath, and there they left the little hunchback, and told him to do everything just as Lusmore had done it.

“He sat there listening for a long time and heard nothing, and so at last he went to sleep, and then all at once he was awakened by hearing the Good People singing in the rath. And they were singing much better now than when Lusmore heard them first, for they had the song now as he had improved it for them, and they were singing:

Da Luan, da Mort,
Da Luan, da Mort,
Da Luan, da Mort,
Augus da Cadine.

“And as soon as he heard it the little fellow, not waiting for time or tune, shouted out: ‘Augus da Hena.’ And if it was all put together right that would make it mean: ‘Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday too, and Thursday too.’ Only he didn’t trouble to put it together right, but just bawled it out any way.

“Then the music stopped all at once, and he heard the people inside the rath shouting: ‘Who is spoiling our tune? Who is spoiling our tune?’ and out they all came and caught him up and hurried him inside the rath so that the breath nearly went out of his body. And one of them shouted: ‘What shall we do to him for spoiling our tune?’ and another said: ‘Ask him what he wants us to do for him!’ and another said: ‘What do you want from us, anyway?’

“And he just found breath enough to say: ‘I want the same that Lusmore had,’ meaning by that he wanted them to reward him the same way they did Lusmore.

“But one of the Good People shouted: ‘You’ll get what Lusmore had, then; it was a hump on the back that Lusmore had, and we took it off him, but we don’t want it and it’s easy to give it to you. Be lively there now, some of you, and hand that hump down here.’

“And then some of the Good People got Lusmore’s hump, that was hanging up under the roof, and they clapped it on his back, on the top of his own, and then they threw him out of the rath. And there his mother found him in the morning, more dead than alive and with a hump twice as big as before.”

“A fine story that is, Mrs. O’Brien,” Terence said, when the old woman had finished. “And why didn’t the one of them get the same reward as the other? Sure he did the same as the other in lengthening the song for the fairies, didn’t he?”

“He did the same in a way,” Mrs. O’Brien answered, “but not for the same reason. Lusmore helped them with the song because he thought they might be the better for his help, and that was all the reason. And he did it in a way that wouldn’t disturb them. But the other did it only to help himself, because he thought that he’ld get a great reward for it, and he had no real wish to do them any kindness. Don’t you see the difference between the two of them?”

“Stuff!” said Terence.

8

THE STARS IN THE WATER

This is to be another sort of chapter altogether. I am going to tell you now what happened. The eighteen years are gone now and we have come to the time when there is something to tell.

When those eighteen years began, you know, Kathleen and Terence were not much more than born. So, if you have got as far as addition and can add eighteen to nothing and find that it makes eighteen, you will see that by this time they were about eighteen years old. John O'Brien and his mother and Kathleen did not live on the east side of Central Park any more. John had got on better and better with the work that he was doing. After a while, instead of having to do work of common kinds any more, he had been put in charge of other men who were doing it. After another while he learned so much about the work and how it was done and how it ought to be done, that he was made one of the partners in the company that did it. So he got a good deal more money and he was able to take his mother and Kathleen out of the little tenement where she was born, and to live in a better place. Then he had a house of his own, over on the west side of the Park, and it was there that Kathleen lived when she was eighteen years old.

Peter had not got along so well. John himself employed him, but Peter knew enough to go only just so far, and there he stuck. He lived in a little better place than he did at first, but he could never make his way like John.

And then Terence, as he grew up, made a good deal of trouble. He never would learn anything useful and he never would do anything useful. He never helped his father at all, and always his father had to help him. If there was any fight or any accident or anything troublesome or wrong within a mile, Terence was always in the midst of it. He was constantly getting his head and his ribs broken, and Peter was always having to pay for other people's things that he had broken, from their heads to their windows.

Ellen's excuse for him, that he was never well and had never been quite himself since he was born, was pretty well worn out. For, people said, he had always been exactly the same ever since he was born, and if that same was not himself, who was it? But Ellen kept saying it none the less. Many a time Mrs. O'Brien tried to make her believe that the boy was a changeling, and not her child at all, and many a time she begged Ellen to let her only try a charm to see if he was, but Ellen never would hear of it. She always said what she had said at first, that nobody knew him but her. She saw him better when she dreamed about him, for then she saw him as he really was, without all the harm that had been done to him by all the sickness that had been on him one time and another.

You might suppose that anybody who could play the fiddle as well as Terence need not have any trouble in making his own living. He might have found a place in a theatre, like the man whose fiddle he had played on first. He might have taught others to play. Or he might have played all by himself, and hundreds of people would have paid to hear him. But he would play only when he chose, and he would never do anything useful with his fiddle. And everybody said he played so wonderfully — everybody except Kathleen.

And this brings us back to Kathleen. Terence heard before he was many years old something about the plan that Peter and John had made, that he and Kathleen should be married when they grew up, if they both liked the plan. He seemed to forget all about this last part, "if they both liked the plan.” He liked the plan himself and he seemed to think that that was enough. He had talked about it to Kathleen many times, before they were both eighteen years old, and it troubled Kathleen so that she tried never to see Terence when she could possibly help it. She had always disliked him, though she had always tried not to show it; but as they got a little older and she found that there was no other way to keep away from him at all, she had to tell him so.

But do you suppose that made any difference with Terence? Well, it did make a difference with him, but he did not let anybody see that it did. When Kathleen told him for the first time that she did not like him at all, he went away by himself. He went straight to the hill that is in the north end of the Park, and there he threw himself down on his face on the grass. For hours he lay there, trembling and crying, and beating the ground with his feet and his fists. And it would take another book as large as this to tell all that he was saying to himself or to the grass, or to something under the grass — how can I tell? And you would not want to read the book. It is not likely that you will ever see anybody in such a rage as he was in. But at the end of it he stood up and looked just as he usually did, and went straight to the O’Briens’ and stayed all the evening and kept as near Kathleen as he could, and stared at her all the time. And he talked to her then and afterward, just as if she had told him that she liked him better than anybody else that she knew.

So Kathleen had to go to her grandmother, as she always did when she was in any trouble, and tell her all about it. And her grandmother told her that she and Terence were both a good deal too young to think of anything of the sort, and that she would do all that she could to help her. But she could not do much. She told John about it, and he said that he should be sorry if the plan that he and Peter had made could not be carried out, but he would forbid it himself, as long as Terence was so lazy and so worthless and so bad as he was now. When he got a little older, he hoped that everything would be better, and there was no hurry about anything.

And though Terence made her so much trouble, Kathleen had many other things to think about. She went to school and learned a great deal, and her grandmother taught her a great deal more. Her grandmother told her stories still, and, though she was nearly eighteen and felt that she was getting so dreadfully old, she still liked stories. Then she had a good many friends, and she spent much of her time with them. She visited Ellen often, too, going to see her at times when she thought that Terence would not be at home. Ellen and Peter still lived on the east side of the Park, and some of her friends lived there, too, so that Kathleen often walked through the north end of the Park, near that hill that I have told you about so many times before.

Kathleen was fond of this part of the Park, as everybody is who knows it. But especially she was fond of one little spot that nobody else seemed to notice much. So Kathleen got a feeling that this one place belonged to her, and she was all the more fond of it because of that. It was a tiny little basin of water, near the path, but up a grassy bank. On the side toward the path it was all open, but on the other side there were rocks, and out of a little cleft in the rocks ran a bit of a stream of water that fed the little basin. Then, around the rocks and over them there was more grass, and the hill rose at both sides and above. On the edge of the hill, right over the basin, was a pine-tree, and around it were other trees. Their branches came together over the water and almost shut out the sky from it, but not quite.

Every time that Kathleen passed it, she went up the bank and looked into the still water. She had a feeling that if she ever went by and did not do this the water would miss her and would feel hurt. When she did this by daylight and in summer, if she stood up and looked into the water, she could see a patch of branches and green leaves and blue sky through them, about as big as the basin itself, and that was scarcely larger than a fair-sized tub.

But if she stooped down close to the water and looked into it, she saw that there was a great deal of sky under it, below the trees, which grew upside down. There was almost as much sky under the water as she could see above it, and she believed that there would prove to be quite as much if she could only get her head where she could see it.

She used to look in at night sometimes, too, and try to see if there were any stars in that sky; but in the summer she never could see any, because the leaves on the trees were so thick that they almost hid the sky, and they seemed to be thicker and to hide the sky more by night than they did by day. In the winter it was different. Then there were no leaves, but only branches and twigs, which covered the sky like lace work, and through these Kathleen sometimes thought that she could see a star or two in the water, but she was seldom quite sure. Yet she never passed the place without looking in it, to see the green leaves and the blue sky or the black leaves and the almost black sky, or the stars, if she could find any.

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ON A CERTAIN DAY — the last day of April it was — there was a good deal of excitement in the fairy palace under the hill. The reason of it was that a new fairy had come to live there. Perhaps you never heard of a baby fairy. I have read a good many stories about fairies that said nothing about any such thing. Now, you needn't try to be so bright about it and say that of course there must be baby fairies, or there could not be any grown-up fairies. That isn't so at all. Fairies are not like men about growing old and dying and other fairies taking their places. I have heard of a fairy funeral, but I can't imagine how it happened, and I think that the story about it must have been a mistake. If you have read this book as far as here, you know that most fairies are thousands of years old, and you know, too — for Naggeneen has told you — what is likely to become of them in the end. Still, there is no sort of doubt that now and then a new fairy is born, and there was one born on this day. He was the son of the King and the Queen, and you can guess well enough that a fairy prince is a person of some consequence.

“What will we do at all for a nurse for the baby?” said the Queen.

“What will we do at all?” said the King.

“It never would do for me to have the care of him at the first,” said the Queen.

“Never a bit,” said the King; “it would ruin him.”

“How would it ruin him?” said the Queen.

“Never a know I know, no more nor you,” said the King, “but you know as well as I it would ruin him.”

“Why can’t I care for my own child?” said the Queen, “the same as a human mother does?”

“I dunno,” said the King, “only we know you can’t. We’ve never dared try, to see what would happen. He must have a human nurse. Maybe it’s something to do with them things Naggeneen was always talking about our having no souls —”

“Don’t be talking about Naggeneen,” said the Queen, “and me not well at all.” Then she was silent for a little while and then she went on talking about Naggeneen herself. “Are you sorry he left us?”

“Who?” said the King.

“Naggeneen,” said the Queen.

“I’m not sorry,” said the King. “We’ve more peace without him. Though he was clever and he often told us the right thing to do and he might tell us the right thing to do now.”

“Did he tell us the right thing to do when he told us to bring Terence here to learn the ways of men and to teach them to us?”

“Sure Terence is a good boy,” said the King, “and he plays the fiddle as well as Naggeneen himself, so we don’t miss Naggeneen for the only thing that he was good for. And Terence is easier to have about other ways.”

“But has he ever learned the ways of men and taught them to us?” the Queen asked.

The King was getting annoyed. “He has learned them, I think,” he said, “but he has never taught them to us. And you know Naggeneen himself said the plan would be no use.”

“He did,” said the Queen; “only you would try it. And just so all this talk is no use. What will we do for a nurse for the baby?”

“We’ll find one some way,” the King answered. “Was you thinking of anyone in particular?”

“I was not thinking of anyone in particular.”

“How would Kathleen O’Brien do, do you think?” the King asked.

“I don’t want to be troubling the O’Briens,” the Queen said, “and they always so kind to us.”

“It would not be troubling them much; we’ld only keep her a little while and they’ld hardly miss her.”

“If she was once here,” said the Queen, “some one of your men would want to keep her, and it would break the heart of her grandmother. So it would her father’s, too, but I’m not thinking so much of him.”

“We’ll not keep her,” said the King, “only as long as the child needs her.”

“You say that now,” said the Queen; “it would be different if she was once here — I’ld like to have her as well as anyone I know.”

“We could find no one else so good,” said the King. “It’s May Eve, you mind. There’s no time when we have more power, and few when we have so much. We’ll all be dancing to-night, and Kathleen often passes along just about dark. It’s likely we could get her to dance with us, and then we’ld be sure enough of her. If that fails, there’s other ways. Our power lasts till sunrise.”

“And you think we’ld not be keeping her long?” said the Queen.

“We’ld have her home almost before she was missed,” the King answered.

“I wouldn’t mind if you tried,” said the Queen.

Kathleen had been to visit Ellen. She was on her way home through the Park, and she had meant to get there before dark, but it was a little later than she had thought, and she saw the red in the sky before her getting darker and duller every minute. As she walked along she saw two other girls of about her own age, whom she knew, in front of her. She overtook them and the three walked on together, though the others could scarcely keep up, Kathleen hurried so.

When they were nearly through the Park they came to the little basin where the water ran down out of the rock. Though she wanted to get home so quickly, she could not pass this place without going up the bank and looking into the water, because she felt so sure that if she did not the water would miss her and feel hurt. She ran up the bank and looked into the still little pool. The other girls went on, and she heard one of them call after her: “Thought you were in a hurry!”

Kathleen did not mind them, but only looked into the water, which was almost black, it was getting so dark all around. She had not seen the water look so dark in a long time. She looked up over her head and she saw that it was because the little new leaves had begun to come out on the trees and were beginning to hide the sky. She saw one or two of the brightest stars, that had already come out in the sky, and she looked back into the water and tried to see them there, but she could not find them. There was nothing but the little, still, black pool.

She went back to the path and ran on after the other girls. She saw them walking on slowly, only a little way ahead of her. Just as she had nearly come up with them she stood still to look at a wonderful sight. She just thought dimly that it was strange that the other girls were not watching it, too, but the sight itself excited her so that she had not much time to think of that. On the grass, close beside the path, there were ever so many boys and girls — at least she thought at first that they were boys and girls — dancing. The grass in that place sloped upward from the path, and the ground was a little hollowed, in a sort of shell shape. All around the place, except where the path was, trees and bushes hung over the grass. The buds were just opening here, too, and the air was full of the smell of the new spring grass and leaves, which always grows stronger in the evening.

Kathleen stood gazing at the boys and girls dancing. There were so many of them that she could not count them. She thought that they seemed to be a little younger and smaller than herself. The boys all wore green jackets and red caps. When she looked at them more closely she could not tell whether they were boys at all or not. They looked more like old men. And she could scarcely believe that either, because they danced so fast and seemed so lively. Her father could not dance like that, she was sure, and he was not an old man.

But she had no doubt that the girls were girls. Usually she could not tell a pretty girl from an ugly one, any more than any other girl can, but she knew that these were pretty. Anybody would. They had long, golden hair that hung all loose and free and came down to their knees, when the little wind did not blow it away in some other direction. They had deep, soft eyes. They were dressed in long, white gowns, so white that they shone, now like a sheet of pale light and now with a hundred little sparkles, as the water of the sea does sometimes, when it is broken into foam by the prow of a ship. All the men carried lanterns and all the girls had something that looked like long flower-stems, only there were tiny lights on the ends of them, instead of flowers. These and the lanterns did not seem to trouble them at all in dancing, and if Kathleen had seen the lights and had not seen the dancers, she would have thought that they were a swarm of fireflies.

She had scarcely stood there for a minute before one of the men came up to her and asked her to dance with him. Kathleen's first thought was that she ought to be afraid, and her second thought was that she was not afraid a bit. She liked dancing and she had just been wishing that she could dance with these boys and girls. Then she wondered if it was quite right. Then she could not see what there could be wrong about it. Then she let the little man take her hand and she stepped off the path upon the grass and began to dance. She heard the other girls calling to her again, farther up the path. She called back to them: “I am coming in a minute! Wait for me!” And then she went on dancing.

When she had been only looking on, the dancing had seemed to Kathleen to be quite wonderful, but now she found that she could do it all nearly as well as the little boys and girls. She thought that it might be because the little old man was a better partner for dancing than she had ever had before. They danced around by themselves, moving in and out among the others, no matter how close together they were, and always finding their way, now in the midst of the whole company and now out beyond the very edge of it, and then suddenly all the dancers would join hands and whirl about in a great circle, so fast that Kathleen could not tell whether her feet were touching the ground at all.

It seemed to her that she had never done anything so delightful before. She did not think of going on with the other girls any more. She did not think of getting home early, or of anything but the dancing. She could not tell at all how long she had been dancing, but it was all dark, except for the little lanterns and the little lights on the flower-stems, and the stars were all out in the sky. And then somebody said: “It is time to go.”

The man who had been dancing with Kathleen whispered to her: “You are to go with us.”

And Kathleen thought of nothing but of going with the queer little old men and the beautiful little girls. They all left the shell-shaped grass-plot and moved along together — Kathleen could scarcely tell even now whether her feet were on the ground or not — over the grass, till they came to a little pool of water — Kathleen’s own little pool.

She looked down into it, and there was no doubt about the stars now. There were hundreds of them down under the water, shining up through it from as far below, it seemed, as the stars in the sky were up above. The dancers who came to it first stepped on the surface of the pool, and it bore them up as if it had been a floor of glass. Then Kathleen saw that the rocks behind the pool were not as she had ever seen them before. There was an opening straight into the hill, and when she came nearer still she saw that the water was no longer a little pool. It was more like a long, narrow lake, and it covered the bottom of the opening that led into the hill. All the people were going in, walking along the path of water as easily as if it had been a path of ice.

Again it seemed to Kathleen that she ought to be afraid, and again it seemed to her, still more clearly, that she was not afraid. When she came to the water she put her foot upon it and walked along it as easily as the others were doing. She thought that she would remember that this water could be walked on, and would try it the next day. She had never thought of trying it before.

But now she and the others were moving along the path into the hill. It was still dark, except for the lights that they carried and the stars that shone up through the water. And these were not the reflection of any stars in the sky, for there was no sky to be seen over them now — only rocks. Then there was a pale violet light shining on the walls of the passage ahead of them. Then, as Kathleen looked down at the water again, to see if she were really walking on it, she saw that there were no more stars, but the water was of a faint, shining yellow, and in a moment she was not walking on water any more, but on a floor, that seemed to her to be all of gold.

She could do nothing now but stand still and look around at the wonderful sight. All around her were walls of silver, so bright that they reflected everything in the great hall, and she could not tell at all how large it was. But she made out that in the middle was a great dome, held up by the most wonderful gleaming columns of gold and silver, first a column of gold and then a column of silver, and these she saw again and again in the walls all about. She could not see the top of the dome from where she stood, it was so high, but all around the sides of it she saw great diamonds and rubies and emeralds, some of them as big as her head, that poured down soft white and red and green lights, and these she saw, too, shining up, a little dimmer, from the gold of the floor, which was almost as good a mirror as the walls.

The sides of the dome, in which the jewels were set, were all of bands and lines and ribbons of gold and silver, wonderfully woven together into shapes and patterns which she could not follow or trace out with her eyes, because they seemed to be always slowly moving — turning and twisting and winding and wreathing about, never for a moment the same, but always new and always beautiful. And when this was reflected in the golden floor it was like the wavering shapes in water that is almost still, but yet has little waves that dance and break up every reflection that is seen in it.

And still, although she saw no lamps except the great white and red and green gems, there came from somewhere — perhaps from the top of the dome, she thought — that violet light that she had seen first on the walls of the passage, and it filled the whole hall, like the glow of a glorious sunset that never faded. And all this was inside a hill that Kathleen had known all the years of her life, and she had never seen anything wonderful about it.

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While Kathleen is wondering at the fairy palace I will explain to you the subject which you have been wondering about. If you only knew more we could get on with the story so much faster. It is most annoying. And you have been brought up so well too! I don't see that it is anybody's fault but your own. You have been wondering all along how it was that the fairies seemed to Kathleen to be, as I said, only a little smaller than herself, when you have always heard that fairies were so very little.

Well, to think of your not understanding that! I am bound to say that when I was of your age I was just as ignorant about it as you are now, but then, children now have a good many more advantages than they had in my day. Considering how few advantages we had, it is a great credit to people of my age that we know anything at all, and, considering how many of them you have, it is a disgrace to you that you do not know everything.

When I was a child I used to read about fairies, and the book would say that they were six inches tall, or that they were about as big as a man's thumb, or it would tell about their sitting in flowers. And then I would look at the pictures and they would appear to be as high as a man's knees, or even higher. And I could not understand it. But I made up my mind to find out about it. That is what you must do, when there is anything that you don't understand. There are very few things that you can't do, if you make up your mind to them, except things that are too hard for you. I hate to have morals getting into a story as much as you do, but that is such a good one that it might as well go in.

Now I will tell you. Fairies can be of any size they like, and you never can tell what size they are going to be, from one minute to another. They can be giants, if they like. And as soon as they had Kathleen with them they could make her of any size they liked too. So as long as she was among them they could keep her and themselves just the same size, or as near to it as they liked.

But when fairies are not taking the trouble to be of any particular size — when they are letting themselves alone, as you might say — then they are about six inches tall. And I think that is a very good size to be. It would be better if you were of that size. You wouldn't eat so much and you wouldn't be so much in the way, and you would be much better-looking. Just think: if your face were only three-quarters of an inch long, all those features of it that are so disagreeable wouldn't show so plainly. You might even look rather pretty. You wouldn't need to be so, but you might look so.

And it would be so much easier to know where you were, if you were of that size, that it would save your mother a good deal of trouble. All she would have to do would be to put you on the mantelpiece, and then you could not get off without breaking your necks — and that would be such an advantage. I don't mean that it would be an advantage to break your necks, because then who would read this book, and why should I take all this trouble to write it? I mean, it would be an advantage that you could not get off. Well, now you see how much better off you would be if you were only six inches tall, and now you understand about the fairies.

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WHILE KATHLEEN WAS STILL WONDERING at the place that she was in, a man whom she had not seen before came up to her. He wore a crown, and she guessed at once that he was some sort of king. It did not surprise her to see a man with a crown. A man with a church steeple on his head would not have surprised her, by this time. "Come with me," he said; "you're wanted at once."

Kathleen followed him to the opposite side of the hall and through a door, into another room. It was much smaller than the hall, but it was just as beautiful, in its own way. There was a woman in this room — another of the beautiful girls, Kathleen would have said — lying on a gold couch. Her hair was hanging down over the pillow on which her head lay, so that Kathleen could scarcely tell which was the hair and which was the gold of the couch. There was a crown lying on a little table beside her, and so Kathleen guessed that she was the Queen. “Kathleen,” said the Queen, “do you know why they have brought you here?”

“No, Your Majesty,” said Kathleen. She was not a bit frightened, any more than she had been all along, and she knew that that was the way to speak to a queen, just as well as if she had never spoken to anybody else in her life.

“They brought you here, then,” said the Queen, “to take care of my baby; but he’ll not need you long, and then you can be going back home.”

“I’m afraid,” Kathleen said, “that I don’t know how to take care of a baby very well. I might do something wrong with it. You see my mother died when I was born, and so I was the only baby that there ever was at our house, and I have hardly ever had anything to do with a real live baby.”

“You’ve had something to do with them that was not alive, haven’t you?” the Queen asked.

Kathleen smiled a little at that. “There were fifteen of them, I think,” she said.

“Well, you’ll be having no more trouble with this one,” the Queen said, “than with any of those fifteen. Only do as you’re told. I can’t take care of it myself, because it’s the law that it must have a nurse that’s a mort — I mean it must have a nurse from outside this place. There’s the baby in the cradle there. Try can you make him go to sleep.”

Kathleen went to the cradle and looked at the baby. It was wide awake and it stared at her like a little owl. Except for that, it looked like any other baby. The way that the baby stared at her came nearer to making Kathleen afraid than anything that she had seen yet. But she took him out of the cradle, sat down on a low seat that she found, began to rock him gently, and sang an old song that her grandmother used to sing to her and that she had sung to her own fifteen babies many a time.

It was scarcely an instant before the baby was asleep. She put him back into the cradle and then turned to the Queen and said: “Shall I do anything more?”

“Not now,” said the King; “come now and have something to eat and drink with us.”

The Queen started at this and cried: “No, no!” but Kathleen did not know what she meant. She knew that she was very hungry, and she followed the King out of the room, back into the hall. Tables had been brought into the hall now, and they were all covered with things to eat that looked very good, and the men and women were sitting at the tables, eating and drinking and talking and laughing. They all stood up as the King came in, and waited till he had taken his place at the head of the table, and then they all sat down again, and the eating and drinking and talking and laughing went on.

One of the men led Kathleen to a seat and put something to eat and drink before her. She did not know what it was, but it looked good. She was just going to taste it, when somebody touched her on the shoulder and somebody said: “Don’t eat that; don’t taste a bit of it.”

She looked around and saw a boy — perhaps she would have said a young man — standing behind her. He was very different from all the other men. He did not look old, as they did. She thought that he was of about her own age, and he was taller than she, while all the others were shorter. “Don’t eat anything or drink anything that they give you,” he said again. “I will give you something to eat.”

He sat down beside her and put a little package on the table before them. He opened it and took out some bread and meat, some strawberries, a little flask full of cream, and a larger one full of water. He gave Kathleen a part of all these and kept a part for himself. “I am not sure,” Kathleen said, “that I ought to let you talk to me, because, you see, I don’t know who you are.”

She had let several people talk to her that evening, without knowing who they were, but this boy seemed to be somehow altogether different.

"My name is Terence," he said. "Now I know you are going to ask 'Terence what?' It's Terence nothing; I have no name at all except Terence."

"I know a boy named Terence," Kathleen said, "and I don't like him a bit."

"I hope that won't make any difference about your liking me," said the boy.

"Oh, not at all," said Kathleen. "It isn't his name that I don't like; it's himself. He is only just as old as I am, and he looks —" Kathleen stopped, surprised at herself, for she had not thought of it before. "He looks a little like these men here, who all seem to be so old; and, besides, he isn't nice at all."

"Then let's not talk about him," said the boy. "Will you tell me what your name is?"

"Oh, yes; didn't I tell you? My name is Kathleen O'Brien."

"And must I call you Kathleen or Miss O'Brien? You see you will have to call me by my first name, because it is the only one I have, and so I think you ought to let me call you by your first name."

"But if you have only one name," Kathleen said, "it is your last name just as much as it is your first, so perhaps you ought to call me by my last one."

"Oh, no," Terence answered; "you see my name ought to be a first name, only I haven't any last one, so I think I ought to call you by your first one."

Kathleen did not say that he might, but he afterward did. She thought that it would be better to change the subject. "It's just as if we were at a picnic and had brought our own luncheon, isn't it?" she said. "And all these other people are eating just as if they were at home. Why don't we do the same way they do?"

"Because," Terence said, "we are not like them. We mustn't talk about it aloud. You see they are the Good People, and we are not. I don't know what

I am at all, but you are like the people outside. I knew that as soon as I saw you, and I saw that they were going to let you eat their food. I almost wish I had let you do it now — no, I don't wish so, either. It would be mean to let you, and I don't want you to, anyway. You did come from outside, didn't you? Well, then, you must not eat or drink the least bit of anything while you are here, except what I bring you. All that I bring you is from outside. If you eat a crumb or drink a drop of anything that they have here, you can never get out again."

"But they all get out," said Kathleen. "They were all outside when I saw them first."

"Oh, yes," Terence answered, "they are different. They can go out and come in whenever they like; but if anybody from outside eats anything here, he can never go out again. It is that way with me, too, for I am different from the Good People, though I don't know whether I came from outside or not."

"You don't know whether you came from outside or not?"

"No. I came here when I was a little baby. I have often asked them how I came here, but they never would tell me. I have lived here ever since I can remember. Have you a father and a mother?"

"My mother is dead," Kathleen answered; "I have a father."

"Yes," said Terence, as if he were trying to work out a puzzle. "Nearly all the people outside seem to have fathers and mothers. I never had either. I have always lived here, but nobody here is my father or my mother, and I don't know how I came here. I have been here so long, and yet it seems so strange to me. This is my only home, and yet I never feel at home in it. I always feel as if I belonged somewhere else. I see the people outside and I feel as if I belonged with them more than here, yet I have never been outside this place one single night."

"You go out often in the daytime, then?" Kathleen asked.

“Oh, yes; I go out every day, almost, and I go to school. Have you been to school?”

“Why, of course,” Kathleen answered; “doesn’t everybody have to go to school?”

“These people here never go to school,” Terence said. “I am the only one who goes, and then I have to try to teach them what I have learned. Do you go home from school and try to teach your father what you have learned?”

“Why, no, indeed,” said Kathleen; “what a funny idea!”

“Sometimes it seems funny to me too,” Terence said, “but you see I can’t tell whether it is funny or not, because I know so little about the people outside. I don’t like to ask them, because they would think it was so strange that I didn’t know; but it is different with you. You have come in here, and I can ask you things that I wouldn’t ask of people outside.”

“If they want to know things,” said Kathleen, “why don’t they go to school themselves?”

“I don’t know that, either,” said Terence, “but they seem to expect me to go to school for all of them. I think that is what I am here for. Before I was old enough to go to school at all they used to bring me things to eat from outside, because, you know, if I ate anything of theirs I never could go out. Then as soon as I was old enough to go to school, they sent me, and I came back every night, and they gave me money to buy all my own food outside, and I have done that ever since, and I have never eaten a bit of the Good People’s food.”

“And don’t you like to stay here?” Kathleen asked. “It seems to me a very beautiful place.”

“No,” said Terence; “they are very kind to me, but I think that I should like to live outside better, and I hope that I shall some time. And then, you see, if I ate anything here I could not go out to go to school, and so I could not teach them. And it is all so strange. It almost makes me cry, it is such a bother sometimes, and then they are so sorry about it themselves and I am so sorry for them, and it almost makes me laugh sometimes, because they can never learn anything. You will see. I think it is time now."

Some of the men were taking away the tables. "It is time for the lesson," the King called out. Some of the other men brought in a big blackboard and set it up. Everybody stopped talking and laughing and stood near the blackboard. Terence made some lines and some letters on the board, with a piece of chalk.

"I shall have to try again," said Terence, "to prove to you the same thing that I tried to prove to you last night. But I'll try a different way, and maybe you'll see it better. Now mind, what I am to prove is this: if any triangle has two sides equal, the angles opposite those sides are also equal."

"And what difference does it make if they're equal or not?" said one of the men who stood near Kathleen.

"Be still there," the King said; "do we want to make telephones or do we not? And sure we can't make telephones without geometry. Hasn't Terence told you that?"

Terence went on: "Let ABC be any triangle in which the sides AB and AC are equal."

"How can it be any triangle, when it's only one triangle?" said another of the men.

"Keep your silly head shut," said the King. "Terence didn't say it was any triangle; he said let it be. Now will you let that triangle be, or will I come over there and make you let it be?"

The man said nothing more and Terence went on: "Now, consider this triangle as two triangles, BAC and CAB."

"How can it be two triangles," another of the men said, "when it's only one triangle?"

"Will you be still there?" the King said. "Terence doesn't say it's two triangles; he says you're to consider it. Will you consider that triangle two triangles, or will I come over there and make you consider it two triangles?"

"I'll consider it seven triangles, if you like, Your Majesty," the man answered, "but I dunno what good it'll do me."

"Then consider it," said the King, "and don't talk about it. Go on, Terence."

"Now, you see that since the sides AB and AC in each triangle are equal, AB and AC in the first are respectively equal to AC and AB in the second, and the angles between these sides are equal. So the two triangles are equal, by previous proposition. And so the angles of one are equal to the angles of the other, where they are opposite the equal sides; that is, the angle ABC is equal to the angle ACB, being opposite the equal sides AC and AB, by the same previous proposition, and that is what I was to prove."

The King looked at the men with triumph in his eye. "There, you blackguards," he said, "do you understand it at all, now that Terence has made it clear to you?"

One by one the men and women began slowly to shake their heads. Not one of them understood it. "Well, Terence," said the King, shaking his own head, "I dunno how it is; nobody could be asking you to make it any clearer than you have, and yet I'm obliged to say there's never a bit of it I understand myself. Maybe to-morrow night you'll be able to make us see it clearer."

Terence had come back to where Kathleen was. "Isn't it funny," he said, "and yet isn't it a pity? I try to teach them as well as I can, but they never can understand at all."

"And do you mean to say," said Kathleen, "that you haven't got any farther in geometry than that? Why, that's only the fifth proposition of the first book."

"Of course I've got farther than that," Terence answered, "but they haven't, and they never will. I have been trying to teach them that proposition — oh, I don't know how long — and they never will learn it in the world. They want to learn to build railways and bridges and all sorts of things, but how can anybody even get ready to build a railway or a bridge till he's got over this bridge and the rest of the geometry? I don't know whether I can ever learn it all myself, but I'm going to the School of Engineering up at the University, next spring, to learn chemistry, and qualitative analysis, and calculus, and analytical mechanics, and graphical statics, and metallurgy, and thermodynamics, and hydraulics, and a lot of other things. But these people here will still be at work on this same triangle years after I am dead, if they have anybody to teach them."

"Now, Terence, my boy," said the King, "there's one thing you can do for us we can understand. Give us a tune out of the fiddle."

Kathleen was startled to hear this boy named Terence asked to play on the fiddle, just as if he had been the other Terence whom she knew. She wondered if he played like the other Terence. She scarcely dared wait to hear, and she felt as if she should like to run away, only she did not know where to run.

But she did not think any more about running after Terence began to play. This was different. And yet in one way it was the same. For the music that Terence was playing was just the music that the other Terence often played and just what most people liked to hear him play best, though Kathleen had always liked it as little as anything else that he did. She had never heard anyone else play it till now. And now it was so different. She could scarcely tell the difference, and yet she could feel it in every clear note that Terence drew out with his bow.

When she was a little girl, almost as long ago as she could remember, she used to say, when the other Terence played this very music, that it did not mean anything. But now it meant something. Meant something! It meant — everything, Kathleen thought, and yet she could not tell at all what it meant. It was not happiness that it meant, and it was not sorrow; it was not merry, and it was not grave. Sometimes it was light and gentle and sweet, and flowed along as if it were a little fountain of music, bubbling and bubbling out of a hidden place; then it would be slower, but fine and firm, and full and free and true. It seemed to Kathleen to mean so much, and yet she could not tell what, except that there was something like a deep longing that went all through it.

And that made her think of the other Terence's music again, for she remembered now, though she had never thought of it before, that there was a longing in his music too. Perhaps she had done wrong, she thought, to say that it did not mean anything. Still, this was so different. If the other Terence's fiddle had ever seemed to be longing for anything, it had seemed to be hopeless, and the fiddle always seemed to be bitterly laughing at those who were listening to it and thinking that it was so fine. She had never thought of anything like this before, but it seemed clear to her now, listening to the same music played so differently. For now, below all the longing and sounding through it, there were strength and hope and life and faith in something good.

I do not say that Kathleen thought all this out while she was listening. She only felt the most of it. But she felt it so much that she scarcely knew what she was doing, and she moved by little and little toward Terence, till she was nearer to him than anybody else, and looked at him as if he were something more wonderful than she had ever seen before, till she found that she could not look at him, because her eyes were wet. And then the music stopped.

Then said the King: "I said that was something that we could understand, Terence, but I dunno if it is. It's the wonderful player you are all out, but I never heard you play like that before, and I think there's something in it that's more than I can find out. That's enough of it for to-night."

Terence had already come back to Kathleen. She could scarcely speak to him even yet. "Who taught you to play like that?" she said.

“I don’t quite know,” he answered, “whether anybody taught me. They taught me to play here, and the music that I just played is their music, but I don’t play it the way they do. I don’t know why that is. Just as soon as they had taught me so that I could play at all, I began to play in my own way. Their music is sweet and bright and merry and sparkling, and sometimes it seems to be sad, but it never means anything.”

Kathleen was startled again to hear Terence say the very words that she had said so many times about the other Terence’s music. “But I never played before in my life,” Terence went on, “the way I have been playing just now. I think it was because you were here. You understood, and so I thought of nothing but you all the time that I was playing, and I think it made me play better. They never understand. They love music and they hate geometry, but they understand one just as well as the other.”

The King came up to Kathleen and said: “It is time for you to come and be looking after the child again.”

Kathleen went with him and he led her back into the room where the Queen was. “Where is the box of ointment?” the King said to the Queen.

“I have it here under my pillow,” the Queen answered; “come here and get it, Kathleen.”

The Queen took something from under her pillow and held it so that Kathleen had to come close to her to get it. “Did you eat anything?” the Queen asked, as Kathleen bent over her.

Kathleen did not quite know whether she ought to answer or not, but the Queen looked at her so kindly that she thought that there could be no harm, and she said: “Only what Terence gave me.”

“That was right,” said the Queen, and then she went on, speaking louder, so that the King could hear: “Take this box of ointment. In the morning, as soon as the baby is awake, take him out of the cradle and wash him, and then just touch his eyes with this ointment; but be careful that you do not touch your own eyes with it.”

Kathleen took the box, which seemed to be of solid gold, and looked at it. What was in it looked like a soft, green salve. She slipped it into the pocket of her gown. “How shall I know when it is morning?” she asked. It seemed to her that here under the hill there would not be much difference between night and day.

“You’ll know it’s morning when the child wakes up,” the Queen said; “or when you wake up yourself, for that matter. You can go to bed now. There’s your bed, next to the cradle.”

The King left them, and Kathleen, who was really very tired, lay down on another gold couch, almost like the Queen’s, that had been placed near the cradle, and in a minute she was asleep.

It seemed scarcely another minute before she was awake again. She remembered that the Queen had said that when she awoke it would be morning, and she looked to see if the baby was awake too. He was, and she took him out of the cradle. Then she saw a large gold basin full of water. She washed the baby in it, and he stared at her all the time, with big, owlish eyes. Then she took the box of ointment out of her pocket. She touched it with her finger and then touched each of the baby’s eyes with it. Instantly his eyes looked brighter and deeper, and instead of staring at her stupidly, as they had done before, they seemed to look straight through her. Nothing had frightened her at all, and now she was getting so that nothing startled her. So she only laid the baby back in his cradle and put the box of ointment into her pocket.

In a moment the King came in and said it was time for breakfast. He and the Queen went out into the hall together and Kathleen followed them. As soon as she was in the hall she saw Terence. He was looking for her and they sat down and ate breakfast together. Then Terence went away.

All day, except when it was time for meals, Kathleen sat with the Queen or looked after the baby, though there was really nothing to do for him. Whenever it was time for a meal they went out into the hall, and there

Kathleen always found Terence, and she always ate with him, and ate only what he brought her.

In the evening the King came to her and said, “Kathleen, it is time for us to go and dance again; come with us.”

Then Terence took her by both hands and said, “Don’t go with them; don’t go; if you do, I am afraid that you will never come back.”

“Of course I shall come back,” she said; “you have been very kind to me, and I would come back to see you again, if it was for nothing else. And then I don’t know whether I must do anything more for the baby. And then —” Kathleen stopped short as she thought. “I ought not to come back — not to-night! I ought to go home! Oh, how anxious my father and my grandmother must be about me! I have been here all night and all day, and they must think that I am dead. And I have not thought of them the whole time. I am wicked to have stayed here so long.”

“Then you will not come back,” Terence said. “You know why I brought you all that you have had to eat and to drink. It was so that you might leave this place. I might have let you eat their food, and then you could never leave it, unless to go out with them and dance on their green and then come back again. I made it so that you could go, and now you will go and you will not come back.”

“I will come back,” Kathleen answered, “but I must see my father and my grandmother and tell them that I am safe. Perhaps I will come back to-morrow, if I can, but I will come back. I would come back just because you wanted to see me, you have been so good to me. It was very good of you, if you wanted me to stay, to bring me the things to eat and drink, so that I could go if I liked.”

“No, it was not good of me at all,” Terence answered; “I had no right to let them keep you here always, even if I wanted you to be here. But I hoped and I always hope that I shall leave this place some time myself, and I did not want to have to leave you here. I would not have left you here. Promise that you will come back."

"I will come back," Kathleen answered.

"Come along now," said the King, hurrying up to Kathleen again. "It's time we were dancing this minute."

All the little men and women were moving out of the hall and Kathleen went with them. In an instant they were again in the passage that Kathleen remembered. The floor was of gold, like the floor of the hall, and then she saw that she was walking on the water once more. The yellow glow was under it still, but fainter than in the hall. The violet light on the walls of the passage grew dimmer; she saw the lights that the men and women carried, shining ahead of her and all around her. Then she looked down at the water and saw the stars shining up through it, as if there were another sky far down under her feet. And then — she felt the cool, fresh breath of the outside air, and it was delicious to her, and she was standing on her own little pool, and deep down under it there were thousands of stars. She and all the others walked — or drifted, as it seemed to Kathleen — up the bank of sweet-smelling new grass, to the little hollowed place, with the trees and the bushes growing around it and hanging over it, where Kathleen had first seen the Good People. And then they began the dance.

9

A YEAR AND A DAY

When Kathleen did not come home at the time she was expected, her father and her grandmother were not much surprised at first. She was in the habit of going where she pleased and of coming back when she pleased. If she chose to be an hour or two late her father or her grandmother might ask her why, or they might not think of it. So, on that May Eve when she danced with the Good People, as it began to get late and still she did not come, they had no doubt that she had decided to make her visit at the Sullivans' a little longer than she had intended. When it got later and still she did not come, her father said that he would walk over to the Sullivans' and come back with her. He never thought of not finding her there. Even when he got there and Ellen told him that Kathleen had gone away hours ago and had said that she was going home, he did not think that any harm could have come to her.

"She met some of the girls that she knew and went with them, maybe," he said, "and she'll be home before me."

But when he got home again and found that she was not there, and when he told his mother that she was not at the Sullivans', they both began to be a little worried. They told each other over and over that Kathleen knew how to take care of herself and that no harm was likely to come to her, but they both doubted their own words. Late at night John went to the Sullivans' again, taking the way that he thought Kathleen would be likely to take, and looking everywhere for her, though he knew that to search for her in such a way as that was nonsense.

The Sullivans had all gone to bed when he got there, but Peter got up and walked back with him, by another way. They went to a police station and asked if there had been any accident — if any girl had been hurt and taken to a hospital. There had been no accident that night. They went home and waited again. At last John could wait no longer. He and Peter started out again and went different ways. They went to other police stations and asked if there had been accidents. There had been one or two, but nobody at all like Kathleen had had anything to do with them. They went to hospitals and asked about all the new patients. There was not one of them that was at all like Kathleen.

It does not belong to the story to tell how they went on searching. All the next day they searched. They tried every way that they knew, and every way that the police knew, and every way that anybody could think of, to find her, and there was no trace. Late that day one of the girls who had walked through the Park with Kathleen came to see her, not knowing that she was lost. Then she told where she had seen Kathleen last. She told how Kathleen had dropped behind the others, though she had said that she wanted to get home early, how they had called to her, how she had answered, and how they had gone on, thinking that she would soon follow.

Then Mrs. O’Brien said to John: “You do not need to search for her any longer. She is with the Good People. I have seen that place often, and it always looked to me like a place where the Good People might be. Last night was May Eve. There is no time in the whole year when the Good People have more power, and especially to carry off young girls. They have taken her with them. Some time she may come back, or some time we may get her back, but it is of no use for you to search for her any more.”

But John went on searching still. The next day and for many days he looked for her and tried every means to find her, but she could not be found. Again and again his mother told him that it was of no use, but still he said: “It might be some use, and I wouldn’t be easy if I didn’t try.”

By and by there came a time when even John did not think that there was any use in trying longer. He read many papers, from many different cities, hoping always to find something about some unknown girl who had been found, sick or hurt or helpless, somewhere, but he said little about her. He went on with his old work, and he and his mother were alone and lonely in the house. Then John came to believe that Kathleen was dead. He told his mother this and she answered: “Kathleen is not dead.”

“And how do you know that, mother?” John said. “You always say that the Good People took her away, but that might be true, and still she might be dead by now. And the Good People might not have taken her at all. How do you know?”

“I don’t know that the Good People took her,” she answered, “though I think they did; but I am sure she is not dead.”

“And how are you sure, mother?”

“Kathleen could never die,” Mrs. O’Brien said, “without I’ld hear the banshee.”

“The banshee?” said John. “There’s no banshee here. There’s banshees only in Ireland.”

“Our banshee is here,” his mother answered. “I know she is here. You’ve heard me tell of her. She’s the sad, mourning woman of the Good People that weeps and wails about the house when anybody of the family is to die, anywhere in the world. It’s true, as you say, that the banshees mostly stay in Ireland, though they are heard to cry and moan for those of the family who are to die in any part of the world. But sometimes the banshee leaves Ireland with the family that she belongs to, and so did ours. Wouldn’t I know her voice? Didn’t I hear her wail and scream before your father died, so many, many years ago? Oh, I'ld never forget it. I'ld know her voice."

"Then why didn't you hear her," John asked "before Kitty died, and why didn't you know before that she was to die?"

"I did hear the banshee that time," his mother answered, "but I couldn't tell that it was Kitty that was to die. It was the night before she died. I heard a little moan, that was more like the wind than anything else, and then it grew louder, and it was a sob and a soft wail. It did not grow very loud. Then I could hear that it was like the keen that the women cry over the dead at home. I knew that it was the banshee. No, I could not be wrong about her; I had heard her before. But I never thought of Kitty then. I thought: 'I'm an old woman — an old woman — though I would never let them say so; and now my time has come. I shall soon be with him again. If I could only see a child of John's and Kitty's before I go, I'ld go gladly. If I could only say to him: "Before I came to you I held John's and Kitty's child in my arms," then I'ld go gladly.' That was what I said to myself that time. But it was Kitty that the banshee meant. And now, though I felt then the first time that I was an old woman, here I am still, and Kitty is gone and the child is grown up to be a woman and she is lost. But she is not dead, John; she is not dead. Kathleen couldn't die without I'ld hear the banshee."

It was not once only that John and his mother talked together in some such way as this. It was a dozen times at least, perhaps two dozen times, that she told him that, whatever had come to Kathleen, she was not dead — that she could not be dead, because the banshee had not moaned and cried about the house, as she was sure to do before any one of the O'Briens could die. And so John, seeing his mother careworn and anxious, but never so full of sorrow as himself, came to think that he ought to bear it better, and not let her see him always so troubled and so sad. Yet he could not believe all that his mother said quite as she believed it, and she had to tell him all of it again and again, and she told him, too, that when the time came she meant to try to get Kathleen back from the Good People. And after a while John did not think every time that he heard anybody at the door that it was Kathleen at last, and all in the house went on as it had gone before, only that Kathleen was not there. But that “only” was enough, and it was a different house.

The dreadful spring was past; the horrible, dull, anxious summer was gone; the cruel, chilly autumn went by; the cold, dead, heartless winter dragged through; another spring came, cheerless, hopeless, helpless, like the last.

“Shaun,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “do you know when it was that Kathleen went away?”

“Could I ever forget?” said John.

“When was it?”

“It was May Eve.”

“And what is to-day, John?”

“It’s the last day of April,” John answered; “it’s a year this night she’s been away. Could I forget it? Don’t I think of it all the time?”

“There’s no time in the year,” Mrs. O’Brien said, “when the Good People have more power than on May Eve.”

“Oh, mother,” said John, “don’t talk to me of the Good People; I’ve heard too much of them. I don’t care if there are any Good People or not. I only know that Kathleen has been from us a year. When her mother died I could bear it, because I had Kathleen left, but now she’s gone, and how can I bear it?”

“Listen to me, John,” his mother went on. “It’s on May Eve, as I told you, that the Good People have great power. It’s then that they dance, and then they make young girls or young men that they want come and dance with them, and then they carry them off. But it’s on May Eve, too, sometimes, that they can be got back by those who know what to do. And so it’s to-night that we must try to get Kathleen back. I wouldn’t tell you till the time came, for fear you might hope too much. We may not find her, and then we may, and you must come with us, for we don't know how much help we'll need."

"Who is it that I must come with?" John asked.

"With me and with the girls that were with Kathleen that night and saw her last."

"How do we know that they can come?" said John. "It's late in the day now and they may be away from home."

"I've taken care of all that," Mrs. O'Brien said; "they'll be here in a little while to go with us."

In a little while the girls came. Then they and Mrs. O'Brien and John went together to the place where Kathleen had met the girls, on her way home from the Sullivans', a year ago. "Was it about this time of the day," Mrs. O'Brien asked, "that you met Kathleen here a year ago to-night?"

"It was," one of the girls said, "about this time."

"Then you must take us," Mrs. O'Brien went on, "just the way that you went, and show us the very place where Kathleen stood, the last instant that you saw her."

They all walked along through the Park, the girls leading the way. "How can they find the very place again?" said John. "It's been a year since then. It's likely they have forgot the spot. How could they remember it so long?"

"John," said his mother, "will you never trust me? Do you think that I've been waiting for them to forget all this time? The very evening after Kathleen was lost they brought me here and then took me to the very spot where they saw her last. They talked of it between themselves and decided just where it was, and many a time since they've been with me here, so that they could not forget it."

In a few minutes the girls stopped. "This is the place where we saw her last," they said; "just here. She stood here and seemed to be looking at something there on the grass."

Mrs. O’Brien whispered: “Stand still here, all of you, and do not speak or stir unless I call to you; then do whatever I tell you, and do it quickly.”

Mrs. O’Brien drew out something which was hung about her neck, by a chain, under her gown. She held it before her in her hand. She stepped upon the grass and looked all around her. She went a few steps forward and looked around again. She went a little to the left, then a little more to the right. And then, to those who were watching, it seemed as if she saw something, though they could see nothing but her. For she made a few hurried steps and then put out her left hand, as if to take hold of something. Then they saw her raise her right hand, as if to touch the something that she had taken hold of, with what she held in it. Still they could see nothing except her, but now she hurried toward them, and suddenly they saw that she was leading Kathleen, with her left arm around her and holding her right hand against her forehead.

“Take her and go home with her,” she said to John, “as quickly as you can. The rest of us will follow.”

“Oh, father,” said Kathleen, “I am so glad that you came to meet me! Have you and grandmother been worried about me all day? I was afraid you would be, but the baby needed me, and I couldn’t send any word to you. And I promised Terence that I would come back — not Terence Sullivan, but the Terence that lives in there. Please ask some of the Good People to tell him that I will come back to-morrow. Then I will go home with you.”

“Take her home! Take her home!” her grandmother cried. And John led her away as fast as he could, while the rest followed.

No one said anything more till they were at home, for it was only a little way. Kathleen scarcely looked at her father till they came into the house, where it was light. “Why, father,” she said, “what makes you look so queer? You look so much older than you did yesterday, and you — oh, I am afraid you were dreadfully worried about me. I didn’t think you would be — such a little while. I forgot that you would be worried. There was so much to see there, and then I had to take care of the baby — and so I forgot. It was very wrong for me to forget, and I am so sorry you were anxious about me. But I thought of you and grandmother just as we were coming out to dance to-night, and as soon as we were done dancing I was coming home. And why were you all there where we were dancing? Did you think that I would be there? You ought not to have been afraid, father. It was just such a little while."

John did not seem to think anything about its being wrong for Kathleen to forget. He did not seem to think of anything but that she had come back. "Just a little while, do you call it?" he said. "Do you call a year a little while for you to be away from me, Kathleen? And from your grandmother? Don't you see how she has worried about you, too, all this long year? And what could I think but that you was dead? Your grandmother never thought so, but I could think nothing else."

"A year!" Kathleen cried. "What do you mean, father? What do you mean? Oh, grandmother, is there anything wrong? Has he been sick? What is it?"

"Be quiet, John," said Mrs. O'Brien, "and let me talk with Kathleen. Come here, Kathleen. No, there is nothing wrong, dear. Now listen, and answer what I ask you. When did you see your father and me last before to-night?"

"Why, you know that, grandmother," Kathleen answered. "I saw father yesterday morning, and I saw you yesterday afternoon, when I left you to go to the Sullivans'."

"And where have you been since then?" Mrs. O'Brien asked.

Kathleen closed her eyes and clasped her hands, as she thought of it. "Oh, it was so wonderful!" she said. "I was inside the hill in the Park. I walked right in there on the water with the Good People. And it was so beautiful there — all gold and silver and jewels — and the music — the music that Terence played! And I must go back. I promised him I would."

"And how long were you there?" Mrs. O'Brien asked.

"All the time," Kathleen said; "all night and all day; I didn't go anywhere else. And when it was time for them all to come out to dance to-night — they were dancing, you know, when I first saw them, and they asked me to dance with them, and then I went into the hill with them. And to-night we came out to dance again, and it was only a little while when you came, and then I saw father, and he brought me home. But I was coming home myself as soon as the dancing was over."

"Kathleen," said Mrs. O'Brien, "listen to me now. Don't be frightened, but listen. You've been away from us for a whole year. It was a year ago this night that you danced with the Good People that first time. All this year you have been with them there in the hill. If we had not gone after you to-night, and if I had not known how to bring you back, they would have taken you into the hill for another year, and you might have stayed there, perhaps, as long as you lived."

"But, grandmother! A year! Why, you know it was yesterday!"

"Yesterday was a year ago," her grandmother said. "You can't understand it now. Don't try. You must eat something now, and then you must go to bed. To-morrow I can tell you about it better, and then perhaps you can understand."

But Kathleen could not eat. Her going away had been so strange, her coming back had been so wonderful, and what her grandmother had told her had been so marvelous, that she could think of nothing else. By and by she went to her room. While she was undressing she felt something hard in her pocket. She took it out, and it was the little box of ointment that the Queen had given her to put on the baby's eyes. Now that she was at home again she felt as if she had dreamed all that she had seen and heard while she was away. But she had not dreamed it. Here was this little gold box to prove it. Yet she could not believe it. And they told her that she had been away for a year! What they said must be a dream too. But here was the little gold box, just as the Queen had given it to her. It was a green salve that was in it. She would open it and see if there really was a green salve. If there was, then it was not a dream.

She opened it. There was the green salve. Yes, it was exactly as she remembered it. And she could remember it all so well. She remembered how the Queen had given it to her, and surely that was last night. She remembered how she had touched the baby’s eyes with the salve, and how much brighter they had looked after she had done it. Surely it was only this morning that she did that. It seemed to her all so plain. And they said that it had been a year. She could not understand it at all. She laid the little gold box on her bureau, under her glass, and went to bed.

The next morning Kathleen could think about things a little more clearly. She could not remember what she had seen and heard in the hill quite so distinctly. She had not forgotten anything, but it all seemed dimmer in her mind than it had been, as if it were long ago. And still it seemed as if it had all happened yesterday. Everybody whom she knew had heard that she was at home again, and everybody came to see her. And they all told her that she had been away for a year. She could not doubt it any longer, and yet she could not understand it. What had she been doing all that time? She could remember just enough to fill up one night and one day, and that was all. Could it be that she had slept for three hundred and sixty-four days and been awake for only one? No, she could not believe that. And so, at last, she came to her grandmother to ask if she could explain it to her.

“No,” the old woman said, “I can’t do that. It’s too wonderful for any of us to understand. But it’s no more wonderful than many things that are true, and I’ve heard tales of it before. Often one stays in the land of the Good People, and in other places, too, and thinks that the time has been short, when it has been long. Shall I tell you what happened once to a monk — a holy man — much more wonderful than what happened to you?

“One day this monk was in the garden of the monastery where he lived, reading in his book. He was reading in the Psalms, where it says, ‘For a thousand years in thy sight are as yesterday, which is past. And as a watch in the night, things that are counted nothing, shall their years be.’

“And he found it hard to believe that even to God Himself a thousand years could seem no more than a day. As he was thinking of this, a bird in a tree near him began to sing, and the song was so beautiful that he forgot the psalm that he had been reading and his thoughts about it, and only listened to the bird. It seemed to him that in all his life he had never heard any music so beautiful.

“But soon the bird flew to another tree, farther from the monastery, and the monk followed, to listen to its song again. Then the bird flew to a tree farther off, and still the monk followed. Once more the bird flew to another tree, and once more the monk followed it, for it seemed to him that as long as that bird sang he could listen to nothing else and could think of nothing else. But he saw that the sun had gone down and he knew that it was time for him to go back to the monastery. As he went back he looked at the colors that the sun had left behind it in the sky, and he thought that they were as beautiful to see as the voice of the bird was to hear.

“They were all faded and the darkness had come on when he reached the monastery and went in. And if he had wondered at the song of the bird and at the colors in the sky, he wondered yet more when he found himself again in the place where he had lived for many years. For many things about the place were changed, and the men in it were all changed. There was not one face among them that he knew. One of the brothers saw him and came toward him, and he said: ‘Brother, why have all these changes been made here since this morning? And who are all these whom I do not know? I scarcely know my own monastery.’

“And the other answered: ‘Who are you that ask this, and why do you come here? For you wear the dress of our order, but you are a stranger. You speak as if you knew the place, yet I myself have lived here for fifty years and I have never seen you before.’

“Then the monk told his name and told how he had been at mass in the chapel in the morning and had then gone into the garden to read. And he told how he had read in the Psalms, ‘A thousand years in thy sight are as yesterday, which is past,’ and how, while he was thinking of these words, he had heard the bird singing. He told how he had followed the bird, till he saw that night was coming, and then had come back to the monastery.

“And the other said: ‘I remember now that when I first came into this place they told me of a legend that a monk of your name had gone out of this monastery a hundred and fifty years before, and had never come back and had never been heard of again. And now, counting my own fifty years here, that must have been two hundred years ago.’

“Then the monk said: ‘God has given me such happiness as He gives to few until they are with Him in Heaven, for these two hundred years have seemed to me to be only a part of a day. Now hear my confession, for I know that I soon shall die.’

“So the other monk heard his confession, and before midnight he died. And this was the way that God had chosen to show him the meaning of His word.”

It was a pretty story, but Kathleen understood no more than before. “No,” said her grandmother, “you cannot understand, and I cannot. We live here such a little while and we are so shut in by time, that we cannot understand how it is with those who live always. But we shall understand when the right time comes, and then we shall wonder how we could ever wonder. And I will tell you another story about it, not to make you understand, but to show you how it is.

“Long ago Finn McCool was the great champion of Ireland. He had many warriors, who were called Fenians. He had a son, Oisin, who was a great warrior, too, and besides that a poet and a minstrel. Some of his poems are left to us yet. One day the Fenians were hunting, when they met a beautiful girl riding on a white horse. She called to Oisin, and he went apart from the others to speak with her.

“She told him that she was the Princess of Tir-na-n-Oge, and that she had come to take him there, where she was to be married to him. ‘Tir-na-n-Oge’ means ‘Land of the Young,’ and they say that nobody ever grows old there. The Princess was as beautiful as moonlight, and her voice was as sweet as the wind blowing on a harp, and Oisin was in love with her and eager to go before she had done speaking.

“He went back to his father and his companions and bade them farewell. It was with tears that Finn said good-by to Oisin, for I think he knew that he should never see him again. But Oisin did not know. Then Oisin mounted the white horse and set the Princess in front of him, and the horse galloped away toward the west. In a little while they came to the sea, and the horse kept straight on, galloping over the water as if it had been a smooth road. Then some say that the water rose around them and covered them and that they were in a beautiful place under the sea. I am not sure of that. Lands there are under the sea, they say, and no doubt there are, but I am not so sure that the real Tir-na-n-Oge is there.

“For others say that the tops of blue hills rose before them, and changed to green as they came nearer, and then Oisin saw that soft grass sloped down to the very water here and there, and in other places there were tall cliffs, and trailing vines hung down from the tops of them, covered with bright flowers, and they swung to and fro in the light breeze. Beyond there were more hills, covered with rich woods. Little veils of mist hid them partly and made them more beautiful, and streams poured down from high places and looked like thin, silky tassels hung upon the hills, and they waved in the air, like the waving vines, and some of them seemed never to reach the ground at all, but to blow away into fine silver spray and to mix with the mists of the hills. And golden sunlight poured down over it all, and there was a warm shimmer in the air that made it all look like something seen in a dream. And this was Tir-na-n-Oge.

“The horse came to the shore and galloped over soft turf till it seemed to Oisin that they were in the very middle of the island, and there they came to a palace, and Oisin thought that it was more beautiful than anything else that he had seen. It may be that the palace was built of marble, but to Oisin it seemed like blocks of pure snow. It was so long that one might well mount his horse to go the length of it, instead of walking. It had gilded domes that looked like suns, with the light shining on them, and the whole palace was dazzling to look at. All around it were gardens, with trees and plants in full bloom, of all the colors of the rainbow, and colors that are not in the rainbow, and other trees with only deep green leaves, and pathways among them which led down into cool, shady hollows, with clear brooks running through them between banks of soft, dark-green moss, sinking their quiet little song.

“Oisin got down off his horse and then lifted the Princess down, and they went into the palace. There the Princess’s father, the King of Tir-na-n-Oge, made Oisin welcome and led both of them to the banquet hall, where a great feast was spread in honor of the Princess and the new Prince. And Oisin thought that if the palace was beautiful outside, it was much more beautiful inside, and as for the table that was before him, he could not think of any of the best things in the world to eat and to drink that were not on it.

“The next day the Princess was married to Oisin. For a long time Oisin and the Princess lived in the palace and Oisin thought that he never could be more happy than he was now. The old warriors cared much for what they ate and drank, and Oisin ate and drank better things than he had ever tasted before. He walked with the Princess down through the shady ways among the trees and across the brooks and up the hill-sides among the flowers. They sat together in the garden or in the palace and she sang to him and told him wonderful tales of heroes and of princesses of olden times. Sometimes they rode hunting together, and everywhere they found game, the finest that Oisin had ever seen.

"But at last Oisin began to feel that he cared less for all these things than he had done at first. The grass and the flowers and the woods did not seem so fair to him as they had seemed; the sunshine was not such pure gold; he wished that the silver streams would not blow away in spray and mix with the mists; he wanted to see them come down yellow with the earth of the mountains and plunge into caverns with great rushing and roaring; he felt that the warm air was taking his strength from him; he no longer liked the rich feasts that were spread before him every day; he longed to follow the deer through the woods, with his old friends, to kill it and to cook it and eat it in the woods, and then to sleep there, under the trees and the stars; these trees and these gardens were beautiful, it was true, but they were too beautiful; a hard way through a rough forest would have pleased him better now; he did not love the Princess less, but he longed to see his father and his men again; her singing was no less sweet to him than it had ever been before, but he wished that he could be again where the Fenians, after a hard day's hunt or a hard day's fight, sat about the fire in their stronghold, and listened to one of them — perhaps himself, for he was the best singer of them all — while he sang songs of great heroes and of great fights.

"And one day, when the Princess had been singing to him, he took her harp from her and sang a song of one of his father's battles, a battle which he had seen himself, where Diarmuid had slain hundreds, and Orcur had slain hundreds, and Erin had been kept from her enemies. Then he said to the Princess: 'Do not think that I am ungrateful for all the happiness that I have had here, but I am longing to see Erin again and to see my father and his men. It is not so beautiful a land as this, but it is my own land, and I am longing to see it. The air here is sweet and the sunshine is warm, but I should like to breathe the mists and to feel the chill again, if I could only see Erin once more!"

Mrs. O’Brien stopped a moment, with the way that she had of seeming to look at things far off. Kathleen said nothing when she paused in this way, and in a minute the old woman went on:

“‘You would not be so happy in Erin as you think,’ the Princess answered him. ‘This is the best place for you to stay, and it would break my heart for you to go.’

“So Oisin said no more then, but the great longing grew upon him, and every day the delights of Tir-na-n-Oge pleased him less. And at last he spoke of it again, and asked the Princess to let him go for a little while. ‘You would find Erin changed,’ she said, ‘and the Fenians are all gone. How long have you been here with me?’

“‘I cannot tell you to a day,’ Oisin answered, ‘but I know that it is weeks since I saw my country and my people.’

“‘You have been here,’ said the Princess, ‘for three hundred years.’

“Oisin could not understand it, but he thought that if he could live so long and not know that the time had passed, the Fenians, too, might be living still, and he begged again to be allowed to go. At last the Princess saw that he would never be happy unless he went, so she brought him the same white horse that had brought them both to Tir-na-n-Oge. ‘The horse,’ she said, ‘will take you to Erin. But you must sit upon his back and never loose his bridle or get down upon the ground. If you touch the ground of Erin you will be at once a weak, old man, you can never come back to Tir-na-n-Oge, you will never see me, and I shall never see you again. Will you promise me, if I will let you go, that you will not get off the horse’s back or let go his bridle?’

“Oisin promised and she let him go. Away over the water the horse galloped again. Tir-na-n-Oge, with its warm sun and its sweet air, was left behind. A damp sea-wind came up, and it blew the salt spray harshly into Oisin’s face as the horse dashed along. It was a joy to him. No more of the soft comforts of that weary island. This was something for a man to face.

Yet he did not forget the Princess, and he meant to go back to her when he had seen his land and his people once more. Then the clouds and the fog drifted away and the sun shone out, but still the salt spray covered him, and he felt stronger as he made his way against it and felt the great, free breeze from the east. And now he saw something like a little cloud on the horizon, and it rose higher and grew wider, and then its misty brown faded away and he saw the beautiful green shores of Erin."

The old woman paused again and said over softly to herself: "The beautiful — beautiful green shores of Erin."

"The horse and the rider soon reached the land now. Oisin rode first to the spot where he had first met the Princess of Tir-na-n-Oge and where he had last seen his father and his companions. He did not think to find them there, but he felt that it was the first place to which he should go. The forest had been cleared away a little, and a strange building stood there. It was a small house, built of stone, and there was a cross on the top of it. Inside he heard a sound of singing. He rode to the door and looked in. There were people kneeling before a man who stood in a higher place than the rest and held up a golden cup.

"This was something that Oisin did not understand, and he rode away, remembering what the Princess had told him, that he would find Ireland changed. He wondered if he had been wise to come at all. But he went on, and now he rode fast, in this direction and in that, to try to find the Fenians. Sometimes he asked people whom he met if they could tell him of his father. Some of them shook their heads and said that they knew no such person as Finn McCool. Others laughed at him. One or two old men told him that the Fenians had all died long ago and that the man of greatest power in Ireland now was Patrick. It was hard for him to believe. He would have thought himself in a dream, but a dream seems right and true while it lasts, and this seemed all wrong and false. Yet, when he found a place that he knew and looked for some familiar stronghold of the Fenians, he found only a low mound of earth, grown all over with grass, or perhaps with weeds and bushes. And everywhere he saw these houses of stone, with crosses on their tops.

"Then it came into his mind to find this Patrick of whom he heard so much, and to see what sort of man was now the greatest in Ireland. This was an easier matter than searching for the Fenians. Everyone knew where the holy Patrick was, and soon Oisin came near the place and found that the saint was building another of the stone houses. As Oisin came near he saw some men trying to lift a heavy stone upon a car, to take it to the new building. It almost made him laugh to see how small and weak the men were. He knew well that he could put the stone on the car alone. It was no larger than the stones that the Fenians used to throw for sport.

"He came near and leaned down from his saddle to lift the stone for the men. He took hold of it and began to raise it, but with the weight the girth of his saddle broke, the saddle slipped around on the horse, Oisin fell, and the horse ran away. Oisin lay there on the ground of Erin, which the Princess had forbidden him to touch, an old man, weak, helpless, blind, hollow-cheeked, wrinkled, white-haired.

"The men took him up and carried him to St. Patrick, who welcomed him kindly and kept him for a while in his own house. Many times the saint talked with him and tried to make him a Christian, but Oisin could think of nothing but the grand days of the Fenians. When St. Patrick talked with him he would begin to tell of these, and he would make the poems about them that have been kept till now and give us what we know of Finn McCool and his heroes. And these poems Patrick would have written down. And always Oisin was mourning for the brave old days of Finn McCool or for the days of Tir-na-n-Oge, which seemed to him now still farther off.

"Old as he was now, with the heavy weight of more than three hundred years upon him, blind and weak, there was one thing in which Oisin felt himself a better man that St. Patrick or any of his band. St. Patrick and all those who were with him fasted much, and when they ate it was frugally, of bread and the herbs of the field, and but little meat. But this was not enough for Oisin. He remembered how he and his fellow-huntsmen used to follow the deer and kill it, and dress it, and cook it on the moor in the fresh, cool evening, and feast till it was time to sleep, and then wake and follow the deer again. And so the food which was given to him in St. Patrick's house seemed poor and scanty to him.

"He said this to the cook and others in the house, and they made sport of him, because so old a man as he should wish to eat so much. Then he told them tales of the days of his father, how great and strong the men of Erin were then, how much more fertile the land was, and of the great beasts and the great trees and plants and vines that it brought forth. In those days, he said, the leg of a lark was as large as a leg of mutton now, a berry of the wild ash was as large as a sheep, and an ivy leaf as broad as a shield.

"They all laughed at him the more when he said these things, and they did not believe a word of it all. 'Alas!' he said, 'how can I show you that what I say is true? The dear heroes whom I knew are all gone. I am left alone to mourn for them, among men who do not even believe how great they were. Everything that I have found is changed, but there may be something that is not changed. Will one of you go with me in a war chariot and drive where I shall tell him, and let me see if I can find anything as I knew it once?'

"Then one of them said that he would go with him. The next morning they set out. Oisin told the man where to drive, till they came to a place where Oisin said: 'Look around you and tell me what you can see on the plain.'

"'I see a stone pillar,' the man answered.

"'Drive the chariot to it,' said Oisin, 'and dig at the foot of the pillar, on the south side of it.'

“The man did as Oisin told him, and when he had dug for a while Oisin asked him if he had found anything. ‘There is something long and hard here,’ said the man, ‘like a wooden pole.’

“‘Dig it out,’ said Oisin.

“The man dug more. ‘I have it out now,’ he said; ‘it is like a great spear, for it has a huge head of rusty iron. I can scarcely lift it.’

“‘It is a spear such as the Fenians used,’ said Oisin. ‘Dig still deeper.’

“The man dug again. ‘Do you find anything more?’ said Oisin.

“‘I have found a great horn,’ the man answered, ‘many times as large as any horn that I ever saw.’

“‘It is the great war-horn of my father, Finn McCool,’ said Oisin. ‘Dig deeper.’

“The man dug again and said, ‘I have found a lump of bog butter.’

“‘Now blow the horn,’ said Oisin.

“The man was scarcely able to blow the horn, but he did blow it, and it gave forth a harsh, terrible note, which sounded over the plain and was echoed back from the woods and the rocks with a hoarse, dreadful sound.

“‘Look about you,’ said Oisin, ‘and tell me what you see.’

“‘Oh, I see,’ said the man, ‘a great flock of birds coming toward us, and every one of them is many times as large as the largest eagle that I have ever seen. I fear that we cannot escape them and that they will kill us. The dog is nearly dead with terror and he is trying to break his chain.’

“‘Give him a piece of the bog butter,’ said Oisin, ‘and let him go. Then tell me what he does.’

“‘He is running straight toward the birds,’ the man answered, ‘and they are coming straight toward him and toward us, along the ground. Ah! he has caught one of them, and all the rest have flown away! He has killed the bird! He is rushing back to us, with madness in his eyes and his mouth covered with blood and foam! I fear that he will be worse for us than the birds would have been.’

“‘Hold the spear straight in front of you as he comes,’ said Oisin, ‘and let him run upon the point of it and kill him.’

“The man held the spear as Oisin told him, and when the dog came on he was caught upon the point of it, and it went through his heart and he fell dead.

“Then the man went and cut off one of the legs of the bird which had been killed, and they took it with them and started back. As they went they passed a mountain ash which had berries of enormous size, and the man put one of them into the chariot. Then the man saw huge ivy leaves, and he took one of them too. So they went back to St. Patrick’s house and showed all the men there what they had brought. The leg of the bird and the berry and the ivy leaf were even larger than Oisin had said. And after that they all believed the stories that Oisin told them, and all of them agreed that a man who had lived in the days when there were such trees and such beasts and such men in Erin should be his own judge as to how much he needed to eat. And so after that all of St. Patrick’s men treated him as well as did St. Patrick himself.

“But Oisin died only a little while after that, the last of the great heroes of Erin. He had lived for more than three hundred years, and it seemed to him no more than the life of a young man.”

10

THE IRON CRUCIFIX

Kathleen had not been at home long, of course, before Peter and Ellen came to see her, and Terence came with them. It seemed to Kathleen that she had never seen him look as he did then. She had never seen him look so evil or so crafty or so sad. She felt afraid of him, because he looked so evil and so crafty, and she felt sorry for him, because he looked so sad. She sat in the corner of the room that was farthest from him, and it was also the farthest from all the others, as they were all sitting near together. Then, when all the others were busy talking among themselves, Terence suddenly came and sat close to her, and between her and the others, so that she could not get away from him.

“What did you do all the year that you was inside the hill?” he said.

“I don’t know,” Kathleen answered; “it seemed only a day to me, and I can’t remember and I can’t think what it was that I did to fill all that time.”

“And how did you like the fairies?” said Terence.

“The Good People? They were very kind to me and I liked them very much, but I wouldn’t have let them keep me — I wouldn’t have stayed — so long, if I had known.”

“You wouldn’t have let them? You wouldn’t have stayed? And what would you have done?”

“I don’t know,” said Kathleen.

“And who was there besides the fairies?” Terence asked.

“Why, there was — oh, I don’t want to talk to you about it, and I don’t think you ought to make me.”

“You don’t need,” said Terence. “I know who was there. I know who he is and what he is, and I know the kind of talk that he talked to you. He made love to you. I know that well enough. That’s what he would do. But do you mind the promise that your father made to my father the day after we was born? I want you should remember that promise.”

“It was no promise at all,” Kathleen said, “and I won’t let you talk to me that way, and I don’t see that it matters to you what he — what anybody said to me anywhere, and I won’t tell you any more.”

“Ah!” said Terence; “he did make love to you. And you think you can talk any way you like to me and you won’t let me talk any way I like to you. Do you know that his staying in that hill with the fairies depends on me? Do you know that —”

Terence turned to see if anybody else was listening and saw Mrs. O’Brien looking straight at him. He stopped short in what he was saying, and then, speaking lower, he went on: “Don’t dare to tell anybody what I was saying to you; you don’t know what I can do, but I might show you if I took the notion.”

For the rest of the time that he stayed Terence said not a word, but he sat and stared at Kathleen. And now she thought that there was something more terrible in his look than there had been before. It seemed to have a kind of spell about it. Kathleen had a feeling that she could not move while he looked at her, although when she tried it she found that she could.

The most natural thing in the world for Kathleen to do would have been to tell her grandmother about this and about all that Terence had said to her, but, whether it was because of the way that Terence had looked at her or for some other reason, she did not tell her. Sometimes after that, when she and Terence met, he reminded her again of what he called the promise, but oftener he said nothing, or next to nothing, and only looked at her in that same way, and then she felt as if she could do nothing of herself, and that if he told her to do anything, she would have to do it.

Kathleen did not forget the promise which she had made to the other Terence in the hill, that she would come back. She had said that she would come back to-morrow if she could. But when to-morrow came, so many people who had heard that she was at home again came to see her, that she was not left alone for a moment. It was several days before she could get away from the house to go where she pleased alone. Then she went straight to the little pool in the Park.

If you live in New York, perhaps you would like to know just where this pool was — and still is. Well, then — go to the northwest corner of Central Park and go in by the little gate at the right of the carriage-drive. Then you will have to go down a flight of steps. Keep to the right, along the west side of the Park, and you will have to go only a few steps till you come to the pool, which is a little way up the bank, on the left, with the rocks behind it and the trees around it, as I have described it to you before. Then go back to the path and keep on the way that you were going, till you have gone up two short flights of steps. Then, only a few feet farther on, you will see, on the left, the little, shell-shaped, grassy slope where Kathleen danced with the Good People. Seeing these places will prove to you that this whole story is true.

Kathleen went straight to the pool, as I said, never thinking but that, when she got there, she could walk into the hill as easily as she had done before. But there was no opening at all in the rocks. They were just as they had always looked before she went through them with the Good People. Then she tried to step on the water, and instead of stepping on it she stepped into it and wet her foot. She almost concluded that everything had been a dream after all. She felt frightened about it, and she hurried home to look at the little box of green ointment. If she found it where she had left it, it would prove that she had really been inside the hill and that it was not a dream. She ran to her room to look for it, and there it was just as she had left it. It was not a dream.

But how was she to keep her promise to Terence? — the Hill Terence, she called him now, when she thought of him, so as not to confuse him with Terence Sullivan. She went to the pool again and again and tried to find the door in the rocks open and the water so that she could walk on it, but she never found them so. Yet she could not think of any other way to get into the hill again. After a while it seemed so hopeless that she gave up going to the pool so often.

Then one day a thought came to her which made it all seem so simple that she was quite surprised at herself for not thinking of it before. Terence had told her that he came out every day to go to school. He had said that the next year he was to go to the School of Engineering at the University. It was when she first came into the hill that he told her that, and so it was next year now. Now the University was not very far away, up on the hill, beyond the north end of the Park. She did not know whether there was any other way to get into the hill than this way through the rocks behind the pool, but if anybody were at the University and wanted to get into the hill, this would surely be the nearest way. Then she felt sure that if she went to the pool at the right time of the day she should meet Terence when he came out or when he went in.

When she thought again she decided that she would not do anything of the kind. If Terence wanted to see her, it was his business to find her, not hers to find him. After that she thought still more. Terence had no way of finding her. She had never told him where she lived, and he might spend the rest of his life searching for her and never find her. And then she had promised him that she would come back. She had tried so hard to keep that promise already that most people would have said it was right for her to give it up now, but she had a feeling that a promise which she had made to

Terence must be kept. She said to herself that it was because he had been so kind to her when she was in the hill.

So she spent all the time she could near the pool, in the hope of seeing Terence. And what do you think happened? She did see him. One afternoon as she was walking along the same old path toward the gate at the corner of the Park, she saw Terence come through that gate and down the steps. And now you will never in the world guess what she did. I suppose you have believed this whole story till now, but I am afraid you will not believe this. I should not believe it myself, if I did not know that it was so. But there is no doubt about it. She turned and walked straight back along the path, and tried to get away without letting Terence see her. Don’t expect me to explain it. I don’t blame you for being surprised. It was the most wonderful thing I ever heard of. A sensible girl like Kathleen too!

But Terence had seen her and he walked swiftly along the path and overtook her. “What makes you try to get away from me?” he said.

“I don’t know,” said Kathleen.

“Didn’t you want to see me?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Kathleen, “I wanted — I don’t know — oh, yes, I did want to see you! How is the little Prince?”

“The little Prince is very well,” said Terence. “You promised that you would come back, you know.”

“Yes,” said Kathleen, “and didn’t I try? But how could I get through those hard rocks? I don’t suppose it was your fault about the rocks, though. How are they getting on with their triangles?”

“They are not getting on at all,” Terence answered. “You promised that you would come back, and then, when you saw me you tried to run away. What made you do that?”

“Oh, but I tried so hard to find you!” Kathleen said. “You don’t know how hard I tried.”

“But what made —?”

“I don’t know; I just couldn’t help it.”

You notice how uninteresting Terence and Kathleen’s conversation was getting. They kept on with it, however, dull as it was. They turned and went up over the hill to the blockhouse, and then down the steep path on the other side and back along the north end of the Park. “Do you come here often?” Terence asked.

“I have been here very often,” Kathleen said, “trying to keep my promise to you.”

“I am here,” he said, “nearly every day, at about this time; will you come again?”

“Yes,” Kathleen said, “if you would like me to.”

They were close to the pool again now. “See that bright star up there in the west?” said Terence.

Kathleen turned to look at it. “It is Venus,” she said. Then she turned back toward where Terence had stood. He was gone. She looked up and down the path and all around, but she could not find him. She went up to the pool. The rocks were just as usual — just as close, just as hard. She tried the water again to see if she could stand on it. She could not. Terence was gone and she went home to think about it.

She thought about it and she thought more about it, but she could not understand it at all. So she very sensibly gave up understanding it. She kept her promise and met Terence again near the pool. And then she met him again and a few times more. Every time he would make her look away from him for a moment, or wait till she did look away, and when she looked back he would be gone. It did not take her long to find out that he did not want her to see him go, of course, and so one day, when she turned her head away she turned it back again quickly, and saw him standing close to the pool with his face toward the rocks. She watched him for a moment while he stood there, and neither of them moved. Then he said, without looking around: “Let me go, Kathleen; I can’t go while you’re looking.”

So she turned away for another instant, and when she looked again he was gone.

I don’t know how many times Terence and Kathleen strolled about the Park in this way, or what they talked about, or just how long a time went by, and I suppose that all these things interest you as little as they do me. But there is no doubt that one day, as they were walking together and talking together of whatever they found to talk about, they came face to face with Terence Sullivan. He passed them as if he had not seen them, but his face was black.

The next day he came to see Kathleen, and he said to her: “Do you think I don’t know who that was with you in the Park yesterday? And does your father know? He will, if I tell him, and what will he say, do you think, when he knows that you’re meeting that fine boy without his knowledge? If I see the two of you there again I’ll tell him, and I’ll be watching for you too. What do you say to that now?”

“I say nothing to it,” Kathleen answered; “what did you think I would say?”

“What did I think you would say? What did I think you could say? Nothing, of course. And is that all you say?”

“That is all,” said Kathleen.

And that was all. He tried his best to get her to say more, but she would not. But it did not take her a minute to think what to do. And it was so simple that she wondered why she had never thought of it before. It was a wonder, too, that Terence Sullivan did not think of it himself and know that she would do it. But he was not clever in some ways, though he was so clever in others.

The next day Kathleen met Terence in the Park, and she said to him: “Terence, we must not stay here for a single minute. You must come straight home with me. I want you to see my father and my grandmother.”

And Terence went straight home with her and she told her grandmother who he was — and indeed she had told her of him before — and that she had met him in the Park. Her father came soon and Terence was introduced to him too.

After that Terence came often and Kathleen seldom met him in the Park, though they still walked there sometimes. Mrs. O'Brien and John were immensely pleased with him. It was the strangest thing to see how much he liked to be in a house, just because it was a house, and how wonderful the ways of people who lived in a house seemed to him. When he and Kathleen sat together in a corner of the room and John sat reading a paper and Mrs. O'Brien knitting and reading a book at the same time, it was as astonishing a sight to him as it would be to you to see a dozen mermaids playing at the bottom of the sea.

"Isn't it beautiful?" he whispered to Kathleen.

"Isn't what beautiful?" Kathleen asked.

"The way you live here," Terence answered. "All these years, you know, I have just come out of the hill to go to school, and then I have gone back again. I have seen the people outside, but I never was in one of their houses before. And don't you ever dance?"

"Why, of course we do," Kathleen said; "we go to balls sometimes, and to parties where there is dancing, and then —"

"But do you never dance here, where you live?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes we do, but the rooms are not large enough to do it very well, you know."

"I never thought before," said Terence, "of people's not dancing all the time that they were not at work or eating or sleeping. You know there in the hill they dance a good deal of the time, and I get so tired of it that it seems to me as if they danced all the time. I think it is delightful not to dance. And what is your grandmother doing? Is she studying?"

"Why, no, she is only reading."

“But what does she read, if she is not studying?”

“Why, I don’t know; a story, maybe, or history, or poetry, or a sermon, or — it might be anything.”

“Will you tell me about all those things some time?” Terence asked. “I have heard people tell stories, but I never read a story, and I never read anything except books to help me learn to make railways and telegraphs, so as to teach it to the people in the hill. That is all they think of when they are not dancing.”

And Terence wondered like this at everything that he saw, and he often told Kathleen how tired he was of living in the hill and how much he wished that he could live outside among the real people, as he called them, instead of with the Good People. Once Kathleen tried to take Terence to see Peter and Ellen, and then a strange thing was discovered. Terence could not go there. When he came to the corner of the street where Peter and Ellen lived, he turned straight around and walked the other way. “This is the way,” Kathleen called, and she hurried back after him.

When she came up with him he turned again and walked with her as they had been going at first. “I don’t know why I did that,” he said. “I didn’t mean to. It was as if my feet turned me around and brought me back.”

By this time they were at the corner again, and Terence did just the same thing over. He turned square around and walked back. He could not help it. He tried it again and again and he could not turn that corner. If you had been there and had seen him trying it, you would have thought that it was the funniest sight that you ever saw, though it may not sound so funny to tell about it. Kathleen was vexed that Terence could not go where she wanted him to, but she laughed till she had to sit down on a doorstep and rest.

Terence did not understand it any more than Kathleen did, and afterward he tried it again, but it was of no use. He begged her not to tell her father or her grandmother, because, he said, it would make him look so ridiculous.

But one day, when he and Kathleen were on their way together to the O'Briens' house, as he came to the last corner, Terence turned around and walked away. "I can't go home with you to-day," he said. "I don't know why it is. I can't walk that way. It is just the same as when I try to go to the Sullivans'."

He went back to the Park and Kathleen went home alone and found that Peter and Ellen were there. Then she simply could not keep herself from telling her grandmother all about it. Afterward she wished that she had not told her, for her grandmother laughed a little and nodded and looked as if she knew everything, and she would tell nothing.

So the Hill Terence came to the O'Briens' so often that he felt quite at home, and everyone there was glad to have him come, and if he stayed away for as long as three or four days, they wondered what had become of him. And all this, you may suppose, did not improve Terence Sullivan's temper. He and the Hill Terence never met except that one time in the Park, but he knew all about it. And he talked with Kathleen about it sometimes, too, and it made her very uncomfortable. He talked in the same way that he did the day after Kathleen came back from the hill, of his having something to do with the Hill Terence and of the harm that he could do if he chose. He never said anything that Kathleen could understand, but he always made her afraid. She told the Hill Terence about it, and she told her grandmother about it. Her grandmother seemed to understand it perfectly, and she told her not to be afraid. Terence did not seem to understand it at all, and he told her not to be afraid.

Then one day, when Terence Sullivan had been talking to her in the same way and had been looking at her in a more terrible way than ever before, she told her grandmother that she could not bear it any longer. If something could not be done to make Terence stop talking to her so, and looking at her so, she should ask her father to let her go away somewhere.

“There’s nothing for you to be afraid of,” her grandmother said, “but if you are afraid and if it troubles you so much, we will see what we can do.”

Then Mrs. O’Brien went to her own room and came back with something which she gave to Kathleen. It was a little crucifix, made of iron. “It was this,” she said, “that I touched you with to bring you out of the circle when you were dancing with the Good People. Hang it around your neck, and if Terence troubles you, hold it up before you and before him. I have always said that Terence was one of the Good People, and I never believed it more than this minute. If he is one of them, he cannot come near the cross, and the iron will be a terror to him too. If he tries to come too near to you, touch him with it, and then we’ll see.”

“Why can he not come near the cross?” Kathleen asked.

“Because,” Mrs. O’Brien said, “the Good People are a kind of spirits, and no spirits can do you any harm if you hold the cross before you, or if you make the sign of the cross. Did I never tell you what the Good People were? They were angels and lived in Heaven once. When Satan and his angels rebelled against God and were driven out of Heaven, the angels that are the Good People were driven out too. They were not good enough to stay in Heaven, and they were not bad enough to fall as Satan and his angels fell, so some of them stayed on the land and some of them stayed in the sea. And so they will live till the Day of Judgment, and then, some say, they will vanish like dew when it dries away; and some say that they will be saved like the souls of Christians. But we do not know.”

“You do not know,” Kathleen repeated, “if the Good People will be saved or not? They were very good to me, though they kept me away from home so long, and I should like to believe —”

“I have read of one of them,” Mrs. O’Brien went on, “who looked in at the gate of Heaven, and an angel told him that he could come in, if he could bring with him the thing which was counted in Heaven the most precious in all the world. And he found it and brought it and went into Heaven. But for the most of them — the Good People themselves do not know whether they are to be saved, and we common people do not know, but they say that priests know. And sometimes the Good People themselves have tried to find out from them.

“There was a troupe of fairies dancing one night on a green near a river, and they were all having the merry kind of time that you know better than I do, Kathleen. But they stopped all at once and ran to hide themselves among the grass and behind leaves and weeds. For they knew, in the way that they have of knowing, that a priest was coming, and the Good People cannot bear to be near a priest.

“The priest who was coming had been on some errand at a long distance from home, and he was a long way from home still. Indeed, he was just making up his mind that, as it was so late, he would not try to go home at all that night, but would ask for a supper and a bed at the first cabin he should come to. And well he knew he would find it and welcome.

“And true for him, close by where the Good People had been dancing, he came to a cabin and knocked at the door. The man and his wife who lived there were proud enough to see the priest in their house and to give him all that he asked, and the trouble that was on them was that they had no more to give. For there was nothing to offer him but potatoes, though they were as good potatoes as there were in Ireland.

“It was only a little while ago that the man of the house had set a net in the river, and he thought that there would hardly be a fish in it so soon. But then he thought that there could be no harm in looking, so down to the river he went to try could he find something for the priest’s supper more than the potatoes. And true enough, there in the net was the finest salmon he ever saw. He was about to take him out, when the net was pulled away from him by something that he could not see, and away went the salmon swimming down the river.

"It may be that he said things to the fish that I wouldn't like to be saying after him, and at the same time he looked around to see what it was that was pulling his net. And then he saw the Good People.

"'Give yourself no trouble about the fish,' one of them said to him. 'If you'll only go back to your house and ask the priest one question from us we'll see that he and you have the finest supper that was ever seen.'

"Now the man thought that it was not safe to be talking and making bargains with the Good People, so he said: 'I'll not have anything to do with you at all.' And then he thought neither was it safe to make them angry with him, and so he said again: 'I've no wish to offend you and I thank you for your offer, but I can't take it from you, and I don't think his Reverence would like me to do that same.'

"Then the one that had spoken first said: 'We'll not ask you to take anything you don't want, but will you ask the priest one question for us?"

"'I see no harm in that,' said he, 'for sure he needn't answer it if he doesn't like; but I'll not take your supper.'

"'Then,' said the little man, 'ask him if we are to be saved at the Day of Judgment, like the souls of Christians, and bring us back word what he says, and we'll be grateful to you forever.'

"He went back to his cabin and found his wife and the priest sitting down to supper. 'Your Reverence,' said he, 'might I ask you one question?'

"'And what might that be?' said the priest.

"'Will you tell me,' said he 'will the Good People be saved at the Day of Judgment, the same as Christians?'

"'You never thought of asking that yourself,' the priest said; 'who told you to ask it?'

"'It was the Good People themselves,' said the man, 'and they are down there by the river, waiting for me to tell them what you answer to it.'

"'Go and tell them, then,' said the priest, 'that if they will come here and ask me that or any other question themselves, I will answer them.'

“So he went back and told them what the priest said, and the instant they heard it they all flew away over the grass and up into the air and vanished. Then he went back to eat his potatoes with the priest, still feeling sorry that he had lost the salmon.”

“But still I don’t see,” Kathleen said. “You say that the cross will help me against Terence if he is one of the Good People, because they are a kind of spirits. But why wouldn’t it help me against him just as much if he wasn’t one of the Good People — if he was just a bad man?”

“No, no,” said the old woman; “that little bit of iron will keep you against any evil spirit, and never one of them dare come near it; but no poor human creature with a soul to save, no matter how wicked, was ever turned away from the blessed cross, or ever will be. The cross was made for them. And now, dear, you have been crying and your eyes are all red. Go to your room and try to make them look better. There might be someone to see you before long, and you wouldn’t like your eyes to look that way.”

Someone did come to see Kathleen before long, but, as it happened, neither she nor her grandmother stayed to see him.

Kathleen scarcely knew that she had been crying till her grandmother told her, but she had. She went to her room and looked in the glass and was surprised to see how red her eyes were. And just at the same instant she saw the little gold box of green ointment, just under the glass, where she had left it, and where it had been ever since that night when she came back from the hill. Then she remembered how the Fairy Queen had given it to her to put on the little Prince’s eyes, and how she had done it, and how bright his eyes looked when she touched them with the ointment. She wondered if it would make her eyes look bright, too, and take the marks of the tears away from them. She took a tiny bit of the ointment on her finger and just touched each eye with it. It did make them look brighter; there was no doubt about it.

The next instant Kathleen started away from the mirror and across the room with a little frightened gasp. For, looking in the glass, she had seen a dark form pass behind her, as if it had just come in at the door of the room. She knew who it was without turning around. It was Terence Sullivan. He was still close to the door now, and she was across the room. She had the little iron crucifix in her hand and she turned and faced him.

“What are you doing here?” she said.

Terence only stared at her, for an instant, more surprised than she was herself. Then he stammered: “What — what am I —”

“What are you here for?” said Kathleen. “Why do you follow me like this? I won’t let you. Go away.”

Terence was a little more himself now. “Which eye do you see me with?” he cried.

“With both eyes, of course,” said Kathleen.

“This for both of them, then!” Terence cried, and he struck at Kathleen’s eyes with his fist.

She raised her hand quickly to ward off the blow, and Terence’s hand touched the iron crucifix. The blow did not reach her eyes. Terence started back from her and fell upon the floor. Only for an instant Kathleen saw his face. His eyes blazed, but the rest of it was as if he had been dead. Somehow he found his way out of the room, Kathleen could scarcely see how. He did not rise, but he seemed to run like a beast running for its life. Kathleen followed him out of the room and to the stairs. She saw him just leaving the house by the door. And yet she could not see how he went, for the door was shut.

Kathleen ran downstairs to find her grandmother and to tell her what had happened. Mrs. O’Brien listened and then she said: “Kathleen, you have been thinking too much about Terence and you have got too nervous. Nobody has come into the house since you left me, only a few minutes ago.”

“But I saw him, grandmother,” Kathleen answered, “and it was all just as I told you. How could I see him if he did not come?”

Mrs. O’Brien sat and thought for a few minutes. “What did you do before you saw Terence?” she asked.

Kathleen thought for a minute, too, for she was so much excited that she could scarcely remember. “I had been crying,” she said, “as you told me, and I put some of the ointment in the little gold box on my eyes to see if it would make them look better.”

“It was that,” said Mrs. O’Brien. “I’ve heard the like of it before. When you have touched your eyes with that ointment you can always see the Good People, whether they want you to or not. That was why he tried to strike your eyes, and if he had struck them he would have put them out. You will always see the Good People now wherever you meet them. They don’t like to be seen except when they choose, and so they may try to do you harm, and you must be careful. Keep the little cross always by you.

“And now come with me,” the old woman went on. “I have had enough of this, and I will have no more.”

“Come with you where, grandmother?” Kathleen asked.

“To the Sullivans,” the old woman answered.

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It was only a little while after they had gone when the Hill Terence came to the door. “Mrs. O’Brien and Miss Kathleen have gone to the Sullivans’,” the servant told him.

“Will they be back soon?” he asked.

“I don’t think so,” the servant said; “it was only a few minutes ago that they went away.”

“I will go to the Sullivans’ and find them,” Terence said.

Now that, you know, was about the most remarkable thing that Terence could say. He had tried to go to the Sullivans’ so many times and had found so many times that his feet simply would not take him there, that he had given up trying long ago. But now he resolved that he would go, and, more than that, he had a feeling such as he had never had before that he must go.

He knew the street and the number, though he had never been there. He started off as if there could not be the slightest doubt of his going wherever he wished to go. He walked quickly through the Park and past the little pool as if he had never seen the place. He came out of the Park at the other side and went on till he came to the corner which he could never turn before. He turned it as if it had been any other corner. It did not even surprise him to find that he could. He thought that he was doing all this just because he was so determined to go just where he chose, but he had never felt anything like the force or the determination or whatever it was which was drawing him straight on.

He reached the house and went up the steps. The door was open, and, instead of ringing, he went straight in. But what he did next was the strangest of all. He could not have told you why he did it any more than he could have told you why he did anything else. Instead of knocking at the door or going into any room that he passed, he went downstairs to the door of the kitchen. There, just for one instant, he stopped — the first instant that he had stopped since he left the O’Briens’ house. Then, still without knocking, he pushed the door open and went in.

11

THE OLD KING COMES BACK

When Mrs. O’Brien and Kathleen left home they walked through the Park and to the Sullivans’. Peter was away. Terence half sat and half lay on the floor in a corner. He held his right hand behind him and covered his face with his left arm. His whole body shook as if he were riding in a cart over a rough road. Ellen sat close to him, trying to soothe him and trying to get him to tell her what was the matter.

When Mrs. O’Brien and Kathleen came in Terence seemed to try to make himself smaller, but he did nothing else. “Ellen,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “come outside the room here for a moment; I have something to tell you.”

“Look at Terence there,” Ellen answered; “how can I leave him when he’s that way?”

“Leave him,” said Mrs. O’Brien, “and come out here with me.”

She took Ellen by the hand and led her, and Ellen followed. There was something in Mrs. O’Brien’s look now that told her she would have to come. “Now look at me,” said Mrs. O’Brien, when they were out of the room; “do I look as if I would mean every word I said, or do I not?”

Ellen did not answer, and Mrs. O’Brien said: “Ellen, when it was only your own affair I told you what you ought to do, but I let you take your own way. But now it is Kathleen’s affair and John’s and mine, and it is time that

I had my way. Look at me, Ellen, and tell me, do I look as if I meant to have it?”

Again Ellen looked in the old woman’s face and said nothing for an instant. Then she looked down again in a confused way, and said: “I must go back to Terence.”

“Ellen,” said the old woman, “go down to the kitchen. We’ll follow you, and Terence can come, too, if he likes, and I think he will.”

Without a word Ellen went down the stairs. Mrs. O’Brien called to Terence: “We are going to the kitchen; you can come if you like.”

Mrs. O’Brien and Kathleen followed Ellen, and Terence followed them. He slipped down the stairs like a bundle of rags. He stole into the kitchen after the others and half sat and half lay in the corner, as he had done in the room above, only he did not cover his face with his arm, but kept his eyes on Mrs. O’Brien to see what she was going to do.

“Now, Ellen,” Mrs. O’Brien whispered, “put your largest pot on the fire, put water in it, and let it boil.”

Ellen looked at the old woman as if she were begging her not to do this. The old woman looked back at her, and then she did it. She put the pot on the fire and the water in the pot. “Now bring all the eggs you have in the house,” Mrs. O’Brien said.

Ellen was past asking questions now, and she brought the eggs. It always takes a long time for water to boil, and it seemed to all of them as if it took hours for this water to boil. While they were waiting not one of them spoke and they scarcely moved. Terence was all but holding his breath, and his eyes, red and staring, were now upon Mrs. O’Brien and now upon Ellen, and never at rest. Kathleen looked at Terence and clutched the little crucifix in her hand. But she need not have been afraid of Terence; he knew the crucifix as well as he cared to know it.

After a long time the water boiled. Mrs. O’Brien waited till it was boiling as hard as ever it could, and then she whispered to Ellen: “Break the eggs now; keep the shells and throw away the rest."

Poor Ellen could not guess what it all meant, but she broke the eggs, laid the shells carefully aside, and threw away the rest.

"Now," said Mrs. O'Brien, "put the shells in the pot."

Ellen did as she was told.

"What are you doing, mother?" Terence called from his corner.

"Tell him you are brewing," Mrs. O'Brien whispered.

"I'm brewing, Terence," said Ellen, scarcely loud enough to be heard.

"And what are you brewing?" Terence asked again.

"Say egg-shells," Mrs. O'Brien whispered.

"Egg-shells, Terence," Ellen said.

Terence sprang to his feet. "Egg-shells!" he cried. "For near six thousand years I have lived on this earth, and never till this minute did I see anybody brew egg-shells!"

Mrs. O'Brien had turned upon him before he had done speaking. "Six thousand years, is it, that you've been on this earth?" she cried. "Then go and spend the rest of the years where you spent the six thousand! You've been long enough here! And send back the child that was stolen when you came here!"

Terence sprang toward a window. Ellen stood in his way; he struck her in the face with his open hand and threw her on the floor. After that nobody saw him but Kathleen. She saw him go toward the window. It was open just a little crack. Before her very eyes he grew smaller and smaller, till he scrambled and rolled and slipped through the crack and was gone.

That very instant the door opened and the Hill Terence came in. He saw Ellen lying on the floor, and, without noticing anyone else, he went to her and lifted her up. Ellen looked in his face, started back from him for an instant, still gazing in his face, and then caught him in her arms and cried, with her voice all full of tears, "It's my own boy — my own boy — the one I always saw in my dreams! Don't come near me, any of you, or you'll wake me and it'll be another dream! Oh, let me keep this dream while I can!"

"You'll keep this dream always, Ellen, dear," the old woman said. "Have no more fear. This is the dream that's for all your life and forever."

It was about that time, or it may have been a little later, that Peter came in. They told him all about it as well as they could. "It's glad I am that it all came out so," Peter said, after they had completely bewildered him by trying to make him understand the story; "it's glad I am. And yet I did like to hear Terence play the fiddle."

"I can play the fiddle a little too," the new Terence said.

"Oh, yes, indeed he can!" said Kathleen. "Bring the fiddle and he will show you."

Peter brought the fiddle and Terence played, and the fiddle sang a great song of gladness — the song of a soul born to find itself a full man all at once.

"Ah! don't you see now? Don't you see now?" Kathleen cried. "That means something!"

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THE FAIRIES in the hill were dancing their endless dance, when Naggeneen, as if he had been lifted up in the air and dropped, was suddenly among them. They stopped the dance and gathered around him. "What for are you back here?" the King asked.

"They drove me out!" Naggeneen cried. "I knew they would! I told you they would! I told you you could do nothing and I could do nothing! It's the only wonder that they didn't drive me out long ago."

"What do you keep your hand behind you for?" the King asked.

"I couldn't tell you that," said Naggeneen; "I couldn't say the words that I'ld have to say to tell you."

“And how did they drive you out?”

“By brewing egg-shells.”

“And do you mean,” the King cried, “that you let them catch you with that old trick? I thought you was clever.”

“Let them catch me! I couldn’t help what they did! I tried to help it, but it’s a spell that’s too strong for me or for any of us. If I was to get a soul by it, I couldn’t help saying: ‘What are you doing, mother?’ and then I couldn’t help saying how long I had been on the earth. Ah, didn’t I always tell you mortals was more powerful than us, if they only knew how? What are our spells and our charms to theirs?”

“And where is Terence, then?” the King asked.

“He’s not come in yet,” somebody answered.

“You know where he must be by this time,” said Naggeneen. “He’s back with his father and his mother by now. Where else could he be?”

“There’ll be no geometry to-night,” the King said. “It’s all done; we’ve failed in that. We’ll always be as we are, as you told us, Naggeneen. So now be as you were yourself and give us a tune to dance by. We was dancing when you came in, but it was no good music we had.”

“I’ll not play any more,” Naggeneen said; “that’s all done too. But I have something more to tell you. Kathleen O’Brien can see us, whether we like it or not. Some fool of you must have given her the ointment when she was here, and now she has used it on her eyes. She saw me when I meant to be invisible, and by the same token she can see any of you any time, whether you want to be seen or not. Now you know it’s the rule that she must be blinded in some way. Any of you can do it that likes. I’ve had enough and I warn you. She carries something that none of you can face, if she uses it. But you can watch your chance and do it when she’s asleep or in some way off her guard.”

An angry murmur ran around when Naggeneen said this. The King was about to speak, but the Queen spoke first. “Never a one of you shall harm her," she said. "Look what she did for me and the little Prince, at that time when we can do nothing for ourselves. And how good her grandmother has always been to us; and her mother, when she was alive. I don't care if she sees everything we do; no one of us shall ever harm her or anyone that belongs to her."

"You are right," the King said, "and it's ordered as you say."

"And she's not to be blinded, then?" said Naggeneen.

"She's not to be harmed," the King answered. "I forbid you ever to touch her, Naggeneen, and none of us ever will."

"Don't fear for me," said Naggeneen. "I'll never go near her. I've had enough."

"And we've all had enough," said the King; "so now, Naggeneen, play for us."

"Leave me be," said Naggeneen; "I'll never play for you again. King, did you ever lose what you cared for more than all the world? When you do, you'll know more than you know now, with all your age and with all your power. I told you once how I carried off the Princess of France and how Guleesh na Guss Dhu stole her from me. I cared nothing for her. It was only the soul that I'ld get from her that I wanted. And this time it was only the soul that I wanted, too, at first, but I loved this one in the end. But a soul will always find out another soul, and there's nothing for one like us, that has no soul. Oh, I couldn't even tell her like a man. All I could do was to be always frightening her and threatening her, and I knew all the time that it would drive her away from me at last, or me away from her. And I'll be like the rest of you till the Last Day, and then it's not even a little smoke that there'll be left of us. Dance and play and do what you like, but leave me be."

Naggeneen turned away from the King, pushed his way through the crowd, and threw himself down in a corner of the hall, with his face against the wall. The rest did not dance any more that night. Naggeneen had frightened them, as he always frightened them when he chose.

After that for a time everything went with the fairies as it had gone at first, except that Naggeneen was not among them. Sometimes he was in the hall by himself and sometimes he was out of it by himself, but he never danced with the others, he never talked with them, and he never played for them.

One day the King came to him as he sat in his corner alone and said, "Naggeneen, we are all going to the wedding. Will you come with us?"

"Leave me be," said Naggeneen. "Why would I want to see it? I don't know if I'll ever go with you or do anything with you again, or with anyone, but I know I'll not now."

All the people who were passing St. Patrick's Cathedral could tell by the looks of things that if they waited long enough they would see somebody come out. So a good many waited. After a while they saw Terence and Kathleen come out and get into a carriage.

"Look," said Kathleen: "do you see them? They are the Good People! Don't you see them all around us, in the street and in the air, and everywhere? I remember every one of them — the funny little men and the pretty little girls. Oh, you goose, you have lived with them all your life, and still you can't see them except when they want you to. But my eyes are different, and I can see them always. Here is one of them coming close to the carriage. It is the King. Yes, Your Majesty. What do you think he says, Terence? He says that they are never going to try to put my eyes out and are never going to do me any harm at all, and that I am never to be afraid of them."

Presently the people who were waiting outside the Cathedral saw John O'Brien and his mother come out and get into another carriage. "Shaun," said the old woman, "I'm wishing that poor Kitty — Heaven rest her soul! — could be here to-day."

“I was thinking that same, mother,” said John.

“I think she sees it all,” said his mother.

“I think so,” said John.

“Shaun,” said the old woman again, “isn’t it all as well as it could be? Isn’t my old King back with us, and isn’t it the luck of O’Donoghue that we’ve found again?”

15. WILLIAM ELLIOT GRIFFIS

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Entangled Mermaid
2. The Boy Who Wanted More Cheese
3. The Princess with Twenty Petticoats
4. The Cat and the Cradle
5. Prince Spin Head and Miss Snow White
6. The Boar with the Golden Bristles
7. The Ice King and His Wonderful Grandchild
8. The Elves and Their Antics
9. The Kabouters and the Bells
10. The Woman with Three Hundred and Sixty-Six Children
11. the Oni on His Travels
12. The Legend of the Wooden Shoe
13. The Curly-Tailed Lion
14. Brabo and the Giant
15. The Farm That Ran Away and Came Back
16. Santa Klaas and Black Pete
17. The Goblins Turned to Stone
18. The Mouldy Penny
19. The Golden Helmet
20. When Wheat Worked Woe
21. Why the Stork Loves Holland
22. The Meeting of the Star-Lovers
23. The Travels of Two Frogs
24. The Child of the Thunder
25. The Tongue-Cut Sparrow
26. The Fire-Fly’s Lovers

27. The Battle of the Ape and the Crab
28. The Wonderful Tea-Kettle
29. Peach-Prince, and the Treasure Island
30. The Fox and the Badger
31. The Seven Patrons of Happiness
32. Daikoku and the Oni
33. Benkei and the Bell
34. Little Silver’s Dream of the Shoji
35. The Tengus, or the Elves with Long Noses
36. Kintaro, or the Wild Baby
37. Jiraiya, or the Magic Frog
38. How the Jelly-Fish Lost Its Shell
39. Lord Cuttle-Fish Gives a Concert
40. Yorimasa, the Brave Archer
41. Watanabe Cuts Off the Oni’s Arm
42. Watanabe Kills the Great Spider
43. Raiko and the Shi-Ten Doji
44. The Sazayé and the Tai
45. Smells and Jingles
46. The Lake of the Lute and the Matchless Mountain
47. The Waterfall of Yoro, or the Fountain of Youth
48. The Earthquake Fish
49. The Dream Story of Gojiro
50. The Procession of Lord Long-Legs
51. Kiyohime, or the Power of Love
52. The Fisherman and the Moon-Maiden
53. The Jewels of the Ebbing and the Flowing Tide
54. Kai Riu O, the Dragon King of the World Under the Sea
55. The Creation of Heaven and Earth
56. How the Sun Goddess Was Enticed Out of Her Cave
57. Welsh Rabbit and Hunted Hares
58. The Mighty Monster Afang
59. The Two Cat Witches

60. How the Cymry Land Became Inhabited
61. The Boy That Was Named Trouble
62. The Golden Harp
63. The Great Red Dragon of Wales
64. The Touch of Clay
65. The Touch of Iron
66. The Maiden of the Green Forest
67. The Treasure Stone of the Fairies
68. Giant Tom and Giant Blubb
69. A Boy That Visited Fairyland
70. The Welshery and the Normans
71. The Welsh Fairies Hold a Meeting
72. King Arthur's Cave
73. The Lady of the Lake
74. The King's Foot Holder
75. Powell, Prince of Dyfed
76. Powell and His Bride
77. Why the Back Door Was Front
78. The Red Bandits of Montgomery
79. The Fairy Congress
80. The Sword of Avalon

PREFACE

GRIFFIS, WILLIAM ELLIOT

Born in Philadelphia in 1843, author William Elliot Griffis was an extremely prolific author and published several books of fairy tales in the 1900's. An active minister in the United States in the 1800's, he worked in several churches in Boston and New York, before retiring from ministry in 1903 to write and lecture. His extensive bibliography includes works about Japanese culture and heritage, and he helped author Inazo Nitobe write the renowned *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*.

As author and professor, his many trips to Europe, and especially the Netherlands, helped shape his appreciation of European cultures. Over the years, he would go on to publish collections of folklore from across the world, with titles such as *Japanese Fairy World: Thirty-five Stories from the Wonderlore of Japan*, *The Firefly's Lovers and Other Fairy Tales of Old Japan*, *Belgian Fairy Tales, Swiss Fairy Tales, Welsh Fairy Tales, Korean Fairy Tales* and *Japanese Fairy Tales*. Although he isn't as well known as Hans Christian Anderson, Griffis indeed contributed much to the world of folklore. He also received two Japanese orders (Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon) and (Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette), plus helped establish the National Institute of Arts and

Letters, the American Historical Association, and the U.S. Naval Academy, according to his obituary from the New York Times. He died in Florida in 1928.

1

THE ENTANGLED MERMAID

Long ago, in Dutch Fairy Land, there lived a young mermaid who was very proud of her good looks. She was one of a family of mere or lake folks dwelling not far from the sea. Her home was a great pool of water that was half salt and half fresh, for it lay around an island near the mouth of a river. Part of the day, when the sea tides were out, she splashed and played, dived and swam in the soft water of the inland current. When the ocean heaved and the salt water rushed in, the mermaid floated and frolicked and paddled to her heart's content. Her father was a gray-bearded merryman and very proud of his handsome daughter. He owned an island near the river mouth, where the young mermaids held their picnics and parties and received the visits of young merrymen.

Her mother and two aunts were merwomen. All of these were sober folks and attended to the business which occupies all well brought up mermaids and merrymen. This was to keep their pool clean and nice. No frogs, toads or eels were allowed near, but in the work of daily housecleaning, the storks and the mermaids were great friends.

All water-creatures that were not thought to be polite and well behaved were expected to keep away. Even some silly birds, such as loons and plovers and all screaming and fighting creatures with wings, were warned off the premises, because they were not wanted. This family of merry folks liked to have a nice, quiet time by themselves, without any rude folks on legs, or with wings or fins from the outside. Indeed they wished to make their pool a model, for all respectable mermaids and merrymen, for ten leagues around. It was very funny to see the old daddy merman, with a switch made of reeds, shooing off the saucy birds, such as the sandpipers and screeching gulls. For the bullfrogs, too big for the storks to swallow, and for impudent fishes, he had a whip made of seaweed.

Of course, all the mermaids in good society were welcome, but young mermen were allowed to call only once a month, during the week when the moon was full. Then the evenings were usually clear, so that when the party broke up, the mermen could see their way in the moonlight to swim home safely with their mermaid friends. For, there were sea monsters that loved to plague the merefolk, and even threatened to eat them up! The mermaids, dear creatures, had to be escorted home, but they felt safe, for their mermen brothers and daddies were so fierce that, except sharks, even the larger fish, such as porpoises and dolphins were afraid to come near them.

One day daddy and the mother left to visit some relatives near the island of Urk. They were to be gone several days. Meanwhile, their daughter was to have a party, her aunts being the chaperones.

The mermaids usually held their picnics on an island in the midst of the pool. Here they would sit and sun themselves. They talked about the fashions and the prettiest way to dress their hair. Each one had a pocket mirror, but where they kept these, while swimming, no mortal ever found out. They made wreaths of bright colored seaweed, orange and black, blue, gray and red and wore them on their brows like coronets. Or, they twined them, along with sea berries and bubble blossoms, among their tresses. Sometimes they made girdles of the strongest and knotted them around their waists.

Every once in a while they chose a queen of beauty for their ruler. Then each of the others pretended to be a princess. Their games and sports often lasted all day and they were very happy.

Swimming out in the salt water, the mermaids would go in quest of pearls, coral, ambergris and other pretty things. These they would bring to their queen, or with them richly adorn themselves. Thus the Mermaid Queen and her maidens made a court of beauty that was famed wherever mermaids and merrymen lived. They often talked about human maids.

“How funny it must be to wear clothes,” said one.

“Are they cold that they have to keep warm?” It was a little chit of a mermaid, whose flippers had hardly begun to grow into hands, that asked this question.

“How can they swim with petticoats on?” asked another.

“My brother heard that real men wear wooden shoes! These must bother them, when on the water, to have their feet floating,” said a third, whose name was Silver Scales. “What a pity they don’t have flukes like us,” and then she looked at her own glistening scaly coat in admiration.

“I can hardly believe it,” said a mermaid, that was very proud of her fine figure and slender waist. “Their girls can’t be half as pretty as we are.”

“Well, I should like to be a real woman for a while, just to try it, and see how it feels to walk on legs,” said another, rather demurely, as if afraid the other mermaids might not like her remark.

They didn’t. Out sounded a lusty chorus, “No! No! Horrible! What an idea! Who wouldn’t be a mermaid?”

“Why, I’ve heard,” cried one, “that real women have to work, wash their husband’s clothes, milk cows, dig potatoes, scrub floors and take care of calves. Who would be a woman? Not I” — and her snub nose — since it could not turn up — grew wide at the roots. She was sneering at the idea that a creature in petticoats could ever look lovelier than one in shining scales.

“Besides,” said she, “think of their big noses, and I’m told, too, that girls have even to wear hairpins.”

At this — the very thought that any one should have to bind up their tresses — there was a shock of disgust with some, while others clapped their hands, partly in envy and partly in glee.

But the funniest things the mermaids heard of were gloves, and they laughed heartily over such things as covers for the fingers. Just for fun, one of the little mermaids used to draw some bag-like seaweed over her hands, to see how such things looked.

One day, while sunning themselves in the grass on the island, one of their number found a bush on which foxgloves grew. Plucking these, she covered each one of her fingers with a red flower. Then, flopping over to the other girls, she held up her gloved hands. Half in fright and half in envy, they heard her story.

After listening, the party was about to break up, when suddenly a young merman splashed into view. The tide was running out and the stream low, so he had had hard work to get through the fresh water of the river and to the island. His eyes dropped salt water, as if he were crying. He looked tired, while puffing and blowing, and he could hardly get his breath. The queen of the mermaids asked him what he meant by coming among her maids at such an hour and in such condition. At this the bashful merman began to blubber. Some of the mergirls put their hands over their mouths to hide their laughing, while they winked at each other and their eyes showed how they enjoyed the fun. To have a merman among them, at that hour, in broad daylight, and crying, was too much for dignity.

“Boo-hoo, boo-hoo,” and the merman still wept salt water tears, as he tried to catch his breath. At last, he talked sensibly. He warned the Queen that a party of horrid men, in wooden shoes, with pickaxes, spades and pumps, were coming to drain the swamp and pump out the pool. He had heard that they would make the river a canal and build a dyke that should keep out the ocean.

“Alas! alas!” cried one mermaid, wringing her hands. “Where shall we go when our pool is destroyed? We can’t live in the ocean all the time.” Then she wept copiously. The salt water tears fell from her great round eyes in big drops.

“Hush!” cried the Queen. “I don’t believe the merman’s story. He only tells it to frighten us. It’s just like him.”

In fact, the Queen suspected that the merman’s story was all a sham and that he had come among her maids with a set purpose to run off with Silver Scales. She was one of the prettiest mermaids in the company, but very young, vain and frivolous. It was no secret that she and the merman were in love and wanted to get married.

So the Queen, without even thanking him, dismissed the swimming messenger. After dinner, the company broke up and the Queen retired to her cave to take a long nap! She was quite tired after entertaining so much company. Besides, since daddy and mother were away, and there were no beaus to entertain, since it was a dark night and no moon shining on the water, why need she get up early in the morning?

So the Mermaid Queen slept much longer than ever before. Indeed, it was not till near sunset the next day that she awoke. Then, taking her comb and mirror in hand, she started to swim and splash in the pool, in order to smooth out her tresses and get ready for supper.

But oh, what a change from the day before! What was the matter? All around her things looked different. The water had fallen low and the pool was nearly empty. The river, instead of flowing, was as quiet as a pond. Horrors! when she swam forward, what should she see but a dyke and fences! An army of horrid men had come, when she was asleep, and built a dam. They had fenced round the swamp and were actually beginning to dig sluices to drain the land. Some were at work, building a windmill to help in pumping out the water.

The first thing she knew she had bumped her pretty nose against the dam. She thought at once of escaping over the logs and into the sea. When she tried to clamber over the top and get through the fence, her hair got so entangled between the bars that she had to throw away her comb and mirror and try to untangle her tresses. The more she tried, the worse became the tangle. Soon her long hair was all twisted up in the timber. In vain were her struggles to escape. She was ready to die with fright, when she saw four horrid men rush up to seize her. She attempted to waddle away, but her long hair held her to the post and rails. Her modesty was so dreadfully shocked that she fainted away.

When she came to herself, she found she was in a big long tub. A crowd of curious little girls and boys were looking at her, for she was on show as a great curiosity. They were bound to see her and get their money's worth in looking, for they had paid a stiver (two cents) admission to the show. Again, before all these eyes, her modesty was so shocked that she gave one groan, flopped over and died in the tub.

Woe to the poor father and mother at Urk! They came back to find their old home gone. Unable to get into it, they swam out to sea, never stopping till they reached Spitzbergen.

What became of the body of the Mermaid Queen?

Learned men came from Leyden to examine what was now only a specimen, and to see how mermaids were made up. Then her skin was stuffed, and glass eyes put in, where her shining orbs had been. After this, her body was stuffed and mounted in the museum, that is, set up above a glass case and resting upon iron rods. Artists came to Leyden to make pictures of her and no fewer than nine noblemen copied her pretty form and features into their coats of arms. Instead of the Mermaid's Pool is now a cheese farm of fifty cows, a fine house and barn, and a family of pink-cheeked, yellow-haired children who walk and play in wooden shoes.

So this particular mermaid, all because of her entanglement in the fence, was more famous when stuffed than when living, while all her young friends and older relatives were forgotten.

2

THE BOY WHO WANTED MORE CHEESE

Klaas Van Bommel was a Dutch boy, twelve years old, who lived where cows were plentiful. He was over five feet high, weighed a hundred pounds, and had rosy cheeks. His appetite was always good and his mother declared his stomach had no bottom. His hair was of a color half-way between a carrot and a sweet potato. It was as thick as reeds in a swamp and was cut level, from under one ear to another.

Klaas stood in a pair of timber shoes, that made an awful rattle when he ran fast to catch a rabbit, or scuffed slowly along to school over the brick road of his village. In summer Klaas was dressed in a rough, blue linen blouse. In winter he wore woollen breeches as wide as coffee bags. They were called bell trousers, and in shape were like a couple of cow-bells turned upwards. These were buttoned on to a thick warm jacket. Until he was five years old, Klaas was dressed like his sisters. Then, on his birthday, he had boy's clothes, with two pockets in them, of which he was proud enough.

Klaas was a farmer's boy. He had rye bread and fresh milk for breakfast. At dinner time, beside cheese and bread, he was given a plate heaped with boiled potatoes. Into these he first plunged a fork and then dipped each round, white ball into a bowl of hot melted butter. Very quickly then did potato and butter disappear "down the red lane." At supper, he had bread and skim milk, left after the cream had been taken off, with a saucer, to make butter. Twice a week the children enjoyed a bowl of bonnyclabber or curds, with a little brown sugar sprinkled on the top. But at every meal there was cheese, usually in thin slices, which the boy thought not thick enough. When Klaas went to bed he usually fell asleep as soon as his shock of yellow hair touched the pillow. In summer time he slept till the birds began to sing, at dawn. In winter, when the bed felt warm and Jack Frost was lively, he often heard the cows talking, in their way, before he jumped out of his bag of straw, which served for a mattress. The Van Bommels were not rich, but everything was shining clean.

There was always plenty to eat at the Van Bommels' house. Stacks of rye bread, a yard long and thicker than a man's arm, stood on end in the corner of the cool, stone-lined basement. The loaves of dough were put in the oven once a week. Baking time was a great event at the Van Bommels' and no men-folks were allowed in the kitchen on that day, unless they were called in to help. As for the milk-pails and pans, filled or emptied, scrubbed or set in the sun every day to dry, and the cheeses, piled up in the pantry, they seemed sometimes enough to feed a small army.

But Klaas always wanted more cheese. In other ways, he was a good boy, obedient at home, always ready to work on the cow-farm, and diligent in school. But at the table he never had enough. Sometimes his father laughed and asked him if he had a well, or a cave, under his jacket.

Klaas had three younger sisters, Trintjé, Anneké and Saartjé; which is Dutch for Kate, Annie and Sallie. These, their fond mother, who loved them dearly, called her "orange blossoms"; but when at dinner, Klaas would keep on, dipping his potatoes into the hot butter, while others were all through, his mother would laugh and call him her Buttercup. But always Klaas wanted more cheese. When unusually greedy, she twitted him as a boy "worse than Butter-and-Eggs"; that is, as troublesome as the yellow and white plant, called toad-flax, is to the farmer — very pretty, but nothing but a weed.

One summer's evening, after a good scolding, which he deserved well, Klaas moped and, almost crying, went to bed in bad humor. He had teased each one of his sisters to give him her bit of cheese, and this, added to his own slice, made his stomach feel as heavy as lead.

Klaas's bed was up in the garret. When the house was first built, one of the red tiles of the roof had been taken out and another one, made of glass, was put in its place. In the morning, this gave the boy light to put on his clothes. At night, in fair weather, it supplied air to his room.

A gentle breeze was blowing from the pine woods on the sandy slope, not far away. So Klaas climbed up on the stool to sniff the sweet piny odors. He thought he saw lights dancing under the tree. One beam seemed to approach his roof hole, and coming nearer played round the chimney. Then it passed to and fro in front of him. It seemed to whisper in his ear, as it moved by. It looked very much as if a hundred fire-flies had united their cold light into one lamp. Then Klaas thought that the strange beams bore the shape of a lovely girl, but he only laughed at himself at the idea. Pretty soon, however, he thought the whisper became a voice. Again, he laughed so heartily, that he forgot his moping and the scolding his mother had given him. In fact, his eyes twinkled with delight, when the voice gave this invitation:

"There's plenty of cheese. Come with us."

To make sure of it, the sleepy boy now rubbed his eyes and cocked his ears. Again, the light-bearer spoke to him: "Come."

Could it be? He had heard old people tell of the ladies of the wood, that whispered and warned travellers. In fact, he himself had often seen the "fairies' ring" in the pine woods. To this, the flame-lady was inviting him.

Again and again the moving, cold light circled round the red tile roof, which the moon, then rising and peeping over the chimneys, seemed to turn into silver plates. As the disc rose higher in the sky, he could hardly see the moving light, that had looked like a lady; but the voice, no longer a whisper, as at first, was now even plainer:

“There’s plenty of cheese. Come with us.”

“I’ll see what it is, anyhow,” said Klaas, as he drew on his thick woolen stockings and prepared to go down-stairs and out, without waking a soul. At the door he stepped into his wooden shoes. Just then the cat purred and rubbed up against his shins. He jumped, for he was scared; but looking down, for a moment, he saw the two balls of yellow fire in her head and knew what they were. Then he sped to the pine woods and towards the fairy ring.

What an odd sight! At first Klaas thought it was a circle of big fire-flies. Then he saw clearly that there were dozens of pretty creatures, hardly as large as dolls, but as lively as crickets. They were as full of light, as if lamps had wings. Hand in hand, they flitted and danced around the ring of grass, as if this was fun.

Hardly had Klaas got over his first surprise, than of a sudden he felt himself surrounded by the fairies. Some of the strongest among them had left the main party in the circle and come to him. He felt himself pulled by their dainty fingers. One of them, the loveliest of all, whispered in his ear:

“Come, you must dance with us.”

Then a dozen of the pretty creatures murmured in chorus:

“Plenty of cheese here. Plenty of cheese here. Come, come!”

Upon this, the heels of Klaas seemed as light as a feather. In a moment, with both hands clasped in those of the fairies, he was dancing in high glee. It was as much fun as if he were at the kermiss, with a row of boys and girls, hand in hand, swinging along the streets, as Dutch maids and youth do, during kermiss week.

Klaas had not time to look hard at the fairies, for he was too full of the fun. He danced and danced, all night and until the sky in the east began to turn, first gray and then rosy. Then he tumbled down, tired out, and fell asleep. His head lay on the inner curve of the fairy ring, with his feet in the centre.

Klaas felt very happy, for he had no sense of being tired, and he did not know he was asleep. He thought his fairy partners, who had danced with him, were now waiting on him to bring him cheeses. With a golden knife, they sliced them off and fed him out of their own hands. How good it tasted! He thought now he could, and would, eat all the cheese he had longed for all his life. There was no mother to scold him, or daddy to shake his finger at him. How delightful!

But by and by, he wanted to stop eating and rest a while. His jaws were tired. His stomach seemed to be loaded with cannon-balls. He gasped for breath.

But the fairies would not let him stop, for Dutch fairies never get tired. Flying out of the sky — from the north, south, east and west — they came, bringing cheeses. These they dropped down around him, until the piles of the round masses threatened first to enclose him as with a wall, and then to overtop him. There were the red balls from Edam, the pink and yellow spheres from Gouda, and the gray loaf-shaped ones from Leyden. Down through the vista of sand, in the pine woods, he looked, and oh, horrors! There were the tallest and strongest of the fairies rolling along the huge, round, flat cheeses from Friesland! Any one of these was as big as a cart wheel, and would feed a regiment. The fairies trundled the heavy discs along, as if they were playing with hoops. They shouted hilariously, as, with a pine stick, they beat them forward like boys at play. Farm cheese, factory cheese, Alkmaar cheese, and, to crown all, cheese from Limburg — which Klaas never could bear, because of its strong odor. Soon the cakes and balls were heaped so high around him that the boy, as he looked up, felt like a frog in a well. He groaned when he thought the high cheese walls were tottering to fall on him. Then he screamed, but the fairies thought he was making music. They, not being human, do not know how a boy feels.

At last, with a thick slice in one hand and a big hunk in the other, he could eat no more cheese; though the fairies, led by their queen, standing on one side, or hovering over his head, still urged him to take more.

At this moment, while afraid that he would burst, Klaas saw the pile of cheeses, as big as a house, topple over. The heavy mass fell inwards upon him. With a scream of terror, he thought himself crushed as flat as a Friesland cheese.

But he wasn’t! Waking up and rubbing his eyes, he saw the red sun rising on the sand-dunes. Birds were singing and the cocks were crowing all around him, in chorus, as if saluting him. Just then also the village clock chimed out the hour. He felt his clothes. They were wet with dew. He sat up to look around. There were no fairies, but in his mouth was a bunch of grass which he had been chewing lustily.

Klaas never would tell the story of his night with the fairies, nor has he yet settled the question whether they left him because the cheese-house of his dream had fallen, or because daylight had come.

3

THE PRINCESS WITH TWENTY PETTICOATS

Long, long ago, before ever a blue flax-flower bloomed in Holland, and when Dutch mothers wore wolf-skin clothes, there was a little princess, very much beloved by her father, who was a great king, or war chief. She was very pretty and fond of seeing herself. There were no metal mirrors in those days, nor any looking glass. So she went into the woods and before the pools and the deep, quiet watercourses, made reflection of her own lovely face. Of this pleasure she never seemed weary.

Yet sometimes this little princess was very naughty. Then her temper was not nearly so sweet as her face. She would play in the sand and roll around in the woods among the leaves and bushes until her curls were all tangled up. When her nurse combed out her hair with a stone comb — for no other kinds were then known — she would fret and scold and often stamp her foot. When very angry, she called her nurse or governess an “aurochs,” — a big beast like a buffalo. At this, the maid put up her hands to her face. “Me — an aurochs! Horrible!” Then she would feel her forehead to see if horns were growing there.

The nurse — they called her “governess,” as the years went on — grew tired of the behavior of the bad young princess. Sometimes she went and told her mother how naughty her daughter was, even to calling her an aurochs. Then the little girl only showed her bad temper worse. She rolled among the leaves all the more and mussed up her ringlets, so that the governess could hardly comb them out smooth again.

It seemed useless to punish the perverse little maid by boxing her ears, pinching her arm, or giving her a good spanking. They even tried to improve her temper by taking away her dinner, but it did no good.

Then the governess and mother went together to her father. When they complained of his daughter to the king, he was much worried. He could fight strong men with his club and spear, and even giants with his sword and battle-axe; but how to correct his little daughter, whom he loved as his own eyes, was too much for him. He had no son and the princess was his only child, and the hopes of the family all rested on her. The king wondered how she would govern his people, after he should die, and she became the queen. Yet he was glad for one thing: that, with all her naughtiness, she was, like her father, always kind to animals. Her pet was a little aurochs calf. Some hunters had killed the mother of the poor little thing in winter time. So the princess kept the creature warm and it fed out of her hand daily.

It was in gloom and with a sad face that the king walked in the woods, thinking how to make a sweet-tempered lady out of his petulant daughter, who was fast growing up to be a tall, fine-looking woman.

Now when the king had been himself a little boy, he was very kind to all living creatures, wild and tame, dumb and with voice — yes, even to the trees in the forest. When a prince, the boy would never let the axe men cut down an oak until they first begged pardon of the fairy that lived in the tree.

There was one big oak, especially, which was near the mansion of his father, the king. It was said that the doctors found little babies in its leafy branches, and brought them to their mothers. The prince-boy took great care of this tree. He was taught by a wise man to cut off the dead limbs, keep off the worms, and warn away all people seeking to break off branches — even for Yule-tide, which came at our Christmas time.

Once when some hunters had chased a young she-aurochs, with her two calves, into the king’s park, the prince, though he was then only a boy, ran out and drove the rough fellows away. Then he sheltered and fed the aurochs family of three, until they were fresh and fat. After this he sent a skilled hunter to imitate the sound of an aurochs mother, to call the aurochs father to the edge of the woods. He then let them all go free, and was happy to see the dumb brutes frisking together.

Now that the boy-prince was grown to be a man and had long been king, and had forgotten all about the incident of his earlier years, he was one day walking in the forest.

Suddenly a gentle breeze arose and the leaves of the old oak tree began first to rustle and then to whisper. Soon the words were clear, and the spirit in the oak said:

“I have seen a thousand years pass by, since I was an acorn planted here. In a few moments I shall die and fall down. Cut my body into staves. Of these make a wooden petticoat, like a barrel, for your daughter. When her temper is bad, let her put it on and wear it until she promises to be good.”

The king was sad at the thought of losing the grand old tree, under which he had played as a boy and his fathers before him. His countenance fell.

“Cheer up, my friend,” said the oak, “for something better shall follow. When I pass away, you will find on this spot a blue flower growing. Where the forest was shall be fields, on which the sun shines. Then, if your daughter be good, young women shall spin something prettier than wooden petticoats. Watch for the blue flower. Moreover,” added the voice of the tree, “that I may not be forgotten, do you take, henceforth, as your family name Ten Eyck” (which, in Dutch, means “at the oak “).

At this moment, a huge aurochs rushed into the wood. Its long hair and shaggy mane were gray with age. The king, thinking the beast would lower his horns and charge at him, drew his sword to fight the mighty brute that seemed to weigh well-nigh a ton.

But the aurochs stopped within ten feet of the king and bellowed; but, in a minute or two, the bellowing changed to a voice and the king heard these good words:

“I die with the oak, for we are brothers, kept under an enchantment for a thousand years, which is to end in a few moments. Neither a tree nor an aurochs can forget your kindness to us, when you were a prince. As soon as our spirits are released, and we both go back to our home in the moon, saw off my right horn and make of it a comb for use on your daughter’s curls. It will be smoother than stone.”

In a moment a tempest arose, which drove the king for shelter behind some rocks hard by. After a few minutes, the wind ceased and the sky was clear. The king looked and there lay the oak, fallen at full length, and the aurochs lay lifeless beside it.

Just then, the king’s woodmen, who were out — thinking their master might be hurt — drew near. He ordered them to take out the right horn of the aurochs and to split up part of the oak for slaves. The next day, they made a wooden petticoat and a horn comb. They were such novelties that nearly every woman in the kingdom came to see them.

After this, the king called himself the Lord of the Land of Ten Eyck, and ever after this was his family name, which all his descendants bore. Whenever the princess showed bad temper, she was forced to wear the wooden petticoat. To have the boys and girls point at her and make fun of her was severe punishment.

But a curious thing took place. It was found that every time the maid combed the hair of the princess she became gentler and more sweet tempered. She often thanked her governess and said she liked to have her curls smoothed with the new comb. She even begged her father to let her own one and have the comb all to herself. It was not long before she surprised her governess and her parents by combing and curling her own hair. In truth, such a wonderful change came over the princess that she did not often have to wear the wooden petticoat, and after a year or two, not at all. So the gossips nearly forgot all about it.

One summer’s day, as the princess was walking in the open, sunny space, where the old oak had stood, she saw a blue flower. It seemed as beautiful as it was strange. She plucked it and put it in her hair. When she reached home, her old aunt, who had been in southern lands, declared it to be the flower of the flax.

During that spring, millions of tiny green blades sprang up where the forest had been, and when summer came, the plants were half a yard high. The women learned how to put the stalks in water and rot the coarse, outer fibre of the flax. Then they took the silk-like strands from the inside and spun them on their spinning-wheels. Then they wove them into pretty cloth.

This, when laid out on the grass, under the sunshine, was bleached white. The flax thread was made first into linen, and then into lace.

“Let us name the place Groen-e’-veld” (Green Field), the happy people cried, when they saw how green the earth was where had been the dark forest. So the place was ever after called the Green Field.

Now when the princess saw what pretty clothes the snow white linen made, she invented a new style of dress. The upper garment, or “rok,” that is, the one above the waist, she called the “boven rok” and the lower one, beneath the waist, her “beneden rok.” In Dutch “boven” means above and “beneden” means beneath. By and by, when, at the looms, more of the beautiful white linen was woven, she had a new petticoat made and put it on. She was so delighted with this one that she wanted more. One after the other, she belted them around her waist, until she had on twenty petticoats at a time. Proud she was of her skirts, even though they made her look like a barrel. When her mother, and maids, and all the women of Groen-é-veld, young and old, saw the princess set the fashion, they all followed. It was not always easy for poor girls, who were to be married, to buy as many as twenty petticoats. But, as it was the fashion, every bride had to obey the rule. It grew to be the custom to have at least twenty; for only this number was thought proper.

So, a new rule, even among the men, grew up. A betrothed young man, or his female relatives assisting him, was accustomed to make a present of one or more petticoats to his sweetheart to increase her wardrobe.

Thus the fashion prevailed and still holds among the women of the coast. Fat or thin, tall or short, they pile on the petticoats and swing their skirts proudly as they walk or go to market, sell their fish, cry "fresh herring" in the streets, or do their knitting at home, or in front of their houses. In some parts of the country, nothing makes a girl so happy as to present her with a new petticoat. It is the fashion to have a figure like a barrel and wear one's clothes so as to look like a small hogshead.

By and by, the men built a dam to get plenty of water in winter for the rotting of the flax stalks. The linen industry made the people rich. In time, a city sprang up, which they called Rotterdam, or the dam where they rotted the flax.

And, because where had been a forest of oaks, with the pool and rivulet, there was now a silvery stream flowing gently between verdant meadows, they made the arms and seal of the city green and white, two of the former and one of the latter; that is, verdure and silver. To this day, on the arms and flags of the great city, and on the high smoke-stacks of the mighty steamers that cross the ocean, from land to land, one sees the wide, white band between the two broad stripes of green.

4

THE CAT AND THE CRADLE

In the early ages, when our far-off ancestors lived in the woods, ate acorns, slept in caves, and dressed in the skins of wild animals, they had no horses, cows or cats. Their only pets and helpers were dogs. The men and the dogs were more like each other than they are now.

However, they knew about bees. So the women gathered honey and from it they made mead. Not having any sugar, the children enjoyed tasting honey more than anything else, and it was the only sweet thing they had.

By and by, cows were brought into the country and the Dutch soil being good for grass, the cows had plenty to eat. When these animals multiplied, the people drank milk and learned to make cheese and butter. So the Dutch boys and girls grew fat and healthy.

The oxen were so strong that they could pull logs of wood or draw a plough. So, little by little, the forests were cut down and grassy meadows, full of bright colored flowers, took their place. Houses were built and the people were rich and happy.

Yet there were still many cruel men and bad people in the land. Sometimes, too, floods came and drowned the cattle and covered the fields with sand, or salt water. In such times, food was very scarce. Thus it happened that not all the babies born could live, or every little child be fed.

The baby girls especially were often left to die, because war was common and only boys, that grew into strong warriors, were wanted.

It grew to be a custom that families would hold a council and decide whether the baby should be raised or not. But if any one should give the infant even a tiny drop of milk, or food of any kind, it was allowed to live and grow up. If no one gave it milk or honey, it died. No matter how much a mother might love her baby, she was not allowed to put milk to its lips, if the grandmother or elders forbade it. The young bride, coming into her husband's home, always had to obey his mother, for she was now as a daughter and one of the family. All lived together in one house, and the grandmother ruled all the women and girls that were under one roof.

This was the way of the world, when our ancestors were pagans, and not always as kind to little babies as our own mothers and fathers are now. Many times was the old grandmother angry, when her son had taken a wife and a girl was born. If the old woman expected a grandson, who should grow up and be a fighter, with sword and spear, and it turned out to be a girl, she was mad as fire. Often the pretty bride, brought into the house, had a hard time of it, with her husband's mother, if she did not in time have a baby boy. In those days a "Herman," a "War Man" and "German" were one and the same word.

Now when the good missionaries came into Friesland, one of the first of the families to receive the gospel was one named Altfrid. With his bride, who also became a Christian, Altfrid helped the missionary to build a church. By and by, a sweet little baby was born in the family and the parents were very happy. They loved the little thing sent from God, as fathers and mothers love their children now.

But when some one went and told the pagan grandmother that the new baby was a girl instead of a boy, the old woman flew into a rage and would have gone at once to get hold of the baby and put it to death. Her lameness, however, made her move slowly, and she could not find her crutch; for the midwife, who knew the bad temper of the grandmother, had purposely hid it. The old woman was angry, because she did not want any more females in the big house, where she thought there were already too many mouths to fill. Food was hard to get, and there were not enough war men to defend the tribe. She meant to get the new baby and throw it to the wolves. The old grandmother was a pagan and still worshipped the cruel gods that loved fighting. She hated the new religion, because it taught gentleness and peace.

But the midwife, who was a neighbor, feared that the old woman was malicious and she had hid her crutch. This she did, so that if the baby was a girl, she could save its life. The midwife was a good woman, who had been taught that the Great Creator loves little girls as well as boys.

So when the midwife heard the grandmother storm and rave, while hunting for her crutch, she ran first to the honey jar, dipped her forefinger in it and put some drops of honey on the baby’s tongue. Then she passed it out the window to some women friends, who were waiting outside. She knew the law, that if a child tasted food, it must be allowed to live.

The kind women took the baby to their home and fed it carefully. A hole was drilled in the small end of a cow’s horn and the warm milk, fresh from the cow, was allowed to fall, drop by drop, into the baby’s mouth. In a few days the little one was able to suck its breakfast slowly out of the horn, while one of the girls held it. So the baby grew bigger every day. All the time it was carefully hidden.

The foolish old grandmother was foiled, for she could never find out where the baby girl was, which all the time was growing strong and plump. Her father secretly made her a cradle and he and the babe’s mother came often to see their child. Every one called her Honig-je’, or Little Honey.

Now about this time, cats were brought into the country and the children made such pets of them that some of the cows seemed to be jealous of the attentions paid to Pussy and the kittens. These were the days when cows and people all lived under one long roof. The children learned to tell the time of day, whether it was morning, noon or night by looking into the cats' eyes. These seemed to open and shut, very much as if they had doors.

The fat pussy, which was brought into the house where Honig-je' was, seemed to be very fond of the little girl, and the two, the cat and the child, played much together. It was often said that the cat loved the baby even more than her own kittens. Every one called the affectionate animal by the nickname of Dub-belt-je', which means Little Double; because this puss was twice as loving as most cat mothers are. When her own furry little babies were very young, she carried them from one place to another in her mouth. But this way, of holding kittens, she never tried on the baby. She seemed to know better. Indeed, Dub-belt-je' often wondered why human babies were born so naked and helpless; for at an age when her kittens could feed themselves and run about and play with their tails and with each other, Honig-je' was not yet able to crawl.

But other dangers were in store for the little girl. One day, when the men were out hunting, and the women went to the woods to gather nuts and acorns, a great flood came. The waters washed away the houses, so that everything floated into the great river, and then down towards the sea.

What had, what would, become of our baby? So thought the parents of Honig-je', when they came back to find the houses swept away and no sign of their little daughter. Dub-belt-je' and her kittens, and all the cows, were gone too.

Now it had happened that when the flood came and the house crashed down, baby was sound asleep. The cat, leaving its kittens, that were now pretty well grown up, leaped up and on to the top of the cradle and the two floated off together. Pretty soon they found themselves left alone, with nothing in sight that was familiar, except one funny thing. That was a wooden shoe, in which was a fuzzy little yellow chicken hardly four days old. It had been playing in the shoe, when the floods came and swept it off from under the very beak of the old hen, that, with all her other chicks, was speedily drowned.

On and on, the raging flood bore baby and puss, until dark night came down. For hours more they drifted until, happily, the cradle was swept into an eddy in front of a village. There it spun round and round, and might soon have been borne into the greater flood, which seemed to roar louder as the waters rose.

Now a cat can see sometimes in the night, better even than in the day, for the darker it becomes, the wider open the eyes of puss. In bright sunshine, at noon, the inside doors of the cat's eyes close to a narrow slit, while at night these doors open wide. That is the reason why, in the days before clocks and watches were made, the children could tell about the time of day by looking at the cat's eyes. Sometimes they named their pussy Klok'-oog, which means Clock Eye, or Bell Eye, for bell clocks are older than clocks with a dial, and because in Holland the bells ring out the hours and quarter hours.

Puss looked up and saw the church tower looming up in the dark. At once she began to meouw and caterwaul with all her might. She hoped that some one in one of the houses near the river bank might catch the sound. But none seemed to hear or heed. At last, when Puss was nearly dead with howling, a light appeared at one of the windows. This showed that some one was up and moving. It was a boy, who was named Dirck, after the saint Theodoric, who had first, long ago, built a church in the village. Then Puss opened her mouth and lungs again and set up a regular cat-scream. This wakened all her other relatives in the village and every Tom and Kitty made answer, until there was a cat concert of meouws and caterwauls.

The boy heard, rushed down-stairs, and, opening the door, listened. The wind blew out his candle, but the brave lad was guided by the sound which Pussy made. Reaching the bank, he threw off his wooden klomps, plunged into the boiling waters, and, seizing the cradle, towed it ashore. Then he woke up his mother and showed her his prize. The way that baby laughed and crowed, and patted the horn of milk, and kicked up its toes in delight over the warm milk, which was brought, was a joy to see. Near the hearth, in the middle of the floor, Dub-belt-je’, the puss, was given some straw for a bed and, after purring joyfully, was soon, like the baby, sound asleep.

Thus the cat warned the boy, and the boy saved the baby, that was very welcome in a family where there were no girls, but only a boy. When Honig-je’ grew up to be a young woman, she looked as lovely as a princess and in the church was married to Dirck! It was the month of April and all the world was waking to flowers, when the wedding procession came out of the church and the air was sweet with the opening of the buds.

Before the next New Year’s day arrived, there lay in the same cradle, and put to sleep over the same rockers, a baby boy. When they brought him to the font, the good grandmother named him Luid-i-ger. He grew up to be the great missionary, whose name in Friesland is, even today, after a thousand years, a household word. He it was who drove out bad fairies, vile enchanters, wicked spirits and terrible diseases. Best of all, he banished “eye-bite,” which was the name the people gave to witchcraft. Luid-i-ger, also, made it hard for the naughty elves and sprites that delude men.

After this, it was easy for all the good spirits, that live in kind hearts and noble lives, to multiply and prosper. The wolves were driven away or killed off and became very few, while the cattle and sheep multiplied, until everybody could have a woollen coat, and there was a cow to every person in the land.

But the people still suffered from the floods, that from time to time drowned the cattle and human beings, and the ebb tides, that carried everything out to sea. Then the good missionary taught the men how to build dykes, that kept out the ocean and made the water of the rivers stay between the banks. The floods became fewer and fewer and at last rarely happened. Then Santa Klaas arrived, to keep alive in the hearts of the people the spirit of love and kindness and good cheer forever.

At last, when nearly a hundred years had passed away, Honig-je’, once the girl baby, and then the dear old lady, who was kind to everybody and prepared the way for Santa Klaas, died. Then, also, Dub-belt-je’ the cat, that had nine lives in one, died with her. They buried the old lady under the church floor and stuffed the pussy that everybody, kittens, boys, girls and people loved. By and by, when the cat’s tail and fur fell to pieces, and ears tumbled off, and its glass eyes dropped out, a skilful artist chiselled a statue of Dub-belt-je’, which still stands over the tomb in the church. Every year, on Santa Klaas day, December sixth, the children put a new collar around its neck and talk about the cat that saved a baby’s life.

5

PRINCE SPIN HEAD AND MISS SNOW WHITE

Long, long ago, before the Romans came into the land and when the fairies ruled in the forest, there was a maiden who lived under an oak tree. When she was a baby they called her Bundlekin. She had four brothers, who loved their younger sister very dearly and did everything they could to make her happy. Her fat father was a famous hunter. When he roamed the woods, no bear, wolf, aurochs, roebuck, deer, or big animal of any kind, could escape from his arrows, his spear, or his pit-trap. He taught his sons to be skilful in the chase, but also to be kind to the dumb creatures when captured. Especially when the mother beast was killed, the boys were always told to care for the cubs, whelps and kittens. As for the smaller animals, foxes, hares, weasels, rabbits and ermine, these were so numerous, that the father left the business of hunting them to the lads, who had great sport.

The house under the oak tree was always well provided with meat and furs. The four brothers brought the little animals, which they took in the woods, to make presents to their sister. So there was always a plenty of pets, bear and wolf cubs, wildcats' kittens and baby aurochs for the girl to play with. Every day, while the animals were so young as to be fed on milk, she enjoyed frolicking with the four-footed babies. When they grew bigger, she romped and sported with them, as if she and they were equal members of the same family. The older brother watched carefully, so that the little brutes, as they increased in size, should not bite or claw his sister, for he knew the fierce nature that was in wild creatures. Yet the maiden had wonderful power over these beasts of the forest, whether little or big. She was not very much afraid of them and often made them run, by looking at them hard in the eye.

While the girl made a pet of the animals, her parents made a pet of her. The mother prepared the skins of the wolves and bears, until these were very soft, keeping the fur on, to make rugs for the floor, and winter coats for her children. The hides of the aurochs sufficed for rougher use, but from what had once been the clothes of the fawn, the weasel, the rabbit, and the ermine, garments were made that were smooth enough to suit a baby's tender flesh. The forest folk wrapped their infants in swaddling hands made of these dressed pelts. After feeding the darling, a mother hung her baby up, warmly covered, to a tree branch. The cradle, which was a furry bag, was made of the same material and swung in the wind.

Bundlekin usually fell asleep right after she had had her breakfast. When she woke up crowing, the squirrels were playing all around her. She even learned to watch the spiders, spinning their houses of silk, without being afraid. When Bundlekin grew up, she always called this curious creature, that could make silk, Spin Head. She jokingly called it her lover, in remembrance of baby days. It was funny to see how deft the mother was with her needles, fashioned from bone, and her rough thread, which was made of the intestines of the deer. From her own childhood in the woods, Bundlekin's mother had been used to this kind of dressmaking. Now, when her daughter had grown, from babyhood and through her teens, to be a lovely maiden, fair of face and strong of limb, her sweet, unselfish parent was equal to new tasks. To the soft leather coats, made from the skins of fawns, martens, and weasels, she added trimmings of snow white ermine. Caps and mittens, cloaks for the body, and coverings for the feet, were fashioned to fit neatly. Fringes, here and there, were put on them, until her girl looked like a king’s daughter. In summer, the skins of birds and their feathers clothed her lightly, and with many and rich colors, while the forest flowers decked her hair.

In winter, in her white forest robes, the maiden, except for her rosy face and sparkling eyes, seemed as if she might have been born of the snow, or was a daughter of the northern ice god at Ulrum. And because she was so lovely, her parents changed her baby name and called her Dri’-fa, which means Snow White.

Yet, though no other girl in Gelderland equalled, and none, not even the princesses, excelled Snow White in beauty of face, form, or raiment, the maiden was not happy, even though many lovers came to her and offered to marry her. Some, as proof of their skill as hunters, brought the finest furs the forest furnished. Others showed their strength or fleetness of foot. Some bargained with the kabouters, or fairies of the mines, to bring them shining ore or precious gems which they offered to Snow White. Others, again, went afar to get strange wonders, amber and ambergris, from the seashores of the far north to please her. One fine fellow, who had been in the south and was proud of his travels, told her of what he had seen in the great cities, and offered her a necklace of pearls.

But all was in vain. Every lover went away sorrowful, for Snow White wearied of them and sent each one home, disappointed.

Last of all, among the lovers came a strange looking one, named Spin Head, resembling a spider, promising a secret worth more than furs, gold, gems, or necklace; but the mother, seeing the ugly creature, drove it off with hard words.

So the months and years passed, until her father feared he would not live to see his daughter a wife.

But one day, when all in the household were absent, the leaves of the oak tree rustled loudly. There was no wind, and Snow White, surprised, strained her ears to find out what this might mean. Soon she could make out these words:

“When the spider, that you called Spin Head, comes to make love to you, listen to him. He is the wisest being in all the forest. He knows the future. He will tell you a secret. I shall pass away, but what he teaches you shall live.”

Then the leaves of the oak ceased to rustle and all was quiet and still again.

While wondering what this message might mean, down came the real spider she had named Spin Head. He lowered himself from a tree branch, high above on a silken thread. The creature sat down on the log beside the maiden; but she was not in the least startled and did not scream nor run away. Indeed, she spoke to the spider as an old friend:

“Well, playmate of my babyhood, what have you to tell me?”

“I came to offer you my love. You need not marry me yet, but if you will let me spin a web in your room, I shall live there, and, by and by, reward you. Let me be in your sight always, and you will not be sorry for it.”

The maiden had no sooner agreed than a terrible tempest uprooted the oak and levelled the trees of the forest. In a moment more, a new and very beautiful house rose up out of the ground. It was as noble to look at as a palace. Near by was a garden, and one day when she walked in it, out of it sprang a blue flower, almost under her feet.

“Choose the best room for your own self,” said Spin Head, “and then show me my corner. After a hundred days, if you treat me kindly, I shall reveal the secret of that blue flower.”

Dri’-fa, the maiden, chose the sunniest room, and gave Spin Head the best corner, near the window and close to the ceiling. At once he began to weave a shining web for his own house. She wondered at such fine work, which no human weaver could excel, and why she was not able to spin silk out of her head, nor even with her fingers, like her strange lover. But the oak had promised that Spin Head would reveal a secret, and she was curious to know what it was. Like all girls, she was in a hurry to have the secret. To ease her impatience, Dri'-fa looked on, while Spin Head was thus busy at making his dwelling place, with shining threads which he spun out, never ceasing. She was so intent upon watching him that night came down before she noticed that her room was not furnished. There was not even a bed to sleep on.

Spin Head looked at her closely and then spoke with a deep voice, like a man's:

"Ah, I know, you want a bed, and pretty things for your room."

In another moment, soft furs lined the floor, and soon all that Dri'-fa had possessed in the forest for comfort she had now, and more. Lost in wonder as she was, in a few minutes she was fast asleep.

She dreamed she wore a dress of some strange, new, white fabric, such as her people had never seen before. Instead of being close in texture, like the skin of an animal, it was as open work, full of thousands of little holes, yet strongly held together. It was light and gauzy, like a silvery spider's web on the summer grass before sunrise, when pearly with dewdrops.

The hundred days were passing swiftly by, and Spin Head and Snow White had become fast friends. Each lived in a different world — a world within a world. She was waiting for the secret he would tell her. She bravely resolved not to be impatient, but let Spin Head speak first.

One day, when autumn had come and she was lonely, she sauntered out into the garden. The chill winds were blowing and the leaves falling, till they covered the ground like a yellow carpet. One fell into her hand, as if it bore words of friendly greeting. Yet, though she waited, not one of the millions of them brought a message to her! Never a word had she ever heard from her parents and brothers! The blue flower had long ago fallen away and there was nothing in its place but a hard, rough, black stalk. Then she said to herself:

“Is there anything in this ugly stick? How will Spin Head reveal his secret?” Never had she been so cast down.

Again the tempest howled. All the winds of heaven seemed to have broken loose. Many a sturdy oak lay prostrate. The leaves darkened the air, so that Snow White could see nothing. Then there was a great calm. The maid cleared her sight, and lo! there, beside her, stood a youth, more beautiful than any of her brothers, or her lovers, or any man she had ever seen. He was dressed in fine white clothing, excelling in its texture any skin of fawn, or animal of the forest. Instead of being leather, however soft, it seemed woven of a multitude of threads. In his hand he held the black stalk of what had been the blue flower.

“I am Spin Head,” he said. “The hundred days are over. The spell is broken and my deliverance from enchantment has come. I bring to you, as my gift, this ugly stalk, on which the blue flower bloomed.”

Between surprise at the change of Spin Head from a spider to a handsome youth, and disappointment at such a present offered her, Snow White was dumb. She could hardly draw her breath. Was that all?

“Break it open,” said Spin Head.

Splitting the stalk from end to end, the maiden was surprised to find inside many long silky fibres, almost as fine as the strands in a spider’s web. She pulled them out and her eyes danced with joy.

“Plant the seed and let the blue flowers blossom by the million,” said the youth. “Then gather the stalks and, from the fibres, weave them together and make this. The black rod is a sceptre of wealth.”

Then, separating the delicate strands one by one, Spin Head wove them together. The result was a rich robe, of a snow white fabric, never seen in the forest. It was linen.

Snow White clapped her hands with joy.

"'Tis for your wedding dress, if you will marry me," said Spin Head.

Snow White's cheeks blushed red, but she looked at him and her eyes said "yes."

"Wait," said Spin Head. "I'll make you a bridal veil."

Once more his fingers wrought wonders. He produced yards of a gauzy, open work stuff. He made it float in the air first. Then he threw it over her head. It trailed down her back and covered her rosy face. It was lace.

Happily married, they left the forest and travelled into the land where the blue flax flowers made a new sky on the earth. Soon on the map men read the names of cities unknown before. At a time when Europe had no such masses of happy people, joyous in their toil, Courtrai, Tournay, Ypres, Ghent, and Bruges told what the blue flower of the flax had done for the country. More than gold, gems, or the wealth of forest or mine, was the gift of Spin Head to Snow White, for the making of Belgic Land.

6

THE BOAR WITH THE GOLDEN BRISTLES

Long, long ago, there were brave fighters and skilful hunters in Holland, but neither men nor women ever dreamed that food was to be got out of the ground, but only from the trees and bushes, such as berries, acorns and honey. They thought the crust of the earth was too hard to be broken up for seed, even if they knew what grain and bread were. They supposed that what nature provided in the forest was the only food for men. Besides this, they made their women do all the work and cook the acorns and brew the honey into mead, while they went out to fish and hunt and fight.

So the fairies took pity on the cold, northern people, who lived where it rained and snowed a great deal. They held a council and agreed that it was time to send down to the earth an animal, with tusks, to tear up the ground. Then the people would see the riches of the earth and learn what soil was. They would be blessed with farms and gardens, barns and stalls, hay and grain, horses and cattle, wheat and barley, pigs and clover.

Now there were powerful fairies, of a certain kind, who lived in a Happy Land far, far away, who had charge of everything in the air and water. One of them was named Fro, who became lord of the summer sunshine and warm showers, that make all things grow. It was in this bright region that the white elves lived.

It was a pretty custom in fairy-land that when a fairy baby cut its first tooth, the mother’s friends should make the little one some pretty present.

When Nerthus, the mother of the infant Fro, looked into its mouth and saw the little white thing that had come up through the baby’s gums, she went in great glee and told the glad news to all the other fairies. It was a great event and she tried to guess what present her wonderful boy-baby should receive.

There was one giant-like fairy as strong as a polar bear, who agreed to get, for little Fro, a creature that could put his nose under the sod and root up the ground. In this way he would show men what the earth, just under its surface, contained, without their going into mines and caverns.

One day this giant fairy heard two stout dwarfs talking loudly in the region under the earth. They were boasting as to which could beat the other at the fire and bellows, for both were blacksmiths. One was the king of the dwarfs, who made a bet that he could excel the other. So he set them to work as rivals, while a third dwarf worked the bellows. The dwarf-king threw some gold in the flames to melt; but, fearing he might not win the bet, he went away to get other fairies to help him. He told the bellows dwarf to keep on pumping air on the fire, no matter what might happen to him.

So when one giant fairy, in the form of a gadfly, flew at him, and bit him in the hand, the bellows-blower did not stop for the pain, but kept on until the fire roared loudly, as to make the cavern echo. Then all the gold melted and could be transformed. As soon as the dwarf-king came back, the bellows-blower took up the tongs and drew out of the fire a boar having golden bristles.

This fire-born golden boar had the power of travelling through the air as swiftly as a streak of lightning. It was named Gullin, or Golden, and was given to the fairy Fro, and he, when grown, used the wonderful creature as his steed. All the other good fairies and the elves rejoiced, because men on the earth would now be helped to do great things.

Even more wonderful to tell, this fire-born creature became the father of all the animals that have tusks and that roam in the woods. A tusk is a big tooth, of which the hardest and sharpest part grows, long and sharp, outside of the mouth and it stays there, even when the mouth is shut.

When Gullin was not occupied, or being ridden by Fro on his errands over the world, he taught his sons, that is, the wild boars of the forest, how to root up the ground and make it soft for things to grow in. Then his master Fro sent the sunbeams and the warm showers to make the turned-up earth fruitful.

To do this, the wild boars were given two long tusks, as pointed as needles and sharp as knives. With one sweep of his head a boar could rip open a dog or a wolf, a bull or a bear, or furrow the earth like a ploughshare.

Now there were several cousins in the Tusk family. The elephant on land, and the walrus and narwhal in the seas; but none of these could plough ground, but because the boar's tusks grew out so long and were so sharp, and hooked at the end, it could tear open the earth's hard crust and root up the ground. This made a soil fit for tender plants to grow in, and even the wild flowers sprang up in them.

All this, when they first noticed it, was very wonderful to human beings. The children called one to the other to come and see the unusual sight. The little troughs, made first by the ripping of the boar's tusks, were widened by rooting with their snouts. These were welcomed by the birds, for they hopped into the lines thus made, to feed on the worms. So the birds, supposing that these little gutters in the ground were made especially for them, made great friends with the boars. They would even perch near by, or fly to their backs, and ride on them.

As for the men fathers, when they looked at the clods and the loose earth thus turned over, they found them to be very soft. So the women and girls were able to break them up with their sticks. Then the seeds, dropped by the birds that came flying back every spring time, from far-away lands, sprouted. It was noticed that new kinds of plants grew up, which had stalks. In the heads or ears of these were a hundredfold more seeds. When the children tasted them, they found, to their delight, that the little grains were good to eat. They swallowed them whole, they roasted them at the fire, or they pounded them with stones. Then they baked the meal thus made or made it into mush, eating it with honey.

For the first time people in the Dutch world had bread. When they added the honey, brought by the bees, they had sweet cakes with mead. Then, saving the seeds over, from one summer to another, they in the spring time planted them in the little trenches made by the animal’s tusks. Then the Dutch words for “boar” and “row” were put together, meaning boar row, and there issued, in time, our word “furrow.”

The women were the first to become skilful in baking. In the beginning they used hot stones on which to lay the lump of meal, or flour and water, or the batter. Then having learned about yeast, which “raised” the flour, that is, lifted it up, with gas and bubbles, they made real bread and cakes and baked them in the ovens which the men had made. When they put a slice of meat between upper and lower layers of bread, they called it “broodje,” that is, little bread; or, sandwich. In time, instead of one kind of bread, or cake, they had a dozen or twenty different sorts, besides griddle cakes and waffles.

Now when the wise men of the mark, or neighborhood, saw that the women did such wonderful things, they put their heads together and said one to the other:

“We are quite ready to confess that fairies, and elves, and even the kabouters are smarter than we are. Our women, also, are certainly wonderful; but it will never do to let the boars think that they know more than we do. They did indeed teach us how to make furrows, and the birds brought us grain; but we are the greater, for we can hunt and kill the boars with our spears.

“Although they can tear up the sod and root in the ground with tusk and snout, they cannot make cakes, as our women can. So let us see if we cannot beat both the boars and birds, and even excel our women. We shall be more like the fairies, if we invent something that will outshine them all.”

So they thought and planned, and, little by little, they made the plough. First, with a sharp stick in their hands, the men scratched the surface of the ground into lines that were not very deep. Then they nailed plates of iron on those sticks. Next, they fixed this iron-shod wood in a frame to be pulled forward, and, by and by, they added handles. Men and women, harnessed together, pulled the plough. Indeed it was ages before they had oxen to do this heavy work for them. At last the perfect plough was seen. It had a knife in front to cut the clods, a coulter, a beam, a mould board and handles, and, after a while, a wheel to keep it straight. Then they set horses to draw it.

Fro the fairy was the owner, not only of the boar with the golden bristles, but also of the lightning-like horse, Sleipnir, that could ride through fire and water with the speed of light. Fro also owned the magic ship, which could navigate both land and sea. It was so very elastic that it could be stretched out to carry a host of warriors over the seas to war, or fold up like a lady’s handkerchief. With this flying vessel, Fro was able to move about like a cloud and also to change like them. He could also appear, or disappear, as he pleased, in one place or another.

By and by, the wild boars were all hunted to death and disappeared. Yet in one way, and a glorious one also, their name and fame were kept in men’s memories. Brave knights had the boar’s head painted on their shields and coats of arms. When the faith of the Prince of Peace made wars less frequent, the temples in honor of Fro were deserted, but the yule log and the revels, held to celebrate the passing of the Mother Night, in December, that is, the longest one of the year, were changed for the Christmas festival.

Then again, the memory of man’s teacher of the plough was still kept green; for the boar was remembered as the giver, not only of nourishing meat, but of ideas for men’s brains. Baked in the oven, and made delightful to the appetite, served on the dish, with its own savory odors; withal, decorated with sprigs of rosemary, the boar’s head was brought in for the great dinner, with the singing of Christmas carols.

7

THE ICE KING AND HIS WONDERFUL GRANDCHILD

In the far-off ages, all the lands of northern Europe were one, for the deep seas had not yet separated them. Then our forefathers thought that fairies were gods. They built temples in their honor, and prayed to them. Then, in the place where is now the little town of Ulrum in Friesland was the home of the spirit in the ice, Uller. That is what Ulrum means, the home of the good fairy Uller.

Uller was the patron of boys and girls. They liked him, because he invented skates and sleds and sleighs. He had charge of things in winter and enjoyed the cold. He delighted also in hunting. Dressed in thick furs, he loved to roam over the hills and through the forests, seeking out the wolf, the bear, the deer, and the aurochs. His bow and arrows were terrible, for they were very big and he was a sure shot. Being the patron of archery, hunters always sought his favor. The yew tree was sacred to Uller, because the best bows were made from its wood. No one could cut down a yew tree without angering Uller.

Nobody knew who Uller’s father was, and if he knew himself, he did not care to tell any one. He would not bestow many blessings upon mankind; yet thousands of people used to come to Ulrum every year to invoke his aid and ask him to send a heavy fall of snow to cover the ground. That meant good crops of food for the next year. The white snow, lying thick upon the ground, kept back the frost giants from biting the earth too hard. Because of deep winter snows, the ground was soft during the next summer. So the seed sprouted more easily and there was plenty to eat.

When Uller travelled over the winter snow, to go out on hunting trips, he strapped snow-shoes on his feet. Because these were shaped like a warrior's shield, Uller was often called the shield-god. His protection was especially invoked by men who fought duels with sword or spear, which were very common in early days; or by soldiers or hunters, who wished to be very brave, or had engaged in perilous ventures.

Now when Uller wanted a wife to marry him, he made love to Skadi, because she was a huntress and liked the things which he liked. So they never had a quarrel. She was very strong, fond of sports, and of chasing the wild animals. She wore a short skirt, which allowed freedom of motion to her limbs. Then she ranged over the hills and valleys with wonderful swiftness. So rapid were her movements that many people likened her to the cold mountain stream, that leaps down from the high peaks and over the rocks, foaming and dashing to the lowlands. They gave the same name to both this fairy woman and the water, because they were so much alike.

Indeed Skadi was very lovely to look at. It was no wonder that many of the gods, fairies and men fell in love with her. It is even said that she had had several husbands before marrying Uller. When you look at her pictures, you will see that she was as pretty as bright winter itself, when Jack Frost clothes the trees with white and makes the cheeks of the girls so rosy. She wore armor of shining steel, a silver helmet, short white skirts and white fur leggings. Her snow-shoes were of the hue of winter. Besides a glittering spear, she had a bow and sharp arrows. These were held in a silver quiver slung over her shoulders. Altogether, she looked like winter alive. She loved to live in the mountains, and hear the thunders of cataracts, the crash of avalanches, the moaning of the winds in the pine forests. Even the howling of wolves was music in her ears. She was afraid of nothing.

Now from such a father and mother one would expect wonderful children, yet very much like their parents. It turned out that the offspring of Uller and Skadi were all daughters. To them — one after another — were given the names meaning Glacier, Cold, Snow, Drift, Snow Whirl, and Snow Dust, the oldest being the biggest and hardiest. The others were in degree softer and more easily influenced by the sun and the wind. They all looked alike, so that some people called them the Six White Sisters.

Yet they were all so great and powerful that many considered them giantesses. It was not possible for men to tame them, for they did very much as they pleased. No one could stop their doings or drive them away, except Woden, who was the god of the sun. Yet in winter, even he left off ruling the world and went away. During that time, that is, during seven months, Uller took Woden’s throne and governed the affairs of the world. When summer came, Uller went with his wife up to the North Pole; or they lived in a house, on the top of the Alps. There they could hunt and roam on their snow-shoes. To these cold places, which the whole family enjoyed, their daughters went also and all were very happy so far above the earth.

Things went on pleasantly in Uller’s family so long as his daughters were young, for then the girls found enough to delight in at their daily play. But when grown up and their heads began to be filled with notions about the young giants, who paid visits to them, then the family troubles began.

There was one young giant fairy named Vuur, who came often to see all six of Uller’s daughters, from the youngest to the oldest. Yet no one could tell which of them he was in love with, or could name the girl he liked best; no, not even the daughters themselves. His character and his qualities were not well known, for he put on many disguises and appeared in many places. It was believed, however, that he had already done a good deal of mischief and was likely to do more, for he loved destruction. Yet he often helped the kabouter dwarfs to do great things; so that showed he was of some use. In fact he was the fire fairy. He kept on, courting all the six sisters, long after

May day came, and he lengthened his visits until the heat turned the entire half dozen of them into water. So they became one.

At this, Uller was so angry at Vuur's having delayed so long before popping the question, and at his daughters' losing their shapes, that he made Vuur marry them all and at once, they taking the name of Regen.

Now when the child of Vuur and Regen was born, it turned out to be, in body and in character, just what people expected from such a father and mother. It was named in Dutch, Stoom. It grew fast and soon showed that it was as powerful as its parents had been; yet it was much worse, when shut up, than when allowed to go free in the air. Stoom loved to do all sorts of tricks. In the kitchen, it would make the iron kettle lid flop up and down with a lively noise. If it were confined in a vessel, whether of iron or earthenware, when set over the fire, it would blow the pot or kettle all to pieces, in order to get out. Thinking itself a great singer, it would make rather a pleasant sound, when its mother let it come out of a spout. Yet it never obeyed either of its parents. When they tried to shut up Stoom inside of anything, it always escaped with a terrible sound. In fact, nothing could long hold it in, without an explosion.

Sometimes Stoom would go down into the bowels of the earth and turn on a stream of water so as to meet the deep fires which are ever burning far down below us. Then there would come an awful earthquake, because Stoom wanted to get out, and the earth crust would not let him, but tried to hold him down. Sometimes Stoom slipped down into a volcano's mouth. Then the mountain, in order to save itself from being choked, had to spit Stoom out, and this always made a terrible mess on the ground, and men called it lava. Or, Stoom might stay down in the crater as a guest, and quietly come out, occasionally, in jets and puffs.

Even when Jack Frost was around and froze the pipes in the house, or turned the water of the pots, pans, kettles and bottles into solid ice, Stoom behaved very badly. If the frozen kettles, or any other closed vessel were put over the stove, or near the fire, and the ice melted at the bottom too fast, Stoom would blow the whole thing up. In this way, he often put men’s lives in danger and made them lose their property.

No one seemed to know how to handle this mischievous fairy. Not one man on earth could do anything with him. So they let him have his own way. Yet all the time, though he was enjoying his own tricks and lively fun, he was, with his own voice, calling on human beings to use him properly, and harness him to wheels; for he was willing to be useful to them, and was all ready to pull or drive, lift or lower, grind or pump, as the need might be.

As long as men did not treat him properly and give him the right to get out into the air, after he had done his work, Stoom would explode, blow up and destroy everything. He could be made to sing, hiss, squeal, whistle, and make all kinds of sounds, but, unless the bands that held him in were strong enough, or if Vuur got too hot, or his mother would not give him drink enough, when the iron pipes were red with heat, he would lose his temper and explode. He had no respect for bad or neglected boilers, or for lazy or careless firemen and engineers.

Yet properly harnessed and treated well, and fed with the food such as his mother can give, and roused by his father’s persuasion, Stoom is greater than any giant or fairy that ever was. He can drive a ship, a locomotive, a submarine, or an aeroplane, as fast as Fro’s boar, horse or ship. Everybody to-day is glad that Stoom is such a good servant and friend all over the world.

8

THE ELVES AND THEIR ANTICS

8. The Elves and Their Antics

THE ELVES ARE the little white creatures that live between heaven and earth. They are not in the clouds, nor down in the caves and mines, like the kabouters. They are bright and fair, dwelling in the air, and in the world of light. The direct heat of the sun is usually too much for them, so they are not often seen during the day, except towards sunset. They love the silvery moonlight. There used to be many folks, who thought they had seen the beautiful creatures, full of fun and joy, dancing hand in hand, in a circle.

In these old days, long since gone by, there were more people than there are now, who were sure they had many times enjoyed the sight of the elves. Some places in Holland show, by their names, where this kind of fairies used to live. These little creatures, that looked as thin as gauze, were very lively and mischievous, though they often helped honest and hard working people in their tasks, as we shall see. But first and most of all, they were fond of fun. They loved to vex cross people and to please those who were bonnie and blithe. They hated misers, but they loved the kind and generous.

These little folks usually took their pleasure in the grassy meadows, among the flowers and butterflies. On bright nights they played among the moonbeams.

There were certain times when the elves were busy, in such a way as to make men and girls think about them. Then their tricks were generally in the stable, or in the field among the cows. Sometimes, in the kitchen or dairy, among the dishes or milk-pans, they made an awful mess for the maids to clean up. They tumbled over the churns, upset the milk jugs, and played hoops with the round cheeses. In a bedroom they made things look as if the pigs had run over them.

When a farmer found his horse’s mane twisted into knots, or two cows with their tails tied together, he said at once, “That’s the work of elves.” If the mares did not feel well, or looked untidy, their owners were sure the elves had taken the animals out and had been riding them all night. If a cow was sick, or fell down on the grass, it was believed that the elves had shot an arrow into its body. The inquest, held on many a dead calf or its mother, was, that it died from an “elf-shot.” They were so sure of this, that even when a stone arrow head — such as our far-off ancestors used in hunting, when they were cave men — was picked up off the ground, it was called an “elf bolt,” or “elf-arrow.”

Near a certain village named Elf-berg or Elf Hill, because there were so many of the little people in that neighborhood, there was one very old elf, named Styf, which means Stiff, because though so old he stood up straight as a lance. Even more than the young elves, he was famous for his pranks. Sometimes he was nicknamed Haan-e’-kam or Cock’s Comb. He got this name, because he loved to mock the roosters, when they crowed, early in the morning. With his red cap on, he did look like a rooster. Sometimes he fooled the hens, that heard him crowing. Old Styf loved nothing better than to go to a house where was a party indoors. All the wooden shoes of the twenty or thirty people within, men and women, girls and boys, would be left outside the door. All good Dutch folks step out of their heavy timber shoes, or klomps, before they enter a house. It is always a curious sight, at a country church, or gathering of people at a party, to see the klomps, big and little, belonging to baby boys and girls, and to the big men, who wear a number thirteen shoe of wood. One wonders how each one of the owners knows his own, but he does. Each pair is put in its own place, but Old Styf would come and mix them all up together, and then leave them in a pile. So when the people came out to go home, they had a terrible time in finding and sorting out their shoes. Often they scolded each other; or, some innocent boy was blamed for the mischief. Some did not find out, till the next day, that they had on one foot their own, and on another foot, their neighbor's shoe. It usually took a week to get the klomps sorted out, exchanged, and the proper feet into the right shoes. In this way, which was a special trick with him, this naughty elf, Styf, spoiled the temper of many people.

Beside the meadow elves, there were other kinds in Elfin Land; some living in the woods, some in the sand-dunes, but those called Staalkaars, or elves of the stall, were Old Styf's particular friends. These lived in stables and among the cows. The Moss Maidens, that could do anything with leaves, even turning them into money, helped Styf, for they too liked mischief. They teased men-folks, and enjoyed nothing better than misleading the stupid fellows that fuddled their brains with too much liquor.

Styf's especially famous trick was played on misers. It was this. When he heard of any old fellow, who wanted to save the cost of candles, he would get a kabouter to lead him off in the swamps, where the sooty elves come out, on dark nights, to dance. Hoping to catch these lights and use them for candles, the mean fellow would find himself in a swamp, full of water and chilled to the marrow. Then the kabouters would laugh loudly.

Old Styf had the most fun with another stingy fellow, who always scolded children when he found them spending a penny. If he saw a girl buying flowers, or a boy giving a copper coin for a waffle, he talked roughly to them for wasting money. Meeting this miser one day, as he was walking along the brick road, leading from the village, Styf offered to pay the old man a thousand guilders, in exchange for four striped tulips, that grew in his garden. The miser, thinking it real silver, eagerly took the money and put it away in his iron strong box. The next night, when he went, as he did three times a week, to count, and feel, and rub, and gloat, over his cash, there was nothing but leaves in a round form. These, at his touch, crumbled to pieces. The Moss Maidens laughed uproariously, when the mean old fellow was mad about it.

But let no one suppose that the elves, because they were smarter than stupid human beings, were always in mischief. No, no! They did, indeed, have far more intelligence than dull grown folks, lazy boys, or careless girls; but many good things they did. They sewed shoes for poor cobblers, when they were sick, and made clothes for children, when the mother was tired. When they were around, the butter came quick in the churn.

When the blue flower of the flax bloomed in Holland, the earth, in spring time, seemed like the sky. Old Styf then saw his opportunity to do a good thing. Men thought it a great affair to have even coarse linen tow for clothes. No longer need they hunt the wolf and deer in the forest, for their garments. By degrees, they learned to make finer stuff, both linen for clothes and sails for ships, and this fabric they spread out on the grass until the cloth was well bleached. When taken up, it was white as the summer clouds that sailed in the blue sky. All the world admired the product, and soon the word “Holland” was less the name of a country, than of a dainty fabric, so snow white, that it was fit to robe a queen. The world wanted more and more of it, and the Dutch linen weaver grew rich. Yet still there was more to come.

Now, on one moonlight night in summer, the lady elves, beautiful creatures, dressed in gauze and film, with wings to fly and with feet that made no sound, came down into the meadows for their fairy dances. But when, instead of green grass, they saw a white landscape, they wondered, Was it winter?

Surely not, for the air was warm. No one shivered, or was cold. Yet there were whole acres as white as snow, while all the old fairy rings, grass and flowers were hidden.

They found that the meadows had become bleaching grounds, so that the cows had to go elsewhere to get their dinner, and that this white area was all linen. However, they quickly got over their surprise, for elves are very quick to notice things. But now that men had stolen a march on them, they asked whether, after all, these human beings had more intelligence than elves. Not one of these fairies but believed that men and women were the inferiors of elves.

So, then and there, began a battle of wits.

“They have spoiled our dancing floor with their new invention; so we shall have to find another,” said the elfin queen, who led the party.

“They are very proud of their linen, these men are; but, without the spider to teach them, what could they have done? Even a wild boar can instruct these human beings. Let us show them, that we, also, can do even more. I’ll get Old Styf to put on his thinking cap. He’ll add something new that will make them prouder yet.”

“But we shall get the glory of it,” the elves shouted in chorus. Then they left off talking and began their dances, floating in the air, until they looked, from a distance, like a wreath of stars.

The next day, a procession of lovely elf maidens and mothers waited on Styf and asked him to devise something that would excel the invention of linen; which, after all, men had learned from the spider.

“Yes, and they would not have any grain fields, if they had not learned from the wild boar,” added the elf queen.

Old Styf answered “yes” at once to their request, and put on his red thinking cap. Then some of the girl elves giggled, for they saw that he did, really, look like a cock’s comb. “No wonder they called him Haan-e’-kam,” said one elf girl to the other.

Now Old Styf enjoyed fooling, just for the fun of it, and he taught all the younger elves that those who did the most work with their hands and head, would have the most fun when they were old.

First of all, he went at once to see Fro, the spirit of the golden sunshine and the warm summer showers, who owned two of the most wonderful things in the world. One was his sword, which, as soon as it was drawn out of its sheath, against wicked enemies, fought of its own accord and won every battle. Fro’s chief enemies were the frost giants, who wilted the flowers and blasted the plants useful to man. Fro was absent, when Styf came, but his wife promised he would come next day, which he did. He was happy to meet all the elves and fairies, and they, in turn, joyfully did whatever he told them. Fro knew all the secrets of the grain fields, for he could see what was in every kernel of both the stalks and the ripe ears. He arrived, in a golden chariot, drawn by his wild boar which served him instead of a horse. Both chariot and boar drove over the tops of the ears of wheat, and faster than the wind.

The Boar was named Gullin, or Golden Bristles because of its sunshiny color and splendor. In this chariot, Fro had specimens of all the grains, fruits, and vegetables known to man, from which Styf could choose, for these he was accustomed to scatter over the earth.

When Styf told him just what he wanted to do, Fro picked out a sheaf of wheat and whispered a secret in his ear. Then he drove away, in a burst of golden glory, which dazzled even the elves, that loved the bright sunshine. These elves were always glad to see the golden chariot coming or passing by.

Styf also summoned to his aid the kabouters, and, from these ugly little fellows, got some useful hints; for they, dwelling in the dark caverns, know many secrets which men used to name alchemy, and which they now call chemistry.

Then Styf fenced himself off from all intruders, on the top of a bright, sunny hilltop, with his thinking cap on and made experiments for seven days. No elves, except his servants, were allowed to see him. At the end of a week, still keeping his secret and having instructed a dozen or so of the elf girls in his new art, he invited all the elves in the Low Countries to come to a great exhibition, which he intended to give.

What a funny show it was! On one long bench, were half a dozen washtubs; and on a table, near by, were a dozen more washtubs; and on a longer table not far away were six ironing boards, with smoothing irons. A stove, made hot with a peat fire, was to heat the irons. Behind the tubs and tables, stood the twelve elf maidens, all arrayed in shining white garments and caps, as spotless as snow. One might almost think they were white elves of the meadow and not kabouters of the mines. The wonder was that their linen clothes were not only as dainty as stars, but that they glistened, as if they had laid on the ground during a hoar frost.

Yet it was still warm summer. Nothing had frozen, or melted, and the rosy-faced elf-maidens were as dry as an ivory fan. Yet they resembled the lilies of the garden when pearly with dew-drops.

When all were gathered together, Old Styf called for some of the company, who had come from afar, to take off their dusty and travel-stained linen garments and give them to him. These were passed over to the trained girls waiting to receive them. In a jiffy, they were washed, wrung out, rinsed and dried. It was noticed that those elf-maidens, who were standing at the last tub, were intently expecting to do something great, while those five elf maids at the table took off the hot irons from the stove. They touched the bottom of the flat-irons with a drop of water to see if it rolled off hissing. They kept their eyes fixed on Styf, who now came forward before all and said, in a loud voice:

“Elves and fairies, moss maidens and stall sprites, one and all, behold our invention, which our great friend Fro and our no less helpful friends, the kabouters, have helped me to produce. Now watch me prove its virtues.”

Forthwith he produced before all a glistening substance, partly in powder, and partly in square lumps, as white as chalk. He easily broke up a handful under his fingers, and flung it into the fifth tub, which had hot water in it. After dipping the washed garments in the white gummy mass, he took them up, wrung them out, dried them with his breath, and then handed them to the elf ironers. In a few moments, these held up, before the company, what a few minutes before had been only dusty and stained clothes. Now, they were white and resplendent. No fuller’s earth could have bleached them thus, nor added so glistening a surface.

It was starch, a new thing for clothes. The fairies, one and all, clapped their hands in delight.

“What shall we name it?” modestly asked Styf of the oldest gnome present.

“Hereafter, we shall call you Styf Sterk, Stiff Starch.” They all laughed.

Very quickly did the Dutch folks, men and women, hear and make use of the elves’ invention. Their linen closets now looked like piles of snow. All over the Low Countries, women made caps, in new fashions, of lace or plain linen, with horns and wings, flaps and crimps, with quilling and with whirligigs. Soon, in every town, one could read the sign “Hier mangled men” (Here we do ironing).

In time, kings, queens and nobles made huge ruffs, often so big that their necks were invisible, and their heads nearly lost from sight, in rings of quilled linen, or of lace, that stuck out a foot or so. Worldly people dyed their starch yellow; zealous folk made it blue; but moderate people kept it snowy white.

Starch added money and riches to the nation. Kings’ treasuries became fat with money gained by taxes laid on ruffs, and on the cargoes of starch, which was now imported by the shipload, or made on the spot, in many countries. So, out of the ancient grain came a new spirit that worked for sweetness and beauty, cleanliness, and health. From a useful substance, as old as Egypt, was born a fine art, that added to the sum of the world’s wealth and pleasure.

9

THE KABOUTERS AND THE BELLS

When the young queen Wilhelmina visited Brabant and Limburg, they amused her with pageants and plays, in which the little fellows called kabouters, in Dutch, and kobolds in German, played and showed off their tricks. Other small folk, named gnomes, took part in the tableaux. The kabouters are the dark elves, who live in forests and mines. The white elves live in the open fields and the sunshine.

The gnomes do the thinking, but the kabouters carry out the work of mining and gathering the precious stones and minerals. They are short, thick fellows, very strong and are strenuous in digging out coal and iron, copper and gold. When they were first made, they were so ugly, that they had to live where they could not be seen, that is, in the dark places. The grown imps look like old men with beards, but no one ever heard of a kabouter that was taller than a yardstick. As for the babies, they are hardly bigger than a man’s thumb. The big boys and girls, in the kabouter kingdom, are not much over a foot high.

What is peculiar about them all is, that they help the good and wise people to do things better; but they love to plague and punish the dull folks, that are stupid, or foolish or naughty. In impish glee, they lure the blockheads, or in Dutch, the “cheese-heads,” to do worse.

A long time ago, there were no church spires or bells in the land of the Dutch folks, as there are now by the thousands. The good teachers from the South came into the country and taught the people to have better manners, finer clothes and more wholesome food. They also persuaded them to forget their cruel gods and habits of revenge. They told of the Father in Heaven, who loves us all, as his children, and forgives us when we repent of our evil doings.

Now when the chief gnomes and kabouters heard of the newcomers in the land, they held a meeting and said one to the other:

“We shall help all the teachers that are good and kind, but we shall plague and punish the rough fellows among them.”

So word was sent to all little people in the mines and hills, instructing them how they were to act and what they were to do.

Some of the new teachers, who were foreigners, and did not know the customs of the country, were very rude and rough. Every day they hurt the feelings of the people. With their axes they cut down the sacred trees. They laughed scornfully at the holy wells and springs of water. They reviled the people, when they prayed to great Woden, with his black ravens that told him everything, or to the gentle Freya, with her white doves, who helped good girls to get kind husbands. They scolded the children at play, and this made their fathers and mothers feel miserable. This is the reason why so many people were angry and sullen, and would not listen to the foreign teachers.

Worse than this, many troubles came to these outsiders. Their bread was sour, when they took it out of the oven. So was the milk, in their pans. Sometimes they found their beds turned upside down. Gravel stones rattled down into their fireplaces. Their hats and shoes were missing. In fact, they had a terrible time generally and wanted to go back home. When the kabouter has a grudge against any one, he knows how to plague him.

But the teachers that were wise and gentle had no trouble. They persuaded the people with kind words, and, just as a baby learns to eat other food at the table, so the people were weaned away from cruel customs and foolish beliefs. Many of the land's folk came to listen to the teachers and helped them gladly to build churches.

More wonderful than this, were the good things that came to these kind teachers, they knew not how. Their bread and milk were always sweet and in plenty. They found their beds made up and their clothes kept clean, gardens planted with blooming flowers, and much hard work done for them. When they would build a church in a village, they wondered how it was that the wood and the nails, the iron necessary to brace the beams, and the copper and brass for the sacred vessels, came so easily and in plenty. When, on some nights, they wondered where they would get food to eat, they found, on waking up in the morning, that there was always something good ready for them. Thus many houses of worship were built, and the more numerous were the churches, the more did farms, cows, grain fields, and happy people multiply.

Now when the gnomes and kabouters, who like to do work for pleasant people, heard that the good teachers wanted church bells, to call the people to worship, they resolved to help the strangers. They would make not only a bell, or a chime, but, actually a carillon, or concert of bells to hang up in the air.

The dark dwarfs did not like to dig metal for swords or spears, or what would hurt people; but the church bells would guide travellers in the forest, and quiet the storms, that destroyed houses and upset boats and killed or drowned people, besides inviting the people to come and pray and sing. They knew that the good teachers were poor and could not buy bells in France or Italy. Even if they had money, they could not get them through the thick forests, or over the stormy seas, for they were too heavy.

When all the kabouters were told of this, they came together to work, night and day, in the mines. With pick and shovel, crowbar and chisel, and hammer and mallet, they broke up the rocks containing copper and tin. Then they built great roaring fires, to smelt the ore into ingots. They would show the teachers that the Dutch kabouters could make bells, as well as the men in the lands of the South. These dwarfish people are jealous of men and very proud of what they can do.

It was the funniest sight to see these short legged fellows, with tiny coats coming just below their thighs, and little red caps, looking like a stocking and ending in a tassel, on their heads, and in shoes that had no laces, but very long points. They flew around as lively as monkeys, and when the fire was hot they threw off everything and worked much harder and longer than men do.

Were they like other fairies? Well, hardly. One must put away all his usual thoughts, when he thinks of kabouters. No filmy wings on their backs! No pretty clothes or gauzy garments, or stars, or crowns, or wands! Instead of these were hammers, pickaxes, and chisels. But how diligent, useful and lively these little folks, in plain, coarse coats and with bare legs, were! In place of things light, clean and easy, the kabouters had furnaces, crucibles and fires of coal and wood.

Sometimes they were grimy, with smoke and coal dust, and the sweat ran down their faces and bodies. Yet there was always plenty of water in the mines, and when hard work was over they washed and looked plain but tidy. Besides their stores of gold, and silver, and precious stones, which they kept ready, to give to good people, they had tools with which to tease or tantalize cruel, mean or lazy folks.

Now when the kabouter daddies began the roaring fires for the making of the bells, the little mothers and the small fry in the kabouter world could not afford to be idle. One and all, they came down from off the earth, and into the mines they went in a crowd. They left off teasing milkmaids, tangling skeins of flax, tearing fishermen’s nets, tying knots in cows’ tails, tumbling pots, pans and dishes, in the kitchen, or hiding hats, and throwing stones down the chimneys onto the fireplaces. They even ceased their fun of mocking children, who were calling the cows home, by hiding behind the rocks and shouting to them. Instead of these tricks, they saved their breath to blow the fires into a blast. Everybody wondered where the “kabs” were, for on the farms and in town nothing happened and all was as quiet as when a baby is asleep.

For days and weeks underground, the dwarfs toiled, until their skins, already dark, became as sooty as the rafters in the houses of our ancestors. Finally, when all the labor was over, the chief gnomes were invited down into the mines to inspect the work.

What a sight! There were at least a hundred bells, of all sizes, like as in a family; where there are daddy, mother, grown ups, young sons and daughters, little folk and babies, whether single, twins or triplets. Big bells, that could scarcely be put inside a hogshead, bells that would go into a barrel, bells that filled a bushel, and others a peck, stood in rows. From the middle, and tapering down the row, were scores more, some of them no larger than cow-bells. Others, at the end, were so small, that one had to think of pint and gill measures.

Besides all these, there were stacks of iron rods and bars, bolts, nuts, screws, and wires and yokes on which to hang the bells.

One party of the strongest of the kabouters had been busy in the forest, close to a village, where some men, ordered to do so by a foreign teacher, had begun to cut down some of the finest and most sacred of the grand old trees. They had left their tools in the woods; but the “kabs,” at night, seized their axes and before morning, without making any noise, they had levelled all but the holy trees. Those they spared. Then, the timber, all cut and squared, ready to hold the bells, was brought to the mouth of the mine.

Now in Dutch, the name for bell is “klok.” So a wise and gray-bearded gnome was chosen by the high sounding title of klokken-spieler, or bell player, to test the bells for a carillon. They were all hung, for practice, on the big trestles, in a long row. Each one of these frames was called a “hang,” for they were just like those on which fishermen’s nets were laid to dry and be mended.

So when all were ready, washed, and in their clean clothes, every one of the kabouter families, daddies, mothers, and young ones, were ranged in lines and made to sing. The heavy male tenors and baritones, the female sopranos and contraltos, the trebles of the little folks, and the squeaks of the very small children, down to the babies’ cooing, were all heard by the gnomes, who were judges. The high and mighty klokken-spieler, or master of the carillon, chose those voices with best tone and quality, from which to set in order and regulate the bells.

It was pitiful to see how mad and jealous some of the kabouters, both male and female, were, when they were not appointed to the first row, in which were some of the biggest of the males, and some of the fattest of the females. Then the line tapered off, to forty or fifty young folks, including urchins of either sex, down to mere babies, that could hardly stand. These had bibs on and had to be held up by their fond mothers. Each one by itself could squeal and squall, coo and crow lustily; but, at a distance, their voices blended and the noise they made sounded like a tinkle.

All being ready, the old gnome bit his tuning fork, hummed a moment, and then started a tune. Along the line, at a signal from the chief gnome, they started a tune.

In the long line, there were, at first, booms and peals, twanging and clanging, jangling and wrangling, making such a clangor that it sounded more like an uproar than an opera. The chief gnome was almost discouraged.

But neither a gnome nor a kabouter ever gives up. The master of the choir tried again and again. He scolded one old daddy, for singing too low. He frowned at a stalwart young fellow, who tried to drown out all the rest with his bull-like bellow. He shook his finger at a kabouter girl, that was flirting with a handsome lad near her. He cheered up the little folks, encouraging them to hold up their voices, until finally he had all in order. Then they practiced, until the master gnome thought he had his scale of notation perfect and gave orders to attune the bells. To the delight of all the gnomes, kabouters and elves, that had been invited to the concert, the rows of bells, a hundred or more, from boomers to tinklers, made harmony. Strung one above the other, they could render merriment, or sadness, in solos, peals, chimes, cascades and carillons, with sweetness and effect. At the low notes the babies called out “cow, cow;” but at the high notes, “bird, bird.”

So it happened that, on the very day that the bishop had his great church built, with a splendid bulb spire on the top, and all nicely furnished within, but without one bell to ring in it, that the kabouters planned a great surprise.

It was night. The bishop was packing his saddle bags, ready to take a journey, on horseback, to Rheims. At this city, the great caravans from India and China ended, bringing to the annual fair, rugs, spices, gems, and things Oriental, and the merchants of Rheims rolled in gold. Here the bishop would beg the money, or ask for a bell, or chimes.

Suddenly, in the night, while in his own house, there rang out music in the air, such as the bishop had never heard in Holland, or in any of the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands. Not even in the old lands, France, or Spain, or Italy, where the Christian teachers, builders and singers, and the music of the bells had long been heard, had such a flood of sweet sounds ever fallen on human ears. Here, in these northern regions, rang out, not a solo, nor a peal, nor a chime, nor even a cascade, from one bell, or from many bells; but, a long programme of richest music in the air — something which no other country, however rich or old, possessed. It was a carillon, that is, a continued mass of real music, in which whole tunes, songs, and elaborate pieces of such length, mass and harmony, as only a choir of many voices, a band of music, or an orchestra of many performers could produce.

To get this grand work of hanging in the spire done in one night, and before daylight, also, required a whole regiment of fairy toilers, who must work like bees. For if one ray of sunshine struck any one of the kabouters, he was at once petrified. The light elves lived in the sunshine and thrived on it; but for dark elves, like the kabouters, whose home was underground, sunbeams were as poisoned arrows bringing sure death; for by these they were turned into stone. Happily the task was finished before the eastern sky grew gray, or the cocks crowed. While it was yet dark, the music in the air flooded the earth. The people in their beds listened with rapture.

“Laus Deo” (Praise God), devoutly cried the surprised bishop. “It sounds like a choir of angels. Surely the cherubim and seraphim are here. Now is fulfilled the promise of the Psalmist: ‘The players on instruments shall be there.’“

So, from this beginning, so mysterious to the rough, unwise and stupid teachers, but, by degrees, clearer to the tactful ones, who were kind and patient, the carillons spread over all the region between the forests of Ardennes and the island in the North Sea. The Netherlands became the land of melodious symphonies and of tinkling bells. No town, however poor, but in time had its carillon. Every quarter of an hour, the sweet music of hymn or song, made the air vocal, while at the striking of the hours, the pious bowed their heads and the workmen heard the call for rest, or they took cheer, because their day’s toil was over. At sunrise, noon, or sunset, the Angelus, and at night the curfew sounded their calls.

It grew into a fashion, that, on stated days, great concerts were given, lasting over an hour, when the grand works of the masters of music were rendered and famous carillon players came from all over the Netherlands, to compete for prizes. The Low Countries became a famous school, in which klokken-spielers (bell players) by scores were trained. Thus no kingdom, however rich or great, ever equalled the Land of the Carillon, in making the air sweet with both melody and harmony.

Nobody ever sees a kabouter nowadays, for in the new world, when the woods are nearly all cut down, the world made by the steam engine, and telegraph, and wireless message, the automobile, aeroplane and submarine, cycle and under-sea boat, the little folks in the mines and forests are forgotten. The chemists, miners, engineers and learned men possess the secrets which were once those of the fairies only. Yet the artists and architects, the clockmakers and bellfounders, who love beauty, remember what their fathers once thought and believed. That is the reason why, on many a famous clock, either in front of the dial or near the pendulum, are figures of the gnomes, who thought, and the kabouters who wrought, to make the carillons. In Teuton lands, where their cousins are named kobolds, and in France where they are called fée, and in England brownies, they have tolling and ringing of bells, with peals, chimes and cascades of sweet sound; but the Netherlands, still, above all others on earth, is the home of the carillon.

10

THE WOMAN WITH THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX CHILDREN

Long, long ago, before the oldest stork was young and big deer and little fawns were very many in the Dutch forests, there was a pond, famous for its fish, which lay in the very heart of Holland, with woods near by. Hunters came with their bows and arrows to hunt the stags. Or, out of the bright waters, boys and men in the sunshine drew out the fish with shining scales, or lured the trout, with fly-bait, from their hiding places. In those days the fish-pond was called the Vijver, and the woods where the deer ran, Rensselaer, or the Deer’s Lair.

So, because the forests of oak, and beech, and alder trees were so fine, and game on land and in water so plentiful, the lord of the country came here and built his castle. He made a hedge around his estate, so that the people called the place the Count’s Hedge; or, as we say, The Hague. Even to-day, within the beautiful city, the forests, with their grand old trees, still remain, and the fish-pond, called the Vijver, is there yet, with its swans. On the little island, the fluffy, downy cygnets are born and grow to be big birds, with long necks, bent like an arch. In another part of the town, also, with their trees for nesting, and their pond for wading, are children of the same storks, whose fathers and mothers lived there before America was discovered.

By and by, many people of rank and fortune came to The Hague, for its society. They built their grand houses at the slope of the hill, not far away from the Vijver, and in time a city grew up.

It was a fine sight to see the lords and ladies riding out from the castle into the country. The cavalcade was very splendid, when they went hawking. There were pretty women on horseback, and gentlemen in velvet clothes, with feathers in their hats, and the horses seemed proud to bear them. The falconers followed on foot, with the hunting birds perched on a hoop, which the man inside the circle carried round him. Each falcon had on a little cap or hood, which was fastened over its head. When this was taken off, it flew high up into the air, on its hunt for the big and little birds, which it brought down for its masters. There were also men with dogs, to beat the reeds and bushes, and drive the smaller birds from shelter. The huntsmen were armed with spears, lest a wild boar, or bear, should rush out and attack them. It was always a merry day, when a hawking party, in their fine clothes and gay trappings, started out.

There were huts, as well as palaces, and poor people, also, at The Hague. Among these, was a widow, whose twin babies were left without anything to eat — for her husband and their father had been killed in the war. Having no money to buy a cradle, and her babies being too young to be left alone, she put the pair of little folks on her back and went out to beg.

Now there was a fine lady, a Countess, who lived with her husband, the Count, near the Vijver. She was childless and very jealous of other women who were mothers and had children playing around them. On this day, when the beggar woman, with her two babies on her back, came along, the grand lady was in an unusually bad temper. For all her pretty clothes, she was not a person of fine manners. Indeed, she often acted more like a snarling dog, ready to snap at any one who should speak to her. Although she had cradles and nurses and lovely baby clothes all ready, there was no baby. This spoiled her disposition, so that her husband and the servants could hardly live with her.

One day, after dinner, when there had been everything good to eat and drink on her table, and plenty of it, the Countess went out to walk in front of her house. It was the third day of January, but the weather was mild. The beggar woman, with her two babies on her back and their arms round her neck, crying with hunger, came trudging along. She went into the garden and asked the Countess for food or an alms. She expected surely, at least a slice of bread, a cup of milk, or a small coin.

But the Countess was rude to her and denied her both food and money. She even burst into a bad temper, and reviled the woman for having two children, instead of one.

“Where did you get those brats? They are not yours. You just brought them here to play on my feelings and excite my jealousy. Begone!”

But the poor woman kept her temper. She begged piteously and said: “For the love of Heaven, feed my babies, even if you will not feed me.”

“No! they are not yours. You’re a cheat,” said the fine lady, nursing her rage.

“Indeed, Madame, they are both my children and born on one day. They have one father, but he is dead. He was killed in the war, while serving his grace, your husband.”

“Don’t tell me such a story,” snapped back the Countess, now in a fury. “I don’t believe that any one, man or woman, could have two children at once. Away with you,” and she seized a stick to drive off the poor woman.

Now, it was the turn of the beggar to answer back. Both had lost their temper, and the two angry women seemed more like she-bears robbed of their whelps.

“Heaven punish you, you wicked, cruel, cold-hearted woman,” cried the mother. Her two babies were almost choking her in their eagerness for food. Yet their cries never moved the rich lady, who had bread and good things to spare, while their poor parent had not a drop of milk to give them. The Countess now called her men-servants to drive the beggar away. This they did, most brutally. They pushed the poor woman outside the garden gate and closed it behind her. As she turned away, the poor mother, taking each of her children by its back, one in each hand, held them up before the grand lady and cried out loudly, so that all heard her:

“May you have as many children as there are days in the year.”

Now with all her wrath burning in her breast, what the beggar woman really meant was this: It was the third of January, and so there were but three days in the year, so far. She intended to say that, instead of having to care for two children, the Countess might have the trouble of rearing three, and all born on the same day.

But the fine lady, in her mansion, cared nothing for the beggar woman’s words. Why should she? She had her lordly husband, who was a count, and he owned thousands of acres. Besides, she possessed vast riches. In her great house, were ten men-servants and thirty-one maid-servants, together with her rich furniture, and fine clothes and jewels. The lofty brick church, to which she went on Sundays, was hung with the coats of arms of her famous ancestors. The stone floor, with its great slabs, was so grandly carved with the crests and heraldry of her family, that to walk over these was like climbing a mountain, or tramping across a ploughed field. Common folks had to be careful, lest they should stumble over the bosses and knobs of the carved tombs. A long train of her servants, and tenants on the farms followed her, when she went to worship. Inside the church, the lord and lady sat, in high seats, on velvet cushions and under a canopy.

By the time summer had come, according to the fashion in all good Dutch families, all sorts of pretty baby clothes were made ready. There were soft, warm, swaddling bands, tiny socks, and long white linen dresses. A baptismal blanket, covered with silk, was made for the christening, and daintily embroidered. Plenty of lace, and pink and blue ribbons — pink for a girl and blue for a boy — were kept at hand. And, because there might be twins, a double set of garments was provided, besides baby bathtubs and all sorts of nice things for the little stranger or strangers — whether one or two — to come. Even the names were chosen — one for a boy and the other for a girl. Would it be Wilhelm or Wilhelmina?

It was real fun to think over the names, but it was hard to choose out of so many. At last, the Countess crossed off all but forty-six; or the following; nearly every girl's name ending in *je*, as in our "Polly," "Sallie."

Girls

Magtel
Nelletje
Zelia
Jannetje
Zara
Marytje
Willemtje
Geertruy
Petronella
Margrieta
Josina
Catharyna
Alida
Annatje
Christina
Katrina
Bethje

  - *Eva*
  - *Dirkje*
  - *Mayken*
  - *Hilleke*
  - *Bethy*
  - *Japik*

Boys

- *Gerrit*
  - *Cornelis*
  - *Volkert*
  - *Kilian*
  - *Johannes*
  - *Petrus*
  - *Barent*
  - *Wessel*
  - *Hendrik*
  - *Teunis*
  - *Wouter*
  - *Evert*
  - *Gysbert*
  - *Jausze*
  - *Myndert*
  - *Adrian*
  - *Joachim*
  - *Arendt*
  - *Dirck*

Nikolaas
Staats
Gozen
Willemtje

But before the sun set on the expected day, it was neither one boy nor one girl, nor both; nor were all the forty-six names chosen sufficient; for the beggar woman’s wish had come true, in a way not expected. There were as many as, and no fewer children than, there were days in the year; and, since this was leap year, there were three hundred and sixty-six little folks in the house; so that other names, besides the forty-six, had to be used.

Yet none of these wee creatures was bigger than a mouse. Beginning at daylight, one after another appeared — first a girl and then a boy; so that after the forty-eighth, the nurse was at her wit’s end, to give them names. It was not possible to keep the little babies apart. The thirty-one servant maids of the mansion were all called in to help in sorting out the girls from the boys; but soon it seemed hopeless to try to pick out Peter from Henry, or Catalina from Annetje. After an hour or two spent at the task, and others coming along, the women found that it was useless to try any longer. It was found that little Piet, Jan and Klaas, Hank, Douw and Japik, among the boys; and Molly, Mayka, Lena, Elsje, Annatje and Marie were getting all mixed up. So they gave up the attempt in despair. Besides, the supply of pink and blue ribbons had given out long before, after the first dozen or so were born. As for the baby clothes made ready, they were of no use, for all the garments were too big. In one of the long dresses, tied up like a bag, one might possibly, with stuffing, have put the whole family of three hundred and sixty-six brothers and sisters.

It was not likely such small fry of human beings could live long. So, the good Bishop Guy, of Utrecht, when he heard that the beggar woman’s curse had come true, in so unexpected a manner, ordered that the babies should be all baptized at once. The Count, who was strict in his ideas of both custom and church law, insisted on it too.

So nothing would do but to carry the tiny infants to church. How to get them there, was a question. The whole house had been rummaged to provide things to carry the little folks in: but the supply of trays, and mince pie dishes, and crocks, was exhausted at the three hundred and sixtieth baby. So there was left only a Turk's Head, or round glazed earthen dish, fluted and curved, which looked like the turban of a Turk. Hence its name. Into this, the last batch of babies, or extra six girls, were stowed. Curiously enough, number 366 was an inch taller than the others. To thirty house maids was given a tray, for each was to carry twelve mannikins, and one the last six, in the Turk's Head. Instead of rich silk blankets a wooden tray, and no clothes on, must suffice.

In the Groote Kerk, or Great Church, the Bishop was waiting, with his assistants, holding brass basins full of holy water, for the christening. All the town, including the dogs, were out to see what was going on. Many boys and girls climbed up on the roofs of the one-story houses, or in the trees to get a better view of the curious procession — the like of which had never been seen in The Hague before. Neither has anything like it ever been seen since.

So the parade began. First went the Count, with his captains and the trumpeters, blowing their trumpets. These were followed by the men-servants, all dressed in their best Sunday clothes, who had the crest and arms of their master, the Count, on their backs and breasts. Then came on the company of thirty-one maids, each one carrying a tray, on which were twelve mannikins, or minikins. Twenty of these trays were round and made of wood, lined with velvet, smooth and soft; but ten were of earthenware, oblong in shape, like a manger. In these, every year, were baked the Christmas pies.

At first, all went on finely, for the outdoor air seemed to put the babies asleep and there was no crying. But no sooner were they inside the church, than about two hundred of the brats began wailing and whimpering. Pretty soon, they set up such a squall that the Count felt ashamed of his progeny and the Bishop looked very unhappy.

To make matters worse, one of the maids, although warned of the danger, stumbled over the helmet of an old crusader, carved in stone, that rose some six inches or so above the floor. In a moment, she fell and lay sprawling, spilling out at least a dozen babies. “Heilige Mayke” (Holy Mary!), she cried, as she rolled over. “Have I killed them?”

Happily the wee ones were thrown against the long-trained gown of an old lady walking directly in front of her, so that they were unhurt. They were easily picked up and laid on the tray again, and once more the line started.

Happily the Bishop had been notified that he would not have to call out the names of all the infants, that is, three hundred and sixty-six; for this would have kept him at the solemn business all day long. It had been arranged that, instead of any on the list of the chosen forty-six, to be so named, all the boys should be called John, and all the girls Elizabeth; or, in Dutch, Jan and Lisbet, or Lizbethje. Yet even to say “John” one hundred and eighty times, and “Lisbet” one hundred and eighty-six times, nearly tired the old gentleman to death, for he was fat and slow.

So, after the first six trays full of wee folks had been sprinkled, one at a time, the Bishop decided to “asperse” them, that is, shake, from a mop or brush, the holy water, on a tray full of babies at one time. So he called for the “aspersorium.” Then, clipping this in the basin of holy water, he scattered the drops over the wee folk, until all, even the six extra girl babies in the Turk’s Head, were sprinkled. Probably, because the Bishop thought a Turk was next door to a heathen, he dropped more water than usual on these last six, until the young ones squealed lustily with the cold. It was noted, on the contrary, that the little folks in the mince pie dishes were gently handled, as if the good man had visions of Christmas coming and the good things on the table.

Yet it was evident that such tiny people could not bear what healthy babies of full size would think nothing of. Whether it was because of the damp weather, or the cold air in the brick church, or too much excitement, or because there were not three hundred and sixty-six nurses, or milk bottles ready, it came to pass that every one of the wee creatures died when the sun went down.

Just where they were buried is not told, but, for hundreds of years, there was, in one of The Hague churches, a monument in honor of these little folks, who lived but a day. It was graven with portraits in stone of the Count and Countess and told of their children, as many as the days of the year. Near by, were hung up the two basins, in which the holy water, used by the Bishop, in sprinkling the babies, was held. The year, month and day of the wonderful event were also engraved. Many and many people from various lands came to visit the tomb. The guide books spoke of it, and tender women wept, as they thought how three hundred and sixty-six little cradles, in the Count's castle, would have looked, had each baby lived.

11

THE ONI ON HIS TRAVELS

1

1. The Oni on His Travels

ACROSS THE OCEAN, in Japan, there once lived curious creatures called Onis. Every Japanese boy and girl has heard of them, though one has not often been caught. In one museum, visitors could see the hairy leg of a specimen. Falling out of the air in a storm, the imp had lost his limb. It had been torn off by being caught in the timber side of a well curb. The story-teller was earnestly assured by one Japanese lad that his grandfather had seen it tumble from the clouds.

Many people are sure that the Onis live in the clouds and occasionally fall off, during a peal of thunder. Then they escape and hide down in a well. Or, they get loose in the kitchen, rattle the dishes around, and make a great racket. They behave like cats, with a dog after them. They do a great deal of mischief, but not much harm. There are even some old folks who say that, after all, Onis are only unruly children, that behave like angels in the morning and act like imps in the afternoon. So we see that not much is known about the Onis.

Many things that go wrong are blamed on the Onis. Foolish folks, such as stupid maid-servants, and dull-witted fellows, that blunder a good deal, declare that the Onis made them do it. Drunken men, especially, that stumble into mud-holes at night, say the Onis pushed them in. Naughty boys that steal cake, and girls that take sugar, often tell fibs to their parents, charging it on the Onis.

The Onis love to play jokes on people, but they are not dangerous. There are plenty of pictures of them in Japan, though they never sat for their portraits, but this is the way they looked.

Some Onis have only one eye in their forehead, others two, and, once in a while, a big fellow has three. There are little, short horns on their heads, but these are no bigger than those on a baby deer and never grow long. The hair on their heads gets all snarled up, just like a little girl's that cries when her tangled tresses are combed out; for the Onis make use of neither brushes nor looking glasses. As for their faces, they never wash them, so they look sooty. Their skin is rough, like an elephant's. On each of their feet are only three toes. Whether an Oni has a nose, or a snout, is not agreed upon by the learned men who have studied them.

No one ever heard of an Oni being higher than a yardstick, but they are so strong that one of them can easily lift two bushel bags of rice at once. In Japan, they steal the food offered to the idols. They can live without air. They like nothing better than to drink both the rice spirit called saké, and the black liquid called soy, of which only a few drops, as a sauce on fish, are enough for a man. Of this sauce, the Dutch, as well as the Japanese, are very fond.

Above all things else, the most fun for a young Oni is to get into a crockery shop. Once there, he jumps round among the cups and dishes, hides in the jars, straddles the shelves and turns somersaults over the counter. In fact, the Oni is only a jolly little imp. The Japanese girls, on New Year's eve, throw handfuls of dried beans in every room of the house and cry, “In, with good luck; and out with you, Onis!” Yet they laugh merrily all the time. The Onis cannot speak, but they can chatter like monkeys. They often seem to be talking to each other in gibberish.

Now it once happened in Japan that the great Tycoon of the country wanted to make a present to the Prince of the Dutch. So he sent all over the land, from the sweet potato fields in the south to the seal and salmon waters in the north, to get curiosities of all sorts. The products of Japan, from the warm parts, where grow the indigo and the sugar cane, to the cold regions, in which are the bear and walrus, were sent as gifts to go to the Land of Dykes and Windmills. The Japanese had heard that the Dutch people like cheese, walk in wooden shoes, eat with forks, instead of chopsticks, and the women wear twenty petticoats apiece, while the men sport jackets with two gold buttons, and folks generally do things the other way from that which was common in Japan.

Now it chanced that while they were packing the things that were piled up in the palace at Yedo, a young Oni, with his horns only half grown, crawled into the kitchen, at night, through the big bamboo water pipe near the pump. Pretty soon he jumped into the storeroom. There, the precious cups, vases, lacquer boxes, pearl-inlaid pill-holders, writing desks, jars of tea, and bales of silk, were lying about, ready to be put into their cases. The yellow wrappings for covering the pretty things of gold and silver, bronze and wood, and the rice chaff, for the packing of the porcelain, were all at hand. What a jolly time the Oni did have, in tumbling them about and rolling over them! Then he leaped like a monkey from one vase to another. He put on a lady’s gay silk kimono and wrapped himself around with golden embroidery. Then he danced and played the game of the Ka-gu’-ra, or Lion of Korea, pretending to make love to a girl-Oni. Such funny capers as he did cut! It would have made a cat laugh to see him. It was broad daylight, before his pranks were over, and the Dutch church chimes were playing the hour of seven.

Suddenly the sound of keys in the lock told him that, in less than a minute, the door would open.

Where should he hide? There was no time to be lost. So he seized some bottles of soy from the kitchen shelf and then jumped into the big bottom drawer of a ladies' cabinet, and pulled it shut.

"Namu Amida" (Holy Buddha!), cried the man that opened the door. "Who has been here? It looks like a rat's picnic."

However, the workmen soon came and set everything to rights. Then they packed up the pretty things. They hammered down the box lids and before night the Japanese curiosities were all stored in the hold of a swift, Dutch ship, from Nagasaki, bound for Rotterdam. After a long voyage, the vessel arrived safely in good season, and the boxes were sent on to The Hague, or capital city. As the presents were for the Prince, they were taken at once to the pretty palace, called the House in the Wood. There they were unpacked and set on exhibition for the Prince and Princess to see the next day.

When the palace maid came in next morning to clean up the floor and dust the various articles, her curiosity led her to pull open the drawer of the ladies' cabinet; when out jumped something hairy. It nearly frightened the girl out of her wits. It was the Oni, which rushed off and down stairs, tumbling over a half dozen servants, who were sitting at their breakfast. All started to run except the brave butler, who caught up a carving knife and showed fight. Seeing this, the Oni ran down into the cellar, hoping to find some hole or crevice for escape. All around, were shelves filled with cheeses, jars of sour-krout, pickled herring, and stacks of fresh rye bread standing in the corners. But oh! how they did smell in his Japanese nostrils! Oni, as he was, he nearly fainted, for no such odors had ever beaten upon his nose, when in Japan. Even at the risk of being carved into bits, he must go back. So up into the kitchen again he ran. Happily, the door into the garden stood wide open.

Grabbing a fresh bottle of soy from the kitchen shelf, the Oni, with a hop, skip and jump, reached outdoors. Seeing a pair of klomps, or wooden shoes, near the steps, the Oni put his pair of three toes into them, to keep the dogs from scenting its tracks. Then he ran into the fields, hiding among the cows, until he heard men with pitchforks coming. At once the Oni leaped upon a cow's back and held on to its horns, while the poor animal ran for its life into its stall, in the cow stable, hoping to brush the monster off.

The dairy farmer's wife was at that moment pulling open her bureau drawer, to put on a new clean lace cap. Hearing her favorite cow moo and bellow, she left the drawer open and ran to look through the pane of glass in the kitchen. Through this, she could peep, at any minute, to see whether this or that cow, or its calf, was sick or well.

Meanwhile, at the House in the Wood, the Princess, hearing the maid scream and the servants in an uproar, rushed out in her embroidered white nightie, to ask who, and what, and why, and wherefore. All different and very funny were the answers of maid, butler, cook, valet and boots.

The first maid, who had pulled open the drawer and let the Oni get out, held up broom and duster, as if to take oath. She declared:

"It was a monkey, or baboon; but he seemed to talk — Russian, I think."

"No," said the butler. "I heard the creature — a black ram, running on its hind legs; but its language was German, I'm sure."

The cook, a fat Dutch woman, told a long story. She declared, on honor, that it was a black dog like a Chinese pug, that has no hair. However, she had only seen its back, but she was positive the creature talked English, for she heard it say "soy."

The valet honestly avowed that he was too scared to be certain of anything, but was ready to swear that to his ears the words uttered seemed to be Swedish. He had once heard sailors from Sweden talking, and the chatter sounded like their lingo.

Then there was Boots, the errand boy, who believed that it was the Devil; but, whatever or whoever it was, he was ready to bet a week's wages that its lingo was all in French.

Now when the Princess found that not one of her servants could speak or understand any language but their own, she scolded them roundly in Dutch, and wound up by saying, "You're a lot of cheese-heads, all of you."

Then she arranged the wonderful things from the Far East, with her own dainty hands, until the House in the Wood was fragrant with Oriental odors, and soon it became famous throughout all Europe. Even when her grandchildren played with the pretty toys from the land of Fuji and flowers, of silk and tea, cherry blossoms and camphor trees, it was not only the first but the finest Japanese collection in all Europe.

Meanwhile, the Oni, in a strange land, got into one trouble after another. In rushed men with clubs, but as an Oni was well used to seeing these at home, he was not afraid. He could outrun, outjump, or outclimb any man, easily. The farmer's vrouw (wife) nearly fainted when the Oni leaped first into her room and then into her bureau drawer. As he did so, the bottle of soy, held in his three-fingered paw, hit the wood and the dark liquid, as black as tar, ran all over the nicely starched laces, collars and nightcaps. Every bit of her quilled and crimped hear-gear and neckwear, once as white as snow, was ruined.

"Donder en Bliksem" (thunder and lightning), cried the vrouw. "There's my best cap, that cost twenty guilders, utterly ruined." Then she bravely ran for the broomstick.

The Oni caught sight of what he thought was a big hole in the wall and ran into it. Seeing the blue sky above, he began to climb up. Now there were no chimneys in Japan and he did not know what this was. The soot nearly blinded and choked him. So he slid down and rushed out, only to have his head nearly cracked by the farmer's wife, who gave him a whack of her broomstick. She thought it was a crazy goat that she was fighting. She first drove the Oni into the cellar and then bolted the door.

An hour later, the farmer got a gun and loaded it. Then, with his hired man he came near, one to pull open the door, and the other to shoot. What they expected to find was a monster.

But no! So much experience, even within an hour, of things unknown in Japan, including chimneys, had been too severe for the poor, lonely, homesick Oni. There it lay dead on the floor, with its three fingers held tightly to its snout and closing it. So much cheese, zuur kool (sour krout), gin (schnapps), advocaat (brandy and eggs), cows' milk, both sour and fresh, wooden shoes, lace collars and crimped neckwear, with the various smells, had turned both the Oni's head and his stomach. The very sight of these strange things being so unusual, gave the Oni first fright, and then a nervous attack, while the odors, such as had never tortured his nose before, had finished him.

The wise men of the village were called together to hold an inquest. After summoning witnesses, and cross-examining them and studying the strange creature, their verdict was that it could be nothing less than a *Hersen Schim*, that is, a spectre of the brain. They meant by this that there was no such animal.

However, a man from Delft, who followed the business of a knickerbocker, or baker of knickers, or clay marles, begged the body of the Oni. He wanted it to serve as a model for a new gargoyle, or rain spout, for the roof of churches. Carved in stone, or baked in clay, which turns red and is called terra cotta, the new style of monster became very popular. The knickerbocker named it after a new devil, that had been expelled by the prayers of the saints, and speedily made a fortune, by selling it to stone cutters and architects. So for one real Oni, that died and was buried in Dutch soil, there are thousands of imaginary ones, made of baked clay, or stone, in the Dutch land, where things, more funny than in fairy-land, constantly take place.

The dead Japanese Oni serving as a model, which was made into a water gutter, served more useful purposes, for a thousand years, than ever he had done, in the land where his relations still live and play their pranks.

12

THE LEGEND OF THE WOODEN SHOE

In years long gone, too many for the almanac to tell of, or for clocks and watches to measure, millions of good fairies came down from the sun and went into the earth. There, they changed themselves into roots and leaves, and became trees. There were many kinds of these, as they covered the earth, but the pine and birch, ash and oak, were the chief ones that made Holland. The fairies that lived in the trees bore the name of Moss Maidens, or Tree “Trintjes,” which is the Dutch pet name for Kate, or Katharine.

The oak was the favorite tree, for people lived then on acorns, which they ate roasted, boiled or mashed, or made into meal, from which something like bread was kneaded and baked. With oak bark, men tanned hides and made leather, and, from its timber, boats and houses. Under its branches, near the trunk, people laid their sick, hoping for help from the gods. Beneath the oak boughs, also, warriors took oaths to be faithful to their lords, women made promises, or wives joined hand in hand around its girth, hoping to have beautiful children. Up among its leafy branches the new babies lay, before they were found in the cradle by the other children. To make a young child grow up to be strong and healthy, mothers drew them through a split sapling or young tree. Even more wonderful, as medicine for the country itself, the oak had power to heal. The new land sometimes suffered from disease called the *val* (or fall). When sick with the *val*, the ground sunk. Then people, houses, churches, barns and cattle all went down, out of sight, and were lost forever, in a flood of water.

But the oak, with its mighty roots, held the soil firm. Stories of dead cities, that had tumbled beneath the waves, and of the famous Forest of Reeds, covering a hundred villages, which disappeared in one night, were known only too well.

Under the birch tree, lovers met to plight their vows, and on its smooth bark was often cut the figure of two hearts joined in one. In summer, the forest furnished shade, and in winter warmth from the fire. In the spring time, the new leaves were a wonder, and in autumn the pigs grew fat on the mast, or the acorns, that had dropped on the ground.

So, for thousands of years, when men made their home in the forest, and wanted nothing else, the trees were sacred.

But by and by, when cows came into the land and sheep and horses multiplied, more open ground was needed for pasture, grain fields and meadows. Fruit trees, bearing apples and pears, peaches and cherries, were planted, and grass, wheat, rye and barley were grown. Then, instead of the dark woods, men liked to have their gardens and orchards open to the sunlight. Still, the people were very rude, and all they had on their bare feet were rough bits of hard leather, tied on through their toes; though most of them went barefooted.

The forests had to be cut down. Men were so busy with the axe, that in a few years, the Wood Land was gone. Then the new "Holland," with its people and red roofed houses, with its chimneys and windmills, and dykes and storks, took the place of the old Holt Land of many trees.

Now there was a good man, a carpenter and very skilful with his tools, who so loved the oak that he gave himself, and his children after him, the name of Eyck, which is pronounced Ike, and is Dutch for oak. When, before his neighbors and friends, according to the beautiful Dutch custom, he called his youngest born child, to lay the corner-stone of his new house, he bestowed upon her, before them all, the name of Neeltje (or Nellie) Van Eyck.

The carpenter daddy continued to mourn over the loss of the forests. He even shed tears, fearing lest, by and by, there should not one oak tree be left in the country. Moreover, he was frightened at the thought that the new land, made by pushing back the ocean and building dykes, might sink down again and go back to the fishes. In such a case, all the people, the babies and their mothers, men, women, horses and cattle, would be drowned. The Dutch folks were a little too fast, he thought, in winning their acres from the sea.

One day, while sitting on his door-step, brooding sorrowfully, a Moss Maiden and a Tree Elf appeared, skipping along, hand in hand. They came up to him and told him that his ancestral oak had a message for him. Then they laughed and ran away. Van Eyck, which was now the man's full family name, went into the forest and stood under the grand old oak tree, which his fathers loved, and which he would allow none to cut down.

Looking up, the leaves of the tree rustled, and one big branch seemed to sweep near him. Then it whispered in his ear:

"Do not mourn, for your descendants, even many generations hence, shall see greater things than you have witnessed. I and my fellow oak trees shall pass away, but the sunshine shall be spread over the land and make it dry. Then, instead of its falling down, like acorns from the trees, more and better food shall come up from out of the earth. Where green fields now spread, and the cities grow where forests were, we shall come to life again, but in another form. When most needed, we shall furnish you and your children and children's children, with warmth, comfort, fire, light, and wealth. Nor need you fear for the land, that it will fall; for, even while living, we, and all the oak trees that are left, and all the birch, beech, and pine trees shall stand on our heads for you. We shall hold up your houses, lest they fall into the ooze and you shall walk and run over our heads. As truly as when rooted in the soil, will we do this. Believe what we tell you, and be happy. We shall turn ourselves upside down for you.”

“I cannot see how all these things can be,” said Van Eyck.

“Fear not, my promise will endure.”

The leaves of the branch rustled for another moment. Then, all was still, until the Moss Maiden and Trintje, the Tree Elf, again, hand in hand, as they tripped along merrily, appeared to him. “We shall help you and get our friends, the elves, to do the same. Now, do you take some oak wood and saw off two pieces, each a foot long. See that they are well dried. Then set them on the kitchen table to-night, when you go to bed.” After saying this, and looking at each other and laughing, just as girls do, they disappeared.

Pondering on what all this might mean, Van Eyck went to his wood-shed and sawed off the oak timber. At night, after his wife had cleared off the supper table, he laid the foot-long pieces in their place.

When Van Eyck woke up in the morning, he recalled his dream, and, before he was dressed, hurried to the kitchen. There, on the table, lay a pair of neatly made wooden shoes. Not a sign of tools, or shavings could be seen, but the clean wood and pleasant odor made him glad. When he glanced again at the wooden shoes, he found them perfectly smooth, both inside and out. They had heels at the bottom and were nicely pointed at the toes, and, altogether, were very inviting to the foot. He tried them on, and found that they fitted him exactly. He tried to walk on the kitchen floor, which his wife kept scrubbed and polished, and then sprinkled with clean white sand, with broomstick ripples scored in the layers, but for Van Eyck it was like walking on ice. After slipping and balancing himself, as if on a tight rope, and nearly breaking his nose against the wall, he took off the wooden shoes, and kept them off, while inside the house. However, when he went outdoors, he found his new shoes very light, pleasant to the feet and easy to walk in. It was not so much like trying to skate, as it had been in the kitchen.

At night, in his dreams, he saw two elves come through the window into the kitchen. One, a kabouter, dark and ugly, had a box of tools. The other, a light-faced elf, seemed to be the guide. The kabouter at once got out his saw, hatchet, auger, long, chisel-like knife, and smoothing plane. At first, the two elves seemed to be quarrelling, as to who should be boss. Then they settled down quietly to work. The kabouter took the wood and shaped it on the outside. Then he hollowed out, from inside of it, a pair of shoes, which the elf smoothed and polished. Then one elf put his little feet in them and tried to dance, but he only slipped on the smooth floor and flattened his nose; but the other fellow pulled the nose straight again, so it was all right. They waltzed together upon the wooden shoes, then took them off, jumped out the window, and ran away.

When Van Eyck put the wooden shoes on, he found that out in the fields, in the mud, and on the soft soil, and in sloppy places, this sort of foot gear was just the thing. They did not sink in the mud and the man’s feet were comfortable, even after hours of labor. They did not “draw” his feet, and they kept out the water far better than leather possibly could.

When the Van Eyck vrouw and the children saw how happy Daddy was, they each one wanted a pair. Then they asked him what he called them.

“Klompen,” said he, in good Dutch, and klompen, or klomps, they are to this day.

“I’ll make a fortune out of this,” said Van Eyck. “I’ll set up a klomp-winkel (shop for wooden shoes) at once.”

So, going out to the blacksmith’s shop, in the village, he had the man who pounded iron fashion for him on his anvil, a set of tools, exactly like those used by the kabouter and the elf, which he had seen in his dream. Then he hung out a sign, marked “Wooden blocks for shoes.” He made klomps for the little folks just out of the nursery, for boys and girls, for grown men and women, and for all who walked out-of-doors, in the street or on the fields.

Soon klomps came to be the fashion in all the country places. It was good manners, when you went into a house, to take off your wooden shoes and leave them at the door. Even in the towns and cities, ladies wore wooden slippers, especially when walking or working in the garden.

Klomps also set the fashion for soft, warm socks, and stockings made from sheep's wool. Soon, a thousand needles were clicking, to put a soft cushion between one's soles and toes and the wood. Women knitted, even while they walked to market, or gossiped on the streets. The klomp-winkels, or shops of the shoe carpenters, were seen in every village.

When rich beyond his day-dreams, Van Eyck had another joyful night vision. The next day, he wore a smiling countenance. Everybody, who met him on the street, saluted him and asked, in a neighborly way:

"Good-morning, Mynheer Bly-moe-dig (Mr. Cheerful). How do you sail to-day?"

That's the way the Dutch talk — not "how do you do," but, in their watery country, it is this, "How do you sail?" or else, "Hoe gat het u al?" (How goes it with you, already?)

Then Van Eyck told his dream. It was this: The Moss Maiden and Trintje, the wood elf, came to him again at night and danced. They were lively and happy.

"What now?" asked the dreamer, smilingly, of his two visitors.

He had hardly got the question out of his mouth, when in walked a kabouter, all smutty with blacksmith work. In one hand, he grasped his tool box. In the other, he held a curious looking machine. It was a big lump of iron, set in a frame, with ropes to pull it up and let it fall down with a thump.

"What is it?" asked Van Eyck.

"It's a Hey" (a pile driver), said the kabouter, showing him how to use it. "When men say to you, on the street, to-morrow, 'How do you sail?' laugh at them," said the Moss Maiden, herself laughing.

"Yes, and now you can tell the people how to build cities, with mighty churches with lofty towers, and with high houses like those in other lands. Take the trees, trim the branches off, sharpen the tops, turn them upside down and pound them deep in the ground. Did not the ancient oak promise that the trees would be turned upside down for you? Did they not say you could walk on top of them?"

By this time, Van Eyck had asked so many questions, and kept the elves so long, that the Moss Maiden peeped anxiously through the window. Seeing the day breaking, she and Trintje and the kabouter flew away, so as not to be petrified by the sunrise.

"I'll make another fortune out of this, also," said the happy man, who, next morning, was saluted as Mynheer Blyd-schap (Mr. Joyful).

At once, Van Eyck set up a factory for making pile drivers. Sending men into the woods, who chose the tall, straight trees, he had their branches cut off. Then he sharpened the trunks at one end, and these were driven, by the pile driver, down, far and deep, into the ground. So a foundation, as good as stone, was made in the soft and spongy soil, and well built houses uprose by the thousands. Even the lofty walls of churches stood firm. The spires were unshaken in the storm.

Old Holland had not fertile soil like France, or vast flocks of sheep, producing wool, like England, or armies of weavers, as in the Belgic lands. Yet, soon there rose large cities, with splendid mansions and town halls. As high towards heaven as the cathedrals and towers in other lands, which had rock for foundation, her brick churches rose in the air. On top of the forest trees, driven deep into the sand and clay, dams and dykes were built, that kept out the ocean. So, instead of the old two thousand square miles, there were, in the realm, in the course of years, twelve thousand, rich in green fields and cattle. Then, for all the boys and girls that travel in this land of quaint customs, Holland was a delight.

13

THE CURLY-TAILED LION

Once upon a time, some Dutch hunters went to Africa, hoping to capture a whole family of lions. In this they succeeded. With a pack of hounds and plenty of aborigines to poke the jungle with sticks, they drove a big male lion, with his wife and four whelps, out of the undergrowth into a circle. In the centre, they had dug a pit and covered it over with sticks and grass. Into this, the whole lion family tumbled. Then, by nets and ropes, the big, fierce creatures and the little cubs were lifted out. They were put in cages and brought to Holland. The baby lions, no bigger than pug dogs, were as pretty and harmless as kittens. The sailors delighted to play with them.

Now lions, even before one was ever seen among the Dutch, enjoyed a great reputation for strength, courage, dignity and power. It was believed that they had all the traits of character supposed to belong to kings, and which boys like to possess. Many fathers had named their sons Leo, which is Latin for lion. Dutch daddies had their baby boys christened with the name of Leeuw, which is their word for the king of beasts.

Before lions were brought from the hot countries into colder lands, the bear and wolf were most admired; because, besides possessing plenty of fur, as well as great claws and terrible teeth, they had great courage. For these reasons, many royal and common folks had taken the wolf and bear as namesakes for their hopeful sons.

But the male lion could make more noise than wolves, for he could roar, while they could only howl. He had a shaggy mane and a very long tail. This had a nail at the end, for scratching and combing out his hair, when tangled up. If he were angry, the mighty brute could stick out his red tongue, curled like a pump handle, and nearly half a yard long.

So the lion was called the king of beasts, and the crowned rulers and knights took him as their emblem. They had pictures of the huge creature painted on their flags, shields and armor. Sometimes they stuck a gold or brass lion on their iron war hats, which they called helmets. No knight was allowed to have more than one lion on his shield, but kings might have three or four, or even a whole menagerie of meat-eating creatures. These painted or sculptured lions were in all sorts of action, running, walking, standing up and looking behind or before.

Now there was a Dutch artist, who noticed what funny fellows kings were, and how they liked to have all sorts of beasts and birds of prey, and sea creatures that devour, on their banners. There were dragons, two-headed eagles, boars with tusks, serpents with fangs, hawks, griffins, wyverns, lions, dragons and dragon-lions, besides horses with wings, mermaids with scaly tails, and even night mares that went flying through the dark. With such a funny variety of beast, bird, and fish, some wondered why there were not cows with two tails, cats with two noses, rams with four horns, and creatures that were half veal and half mutton. He noticed that kings did not care much for tame, quiet, peaceable, or useful creatures, such as oxen or horses, doves or sheep; but only for those brutes that hunt and kill the more defenceless creatures.

Since, then, kings of the country must have a lion, the artist resolved to make a new one. He would have some fun, at any rate.

So as painter or sculptor select men and women to pose for them in their study as their heroes and heroines, and just as they picture plump little boys and girls as cherubs and angels, so the Dutchman would make of the cubs and the father beast of prey his models for coats of arms.

Poor lions! They did not know, but they soon found out how tiresome it was to pose. They must hold their paws up, down, sideways or behind, according as they were told. They must stand or kneel, for a long time, in awkward positions. They must stick out their tongues to full length, walk on their hind legs, twist their necks, to one side or the other, look forward or backward, and in many tiresome ways do just as they were ordered. They must also make of their tails every sort of use, whether to wrap around posts or bundles, to stick out of their cage, or put between their legs, as they ran away, or to whisk them around, as they roared; or hoist them up high when rampant.

In some cases, they were expected, even, to put on spectacles, and pretend to be reading, to hold in their paws books and scrolls, or town arms, or shop signs. They must pose, not only as companions of Daniel, in the lions’ den at Babylon, which was proper; but also to sit, as companion of St. Mark, and even to stand on their legs on the top of a high column, without falling off.

In a word, this artist belonged to the college of heralds, and he introduced the king of beasts into Dutch heraldry.

So from that day forth, the life of that family of African lions, from the daddy to the youngest cub, was made a burden. When at home in the jungle and even in the cage, the father lion’s favorite position was that of lolling on one side, with his paws stretched out, and half asleep and all day, until he went out, towards dark, to hunt. Now, he must stand up, nearly all day. Daddy lion had to do most of the posing, until the poor beast’s front legs and paws were weary with standing so long. Moreover, the hair was all worn off his body at the place where he had to sit on the hard wooden floor.

He must do all this, on penalty of being punched with a red hot poker, if he refused. A charcoal furnace and long andirons were kept near by, and these were attended to by a Dutch boy. Or, it might be that the whole family of lions were not allowed to have any dinner till Daddy obeyed and did what he was told, though often with a snarl or a roar.

First, Leo must rise upon his hind legs and look in front of him. This posture was not hard, for in his native jungle, he had often thus obtained a breakfast of venison for his wife and family. But oh, to stand a half hour on two legs only, when he had four, and would gladly have used all of them, was hard. Yet this was the position, called "the lion rampant," which kings liked best.

But the king's uncles, nephews, nieces, cousins, and his wife's relations generally, every one of them, wanted a lion on his or her stationery and pocket handkerchiefs, as well as on their shields and flags. So the old lion was tortured — the hot poker being always in sight — and he was made to take a great variety of positions. The artist called out to Leo, just as a driver says to his cart horse, "whoa," "get up," "golong," etc. When he yelled in this fashion, the lion had to obey.

Pretty soon lions in heraldry, on flags, armor, town arms, family crests and city seals became all the fashion. The whole country went lion-mad. There were lions carved in stone, wood and iron, and every sort and kind, possible or impossible. Some of them seemed to be engaged in a variety of tricks, as if they belonged to a circus, or were having a holiday. They laughed, giggled, yawned, stuck out their tongues, held boards for hotels, bundles for the shopkeepers, or barrels for beer halls, and made excellent shop signs, which the boys and girls enjoyed looking at.

Mrs. Leo was not in much demand, for Mr. Leo did not approve of his wife's appearing in public. She was kept busy in taking care of her cubs. Daddy Lion had to do multiple work for his family, until the cubs were grown. Yet long before this time had come, their Dad had died and been stuffed for a museum. How this first king of beasts in the Netherlands came to his untimely end was on this wise.

Not satisfied with posing Leo in every posture, and with all possible gestures, his master, the artist, wanted him to look “heraldical”; that is, like some of the mythical beasts that were combinations of any and all creatures having fins, fur, feathers, or scales, such as the dragon or griffin. One day, he attempted to make out of a live lion a fanciful creature of curlicues and curliewurlies. So he strapped the lion down, and used a curling iron on his mane until he looked like a bearded bull of Babylon. Then he combed out, and, with curl papers, twisted the long line of hair, which is seen in front of Leo’s stomach. In like manner, he treated the bunches of hair that grow over the animal’s kneepans and elbows. Last of all, he took a hair brush, and smoothed out the tuft, at the end of the animal’s long tail. Then the artist made a picture of him in this condition, all curled and rich in ringlets, like a dandy.

By this time, the father of the lion family looked as if he had come out fresh from a hairdresser’s parlor. Indeed, Mrs. Leo was so struck with her husband’s appearance, that she immediately licked her cubs all over, until their fur shone, so they should look like their father. Then, having used her tongue as a comb, to make her own skin smooth and glossy, she completed the job by using the nail in her tail, to do the finishing work. Altogether, this was the curliest family of lions ever seen, and Daddy Leo appeared to be the funniest curly-headed and curly-bodied lion ever seen. In fact he was all curls, from head to tail.

Notwithstanding all his pains, the artist was not yet satisfied with his job. He wanted a circle of long hair to grow in the middle of the lion’s tail. His curly lion should beat all creation, and in this way he proceeded.

His own daughter, being a young lady and having some trouble of the throat, the doctor had ordered medicine for the girl, charging her not to spill any drops of the liquid on her face, or clothes.

But, in giving the dose, either the mother, or the daughter, was careless. At that very moment the cat ran across the room, after the mouse, and just as she held the spoon to her mouth, Puss got twisted in her skirts. So most of the medicine splashed upon her upper lip and then ran down to her chin, on either side of her mouth. She laughed over the spill, wiped off the liquid, and thought no more of the matter.

But a week later, she was astonished. On waking, she looked in the glass, only to shrink back in horror. On her face had grown both moustaches and a beard. True, both were rather downy, but still they were black; and, until the barber came, and shaved off the growth, she was a bearded woman. Yet, strange to tell, after one or two shaves by the barber, no more hair grew again on her face, which was smooth again.

"By Saint Servatus! I'll make a fortune on this," cried the artist, when he saw his daughter's hairy face.

So, he sold his secret to a druggist, and this man made an ointment, giving it a Chinese name, meaning "beard-grower." This wonderful medicine, as his sign declared, would "force the growth of luxuriant moustaches and a beard, on the smoothest face of any young man," who should buy and apply it.

Soon the whole town rang with the news of the wonderful discovery. The druggist sold out his stock, in two days, to happy purchasers. Other young fellows, that wanted to outrival their companions, had to wait a fortnight for the new medicine to be made. By that time, a full crop of downy hair had come out on the cheeks and chin and upper lip of many a youth. Some, who had been trying for years to raise moustaches, in order duly to impress the girls, to whom they were making love, were now jubilant. In several cases, a lover was able to cut out his rival and win the maid he wanted. Several courtings were hastened and became genuine matches, because a face, long very smooth, and like a desert as to hair, bore a promising crop. Beard and cheeks had at last met together. So the new medicine was called a “match-maker.”

The artist rubbed his hands in glee, at the prospect of a fortune. He argued that if the wonderful ointment made beards for men, it must be good for lions also. So again, Daddy Lion was coerced by the threat of the hot poker. Then his tail was seized, and, by means of a rope, tied to a post on one side of the cage, he was held fast. Then the artist anointed about six inches of the middle of the smooth tail with the magic liquid. For fear the lion might lick it off, the poor beast was held in this tiresome position for a whole week, so that he could not turn round, and he nearly died of fatigue.

But it happened to the lion’s tail, as it did with the young men’s chins, cheeks and upper lips. A beard did indeed grow, but once shaved off — and many did shave, thinking to promote greater growth — no more hair ever appeared again. The ointment forced a downy growth but it killed the roots of the hair.

A worse fate befell the lion. A crop of hair, perhaps an inch longer than common, grew out. But this time, the bad medicine, which had deceived men, and was unfit for lions, struck in.

From this cause, added to nervous prostration, old Leo fell dead. As lion fathers go, he was a good one, and his widow and children mourned for him. He had never once, however hungry, tried to eat up his cubs, which was something in his favor.

Soon after these exploits, the old artist died also. His son, hearing there was still a demand, among kings, for lions, and those especially with centre curls in their tails, took the most promising of the whelps and petted and fed him well. In the seventh year, when his mane and elbow and knee hair had grown out, this cub was mated to a young lioness of like promise. When, of this couple, a male whelp was born, it was found that in due time its knees, elbows, tail-tuft, and the front of its body were all rich in furry growth. In the middle of its tail, also, thick ringlets, several inches long, were growing.

Evidently, the hair tonic had done some good. So this one became the father of all the curly-tailed lions in the Netherlands. Not only was this lion, thus distinguished for so novel an ornament, copied into heraldry, but it adorned many city seals and town arms. In time, the lion of the Netherlands was pictured with a crown on its head, a sword in its right hand, a bundle of seven arrows — in token of a union of seven states — and, still later, the new Order of the Netherlands Lion was founded. The original curly lion, with long hair in the middle of its tail, boasts of a long line of descendants that are proud of their ancestor.

14

BRABO AND THE GIANT

Ages ago, when the giants were numerous on the earth, there lived a big fellow named Antigonus. That was not what his mother had called him, but some one told him of a Greek general of that name; so he took this for his own. He was rough and cruel. His castle was on the Scheldt River, where the city of Antwerp now stands. Many ships sailed out of France and Holland, down this stream. They were loaded with timber, flax, iron, cheese, fish, bread, linen, and other things made in the country. It was by this trade that many merchants grew rich, and their children had plenty of toys to play with. The river was very grand, deep, and wide. The captains of the ships liked to sail on it, because there was no danger from rocks, and the country through which it flowed was so pretty.

So every day, one could see hundreds of white-sailed craft moving towards the sea, or coming in from the ocean. Boys and girls came down to stand in their wooden shoes on the banks, to see the vessels moving to and fro. The incoming ships brought sugar, wine, oranges, lemons, olives and other good things to eat, and wool to make warm clothes. Often craftsmen came from the wonderful countries in the south to tell of the rich cities there, and help to build new and fine houses, and splendid churches, and town halls. So all the Belgian people were happy.

But one day, this wicked giant came into the country to stop the ships and make them pay him money. He reared a strong castle on the river banks. It had four sides and high walls, and deep down in the earth were dark, damp dungeons. One had to light a candle to find his way to the horrid places.

What was it all for? The people wondered, but they soon found out. The giant, with a big knotted club, made out of an oak tree, strode through the town. He cried out to all the people to assemble in the great open square.

“From this day forth,” he roared, “no ship, whether up or down the river, shall pass by this place, without my permission. Every captain must pay me toll, in money or goods. Whoever refuses, shall have both his hands cut off and thrown into the river.

“Hear ye all and obey. Any one caught in helping a ship go by without paying toll, whether it be night, or whether it be day, shall have his thumbs cut off and be put in the dark dungeon for a month. Again I say, Obey!”

With this, the giant swung and twirled his club aloft and then brought it down on a poor countryman’s cart, smashing it into flinders. This was done to show his strength.

So every day, when the ships hove in sight, they were hailed from the giant’s castle and made to pay heavy toll. Poor or rich, they had to hand over their money. If any captain refused, he was brought ashore and made to kneel before a block and place one hand upon the other. Then the giant swung his axe and cut off both hands, and flung them into the river. If a ship master hesitated, because he had no money, he was cast into a dungeon, until his friends paid his ransom.

Soon, on account of this, the city got a bad name. The captains from France kept in, and the ship men from Spain kept out. The merchants found their trade dwindling, and they grew poorer every day. So some of them slipped out of the city and tried to get the ships to sail in the night, and silently pass the giant’s castle.

But the giant’s watchers, on the towers, were as wide awake as owls and greedy as hawks. They pounced on the ship captains, chopped off their hands and tossed them into the river. The townspeople, who were found on board, were thrown into the dungeons and had their thumbs cut off.

So the prosperity of the city was destroyed, for the foreign merchants were afraid to send their ships into the giant’s country. The reputation of the city grew worse. It was nicknamed by the Germans Hand Werpen, or Hand Throwing; while the Dutchmen called it Antwerp, which meant the same thing. The Duke of Brabant, or Lord of the land, came to the big fellow’s fortress and told him to stop. He even shook his fist under the giant’s huge nose, and threatened to attack his castle and burn it. But Antigonus only snapped his fingers, and laughed at him. He made his castle still stronger and kept on hailing ships, throwing some of the crews into dungeons and cutting off the hands of the captains, until the fish in the river grew fat.

Now there was a brave young fellow named Brabo, who lived in the province of Brabant. He was proud of his country and her flag of yellow, black and red, and was loyal to his lord. He studied the castle well and saw a window, where he could climb up into the giant’s chamber.

Going to the Duke, Brabo promised if his lord’s soldiers would storm the gates of the giant’s castle, that he would seek out and fight the ruffian. While they battered down the gates, he would climb the walls. “He’s nothing but a ‘bulle-wak’“ (a bully and a boaster), said Brabo, “and we ought to call him that, instead of Antigonus.”

The Duke agreed. On a dark night, one thousand of his best men-at-arms were marched with their banners, but with no drums or trumpets, or anything that could make a noise and alarm the watchmen.

Reaching a wood full of big trees near the castle, they waited till after midnight. All the dogs in the town and country, for five miles around, were seized and put into barns, so as not to bark and wake the giant up. They were given plenty to eat, so that they quickly fell asleep and were perfectly quiet.

At the given signal, hundreds of men holding ship's masts, or tree trunks, marched against the gates. They punched and pounded and at last smashed the iron-bound timbers and rushed in. After overcoming the garrison, they lighted candles, and unlocking the dungeons, went down and set the poor half-starved captives free. Some of them pale, haggard and thin as hop poles, could hardly stand. About the same time, the barn doors where the dogs had been kept, were thrown open. In full cry, a regiment of the animals, from puppies to hounds, were at once out, barking, baying, and yelping, as if they knew what was going on and wanted to see the fun.

But where was the giant? None of the captains could find him. Not one of the prisoners or the garrison could tell where he had hid.

But Brabo knew that the big fellow, Antigonus, was not at all brave, but really only a bully and a coward. So the lad was not afraid. Some of his comrades outside helped him to set up a tall ladder against the wall. Then, while all the watchers and men-at-arms inside, had gone away to defend the gates, Brabo climbed into the castle, through a slit in the thick wall. This had been cut out, like a window, for the bow-and-arrow men, and was usually occupied by a sentinel. Sword in hand, Brabo made for the giant's own room. Glaring at the youth, the big fellow seized his club and brought it down with such force that it went through the wooden floor. But Brabo dodged the blow and, in a trice, made a sweep with his sword. Cutting off the giant's head, he threw it out the window. It had hardly touched the ground, before the dogs arrived. One of the largest of these ran away with the trophy and the big, hairy noddle of the bully was never found again.

But the giant's huge hands! Ah, they were cut off by Brabo, who stood on the very top of the highest tower, while all below looked up and cheered. Brabo laid one big hand on top of the other, as the giant used to do, when he cut off the hands of captains. He took first the right hand and then the left hand and threw them, one at a time, into the river.

A pretty sight now revealed the fact that the people knew what had been going on and were proud of Brabo’s valor. In a moment, every house in Antwerp showed lighted candles, and the city was illuminated. Issuing from the gates came a company of maidens. They were dressed in white, but their leader was robed in yellow, red, and black, the colors of the Brabant flag. They all sang in chorus the praises of Brabo their hero.

“Let us now drop the term of disgrace to the city — that of the Hand-Throwing and give it a new name,” said one of the leading men of Antwerp.

“No,” said the chief ruler, “let us rather keep the name, and, more than ever, invite all peaceful ships to come again, ‘an-’t-werf’ (at the wharf), as of old. Then, let the arms of Antwerp be two red hands above a castle.”

“Agreed,” cried the citizens with a great shout. The Duke of Brabant approved and gave new privileges to the city, on account of Brabo’s bravery. So, from high to low, all rejoiced to honor their hero, who was richly rewarded.

After this, thousands of ships, from many countries, loaded or unloaded their cargoes on the wharves, or sailed peacefully by. Antwerp excelled all seaports and became very rich again. Her people loved their native city so dearly, that they coined the proverb “All the world is a ring, and Antwerp is the pearl set in it.”

To this day, in the great square, rises the splendid bronze monument of Brabo the Brave. The headless and handless hulk of the giant Antigonus lies sprawling, while on his body rests Antwerp castle. Standing over all, at the top, is Brabo high in air. He holds one of the hands of Antigonus, which he is about to toss into the Scheldt River.

No people honor valor more than the Belgians. Themselves are to-day, as of old, among the bravest.

15

THE FARM THAT RAN AWAY AND CAME BACK

There was once a Dutchman, who lived in the province called Drenthe. Because there was a row of little trees on his farm, his name was Ryer Van Boompjes; that is, Ryer of the Little Trees. After a while, he moved to the shore of the Zuyder Zee and into Overijssel. Overijssel means over the Ijssel River. There he bought a new farm, near the village of Blokzyl. By dyking and pumping, certain wise men had changed ten acres, of sand and heath, into pasture and land for plowing. They surrounded it on three sides with canals. The fourth side fronted on the Zuyder Zee. Then they advertised, in glowing language, the merits of the new land and Ryer Van Boompjes bought it and paid for his real estate. He was as proud as a popinjay of his island and he ruled over it like a Czar or a Kaiser.

A few years before, Ryer had married a “queezel,” as the Dutch call either a nun, or a maid who is no longer young. At this date, when our story begins, he had four blooming, but old-fashioned children, with good appetites. They could eat cabbage and potatoes, rye bread and cheese, by the half peck, and drink buttermilk by the quart. In addition, Ryer owned four horses, six cows, two dogs, some roosters and hens, a flock of geese, two dozen ducks, and a donkey.

Yet although Ryer was rich, as wealth is reckoned in Drenthe, whence he had come, he was greedy for more. He skimped the food of his animals. So much did he do this, that his neighbors declared that they had seen him put green spectacles on his cows and the donkey. Then he mixed straws and shavings with the hay to make the animals think they were eating fresh grass.

When he ploughed, he drove his horses close to the edge next to the water, so as to make use of every half inch of land. When sometimes bits of fen land, from his neighbor’s farms, got loose and floated on the water, Ryer felt he was in luck. He would go out at night, grapple the boggy stuff and fasten it to his own land.

After this had happened several times, and Ryer had added a half acre to his holdings, his greed possessed him like a bad fairy. He began to steal the land on the other side of the Zuyder Zee. In the course of time, he became a regular land thief. Whenever he saw, or heard of, a floating bit of territory, he rowed his boat after it by night. Before morning, aided by wicked helpers, who shared in the plunder, and were in his pay, he would have the bog attached to his own farm.

All this time, he hardly realized that his ill-gotten property, now increased to twelve acres or more, was itself a very shaky bit of real estate. In fact, it was not real at all. His wife one day told him so, for she knew of her mean husband’s trickery.

About this time, heavy rains fell, for many days, and without ceasing, until all the region was reduced to pulp and the country seemed afloat. The dykes appeared ready to burst. Thousands feared that the land had an attack of the disease called val (fall) and that the soil would sink under the waves as portions of the realm had done before, in days long gone by.

Yet none of this impending trouble worried Ryer, whose greed grew by what it fed upon. In fact, the first day the sun shone again, quickly drying up parts of his farm, he had two horses harnessed up for work. Then he drove them so near the edge of the ditch that plough, man, and horses tumbled, and down they went, into the shiny mess of mud and water.

At this moment, also, the water, from below the bottom of the Zuyder Zee, welled up, in a great wave, like a mushroom, and the whole of Ryer’s soggy estate was on the point of breaking loose and seemed ready to float away.

The stingy fellow, as he fell overboard, bumped his head so hard on the plough beam, that he lay senseless for a half hour. He would certainly have been drowned, had not Pete, his stout son, who was not far away, and had seen the tumble, ran to the house, launched a boat and rowed quickly to the spot, where he had last seen his father. Grabbing his daddy by the collar, he hauled him, half dead, into the boat. Between his bump and his fright, and the cold bath, old Ryer was a long time coming to his wits. With filial piety, Pete kept on rubbing the paternal hands and restoring the circulation. All this, however, took a long time, even an hour or more. When his father was able to sit up and talk, Pete started to row back to the little wharf in front of his home.

But where was it, — the farm, with the house and fields? Whither had they gone? Ryer was too mystified to get his bearings, but Pete knew the points of the compass. Yet his father’s farm was not there. He looked at the shore of Overijssel, which he had left. Instead of the old, straight lines of willow trees, with the church spire beyond, there was a hollow and empty place. It looked as if a giant, as big as the world itself, had bitten out a piece of land and swallowed it down. Dumbfounded, father and son looked, the one at the other, but said nothing, for there was nothing to say.

Meanwhile, what had become of the farm and “the Queezel,” as the neighbors still called her — that is, the mother with the children. These good people soon saw that they were floating off somewhere. The mainland was every moment receding further into the distance. In fact, the farm was moving from Overijssel northward, towards Friesland. One by one, the church spires of the village near by faded from sight.

But when the wind changed from south to west, they seemed as if on a ship, with sails set, and to be making due west, for North Holland. The younger children, so far from being afraid, clapped their hands in glee. They thought it great fun to ferry across the big water, which they had so long seen before their eyes. Their stingy father had never owned a carriage, or allowed the horses to be ridden. He always made his family walk to church. Whether it were to the sermon, in the morning, or to hear the catechism expounded by the Domine, in the afternoon, all the family had to tramp on their wooden shoes there and back.

As for the floating farm, the cows could not understand it. They mooed piteously, while the donkey brayed loudly. At night, and day after day, no one could attend properly to the animals, to see that they were fed and given water. One always sees a big tub in the middle of a Dutch pasture field. Neither ducks, nor geese, nor chickens minded it in the least, but the thirsty cattle and horses, at the end of the first day, had drunk the tub dry. None of the dumb brutes, even if they had not been afraid of being drowned, could drink from the Zuyder Zee, for it was chiefly sea water, that is, salt, or at least brackish.

Occasionally this errant farm, that had thus broken loose, passed by fishermen, who wondered at so much land thus adrift. Yet they feared to hail, and go on board, lest the owners might think them intruding. Others thought it none of their business, supposing some crazy fellow was using his farm as a ship, to move his lands, goods and household, and thus save expense. In some of the villages, the runaway farm was descried from the tops of the church towers. Then, it furnished a subject for chat and gossip, during three days, to the women, as they milked the cows, or knitted stockings. To the men, also, while they smoked, or drank their coffee, it was a lively topic.

“There were real people on it and a house and stables,” said the sexton of a church, who declared that he had seen this new sort of a flying Dutchman. It was the usual sight — “cow, dog, and stork,” and then he quoted the old Dutch proverb.

At last, after several days, and when Ryer and his son were nearly finished, with fatigue and fright, in trying to row their boat to catch up with the runaway farm, they finally reached a village across the Zuyder Zee, in North Holland, where rye bread and turnips satisfied their hunger and they had waffles for dessert. Their small change went quickly, and then the two men were at their wit’s end to know what further to do.

By this time, out on the floating farm, the mother and children were wild with fear of starving. All the food for the cattle had been eaten up, the dog had no meat, the cat no milk, and the stork had run out of its supply of frogs. There was no sugar or coffee, and neither rye nor currant-bread, or sliced sausage or wafer-thin cheese for any one; but only potatoes and some barley grain. Happily, however, in drifting within sight of the village of Osterbeek, the mother and the children noticed that the east wind was freshening. Soon they descried the tops of the church towers of North Holland. The smell of cows and cheese and of burning peat fires from the chimneys made both animals and human beings happy, as the wind blew the island westward to the village.

Curiously enough, this was the very place at which, by hard rowing, Ryer and Pete had also arrived. Father and son were sitting in the hotel parlor, with their eyes down on the sandy floor, wondering how they were to pay for their next sandwich and coffee, for their money was all gone.

At that moment, a small boy clattered over the bricks in his klomps. He kicked these off, at the door, and rushed into the room. He had on his yellow baggy trousers and his hair, of the same color, was cut level with his ears. Half out of breath, he announced the coming, afloat, of what looked like a combination of farm and menagerie. A house, a woman, some girls, a dog, a cat, and a stork were on it and afloat.

At once, old man Ryer, still stiff from his long, cold bath, hobbled out, and Pete ran before him. Yes, it was mother, the children and all the animals! For the first time in his life, the mean old sinner felt his heart thumping, in grateful emotion, under his woolen jacket, with its two gold buttons. Something like real religion had finally oozed out from under his crusted soul.

A whole convoy of boys, fishermen, farmers, and a fat vrouw or two, volunteered to go out and tow the runaway farm to the village wharf. They succeeded in grappling the float and held it fast by ropes tied to a horse post.

That night all were happy. The farm was made fast by another rope put round the town pump. Then the villagers all went to bed. They were happy in having rescued a runaway farm, and they expected a good "loon" (reward) from the rich old Ryer, who, in the barroom, had talked big about his wealth.

As for the Van Boompjes, in order to save a landlord's bill for beds, they slept in their house, on board the farm, amid the lowing of their cattle that called out, in their own way, for more fodder; while the people in the village wondered at roosters crowing out on the water, and evidently the barn-yard birds were frightened.

And so they were; for, before midnight, when all other creatures were asleep, and not even a mouse was stirring on land, whether hard fast, or floating, the west wind rose mightily and blew to a terrific gale.

In a moment, the tow lines, that held the vagrant farm to the village pump and horse post, snapped. The Van Boompjes estate left the wharf and was driven, at a furious rate, across the Zuyder Zee. For several hours, like a ship under full sail, it was pushed westward by the wind. Yet so soundly did all sleep, man and wife, children and hens, that none awakened during this strange voyage. Even the roosters, after their first concert, held in their voices.

Suddenly, and as straight as if steered by a skilled pilot, the Van Boompjes farm, now an accomplished traveller, after its many adventures, shot into its old place. This took place with such violence, that Ryer Van Boompjes and his wife were both thrown out of bed. The cows were knocked over in the stable. The dog barked, supposing some one had kicked him. One old rooster, jostled off his perch, set up a tremendous crowing, that brought some of the early risers out to rub their eyes and see what was going on.

"Hemel en aard, bliksem en regen" (Heaven and earth, lightning and rain), they cried, "the old farm is back in its place."

In fact, the Van Boompjes real estate was snugly fitted once more to the mainland, and again in the niche it had left. It had struck so hard, that a ridge of raised sod, five inches high, marked the place of junction. At least twenty fishes and wriggling eels were smashed in the collision.

From that day forth the conscience of Van Boompjes returned, and he actually became an honest man. He sawed off, from time to time, portions of his big farm, and returned them home, with money paid as interest, to the owners. He found out all the mynheers, whose bits of land had drifted off. He sent a tidy sum of gold to the village in North Holland, where his farm had been moored, for a few hours. With a good conscience, he went to church and worshipped. His action, at each of the two collections, which Dutch folks always take up on Sundays, was noticed and praised as a sure and public sign of the old sinner's true repentance. When the deacons, with their white gloves on, poked under his nose their black velvet bags, hung at the end of fishing poles, ten feet long, this man, who had been for years a skinflint, dropped in a silver coin each time.

On the farm, all the animals, from duck to stork, and from dog to ox, now led happier lives. In the family, all declared that the behavior of the farm and the wind of the Zuyder Zee had combined to make a new man and a delightful father of old Van Boompjes. He lived long and happily and died greatly lamented.

16

SANTA KLAAS AND BLACK PETE

Who is Santa Klaas? How did he get his name? Where does he live? Did you ever see him?

These are questions, often asked of the storyteller, by little folks.

Before Santa Klaas came into the Netherlands, that is, to Belgium and Holland, he was called by many names, in the different countries in which he lived, and where he visited. Some people say he was born in Myra, many hundred years ago before the Dutch had a dyke or a windmill, or waffles, or wooden shoes. Others tell us how, in time of famine, the good saint found the bodies of three little boys, pickled in a tub, at a market for sale, and to be eaten up. They had been salted down to keep till sold. The kind gentleman and saint, whose name was Nicholas, restored these three children to life. It is said that once he lost his temper, and struck with his fist a gentleman named Arius; but the story-teller does not believe this, for he thinks it is a fib, made up long afterward. How could a saint lose his temper so?

Another story they tell of this same Nicholas was this. There were three lovely maidens, whose father had lost all his money. They wanted husbands very badly, but had no money to buy fine clothes to get married in. He took pity on both their future husbands and themselves. So he came to the window, and left three bags of gold, one after the other. Thus these three real girls all got real husbands, just as the novels tell us of the imaginary ones. They lived happily ever afterward, and never scolded their husbands.

By and by, men who were goldsmiths, bankers or pawnbrokers, made a sign of these three bags of gold, in the shape of balls. Now they hang them over their shop doors, two above one. This means “two to one, you will never get it again” — when you put your ring, furs, or clothes, or watch, or spoons, in pawn.

It is ridiculous how many stories they do tell of this good man, Nicholas, who was said to be what they call a bishop, or inspector, who goes around seeing that things are done properly in the churches. It was because the Reverend Mr. Nicholas had to travel about a good deal, that the sailors and travellers built temples and churches in his honor. To travel, one must have a ship on the sea and a horse on the land, or a reindeer up in the cold north; though now, it is said, he comes to Holland in a steamship, and uses an automobile.

On Santa Klaas eve, each of the Dutch children sets out in the chimney his wooden shoe. Into it, he puts a whisp of hay, to feed the traveller’s horse. When St. Nicholas first came to Holland, he arrived in a sailing ship from Spain and rode on a horse. Now he arrives in a big steamer, made of steel. Perhaps he will come in the future by aeroplane. To fill all the shoes and stockings, the good saint must have an animal to ride. Now the fast white horse, named Sleipnir, was ready for him, and on Sleipnir’s back he made his journeys.

How was Santa Klaas dressed?

His clothes were those of a bishop. He wore a red coat and his cap, higher than a turban and called a mitre, was split along two sides and pointed at the top. In his hands, he held a crozier, which was a staff borrowed from shepherds, who tended sheep; and with the crozier he helped the lambs over rough places; but the crozier of Santa Klaas was tipped with gold. He had white hair and rosy cheeks. For an old man, he was very active, but his heart and feelings never got to be one day older than a boy's, for these began when mother love was born and father's care was first in the world, but it never grows old.

When Santa Klaas travelled up north to Norway and into the icy cold regions, where there were sleighs and reindeer, he changed his clothes. Instead of his red robe, he wears a jacket, much shorter and trimmed with ermine, white as snow. Taking off his mitre, he wears a cap of fur also, and has laid aside his crozier. In the snow, wheels are no good, and runners are the best for swift travel. So, instead of his white horse and a wagon, he drives in a sleigh, drawn by two stags with large horns. In every country, he puts into the children's stockings hung up, or shoes set in the fireplace, something which they like. In Greenland, for example, he gives the little folks seal blubber, and fish hooks. So his presents are not the same in every country. However, for naughty boys and girls everywhere, instead of filling shoes and stockings, he may leave a switch, or pass them by empty.

When Santa Klaas travels, he always brings back good things. Now when he first came to New Netherland in America, what did he find to take back to Holland?

Well, it was here, on our continent, that he found corn, potatoes, pumpkins, maple sugar, and something to put in pipes to smoke; besides strange birds and animals, such as turkeys and raccoons, in addition to many new flowers. What may be called a weed, like the mullein, for example, is considered very pretty in Europe, where they did not have such things. There it is called the American Velvet Plant, or the King's Candlestick.

But, better than all, Santa Klaas found a negro boy, Pete, who became one of the most faithful of his helpers. At Utrecht, in Holland, the students of the University give, every year, a pageant representing Santa Klaas on his white horse, with Black Pete, who is always on hand and very busy.

Black Pete’s father brought peanuts from Africa to America, and sometimes Santa Klaas drops a bagful of these, as a great curiosity, into the shoes of the Dutch young folks.

Santa Klaas was kept very busy visiting the homes and the public schools in New Netherland; for in these schools all the children, girls as well as boys, and not boys only, received a free education. In later visits he heard of Captain Kidd and his fellow pirates, who wore striped shirts and red caps, and had pigtails of hair, tied in eel skins, and hanging down their backs. These fellows wore earrings and stuck pistols in their belts and daggers at their sides. Instead of getting their gold honestly, and giving it to the poor, or making presents to the children, the pirates robbed ships. Then, as ‘twas said, they buried their treasure. Lunatics and boys that read too many novels, have ever since been digging in the land to find Captain Kidd’s gold.

Santa Klaas does not like such people. Moreover, he was just as good to the poor slaves, as to white children. So the colored people loved the good saint also. Their pickaninnies always hung up their stockings on the evening of December sixth.

Santa Klaas filled the souls of the people in New Netherland so full of his own spirit, that now children all over the United States, and those of Americans living in other countries, hang up their stockings and look for a visit from him.

In Holland, Black Pete was very loyal and true to his master, carrying not only the boxes and bundles of presents for the good children, but also the switches for bad boys and girls. Between the piles of pretty things to surprise good children, on one side, and the boxes of birch and rattan, the straps and hard hair-brush backs for naughty youngsters, Pete holds the horn of plenty. In this are dolls, boats, trumpets, drums, balls, toy houses, flags, the animals in Noah’s Ark, building blocks, toy castles and battleships, story and picture books, little locomotives, cars, trains, automobiles, aeroplanes, rocking horses, windmills, besides cookies, candies, marbles, tops, fans, lace, and more nice things than one can count.

Pete also takes care of the horse of Santa Klaas, named Sleipnir, which goes so fast that, in our day, the torpedo and submarine U-boats are named after him. This wonderful animal used to have eight feet, for swiftness. That was when Woden rode him, but, in course of time, four of his legs dropped off, so that the horse of Santa Klaas looks less like a centipede and more like other horses. Whenever Santa Klaas walks, Pete has to go on foot also, even though the chests full of presents for the children are very heavy and Pete has to carry them.

Santa Klaas cares nothing about rich girls or poor girls, for all the kinds of boys he knows about or thinks of are good boys and bad boys. A youngster caught stealing jam out of the closet, or cookies from the kitchen, or girls lifting lumps of sugar out of the sugar bowl, or eating too much fudge, or that are mean, stingy, selfish, or have bad tempers, are considered naughty and more worthy of the switch than of presents. So are the boys who attend Sunday School for a few weeks before Christmas, and then do not come any more till next December. These Santa Klaas turns over to Pete, to be well thrashed.

In Holland, Pete still keeps on the old dress of the time of New Netherland. He wears a short jacket, with wide striped trousers, in several bright colors, shoes strapped on his feet, a red cap and a ruff around his neck. Sometimes he catches bad boys, to put them in a bag for a half hour, to scare them; or, he shuts them up in a dark closet, or sends them to bed without any supper. Or, instead of allowing them eleven buckwheat cakes at breakfast, he makes them stop at five. When Santa Klaas leaves Holland to go back to Spain, or elsewhere, Pete takes care of the nag Sleipnir, and hides himself until Santa Klaas comes again next year.

The story-teller knows where Santa Klaas lives, but he won’t tell.

17

THE GOBLINS TURNED TO STONE

When the cow came to Holland, the Dutch folks had more and better things to eat. Fields of wheat and rye took the place of forests. Instead of acorns and the meat of wild game, they now enjoyed milk and bread. The youngsters made pets of the calves and all the family lived under one roof. The cows had a happy time of it, because they were kept so clean, fed well, milked regularly, and cared for in winter.

By and by the Dutch learned to make cheese and began to eat it every day. They liked it, whether it was raw, cooked, toasted, sliced, or in chunks, or served with other good things. Even the foxes and wild creatures were very fond of the smell and taste of toasted cheese. They came at night close to the houses, often stealing the cheese out of the pantry. When a fox would not, or could not, be caught in a trap by any other bait, a bit of cooked cheese would allure him so that he was caught and his fur made use of.

When the people could not get meat, or fish, they had toasted bread and cheese, which in Dutch is “geroostered brod met kaas.” Then they laughed, and named the new dish after whatever they pretended it was. It was just the same, as when they called goodies, made out of flour and sugar, “nuts,” “fingers,” “calves” and “lambs.” Even grown folks love to play and pretend things like children.

Soon, it became the fashion to have cheese parties. Men and women would sit around the fire, by the hour, nibbling the toast that had melted cheese poured over it. But after they had gone to bed, some of them dreamed.

Now some dreams may be pleasant, but cheese-dreams were not usually of this sort. The dreamer thought that a big she-horse had climbed upon the bed and sat down upon his stomach. Once there, the beast grinned hideously, snored, and pressed its hoofs down on the sleeper’s breast, so that he could not breathe or speak. The feeling was a horrible one; but, just when the dreamer expected to choke, he seemed to jump off some high place, and come down somewhere, very far off. Then the animal ran away and the terrible dream was over.

This was called a nightmare, or in Dutch a “nacht merrie.” “Nacht” means night, and “merrie” a filly or a mare. In the dream, it was not a small or a young horse, but always a big mare that squatted down on a man’s stomach.

In those days, instead of seeking for the trouble inside, or asking whether there was any connection between nightmares and too hearty eating of cheese, the Dutch fathers laid it all on the goblins.

The goblins, or sooty elves, that used to live in Holland, were ugly, short fellows, very smart, quick in action and able to travel far in a second. They were first cousins to the kabouters. They had big heads, green eyes and split feet, like cows. They were so ugly, that they were ordered to live under ground and never come out during the day. If they did, they would be turned to stone.

The goblins had a bad reputation for mischief. They liked to have fun with human beings. They would listen to the conversation of people and then mock them by repeating the last word. That is the reason why echoes were called “week klank,” or dwarf’s talk.

Because these goblins were short, they envied men their greater stature and wanted to grow to the height of human beings. As they were not able of themselves to do this, they often sneaked into a house and snatched a child out of the cradle. In place of the stolen baby, one of their own wizened children was laid. That was the reason why many a poor little baby, that grew puny and thin, was called a “wiseel-kind,” or changeling. When the sick baby could not get well, and medicine or care seemed to do no good, the mother thought that the goblins had taken away her own child.

It was only the female goblins that would change themselves into night mares and sit on the body of the dreamer. They usually came in through a hole or a crack; but if that person in the house could plug up the hole, or stop the crack, he could conquer the female goblin, and do what he pleased with her. If a man wanted to, he could make her his wife. So long as the hole was kept stopped up, by which the goblin entered, she made a good wife. If this crack was left open, or if the plug dropped out of the hole, the she-goblin was off and could never be found again.

The ruler of the goblins lived beneath the earth, as the king of the underworld. His palace was made of gold and glittered with gems. He had riches more than men could count. All the goblins and kabouters, who worked in the mines and at the forges and anvils, making swords, spears, bells, or jewels, obeyed him.

The most wonderful things about these dwarfs was the way in which they made themselves invisible, so that men were able to see neither the night mares nor the male goblins, while at their mischief. This was a little red cap which every goblin possessed, and which he was careful never to lose. The red cap acted like a snuffer on a candle, to put it out, and while under it, no goblin could be seen by mortal eyes.

Now it happened that one night, as a dear old lady lay dying on her bed, a middle-sized goblin, with his red cap on, came in through a crack into the room, and stood at the foot of her bed. Just for mischief and to frighten her by making himself visible, he took off his red cap.

When the old lady saw the imp, she cried out loudly:

“Go way, go way. Don’t you know I belong to my Lord?”

But the goblin dwarf only laughed at her, with his green eyes.

Calling her daughter Alida, the old lady whispered in her ear:

“Bring me my wooden shoes.”

Rising up in her bed, the old lady hurled the heavy klomps, one after the other, at the goblin’s head. At this, he started to get out through the crack, and away, but before his body was half out, Alida snatched his red cap away. Then she stuck a needle in his cloven foot that made him howl with pain. Alida looked at the crack through which he escaped and found it quite sooty.

Twirling the little red cap around on her forefinger, a brilliant thought struck her. She went and told the men her plan, and they agreed to it. This was to gather hundreds of farmers and townfolk, boys and men together, on the next moonlight night, and round up all the goblins in Drenthe. By pulling off their caps, and holding them till the sun rose, when they would be petrified, the whole brood could be exterminated.

So, knowing that the goblin would come the next night, to steal back his red cap, she left a note outside the crack, telling him to bring several hundred goblins to the great moor, or veldt. There, at a certain hour near midnight, he would find the red cap on a bush. With his companions, he could celebrate the return of the cap. In exchange for this, she asked the goblin to bring her a gold necklace.

The moonlight night came round and hundreds of the men of Drenthe gathered together. They were armed with horseshoes, and with witch-hazel and other plants, which are like poison to the sooty elves. They had also bits of parchment covered with runes, a strange kind of writing, and various charms which are supposed to be harmful to goblins. It was agreed to move together in a circle towards the centre, where the lady Alida was to hang the red cap upon a bush. Then, with a rush, the men were to snatch off all the goblins' caps, pulling and grabbing, whether they could see, or even feel anything, or not.

The placing of the red cap upon the bush in the centre, by the lady Alida, was the signal.

So, when the great round-up narrowed to a small space, the men began to grab, snatch and pull. Putting their hands out in the air, at the height of about a yard from the ground, they hustled and pushed hard. In a few minutes, hundreds of red caps were in their hands, and as many goblins became visible. They were, indeed, an ugly host.

Yet hundreds of other goblins escaped, with their caps on, and were still invisible. As they broke away in groups, however, they were seen, for in each bunch was one or more visible fellow, because he was capless. So the men divided into squads, to chase the imps a long distance, even to many distant places. It was a most curious night battle. Here could be seen groups of men in a tussle with the goblins, many more of which, but by no means all, were made capless and visible.

The racket kept up till the sky in the east was gray. Had all the goblins run away, it would have been well with them. Hundreds of them did, but the others were so anxious to help their fellows, or to get back their own caps, fearing the disgrace of returning head bare to their king, and getting a good scolding, that the sun suddenly rose on them, before they knew it was day.

At the first level ray, the goblins were all turned to stone.

The treeless, desolate land, which, a moment before, was full of struggling goblins and men, became as quiet as the blue sky above. Nothing but some rounded rocks or stones, in groups, marked the spot where the bloodless battle of imps and men had been fought.

There, these stones, big and little, lie to this day. Among the buckwheat, and the potato blossoms of the summer, under the shadows and clouds, and whispering breezes of autumn, or covered with the snows of winter, they are seen on desolate heaths. Over some of them, oak trees, centuries old, have grown. Others are near, or among, the farmers’ grain fields, or, not far from houses and barn-yards. The cows wander among them, knowing nothing of their past. And the goblins come no more.

18

THE MOULDY PENNY

"Gold makes a woman penny-white," said the Dutch, in the days when fairies were plentiful and often in their thoughts. What did the proverb mean? Who ever saw a white penny?

Well, that was long ago, when pennies were white, because they were then made of silver. Each one was worth a denary, which was a coin worth about a shilling, or a quarter of a dollar.

As the Dutch had pounds, shillings and pence, before the English had them, we see what *d* in the signs £ s. d. means, that is, a denary, or a white penny, made of silver.

In the old days, before the Dutch had houses with glass windows or clothes of cloth or linen, or hats or shoes, cows and horses, or butter and cheese, they knew nothing of money and they cared less. Almost everything, even the land, was owned in common by all. Their wants were few. Whenever they needed anything from other countries they swapped or bartered. In this way they traded salt for furs, or fish for iron. But when they met with, or had to fight, another tribe that was stronger or richer, or knew more than they did, they required other things, which the forests and waters could not furnish. So, by and by, pedlars and merchants came up from the south. They brought new and strange articles, such as mirrors, jewelry, clothes, and pretty things, which the girls and women wanted and had begged their daddies and husbands to get for them. For the men, they brought iron tools and better weapons, improved traps, to catch wild beasts, and wagons, with wheels that had spokes. When regular trade began, it became necessary to have money of some kind.

Then coins of gold, silver, and copper were seen in the towns and villages, and even in the woods and on the heaths of Holland. Yet there was a good deal that was strange and mysterious about these round, shining bits of metal, called money.

“Money. What is money?” asked many a proud warrior disdainfully.

Then the wise men explained to the fighting men, that money was named after Juno Moneta, a goddess in Rome. She told men that no one would ever want for money who was honest and just. Then, by and by, the mint was in her temple and money was coined there. Then, later, in Holland, the word meant money, but many people, who wanted to get rich quickly, worshipped her. In time, however, the word “gold” meant money in general.

When a great ruler, named Charlemagne, conquered or made treaties with our ancestors, he allowed them to have mints and to coin money. Then, again, it seemed wonderful how the pedlars and the goldsmiths and the men called Lombards — strange long-bearded men from the south, who came among the Dutch — grew rich faster than the work people. They seemed to amass gold simply by handling money.

When a man who knew what a silver penny would do, made a present of one to his wife, her face lighted up with joy. So in time, the word “penny white,” meant the smiling face of a happy woman. Yet it was also noticed that the more people had, the more they wanted. The girls and boys quickly found that money would buy what the pedlars brought. In the towns, shops sprang up, in which were many curious things, which tempted people to buy.

Some tried to spend their money and keep it too — to eat their cake and have it also — but they soon found that they could not do this. There were still many foolish, as well as wise people, in the land, even during the new time of money. A few saved their coins and were happy in giving some to the poor and needy. Many fathers had what was called a “sparpot,” or home savings bank, and taught their children the right use of money. It began to be the custom for people to have family names, so that a girl was not merely the daughter of so-and-so, nor a boy the son of a certain father. In the selection of names, those which had the word “penny” in them proved to be very popular. To keep a coin in the little home bank, without spending it, long enough for it to gather mould, which it did easily in the damp climate of Holland, that is, to darken and get a crust on it, was considered a great virtue in the owner. This showed that the owner had a strong mind and power of self-control. So the name “Schimmelpennig,” or “mouldy penny,” became honorable, because such people were wise and often kind and good. They did not waste their money, but made good use of it.

On the other hand, were some mean and stingy folks, who liked to hear the coins jingle. Instead of wisely spending their cash, or trading with it, they hoarded their coins; that is, they hid them away in a stocking, or a purse, or in a jar, or a cracked cooking pot, that couldn’t be used. Often they put it away somewhere in the chimney, behind a loose brick. Then, at night, when no one was looking, these miserly folks counted, rubbed, jingled, and gloated over the shining coins and never helped anybody. So there grew up three sorts of people, called the thrifty, the spendthrifts, and the misers. These last were the meanest and most disliked of all. Others, again, hid their money away, so as to have some, when sick, or old, and they talked about it. No one found fault with these, though some laughed and said “a penny in the savings jar makes more noise than when it is full of gold.” Even when folks got married they were exhorted by the minister to save money, “so as to have something to give to the poor.”

Now when the fairies, that work down underground, heard that the Dutch had learned the use of money, and had even built a mint to stamp the metal, they held a feast to talk over what they should do to help or harm. In any event, they wanted to have some fun with the mortals above ground.

That has always been the way with kabouters. They are in for fun, first, last, and always. So, with punches and hammers, they made counterfeit money. Then, in league with the elves, they began also to delude misers and make them believe that much money makes men happy.

A long time after the mint had been built, two kabouters met to talk over their adventures.

“It is wonderful what fools these creatures called men are,” said the first one. “There’s old Vrek. He has been hoarding coins for the last fifty years. Now, he has a pile of gold in guilders and stivers, but there’s hardly anything of his old self left. His soul is as small as a shrimp. I whispered to him not to let out his money in trade, but to keep it shut up. His strong box is full to bursting, but what went into the chest has oozed out of the man. He died, last night, and hardly anybody considers him worth burying. Some one on the street to-day asked what Vrek had left behind. The answer was ‘Nothing — he took it all with him, for he had so little to take.’“

“That’s jolly,” said the older kabouter, who was a wicked looking fellow. “I’ll get some fun out of this. To shrivel up souls will be my business henceforth. There’s nothing like this newfangled business of getting money, that will do it so surely.”

So this ugly old imp went “snooping” around, as the Dutch say, about people who sneak and dodge in and out of places, to which they ought not to go, and in houses where they should not be found. This imp’s purpose was to make men crazy on the subject of making money, when they tried, as many of them did, to get rich quickly in mean ways. Sorry to tell, the imp found a good many promising specimens to work upon, at his business of making some wise men foolish. He taught them to take out of their souls what they hoarded away. To such fellows, when they became misers, he gave the name of “Schim,” which means a shadow. It was believed by some people that such shrivelled up wretches had no bowels.

Soon after this, a great meeting of kabouters was held, in the dark realms below ground. Each one told what he had been doing on the earth. After the little imps had reported, the chief kabouter, when his turn came, cried out:

“I shall tell of three brothers, and what each one did with the first silver penny he earned.”

“Go on,” they all cried.

“I’ve caught one schim young. He married a wife only last year, but he won’t give her one gulden a year to dress on. He skimps the table, pares the cheese till the rind is as thin as paper, and makes her live on skim milk and barley. Besides this, he won’t help the poor with a stiver. I saw him put away a bright and shining silver penny, fresh from the mint. He hid coin and pocketbook in the bricks of a chimney. So I climbed down from the roof, seized both and ran away. I smeared the purse with wax and hid it in the thick rib of a boat, by the wharf. There the penny will gather mould enough. Ha! Ha! Ha!”

At this, the little imps broke out into a titter that sounded like the cackle of a hen trying to tell she had laid an egg.

“Good for you! Serves the old schim right,” said a good kabouter, who loved to help human beings. “Now, I’ll tell you about his brother, who has a wife and baby. He feeds and clothes them well, and takes good care of his old mother.

“Almost every week he helps some poor little boy, or girl, that has no mother or father. I heard him say he wished he could take care of poor orphans. So, when he was asleep, at night, I whispered in his ear and made him dream.

"'Put away your coin where it won't get mouldy and show that a penny that keeps moving is not like a rolling stone that gathers no moss. Deliver it to the goldsmiths for interest and leave it in your will to increase, until it becomes a great sum. Then, long after you are dead, the money you have saved and left for the poor *weesies* (orphans) will build a house for them. It will furnish food and beds and pay for nurses that will care for them, and good women who will be like mothers. Other folks, seeing what you have done, will build orphan houses. Then we shall have a Wees House (orphan asylum) in every town. No child, without a father or mother, in all Holland, will have to cry for milk or bread. Don't let your penny mould.'

"The third brother, named Spill-penny, woke up on the same morning, with a headache. He remembered that he had spent his silver penny at the gin house, buying drinks for a lot of worthless fellows like himself. He and his wife, with little to eat, had to wear ragged clothes, and the baby had not one toy to play with. When his wife gently chided him, he ran out of the house in bad humor. Going to the tap room, he ordered a drink of what we call 'Dutch courage,' that is, a glass of gin, and drank it down. Then what do you think he did?"

"Tell us," cried the imps uproariously.

"He went into a clothing house, bought a suit of clothes, and had it 'charged.'"

"That's it. I've known others like him," said an old imp.

"Now it was kermiss day in the village, and all that afternoon and evening this spendthrift was roystering with his fellow 'zuip zaks' (boon companions). With them, it was 'always drunk, always dry.' Near midnight, being too full of gin, he stumbled in the gutter, struck his head on the curb, and fell down senseless.

"Her husband not coming home that night, the distracted wife went out early in the morning. She found several men lying asleep on the sidewalks or in the gutters. She turned each one over, just as she did buckwheat cakes on the griddle, to see if this man or that was hers. At last she discovered her worthless husband, but no shaking or pulling could awake him. He was dead.

"Now there was a covetous undertaker in town, who carted away the corpse, and then told the widow that she must spend much money on the funeral, in order to have her husband buried properly; or else, the tongues of the neighbors would wag. So the poor woman had to sell her cow, the only thing she had, and was left poorer than ever. That was the end of Spill-penny."

"A jolly story," cried the kabouters in chorus. "Served him right. Now tell us about Vrek the miser. Go on."

"Well, the saying 'Much coin, much care,' is hardly true of him, for I and my trusty helpers ran away with all he had. With his first silver penny he began to hoard his money. He has been hunting for years for that penny, but has not found it. It will be rather mouldy, should he find it, but that he never will."

"Why not?" asked a young imp.

"For a good reason. He would not pay his boatmen their wages. So they struck, and refused to work. When he tried to sail his own boat, it toppled over and sunk, and Vrek was drowned. His wife was saved the expenses of a funeral, for his carcass was never found, and the covetous undertaker lost a job."

"What of the third one?" they asked.

"Oh, Mynheer Eerlyk, you mean? No harm can come to him. Everybody loves him and he cares for the orphans. There will be no mouldy penny in his house."

Then the meeting broke up. The good kabouters were happy. The bad ones, the imps, were sorry to miss what they hoped would be a jolly story.

When a thousand years passed away and the age of newspapers and copper pennies had come, there were no descendants of the two brothers

Spill-penny and Schim; but of Mynheer Eerlyk there were as many as the years that had flown since he made a will. In this document, he ordered that his money, in guilders of gold and pennies of silver, should remain at compound interest for four hundred years. In time, the ever increasing sum passed from the goldsmiths to the bankers, and kept on growing enormously. At last this large fortune was spent in building hundreds of homes for orphans.

According to his wish, each girl in the asylum dressed in clothes that were of the colors on the city arms. In Amsterdam, for example, each orphan child's frock is half red and half black, with white aprons, and the linen and lace caps are very neat and becoming to their rosy faces. In Friesland, where golden hair and apple blossom cheeks are so often seen with the white lace and linen, some one has called the orphan girls "Apples of gold in pictures of silver." Among the many glories of the Netherlands is her care for the aged and the orphans.

One of the thirty generations of the Eerlyks read one day in the newspaper:

"Last week, while digging a very deep canal, some workman struck his pickaxe against timbers that were black with age, and nearly as hard as stone. These, on being brought up, showed that they were the ribs of an ancient boat. Learned men say that there was once a river here, which long since dried up. All the pieces of the boat were recovered, and, under the skilful hands of our ship carpenters, have been put together and the whole vessel is now set up and on view in our museum."

"We'll go down to-morrow on our way home from school, and see the curiosity," cried one of the Eerlyk boys, clapping his hands.

"Wait," said his father, "there's more in the story.

"To-day, the janitor of the museum, while examining a wide crack in one of the ribs, which was covered with wax, picked this substance away. He poked his finger in the crack, and finding something soft, pulled it out. It was a rough leather purse, inside of which was a coin, mouldy with age and dark as the wood. Even after cleaning it with acid, it was hard to read what was stamped on it; but, strange to say, the face of the coin had left its impression on the leather, which had been covered with wax. From this, though the metal of the coin was black, and the mould thick on the coin, what they saw showed that it was a silver penny of the age of Charlemagne, or the ninth century.”

“Charlemagne is French, father, but we call him Karel de Groot, or Charles the Great.”

“Yes, my son. Don’t you hear Karel’s Klok (the curfew) sounding? ‘Tis time for little folks to go to bed.”

19

THE GOLDEN HELMET

For centuries, more than can be counted on the fingers of both hands, the maidens and mothers of Friesland have worn a helmet of gold covering the crown and back of their heads, and with golden rosettes at each ear. It marks the Frisian girl or woman. She is thus known by this head-dress as belonging to a glorious country, that has never been conquered and is proudly called Free Frisia. It is a relic of the age of gold, when this precious metal was used in a thousand forms, not seen to-day.

Of how and why the golden helmet is worn, this is the story:

In days gone by, when forests covered the land and bears and wolves were plentiful, there were no churches in Friesland. The people were pagans and all worshipped Woden, whom the Frisians called Fos-i-te'. Certain trees were sacred to him. When a baby was ill, or grown people had a disease, which medicine could not help, they laid the sick one at the foot of the holy tree, hoping for health soon to come. But, should the patient die under the tree, then the sorrowful friends were made glad, if the leaves of the tree fell upon the corpse. It was death to any person who touched the sacred tree with an axe, or made kindling wood, even of its branches.

Now among the wild people of the north, who ate acorns and were clothed in the skins of animals, there came, from the Christian lands of the south, a singer with his harp. Invited to the royal court, he sang sweet songs. To these the king's daughter listened with delight, until the tears, first of sorrow and then of joy, rolled down her lovely cheeks.

This maiden was the pride of her father, because of her sweet temper and willing spirit, while all the people boasted of her beauty. Her eyes were of the color of a sky without clouds. No spring flower could equal the pink and rose in her cheeks. Her lips were like the red coral, which the ship men brought from distant shores. Her long tresses rivalled gold in their glory. And, because her father worshipped Fos-i-té', the god of justice, and his daughter was always so fair to all her playmates, he, in his pride of her, gave her the name Fos-te-dí'-na, that is, the darling of Fos-i-té', or the Lady of Justice.

The singer from the south sang a new song, and when he played upon his harp his music was apt to be soft and low; sometimes sad, even, and often appealing. It was so much finer, and oh! so different, from what the glee men and harpers in the king's court usually rendered for the listening warriors. Instead of being about fighting and battle, or the hunting of wolves and bears, of stags and the aurochs, it was of healing the sick and helping the weak. In place of battles and the exploits of war lords, in fighting and killing Danes, the harper's whole story was of other things and about gentle people. He sang neither of war, nor of the chase, nor of fighting gods, nor of the storm maidens, that carry up to the sky, and into the hall of Woden, the souls of the slain on the battlefield. The singer sang of the loving Father in Heaven, who sent his dear Son to earth to live and die, that men might be saved. He made music with voice and instrument about love, and hope, and kindness to the sick and poor, of charity to widows and to orphans, and about the delights of doing good. He closed by telling the story of the crown of thorns, how wicked men nailed this good prophet to a cross, and how, when tender-hearted women wept, the Holy Teacher told them not to weep for him, but for themselves and their children. This mighty lord of noble thoughts and words lived what he taught. He showed greatness in the hour of death, by first remembering his mother, and then by forgiving his enemies.

“What! forgive an enemy? Forgive even the Danes? What horrible doctrine do we hear!” cried the men of war. “Let us kill this singer from the south.” And they beat their swords on their metal shields, till the clangor was deafening. The great hall rang with echoes of the din, as if for battle. The Druids, or pagan priests, even more angry, applauded the action of the fighting men.

But Fos-te-dí-na rushed forward to shield the harper, and her long golden hair covered him.

“No!” said the king to his warriors. “This man is my guest. I invited him and he shall be safe here.”

Sullen and bitter in their hearts, both priests and war men left the hall, breathing out revenge and feeling bound to kill the singer. Soon all were quiet in slumber, for the hour was late.

Why were the pagan followers of the king so angry with the singer?

The answer to this question is a story in itself.

Only three days before, a party of Christian Danes had been taken prisoners in the forest. They had come, peaceably and without arms, into the country; for they wanted to tell the Frisians about the new religion, which they had themselves received. In the cold night air, they had, unwittingly, cut off some of the dead branches of a tree sacred to the god Fos-i-té to kindle a fire.

A spy, who had closely watched them, ran and told his chief. Now, the Christian Danes were prisoners and would be given to the hungry wolves to be torn to pieces. That was the law concerning sacrilege against the trees of the gods.

Some of the Frisians had been to Rome, the Eternal City, and had there learned, from the cruel Romans, how to build great enclosures, not of stone but of wood. Here, on holidays, they gave their prisoners of war to the wild beasts, for the amusement of thousands of the people. The Frisians could get no lions or tigers, for these fierce brutes live in hot countries; but they sent hundreds of hunters into the woods for many miles around. These bold fellows drove the deer, bears, wolves, and the aurochs within an ever narrowing circle towards the pits. Into these, dug deep in the ground and covered with branches and leaves, the animals fell down and were hauled out with ropes. The deer were kept for their meat, but the bears and wolves were shut up, in pens, facing the great enclosure. When maddened with hunger, these ravenous beasts of prey were to be let loose on the Christian Danes. Several aurochs, made furious by being goaded with pointed sticks, or pricked by spears, were to rush out and trample the poor victims to death.

The heart of the beautiful Fos-te-dí-na, who had heard the songs of the singer of faith in the one God and love for his creatures, was deeply touched. She resolved to set the captives free. Being a king's daughter, she was brave as a man. So, at midnight, calling a trusty maid-servant, she, with a horn lantern, went out secretly to the prison pen. She unbolted the door, and, in the name of their God and hers, she bade the prisoners return to their native land.

How the wolves in their pen did roar, when, on the night breeze, they sniffed the presence of a newcomer! They hoped for food, but got none.

The next morning, when the crowd assembled, but found that they were to be cheated of their bloody sport, they raged and howled. Coming to the king, they demanded his daughter's punishment. The pagan priests declared that the gods had been insulted, and that their anger would fall on the whole tribe, because of the injury done to their sacred tree. The hunters swore they would invade the Danes' land and burn all their churches.

Fos-te-dí-na was summoned before the council of the priests, who were to decide on the punishment due her. Being a king's daughter, they could not put her to death by throwing her to the wolves.

Even as the white-bearded high priest spoke, the beautiful girl heard the fierce creatures howling, until her blood curdled, but she was brave and would not recant.

In vain they threatened the maiden, and invoked the wrath of the gods upon her. Bravely she declared that she would suffer, as her Lord did, rather than deny him.

“So be it,” cried the high priest. “Your own words are your sentence. You shall wear a crown of thorns.”

Fos-te-di’-na was dismissed. Then the old men sat long, in brooding over what should be done. They feared the gods, but were afraid, also, to provoke their ruler to wrath. They finally decided that the maiden’s life should be spared, but that for a whole day, from sunrise to sunset, she should stand in the market-place, with a crown of sharp thorns pressed down hard upon her head. The crowd should be allowed to revile her for being a Christian and none be punished; but no vile language was to be allowed, or stones or sticks were to be thrown at her.

Fos-te-di’-na refused to beg for mercy and bravely faced the ordeal. She dressed herself in white garments, made from the does and fawns — free creatures of the forest — and unbound her golden tresses. Then she walked with a firm step to the centre of the market-place.

“Bring the thorn-crown for the blasphemer of Fos-i-té,” cried the high priest.

This given to him, the king’s daughter kneeled, and the angry old man, his eyes blazing like fire, pressed the sharp thorns slowly, down and hard, upon the maiden’s brow. Quickly the red blood trickled down over her golden hair and face. Then in long, narrow lines of red, the drops fell, until the crimson stains were seen over the back, front, and sides of her white garments.

But without wincing, the brave girl stood up, and all day long, while the crowd howled, in honor of their gods, and rough fellows jeered at her, Fos-te-dí-na was silent and patient, like her Great Example. Inwardly, she prayed the Father of all to pardon and forgive. There were not a few who pitied the bleeding maiden wearing the cruel crown, that drew the blood that stained her shining hair and once white clothing.

Years passed by and a great change came over land and people. The very scars on Fos-te-dí-na's forehead softened the hearts of the people. Thousands of them heard the words of the good missionaries. Churches arose, on which was seen the shining cross. Idols were abolished and the trees, once sacred to the old gods, were cut down. Meadows, rich with cows, smiled where wolves had roamed. The changes, even in ten years, were like those in a fairy tale. Best of all, a Christian prince from the south, grandson of Charlemagne, fell in love with Fos-te-dí-na, now queen of the country. He sought her hand, and won her heart, and the date for the marriage was fixed. It was a great day for Free Frisia. The wedding was to be in a new church, built on the very spot where Fos-te-dí-na had stood, in pain and sorrow, when the crown of thorns was pressed upon her brow.

On that morning, a bevy of pretty maidens, all dressed in white, came in procession to the palace. One of them bore in her hands a golden crown, with plates coming down over the forehead and temples. It was made in such a way that, like a helmet, it completely covered and concealed the scars of the sovereign lady. So Fos-te-dí-na was married, with the golden helmet on her head. "But which," asked some, "was the more glorious, her long tresses, floating down her back, or the shining crown above it?" Few could be sure in making answer.

Instead of a choir singing hymns, the harper, who had once played in the king's hall, now an older man, had been summoned, with his harp, to sing in solo. In joyous spirits, he rendered into the sweet Frisian tongue, two tributes in song to the crowned and glorified Lord of all.

One praised the young guest at the wedding at Cana, Friend of man, who turned water into wine; the other, "The Great Captain of our

Salvation," who, in full manly strength, suffered, thorn-crowned, for us all.

Then the solemn silence, that followed the song, was broken by the bride's coming out of the church. Though by herself alone, without adornment, Fos-te-dí-na was a vision of beauty. Her head-covering looked so pretty, and the golden helmet was so becoming, that other maidens, also, when betrothed, wished to wear it. It became the fashion-for Christian brides, on their wedding days, to put on this glorified crown of thorns.

All the jewelers approved of the new bridal head-dress, and in time this golden ornament was worn in Friesland every day. Thus it has come to pass that the Frisian helmet, which is the glorified crown of thorns, is, in one form or another, worn even in our day. When Fos-te-dí-na's first child, a boy, was born, the happy parents named him William, which is only another word for Gild Helm. Out from this northern region, and into all the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands, the custom spread. In one way or another, one can discern, in the headdresses or costumes of the Dutch and Flemish women, the relics of ancient history.

When Her Majesty, the Dutch Queen, visits the Frisians, in the old land of the north, which her fathers held so dear, she, out of compliment to Free Frisia, wears the ancient costume, surmounted by the golden helm. Those who know the origin of the name Wilhelmina read in it the true meaning, which is,

"The Sovereign Lady of the Golden Helm."

20

WHEN WHEAT WORKED WOE

Many a day has the story-teller wandered along the dykes, which overlook the Zuyder Zee. Once there were fertile fields, and scores of towns, where water now covers all. Then fleets of ships sailed on the bosom of Lake Flevo, and in the river which ran into the sea. Bright and beautiful cities dotted the shores, and church bells chimed merrily for the bridal, or tolled in sympathy for the sorrowing. Many were the festal days, because of the wealth, which the ships brought from lands near and far.

But to-day the waters roll over the spot and “The Dead Cities of the Zuyder Zee” are a proverb. Yet all are not dead, in one and the same sense. Some lie far down under the waves, their very names forgotten, because of the ocean’s flood, which in one night, centuries ago, rushed in to destroy. Others languished, because wealth came no longer in the ships, and the seaports dried up. And one, because of a foolish woman, instead of holding thousands of homes and people, is to-day only a village nestling behind the dykes. It holds a few hundred people and only a fragment of land remains of its once great area.

In the distant ages of ice and gravel, when the long and high glaciers of Norway poked their cold noses into Friesland, Stavoren held the shrine of Stavo, the storm-god. The people were very poor, but many pilgrims came to worship at Stavo’s altars. After the new religion came into the land, wealth increased, because the ships traded with the warm lands in the south. A great city sprang up, to which the counts of Holland granted a charter, with privileges second to none. It was written that Stavoren should have “the same freedom which a free city enjoys from this side of the mountains (the Alps) to the sea.”

Then there came an age of gold in Stavoren. People were so rich, that the bolts and hinges and the keys and locks of their doors were made of this precious yellow metal. In some of the houses, the parlor floor was paved with ducats from Spain.

Now in this city lived a married couple, whose wealth came from the ships. The man, a merchant, was a simple hearted and honest fellow, who worked hard and was easily pleased.

But his wife was discontented, always peevish and never satisfied with anything. Even her neighbors grew tired of her whining and complaints. They declared that on her tombstone should be carved these words:

“She wanted something else”

Now on every voyage, made by the many ships he owned, the merchant charged his captains to bring home something rare and fine, as a present to his wife. Some pretty carving or picture, a roll of silk for a dress, a lace collar, a bit of splendid tapestry, a shining jewel; or, it may be, a singing bird, a strange animal for a pet, a barrel of fruit, or a box of sweetmeats was sure to be brought. With such gifts, whether large or small, the husband hoped to please his wife.

But in this good purpose, he could never succeed. So he began to think that it was his own fault. Being only a man, he could not tell what a woman wanted. So he resolved to try his own wits and tastes, to see if he could meet his wife’s desires.

One day, when one of his best captains was about to sail on a voyage to the northeast, to Dantzig, which is almost as far as Russia, he inquired of his bad-tempered vrouw what he should bring her.

"I want the best thing in the world," said she. "Now this time, do bring it to me."

The merchant was now very happy. He told the captain to seek out and bring back what he himself might think was the best thing on earth; but to make sure, he must buy a cargo of wheat.

The skipper went on board, hoisted anchor and set sail. Using his man's wits, he also decided that wheat, which makes bread, was the very thing to be desired. In talking to his mates and sailors, they agreed with him. Thus, all the men, in this matter, were of one mind, and the captain dreamed only of jolly times when on shore. On other voyages, when he had hunted around for curiosities to please the wife of the boss, he had many and anxious thoughts; but now, he was care-free.

In Dantzig, all the ship's men had a good time, for the captain made "goed koop" (a fine bargain). Then the vessel, richly loaded with grain, turned its prow homeward. Arriving at Stavoren, the skipper reported to the merchant, to tell him of much money made, of a sound cargo obtained, of safe arrival, and, above all, plenty of what would please his wife; for what on earth could be more valuable than wheat, which makes bread, the staff of life?

At lunch time, when the merchant came home, his wife wanted to know what made him look so joyful. Had he made "goed koop" that day?

Usually, at meal time, this quiet man hardly spoke two words an hour. To tell the truth, he sometimes irritated his wife because of his silence, but to-day he was voluble.

The man of wealth answered, "I have a joyful surprise for you. I cannot tell you now. You must come with me and see."

After lunch, he took his wife on board the ship, giving a wink of his eye to the skipper, who nodded to the sailors, and then the stout fellows opened the hatches. There, loaded to the very deck, was the precious grain. The merchant looked up, expecting to see and hear his wife clap her hands with joy.

But the greedy woman turned her back on him, and flew into a rage.

"Throw it all overboard, into the water," she screamed. "You wretch, you have deceived me."

The husband tried to calm her and explain that it was his thought to get wheat, as the world's best gift, hoping thus to please her.

At that moment, some hungry beggars standing on the wharf, heard the lady's loud voice, and falling on their knees cried to her:

"Please, madame, give us some of this wheat; we are starving."

"Yes, lady, and there are many poor in Stavoren, in spite of all its gold," said the captain. "Why not divide this wheat among the needy, if you are greatly disappointed? You will win praise for yourself. In the name of God, forgive my boldness, and do as I ask. Then, on the next voyage, I shall sail as far as China and will get you anything you ask!"

But the angry woman would listen to no one. She stayed on the ship, urging on the sailors, with their shovels, until every kernel was cast overboard.

"Never again will I try to please you," said her husband. "The hungry will curse you, and you may yet suffer for food, because of this wilful waste, which will make woful want. Even you will suffer."

She listened at first in silence, and then put her fingers in her ears to hear no more. Proud of her riches, with her voice in a high key, she shouted, "I ever want? What folly to say so! I am too rich." Then, to show her contempt for such words, she slipped off a ring from her finger and threw it into the waters of the harbor. Her husband almost died of grief and shame, when he saw that it was her wedding ring, which she had cast overboard.

"Hear you all! When that ring comes back to me, I shall be hungry and not before," said she, loud enough to be heard on ship, wharf, and street. Gathering up her skirts, she stepped upon the gangway, tripping to the shore, and past the poor people, who looked at her in mingled hate and fear. Then haughtily, she strode to her costly mansion.

Now to celebrate the expected new triumph and to show off her wealth and luxury, with the numerous curiosities brought her from many lands, the proud lady had already invited a score of guests. When they were all seated, the first course of soup was served in silver dishes, which every one admired. As the fish was about to be brought in, to be eaten off golden plates, the butler begged the lady's permission to bring in first, from the chief cook, something rare and wonderful, that he had found in the mouth of the fish, which was waiting, already garnished, on the big dish. Not dreaming what it might be, the hostess clapped her hands in glee, saying to those at the table:

"Perhaps now, at last, I shall get what I have long waited for — the best thing in the world."

"We shall all hope so," the guests responded in chorus.

But when the chief cook came into the banquet hall, and, bowing low, held before his mistress a golden salver, with a finger ring on it, the proud lady turned pale.

It was the very ring which, in her anger, she had tossed overboard the day before. To add to her shame, she saw from the look of horror on their faces, that the guests had recognized the fact that it was her wedding token.

This was only the beginning of troubles. That night, her husband died of grief and vexation. The next day, the warehouses, stored with valuable merchandise of all sorts, were burned to the ground.

Before her husband had been decently buried, a great tempest blew down from the north, and news came that four of his ships had been wrecked. Their sailors hardly escaped with their lives, and both they and their families in Stavoren were now clamoring for bread.

Even when she put on her weeds of grief, these did not protect the widow from her late husband's creditors. She had to sell her house and all that was in it, to satisfy them and pay her debts. She had even to pawn her ring to the Lombards, the goldsmiths of the town, to buy money for bread.

Now that she was poor, none of the former rich folks, who had come to her grand dinners, would look at her. She had even to beg her bread on the streets; for who wanted to help the woman who wasted wheat? She was glad to go to the cow stalls, and eat what the cattle left. Before the year ended, she was found dead in a stable, in rags and starvation. Thus her miserable life ended. Without a funeral, but borne on a bier, by two men, she was buried at the expense of the city, in the potter's field.

But even this was not the end of the fruits of her wickedness, for the evil she did lived after her. It was found that, from some mysterious cause, a sand bar was forming in the river. This prevented the ships from coming up to the docks. With its trade stopped, the city grew poorer every day. What was the matter?

By and by, at low tide, some fishermen saw a green field under the surface of the harbor. It was not a garden of seaweed, for instead of leaves whirling with the tide, there were stalks that stood up high. The wheat had sprouted and taken root. In another month the tops of these stalks were visible above the water. But in such soil as sand, the wheat had reverted to its wild state. It was good for nothing, but only did harm.

For, while producing no grain for food, it held together the sand, which rolled down the river and had come all the way from the Alps to the ocean. Of old, this went out to sea and kept the harbor scoured clean, so that the ships came clear up to the wharves. Then, on many a morning, a wealthy merchant, whose house was close to the docks, looked out of his window to find the prows, of his richly laden ships, poked almost into his bedroom, and he liked it. Venturesome boys even climbed from their cots down the bowsprits, on to the deck of their fathers' vessels. Of such sons, the fathers were proud, knowing that they would make brave sailors and navigate spice ships from the Indies. It was because of her brave mariners, that Stavoren had gained her glory and greatness, being famed in all the land.

But now, within so short a time, the city's renown and wealth had faded like a dream. By degrees, the population diminished, commerce became a memory, and ships a curiosity. The people, that were left, had to eat rye and barley bread, instead of wheat. Floods ruined the farmers and washed away large parts of the town, so that dykes had to be built to save what was left.

More terrible than all, the ocean waves rolled in and wiped out cities, towns, and farms, sinking churches, convents, monasteries, warehouses, wharves, and docks, in one common ruin, hidden far down below.

To this day the worthless wheat patch, that spoiled Stavoren, is called "Vrouwen Zand," or the Lady's Sand. Instead of being the staff of life, as Nature intended, the wheat, because of a power of evil greater than that of a thousand wicked fairies, became the menace of death to ruin a rich city.

No wonder the Dutch have a proverb, which might be thus translated:

Peevishness perverts wheat into weeds
But a sweet temper turns a field into gold.

21

WHY THE STORK LOVES HOLLAND

Above all countries in Europe, this bird, wise in the head and long in the legs, loves Holland. Flying all the way from Africa, the stork is at home among dykes and windmills.

Storks are seen by the thousands in Holland and Friesland. Sometimes they strut in the streets, not in the least frightened or disturbed. They make their nests among the tiles and chimneys, on the red roofs of the houses, and they rear their young even on the church towers.

If a man sets an old cart wheel flat on a tree-top, the storks accept this, as an invitation to come and stay. At once they proceed, first of all, to arrange their toilet, after their long flight. They do this, even before they build their nest. You can see them, by the hour, preening their feathers and combing their plumage, with their long bills. Then, as solemnly as a boss mason, they set about gathering sticks and hay for their house. They never seem to be in a hurry.

A stork lays on a bit of wood, and then goes at his toilet again, looking around to see that other folks are busy. Year after year, a pair of storks will use the same nest, rebuilding, or repairing it, each spring time. The stork is a steady citizen and does not like to change. Once treated well in one place, by the landlord, Mr. and Mrs. Stork keep the same apartments and watch over the family cradle inside the house, to see that it is always occupied by a baby. The return of the stork is, in Holland, a household celebration.

Out in the fields, Mr. Stork is happy indeed, for Holland is the paradise of frogs; so the gentleman of the red legs finds plenty to eat. He takes his time for going to dinner, and rarely rushes for quick lunch. After business hours in the morning, he lays his long beak among his thick breast feathers, until it is quite hidden. Then, perched up in the air on one long leg, like a stilt, he takes a nap, often for hours.

With the other leg crossed, he seems to be resting on the figure four (4).

Towards evening he shakes out his wings, flaps them once or twice, and takes a walk, but he is never in haste. Beginning his hunt, he soon has enough frogs, mice, grubs, worms or insects to make a good meal. It is because this bird feels so much at home, in town and country, making part of the landscape, that we so associate together Holland and the stork, as we usually do.

The Dutch proverb pictures the scene, which is so common. “In the same field, the cow eats grass; the grayhound hunts the hare; and the stork helps himself to the frogs.” Indeed, if it were not for the stork, Holland would, like old Egypt, in the time of Moses, be overrun with frogs.

The Dutch call the stork by the sweet name “Ooijevaar,” or the treasure-bringer. Every spring time, the boys and girls, fathers and mothers, shout welcome to the white bird from Egypt.

“What do you bring me?” is their question or thought.

If the bird deserts its old home on their roof, the family is in grief, thinking it has lost its luck; but if Daddy Stork, with Mrs. Stork’s approval, chooses a new place for their nest, there is more rejoicing in that house, than if money had been found. “Where there are nestlings on the roof, there will be babies in the house,” is what the Dutch say; for both are welcome.

To tell why the stork loves Holland, we must go back to the Africa of a million years ago. Then, we shall ask the Dutch fairies how they succeeded in making the new land, in the west, so popular in the stork world. For what reason did the wise birds emigrate to the cold country a thousand miles away? They were so regular and punctual, that a great prophet wrote:

“Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times.”

Ages ago, there were camels and caravans in Africa, but there was no Holland, for the land was still under the waves. In India, also, the stork was an old bird, that waded in the pools and kept the frogs from croaking in terms of the multiplication table. Sometimes the stork population increased too fast and some went hungry for food; for, the proverb tells us that a stork “died while waiting for the ocean to dry, hoping to get a supply of dried fish.”

When on the coast of the North Sea, the Land of a Million Islands was made, the frog emigrants were there first. They poured in so fast, that it seemed a question as to who should own the country-frogs or men. Some were very big, as if ambitious to be bulls. They croaked so loud, that they drowned out the fairy music, and made the night hideous with their noises. The snakes spoiled the country for the little birds, while the toads seemed to think that the salt ocean had been kept out, and the land made, especially for them.

The Dutch fairies were disgusted at the way these reptiles behaved, for they could not enjoy themselves, as in the old days. If they went to dance in the meadow, on moonlight nights, they always found a big bullfrog sitting in their ring, mocking them with its bellowing. So when they heard about the storks in Africa, and what hearty appetites they had, for the various wrigglers, crawlers, jumpers and splashers in the waters, they resolved to invite them, in a body, to Holland.

The Dutch fairies knew nothing of the habits of the bird and scarcely imagined how such a creature might look, but they heard many pleasant things about the stork’s good character. The wise bird had an excellent reputation, not only for being kind to its young, but also for attending to the wants of its parents, when they were old. It was even said that in some countries the stork was the symbol for filial piety.

So the fairies of all the Netherlands despatched a delegation to Egypt and a congress of storks was called to consider this invitation to go west. Messengers were at once sent to all the red-legged birds, among the bulrushes of the Nile, or that lived on the roofs of the temples, or that perched on the pyramids, or dwelt on the top of old columns, or that stood in rows along the eaves of the town houses. The town birds gained their living by acting as street cleaners, but the river birds made their meals chiefly on fish, frogs, and mice.

The invitation was discussed in stork meeting, and it was unanimously accepted; except by some old grannies and grandpops that feared in the strange land they would not be well fed. On a second motion, it was agreed that only the strongest birds should attempt the flight. Those afraid, or too weak to go, must stay behind and attend to the old folks. Such a rattle of mandibles was never heard in Egypt before, as when this stork meeting adjourned.

Now when storks travel, they go in flocks. Thousands of them left Egypt together. High in the air, with their broad wings spread and their long legs stretched out behind them, they covered Europe in a few hours. Then they scattered all over the marshy lands of the new country. It was agreed that each pair was to find its own home. When the cold autumn should come, they were to assemble again for flight to Egypt.

It was a new sight for the fairies, the frogs and the men, to look over the landscape and see these snow white strangers. They were so pretty to look at, while promenading over the meadows, wading in the ponds and ditches, or standing silently by the river banks. Soon, however, these foreign birds were very unpopular in bullfrog land, and as for the snakes, they thought that Holland would be ruined by these hungry strangers. On the other hand, it was good news, in fairy-land, that all fairies could dance safely on their meadow rings, for the bullfrogs were now afraid to venture in the grass, lest they should be gobbled up, for the frogs could not hide from the storks. The new birds could poke their big bills so far into the mud-holes, that no frog, or snake, big or little, was safe. The stork's red legs were so long, and the birds could wade in such deep water, that hundreds of frogs were soon eaten up, and there were many widows and orphans in the ponds and puddles.

When the fairies got more acquainted with their new guests, and saw how they behaved, they nearly died of laughing. They were not surprised at their diet, or eating habits, but they soon discovered that the storks were not song birds. Instead of having voices, they seemed to talk to each other by clattering their long jaws, or snapping their mandibles together. Their snowy plumage — all being white but their wing feathers — was admired, was envied, and their long bright colored legs were a wonder. At first the fairies thought their guests wore red stockings and they thought how heavy must be the laundry work on wash days; for in Holland, everything must be clean.

Of all creatures on earth, as the fairies thought, the funniest was seen when Mr. Stork was in love. To attract and please his lady love, he made the most grotesque gestures. He would leap up from the ground and move with a hop, skip, and jump. Then he spread out his wings, as if to hug his beloved. Then he danced around her, as if he were filled with wine. All the time he made the best music he knew how, by clattering his mandibles together. He intended this performance for a sort of love ditty, or serenade. The whole program was more amusing than anything that an ape, goat, or donkey could get up. How the fairies did laugh!

Yet the fairies were very grateful to the storks for ridding their meadows of so much vermin. How these delicate looking, snow white and graceful creatures could put so many snails, snakes, tadpoles, and toads into their stomachs and turn them into snow white feathers, wonderful wings and long legs, as red as a rose, was a mystery to them. It seemed more wonderful than anything which they could do, but as fairies have no stomachs and do not eat, this whole matter of digestion was a mystery to them.

Besides the terror and gloom in the frog world, every reptile winced and squirmed, when he heard of this new enemy. All crawlers, creepers, and jumpers had so long imagined that the land was theirs and had been made solely for their benefit! Nor did they know how to conquer the storks. The frog daddies could do nothing, and the frog mothers were every moment afraid to let either the tadpoles or froggies go out of their sight. They worried lest they should see their babies caught up in a pair of long, bony jaws, as sharp as scissors, there to wriggle and crow, until their darlings disappeared within the monster.

One anecdote of the many that were long told in the old Dutch frog ponds was this: showing into what clangers curiosity may lead youngsters. We put it in quotation marks to show that it was told as a true story, and not printed in a book, or made up.

“A tadpole often teased its froggy mother to let it go and see a red pole, of which it had heard from a traveller. Mrs. Frog would not at first let her son go, but promised that as soon as the tadpole lost his tail, and his flippers had turned into fore legs, and his hind quarters had properly sprouted, so that he could hop out of danger, he might then venture on his travels. She warned him, however, not to go too near to that curious red pole, of which he had heard. Nobody as yet found out just what this red thing, standing in the water, was; but danger was suspected by old heads, and all little froggies were warned to be careful and keep away. In reality, the red stick was the leg of a stork, sound asleep, for it was taking its usual afternoon nap. The frogs on the bank, and those in the pool that held their noses above water, to get their breath, had never before seen anything like this red stilt, or its cross pole; for no bird of this sort had ever before flown into their neighborhood. They never suspected that it was a stork, with its legs shaped like the figure four (4). Indeed, they knew nothing of its long bill, that could open and shut like a trap, catching a frog or snake, and swallowing it in a moment.

"Unfortunately for this uneducated young frog, that had never travelled from home, it now went too near the red pole, and, to show how brave it was, rubbed its nose against the queer thing. Suddenly the horrible creature, that had only been asleep, woke up and snapped its jaws. In a moment, a wriggling froggy disappeared from sight into the stomach of a monster, that had two red legs, instead of one. At the sight of such gluttony, there was an awful splash, for a whole row of frogs had jumped from the bank into the pool. After this, it was evident that Holland was not to belong entirely to the frogs."

As for the human beings, they were so happy over the war with the vermin and the victory of the storks, that they made this bird their pride and joy. They heaped honors upon the stork as the savior of their country. They placed boxes on the roofs of their houses for these birds to nest in. All the old cart wheels in the land were hunted up. They sawed off the willow trees a few feet above the ground, and set the wheels in flat, which the storks used as their parlors and dressing rooms.

As for the knights, they placed the figure of the stork on their shields, banners, and coats of arms, while citizens made this bird prominent on their city seals. The capital of the country, The Hague, was dedicated to this bird, and, for all time, a pond was dug within the city limits, where storks were fed and cared for at the public expense. Even to-day, many a good story, illustrating the tender affection of The Hague storks for their young, is told and enjoyed as an example to Dutch mothers to be the best in the world.

Out in the country at large, in any of the eleven provinces, whenever they drained a swamp, or pumped out a pond to make a village, it was not looked upon as a part of Holland, unless there were storks. Even in the new wild places they planted stakes on the pumped out dry land, called polders.

On the top of these sticks were laid as invitations for the stork families to come and live with the people. Along the roads they stuck posts for storks' nests. It became a custom with farmers, when the storks came back, to kill the fatted calf, or lamb, and leave the refuse meat out in the fields for a feast to these bird visitors. A score of Dutch proverbs exist, all of them complimentary to the bird that loves babies and cradles.

Last of all, the Dutch children, even in the reign of Queen Wilhelmina, made letter carriers of their friends the treasure-bringers. Tying tiny slips of paper to their red legs, they sent messages, in autumn, to the boys and girls in the old land of the sphinx and pyramids, of Moses, and the children of Israel. In the spring time, the children's return messages were received in the country which bids eternal welcome to the bird named the Bringer of Blessings.

This is why the storks love Holland.

22

THE MEETING OF THE STAR-LOVERS

On the banks of the Silver River of Heaven (which we call the Milky Way) there lived a beautiful maiden, who was the daughter of the sun. Her name was Shokujo. She did not care for games or play, like her companions, and, thinking nothing of vain display, wore only the simplest of dress. Yet she was very diligent, and made many garments for others. Indeed, so busy was she that all called her the Weaving or Spinning Princess.

The sun-king noticed the serious disposition and close habits of his daughter, and tried in various ways to get her to be more lively. At last he thought to marry her. As marriages in the star-land are usually planned by the parents, and not by the foolish lover-boys and girls, he arranged the union without consulting his daughter. The young man on whom the sun-king thus bestowed his daughter's hand was Kingin, who kept a herd of cows on the banks of the celestial stream. He had always been a good neighbor, and, living on the same side of the river, the father thought he would get a nice son-in-law, and at the same time improve his daughter's habits and disposition.

No sooner did the maiden become wife than her habits and character utterly changed for the worse, and the father had a very vexatious case of *tadashiku suguru* ("too much of a good thing") on his hands. The wife became not only very merry and lively, but utterly forsook loom and needle. She gave up her nights and days to play and idleness, and no silly lover could have been more foolish than she.

The sun-king became very much offended at all this, and thinking that the husband was the cause of it, he determined to separate the couple. So he ordered the husband to remove to the other side of the river of stars, and told him that hereafter they should meet only once a year, on the seventh night of the seventh month. To make a bridge over the flood of stars, the sun-king called myriads of magpies, which thereupon flew together, and, making a bridge, supported him on their wings and backs as if it were a roadway of solid land. So, bidding his weeping wife farewell, the lover-husband sorrowfully crossed the River of Heaven. No sooner had he set foot on the opposite side than the magpies flew away, filling all the heavens with their chatter. The weeping wife and lover-husband stood for a long time wistfully gazing at each other from afar. Then they separated, the one to lead his ox, the other to ply her shuttle during the long hours of the day with diligent toil. Thus they filled the hours, and the sun-king again rejoiced in his daughter’s industry.

But when night fell, and all the lamps of heaven were lighted, the lovers would come and stand by the banks of the starry river, and gaze longingly at each other, waiting for the seventh night of the seventh month.

At last the time drew near, and only one fear possessed the loving wife. Every time she thought of it her heart played pit-a-pat faster. What if it should rain? For the River of Heaven is always full to the brim, and one extra drop of rain causes a flood which sweeps away even the bird-bridge.

But not a drop fell. The seventh month, seventh night, came, and all the heavens were clear. The magpies flew joyfully in myriads, making one way for the tiny feet of the little lady. Trembling with joy, and with heart fluttering more than the bridge of wings, she crossed the River of Heaven, and was in the arms of her husband. This she did every year. The lover-husband stayed on his side of the river, and the wife came to him on the magpie bridge, save on the sad occasion when it rained. So every year the people hope for clear weather, and the happy festival is celebrated alike by old and young.

23

THE TRAVELS OF TWO FROGS

Long, long ago, in the good old days before the hairy-faced and pale-cheeked men from over the Sea of Great Peace (Pacific Ocean) came to Japan; before the black coal-smoke and snorting engine scared the white heron from the rice-fields; before black crows and fighting sparrows, which fear not man, perched on telegraph wires, or ever a railway was thought of, there lived two frogs — one in a well in Kioto, the other in a lotus-pond in Ozaka.

Now it is a common proverb in the Land of the Gods (Japan) that "the frog in the well knows not the great ocean," and the Kioto frog had so often heard this scornful sneer from the maids who came to draw out water, with their long bamboo-handled buckets that he resolved to travel abroad and see the world, and especially the *tai kai* (the great ocean).

"I'll see for myself," said Mr. Frog, as he packed his wallet and wiped his spectacles, "what this great ocean is that they talk about. I'll wager it isn't half as deep or wide as well, where I can see the stars even at daylight."

Now the truth was, a recent earthquake had greatly reduced the depth of the well and the water was getting very shallow. Mr. Frog informed his family of his intentions. Mrs. Frog wept a great deal; but, drying her eyes with her paper handkerchief, she declared she would count the hours on her fingers till he came back, and at every morning and evening meal would set out his table with food on it, just as if he were home. She tied up a little lacquered box full of boiled rice and snails for his journey, wrapped it around with a silk napkin, and, putting his extra clothes in a bundle, swung it on his back. Tying it over his neck, he seized his staff and was ready to go.

"*Sayonara*" ("Good-bye") cried he, as, with a tear in his eye, he walked away.

"*Sayonara. Oshidzukani*" ("Good-bye. Walk slowly"), croaked Mrs. Frog and the whole family of young frogs in a chorus.

Two of the froggies were still babies, that is, they were yet polywogs, with a half inch of tail still on them; and, of course, were carried about by being strapped on the back of their older brothers.

Mr. Frog being now on land, out of his well, noticed that the other animals did not leap, but walked on their legs. And, not wishing to be eccentric, he likewise began briskly walking upright on his hind legs or waddling on all fours.

Now it happened that about the same time the Ozaka father frog had become restless and dissatisfied with life on the edges of his lotus-ditch. He had made up his mind to "cast the lion's cub into the valley."

"Why! that *is* tall talk for a frog, I must say," exclaims the reader. "What did he mean?"

I must tell you that the Ozaka frog was a philosopher. Right at the edge of his lotus-pond was a monastery, full of Buddhist monks, who every day studied their sacred rolls and droned over the books of Confucius, to learn them by heart. Our frog had heard them so often that he could (in frog language, of course) repeat many of their wise sentences and intone responses to their evening prayers put up by the great idol Amida. Indeed, our frog had so often listened to their debates on texts from the classics that he had himself become a sage and a philosopher. Yet, as the proverb says, “the sage is not happy.”

Why not? In spite of a soft mud-bank, plenty of green scum, stagnant water, and shady lotus leaves, a fat wife and a numerous family; in short, everything to make a frog happy, his forehead, or rather gullet, was wrinkled with care from long pondering of knotty problems, such as the following:

The monks often come down to the edge of the pond to look at the pink and white lotus. One summer day, as a little frog, hardly out of his tadpole state, with a small fragment of tail still left, sat basking on a huge round leaf, one monk said to the other:

“Of what does that remind you?”

“The babies of frogs will become but frogs,” said one shaven pate, laughing.

“What think you?”

“The white lotus flower springs out of the black mud,” said the other, solemnly, as both walked away.

The old frog, sitting near by, overheard them and began to philosophize: “Humph! The babies of frogs will become but frogs, hey? If mud becomes lotus, why shouldn’t a frog become a man? Why not? If my pet son should travel abroad and see the world — go to Kioto, for instance — why shouldn’t he be as wise as those shining-headed men, I wonder? I shall try it, anyhow. I’ll send my son on a journey to Kioto. I’ll ‘cast the lion’s cub into the valley’ (send the pet son abroad in the world, to see and study) at once. I’ll deny myself for the sake of my offspring.”

Flump! splash! sounded the water, as a pair of webby feet disappeared. The “lion’s cub” was soon ready, after much paternal advice, and much counsel to beware of being gobbled up by long-legged storks, and trod on by impolite men, and struck at by bad boys. “*Kio ni no inaka*” (“Even in the capital there are boors”) said Father Frog.

Now it so happened that the old frog from Kioto and the “lion’s cub” from Ozaka started each from his home at the same time. Nothing of importance occurred to either of them until, as luck would have it, they met on a hill near Hashimoto, which is half way between the two cities. Both were footsore, and websore, and very tired, especially about the hips, on account of the unfroglike manner of walking, instead of hopping, as they had been used to.

“*Ohio gozarimasu*” (“Good-morning”) said the “lion’s cub” to the old frog, as he fell on all fours and bowed his head to the ground three times, squinting up over his left eye, to see if the other frog was paying equal deference in return.

“*He, konnichi wa*” (“Yes, good-day”) replied the Kioto frog.

“*O tenki*” (“It is rather fine weather to-day”) said the “cub.”

“*He, yoi tenki gozence*” (“Yes, it is very fine”) replied the old fellow.

“I am Gamataro, from Ozaka, the oldest son of Hiki Dono, Sensui no Kami” (Lord Bullfrog, Prince of the Lotus-Ditch).

“Your Lordship must be weary with your journey. I am Kayeru San of Idomidzu (Sir Frog of the Well) in Kioto. I started out to see the ‘great ocean’ from Ozaka; but, I declare, my hips are so dreadfully tired that I believe that I’ll give up my plan and content myself with a look from this hill.”

The truth must be owned that the old frog was not only on his hind legs, but also on his last legs, when he stood up to look at Ozaka; while the “cub” was tired enough to believe anything. The old fellow, wiping his face, spoke up:

“Suppose we save ourselves the trouble of the journey. This hill is half way between the two cities, and while I see Ozaka and the sea you can get a good look of the Kio” (Capital, or Kioto).

“Happy thought!” said the Ozaka frog.

Then both reared themselves upon their hind-legs, and stretching upon their toes, body to body, and neck to neck, propped each other up, rolled their goggles and looked steadily, as they supposed, on the places which they each wished to see. Now everyone knows that a frog has eyes mounted in that part of his head which is front when he is down and back when he stands up. They are set like a compass on gimbals.

Long and steadily they gazed, until, at last, their toes being tired, they fell down on all fours.

“I declare!” said the old *yaze* (daddy) “Ozaka looks just like Kioto; and as for ‘the great ocean’ those stupid maids talked about, I don’t see any at all, unless they mean that strip of river that looks for all the world like the Yodo. I don’t believe there is any ‘great ocean’!”

“As for my part,” said the ‘cub’, “I am satisfied that it’s all folly to go further; for Kioto is as like Ozaka as one grain of rice is like another.” Then he said to himself: “Old Totsu San (my father) is a fool, with all his philosophy.”

Thereupon both congratulated themselves upon the happy labor-saving expedient by which they had spared themselves a long journey, much leg-weariness, and some danger. They departed, after exchanging many compliments; and, dropping again into a frog’s hop, they leaped back in half the time — the one to his well and the other to his pond. There each told the story of both cities looking exactly alike; thus demonstrating the folly of those foolish folks called men. As for the old gentleman in the lotus-pond, he was so glad to get the “cub” back again that he never again tried to reason out the problems of philosophy. And to this day the frog in the well knows not and believes not in the “great ocean.” Still do the babies of frogs become but frogs. Still is it vain to teach the reptiles philosophy; for all such labor is “like pouring water in a frog’s face.” Still out of the black mud springs the glorious white lotus in celestial purity, unfolding its stainless petals to the smiling heavens, the emblem of life and resurrection.

24

THE CHILD OF THE THUNDER

Pretty soon the storm rattled very near him, and he thought he had better seek shelter, lest the thunder should strike and kill him. For Bimbo, like all his neighbors, had often heard stories of Kaijin, the god of the thunder-drums, who lives in the skies and rides on the storm, and sometimes kills people by throwing out of the clouds at them a terrible creature like a cat, with iron-like claws and a hairy body.

Just as Bimbo threw his hoe over his shoulder and started to move, a terrible blinding flash of lightning dazzled his eyes. It was immediately followed by a deafening crash, and the thunder fell just in front of him. He covered his eyes with his hands, but finding himself unhurt, uttered a prayer of thanks to Buddha for safety. Then he uncovered his eyes and looked down at his feet.

There lay a little boy, rosy and warm, and crowing in the most lively manner, and never minding the rain in the least. The farmer’s eyes opened very wide, but happy and nearly surprised out of his senses, he picked up the child tenderly in his arms, and took him home to his old wife.

“Here’s a gift from Raijin,” said Bimbo. “We’ll adopt him as our own son and call him Rai-taro,” (the first-born darling of the thunder).

So the boy grew up and became a very dutiful and loving child. He was as kind and obedient to his foster-parents as though he had been born in their house. He never liked to play with other children, but kept all day in the fields with his father, sporting with the rivulet and looking at the clouds and sky. Even when the strolling players of the Dai Kagura (the comedy which makes the gods laugh) and the "Lion of Corea" came into the village, and every boy and girl and nurse and woman was sure to be out in great glee, the child of the thunder stayed up in the field, or climbed on the high rocks to watch the sailing of the birds and the flowing of the water and the river far away.

Great prosperity seemed to come to the farmer, and he laid it all to the sweet child that fell to him from the clouds. It was very curious that rain often fell on Bimbo's field when none fell elsewhere; so that Bimbo grew rich and changed his name to Kanemochi. He believed that the boy Raitaro beckoned to the clouds, and they shed their rain for him.

A good many summers passed by, and Raitaro had grown to be a tall and handsome lad, almost a man and eighteen years old. On his birthday the old farmer and the good wife made a little feast for their foster-child. They ate and drank and talked of the thunder-storm, out of which Raitaro was born.

Finally the young man said solemnly:

"My dear parents, I thank you very much for your kindness to me, but I must now say farewell. I hope you will always be happy."

Then, in a moment, all trace of a human form disappeared, and floating in the air, they saw a tiny white dragon, which hovered for a moment above them, and then flew away. The old couple went out of doors to watch it, when it grew bigger and bigger, taking its course to the hills above, where the piled-up white clouds, which form on a summer's afternoon, seemed built up like towers and castles of silver. Towards one of these the dragon moved, until, as they watched his form, now grown to a mighty size, it disappeared from view.

After this Kanemochi and his wife, who were now old and white-headed, ceased from their toil and lived in comfort all their days. When they died and their bodies were reduced to a heap of white cinders in the stone furnace of the village cremation-house, their ashes were mixed, and being put into one urn, were laid away in the cemetery of the temple yard. Their tomb was carved in the form of a white dragon, which to this day, in spite of mosses and lichens, may still be seen among the ancient monuments of the little hamlet.

25

THE TONGUE-CUT SPARROW

There was once an old man who had a wife with a very bad temper. She had never borne him any children, and would not take the trouble to adopt a son. So for a little pet he kept a tiny sparrow, and fed it with great care. The old dame not satisfied with scolding her husband hated the sparrow.

Now the old woman's temper was especially bad on wash days, when her old back and knees were well strained over the low tub, which rested on the ground.

It happened once that she had made some starch, and set it in a red wooden bowl to cool. While her back was turned, the sparrow hopped down on the edge of the bowl, and pecked at some of the starch. In a rage the old hag seized a pair of scissors and cut the sparrow's tongue out. Flinging the bird in the air she cried out, "Now be off." So the poor sparrow, all bleeding, flew away.

When the old man came back and found his pet gone, he made a great ado. He asked his wife, and she told him what she had done and why. The sorrowful old man grieved sorely for his pet, and after looking in every place and calling it by name, gave it up as lost.

Long after this, old man while wandering on the mountains met his old friend the sparrow. They both cried "Ohio!" (good morning,) to each other, and bowing low offered many mutual congratulations and inquiries as to health, etc. Then the sparrow begged the old man to visit his humble abode, promising to introduce his wife and two daughters.

The old man went in and found a nice little house with a bamboo garden, tiny waterfall, stepping stone and everything complete. Then Mrs. Sparrow brought in slices of sugar-jelly, rock-candy, sweet potato custard, and a bowl of hot starch sprinkled with sugar, and a pair of chopsticks on a tray. Miss Suzumi, the elder daughter brought the tea caddy and tea-pot, and in a snap of the fingers had a good cup of tea ready, which she offered on a tray, kneeling.

"Please take up and help yourself. The refreshments are very poor, but I hope you will excuse our plainness," said Mother Sparrow. The delighted old man, wondering in himself at such a polite family of sparrows, ate heartily, and drank several cups of tea. Finally, on being pressed he remained all night.

For several days the old man enjoyed himself at the sparrow's home. He looked at the landscapes and the moonlight, feasted to his heart's content, and played *go* (the game of 360 checkers) with Ko-suzumi the little daughter. In the evening Mrs. Sparrow would bring out the refreshments and the wine, and seat the old man on a silken cushion, while she played the guitar. Mr. Sparrow and his two daughters danced, sung and made merry. The delighted old man leaning on the velvet arm-rest forgot his cares, his old limbs and his wife's tongue, and felt like a youth again.

On the fifth day the old man said he must go home. Then the sparrow brought out two baskets made of plaited rattan, such as are used in traveling and carried on men's shoulders. Placing them before their guest, the sparrow said, "Please accept a parting gift."

Now one basket was very heavy, and the other very light. The old man, not being greedy, said he would take the lighter one. So with many thanks and bows and good-byes, he set off homewards.

He reached his hut safely, but instead of a kind welcome the old hag began to scold him for being away so long. He begged her to be quiet, and telling of his visit to the sparrows, opened the basket, while the scowling old woman held her tongue, out of sheer curiosity.

Oh, what a splendid sight! There were gold and silver coin, and gems, and coral, and crystal, and amber, and the never-failing bag of money, and the invisible coat and hat, and rolls of books, and all manner of precious things.

At the sight of so much wealth, the old hag's scowl changed to a smile of greedy joy. "I'll go right off and get a present from the sparrows," said she.

So binding on her straw sandals, and tucking up her skirts, and adjusting her girdle, tying the bow in front, she seized her staff and set off on the road. Arriving at the sparrow's house she began to flatter Mr. Sparrow by soft speeches. Of course the polite sparrow invited her into his house, but nothing but a cup of tea was offered her, and wife and daughters kept away. Seeing she was not going to get any good-bye gift, the brazen hussy asked for one. The sparrow then brought out and set before her two baskets, one heavy and the other light. Taking the heavier one without so much as saying "thank you," she carried it back with her. Then she opened it, expecting all kinds of riches.

She took off the lid, when a horrible cuttle-fish rushed at her, and a horned *oni* snapped his tusks at her, a skeleton poked his bony fingers in her face, and finally a long, hairy serpent, with a big head and lolling tongue, sprang out and coiled around her, cracking her bones, and squeezing out her breath, till she died.

After the good old man had buried his wife, he adopted a son to comfort his old age, and with his treasures lived at ease all his days.

26

THE FIRE-FLY’S LOVERS

On the southern and sunny side of the castle moats of the Fukui castle, in Echizen, the water had long ago become shallow so that lotus lilies grew luxuriantly. Deep in the heart of one of the great flowers whose petals were as pink as the lining of a sea-shell, lived the King of the Fire-flies, Hi-o, whose only daughter was the lovely princess Hotaru-himé. While still a child the himé (princess) was carefully kept at home within the pink petals of the lily, never going even to the edges except to see her father fly off on his journey. Dutifully she waited until of age, when the fire glowed in her own body, and shone, beautifully illuminating the lotus, until its light at night was like a lamp within a globe of coral.

Every night her light grew brighter and brighter, until at last it was as mellow as gold. Then her father said:

“My daughter is now of age, she may fly abroad with me sometimes, and when the proper suitor comes she may marry whom she will.”

So Hotaru-himé flew forth in and out among the lotus lilies of the moat, then into rich rice fields, and at last far off to the indigo meadows.

Whenever she went a crowd of suitors followed her, for she had the singular power of attracting all the night-flying insects to herself. But she cared for none of their attentions, and though she spoke politely to them all she gave encouragement to none. Yet some of the sheeny-winged gallants called her a coquette.

One night she said to her mother, the queen:

“I have met many admirers, but I don’t wish a husband from any of them. Tonight I shall stay at home, and if any of them love me truly they will come and pay me court here. Then I shall lay an impossible duty on them. If they are wise they will not try to perform it; and if they love their lives more than they love me, I do not want any of them. Whoever succeeds may have me for his bride.”

“As you will my child,” said the queen mother, who arrayed her daughter in her most resplendent robes, and set her on her throne in the heart of the lotus.

Then she gave orders to her body-guard to keep all suitors at a respectful distance lest some stupid gallant, a horn-bug or a cockchafer dazzled by the light should approach too near and hurt the princess or shake her throne.

No sooner had twilight faded away, than forth came the golden beetle, who stood on a stamen and making obeisance, said: —

“I am Lord Green-Gold, I offer my house, my fortune and my love to Princess Hotaru.”

“Go and bring me fire and I will be your bride” said Hotaru-himé.

With a bow of the head the beetle opened his wings and departed with a stately whirr.

Next came a shining bug with wings and body as black as lamp-smoke, who solemnly professed his passion.

“Bring me fire and you may have me for your wife.”

Off flew the bug with a buzz.

Pretty soon came the scarlet dragon-fly, expecting so to dazzle the princess by his gorgeous colors that she would accept him at once.

“I decline your offer” said the princess, “but if you bring me a flash of fire, I’ll become your bride.”

Swift was the flight of the dragon-fly on his errand, and in came the Beetle with a tremendous buzz, and ardently plead his suit.

“I’ll say ‘yes’ if you bring me fire” said the glittering princess.

Suitor after suitor appeared to woo the daughter of the King of the Fire-flies until every petal was dotted with them. One after another in a long troop they appeared. Each in his own way, proudly, humbly, boldly, mildly, with flattery, with boasting, even with tears, each proffered his love, told his rank or expatiated on his fortune or vowed his constancy, sang his tune or played his music. To every one of her lovers the princess in modest voice returned the same answer:

“Bring me fire and I’ll be your bride.”

So without telling his rivals, each one thinking he had the secret alone sped away after fire.

But none ever came back to wed the princess. Alas for the poor suitors! The beetle whizzed off to a house near by through the paper windows of which light glimmered. So full was he of his passion that thinking nothing of wood or iron, he dashed his head against a nail, and fell dead on the ground.

The black bug flew into a room where a poor student was reading. His lamp was only a dish of earthenware full of rape seed oil with a wick made of pith. Knowing nothing of oil the love-lorn bug crawled into the dish to reach the flame and in a few seconds was drowned in the oil.

“Nan jaro?” (What’s that?) said a thrifty housewife, sitting with needle in hand, as her lamp flared up for a moment, smoking the chimney, and then cracking it; while picking out the scorched bits she found a roasted dragon-fly, whose scarlet wings were all burned off.

Mad with love the brilliant hawk-moth, afraid of the flame yet determined to win the fire for the princess, hovered round and round the candle flame, coming nearer and nearer each time. “Now or never, the princess or death,” he buzzed, as he darted forward to snatch a flash of flame, but singeing his wings, he fell helplessly down, and died in agony.

“What a fool he was, to be sure,” said the ugly clothes moth, coming on the spot, “I’ll get the fire. I’ll crawl up *inside* the candle.” So he climbed up the hollow paper wick, and was nearly to the top, and inside the hollow blue part of the flame, when the man, snuffing the wick, crushed him to death.

Sad indeed was the fate of the lovers of Hi-o’s daughter. Some hovered around the beacons on the headland, some fluttered about the great wax candles which stood eight feet high in their brass sockets in Buddhist temples; some burned their noses at the top of incense sticks, or were nearly choked by the smoke; some danced all night around the lanterns in the shrines; some sought the sepulchral lamps in the graveyard; one visited the cremation furnace; another the kitchen, where a feast was going on; another chased the sparks that flew out of the chimney; but none brought fire to the princess, or won the lover’s prize. Many lost their feelers, had their shining bodies scorched or their wings singed, but most of them alas! lay dead, black and cold next morning.

As the priests trimmed the lamps in the shrines, and the servant maids the lanterns, each said alike:

“The Princess Hotaru must have had many lovers last night.”

Alas! alas! poor suitors. Some tried to snatch a streak of green fire from the cat’s eyes, and were snapped up for their pains. One attempted to get a mouthful of bird’s breath, but was swallowed alive. A carrion beetle (the ugly lover) crawled off to the sea shore, and found some fish scales that emitted light. The stag-beetle climbed a mountain, and in a rotten tree stump found some bits of glowing wood like fire, but the distance was so great that long before they reached the castle moat it was daylight, and the fire had gone out; so they threw their fish scales and old wood away.

The next day was one of great mourning and there were so many funerals going on, that Hi-maro the Prince of the Fire-flies on the north side of the castle moat inquired of his servants the cause. Then he learned for the first time of the glittering princess. Upon this the prince who had just succeeded his father upon the throne fell in love with the princess and resolved to marry her. He sent his chamberlain to ask of her father his daughter in marriage according to true etiquette. The father agreed to the prince's proposal, with the condition that the Prince should obey her behest in one thing, which was to come in person bringing her fire.

Then the Prince at the head of his glittering battalions came in person and filled the lotus palace with a flood of golden light. But Hotaru-himé was so beautiful that her charms paled not their fire even in the blaze of the Prince's glory. The visit ended in wooing, and the wooing in wedding. On the night appointed, in a palanquin made of the white lotus-petals, amid the blazing torches of the prince's battalions of warriors, Hotaru-himé was borne to the prince's palace and there, prince and princess were joined in the wedlock.

Many generations have passed since Hi-maro and Hotaru-himé were married, and still it is the whim of all Fire-fly princesses that their base-born lovers must bring fire as their love-offering or lose their prize. Else would the glittering fair ones be wearied unto death by the importunity of their lovers. Great indeed is the loss, for in this quest of fire many thousand insects, attracted by the fire-fly, are burned to death in the vain hope of winning the fire that shall gain the cruel but beautiful one that fascinates them. It is for this cause that each night insects hover around the lamp flame, and every morning a crowd of victims drowned in the oil, or scorched in the flame, must be cleaned from the lamp. This is the reason why young ladies catch and imprison the fire-flies to watch the war of insect-love, in the hope that they may have human lovers who will dare as much, through fire and flood, as they.

27

THE BATTLE OF THE APE AND THE CRAB

In the land where neither the monkeys or the cats have tails, and the persimmons grow to be as large as apples and with seeds bigger than a melon's, there once lived a land crab in the side of a sand hill. One day an ape came along having a persimmon seed, which he offered to swap with the crab for a rice-cake. The crab agreed, and planting the seed in his garden went out every day to watch it grow.

By-and-by the ape came to visit the crab, and seeing the fine tree laden with the yellow-brown fruit, begged a few. The crab, asking pardon of the ape, said he could not climb the tree to offer him any, but agreed to give the ape half, if he would mount the tree and pluck them.

So the monkey ran up the tree, while the crab waited below, expecting to eat the ripe fruit. But the monkey sitting on a limb first filled his pockets full, and then picking off all the best ones, greedily ate the pulp, and threw the skin and stones in the crab's face. Every once in a while, he would pull off a green sour persimmon and hit the crab hard, until his shell was nearly cracked. At last the crab thought he would get the best of the ape. So when his enemy had eaten his fill until he was bulged out, he cried out,

"Now Mister Ape, I dare you to come down head-foremost. You can't do it."

So the ape began to descend, head downward. This was just what the crab wanted, for all the finest persimmons rolled out of his pockets on the ground. The crab quickly gathered them up, and with both arms full ran off to his hole. Then the ape was very angry. He kindled a fire, and blew the smoke down the hole, until the crab was nearly choked. The poor crab to save his life had to crawl out.

Then the monkey beat him soundly, and left him for dead.

The crab had not been long thus, when three travelers, a rice-mortar, an egg, and a wasp found him lying on the ground. They carried him into the house, bound up his wounds and while he lay in bed they planned how they might destroy the ape. They all talked of the matter over their cups of tea, and after the mortar had smoked several pipes of tobacco, a plan was agreed on.

So taking the crab along, stiff and sore as he was, they marched to the monkey’s castle. The wasp flew inside, and found that their enemy was away from home. Then all entered and hid themselves. The egg cuddled up under the ashes in the hearth. The wasp flew into the closet. The mortar hid behind the door. They then waited for the ape to come home. The crab sat beside the fire.

Towards evening the monkey arrived, and throwing off his coat (which was just what the wasp wanted) he lighted a sulphur match, and kindling a fire, hung on the kettle for a cup of tea, and pulled out his pipe for a smoke. Just as he sat down by the hearth to salute the crab, the egg burst and the hot yolk flew all over him and in his eye, nearly blinding him. He rushed out to the bath-room to plunge in the tub of cold water, when the wasp flew at him and stung his nose. Slipping down, he fell flat on the floor, when the mortar rolled on him and crushed him to death. Then the whole party congratulated the crab on their victory. Grateful for the friendship thus shown, the whole party, crab, mortar and wasp lived in peace together.

The crab married the daughter of a rich crab that lived over the hill, and a great feast of persimmons was spread before the bride’s relatives who came to see the ceremony. By-and-by a little crab was born which became a great pet with the mortar and wasp. With no more apes to plague them, they lived very happily.

28

THE WONDERFUL TEA-KETTLE

A long time ago there was an old priest who lived in the temple of Morinji in the province of Hitachi. He cooked his own rice, boiled his own tea, swept his own floor and lived frugally as an honest priest should do.

One day he was sitting near the square fire-place in the middle of the floor. A rope and chain to hold the pot and kettle hung down from the covered hole in the ceiling which did duty as a chimney. A pair of brass tongs was stuck in the ashes and the fire blazed merrily. At the side of the fire-place, on the floor, was a tray filled with tiny tea-cups, a pewter tea-caddy, a bamboo tea-stirrer, and a little dipper. The priest having finished sweeping the ashes off the edges of the hearth with a little whisk of hawk's feathers, was just about to put on the tea when "suzz," "suzz," sang the tea-kettle spout; and then "pattari" — "pattari" said the lid, as it flapped up and down, and the kettle swung backwards and forwards.

"What does this mean?" said the old bonze. "*Naru hodo,*" said he, with a start as the spout of the kettle turned into a badger's nose with its big whiskers, while from the other side sprouted out a long bushy tail.

"*Yohodo medzurashi,*" shouted the priest dropping the tea-caddy and spilling the green tea all over the matting as four hairy legs appeared under the kettle, and the strange compound, half badger and half kettle, jumped off the fire, and began running around the room. To the priest's horror it leaped on a shelf, puffed out its belly and began to beat a tune with its fore-paws as if it were a drum. The old bonze's pupils, hearing the racket rushed in, and after a lively chase, upsetting piles of books and breaking some of the tea-cups, secured the badger, and squeezed him in a keg used for storing the pickled radishes called *daikon*, (or Japanese sauer-kraut.) They fastened down the lid with a heavy stone. They were sure that the strong odor of the radishes would kill the beast, for no man could possibly survive such a smell, and it was not likely a badger could.

The next morning the tinker of the village called in and the priest told him about his strange visitor. Wishing to show him the animal, he cautiously lifted the lid of the cask, lest the badger, might after all, be still alive, in spite of the stench of the sour mess, when lo! there was nothing but the old iron tea-kettle. Fearing that the utensil might play the same prank again, the priest was glad to sell it to the tinker who bought the kettle for a few iron cash. He carried it to his junk shop, though he thought it felt unusually heavy.

The tinker went to bed as usual that night with his *andon*, or paper shaded lamp, just back of his head. About midnight, hearing a strange noise like the flapping up and down of an iron pot-lid, he sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes, and there was the iron pot covered with fur and sprouting out legs. In short, it was turning into a hairy beast. Going over to the recess and taking a fan from the rack, the badger climbed up on the frame of the lamp, and began to dance on its one hind leg, waving the fan with its fore-paw. It played many other tricks, until the man started up, and then the badger turned into a tea-kettle again.

"I declare," said the tinker as he woke up next morning, and talked the matter over with his wife. "I'll just 'raise a mountain'" (earn my fortune) on this kettle. It certainly is a very highly accomplished tea-kettle I'll call it the

Bumbuku Chagama (The Tea-Kettle accomplished in literature and military art) and exhibit it to the public.

So the tinker hired a professional show-man for his business agent, and built a little theatre and stage. Then he gave an order to a friend of his, an artist, to paint scenery, with Fuji yama and cranes flying in the air, and a crimson sun shining through the bamboo, and a red moon rising over the waves, and golden clouds and tortoises, and the Sumiyoshi couple, and the grasshopper’s picnic, and the Procession of Lord Long-legs, and such like. Then he stretched a tight rope of rice-straw across the stage, and the handbills being stuck up in all the barber shops in town, and wooden tickets branded with “Accomplished and Lucky Tea-Kettle Performance, Admit one,” — the show was opened. The house was full and the people came in parties bringing their tea-pots full of tea and picnic boxes full of rice and eggs, and dumplings, made of millet meal, sugared roast-pea cakes, and other refreshments; because they came to stay all day. Mothers brought their babies with them for the children enjoyed it most of all.

Then the tinker, dressed up in his wide ceremonial clothes, with a big fan in his hand, came out on the platform, made his bow and set the wonderful tea-kettle on the stage. Then at a wave of his fan, the kettle ran around on four legs, half badger and half iron, clanking its lid and wagging its tail. Next it turned into a badger, swelled out its body and beat a tune on it like a drum. It danced a jig on the tight rope, and walked the slack rope, holding a fan, or an umbrella in his paw, stood on his head, and finally at a flourish of his master’s fan became a cold and rusty tea-kettle again. The audience were wild with delight, and as the fame of the wonderful tea-kettle spread, many people came from great distances.

Year after year the tinker exhibited the wonder until he grew immensely rich. Then he retired from the show business, and out of gratitude took the old kettle to the temple again and deposited it there as a precious relic. It was then named Bumbuku Dai Mio Jin (The Great Illustrious, Accomplished in Literature and the Military Art).

29

PEACH-PRINCE, AND THE TREASURE ISLAND

Very long, long ago, there lived an old man and woman in a village near a mountain, from which flowed a stream of purest water. This old couple loved each other so dearly and lived together so happily, that the neighbors called them *oshi-dori fu-fu* (a love-bird couple), after the mandarin ducks which always dwell together in pairs, and are so affectionate that they are said to pine and die if one be taken from the other. The old man was a woodcutter, and the old woman kept house, but they were very lonely for they had no child, and often grieved over their hard lot.

One day while the man was out on the mountain cutting brush, his old crone took her shallow tub and clothes down to the brook to wash. She had not yet begun, when she saw a peach floating with its stem and two leaves in the stream. She picked up the fruit and set it aside to take home and share it with her old man. When he returned she set it before him, not dreaming what was in it. He was just about to cut it open, when the peach fell in half, and there lay a little baby boy. The happy old couple rejoiced over him and reared him tenderly. Because he was their first child (taro) and born of a peach (momo) they called him Momotaro or Peach-Darling.

The most wonderful thing in the child, was his great strength! Even when still a baby, he would astonish his foster-mother by standing on the mats, and lifting her wash tub, or kettle of hot tea, which he would balance above his head without spilling a drop. The little fellow grew to be strong and brave and good. He was always kind to his parents and saved them many a step and much toil. He practiced archery, wrestling, and handling the iron club, until he was not afraid of anybody or anything. He even laughed at the oni, who, were demons living in the clouds or on lonely islands in the sea. Momotaro was also very kind to birds and animals, so that they were very tame, and became his friends, knew him and called him by name.

Now there was an island far out in the ocean, inhabited by onis with horns in their heads, and big sharp tusks in their mouths, who ravaged the shores of Japan and ate up the people. In the centre of the island was the giant Oni's castle, built inside a great cave which was full of all kinds of treasures such as every one wants. These are:

1. The hat which makes the one who puts it on invisible. It looks just like a straw hat, but has a tuft of fine grass on the top, and a pink fringe like the lining of shells, around the brim.

2. A coat like a farmer's grass rain-cloak, which makes the wearer invisible.

3. The crystal jewels which flash fire, and govern the ebb and flow of the tide.

4. Shippo, or "the seven jewels," namely gold and silver, branch of red coral, agate, emerald, crystal and pearl. All together called *takare mono*, or precious treasures.

Momotaro made up his mind to conquer these demons, and get their treasures. He prepared his weapons and asked the old woman to make him some millet dumplings. So the old lady ground the millet seeds into meal, the old man kneaded the dough, and both made the dumplings which the little hero carefully stuck on skewers and stowed away in a bamboo basket-box. This he wrapped in a silk napkin, and flung it over his shoulder.

Seizing his iron club he stuck his flag in his back as the sign of war. The flag was of white silk, crossed by two black bars at the top, and underneath these, was embroidered the device of a peach with a stem and two leaves floating on a running stream. This was his crest or *sashimono* (banneret). Then he bade the old folks good-bye and walked off briskly. He took his little dog with him, giving him a millet dumpling now and then.

As he passed along he met a monkey chattering and showing his teeth. The monkey said,

"Where are you going, Mr. Peach-Darling?"

"I'm going to the *oni's* island to get his treasures."

"What have you got good in your package?"

"Millet dumplings. Have one?"

"Yes, give me one, and I'll go with you," said the monkey.

So the monkey ate the dumpling, and boy, dog and monkey all trudged on together. A little further on a pheasant met them and said:

"Ohio, Momotaro, doko?" (Good morning, Mr. Peach-Prince, where are you going?). Peach-Prince told him, and at the same time offered him a dumpling. This made the pheasant his friend.

Peach-Prince and his little army of three retainers journeyed on until they reached the sea-shore. There they found a big boat into which Peach-Prince with the dog and monkey embarked, while the pheasant flew over to the island to find a safe place to land, so as to take the onis by surprise.

They quietly reached the door of the cave, and then Momotaro beat in the gate with his iron club. Rushing into the castle, he put the small onis to flight, and dashing forward, the little hero would nearly have reached the room where the giant oni was just waking up after a nights' drunkenness. With a terrible roar he advanced to gobble up Peach-Prince, when the dog ran behind and bit the oni in the leg. The monkey climbed up his back and blinded him with his paws while the pheasant flew in his face. Then Peach-

Prince beat him with his iron club, until he begged for his life and promised to give up all his treasures.

The onis brought all their precious things out of the storehouse and laid them on great tables or trays before the little hero and his little army.

Momotaro sat on a rock, with his little army of three retainers around him, holding his fan, with his hands akimbo on his knees, just as mighty generals do after a battle, when they receive the submission of their enemies. On his right sat kneeling on the ground his faithful monkey, while the pheasant and dog sat on the left.

After the onis had surrendered all, they fell down on their hands and knees with their faces in the dust, and acknowledged Peach-Prince as their master, and swore they would ever henceforth be his slaves. Then Peach-Prince, with a wave of his fan bade them rise up and carry the treasures to the largest ship they had, and to point the prow to the land. This done, Momotaro and his company got on board, and the onis bowed farewell.

A stiff breeze sprang up and sent the ship plowing through the waters, and bent out the great white sail like a bow. On the prow was a long black tassel like the mane of a horse, that at every lurch dipped in the waves, and as it rose flung off the spray.

The old couple becoming anxious after their Peach-Darling, had traveled down to the sea shore, and arrived just as the treasure ship hove in sight. Oh how beautiful it looked with its branches of red coral, and shining heaps of gold and silver, and the invisible coat and hat, the dazzling sheen of the jewels of the ebbing and the flowing tide, the glistening pearls, and piles of agate and crystal.

Momotaro came home laden with riches enough to keep the old couple in comfort all their lives, and he himself lived in great state. He knighted the monkey, the dog and the pheasant, and made them his body-guard. Then he married a beautiful princess and lived happily till he died.

30

THE FOX AND THE BADGER

There is a certain mountainous district in Shikoku in which a skillful hunter had trapped or shot so many foxes and badgers that only a few were left. These were an old grey badger and a female fox with one cub. Though hard pressed by hunger, neither dared to touch a loose piece of food, lest a trap might be hidden under it. Indeed they scarcely stirred out of their holes except at night, lest the hunter's arrow should strike them. At last the two animals held a council together to decide what to do, whether to emigrate or to attempt to outwit their enemy. They thought a long while, when finally the badger having hit upon a good plan, cried out:

"I have it. Do you transform yourself into a man. I'll pretend to be dead. Then you can bind me up and sell me in the town. With the money paid you can buy some food. Then I'll get loose and come back. The next week I'll sell you and you can escape."

"Ha! ha! ha! *yoroshiu*, *yoroshiu*," (good, good,) cried both together. "It's a capital plan," said Mrs. Fox.

So the Fox changed herself into a human form, and the badger, pretending to be dead, was tied up with straw ropes.

Slinging him over her shoulder, the fox went to town, sold the badger, and buying a lot of *tofu* (bean-cheese) and one or two chickens, made a feast. By this time the badger had got loose, for the man to whom he was sold, thinking him dead, had not watched him carefully. So scampering away to the mountains he met the fox, who congratulated him, while both feasted merrily.

The next week the badger took human form, and going to town sold the fox, who made believe to be dead. But the badger being an old skin-flint, and very greedy, wanted all the money and food for himself. So he whispered in the man's ear to watch the fox well as she was only feigning to be dead. So the man taking up a club gave the fox a blow on the head, which finished her. The badger, buying a good dinner, ate it all himself, and licked his chops, never even thinking of the fox's cub.

The cub after waiting a long time for its mother to come back, suspected foul play, and resolved on revenge. So going to the badger he challenged him to a trial of skill in the art of transformation. The badger accepted right off, for he despised the cub and wished to be rid of him.

“Well what do you want to do first? said Sir Badger.”

“I propose that you go and stand on the Big Bridge leading to the city,” said the cub, “and wait for my appearance. I shall come in splendid garments, and with many followers in my train. If you recognize me, you win, and I lose. If you fail, I win.”

So the badger went and waited behind a tree. Soon a daimio riding in a palanquin, with a splendid retinue of courtiers appeared, coming up the road. Thinking this was the fox-cub changed into a nobleman, although wondering at the skill of the young fox, the badger went up to the palanquin and told the person inside that he was recognized and had lost the game.

“What!” said the daimio's followers, who were real men, and surrounding the badger, they beat him to death.

The fox-cub, who was looking on from a hill near by, laughed in derision, and glad that treachery was punished, scampered away.

31

THE SEVEN PATRONS OF HAPPINESS

Every child knows who the *Shichi fuku Fin* or seven Patrons of Happiness are. They have charge of Long Life, Riches, Daily Food, Contentment, Talents, Glory, and Love. Their images carved in ivory, wood, stone, or cast in bronze are found in every house or sold in the stores or are painted on shop signs or found in picture books. They are a jolly company and make a happy family. On New Year's eve a picture of the Treasure-ship (Takaré-buné) laden with shippo (the seven jewels) and all the good things of life which men most desire is hung up in houses. The ship is coming into port and the passengers are the seven happy fairies who will make gifts to the people. These seven jewels are the same as those which Momotaro brought back from the oni's island.

First there is Fukoruku Jin the patron of Long Life or Length of Days. He has an enormously high forehead rounded at the top which makes his head look like a sugar-loaf. It is bald and shiny. A few stray white hairs sometimes sprout up, and the barber to reach them has to prop a ladder against his head to climb up and apply his razor. This big head comes from thinking so much. His eyebrows are cotton-white, and a long snowy beard falls down over his breast.

Once in a while in a good humor he ties a handkerchief over his high slippery crown and allows little boys to climb up on top — that is if they are good and can write well.

When he wants to show how strong and lively he is even though so old, he lets Daikoku the fat fellow ride on top of his head, while he smokes his pipe and wades across a river. Daikoku has to hold on tightly or he will slip down and get a ducking.

Usually the old shiny head is a very solemn gentleman, and walks slowly along with his staff in one hand while with the other he strokes his long eyebrows. The tortoise and the crane are always with him, for these are his pets. Sometimes a stag with hair white with age, walks behind him. Every body likes Fukoruku Jin because every one wants to get his favor and live long; until, like a lobster, their backs are bent with age. At a wedding you will always see a picture of white-bearded and shiny-pated Fukoruku Jin.

Daikoku is a short chubby fellow with eyes half sunk in fat but twinkling with fun. He has a flat cap set on his head like the kind which babies wear, a loose sack over his shoulders, and big boots on his feet. His throne is two straw bags of rice, and his badge of office is a mallet or hammer, which makes people rich when he shakes it. The hammer is the symbol of labor, showing that people may expect to get rich only by hard work. One end of it is carved to represent the jewel of the ebbing and the flowing tides, because merchants get rich by commerce on the sea and must watch the tides. He is often seen holding the arithmetic frame on which you can count, do sums, subtract, multiply, or divide, by sliding balls up and down a row of sticks set in a frame, instead of writing figures. Beside him is a ledger and day-book. His favorite animal is the rat, which like some rich men’s pets, eats or runs away with his wealth.

The great silver-white radish called daikon, two feet long and as big as a man’s calf is always seen near him because it signifies flourishing prosperity.

He keeps his bag tightly shut, for money easily runs away when the purse is once opened. He never lets go his hammer, for it is only by constant care that any one can keep money after he gets it. Even when he frolics with Fukuroku Jin, and rides on his head, he keeps his hammer ready swinging at his belt. He has huge lop ears.

Once in a while, when he wishes to take exercise, and Fukuroku Jin wants to show how frisky he can be, even if he is old, they have a wrestling match together. Daikoku nearly always beats, because Fukuroku Jin is so tall that he has to bend down to grip Daikoku, who is fat and short, and thus he becomes top-heavy. Then Daikoku gets his rival’s long head under his left arm, seizes him over his back by the belt, and throws him over his shoulder flat on the ground. But if Fukuroku Jin can only get hold of Daikoku’s lop ears, both fall together. Then they laugh heartily and try it again.

Ebisu is the patron of daily food, which is rice and fish, and in old times was chiefly fish. He is nearly as fat as Daikoku, but wears a court noble’s high cap. He is always fishing or enjoying his game. When very happy, he sits on a rock by the sea, with his right leg bent under him, and a big red fish, called the tai, under his left arm. He carries a straw wallet on his back to hold his fish and keep it fresh. Often he is seen standing knee-deep in the water, pole in hand, watching for a nibble. Some say that Ebisu is the same scamp that goes by the other name of Sosanoo.

Hotei is the patron of contentment, and of course is the father of happiness. He does not wear much clothing, for the truth is that all his property consists of an old, ragged wrapper, a fan, and a wallet. He is as round as a pudding, and as fat as if rolled out of dough. His body is like a lump of *mochi* pastry, and his limbs like *dango* dumplings. He has lop ears that hang down over his shoulders, a tremendous double chin, and a round belly. Though he will not let his beard grow long, the slovenly old fellow never has it shaven when he ought to. He is a jolly vagabond, and never fit for company; but he is a great friend of the children, who romp over his knees and shoulders, pull his ears and climb up over his shaven head. He always keeps something good for them in his wallet. Sometimes he opens it wide, and then makes them guess what is inside. They try to peep in but are not tall enough to look over the edge. He makes tops, paints pictures or kites for the boys, and is the children's greatest friend. When the seven patrons meet together, Hotei is apt to drink more wine than is good for him.

Toshitoku is almost the only one of the seven who never lays aside his dignity. He has a very grave countenance. He is the patron of talents. His pet animal is a spotted fawn. He travels about a good deal to find and reward good boys, who are diligent in their studies, and men who are fitted to rule. In one hand he carries a crooked staff of bamboo, at the top of which is hung a book or roll of manuscript. His dress is like that of a learned doctor, with square cap, stole, and high-toed slippers.

Bishamon is the patron of glory and fame. He is a mighty soldier, with a golden helmet, breastplate and complete armor. He is the protector of priests and warriors. He gives them skill in fencing, horsemanship and archery. He holds a pagoda in one hand and a dragon sword in the other. His pet animal is the tiger.

Six out of the jolly seven worthies are men. Benten is the only lady. She is the patron of the family and of the sea. She plays the flute and the guitar for the others, and amuses them at their feasts, sometimes even dancing for them. Her real home is in Riu Gu, and she is the Queen of the world under the sea. She often dwells in the sea or ocean caves. Her favorite animal is the snake, and her servants are the dragons.

Once a year the jolly seven meet together to talk over old times, relate their adventures, and have a supper together. Then they proceed to business, which is to arrange all the marriages for the coming year. They have a great many hanks of red and white silk, which are the threads of fate of those to be married: The white threads are the men, the red are the women. At first they select the threads very carefully, and tie a great many pairs or couples neatly and strongly together, so that the matches are perfect. All such marriages of threads make happy marriages among human beings. But by-and-by they get tired, and lazy, and instead of tying the knots carefully, they hurry up the work and then jumble them carelessly, and finally toss and tangle up all the rest in a muss.

This is the reason why so many marriages are unhappy.

Then they begin to frolic like big boys. Benten plays the guitar, and Bishamon lies down on the floor resting with his elbows to hear it. Hotei drinks wine out of a shallow red cup as wide as a dinner plate. Daikoku and Fukuroku Jin begin to wrestle, and when Daikoku gets his man down, he pounds his big head with an empty gourd while Toshitoku and Ebisu begin to eat tai fish. When this fun is over, Benten and Fukuroku Jin play a game of checkers, while the others look on and bet; except Hotei the fat fellow, who is asleep. Then they get ashamed of themselves for gambling, and after a few days the party breaks up and each one goes to his regular business again.

32

DAIKOKU AND THE ONI

A long while ago, when the idols of Buddha and his host of disciples came to Japan, after traveling through China from India, they were very much vexed because the people still liked the little black fellow named Daikoku. Even when they became Buddhists they still burned incense to Daikoku, because he was the patron of wealth; for everybody then, as now, wanted to be rich. So the Buddhist idols determined to get rid of the little fat fellow. How to do it was the question. At last they called Yemma, the judge of the lower regions, and gave him the power to destroy Daikoku.

Now Yemma had under him a whole legion of *oni*, some green, some black, others blue as indigo, and others of a vermillion color, which he usually sent on ordinary errands.

But for so important an expedition he now called Shino a very cunning old fellow, and ordered him to kill or remove Daikoku out of the way.

Shino made his bow to his master, tightened his tiger-skin belt around his loins and set off.

It was not an easy thing to find Daikoku, even though every one worshipped him. So the oni had to travel a long way, and ask a great many questions of people, and often lose his way before he got any clue. One day he met a sparrow who directed him to Daikoku's palace, where among all his money-bags and treasure piled to the ceiling, the fat and lop-eared fellow was accustomed to sit eating daikon radish, and amuse himself with his favorite pets, the rats. Around him was stored in straw bags his rice which he considered more precious than money.

Entering the gate, the oni peeped about cautiously but saw no one. He went further on till he came to a large store house standing alone and built in the shape of a huge rice-measure. Not a door or window could be seen, but climbing up a narrow plank set against the top edge he peeped over, and there sat Daikoku.

The oni descended and got into the room. Then he thought it would be an easy thing to pounce upon Daikoku. He was already chuckling to himself over the prospect of such wealth being his own, when Daikoku squeaked out to his chief rat.

"*Nedzumi san*, (Mr. Rat) I feel some strange creature must be near. Go chase him off the premises."

Away scampered the rat to the garden and plucked a sprig of holly with leaves full of thorns like needles. With this in his fore-paw, he ran at the oni, whacked him soundly, and stuck him all over with the sharp prickles.

The oni yelling with pain ran away as fast as he could run. He was so frightened that he never stopped until he reached Yemma's palace, when he fell down breathless. He then told his master the tale of his adventure, but begged that he might never again be sent against Daikoku.

So the Buddhist idols finding they could not banish or kill Daikoku, agreed to recognize him, and so they made peace with him and to this day Buddhists and Shintoists alike worship the fat little god of wealth.

When people heard how the chief oni had been driven away by only a rat armed with holly, they thought it a good thing to keep off all oni. So ever afterward, even to this day, after driving out all the bad creatures with parched beans, they place sprigs of holly at their door-posts on New Year's eve, to keep away the oni and all evil spirits.

33

BENKEI AND THE BELL

On one of the hills overlooking the blue sky's mirror of Lake Biwa, stands the ancient monastery of Miidera which was founded over 1,200 years ago, by the pious mikado Tenchi.

Near the entrance, on a platform constructed of stoutest timbers, stands a bronze bell five and a half feet high. It has on it none of the superscriptions so commonly found on Japanese bells, and though its surface is covered with scratches it was once as brilliant as a mirror. This old bell, which is visited by thousands of people from all parts of Japan who come to wonder at it, is remarkable for many things.

Over two thousand years ago, say the bonzes, it hung in the temple of Gihon Shoja in India which Buddha built. After his death it got into the possession of the Dragon King of the World under the Sea. When the hero Toda the Archer shot the enemy of the queen of the Under-world, she presented him with many treasures and among them this great bell, which she caused to be landed on the shores of the lake. Toda however was not able to remove it, so he presented it to the monks at Miidera. With great labor it was brought to the hill-top and hung in this belfry where it rung out daily matins and orisons, filling the lake and hill sides with sweet melody.

Now it was one of the rules of the Buddhists that no woman should be allowed to ascend the hill or enter the monastery of Miidera. The bonzes associated females and wicked influences together. Hence the prohibition.

A noted beauty of Kioto hearing of the polished face of the bell, resolved in spite of the law against her sex to ascend the hill to dress her hair and powder her face in the mirror-like surface of the bell.

So selecting an hour when she knew the priests would be too busy at study of the sacred rolls to notice her, she ascended the hill and entered the belfry. Looking into the smooth surface, she saw her own sparkling eyes, her cheeks, flushed rosy with exercise, her dimples playing, and then her whole form reflected as in her own silver mirror, before which she daily sat. Charmed as much by the vastness as the brilliancy of the reflection, she stretched forth her hand, and touching her finger-tips to the bell prayed aloud that she might possess just such a mirror of equal size and brightness.

But the bell was outraged at the impiety of the woman’s touch, and the cold metal shrank back, leaving a hollow place, and spoiling the even surface of the bell. From that time forth the bell gradually lost its polish, and became dull and finally dark like other bells.

When Benkei was a monk, he was possessed of a mighty desire to steal this bell and hang it up at Hiyeisan. So one night he went over to Miidera hill and cautiously crept up to the belfry and unhooked it from the great iron link which held it. How to get it down the mountain was now the question.

Should he let it roll down, the monks at Miidera would hear it bumping over the stones. Nor could he carry it in his arms, for it was too big around (16 feet) for him to grasp and hold. He could not put his head in it like a candle in a snuffer, for then he would not be able to see his way down.

So climbing into the belfry he pulled out the cross-beam with the iron link, and hanging on the bell put the beam on his shoulder to carry it in *tembimbo* style, that is, like a pair of scales.

The next difficulty was to balance it, for he had nothing but his lantern to hang on the other end of the beam to balance the bell. It was a prodigiously hard task to carry his burden the six or seven miles distance to Hiyeisan. It was “trying to balance a bronze bell with a paper lantern.”

The work made him puff and blow and sweat until he was as hungry as a badger, but he finally succeeded in hooking it up in the belfry at Hiyeisan.

Then all the fellow priests of Benkei got up, though at night, to welcome him. They admired his bravery and strength and wished to strike the bell at once to show their joy.

“No, I won’t lift a hammer or sound a note till you make me some soup. I am terribly hungry,” said Benkei, as he sat down on a cross piece of the belfry and wiped his forehead with his cowl.

Then the priests got out the iron soup-pot, five feet in diameter, and kindling a fire made a huge mess of soup and served it to Benkei. The lusty monk sipped bowl after bowl of the steaming nourishment until the pot was empty.

“Now,” said he, “you may sound the bell.”

Five or six of the young bonzes mounted the platform and seized the rope that held the heavy log suspended from the roof. The manner of striking the bell was to pull back the log several feet, then let go the rope, holding the log after the rebound.

At the first stroke the bell quivered and rolled out a most mournful and solemn sound which as it softened and died away changed into the distinct murmur:

“I want to go back to Miidera, I want to go back to Miidera, I want to go-o back to-o M-i-i-de-ra-ra-a-a-a.”

“Naru hodo” said the priests. “What a strange bell. It wants to go back. It is not satisfied with our ringing.”

“Ah! I know what is the matter” said the aged abbot. “It must be sprinkled with holy water of Hiyeisan. Then it will be happy with us. Ho! page bring hither the deep sea shell full of sacred water.”

So the pure white shell full of the consecrated water was brought, together with the holy man’s brush. Dipping it in the water the abbot sprinkled the bell inside and out.

“I dedicate thee, oh bell, to Hiyeisan. Now strike,” said he, signalling to the bell-pullers.

Again the young men mounted the platform, drew back the log with a lusty pull and let fly.

“M-m-m-mi-mi-de-de-ra-ra ye-e-e-e-ko-o-o-o-o” “(Miidera ye ko, I want to go back to Miidera)” moaned out the homesick bell.

This so enraged Benkei that he rushed to the rope waved the monks aside and seizing the rope strained every muscle to jerk the beam its entire length afield, and then let fly with force enough to crack the bell. For a moment the dense volume of sound filled the ears of all like a storm, but as the vibrations died away, the bell whined out:

“Miidera-mi-mi-de-de-ra-a-a ye-e-e-ko-o-o-o-o.” “I want to go back to Miidera,” sobbed the bell.

Whether struck at morning, noon or night the bell said the same words. No matter when, by whom, how hard or how gently it was struck, the bell moaned the one plaint as if crying, “I want to go back to Miidera.” “I want to go back to Miidera.”

At last Benkei in a rage unhooked the bell, shouldered it beam and all, and set off to take it back. Carrying the bell to the top of Hiyeisan, he set it down, and giving it a kick rolled it down the valley toward Miidera, and left it there. Then the Miidera bonzes hung it up again. Since that time the bell has completely changed its note, until now it is just like other bells in sound and behavior.

34

LITTLE SILVER’S DREAM OF THE SHOJI

She thought she had gone down to Ozaka, and there got on a junk and sailed far away to the southwest, through the Inland sea. One night the water seemed full of white ghosts of men and women. Some of them were walking on, and in, the water. Some were running about. Here and there groups appeared to be talking together. Once in a while the junk would run against one of them; and when Little Silver looked to see if he were hurt or knocked over, she could see nothing until the junk passed by, when the ghost would appear standing in the same place, as though the ship had gone through empty air.

Occasionally a ghost would come up to the side of the ship, and in a squeaky voice ask for a dipper. While she would be wondering what a ghost wanted to do with a dipper, a sailor would quietly open a locker, take out a dipper having no bottom, and give one every time he was asked for them. Little Silver noticed a large bundle of these dippers ready. The ghosts would then begin to bail up water out of the sea to empty it in the boat. All night they followed the junk, holding on with one hand to the gunwale, while they vainly dipped up water with the other, trying to swamp the boat. If dippers with bottoms in them had been given them, the sailors said, the boat would have been sunk. When daylight appeared the shadowy host of people vanished.

In the morning they passed an island, the shores of which were high rocks of red coral. A great earthen jar stood on the beach, and around it lay long-handled ladles holding a half-gallon or more, and piles of very large shallow red lacquered wine cups, which seemed as big as the full moon. After the sun had been risen some time, there came down from over the hills a troop of the most curious looking people. Many were short, little wizen-faced folks, that looked very old; or rather, they seemed old before they ought to be. Some were very aged and crooked, with hickory-nut faces, and hair of a reddish gray tint. All the others had long scarlet locks hanging loose over their heads, and streaming down their backs. Their faces were flushed as if by hard drinking, and their pimpled noses resembled huge red barnacles. No sooner did they arrive at the great earthen jar than they ranged themselves round it. The old ones dipped out ladles full, and drank of the wine till they reeled. The younger ones poured the liquor into cups and drank. Even the little infants guzzled quantities of the yellow saké from the shallow cups of very thin red-lacquered wood.

Then began the dance, and wild and furious it was. The leather-faced old sots tossed their long reddish-grey locks in the air, and pirouetted round the big saké jar. The younger ones of all ages clapped their hands, knotted their handkerchiefs over their foreheads, waved their dippers or cups or fans, and practiced all kinds of antics, while their scarlet hair streamed in the wind or was blown in their eyes.

The dance over, they threw down their cups and dippers, rested a few minutes and then took another heavy drink all around.

“Now to work” shouted an old fellow whose face was redder than his half-bleached hair, and who having only two teeth like tusks left looked just like an *oni* (imp.) As for his wife, her teeth had long ago fallen out and the skin of her face seemed to have added a pucker for every year since a half century had rolled over her head.

Then Little Silver looked and saw them scatter. Some gathered shells and burned them to make lime. Others carried water and made mortar, which they thickened by a pulp made of paper, and a glue made by boiling fish skin. Some dived under the sea for red coral, which they hauled up by means of straw ropes, in great sprigs as thick as the branches of a tree. They quickly ran up a scaffold, and while some of the scarlet-headed plasterers smeared the walls, others below passed up the tempered mortar on long shell shovels, to the hand mortar-boards. Even at work they had casks and cups of saké at hand, while children played in the empty kegs and licked the gummy sugar left in some of them.

"What is that house for?" asked Little Silver of the sailors.

"Oh, that is the Kura (storehouse) in which the King of the Shoji stores the treasures of life, and health, and happiness, and property, which men throw away, or exchange for the saké, which he gives them, by making funnels of themselves."

"Oh, Yes," said Little Silver to herself, as she remembered how her father had said of a certain neighbor who had lately been drinking hard, "he swills saké like a Shoji."

She also understood why picnic or "chow-chow" boxes were often decorated with pictures of Shoji, with their cups and dippers. For, at these picnics, many men get drunk; so much so indeed, that after a while the master of the feast orders very poor and cheap wine to be served to the guests. He also replaces the delicate wine cups of egg-shell porcelain, with big thick tea-cups or wooden bowls, for the guests when drunk, do not know the difference.

She also now understood why it was commonly said of a Mr. Matsu, who had once been very rich but was now a poor sot, "His property has all gone to the Shoji."

Just then the ship in which she was sailing struck a rock, and the sudden jerk woke up Little Silver, who cried out, "Tapir, come eat; tapir, come eat."

No tapir came, but if he had I fear Little Silver would have been more frightened than she was by her dream of the ghosts; for next morning she laughed to think how they had all their work a-dipping water for nothing, and at her old nurse for thinking a picture of a tapir could keep off dreams.

35

THE TENGUS, OR THE ELVES WITH LONG NOSES

Curious creatures are the tengus, with the head of a hawk and the body of a man. They have very hairy hands or paws with two fingers, and feet with two toes. They are hatched out of eggs, and have wings and feathers, until full grown. Then their wings moult, and the stumps are concealed behind their dress, which is like that of a man. They walk, when grown up, on clogs a foot high, which are like stilts, as they have but one support instead of two, like the sort which men wear. The tengus strut about easily on these, without stumbling.

The Dai Tengu, or master, is a solemn-faced, scowling individual with a very proud expression, and a nose about eight finger-breadths long. When he goes abroad, his retainers march before him, for fear he might break his nose against something. He wears a long grey beard down to his girdle, and moustaches to his chin. In his left hand he carries a large fan made of seven wide feathers. This is the sign of his rank. He has a mouth, but he rarely opens it. He is very wise, and rules over all the tengus in Japan.

The Karasu or crow-tengu is a black fellow, with a long beak, in the place where his nose and mouth ought to be. He looks as if some one had squeezed out the lower part of his face, and pulled his nose down so as to make a beak like a crow’s. He is the Dai Tengu’s lictor. He carries the axe of authority over his left shoulder, to chop bad people’s heads off. In his right fist is his master's book of wisdom, and roll of authority. Even these two highest in authority in Tengu-land are servants of the great lord Kampira, the long-haired patron of sailors and mountaineers.

The greatest of the Dai Tengu lived in Kurama mountain and taught Yoshitsuné. This lad, while a pupil in the monastery, would slip out in the evening, when the priests thought him asleep, and come to the King of the Tengus, who instructed him in the military arts, in cunning, magic, and wisdom. Every night the boy would spread the roll of wisdom before him, and sit at the feet of the hoary-headed tengu, and learn the strange letters in which tengu wisdom is written, while the long-nosed servant tengus, propped up on their stilt-clogs, looked on. The boy was not afraid, but quickly learned the knowledge which birds, beasts and fishes have, how to understand their language and to fly, swim and leap like them.

When a tengu stumbles and falls down on his nose, it takes a long while to heal, and if he breaks it, the doctor puts it in splints like a broken arm, until it straightens out and heals up again.

Some of the amusements in Tengu-land are very curious. A pair of young tengus will fence with their noses as if they were foils. Their faces are well protected by masks, for if one tengu should "poke his nose" into the other's eye he might put it out, and a blind tengu could not walk about, because he would be knocking his nose against everything.

Two old tengus with noses nearly two feet long, sometimes try the strength of their face-handles. One fellow has his beak straight up in the air like a supporting post, while the other sits a yard off with his elastic nose stretched across like a tight-rope, and tied with twine at the top of the other one's nose. On this tight nose-rope a little tengu boy, with a tiny pug only two inches long, dances a jig. He holds an umbrella in his hand, now dancing, and now standing upon one foot. The tengu-daddy, whose nose serves as a tent-pole, waves his fan and sings a song, keeping time to the dance.

There is another tengu who sometimes quarrels with his wife, and when angry boxes her ears with his nose.

A lady-tengu who is inclined to be literary and sentimental, writes poetry. When the mood seizes her she ties the pen to her nose, dips it in ink and writes a poem on the wall.

A tengu-painter makes a long-handled brush to whitewash the ceiling, by strapping it to his nose.

Sometimes the little tengus get fighting, and then the feathers fly as they tear each other with their little claws which have talons on them shaped like a chicken's, but which when fully grown look like hands.

All the big tengus are fond of trying the strength of their noses, and how far they can bend them up and down without breaking. They have two favorite games of which they sometimes give exhibitions. The player has long strings of iron cash (that is, one hundred of the little iron coins, with a square hole in the centre). Several of these he slides on a rope like buttons on a string, or counters on a wire. Then he lifts them off with the tip of his nose. Sometimes his nose bends so much under the weight that the coins slip off. Whichever tengu can pick off the greater number of strings without letting any slip, wins the game, and is called O-hana (The King of Noses).

Another balances hoops and poles on his nose and throws balls through the hoops; or he poises a saucer of water on the tip of his nose without spilling a drop. Another fellow hangs a bell from the ceiling. Then, with a handkerchief tied loosely round his head, he pulls his nose back like a snapping-turtle's beak, and then suddenly lets go. His nose then strikes the bell and rings it. It hurts very much, but he does not mind it.

The tengus have one great fault. They love liquor too much. They often get drunk. They buy great casks of rice-wine, sling them round their necks, and drink out of long cups shaped like their faces, using the nose for a handle. A drunken tengu makes a funny sight, as he staggers about with his big wings drooping and flapping around him, and the feathers trailing in the mud, and his long nose limp, pendulous and groggy.

When the master of the tengus wishes to “see the flowers,” which means to go on a picnic, he punishes his drunken servant by swinging the box of eatables over the fellow’s red nose. Putting the end over his shoulders, he compels the sot to come along. It sobers the fellow, for the weight on his nose and the pulling on it hurts dreadfully, and often makes him squeal.

Oyama, a mountain near Tokio, is said to be full of these long-nosed elves, but many other mountains are inhabited by them, for they like lonely places away from men.

Dancers often put on masks like the tengu’s face and dance a curious dance which they call the Tengu’s quadrille.

The tengus are very proud fellows, and think themselves above human beings. They are afraid of brave men, however, and never dare to hurt them. They scare children, especially bad boys. They watch a boy telling lies and catch him. Then the tengus pull out his tongue by the roots, and run away with it.

When a tengu walks, he folds his arms, throws back his head till his nose is far up in the air, and struts around as if he were a daimio. When a man becomes vain and carries his nose too high, the people say “He has become a tengu.”

36

KINTARO, OR THE WILD BABY

Long, long ago, when the tallest fir trees on the Hakoné mountains were no higher than a rice-stalk, there lived in that part of the range called Ashigara, a little ruddy boy, whom his mother had named Kintaro, or Golden Darling. He was not like other boys, for having no children to play with, he made companions of the wild animals of the forest.

He romped with the little bears, and often when the old she bear would come for her cubs to give them their supper and put them to bed, Kintaro would jump on her back and have a ride to her cave. He also put his arms around the neck of the deer, which were not afraid of him. He was prince of the forest, and the rabbits, wild boars, squirrels and martens, pheasants and hawks were his servants and messengers.

Although not much more than a fat baby, Kintaro wielded a big axe, and could chop a snake to pieces before he had time to wriggle.

Kintaro’s father had been a brave soldier in Kioto, who through the malice of enemies at court, had fallen into disgrace. He had loved a beautiful lady whom he married. When her husband died she fled eastward to the Ashigara mountains, and there in the lonely forests in which no human being except poor woodcutters ever came, her boy was born.

She lived in a cave, nourishing herself on roots and herbs. The woodcutters soon learned about the strange pair living wild but peacefully in the woods, though they did not dream of her noble rank. The boy was known among them as “Little Wonder,” and the woman as “The old nurse of the mountain.”

Thus, all alone, the little fellow grew up, exercising himself daily, so that even though a child he could easily wrestle with a bear. Among his retainers were the tengus, though they were often rebellious and disobedient, not liking to be governed by a boy.

One day, an old mother-tengu, who had always laughed at the idea of obeying a little dumpling of a fellow like Kintaro, flew up to her nest in a high fir tree. Kintaro watched to see where it was, and waited till she left it to go and seek for food. Then going up to the tree, he shook it with all his might, until the nest came tumbling down, and the two young squabs of tengus with it.

Now it happened that just at that time the great hero and imp-killer, Raiko, was marching through the mountains on his way to Kioto. Seeing that the ruddy little fellow was no ordinary child, he found out the mother and heard her story. He then asked for the child and adopted him as his own.

So Kintaro went off with Raiko and grew up to be a brave soldier, and taking his father’s name, he was known as Sakata Kintoki. His mother, however, remained in the mountains, and living to an extreme old age, was always known as “The old nurse of the mountains.”

37

JIRAIYA, OR THE MAGIC FROG

Ogata was the name of a castle-lord who lived in the Island of the Nine Provinces, (Kiushiu). He had but one son, an infant, whom the people in admiration nicknamed Jiraiya (Young Thunder.) During one of the civil wars, this castle was taken, and Ogata was slain; but by the aid of a faithful retainer, who hid Jiraiya in his bosom, the boy escaped and fled northward to Echigo. There he lived until he grew up to manhood.

At that time Echigo was infested with robbers. One day the faithful retainer of Jiraiya being attacked, made resistance, and was slain by the robbers. Jiraiya now left alone in the world went out from Echigo and led a wandering life in several provinces.

All this time he was consumed with the desire to revive the name of his father, and restore the fortunes of his family. Being exceedingly brave, and an expert swordsman, he became chief of a band of robbers and plundered many wealthy merchants, and in a short time he was rich in men, arms and booty. He was accustomed to disguise himself, and go in person into the houses and presence of men of wealth, and thus learn all about their gates and guards, where they slept, and in what rooms their treasures were stored, so that success was easy.

Hearing of an old man who lived in Shinano, he started to rob him, and for this purpose put on the disguise of a pilgrim. Shinano is a very high table-land, full of mountains, and the snow lies deep in winter. A great snow storm coming on, Jiraiya took refuge in a humble house by the way. Entering, he found a very beautiful woman, who treated him with great kindness. This, however, did not change the robber’s nature. At midnight, when all was still, he unsheathed his sword, and going noiselessly to her room, he found the lady absorbed in reading.

Lifting his sword, he was about to strike at her neck, when, in a flash, her body changed into that of a very old man, who seized the heavy steel blade and broke it in pieces as though it were a stick. Then he tossed the bits of steel away, and thus spoke to Jiraiya, who stood amazed but fearless:

“I am a man named Senso Dojin, and I have lived in these mountains many hundred years, though my true body is that of a huge frog. I can easily put you to death but I have another purpose. So I shall pardon you and teach you magic instead.”

Then the youth bowed his head to the floor, poured out his thanks to the old man and begged to be received as his pupil.

Remaining with the old man of the mountain for several weeks, Jiraiya learned all the arts of the mountain spirits; how to cause a storm of wind and rain, to make a deluge, and to control the elements at will.

He also learned how to govern the frogs, and at his bidding they assumed gigantic size, so that on their backs he could stand up and cross rivers and carry enormous loads.

When the old man had finished instructing him he said “Henceforth cease from robbing, or in any way injuring the poor. Take from the wicked rich, and those who acquire money dishonestly, but help the needy and the suffering.” Thus speaking, the old man turned into a huge frog and hopped away.

What this old mountain spirit bade him do, was just what Jiraiya wished to accomplish. He set out on his journey with a light heart. “I can now make the storm and the waters obey me, and all the frogs are at my command; but alas! the magic of the frog cannot control that of the serpent. I shall beware of his poison.”

From that time forth the oppressed poor people rejoiced many a time as the avaricious merchants and extortionate money lenders lost their treasures. For when a poor farmer, whose crops failed, could not pay his rent or loan on the date promised, these hard-hearted money lenders would turn him out of his house, seize his beds and mats and rice-tub, and even the shrine and images on the god-shelf, to sell them at auction for a trifle, to their minions, who resold them at a high price for the money-lender, who thus got a double benefit. Whenever a miser was robbed, the people said, “The young thunder has struck,” and then they were glad, knowing that it was Jiraiya, (Young Thunder.) In this manner his name soon grew to be the poor people’s watchword in those troublous times.

Yet Jiraiya was always ready to help the innocent and honest, even if they were rich. One day a merchant named Fukutaro was sentenced to death, though he was really not guilty. Jiraiya hearing of it, went to the magistrate and said that he himself was the very man who committed the robbery. So the man’s life was saved, and Jiraiya was hanged on a large oak tree. But during the night, his dead body changed into a bull-frog which hopped away out of sight, and off into the mountains of Shinano.

At this time, there was living in this province, a young and beautiful maiden named Tsunadé. Her character was very lovely. She was always obedient to her parents and kind to her friends. Her daily task was to go to the mountains and cut brushwood for fuel. One day while thus busy singing at the task, she met a very old man, with a long white beard sweeping his breast, who said to her:

“Do not fear me. I have lived in this mountain many hundred years, but my real body is that of a snail. I will teach you the powers of magic, so that you can walk on the sea, or cross a river however swift and deep, as though it were dry land.”

Gladly the maiden took daily lessons of the old man, and soon was able to walk on the waters as on the mountain paths. One day the old man said, “I shall now leave you and resume my former shape. Use your power to destroy wicked robbers. Help those who defend the poor. I advise you to marry the celebrated man Jiraiya, and thus you will unite your powers.”

Thus saying, the old man shrivelled up into a snail and crawled away.

“I am glad,” said the maiden to herself, “for the magic of the snail can overcome that of the serpent. When Jiraiya, who has the magic of the frog, shall marry me, we can then destroy the son of the serpent, the robber named Dragon-coil (Orochimaru).”

By good fortune, Jiraiya met the maiden Tsunadé, and being charmed with her beauty, and knowing her power of magic, sent a messenger with presents to her parents, asking them to give him their daughter to wife. The parents agreed, and so the young and loving couple were married.

Hitherto when Jiraiya wished to cross a river he changed himself into a frog and swam across; or, he summoned a bull-frog before him, which increased in size until as large as an elephant. Then standing erect on his warty back, even though the wind blew his garments wildly, Jiraiya reached the opposite shore in safety. But now, with his wife’s powers, the two, without any delay, walked over as though the surface was a hard floor.

Soon after their marriage, war broke out in Japan between the two famous clans of Tsukikagé and Inukagé. To help them fight their battles, and capture the castles of their enemies, the Tsukikagé family besought the aid of Jiraiya, who agreed to serve them and carried their banner in his back. Their enemies, the Inukagé, then secured the services of Dragon-coil.

This Orochimaru, or Dragon-coil, was a very wicked robber whose father was a man, and whose mother was a serpent that lived in the bottom of Lake Takura. He was perfectly skilled in the magic of the serpent, and by spurting venom on his enemies, could destroy the strongest warriors.

Collecting thousands of followers, he made great ravages in all parts of Japan, robbing and murdering good and bad, rich and poor alike. Loving war and destruction he joined his forces with the Inukagé family.

Now that the magic of the frog and snail was joined to the one army, and the magic of the serpent aided the other, the conflicts were bloody and terrible, and many men were slain on both sides.

On one occasion, after a hard fought battle, Jiraiya fled and took refuge in a monastery, with a few trusty vassals, to rest a short time. In this retreat a lovely princess named Tagoto was dwelling. She had fled from Orochimaru, who wished her for his bride. She hated to marry the offspring of a serpent, and hoped to escape him. She lived in fear of him continually. Orochimaru hearing at one time that both Jiraiya and the princess were at this place, changed himself into a serpent, and distilling a large mouthful of poisonous venom, crawled up to the ceiling in the room where Jiraiya and his wife were sleeping, and reaching a spot directly over them, poured the poisonous venom on the heads of his rivals. The fumes of the prison so stupefied Jiraiya’s followers, and even the monks, that Orochimaru, instantly changing himself to a man, profited by the opportunity to seize the princess Tagoto, and make off with her.

Gradually the faithful retainers awoke from their stupor to find their master and his beloved wife delirious, and near the point of death, and the princess gone.

“What can we do to restore our dear master to life?” This was the question each one asked of the others, as with sorrowful faces and weeping eyes they gazed at the pallid forms of their unconscious master and his consort. They called in the venerable abbot of the monastery to see if he could suggest what could be done.

“Alas!” said the aged priest, “there is no medicine in Japan to cure your lord’s disease, but in India there is an elixir which is a sure antidote. If we could get that, the master would recover.”

“Alas! alas!” and a chorus of groans showed that all hope had fled, for the mountain in India, where the elixir was made, lay five thousand miles from Japan.

Just then a youth named Rikimatsu, one of the pages of Jiraiya, arose to speak. He was but fourteen years old, and served Jiraiya out of gratitude, for he had rescued his father from many dangers and saved his life. He begged permission to say a word to the abbot, who, seeing the lad’s eager face, motioned to him with his fan to speak.

“How long can our lord live,” asked the youth.

“He will be dead in thirty hours,” answered the abbot, with a sigh.

“I’ll go and procure the medicine, and if our master is still living when I come back, he will get well.”

Now Rikimatsu had learned magic and sorcery from the Tengus, or long-nosed elves of the mountains, and could fly high in the air with incredible swiftness. Speaking a few words of incantation, he put on the wings of a Tengu, mounted a white cloud and rode on the east wind to India, bought the elixir of the mountain spirits, and returned to Japan in one day and a night.

On the first touch of the elixir on the sick man’s face he drew a deep breath, perspiration glistened on his forehead, and in a few moments more he sat up.

Jiraiya and his wife both got well, and the war broke out again. In a great battle Dragon-coil was killed and the princess rescued. For his prowess and aid Jiraiya was made daimio of Idzu.

Being now weary of war and the hardships of active life, Jiraiya was glad to settle down to tranquil life in the castle and rear his family in peace. He spent the remainder of his days in reading the books of the sages, in composing verses, in admiring the flowers, the moon and the landscape, and occasionally going out hawking or fishing. There, amid his children and children’s children, he finished his days in peace.

38

HOW THE JELLY-FISH LOST ITS SHELL

In the days of old, the jelly-fish was one of the retainers in waiting upon the Queen of the World under the Sea, at her palace in Riu Gu. In those days he had a shell, and as his head was hard, no one dared to insult him, or stick him with their horns, or pinch him with their claws, or scratch him with their nails, or brush rudely by him with their fins. In short, this fish instead of being a lump of jelly, as white and helpless as a pudding, as we see him now, was a lordly fellow that could get his back up and keep it high when he wished to. He waited on the queen and right proud was he of his office. He was on good terms with the King’s dragon, which often allowed him to play with his scaly tail but never hurt him in the least.

One day the Queen fell sick, and every hour grew worse. The King became anxious, and her subjects talked about nothing else but her sickness. There was grief all through the water-world; from the mermaids on their beds of sponge, and the dragons in the rocky caverns, down to the tiny gudgeons in the rivers, that were considered no more than mere bait. The jolly cuttle-fish stopped playing his drums and guitar, folded his six arms and hid away moping in his hole. His servant the lobster in vain lighted his candle at night, and tried to induce him to come out of his lair. The dolphins and porpoises wept tears, but the clams, oysters and limpets shut up their shells and did not even wiggle. The flounders and skates lay flat on the ocean’s floor, never even lifting up their noses. The squid wept a great deal of ink, and the jelly-fish nearly melted to pure water. The tortoise was patient and offered to do anything for the relief of the Queen.

But nothing could be done. The cuttle-fish who professed to be “a kind of a” doctor, offered the use of all his cups to suck out the poison, if that were the trouble.

But it wasn’t. It was internal, and nothing but medicine that could be swallowed would reach the disease.

At last some one suggested that the liver of a monkey would be a specific for the royal sickness, and it was resolved to try it. The tortoise, who was the Queen’s messenger, because he could live on both land and water, swim or crawl, was summoned. He was told to go upon earth to a certain mountain, catch a monkey and bring him alive to the Under-world.

Off started the tortoise on his journey to the earth, and going to a mountain where the monkeys lived, squatted down at the foot of a tree and pretended to be asleep though keeping his claws and tail out. There he waited patiently, well knowing that curiosity and the monkey’s love of tricks would bring one within reach of his talons. Pretty soon, a family of chattering monkeys came running along among the branches overhead, when suddenly a young *saru* (monkey) caught sight of the sleeping tortoise.

“*Naru hodo*” (Is it possible?) said the long-handed fellow, “here’s fun; let’s tickle the old fellow’s back and pull his tail.”

All agreed, and forthwith a dozen monkeys, joining hand over hand, made a long ladder of themselves until they just reached the tortoise’s back. (They didn’t use their tails, for Japanese monkeys have none, except stumps two inches long). However, he who was to be the tail end of this living rope, when all was ready, crawled along and slipped over the whole line, whispering as he slid:

“‘Sh! don’t chatter or laugh, you’ll wake the old fellow up.”

Now the monkey expected to hold on the living pendulum by one long hand, and swinging down with the other, to pull the tortoise’s tail, and see how near he could come to his snout without being snapped up. For a monkey well knew that a tortoise could neither jump off its legs nor climb a tree.

Once! Twice! The monkey pendulum swung back and forth without touching.

Three! Four! The monkey’s finger-nails scratched the tortoise’s back. Yet old Hard Shell pretended to be sound asleep.

Five! Six! The monkey caught hold of the tortoise’s tail and jerked it hard. Old Tortoise now moved out its head a little, as if still only half awake.

Seven! Eight! This time the monkey intended to pull the tortoise’s head, when just as he came within reach, the tortoise snapped him, held him in his claws, and as the monkey pendulum swung back he lost his hold. In an instant he was jerked loose, and fell head-foremost to the ground, half stunned.

Frightened at the loss of their end link, the other monkeys of the chain wound themselves up like a windlass over the branches, and squatting on the trees, set up a doleful chattering.

“Now,” says the tortoise, “I want you to go with me. If you don’t, I’ll eat you up. Get on my back and I’ll carry you; but I must hold your paw in my mouth so you won’t run away.”

Half frightened to death, the monkey obeyed, and the tortoise trotted off to the sea, swam to the spot over the Queen’s palace, and in a fillip of the finger was down in the gardens of Riu Gu.

The Queen hearing of the monkey’s arrival thanked the tortoise, and commanded her cook and baker to feed him well and treat him kindly, for the queen felt really sorry because he was to lose his liver.

As for the monkey he enjoyed himself very much, and ran around everywhere amusing the star-fishes, clams, oysters and other pulpy creatures that could not run, by his rapid climbing of the rocks and coral bushes, and by rolling over the sponge beds and cutting all manner of antics.

They had never before seen anything like it. Poor fellow! he didn't suspect what was to come.

All this time however the jelly-fish pitied him in his heart, and could hardly keep what he knew to himself. Seeing that the monkey, lonely and homesick was standing by the shore of a pond, the jelly-fish squeezed himself up near him and said:

"Excuse my addressing you, I feel very sorry for you because you are to be put to death."

"Why?" said the monkey, "What have I done?"

"Oh, nothing," said the jelly-fish, "only our queen is sick and she wants your liver for medicine."

Then if ever any one saw a sick looking monkey it was this one. As the Japanese say "his liver was smashed." He felt dreadfully afraid. He put his hands over his eyes, and immediately began to plan how to save both his liver and his life.

After a while the rain began to fall heavily, and the monkey ran in out of the garden, and standing in the hall of the Queen's palace began to weep bitterly. Just then the tortoise, passing by, saw his captive.

"What are you crying about?"

"Aita! aita!" cried the monkey, "When I left my home on the earth, I forgot to bring my liver with me, but hung it upon a tree, and now it is raining and my liver will decay and I'll die. Aita! aita!" and the poor monkey's eyes became red as a *tai* fish, and streamed with tears.

When the tortoise told the Queen's courtiers what the monkey had said, their faces fell.

“Why, here’s a pretty piece of business. The monkey is of no use without his liver. We must send him after it.”

So they dispatched the tortoise to the earth again, the monkey sitting a-straddle of his back. They came to the mountain again, and the tortoise being a little lazy, waited at the foot while the monkey scampered off, saying he would be back in an hour. The two creatures had become so well acquainted that the old Hard Shell fully trusted the lively little fellow.

But instead of an hour the tortoise waited till evening. No monkey came. So finding himself fooled, and knowing all the monkeys would take the alarm, he waddled back and told the Queen all about it.

“Then,” said the Queen after reprimanding her messenger for his silly confidence, “the monkey must have got wind of our intention to use his liver, and what is more, some one of my retainers or servants must have told him.”

Then the Queen issued an order commanding all her subjects to appear before the Dragon-King of the Sea. Whoever did this wicked thing, Kai Riu O would punish him.

Now it happened that all the fish and sea animals of all sorts, that swam, crawled, rolled or moved in any way, appeared before Kai Riu O, the Dragon-King, and his Queen — all except the jelly-fish. Then the Queen knew the jelly-fish was the guilty one. She ordered the culprit to be brought into her presence. Then publicly, before all her retainers and servants, she cried out:

“You leaky-tongued wretch, for your crime of betraying the confidence of your sovereign, you shall no longer remain among shell-fish. I condemn you to lose your shell.”

Then she stripped off his shell, and left the poor jelly-fish entirely naked and ashamed.

“Be off, you tell-tale. Hereafter all your children shall be soft and defenceless.”

The poor jelly-fish blushed crimson, squeezed himself out, and swam off out of sight. Since that time jelly-fishes have had no shells.

39

LORD CUTTLE-FISH GIVES A CONCERT

Despite the loss of the monkey's liver, the queen of the World under the Sea, after careful attention and long rest, got well again, and was able to be about her duties and govern her kingdom well. The news of her recovery created the wildest joy all over the Under-world, and from tears and gloom and silence, the caves echoed with laughter, and the sponge-beds with music. Every one had on a "white face." Drums, flutes and banjos, which had been hung up on coral branches, or packed away in shell boxes, were taken down, or brought out, and right merrily were they struck or thrummed with the ivory *hashi* (plectrum). The pretty maids of the Queen put on their ivory thimble-nails, and the Queen again listened to the sweet melodies on the *koto*, (flat harp), while down among the smaller fry of fishy retainers and the scullions of the kitchen, were heard the constant thump of the *tsutsumi* (shoulder-drum), the bang of the taiko (big drum), and the loud cries of the dancers as they struck all sorts of attitudes with hands, feet and head.

No allusion was openly made either to monkeys, tortoises or jelly-fish. This would not have been polite. But the jelly-fish, in a distant pool in the garden, could hear the refrain, "The rivers of China run into the sea, and in it sinks the rain."

Now in the language of the Under-world people the words for “river,” and “skin,” (or “covering,”) and “China,” and “shell,” and “rain,” and “jelly,” are the same. So the chorus, which was nothing but a string of puns, meant, “The skin of the jelly-fish runs to the sea, and in it sinks the jelly.”

But none of these musical performances were worthy of the Queen’s notice; although as evidences of the joy of her subjects, they did very well. A great many entertainments were gotten up to amuse the finny people, but the Queen was present at none of them except the one about to be described. How and why she became a spectator shall also be told.

One night the queen was sitting in the pink drawing-room, arrayed in her queenly robes, for she was quite recovered and expected to walk out in the evening. Everything in the room, except a vase of green and golden colored sponge-plant, and a plume of glass-thread, was of a pink color. Then there was a pretty rockery made of a pyramid of pumice, full of embossed rosettes of living sea-anemones of scarlet, orange, grey and black colors, which were trained to fold themselves up like an umbrella, or blossom out like chrysanthemums, at certain hours of the day, or when touched, behaving just like four o’clocks and sensitive plants.

All the furniture and hangings of the rooms were pink. The floor was made of mats woven from strips of shell-nacre, bound at the sides with an inch border of pink coral. The ceiling was made of the rarest of pink shells wrought into flowers and squares. The walls were decorated with the same material, representing sea-scenes, jewels and tortoise shell patterns. In the *tokonoma*, or raised space, was a bouquet of sea-weed of richest dyes, and in the nooks was an open cabinet holding several of the queen’s own treasures, such as a tiara which looked like woven threads of crystal (Euplectella), and a toilet box and writing case made of solid pink coral. The gem of all was a screen having eight folds, on which was depicted the palace and throne-room of Riu Gu, the visit of Toda, and the procession of the Queen, nobles and grandees that escorted the brave archer, when he took his farewell to return to earth.

The Queen sat on the glistening sill of the wide window looking out over her gardens, her two maids sitting at her feet. The sound of music wafted through the coral groves and crystal grottoes reached her ear.

"*O medzurashi gozarimasu!*" "(How wonderful this is!)" exclaimed the queen, half aloud. "What strange music is this? It is neither guitar, nor hand, nor shoulder drum, nor singing. It seems to be a mixture of all. Hear! It sounds as if a band with many instruments was playing to the accompaniment of a large choir of voices."

True enough! It was the most curious music ever heard in Riu Gu, for to tell the truth the voices were not in perfect accord, though all kept good time. The sound seemed to issue from the mansion of Lord Cuttle-fish, the palace physician. The queen's curiosity was roused.

"I shall go and see what it is," said she, as she rose up. Suddenly she recollected, and exclaimed:

"O, no, it would not be proper for me to be seen in public at this hour of the evening, and if it is in Lord Cuttle-fish's mansion, I could not enter without a retinue, No, it won't do for me, it's beneath my dignity," said her majesty to herself as she went over to touch her anemones, while her maids fanned her, seeing their mistress flushed with excitement, and fearing a relapse.

Curiosity got the better of the queenly lady, and off she started with only her two maids who held aloft over her head, the long pearl-handled fans made of white shark's fins.

"Besides," thought she, "perhaps the concert is outside, in the garden. If so, I can look down and see from the great green rock that overlooks it, and my lord Kai Riu O need not know of it."

The Queen walked over her pebbled garden walk, avoiding the great high road paved with white coral rock, and taking a by-path trimmed with fan-coral. The sound of the drums and voices grew louder, until as she reached the top of a green rock back of Lord Cuttle-fish’s garden, the whole performance was open to her view.

It was so funny, and the queen was so overcome at the comical sight, that she nearly fell down and got the hysterics, laughing so heartily. She utterly forgot her dignity, and laughed till the tears ran down her face. She was so afraid she would scream out, that she nearly choked herself to death with her sleeve, while her alarmed maids, though meaning nothing by their acts but friendly help, slapped her back to give her breath.

There, at the top of a high green rock, all covered with barnacles, on a huge tuft of sponge, sat Lord Cuttle-fish, playing on three musical instruments at once. His great warty speckled head, six feet high, like a huge bag upside down, was bent forward to read the notes of his music book by the light of a wax candle, which was stuck in the feelers of a prickly lobster, and patiently held. Of his six pulpy arms one long one ran down like the trunk of an elephant, fingering along the pages of a music book. Two others were used to play the guitar, one to grasp the handle and pinch the strings, and the other to hold the ivory stick to strike the strings. The tsutsumi (small double drum) was held on his shoulder and neck, while still another arm curled up in a bunch, punched it like a fist. Below him was a another, a bass drum, set in a frame, and in his last leg, or arm, was clutched a heavy drum-stick, which pounded out tremendous noise, if not music. There the old fellow sat with his head bobbing, and all his six cuppy arms in motion, his rolling blue eyes ogling the notes, and his mouth like an elephant’s, screeching out the song, which was made up of puns on ‘tortoises,’ ‘monkeys,’ ‘jelly-fishes,’ ‘livers’ and ‘shell,’ though the real words made an entirely different sense.

All this time, in front of Lord Cuttle-fish, sat the lobster holding up the light, like the *kurombo*, or black fellows who hold candles at the end of long-handled candle-sticks on the stage of the theatres so that the people may see the faces of the actors.

But the audience, or rather the orchestra was the funniest part of all. They could hardly be called listeners, for they were all performers. On the left was the lusty red-faced *tai* fish with its gills wide open, singing at the top, or rather at the bottom, of his throat, and beating time by flapping his wide fins. Just back of him was a little gudgeon, silent and fanning himself with a blue flat fan, having disgracefully broken down on a high note. Next behind, on the right, was a long-nosed gar-fish singing alto, and proud of her slender form, with the last new thing in folding fans held in her fin. In the fore-ground squatted a great fat frog with big bulging eyes, singing base, and leading the choir by flapping his webbed fingers up and down with his frightful cavern of a mouth wide open. Next, sat the stately and dignified mackerel who was rather scandalized at the whole affair, and kept very still, refusing to join in. At the mackerel’s right fin, squeaked out the stupid flat-headed *fugu* fish with her big eye impolitely winking at the servant-maid just bringing in refreshments; for the truth was, she was thirsty after so much vocal exercise. The *fugu* was very vain and always played the coquette around the hooks of the fishermen who always liked to eat her because she was so sweet, yet her flesh was poison.

“How strange it is that men will angle after that ugly hussy, when she poisons them,” was the oft-repeated remark of the gar-fish.

Just behind the herring, with one eye on Lord Cuttle-fish and one on the coming refreshments, was the skate. The truth must be told that the entire right wing of the orchestra was very much demoralized by the smell of the steaming tea and eatables just about to be served. The suppon, (tortoise with a snout like a bird’s beak,) though he continued to sing, impolitely turned his head away from Lord Cuttle-fish, and his back to the frog that acted as precentor. The sucker, though very homely, and bloated with fat, kept on in the chorus, and pretended not to notice the waiter and her tray and cups.

Indeed, Madame Sucker thought it quite vulgar in the tortoise to be so eager after the cakes and wine.

In truth the concert had been long, and all were thirsty and ready for a bite and a drink.

Suddenly the music ceased, and the long clatter on the drum announced the end. Lord Cuttle-fish kicked over his drum, unscrewed his guitar, and packed it away in his music box. He then slid along on his six slippery legs to the refreshments, and actually amused the company by standing on his head, and twirling his six cuppy arms around.

At this Miss Mackerel was quite shocked, and whispered under her fan to the gar-fish, “It is quite undignified. What would the Queen say if she saw it?” not knowing that the Queen was looking on.

Then all sat down on their tails, propped upright on one fin, and produced their fans to cool themselves off. The lobster pulled off the candle stump and ate it up, wiped his feelers, and joined the party.

The liquid refreshments consisted of sweet and clear *saké* (rice beer) tea, and cherry-blossom water. The solids were thunder-cakes, egg-cracknels, boiled rice, *daikon* radishes and macaroni, lotus-root, *taro*, and side-dishes piled up with flies, worms, bugs and all kinds of bait for the small fry — the finny brats that were to eat at the second table. The tea was poured by the servants of Lord Cuttle-fish. These were the funniest little green *kappas*, or creatures half way between a monkey and a tortoise, with yellow eyes, hands like an ape, hair clipped short on their heads, eyes like frogs, and a mouth that stretched from ear to ear Poor creatures! they were only too happy to know that though they looked like monkeys their livers would not do for medicine.

The Queen did not wait to see the end of the feast, but laughing heartily, returned to her palace and went to sleep.

After helping himself with all the cups of his arms out of the tub of boiled rice, until Miss Mackerel made up her mind that he was an *omeshi* *gurai*, (rice glutton,) and drinking like a shoal of fishes, Lord Cuttle-fish went home, coiled himself up into a ball, and fell asleep. He had a headache next morning.

40

YORIMASA, THE BRAVE ARCHER

Genzan Yorimasa was a brave warrior and a very useful man who lived more than eight thousand moons ago. On account of his valor and skill in the use of the bow he was called to Kioto, and promoted to be chief guard of the imperial palace. At that time the emperor, Narahito, could not sleep at night, because his rest was disturbed by a frightful beast, which scared away even the sentinels in armor who stood on guard.

This dreadful beast had the wings of a bird, the body and claws of a tiger, the head of a monkey, a serpent tail, and the crackling scales of a dragon. It came after night, upon the roof of the palace, and howled and scratched so dreadfully, that the poor mikado losing all rest, grew weak and thin. None of the guards dare face it in hand-to-hand fight, and none had skill enough to hit it with an arrow in the dark, though several of the imperial corps of archers had tried again and again. When Yorimasa received his appointment, he strung his bow carefully, and carefully honing his steel-headed arrows, stored his quiver, and resolved to mount guard that night with his favorite retainer.

It chanced to be a stormy night. The lightning was very vivid, and Kaminari, the thunder-god was beating all his drums. The wind swirled round frightfully, as though Fuden the wind-god was emptying all his bags.

Toward midnight, the falcon eye of Yorimasa saw, during a flash of lightning, the awful beast sitting on the “devil’s tile” at the tip of the ridge-pole, on the north-east end of the roof. He bade his retainer have a torch of straw and twigs ready to light at a moment’s notice, to loosen his blade, and wet its hilt-pin, while he fitted the notch of his best arrow into the silk cord of his bow.

Keeping his eyes strained, he pretty soon saw the glare now of one eye, now two eyes, as the beast with swaying head crept along the great roof to the place on the eaves directly under the mikado’s sleeping-room. There it stopped.

This was Yorimasa’s opportunity. Aiming about a foot to the right of where he saw the eye glare, he drew his yard-length shaft clear back to his shoulder, and let fly. A dull thud, a frightful howl, a heavy bump on the ground, and the writhing of some creature among the pebbles, told in a few seconds time that the shaft had struck flesh. The next instant Yorimasa’s retainer rushed out with blazing torch and joined battle with his dirk. Seizing the beast by the neck, he quickly despatched him, by cutting his throat. Then they flayed the monster, and the next morning the hide was shown to his majesty.

All congratulated Yorimasa on his valor and marksmanship. Many young men, sons of nobles and warriors, begged to become his pupils in archery. The mikado ordered a noble of very high rank to present to Yorimasa a famous sword named Shishi-no-o, (King of Wild Boars), and to give him a lovely maid of honor named Ayami, to wife. And so the brave and the fair were married, and to this day the fame of Yorimasa is like the “umé-také-matsu,” (plum-blossom, bamboo and pine), fragrant, green and ever-during.

41

WATANABE CUTS OFF THE ONI’S ARM

When the capital of Japan was the city of Kioto, and the mikado dwelt in it with all his court, there lived a brave captain of the guard named Yorimitsu, who belonged to the famous Minamoto family. He was also called Raiko, and by this name he is best known to all the boys and girls in Great Japan. Under Captain Raiko were three brave guardsmen, one of whom was named Watanabé Tsuna. The duty of these men-at-arms was to watch at the gates leading to the palace.

It had come to pass that the blossom capital had fallen in a dreadful condition, because the guards at the other gates had been neglected. Thieves were numerous and murders were frequent, so that every one in the city was afraid to go out into the streets at night. Worse than all else, was the report that oni or imps were prowling around in the dark to seize people by the hair of the head. Then they would drag them away to the mountains, tear the flesh off their bones, and eat them up.

The worst place in the city, to which the horned imps came oftenest, was at the south-western gate called the Rajo-mon.

To this post of danger, Raiko sent Tsuna, the bravest of his guards.

It was on a dark, rainy and dismal night, that Tsuna started, well-armed, to stand sentinel at the gate. His trusty helmet was knotted over his chin, and all the pieces of his armor were well laced up. His sandals were girt tight to his feet, and in his belt was thrust the trusty sword, freshly ground, until its edge was like a razor's, and with it the owner could cut asunder a hair floating in the air.

Arriving at the red pillar of the gate, Tsuna paced up and down the stone way with eyes and ears wide open. The wind was blowing frightfully, the storm howled and the rain fell in such torrents that soon the cords of Tsuna's armor and his dress were soaked through.

The great bronze bell of the temples on the hills boomed out the hours one after another, until a single stroke told Tsuna it was the hour of the Rat (midnight).

Two hours passed, and the hour of the Bull sounded (2 A.M.,) still Tsuna was wide awake. The storm had lulled, but it was darker than ever.

The hour of the Tiger (3 o'clock) rung out, and the soft mellow notes of the temple bell died away like a lullaby wooing one to sleep, spite of will and vow.

The warrior, almost without knowing it, grew sleepy and fell into a doze. He started and woke up. He shook himself, jingled his armor, pinched himself, and even pulled out his little knife from the wooden scabbard of his dirk, and pricked his leg with the point of it to keep awake, but all in vain. Unconsciously overcome, he leaned against the gate-post, and fell asleep.

This was just what the imp wanted. All the time he had been squatting on the cross-piece at the top of the gate waiting his opportunity. He now slid down as softly as a monkey, and with his iron-like claws grabbed Tsuna by the helmet, and began to drag him into the air.

In an instant Tsuna was awake. Seizing the hairy wrist of the imp with his left hand, with his right he drew his sword, swept it round his head, and cut off the demon's arm. The oni, frightened and howling with pain, leaped up the post and disappeared in the clouds.

Tsuna waited with drawn sword in hand, lest the oni might come again, but in a few hours morning dawned. The sun rose on the pagodas and gardens and temples of the capitol and the nine-fold circle of flowery hills. Everything was beautiful and bright. Tsuna returned to report to his captain, carrying the oni's arm in triumph. Raiko examined it, and loudly praised Tsuna for his bravery, and rewarded him with a silken sash.

Now it is said that if an oni's arm be cut off it cannot be made to unite with the body again, if kept apart for a week. So Raiko warned Tsuna to lock it up, and watch it night and day, lest it be stolen from him.

So Tsuna went to the stone-cutters who made idols of Buddha, mortars for pounding rice, and coffers for burying money in to be hidden away in the ground, and bought a strong box cut out of the solid stone. It had a heavy lid on it, which slid in a groove and came out only by touching a secret spring. Then setting it in his bed chamber, he guarded it day and night, keeping the gate and all his doors locked. He allowed no one who was a stranger to look at the trophy.

Six days passed by, and Tsuna began to think his prize was sure, for were not all his doors tight shut? So he set the box out in the middle of the room, and twisting some rice-straw fringe in token of sure victory and rejoicing, he sat down in ease before it. He took off his armor and put on his court robes. During the evening, but rather late, there was a feeble knock like that of an old woman at the gate outside.

Tsuna cried out, "Who's there?"

The squeaky voice of his aunt (as it seemed), who was a very old woman, replied "Me, I want to see my nephew, to praise him for his bravery in cutting the oni's arm off."

So Tsuna let her in and carefully locking the door behind her, helped the old crone into the room, where she sat down on the mats in front of the box and very close to it. Then she grew very talkative, and praised her nephew's exploit, until Tsuna felt very proud.

All the time the old woman’s left shoulder was covered with her dress while her right hand was out. Then she begged earnestly to be allowed to see the limb. Tsuna at first politely refused, but she urged, until yielding affectionately he slid back the stone lid just a little.

“This is my arm” cried the old hag, turning into an oni, and dragging out the arm.

She flew up to the ceiling, and was out of the smoke-slide through the roof in a twinkling. Tsuna rushed out of the house to shoot her with an arrow, but he saw only a demon far off in the clouds grinning horribly. He noted carefully however that the direction of the imps’ flight was to the north-west.

A council was now held by Raiko’s band, and it was decided that the lurking-place of the demons must be in the mountains of Oyé in the province of Tango. It was resolved to hunt out and destroy the imps.

42

WATANABE KILLS THE GREAT SPIDER

During the time in which Watanabé was forming his plan to destroy the onis that lurked in the Oyé mountains, the brave Raiko fell sick, and daily grew weaker and paler. When the demons found this out they sent the three-eyed imp called Mitsumé Kozo, to plague him.

This imp, which had a snout like a hog's, three monstrous blue eyes, and a mouth full of tusks, was glad that the brave soldier could no longer fight the onis. He would approach the sick man in his chamber, leer horribly at him, loll out his tongue, and pull down the lids of his eyes with his hairy fingers, until the sight sickened Raiko more and more.

But Raiko, well or ill, always slept with his trusty sword under his pillow, and pretending to be greatly afraid, and to cower under the bed-clothes, the kozo grew bolder and bolder. When the imp was near the bed, Raiko drew his blade, and cut the oni across his huge double nose. This made the demon howl, and he ran away, leaving tracks of blood.

When Tsuna and his band heard of their brave master's exploit, they came to congratulate him, and offered to hunt out the demon and destroy him.

They followed the red drops until they came to a cavern in the mountains. Entering this they saw in the gloom a spider six feet high, with legs as long as a fishing-pole, and as thick as a daikon radish. Two great yellow eyes glared at them like lamps. They noticed a great gaping wound as if done by a sword-cut on his snout.

It was a horrible, nasty hairy thing to fight with swords, since to get near enough, they would be in danger of the creature's claws. So Tsuna went and chopped down a tree as thick as a man's leg, leaving the roots on, while his comrades prepared a rope to tie up the monster like a fly in a web. Then with a loud yell Tsuna rushed at the spider, felled him with a blow, and held him down with the tree and roots so he could not bite or use his claws. Seeing this, his comrades rushed in, and bound the monster's legs tight to his body so that he could not move. Drawing their swords they passed them through his body and finished him. Returning in triumph to the city, they found their dear captain recovered from his illness.

Raiko thanked his brave warriors for their exploits, made a feast for them, and gave them many presents. At this feast Captain Raiko told them that he had received orders from the mikado to march against the oni's den in Tango, slaughter them all, and rescue the prisoners he should find there. Then he showed them his commission written in large letters,

"I command you, Raiko, to chastise the onis."

He also allowed them to examine the gold brocade bag, in which it was kept, and which one of the fair ladies of the court had made for him with her own tapering fingers.

At this time many families in Kioto were grieving over the loss of their children, and even while Tsuna had been away, several lovely damsels had been seized and taken to the demon's den.

Lest the onis might hear of their coming, and escape, the four trusty men disguised themselves as Komuso or wandering priests of the mountains. They put on over their helmets, huge hats like wash-bowls, made of straw, woven so tightly that no one could see their faces. They covered their armor with very cheap and common clothes, and then after worshipping at the shrines, began their march.

43

RAIKO AND THE SHI-TEN DOJI

Quite pathless were the desolate mountains of Tango, for no one ever went into them except once in a while a poor woodcutter or charcoal-burner; yet Raiko and his men set out with stout hearts. There were no bridges over the streams, and frightful precipices abounded. Once they had to stop and build a bridge by felling a tree, and walking across it over a dangerous chasm. Once they came to a steep rock, to descend which they must make a ladder of creeping vines. At last they reached a dense grove at the top of a cliff, far up to the clouds, which seemed as if it might contain the demon’s castle.

Approaching, they found a pretty maiden washing some clothes which had spots of blood on them. They said to her, “Sister, Miss, why are you here, and what are you doing?”

“Ah,” said she, with a deep sigh, “you must not come here. This is the haunt of demons. They eat human flesh and they will eat yours.” “Look there” said she pointing to a pile of white bones of men, women and children, “You must go down the mountain as quickly as you came.” Saying this she burst into tears.

But instead of being frightened or sorrowful, the brave fellows nearly danced for joy. “We have come here for the purpose of destroying the demons by the mikado’s orders,” said Raiko, patting his breast, where inside his dress in the damask bag was the imperial order.

At this the maiden dried her tears and smiled so sweetly that Raiko’s heart was touched by her beauty.

“But how came you to live among these cannibal demons,” asked Raiko.

She blushed deeply as she replied sadly “Although they eat men and old women, they keep the young maidens to wait on them.”

“It’s a great pity” said Raiko, “but we shall now avenge our fellow subjects of the mikado, as well as your shame and cruel treatment, if you will show us the way up the cliff to the den.”

They began to climb the hill but they had not gone far before they met a young oni who was a cook in the great doji’s kitchen. He was carrying a human limb for his master’s lunch. They gnashed their teeth silently, and clutched their swords under their coats. Yet they courteously saluted the cook-demon, and asked for an interview with the chief. The demon smiled in his sleeve, thinking what a fine dinner his master would make of the four men.

A few feet forward, and a turn in the path brought them to the front of the demon’s castle. Among tall and mighty boulders of rock, which loomed up to the clouds, there was an opening in the dense groves, thickly covered with vines and mosses like an arbor. From this point, the view over the plains below commanded a space of hundreds of miles. In the distance the red pagodas, white temple-gables and castle towers of Kioto were visible.

Inside the cave was a banqueting hall large enough to seat one hundred persons. The floor was neatly covered with new, clean mats of sea-green rice-straw, on which tables, silken cushions, arm-rests, drinking-cups, bottles and many other articles of comfort lay about. The stone walls were richly decorated with curtains and hangings of fine silken stuffs.

At the end of the long hall, on a raised dais, our heroes presently observed, as a curtain was lifted, the chief demon, Shi-ten doji, of august, yet frightful appearance. He was seated on a heap of luxurious cushions made of blue and crimson crape, stuffed with swan’s down. He was leaning on a golden arm-rest. His body was quite red, and he was round and fat like a baby grown up. He had very black hair cut like a small boy’s, and on the top of his head, just peeping through the hair were two very short horns. Around him were a score of lovely maidens — the fairest of Kioto — on whose beautiful faces was stamped the misery they dared not fully show, yet could not entirely conceal. Along the wall other demons sat or lay at full length, each one with his handmaid seated beside him to wait on him and pour out his wine. All of them were of horrible aspect, which only made the beauty of the maidens more conspicuous. Seeing our heroes walk in the hall led by the cook, each one of the demons was as happy as a spider, when in his lurking hole he feels the jerk on his web-thread that tells him a fly is caught. All of them at once poured out a fresh saucer of saké and drank it down.

Raiko and his men separated, and began talking freely with the demons until the partitions at one corner were slid aside, and a troop of little demons who were waiter-boys entered. They brought in a host of dishes, and the onis fell to and ate. The noise of their jaws sounded like the pounding of a rice mill.

Our heroes were nearly sickened at the repast, for it consisted chiefly of human flesh, while the wine-cups were made of empty human skulls. However, they laughed and talked and excused themselves from eating, saying they had just lunched.

As the demons drank more and more they grew lively, laughed till the cave echoed, and sang uproarious songs. Every time they grinned, they showed their terrible tusks, and teeth like fangs. All of them had horns, though most of these were very short.

The doji became especially hilarious, and drank the health of every one of his four guests in a skull full of wine. To supply him there was a tub full of saké at hand, and his usual drinking-vessel was a dish which seemed to Tsuma to be as large as a full moon.

Raiko now offered to return the courtesies shown them by dancing "the Kioto dance," for which he was famous. Stepping out into the centre of the hall, with his fan in one hand, he danced gracefully and with such wonderful ease, that the onis screamed with delight, and clapped their hands in applause, saying they had never seen anything to equal it. Even the maidens, lost in admiration of the polished courtier, forgot their sorrow, and felt as happy for the time as though they were at home dancing.

The dance finished, Raiko took from his bosom a bottle of saké, and offered it to the chief demon as a gift, saying it was the best wine of Sakai. The delighted doji drank and gave a sip to each of his lords saying, "This is the best liquor I ever tasted, you must drink the health of our friends in it."

Now Raiko had bought, at the most skillful druggists' in the capital, a powerful sleeping potion, and mixed it with the wine, which made it taste very sweet. In a few minutes all the demons had dropped off asleep, and their snores sounded like the rolling thunder of the mountains.

Then Raiko rose up and gave the signal to his comrades. Whispering to the maidens to leave the room quietly, they drew their swords, and with as little noise as possible cut the throats of the demons. No sound was heard but the gurgling of blood that ran out in floods on the floor. The doji lying like a lion on his cushions was still sleeping, the snores issuing out of his nose like thunder from a cloud. The four warriors approached him and like loyal vassals as they were, they first turned their faces towards Kioto, reverenced the mikado, and prayed for the blessing of the gods who made Japan. Raiko then drew near, and measuring the width of the doji's neck with his sword found that it would be short. Suddenly, the blade lengthened of itself. Then lifting his weapon, he smote with all his might and cut the neck clean through.

In an instant, the bloody head flew up in the air gnashing its teeth and rolling its yellow eyes, while the horns sprouted out to a horrible length, the jaws opening and shutting like the edges of an earthquake fissure. It flew up and whirled round the room seven times. Then with a rush it flew at Raiko's head, and bit through the straw hat and into the iron helmet inside. But this final effort exhausted its strength, it's motions ceased and it fell heavily to the floor.

Anxiously the comrades helped their fallen leader to rise, and examined his head. But he was unhurt, — not a scratch was on him. Then the heroes congratulated each other and after despatching the smaller demons, brought out all the treasure and divided it equally. Then they set the castle on fire and buried the bones of the victims, setting up a stone to mark the spot. All the maidens and captives were assembled together, and in great state and pomp they returned to Kioto. The virgins were restored to their parents, and many a desolate home was made joyful, and many mourning garments taken off. Raiko was honored by the mikado in being made a kugé (court noble,) and was appointed Chief of the entire garrison of Kioto. Then all the people were grateful for his valor.

44

THE SAZAYÉ AND THE TAI

One day a Tai (red fish) and a Herring were looking at the strong shell of the sazayé, and becoming quite envious, the Tai said:

“What a mighty strong castle you do live in, Mr. Sazayé. When you once shut up your shell no one need even try to touch you. You are to be envied sir.”

The Sazayé was tickled at the flattery, but pretending to be very humble, shook his head and said:

“It is very kind in you, my lords, to say so, but my little hut is nothing but a shell; yet I must say that when I lock my door I do not feel any anxiety, and I really pity you poor fellows who have no shell at all.”

He had hardly got the last word out of his grisly throat, when suddenly there was a great splash, and away darted the tai and herring, never resting their fins or tails a moment till safe out of danger.

The Sazayé drew in his flap in the twinkling of an eye, and keeping as quiet as possible, wondered what the noise was. Was it a stone, or a net, or a fish-hook? He wondered if the tai and herring were caught.

“Surely they must be,” thought he. “However I’m safe, thanks to my castle shell,” he muttered.

So drawing his trap tighter he took a long nap. When he woke up, quite refreshed, he cautiously loosened his trap and peeped out.

“How strange every thing looks, am I dreaming?” said he as he saw piles of fish, clams, prawns and lobsters lying on a board all around him.

“Ugh, what is that?” clapping himself shut as a great black-nosed and long-whiskered dog poked his muzzle near him.

Poor shell-fish! There he lay in a fishmonger’s shop, with a slip of paper marked “ten cash,” (1-10 of a cent,) on his back. A few hours later, purchased by a laborer’s wife for his dinner, he was stewing along with several of his relative’s in his own juice. The castle, of which he was so proud, serving first as a dinner-pot, then as a saucer, after which it was thrown away in a heap and burned into lime.

45

SMELLS AND JINGLES

Yedo people are very fond of broiled eels. A rich merchant, named Kisaburo, who was very miserly with his money, once moved his quarters next door to the shop of one Kichibei, who caught and cooked eels for a living. During the night Mr. Kichibei caught his stock in trade, and in the day-time served them, smoking hot, to his customers. Cut into pieces three or four inches long, they were laid to sizzle on a grid-iron over red hot charcoal, which was kept in a glow by constant fanning.

Kisaburo, wishing to save money, and having a strong imagination, daily took his seat at meal time close to his neighbor’s door. Eating his boiled rice, and snuffing in the odors of the broiled eels, as they were wafted in, he enjoyed with his nose, what he would not pay for to put in his mouth. In this way, as he flattered himself, he saved much money, and his strong box grew daily heavier.

Kichibei, the eel-broiler, on finding this out, thought he would charge his stingy neighbor for the smell of his eels. So, making out his bill he presented it to Kisaburo, who seemed to be much pleased. He called to his wife to bring his iron-bound money box, which was done. Emptying out the shining mass of *kobans* (oval gold pieces, worth five or six dollars), *ichi-bu* and *ni-bu* (square silver pieces, worth a quarter and a half dollar respectively) he jingled the coins at a great rate, and then touching the eel-man’s bill with his fan, bowed, low and said with a smile:

“All right, neighbor Kichibei, we are square now.”

“What!” cried the eel-frier, “are you not going to pay me?”

“Why yes, I have paid you. You have charged me for the smell of your eels, and I have paid you with the sound of my money.”

46

THE LAKE OF THE LUTE AND THE MATCHLESS MOUNTAIN

When Heaven and earth were first created, there was neither Lake of Biwa nor Mountain of Fuji. Suruga and Omi were both plains. Even for long after men inhabited Japan and the Mikados had ruled for centuries there was neither earth so nigh to heaven nor water so close to the Under-world as the peaks of Fuji and the bottom of Biwa. Men drove the plow and planted the rice over the very spot where crater and deepest depth now are.

But one night in the ancient times there was a terrible earthquake. All the world shook, the clouds lowered to the earth, floods of water poured from the sky, and a sound like the fighting of a myriad of dragons filled the air. In the morning all was serene and calm. The sky was blue. The earth was as bright and all was as “white-faced” as when the sun goddess first came out from her hiding in the cave.

The people of Omi awoke, scarce expecting to find either earth or heaven, when lo! they looked on what had yesterday been tilled land or barren moor, and there was a great sheet of blue. Was it sky? Had a sheet of the “blue field of heaven” fallen down? Was it the ocean? They came near it, tasted it. It was fresh and sweet as a fountain-rill. They looked at it from the hill-tops, and, seeing its outline, called it “the lake of the four-stringed lute.” Others, proud of their new possession, named it the Lake of Omi.

Greater still was the surprise of the Suruga people. The sailors, far out at sea, rubbed their eyes and wondered at the strange shape of the towering white cloud. Was it the Iwakura, the eternal throne of Heaven, come down to rest on earth out of the many piled white clouds of heaven? Some thought they had lost their reckoning; but were assured when they recognized familiar landmarks on shore. Many a cottager woke up to find his house, which lay in a valley the day before, was now far up on the slope, with the distant villages and the sea visible; while far, far above shone the snowy head of a mountain, whose crown lay in the blue sky. At night the edges of the peak, like white fingers, seemed to pluck the stars from the Milky Way.

“What shall we call this new-born child of the gods?” said the people. And various names were proposed.

“There is no other mountain so beautiful in all the earth, there’s not its equal anywhere; therefore call it Fuji, (no two such), the peerless, the matchless mountain,” said one.

“It is so tall, so comely, so grand, call it Fuji, (rich scholar, the lordly mountain),” said another.

“Call it Fuji, (never dying, the immortal mountain),” said a third.

“Call it, after the festal flower of joy, Fuji” (Wistaria) said another, as he decked the peak of his hat with the drooping clusters of the tender blue blossom. “It looks blue and purple in the distance, just like the fuji flower.” Various as the meanings of the name were, they sounded all alike to the ear. So, without any quarreling, all agreed to call it Fuji and each to choose his own meaning. To this day, though many a learned dispute and the scratching of the written character on the sand with walking stick, or on paper with pencil, or on the palm of the hand with forefinger takes place, all pronounce the name alike as they rave on the beauties of Fuji Yama.

So went forth into the countries bounding “the four seas” the belief that there was a white mountain of perfect form in Japan, and that whoever ascended it would live long and even attain immortality; and that somewhere on the mountain was hidden the elixir of immortality, which if any one drank he would live forever. Now in one of the kingdoms of far-off China there lived a rich old king, who had abundance of treasures, health, and many children. But he did not wish to die, and, hence, spent his days in studying the lore and arts of the alchemists, who believed they would finally attain to the transmutation of lead into gold, find the universal solvent of all things, the philosophers' stone, the elixir of life, and all the wondrous secrets which men in Europe long afterward labored to discover.

Among the king's sages was one old man of mighty wisdom, who had heard of the immortal mountain of Japan, and, learning of the manner of its appearance, concluded that the Japan Archipelago contained the Fortunate Isles and in it was the true elixir of life. He divulged his secret to the king, and advised him to make the journey to the Land of the Rising Sun.

Overjoyed at the good news and the faithfulness of his loyal sage, the king loaded him with gifts and honors. He selected five hundred of the most beauteous youths and virgins of his kingdom, and, fitting out a fleet, sailed away to the Happy Isles of the East. Coasting along the shore until they recognized the glorious form of the mountain, they landed and began the ascent. Alas! for the poor king. The rough sea and severe storms had worn on his aged frame and the fatigues of the ascent were so great, that before reaching the top he fainted away, and before the head of the procession had set foot on the crater edge the monarch was dead. Sadly they gave up the search for the elixir of life, and, descending the mountain, buried their master in the Province of Kii. Then, in their exuberance of youth and joy, thinking little of the far future and wishing to enjoy the present, they separated in couples, married, and, disposing of their ship and cargo, settled in the country, and colonized the eastern part of Japan.

Long afterward, when Buddhist believers came to Japan, one of them, climbing Fuji, noticed that around its sunken crater were eight peaks, like the petals of their sacred lotus flower. Thus, it seemed to them, Great Buddha had honored Japan, by bestowing the sacred symbol of Nirvana, or Heaven, on the proudest and highest part of Japan. So they also named it Fuji, “the sacred mountain”; and to this day all the world calls this sacred mountain Fuji, or Fusi Yama, while the Japanese people believe that the earth which sunk in Omi is the same which, piled to the clouds, is the lordly mountain of Suruga.

47

THE WATERFALL OF YORO, OR THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Long, long ago, when the oldest stork was young, there lived an aged woodcutter and his son on the slopes of the mountain Tagi, in the province of Mino. They gained a frugal livelihood by cutting brushwood on the hill-side, and carrying it in bundles on their back to sell in the nearest market town; for they were too poor to own an ox. With the money thus received they bought rice and radishes, their daily food.

Only once or twice a year, at New Year’s and on the mikado’s birthday, could they afford to treat themselves to a mess of bean-curd or fresh fish. Yet the old man was very fond of rice-wine, and every week bought a gourd full to keep his old blood warm.

As the years rolled on the aged father’s limbs became so stiff that he was unable any longer to climb the mountains. So his son, now grown to be a sturdy man, cut nearly double the quantity of wood and thus kept the family larder full. The old man was so proud of his son that he daily stood at sunset in front of his rustic gate to welcome him back. And to see the old daddy and the young stripling remove their headkerchiefs, and bow with hands on knees in polite fashion, bending their backs and sucking in their breath, out of respect to each other, and to hear them inquiring after one another’s health, showering mutual compliments all the time, one would have thought they had not seen each other for eight years, instead of eight hours.

One winter the snow fell long and thick, until all the ground in field and forest was covered several feet over. The bamboo branches bent with their weight of white, the pine boughs broke under their load, and even the stone idols along the wayside were covered up. At first, even with the hardest work, the young woodcutter could scarcely get and sell wood to buy enough food to keep them both alive. He often went hungry himself, so that his father might have his warm wine.

One day he went by another path up one of the mountain dells with his rope basket strapped to his back, and the empty gourd-bottle at his belt. While gloomily grieving over his hard luck, the faint odor of rice-wine seemed borne on the breeze.

He snuffed the air. It was no mistake. “Here’s luck, surely,” said he, throwing down his bundle.

Hurrying forward he saw a foaming waterfall tumbling over the rocks in a thick stream.

As he drew near, some of the spray fell on his tongue. He tasted it, smacked his lips and throwing down his cord and basket to the ground, filled his gourd and hastened home to his father.

Every day, till the end of his father’s life, did he come to this wonderful cascade of wine, and thus the old man was nourished for many a long year.

The news of this fountain of youth spread abroad until it reached the court. The mikado, hearing of it, made a journey to Mino to see the wonderful waterfall. In honor of this event, and as a reward of filial piety, the name of the year-period was changed to Yoro, (Nourishing Old Age).

48

THE EARTHQUAKE FISH

Long, long ago, when the gods came down from heaven to subdue the earth for the mikados, and civilize the country, there were a great many earthquakes, and nothing to stop them. The world continually rocked, and men’s houses and lives were never safe.

Now the two gods who were charged with the work of subduing the northeastern part of the world were Kashima and Katori. Having done their work well, and quieted all the enemies of the Sun-goddess, they came to the province of Hitachi. Kashima, sticking his sword into the earth, ran it through to the other side, leaving the hilt above the ground. In the course of centuries this mighty sword shrunk and turned to stone, and the people gave it the name of *Kanamé ishi,* (The rock of Kanamé).

Now Kanamé means the rivet in a fan, that holds all the sticks together, and they gave the name “rivet-rock,” because it is the rivet that binds the earth together. No one could ever lift this rock except Kashima the mighty one who first set it in the earth.

Yet even Kashima never raises it, except to stop an earthquake of unusual violence. When the earth quivers, it is because the great earthquake-fish or *jishin-uwo* is restless or angry. This *jishin-uwo* is a great creature something like a catfish. It is about seven hundred miles long, and holds the world on its back. Its tail is at Awomori in the north, and the base of its head is at Kioto, so that all Japan lies on top of it. To his mouth are attached huge twirling feelers, which are just like the hideous moustaches which the hairy-faced men from beyond the *Tai-kai* (Pacific Ocean) wear on their lips. As soon as these begin to move, it is a sign that the monster is in wrath. When he gets angry, and flaps his tail or bumps his head, there is an earthquake. When he flounders about or rolls over, there is terrible destruction of life and property on the surface of the earth above.

In order to keep the earthquake-fish quiet, the great giant Kashima is appointed to watch him. His business is to stand near by, and when the monster becomes violent Kashima must jump up and straddle him, and hold his gills, put his foot on his fin; and when necessary lift up the great rock of Kanamé and hold him down with its weight. Then he becomes perfectly quiet, and the earthquake ceases. Hence the people sing this earthquake verse:

No monster can move the Kanamé rock
Though he tug at it never so hard,
For over it stands, resisting the shock,
The Kashima Kami on guard.

Another verse they sing as follows:

These are things
An earthquake brings;
At nine of the bell they sickness fortell,
At five and seven betoken rain,
At four the sky is cleared thereby

At six and eight comes wind again.

49

THE DREAM STORY OF GOJIRO

Only a few years ago there was a gentleman in Fukui, Japan, who had a son, a bright lad of twelve, who was very diligent at school and had made astonishing progress in his studies. He was especially quick at learning Chinese characters, of which every Japanese gentleman who wishes to be called educated must know at least two thousand. For, although the Chinese and Japanese are two very different languages, yet the Japanese, Coreans and Chinese use the same letters to write with, just as English, Germans, French and Spaniards all employ one and the same alphabet.

Now Gojiro’s father had promised him that when he read through five volumes of the Nihongi, or Ancient History of Japan, he would give him for a present a book of wonderful Chinese stories. Gojiro performed his task, and his father kept his promise. One day on his return from a journey to Kioto, he presented his son with sixteen volumes, all neatly silk-bound, well illustrated with wood-cuts, and printed clearly on thin, silky mulberry paper, from the best wooden blocks. It will be remembered that several volumes of Japanese literature make but one of ours, as they are much lighter and thinner than ours.

Gojiro was so delighted with the wonderful stories of heroes and warriors, travelers and sailors, that he almost felt himself in China. He read far into the night, with the lamp inside of his musquito curtain; and finally fell asleep, still undressed, but with his head full of all sorts of Chinese wonders.

He dreamed he was far away in China, walking along the banks of the great Yellow River. Everything was very strange. The people talked an entirely different language from his own; had on different clothes; and, instead of the nice shaven head and top-knot of the Japanese, every one wore a long pigtail of hair, that dangled at his heels. Even the boats were of a strange form, and on the fishing smacks perched on projecting rails, sat rows of cormorants, each with a ring around his neck. Every few minutes one of them would dive under the water, and after a while come struggling up with a fish in its mouth, so big that the fishermen had to help the bird into the boat. The game was then flung into a basket, and the cormorant was treated to a slice of raw fish, by way of encouragement and to keep the bird from the bad habit of eating the live fish whole. This the ravenous bird would sometimes try to do, even though the ring was put around his neck for the express purpose of preventing him from gulping down a whole fish at once.

It was springtime, and the buds were just bursting into flower. The river was full of fish, especially of carp, ascending to the great rapids or cascades. Here the current ran at a prodigious rate of swiftness, and the waters rippled and boiled and roared with frightful noise. Yet, strange to say, many of the fish were swimming up the stream as if their lives depended on it. They leaped and floundered about; but every one seemed to be tossed back and left exhausted in the river, where they panted and gasped for breath in the eddies at the side. Some were so bruised against the rocks that, after a few spasms, they floated white and stiff, belly up, on the water, dead, and were swept down the stream. Still the shoal leaped and strained every fin, until their scales flashed in the sun like a host of armored warriors in battle. Gojiro, enjoying it as if it were a real conflict of wave and fishes, clapped his hands with delight.

Then Gojiro inquired, by means of writing, of an old white-bearded sage standing by and looking on: “What is the name of this part of the river?”

“We call it Lung Men,” said the sage.

“Will you please write the characters for it,” said Gojiro, producing his ink-case and brush-pen, with a roll of soft mulberry paper.

The sage wrote the two Chinese characters, meaning “The Gate of the Dragons,” or “Dragons’ Gate,” and turned away to watch a carp that seemed almost up into smooth water.

“Oh! I see,” said Gojiro to himself. “That’s pronounced Riu Mon in Japanese. I’ll go further on and see. There must be some meaning in this fish-climbing.” He went forward a few rods, to where the banks trended upward into high bluffs, crowned by towering firs, through the top branches of which fleecy white clouds sailed slowly along, so near the sky did the tree-tops seem. Down under the cliffs the river ran perfectly smooth, almost like a mirror, and broadened out to the opposite shore. Far back, along the current, he could still see the rapids shelving down. It was crowded at the bottom with leaping fish, whose numbers gradually thinned out toward the center; while near the top, close to the edge of level water, one solitary fish, of powerful fin and tail, breasted the steep stream. Now forward a leap, then a slide backward, sometimes further to the rear than the next leap made up for, then steady progress, then a slip, but every moment nearer, until, clearing foam and ripple and spray at one bound, it passed the edge and swam happily in smooth water.

It was inside the Dragon Gate.

Now came the wonderful change. One of the fleecy white clouds suddenly left the host in the deep blue above, dipped down from the sky, and swirling round and round as if it were a water spout, scratched and frayed the edge of the water like a fisher’s troll. The carp saw and darted toward it. In a moment the fish was transformed into a white dragon, and, rising into the cloud, floated off toward Heaven. A streak or two of red fire, a gleam of terrible eyes, and the flash of white scales was all that Gojiro saw. Then he awoke.

“How strange that a poor little carp, a common fish that lives in the river, should become a great white dragon, and soar up into the sky, to live there,” thought Gojiro, the next day, as he told his mother of his dream.

“Yes,” said she; “and what a lesson for you. See how the carp persevered, leaping over all difficulties, never giving up till it became a dragon. I hope my son will mount over all obstacles, and rise to honor and to high office under the government.”

“Oh! oh! now I see!” said Gojiro. “That is what my teacher means when he says the students in Tokio have a saying, ‘I’m a fish to day, but I hope to be a dragon to-morrow,’ when they go to attend examination; and that’s what Papa meant when he said: ‘That fish’s son, Kofuku, has become a white dragon, while I am yet only a carp.’“

So on the third day of the third month, at the Feast of Flags, Gojiro hoisted the *nobori*. It was a great fish, made of paper, fifteen feet long and hollow like a bag. It was yellow, with black scales and streaks of gold, and red gills and mouth, in which two strong strings were fastened. It was hoisted up by a rope to the top of a high bamboo pole on the roof of the house. There the breeze caught it, swelled it out round and full of air. The wind made the fins work, and the tail flap, and the head tug, until it looked just like a carp trying to swim the rapids of the Yellow River — the symbol of ambition and perseverance.

50

THE PROCESSION OF LORD LONG-LEGS

Lovely and bright in the month of May, at the time of rice-planting, was the day on which the daimio, Lord Long-legs, was informed by his chamberlain, Hop-hop, that on the morrow his lordship's retinue would be in readiness to accompany their worshipful Lord Long-legs on his journey. This Lord Long-legs was a daimio who ruled over four acres of rice-field in Echizen, whose revenue was ten thousand rice-stalks. His retainers, who were all grasshoppers, numbered over six thousand, while his court consisted only of nobles, such as Mantis, Beetle, and Pinching-bug. The maids of honor who waited on his queen Katydid, were lady-bugs, butterflies, and goldsmiths, and his messengers were fire-flies and dragon-flies. Once in a while a beetle was sent on an errand; but these stupid fellows had such a habit of running plump into things, and bumping their heads so badly that they always forgot what they were sent for. Besides these, he had a great many servants in the kitchen — such as grubs, spiders, toads, etc. The entire population of his dominion, including the common folks, numbered several millions, and ranked all the way from horse-flies down to ants, mosquitoes, and ticks.

Many of his subjects were very industrious and produced fine fabrics, which, however, were seized and made use of by great monsters, called men. Thus the gray worms kept spinning-wheels in their heads. They had a fashion of eating mulberry leaves, and changing them into fine threads, called silk. The wasps made paper, and the bees distilled honey. There was another insect which spread white wax on the trees. These were all retainers or friendly vassals of Lord Long-legs.

Now it was Lord Long-legs' duty once a year to go up to Yedo to pay his respects to the great Tycoon and to spend several weeks in the Eastern metropolis. I shall not take the time nor tax the patience of my readers in telling about all the bustle and preparation that went on in the yashiki (mansion) of Lord Long-legs for a whole week previous to starting. Suffice it to say that clothes were washed and starched, and dried on a board, to keep them from shrinking; trunks and baskets were packed; banners and umbrellas were put in order; the lacquer on the brass ornaments; shields and swords and spears were all polished; and every little item was personally examined by the daimio's chief inspector. This functionary was a black-and-white-legged mosquito, who, on account of his long nose, could pry into a thing further and see it easier than any other of his lordship's officers; and, if anything went wrong, he could make more noise over it than any one else. As for the retainers, down to the very last lackey and coolie, each one tried to outshine the other in cleanliness and spruce dress.

The Bumble-bee brushed off the pollen from his legs; and the humbler Honey-bee, after allowing his children to suck his paws, to get the honey sticking to them, spruced up and listened attentively to the orders read to him by the train-leader, Sir Locust, who prided himself on being seventeen years old, and looked on all the others as children. He read from a piece of wasp-nest paper: “No leaving the line to suck flowers, except at halting-time.” The Blue-tailed Fly washed his hands and face over and over again. The lady-bugs wept many tears, because they could not go with the company; the crickets chirped rather gloomily, because none with short limbs could go on the journey; while Daddy Long-legs almost turned a somersault for joy when told he might carry a bundle in the train. All being in readiness, the procession was to start at six o’clock in the morning. The exact minute was to be announced by the time-keeper of the mansion, Flea san, whose house was on the back of Neko, a great black cat, who lived in the porter’s lodge of the castle, near by. Flea san was to notice the opening or slits in the monster’s moony-green eyes, which when closed to a certain width would indicate six o’clock. Then with a few jumps she was to announce it to a mosquito friend of hers, who would fly with the news to the gate-keeper of the yashiki, one Whirligig by name.

So, punctually to the hour, the great double gate swung wide open, and the procession passed out and marched on over the hill. All the servants of Lord Long-legs were out, to see the grand sight. They were down on their knees, saying: “O shidzukani,” (please go slowly). When their master’s palanquin passed, they bowed their heads to the dust, as was proper. The ladies, who were left behind, cried bitterly, and soaked their paper handkerchiefs with tears, especially one fair brown creature, who was next of kin to Lord Long-legs, being an ant on his mother’s side.

The procession was closed by six old daddies (spiders), marching two by two, who were a little stupid and groggy, having had a late supper, and a jolly feast the night before. When the great gate slammed shut, one of them caught the end of his foot in it, and was lamed for the rest of the journey. This old Daddy Long-legs, hobbling along, with a bundle on his back, was the only funny thing in the procession, and made much talk among bystanders on the road.

This is the order and the way they looked. First there went out, far ahead, a plump, tall Mantis, with a great long baton of grass, which he swung to and fro before him, from right to left, (like a drum-major), crying out: “*Shitaniro*, down on your knees! Get down with you!” Whereat all the ants, bugs and lizards at once bent their forelegs, and the toads, which were already squatting, bobbed their noses in the dust. Even the mud-turtles poked their heads out of the water to see what was going on. All the worms and grubs who lived up in trees or tall bushes had to come down to the ground. It was forbidden to any insect to remain on a high stalk of grass, lest he might look down on His Highness. Even the Inch-worm had to wind himself up and stop measuring his length, while the line was passing. And in case of grubs or moths in the nest or cocoon, too young to crawl out, the law compelled their parents to cover them over with a leaf. It would be an insult to Lord Long-legs to look down on him. Next followed two lantern-bearers, holding glow-worms for lanterns in their fore-paws. These were wrapped in cases made of leaves, which they took off at night. Behind were six fire-flies, well supplied with self-acting lamps, which they kept hidden somewhere under their wings. Next marched four abreast the band of little weevils, carrying the umbrellas of state, which were morning-glories — some open, some shut. Behind them strutted four green grasshoppers, who were spear-bearers, carrying pink blossoms. Just before the palanquin were two tall dandies, high lords themselves and of gigantic stature and imposing bellies, who, with arms akimbo and feelers far up in the air, bore aloft high over all the insignia of their Lord Long-legs. All these fellows strutted along on their hind legs, their backs as stiff as a hemp stalk, their noses pointing to the stars, and their legs striding like stilts. The priest in his robes, a praying beetle, who was chaplain, walked on solemnly.

Meanwhile a great crowd of spectators lined the path; but all were on their knees. Frogs and toads blinked out of the sides of their heads. The pretty red lizards glided out, to see the splendid show; worms stopped crawling; and all kinds of bugs ceased climbing, and came down from the grass and flower-stalks, to bow humbly before the train of Lord Long-legs. Bug mothers hastened, with their bug babies on their backs, down to the road, and, squatting down, taught their little nits to put their fore-paws politely together and bow down on their front knees. No one dared to speak out loud; but the mole-cricket, nudging his fellow under the wing, said:

“Just look at that green Mantis! He looks as though ‘he would rush out with a battle-ax on his shoulder to meet a chariot.’ See how he ogles his fellow!”

“Yes; and just behold that bandy-legged hopper, will you? I could walk better than that myself,” said the other.

“‘Sh!” said the mole-cricket. “Here comes the palanquin.”

Everybody now cast a squint up under their eyebrows, and watched the palanquin go by. It was made of delicately-woven striped grass, bound with bamboo threads, lacquered, and finished with curtains of gauze, made of dragon-fly wings, through which Lord Long-legs could peep. It was borne on the shoulders of four stalwart hoppers, who, carrying rest-poles of grass, trudged along, with much sweat and fuss and wiping of their foreheads, stopping occasionally to change shoulders. At their side walked a body-guard of eight hoppers, armed with pistils, and having side-arms of sword-grass. They were also provided with poison-shoots, in case of trouble. Other bearers followed, keeping step and carrying the regalia, consisting of chrysanthemum stalks and blossoms. Then followed, in double rank, a long string of wasps, who were for show and nothing more. Between them, inside, carefully saddled, bridled, and in full housings, was a horse-fly, led by a snail, to keep the restive animal from going at a too rapid pace.

Three big, gawky helmet-headed beetles next followed, bearing rice-sprouts, with full heads of rice.

“Oh! oh! look there!” cried a little grub at the side of the road. “See the little grasshopper riding on his father’s back!”

“Hai,” said Mother Butterfly, putting one paw on her baby’s neck, for fear of being arrested for making a noise.

It was so. The little ‘hopper, tired of long walking, had climbed on his father’s back for a ride, holding on by the feelers and seeing everything.

Finally, toward the end of the procession, was a great crowd of common ‘hoppers, beetles, and bugs of all sorts, carrying the presents to be given in Yedo, and the clothing, food and utensils for the use of Lord Long-legs on the journey; for the hotels were sometimes very poor on the Tokaido high road, and the daimio liked his comforts. Besides, it was necessary for Lord Long-legs to travel with proper dignity, as became a daimio. His messengers always went before and engaged lodging-places, as the fleas, spiders and mosquitoes from other localities, who traveled up and down the great high road, sometimes occupied the places first. The procession wound up by the rear-guard of Daddy Long-legs, who prevented any insult or disrespect from the rabble. After the line had passed, insects could cross the road, traffic and travel were resumed, and the road was cleared, while the procession faded from view in the distance.

51

KIYOHIME, OR THE POWER OF LOVE

Quiet and shady was the spot in the midst of one of the loveliest valley landscapes in the empire, near the banks of the Hidaka river, where stood the tea-house kept by one Kojima. It was surrounded on all sides by glorious mountains, ever robed with deep forests, silver-threaded with flashing water-falls, to which the lovers of nature paid many a visit, and in which poets were inspired to write stanzas in praise of the white foam and the twinkling streamlets. Here the bonzes loved to muse and meditate, and anon merry picnic parties spread their mats, looped their canvas screens, and feasted out of nests of lacquered boxes, drinking the amber saké from cups no larger nor thicker than an egg-shell, while the sound of guitar and drum kept time to dance and song.

The garden of the tea-house was as lovely a piece of art as the florist’s cunning could produce. Those who emerged from the deep woods of the lofty hill called the Dragon’s Claw, could see in the tea-house garden a living copy of the landscape before them. There were mimic mountains, (ten feet high), and miniature hills veined by a tiny, path with dwarfed pine groves, and tiny bamboo clumps, and a patch of grass for meadow, and a valley just like the great gully of the mountains, only a thousand times smaller, and but twenty feet long. So perfect was the imitation that even the miniature irrigated rice-fields, each no larger than a checker-board, were in full sprout. To make this little gem of nature in art complete, there fell from over a rock at one end a lovely little waterfall two feet high, which after an angry splash over the stones, rolled on over an absurdly small beech, all white-sanded and pebbled, threading its silver way beyond, until lost in fringes of lilies and aquatic plants. In one broad space imitating a lake, was a lotus pond, lined with iris, in which the fins of gold fish and silver carp flashed in the sunbeams. Here and there the nose of a tortoise protruded, while on a rugged rock sat an old grandfather surveying the scene with one or two of his grand-children asleep on his shell and sunning themselves.

The fame of the tea-house, its excellent fare, and special delicacy of its mountain trout, sugar-jelly and well-flavored rice-cakes, drew hundreds of visitors, especially poetry-parties, and lovers of grand scenery.

Just across the river, which was visible from the verandah of the tea-house, stood the lofty firs that surrounded the temple of the Tendai Buddhists. Hard by was the pagoda, which painted red peeped between the trees. A long row of paper-windowed and tile-roofed dwellings to the right made up the monastery, in which a snowy eye-browed but rosy-faced old abbot and some twenty bonzes dwelt, all shaven-faced and shaven-pated, in crape robes and straw sandals, their only food being water and vegetables.

Not the least noticeable of the array of stone lanterns, and bronze images with aureoles round their heads, and incense burners and holy water tanks, and dragon spouts, was the belfry, which stood on a stone platform. Under its roof hung the massive bronze bell ten feet high, which, when struck with a suspended log like a trip-hammer, boomed solemnly over the valley and flooded three leagues of space with the melody which died away as sweetly as an infant falling in slumber. This mighty bell was six inches thick and weighed several tons.

In describing the tea-house across the river, the story of its sweetest charm, and of its garden the fairest flower must not be left untold. Kiyo, the host’s daughter, was a lovely maiden of but eighteen, as graceful as the bamboo reed swaying in the breeze of a moonlit summer’s eve, and as pretty as the blossoms of the cherry-tree. Far and wide floated the fame of Kiyo, like the fragrance of the white lilies of Ibuki, when the wind sweeping down the mountain heights, comes perfume-laden to the traveler.

As she busied herself about the garden, or as her white socks slipped over the mat-laid floor, she was the picture of grace itself. When at twilight, with her own hands, she lighted the gay lanterns that hung in festoons along the eaves of the tea-house above the verandah, her bright eyes sparkling, her red petticoats half visible through her semi-transparent crape robe, she made many a young man’s heart glow with a strange new feeling, or burn with pangs of jealousy.

Among the priests that often passed by the tea-house on their way to the monastery, were some who were young and handsome.

It was the rule of the monastery that none of the bonzes should drink saké (wine) eat fish or meat, or even stop at the tea-houses to talk with women. But one young bonze named “Lift-the-Kettle” (after a passage in the Sanscrit classics) had rigidly kept the rules. Fish had never passed his mouth; and as for saké, he did not know even its taste. He was very studious and diligent. Every day he learned ten new Chinese characters. He had already read several of the sacred sutras, had made a good beginning in Sanskrit, knew the name of every idol in the temple of the 3,333 images in Kioto, had twice visited the sacred shrine of the Capital, and had uttered the prayer “Namu mio ho ren gé kio,” (“Glory be to the sacred lotus of the law”), counting it on his rosary, five hundred thousand times. For sanctity and learning he had no peer among the young neophytes of the bonzerie.

Alas for “Lift-the-Kettle!”. One day, after returning from a visit to a famous shrine in the Kuanto, (Eastern Japan), as he was passing the tea-house, he caught sight of Kiyohimé, (the “lady” or “princess” Kiyo), and from that moment his pain of heart began. He returned to his bed of mats, but not to sleep. For days he tried to stifle his passion, but his heart only smouldered away like an incense-stick.

Before many days he made a pretext for again passing the house. Hopelessly in love, without waiting many days he stopped and entered the tea-house.

His call for refreshments was answered by Kiyohimé herself!

As fire kindles fire, so priest and maiden were now consumed in one flame of love. To shorten a long story, “Lift-the-Kettle” visited the inn oftener and oftener, even stealing out at night to cross the river and spend the silent hours with his love.

So passed several months, when suddenly a change come over the young bonze. His conscience began to trouble him for breaking his vows. In the terrible conflict between principle and passion, the soul of the priest was tossed to and fro like the feathered seed-ball of a shuttlecock.

But conscience was the stronger, and won.

He resolved to drown his love and break off his connection with the girl. To do it suddenly, would bring grief to her and a scandal both on her family and the monastery. He must do it gradually to succeed at all.

Ah! how quickly does the sensitive love-plant know the finger-tip touch of cooling passion! How quickly falls the silver column in the crystal tube, at the first breath of the heart’s chill even though the words on the lip are warm! Kiyohimé marked the ebbing tide of her lover’s regard, and then a terrible resolve of evil took possession of her soul. From that time forth, she ceased to be a pure and innocent and gentle virgin. Though still in maiden form and guise, she was at heart a fox, and as to her nature she might as well have worn the bushy tail of the sly deceiver. She resolved to win over her lover, by her importunities, and failing in this, to destroy him by sorcery.

One night she sat up until two o’clock in the morning, and then, arrayed only in a white robe, she went out to a secluded part of the mountain where in a lonely shrine stood a hideous scowling image of Fudo, who holds the sword of vengeance and sits clothed in fire. There she called upon the god to change her lover’s heart or else destroy him.

Thence, with her head shaking, and eyes glittering with anger like the orbs of a serpent, she hastened to the shrine of Kampira, whose servants are the long-nosed sprites, who have the power of magic and of teaching sorcery. Standing in front of the portal she saw it hung with votive tablets, locks of hair, teeth, various tokens of vows, pledges and marks of sacrifice, which the devotees of the god had hung up. There, in the cold night air she asked for the power of sorcery, that she might be able at will to transform herself into the terrible *ja*, — the awful dragon-serpent whose engine coils are able to crack bones, crush rocks, melt iron or root up trees, and which are long enough to wind round a mountain.

It would be too long to tell how this once pure and happy maiden, now turned to an avenging demon went out nightly on the lonely mountains to practice the arts of sorcery. The mountain-sprites were her teachers, and she learned so diligently that the chief goblin at last told her she would be able, without fail, to transform herself when she wished.

The dreadful moment was soon to come. The visits of the once lover-priest gradually became fewer and fewer, and were no longer tender hours of love, but were on his part formal interviews, while Kiyohimé became more importunate than ever. Tears and pleadings were alike useless, and finally one night as he was taking leave, the bonze told the maid that he had paid his last visit. Kiyohimé then utterly forgetting all womanly delicacy, became so urgent that the bonze tore himself away and fled across the river. He had seen the terrible gleam in the maiden’s eyes, and now terribly frightened, hid himself under the great temple bell.

Forthwith Kiyohimé, seeing the awful moment had come, pronounced the spell of incantation taught her by the mountain spirit, and raised her T-shaped wand. In a moment her fair head and lovely face, body, limbs and feet lengthened out, disappeared, or became demon-like, and a fire-darting, hissing-tongued serpent, with eyes like moons trailed over the ground towards the temple, swam the river, and scenting out the track of the fugitive, entered the belfry, cracking the supporting columns made of whole tree-trunks into a mass of ruins, while the bell fell to the earth with the cowering victim inside.

Then began the winding of the terrible coils round and round the metal, as with her wand of sorcery in her hands, she mounted the bell. The glistening scales, hard as iron, struck off sparks as the pressure increased. Tighter and tighter they were drawn, till the heat of the friction consumed the timbers and made the metal glow hot like fire.

Vain was the prayer of priest, or spell of rosary, as the bonzes piteously besought great Buddha to destroy the demon. Hotter and hotter grew the mass, until the ponderous metal melted down into a hissing pool of scintillating molten bronze; and soon, man within and serpent without, timber and tiles and ropes were nought but a few handfuls of white ashes.

52

THE FISHERMAN AND THE MOON-MAIDEN

Pearly and lustrous white, like a cloud in the far-off blue sky, seemed the floating figure of the moon-maiden, as she flew to earth. She was one of the fifteen glistening virgins that wait attendant upon the moon in her chambers in the sky. Looking down from her high home to the earth, she became enraptured with the glorious scenery of Suruga's ocean shore, and longed for a bath in the blue waters of the sea.

So this fairy maid sped to the earth one morning early, when the moon having shone through the night was about to retire for the day. The sun was rising bright and red over the eastern seas, flushing the mountains and purpling the valleys. Out amid the sparkling waves the ships sailed toward the sun, and the fishermen cast their nets.

It was in early spring, when the air was full of the fragrance of plum blossoms, and the zephyrs blew so softly that scarce a bamboo leaf quivered, or a wave lapsed with sound on the silvery shore.

The moon-maiden was so charmed with the scenery of earth, that she longed to linger above it to gaze tranquilly. Floating slowly through the air, she directed her course to the pine groves that fringe the strand near Cape Miwo. Lying at the base of Fuji mountain, whose snowy crown glistens above, fronting the ocean, whose blue plain undulates in liquid glory till it meets the bending sky, the scenery of Miwo is renowned everywhere under the whole heavens, but especially in the land which the mikado’s reign blesses with peace.

Full of happiness, the fairy maiden played sweet music from her flute, until the air was full of it, and it sounded to the dweller on earth like the sweet falling of rain drops on the thirsty ground. Her body shed sweet fragrance through the air, and flowers fell from her robes as she passed. Though none saw her form, all wondered.

Arriving over a charming spot on the sea shore, she descended to the strand, and stood at the foot of a pine tree. She laid her musical instrument on a rock near by, and taking off her wings and feathered suit hung them carefully on the pine tree bough. Then she strolled off along the shore to dip her shining feet in the curling waves.

Picking up some shells, she wondered with innocent joy at the rich tints, which seemed more beautiful than any color in the moon-world. With one, a large smooth scallop, she was particularly pleased; for inside one valve was a yellow disc, and on its mate was a white one.

“How strange,” said she. “Here is the sun, and there is the moon. I shall call this the *Tsuki-hi-kai* — ‘sun and moon shell’,” and she put them in her girdle.

It chanced that near the edge of the pine grove, not far away, there dwelt a lone fisherman, who, coming down to the shore, caught a whiff of sweet perfume such as had never before delighted his nostrils. What could it be? The spring zephyrs, blowing from the west, seemed laden with the sweet odor.

Curiosity prompted him to seek the cause. He walked toward the pine tree, and looking up, caught sight of the feathery suit of wings. Oh! how his eyes sparkled. He danced for joy, and taking down the robe carried it to his neighbors. All were delighted, and one old man said that the fairy must herself be near by. He advised the man to seek until he found her.

So with feathered robe in hand the fisherman went out again to the strand, and took his place near the pine tree. He had not waited long before a lovely being, with rose-tinted white skin and of perfect form, appeared.

“Please good sir, give me back my feathered robe,” said she, in a sad voice of liquid sweetness, though she seemed greatly frightened.

“No, I must keep it as a sacred treasure, a relic from a heavenly visitor, and dedicate it in the shrine yonder as a memorial of an angel’s visit” said the fisherman.

“Oh, wicked man, what a wretched and impious thing to rob an inhabitant of heaven of the robe by which she moves. How can I fly back to my home again?”

“Give me your wings, oh ye wild geese that fly across the face of the moon, and on tireless pinions seek the icy shores in spring time, and soar unwearied homeward in autumn. Lend me your wings.”

But the wild geese overhead only whirred and screamed, and bit their sprays of pine which they carried in their mouth.

“Oh, ye circling gulls, lend me but for a day your downy wings. I am prisoner here”, cried the weeping fairy.

But the graceful gulls hovering for a moment swept on in widening circles out to farther sea.

“Oh, breezes of the air which blow whither ye list! Oh, tide of ocean which ebbs and flows at will! Ye may move all, but I am prisoner here, devoid of motion. Oh, good sir have pity and give me back my wings,” cried the moon-maiden, pressing her hands together in grief.

The fisher’s heart was touched by the pathos of her voice and the glittering of her tears.

“I’ll give back your winged-robe if you’ll dance and make music for me”, said he.

“Oh, yes, good sir, I will dance and make music, but first let me put on my feather-robe for without it I have no power of motion.”

“Oh, yes”, said the suspicious mortal, “If I give you back your wings you’ll fly straight to heaven.”

“What! can you not believe the word of a heavenly being, without doubting? Trust me in good faith and you’ll lose nothing.”

Then with shamed face the fisherman handed to the moon-maiden her feathered robe, which she donned and began to dance. She poured out such sweet strains from her upright flute that with eye and ear full of rapture, the fisherman imagined himself in heaven. Then she sang a sweet song in which she described the delights of life in the moon and the pleasure of celestial residence.

The fisherman was so overjoyed that he longed to detain the fairy. He begged her to dwell with him on earth, but in vain. As he looked, he saw her rising. A fresh breeze, rippling the face of the sea, now sprang up, and wafted the pearly maiden over the pine-clad hills and past Fuji mountain. All the time sweet music rained through the air until, as the fisherman strained his eyes toward the fresh-fallen snow on Fuji’s crest, he could no longer distinguish the moon-maiden from the fleecy clouds that filled the thin air.

Pondering long upon the marvelous apparition, the fisherman resolved to mark the spot where the fairy first descended to earth. So he prevailed upon the simple villagers to build a railing of stone around the now sacred pine.

Daily they garlanded the old trunk with festoons of tasseled and twisted rice-straw. Long after, when by the storms of centuries the old pine, in spite of bandages and crutches, and tired of wrestling with the blast, fell down like an old man, to rise no more, a grateful posterity cleared the space and built the shrine of Miwo, which still dots with its sacred enclosure the strand of Suruga on which the fairy danced.

53

THE JEWELS OF THE EBBING AND THE FLOWING TIDE

Chiuai was the fourteenth mikado of the Land of the Gods (Japan). His wife, the empress, was named Jingu, or Godlike Exploit. She was a wise and discreet lady and assisted her husband to govern his dominions. When a great rebellion broke out in the south island called Kiushiu, the mikado marched his army against the rebels. The empress went with him and lived in the camp. One night, as she lay asleep in her tent, she dreamed that a heavenly being appeared to her and told her of a wonderful land in the west, full of gold, silver, jewels, silks and precious stones. The heavenly messenger told her if she would invade this country she would succeed, and all its spoil would be hers, for herself and Japan.

“Conquer Corea!” said the radiant being, as she floated away on a purple cloud.

In the morning the empress told her husband of her dream, and advised him to set out to invade the rich land. But he paid no attention of her. When she insisted, in order to satisfy her, he climbed up a high mountain, and looking far away towards the setting sun, saw no land thither, not even mountain peaks. So, believing that there was no country in that direction he descended, and angrily refused to set out on the expedition. Shortly after, in a battle with the rebels the mikado was shot dead with an arrow.

The generals and captains of the host then declared their loyalty to the empress as the sole ruler of Japan. She, now having the power, resolved to carry out her daring plan of invading Corea. She invoked all the *kami* or gods together, from the mountains, rivers and plains to get their advice and help. All came at her call. The kami of the mountains gave her timber and iron for her ships; the kami of the fields presented rice and grain for provisions; the kami of the grasses gave her hemp for cordage; and the kami of the winds promised to open his bag and let out his breezes to fill her sails toward Corea. All came except Isora, the kami of the sea shore. Again she called for him and sat up waiting all night with torches burning, invoking him to appear.

Now, Isora was a lazy fellow, always slovenly and ill-dressed, and when at last he did come, instead of appearing in state in splendid robes, he rose right out of the sea-bottom, covered with mud and slime, with shells sticking all over him and sea-weed clinging to his hair. He gruffly asked what the empress wanted.

“Go down to Riu Gu and beg his majesty Kai Riu O, the Dragon King of the World Under the Sea, to give me the two jewels of the tides,” said the imperial lady.

Now among the treasures in the palace of the Dragon King of the World Under the Sea were two jewels having wondrous power over the tides. They were about as large as apples, but shaped like apricots, with three rings cut near the top. They seemed to be of crystal, and glistened and shot out dazzling rays like fire. Indeed, they appeared to seethe and glow like the eye of a dragon, or the white-hot steel of the sword-forger. One was called the Jewel of the Flood-Tide, and the other the Jewel of the Ebb-Tide. Whoever owned them had the power to make the tides instantly rise or fall at his word, to make the dry land appear, or the sea overwhelm it, in the fillip of a finger.

Isora dived with a dreadful splash, down, down to Riu Gu, and straightway presented himself before Kai Riu O. In the name of the empress, he begged for the two tide-jewels.

The Dragon King agreed, and producing the flaming globes from his casket, placed them on a huge shell and handed them to Isora, who brought the jewels to Jingu, who placed them in her girdle.

The empress now prepared her fleet for Corean invasion. Three thousand barges were built and launched, and two old kami with long streaming gray hair and wrinkled faces, were made admirals. Their names were Suwa Daimio Jin (Great Illustrious, Spirit of Suwa) and Sumiyoshi Daimio Jin, the kami who lives under the old pine tree at Takasago, and presides over nuptial ceremonies.

The fleet sailed in the tenth month. The hills of Hizen soon began to sink below the horizon, but no sooner were they out of sight of land than a great storm arose. The ships tossed about, and began to butt each other like bulls, and it seemed as though the fleet would be driven back; when lo! Kai Riu O sent shoals of huge sea-monsters and immense fishes that bore up the ships and pushed their sterns forward with their great snouts. The shachihoko, or dragon-fishes, taking the ship’s cables in their mouths towed them forward, until the storm ceased and the ocean was calm. Then they plunged downwards into the sea and disappeared.

The mountains of Corea now rose in sight. Along the shore were gathered the Corean army. Their triangular fringed banners, inscribed with dragons, flapped in the breeze. As soon as their sentinels caught sight of the Japanese fleet, the signal was given, and the Corean line of war galleys moved gaily out to attack the Japanese.

The empress posted her archers in the bows of her ships and waited for the enemy to approach. When they were within a few hundred sword-lengths, she took from her girdle the Jewel of the Ebbing Tide and cast the flashing gem into the sea. It blazed in the air for a moment, but no sooner did it touch the water, than instantly the ocean receded from under the Corean vessels, and left them stranded on dry land. The Coreans, thinking it was a tidal wave, and that the Japanese ships were likewise helpless in the undertow, leaped out of their galleys and rushed over the sand, and on to the attack. With shouting and drawn swords their aspect was terrible. When within range of the arrows, the Japanese bowmen opened volleys of double-headed, or triple-pronged arrows on the Coreans, and killed hundreds.

But on they rushed, until near the Japanese ships, when the empress taking out the Flood-Tide Jewel, cast it in the sea. In a snap of the finger, the ocean rolled up into a wave many tens of feet high and engulfed the Corean army, drowning them almost to a man. Only a few were left out of the ten thousand. The warriors in their iron armor sank dead in the boiling waves, or were cast along the shore like logs. The Japanese army landed safely, and easily conquered the country. The king of Corea surrendered and gave his bales of silk, jewels, mirrors, books, pictures, robes, tiger skins, and treasures of gold and silver to the empress. The booty was loaded on eighty ships, and the Japanese army returned in triumph to their native country.

54

KAI RIU O, THE DRAGON KING OF THE WORLD UNDER THE SEA

Soon after her arrival at home, the empress Jingu gave birth to a son, whom she named Ojin. He was one of the fairest children ever born of an imperial mother, and was very wise and wonderful even when an infant. He was a great favorite of Takénouchi, the prime minister of the empress. As he grew up, he was full of the *Yamato Damashii,* or the spirit of unconquerable Japan.

This Takénouchi was a very venerable old man, who was said to be three hundred and sixty years old. He had been the counsellor of five mikados. He was very tall, and as straight as an arrow, when other old men were bent like a bow. He served as a general in war and a civil officer in peace. For this reason he always kept on a suit of armor under his long satin and damask court robes. He wore the bear-skin shoes and the tiger-skin scabbard which were the general's badge of rank, and also the high cap and long fringed strap hanging from the belt, which marked the court noble. He had moustaches, and a long beard fell over his breast like a foaming waterfall, as white as the snows on the branches of the pine trees of Ibuki mountain.

Now the empress, as well as Takénouchi, wished the imperial infant Ojin to live long, be wise and powerful, become a mighty warrior, be invulnerable in battle, and to have control over the tides and the ocean as his mother once had. To do this it was necessary to get back the Tide Jewels.

So Takénouchi took the infant Ojin on his shoulders, mounted the imperial war-barge, whose sails were of gold-embroidered silk, and bade his rowers put out to sea. Then standing upright on the deck, he called on Kai Riu O to come up out of the deep and give back the Tide Jewels to Ojin.

At first there was no sign on the waves that Kai Riu O heard. The green sea lay glassy in the sunlight, and the waves laughed and curled above the sides of the boat. Still Takénouchi listened intently and waited reverently. He was not long in suspense. Looking down far under the sparkling waves, he saw the head and fiery eyes of a dragon mounting upward. Instinctively he clutched his robe with his right hand, and held Ojin tightly on his shoulder, for this time not Isora, but the terrible Kai Riu O himself was coming.

What a great honor! The sea-king's servant, Isora, had appeared to a woman, the empress Jingu, but to her son, the Dragon King of the World Under the Sea deigned to come in person.

The waters opened; the waves rolled up, curled, rolled into wreaths and hooks and drops of foam, which flecked the dark green curves with silvery bells. First appeared a living dragon with fire-darting eyes, long flickering moustaches, glittering scales of green all ruffled, with terrible spines erect, and the joints of the fore-paws curling out jets of red fire. This living creature was the helmet of the Sea King. Next appeared the face of awful majesty and stern mien, as if with reluctant condescension, and then the jewel robes of the monarch. Next rose into view a huge haliotis shell, in which, on a bed of rare gems from the deep sea floor, glistened, blazed and flashed the two Jewels of the Tides.

Then the Dragon-King spoke, saying:

“Quick, take this casket, I deign not to remain long in this upper world of mortals. With these I endow the imperial prince of the Heavenly line of the mikados of the Divine country. He shall be invulnerable in battle. He shall have long life. To him I give power over sea and land. Of this, let these Tide-Jewels be the token.”

Hardly were these words uttered when the Dragon-King disappeared with a tremendous splash. Takénouchi standing erect but breathless amid the crowd of rowers who, crouching at the boat’s bottom had not dared so much as to lift up their noses, waited a moment, and then gave the command to turn the prow to the shore.

Ojin grew up and became a great warrior, invincible in battle and powerful in peace. He lived to be one hundred and eleven years old, and was next to the last of the long lived mikados of Everlasting Great Japan.

55

THE CREATION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Of old the Heavens and the Earth were not separated. Land and water, solids and gases, fire and stone, light and darkness were mixed together. All was liquid and turbid chaos.

Then the mighty mass began to move from within. The lighter particles of gas and air began to rise, forming the sky and heavens. The heavy parts sank and cohered, becoming the earth. The water formed the four seas. Then there appeared something like a white cloud floating between heaven and earth. Out of this came forth three beings — The Being of the Middle of Heaven, The High August Being, and The Majestic Being. These three "hid their bodies."

Out of the warm mould of the earth something like a rush sprouted up. It was clear and bright like crystal. From this rush-sprout came forth a being whose title is "The Delightful and Honorable Rush-Sprout." Next appeared another being out of the buds of the rush-sprout whose name is "The Honorable Heaven-born." These five beings are called "the heavenly gods."

Next came into existence four pairs of beings viz.: (1) The Being Sprung from the First Mud, and The Being of the Sand and Mud; (2) The Being with Hands and Feet Growing, and the Being Having Breath; (3) The Male Being, and the Female Being of the Great Place (the earth); (4) The

Being of Complete Perfection, and the Being who cried out “Strange and Awful” to her mate.

Thus the last pair that came into existence were the first man and woman called Izanagi and Izanami.

It is said that the other pairs of beings before Izanagi and Izanami were only their imperfect forms or the processes through which they passed before arriving at perfection.

These two beings lived in the Heavens. The world was not yet well formed, and the soil floated about like a fish in the water, but near the surface; and was called “The Floating Region.” The sun, earth and moon were still attached to each other like a head to the neck, or arms to the body. They were little by little separating, the parts joining them growing thinner and thinner. This part, like an isthmus, was called “Heaven’s Floating Bridge.” It was on this bridge that Izanagi and Izanami were standing when they saw a pair of wagtails cooing and billing sweetly together. The heavenly couple were so delighted with the sight that they began to imitate the birds. Thus began the art of love, which mortals have practiced to this day.

While talking together on this Bridge of Heaven, they began to wonder if there was a world beneath them. They looked far down upon the green seas, but could see nothing! Then Izanagi took his long jeweled spear and plunged it into the turbid mass, turning it round and round. As he lifted it up, the drops which trickled from it hardened into earth of their own accord; and thus dry land was formed. As Izanagi was cleansing his spear the lumps of muck and mud which had adhered to it flew off into space, and were changed into stars and comets.

[It is said that by turning his spear round and round, Izanagi set the Earth revolving in daily revolutions].

To the land thus formed, they gave the name of “The Island of the Congealed Drop,” because they intended to create a large archipelago and wished to distinguish this as the first island. They descended from Heaven on the floating bridge and landed on the island. Izanagi struck his tall spear in the ground making it the axis of the world. He then proceeded to build a palace around the spear which formed the central pillar. [This spot was formerly at the North pole, but is now at Eshima, off the central eastern coast of Japan]. They then resolved to walk round the island and examine it. This done, they met together. Izanami cried out, “What a lovely man!” But Izanagi rebuked her for speaking first, and said they must try it again. Then they walked round the island once more. When they met, Izanami held her tongue while Izanagi said, “What a lovely woman!”

Being now both in good humor, they began the work of creating Japan. The first island brought up out of the water was Awaji; and then the main island. After that, eight large islands were created, whence comes one of the names of Japan, “The Empire of the Eight Great Islands.” Six smaller islands were also produced. The several thousand islets which make up the archipelago of Everlasting Great Japan were formed by the spontaneous consolidation of the foam of the sea.

After the country was thus formed the divine pair created eight millions of earthly gods or kami, and the ten thousand different things on the earth. Vegetation sprang up over all the land, which was however still covered with mist. So Izanagi created with his breath the two gods, male and female of the wind. All these islands are the children of Izanagi and Izanami, and when first born were small and feeble, but gradually grew larger and larger, attaining their present size like human beings, which are at first tiny infants.

As the gradual separation of the land and sea went on, foreign countries were formed by the congealing of the foam of the sea. The god of fire was then born of Izanami, his mother. This god often got very angry at any one who used unclean fire. Izanami then created by herself the gods of metals, of clay and of fresh water. This latter was told always to keep the god of fire quiet, and put him out when he began to do mischief.

Izanagi and Izanami, though married but a short time, began to quarrel, for Izanami had once told her husband not to look at her when she hid herself. But Izanagi did not do what she requested, but intruded on her privacy when she was unwell, and stared at her when she wished to be alone. Izanami then got very angry, and went down to the lower world of darkness, and disappeared.

In the dark world under the earth Izanami stayed a long time, and after long waiting, Izanagi went after her. In the darkness of the Under-world he was horrified at what he saw, and leaving his consort below, tried to escape to the earth again.

In his struggles several gods were created, one of them coming out of his staff. When he got up to daylight, he secured a large rock to close up the hole in the earth. Turning this rock into a god, he commanded him to watch the place. He then rushed into the sea and continued washing for a long time to purify himself. In blowing out from his lungs the polluted air inhaled in the Under-world, the two evil gods sprang forth from his breath. As these would commit great harm and wickedness, Izanagi created two other gods to correct their evil. But when he had washed his eyes and could see clearly again, there sprang out two precious and lovely beings; one from his left eye, being a rare and glistening maiden, whom he afterwards named Ama Térasu, or “The Heaven Illuminating Spirit.” From his right eye appeared Susa no O, the “Ruler of the Moon.” Being now pure again, and having these lovely children, Izanagi rejoiced and said, “I have begotten child upon child, and at the end of my begetting, I have begotten me two jewel-children.” Now the brightness of the person of the maiden Ama Térasu was beautiful, and shone through Heaven and Earth. Izanagi, well pleased, said: “Though my children are many, none of them is like this wonder-child. She must not be kept in this region.” So taking off the necklace of precious stones from his neck and rattling it, he gave it to her, saying, “Rule thou over the High Plain of Heaven.”

At that time the distance between Heaven and Earth was not very great, and he sent her up to the blue sky by the Heaven-uniting Pillar, on which the Heavens rested like a prop. She easily mounted it, and lived in the sun, illuminating the whole Heavens and the Earth. The Sun now gradually separated from the Earth, and both moved farther and farther apart until they rested where they now are.

Izanagi next spoke to Susa no O the Ruler of the Moon, and said, “Rule thou over the new-born Earth and the blue Waste of the Sea, with its Multitudinous Salt Waters.”

56

HOW THE SUN GODDESS WAS ENTICED OUT OF HER CAVE

When the far-shining goddess, on account of the evil pranks of her brother, Susa no O, the Ruler of the Moon, hid herself in a cave, there was no more light, and heaven and earth were plunged into darkness.

A council of all the gods was held in the dry bed of one of the rivers [which we call the Milky Way] in the fields of Heaven. The question of how to appease the anger of the goddess was discussed. A long-headed and very wise god was ordered to think out a plan to entice her forth from the cave.

After due deliberation, it was resolved that a looking-glass should be made to tempt her to gaze at herself, and that tricks should be played to arouse her curiosity to come out and see what was going on.

So setting to work with a will, the gods forged and polished a mirror, wove cloth for beautiful garments, built a pavilion, carved a necklace of jewels, made wands, and tried an augury.

All being ready, the fat and rosy-cheeked goddess of mirth with face full of dimples, and eyes full of fun, named Uzumé, was selected to lead the dance. She had a flute made from a bamboo cane by piercing holes between the joints, while every god in the great orchestra had a pair of flat hard wood clappers, which he struck together.

She bound up her long flowing sleeves with a creeper vine, and made for herself a baton of twigs of bamboo grass, by which she could direct the motions of the musicians. This she held in one hand while in the other was a spear wound round with grass, on which small bells tinkled. Great bonfires were lighted in front of the cave, so that the audience of gods could see the dance. A large circular box which resounded like a drum when trod on, was set up for Uzumé to dance upon. The row of cocks now began to crow in concert.

All being ready, the Strong-handed god who was to pull the sun-goddess out of the cave, as soon as overcome by her curiosity she should peep forth, hid himself beside the stone door of the cave. Uzumé mounted the box and began to dance. As the drum-box resounded, the spirit of folly seized her, and she began to chant a song.

Becoming still more foolish, Uzumé waved her wand wildly, loosened her dress, and danced till she had not a stitch of clothing left on her. The gods were so amused at her foolishness that they all laughed, until the heavens shook as with claps of thunder.

The Sun-goddess within the cave heard all these strange noises; the crowing of the cocks, the hammering on the anvil, the chopping of wood, the music of the koto, the clappering of the hard wood, the tinkling of the bells, the shouting of Uzumé and the boisterous laughter of the gods. Wondering what it all meant, she peeped out.

As she did so the Doubly Beautiful goddess held up the mirror.

The Far-Shining one seeing her own face in it was greatly astonished. Curiosity got the better of fear. She looked far out. Instantly the strong-handed god pulled the rocky door open, and seizing her hand, dragged her forth. Then all the heavens and earth were lightened, the trees and grass became green again, and the goddess of colors resumed her work of tinting the flowers. The gloom fled from all eyes, and human beings again became “white-faced.”

Thus the calamity which had befallen heaven and earth, by the sun-goddess hiding in the cave became a means of much benefit to mortals. For by their necessity the gods were compelled to invent the arts of metal-working, weaving, carpentry, jeweling and many other useful appliances for the human race. They also on this occasion first made use of music, dancing, the Dai Kagura (The comedy which makes the gods laugh) and many of the games which the children play at the present time.

57

WELSH RABBIT AND HUNTED HARES

Long, long ago, there was a good saint named David, who taught the early Cymric or Welsh people better manners and many good things to eat and ways of enjoying themselves.

Now the Welsh folks in speaking of their good teacher pronounced his name Tafid and affectionately Taffy, and this came to be the usual name for a person born in Wales. In our nurseries we all learned that “Taffy was a Welshman,” but it was their enemies who made a bad rhyme about Taffy.

Wherever there were cows or goats, people could get milk. So they always had what was necessary for a good meal, whether it were breakfast, dinner or supper. Milk, cream, curds, whey and cheese enriched the family table. Were not these enough?

But Saint David taught the people how to make a still more delicious food out of cheese, and that this could be done without taking the life of any creature.

Saint David showed the girls how to take cheese, slice and toast it over the coals, or melt it in a skillet and pour it hot over toast or biscuit. This gave the cheese a new and sweeter flavor. When spread on bread, either plain, or browned over the fire, the result, in combination, was a delicacy fit for a king, and equal to anything known.

The fame of this new addition to the British bill of fare spread near and far. The English people, who had always been fond of rabbit pie, and still eat thousands of Molly Cotton Tails every day, named it “Welsh Rabbit,” and thought it one of the best things to eat. In fact, there are many people, who do not easily see a joke, who misunderstand the fun, or who suppose the name to be either slang, or vulgar, or a mistake, and who call it “rarebit.” It is like “Cape Cod turkey” (codfish), or “Bombay ducks” (dried fish), or “Irish plums” (potatoes) and such funny cookery with fancy names.

Now up to this time, the rabbits and hares had been so hunted with the aid of dogs, that there was hardly a chance of any of them surviving the cruel slaughter.

In the year 604, the Prince of Powys was out hunting. The dogs started a hare, and pursued it into a dense thicket. When the hunter with the horn came up, a strange sight met his eyes. There he saw a lovely maiden. She was kneeling on the ground and devoutly praying. Though surprised at this, the prince was anxious to secure his game. He hissed on the hounds and ordered the horn to be blown, for the dogs to charge on their prey, expecting them to bring him the game at once. Instead of this, though they were trained dogs and would fight even a wolf, they slunk away howling, and frightened, as if in pain, while the horn stuck fast to the lips of the blower and he was silent. Meanwhile, the hare nestled under the maiden’s dress and seemed not in the least disturbed.

Amazed at this, the prince turned to the fair lady and asked:

“Who are you?”

She answered, “My mother named me Monacella. I have fled from Ireland, where my father wished to marry me to one of his chief men, whom I did not love. Under God’s guidance, I came to this secret desert place, where I have lived for fifteen years, without seeing the face of man.”

To this, the prince in admiration replied: “O most worthy Melangell [which is the way the Welsh pronounce Monacella], because, on account of thy merits, it has pleased God to shelter and save this little, wild hare, I, on my part, herewith present thee with this land, to be for the service of God and an asylum for all men and women, who seek thy protection. So long as they do not pollute this sanctuary, let none, not even prince or chieftain, drag them forth.”

The beautiful saint passed the rest of her life in this place. At night, she slept on the bare rock. Many were the wonders wrought for those who with pure hearts sought her refuge. The little wild hares were under her special protection, and they are still called “Melangell’s Lambs.”

58

THE MIGHTY MONSTER AFANG

After the Cymric folk, that is, the people we call Welsh, had come up from Cornwall into their new land, they began to cut down the trees, to build towns, and to have fields and gardens. Soon they made the landscape smile with pleasant homes, rich farms and playing children.

They trained vines and made flowers grow. The young folks made pets of the wild animals' cubs, which their fathers and big brothers brought home from hunting. Old men took rushes and reeds and wove them into cages for song birds to live in.

While they were draining the swamps and bogs, they drove out the monsters, that had made their lair in these wet places. These terrible creatures liked to poison people with their bad breath, and even ate up very little boys and girls, when they strayed away from home.

So all the face of the open country between the forests became very pretty to look at. The whole of Cymric land, which then extended from the northern Grampian Hills to Cornwall, and from the Irish Sea, past their big fort, afterward called London, even to the edge of the German Ocean, became a delightful place to live in.

The lowlands and the rivers, in which the tide rose and fell daily, were especially attractive. This was chiefly because of the many bright flowers growing there; while the yellow gorse and the pink heather made the hills look as lovely as a young girl's face. Besides this, the Cymric maidens were the prettiest ever, and the lads were all brave and healthy; while both of these knew how to sing often and well.

Now there was a great monster named the Afang, that lived in a big bog, hidden among the high hills and inside of a dark, rough forest.

This ugly creature had an iron-clad back and a long tail that could wrap itself around a mountain. It had four front legs, with big knees that were bent up like a grasshopper's, but were covered with scales like armor. These were as hard as steel, and bulged out at the thighs. Along its back, was a ridge of horns, like spines, and higher than an alligator's. Against such a tough hide, when the hunters shot their darts and hurled their javelins, these weapons fell down to the ground, like harmless pins.

On this monster's head, were big ears, half way between those of a jackass and an elephant. Its eyes were as green as leeks, and were round, but scalloped on the edges, like squashes, while they were as big as pumpkins.

The Afang's face was much like a monkey's, or a gorilla's, with long straggling gray hairs around its cheeks like those of a walrus. It always looked as if a napkin, as big as a bath towel, would be necessary to keep its mouth clean. Yet even then, it slobbered a good deal, so that no nice fairy liked to be near the monster.

When the Afang growled, the bushes shook and the oak leaves trembled on the branches, as if a strong wind was blowing.

But after its dinner, when it had swallowed down a man, or two calves, or four sheep, or a fat heifer, or three goats, its body swelled up like a balloon. Then it usually rolled over, lay along the ground, or in the soft mud, and felt very stupid and sleepy, for a long while.

All around its lair, lay wagon loads of bones of the creatures, girls, women, men, boys, cows, and occasionally a donkey, which it had devoured.

But when the Afang was ravenously hungry and could not get these animals and when fat girls and careless boys were scarce, it would live on birds, beasts and fishes. Although it was very fond of cows and sheep, yet the wool and hair of these animals stuck in its big teeth, it often felt very miserable and its usually bad temper grew worse.

Then, like a beaver, it would cut down a tree, sharpen it to a point and pick its teeth until its mouth was clean. Yet it seemed all the more hungry and eager for fresh human victims to eat, especially juicy maidens; just as children like cake more than bread.

The Cymric men were not surprised at this, for they knew that girls were very sweet and they almost worshiped women. So they learned to guard their daughters and wives. They saw that to do such things as eating up people was in the nature of the beast, which could never be taught good manners.

But what made them mad beyond measure was the trick which the monster often played upon them by breaking the river banks, and the dykes which with great toil they had built to protect their crops. Then the waters overflowed all their farms, ruined their gardens and spoiled their cow houses and stables.

This sort of mischief the Afang liked to play, especially about the time when the oat and barley crops were ripe and ready to be gathered to make cakes and flummery; that is sour oat-jelly, or pap. So it often happened that the children had to do without their cookies and porridge during the winter. Sometimes the floods rose so high as to wash away the houses and float the cradles. Even those with little babies in them were often seen on the raging waters, and sent dancing on the waves down the river, to the sea.

Once in a while, a mother cat and all her kittens were seen mewing for help, or a lady dog howling piteously. Often it happened that both puppies and kittens were drowned.

So, whether for men or mothers, pussies or puppies, the Cymric men thought the time had come to stop this monster's mischief. It was bad enough that people should be eaten up, but to have all their crops ruined and animals drowned, so that they had to go hungry all winter, with only a little fried fish, and no turnips, was too much for human patience. There were too many weeping mothers and sorrowful fathers, and squalling brats and animals whining for something to eat.

Besides, if all the oats were washed away, how could their wives make flummery, without which, no Cymric man is ever happy? And where would they get seed for another year's sowing? And if there were no cows, how could the babies or kitties live, or any grown-up persons get buttermilk?

Someone may ask, why did not some brave man shoot the Afang, with a poisoned arrow, or drive a spear into him under the arms, where the flesh was tender, or cut off his head with a sharp sword?

The trouble was just here. There were plenty of brave fellows, ready to fight the monster, but nothing made of iron could pierce that hide of his. This was like armor, or one of the steel battleships of our day, and the Afang always spit out fire or poison breath down the road, up which a man was coming, long before the brave fellow could get near him. Nothing would do, but to go up into his lair, and drag him out.

But what man or company of men was strong enough to do this, when a dozen giants in a gang, with ropes as thick as a ship's hawser, could hardly tackle the job?

Nevertheless, in what neither man nor giant could do, a pretty maiden might succeed. True, she must be brave also, for how could she know, but if hungry, the Afang might eat her up?

However, one valiant damsel, of great beauty, who had lots of perfumery and plenty of pretty clothes, volunteered to bind the monster in his lair. She said, “I'm not afraid.” Her sweetheart was named Gadern, and he was a young and strong hunter. He talked over the matter with her and they two resolved to act together.

Gadern went all over the country, summoning the farmers to bring their ox teams and log chains. Then he set the blacksmiths to work, forging new and especially heavy ones, made of the best native iron, from the mines, for which Wales is still famous.

Meanwhile, the lovely maiden arrayed herself in her prettiest clothes, dressed her hair in the most enticing way, hanging a white blossom on each side, over her ears, with one flower also at her neck.

When she had perfumed her garments, she sallied forth and up the lake where the big bog and the waters were and where the monster hid himself.

While the maiden was still quite a distance away, the terrible Afang, scenting his visitor from afar, came rushing out of his lair. When very near, he reared his head high in the air, expecting to pounce on her, with his iron clad claws and at one swallow make a breakfast of the girl.

But the odors of her perfumes were so sweet, that he forgot what he had thought to do. Moreover, when he looked at her, he was so taken with unusual beauty, that he flopped at once on his forefeet. Then he behaved just like a lovelorn beau, when his best girl comes near. He ties his necktie and pulls down his coat and brushes off the collar.

So the Afang began to spruce up. It was real fun to see how a monster behaves when smitten with love for a pretty girl. He had no idea how funny he was.

The girl was not at all afraid, but smoothed the monster’s back, stroked and played with its big moustaches and tickled its neck until the Afang’s throat actually gurgled with a laugh. Pretty soon he guffawed, for he was so delighted.

When he did this, the people down in the valley thought it was thunder, though the sky was clear and blue.

The maiden tickled his chin, and even put up his whiskers in curl papers. Then she stroked his neck, so that his eyes closed. Soon she had gently lulled him to slumber, by singing a cradle song, which her mother had taught her. This she did so softly, and sweetly, that in a few minutes, with its head in her lap, the monster was sound asleep and even began to snore.

Then, quietly, from their hiding places in the bushes, Gadern and his men crawled out. When near the dreaded Afang, they stood up and sneaked forward, very softly on tip toe. They had wrapped the links of the chain in grass and leaves, so that no clanking was heard. They also held the oxen's yokes, so that nobody or anything could rattle, or make any noise. Slowly but surely they passed the chain over its body, in the middle, besides binding the brute securely between its fore and hind legs.

All this time, the monster slept on, for the girl kept on crooning her melody.

When the forty yoke of oxen were all harnessed together, the drovers cracked all their whips at once, so that it sounded like a clap of thunder and the whole team began to pull together.

Then the Afang woke up with a start.

The sudden jerk roused the monster to wrath, and its bellowing was terrible. It rolled round and round, and dug its four sets of toes, each with three claws, every one as big as a plowshare, into the ground. It tried hard to crawl into its lair, or slip into the lake.

Finding that neither was possible, the Afang looked about, for some big tree to wrap its tail around. But all his writhings or plungings were of no use. The drovers plied their whips and the oxen kept on with one long pull together and forward. They strained so hard, that one of them dropped its eye out. This formed a pool, and to this day they call it The Pool of the Ox's Eye. It never dries up or overflows, though the water in it rises and falls, as regularly as the tides.

For miles over the mountains the sturdy oxen hauled the monster. The pass over which they toiled and strained so hard is still named the Pass of the Oxen’s Slope. When going down hill, the work of dragging the Afang was easier.

In a great hole in the ground, big enough to be a pond, they dumped the carcass of the Afang, and soon a little lake was formed. This uncanny bit of water is called “The Lake of the Green Well.” It is considered dangerous for man or beast to go too near it. Birds do not like to fly over the surface, and when sheep tumble in, they sink to the bottom at once.

If the bones of the Afang still lie at the bottom, they must have sunk down very deep, for the monster had no more power to get out, or to break the river banks. The farmers no longer cared anything about the creature, and they hardly every think of the old story, except when a sheep is lost.

As for Gadern and his brave and lovely sweetheart, they were married and lived long and happily. Their descendants, in the thirty-seventh generation, are proud of the grand exploit of their ancestors, while all the farmers honor his memory and bless the name of the lovely girl that put the monster asleep.

59

THE TWO CAT WITCHES

In old days, it was believed that the seventh son, in a family of sons, was a conjurer by nature. That is, he could work wonders like the fairies and excel the doctors in curing diseases.

If he were the seventh son of a seventh son, he was himself a wonder of wonders. The story ran that he could even cure the “shingles,” which is a very troublesome disease. It is called also by a Latin name, which means a snake, because, as it gets worse, it coils itself around the body.

Now the eagle can attack the serpent and conquer and kill this poisonous creature. To secure such power, Hugh, the conjurer, ate the flesh of eagles. When he wished to cure the serpent-disease, he uttered words in the form of a charm which acted as a talisman and cure. After wetting the red rash, which had broken out over the sick person’s body, he muttered:

“He-eagle, she-eagle, I send you over nine seas, and over nine mountains, and over nine acres of moor and fen, where no dog shall bark, no cow low, and no eagle shall higher rise.”

After that, the patient was sure that he felt better.

There was always great rivalry between these conjurers and those who made money from the Pilgrims at Holy Wells and visitors to the relic shrines, but this fellow, named Hugh, and the monks, kept on mutually good terms. They often ate dinner together, for Hugh was a great traveler over the whole country and always had news to tell to the holy brothers who lived in cells.

One night, as he was eating supper at an inn, four men came in and sat down at the table with him. By his magical power, Hugh knew that they were robbers and meant to kill him that night, in order to get his money.

So, to divert their attention, Hugh made something like a horn to grow up out of the table, and then laid a spell on the robbers, so that they were kept gazing at the curious thing all night long, while he went to bed and slept soundly.

When he rose in the morning, he paid his bill and went away, while the robbers were still gazing at the horn. Only when the officers arrived to take them to prison did they come to themselves.

Now at Bettws-y-Coed-that pretty place which has a name that sounds so funny to us Americans and suggests a girl named Betty the Co-ed at college — there was a hotel, named the "Inn of Three Kegs." The shop sign hung out in front. It was a bunch of grapes gilded and set below three small barrels.

This inn was kept by two respectable ladies, who were sisters.

Yet in that very hotel, several travelers, while they were asleep, had been robbed of their money. They could not blame anyone nor tell how the mischief was done. With the key in the keyhole, they had kept their doors locked during the night. They were sure that no one had entered the room. There were no signs of men's boots, or of anyone's footsteps in the garden, while nothing was visible on the lock or door, to show that either had been tampered with. Everything was in order as when they went to bed.

Some people doubted their stories, but when they applied to Hugh the conjurer, he believed them and volunteered to solve the mystery. His motto was "Go anywhere and everywhere, but catch the thief."

When Hugh applied one night for lodging at the inn, nothing could be more agreeable than the welcome, and fine manners of his two hostesses.

At supper time, and during the evening, they all chatted together merrily. Hugh, who was never at a loss for news or stories, told about the various kinds of people and the many countries he had visited, in imagination, just as if he had seen them all, though he had never set foot outside of Wales.

When he was ready to go to bed, he said to the ladies:

“It is my custom to keep a light burning in my room, all night, but I will not ask for candles, for I have enough to last me until sunrise.” So saying, he bade them good night.

Entering his room and locking the door, he undressed, but laid his clothes near at hand. He drew his trusty sword out of its sheath and laid it upon the bed beside him, where he could quickly grasp it. Then he pretended to be asleep and even snored.

It was not long before, peeping between his eyelids, only half closed, he saw two cats come stealthily down the chimney.

When in the room, the animals frisked about, and then gamboled and romped in the most lively way. Then they chased each other around the bed, as if they were trying to find out whether Hugh was asleep.

Meanwhile, the supposed sleeper kept perfectly motionless. Soon the two cats came over to his clothes and one of them put her paw into the pocket that contained his purse.

At this, with one sweep of his sword, Hugh struck at the cat’s paw. The beast howled frightfully, and both animals ran for the chimney and disappeared. After that, everything was quiet until breakfast time.

At the table, only one of the sisters was present. Hugh politely inquired after the other one. He was told that she was not well, for which Hugh said he was very sorry.

After the meal, Hugh declared he must say good-by to both the sisters, whose company he had so enjoyed the night before. In spite of the other lady’s many excuses, he was admitted to the sick lady’s room.

After polite greetings and mutual compliments, Hugh offered his hand to say “good-by.” The sick lady smiled at once and put out her hand, but it was her left one.

“Oh, no,” said Hugh, with a laugh. “I never in all my life have taken any one’s left hand, and, beautiful as yours is, I won’t break my habit by beginning now and here.”

Reluctantly, and as if in pain, the sick lady put out her hand. It was bandaged.

The mystery was now cleared up. The two sisters were cats.

By the help of bad fairies they had changed their forms and were the real robbers.

Hugh seized the hand of the other sister and made a little cut in it, from which a few drops of blood flowed, but the spell was over.

“Henceforth,” said Hugh, “you are both harmless, and I trust you will both be honest women.”

And they were. From that day they were like other women, and kept one of the best of those inns — clean, tidy, comfortable and at modest prices — for which Wales is, or was, noted.

Neither as cats with paws, nor landladies, with soaring bills, did they ever rob travelers again.

60

HOW THE CYMRY LAND BECAME INHABITED

In all Britain to-day, no wolf roams wild and the deer are all tame.

Yet in the early ages, when human beings had not yet come into the land, the swamps and forests were full of very savage animals. There were bears and wolves by the thousand besides lions and the woolly rhinoceros, tigers, with terrible teeth like sabres.

Beavers built their dams over the little rivers, and the great horned oxen were very common. Then the mountains were higher, and the woods denser. Many of the animals lived in caves, and there were billions of bees and a great many butterflies. In the bogs were ferns of giant size, amid which terrible monsters hid that were always ready for a fight or a frolic.

In so beautiful a land, it seemed a pity that there were no men and women, no boys or girls, and no babies.

Yet the noble race of the Cymry, whom we call the Welsh, were already in Europe and lived in the summer land in the South. A great benefactor was born among them, who grew up to be a wonderfully wise man and taught his people the use of bows and arrows. He made laws, by which the different tribes stopped their continual fighting and quarrels, and united for the common good of all. He persuaded them to take family names. He invented the plow, and showed them how to use it, making furrows, in which to plant grain.

When the people found that they could get things to eat right out of the ground, from the seed they had planted, their children were wild with joy.

No people ever loved babies more than these Cymry folk and it was they who invented the cradle. This saved the hard-working mothers many a burden, for each woman had, besides rearing the children, to work for and wait on her husband.

He was the warrior and hunter, and she did most of the labor, in both the house and the field. When there were many little brats to look after, a cradle was a real help to her. In those days, “brat” was the general name for little folks. There were good laws, about women especially for their protection. Any rough or brutish fellow was fined heavily, or publicly punished, for striking one of them.

By and by, this great benefactor encouraged his people to the brave adventure, and led them, in crossing the sea to Britain. Men had not yet learned to build boats, with prow or stern, with keels and masts, or with sails, rudders, or oars, or much less to put engines in their bowels, or iron chimneys for smoke stacks, by which we see the mighty ships driven across the ocean without regard to wind or tide.

This great benefactor taught his people to make coracles, and on these the whole tribe of thousands of Cymric folk crossed over into Britain, landing in Cornwall. The old name of this shire meant the Horn of Gallia, or Wallia, as the new land was later named. We think of Cornwall as the big toe of the Mother Land. These first comers called it a horn.

It was a funny sight to see these coracles, which they named after their own round bodies. The men went down to the riverside or the sea shore, and with their stone hatchets, they chopped down trees. They cut the reeds and osiers, peeled the willow branches, and wove great baskets shaped like bowls. In this work, the women helped the men.

The coracle was made strong by a wooden frame fixed inside round the edge, and by two cross boards, which also served as seats. Then they turned the wicker frame upside down and stretched the hides of animals over the whole frame and bottom. With pitch, gum, or grease, they covered up the cracks or seams. Then they shaped paddles out of wood. When the coracle floated on the water, the whole family, daddy, mammy, kiddies, and any old aunts or uncles, or granddaddies, got into it. They waited for the wind to blow from the south over to the northern land.

At first the coracle spun round and round, but by and by each daddy could, by rowing or paddling, make the thing go straight ahead. So finally all arrived in the land now called Great Britain.

Though sugar was not then known, or for a thousand years later, the first thing they noticed was the enormous number of bees. When they searched, they found the rock caves and hollow trees full of honey, which had accumulated for generations. Every once in a while the bears, that so like sweet things, found out the hiding place of the bees, and ate up the honey. The children were very happy in sucking the honey comb and the mothers made candles out of the beeswax. The new comers named the country Honey Island.

The brave Cymry men had battles with the darker skinned people who were already there. When any one, young or old, died, their friends and relatives sat up all night guarding the body against wild beasts or savage men. This grew to be a settled custom and such a meeting was called a “wake.” Everyone present did keep awake, and often in a very lively way.

As the Cymry multiplied, they built many *don*, or towns. All over the land to-day are names ending in *don* like London, or Croydon, showing where these villages were.

But while occupied in things for the body, their great ruler did not neglect matters of the mind. He found that some of his people had good voices and loved to sing. Others delighted in making poetry. So he invented or improved the harp, and fixed the rules of verse and song.

Thus ages before writing was known, the Cymry preserved their history and handed down what the wise ones taught.

Men might be born, live and die, come and go, like leaves on the trees, which expand in the springtime and fall in the autumn; but their songs, and poetry, and noble language never die. Even to-day, the Cymry love the speech of their fathers almost as well as they love their native land.

Yet things were not always lovely in Honey Land, or as sweet as sugar. As the tribes scattered far apart to settle in this or that valley, some had fish, but no salt, and others had plenty of salt, but no fish. Some had all the venison and bear meat they wanted, but no barley or oats. The hill men needed what the men on the seashore could supply. From their sheep and oxen they got wool and leather, and from the wild beasts fur to keep warm in winter. So many of them grew expert in trade. Soon there were among them some very rich men who were the chiefs of the tribes.

In time, hundreds of others learned how to traffic among the tribes and swap, or barter their goods, for as yet there were no coins for money, or bank bills. So they established markets or fairs, to which the girls and boys liked to go and sell their eggs and chickens, for when the wolves and foxes were killed off, sheep and geese multiplied.

But what hindered the peace of the land, were the feuds, or quarrels, because the men of one tribe thought they were braver, or better looking, than those in the other tribe. The women were very apt to boast that they wore their clothes — which were made of fox and weasel skins — more gracefully than those in the tribe next to them.

So there was much snarling and quarreling in Cymric Land. The people were too much like naughty children, or when kiddies are not taught good manners, to speak gently and to be kind one to the other.

One of the worst quarrels broke out, because in one tribe there were too many maidens and not enough young men for husbands. This was bad for the men, for it spoiled them. They had too many women to wait on them and they grew to be very selfish.

In what might be the next tribe, the trouble was the other way. There were too many boys, a surplus of men, and not nearly enough girls to go round. When any young fellow, moping out his life alone and anxious for a wife, went a-courting in the next tribe, or in their vale, or on their hill top, he was usually driven off with stones. Then there was a quarrel between the two tribes.

Any young girl, who sneaked out at night to meet her young man of another clan, was, when caught, instantly and severely spanked. Then, with her best clothes taken off, she had to stand tied to a post in the market place a whole day. Her hair was pulled down in disorder, and all the dogs were allowed to bark at her. The girls made fun of the poor thing, while they all rubbed one forefinger over the other, pointed at her and cried, “Fie, for shame!” while the boys called her hard names.

If it were known that the young man who wanted a wife had visited a girl in the other tribe, his spear and bow and arrows were taken away from him till the moon was full. The other boys and the girls treated him roughly and called him hard names, but he dare not defend himself and had to suffer patiently. This was all because of the feud between the two tribes.

This went on until the maidens in the valley, who were very many, while yet lovely and attractive, became very lonely and miserable; while the young men, all splendid hunters and warriors, multiplied in the hill country. They were wretched in mind, because not one could get a wife, for all the maidens in their own tribe were already engaged, or had been mated.

One day news came to the young men on the hill top, that the valley men were all off on a hunting expedition. At once, without waiting a moment, the poor lonely bachelors plucked up courage. Then, armed with ropes and straps, they marched in a body to the village in the valley below. There, they seized each man a girl, not waiting for any maid to comb her hair, or put on a new frock, or pack up her clothes, or carry any thing out of her home, and made off with her, as fast as one pair of legs could move with another pair on top.

At first, this looked like rough treatment — for a lovely girl, thus to be strapped to a brawny big fellow; but after a while, the girls thought it was great fun to be married and each one to have a man to caress, and fondle, and scold, and look for, and boss around; for each wife, inside of her own hut was quite able to rule her husband. Every one of these new wives was delighted to find a man who cared so much for her as to come after her, and risk his life to get her, and each one admired her new, brave husband.

Yet the brides knew too well that their men folks, fathers and brothers, uncles and cousins, would soon come back to attempt their recapture.

And this was just what happened. When a runner brought, to the valley men now far away, the news of the rape of their daughters, the hunters at once ceased chasing the deer and marched quickly back to get the girls and make them come home.

The hill men saw the band of hunters coming after their daughters. They at once took their new wives into a natural rocky fortress, on the top of a precipice, which overlooked the lake.

This stronghold had only one entrance, a sort of gateway of rocks, in front of which was a long steep, narrow path. Here the hill men stood, to resist the attack and hold their prizes.

It was a case of a very few defenders, assaulted by a multitude, and the battle was long and bloody. The hill men scorned to surrender and shot their arrows and hurled their javelins with desperate valor. They battled all day from sunrise until the late afternoon, when shadows began to lengthen. The stars, one by one came out and both parties, after setting sentinels, lay down to rest.

In the morning, again, charge after charge was made. Sword beat against shield and helmet, and clouds of arrows were shot by the archers, who were well posted in favorable situations, on the rocks. Long before noon, the field below was dotted and the narrow pass was choked with dead bodies. In the afternoon, after a short rest and refreshed with food, the valley men, though finding that only four of the hill fighters were alive, stood off at a distance and with their long bows and a shower of arrows left not one to breathe.

Now, thought the victors, we shall get our maidens back again. So, taking their time to wash off the blood and dust, to bind up their wounds, and to eat their supper, they thought it would be an easy job to load up all the girls on their ox-carts and carry them home.

But the valley brides, thus suddenly made widows, were too true to their brave husbands. So, when they had seen the last of their lovers quiet in death, they stripped off all their ornaments and fur robes, until all stood together, each clad in her own innocence, as pure in their purpose as if they were a company of Druid priestesses.

Then, chanting their death song, they marched in procession to the tall cliff, that rose sheer out of the water. One by one, each uttering the name of her beloved, leaped into the waves.

Men at a distance, knowing nothing of the fight, and sailors and fishermen far off on the water, thought that a flock of white birds were swooping down from their eyrie, into the sea to get their food from the fishes. But when none rose up above the waters, they understood, and later heard the whole story of the valor of the men and the devotion of the women.

The solemn silence of night soon brooded over the scene.

The men of the valley stayed only long enough to bury their own dead. Then they marched home and their houses were filled with mourning. Yet they admired the noble sacrifice of their daughters and were proud of them. Afterwards they raised stone monuments on the field of slaughter.

To-day, this water is called the Lake of the Maidens, and the great stones seen near the beach are the memorials marking the place of the slain in battle.

During many centuries, the ancient custom of capturing the bride, with resistance from her male relatives, was vigorously kept up. In the course of time, however, this was turned into a mimic play, with much fun and merriment. Yet, the girls appear to like it, and some even complain if it is not rough enough to seem almost real.

61

THE BOY THAT WAS NAMED TROUBLE

In one of the many “Co-eds,” or places with this name, in ancient and forest-covered Wales, there was a man who had one of the most beautiful mares in all the world. Yet great misfortunes befell both this Co-ed mare and her owner.

Every night, on the first of May, the mare gave birth to a pretty little colt. Yet no one ever saw, or could ever tell what became of any one, or all of the colts. Each and all, and one by one, they disappeared. Nobody knew where they were, or went, or what had become of them.

At last, the owner, who had no children, and loved little horses, determined not to lose another. He girded on his sword, and with his trusty spear, stood guard all night in the stable to catch the mortal robber, as he supposed he must be.

When on this same night of May first, the mare foaled again, and the colt stood up on its long legs, the man greatly admired the young creature. It looked already, as if it could, with its own legs, run away and escape from any wolf that should chase it, hoping to eat it up.

But at this moment, a great noise was heard outside the stable. The next moment a long arm, with a claw at the end of it, was poked through the window-hole, to seize the colt.

Instantly the man drew his sword and with one blow, the claw part of the arm was cut off, and it dropped inside, with the colt.

Hearing a great cry and tumult outside, the owner of the mare rushed forth into the darkness. But though he heard howls of pain, he could see nothing, so he returned.

There, at the door, he found a baby, with hair as yellow as gold, smiling at him. Besides its swaddling clothes, it was wrapped up in flame-colored satin.

As it was still night, the man took the infant to his bed and laid it alongside of his wife, who was asleep.

Now this good woman loved children, though she had none of her own, and so when she woke up in the morning, and saw what was beside her, she was very happy. Then she resolved to pretend that it was her own.

So she told her women, that she had borne the child, and they called him Gwri of the Golden Hair.

The boy baby grew up fast, and when only two years old, was as strong as most children are at six.

Soon he was able to ride the colt that had been born on the May night, and the two were as playmates together.

Now it chanced, the man had heard the tale of Queen Rhiannon, wife of Powell, Prince of Dyfed. She had become the mother of a baby boy, but it was stolen from her at night.

The six serving women, whose duty it was to attend to the Queen, and guard her child, were lazy and had neglected their duty. They were asleep when the baby was stolen away. To excuse themselves and be saved from punishment, they invented a lying story. They declared that Rhiannon had devoured the child, her own baby.

The wise men of the Court believed the story which the six wicked women had told, and Rhiannon, the Queen, though innocent, was condemned to do penance. She was to serve as a porter to carry visitors and their baggage from out doors into the castle.

Every day, for many months, through the hours of daylight, she stood in public disgrace in front of the castle of Narberth, at the stone block, on which riders on horses dismounted from the saddle. When anyone got off at the gate, she had to carry him or her on her back into the hall.

As the boy grew up, his foster father scanned his features closely, and it was not long before he made up his mind that Powell was his father and Rhiannon was his mother.

One day, with the boy riding on his colt, and with two knights keeping him company, the owner of the Co-ed mare came near the castle of Narberth.

There they saw the beautiful Rhiannon sitting on the horse block at the gate.

When they were about to dismount from their horses, the lovely woman spoke to them thus:

“Chieftains, go no further thus. I will carry everyone of you on my back, into the palace.”

Seeing their looks of astonishment, she explained:

“This is my penance for the charge brought against me of slaying my son and devouring him.”

One and all the four refused to be carried and went into the castle on their own feet. There Powell, the prince, welcomed them and made a feast in their honor. It being night, Rhiannon sat beside him.

After dinner when the time for story telling had come, the chief guest told the tale of his mare and the colt, and how he cut the clawed hand, and then found the boy on the doorstep.

Then to the joy and surprise of all, the owner of the Co-ed mare, putting the golden-haired boy before Rhiannon, cried out:

“Behold lady, here is thy son, and whoever they were who told the story and lied about your devouring your own child, have done you a grievous wrong.”

Everyone at the table looked at the boy, and all recognized the lad at once as the child of Powell and Rhiannon.

“Here ends my trouble (pryderi),” cried out Rhiannon.

Thereupon one of the chiefs said:

“Well hast thou named thy child ‘Trouble,’” and henceforth Pryderi was his name.

Soon it was made known, by the vision and word of the bards and seers, that all the mischief had been wrought by wicked fairies, and that the six serving women had been under their spell, when they lied about the Queen. Powell, the castle-lord, was so happy that he offered the man of Co-ed rich gifts of horses, jewels and dogs.

But this good man felt repaid in delivering a pure woman and loving mother from undeserved shame and disgrace, by wisdom and honesty according to common duty.

As for Pryderi, he was educated as a king’s son ought to be, in all gentle arts and was trained in all manly exercises.

After his father died, Pryderi became ruler of the realm. He married Kieva the daughter of a powerful chieftain, who had a pedigree as long as the bridle used to drive a ten-horse chariot. It reached back to Prince Casnar of Britain.

Pryderi had many adventures, which are told in the Mabinogian, which is the great storehouse of Welsh hero, wonder, and fairy tales.

62

THE GOLDEN HARP

Morgan is one of the oldest names in Cymric land. It means one who lives near the sea.

Every day, for centuries past, tens of thousands of Welsh folks have looked out on the great blue plain of salt water.

It is just as true, also, that there are all sorts of Morgans. One of these named Taffy, was like nearly all Welshmen, in that he was very fond of singing.

The trouble in his case, however, was that no one but himself loved to hear his voice, which was very disagreeable. Yet of the sounds which he himself made with voice or instrument, he was an intense admirer. Nobody could persuade him that his music was poor and his voice rough. He always refused to improve.

Now in Wales, the bard, or poet, who makes up his poetry or song as he goes along, is a very important person, and it is not well to offend one of these gentlemen. In French, they call such a person by a very long name — the improvisator.

These poets have sharp tongues and often say hard things about people whom they do not like. If they used whetstones, or stropped their tongues on leather, as men do their razors, to give them a keener edge, their words could not cut more terribly.

Now, on one occasion, Morgan had offended one of these bards. It was while the poetic gentleman was passing by Taffy’s house. He heard the jolly fellow inside singing, first at the top and then at the bottom of the scale. He would drop his voice down on the low notes and then again rise to the highest until it ended in a screech.

Someone on the street asked the poet how he liked the music which he had heard inside.

“Music?” replied the bard with a sneer. “Is that what Morgan is trying? Why! I thought it was first the lowing of an aged cow, and then the yelping of a blind dog, unable to find its way. Do you call that music?”

The truth was that when the soloist had so filled himself with strong ale that his brain was fuddled, then it was hard to tell just what kind of a noise he was making. It took a wise man to discover the tune, if there was any.

One evening, when Morgan thought his singing unusually fine, and felt sorry that no one heard him, he heard a knock.

Instead of going to the door to inquire, or welcome the visitor, he yelled out “Come in!”

The door opened and there stood three tired looking strangers. They appeared to be travelers. One of them said:

“Kind sir, we are weary and worn, and would be glad of a morsel of bread. If you can give us a little food, we shall not trouble you further.”

“Is that all?” said Morgan. “See there the loaf and the cheese, with a knife beside them. Take what you want, and fill your bags. No man shall ever say that Taffy Morgan denied anyone food, when he had any himself.”

Whereupon the three travelers sat down and began to eat.

Meanwhile, without being invited to do so, their host began to sing for them.

Now the three travelers were fairies in disguise. They were journeying over the country, from cottage to cottage, visiting the people. They came to reward all who gave them a welcome and were kind to them, but to vex and play tricks upon those who were stingy, bad tempered, or of sour disposition. Turning to Taffy before taking leave, one of them said:

“You have been good to us and we are grateful. Now what can we do for you? We have power to grant anything you may desire. Please tell us what you would like most.”

At this, Taffy looked hard in the faces of the three strangers, to see if one of them was the bard who had likened his voice in its ups and downs to a cow and a blind dog. Not seeing any familiar face, he plucked up his courage, and said:

“If you are not making fun of me, I’ll take from you a harp. And, if I can have my wish in full, I want one that will play only lively tunes. No sad music for me!”

Here Morgan stopped. Again he searched their faces, to see if they were laughing at him and then proceeded.

“And something else, if I can have it; but it’s really the same thing I am asking for.”

“Speak on, we are ready to do what you wish,” answered the leader.

“I want a harp, which, no matter how badly I may play, will sound out sweet and jolly music.”

“Say no more,” said the leader, who waved his hand. There was a flood of light, and, to Morgan’s amazement, there stood on the floor a golden harp.

But where were the three travelers? They had disappeared in a flash.

Hardly able to believe his own eyes, it now dawned upon him that his visitors were fairies.

He sat down, back of the harp, and made ready to sweep the strings. He hardly knew whether or not he touched the instrument, but there rolled out volumes of lively music, as if the harp itself were mad. The tune was wild and such as would set the feet of young folks agoing, even in church.

As Taffy's fingers seemed every moment to become more skillful, the livelier the music increased, until the very dishes rattled on the cupboard, as if they wanted to join in. Even the chair looked as if about to dance.

Just then, Morgan's wife and some neighbors entered the house. Immediately, the whole party, one and all, began dancing in the jolliest way. For hours, they kept up the mad whirl. Yet all the while, Taffy seemed happier and the women the merrier.

No telegraph ever carried the news faster, all over the region, that Morgan had a wonderful harp.

All the grass in front of the house, was soon worn away by the crowds, that came to hear and dance. As soon as Taffy touched the harp strings, the feet of everyone, young and old, began shuffling, nor could anyone stop, so long as Morgan played. Even very old, lame and one-legged people joined in. Several old women, whom nobody had ever prevailed upon to get out of their chairs, were cured of their rheumatism. Such unusual exercise was severe for them, but it seemed to be healthful.

A shrewd monk, the business manager of the monastery near by, wanted to buy Morgan's house, set up a sanatarium and advertise it as a holy place. He hoped thus to draw pilgrims to it and get for it a great reputation as a healing place for the lame and the halt, the palsied and the rheumatic. Thus the monastery would be enriched and all the monks get fat.

But Taffy was a happy-go-lucky fellow, who cared little about money and would not sell; for, with his harp, he enjoyed both fun and fame.

One day, in the crowd that stood around his door waiting to begin to hop and whirl, Morgan espied the bard who had compared his voice to a cow and a cur. The bard had come to see whether the stories about the harp were true or not.

He found to his own discomfort what was the fact and the reality, which were not very convenient for him. As soon as the harp music began, his feet began to go up, and his legs to kick and whirl. The more Morgan played, the madder the dance and the wilder the antics of the crowd, and in these the bard had to join, for he could not help himself. Soon they all began to spin round and round on the flagstones fronting the door, as if crazy. They broke the paling of the garden fence. They came into the house and knocked over the chairs and sofa, even when they cracked their shins against the wood. They bumped their heads against the walls and ceiling, and some even scrambled over the roof and down again. The bard could no more stop his weary legs than could the other lunatics.

To Morgan his revenge was so sweet, that he kept on until the bard's legs snapped, and he fell down on top of people that had tumbled from shear weariness, because no more strength was left in them.

Meanwhile, Morgan laughed until his jaws were tired and his stomach muscles ached.

But no sooner did he take his fingers off the strings, to rest them, than he opened his eyes in wonder; for in a flash the harp had disappeared.

He had made a bad use of the fairies' gift, and they were displeased. So both the monk and Morgan felt sorry.

Yet the grass grew again when the quondam harper and singer ceased desolating the air with his quavers. The air seemed sweeter to breathe, because of the silence.

However, the fairies kept on doing good to the people of good will, and to-day some of the sweetest singers in Wales come from the poorest homes.

63

THE GREAT RED DRAGON OF WALES

Every old country that has won fame in history and built up a civilization of its own, has a national flower. Besides this, some living creature, bird, or beast, or, it may be, a fish is on its flag. In places of honor, it stands as the emblem of the nation; that is, of the people, apart from the land they live on. Besides flag and symbol, it has a motto. That of Wales is: “Awake: It is light.”

Now because the glorious stories of Wales, Scotland and Ireland have been nearly lost in that of mighty England, men have at times, almost forgotten about the leek, the thistle, and the shamrock, which stand for the other three divisions of the British Isles.

Yet each of these peoples has a history as noble as that of which the rose and the lion are the emblems. Each has also its patron saint and civilizer. So we have Saint George, Saint David, Saint Andrew, and Saint Patrick, all of them white-souled heroes. On the union flag, or standard of the United Kingdom, we see their three crosses.

The lion of England, the harp of Ireland, the thistle of Scotland, and the Red Dragon of Wales represent the four peoples in the British Isles, each with its own speech, traditions, and emblems; yet all in unity and in loyalty, none excelling the Welsh, whose symbol is the Red Dragon. In classic phrase, we talk of Albion, Scotia, Cymry, and Hibernia.

But why red? Almost all the other dragons in the world are white, or yellow, green or purple, blue, or pink. Why a fiery red color like that of Mars?

Borne on the banners of the Welsh archers, who in old days won the battles of Crecy and Agincourt, and now seen on the crests on the town halls and city flags, in heraldry, and in art, the red dragon is as rampant, as when King Arthur sat with His Knights at the Round Table.

The Red Dragon has four three-toed claws, a long, barbed tongue, and tail ending like an arrow head. With its wide wings unfolded, it guards those ancient liberties, which neither Saxon, nor Norman, nor German, nor kings on the throne, whether foolish or wise, have ever been able to take away. No people on earth combine so handsomely loyal freedom and the larger patriotism, or hold in purer loyalty to the union of hearts and hands in the British Empire, which the sovereign represents, as do the Welsh.

The Welsh are the oldest of the British peoples. They preserve the language of the Druids, bards, and chiefs, of primeval ages which go back and far beyond any royal line in Europe, while most of their fairy tales are pre-ancient and beyond the dating.

Why the Cymric dragon is red, is thus told, from times beyond human record.

It was in those early days, after the Romans in the south had left the island, and the Cymric king, Vortigern, was hard pressed by the Picts and Scots of the north. To his aid, he invited over from beyond the North Sea, or German Ocean, the tribes called the Long Knives, or Saxons, to help him.

But once on the big island, these friends became enemies and would not go back. They wanted to possess all Britain.

Vortigern thought this was treachery. Knowing that the Long Knives would soon attack him, he called his twelve wise men together for their advice. With one voice, they advised him to retreat westward behind the mountains into Cymry. There he must build a strong fortress and there defy his enemies.

So the Saxons, who were Germans, thought they had driven the Cymry beyond the western borders of the country which was later called England, and into what they named the foreign or Welsh parts. Centuries afterwards, this land received the name of Wales.

People in Europe spoke of Galatians, Wallachians, Belgians, Walloons, Alsatians, and others as “Welsh.” They called the new fruit imported from Asia walnuts, but the names “Wales” and “Welsh” were unheard of until after the fifth century.

The place chosen for the fortified city of the Cymry was among the mountains. From all over his realm, the King sent for masons and carpenters and collected the materials for building. Then, a solemn invocation was made to the gods by the Druid priests. These grand looking old men were robed in white, with long, snowy beards falling over their breasts, and they had milk-white oxen drawing their chariot. With a silver knife they cut the mistletoe from the tree-branch, hailing it as a sign of favor from God. Then with harp, music and song they dedicated the spot as a stronghold of the Cymric nation.

Then the King set the diggers to work. He promised a rich reward to those men of the pick and shovel who should dig the fastest and throw up the most dirt, so that the masons could, at the earliest moment, begin their part of the work.

But it all turned out differently from what the king expected. Some dragon, or powerful being underground, must have been offended by this invasion of his domain; for, the next morning, they saw that everything in the form of stone, timber, iron or tools, had disappeared during the night. It looked as if an earthquake had swallowed them all up.

Both king and seers, priests and bards, were greatly puzzled at this. However, not being able to account for it, and the Saxons likely to march on them at any time, the sovereign set the diggers at work and again collected more wood and stone.

This time, even the women helped, not only to cook the food, but to drag the logs and stones. They were even ready to cut off their beautiful long hair to make ropes, if necessary.

But in the morning, all had again disappeared, as if swept by a tempest. The ground was bare.

Nevertheless, all hands began again, for all hearts were united.

For the third time, the work proceeded. Yet when the sun rose next morning, there was not even a trace of either material or labor.

What was the matter? Had some dragon swallowed everything up?

Vortigern again summoned his twelve wise men, to meet in council, and to inquire concerning the cause of the marvel and to decide what was to be done.

After long deliberation, while all the workmen and people outside waited for their verdict, the wise men agreed upon a remedy.

Now in ancient times, it was a custom, all over the world, notably in China and Japan and among our ancestors, that when a new castle or bridge was to be built, they sacrificed a human being. This was done either by walling up the victim while alive, or by mixing his or her blood with the cement used in the walls. Often it was a virgin or a little child thus chosen by lot and made to die, the one for the many.

The idea was not only to ward off the anger of the spirits of the air, or to appease the dragons under ground, but also to make the workmen do their best work faithfully, so that the foundation should be sure and the edifice withstand the storm, the wind, and the earthquake shocks.

So, nobody was surprised, or raised his eyebrows, or shook his head, or pursed up his lips, when the king announced that what the wise men declared, must be done and that quickly. Nevertheless, many a mother hugged her darling more closely to her bosom, and fathers feared for their sons or daughters, lest one of these, their own, should be chosen as the victim to be slain.

King Vortigern had the long horn blown for perfect silence, and then he spoke:

“A child must be found who was born without a father. He must be brought here and be solemnly put to death. Then his blood will be sprinkled on the ground and the citadel will be built securely.”

Within an hour, swift runners were seen bounding over the Cymric hills. They were dispatched in search of a boy without a father, and a large reward was promised to the young man who found what was wanted. So into every part of the Cymric land, the searchers went.

One messenger noticed some boys playing ball. Two of them were quarreling. Coming near, he heard one say to the other:

“Oh, you boy without a father, nothing good will ever happen to you.”

“This must be the one looked for,” said the royal messenger to himself. So he went up to the boy, who had been thus twitted and spoke to him thus:

“Don’t mind what he says.” Then he prophesied great things, if he would go along with him. The boy was only too glad to go, and the next day the lad was brought before King Vortigern.

The workmen and their wives and children, numbering thousands, had assembled for the solemn ceremony of dedicating the ground by shedding the boy’s blood. In strained attention the people held their breath.

The boy asked the king:

“Why have your servants brought me to this place?”

Then the sovereign told him the reason, and the boy asked:

“Who instructed you to do this?”

“My wise men told me so to do, and even the sovereign of the land obeys his wise councilors.”

“Order them to come to me, Your Majesty,” pleaded the boy.

When the wise men appeared, the boy, in respectful manner, inquired of them thus:

"How was the secret of my life revealed to you? Please speak freely and declare who it was that discovered me to you."

Turning to the king, the boy added:

"Pardon my boldness, Your Majesty. I shall soon reveal the whole matter to you, but I wish first to question your advisers. I want them to tell you what is the real cause, and reveal, if they can, what is hidden here underneath the ground."

But the wise men were confounded. They could not tell and they fully confessed their ignorance.

The boy then said:

"There is a pool of water down below. Please order your men to dig for it."

At once the spades were plied by strong hands, and in a few minutes the workmen saw their faces reflected, as in a looking glass. There was a pool of clear water there.

Turning to the wise men, the boy asked before all:

"Now tell me, what is in the pool?"

As ignorant as before, and now thoroughly ashamed, the wise men were silent.

"Your Majesty, I can tell you, even if these men cannot. There are two vases in the pool."

Two brave men leaped down into the pool. They felt around and brought up two vases, as the boy had said.

Again, the lad put a question to the wise men:

"What is in these vases?"

Once more, those who professed to know the secrets of the world, even to the demanding of the life of a human being, held their tongues.

“There is a tent in them,” said the boy. “Separate them, and you will find it so.”

By the king’s command, a soldier thrust in his hand and found a folded tent.

Again, while all wondered, the boy was in command of the situation. Everything seemed so reasonable, that all were prompt and alert to serve him.

“What a splendid chief and general, he would make, to lead us against our enemies, the ‘Long Knives!’” whispered one soldier to another.

“What is in the tent?” asked the boy of the wise men.

Not one of the twelve knew what to say, and there was an almost painful silence.

“I will tell you, Your Majesty, and all here, what is in this tent. There are two serpents, one white and one red. Unfold the tent.”

With such a leader, no soldier was afraid, nor did a single person in the crowd draw back? Two stalwart fellows stepped forward to open the tent.

But now, a few of the men and many of the women shrank back while those that had babies, or little folks, snatched up their children, fearing lest the poisonous snakes might wriggle towards them.

The two serpents were coiled up and asleep, but they soon showed signs of waking, and their fiery, lidless eyes glared at the people.

“Now, Your Majesty, and all here, be you the witnesses of what will happen. Let the King and wise men look in the tent.”

At this moment, the serpents stretched themselves out at full length, while all fell back, giving them a wide circle to struggle in.

Then they reared their heads. With their glittering eyes flashing fire, they began to struggle with each other. The white one rose up first, threw the red one into the middle of the arena, and then pursued him to the edge of the round space.

Three times did the white serpent gain the victory over the red one.

But while the white serpent seemed to be gloating over the other for a final onset, the red one, gathering strength, erected its head and struck at the other.

The struggle went on for several minutes, but in the end the red serpent overcame the white, driving it first out of the circle, then from the tent, and into the pool, where it disappeared, while the victorious red one moved into the tent again.

When the tent flap was opened for all to see, nothing was visible except a red dragon; for the victorious serpent had turned into this great creature which combined in one new form the body and the powers of bird, beast, reptile and fish. It had wings to fly, the strongest animal strength, and could crawl, swim, and live in either water or air, or on the earth. In its body was the sum total of all life.

Then, in the presence of all the assembly, the youth turned to the wise men to explain the meaning of what had happened. But not a word did they speak. In fact, their faces were full of shame before the great crowd.

“Now, Your Majesty, let me reveal to you the meaning of this mystery.”

“Speak on,” said the King, gratefully.

“This pool is the emblem of the world, and the tent is that of your kingdom. The two serpents are two dragons. The white serpent is the dragon of the Saxons, who now occupy several of the provinces and districts of Britain and from sea to sea. But when they invade our soil our people will finally drive them back and hold fast forever their beloved Cymric land. But you must choose another site, on which to erect your castle.”

After this, whenever a castle was to be built no more human victims were doomed to death. All the twelve men, who had wanted to keep up the old cruel custom, were treated as deceivers of the people. By the King’s orders, they were all put to death and buried before all the crowd.

To-day, like so many who keep alive old and worn-out notions by means of deception and falsehood, these men are remembered only by the Twelve Mounds, which rise on the surface of the field hard by.

As for the boy, he became a great magician, or, as we in our age would call him, a man of science and wisdom, named Merlin. He lived long on the mountain, but when he went away with a friend, he placed all his treasures in a golden cauldron and hid them in a cave. He rolled a great stone over its mouth. Then with sod and earth he covered it all over so as to hide it from view. His purpose was to leave this his wealth for a leader, who, in some future generation, would use it for the benefit of his country, when most needed.

This special person will be a youth with yellow hair and blue eyes. When he comes to Denas, a bell will ring to invite him into the cave. The moment his foot is over the place, the stone of entrance will open of its own accord. Anyone else will be considered an intruder and it will not be possible for him to carry away the treasure.

64

THE TOUCH OF CLAY

Long, long ago before the Cymry came into the beautiful land of Wales, there were dark-skinned people living in caves.

In these early times there were a great many fairies of all sorts, but of very different kinds of behavior, good and bad.

It was in this age of the world that fairies got an idea riveted into their heads which nothing, not even hammers, chisels or crowbars can pry up. Neither horse power, nor hydraulic force nor sixteen-inch bombs, nor cannon balls, nor torpedoes can drive it out.

It is a settled matter of opinion in fairy land that, compared with fairies, human beings are very stupid. The fairies think that mortals are dull witted and awfully slow, when compared to the smarter and more nimble fairies, that are always up to date in doing things.

Perhaps the following story will help explain why this is.

These ancient folks who lived in caves, could not possibly know some things that are like A B C to the fairies of to-day. For the Welsh fairies, King Puck and Queen Mab, know all about what is in the telegraphs, submarine cables and wireless telegraphy of to-day. Puck would laugh if you should say that a telephone was any new thing to him. Long ago, in Shakespeare’s time, he boasted that he could “put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes.” Men have been trying ever since to catch up with him, but they have not gone ahead of him yet.

If, only three hundred years ago, this were the case, what must have been Puck’s fun, when he saw men in the early days, working so hard to make even a clay cup or saucer. These people who slept and ate in cave boarding-houses, knew nothing of metals, or how to make iron or brass tools, wire, or machines, or how to touch a button and light up a whole room, which even a baby can now do.

There is one thing that we, who have traveled in many fairy lands, have often noticed and told our friends, the little folks, and that is this:

All the fairies we ever knew are very slow to change either their opinions, or their ways, or their fashions. Like many mortals, they think a great deal of their own notions. They imagine that the only way to do a thing is in that which they say is the right one.

So it came to pass that even when the Cymric folk gave up wearing the skins of animals, and put on pretty clothes woven on a loom, and ate out of dishes, instead of clam shells, there were still some fairies that kept to the notions and fashions of the cave days. To one of these, came trouble because of this failing.

Now there was once a pretty nymph, who lived in the Red Lake, to which a young and handsome farmer used to come to catch fish. One misty day, when the lad could see only a few feet before him, a wind cleared the air and blew away the fog. Then he saw near him a little old man, standing on a ladder. He was hard at work in putting a thatched roof on a hut which he had built.

A few minutes later, as the mist rose and the breezes blew, the farmer could see no house, but only the ripplings of water on the lake’s surface.

Although he went fishing often, he never again saw anything unusual, during the whole summer.

On one hot day in the early autumn, while he stopped to let his horse drink, he looked and saw a very lovely face on the water. Wondering to whom it might belong, there rose up before him the head and shoulders of a most beautiful woman. She was so pretty that he had two tumbles. He fell off his horse and he fell in love with her at one and the same time.

Rushing toward the lovely vision, he put out his arms at that spot where he had seen her, but only to embrace empty air. Then he remembered that love is blind. So he rubbed his eyes, to see if he could discern anything. Yet though he peered down into the water, and up over the hills, he could not see her anywhere.

But he soon found out to his joy that his eyes were all right, for in another place, the face, flower-crowned hair, and her reflection in the water came again. Then his desire to possess the damsel was doubled. But again, she disappeared, to rise again somewhere else.

Five times he was thus tantalized and disappointed. She rose up, and quickly disappeared.

It seemed as though she meant only to tease him. So he rode home sorrowing, and scarcely slept that night.

Early morning, found the lovelorn youth again at the lake side, but for hours he watched in vain. He had left his home too excited to have eaten his usual breakfast, which greatly surprised his housekeeper. Now he pulled out some sweet apples, which a neighbor had given him, and began to munch them, while still keeping watch on the waters.

No sooner had the aroma of the apples fallen on the air, than the pretty lady of the lake bobbed up from beneath the surface, and this time quite near him. She seemed to have lost all fear, for she asked him to throw her one of the apples.

“Please come, pretty maid, and get it yourself,” cried the farmer. Then he held up the red apple, turning it round and round before her, to tempt her by showing its glossy surface and rich color.

Apparently not afraid, she came up close to him and took the apple from his left hand. At once, he slipped his strong right arm around her waist, and hugged her tight. At this, she screamed loudly.

Then there appeared in the middle of the lake the old man, he had seen thatching the roof by the lake shore. This time, besides his long snowy beard, he had on his head a crown of water lilies.

“Mortal,” said the venerable person. “That is my daughter you are clasping. What do you wish to do with her?”

At once, the farmer broke out in passionate appeal to the old man that she might become his wife. He promised to love her always, treat her well, and never be rough or cruel to her.

The old father listened attentively. He was finally convinced that the farmer would make a good husband for his lovely daughter. Yet he was very sorry to lose her, and he solemnly laid one condition upon his future son-in-law.

He was never under any pretense, or in any way, to strike her with clay, or with anything made or baked from clay. Any blow with that from which men made pots and pans, and jars and dishes, or in fact, with earth of any sort, would mean the instant loss of his wife. Even if children were born in their home, the mother would leave them, and return to fairy land under the lake, and be forever subject to the law of the fairies, as before her marriage.

The farmer was very much in love with his pretty prize, and as promises are easily made, he took oath that no clay should ever touch her.

They were married and lived very happily together. Years passed and the man was still a good husband and lover. He kept up the habit which he had learned from a sailor friend. Every night, when far from home and out on the sea, he and his mates used to drink this toast; “Sweethearts and wives: may every sweetheart become a wife and every wife remain a sweetheart, and every husband continue a lover.”

So he proved that though a husband he was still a lover, by always doing what she asked him and more. When the children were born and grew up, their father told them about their mother’s likes and dislikes, her tastes and her wishes, and warned them always to be careful. So it was altogether a very happy family.

One day, the wife and mother said to her husband, that she had a great longing for apples. She would like to taste some like those which he long ago gave her. At once, the good man dropped what he was doing and hurried off to his neighbor, who had first presented him with a trayful of these apples.

The farmer not only got the fruit, but he also determined that he would plant a tree and thus have apples for his wife, whenever she wanted them. So he bought a fine young sapling, to set in his orchard, for the children to play under and to keep his pantry full of the fine red-cheeked fruit. At this his wife was delighted.

So happy enough — in fact, too merry to think of anything else, they, both husband and wife, proceeded to set the sapling in the ground. She held the tree, while he dug down to make the hole deep enough to make sure of its growing.

But farmers are sometimes very superstitious. They even believe in luck, though not in Puck. Some of them have faith in what the almanac, and the patent medicine may say, and in planting potatoes according to the moon, but they scout the idea of there being any fairies.

With the farmer, this had become a fixed state of mind and now it brought him to grief, as we shall see. For though he remembered what his wife liked and disliked, and recalled what her father had told him, he had forgotten that she was a fairy.

With this farmer and other Welsh mortals, it had become a habit, when planting a young tree, to throw the last shovelful of earth over the left shoulder. This was for good luck. The farmer was afraid to break such a good custom, as he thought it to be.

So merrily he went to work, forgetting everything in his adherence to habit. He became so absorbed in his job, that he did not look where his spadeful went, and it struck his dear wife full in the breast.

At that moment, she cried out bitterly, not in pain, but in sorrow. Then she started to run towards the lake. At the shore, she called out, “Good-by, dear, dear husband.” Then, leaping into the water, she was never seen again and all his tears and those of the children never brought her back.

65

THE TOUCH OF IRON

Ages ago, before the Cymry rowed in their coracles across the sea, there was a race of men already in the Land of Honey, as Great Britain was then called.

These ancient people, who lived in caves, did not know how to build houses or to plow the ground. They had no idea that they could get their food out of the earth. As for making bread and pies, cookies and goodies, from what grew from the soil, they never heard of such a thing. They were not acquainted with the use of fire for melting copper, nor did they know how to get iron out of the ore, to make knives and spears, arrow heads and swords, and armor and helmets.

All they could do was to mold clay, so as to make things to cook with and hold milk, or water. When they baked this soft stuff in the fire, they found they had pots, pans and dishes as hard as stone, though these were easily broken.

To hunt the deer, or fight the wolves and bears, they fashioned clubs of wood. For javelins and arrows, they took hard stone like flint and chipped it to points and sharpened it with edges. This was the time which men now call the Stone Age. When the men went to war, their weapons were wholly of wood or stone.

They had not yet learned to weave the wool of the sheep into warm clothing, but they wore the skins of animals. Each one of the caves, in which they lived, was a general boarding house, for dogs and pigs, as well as people.

When a young man of one tribe wanted a wife, he sallied out secretly into another neighborhood. There he lay in wait for a girl to come along. He then ran away with her, and back to his own daddy’s cave.

By and by, when the Cymry came into the land, they had iron tools and better weapons of war. Then there were many and long battles and the aborigines were beaten many times.

So the cave people hated everything made of iron. Anyone of the cave people, girls or boys, who had picked up iron ornaments, and were found wearing or using iron tools, or buying anything of iron from the cave people’s enemies, was looked upon as a rascal, or a villain, or even as a traitor and was driven out of the tribe.

However, some of the daughters of the cave men were so pretty and had such rosy cheeks, and lovely bodies, and beautiful, long hair, that quite often the Cymric youth fell in love with them.

Many of the cave men’s daughters were captured and became wives of the Cymry and mothers of children. In course of ages, their descendants helped to make the bright, witty, song-loving Welsh people.

Now the fairies usually like things that are old, and they are very slow to alter the ancient customs, to which they have been used; for, in the fairy world, there is no measure of time, nor any clocks, watches, or bells to strike the hours, and no almanacs or calendars.

The fairies cannot understand why ladies change the fashions so often, and the men their ways of doing things. They wonder why beards are fashionable at one time; then, moustaches long or short, at another; or smooth faces when razors are cheap. Most fairies like to keep on doing the same thing in the old way. They enjoy being like the mountains, which stand; or the sea, that rolls; or the sun, that rises and sets every day and forever. They never get tired of repeating to-morrow what they did yesterday. They are very different from the people that are always wanting something else, and even cry if they cannot have it.

That is the reason why the fairies did not like iron, or to see men wearing iron hats and clothes, called helmets and armor, when they went to war. They no more wanted to be touched by iron than by filth, or foul disease. They hated knives, stirrups, scythes, swords, pots, pans, kettles, or this metal in any form, whether sheet, barbed wire, lump or pig iron.

Now there was a long, pretty stretch of water, near which lived a handsome lad, who loved nothing better than to go out on moonlight nights and see the fairies dance, or listen to their music. This youth fell in love with one of these fairies, whose beauty was great beyond description. At last, unable to control his passion, he rushed into the midst of the fairy company, seized the beautiful one, and rushed back to his home, with his prize in his arms. This was in true cave-man fashion. When the other fairies hurried to rescue her, they found the man’s house shut. They dared not touch the door, for it was covered over with iron studs and bands, and bolted with the metal which they most abhorred.

The young man immediately began to make love to the fairy maid, hoping to win her to be his wife. For a long time she refused, and moped all day and night. While weeping many salt water tears, she declared that she was too homesick to live.

Nevertheless the lover persevered. Finding herself locked in with iron bars, while gratings, bolts and creaking hinges were all about her, and unable to return to her people, the fairy first thought out a plan of possible escape. Then she agreed to become the man’s wife. She resolved, at least, that, without touching it, she should oil all the iron work, and stop the noise.

She was a smart fairy, and was sure she could outwit the man, even if he were so strong, and had every sort of iron everywhere in order to keep her as it were in a prison. So, pretending she loved him dearly, she said: “I will not be your wife, but, if you can find out my name, I shall gladly become your servant.”

“Easily won,” thought the lover to himself. Yet the game was a harder one to play than he supposed. It was like playing Blind Man’s Buff, or Hunt the Slipper. Although he made guesses of every name he could think of, he was never “hot” and got no nearer to the thing sought than if his eyes were bandaged. All the time, he was deeper and deeper in love with the lovely fairy maid.

But one night, on returning home, he saw in a turf bog, a group of fairies sitting on a log. At once, he thought, they might be talking about their lost sister. So he crept up quite near them, and soon found that he had guessed right. After a long discussion, finding themselves still at a loss, as to how to recover her, he heard one of them sigh and say, “Oh, Siwsi, my sister, how can you live with a mortal?”

“Enough,” said the young man to himself. “I’ve got it.” Then, crawling away noiselessly, he ran back all the way to his house, and unlocked the door. Once inside the room, he called out his servant’s name — “Siwsi! Siwsi!”

Astonished at hearing her name, she cried out, “What mortal has betrayed me? For, surely no fairy would tell on me? Alas, my fate, my fate!”

But in her own mind, the struggle and the fear were over. She had bravely striven to keep her fairyhood, and in the battle of wits, had lost.

She would not be wife, but what a wise, superb and faithful servant she made!

Everything prospered under her hand. The house and the farm became models. Not twice, but three times a day, the cows, milked by her, yielded milk unusually rich in cream. In the market, her butter excelled, in quality and price, all others.

Meanwhile, the passion of the lover abated not one jot, or for an instant. His perseverance finally won. She agreed to become his wife; but only on one condition.

“You must never strike me with iron,” she said. “If you do, I’ll feel free to leave you, and go back to my relatives in the fairy family.”

A hearty laugh from the happy lover greeted this remark, made by the lovely creature, once his servant, but now his betrothed. He thought that the condition was very easy to obey.

So they were married, and no couple in all the land seemed to be happier. Once, twice, the cradle was filled. It rocked with new treasures that had life, and were more dear than farm, or home, or wealth in barns or cattle, cheese and butter. A boy and a girl were theirs. Then the mother’s care was unremitting, day and night.

Even though the happy father grew richer every year, and bought farm after farm, until he owned five thousand acres, he valued, more than these possessions, his lovely wife and his beautiful children.

Yet this very delight and affection made him less vigilant; yes, even less careful concerning the promise he had once given to his fairy wife, who still held to the ancient ideas of the Fairy Family in regard to iron.

One of his finest mares had given birth to a filly, which, when the day of the great fair came, he determined to sell at a high price.

So with a halter on his arm, he went out to catch her.

But she was a lively creature, so frisky that it was much like his first attempt to win his fairy bride. It almost looked as if she were a cave girl running away from a lover, who had a lasso in his hand. The lively and frolicsome beast scampered here and there, grazing as she stopped, as if she were determined to put off her capture as long as possible.

So, calling to his wife, the two of them together, tried their skill to catch the filly. This time, leaving the halter in the house, the man took bit and bridle, and the two managed to get the pretty creature into a corner; but, when they had almost captured her, away she dashed again.

By this time, the man was so vexed that he lost his temper; and he who does that, usually loses the game, while he who controls the wrath within, wins. Mad as a flaming fire, he lost his brains also and threw bit and bridle and the whole harness after the fleet animal.

Alas! alas! the wife had started to run after the filly and the iron bit struck her on the cheek. It did not hurt, but he had broken his vow.

Now came the surprise of his life. It was as if, at one moment, a flash of lightning had made all things bright; and then in another second was inky darkness. He saw this lovely wife, one moment active and fleet as a deer. In another, in the twinkling of an eye, nothing was there. She had vanished. After this, there was a lonely home, empty of its light and cheer.

But by living with human beings, a new idea and form of life had transformed this fairy, and a new spell was laid on her. Mother-love had been awakened in her heart. Henceforth, though the law of the fairy world would not allow her to touch again the realm of earth, she, having once been wife and parent, could not forget the babies born of her body. So, making a sod raft, a floating island, she came up at night, and often, while these three mortals lived, this fairy mother would spend hours tenderly talking to her husband and her two children, who were now big boy and girl, as they stood on the lake shore.

On his part, the father did not think it “an ideal arrangement,” as some modern married folks do, to be thus separated, wife and husband, one from the other; but by her coming as near as could be allowed, she showed her undying love. Even to-day, good people sometimes see a little island floating on the lake, and this, they point out as the place where the fairy mother was wont to come and hold converse with her dear ones. When they merrily eat the pink delicacy, called “floating island,” moving it about with a spoon on its yellow lake of eggs and cream, they call this “the Fairy Mother’s rocking chair.”

66

THE MAIDEN OF THE GREEN FOREST

Many a palace lies under the waves that wash Cymric land, for the sea has swallowed up more than one village, and even cities.

When Welsh fairies yield to their mortal lovers and consent to become their wives, it is always on some condition or promise. Sometimes there are several of these, which the fairy ladies compel their mortal lovers to pledge them, before they agree to become wives. In fact, the fairies in Cymric land are among the most exacting of any known.

A prince named Benlli, of the Powys region, found this out to his grief, for he had always supposed that wives could be had simply for the asking. All that a man need say, to the girl to whom he took a fancy, was this: “Come along with me, and be my bride,” and then she would say, “Thank you, I’ll come,” and the two would trot off together. This was the man’s notion.

Now Benlli was a wicked old fellow. He was already married, but wrinkles had gathered on his wife’s face. She had a faded, washed-out look, and her hair was thinning out. She would never be young again, and he was tired of her, and wanted a mate with fresh rosy cheeks, and long, thick hair. He was quite ready to fall in love with such a maiden, whenever his eyes should light upon her.

One day, he went out hunting in the Green Forest. While waiting for a wild boar to rush out, there rode past him a young woman whose beauty was dazzling. He instantly fell in love with her.

The next day, while on horseback, at the same opening in the forest, the same maiden reappeared; but it was only for a moment, and then she vanished.

Again, on the third day, the prince rode out to the appointed place, and again the vision of beauty was there. He rode up to her and begged her to come and live with him at his palace.

"I will come and be your wedded wife on three conditions: You must put away the wife you now have; you must permit me to leave you, one night in every seven, without following after or spying upon me; and you must not ask me where I go or what I do. Swear to me that you will do these three things. Then, if you keep your promises unbroken, my beauty shall never change, no, not until the tall vegetable flag-reeds wave and the long green rushes grow in your hall."

The Prince of Powys was quite ready to swear this oath and he solemnly promised to observe the three conditions. So the Maid of the Green Forest went to live with him.

"But what of his old wife?" one asks.

Ah! he had no trouble from that quarter, for when the newly-wedded couple arrived at the castle, she had already disappeared.

Happy, indeed, were the long bright days, which the prince and his new bride spent together, whether in the castle, or out doors, riding on horseback, or in hunting the deer. Every day, her beauty seemed diviner, and she more lovely. He lavished various gifts upon her, among others that of a diadem of beryl and sapphire. Then he put on her finger a diamond ring worth what was a very great sum — a king's ransom. In the Middle Ages, monarchs as well as nobles were taken prisoners in battle and large amounts of money had to be paid to get them back again. So a king's ransom is what

Benlli paid for his wife’s diamond ring. He loved her so dearly that he never suspected for a moment that he would ever have any trouble in keeping his three promises.

But without variety, life has no spice, and monotony wearies the soul. After nine years had passed, and his wife absented herself every Friday night, he began to wonder why it could be. His curiosity, to know the reason for her going away, so increased that it so wore on him that he became both miserable in himself and irritable toward others. Everybody in the castle noticed the change in their master, and grieved over it.

One night, he invited a learned monk from the white monastery, not far away, to come and take dinner with him. The table in the great banqueting hall was spread with the most delicious viands, the lights were magnificent, and the music gay.

But Wyland, the monk, was a man of magic and could see through things. He noticed that some secret grief was preying upon the Prince’s mind. He discerned that, amidst all this splendor, he, Benlli, the lord of the castle, was the most miserable person within its walls. So Wyland went home, resolved to call again and find out what was the trouble.

When they met, some days later, Wyland’s greeting was this:

“Christ save thee, Benlli! What secret sorrow clouds thy brow? Why so gloomy?”

Benlli at once burst out with the story of how he met the Maid of the Green Forest, and how she became his wife on three conditions.

“Think of it,” said Benlli, groaning aloud. “When the owls cry and the crickets chirp, my wife leaves my bed, and until the daystar appears, I lie alone, torn with curiosity, to know where she is, and what she is doing. I fall again into heavy sleep, and do not awake until sunrise, when I find her by my side again. It is all such a mystery, that the secret lies heavy on my soul. Despite all my wealth, and my strong castle, with feasting and music by night and hunting by day, I am the most miserable man in Cymric land. No beggar is more wretched than I."

Wyland, the monk, listened and his eyes glittered. There came into his head the idea of enriching the monastery. He saw his chance, and improved it at once. He could make money by solving the secret for a troubled soul.

"Prince Benlli," said he, "if you will bestow upon the monks of the White Minster, one tenth of all the flocks that feed within your domain, and one tenth of all that flows into the vaults of your palace, and hand over the Maiden of the Green Forest to me, I shall warrant that your soul will be at peace and your troubles end."

To all this, Prince Benlli agreed, making solemn promise. Then the monk Wyland took his book, leather bound, and kept shut by means of metal clasps, and hid himself in the cranny of a rock near the Giant's Cave, from which there was entrance down into Fairyland.

He had not long to wait, for soon, with a crown on her head, a lady, royally arrayed, passed by out of the silvery moonlight into the dark cave. It was none other than the Maiden of the Green Forest.

Now came a battle of magic and spells, as between the monk's own and those of the Green Forest Maiden. He moved forward to the mouth of the cave. Then summoning into his presence the spirits of the air and the cave, he informed them as to Benlli's vow to enrich the monastery, and to deliver the Green Forest Maiden to himself. Then, calling aloud, he said:

"Let her forever be, as she now appears, and never leave my side."

"Bring her, before the break of day, to the cross near the town of the White Minster, and there will I wed her, and swear to make her my own."

Then, by the power of his magic, he made it impossible for any person or power to recall or hinder the operation of these words. Leaving the cave's mouth, in order to be at the cross, before day should dawn, the first thing he met was a hideous ogress, grinning and rolling her bleared red eyes at him. On her head seemed what was more like moss, than hair. She stretched out a long bony finger at him. On it, flashed the splendid diamond, which Benlli had given his bride, the beautiful Maid of the Green Forest.

“Take me to thy bosom, monk Wyland,” she shrieked, laughing hideously and showing what looked like green snags in her mouth. “For I am the wife you are sworn to wed. Thirty years ago, I was Benlli’s blooming bride. When my beauty left me, his love flew out of the window. Now I am a foul ogress, but magic makes me young again every seventh night. I promised that my beauty should last until the tall flag reeds and the long green rushes grow in his hall.”

Amazed at her story, Wyland drew in his breath.

“And this promise, I have kept. It is already fulfilled. Your spell and mine are both completed. Yours brought to him the peace of the dead. Mine made the river floods rush in. Now, waters lap to and fro among the reeds and rushes that grow in the banqueting hall, which is now sunk deep below the earth. With the clash of our spells, no charm can redress our fate.

“Come then and take me as thy bride, for oath and spell have both decreed it as thy reward. As Benlli’s promise to you is fulfilled, for the waters flow in the palace vaults, the pike and the dare (fish) feed there.”

So, caught in his own dark, sordid plot, the monk, who played conjurer, had become the victim of his own craft.

They say that Wyland’s Cross still recalls the monk, while fishermen on the Welsh border, can, on nights with smooth water, see towers and chimneys far below, sunk deep beneath the waves.

67

THE TREASURE STONE OF THE FAIRIES

The Gruffyds were one of the largest of the Welsh tribes. To-day, it is said that in Britain one man in every forty has this, as either his first, middle, or last name. It means “hero” or “brave man,” and as far back as the ninth century, the word is found in the Book of Saint Chad.

The monks, who derived nearly every name from the Latin, insisted the word meant Great Faith.

Another of the most common of Welsh personal names was William; which, when that of a father’s son, was written Williams and was only the Latin for Gild Helm, or Golden Helmet.

Long ago, when London was a village and Cardiff only a hamlet, there was a boy of this name, who tended sheep on the hill sides. His father was a hard working farmer, who every year tried to coax to grow out of the stony ground some oats, barley, leeks and cabbage. In summer, he worked hard, from the first croak of the raven to the last hoot of the owl, to provide food for his wife and baby daughter. When his boy was born, he took him to the church to be christened Gruffyd, but every body called him “Gruff.” In time several little sisters came to keep the boy company.

His mother always kept her cottage, which was painted pink, very neat and pretty, with vines covering the outside, while flowers bloomed indoors. These were set in pots and on shelves near the latticed windows. They seemed to grow finely, because so good a woman loved them. The copper door-sill was kept bright, and the broad borders on the clay floor, along the walls, were always fresh with whitewash. The pewter dishes on the sideboard shone as if they were moons, and the china cats on the mantle piece, in silvery luster, reflected both sun and candle light. Daddy often declared he could use these polished metal plates for a mirror, when he shaved his face. Puss, the pet, was always happy purring away on the hearth, as the kettle boiled to make the flummery, of sour oat jelly, which, daddy loved so well.

Mother Gruffyd was always so neat, with her black and white striped apron, her high peaked hat, with its scalloped lace and quilled fastening around her chin, her little short shawl, with its pointed, long tips, tied in a bow, and her bright red plaid petticoat folded back from her frock. Her snowy-white, rolling collar and neck cloth knotted at the top, and fringed at the ends, added fine touches to her picturesque costume.

In fact, young Gruffyd was proud of his mother and he loved her dearly. He thought no woman could be quite as sweet as she was.

Once, at the end of the day, on coming back home, from the hills, the boy met some lovely children. They were dressed in very fine clothes, and had elegant manners. They came up, smiled, and invited him to play with them. He joined in their sports, and was too much interested to take note of time. He kept on playing with them until it was pitch dark.

Among other games, which he enjoyed, had been that of “The King in his counting house, counting out his money,” and “The Queen in her kitchen, eating bread and honey,” and “The Girl hanging out the clothes,” and “The Saucy Blackbird that snipped off her nose.” In playing these, the children had aprons full of what seemed to be real coins, the size of crowns, or five-shilling pieces, each worth a dollar. These had “head and tail,” beside letters on them and the boy supposed they were real.

But when he showed these to his mother, she saw at once from their lightness, and because they were so easily bent, that they were only paper, and not silver.

She asked her boy where he had got them. He told her what a nice time he had enjoyed. Then she knew that these, his playmates, were fairy children. Fearing that some evil might come of this, she charged him, her only son, never to go out again alone, on the mountain. She mistrusted that no good would come of making such strange children his companions.

But the lad was so fond of play, that one day, tired of seeing nothing but byre and garden, while his sisters liked to play girls' games more than those which boys cared most for, and the hills seeming to beckon him to come to them, he disobeyed, and slipped out and off to the mountains. He was soon missed and search was made for him.

Yet nobody had seen or heard of him. Though inquiries were made on every road, in every village, and at all the fairs and markets in the neighborhood, two whole years passed by, without a trace of the boy.

But early one morning of the twenty-fifth month, before breakfast, his mother, on opening the door, found him sitting on the steps, with a bundle under his arm, but dressed in the same clothes, and not looking a day older or in any way different, from the very hour he disappeared.

"Why my dear boy, where have you been, all these months, which have now run into the third year — so long a time that they have seemed to me like ages?"

"Why, mother dear, how strange you talk. I left here yesterday, to go out and to play with the children, on the hills, and we have had a lovely time. See what pretty clothes they have given me for a present." Then he opened his bundle.

But when she tore open the package, the mother was all the more sure that she was right, and that her fears had been justified. In it she found only a dress of white paper. Examining it carefully, she could see neither seam nor stitches. She threw it in the fire, and again warned her son against fairy children.

But pretty soon, after a great calamity had come upon them, both father and mother changed their minds about fairies.

They had put all their savings into the venture of a ship, which had for a long time made trading voyages from Cardiff. Every year, it came back bringing great profit to the owners and shareholders. In this way, daddy was able to eke out his income, and keep himself, his wife and daughters comfortably clothed, while all the time the table was well supplied with good food. Nor did they ever turn from their door anyone who asked for bread and cheese.

But in the same month of the boy's return, bad news came that the good ship had gone down in a storm. All on board had perished, and the cargo was totally lost, in the deep sea, far from land. In fact, no word except that of dire disaster had come to hand.

Now it was a tradition, as old as the days of King Arthur, that on a certain hill a great boulder could be seen, which was quite different from any other kind of rock to be found within miles. It was partly imbedded in the earth, and beneath it, lay a great, yes, an untold treasure. The grass grew luxuriantly around this stone, and the sheep loved to rest at noon in its shadow. Many men had tried to lift, or pry it up, but in vain. The tradition, unaltered and unbroken for centuries, was to the effect, that none but a very good man could ever budge this stone. Any and all unworthy men might dig, or pull, or pry, until doomsday, but in vain. Till the right one came, the treasure was as safe as if in heaven.

But the boy's father and mother were now very poor and his sisters now grown up wanted pretty clothes so badly, that the lad hoped that he or his father might be the deserving one. He would help him to win the treasure for he felt sure that his parent would share his gains with all his friends.

Though his neighbors were not told of the generous intentions credited to the boy’s father, by his loving son, they all came with horses, ropes, crowbars, and tackle, to help in the enterprise. Yet after many a long days’ toil, between the sun’s rising and setting, their end was failure. Every day, when darkness came on, the stone lay there still, as hard and fast as ever. So they gave up the task.

On the final night, the lad saw that father and mother, who were great lovers, were holding each other’s hands, while their tears flowed together, and they were praying for patience.

Seeing this, before he fell asleep, the boy resolved that on the morrow, he would go up to the mountains, and talk to his fairy friends about the matter.

So early in the morning, he hurried to the hill tops, and going into one of the caves, met the fairies and told them his troubles. Then he asked them to give him again some of their money.

“Not this time, but something better. Under the great rock there are treasures waiting for you.”

“Oh, don’t send me there! For all the men and horses of our parish, after working a week, have been unable to budge the stone.”

“We know that,” answered the principal fairy, “but do you yourself try to move it. Then you will see what is certain to happen.”

Going home, to tell what he had heard, his parents had a hearty laugh at the idea of a boy succeeding where men, with the united strength of many horses and oxen, had failed.

Yet, after brooding awhile, they were so dejected, that anything seemed reasonable. So they said, “Go ahead and try it.”

Returning to the mountain, the fairies, in a band, went with him to the great rock.

One touch of his hand, and the mighty boulder trembled, like an aspen leaf in the breeze.

A shove, and the rock rolled down from the hill and crashed in the valley below.

There, underneath, were little heaps of gold and silver, which the boy carried home to his parents, who became the richest people in the country round about.

68

GIANT TOM AND GIANT BLUBB

Everyone who has read anything of Welsh history — though not of the sort that is written by English folks — knows also that Cornwall is, in soul, a part of Wales. Before the Romans, first, and the Saxons, next, invaded Britain, the Cymric people lived all over the island, south of Scotland.

They were the British people, and nobody ever heard the German name, “Wales,” which means a foreign land; or the word “Welsh,” which refers to foreigners, until men who were themselves outsiders came into Britain.

Since that time, it has been much the same, as when a British Jack Tar, when rambling in Portugal, or China, calls the natives “foreigners,” and tells them to “get out of the way.”

Ages ago, when the Cymric men, with their wives and little ones rowed over in their coracles, from Gallia, or the Summer Land, to Britain, the Honey Land, they came first to the promontory which we know as Cornwall; that is, the Cornu Galliae, or Walliae, which means Horn or Cape of the new country now called England. Here was a new region, rich in every kind of minerals. Ages before, the Phoenicians had named it Britain or the Land of Tin. Within the memory of men now living, Cornishmen, that is, the miners of Cornwall, on going to California, discovered gold.

In Cornwall, as part of the Cymric realm, King Arthur found and married Guinevere, his queen. It was in Cornwall, also, that Merlin was hidden. Hear the rhyme:

Marvelous Merlin is wasted away
By a wicked woman, who may she be?
For she hath pent him in a crag
On Cornwall coast.

So it happens that thousands of "English" people in Cornwall are Welsh, by both name or descent, or have translated their names into English form, even while keeping the Welsh meaning. They are also Welsh in traits of character. Just as tens of thousands of Welsh folks, among the first settlers of New England and the American colonies are described in our histories as "English" people.

Now in early Cornwall there were many giants. Some were good but others were bad. One of these, a right fine fellow, was named Tom, and the other, a bad one, Blubb. This giant had had twenty wives, and was awfully cruel. Nobody ever knew what became of the twenty maidens he had married.

Sometimes people called the big fellow, that lived in a castle, Giant Blunderbuss, but Blubb was his name for short. He was much taller than the highest hop pole in Kent. He was made up mostly of head and stomach, for his chief idea in living was to eat. His skull was as big as a hogshead, or a push-ball, or a market wagon loaded with carrots. Indeed, it was strongly suspected by most people that the big bone box set on his shoulders was as hollow inside as a pumpkin, but that a cocoanut would hold all the brains he had. At any rate, during one of his fights with another giant, he had been given an awful thwack from the other giant’s club. Then the sound made, which was heard a long distance away, was exactly like that when one pounds on an empty barrel.

Now this Giant Blubb had built a mighty castle between a big hill and a river. Under it were vaults of vast size, filled with treasures of all sorts, gold, silver, jewels and gems. There were cells, in which he kept his wives, after he had married them. It was the opinion of his neighbors, that in every case, soon after the honeymoon was over, he ate them up.

Yet, if even the devil ought to have his due; one should be fair to this human monster, and we are bound to say that Giant Blubb denied these stories as pure gossip. It is certain that such crimes as murder and cannibalism never could be proved against him.

To guard his underground treasures, he had two huge and fierce dogs, supposed to be named Catchem and Tearem. What they were really called by their master was a secret. Yet anyone who had a piece of meat ready to throw to them, and knew their names, which were pass words, could first quiet them. Then he could walk by them and get the treasure.

Besides these dogs, the only living thing left in the castle when the giant went out, was the latest Mrs. Blubb. Yet she was in constant fear of her life, lest her big husband should sometime make a meal of her. For even she had heard the story that Blubb was a cannibal and looked at all plump women simply as delicacies, exactly as a boy peers into the window of a candy shop.

What made all the country round hate this cruel giant was not wholly on account of his awful appetite. It was because he had ruined the King’s High Road. Ever since the time of King Lud, whose name we read in Ludgate Hill, in London, where His Cymric Majesty had lived, this highway had been free to all. It ran all the way through Cornwall, from Penzance, and thence eastward to London and beyond.

When Giant Blubb wished to enlarge his castle, he had the walls and towers built down to the river's edge. This closed up the big road, so that people had to go far around and up over the hill, or by boat along the river. Such a roundabout way took much time and toil, and was too much trouble for all.

Everybody had to submit to this extortion, until there came along Giant Tom, of whom we shall now tell. His real name was Rolling Stone, for he never stuck long in one place at a job, and cared not a cucumber for money, or fine clothes.

This jolly fellow was very good-natured and popular, but often very lazy. His mother talked with him many times, urging him to learn a trade, or in some way make an honest living. She found it very hard to keep anything in her larder, barn, pantry, or cellar, when he was at home. He measured four feet across his shoulders and at every meal he ate what would feed three big men. But as he could do six men's work, when he had a mind to — as often he did — he was always welcome. In fact, he was too popular for his own good.

One day, when ten common fellows were trying their utmost to lift a big long log on a cart, and were unable to do it, Tom came along and told them to stand back. Then he hoisted the tree on to the wain, roped it into place, and told the cartman to drive on. Then they all cheered him, and one of them lifted his Monmouth cap and cried out, "Hurrah for Giant Tom. He's the fellow to whip Giant Blubb."

"He is! He is!" they all cried in chorus.

"Who is this Giant Blubb? Where does he live?" asked Tom, rolling up his sleeves, for he was just spoiling for a row with a fellow of his size.

Then they told the story of how the big bully had ruined the King's Highway, by building a great wall and tower across the road, to shut it up, to the grief of many honest men.

“Never mind, boys. I’ll attend to his bacon,” said Tom. “Leave the matter with me, and don’t bother to tell the King about it.”

Tom went the next day into town and hired himself out to a beer brewer to drive the wagon. Perhaps he hoped, also, while in this occupation, to keep down his thirst.

He asked the boss to give him the route that led past Giant Blubb’s castle, over the old King’s Highway.

The master of the brewery saw through Tom’s purpose. He winked, and only said:

“Go ahead, my boy. I’ll pay you double wages, if you will open that road again; but see that Giant Blubb does not get my load of kegs, or that your carcass doesn’t count with those of the twenty wives in his vaults and make twenty-one.”

Again he winked his eye knowingly to his workmen. Tom drove off. He occupied all the room on the seat of the cart, which two men usually filled and left plenty of room on either side.

Cracking his whip, the new driver kept the four horses on a galloping pace, until very soon he called out “whoa,” before the frowning high gateway of Giant Blubb.

Tom shouted from the depth of his lungs:

“Open the gate and let me drive through. This is the King’s Highway.”

The only reply, for a minute, was the barking of the curs. Then a rattling of bolts was heard, and the great gates swung wide open.

“Who are you, you impudent fellow? Go round over the hill, or I’ll thrash you,” blustered Giant Blubb, in a rage.

“Better save your breath to cool your porridge, you big boaster, and come out and fight,” said Tom.

“Fight? You pigmy. I’ll just get a switch and whip you, as I would a bad boy.”

Thereupon Giant Blubb stepped aside into the grove nearby, keeping all the while an eye on his gate, guarded by his two monstrous dogs. He selected an elm tree twenty feet high, tore it up by the roots, pulled off the branches, and peeled it for a whip. This he jerked up and down to make ready for his task of thrashing “the pigmy.”

Meanwhile Giant Tom upset the wain, drew out the tongue and took off one of the wheels. Then, as if armed with spear and shield, he advanced to meet Giant Blubb. He whistled like a boy, as he went forward.

In a passion of rage, Giant Blubb lifted his elm switch to strike, but Tom warded off the blow with his wheel shield. Then he punched him in the stomach, with the wagon tongue, so hard that the big fellow slipped and rolled over in the mud:

Picking himself up, Giant Blubb, now half blind with rage, rushed against Tom, who, this time, made a lunge which planted the cart tongue inside Blubb’s bowels, and knocked him over.

But Tom was not a cruel fellow, and had no desire to kill anyone. So he threw down his war tools, and tearing up a yard or two of grassy sod rolled it together, and made a plug of it, as big around as a milk churn. With this, he stopped up the big hole in Giant Blubb’s huge body.

But instead of thanking Tom, Giant Blubb rushed at him again. He was in too much of a rage to see anything clearly, while Tom, perfectly cool, gave the angry monster such a kick, in the place where he kept his dinner, that he rolled over, and Tom gave him another kick. Then the plug of sod fell out of his wound.

As he was bleeding to death, Giant Blubb beckoned to Tom to come up close, for he could only whisper.

“You’ve beaten me on the square, and I like you. Don’t think I killed my twenty wives. They all died naturally. But call the dogs by name, and they will let you pass. Then, in my vaults, you’ll find gold, silver, and copper. Make these your own and bury me decently. This is all I ask.”

Tom made himself owner of the castle and all its treasures. He opened the King's Highway again. He took care of his aged mother, married the twenty-first wife of Giant Blubb, now a widow, and was always kind to the sick and poor.

To-day in Cornwall, they still tell stories of the big fellow who abolished Giant Blubb's toll gate.

Centuries afterward, when Christ's gospel came into the land, they restored Giant Tom's tomb and on it were chiseled these words:

THE RESTORER of paths to dwell in.

69

A BOY THAT VISITED FAIRYLAND

Many are the places in Wales where the ground is lumpy and humpy with tumuli, or little artificial mounds. Among these the sheep graze, the donkeys bray, and the cows chew the cud.

Here the ground is strewn with the ruins of cromlechs, or Cymric strongholds, of old Roman camps, of chapels and monasteries, showing that many different races of men have come and gone, while the birds still fly and the flowers bloom.

Centuries ago, the good monks of St. David had a school where lads were taught Latin and good manners. One of their pupils was a boy named Elidyr. He was such a poor scholar and he so hated books and loved play, that in his case spankings and whippings were almost of daily occurrence. Still he made no improvement. He was in the habit also of playing truant, or what one of the monks called “traveling to Bagdad.” One of the consequences was that certain soft parts of his body — apparently provided by nature for this express purpose — often received a warming from his daddy.

His mother loved her boy dearly, and she often gently chided him, but he would not listen to her, and when she urged him to be more diligent, he ran out of the room. The monks did not spare the birch rod, and soon it was a case of a whipping for every lesson not learned.

One day, though he was only twelve years old, the boy started on a long run into the country. The further he got, the happier he felt — at least for one day.

At night, tired out, he crept into a cave. When he woke up, in the morning, he thought it was glorious to be as free as the wild asses. So like them, he quenched his thirst at the brook. But when, towards noon, he could find nothing to eat, and his inside cavity seemed to enlarge with very emptiness, his hunger grew every minute. Then he thought that a bit of oat cake, a leek, or a bowl of oat meal, whether porridge or flummery, might suit a king.

He dared not go out far and pick berries, for, by this time, he saw that people were out searching for him. He did not feel yet, like going back to books, rods and scoldings, but the day seemed as long as a week. Meanwhile, he discovered that he had a stomach, which seemed to grow more and more into an aching void. He was glad when the sunset and darkness came. His bed was no softer in the cave, as he lay down with a stone for his pillow. Yet he had no dreams like those of Jacob and the angels.

When daylight came, the question in his mind was still, whether to stay and starve, or to go home and get two thrashings — one from his daddy, and another from the monks. But how about that thing inside of him, which seemed to be a live creature gnawing away, and which only something to eat would quiet? Finally, he came to a stern resolve. He started out, ready to face two whippings, rather than one death by starvation.

But he did not have to go home yet, for at the cave’s mouth, he met two elves, who delivered a most welcome message.

“Come with us to a land full of fun, play, and good things to eat.”

All at once, his hunger left him and he forgot that he ever wanted to swallow anything. All fear, or desire to go home, or to risk either schooling or a thrashing, passed away also.

Into a dark passage all three went, but they soon came out into a beautiful country. How the birds sang and the flowers bloomed! All around could be heard the joyful shouts of little folks at play. Never did things look so lovely.

Soon, in front of the broad path along which they were traveling, there rose up before him a glorious palace. It had a splendid gateway, and the silver-topped towers seemed to touch the blue sky.

“What building is this?” asked the lad of his two guides.

They made answer that it was the palace of the King of Fairyland. Then they led him into the throne room, where, sat in golden splendor, a king, of august figure and of majestic presence, who was clad in resplendent robes. He was surrounded by courtiers in rich apparel, and all about him was magnificence, such as this boy, Elidyr, had never even read about or dreamed.

Yet everything was so small that it looked like Toy Land, and he felt like a giant among them, even though many of the little men around him were old enough to have whiskers on their cheeks and beards on their chins.

The King spoke kindly to Elidyr, asking him who he was, and whence he had come.

While talking thus, the Prince, the King’s only son appeared. He was dressed in white velvet and gold, and had a long feather in his cap. In the pleasantest way, he took Elidyr’s hand and said:

“Glad to see you. Come and let us play together.”

That was just what Elidyr liked to hear. The King smiled and said to his visitor, “You will attend my son?” Then, with a wave of his hand, he signified to the boys to run out and play games.

A right merry time they did have, for there were many other little fellows for playmates.

These wee folks, with whom Elidyr played, were hardly as big as our babies, and certainly would not reach up to his mother’s knee. To them, he looked like a giant, and he richly enjoyed the fun of having such little men, but with beards growing on their faces, look up to him.

They played with golden balls, and rode little horses, with silver saddles and bridles, but these pretty animals were no larger than small dogs, or grayhounds.

No meat was ever seen on the table, but always plenty of milk. They never told a lie, nor used bad language, or swear-words. They often talked about mortal men, but usually to despise them; because what they liked to do, seemed so absurd and they always wanted foolish and useless things. To the elves, human beings were never satisfied, or long happy, even when they got what they wanted.

Everything in this part of fairyland was lovely, but it was always cloudy. No sun, star or moon was ever seen, yet the little men did not seem to mind it and enjoyed themselves every day. There was no end of play, and that suited Elidyr.

Yet by and by, he got tired even of games and play, and grew very homesick. He wanted to see his mother. So he asked the King to let him visit his old home. He promised solemnly to come back, after a few hours. His Majesty gave his permission, but charged him not to take with him anything whatever from fairyland, and to go with only the clothes on his back.

The same two elves or dwarfs, who had brought him into fairyland, were chosen to conduct him back. When they had led him again through the underground passage into the sunlight, they made him invisible until he arrived at his mother’s cottage. She was overjoyed to find that no wolf had torn him to pieces, or wild bull had pushed him over a precipice.

She asked him many questions, and he told her all he had seen, felt, or known.

When he rose up to go, she begged him to stay longer, but he said he must keep his word. Besides, he feared the rod of the monks, or his daddy, if he remained. So he made his mother agree not to tell anything — not even to his father, as to where he was, or what he was doing. Then he made off and reported again to his playmates in fairyland.

The King was so pleased at the lad's promptness in returning, and keeping his word, and telling the truth, that he allowed him to go see his mother as often as he wanted to do so. He even gave orders releasing the two little men from constantly guarding him and told them to let the lad go alone, and when he would, for he always kept his word.

Many times did Elidyr visit his mother. By one road, or another, he made his way, keeping himself invisible all the time, until he got inside her cottage. He ran off, when anyone called in to pay a visit, or when he thought his daddy, or one of the monks was coming. He never saw any of these men.

One day, in telling his mother of the fun and good times he had in fairyland, he spoke of the heavy yellow balls, with which he and the King's sons played, and how these rolled around.

Before leaving home, this boy had never seen any gold, and did not know what it was, but his mother guessed that it was the precious metal, of which the coins called sovereigns, and worth five dollars apiece, were made. So she begged him to bring one of them back to her.

This, Elidyr thought, would not be right; but after much argument, his parents being poor, and she telling him that, out of hundreds in the King's palace, one single ball would not be missed, he decided to please her.

So one day, when he supposed no one was looking, he picked up one of the yellow balls and started off through the narrow dark passageway homeward.

But no sooner was he back on the earth, and in the sunlight again, than he heard footsteps behind him. Then he knew that he had been discovered.

He glanced over his shoulder and there were the two little men, who had led him first and had formerly been his guards. They scowled at him as if they were mad enough to bite off the heads of tenpenny nails. Then they rushed after him, and there began a race to the cottage.

But the boy had legs twice as long as the little men, and got to the cottage door first. He now thought himself safe, but pushing open the door, he stumbled over the copper threshold, and the ball rolled out of his hand, across the floor of hardened clay, even to the nearly white-washed border, which ran about the edges of the room. It stopped at the feet of his mother, whose eyes opened wide at the sight of the ball of shining gold.

As he lay sprawling on the floor, and before he could pick himself up, one of the little men leaped over him, rushed into the room, and, from under his mother's petticoats, picked up the ball.

They spat at the boy and shouted, "traitor," "rascal," "thief," "false mortal," "fox," "rat," "wolf," and other bad names. Then they turned and sped away.

Now Elidyr, though he had been a mischievous boy, often willful, lazy, and never liking his books, had always loved the truth. He was very sad and miserable, beyond the telling, because he had broken his word of honor. So, almost mad with grief and shame, and from an accusing conscience, he went back to find the cave, in which he had slept. He would return to the King of the fairies, and ask his pardon, even if His Majesty never allowed him to visit Fairyland again.

But though he often searched, and spent whole days in trying to find the opening in the hills, he could never discover it.

So, fully penitent, and resolving to live right, and become what his father wanted him to be, he went back to the monastery.

There he plied his tasks so diligently that he excelled all in book-learning. In time, he became one of the most famous scholars in Welsh history. When he died, he asked to be buried, not in the monk's cemetery, but with his father and mother, in the churchyard. He made request that no name, record, or epitaph, be chiseled on his tomb, but only these words:

We can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth.

70

THE WELSHERY AND THE NORMANS

Though their land has been many times invaded, the Welsh have never been conquered. Powerful tribes, like the Romans, Saxons and Normans, have tried to overwhelm them. Even when English and German kings attempted to crush their spirit and blot out their language and literature, the Welsh resisted and won victory.

Among the bullies that tried force, instead of justice, and played the slave-driver, rather than the Good Samaritan's way, were the Normans. These brutal fellows, when they thought that they had overrun Wales with their armies, began to build strong castles all over the country. They kept armed men by the thousands ready, night and day, to rush out and put to death anybody and everybody who had a weapon in his hand. Often they burned whole villages. They killed so many Welsh people that it seemed at times as if they expected to empty the land of its inhabitants. Thus, they hoped to possess all the acres for themselves. They talked as if there were no people so refined and so cultured as they were, while the natives, good and bad, were lumped together as "the Welshery."

Yet all this time, with these hundreds of strong castles, bristling with turrets and towers, no Englishman's life was safe. If he dared to go out alone, even twenty rods from the castle, he was instantly killed by some angry Welshman lying in ambush. So the Normans had to lock themselves up in armor, until they looked like lobsters in their shells. When on their iron-clad horses they resembled turtles, so that if a knight fell off, he had to be chopped open to be rid of his metal clothes.

Yet all this was in vain, for when the Norman marched out in bodies, or rode in squadrons, the Welshery kept away and were hidden.

Even the birds and beasts noticed this, and saw what fools the Normans were, to behave so brutally.

As for the fairies, they met together to see what could be done. Even the reptiles shamed men by living together more peaceably. Only the beasts of prey approved of the Norman way of treating the Welsh people.

At last, it came to pass that, after the long War of the Roses, when the Reds and the Whites had fought together, a Welsh king sat upon the throne of England. Henry VIII was of Cymric ancestry. His full name was Henry Tudor; or, in English, Henry Theodore.

Among the Welsh, every son, to his own name as a child, such as Henry, William, Thomas, etc., added that of his father. Thus it happens that we can usually tell a man by his name; for example, Richards, Roberts, Evans, Jones, etc., etc., that he is a Welshman.

When a Welshman went into England to live, if he were a sister’s son, he usually added a syllable showing this, as in the case of Jefferson, which means sister’s son. Our great Thomas Jefferson used to boast that he could talk Welsh.

So the living creatures of all sorts in Wales, human beings, fairies, and animals took heart and plucked up courage, when a Tudor king, Henry VIII, sat on the throne.

Now it was Puck who led the fairies as the great peacemaker. He went first to visit all the most ancient creatures, in order to find out who should be offered the post of honor, as ambassador, who should be sent to the great king in London, Henry Tudor, to see what could be done for Wales.

First he called on the male eagle, oldest of all birds. Though not bald-headed, like his American cousin, the Welsh eagle was very old, and at that time a widower. Although he had been father to nine generations of eaglets, he sent Puck to the stag.

This splendid creature, with magnificent antlers, lived at the edge of the forest, near the trunk of an oak tree. It was still standing, but was now a mere shell. Old men said that the children of the aborigines played under it, and here was the home of the god of lightning, which they worshiped.

So to the withered oak, Puck went, and offered him the honor of leadership to an embassy to the King.

But the stag answered and said:

“Well do I remember when an acorn fell from the top of the parent oak. Then, for three hundred years it was growing. Children played under it. They gathered acorns in their aprons, and the archers made bows from its boughs.

“Then the oak tree began to die, and, during nearly thirty tens of years it has been fading, and I have seen it all.

“Yet there is one older than I. It is the salmon that swims in the Llyn stream. Inquire there.”

So of the old mother salmon, Puck went to ask, and this was the answer which he received.

“Count all the spots on my body, and all the eggs in my roe — one for each year. Yet the blackbird is older even than I. Go listen to her story. She excels me, in both talk and fact.”

And the blackbird opened its orange-colored bill, and answered proudly:

“Do you see this flinty rock, on which I am sitting? Once it was so huge that three hundred yoke of oxen could hardly move it. Yet, today, it hardly more than affords me room to roost on.

“What made it so small, do you ask?

“Well, all I have clone to wear it away, has been to wipe my beak on it, every night, before I go to sleep, and in the morning to brush it with the tips of my wing.”

Even Puck, fairy though he was, was astonished at this. But the blackbird added:

“Go to the toad, that blinks its eye under the big rock yonder. His age is greater than mine.”

The toad was half asleep when Puck came, but it opened with alertness, its beautiful round bright eyes, set in a rim of gold. Then Puck asked the question: “Oh, thou that carriest a jewel in thy head, are there any things alive that are older than thou art?”

“That, I could not be sure of, especially if as many false things are told about them, as are told about me; but when I was a tadpole in the pond, that old hag of an owl was still hooting away, in the treetops, scaring children, as in ages gone. She is older than I. Go and see her. If age makes wise, she is the wisest of all.”

Puck went into the forest, but at first saw no bird answering to the description given him.

He said to himself, “She is, I wonder, who?”

He was surprised to hear his question repeated, not as an echo, but by another. Still, he thought it might possibly be his own voice come back.

So, in making a catalogue, in his note book, of what he had seen and heard that day, he put down, “To wit — one echo.”

Again came the sound:

“To whit — to who, to whit — to who?” Sounded the voice.

Thinking that this was intended to be a polite question, Puck looked up. Sure enough, there was the wise bird sitting on a bough, above him, as sober as a judge.

“Who! did you ask?” answered Puck and then went on to explain:

“I am Lord of the Fairies in Welshery, and I seek to know which is the most venerable, of all the creatures in the Land of the Red Dragon.

“I am ready to salute you, as the most ancient and honorable of all living things in the Cymric realm. You are desired to bear a message to the Great King, in London.”

Tickled by such delicate flattery, and the honors proffered her, this lady owl, after much blinking and winking, flirting, and fluttering, at last agreed to go to King Henry VIII in London. The business, with which she was charged, was to protest against Norman brutality and to plead for justice.

Now this old lady-owl, gray with centuries, though she had such short ears, kept them open by day and during the night, also, for all the gossip that floated in the air. She knew all about everybody and everything. From what she had heard, she expected to find the new King, Henry VIII, a royal fellow in velvet, with a crown on his head, and his body as big and round as a hogshead, sitting in a room full of chopping blocks and battle axes. Further, she fancied she would find a dozen pretty women locked up in his palace, some in the cellar, others in the pantry, and more in the garret; but all waiting to have their heads chopped off.

For the popular story ran that his chief amusement was to marry a wife one day and slice off her head the next.

It was said also that the King kept a private graveyard, and took a walk in it every afternoon to study the epitaphs, which he kept a scholar busy in writing; and also a man, from the marble yard near by, to chisel them on the tombs, after his various wives had been properly beheaded.

But the owl never could find out whether these fables were wicked fibs, or fairy tales, or only street talk.

Puck and the owl together arrived in London, at the palace, when the King was at his dinner. The butlers and lackeys wanted to keep them out, but the merry monarch gave orders to let them in at once. He made the owl perch over the mantel piece, but told Puck to stand upon the dinner table and walk over the tablecloth. The pepper box was put away, so that he should not sneeze and the King carefully removed the mustard pot, for fear the little fairy fellow might fall in it and be drowned in the hot stuff.

His Majesty said that, for the time being, Puck should be the Prince of Wales. Puck strutted about to the amusement of the King and all the Court ladies, but he kept away from the pepper, which made his nose tingle, and from the hot soup, for fear he might tumble into it and be scalded. When the dessert came on, Puck hid himself under a walnut shell, just for fun.

It would take too long to tell about all that was said, or the questions, which the King asked about his Welsh subjects, and which either the owl or the fairy man answered. According to Puck's story, Wales was then a most distressful country, though the Welshery, to a man, wanted to be good and loyal subjects of the Tudors.

Several times did Puck appeal to the owl, to have his story confirmed, because this wise bird had lived among the Cymry, centuries before the Normans came. The owl every time blinked, bowed, and answered solemnly:

"To whit, to who. To whit, to who," which in this case showed that she had learned to speak the Court language.

"Why, bless my soul, the owl speaks good Cockney Hinglish," whispered one of the butlers, who had been born in Wales.

"Yes, but that is the proper way to address His Majesty, King Ennery the Heighth," answered the other butler, who was a native-born Londoner.

Puck and the owl returned to Wales. What happened after that, is the A B C of history, that everybody knows, and for which all the Welsh people to this day bless the Tudors, who made the Welsh equal before the law with any and all Englishmen. Even Puck himself had never seen anything like the change that quickly took place for the better, nor did Queen Mab, with her wand, ever work such wonders.

It was better than a fairy tale, and the effects, very soon seen, were even more wonderful. Down went the castles into ruins, for rats to run around in, and wild dogs to yelp and foxes to hide in, or look out of the casements. To-day, what were once banqueting halls are covered with moss, and on the ground grass grows, over which sheep graze and children play; while rooks and crows nest or roost in the tall towers.

Any Englishman’s life was safe anywhere, and Wales became one of the most easily governed countries in all the wonderful British Empire.

71

THE WELSH FAIRIES HOLD A MEETING

In the ancient Cymric gatherings, the Druids, poets, prophets, seers, and singers all had part. The one most honored as the president of the meeting was crowned and garlanded. Then he was led in honor and sat in the chair of state. They called this great occasion an Eistedfodd, or sitting, after the Cymric word, meaning a chair.

All over the world, the Welsh folks, who do so passionately love music, poetry and their own grand language, hold the Eistedfodd at regular intervals. Thus they renew their love for the Fatherland and what they received long ago from their ancestors.

Now it happens that the fairies in every land usually follow the customs of the mortals among whom they live. The Swiss, the Dutch, the Belgian, the Japanese and Korean fairies, as we all know, although they are much alike in many things are as different from each other as the countries in which they live and play. So, when the Welsh fairies all met together, they resolved to have songs and harp music and make the piper play his tunes just as in the Eistedfodd.

The Cymric fairies of our days have had many troubles to complain of. They were disgusted with so much coal smoke, the poisoning of the air by chemical fumes, and the blackening of the landscape from so many factory chimneys. They had other grievances also.

So the Queen Mab, who had a Welsh name, and another fairy, called Pwca, or in English King Puck, sent out invitations into every part of Wales, for a gathering on the hills, near the great rock called Dina's seat. This is a rocky chair formed by nature. They also included in their call those parts of western and south England, such as are still Welsh and spiritually almost a part of Wales. In fact, Cornwall was the old land, in which the Cymry had first landed when coming from over the sea.

The meeting was to be held on a moonlight night, and far away from any houses, lest the merry making, dancing and singing of the fairies should keep the farmers awake. This was something of which the yokels, or men of the plow, often complained. They could not sleep while the fairies were having their parties.

Now among the Welsh fairies of every sort, size, dress, and behavior, some were good, others were bad, but most of them were only full of fun and mischief. Chief of these was the lively little fellow, Puck, who lived in Cwm Pwcca, that is, Puck Valley, in Breconshire.

Now it had been an old custom, which had come down, from the days of the cave men, that when anyone died, the people, friends and relatives sat up all night with the corpse. The custom arose, at first, with the idea of protection against wild beasts and later from insult by enemies. This was called a wake. The watchers wept and wailed at first, and then fell to eating and drinking. Sometimes, they got to be very lively. The young folks even looked on a wake, after the first hour or two, as fine fun. Strong liquor was too plentiful and it often happened that quarrels broke out. When heads were thus fuddled, men saw or thought they saw, many uncanny things, like leather birds, cave eagles, and the like.

But all these fantastic things and creatures, such as foolish people talk about, and with which they frighten children, such as corpse candles, demons and imps, were ruled out and not invited to the fairy meeting. Some other objects, which ignorant folks believed in, were not to be allowed in the company. The door-keeper was notified not to admit the eagles of darkness, that live in a cave which is never lighted up; or the weird, featherless bird of leather, from the Land of Illusion and Phantasy, that brushes its wing against windows, when a funeral is soon to take place; or the greedy dog with silver eyes. None of these would be permitted to show themselves, even if they came and tried to get in. Some other creatures, not recognized in the good society of Fairyland, were also barred out.

To this gathering, only the bright and lively fairies were welcome. Some of the best natured among the big creatures, and especially giants and dragons, might pay a visit, if they wanted to do so; but all the bad ones, such as lake hags, wraiths, sellers of liquids for wakes, who made men drunk, and all who, under the guise of fairies, were only agents for undertakers, were ruled out. The Night Dogs of the Wicked Hunter Annum, the monster Afang, Cadwallader’s Goats, and various, cruel goblins and ogres, living in the ponds, and that pulled cattle down to eat them up, and the immodest mermaids, whose bad behavior was so well known, were crossed off the list of invitations.

No ugly brats, such as wicked fairies were in the habit of putting in the cradles of mortal mothers, when they stole away their babies, were allowed to be present, even if they should come with their mothers. This was to be a perfectly respectable company, and no bawling, squealing, crying, or blubbering was to be permitted.

When they had all gathered together, at the evening hour, there was seen, in the moonlight, the funniest lot of creatures, that one could imagine, but all were neatly dressed and well behaved.

Quite a large number of the famous Fair Family, that moved only in the best society of fairyland, fathers, mothers, cousins, uncles and aunts, were on hand. In fact, some of them had thought it was to be a wake, and were ready for whatever might turn up, whether solemn or frivolous. These were dressed in varied costume.

Queen Mab, who above all else, was a Welsh fairy, and whose name, as everybody knows who talks Cymric, suggested her extreme youth and lively disposition, was present in all her glory.

When they saw her, several learned fairies, who had come from a distance, fell at once into conversation on this subject. One remarked: “How would the Queen like to add another syllable to her name? Then we should call her Mab-gath (which means Kitten, or Little Puss).”

“Well not so bad, however; because many mortal daddies, who have a daughter, call her Puss. It is a term of affection with them and the little girls never seem to be offended.”

“Oh! Suppose that in talking to each other we call our Queen Mab-gar, what then?” asked another, with a roguish twinkle in the eye.

“It depends on how you use it,” said a wise one dryly. This fairy was a stickler for the correct use of every word. “If you meant ‘babyish,’ or ‘childish,’ she, or her friends might demur; but, if you use the term ‘love of children,’ what better name for a fairy queen?”

“None. There could not be any,” they shouted, all at once, “but let us ask our old friend the harper.”

Now such a thing as inquiring into each other’s ages was not common in Fairy Land. Very few ever asked such a question, for it was not thought to be polite. For, though we hear of ugly fairy brats being put into the cradles, in place of pretty children, no one ever heard, either of fairies being born or of dying, or having clocks, or watches, or looking to see what time it was. Nor did doctors, or the census clerks, or directory people ever trouble the fairy ladies, to ask their age.

Occasionally, however, there was one fairy, so wise, so learned, and so able to tell what was going to happen to-morrow, or next year, that the other fairies looked up to such an one with respect and awe.

Yet these honorables would hardly know what you were talking about, if you asked any of them how old they might be, or spoke of “old” or “young.” If, by any chance, a fairy did use the world “old” in talking of their number, it would be for honor or dignity, and they would mean it for a compliment.

The fact was, that many of the most lively fairies showed their frivolous disposition at once. These were of the kind, that, like kittens, cubs, or babies, wanted to play all the time, yes, every moment. Already, hundreds of them were tripping from flower to flower, riding on the backs of fireflies, or harnessing night moths, or any winged creatures they could saddle, for flight through the air. Or, they were waltzing with glow worms, or playing “ring around a rosy,” or dancing in circles. They could not keep still, one moment.

In fact, when a great crowd of the frolicsome creatures got singing together, they made such a noise, that a squad of fairy policemen, dressed in club moss and armed with pistils, was sent to warn them not to raise their voices too high; lest the farmers, especially those that were kind to the fairies, should be awakened, and feel in bad humor.

So the knot of learned fairies had a quiet time to talk, and, when able to hear their own words, the harper, who was very learned, answered their questions about Queen Mab as follows:

“Well, you know the famous children’s story book, in which mortals read about us, and which they say they enjoy so much, is named Mabinogion, that is, The Young Folks’ Treasury of Cymric Stories.”

“It is well named,” said another fairy savant, “since Queen Mab is the only fairy that waits on men. She inspires their dreams, when these are born in their brains.”

The talk now turned on Puck, who was to be the president of the meeting. They were expected to show much dignity in his presence, but some feared he would, as usual, play his pranks. Before he arrived in his chariot, which was drawn by dragon flies, some of his neighbors that lived in the valley near by chatted about him, until the gossip became quite personal. Just for the fun of it, and the amusement of the crowd, they wanted Puck to give an exhibition, off-hand, of all his very varied accomplishments for he could beat all rivals in his special variety, or as musicians say, his repertoire.

"No. 'Twould be too much like a Merry Andrew's or a Buffoon's sideshow, where the freaks of all sorts are gathered, such as they have at those county fairs, which the mortals get up, to which are gathered great crowds. The charge of admission is a sixpence. I vote 'no.'"

"Well, for the very reason that Puck can beat the rest of us at spells and transformations, I should like to see him do for us as many stunts as he can. I've heard from a mortal, named Shakespeare, that, in one performance, Puck could be a horse, a hound, a hog, a bear without any head, and even kindle himself into a fire; while his vocal powers, as we know, are endless. He can neigh, bark, grunt, roar, and even burn up things. Now, I should like to see the fairy that could beat him at tricks. It was Puck himself, who told the world that he was in the habit of doing all these things, and I want to see whether he was boasting."

"Tut, tut, don't talk that way, about our king," said a fourth fairy.

All this was only chaff and fun, for all the fairies were in good humor. They were only talking, to fill up the interval until the music began.

Now the canny Welsh fairies had learned the trick of catching farthings, pennies and sixpences from the folks who have more curiosity in them than even fairies do. These human beings, cunning fellows that they are, let the curtain fall on a show, just at the most interesting part. Then they tell you to come next day and find out what is to happen. Or, as they say in a story paper, "to be continued in our next."

Or, worse than all, the story teller stops, at some very exciting episode, and then passes the hat or collection-box around, to get the copper or silver of his listeners, before he will go on.

This time, however, it was Puck himself who came forward and declared that, unless everyone of the fairies would promise to attend the next meeting, there should be no music. Now a meeting of the Welshery, whether fairies or human, without music was a thing not to be thought of. So, although at first some fairies grumbled and held back, and were quite sulky about it, even muttering other grumpy words, they at last all agreed, and Puck sent for the fiddler to make music for the dance.

72

KING ARTHUR’S CAVE

In our time, every boy and girl knows about the nuts and blossoms, the twigs and the hedges, the roots and the leaf of the common hazel bush, and everybody has heard of the witch hazel. In old days they made use of the forked branches of the hazel as a divining rod. With this, they believed that they could divine, or find out the presence of treasures of gold and silver, deep down in the earth, and hidden from human eyes.

And, what boy or girl has never played the game, and sung the ditty, “London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down,” even though nobody now living ever saw it fall?

Now, our story is about a hazel rod, a Welshman on London Bridge, treasures in a cave, and what happened because of these.

It was in the days when London Bridge was not, as we see it to-day, a massive structure of stone and iron, able to bear up hundreds of cars, wagons, horses and people, and lighted at night with electric bulbs. No, when this Welshman visited London, the bridge had a line of shops on both sides of the passage way, and reaching from end to end.

Taffy was the name of this fellow from Denbigh, in Wales, and he was a drover. He had brought, all the way from one of the richest of the Welsh provinces, a great drove of Black Welsh cattle, such as were in steady demand by Englishmen, who have always been lovers of roast beef.

Escaping all the risks of cattle thieves, rustlers, and highwaymen, he had sold his beeves at a good price; so that his pockets were now fairly bulging out with gold coins, and yet this fellow wanted more. But first, before going home, he would see the sights of the great city, which then contained about a hundred thousand people.

While he was handling some things in a shop, to decide what he should take home to his wife, his three daughters and his two little boys, he noticed a man looking intently, not at him, but at his stick. After a while, the stranger came up to him and asked him where he came from.

Now Taffy was not very refined in his manners, and he thought it none of the fellow's business. He was very surly and made reply in a gruff voice.

"I come from my own country."

The stranger did not get angry, but in a polite tone made answer:

"Don't be offended at my question. Tell me where you cut that hazel stick, and I'll make it to your advantage, if you will take my advice."

Even yet Taffy was gruff and suspicious.

"What business is it of yours, where I cut my hazel stick?" he answered.

"Well it may matter a good deal to you, if you will tell me. For, if you remember the place, and can lead me to it, I'll make you a rich man, for near that spot lies a great treasure."

Taffy was not much of a thinker, apart from matters concerning cattle, and his brain worked slowly! He was sorely puzzled. Here was a wizard, who could make him rich, and he did so love to jingle gold in his pockets. But then he was superstitious. He feared that this sorcerer derived all his uncanny knowledge from demons, and Taffy, being rather much of a sinner, feared these very much. Meanwhile, his new acquaintance kept on persuading him.

Finally Taffy yielded and the two went on together to Wales.

Now in this country, there are many stones placed in position, showing they were not there by accident, but were reared by men, to mark some old battle, or famous event. And for this, rough stone work, no country, unless it be Korea or China, is more famous than Wales.

On reaching one called the Fortress Rock, Taffy pointed to an old hazel root, and said to his companion:

“There! From that stock, I cut my hazel stick. I am sure of it.”

The sorcerer looked at Taffy to read his face, and to be certain that he was telling the truth. Then he said:

“Bring shovels and we’ll both dig.”

These having been brought, the two began to work until the perspiration stood out in drops on their foreheads. First the sod and rooty stuff, and then down around the gravelly mass below, they plied their digging tools. Taffy was not used to such toil, and his muscles were soon weary. But, urged on by visions of gold, he kept bravely at his task.

At last, when ready to drop from fatigue, he heard his companion say:

“We’ve struck it!”

A few shovelfuls more laid bare a broad flat stone. This they pried up, but it required all their strength to lift and stand it on edge. Just below, they saw a flight of steps. They were slippery with wet and they looked very old, as if worn, ages ago, by many feet passing up and down them.

Taffy shrunk back, as a draught of the close, dead air struck his nostrils.

“Come on, and don’t be afraid. I’m going to make you rich,” said the sorcerer.

At this, Taffy’s eyes glistened, and he followed on down the steps, without saying a word. At the bottom of the descent, they entered a narrow passage, and finally came to a door.

“Now, I’ll ask you. Are you brave, and will you come in with me, if I open this door?”

By this time, Taffy was so eager for treasure, that he spoke up at once.

“I’m not afraid. Open the door.”

The sorcerer gave a jerk and the door flew open. What a sight!

There, in the faint, red light, Taffy discerned a great cave. Lying on the floor were hundreds of armed men, but motionless and apparently sound asleep. Little spangles of light were reflected from swords, spears, round shields, and burnished helmets. All these seemed of very ancient pattern. But immediately in front of them was a bell. Taffy felt some curiosity to tap it. Would the sleeping host of men then rise up?

Just then, the sorcerer, speaking with a menacing gesture, and in a harsh tone, said:

“Do not touch that bell, or it’s all up with us both.”

Moving carefully, so as not to trip, or to stumble over the sleeping soldiers, they went on, and Taffy, stopping and looking up beheld before him a great round table. Many warriors were sitting at it. Their splendid gold inlaid armor, glittering helmets and noble faces showed that they were no common men. Yet Taffy could see only a few of the faces, for all had their heads more or less bent down, as if sound asleep, though sword and spear were near at hand, ready to be grasped in a moment.

Outshining all, was a golden throne at the farther end of the table and on it sat a king. He was of imposing stature, and august presence. Upon his head was a crown, on which were inlaid or set precious stones. These shone by their own light, sending out rays so brilliant that they dazzled Taffy, who had never seen anything like them. The king held in his right hand a mighty sword. It had a history and the name of it was Excalibur. In Arthur’s hand, it was almost part of his own soul. Its hilt and handle were of finely chased gold, richly studded with gems. Yet his head, too, was bent in deep sleep, as if only thunder could wake him.

“Are they all, everyone, asleep?” asked Taffy.

“Each and all,” was the answer.

“When did they fall asleep?” asked the drover.

“Over a thousand years ago,” answered the sorcerer.

“Tell me who they are, and why here,” asked Taffy.

“They are King Arthur’s trusty warriors. They are waiting for the hour to come, when they shall rise up and destroy the enemies of the Cymry, and once again possess the whole island of Britain, as in the early ages, before the Saxons came.”

“And who are those sitting around the table?” asked Taffy.

The sorcerer seemed tired of answering questions, but he replied, giving the name of each knight, and also that of his father, as if he were a Welshman himself; but at this, Taffy grew impatient, feeling as if a book of genealogy had been hurled at him.

Most impolitely, he interrupted his companion and cried out:

“And who is that on the throne?”

The sorcerer looked as if he was vexed, and felt insulted, but he answered:

“It’s King Arthur himself, with Excalibur, his famous sword, in his hand.”

This was snapped out, as if the sorcerer was disgusted at the interruption of his genealogy, and he shut his mouth tight as if he would answer no more questions, for such an impolite fellow.

Seizing Taffy by the hand, he led him into what was the storehouse of the cave. There lay heaps upon heaps of yellow gold. Both men stuffed their pockets, belt bags, and the inside of their clothes, with all they could load in.

“Now we had better get out, for it is time to go,” said the sorcerer and he led the way towards the cave door.

But as Taffy passed back, and along the hall, where the host of warriors were sleeping, his curiosity got the better of him.

He said to himself, “I must see this host awake. I’ll touch that bell, and find out whether the sorcerer spoke the truth.”

So, when he came to it, he struck the bell. In the twinkling of an eye, thousands of warriors sprang up, seized their armor, girded their swords, or seized their spears. All seemed eagerly awaiting the command to rush against the foe.

The ground quaked with their tramping, and shook with their tread, until Taffy thought the cave roof would fall in and bury them all. The air resounded with the rattle of arms, as the men, when in ranks, marked time, ready for motion forward and out of the cave.

But from the midst of the host, a deep sounding voice, as earnest as if in hot temper, but as deliberate as if in caution against a false alarm, spoke. He inquired:

“Who rang that bell? Has the day come?”

The sorcerer, thoroughly frightened and trembling, answered:

“No, the day has not come. Sleep on.”

Taffy, though dazzled by the increasing brilliancy of the light, had heard another deep voice, more commanding in its tones than even a king’s, call out, “Arthur, awake, the bell has rung. The day is breaking. Awake, great King Arthur!”

But even against such a voice, that of the sorcerer, now scared beyond measure, lest the king and his host should discover the cheat, and with his sword, Excalibur, chop the heads off both Taffy and himself, answered:

“No, it is still night. Sleep on, Arthur the Great.”

Erect over all, his head aloft and crowned with jewels, as with stars, the King himself now spoke:

“No, my warriors, the day has not yet come, when the Black Eagle and the Golden Eagle will meet in war. Sleep on, loyal souls. The morning of Wales has not yet dawned.”

Then, like the gentle soughing of the evening breeze among forest trees, all sound died away, and in the snap of a finger, all were asleep again. Seizing the hand of Taffy, the sorcerer hurried him out of the cave, moved the stone back in its place and motioning to Taffy to do the same, he quickly shoveled and kicked the loose dirt in the hole and stamped it down: When

Taffy turned to look for him, he was gone, without even taking the trouble to call his dupe a fool.

Wearied with his unwonted labors and excitements, Taffy walked home, got his supper, pondered on what he had seen, slept, and awoke in the morning refreshed. After breakfast, he sallied out again with pick and shovel.

For months, Taffy dug over every square foot of the hill. Neglecting his business as cattle man, he spent all the money he had made in London, but he never found that entrance to the cave. He died a poor man and all his children had to work hard to get their bread.

73

THE LADY OF THE LAKE

One easily gets acquainted with the Welsh fairies, for nearly all the good ones are very fond of music.

Or, they live down in the lakes, or up in the mountains. They are always ready to help kind or polite people, who treat them well or will give them a glass of milk, or a saucer of flummery.

But, oh, what tricks and mischief they do play on mean or stingy or grumpy folks with bad tempers! They tangle up the harness of the horses; milk the cows, letting the milk go to waste, on the stable floor; tie knots in their tails, or keep the dog’s mouth shut, when the robbers come sneaking around. Better not offend a fairy, even though no higher than a thimble!

A favorite place for the elfin ladies of the lake is high up in one of the fresh water mountain ponds. They are cousins to the mermaids, that swim in the salt water.

They say that these lake maidens love to come up close to the shore, to smell the sweet grass and flowers, which the cows like so much.

Near one of these lakes dwelt a widow, with only one son, named Gwyn. One day he took his lunch of barley bread and cheese, and went out, as usual, to tend the cows. Soon he saw rising out of the water, to dress her long and luxuriant hair, the most beautiful lady he had ever seen. In her hand she held a golden comb, and was using the bright lake-surface as a mirror.

At once Gwyn fell in love with her, and, like an unselfish lad, held out his refreshments — barley bread and cheese — all he had — bidding her to come and take.

But though the lady glided toward him, while he still held out his hand, she shook her head, saying:

O thou of the hard baked bread,
It is not easy to catch me

Sorry enough to miss such a prize, he hurried home to tell his mother. She, wondering also, whether fairies have teeth to chew, told him to take soft dough next time. Then, perhaps, the strange lady would come again.

Not much sleep did the boy get that night, and, before the sun was up, he was down by the lake side holding out his dough.

There, hour after hour, neglecting the cows, he looked eagerly over the water, but nothing appeared, except ripples started by the breeze. Again and again, he gazed in hope, only to be disappointed.

Meanwhile he thought out a pretty speech to make to her, but he kept his dough and went hungry.

It was late in the afternoon, when the trees on the hills were casting long shadows westward, that he gave up watching, for he supposed she would come no more.

But just as he started to go back to his mother's cabin, he turned his head and there was the same lady, looking more beautiful than ever. In a moment, he forgot every word he meant to say to her. His tongue seemed to leave him, and he only held out his hand, with the dough in it.

But the lake lady, shaking her head, only laughed and said:

THOU of the soft bread

I will not have thee

Though she dived under the water and left him sad and lonely, she smiled so sweetly, as she vanished, that, though again disappointed, he thought she would come again and she might yet accept his gift.

His mother told him to try her with bread half baked, that is, midway between hard crust and soft dough.

So, having packed his lunch, and much excited, though this time with bright hopes, Gwyn went to bed, though not to sleep. At dawn, he was up again and out by the lake side, with his half baked bread in his hand.

It was a day of rain and shine, of sun burst and cloud, but no lady appeared.

The long hours, of watching and waiting, sped on, until it was nearly dark.

When just about to turn homewards, to ease his mother’s anxiety, what should he see, but some cows walking on the surface of the water! In a few minutes, the lady herself, lovelier than ever, rose up and moved towards the shore.

Gwyn rushed out to meet her, with beseeching looks and holding the half baked bread in his hand. This time, she graciously took the gift, placed her other hand in his, and he led her to the shore.

Standing with her on land, he could not speak for many seconds. He noticed that she had sandals on her feet, and the one on the right foot was tied in a way rather unusual. Under her winsome smile, at last, he regained the use of his tongue. Then he burst out:

“Lady I love you, more than all the world besides. Will you be my wife?”

She did not seem at all willing at first, but love begets love. Finally yielding to his pleadings, she said, rather solemnly:

“I will be your bride but only on this condition, that if you strike me three times, without cause, I will leave your house and you only will be to blame, and it will be forever.”

These words stuck in his mind, and he inwardly made a vow never to give his lovely wife cause to leave him.

But not yet did happiness come, for, even while he took oath that he would rather cut off his right hand, than offend her, she darted away like an arrow, and, diving in the lake, disappeared.

At this sudden blow to his hopes and joy, Gwyn was so sorely depressed, as to wish to take his own life. Rushing up to the top of a rock, overhanging the deepest part of the lake, he was just about to leap into the water and drown himself, when he heard a voice behind him, saying:

“Hold rash lad, come here!”

He looked and there down on the shore of the lake, stood a grand looking old man, with a long white beard. On either side of him was a lovely maiden. These were his daughters.

Trembling with fear, the lad slipped down from the rock and drew near. Then the old man spoke comfortably to him, though in a very cracked voice.

“Mortal, do you wish to marry one of my daughters? Show me the one you love more than the other, and I will consent.”

Now the two maidens were so beautiful, yet so exactly alike, that Gwyn could not note any difference. As he looked, he began to wonder whether it had been a different lady, in each case, that rose out of the water. He looked beyond the old man, to see if there were a third lady. When he saw none more, he became more distracted. He feared lest he might choose the wrong one, who had not promised to love him.

Almost in despair, he was about to run home, when he noticed that one of the maidens put forward her right foot. Then he saw that her sandal was tied in the way he had already wondered at. So he boldly went forward and took her by the hand.

“This one is mine,” said he to the father.

“You are right,” answered the old man. “This is my daughter Nelferch. Take her and you shall have as many cattle, sheep, horses, hogs, and goats, as she can count, of each, without drawing in her breath. But I warn you that three blows, without cause, will send her back to me.”

While the old man smiled, and Gwyn renewed his vow, the new wife began to count by fives — one, two, three, four, five.

At the end of each count drawing in a fresh breath, there rose up, out of the lake, as many sheep, cattle, goats, pigs, and horses, as she had counted.

So it happened that the lad, who went out of his mother’s cottage, in the morning, a poor boy, came back to her, a rich man, and leading by the hand the loveliest creature on whom man or woman had ever looked upon.

As for the old man and the other daughter, no one ever saw them again.

Gwyn and his wife went out to a farm which he bought, and oh, how happy they were! She was very kind to the poor. She had the gift of healing, knew all the herbs, which were good for medicine, and cured sick folk of their diseases.

Three times the cradle was filled, and each time with a baby boy. Eight long and happy years followed. They loved each other so dearly and were so happy together, that Gwyn’s vow passed entirely out of his mind, and he thought no more of it.

On the seventh birthday of the oldest boy, there was a wedding at some distance away, and the father and mother walked through a field where their horses were grazing. As it was too far for Lady Nelferch to walk all the way, her husband went back to the house, for saddle and bridle, while she should catch the horse.

“Please do, and bring me my gloves from off the table,” she called, as he turned towards the house.

But when he returned to the field, he saw that she had not stirred. So, before handing his wife her gloves and pointing playfully to the horses, he gave her a little flick with the gloves.

Instead of moving, instantly, she heaved a deep sigh. Then looking up at him with sorrowful and reproachful eyes, she said:

“Remember our vow, Gwyn. This is the first causeless blow. May there never be another.”

Days and years passed away so happily, that the husband and father never again had to recall the promise given to his wife and her father.

But when they were invited to the christening of a baby, every one was full of smiles and gayety, except Nelferch. Women, especially the older ones, often cry at a wedding, but why his wife should burst into tears puzzled Gwyn.

Tapping her on the shoulder, he asked the reason:

“Because,” said she, “this weak babe will be in pain and misery all its days and die in agony. And, husband dear, you have once again struck me a causeless blow. Oh, do be on your guard, and not again break your promise.”

From this time forth, Gwyn was on watch over himself, day and night, like a sentinel over whom hangs the sentence of death, should he fall asleep on duty. He was ever vigilant lest, he, in a moment of forgetfulness, might, by some slip of conduct, or in a moment of forgetfulness, strike his dear wife.

The baby, whose life of pain and death of agony Nelferch had foretold, soon passed away; for, happily, its life was short. Then she and her husband attended the last rites of sorrow, for Celtic folk always have a funeral and hold a wake, even when a baby, only a span long, lies in the coffin.

Yet in the most solemn moment of the services of burial, Nelferch the wife, laughed out, so long and with such merriment, that everyone was startled.

Her husband, mortified at such improper behavior, touched her gently, saying:

“Hush, wife! Why do you laugh?”

“Because the babe is free from all pain. And, you have thrice struck me! Farewell!”

Fleeing like a deer home to their farm, she called together, by its name, each and every one of their animals, from stable and field; yes, even those harnessed to the plow. Then, over the mountain all moved in procession to the lake.

There, they plunged in and vanished. No trace of them was left, except that made by the oxen drawing the plow, and which mark on the ground men still point out.

Broken hearted and mad with grief, Gwyn rushed into the lake and was seen no more. The three sons, grieving over their drowned father, spent their many days wandering along the lakeside, hoping once more to see one, or both, of their dear parents.

Their love was rewarded. They never saw their father again, but one day their mother, Nelferch, suddenly appeared out of the water. Telling her children that her mission on earth was to relieve pain and misery, she took them to a point in the lake, where many plants grew that were useful in medicine. There, she often came and taught them the virtues of the roots, leaves, juices and the various virtues of the herbs, and how to nurse the sick and heal those who had diseases.

All three of Nelferch’s sons became physicians of fame and power. Their descendants, during many centuries, were renowned for their skill in easing pain and saving life. To this day, Physicians’ Point is shown to visitors as a famous spot, and in tradition is almost holy.

74

THE KING’S FOOT HOLDER

There was a curious custom in the far olden times of Wales. At the banqueting hall, the king of the country would sit with his feet in the lap of a high officer.

Whenever His Majesty sat down to dinner, this official person would be under the table holding the royal feet. This was also the case while all sat around the evening fire in the middle of the hall. This footholding person was one of the king’s staff and every castle must have a human footstool as part of its furniture.

By and by, it became the fashion for pretty maidens to seek this task, or to be chosen for the office. Their names in English sounded like Foot-Ease, Orthopede, or Foot Lights. When she was a plump and petite maid, they nicknamed her Twelve Inches, or when unusually soothing in her caresses of the soft royal toes. It was considered a high honor to be the King’s Foot Holder. In after centuries, it was often boasted of that such and such an ancestor had held this honorable service.

One picture of castle life, as given in one of the old books tells how Kaim, the king’s officer, went to the mead cellar with a golden cup, to get a drink that would keep them all wide awake. He also brought a handful of skewers on which they were to broil the collops, or bits of meat at the fire.

While they were doing this, the King sat on a seat of green rushes, over which was spread a flame-colored satin cover, with a cushion like it, for his elbow to rest upon.

In the evening, the harpers and singers made music, the bards recited poetry, or the good story tellers told tales of heroes and wonders. During all this time, one or more maidens held the king's feet, or took turns at it, when tired; for often the revels or songs and tales lasted far into the night. At intervals, if the story was dull, or he had either too much dinner, or had been out hunting and got tired, His Majesty took a nap, with his feet resting upon the lap of a pretty maiden. This happened often in the late hours, while they were getting the liquid refreshments ready.

Then the king's chamberlain gently nudged him, to be wideawake, and he again enjoyed the music, and the stories, while his feet were held.

For, altogether, it was great fun.

Now there was once a Prince of Gwynedd, in Wales, named Math, who was so fond of having his feet held, that he neglected to govern his people properly. He spent all his time lounging in an easy chair, while a pretty maiden held his heels and toes. He committed all public cares to two of his nephews. These were named for short, Gily and Gwyd.

The one whom the king loved best to have her hold his feet was the fairest maiden in all the land, and she was named Goewen.

By and by, the prince grew so fond of having his feet held, and stroked and patted and played with, by Goewen, that he declared that he could not live, unless Goewen held his feet. And, she said, that if she did not hold the king's feet, she would die.

Now this Gily, one of the king's nephews, son of Don, whom he had appointed to look day by day after public affairs, would often be in the hall at night. He listened to the music and stories, and seeing Goewen, the king's foot holder, he fell in love with her. His eye usually wandered from the story teller to the lovely girl holding the king’s feet, and he thought her as beautiful as an angel.

Soon he became so lovesick, that he felt he would risk or give his life to get and have her for his own. But what would the king say?

Besides, he soon found out that the maiden Goewen cared nothing for him.

Nevertheless the passion of the love-lorn youth burned hotly and kept increasing. He confided his secret to his brother Gwyd, and asked his aid, which was promised. So, one day, the brother went to King Math, and begged for leave to go to Pryderi. In the king’s name, he would ask from him the gift of a herd of swine of famous breed; which, in the quality of the pork they furnished, excelled all other pigs known. They were finer than any seen in the land, or ever heard of before. Their flesh was said to be sweeter, juicier, and more tender than the best beef. Even their manners were better than those of some men.

In fact, these famous pigs were a present from the King of Fairyland. So highly were they prized, that King Math doubted much whether his nephew could get them at any price.

In ancient Wales the bards and poet singers were welcomed, and trusted above all men; and this, whether in the palace or the cottage.

So Gwyd, the brother of the love-sick one, in order to get the herd of surpassing swine, took ten companions, all young men and strong, dressed as bards, and pretending by their actions to be such. Then they all started out together to seek the palace of Pryderi.

Having arrived, they were entertained at a great feast, in the castle hall. There Pryderi sat on his throne-chair, with his feet in a maiden’s lap.

The dinner over, Gwyd was asked to tell a story.

This he did, delighting everyone so much, that he was voted a jolly good fellow by all. In fact, Pryderi felt ready to give him anything he might demand, excepting always his foot holder.

At once, Gwyd made request to give him the herd of swine.

At this, the countenance of Pryderi fell, for he had made a promise to his people, that he would not sell or give away the swine, until they had produced double their number in the land; for there were no pigs and no pork like theirs, to be bought anywhere.

Now this Gwyd was not very cunning, but he had the power of using magic arts. By these, he could draw the veil of illusion over both the mind and the eyes of the people.

So he made answer to Pryderi’s objections thus:

“Keep your promise to your people, oh, most honored Pryderi, and only exchange them for the gift I make thee,” said Gwyd.

Thereupon, exerting his powers of magic, he created the illusion of twelve superb horses. These were all saddled, bridled, and magnificently caparisoned. But, after twenty-four hours, they would vanish from sight. The illusion would be over.

With these steeds, so well fitted for hunting, were twelve sleek, fleet hounds. Taken altogether, here was a sight to make a hunter’s eyes dance with delight.

So Pryderi gave Gwyd the swine, and he quickly drove them off.

“For,” he whispered to his companion fellows in knavery, “the illusion will only last until the same hour to-morrow.”

And so it happened. For when Pryderi’s men went to the stables, to groom the horses and feed the hounds, there was nothing in either the stables or the kennels.

When they told this to Pryderi, he at once blew his horn and assembled his knights, to invade the country of Gwynedd, to recover his swine. Hearing of his coming, King Math went out to meet Pryderi in battle.

But while he was away with his army, Gily, the lover, seized the beautiful maiden Goewen, who held the king’s feet in her lap.

She was not willing to marry Gily, but he eloped with her, and carried her off to his cottage.

The war which now raged was finally decided by single combat, as was the custom in old days. By this, the burning of the peasants’ houses, and the ruin which threatened the whole country, ended, and peace came.

It was not alone by the strength and fierceness of King Math, but also by the magic spells of Gwyd, that Pryderi was slain.

After burying the hero, King Math came back to his palace and found out what Gily had done. Then he took Goewen away from Gily, and to make amends for her trouble, in being thus torn from his palace, King Math made her his queen. Then the lovely Goewen shared his throne covered with the flame colored satin. One of the most beautiful maidens of the court was chosen to hold his feet, until such time as a permanent choice was made.

As for the two nephews, who had fled from the wrath of their princely uncle, they were put under bans, as outlaws, and had to live on the borders of the kingdoms. No one of the king’s people was allowed to give them food or drink. Yet they would not obey the summons of the king, to come and receive their punishment.

But at last, tired of being deserted by all good men and women, they repented in sorrow. Hungry, ragged and forlorn, they came to their uncle, the king to submit themselves to be punished.

When they appeared, Math spoke roughly to them, and said:

“You cannot make amends for the shame you have brought upon me. Yet, since you obey and are sorry, I shall punish you for a time and then pardon you. You are to do penance for three years at least.”

Then they were changed into wild deer, and he told them to come back after twelve months.

At the end of the year they returned, bringing with them a young fawn.

As this creature was entirely innocent, it was given a human form and baptized in the church.

But the two brothers were changed into wild swine, and driven off to find their food in the forest.

At the end of the year, they came back with a young pig.

The king had the little animal changed into a human being, which, like every mother’s child in that time, received baptism.

Again the brothers were transformed into animal shape. This time, as wolves, and were driven out to the hills.

At the end of a twelve months’ period, they came back, three in number, for one was a cub.

By this time, the penance of the naughty nephews was over, and they were now to be delivered from all magic spells.

So their human nature was restored to them, but they must be washed thoroughly. In the first place, it took much hot water and lye, made from the wood ashes, and then a great deal of scrubbing, to make them presentable.

Then they were anointed with sweet smelling oil, and the king ordered them to be arrayed in elegant apparel. They were appointed to hold honorable office at court, and from time to time to go out through the country, to call the officers to attend to public business.

When the time came that the king sought for one of the most beautiful maidens, who should hold his feet, Gwyd nominated to the prince’s notice his sister Arianrod. The king was gracious, and thereafter she held his feet at all the banquets. She was looked up to with reverence by all, and held the office for many years. Thus King Math’s reputation for grace and mercy was confirmed.

75

POWELL, PRINCE OF DYFED

One of the oldest of the Welsh fairy tales tells us about Pwyle, King of Fairyland and father of the numerous clan of the Powells. He was a mighty hunter. He could ride a horse, draw a bow, and speak the truth. He was always honored by men, and he kept his faith and his promises to women. The children loved him, for he loved them. In the castle hall, he could tell the best stories. No man, bard, or warrior, foot holder or commoner, could excel him in gaining and keeping the attention of his hearers, even when they were sleepy and wanted to go to bed.

One day, when out a hunting in the woods, he noticed a pack of hounds running down a stag. He saw at once that they were not his own, for they were snow white in color and had red ears.

Being a young man, Powell did not know at this time of his life, that red is the fairy color, and that these were all dogs from Fairyland. So he drove off the red-eared hounds, and was about to let loose his own pack on the stag, when a horseman appeared on the scene.

The stranger at once began to upbraid Powell for being impolite. He asked why his hounds should not be allowed to hunt the deer.

Powell spoke pleasantly in reply, making his proper excuses to the horseman. The two began to like each other, and soon got acquainted and mutually enjoyed being companions.

It turned out that the stranger was Arawn, a king in Fairyland. He had a rival named Hargan, who was beating him and his army in war.

So Arawn asked Powell to help him against his enemy. He even made request that one year from that time, Powell should meet Hargan in battle. He told him that one stroke of his sword would finish the enemy. He must then sheathe his weapon, and not, on any account, strike a second time.

To make victory sure, the Fairy King would exchange shapes with the mortal ruler and each take not only the place, but each the shape and form of the other. Powell must go into Fairy Land and govern the kingdom there, while Arawn should take charge of affairs at Dyfed.

But Powell was warned, again, to smite down his enemy with a single stroke of his sword. If, in the heat of the conflict, and the joy of victory, Powell should forget, and give a second blow to Hargan, he would immediately come to life and be as strong as ever.

Powell heeded well these words. Then, putting on the shape of Arawn, he went into Fairy Land, and no one noticed, or thought of anything different from the days and years gone by.

But now, at night, a new and unexpected difficulty arose. Arawn’s beautiful wife was evidently not in the secret, for she greeted Powell as her own husband.

After dinner, when the telling of stories in the banqueting hall was over, the time had come for them to retire.

But the new bed fellow did not even kiss her, or say “good night,” but turned his back to her and his face to the wall, and never moved until daylight. Then the new King in Fairy Land rose up, ate his breakfast, and went out to hunt.

Every day, he ruled the castle and kingdom, as if he had always been the monarch. To everybody, he seemed as if he had been long used to public business, and no questions were asked, nor was there any talk made on the subject. Everyone took things as matter of course.

Yet, however polite or gracious he might be to the queen during the day, in the evening, he spoke not a word, and passed every night as at the first.

The twelve months soon sped along, and now the time for the battle in single combat between Powell and Hargan had fully come. The two warriors met in the middle of a river ford, and backed their horses for a charge. Then they rushed furiously at the other. Powell’s spear struck Hargan so hard, that he was knocked out of the saddle and hurled, the length of a lance, over and beyond the crupper, or tail strap of his horse. He fell mortally wounded upon the ground.

Now came the moment of danger and temptation to Powell, for Hargan cried out:

“For the love of Heaven, finish your work on me. Slay me with your sword.”

But Powell was wise and his head was cool. He had kept in mind the warning to strike only one blow. He called out loudly, so that all could hear him:

“I will not repeat that. Slay thee who may, I shall not.”

So Hargan, knowing his end had come, bade his nobles bear him away from the river shore.

Then Powell, with his armies, overran the two kingdoms of Fairy Land and made himself master of all. He took oath of all the princes and nobles, who swore to be loyal to their new master.

This done, Powell rode away to the trysting place in a glen, and there he met Arawn, as had been appointed. They changed shapes, and each became himself, as he had been before.

Arawn thanked Powell heartily, and bade him see what he had done for him.

Then each one rode back, in his former likeness, to his kingdom.

Now at Anwyn, no one but Arawn himself knew that anything unusual had taken place. After dinner, and the evening story telling were over, and it was time to go to bed, Arawn’s wife was surprised in double measure.

Two things puzzled her. Her husband was now very tender to her and also very talkative; whereas, for a whole year, every night, he had been as silent and immovable as a log. How could it be, in either case?

But this time, the wife was silent as a statue. Even though Arawn spoke to her three times, he received no reply.

Then he asked directly of her, why she was so silent. She made an answer that, for a whole year, no word had been spoken in their bedroom.

“What?” said he, “did we not talk together, as always before?”

“No,” said she, “not for a year has there been talk or caress between us.”

At this answer, Arawn was overcome with surprise, and as struck with admiration at having so good a friend. He burst out first in praise of Powell, and then told his wife all that had happened during the past twelve months. She, too, was full of admiration, and told her husband that in Powell he had certainly found a true friend.

In Dyfed, when Powell had returned to his own land and castle, he called his lords together. Then he asked them to be perfectly frank and free to speak. They must tell him whether they thought him a good king during the year past.

All shouted in chorus of approval. Then their spokesman addressed Powell thus:

“My lord, never was thy wisdom so great, thy generosity more free, nor thy justice more manifest, than during the past year.”

When he ceased, all the vassals showed their approval of this speech.

Then Powell, smiling, told the story of his adventures in exchanging his form and tasks; at the end of which, the spokesman taking his cue from the happy faces of all his fellow vassals, made reply:

“Of a truth, lord, we pray thee, do thou give thanks to Heaven that thou hast formed such a fellowship. Please continue to us the form of the kingdom and rule, that we have enjoyed for a year past.”

Thereupon King Powell took oath, kissing the hilt of his sword, and called on Heaven to witness his promise that he would do as they had desired.

So the two kings confirmed the friendship they had made. Each sent the other rich gifts of jewels, horses and hounds.

In memory of so wonderful and happy union, of a mortal and a fairy, Powell was thereafter, in addition to all his titles, saluted as Lord of Anwyn, which is only another name for the Land of the Fairies.

76

POWELL AND HIS BRIDE

Not far from the castle where King Powell had his court, there was a hillock called the Mount of Macbeth. It was the common belief that some strange adventure would befall anyone who should sit upon that mound.

He would receive blows, or wounds, or else he would see something wonderful.

Thus it came to pass, that none but peaceful bards had ever sat upon the mound. Never a warrior or a common man had risked sitting there. The general fear felt, and the awe inspired by the place, was too great.

But after his adventure of being King of Fairy Land for a whole year, everything else to Powell seemed dull and commonplace. So, to test his own courage, and worthiness of kingship, Powell assembled all his lords at Narberth.

After the night's feasting, revelry and story telling, Powell declared that, next day, he would sit upon the enchanted mound.

So when the sun was fully risen, Powell took his seat upon the mound, expecting that, all of a sudden, something unusual would happen.

For some minutes nothing, whether event or vision, took place. Then he lifted up his eyes and saw approaching him a white horse on which rode a lady. She was dressed in shining garments, as if made of gold. Evidently she was a princess. Yet she came not very near.

“Does anyone among you know who this lady is?” asked Powell of his chieftains.

“Not one of us,” was the answer.

Thereupon Powell ordered his vassals to ride forward. They were to greet her courteously, and inquire who she was.

But now the predicted wonder took place. She moved away from them, yet at a quiet pace that suited her. Though the knights spurred their horses, and rode fast and furiously, they could not come any nearer to her.

They galloped back, and reported their failure to reach the lady.

Then Powell picked out others and sent them riding after the lady, but each time, one and all returned, chagrined with failure. A woman had beaten them.

So the day closed with silence in the castle hall. There was no merry making or story telling that night.

The next day, Powell sat again on the mound and once more the golden lady came near.

This time, Powell himself left his seat on the mound, leaped on his fleetest horse, and pursued the maiden, robed in gold, on the white horse.

But she flitted away, as she had done before from the knights. Again and again, though he could get nearer and nearer to her, he failed.

Then the baffled king cried out, in despair, “O maiden fair, for the sake of him whom thou lovest, stay for me.”

Evidently the lady, who lived in the time of castles and courts, did not care to be wooed in the style of the cave men. Such manners did not suit her, but with a change of method of making love, her heart melted. Besides, she was a kind woman. She took pity on horses, as well as on men.

Sweet was her voice, as she answered most graciously:

“I will stay gladly, and it were better for thy horses, hadst thou asked me properly, long ago.”

To his questions, as to how and why she came to him, she told her story, as follows:

“I am Rhiannon, descended from the August and Venerable One of old. My aunts and uncles tried to make me marry against my will a chieftain named Gwawl, an auburn-haired youth, son of Clud, but, because of my love to thee, would I have no husband, and if you reject me, I will never marry any man.”

“As Heaven is my witness, were I to choose among all the damsels and ladies of the world, thee would I choose,” cried Powell.

After that, it was agreed that, when a year had sped, Powell should go to the Palace of the August and Venerable One of old, and claim her for his bride.

So, when twelve months had passed, Powell with his retinue of a hundred knights, all splendidly horsed and finely appareled, presented himself before the castle. There he found his fair lady and a feast already prepared at which he sat with her. On the other side of the table, were her father and mother.

In the midst of this joyous occasion, when all was gayety, and they talked together, in strode a youth clad in sheeny satin. He was of noble bearing and had auburn hair. He saluted Powell and his knights courteously.

At once Powell, the lord of Narberth, invited the stranger to come and sit down as guest beside him.

“Not so,” replied the youth. “I am a suitor, and have come to crave a boon of thee.”

Without guile or suspicion, Powell replied innocently.

“Ask what you will. If in my power, it shall be yours.”

But Rhiannon chided Powell. She asked, “Oh, why did you give him such an answer?”

“But he did give it,” cried the auburn haired youth. Then turning to the whole company of nobles, he appealed to them:

“Did he not pledge his word, before you all, to give me what I asked?”

Then, turning to Powell, he said:

“The boon I ask is this, to have thy bride, Rhiannon. Further, I want this feast and banquet to celebrate, in this place, our wedding.”

At this demand, Powell seemed to have been struck dumb. He did not speak, but Rhiannon did.

“Be silent, as long as thou wilt,” she cried, “but surely no man ever made worse use of his wits than thou hast done; for this man, to whom thou gavest thy oath of promise, is none other than Gwawl, the son of Clud. He is the suitor, from whom I fled to come to you, while you sat on the Narberth mound.”

Now, out of such trouble, how should the maiden, promised to two men, be delivered?

Her wit saved her for the nonce. Powell was bound to keep his word; but Rhiannon explained to Gwawl, that it was not his castle or hall. So, he could not give the banquet; but, in a year from that date, if Gwawl would come for her, she would be his bride. Then, a new bridal feast would be set for the wedding.

In the meantime, Rhiannon planned with Powell to get out of the trouble. For this purpose, she gave him a magical bag, which he was to use when the right time should come.

Quickly the twelve months passed and then Gwawl appeared again, to claim his bride, and a great feast was spread in his honor.

All were having a good time, when in the midst of their merriment, a beggar appeared in the hall. He was in rags, and carried the usual beggar’s wallet for food or alms. He asked only that, out of the abundance on the table, his bag might be filled.

Gwawl agreed, and ordered his servants to attend to the matter.

But the bag never got full. What they put into it, or how much made no difference. Dish after dish was emptied. By degrees, most of the food on the table was in the beggar’s bag.

“My soul alive! Will that bag never get full?” asked Gwawl.

“No, by Heaven! Not unless some rich man shall get into it, stamp it down with his feet, and call out ‘enough.’”

Then Rhiannon, who sat beside Gwawl, urged him to attempt the task, by putting his two feet in the bag to stamp it down.

No sooner had Gwawl done this, than the supposed beggar pushed him down inside the bag. Then drawing the mouth shut, he tied it tight over Gwawl’s head.

Then the beggar’s rags dropped, and there stood forth the handsome leader, Powell. He blew his horn, and in rushed his knights who overcame and bound the followers of Gwawl.

Then they proceeded to play a merry game of football, using the bag, in which Gwawl was tied, as men in our day kick pigskin. One called to his mate, or rival, “What’s in the bag?” and others answered, “a badger.” So they played the game of “Badger in the Bag,” kicking it around the hall.

They did not let the prisoner out of the bag, until he had promised to pay the pipers, the harpers, and the singers, who should come to the wedding of Powell and Rhiannon. He must give up all his claims, and register a vow never to take revenge. This oath given, and promises made, the bag was opened and the agreements solemnly confirmed in presence of all.

Then Gwawl, and every one of his men, knights and servants, were let go, and they went back to their own country.

A few evenings later, in the large banqueting hall, Powell and Rhiannon were married. Besides the great feast, presents were given to all present, high and low. Then the happy pair made their wedding journey to Gwawl’s palace at Narberth. There the lovely bride gave a ring, or a gem, to every lord and lady in her new realm, and everybody was happy.

77

WHY THE BACK DOOR WAS FRONT

In the days when were no books, or writing, and folk tales were the only ones told, there was an old woman, who had a bad reputation. She pretended to be very poor, so as not to attract or tempt robbers. Yet those who knew her best, knew also, as a subject of common talk, that she was always counting out her coins.

Besides this, she lived in a nice house, and it was believed that she made a living by stealing babies out of their cradles to sell to the bad fairies.

It was matter of rumor that she would, for an extra large sum, take a wicked fairy’s ugly brat, and put it in place of a mother’s darling.

In addition to these horrid charges against her, it was rumored that she laid a spell, or charm, on the cattle of people whom she did not like, in order to take revenge on them.

The old woman denied all this, and declared it was only silly gossip of envious people who wanted her money. She lived so comfortably, she averred, because her son, who was a stone mason, who made much money by building chimneys, which had then first come into fashion. When he brought to her the profits of his jobs, she counted the coins, and because of this, some people were jealous, and told bad stories about her. She declared she was thrifty, but neither a miser, nor a kidnaper, nor a witch.

One day, this old woman wanted more feathers to stuff into her bed, to make it softer and feel pleasanter for her old bones to rest upon, for what she slept on was nearly worn through. So she went to a farm, where they were plucking geese, and asked for a few handfuls of feathers.

But the rich farmer's people refused and ordered her out of the farm yard.

Shortly after this event, the cows of this farmer, who was opposed to chimneys, and did not like her or her son, suffered dreadfully from the disease called the black quarter. As they had no horse doctors or professors of animal economy, or veterinaries in those days, many of the cows died. The rich farmer lost much money, for he had now no milk or beef to sell. At once, he suspected that his cattle were bewitched, and that the old woman had cast a spell on them. In those days, it was very easy to think so.

So the angry man went one day to the old crone, when she was alone, and her stout son was away on a distant job. He told her to remove the charm, which she had laid on his beasts, or he would tie her arms and legs together, and pitch her into the river.

The old woman denied vehemently that she possessed any such powers, or had ever practiced such black arts.

To make sure of it, the farmer made her say out loud, "The Blessing of God be upon your cattle!" To clinch the matter, he compelled her to repeat the Lord's Prayer, which she was able to do, without missing one syllable. She used the form of words which are not found in the prayer book, but are in the Bible, and was very earnest, when she prayed "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

But after all that trouble, and the rough way which the rich farmer took to save his cattle, his efforts were in vain. In spite of that kind of religion which he professed — which was shown by bullying a poor old woman — his cattle were still sick, with no sign of improvement. He was at his wits' end to know what to do next.

Now, as we have said, this was about the time that chimneys came into fashion. In very old days, the Cymric house was a round hut, with a thatched roof, without glass windows, and the smoke got out through the door and holes in the walls, in the best way it could. The only tapestry in the hut was in the shape of long festoons of soot, that hung from the roof or rafters. These, when the wind blew, or the fire was lively, would swing or dance or whirl, and often fall on the heads, or into the food, while the folks were eating. When the children cried, or made wry faces at the black stuff, their daddy only laughed, and said it was healthy, or was for good luck.

But by and by, the carpenters and masons made much improvement, especially when, instead of flint hatchets, they had iron axes and tools. Then they hewed down trees, that had thick cross branches and set up columns in the center, and made timber walls and rafters. Then the house was square or oblong. In other words, the Cymric folks squared the circle.

Now they began to have lattices, and, much later, even glass windows. They removed the fireplace from the middle of the floor and set it at the end of the house, opposite the door, and built chimneys.

Then they set the beds at the side, and made sleeping rooms. This was done by stretching curtains between partitions. They had also a loft, in which to keep odds and ends. They hung up the bacon and hams, and strings of onions, and made a mantle piece over the fireplace. They even began to decorate the walls with pictures and to set pewter dishes, china cats, and Dresden shepherds in rows on the shelves for ornaments.

Now people wore shoes and the floor, instead of being muddy, or dusty, with pools and puddles of water in the time of rainy weather and with the pigs and chickens running in and out, was of clay, beaten down flat and hard, and neatly whitewashed at the edges. Outside, in front, were laid nice flat flagstones, that made a pleasant path to the front door. Flowers, inside and out, added to the beauty of the home and made perfume for those who loved them.

The rich farmer had just left his old round hut and now lived in one of the new and better kind of houses. He was very proud of his chimney, which he had built higher than any of his neighbors, but he could not be happy, while so many of his cows were sick or dying. Besides, he was envious of other people's prosperity and cared nothing, when they, too, suffered.

One night, while he was standing in front of his fine house and wondering why he must be vexed with so many troubles, he talked to himself and, speaking out loud, said:

"Why don't my cows get well?"

"I'll tell you," said a voice behind him. It seemed half way between a squeak and a growl.

He turned round and there he saw a little, angry man. He was dressed in red, and stood hardly as high as the farmer's knee. The little old man glared at the big fellow and cried out in a high tone of voice:

"You must change your habits of disposing of your garbage, for other people have chimneys besides you."

"What has that to do with sickness among my cows?"

"Much indeed. Your family is the cause of your troubles, for they throw all their slops down my chimney and put out my fire."

The farmer was puzzled beyond the telling, for he owned all the land within a mile, and knew of no house in sight.

"Put your foot on mine, and then you will have the power of vision, to see clearly."

The farmer's big boot was at once placed on the little man's slipper, and when he looked down he almost laughed at the contrast in size. What was his real surprise, when he saw that the slops thrown out of his house, did actually fall down; and, besides, the contents of the full bucket, when emptied, kept on dripping into the chimney of a house which stood far below, but which he had never seen before.

But as soon as he took his foot off that of the tiny little man, he saw nothing. Everything like a building vanished as in a dream.

“I see that my family have done wrong and injured yours. Pray forgive me. I’ll do what I can to make amends for it.”

“It’s no matter now, if you only do as I ask you. Shut up your front door, build a wall in its place, and then my family will not suffer from yours.”

The rich farmer thought all this was very funny, and he had a hearty laugh over it all.

Yet he did exactly as the little man in the red cloak had so politely asked him. He walled up the old door at the front, and built another at the back of the house, which opened out into the garden. Then he made the path, on which to go in from the roadway to the threshold, around the corners and over a longer line of flagstones. Then he removed the fireplace and chimney to what had been the front side of the house, but was now the back. For the next thing, he had a copper doorsill nailed down, which his housemaid polished, until it shone as bright as gold.

Yet long before this, his cows had got well, and they now gave more and richer milk than ever. He became the wealthiest man in the district. His children all grew up to be fine looking men and women. His grandsons were famous engineers and introduced paving and drainage in the towns so that to-day, for both man and beast, Wales is one of the healthiest of countries.

78

THE RED BANDITS OF MONTGOMERY

When chimneys were first added to houses in Wales, and the style of house-building changed, from round to square, many old people found fault with the new fashion of letting the smoke out.

They declared they caught colds and sneezed oftener, than in the times gone by. The chimneys, they said, cost too much money, and were useless extravagances. They got along well enough, in the good old days, when the smoke had its own way of getting out. Then, it took plenty of time to pass through the doors and windholes, for no one person or thing was in a hurry, when they were young. Moreover, when the fireplace was in the middle of the floor, the whole family sat around it and had a sociable time.

It was true, as they confessed, when argued with, that the smell of the cooking used to linger too long. The soot also, hung in long streamers from the rafters, and stuck to the house, like old friends.

But the greatest and most practical objection of the old folks to the chimneys was that robbers used them to climb down at night and steal people’s money, when they were asleep. So, many householders used to set old scythe blades across the new smoke holes, to keep out the thieves, or to slice them up, if they persisted.

In Montgomery, which is one of the Welsh shires, there was an epidemic of robbery, and the doings of the Red Bandits are famous in history.

Now there was a young widow, whose husband had been killed by the footpads, or road robbers. She was left alone in the world, with a little boy baby in the cradle and only one cow in the byre. She had hard work to pay her rent, but as there were three or four scythes set in the chimney, and the cow stable had a good lock on it, she thought she was safe from burglars or common thieves.

But the Reds picked out the most expert chimney-climber in their gang, and he one night slipped down into the widow's cottage, without making any noise or cutting off his nose, toes, or fingers. Then, robbing the widow of her rent money, he picked the lock of the byre and drove off the cow. In the morning, the poor woman found both doors open, but there was no money and no cow.

While she was crying over her loss, and wringing her hands, because of her poverty, she heard a knock at the door.

"Come in," said the widow.

There entered an old lady with a kindly face. She was very tall and well dressed. Her cloak, her gloves, and shoes, and the ruffles under her high peaked Welsh head dress, were all green. The widow thought she looked like an animated leek. In her right hand was a long staff, and in her left, under her cloak, she held a little bag, that was green, also.

"Why do you weep?" asked the visitor.

Then the widow told her tale of woe — the story of the loss of her husband, and how a red robber, in spite of the scythe blades set in the chimney, had come down and taken away both her money and her cow.

Now, although she had sold all her butter and cream, she could neither pay her rent, nor have any buttermilk with her rye bread and flummery.

“Dry your tears and take comfort,” said the tall lady in the green peaked hat. “Here is money enough to pay your rent and buy another cow.” With that, she sat down at the round table near the peat fire. Opening her bag, the shining gold coins slid out and formed a little heap on the table.

“There, you can have all this, if you will give me all I want.”

At first, the widow’s eyes opened wide, and then she glanced at the cradle, where her baby was sleeping. Then she wondered, though she said nothing.

But the next moment, she was laughing at herself, and looking around at her poor cottage. She tried to guess what there was in it, that the old lady could possibly want.

“You can have anything I have. Name it,” she said cheerfully to her visitor.

But only a moment more, and all her fears returned at the thought that the visitor might ask for her boy.

The old lady spoke again and said:

“I want to help you all I can, but what I came here for is to get the little boy in the cradle.”

The widow now saw that the old woman was a fairy, and that if her visitor got hold of her son, she would never see her child again.

So she begged piteously of the old lady, to take anything and everything, except her one child.

“No, I want that boy, and, if you want the gold, you must let me take him.”

“Is there anything else that I can do for you, so that I may get the money?” asked the widow.

“Well, I’ll make it easier for you. There are two things I must tell you to cheer you.”

“What are they?” asked the widow, eagerly.

“One is, that by our fairy law, I cannot take your boy, until three days have passed. Then, I shall come again, and you shall have the gold; but only on the one condition I have stated.”

“And the next?” almost gasped the widow.

“If you can guess my name, you will doubly win; for then, I shall give you the gold and you can keep your boy.”

Without waiting for another word, the lady in green scooped up her money, put it back in the bag, and moved off and out the door.

The poor woman, at once a widow and mother, and now stripped of her property, fearing to lose her boy, brooded all night over her troubles and never slept a wink.

In the morning, she rose up, left her baby with a neighbor, and went to visit some relatives in the next village, which was several miles distant. She told her story, but her kinsfolk were too poor to help her. So, all disconsolate, she turned her face homewards.

On her way back she had to pass through the woods, where, on one side, was a clearing. In the middle of this open space, was a ring of grass. In the ring a little fairy lady was tripping around and singing to herself.

Creeping up silently, the anxious mother heard to her joy, a rhymed couplet and caught the sound of a name, several times repeated. It sounded like “Silly Doot.”

Hurrying home and perfectly sure that she knew the secret that would save her boy, she set cheerily about her regular work and daily tasks. In fact, she slept soundly that night.

Next day, in came the lady in green as before, with her bag of money. Taking her seat at the round table, near the fire, she poured out the gold. Then jingling the coins in the pile, she said:

“Now give up your boy, or guess my name, if you want me to help you.”

The young widow, feeling sure that she had the old fairy in a trap, thought she would have some fun first.

“How many guesses am I allowed?” she asked.

“All you want, and as many as you please,” answered the green lady, smiling.

The widow rattled off a string of names, English, Welsh and Biblical; but every time the fairy shook her head. Her eyes began to gleam, as if she felt certain of getting the boy. She even moved her chair around to the side nearest the cradle.

“One more guess,” cried the widow. “Can it be Silly Doot?”

At this sound, the fairy turned red with rage. At the same moment, the door opened wide and a blast of wind made the hearth fire flare up. Leaving her gold behind her, the old woman flew up the chimney, and disappeared over the housetops.

The widow scooped up the gold, bought two cows, furnished her cottage with new chairs and fresh flowers, and put the rest of the coins away under one of the flag stones at the hearth. When her boy grew up, she gave him a good education, and he became one of the fearless judges, who, with the aid of Baron Owen, rooted out of their lair the Red Bandits, that had robbed his mother. Since that day, there has been little crime in Wales — the best governed part of the kingdom.

79

THE FAIRY CONGRESS

One can hardly think of Wales without a harp. The music of this most ancient and honorable instrument, which emits sweet sounds, when heard in a foreign land makes Welsh folks homesick for the old country and the music of the harp. Its strings can wail with woe, ripple with merriment, sound out the notes of war and peace, and lift the soul in heavenly melody.

Usually a player on the harp opened the Eistedfodd, as the Welsh literary congress is called, but this time they had engaged for the fairies a funny little fellow to start the programme with a solo on his violin.

The figure of this musician, at the congress of Welsh fairies, was the most comical of any in the company. The saying that he was popular with all the mountain spirits was shown to be true, the moment he began to scrape his fiddle, for then they all crowded around him.

"Did you ever see such a tiny specimen?" asked Queen Mab of Puck.

The little fiddler came forward and drawing his instrument from under his arm, proceeded to scrape the strings. He had on a pair of moss trousers, and his coat was a yellow gorse flower. His feet were clad in shoes made of beetles' wings, which always kept bright, as if polished with a brush.

When one looked at the fiddle, he could see that it was only a wooden spoon, with strings across the bowl. But the moment he drew the bow from one side to the other, all the elves, from every part of the hills, came tripping along to hear the music, and at once began dancing.

Some of these elves were dressed in pink, some in blue, others in yellow, and many had glow worms in their hands. Their tread was so light that the flower stems never bent, nor was a petal crushed, when they walked over the turf. All, as they came near, bowed or dropped a curtsey. Then the little musician took off his cap to each, and bowed in return.

There was too much business before the meeting for dancing to be kept up very long, but when the violin solo was over, at a sign given by the fiddler, the dancers took seats wherever they could find them, on the grass, or gorse, or heather, or on the stones. After order had been secured, the chairman of the meeting read regrets from those who had been invited but could not be present.

The first note was from the mermaids, who lived near the Green Isles of the Ocean. They asked to be excused from traveling inland and climbing rocks. In the present delicate state of their health this would be too fatiguing. Poor things!

It was unanimously voted that they be excused.

Queen Mab was dressed, as befitted the occasion, like a Welsh lady, not wearing a crown, but a high peaked hat, pointed at the top and about half a yard high. It was black and was held on by fastenings of scalloped lace, that came down around her neck.

The lake fairies, or Elfin Maids, were out in full force. These lived at the bottom of the many ponds and pools in Wales. Many stories are told of the wonderful things they did with boats and cattle.

Nowadays, when they milk cows by electric machinery and use steam launches on the water, most of the water sprites of all kinds have been driven away, for they do not like the smell of kerosene or gasoline. It is for these reasons that, in our day, they are not often seen. In fact, cows from the creameries can wade out into the water and even stand in it, while lashing their tails to keep off the flies, without any danger, as in old times, of being pulled down by the Elfin Maids.

The little Red Men, that could hide under a thimble, and have plenty of room to spare, were all out. The elves, and nixies and sprites, of all colors and many forms were on hand.

The pigmies, who guard the palace of the king of the world underground, came in their gay dresses. There were three of them, and they brought in their hands balls of gold, with which to play tenpins, but they were not allowed to have any games while the meeting was going on.

In fact, just when these little fellows from down under the earth were showing off their gay clothes and their treasures from the caves, one mischievous fairy maid sidled up to their chief and whispered in his ear:

“Better put away your gold, for this is in modern Wales, where they have pawn shops. Three golden balls, two above the one below, which you often see nowadays, mean that two to one you will never get it again. These hang out as the sign of a pawnbroker’s shop, and what you put in does not, as a rule, come out. I am afraid that some of the Cymric fairies from Cornwall, or Montgomery, or Cheshire, might think you were after business, and you understand that no advertising is allowed here.”

In a moment, each of the three leaders thrust his ball into his bosom. It made his coat bulge out, and at this, some of the fairies wondered, but all they thought of was that this spoiled a handsome fellow’s figure. Or was it some new idea? To tell the truth, they were vexed at not keeping up with the new fashions, for they knew nothing of this latest fad among such fine young gallants.

Much of the chat and gossip, before and after the meeting, was between the fairies who live in the air, or on mountains, and those down in the earth, or deep in the sea. They swapped news, gossip and scandal at a great rate.

There were a dozen or two fine-looking creatures who had high brows, who said they were Co-eds. This did not mean that these fairies had ever been through college. “Certainly the college never went through them,” said one very homely fairy, who was spiteful and jealous. The simple fact was that the one they called Betty, the Co-ed, and others from that Welsh village, called Bryn Mawr, and another from Flint, and another from Yale, and still others from Brimbo and from Co-ed Poeth, had come from places so named and down on the map of Wales, though they were no real Co-ed girls there, that could talk French, or English, or read Latin. In fact, Co-ed simply meant that they were from the woods and lived among the trees; for Co-ed in Welsh means a forest.

The fairy police were further instructed not to admit, and, if such were found, to put out the following bad characters, for this was a perfectly respectable meeting. These naughty folks were:

The Old Hag of the Mist.

The Invisible Hag that moans dolefully in the night.

The Tolaeth, a creature never seen, but that groans, sings, saws, or stamps noisily.

The Dogs of the Sky.

All witches, of every sort and kind.

All peddlers of horseshoes, crosses, charms, or amulets.

All mortals with brains fuddled by liquor.

All who had on shoes which water would not run under.

All fairies that were accustomed to turn mortals into cheese.

Every one of these, who might want to get in, were to be refused admittance.

Another circle of rather exclusive fairies, who always kept away from the blacksmiths, hardware stores, smelting furnaces and mines, had formed an anti-iron society. These were a kind of a Welsh “Four Hundred,” or élite, who would have nothing to do with anyone who had an iron tool, or weapon, or ornament in his hand, or on his dress, or who used iron in any form, or for any use. They frowned upon the idea of Cymric Land becoming rich by mining, and smelting, and selling iron. They did not even approve of the idea that any imps and dwarfs of the iron mines should be admitted to the meeting.

One clique of fairies, that looked like elves were in bad humor, almost to moping. When one of these got up to speak, it seemed as if he would never sit down. He tired all the lively fairies by long-winded reminiscences, of druids, and mistletoes, and by telling every one how much better the old times were than the present.

President Puck, who always liked things short, and was himself as lively as quicksilver, many times called these long-winded fellows to order; but they kept meandering on, until daybreak, when it was time to adjourn, lest the sunshine should spoil them all, and change them into slate or stone.

It was hard to tell just how much business was disposed of, at this session, or whether one ever came to the point, although there was a great deal of oratory and music. Much of what was said was in poetry, or in verses, or rhymes, of three lines each. What they talked about was mainly in protest against the smoke of factories and collieries, and because there was so much soot, and so little soap, in the land.

But what did they do at the fairy congress?

The truth is, that nobody to-day knows what was done in this session of the fairies, for the proceedings were kept secret. The only one who knows was an old Welshman whom the story-teller used to meet once in a while. He is the one mortal who knows anything about this meeting, and he won’t tell; or at least he won’t talk in anything but Welsh. So we have to find out the gist of the matter, by noticing, in the stories which we have just read what the fairies did.

80

THE SWORD OF AVALON

Many of the Welsh tales are about fighting and wars and no country as small as Wales has so many castles. Yet these are nearly all in ruins and children play in them. This is because men got tired of battles and sieges.

Everybody knows that after King Arthur’s knights had punched and speared, whacked and chopped at each other with axe and sword long enough, had slain dragons and tamed monsters, and rescued princesses from cruel uncles, and good men from dark dungeons, even the plain people, such as farmers and mechanics, had enough and wanted no more. Besides this, they wished to be treated more like human beings, and not have to work so hard and also to keep their money when they earned it.

Even King Arthur himself, towards the end of this era, saw that fashions were changing and that he must change with them. Hardware was too high in price, and was no longer needed for clothing. He was wise enough to see that battle axes, maces, swords, lances and armor had better be put to some better use, when iron was getting scarce and wool and linen were cheaper. Even the stupid Normans learned that decency and kindness cost less, and accomplished more in making the Welshery loyal subjects of the king.

So when, after many battles, King Arthur went out to have a little war of his own, and to enjoy the fight, in which he was mortally wounded, he showed his greatness, even in the hour of death. In truth, it is given to some men, like Samson, to be even mightier when they die, than when following the strenuous life. So it was with this great and good man of Cymry. His love for his people never ceased for one moment, and in his dying hour he left a bequest that all his people have understood and acted upon.

Thus it has come to pass that the Welsh have been really unconquerable, by Saxon or Norman, or even in these twentieth century days by Teutons. Though living in a small country, they are among the greatest in the world, not in force, or in material things, but in soul. When Belgium was invaded, they not only stood up in battle against the invader, but they welcomed to their homes tens of thousands of fugitives and fed and sheltered them.

Brave as lions, their path of progress has been in faithfulness to duty, industry, and patience, and along the paths of poetry, music and brotherhood. Their motto for ages has been, “Truth against the World.”

Now the manner of King Arthur’s taking off and his immortal legacy was on this fashion:

After doing a great many wonderful things, in many countries, King Arthur came back to punish the wicked man, Modred. In the battle that ensued, he received wounds that made him feel that he was very soon to die. So he ordered his loyal vassal to take his sword to the island of Avalon. There he must cast the weapon into the deep water.

But the sword was part of the soul of Arthur. It would not sink out of sight, until it had given a message, from their king to the Welsh, for all time.

After it had been thrown in the water, it disappeared, but rose again. First the shining blade, and then the hilt, and then a hand was seen to rise out of the flood.

Thrice that hand waved the sword round and round.

This was the prophecy of “the deathless from the dead.” King Arthur’s body might be hid in a cave, or molder in the ground, but his soul was to live and cheer his people. His beloved Cymric nation, with their undying language, were to rise in power again.

And the resurrection has been glorious. Not by the might of the soldier, or by arms or war — though the Welsh never flinch from duty, or before the foe — but by the power of poet, singer and the narrator of stories, that touch the imagination, and fire the soul to noble deeds, have these results come.

Arthur’s good blade, thus waved above the waters, became a veritable sword of the Spirit.

Men of genius arose to flush with color the old legends. Prophets, preachers, monks, missionaries carried these all over Europe, and made them the vehicles of Christian doctrine. In their new forms, they fired the imagination and illuminated, as with ten thousand lamps, many lands and nations, until they held every people in spell. In miracle and morality play, they reappeared in beauty. They attuned the harp and instrument of the musician and the troubadour, and these sang the gospel in all lands, north and south, while telling the stories of Adam, and of Abraham, of Bethlehem, and of the cross, of the Holy Grail, and of Arthur and his Knights. All the precious lore of the Celtic race became transfigured, to illustrate and enforce Christian truth. The symbolical bowl, the Celtic caldron of abundance, became the cup of the Eucharist and the Grail the symbol of blessings eternal.

By the artists, in the stained glass, and in windows of the great churches, which were built no longer of wood but of stone, that blossomed under the chisel, the old legends were, by the new currents of truth, given a mystic glow. As wonderful as the rise of Gothic architecture and the upbuilding of cathedrals, as glorious as the light and art, that beautify the great temples of worship, was this re-birth of the Arthurian legends.

For now, again, the old virtues of the knightly days — loyalty, obedience, redress of wrongs, reverence of womanhood, and the application of Christian ethics to the old rude rules of decency, lifted the life of the common people to a nobler plane and ushered in the modern days.

Then, after seven hundred years, a host of singers, Tennyson leading them all, attuned the old Celtic harp. They reset for us the Cymric melody and colorful incidents in “the light that never was on sea or land.” The old days live again in a greater glory.

Lady Guest put the Mabinogion into English, and Renan, and Arnold, and Rolleston, and Rhys, in prose, competed in praise of the heritages from the old time. Popular education was diffused. The Welsh language rose again from the dead. Cardiff holds in pure white marble the most thrilling interpretation of Welsh history, in the twelve white marble statues of the great men of Wales. The Welsh people, by bloodless victory, have won the respect of all mankind.

They set a beacon for the oppressed nations. In the World War of 1914-1918, they helped to save freedom and civilization. They were in the van.

Long may the sword of Arthur wave!

16. GRACE JAMES

CONTENTS

Preface

1. Green Willow
2. The Flute
3. The Tea-Kettle
4. The Peony Lantern
5. The Sea King and the Magic Jewels
6. The Good Thunder
7. The Black Bowl
8. The Star Lovers
9. Horaizan
10. Reflections
11. The Story of Susa, the Impetuous
12. The Wind in the Pine Tree
13. Flower of the Peony
14. The Mallet
15. The Bell of Dojoji
16. The Maiden of Unai
17. The Robe of Feathers
18. The Singing Bird of Heaven
19. The Cold Lady
20. The Fire Quest
21. A Legend of Kwannon
22. The Espousal of the Rat’s Daughter
23. The Land of Yomi
24. The Spring Lover and the Autumn Lover
25. The Strange Story of the Golden Comb
26. The Jelly-Fish Takes a Journey

27. Urashima
28. Tamamo, the Fox Maiden
29. Momotaro
30. The Matsuyama Mirror
31. Broken Images
32. The Tongue-Cut Sparrow
33. The Nurse
34. The Beautiful Dancer of Yedo
35. Hana-Saka-Jiji
36. The Moon Maiden
37. Karma
38. The Sad Story of the Yaoya’s Daughter

PREFACE

JAMES, GRACE

Grace James (1882-1965) was an English writer of children's literature and a Japanese folklorist. Her father Thomas was a British Naval officer, who was a member of one of the Naval Missions which visited Japan. Her parents went there around 1873 and she was born in Tokyo seven years later. The family lived in five houses in and around Tokyo during this period, and spent their summers at Nikko, Kamakura and Karuizawa. When she was twelve, the whole family moved back to England.

James was mostly known for her John and Mary books, which were a series of books about two children who have fantastic adventures. However, in 1910, before the John and Mary books, she published her *Japanese Fairy Tales*, a collection of traditional Japanese folk tales.

1

GREEN WILLOW

Tomodata, the young *samurai*, owed allegiance to the Lord of Noto. He was a soldier, a courtier, and a poet. He had a sweet voice and a beautiful face, a noble form and a very winning address. He was a graceful dancer, and excelled in every manly sport. He was wealthy and generous and kind. He was beloved by rich and by poor.

Now his *daimyo*, the Lord of Noto, wanted a man to undertake a mission of trust. He chose Tomodata, and called him to his presence.

“Are you loyal?” said the *daimyo*.

“My lord, you know it,” answered Tomodata.

“Do you love me, then?” asked the *daimyo*.

“Ay, my good lord,” said Tomodata, kneeling before him.

“Then carry my message,” said the *daimyo*. “Ride and do not spare your beast. Ride straight, and fear not the mountains nor the enemies’ country. Stay not for storm nor any other thing. Lose your life; but betray not your trust. Above all, do not look any maid between the eyes. Ride, and bring me word again quickly.”

Thus spoke the Lord of Noto.

So Tomodata got him to horse, and away he rode upon his quest. Obedient to his lord’s commands, he spared not his good beast. He rode straight, and was not afraid of the steep mountain passes nor of the enemies’ country. Ere he had been three days upon the road the autumn tempest burst, for it was the ninth month. Down poured the rain in a torrent. Tomodata bowed his head and rode on. The wind howled in the pine-tree branches. It blew a typhoon. The good horse trembled and could scarcely keep its feet, but Tomodata spoke to it and urged it on. His own cloak he drew close about him and held it so that it might not blow away, and in this wise he rode on.

The fierce storm swept away many a familiar landmark of the road, and buffeted the *samurai* so that he became weary almost to fainting. Noontide was as dark as twilight, twilight was as dark as night, and when night fell it was as black as the night of Yomi, where lost souls wander and cry. By this time Tomodata had lost his way in a wild, lonely place, where, as it seemed to him, no human soul inhabited. His horse could carry him no longer, and he wandered on foot through bogs and marshes, through rocky and thorny tracks, until he fell into deep despair.

“Alack!” he cried, “must I die in this wilderness and the quest of the Lord of Noto be unfulfilled?”

At this moment the great winds blew away the clouds of the sky, so that the moon shone very brightly forth, and by the sudden light Tomodata saw a little hill on his right hand. Upon the hill was a small thatched cottage, and before the cottage grew three green weeping-willow trees.

“Now, indeed, the gods be thanked!” said Tomodata, and he climbed the hill in no time. Light shone from the chinks of the cottage door, and smoke curled out of a hole in the roof. The three willow trees swayed and flung out their green streamers in the wind. Tomodata threw his horse’s rein over a branch of one of them, and called for admittance to the longed-for shelter.

At once the cottage door was opened by an old woman, very poorly but neatly clad.

“Who rides abroad upon such a night?” she asked, “and what wills he here?”

“I am a weary traveller, lost and benighted upon your lonely moor. My name is Tomodata. I am a *samurai* in the service of the Lord of Noto, upon whose business I ride. Show me hospitality for the love of the gods. I crave food and shelter for myself and my horse.”

As the young man stood speaking the water streamed from his garments. He reeled a little, and put out a hand to hold on by the side-post of the door.

“Come in, come in, young sir!” cried the old woman, full of pity. “Come in to the warm fire. You are very welcome. We have but coarse fare to offer, but it shall be set before you with great good-will. As to your horse, I see you have delivered him to my daughter; he is in good hands.”

At this Tomodata turned sharply round. Just behind him, in the dim light, stood a very young girl with the horse’s rein thrown over her arm. Her garments were blown about and her long loose hair streamed out upon the wind. The *samurai* wondered how she had come there. Then the old woman drew him into the cottage and shut the door. Before the fire sat the good man of the house, and the two old people did the very best they could for Tomodata. They gave him dry garments, comforted him with hot rice wine, and quickly prepared a good supper for him.

Presently the daughter of the house came in, and retired behind a screen to comb her hair and to dress afresh. Then she came forth to wait upon him. She wore a blue robe of homespun cotton. Her feet were bare. Her hair was not tied nor confined in any way, but lay along her smooth cheeks, and hung, straight and long and black, to her very knees. She was slender and graceful. Tomodata judged her to be about fifteen years old, and knew well that she was the fairest maiden he had ever seen.

At length she knelt at his side to pour wine into his cup. She held the wine-bottle in two hands and bent her head. Tomodata turned to look at her. When she had made an end of pouring the wine and had set down the bottle, their glances met, and Tomodata looked at her full between the eyes, for he forgot altogether the warning of his *daimyo*, the Lord of Noto.

“Maiden,” he said, “what is your name?”

She answered: “They call me the Green Willow.”

“The dearest name on earth,” he said, and again he looked her between the eyes. And because he looked so long her face grew rosy red, from chin to forehead, and though she smiled her eyes filled with tears.

Ah me, for the Lord of Noto’s quest!

Then Tomodata made this little song:

Long-haired maiden, do you know
That with the red dawn I must go?
Do you wish me far away?
Cruel long-haired maiden, say —
Long-haired maiden, if you know
That with the red dawn I must go,
Why, oh why, do you blush so?

And the maiden, the Green Willow, answered:

The dawn comes if I will or no;
Never leave me, never go.
My sleeve shall hide the blush away.
The dawn comes if I will or no;
Never leave me, never go.
Lord, I lift my long sleeve so...

"OH, GREEN WILLOW, GREEN WILLOW…" sighed Tomodata.

That night he lay before the fire — still, but with wide eyes, for no sleep came to him though he was weary. He was sick for love of the Green Willow. Yet by the rules of his service he was bound in honour to think of no such thing. Moreover, he had the quest of the Lord of Noto that lay heavy on his heart, and he longed to keep truth and loyalty.

At the first peep of day he rose up. He looked upon the kind old man who had been his host, and left a purse of gold at his side as he slept. The maiden and her mother lay behind the screen.

Tomodata saddled and bridled his horse, and mounting, rode slowly away through the mist of the early morning. The storm was quite over and it was as still as Paradise. The green grass and the leaves shone with the wet. The sky was clear, and the path very bright with autumn flowers; but Tomodata was sad.

When the sunlight streamed across his saddlebow, "Ah, Green Willow, Green Willow," he sighed; and at noontide it was "Green Willow, Green Willow"; and "Green Willow, Green Willow," when the twilight fell. That night he lay in a deserted shrine, and the place was so holy that in spite of all he slept from midnight till the dawn. Then he rose, having it in his mind to wash himself in a cold stream that flowed near by, so as to go refreshed upon his journey; but he was stopped upon the shrine's threshold. There lay the Green Willow, prone upon the ground. A slender thing she lay, face downwards, with her black hair flung about her. She lifted a hand and held Tomodata by the sleeve. "My lord, my lord," she said, and fell to sobbing piteously.

He took her in his arms without a word, and soon he set her on his horse before him, and together they rode the livelong day. It was little they recked of the road they went, for all the while they looked into each other's eyes. The heat and the cold were nothing to them. They felt not the sun nor the rain; of truth or falsehood they thought nothing at all; nor of filial piety, nor of the Lord of Noto’s quest, nor of honour nor plighted word. They knew but the one thing. Alas, for the ways of love!

At last they came to an unknown city, where they stayed. Tomodata carried gold and jewels in his girdle, so they found a house built of white wood, spread with sweet white mats. In every dim room there could be heard the sound of the garden waterfall, whilst the swallow flitted across and across the paper lattice. Here they dwelt, knowing but the one thing. Here they dwelt three years of happy days, and for Tomodata and the Green Willow the years were like garlands of sweet flowers.

In the autumn of the third year it chanced that the two of them went forth into the garden at dusk, for they had a wish to see the round moon rise; and as they watched, the Green Willow began to shake and shiver.

“My dear,” said Tomodata, “you shake and shiver; and it is no wonder, the night wind is chill. Come in.” And he put his arm around her.

At this she gave a long and pitiful cry, very loud and full of agony, and when she had uttered the cry she failed, and dropped her head upon her love’s breast.

“Tomodata,” she whispered, “say a prayer for me; I die.”

“Oh, say not so, my sweet, my sweet! You are but weary; you are faint.”

He carried her to the stream’s side, where the iris grew like swords, and the lotus-leaves like shields, and laved her forehead with water. He said: “What is it, my dear? Look up and live.”

“The tree,” she moaned, “the tree... they have cut down my tree. Remember the Green Willow.”

With that she slipped, as it seemed, from his arms to his feet; and he, casting himself upon the ground, found only silken garments, bright coloured, warm and sweet, and straw sandals, scarlet-thonged.

In after years, when Tomodata was a holy man, he travelled from shrine to shrine, painfully upon his feet, and acquired much merit.

Once, at nightfall, he found himself upon a lonely moor. On his right hand he beheld a little hill, and on it the sad ruins of a poor thatched cottage. The door swung to and fro with broken latch and creaking hinge. Before it stood three old stumps of willow trees that had long since been cut down. Tomodata stood for a long time still and silent. Then he sang gently to himself:

Long-haired maiden, do you know
That with the red dawn I must go?
Do you wish me far away?
Cruel long-haired maiden, say —
Long-haired maiden, if you know
That with the red dawn I must go,
Why, oh why, do you blush so?

“Ah, foolish song! The gods forgive me... I should have recited the Holy Sutra for the Dead,” said Tomodata.

2

THE FLUTE

Long since, there lived in Yedo a gentleman of good lineage and very honest conversation. His wife was a gentle and loving lady. To his secret grief, she bore him no sons. But a daughter she did give him, whom they called O'Yoné, which, being interpreted, is "Rice in the ear." Each of them loved this child more than life, and guarded her as the apple of their eye. And the child grew up red and white, and long-eyed, straight and slender as the green bamboo.

When O'Yoné was twelve years old, her mother drooped with the fall of the year, sickened, and pined, and ere the red had faded from the leaves of the maples she was dead and shrouded and laid in the earth. The husband was wild in his grief. He cried aloud, he beat his breast, he lay upon the ground and refused comfort, and for days he neither broke his fast nor slept. The child was quite silent.

Time passed by. The man perforce went about his business. The snows of winter fell and covered his wife's grave. The beaten pathway from his house to the dwelling of the dead was snow also, undisturbed save for the faint prints of a child's sandalled feet. In the spring-time he girded up his robe and went forth to see the cherry blossom, making merry enough, and writing a poem upon gilded paper, which he hung to a cherry-tree branch to flutter in the wind. The poem was in praise of the spring and of *saké*. Later, he planted the orange lily of forgetfulness, and thought of his wife no more. But the child remembered.

Before the year was out he brought a new bride home, a woman with a fair face and a black heart. But the man, poor fool, was happy, and commended his child to her, and believed that all was well.

Now because her father loved O’Yoné, her stepmother hated her with a jealous and deadly hatred, and every day she dealt cruelly by the child, whose gentle ways and patience only angered her the more. But because of her father’s presence she did not dare to do O’Yoné any great ill; therefore she waited, biding her time. The poor child passed her days and her nights in torment and horrible fear. But of these things she said not a word to her father. Such is the manner of children.

Now, after some time, it chanced that the man was called away by his business to a distant city. Kioto was the name of the city, and from Yedo it is many days’ journey on foot or on horseback. Howbeit, go the man needs must, and stay there three moons or more. Therefore he made ready, and equipped himself, and his servants that were to go with him, with all things needful; and so came to the last night before his departure, which was to be very early in the morning.

He called O’Yoné to him and said: “Come here, then, my dear little daughter.” So O’Yoné went and knelt before him.

“What gift shall I bring you home from Kioto?” he said.

But she hung her head and did not answer.

“Answer, then, rude little one,” he bade her. “Shall it be a golden fan, or a roll of silk, or a new *obi* of red brocade, or a great battledore with images upon it and many light-feathered shuttlecocks?”

Then she burst into bitter weeping, and he took her upon his knees to soothe her. But she hid her face with her sleeves and cried as if her heart would break. And, “O father, father, father,” she said, “do not go away — do not go away!”

“But, my sweet, I needs must,” he answered, “and soon I shall be back — so soon, scarcely it will seem that I am gone, when I shall be here again with fair gifts in my hand.”

“Father, take me with you,” she said.

“Alas, what a great way for a little girl! Will you walk on your feet, my little pilgrim, or mount a pack-horse? And how would you fare in the inns of Kioto? Nay, my dear, stay; it is but for a little time, and your kind mother will be with you.”

She shuddered in his arms.

“Father, if you go, you will never see me more.”

Then the father felt a sudden chill about his heart, that gave him pause. But he would not heed it. What! Must he, a strong man grown, be swayed by a child’s fancies? He put O’Yoné gently from him, and she slipped away as silently as a shadow.

But in the morning she came to him before sunrise with a little flute in her hand, fashioned of bamboo and smoothly polished. “I made it myself,” she said, “from a bamboo in the grove that is behind our garden. I made it for you. As you cannot take me with you, take the little flute, honourable father. Play on it sometimes, if you will, and think of me.” Then she wrapped it in a handkerchief of white silk, lined with scarlet, and wound a scarlet cord about it, and gave it to her father, who put it in his sleeve. After this he departed and went his way, taking the road to Kioto. As he went he looked back thrice, and beheld his child, standing at the gate, looking after him. Then the road turned and he saw her no more.

The city of Kioto was passing great and beautiful, and so the father of O’Yoné found it. And what with his business during the day, which sped very well, and his pleasure in the evening, and his sound sleep at night, the time passed merrily, and small thought he gave to Yedo, to his home, or to his child. Two moons passed, and three, and he made no plans for return.

One evening he was making ready to go forth to a great supper of his friends, and as he searched in his chest for certain brave silken *hakama* which he intended to wear as an honour to the feast, he came upon the little flute, which had lain hidden all this time in the sleeve of his travelling dress. He drew it forth from its red and white handkerchief, and as he did so, felt strangely cold with an icy chill that crept about his heart. He hung over the live charcoal of the *hibachi* as one in a dream. He put the flute to his lips, when there came from it a long-drawn wail.

He dropped it hastily upon the mats and clapped his hands for his servant, and told him he would not go forth that night. He was not well, he would be alone. After a long time he reached out his hand for the flute. Again that long, melancholy cry. He shook from head to foot, but he blew into the flute. “Come back to Yedo... come back to Yedo... Father! Father!” The quavering childish voice rose to a shriek and then broke.

A horrible foreboding now took possession of the man, and he was as one beside himself. He flung himself from the house and from the city, and journeyed day and night, denying himself sleep and food. So pale was he and wild that the people deemed him a madman and fled from him, or pitied him as the afflicted of the gods. At last he came to his journey’s end, travel-stained from head to heel, with bleeding feet and half-dead of weariness.

His wife met him in the gate.

He said: “Where is the child?”

“The child...?” she answered.

“Ay, the child — my child... where is she?” he cried in an agony.

The woman laughed: “Nay, my lord, how should I know? She is within at her books, or she is in the garden, or she is asleep, or mayhap she has gone forth with her playmates, or...”

He said: “Enough; no more of this. Come, where is my child?”

Then she was afraid. And, “In the Bamboo Grove,” she said, looking at him with wide eyes.

There the man ran, and sought O'Yoné among the green stems of the bamboos. But he did not find her. He called, "Yoné! Yoné!" and again, "Yoné! Yoné!" But he had no answer; only the wind sighed in the dry bamboo leaves. Then he felt in his sleeve and brought forth the little flute, and very tenderly put it to his lips. There was a faint sighing sound. Then a voice spoke, thin and pitiful:

"Father, dear father, my wicked stepmother killed me. Three moons since she killed me. She buried me in the clearing of the Bamboo Grove. You may find my bones. As for me, you will never see me any more — you will never see me more..."

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WITH HIS OWN two-handed sword the man did justice, and slew his wicked wife, avenging the death of his innocent child. Then he dressed himself in coarse white raiment, with a great rice-straw hat that shadowed his face. And he took a staff and a straw rain-coat and bound sandals on his feet, and thus he set forth upon a pilgrimage to the holy places of Japan.

And he carried the little flute with him, in a fold of his garment, upon his breast.

3

THE TEA-KETTLE

Long ago, as I’ve heard tell, there dwelt at the temple of Morinji, in the Province of Kotsuke, a holy priest.

Now there were three things about this reverend man. First, he was wrapped up in meditations and observances and forms and doctrines. He was a great one for the Sacred Sutras, and knew strange and mystical things. Then he had a fine exquisite taste of his own, and nothing pleased him so much as the ancient tea ceremony of the *Cha-no-yu*; and for the third thing about him, he knew both sides of a copper coin well enough and loved a bargain.

None so pleased as he when he happened upon an ancient tea-kettle, lying rusty and dirty and half-forgotten in a corner of a poor shop in a back street of his town.

“An ugly bit of old metal,” says the holy man to the shopkeeper; “but it will do well enough to boil my humble drop of water of an evening. I’ll give you three *rin* for it.” This he did and took the kettle home, rejoicing; for it was of bronze, fine work, the very thing for the *Cha-no-yu*.

A novice cleaned and scoured the tea-kettle, and it came out as pretty as you please. The priest turned it this way and that, and upside down, looked into it, tapped it with his finger-nail. He smiled. “A bargain,” he cried, “a bargain!” and rubbed his hands. He set the kettle upon a box covered over with a purple cloth, and looked at it so long that first he was fain to rub his eyes many times, and then to close them altogether. His head dropped forward and he slept.

And then, believe me, the wonderful thing happened. The tea-kettle moved, though no hand was near it. A hairy head, with two bright eyes, looked out of the spout. The lid jumped up and down. Four brown and hairy paws appeared, and a fine bushy tail. In a minute the kettle was down from the box and going round and round looking at things.

“A very comfortable room, to be sure,” says the tea-kettle.

Pleased enough to find itself so well lodged, it soon began to dance and to caper nimbly and to sing at the top of its voice. Three or four novices were studying in the next room. “The old man is lively,” they said; “only hark to him. What can he be at?” And they laughed in their sleeves.

Heaven’s mercy, the noise that the tea-kettle made! Bang! bang! Thud! thud! thud!

The novices soon stopped laughing. One of them slid aside the *kara-kami* and peeped through.

“Arah, the devil and all’s in it!” he cried. “Here’s the master’s old tea-kettle turned into a sort of a badger. The gods protect us from witchcraft, or for certain we shall be lost!”

“And I scoured it not an hour since,” said another novice, and he fell to reciting the Holy Sutras on his knees.

A third laughed. “I’m for a nearer view of the hobgoblin,” he said.

So the lot of them left their books in a twinkling, and gave chase to the tea-kettle to catch it. But could they come up with the tea-kettle? Not a bit of it. It danced and it leapt and it flew up into the air. The novices rushed here and there, slipping upon the mats. They grew hot. They grew breathless.

“Ha, ha! Ha, ha!” laughed the tea-kettle; and “Catch me if you can!” laughed the wonderful tea-kettle.

Presently the priest awoke, all rosy, the holy man.

"And what's the meaning of this racket," he says, "disturbing me at my holy meditations and all?"

"Master, master," cry the novices, panting and mopping their brows, "your tea-kettle is bewitched. It was a badger, no less. And the dance it has been giving us, you'd never believe!"

"Stuff and nonsense," says the priest; "bewitched? Not a bit of it. There it rests on its box, good quiet thing, just where I put it."

Sure enough, so it did, looking as hard and cold and innocent as you please. There was not a hair of a badger near it. It was the novices that looked foolish.

"A likely story indeed," says the priest. "I have heard of the pestle that took wings to itself and flew away, parting company with the mortar. That is easily to be understood by any man. But a kettle that turned into a badger — no, no! To your books, my sons, and pray to be preserved from the perils of illusion."

That very night the holy man filled the kettle with water from the spring and set it on the *hibachi* to boil for his cup of tea. When the water began to boil —

"Ai! Ai!" the kettle cried; "Ai! Ai! The heat of the Great Hell!" And it lost no time at all, but hopped off the fire as quick as you please.

"Sorcery!" cried the priest. "Black magic! A devil! A devil! A devil! Mercy on me! Help! Help! Help!" He was frightened out of his wits, the dear good man. All the novices came running to see what was the matter.

"The tea-kettle is bewitched," he gasped; "it was a badger, assuredly it was a badger... it both speaks and leaps about the room."

"Nay, master," said a novice, "see where it rests upon its box, good quiet thing."

And sure enough, so it did.

“Most reverend sir,” said the novice, “let us all pray to be preserved from the perils of illusion.”

The priest sold the tea-kettle to a tinker and got for it twenty copper coins.

“It’s a mighty fine bit of bronze,” says the priest. “Mind, I’m giving it away to you, I’m sure I cannot tell what for.” Ah, he was the one for a bargain! The tinker was a happy man and carried home the kettle. He turned it this way and that, and upside down, and looked into it.

“A pretty piece,” says the tinker; “a very good bargain.” And when he went to bed that night he put the kettle by him, to see it first thing in the morning.

He awoke at midnight and fell to looking at the kettle by the bright light of the moon.

Presently it moved, though there was no hand near it.

“Strange,” said the tinker; but he was a man who took things as they came.

A hairy head, with two bright eyes, looked out of the kettle’s spout. The lid jumped up and down. Four brown and hairy paws appeared, and a fine bushy tail. It came quite close to the tinker and laid a paw upon him.

“Well?” says the tinker.

“I am not wicked,” says the tea-kettle.

“No,” says the tinker.

“But I like to be well treated. I am a badger tea-kettle.”

“So it seems,” says the tinker.

“At the temple they called me names, and beat me and set me on the fire. I couldn’t stand it, you know.”

“I like your spirit,” says the tinker.

“I think I shall settle down with you.”

“Shall I keep you in a lacquer box?” says the tinker.

“Not a bit of it, keep me with you; let us have a talk now and again. I am very fond of a pipe. I like rice to eat, and beans and sweet things.”

“A cup of *saké* sometimes?” says the tinker.

“Well, yes, now you mention it.”

“I’m willing,” says the tinker.

“Thank you kindly,” says the tea-kettle; “and, as a beginning, would you object to my sharing your bed? The night has turned a little chilly.”

“Not the least in the world,” says the tinker.

The tinker and the tea-kettle became the best of friends. They ate and talked together. The kettle knew a thing or two and was very good company.

One day: “Are you poor?” says the kettle.

“Yes,” says the tinker, “middling poor.”

“Well, I have a happy thought. For a tea-kettle, I am out-of-the-way — really very accomplished.”

“I believe you,” says the tinker.

“My name is *Bumbuku-Chagama*; I am the very prince of Badger Tea-Kettles.”

“Your servant, my lord,” says the tinker.

“If you’ll take my advice,” says the tea-kettle, “you’ll carry me round as a show; I really am out-of-the-way, and it’s my opinion you’d make a mint of money.”

“That would be hard work for you, my dear *Bumbuku,*” says the tinker.

“Not at all; let us start forthwith,” says the tea-kettle.

So they did. The tinker bought hangings for a theatre, and he called the show *Bumbuku-Chagama*. How the people flocked to see the fun! For the wonderful and most accomplished tea-kettle danced and sang, and walked the tight rope as to the manner born. It played such tricks and had such droll ways that the people laughed till their sides ached. It was a treat to see the tea-kettle bow as gracefully as a lord and thank the people for their patience.

The *Bumbuku-Chagama* was the talk of the country-side, and all the gentry came to see it as well as the commonalty. As for the tinker, he waved a fan and took the money. You may believe that he grew fat and rich. He even went to Court, where the great ladies and the royal princesses made much of the wonderful tea-kettle.

At last the tinker retired from business, and to him the tea-kettle came with tears in its bright eyes.

"I'm much afraid it's time to leave you," it says.

"Now, don't say that, *Bumbuku*, dear," says the tinker. "We'll be so happy together now we are rich."

"I've come to the end of my time," says the tea-kettle. "You'll not see old *Bumbuku* any more; henceforth I shall be an ordinary kettle, nothing more or less."

"Oh, my dear *Bumbuku*, what shall I do?" cried the poor tinker in tears.

"I think I should like to be given to the temple of Morinji, as a very sacred treasure," says the tea-kettle.

It never spoke or moved again. So the tinker presented it as a very sacred treasure to the temple, and the half of his wealth with it.

And the tea-kettle was held in wondrous fame for many a long year. Some persons even worshipped it as a saint.

4

THE PEONY LANTERN

In Yedo there dwelt a *samurai* called Hagiwara. He was a *samurai* of the *hatamoto*, which is of all the ranks of *samurai* the most honourable. He possessed a noble figure and a very beautiful face, and was beloved of many a lady of Yedo, both openly and in secret. For himself, being yet very young, his thoughts turned to pleasure rather than to love, and morning, noon and night he was wont to disport himself with the gay youth of the city. He was the prince and leader of joyous revels within doors and without, and would often parade the streets for long together with bands of his boon companions.

One bright and wintry day during the Festival of the New Year he found himself with a company of laughing youths and maidens playing at battledore and shuttlecock. He had wandered far away from his own quarter of the city, and was now in a suburb quite the other side of Yedo, where the streets were empty, more or less, and the quiet houses stood in gardens. Hagiwara wielded his heavy battledore with great skill and grace, catching the gilded shuttlecock and tossing it lightly into the air; but at length with a careless or an ill-judged stroke, he sent it flying over the heads of the players, and over the bamboo fence of a garden near by. Immediately he started after it. Then his companions cried, “Stay, Hagiwara; here we have more than a dozen shuttlecocks.”

“Nay,” he said, “but this was dove-coloured and gilded.”

“Foolish one!” answered his friends; “here we have six shuttlecocks all dove-coloured and gilded.”

But he paid them no heed, for he had become full of a very strange desire for the shuttlecock he had lost. He scaled the bamboo fence and dropped into the garden which was upon the farther side. Now he had marked the very spot where the shuttlecock should have fallen, but it was not there; so he searched along the foot of the bamboo fence — but no, he could not find it. Up and down he went, beating the bushes with his battledore, his eyes on the ground, drawing breath heavily as if he had lost his dearest treasure. His friends called him, but he did not come, and they grew tired and went to their own homes. The light of day began to fail. Hagiwara, the *samurai*, looked up and saw a girl standing a few yards away from him. She beckoned him with her right hand, and in her left she held a gilded shuttlecock with dove-coloured feathers.

The *samurai* shouted joyfully and ran forward. Then the girl drew away from him, still beckoning him with the right hand. The shuttlecock lured him, and he followed. So they went, the two of them, till they came to the house that was in the garden, and three stone steps that led up to it. Beside the lowest step there grew a plum tree in blossom, and upon the highest step there stood a fair and very young lady. She was most splendidly attired in robes of high festival. Her *kimono* was of water-blue silk, with sleeves of ceremony so long that they touched the ground; her under-dress was scarlet, and her great girdle of brocade was stiff and heavy with gold. In her hair were pins of gold and tortoiseshell and coral.

When Hagiwara saw the lady, he knelt down forthwith and made her due obeisance, till his forehead touched the ground.

Then the lady spoke, smiling with pleasure like a child. “Come into my house, Hagiwara Sama, *samurai* of the *hatamoto*. I am O’Tsuyu, the Lady of the Morning Dew. My dear handmaiden, O’Yoné, has brought you to me.

Come in, Hagiwara Sama, *samurai* of the *hatamoto*; for indeed I am glad to see you, and happy is this hour.”

So the *samurai* went in, and they brought him to a room of ten mats, where they entertained him; for the Lady of the Morning Dew danced before him in the ancient manner, whilst O’Yoné, the handmaiden, beat upon a small scarlet-tasselled drum.

Afterwards they set food before him, the red rice of the festival and sweet warm wine, and he ate and drank of the food they gave him.

It was dark night when Hagiwara took his leave. “Come again, honourable lord, come again,” said O’Yoné the handmaiden.

“Yea, lord, you needs must come,” whispered the Lady of the Morning Dew.

The *samurai* laughed. “And if I do not come?” he said mockingly. “What if I do not come?”

The lady stiffened, and her child’s face grew grey, but she laid her hand upon Hagiwara’s shoulder.

“Then,” she said, “it will be death, lord. Death it will be for you and for me. There is no other way.” O’Yoné shuddered and hid her eyes with her sleeve.

The *samurai* went out into the night, being very much afraid.

Long, long he sought for his home and could not find it, wandering in the black darkness from end to end of the sleeping city. When at last he reached his familiar door the late dawn was almost come, and wearily he threw himself upon his bed. Then he laughed. “After all, I have left behind me my shuttlecock,” said Hagiwara the *samurai*.

The next day Hagiwara sat alone in his house from morning till evening. He had his hands before him; and he thought, but did nothing more. At the end of the time he said, “It is a joke that a couple of *geisha* have sought to play on me. Excellent, in faith, but they shall not have me!” So he dressed himself in his best and went forth to join his friends. For five or six days he was at joustings and junketings, the gayest of the gay. His wit was ready, his spirits were wild.

Then he said, “By the gods, I am deathly sick of this,” and took to walking the streets of Yedo alone. From end to end of the great city he went. He wandered by day and he wandered by night, by street and alley he went, by hill and moat and castle wall, but he found not what he sought. He could not come upon the garden where his shuttlecock was lost, nor yet upon the Lady of the Morning Dew. His spirit had no rest. He fell sick and took to his bed, where he neither ate nor slept, but grew spectre-thin. This was about the third month. In the sixth month, at the time of *niubai,* the hot and rainy season, he rose up, and, in spite of all his faithful servant could say or do to dissuade him, he wrapped a loose summer robe about him and at once went forth.

“Alack! Alack!” cried the servant, “the youth has the fever, or he is perchance mad.”

Hagiwara faltered not at all. He looked neither to the right nor to the left. Straight forward he went, for he said to himself, “All roads lead past my love’s house.” Soon he came to a quiet suburb, and to a certain house whose garden had a split bamboo fence. Hagiwara laughed softly and scaled the fence.

“The same, the very same shall be the manner of our meeting,” he said. He found the garden wild and overgrown. Moss covered the three stone steps. The plum tree that grew there fluttered its green leaves disconsolate. The house was still, its shutters were all closed, it was forlorn and deserted.

The *samurai* grew cold as he stood and wondered. A soaking rain fell.

There came an old man into the garden. He said to Hagiwara:

“Sir, what do you do here?”

“The white flower has fallen from the plum tree,” said the *samurai*. “Where is the Lady of the Morning Dew?”

“She is dead,” answered the old man; “dead these five or six moons, of a strange and sudden sickness. She lies in the graveyard on the hill, and O’Yoné, her handmaid, lies by her side. She could not suffer her mistress to wander alone through the long night of Yomi. For their sweet spirits’ sake I would still tend this garden, but I am old and it is little that I can do. Oh, sir, they are dead indeed. The grass grows on their graves.”

Hagiwara went to his own home. He took a slip of pure white wood and he wrote upon it, in large fair characters, the dear name of his lady. This he set up, and burned before it incense and sweet odours, and made every offering that was meet, and did due observance, and all for the welfare of her departed spirit.

Then drew near the Festival of *Bon*, the time of returning souls. The good folk of Yedo took lanterns and visited their graves. Bringing food and flowers, they cared for their beloved dead. On the thirteenth day of the seventh month, which, in the *Bon*, is the day of days, Hagiwara the *samurai* walked in his garden by night for the sake of the coolness. It was windless and dark. A cicala hidden in the heart of a pomegranate flower sang shrilly now and again. Now and again a carp leaped in the round pond. For the rest it was still, and never a leaf stirred.

About the hour of the Ox, Hagiwara heard the sound of footsteps in the lane that lay beyond his garden hedge. Nearer and nearer they came.

“Women’s *geta*,” said the *samurai*. He knew them by the hollow echoing noise. Looking over his rose hedge, he saw two slender women come out of the dimness hand in hand. One of them carried a lantern with a bunch of peony flowers tied to the handle. It was such a lantern as is used at the time of the *Bon* in the service of the dead. It swung as the two women walked, casting an uncertain light. As they came abreast of the *samurai* upon the other side of the hedge, they turned their faces to him. He knew them at once, and gave one great cry.

The girl with the peony lantern held it up so that the light fell upon him.

“Hagiwara Sama,” she cried, “by all that is most wonderful! Why, lord, we were told that you were dead. We have daily recited the *Nembutsu* for your soul these many moons!”

“Come in, come in, O’Yoné,” he said; “and is it indeed your mistress that you hold by the hand? Can it be my lady?... Oh, my love!”

O’Yoné answered, “Who else should it be?” and the two came in at the garden gate.

But the Lady of the Morning Dew held up her sleeve to hide her face.

“How was it I lost you?” said the *samurai*; “how was it I lost you, O’Yoné?”

“Lord,” she said, “we have moved to a little house, a very little house, in the quarter of the city which is called the Green Hill. We were suffered to take nothing with us there, and we are grown very poor. With grief and want my mistress is become pale.”

Then Hagiwara took his lady’s sleeve to draw it gently from her face.

“Lord,” she sobbed, “you will not love me, I am not fair.”

But when he looked upon her his love flamed up within him like a consuming fire, and shook him from head to foot. He said never a word.

She drooped. “Lord,” she murmured, “shall I go or stay?”

And he said, “Stay.”

A little before daybreak the *samurai* fell into a deep sleep, and awoke to find himself alone in the clear light of the morning. He lost not an instant, but rose and went forth, and immediately made his way through Yedo to the quarter of the city which is called the Green Hill. Here he inquired for the house of the Lady of the Morning Dew, but no one could direct him. High and low he searched fruitlessly. It seemed to him that for the second time he had lost his dear lady, and he turned homewards in bitter despair. His way led him through the grounds of a certain temple, and as he went he marked two graves that were side by side. One was little and obscure, but the other was marked by a fair monument, like the tomb of some great one. Before the monument there hung a lantern with a bunch of peony flowers tied to its handle. It was such a lantern as is used at the time of *Bon* in the service of the dead.

Long, long did the *samurai* stand as one in a dream. Then he smiled a little and said:

"'We have moved to a little house... a very little house... upon the Green Hill... we were suffered to take nothing with us there and we are grown very poor... with grief and want my mistress is become pale...' A little house, a dark house, yet you will make room for me, oh, my beloved, pale one of my desires. We have loved for the space of ten existences, leave me not now... my dear." Then he went home.

His faithful servant met him and cried:

"Now what ails you, master?"

He said, "Why, nothing at all... I was never merrier."

But the servant departed weeping, and saying, "The mark of death is on his face... and I, whither shall I go that bore him as a child in these arms?"

Every night, for seven nights, the maidens with the peony lantern came to Hagiwara's dwelling. Fair weather or foul was the same to them. They came at the hour of the Ox. There was mystic wooing. By the strong bond of illusion the living and the dead were bound together.

On the seventh night the servant of the *samurai*, wakeful with fear and sorrow, made bold to peer into his lord's room through a crack in the wooden shutters. His hair stood on end and his blood ran cold to see Hagiwara in the arms of a fearful thing, smiling up at the horror that was its face, stroking its dank green robe with languid fingers. With daylight the servant made his way to a holy man of his acquaintance. When he had told his tale he asked, "Is there any hope for Hagiwara Sama?"

"Alack," said the holy man, "who can withstand the power of Karma? Nevertheless, there is a little hope." So he told the servant what he must do. Before nightfall, this one had set a sacred text above every door and window-place of his master’s house, and he had rolled in the silk of his master’s girdle a golden emblem of the Tathagata. When these things were done, Hagiwara being drawn two ways became himself as weak as water. And his servant took him in his arms, laid him upon his bed and covered him lightly, and saw him fall into a deep sleep.

At the hour of the Ox there was heard the sound of footsteps in the lane, without the garden hedge. Nearer and nearer they came. They grew slow and stopped.

“What means this, O’Yoné, O’Yoné?” said a piteous voice. “The house is asleep, and I do not see my lord.”

“Come home, sweet lady, Hagiwara’s heart is changed.”

“That I will not, O’Yoné, O’Yoné... you must find a way to bring me to my lord.”

“Lady, we cannot enter here. See the Holy Writing over every door and window-place... we may not enter here.”

There was a sound of bitter weeping and a long wail.

“Lord, I have loved thee through the space of ten existences.” Then the footsteps retreated and their echo died away.

The next night it was quite the same. Hagiwara slept in his weakness; his servant watched; the wraiths came and departed in sobbing despair.

The third day, when Hagiwara went to the bath, a thief stole the emblem, the golden emblem of the Tathagata, from his girdle. Hagiwara did not mark it. But that night he lay awake. It was his servant that slept, worn out with watching. Presently a great rain fell and Hagiwara, waking, heard the sound of it upon the roof. The heavens were opened and for hours the rain fell. And it tore the holy text from over the round window in Hagiwara’s chamber.

At the hour of the Ox there was heard the sound of footsteps in the lane without the garden hedge. Nearer and nearer they came. They grew slow and stopped.

“This is the last time, O’Yoné, O’Yoné, therefore bring me to my lord. Think of the love of ten existences. Great is the power of Karma. There must be a way...”

“Come, my beloved,” called Hagiwara with a great voice.

“Open, lord... open and I come.”

But Hagiwara could not move from his couch.

“Come, my beloved,” he called for the second time.

“I cannot come, though the separation wounds me like a sharp sword. Thus we suffer for the sins of a former life.” So the lady spoke and moaned like the lost soul that she was. But O’Yoné took her hand.

“See the round window,” she said.

Hand in hand the two rose lightly from the earth. Like vapour they passed through the unguarded window. The *samurai* called, “Come to me, beloved,” for the third time.

He was answered, “Lord, I come.”

In the grey morning Hagiwara’s servant found his master cold and dead. At his feet stood the peony lantern burning with a weird yellow flame. The servant shivered, took up the lantern and blew out the light; for “I cannot bear it,” he said.

5

THE SEA KING AND THE MAGIC JEWELS

This is a tale beloved by the children of Japan, and by the old folk — a tale of magical jewels and a visit to the Sea King's palace.

Prince Rice-Ear-Ruddy-Plenty loved a beautiful and royal maiden, and made her his bride. And the lady was called Princess Blossoming-Brightly-as-the-Flowers-of-the-Trees, so sweetly fair was she. But her father was augustly wrath at her betrothal, for his Augustness, Prince Rice-Ear-Ruddy-Plenty, had put aside her elder sister, the Princess of the Rocks (and, indeed, this lady was not fair), for he loved only Princess Blossoming-Brightly. So the old King said, "Because of this, the offspring of these heavenly deities shall be frail, fading and falling like the flowers of the trees." So it is. At this day, the lives of their Augustnesses, the Heavenly Sovereigns, are not long.

Howbeit, in the fullness of time, the lady, Blossoming-Brightly-as-the-Flowers-of-the-Trees, bore two lovely men children, and called the elder Fire Flash and the younger Fire Fade.

Prince Fire Flash was a fisherman, who got his luck upon the wide sea, and ran upon the shore with his august garments girded. And again, he tarried all the night in his boat, upon the high wave-crests. And he caught things broad of fin and things narrow of fin, and he was a deity of the water weeds and of the waters and of the fishes of the sea.

But Prince Fire Fade was a hunter, who got his luck upon the mountains and in the forest, who bound sandals fast upon his feet, and bore a bow and heavenly-feathered arrows. And he caught things rough of hair and things soft of hair, and he knew the trail of the badger and the wild cherry's time of flowering. For he was a deity of the woods.

Now Prince Fire Fade spoke to his elder brother, Prince Fire Flash, and said, "Brother, I am aweary of the green hills. Therefore let us now exchange our luck. Give me thy rod and I will go to the cool waters. Thou mayest take my great bow and all my heavenly-feathered arrows and try the mountains, where, trust me, thou shalt see many strange and beautiful things, unknown to thee before."

But Prince Fire Flash answered, "Not so... not so."

And again, after not many days were past, Prince Fire Fade came and sighed, "I am aweary of the green hills... the fair waters call me. Woe to be a younger brother!" And when Prince Fire Flash took no heed of him, but angled with his rod, day and night, and caught things broad of fin and things narrow of fin, Prince Fire Fade drooped with desire, and let his long hair fall untended upon his shoulders. And he murmured, "Oh, to try my luck upon the sea!" till at last Prince Fire Flash, his elder brother, gave him the rod for very weariness, and betook himself to the mountains. And all day he hunted, and let fly the heavenly-feathered arrows; but rough of hair or soft of hair, never a thing did he catch. And he cried, "Fool, fool, to barter the heavenly luck of the gods!" So he returned.

And his Augustness, Prince Fire Fade, took the luck of the sea, and angled in sunshine and in gloom; but broad of fin or narrow of fin, never a fish did he catch. And, moreover, he lost his brother's fish-hook in the sea. So he hung his head, and returned.

And Prince Fire Flash said, "Each to his own, the hunter to the mountain, and the fisherman to the sea... for thou and I have brought nothing home, and this night we sleep hungry. We may not barter the luck of the gods. And now, where is my fish-hook?”

So Prince Fire Fade replied, saying softly, “Sweet brother, be not angry... but, toiling all day with thy fish-hook, broad of fin or narrow of fin, not a fish did I catch; and, at the last, I lost thy fish-hook in the sea.”

At this his Highness, Prince Fire Flash, flew into a great rage, and stamping his feet, required the fish-hook of his brother.

And Prince Fire Fade made answer, “Sweet brother, I have not thy fish-hook, but the deep sea, whose bottom no man may search. Though I should die for thee, yet could I not give thee back thy fish-hook.”

But his elder brother required it of him the more urgently.

Then Prince Fire Fade burst the wild wistaria tendrils which bound his august ten-grasp sword to his side. And he said, “Farewell, good sword.” And he broke it into many fragments, and made five hundred fish-hooks to give to his brother, Prince Fire Flash. But Prince Fire Flash would have none of them.

And again Prince Fire Fade toiled at a great furnace, and made one thousand fish-hooks; and upon his knees he humbly offered them to his brother, Prince Fire Flash. For he loved his brother. Nevertheless Prince Fire Flash would not so much as look at them, but sat moody, his head on his hand, saying, “Mine own lost fish-hook will I have, that and no other.”

So Prince Fire Fade went grieving from the palace gates, and wandered lamenting by the seashore; and his tears fell and mingled with the foam. And, when night came, he had no heart to return homewards, but sat down, weary, upon a rock amid the salt pools. And he cried, “Alas, my brother, I am all to blame, and through my foolishness has this come upon me. But oh, my brother, together were we nursed upon the sweet breast of our mother, Princess Blossoming-Brightly-as-the-Flowers-of-the-Trees, for almost hand in hand did we come into the world.”

And the moon rose so that the sea and the Central Land of Reed Plains was light. But Prince Fire Fade ceased not to lament.

Then Shiko-Tsuchi-no-Kami, the Lord of Sea Salt, came with the rising tide, and spoke, “Wherefore weeps the Heaven’s Sky Height?”

And Prince Fire Fade made answer: “I have taken my brother’s fish-hook, and I have lost it in the sea. And though I have given him many other fish-hooks for compensation, he will have none of them, but desires only the original fish-hook. Truly, the gods know, I would give my life to find it; but how should that serve?”

And Shiko-Tsuchi-no-Kami took him by the sleeve to where a boat moved upon the water, and set him in the boat and pushed it from the shore, saying, “My son, pursue the pleasant path that Tsuki-Yomi-no-Kami, His Augustness, the Moon Night Possessor, has made for thee upon the waters. And, at the end, thou shalt come to a palace made of fishes’ scales, which is the palace of the great King of the Sea. Before the gate there is a clear well, and by the well-side there grows a cassia tree with many spreading branches. Therefore climb thou into the branches of the cassia tree, and there wait for the King’s daughter, who shall come to give thee counsel.”

And Prince Fire Fade, standing up in the boat, made obeisance, and thanked the Lord of Sea Salt. But this one girded his august garments and pushed the boat before him, till he was thigh-deep in the water. And he said, “Nay, nay, fair youth, no thanks, only do my bidding.”

So his Augustness, Prince Fire Fade, came to the Sea King’s palace. And he forthwith climbed the cassia tree and waited among its green branches.

At the day’s dawning came the handmaidens of the Sea King’s daughter, with their jewelled vessels, to draw water from the well. And as they stooped to dip their vessels, Prince Fire Fade leaned and watched them from the branches of the cassia tree. And the glory of his august countenance made a brightness upon the waters of the well. So all the maidens looked up and beheld his comeliness, and were amazed. But he spoke them fairly, and desired of them a little water from their vessels. So the maidens drew him water in a jewelled cup (howbeit the jewels were clouded, because of the coldness of the well water), and they presented it to him with all reverence. Then, not drinking the water, Prince Fire Fade took the royal jewel from his neck, and holding it between his two lips he dropped it into the cup, and the cup he gave again to the maidens.

Now they saw the great jewel shining in the cup, but they could not move it, for it clung fast to the gold. So the maidens departed, skimming the water like the white birds of the offing. And they came to the Sea King's daughter, bearing the cup and the jewel in it.

And the Princess, looking at the jewel, asked them, "Is there, perchance, a stranger at the gate?"

And one of the maidens answered, "There is some one sitting in the branches of the cassia tree which is by our well."

And another said, "It is a very beautiful young man."

And another said, "He is even more glorious than our king. And he asked water of us, so we respectfully gave him water in this cup. And he drank none of it, but dropped a jewel into it from his lips. So we have brought them unto Thine Augustness, both the cup and the jewel."

Then the Princess herself took a vessel and went to draw water at the well. And her long sleeves, and certain of the folds of her august garments, floated behind her, and her head was bound with a garland of sea flowers. And coming to the well she looked up through the branches of the cassia tree. And her eyes met the eyes of Prince Fire Fade.

And presently she fetched her father, the Sea King, saying, "Father, there is a beautiful person at our gate." So the Sea King came out and welcomed Prince Fire Fade, and said, "This is the August Child of the Heaven's Sun Height." And leading him into his palace he caused the floor to be spread with eight layers of rugs of asses' skins, and eight layers of rugs of silk, and set the Prince upon them.

And that night he made a great banquet, and celebrated the betrothal of Prince Fire Fade to his daughter, the fair Jewel Princess. And for very many days there was held high revel and rejoicing in the Sea King's palace.

But one night, as they took their ease upon the silken floor, and all the fishes of the sea brought rich dishes, and sweetmeats in vessels of gold and coral and jade to set before them, the fair Jewel Princess herself sat at Prince Fire Fade's right hand to pour the wine into his cup. And the silver scales upon the palace walls glittered in the moonlight. But Prince Fire Fade looked out across the Sea Path and thought of what had gone before, and so heaved a deep sigh.

Then the Sea King was troubled, and asked him, saying, "Wherefore dost thou sigh?" But Prince Fire Fade answered nothing.

And the fair Jewel Princess, his betrothed wife, came closer, and touched him on the breast, and said softly, "Oh, Thine Augustness, my sweet spouse, art thou not happy in our water palace, where the shadows fall green, that thou lookest so longingly across the Sea Path? Or do our maidens not please thee, who move silently, like the birds of the offing? Oh, my lord, despise me not, but tell me what is in thine heart."

Then Prince Fire Fade answered, "My lovely lady, Thine Augustness, let nothing be hidden from thee, because of our love." And he told them all the story of the fish-hook, and of his elder brother's wrath.

"And now," he said, "will the Jewel Princess give me counsel?"

Then the Jewel Princess smiled, and rose up lightly, and her hair was so long that it hung to the edge and hem of her silken red robe. And she passed to where the palace steps led down into the water. And standing upon the last step she called to the fishes of the sea, and summoned them, great and small, from far and near. So the fishes of the sea, both great and small, swam about her feet, and the water was silver with their scales. And the

King’s daughter cried, “O fishes of the sea, find and bring me the august fish-hook of Prince Fire Flash.”

And the fishes answered, “Lady, the *Tai* is in misery, for something sticks in his throat so that he cannot eat. Perchance this may be the august fish-hook of his Augustness, Prince Fire Flash.”

Then the Princess stooped down and lifted the *Tai* from the water, and with her white hand she took the lost fish-hook from his throat. And after she had washed and dabbled it for a little, she took it in to Prince Fire Fade. And he rejoiced and said, “This is indeed my brother’s fish-hook. I go to restore it instantly, and we shall be reconciled.” For he loved his brother.

But the fair Jewel Princess stood silent and sorrowing, for she thought, “Now will he depart and leave me lonely.”

And Prince Fire Fade hastened to the water’s edge, and there bestrode a valiant crocodile, who should bring him to his journey’s end. And ere he went, the Sea King spoke: “Fair youth, now listen to my counsel. If thy brother sow rice upon the uplands, do thou sow thy rice low, in the water meads. But if thy brother sow his rice in the water meads, then do thou, Thine Augustness, sow thy rice upon the uplands. And I who rule the rains and the floods will continually prosper the labours of Thine Augustness. Moreover, here are two magic jewels. If thy brother should be moved by envy to attack thee, then put forth the Tide Flowing Jewel and the waters shall arise to drown him. But if thou shouldst have compassion upon him, then put forth the Tide Ebbing Jewel, and all the waters shall subside, and his life be spared.”

And his Augustness Prince Fire Fade gave thanks with obeisance. And he hid the fish-hook in his long sleeve, and hung the two great jewels about his neck. Then the fair Jewel Princess came near and bade him farewell, with many tears. And the Sea King charged the crocodile, saying, “While crossing the middle of the sea, do not alarm him.”

So Prince Fire Fade sat upon the crocodile’s head; and in one day he came to his own place and sprang lightly to shore. And unsheathing his dagger, he hung it upon the crocodile’s neck for a token.

Hereupon, Prince Fire Fade found his brother, and gave him back his own fish-hook that had been lost. Nevertheless, because of the two great jewels, which he wore in the folds of his raiment, he had everlasting dominion over his brother, and flourished in all his doings.

And, after some time, there came to Prince Fire Fade the daughter of the Sea King, the fair Jewel Princess. And she came across the Sea Path bearing in her arms a young child. And she, weeping, laid down the child at the feet of His Augustness and said, “My lord, I have brought thy son.”

But Prince Fire Fade raised her up and made her welcome, and built for her a palace on the seashore, at the limit of the waves. And the palace was thatched with cormorant’s feathers. So they dwelt there with the August Child.

And the fair Jewel Princess besought her lord, saying, “Sweet husband, look not on me in the dark night, for then I must take my native shape; with those of my land it is ever so. Howbeit, look not on me, lest I should be ashamed and misfortune should follow.” So Prince Fire Fade promised her, and spoke many fair words of assurance.

Nevertheless, there came a night when Prince Fire Fade lay awake, and could get no rest. And, at length, when it was very dark, before the dawn, he arose and struck a light to look upon his bride as she slept. And he beheld a great scalèd dragon, with translucent eyes, which was coiled up at the couch’s foot. And Prince Fire Fade cried out aloud for terror, and dropped the light. Then morning broke very grey upon the sea. And at the same instant the great dragon stirred, and from its coils the Jewel Princess lifted up her lovely head. And the green scales fell away from her like a garment. So she stood, in a white robe, with her child upon her breast. And she hung her head and wept, saying, “O Thine Augustness, my sweet spouse, I had thought to have made the Sea Path a highway between thy land and mine, that we might go and come at pleasure. But now, though I warned thee, thou hast looked upon me in the night. Therefore, my lord, between me and thee it is farewell. I go across the Sea Path, and of this going there is no return. Take thou the August Child."

She spoke, and departed immediately upon the Sea Path, weeping and covering her face with her hair and looking back to the shore. And she was never more seen upon the Central Land of Reed Plains. Moreover, she shut the gates of the sea and closed the way to her father's palace. But the young maid, her sister, she sent to be a nurse to her babe, and because, for all that had been, she could not restrain her loving heart, she made a little song, and sent it to her lord by the maid, her sister. And the song said:

Oh, fair are the red jewels,
And fair is the string on which they are strung...
Even so, fair is my babe.
But brighter far, and more renowned are the white jewels,
The jewels that are like my lord.

Then the husband answered, in a song which said:

As for thee, my lady, whom I took to be my bride,
To the island where lights the wild duck — the bird of the offing,
I shall not forget thee till the end of my life.

6

THE GOOD THUNDER

Folks say that Rai-den, the Thunder, is an unloving spirit, fearful and revengeful, cruel to man. These are folks who are mortally afraid of the storm, and who hate lightning and tempest; they speak all the evil they can of Rai-den and of Rai-Taro, his son. But they are wrong.

Rai-den Sama lived in a Castle of Cloud set high in the blue heaven. He was a great and mighty god, a Lord of the Elements. Rai-Taro was his one and only son, a brave boy, and his father loved him.

In the cool of the evening Rai-den and Rai-Taro walked upon the ramparts of the Castle of Cloud, and from the ramparts they viewed the doings of men upon the Land of Reed Plains. North and South and East and West they looked. Often they laughed — oh, very often; sometimes they sighed. Sometimes Rai-Taro leaned far over the castle walls to see the children that went to and fro upon earth.

One night Rai-den Sama said to Rai-Taro, “Child, look well this night upon the doings of men!”

Rai-Taro answered, “Father, I will look well.”

From the northern rampart they looked, and saw great lords and men-at-arms going forth to battle. From the southern rampart they looked, and saw priests and acolytes serving in a holy temple where the air was dim with incense, and images of gold and bronze gleamed in the twilight. From the eastern rampart they looked, and saw a lady's bower, where was a fair princess, and a troop of maidens, clad in rose colour, that made music for her. There were children there, too, playing with a little cart of flowers.

"Ah, the pretty children!" said Rai-Taro.

From the western rampart they looked, and saw a peasant toiling in a rice-field. He was weary enough and his back ached. His wife toiled with him by his side. If he was weary, it is easy to believe that she was more weary still. They were very poor and their garments were ragged.

"Have they no children?" said Rai-Taro. Rai-den shook his head.

Presently, "Have you looked well, Rai-Taro?" he said. "Have you looked well this night upon the doings of men?"

"Father," said Rai-Taro, "indeed, I have looked well."

"Then choose, my son, choose, for I send you to take up your habitation upon the earth."

"Must I go among men?" said Rai-Taro.

"My child, you must."

"I will not go with the men-at-arms," said Rai-Taro; "fighting likes me very ill."

"Oho, say you so, my son? Will you go, then, to the fair lady's bower?"

"No," said Rai-Taro, "I am a man. Neither will I have my head shaved to go and live with priests."

"What, then, do you choose the poor peasant? You will have a hard life and scanty fare, Rai-Taro."

Rai-Taro said, "They have no children. Perhaps they will love me."

"Go, go in peace," said Rai-den Sama; "for you have chosen wisely."

"How shall I go, my father?" said Rai-Taro.

"Honourably," said his father, "as it befits a Prince of High Heaven."

Now the poor peasant man toiled in his rice-field, which was at the foot of the mountain Hakusan, in the province of Ichizen. Day after day and week after week the bright sun shone. The rice-field was dry, and young rice was burnt up.

“Alack and alas!” cried the poor peasant man, “and what shall I do if my rice-crop fails? May the dear gods have mercy on all poor people!”

With that he sat himself down on a stone at the rice-field’s edge and fell asleep for very weariness and sorrow.

When he woke the sky was black with clouds. It was but noonday, but it grew as dark as night. The leaves of the trees shuddered together and the birds ceased their singing.

“A storm, a storm!” cried the peasant. “Rai-den Sama goes abroad upon his black horse, beating the great drum of the Thunder. We shall have rain in plenty, thanks be.”

Rain in plenty he had, sure enough, for it fell in torrents, with blinding lightning and roaring thunder.

“Oh, Rai-den Sama,” said the peasant, “saving your greatness, this is even more than sufficient.”

At this the bright lightning flashed anew and fell to the earth in a ball of living fire, and the heavens cracked with a mighty peal of thunder.

“Ai! Ai!” cried the poor peasant man. “Kwannon have mercy on a sinful soul, for now the Thunder Dragon has me indeed.” And he lay on the ground and hid his face.

Howbeit the Thunder Dragon spared him. And soon he sat up and rubbed his eyes. The ball of fire was gone, but a babe lay upon the wet earth; a fine fresh boy with the rain upon his cheeks and his hair.

“Oh, Lady, Lady Kwannon,” said the poor peasant man, “this is thy sweet mercy.” And he took the boy in his arms and carried him to his own home.

As he went the rain still fell, but the sun came out in the blue sky, and every flower in the cooler air shone and lifted up its grateful head.

The peasant came to his cottage door.

“Wife, wife,” he called, “I have brought you something home.”

“What may it be?” said his wife.

The man answered, “Rai-Taro, the little eldest son of the Thunder.”

Rai-Taro grew up straight and strong, the tallest, gayest boy of all that country-side. He was the delight of his foster-parents, and all the neighbours loved him. When he was ten years old he worked in the rice-fields like a man. He was the wonderful weather prophet.

“My father,” he said, “let us do this and that, for we shall have fair weather”; or he said, “My father, let us the rather do this or that, for to-night there will be a storm,” and whatever he had said, so, sure enough, it came to pass. And he brought great good fortune to the poor peasant man, and all his works prospered.

When Rai-Taro was eighteen years old all the neighbours were bidden to his birthday feast. There was plenty of good *saké*, and the good folk were merry enough; only Rai-Taro was silent and sad and sorry.

“What ails you, Rai-Taro?” said his foster-mother. “You who are wont to be the gayest of the gay, why are you silent, sad and sorry?”

“It is because I must leave you,” Rai-Taro said.

“Nay,” said his foster-mother, “never leave us, Rai-Taro, my son. Why would you leave us?”

“Mother, because I must,” said Rai-Taro in tears.

“You have been our great good fortune; you have given us all things. What have I given you? What have I given you, Rai-Taro, my son?”

Rai-Taro answered, “Three things have you taught me — to labour, to suffer, and to love. I am more learned than the Immortals.”

Then he went from them. And in the likeness of a white cloud he scaled heaven’s blue height till he gained his father’s castle. And Rai-den received him. The two of them stood upon the western rampart of the Castle of Cloud and looked down to earth.

The foster-mother stood weeping bitterly, but her husband took her hand.

“My dear,” he said, “it will not be for long. We grow old apace.”

7

THE BLACK BOWL

Long ago, in a part of the country not very remote from Kioto, the great gay city, there dwelt an honest couple. In a lonely place was their cottage, upon the outskirts of a deep wood of pine trees. Folks had it that the wood was haunted. They said it was full of deceiving foxes; they said that beneath the mossy ground the elves built their kitchens; they said that long-nosed *Tengu* had tea-parties in the forest thrice a month, and that the fairies' children played at hide-and-seek there every morning before seven. Over and above all this they didn't mind saying that the honest couple were queer in their ways, that the woman was a wise woman, and that the man was a warlock — which was as may be. But sure it was that they did no harm to living soul, that they lived as poor as poor, and that they had one fair daughter. She was as neat and pretty as a princess, and her manners were very fine; but for all that she worked as hard as a boy in the rice-fields, and within doors she was the housewife indeed, for she washed and cooked and drew water. She went barefoot in a grey homespun gown, and tied her back hair with a tough wistaria tendril. Brown she was and thin, but the sweetest beggar-maid that ever made shift with a bed of dry moss and no supper.

By-and-by the good man her father dies, and the wise woman her mother sickens within the year, and soon she lies in a corner of the cottage waiting for her end, with the maid near her crying bitter tears.

“Child,” says the mother, “do you know you are as pretty as a princess?”

“Am I that?” says the maid, and goes on with her crying.

“Do you know that your manners are fine?” says the mother.

“Are they, then?” says the maid, and goes on with her crying.

“My own baby,” says the mother, “could you stop your crying a minute and listen to me?”

So the maid stopped crying and put her head close by her mother’s on the poor pillow.

“Now listen,” says the mother, “and afterwards remember. It is a bad thing for a poor girl to be pretty. If she is pretty and lonely and innocent, none but the gods will help her. They will help you, my poor child, and I have thought of a way besides. Fetch me the great black rice-bowl from the shelf.”

The girl fetched it.

“See, now, I put it on your head and all your beauty is hidden away.”

“Alack, mother,” said the poor child, “it is heavy.”

“It will save you from what is heavier to bear,” said the mother. “If you love me, promise me that you will not move it till the time comes.”

“I promise! I promise! But how shall I know when the time comes?”

“That you shall know... And now help me outside, for the sweet morning dawns and I’ve a fancy to see the fairies’ children once again, as they run in the forest.”

So the child, having the black bowl upon her head, held her mother in her arms in a grassy place near the great trees, and presently they saw the fairies’ children threading their way between the dark trunks as they played at hide-and-seek. Their bright garments fluttered, and they laughed lightly as they went. The mother smiled to see them; before seven she died very sweetly as she smiled.

When her little store of rice was done, the maid with the wooden bowl knew well enough that she must starve or go and find more. So first she tended her father's and mother's graves and poured water for the dead, as is meet, and recited many a holy text. Then she bound on her sandals, kilted her grey skirts to show her scarlet petticoat, tied her household gods in a blue printed handkerchief, and set out all alone to seek her fortunes, the brave girl!

For all her slenderness and pretty feet she was a rarely odd sight, and soon she was to know it. The great black bowl covered her head and shadowed her face. As she went through a village two women looked up from washing in the stream, stared and laughed.

"It's a boggart come alive," says one.

"Out upon her," cries the other, "for a shameless wench! Out upon her false modesty to roam the country thus with her head in a black bowl, as who should cry aloud to every passing man, 'Come and see what is hidden!' It is enough to make a wholesome body sick."

On went the poor maid, and sometimes the children pelted her with mud and pebbles for sport. Sometimes she was handled roughly by village louts, who scoffed and caught at her dress as she went; they even laid hands upon the bowl itself and sought to drag it from her head by force. But they only played at that game once, for the bowl stung them as fiercely as if it had been a nettle, and the bullies ran away howling.

The beggar-maiden might seek her fortune, but it was very hard to find. She might ask for work; but see, would she get it? None were wishful to employ a girl with a black bowl on her head.

At last, on a fine day when she was tired out, she sat her upon a stone and began to cry as if her heart would break. Down rolled her tears from under the black bowl. They rolled down her cheeks and reached her white chin.

A wandering ballad-singer passed that way, with his *biwa* slung across his back. He had a sharp eye and marked the tears upon the maid's white chin. It was all he could see of her face, and, "Oh, girl with the black bowl on your head," quoth he, "why do you sit weeping by the roadside?"

"I weep," she answered, "because the world is hard. I am hungry and tired... No one will give me work or pay me money."

"Now that's unfortunate," said the ballad-singer, for he had a kind heart; "but I haven't a *rin* of my own, or it would be yours. Indeed I am sorry for you. In the circumstances the best I can do for you is to make you a little song." With that he whips his *biwa* round, thrums on it with his fingers and starts as easy as you please. "To the tears on your white chin," he says, and sings:

THE WHITE CHERRY blooms by the roadside,
How black is the canopy of cloud!
The wild cherry droops by the roadside,
Beware of the black canopy of cloud.
Hark, hear the rain, hear the rainfall
From the black canopy of cloud.
Alas, the wild cherry, its sweet flowers are marred,
Marred are the sweet flowers, forlorn on the spray!

"SIR, I do not understand your song," said the girl with the bowl on her head.

"Yet it is plain enough," said the ballad-singer, and went his way. He came to the house of a passing rich farmer. In he went, and they asked him to sing before the master of the house.

“With all the will in the world,” says the ballad-singer. “I will sing him a new song that I have just made.” So he sang of the wild cherry and the great black cloud.

When he had made an end, “Tell us the interpretation of your song,” says the master of the house.

“With all the will in the world,” quoth the ballad-singer. “The wild cherry is the face of a maiden whom I saw sitting by the wayside. She wore a great black wooden bowl upon her head, which is the great black cloud in my song, and from under it her tears flowed like rain, for I saw the drops upon her white chin. And she said that she wept for hunger, and because no one would give her work nor pay her money.”

“Now I would I might help the poor girl with the bowl on her head,” said the master of the house.

“That you may if you wish,” quoth the ballad-singer. “She sits but a stone’s throw from your gate.”

The long and short of it was that the maid was put to labour in the rich farmer’s harvest-fields. All the day long she worked in the waving rice, with her grey skirts kilted and her sleeves bound back with cords. All day long she plied the sickle, and the sun shone down upon the black bowl; but she had food to eat and good rest at night, and was well content.

She found favour in her master’s eyes, and he kept her in the fields till all the harvest was gathered in. Then he took her into his house, where there was plenty for her to do, for his wife was but sickly. Now the maiden lived well and happily as a bird, and went singing about her labours. And every night she thanked the august gods for her good fortune. Still she wore the black bowl upon her head.

At the New Year time, “Bustle, bustle,” says the farmer’s wife; “scrub and cook and sew; put your best foot foremost, my dear, for we must have the house look at its very neatest.”

“To be sure, and with all my heart,” says the girl, and she put her back into the work; “but, mistress,” she says, “if I may be so bold as to ask, are we having a party, or what?”

“Indeed we are, and many of them,” says the farmer’s wife. “My son that is in Kioto, the great and gay, is coming home for a visit.”

Presently home he comes, the handsome young man. Then the neighbours were called in, and great was the merry-making. They feasted and they danced, they jested and they sang, many a bowl of good red rice they ate, and many a cup of good *saké* they drank. All this time the girl, with bowl on her head, plied her work modestly in the kitchen, and well out of the way she was — the farmer’s wife saw to that, good soul! All the same, one fine day the company called for more wine, and the wine was done, so the son of the house takes up the *saké* bottle and goes with it himself to the kitchen. What should he see there but the maiden sitting upon a pile of faggots, and fanning the kitchen fire with a split bamboo fan!

“My life, but I must see what is under that black bowl,” says the handsome young man to himself. And sure enough he made it his daily care, and peeped as much as he could, which was not very much; but seemingly it was enough for him, for he thought no more of Kioto, the great and gay, but stayed at home to do his courting.

His father laughed and his mother fretted, the neighbours held up their hands, all to no purpose.

“Oh, dear, dear maiden with the wooden bowl, she shall be my bride and no other. I must and will have her,” cried the impetuous young man, and very soon he fixed the wedding-day himself.

When the time came, the young maidens of the village went to array the bride. They dressed her in a fair and costly robe of white brocade, and in trailing *hakama* of scarlet silk, and on her shoulders they hung a cloak of blue and purple and gold. They chattered, but as for the bride she said never a word. She was sad because she brought her bridegroom nothing, and because his parents were sore at his choice of a beggar-maid. She said nothing, but the tears glistened on her white chin.

“Now off with the ugly old bowl,” cried the maidens; “it is time to dress the bride’s hair and to do it with golden combs.” So they laid hands to the bowl and would have lifted it away, but they could not move it.

“Try again,” they said, and tugged at it with all their might. But it would not stir.

“There’s witchcraft in it,” they said; “try a third time.” They tried a third time, and still the bowl stuck fast, but it gave out fearsome moans and cries.

“Ah! Let be, let be for pity’s sake,” said the poor bride, “for you make my head ache.”

They were forced to lead her as she was to the bridegroom’s presence.

“My dear, I am not afraid of the wooden bowl,” said the young man.

So they poured the *saké* from the silver flagon, and from the silver cup the two of them drank the mystic “Three Times Three” that made them man and wife.

Then the black bowl burst asunder with a loud noise, and fell to the ground in a thousand pieces. With it fell a shower of silver and gold, and pearls and rubies and emeralds, and every jewel of price. Great was the astonishment of the company as they gazed upon a dowry that for a princess would have been rich and rare.

But the bridegroom looked into the bride’s face. “My dear,” he said, “there are no jewels that shine like your eyes.”

8

THE STAR LOVERS

All you that are true lovers, I beseech you pray the gods for fair weather upon the seventh night of the seventh moon.

For patience’ sake and for dear love’s sake, pray, and be pitiful that upon that night there may be neither rain, nor hail, nor cloud, nor thunder, nor creeping mist.

Hear the sad tale of the Star Lovers and give them your prayers.

The Weaving Maiden was the daughter of a Deity of Light. Her dwelling was upon the shore of the Milky Way, which is the Bright River of Heaven. All the day long she sat at her loom and plied her shuttle, weaving the gay garments of the gods. Warp and woof, hour by hour the coloured web grew till it lay fold on fold piled at her feet. Still she never ceased her labour, for she was afraid. She had heard a saying:

“Sorrow, age-long sorrow, shall come upon the Weaving Maiden when she leaves her loom.”

So she laboured, and the gods had garments to spare. But she herself, poor maiden, was ill-clad; she recked nothing of her attire or of the jewels that her father gave her. She went barefoot, and let her hair hang down unconfined. Ever and anon a long lock fell upon the loom, and back she flung it over her shoulder. She did not play with the children of Heaven, or take her pleasure with celestial youths and maidens. She did not love or weep. She was neither glad nor sorry. She sat weaving, weaving... and wove her being into the many-coloured web.

Now her father, the Deity of Light, grew angry. He said, “Daughter, you weave too much.”

“It is my duty,” she said.

“At your age to talk of duty!” said her father. “Out upon you!”

“Wherefore are you displeased with me, my father?” she said, and her fingers plied the shuttle.

“Are you a stock or a stone, or a pale flower by the wayside?”

“Nay,” she said, “I am none of these.”

“Then leave your loom, my child, and live; take your pleasure, be as others are.”

“And wherefore should I be as others are?” she said.

“Never dare to question me. Come, will you leave your loom?”

She said, “Sorrow, age-long sorrow, shall come upon the Weaving Maiden when she leaves her loom.”

“A foolish saying,” cried her father, “not worthy of credence. What do we know of age-long sorrow? Are we not gods?” With that he took her shuttle from her hand gently, and covered the loom with a cloth. And he caused her to be very richly attired, and they put jewels upon her and garlanded her head with flowers of Paradise. And her father gave her for spouse the Herd Boy of Heaven, who tended his flocks upon the banks of the Bright River.

Now the Maiden was changed indeed. Her eyes were stars and her lips were ruddy. She went dancing and singing all the day. Long hours she played with the children of Heaven, and she took her pleasure with the celestial youths and maidens. Lightly she went; her feet were shod with silver. Her lover, the Herd Boy, held her by the hand. She laughed so that the very gods laughed with her, and High Heaven re-echoed with sounds of mirth. She was careless; little did she think of duty or of the garments of the gods. As for her loom, she never went near it from one moon’s end to another.

“I have my life to live,” she said; “I’ll weave it into a web no more.”

And the Herd Boy, her lover, clasped her in his arms. Her face was all tears and smiles, and she hid it on his breast. So she lived her life. But her father, the Deity of Light, was angry.

“It is too much,” he said. “Is the girl mad? She will become the laughing-stock of Heaven. Besides, who is to weave the new spring garments of the gods?”

Three times he warned his daughter.

Three times she laughed softly and shook her head.

“Your hand opened the door, my father,” she said, “but of a surety no hand either of god or of mortal can shut it.”

He said, “You shall find it otherwise to your cost.” And he banished the Herd Boy for ever and ever to the farther side of the Bright River. The magpies flew together, from far and near, and they spread their wings for a frail bridge across the river, and the Herd Boy went over by the frail bridge. And immediately the magpies flew away to the ends of the earth and the Weaving Maiden could not follow. She was the saddest thing in Heaven. Long, long she stood upon the shore, and held out her arms to the Herd Boy, who tended his oxen desolate and in tears. Long, long she lay and wept upon the sand. Long, long she brooded, looking on the ground.

She arose and went to her loom. She cast aside the cloth that covered it. She took her shuttle in her hand.

“Age-long sorrow,” she said, “age-long sorrow!” Presently she dropped the shuttle. “Ah,” she moaned, “the pain of it,” and she leaned her head against the loom.

But in a little while she said, “Yet I would not be as once I was. I did not love or weep, I was neither glad nor sorry. Now I love and I weep — I am glad, and I am sorry.”

Her tears fell like rain, but she took up the shuttle and laboured diligently, weaving the garments of the gods. Sometimes the web was grey with grief, sometimes it was rosy with dreams. The gods were fain to go strangely clad. The Maiden's father, the Deity of Light, for once was well pleased.

"That is my good, diligent child," he said. "Now you are quiet and happy."

"The quiet of dark despair," she said. "Happy! I am the saddest thing in Heaven."

"I am sorry," said the Deity of Light; "what shall I do?"

"Give me back my lover."

"Nay, child, that I cannot do. He is banished for ever and ever by the decree of a Deity, that cannot be broken."

"I knew it," she said.

"Yet something I can do. Listen. On the seventh day of the seventh moon, I will summon the magpies together from the ends of the earth, and they shall be a bridge over the Bright River of Heaven, so that the Weaving Maiden shall lightly cross to the waiting Herd Boy on the farther shore."

So it was. On the seventh day of the seventh moon came the magpies from far and near. And they spread their wings for a frail bridge. And the Weaving Maiden went over by the frail bridge. Her eyes were like stars, and her heart like a bird in her bosom. And the Herd Boy was there to meet her upon the farther shore.

And so it is still, oh, true lovers — upon the seventh day of the seventh moon these two keep their tryst. Only if the rain falls with thunder and cloud and hail, and the Bright River of Heaven is swollen and swift, the magpies cannot make a bridge for the Weaving Maiden. Alack, the dreary time!

Therefore, true lovers, pray the gods for fair weather.

9

HORAIZAN

Jofuku was the Wise Man of China. Many books he read, and he never forgot what was in them. All the characters he knew as he knew the lines in the palm of his hand. He learned secrets from birds and beasts, and herbs and flowers and trees, and rocks and metals. He knew magic and poetry and philosophy. He grew full of years and wisdom. All the people honoured him; but he was not happy, for he had a word written upon his heart.

The word was *Mutability*. It was with him day and night, and sorely it troubled him. Moreover, in the days of Jofuku a tyrant ruled over China, and he made the Wise Man's life a burden.

"Jofuku," he said, "teach the nightingales of my wood to sing me the songs of the Chinese poets."

Jofuku could not do it for all his wisdom.

"Alas, liege," he said, "ask me another thing and I will give it you, though it cost me the blood of my heart."

"Have a care," said the Emperor, "look to your ways. Wise men are cheap in China; am I one to be dishonoured?"

"Ask me another thing," said the Wise Man.

"Well, then, scent me the peony with the scent of the jessamine. The peony is brilliant, imperial; the jessamine is small, pale, foolish.

Nevertheless, its perfume is sweet. Scent me the peony with the scent of the jessamine."

But Jofuku stood silent and downcast.

"By the gods," cried the Emperor, "this wise man is a fool! Here, some of you, off with his head."

"Liege," said the Wise Man, "spare me my life and I will set sail for Horaizan where grows the herb Immortality. I will pluck this herb and bring it back to you again, that you may live and reign for ever."

The Emperor considered.

"Well, go," he said, "and linger not, or it will be the worse for you."

Jofuku went and found brave companions to go with him on the great adventure, and he manned a junk with the most famous mariners of China, and he took stores on board, and gold; and when he had made all things ready he set sail in the seventh month, about the time of the full moon.

The Emperor himself came down to the seashore.

"Speed, speed, Wise Man," he said; "fetch me the herb Immortality, and see that you do it presently. If you return without it, you and your companions shall die the death."

"Farewell, liege," called Jofuku from the junk. So they went with a fair wind for their white sails. The boards creaked, the ropes quivered, the water splashed against the junk's side, the sailors sang as they steered a course eastward, the brave companions were merry. But the Wise Man of China looked forward and looked back, and was sad because of the word written upon his heart — *Mutability*.

The junk of Jofuku was for many days upon the wild sea, steering a course eastwards. He and the sailors and the brave companions suffered many things. The great heat burnt them, and the great cold froze them. Hungry and thirsty they were, and some of them fell sick and died. More were slain in a fight with pirates. Then came the dread typhoon, and mountain waves that swept the junk. The masts and the sails were washed away with the rich stores, and the gold was lost for ever. Drowned were the famous mariners, and the brave companions every one. Jofuku was left alone.

In the grey dawn he looked up. Far to the east he saw a mountain, very faint, the colour of pearl, and on the mountain top there grew a tree, tall, with spreading branches. The Wise Man murmured:

"The Island of Horaizan is east of the east, and there is Fusan, the Wonder Mountain. On the heights of Fusan there grows a tree whose branches hide the Mysteries of Life."

Jofuku lay weak and weary and could not lift a finger. Nevertheless, the junk glided nearer and nearer to the shore. Still and blue grew the waters of the sea, and Jofuku saw the bright green grass and the many-coloured flowers of the island. Soon there came troops of young men and maidens bearing garlands and singing songs of welcome; and they waded out into the water and drew the junk to land. Jofuku was aware of the sweet and spicy odours that clung to their garments and their hair. At their invitation he left the junk, which drifted away and was no more seen.

He said, "I have come to Horaizan the Blest." Looking up he saw that the trees were full of birds with blue and golden feathers. The birds filled the air with delightful melody. On all sides there hung the orange and the citron, the persimmon and the pomegranate, the peach and the plum and the loquat. The ground at his feet was as a rich brocade, embroidered with every flower that is. The happy dwellers in Horaizan took him by the hands and spoke lovingly to him.

"How strange it is," said Jofuku, "I do not feel my old age any more."

"What is old age?" they said.

"Neither do I feel any pain."

"Now what is pain?" they said.

"The word is no longer written on my heart."

"What word do you speak of, beloved?"

“*Mutability* is the word.”

“And what may be its interpretation?”

“Tell me,” said the Wise Man, “is this death?”

“We have never heard of death,” said the inhabitants of Horaizan.

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THE WISE MAN of Japan was Wasobiobe. He was full as wise as the Wise Man of China. He was not old but young. The people honoured him and loved him. Often he was happy enough.

It was his pleasure to venture alone in a frail boat out to sea, there to meditate in the wild and watery waste. Once as he did this it chanced that he fell asleep in his boat, and he slept all night long, while his boat drifted out to the eastward. So, when he awoke in the bright light of morning, he found himself beneath the shadow of Fusan, the Wonder Mountain. His boat lay in the waters of a river of Horaizan, and he steered her amongst the flowering iris and the lotus, and sprang on shore.

“The sweetest spot in the world!” he said. “I think I have come to Horaizan the Blest.”

Soon came the youths and maidens of the island, and with them the Wise Man of China, as young and as happy as they.

“Welcome, welcome, dear brother,” they cried, “welcome to the Island of Eternal Youth.”

When they had given him to eat of the delicious fruit of the island, they laid them down upon a bank of flowers to hear sweet music. Afterwards they wandered in the woods and groves. They rode and hunted, or bathed in the warm sea-water. They feasted and enjoyed every delightful pleasure. So the long day lingered, and there was no night, for there was no need of sleep, there was no weariness and no pain.

~

THE WISE MAN of Japan came to the Wise Man of China. He said:

"I cannot find my boat."

"What matter, brother?" said Jofuku. "You want no boat here."

"Indeed, my brother, I do. I want my boat to take me home. I am sick for home. There's the truth."

"Are you not happy in Horaizan?"

"No, for I have a word written upon my heart. The word is *Humanity*. Because of it I am troubled and have no peace."

"Strange," said the Wise Man of China. "Once I too had a word written on my heart. The word was *Mutability,* but I have forgotten what it means. Do you too forget."

"Nay, I can never forget," said the Wise Man of Japan.

He sought out the Crane, who is a great traveller, and besought her, "Take me home to my own land."

"Alas," the Crane said, "if I did so you would die. This is the Island of Eternal Youth; do you know you have been here for a hundred years? If you go away you will feel old age and weariness and pain, then you will die."

"No matter," said Wasobiobe, "take me home."

Then the Crane took him on her strong back and flew with him. Day and night she flew and never tarried and never tired. At last she said, "Do you see the shore?"

And he said, "I see it. Praise be to the gods."

She said, "Where shall I carry you?... You have but a little time to live."

"Good Crane, upon the dear sand of my country, under the spreading pine, there sits a poor fisherman mending his net. Take me to him that I may die in his arms."

So the Crane laid Wasobiobe at the poor fisherman's feet. And the fisherman raised him in his arms. And Wasobiobe laid his head against the fisherman’s humble breast.

“I might have lived for ever,” he said, “but for the word that is written on my heart.”

“What word?” said the fisherman.

“*Humanity* is the word,” the Wise Man murmured. “I am grown old — hold me closer. Ah, the pain...” He gave a great cry.

Afterwards he smiled. Then his breath left him with a sigh, and he was dead.

“It is the way of all flesh,” said the fisherman.

10

REFLECTIONS

Long enough ago there dwelt within a day's journey of the city of Kioto a gentleman of simple mind and manners, but good estate. His wife, rest her soul, had been dead these many years, and the good man lived in great peace and quiet with his only son. They kept clear of women-kind, and knew nothing at all either of their winning or their bothering ways. They had good steady men-servants in their house, and never set eyes on a pair of long sleeves or a scarlet *obi* from morning till night.

The truth is that they were as happy as the day is long. Sometimes they laboured in the rice-fields. Other days they went a-fishing. In the spring, forth they went to admire the cherry flower or the plum, and later they set out to view the iris or the peony or the lotus, as the case might be. At these times they would drink a little *saké*, and twist their blue and white *tenegui* about their heads and be as jolly as you please, for there was no one to say them nay. Often enough they came home by lantern light. They wore their oldest clothes, and were mighty irregular at their meals.

But the pleasures of life are fleeting — more's the pity! — and presently the father felt old age creeping upon him.

One night, as he sat smoking and warming his hands over the charcoal, "Boy," says he, "it's high time you got married."

“Now the gods forbid!” cries the young man. “Father, what makes you say such terrible things? Or are you joking? You must be joking,” he says.

“I’m not joking at all,” says the father; “I never spoke a truer word, and that you’ll know soon enough.”

“But, father, I am mortally afraid of women.”

“And am I not the same?” says the father. “I’m sorry for you, my boy.”

“Then what for must I marry?” says the son.

“In the way of nature I shall die before long, and you’ll need a wife to take care of you.”

Now the tears stood in the young man’s eyes when he heard this, for he was tender-hearted; but all he said was, “I can take care of myself very well.”

“That’s the very thing you cannot,” says his father.

The long and short of it was that they found the young man a wife. She was young, and as pretty as a picture. Her name was Tassel, just that, or Fusa, as they say in her language.

After they had drunk down the “Three Times Three” together and so became man and wife, they stood alone, the young man looking hard at the girl. For the life of him he did not know what to say to her. He took a bit of her sleeve and stroked it with his hand. Still he said nothing and looked mighty foolish. The girl turned red, turned pale, turned red again, and burst into tears.

“Honourable Tassel, don’t do that, for the dear gods’ sake,” says the young man.

“I suppose you don’t like me,” sobs the girl. “I suppose you don’t think I’m pretty.”

“My dear,” he says, “you’re prettier than the bean-flower in the field; you’re prettier than the little bantam hen in the farm-yard; you’re prettier than the rose carp in the pond. I hope you’ll be happy with my father and me.”

At this she laughed a little and dried her eyes. “Get on another pair of *hakama,*” she says, “and give me those you’ve got on you; there’s a great hole in them — I was noticing it all the time of the wedding!”

Well, this was not a bad beginning, and taking one thing with another they got on pretty well, though of course things were not as they had been in that blessed time when the young man and his father did not set eyes upon a pair of long sleeves or an *obi* from morning till night.

By and by, in the way of nature, the old man died. It is said he made a very good end, and left that in his strong-box which made his son the richest man in the country-side. But this was no comfort at all to the poor young man, who mourned his father with all his heart. Day and night he paid reverence to the tomb. Little sleep or rest he got, and little heed he gave to his wife, Mistress Tassel, and her whimsies, or even to the delicate dishes she set before him. He grew thin and pale, and she, poor maid, was at her wits’ end to know what to do with him. At last she said, “My dear, and how would it be if you were to go to Kioto for a little?”

“And what for should I do that?” he says.

It was on the tip of her tongue to answer, “To enjoy yourself,” but she saw it would never do to say that.

“Oh,” she says, “as a kind of a duty. They say every man that loves his country should see Kioto; and besides, you might give an eye to the fashions, so as to tell me what like they are when you get home. My things,” she says, “are sadly behind the times! I’d like well enough to know what people are wearing!”

“I’ve no heart to go to Kioto,” says the young man, “and if I had, it’s the planting-out time of the rice, and the thing’s not to be done, so there’s an end of it.”

All the same, after two days he bids his wife get out his best *hakama* and *haouri*, and to make up his *bento* for a journey. “I’m thinking of going to Kioto,” he tells her.

“Well, I am surprised,” says Mistress Tassel. “And what put such an idea into your head, if I may ask?”

“I’ve been thinking it’s a kind of duty,” says the young man.

“Oh, indeed,” says Mistress Tassel to this, and nothing more, for she had some grains of sense. And the next morning as ever was she packs her husband off bright and early for Kioto, and betakes herself to some little matter of house cleaning she has on hand.

The young man stepped out along the road, feeling a little better in his spirits, and before long he reached Kioto. It is likely he saw many things to wonder at. Amongst temples and palaces he went. He saw castles and gardens, and marched up and down fine streets of shops, gazing about him with his eyes wide open, and his mouth too, very like, for he was a simple soul.

At length, one fine day he came upon a shop full of metal mirrors that glittered in the sunshine.

“Oh, the pretty silver moons!” says the simple soul to himself. And he dared to come near and take up a mirror in his hand.

The next minute he turned as white as rice and sat him down on the seat in the shop door, still holding the mirror in his hand and looking into it.

“Why, father,” he said, “how did you come here? You are not dead, then? Now the dear gods be praised for that! Yet I could have sworn —— But no matter, since you are here alive and well. You are something pale still, but how young you look. You move your lips, father, and seem to speak, but I do not hear you. You’ll come home with me, dear, and live with us just as you used to do? You smile, you smile, that is well.”

“Fine mirrors, my young gentleman,” said the shopman, “the best that can be made, and that’s one of the best of the lot you have there. I see you are a judge.”

The young man clutched his mirror tight and sat staring stupidly enough no doubt. He trembled. “How much?” he whispered. “Is it for sale?” He was in a taking lest his father should be snatched from him.

“For sale it is, indeed, most noble sir,” said the shopman, “and the price is a trifle, only two *bu*. It’s almost giving it away I am, as you’ll understand.”

“Two *bu* — only two *bu*! Now the gods be praised for this their mercy!” cried the happy young man. He smiled from ear to ear, and he had the purse out of his girdle, and the money out of his purse, in a twinkling.

Now it was the shopman who wished he had asked three *bu* or even five. All the same he put a good face upon it, and packed the mirror in a fine white box and tied it up with green cords.

“Father,” said the young man, when he had got away with it, “before we set out for home we must buy some gauds for the young woman there, my wife, you know.”

Now, for the life of him, he could not have told why, but when he came to his home the young man never said a word to Mistress Tassel about buying his old father for two *bu* in the Kioto shop. That was where he made his mistake, as things turned out.

She was as pleased as you like with her coral hair-pins, and her fine new *obi* from Kioto. “And I’m glad to see him so well and so happy,” she said to herself; “but I must say he’s been mighty quick to get over his sorrow after all. But men are just like children.” As for her husband, unbeknown to her he took a bit of green silk from her treasure-box and spread it in the cupboard of the *toko no ma*. There he placed the mirror in its box of white wood.

Every morning early and every evening late, he went to the cupboard of the *toko no ma* and spoke with his father. Many a jolly talk they had and many a hearty laugh together, and the son was the happiest young man of all that country-side, for he was a simple soul.

But Mistress Tassel had a quick eye and a sharp ear, and it was not long before she marked her husband’s new ways.

“What for does he go so often to the *toko no ma*,” she asked herself, “and what has he got there? I should be glad enough to know.” Not being one to suffer much in silence, she very soon asked her husband these same things.

He told her the truth, the good young man. “And now I have my dear old father home again, I’m as happy as the day is long,” he says.

“H’m,” she says.

“And wasn’t two *bu* cheap,” he says, “and wasn’t it a strange thing altogether?”

“Cheap, indeed,” says she, “and passing strange; and why, if I may ask,” she says, “did you say nought of all this at the first?”

The young man grew red.

“Indeed, then, I cannot tell you, my dear,” he says. “I’m sorry, but I don’t know,” and with that he went out to his work.

Up jumped Mistress Tassel the minute his back was turned, and to the *toko no ma* she flew on the wings of the wind and flung open the doors with a clang.

“My green silk for sleeve-linings!” she cried at once; “but I don’t see any old father here, only a white wooden box. What can he keep in it?”

She opened the box quickly enough.

“What an odd flat shining thing!” she said, and, taking up the mirror, looked into it.

For a moment she said nothing at all, but the great tears of anger and jealousy stood in her pretty eyes, and her face flushed from forehead to chin.

“A woman!” she cried, “a woman! So that is his secret! He keeps a woman in this cupboard. A woman, very young and very pretty — no, not pretty at all, but she thinks herself so. A dancing-girl from Kioto, I’ll be bound; ill-tempered too — her face is scarlet; and oh, how she frowns, nasty little spitfire. Ah, who could have thought it of him? Ah, it’s a miserable girl I am — and I've cooked his *daikon* and mended his *hakama* a hundred times. Oh! oh! oh!"

With that, she threw the mirror into its case, and slammed-to the cupboard door upon it. Herself she flung upon the mats, and cried and sobbed as if her heart would break.

In comes her husband.

"I've broken the thong of my sandal," says he, "and I've come to —— But what in the world?" and in an instant he was down on his knees beside Mistress Tassel doing what he could to comfort her, and to get her face up from the floor where she kept it.

"Why, what is it, my own darling?" says he.

"*Your* own darling!" she answers very fierce through her sobs; and "I want to go home," she cries.

"But, my sweet, you are at home, and with your own husband."

"Pretty husband!" she says, "and pretty goings-on, with a woman in the cupboard! A hateful, ugly woman that thinks herself beautiful; and she has *my* green sleeve-linings there with her to boot."

"Now, what's all this about women and sleeve-linings? Sure you wouldn't grudge poor old father that little green rag for his bed? Come, my dear, I'll buy you twenty sleeve-linings."

At that she jumped to her feet and fairly danced with rage.

"Old father! old father! old father!" she screamed; "am I a fool or a child? I saw the woman with my own eyes."

The poor young man didn't know whether he was on his head or his heels. "Is it possible that my father is gone?" he said, and he took the mirror from the *toko no ma*.

"That's well; still the same old father that I bought for two *bu*. You seem worried, father; nay, then, smile as I do. There, that's well."

Mistress Tassel came like a little fury and snatched the mirror from his hand. She gave but one look into it and hurled it to the other end of the room. It made such a clang against the woodwork, that servants and neighbours came rushing in to see what was the matter.

“It is my father,” said the young man. “I bought him in Kioto for two *bu*.”

“He keeps a woman in the cupboard who has stolen my green sleeve-linings,” sobbed the wife.

After this there was a great to-do. Some of the neighbours took the man’s part and some the woman’s, with such a clatter and chatter and noise as never was; but settle the thing they could not, and none of them would look into the mirror, because they said it was bewitched.

They might have gone on the way they were till doomsday, but that one of them said, “Let us ask the Lady Abbess, for she is a wise woman.” And off they all went to do what they might have done sooner.

The Lady Abbess was a pious woman, the head of a convent of holy nuns. She was the great one at prayers and meditations and at mortifyings of the flesh, and she was the clever one, none the less, at human affairs. They took her the mirror, and she held it in her hands and looked into it for a long time. At last she spoke:

“This poor woman,” she said, touching the mirror, “for it’s as plain as daylight that it is a woman — this poor woman was so troubled in her mind at the disturbance that she caused in a quiet house, that she has taken vows, shaved her head, and become a holy nun. Thus she is in her right place here. I will keep her, and instruct her in prayers and meditations. Go you home, my children; forgive and forget, be friends.”

Then all the people said, “The Lady Abbess is the wise woman.”

And she kept the mirror in her treasure.

Mistress Tassel and her husband went home hand in hand.

“So I was right, you see, after all,” she said.

“Yes, yes, my dear,” said the simple young man, “of course. But I was wondering how my old father would get on at the holy convent. He was never much of a one for religion.”

11

THE STORY OF SUSA, THE IMPETUOUS

When Izanagi, the Lord who Invites, turned his back upon the unclean place, and bade farewell to Yomi, the World of the Dead, whither he had journeyed upon a quest, he beheld once more the Land of Fresh Rice Ears, and was glad. And he rested by the side of a clear river that he might perform purification.

And Izanagi-no-Mikoto bathed in the upper reach. But he said, “The water of the upper reach is too rapid.” Then he bathed in the lower reach; but he said, “The water of the lower reach is too sluggish.” So he went down for the third time and bathed in the middle reach of the river. And as the water dropped from his beautiful countenance there were created three sublime deities — Ama Terassu, the Glory of High Heaven; Tsuki-Yomi-no-Kami, the Moon-Night-Possessor; and Susa, the Impetuous, the Lord of the Sea.

Then Izanagi-no-Mikoto rejoiced, saying, “Behold the three august children that are mine, who shall also be illustrious for ever.” And, taking the great string of jewels from his neck, he bestowed it upon Ama Terassu, the Glorious, and said to her, “Do Thine Augustness rule the Plain of High Heaven, shining in thy beauty by day.” So she took the august jewels and hid them in the storehouse of the gods.

And the Lord of Invitation commanded Tsuki-Yomi-no-Kami, saying, “Do Thine Augustness rule the Dominion of the Night.” Now this was a youth of a fair and pleasant countenance.

And to the youngest of the deities, his Augustness the Lord Izanagi gave the Sea Plain.

So Ama Terassu ruled the day, and Tsuki-Yomi-no-Kami softly ruled the night. But Susa, the Impetuous, flung himself upon the ground and violently wept, for he said, “Ah, miserable, to dwell for ever upon the confines of the cold sea!” So he ceased not in his weeping, and took the moisture of the valley for his tears, so that the green places were withered and the rivers and streams were dried up. And evil deities increased and flourished, and as they swarmed upon the earth their noise was as the noise of flies in the fifth moon; and far and wide there arose portents of woe.

Then his father, the Lord of Invitation, came and stood terribly by him and said, “What is this that I do see and hear? Why dost thou not rule the dominions with which I charged thee, but lie here, like a child, with tears and wailings? Answer.”

And Susa, the Impetuous, answered, “I wail because I am in misery and love not this place, but would depart to my mother who rules the Nether Distant Land, who is called the Queen of Yomi, the World of the Dead.”

Then Izanagi was wroth and expelled him with a divine expulsion, and charged him that he should depart and show his face no more.

And Susa, the Impetuous, answered, “So be it. But first I will ascend to High Heaven to take leave of Her Augustness, my sister, who is the Glory of Heaven, and then I will depart.”

So he went up to Heaven with a noise and a great speed, and at his going all the mountains shook and every land and country quaked. And Ama Terassu, the Light of Heaven, she also trembled at his coming, and said, “This coming of His Augustness, my brother, is of no good intent, but to lay hold of mine inheritance, and to take it by force. For this alone does he invade the fastness of High Heaven.”

And forthwith she divided the hair that hung upon her shoulders and rolled it in two august bunches to the left and to the right, and adorned it with jewels. So she made her head like the head of a young warrior. And she slung upon her back a great bow and a quiver of arrows, one thousand and five hundred arrows, and she took in her hand a bamboo staff and brandished it and stamped upon the ground with her armed feet, so that the earth flew like powdered snow. So she came to the bank of the Tranquil River of Heaven and stood valiantly, like unto a mighty man, and waited.

And Susa, the Impetuous, spoke from the farther bank: “My lovely sister, Thine Augustness, why comest thou thus armed against me?”

And she answered, “Nay, but wherefore ascendest thou hither?”

And Susa replied, “There is nothing evil in my mind. Because I desired to dwell in the Land of Yomi, therefore has my father deigned to expel me with a divine expulsion, and I thought to take leave of thee, and so I have ascended hither. I have no evil intention.”

And she, bending her great eyes on him, said “Swear.”

And he swore, by the ten-grasp sword that was girded on him, and after that he swore by the jewels in her hair. Then she suffered him to cross over the Tranquil River of Heaven, and also to cross over the Floating Bridge. So Susa, the Impetuous, entered the dominions of his sister, the Sun Goddess.

But his wild spirit never ceased to chafe. And he pillaged the fair lands of Ama Terassu and broke down the divisions of the rice-fields which she had planted, and filled in the ditches. Still the Light of Heaven upbraided him not, but said, “His Augustness, my brother, believes that the land should not be wasted by ditches and divisions, and that rice should be sown everywhere, without distinction.” But notwithstanding her soft words Susa, the Impetuous, continued in his evil ways and became more and more violent.

Now, as the great Sun Goddess sat with her maidens in the awful Weaving Hall of High Heaven, seeing to the weaving of the august garments of the gods, her brother made a mighty chasm in the roof of the Weaving Hall, and through the chasm he let down a heavenly piebald horse. And the horse fled hither and thither in terror, and wrought great havoc amongst the looms and amongst the weaving maidens. And Susa himself followed like a rushing tempest and like a storm of waters flooding the hall, and all was confusion and horror. And in the press the Sun Goddess was wounded with her golden shuttle. So with a cry she fled from High Heaven and hid herself in a cave; and she rolled a rock across the cave's mouth.

Then dark was the Plain of High Heaven, and black dark the Central Land of Reed Plains, and eternal night prevailed. Hereupon the voices of the deities as they wandered over the face of the earth were like unto the flies in the fifth moon, and from far and near there arose portents of woe. Therefore did the Eight Hundred Myriad Deities assemble with a divine assembly in the dry bed of the Tranquil River of Heaven, there to hold parley, and to make decision what should be done. And His Augustness the Lord of Deep Thoughts commanded them. So they called together the Singing Birds of Eternal Night. And they charged Ama-tsu-mara, the Divine Smith, to make them a mirror of shining white metal. And they charged Tama-noya-no-mikoto to string together many hundreds of curved jewels. And, having performed divination by the shoulder-blade of a stag of Mount Kagu, they uprooted a sacred tree, a *sakaki*, of five hundred branches. And they hung the jewels upon the branches of the tree, and they hung the mirror upon its branches. And all the lower branches they covered with offerings, streamers of white and streamers of blue, and they bore the tree before the rock cavern where the Sun Goddess was. And immediately the assembled birds sang. Then a divine maiden of fair renown, who for grace and skill in dancing had no sister, either in the Land of Rice Ears or upon the Plain of High Heaven, stood before the cavern door. And there was hung about her for a garland the club moss from Mount Kagu, and her head was bound with the leaves of the spindle-tree and with flowers of gold and flowers of silver, and a sheaf of green bamboo-grass was in her hands. And she danced before the cavern door as one possessed, for heaven and earth have not seen the like of her dancing. It was more lovely than the pine-tops waving in the wind or the floating of sea foam, and the cloud race upon the Plain of High Heaven is not to be compared with it. And the earth quaked and High Heaven shook, and all the Eight Hundred Myriad Deities laughed together.

Now Ama Terassu, the Glory of Heaven, lay in the rock cavern, and the bright light streamed from her fair body in rays, so that she was as a great jewel of price. And pools of water gleamed in the floor of the cavern, and the slime upon the walls gleamed with many colours, and the small rock-plants flourished in the unwonted heat, so that the heavenly lady lay in a bower and slept. And she awoke because of the song of the Eternal Singing Birds, and she raised herself and flung the hair back over her shoulder, and said, “Alack, the poor birds that sing in the long night!” And there came to her the sound of dancing and of high revel and of the merriment of the gods, so she was still and listened. And presently she felt the Plain of High Heaven shake, and heard the Eight Hundred Myriad Deities as they laughed together. And she arose and came to the door of the cavern, and rolled back the great stone a little way. And a beam of light fell upon the dancing maiden where she stood, panting, in all her array; but the other deities were yet in darkness, and they looked at each other and were still. Then spoke the Fair Glory of Heaven: “Methought that because I was hidden the Plain of High Heaven should be dark, and black dark the Central Land of Reed Plains. How, then, doth the Dancing Maiden go thus, adorned with garlands and her head tired? And why do the Eight Hundred Myriad Deities laugh together?”

Then the Dancing Maiden made answer: “O Thine Augustness, that art the sweet delight of all the deities, behold the divine maidens are decked with flowers, and the gods assemble with shouts. We rejoice and are glad because there is a goddess more illustrious than Thine Augustness.”

And Ama Terassu heard and was wroth. And she covered her face with her long sleeves, so that the deities should not see her tears; howbeit, they fell like the falling stars. Then the youths of the Court of Heaven stood by the *sakaki* tree, where hung the mirror that was made by Ama-tsu-Mara, the Divine Smith. And they cried, “Lady, look and behold the new paragon of Heaven!”

And Ama Terassu said, “Indeed, I will not behold.” Nevertheless, she presently let slip the sleeves that covered her countenance and looked in the mirror. And as she looked, and beheld, and was dazzled by her own beauty, that was without peer, she came forth slowly from the rocks of the cavern. And the light of her flooded High Heaven, and below the rice ears waved and shook themselves, and the wild cherry rushed into flower. And all the deities joined their hands in a ring about Ama Terassu, the Goddess of the Sun, and the door of the rock cavern was shut. Then the Dancing Maiden cried, “O Lady, Thine Augustness, how should any Deity be born to compare with thee, the Glory of Heaven?”

So with joy they bore the goddess to her place.

But Susa, the Swift, the Brave, the Impetuous, the Long-Haired, the Thrice Unhappy, the Lord of the Sea, him the deities arraigned to stand trial in the dry bed of the Tranquil River of Heaven. And they took counsel, and fined him with a great fine. And, having shorn him of his hair, which was his beauty and his pride (for it was blue-black as an iris, and hung below his knee), they banished him for ever from the heavenly precincts.

So Susa descended to earth by the Floating Bridge with bitterness in his heart, and for many days he wandered in despair, he knew not whither. By fair rice-fields he came, and by barren moors, heeding nothing; and at last he stayed to rest by the side of the river called Hi, which is in the land of Izumo.

And as he sat, moody, his head on his hand, and looked down at the water, he beheld a chopstick floating on the surface of the stream. So Susa, the Impetuous, arose immediately, saying, “There are people at the river head.” And he pursued his way up the bank in quest of them. And when he had gone not a great way, he found an old man weeping and lamenting very grievously, among the reeds and willows by the water-side. And there was with him a lady of great state and beauty, like unto the daughter of a deity; but her fair eyes were marred with many tears, and she moaned continually and wrung her hands. And these twain had between them a young maid of very slender and delicate form; but her face Susa could not see, for she covered it with a veil. And ever and anon she moved and trembled with fear, or seemed to beseech the old man earnestly, or plucked the lady by the sleeve; at which these last but shook their heads sorrowfully, and returned to their lamentations.

And Susa, full of wonder, drew near and asked the old man, “Who art thou?”

And the old man answered, “I am an earthly deity of the mountains. This is my wife, who weeps with me by the water-side, and the child is my youngest daughter.”

And Susa inquired of him again, “What is the cause of your weeping and lamentation?”

And he answered, “Know, sir, that I am an earthly deity of renown, and I was the father of eight fair daughters. But a horror broods over the land, for every year at this time it is ravaged by a monster, the eight-forked serpent of Koshi, that delights in the flesh of young virgins. In seven years have my seven sweet children been devoured. And now the time of my youngest-born is at hand. Therefore do we weep, O Thine Augustness.”

Then said Susa, the Impetuous, “What is the likeness of this monster?”

And the deities of the mountain made answer: “His eyes are fiery and red as the *akakagachi* (that is, the winter cherry). He has but one body, with eight heads and eight scaly tails. Moreover, on his body grows moss, together with the fir and the cryptomeria of the forest. In his going he covers eight valleys and eight hills, and upon his under side he is red and gory.”

Then the Lord Susa, the Impetuous, cried, “My lord, give me thy daughter.”

And the earthly deity, seeing his strength and great beauty and the brightness of his countenance, knew that he was a god, and answered, “With all reverence do I offer her unto thee. Howbeit, I know not thine august name.”

And Susa said, “I am Susa, the Sea God, the exile of High Heaven.”

And the mountain deity and also his fair wife spoke, saying, “So be it, Thine Augustness, take the young maid.”

And immediately Susa flung away the veil and saw the face of his bride, pale as the moon in winter. And he touched her on the forehead, and said, “Fair and beloved, fair and beloved...”

And the maid flushed faintly to stand thus barefaced. Howbeit, she had little need, for the tears that stood in my lord Susa’s eyes were veil enough for her modesty. And he said again, “Dear and beautiful, our pleasure shall be hereafter, now we may not tarry.”

So he took the young maid at once, and changed her into a crown for his head. And Susa wore the crown gallantly. And he instructed the earthly deity, and together they brewed *saké*, refined eight-fold; and with the *saké* they filled eight vats and set them in readiness; and when all was prepared they waited. And presently there was a mighty noise, like the sound of an earthquake, and the hills and valleys shook. And the serpent crawled in sight, huge and horrible, so that the earthly deities hid their faces for fear. But Susa, the Impetuous, gazed upon the serpent with his sword drawn.

Now the serpent had eight heads, and immediately he dipped a head into each vat of *saké* and drank long. Thereupon he became drunken with the distilled liquor, and all the heads lay down and slept.

Then the Lord Susa brandished his ten-grasp sword, and leapt upon the monster and cut off the eight heads with eight valiant strokes. So the serpent was slain with a great slaying, and the river Hi flowed on, a river of blood. And Susa cut the tails of the serpent also, and as he struck the fourth tail the edge of his august sword was turned back. So he probed with its point, and found a great jewelled sword with a blade sharp as no known smith could temper it. And he took the sword and sent it for an offering to the Sun Goddess, his august sister. This is the herb-quelling sword.

And Susa, the Impetuous, built him a palace at the place called Suga, and dwelt there with his bride. And the clouds of heaven hung like a curtain round about the palace. Then the Lord Susa sang this song:

Many clouds arise.
The manifold fence of the forth-issuing clouds
Makes a manifold fence,
For the spouses to be within.
Oh, the manifold fence...

12

THE WIND IN THE PINE TREE

It was a Deity from High Heaven that planted the Pine Tree.

So long ago that the crane cannot remember it, and the tortoise knows it only by hearsay from his great-grandmother, the heavenly deity descended. Lightly, lightly he came by way of the Floating Bridge, bearing the tree in his right hand. Lightly, lightly his feet touched the earth.

He said, “I have come to the Land of the Reed Plains. I have come to the Land of Fresh Rice Ears. It is a good land; I am satisfied.” And he planted the Pine Tree within the sound of the sea at Takasaga, which is in the Province of Harima. Then he went up again to High Heaven by way of the Floating Bridge.

But the Pine Tree flourished. So great it grew, there was not a greater in all the Land of the Reed Plains. Its trunk was rosy red, and beneath it spread a brown carpet of fallen needles.

In the sweet nights of summer the Children of the Woods came hand in hand to the Pine Tree by moonlight, slipping their slim dark feet upon the moss, and tossing back their long green hair.

The Children of the Water came by moonlight, all drenching wet their sleeves, and the bright drops fell from their finger-tips. The Children of the Air rested in the Pine Tree’s branches, and made murmuring music all the live-long night. The Children of the Sea Foam crept up the yellow sands;

and from the confines of Yomi came the Mysteries, the Sounds and the Scents of the Dark — with faces veiled and thin grey forms, they came, and they hung upon the air about the place where the Pine Tree was, so that the place was holy and haunted.

Lovers wandering upon the beach at Takasaga would hear the great company of Spirits singing together.

"Joy of my heart," they said to one another, "do you hear the wind in the Pine Tree?"

Poor souls lying sick a-bed would listen, and fishermen far out at sea would pause in their labour to whisper, "The wind, the wind in the Pine Tree! How the sound carries over the water!"

As for the coming of the Maiden, the crane cannot remember it, but the tortoise has it of his great-grandmother that she was born of poor parents in Takasaga. The Maiden was brown and tall and slender; in face and form most lovely. Her hair hung down to her knees. She rose at dawn to help her mother; she found sticks for the fire, she drew water at the well. She could spin and weave with the best; and for long, long hours she sat and plied her wheel or her shuttle in the shade of the great Pine Tree, whilst her ears heard the sound of the wind in its branches. Sometimes her eyes looked out over the paths of the sea, as one who waits and watches. She was calm, not restless, more grave than gay, though she smiled not seldom. Her voice was the voice of a Heavenly Being.

Now concerning the Youth from the far province, of him the crane knows something, for the crane is a great traveller. She was flying over the streams and the valleys of the far province, so she says, when she saw the Youth at work in the green rice-fields. The crane lingered, circling slowly in the bright air. The Youth stood up. He looked round upon the valleys and streams; he looked into the sky.

"I hear the call," he said. "I may tarry no longer. Voice in my heart, I hear and I obey."

With that he left the rice-field, and bade farewell to his mother and his father and his sisters and his brothers and his friends. All together, they came down to the seashore, weeping and clinging to each other. The Youth took a boat and went away to sea, and the rest of them stood upon the beach.

On sped the boat for many a day over the unknown paths of the sea. And the white crane flew behind the boat. And when the wind failed, she pushed the boat forward with the wind of her strong wings.

At last, one evening about the hour of sunset, the Youth heard the sound of sweet singing. The sound came to him from the land, and it travelled over the paths of the sea. He stood up in his boat, and the crane beat her strong white wings and guided his boat to the shore till its keel touched the yellow sand of the sea-beach of Takasaga.

When the Youth had come ashore he pushed the boat out again with the waves, and watched it drift away. Then he turned his face inland. The sound of music was still in his ears. The voice was like the voice of a Heavenly Being, and strange and mystical were the words of the song: —

THE LOVER BROUGHT a love gift to his mistress,
Jewels of jade upon a silken string;
Well-carved jewels,
Well-rounded jewels,
Green as the grass,
Upon a silken string.
The jewels know not one another,
The string they know,
Oh, the strength of the silken string!

THE YOUTH WENT INLAND and came to the great Pine Tree and to the Maid that sat beneath, weaving diligently and singing. The crane came flying with her strong white wings, and perched upon the Tree's topmost branches. The tortoise lay below on the brown carpet of needles. He watched and saw much with his little eyes, but he said nothing, being very silent by nature.

The Youth stood before the Maiden, waiting.

"Whence come you?" she said, lifting up her eyes.

"I have come across the sea path. I have come from afar."

"And wherefore came you?"

"That you must know best, seeing it was your voice that sang in my heart."

"Do you bring me the gift?" she said.

"Indeed, I bring you the complete gift, jewels of jade upon a silken string."

"Come," she said, and rose and took him by the hand. And they went to her father's house.

So they drank the "Three Times Three," and were made man and wife, and lived in sweet tranquillity many, many years.

All the time the crane dwelt in the Pine Tree's topmost branches, and the tortoise on the brown carpet of needles below.

At last the Youth and Maiden, that once were, became white-haired, old, and withered, by the swift, relentless passage of years.

"Fair love," said the old man, "how weary I grow! It is sad to be old."

"Say not so, dear delight of my heart," said the old woman; "say not so, the best of all is to come."

"My dear," said the old man, "I have a desire to see the great Pine Tree before I die, and to listen once more to the song of the wind in its branches."

"Come, then," she said, and rose and took him by the hand.

Old and faint and worn, with feeble, tottering steps, and hand in hand they came.

"How faint I grow," said the old man. "Ah, I am afraid! How dark it is! Hold you my hand..."

"I have it fast in mine. There, lie down, lie down, dear love; be still and listen to the wind in the Pine Tree."

He lay on the soft brown bed beneath the Pine Tree's boughs; and the wind sang.

She who was his love and his wife bent over him and sheltered him. And he suffered the great change.

Then he opened his eyes and looked at her. She was tall and straight and slender, in face and form most lovely, and each of them was young as the gods are young. He put out his hand and touched her. "Your long black hair..." he said.

Once more she bade him, "Come." Lightly they left the ground. To the sound of the wind's music they swayed, they floated, they rose into the air. Higher they rose and higher. The branches of the Pine Tree received them, and they were no more seen.

Still, in the sweet nights of summer, the Children of the Woods come hand in hand to the Pine Tree by moonlight, slipping their slim dark feet upon the moss, and tossing back their long green hair.

The Children of the Water come by moonlight, all drenching wet their sleeves, and the bright drops fall from their finger-tips. The Children of the Air rest in the Pine Tree's branches, and make murmuring music all the live-long night. The Children of the Sea Foam creep up the yellow sands; and from the confines of Yomi come the Mysteries, the Sounds and the Scents of the Dark — with faces veiled and thin grey forms, they come, and they hang upon the air about the place where the Pine Tree is, so that the place is holy and haunted.

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13

FLOWER OF THE PEONY

Aya, sweet maid, was the only child of a *daimyo* of the Province of Omi. Mother had she none, and her father was a noble lord and a warrior. He was at the Court of the Shogun, or he had weighty affairs at the capital, or he went here and there with armies and overcame his enemies. Aya saw little of him.

Long years she dwelt with her nurse and her maidens within the walls of her father's castle. High walls were they and well-guarded, and at their foot was a deep moat which was rosy with lotus flowers all the seventh month.

When the Lady Aya was some sixteen years old her father the *daimyo* came home victorious from a foray, and she went with her maidens to meet him in the gate. She was dressed in her bravest, and as became her rank.

"My lord and father," she said, "sweet is your honourable return."

"Child, how you have grown!" her father said, astonished. "How old are you, Aya?"

"Sixteen years old, lord," she said.

"By all the gods, you are become a little great young lady, and I thought you were a baby and brought you home a doll for a home-coming gift."

He laughed, but presently afterwards grew grave, and in deep thought he went into the castle.

Soon after this he began to look about him, to find a fitting husband for his daughter.

"Best it should be done now," he said, "for a wonder has come to pass, and I am at peace with every *daimyo* in the land — and it will not last."

The Lord of Ako, in Harima, had three tall sons, fine young men and warriors all.

"The eldest is over old," said the Lord of Omi. "The youngest is a boy — but what of the middle brother? It seems to me that the middle brother should do well. They say that second thoughts are best," said the Lord of Omi.

So after messengers had come and gone, the Lady Aya was betrothed to the young Lord of Ako, and there was great rejoicing in all the country-side, for all the man and the maiden had never set eyes on one another.

The Lady Aya was very glad when she saw the presents that came from her bridegroom's house. She sat with the seamstress of the castle and fingered the soft stuffs of her fine new robes. For the rest, she played with her maidens the live-long day, or took her broidery frame, plying the needle and long silken thread. It was the month of May, and very often they took the air in a garden gallery, where Aya and her maids laughed together, and sometimes they spoke of the young Lord of Ako and how brave and beautiful he was, how skilful in art and in war, and how rich. When evening came they slipped down the gallery steps and into the garden, where they went hither and thither, hand in hand, to enjoy the cool air and the sweet scent of the flowers.

One night the Lady Aya walked in the garden according to her wont. The moon rose, round and silver.

"Ah me," sighed one of the maidens, "the moon is a love-lorn lady. Look how pale and wan she goes, and even now she will hide her eyes with her long sleeve of cloud."

“You speak sooth,” returned Aya, “the moon is a love-lorn lady; but have you seen her faint sister who is sadder and fairer than she?”

“Who, then, is the moon’s sister?” asked all the maidens at once.

Aya said, “Come and see — come.”

With that she drew them along the paths of the garden to the still pond, where were the dancing fireflies and the frogs that sang musically. Holding each other’s hands, the maidens looked down into the water, and one and all they beheld the moon’s sister, and they laughed softly together. While they played by the water’s brim, the Lady Aya’s foot slipped upon a smooth stone, and most assuredly she would have fallen into the pond. But all of a sudden a youth leapt forward out of the sweet secrecy of the night, and caught her in his arms. For a moment all the maidens beheld the glimmer of his garments. Then he was gone. Aya stood alone, trembling. Down gazed the moon, wide-eyed and sorrowful; and still more sorrowful and sweet, upwards gazed the moon’s pale sister. They saw a band of silent maidens who stood in a wilderness of blossoming peony flowers, that grew to the water’s edge. It was the Lady Aya who loved them and had them planted so.

Now the lady turned without a word and moved along the paths of the garden very slowly, hanging her head. When she came to the garden gallery she left all her maidens save one, and went silently to her bower.

There she was for a long space, saying nothing. She sat and traced the pattern on her robe with the point of her finger. And Sada, her maiden, was over against her.

At length, “He was a great lord,” said Aya.

“Truth, lady.”

“He was young.”

“He was passing well-favoured.”

“Alas! he saved my life, and I had not time to thank him.”

“The moon shone upon the jewelled mounting of his sword.”

"And his robe that was broidered with peony flowers — my peony flowers."

"Lady, the hour grows very late."

"Well, then, untie my girdle."

"You look pale, lady."

"Small marvel, I am weary."

"Lady, what of the young Lord of Ako?"

"What of him? Why, I have not seen him. Enough, let be — no more of him. Alas! I am drowsy, I know not what I say."

After this night the Lady Aya, that had been so fresh and fair and dancing gay as a wave of the sea, fell into a pale melancholy. By day she sighed, and by night she wept. She smiled no more as she beheld her rich wedding-garments, and she would not play any more with her maidens upon the garden gallery. She wandered like a shadow, or lay speechless in her bower. And all the wise men and all the wise women of that country-side were not able to heal her of her sickness.

Then the maid Sada, weeping and hiding her face with her sleeve, went to the Lord of the House and told him of the moonlight adventure and the fair youth of the peony bed.

"Ah me," she said, "my sweet mistress pines and dies for the love of this beautiful young man."

"Child," said the *daimyo*, "how you talk! My daughter's garden is well guarded by walls and by men-at-arms. It is not possible that any stranger should enter it. What, then, is this tale of the moon and a *samurai* in peony garments and all manner of other foolishness, and how will such a tale sound in the ears of the Lord of Ako?"

But Sada wept and said, "My mistress will die."

"To fight in the field, to flatter at Court and to speak in Council, all these are easy," said the *daimyo*, "but preserve me from the affairs of my women, for they are too hard for me."

With that he made a search of all the castle and the castle grounds, but not a trace did he find of any stranger in hiding.

That night the Lady Aya called piteously for the cooler air, so they bore her out on to her garden gallery, where she lay in O Sada’s arms. A minstrel of the household took his *biwa*, and to soothe her he made this song:

Music of my lute —
Is it born, does it die,
Is it truth or a lie?
Whence, whence and where,
Enchanted air?
Music of my lute
Is mute.

Sweet scents in the night —
Do they float, do they seem,
Are they essence of dream,
Or thus are they said
The thoughts of the Dead?
Sweet scents in the night
Delight.

Now, while the minstrel sang and touched his instrument, a fair youth stood up from the rosy sea of peonies by the pond. All there saw him clearly, his bright eyes, his sword, and his dress broidered with flowers. The Lady Aya gave a wild cry and ran to the edge of the garden gallery, holding out her white arms. And immediately the vision passed away. But the minstrel took up his *biwa* once more and sang:

Love more strange than death —
Is it longer than life,
Is it hotter than strife?
Strong, strong and blind,
Transcending kind —
Love more strange than death
Or breath.

At this the mysterious knight of the flowers stood once again straight and tall, and his shining eyes were fixed upon the Lady Aya.

Then a gentleman of the company of the *daimyo*, who was a mighty man of war, drew his sword forthwith and leapt down amongst the peonies to do battle with the bold stranger that so gazed upon his master’s daughter. And at that a cloud drew across the moon’s face as if by faery, and of a sudden a great hot wind blew from the south. The lights died upon the garden gallery, the maidens held their garments together while their long gossamer sleeves floated out. All the peony bed was tossed about like a troubled sea, and the pink and white petals flew like foam. A mist, damp and over-sweet, hung upon the wind, so that all who were there grew faint and clung to one another, trembling.

When they were recovered, they found the night still and the moon undimmed. The soldier of the *daimyo’s* company stood panting and white as death at the steps of the garden gallery. In his right hand he held his unstained sword, in his left a perfect peony flower.

“I have him,” he shouted; “he could not escape me. I have him fast.”

Aya said, “Give me the flower”; and he gave it her without a word, as one in a dream.

Then Aya went to her bower and slept with the peony upon her breast and was satisfied.

For nine days she kept the flower. The sweet colour came to her face, and the light to her eyes. She was perfectly healed of her sickness.

She set the peony in a bronze vase and it did not droop or fade, but grew larger and more lovely all the nine days.

At the end of this time the young Lord of Ako came riding in great pomp and state to claim his long-promised lady. So he and the Lady Aya were wed in the midst of much feasting and rejoicing. Howbeit, they say she made but a pale bride. And the same day the peony withered and was thrown away.

14

THE MALLET

There were once two farmer men who were brothers. Both of them worked hard in seed-time and in harvest-time. They stood knee-deep in water to plant out the young rice, bending their backs a thousand times an hour; they wielded the sickle when the hot sun shone; when the rain poured down in torrents, there they were still at their digging or such like, huddled up in their rice-straw rain coats, for in the sweat of their brows did they eat their bread.

The elder of the two brothers was called Cho. For all he laboured so hard he was passing rich. From a boy he had had a saving way with him, and had put by a mint of money. He had a big farm, too, and not a year but that he did well, what with his rice, and his silk-worms, and his granaries and storehouses. But there was nothing to show for all this, if it will be believed. He was a mean, sour man with not so much as a “good day” and a cup of tea for a wayfarer, or a cake of cold rice for a beggar man. His children whimpered when he came near them, and his wife was much to be pitied.

The younger of the two brothers was called Kanè. For all he laboured so hard he was as poor as a church mouse. Bad was his luck, his silk-worms died, and his rice would not flourish. In spite of this he was a merry fellow, a bachelor who loved a song and an honest cup of *saké*. His roof, his pipe, his meagre supper, all these he would share, very gladly, with the first-comer. He had the nimblest tongue for a comical joke, and the kindest heart in the world. But it is a true thing, though it is a pity all the same, that a man cannot live on love and laughter, and presently Kanè was in a bad way.

"There's nothing for it," he says, "but to pocket my pride" (for he had some) "and go and see what my brother Cho will do for me, and I'm greatly mistaken if it will be much."

So he borrows some clothes from a friend for the visit, and sets off in very neat *hakama*, looking quite the gentleman, and singing a song to keep his heart up.

He sees his brother standing outside his house, and the first minute he thinks he is seeing a boggart, Cho is in such ragged gear. But presently he sings out, "You're early, Cho."

"You're early, Kanè," says Cho.

"May I come in and talk a bit?" asks Kanè.

"Yes," says Cho, "you can; but you won't find anything to eat at this time of day, nor yet to drink, so let disappointments be avoided."

"Very well," says Kanè; "as it happens, it's not food I've come for."

When they were inside the house and sitting on the mats, Cho says, "That's a fine suit of clothes you've got on you, Kanè. You must be doing well. It's not me that can afford to go about the muddy roads dressed up like a prince. Times are bad, very bad."

In spite of this not being a good beginning, Kanè plucks up his courage and laughs. And presently he says:

"Look here, brother. These are borrowed clothes, my own will hardly hold together. My rice crop was ruined, and my silk-worms are dead. I have not a *rin* to buy rice seed or new worms. I am at my wits' end, and I have come to you begging, so now you have it. For the sake of the mother that bore us both, give me a handful of seed and a few silk-worms' eggs."

At this Cho made as if he would faint with astonishment and dismay.

“Alack! Alack!” he says. “I am a poor man, a very poor man. Must I rob my wife and my miserable children?” And thus he bewailed himself and talked for half an hour.

But to make a long story short, Cho says that out of filial piety, and because of the blessed mother of them both, he must make shift to give Kanè the silk-worms’ eggs and the rice. So he gets a handful of dead eggs and a handful of musty and mouldy rice. “These are no good to man or beast,” says the old fox to himself, and he laughs. But to his own blood-brother he says, “Here, Kanè. It’s the best silk-worms’ eggs I am giving you, and the best rice of all my poor store, and I cannot afford it at all; and may the gods forgive me for robbing my poor wife and my children.”

Kanè thanks his brother with all his heart for his great generosity, and bows his head to the mats three times. Then off he goes, with the silk-worms’ eggs and the rice in his sleeve, skipping and jumping with joy, for he thought that his luck had turned at last. But in the muddy parts of the road he was careful to hold up his *hakama*, for they were borrowed.

When he reached home he gathered great store of green mulberry leaves. This was for the silk-worms that were going to be hatched out of the dead eggs. And he sat down and waited for the silk-worms to come. And come they did, too, and that was very strange, because the eggs were dead eggs for sure. The silk-worms were a lively lot; they ate the mulberry leaves in a twinkling, and lost no time at all, but began to wind themselves into cocoons that minute. Then Kanè was the happy man. He went out and told his good fortune to all the neighbours. This was where he made his mistake. And he found a peddlar man who did his rounds in those parts, and gave him a message to take to his brother Cho, with his compliments and respectful thanks, that the silk-worms were doing uncommonly well. This was where he made a bigger mistake. It was a pity he could not let well alone.

When Cho heard of his brother’s luck he was not pleased. Pretty soon he tied on his straw sandals and was off to Kanè’s farm. Kanè was out when he got there, but Cho did not care for that. He went to have a look at the silk-worms. And when he saw how they were beginning to spin themselves into cocoons, as neat as you please, he took a sharp knife and cut every one of them in two. Then he went away home, the bad man! When Kanè came to look after his silk-worms he could not help thinking they looked a bit queer. He scratches his head and he says, “It almost appears as though each of them has been cut in half. They seem dead,” he says. Then out he goes and gathers a great lot of mulberry leaves. And all those half silk-worms set to and ate up the mulberry leaves, and after that there were just twice as many silk-worms spinning away as there were before. And that was very strange, because the silk-worms were dead for sure.

When Cho heard of this he goes and chops his own silk-worms in two with a sharp knife; but he gained nothing by that, for the silk-worms never moved again, but stayed as dead as dead, and his wife had to throw them away next morning.

After this Kanè sowed the rice seed that he had from his brother, and when the young rice came up as green as you please he planted it out with care, and it flourished wonderfully, and soon the rice was formed in the ear.

One day an immense flight of swallows came and settled on Kanè’s rice-field.

“Arah! Arah!” Kanè shouted. He clapped his hands and beat about with a bamboo stick. So the swallows flew away. In two minutes back they came.

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“Arah! Arah!” Kanè shouted. He clapped his hands and beat about with his bamboo stick. So the swallows flew away. In two minutes back they came.

When he had scared them away for the ninth time, Kanè takes his *tenegui* and wipes his face. “This grows into a habit,” he says. But in two minutes back came the swallows for the tenth time. “Arah! Arah!” Kanè shouted, and he chased them over hill and dale, hedge and ditch, rice-field and mulberry-field, till at last they flew away from his sight, and he found himself in a mossy dell shaded by spreading pine trees. Being very tired with running he lies down his full length upon the moss, and presently falls fast asleep and snoring.

The next thing was that he dreamed. He thought he saw a troop of children come to the mossy glade, for in his dream he remembered very well where he was. The children fluttered here and there among the pine-trees’ trunks. They were as pretty as flowers or butterflies. One and all of them had dancing bare feet; their hair hung down, long, loose and black; their skins were white like the plum blossom.

“For good or for evil,” says Kanè to himself, “I have seen the fairies’ children.”

The children made an end of their dancing, and sat them upon the ground in a ring. “Leader! Leader!” they cried. “Fetch us the mallet.” Then there rose up a beautiful boy, about fourteen or fifteen years old, the eldest and the tallest there. He lifted a mossy stone quite close to Kanè’s head. Underneath was a plain little mallet of white wood. The boy took it up and went and stood within the circle of children. He laughed and cried, “Now what will you have?”

“A kite, a kite,” calls out one of the children.

The boy shakes the mallet, and lo and behold he shakes a kite out of it! — a great kite with a tail to it, and a good ball of twine as well.

“Now what else?” asks the boy.

“Battledore and shuttlecock for me,” says a little girl.

And sure enough there they are, a battledore of the best, and twenty shuttlecocks, meetly feathered and gilded.

“Now what else?” says the boy.

“A lot of sweets.”

“Greedy!” says the boy, but he shakes the mallet, and there are the sweets.

“A red crêpe frock and a brocade *obi*.”

“Miss Vanity!” says the boy, but he shakes all this gravely out of the mallet.

“Books, story books.”

“That’s better,” says the boy, and out come the books by the dozen and score, all open to show the lovely pictures.

Now, when the children had their hearts’ desires, the leader put away the mallet beneath its mossy stone, and after they had played for some time they became tired; their bright attires melted away into the gloom of the wood, and their pretty voices grew distant and then were heard no more. It was very still.

Kanè awoke, good man, and found the sun set and darkness beginning to fall. There was the mossy stone right under his hand. He lifted it, and there was the mallet.

“Now,” said Kanè, taking it up, “begging the pardon of the fairies’ children, I’ll make bold to borrow that mallet.” So he took it home in his sleeve and spent a pleasant evening shaking gold pieces out of it, and *saké*, and new clothes, and farmers’ tools, and musical instruments, and who knows what all!

It is not hard to believe that pretty soon he became the richest and jolliest farmer in all that country-side. Sleek and fat he grew, and his heart was bigger and kinder than ever.

But what like was Cho’s heart when he got wind of all this? Ay, there’s the question. Cho turned green with envy, as green as grass. “I’ll have a fairy mallet, too," he says, "and be rich for nothing. Why should that idiot spendthrift Kanè have all the good fortune?" So he goes and begs rice from his brother, which his brother gives him very willingly, a good sackful. And he waits for it to ripen, quite wild with impatience. It ripens sure enough, and sure enough a flight of swallows comes and settles upon the good grain in the ear.

"Arah! Arah!" shouted Cho, clapping his hands and laughing aloud for joy. The swallows flew away, and Cho was after them. He chased them over hill and dale, hedge and ditch, rice-field and mulberry-field, till at last they flew away from his sight, and he found himself in a mossy dell shaded by spreading pine-trees. Cho looks about him.

"This should be the place," says he. So he lies down and waits with one wily eye shut and one wily eye open.

Presently who should trip into the dell but the fairies' children! Very fresh they were as they moved among the pine-tree trunks.

"Leader! Leader! Fetch us the mallet," they cried. Up stepped the leader and lifted away the mossy stone. And behold there was no mallet there!

Now the fairies' children became very angry. They stamped their little feet, and cried and rushed wildly to and fro, and were beside themselves altogether because the mallet was gone.

"See," cried the leader at last, "see this ugly old farmer man; he must have taken our mallet. Let us pull his nose for him."

With a shrill scream the fairies' children set upon Cho. They pinched him, and pulled him, and buffeted him, and set their sharp teeth in his flesh till he yelled in agony. Worst of all, they laid hold of his nose and pulled it. Long it grew, and longer. It reached his waist. It reached his feet.

Lord, how they laughed, the fairies' children! Then they scampered away like fallen leaves before the wind.

Cho sighed, and he groaned, and he cursed, and he swore, but for all that his nose was not an inch shorter. So, sad and sorry, he gathered it up in his two hands and went to Kanè's house.

"Kanè, I am very sick," says he.

"Indeed, so I see," says Kanè, "a terrible sickness; and how did you catch it?" he says. And so kind he was that he never laughed at Cho's nose, nor yet he never smiled, but there were tears in his eyes at his brother's misfortunes. Then Cho's heart melted and he told his brother all the tale, and he never kept back how mean he had been about the dead silk-worms' eggs, and about the other things that have been told of. And he asked Kanè to forgive him and to help him.

"Wait you still a minute," says Kanè.

He goes to his chest, and he brings out the mallet. And he rubs it very gently up and down Cho's long nose, and sure enough it shortened up very quickly. In two minutes it was a natural size. Cho danced for joy.

Kanè looks at him and says, "If I were you, I'd just go home and try to be different."

When Cho had gone, Kanè sat still and thought for a long time. When the moon rose that night he went out and took the mallet with him. He came to the mossy dell that was shaded with spreading pine trees, and he laid the mallet in its old place under the stone.

"I'm the last man in the world," he said, "to be unfriendly to the fairies' children."

15

THE BELL OF DOJOJI

The monk Anchin was young in years but old in scholarship. Every day for many hours he read the Great Books of the Good Law and never wearied, and hard characters were not hard to him.

The monk Anchin was young in years but old in holiness; he kept his body under by fastings and watchings and long prayers. He was acquainted with the blessedness of sublime meditations. His countenance was white as ivory and as smooth; his eyes were deep as a brown pool in autumn; his smile was that of a Buddha; his voice was like an angel's. He dwelt with a score of holy men in a monastery of the mountains, where he learned the mystic "Way of the Gods." He was bound to his order by the strictest vows, but was content, rejoicing in the shade of the great pine trees and the sound of the running water of the streams.

Now it happened that on a day in spring-time, the old man, his Abbot, sent the young monk Anchin upon an errand of mercy. And he said, "My son, bind your sandals fast and tie spare sandals to your girdle, take your hat and your staff and your rosary and begging bowl, for you have far to go, over mountain and stream, and across the great plain."

So the monk Anchin made him ready.

"My son," the Abbot said, "if any wayfarer do you a kindness, forget not to commend him to the gods for the space of nine existences."

"I will remember," said the monk, and so he set forth upon his way.

Over mountain and stream he passed, and as he went his spirit was wrapped in contemplation, and he recited the Holy Sutras aloud in a singing voice. And the Wise Birds called and twittered from branch to branch of the tall trees, the birds that are beloved of Buddha. One bird chanted the grand Scripture of the Nicheten, the Praise of the Sutra of the Lotus, of the Good Law, and the other bird called upon his Master's name, for he cried:

"O thou Compassionate Mind! O thou Compassionate Mind!"

The monk smiled. "Sweet and happy bird," he said.

And the bird answered, "O thou Compassionate Mind!... O thou Compassionate Mind!"

When the monk Anchin came to the great plain, the sun was high in the heavens, and all the blue and golden flowers of the plain languished in the noon-tide heat. The monk likewise became very weary, and when he beheld the Marshy Mere, where were bulrush and sedge that cooled their feet in the water, he laid him down to rest under a sycamore tree that grew by the Marshy Mere.

Over the mere and upon the farther side of it there hung a glittering haze.

Long did the monk Anchin lie; and as he lay he looked through the glittering haze, and as he looked the haze quivered and moved and grew and gathered upon the farther side of the mere. At the last it drew into a slender column of vapour, and out of the vapour there came forth a very dazzling lady. She wore a robe of green and gold, interwoven, and golden sandals on her slender feet. In her hands were jewels — in each hand one bright jewel like a star. Her hair was tied with a braid of scarlet, and she had a crown of scarlet flowers. She came, skirting the Marshy Mere. She came, gliding in and out of the bulrush and the sedge. In the silence there could be heard the rustle of her green skirt upon the green grass.

The monk Anchin stumbled to his feet and, trembling, he leaned against the sycamore tree.

Nearer and nearer came the lady, till she stood before Anchin and looked into his eyes. With the jewel that was in her right hand she touched his forehead and his lips. With the jewel that was in her left hand she touched his rice-straw hat and his staff and his rosary and his begging bowl. After this she had him safe in thrall. Then the wind blew a tress of her hair across his face, and when he felt it he gave one sob.

For the rest of his journey the monk went as a man in a dream. Once a rich traveller riding on horseback threw a silver coin into Anchin’s begging bowl; once a woman gave him a piece of cake made of millet; and once a little boy knelt down and tied the fastening of his sandal that had become loose. But each time the monk passed on without a word, for he forgot to commend the souls of these compassionate ones for the space of nine existences. In the tree-tops the Wise Birds of Buddha sang for him no more, only from the thicket was heard the cry of the *Hototogisu*, the bird lovelorn and forsaken.

Nevertheless, well or ill, he performed his errand of mercy and returned to the monastery by another way.

Howbeit, sweet peace left him from the hour in which he had seen the lady of the Marshy Mere. The Great Books of the Good Law sufficed him no longer; no more was he acquainted with the blessedness of divine meditations. His heart was hot within him; his eyes burned and his soul longed after the lady of the green and golden robe.

She had told him her name, and he murmured it in his sleep. “Kiohimé — Kiohimé!” Waking, he repeated it instead of his prayers — to the great scandal of the brethren, who whispered together and said, “Is our brother mad?”

At length Anchin went to the good Abbot, and in his ear poured forth all his tale in a passion of mingled love and grief, humbly asking what he must do.

The Abbot said, “Alack, my son, now you suffer for sin committed in a former life, for Karma must needs be worked out.”

Anchin asked him, “Then is it past help?”

“Not that,” said the Abbot, “but you are in a very great strait.”

“Are you angry with me?” said Anchin.

“Nay, Heaven forbid, my poor son.”

“Then what must I do?”

“Fast and pray, and for a penance stand in the ice-cold water of our mountain torrent an hour at sunrise and an hour at sunset. Thus shall you be purged from carnal affection and escape the perils of illusion.”

So Anchin fasted and prayed, he scourged his body, and hour after hour he did penance in the ice-cold water of the torrent. Wan as a ghost he grew, and his eyes were like flames. His trouble would not leave him. A battle raged in his breast. He could not be faithful to his vows and faithful to his love.

The brethren wondered, “What can ail the monk Anchin, who was so learned and so holy — is he bewitched by a fox or a badger, or can he have a devil?”

But the Abbot said, “Let be.”

Now on a hot night of summer, the monk being sleepless in his cell, he was visited by Kiohimé, the magic lady of the mere. The moonlight was on her hands and her long sleeves. Her robe was green and gold, interwoven; golden were her sandals. Her hair was braided with scarlet and adorned with scarlet flowers.

“Long, long have I waited for thee on the plains,” she said. “The night wind sighs in the sedge — the frogs sing by the Marshy Mere. Come, lord...”

But he cried, “My vows that I have vowed — alas! the love that I love. I keep faith and loyalty, the bird in my bosom... I may not come.”

She smiled, “*May* not?” she said, and with that she lifted the monk Anchin in her arms.

But he, gathering all his strength together, tore himself from her and fled from the place. Barefooted and bareheaded he went, his white robe flying, through the dark halls of the monastery, where the air was heavy with incense and sweet with prayers, where the golden Amida rested upon her lotus, ineffably smiling. He leaped the grey stone steps that led down from her shrine and gained the pine trees and the mountain path. Down, down he fled on the rough way, the nymph Kiohimé pursuing. As for her, her feet never touched the ground, and she spread her green sleeves like wings. Down, down they fled together, and so close was she behind him that the monk felt her breath upon his neck.

“As a young goddess, she is fleet of foot...” he moaned.

At last they came to the famed temple of Dojoji, which was upon the plains. By this Anchin sobbed and staggered as he ran; his knees failed him and his head swam.

“I am lost,” he cried, “for a hundred existences.” But with that he saw the great temple bell of Dojoji that hung but a little way from the ground. He cast himself down and crept beneath it, and so deemed himself sheltered and secure.

Then came Kiohimé, the Merciless Lady, and the moonlight shone upon her long sleeves. She did not sigh, nor cry, nor call upon her love. She stood still for a little space and smiled. Then lightly she sprang to the top of the great bronze bell of Dojoji, and with her sharp teeth she bit through the ropes that held it, so that the bell came to the ground and the monk was a prisoner. And Kiohimé embraced the bell with her arms. She crept about it, she crawled about it and her green robe flowed over it. Her green robe glittered with a thousand golden scales; long flames burst from her lips and from her eyes; a huge and fearsome Dragon, she wound and coiled herself about the bell of Dojoji. With her Dragon’s tail she lashed the bell, and lashed it till its bronze was red hot.

Still she lashed the bell, while the monk called piteously for mercy. And when he was very quiet she did not stop. All the night long the frogs sang by the Marshy Mere and the wind sighed in the sedges. But the Dragon Lady was upon the bell of Dojoji, and she lashed it furiously with her tail till dawn.

16

THE MAIDEN OF UNAI

The Maiden of Unai was fair as an earthly deity, but the eyes of man might not behold her. She dwelt in a hidden place in her father’s house, and of what cheer she made the live-long day not a soul could tell, but her father who kept watch, and her mother who kept ward, and her ancient nurse who tended her. The cause was this.

When the maid was about seven years old, with her black hair loose and hanging to her shoulder, an ancient man, a traveller, came, footsore and weary, to her father’s house. He was made welcome, served with rice and with tea, whilst the master of the house sat by, and the mistress, to do him honour. Meanwhile the little maid was here and there, catching at her mother’s sleeve, pattering with bare feet over the mats, or bouncing a great green and scarlet ball in a corner. And the stranger lifted his eyes and marked the child.

After he had eaten, he called for a bowl of clear water, and taking from his wallet a handful of fine silver sand he let it slip through his fingers and it sank to the bottom of the bowl. In a little he spoke.

“My lord,” he said to the master of the house, “I was hungry and weary, and you have fed me and refreshed me. I am a poor man and it is hard for me to show my gratitude. Now I am a soothsayer by profession, very far-famed for the skill of my divination. Therefore, in return for your kindness I have looked into the future of your child. Will you hear her destiny?”

The child knelt in a corner of the room bouncing her green and scarlet ball.

The master of the house bade the soothsayer speak on.

This one looked down into the bowl of water where the sand was, and said: “The Maiden of Unai shall grow up fairer than the children of men. Her beauty shall shine as the beauty of an earthly deity. Every man who looks upon her shall pine with love and longing, and when she is fifteen years old there shall die for her sake a mighty hero from near, and a valiant hero from afar. And there shall be sorrow and mourning because of her, loud and grievous, so that the sound of it shall reach High Heaven and offend the peace of the gods.”

The master of the house said, “Is this a true divination?”

“Indeed, my lord,” said the soothsayer, “it is too true.” And with that he bound on his sandals, and taking his staff and his great hat of rice-straw, he spoke no other word, but went his ways; neither was he any more seen nor heard tell of upon that country-side.

And the child knelt in a corner of the room, bouncing her green and scarlet ball.

The father and mother took counsel.

The mother wept, but she said, “Let be, for who can alter the pattern set up upon the looms of the weaving women of Heaven?” But the father cried, “I will fight. I will avert the portent; the thing shall not come to pass. Who am I that I should give credence to a dog of a soothsayer who lies in his teeth?” And though his wife shook her head and moaned, he gave her counsel no heed, for he was a man.

So they hid the child in a secret chamber, where an old wise woman tended her, fed her, bathed her, combed her hair, taught her to make songs and to sing, to dance so that her feet moved like rosy butterflies over the white mats, or to sit at a frame with a wonder of needlework stretched upon it, drawing the needle and the silken thread hour after hour.

For eight years the maid set eyes upon no human being save her father, her mother, and her nurse, these three only. All the day she spent in her distant chamber, far removed from the sights and the sounds of the world. Only in the night she came forth into her father's garden, when the moon shone and the birds slept and the flowers had no colour. And with every season that passed the maid grew more beautiful. Her hair hung down to her knees and was black as a thundercloud. Her forehead was the plum blossom, her cheek the wild cherry, and her mouth the flower of the pomegranate. At fifteen years old she was the loveliest thing that ever saw the light, and the sun was sick with jealousy because only the moon might shine upon her.

In spite of all, the fame of her beauty became known, and because she was kept so guarded men thought of her the more, and because she might not be seen men longed to behold her. And because of the mystery and the maiden, gallants and warriors and men of note came from far and near and flocked to the house of Unai; and they made a hedge about it with themselves and their bright swords; and they swore that they would not leave the place till they had sight of the maid, and this they would have either by favour or by force.

Then the master of the house did even as he must, and he sent her mother to bring the maid down. So the mother went, taking with her a robe of grey silk and a great girdle of brocade, green and gold; and she found the maid, her daughter, sitting in her secret chamber singing.

The maid sang thus:

Nothing has changed since the time of the gods,
Neither the running of water nor the way of love.

AND THE MOTHER was astonished and said, “What manner of song is this, and where heard you of such a thing as love?”

And she answered, “I have read of it in a book.”

Then they took her, her mother and the wise woman, and they tied her hair and pinned it high upon her head with gold and coral pins, and held it with a great lacquer comb. She said, “How heavy it is!”

While they dressed her in the robe of grey silk, and tied the girdle of brocade, first she shuddered and said, “I am cold.” Then they would have thrown over her a mantle broidered with plum blossom and pine, but she would have none of it, saying, “No, no, I burn.”

They painted her lips with *beni*, and when she saw it she murmured, “Alack, there is blood upon my lips!” But they led her down and out on to a balcony, where the men who were assembled might see her. She was fairer than the children of men, and her beauty shone like the beauty of an earthly deity. And all the warriors who were there looked upon her and were silent, for already they were faint with love and longing. And the maid stood with eyes cast down, and slowly the hot blush rose to her cheek and she was lovelier than before.

Three or four score men of name sought her hand, being distraught for love of her, and amongst them were two braver and nobler than the rest. The one came from afar and was the champion of Chinu, and the other came from near, the champion of Unai. They were young, strong, and black-haired. They were equal in years, in strength, and in valour. Both were girded with great swords, and full-charged quivers were upon their backs, and six-foot bows of white wood were in their hands. Together they stood beneath the balcony of the maiden of Unai, like twin brothers in beauty and attainments. Together they cried aloud with passionate voices, telling of their eternal love, and bidding the maiden choose between them.

She lifted up her eyes and looked fixedly upon them, but spoke no word.

Then they drew their swords and made as if to fight the matter out there and then; but the maid’s father spoke: “Put up your swords, fair sirs; I have devised a better way for the decision of this thing. If it please you, enter my house.”

Now part of the house of Unai was built out upon a platform over the river that flowed past. It was the fifth month and the wistaria was in blossom upon the trellis, and hung downwards nearly into the water. The river was swift and deep. Here the master of the house brought the champions, and the maiden was there also. But the mother and the wise woman stood a little way apart, and hid their faces in their long sleeves. Presently a white water-bird dropped from the blue sky, and rocked to and fro upon the water of the river.

“Now, champions,” cried the father of the maiden, “draw me your bows and let fly each of you an arrow at yonder white bird that floats upon the river. He that shall strike the bird and prove himself to be the better marksman, he shall wed my daughter, the peerless Maiden of Unai.”

Then immediately the two champions drew their bows of white wood and let fly each of them an arrow. Each arrow sped swift; each arrow struck true. The champion of Chinu struck the water-bird in the head, but the champion of Unai struck her in the tail so that the white feathers were scattered. Then the champions cried, “Enough of this trifling. There is but one way.” And again their bright swords leapt from their scabbards.

But the maid stood trembling, holding the gnarled stem of the wistaria in her hands. She trembled and shook the branches so that the frail flowers fell about her. “My lords, my lords,” she cried, “oh, brave and beautiful heroes of fame, it is not meet that one of you should die for such as I am. I honour you; I love you both — therefore farewell.” With that, still holding to the wistaria, she swung herself clear of the balcony and dropped into the deep and swift-flowing river. “Weep not,” she cried, “for no woman dies to-day. It is but a child that is lost.” And so she sank.

Down sprang the champion of Chinu into the flood, and in the same instant down sprang the champion of Unai. Alack, they were heavy with the arms that they bore, and they sank and were entangled in the long water weeds. And so the three of them were drowned.

But at night when the moon shone, the pale dead rose, floating to the surface of the water. The champion of Unai held the maiden’s right hand in his own, but the champion of Chinu lay with his head against the maiden’s heart, bound close to her by a tress of her long hair; and as he lay he smiled.

The three corpses they lifted from the water, and laid them together upon a bier of fair white wood, and over them they strewed herbs and sweet flowers, and laid a veil over their faces of fine white silk. And they lighted fires and burned incense. Gallants and warriors and men of note who loved the maiden, alive or dead, stood about her bier and made a hedge with themselves and their bright swords. And there was sorrow and mourning, loud and grievous, so that the sound of it reached High Heaven and offended the peace of the gods.

A grave was dug wide and deep, and the three were buried therein. The maid they laid in the middle, and the two champions upon either side. Idzumo was the native place of the champion of Chinu, so they brought earth from thence in a junk, and with this earth they covered him.

So the maid slept there in the grave, the champions faithfully guarding her, for they had buried with them their bows of white wood and their good armour and their spears and their bright swords. Nothing was forgotten that is needful for adventure in the Land of Yomi.

17

THE ROBE OF FEATHERS

Mio Strand is in the Province of Suruga. Its sand is yellow and fine, strewn with rose shells at the ebb tide. Its pine trees are ancient and they lean all one way, which is the way that the wild wind wills. Before Mio rolls the deep sea, and behind Mio rises Fugi, the most sacred, the mountain of mountains. Small marvel that the Strange People should come to Mio.

Of the Strange People not much is known, even at Mio, though it is sure they come there. It seems they are shy indeed, more’s the pity. They come through the blue air, or across the mysterious paths of the sea. Their footprints are never, never seen upon the wet beach, for they tread too lightly. But sometimes in their dancing they sweep their robes upon the sand and leave it ribbed and ruffled; so, often enough, it may be seen at Mio.

This is not all. Once a fisherman of Mio set eyes upon a maiden of the Strange People, and talked with her and made her do his bidding. This is a true thing, and thus it came about.

The fisherman was out in his boat all night. He cast his net here and he cast his net there, but he caught nothing at all for his pains. It may be believed that he grew weary enough before the morning. In the cold of the dawn he brought his boat to shore and set foot on Mio Strand, shivering.

Then, so he says, a warm wind met him and blew through his garments and his hair, so that he flushed and glowed. The very sand was full of comfort to his chilly feet. Upon the warm wind a fragrance was borne, cedar and vervain, and the scent of a hundred flowers.

Flowers dropped softly through the air like bright rain. The fisherman stretched out his hands and caught them, lotus and jessamine and pomegranate. And all the while sweet music sounded.

“This is never Mio Strand,” cried the fisherman, bewildered, “where I have pulled my boat ashore a thousand times or flown kites upon a holiday. Alack, I fear me I have sailed to the Fortunate Isles unawares, or come unwilling to the Sea King’s garden; or very like I am dead and never knew it, and this is Yomi. O Yomi, Land of Yomi, how like thou art to Mio Strand, my dear home!”

After he had said this, the fisherman looked up the beach and down the beach, and he turned and saw Fuji, the mountain of mountains, and then he turned and saw the deep rolling sea and knew he was at Mio and no other place, and gave a long sigh.

“Thanks be,” he said, and lifting his eyes he saw a robe of feathers hanging upon the branch of a pine tree. In the robe were feathers of all the birds that fly, every one; the kingfisher and the golden pheasant, the love bird, the swan, the crow, the cormorant, the dove, the bullfinch, the falcon, the plover, and the heron.

“Ah, the pretty fluttering thing!” said the fisherman, and he took it from the pine tree where it hung.

“Ah, the warm, sweet, fairy thing!” said the fisherman; “I’ll take it home for a treasure, sure no money could buy it, and I’ll show it to all the folk of the village.” And off he set for home with the fairy feathers over his arm.

Now the maiden of the Strange People had been playing all this time with the White Children of the Foam that live in the salt sea. She looked up through the cold clear water and marked that her robe hung no longer on the pine-tree branch.

“Alas, alas!” she cried, “my robe, my feather robe!” Swifter than any arrow she sprang from the water, and sped, fleet of foot, along the wet sand. The White Children of the Foam followed at her flashing heels. Clad in the cloak of her long hair, she came up with the fisherman.

“Give me my feather robe,” she said, and held out her hand for it.

“Why?” said the fisherman.

“’Tis mine. I want it. I must have it.”

“Oho,” said the fisherman, “finding’s keeping,” and he didn’t give her the feather robe.

“I am a Fairy,” she said.

“Farewell, Fairy,” said the fisherman.

“A Moon Fairy,” she said.

“Farewell, Moon Fairy,” said the fisherman, and he made to take his way along Mio Strand. At that she snatched at the feather robe, but the fisherman held fast. The feathers fluttered out and dropped upon the sand.

“I wouldn’t do that,” said the fisherman. “You’ll have it all to pieces.”

“I am a Moon Fairy, and at dawn I came to play upon fair Mio Strand; without my feathers I cannot go back to my place, my home in High Heaven. Therefore give me my feathers.”

“No,” said the fisherman.

“Oh, fisherman, fisherman, give me my robe.”

“I couldn’t think of it,” said the fisherman.

At this the maiden fell upon her knees and drooped like a lily in the heat of the day. With her arms she held the fisherman about the knees, and as she clung to him beseeching him, he felt her tears upon his bare feet.

She wept and said:

I AM A BIRD, a frail bird,
A wounded bird with broken wings,
I must die far from home,
For the Five Woes are come upon me.
The red flowers in my hair are faded;
My robe is made unclean;
Faintness comes upon me;
I cannot see — farewell, dear sight of my eyes;
I have lost joy.
Oh, blessed flying clouds, and happy birds,
And golden dust in the wind,
And flying thoughts and flying prayers!
I have lost all joy.

“OH, STOP,” said the fisherman, “you may have your robe.”

“Give,” she cried.

“Softly, softly,” said the fisherman. “Not so fast. I will give you your robe if you will dance for me here on Mio Strand.”

“What must I dance?” she asked.

“You must dance the mystic dance that makes the Palace of the Moon turn round.”

She said, “Give me my feathers and I will dance it. I cannot dance without my feathers.”

“What if you cheat me, what if you break your promise and fly immediately to the moon and no dancing at all?”

“Ah, fisherman,” she said, “the faith of a Fairy!”

Then he gave her the robe.

Now, when she had arrayed herself and flung back her hair, the Fairy began to dance upon the yellow sand. In and out of the feather robe crept her fairy feet. Slowly, softly, she went with folded wings and sang:

Oh, the gold and silver mountains of the Moon,
And the sweet Singing Birds of Heaven!
They sing in the branches of the cinnamon tree,
To entertain the thirty kings that are there.
Fifteen kings in white garments,
To reign for fifteen days.
Fifteen kings in black garments,
To reign for fifteen days.
I hear the music of Heaven;
Away, away, I fly to Fairy Places.

At this the Fairy spread her rainbow-coloured wings, and the wind that they made fluttered the red flowers in her hair. Out streamed the robe of feathers bright and gay.

The Fairy laughed. Her feet touched the waves of the sea; her feet touched the grass and the flowers inshore. They touched the high branches of the pines and then the white clouds.

“Farewell, fisherman!” the Fairy cried, and he saw her no more.

Long, long he stood gazing up into the sky. At length he stooped and picked up a little feather from the shore, a grey dove’s feather. He smoothed it out with his finger and hid it in his girdle.

Then he went to his home.

18

THE SINGING BIRD OF HEAVEN

Ama Terassu, the Glorious, the Light of High Heaven, commanded, saying, “His Augustness, my August Child, who is called the Conqueror, shall descend to the land. For it is a Land of Luxuriant Reed Plains, a Land of Fresh Rice Ears, a Land of a Thousand Autumns. So of this land he shall be king.”

Now his Augustness, the August Child, the Conqueror, stood upon the Floating Bridge of Heaven and looked down, and he saw that there was a great unquietness upon the Land of the Reed Plains. For earthly deities made strife, and blood ran, and fearful sounds of war arose, even to High Heaven. So the August Child, the heavenly born, turned back across the Floating Bridge, and swore he would not descend to rule the land until it should be cleansed.

And Ama Terassu, the Light of High Heaven, who had the sun set fast between her eyes, bound her head with jewels, and gathered the deities together in a divine assembly, to hold council in the Tranquil River Bed. And she spoke and said, “Who shall subdue the land that I have given to the August Child?”

And all the deities cried, “O Thine Augustness, send down the Lord of Spears.” Therefore the Lord of Spears went lightly down by the Floating Bridge; and there were bound upon his back eight hundred spears. Howbeit, he made a truce with the Lord of the Reed Plains and tarried there; and for three years there was no report.

Therefore, once more the Queen of Heaven called him whom the gods name Wonderful, and she called the Lord of Deep Thoughts, and likewise she called every deity of Heaven, and they came to council in the Tranquil River Bed, so that upon the sand there was left the print of their august feet. And Ama Terassu said, “Behold now the Lord of Spears is faithless. Whom shall we send to rule the land?” And the Young Prince answered, “O Mother of Heaven, Thine Augustness, send me.” And all the deities assented with one accord and cried, “Send him, send him,” till there was a sound like thunder in the River Bed.

So the Young Prince bound on his sandals, and they brought to him the great bow that stands in the Hall of High Heaven, and bestowed it upon him, and they gave him many heavenly-feathered arrows. So they made him ready, and they brought him to the Floating Bridge. And the Young Prince descended lightly, while his garments shone with the glory of Heaven. But when he touched the tops of the high hills, his heart beat fast and his blood ran warm. Therefore he cut the fastening of his sandals and cast them behind him, and he ran upon his bare feet, like an earthly deity, and came to the palace upon the Reed Plains.

Now, at the door of the palace the Princess Undershining stood, like a growing flower. So the Young Prince beheld her and loved her, and he built him a dwelling upon the Reed Plains, and took the Princess for his bride. And, because he loved her and her earthly children, he brought no report to High Heaven, and he forgot the waiting deities. For Heaven was vague to him as a dream.

But the gods were weary.

And Ama Terassu said, “Long, long tarries our messenger, and brings no word again. My Lord, the August Child, waxes impatient; whom now shall we send?” Thereupon, all the deities, and the Lord of Deep Thoughts, replied, “Send down the Singing Bird, the beloved of High Heaven.”

So Ama Terassu took the golden Singing Bird, and said, “Sweet music of the divine gods, spread thou thy bright wings, and fly to the Land of Reed Plains, and there search out the Young Prince, the messenger of Heaven, and, when thou hast found him, sing in his ear this song: ‘Ama Terassu, the Goddess of the Sun, has sent me saying, How fares the quest of High Heaven, and how fares the message? Where is the report of the gods?’”

So the bird departed, singing. And she came to the Land of the Reed Plains, and perched upon the branch of a fair cassia tree which grew hard by the Young Prince’s dwelling. Day and night, she sang, and the gods in Heaven thought long for their sweet Singing Bird. Howbeit she returned not again, but sat upon the branch of the cassia tree.

But the Young Prince gave no heed.

And She that Speaketh Evil heard the words that the bird sang. And she whispered in the Young Prince’s ear, “See now, my lord, this is an evil bird, and evil is its cry; therefore take thou thine arrows and go forth and slay it.” So she urged continually, and, by glamour, she prevailed upon him. Then the Young Prince arose, and took his bow and his heavenly-feathered arrows, and he let fly an arrow into the branches of the cassia tree. And suddenly the sweet sound of singing ceased, and the golden bird fell dead, for the aim was true.

But the heavenly-feathered arrow took wing and pierced the floor of Heaven, and reached the high place, where sat the Sun Goddess, together with her August Counsellors, in the Tranquil River Bed of Heaven. And the god called Wonderful took up the arrow, and beheld the blood upon its feathers. And the Lord of Deep Thoughts said, “This is the arrow that was given to the Young Prince,” and he showed it to all the deities. And he said, “If the Young Prince has shot this arrow at the evil deities, according to our command, let it do him no hurt. But, if his heart be not pure, then let the Young Prince perish by this arrow.” And he hurled the arrow back to earth.

Now the Young Prince lay upon a couch, sleeping. And the arrow fell, and pierced his heart that he died.

Yet the sweet Singing Bird of Heaven returned no more; and the gods were sorrowful.

Howbeit, the Young Prince lay dead upon his bed; and the wailing of his spouse, the Princess Undershining, re-echoed in the wind, and was heard in Heaven. So the Young Prince’s father descended with cries and lamentations, and there was built a mourning house upon the Land of Reed Plains, and the Young Prince was laid there.

And there came to mourn for him the wild goose of the river, and the pheasant, and the kingfisher. And they mourned for him eight days and eight nights.

19

THE COLD LADY

Once an old man and a young man left their village in company, in order to make a journey into a distant province. Now, whether they went for pleasure or for profit, for matters of money, of love or war, or because of some small or great vow that they had laid upon their souls, it is no longer known. All these things were very long since forgotten. It is enough to say that it is likely they accomplished their desires, for they turned their faces homewards about the setting-in of the winter season, which is an evil time for wayfarers, Heaven knows.

Now as they journeyed, it happened that they missed their way, and, being in a lonely part of the country, they wandered all the day long and came upon no good soul to guide them. Near nightfall they found themselves upon the brink of a broad and swift-flowing river. There was no bridge, no ford, no ferry. Down came the night, with pitch-black clouds and a little shrewd wind that blew the dry and scanty reeds. Presently the snow came. The flakes fell upon the dark water of the river.

“How white, how white they are!” cried the young man.

But the old man shivered. In truth it was bitter cold, and they were in a bad case. Tired out, the old man sat him down upon the ground; he drew his cloak round him and clasped his hands about his knees. The young man blew upon his fingers to warm them. He went up the bank a little, and at last he found a small poor hut, deserted by a charcoal-burner or ferryman.

“Bad it is at the best,” said the young man, “yet the gods be praised for any shelter on such a night.” So he carried his companion to the hut. They had no food and no fire, but there was a bundle of dried leaves in the corner. Here they lay down and covered themselves with their straw rain-coats; and in spite of the cold, they soon fell asleep.

About midnight the young man was awakened by an icy air upon his cheek. The door of the hut stood wide open, and he could see the whirling snow-storm without. It was not very dark. “A pest upon the wind!” said the young man. “It has blown open the door, and the snow has drifted in and covered my feet,” and he raised himself upon his elbow. Then he saw that there was a woman in the hut.

She knelt by the side of the old man, his companion, and bent low over him till their faces almost met. White was her face and beautiful; white were her trailing garments; her hair was white with the snow that had fallen upon it. Her hands were stretched forth over the man that slept, and bright icicles hung from her finger-tips. Her breath was quite plainly to be seen as it came from her parted lips. It was like a fair white smoke. Presently she made an end of leaning over the old man, and rose up very tall and slender. Snow fell from her in a shower as she moved.

“That was easy,” she murmured, and came to the young man, and sinking down beside him took his hand in hers. If the young man was cold before, he was colder now. He grew numb from head to heel. It seemed to him as if his very blood froze, and his heart was a lump of ice that stood still in his bosom. A deathly sleep stole over him.

“This is my death,” he thought. “Can this be all? Thank the gods there is no pain.” But the Cold Lady spoke.

“It is only a boy,” she said. “A pretty boy,” she said, stroking his hair; “I cannot kill him.”

“Listen,” she said. The young man moaned.

“You must never speak of me, nor of this night,” she said. “Not to father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother, nor to betrothed maid, nor to wedded wife, nor to boy child, nor to girl child, nor to sun, nor moon, nor water, fire, wind, rain, snow. Now swear it.”

He swore it. “Fire — wind — rain — snow...” he murmured, and fell into a deep swoon.

When he came to himself it was high noon, the warm sun shone. A kind countryman held him in his arms and made him drink from a steaming cup.

“Now, boy,” said the countryman, “you should do. By the mercy of the gods I came in time, though what brought me to this hut, a good three *ri* out of my way, the August Gods alone know. So you may thank them and your wondrous youth. As for the good old man, your companion, it is a different matter. He is past help. Already his feet have come to the Parting of the Three Ways.”

“Alack!” cried the young man. “Alack, for the snow and the storm, and the bitter, bitter night! My friend is dead.”

But he said no more then, nor did he when a day’s journey brought him home to his own village. For he remembered his oath. And the Cold Lady’s words were in his ear.

“You must never speak of me, nor of this night, not to father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother, nor to betrothed maid, nor to wedded wife, nor to boy child, nor to girl child, nor to sun, nor moon, nor water, fire, wind, rain, snow...”

Some years after this, in the leafy summer time, it chanced that the young man took his walks abroad alone, and as he was returning homewards, about sundown, he was aware of a girl walking in the path a little way before him. It seemed as though she had come some distance, for her robe was kilted up, she wore sandals tied to her feet, and she carried a bundle. Moreover, she drooped and went wearily. It was not strange that the young man should presently come up with her, nor that he should pass the time of day. He saw at once that the girl was very young, fair, and slender.

"Young maiden," he said, "whither are you bound?"

She answered, "Sir, I am bound for Yedo, where I intend to take service. I have a sister there who will find me a place."

"What is your name?" he asked.

"My name is O'Yuki."

"O'Yuki," said the young man, "you look very pale."

"Alas! sir," she murmured, "I faint with the heat of this summer day." And as she stood in the path her slender body swayed, and she slid to his feet in a swoon.

The young man lifted her gently, and carried her in his arms to his mother's house. Her head lay upon his breast, and as he looked upon her face, he shivered slightly.

"All the same," he said to himself, "these summer days turn chilly about sundown, or so it seems to me."

When O'Yuki was recovered of her swoon, she thanked the young man and his mother sweetly for their kindness, and as she had little strength to continue her journey, she passed the night in their house. In truth she passed many nights there, and the streets of Yedo never knew her, for the young man grew to love her, and made her his wife ere many moons were out. Daily she became more beautiful — fair she was, and white. Her little hands, for all she used them for work in the house and work in the fields, were as white as jasmine flowers; the hot sun could not burn her neck, or her pale and delicate cheek. In the fulness of time she bore seven children, all as fair as she, and they grew up tall and strong with straight noble limbs; their equal could not be found upon that country-side. Their mother loved them, reared them, laboured for them. In spite of passing years, in spite of the joys and pains of motherhood, she looked like a slender maiden; there came no line upon her forehead, no dimness to her eyes, and no grey hairs.

All the women of the place marvelled at these things, and talked of them till they were tired. But O'Yuki's husband was the happiest man for miles round, what with his fair wife and his fair children. Morning and evening he prayed and said, "Let not the gods visit it upon me if I have too much joy."

On a certain evening in winter, O'Yuki, having put her children to bed and warmly covered them, was with her husband in the next room. The charcoal glowed in the *hibachi*; all the doors of the house were closely shut, for it was bitter cold, and outside the first big flakes of a snow-storm had begun to fall. O'Yuki stitched diligently at little bright-coloured garments. An *andon* stood on the floor beside her, and its light fell full upon her face.

Her husband looked at her, musing...

"Dear," he said, "when I look at you to-night I am reminded of an adventure that came to me many years since."

O'Yuki spoke not at all, but stitched diligently.

"It was an adventure or a dream," said the man her husband, "and which it was I cannot tell. Strange it was as a dream, yet I think I did not sleep."

O'Yuki went on sewing.

"Then, only then, I saw a woman, who was as beautiful as you are and as white... indeed, she was very like you."

"Tell me about her," said O'Yuki, not lifting her eyes from her work.

"Why," said the man, "I have never spoken of her to anybody." Yet he spoke then to his undoing. He told of his journey, and how he and his companion, being benighted in a snow-storm, took shelter in a hut. He spoke of the white Cold Lady, and of how his friend had died in her chill embrace.

"Then she came to my side and leaned over me, but she said, 'It is only a boy... a pretty boy... I cannot kill him.' Gods! How cold she was... how cold... Afterwards she made me swear, before she left me she made me swear..."

“You must never speak of me, nor of this night,” O’Yuki said, “not to father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister, nor to betrothed maid, nor to wedded wife, nor to boy child, nor to girl child, nor to sun, nor moon, nor water, fire, wind, rain, snow. All this you swore to me, my husband, even to me. And after all these years you have broken your oath. Unkind, unfaithful, and untrue!” She folded her work together and laid it aside. Then she went to where the children were, and bent her face over each in turn.

The eldest murmured “Cold... Cold...” so she drew the quilt up over his shoulder.

The youngest cried, “Mother”... and threw out his little arms.

She said, “I have grown too cold to weep any more.”

With that she came back to her husband. “Farewell,” she said. “Even now I cannot kill you for my little children’s sakes. Guard them well.”

The man lifted up his eyes and saw her. White was her face and beautiful; white were her trailing garments; her hair was white as it were with snow that had fallen upon it. Her breath was quite plainly to be seen as it came from her parted lips. It was like a fair white smoke.

“Farewell! Farewell!” she cried, and her voice grew thin and chill like a piercing winter wind. Her form grew vague as a snow wreath or a white vaporous cloud. For an instant it hung upon the air. Then it rose slowly through the smoke-hole in the ceiling and was no more seen.

20

THE FIRE QUEST

The Wise Poet sat reading by the light of his taper. It was a night of the seventh month. The cicala sang in the flower of the pomegranate, the frog sang by the pond. The moon was out and all the stars, the air was heavy and sweet-scented. But the Poet was not happy, for moths came by the score to the light of his taper; not moths only, but cockchafers and dragon-flies with their wings rainbow-tinted. One and all they came upon the Fire Quest; one and all they burned their bright wings in the flame and so died. And the Poet was grieved.

"Little harmless children of the night," he said, "why will you still fly upon the Fire Quest? Never, never can you attain, yet you strive and die. Foolish ones, have you never heard the story of the Firefly Queen?"

The moths and the cockchafers and the dragon-flies fluttered about the taper and paid him no heed.

"They have never heard it," said the Poet; "yet it is old enough. Listen:

"The Firefly Queen was the brightest and most beautiful of small things that fly. She dwelt in the heart of a rosy lotus. The lotus grew on a still lake, and it swayed to and fro upon the lake's bosom while the Firefly Queen slept within. It was like the reflection of a star in the water.

"You must know, oh, little children of the night, that the Firefly Queen had many suitors. Moths and cockchafers and dragon-flies innumerable flew to the lotus on the lake. And their hearts were filled with passionate love. ‘Have pity, have pity,’ they cried, ‘Queen of the Fireflies, Bright Light of the Lake.’ But the Firefly Queen sat and smiled and shone. It seemed that she was not sensible of the incense of love that arose about her.

“At last she said, ‘Oh, you lovers, one and all, what make you here idly, cumbering my lotus house? Prove your love, if you love me indeed. Go, you lovers, and bring me fire, and then I will answer.’

“Then, oh, little children of the night, there was a swift whirr of wings, for the moths and the cockchafers and the dragon-flies innumerable swiftly departed upon the Fire Quest. But the Firefly Queen laughed. Afterwards I will tell you the reason of her laughter.

“So the lovers flew here and there in the still night, taking with them their desire. They found lighted lattices ajar and entered forthwith. In one chamber there was a girl who took a love-letter from her pillow and read it in tears, by the light of a taper. In another a woman sat holding the light close to a mirror, where she looked and painted her face. A great white moth put out the trembling candle-flame with his wings.

“‘Alack! I am afraid,’ shrieked the woman; ‘the horrible dark!’

“In another place there lay a man dying. He said, ‘For pity’s sake light me the lamp, for the black night falls.’

“‘We have lighted it,’ they said, ‘long since. It is close beside you, and a legion of moths and dragon-flies flutter about it.’

“‘I cannot see anything at all,’ murmured the man.

“But those that flew on the Fire Quest burnt their frail wings in the fire. In the morning they lay dead by the hundred and were swept away and forgotten.

“The Firefly Queen was safe in her lotus bower with her beloved, who was as bright as she, for he was a great lord of the Fireflies. No need had he to go upon the Fire Quest. He carried the living flame beneath his wings.

“Thus the Firefly Queen deceived her lovers, and therefore she laughed when she sent them from her on a vain adventure.”

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“Be not deceived,” cried the Wise Poet, “oh, little children of the night. The Firefly Queen is always the same. Give over the Fire Quest.”

But the moths and the cockchafers and the dragon-flies paid no heed to the words of the Wise Poet. Still they fluttered about his taper, and they burnt their bright wings in the flame and so died.

Presently the Poet blew out the light. “I must needs sit in the dark,” he said; “it is the only way.”

21

A LEGEND OF KWANNON

In the days of the gods, Ama-no-Hashidate was the Floating Bridge of Heaven. By way of this bridge came the deities from heaven to earth, bearing their jewelled spears, their great bows and heavenly-feathered arrows, their wonder robes and their magic mirrors. Afterwards, when the direct way was closed that had been between earth and heaven, and the deities walked no more upon the Land of Fresh Rice Ears, the people still called a place Ama-no-Hashidate, for the sake of happy memory. This place is one of the Three Fair Views of Yamato. It is where a strip of land runs out into the blue sea, like a floating bridge covered with dark pine trees.

There was a holy man of Kioto called Saion Zenji. He had followed the Way of the Gods from his youth up. He was also a disciple of the great Buddha; well versed was he in doctrines and philosophies; he knew the perils of illusion and the ineffable joys of Nirvana. Long hours would he pass in mystic meditation, and many of the Scriptures he had by heart. When he was on a pilgrimage he came to Ama-no-Hashidate, and he offered up thanks because the place was so lovely in his eyes.

He said, “The blind and ignorant have it that trees and rocks and the green sea-water are not sentient things, but the wise know that they also sing aloud and praise the Tathagata. Here will I take up my rest, and join my voice with theirs, and will not see my home again.”

So Saion Zenji, the holy man, climbed Nariai-San, the mountain over against Ama-no-Hashidate. And when he had come to the place of the Lone Pine, he built him a shrine to Kwannon the Merciful, and a hut to cover his own head.

All day he chanted the Holy Sutras. From dawn to eventide he sang, till his very being was exalted and seemed to float in an ecstasy of praise. Then his voice grew so loud and clear that it was a marvel. The blue campanula of the mountain in reverence bowed its head; the great white lily distilled incense from its deep heart; the cicala shrilled aloud; the Forsaken Bird gave a long note from the thicket. About the hermit's hut there fluttered dragon-flies and butterflies innumerable, which are the souls of the happy dead. In the far valleys the peasant people were comforted in their toil, whether they planted out the green young rice, or gathered in the ears. The sun and the wind were tempered, and the rain fell softly upon their faces. Ever and again they climbed the steep hillside to kneel at the shrine of Kwannon the Merciful, and to speak with the holy man, whose wooden bowl they would fill with rice or millet, or barley-meal or beans. Sometimes he came down and went through the villages, where he soothed the sick and touched the little children. Folks said that his very garments shone.

Now in that country there came a winter season the like of which there had not been within the memory of man. First came the wind blowing wildly from the north, and then came the snow in great flakes which never ceased to fall for the period of nine days. All the folk of the valleys kept within doors as warm as might be, and those that had their winter stores fared none so ill. But, ah me, for the bitter cold upon the heights of Nariai-San! At the Lone Pine, and about the hermit's hut, the snow was piled and drifted. The shrine of Kwannon the Merciful could no more be seen. Saion Zenji, the holy man, lived for some time upon the food that was in his wooden bowl. Then he drew about him the warm garment of thought, and passed many days in meditation, which was meat and drink and sleep to him. Howbeit, even his clear spirit could not utterly dispel the clouds of illusion. At length it came to earth and all the man trembled with bodily weakness.

“Forgive me, O Kwannon the Merciful,” said Saion Zenji; “but verily it seems to me that if I have no food I die.”

Slowly he rose, and painfully he pushed open the door of his hut. The snow had ceased; it was clear and cold. White were the branches of the Lone Pine, and all white the Floating Bridge.

“Forgive me, O Kwannon the Merciful,” said Saion Zenji; “I know not the reason, but I am loath to depart and be with the Shades of Yomi. Save me this life, O Kwannon the Merciful.”

Turning, he beheld a dappled hind lying on the snow, newly dead of the cold. He bowed his head. “Poor gentle creature,” he said, “never more shalt thou run in the hills, and nibble the grass and the sweet flowers.” And he stroked the hind’s soft flank, sorrowing.

“Poor deer, I would not eat thy flesh. Is it not forbidden by the Law of the Blessed One? Is it not forbidden by the word of Kwannon the Merciful?” Thus he mused. But even as he mused he seemed to hear a voice that spoke to him, and the voice said:

“Alas, Saion Zenji, if thou die of hunger and cold, what shall become of my people, the poor folk of the valleys? Shall they not be comforted any more by the Sutras of the Tathagata? Break the law to keep the law, beloved, thou that countest the world well lost for a divine song.”

Then presently Saion Zenji took a knife, and cut him a piece of flesh from the side of the dappled hind. And he gathered fir cones and made a little fire and cooked the deer’s flesh in an iron pot. When it was ready he ate half of it. And his strength came to him again, and he opened his lips and sang praises to the Tathagata, and the very embers of the dying fire leapt up in flame to hear him.

“Howbeit I must bury the poor deer,” said Saion Zenji. So he went to the door of his hut. But look where he might no deer nor dappled hind did he see, nor yet the mark of one in the deep snow.

“It is passing strange,” he said, and wondered.

As soon as might be, up came the poor folk from the valley to see how their hermit had fared through the snow and the stormy weather. “The gods send he be not dead of cold or hunger,” they said one to another. But they found him chanting in his hut, and he told them how he had eaten of the flesh of a dappled hind and was satisfied.

“I cut but a hand’s breadth of the meat,” he said, “and half of it is yet in the iron pot.”

But when they came to look in the pot, they found there no flesh of deer, but a piece of cedar wood gilded upon the one side. Marvelling greatly, they carried it to the shrine of Kwannon the Merciful, and when they had cleared away the deep snow, all of them went in to worship. There smiled the image of the sweet heavenly lady, golden among her golden flowers. In her right side there was a gash where the gilded wood was cut away. Then the poor folk from the valley reverently brought that which they had found in the hermit’s pot, and set it in the gash. And immediately the wound was healed and the smooth gold shone over the place. All the people fell on their faces, but the hermit stood singing the high praise of Kwannon the Merciful.

The sun set in glory. The valley folk crept softly from the shrine and went down to their own homes. The cold moon and the stars shone upon the Lone Pine and the Floating Bridge and the sea. Through a rent in the shrine’s roof they illumined the face of Kwannon the Merciful, and made visible her manifold arms of love. Yet Saion Zenji, her servant, stood before her singing in an ecstasy, with tears upon his face:

O WONDER-WOMAN, strong and beautiful,

Tender-hearted, pitiful, and thousand-armed!
Thou hast fed me with thine own flesh —
Mystery of mysteries!
Poor dead dappled hind thou cam’st to me;
In the deep of mine own heart thou spoke to me
To keep, yet break, and breaking, keep thy law —
Mystery of mysteries!
Kwannon, the Merciful Lady, stay with me,
Save me from the perils of illusion;
Let me not be afraid of the snow or the Lone Pine.
Mystery of mysteries —
Thou hast refused Nirvana,
Help me that I may lose the world, content,
And sing the Divine Song.

22

THE ESPOUSAL OF THE RAT’S DAUGHTER

Mr. Nedzumi, the Rat, was an important personage in the hamlet where he lived — at least he was so in his own and his wife’s estimation. This was in part, of course, due to the long line of ancestors from whom he was descended, and to their intimate association with the gods of Good Fortune. For, be it remembered, his ancestry went back into a remote past, in fact as far as time itself; for had not one of his race been selected as the first animal in the cycle of the hours, precedence being even given him over the dragon, the tiger, and the horse? As to his intimacy with the gods, had not one of his forebears been the chosen companion of the great Daikoku, the most revered and the most beneficent of the gods of Good Fortune?

Mr. Rat was well-to-do in life. His home had for generations been established in a snug, warm and cosy bank, hard by one of the most fertile rice-fields on the country-side, where crops never failed, and where in spring he could nibble his fill of the young green shoots, and in autumn gather into his storerooms supplies of the ripened grain sufficient for all his wants during the coming winter.

For his needs were not great. Entertainment cost him but little, and, unlike his fellows, he had the smallest of families, in fact a family of one only.

But, as regards that one, quality more than compensated for quantity, for it consisted of a daughter, of a beauty unsurpassed in the whole province. He himself had been the object of envy in his married life, for he had had the good fortune to marry into a family of a very select piebald breed, which seldom condescended to mix its blood with the ordinary self-coloured tribe, and now his daughter had been born a peerless white, and had received the name of Yuki, owing to her resemblance to pure snow.

It is little wonder, then, that as she grew up beautiful in form and feature, her father's ambitions were fired, and that he aspired to marry her to the highest in the land.

As it happened, the hamlet where he lived was not very far removed from a celebrated temple, and Mr. Rat, having been brought up in the odour of sanctity, had all his life long been accustomed to make pilgrimages to the great shrine. There he had formed the acquaintance of an old priest, who was good enough to provide for him out of the temple offerings in return for gossip as to the doings of his village, which happened to be that in which the priest had been born and bred. To him the rat had often unburdened his mind, and the old priest had come to see his friend's self-importance and his little weaknesses, and had in vain impressed upon him the virtues of humility.

Now Mr. Rat could find no one amongst his village companions to inform him where to attain what had now become an insatiable desire, namely, a fine marriage for his daughter. So he turned to the temple custodian for advice, and one summer morn found him hammering on the gong which summoned his friend the priest.

"Welcome, Mr. Rat; to what am I indebted for your visit?" said the old priest, for experience had shown him that his friend seldom came so far afield unless he had some request to make.

Thereupon Mr. Rat unburdened himself of all that was in his mind, of his aspiration, and of the difficulty he had in ascertaining in what manner he could obtain it.

Nor did the priest immediately satisfy him, for he said the matter was a difficult one, and would require much consideration. However, on the third day the oracle gave answer as follows: “There is no doubt that apart from the gods there is no one so powerful, or who exercises so beneficent a rule over us, as His Majesty the Sun. Had I a daughter, and did I aspire to such heights for her as you do, I should make my suit to him, and I should take the opportunity of so doing when he comes down to our earth at sundown, for then it is that he decks himself in his most gorgeous apparel; moreover, he is more readily approached when his day’s work is done, and he is about to take his well-earned rest. Were I you I would lose no time, but present myself in company with your honourable wife and daughter to him this very evening at the end of the great Cryptomeria Avenue at the hour when he especially honours it by flooding it with his beams.”

“A thousand thanks,” said Mr. Rat. “No time is to be lost if I am to get my folk together at the time and place you mention.”

“Good fortune to you,” said the priest; “may I hail you the next time I see you as father-in-law to His Majesty the Sun.”

At the appointed hour parents and daughter were to be seen in the avenue, robed in their finest clothes; and as the sun came earthwards and his rays illumined the gloom under the great pines, Mr. Rat, noway abashed, addressed His Majesty and at once informed him of his desire.

His Majesty, evidently considering that one business personage addressing another should not waste time in beating about the bush, replied as follows: “I am extremely beholden to you for your kind intention of allowing me to wed your honourable and beautiful daughter, O Yuki San, but may I ask your reason for selecting me to be your honourable son-in-law?”

To this Mr. Rat replied, “We have determined to marry our daughter to whoever is the most powerful personage in the world, and that is why we desire to offer her to you in marriage.”

“Yes,” said His Majesty, “you are certainly not without reason in imagining me to be the most august and powerful person in the world; but, unfortunately, it has been my misfortune to discover that there is one other even more powerful than myself, against whose plottings I have no power. It is to him that you should very certainly marry your daughter.”

“And may we honourably ask you who that potentate may be?” said Mr. Rat.

“Certainly,” rejoined the Sun. “It is the Cloud. Oftentimes when I have set myself to illumine the world he comes across my path and covers my face so that my subjects may not see me, and so long as he does this I am altogether in his power. If, therefore, it is the most powerful personage in the world whom you seek for your daughter, the honourable O Yuki San, you must bestow her on no one else than the Cloud.”

It required little consideration for both father and mother to see the wisdom of the Sun’s advice, and upon his suggestion they determined to wait on the Cloud at the very earliest opportunity, and at an hour before he rose from his bed, which he usually made on the slopes of a mountain some leagues removed from their village. So they set out, and a long journey they had, so long that Mr. Rat decided that if he was to present his daughter when she was looking her best, the journey must not be hurried. Consequently, instead of arriving at early dawn, it was full afternoon when they neared the summit where the Cloud was apparently wrapped in slumber. But he roused himself as he saw the family approaching, and bade them welcome in so urbane a manner that the Rat at once proceeded to lay his request before him.

To this the Cloud answered, “I am indeed honoured by your condescension in proposing that I should marry your beauteous daughter, O Yuki San. It is quite true, as His August Majesty the Sun says, that when I so desire I have the strength to stay him from exercising his power upon his subjects, and I should much esteem the privilege of wedding your daughter. But as you would single out for that honour the most powerful person in the world, you must seek out His Majesty the Wind, against whom I have no strength, for as soon as he competes with me for supremacy I must fain fly away to the ends of the earth."

"You surprise me," said the Rat, "but I take your word for it. I would, therefore, ask you whether His Majesty the Wind will be this way shortly, and where I may best meet him."

"I am afraid I cannot tell you at the moment when he is likely to be this way. He usually announces his coming by harrying some of my subjects who act as my outposts, but, as you see, they are now all resting quietly. His Majesty is at this moment, I believe, holding a court far out in the Eastern Seas. Were I you I would go down to the seashore and await his coming. He is often somewhat inclined to be short-tempered by the time he gets up into these mountainous parts, owing to the obstructions he has met with on his journey, and he will have had few of these vexatious annoyances during his ride over the sea."

Now, although from the slopes of the mountain the sea looked not very far distant, it was in reality a long way for a delicately-nurtured young lady such as Yuki, and every mile of the journey that she had to traverse increased her querulousness. Her father had often boasted of the journeys that he had taken down to the coast, free of cost, concealed in a truck-load of rice, and she would take no excuses that there was no railway to the point at which they were to await His Highness the Wind, although had there been it would never have done for a party engaged on such an embassy to ride in a railway truck. Nor was her humour improved by the time they had to wait in the very second-rate accommodation afforded by a fishing hamlet, as none of them were accustomed to a fish fare. But after many days there were signs that the great personage was arriving, and they watched with some trepidation his passage over the sea, although when, in due time, he neared the shore they could hardly credit the Cloud's assurance as to his strength, for he seemed the personification of all that was gentle; and Madame Rat at once interposed the remark that you should never judge a person's character by what you hear, and that the Cloud evidently owed the Wind a grudge.

So the Rat at once unburdened himself to the Wind as it came over the water towards him, making its face ripple with smiles. And the Wind itself was in the fairest good humour and addressed the Rat as follows: "Mr. Cloud is a flatterer, and knows full well that I have no power against him when he really comes up against me in one of his thunderous moods. To call me the most powerful person in the world is nonsense. Where do you come from? Why, in that very village there is one stronger than me, namely, the high wall that fences in the house of your good neighbour. If your daughter must fain marry the strongest thing in the world, wed her to the wall. You will find him a very stalwart spouse. I wish you good day. I am sorry I cannot offer you a seat in my chariot, but I am not going in the direction of that wall to-day, else I should have had much pleasure in introducing your honourable self to my powerful antagonist."

By this time the party was getting much disheartened, and the stress of the journey and the chagrin of so many disappointments were beginning to tell on O Yuki San's beauty. But Mr. Rat said there was nothing for it but to return home; he knew the wall in question very well, but had no idea it stood so high in the world's estimation — he had always thought of it as somewhat of a dullard.

So they trudged homewards, and it was weary work, for the Cloud had hidden the Sun, and the Wind had fretted the Cloud, who showed his ill-humour by discharging a surplusage of moisture he had in his pocket, and they approached their home wet through, bedraggled and worn out. As luck would have it, just as they gained the wall which the wind had singled out for its power, a heavier downpour than ever came on and they were glad to take shelter under the lee of the wall. Now Mr. Wall had always been known for his inquisitive nature, which, it is said, arose from one side of his face never being able to see what was going on on the other; and so hearing his leeward side addressing Mr. Rat, and ascertaining that he had come from the sea, the windward side at once asked whether he had any tidings of that scoundrel the Wind, who was always coming and chafing his complexion.

“Why,” said Mr. Rat, “we met him but recently, and he desired to be remembered to you, who, he said, was the strongest person in the world.”

“I the strongest! It shows his ignorance. Why, only yesterday your nephew, the big brown rat, because he would not be at the trouble of going round, must needs gnaw a hole through me. The strongest thing in the world! Why, next time the wind comes this way he’ll rush through the hole and be telling your nephew that he’s the strongest person in the world.”

At this moment the rain stopped, the clouds rolled by, and the sun shone out, and Mr. and Mrs. Rat went home congratulating themselves that they had not had to demean themselves by proposing their daughter in marriage to a neighbour with such a false character.

And a month afterwards O Yuki San expressed her determination to marry her cousin, and her parents were fain to give their consent, for had he not proved himself to be the most powerful person in the world?

23

THE LAND OF YOMI

From the glorious clouds of High Heaven, from the divine ether, the vital essence, and the great concourse of eternal deities, there issued forth the heavenly pair — Izanagi, His Augustness, the Lord of Invitation, and with him, Izanami, Her Augustness, the Lady of Invitation.

Together they stood upon the Floating Bridge of High Heaven, and they looked down to where the mists swirled in confusion beneath their feet. For to them had been given power and commandment to make, consolidate and give birth to the drifting lands. And to this end the august powers had granted them a heavenly jewelled spear. And the two deities, standing upon the Floating Bridge of Heaven, lowered the jewelled spear head-first into chaos, so that the mists were divided. And, as they waited, the brine dripped from the jewels upon the spear-head, and there was formed an island. This is the island of Onogoro.

And His Augustness, the Lord of Invitation, took by the hand Her Augustness, the Lady of Invitation, his lovely Younger Sister, and together they descended to the island that was created. And they made the islands of Japan; the land of Iyo, which is called Lovely Princess; the land of Toyo, which is called Luxuriant Sun Youth; the land of Sanuki, which is called

Good Prince Boiled Rice; and Great Yamato, the Luxuriant Island of the Dragon Fly; and many more, of which to tell were weariness.

Furthermore, they gave birth to many myriads of deities to rule over the earth, and the air, and the deep sea; and for every season there were deities, and every place was sacred, for the deities were like the needles of the pine trees in number.

Now, when the time came for the Fire God, Kagu-Tsuchi, to be born, his mother, the Lady Izanami, was burned, and suffered a change; and she laid herself upon the ground. Then Izanagi, the Prince who Invites, asked, “What is it that has come to thee, my lovely Younger Sister?”

And she answered, weeping, “The time of my departure draws near... I go to the land of Yomi.”

And His Augustness Izanagi wept aloud, dropping his tears upon her feet and upon her pillow. And all his tears fell down and became deities. Nevertheless, the Lady Izanami departed.

Then His Augustness, the Prince who Invites, was wroth, and lifted his face to High Heaven, and cried, “O Thine Augustness, my lovely Younger Sister, that I should have given thee in exchange for this single child!”

And, drawing the ten-grasp sword that was girded upon him, he slew the Fire God, his child; and binding up his long hair, he followed the Lady Izanami to the entrance of Yomi, the world of the dead. And she, the Princess who Invites, appearing as lovely as she was when alive, came forth to greet him. And she lifted up the curtain of the Palace of Hades that they might speak together.

And the Lord Izanagi said, “I weary for thee, my lovely Younger Sister, and the lands that thou and I created together are not finished making. Therefore come back.”

Then the Lady made answer, saying, “My sweet lord, and my spouse, it is very lamentable that thou camest not sooner unto me, for I have eaten of the baked meats of Yomi. Nevertheless, as thou hast dearly honoured me in thy coming here, Thine Augustness, my lovely Elder Brother, if it may be, I will return with thee. I go to lay my desire before the Gods of Yomi. Wait thou here until I come again, and, if thou love me, seek not to look upon me till the time.” And so she spoke and left him.

Izanagi sat upon a stone at the entrance of the Palace of Hades until the sun set, and he was weary of that valley of gloom. And because she tarried long, he arose and plucked a comb from the left tress of his hair, and broke off a tooth from one end of the comb, and lighting it to be a torch, he drew back the curtain of the Palace of Yomi. But he saw his beloved lying in corruption, and round about her were the eight deities of Thunder. They are the Fire Thunder, and the Black Thunder, and the Cleaving Thunder, and the Earth Thunder, and the Roaring Thunder, and the Couchant Thunder, and the Young Thunder. And by her terrible head was the Great Thunder.

And Izanagi, being overawed, turned to flee away, but Izanami arose and cried, “Thou hast put me to shame, for thou hast seen my defilement. Now I will see thine also.”

And she called to her the Hideous Females of Yomi, and bade them take and slay His Augustness, the Lord who Invites. But he ran for his life, in the gloom stumbling upon the rocks of the valley of Yomi. And tearing the vine wreath from his long hair he flung it behind him, and it fell to the ground and became many bunches of grapes, which the Hideous Females stayed to devour. And he fled on. But the Females of Yomi still pursued him; so then he took a multitudinous and close-toothed comb from the right tresses of his long hair, and cast it behind him. When it touched the ground it became a groove of bamboo shoots, and again the females stayed to devour; and Izanagi fled on, panting.

But, in her wrath and despair, his Younger Sister sent after him the Eight Thunders, together with a thousand and five hundred warriors of Hades; yet he, the Prince of Invitation, drew the ten-grasp sword that was augustly girded upon him, and brandishing it behind him gained at last the base of the Even Pass of Hades, the black mouth of Yomi. And he plucked there three peaches that grew upon a tree, and smote his enemies that they all fled back; and the peaches were called Their Augustnesses, Great Divine Fruit.

Then, last of all, his Younger Sister, the Princess who Invites, herself came out to pursue. So Izanagi took a rock which could not have been lifted by a thousand men, and placed it between them in the Even Pass of Hades. And standing behind the rock, he pronounced a leave-taking and words of separation. But, from the farther side of the rock, Izanami called to him, “My lovely Elder Brother, Thine Augustness, of small avail shall be thy making of lands, and thy creating of deities, for I, with my powers, shall strangle every day a thousand of thy people.”

So she cried, taunting him.

But he answered her, “My lovely Younger Sister, Thine Augustness, if thou dost so, I shall cause, in one day, fifteen hundred to be born. Farewell.”

So Her Augustness, the Lady who Invites, is called the Queen of the Dead.

But the great lord, His Highness, the Prince who Invites, departed, crying, “Horror! Horror! Horror! I have come to a hideous and polluted land.” And he lay still by the river-side, until such time as he should recover strength to perform purification.

24

THE SPRING LOVER AND THE AUTUMN LOVER

This is a story of the youth of Yamato, when the gods still walked upon the Land of the Reed Plains and took pleasure in the fresh and waving rice-ears of the country-side.

There was a lady having in her something of earth and something of heaven. She was a king’s daughter. She was augustly radiant and renowned. She was called the Dear Delight of the World, the Greatly Desired, the Fairest of the Fair. She was slender and strong, at once mysterious and gay, fickle yet faithful, gentle yet hard to please. The gods loved her, but men worshipped her.

The coming of the Dear Delight was on this wise. Prince Ama Boko had a red jewel of one of his enemies. The jewel was a peace-offering. Prince Ama Boko set it in a casket upon a stand. He said, “This is a jewel of price.” Then the jewel was transformed into an exceeding fair lady. Her name was the Lady of the Red Jewel, and Prince Ama Boko took her to wife. There was born to them one only daughter, who was the Greatly Desired, the Fairest of the Fair.

It is true that eighty men of name came to seek her hand. Princes they were, and warriors, and deities. They came from near and they came from far. Across the Sea Path they came in great ships, white sails or creaking oars, with brave and lusty sailors. Through the forests dark and dangerous they made their way to the Princess, the Greatly Desired; or lightly, lightly they descended by way of the Floating Bridge in garments of glamour and silver-shod. They brought their gifts with them — gold, fair jewels upon a string, light garments of feathers, singing birds, sweet things to eat, silk cocoons, oranges in a basket. They brought minstrels and singers and dancers and tellers of tales to entertain the Princess, the Greatly Desired.

As for the Princess, she sat still in her white bower with her maidens about her. Passing rich was her robe, and ever and anon her maidens spread it afresh over the mats, set out her deep sleeves, or combed her long hair with a golden comb.

Round about the bower was a gallery of white wood, and here the suitors came and knelt in the presence of their liege lady.

Many and many a time the carp leapt in the garden fish-pond. Many and many a time a scarlet pomegranate flower fluttered and dropped from the tree. Many and many a time the lady shook her head and a lover went his way, sad and sorry.

Now it happened that the God of Autumn went to try his fortune with the Princess. He was a brave young man indeed. Ardent were his eyes; the colour flamed in his dark cheek. He was girded with a sword that ten men could not lift. The chrysanthemums of autumn burned upon his coat in cunning broidery. He came and bent his proud head to the very ground before the Princess, then raised it and looked her full in the eyes. She opened her sweet red lips — waited — said nothing — but shook her head.

So the God of Autumn went forth from her presence, blinded with his bitter tears.

He found his younger brother, the God of Spring.

“How fares it with you, my brother?” said the God of Spring.

“Ill, ill indeed, for she will not have me. She is the proud lady. Mine is the broken heart.”

“Ah, my brother!” said the God of Spring.

"You'd best come home with me, for all is over with us," said the God of Autumn.

But the God of Spring said, "I stay here."

"What," cried his brother, "is it likely, then, that she will take you if she'll have none of me? Will she love the smooth cheeks of a child and flout the man full grown? Will you go to her, brother? She'll laugh at you for your pains."

"Still I will go," said the God of Spring.

"A wager! A wager!" the God of Autumn cried. "I'll give you a cask of *saké* if you win her — *saké* for the merry feast of your wedding. If you lose her, the *saké* will be for me. I'll drown my grief in it."

"Well, brother," said the God of Spring, "I take the wager. You'll have your *saké* like enough indeed."

"And so I think," said the God of Autumn, and went his ways.

Then the young God of Spring went to his mother, who loved him.

"Do you love me, my mother?" he said.

She answered, "More than a hundred existences."

"Mother," he said, "get me for my wife the Princess, the Fairest of the Fair. She is called the Greatly Desired; greatly, oh, greatly, do I desire her."

"You love her, my son?" said his mother.

"More than a hundred existences," he said.

"Then lie down, my son, my best beloved, lie down and sleep, and I will work for you."

So she spread a couch for him, and when he was asleep she looked on him.

"Your face," she said, "is the sweetest thing in the world."

There was no sleep for her the live-long night, but she went swiftly to a place she knew of, where the wistaria drooped over a still pool. She plucked her sprays and tendrils and brought home as much as she could carry. The wistaria was white and purple, and you must know it was not yet in flower, but hidden in the unopened bud. From it she wove magically a robe. She fashioned sandals also, and a bow and arrows.

In the morning she waked the God of Spring.

“Come, my son,” she said, “let me put this robe on you.”

The God of Spring rubbed his eyes. “A sober suit for courting,” he said. But he did as his mother bade him. And he bound the sandals on his feet, and slung the bow and the arrows in their quiver on his back.

“Will all be well, my mother?” he said.

“All will be well, beloved,” she answered him.

So the God of Spring came before the Fairest of the Fair. And one of her maidens laughed and said:

“See, mistress, there comes to woo you to-day only a little plain boy, all in sober grey.”

But the Fairest of the Fair lifted up her eyes and looked upon the God of Spring. And in the same moment the wistaria with which he was clothed burst into flower. He was sweet-scented, white and purple from head to heel.

The Princess rose from the white mats.

“Lord,” she said, “I am yours if you will have me.”

Hand in hand they went together to the mother of the God of Spring.

“Ah, my mother,” he said, “what shall I do now? My brother the God of Autumn is angry with me. He will not give me the *saké* I have won from him in a wager. Great is his rage. He will seek to take our lives.”

“Be still, beloved,” said his mother, “and fear not.”

She took a cane of hollow bamboo, and in the hollow she put salt and stones; and when she had wrapped the cane round with leaves, she hung it in the smoke of the fire. She said:

“The green leaves fade and die. So you must do, my eldest born, the God of Autumn. The stone sinks in the sea, so must you sink. You must sink, you must fail, like the ebb tide.”

Now the tale is told, and all the world knows why Spring is fresh and merry and young, and Autumn the saddest thing that is.

25

THE STRANGE STORY OF THE GOLDEN COMB

In ancient days two *samurai* dwelt in Sendai of the North. They were friends and brothers in arms.

Hasunuma one was named, and the other Saito. Now it happened that a daughter was born to the house of Hasunuma, and upon the selfsame day, and in the selfsame hour, there was born to the house of Saito a son. The boy child they called Konojo, and the girl they called Aiko, which means the Child of Love.

Or ever a year had passed over their innocent heads the children were betrothed to one another. And as a token the wife of Saito gave a golden comb to the wife of Hasunuma, saying: “For the child’s hair when she shall be old enough.” Aiko’s mother wrapped the comb in a handkerchief, and laid it away in her chest. It was of gold lacquer, very fine work, adorned with golden dragon-flies.

This was very well; but before long misfortune came upon Saito and his house, for, by sad mischance, he aroused the ire of his feudal lord, and he was fain to fly from Sendai by night, and his wife was with him, and the child. No man knew where they went, or had any news of them, nor of how they fared, and for long, long years Hasunuma heard not one word of them.

The child Aiko grew to be the loveliest lady in Sendai. She had longer hair than any maiden in the city, and she was the most graceful dancer ever seen. She moved as a wave of the sea, or a cloud of the sky, or the wild bamboo grass in the wind. She had a sister eleven moons younger than she, who was called Aiyamé, or the Water Iris; and she was the second loveliest lady in Sendai. Aiko was white, but Aiyamé was brown, quick, and light, and laughing. When they went abroad in the streets of Sendai, folk said, "There go the moon and the south wind."

Upon an idle summer day when all the air was languid, and the cicala sang ceaselessly as he swung on the pomegranate bough, the maidens rested on the cool white mats of their lady mother's bower. Their dark locks were loose, and their slender feet were bare. They had between them an ancient chest of red lacquer, a Bride Box of their lady mother's, and in the chest they searched and rummaged for treasure.

"See, sister," said Aiyamé, "here are scarlet thongs, the very thing for my sandals... and what is this? A crystal rosary, I declare! How beautiful!"

Aiko said, "My mother, I pray you give me this length of violet silk, it will make me very fine undersleeves to my new grey gown; and, mother, let me have the crimson for a petticoat; and surely, mother, you do not need this little bit of brocade?"

"And what an *obi*," cried Aiyamé, as she dragged it from the chest, "grass green and silver!" Springing lightly up, she wound the length about her slender body. "Now behold me for the finest lady in all Sendai. Very envious shall be the daughter of the rich Hachiman, when she sees this wonder *obi*; but I shall be calm and careless, and say, looking down thus humbly, 'Your pardon, noble lady, that I wear this foolish trifling *obi*, unmeet for your great presence!' Mother, mother, give me the *obi*."

"Arah! Arah! Little pirates!" said the mother, and smiled.

Aiko thrust her hand to the bottom of the chest. "Here is something hard," she murmured, "a little casket wrapped in a silken handkerchief. How it smells of orris and ancient spices! — now what may it be?" So saying, she unwound the kerchief and opened the casket. “A golden comb!” she said, and laid it on her knee.

“Give it here, child,” cried the mother quickly; “it is not for your eyes.”

But the maiden sat quite still, her eyes upon the golden comb. It was of gold lacquer, very fine work, adorned with golden dragon-flies.

For a time the maiden said not a word, nor did her mother, though she was troubled; and even the light Lady of the South Wind seemed stricken into silence, and drew the scarlet sandal thongs through and through her fingers.

“Mother, what of this golden comb?” said Aiko at last.

“My sweet, it is the love-token between you and Konojo, the son of Saito, for you two were betrothed in your cradles. But now it is full fifteen years since Saito went from Sendai in the night, he and all his house, and left no trace behind.”

“Is my love dead?” said Aiko.

“Nay, that I know not — but he will never come; so, I beseech you, think no more of him, my pretty bird. There, get you your fan, and dance for me and for your sister.”

Aiko first set the golden comb in her hair. Then she flung open her fan to dance. She moved like a wave of the sea, or a cloud of the sky, or the wild bamboo grass in the wind. She had not danced long before she dropped the fan, with a long cry, and she herself fell her length upon the ground. From that hour she was in a piteous way, and lay in her bed sighing, like a maid lovelorn and forsaken. She could not eat nor sleep; she had no pleasure in life. The sunrise and the sound of rain at night were nothing to her any more. Not her father, nor her mother, nor her sister, the Lady of the South Wind, were able to give her any ease.

Presently she turned her face to the wall. “It is more than I can understand,” she said, and so died.

When they had prepared the poor young maid for her grave, her mother came, crying, to look at her for the last time. And she set the golden comb in the maid’s hair, saying:

“My own dear little child, I pray that in other lives you may know happiness. Therefore take your golden token with you; you will have need of it when you meet the wraith of your lover.” For she believed that Konojo was dead.

But, alas, for Karma that is so pitiless, one short moon had the maid been in her grave when the brave young man, her betrothed, came to claim her at her father’s house.

“Alas and alack, Konojo, the son of Saito, alas, my brave young man, too late you have come! Your joy is turned to mourning, for your bride lies under the green grass, and her sister goes weeping in the moonlight to pour the water of the dead.” Thus spoke Hasunuma the *samurai*.

“Lord,” said the brave young man, “there are three ways left, the sword, the strong girdle, and the river. These are the short roads to Yomi. Farewell.”

But Hasunuma held the young man by the arm. “Nay, then, thou son of Saito,” he said, “but hear the fourth way, which is far better. The road to Yomi is short, but it is very dark; moreover, from the confines of that country few return. Therefore stay with me, Konojo, and comfort me in my old age, for I have no sons.”

So Konojo entered the household of Hasunuma the *samurai*, and dwelt in the garden house by the gate.

Now in the third month Hasunuma and his wife and the daughter that was left them arose early and dressed them in garments of ceremony, and presently were borne away in *kago*, for to the temple they were bound, and to their ancestral tombs, where they offered prayers and incense the live-long day.

It was bright starlight when they returned, and cold the night was, still and frosty. Konojo stood and waited at the garden gate. He waited for their home-coming, as was meet. He drew his cloak about him and gave ear to the noises of the evening. He heard the sound of the blind man's whistle, and the blind man's staff upon the stones. Far off he heard a child laugh twice; then he heard men singing in chorus, as men who sing to cheer themselves in their labour, and in the pauses of song he heard the creak, creak of swinging *kago* that the men bore upon their shoulders, and he said, "They come."

I GO to the house of the Beloved,
Her plum tree stands by the eaves;
It is full of blossom.
The dew lies in the heart of the flowers,
So they are the drinking-cups of the sparrows.
How do you go to your love's house?
Even upon the wings of the night wind.
Which road leads to your love's house?
All the roads in the world.

THIS WAS the song of the *kago* men. First the *kago* of Hasunuma the *samurai* turned in at the garden gate, then followed his lady; last came Aiyamé of the South Wind. Upon the roof of her *kago* there lay a blossoming bough.

"Rest well, lady," said Konojo, as she passed, and had no answer back. Howbeit it seemed that some light thing dropped from the *kago*, and fell with a little noise to the ground. He stooped and picked up a woman's comb. It was of gold lacquer, very fine work, adorned with golden dragon-flies. Smooth and warm it lay in the hand of Konojo. And he went his way to the garden house. At the hour of the rat the young *samurai* threw down his book of verse, laid himself upon his bed, and blew out his light. And the selfsame moment he heard a wandering step without.

“And who may it be that visits the garden house by night?” said Konojo, and he wondered. About and about went the wandering feet till at length they stayed, and the door was touched with an uncertain hand.

“Konojo! Konojo!”

“What is it?” said the *samurai*.

“Open, open; I am afraid.”

“Who are you, and why are you afraid?”

“I am afraid of the night. I am the daughter of Hasunuma the *samurai*... Open to me for the love of the gods.”

Konojo undid the latch and slid back the door of the garden house to find a slender and drooping lady upon the threshold. He could not see her face, for she held her long sleeve so as to hide it from him; but she swayed and trembled, and her frail shoulders shook with sobbing.

“Let me in,” she moaned, and forthwith entered the garden house.

Half smiling and much perplexed, Konojo asked her:

“Are you Aiyamé, whom they call the Lady of the South Wind?”

“I am she.”

“Lady, you do me much honour.”

“The comb!” she said, “the golden comb!”

As she said this, she threw the veil from her face, and taking the robe of Konojo in both her little hands, she looked into his eyes as though she would draw forth his very soul. The lady was brown and quick and light. Her eyes and her lips were made for laughing, and passing strange she looked in the guise that she wore then.

“The comb!” she said, “the golden comb!”

“I have it here,” said Konojo; “only let go my robe, and I will fetch it you.”

At this the lady cast herself down upon the white mats in a passion of bitter tears, and Konojo, poor unfortunate, pressed his hands together, quite beside himself.

“What to do?” he said; “what to do?”

At last he raised the lady in his arms, and stroked her little hand to comfort her.

“Lord,” she said, as simply as a child, “lord, do you love me?”

And he answered her in a moment, “I love you more than many lives, O Lady of the South Wind.”

“Lord,” she said, “will you come with me then?”

He answered her, “Even to the land of Yomi,” and took her hand.

Forth they went into the night, and they took the road together. By riverside they went, and over plains of flowers; they went by rocky ways, or through the whispering pines, and when they had wandered far enough, of the green bamboos they built them a little house to dwell in. And they were there for a year of happy days and nights.

Now upon a morning of the third month Konojo beheld men with *kago* come swinging through the bamboo grove. And he said:

“What have they to do with us, these men and their *kago*?”

“Lord,” said Aiyamé, “they come to bear us to my father’s house.”

He cried, “What is this foolishness? We will not go.”

“Indeed, and we must go,” said the lady.

“Go you, then,” said Konojo; “as for me, I stay here where I am happy.”

“Ah, lord,” she said, “ah, my dear, do you then love me less, who vowed to go with me, even to the Land of Yomi?”

Then he did all that she would. And he broke a blossoming bough from a tree that grew near by and laid it upon the roof of her *kago*.

Swiftly, swiftly they were borne, and the *kago* men sang as they went, a song to make labour light.

I go to the house of the Beloved,
Her plum tree stands by the eaves;
It is full of blossom.
The dew lies in the heart of the flowers,
So they are the drinking-cups of the sparrows.
How do you go to your love's house?
Even upon the wings of the night wind.
Which road leads to your love's house?
All the roads in the world.

This was the song of the *kago* men.

About nightfall they came to the house of Hasunuma the *samurai*.

"Go you in, my dear lord," said the Lady of the South Wind. "I will wait without; if my father is very wroth with you, only show him the golden comb." And with that she took it from her hair and gave it him. Smooth and warm it lay in his hand. Then Konojo went into the house.

"Welcome, welcome home, Konojo, son of Saito!" cried Hasunuma. "How has it fared with your knightly adventure?"

"Knightly adventure!" said Konojo, and blushed.

"It is a year since your sudden departure, and we supposed that you had gone upon a quest, or in the expiation of some vow laid upon your soul."

"Alas, my good lord," said Konojo, "I have sinned against you and against your house." And he told Hasunuma what he had done.

When he had made an end of his tale:

“Boy,” said the *samurai*, “you jest, but your merry jest is ill-timed. Know that my child lies even as one dead. For a year she has neither risen nor spoken nor smiled. She is visited by a heavy sickness and none can heal her.”

“Sir,” said Konojo, “your child, the Lady of the South Wind, waits in a *kago* without your garden wall. I will fetch her in presently.”

Forth they went together, the young man and the *samurai*, but they found no *kago* without the garden wall, no *kago*-bearers and no lady. Only a broken bough of withered blossom lay upon the ground.

“Indeed, indeed, she was here but now!” cried Konojo. “She gave me her comb — her golden comb. See, my lord, here it is.”

“What comb is this, Konojo? Where got you this comb that was set in a dead maid’s hair, and buried with her beneath the green grass? Where got you the comb of Aiko, the Lady of the Moon, that died for love? Speak, Konojo, son of Saito. This is a strange thing.”

Now whilst Konojo stood amazed, and leaned silent and bewildered against the garden wall, a lady came lightly through the trees. She moved as a wave of the sea, or a cloud of the sky, or the wild bamboo grass in the wind.

“Aiyamé,” cried the *samurai*, “how are you able to leave your bed?”

The young man said nothing, but fell on his knees beside the garden wall. There the lady came to him and bent so that her hair and her garments overshadowed him, and her eyes held his.

“Lord,” she said, “I am the spirit of Aiko your love. I went with a broken heart to dwell with the shades of Yomi. The very dead took pity on my tears. I was permitted to return, and for one short year to inhabit the sweet body of my sister. And now my time is come. I go my ways to the grey country. I shall be the happiest soul in Yomi — I have known you, beloved. Now take me in your arms, for I grow very faint.”

With that she sank to the ground, and Konojo put his arms about her and laid her head against his heart. His tears fell upon her forehead.

“Promise me,” she said, “that you will take to wife Aiyamé, my sister, the Lady of the South Wind.”

“Ah,” he cried, “my lady and my love!”

“Promise, promise,” she said.

Then he promised.

After a little she stirred in his arms.

“What is it?” he said.

So soft her voice that it did not break the silence but floated upon it.

“The comb,” she murmured, “the golden comb.”

And Konojo set it in her hair.

~

A BURDEN, pale but breathing, Konojo carried into the house of Hasunuma and laid upon the white mats and silken cushions. And after three hours a young maid sat up and rubbed her sleepy eyes. She was brown and quick and light and laughing. Her hair was tumbled about her rosy cheeks, unconfined by any braid or comb. She stared first at her father, and then at the young man that was in her bower. She smiled, then flushed, and put her little hands before her face.

“Greeting, O Lady of the South Wind,” said Konojo.

26

THE JELLY-FISH TAKES A JOURNEY

Once upon a time the jelly-fish was a very handsome fellow. His form was beautiful, and round as the full moon. He had glittering scales and fins and a tail as other fishes have, but he had more than these. He had little feet as well, so that he could walk upon the land as well as swim in the sea. He was merry and he was gay, he was beloved and trusted of the Dragon King. In spite of all this, his grandmother always said he would come to a bad end, because he would not mind his books at school. She was right. It all came about in this wise.

The Dragon King was but lately wed when the young Lady Dragon his wife fell very sick. She took to her bed and stayed there, and wise folk in Dragonland shook their heads and said her last day was at hand. Doctors came from far and near, and they dosed her and they bled her, but no good at all could they do her, the poor young thing, nor recover her of her sickness.

The Dragon King was beside himself.

“Heart’s Desire,” he said to his pale bride, “I would give my life for you.”

“Little good would it do me,” she answered. “Howbeit, if you will fetch me a monkey’s liver I will eat it and live.”

“A monkey’s liver!” cried the Dragon King. “A monkey’s liver! You talk wildly, O light of mine eyes. How shall I find a monkey’s liver? Know you not, sweet one, that monkeys dwell in the trees of the forest, whilst we are in the deep sea?”

Tears ran down the Dragon Queen’s lovely countenance.

“If I do not have the monkey’s liver, I shall die,” she said.

Then the Dragon went forth and called to him the jelly-fish.

“The Queen must have a monkey’s liver,” he said, “to cure her of her sickness.”

“What will she do with the monkey’s liver?” asked the jelly-fish.

“Why, she will eat it,” said the Dragon King.

“Oh!” said the jelly-fish.

“Now,” said the King, “you must go and fetch me a live monkey. I have heard that they dwell in the tall trees of the forest. Therefore swim quickly, O jelly-fish, and bring a monkey with you back again.”

“How will I get the monkey to come back with me?” said the jelly-fish.

“Tell him of all the beauties and pleasures of Dragonland. Tell him he will be happy here and that he may play with mermaids all the day long.”

“Well,” said the jelly-fish, “I’ll tell him that.”

Off set the jelly-fish; and he swam and he swam, till at last he reached the shore where grew the tall trees of the forest. And, sure enough, there was a monkey sitting in the branches of a persimmon tree, eating persimmons.

“The very thing,” said the jelly-fish to himself; “I’m in luck.”

“Noble monkey,” he said, “will you come to Dragonland with me?”

“How should I get there?” said the monkey.

“Only sit on my back,” said the jelly-fish, “and I’ll take you there; you’ll have no trouble at all.”

“Why should I go there, after all?” said the monkey. “I am very well off as I am.”

"Ah," said the jelly-fish, "it's plain that you know little of all the beauties and pleasures of Dragonland. There you will be happy as the day is long. You will win great riches and honour. Besides, you may play with the mermaids from morn till eve."

"I'll come," said the monkey.

And he slipped down from the persimmon tree and jumped on the jelly-fish's back.

When the two of them were about half-way over to Dragonland, the jelly-fish laughed.

"Now, jelly-fish, why do you laugh?"

"I laugh for joy," said the jelly-fish. "When you come to Dragonland, my master, the Dragon King, will get your liver, and give it to my mistress the Dragon Queen to eat, and then she will recover from her sickness."

"My liver?" said the monkey.

"Why, of course," said the jelly-fish.

"Alas and alack," cried the monkey, "I'm grieved indeed, but if it's my liver you're wanting I haven't it with me. To tell you the truth, it weighs pretty heavy, so I just took it out and hung it upon a branch of that persimmon tree where you found me. Quick, quick, let's go back for it."

Back they went, and the monkey was up in the persimmon tree in a twinkling.

"Mercy me, I don't see it at all," he said. "Where can I have mislaid it? I should not be surprised if some rascal has stolen it," he said.

Now if the jelly-fish had minded his books at school, would he have been hoodwinked by the monkey? You may believe not. But his grandmother always said he would come to a bad end.

"I shall be some time finding it," said the monkey. "You'd best be getting home to Dragonland. The King would be loath for you to be out after dark. You can call for me another day. *Sayonara.*"

The monkey and the jelly-fish parted on the best of terms.

The minute the Dragon King set eyes on the jelly-fish, “Where’s the monkey?” he said.

“I’m to call for him another day,” said the jelly-fish. And he told all the tale.

The Dragon King flew into a towering rage. He called his executioners and bid them beat the jelly-fish.

“Break every bone in his body,” he cried; “beat him to a jelly.”

Alas for the sad fate of the jelly-fish! Jelly he remains to this very day.

As for the young Dragon Queen, she was fain to laugh when she heard the story.

“If I can’t have a monkey’s liver I must needs do without it,” she said. “Give me my best brocade gown and I will get up, for I feel a good deal better.”

27

URASHIMA

Urashima was a fisherman of the Inland Sea.

Every night he plied his trade. He caught fishes both great and small, being upon the sea through the long hours of darkness. Thus he made his living.

Upon a certain night the moon shone brightly, making plain the paths of the sea. And Urashima kneeled in his boat and dabbled his right hand in the green water. Low he leaned, till his hair lay spread upon the waves, and he paid no heed to his boat that listed or to his trailing fishing-net. He drifted in his boat till he came to a haunted place. And he was neither waking nor sleeping, for the moon made him mad.

Then the Daughter of the Deep Sea arose, and she took the fisherman in her arms, and sank with him, down, down, to her cold sea cave. She laid him upon a sandy bed, and long did she look upon him. She cast her sea spell upon him, and sang her sea songs to him and held his eyes with hers.

He said, “Who are you, lady?”

She told him, “The Daughter of the Deep Sea.”

“Let me go home,” he said; “my little children wait and are tired.”

“Nay, rather stay with me,” she said:

Urashima,
Thou Fisherman of the Inland Sea,
Thou art beautiful;
Thy long hair is twisted round my heart;
Go not from me,
Only forget thy home.

“Ah, now,” said the fisherman, “let be, for the dear gods’ sake... I would go to mine own.”

But she said again:

Urashima,
Thou Fisherman of the Inland Sea,
I’ll set thy couch with pearl;
I’ll spread thy couch with seaweed and sea flowers;
Thou shalt be King of the Deep Sea,
And we will reign together.

“Let me go home,” said Urashima; “my little children wait and are tired.”

But she said:

Urashima:
Thou Fisherman of the Inland Sea,
Never be afraid of the Deep Sea tempest;
We will roll rocks about our cavern doors;
Neither be afraid of the drowned dead;

Thou shalt not die.

“Ah, now,” said the fisherman, “let be, for the dear gods’ sake... I would go to mine own.”

“Stay with me this one night.”

“Nay, not one.”

Then the Daughter of the Deep Sea wept, and Urashima saw her tears.

“I will stay with you this one night,” he said.

So after the night was passed, she brought him up to the sand and the seashore.

“Are we near your home?” she said.

He told her, “Within a stone’s throw.”

“Take this,” she said, “in memory of me.” She gave him a casket of mother-of-pearl; it was rainbow-tinted and its clasps were of coral and of jade.

“Do not open it,” she said; “O fisherman, do not open it.” And with that she sank and was no more seen, the Daughter of the Deep Sea.

As for Urashima, he ran beneath the pine trees to come to his dear home. And as he went he laughed for joy. And he tossed up the casket to catch the sun.

“Ah, me,” he said, “the sweet scent of the pines!” So he went calling to his children with a call that he had taught them, like a sea-bird’s note. Soon he said, “Are they yet asleep? It is strange they do not answer me.”

Now when he came to his house he found four lonely walls, moss-grown. Nightshade flourished on the threshold, death lilies by the hearth, dianthus and lady fern. No living soul was there.

“Now what is this?” cried Urashima. “Have I lost my wits? Have I left my eyes in the deep sea?”

He sat down upon the grassy floor and thought long. “The dear gods help me!” he said. “Where is my wife, and where are my little children?”

He went to the village, where he knew the stones in the way, and every tiled and tilted eave was to him most familiar; and here he found folk walking to and fro, going upon their business. But they were all strange to him.

“Good morrow,” they said, “good morrow, wayfarer. Do you tarry in our town?”

He saw children at their play, and often he put his hand beneath their chins to turn their faces up. Alas! he did it all in vain.

“Where are my little children,” he said, “O Lady Kwannon the Merciful? Peradventure the gods know the meaning of all this; it is too much for me.”

When sunset came, his heart was heavy as stone, and he went and stood at the parting of the ways outside the town. As men passed by he pulled them by the sleeve:

“Friend,” he said, “I ask your pardon, did you know a fisherman of this place called Urashima?”

And the men that passed by answered him, “We never heard of such an one.”

There passed by the peasant people from the mountains. Some went a-foot, some rode on patient pack-horses. They went singing their country songs, and they carried baskets of wild strawberries or sheaves of lilies bound upon their backs. And the lilies nodded as they went. Pilgrims passed by, all clad in white, with staves and rice-straw hats, sandals fast bound and gourds of water. Swiftly they went, softly they went, thinking of holy things. And lords and ladies passed by, in brave attire and great array, borne in their gilded *kago*. The night fell.

“I lose sweet hope,” said Urashima.

But there passed by an old, old man.

“Oh, old, old man,” cried the fisherman, “you have seen many days; know you ought of Urashima? In this place was he born and bred.”

Then the old man said, “There was one of that name, but, sir, that one was drowned long years ago. My grandfather could scarce remember him in the time that I was a little boy. Good stranger, it was many, many years ago.”

Urashima said, “He is dead?”

“No man more dead than he. His sons are dead and their sons are dead. Good even to you, stranger.”

Then Urashima was afraid. But he said, “I must go to the green valley where the dead sleep.” And to the valley he took his way.

He said, “How chill the night wind blows through the grass! The trees shiver and the leaves turn their pale backs to me.”

He said, “Hail, sad moon, that showest me all the quiet graves. Thou art nothing different from the moon of old.”

He said, “Here are my sons’ graves and their sons’ graves. Poor Urashima, there is no man more dead than he. Yet am I lonely among the ghosts...”

“Who will comfort me?” said Urashima.

The night wind sighed and nothing more.

Then he went back to the seashore. “Who will comfort me?” cried Urashima. But the sky was unmoved, and the mountain waves of the sea rolled on.

Urashima said, “There is the casket.” And he took it from his sleeve and opened it. There rose from it a faint white smoke that floated away and out to the far horizon.

“I grow very weary,” said Urashima. In a moment his hair turned as white as snow. He trembled, his body shrank, his eyes grew dim. He that had been so young and lusty swayed and tottered where he stood.

“I am old,” said Urashima.

He made to shut the casket lid, but dropped it, saying, “Nay, the vapour of smoke is gone for ever. What matters it?”

He laid down his length upon the sand and died.

28

TAMAMO, THE FOX MAIDEN

A pedlar journeyed with his pack upon the great high-road which leads to the city of Kioto. He found a child sitting all alone by the wayside.

“Well, my little girl,” he said, “and what make you all alone by the wayside?”

“What do you,” said the child, “with a staff and a pack, and sandals outworn?”

“I am bound for Kioto, and the Mikado’s Palace, to sell my gauds to the ladies of the Court.”

“Ah,” said the child, “take me too.”

“What is your name, my little girl?”

“I have no name.”

“Whence come you?”

“I come from nowhere.”

“You seem to be about seven years old.”

“I have no age.”

“Why are you here?”

“I have been waiting for you.”

“How long have you waited?”

“For more than a hundred years.”

The Pedlar laughed.

“Take me to Kioto,” said the child.

“You may come if you will,” said the Pedlar. So they went their ways together, and in time they came to Kioto and to the Mikado’s Palace. Here the child danced in the august presence of the Son of Heaven. She was as light as the sea-bird upon a wave’s crest. When she had made an end of dancing, the Mikado called her to him.

“Little maid,” he said, “what guerdon shall I give you? Ask!”

“O Divinely Descended,” said the child, “Son of the Gods... I cannot ask... I am afraid.”

“Ask without fear,” said the Mikado.

The child murmured, “Let me stay in the bright presence of your Augustness.”

“So be it,” said the Mikado, and he received the child into his household. And he called her Tamamo.

Very speedily she became mistress of every lovely art. She could sing, and she could play upon any instrument of music. She had more skill in painting than any painter in the land; she was a wonder with the needle and a wonder at the loom. The poetry that she made moved men to tears and to laughter. The many thousand characters were child’s play to her, and all the hard philosophies she had at her fingers’ ends. She knew Confucius well enough, the Scriptures of Buddha, and the lore of Cathay. She was called the Exquisite Perfection, the Gold Unalloyed, the Jewel without Flaw.

And the Mikado loved her.

Soon he clean forgot honour and duty and kingly state. Day and night he kept Tamamo by his side. He grew rough and fierce and passionate, so that his servants feared to approach him. He grew sick, listless, and languid, he pined, and his physicians could do nothing for him.

“Alas and alack,” they cried, “what ails the Divinely Descended? Of a surety he is bewitched. Woe! woe! for he will die upon our hands.”

“Out upon them, every one,” cried the Mikado, “for a pack of tedious fools. As for me, I will do my own will and pleasure.”

He was mad for love of Tamamo.

He took her to his Summer Palace, where he prepared a great feast in her honour. To the feast were bidden all the highest of the land, princes and lords and ladies of high estate; and, willy-nilly, to the Summer Palace they all repaired, where was the Mikado, wan and wild, and mad with love, and Tamamo by his side, attired in scarlet and cloth of gold. Radiantly fair she was, and she poured the Mikado’s *saké* out of a golden flagon.

He looked into her eyes.

“Other women are feeble toys beside you,” he said. “There’s not a woman here that’s fit to touch the end of your sleeve. O Tamamo, how I love you...”

He spoke loudly so that all could hear him, and laughed bitterly when he had spoken.

“My lord... my lord...” said Tamamo.

Now as the high company sat and feasted, the sky became overcast with black clouds, and the moon and the stars were hid. Suddenly a fearful wind tore through the Summer Palace and put out every torch in the great Hall of Feasting. And the rain came down in torrents. In the pitchy darkness fear and horror fell upon the assembly. The courtiers ran to and fro in a panic, the air was full of cries, the tables were overturned. The dishes and drinking-vessels crashed together, the *saké* spilled and soaked into the white mats. Then a radiance was made visible. It came from the place where Tamamo was, and it streamed in long flames of fire from her body.

The Mikado cried aloud in a terrible voice, “Tamamo! Tamamo! Tamamo!” three times. And when he had done this he fell in a deathly swoon upon the ground.

And for many days he was thus, and he seemed either asleep or dead, and no one could recover him from his swoon.

Then the Wise and Holy Men of the land met together, and when they had prayed to the gods, they called to them Abé Yasu, the Diviner. They said:

"O Abé Yasu, learned in dark things, find out for us the cause, and if it may be, the cure, of our Lord's strange sickness. Perform divination for us, O Abé Yasu."

Then Abé Yasu performed divination, and he came before the Wise Men and said:

The wine is sweet, but the aftertaste is bitter.
Set not your teeth in the golden persimmon,
It is rotten at the core.
Fair is the scarlet flower of the Death Lily,
Pluck it not.
What is beauty?
What is wisdom?
What is love?
Be not deceived. They are threads in the fabric of illusion!

Then the Wise Men said, "Speak out, Abé Yasu, for your saying is dark, and we cannot understand it."

"I will do more than speak," said Abé Yasu. And he spent three days in fasting and in prayer. Then he took the sacred *Gohei* from its place in the Temple, and calling the Wise Men to him he waved the sacred *Gohei* and with it touched each one of them. And together they went to Tamamo's bower, and Abé Yasu took the sacred *Gohei* in his right hand.

Tamamo was in her bower adorning herself, and her maidens were with her.

“My lords,” she said, “you come all unbidden. What would you have with me?”

“My lady Tamamo,” said Abé Yasu the Diviner, “I have made a song after the fashion of the Chinese. You who are learned in poetry, I pray you hear and judge my song.”

“I am in no mood for songs,” she said, “with my dear lord lying sick to death.”

“Nevertheless, my lady Tamamo, this song of mine you needs must hear.”

“Why, then, if I must...” she said.

Then spoke Abé Yasu:

The wine is sweet, the aftertaste is bitter.
Set not your teeth in the golden persimmon,
It is rotten at the core.
Fair is the scarlet flower of the Death Lily,
Pluck it not.
What is beauty?
What is wisdom?
What is love?
Be not deceived. They are threads in the fabric of illusion!

When Abé Yasu the Diviner had spoken, he came to Tamamo and he touched her with the sacred *Gohei*.

She gave a loud and terrible cry, and on the instant her form was changed into that of a great fox having nine long tails and hair like golden wire. The fox fled from Tamamo’s bower, away and away, until it reached the far plain of Nasu, and it hid itself beneath a great black stone that was upon that plain.

But the Mikado was immediately recovered from his sickness.

Soon, strange and terrible things were told concerning the great stone of Nasu. A stream of poisonous water flowed from under it and withered the bright flowers of the plain. All who drank of the stream died, both man and beast. Moreover, nothing could go near the stone and live. The traveller who rested in its shadow arose no more, and the birds that perched upon it fell dead in a moment. People named it the Death Stone, and thus it was called for more than a hundred years.

Then it chanced that Genyo, the High Priest, who was a holy man indeed, took his staff and his begging bowl and went upon a pilgrimage.

When he came to Nasu, the dwellers upon the plain put rice into his bowl.

“O thou Holy Man,” they said, “beware the Death Stone of Nasu. Rest not in its shade.”

But Genyo, the High Priest, having remained a while in thought, made answer thus:

“Know, my children, what is written in the Book of the Good Law: ‘Herbs, trees and rocks shall all enter into Nirvana.’”

With that he took his way to the Death Stone. He burnt incense, he struck the stone with his staff, and he cried, “Come forth, Spirit of the Death Stone; come forth, I conjure thee.”

Then there was a great flame of fire and a rending noise, and the Stone burst and split in sunder. From the stone and from the fire there came a woman.

She stood before the Holy Man. She said:

I AM TAMAMO, once called the Proud Perfection;

I am the golden-haired Fox;
I know the Sorceries of the East;
I was worshipped by the Princes of Ind;
I was great Cathay's undoing;
I was wise and beautiful,
Evil incarnate.
The power of the Buddha has changed me;
I have dwelt in grief for a hundred years;
Tears have washed away my beauty and my sin.
Shrive me, Genyo, shrive me, Holy Man;
Let me have peace.

"Poor Spirit," said Genyo. "Take my staff and my priestly robe and my begging bowl and set forth upon the long journey of repentance."

Tamamo took the priestly robe and put it upon her; in one hand she took the staff, in the other the bowl. And when she had done this, she vanished for ever from the sight of earthly men.

"O thou, Tathagatha," said Genyo, "and thou, Kwannon, Merciful Lady, make it possible that one day even she may attain Nirvana."

29

MOMOTARO

If you'll believe me there was a time when the fairies were none so shy as they are now. That was the time when beasts talked to men, when there were spells and enchantments and magic every day, when there was great store of hidden treasure to be dug up, and adventures for the asking.

At that time, you must know, an old man and an old woman lived alone by themselves. They were good and they were poor and they had no children at all.

One fine day, "What are you doing this morning, good man?" says the old woman.

"Oh," says the old man, "I'm off to the mountains with my billhook to gather a faggot of sticks for our fire. And what are you doing, good wife?"

"Oh," says the old woman, "I'm off to the stream to wash clothes. It's my washing day," she adds.

So the old man went to the mountains and the old woman went to the stream.

Now, while she was washing the clothes, what should she see but a fine ripe peach that came floating down the stream? The peach was big enough, and rosy red on both sides.

"I'm in luck this morning," said the dame, and she pulled the peach to shore with a split bamboo stick.

By-and-by, when her good man came home from the hills, she set the peach before him. "Eat, good man," she said; "this is a lucky peach I found in the stream and brought home for you."

But the old man never got a taste of the peach. And why did he not?

All of a sudden the peach burst in two and there was no stone to it, but a fine boy baby where the stone should have been.

"Mercy me!" says the old woman.

"Mercy me!" says the old man.

The boy baby first ate up one half of the peach and then he ate up the other half. When he had done this he was finer and stronger than ever.

"Momotaro! Momotaro!" cries the old man; "the eldest son of the peach."

"Truth it is indeed," says the old woman; "he was born in a peach."

Both of them took such good care of Momotaro that soon he was the stoutest and bravest boy of all that country-side. He was a credit to them, you may believe. The neighbours nodded their heads and they said, "Momotaro is the fine young man!"

"Mother," says Momotaro one day to the old woman, "make me a good store of *kimi-dango*" (which is the way that they call millet dumplings in those parts).

"What for do you want *kimi-dango*?" says his mother.

"Why," says Momotaro, "I'm going on a journey, or as you may say, an adventure, and I shall be needing the *kimi-dango* on the way."

"Where are you going, Momotaro?" says his mother.

"I'm off to the Ogres' Island," says Momotaro, "to get their treasure, and I should be obliged if you'd let me have the *kimi-dango* as soon as may be," he says.

So they made him the *kimi-dango*, and he put them in a wallet, and he tied the wallet to his girdle and off he set.

"*Sayonara*, and good luck to you, Momotaro!" cried the old man and the old woman.

"Sayonara! Sayonara!" cried Momotaro.

He hadn't gone far when he fell in with a monkey.

"Kia! Kia!" says the monkey. "Where are you off to, Momotaro?"

Says Momotaro, "I'm off to the Ogres' Island for an adventure."

"What have you got in the wallet hanging at your girdle?"

"Now you're asking me something," says Momotaro; "sure, I've some of the best millet dumplings in all Japan."

"Give me one," says the monkey, "and I will go with you."

So Momotaro gave a millet dumpling to the monkey, and the two of them jogged on together. They hadn't gone far when they fell in with a pheasant.

"Ken! Ken!" said the pheasant. "Where are you off to, Momotaro?"

Says Momotaro, "I'm off to the Ogres' Island for an adventure."

"What have you got in your wallet, Momotaro?"

"I've got some of the best millet dumplings in all Japan."

"Give me one," says the pheasant, "and I will go with you."

So Momotaro gave a millet dumpling to the pheasant, and the three of them jogged on together.

They hadn't gone far when they fell in with a dog.

"Bow! Wow! Wow!" says the dog. "Where are you off to, Momotaro?"

Says Momotaro, "I'm off to the Ogres' Island."

"What have you got in your wallet, Momotaro?"

"I've got some of the best millet dumplings in all Japan."

"Give me one," says the dog, "and I will go with you."

So Momotaro gave a millet dumpling to the dog, and the four of them jogged on together. By-and-by they came to the Ogres' Island.

“Now, brothers,” says Momotaro, “listen to my plan. The pheasant must fly over the castle gate and peck the Ogres. The monkey must climb over the castle wall and pinch the Ogres. The dog and I will break the bolts and bars. He will bite the Ogres, and I will fight the Ogres.”

Then there was the great battle.

The pheasant flew over the castle gate: “Ken! Ken! Ken!”

Momotaro broke the bolts and bars, and the dog leapt into the castle courtyard. “Bow! Wow! Wow!”

The brave companions fought till sundown and overcame the Ogres. Those that were left alive they took prisoners and bound with cords — a wicked lot they were.

“Now, brothers,” says Momotaro, “bring out the Ogres’ treasure.”

So they did.

The treasure was worth having, indeed. There were magic jewels there, and caps and coats to make you invisible. There was gold and silver, and jade and coral, and amber and tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl.

“Here’s riches for all,” says Momotaro. “Choose, brothers, and take your fill.”

“Kia! Kia!” says the monkey. “Thanks, my Lord Momotaro.”

“Ken! Ken!” says the pheasant. “Thanks, my Lord Momotaro.”

“Bow! Wow! Wow!” says the dog. “Thanks, my dear Lord Momotaro.”

30

THE MATSUYAMA MIRROR

A long, long time ago there lived in a quiet spot a young man and his wife. They had one child, a little daughter, whom they both loved with all their hearts. I cannot tell you their names, for they have long since been forgotten; but the name of the place where they lived was Matsuyama, in the Province of Echigo.

It happened once, while the little girl was still a baby, that the father was obliged to go to the great city, the capital of Japan, upon some business. It was too far for the mother and her little baby to go, so he set out alone, after bidding them goodbye and promising to bring them home some pretty present.

The mother had never been farther from home than the next village, and she could not help being a little frightened at the thought of her husband taking such a long journey; and yet she was a little proud too, for he was the first man in all that country-side who had been to the big town where the king and his great lords lived, and where there were so many beautiful and curious things to be seen.

At last the time came when she might expect her husband back, so she dressed the baby in its best clothes, and herself put on a pretty blue dress which she knew her husband liked.

You may fancy how glad this good wife was to see him come home safe and sound, and how the little girl clapped her hands, and laughed with delight when she saw the pretty toys her father had brought for her. He had much to tell of all the wonderful things he had seen upon the journey, and in the town itself.

"I have brought you a very pretty thing," said he to his wife; "it is called a mirror. Look and tell me what you see inside." He gave to her a plain white wooden box, in which, when she had opened it, she found a round piece of metal. One side was white, like frosted silver, and ornamented with raised figures of birds and flowers; the other was bright as the clearest crystal. Into it the young mother looked with delight and astonishment, for, from its depths was looking at her with parted lips and bright eyes, a smiling happy face.

"What do you see?" again asked the husband, pleased at her astonishment and glad to show that he had learned something while he had been away.

"I see a pretty woman looking at me, and she moves her lips as if she was speaking, and — dear me, how odd, she has on a blue dress just like mine!"

"Why, you silly woman, it is your own face that you see!" said the husband, proud of knowing something that his wife didn't know. "That round piece of metal is called a mirror. In the town everybody has one, although we have not seen them in this country-place before."

The wife was charmed with her present, and for a few days could not look into the mirror often enough; for you must remember that as this was the first time she had seen a mirror, so, of course, it was the first time she had ever seen the reflection of her own pretty face. But she considered such a wonderful thing far too precious for everyday use, and soon shut it up in its box again and put it away carefully among her most valued treasures.

Years passed on, and the husband and wife still lived happily. The joy of their life was their little daughter, who grew up the very image of her mother, and who was so dutiful and affectionate that everybody loved her. Mindful of her own little passing vanity on finding herself so lovely, the mother kept the mirror carefully hidden away, fearing that the use of it might breed a spirit of pride in her little girl.

She never spoke of it, and as for the father he had forgotten all about it. So it happened that the daughter grew up as simple as the mother had been, and knew nothing of her own good looks, or of the mirror which would have reflected them.

But by-and-by a terrible misfortune happened to this happy little family. The good, kind mother fell sick; and, although her daughter waited upon her, day and night, with loving care, she got worse and worse, until at last there was no doubt but that she must die.

When she found that she must so soon leave her husband and child, the poor woman felt very sorrowful, grieving for those she was going to leave behind, and most of all for her little daughter.

She called the girl to her and said, “My darling child, you know that I am very sick; soon I must die and leave your dear father and you alone. When I am gone, promise me that you will look into this mirror every night and every morning; there you will see me, and know that I am still watching over you.” With these words she took the mirror from its hiding-place and gave it to her daughter. The child promised, with many tears, and so the mother, seeming now calm and resigned, died a short time after.

Now this obedient and dutiful daughter never forgot her mother’s last request, but each morning and evening took the mirror from its hiding-place, and looked in it long and earnestly. There she saw the bright and smiling vision of her lost mother. Not pale and sickly as in her last days, but the beautiful young mother of long ago. To her at night she told the story of the trials and difficulties of the day; to her in the morning she looked for sympathy and encouragement in whatever might be in store for her.

So day by day she lived as in her mother’s sight, striving still to please her as she had done in her lifetime, and careful always to avoid whatever might pain or grieve her.

Her greatest joy was to be able to look in the mirror and say, “Mother, I have been to-day what you would have me to be.”

Seeing her look into the mirror every night and morning without fail, and seem to hold converse with it, her father at length asked her the reason of her strange behaviour. “Father,” she said, “I look in the mirror every day to see my dear mother and to talk with her.” Then she told him of her mother’s dying wish, and how she had never failed to fulfil it. Touched by so much simplicity, and such faithful, loving obedience, the father shed tears of pity and affection. Nor could he find it in his heart to tell the child that the image she saw in the mirror was but the reflection of her own sweet face, becoming by constant sympathy and association more and more like her dead mother’s day by day.

31

BROKEN IMAGES

Once there lived two brothers who were princes in the land.

The elder brother was a hunter. He loved the deep woods and the chase. He went from dawn to dark with his bow and his arrows. Swiftly he could run; he was strong and bright-eyed. The younger brother was a dreamer; his eyes were gentle. From dawn to dark he would sit with his book or with his thoughts. Sweetly could he sing of love, or of war, or of the green fields, and tell stories of the fairies and of the time of the gods.

Upon a fair day of summer the hunter betook himself very early to the woods, as was his wont. But the dreamer took his book in his hand, and, musing, he wandered by the stream’s side, where grew the yellow mimulus.

“It is the fairies’ money,” he said; “it will buy all the joys of fairyland!” So he went on his way, smiling.

And when he had continued for some time, he came to a holy shrine. And there led to the shrine a hundred steps, moss-grown and grey. Beside the steps were guardian lions, carved in stone. Behind the shrine was Fugi, the Mystic Mountain, white and beautiful, and all the lesser hills rose softly up like prayers.

“O peerless Fugi,” said the dreamer, “O passionless wonder mountain! To see thee is to hear sweet music without sound, the blessed harmony of silence.”

Then he climbed the steps, moss-grown and grey. And the lions that were carved in stone rose up and followed him, and they came with him to the inner gates of the shrine and stayed there.

In the shrine there was a hush of noonday. The smoke of incense curled and hung upon the air. Dimly shone the gold and the bronze, the lights and the mystic mirrors.

There was a sound of singing in the shrine, and turning, the dreamer saw a man who stood at his right hand. The man was taller than any child of earth. Moreover, his face shone with the glory of a youth that cannot pass away. He held a year-old child upon his arm and hushed it to sleep, singing a strange melody. When the babe fell asleep he was well pleased, and smiled.

“What babe is that?” said the dreamer.

“O dreamer, it is no babe, but a spirit.”

“Then, my lord, what are you?” said the dreamer.

“I am Jizo, who guards the souls of little children. It is most pitiful to hear their crying when they come to the sandy river-bed, the *Sai-no-kawara*. O dreamer, they come alone, as needs they must, wailing and wandering, stretching out their pretty hands. They have a task, which is to pile stones for a tower of prayer. But in the night come the *Oni* to throw down the towers and to scatter all the stones. So the children are made afraid, and their labour is lost.”

“What then, my lord Jizo?” said the dreamer.

“Why, then I come, for the Great One gives me leave. And I call ‘Come hither, wandering souls.’ And they fly to me that I may hide them in my long sleeves. I carry them in my arms and on my breast, where they lie light and cold, — as light and cold as the morning mist upon the mountains.”

When he had spoken, the year-old child stirred and murmured: so he rocked it, and wandered to and fro in the quiet temple court and hushed it as he went.

So the swift moments flew and the noontide passed away.

Presently there came to the shrine a lady most gentle and beautiful. Grey was her robe, and she had silver sandals on her feet. She said, “I am called The Merciful. For mankind’s dear sake, I have refused eternal peace. The Great One has given to me a thousand loving arms, arms of mercy. And my hands are full of gifts. O dreamer, when you dream your dreams you shall see me in my lotus boat when I sail upon the mystic mere.”

“Lady, Lady Kwannon...” said the dreamer.

Then came one clothed in blue, speaking with a sweet, deep, well-known voice.

“I am Benten, the Goddess of the Sea and the Goddess of Song. My dragons are about me and beneath my feet. See their green scales and their opal eyes. Greeting, O dreamer!”

After her there came a band of blooming boys, laughing and holding out their rosy arms. “We are the Sons of the Sea Goddess,” they said. “Come, dreamer, come to our cool caves.”

The God of Roads came, and his three messengers with him. Three apes were the three messengers. The first ape covered his eyes with his hands, for he could see no evil thing. The second ape covered his ears with his hands, for he could hear no evil thing. The third ape covered his mouth with his hands, for he could speak no evil thing. Then came She, the fearful woman who takes the clothes of the dead who are not able to pay their toll, so that they must stand shivering at the entrance of the mysterious Three Ways. They are unfortunate indeed.

And many and many a vision the dreamer saw in that enchanted shrine.

And dark night fell, with storm and tempest and the sound of rain upon the roof. Yet the dreamer never stirred. Suddenly there was a sound of hurrying feet without. A voice called loud, “My brother, my brother, my brother!...” In sprang the hunter through the golden temple doors.

“Where are you?” he cried, “my brother, my brother!” He had his swinging lantern in his hand and held it high, as he flung his long blown hair back over his shoulder. His face was bright with the rain upon it, his eyes were as keen as an eagle’s.

“O brother...” said the dreamer, and ran to meet him.

“Now the dear gods be thanked that I have you safe and sound,” said the hunter. “Half the night I have sought you, wandering in the forest and by the stream’s side. I was all to blame for leaving you... my little brother.” With that, he took his brother’s face between his two warm hands.

But the dreamer sighed, “I have been with the gods all night,” he said, “and I think I see them still. The place is holy.”

Then the hunter flashed his light upon the temple walls, upon the gilding and the bronze.

“I see no gods,” he said.

“What see you, brother?”

“I see a row of stones, broken images, grey, with moss-grown feet.”

“They are grey because they are sad, they are sad because they are forgotten,” said the dreamer.

But the hunter took him by the hand and led him into the night.

The dreamer said, “O brother, how sweet is the scent of the bean fields after the rain.”

“Now bind your sandals on,” said the hunter, “and I’ll run you a race to our home.”

32

THE TONGUE-CUT SPARROW

Once upon a time there was an old man who lived all alone. And there was an old woman who lived all alone. The old man was merry and kind and gentle, with a good word and a smile for all the world. The old woman was sour and sad, as cross a patch as could be found in all the country-side. She grumbled and growled for ever, and would not so much as pass the time of day with respectable folk.

The old man had a pet sparrow that he kept as the apple of his eye. The sparrow could talk and sing and dance and do all manner of tricks, and was very good company. So the old man found when he came home from his work at night. There would be the sparrow twittering on the doorstep, and “Welcome home, master,” he would say, his head on one side, as pert and pretty as you please.

One day the old man went off to cut wood in the mountains. The old woman, she stayed at home for it was her washing day. She made some good starch in a bowl and she put it outside her door to cool.

“It will be all ready when I want it,” she said to herself. But that’s just where she made a mistake. The little sparrow flew over the bamboo fence and lighted on the edge of the starch bowl. And he pecked at the starch with his little beak. He pecked and he pecked till all the starch was gone, and a good meal he made, to be sure.

Then out came the old woman for the starch to starch her clothes.

You may believe she was angry. She caught the little sparrow roughly in her hand, and, alas and alack! she took a sharp, sharp scissors and cut his little tongue. Then she let him go.

Away and away flew the little sparrow, over hill and over dale.

“And a good riddance, too!” said the cruel old woman.

When the old man came home from the mountains he found his pet sparrow gone. And before long he knew all the tale. He lost no time, the good old man; he set out at once on foot, calling “Sparrow, sparrow, where are you, my tongue-cut sparrow?”

Over hill and over dale he went, calling “Sparrow, sparrow, where are you, my tongue-cut sparrow?”

At last and at length he came to the sparrow’s house, and the sparrow flew out to greet his master. Then there was a twittering, to be sure. The sparrow called his brothers and sisters and his children and his wife and his mother-in-law and his mother and his grandmother. And they all flew out to do the old man honour. They brought him into the house and they set him down upon mats of silk. Then they spread a great feast; red rice and *daikon* and fish, and who knows what all besides, and the very best *saké* to drink. The sparrow waited upon the good old man, and his brothers and sisters and his children and his wife and his mother-in-law and his mother and his grandmother with him.

After supper the sparrow danced, whilst his grandmother played the *samisen* and the good old man beat time.

It was a merry evening.

At last, “All good things come to an end,” says the old man; “I fear ’tis late and high time I was getting home.”

“Not without a little present,” says the sparrow.

“Ah, sparrow dear,” says the old man, “I’d sooner have yourself than any present.”

But the sparrow shook his head.

Presently they brought in two wicker baskets.

“One of them is heavy,” says the sparrow, “and the other is light. Say, master, will you take the heavy basket or the light?”

“I’m not so young as I once was,” says the good old man. “Thanking you kindly, I’d sooner have the light basket; it will suit me better to carry — that is, if it’s the same to you,” he says.

So he went home with the light basket. When he opened it, wonderful to tell, it was full of gold and silver and tortoise-shell and coral and jade and fine rolls of silk. So the good old man was rich for life.

Now, when the bad old woman heard tell of all this, she tied on her sandals and kilted her skirts and took a stout stick in her hand. Over hill and over dale she went, and took the straight road to the sparrow’s house. There was the sparrow, and there were his brothers and sisters and children and his wife and his mother and his mother-in-law and his grandmother. They were not too pleased to see the bad old woman, but they couldn’t do less than ask her in as she’d come so far. They gave her red rice and white rice and *daikon* and fish, and who knows what besides, and she gobbled it up in a twinkling, and drank a good cup of *saké*. Then up she got. “I can’t waste any more time here,” she says, “so you’d best bring out your presents.”

They brought in two wicker baskets.

“One of them is heavy,” says the sparrow, “and the other is light. Say, mistress, will you take the heavy basket or the light?”

“I’ll take the heavy one,” says the old woman, quick as a thought. So she heaved it up on her back and off she set. Sure enough it was as heavy as lead.

When she was gone, Lord! how the sparrows did laugh!

No sooner did she reach home than she undid the cords of the basket.

“Now for the gold and silver,” she said, and smiled — though she hadn’t smiled for a twelve-month. And she lifted up the lid.

“Ai! Ai! Kowai! Obaké da! Obaké!” she screeched.

The basket was full of ugly imps and elves and pixies and demons and devils. Out they came to tease the old woman, to pull her and to poke her, to push her and to pinch her. She had the fine fright of her life, I warrant you.

33

THE NURSE

Idé the *samurai* was wedded to a fair wife and had an only child, a boy called Fugiwaka. Idé was a mighty man of war, and as often as not he was away from home upon the business of his liege lord. So the child Fugiwaka was reared by his mother and by the faithful woman, his nurse. Matsu was her name, which is, in the speech of the country, the Pine Tree. And even as the pine tree, strong and evergreen, was she, unchanging and enduring.

In the house of Idé there was a very precious sword. Aforetime a hero of Idé's clan slew eight-and-forty of his enemies with this sword in one battle. The sword was Idé's most sacred treasure. He kept it laid away in a safe place with his household gods.

Morning and evening the child Fugiwaka came to make salutations before the household gods, and to reverence the glorious memory of his ancestors. And Matsu, the nurse, knelt by his side.

Morning and evening, "Show me the sword, O Matsu, my nurse," said Fugiwaka.

And O Matsu made answer, "Of a surety, my lord, I will show it to you."

Then she brought the sword from its place, wrapped in a covering of red and gold brocade. And she drew off the covering and she took the sword from its golden sheath and displayed the bright steel to Fugiwaka. And the child made obeisance till his forehead touched the mats.

At bedtime O Matsu sang songs and lullabies. She sang this song:

Sleep, my little child, sweetly sleep —
Would you know the secret,
The secret of the hare o Nennin Yama?
Sleep, my little child, sweetly sleep —
You shall know the secret.
Oh, the august hare of Nennin Yama,
How augustly long are his ears!
Why should this be, oh, best beloved?
You shall know the secret.
His mother ate the bamboo seed.
Hush! Hush!
His mother ate the loquat seed.
Hush! Hush!
Sleep, my little child, sweetly sleep —
Now you know the secret.

Then O Matsu said, “Will you sleep now, my lord Fugiwaka?”

And the child answered, “I will sleep now, O Matsu.”

“Listen, my lord,” she said, “and, sleeping or waking, remember. The sword is your treasure. The sword is your trust. The sword is your fortune. Cherish it, guard it, keep it.”

“Sleeping or waking, I will remember,” said Fugiwaka.

Now in an evil day the mother of Fugiwaka fell sick and died. And there was mourning in the house of Idé. Howbeit, when years were past, the *samurai* took another bride, and he had a son by her and called him Goro. And after this Idé himself was slain in an ambush, and his retainers brought his body home and laid him with his fathers.

Fugiwaka was chief of the House of Idé. But the Lady Sadako, his stepmother, was ill-pleased. Black mischief stirred in her heart; she bent her brows and she brooded as she went her ways, bearing her babe in her arms. At night she tossed upon her bed.

“My child is a beggar,” she said. “Fugiwaka is chief of the House of Idé. Evil fortune betide him! It is too much,” said the proud lady. “I will not brook it; my child a beggar! I would rather strangle him with my hands...” Thus she spoke and tossed upon her bed, thinking of a plan.

When Fugiwaka was fifteen years old she turned him out of the house with a poor garment upon his back, barefooted, with never a bite nor a sup nor a gold piece to see him on his way.

“Ah, lady mother,” he said, “you use me ill. Why do you take my birthright?”

“I know nought of birthrights,” she said. “Go, make your own fortune if you can. Your brother Goro is chief of the House of Idé.”

With that she bade them shut the door in his face.

Fugiwaka departed sorrowfully, and at the cross-roads O Matsu, his nurse, met him. She had made herself ready for a journey: her robe was kilted, she had a staff in her hand and sandals on her feet.

“My lord,” she said, “I am come to follow you to the world’s end.”

Then Fugiwaka wept and laid his head upon the woman’s breast.

“Ah,” he said, “my nurse, my nurse! And,” he said, “what of my father’s sword? I have lost the precious sword of Idé. The sword is my treasure, the sword is my trust, the sword is my fortune. I am bound to cherish it, to guard it, to keep it. But now I have lost it. Woe is me! I am undone, and so is all the House of Idé!”

"Oh, say not so, my lord," said O Matsu. "Here is gold; go you your way and I will return and guard the sword of Idé."

So Fugiwaka went his way with the gold that his nurse gave him.

As for O Matsu, she went straightway and took the sword from its place where it lay with the household gods, and she buried it deep in the ground until such time as she might bear it in safety to her young lord.

But soon the Lady Sadako became aware that the sacred sword was gone.

"It is the nurse!" she cried. "The nurse has stolen it... Some of you bring her to me."

Then the Lady Sadako's people laid their hands roughly upon O Matsu and brought her before their mistress. But for all they could do O Matsu's lips were sealed. She spoke never a word, neither could the Lady Sadako find out where the sword was. She pressed her thin lips together.

"The woman is obstinate," she said. "No matter; for such a fault I know the sovereign cure."

So she locked O Matsu in a dark dungeon and gave her neither food nor drink. Every day the Lady Sadako went to the door of the dark dungeon.

"Well," she said, "where is the sword of Idé? Will you say?"

But O Matsu answered not a word.

Howbeit she wept and sighed to herself in the darkness — "Alas! Alas! never alive may I come to my young lord. Yet he must have the sword of Idé, and I shall find a way."

Now after seven days the Lady Sadako sat in the garden-house to cool herself, for it was summer. The time was evening. Presently she saw a woman that came towards her through the garden flowers and trees. Frail and slender was the woman; as she came her body swayed and her slow steps faltered.

"Why, this is strange!" said the Lady Sadako. "Here is O Matsu, that was locked in the dark dungeon." And she sat still, watching.

But O Matsu went to the place where she had buried the sword and scratched at the ground with her fingers. There she was, weeping and moaning and dragging at the earth. The stones cut her hands and they bled. Still she tore away the earth and found the sword at last. It was in its wrapping of gold and scarlet, and she clasped it to her bosom with a loud cry.

“Woman, I have you now,” shrieked the Lady Sadako, “and the sword of Idé as well!” And she leaped from the garden-house and ran at full speed. She stretched forth her hand to catch O Matsu by the sleeve, but did not have her or the sword either, for both of them were gone in a flash, and the lady beat the empty air. Swiftly she sped to the dark dungeon, and as she went she called her people to bring torches. There lay the body of poor O Matsu, cold and dead upon the dungeon floor.

“Send me the Wise Woman,” said the Lady Sadako.

So they sent for the Wise Woman. And the Lady Sadako asked, “How long has she been dead?”

The Wise Woman said, “She was starved to death; she has been dead two days. It were well you gave her fit burial; she was a good soul.”

As for the sword of Idé, it was not found.

Fugiwaka tossed to and fro upon his lowly bed in a wayside tavern. And it seemed to him that his nurse came to him and knelt by his side. Then he was soothed.

O Matsu said, “Will you sleep now, my lord Fugiwaka?”

And he answered, “I will sleep now, O Matsu.”

“Listen, my lord,” she said, “and, sleeping or waking, remember. The sword is your treasure. The sword is your trust. The sword is your fortune. Cherish it, guard it, keep it.”

The sword was in its wrapping of gold and scarlet, and she laid it by Fugiwaka’s side. The boy turned over to sleep, and his hand clasped the sword of Idé.

“Waking or sleeping,” he said, “I will remember.”

34

THE BEAUTIFUL DANCER OF YEDO

This is the tale of Sakura-ko, Flower of the Cherry, who was the beautiful dancer of Yedo. She was a *geisha*, born a *samurai's* daughter, that sold herself into bondage after her father died, so that her mother might have food to eat. Ah, the pity of it! The money that bought her was called *Namida no Kané*, that is "the money of tears."

She dwelt in the narrow street of the *geisha*, where the red and white lanterns swing and the plum trees flourish by the low eves. The street of the *geisha* is full of music, for they play the *samisen* there all day long.

Sakura-ko played it too; indeed she was skilful in every lovely art. She played the *samisen*, the *kotto*, the *biwa*, and the small hand-drum. She could make songs and sing them. Her eyes were long, her hair was black, her hands were white. Her beauty was wonderful, and wonderful her power to please. From dawn to dusk, and from dusk to dawn she could go smiling and hide her heart. In the cool of the day she would stand upon the gallery of her mistress's house, and muse as she stood and looked down into the street of the *geisha*. And the folk that passed that way said to one another, "See, yonder stands Sakura-ko, Flower of the Cherry, the beautiful dancer of Yedo, the *geisha* without peer."

But Sakura-ko looked down and mused and said, "Little narrow street of the *geisha*, paved with bitterness and broken hearts, your houses are full of vain hopes and vain regrets; youth and love and grief dwell here. The flowers in your gardens are watered with tears."

The gentlemen of Yedo must needs have their pleasure, so Sakura-ko served at feasts every night. They whitened her cheeks and her forehead, and gilded her lips with *beni*. She wore silk attires, gold and purple and grey and green and black, *obi* of brocade magnificently tied. Her hair was pinned with coral and jade, fastened with combs of gold lacquer and tortoise-shell. She poured *saké*, she made merry with the good company. More than this, she danced.

Three poets sang of her dancing. One said, "She is lighter than the rainbow-tinted dragonfly."

And another said, "She moves like the mist of the morning when the bright sun shines."

And the third said, "She is like the shadow in the river of the waving willow-branch."

But it is time to tell of her three lovers.

The first lover was neither old nor young. He was passing rich, and a great man in Yedo. He sent his servant to the street of the *geisha* with money in his girdle. Sakura-ko shut the door in his face.

"You are wrong, fellow," she said, "you have lost your way. You should have gone to the street of the toy-shops and bought your master a doll; let him know there are no dolls here."

After this the master came himself. "Come to me, O Flower of the Cherry," he said, "for I must have you."

"*Must?*" she said, and looked down with her long eyes.

"Aye," he said, "must is the word, O Flower of the Cherry."

"What will you give me?" she said.

"Fine attires, silk and brocade, a house, white mats and cool galleries; servants to wait on you, gold hairpins — what you will."

"What do I give you?" she said.

"Yourself, just that, O Flower of the Cherry."

"Body and soul?" she said.

And he answered her, "Body and soul."

"Now, fare you well," she said, "I have a fancy to remain a *geisha*. It is a merry life," she said, and she laughed.

So that was the end of the first lover.

The second lover was old. To be old and wise is very well, but he was old and foolish. "Sakura-ko," he cried, "ah, cruel one, I am mad for love of you!"

"My lord," she said, "I can easily believe it."

He said, "I am not so very old."

"By the divine compassion of the gods," she told him, "you may yet have time to prepare for your end. Go home and read the good law." But the old lover would hear nothing of her counsel. Instead, he bade her to his house by night to a great feast which he had prepared for her. And when they had made an end of the feast she danced before him wearing scarlet *hakama* and a robe of gold brocade. After the dancing he made her sit beside him and he called for wine, that they might drink together. And the *geisha* who poured the *saké* was called Silver Wave.

When they had drunk together, Sakura-ko and her old lover, he drew her to him and cried:

"Come, my love, my bride, you are mine for the time of many existences; there was poison in the cup. Be not afraid, for we shall die together. Come with me to the Meido."

But Sakura-ko said, "My sister, the Silver Wave, and I are not children, neither are we old and foolish to be deceived. I drank no *saké* and no poison. My sister, the Silver Wave, poured fresh tea in my cup. Howbeit I am sorry for you, and so I will stay with you till you die."

He died in her arms and was fain to take his way alone to the Meido.

“Alas! alas!” cried the Flower of the Cherry. But her sister, Silver Wave, gave her counsel thus: “Keep your tears, you will yet have cause for weeping. Waste not grief for such as he.”

And that was the end of the second lover.

The third lover was young and brave and gay. Impetuous he was, and beautiful. He first set eyes on the Flower of the Cherry at a festival in his father’s house. Afterwards he went to seek her out in the street of the *geisha*. He found her as she leaned against the gallery railing of her mistress’s house.

She looked down into the street of the *geisha* and sang this song:

My mother bade me spin fine thread
Out of the yellow sea sand —
A hard task, a hard task.
May the dear gods speed me!
My father gave me a basket of reeds;
He said, ‘Draw water from the spring
And carry it a mile’ —
A hard task, a hard task.
May the dear gods speed me!
My heart would remember,
My heart must forget;
Forget, my heart, forget —
A hard task, a hard task.
May the dear gods speed me!

When she had made an end of singing, the lover saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"Do you remember me," he said, "O Flower of the Cherry? I saw you last night at my father's house."

"Aye, my young lord," she answered him, "I remember you very well."

He said, "I am not so very young. And I love you, O Flower of the Cherry. Be gentle, hear me, be free, be my dear wife."

At this she flushed neck and chin, cheeks and forehead.

"My dear," said the young man, "now you are Flower of the Cherry indeed."

"Child," she said, "go home and think of me no more. I am too old for such as you."

"Old!" he said; "why, there lies not a year between us!"

"No, not a year — no year, but an eternity," said Flower of the Cherry. "Think no more of me," she said; but the lover thought of nothing else. His young blood was on fire. He could not eat, nor drink, nor sleep. He pined and grew pale, he wandered day and night, his heart heavy with longing. He lived in torment; weak he grew, and weaker. One night he fell fainting at the entrance of the street of the *geisha*. Sakura-ko came home at dawn from a festival in a great house. There she found him. She said no word, but she bore him to his house outside Yedo, and stayed with him there full three moons. And after that time he was nursed back to ruddy health. Swiftly, swiftly, the glad days sped by for both of them.

"This is the happy time of all my life. I thank the dear gods," said Flower of the Cherry one evening.

"My dear," the young man bade her, "fetch hither your *samisen* and let me hear you sing."

So she did. She said, "I shall sing you a song you have heard already."

My mother bade me spin fine thread
Out of the yellow sea sand —

A hard task, a hard task.
May the dear gods speed me!
My father gave me a basket of reeds;
He said, ‘Draw water from the spring
And carry it a mile’ —
A hard task, a hard task.
May the dear gods speed me!
My heart would remember,
My heart must forget;
Forget, my heart, forget —
A hard task, a hard task.
May the dear gods speed me!

“Sweet,” he said, “what does this song mean, and why do you sing it?”

She answered, “My lord, it means that I must leave you, and therefore do I sing it. I must forget you; you must forget me. That is my desire.”

He said, “I will never forget you, not in a thousand existences.”

She smiled, “Pray the gods you may wed a sweet wife and have children.”

He cried, “No wife but you, and no children but yours, O Flower of the Cherry.”

“The gods forbid, my dear, my dear. All the world lies between us.”

The next day she was gone. High and low the lover wandered, weeping and lamenting and seeking her both near and far. It was all in vain, for he found her not. The city of Yedo knew her no more — Sakura-ko, the beautiful dancer.

And her lover mourned many many days. Howbeit at last he was comforted, and they found for him a very sweet fair lady whom he took to wife willingly enough, and soon she bore him a son. And he was glad, for time dries all tears.

Now when the boy was five years old he sat in the gate of his father’s house. And it chanced that a wandering nun came that way begging for alms. The servants of the house brought rice and would have put it into her begging bowl, but the child said, “Let me give.”

So he did as he would.

As he filled the begging bowl and patted down the rice with a wooden spoon and laughed, the nun caught him by the sleeve and held him and looked into his eyes.

“Holy nun, why do you look at me so?” cried the child.

She said, “Because I once had a little boy like you, and I went away and left him.”

“Poor little boy!” said the child.

“It was better for him, my dear, my dear — far, far better.”

And when she had said this, she went her way.

35

HANA-SAKA-JIJI

35. Hana-Saka-Jiji

In the early days there lived a good old couple. All their lives long they had been honest and hard-working, but they had always been poor. Now in their old age it was all they could do to make both ends meet, the poor old creatures.

But they did not complain, not a bit of it. They were merry as the day is long. If they ever went to bed cold or hungry they said nothing about it, and if they had bite or sup in the house you may be sure they shared it with their dog, for they were very fond of him. He was faithful, good, and clever. One evening the old man and the old woman went out to do a bit of digging in their garden, and the dog went with them.

While they were working the dog was sniffing the ground, and presently he began to scratch up the earth with his paws.

“What can the dog be about now?” says the old woman.

“Oh, just nothing at all,” says the old man; “he’s playing.”

“It’s more than playing,” says the old woman. “It’s my belief he’s found something worth having.”

So off she went to see what the dog would be at, and the old man followed her and leaned on his spade. Sure enough the dog had dug a pretty big hole by this time, and he went on scratching with his paws for dear life and barking short and sharp. The old man helped with his spade, and before long they came on a big box of hidden treasure, silver and gold and jewels and rich stuffs.

It is easy to believe that the good old couple were glad. They patted their clever dog, and he jumped up and licked their faces. After this they carried the treasure into the house. The dog ran to and fro and barked.

Now, next door to the good old couple lived another old couple, not so good as they, but envious and discontented. When the dog found the hidden treasure they looked through a hole in the bamboo hedge and saw the whole affair. Do you think they were pleased? Why, not a bit of it. They were so angry and envious that they could get no pleasure by day nor rest at night.

At last the bad old man came to the good old man.

“I’ve come to ask for the loan of your dog,” he says.

“With all my heart,” says the good old man; “take him and welcome.”

So the bad old man took the dog and brought him to their best room. And the bad old man and his wife put a supper, of all manner of fine things to eat, before the dog, and bade him fall to.

“Honourable Dog,” they said, “you are good and wise, eat and afterwards find us treasure.”

But the dog would not eat.

“All the more left for us,” said the greedy old couple, and they ate up the dog’s supper in a twinkling. Then they tied a string round his neck and dragged him into the garden to find treasure. But never a morsel of treasure did he find, nor a glint of gold, nor a shred of rich stuff.

“The devil’s in the beast,” cries the bad old man, and he beat the dog with a big stick. Then the dog began to scratch up the earth with his paws.

“Oho! Oho!” says the bad old man to his wife, “now for the treasure.”

But was it treasure that the dog dug up? Not a bit of it. It was a heap of loathly rubbish, too bad to tell of. But they say it smelt most vilely and the bad old couple were fain to run away, hiding their noses with their sleeves.

“Arah, arah!” they cried, “the dog has deceived us.” And that very night they killed the poor dog and buried him at the foot of a tall pine tree.

Alack for the good old man and the good old woman when they heard the dog was gone! It was they that wept the bitter tears. They pulled flowers and strewed them on the poor dog’s grave. They burned incense and they spread out good things to eat, and the vapour that rose from them comforted the poor dog’s spirit.

Then the good old man cut down the pine tree, and made a mortar of its wood. He put rice in the mortar and pounded the rice with a pestle.

“Wonder of wonders,” cried the old woman, who was looking on, “wonder of wonders, good man, our rice is all turned into broad gold pieces!”

So it was sure enough.

Presently, in comes the bad old man to ask for the loan of the mortar.

“For I’m needing a mortar something very special,” says he.

“Take it,” says the good old man; “I’m sure you’re welcome.”

So the bad old man took away the mortar under his arm, and when he had got it home he filled it with rice in a twinkling. And he pounded away at it for dear life’s sake.

“Do you see any gold coming?” he says to his wife, who was looking on.

“Never a bit,” she says, “but the rice looks queer.”

Queer enough it was, mildewed and rotten, no use to man or beast.

“Arah, arah!” they cried, “the mortar has deceived us.” And they didn’t let the grass grow under their feet, but lit a fire and burnt the mortar.

Now the good old couple had lost their fairy mortar. But they never said a word, the patient old folk. The good old man took some of the ashes of the mortar and went his way.

Now it was mid-winter time, and all the trees were bare. There was not a flower to be seen, nor yet a little green leaf.

What does the good old man do but climb into a cherry tree and scatter a handful of his ashes over the branches? In a moment the tree was covered with blossoms.

“It will do,” says the good old man, and down he gets from the tree and off he sets for the Prince’s palace, where he knocks at the gate as bold as brass.

“Who are you?” they ask him.

“I am *Hana-saka-jiji*,” says the old man, “the man who makes dead trees to blossom; my business is with the Prince.”

Mighty pleased the Prince was when he saw his cherry trees and his peach trees and his plum trees rush into blossom.

“Why,” he said, “it is mid-winter, and we have the joys of spring.” And he called forth his lady wife and her maidens and all his own retainers to see the work of *Hana-saka-jiji*. At last he sent the old man home with a passing rich reward.

Now what of the bad old couple? Were they content to let well alone? Oh no.

They gathered together all the ashes that were left, and when they had put them in a basket they went about the town crying:

“We are the *Hana-saka-jiji*. We can make dead trees blossom.”

Presently out comes the Prince and all his company to see the show. And the bad old man climbs up into a tree forthwith and scatters his ashes.

But the tree never blossomed, never a bit. The ashes flew into the Prince’s eyes, and the Prince flew into a rage. There was a pretty to-do. The bad old couple were caught and well beaten. Sad and sorry they crept home at night. It is to be hoped that they mended their ways. Howbeit the good people, their neighbours, grew rich and lived happy all their days.

36

THE MOON MAIDEN

36. The Moon Maiden

There was an old bamboo cutter called Také Tori. He was an honest old man, very poor and hard-working, and he lived with his good old wife in a cottage on the hills. Children they had none, and little comfort in their old age, poor souls.

Také Tori rose early upon a summer morning, and went forth to cut bamboos as was his wont, for he sold them for a fair price in the town, and thus he gained his humble living.

Up the steep hillside he went, and came to the bamboo grove quite wearied out. He took his blue *tenegui* and wiped his forehead, “Alack for my old bones!” he said. “I am not so young as I once was, nor the good wife either, and there’s no chick nor child to help us in our old age, more’s the pity.” He sighed as he got to work, poor Také Tori.

Soon he saw a bright light shining among the green stems of the bamboos.

“What is this?” said Také Tori, for as a rule it was dim and shady enough in the bamboo grove. “Is it the sun?” said Také Tori. “No, that cannot well be, for it comes from the ground.” Very soon he pushed his way through the bamboo stems to see what the bright light came from. Sure enough it came from the root of a great big green bamboo. Také Tori took his axe and cut down the great big green bamboo, and there was a fine shining green jewel, the size of his two fists.

“Wonder of wonders!” cried Také Tori. “Wonder of wonders! For five-and-thirty years I’ve cut bamboo. This is the very first time I’ve found a great big green jewel at the root of one of them.” With that he takes up the jewel in his hands, and as soon as he does that, it bursts in two with a loud noise, if you’ll believe it, and out of it came a young person and stood on Také Tori’s hand.

You must understand the young person was small but very beautiful. She was dressed all in green silk.

“Greetings to you, Také Tori,” she says, as easy as you please.

“Mercy me!” says Také Tori. “Thank you kindly. I suppose, now, you’ll be a fairy,” he says, “if I’m not making too bold in asking?”

“You’re right,” she says, “it’s a fairy I am, and I’m come to live with you and your good wife for a little.”

“Well, now,” says Také Tori, “begging your pardon, we’re very poor. Our cottage is good enough, but I’m afraid there’d be no comforts for a lady like you.”

“Where’s the big green jewel?” says the fairy.

Take Tori picks up the two halves. “Why, it’s full of gold pieces,” he says.

“That will do to go on with,” says the fairy; “and now, Také Tori, let us make for home.”

Home they went. “Wife! wife!” cried Také Tori, “here’s a fairy come to live with us, and she has brought us a shining jewel as big as a persimmon, full of gold pieces."

The good wife came running to the door. She could hardly believe her eyes.

"What is this," she said, "about a persimmon and gold pieces? Persimmons I have seen often enough — moreover, it is the season — but gold pieces are hard to come by."

"Let be, woman," said Také Tori, "you are dull." And he brought the fairy into the house.

Wondrous fast the fairy grew. Before many days were gone she was a fine tall maiden, as fresh and as fair as the morning, as bright as the noonday, as sweet and still as the evening, and as deep as the night. Také Tori called her the Lady Beaming Bright, because she had come out of the shining jewel.

Take Tori had the gold pieces out of the jewel every day. He grew rich, and spent his money like a man, but there was always plenty and to spare. He built him a fine house, he had servants to wait on him. The Lady Beaming Bright was lodged like an empress. Her beauty was famed both near and far, and scores of lovers came to seek her hand.

But she would have none of them. "Také Tori and the dear good wife are my true lovers," she said; "I will live with them and be their daughter."

So three happy years went by; and in the third year the Mikado himself came to woo the Lady Beaming Bright. He was the brave lover, indeed.

"Lady," he said, "I bow before you, my soul salutes you. Sweet lady, be my Queen."

Then the Lady Beaming Bright sighed and great tears stood in her eyes, and she hid her face with her sleeve.

"Lord, I cannot," she said.

"Cannot?" said the Mikado; "and why not, O dear Lady Beaming Bright?"

"Wait and see, lord," she said.

Now about the seventh month she grew very sorrowful, and would go abroad no more, but was for long upon the garden gallery of Také Tori’s house. There she sat in the daytime and brooded. There she sat at night and gazed upon the moon and the stars. There she was one fine night when the moon was at its full. Her maidens were with her, and Také Tori and the good wife, and the Mikado, her brave lover.

“How bright the moon shines!” said Také Tori.

“Truly,” said the good wife, “it is like a brass saucepan well scoured.”

“See how pale and wan it is,” said the Mikado; “it is like a sad despairing lover.”

“How long and bright a beam!” quoth Také Tori. “It is like a highway from the moon reaching to this garden gallery.”

“O dear foster-father,” cried the Lady Beaming Bright. “You speak truth, it is a highway indeed. And along the highway come countless heavenly beings swiftly, swiftly, to bear me home. My father is the King of the Moon. I disobeyed his behest. He sent me to earth three years to dwell in exile. The three years are past and I go to mine own country. Ah, I am sad at parting.”

“The mist descends,” said Také Tori.

“Nay,” said the Mikado, “it is the cohorts of the King of the Moon.”

Down they came in their hundreds and their thousands, bearing torches. Silently they came, and lighted round about the garden gallery. The chief among them brought a heavenly feather robe. Up rose the Lady Beaming Bright and put the robe upon her.

“Farewell, Také Tori,” she said, “farewell, dear foster-mother, I leave you my jewel for a remembrance... As for you, my lord, I would you might come with me — but there is no feather robe for you. I leave you a phial of the pure elixir of life. Drink, my lord, and be even as the Immortals.”

Then she spread her bright wings and the cohorts of Heaven closed about her. Together they passed up the highway to the moon, and were no more seen.

The Mikado took the elixir of life in his hand, and he went to the top of the highest mountain in that country. And he made a great fire to consume the elixir of life, for he said, “Of what profit shall it be to me to live for ever, being parted from the Lady Beaming Bright?”

So the elixir of life was consumed, and its blue vapour floated up to Heaven. And the Mikado said, “Let my message float up with the vapour and reach the ears of my Lady Beaming Bright.”

37

KARMA

37. Karma

THE YOUNG MAN, Ito Tatewaki, was returning homeward after a journey which he had taken to the city of Kioto. He made his way alone and on foot, and he went with his eyes bent upon the ground, for cares weighed him down and his mind was full of the business which had taken him to Kioto. Night found him upon a lonely road leading across a wild moor. Upon the moor were rocks and stones, with an abundance of flowers, for it was summer time, and here and there grew a dark pine tree, with gnarled trunk and crooked boughs.

Tatewaki looked up and beheld the figure of a woman before him in the way. It was a slender girl dressed in a simple gown of blue cotton. Lightly she went along the lonely road in the deepening twilight.

“I should say she was the serving-maid of some gentle lady,” Tatewaki said to himself. “The way is solitary and the time is dreary for such a child as she.”

So the young man quickened his pace and came up with the maiden. “Child,” he said very gently, “since we tread the same lonely road let us be fellow-travellers, for now the twilight passes and it will soon be dark.”

The pretty maiden turned to him with bright eyes and smiling lips.

“Sir,” she said, “my mistress will be glad indeed.”

“Your mistress?” said Tatewaki.

“Why, sir, of a surety she will be glad because you are come.”

“Because I am come?”

“Indeed, and indeed the time has been long,” said the serving-maid; “but now she will think no more of that.”

“Will she not?” said Tatewaki. And on he went by the maiden’s side, walking as one in a dream.

Presently the two of them came to a little house, not far from the roadside. Before the house was a small fair garden, with a stream running through it and a stone bridge. About the house and the garden there was a bamboo fence, and in the fence a wicket-gate.

“Here dwells my mistress,” said the serving-maid. And they went into the garden through the wicket-gate.

Now Tatewaki came to the threshold of the house. He saw a lady standing upon the threshold waiting.

She said, “You have come at last, my lord, to give me comfort.”

And he answered, “I have come.”

When he had said this he knew that he loved the lady, and had loved her since love was.

“O love, love,” he murmured, “time is not for such as we.”

Then she took him by the hand, and they went into the house together and into a room with white mats and a round latticed window.

Before the window there stood a lily in a vessel of water.

Here the two held converse together.

And after some time there was an old ancient woman that came with *saké* in a silver flagon; and she brought silver drinking-cups and all things needful. And Tatewaki and the lady drank the “Three Times Three” together. When they had done this the lady said, “Love, let us go out into the shine of the moon. See, the night is as green as an emerald...”

So they went and left the house and the small fair garden behind them. Or ever they had closed the wicket-gate the house and the garden and the wicket-gate itself all faded away, dissolving in a faint mist, and not a sign of them was left.

“Alas! what is this?” cried Tatewaki.

“Let be, dear love,” said the lady, and smiled; “they pass, for we have no more need of them.”

Then Tatewaki saw that he was alone with the lady upon the wild moor. And the tall lilies grew about them in a ring. So they stood the live-long night, not touching one another but looking into each other’s eyes most steadfastly. When dawn came, the lady stirred and gave one deep sigh.

Tatewaki said, “Lady, why do you sigh?”

And when he asked her this, she unclasped her girdle, which was fashioned after the form of a golden scaled dragon with translucent eyes. And she took the girdle and wound it nine times about her love’s arm, and she said, “O love, we part: these are the years until we meet again.” So she touched the golden circles on his arm.

Then Tatewaki cried aloud, “O love, who are you? Tell me your name...”

She said, “O love, what have we to do with names, you and I?... I go to my people upon the plains. Do not seek for me there... Wait for me.”

And when the lady had spoken she faded slowly and grew ethereal, like a mist. And Tatewaki cast himself upon the ground and put out his hand to hold her sleeve. But he could not stay her. And his hand grew cold and he lay still as one dead, all in the grey dawn.

When the sun was up he arose.

“The plains,” he said, “the low plains... there will I find her.” So, with the golden token wound about his arm, fleetly he sped down, down to the plains. He came to the broad river, where he saw folk standing on the green banks. And on the river there floated boats of fresh flowers, the red dianthus and the campanula, golden rod and meadow-sweet. And the people upon the river banks called to Tatewaki:

“Stay with us. Last night was the Night of Souls. They came to earth and wandered where they would, the kind wind carried them. To-day they return to Yomi. They go in their boats of flowers, the river bears them. Stay with us and bid the departing Souls good speed.”

And Tatewaki cried, “May the Souls have sweet passage... I cannot stay.”

So he came to the plains at last, but did not find his lady. Nothing at all did he find, but a wilderness of ancient graves, with nettles overgrown and the waving green grass.

So Tatewaki went to his own place, and for nine long years he lived a lonely man. The happiness of home and little children he never knew.

“Ah, love,” he said, “not patiently, not patiently, I wait for you... Love, delay not your coming.”

And when the nine years were past he was in his garden upon the Night of Souls. And looking up he saw a woman that came towards him, threading her way through the paths of the garden. Lightly she came; she was a slender girl, dressed in a simple gown of blue cotton. Tatewaki stood up and spoke:

“Child,” he said very gently, “since we tread the same lonely road let us be fellow-travellers, for now the twilight passes and it will soon be dark.”

The maid turned to him with bright eyes and smiling lips:

“Sir,” she said, “my mistress will be glad indeed.”

“Will she be glad?” said Tatewaki.

“The time has been long.”

“Long and very weary,” said Tatewaki.

“But now you will think no more of that...”

“Take me to your mistress,” said Tatewaki. “Guide me, for I cannot see any more. Hold me, for my limbs fail. Do not leave go my hand, for I am afraid. Take me to your mistress,” said Tatewaki.

In the morning his servants found him cold and dead, quietly lying in the shade of the garden trees.

38

THE SAD STORY OF THE YAOYA'S DAUGHTER

There was a wandering ballad-singer who came to a great house in Yedo where they wished to be entertained.

"Will you have a dance or a song?" said the ballad-singer; "or shall I tell you a story?" The people of the house bade him tell a story.

"Shall it be a tale of love or a tale of war?" said the ballad-singer.

"Oh, a tale of love," they said.

"Will you have a sad tale or a merry?" asked the ballad-singer.

They were all agreed that they would hear a sad tale.

"Well, then," said the ballad-singer, "listen, and I will tell you the sad story of the Yaoya's daughter."

So he told this tale.

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THE YAOYA WAS a poor hard-working man, but his daughter was the sweetest thing in Yedo. You must know she was one of the five beauties of the city, that grew like five cherry-trees in the time of the spring blossoming.

In autumn the hunters lure the wild deer with the sound of the flute. The deer are deceived, for they believe that they hear the voices of their mates.

So are they trapped and slain. For like calls to like. Youth calls to youth, beauty to beauty, love to love. This is law, and this law was the undoing of the Yaoya’s daughter.

When there was a great fire in Yedo, so great that more than the half of the city was burned, the Yaoya’s house was ruined also. And the Yaoya and his wife and his daughter had no roof over them, nor anywhere to lay their heads. So they went to a Buddhist temple for shelter and stayed there many days, till their house should be rebuilt. Ah me, for the Yaoya’s daughter! Every morning at sunrise she bathed in the spring of clean water that was near the temple. Her eyes were bright and her cheeks ruddy. Then she would put on her blue gown and sit by the water-side to comb her long hair. She was a sweet and slender thing, scarce fifteen years old. Her name was O Schichi.

“Sweep the temple and the temple courts,” her father bade her. “’Tis well we should do so much for the good priests who give us shelter.” So O Schichi took the broom and swept. And as she laboured she sang merrily, and the grey precincts of the temple grew bright.

Now there was a young acolyte who served in the holy place. Gentle he was and beautiful. Not a day passed but he heard the singing of O Schichi; not a day passed but he set eyes upon her, going her ways, so light and slender, in the ancient courts of the temple.

It was not long before he loved her. Youth calls to youth, beauty to beauty, love to love. It was not long before she loved him.

Secretly they met together in the temple grove. Hand in hand they went, her head against his arm.

“Ah,” she cried, “that such a thing should be! I am happy and unhappy. Why do I love you, my own?”

“Because of the power of Karma,” said the acolyte. “Nevertheless, we sin, O heart’s desire, grievously we sin, and I know not what may come of it.”

“Alas,” she said, “will the gods be angry with us, and we so young?”

“I cannot tell,” he said; “but I am afraid.”

Then the two of them clung together, trembling and weeping. But they pledged themselves to each other for the space of many existences.

The Yaoya had his dwelling in the quarter of the city called Honjo, and presently his house was rebuilt which had been destroyed by the fire. He and his wife were glad, for they said, “Now we shall go home.”

O Schichi hid her face with her sleeve and wept bitter tears.

“Child, what ails you?” said her mother.

O Schichi wept. “Oh! oh! oh!” she cried, and swayed herself to and fro.

“Why, maid, what is it?” said her father.

Still O Schichi wept. “Oh! oh! oh!” she cried, and swayed herself to and fro.

That night she went to the grove. There was the acolyte, very pale and sorrowful, beneath the trees.

“They will part us,” she cried, “O my dear heart’s desire. The dear gods are angry with us, and we so young.”

“Ah,” he said, “I was afraid... Farewell, dear maid, O little maid, sweet and slender. Remember we are pledged to one another for the space of many existences.”

Then the two of them clung together, trembling and weeping, and they bade farewell a thousand times.

The next day they bore O Schichi home to Honjo. She grew languid and listless. White she grew, white as the buckwheat flower. She drooped and she failed. No longer was she numbered with the five beauties of Yedo, nor likened to a cherry-tree in the time of the spring blossoming. All the day long she brooded silently. At night she lay awake in her low bed.

“Oh! oh!” she moaned, “the weary, weary night! Shall I never see him? Must I die of longing? Oh! oh! the weary, weary night...”

Her eyes grew large and burning bright.

"Alas! poor maid," said her father.

"I am afraid..." said her mother. "She will lose her wits... She does not weep any more."

At last O Schichi arose and took straw and made it into a bundle; and she put charcoal in the bundle and laid it beneath the gallery of her father's house. Then she set fire to the straw and the charcoal, and the whole burnt merrily. Furthermore the wood of her father's house took light and the house was burnt to the ground.

"I shall see him; I shall see him!" shrieked O Schichi, and fell in a swoon.

Howbeit all the city knew that she had set fire to her father's house. So she was taken before the judge to be tried for her wrong-doing.

"Child," said the judge, "what made you do this thing?"

"I was mad," she said, "I did it for love's sake. I said, 'I will burn the house, we shall have nowhere to lay our heads, then we shall take shelter at the temple; I will see my lover.' Lord, I have not seen him nor heard of him these many, many moons."

"Who is your lover?" said the judge.

Then she told him.

Now as for the law of the city, it was hard and could not be altered. Death was the penalty for the crime of the Yaoya's daughter. Only a child might escape.

"My little maid," the judge said, "are you perhaps twelve years old?"

"Nay, lord," she answered.

"Thirteen, then, or fourteen? The gods send you may be fourteen. You are little and slender."

"Lord," she said, "I am fifteen."

"Alas, my poor maid," said the judge, "you are all too old."

So they made her stand upon the bridge of Nihonbashi. And they told her story aloud; they called it from the house-tops so that all might hear.

There she was for all the world to look upon.

Every day for seven days she stood upon the bridge of Nihonbashi, and drooped in the glare of the sun and of men’s glances. Her face was white as the flower of the buckwheat. Her eyes were wide and burning bright. She was the most piteous thing under the sky. The tender-hearted wept to see her. They said, “Is this the Yaoya’s daughter that was one of the five beauties of Yedo?”

After the seven days were passed they bound O Schichi to a stake, and they piled faggots of wood about her and set the faggots alight. Soon the thick smoke rose.

“It was all for love,” she cried with a loud voice. And when she had said this, she died.

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“The tale is told,” said the ballad-singer. “Youth calls to youth, beauty to beauty, love to love. This is law, and this law was the undoing of the Yaoya’s daughter.”

17. MITE KREMNITZ

CONTENTS

Preface

1. Stan Bolovan
2. The Wonderful Bird
3. The Twins with the Golden Star
4. Youth Without Age and Life Without Death
5. The Little Purse with Two Half-pennies
6. Mogarzea and His Son
7. Cunning Ileane
8. The Princess and the Fisherman
9. Little Wild-Rose
10. The Voice of Death
11. The Old Woman and the Old Man
12. The Pea Emperor
13. The Morning Star and the Evening Star
14. The Two Step-Sisters
15. The Poor Boy
16. Mother’s Darling Jack
17. Tellerchen
18. The Fairy Aurora

PREFACE

KREMNITZ, MITE

Mite Kremnitz (1852-1916), born Marie von Bardeleben, was a German writer. She was the daughter of the famous surgeon Heinrich Adolf von Bardeleben. Kremnitz grew in Greifswald, London and, starting with 1868, in Berlin. Later she married the doctor Wilhelm Kremnitz and moved with him to Bucharest in 1875.

In Romania, Kremnitz became good friends with the Queen Elisabeth, who wrote poems, novels and short stories under the nom de plume Carmen Sylva, and in 1881 she was appointed her maid of honor. They published several novels and a drama in collaboration.

Among her multiple books was a collection of Romanian stories for children entitled *Roumanian Fairy Tales.*

1

STAN BOLOVAN

Once upon a time, something happened. If it hadn't happened, it wouldn't be told.

At the edge of the village, where the peasants' oxen break through the hedges and the neighbors' hogs wallow in the ground under the fences, there once stood a house. In this house lived a man, and the man had a wife; but the wife grieved all day long.

"What troubles you, dear wife, that you sit there drooping like a frost-bitten bud in the sunlight?" her husband asked one day. "You have all you need. So be cheerful, like other folks."

"Let me alone, and ask no more questions!" replied the wife, and became still more melancholy than before.

Her husband questioned her the second time, and received the same reply. But, when he asked again, she answered more fully.

"Dear me," she said, "why do you trouble your head about it? If you know, you'll be just sorrowful as I am. It's better for me not to tell you."

But, to this, people will never agree. If you tell a person he must sit still, he is more anxious to move than ever. Stan was now determined to know what was in his wife's mind.

"If you are determined to hear, I'll tell you," said the wife. "There's no luck in the house, husband, — there's no luck in the house!"

“Isn’t the cow a good one? Are not the fruit-trees and bee-hives full? Are not the fields fertile?” asked Stan. “You talk nonsense, if you complain of any thing.”

“But, husband, we have no children.”

Stan understood; and, when a man realizes such a thing, it isn’t well. From this time, a sorrowful man and a sorrowful woman lived in the house on the edge of the village. And they were sorrowful because the Lord had given them no children. When the wife saw her husband sad, she grew still more melancholy; and the more melancholy she was, the greater his grief became.

This continued for a long time.

They had masses repeated and prayers read in all the churches. They questioned all the witches, but God’s gift did not come.

One day, two travelers arrived at Stan’s house, and were joyfully received and entertained with the best food he had. They were angels in disguise; and, perceiving that Stan and his wife were good people, one of them, while throwing his knapsack over his shoulder to continue his journey, asked his host what he most desired, and said that any three of his wishes should be fulfilled.

“Give me children,” replied Stan.

“What else shall I give you?”

“Children, sir, give me children!”

“Take care,” said the angel, “or there will be too many of them. Have you enough to support them?”

“Never mind that, sir, — only give them to me!”

The travelers departed; but Stan accompanied them as far as the high-road, that they might not lose their way among the fields and woods.

When Stan reached home again, he found the house, yard, and garden filled with children, in all not less than a hundred. Not one was larger than the other; but each was more quarrelsome, bolder, more mischievous and noisier than the rest. And, in some way, God made Stan feel and know that they all belonged to him and were his.

“Good gracious! What a lot of them!” he cried, standing in the midst of the throng.

“But not too many, husband,” replied his wife, bringing a little flock with her.

Then followed days which can only be experienced by a man who has a hundred children. The house and village echoed with shouts of “father” and “mother,” and the world was full of happiness.

But taking care of children isn’t so simple a matter. Many pleasures come with many troubles, and many troubles with many joys. When, after a few days, the children began to shout, “Father, I’m hungry!” Stan began to scratch his head. There did not seem to him to be too many children, for God’s gift is good, however large it may be; but his barns were too small, the cow was growing thin, and the fields did not produce enough.

“I’ll tell you what, wife,” said Stan one day, “it seems to me that there isn’t much harmony in our affairs. As God was good enough to give us so many children, He ought to have filled the measure of His goodness, and sent us food for them, too.”

“Search for it, husband,” the wife answered. “Who knows where it may be concealed? The Lord never does a thing by halves.”

Stan went out into the wide world to find God’s gift. He was firmly resolved to return home laden with food.

Aha! The road of the hungry is always a long one. A man doesn’t earn food for a hundred greedy children in a trice. Stan wandered on, on, on, till he had fairly run himself off his feet. When he had thus arrived nearly at the end of the world, where what is mixes with what is not, he saw in the distance, in the middle of a field which lay spread out as flat as a cake, a sheep-fold. By it stood seven shepherds, and in the shadow within lay a flock of sheep.

“Lord, help me,” said Stan, and went up to the fold to see whether, by patience and discretion, he might not find some employment there. But he soon discovered that there was not much more hope here than in the other places whither he had journeyed. This was the state of affairs: every night, at precisely twelve o’clock, a furious dragon came and took from the herd a ram, a sheep, and a lamb, three animals in all. He also carried milk enough for seventy-seven lambkins to the old she-dragon, that she might bathe in it and grow young. The shepherds were very angry about it, and complained bitterly. So Stan saw that he was not likely to return home from here richly laden with food for his children.

But there is no spur more powerful than for a man to see his children starving. An idea entered Stan’s head, and he said boldly, “What would you give me, if I released you from the greedy dragon?”

“One of each three rams shall be yours, one-third of the sheep, and one-third of the lambs,” replied the shepherds.

“Agreed,” said Stan; yet he felt rather anxious, lest he might find it too hard to drive the flock home alone.

But there was no hurry about that. It was some time before midnight. And besides, to tell the truth, Stan did not exactly know how he was to get rid of the dragon. “The Lord will send me some clever plan,” he said to himself, and then counted the flock again to see how many animals he would have.

Just at midnight, when day and night, weary of strife, for a moment stood still, Stan felt that he was about to see something he had never beheld before. It was something that can not be described. It is a horrible thing to have a dragon come. It seemed as if the monster was hurling huge rocks at the trees, and thus forcing a way through primeval forests. Even Stan felt that he should be wise to take the quickest way off, and enter into no quarrel with a dragon. Ah! but his children at home were starving.

“I’ll kill you or you shall kill me!” Stan said to himself, and remained where he was, close by the sheep-fold.

“Stop!” he cried, when he saw the dragon near the fold; and he shouted as though he was a person of importance.

“H’m,” said the dragon: “where did you come from, that you screech at me so?”

“I am Stan Bolovan, who at night devours rocks and by day grazes on the trees of the primeval forests; and if you touch the flock, I’ll cut a cross on your back, and bathe you in holy water.”

When the dragon heard these words, he stopped in the midst of his career; for he saw that he had found his match.

“But you must first fight with me,” replied the dragon, hesitatingly.

“*I* fight with you?” cried Stan. “Beware of the words that have escaped your lips. My breath is stronger than your whole body.” Then, taking from his knapsack a piece of white cheese, he showed it to the dragon. “Do you see this stone?” he said. “Pick one up from the bank of yonder stream, and we’ll try our strength.”

The dragon took a stone from the shore of the brook.

“Can you squeeze buttermilk out of the stone?” asked Stan.

The dragon crushed the stone in his hand, so that he crumbled it into powder. But he squeezed no buttermilk from it.

“It can’t be done,” he said rather angrily.

“I’ll show you whether it can be done,” replied Stan, and then squeezed the soft cheese in his hand, till the buttermilk trickled down between his fingers.

When the dragon saw this, he began to look about him to find the shortest road to run away; but Stan placed himself before the forest. “Let us have a little reckoning about what you have taken from the fold,” he said. “Nothing is given away here.”

The poor dragon would have taken flight, if he hadn’t been afraid that Stan might blow behind him, and bury him under the trees in the forest. So he stood still, like a person who doesn’t know what else to do.

“Listen!” he said, after a while. “I see that you are a useful man. My mother has long been looking for a servant like you, but has not been able to find one. Enter our service. The year has three days, and each day’s wages is seven sacks of ducats!”

Three times seven sacks of ducats! A fine business! That was just what Stan needed. “And,” he thought, “if I’ve outwitted the dragon, I can probably get the better of his mother!” So he didn’t waste many words about the matter, but set off with the monster. A long, rough road; but still it was too short, since it led to a bad end. It seemed to Stan as if he had arrived almost before he started.

The old she-dragon, old as Time itself, was waiting for them. She had made a fire under the huge caldron, in which she meant to boil the milk and mix it with the blood of a lamb and the marrow from its bones, that the liquid might have healing power. Stan saw her eyes glistening in the darkness when they were still three gun-shots off. But, when they reached the spot and the she-dragon perceived that her son had brought her nothing, she was very angry. This she-dragon was by no means lovable. She had a wrinkled face, open jaws, tangled hair, sunken eyes, parched lips, and a breath reeking with the smell of onions.

“Stay here,” said the dragon. “I’ll go and make arrangements with my mother.”

Stan would willingly have stood still further off, but he had no choice now that he had once entered upon this evil business. So he let the dragon go on.

“Listen, mother!” said the dragon, when he had entered the house. “I’ve brought you a man to get rid of. He’s a terrible fellow, who eats pieces of rock and squeezes buttermilk out of stones.” Then he told her what had happened.

“Just leave him to me,” she said, after hearing the whole story. “No man ever slipped through *my* fingers.”

So the matter remained as it had first been settled. Stan Bolovan became the servant of this monster and his mother. A terrible fix! I really don’t know what will come of it.

The next day, the she-dragon gave him his task. They were to give a signal to the dragon world with a club sheathed in seven thicknesses of iron. The dragon raised the club and hurled it three miles, then he set off with Stan, that he might also throw it three miles, or, if possible, further still. When Stan reached the club, he began to look at it rather anxiously. He saw that he and all his children together could not even lift it from the ground.

“Why are you standing there?” asked the dragon.

“Why, you see, it’s such a handsome club. I’m sorry,” replied Stan.

“Sorry? Why?” inquired the dragon.

“Because,” answered Stan, “I’m afraid you’ll never see it again in your whole life, if I throw it; for I know my own strength.”

“Don’t fear. Just throw it,” replied the dragon.

“If you really mean it, we’ll first go and get provisions enough to last three days; for we shall have to travel at least three days, if not longer, to get it.”

These words frightened the dragon, but he did not yet believe that it would be so bad as Stan said. So they went home for the provisions, though he wasn’t at all pleased with the idea of having Stan serve his year in merely going after the club. When they got back again to it, Stan sat down on the bag of provisions and became absorbed in staring at the moon.

“What are you doing?” asked the dragon.

“Only waiting for the moon to sail by.”

“Why?”

“Don’t you see that the moon is directly in my way?” said Stan. “Or do you want me to fling the club into the moon?”

The dragon now began to be seriously anxious. It was a club that had descended to him from his ancestors, and he wouldn’t have liked to lose it in the moon.

“I’ll tell you what,” he said. “Don’t throw the club. I’ll do it myself.”

“Certainly not. Heaven forbid!” replied Stan. “Only wait till the moon passes by.”

Then a long conversation followed; for Stan would not consent to have the dragon throw the club again, except on the promise of seven sacks of ducats.

“Oh, dear! mother, he’s a tremendously strong man,” said the dragon. “I could scarcely prevent him from throwing the club into the moon.”

The she-dragon began to be anxious, too. Just think of it! Would it be a joke to have a person able to throw any thing into the moon? She was a she-dragon of true dragon blood, however, and the next day had thought of a still harder task.

“Bring some water,” she said early in the morning, and gave each twelve buffalo skins, ordering them to fill them by evening, and fetch them all home at once.

They went to the well; and, before one could wink, the dragon had filled the twelve skins, and was in the act of carrying them back. Stan was tired, he had scarcely been able to drag the empty skins along. A chill ran through his veins, when he thought of the full ones. What do you suppose he did? He pulled a worn-out knife blade from his belt, and began to scratch the earth around the well with it.

“What are you doing?” asked the dragon.

“I’m not a blockhead, that I should go to the labor of filling the skins with water,” replied Stan.

“But how will you carry the water to the house, then?”

"How? Just as you see," said Stan. "I'm going to take the well, you goose!"

The dragon stood with his mouth wide-open in amazement. He wouldn't have had this done on any account, for the well was one that had belonged to his ancestors.

"I'll tell you," he said anxiously, "let me carry your skins home, too."

"Certainly not. Heaven forbid!" replied Stan, digging on around the well.

Now, another long discussion followed; and this time, too, the dragon could only persuade Stan by promising him seven sacks of ducats.

On the third day, that is the last one, the she-dragon sent them into the forest for wood.

Before one could count three, the dragon tore up more trees than Stan had ever seen before in his whole life, and piled them up together. But Stan began to examine the trees, chose the very finest, climbed up into one and tied its top with a wild grape-vine to the next. So, without saying a word, he continued to fasten one splendid tree to another.

"What are you doing there?" asked the dragon.

"You see what I am doing," replied Stan, working quietly on.

"Why are you tying the trees together?"

"Why, to save myself unnecessary work in pulling them up one by one," said Stan.

"But how are you going to carry them home?"

"I shall take the whole forest, you goose! Can't you understand that?" said Stan, continuing to fasten them together.

The dragon now felt as if he wanted to take to his heels, and never stop until he reached home.

But he was afraid that he should suddenly find Stan pulling the whole forest down on his head.

This time, as it was the end of the year’s service, it seemed as if the discussion would never cease. Stan did not want to listen at all, but had set his mind upon flinging the forest on his back at any rate.

“I’ll tell you what,” said the dragon, trembling with fear, “your wages shall be seven times seven sacks of ducats. Content yourself with that.”

“Well, be it so, as I see you are a good fellow,” replied Stan, and agreed that the dragon should carry the wood for him.

The year was now over. Stan was anxious only about one things — how he was to drag so many ducats home.

In the evening, the dragon and his mother sat talking together in their room; but Stan listened in the entry.

“Woe betide us!” said the dragon: “this fellow upsets us terribly. Give him money, even more than he has, only let us get rid of him.”

Ah, yes! but the she-dragon cared for money.

“Let me tell you one thing,” she said: “you must kill this man to-night.”

“I am afraid of him, mother,” he answered in terror.

“Have no fear,” replied his mother. “When you see that he is asleep, take your club and strike him in the middle of the forehead.”

So it was agreed. Ah, yes! but Stan always had a bright idea at the right time. When he saw that the dragon and his mother had put out the light, he took the pig’s trough, and laid it bottom upward in his place, covered it carefully with a shaggy coat, and lay down himself under the bed, where he began to snore like a person who is sound asleep.

The dragon went out softly, approached the bed, raised his club, and struck one blow on the spot where Stan’s head ought to have been. The trough sounded hollow, Stan groaned, and the dragon tiptoed back again.

Stan then crept out from under the bed, cleaned it, and lay down, but was wise enough not to close an eye all night long.

The dragon and his mother were rigid with amazement when they saw Stan come in the next morning as sound as an egg.

"Good morning!"

"Good morning; but how did you sleep last night?"

"Very well," replied Stan. "Only I dreamed that a flea bit me just here on the forehead, and it seems as if it still pained me."

"Just listen to that, mother!" cried the dragon. "Did you hear? He talks about a flea, and I hit him with my club!"

This was too much for the she-dragon. She perceived that it isn't worth while to argue with such people. So they hastened to fill his sacks, in order to get rid of him as quickly as possible. But poor Stan now began to perspire. When he stood beside the bags, he trembled like an aspen leaf, because he was unable to lift even one of them from the ground. So he stood staring at them.

"Why are you standing there?" asked the dragon.

"H'm! I'm waiting," replied Stan, "because I would rather stay with you another year. I'm ashamed to have any body see me carry away so little at one time. I'm afraid people will say, 'Look at Stan Bolovan, who in one year has grown as weak as a dragon.'"

Now, it was the two dragons' turn to be frightened.

They vainly told him that they would give him seven — nay, three times seven or even seven times seven — sacks of ducats, if he would only go away.

"I'll tell you what," said Stan, at last. "As I see you don't want to keep me, I won't force you to do so. Have it your own way. I'll go. But, that I need not be ashamed before the people, you must carry this treasure home for me."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when the dragon picked up the sacks and set off with Stan.

Short and smooth, yet always too long, is the road that leads home. But, when Stan found himself close to his house, and heard his children's shouts, he began to walk slower. It seemed too near; for he was afraid that, if the dragon knew where he lived, he might come to take away the treasure. Only he was puzzled to find any way of carrying his money home alone.

“I really don’t know what to do,” he said, turning to the dragon. “I have a hundred hungry children, and fear you may fare badly among them, because they are very fond of fighting. But just behave sensibly, and I’ll protect you as well as I can.”

A hundred children! That’s no joke! The dragon — though a dragon of dragon race — let the bags fall in his fright. But, from sheer terror, he picked them up again. Yet his fear did not gain the mastery till they entered the court-yard. When the hungry children saw their father coming with the loaded dragon, they rushed toward him, each one with a knife in the right hand and a fork in the left. Then they all began to whet the knives on the forks, shrieking at the top of their lungs, “We want dragon meat!”

This was enough to scare Satan himself. The dragon threw down the sacks, and then took to flight, so frightened that since that time he has never dared to come back to the world.

2

THE WONDERFUL BIRD

Once upon a time, something happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.

There was a good, pious emperor, who had three sons. Among many other benefits bestowed upon the inhabitants of his empire he built a church, about which marvelous stories were told, for he adorned it with gold, precious stones and every thing the workmen of that country regarded as beautiful and valuable. Within and in front of this church were numbers of marble columns, and it was supplied with the finest paintings, silver chandeliers, huge silver lamps, and the rarest books. The more the emperor rejoiced in its beauty, the more sorrowful he felt that he could not finish it, for the steeple continually fell down.

“How is it that this sacred church can not be completed?” he asked. “I have spent all my property and it is not yet done.” So he ordered a proclamation to be sent throughout the empire, stating that any architect who could finish the church steeple would receive great gifts and honors. Besides this, a second proclamation was issued, commanding prayers to be read and services held in all the churches, that God might take pity on him and send him a good architect. The third night the monarch dreamed that if any one would fetch the wonderful bird from the other shore and put its nest in the steeple, the church could be finished. He told this dream to his sons, and they vied with each other in offering to set out and devote themselves to their imperial father’s service.

The emperor replied: “I see, my sons, that you all desire to fulfill your duty to God, but you can’t all three go at once. My oldest son shall set out first, if he does not succeed, the second one, and so on until the Lord takes pity upon us.”

The younger sons silently submitted; the oldest one made his preparations for the journey. He traveled as best he could, and when he had passed the frontiers of his father’s empire, found himself in a beautiful grove. After lighting a fire he stood waiting until his food was cooked. Suddenly he saw a fox, which begged him to tie up his hound, give it a bit of bread and a glass of wine, and let it rest by his fire. Instead of granting the request the prince released the hound, which instantly pursued the animal, whereupon the fox, by a magic spell, transformed the emperor’s son into a block of stone.

When the sovereign saw that his oldest son did not return, he listened to the entreaties of his second son, and gave him permission to set forth to find the wonderful bird. After making his preparations and taking some provisions with him, this prince also departed. On the spot where his brother had been turned to stone, the same thing happened to him, because he also refused the fox’s entreaties, and tried to catch it, to get its skin.

The emperor grew very thoughtful, when after a long time his sons failed to return, either with or without the wonderful bird.

At last the youngest said: “You see, father, it is now a long time since my brothers set out to find the wonderful bird, and they haven’t come home yet; give me some money and clothes for the journey that I may try my luck also. If I succeed, you will rejoice, because your dream will be fulfilled, and if I do not, you will suffer no mortification from it.”

“Your older brothers have apparently been unable to get this wonderful bird,” replied the emperor; “nay, perhaps they have even lost their lives, they have been absent so long. I am old; if you go too, who will help me in the cares of government; if I die, who is there to ascend the throne except you, my son? Stay here, my dear child, do not leave me."

"You know, my royal father, that I have never swerved a hair's breadth from your commands, and if I now venture to urge my petition it is only because, if possible, I would fain fulfill a wish that gives you no rest, which you have cherished so many years and striven to realize at so great a cost."

After many entreaties, the emperor yielded. The prince chose from the imperial stables a horse that pleased him, took a dog for a companion, supplied himself with sufficient food and departed.

After some time had passed, the emperor's two older sons suddenly arrived with the magic bird and a young girl, who was placed in charge of the poultry-yard. Every body wondered at the beauty of the bird, whose plumage glittered with a thousand hues, each feather shining like the sun, and the church-steeple did not fall after the bird and its nest were placed within. One thing, however, was noticed; the bird seemed dumb, it never uttered a note, and all who saw it grieved that so beautiful a creature should have no song; even the emperor, spite of all the pleasure he took in the church and steeple, was sorrowful because the bird did not sing.

People began to forget the youngest son, so great was the rejoicing over the bird that seemed to keep the steeple from falling, and thus enabled the workmen to finish the church; but the emperor grieved because the prince was not there to share his subjects' pleasure.

One day the poultry-keeper came to him and said: "May thy face shine, mighty emperor, the whole city is marveling at the singing of the magic bird — a shepherd entered the church early this morning, and the bird instantly began to sing as if it would burst its throat, and is so happy that it can hardly keep in its nest. This has happened to-day for the second time. While the shepherd is in the church the bird never stops singing, but as soon as he goes away, it is silent."

“Let the shepherd be brought before me at once.”

“Your majesty, the shepherd seems to be a stranger; no one here knows him. Your majesty’s sons, I hear, have set guards to arrest him.”

“Silence,” said the emperor; “do not mention my sons; it is not seemly for you to speak against them.”

The sovereign sent some of his most trusty servants to keep watch, seize the shepherd as soon as he entered the church and the bird began to sing, and bring him before him. But, not content with this, he went himself the next holiday to hear the bird’s wonderful singing with his own ears, and see the shepherd. If he had not been present, a violent conflict would have arisen between his own people and the spies sent by his sons, who evidently wished to lay hands on the shepherd. The emperor ordered that he should be brought to the palace, for a strange feeling stirred in his heart when he saw the timid youth with the figure of a hero.

When he came out of church, the monarch went directly home to his palace, for his heart told him that there must be something unusual about this shepherd. On seeing him, he said: —

“Tell me, my son, from what part of the country do you come? Have you any parents, and how did you get here?”

“My story is a long one, most noble emperor. I have parents and brothers. I shall need more time to tell you how I came hither, but if it is your majesty’s will, I am ready. I will come to your majesty early to-morrow morning, it is too late to-day.”

“Very well, my brave fellow, I will expect you at dawn to-morrow.”

Early the next morning the shepherd came to await the emperor’s commands; but as soon as the emperor heard that he had arrived, he summoned him.

“Tell me, my son, what is the reason the magic bird sings as soon as you enter the church, and stops when you go out.”

“To understand that and other things, your majesty, let me tell you my whole story.”

“I will listen; tell me anything you please.”

The shepherd then began: —

“I have a father, and brothers. I left my home to do something to please my father, who was sad because he had a wish that could not be fulfilled. After a journey of several days I reached a beautiful meadow, from which branched several roads. Intending to spend the night there, I lighted a fire, took out some of the provisions I had brought with me, and was just sitting down to eat them, when I suddenly saw a fox beside me. Whence it came I did not know; it seemed as if it had sprung up out of the earth.

“‘Please let me warm myself by your fire,’ it said. ‘See, I am so cold that my teeth chatter. Give me a bit of bread and a glass of wine, that I may satisfy my hunger and thirst, and tie your dog, so I can eat in peace and rest without fear.’

“‘Very well,’ I replied, ‘come and warm yourself. Here are my provisions and my flask, eat and drink as much as you choose.’

“I tied my dog, and we sat down by the fire and talked together. Among other things, I told the fox where I was going, and even asked if it could tell me what I should do to accomplish the task I had voluntarily undertaken.

“‘Have no anxiety about that,’ replied the fox. ‘We’ll set out together early to-morrow morning, and if I don’t help you to the goal, never trust me again.’

“We sat by the fire, feasting like two friends, then the fox bade me good-night, and vanished like a shadow. I wondered how it had been possible that I did not see what direction the animal took, and while racking my brains to find out how it had managed to go and come unperceived, I fell asleep. When the fox came at dawn next morning, it found me gazing in astonishment at several blocks of stone, which resembled two men, two dogs, and two horses. As soon as I saw the animal, we prepared to set out.

“The fox turned three somersaults and suddenly changed into a handsome hero. On the way he told me that the place where I had spent the night was part of his property, that he was married and had several children, but had been condemned to wear the form of a fox until some human being would take pity on him and receive him, let him warm himself by the same fire, give him a bit of bread and glass of wine. As I was this man, he was now released from the spell, and would go with me and never leave me until I had accomplished my object. This event pleased me, and we journeyed on and on all through the long summer day until late at night when we reached a mountain meadow, where we encamped. My traveling companion told me that the next day we should be obliged to pass through the lands of several dragons, and he thought we should there find what we sought.

“The following morning we entered the dragons’ country, though somewhat timidly, and about noon reached the dragon-palace. It is impossible to describe the magnificent things we saw there. Gardens with all sorts of flowers and fruits, rooms that seemed lined with silver, so that they shone in the sun like mirrors, walls covered with paintings and carved flowers. Every corner of the palace was gilded, and fountains cast jets of water into the air. Luckily for us, the dragons were not at home when we arrived. On the threshold we met a beautiful girl, a girl who looked as sweet as if she were made of sugar, and who advised us not to enter the court-yard in the dragons’ absence, or we should meet with some misfortune. Then she wept for joy at seeing people from the place from whence the dragons had stolen her. When we asked her about the wonderful bird, she said it was in the possession of some other dragons, relatives of those on whose lands we were.

“‘Go there,’ she added, ‘for with God’s help, I hope you will succeed, and when you return, take me with you.’

“After she had told us how we could enter the dragons’ court-yard and what we must do, I swore by what was dearest to me in the world, my father, that I would not leave her in the dragons’ power, but take her away. Then we continued the journey. To tell the truth, I loved her as soon as I saw her.

“When we reached the borders of the next dragon-kingdom, we stopped to rest, but at dawn the following day we crossed the frontier and by noon reached their palace, which was even more beautiful than the first one. As soon as I had dismounted from my horse, I went to the stable, but my companion turned back, for this was what the girl had advised. The horses were at their cribs. One turned its head and looked at me. I patted its eyes, pulled its ears, threw a bridle over its neck, mounted it, and in riding by, took the cage with the magic bird that hung in the entry.”

“You brought the wonderful bird?” cried the emperor. “Then you are my son, whom all believe dead.”

“Even so, father.” And after kissing the emperor’s hand, he begged him to send for the poultry-keeper. When she came, the shepherd said, “This is the girl of whom I told you.”

“How is that possible!” replied the emperor. “How did she become a poultry maid?”

“She’ll tell you that herself. I don’t know. So, as I was saying,” he continued, “after I had snatched the cage I fled as fast as I could on the horse I had taken from the dragons, but the other horses began to neigh and make such a noise that my hair fairly bristled, yet I held firm. The dragons chased me until I reached my comrade, who was waiting for me on the frontier. If it had not been for him, they would have seized me, and who knows what would have become of me then. But my companion stretched out his hand, shouting, ‘Stop!’ The dragons seemed to be suddenly turned to stone; not another step forward did they take. After embracing and kissing me he admired the bird’s beauty. The dragons did every thing in their power to get it from me, and made all sorts of promises, but when they saw they could not persuade me, begged me at least to give them the horse. I perceived it would not be right to leave them in such a sad state, so I returned the horse and went on with my companion and the bird, but the dragons almost stared their eyes out after it.

"When we reached the other dragon palace, the girl was waiting for us at the gate. Cracking her whip three times the whole building changed into an apple, which she put in her pocket. I passed my arm around her, and we set out. But oh! dear, when the dragons discovered it! How they chased us, roaring so that our blood curdled in our veins. I summoned all my courage, spurred my horse, and fled like the wind with my companion. But the dragons came as fast as thought. When my comrade saw this, and perceived that there was no possibility of escape, he stopped, made a sign and turned them into blocks of stone. Then we continued our journey till we reached the field from which we had started and which was part of the fox's property. After we had rested and I had thanked God that we had accomplished our task, I asked my comrade what those stone pillars meant.

"He answered: 'If you know you will regret it, and if you don't know, you will also regret it.'

"'Pray tell me.'

"'These are your brothers,' he answered. 'Instead of kindly granting my request, as you did, they set their hounds on me, which condemned me to wear the loathsome fox-skin still longer, so I turned them to stone.'

"'For my sake,' I entreated, 'for the sake of our friendship, make them men again as they were before.'

"'I prize your friendship greatly,' he replied, 'so let it be as you wish — but you'll repent it.'

"In an instant he made a sign with his hand, the stones suddenly shook, and my brothers remained motionless with amazement, when they saw us before them. We took leave of my comrade and set out on our way home. But see what a fine trick my brothers played me.

"'Brother,' they said, after we had ridden about a mile, 'we are tired by the long distance, and it is very warm. Let us go to a pond we know here and each drink a little to cool ourselves.' I agreed, and we went there. The oldest drank, so did the second one, but when I was going to drink too, lying face downward at the edge of the pond, so that I could reach the water with my lips, as they had done, I suddenly felt a terrible burning sensation in both feet, and when I turned to see the cause, could not get up; my brothers had cut off both my feet, and then hurried off, without listening to my complaints and entreaties.

"I spent three days and nights beside the pond. When my good horse saw a dragon coming, it lifted me by my clothes with its teeth, ran as far as it could and kicked so violently that no wild beast could approach us.

"At last, on the fourth day, I met a blind man groping his way along. 'Who are you?' I asked.

"'A poor, maimed fellow,' said he. Then, after he had told me that his brothers, out of envy, had put out his eyes, I told him that my brothers had cut off my feet.

"'I'll tell you what!' he exclaimed. 'We'll take an oath of brotherhood. I have feet, you have eyes, so I'll carry you on my back. I'll walk for you, and you shall see for me. A huge scorpion lives close by, whose blood cures all kinds of diseases.'

"I accepted his offer, and we went to the scorpion's house. He was not at home, so the blind man put me behind the door, telling me to kill him with my sword as soon as he came in; then he hid himself behind the stove. We did not wait long before the scorpion entered in a great rage, for he had noticed that somebody had broken into his house. When I saw him my heart shrunk till it was no bigger than a flea, but as he came in I waited till he was close by me, then struck one blow that chopped all three of his heads off at once.

“I instantly smeared myself with the hot blood and as soon as it touched my feet they stuck as fast as if they had never been cut off. I also smeared the blind man’s eyes, and his sight returned. After thanking God, each set out on his own way.

“I did not want to go home at once, but thought it best to hire out as a shepherd and leave God to arrange things so that the criminals’ guilt should appear. I was not disappointed in my confidence, for you see His power is great and His judgment just.”

“Now tell me how you became a servant and poultry-maid,” said the emperor to the maiden.

“After your imperial majesty’s oldest sons had cut off their youngest brother’s feet, one of them took me, the other the wonderful bird. I thought my heart would dissolve with grief because I was obliged to part from your majesty’s youngest son, whom I loved because he was such a noble man. They proposed that I should love one of them, and promised that he would marry me as soon as we reached the emperor’s court. After refusing all their offers, I preferred to take service as your majesty’s poultry maid, rather than go any where else, for I knew God would not let a man who did right perish, and now I thank Him for having shown me that a good deed is never lost.”

“Can you prove,” asked the emperor, “that you are the girl and no one else?”

“This apple will show every one that I am she,” replied the girl, drawing it from her bosom. “Your older sons knew nothing about it, or they would have taken it from me.”

With these words she went out of doors, cracked a little whip three times over the apple and a magnificent palace, more splendid than any in the kingdom, instantly arose.

The emperor himself was astonished. He wished to celebrate his youngest son’s return, but the latter said, “Father, before we thank God that I have come home alive, let us three brothers submit to His judgment.”

The emperor could make no objection. The brothers were led before him and he ordered the older ones to kneel and ask the youngest son’s forgiveness. But he replied: “If God forgives you, I will also.”

As they could not avoid it, they went in front of the church, and set out three bee-hives at equal distances apart. Each brother stood with his feet in one, and hurled a stone into the air from a sling. The elder brothers’ stones in falling back struck them so hard on the head that they were killed, but the youngest brother’s fell in front of him.

Many had assembled to witness this trial. After the wedding was over and the emperor had married his son to the poultry-maid, he came down from the throne and gave it to the prince, who, if alive, reigns there still.

I was present at these events, and now tell them to those who listen.

3

THE TWINS WITH THE GOLDEN STAR

Once upon a time something happened. If it hadn’t happened, it wouldn’t be told.

There was an emperor, who ruled over a whole world, and in this world lived an old shepherd and shepherdess, who had three daughters, Anna, Stana, and Laptitza.

Anna, the oldest sister, was so beautiful that the sheep stopped feeding when she went among them; Stana, the second, was so lovely that the wolves watched the herd when she was the shepherdess, but Laptitza, the youngest, who had a skin as white as the foam of milk, and hair as soft as the wool of the lambkins, was as beautiful as both of her sisters put together, beautiful as only she herself could be.

One summer day, when the sunbeams were growing less scorching, the three sisters went to the edge of the forest to pick strawberries. While searching for them, they heard the tramp of horses’ hoofs, as if a whole troop of cavalry were dashing up. It was the emperor’s son, hunting with his friends and courtiers, all handsome, stately youths, sitting their horses as if they were a part of their steeds, but the handsomest and proudest of all rode the most fiery charger, and was the emperor’s son himself.

When they saw the sisters, they curbed their horses and rode more slowly.

“Listen to me, sisters,” said Anna; “if one of those youths should choose me for his wife, I’d knead a loaf of bread which, when he had eaten it, would make him always feel young and brave.”

“And I,” said Stana, “would weave my husband a shirt, in which he could fight against dragons, go through water without being wet, or fire without being burned.”

“But I,” said Laptitza, the youngest sister, “would give my husband two beautiful sons, twin boys with golden hair, and on their foreheads a golden star, a star as bright as Lucifer.”

The youths heard these words, and turning their horses dashed toward the maidens.

“Sacred be thy promise, thou shalt be mine, fairest empress,” cried the emperor’s son, lifting Laptitza with her berries upon his horse.

“And thou shalt be mine!” “And thou shalt be mine!” said a second and third youth; so bearing their lovely burdens on their steeds, all dashed back to the imperial court.

The three weddings were celebrated the very next day, and for three days and nights the festival was held throughout the empire with great pomp and splendor. After three days and nights the news went through the whole country that Anna had gathered grain, ground, boiled, and kneaded it, and made a loaf of bread, as she had promised while picking strawberries. Then, after three more days and nights, tidings went through the land that Stana had collected flax, dried, and hackled it, spun it into linen, wove the cloth, and made her husband a shirt as she had promised while seeking for her strawberries. Laptitza alone had not yet kept her word, but great things require time.

When seven weeks had passed, counting from the wedding day, the emperor’s son, now emperor, appeared before his brave companions and the other courtiers with a very joyous face, and in a much softer voice than ever before informed them that henceforth he should not leave the court for a long time, his heart moved him to stay with his wife night and day.

So the world, the country, and the whole empire rejoiced in the expectation of seeing something never beheld before.

But many things happen in this world, among them much that is good and much that is evil.

The emperor had a step-mother, who had brought with her to the palace a daughter of her first husband, a girl with beautiful hair. But woe betide those who have such relationships.

The step-mother had intended that her daughter should become the emperor's wife and empress of the whole country, instead of little Milk-white, the shepherd's daughter. Therefore she determined that if things fell out as Laptitza had promised, the emperor and the world should believe they did not happen according to the prediction.

But the step-mother could not carry out her plan, because the emperor remained with his wife day and night. Yet she thought that gradually, by coaxing and cunning, she might get rid of him, and then Laptitza would be left in her care and she would provide for every thing.

But she could not get rid of the emperor by means of a few coaxing words. The wind blew them away, and all her craft was useless. Time passed, the day for the fulfillment of Laptitza's promise was drawing near, and still the emperor never left his wife.

When the step-mother saw that no plot succeeded, she felt as if a stone were lying heavy on her heart, and sent a message to her brother, whose kingdom was very near, to ask him to come with his soldiers and summon the emperor to a war.

This was a clever plan and, as will be seen, not an unsuccessful one. The emperor fairly leaped into the air in his rage, when he heard that hostile soldiers were on the march to attack his country, and that something would occur which had not happened for a long time — a battle, a terrible battle, a battle between two emperors. The young husband saw that there was no help for it, he must do what needed to be done.

That is the way with emperors. No matter how much they wish to guard their wives — if they hear of war, their hearts fairly leap in their bodies, their brains swell almost to bursting, their eyes grow dim, and leaving wife and children in God’s care, they dash like the wind to battle.

The emperor departed at the first sign of peril, moved as swiftly as one of God’s judgments, fought as only he could fight, and at dawn on the morning of the third day was back again at the imperial court, his heart soothed by the battle, but full of unsatisfied longing to know what had happened during his absence.

And — this had happened. Just at dawn on the morning of the third day, when the stars were paling in the sky, and the emperor was only three steps from the palace-gate, the Lord’s gift came down to the earth, and Laptitza’s promise was fulfilled — two beautiful twin princes, exactly alike, each with golden hair and a golden star on his forehead.

But the world was not to see them!

The step-mother, as wicked as her thoughts, hastily put two puppies in the place of the beautiful twins, and buried the golden-haired children at the corner of the palace, just under the emperor’s windows.

When the monarch entered the palace he saw and heard nothing except the two puppies the step-mother had put in the twins’ place. No words were wasted. The emperor saw with his own eyes, and that was enough. Laptitza had not kept her promise, and there was nothing to be done except mete out her punishment.

He could not help it, and though his own heart was torn, commanded that the empress should be buried to her breast in the earth and so remain before the eyes of the world, in token of what befell those who tried to deceive an emperor.

The next day the step-mother's wish was fulfilled. The emperor married a second time, and again the wedding festivities lasted three days and three nights.

But God's blessing does not rest upon unjust deeds.

The two princes found no rest in the earth. Two beautiful aspens sprang up where they were buried, but when the step-mother saw them she ordered them to be pulled up by the roots. The emperor, however, said: "Let them grow, I like to see them before the window. I never beheld such aspens before."

So the trees grew, grew as no other aspens ever had grown, every day a year's growth, every night another year's growth, but in the dawn of morning, when the stars were paling in the sky, three years' growth in a single moment. When three days and three nights had passed, the two aspens were lofty trees, lifting their boughs to the emperor's window, and when the wind stirred the branches, he listened to their rustling all day long.

The step-mother suspected what they were, and pondered all day trying to find some way to get rid of the trees at any cost. It was a difficult task, but a woman's will can squeeze milk from a stone, a woman's cunning conquers heroes — what force can not accomplish, fair words win, and when these fail, hypocritical tears succeed.

One morning the empress sat down on the side of her husband's bed and began to overwhelm him with loving words and tender caresses. It was a long time before the thread broke, but at last — even emperors are mortal!

"Very well," he said, reluctantly, "have your own way; order the aspens to be cut down, but one must be made into a bedstead for me, the other for you."

This satisfied the empress. The aspens were cut down, and before night the beds were standing in the emperor's room.

When he lay down, he felt as if he had become a hundred times heavier, yet he had never rested so well; but it seemed to the empress as if she were lying on thorns and nettles, so that she could not sleep all night long.

When the emperor had fallen asleep, the beds began to creak, and amid this creaking the empress fancied she heard words that no one else understood.

“Is it hard for you, brother?” asked one of the beds.

“No, it isn’t hard for me,” replied the bed in which the emperor was sleeping, “I am happy, for my beloved father rests upon me.”

“It’s hard for me,” replied the other, “for on me lies a wicked soul.”

So the beds talked on in the empress’s ears until the dawn of morning.

When daylight came, the empress planned how she could destroy the beds. At last she ordered two bedsteads exactly like them, and when the emperor went hunting, placed them in his room without his knowledge; but the aspen beds, down to the very smallest splinter, she threw into the fire.

When they were burned so entirely that not even a bit of charcoal remained, the empress collected the ashes and scattered them to the winds, that they might be strewn over nine countries and seas, and not an atom find another atom through all eternity.

But she had not noticed that just when the fire was burning brightest two sparks rose, and soaring upward, fell again into the midst of the deep river that flowed through the empire, where they were changed into two little fishes with golden scales, so exactly alike that nobody could help knowing they were twin brothers.

One day the imperial fishermen went out early in the morning, and threw their nets into the water. Just at the moment the last stars were fading, one of the men drew up his net and beheld what he had never seen before: two tiny fishes with golden scales.

The other fishermen assembled to see the miracle, but when they had beheld and admired it, determined to carry the fish alive to the emperor for a gift.

“Don’t take us there, we’ve just come from there, and it will be our destruction,” said one of the fishes.

“But what shall I do with you?” asked the fisherman.

“Go and gather the dew from the leaves, let us swim in it, put us in the sun, and don’t come back again till the sunbeams have dried the dew,” said the second little fish.

The fisherman did as he was told, gathered the dew from the leaves, put the little fish into it, placed them in the sun, and did not come back till the dew was all dried up.

But what had happened! What did he see?

Two boys, handsome princes with golden hair and a golden star on their foreheads, so exactly alike that no one who saw them could help knowing that they were twin brothers.

The children grew very rapidly. Every day enough for a year, and every night enough for another year, but in the dawn of morning when the stars paled in the sky, enough for three years in a single moment. Besides, they grew as no other children ever had grown, three times as fast in age, strength, and wisdom. When three days and nights had passed, they were twelve years in age, twenty-four in strength, and thirty-six in wisdom.

“Now let us go to our father,” said one of the princes to the fisherman.

The fisherman dressed the lads in beautiful clothing, and made each a lambskin cap, which the boys drew low over their faces, that no one might see their golden hair and the golden star on their foreheads, and then took the princes to the imperial palace.

It was broad daylight when they arrived.

“We want to speak to the emperor,” said one of the princes to the guard, who stood armed at the door of the palace.

“That can’t be done, he’s at table,” replied the soldier.

“Just because he *is* at table,” said the second prince, passing through the door.

The guards ran up and tried to drive the boys out of the court-yard, but the boys slipped through their fingers like quicksilver. Three paces forward, three up, and they were standing before the great hall, where the emperor was dining with all his court.

“We want to come in,” said one of the princes sharply, to the servants who stood at the door.

“That can’t be done,” one of the lackeys answered.

“Indeed! We’ll see whether it can be done or not,” cried the other prince, pushing the men aside right and left.

But there were a great many lackeys, and only two princes. A tumult and uproar arose outside, that resounded through the palace.

“What is going on out there?” asked the emperor angrily.

The princes stopped when they heard their father’s voice.

“Two boys are trying to enter by force,” said an attendant, approaching the emperor.

“By force? Who seeks to enter my palace by force? Who are these boys?” cried the emperor in the same breath.

“We know not, your majesty,” replied the lackey, “but there must be something uncommon about them, for the lads are as strong as young lions, they overpowered the guard at the gate, and have given us plenty to do. Besides, they are proud, they don’t lift their caps from their heads.”

The emperor flushed scarlet with rage.

“Throw them out!” he cried. “Set the dogs on them.”

“Never mind, we will go,” said the princes, weeping at the harsh words, as they went down the steps again.

As they reached the gate, they were stopped by a servant, who was out of breath from running to overtake them.

“The emperor has commanded you to come back, the empress wants to see you.”

The princes hesitated, then turned, climbed the stairs, and still with their caps on their heads appeared before the emperor.

There stood a long, wide table, at which sat all the imperial guests; at the head was the emperor, and beside him the empress, reclining on twelve silk cushions.

As the princes entered, one of these twelve cushions fell to the floor, only eleven remaining under the royal lady.

“Take off your caps!” cried a courtier.

“To wear the head covered is a token of rank among men. We wish to be what we are.”

“Why, yes!” exclaimed the emperor, softened by the musical words that fell from the boys’ lips. “Remain what you are, but who are you? Whence do you come, and what do you want?”

“We are twin brothers, members of a family that is broken in twain, half in the earth, half at the head of the table; we come from whence we went, and have reached the place whence we came; we have had a long journey, have spoken in the sighing of the wind, given a voice to wood, sang in the ripples of the water, but now we wish to chant in human language a song you know without knowing it.”

A second cushion fell from under the empress.

“Let them go home with their nonsense!” she said to her husband.

“Oh! no, let them sing,” replied the emperor. “You only wanted to see them, but I wish to hear them. Sing, boys!”

The empress was silent, and the princes began to sing the story of their lives.

“There was once an emperor,” they began, and a third cushion fell from under the empress.

When they described the emperor’s departure to the war, three cushions fell at once, and when the princes had finished their song not a single one remained. But when they took off their caps and showed their golden hair and the golden star on their foreheads, guests, courtiers and emperor closed their eyes, that they might not be dazzled by so much radiance.

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AFTERWARD, what ought to have been from the beginning, happened.

Laptitza sat at the head of the table beside her husband, but the step-mother's daughter served as the humblest maid in the palace, and the wicked step-mother was fastened to the tail of a wild mare and dragged around the earth seven times, that the whole world might know and never forget, that whoever plans evil comes to a bad end.

4

YOUTH WITHOUT AGE AND LIFE WITHOUT DEATH

Once upon a time something happened whose like never occurred before — if it had not happened it would not be told — since the flea had one foot shod with ninety-nine pounds of iron and jumped into the skies to get us fairy tales.

There was once a mighty emperor and empress. Both were young and handsome, and as they desired the blessing of children they did every thing that was necessary to secure it, that is they went to the witches and philosophers and asked them to read the stars to find out whether they would have children or not. But it was all in vain. Finally the emperor heard that a very wise old man lived in a neighboring village, and sent for him. The messengers returned with the answer: “Let him who needs me come to me.” So the emperor and empress set out for the wise man’s house, taking with them several of their courtiers, attendants, and soldiers. When the old man saw them in the distance, he rose, went to meet them, and said at once:

“Welcome! But what do you want to know, oh, emperor! your wish will bring you sorrow.”

“I am not here to question you about that,” replied the emperor, “but to learn whether you have any plants you can give us that will bestow the blessing of children.”

"I have," the old man answered, "but you will possess only *one* child. He will be a handsome, lovable boy, yet you will not be able to keep him long."

After the emperor and empress had obtained the herbs they joyfully returned to the palace. The whole empire, the courtiers, and all the attendants rejoiced too. But when the hour of its birth came, the child began to scream in a way no magic arts could silence. The emperor commenced to promise it all the good things the world contained, but it was impossible to quiet it.

"Hush, father's pet," said the emperor, "I will give you this or that kingdom; hush, my son, I will give you this or that princess for your wife." At last, when he saw the child would not stop, he added: "Hush, my boy, I will give you youth without age and life without death."

Then the prince stopped crying; the courtiers beat drums and blew trumpets, and there were great rejoicings throughout the empire for a whole week.

The older the boy grew, the more thoughtful and reflective he became. He went to the schools and the philosophers and gained every kind of learning, so that the emperor died of joy and came to life again. The whole realm was proud of having a prince so wise and learned, a second King Solomon. But one day, when the lad had just reached his fifteenth year and the emperor sat at a banquet with the nobles and grandees of the country, the handsome prince rose, saying: "Father, the time has come, you must now give me what you promised at my birth!"

When the emperor heard this he grew very sorrowful and answered: "Why, my son, how can I give you an impossible thing? If I promised it to you then, it was only to hush you."

"If you can't give it to me, father, I shall be obliged to wander through the whole world till I find what was promised to me, and for which I was born."

Then all the nobles and the emperor fell at his feet and besought him not to quit the country, because, as the courtiers said, his father was growing old, and they would place him on the throne and give him the most beautiful princess under the sun for his wife. But it was impossible to shake his resolution, he remained as firm as a rock. After his father had seen and duly considered all these things, he gave his consent and prepared to supply the prince with provisions and whatever else he might need for his journey.

The young hero went to the imperial stables, where the finest steeds in the whole realm were standing, to choose one of them; but when he laid his hand on the horse's tail he knocked it down, and so they all fell, one after another. At last, just as he was going out, he let his eyes wander around the building once more and saw in one corner a sick, weak horse, covered with sores. He went up to it, and when he grasped it by the tail, the animal turned its head, saying:

"What do you command, my master? I thank God that He has permitted a hero's hand to touch me once more."

And, planting its feet firmly, it remained standing. The young prince told it what he intended to do, and the horse replied:

"To obtain your wish, you must ask your father for the sword, lance, bow, quiver of arrows, and garments he wore when a youth; but you must take care of me with your own hands for six weeks and give me oats boiled in milk."

When the prince begged the emperor for the articles the horse had advised, the monarch called the major-domo of the palace and ordered him to open all the chests of clothing, that his son might choose what he pleased. The young hero, after rummaging them three whole days, at last found in the very bottom of an old trunk the weapons and garments his father had worn in his youth, but the arms were covered with rust. He set to work to clean them with his own hands and in six weeks, during the time he was taking care of the horse, he succeeded in making the weapons as bright and shining as a mirror. When the horse heard from the handsome prince that the clothes and arms were cleaned and ready, it shook itself once. All the sores instantly fell off and there it stood, a strong, well-formed animal, with four wings. When the hero saw this, he said:

“We’ll go in three days!”

“May you have a long life, master. From to-day I shall be at your service,” the horse answered.

On the morning of the third day there was great mourning throughout the whole court and empire. The handsome prince, clad like a hero, holding his sword in his hand and riding the horse he had chosen, took leave of the emperor, the empress, the great nobles and lesser grandees, the army, and all the attendants, who, with tears in their eyes, implored him to give up the journey and not risk his life; but setting spurs to his steed, he dashed through the gate like the wind, followed by the carts loaded with provisions and money, and the two hundred horsemen the emperor had commanded to accompany him.

After reaching the boundaries of his father’s country and arriving at the wilderness, the prince distributed all his property among the escort, bade them farewell, and sent them back, keeping for himself only as much food as the horse could carry. Then he turned toward the east and rode for three days and three nights, till he came to a wide plain where lay a great many human bones.

When he stopped here to rest, the horse said: “You must know, master, that we are on the land of a Woodpecker Fairy who is so wicked that nobody can enter her domain without being murdered. She was once a woman, but the curse of her parents, whom she angered by her disobedience, turned her into a woodpecker. She is with her children now, but you will meet her to-morrow in yonder forest; she will come to kill you. She is terribly big, but don’t be frightened; hold the bow ready to pierce her with an arrow, and keep your sword and lance in hand, so that you can use them in case of need."

Then they went to rest, taking turns in watching.

At dawn the next morning they prepared to pass through the forest; the prince saddled and bridled the horse, drew the girths tighter than usual, and mounted. Suddenly he heard a tremendous crashing. "Make ready, master," said the horse, "the Woodpecker Fairy is coming." As she approached, she moved so fast that she tore the trees down; but the horse leaped upward like the wind, so that it was almost over her, and the prince shot off one of her feet with an arrow. Just as he was about to discharge the second arrow, she cried:

"Stop, my young hero, I'll do you no harm." And seeing that he did not believe her, she gave him the promise written with her own blood.

"Your horse can not be killed, my young hero," she added, "it is enchanted; if it hadn't been for that, I would have roasted and eaten you. Know that until to-day no mortal man has ventured to cross my boundaries as far as this; a few bold wights who dared to make the trial, reached the plain where you saw so many bones."

They now went to the fairy's house, where she entertained them as guests. But while sitting at the table enjoying the banquet, the Woodpecker Fairy moaned with pain, so the prince pulled the foot he had shot off out of the traveling bag where he had put it, fastened it on, and it instantly healed. The hostess, in her joy, kept open house for three days, and begged the emperor's son to choose one of her daughters, all three of whom were beautiful as fairies, for his wife. He would not do that, but told her what he was seeking, and she replied:

"With your horse and your heroic courage, I believe you will succeed."

After three days had passed, the prince prepared to continue his journey and departed. He rode on, and on, and on; the road seemed to grow longer and longer, but when he had finally crossed the frontiers of the Woodpecker

Fairy’s kingdom, he entered a beautiful meadow, one side of which was covered with blooming plants, but the other was scorched.

The prince asked why the grass was singed, and the horse answered:

“We are now in the domain of the Scorpion Witch; she is the Woodpecker Fairy’s sister, but they are both so wicked that they can’t live together. Their parents’ curse has fallen upon them, and so, as you see, they have become monsters; their enmity goes beyond all bounds; they are always trying to get possession of each other’s lands. When this one is very angry she spits fire and pitch; she must have had some quarrel with her sister, and, to drive her out of her kingdom, has burned the grass on which she was standing. She is even worse than her sister, and has three heads. We will rest awhile now, and be ready at the first peep of dawn to-morrow.”

The next day they prepared themselves just as they did when they expected to meet the Woodpecker fairy, and set out. Soon they heard a howling and rustling unlike any thing ever known before.

“Make ready, master, the Scorpion Witch is coming.”

The Scorpion Witch, with one jaw in the sky and the other on the earth, approached like the wind, spitting fire as she came, but the horse darted upward as swiftly as an arrow, and then rushed over her a little on one side. The hero shot an arrow and one of her heads fell, but when he was going to strike off another, the Scorpion Witch entreated him to forgive her, she would do him no harm, and to convince him of this she gave him her promise, written in her own blood.

Like the Woodpecker Fairy, she entertained the prince, who returned her head, which grew on again, and at the end of three days he resumed his travels.

When the hero and his horse had reached the boundaries of the Scorpion Witch’s kingdom they hurried on without resting till they came to a field covered with flowers, where reigned perpetual spring. Every blossom was remarkably beautiful and filled with a sweet, intoxicating fragrance; a gentle breeze fanned them all. They remained here to rest, but the horse said:

“We have arrived so far successfully, master, but we still have one great peril to undergo and, if the Lord helps us to conquer it, we shall really be valiant heroes. A short distance further on is the palace where dwell Youth without Age and Life without Death. It is surrounded by a high, dense forest, where roam all the wild animals in the world, watching it day and night. They are very numerous, and it is almost beyond the bounds of possibility to get through the wood by fighting them; we must try, if we can, to jump over them.”

After resting about two days they prepared to continue their journey, and the horse, holding its breath, said:

“Buckle my girth as tight as you can, and when you have mounted hold fast to my mane and press your feet close to my neck, that you may not hinder me.” The prince mounted, and in a moment they were close to the forest.

“Master,” said the horse, “this is the time that the wild beasts are fed; they are all collected together, now we’ll jump over.”

“Forward,” replied the handsome prince, “and may the Lord have mercy on us.”

They flew upward and saw the palace, which glittered so that it would have been easier to look at the sun. They passed over the forest, and, just as they were descending at the palace steps, one of the horse’s hoofs lightly touched the top of a tree, which put the whole woods in motion. The wild animals began to howl till it was enough to make one’s hair bristle. They hastily alighted, and if the mistress of the palace had not been outside feeding her chickens (for that is what she called the wild beasts), they would certainly have been killed. She spared their lives out of pure pleasure, for she had never before seen a human being. Restraining the savage beasts, she soothed them, and sent them back to their haunts. She was a tall, slender, lovely fairy, quite too beautiful. When the young hero saw her, he stood still as though turned to stone. But as she gazed at him she pitied him and said:

“Welcome, my handsome prince. What do you seek here?”

“We seek Youth without Age and Life without Death.”

Then he dismounted from his horse and entered the palace, where he found two other ladies, both of the same age, the elder sisters of the first one. He began to thank the fairy for having delivered him from danger, but she and her sisters, to show their joy, had a handsome banquet served in golden dishes. They gave the horse liberty to graze wherever it chose, and afterward made it acquainted with all the wild beasts, so that it might rove about the forest in peace. The ladies entreated the prince to stay with them, saying that it was so tiresome to be alone. He did not wait to be asked a second time, but accepted the offer with the satisfaction of a man who has found precisely what he sought.

By degrees they became accustomed to live together; the prince told them his story and related what he had suffered before meeting them, and after some time he married the youngest sister. At their wedding permission was granted to him to go wherever he liked in the neighborhood; they only begged him not to enter one valley, which they pointed out, otherwise some misfortune would befall him; it was called, they said, the Valley of Lamentation.

The prince spent a very long time at the palace without being aware of it, for he always remained just as young as he was when he arrived. He wandered about the woods without ever having a headache. He amused himself in the golden palace, lived in peace and quiet with his wife and her sisters, enjoyed the beauty of the flowers, and the sweet, pure air. He often went hunting; but one day, while pursuing a hare, he shot two arrows at it without hitting the animal. Angrily chasing it he discharged a third arrow, which struck it, but in his haste the luckless man had not noticed that he had passed through the Valley of Lamentation while following the game.

He picked it up and turned toward home, but was suddenly seized with a longing for his father and mother. He did not venture to speak of this wish to his wife, yet by his grief and restlessness both she and her sisters instantly perceived his condition.

“Oh! luckless prince, you have passed through the Valley of Lamentation,” they said in terror.

“I did so, my dear ones, without meaning to be so imprudent, but now the longing to see my parents is killing me! Yet I can not forsake you. I have already spent several days with you and have no cause to complain. So I’ll go and see my parents once more, and then come back to you, never to leave you again.”

“Do not quit us, beloved prince! Your parents died two or three hundred years ago, and if you go, we fear you yourself will never return; stay with us, for a presentiment of evil tells us that you will perish!”

All the entreaties of the three ladies, as well as those of the horse, were unable to quiet the young hero’s longing for his parents, which was fairly consuming him alive.

At last the horse said: “If you don’t listen to me, master, whatever happens to you will be your own fault. I’ll tell you something, and if you accept my condition, I’ll take you back.”

“I’ll accept it with many thanks,” replied the prince; “let me hear it.”

“As soon as you reach your father’s palace you will dismount, but I am to return alone in case you stay even an hour.”

“Be it so,” the prince agreed.

They made their preparations for the journey, the prince embraced the ladies and after having bade them farewell he rode away, but they sobbed and wept bitterly when he left them.

They reached the country which had once been the kingdom of the Scorpion Witch, but found cities there; the woods had become fields; the prince questioned one person and another about the Scorpion Witch and her house, but they answered that their grandfathers had heard from their great, great grandfathers that such silly tales had once been told.

“How is that possible!” replied the prince, “I came through this region myself only a short time ago,” and he told them all he knew.

The people laughed at him as if he were a lunatic or a person talking in his sleep, and the prince angrily rode on without noticing that his hair and beard were growing white.

When he reached the realm of the Woodpecker Fairy, the same questions and answers were exchanged. The prince could not understand how these places had altered so much in a few days, and again rode angrily on. He now had a white beard that reached to his waist, and he felt as if his feet were beginning to tremble.

Quitting this country he arrived in his father’s empire. Here he found new people, new towns, and every thing so much changed that he could not recognize it. At last he came to the palace where he was born. When he dismounted, the horse kissed his hand, and said:

“I wish you good health, master, I’m going back to the place from which I came. If you want to go too, mount quickly, and we’ll be off.”

“Farewell, I too hope to return soon.”

The horse darted away with the speed of an arrow.

When the prince saw the ruined palace and the weeds growing around it, he sighed deeply and with tears in his eyes tried to remember how magnificent these places had once been. He walked around the building two or three times, tried to recollect how every room, every corner had looked, found the stable where he had discovered the horse, and then went down into the cellar, whose entrance was choked up with fallen rubbish.

He groped hither and thither, holding up his eyelids with his hands, and scarcely able to totter along, while his snowy beard now fell to his knees, but found nothing except a dilapidated old chest, which he opened. It seemed empty, but as he raised the lid a voice from the bottom said: “Welcome, if you had kept me waiting much longer, I too should have gone to decay.”

Then his death, which had become completely shriveled in the chest, seized him; but the prince fell lifeless on the ground and instantly crumbled into dust.

5

THE LITTLE PURSE WITH TWO HALF-PENNIES

There was once an old man and an old woman. The old woman had a hen and the old man had a rooster; the old woman's hen laid two eggs a day and she ate a great many, but she would not give the old man a single one. One day the old man lost patience and said: "Listen, old crony, you live as if you were in clover, give me a couple of eggs so that I can at least have a taste of them."

"No indeed!" replied the old woman, who was very avaricious. "If you want eggs, beat your rooster that he may lay eggs for you, and then eat them; I flogged my hen, and just see how she lays now."

The old man, being stingy and greedy, listened to the old woman's talk, angrily seized his rooster, gave him a sound thrashing and said:

"There, now, lay some eggs for me or else go out of the house, I won't feed you for nothing any longer."

As soon as the rooster escaped from the old man's hands it ran off down the high-road. While thus pursuing its way, lo and behold! it found a little purse with two half-pennies. Taking it in its beak, the bird turned and went back toward the old man's house. On the road it met a carriage containing a gentleman and several ladies. The gentleman looked at the rooster, saw a purse in its bill, and said to the driver:

"Get down and see what this rooster has in its beak."

The driver hastily jumped from his box, took the little purse from the rooster's bill, and gave it to his master. The gentleman put it in his pocket and drove on. The rooster was very angry and ran after the carriage, repeating continually:

Kikeriki, sir, Kikerikak,
To me the little purse give back.

The enraged gentleman said to the coachman as they passed a well:

"Take that impudent rooster and throw it into the well."

The driver got down from his box again, seized the rooster, and flung it down the well. When the rooster saw that its life was in such great danger, what was it to do?

It began to swallow the water, and drank and drank till it had swallowed all the water in the well. Then it flew out and again ran after the carriage, calling:

Kikeriki, sir, Kikerikak,
To me the little purse give back.

When the gentleman saw this, he was perfectly amazed and said:

"Hoho! This rooster is a perfect imp of Satan! Never mind! I'll wring your neck, you saucy cockerel!" When he reached home he told the cook to take the rooster, throw it on the coals burning upon the hearth, and push a big stone in front of the opening in the chimney. The old woman did what her master bade her.

When the rooster saw this new injustice, it began to spit out the water it had swallowed till it had poured all the water from the well upon the burning coals. This put out the fire, cooled the hearth, and made such a flood on the kitchen floor that the cook fainted away from pure rage. Then the rooster gave the stone a push, came out safe and sound, ran to the gentleman's window, and began to knock on the panes with its bill, screaming:

KIKERIKI, sir, Kikerikak,
To me the little purse give back.

"HEAVEN KNOWS that I've got a torment in this monster of a rooster," said the gentleman. "Driver, rid me of it, toss it into the middle of the herds of cows and oxen; perhaps some bull will stick its horns through it and relieve us." The coachman seized the rooster and flung it among the herds. You ought to have seen the rooster's delight. It swallowed bulls, oxen, cows, and calves, till it had devoured the whole herd and its stomach had grown as big as a mountain. Then it went to the window again, spread out its wings before the sun so that it darkened the gentleman's room, and once more began:

KIKERIKI, sir, Kikerikak,
To me the little purse give back.

WHEN THE GENTLEMAN saw this he was ready to burst with rage and did not know what to do to get rid of the rooster. He stood thinking till at last an idea entered his head:

“I’ll lock it up in the treasure-chamber. Perhaps if it tries to swallow the ducats one will stick in its throat, and I shall get rid of the bird.” No sooner said than done. He grasped the rooster and flung it into the treasure-chamber. The rooster swallowed all the money and left the chests empty. Then it escaped from the room, went to the gentleman’s window, and again began:

Kikeriki, sir, Kikerikak,
To me the little purse give back.

As the gentleman saw that there was nothing else to be done he tossed the purse out. The rooster picked it up, went about its own business, and left the gentleman in peace. All the poultry ran after the rooster so that it really looked like a wedding; but the gentleman turned green with rage as he watched, and said sighing:

“Let them all run off to the last chick, I’m glad to be rid of the torment; there was witchcraft in that rooster!”

But the puffed-up rooster stalked proudly along, followed by all the fowls, and went merrily on and on till he reached the old man’s house and began to crow: “Kikeriki!”

When the old man heard the rooster’s voice he ran out joyfully to meet the bird, but looking through the door what did he see? His rooster had become a terrible object. An elephant beside it would have seemed like a flea; and following behind came countless flocks of birds, each one more beautiful and brilliant than the other. When the old man saw the rooster so huge and fat, he opened the gate for it. “Master,” said the bird, “spread a sheet here in the middle of the yard.”

The old man, as nimble as a top, laid down the sheet. The rooster took its stand upon it, spread its wings, and instantly the whole yard was filled with birds and herds of cattle, but it shook out on the sheet a pile of ducats that flashed in the sun till they dazzled the eyes. When the old man beheld this vast treasure he did not know what to do in his delight, and hugged and kissed the rooster.

But all at once the old woman appeared from somewhere, and when she saw this marvelous spectacle her eyes glittered in her head, and she was ready to burst with wrath.

“Dear old friend,” she said, “give me a few ducats.”

“Pine away with longing for them, old woman; when I begged you for some eggs, you know what you answered. Now flog your hen, that it may bring you ducats. I beat my rooster, and you see what it has fetched me.”

The old woman went to the hen-coop, shook the hen, took it by the tail, and gave it such a drubbing that it was enough to make one weep for pity. When the poor hen escaped from the old woman’s hands it fled to the highway. While walking along it found a bead, swallowed it, hurried back home as fast as possible, and began to cackle at the gate. The old woman welcomed it joyfully. The hen ran quickly in at the gate, passed its mistress, and went to its nest — at the end of an hour it jumped off, cackling loudly. The old woman hastened to see what the hen had laid. But when she glanced into the nest what did she perceive? A little glass bead. The hen had laid a glass bead! When the old woman saw that the hen had fooled her, she began to beat it, and beat till she flogged it to death. So the stupid old soul remained as poor as a church-mouse. From that time she might live on roast nothing and golden wait a while, instead of eggs, for she had abused and killed the poor hen, though it was not at all to blame.

But the old man was very rich; he built great houses, laid out beautiful gardens, and lived luxuriously. He made the old woman his poultry-maid, the rooster he took about with him everywhere, dressed in a gold collar, yellow boots, and spurs on its heels, so that one might have thought it was one of the Three Kings from the Christmas play instead of a mere ordinary rooster.

6

MOGARZEA AND HIS SON

There was once a young lad who had neither father nor mother. Every thing his parents had left him was in the care of guardians, and at last he could bear their unjust reproaches no longer, but went out into the wide world, entered a path leading to a glade in the forest, and followed it a long way.

When, in the evening, he grew tired and found no place to rest, he climbed a hill and gazed around him in every direction to try to discover a light; after a long search he saw the flicker of a tiny spark and went toward it. He walked and walked half the night, then he came to a huge fire, by which a man as big as a giant was sleeping. What was the youth to do? After thinking a while, he crept into one leg of the man's trowsers and spent the rest of the night there.

When the man rose the next morning, to his great astonishment, he saw the youngster drop out of his breeches.

"Where did you come from?" he asked.

"I was sent to you for a son last night," replied the lad.

"If that is true," said the big man, "you may tend my sheep, and I'll give you something to eat, but beware that you don't cross the boundaries, or woe betide you!"

He pointed out to the boy the end of his land, and then added:

"God be with you!"

The lad tended the flock all day, and when he returned in the evening found the fire lighted, and helped the giant milk the sheep.

After their work was done, they sat down to supper, and while they were eating the boy asked:

"What is your name, father?"

"Mogarzea," replied the big fellow.

"I wonder you don't get tired of staying here alone in this wilderness."

"Then you wonder without cause. Don't you know that the bear never dances willingly?"

"Yes, you're right there," replied the boy. "But I see that you are always dull and sad. Tell me your story, father."

"What can be the use of telling you things that would make you sorrowful too?"

"Never mind, I should like to know them. Are you not my father? Do you suppose you have me as a son for nothing?"

"Well then, if that's true and you wish it, listen to my story.

"My name, as I have already told you, is Mogarzea; I am a prince, and set out to go to the Sweet-milk Lake, which is not far from here, to marry a fairy. I had heard that three fairies lived there. But Fortune did not smile upon me; wicked elves attacked me and took away my soul. Since that time I have settled here to dwell with my sheep on this little patch of land, without being able to take pleasure in any thing, without having a moment's happiness, or even once enjoying a laugh.

"The abominable elves are so quarrelsome that they let no one who crosses their frontiers go unpunished. That's why I advise you to be on your guard, lest something should happen to you also."

"All right, all right, just let me alone, father," replied the youth, and they went to rest.

When day dawned, the lad rose and set off with the flock. I don't know how or why, but he could not feel content to gaze at the elves' beautiful meadows, while the sheep were grazing on Mogarzea's barren ground.

On the third day, when he was standing in the shade of a tree playing on the flute, for he was, as it were, a master of the art of flute playing, one of the sheep strayed away into the flowery meadows, others followed, then others, till, when the youth noticed them, a number of the animals had crossed the boundaries.

Still playing on his flute, he went to drive back the sheep which had left the flock, but he suddenly saw before him three merry maidens, who stopped him and began to dance around him. When the lad discovered the state of affairs, he summoned up his courage and blew with all his might. They danced until the evening.

"Let me go now," he said, "poor Mogarzea will be hungry; to-morrow, if you wish, I'll play still better."

"We will let you go," they replied, "but you know that if you don't come you will not escape our punishment."

So they agreed that he was to come directly to them the next morning, sheep and all, then each went home. Mogarzea wondered why the milk had increased so much, and was not satisfied until the lad assured him that he had not crossed the boundaries. They ate their supper and went to rest.

The youth did not wait till it had become perfectly light, but at the first streak of dawn set off with the sheep straight to the elves' meadows. When he began to play on his flute, the elves instantly appeared and danced and danced till evening. Then the youth pretended to drop the flute and, as if by accident, stepped upon it and broke it.

If you could have seen how he bewailed it, how he wrung his hands and wept over the loss of his companion, you would surely have pitied him. Even the elves were touched with compassion and tried to comfort him.

“I wouldn’t care so much,” he said, “only I shall never find another flute that will sound as merry as this one, for it was made out of the heart of a seven-year-old cherry tree.”

“We have, in the court-yard, a cherry tree that is just seven years old; if you want it, come, we’ll cut it down and you can make yourself another flute.”

They all went there, felled the cherry tree, and for fear of touching the pith while stripping off the bark, the youth requested all the elves to help.

After having made a cleft in the trunk with his ax, large enough for them to get their fingers in, he told them to take hold of it in order to break it apart solely by the strength of their arms, that the blade of the ax might not touch the pith of the wood. They were actually stupid enough to do so as they stood around the trunk, and, while saying “pull,” he drew out the ax and caught their fingers in the crack.

In vain the elves begged him to release them, in vain they said that they were almost faint with pain; the lad would not even listen to the fine promises they made, but remained as cold as a stone.

Finally he asked them for Mogarzea’s soul.

“It is in a bottle on the window-sill,” they said.

After he had fetched it, he inquired how he could restore it to its place, and the elves explained, hoping he would then release them from their torture.

“You have tormented many people so that they suffered terrible agony all their lives; now you too can suffer for one night, it won’t make the sky fall.”

With these words he took the sheep and Mogarzea’s soul and departed; but the elves wailed so that any one’s heart might have been torn with pity. When he reached home, Mogarzea scolded him for being late. The boy’s only reply was to ask him to lie down on his back, then climbing upon his breast he jumped up and down several times, until the lazy soul the elves had conjured into him darted out and the youngster gave him his own to swallow; holding his mouth and nose with his hands he made him drink the water that had been in the bottle, and then put on a plaster he had brought from the elves.

He had scarcely got it on, when Mogarzea sprang up like a deer and said:

“Whether you are my son or not, what do you want as a reward for what you have done?”

“Tell me where the Milk Lake is, and what I am to do to obtain one of the three fairies who are there for my wife, and let me be your son forever.”

Mogarzea granted the lad’s wishes and they sat down to supper without his wondering how the sheep gave so much milk; all night long they amused themselves by shouting, singing and dancing.

Noticing that dawn was approaching before they had gone to rest, they resolved to set out together to pay a visit to the cheated elves, — and did so. When Mogarzea saw them, he took them, log and all, on his back and went to his father’s kingdom, where every body rejoiced when he came home as brave and cheery as ever. But he pointed out his deliverer, who was following behind with the sheep.

Then they all thanked the lad for his cleverness in rescuing Mogarzea from misfortune, and the festivities at the palace lasted three whole days.

After these three days had passed, the boy took Mogarzea aside and said:

“I want to go now; please tell me where the Sweet-milk Lake is, and, God willing, I’ll come back again with my wife.”

At first Mogarzea tried to detain him, but finding it no use to talk till he was tired, he told him what he had heard — he had seen nothing, on account of the elves.

The boy took his flute and some food for the journey, and then, departing, walked three long summer days until the evening, before he reached the Milk Lake, which was in a fairy’s kingdom. Early the next morning he began to play on his flute at the edge of the lake, — and what did he see? A beautiful fairy, whose hair was exactly like gold, and whose clothes were more costly than any he had ever seen; she was more dazzling than the sun as she began to dance. The boy stood motionless with his eyes fixed upon her, but when the fairy noticed that he was no longer playing she vanished. The next day she did the same thing. On the third, still playing, he approached, and as in the pleasure of dancing she did not notice it, he suddenly rushed upon her, clasped her in his arms, kissed her, and snatched the rose from her head.

She screamed and then begged him to give her back the flower, but he refused. Even wood and stone might have wept over her grief, as she lamented and entreated. But when he fastened the rose in his hat, she followed him.

Finding that he could not be persuaded to restore the rose, they agreed to be married. So they went to Mogarzea, to be wedded by the emperor, and remained there, but every year in the month of May they returned to the Milk Lake to bathe their children in its waves.

After the emperor’s death Mogarzea divided the kingdom with his preserver.

7

CUNNING ILEANE

Once upon a time something happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.

There was once an emperor who had three daughters; the oldest was beautiful, the middle one more beautiful, but the youngest, Ileane, was so fair that even the sun stopped to gaze at her and admire her charms.

One day the emperor received the news that his neighbor, a mighty monarch, was no longer friendly, but wanted to fight with him on account of a great imperial feud. The emperor consulted the old men of the country, and, seeing there was nothing else to be done, he commanded his valiant soldiers to mount their horses, take their weapons, and prepare for the terrible battle which was to be fought.

Before mounting himself, the emperor called his daughters, addressed a few fatherly, touching words to them, and gave each one a beautiful flower, a merry little bird, and a rosy-cheeked apple.

“Whoever has her flower wither, her bird mope or her apple rot, I shall know has not kept her faith,” said the wise emperor; then mounting his steed he wished them “Good-health” and set off with his brave soldiers on their toilsome way.

When the neighboring emperor’s three sons heard the news that the emperor had quitted his home and gone to the war, they made an agreement among themselves and sprang on their horses to ride to the palace and vex the monarch by making his three daughters faithless to his trust. The oldest prince, a brave, spirited, handsome fellow, went first to see how matters stood and bring tidings afterward to the others.

Three days and three nights the champion stood under the wall, but not one of the girls had appeared at the windows. In the gray dawn of the fourth day he lost patience, plucked up his courage, and tapped on the oldest princess’s window.

“What is it — what is it? What is wanted?” asked the royal maiden, roused from her sleep.

“It is I, little sister,” said the prince, “I, an emperor’s son, who have stood under your window three days for love of you.”

The princess did not even approach the window, but replied in a prudent tone:

“Go back home by the way you came; may flowers spring up before you and thorns remain behind.”

After three more days and nights the prince again knocked on the girl’s window. This time the princess approached it, and said in a more gentle voice:

“I told you to go back home by the way you came; may thorns spring up before you and flowers remain behind.”

Once more the prince waited three days and three nights under the maiden’s window. In the gray dawn of the tenth day, that is after thrice three days and thrice three nights had passed, he smoothed his hair and for the third time tapped on the window.

“What is it? Who is it? What is wanted?” asked the princess, this time somewhat more sternly than before.

“It is I, little sister,” said the prince. “For thrice three days I have stood longingly under your window. I would like to see your face, gaze into your eyes, and watch the words flow from your lips!”

The princess opened the window, glanced angrily at the handsome youth, and said in a scarcely audible voice:

“I would willingly look into your face and say a word or two to you, but first go to my younger sister — then come to me.”

“I’ll send my younger brother,” replied the prince. “But give me one kiss to make my way home pleasanter.”

And almost before he had spoken, he snatched a kiss from the beautiful girl.

“May no second one fall to your lot,” said the princess, wiping her mouth with her embroidered sleeve. “Go back home by the way you came; may flowers spring up before you and flowers remain behind.”

The prince went back to his brothers and told them all that had happened, and the second took his departure.

After this prince had stood under the second princess’s window nine times nine days and nine times nine nights and tapped for the ninth time at her window, she opened it and said to him kindly:

“I would like to look at you and say a word or two to you, but first go to my youngest sister, then come to me.”

“I’ll send my youngest brother,” said the prince. “But give me one kiss, that I may hurry the faster.”

He had scarcely said it, when he stole a kiss.

“May no second one fall to your lot,” said this royal maiden too. “Go back home by the way you came, may flowers spring up before you and flowers remain behind!”

The prince returned to his brothers, told them all that had happened, and — for the third time — a hero departed, the youngest son. When he reached the palace where the three sisters lived Ileane was standing at the window, and when she saw him, said merrily:

“You handsome champion with the royal face, where are you hurrying, that you urge on your steed so hotly?”

When the prince saw Ileane’s face and heard Ileane’s words, he stopped, gazed at her, and answered boldly:

“I’m hurrying to the sun to steal one of its rays, to give to its sister and take her home, where she shall become my bride. Now, little sister, I will stop on my way to look at you, gaze at the radiance of your face, say a word to you and steal a word in reply.”

Ileane cleverly answered: “If your nature is like your words, if your soul is like your face, proud and beautiful, and mild and gentle, I will gladly call you into the house, seat you at a banquet, give you food and drink and kisses.”

The prince sprang from his horse as he heard these words, and answered boldly:

“My nature will be like my speech, my heart like my face; let me in, seat me at the banquet, you shall never repent it from dawn till nightfall.”

He had scarcely uttered the words when he leaped upon the window-sill, jumped through the window into the room, went through the room to the table, and took his place at the very top, where the emperor had sat when he was a bridegroom.

“Stop, stop!” said Ileane. “First let me see whether you are what you ought to be, and then we’ll talk and begin our love-making. Can you make roses grow on burdocks?”

“No!” said the prince.

“Then the thistle is your flower,” said clever Ileane. “Can you make the bat sing in a sweet voice?”

“No!” said the prince.

“Then night is your day,” said clever Ileane. “Can you make apples grow on wolf’s-bane?”

“That I can!” said the prince.

“Then that shall be your fruit!” replied the beautiful and cunning Ileane. “Sit down at the table.”

The prince took his place. Ah! but Ileane was indeed cunning Ileane. Ere he had fairly seated himself, he dropped, chair and all, into the deep cellar where the emperor’s treasures were kept.

Ileane now began to scream: “Help!” and when all the servants came rushing in to see what had happened, she told them she had heard a noise and was afraid that some one had got into the cellar to rob the emperor of his treasures. The servants did not waste many words, but instantly opened the iron door and went into the cellar, where they found the prince and brought him in disgrace to be sentenced.

Ileane pronounced judgment.

Twelve girls under punishment for some offense were to carry him out of the country, and when they had reached the frontier with him, each one was to give him a kiss.

The order was obeyed. When the prince reached home and joined his brothers, he told them the whole story, and after every thing had been related their hearts were filled with rage. So they sent word to the two older princesses that they must arrange to have Ileane go to the three princes’ court, so that they might revenge themselves upon her for the insult she had offered them. When the oldest daughter received this message from the prince she pretended to be sick, called Ileane to her bedside, and told her that she could not get well unless Ileane brought her something to eat from the princes’ kitchen.

Ileane would have done any thing for her sister’s sake, so she took a little jug and set off for the court of the three princes, to beg or steal. When she reached the palace, she rushed breathlessly into the kitchen and said to the head-cook:

“For heaven’s sake, don’t you hear the emperor calling you? Make haste, and see what is the matter.”

The cook took to his heels and ran as fast as he could, as though he had received an imperial command. Ileane, left alone in the kitchen, filled her jug with food, emptied all the dainty dishes that were on the fire upon the floor, and went away.

When the princes heard of this insult they were still more enraged than before, sent another message to the two sisters and again prepared a revenge. As soon as the second sister received the news, she, too, pretended to be ill, called Ileane to her bed, and told her that she could not get well unless she tasted the wine in the princes’ cellar. Ileane would have done any thing for her sister, so she took the little jug and prepared to go again.

When she reached the court she rushed into the cellar, and, panting for breath, said to the head-butler:

“For heaven’s sake, don’t you hear the emperor calling you? Make haste and see what is the matter.” The butler took to his heels and ran as if he had received an imperial command. Ileane filled her jug with wine, poured out the rest on the cellar floor, and then hurried home.

The princes sent a third message to the two princesses and told them they must send Ileane in a different way from what they had done before. This time both the princesses feigned illness, called their sister to them, and told her that they could not get well unless Ileane brought them two of the princes’ apples.

“My dear sisters,” replied Ileane, “I would go through fire and water for you, how much more willingly to the princes.” Taking the little jug she set off to find, seize, and bring back the fruit and save her dear sisters’ lives.

When the youngest prince learned that Ileane was coming to the garden to steal the golden apples, he gave orders that, if groans were heard there, nobody must dare go in, but let the person who was wailing, moan in peace. Then he hid huge knives, swords, spears, and many other things in the earth under the tree that bore the golden apples, concealing them so that only the sharp points rose out of the ground. After he had finished, he hid himself in a clump of bushes and waited for Ileane. She came to the gate, and seeing the two huge lions that kept guard there flung each of them a piece of meat; the lions began to tear it, and the princess went to the apple tree, stepped cautiously between the knives, swords, spears, and other things, and climbed into it.

"May this do you much good, little sister," said the prince. "I'm glad to see you in my garden."

"The pleasure is mine," replied Ileane, "since I have so brave and handsome a prince for my companion. Come, climb the tree and help me pick some apples for my dear sisters, who are dangerously ill and have asked for them."

The prince wanted nothing better — he meant to pull Ileane from the tree among the knives.

"You are very kind, Ileane," he replied, "be kinder still and give me your hand to help me up into the tree."

"Your plan is wicked," thought Ileane, "but it shall work your own misfortune." She gave him her hand, pulled him up the trunk to the branches, and then let him drop among the knives, swords, spears and other such things, which had been put there for her own destruction.

"There you are," she said, "now you will know what you meant to do."

The hero with the black soul began to shriek and groan — but nobody came to help him; they left him, according to his own orders, to moan in peace, and he was obliged to bear his terrible sufferings patiently.

Ileane took her apples, carried them home, gave them to her sisters, and then went back to the imperial palace and told the servants to go and rescue their master from his great danger.

The prince, who had been so abominably treated, sent for the most skillful witch in the whole country to come and give him a cure for his wounds. But Ileane had gone to the witch first and offered her a great deal of money to let her, Ileane, go to the court in her place. So Ileane went to the palace disguised as the witch. She ordered a buffalo hide to be soaked in vinegar three days and three nights, then taken out and wrapped around the wounded youth. But the prince's cuts only burned the more, and his sufferings became still more unbearable. When he saw that he was in a bad way, he sent for a priest that he might relieve his heart before he died and give him the sacrament. But Ileane was not idle. She went to the priest, offered him a large sum of money, and induced him to let her go to the palace instead. So Ileane arrived at the court disguised as a priest.

When she approached the prince's bed he was at the point of death, there were scarcely three breaths left in him.

"My son," said the false priest, Ileane, "you have summoned me to confess your sins to me. Think of the hour of death, and tell me all you have on your heart. Are you at variance with any one? Yes, or no?"

"With no one," replied the prince, "except Ileane, the youngest daughter of the emperor, our neighbor. And I hate her out of love and longing," he continued. "If I should not die, but recover, I will ask the emperor for her hand in marriage, and if I don't kill her the first night she shall be my faithful wife according to the law." Ileane heard these words, said a few in reply, and then went home. Here she soon understood why her sisters were wailing and lamenting, for they had heard that the emperor was returning home from the great war.

"You ought to rejoice," said Ileane, "when you hear that our kind father is coming home safe and well."

"We should rejoice," replied the sisters, "if our flowers had not withered, our apples had not rotted, and our birds had not stopped singing; but now we have reason to cry."

When Ileane heard these words she went to her room, saw the flower sprinkled with dew, the bird hungry, and the apple looking as if it wanted to say: “Eat me, little sister!”

So, to help her dear sisters, she gave the flower to one and the bird to the other, keeping only the beautiful apple for herself. So they waited for the arrival of the emperor, who was very stern in his commands.

When the monarch reached home, he approached his oldest daughter and asked for the flower, the bird, and the apple. She showed him nothing but the flower, and even that was half withered. The emperor said nothing, but went to his second daughter. She showed him only the little bird, and that, too, looked drooping. Again the emperor did not speak, but silently went up to his youngest daughter, clever Ileane.

When the emperor saw the apple on Ileane’s chest of drawers he could almost have devoured it with his eyes, it was so beautiful. “Where did you put the flower, and what have you done with the bird?” he asked Ileane.

Ileane did not answer, but hurried to her sisters and brought back a fresh flower and a merry little bird.

“May you prosper, my little daughter,” said the emperor; “I see now that you have kept faith with me.”

From Ileane the emperor went to his second daughter, and then to the eldest one.

When he questioned them about the three things he had trusted to their care, they hastily brought Ileane’s flower, bird, and apple. But as God permits no falsehood to succeed, in their hands the flower withered, the bird moped, and only the apple remained fresh, rosy-cheeked, and eatable.

When the emperor saw this he understood every thing, and ordered the two older princesses to be buried to their breasts in the earth, and left there that they might be an example of the severity of an imperial punishment. But Ileane he praised, kissed, spoke to her in kind, fatherly words, and said:

“May you have much happiness, my child, for you have been faithful to your duty.”

After the neighboring emperor’s son had recovered, he mounted his horse and set off to ask Ileane to be his wife. The old emperor, Ileane’s father, after hearing for what purpose the prince had come, said to him kindly:

“Go and ask Ileane, my son and hero; whatever she wishes shall, with God’s help, be done.”

Ileane said nothing, but permitted the prince to kiss her. The emperor instantly understood the whole matter and said: “My dear children, I see that you ought to be husband and wife; may it prove for your good.”

It was not long before Ileane married the bold, handsome, heroic youth. Her wedding was so magnificent that tidings of it spread through seven countries. Yes indeed! But Ileane had not forgotten the evil the prince had in his mind; she knew that he would try some trick upon her the first night after their marriage. So she ordered a sugar doll to be made exactly the same size as she was herself, with face, eyes, lips, and figure precisely like Ileane’s. When it was finished, she hid it in the bed where she was to sleep that night.

In the evening, when the relatives and friends had gone to rest and Ileane, too, had been asleep, the prince said to his bride:

“Dear Ileane, wait a little while, I’ll come back directly.” Then he left the room.

Ileane did not hesitate long, but jumped out of bed, left the sugar doll in her place, and hid behind a curtain at the head of the bed.

She had scarcely concealed herself, when the prince returned to the chamber with a sharp sword in his hand.

“Tell me now, my dear Ileane,” he said, “did you throw me into the cellar?”

"Yes," said Ileane, behind the curtain. The prince dealt one blow with the sword on the doll's breast.

"Did you drive me out of the country with scorn and mockery?" he asked again.

"Yes," said Ileane.

The prince cut the doll across her face.

"Did you empty my dishes of food?" asked the prince the third time.

"Yes," said Ileane.

The prince slashed the doll from head to foot.

"Did you pour out my wine?" was the prince's fourth question.

"Yes," said Ileane.

The prince cut the figure once across. Ileane began to breathe heavily as if in the agony of death.

"Did you throw me among the knives?" he asked for the fifth and last question.

"Yes," said Ileane.

The prince now thrust his sword into the figure's heart, slashed, and hacked it in all directions, with all his strength, till the tears ran down in streams. As dawn approached he began to sob bitterly. Suddenly a bit of sugar popped into his mouth.

"Ah, Ileane! you were sweet in life, and remain sweet even in death," he said, weeping still more violently.

"Sweet indeed," said Ileane, coming out from behind the curtain, "but from this hour forth I will be a hundred thousand times sweeter."

The prince seemed fairly petrified with delight, when he saw Ileane safe and well. He clasped her in his arms, and for many years they lived joyously and ruled the land in peace and happiness.

8

THE PRINCESS AND THE FISHERMAN

Once upon a time something happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.

There was once a fisherman, neither very well off nor very poor, but he was young, with a mustache that curled fiercely at the ends, you know, and a fine-looking fellow. Whenever he passed the imperial palace, the emperor’s daughter sent for him, bought his fish, and gave him ten times as much money as they were worth.

Our fisherman was spoiled by this wealth, and whenever he had nice fresh fish he took them to the palace; not a day passed that the princess did not buy fish if the fisherman went by.

One day, while paying for the fish, the princess pressed his hand, the fisherman blushed as red as a beet, and cast down his eyes, but first gave her one loving glance, for he had understood that she was willing he should do so.

Then he entered into conversation with her, and took good care not to say any thing stupid.

The next time the princess bought fish he began to talk about them at great length, and made her comprehend that he had understood her feelings, and that the fire of love which was consuming her burned no less hotly in his heart than in her own.

Another time he spoke still more freely, and the princess learned that he was unmarried; she was, besides, much pleased with his clever answers, and as he was very attractive the royal maiden finally fell in love with him. She gave him a purse filled with money to purchase handsome clothes, and told him to come back afterward and show himself to her.

After he had bought garments like those worn by gentlemen, he put them on and returned to the princess. She would scarcely have recognized him, for even his gait and bearing had become as stiff as a noble's.

At last, unable to repress the love that glowed in her heart, the emperor's daughter told him that she would marry him.

The fisherman did not know much, but he was aware that such a dainty morsel wasn't meant for his bill, and he could hardly believe what he heard with his ears and saw with his eyes; but when the princess assured him that she wasn't joking, he accepted her hand, though to tell the truth with many doubts and blushes.

The marriage did not exactly suit the emperor, but as he loved his daughter and she was her parents' only child, he yielded to her wishes. The princess gave the fisherman another purse filled with money, and told him to buy himself still handsomer clothes. When he returned, in garments that fairly glittered with gold, the royal maiden presented him to the emperor, and the monarch betrothed them to each other.

Ere long a magnificent imperial wedding was celebrated. When the company sat down to enjoy the banquet, a soft-boiled egg, which, according to ancient custom, only the bride and bridegroom were permitted to eat, was brought to the wedded pair. When the husband was about to dip a bit of bread into the egg, the princess stopped him, saying: "I must dip first, because I am the daughter of an emperor, and you are a fisherman." The bridegroom made no reply, but rose from the table and vanished. The guests, who did not know what had happened, looked at one another and asked in surprise what this meant, for they had not heard that the emperor’s son-in-law had formerly been a fisherman.

The bride repented her imprudence, bit her lips, and wrung her hands. She ate what she was compelled to swallow, but she might just as well have thrown it behind her, for not a morsel did her any good.

After the feast she went to her room, but all night long she could not once close her eyes or fall asleep, she was so sorrowful. She thought of her bridegroom so constantly that she was afraid she would fall ill from longing. Her principal grief was that she did not know why he had gone away without saying even one word.

The next day she went to the emperor and told him she was seized with so great a longing for her husband that she was going to follow him till she found him. The emperor tried to detain her, but she would not listen and set out on her journey.

She searched up and down the whole city, but did not find him anywhere. Then she wandered from place to place till she met him serving in a tavern.

As soon as she saw him she went up and spoke to him, but he pretended not to know her, turned his head away, made no answer, and went about his business.

The princess followed him everywhere, begging him to say just one word to her, but in vain. When the landlord saw that the stranger was to blame for the interruption in the work, he said: “Why don’t you let my servant finish his work in peace? Don’t you see he is dumb? Be kind enough to go away from here, if you are a respectable woman.”

“He isn’t dumb,” she cried, “this is my husband, who deserted and fled from me on account of a fault of mine.”

All the people in the tavern stood still in astonishment when they heard her words, for she was not joking; but the landlord could not believe it, he thought it would be impossible for a man who could speak to live a whole week without saying even one word, and every body really knew him as a dumb man, made him understand by signs, and liked him for his industry.

The princess then entered into an agreement with them all, that she would induce him to speak within three days if they would only allow her to stay with him, but if she did not succeed she would be hung. This agreement was put in writing and shown to the magistrates for their sanction. When the contract was concluded, the three days' trial was arranged to begin the next morning.

The fisherman at first knew nothing about this agreement, though he heard of it afterward, but the emperor's daughter never left his side.

"My beloved husband," she said, "you know I am to blame. I chose you because I loved you; I swear that I will never commit such a blunder again; have pity on me, speak one word to me, save me from the disgrace that is killing me. I know you have a right to be angry, but for the sake of my love, forgive me."

The fisherman turned his head toward her, shrugged his shoulders, and pretended that he did not know her, and did not understand what she was talking about. One day, two days passed, and he did not even say boo. When the third came the princess was terribly frightened, and wherever the dumb man went she followed, beseeching him to say one word to her.

But the fisherman, feeling that she was softening him by her entreaties, fled like a savage that she might not assail him with tears, and pretended his heart was a lump of ice; but she did not cease imploring him a thousand times, so tenderly that it would have softened even a wild beast.

At last the third day also passed, and the fisherman had not even said baa.

Every body wondered over these things. Nothing was talked of in the whole city, except the mute servant at the tavern and the beautiful, charming girl, who, it was supposed, had mistaken the dumb man for some one else, and had now brought herself into trouble.

The next day the gallows was ready, and the whole population gathered around it to witness the end of the affair.

The magistrates were summoned to the place, and, against their will, compelled to execute what was in the agreement.

The executioner came, and called upon the princess to submit to the penalty, since she had not succeeded in fulfilling the obligations she had imposed upon herself; the girl turned once more to the fisherman, and, sobbing bitterly, tried to soften his heart, but in vain. When she saw and understood that no escape was possible, she loosed her hair and let it fall over her shoulders, wailing so piteously that it was enough to make even wood and stone weep for her, and so walked toward the place of execution. All the people, old and young, were weeping around her, yet could not help her.

On reaching the gallows, she once more gazed hopefully at the dumb man, who had come with the crowd, but stood as if he were perfectly unmoved, and said to him:

“My dear husband, save me from death; you know my love for you, do not let me perish so ignominiously. Speak but one word and I shall be delivered.” But the man only shrugged his shoulders and glanced backward across the fields.

The executioner stood with the noose in his hand; two assistants led her up the ladder, and the hangman slipped the rope around her neck. One moment more, and the princess would have been a corpse! But just at the instant the executioner was going to let her swing out into the empty air, the fisherman raised his hand, shouting: “Hi! hi! stop!”

They all stood motionless, tears of joy streamed from every eye as the hangman took the noose from the prisoner’s neck. Then the fisherman, looking at the royal maiden, said three times:

“Will you say fisherman to me again?”

“Forgive me, my dear husband,” the princess hastened to reply, “I have only said it once, and that was by mistake. I promise you not to do so again.”

“Let her come down, she is my wife.”

He took her by the hand, and they went home together.

Afterward they lived in peace and happiness, and if they haven’t died, they are living still.

9

LITTLE WILD-ROSE

Once upon a time something extraordinary happened. If it had not happened it would not be told. It was when the wolves lay down to rest with the sheep, and the shepherds feasted in the green fields with emperors and kings, when one sun rose and another set.

There was once a man, my dear good friends. This man would now — I am telling no lie — this man would now be a hundred years old, if not twenty more to boot; his wife, too, was older than any body I know; she was like the Friday-goddess (Venus), and from youth to age had never had a single child. Only those who know what children are in a house can understand the uncontrollable grief in the empty home of the old man and his wife. The poor old man had done every thing in his power to have his house brightened and filled with joy by what he himself so greatly desired. He had given alms to the convents and churches, he had had liturgies read in seven churches, had sent for priests with white beards, because they are the holiest men and have more earnestness in prayer, and had had masses read for all the saints and prayers for the last unction. But every thing was useless. The old wife had clung to the witches and magicians. There was not an enchanter to whom she had not gone for advice, even if he lived a week’s journey off. As I said before, what wouldn’t she have done! But it was vain, all was useless.

One day the old man said sadly and thoughtfully:

“Old wife!”

“What do you want?”

“Give me some provisions to take with me on my journey, for I intend to travel through the wide world, looking wherever I go to try and find a child, for my heart aches and burns when I think that the end of my life is drawing near, and no heir will have my house after me, but all my property fall into the hands of strangers. I have tried all ways, now I will take this one. And I’ll tell you one thing: If I find no child, I won’t come home any more.”

With these words the old man took his knapsack on his back, went out of the house, and began his journey. He walked on and on and on through the kingdom and the world, as God willed. Listen, good friends, I am telling the truth. He walked on till he came to a thick forest, so dense that it seemed like a wall. Tree was intwined with tree, bush with bush, so that the sun could not even send so much as a ray of light through the foliage. When the old man saw these vast woods he thrice made the sign of the cross toward the east, prostrated himself three times, also toward the east, and then entered with great sorrow. How long a time he spent in groping about the forest I don’t know, but I do know that one day he reached the entrance of a cave. This cave was hundreds and thousands of times darker than the deep forest, as dark as it is when we shut our eyes, as dark as it usually is in endless caverns. The old man crossed himself three times, fell on his knees several times, and then, with God’s assistance, turned around a projection of a rock. He went about the distance of a gun-shot and saw a light in a cranny. Approaching nearer and nearer he could not believe his eyes when he saw what was standing beside it. An old hermit! He was very old, as ancient as the world. He had a white beard that reached to his knees, and when he raised his eyebrows and then lowered them again they shaded the whole cave.

The hermit stood like a pillar of stone, his eyes fixed on a psalm-book on which his elbow rested, and which was sprinkled with big red characters; it was very, very old, so old that God alone knew to what period it belonged; and on a broad stone a yellow wax-candle blazed with a red flame and a blue smoke that was as dense as a cloud. The old man approached the praying saint and, again falling on his knees, said:

"Good-evening, holy father!"

The hermit was so absorbed in his litany that he heard nothing. So our old man spoke louder. The hermit did not stir, but made him a sign with his crutch to move aside. The old man stood aloof till the hermit had finished his prayer. When it was over, he raised his eyebrows and began:

"My son, what do you seek from me in this dark, cheerless abode? For many centuries my eyes have seen no human face, and now I wonder what has led your footsteps hither."

The old man answered:

"I kiss your right hand. My unhappiness has brought me here. I have lived with my wife many years, but we have no children, and I should like to have an heir when I behold our Lord's glorious face."

The hermit took an apple, and, after having blessed it, cut it in two, and said:

"Take these two halves of the apple; give this one to your wife, eat the other yourself, and in God's name do not wander over the world so."

The old man took the gift, kissed the hermit's right hand and feet, and left the cave. Entering the dense forest, he walked a long time before he came to the meadows. There a terrible thirst and burning sensation in the throat seized upon him. What should he do, for he found no water? He did precisely what he was destined to do. He took the half apple and ate it. But instead of the half intended for him, he ate his wife's. He had scarcely swallowed it when he felt as if he could go no further. So he sank down on the grass where a quantity of yellow cheese-wort was growing, and fell sound asleep. And the angel of the Lord came down from Heaven, and watched beside him. When he awoke, what did his eyes behold? The wonder of wonders! The most marvelous of marvels! By his side, among the herbs, a little child was crying and moving its tiny hands. The angel brought some basil and some water that had been consecrated nine years, sprinkled the child, and christened it, giving it the name of “Little Wild-Rose.” The old man, happier than he had ever been at the sight of the pretty little girl, took her in his arms, kissed her, and set off with her to his wife. When he reached the house he took a kneading-trough, put the little thing in it, set it on the roof, and then crawled into the cottage, saying:

“Come quick, wife, come quick, and see what a treasure of a daughter, with golden hair and eyes like stars, our Lord has given me.”

When they hurried out, to see the treasure of a girl and take the trough down from the roof, they saw nothing, no trace of the child anywhere. The old man crossed himself and sighed deeply. He searched hither and thither, right and left, but the little girl was nowhere to be found. He hunted through the straw in the hut and on the ground behind it to see if she had fallen down; but if she wasn’t there she wasn’t, and that ended the matter, for they couldn’t stamp her out of the earth.

Oh, heavens, how the old man grieved and wrung his hands in despair. How could he help being startled by such a thing! He had put the child in the trough and seen her after he had laid her in it, and knew exactly where he had left her, and now to be unable to find her just a moment after was quite too bad.

“What could have happened to the little girl? Has the angel of the Lord taken her? Have the elves and wicked gnomes stolen her away? What in the world could have occurred!” said the man, sighing. Somebody had taken her, that was plain. But neither angels nor elves nor wicked gnomes frequented the neighborhood. Now, my good friends, just listen to the amazing event. A vulture or a griffin, whichever it was, but we’ll say a griffin, was passing by, and, hearing the child’s cries, swooped swiftly down, seized the little one, tucked her under its right wing, soared up into the sky with her, and took her to its eyry to feed its young. After putting her in its nest, the griffin flew off again. But the young birds, instead of eating the little girl, looked kindly at her, gave her some soft bread-crumbs, made a bed for her, and covered her with their wings to protect her from the chill of the morning air.

I must now tell you that in this terrible forest, at the bottom of a well of pure poison, lived a dragon with twelve heads, and this well was not far from the tree in whose top rested the griffin’s nest. This horrible dragon never let the little griffins grow up, but as soon as they were ready to fly stretched out two of its fiery heads and put an end to their lives, so that the poor old griffin had never yet, in all its life, been able to see even one of its children fly off.

The present brood were now full-grown, and were waiting for daylight to fly through the woods and mountains, when lo, just at midnight the water of the well made a splashing noise, and what appeared in the moonlight that flickered through the trees? Two fiery heads, which approached the nest, setting up such a howling and wailing that the mountains shook to their foundations and the valleys rocked to and fro like cradles. Suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, the joints of the earth and sky trembled and quaked, and the archangel, grasping a sword in his hand, appeared on a golden cloud, darting downward like a thunderbolt. Just as the dragon was going to seize the young griffins, the angel flashed his sword from east to west, and again from west to east, cutting off both heads as easily as one drinks a spoonful of water. Then two still more terrible ones came, but they were also hacked into pieces. Two others next appeared; they, too, were destroyed, and so fared all the twelve. Blood and poison flowed till the whole forest and valley were turned into a marsh, and the heads dashed against the tree which held the nest, so that the leaves fell from the boughs for ten miles around. The angel took some basil plant, and sprinkled the four quarters of the earth with water that had been consecrated in Paradise nine years before. The pools of blood all gathered into one spot, the heads lost their vitality, and the ground opened, swallowing them up with all the blood, so that the wood once more became pure and bright as God meant it to be.

When the griffin came back at dawn, found its children safe in the nest, and saw that the accursed well had disappeared, it uttered such a cry of delight that the earth for nine miles round trembled and shook.

Then it waked the young birds and said:

“Tell me quickly, my darlings, who has done me this great favor?”

The young birds shook their heads and replied: “We don’t know any thing about it, we have been asleep all night.”

As the griffin looked about, its glance fell upon the little girl, whose golden hair and starry eyes were glittering in the morning sunlight like the torches of Paradise, and the thought instantly darted through its mind that this beautiful light must have rendered the unspeakable benefit.

“Children,” said the griffin, angrily, “you haven’t eaten the little girl, what does this mean?” The young birds kept as still as mice, but the griffin straightway swallowed lovely little Wild-Rose, yet when she appeared again she was seven times as beautiful as before.

The griffin now set about a great task; all day long it brought flowers and soft green moss from the woodland meadows to make the little girl a room like a fairy’s nest, and this tiny chamber, whenever the wind blew, rocked to and fro like a cradle. From this time little Wild-Rose was as dear to it as its own children, nay, she was the very apple of the griffin’s eye, and it took care of her and fed her with the very best things a griffin could find.

So the little Wild-Rose with the golden hair began to grow and flourish like a stately lily. In the morning the merry dawn kissed and woke her, at noon the shadows of the leafy boughs fanned her, and in the evening she was lulled to rest by the gentle breezes and the tunes that echoed through the forest from the shepherds' pipes.

So the little girl grew in beauty till she was able to stand alone, and one day, just as the evening-star was bathing in the rosy light left by the sun when it sank behind the mountains, the Lord permitted what had been predestined to happen, though it was something that had never occurred before, since this world was created and the sun began its course through the sky. So it happened that little Wild-Rose stood up, came out of her little room, and for the first time gazed into the world. But when she looked at the evening-sky the air quivered, the rising stars trembled, and on the eastern horizon a second sun, more beautiful and a hundred times brighter than the one which had set behind the mountains, rose upward in majesty and splendor as if mounting from a sea of fire. The forests, chasms and valleys quaked, the flowers whispered sweetly to each other and turned their little heads toward the vivifying waves of light. And now behold — the fairest flowers tried to drink in the little maid's glances, and the trees around bowed their tops to rejoice in little Wild-Rose's beauty. In short, the whole of God's creation, the birds in the sky as well as the beasts in the forest, exulted and jumped for joy over the divine miracle.

After that evening's festival, twice three days passed, then three times three, finally still more until little Wild-Rose was fourteen years old.

At fourteen little Wild-Rose was beautiful — so beautiful that I am afraid to praise her and describe her perfections, lest you should afterward say that you had seen some one equally handsome. But there was no one like her under the sun. Lovely as she was, no human being had seen her, and she had no idea of empires and cities; she lived on sisterly terms with the flowers, danced with the butterflies, was lulled by the murmur of the brook, vied with the birds in singing. Now, my dear readers, forgive me for first telling you I would say nothing, and afterward adding a few words in praise of little Wild-Rose. Who that has ever seen her can help talking about her?

So the days passed like hours and the hours like minutes, until one day a great hunt took place in the beautiful woods.

The emperor’s son went to the chase too.

Well, evidently this ought to have been. The prince, in a good or evil hour — I don’t know which I ought to say — saw a deer bound into the thicket, and hurried after the animal faster and faster and faster, till the young hero found himself where he had never been even in his dreams — in the very depths of the dense forest, which was still untrodden by any human foot.

When the prince discovered his situation, he stood still and listened, to try to hear some sound in this solitude; the barking of a dog, the blast of a horn, the report of a gun, any thing of the sort would have pleased the youth. But he listened in vain, utter silence and solitude surrounded him. After gazing around him for some time a dazzling light gleamed through the foliage. He glanced that way again, and felt that he must know what was there. One, two, three, and he reached the spot to see what it was. And he found — found the tree with the dainty little swinging chamber, and the young griffins staring at him. Whatever he may have thought, he drew his bow and would have instantly shot off the heads of the whole brood, when, like a thunderbolt, a blaze of light flashed into his face, dazzling him so that he dropped the bow and covered his eyes with his hands. When he looked that way again, he saw for half a minute the face and figure of little Wild-Rose, felt as if he were in the other world, and could not help falling on the grass in a fainting-fit. When he recovered his senses he called to the young girl to come down. But how was Wild-Rose to do such a thing? She did not go to a young man, but staid quietly at home with her mamma.

When the prince saw this he went away as he had come. Yet no, not exactly as he had come, for when he arrived his heart had not been full of love and longing. Neither had he come through the bushes without any trace of path or opening. But now he tumbled about wherever he went, as though he had no eyes. Yet, however he returned, he *did* return, arriving just as the shepherds were driving their cattle from the pasture into the village, and there he luckily met two of his hunting companions.

Early the next morning heralds from the imperial court went through the whole country, proclaiming that whoever would promise to bring a wonder of a girl from the forest of the well with two trees, would be received by the emperor as his councilor so long as he lived and the whole court would do him honor. Lo, and behold! there came an old, lame woman, with a hump on her back and as much hair on her head as there is on the palm of the hand. “I am the person who can bring the girl from the forest of the well with the two trees,” she said. The heralds looked at the old woman and burst out laughing.

“Are you from Satan’s kingdom, you scare-crow?” said a herald. “Who, in the Wood Witch’s name, brought you in our way, for now we shall have no luck. Begone from our sight.”

But the old woman insisted that she could bring the girl from the forest. And she stuck to the heralds like a bur to a sheep.

Then the oldest herald said: “Comrades, take her with us, for the emperor said plainly that we were to bring to the court any person, no matter who, that boasted of being able to execute his command; take the old woman and put her in the carriage.”

So they took the old woman and carried her to court.

“You have boasted that you could bring the girl from the forest?” asked the emperor, seated on his throne.

“Long life to your majesty. Yes, I promised to do so.”

“Then set to work.”

“Let that be the old woman’s care, but give me a kettle and a tripod.” She quickly received them and set off behind the emperor’s huntsmen, her mouth chattering and the kettle rattling, as the gipsies do when they bring a bride to her wedding. The prince had not remained at home either. How could he have staid behind and not known the why and wherefore! When the party reached the forest, the hunters and the prince halted and the old woman went on, like the Wood Witch, alone.

The shrewd, cunning old woman lighted a fire under the tree where the girl was, placed the tripod over the flames, and hung the kettle on it. But the kettle stood awry and upset as fast as she put it on. Little Wild-Rose, who was looking down from her room and saw the old woman's stupidity, lost her patience and called:

"Not that way, old woman, set the tripod the other way."

"But suppose I don't know how, my darling?"

And she vainly set it up, turned it round, and straightened it, the kettle would not stand. Wild-Rose grew more and more impatient and angry.

"Haven't I already told you once that it won't stand so? Turn the handle of the kettle toward the trunk of the tree."

The old woman did exactly the opposite, and then said:

"Come down and show me, dear child."

And Wild-Rose, absorbed by that one idea, climbed quickly down the tree to teach the crone. But the old woman taught her so that she needed no second lesson. Seizing her by the arm, she lifted her on her shoulder and ran off with her to the enamored prince. When the prince saw Wild-Rose, he came to meet her, begged for her hand, and, trembling, kissed her. Then she was clothed in magnificent garments, which had been embroidered with gold and pearls by nine princesses.

She was placed in the imperial carriage, and the horses stopped only once on the way home to take breath, for they had no equals except among the steeds of the sun. When they reached the palace, the prince lifted her out, led her in, and seated her at the table as if she were a real princess. The young hero's parents gazed at her with delight, and remembered their own youth. At the end of a week a magnificent wedding was celebrated, which lasted for three days and three nights, then, after twenty-four hours' intermission, three days and three nights more were spent in splendid festivities.

I was there, too, but as I am lame in one foot, I did not arrive until the wedding was over and had great trouble in finding some clear broth, which I searched in vain for a crumb of meat and then sipped from a sieve, so you can imagine how much I had and how I spent the time.

10

THE VOICE OF DEATH

Once upon a time something happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.

There was once a man who prayed daily to God to grant him riches. One day his numerous and frequent prayers found our Lord in the mood to listen to them. When the man had grown rich he did not want to die, so he resolved to go from country to country and settle wherever he heard that the people lived forever. He prepared for his journey, told his wife his plan, and set off.

In every country he reached he asked whether people ever died there, and went on at once if he was told that they did. At last he arrived in a land where the inhabitants said they did not know what dying meant. The traveler, full of joy, asked:

“But are there not immense crowds of people here, if none of you die?”

“No, there are no immense crowds,” was the reply, “for you see, every now and then somebody comes and calls one after another, and whoever follows him, never returns.”

“And do people see the person who calls them?” asked the traveler.

“Why shouldn’t they see him?” he was answered.

The man could not wonder enough at the stupidity of those who followed the person that called them, though they knew that they would be obliged to stay where he took them. Returning home, he collected all his property, and with his wife and children, went to settle in the country where people did not die but were called by a certain person and never came back. He had therefore firmly resolved that neither he nor his family would ever follow any body who called them, no matter who it might be.

So, after he had established himself and arranged all his business affairs, he advised his wife and all his family on no account to follow any one who might call them, if, as he said, they did not want to die.

So they gave themselves up to pleasure, and in this way spent several years. One day, when they were all sitting comfortably in their house, his wife suddenly began to call:

“I’m coming, I’m coming!”

And she looked around the room for her fur jacket. Her husband instantly started up, seized her by the hand, and began to reproach her.

“So you don’t heed my advice? Stay here, if you don’t want to die.”

“Don’t you hear how he is calling me? I’ll only see what he wants and come back at once.”

And she struggled to escape from her husband’s grasp and go.

He held her fast and managed to bolt all the doors in the room. When she saw that, she said:

“Let me alone, husband, I don’t care about going now.”

The man thought she had come to her senses and given up her crazy idea, but before long the wife rushed to the nearest door, hurriedly opened it, and ran out. Her husband followed, holding her by her fur sack and entreating her not to go, for she would never return. She let her hands fall, bent backward, then leaned a little forward and suddenly threw herself back, slipping off her sack and leaving it in her husband’s grasp, who stood stock still staring after her as she rushed on, screaming with all her might:

“I’m coming, I’m coming.”

When he could see her no longer, the husband collected his senses, went back to the house, and said:

“If you are mad and want to die, go in God’s name, I can’t help you; I’ve told you often enough that you must follow no one, no matter who called you.”

Days passed, many days; weeks, months, years followed, and the peace of the man’s household was not disturbed again.

But at last one morning, when he went to his barber’s as usual to be shaved, just as he had the soap on his chin, and the shop was full of people, he began to shout:

“I won’t come, do you hear, I won’t come!”

The barber and his customers all stared in amazement. The man, looking toward the door, said again: “Take notice, once for all, that I won’t come, and go away from there.”

Afterward he cried:

“Go away, do you hear, if you want to get off with a whole skin, for I tell you a thousand times I won’t come.”

Then, as if some one was standing at the door constantly calling him, he grew angry and raved at the person for not leaving him in peace. At last he sprang up and snatched the razor from the barber’s hand, crying:

“Give it to me, that I may show him what it is to continually annoy people.”

And he ran at full speed after the person who, he said, was calling him, but whom nobody else could see. The poor barber, who did not want to lose his razor, followed. The man ran, the barber pursued, till they passed beyond the city limits, and, just outside of the town, the man fell into a chasm from which he did not come out again, so he also, like all the rest, followed the voice that called him.

The barber, who returned home panting for breath, told everybody he met what had happened and so the belief spread through the country that the people, who had gone away and not returned, had fallen into that gulf, for until then no one had known what became of those who followed the person that summoned them.

When a throng set out to visit the scene of misfortune, to see the insatiable gulf which swallowed up all the people and yet never had enough, nothing was found; it looked as if, since the beginning of the world, nothing had been there except a broad plain, and from that time the population of the neighborhood began to die like the human beings in the rest of the earth.

11

THE OLD WOMAN AND THE OLD MAN

Once upon a time there was an old man and an old woman, who had not a single child in their old age, and it was very hard for them, because they had no help, not even to light the fire; when they came home from working in the fields, they were obliged to begin with lighting the fire and then prepare their food.

One day, when they were fretting and consulting each other, they determined to look for children whatever might happen.

The old man went one way, the old woman another, to find a child somewhere.

The old man met a dog, the old woman a mouse. When they met again the old woman asked:

“Husband, what have you found?”

“A little dog. And you, wife?”

“A little mouse.”

They now agreed to adopt the mouse for a child and drive the dog away, so the couple returned with the mouse, greatly delighted because they had found what they sought, that is, a child.

On reaching home the old woman began to make a fire; then she set the pot of sour buttermilk on to boil, and left the mouse to watch that it did not fall over, while she went to work with the old man in the fields.

After she had gone, the porridge boiled and splashed over the top of the pot; the mouse, which was sitting on the hearth, said:

“Porridge, don’t jump on me or I’ll jump on you.” But the buttermilk did not stop and still splashed over the brim. When the mouse saw this, it grew angry and leaped straight into the pot.

When the old people returned from hoeing and called their child, there was no child to be found. After searching for it a long time without success, they sat sadly down to eat their dinner. Yet they ate the porridge with great relish until, when the old woman emptied the dish she found at the bottom — what? The little mouse, their child, dead! She began:

“Husband, husband, here it is, our child is drowned in the buttermilk.”

“How is that possible, wife!” replied the bearded old fellow.

When they saw this terrible accident, they began to weep and lament bitterly; the old man in his grief tore his beard, and the old woman pulled the hair out of her head.

The old man left the house with tearful eyes and touzled beard; on the bough of a tree, in front of the hut, perched a magpie, which seeing him asked:

“Why have you pulled out your beard, old man?”

“Oh, my dear bird, how can I help tearing my beard, when my little child has drowned itself in the pot of porridge and is dead?”

When the magpie heard this, it tore out all its feathers, leaving nothing but the tail.

The old woman set off with her bald head to the well, to get a jug of water to wash the dead body of her child.

By the well stood a girl with a pitcher, who had come to draw water; when she saw the old woman she asked:

“My, old woman, why have you torn the hair out of your head till you are perfectly bald?”

“Alas, my darling, how can I help tearing my hair and making myself bald, when my little mouse is dead?”

The girl, in her grief, smashed her pitcher in two, then she hurried to the empress to tell her the story; the royal lady, as soon as she heard it, fell down from the balcony, broke her ankle, and died, while the emperor, out of love for his wife, went away and became a monk in the monastery of Lies, beyond the Country of Truth; while I

ACQUAINTANCE MADE WITH GRANDSIRES OLD,
To whom this simple tale I told,
It seemed to them such perfect chaff
That its bare memory raised a laugh.

12

THE PEA EMPEROR

Once upon a time something wonderful happened. If it hadn’t happened, it wouldn’t be told.

There was once a good for nothing fellow, who was so poor and needy that he had not even enough to eat to be able to drink water after it. When he had wandered through all the countries in the world, he returned home somewhat more sensible. He had passed through many perils abroad, knocked his head against the top of the door, been sifted through the coarse and the fine sieve. He would now gladly have pursued some trade, but he had no money. One day he found three peas. After picking them up from the ground he took them on the palm of his hand, looked at them, pondered a long time, and then said laughing: “If I plant these seeds in the ground, I shall have a hundred in a year; if I afterward plant the hundred, I shall have thousands, and if I put these thousands in the earth I shall reap who knows how many! Then, if I go on in this way, I shall finally become a rich man. But if I could help wealth to come quicker — let me see!”

He went to the emperor and begged him to order through the whole empire barrels in which to keep his peas.

When the emperor heard that he needed such a quantity of barrels, he thought he must be stifling in money, and was more and more convinced of it when he entered into conversation with him. What is true must remain true; he didn’t keep his mouth shut, but opened it and bragged till it would have been supposed that real pearls fell from his lips.

He told the emperor what he had seen in foreign lands, related how things were here and there, spoke of this and that, till the emperor stood before him with his mouth wide open. When he saw that the emperor marveled at his statements, he bragged more and more, saying that he had palaces, herds, and other riches.

The sovereign believed the boaster’s stories, and said to him:

“I see that you have traveled, know a great deal, and are cunning and experienced; if you wish, I will gladly give you my daughter in marriage.”

The braggart now regretted having told so many lies, for he did not know how to escape the monarch’s proposal. After reflecting a short time, he plucked up courage and said “I will gladly accept the position of son-in-law you offer, and will try to show you that I am worthy of it.”

The necessary preparations were made, and after some time an imperial wedding was celebrated in the palace. Then the man remained there.

One, two, several weeks elapsed, and no trace of peas and wealth appeared. Finally the emperor began to repent what he had done, but there was no help for it and the emperor’s son-in-law perceived, from the manner of the courtiers and nobles, that they had very little respect for him.

His cheeks burned with shame. He made useless plans, tortured himself to find some means of getting out of the scrape, and could not even sleep at night. One morning without any one’s knowledge he left the palace at dawn, walked on till he came to a meadow, and wandered along absorbed in thought, without knowing where he was going. Suddenly a rosy-cheeked man stood before him, and asked: “Where are you going, gossip, you look as sad and thoughtful as if all your ships had sunk in the sea.”

The emperor’s son-in-law related his dilemma and what he was seeking, and the man replied:

“If I deliver you from your difficulty, what will you give me?”

“Whatever you ask,” he answered.

“There are nine of us brothers,” said the man, “and each knows a riddle. If you guess them our whole property shall be yours, but if not, your first child must be ours.”

The emperor’s son-in-law, utterly crushed with shame, agreed, hard as it was for him, hoping that before the child was born he might find somebody who could tell him what to do.

So they set out together, that the stranger might show him the herds of cattle he owned and his palaces, which were not far off. They also instructed the herdsmen, swineherds, shepherds, and laborers what they were to say, if any body asked to whom the flocks and herds belonged.

The emperor’s son-in-law returned to the palace and said that he would take his wife home the next day. On his way back he met an old man in the fields, and, seeing how aged and feeble he was, he pitied him and offered him alms. The old man would accept nothing, but asked permission to enter his service, telling him that he would be none the worse for it, and the other received him. When the emperor heard that his son-in-law wanted to go to his own palace, he was so delighted that he commanded every thing to be arranged on a grand scale in order to accompany him with imperial honors.

Therefore, on the following day, the whole court was filled with nobles, soldiers, and attendants of all kinds. All the directions for the journey had been given by the old man who had taken service with the emperor’s son-in-law; he said that he was the Pea Emperor’s steward, and all praised his energy, dignity, and industry.

The emperor was in high spirits and set out with the empress, the Pea Emperor, and his bride, for his son-in-law’s possessions. The old servant went before and had every thing in good order. But the poor Pea Emperor was as pale and dejected as if somebody had showered him with boiling water. He was thinking of the riddles and how he could guess them.

They drove and drove till they reached the fields. Here was a beautiful meadow, beyond it a grove like the Garden of Paradise. When the overseer of the fields saw them, he came up cap in hand.

“To whom do these estates belong, my friend?” asked the emperor.

“To the Pea Emperor,” replied the man.

The emperor grew fat with joy, for he now believed that his son-in-law really was no beggar. They drove on some distance further and met numerous flocks and herds of all sorts of animals; the emperor asked one keeper after another to whom they belonged, and all replied: “To the Pea Emperor.”

But when they reached the palace of the nine dragons the emperor marveled at its magnificence. Every thing was in order. They were received at the gate by a band of musicians, who played the most beautiful tunes ever heard. The interior of the palace was adorned with real gems. A magnificent banquet was hastily prepared, and they drank the finest wine.

After the emperor had wished his son-in-law every happiness, he returned to his own home greatly delighted with the riches he had seen. But the Pea Emperor was almost dead with anxiety.

Evening came. The old servant said to his master:

“Master, what you have seen of me since I entered your service must have convinced you of my fidelity. Now I assure you that I can help you still more.”

“Are you telling the truth?” asked the Pea Emperor.

“Do not doubt me for an instant, master! And I ask one thing besides: let me spend the night in some corner of the chamber where you are sleeping, even if it is behind the door. Moreover, I advise you not to answer a single word, no matter who calls you by name or how great a noise is made.”

“Be it so!” said the Pea Emperor. And so it was.

After they had lain down and put out the light, they heard a dull, rumbling noise like an approaching thunder storm. Then a hoarse, rough voice said:

“Pea Emperor, Pea Emperor!”

“What do you want?” replied the old man.

“I’m not calling you,” it replied, “I’m calling the Pea Emperor.”

“That’s just the same thing,” replied the old man, “my master is asleep, he’s tired.”

Then the noise of many voices was heard, as if people were quarreling! Again the first one repeated: “Pea Emperor, Pea Emperor!”

“What is it?” the old man answered.

“What is one?”

“The moon is one.”

“Is it you, master?”

“Burst, dragon!”

Then a terrible wailing arose, as if all the spirits of evil were abroad, and another voice said:

“What is two?”

“Two eyes in the head see well.”

“Is it you, master?”

“Burst, dragon!”

“What is three?”

“Where there are three grown daughters in a house, *beware* of putting your head in.”

“Is it you, master?”

“Burst, dragon!”

“What is four?”

“The cart with four wheels runs well.”

“Is it you, master?”

“Burst, dragon!”

“What is five?”

“Five fingers on the hand hold well.”

“Is it you, master?”

“Burst, dragon!”

Again there was a noise like a thunder storm, and the palace shook as if the earth was quaking. And again there was a shout for the Pea Emperor. But the latter became more and more quiet, and scarcely ventured to breathe, but remained perfectly still. This time, too, the old servant answered. Another voice asked:

“What is six?”

“The flute with six holes blows well.”

“Is it you, master?”

“Burst, dragon!”

“What is seven?”

“Where there are seven brothers, don’t meddle with their affairs.”

“Is it you, master?”

“Burst, dragon!”

“What is eight?”

“The plow with eight oxen furrows the earth well.”

“Is it you, master?”

“Burst, dragon!”

“What is nine?”

“Where there are nine grown daughters in a house, it is not swept.”

“Is it you, master?”

“Burst, dragon!”

The Pea Emperor, who heard all this, could not sleep all night long, even when it grew so still that one might have heard a fly buzz; he waited for daylight with the utmost impatience.

When he rose the next morning the old servant had vanished. He went out of the palace, and what did he behold? The scattered corpses of nine dragons, which he gave to the ravens. While thanking God for having preserved his life and delivered him from disgrace, he heard a sweet voice say:

“Your compassion for the poor man saved you. Always be charitable.”

13

THE MORNING STAR AND THE EVENING STAR

Once upon a time something extraordinary happened. If it had not happened it would not be told.

There was once an emperor and empress who were childless. So they sought out all the wizards and witches, all the old women and astrologers; but their skill proved vain, no one knew how to help them. At last the royal pair devoted themselves to almsgiving, praying, and fasting, until one night the empress dreamed that the Lord had taken pity on her, and appearing to her, said: “I have heard your prayers, and will give you a child whose like can not be found on earth. Your husband, the emperor, must go to the brook to-morrow with a hook and line, then you are to prepare with your own hands the fish he catches, and eat it.”

Before it was fairly daylight, the empress went to the emperor and woke him, saying: “Rise, my royal husband, it is morning.”

“Why, what ails you to-day, wife, that you wake me so early?” the emperor replied. “Has any foe crossed the frontiers of my country?”

“Heaven forbid. I’ve heard nothing of that sort, but listen to my dream.”

And she told him about it.

When the emperor heard her story he jumped out of bed, dressed, took the hook and line, and, gasping for breath, went to the brook. He threw in the hook and soon saw the cork on the line bob. He pulled it out, and what did he see? A big fish, made entirely of gold. It was a wonder that he did not die of joy. But what did the empress say when *she* saw it? She was still more out of her wits.

The empress cooked the fish with her own hands, the royal couple ate it, and the empress instantly felt that the promise would be fulfilled.

The maid-servant who cleared away the table saw a fish-bone on the empress’ plate, and thought she would suck it, to know how food tastes when prepared by royal hands.

One day the empress received the gift of a beautiful boy, as handsome as a little angel. That same night the maid-servant, too, had a son who looked so exactly like the prince that they could not be distinguished from each other. The maid-servant’s child precisely resembled the royal one. The prince was named Busujok, the maid-servant’s son was called Siminok.

They grew up together, were taught their lessons, and learned as much in one day as other children in a whole year. When they were playing in the garden, the empress watched them from her window with great delight.

They became tall youths and looked so much alike that people could never tell which was the prince and which the maid-servant’s son. They were haughty in bearing, both were charming, winning in speech, and brave, brave to a fault.

One day they determined to go hunting. But the empress was constantly fretting herself to find some way of recognizing her own son, for as their faces were alike and their clothes precisely the same, she often could not distinguish one from the other. She therefore thought of putting some mark on the prince. So she called him, and while pretending to be playing with his hair, knotted two locks together without his knowledge. Then the youths went off to hunt.

They hurried joyously through the green fields, skipped about like lambkins, gathered flowers, sprinkled themselves with dew, watched the butterflies flit from blossom to blossom, saw the bees gather wax and honey, and enjoyed themselves to the utmost. Then they went to the springs, drank some water to refresh themselves, and gazed unweariedly at the sky, which met the earth on the horizon. They would fain have gone to the end of the world to see it close at hand, or at least far enough to reach the spot where the earth grows marshy before it comes to an end.

Next they went into the woods. When they saw the beauties of the forest, they stood still with mouths wide open in astonishment. Consider that they had not beheld any of these things in their whole lives. When the wind blew and stirred the leaves, they listened to their rustling, and it seemed as if the empress was passing by, drawing her silken train after her. Then they sat down on the soft grass, under the shade of a big tree. Here they began to reflect and consult each other about how they were to commence hunting. They wanted to kill nothing but wild beasts. They did not notice the birds which hopped around them and perched on the boughs of the trees; they would have been sorry to hurt them, for they liked to listen to their twitter. It seemed as if the birds knew this; they showed no fear, but sang as if they were going to split their throats; the nightingales, however, trilled only from their craws, that their songs might be the sweeter. While they stood there consulting, the prince suddenly felt so overwhelmed with fatigue that he could hold out no longer, but laying his head in Siminok's lap, asked him to stroke his hair.

While he was doing so, Siminok stopped and said:

"What is the matter with your head, Brother Busujok?"

"What should be the matter? How do I know, Brother Siminok?"

"Just see," replied Siminok, "two locks of your hair are tied together."

"How is that possible?" said Busujok. This discovery vexed the prince so much that he determined to go out into the wide world.

"Brother Siminok," he said, "I'm going out into the wide world, because I can't understand why my mother tied my hair while she was playing with it."

“Listen to reason, Brother Busujok, and do nothing of the sort,” replied Siminok; “if the empress tied your hair, it certainly was not for any evil purpose.”

But Busujok remained firm in his resolve, and when he took leave of Siminok, he said to him:

“Take this handkerchief, Brother Siminok, and if you ever see three drops of blood on it, you will know that I am dead.”

“May the Lord help you, Brother Busujok, that you may prosper; but I beg you once more by my love, stay!”

“Impossible,” replied Busujok.

Then the youths embraced each other, and Busujok departed; Siminok remained behind, gazing longingly after him till he was out of sight.

Siminok then returned to the palace and related all that had happened.

The empress was insane with grief. She wrung her hands and wept till it was pitiful to see her. But she did not know what to do, and at last comforted herself a little by gazing at Siminok. After some time the latter took out the prince’s handkerchief, looked at it, and saw three drops of blood on it. Then he said:

“Oh! my royal brother is dead. I shall go and look for him.”

Taking some provisions for the journey, he set out in search of Busujok. He passed through cities and villages, crossed fields and forests, wandering on and on till he reached a small hut. There he met an old woman, whom he asked about his brother. The crone told him that Busujok had become the son of the emperor who reigned in the neighborhood.

When Siminok reached this emperor’s palace, the princess, as soon as she saw him, thought that he was her husband and came running to meet him. But he said: “I am your husband’s brother; I have heard that he is dead, and came here to learn something about him.”

“I can not believe it,” replied the princess. “You are my husband, and I don’t know why you deny it. Has my faith been put to any test, and have I ever deceived you?”

“Nothing of the sort. But I tell you truthfully that I am not your husband.”

The princess would not believe this, so Siminok said:

“The Lord will show the truth. Let the sword hanging on yonder nail scratch whichever of us two is mistaken.”

Instantly the sword sprang down and cut the princess’ finger. Then she believed Siminok, and gave him the hospitality which was his due.

The next day he learned that Busujok had gone out hunting and had not yet returned. So he, too, mounted a horse, took some greyhounds, and rode after his brother, following the direction in which he had gone. He rode on and on till he reached a forest, where he met the Wood Witch. As soon as he saw her, he set off after her. She fled, he pursued, until perceiving no way of escape she swung herself up into a tall tree.

Siminok dismounted, tied his horse to a tree, made a fire, took out his provisions, and began to eat, occasionally tossing the greyhounds something.

“Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I’m so cold,” said the Wood Witch, “my teeth are chattering.”

“Get down and warm yourself by the fire,” replied Siminok.

“I’m afraid of the dogs,” she said.

“Don’t be frightened, they’ll do you no harm.”

“If you want to do me a favor,” the Wood Witch answered, “take a strand of my hair and tie your dogs with it.”

Siminok put the hair in the fire.

“Oh! how horribly the hair I gave you smells — you have put it in the fire.”

“Go away from here and don’t talk any more nonsense,” replied Siminok. “One of the hounds put its tail a little too near the fire and scorched it, that’s what smells so badly. If you are cold, come down and warm yourself, if not, hold your tongue and let me alone.”

The Wood Witch believed him, came down, approached the fire, and said:

“I am hungry.”

“What shall I give you to eat? Take what you want of all I have.”

“I should like to eat you,” said the Wood Witch, “prepare for it.”

“And I will devour you,” replied Siminok.

He set the hounds upon her to tear her to pieces.

“Stop,” cried the Wood Witch, “call off your dogs that they may not tear me, and I’ll give you back your brother with his horse, hounds, and all.”

Siminok called off the dogs.

The Wood Witch swallowed three times and up came Busujok, his horse, and his dogs. Siminok now set his hounds upon her, and they tore her into mince-meat. When Busujok recovered his senses, he wondered at seeing Siminok there and said:

“Welcome, I’m glad to meet you so well and gay, Brother Siminok, but I’ve been asleep a very long time.”

“You might have slept soundly till the end of the world, if I had not come?” he replied.

Then Siminok told him every thing that had happened from their parting until that moment.

But Busujok suspected him; he thought that Siminok had won his wife’s love, and would not believe him when he told him the simple truth — that such an idea had never entered his head.

Now that Busujok had once begun to be jealous of his bride, he acted like a lunatic! So, being overpowered by evil thoughts, he made an agreement with Siminok to bandage the eyes of their horses, mount them, and let them carry their riders wherever they would.

This was done. When Busujok heard a groan he stopped his horse, untied the bandage, and looked around him. Siminok was nowhere to be seen. Just think! He had fallen into a spring, been drowned, and never came out again!

Busujok returned home and questioned his wife; she told just the same story as Siminok. Then, to be still more certain of the truth, he, too, ordered the sword to jump down from the wall and scratch the one who was wrong. The sword leaped down and wounded his middle finger.

The prince pined away, lamenting and weeping bitterly for the loss of Siminok, and sorely repenting his undue haste, but all was vain, nothing could be changed. So, in his grief and anguish, he resolved not to live any longer without his brother, ordered his own eyes and those of his horse to be bandaged, mounted it, and bade it hasten to the forest where Siminok had perished. The horse went as fast as it could, and plump! it tumbled into the very same spring where Siminok had fallen, and there Busujok, too, ended his days. But at the same time the morning star, the emperor’s son Busujok, and the evening star, the maid-servant’s son Siminok, appeared in the sky.

14

THE TWO STEP-SISTERS

Once upon a time there was an old widower, who had one daughter; he married again and took for his wife a widow, who also had a daughter. The widow's daughter was ugly, lazy, obstinate and spiteful; yet as she was her mother's own child, the latter was delighted with her and pushed every thing upon her husband's daughter. But the old man's child was beautiful, industrious, obedient and good. God had gifted her with every virtuous and lovable quality, yet she was persecuted by her spiteful sister, as well as by her step-mother; it was fortunate that she possessed endurance and patience, or she would have fared badly. Whenever there was any hard work to be done, it was put upon the old man's daughter — she was obliged to get dry wood from the forest, drag the heavy sacks of grain to the mill; in short, every task always fell to her lot. The whole livelong day she had no rest, but was kept continually going up stairs and down. Still the old woman and her treasure of a daughter were constantly dissatisfied, and always had something to find fault with. The step-daughter was a heavy cross to the second wife, but her own daughter was like the basil plant, which is placed before the images of the saints.

When the step-sisters went to the village in the evening to spin, the old man's daughter did not allow herself to be interrupted in her work, but finished a whole sieve full of spools, while the old woman's daughter with difficulty completed a single one. When they came home late at night, the old woman's daughter jumped nimbly over the fence and asked to hold the sieve till the other had leaped over it too. Meantime the spiteful girl hurried into the house to her parents, and said she had spun all the spools. The step-sister vainly declared that they were the work of her own hands; mother and daughter jeered at her words, and of course gained their cause. When Sunday or Friday came the old woman's daughter was brushed and bedizened as though the calves had licked her. There was no dance, no feather-plucking in the village to which the old woman's daughter did not go, but the step-daughter was sternly denied every pleasure of the kind. Yet when the husband came home, his wife's tongue ran like a mill-wheel — her step-daughter was disobedient, bold, bad-tempered, this, that, and the other; he must send her away from home, put her out at service, whichever he chose; it was impossible to keep her in the house because she might ruin her daughter too.

The old man was a jackanapes, or, as the saying goes, under petticoat government. Every thing his wife said was sacred. Had he obeyed the voice of his heart the poor old man might perhaps have said something, but now the hen had begun to crow in the house, and the rooster was of no consequence; yet, if he had thought of opposing them, his wife and her daughter would have soon made him repent it. One day, when he was unusually angry about what his wife had told him, he called the young girl, and said: —

"My dear child, your mother is always saying that you are disobedient to her, have a spiteful tongue, and are wicked, so that it is not possible for you to stay any longer in my house; therefore go wherever the Lord may guide you, that there may no longer be so much quarreling here on your account. But I advise you as a father, wherever you may go, to be obedient, humble, and industrious, for here with me all your faults have been overlooked, parental affection has aided, but among strangers nobody knows what sort of people you may meet, and they will not indulge you as we have done.”

When the poor girl saw that her step-mother and her daughter wanted to drive her out of the house at any cost, she kissed her father’s hand with tears in her eyes, and went out into the wide world without any hope of ever returning home. She walked along the road till she chanced to meet a little sick dog, so thin that one could count its ribs.

When the dog saw her, it said: “You beautiful, industrious girl, have pity on me and take care of me, I will reward you some day.”

The girl did pity the poor animal, and, taking it in her arms, washed and cleaned it thoroughly. Then she left it and went on, glad that she had been able to do a good action. She had not walked far when she came to a fine pear-tree in full bloom, but it was completely covered with caterpillars.

When the pear-tree saw the girl, it said: “You beautiful, industrious girl, take care of me and rid me of these caterpillars, I will repay you for it some day.”

The girl, with her usual diligence, cleared the pear-tree from its dry branches and most carefully removed the caterpillars; then she walked quietly on to seek some place where she might enter into service.

On her way she came to a ruined, neglected fountain, which said to her: “You beautiful, industrious girl, take care of me, I will reward you some day.”

The little maid cleared the fountain, cleaned it thoroughly, and then went on again. As she walked she came to a dilapidated oven, which had become almost entirely useless.

As soon as the oven saw her, it said: “You beautiful, industrious girl, line me with stones and clean me, I will repay you some day!”

The young girl knew that work harms no one, so she rolled up her sleeves, moistened some clay, stopped the holes in the stove, greased it and cleaned it till it was a pleasure to see it. Then she washed her hands and continued her journey. As she walked on, day and night, it happened, I don’t know how — that she missed her way; yet she did not lose her trust in God, but walked on and on until early one morning, after passing through a dark forest, she reached a beautiful meadow. In the meadow she saw a little house, completely overgrown with vines, and when she approached it an old woman came out kindly to meet her, and said: “What are you seeking here, child, and who are you?”

“Who should I be, good dame! A poor girl, motherless, and I may say fatherless, too, for God alone knows what I have suffered since my own mother’s hands were folded on her breast. I am seeking service, and as I know nobody and am wandering from place to place I have lost my way. But the Lord guided me, so that I have reached your house and I beg you to give me a shelter.”

“Poor child!” replied the old dame. “Surely God himself has led you to me and saved you from danger. I am the goddess of Sunday. Serve me to-day, and I promise that you shall not leave my house empty-handed to-morrow.”

“Very well, but I don’t know what I have to do.”

“You must wash and feed my little children, who are now asleep, and then cook my dinner; when I come home from church I want to find it neither hot nor cold, but just right to eat.”

When she had said this, the old woman set off for church. The young girl rolled up her sleeves and went to work. First of all she prepared the water for the bath, then went out-doors and began to call: “Children, children, children, come to mother and let her wash you.”

When she looked up, what did she behold? The court-yard was filled and the woods were swarming with a host of dragons and all sorts of wild beasts of every size. But, firm in her faith and trust in God, the young girl did not quail, but taking one animal after another washed and cleaned it in the best possible way. Then she set about cooking the dinner, and when

Sunday came out of church and saw her children so nicely washed and every thing so well done she was greatly delighted. After she had sat down to the table, she told the young girl that she might go up into the attic, choose whichever chest she wanted, and take it away with her for her wages; but she must not open it until she reached her father's house.

The maiden went to the garret, where there were a number of chests, some old and ugly, others new and beautiful. But as she was not a bit covetous, she took the oldest and ugliest of them all. When she came down with it, the goddess of Sunday frowned slightly, but there was no help for it, so she blessed the girl, who took her trunk on her back and joyfully returned to her father's house.

On the way, lo and behold! there was the oven full of beautifully risen, nicely browned cakes. The girl ate and ate, as many as she could, then took some with her for her journey and went on. Soon she came to the fountain she had cleaned, and which was now filled to the brim with water as clear as tears and as sweet and cold as ice. On the edge stood two silver goblets, from which she drank the water until she was entirely refreshed. Then, taking one goblet with her, she walked on. As she went, lo and behold! there stood the pear-tree she had cleaned, full of pears as yellow as wax, perfectly ripe, and as sweet as honey. When the pear-tree saw the girl, it bent its branches down to her, and she ate some of the fruit and took more pears to eat on the way, just as many of them as she wanted. From there she journeyed on again, and lo and behold! she next met the little dog, which was now well and handsome; around its neck it wore a collar of ducats which it gave the old man's daughter as a reward for taking care of it in its sickness.

So the young girl at last reached her father's house. When the old man saw her his eyes filled with tears and his heart throbbed with joy. The girl took out the dog's collar and the silver goblet and gave them to her father; when they opened the chest together, out came countless numbers of horses, cattle, and sheep, till the sight of so much wealth instantly made the old man young again. But his wife stood as if she were dazed, and did not know what to do in her rage. Her daughter, however, plucked up courage and said:—

“Never mind, mother, the world isn’t emptied yet; I’ll go and fetch you still greater treasures.”

After saying this she angrily set off at once. She walked and walked along the same path her step-sister had followed. She, too, met the sick, feeble dog, passed the pear-tree covered with caterpillars, the dry, neglected fountain, and the dilapidated oven which had become almost useless; but when dog, tree, fountain and oven begged her to take care of them, she answered rudely and scornfully: “Do you suppose I’ll soil my delicate hands! Have you often been tended by people like me?”

As they all knew that it is easier to get milk from a dry cow than to make a spoiled, lazy girl obliging, they let her go her way in peace, and no longer asked her for help. As she walked on and on, she too at last reached the Goddess Sunday. But here also she behaved sullenly, saucily, and awkwardly. Instead of cooking the dinner nicely and washing Sunday’s children as thoroughly as her step-sister had done, she burned them all till they screamed and ran off as though crazed by the burns and the pain. The food she scorched, charred, and let curdle so that no one could eat it, and when Sunday came home from church she covered her eyes and ears in horror at what she found in her house. Even the gentle, indulgent goddess could not get along with such an obstinate, lazy girl as this one, so she told her to go up into the garret, choose any chest she wanted, and then in God’s name continue her journey.

The girl went, took the newest and handsomest trunk, for she liked to get as much as possible of the best and finest things, but was not willing to do faithful service. When she came down she did not go to the Goddess Sunday to receive her blessing, but hurried off as if she were quitting an evil house. She nearly ran herself off her feet, in the fear that her mistress might change her mind and follow her to get her trunk back. When she reached the oven there were some nice cakes in it, but when she approached to satisfy her hunger the fire burned her and she could take none. The silver goblets were again at the fountain and the fountain was full of water to the brim, but when the girl tried to seize the cup to drink, the goblets instantly vanished, the water dried up, and the girl almost died of thirst. When she came to the pear tree it stood full of pears, but do you suppose the traveler could taste even one of them? No! The tree had made itself a thousand times as tall as before, so that its boughs touched the clouds! So the old woman's daughter might pick her teeth, she obtained nothing else. Going further on she met the dog, which again had a collar of ducats round its neck; but when the girl tried to take it off the dog bit her so that he tore off her fingers and would not let her touch him. The girl, in rage and shame, sucked her delicate little hands, but it did no good.

At last, after great difficulty, she reached her mother's house, but even here she did not find herself rolling in money, for when the old man's wife opened the chest, out came a host of dragons, which swallowed her and her daughter as if they had never been in the world. Then dragons, trunk, and all vanished.

The old man could now live in peace, and possessed countless riches; his daughter he married to a worthy, capable man. The cocks now crowed on the gate-posts, the threshold, and everywhere, but the hens no longer crowed as an evil omen in the house of the old man, who had not many days of life remaining. He was bald and bent, because his wife had quarreled with him too often and looked to see if he didn't need a drubbing.

15

THE POOR BOY

Once upon a time something happened. If it hadn’t happened, it wouldn’t be told.

There was once a poor widow, so poor that even the flies would not stay in her house, and this widow had two children, a boy and a girl. The boy was such a brave fellow that he would have torn the snakes’ tongues out of their mouths, and the girl was so beautiful that the emperor’s sons and handsome princes of every land were waiting impatiently for her to grow up, that they might go and court her. But when the girl had reached her sixteenth year, the same thing befell her that happens to all beautiful maidens — a dragon came, stole her, and carried her far away to the shore of another country. From that day the widow loved her son hundreds and thousands of times better than before, because he was now her only child and the sole joy she had in the world. She watched him like the apple of her eye and would not let him go a single step away from her. But much as she loved him she was cheerless and sad, for, dear me! a boy is only a boy, but a girl is a girl, especially when she is beautiful.

The boy, seeing his mother so melancholy, tried to grow stronger and stronger, and counted the days before he should be large enough to go out into the world and seek his sister, little Rosy Cheeks, along untrodden paths filled with thorns. When he had reached his eighteenth year he made himself a pair of calf-skin sandals with steel soles, went to his mother, and said: —

“Mother, I have neither rest nor peace here so long as I see you so sick and sorrowful from constantly thinking of my sister; I have determined to go out into the wide world and not return till I can bring news of her. I don’t know whether I shall find her, but at least I hope so, and that hope I leave with you for your consolation.”

When the widow heard these words she was forced to struggle with her feelings ere she answered: “Well, my son, my child! Do what you can not help doing; when you return I shall see you again, and if you don’t come back I shall not weep for you, because the journey you have in view is a long one; therefore if you are absent a long time there will always be the hope of your return.”

After saying this she mixed three loaves for him with her own milk, one of meal, the second of bran, and the third of ashes from the hearth. The lad put the loaves into his knapsack, bade his mother farewell, and went out into the world like a poor boy to whom all roads are equally long, all bridges equally wide, and who does not know what direction to take. At the gate he stood still, cast one glance to the east, one to the west, one to the north, and one to the south, then took a handful of dust from under the threshold of the door, scattered it on the wind, and turned his steps in the direction that it was carried by the breeze.

The Poor Boy walked and walked, further and further, through many a rich country, till he came to a moor on which no grass grew and no water flowed. Here he stopped and pulled out his three loaves. He began with the one made of meal, because it was the handsomest, and as he ate it his strength increased and his thirst was quenched. Again the Poor Boy walked on, journeying across the wide moor a whole long summer day until nightfall, when he reached a vast forest as extensive as the heath he had passed, but which was dense, gloomy, and forsaken even by the winds.

When he entered the wood, he saw by the trunk of a tree an old woman with a bent figure and a wrinkled face. The Poor Boy, who for so long a time had seen no human countenance and heard no human speech, was greatly delighted and said merrily: —

“Good luck, mother! But how do you happen to come here, and what are you doing in this wilderness of a forest?”

“Your words are kind!” replied the old woman sighing. “Alas, age has brought me down to this; I wanted to walk a little distance and can go no further because my feet will no longer carry me.”

When the Poor Boy heard this he pitied the old woman, went up to her, and asked whence she came, where she was going, and on what business she was bent. The luckless fellow did not know that this person was no other than the Wood Witch, who waits on the edge of forests and meets those who wander in these desolate regions, in order to delude them with fair words and then lead them to destruction. When he saw her so feeble, the boy remembered his three loaves, and, as if he were going home the very next day, thought he would share his provisions with her that she might get a little strength.

“I thank you,” replied the Wood Witch, who had other designs upon him in her mind; “but see, I have no teeth to chew your dry bread. If you want to do any thing to help me, take me on your back and carry me, I live close by.”

“But just taste it,” said the boy, who in his kindness of heart wanted to do her some good. “It is only hunger that has made you so weak, and if this doesn’t help you I’ll carry you as you wish.”

When the Wood Witch saw the loaf made of meal she gazed at it with delight; there was something about it — I don’t know what — that made even the Wood Witch long for a morsel. And as she bit into it her heart grew softer. After she had eaten three mouthfuls she felt as if she were a human being, like the rest of us, with her heart in the right place and a gentle temper.

"Learn, my son," she said to him, "that I am the Wood Witch, and know very well who you are, whence you come, and where you are going. It is a great task you have before you, for your sister is in the other world, which inhabitants of this earth can reach only in one way."

"And what is that?" asked the Poor Boy impatiently.

The Wood Witch looked doubtfully at him.

"I don't advise you to take it," she said, "it would be a pity to lose your young life. But who knows, perhaps you'll have good luck; I see that you have a tender heart, and whoever has that can bring many things to pass; besides, I know you — you will have no rest till you have found her. So learn — far away from here, after you have crossed six moors and six forests, you will meet on the edge of the seventh forest, which extends to the frontiers of the next world, an old witch; this witch has a drove of horses, and among them is an enchanted horse which can carry you to the other shore. But this steed can be obtained only by the person who knows how to choose it from the whole drove, after he has served the old witch for a year."

This was what the Poor Boy had wanted to know. He lost no more time, thanked the Wood Witch for her explanations, and set off, keeping straight through the dense forest, because his road was long and he was in a hurry. The Poor Boy walked like one who goes on a good errand, and hurried like a person who wants to get home early. How far he walked and how much he hurried any one can imagine, who remembers how long a time he himself required to cross a single moor and a single forest. But, when his strength failed, he bit off a piece of his loaf and instantly revived again.

As he came out of the sixth forest and passed near the clear waves of a brook, he saw a wasp struggling in the water and pitied the insect. So he took a dry branch and held out one end of it to the wasp, that it might crawl up on it and then use its wings. But this wasp happened to be the queen of all the wasps in the woods, and when she found herself saved by the boy's kindness she flew upon his shoulder and said:

"Wherever you go, may good-luck be your companion. Please pull out a hair from under my right wing and take good care of it, for who knows whether it will not prove useful to you some day. If you need me, shake this hair and I'll come to you, in whatever part of the world you may be."

The Poor Boy pulled out the hair, put it carefully away, and journeyed on. Who knows how far he walked before he came to a great lake, on whose shore he saw a fish flapping on the dry land. He pitied the poor creature, which had scarcely a breath of life left, so he picked it up and tossed it into the water. But this fish was king of all the fishes, and had jeweled scales and golden fins. It swam once around the lake, breathed two or three times to recover its strength, and then came back to the boy and said:

"Wherever you go, may good-luck be your companion. Please pull off a scale from under my right fin and keep it carefully, who knows whether it may not be useful to you some day. If you ever need me, rub this scale and I'll come to you wherever you may be, as far as the water extends around the earth."

The Poor Boy took the scale, put it carefully away, and journeyed on. Who knows how far he walked ere he reached the seventh moor, where no grass grew and no water flowed. There he found in his path a mole which had been surprised above ground by the daylight, and was now groping piteously about in its blindness, unable to find its burrow where its children were starving, though it was only one jump away. The youth pitied the mole, too, took it and carried it to its hill.

"Wherever you go," said the mole, "may good-luck be your companion. Please take a claw from my right paw and keep it carefully; who knows whether it may not be useful to you some day. But if you need me, scratch on the ground with this claw and I will come to you in whatever part of the earth you may be."

The Poor Boy took the claw, put it carefully away, and went on again over the endless moor toward the invisible forest that lay on the frontiers of the other world. How many days and nights he journeyed over this moor heaven only knows; but one morning, when he woke, he saw in the distance, as far off as if it were in the other world, a streak of light like the fire shepherds build at the entrance of the fold. This was the home of the witch who had the enchanted horse.

The Poor Boy was greatly delighted when he found himself so near the end of the world, and his joy increased till, on the evening of the third day, he reached the enchantress's house. Oh, dear! there he was, in the midst of the moor, just at the edge of the forest, which stretched far beyond his sight in the dusk of twilight, upon a wide plain covered with green grass, through which flowed streams of clear water, but in the middle of this plain rose a number of tall poles, on each of which was a human skull. The witch's hut stood in the midst of these poles, with a tall poplar in front of it, and on the right and left a willow tree. This proved that the Wood Witch was right — life here was by no means merry. The Poor Boy plucked up his courage and approached to enter the hut, which stood as if deserted in the middle of the moor.

The old witch sat on a high three-legged chair in the entry, but before her stood a huge kettle on a big tripod, over a fire that burned without smoke. In one hand she held the shin-bone of a giant, which she used to stir the herbs stewing in the caldron. When the Poor Boy bade her good evening, she eyed him from top to toe.

"Welcome, my hero! I've expected you a long time, for this caldron has long been rattling and telling me continually that you were on the way."

The lad was much pleased with this kind reception, for the old woman did not seem to him at all peevish, as she looked kindly at him and spoke in a gentle voice. She, too, was glad, because she had again laid hands on a man, for the poles bearing human skulls protected her from the malicious elves, who could not pass through them; and there was still one piece of ground large enough for three heads, where poles had not yet been put.

They now agreed that the Poor Boy should watch the drove a whole year, and in payment receive the horse he himself should choose; but if he should lose the drove he was to give up his head to the witch. The old woman instantly stuck a pole in the ground and put the hero's hat on it. Then the youth ate something, that he might not go with the drove to the pasture hungry. While the boy was eating, the witch led the mares behind the hut and began to beat them with the giant's shin bone, telling them not to drink any water during the night, nor allow the others to do so, because the water from the springs in the plain would put them to sleep, and the old woman wanted the herd to graze all night. The boy knew nothing about this.

When he came to the pasture with the drove he was attacked by so great a thirst, that he would have walked from morning till night to find a drop of water; so to quench it he lay down by a spring and drank, and even while drinking he fell asleep.

When in the first gray dawn of the next morning he woke from his slumber, the drove had vanished, leaving no trace anywhere! It is only necessary to remember that the lad's cap was already hanging on the pole to understand how great was his despair. But he gazed around him in every direction without discovering even a sign of a horse; the morning twilight was fast vanishing, and he stood utterly forsaken, not knowing which way to turn. Then he recollected the service he had once rendered the wasp, and thought that a wasp flies so fast that it might discover the drove and bring him news of their hiding-place, so he took the hair he had pulled from under the wasp's right wing and shook it. Quick as thought a buzzing noise was heard from every direction — it grew louder and louder, till one might have thought the world was going to ruin. Good gracious! There came one wasp after another, one swarm behind another, whole ranks, great clouds of wasps of all sizes, all ready to circle the earth and obey the Poor Boy’s commands.

“Have no anxiety,” said the Wasp Queen; “if the drove still remains on the earth, we’ll bring the horses back to you ere sunrise.”

Then every thing became quiet, because the wasps flew off to every quarter of the globe and scattered all over the world. Ere long a cloud of dust appeared in the distance, swept with mad haste over the wide plain in the midst of the moor, and the drove of horses, urged by the wasps’ stings, dashed up so swiftly that the earth fairly groaned under their hoofs. The Poor Boy thanked the wasps for their help, and then went to the hut as if nothing had happened.

The old woman looked askance at him, said he had done well, and then beat the mares again, ordering them to hide carefully at night. That evening the lad would eat nothing, because he thought the witch’s food had caused his terrible thirst the night before; but when he went with the drove to the pasture, a burning, consuming thirst seized upon him as soon as he saw the clear water, and wherever he went springs bubbled from under his feet. At last he could no longer control himself, and relying upon the aid of the wasps, lay down beside a spring and had scarcely drunk when he instantly fell asleep. This time he woke later than on the night before, because he had gone to sleep later, so he was later in shaking the hair he had pulled out from under the wasp’s wing, and the swarms of wasps were later in coming to seek and drive the horses home.

But what did the youth see? Ere long one swarm after another returned, each bringing news that the drove could not be found on the surface of the earth and must have hidden somewhere in the sea.

The sun was about to rise. The Poor Boy took the fish-scale, rubbed it, and suddenly there appeared in the springs at his feet a school of tiny fish, that filled every channel, and asked what were his wishes and commands.

He told them what he desired and instantly all the waters on the earth, rivers, lakes, and seas, began to swell and dash, while the wasps flew off to be ready to pounce upon the drove as soon as the fish forced the horses to appear.

The Poor Boy had scarcely time to collect his horses and take them home when the sun rose.

The old woman looked angrily at him, but said again that he had done well, and gave the mares a still more terrible beating; for the year consisted of three days, and if they did not hide successfully that night the hero might demand his wages.

The Poor Boy knew this too. So he began to eat his meal-loaf as he went with the drove to the pasture, and whenever he bit off a piece his strength increased and his thirst was quenched. Yet, whenever he saw the springs or heard the water rippling over the pebbles, he grew thirsty again, and so devoured the whole of the meal-loaf. He ought now to have taken the bran loaf, but did not venture to do so because he still had a long journey before him, and was afraid of being without food. Therefore he again relied on the aid of the wasps and fishes, lay down by a spring, and as soon as he had drunk fell asleep.

When he awoke it was broad daylight, though the sun had not yet risen. He shook the hair, but the wasps came with the tidings that the drove was not on the surface of the earth, he rubbed the fish-scale, but the fishes said the horses were not under the water either; so, in his despair, he seized the mole’s claw and scratched on the ground with it.

Then you should have seen the wonder! The wasps buzzed, the fish searched all the water in the world, and the moles began to rummage the earth, furrowing it in every direction as if they meant to make it into pap. When the first sunbeams touched the top of the poplar before the hut, the drove dashed like hunted ghosts to the Poor Boy; if the horses tried to go into the water the fish scared them back, if they tried to hide themselves in the ground the claws of the moles drove them out, and so they were forced to go wherever the wasps guided them.

The Poor Boy thanked his friends for their help, and returned home just as the sun shone upon the hut. The old woman looked angrily at him, but said nothing.

But now trouble came. The year was over, and the Poor Boy began to rack his brains because he did not know which horse in the drove he ought to choose. That’s the way with over-hasty people. The Wood Witch could probably have told him this, too, if he had not left her so quickly. Now he went to work hap-hazard. Still, he thought, whatever he might hit upon he should not fare badly, for on a long journey it was better at any rate to be on horseback than on foot. Besides, he had seen the old witch’s horses run and knew that they were fine animals, no worthless jades. So he went through the drove, and as he walked noticed a sick filly, which he pitied because it looked so neglected, but he did not think of choosing it. But, no matter how much he turned and twisted, he always stopped beside this animal, for he was very kind-hearted and told himself that, even if he could not make much use of it, he could at least do the poor creature some service.

“Who knows,” he said, “if I should comb, brush, and curry it, perhaps it may yet make a good horse!”

So he chose it, and resolved to take with him the pouch containing the comb, brush, and curry-comb, in order to carefully tend his horse.

The old witch turned green with spite when she heard that the youth had chosen this steed, for it was the very one. But what could she do? She was obliged to keep her promise. She merely advised him to select another, better animal, telling him that he would soon be without a horse, and that good work deserved good wages, but at last she gave it to him.

Still, a witch always remains a witch, and when the Poor Boy had mounted, taken leave of her, and ridden off, she went to the big caldron, took it off and mounted the tripod, then she changed herself in face and figure and hurried after with the speed of curses, to catch him, kill him, and get her horse back. The Poor Boy felt that something terrible was pursuing him, and set spurs to his steed.

“It’s no use to spur me,” said the horse, “we can’t outrun her, so long as we are on her lands. But throw the comb behind you, to put an obstacle in her way.”

Now the Poor Boy knew that he had chosen wisely when he took the sick filly. So he drew the comb out of the bag, flung it behind him, and it instantly became a long, high fence, which the witch could not climb over, so she was obliged to go a long way round, and he thus gained a start.

“Throw down the brush,” said the horse, when it again heard the trampling of the tripod near them.

The rider threw the brush, which turned into a dense growth of reeds, through which the old hag forced her way with much difficulty and many a groan.

“Throw the curry-comb,” cried the horse for the third time. When he had flung that down, the Poor Boy looked back and saw a whole forest of knives and swords, and among them the witch trying to get through and being cut into mince-meat.

When they reached the seventh forest, where the witch’s kingdom ended, the sick horse shook itself and became a handsome, winged steed, whose like was never seen before or since.

“Now hold fast,” said the horse, “I am going to carry you as never hero went from this world to the other, for I, too, have a sister there whom I seek.”

The Poor Boy was dazed by the swiftness with which the horse flew over the forest and alighted in the other world through a large opening in another part of the woods. When he recovered his senses, he found himself on the shore of the other world with the horse, which now shook itself a second time, changed into a handsome prince with long, curling locks, and said:

"Wherever you go, may good luck be your companion, for you have released me from the spell the Wood Witch laid upon me. Learn that I am the son of the Red Emperor and set out to seek my sister, but on the edge of the forest I met the Wood Witch, who complained that she could walk no further and begged me to carry her on my back; but when, out of pity, I let her get on my shoulders, she changed me into a horse and condemned me to retain that form until a hero took pity on me and mounted me, that I might carry him to the other world, there I was to regain my human form."

The Poor Boy was greatly overjoyed to find himself no longer alone. He took the bran loaf, broke it in halves, and gave one portion to the prince, that they might be brothers till death. The prince tasted the bread, and as he ate his strength and his love increased. They told each other their experiences, and then went on their way.

Far, far off, just at the end of the coast-line, rose shining buildings, which must be the dragons' palaces. The country here was so beautiful, that one would have gladly traveled through it forever, it was so radiant with light, so green, so rich in flowers, birds of beautiful plumage, and tame, sportive animals. And in this country men never grew old, but remained exactly the same age as when they entered it, for here there were no days, the sun neither rose nor set, but the light came of itself, as if from a clear sky. The dragons, however, were nowhere to be seen, and the two brothers for life continued their way. After they had walked as far as a three-days' march, they reached the beautiful palaces and paused before them, because they were so marvelously lovely, with high towers, and walls built of stones as soft as velvet, covered with plates of snow that had been dried in the sun. But they seemed empty and deserted.

The Poor Boy and the prince entered, went through all the rooms filled with costly ornaments, and, seeing no one, thought that the dragon must surely have gone hunting and determined to wait for him. But they were surprised that they did not find their sisters here. Each stretched himself on one of the beautiful divans and was going to rest, when suddenly both started up, amazed by what they heard.

Dear me! It was a song, so touching that it would have softened the very stones; it made those who listened feel as if they were in heaven, and the notes were in a woman's voice. The two companions did not listen long, but hurried off in the direction from which the sound came.

This is what they saw — in one part of the palace was a glass tower, and in this tower sat a girl spinning, singing, and weeping, but her tears, in falling, were instantly changed to pearls. This maiden was so beautiful that, if she had been in the world, two men would have killed each other for her sake. When the heroes beheld her, they stood motionless and gazed longingly at her, but the girl stopped spinning, and neither sang nor wept, but looked at them in amazement.

She was not the sister of either youth, but as usually happens in such cases, the Poor Boy supposed she was the prince's sister, and the prince thought she was the sister of the Poor Boy.

"I'll stay here," said the Poor Boy, "and you can go on, deliver my sister, and marry her."

"No, I'll stay here," replied the prince, "you can go on and release my sister, for this maiden shall be my wife."

Now came trouble! When they understood that the lovely girl was the sister of neither, the handsome heroes seized their swords and were on the point of fighting as men do fight when they are obliged to divide any thing.

"Stop," said the fair girl, "don't attack each other. It is better first to discover whether I am really what I seem to you, or, after all, only a shadow! I am the Bodiless Maiden, who will not obtain form in this world until the dragon has stolen me from the other shore. I shall then be as you see me now, shall spin, sing, and weep, because I shall think of my mother who is spinning, singing, and weeping; and your sisters, who were stolen by the two older brothers of the dragon who rules this palace spin, sing, and weep, too.”

On hearing this, the two heroes wanted to set off at once, in order to lose no more time on the way.

“Stop, don’t be over hasty,” said the Bodiless Maiden. “You probably think that you will conquer the dragons by mere will? Great deeds await you. The old she-dragon put me here, that I might constantly spur on her youngest son, because it is written that all three brothers are to be married at the same time. The two older brothers keep your sisters prisoners, but can not wed them till the youngest son has stolen me. Whenever he comes home from hunting, he stops there where you are standing, gazes longingly at me, then arranges his weapons and feeds his horse with red-hot coals, but can’t set out yet because my hour has not come. So stay and conquer him here, that he may not steal me while you are on your way, for you would then be too late in reaching your sisters. Yet mind one thing; you can not conquer him outside of his court-yard, because he is invisible. So, when he comes home, he throws his club at the gate with so much force that the earth quakes, the walls fall down, and any mortals who might be inside are buried alive. If you feel that you have strength enough to hold the gates on their hinges, so that they can not give way when he hurls the club against them, stay, otherwise go, in God’s name, for it would be a pity to lose your young lives.”

The Poor Boy and the prince looked at each other, understood that the deed must be done, and resolved to stay. While the Poor Boy went to the gates to hold them, the prince drew his sword and awaited the dragon in the middle of the court-yard. You can perceive that this was no joke.

Very little time passed, when suddenly, crash! the club struck against the iron-barred gates so that one might have believed the world was falling to pieces. The Poor Boy thought the muscles of his heart would crack in two under the terrible strain, and the walls would crumble to their foundations — but he held the gates on their hinges. When the dragon saw that the palace did not fall down, he stood still in surprise.

"What does this mean?" he said. "I must have grown very weak since yesterday." He did not suspect what awaited him.

When, with some difficulty, he opened the gate, he did not notice the Poor Boy, but went straight toward the prince, who stood in mortal terror in the middle of the court-yard, for, after all, what would you expect? A dragon is a dragon, and not a girl in woman's clothes.

We won't linger over the story any longer, we know what always happens when dragons and princes meet. They began the battle. The prince was a hero, but the dragon was the youngest of three brothers! They fought with swords, who knows how long? then, when they saw that neither could conquer the other in that way, they fought hand to hand, while the Poor Boy held up the palace, that it might not fall down on their heads.

When the Poor Boy saw that his strength was failing and neither was conquering the other, he called loudly: "Seize him and throw him on the ground, I can hold out no longer."

The prince grasped the dragon, summoned up all his strength, and hurled him on the ground so that his bones cracked and he lay senseless; then he hastily took to flight, ran through the half-open gate, and pulled the Poor Boy after him; the walls fell, the huge splendid palaces toppled down, and, as it were, buried the dragon alive. Nothing remained standing except the glass tower, now empty and deserted. The Bodiless Maiden had vanished from it the very moment that there was no longer any one who could have stolen her from the other world.

The two comrades thanked the Lord that they had been able to accomplish their task so far, and journeyed on, walking and walking, till they reached the palace of the second dragon. Already in the distance they saw the glass tower and heard the wailing song; but the Poor Boy's heart beat higher, because the nearer he approached the more distinctly he recognized his sister’s voice. When they reached the beautiful great palace and saw the girl in the glass tower, both rushed up to break into the turret and clasp her in their arms.

But affairs could not be managed so easily. The girl in the glass tower, who was really the Poor Boy’s sister, looked at them in surprise; but when he told her that he had come to rescue her from the dragon’s claws, she replied that she did not know him, and that neither in face nor form did he bear any resemblance to her brother. Great was the Poor Boy’s grief when he saw that his sister wanted to have nothing to do with him, though for her sake he had crossed so many moors and encountered so many dangers, but his sorrow became still greater when she began to complain that she was dying of love for the dragon. Every day, she said, he came and gazed ardently at her, yet day after day kept her a prisoner and did not marry her. Still, this was endurable to the Poor Boy, because she was only his sister; but when the prince saw the girl, heard her voice, and perceived her love for the dragon, he became perfectly frantic.

“Well then, if you won’t come, we’ll carry you off by force!” he said, ready to take the whole palace on his back and fly with it to the other shore.

“Gently, gently,” said the girl; “if it came to that, I need only pull a nail out of this glass wall to bring the whole palace toppling down upon your heads. But I pity your youth, and advise you not to stay here long, because my betrothed husband might catch you, and you will have no one to mourn for you.”

The Poor Boy now took his ash-cake from his knapsack and said: “Sister, just taste this bread, and then say that I am not your brother.”

She held out her hand and the glass walls opened; but after she had taken the bread and tasted it she felt that it had been mixed with her own mother’s milk, and was seized with such terrible homesickness that one might have wept for pity. “Forward!” she said hastily, “let us fly, for if he finds us here, woe betide you.”

The Poor Boy took her in his arms and kissed her, because she was his sister, but the prince embraced and kissed her, too, because — because he was the Poor Boy’s sworn brother.

Then they agreed to serve this dragon as they had served his brother, so they waited awhile, received the dragon as he deserved, conquered him, and after thanking God that they had overcome this peril too, journeyed on again to deliver the emperor’s daughter.

But now came fresh trouble. The princess did not want to be rescued, and the prince had no token with him by which she might have recognized him as her brother. In vain the Poor Boy told her that if she did not come willingly, he would carry her off by force; she kept her hand on the dangerous nail and it was impossible to coax her.

I must mention that it would go hard with them if they waited for the dragon; for there were only two champions, and if one held up the palace by keeping the gates on their hinges and the other waited for the dragon in the middle of the court-yard, there was no one who could protect them from the nail.

“Let me attend to it,” said the Poor Boy, who, since he had seen the princess, had grown fairly frantic. “Either his life or mine!”

As we perceive, he had determined to fight the dragon in the open ground, where he could not see him, — a thing never heard of since fairy princes first began to fight the dragon’s brood; for if it is hard to conquer a dragon at all, it is doubly difficult to vanquish one when he is invisible, and no one had ever thought of such an exploit.

The prince and the Poor Boy’s sister hid themselves in a ditch near the palace, that the dragon might not see them; but the Poor Boy stationed himself a little behind the gate and waited for the dragon to hurl his club, in order to get near him, for when he no longer had a club he would be obliged to fight either with his sword or with his fists.

Ere long, crash! the club struck the iron-barred gate, but the Poor Boy was not slow, he opened the other gate and ran out with it, leaving the palace to fall in ruins behind him.

“Come on, if you have the courage to show yourself,” he shouted, believing that the dragon would make some reply and thus betray himself.

But the dragon felt that he had found his match, and did not think of speaking, but, invisible to the youth, approached, drew his sword, and aimed straight at his enemy’s head to hack it off, but the blow only broke the lad’s jaw. The wound hurt the Poor Boy, but it pleased him, too, because he now knew where to look for his foe; so he rushed in the direction from which the blow had come, struck out, and felt that he hit flesh, struck again, and again felt that he had hit, and so continued to deal short, swift thrusts, with, which he drove the dragon before the point of his sword. Suddenly he perceived that he no longer hit any thing and the dragon had escaped, so he stood cowering, like a person who does not know from whence the next blow will come.

The dragon again aimed straight at the Poor Boy’s head, and as he hacked, struck off his right ear.

“I’ll pay you for that,” shouted the youth, rushing upon him again. But his strength was now greatly diminished, and he only hit the dragon twice before he lost him from the point of his saber.

The princess was watching their battle from her tower, which had remained standing, and as she watched wondered at the Poor Boy’s heroic courage; but when she saw the dragon aiming a third blow at the youth’s head, she called: “Dear hero, turn to the right and spit three times, then you can see your foe.”

When the Poor Boy heard this, he felt a hundred thousand times stronger than he had been before, and as he turned to the right, spit, and saw the dragon, he rushed upon him, seized him in his arms, and squeezed him so that he crushed all his bones and flung him on the ground as dead as a mouse.

The prince and the Poor Boy lost no time, but prepared to journey home. The princess kissed the Poor Boy and his ear and his chin instantly healed, so that he looked even handsomer than before. Then the two comrades went to the dragon’s stables, which were hidden under the foundations of the fallen palace. Each took an enchanted horse, mounted, lifted his betrothed bride upon it, and hurried homeward.

If the Red Emperor had been only an ordinary mortal he would have rejoiced, but he was a sovereign to boot! He divided his empire between his son and his daughter’s husband; the Poor Boy went to his poor mother’s house to bring her to court and, when she had arrived, a wedding was celebrated, dear me! a wedding that will be talked about as long as the world stands.

16

MOTHER’S DARLING JACK

Once upon a time something happened. If it had not happened it would not be told.

There was once a man who had a child. This child was the youngest of seven which the Lord had given him, so it was destined from its birth to be lucky. It was christened John, because all dunces and upstarts are named John. The father loved little Jack like the very apple of his eye. It could not have been otherwise, since the boy was the youngest of seven children and the smallest, chubbiest, and fattest of them all. But the father doesn’t count for every thing. He comes and goes, appears and vanishes, the house is only a sleeping-place for him. The mother is the real soul of the household; she bathes one, feeds another, and scrubs for a third. Jack was his mother’s boy, his mother’s pet, his mother’s darling, his mother’s handsomest and brightest child.

They say it is not well for one person to be every thing, the lowest to be highest, and the child to govern the house. Jack grew larger every day, and the larger he grew the more quarrelsome, obstinate, and consequently self-willed he became. So there was often, nay, to tell the whole truth, *very* often, anger in the house on the boy’s account. Jack daily heard some harsh word; but as it proved that words made no impression, punishment frequently followed. Ah! but Jack was the youngest of seven. The one who punished suffered, not the one who was chastised. If the father whipped Jack, the mother wiped away his tears; if the mother slapped him, she took care not to let her husband know it. It is a bad example, when a child breaks a pot, for the mother to set to work to pick up the pieces; things are then in a bad way, and it is well not to waste another word about them.

So it ended. Jack became a very disobedient child, and disobedience avenges itself on the disobedient. If his father wanted to teach him anything, and said: “My dear Jack, look, do it so, this is right; this is the way oxen are harnessed in front of carts, this is the way the nail is driven into the wheel, this is the way sacks are carried,” and other useful lessons, Jack’s mind was fixed on other things, and he replied, “Oh! let me alone.” And so from one “Oh! let me alone,” to another “Oh! let me alone,” Jack grew into a big boy without having even learned so much as that a plow has handles, a mill is not a mortar, and a cow is not an ox. And he couldn’t do much in this way.

One day his father was preparing to go to the fair. Every thing was ready except one pin, which had not yet been put through the yoke.

“Father,” said Jack, “I’m coming with you.”

“It will be better for you to stay at home, that you may not be lost in the market,” replied his father.

“I want to go —”

“I won’t take you.”

“I *will* go.”

“I won’t take you.”

Every body knows what forward children are. The instant they are told that a thing can’t be had, they want to seize it by force. His father could not help himself, so he set Jack in the wagon and drove off with him to the fair.

“Mind,” he said, “you must keep close to me.” “Yes, father,” said Jack, obediently, for the first time in the memory of the family. And until they reached the end of the village, Jack sat as if he were nailed to the back of the cart. At the end of the village he put out one foot, then he raised his head and began to look around him. Finally he stood up, leaned on the side of the cart, and began to watch the wheels. He could not understand how one wheel moved of its own accord, how one spoke hurried after another, constantly going forward without stirring from the spot, nay, without moving from under his own nose.

They reached the woods. Jack perked up his nose and stared with his mouth wide open. The trees on the right and left set out and ran with all their might, one after another. There must be witchcraft in it. Jack jumped out of the cart and again felt the solid ground under his feet. But he once more stood with his mouth wide open. The trees now stood still, but the cart moved on further and further. “Stop, father, stop, so I can see how the wheels turn,” the boy called after a while.

But now his hair fairly bristled with fear. He heard his shout repeated from ten different directions, while his father drove on without noticing his cry. “Father!” he called again, and again he heard the word ten times. Jack was terribly frightened, and seeing that no place was as pleasant as home, began to run back there. Nothing but a cloud of dust could be seen behind him. He ran on and on toward home till he turned into the wrong road.

Now you can see how unfortunate it is for inexperienced people not to listen to the advice of wiser ones! Jack had done wrong in trying to run home when he did not know the way through the forest. He ran for a long time, then gradually slackened his pace and at last began to walk, but kept on through forest after forest, across a meadow, and through the woods again, then across another meadow, till he was completely tired out, and weary of his life.

“Lord, have mercy on me, I will always be obedient in future,” he cried, at last — and his heart must have been very heavy when he uttered such words.

After that he did not walk much further. A short distance off, on the edge of the woods, stood a village. Jack jumped for joy when he saw it, and did not stop till he was in the middle of it. Then he went from house to house, and the further he went the more he wondered that he found all kinds of houses except his own home. He did not know what to do, and began to cry.

“What are you crying about, my son?” asked a man who was coming back from the fields in front of a cart drawn by four oxen.

Jack told his story, and the man pitied him. “What is your name?” asked the kind-hearted peasant. “Jack,” replied the boy.

“But your father, what is his name?”

“His name is father,” the lad answered.

“What is the village where you belong called?”

“Village!” he said.

So Jack could answer no questions, and the man could do nothing to help him. He therefore took him into his service as plow-boy, for he needed just such a lad to guide the oxen while he held the handles of the plow. Thus Jack became the servant of a worthy man in the village on the edge of the forest. But he was of little use, because he had not paid attention when good instruction was given him. And whoever does not know how to do any thing well, must expect a great deal of scolding.

One day Jack’s master was preparing to go to market. “Listen, Jack,” he said, “grease the cart thoroughly, for we’re going to market to-morrow.”

Jack said “Yes,” took the grease, and began to scratch his head. He did not know how to grease a cart. He had never listened when he had been told, nor looked when he might have seen it; so now he did not know what to do. Finally, from what he had hitherto learned, he recollected that the beginning of a cart is at the yoke, that is, the pole. So he thought he must commence there if he wanted to do the business thoroughly. He greased the thills, the pole, even the rack of the cart. Here he stopped, for there was no grease left. So he went to ask for some.

“Master,” he said, after entering the room, “give me some more grease.”

“Why in the world do you want more grease?” replied his master angrily, “I gave you enough to grease the cart three times over.”

Jack said that there had only been enough for the thills, pole, and rack. When his master heard such words, he took Jack by the ear, led him out, and gave him such a beating that never again in his whole life did he forget that only the axles of a cart are to be greased. Well, what was the mother’s darling to do — he was obliged to bear it, and then pay attention, that he might learn how to grease a cart.

After the cart was ready, the oxen were put in and the master took his seat in front, but Jack crouched in the back of the cart like a little heap of misery, sobbing now and then from having wept so much. “Silence,” said his master sternly, “don’t let me hear another word from you!” This was the last thing before they drove off.

Jack sat as still as a mouse; he was almost afraid to breathe. At last, this grew tiresome. So he began to watch the wheels again. But he was wiser now, and did not wonder at the wheels or the trees. Yet he saw something he could not understand. Often as he had seen a wheel go round, he had never noticed the pin spring from it. The cart passed over a big stone, and, “klirr,” the pin bounced out of the axle and fell on the ground. It was pretty to look at, but the lad didn’t understand it. He would have liked to ask his master, but the farmer had ordered him to be silent. After some time the nut loosened. Jack thought he understood why. Directly after — bump dropped the nut, too, and was left behind the cart. Jack started and was going to say something, but looked at his master and remembered that he had been ordered to keep still. But one thing he did understand — if the nut had dropped on account of the nail, the wheel would come off for want of the nut. He had scarcely comprehended this, when crack! the wheel fell into the dust and was left behind the cart.

The cart moved on awhile upon three wheels, then it upset, breaking the pole in two. Now they were in a bad fix.

“There it is,” cried Jack in terror, “didn’t I say that would happen?”

We will waste no more words on this subject! The farmer was in *such* a rage! To be in the middle of the road with a broken pole is no joke. The farmer seized Jack, gave him another sound thrashing, and then told him to be off that he might cause him no more trouble. He was really in the wrong, for he had himself forbidden Jack to speak. But Jack was to blame, too — if he had always obeyed, he would have learned long before just how far such an order went. He had been too obedient, obstinately obedient. And that isn’t well either.

The farmer continued his journey as best he could, but Jack was left on foot in the middle of the road. Alas! Woe betide him, I really don’t know what he is to do. He turned into a path he did not know, and hoped to reach home. Again he walked over meadows and through forests, walked for a long, long time, till his feet would scarcely carry him. This time he found a village in a beautiful meadow, and outside the village was a man watching a flock of sheep grazing.

“How do you do, good sir!”

“Thank you kindly, may you grow tall, my son.”

One word led to another, and Jack briefly told the man his whole story, from beginning to end, and the peasant was pleased, because, just at that time, he needed a shepherd-boy to drive the little flock to pasture, lead them to water, and watch them that they might not mingle with others. They were a particular breed of sheep, and he would not have had them injured on any account. Such sheep, it was reported, were owned only by one emperor, from whom the peasant had obtained the single lamb. So they were sheep, well — we can imagine how beautiful they were, since they had descended from a lamb that belonged to an emperor!

Jack was glad, too, because he found himself in luck again. So they made a bargain, and Jack became a shepherd boy.

“You must watch the sheep the whole livelong day, drive them down into the valley to drink, and when it grows dark bring them back to the fold. If it seems cold, make a fire at the entrance of the pen, and that the sheep may not freeze, drive them into the fold.” These were the peasant’s orders, and Jack said he would do exactly as he was told.

During the day Jack watched the sheep; when he was thirsty he led them down to drink, and as it grew dark drove them to the fold. This fold was a strange contrivance. Jack had never seen one before. It was inclosed by a fence of woven willow branches, roofed with rushes that the rain might not injure it, but in one place an opening had been left, over which was a roof made of reeds, supported by posts. “That’s the entrance to the fold,” said Jack to himself, delighted with his penetration.

As he was cold he made a fire in the opening, just under the reed-roof. A fire is a fine thing, and Jack warmed himself by it. Then he remembered that his master had told him he must drive the sheep into the fold, to keep them from freezing. True, he did not understand why they should be any warmer inside the fold than outside, but he did as he was ordered. Seizing the finest ram, the one which wore the big bell round its neck, he pushed it through the opening into the fold. But lo and behold! The fire was burning in the gap, and the ram was so scorched that not a thread of wool was left on its body.

“Oho, now I understand it,” cried Jack, still more pleased. “The sheep must go through the fire to keep them from freezing.”

And, as he felt that he was doing right, he thrust all the sheep into the fold one after the other.

Suddenly he noticed that the fence, the thatching, and the roof above the opening had all taken fire and were blazing merrily. Jack stood perfectly still. He had never seen any thing of the sort and rejoiced over carrying out his orders so well, for he perceived that the sheep could not possibly be cold in the midst of the fire. So he contentedly watched the work he had accomplished. One thing he did wish — that his master was there, so that he might have said, “See how well I understand tending sheep.”

And the wish was fulfilled. His master was just sitting at the table eating bread and onions, because it was a fast day. He looked out of the window and saw a great fire on the mountains, and gazing more attentively at it, noticed that it was in the direction of his fold. This seemed queer. With his mouth full he left the house, walked faster and faster, broke into a run, and went higher and higher up the hill-side till at last, panting for breath, he reached his fold.

Alas! Alas! What a sight! The fold burned down, the sheep of the imperial breed one and all roasted, so that one might have supposed they were nothing but overripe melons. That was a bad job, really a very bad job! Jack had done a great deal of mischief, and might be thankful to escape with a flogging. And so it happened. The farmer, enraged, nay, fairly furious, seized the cunning shepherd and beat him, beat him so that he would have nearly killed him had not Jack luckily escaped from his hands. But after he got away Jack took to his heels and ran with all his might, so that he did not look round until he was in the woods.

What was to be done then? That’s the way a person fares when he has no sense! If he had behaved himself, he would have been sitting quietly in the house eating barley-sugar and milk.

Jack walked on and on through the forest, turning to the right and left, forward and backward, hither and thither, on and on he went, poor boy, trying to find some path that led home. He was so hungry and thirsty that he sucked the dew from the leaves and ate the oak-apples and acorns he found on the ground; then he grew tired and cross and frightened. Woe betide any one who loses the way in a forest!

Night came on, and darkness surprised him in the terrible woods. His hair stood on end and he was so terrified that a chill ran through every vein when he heard the wolves, bears, and all sorts of wild beasts howling and panting in the forest. There was no escape now. Then he saw a large tree with a hole in its trunk big enough to shelter him. Nearing it he noticed that this hole had been hollowed out. That was all right. He would hide in it to keep from being devoured by the wild beasts, and was so delighted to find himself safe that he no longer felt sorrowful or hungry. When we have escaped a great danger, we no longer think of small annoyances. Jack fell asleep from fatigue, and was just dreaming that he was at home eating millet and milk, when suddenly, piff, paff, puff, he heard a shot and started up in terror.

What had happened? Only a few paces from him twelve big, horrible robbers, foot-pads, had assembled with their captain, made a fire, roasted an ox, and were just tapping a cask of good wine; they were going to have a carouse. When Jack saw the ox on the spit he began to feel almost famished. Dear me! he was so hungry that he would gladly have turned into a wood-worm and gnawed the tree. The poor lad, in his inexperience, did not know what terrible people robbers are, so he came out of the hole and approached them. This was not wise. Robbers are not to be trifled with.

Jack said he would like something to eat too. The robbers all stared at him, then drew their knives and swords and began to whet them to cut him in pieces and kill him before you could say Jack Robinson. That’s the way with robbers. They don’t stand on much ceremony.

“Stop,” said one of them. “Might not this boy be useful to us?”

“How?” asked another.

“Perhaps he’s the seventh child, then he can find the iron-wort for us,” said the first speaker.

“That’s true!” they all shouted.

So they questioned Jack, and were wild with delight when they learned that he actually was the seventh of seven children. The point in question was this — the robbers had learned that the emperor had received an immense sum of money, all in gold, from a merchant who had long been his debtor; the wicked men wanted to steal this treasure. But the emperor had put it in a room closed with seven iron-barred doors, and on each door were seven locks wrought with great skill, so that no one could open them. So this was a real imperial business, which required careful consideration. Therefore, the robbers had gone to a witch, that she might give them instruction and a powerful charm by means of which they could force their way through the royal locks and iron-barred doors. The witch had told them that nothing except iron-wort would open the locks, and that the plant could be found only by the seventh of seven children while he was still an innocent child, in the gray dawn of morning, when it gleamed in the meadows among the other herbs. Moreover, whoever had the plant must then make a gash in his finger, lay it in the cut, and leave it there till the wound had healed, so that it might remain in the finger. After that any piece of iron, lock, bolt, or chain, no matter how strong it might be, would open at his bidding. Such a plant would be to the robbers not merely a source of amusement, but a valuable possession. So they entertained Jack and made him a soft bed where he could sleep soundly; but they told him that they would kill him if he didn’t find the plant. All night long poor Jack dreamed of searching for the stalk of the herb. At the first gray dawn the robbers waked the boy and sent him to look for it.

Jack crept along on all fours, and while in this position, looking over the stalks of the plants in the meadow, he instantly saw one that glistened. That was the one he wanted! That was iron-wort!

Among the robbers was a one-eyed man, who had been locked up in the imperial dungeons and escaped loaded with fetters. The chains had afterward been filed off, but the handcuffs were made of a special kind of iron which fire did not melt and the file did not scratch. Jack touched the handcuff with the plant, and “klirr!” it fell rattling to the ground.

“Aha, may you be lucky, my son, you have freed me from an annoyance,” said the delighted robber.

But when the captain took the plant from Jack’s hand to remove the second handcuff, he labored in vain, the iron would not obey him. The witch had not told them that the herb would obey no one except the person appointed by fate to find it.

So the robbers saw that the iron-wort would do them no good, and perceiving this they became very angry and sharpened their knives and swords to kill Jack.

“Stop,” cried the one-eyed brigand. “You have said that you would not murder him if he could find the plant for us. He has found it. As men of our word, we must not kill him.”

And they did not, for robbers are men of their word; whether it is good or evil, what they have promised they perform. Yet, fearing Jack might give them up to justice, they found another way to get rid of him.

What did they do? They seized Jack and put him in an open cask, then closed it, drove iron bands around it, and went away. It was an evil deed.

So Jack went from good to bad, and from bad to worse, till at last we see him fastened up in a wine-cask. What was to become of him! just think, inside of a cask — that’s the end of every thing! Jack began to cry, howl, and shriek till the hungry wolves heard him and came running up, thinking they could devour him. But they could do nothing but lick their chops. Jack was shut up in the cask. As soon as he discovered that the wolves were near, he looked through the bung-hole and kept perfectly still.

The wolves then fell upon the remains of the ox and fought greedily over the bones. One, the largest and fiercest, seized a bone and crouched down with it close by Jack’s cask — Jack hardly dared to breathe.

Suddenly he saw the wolf’s hairy tail come through the bung-hole. Jack was terribly frightened. The tail came further and further in, and Jack grew more and more alarmed. At last the wolf shook itself and leaned further back, so that the whole tail entered and touched Jack’s nose. This was a bad business! Jack trembled with fear, and in his terror clutched the wolf’s tail with both hands and held on with all his might. The wolf was frightened, too, and took to flight, dragging the cask after it. You ought to have seen the wonder; helter-skelter went the brute, banging the cask against the trees, up hill and down dale. The wolf running, the cask following, Jack holding tight to the tail — that was worth seeing! Suddenly, helter-skelter the cask struck against a wall and burst open. The wolf ran on, but Jack found himself at home again, holding fast in both hands the wolf’s tail, which had been torn off.

So fared mother’s darling Jack. Whoever knows any thing more may continue his story.

17

TELLERCHEN

Once upon a time something very extraordinary happened. If it had not happened, it would not be told.

There was once a husband and wife. The husband had a son by a former marriage, and the wife had a daughter by her first husband. This wicked woman could not bear the sight of her husband's son. One day she said: "Husband! If you don't send that boy away, I can't eat at the same table with you any longer."

"But where shall I send him, wife? Let him stay till he is a little older, then he will set up housekeeping for himself."

"I mean just what I told you — choose."

When the man saw that he could do nothing with his wife, he said to the boy: "My dear son, you see I am growing old. I can no longer do work enough to need no assistance. Your mother won't have you here. So go wherever the Lord may lead you to earn your daily bread, and, if it is His will, I'll come to see you now and then if I can."

"I see, dear father, that my step-mother can't bear the sight of me, yet I don't know why. I have never been disobedient to her, but have always done every thing she told me; still, it is all in vain, she can't endure me. So I will go and work wherever God may guide me. I shall be able to earn my daily bread, for I’m a stout, capable lad. But come and see me if you can, father, for I feel as if I should die of longing for you.”

“Go and prosper, my dear son; may the Lord help you.”

“May we have a happy meeting, dear father.”

And the poor boy, with tears streaming down his cheeks, left his father’s house. He walked on till at last he met a rich man, to whom he hired himself as a servant. He remained in service seven years, and his master was well satisfied, but suddenly such a longing for his father seized upon him that he could bear it no longer. He told his employer that he was going to see his parents, and his master said:

“Boy, you have worked on my farm seven years, and served me well. Does the place no longer suit you, or have you been offered higher wages elsewhere, that you want to leave me?”

“No indeed, master. But I long to go home, — I feel as if I wanted to see my father again. If you think you still owe me any thing, please settle my account.”

“Well, my boy, one can’t keep a servant by force, and you fixed no rate of wages when you came to me. As a reward for the services you have rendered, you may choose from my herds two head of horned cattle and ten smaller ones.”

When the boy heard this, he hardly knew what to do with himself in his delight at the thought of having earned so much by his labor. He went among the herds and flocks, looking up and down, and wondering which animals he should choose. He did not want to take the best ones, because he thought his services were not worth so much. But neither did he want to select the worst, he could not make up his mind to that. So he chose from those of medium value. He did the same with the horned cattle. But in searching his eyes fell upon an ox, which also gazed longingly at the youth. So he took this ox and a cow.

Now he had no other thought in his mind except to go to his parents, believing that his step-mother would no longer look askance at him. So he bade his master good-by and went away. Just think, the ox was bewitched, but the boy did not know it. He named the animal Tellerchen.

He reached home. His father died of joy and came to life again when he saw his son, who had grown tall and handsome, and so sensible too. But the wicked old step-mother behaved like seven evil demons, — nay, like the witch she was. The youth staid in his father’s house, helped him work in the fields, drove the cattle to pasture, and made himself very useful. Whenever he went to the pasture with the cattle his mother gave him a cake; but it was made of ashes, and he could not eat it. What was he to do? At noon, instead of having something to eat like every body else, he sat under the shade of a tree and wept over his lot, but he could not bring himself to tell his father, lest he should make trouble between him and his wife. He had no comfort at home, no companions abroad, and so he grew sad and thoughtful. One day, when he was crying with hunger, and even the herdsmen who had left their oxen were eating, Tellerchen suddenly began to speak and said:

“Master, don’t grieve any longer, throw the ash-cake away, seize my right horn, and eat and drink what you will find there.”

“Why, Tellerchen,” replied the youth, “there must be witchcraft about you too. Where was such a thing ever heard of, and how long have you been able to talk?”

“Mind what I tell you. I see you are an excellent lad, and I am sorry you should weep your youth away. Just try my advice, and you’ll see that it will be profitable to you.”

And it was. The youth seized Tellerchen’s right horn. Behold what happened! He drew out a roll as white as snow, and a glass of wine which would have made any one’s mouth water. The lad ate and drank.

The step-mother noticed that the youth’s face had grown fuller, that he was in good spirits, and did all his work cheerily. Instead of seeing him grow thinner day by day, as she had expected, he constantly gained flesh. She soon discovered that Tellerchen must be at the bottom of the mystery, for she perceived that the boy took much better care of him than of the other cattle. How should she manage to find out what he did and ate in the woods? She secretly sent her daughter after him, and ordered her to watch what the youth did while pasturing the cattle. The girl followed her step-brother without his knowledge, watched him, returned to her mother and said, "Mother, what I have seen to-day is beyond telling!"

"You met the Wood Witch?"

"A wrong guess," the daughter replied.

"You have seen a wizard, a dragon, or a griffin?"

"No indeed! Heaven forbid!"

"Or did a handsomer, richer, and more sensible youth follow you?"

"What an idea! But it's useless for you to rack your brains, you can't guess."

"Then tell me what you saw, and don't chatter about it any longer."

"Mother, my step-brother's ox is enchanted."

"Didn't I always say that there was something the matter with the accursed beast?"

"If you could have seen how he hugged and kissed him, sometimes on the right and sometimes on the left cheek, mother. I really felt as though my heart would stop beating. Then directly after he seized his right horn and pulled out some white rolls and wine, which he devoured as if the wolves were after him. I tell you my mouth watered when I saw him eat so greedily. Yet what amazed me still more was to hear the ox talk. I stood with my mouth wide open, staring at him."

"Never mind, I'll get even with him."

The step-mother did not like the ox, and urged her husband to have him slaughtered, neither more nor less. All night long she teased him about it. The poor old man told her that the animal was not his, but his son's, that he was a fine beast and might yet be very useful to them. But she would not listen, and never stopped talking until he had promised to kill the ox. Luckily the youth was awake and heard it all. As soon as morning dawned he went to Tellerchen to curry and clean the animal as he always did, but began to weep, and told the ox the fate in store for him. Tellerchen told him he must stand outside the house on the bench by the door, and when the people were chasing him, to catch him and take him to the shambles, he must jump on his back as he passed by. This was done, and after the ox had escaped he took his master to a forest far more beautiful than any the boy had ever seen. There they built huts, and lived as if they were in clover, for the grass in the surrounding meadows was so tall that a man might have lost himself in it, and was always so green and blooming that it made excellent pasturage.

One day, when the youth was sitting comfortably before his hut, playing on the flute, while the ox grazed at some distance, up came an enormous bull, so fat that his hide seemed ready to burst.

“Why did you come here, youngster, with your Tellerchen, to drink my water and feed on my grass?” he asked.

“I didn’t know that this was your property,” answered the youth, “Tellerchen brought me here.”

“Then tell him he must come to the Gold Bridge to-morrow and fight with me.” After saying this, he went away.

When the ox came home at night he found the youth more sorrowful than ever before. “What ails you, master, that you stand there as if you were stupefied?” asked the ox.

“What ails me?” replied the youth. “Why, I’m in a fine fix!” And he repeated all that the bull had said.

“Never mind, master, don’t worry about it, leave that to me.”

Early the next morning the ox left the lad in the hut and set off to the Gold Bridge to fight with the bull; he fought till he had pushed him under the bridge, and then came back home safe and sound.

Two days after another bull came, somewhat smaller than the first one. After saying the same things the other had said, he summoned Tellerchen to fight at the Silver Bridge. The ox again found his master weeping, soothed him as he had done before, and went to fight the second bull and hurl him under the bridge.

After several days a third bull appeared, a feeble, unsightly, ugly, dirty animal, and said to the boy: “Who gave you leave to come here with your Tellerchen to drink my water and spoil the grass in my meadows?”

“What business is it of yours?” replied the youth pertly.

“If it isn’t my business, whose affair should it be?” replied the bull. “Whichever of you two will dare to fight with me may come to-morrow to the Copper Bridge.”

“Don’t worry,” replied the youth carelessly, “we will come.”

When Tellerchen returned from the pasture in the evening, his master, with great amusement, told him every thing that had happened.

“Your mirth is out of place,” replied the ox, “for my time has now come. The bull, sick and emaciated as he was, will overpower me. Watch our battle to-morrow, for I will not let you fight with him; you are young and delicate, and still have a great deal to see in the world. When you perceive that he is conquering me and about to push me under the bridge, rush forward and seize my left horn, but don’t open it till you have reached home.”

When the youth heard this, he began to weep so that he could not be quieted, and grieved so much all night long that he had no sleep.

Early the next morning he went with Tellerchen to the Copper Bridge, where the puny-looking bull awaited them. They began the struggle, and fought and fought until toward the afternoon. Sometimes the ox gored the bull, at others the bull the ox, and the victory still remained undecided. But when the afternoon was nearly over the ox’s strength failed, and, while the bull was carrying him off and in the very act of hurling him under the bridge, the boy rushed up and wrenched off his left horn.

He wept, — Heaven knows how bitterly the poor lad wept by the bridge. But seeing that his Tellerchen did not come out again from under the bridge and it was growing dark, he set off with his horn, and a heart bleeding with grief. He spent the night on a hill. The next day hunger vexed him, and thinking he should find something to eat in the horn Tellerchen had left him, he opened it.

What, I beg to ask you, do you suppose happened then! Whence came the countless multitude of all sorts of cattle? How could he drive them home? and to get them back into the horn again was impossible. He owned this to himself and began to weep bitterly. While thus lamenting, lo and behold! a dragon came up to him and said: —

“What will you give me, boy, if I put all these beasts back into the horn for you?”

“Half of them,” replied the lad.

“I’ve no fancy for *that*,” said the dragon, “I want something else.”

“Tell me what it is, and I’ll see.”

“When you love life best I am to be allowed to come and take the dearest thing you have, to devour it.”

The lad, without exactly knowing what he was doing, agreed.

The dragon rapped three times with its tail and put all the cattle back in the horn, which the boy then took and went to his father, whom he found alone. No one knew what had become of the old woman and her daughter, they had vanished from the house.

When the peasant saw his son grown into a youth he almost lost his senses with joy, but managed to calm himself. His son opened the horn, and instantly the fields and surrounding country were so filled with cattle that every body was bewildered.

“Do all these flocks and herds belong to you?” asked the old man.

“All, father. What shall we do with this multitude of beasts.”

“Relieve the sorrows of the widows and the poor,” he replied.

The youth followed his father’s advice. There was no day the Lord bestowed on which he did not render some service to those who needed aid. So it happened that not a single pauper was left in the neighborhood. News of the wealth and benevolence of the old man’s son reached the imperial court, and as the emperor had a very clever and beautiful daughter, he sent to ask the youth to become her suitor.

When the young man heard that the emperor wanted him for a son-in-law he was greatly astonished. But, on being summoned to the court, he went there and behaved with so much good sense and dignity that the sovereign was not at all sorry he had cast his eye upon him. The princess liked him because he was a handsome, proud, spirited Roumanian youth. Then, after having agreed among themselves, a wedding was celebrated whose fame spread through the whole country. The young man’s father was there too.

After the dances and amusements of the marriage were over and every body had gone home, the old man, according to ancient custom, placed in the room where the emperor’s son-in-law and his bride were to sleep a roll of snow-white bread. Then he, too, went to rest.

What happened during the night? The emperor’s son-in-law suddenly saw the dragon, which, with one jaw on the upper cornice of the door and the other on the threshold beneath, told the young fellow it had come to settle their account and he must now give up to be devoured the bride sleeping beside him, whom he loved like the apple of his eye.

The old man’s son, who had long since forgotten the settlement, did not know what to do. He dared not rush upon the dragon and kill it, because he knew that they had made this bargain; his father had often told him that, when a man has given his word, he has also pledged his soul. Yet his heart would not let him yield up his beloved wife for the dragon to devour. While he was torturing himself in trying to think what he could do to neither break his promise nor give up his bride, the bread on the table began to jump about and said:

“Hi, dragon, I’ve been sowed, grew up, was mowed down and fastened into a bundle, yet I bore it, do you now bear your trouble, too, and go into the depths of the sea.”

The dragon stood waiting. The bread went on:

“Then I was carried to the barn, horses trampled on me, I was winnowed and taken to the mill. Bear your troubles as I’ve borne mine, and go, that we may hear your name no more.”

The dragon still waited, and its tongue darted about in its mouth like lightning. The emperor’s son-in-law and his bride remained perfectly quiet. The bread spoke again:

“Then I was ground, taken home, sifted, kneaded with water, put into the oven, and baked till my eyes almost started out of my head, yet I bore it. Do you bear it too, you accursed dragon, and may you burst.”

The noise that echoed through the air, as the dragon burst, was so loud that every body in the palace awoke. Men came running to the spot, what did they see? A monster of a dragon, burst and split open. It was so huge that all shrank away in terror.

Afterward they took the carcass, carried it out of the palace, and gave it to the ravens. Then the emperor’s son-in-law related the whole affair. When the people in the palace heard it, they all thanked God for having worked such a miracle and permitted the emperor’s children to escape safe and sound. Then they lived in peace and happiness and did good every where, and if they have not died, they may be alive now.

18

THE FAIRY AURORA

Once upon a time something happened. If it hadn’t happened, it wouldn’t be told.

There was once a great and mighty emperor, whose kingdom was so large that no one knew where it began and where it ended. Some believed it was boundless, others said that they dimly remembered having heard from very old people that the emperor had formerly engaged in war with his neighbors, some of whom had proved greater and more powerful, others smaller and weaker than he. One piece of news about this emperor went all through the wide world — that he always laughed with his right eye and wept with the left. People vainly asked the reason that the emperor’s eyes could not agree, and even differed so entirely. When great heroes went to the emperor to question him, he smiled evasively and made no reply. So the enmity between the monarch’s eyes remained a profound mystery, whose cause nobody knew except the emperor himself. Then the emperor’s sons grew up. Ah, what princes they were! Three princes in one country, like three morning stars in the sky! Florea, the oldest, was a fathom tall, with shoulders more than four span broad. Costan was very different, short, strongly built, with a muscular arm and a stout fist. The third and youngest prince was named Petru — a tall, slender fellow, more like a girl than a boy. Petru did not talk much, he laughed and sang, sang and laughed, from morning till night. Only he was often seen in a graver mood, when he pushed back the curling locks from his forehead and looked like one of the old wiseacres who belonged to the emperor's council.

"Come, Florea, you are grown up, go to our father and ask him why one of his eyes always weeps and the other always laughs," said Petru, one fine morning to his brother Florea. But Florea would not go; he knew by experience that the emperor was always vexed if any one asked him that question.

Petru fared just the same when he went to his brother Costan.

"Very well, if nobody else dares, I'll venture it!" he said at last. No sooner said than done, Petru instantly went and asked.

"May your mother blind you! What's that to you?" replied the emperor wrathfully, giving him one cuff on the right ear and another on the left. Petru went sadly away, and told his brothers how his father had served him. Yet, after the young prince had asked what was the matter with the eyes, it seemed as though the left one wept less and the right one laughed more.

Petru plucked up his courage and went to the emperor again. A box on the ear is a box on the ear, and two of them are two! It was no sooner thought than done. He fared just the same the second time. But the left now only wept occasionally, and the right one seemed ten years younger.

"If that's the way things stand," thought Petru, "I know what I have to do. I'll keep going to him, keep repeating the question, and keep receiving the cuffs on the ear until both eyes laugh."

No sooner said than done. Petru never made the same remark twice.

"My son Petru," began the emperor, this time in a pleasant tone and laughing with both eyes, "I see that you can't drive this anxiety out of your head, so I'll tell you what is the matter with my eyes. Know that this eye laughs when I see that I have three such sons as you, but the other weeps because I fear that you will not be able to reign in peace and protect the country against bad neighbors. But if you bring me water from the fountain of the Fairy Aurora that I may bathe my eyes with it, both will laugh, because I shall then know that I have brave sons on whom I can rely."

Such were the emperor's words. Petru took his hat from the bench by the stove, and went to tell his brothers what he had heard. The princes consulted together and soon settled the matter, as is proper among own brothers. Florea, being the oldest, went to the stables, chose the best and handsomest horse, saddled it, and bade farewell to home.

"I will go," he said to his brothers; "and if, at the end of a year, a month, a week, and a day, I have not returned with the water, you can follow me, Costan." With these words he departed.

For three days and three nights Florea did not stop; his horse flew like a ghost over the mountains and valleys till it reached the frontiers of the empire. But all around the emperor's dominions ran a deep gulf, and across this abyss there was only a single bridge. Here Florea halted to look back and bid farewell to his native land.

May the Lord preserve even a Pagan from what Florea now beheld when he wanted to go on — a dragon! But a dragon with three heads and the most horrible faces, with one jaw in the sky and another on the earth. Florea did not wait for the dragon to bathe him in flames, but set spurs to his horse and vanished as if he had never been in existence. The dragon sighed once and disappeared, without leaving a trace behind.

A week passed; Florea did not return; a fortnight slipped by, but nothing was heard of him. A month elapsed; Costan began to search among the horses to choose one. When morning dawned after a year, a month, a week, and a day, Costan mounted his horse, took leave of his youngest brother, and saying to him, "Come, if I am lost too," rode off as Florea had done.

The dragon at the bridge was now still more terrible, his heads were more frightful — and the hero fled still faster. Nothing more was heard of the two brothers; Petru remained alone.

"I am going to follow my brothers," he said one day to his father.

“Then may God go with you,” replied the emperor. “He alone knows whether you will have better luck than your brothers.”

So the monarch’s youngest son also bade him farewell and set off for the frontiers of the empire. On the bridge stood a dragon still larger and more horrible, with jaws even more yawning and frightful. The creature now had seven heads instead of three.

Petru stopped when he beheld this monster. “Get out of the way!” he shouted. The dragon did not stir. Petru called a second and a third time, then rushed forward with uplifted sword. Instantly the sky darkened so that he saw nothing but fire — fire on the right, fire on the left, fire before him, fire behind him. The dragon was spitting fire from every one of its seven heads. The horse began to neigh and rear, so that our hero could not strike with his sword.

“Hold! This won’t do!” said Petru, dismounting and seizing the horse’s bridle with his left hand, while he held his sword in the right.

That plan would not do either. The hero saw nothing but fire and smoke.

“I’ll go home — to get a better horse,” said Petru, and he mounted his steed, and went away to come back again.

When he reached the place his nurse, old Birscha, was waiting for him at the court-yard gate.

“Ah, my son Petru! I knew you would be obliged to come back again, because you didn’t set out right.”

“How ought I to have gone?” asked Petru, half angrily, half sadly.

“You see, my dear Petru,” the old nurse began, “you can’t reach the fountain of the Fairy Aurora unless you ride the horse which your father the emperor rode in his youth; go, ask where and whose that horse is, then mount it and depart.”

Petru thanked her for her directions, and then went off to inquire about the horse.

“May the light grow black to you!” said the emperor. “Who told you to ask me that? It must surely have been that witch of a Birscha. Are you crazy? Fifty years have passed since I was young, who knows where the bones of the horse I rode then are rotting? It seems to me that there’s one strap of the bridle lying on the stable floor. It’s all I have left of the horse.”

Petru went off in a rage and told his old nurse the whole story.

“Just wait,” cried the old woman, laughing. “If that’s the way things are, very well. Go and bring me the piece of the bridle, I shall know how to turn it to some account.”

The floor was covered with saddles, bridles, and straps; Petru chose the most tattered, rusted, and blackest, and carried it to the old woman, that she might do with it what she had promised. The old nurse took the bridle, smoked it with incense, muttered a short spell over it, and then said to Petru. “Now take the bridle and strike the pillars of the house with it.”

Petru did as he was told. The old woman’s charm worked well. Scarcely had Petru struck the pillars when something happened — I don’t know how — that utterly amazed him. A horse stood before him, a horse whose superior the world never saw. Its saddle was made of gold and jewels, its bridle glittered so that one dared not look at it for fear of being blinded. A beautiful horse, beautiful saddle, and beautiful bridle for the handsome prince!

“Jump on the bay’s back, my young hero,” cried the old woman, making the sign of the cross over horse and rider; then she repeated a short charm and went into the palace.

After Petru had leaped on the horse he felt thrice as much strength in his arm and thrice as much courage in his heart.

“Hold fast, master, for we have a long journey and must go swiftly,” said the bay, and the hero soon saw that they galloped, galloped, galloped, as never horse and hero had galloped before.

On the bridge now stood a dragon whose like had never been there, a dragon with twelve heads, each one more terrible, more fiery than the others. Ah, but the monster found its match. Petru did not quail, but began to roll up his sleeves and spit upon his hands. “Out of the way!” he shouted. The dragon began to spit fire. Petru wasted no more words, but drew his sword and prepared to rush upon the bridge.

“Hold, calm yourself, master,” said the bay, “do as I tell you; press the spurs into my flanks, draw your sword, and be ready, for we must now leap over the bridge and the dragon. When you see that we are directly over the monster, cut off its head, wipe the blood from your sword on your sleeve, and put it in the sheath, that you may be prepared to fight when we touch the earth again.”

Petru struck in the spurs, drew his sword, hacked off the head, wiped the blood away, thrust the blade into its sheath, and was ready when he again felt firm ground under the horse’s hoofs. So they crossed the bridge.

“Now we must go on,” Petru began, after he had cast one more glance back to his native land.

“Forward,” replied the bay, “but you must now tell me, master, how we are to hasten. Like the wind? Like thought? Like longing? Or like a curse?”

Petru looked before him and saw nothing but sky and earth — a wilderness which made his hair bristle with horror.

“We will change our pace and ride like each in turn, — not too fast that we may not grow weary, and not too slow lest we should be late.”

They rode on, — one day like the wind, one like thought, one like longing, and one like a curse, until in the gray dawn of the morning of the fourth day, they reached the end of the wilderness.

“Now stop and go on at a walk, that I may see what I have never beheld,” cried Petru, rubbing his eyes like a person waking from sleep or one who beholds something that seems like an illusion. Before the eyes of the young prince stretched a copper forest — trees, saplings, shrubs, bushes, ferns, and flowers of the most beautiful varieties, all made of copper. Petru stood staring, as a man gazes who beholds something he has never seen or heard of. He rode into the wood. The blossoms along the wayside began to praise themselves and tempt Petru to gather them and make a garland:

“Take me, I am beautiful and give strength to him who breaks me,” said one.

“Oh, no, take me, for whoever wears me in his hat will be loved by the greatest beauty in the world,” said another. Then a third and a fourth, each lovelier than its companions, stirred, and in sweet tones tried to persuade Petru to gather it.

The bay sprang aside whenever it saw its master stoop toward a flower.

“Why don’t you keep quiet?” cried Petru, somewhat sternly.

“Pick no blossoms, you will fare badly if you gather them,” replied the bay.

“Why should I fare badly?”

“A curse rests on these flowers — whoever gathers them must fight with the Welwa of the wood.”

“With what sort of a Welwa?”

“Now let me alone! But listen; look at the flowers and gather none of them, keep quiet.” Having said this the horse went on at a walk. Petru knew by experience that he would do well to heed the bay’s advice. So he turned his thoughts away from the flowers. But it was all in vain! If one is unlucky, he can’t get rid of his ill-fortune even if he tries with all his might. The flowers still offered themselves to him, and his heart grew weaker and weaker.

“Come what may,” said Petru after a while, “I shall at least see the Welwa of this wood, that I may know what the monster is like and with whom I have to deal. If I am fated to die by its hands, it will kill me in some way, and if not I shall escape, though there should be hundreds and thousands like it.” Then he began to pull off the flowers.

"You have done wrong!" said the bay anxiously. "But as the thing has happened it can't be changed, so gird yourself and prepare to fight, for here is the Welwa."

The bay had scarcely spoken and Petru had hardly twined his wreath, when a light breeze blew from all quarters of the compass and soon rose to a gale. The gale increased until everywhere there was naught save gloom and darkness, gloom and darkness. The ground under Petru's feet trembled and shook, till he felt as though somebody had taken the world on his back and was dragging it away at full speed.

"Are you afraid?" asked the bay, shaking its mane.

"Not at all," replied Petru, summoning up his courage, though chills were running down his back. "If a thing must be, all right; let it be as it is."

"You need not fear," replied the bay, to encourage him. "Take the bridle from my neck and try to catch the Welwa with it."

The horse had just time to say this and Petru had not even a chance to unfasten the bridle properly, when the Welwa stood before him, a monster so frightful, so terrible, that he could not look at it. It has no head, yet it is not headless, it does not fly through the air, yet neither does it walk on the earth. It has a mane like the horse, horns like the stag, a face like the bear, eyes like the polecat, and a body that resembles every thing except a living being! Such was the Welwa which rushed upon Petru.

Petru rose in his stirrups and began to strike, sometimes with his sword, sometimes with his arm, till the perspiration ran down his body in streams.

A day and night passed away; the battle was not yet decided.

"Stop, so that we can rest a little while," said the Welwa, panting for breath.

The hero let his sword fall.

"Don't stop!" cried the bay quickly, and Petru set to work again with all his might.

The Welwa now neighed once like a horse, then howled like a wolf, and again rushed upon Petru. The battle went on for another day and night, and was even more terrible than before. Petru grew so weary that he could scarcely move.

"Stop now! I see I am dealing with a person who understands fighting. Stop!" said the Welwa for the second time. "Stop and let us settle our quarrel."

"Don't stop!" cried the bay.

Petru fought on, though he could scarcely breathe. But the Welwa no longer rushed so fiercely upon him and began to act with more care and caution, as people do when they feel they have not much strength. So the fight lasted till the dawn of the third day. When the rosy light of morning began to glimmer, Petru — how, I don't know, it's enough that he did it — threw the bridle over the head of the wearied Welwa, which instantly became a horse — the handsomest horse in the world.

"Sweet be your life, for you have delivered me from enchantment," said the transformed Welwa, and began to caress the bay charger. Petru learned from their conversation that the Welwa was a brother of the bay horse, and had been bewitched many years before by Holy Wednesday.

Petru tied the Welwa to his horse, sprang into the saddle, and continued his journey. How did he ride? That I need not say. He rode swiftly till he got out of the copper forest.

"Stand still, and let me look at what I have never seen before," said Petru again, when they came out of the copper forest. A still more marvelous one now stretched before him, a forest of glittering bushes bearing the handsomest and most tempting flowers — he was entering the Silver Wood. The blossoms began to talk still more sweetly and enticingly than they had done in the Copper Forest. "Gather no more flowers," said the Welwa that was tied to the bay, "for my brother is seven times stronger than I."

But did my fearless hero restrain himself? Scarcely two minutes had passed ere he began to gather flowers and twine them into a wreath. The tempest howled louder, the darkness was greater, and the earth quaked still more than in the Copper Forest; the Welwa of the Silver Wood rushed upon Petru with seven-fold greater fierceness than the other Welwa had done. But he was not idle either. The battle again lasted for three days and three nights, and at dawn on the fourth morning our hero bridled the second Welwa.

“Sweet be your fortune, for you have delivered me from enchantment!” said the Welwa, and they pursued their journey along the road by which they had come.

“Stop, stand still, go on at a walk, and let me gaze at what I have never seen before,” cried Petru for the third time; then he covered his eyes with his hand lest he should be blinded by the rays streaming from the Gold Forest. He had already beheld marvelous things, but never even dreamed of a sight like this.

“We will stand here or we shall fare badly,” cried the horses in one breath.

“Why should we fare badly?” asked Petru.

“You’ll pluck the flowers again. I know your heart will give you no rest until you do! And our youngest brother is seven times seven times stronger and more terrible than we three together. So let us go round the forest,” said the bay.

“Certainly not,” replied Petru; “let us go through it! Let us see all, since we have seen something, and experience all, now that we have experienced part. Have no fear, I have none!”

I need not tell you that Petru did again what he had already done twice. Oh dear! How could he help it?

Scarcely was the wreath twined when something began which had never been experienced before. It was not a more furious tempest or greater darkness, neither did the earth quake more violently. No! I don’t know how or what it was, but it seemed to Petru as though somebody had got into the middle of the earth to overturn it. What happened was something awful, and may Heaven preserve any one from it!

“You see!” said the bay angrily, “why couldn’t you keep quiet?”

Petru saw that he saw nothing more, began to feel that he felt nothing more, and understood that he could understand nothing more, so he made no reply, but girded his sword tighter and prepared to fight. “Now the Welwa can come,” he cried, “I will die or throw the bridle over its head.” He had scarcely uttered the words when something whose like he had never beheld before approached him. A dense fog surrounded Petru, a fog so dense that he could not even see himself in it.

“What’s this?” cried the champion, somewhat startled, when he began to feel that he was aching all over. But he was still more alarmed when he perceived that he could not hear his own voice through the mist. So he began to strike about him with his sword to the right and left, before and behind, in every direction, and with all the strength he had — as a man does when he sees that matters are growing serious. So he fought on during a day and a night, without seeing any thing except thick darkness, or hearing any thing except his own perspiration trickling down his horse’s flanks. For some time he had even felt as if he were no longer alive, but had died long before. Suddenly the fog began to scatter. At dawn on the second day it disappeared entirely, and when the sun rose in the sky Petru’s eyes again saw the light. He felt as if he had been born anew.

The Welwa? it seemed to have vanished from the earth.

“Get your breath now, for the battle will begin again presently,” said the bay.

“What was that?” asked Petru.

“The Welwa,” replied the horse, “the Welwa changed into fog. Get your breath, it is coming again.”

The bay had hardly spoken and Petru had hardly had time to breathe, when he saw approaching from one side something, — but what it was he did not know. Water, yet it was not like water, for it did not seem to flow on the earth, but in some queer fashion to fly, or move in some way — Enough, it left no trace behind and did not fly high. It was something that appeared to be nothing.

“Oh, dear!” cried Petru.

“Take courage and defend yourself, don’t stand still,” said the bay, but could not utter another word, for the water filled its mouth.

The fight began again. Petru struck about him without stopping for a day and a night, not knowing at what he was aiming, and fought without knowing with whom. When the next day dawned he felt that his feet were paralyzed.

“Now I am lost!” he cried somewhat angrily; yet he began to show himself doubly brave and dealt still stronger blows. The sun rose and the water vanished, one could not tell how or when.

“Get your breath!” said the bay, “get your breath, for you haven’t much time to lose. The Welwa will come back directly.”

Petru made no answer; the poor fellow was so tired that he did not know what to do. So he settled himself more firmly in the saddle, seized his sword with a tighter grip, and thus prepared awaited the approach of the foe he saw advancing.

Such a thing, how can I describe it? It was like a man dreaming that he sees something which has what it has not, and has not what it has — this was the shape in which the Welwa now appeared to Petru. Oh, heavens! how could the Welwa now be a gold forest after having twice left it in disgrace? It flew with its feet and walked with its wings, its head was behind and its tail was before, its eyes were in its breast and its breast was on its forehead — and as for the rest, no mortal could describe it.

Petru shuddered in every limb, and crossed himself twice, then he plucked up courage and began to fight as he had already fought once, and also as he had never yet fought before. The day passed and Petru's strength failed. Evening came, and Petru's eyes began to grow dim. When midnight arrived he felt that he was no longer on horseback. He himself did not know how and when he had reached the earth, but he was on foot. When night was yielding to day Petru could not keep up, but sank on his knees.

"Stand up, gather your strength once more!" cried the bay, seeing that his master was losing his vigor.

Petru wiped away the perspiration with his shirt-sleeve, strained every nerve, and once more stood erect.

"Now strike the Welwa on the mouth with the bridle?" said the bay.

Petru did as he was bid. The Welwa neighed so loudly that Petru thought he should be deafened, then, though so tired that it was scarcely able to move, rushed upon the hero. The fight was now not long. Petru managed to throw the bridle over this Welwa's head, too.

When broad day came, the hero was riding on the fourth horse. "May you have a beautiful wife, for you have delivered me from enchantment!" said the Welwa.

They rode on, and when night was shrouding the day, they reached the borders of the Gold Forest.

While pursuing their way Petru began to get tired, and, in order to have something to do, examined the beautiful wreaths. "What shall I do with the wreaths?" he said to himself. "One is enough for me. I'll keep the handsomest." So he threw down the copper one, then the silver one, and reserved only the gold garland.

"Stop," said the bay horse. "Don't throw the wreaths away. Dismount and pick them up, they may yet be useful to you."

Petru did as he was told and rode on. Toward evening, when the sun was only a hand's breadth above the horizon and the little flies were beginning to swarm, our rider reached the edge of the forest. Before him stretched a wide moor, on which as far as the eye could wander nothing was visible. The horses stopped.

“What is it?” asked Petru.

“We may fare badly here,” replied the bay.

“Why should we fare badly?”

“We are now entering the domain of Holy Wednesday. So long as we ride through it, we shall experience nothing but cold, cold, cold. Fires are kept burning all along the roadside, and I’m afraid you will go and warm yourself.”

“Why shouldn’t I warm myself?”

“You’ll fare badly if you do,” said the bay anxiously.

“Forward,” said Petru fearlessly, “I will be cold, too, if necessary.”

The further Petru entered Holy Wednesday’s kingdom the more he felt that it was no pleasant region. At every step the air grew colder and frostier, there was so much cold and ice that it froze even the marrow in one’s bones. But Petru was no coward, he proved as brave in enduring hardship as he had been in battle. Along the roadside one fire after another was burning, and beside these fires were gathered groups of people who called to him in the sweetest, most enticing words. Petru’s very breath froze, yet he did not yield, but ordered the bay to go on at a walk. How long our hero battled with the cold and frost can not be told, for every body knows that Holy Wednesday’s kingdom is longer than one stone’s throw or even two. The cold there is not moderate, but bitter, so bitter that even the rocks are split by the frost. That’s the way it is in that country. But Petru had not grown up without some hardships, so he only ground his teeth, though he was so benumbed that he couldn’t even wink.

They reached Holy Wednesday. Petru dismounted, flung the bridle over the bay’s head, and entered the house.

“Good morning, mother.”

“Thank you, my frozen hero!”

Petru laughed, but made no answer.

“You have proved yourself a brave fellow,” said Holy Wednesday, patting him on the shoulder. “Now I’ll give you the reward.” She went to an iron chest, opened it, and took out a little box. “See,” she said, “this casket has been destined from the earliest times for the person who penetrated the realm of the cold. Take it and guard it carefully, for it may be of great service to you. When you open it, you will receive news from whatever place you desire and truthful tidings from your native land.”

Petru thanked her for her words and her gift, mounted his horse, and rode on. After he was a good stone’s throw away, he opened the magic box. “What do you command?” asked something inside.

“Give me news of my father,” replied Petru rather timidly.

“He is sitting in the council chamber with the elders of the kingdom.”

“Is he prospering?”

“Not especially; he has troubles.”

“Who is annoying him?” asked Petru, somewhat sharply.

“Your brothers, Costan and Florea,” the voice in the box answered. “As it seems to me, they are trying to wrest the scepter from him and the old monarch says that they are not yet worthy of it.”

“Forward, bay, we have no time to lose,” cried Petru. Then, shutting the box, he put it into his knapsack.

They hurried as ghosts flit when whirlwinds are blowing and vampires hunting at midnight. How long they rode can not be told, but it was a long, long time.

“Stop! Let me give you another piece of advice,” said the bay after a while.

“Well, tell me,” said Petru.

“You have been tormented by the cold, now you’ll have to encounter heat such as you never felt before. Keep up your courage, and don’t let yourself be attracted to the cool places.”

“Forward!” replied Petru. “Don’t be anxious — if I didn’t freeze, I shan’t melt.”

Indeed! This heat was enough to melt the very marrow of one’s bones, a heat that exists nowhere except in the kingdom of Holy Thursday. The further they went the greater the heat became. Even the iron of the horses’ shoes began to melt, but Petru would not yield. The perspiration ran down his body in streams, he wiped it away with his sleeve, and rode swiftly on. As for the heat, intense as it became, there was something else that tortured Petru more. Along the roadside, always a good stone’s throw apart, were cool valleys with cold springs ready to quench the traveler’s thirst. When Petru looked at them, he felt as if his heart was shriveled and his tongue dried up with thirst. Lilies, violets, and roses grew in the soft grass around the springs, and on these beds of flowers reclined girls so beautiful that heaven only knows how it would have been possible for them to be lovelier. Petru would fain have shut his eyes in order not to see such bewitching creatures any longer.

“Come, hero, come to the cooling waters, let us amuse you,” called the enticing maidens.

Petru silently shook his head, he had lost the power of speech.

They rode on so for a long, long time. Suddenly they felt that the heat was beginning to lessen, and on a distant hill-top a hut appeared. This was the dwelling of Holy Thursday. Petru approached, and when almost at the door Holy Thursday came out and welcomed him. Petru expressed his thanks, as is customary among distinguished and well-behaved people, and they entered into conversation as people who have never seen each other are in the habit of doing. Petru brought news of Holy Wednesday, related his adventures, and mentioned the goal for which he had started, and then bade her farewell, for he really had no time to lose. Who could tell how far he still had to go to reach the Fairy Aurora?

“Wait a little while, until I can say a few words to you,” said Holy Thursday. “You are now about to enter the domain of Holy Friday; go to her and tell her that I wish her health and happiness. When you return, come to me again, and I’ll give you something that will be useful to you.”

Petru thanked her and rode on.

He had scarcely ridden long enough to smoke a pipeful of tobacco, when he entered a new country. Here it was neither hot nor cold, but like the climate in spring when the lambs are being weaned. Petru began to breathe easily, but he was on a desolate moor consisting of sand and thistles.

“What can this be?” asked Petru, when he saw an object something like a house, but a long, long distance off; just where his eyes beheld the end of the dreary heath.

“That is Holy Friday’s house,” replied the bay; “if we ride on, we may be able to reach it before dark.”

And so it happened. Night was just closing in as the hero slowly neared the distant house. On the moor was a throng of phantoms flitting on Petru’s right and left hand, before and behind him.

“Don’t be afraid,” said the bay. “Those are the Whirlwind’s daughters; they are dancing in the air, waiting for the moon eater.”

So they reached Holy Friday’s house. “Dismount and enter,” said the bay.

Petru was about to do what he had been told.

“Stop, don’t be in such a hurry,” the horse continued. “Let me first tell you what you are to do. You can’t go into Holy Friday’s house so unceremoniously; she is guarded by the Whirlwinds.”

“What am I to do?”

“Take the copper wreath and go with it to the hill you see yonder. When you reach the top, begin to call: ‘Good Heavens, what beautiful girls, what angels, what fairy-like creatures!’ Then hold the garland aloft, and say: ‘If I only knew whether any body would take this wreath from me — if I only knew! If I only knew!’ and hurl the garland away.”

“Why should I do that?” asked Petru, as a man is in the habit of questioning, when he wants to know the cause of his acts.

“Silence! Go and do it,” replied the bay curtly, and Petru, without further words, did as he was bid.

Scarcely had the hero flung the wreath aside, when the Whirlwinds rushed upon it and tussled around it.

Petru now turned toward the house.

“Stop,” cried the bay again, “I haven’t yet told you every thing. Take the silver wreath and knock at Holy Friday’s window. When she asks ‘Who is there?’ say that you came on foot and have lost your way on the moor. She will rebuff you. But you mustn’t stir from the spot. Say to her: ‘I won’t go away, for ever since I was a little child I have always heard of Holy Friday (Venus) and — I didn’t have steel shoes made with calf-skin straps, did not travel nine years and nine months, did not fight for this silver wreath I want to give her, did not do and suffer all these things merely to turn back now that I have reached her.’ Act and speak as I have told you — what follows must be your own care.”

Petru made no reply, but went up to the house. As it was perfectly dark, the hero did not see the dwelling, and was guided only by the rays of light streaming through the window. When he reached the house several dogs began to bark, because they knew some stranger was near.

“Who is fighting with the hounds? May his life be bitter,” cried Holy Friday angrily.

“It is I, Holy Friday!” said Petru, with laboring breath, like a man who likes and yet is not quite satisfied with what he is doing. “I have lost my way on the moor, and don’t know where I can spend the night.” Here he stopped, not daring to say more.

“Where did you leave your horse?” asked Holy Friday rather sharply.

Petru reflected; he did not know whether he ought to tell a lie or speak the truth, so he made no answer.

“Go, in God’s name, my son, I have no room for you,” said Holy Friday retiring from the window.

Petru now repeated what the horse had told him to say. Scarcely had he done so, when he saw Holy Friday open the window.

“Let me see the wreath, my son,” she said sweetly, in a gentle tone.

Petru gave her the garland.

“Come into the house,” said Holy Friday, “don’t be afraid of the dogs, they know what I want.”

It was even so. The dogs began to wag their tails, and followed Petru as they follow a master returning home from the fields at night. Petru said “good evening” as he entered, laid his hat on the oven, and when Holy Friday invited him to sit down took his place on a bench by the stove. They now talked about everyday matters, the world, the wickedness of mankind, and similar things, without any special reason or purpose. It appeared from her talk that Holy Friday was very much incensed against men; but Petru agreed with her in every thing — as is proper for a person who is sitting at another’s table.

Heavens, how old the aged dame looked! I don’t know why young Petru devoured her so with his eyes, that he might have given her the Evil eye. Was he counting the wrinkles in her face? He would have needed to be born seven times in succession, and each time live seven times as long as an ordinary human life, to have leisure to number them all. But Holy Friday’s heart laughed with joy, when she saw Petru completely absorbed in gazing at her.

“When the present state of things had no existence,” Holy Friday began, “before the world was made, I was born, and was so beautiful a child that my parents created the earth, in order to have somebody to admire my loveliness. By the time the world was made I had grown up and, amid all the marveling at my beauty, the Evil eye fell upon me. Since then every century a wrinkle has formed on my face. And now I am old!” Holy Friday’s grief and anger would allow her to say no more.

In the course of the conversation Holy Friday told Petru that her father had once been a great and powerful emperor, and once, when a quarrel broke out between him and the Fairy Aurora, who ruled the adjoining country, he had been shamefully mocked at by his neighbor. Then she began to say all sorts of things about the Fairy Aurora. What was Petru to do? He listened in silence, now and then saying: “Yes, yes, it is really too bad.” What else could he do?

“But I will set you a task, if you are a brave champion and will perform it,” said Holy Friday, when both began to be sleepy. “At the Fairy Aurora’s is a spring — whoever drinks from it will bloom like the rose and the violet. Bring me a jug of the water, and I shall know how to show you my gratitude. It’s a difficult task, heaven knows! The Fairy Aurora’s kingdom is guarded by all sorts of wild beasts and terrible dragons. But I want to tell you something else, and give you something too.”

After Holy Friday had said this, she went to a chest bound with iron on every corner and took out a tiny little flute.

“Look,” she said to Petru, “an old man gave me this when I was young. Whoever hears its notes falls asleep and sleeps till they are heard no longer. Take the instrument, and play upon it so long as you remain in the Fairy Aurora’s kingdom. No one will harm you, for every creature will be asleep.”

Petru now told his hostess what he meant to do, and Holy Friday was still more delighted. They did not talk much more. Why should they? it was already long past midnight. Petru said “good night,” thrust the flute into its case, and went up to the garret to get some sleep. When morning dawned, the hero was already awake and the morning-star had hardly risen in the sky ere he was up. He took a large manger, filled it with red-hot coals, and went out to feed his horses. After the bay had eaten nine and each of the other horses three full cribs of fire, Petru led them to the spring, watered them, and prepared to continue his journey.

“Stop,” Holy Friday called from the window. “I have a word more to say. I want to give you a piece of advice.”

Petru went to the window.

“Leave one horse here, and go on with only three. Ride slowly until you have reached the Fairy Aurora’s kingdom. Then dismount and enter her country on foot. Then, when you return, come so that you will leave all three steeds lying in the road and arrive here on foot.”

“I will obey every word,” said Petru, trying to go on.

“Don’t be in a hurry, I haven’t finished yet,” Holy Friday continued. “Don’t look at the Fairy Aurora, for her eyes bewitch, her glances rob a man of his reason. She is ugly, too ugly to be described. She has owl’s eyes, a fox’s face, and cat’s claws. Do you hear? Don’t look at her. And may the Lord bring you back to me safe and sound, my son Petru.”

Petru thanked her for her counsel and lingered no longer. Where should he find time to gossip with old women? He left the bay horse in the meadow and continued his journey.

Far, far away, where the sky meets the earth and the stars talk to the flowers, appeared a bright rosy glow, almost like that of the sky in early spring, only still more beautiful and wonderful. This was the Fairy Aurora’s palace. The whole space between was filled with flowery meadows. Then, too, it was neither warm nor cold, neither light nor dark, but midway between, just as it is on St. Peter’s day when one rises early in the morning to drive the cattle to pasture. Petru rode through this beautiful region with a happy heart. How long he rode can not be told in human language, for in that country night does not follow day and day night; it was always early morning with soft, cool breezes, a viewless sun, and a dim light — the reign of day and night first began in Holy Friday’s land. After a long journey, Petru saw something white appear amid the rosy glow of the sky. The nearer he approached the more distinctly he saw what was now before his eyes. It was the fairy-palace. Petru gazed and gazed, then drew a long breath like a man who says, “Oh, Lord, I thank thee!” But ah, how beautiful this palace was! Lofty turrets stretching far above the clouds, walls white as sea-shells, and brighter than the sun at noon-day, a roof of silver — but what kind of silver? it did not even glitter in the sun — and the windows were all spun from air and set in frames of dull gold. Over all these things the merry sunbeams played, as the wind plays with the shadows of the branches in the spring, when it is so indolent that it scarcely stirs.

Petru could not stay long, for he was in a hurry; so he dismounted, let the horses graze on the dewy grass, took his flute, as Holy Friday had directed, and saying, “God be with me!” commenced his tremendous task. He had scarcely walked three stones’ throws when he saw a giant, lulled to sleep by the sweet notes of the flute. This was one of the guardians of the Fairy Aurora’s palace. As he lay there on his back Petru began to measure him by paces. I won’t exaggerate, but he was so big that when Petru had walked from his feet to his head he heaved a sigh, he did not exactly know whether from fatigue or fear. It would have been no wonder if he was astounded. The rising moon is not so large as the giant’s eye. And this eye was not even like other people’s, but in the middle of the giant’s forehead. Such was the eye! What could the rest have been! Petru was a brave hero, but he heartily thanked God, the flute, and Holy Friday, that he had not got into a fight with this monster of a man, and softly continued his way. The prince had walked about as far as a man usually goes before he feels inclined to sit down in the shade, when he encountered still more terrible foes. Dragons, each with seven heads, were stretched out in the sun sound asleep, some on his right hand, others on the left. How these dragons looked I can not describe: nowadays every body knows that dragons are not things to be trifled with or laughed at. Petru hurried swiftly past them, but I really don’t know whether it was from haste or fear. And it would have been no wonder if he was afraid! A dragon is a dragon!

The prince now reached a river. But let nobody suppose it was an ordinary stream; milk flowed instead of water, not over sand and gravel, but over gems and pearls, and it ran neither slowly nor quickly, but both slowly and quickly at the same time, like the days of happy mortals. This was the river that flowed around the palace without ever stopping or moving. On the bank, each one leap from the other, lions were sleeping. And such lions! They had golden hair, and teeth and claws tipped with iron. These were the guardians of the other bank of the river, where there was a beautiful garden, as beautiful as gardens can only be in the Fairy Aurora’s realm. On the shore grew the fairest flowers and upon these blossoms fairies, each more beautiful and bewitching than the others, slept sweetly side by side. Petru did not even dare to glance that way. The prince now asked himself how he was to get across the stream. It was broad and deep and had only one bridge, and this bridge, too, was unlike any other in the world. On each bank was a bridge-head, each guarded by four sleeping lions! But as to the bridge — no human soul could cross it. One saw it with the eyes, but felt nothing but empty air if he tried to set foot on it. Who knows of what material it was made! Perhaps a little cloud.

Enough, Petru remained on the river bank. Cross? That he could not do. Swim over it? That was not to be thought of! What should he do? Well, we needn’t worry about Petru, he isn’t easily frightened. He turned and went back to the giant. “We’ll run the risk,” he thought, “we’ll talk to each other. Wake up, my brave fellow,” he shouted, pulling the monster by the sleeve of his coat. When the giant awoke he stretched out his hand toward Petru — just as we do when we try to catch a fly. Petru blew upon the flute, and the giant fell back to the ground. So Petru waked him and put him to sleep again, three times in succession, — that is, he waked him three times and made him go to sleep three times. When this was to be done for the fourth time, Petru unfastened his cravat, tied the giant's two little fingers together with it, then drew his sword, and, tapping the monster on the breast, cried, "Wake up, my brave fellow!"

When the giant saw what a sorry jest had been played upon him, he said to Petru: "Hark ye, this is no fair fight! Fight honestly, if you are a hero!"

"Wait a while, I want to talk with you first," said Petru. "Swear that you will carry me over the river, then I'll release you for a fair fight."

The giant took the oath, and Petru let him rise. When he was fairly awake he rushed upon the prince to crush him at a single blow. But he had met his match. Petru was more than a day old, and he, too, dashed boldly on the foe. They fought for three days and three nights; the giant seized Petru and hurled him on the ground so that he drove him into the earth up to his knees, but Petru buried the giant to his waist; then the giant thrust him into the ground to his breast, and finally Petru forced the giant down to his neck. When the giant found himself cornered in this way he cried out in terror, "Let me go, let me go, I own myself conquered!"

"Will you carry me over the river?" asked Petru.

"I will!" he replied from the hole in the ground.

"What shall I do to you if you break your promise?"

"Kill me; do whatever you choose with me, only let me live now!"

"Be it so!" said Petru, then taking the giant's left hand he tied it to his right foot, stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth so that he could not cry out, bandaged his eyes to prevent him from seeing, and led him to the river.

When they reached the stream the giant put one foot on the opposite bank, took Petru on the palm of his hand and set him carefully on the further shore.

"That's right!" said Petru; then he blew on his flute and the giant sank down on the river bank.

When the fairies, who were bathing in the milky waves of the river, heard the sound of Petru's flute they felt sleepy, came out, and fell asleep on the blossoms along the shore, where Petru found them when he got down from the palm of the giant’s hand. He did not venture to linger long with them. They were beautiful, heaven knows! What must the Fairy Aurora herself be? Or was she the ugliest among the fair ones? The prince did not stop to ask himself many questions, but set off to see.

When he entered the garden, he began to wonder again. Much as he had seen and experienced, he had never beheld any thing so beautiful. The trees all had golden branches, the waters of the fountains were clearer than dew, the wind blew with a musical sound, and the flowers whispered sweet, loving words. Petru wondered still more when he found that there was not a single unfolded blossom in the garden, nothing but buds. It seemed as if the world had stood still here, and it was always spring. Yet when did the flowers bloom, if they had not yet had time to open? And, if they did not bloom, why was it? This question, and many another one, Petru asked himself on his way to the palace. No one barred his progress, no one interfered with his thoughts, every body was asleep; the nymphs beside the fountains, the birds on the boughs, the deer in the thickets, and the butterflies on the flowers, all were sunk in dreams by the music of the flute. Nay, even the wind no longer played with the leaves, the sunbeams no longer drank the dewdrops from the grass, and the river had ceased to flow. Petru alone was awake, awake with his thoughts, and his wonder at these thoughts. He reached the court-yard of the palace. Around it stretched a thick, beautiful grass-plot — a grass plot that swayed like the wind. Before him was the gate — a gate made entirely of flowers and other beautiful things. Below and beside the gate were more flowers, each one more beautiful than the other, so that Petru fancied he was treading upon clouds as he passed over them. On the right and left slept fairies, who should have guarded the entrance of the court-yard. Petru looked around him in every direction, said once more, “God be with me!” and entered the palace.

What Petru saw I can not describe; surely every body knows that the palace of the Fairy Aurora can be no ordinary place. Around it were petrified fairies, trees with golden leaves, and flowers made of pearls and gems, columns wrought of sunbeams, steps as soft and lustrous as the couches of princesses, and a sweet, soothing atmosphere. Such was the court-yard of the Fairy Aurora's palace, and it could have been no different. Why should it? Petru went up the steps and entered the palace. The first twelve rooms were hung with linen, the next twelve with silk; then came twelve decked with silver and twelve with gold. Petru passed swiftly through the whole forty-eight, and in the forth-ninth apartment, which was the most magnificent of all, he found the Fairy Aurora. The chamber was large, broad, and high, like one of the finest churches. The walls were covered with all sorts of silk and beautiful things, and on the floor, where one sets one's foot, was something, I don't know exactly what, but something as glittering as a mirror and as soft as cushions, besides many other beautiful things, such as a Fairy Aurora must have. Where should there be lovely things, if not in her palace! As has been said, Petru fairly held his breath when he saw himself in the midst of so much beauty. In the center of this church, or whatever it was, Petru saw the famous fountain on whose account he had taken so long a journey, a fountain like any other, with nothing extraordinary about it. One couldn't help wondering that the Fairy Aurora allowed it to be in her room. It had staves such as were used in ancient times, but they had evidently been allowed to remain for some special purpose.

And now I will tell a wonderful thing. Beside the fountain lay the Fairy Aurora herself — the real Fairy Aurora! The couch was made of gold and heaven knows what else, but it was a beautiful one, and on it slept the Fairy Aurora, resting on silken cushions filled with spring breezes. Of course she was not beautiful. Why should she be? Had not Holy Friday said that she was a combination of hideous things? Why should we delay in our words?

Perhaps Holy Friday was right! It might be so. Enough — when Petru looked at her as she slept there on her couch, he held his breath and no longer played on the magic flute — he was petrified by this wonder of wonders. No, she was beautiful, far, far more beautiful than one would expect the Fairy Aurora must be! I’ll say no more.

On the right and left of the couch slept twelve of the prettiest fairies in the kingdom, who had evidently been overtaken by slumber while waiting on their queen. Petru was so absorbed in gazing at the Fairy Aurora that he did not notice them till, no longer hearing the flute, they stirred in their sleep. Petru, too, trembled, and began to play again. The whole palace was once more sunk in slumber, and the prince advanced three paces.

Between the couch and the fountain was a table on which were a tender white loaf, kneaded with roe’s milk, and a goblet of red wine, sweet as a morning dream. This was the bread of strength and the wine of youth. Petru looked once at the bread, once at the wine, and once at the Fairy Aurora, then with three steps more reached the couch, the table, and the fountain. When he stood beside the couch he fairly lost his senses — he really could not control himself, and stooping bit the Fairy Aurora. She opened her eyes, and looked at the prince with a glance which made him lose his senses still more. He played upon his flute that she might fall asleep again, placed the golden wreath on her brow, took a piece of bread from the table, drank a sip of the wine of youth, then bit the fairy again, ate another mouthful of bread, and drank more wine. This he did three times in succession. Thrice he bit the Fairy Aurora, thrice he ate of the bread, and thrice he tasted the wine. Then he filled the jug with water from the fountain and vanished like a piece of good news.

When the hero entered the garden he found an entirely new world. The flowers were flowers, the buds had opened, the fountains played faster, the sunbeams danced more cheerily on the palace walls, and the fairies’ faces looked more joyous. All this was due to the three bites.

Petru went away by the same road that he came, amid the fairies and flowers, on the palm of the giant’s hand, past lions, dragons, and other monsters. Then, seated in his saddle, he cast one glance back and saw that the whole world behind him was in motion. Hi! But they had somebody before them worth chasing. Not like the wind, not like thought, not like longing, not like a curse, but even faster than happiness vanishes, Petru hurried on his way. The pursuers were left behind, and the prince reached Holy Friday on foot. Holy Friday knew that he was coming by the neighing of the bay horse, which had felt its master’s approach three days off, so she came to meet him, bringing some white bread and red wine.

“Welcome back, prince!”

“Good morning, thank you kindly, Holy Friday.”

Petru then handed her the jug of water from the Fairy Aurora’s fountain, and his hostess thanked him most warmly. They exchanged a few words about the prince’s journey, the Fairy Aurora’s palace, and the beauty of this sister of the Sun — then Petru saddled the bay, for he really had no time to lose. Holy Friday listened sometimes joyously, sometimes bitterly, sometimes merrily, sometimes angrily, but when she saw that Petru was surely going, to carry home his portion of the water from the fairy fountain, she wished him health and happiness.

Petru did not stop till he reached Holy Thursday. Here he dismounted and entered as had been agreed, but did not stay long, merely greeted her, talked a little while, and then said farewell.

“Stop, let me tell you something else before you go on,” said Holy Thursday anxiously. “Take care of your life; enter into conversation with no one, don’t ride too fast, don’t let go of the water, believe no promises, and fly from lips that speak sweet words! Go as you came, the way is long, the world is wicked, and you have something very valuable in your hand, so listen to me. I give you this handkerchief, it is made neither of gold, silver, silk, nor pearls, but striped linen; take good care of it, it is enchanted.

Whoever carries it no thunderbolt can strike, no lance stab, no sword slay, and no bullet pierce.”

Such were Holy Thursday’s words. Petru took the handkerchief and listened to her counsel; then dashed off on the bay, hurrying as fairy princes do hurry, when seized by homesickness. Petru did not dismount at Holy Wednesday’s, but said, “How do you do,” from his horse’s back and rode on. Just at the right time he remembered his enchanted box, and, wishing to know what was going on in the world, drew it out of its case. He had barely pulled it out and not wholly opened it, when the voice inside said:

“The Fairy Aurora is angry because you took the water away. Holy Friday is angry because she has broken her jug, your brothers Florea and Costan are angry because you have wrested the empire from them.”

Petru began to laugh when he heard of so much anger. He did not exactly know what else to ask. “How did Holy Friday break the jug?” he said at last.

“She began to dance with joy, and fell down with it.”

“How have I wrested the empire from my brothers?”

The box now began to relate how Florea and Costan, as the emperor was now old and blind in both eyes, had gone to him and begged him to divide his kingdom between them. The emperor had replied that no one should rule the land except he who brought water from the Fairy Aurora’s fountain. “As the brothers understood his meaning they went to old Birscha, who told them that you had been there, accomplished the feat, and set out on your way home. Your brothers consulted together and are now on their way to meet you, kill you, take the water from you, and reign over the country.”

“You lie, you accursed box,” cried Petru furiously, when he heard all this, and dashed the casket upon the ground so that it broke into seventy-seven pieces. He had not ridden much further, ere he saw the clouds of his own country, felt his native breezes, and beheld here and there, in the distance, one of the mountain peaks on the frontiers of his home. Petru stopped, that he might see more distinctly what it seemed to him that he only fancied he perceived.

He was just going to cross the bridge on the borders of the empire, when he thought he heard a distant sound, as though some one were calling him, and even shouting his name: “Ho! Petru!” He wanted to halt.

“Forward, forward,” cried the bay. “You’ll fare badly if you stop.”

“No, no, stop! Let us see who and what it is, and what is wanted. Let me look the world in the face!” So saying, Petru turned the bay’s bridle.

Oh, Petru, Petru! Who told you to stop? Wouldn’t it be better for you to remember what Holy Thursday said to you? Wouldn’t it be better for you to heed the bay’s counsel? That’s the way of the world, you can do nothing to change it!

When he turned, he saw his brother Florea and his brother Costan. They were both there, and approached Petru. Forward, Petru, hurry on! Or did not Holy Thursday tell you that you must enter into conversation with no one? Or do you no longer remember the tidings Holy Wednesday’s box brought you? The brothers drew near with fair words and honey on their lips. What did Holy Thursday say? Petru, Petru, have you forgotten?

When Petru saw his dear brothers, he leaped from the bay’s back and rushed into their arms. Dear me! how could he help it? How long it was since he had seen a human face or heard one word of human speech! The conversation flowed as it flows among brothers. Petru was gay and happy; Florea and Costan were full of sweet words, there was honey on their lips. Only the bay was sad and hung his head mournfully. After the brothers had talked a long time about the old emperor, the country, and Petru’s journey, Florea began to frown.

“Brother Petru, this is a wicked world! — wouldn’t it be better for you to give us the water to carry? People will come to meet you, but nobody will know any thing about us, whence we come, where we are going, or what we have."

"Yes, indeed," said Costan, "Florea speaks sensibly."

Petru shook his head once or twice, and then told his brothers about his charmed handkerchief. They now perceived that there was only one way to kill the hero, so Florea began to talk to Petru over Costan's shoulders. About three stones'-throws off was a well of clear, cold water.

"Aren't you thirsty, Costan?" asked Florea, winking at Costan.

"Yes," replied Costan, understanding what Florea meant. "Come, Petru, let us quench our thirst, and then may God help us on our way. We'll follow you to protect you from annoyance and danger."

Don't go, Petru, don't go, or you'll fare badly! The bay horse neighed but once. Ah, but the hero did not understand. What happened then! What should happen? Nothing! —

The well was broad and deep.

The two brothers went home with the water, as if they had brought it from the Fairy Aurora.

The bay neighed again, so fiercely and mournfully that even the woods shook with fear, then rushed to the well and stood there paralyzed by grief.

This was the story of Petru, the brave, the heroic prince. It seems as if he were destined to arrive at an evil hour.

A banquet was held at the emperor's court, and all sorts of splendid ceremonies were arranged. All through the land went the news that the monarch's sons, Florea and Costan, had brought the water from the Fairy Aurora. The emperor washed his eyes with the water and saw as never mortal man had seen before. In the royal chamber behind the hearth stood a cask, and in the stave of this cask he saw a worm — the emperor could see so well that he looked through the wood. After dividing the empire between his two brave sons, he retired to his large private estates to spend his old age in peace. So ended the story of the water from the Fairy Aurora's fountain.

The country celebrated the event for three days and three nights, then the people went to work again as if nothing had happened.

After Petru had left the couch, the palace, and the court-yard, and the sound of his flute could no longer be heard, the Fairy Aurora recovered her consciousness, opened her eyes, raised her head, and looked around her in every direction as if searching for something, though she herself did not exactly know what.

“What was that?” she asked, half awake, half-dreaming — “Who?”

It seemed to her as if she had seen something in a vision, — no, in reality, — something sweet and pleasant. A creature like a human being, but with a more commanding glance, something unlike any thing she had ever beheld before.

“Don’t you know what it was? Did you see it too! Or, have you, too, been asleep, been dreaming?”

Such were the questions the Fairy Aurora asked her attendant fays and herself. She felt as if she had had a different soul ever since she saw this wonder. But no one answered her; every one was dumb with amazement.

The Fairy Aurora noticed the wreath: “What a beautiful garland! Who gathered the flowers for it, who twined them into a coronal, and who brought the wreath here and laid it on my couch?”

And the Fairy Aurora became sad.

She saw the bread on the table. Three mouthfuls were missing, one on the right side, one on the left and one out of the middle. It was the same with the wine of youth; three sips were missing, one from the top, one from the bottom, and one from the middle.

Somebody must have been there. The Fairy Aurora grew still more sorrowful; it seemed to her as if she missed something, yet she did not know what or where.

The water in the fountain was turbid. Water! Somebody has taken water away from here! And the Fairy Aurora was wrathful. How had any one been able to enter unperceived? Where were all the sharp-eyed guards? The giants, the dragons, the iron-shod lions, the fairies, the flowers, and the sun — what had they all been doing? Nobody had watched! Had nobody been at his post? The Fairy Aurora now fell into a perfect rage. “Lions! Dragons! Giants! set forth, pursue, catch, seize and bring him back.” Such were the orders of the Fairy Aurora in the fury of her wrath. The command was issued and set her whole realm in commotion, but Petru had fled so swiftly that not even the sunbeams could overtake him. All returned sorrowfully; all brought sad tidings. Petru had crossed the frontiers of the kingdom, had gone where the Fairy Aurora’s guards possessed no power.

The fairy queen now forgot her anger in her grief, and sent forth the Sun to make seven days into one, to search, gaze, and bring tidings. During this seven-fold long day the Fairy Aurora did nothing but watch the course of the Sun; she gazed and gazed till the tears began to stream from her eyes, I don’t know whether from looking so long or from her great sorrow and yearning.

Lo and behold! On the seventh day the Sun came home, — red, tired, and sad. More bad news. Alas! Petru was where the sunbeams could not penetrate.

When the Fairy Aurora saw that this last trial had also been vain, she gave strict orders throughout her whole country that the fairies should no longer smile, the flowers no longer send forth fragrance, the breezes no longer blow, the springs no more pour forth clear waters, nor the sunbeams shine. Then she commanded that the black veil of darkness should be let down between the world and her empire, a veil so thick that only a single sunbeam should pierce it, to convey the tidings that the sun would not move through the sky until the person who had taken the water from the fountain should come. And this news went through the darkened world. The people agreed that the great light had been solely for the emperor’s eye-sight. Nobody in the world saw except the emperor, nobody perceived the annoyances of the darkness except the emperor, and nobody was more unhappy than the emperor. So he advised and commanded his sons, Florea and Costan, to set out and free the world from darkness.

Whoever lies once, will lie a second time; Florea mounted his horse and rode by the way Petru had smoothed to the Fairy Aurora’s kingdom. When he had nearly reached her court, the fairy felt that some stranger was approaching.

“Is any body coming?” she asked, rather sharply.

“Some one is coming,” replied the dragons who mounted guard at the bridge.

“How is he coming? Over or under the bridge?”

The bridge was what we know. Florea passed under it.

“The hero is passing under the bridge!” replied the dragons, somewhat amused.

“See to him, or the light will become black to you,” said the fairy, receiving Florea at his entrance. Florea was thrilled by the sight of so much beauty.

“Welcome, my hero! Did you steal the water?”

“Yes, you are right, I took it.”

“Did you drink the wine?”

Florea remained silent.

“Did you eat the bread?”

“No,” said Florea.

“Did you bite me?”

Florea was silent.

“Then may you lose your sight! I’ll teach you to tell another falsehood!” said the fairy, angrily, giving Florea two cuffs, one on the right ear and the other on the left, till every thing grew as dark before his eyes as mortal sin. Two dragons led the blind prince out of the palace, and the matter was settled.

Costan now set out to follow his brother’s example. He set out for the Fairy Aurora’s palace, reached it, and fared just as Florea had done — he, too, left it a blind man.

There was now not a single ray of light in the whole earth. The world was deprived of light on account of one emperor’s eyes.

After the Fairy Aurora had found that she could not recover Petru, she summoned every one in her whole domain; the fairies, the flowers, in short, all her subjects. Even the sun himself was obliged to come down from the sky, unharness the horses from his chariot, lead them to the stable, and go to the Fairy Aurora’s palace. When all were thus assembled, the beautiful queen gave them no further commands, but in her grief and suffering bade farewell to all her subjects, thanked them for their love and confidence, and sent them out into the world, that each one might act according to his own ideas, keeping only two lions, two large and two small dragons, and two giants, that she might have somebody to guard the bridge. She sent all the fairies into the garden, telling them not to come back to the court till she was happy once more, then gave orders that the flowers should henceforth cease to smell so sweet that every human being would carry them away, the winds wail so piteously that no mortal could help weeping to hear them, the springs send forth bitter waters, and the sun daily cast seven times seven cold rays into the world. After saying all these things, she went to the great wheel on which the threads of human life are wound, stopped it, so that it could no longer turn, and human existence became changeless. Then the Fairy Aurora hid herself from the world in the darkest and dreariest corner of her whole palace.

The big and little dragons and the giants went out into the wide world and hid themselves for very shame in the most secluded caves and deserts, so that they could no longer be seen by any human eye; the lions shook the gold from their manes, the iron from their teeth and paws, and became furious with rage; the fairies concealed themselves in the garden; the flowers, springs, and winds obeyed the Fairy Aurora’s will; and the cold rays of the sun, lacking both warmth and light, can still be seen in the sky on summer nights. Human life was at a stand, time ceased to move. Two lions, two big and two little dragons, and two giants mounted guard at the bridge. How long the Fairy Aurora’s kingdom remained in this state is not known and can not be told. Much time passed without moving.

Holy Friday, too, at last noticed that the Fairy Aurora was angry; the scanty sunbeams, and the whirlwinds which shook the whole world, had brought her the tidings. She was half angry, half pleased, — angry because she could no longer see around her, and pleased because her brave, handsome prince had escaped and her beautiful neighbor was sorrowful. She was provoked, too, because her jug with the wonderful water was broken. But when Holy Friday saw that the darkness did not lessen, the light did not return, and even the very last sunbeam vanished from the earth, she realized that the Fairy Aurora was not jesting, and she ordered the whirlwinds to set out together and remove the great veil on the frontiers of the empire, that light might enter the world. The winds departed, each one more furious, more fierce, more terrible than the other — as whirlwinds usually are. It seemed as if they were taking the world away with them, and meant to tarry on it no longer. They reached the veil and dashed against it. Oh, how strong they were! But the veil did not stir. The whirlwinds blew against it again and again, three times in succession, then they gave up the attempt. They saw that the veil was firmer than the earth itself. After lingering a few moments they returned, wearied and covered with disgrace, and once more circled around the earth in their wild rage. You can imagine what happened to every thing that came in their way. Nothing good at any rate. Alas! alas!

The whirlwinds returned to Holy Friday and told her about the veil. Holy Friday was now not only half-angry, but wholly enraged, so she sent the whirlwinds to the emperor’s court to tell Petru he must intercede with the Fairy Aurora and promise to do whatever she asked, that light might return to the world. The whirlwinds set out again — this time somewhat more slowly and peacefully, as people depart when engaged on a good errand to a friendly person. They reached the palace. Petru was not there. The whirlwinds began to act somewhat more willfully. Petru had perished on the way. The whirlwinds circled around the palace from the left, then from the right, then from the center, turned it, twisted it, raised it, and hurled it, till there was nothing left of it. Then they returned to Holy Friday's hut with the news of Petru's death.

"Go into the world, every one of you, move every thing that can be moved, and find Petru. Bring him to me dead or alive!" said Holy Friday, after she had heard the sad tidings.

For three days and three nights the whirlwinds did not stop blowing. Thrice they uprooted trees, drove the rivers from their beds, dispersed the clouds by beating them against the rocks, swept the bottom of the sea and destroyed the surface of the earth. It was all in vain. They came back to the house, each one more tired, angry and mortified than the other.

Only one still lingered: the Spring wind, the soft, lazy, warm Spring wind. What had become of him? They all knew that he could not have accomplished much. Who knows? Weary as he was, he had perhaps lain down somewhere in the shade. Nobody troubled his head any more about him. Suddenly, after a short time, when all were racking their brains to discover Petru, the leaves began to stir gently.

Holy Friday felt the soft air, and went out. "What news do you bring?" she asked the favorite of all the winds.

"Sad, very sad, yet good," — whispered the young wind. "After I grew tired of so much searching, destroying, and pulling, I reached an empty well, and, being rid of my brothers, thought I would rest a while before setting off for home."

“And you found Petru at the bottom of the well?” cried Holy Friday, joyfully.

“Yes, and the bay by his side.”

“May your speech be sweet, your breezes soft, and may you ever bring good tidings!” said Holy Friday; then she commanded him to hasten to Holy Thursday and tell her she must be ready with the gold crucible, for Petru was in a sad case: — from there the Spring wind was to rush to Holy Wednesday and tell her she must come to the well with the water of life. “Do you understand?” said Holy Friday. “And go as fast as you can,” and they all set off together.

They reached the deserted well. There was nothing left of Petru except bones and ashes. Holy Wednesday took the bones and fitted them together — not a single one was missing. Holy Friday ordered the whirlwinds to search the bottom of the well, turn up all the dust, and collect Petru’s ashes. This was done. Holy Thursday made a fire, gathered the dew from the flowers into the gold crucible, and set it on the flames. When the water began to boil, Holy Wednesday repeated three spells, looked once to the east, once to the west, once to the north, and once to the south, and threw the herb of life into the boiling water. Holy Friday did the same with Petru’s ashes. Holy Thursday counted one, two, three, and took the crucible off the fire. Petru’s ashes and the herb of life were made into a fragrant salve. The Spring wind blew upon it once and stiffened it, then Petru’s bones were smeared with it seven times from head to foot, seven times from foot to head, seven times across one way, and seven times across the other, and, when this was done, up sprang the hero, a hundred thousand times handsomer, braver, and prouder than before.

“Jump on the horse!” said Holy Friday.

As soon as the bay felt his master on his back, he began to neigh and stamp. The animal was more spirited than ever.

“Where shall we go?” the horse asked gayly.

“Home,” replied Petru.

“How shall we ride?”

“Like a curse.”

Petru expressed his thanks for the service done him, and set off; he rode and rode as fleetly as a curse flies, till he came to the emperor’s court.

Nothing was left of the palace except the ground where it had stood. No trace of any human being who could have uttered a word or given any tidings was to be found. At last old Birscha came out of a ruined cellar. Petru learned what had happened and its cause, turned his bay, and went back even more swiftly than he had come. He did not even stop to take breath until he reached the Fairy Aurora’s kingdom. The time that had passed since every thing had been in the condition the queen had commanded, can not be told in words. It must have been a long period.

When Petru reached the bridge the sun had only three bright rays, seven warm, and nine cold ones left; all the others had gradually been lost.

The Fairy Aurora felt that some remarkable person must be coming, for it seemed just as it had done when she woke from the dream that had made her so sad. She was longing for something, she knew not what, just as she had then.

“Who is coming?” she asked in a low tone.

“Hold firmly, master,” said the bay.

Petru struck in the spurs, drew the bridle, and felt nothing until he was on the other side of the bridge.

“The hero is coming! *Over* the bridge!” cried the guards, waving their hats in the air.

The Fairy Aurora did not stir nor speak.

Petru suddenly rushed up to her, clasped her in his arms, and kissed her — just as fairy princes always kiss bewitching fairies.

The lovely fairy queen felt as she had never felt before. She said nothing more, asked no more questions, but made a sign to have the bay led into the stables of the sun, and entered the palace with Petru.

The fairies began to smile merrily, the flowers to smell sweetly, the springs to pour forth clear waters, the winds to blow cheerily, the wheel of life whirled faster than a top, the black veil fell, and the radiant sun rose high in the heavens, higher than it had ever done before. And in the world there was a light like the sun’s, so that for nine years, nine months, and nine days it was so terribly bright that nothing could be seen.

Petru rode home, brought back his old father and mother, had a wedding so magnificent that tidings of it spread through ninety-nine countries, and became emperor of both kingdoms.

His brothers, Florea and Costan, had their sight restored so that they might witness Petru’s happiness.

This, dear children, was the story of handsome Prince Petru and the Fairy Aurora, queen of the Land of the Sun.

Petru lived and reigned in peace and health, and who knows whether, by God’s help, he may not be reigning still.

18. EDMUND LEAMY

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Golden Spears
2. The House in the Lake
3. The Enchanted Cave
4. The Huntsman’s Son
5. The Fairy Tree of Dooros
6. The Little White Cat
7. Princess Finola and the Dwarf

PREFACE

LEAMY, EDMUND

Edmund Leamy was born in Waterford in 1848 and served as a Member of Parliament (MP) in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until his death in 1904. He also was an editor of the newspaper *United Ireland*, which was owned by Charles Stewart Parnell. Despite Leamy's political endeavors, he was also a talented folklorist and poet. His first collection of Irish folklore, *Irish Fairy Tales*, was published in 1889.

The preface of *Irish Fairy Tales* was penned by J. E Redmond, a fellow Irish politician nationalist. In it, Redmond refers to Leamy as "one of the most brightest and most poetic spirits who have appeared in Ireland in the last half century." Redmond goes on to say that Leamy loved every inch of his country, and the tales that surrounded it, often living in "his youth." He also laments that politics prevented the author from creating even more magic and myth for generations, but that we're very blessed to see the "rare power of poetic expression" Leamy has left for us.

Irish Fairy Tales was republished in 1906 by M. A. Gill & Son, Ltd, Dublin to honor Leamy after his death. The introduction for the volume emphasizes that Leamy wrote for children to entertain them, and not with a literary critic in mind. It’s with this spirit that Leamy endows all of his tales with a magic anyone can appreciate.

1

THE GOLDEN SPEARS

Once upon a time there lived in a little house under a hill a little old woman and her two children, whose names were Connla and Nora. Right in front of the door of the little house lay a pleasant meadow, and beyond the meadow rose up to the skies a mountain whose top was sharp-pointed like a spear. For more than halfway up it was clad with heather, and when the heather was in bloom it looked like a purple robe falling from the shoulders of the mountain down to its feet. Above the heather it was bare and gray, but when the sun was sinking in the sea, its last rays rested on the bare mountain top and made it gleam like a spear of gold, and so the children always called it the "Golden Spear."

In summer days they gamboled in the meadow, plucking the sweet wild grasses — and often and often they clambered up the mountain side, knee deep in the heather, searching for frechans and wild honey, and sometimes they found a bird's nest — but they only peeped into it, they never touched the eggs or allowed their breath to fall upon them, for next to their little mother they loved the mountain, and next to the mountain they loved the wild birds who made the spring and summer weather musical with their songs.

Sometimes the soft white mist would steal through the glen, and creeping up the mountain would cover it with a veil so dense that the children could not see it, and then they would say to each other: “Our mountain is gone away from us.” But when the mist would lift and float off into the skies, the children would clap their hands, and say: “Oh, there’s our mountain back again.”

In the long nights of winter they babbled of the spring and summertime to come, when the birds would once more sing for them, and never a day passed that they didn’t fling crumbs outside their door, and on the borders of the wood that stretched away towards the glen.

When the spring days came they awoke with the first light of the morning, and they knew the very minute when the lark would begin to sing, and when the thrush and the blackbird would pour out their liquid notes, and when the robin would make the soft, green, tender leaves tremulous at his song.

It chanced one day that when they were resting in the noontide heat, under the perfumed shade of a hawthorn in bloom, they saw on the edge of the meadow, spread out before them, a speckled thrush cowering in the grass.

“Oh, Connla! Connla! Look at the thrush — and, look, look up in the sky, there is a hawk!” cried Nora.

Connla looked up, and he saw the hawk with quivering wings, and he knew that in a second it would pounce down on the frightened thrush. He jumped to his feet, fixed a stone in his sling, and before the whir of the stone shooting through the air was silent, the stricken hawk tumbled headlong in the grass.

The thrush, shaking its wings, rose joyously in the air, and perching upon an elm-tree in sight of the children, he sang a song so sweet that they left the hawthorn shade and walked along together until they stood under the branches of the elm; and they listened and listened to the thrush’s song, and at last Nora said:

“Oh, Connla! did you ever hear a song so sweet as this?”

“No,” said Connla, “and I do believe sweeter music was never heard before.”

“Ah,” said the thrush, “that’s because you never heard the nine little pipers playing. And now, Connla and Nora, you saved my life to-day.”

“It was Nora saved it,” said Connla, “for she pointed you out to me, and also pointed out the hawk which was about to pounce on you.”

“It was Connla saved you,” said Nora, “for he slew the hawk with his sling.”

“I owe my life to both of you,” said the thrush. “You like my song, and you say you have never heard anything so sweet; but wait till you hear the nine little pipers playing.”

“And when shall we hear them?” said the children.

“Well,” said the thrush, “sit outside your door to-morrow evening, and wait and watch until the shadows have crept up the heather, and then, when the mountain top is gleaming like a golden spear, look at the line where the shadow on the heather meets the sunshine, and you shall see what you shall see.”

And having said this, the thrush sang another song sweeter than the first, and then saying “good-by,” he flew away into the woods.

The children went home, and all night long they were dreaming of the thrush and the nine little pipers; and when the birds sang in the morning, they got up and went out into the meadow to watch the mountain.

The sun was shining in a cloudless sky, and no shadows lay on the mountain, and all day long they watched and waited, and at last, when the birds were singing their farewell song to the evening star, the children saw the shadows marching from the glen, trooping up the mountain side and dimming the purple of the heather.

And when the mountain top gleamed like a golden spear, they fixed their eyes on the line between the shadow and the sunshine.

“Now,” said Connla, “the time has come.”

“Oh, look! look!” said Nora, and as she spoke, just above the line of shadow a door opened out, and through its portals came a little piper dressed in green and gold. He stepped down, followed by another and another, until they were nine in all, and then the door slung back again. Down through the heather marched the pipers in single file, and all the time they played a music so sweet that the birds, who had gone to sleep in their nests, came out upon the branches to listen to them, and then they crossed the meadow, and they went on and on until they disappeared in the leafy woods.

While they were passing the children were spellbound, and couldn’t speak, but when the music had died away in the woods, they said:

“The thrush is right, that is the sweetest music that was ever heard in all the world.”

And when the children went to bed that night the fairy music came to them in their dreams. But when the morning broke, and they looked out upon their mountain and could see no trace of the door above the heather, they asked each other whether they had really seen the little pipers, or only dreamt of them.

That day they went out into the woods, and they sat beside a stream that pattered along beneath the trees, and through the leaves tossing in the breeze the sun flashed down upon the streamlet, and shadow and sunshine danced upon it. As the children watched the water sparkling where the sunlight fell, Nora said:

“Oh, Connla, did you ever see anything so bright and clear and glancing as that?”

“No,” said Connla, “I never did.”

“That’s because you never saw the crystal hall of the fairy of the mountains,” said a voice above the heads of the children.

And when they looked up, who should they see perched on a branch but the thrush.

“And where is the crystal hall of the fairy?” said Connla.

“Oh, it is where it always was, and where it always will be,” said the thrush. “And you can see it if you like.”

“We would like to see it,” said the children.

“Well, then,” said the thrush, “if you would, all you have to do is to follow the nine little pipers when they come down through the heather, and cross the meadow to-morrow evening.”

And the thrush having said this, flew away.

Connla and Nora went home, and that night they fell asleep talking of the thrush and the fairy and the crystal hall.

All the next day they counted the minutes, until they saw the shadows thronging from the glen and scaling the mountain side. And, at last, they saw the door springing open, and the nine little pipers marching down.

They waited until the pipers had crossed the meadow and were about to enter the wood. And then they followed them, the pipers marching on before them and playing all the time. It was not long until they had passed through the wood, and then, what should the children see rising up before them but another mountain, smaller than their own, but, like their own, clad more than half way up with purple heather, and whose top was bare and sharp-pointed, and gleaming like a golden spear.

Up through the heather climbed the pipers, up through the heather the children clambered after them, and the moment the pipers passed the heather a door opened and they marched in, the children following, and the door closed behind them.

Connla and Nora were so dazzled by the light that hit their eyes, when they had crossed the threshold, that they had to shade them with their hands; but, after a moment or two, they became able to bear the splendor, and when they looked around they saw that they were in a noble hall, whose crystal roof was supported by two rows of crystal pillars rising from a crystal floor; and the walls were of crystal, and along the walls were crystal couches, with coverings and cushions of sapphire silk with silver tassels.

Over the crystal floor the little pipers marched; over the crystal floor the children followed, and when a door at the end of the hall was opened to let the pipers pass, a crowd of colors came rushing in, and floor, and ceiling, and stately pillars, and glancing couches, and shining walls, were stained with a thousand dazzling hues.

Out through the door the pipers marched; out through the door the children followed, and when they crossed the threshold they were treading on clouds of amber, of purple, and of gold.

“Oh, Connla,” said Nora, “we have walked into the sunset!”

And around and about them everywhere were soft, fleecy clouds, and over their heads was the glowing sky, and the stars were shining through it, as a lady’s eyes shine through a veil of gossamer. And the sky and stars seemed so near that Connla thought he could almost touch them with his hand.

When they had gone some distance, the pipers disappeared, and when Connla and Nora came up to the spot where they had seen the last of them, they found themselves at the head of a ladder, all the steps of which were formed of purple and amber clouds that descended to what appeared to be a vast and shining plain, streaked with purple and gold. In the spaces between the streaks of gold and purple they saw soft, milk-white stars. And the children thought that the great plain, so far below them, also belonged to cloudland.

They could not see the little pipers, but up the steps was borne by the cool, sweet air the fairy music; and lured on by it step by step they traveled down the fleecy stairway. When they were little more than halfway down there came mingled with the music a sound almost as sweet — the sound of waters toying in the still air with pebbles on a shelving beach, and with the sound came the odorous brine of the ocean. And then the children knew that what they thought was a plain in the realms of cloudland was the sleeping sea unstirred by wind or tide, dreaming of the purple clouds and stars of the sunset sky above it.

When Connla and Nora reached the strand they saw the nine little pipers marching out towards the sea, and they wondered where they were going to. And they could hardly believe their eyes when they saw them stepping out upon the level ocean as if they were walking upon the land; and away the nine little pipers marched, treading the golden line cast upon the waters by the setting sun. And as the music became fainter and fainter as the pipers passed into the glowing distance, the children began to wonder what was to become of themselves. Just at that very moment they saw coming towards them from the sinking sun a little white horse, with flowing mane and tail and golden hoofs. On the horse's back was a little man dressed in shining green silk. When the horse galloped on to the strand the little man doffed his hat, and said to the children:

"Would you like to follow the nine little pipers?" The children said, "yes."

"Well, then," said the little man, "come up here behind me; you, Nora, first, and Connla after."

Connla helped up Nora, and then climbed on to the little steed himself; and as soon as they were properly seated the little man said "swish," and away went the steed, galloping over the sea without wetting hair or hoof. But fast as he galloped the nine little pipers were always ahead of him, although they seemed to be going only at a walking pace. When at last he came up rather close to the hindmost of them the nine little pipers disappeared, but the children heard the music playing beneath the waters. The white steed pulled up suddenly, and wouldn't move a step further.

"Now," said the little man to the children, "clasp me tight, Nora, and do you, Connla, cling on to Nora, and both of you shut your eyes."

The children did as they were bidden, and the little man cried:

“Swish! swash!”

And the steed went down and down until at last his feet struck the bottom.

“Now open your eyes,” said the little man.

And when the children did so they saw beneath the horse’s feet a golden strand, and above their heads the sea like a transparent cloud between them and the sky. And once more they heard the fairy music, and marching on the strand before them were the nine little pipers.

“You must get off now,” said the little man, “I can go no farther with you.”

The children scrambled down, and the little man cried “swish,” and himself and the steed shot up through the sea, and they saw him no more. Then they set out after the nine little pipers, and it wasn’t long until they saw rising up from the golden strand and pushing their heads up into the sea above, a mass of dark gray rocks. And as they were gazing at them they saw the rocks opening, and the nine little pipers disappearing through them.

The children hurried on, and when they came up close to the rocks they saw sitting on a flat and polished stone a mermaid combing her golden hair, and singing a strange sweet song that brought the tears to their eyes, and by the mermaid’s side was a little sleek brown otter.

When the mermaid saw them she flung her golden tresses back over her snow-white shoulders, and she beckoned the children to her. Her large eyes were full of sadness; but there was a look so tender upon her face that the children moved towards her without any fear.

“Come to me, little one,” she said to Nora, “come and kiss me,” and in a second her arms were around the child. The mermaid kissed her again and again; as the tears rushed to her eyes, she said:

“Oh, Nora, mavourneen, your breath is as sweet as the wild rose that blooms in the green fields of Erin, and happy are you, my children, who have come so lately from the pleasant land. Oh, Connla! Connla! I get the scent of the dew of the Irish grasses and of the purple heather from your feet. And you both can soon return to Erin of the Streams, but I shall not see it till three hundred years have passed away, for I am Liban the Mermaid, daughter of a line of kings. But I may not keep you here. The Fairy Queen is waiting for you in her snow-white palace and her fragrant bowers. And now kiss me once more, Nora, and kiss me, Connla. May luck and joy go with you, and all gentleness be upon you both."

Then the children said good-by to the mermaid, and the rocks opened for them and they passed through, and soon they found themselves in a meadow starred with flowers, and through the meadow sped a sunlit stream. They followed the stream until it led them into a garden of roses, and beyond the garden, standing on a gentle hill, was a palace white as snow. Before the palace was a crowd of fairy maidens pelting each other with rose-leaves. But when they saw the children they gave over their play, and came trooping towards them.

"Our queen is waiting for you," they said; and then they led the children to the palace door. The children entered, and after passing through a long corridor they found themselves in a crystal hall so like the one they had seen in the mountain of the golden spear that they thought it was the same. But on all the crystal couches fairies, dressed in silken robes of many colors, were sitting, and at the end of the hall, on a crystal throne, was seated the fairy queen, looking lovelier than the evening star. The queen descended from her throne to meet the children, and taking them by the hands, she led them up the shining steps. Then, sitting down, she made them sit beside her, Connla on her right hand and Nora on her left.

Then she ordered the nine little pipers to come before her, and she said to them:

"So far you have done your duty faithfully, and now play one more sweet air and your task is done."

And the little pipers played, and from the couches at the first sound of the music all the fairies rose, and forming partners, they danced over the crystal floor as lightly as the young leaves dancing in the wind.

Listening to the fairy music, and watching the wavy motion of the dancing fairies, the children fell asleep. When they awoke next morning and rose from their silken beds they were no longer children. Nora was a graceful and stately maiden, and Connla a handsome and gallant youth. They looked at each other for a moment in surprise, and then Connla said:

“Oh, Nora, how tall and beautiful you are!”

“Oh, not so tall and handsome as you are, Connla,” said Nora, as she flung her white arms round his neck and kissed her brother’s lips.

Then they drew back to get a better look of each other, and who should step between them but the fairy queen.

“Oh, Nora, Nora,” said she, “I am not as high as your knee, and as for you, Connla, you look as straight and as tall as one of the round towers of Erin.”

“And how did we grow so tall in one night?” said Connla.

“In one night!” said the fairy queen. “One night, indeed! Why, you have been fast asleep, the two of you, for the last seven years!”

“And where was the little mother all that time?” said Connla and Nora together.

“Oh, the little mother was all right. She knew where you were; but she is expecting you to-day, and so you must go off to see her, although I would like to keep you — if I had my way — all to myself here in the fairyland under the sea. And you will see her to-day; but before you go here is a necklace for you, Nora; it is formed out of the drops of the ocean spray, sparkling in the sunshine. They were caught by my fairy nymphs, for you, as they skimmed the sunlit billows under the shape of sea-birds, and no queen or princess in the world can match their luster with the diamonds won with toil from the caves of earth. As for you, Connla, see here’s a helmet of shining gold fit for a king of Erin — and a king of Erin you will be yet; and here's a spear that will pierce any shield, and here's a shield that no spear can pierce and no sword can cleave as long as you fasten your warrior cloak with this brooch of gold."

And as she spoke she flung round Connla's shoulders a flowing mantle of yellow silk, and pinned it at his neck with a red gold brooch.

"And now, my children, you must go away from me. You, Nora, will be a warrior's bride in Erin of the Streams. And you, Connla, will be king yet over the loveliest province in all the land of Erin; but you will have to fight for your crown, and days of battle are before you. They will not come for a long time after you have left the fairyland under the sea, and until they come lay aside your helmet, shield, and spear, and warrior's cloak and golden brooch. But when the time comes when you will be called to battle, enter not upon it without the golden brooch I give you fastened in your cloak, for if you do harm will come to you. Now, kiss me, children; your little mother is waiting for you at the foot of the golden spear, but do not forget to say good-by to Liban the Mermaid, exiled from the land she loves, and pining in sadness beneath the sea."

Connla and Nora kissed the fairy queen, and Connla, wearing his golden helmet and silken cloak, and carrying his shield and spear, led Nora with him. They passed from the palace through the garden of roses, through the flowery meadow, through the dark gray rocks, until they reached the golden strand; and there, sitting and singing the strange, sweet song, was Liban the Mermaid.

"And so you are going up to Erin," she said, "up through the covering waters. Kiss me, children, once again; and when you are in Erin of the Streams, sometimes think of the exile from Erin beneath the sea."

And the children kissed the mermaid, and with sad hearts, bidding her good-by, they walked along the golden strand. When they had gone what seemed to them a long way, they began to feel weary; and just then they saw coming towards them a little man in a red jacket leading a coal-black steed.

When they met the little man, he said: “Connla, put Nora up on this steed; then jump up before her.”

Connla did as he was told, and when both of them were mounted —

“Now, Connla,” said the little man, “catch the bridle in your hands, and you, Nora, clasp Connla round the waist, and close your eyes.”

They did as they were bidden, and then the little man said, “Swash, swish!” and the steed shot up from the strand like a lark from the grass, and pierced the covering sea, and went bounding on over the level waters; and when his hoofs struck the hard ground, Connla and Nora opened their eyes, and they saw that they were galloping towards a shady wood.

On went the steed, and soon he was galloping beneath the branches that almost touched Connla’s head. And on they went until they had passed through the wood, and then they saw rising up before them the “Golden Spear.”

“Oh, Connla,” said Nora, “we are at home at last.”

“Yes,” said Connla, “but where is the little house under the hill?”

And no little house was there; but in its stead was standing a lime-white mansion.

“What can this mean?” said Nora.

But before Connla could reply, the steed had galloped up to the door of the mansion, and, in the twinkling of an eye, Connla and Nora were standing on the ground outside the door, and the steed had vanished.

Before they could recover from their surprise the little mother came rushing out to them, and flung her arms around their necks, and kissed them both again and again.

“Oh, children! children! You are welcome home to me; for though I knew it was all for the best, my heart was lonely without you.”

And Connla and Nora caught up the little mother in their arms, and they carried her into the hall and set her down on the floor.

“Oh, Nora!” said the little mother, “you are a head over me; and as for you, Connla, you look almost as tall as one of the round towers of Erin.”

“That’s what the fairy queen said, mother,” said Nora.

“Blessings on the fairy queen,” said the little mother. “Turn round, Connla, till I look at you.”

Connla turned round, and the little mother said:

“Oh, Connla, with your golden helmet and your spear, and your glancing shield, and your silken cloak, you look like a king. But take them off, my boy, beautiful as they are. Your little mother would like to see you, her own brave boy, without any fairy finery.”

And Connla laid aside his spear and shield, and took off his golden helmet and his silken cloak. Then he caught the little mother and kissed her, and lifted her up until she was as high as his head. And said he:

“Don’t you know, little mother, I’d rather have you than all the world.”

And that night, when they were sitting down by the fire together, you may be sure that in the whole world no people were half as happy as Nora, Connla, and the little mother.

2

THE HOUSE IN THE LAKE

A long, long time ago there lived in a little hut, in the midst of one of the inland lakes of Erin, an old fisherman and his son. The hut was built on stakes driven into the bed of the lake, and was so high above the waters that even when they were stirred into waves by the wind coming down from the mountains they did not reach the threshold of the door. Around, outside the hut, on a level with the floor, was a little wicker-work platform, and under the platform, close to the steps leading up to it from the water, the fisherman's curragh, made of willows, covered with skins, was moored, and it was only by means of the curragh that he and his son, Enda, could leave their lake dwelling.

On many a summer evening Enda lay stretched on the platform, watching the sunset fading from the mountain-tops, and the twilight creeping over the waters of the lake, and it chanced that once when he was so engaged he heard a rustle in a clump of sedge that grew close to one side of the hut. He turned to where the sound came from, and what should he see but an otter swimming towards him, with a little trout in his mouth. When the otter came up to where Enda was lying, he lifted his head and half his body from the water, and flung the trout on the platform, almost at Enda's feet, and then disappeared.

Enda took the little panting trout in his hand; but as he did so he heard, quite close to him, in the lake, a sound like that of water plashing upon water, and he saw the widening circles caused by a trout which had just risen to a fly; and he said to the little trout he held in his hand:

"I won't keep you, poor thing! Perhaps that was a little comrade come to look for you, and so I'll send you back to him."

And saying this, he dropped the little trout into the lake.

Well, when the next evening came, again Enda was lying stretched outside the hut, and once more he heard the rustle in the sedge, and once more the otter came and flung the little trout almost into his hands.

Enda, more surprised than ever, did not know what to do. He saw that it was the same little trout the otter had brought him the night before, and he said:

"Well, I gave you a chance last night. I'll give you another, if only to see what will come of it."

And he dropped the trout into the lake; but no sooner had it touched the waters than it was changed into a beautiful, milk-white swan. And Enda could hardly believe his eyes, as he saw it sailing across the lake, until it was lost in the sedges growing by the shore.

All that night he lay awake, thinking of what he had seen, and as soon as the morning stood on the hill-tops, and cast its shafts of golden light across the lake, Enda rose and got into his curragh.

He rowed all round the shores, beating the sedges with his oar, in pursuit of the swan; but all in vain; he could not catch a glimpse of her white plumage anywhere. Day after day he rowed about the lake in search of her, and every evening he lay outside the hut watching the waters. At long last, one night, when the full moon, rising above the mountains, flooded the whole lake with light, he saw the swan coming swiftly towards him, shining brighter than the moonbeams. The swan came on until it was almost within a boat’s length of the hut; and what should Enda hear but the swan speaking to him in his own language:

“Get into your curragh, Enda, and follow me,” said she, and, saying this, she turned round and sailed away.

Enda jumped into the curragh, and soon the water, dripping from his oar, was flashing like diamonds in the moonlight. And he rowed after the swan, who glided on before him, until she came to where the shadows of the mountains lay deepest on the lake. Then the swan rested, and when Enda came up to her:

“Enda,” said she, “I have brought you where none may hear what I wish to say to you. I am Mave, the daughter of the king of Erin. By the magic arts of my cruel stepmother I was changed into a trout, and cast into this lake a year and a day before the evening when you restored me to the waters the second time. If you had not done so the first night the otter brought me to you I should have been changed into a hooting owl; if you had not done so the second night, I should have been changed into a croaking raven. But, thanks to you, Enda, I am now a snow-white swan, and for one hour on the first night of every full moon the power of speech is and will be given to me as long as I remain a swan. And a swan I must always remain, unless you are willing to break the spell of enchantment that is over me; and you alone can break it.”

“I’ll do anything I can for you, O princess!” said Enda. “But how can I break the spell?”

“You can do so,” said the swan, “only by pouring upon my plumage the perfumed water that fills the golden bowl that is in the inmost room of the palace of the fairy queen, beneath the lake.”

“And how can I get that?” said Enda.

“Well,” said the swan, “you must dive beneath the lake, and walk along its bed, until you come to where the lake dragon guards the entrance of the fairy queen’s dominions.”

“I can dive like a fish,” said Enda; “but how can I walk beneath the waters?”

“You can do it easily enough,” said the swan, “if you get the water-dress of Brian, one of the three sons of Turenn, and his helmet of transparent crystal, by the aid of which he was able to walk under the green salt sea.”

“And where shall I find them?”

“They are in the water-palace of Angus of the Boyne,” said the swan; “but you should set out at once, for if the spell be not broken before the moon is full again, it cannot be broken for a year and a day.”

“I’ll set out in the first ray of the morning,” said Enda.

“May luck and joy go with you,” said the swan. “And now the hours of silence are coming upon me, and I have only time to warn you that dangers you little dream of will lie before you in your quest for the golden cup.”

“I am willing to face all dangers for your sake, O princess,” said Enda.

“Blessings be upon you, Enda,” said the swan, and she sailed away from the shadow out into the light across the lake to the sedgy banks. And Enda saw her no more.

He rowed his curragh home, and he lay on his bed without taking off his clothes. And as the first faint glimmer of the morning came slanting down the mountains, he stepped into his curragh and pulled across the lake, and took the road towards the water-palace of Angus of the Boyne.

When he reached the banks of the glancing river a little woman, dressed in red, was standing there before him.

“You are welcome, Enda,” said she. “And glad am I to see the day that brings you here to help the winsome Princess Mave. And now wait a second, and the water-dress and crystal helmet will be ready for you.”

And, having said this, the little woman plucked a handful of wild grasses, and she breathed upon them three times and then flung them on the river, and a dozen fairy nymphs came springing up through the water, bearing the water-dress and crystal helmet and a shining spear. And they laid them down upon the bank at Enda's feet, and then disappeared.

"Now, Enda," said the fairy woman, "take these; by the aid of the dress and the helmet you can walk beneath the waters. You will need the spear to enable you to meet the dangers that lie before you. But with that spear, if you only have courage, you can overcome everything and everyone that may attempt to bar your way."

Having said this, she bid good-by to Enda, and stepping off the bank, she floated out upon the river as lightly as a red poppy leaf. And when she came to the middle of the stream she disappeared beneath the waters.

Enda took the helmet, dress, and spear, and it was not long until he came to the sedgy banks where his little boat was waiting for him. As he stepped into the curragh the moon was rising above the mountains. He rowed on until he came to the hut, and having moored the boat to the door, he put on the water-dress and the crystal helmet, and taking the spear in his hand, he leaped over the side of the curragh, and sank down and down until he touched the bottom. Then he walked along without minding where he was going, and the only light he had was the shimmering moonlight, which descended as faintly through the waters as if it came through muffled glass. He had not gone very far when he heard a horrible hissing, and straight before him he saw what he thought were two flaming coals. After a few more steps he found himself face to face with the dragon of the lake, the guardian of the palace of the fairy queen. Before he had time to raise his spear, the dragon had wound its coils around him, and he heard its horrible teeth crunching against the side of his crystal helmet, and he felt the pressure of its coils around his side, and the breath almost left his body; but the dragon, unable to pierce the helmet, unwound his coils, and soon Enda's hands were free, and before the dragon could attempt to seize him again, he drove his spear through one of its fiery eyes, and, writhing with pain, the hissing dragon darted through a cave behind him. Enda, gaining courage from the dragon’s flight, marched on until he came to a door of dull brass set in the rocks. He tried to push it in before him, but he might as well have tried to push away the rocks. While he was wondering what he should do, he heard again the fierce hissing of the dragon, and saw the red glare of his fiery eye dimly in the water.

Lifting his spear and hastily turning round to meet the furious monster, Enda accidentally touched the door with the point of the spear, and the door flew open. Enda passed through, and the door closed behind him with a grating sound, and he marched along through a rocky pass which led to a sandy plain.

As he stepped from the pass into the plain the sands began to move, as if they were alive. In a second a thousand hideous serpents, almost the color of the sand, rose hissing up, and with their forked tongues made a horrible, poisonous hedge in front of him. For a second he stood dismayed, but then, leveling his spear, he rushed against the hedge of serpents, and they, shooting poison at him, sank beneath the sand. But the poison did not harm him, because of his water-dress and crystal helmet.

When he had passed over the sandy plain, he had to climb a great steep, jagged rock. When he got to the top of the rock he saw spread out before him a stony waste without a tuft or blade of grass. At some distance in front of him he noticed a large dark object, which he took to be a rock, but on looking at it more closely he saw that it was a huge, misshapen, swollen mass, apparently alive. And it was growing bigger and bigger every moment. Enda stood amazed at the sight, and before he knew where he was the loathsome creature rose from the ground, and sprang upon him before he could use his spear, and, catching him in its horrid grasp, flung him back over the rocks on to the sandy plain. Enda was almost stunned, but the hissing of the serpents rising from the sand around him brought him to himself, and, jumping to his feet, once more he drove them down beneath the surface. He then approached the jagged rock, on the top of which he saw the filthy monster glaring at him with bloodshot eyes. Enda poised his spear and hurled it against his enemy. It entered between the monster's eyes, and from the wound the blood flowed down like a black torrent and dyed the plain, and the shrunken carcass slipped down the front of the rocks and disappeared beneath the sand. Enda once more ascended the rock, and without meeting or seeing anything he passed over the stony waste, and at last he came to a leafy wood. He had not gone far in the wood until he heard the sound of fairy music, and walking on he came upon a mossy glade, and there he found the fairies dancing around their queen. They were so small, and were all so brightly dressed, that they looked like a mass of waving flowers; but when he was seen by them they vanished like a glorious dream, and no one remained before him but the fairy queen. The queen blushed at finding herself alone, but on stamping her little foot three times upon the ground, the frightened fairies all crept back again.

"You are welcome, Enda," said the queen. "My little subjects have been alarmed by your strange dress and crystal helmet. I pray you take them off; you do not need them here."

Enda did as he was bidden, and he laid down his water-dress and helmet on the grass, and the little fairies, seeing him in his proper shape, got over their fright, and, unrestrained by the presence of the queen, they ran tumbling over one another to try and get a good look at the crystal helmet.

"I know what you have come for, Enda," said the queen. "The golden cup you shall have to-morrow; but to-night you must share our feast, so follow me to the palace."

Having said this, the queen beckoned her pages to her, and, attended by them and followed by Enda, she went on through the wood. When they had left it behind them Enda saw on a green hill before him the snow-white palace of the fairy queen.

As the queen approached the steps that led up to the open door, a band of tiny fairies, dressed in rose-colored silk, came out, carrying baskets of flowers, which they flung down on the steps to make a fragrant carpet for her. They were followed by a band of harpers dressed in yellow silken robes, who ranged themselves on each side of the steps and played their sweetest music as the queen ascended.

When the queen, followed by Enda, entered the palace, they passed through a crystal hall that led to a banquet-room. The room was lighted by a single star, large as a battle-shield. It was fixed against the wall above a diamond throne.

The queen seated herself upon the throne, and the pages, advancing towards her, and bending low, as they approached the steps, handed her a golden wand.

The queen waved the wand three times, and a table laden with all kinds of delicacies appeared upon the floor. Then she beckoned Enda to her, and when he stood beside her the fairy table was no higher than his knee.

“I am afraid I must make you smaller, Enda,” said the queen, “or you will never be able to seat yourself at my fairy table.”

And having said this, she touched Enda with the golden wand, and at once he became as small as her tallest page. Then she struck the steps of her throne, and all the nobles of her court, headed by her bards, took their places at the festive board.

The feast went on right merrily, and when the tiny jeweled drinking-cups were placed upon the table, the queen ordered the harpers to play.

And the little harpers struck the chords, and as Enda listened to the music it seemed to him as if he was being slowly lifted from his seat, and when the music ended the fairies vanished, the shining star went out, and Enda was in perfect darkness.

The air blew keenly in his face, and he knew not where he was. At last he saw a faint gray light, and soon this light grew broader and brighter, and as the shadows fled before it, he could hardly believe his eyes when he found himself in his curragh on the lake, and the moonlight streaming down from the mountain-tops.

For a moment he thought he must have been dreaming; but there in the boat before him were the crystal helmet, and the water-dress, and the gleaming spear, and the golden bowl of perfumed water that was to remove the spell of enchantment from the white swan of the lake, and sailing towards him from the sedgy bank came the snow-white swan; and when she touched the boat, Enda put out his hands and lifted her in, and then over her plumage he poured the perfumed water from the golden bowl, and the Princess Mave in all her maiden beauty stood before him.

“Take your oar, Enda,” she said, “and row to the southern bank.”

Enda seized his oar, and the curragh sped across the waters swifter than a swallow in its flight. When the boat touched the shore Enda jumped out, and lifted the princess on to the bank.

“Send your boat adrift, Enda,” she said; “but first take out your shining spear; the water-dress and the crystal helmet will take care of themselves.”

Enda took out the spear, and then pushed the boat from the bank. It sped on towards the hut in the middle of the lake; but before it had reached halfway six nymphs sprang up from the water and seizing the helmet and dress, sank with them beneath the tide, and the boat went on until it pushed its prow against the steps of the little hut, where it remained.

Then Enda and the princess turned towards the south, and it was not long until they came to a deep forest, that was folding up its shadows and spreading out its mossy glades before the glancing footsteps of the morning. They had not gone far through the forest when they heard the music of hounds and the cries of huntsmen, and crashing towards them through the low branches they saw a fierce wild boar. Enda, gently pushing the princess behind him, leveled his spear, and when the boar came close to him he drove it into his throat. The brute fell dead at his feet, and the dogs rushing up began to tear it to pieces. The princess fainted at the sight, and while

Enda was endeavoring to restore her, the king of Erin, followed by his huntsmen, appeared, and when the king saw the princess he started in amazement, as he recognized the features of his daughter Mave.

At that moment the princess came to herself, and her father, lifting her tenderly in his arms, kissed her again and again.

“I have mourned you as dead, my darling,” said he, “and now you are restored to me more lovely than ever. I would gladly have given up my throne for this. But say who is the champion who has brought you hither, and who has slain the wild boar we have hunted so many years in vain?”

The princess blushed like a rose as she said:

“His name is Enda, father; it is he has brought me back to you.”

Then the king embraced Enda and said:

“Forgive me, Enda, for asking any questions about you before you have shared the hospitality of my court. My palace lies beyond the forest, and we shall reach it soon.”

Then the king ordered his huntsman to sound the bugle-horn, and all his nobles galloped up in answer to it, and when they saw the Princess Mave they were so dazzled by her beauty that they scarcely gave a thought to the death of the wild boar.

“It is my daughter, Mave, come back to me,” said the king.

And all the nobles lowered their lances, and bowed in homage to the lady.

“And there stands the champion who has brought her home,” said the king, pointing to Enda.

The nobles looked at Enda, and bowed courteously, but in their hearts they were jealous of the champion, for they saw he was already a favorite of the king’s.

Then the pages came up, leading milk-white steeds with golden bridles, and the king, ordering Enda to mount one of them, lifted Mave on to his own, and mounted behind her. The pages, carrying the boar’s head on a hollow shield, preceded by the huntsmen sounding their horns, set out towards the palace, and the royal party followed them.

As the procession approached the palace crowds came rushing out to see the trophies of the chase, and through the snow-white door the queen, Mave's cruel stepmother, attended by her maids-of-honor and the royal bards, came forth to greet the king. But when she saw seated before him the Princess Mave, who she thought was at the bottom of the lake under a spell of enchantment, she uttered a loud cry, and fell senseless to the ground.

The king jumped from his horse, and rushing to the queen, lifted her up and carried her in his arms to her apartments, for he had no suspicion of the wickedness of which she had been guilty.

And the court leeches were summoned to attend her, but she died that very night, and it was not until a green mound, worthy of a queen of Erin, had been raised over her grave that the Princess Mave told her father of the wickedness of her stepmother. And when she told him the whole story of how Enda had broken the spell of enchantment, and of the dangers which he had faced for her sake, the king summoned an assembly of all his nobles, and seated on his throne, wearing his golden helmet, the bards upon his right hand and the Druids upon his left, and the nobles in ranks before him with gleaming helmets and flashing spears, he told them the story of the princess, and of the service which Enda had rendered to her.

"And now," said the king, "if the princess is willing to take her deliverer for her husband, I am willing that she shall be his bride; and if you, my subjects, bards and Druids and nobles and chiefs of Erin, have anything to say against this union, speak. But first, Mave," said the king, as he drew the blushing princess to him, "speak, darling, as becomes the daughter of a king — speak in the presence of the nobles of Erin, and say if it is your wish to become Enda's bride."

The princess flung her white arms around her father's neck, as she murmured:

“Father, it was Enda brought me back to you, and before all the princes and nobles of Erin I am willing to be his bride.”

And she buried her head upon the king’s breast, and as he stroked her silken hair falling to her feet, the bards struck their golden harps, but the sound of the joyous music could hardly drown the murmurs of the jealous nobles.

When the music ceased the king beckoned Enda to him, and was about to place his hand in Mave’s when a Druid, whose white beard almost touched the ground, and who had been a favorite of the dead stepmother, and hated Mave for her sake, stepped forward and said:

“O king of Erin, never yet has the daughter of a king been freely given in marriage to any save a battle champion; and that stripling there has never struck his spear against a warrior’s shield.”

A murmur of approbation rose from the jealous princes, and Congal, the bravest of them all, stepped out from the ranks, and said:

“The Druid speaks the truth, O king! That stripling has never faced a battle champion yet, and, speaking for all the nobles of your land, I challenge him to fight any one of us; and as he is young and unused to arms, we are willing that the youngest and least experienced amongst us should be set against him.”

When Congal had spoken, the nobles, in approval of his words, struck their shields with their swords, and the brazen sound ascended to the skies.

The face of the princess, blushing a moment before like a rose, became as white as a lily; but the color returned to her cheeks when she heard Enda’s voice ringing loud and clear.

“It is true, O king!” said he, “that I have never used my spear in battle yet. The Prince Congal has challenged me to meet the youngest and least experienced of the chiefs of Erin. I have risked my life already for your daughter’s sake. I would face death a thousand times for the chance of winning her for my bride; but I would scorn to claim her hand if I dared not meet the boldest battle champion of the nobles of Erin, and here before you, O king, and bards, Druids, and nobles, and chiefs of Erin, and here, in the presence of the Lady Mave, I challenge the boldest of them all.”

The king’s eyes flashed with joy as he listened to the brave words of Enda.

“It is well,” said the king; “the contest shall take place to-morrow on the lawn outside our palace gates; but before our assembly dissolves I call on you, nobles and chiefs of Erin, to name your boldest champion.”

Loud cries of “Congal! Congal!” answered the king’s speech.

“Are you willing, Congal?” asked the king.

“Willing, O king!” answered Congal.

“It is well,” said the king. “We shall all meet again to-night in our banquet-hall.”

And the king, with the Princess Mave on his arm, attended by his bards and Druids, entered the palace, and the chiefs and nobles went their several ways.

At the feast that night the princess sat beside the king, and Enda beside the princess, and the bards and Druids, nobles and chiefs, took their places in due order. And the bards sang songs of love and battle, and never merrier hours were spent than those which passed away that night in the banquet-hall of Erin’s king.

When the feast was over Enda retired to his apartment to spend the night dreaming of the Princess Mave, and Congal went to his quarters; but not to sleep or dream, for the Druid who had provoked the contest came to him bringing his golden wand, and all night long the Druid was weaving spells to charm the shield and spear and helmet of Congal, to make them invulnerable in the battle of the morrow.

But while Enda lay dreaming of the Princess Mave, the little fairy woman who gave him the water-dress, and crystal helmet, and shining spear on the banks of the Boyne, slid into his room, and she placed beside his couch a silver helmet and a silver shield. And she rubbed the helmet, and the shield, and the blue blade and haft of his spear with the juice of the red rowan berries, and she let a drop fall upon his face and hands, and then she slid out as silently as she came.

When the morning broke, Enda sprang from his couch, and he could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the silver shield and helmet. At the sight of them he longed for the hour of battle, and he watched with eager gaze the sun climbing the sky; and, after hours of suspense, he heard the trumpet's sound and the clangor of the hollow shields, struck by the hard-pointed spears.

Putting on the helmet, and fastening the shield upon his left arm, and taking the spear in his right hand, he stepped out bravely to the fight. The edge of the lawn before the palace gates was ringed by the princes, nobles, and chiefs of Erin. And the palace walls were thronged by all the beauties of the Court and all the noble ladies of the land. And on his throne, surrounded by his Druids, his brehons, and his bards, was the king of Erin, and at his feet sat the lovely Lady Mave.

As Enda stepped out upon the lawn, he saw Congal advancing from the ranks of the nobles, and the two champions approached each other until they met right in front of the throne.

Then both turned towards the throne, and bowed to the king and the Princess Mave; and then facing each other again, they retired a space, and when their spears were poised, ready for battle, the king gave the signal, which was answered by the clang of stricken shields, and Congal and Enda launched their gleaming spears. They flashed like lightning in the sunlit air, and in a second Congal's had broken against Enda's shield; but Enda's, piercing Congal's helmet, hurled him senseless on the plain.

The nobles and chiefs could hardly realize that in that single second their boldest champion was overthrown; but when they saw him stretched motionless on the grassy sward, from out their ranks six warriors advanced to where the chieftain lay, and sadly they bore him away upon their battle-shields, and Enda remained victor upon the field.

And then the king’s voice rang out clear as the sound of a trumpet in the still morning:

“Bards and brehons, princes and nobles, and chiefs of Erin, Enda has proved himself a battle champion, and who amongst you now will dare gainsay his right to claim my daughter for his bride?”

And no answer came.

But when he summoned Enda to his throne, and placed the lady’s hand in his, a cheer arose from the great assembly, that proved that jealousy was extinguished in all hearts, and that all believed that Enda was worthy of the winsome bride; and never since that day, although a thousand years have passed, was there in all the world a brighter and gayer wedding than the wedding of Enda and the Princess Mave.

3

THE ENCHANTED CAVE

A long, long time ago, Prince Cuglas, master of the hounds to the high King of Erin, set out from Tara to the chase. As he was leaving the palace the light mists were drifting away from the hill-tops, and the rays of the morning sun were falling aslant on the *grinan* or sunny bower of the Princess Ailinn. Glancing towards it the prince doffed his plumed and jeweled hunting-cap, and the princess answered his salute by a wave of her little hand, that was as white as a wild rose in the hedges in June, and leaning from her bower, she watched the huntsman until his tossing plumes were hidden by the green waving branches of the woods.

The Princess Ailinn was over head and ears in love with Cuglas, and Cuglas was over head and ears in love with the Princess Ailinn, and he believed that never was summer morning half as bright, or as sweet, or as fair as she. The glimpse which he had just caught of her filled his heart with delight, and almost put all thought of hunting out of his head, when suddenly the tuneful cries of the hounds, answered by a hundred echoes from the groves, broke upon his ear.

The dogs had started a dappled deer that bounded away through the forest. The prince, spurring his gallant steed, pushed on in eager pursuit.

On through the forest sped the deer, through soft, green, secret ways and flowery dells, then out from the forest, up heathery hills, and over long stretches of moorland, and across brown rushing streams, sometimes in view of the hounds, sometimes lost to sight, but always ahead of them.

All day long the chase continued, and at last, when the sun was sinking, the dogs were close upon the panting deer, and the prince believed he was about to secure his game, when the deer suddenly disappeared through the mouth of a cave which opened before him. The dogs followed at his heels, and the prince endeavored to rein in his steed, but the impetuous animal bore him on, and soon was clattering over the stony floor of the cave in perfect darkness. Cuglas could hear ahead of him the cries of the hounds growing fainter and fainter, as they increased the distance between them and him. Then the cries ceased altogether, and the only sound the prince heard was the noise of his horse's hoofs sounding in the hollow cave. Once more he endeavored to check his career, but the reins broke in his hands, and in that instant the prince felt the horse had taken a plunge into a gulf, and was sinking down and down, as a stone cast from the summit of a cliff sinks down to the sea. At last the horse struck the ground again, and the prince was almost thrown out of his saddle, but he succeeded in regaining his seat. Then on through the darkness galloped the steed, and when he came into the light the prince's eyes were for some time unable to bear it. But when he got used to the brightness he saw he was galloping over a grassy plain, and in the distance he perceived the hounds rushing towards a wood faintly visible through a luminous summer haze. The prince galloped on, and as he approached the wood he saw coming towards him a comely champion, wearing a shining brown cloak, fastened by a bright bronze spear-like brooch, and bearing a white hazel wand in one hand, and a single-edged sword with a hilt made from the tooth of a sea-horse in the other; and the prince knew by the dress of the champion, and by his wand

and sword, that he was a royal herald. As the herald came close to him the prince's steed stopped of his own accord.

"You are welcome, Cuglas," said the herald, "and I have been sent by the Princess Crede to greet you and to lead you to her court, where you have been so long expected."

"I know not how this may be," said Cuglas.

"How it has come about I shall tell you as we go along," said the herald. "The Princess Crede is the Queen of the Floating Island. And it chanced, once upon a day, when she was visiting her fairy kinsmen, who dwell in one of the pleasant hills that lie near Tara, she saw you with the high king and princes and nobles of Erin following the chase. And seeing you her heart went out to you, and wishing to bring you to her court, she sent one of her nymphs, in the form of a deer, to lure you on through the cave, which is the entrance to this land."

"I am deeply honored by the preference shown me by the princess," said Cuglas, "but I may not tarry in her court; for above in Erin there is the Lady Ailinn, the loveliest of all the ladies who grace the royal palace, and before the princes and chiefs of Erin she has promised to be my bride."

"Of that I know not," said the herald; "but a true champion, like you, cannot, I know, refuse to come with me to the court of the Princess Crede."

As the herald had said these words the prince and he were on the verge of the wood, and they entered upon a mossy pathway that broadened out as they advanced until it was as wide as one of the great roads of Erin. Before they had gone very far the prince heard the tinkling of silver bells in the distance, and almost as soon as he heard them he saw coming up towards him a troop of warriors on coal black steeds. All the warriors wore helmets of shining silver, and cloaks of blue silk. And on the horses' breasts were crescents of silver, on which were hung tiny silver bells, shaking out music with the motion of the horses. As the prince approached the champions they lowered their spears, and dividing in two lines the prince and the herald passed between the ranks, and the champions, forming again, followed on behind the prince.

At last they passed through the wood, and they found themselves on a green plain, speckled with flowers, and they had not gone far when the prince saw coming towards him a hundred champions on snow-white steeds, and around the breast of the steeds were crescents of gold, from which were hanging little golden bells. The warriors all wore golden helmets, and the shafts of their shining spears were of gold, and golden sandals on their feet, and yellow silken mantles fell down over their shoulders. And when the prince came near them they lowered their lances, and then they turned their horses' heads around and marched before him. And it was not long until above the pleasant jingle of the bells the prince heard the measured strains of music, and he saw coming towards him a band of harpers, dressed in green and gold, and when the harpers had saluted the prince they marched in front of the cavalcade, playing all the time, and it was not long until they came to a stream that ran like a blue riband around the foot of a green hill, on the top of which was a sparkling palace; the stream was crossed by a golden bridge, so narrow that the horsemen had to go two-by-two. The herald asked the prince to halt and to allow all the champions to go before him; and the cavalcade ascended the hill, the sunlight brightly glancing on helmet and on lance, and when it reached the palace the horsemen filed around the walls.

When at length the prince and herald crossed the bridge and began to climb the hill, the prince thought he felt the ground moving under them, and on looking back he could see no sign of the golden bridge, and the blue stream had already become as wide as a great river, and was becoming wider every second.

"You are on the floating island now," said the herald, "and before you is the palace of the Princess Crede."

At that moment the queen came out through the palace door, and the prince was so dazzled by her beauty, that only for the golden bracelet he wore upon his right arm, under the sleeve of his silken tunic, he might almost have forgotten the Princess Ailinn. This bracelet was made by the dwarfs who dwell in the heart of the Scandinavian Mountains, and was sent with other costly presents by the King of Scandinavia to the King of Erin, and he gave it to the princess, and it was the virtue of this bracelet, that whoever was wearing it could not forget the person who gave it to him, and it could never be loosened from the arm by any art or magic spell; but if the wearer, even for a single moment, liked anyone better than the person who gave it to him, that very moment the bracelet fell off from the arm and could never again be fastened on. And when the princess promised her hand in marriage to the Prince Cuglas, she closed the bracelet on his arm.

The fairy queen knew nothing about the bracelet, and she hoped that before the prince was long in the floating island he would forget all about the princess.

“You are welcome, Cuglas,” said the queen, as she held out her hand, and Cuglas, having thanked her for her welcome, they entered the palace together.

“You must be weary after your long journey,” said the queen. “My page will lead you to your apartments, where a bath of the cool blue waters of the lake has been made ready for you, and when you have taken your bath the pages will lead you to the banquet hall, where the feast is spread.”

At the feast the prince was seated beside the queen, and she talked to him of all the pleasures that were in store for him in fairyland, where pain, and sickness, and sorrow, and old age, are unknown, and where every rosy hour that flies is brighter than the one that has fled before it. And when the feast was ended the queen opened the dance with the prince, and it was not until the moon was high above the floating island that the prince retired to rest.

He was so tired after his journey and the dancing that he fell into a sound sleep. When he awoke the next morning the sun was shining brightly, and he heard outside the palace the jingle of bells and the music of baying hounds, and his heart was stirred by memories of the many pleasant days on which he had led the chase over the plains and through the green woods of Tara.

He looked out through the window, and he saw all the fairy champions mounted on their steeds ready for the chase, and at their head the fairy queen. And at that moment the pages came to say the queen wished to know if he would join them, and the prince went out and found his steed ready saddled and bridled, and they spent the day hunting in the forest that stretched away for miles behind the palace, and the night in feasting and dancing.

When the prince awoke the following morning he was summoned by the pages to the presence of the queen. The prince found the queen on the lawn outside the palace surrounded by her court.

“We shall go on the lake to-day, Cuglas,” said the queen, and taking his arm she led him along the water’s edge, all the courtiers following.

When she was close to the water she waved her wand, and in a second a thousand boats, shining like glass, shot up from beneath the lake and set their bows against the bank. The queen and Cuglas stepped into one, and when they were seated two fairy harpers took their places in the prow. All the other boats were soon thronged by fairies, and then the queen waved her wand again, and an awning of purple silk rose over the boat, and silken awnings of various colors over the others, and the royal boat moved off from the bank followed by all the rest, and in every boat sat a harper with a golden harp, and when the queen waved her wand for the third time, the harpers struck the trembling chords, and to the sound of the delightful music the boats glided over the sunlit lake. And on they went until they approached the mouth of a gentle river sliding down between banks clad with trees. Up the river, close to the bank and under the drooping trees, they sailed, and when they came to a bend in the river, from which the lake could be no longer seen, they pushed their prows in against the bank, and the queen and Cuglas, and all the party, left the boats and went on under the trees until they came to a mossy glade.

Then the queen waved her wand, and silken couches were spread under the trees, and she and Cuglas sat on one apart from the others, and the courtiers took their places in proper order.

And the queen waved her wand again, and wind shook the trees above them, and the most luscious fruit that was ever tasted fell down into their hands; and when the feast was over there was dancing in the glades to the music of the harps, and when they were tired dancing they set out for the boats, and the moon was rising above the trees as they sailed away over the lake, and it was not long until they reached the bank below the fairy palace.

Well, between hunting in the forest, and sailing over the lake, and dancing in the greenwood glade and in the banquet hall, the days passed, but all the time the prince was thinking of the Princess Ailinn, and one moonlit night, when he was lying awake on his couch thinking of her, a shadow was suddenly cast on the floor.

The prince looked towards the window, and what should he see sitting on the sill outside but a little woman tapping the pane with a golden bodkin.

The prince jumped from his couch and opened the window, and the little woman floated on the moonbeams into the room and sat down on the floor.

“You are thinking of the Princess Ailinn,” said the little woman.

“I never think of anyone else,” said the prince.

“I know that,” said the little woman, “and it’s because of your love for each other, and because her mother was a friend to me in the days gone by, that I have come here to try and help you; but there is not much time for talking, the night advances. At the bank below a boat awaits you. Step into it and it will lead you to the mainland, and when you reach it you will find before you a path that will take you to the green fields of Erin and the plains of Tara. I know you will have to face danger. I know not what kind of danger; but whatever it may be do not draw your sword before you tread upon the mainland, for if you do you shall never reach it, and the boat will come back again to the floating island; and now go and may luck go with you;” and saying this the little woman climbed up the moonbeams and disappeared.

The prince left the palace and descended to the lake, and there before him he saw a glistening boat; he stepped into it, and the boat went on and on beneath the moon, and at last he saw the mainland, and he could trace a winding pathway going away from the shore. The sight filled his heart with joy, but suddenly the milk-white moonshine died away, and looking up to the sky he saw the moon turning fiery red, and the waters of the lake, shining like silver a moment before, took a blood-red hue, and a wind arose that stirred the waters, and they leaped up against the little boat, tossing it from side to side. While Cuglas was wondering at the change, he heard a strange, unearthly noise ahead of him, and a bristling monster, lifting its claws above the water, in a moment was beside the boat and stuck one of his claws in the left arm of the prince, and pierced the flesh to the bone. Maddened by the pain the prince drew his sword and chopped off the monster’s claw. The monster disappeared beneath the lake, and, as it did so, the color of the water changed, and the silver moonlight shone down from the sky again, but the boat no longer went on towards the mainland, but sped back towards the floating island, while forth from the island came a fleet of fairy boats to meet it, led by the shallop of the fairy queen. The queen greeted the prince as if she knew not of his attempted flight, and to the music of the harps the fleet returned to the palace.

The next day passed and the night came, and again the prince was lying on the couch, thinking of the Princess Ailinn, and again he saw the shadow on the floor and heard the tapping against the window.

And when he opened it the little woman slid into the room.

“You failed last night,” she said, “but I come to give you another chance. To-morrow the queen must set out on a visit to her fairy kinsmen, who dwell in the green hill near the plain of Tara; she cannot take you with her, for if your feet once touched the green grass that grows in the fruitful fields of Erin, she could never bring you back again. And so, when you find she has left the palace, go at once into the banquet hall and look behind the throne, and you will see a small door let down into the ground. Pull this up and descend the steps which you will see. Where they lead to I cannot tell. What dangers may be before you I do not know; but this I know, if you accept anything, no matter what it is, from anyone you may meet on your way, you shall not set foot on the soil of Erin.”

And having said this the little woman, rising from the floor, floated out through the window.

The prince returned to his couch, and the next morning, as soon as he heard the queen had left the palace, he hastened to the banquet hall. He discovered the door and descended the steps, and he found himself in a gloomy and lonesome valley. Jagged mountains, black as night, rose on either side, and huge rocks seemed ready to topple down upon him at every step. Through broken clouds a watery moon shed a faint, fitful light, that came and went as the clouds, driven by a moaning wind, passed over the valley.

Cuglas, nothing daunted, pushed on boldly until a bank of cloud shut out completely the struggling moon, and closing over the valley covered it like a pall, leaving him in perfect darkness. At the same moment the moaning wind died away, and with it died away all sound. The darkness and the deathlike silence sent an icy chill to the heart of Cuglas. He held his hand close to his eyes, but he saw it not. He shouted that he might hear the sound of his own voice, but he heard it not. He stamped his foot on the rocky ground, but no sound was returned to him. He rattled his sword in its brazen scabbard, but it gave no answer back to him. His heart grew colder and colder, when suddenly the cloud above him was rent in a dozen places, and lightning flashed through the valley, and the thunder rolled over the echoing mountains. In the lurid glare of the lightning Cuglas saw a hundred ghostly forms sweeping towards him, uttering as they came nearer and nearer shrieks so terrible that the silence of death could more easily be borne. Cuglas turned to escape, but they hemmed him round, and pressed their clammy hands upon his face.

With a yell of horror he drew his sword and slashed about him, and that very moment the forms vanished, the thunder ceased, the dark cloud passed, and the sun shone out as bright as on a summer day, and then Cuglas knew the forms he had seen were those of the wild people of the glen.

With renewed courage he pursued his way through the valley, and after three or four windings it took him out upon a sandy desert. He had no sooner set foot upon the desert than he heard behind him a crashing sound louder than thunder. He looked around, and he saw that the walls of mountain through which he had just passed had fallen into the valley, and filled it up so that he could no longer tell where it had been.

The sun was beating fiercely on the desert, and the sands were almost as hot as burning cinders; and as Cuglas advanced over them his body became dried up, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and when his thirst was at its height a fountain of sparkling water sprang up in the burning plain a few paces in front of him; but when he came up quite close to it and stretched out his parched hands to cool them in the limpid waters, the fountain vanished as suddenly as it appeared. With great pain, and almost choking with heat and thirst, he struggled on, and again the fountain sprang up in front of him and moved before him, almost within his reach. At last he came to the end of the desert, and he saw a green hill up which a pathway climbed; but as he came to the foot of the hill, there, sitting right in his way, was a beautiful fairy holding out towards him a crystal cup, over the rim of which flowed water as clear as crystal. Unable to resist the temptation, the prince seized the cold, bright goblet, and drank the water. When he did so his thirst vanished, but the fairy, and the green hill, and the burning desert disappeared, and he was standing in the forest behind the palace of the fairy queen.

That evening the queen returned, and at the feast she talked as gaily to the prince as if she knew not of his attempt to leave the Floating Island, and the prince spoke as gaily as he could to her, although in his heart there was sadness when he remembered that if he had only dashed away the crystal cup, he would be at that moment in the royal banquet hall of Tara, sitting beside the Princess Ailinn.

And he thought the feast would never end; but it was over at last, and the prince returned to his apartments. And that night, as he lay on his couch, he kept his eyes fixed upon the window; but hours passed, and there was no sign of anyone. At long last, and when he had given up all hope of seeing her, he heard a tapping at the window, and he got up and opened it, and the little woman came in.

“You failed again to-day,” said she — “failed just at the very moment when you were about to step on the green hills of Erin. I can give you only one chance more. It will be your last. The queen will go hunting in the morning. Join the hunt, and when you are separated from the rest of the party in the wood throw your reins upon your horse’s neck and he will lead you to the edge of the lake. Then cast this golden bodkin into the lake in the direction of the mainland, and a golden bridge will be thrown across, over which you can pass safely to the fields of Erin; but take care and do not draw your sword, for if you do your steed will bear you back again to the Floating Island, and here you must remain forever.” Then handing the bodkin to the prince, and saying good-by, the little woman disappeared.

The next morning the queen and the prince and all the court went out to hunt, and a fleet white deer started out before them, and the royal party pressed after him in pursuit. The prince’s steed outstripped the others, and when he was alone the prince flung the reins upon his horse’s neck, and before long he came to the edge of the lake.

Then the prince cast the bodkin on to the water, and a golden bridge was thrown across to the mainland, and the horse galloped on to it, and when the prince was more than halfway he saw riding towards him a champion wearing a silver helmet, and carrying on his left arm a silver shield, and holding in his right hand a gleaming sword. As he came nearer he struck his shield with his sword and challenged the prince to battle. The prince’s sword almost leaped out of its scabbard at the martial sound, and, like a true knight of Tara, he dashed against his foe, and swinging his sword above his head, with one blow he clove the silver helmet, and the strange warrior reeled from his horse and fell upon the golden bridge. The prince, content with this achievement, spurred his horse to pass the fallen champion, but the horse refused to stir, and the bridge broke in two almost at his feet, and the part of it between him and the mainland disappeared beneath the lake, carrying with it the horse and the body of the champion, and before the prince could recover from his surprise, his steed wheeled round and was galloping back, and when he reached the land he rushed through the forest, and the prince was not able to pull him up until he came to the palace door.

All that night the prince lay awake on his couch with his eyes fixed upon the window, but no shadow fell upon the floor, and there was no tapping at the pane, and with a heavy heart he joined the hunting party in the morning. And day followed day, and his heart was sadder and sadder, and found no pleasure in the joys and delights of fairyland. And when all in the palace were at rest he used to roam through the forest, always thinking of the Princess Ailinn, and hoping against hope that the little woman would come again to him, but at last he began to despair of ever seeing her. It chanced one night he rambled so far that he found himself on the verge of the lake, at the very spot from which the golden bridge had been thrown across the waters, and as he gazed wistfully upon them a boat shot up and came swiftly to the bank, and who should he see sitting in the stern but the little woman.

“Ah, Cuglas, Cuglas,” she said, “I gave you three chances, and you failed in all of them.”

“I should have borne the pain inflicted by the monster’s claw,” said Cuglas. “I should have borne the thirst on the sandy desert, and dashed the crystal cup untasted from the fairy’s hand; but I could never have faced the nobles and chiefs of Erin if I had refused to meet the challenge of the battle champion on the golden bridge.”

“And you would have been no true knight of Erin, and you would not have been worthy of the wee girl who loves you, the bonny Princess Ailinn, if you had refused to meet it,” said the little woman; “but for all that you can never return to the fair hills of Erin. But cheer up, Cuglas, there are mossy ways and forest paths and nestling bowers in fairyland. Lonely they are, I know, in your eyes now,” said the little woman; “but maybe,” she added, with a laugh as musical as the ripple on a streamlet when summer is in the air, “maybe you won’t always think them so lonely.”

“You think I’ll forget Ailinn for the fairy queen,” said Cuglas, with a sigh.

“I don’t think anything of the kind,” said she.

“Then what do you mean?” said the prince.

“Oh, I mean what I mean,” said the little woman. “But I can’t stop here all night talking to you: and, indeed, it is in your bed you ought to be yourself. So now good-night; and I have no more to say, except that perhaps, if you happen to be here this night week at this very hour, when the moon will be on the waters, you will see — — But no matter what you will see,” said she; “I must be off.”

And before the prince could say another word the boat sped away from the bank, and he was alone. He went back to the palace, and he fell asleep that night only to dream of the Princess Ailinn.

As for the princess, she was pining away in the palace of Tara, the color had fled from her cheeks, and her eyes, which had been once so bright they would have lighted darkness like a star, lost nearly all their luster, and the king's leeches could do nothing for her, and at last they gave up all hope, and the king and queen of Erin and the ladies of the court watched her couch by night and by day sadly waiting for her last hour.

At length one day, when the sun was shining brightly over Tara's plain, and its light, softened by the intervening curtains, was falling in the sick chamber, the royal watchers noticed a sweet change coming over the face of the princess; the bloom of love and youth were flushing on her cheeks, and from her eyes shone out the old, soft, tender light, and they began to hope she was about to be restored to them, when suddenly the room was in darkness as if the night had swept across the sky, and blotted out the sun. Then they heard the sound of fairy music, and over the couch where the princess lay they beheld a gleam of golden light, but only for a moment; and again there was perfect darkness, and the fairy music ceased. Then, as suddenly as it came the darkness vanished, the softened sunlight once more filled the chamber, and rested upon the couch; but the couch was empty, and the royal watchers, looking at each other, said in whispers: "The fairies have carried away the Princess Ailinn to fairyland."

Well, that very day the prince roamed by himself through the forest, counting the hours until the day would fade in the sky and the moon come climbing up, and at last, when it was shining full above the waters, he went down to the verge of the lake, and he looked out over the gleaming surface watching for the vision promised by the little woman. But he could see nothing, and was about to turn away when he heard the faint sound of fairy music. He listened and listened, and the sound came nearer and clearer, and away in the distance, like drops of glistening water breaking the level of the lake, he saw a fleet of fairy boats, and he thought it was the fairy queen sailing in the moonlight. And it was the fairy queen, and soon he was able to recognize the royal shallop leading the others, and as it came close to the bank he saw the little woman sitting in the prow between the little harpers, and at the stern was the fairy queen, and by her side the lady of his heart, the Princess Ailinn. In a second the boat was against the bank, and the princess in his arms. And he kissed her again and again.

“And have you never a kiss for me?” said the little woman, tapping his hand with the little gold bodkin.

“A kiss and a dozen,” said Cuglas, as he caught the little fairy up in his arms.

“Oh, fie, Cuglas,” said the queen.

“Oh, the princess isn’t one bit jealous,” said the little woman. “Are you, Ailinn?”

“Indeed I am not,” said Ailinn.

“And you should not be,” said the fairy queen, “for never lady yet had truer knight than Cuglas. I loved him, and I love him dearly. I lured him here hoping that in the delights of fairyland he might forget you. It was all in vain. I know now that there is one thing no fairy power above or below the stars, or beneath the waters, can ever subdue, and that is love. And here together forever shall you and Cuglas dwell, where old age shall never come upon you, and where pain or sorrow or sickness is unknown.”

And Cuglas never returned to the fair hills of Erin, and ages passed away since the morning he followed the hounds into the fatal cave, but his story was remembered by the firesides, and sometimes, even yet, the herdboy watching his cattle in the fields hears the tuneful cry of hounds, and follows it till it leads him to a darksome cave, and as fearfully he listens to the sound becoming fainter and fainter he hears the clatter of hoofs over the stony floor, and to this day the cave bears the name of the prince who entered it never to return.

4

THE HUNTSMAN’S SON

A long, long time ago there lived in a little hut on the borders of a great forest a huntsman and his wife and son. From his earliest years the boy, whose name was Fergus, used to hunt with his father in the forest, and he grew up strong and active, sure and swift-footed as a deer, and as free and fearless as the wind. He was tall and handsome; as supple as a mountain ash, his lips were as red as its berries; his eyes were as blue as the skies in spring; and his hair fell down over his shoulders like a shower of gold. His heart was as light as a bird’s, and no bird was fonder of green woods and waving branches. He had lived since his birth in the hut in the forest, and had never wished to leave it, until one winter night a wandering minstrel sought shelter there, and paid for his night’s lodging with songs of love and battle. Ever since that night Fergus pined for another life. He no longer found joy in the music of the hounds or in the cries of the huntsmen in forest glades. He yearned for the chance of battle, and the clang of shields, and the fierce shouts of fighting warriors, and he spent all his spare hours practicing on the harp and learning the use of arms, for in those days the bravest warriors were also bards. In this way the spring and summer and autumn passed; and when the winter came again it chanced that on a stormy night, when thunder was rattling through the forest, smiting the huge oaks and hurling them crashing to the earth, Fergus lay awake thinking of his present lot, and wondering what the future might have in store for him. The lightning was playing around the hut, and every now and then a flash brightened up the interior.

After a peal, louder than any which had preceded it, Fergus heard three loud knocks at the door. He called out to his parents that someone was knocking.

“If that is so,” said his father, “open at once; this is no night to keep a poor wanderer outside our door.”

Fergus did as he was bidden, and as he opened the door a flash of lightning showed him, standing at the threshold, a little wizened old man with a small harp under his arm.

“Come in, and welcome,” said Fergus, and the little man stepped into the room.

“It is a wild night, neighbors,” said he.

“It is, indeed, a wild night,” said the huntsman and his wife, who had got up and dressed themselves; “and sorry we are we have no better shelter or better fare to offer you, but we give you the best we have.”

“A king cannot do more than his best,” said the little man.

The huntsman’s wife lit the fire, and soon the pine logs flashed up into a blaze, and made the hut bright and warm. She then brought forth a peggin of milk and a cake of barley-bread.

“You must be hungry, sir,” she said.

“Hungry I am,” said he; “but I wouldn’t ask for better fare than this if I were in the king’s palace.”

“Thank you kindly, sir,” said she, “and I hope you will eat enough, and that it will do you good.”

“And while you are eating your supper,” said the huntsman, “I’ll make you a bed of fresh rushes.”

“Don’t put yourself to that trouble,” said the little man. “When I have done my supper I’ll lie down here by the fire, if it is pleasing to you, and I’ll sleep like a top until morning. And now go back to your beds and leave me to myself, and maybe some time when you won't be expecting it I'll do a good turn for your kindness to the poor wayfarer."

"Oh, it's no kindness at all," said the huntsman's wife. "It would be a queer thing if an Irish cabin would not give shelter and welcome in a wild night like this. So good night, now, and we hope you will sleep well."

"Good night," said the little man, "and may you and yours never sup sorrow until your dying day."

The huntsman and his wife and Fergus then went back to their beds, and the little man, having finished his supper, curled himself up by the fire, and was soon fast asleep.

About an hour after a loud clap of thunder awakened Fergus, and before it had died away he heard three knocks at the door. He aroused his parents and told them.

"Get up at once," said his mother, "this is no night to keep a stranger outside our door."

Fergus rose and opened the door, and a flash of lightning showed him a little old woman, with a shuttle in her hand, standing outside.

"Come in, and welcome," said he, and the little old woman stepped into the room.

"Blessings be on them who give welcome to a wanderer on a wild night like this," said the old woman.

"And who wouldn't give welcome on a night like this?" said the huntsman's wife, coming forward with a peggin of milk and a barley cake in her hand, "and sorry we are we have not better fare to offer you."

"Enough is as good as a feast," said the little woman, "and now go back to your beds and leave me to myself."

"Not till I shake down a bed of rushes for you," said the huntsman's wife.

"Don't mind the rushes," said the little woman; "go back to your beds. I'll sleep here by the fire."

The huntsman's wife went to bed, and the little old woman, having eaten her supper, lay down by the fire, and was soon fast asleep.

About an hour later another clap of thunder startled Fergus. Again he heard three knocks at the door. He roused his parents, but he did not wait for orders from them. He opened the door, and a flash of lightning showed him outside the threshold a low-sized, shaggy, wild-looking horse. And Fergus knew it was the Pooka, the wild horse of the mountains. Bold as Fergus was, his heart beat quickly as he saw fire issuing from the Pooka's nostrils. But, banishing fear, he cried out:

"Come in, and welcome."

"Welcome you are," said the huntsman, "and sorry we are that we have not better shelter or fare to offer you."

"I couldn't wish a better welcome," said the Pooka, as he came over near the fire and sat down on his haunches.

"Maybe you would like a little bit of this, Master Pooka," said the huntsman's wife, as she offered him a barley cake.

"I never tasted anything sweeter in my life," said the Pooka, crunching it between his teeth, "and now if you can give me a sup of milk, I'll want for nothing."

The huntsman's wife brought him a peggin of milk. When he had drunk it, "Now," says the Pooka, "go back to your beds, and I'll curl myself up by the fire and sleep like a top till morning."

And soon everybody in the hut was fast asleep.

When the morning came the storm had gone, and the sun was shining through the windows of the hut. At the song of the lark Fergus got up, and no one in the world was ever more surprised than he when he saw no sign of the little old man, or the little old woman, or the wild horse of the mountains. His parents were also surprised, and they all thought that they must have been dreaming until they saw the empty peggins around the fire and some pieces of broken bread; and they did not know what to think of it all.

From that day forward the desire grew stronger in the heart of Fergus for a change of life; and one day he told his parents that he was resolved to seek his fortune. He said he wished to be a soldier, and that he would set out for the king's palace, and try to join the ranks of the Feni.

About a week afterwards he took leave of his parents, and having received their blessing he struck out for the road that led to the palace of the High King of Erin. He arrived there just at the time when the great captain of the Fenian host was recruiting his battalions, which had been thinned in recent battle.

The manly figure of Fergus, his gallant bearing, and handsome face, all told in his favor. But before he could be received into the Fenian ranks he had to prove that he could play the harp like a bard, that he could contend with staff and shield against nine Fenian warriors, that he could run with plaited hair through the tangled forest without loosening a single hair, and that in his course he could jump over trees as high as his head, and stoop under trees as low as his knee, and that he could run so lightly that the rotten twigs should not break under his feet. Fergus proved equal to all the tests, thanks to the wandering minstrel who taught him the use of the harp, to his own brave heart, and to his forest training. He was enrolled in the second battalion of the Feni, and before long he was its bravest and ablest champion.

At that very time it happened that the niece of the High King of Erin was staying with the king and queen in their palace at Tara. The princess was the loveliest lady in all the land. She was as proud as she was beautiful. The princes and chieftains of Erin in vain sought her hand in marriage. From Alba and Spain, and the far-off isles of Greece, kings came to woo her. From the northern lands came vikings in stately galleys with brazen prows, whose oarsmen tore the white foam from the emerald seas as they swept towards the Irish coasts. But the lady had vowed she would wed with no one except a battle champion who could excel in music the chief bard of the High King of Erin; who could outstrip on his steed in the great race of Tara the white steed of the plains; and who could give her as a wedding robe a garment of all the colors of the rainbow, so finely spun that when folded up it would fit in the palm of her small white hand. To fulfill these three conditions was impossible for all her suitors, and it seemed as if the loveliest lady of the land would go unmarried to her grave.

It chanced that once, on a day when the Fenian battalions were engaged in a hurling-match, Fergus beheld the lady watching the match from her sunny bower. He no sooner saw her than he fell over head and ears in love with her, and he thought of her by night, and he thought of her by day, and believing that his love was hopeless, he often wished he had never left his forest-home.

The great fair of Tara was coming on, and all the Feni were busy from morning till night practicing feats of arms and games, in order to take part in the contests to be held during the fair. And Fergus, knowing that the princess would be present, determined to do his best to win the prizes which were to be contended for before the ladies' eyes.

The fair began on the 1st of August, but for a whole week before the five great roads of Erin were thronged with people of all sorts. Princes and warriors on their steeds, battle champions in their chariots, harpers in hundreds, smiths with gleaming spears and shields and harness for battle steeds and chariots; troops of men and boys leading racehorses; jewelers with gold drinking-horns, and brooches, and pins, and earrings, and costly gems of all kinds, and chessboards of silver and gold, and golden and silver chessmen in bags of woven brass; dyers with their many-colored fabrics; bands of jugglers; drovers goading on herds of cattle; shepherds driving their sheep; huntsmen with spoils of the chase; dwellers in the lakes or by the fish-abounding rivers with salmon and speckled trout; and countless numbers of peasants on horseback and on foot, all wending their way to the great meeting-place by the mound, which a thousand years before had been raised over the grave of the great queen. For there the fair was to be held.

On the opening day the High King, attended by the four kings of Erin, set out from the palace, and with them went the queen and the ladies of the court in sparkling chariots. The princess rode in the chariot with the High Queen, under an awning made of the wings of birds, to protect them from the rays of the sun. Following the queen were the court ladies in other chariots, under awnings of purple or of yellow silk. Then came the brehons, the great judges of the land, and the chief bards of the high court of Tara, and the Druids, crowned with oak leaves, and carrying wands of divination in their hands.

When the royal party reached the ground it took its place in inclosures right up against the monumental mound. The High King sat with the four kings of Erin, all wearing their golden helmets, for they wore their diadems in battle only. In an inclosure next the king’s sat the queen and the princess and all the ladies of the court. At either side of the royal pavilions were others for the dames and ladies and nobles and chiefs of different degrees, forming part of a circle on the plain, and the stands and benches for the people were so arranged as to complete the circle, and in the round green space within it, so that all might hear and see, the contests were to take place.

At a signal from the king, who was greeted with a thunderous cheer, the heralds rode round the circle, and having struck their sounding shields three times with their swords, they made a solemn proclamation of peace. Then was sung by all the assembled bards, to the accompaniment of their harps, the chant in honor of the mighty dead. When this was ended, again the heralds struck their shields, and the contests began. The first contest was the contest of spear-throwing between the champions of the seven battalions of the Feni. When the seven champions took their places in front of the royal inclosure, everyone, even the proud princess, was struck by the manly beauty and noble bearing of Fergus.

The champions poised their spears, and at a stroke from the heralds upon their shields the seven spears sped flashing through the air. They all struck the ground, shafts up, and it was seen that two were standing side by side in advance of the rest, one belonged to Fergus, the other to the great chief, Oscar. The contest for the prize then lay between Oscar and Fergus, and when they stood in front of the king, holding their spears aloft, every heart was throbbing with excitement. Once more the heralds struck their shields, and, swifter than the lightning's flash, forth went the spears, and when Fergus's spear was seen shivering in the ground a full length ahead of the great chief Oscar's, the air was shaken by a wild cheer that was heard far beyond the plains of Tara. And as Fergus approached the high king to receive the prize the cheers were renewed. But Fergus thought more of the winsome glance of the princess than he did of the prize or the sounding cheers. And Princess Maureen was almost sorry for her vow, for her heart was touched by the beauty of the Fenian champion.

Other contests followed, and the day passed, and the night fell, and while the Fenian warriors were reveling in their camps the heart of Fergus, victor as he was, was sad and low. He escaped from his companions, and stole away to his native forest, for —

When the heart is sick and sorest,
There is balsam in the forest —
There is balsam in the forest
For its pain.

And as he lay under the spreading branches, watching the stars glancing through the leaves, and listening to the slumb'rous murmur of the waters, a strange peace came over him.

But in the camp which he had left, and in the vast multitude on the plains of Tara, there was stir and revelry, and babbling speculation as to the contest of to-morrow — the contest which was to decide whether the chief bard of Erin was to hold his own against all comers, or yield the palm. For rumor said that a great Skald had come from the northern lands to compete with the Irish bard.

At last, over the Fenian camp, and over the great plain and the multitude that thronged it, sleep fell, clothing them with a silence as deep as that which dwelt in the forest, where, dreaming of the princess, Fergus lay. He awoke at the first notes of the birds, but though he felt he ought to go back to his companions and be witness of the contest which might determine whether the princess was to be another's bride, his great love and his utter despair of winning her so oppressed him that he lay as motionless as a broken reed. He scarcely heard the music of the birds, and paid no heed to the murmur of the brook rushing by his feet. The crackling of branches near him barely disturbed him, but when a shadow fell across his eyes he looked up gloomily, and saw, or thought he saw, someone standing before him. He started up, and who should he see but the little wizened old man who found shelter in his father's hut on the stormy night.

"This is a nice place for a battle champion to be. This is a nice place for *you* to be on the day which is to decide who will be the successful suitor of the princess."

"What is it to me," said Fergus, "who is to win her since I cannot?"

"I told you," said the little man, "the night you opened the door for me, that the time might come when I might be able to do a good turn for you and yours. The time has come. Take this harp, and my luck go with you, and in the contest of the bards to-day you'll reap the reward of the kindness you did when you opened your door to the poor old wayfarer in the midnight storm."

The little man handed his harp to Fergus and disappeared as swiftly as the wind that passes through the leaves.

Fergus, concealing the harp under his silken cloak, reached the camp before his comrades had aroused themselves from sleep.

At length the hour arrived when the great contest was to take place.

The king gave the signal, and as the chief bard of Erin was seen ascending the mound in front of the royal inclosures he was greeted with a roar of cheers, but at the first note of his harp silence like that of night fell on the mighty gathering.

As he moved his fingers softly over the strings every heart was hushed, filled with a sense of balmy rest. The lark soaring and singing above his head paused mute and motionless in the still air, and no sound was heard over the spacious plain save the dreamy music. Then the bard struck another key, and a gentle sorrow possessed the hearts of his hearers, and unbidden tears gathered to their eyes. Then, with bolder hand, he swept his fingers across his lyre, and all hearts were moved to joy and pleasant laughter, and eyes that had been dimmed by tears sparkled as brightly as running waters dancing in the sun. When the last notes had died away a cheer arose, loud as the voice of the storm in the glen when the live thunder is reveling on the mountain tops. As soon as the bard had descended the mound the Skald from the northern lands took his place, greeted by cries of welcome from a hundred thousand throats. He touched his harp, and in the perfect silence was heard the strain of the mermaid's song, and through it the pleasant ripple of summer waters on the pebbly beach. Then the theme was changed, and on the air was borne the measured sweep of countless oars and the swish of waters around the prows of contending galleys, and the breezy voices of the sailors and the sea-bird's cry. Then his theme was changed to the mirth and laughter of the banquet-hall, the clang of meeting drinking-horns, and songs of battle. When the last strain ended, from the mighty host a great shout went up, loud as the roar of winter billows breaking in the hollows of the shore; and men knew not whom to declare the victor, the chief bard of Erin or the Skald of the northern lands.

In the height of the debate the cry arose that another competitor had ascended the mound, and there standing in view of all was Fergus, the huntsman’s son. All eyes were fastened upon him, but no one looked so eagerly as the princess.

He touched his harp with gentle fingers, and a sound low and soft as a faint summer breeze passing through forest trees stole out, and then was heard the rustle of birds through the branches, and the dreamy murmur of waters lost in deepest woods, and all the fairy echoes whispering when the leaves are motionless in the noonday heat; then followed notes cool and soft as the drip of summer showers on the parched grass, and then the song of the blackbird, sounding as clearly as it sounds in long silent spaces of the evening, and then in one sweet jocund burst the multitudinous voices that hail the breaking of the morn. And the lark, singing and soaring above the minstrel, sank mute and motionless upon his shoulder, and from all the leafy woods the birds came thronging out and formed a fluttering canopy above his head.

When the bard ceased playing no shout arose from the mighty multitude, for the strains of his harp, long after its chords were stilled, held their hearts spellbound.

And when he had passed away from the mound of contest all knew there was no need to declare the victor. And all were glad the comely Fenian champion had maintained the supremacy of the bards of Erin. But there was one heart sad, the heart of the princess; and now she wished more than ever that she had never made her hateful vow.

Other contests went on, but Fergus took no interest in them; and once more he stole away to the forest glade. His heart was sorrowful, for he thought of the great race of the morning, and he knew that he could not hope to compete with the rider of the white steed of the plains. And as he lay beneath the spreading branches during the whole night long his thoughts were not of the victory he had won, but of the princess, who was as far away from him as ever. He passed the night without sleep, and when the morning came he rose and walked aimlessly through the woods.

A deer starting from a thicket reminded him of the happy days of his boyhood, and once more the wish came back to him that he had never left his forest home. As his eyes followed the deer wistfully, suddenly he started in amazement. The deer vanished from view, and in his stead was the wild horse of the mountains.

“I told you I’d do you a good turn,” said the Pooka, “for the kindness you and yours did me on that wild winter’s night. The day is passing. You have no time to lose. The white steed of the plains is coming to the starting-post. Jump on my back, and remember, ‘Faint heart never won fair lady.’”

In half a second Fergus was bestride the Pooka, whose coat of shaggy hair became at once as glossy as silk, and just at the very moment when the king was about to declare there was no steed to compete with the white steed of the plains, the Pooka, with Fergus upon his back, galloped up in front of the royal inclosure. When the people saw the champion a thunderous shout rose up that startled the birds in the skies, and sent them flying to the groves.

And in the ladies’ inclosure was a rustle of many-colored scarves waving in the air. At the striking of the shields the contending steeds rushed from the post with the swiftness of a swallow’s flight. But before the white steed of the plains had gone halfway round, Fergus and the wild horse of the mountains had passed the winning post, greeted by such cheers as had never before been heard on the plains of Tara.

Fergus heard the cheers, but scarcely heeded them, for his heart went out through his eyes that were fastened on the princess, and a wild hope stirred him that his glance was not ungrateful to the loveliest lady of the land.

And the princess was sad and sorry for her vow, for she believed that it was beyond the power of Fergus to bring her a robe of all the colors of the rainbow, so subtly woven as to fit in the palm of her soft, white hand.

That night also Fergus went to the forest, not too sad, because there was a vague hope in his heart that had never been there before. He lay down under the branches, with his feet towards the rustling waters, and the smiles of the princess gilded his slumbers, as the rays of the rising sun gild the glades of the forest; and when the morning came he was scarcely surprised when before him appeared the little old woman with the shuttle he had welcomed on the winter's night.

"You think you have won her already," said the little woman. "And so you have, too; her heart is all your own, and I'm half inclined to think that my trouble will be thrown away, for if you had never a wedding robe to give her, she'd rather have you this minute than all the kings of Erin, or than all the other princes and kings and chieftains in the whole world. But you and your father and mother were kind to me on a wild winter's night, and I'd never see your mother's son without a wedding robe fit for the greatest princess that ever set nations to battle for her beauty. So go and pluck me a handful of wild forest flowers, and I'll weave out of them a wedding robe with all the colors of the rainbow, and one that will be as sweet and as fragrant as the ripe, red lips of the princess herself."

Fergus, with joyous heart, culled the flowers, and brought them to the little old woman.

In the twinkling of an eye she wove with her little shuttle a wedding robe, with all the colors of the rainbow, as light as the fairy dew, as soft as the hand of the princess, as fragrant as her little red mouth, and so small that it would pass through the eye of a needle.

“Go now, Fergus,” said she, “and may luck go with you; but, in the days of your greatness and of the glory which will come to you when you are wedded to the princess, be as kind, and have as open a heart and as open a door for the poor as you had when you were only a poor huntsman’s son.”

Fergus took the robe and went towards Tara. It was the last day of the fair, and all the contests were over, and the bards were about to chant the farewell strains to the memory of the great queen. But before the chief bard could ascend the mound, Fergus, attended by a troop of Fenian warriors on their steeds, galloped into the inclosure, and rode up in front of the queen’s pavilion. Holding up the glancing and many-colored robe, he said:

“O Queen and King of Erin! I claim the princess for my bride. You, O king, have decided that I have won the prize in the contest of the bards; that I have won the prize in the race against the white steed of the plains; it is for the princess to say if the robe which I give her will fit in the hollow of her small white hand.”

“Yes,” said the king. “You are victor in the contests; let the princess declare if you have fulfilled the last condition.”

The princess took the robe from Fergus, closed her fingers over it, so that no vestige of it was seen.

“Yes, O king!” said she, “he has fulfilled the last condition; but before ever he had fulfilled a single one of them, my heart went out to the comely champion of the Feni. I was willing then, I am ready now, to become the bride of the huntsman’s son.”

5

THE FAIRY TREE OF DOOROS

Once upon a time the fairies of the west, going home from a hurling-match with the fairies of the lakes, rested in Dooros Wood for three days and three nights. They spent the days feasting and the nights dancing in the light of the moon, and they danced so hard that they wore the shoes off their feet, and for a whole week after the leprechauns, the fairies' shoemakers, were working night and day making new ones, and the rip, rap, tap, tap of their little hammers were heard in all the hedgerows.

The food on which the fairies feasted was little red berries, which were so like those that grow on the rowan tree that if you only looked at them you might mistake one for the other; but the fairy berries grow only in fairyland, and are sweeter than any fruit that grows here in this world, and if an old man, bent and gray, ate one of them, he became young and active and strong again; and if an old woman, withered and wrinkled, ate one of them, she became young and bright and fair; and if a little maiden who was not handsome ate of them, she became lovelier than the flower of beauty.

The fairies guarded the berries as carefully as a miser guards his gold, and whenever they were about to leave fairyland they had to promise in the presence of the king and queen that they would not give a single berry to mortal man, nor allow one to fall upon the earth; for if a single berry fell upon the earth a slender tree of many branches, bearing clusters of berries, would at once spring up, and mortal men might eat of them.

But it chanced that this time they were in Dooros Wood they kept up the feasting and dancing so long, and were so full of joy because of their victory over the lake fairies, that one little, weeny fairy, not much bigger than my finger, lost his head, and dropped a berry in the wood.

When the feast was ended the fairies went back to fairyland, and were at home for more than a week before they knew of the little fellow’s fault, and this is how they came to know of it.

A great wedding was about to come off, and the queen of the fairies sent six of her pages to Dooros Wood to catch fifty butterflies with golden spots on their purple wings, and fifty white without speck or spot, and fifty golden, yellow as the cowslip, to make a dress for herself, and a hundred white, without speck or spot, to make dresses for the bride and bridesmaids.

When the pages came near the wood they heard the most wonderful music, and the sky above them became quite dark, as if a cloud had shut out the sun. They looked up, and saw that the cloud was formed of bees, who in a great swarm were flying towards the wood and humming as they flew. Seeing this they were sore afraid until they saw the bees settling on a single tree, and on looking closely at the tree they saw it was covered with fairy berries.

The bees took no notice of the fairies, and so they were no longer afraid, and they hunted the butterflies until they had captured the full number of various colors. Then they returned to fairyland, and they told the queen about the bees and the berries, and the queen told the king.

The king was very angry, and he sent his heralds to the four corners of fairyland to summon all his subjects to his presence that he might find out without delay who was the culprit.

They all came except the little weeny fellow who dropped the berry, and of course everyone said that it was fear that kept him away, and that he must be guilty.

The heralds were at once sent in search of him, and after a while they found him hiding in a cluster of ferns, and brought him before the king.

The poor little fellow was so frightened that at first he could scarcely speak a word, but after a time he told how he never missed the berry until he had returned to fairyland, and that he was afraid to say anything to anyone about it.

The king, who would hear of no excuse, sentenced the little culprit to be banished into the land of giants beyond the mountains, to stay there for ever and a day unless he could find a giant willing to go to Dooros Wood and guard the fairy tree. When the king had pronounced sentence everyone was very sorry, because the little fellow was a favorite with them all. No fairy harper upon his harp, or piper upon his pipe, or fiddler upon his fiddle, could play half so sweetly as he could play upon an ivy leaf; and when they remembered all the pleasant moonlit nights on which they had danced to his music, and thought that they should never hear or dance to it any more, their little hearts were filled with sorrow. The queen was as sad as any of her subjects, but the king’s word should be obeyed.

When the time came for the little fellow to set out into exile the queen sent her head page to him with a handful of berries. These the queen said he was to offer to the giants, and say at the same time that the giant who was willing to guard the tree could feast on berries just as sweet from morn till night.

As the little fellow went on his way nearly all the fairies followed him to the borders of the land, and when they saw him go up the mountain towards the land of the giants, they all took off their little red caps and waved them until he was out of sight.

On he went walking all day and night, and when the sun rose on the morrow he was on the top of the mountain, and he could see the land of the giants in the valley stretched far below him. Before beginning his descent he turned round for a last glimpse of fairyland; but he could see nothing, for a thick, dark cloud shut it out from view. He was very sad, and tired, and footsore, and as he struggled down the rough mountain side, he could not help thinking of the soft, green woods and mossy pathways of the pleasant land he had left behind him.

When he awoke the ground was trembling, and a noise that sounded like thunder fell on his ears. He looked up and saw coming towards him a terrible giant, with one eye that burned like a live coal in the middle of his forehead; his mouth stretched from ear to ear, his teeth were long and crooked, the skin of his face was as black as night, and his arms and chest were all covered with black, shaggy hair; round his body was an iron band, and hanging from this by a chain was a great club with iron spikes. With one blow of this club he could break a rock into splinters, and fire could not burn him, and water could not drown him, and weapons could not wound him, and there was no way to kill him but by giving him three blows of his own club. And he was so bad-tempered that the other giants called him Sharvan the Surly. When the giant spied the red cap of the little fairy he gave the shout that sounded like thunder. The poor fairy was shaking from head to foot.

“What brought you here?” said the giant.

“Please, Mr. Giant,” said the fairy, “the king of the fairies banished me here, and here I must stay for ever and a day, unless you come and guard the fairy tree in Dooros Wood.”

“Unless what?” roared the giant, and he gave the fairy a touch of his foot that sent the little fellow rolling down head over heels.

The poor fairy lay as if he were dead, and then the giant, feeling sorry for what he had done, took him up gently between his finger and thumb.

“Don’t be frightened, little man,” said he, “and now, tell me all about the tree.”

“It is the tree of the fairy berry that grows in the Wood of Dooros,” said the fairy, “and I have some of the berries with me.”

“Oh, you have, have you?” said the giant. “Let me see them.”

The fairy took three berries from the pocket of his little green coat, and gave them to the giant.

The giant looked at them for a second. He then swallowed the three together, and when he had done so, he felt so happy that he began to shout and dance for joy.

“More, you little thief!” said he. “More, you little — — what’s your name?” said the giant.

“Pinkeen, please, Mr. Giant,” said the fairy, as he gave up all the berries.

The giant shouted louder than before, and his shouts were heard by all the other giants, who came running towards him.

When Sharvan saw them coming, he caught up Pinkeen, and put him in his pocket, that they shouldn’t see him.

“What were you shouting for?” said the giants.

“Because,” said Sharvan, “that rock there fell down on my big toe.”

“You did not shout like a man that was hurt,” said they.

“What is it to you what way I shouted?” said he.

“You might give a civil answer to a civil question,” said they; “but sure you were always Sharvan the Surly;” and they went away.

When the giants were out of sight, Sharvan took Pinkeen out of his wallet.

“Some more berries, you little thief — I mean little Pinkeen,” said he.

“I have not any more,” said Pinkeen; “but if you will guard the tree in Dooros Wood you can feast on them from morn till night.”

“I’ll guard every tree in the wood, if I may do that,” said the giant.

“You’ll have to guard only one,” said Pinkeen.

“How am I to get to it?” said Sharvan.

“You must first come with me towards fairyland,” said the fairy.

“Very well,” said Sharvan; “let us go.” And he took up the fairy and put him into his wallet, and before very long they were on the top of the mountain. Then the giant looked around towards the giants’ land; but a black cloud shut it out from view, while the sun was shining on the valley that lay before him, and he could see away in the distance the green woods and shining waters of fairyland.

It was not long until he reached its borders, but when he tried to cross them his feet stuck to the ground and he could not move a step. Sharvan gave three loud shouts that were heard all over fairyland, and made the trees in the woods tremble, as if the wind of a storm was sweeping over them.

“Oh, please, Mr. Giant, let me out,” said Pinkeen. Sharvan took out the little fellow, who, as soon as he saw he was on the borders of fairyland ran as fast as his legs could carry him, and before he had gone very far he met all the little fairies who, hearing the shouts of the giant, came trooping out from the ferns to see what was the matter. Pinkeen told them it was the giant who was to guard the tree, shouting because he was stuck fast on the borders, and they need have no fear of him. The fairies were so delighted to have Pinkeen back again, that they took him up on their shoulders and carried him to the king’s palace, and all the harpers and pipers and fiddlers marched before him playing the most jocund music that was ever heard. The king and queen were on the lawn in front of the palace when the gay procession came up and halted before them. The queen’s eyes glistened with pleasure when she saw the little favorite, and the king was also glad at heart, but he looked very grave as he said:

“Why have you returned, sirrah?”

Then Pinkeen told his majesty that he had brought with him a giant who was willing to guard the fairy tree.

“And who is he and where is he?” asked the king.

“The other giants called him Sharvan the Surly,” said Pinkeen, “and he is stuck fast outside the borders of fairyland.”

“It is well,” said the king, “you are pardoned.”

When the fairies heard this they tossed their little red caps in the air, and cheered so loudly that a bee who was clinging to a rose-bud fell senseless to the ground.

Then the king ordered one of his pages to take a handful of berries, and to go to Sharvan and show him the way to Dooros Wood. The page, taking the berries with him, went off to Sharvan, whose roaring nearly frightened the poor little fellow to death. But as soon as the giant tasted the berries he got into good humor, and he asked the page if he could remove the spell of enchantment from him.

“I can,” said the page, “and I will if you promise me that you will not try to cross the borders of fairyland.”

“I promise that, with all my heart,” said the giant. “But hurry on, my little man, for there are pins and needles in my legs.”

The page plucked a cowslip, and picking out the five little crimson spots in the cup of it, he flung one to the north, and one to the south, and one to the east, and one to the west, and one up into the sky, and the spell was broken, and the giant’s limbs were free. Then Sharvan and the fairy page set off for Dooros Wood, and it was not long until they came within view of the fairy tree. When Sharvan saw the berries glistening in the sun, he gave a shout so loud and strong that the wind of it blew the little fairy back to fairyland. But he had to return to the wood to tell the giant that he was to stay all day at the foot of the tree ready to do battle with anyone who might come to steal the berries, and that during the night he was to sleep amongst the branches.

“All right,” said the giant, who could scarcely speak, as his mouth was full of berries.

Well, the fame of the fairy-tree spread far and wide, and every day some adventurer came to try if he could carry away some of the berries; but the giant, true to his word, was always on the watch, and not a single day passed on which he did not fight and slay a daring champion, and the giant never received a wound, for fire could not burn him, nor water drown him, nor weapon wound him.

Now, at this time, when Sharvan was keeping watch and ward over the tree, a cruel king was reigning over the lands that looked towards the rising sun. He had slain the rightful king by foul means, and his subjects, loving their murdered sovereign, hated the usurper; but much as they hated him they feared him more, for he was brave and masterful, and he was armed with a helmet and shield which no weapon made by mortal hands could pierce, and he carried always with him two javelins that never missed their mark, and were so fatal that they were called "the shafts of death." The murdered king had two children — a boy, whose name was Niall, and a girl, who was called Rosaleen — that is, little Rose; but no rose that ever bloomed was half as sweet or fresh or fair as she. Cruel as the tyrant king was, he was too afraid of the people to kill the children. He sent the boy adrift on the sea in an open boat, hoping the waves would swallow it; and he got an old witch to cast the spell of deformity over Rosaleen, and under the spell her beauty faded, until at last she became so ugly and wasted that scarcely anyone would speak to her. And, shunned by everyone, she spent her days in the out-houses with the cattle, and every night she cried herself to sleep.

One day, when she was very lonely, a little robin came to pick the crumbs that had fallen about her feet. He appeared so tame that she offered him the bread from her hand, and when he took it she cried with joy at finding that there was one living thing that did not shun her. After this the robin came every day, and he sang so sweetly for her that she almost forgot her loneliness and misery. But once while the robin was with her the tyrant king's daughter, who was very beautiful, passed with her maids of honor, and, seeing Rosaleen, the princess said:

"Oh, there is that horrid ugly thing."

The maids laughed and giggled, and said they had never seen such a fright.

Poor Rosaleen felt as if her heart would break, and when the princess and her maids were out of sight she almost cried her eyes out. When the robin saw her crying he perched on her shoulder and rubbed his little head against her neck and chirruped softly in her ear, and Rosaleen was comforted, for she felt she had at least one friend in the world, although it was only a little robin. But the robin could do more for her than she could dream of. He heard the remark made by the princess, and he saw Rosaleen's tears, and he knew now why she was shunned by everybody, and why she was so unhappy. And that very evening he flew off to Dooros Wood, and called on a cousin of his and told him all about Rosaleen.

"And you want some of the fairy berries, I suppose," said his cousin, Robin of the Wood.

"I do," said Rosaleen's little friend.

"Ah," said Robin of the Wood, "times have changed since you were here last. The tree is guarded now all the day long by a surly giant. He sleeps in the branches during the night, and he breathes upon them and around them every morning, and his breath is poison to bird and bee. There is only one chance open, and if you try that it may cost you your life."

"Then tell me what it is, for I would give a hundred lives for Rosaleen," said her own little robin.

"Well," said Robin of the Wood, "every day a champion comes to battle with the giant, and the giant, before he begins the fight, puts a branch of berries in the iron belt that's around his waist, so that when he feels tired or thirsty he can refresh himself, and there is just a bare chance, while he is fighting, of picking one of the berries from the branch; but if his breath fall on you it is certain death."

"I will take the chance," said Rosaleen's robin.

“Very well,” said the other. And the two birds flew through the wood until they came within sight of the fairy tree. The giant was lying stretched at the foot of it, eating the berries; but it was not long until a warrior came, who challenged him to battle. The giant jumped up, and plucking a branch from the tree stuck it in his belt, and swinging his iron club above his head strode towards the warrior, and the fight began. The robin perched on a tree behind the giant, and watched and waited for his chance; but it was a long time coming, for the berries were in front of the giant’s belt. At last the giant, with one great blow, struck the warrior down, but as he did so he stumbled and fell upon him, and before he had time to recover himself the little robin darted towards him like a flash and picked off one of the berries, and then, as fast as wings could carry him, he flew towards home, and on his way he passed over a troop of warriors on snow-white steeds. All the horsemen except one wore silver helmets and shining mantles of green silk, fastened by brooches of red gold, but the chief, who rode at the head of the troop, wore a golden helmet, and his mantle was of yellow silk, and he looked by far the noblest of them all. When the robin had left the horsemen far behind him he spied Rosaleen sitting outside the palace gates bemoaning her fate. The robin perched upon her shoulder, and almost before she knew he was there he put the berry between her lips, and the taste was so delicious that Rosaleen ate it at once, and that very moment the witch’s withering spell passed away from her, and she became as lovely as the flower of beauty. Just then the warriors on the snow-white steeds came up, and the chief with the mantle of yellow silk and the golden helmet leaped from his horse, and bending his knee before her, said:

“Fairest of all fair maidens, you are surely the daughter of the king of these realms, even though you are without the palace gates, unattended, and wear not royal robes. I am the Prince of the Sunny Valleys.”

“Daughter of a king I am,” said Rosaleen, “but not of the king who rules these realms.”

And saying this she fled, leaving the prince wondering who she could be. The prince then ordered his trumpeters to give notice of his presence outside the palace, and in a few moments the king and all his nobles came out to greet the prince and his warriors, and give them welcome. That night a great feast was spread in the banquet hall, and the Prince of the Sunny Valleys sat by the king, and beside the prince sat the king's beautiful daughter, and then in due order sat the nobles of the court and the warriors who had come with the prince, and on the wall behind each noble and warrior his shield and helmet were suspended, flashing radiance through the room. During the feast the prince spoke most graciously to the lovely lady at his side, but all the time he was thinking of the unknown beauty he had met outside the palace gates, and his heart longed for another glimpse of her. When the feast was ended, and the jeweled drinking-cups had gone merrily around the table, the bards sang, to the accompaniment of harps, the "Courtship of the Lady Eimer," and as they pictured her radiant beauty outshining that of all her maidens, the prince thought that fair as Lady Eimer was there was one still fairer.

When the feast was ended the king asked the prince what brought him into his realms.

"I come," said the prince, "to look for a bride, for it was foretold to me in my own country that here only I should find the lady who is destined to share my throne, and fame reported that in your kingdom are to be found the loveliest maidens in all the world, and I can well believe that," added the prince, "after what I have seen to-day."

When the king's daughter heard this she hung down her head and blushed like a rose, for, of course, she thought the prince was alluding only to herself, as she did not know that he had seen Rosaleen, and she had not heard of the restoration of her beauty.

Before another word could be spoken a great noise and the clang of arms were heard outside the palace. The king and his guests started from their seats and drew their swords, and the bards raised the song of battle; but their voices were stilled and their harps silenced when they saw at the threshold of the banquet hall a battle champion, in whose face they recognized the features of their murdered king.

"'Tis Niall come back to claim his father's throne," said the chief bard. "Long live Niall!"

"Long live Niall!" answered all the others.

The king, white with rage and amazement, turned to the chiefs and nobles of his court, and cried out:

"Is there none loyal enough to drive that intruder from the banquet hall?"

But no one stirred, and no answer was given. Then the king rushed forward alone, but before he could reach the spot where Niall was standing he was seized by a dozen chiefs and at once disarmed.

During this scene the king's daughter had fled frightened; but Rosaleen, attracted by the noise, and hearing her brother's name and the cheers which greeted it, had entered the banquet hall unperceived by anyone. But when her presence was discovered every eye was dazzled with her beauty. Niall looked at her for a second, wondering if the radiant maiden before him could be the little sister he had been separated from for so many years. In another second she was clasped in his arms.

Then the feast was spread again, and Niall told the story of his adventures; and when the Prince of the Sunny Valley asked for the hand of Rosaleen, Niall told his lovely sister to speak for herself. With downcast eyes and smiling lips she said, "yes," and that very day was the gayest and brightest wedding that ever took place, and Rosaleen became the prince's bride.

In her happiness she did not forget the little robin, who was her friend in sorrow. She took him home with her to Sunny Valleys, and every day she fed him with her own hands, and every day he sang for her the sweetest songs that were ever heard in lady’s bower.

6

THE LITTLE WHITE CAT

A long, long time ago, in a valley far away, the giant Trencoss lived in a great castle, surrounded by trees that were always green. The castle had a hundred doors, and every door was guarded by a huge, shaggy hound, with tongue of fire and claws of iron, who tore to pieces anyone who went to the castle without the giant's leave. Trencoss had made war on the King of the Torrents, and, having killed the king, and slain his people, and burned his palace, he carried off his only daughter, the Princess Eileen, to the castle in the valley. Here he provided her with beautiful rooms, and appointed a hundred dwarfs, dressed in blue and yellow satin, to wait upon her, and harpers to play sweet music for her, and he gave her diamonds without number, brighter than the sun; but he would not allow her to go outside the castle, and told her if she went one step beyond its doors, the hounds, with tongues of fire and claws of iron, would tear her to pieces. A week after her arrival, war broke out between the giant and the King of the Islands, and before he set out for battle, the giant sent for the princess, and informed her that on his return he would make her his wife. When the princess heard this she began to cry, for she would rather die than marry the giant who had slain her father.

"Crying will only spoil your bright eyes, my little princess," said Trencoss, "and you will have to marry me whether you like it or no."

He then bade her go back to her room, and he ordered the dwarfs to give her everything she asked for while he was away, and the harpers to play the sweetest music for her. When the princess gained her room she cried as if her heart would break. The long day passed slowly, and the night came, but brought no sleep to Eileen, and in the gray light of the morning she rose and opened the window, and looked about in every direction to see if there were any chance of escape. But the window was ever so high above the ground, and below were the hungry and ever watchful hounds. With a heavy heart she was about to close the window when she thought she saw the branches of the tree that was nearest to it moving. She looked again, and she saw a little white cat creeping along one of the branches.

"Mew!" cried the cat.

"Poor little pussy," said the princess. "Come to me, pussy."

"Stand back from the window," said the cat, "and I will."

The princess stepped back, and the little white cat jumped into the room. The princess took the little cat on her lap and stroked him with her hand, and the cat raised up its back and began to purr.

"Where do you come from, and what is your name?" asked the princess.

"No matter where I come from or what's my name," said the cat. "I am a friend of yours, and I come to help you."

"I never wanted help worse," said the princess.

"I know that," said the cat; "and now listen to me. When the giant comes back from battle and asks you to marry him, say to him you will marry him."

"But I will never marry him," said the princess.

"Do what I tell you," said the cat. "When he asks you to marry him, say to him you will if his dwarfs will wind for you three balls from the fairy dew that lies on the bushes on a misty morning as big as these," said the cat, putting his right forefoot into his ear and taking out three balls — one yellow, one red, and one blue.

"They are very small," said the princess. "They are not much bigger than peas, and the dwarfs will not be long at their work."

"Won't they," said the cat. "It will take them a month and a day to make one, so that it will take three months and three days before the balls are wound; but the giant, like you, will think they can be made in a few days, and so he will readily promise to do what you ask. He will soon find out his mistake, but he will keep his word, and will not press you to marry him until the balls are wound."

"When will the giant come back?" asked Eileen.

"He will return to-morrow afternoon," said the cat.

"Will you stay with me until then?" said the princess. "I am very lonely."

"I cannot stay," said the cat. "I have to go away to my palace on the island on which no man ever placed his foot, and where no man but one shall ever come."

"And where is that island?" asked the princess, "and who is the man?"

"The island is in the far-off seas where vessel never sailed; the man you will see before many days are over; and if all goes well, he will one day slay the giant Trencoss, and free you from his power."

"Ah!" sighed the princess, "that can never be, for no weapon can wound the hundred hounds that guard the castle, and no sword can kill the giant Trencoss."

"There is a sword that will kill him," said the cat; "but I must go now. Remember what you are to say to the giant when he comes home, and every morning watch the tree on which you saw me, and if you see in the branches anyone you like better than yourself," said the cat, winking at the princess, "throw him these three balls and leave the rest to me; but take care not to speak a single word to him, for if you do all will be lost."

"Shall I ever see you again?" asked the princess.

"Time will tell," answered the cat, and, without saying so much as good-by, he jumped through the window on to the tree, and in a second was out of sight.

The morrow afternoon came, and the giant Trencoss returned from battle. Eileen knew of his coming by the furious barking of the hounds, and her heart sank, for she knew that in a few moments she would be summoned to his presence. Indeed, he had hardly entered the castle when he sent for her, and told her to get ready for the wedding. The princess tried to look cheerful, as she answered:

"I will be ready as soon as you wish; but you must first promise me something."

"Ask anything you like, little princess," said Trencoss.

"Well, then," said Eileen, "before I marry you, you must make your dwarfs wind three balls as big as these from the fairy dew that lies on the bushes on a misty morning in summer."

"Is that all?" said Trencoss, laughing. "I shall give the dwarfs orders at once, and by this time to-morrow the balls will be wound, and our wedding can take place in the evening."

"And will you leave me to myself until then?"

"I will," said Trencoss.

"On your honor as a giant?" said Eileen.

"On my honor as a giant," replied Trencoss.

The princess returned to her rooms, and the giant summoned all his dwarfs, and he ordered them to go forth in the dawning of the morn and to gather all the fairy dew lying on the bushes, and to wind three balls — one yellow, one red, and one blue. The next morning, and the next, and the next, the dwarfs went out into the fields and searched all the hedgerows, but they could gather only as much fairy dew as would make a thread as long as a wee girl's eyelash; and so they had to go out morning after morning, and the giant fumed and threatened, but all to no purpose. He was very angry with the princess, and he was vexed with himself that she was so much cleverer than he was, and, moreover, he saw now that the wedding could not take place as soon as he expected.

When the little white cat went away from the castle he ran as fast as he could up hill and down dale, and never stopped until he came to the Prince of the Silver River. The prince was alone, and very sad and sorrowful he was, for he was thinking of the Princess Eileen, and wondering where she could be.

“Mew,” said the cat, as he sprang softly into the room; but the prince did not heed him. “Mew,” again said the cat; but again the prince did not heed him. “Mew,” said the cat the third time, and he jumped up on the prince’s knee.

“Where do you come from, and what do you want?” asked the prince.

“I come from where you would like to be,” said the cat.

“And where is that?” said the prince.

“Oh, where is that, indeed! as if I didn’t know what you are thinking of, and of whom you are thinking,” said the cat; “and it would be far better for you to try and save her.”

“I would give my life a thousand times over for her,” said the prince.

“For whom?” said the cat, with a wink. “I named no name, your highness,” said he.

“You know very well who she is,” said the prince, “if you knew what I was thinking of; but do you know where she is?”

“She is in danger,” said the cat. “She is in the castle of the giant Trencoss, in the valley beyond the mountains.”

“I will set out there at once,” said the prince, “and I will challenge the giant to battle, and will slay him.”

“Easier said than done,” said the cat. “There is no sword made by the hands of man can kill him, and even if you could kill him, his hundred hounds, with tongues of fire and claws of iron, would tear you to pieces.”

“Then, what am I to do?” asked the prince.

“Be said by me,” said the cat. “Go to the wood that surrounds the giant’s castle, and climb the high tree that’s nearest to the window that looks towards the sunset, and shake the branches, and you will see what you will see. Then hold out your hat with the silver plumes, and three balls — one yellow, one red, and one blue — will be thrown into it. And then come back here as fast as you can; but speak no word, for if you utter a single word the hounds will hear you, and you shall be torn to pieces.”

Well, the prince set off at once, and after two days’ journey he came to the wood around the castle, and he climbed the tree that was nearest to the window that looked towards the sunset, and he shook the branches. As soon as he did so, the window opened and he saw the Princess Eileen, looking lovelier than ever. He was going to call out her name, but she placed her fingers on her lips, and he remembered what the cat had told him, that he was to speak no word. In silence he held out the hat with the silver plumes, and the princess threw into it the three balls, one after another, and, blowing him a kiss, she shut the window. And well it was she did so, for at that very moment she heard the voice of the giant, who was coming back from hunting.

The prince waited until the giant had entered the castle before he descended the tree. He set off as fast as he could. He went up hill and down dale, and never stopped until he arrived at his own palace, and there waiting for him was the little white cat.

“Have you brought the three balls?” said he.

“I have,” said the prince.

“Then follow me,” said the cat.

On they went until they left the palace far behind and came to the edge of the sea.

“Now,” said the cat, “unravel a thread of the red ball, hold the thread in your right hand, drop the ball into the water, and you shall see what you shall see."

The prince did as he was told, and the ball floated out to sea, unraveling as it went, and it went on until it was out of sight.

"Pull now," said the cat.

The prince pulled, and, as he did, he saw far away something on the sea shining like silver. It came nearer and nearer, and he saw it was a little silver boat. At last it touched the strand.

"Now," said the cat, "step into this boat and it will bear you to the palace on the island on which no man has ever placed his foot — the island in the unknown seas that were never sailed by vessels made of human hands. In that palace there is a sword with a diamond hilt, and by that sword alone the giant Trencoss can be killed. There also are a hundred cakes, and it is only on eating these the hundred hounds can die. But mind what I say to you: if you eat or drink until you reach the palace of the little cat in the island in the unknown seas, you will forget the Princess Eileen."

"I will forget myself first," said the prince, as he stepped into the silver boat, which floated away so quickly that it was soon out of sight of land.

The day passed and the night fell, and the stars shone down upon the waters, but the boat never stopped. On she went for two whole days and nights, and on the third morning the prince saw an island in the distance, and very glad he was; for he thought it was his journey's end, and he was almost fainting with thirst and hunger. But the day passed and the island was still before him.

At long last, on the following day, he saw by the first light of the morning that he was quite close to it, and that trees laden with fruit of every kind were bending down over the water. The boat sailed round and round the island, going closer and closer every round, until, at last, the drooping branches almost touched it. The sight of the fruit within his reach made the prince hungrier and thirstier than he was before, and forgetting his promise to the little cat — not to eat anything until he entered the palace in the unknown seas — he caught one of the branches, and, in a moment, was in the tree eating the delicious fruit. While he was doing so the boat floated out to sea and soon was lost to sight; but the prince, having eaten, forgot all about it, and, worse still, forgot all about the princess in the giant's castle. When he had eaten enough he descended the tree, and, turning his back on the sea, set out straight before him. He had not gone far when he heard the sound of music, and soon after he saw a number of maidens playing on silver harps coming towards him. When they saw him they ceased playing, and cried out:

"Welcome! welcome! Prince of the Silver River, welcome to the island of fruits and flowers. Our king and queen saw you coming over the sea, and they sent us to bring you to the palace."

The prince went with them, and at the palace gates the king and queen and their daughter Kathleen received him, and gave him welcome. He hardly saw the king and queen, for his eyes were fixed on the Princess Kathleen, who looked more beautiful than a flower. He thought he had never seen anyone so lovely, for, of course, he had forgotten all about poor Eileen pining away in her castle prison in the lonely valley. When the king and queen had given welcome to the prince a great feast was spread, and all the lords and ladies of the court sat down to it, and the prince sat between the queen and the Princess Kathleen, and long before the feast was finished he was over head and ears in love with her. When the feast was ended the queen ordered the ballroom to be made ready, and when night fell the dancing began, and was kept up until the morning star, and the prince danced all night with the princess, falling deeper and deeper in love with her every minute. Between dancing by night and feasting by day weeks went by. All the time poor Eileen in the giant's castle was counting the hours, and all this time the dwarfs were winding the balls, and a ball and a half were already wound. At last the prince asked the king and queen for their daughter in marriage, and they were delighted to be able to say yes, and the day was fixed for the wedding. But on the evening before the day on which it was to take place the prince was in his room, getting ready for a dance, when he felt something rubbing against his leg, and, looking down, who should he see but the little white cat. At the sight of him the prince remembered everything, and sad and sorry he was when he thought of Eileen watching and waiting and counting the days until he returned to save her. But he was very fond of the Princess Kathleen, and so he did not know what to do.

“You can’t do anything to-night,” said the cat, for he knew what the prince was thinking of, “but when morning comes go down to the sea, and look not to the right or the left, and let no living thing touch you, for if you do you shall never leave the island. Drop the second ball into the water, as you did the first, and when the boat comes step in at once. Then you may look behind you, and you shall see what you shall see, and you’ll know which you love best, the Princess Eileen or the Princess Kathleen, and you can either go or stay.”

The prince didn’t sleep a wink that night, and at the first glimpse of the morning he stole from the palace. When he reached the sea he threw out the ball, and when it had floated out of sight, he saw the little boat sparkling on the horizon like a newly-risen star. The prince had scarcely passed through the palace doors when he was missed, and the king and queen and the princess, and all the lords and ladies of the court, went in search of him, taking the quickest way to the sea. While the maidens with the silver harps played sweetest music, the princess, whose voice was sweeter than any music, called on the prince by his name, and so moved his heart that he was about to look behind, when he remembered how the cat had told him he should not do so until he was in the boat. Just as it touched the shore the princess put out her hand and almost caught the prince’s arm, but he stepped into the boat in time to save himself, and it sped away like a receding wave. A loud scream caused the prince to look round suddenly, and when he did he saw no sign of king or queen, or princess, or lords or ladies, but only big green serpents, with red eyes and tongues, that hissed out fire and poison as they writhed in a hundred horrible coils.

The prince, having escaped from the enchanted island, sailed away for three days and three nights, and every night he hoped the coming morning would show him the island he was in search of. He was faint with hunger and beginning to despair, when on the fourth morning he saw in the distance an island that, in the first rays of the sun, gleamed like fire. On coming closer to it he saw that it was clad with trees, so covered with bright red berries that hardly a leaf was to be seen. Soon the boat was almost within a stone's cast of the island, and it began to sail round and round until it was well under the bending branches. The scent of the berries was so sweet that it sharpened the prince's hunger, and he longed to pluck them; but, remembering what had happened to him on the enchanted island, he was afraid to touch them. But the boat kept on sailing round and round, and at last a great wind rose from the sea and shook the branches, and the bright, sweet berries fell into the boat until it was filled with them, and they fell upon the prince's hands, and he took up some to look at them, and as he looked the desire to eat them grew stronger, and he said to himself it would be no harm to taste one; but when he tasted it the flavor was so delicious he swallowed it, and, of course, at once he forgot all about Eileen, and the boat drifted away from him and left him standing in the water.

He climbed on to the island, and having eaten enough of the berries, he set out to see what might be before him, and it was not long until he heard a great noise, and a huge iron ball knocked down one of the trees in front of him, and before he knew where he was a hundred giants came running after it. When they saw the prince they turned towards him, and one of them caught him up in his hand and held him up that all might see him. The prince was nearly squeezed to death, and seeing this the giant put him on the ground again.

“Who are you, my little man?” asked the giant.

“I am a prince,” replied the prince.

“Oh, you are a prince, are you?” said the giant. “And what are you good for?” said he.

The prince did not know, for nobody had asked him that question before.

“I know what he’s good for,” said an old giantess, with one eye in her forehead and one in her chin. “I know what he’s good for. He’s good to eat.”

When the giants heard this they laughed so loud that the prince was frightened almost to death.

“Why,” said one, “he wouldn’t make a mouthful.”

“Oh, leave him to me,” said the giantess, “and I’ll fatten him up; and when he is cooked and dressed he will be a nice dainty dish for the king.”

The giants, on this, gave the prince into the hands of the old giantess. She took him home with her to the kitchen, and fed him on sugar and spice and all things nice, so that he should be a sweet morsel for the king of the giants when he returned to the island. The poor prince would not eat anything at first, but the giantess held him over the fire until his feet were scorched, and then he said to himself it was better to eat than to be burnt alive.

Well, day after day passed, and the prince grew sadder and sadder, thinking that he would soon be cooked and dressed for the king; but sad as the prince was, he was not half as sad as the Princess Eileen in the giant’s castle, watching and waiting for the prince to return and save her.

And the dwarfs had wound two balls, and were winding a third.

At last the prince heard from the old giantess that the king of the giants was to return on the following day, and she said to him:

“As this is the last night you have to live, tell me if you wish for anything, for if you do your wish will be granted.”

"I don't wish for anything," said the prince, whose heart was dead within him.

"Well, I'll come back again," said the giantess, and she went away.

The prince sat down in a corner, thinking and thinking, until he heard close to his ear a sound like "purr, purr!" He looked around, and there before him was the little white cat.

"I ought not to come to you," said the cat; "but, indeed, it is not for your sake I come. I come for the sake of the Princess Eileen. Of course, you forgot all about her, and, of course, she is always thinking of you. It's always the way —

Favored lovers may forget,
Slighted lovers never yet."

The prince blushed with shame when he heard the name of the princess.

"'Tis you that ought to blush," said the cat; "but listen to me now, and remember, if you don't obey my directions this time you'll never see me again, and you'll never set your eyes on the Princess Eileen. When the old giantess comes back tell her you wish, when the morning comes, to go down to the sea to look at it for the last time. When you reach the sea you will know what to do. But I must go now, as I hear the giantess coming." And the cat jumped out of the window and disappeared.

"Well," said the giantess, when she came in, "is there anything you wish?"

"Is it true I must die to-morrow?" asked the prince.

"It is."

"Then," said he, "I should like to go down to the sea to look at it for the last time."

“You may do that,” said the giantess, “if you get up early.”

“I’ll be up with the lark in the light of the morning,” said the prince.

“Very well,” said the giantess, and, saying “good night,” she went away.

The prince thought the night would never pass, but at last it faded away before the gray light of the dawn, and he sped down to the sea. He threw out the third ball, and before long he saw the little boat coming towards him swifter than the wind. He threw himself into it the moment it touched the shore. Swifter than the wind it bore him out to sea, and before he had time to look behind him the island of the giantess was like a faint red speck in the distance. The day passed and the night fell, and the stars looked down, and the boat sailed on, and just as the sun rose above the sea it pushed its silver prow on the golden strand of an island greener than the leaves in summer. The prince jumped out, and went on and on until he entered a pleasant valley, at the head of which he saw a palace white as snow.

As he approached the central door it opened for him. On entering the hall he passed into several rooms without meeting with anyone; but, when he reached the principal apartment, he found himself in a circular room, in which were a thousand pillars, and every pillar was of marble, and on every pillar save one, which stood in the centre of the room, was a little white cat with black eyes. Ranged round the wall, from one door-jamb to the other, were three rows of precious jewels. The first was a row of brooches of gold and silver, with their pins fixed in the wall and their heads outwards; the second a row of torques of gold and silver; and the third a row of great swords, with hilts of gold and silver. And on many tables was food of all kinds, and drinking horns filled with foaming ale.

While the prince was looking about him the cats kept on jumping from pillar to pillar; but seeing that none of them jumped on to the pillar in the centre of the room, he began to wonder why this was so, when, all of a sudden, and before he could guess how it came about, there right before him on the center pillar was the little white cat.

“Don’t you know me?” said he.

“I do,” said the prince.

“Ah, but you don’t know who I am. This is the palace of the Little White Cat, and I am the King of the Cats. But you must be hungry, and the feast is spread.”

Well, when the feast was ended, the King of the Cats called for the sword that would kill the giant Trencoss, and the hundred cakes for the hundred watch-dogs.

The cats brought the sword and the cakes and laid them before the king.

“Now,” said the king, “take these; you have no time to lose. To-morrow the dwarfs will wind the last ball, and to-morrow the giant will claim the princess for his bride. So you should go at once; but before you go take this from me to your little girl.”

And the king gave him a brooch lovelier than any on the palace walls.

The king and the prince, followed by the cats, went down to the strand, and when the prince stepped into the boat all the cats “mewed” three times for good luck, and the prince waved his hat three times, and the little boat sped over the waters all through the night as brightly and as swiftly as a shooting star. In the first flush of the morning it touched the strand. The prince jumped out and went on and on, up hill and down dale, until he came to the giant’s castle. When the hounds saw him they barked furiously, and bounded towards him to tear him to pieces. The prince flung the cakes to them, and as each hound swallowed his cake he fell dead. The prince then struck his shield three times with the sword which he had brought from the palace of the little white cat.

When the giant heard the sound he cried out:

“Who comes to challenge me on my wedding-day?”

The dwarfs went out to see, and, returning, told him it was a prince who challenged him to battle.

The giant, foaming with rage, seized his heaviest iron club, and rushed out to the fight. The fight lasted the whole day, and when the sun went down the giant said:

“We have had enough of fighting for the day. We can begin at sunrise to-morrow.”

“Not so,” said the prince. “Now or never; win or die.”

“Then take this,” cried the giant, as he aimed a blow with all his force at the prince’s head; but the prince, darting forward like a flash of lightning, drove his sword into the giant’s heart, and, with a groan, he fell over the bodies of the poisoned hounds.

When the dwarfs saw the giant dead they began to cry and tear their hair. But the prince told them they had nothing to fear, and he bade them go and tell the Princess Eileen he wished to speak with her. But the princess had watched the battle from her window, and when she saw the giant fall she rushed out to greet the prince, and that very night he and she and all the dwarfs and harpers set out for the Palace of the Silver River, which they reached the next morning, and from that day to this there never has been a gayer wedding than the wedding of the Prince of the Silver River and the Princess Eileen; and though she had diamonds and pearls to spare, the only jewel she wore on her wedding-day was the brooch which the prince had brought her from the Palace of the Little White Cat in the far-off seas.

7

PRINCESS FINOLA AND THE DWARF

A long, long time ago there lived in a little hut in the midst of a bare, brown, lonely moor an old woman and a young girl. The old woman was withered, sour-tempered, and dumb. The young girl was as sweet and as fresh as an opening rosebud, and her voice was as musical as the whisper of a stream in the woods in the hot days of summer. The little hut, made of branches woven closely together, was shaped like a beehive. In the center of the hut a fire burned night and day from year's end to year's end, though it was never touched or tended by human hand. In the cold days and nights of winter it gave out light and heat that made the hut cozy and warm, but in the summer nights and days it gave out light only. With their heads to the wall of the hut and their feet towards the fire were two sleeping-couches — one of plain woodwork, in which slept the old woman; the other was Finola's. It was of bog-oak, polished as a looking-glass, and on it were carved flowers and birds of all kinds, that gleamed and shone in the light of the fire. This couch was fit for a princess, and a princess Finola was, though she did not know it herself.

Outside the hut the bare, brown, lonely moor stretched for miles on every side, but towards the east it was bounded by a range of mountains that looked to Finola blue in the daytime, but which put on a hundred changing colors as the sun went down. Nowhere was a house to be seen, nor a tree, nor a flower, nor sign of any living thing. From morning till night, nor hum of bee, nor song of bird, nor voice of man, nor any sound fell on Finola's ear. When the storm was in the air the great waves thundered on the shore beyond the mountains, and the wind shouted in the glens; but when it sped across the moor it lost its voice, and passed as silently as the dead. At first the silence frightened Finola, but she got used to it after a time, and often broke it by talking to herself and singing.

The only other person beside the old woman Finola ever saw was a dumb dwarf who, mounted on a broken-down horse, came once a month to the hut, bringing with him a sack of corn for the old woman and Finola. Although he couldn't speak to her, Finola was always glad to see the dwarf and his old horse, and she used to give them cake made with her own white hands. As for the dwarf he would have died for the little princess, he was so much in love with her, and often and often his heart was heavy and sad as he thought of her pining away in the lonely moor.

It chanced that he came one day, and she did not, as usual, come out to greet him. He made signs to the old woman, but she took up a stick and struck him, and beat his horse and drove him away; but as he was leaving he caught a glimpse of Finola at the door of the hut, and saw that she was crying. This sight made him so very miserable that he could think of nothing else but her sad face that he had always seen so bright, and he allowed the old horse to go on without minding where he was going. Suddenly he heard a voice saying: "It is time for you to come."

The dwarf looked, and right before him, at the foot of a green hill, was a little man not half as big as himself, dressed in a green jacket with brass buttons, and a red cap and tassel.

"It is time for you to come," he said the second time; "but you are welcome, anyhow. Get off your horse and come in with me, that I may touch your lips with the wand of speech, that we may have a talk together."

The dwarf got off his horse and followed the little man through a hole in the side of a green hill. The hole was so small that he had to go on his hands and knees to pass through it, and when he was able to stand he was only the same height as the little fairyman. After walking three or four steps they were in a splendid room, as bright as day. Diamonds sparkled in the roof as stars sparkle in the sky when the night is without a cloud. The roof rested on golden pillars, and between the pillars were silver lamps, but their light was dimmed by that of the diamonds. In the middle of the room was a table, on which were two golden plates and two silver knives and forks, and a brass bell as big as a hazelnut, and beside the table were two little chairs covered with blue silk and satin.

"Take a chair," said the fairy, "and I will ring for the wand of speech."

The dwarf sat down, and the fairyman rang the little brass bell, and in came a little weeny dwarf no bigger than your hand.

"Bring me the wand of speech," said the fairy, and the weeny dwarf bowed three times and walked out backwards, and in a minute he returned, carrying a little black wand with a red berry at the top of it, and, giving it to the fairy, he bowed three times and walked out backwards as he had done before.

The little man waved the rod three times over the dwarf, and struck him once on the right shoulder and once on the left shoulder, and then touched his lips with the red berry, and said: "Speak!"

The dwarf spoke, and he was so rejoiced at hearing the sound of his own voice that he danced about the room.

"Who are you at all, at all?" said he to the fairy.

"Who is yourself?" said the fairy. "But come, before we have any talk let us have something to eat, for I am sure you are hungry."

Then they sat down to table, and the fairy rang the little brass bell twice, and the weeny dwarf brought in two boiled snails in their shells, and when they had eaten the snails he brought in a dormouse, and when they had eaten the dormouse he brought in two wrens, and when they had eaten the wrens he brought in two nuts full of wine, and they became very merry, and the fairyman sang “Cooleen dhas,” and the dwarf sang “The little blackbird of the glen.”

“Did you ever hear the ‘Foggy Dew’?” said the fairy.

“No,” said the dwarf.

“Well, then, I’ll give it to you; but we must have some more wine.”

And the wine was brought, and he sang the “Foggy Dew,” and the dwarf said it was the sweetest song he had ever heard, and that the fairyman’s voice would coax the birds off the bushes.

“You asked me who I am?” said the fairy.

“I did,” said the dwarf.

“And I asked you who is yourself?”

“You did,” said the dwarf.

“And who are you, then?”

“Well, to tell the truth, I don’t know,” said the dwarf, and he blushed like a rose.

“Well, tell me what you know about yourself.”

“I remember nothing at all,” said the dwarf, “before the day I found myself going along with a crowd of all sorts of people to the great fair of the Liffey. We had to pass by the king’s palace on our way, and as we were passing the king sent for a band of jugglers to come and show their tricks before him. I followed the jugglers to look on, and when the play was over the king called me to him, and asked me who I was and where I came from. I was dumb then, and couldn’t answer; but even if I could speak I could not tell him what he wanted to know, for I remembered nothing of myself before that day. Then the king asked the jugglers, but they knew nothing about me, and no one knew anything, and then the king said he would take me into his service; and the only work I have to do is to go once a month with a bag of corn to the hut in the lonely moor.”

“And there you fell in love with the little princess,” said the fairy, winking at the dwarf.

The poor dwarf blushed twice as much as he had done before.

“You need not blush,” said the fairy; “it is a good man’s case. And now tell me, truly, do you love the princess, and what would you give to free her from the spell of enchantment that is over her?”

“I would give my life,” said the dwarf.

“Well, then, listen to me,” said the fairy. “The Princess Finola was banished to the lonely moor by the king, your master. He killed her father, who was the rightful king, and would have killed Finola, only he was told by an old sorceress that if he killed her he would die himself on the same day, and she advised him to banish her to the lonely moor, and she said she would fling a spell of enchantment over it, and that until the spell was broken Finola could not leave the moor. And the sorceress also promised that she would send an old woman to watch over the princess by night and by day, so that no harm should come to her; but she told the king that he himself should select a messenger to take food to the hut, and that he should look out for someone who had never seen or heard of the princess, and whom he could trust never to tell anyone anything about her; and that is the reason he selected you.”

“Since you know so much,” said the dwarf, “can you tell me who I am, and where I came from?”

“You will know that time enough,” said the fairy. “I have given you back your speech. It will depend solely on yourself whether you will get back your memory of who and what you were before the day you entered the king’s service. But are you really willing to try and break the spell of enchantment and free the princess?”

“I am,” said the dwarf.

“Whatever it will cost you?”

“Yes, if it cost me my life,” said the dwarf; “but tell me, how can the spell be broken?”

“Oh, it is easy enough to break the spell if you have the weapons,” said the fairy.

“And what are they, and where are they?” said the dwarf.

“The spear of the shining haft and the dark blue blade and the silver shield,” said the fairy. “They are on the farther bank of the Mystic Lake in the Island of the Western Seas. They are there for the man who is bold enough to seek them. If you are the man who will bring them back to the lonely moor you will only have to strike the shield three times with the haft, and three times with the blade of the spear, and the silence of the moor will be broken for ever, the spell of enchantment will be removed, and the princess will be free.”

“I will set out at once,” said the dwarf, jumping from his chair.

“And whatever it cost you,” said the fairy, “will you pay the price?”

“I will,” said the dwarf.

“Well, then, mount your horse, give him his head, and he will take you to the shore opposite the Island of the Mystic Lake. You must cross to the island on his back, and make your way through the water-steeds that swim around the island night and day to guard it; but woe betide you if you attempt to cross without paying the price, for if you do the angry water-steeds will rend you and your horse to pieces. And when you come to the Mystic Lake you must wait until the waters are as red as wine, and then swim your horse across it, and on the farther side you will find the spear and shield; but woe betide you if you attempt to cross the lake before you pay the price, for if you do, the black Cormorants of the Western Seas will pick the flesh from your bones.”

“What is the price?” said the dwarf.

“You will know that time enough,” said the fairy; “but now go, and good luck go with you.”

The dwarf thanked the fairy, and said good-by. He then threw the reins on his horse’s neck, and started up the hill, that seemed to grow bigger and bigger as he ascended, and the dwarf soon found that what he took for a hill was a great mountain. After traveling all the day, toiling up by steep crags and heathery passes, he reached the top as the sun was setting in the ocean, and he saw far below him out in the waters the island of the Mystic Lake.

He began his descent to the shore, but long before he reached it the sun had set, and darkness, unpierced by a single star, dropped upon the sea. The old horse, worn out by his long and painful journey, sank beneath him, and the dwarf was so tired that he rolled off his back and fell asleep by his side.

He awoke at the breaking of the morning, and saw that he was almost at the water’s edge. He looked out to sea, and saw the island, but nowhere could he see the water-steeds, and he began to fear he must have taken a wrong course in the night, and that the island before him was not the one he was in search of. But even while he was so thinking he heard fierce and angry snortings, and, coming swiftly from the island to the shore, he saw the swimming and prancing steeds. Sometimes their heads and manes only were visible, and sometimes, rearing, they rose half out of the water, and, striking it with their hoofs, churned it into foam, and tossed the white spray to the skies. As they approached nearer and nearer their snortings became more terrible, and their nostrils shot forth clouds of vapor. The dwarf trembled at the sight and sound, and his old horse, quivering in every limb, moaned piteously, as if in pain. On came the steeds, until they almost touched the shore, then rearing, they seemed about to spring on to it. The frightened dwarf turned his head to fly, and as he did so he heard the twang of a golden harp, and right before him who should he see but the little man of the hills, holding a harp in one hand and striking the strings with the other.

“Are you ready to pay the price?” said he, nodding gayly to the dwarf.

As he asked the question, the listening water-steeds snorted more furiously than ever.

“Are you ready to pay the price?” said the little man a second time.

A shower of spray, tossed on shore by the angry steeds, drenched the dwarf to the skin, and sent a cold shiver to his bones, and he was so terrified that he could not answer.

“For the third and last time, are you ready to pay the price?” asked the fairy, as he flung the harp behind him and turned to depart.

When the dwarf saw him going he thought of the little princess in the lonely moor, and his courage came back, and he answered bravely:

“Yes, I am ready.”

The water-steeds, hearing his answer, and snorting with rage, struck the shore with their pounding hoofs.

“Back to your waves!” cried the little harper; and as he ran his fingers across his lyre, the frightened steeds drew back into the waters.

“What is the price?” asked the dwarf.

“Your right eye,” said the fairy; and before the dwarf could say a word, the fairy scooped out the eye with his finger, and put it into his pocket.

The dwarf suffered most terrible agony; but he resolved to bear it for the sake of the little princess. Then the fairy sat down on a rock at the edge of the sea, and, after striking a few notes, he began to play the “Strains of Slumber.”

The sound crept along the waters, and the steeds, so ferocious a moment before, became perfectly still. They had no longer any motion of their own, and they floated on the top of the tide like foam before a breeze.

“Now,” said the fairy, as he led the dwarf’s horse to the edge of the tide.

The dwarf urged the horse into the water, and once out of his depth, the old horse struck out boldly for the island. The sleeping water-steeds drifted helplessly against him, and in a short time he reached the island safely, and he neighed joyously as his hoofs touched solid ground.

The dwarf rode on and on, until he came to a bridle-path, and following this, it led him up through winding lanes, bordered with golden furze that filled the air with fragrance, and brought him to the summit of the green hills that girdled and looked down on the Mystic Lake. Here the horse stopped of his own accord, and the dwarf's heart beat quickly as his eye rested on the lake, that, clipped round by the ring of hills, seemed in the breezeless and sunlit air —

As still as death.
And as bright as life can be.

After gazing at it for a long time, he dismounted, and lay at his ease in the pleasant grass. Hour after hour passed, but no change came over the face of the waters, and when the night fell sleep closed the eyelids of the dwarf.

The song of the lark awoke him in the early morning, and, starting up, he looked at the lake, but its waters were as bright as they had been the day before.

Towards midday he beheld what he thought was a black cloud sailing across the sky from east to west. It seemed to grow larger as it came nearer and nearer, and when it was high above the lake he saw it was a huge bird, the shadow of whose outstretched wings darkened the waters of the lake; and the dwarf knew it was one of the Cormorants of the Western Seas. As it descended slowly, he saw that it held in one of its claws a branch of a tree larger than a full-grown oak, and laden with clusters of ripe red berries. It alighted at some distance from the dwarf, and, after resting for a time, it began to eat the berries and to throw the stones into the lake, and wherever a stone fell a bright red stain appeared in the water. As he looked more closely at the bird the dwarf saw that it had all the signs of old age, and he could not help wondering how it was able to carry such a heavy tree.

Later in the day, two other birds, as large as the first, but younger, came up from the west and settled down beside him. They also ate the berries, and throwing the stones into the lake it was soon as red as wine.

When they had eaten all the berries, the young birds began to pick the decayed feathers off the old bird and to smooth his plumage. As soon as they had completed their task, he rose slowly from the hill and sailed out over the lake, and dropping down on the waters, dived beneath them. In a moment he came to the surface, and shot up into the air with a joyous cry, and flew off to the west in all the vigor of renewed youth, followed by the other birds.

When they had gone so far that they were like specks in the sky, the dwarf mounted his horse and descended towards the lake.

He was almost at the margin, and in another minute would have plunged in, when he heard a fierce screaming in the air, and before he had time to look up, the three birds were hovering over the lake.

The dwarf drew back frightened.

The birds wheeled over his head, and then, swooping down, they flew close to the water, covering it with their wings, and uttering harsh cries.

Then, rising to a great height, they folded their wings and dropped headlong, like three rocks, on the lake, crashing its surface, and scattering a wine-red shower upon the hills.

Then the dwarf remembered what the fairy told him, that if he attempted to swim the lake, without paying the price, the three Cormorants of the Western Seas would pick the flesh off his bones. He knew not what to do, and was about to turn away, when he heard once more the twang of the golden harp, and the little fairy of the hills stood before him.

“Faint heart never won fair lady,” said the little harper. “Are you ready to pay the price? The spear and shield are on the opposite bank, and the

Princess Finola is crying this moment in the lonely moor."

At the mention of Finola's name the dwarf's heart grew strong.

"Yes," he said; "I am ready — win or die. What is the price?"

"Your left eye," said the fairy. And as soon as said he scooped out the eye, and put it in his pocket.

The poor blind dwarf almost fainted with pain.

"It's your last trial," said the fairy, "and now do what I tell you. Twist your horse's mane round your right hand, and I will lead him to the water. Plunge in, and fear not. I gave you back your speech. When you reach the opposite bank you will get back your memory, and you will know who and what you are."

Then the fairy led the horse to the margin of the lake.

"In with you now, and good luck go with you," said the fairy.

The dwarf urged the horse. He plunged into the lake, and went down and down until his feet struck the bottom. Then he began to ascend, and as he came near the surface of the water the dwarf thought he saw a glimmering light, and when he rose above the water he saw the bright sun shining and the green hills before him, and he shouted with joy at finding his sight restored.

But he saw more. Instead of the old horse he had ridden into the lake he was bestride a noble steed, and as the steed swam to the bank the dwarf felt a change coming over himself, and an unknown vigor in his limbs.

When the steed touched the shore he galloped up the hillside, and on the top of the hill was a silver shield, bright as the sun, resting against a spear standing upright in the ground.

The dwarf jumped off, and, running towards the shield, he saw himself as in a looking-glass.

He was no longer a dwarf, but a gallant knight. At that moment his memory came back to him, and he knew he was Conal, one of the Knights of the Red Branch, and he remembered now that the spell of dumbness and deformity had been cast upon him by the Witch of the Palace of the Quicken Trees.

Slinging his shield upon his left arm, he plucked the spear from the ground and leaped on to his horse. With a light heart he swam back over the lake, and nowhere could he see the black Cormorants of the Western Seas, but three white swans floating abreast followed him to the bank. When he reached the bank he galloped down to the sea, and crossed to the shore.

Then he flung the reins upon his horse's neck, and swifter than the wind the gallant horse swept on and on, and it was not long until he was bounding over the enchanted moor. Wherever his hoofs struck the ground, grass and flowers sprang up, and great trees with leafy branches rose on every side.

At last the knight reached the little hut. Three times he struck the shield with the haft and three times with the blade of his spear. At the last blow the hut disappeared, and standing before him was the little princess.

The knight took her in his arms and kissed her; then he lifted her on to the horse, and, leaping up before her, he turned towards the north, to the palace of the Red Branch Knights, and as they rode on beneath the leafy trees from every tree the birds sang out, for the spell of silence over the lonely moor was broken for ever.

19. CHARLES PERRAULT

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood
2. Blue Beard
3. Master Cat; or, Puss in Boots
4. The Fairies
5. Riquet with the Tuft
6. Beauty and the Beast
7. Perfect Love
8. Anguillette
9. Young and Handsome
10. The Palace of Revenge
11. The Prince of Leaves
12. The Fortunate Punishment
13. Fairer than a Fairy
14. The Good Woman
15. Princess Minute and King Floridor
16. The Impossible Enchantment
17. Bleuette and Coquelicot
18. The Princess Camion
19. Princess Lionette and Prince Coquerico
20. The Prince Désir and the Princess Mignone
21. Prince Chéri
22. The Widow and Her Two Daughters
23. Prince Fatal and Prince Fortuné
24. Cinderella
25. Little Thumbling
26. Little Red Ridding Hood

27. Donkey Skin
28. The Ridiculous Wishes

PREFACE

PERRAULT, CHARLES

Charles Perrault (1628-1703) was an author who helped bring about the popularity of the fairy tale by writing down folk tales. He wrote several books and was an advisor for Louis XI, but it’s his contribution to fairy tales that make him a significant literary figure. With his book, *The Tales of Mother Goose,* Perrault immortalized some of the most beloved fairy tales of all time, including such stories as “The Sleeping Beauty” and “Puss in Boots”.

Perrault actually wrote down the fairy tales that would capture the imagination of the world when he was near 70. He died five years later, but left a big legacy. Other folklorists, such as The Brothers Grimm, would retell the same stories around Europe, however, it’s Perrault the French folklorist we have to thank for the ones included in this volume. *The Tales of Mother Goose* was published in 1697, and was originally known as *Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals* (*Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé*). Although we know may know “Mother Goose” as a figure associated with nursery rhymes, the Mother Goose of today came after Perrault’s work.

1

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY IN THE WOOD

There were once a King and Queen, who were very unhappy at not having any children, more unhappy than words can tell. Vows, pilgrimages, everything was tried, but nothing was of any avail; at length, however, a little daughter was born to them.

There was a splendid christening. For godmothers, they gave the young Princess all the fairies they could find in the country—they were seven in number—in order that each making her a gift, according to the custom of fairies in those days, the Princess might, by these means, become possessed of all imaginable perfections. When the ceremony was over, all the company returned to the King's palace, where a great banquet had been prepared for the fairies. The table was magnificently laid for them, and each had placed for her a massive gold case, containing a spoon, a fork, and a knife of fine gold, set with diamonds and rubies.

But as they were all taking their seats, there was seen to enter an old fairy, who had not been invited, for everyone thought that she was either dead or enchanted, as she had not been outside the tower in which she lived for upwards of fifty years. The King ordered a cover to be laid for her, but there was no possibility of giving her a massive gold case, such as the others had, because there had been only seven made expressly for the seven fairies. The old fairy thought she was treated with contempt, and muttered some threats between her teeth. One of the young fairies, who chanced to be near her, overheard her grumblings, and was afraid she might bestow some evil gift on the young Princess. Accordingly, as soon as they rose from table, she went and hid herself behind the hangings, in order to be the last to speak, and so enable herself to repair, as far as possible, any harm the old fairy might have done. Meanwhile the fairies began bestowing their gifts on the Princess. The youngest, as her gift, promised that she should be the most beautiful person in the world; the next fairy, that she should have the mind of an angel; the third, that every movement of hers should be full of grace; the fourth, that she should dance to perfection; the fifth, that she should sing like a nightingale; the sixth, that she should play on every kind of instrument in the most exquisite manner possible. It was now the turn of the old fairy, and she said, while her head shook more with malice than with age, that the Princess should pierce her hand with a spindle, and die of the wound.

The whole company trembled when they heard this terrible prediction, and there was not one among them who did not shed tears. At this moment the young fairy advanced from behind the tapestry, and said, speaking that all might hear,—

"Comfort yourselves, King and Queen; your daughter shall not die of the wound. It is true that I have not sufficient power to undo entirely what my elder has done. The Princess will pierce her hand with a spindle, but, instead of dying, she will only fall into a deep sleep, which will last a hundred years, at the end of which time a king's son will come and wake her."

The King, in the hope of preventing the misfortune foretold by the old fairy, immediately sent forth a proclamation forbidding everyone, on pain of death, either to spin with a spindle, or to have spindles in their possession.

Fifteen or sixteen years had passed, when, the King and Queen being absent at one of their country houses, it happened that the Princess, while running about the castle one day, and up the stairs from one room to the other, came to a little garret at the top of a turret, where an old woman sat alone spinning with distaff and spindle, for this good woman had never heard the King's proclamation forbidding the use of the spindle.

"What are you doing there?" asked the Princess.

"I am spinning, my pretty child," answered the old woman, who did not know who she was.

"Oh, how pretty it is!" exclaimed the Princess. "How do you do it? Give it to me, that I may see if I can do it as well."

She had no sooner taken hold of the spindle, than, being very hasty, and rather thoughtless, and moreover, the fairies having ordained that it should be so, she pierced her hand with the point of it, and fainted away. The poor old woman was in great distress, and called for help. People came running from all quarters; they threw water in the Princess's face, they unlaced her dress, they slapped her hands, they rubbed her temples with Queen of Hungary's water, but nothing would bring her to. The King, who had run upstairs at the noise, then remembered the prediction of the fairies, and wisely concluded that this accident must have happened as the fairies had said it would. He ordered the Princess to be carried into a beautiful room of the palace, and laid on a bed embroidered with silver and gold. One might have thought it was an angel lying there, so lovely did she look, for the rich colours of her complexion had not faded in her swoon; her cheeks were still rosy, and her lips like coral. Only, her eyes were closed, but they could hear her breathing softly, which showed that she was not dead.

The King gave orders that she was to be left to sleep there in quiet, until the hour of her awaking should arrive. The good fairy who had saved her life, by condemning her to sleep for a hundred years, was in the Kingdom of Mataquin, twelve thousand leagues away, when the Princess met with her accident, but she was informed of it instantly by a little dwarf, who had a pair of seven-league boots, that is, boots which enabled the wearer to take seven leagues at a stride.

The fairy set out immediately, and an hour afterwards she was seen arriving in a chariot of fire, drawn by dragons.

The King advanced to hand her out of the chariot. She approved of all he had done, but being gifted with great foresight, she bethought her that the Princess would feel very lost and bewildered on awaking and finding herself all alone in the old castle; so this is what the fairy did. With her wand she touched everybody who was in the castle, except the King and Queen: governesses, maids of honour, women of the bed-chamber, gentlemen, officers, stewards, cooks, scullions, boys, guards, porters, pages, footmen; she also touched the horses that were in the stables with their grooms, the great mastiffs in the courtyard, and little Fluff, the pet dog of the Princess, that was on the bed beside her. As soon as she had touched them, they all fell asleep, not to wake again until the hour arrived for their mistress to do so, in order that they should all be ready to attend upon her as soon as she should want them. Even the spits before the fire, hung with partridges and pheasants, and the very fire itself, went to sleep. All this was done in a moment, for fairies never lost much time over their work.

The King and Queen now kissed their dear daughter, who still slept on, quitted the castle, and issued a proclamation forbidding any person, whosoever, to approach it. These orders were unnecessary, for in a quarter of an hour there grew up around the park such a number of trees, large and small, of brambles and thorns interlacing each other, that neither man nor beast could have got through them, and nothing could be now seen of the castle but the tops of the turrets, and they only from a considerable distance. Nobody doubted that this also was some of the fairy's handiwork, in order that the Princess might be protected from the curiosity of strangers during her long slumber.

When the hundred years had passed away, the son of the King at that time upon the throne, and who was of a different family to that of the sleeping Princess, having been hunting in the neighbourhood, inquired what towers they were that he saw above the trees of a very thick wood. Each person answered him according to the story he had heard. Some said it was an old castle, haunted by ghosts; others, that all the witches of the country held their midnight revels there. The more general opinion, however, was that it was the abode of an ogre, and that he carried thither all the children he could catch, in order to eat them at his leisure, and without being pursued, he alone having the power of making his way through the wood.

The Prince did not know what to believe of all this, when an old peasant spoke in his turn, and said to him, "Prince, it is more than fifty years ago since I heard my father say, that there was in that castle the most beautiful Princess that was ever seen; that she was to sleep for a hundred years, and would be awakened by a king's son, for whom she was intended and was waiting."

The young Prince, at these words, felt himself all on fire. He had not a moment's doubt that he was the one chosen to accomplish this famous adventure, and urged to the deed by love and glory, he resolved, without delay, to see what would come of it.

Scarcely had he approached the wood, when all those great trees, all those brambles and thorns, made way for him to pass of their own accord. He walked towards the castle, which he saw at the end of a long avenue he had entered, and he was somewhat surprised to find that none of his people had been able to follow him, the trees having closed up again as soon as he had passed. Nevertheless, he continued to advance; a young prince, inspired by love, is always courageous. He came to a large fore-court, where everything he saw might well have frozen his blood with terror. A frightful silence reigned around; death seemed everywhere present; on every side, nothing to be seen but the bodies of men and animals stretched out, apparently lifeless. He soon discovered, however, by the shining noses and red faces of the porters, that they were only asleep; and their goblets, in which still remained a few drops of wine, sufficiently proved that they had dozed off whilst drinking.

He next passed through a large courtyard paved with marble, ascended the staircase, and entered the guard-room, where the guards stood, drawn up in line, their carbines shouldered, and snoring their loudest. He traversed several rooms with ladies and gentlemen all asleep, some standing, others seated. At last he came to one covered with gold, and there on a bed, the curtains of which were open on either side, he saw the most lovely sight he had ever looked upon—a Princess, who appeared to be about fifteen or sixteen, and whose dazzling beauty shone with a radiance which scarcely seemed to belong to this world. He approached, trembling and admiring, and knelt down beside her.

At that moment, the enchantment being ended, the Princess awoke, and gazing at him for the first time with unexpected tenderness, "Is it you, Prince?" she said; "I have waited long for you to come." The Prince, delighted at these words, and still more by the tone in which they were uttered, knew not how to express his joy and gratitude. He assured her that he loved her better than himself. His words were rather confused, but she was all the more pleased with them; there was little eloquence, but a great deal of love. He was much more embarrassed than she was, which is not to be wondered at. She had had time to think over what she should say to him, for there is reason to believe, although history does not mention it, that during her long, long sleep, the good fairy had let her enjoy very pleasant dreams. In short, they talked for four hours without having said half what they had to say to each other.

In the meanwhile, all the palace had been roused at the same time as the Princess. Everybody remembered his or her duty, and, as they were not all in love, they were dying with hunger. The lady-in-waiting, as hungry as any of them, became impatient, and announced loudly to the Princess that the meat was on the table. The Prince assisted the Princess to rise; she was fully dressed, and most magnificently, but he was careful not to tell her that she was dressed like his grandmother, and wore a stand-up collar, for, in spite of this, she was not a whit less beautiful.

They passed into a hall of mirrors, where they supped, waited upon by the officers of the Princess. The violins and hautboys played old but charming pieces of music, notwithstanding that it was a hundred years since they had been performed by anybody, and after supper, without loss of time, the grand almoner married the royal lovers in the chapel of the castle.

Early next morning the Prince returned to the city, where he knew his father would be in anxiety about him. The Prince told him that he had lost his way in the forest whilst hunting, and that he had slept in the hut of a woodcutter, who had given him black bread and cheese to eat.

The King, his father, who was a simple-minded man, believed him, but his mother was not so easily satisfied. She noticed that he went hunting nearly every day, and had always some story ready as an excuse, when he had slept two or three nights away from home, and so she felt quite sure that he had a lady-love. More than two years went by and the Princess had two children, the first, which was a girl, was named Aurora, and the second, a son, was called Day, because he was still more beautiful than his sister.

The Queen, hoping to find out the truth from her son, often said to him that he ought to form some attachment, but he never dared to trust her with his secret. Although he loved her, he feared her, for she was of the race of ogres, and the King had only married her on account of her great riches. It was even whispered about the court that she had the inclinations of an ogress, and that when she saw little children passing, it was with the greatest difficulty that she restrained herself from pouncing upon them. The Prince, therefore, would never say one word to her about his affairs.

On the death of the King, however, which took place two years later, the Prince, being now his own master, made a public declaration of his marriage, and went in great state to bring the Queen, his wife, to the palace. She made a magnificent entry into the capital, with her two children, one on either side of her.

Sometime afterwards, the King went to war with his neighbour, the Emperor Cantalabute. He left the Queen, his mother, Regent of the Kingdom, earnestly recommending to her care his wife and children. He was likely to be all summer in the field, and he had no sooner left than the Queen-mother sent her daughter-in-law and the children to a country house in the wood, so that she might more easily gratify her horrible longing. She followed them thither a few days after, and one evening said to her head cook, "I will eat little Aurora for dinner to-morrow." "Ah, madam!" exclaimed the cook. "I will," said the Queen, and she said it in the voice of an ogress longing to eat fresh meat; "and I will have her served with my favourite sauce."

The poor man, seeing plainly that an ogress was not to be trifled with, took his great knife and went up to little Aurora's room. She was then about four years old, and came jumping and laughing to throw her arms about his neck, and ask him for sweetmeats. He burst into tears, and the knife fell from his hands; then he went down again and into the farmyard, and there killed a little lamb which he served up with so delicious a sauce, that his mistress assured him she had never eaten anything so excellent. In the meanwhile, he had carried off little Aurora, and given her to his wife, that she might hide her in the lodging which she occupied at the further end of the farmyard. A week later, the wicked Queen said to her head cook, "I will eat little Day for supper." He made no reply, having decided in his own mind to deceive her as before.

He went in search of little Day, and found him with a tiny foil in his hand, fencing with a great monkey, though he was only three years old. He carried the child to his wife, who hid him where she had hidden his sister, and then cooked a very tender little kid in the place of little Day, which the ogress thought wonderfully good. All had gone well enough so far, but one evening this wicked Queen said to the head cook, "I should like to eat the Queen with the same sauce that I had with the children."

Then the poor cook was indeed in despair, for he did not know how he should be able to deceive her. The young Queen was over twenty years of age, without counting the hundred years she had slept, and no longer such tender food, although her skin was still white and beautiful, and where among all his animals should he find one old enough to take her place?

He resolved at last that, to save his own life, he would kill the Queen, and he went up to her room, determined to carry out his purpose without delay. He worked himself up into a passion, and entered the young Queen's room, dagger in hand. He did not wish, however, to take her by surprise, and so he repeated to her, very respectfully, the order he had received from the Queen-mother. "Do your duty," she said, stretching out her neck to him; "obey the orders that have been given you. I shall again see my children, my poor children, whom I loved so dearly," for she had thought them dead, ever since they had been carried away from her without a word of explanation.

"No, no, madam!" replied the poor cook, touched to the quick, "you shall not die, and you shall see your children again, but it will be in my own house, where I have hidden them; I will again deceive the Queen-mother by serving up to her a young hind in your stead."

He led her forthwith to his own apartments, then, leaving her to embrace her children and weep with them, he went and prepared a hind, which the Queen ate at her supper with as much appetite as if it had been the young Queen. She exulted in her cruelty, and intended to tell the King, on his return, that some ferocious wolves had devoured the Queen, his wife, and her two children.

One evening, while she was prowling, as usual, round the courts and poultry-yards of the castle, to inhale the smell of fresh meat, she overheard little Day crying in one of the lower rooms, because the Queen, his mother, was about to whip him for being naughty, and she also heard little Aurora begging forgiveness for her brother. The ogress recognised the voices of the Queen and her children, and, furious at having been deceived, she gave orders, in a voice that made everybody tremble, that the next morning early there should be brought into the middle of the court a large copper, which she had filled with toads, vipers, adders, and serpents, in order to throw into it the Queen and her children, the head cook, his wife, and his maid-servant. She further commanded that they should be brought thither with their hands tied behind them.

There they stood, and the executioners were preparing to fling them into the copper, when the King, who was not expected back so soon, entered the courtyard on horseback. He had ridden post-haste, and in great astonishment asked what was the meaning of this horrible spectacle? No one dared tell him, when the ogress, enraged at what she saw, flung herself head foremost into the copper, where she was instantly devoured by the horrid reptiles, with which she had herself caused it to be filled. The King could not help being sorry for it; she was his mother; but he quickly consoled himself with his beautiful wife and children.

2

BLUE BEARD

Once upon a time there was a man who had fine houses in town and country, gold and silver plate, embroidered furniture, and coaches gilt all over; but, unfortunately, this man had a blue beard, which made him look so ugly and terrible, that there was not a woman or girl who did not run away from him.

One of his neighbours, a lady of rank, had two daughters, who were perfectly beautiful. He proposed to marry one of them, leaving the mother to choose which of the two she would give him. Neither of the daughters, however, would have him, and they sent him from one to the other, each being unable to make up her mind to marry a man with a blue beard. A further reason which they had for disliking him was, that he had already been married several times, and nobody knew what had become of his wives. Blue Beard, in order to improve the acquaintance, took the girls with their mother, three or four of their most intimate friends, and some other young people who resided in the neighbourhood, to one of his country seats, where they spent an entire week. Nothing was thought of but excursions, hunting and fishing-parties, balls, entertainments, suppers; nobody went to bed; the whole night was passed in games and playing merry tricks on one another. In short, all went off so well, that the youngest daughter began to think that the beard of the master of the house was not so blue as it used to be, and that he was a very worthy man. Immediately upon their return to town the marriage took place.

At the end of a month, Blue Beard told his wife that he was obliged to take a journey, which would keep him away from home for six weeks at least, as he had business of great importance to attend to. He begged her to amuse herself as well as she could during his absence, to invite her best friends, and, if she liked, take them into the country, and wherever she was, to have the best of everything for the table.

"Here," said he to her, "are the keys of my two large store-rooms; these are those of the chests in which the gold and silver plate, not in general use, is kept; these are the keys of the strong boxes in which I keep my money; these open the caskets that contain my jewels, and this is the master-key of all the rooms. As for this little key, it is that of the closet at the end of the long gallery on the ground floor. Open everything, and go everywhere except into that little closet, which I forbid you to enter, and I forbid you so strictly, that if you should venture to open the door, there is nothing that you may not have to dread from my anger!" She promised to obey his orders to the letter, and, after having embraced her, he got into his coach and set out on his journey.

The friends and neighbours of the young bride did not wait for her invitation, so eager were they to see all the rich treasures in the house, and not having ventured to visit her while her husband was at home, so frightened were they at his blue beard. They were soon to be seen running through all the rooms, and into the closets and wardrobes, each one more beautiful and splendid than the last. Then they went upstairs to the store-rooms; there they could not sufficiently express their admiration at the number and beauty of the hangings, the beds, the sofas, the cabinets, the elegant little stands, the tables, the mirrors in which they could see themselves from head to foot, framed some with glass, some with silver, some with gilt metal, all of a costliness beyond what had ever before been seen. They never ceased enlarging upon, and envying, the good fortune of their friend, who, meanwhile, took no pleasure in the sight of all these treasures, so great was her longing to go and open the door of the closet on the ground floor. Her curiosity at last reached such a pitch that, without stopping to consider how rude it was to leave her guests, she ran down a little back staircase leading to the closet, and in such haste that she nearly broke her neck two or three times before she reached the bottom. At the door of the closet she paused for a moment, calling to mind her husband's prohibition, and reflecting that some trouble might fall upon her for her disobedience; but the temptation was so strong that she could not resist it. So she took the little key, and with a trembling hand opened the door of the closet.

At first she could distinguish nothing, for the windows were closed; in a few minutes, however, she began to see that the floor was covered with blood, in which was reflected the bodies of several dead women hanging on the walls. These were all the wives of Blue Beard, who had killed them one after another. She was ready to die with fright, and the key, which she had taken out of the lock, fell from her hand.

After recovering her senses a little, she picked up the key, locked the door again, and went up to her room to try and compose herself; but she found it impossible to quiet her agitation.

She now perceived that the key of the closet was stained with blood; she wiped it two or three times, but the blood would not come off. In vain she washed it, and even scrubbed it with sand and free-stone, the stain was still there, for the key was an enchanted one, and there were no means of cleaning it completely; when the blood was washed off one side, it came back on the other.

Blue Beard returned that very evening, and said that he had received letters on the road, telling him that the business on which he was going had been settled to his advantage.

His wife did all she could to make him believe that she was delighted at his speedy return.

The next morning he asked her for his keys again; she gave them to him; but her hand trembled so, that he had not much difficulty in guessing what had happened.

"How comes it," said he, "that the key of the closet is not with the others?"

"I must have left it," she replied, "upstairs on my table."

"Fail not," said Blue Beard, "to give it me presently."

After several excuses, she was obliged to go and fetch the key. Blue Beard having examined it, said to his wife, "Why is there blood on this key?" "I don't know," answered the poor wife, paler than death.

"You don't know!" rejoined Blue Beard; "I know well enough. You must needs go into the closet. Well, madam, you shall go in again, and take your place among the ladies you saw there."

She flung herself at her husband's feet, weeping and begging his pardon, with all the signs of a true repentance at having disobeyed him. Her beauty and sorrow might have melted a rock, but Blue Beard had a heart harder than rock.

"You must die, madam," said he, "and at once."

"If I must die," she replied, looking at him with streaming eyes, "give me a little time to say my prayers."

"I give you half a quarter of an hour," answered Blue Beard, "not a minute more."

As soon as she found herself alone, she called her sister, and said to her, "Sister Anne"—for so she was named—"go up, I pray you, to the top of the tower, and see if my brothers are not in sight. They promised they would come to visit me to-day, and if you see them, sign to them to make haste."

Sister Anne mounted to the top of the tower, and the poor unhappy wife called to her from time to time, "Anne! Sister Anne! do you not see anything coming?" and Sister Anne answered her, "I see nothing but the dust turning gold in the sun, and the grass growing green."

Meanwhile, Blue Beard, with a large cutlass in his hand, called out with all his might to his wife, "Come down quickly, or I shall come up there." "One minute more, if you please," replied his wife; and then said quickly in a low voice, "Anne! Sister Anne! do you not see anything coming?" And Sister Anne answered, "I see nothing but the dust turning gold in the sun, and the grass growing green."

"Come down quickly," roared Blue Beard, "or I shall come up there."

"I am coming," answered his wife; and then called "Anne! Sister Anne! do you not see anything coming?"

"I see a great cloud of dust moving this way," said Sister Anne.

"Is it my brothers?"

"Alas! no, sister, only a flock of sheep."

"Will you not come down?" shouted Blue Beard.

"One minute more," replied his wife; and then she cried, "Anne! Sister Anne! do you not see anything coming?"

"I see two horsemen coming this way," she replied, "but they are still a great distance off. Heaven be praised!" she exclaimed a moment afterwards. "They are my brothers! I am making all the signs I can to hasten them."

Blue Beard began to roar so loudly that the whole house shook again. The poor wife went down and threw herself at his feet with weeping eyes and dishevelled hair. "It is of no use," said Blue Beard; "you must die!" Then, taking her by the hair with one hand, and raising the cutlass with the other, he was about to cut off her head.

The poor wife, turning towards him her dying eyes, begged him to give her one short moment to collect herself. "No, no," said he; "commend yourself to heaven," and, lifting his arm... At this moment there was such a loud knocking at the gate that Blue Beard stopped short. It was opened, and two horsemen were immediately seen to enter, who, drawing their swords, ran straight at Blue Beard. He recognised them as the brothers of his wife, one a dragoon, the other a musketeer, and he therefore fled at once, hoping to escape; but they pursued him so closely that they overtook him before he could reach the steps to his door, and, running their swords through his body, left him dead on the spot. The poor wife was almost as dead as her husband, and had not strength to rise and embrace her brothers.

It was found that Blue Beard had left no heirs, and so his widow came into possession of all his property. She employed part of it in marrying her Sister Anne to a man who had long loved her; another part in buying captains' commissions for her two brothers; and with the remainder she married herself to a very worthy man, who made her forget the dreadful time she had passed with Blue Beard.

3

MASTER CAT; OR, PUSS IN BOOTS

A miller bequeathed to his three sons all he possessed of worldly goods, which consisted only of his Mill, his Ass, and his Cat. It did not take long to divide the property, and neither notary nor attorney was called in; they would soon have eaten up the poor little patrimony. The eldest son had the Mill; the second son, the Ass; and the youngest had nothing but the Cat.

The latter was very disconsolate at having such a poor share of the inheritance. "My brothers," said he, "may be able to earn an honest livelihood by entering into partnership; but, as for me, when I have eaten my Cat and made a muff of his skin, I must die of hunger." The Cat, who had heard this speech, although he had not appeared to do so, said to him with a sedate and serious air, "Do not be troubled, master; you have only to give me a bag, and get a pair of boots made for me in which I can go among the bushes, and you will see that you are not left so badly off as you believe." Though his master did not place much reliance on the Cat's words, he had seen him play such cunning tricks in catching rats and mice, when he would hang himself up by the heels, or hide in the flour pretending to be dead, that he was not altogether without hope of being helped by him out of his distress.

As soon as the Cat had what he asked for, he boldly pulled on his boots, and, hanging his bag round his neck, he took the strings of it in his fore-paws, and started off for a warren where there were a great number of rabbits. He put some bran and sow-thistles in his bag, and then, stretching himself out as if he were dead, he waited till some young rabbit, little versed in the wiles of the world, should come and poke his way into the bag, in order to eat what was inside it.

He had hardly laid himself down before he had the pleasure of seeing a young scatterbrain of a rabbit get into the bag, whereupon Master Cat pulled the strings, caught it, and killed it without mercy. Proud of his prey, he went to the palace, and asked to speak to the King. He was ushered upstairs and into the state apartment, and, after making a low bow to the King, he said, "Sire, here is a wild rabbit, which my Lord the Marquis of Carabas—for such was the title he had taken a fancy to give to his master—has ordered me to present, with his duty, to your Majesty."

"Tell your master," replied the King, "that I thank him and am pleased with his gift."

Another day he went and hid himself in the wheat, keeping the mouth of his bag open as before, and as soon as he saw that a brace of partridges had run inside, he pulled the strings, and so took them both. He went immediately and presented them to the King, as he had the rabbits. The King was equally grateful at receiving the brace of partridges, and ordered drink to be given him.

For the next two or three months, the Cat continued in this manner, taking presents of game at intervals to the King, as if from his master. One day, when he knew the King was going to drive on the banks of the river, with his daughter, the most beautiful Princess in the world, he said to his master, "If you will follow my advice, your fortune is made; you have only to go and bathe in a part of the river I will point out to you, and then leave the rest to me."

The Marquis of Carabas did as his Cat advised him, without knowing what good would come of it. While he was bathing, the King passed by, and the Cat began to call out with all his might, "Help! Help! My Lord the Marquis of Carabas is drowning!" Hearing the cry, the King looked out of the coach window, and recognising the Cat who had so often brought him game, he ordered his guards to fly to the help of my Lord the Marquis of Carabas. Whilst they were getting the poor Marquis out of the river, the Cat went up to the royal coach, and told the King that, while his master had been bathing, some robbers had come and carried off his clothes, although he had shouted, "Stop thief," as loud as he could. The rogue had hidden them himself under a large stone. The King immediately ordered the officers of his wardrobe to go and fetch one of his handsomest suits for my Lord the Marquis of Carabas. The King embraced him a thousand times, and as the fine clothes they dressed him in set off his good looks—for he was handsome and well made—the Marquis of Carabas quite took the fancy of the King's daughter, and after he had cast two or three respectful and rather tender glances towards her, she fell very much in love with him. The King insisted upon his getting into the coach, and accompanying them in their drive. The Cat, delighted to see that his plans were beginning to succeed, ran on before, and coming across some peasants who were mowing a meadow, he said to them, "You, good people, who are mowing here, if you do not tell the King that this meadow you are mowing belongs to my Lord the Marquis of Carabas, you shall all be cut in pieces as small as minced meat." The King did not fail to ask the peasants whose meadow it was they were mowing. "It belongs to my Lord the Marquis of Carabas," said they all together, for the Cat's threat had frightened them. "You have a fine property there," said the King to the Marquis of Carabas.

"As you say, sire," responded the Marquis of Carabas, "for it is a meadow which yields an abundant crop every year."

Master Cat, who still kept in advance of the party, came up to some reapers, and said to them, "You, good people, who are reaping, if you do not say that all this corn belongs to my Lord the Marquis of Carabas, you shall all be cut into pieces as small as minced meat."

The King, who passed by a minute afterwards, wished to know to whom belonged all the cornfields he saw. "To my Lord the Marquis of Carabas," repeated the reapers, and the King again congratulated the Marquis on his property.

The Cat, still continuing to run before the coach, uttered the same threat to everyone he met, and the King was astonished at the great wealth of my Lord the Marquis of Carabas. Master Cat at length arrived at a fine castle, the owner of which was an ogre, the richest ogre ever known, for all the lands through which the King had driven belonged to the Lord of this castle. The Cat took care to find out who the ogre was, and what he was able to do; then he asked to speak with him, saying that he did not like to pass so near his castle without doing himself the honour of paying his respects to him. The ogre received him as civilly as an ogre can, and made him sit down.

"I have been told," said the Cat, "that you have the power of changing yourself into all kinds of animals; that you could, for instance, transform yourself into a lion or an elephant."

"'Tis true," said the ogre, abruptly, "and to prove it to you, you shall see me become a lion." The Cat was so frightened when he saw a lion in front of him, that he quickly scrambled up into the gutter, not without difficulty and danger, on account of his boots, which were worse than useless for walking on the tiles. Shortly afterwards, seeing that the ogre had resumed his natural form, the Cat climbed down again, and admitted that he had been terribly frightened. "I have also been assured," said the Cat, "but I cannot believe it, that you have the power besides of taking the form of the smallest animal; for instance, that of a rat, or a mouse; I confess to you I hold this to be utterly impossible." "Impossible!" exclaimed the ogre, "you shall see!" and he immediately changed himself into a mouse, and began running about the floor. The cat no sooner caught sight of it, than he pounced upon it and ate it.

In the meanwhile, the King, seeing the fine castle of the ogre as he was driving past, thought he should like to go inside. The Cat, who heard the noise of the coach rolling over the draw-bridge, ran to meet it, and said to the King, "Your Majesty is welcome to the Castle of my Lord the Marquis of Carabas!"

"How, my Lord Marquis," exclaimed the King, "this castle belongs to you? Nothing could be finer than this courtyard, and all these buildings which surround it. Let us see the inside of it, if you please."

The Marquis handed out the young Princess, and following the King, who led the way upstairs, they entered a grand hall, where they found prepared a magnificent repast, which the ogre had ordered in expectation of some friends, who were to have visited him that very day, but who did not venture to enter when they heard the King was there. The King, as greatly delighted with the excellent qualities of my Lord the Marquis of Carabas as his daughter, who was more than ever in love with him, seeing what great wealth he possessed, said to him, after having drunk five or six bumpers, "It depends entirely on yourself, my Lord Marquis, whether or not you become my son-in-law." The Marquis, making several profound bows, accepted the honour the King offered him, and that same day was married to the Princess. The Cat became a great lord, and never again ran after mice, except for his amusement.

4

THE FAIRIES

There was once a widow who had two daughters. The elder was so like her mother in temper and face, that to have seen the one was to have seen the other. They were both so disagreeable and proud, that it was impossible to live with them. The younger, who was the exact portrait of her father in her kindly and polite ways, was also as beautiful a girl as one could see. As we are naturally fond of those who resemble us, the mother doted on her elder daughter, while for the younger she had a most violent aversion, and made her take her meals in the kitchen and work hard all day. Among other things that she was obliged to do, this poor child was forced to go twice a day to fetch water from a place a mile or more from the house, and carry back a large jug filled to the brim. As she was standing one day by this spring, a poor woman came up to her, and asked the girl to give her some water to drink.

"Certainly, my good woman," she replied, and the beautiful girl at once stooped and rinsed out the jug, and then, filling it with water from the clearest part of the spring, she held it up to the woman, continuing to support the jug, that she might drink with greater comfort. Having drunk, the woman said to her, "You are so beautiful, so good and kind, that I cannot refrain from conferring a gift upon you," for she was really a fairy, who had taken the form of a poor village woman, in order to see how far the girl's kind-heartedness would go. "This gift I make you," continued the fairy, "that with every word you speak, either a flower or a precious stone will fall from your mouth."

The girl had no sooner reached home than her mother began scolding her for being back so late. "I am sorry, mother," said she, "to have been out so long," and as she spoke, there fell from her mouth two roses, two pearls, and two large diamonds. The mother gazed at her in astonishment. "What do I see!" she exclaimed, "Pearls and diamonds seem to be dropping from her mouth! How is this, my daughter?"—it was the first time she had called her *daughter*. The poor child related in all simplicity what had happened, letting fall quantities of diamonds in the course of her narrative. "I must certainly send my other daughter there," said the mother. "Look, Fanchon, see what falls from your sister's mouth when she speaks! Would you not be glad to receive a similar gift? All you have to do, is to go and fetch water from the spring, and if an old woman asks you for some to drink, to give it her nicely and politely." "I should like to see myself going to the spring," answered the rude, cross girl.

"I insist on your going," rejoined the mother, "and that at once."

The elder girl went off, still grumbling; with her she took the handsomest silver bottle she could find in the house.

She had no sooner arrived at the spring, than she saw a lady magnificently dressed walking towards her from the wood, who approached and asked for some water to drink. It was the same fairy who had appeared to the sister, but she had now put on the airs and apparel of a princess, as she wished to see how far this girl's rudeness would go. "Do you think I came here just to draw water for you?" answered the arrogant and unmannerly girl; "I have, of course, brought this silver bottle on purpose for madam to drink from! Well, all I have to say is—drink from it if you like."

"You are scarcely polite," said the fairy, without losing her temper; "however, as you are so disobliging, I confer this gift upon you, that with every word you speak, a snake or a toad shall fall from your mouth."

Directly her mother caught sight of her, she called out, "Well, my daughter!" "Well, my mother!" replied the ill-tempered girl, throwing out as she spoke two vipers and two toads. "Alack!" cried the mother, "what do I see? This is her sister's doing, but I will pay her out for it," and, so saying, she ran towards the younger girl with intent to beat her. The unhappy girl fled from the house, and went and hid herself in a neighbouring forest. The King's son, who was returning from hunting, met her, and seeing how beautiful she was, asked her what she was doing there all alone, and why she was crying. "Alas! sir, my mother has driven me from home." The King's son, seeing five or six pearls and as many diamonds, falling from her mouth as she spoke, asked her to explain how this was, and she told him all her tale. The King's son fell in love with her, and thinking that such a gift as she possessed was worth more than any ordinary dower brought by another, he carried her off to his father's palace, and there married her.

As for her sister, she made herself so hated, that her own mother drove her from the house. The miserable girl, having gone about in vain trying to find someone who would take her in, crept away into the corner of a wood, and there died.

5

RIQUET WITH THE TUFT

Once upon a time there was a Queen who had a son, so ugly and misshapen, that it was doubted for a long time whether his form was really human. A fairy, who was present at his birth, affirmed, nevertheless, that he would be worthy to be loved, as he would have an excellent wit; she added, moreover, that by virtue of the gift she had bestowed upon him, he would be able to impart equal intelligence to the one whom he loved best. All this was some consolation to the poor Queen, who was much distressed at having brought so ugly a little monkey into the world. It is true that the child was no sooner able to speak than he said a thousand pretty things, and that in all his ways there was a certain air of intelligence, with which everyone was charmed. I had forgotten to say that he was born with a little tuft of hair on his head, and so he came to be called Riquet with the Tuft; for Riquet was the family name.

About seven or eight years later, the Queen of a neighbouring kingdom had two daughters. The elder was fairer than the day, and the Queen was so delighted, that it was feared some harm might come to her from her great joy. The same fairy who had assisted at the birth of little Riquet, was present upon this occasion, and in order to moderate the joy of the Queen, she told her that this little Princess would have no gifts of mind at all, and that she would be as stupid as she was beautiful. The Queen was greatly mortified on hearing this, but, shortly after, she was even more annoyed, when her second little daughter was born and proved to be extremely ugly. "Do not distress yourself, madam," said the fairy to her, "your daughter will find compensation, for she will have so much intelligence, that her lack of beauty will scarcely be perceived."

"Heaven send it may be so," replied the Queen; "but are there no means whereby a little more understanding might be given to the elder, who is so lovely?" "I can do nothing for her in the way of intelligence, madam," said the fairy, "but everything in the way of beauty; as, however, there is nothing in my power I would not do to give you comfort, I will bestow on her the power of conferring beauty on any man or woman who shall please her." As these two Princesses grew up, their endowments also became more perfect, and nothing was talked of anywhere but the beauty of the elder, and the intelligence of the younger. It is true that their defects also greatly increased with their years. The younger became uglier every moment, and the elder more stupid every day. She either made no answer when she was spoken to, or else said something foolish. With this she was so clumsy, that she could not even place four pieces of china on a mantelshelf, without breaking one of them, or drink a glass of water, without spilling half of it on her dress. Notwithstanding the attraction of beauty, the younger, in whatever society they might be, nearly always bore away the palm from her sister. At first everyone went up to the more beautiful, to gaze at and admire her; but they soon left her for the cleverer one, to listen to her many pleasant and amusing sayings; and people were astonished to find that in less than a quarter of an hour, the elder had not a soul near her, while all the company had gathered round the younger. The elder, though very stupid, noticed this, and would have given, without regret, all her beauty, for half the sense of her sister. Discreet as she was, the Queen could not help often reproaching her with her stupidity, which made the poor Princess ready to die of grief.

One day, when she had gone by herself into a wood, to weep over her misfortune, she saw approaching her, a little man of very ugly and unpleasant appearance, but magnificently dressed. It was the young Prince Riquet with the Tuft, who, having fallen in love with her from seeing her portraits, which were sent all over the world, had left his father's kingdom that he might have the pleasure of beholding her and speaking to her. Enchanted at meeting her thus alone, he addressed her with all the respect and politeness imaginable. Having remarked, after paying her the usual compliments, that she was very melancholy, he said to her, "I cannot understand, madam, how a person so beautiful as you are can be so unhappy as you appear; for, although I can boast of having seen an infinite number of beautiful people, I can say with truth that I have never seen one whose beauty could be compared with yours."

"You are pleased to say so, sir," replied the Princess, and there she stopped.

"Beauty," continued Riquet, "is so great an advantage, that it ought to take the place of every other, and, possessed of it, I see nothing that can have power to afflict one."

"I would rather," said the Princess, "be as ugly as you are, and have intelligence, than possess the beauty I do, and be so stupid as I am."

"There is no greater proof of intelligence, madam, than the belief that we have it not; it is the nature of that gift, that the more we have, the more we believe ourselves to be without it."

"I do not know how that may be," said the Princess, "but I know well enough that I am very stupid, and that is the cause of the grief that is killing me."

"If that is all that troubles you, madam, I can easily put an end to your sorrow."

"And how would you do that?" said the Princess.

"I have the power, madam," said Riquet with the Tuft, "to give as much intelligence as it is possible to possess, to the person whom I love best; as you, madam, are that person, it will depend entirely upon yourself, whether or not you become gifted with this amount of intelligence, provided that you are willing to marry me."

The Princess was struck dumb with astonishment, and replied not a word.

"I see," said Riquet with the Tuft, "that this proposal troubles you, and I am not surprised, but I will give you a full year to consider it."

The Princess had so little sense, and at the same time was so anxious to have a great deal, that she thought the end of that year would never come; so she at once accepted the offer that was made her. She had no sooner promised Riquet with the Tuft that she would marry him that day twelve months, than she felt herself quite another person to what she had previously been. She found she was able to say whatever she pleased, with a readiness past belief, and of saying it in a clever, but easy and natural manner. She immediately began a sprightly and well-sustained conversation with Riquet with the Tuft, and was so brilliant in her talk, that Riquet with the Tuft began to think he had given her more wit than he had reserved for himself. On her return to the palace, the whole Court was puzzled to account for a change so sudden and extraordinary; for the number of foolish things which they had been accustomed to hear from her, she now made as many sensible and exceedingly witty remarks. All the Court was in a state of joy not to be described. The younger sister alone was not altogether pleased, for, having lost her superiority over her sister in the way of intelligence, she now only appeared by her side as a very unpleasing-looking person.

The King now began to be guided by his elder daughter's advice, and at times even held his Council in her apartments. The news of the change of affairs was spread abroad, and all the young princes of the neighbouring kingdoms exerted themselves to gain her affection, and nearly all of them asked her hand in marriage. She found none of them, however, intelligent enough to please her, and she listened to all of them, without engaging herself to one.

At length arrived a Prince, so rich and powerful, so clever and so handsome, that she could not help listening willingly to his addresses. Her father, having perceived this, told her that he left her at perfect liberty to choose a husband for herself, and that she had only to make known her decision. As the more intelligence we possess, the more difficulty we find in making up our mind on such a matter as this, she begged her father, after having thanked him, to allow her time to think about it.

She went, by chance, to walk in the same wood in which she had met Riquet with the Tuft, in order to meditate more uninterruptedly over what she had to do. While she was walking, deep in thought, she heard a dull sound beneath her feet, as of many persons running to and fro, and busily occupied. Having listened more attentively, she heard one say, "Bring me that saucepan;" another, "Give me that kettle;" another, "Put some wood on the fire." At the same moment the ground opened, and she saw beneath her what appeared to be a large kitchen, full of cooks, scullions, and all sorts of servants necessary for the preparation of a magnificent banquet. There came forth a band of about twenty to thirty cooks, who went and established themselves in an avenue of the wood, at a very long table, and who, each with the larding-pin in his hand and the tail of his fur cap over his ear, set to work, keeping time to a harmonious song.

The Princess, astonished at this sight, asked the men for whom they were working.

"Madam," replied the chief among them, "for Prince Riquet with the Tuft, whose marriage will take place to-morrow." The Princess, still more surprised than she was before, and suddenly recollecting that it was just a twelvemonth from the day on which she had promised to marry Prince

Riquet with the Tuft, was overcome with trouble and amazement. The reason of her not having remembered her promise was, that when she made it she had been a very foolish person, and when she became gifted with the new mind that the Prince had given her, she had forgotten all her follies.

She had not taken another thirty steps, when Riquet with the Tuft presented himself before her, gaily and splendidly attired, like a Prince about to be married. "You see, madam," said he, "I keep my word punctually, and I doubt not that you have come thither to keep yours, and to make me, by the giving of your hand, the happiest of men."

"I confess to you, frankly," answered the Princess, "that I have not yet made up my mind on that matter, and that I do not think I shall ever be able to do so in the way you wish." "You astonish me, madam," said Riquet with the Tuft. "I have no doubt I do," said the Princess; "and assuredly, had I to deal with a stupid person, with a man without intelligence, I should feel greatly perplexed. 'A Princess is bound by her word,' he would say to me, 'and you must marry me, as you have promised to do so.' But as the person to whom I speak is, of all men in the world, the one of greatest sense and understanding, I am certain he will listen to reason. You know that, when I was no better than a fool, I nevertheless could not decide to marry you—how can you expect, now that I have the mind which you have given me, and which renders me much more difficult to please than before, that I should take to-day a resolution which I could not then? If you seriously thought of marrying me, you did very wrong to take away my stupidity, and so enable me to see more clearly than I saw then." "If a man without intelligence," replied Riquet with the Tuft, "who reproached you with your breach of promise, might have a right, as you have just intimated, to be treated with indulgence, why would you, madam, that I should receive less consideration in a matter which affects the entire happiness of my life? Is it reasonable that persons of intellect should be in a worse position than those that have none? Can you assert this—you who have so much, and who so earnestly desired to possess it? But let us come to the point, if you please. Setting aside my ugliness, is there anything in me that displeases you? Are you dissatisfied with my birth, my understanding, my temper, or my manners?"

"Not in the least," replied the Princess; "I admire in you everything you have mentioned."

"If that is so," rejoined Riquet with the Tuft, "I shall soon be happy, as you have it in your power to make me the most pleasing looking of men."

"How can that be done?" asked the Princess.

"It can be done," said Riquet with the Tuft, "if you love me sufficiently to wish that it should be. And, in order, madam, that you should have no doubt about it, know that the same fairy, who, on the day I was born, endowed me with the power to give intelligence to the person I chose, gave you also the power to render handsome the man you should love, and on whom you should wish to bestow this favour."

"If such be the fact," said the Princess, "I wish, with all my heart, that you should become the handsomest and most lovable Prince in the world, and I bestow the gift on you to the fullest extent in my power."

The Princess had no sooner pronounced these words than Riquet with the Tuft appeared to her eyes, of all men in the world, the handsomest, the best made, and most attractive she had ever seen. There are some who assert that it was not the spell of the fairy, but love alone that caused this metamorphosis. They say that the Princess, having reflected on the perseverance of her lover, on his prudence, and on all the good qualities of his heart and mind, no longer saw the deformity of his body, or the ugliness of his features; that his hump appeared to her nothing more than a good-natured shrug of his shoulders, and that instead of noticing, as she had done, how badly he limped, she saw in him only a certain lounging air, which charmed her. They say also that his eyes, which squinted, only seemed to her the more brilliant for this; and that the crookedness of his glance was to her merely expressive of his great love; and, finally, that his great red nose had in it, to her mind, something martial and heroic. However this may be, the Princess promised on the spot to marry him, provided he obtained the consent of the King, her father. The King, having learned that his daughter entertained a great regard for Riquet with the Tuft, whom he knew also to be a very clever and wise Prince, received him with pleasure as his son-in-law. The wedding took place the next morning, as Riquet with the Tuft had foreseen, and according to the orders which he had given a long time before.

6

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

There was once a merchant, who was very, very rich. He had six children, three boys and three girls, and as he was a man of good sense, he spared no expense in order that they might be well educated, and gave them masters of every kind. His daughters were all beautiful, but his youngest one was especially admired, and from the time she was a small child, had been only known and spoken of as "Beauty." The name remained with her as she grew older, which gave rise to a great deal of jealousy on the part of her sisters. The young girl was not only more beautiful than they were, but also kinder and more amiable. The elder daughters gave themselves great airs, for they were overweeningly proud of being so rich, and would not condescend to receive visits from the daughters of other merchants, as they only cared for the society of people in high position. Not a day passed that they did not go to a ball, or a theatre, or for a drive or walk in a fashionable part of the town, and they made fun of their sister, who spent a great part of her time in study. The girls received many offers of marriage from well-to-do merchants, as they were known to be rich, but the two elder ones replied, that they did not intend to marry anyone, unless a duke or an earl could be found for a husband.

Beauty, the youngest, was more polite, and thanked those who asked for her hand, but she was, as she told them, too young as yet, and wished to remain for a few more years as a companion to her father.

Then, all at once, the merchant lost the whole of his fortune; nothing was left to him but a little house, situated far away in the country. He told his children, weeping, that they would be obliged to go and live there, and that, even then, they would have to support themselves by the work of their own hands. His two elder daughters refused to leave the town; they had many admirers, they said, who would be only too glad to marry them, although they were now without fortune. But these young ladies found themselves greatly mistaken, for their admirers did not even care to look at them, now that they were poor. They had made themselves generally disliked, on account of their haughty behaviour. "They do not deserve to be pitied," said everyone; "we are very glad that their pride is humbled; let them go and play the fine lady, keeping sheep." But people spoke differently of Beauty. "We are very sorry," they said, "that she is in trouble; she is such a good girl! she always spoke so kindly to the poor! she was so gentle and courteous!" Several of her suitors, also, still wished to marry her, although she had not a penny, but she told them that she could not think of leaving her father in his distress, and that she intended going with him into the country, to comfort him, and help with the work. Beauty was very unhappy at losing her fortune, but she said to herself, "It is no use crying, tears will not give me back my riches; I must try and be happy without them."

As soon as they were settled in their country house, the merchant and his sons began to till the ground. Beauty rose every morning at four o'clock, and made haste to clean the house and prepare the dinner. She found her duties very painful and fatiguing at first, for she had not been accustomed to do the work of a servant; but in two months' time she had grown stronger, and the activity of her life gave her fresh health and colour. When her day's work was over, she amused herself with reading, or music; sometimes she sat down to her wheel, and sang to her spinning. Meanwhile her two sisters were wearied to death with the dulness of their life; they stayed in bed till ten o'clock, did nothing all day but saunter about, and for their only diversion talked with regret of their former fine clothes and friends. "Look at our young sister," they said to one another; "she is so low-minded and stupid, that she is quite content with her miserable condition."

The good merchant thought differently: he knew that Beauty was better fitted to shine in society than they were; he admired the good qualities of his youngest child, especially her patience, for her sisters, not content with allowing her to do all the work of the house, took every opportunity of insulting her.

The family had lived in this solitude for a year, when a letter arrived for the merchant, telling him that a vessel, on which there was merchandise belonging to him, had arrived safely in port. The two elder girls were nearly out of their minds with joy when they heard this good news, for now they hoped that they should be able to leave the country. They begged their father, ere he departed, to bring them back dresses and capes, head-dresses, and all sorts of odds and ends of fancy attire. Beauty asked for nothing; for, as she thought to herself, all the money that the merchandise would bring in, would not be sufficient to pay for everything that her sisters wished for. "Is there nothing you wish me to buy for you?" her father said to her. "As you are so kind as to think of me," she replied, "I pray you to bring me a rose, for we have not one here." Now Beauty did not really care about the rose, but she had no wish to seem, by her example, to reprove her sisters, who would have said that she did not ask for anything, in order to make herself appear more considerate than they were.

The father left them, but on arriving at his destination, he had to go to law about his merchandise, and after a great deal of trouble, he turned back home as poor as he came. He had not many more miles to go, and was already enjoying, in anticipation, the pleasure of seeing his children again, when, passing on his journey through a large wood, he lost his way. It was snowing hard; the wind was so violent that he was twice blown off his horse, and, as the night was closing in, he was afraid that he would die of cold and hunger, or that he would be eaten by the wolves, that he could hear howling around him. All at once, however, he caught sight of a bright light, which appeared to be some way off, at the further end of a long avenue of trees. He walked towards it, and soon saw that it came from a splendid castle, which was brilliantly illuminated. The merchant thanked God for the help that had been sent him, and hastened towards the castle, but was greatly surprised, on reaching it, to find no one in the courtyard, or about the entrances. His horse, which was following him, seeing the door of a large stable standing open, went in, and finding there some hay and oats, the poor animal, half dead for want of food, began eating with avidity.

The merchant fastened him up in the stable, and went towards the house, but still no one was to be seen; he walked into a large dining-hall, and there he found a good fire, and a table laid for one person, covered with provisions. Being wet to the skin with the rain and snow, he drew near the fire to dry himself, saying, as he did so, "The master of this house, or his servants, will pardon me the liberty I am taking; no doubt they will soon appear." He waited for a considerable time; but when eleven o'clock had struck, and still he had seen no one, he could no longer resist the feeling of hunger, and seizing a chicken, he ate it up in two mouthfuls, trembling the while. Then he took a draught or two of wine, and, his courage returning, he left the dining-hall and made his way through several large rooms magnificently furnished. Finally he came to a room where there was a comfortable bed, and as it was now past midnight, and he was very tired, he made up his mind to shut the door and lie down.

It was ten o'clock next morning before he awoke, when, to his great surprise, he found new clothes put in place of his own, which had been completely spoiled. "This palace must certainly belong to some good fairy," he said to himself, "who, seeing my condition, has taken pity upon me." He looked out of the window; the snow was gone, and he saw instead, bowers of delicious flowers which were a delight to the eye.

He went again into the dining-hall where he had supped the night before, and saw a little table with chocolate upon it. "I thank you, good madam fairy," he said aloud, "for your kindness in thinking of my breakfast."

The merchant, having drunk his chocolate, went out to find his horse; as he passed under a bower of roses, he remembered that Beauty had asked him to bring her one, and he plucked a branch on which several were growing. He had scarcely done so, when he heard a loud roar, and saw coming towards him a Beast, of such a horrible aspect, that he nearly fainted. "You are very ungrateful," said the Beast in a terrible voice; "I received you into my castle, and saved your life, and now you steal my roses, which I care for more than anything else in the world. Death alone can make amends for what you have done; I give you a quarter of an hour, no more, in which to ask forgiveness of God."

The merchant threw himself on his knees, and with clasped hands, said to the Beast, "I pray you, my lord, to forgive me. I did not think to offend you by picking a rose for one of my daughters, who asked me to take it her." "I am not called my lord," responded the monster, "but simply the Beast, I do not care for compliments; I like people to say what they think; so do not think to mollify me with your flattery. But you tell me you have some daughters; I will pardon you on condition that one of your daughters will come of her own free will to die in your place. Do not stop to argue with me; go! and if your daughter refuses to die for you, swear that you will return yourself in three months' time."

The merchant had no intention of sacrificing one of his daughters to this hideous monster, but he thought, "At least I shall have the pleasure of embracing them once more." He swore therefore to return, and the Beast told him that he might go when he liked; "but," added he, "I do not wish you to go from me with empty hands. Go back to the room in which you slept, there you will find a large empty trunk; you may fill it with whatever you please, and I will have it conveyed to your house." With these words the Beast withdrew, and the merchant said to himself, "If I must die, I shall at least have the consolation of leaving my children enough for their daily bread."

He returned to the room where he had passed the night, and finding there a great quantity of gold pieces, he filled the trunk, of which the Beast had spoken, with these, closed it, and remounting his horse, which he found still in the stable, he rode out from the castle, his sadness now as great as had been his joy on entering it. His horse carried him of its own accord along one of the roads through the forest, and in a few hours the merchant was again in his own little house.

His children gathered round him; but instead of finding pleasure in their caresses, he began to weep as he looked upon them. He held in his hand the branch of roses which he had brought for Beauty. "Take them," he said, as he gave them to her, "your unhappy father has paid dearly for them." And then he told his family of the melancholy adventure that had befallen him.

The two elder girls, when they had heard his tale, cried and screamed, and began saying all sorts of cruel things to Beauty, who did not shed a tear. "See what the pride of this wretched little creature has brought us to!" said they. "Why couldn't she ask for wearing apparel as we did? but no, she must needs show herself off as a superior person. It is she who will be the cause of our father's death, and she does not even cry!"

"That would be of little use," replied Beauty. "Why should I cry about my father's death? He is not going to die. Since the monster is willing to accept one of his daughters, I will give myself up to him, that he may vent his full anger upon me; and I am happy in so doing, for by my death I shall have the joy of saving my father, and of proving my love for him."

"No, my sister," said the three brothers, "you shall not die; we will go and find out this monster, and we will either kill him or die beneath his blows." "Do not hope to kill him," said their father to them; "for the Beast is so powerful, that I fear there are no means by which he could be destroyed. My Beauty's loving heart fills mine with gladness, but she shall not be exposed to such a terrible death. I am old, I have but a little while to live; I shall but lose a few years of life, which I regret on your account, and on yours alone, my children."

"I am determined, my father," said Beauty, "that you shall not return to that castle without me; you cannot prevent me following you. Although I am young, life has no great attraction for me, and I would far rather be devoured by the monster than die of the grief which your death would cause me."

In vain the others tried to dissuade her, Beauty persisted in her determination to go to the castle; and her sisters were not sorry about it, for the virtues of their young sister had aroused in them a strong feeling of jealousy.

The merchant was so taken up with grief at losing his daughter, that he quite forgot about the trunk which he had filled with gold pieces, but, to his astonishment, he had no sooner shut himself into his room for the night, than he found it beside his bed. He resolved not to tell his children of his newly-obtained riches, for he knew that his daughters would then wish to return to the town, and he had made up his mind to die where he was in the country. He confided his secret, however, to Beauty, who told him that there had been visitors at the house during his absence, among them two who were in love with her sisters. She begged her father to marry them; for she was so good of heart, that she loved them and freely forgave them all the unkindness they had shown her.

The two hard-hearted girls rubbed their eyes with an onion that they might shed tears on the departure of their father and Beauty; but the brothers wept sincerely, as did also the merchant; Beauty alone would not cry, fearing that it might increase their sorrow. The horse took the road that led to the castle, and as evening fell, it came in view, illuminated as before. Again the horse was the only one in the stable, and once more the merchant entered the large dining-hall, this time with his daughter, and there they found the table magnificently laid for two.

The merchant had not the heart to eat; but Beauty, doing her utmost to appear cheerful, sat down to the table and served him to something. Then she said to herself, "The Beast wants to fatten me before he eats me, since he provides such good cheer."

They had finished their supper, when they heard a great noise, and the merchant, weeping, said farewell to his poor daughter, for he knew it was the Beast. Beauty could not help shuddering when she saw the dreadful shape approaching; but she did her best not to give way to her fear, and when the Beast asked her if it was of her own free will that she had come, she told him, trembling, that it was so. "You are very good, and I am much obliged to you," said the Beast. "Good man, to-morrow morning you will leave, and do not venture ever to come here again." "Good-bye, Beast," replied Beauty, and the Beast immediately retired. "Alas! my daughter," said the merchant, clasping Beauty in his arms, "I am half dead with fright. Listen to me, and leave me here." "No, my father," said Beauty, without faltering. "You will depart to-morrow morning, and you will leave me under Heaven's protection, maybe I shall find pity and help."

They retired to rest, thinking that they would have no sleep that night; but no sooner were they in bed than their eyes closed. In her dreams there appeared to Beauty a lady, who said to her, "I have pleasure in the goodness of your heart, Beauty; your good action in giving your life to save that of your father will not be without its reward." Beauty told her father next morning of her dream, and although it afforded him some consolation, it did not prevent his loud cries of grief when at last he was forced to bid good-bye to his dear daughter.

After his departure, Beauty went back and sat down in the dining-hall, and began weeping herself. She was, however, of a courageous disposition, and so she commended herself to God, and resolved not to be miserable during the short time still left her to live, for she quite thought that the Beast would eat her that evening. In the meanwhile she resolved to walk about and look over the fine castle she was in. She found it impossible not to admire its beauty, but her surprise was great when she came to a door over which was written: Beauty's Room. She hastily opened the door, and was dazzled by the magnificence of the whole apartment; what most attracted her admiration, however, was a large bookcase, a piano, and several books of music.

"He does not wish me to feel dull," she said in a low voice. Then the thought came to her, "If I was only going to live here a day, there would not have been so much provided for my amusement." This thought revived her courage.

She opened the bookcase and there saw a book on which was written in letters of gold:—

"Wish what you like, Command what you will, You alone are Queen and Mistress here."

"Alas!" she murmured, sighing, "I wish for nothing but to see my dear father again, and to know what he is doing at this moment." She had only said this to herself in a low voice, what was her surprise, therefore, when, turning towards a large mirror, she saw her home, and her father, just returned, wearing a sad countenance; her sisters went forward to meet him, and in spite of the expression of sorrow which they tried to assume, it was evident in their faces that they were delighted to have lost their sister. In another minute, the picture had disappeared, and Beauty could not help thinking that the Beast was very kind hearted, and that she had not much to fear from him.

She found the table laid for her at noon, and during her dinner she was entertained with a delightful concert, although no creature was visible.

In the evening, as she was just sitting down to her meal, she heard the sound of the Beast's voice, and could not help shuddering. "Beauty," said the monster to her, "will you allow me to look on while you are eating your supper?" "You are master here," replied Beauty, trembling. "Not so," rejoined the Beast, "it is you who alone are mistress; if I annoy you, you have only to tell me to go, and I will leave you at once. But confess now, you think me very ugly, do you not?" "That is true," said Beauty, "for I cannot tell a lie; but I think you are very kind."

"You are right," said the monster; "but, besides being ugly, I am also stupid; I know, well enough, that I am only a Beast."

"No one is stupid, who believes himself to be wanting in intelligence, it is the fool who is not aware of being without it." "Eat, Beauty," said the monster to her, "and try to find pleasure in your own house; for everything here belongs to you. I should be very sorry if you were unhappy." "You are everything that is kind," said Beauty. "I assure you that your goodness of heart makes me happy; when I think of that, you no longer appear so ugly to me." "Ah, yes!" replied the Beast, "I have a kind heart, but for all that I am a monster." "Many men are more monsters than you," said Beauty; "and I care more for you with your countenance, than for those who with their human face hide a false, corrupt, and ungrateful heart." "If I had sufficient wit," responded the Beast, "I would make you a pretty answer in return for your words; but I am too stupid for that, and all I can say is, that I am very grateful to you."

Beauty ate her supper with a good appetite. She had lost almost all her fear of the monster, but she almost died of fright, when he said, "Beauty, will you be my wife?"

She sat for a while without answering; she was alarmed at the thought of arousing the monster's anger by refusing him. Nevertheless she finally said, trembling, "No, Beast." At this the poor monster sighed, and the hideous sound he made echoed throughout the castle, but Beauty was soon reassured, for the Beast, after sadly bidding her adieu, left the room, turning his head from time to time to look at her again.

A strong feeling of compassion for the Beast came over Beauty when she was left alone. "Alas!" she said, "it is a pity he is so ugly, for he is so good!"

Beauty spent three months in the castle, more or less happily. The Beast paid her a visit every evening, and conversed with her as she ate her supper, showing good sense in his talk, but not what the world deems cleverness. Every day Beauty discovered some fresh good quality in the monster; she grew accustomed to his ugliness, and far from fearing his visit, she would often look at her watch to see if it was nearly nine o'clock, for the Beast always arrived punctually at that hour. There was only one thing which caused distress to Beauty, and that was, that every evening before retiring, the monster asked her if she would be his wife, and always appeared overcome with sorrow at her refusal. One day she said to him, "You grieve me, Beast; I wish it were possible for me to marry you, but I am too truthful to make you believe that such a thing could ever happen; I shall always be your friend, try to be satisfied with that." "I suppose I must," responded the Beast; "I know I am horrible to look upon, but I love you very much. However, I am but too happy that you consent to remain here; promise me that you will never leave me." The colour came into Beauty's face; her mirror had shown her that her father was ill with the grief of losing her, and she was hoping to see him again. "I would promise without hesitation never to leave you," said Beauty to him, "but I do so long to see my father again, that I shall die of sorrow if you refuse me this pleasure." "I would rather die myself," said the monster, "than give you pain; I will send you home to your father, you will stay there, and your poor Beast will die of grief at your absence." "No, no," said Beauty, crying; "I care for you too much to wish to cause your death; I promise to return in a week's time. You have let me see that my sisters are married, and that my brothers have entered the army. My father is all alone, let me remain with him a week." "You shall be with him to-morrow morning, but remember your promise. When you wish to return, you have only to put your ring on the table before going to bed. Farewell, Beauty." The Beast gave his usual sigh as he said these words, and Beauty went to bed feeling troubled at the thought of the sorrow she had caused him. When she awoke the following morning, she found herself at home, and ringing a little bell that stood beside her bed, the maid-servant came in, who gave a loud cry of astonishment at seeing her there. Her father ran in on hearing the cry, and almost died of joy when he found his dear daughter, and they remained clasped in each other's arms for more than a quarter of an hour.

Beauty, after the first transports of joy were over, remembered that she had no clothes with her; but the servant told her that she had just found a trunk in the next room, in which were dresses of gold fabric, trimmed with diamonds. Beauty thanked the kind Beast for his thoughtfulness. She took out the least costly of the dresses, and told the maid to lock the others away again, as she wished to give them to her sisters; but she had no sooner uttered these words, than the trunk disappeared. Her father said to her that the Beast evidently wished her to keep them all for herself, and the trunk and the dresses immediately reappeared.

Beauty dressed herself, and, meanwhile, news of her arrival was sent to her sisters, who came in haste with their husbands. They were both extremely unhappy. The eldest had married a young man who was as handsome as nature could make him, but he was so in love with his own face, that he could think of nothing else from morning to night, and cared nothing for the beauty of his wife. The second had married a very witty and clever man, but he only made use of his ability to put everybody in a bad temper, beginning with his wife.

Her sisters nearly died of envy when they saw Beauty dressed like a princess, and beautiful as the day. In vain she showered caresses upon them, nothing could stifle their jealousy, which only increased when she told them how happy she was.

These two jealous creatures went into the garden, that they might cry more at their ease. They said to one another, "Why should this wretched little thing be happier than we are? Are we not more attractive than she is?"

"Sister," said the eldest one, "an idea has occurred to me: let us try to keep her here over the week. Her stupid old Beast will be enraged at her breaking her word, and perhaps he will devour her." "You are right, sister," replied the other; "to carry out our plan, we must appear very loving and kind to her." And having settled this, they went back to the house and were so affectionate to her, that Beauty cried for joy. When the week drew to a close, the two sisters showed such signs of grief at her departure, and made such lamentation, that she promised to stay till the end of the second one. Beauty, however, reproached herself for the sorrow she would cause her poor Beast, whom she loved with all her heart; and she began to miss him very much. On the tenth night of her absence, she dreamed that she was in the garden of the castle, and that she saw the Beast lying on the grass, apparently dying, and that he reproached her with her ingratitude. Beauty awoke with a start, and wept. "I am indeed wicked," she said, "to behave so ungratefully to a Beast who has been so considerate and kind to me! Is it his fault that he is ugly and that he is not clever? He is good, and that is worth everything else. Why did I refuse to marry him? I should be happier with him than my sisters are with their husbands. It is neither beauty nor wit in a husband which makes a wife happy; it is amiability of character, uprightness and generosity: and the Beast has all these good qualities. I do not love him, but I respect him, and I feel both affection for him, and gratitude. I will not make him unhappy; should I do so, I should reproach myself for it as long as I live."

With these words, Beauty rose, placed her ring on a table, and lay down again. The moment she was in bed, she fell asleep, and when she awoke next morning, she saw with delight that she was back in the Beast's castle. She dressed herself magnificently, in order to please him, and the hours seemed to drag as she waited for nine o'clock to strike; but the hour came, and the Beast did not appear.

Then Beauty began to fear that she had caused his death. She ran through the castle, uttering loud cries, for she was in despair. After having looked everywhere, she remembered her dream, and ran into the garden towards the water, where she had seen him in her sleep. She found the poor Beast stretched on the ground, and unconscious, and she thought he was dead. Forgetting her horror at his appearance, she threw herself upon him, and feeling that his heart was still beating, she fetched some water and threw it over his head. The Beast opened his eyes, and said to Beauty, "You forgot your promise; in my grief at losing you, I determined to let myself die of hunger; but I die happy, since I have had the joy of seeing you once again." "No, my dear Beast, you shall not die," exclaimed Beauty. "You shall live to be my husband; I am yours from this moment, and only yours. Alas! I thought the feeling I had for you was only one of friendship; but now I know, by the grief I feel, that I cannot live without you." Beauty had scarcely uttered these words before she saw the castle suddenly become brilliantly illuminated, while fire-works, music, everything indicated the celebration of some joyful event. She did not gaze long, however, at these splendours, but quickly turned her eyes again towards her dear Beast, the thought of whose danger made her tremble with anxiety. But what was her surprise when she saw that the Beast had disappeared, and that a young and handsome Prince was lying at her feet, who thanked her for having released him from enchantment. Although this Prince was fully worthy of her attention, Beauty, nevertheless, could not help asking what had become of the Beast. "You see him at your feet," said the Prince to her. "A wicked fairy condemned me to remain in the form of a monster, until some fair damsel would consent to marry me, and she forbade me also to betray that I had intelligence. You are the only one who has been kind enough to allow the goodness of my heart to touch yours, and I cannot, even by offering you my crown, acquit myself of obligation to you."

Beauty, agreeably surprised, gave the young Prince her hand, to help him to rise. They passed, side by side, into the castle, and Beauty nearly died of joy, when she found her father and all her family assembled in the dining-hall, the beautiful lady whom she had seen in her dream having transported them thither. "Beauty," said the lady, who was a well-known fairy, "receive the recompense of your noble choice; you preferred virtue to beauty or intelligence, and you therefore deserve to find all these qualities united in one person. You are soon to become a great queen; I trust your exalted position will not destroy your good disposition. As for you," said the fairy, turning to Beauty's sisters, "I know your hearts and all the malice concealed in them. Be turned, therefore, into statues, but preserve your consciousness beneath the stone which will envelop you. You will remain at the entrance of your sister's palace, and I impose no further punishment upon you, than to be the constant witnesses of her happiness. You will not be able to resume your present forms, until you have recognised and confessed your faults, but I greatly fear that you will always remain statues. Pride, anger, greediness, and laziness may be corrected; but nothing short of a miracle can convert the envious and malicious heart." The fairy then gave a tap with her wand, and all those assembled in the dining-hall were immediately transported into the Prince's kingdom. His subjects greeted him with joy; he married Beauty, who lived a long life with him of perfect happiness, for it was founded upon virtue.

7

PERFECT LOVE

In one of those agreeable countries subject to the Empire of the Fairies, reigned the redoubtable Danamo. She was learned in her art, cruel in her deeds, and proud of the honour of being descended from the celebrated Calypso, whose charms had the glory and the power, by detaining the famous Ulysses, to triumph over the prudence of the conquerors of Troy.

She was tall, fierce-looking, and her haughty spirit had with much difficulty been subjected to the rigid laws of Hymen. Love had never been able to reach her heart, but the idea of uniting a flourishing kingdom to that of which she was Queen, and another which she had usurped, had induced her to marry an old monarch, who was one of her neighbours.

He died a few years after his marriage, and left the Queen with one daughter, named Azire. She was exceedingly ugly, but did not appear so in the eyes of Danamo, who thought her charming, perhaps because she was the very image of herself. She was heiress also to three kingdoms, a circumstance which softened down many defects, and her hand was sought in marriage by all the most powerful princes of the adjacent provinces. Their eagerness, joined to the blind affection of Danamo, rendered her vanity insupportable. She was ardently besought — she must, therefore, be worthy of such solicitation. It was thus that the Fairy and the Princess reasoned in their own minds, and enjoyed the pleasure of deceiving themselves. Meanwhile, Danamo thought only of rendering the happiness of the Princess as perfect as she considered was her due, and, with this object, brought up in her palace a young Prince, the son of her brother.

His name was Parcin Parcinet. He had a noble bearing, a graceful figure, a profusion of beautiful fair hair. Love might have been jealous of his power, for that deity had never, amongst his golden-pointed arrows, any so certain to triumph irresistibly over hearts as the fine eyes of Parcin Parcinet. He could do everything well that he chose to undertake — danced and sang to perfection, and bore off all the prizes in the tournament whenever he took the trouble to contend for them.

This young Prince was the delight of the Court, and Danamo, who had her motives for it, made no objection to the homage and admiration which he received.

The King who was the father of Parcinet was the Fairy’s brother. She declared war against him without even seeking for a reason. The King fought valiantly, at the head of his troops; but what could any army effect against the power of so skilful a Fairy as Danamo? She allowed the victory to remain in doubt only long enough for her unfortunate brother to fall in the combat. As soon as he was dead, she dispersed all her enemies with one stroke of her wand, and made herself mistress of the kingdom.

Parcin Parcinet was at that time still in his cradle. They brought him to Danamo. It would have been in vain to attempt hiding him from a Fairy. He already displayed those seductive graces which win the heart. Danamo caressed him, and a few days afterwards took him with her to her own dominions.

The Prince had attained the age of eighteen, when the Fairy, desirous at length of executing the designs which she had so many years contemplated, resolved to marry Parcin Parcinet to the Princess, her daughter. She never for a moment doubted the infinite delight which that young Prince, born to a throne, and condemned by misfortune to remain a subject, would feel at becoming in one day the sovereign of three kingdoms. She sent for the Princess, and revealed to her the choice she had made of a husband for her. The Princess listened to this disclosure with an emotion which caused the Fairy to believe that this resolution in favour of Parcin Parcinet was not agreeable to her daughter. "I see clearly," she said to her, as she perceived her agitation increasing, "that thou hast much more ambition, and wouldst unite with thine own empire that of one of those kings who have so often proposed for thee; but where is the King whom Parcin Parcinet cannot conquer? In courage he surpasses them all. The subjects of so perfect a prince might one day rebel in his favour. In giving thee to him I secure to thee the possession of his kingdom. As to his person, it is unnecessary to speak — thou knowest that the proudest beauties have not been able to resist his charms." The Princess, suddenly flinging herself at the feet of the Fairy, interrupted her discourse, and confessed to her that her heart had not been able to defy the young victor, famous for so many conquests. "But," added she, blushing, "I have given a thousand proofs of my affection to the insensible Parcin Parcinet, and he has received them with a coldness which distracts me." "'Tis because he dares not raise his thoughts so high as thee," replied the haughty Fairy. "He fears, no doubt, to offend me, and I appreciate his respect."

This flattering idea was too agreeable to the inclination and the vanity of the Princess for her not to be persuaded of its truth. The Fairy ended by sending for Parcin Parcinet. He came, and found her in a magnificent cabinet, where she awaited him with the Princess, her daughter. "Call all thy courage to thy assistance," said she to him as soon as he appeared — "not to support affliction, but to prevent being overcome by thy good fortune. Thou art called to a throne, Parcin Parcinet, and to crown thy happiness, thou wilt mount that throne by espousing my daughter." "I, Madam!" exclaimed the young Prince, with an astonishment in which it was easy to perceive that joy had no share, “I espouse the Princess,” continued he, retreating a few paces. “Hah! what deity is meddling with my fate? Why does he not leave the care of it to the only one from whom I implore assistance?”

These words were uttered by the Prince with a vehemence in which his heart took too much part to allow it to be controlled by his prudence. The Fairy imagined that the unhoped-for happiness had driven Parcin Parcinet out of his wits; but the Princess loved him, and love sometimes renders lovers more keen sighted than even wisdom. “From what deity, Parcin Parcinet,” said she to him with emotion, “do you implore assistance so fondly? I feel too deeply that I have no share in the prayers you address to him.” The young Prince, who had had time to recover from his first surprise, and who was conscious of the imprudence he had committed, summoned his brain to the assistance of his heart. He answered the Princess with more gallantry than she had hoped for, and thanked the Fairy with an air of dignity that sufficiently proved him to be worthy not only of the empire that was offered him, but of that of the whole world.

Danamo and her proud daughter were satisfied with his expressions, and they settled everything before they left the apartment, the Fairy deferring the wedding-day a short time, only to give opportunity to all her Court to prepare for this grand solemnity.

The news of the marriage of Parcin Parcinet and Azire was spread throughout the Palace the moment they had quitted the Queen’s cabinet. Crowds came to congratulate the Prince. However unamiable the Princess, it was to high fortune she conducted him. Parcin Parcinet received all these honours with an air of indifference, which surprised his new subjects the more, for that they detected beneath it extreme affliction and anxiety. He was compelled, however, to endure for the rest of the day the eager homage of the whole Court, and the ceaseless demonstrations of affection lavished upon him by Azire.

What a situation for a young Prince, a prey to the keenest anguish. Night seemed to him to have delayed its return a thousand times longer than usual. The impatient Parcin Parcinet prayed for its arrival. It came at length. He quitted precipitately the place in which he had suffered so much. He retired to his own apartments, and, having dismissed his attendants, opened a door which led into the Palace Gardens, and hurried through them, followed only by a young slave.

A beautiful, but not very extensive, river ran at the end of the gardens, and separated from the magnificent Palace of the Fairy a little Château, flanked by four towers, and surrounded by a tolerably deep moat, which was filled by the river aforesaid. It was to this fatal spot that the vows and sighs of Parcin Parcinet were incessantly wafted.

What a miracle was confined in it! Danamo had the treasure carefully guarded within it. It was a young Princess, the daughter of her sister, who, dying, had confided her to the charge of the Fairy. Her beauty, worthy the admiration of the universe, appeared too dangerous to Danamo to allow her to be seen by the side of Azire. Permission was occasionally accorded to the charming Irolite (so was she named), to come to the Palace, to visit the Fairy and the Princess her daughter, but she had never been allowed to appear in public. Her dawning beauties were unknown to the world, but there was one who was not ignorant of them. They had met the eyes of Parcin Parcinet one day at the apartments of the Princess Azire, and he had adored Irolite from the moment that he had seen her. Their near relationship afforded no privilege to that young Prince; from the time Irolite ceased to be an infant the pitiless Danamo suffered no one to behold her.

Nevertheless Parcin Parcinet burned with a flame as ardent as such charms as Irolite’s could not fail to kindle. She was just fourteen. Her beauty was perfect. Her hair was of a charming colour. Without being decidedly dark or fair, her complexion had all the freshness of spring. Her mouth was lovely, her teeth admirable, her smile fascinating. She had large hazel eyes, sparkling and tender, and her glances appeared to say a thousand things which her young heart was ignorant of.

She had been brought up in complete solitude. Near as was the Palace of the Fairy to the Château in which she dwelt, she saw no more persons than she might have seen in the midst of deserts. Danamo's orders to this effect were strictly followed. The lovely Irolite passed her days amongst the women appointed to attend her. They were few in number, but little as were the advantages to be gained in so solitary and circumscribed a Court, Fame, which feared not Danamo, published such wonders of this young Princess, that ladies of the highest rank were eager to share the seclusion of the youthful Irolite. Her appearance confirmed all that Fame had reported. They were always finding some new charm to admire in her.

A governess of great intelligence and prudence, formerly attached to the Princess who was the mother of Irolite, had been allowed to remain with her, and frequently bewailed the rigorous conduct of Danamo towards her young mistress. Her name was Mana. Her desire to restore the Princess to the liberty she was entitled to enjoy, and the position she was born to occupy, had induced her to favour the love of Parcin Parcinet. It was now three years since he had contrived to introduce himself one evening into the Château in the dress of a slave. He found Irolite in the garden, and declared his passion for her. She was then but a charming child. She loved Parcin Parcinet as if he had been her brother, and could not then comprehend the existence of any warmer attachment. Mana, who was rarely absent from the side of Irolite, surprised the young Prince in the garden; he avowed to her his love for the Princess, and the determination he had formed to perish, or to restore her one day to liberty, and then to seek, by a personal appeal to his former subjects, a glorious means of revenging himself on Danamo, and of placing Irolite upon the throne.

The noble qualities which were daily developed in the nature of Parcin Parcinet, might have rendered probable his success in still more difficult undertakings, and it was also the only hope of rescue which offered itself to Irolite. Mana allowed him to visit the Château occasionally after nightfall. He saw Irolite only in her presence, but he spoke to her of his love, and never ceased endeavouring, by tender words and devoted attentions, to inspire her with a passion as ardent as his own. For three years Parcin Parcinet had been occupied solely with this passion. Nearly every night he visited the Château of his Princess, and all his days he passed in thinking of her. We left him on his road through Danamo's gardens, followed by a slave, and absorbed in the despair to which the determination of the Fairy had reduced him. He reached the river's bank: a little gilded boat, moored to the shore, in which Azire sometimes enjoyed an excursion on the water, enabled the enamoured Prince to cross the stream. The slave rowed him over, and as soon as Parcin Parcinet had ascended the silken ladder which was thrown to him from a little terrace that extended along the entire front of the Château, the faithful servant rowed the boat back to its mooring-place, and remained with it there until a signal was made to him by his master. This was the waving, for a few minutes, of a lighted flambeau on the terrace.

This evening the Prince took his usual route, the silken ladder was thrown to him, and he reached, without any obstacle, the apartment of the youthful Irolite. He found her stretched on a couch, and bathed in tears. How beautiful did she appear to him in her affliction. Her charms had never before affected the young Prince so deeply.

"What is the matter, my Princess?" asked he, flinging himself on his knees before the couch on which she lay. "What can have caused these precious tears to flow? Alas!" he continued, sighing, "have I still more misfortunes to learn here?" The young lovers mingled their tears and sighs, and were forced to give full vent to their sorrow before they could find words to declare its cause. At length the young Prince entreated Irolite to tell him what new severity the Fairy had treated her with. "She would compel you to marry Azire," replied the beautiful Irolite, blushing; "which of all her cruelties could cause me so much agony?" "Ah! my dear Princess," exclaimed the Prince, "you fear I shall marry Azire! My lot is a thousand times more happy than I could have imagined it!" "Can you exult in your destiny," sadly rejoined the Princess, "when it threatens to separate us? I cannot express to you the tortures that I suffer from this fear! Ah, Parcin Parcinet, you were right! The love I bear to you is far different from that I should feel for a brother!" The enamoured Prince blessed Fortune for her severities; never before had the young heart of Irolite appeared to him truly touched by love, and now he could no longer doubt having inspired her with a passion as tender as his own. This unlooked-for happiness renewed all his hopes. "No!" he exclaimed with rapture; "I no longer despair of overcoming our difficulties, since I am convinced of your affection. Let us fly, my Princess. Let us escape from the fury of Danamo and her hateful daughter. Let us seek a home more favourable to the indulgence of that love, in which alone consists our happiness!" "How!" rejoined the young Princess with astonishment. "Depart with you! And what would all the kingdom say of my flight?" "Away with such idle fears, beautiful Irolite," interrupted the impatient Parcin Parcinet, "everything urges us to quit this spot. Let us hasten —" "But whither?" asked the prudent Mana, who had been present during the entire interview, and who, less pre-occupied than these young lovers, foresaw all the difficulties in the way of their flight. "I have plans which I will lay before you," answered Parcin Parcinet; "but how did you become so soon acquainted here with the news of the Fairy's Court?" "One of my relatives," replied Mana, "wrote to me the instant that the rumour was circulated through the Palace, and I thought it my duty to inform the Princess." "What have I not suffered since that moment!" said the lovely Irolite. "No, Parcin Parcinet, I cannot live without you!" The young Prince, in a transport of love, and enchanted by these words, imprinted on the beautiful hand of Irolite a passionate and tender kiss, which had all the charms of a first and precious favour. The day began to dawn, and warned Parcinet, too soon, that it was time for him to retire. He promised the Princess he would return the following night to reveal his plans for their escape. He found his faithful slave in waiting with the boat, and returned to his apartments. He was enraptured with the delight of being beloved by the fair Irolite, and agitated by the obstacles which he clearly perceived would have to be surmounted, sleep could neither calm his anxiety, nor make him for one moment forget his happiness.

The morning sun had scarcely lighted his chamber, when a dwarf presented him with a magnificent scarf from the Princess Azire, who in a note, more tender than Parcin Parcinet would have desired, entreated him to wear it constantly from that moment. He returned an answer which it embarrassed him much to compose; but Irolite was to be rescued, and what constraint would he not have himself endured to restore her to liberty. He had no sooner dismissed the dwarf than a giant arrived to present him, from Danamo, with a sabre of extraordinary beauty. The hilt was formed by a single stone, more brilliant than a diamond, and which emitted so dazzling a lustre that it would light the way by night. Upon its blade were engraven these words —

For the hand of a conqueror.

Parcin Parcinet was pleased with this present. He went to thank the Fairy for it, and entered her apartment, wearing the marvellous sabre she had sent him, and the beautiful scarf he had received from Azire. The assurance of Irolite’s affection for him had relieved him from all anxiety, and filled his bosom with that gentle and perfect happiness which is born of mutual love. An air of joy was apparent in all his actions. Azire attributed it to the effect of her own charms, and the Fairy to satisfied ambition. The day passed in entertainments which could not diminish the insupportable length of it to Parcin Parcinet. In the evening they walked in the Palace gardens, and were rowed on that very river with which the Prince was so well acquainted. His heart beat quickly as he stepped into that little boat. What a difference between the pleasure to which it was accustomed to bear him, and the dreary dulness of his present position. Parcin Parcinet could not help casting frequent glances towards the dwelling of the charming Irolite. She did not make her appearance upon the terrace of the Château, for there was an express order that she was not to be permitted to leave her chamber, whenever the Fairy or Azire was on the water. The latter, who narrowly watched all the Prince’s actions, observed that he often looked in that direction. “What are you gazing at, Prince?” said she. “Amidst all the honours that surround you, is the prison of Irolite deserving so much attention?” “Yes, Madam,” replied the Prince, very imprudently, “I feel for those who have not drawn on themselves by their own misconduct the misfortunes they endure.” “You are too compassionate,” replied Azire, contemptuously; “but to relieve your anxiety,” added she, lowering her voice, “I can inform you that Irolite will not long continue a prisoner.” “And what is to become of her, then?” hastily inquired the young Prince. “The Queen will marry her in a few days to Prince Ormond,” answered Azire. “He is, as you know, a kinsman of ours; and, agreeable to the Queen’s intentions, the day after the nuptials he will conduct Irolite to one of his fortresses, from whence she will never return to the Court.” “How!” exclaimed Parcin Parcinet, with extraordinary emotion; “will the Queen bestow that beautiful Princess on so frightful a Prince, and whose vices exceed even his ugliness? What cruelty!” — The latter word escaped his lips despite himself: but he could no longer be false to his courage and his heart. “Methinks it is not for you, Parcin Parcinet,” retorted Azire, haughtily, “to complain of the cruelties of Danamo.”

This conversation would, no doubt, have been carried too far for the young Prince, whose safety lay in dissimulation; when, fortunately for Parcin Parcinet, some of the ladies in waiting on Azire approached her, and a moment afterwards the Fairy having appeared on the bank of the river, Azire signified her desire to rejoin her. On landing, Parcin Parcinet pretended indisposition in order to obtain at least the liberty of lamenting alone his new misfortunes.

The Fairy, and more particularly Azire, testified great anxiety respecting his illness. He returned to his own apartments. There he indulged in a thousand complaints against destiny for the ills it threatened to inflict on the charming Irolite, abandoned himself to all his grief and all his passion, and beginning at length to seek consolation for sufferings so agonizing to a faithful lover, wrote a letter full of the most moving phrases that his affection could dictate, to one of his Aunts, who was a Fairy as well as Danamo, but who found as much pleasure in befriending the unfortunate as Danamo did in making them miserable. Her name was Favourable. The Prince explained to her the cruel situation to which love and fate had reduced him, and not being able to absent himself from the Court of Danamo without betraying the design he had formed, he sent his faithful slave with the letter to Favourable. When every one had retired to rest, he left his apartment as usual, crossed the gardens alone, and stepping into the little boat, took up one of the oars without knowing whether or not he could manage to use it: but what cannot love teach his votaries? He can instruct them in much more difficult matters. He enabled Parcin Parcinet to row with as much skill and rapidity as the most expert waterman. He entered the Château, and was much surprised to find no one but the prudent Mana, weeping bitterly in the Princess's chamber. "What afflicts you, Mana?" asked the Prince, eagerly; "and where is my dear Irolite?" "Alas! my Lord," replied Mana, "she is no longer here. A troop of the Queen's Guards, and some women, in whom she apparently confides, removed the Princess from the Castle about three or four hours ago.”

Parcin Parcinet heard not the last of these sad words. He had sunk insensible on the ground the instant he learned the departure of the Princess. Mana, with great difficulty, restored him to consciousness. He recovered from his swoon only to give way to a sudden paroxysm of fury. He drew a small dagger from his girdle, and had pierced his heart, if the prudent Mana, dragging back his arm as best she could, and falling at the same time on her knees, had not exclaimed — “How, my Lord! would you abandon Irolite? Live to save her from the wrath of Danamo. Alas! without you, how will she find protection from the Fairy’s cruelty?” These words suspended for a moment the despair of the wretched Prince. “Alas!” replied he, shedding tears, which all his courage could not restrain, “whither have they borne my Princess? Yes, Mana! I will live to enjoy at least the sad satisfaction of dying in her defence, and in avenging her on her enemies!” After these words, Mana conjured him to quit the fatal building to avoid fresh misfortunes. “Hasten, Prince,” said she to him; “how know we that the Fairy has not here some spy ready to acquaint her with everything that passes within these walls? Be careful of a life so dear to the Princess whom you adore. I will let you know all that I can contrive to learn respecting her.”

The Prince departed after this promise, and regained his chamber, oppressed with all the grief which so tender and so luckless a passion could inspire. He passed the night on a couch on which he had thrown himself on entering the room. Daybreak surprised him there: and the morning was advanced some hours, when he heard a noise at his chamber door. He ran to it with the eager impatience which we feel when we await tidings in which the heart is deeply interested. He found his people conducting to him, a man who desired to speak with him instantly. He recognised the messenger as one of Mana’s relations, who placed in the hand of Parcin Parcinet a letter which he took with him into his cabinet to read, in order to conceal the emotion its receipt excited in him. He opened it hastily, having observed it was in Mana’s handwriting, and found these words: —

“Mana, to the greatest Prince in the world. Be comforted, my Lord; our Princess is in safety, if such an expression be allowable, so long as she is subjected to the power of her enemy. She requested Danamo to permit my attendance on her, and the Fairy consented that I should rejoin her. She is confined in the Palace. Yesterday evening the Queen caused her to be brought into her cabinet, ordered her to look upon Prince Ormond as one who would be in a few days her husband, and presented to her that Prince so unworthy of being your rival. The Princess was so distressed that she could answer the Queen only by tears. They have not yet ceased to flow. It is for you, my Lord, to find, if possible, some means of escape from the impending calamity.”

At the foot of the letter were the following lines, written with a trembling hand, and some of the words being nearly effaced. “How I pity you, my dear Prince; your sufferings are more terrible to me than my own. I spare your feelings the recital of what I have endured since yesterday. Why was I born to disturb your peace? Alas! had you never known me, perhaps you might have been happy.”

What mingled emotions of joy and grief agitated the heart of the young Prince in reading this postscript. What kisses did he not imprint on this precious token of the love of the divine Irolite! He was so excited that it was with the greatest difficulty in the world that he succeeded in writing a coherent answer. He thanked the prudent Mana; he informed the Princess of the assistance he expected from the Fairy Favourable; and what did he not say to her of his grief or his love! He then took the letter to Mana’s kinsman, and presented him with a clasp set with jewels of inestimable beauty and value, as an earnest of the reward he had deserved, for the pleasure he had given him. Mana’s kinsman had scarcely departed, when the Queen and Princess Azire sent to enquire how the Prince had passed the night. It was easily seen by his countenance that he was not well. He was entreated to return to his bed, and as he felt he should be under less restraint there than in the company of the Fairy, he consented to do so.

After dinner, the Queen came to see him, and spoke to him of the marriage of Irolite and Prince Ormond as of a matter she had decided upon. Parcin Parcinet, who had at length made up his mind to control himself, so as not to awaken suspicions which might frustrate his designs, pretended to approve of the Fairy's intentions, and only requested her to await his perfect recovery, as it was his wish to be present at the festivities which would take place on the occasion of these grand nuptials. The Fairy and Azire, who were in despair about his illness, promised him everything he desired; and Parcin Parcinet thus retarded, for some days at least, the threatened marriage of Irolite. His conversation with Azire, when on the water with her, had hastened the approach of that misfortune to the beautiful Princess he loved so tenderly. Azire had related to the Queen the words of Parcin Parcinet, and the pity he had expressed for Irolite. The Queen, who never paused in the execution of what she had determined on, sent that very evening for Irolite, and decided, in conjunction with Azire, that the marriage of the former should immediately take place, and that her departure should be expedited before Parcin Parcinet was established in the higher authority his match with Azire would invest him with. Before ten days had expired, however, the Prince's faithful slave returned from his mission. With what delight did the Prince discover in the letter Favourable had written to him, the proofs of her compassion and of her friendship for him and for Irolite. She sent him a ring made of four separate metals, gold, silver, brass, and iron. This ring had the power to save him four times from the persecution of the cruel Danamo, and Favourable assured the Prince that the Fairy would not order him to be pursued more often than that ring was able to protect him. These good tidings restored the Prince to health, and he sent with all speed for Mana’s kinsman. He entrusted him with a letter for Irolite, informing her of the success they might hope for. There was no time to be lost. The Queen had determined the wedding of Irolite should take place in three days. That evening there was to be a ball given by the Princess Azire. Irolite was to be present. Parcin Parcinet could not endure the idea of appearing “*en négligé*,” as his recent illness might have permitted him, he dressed himself in the most magnificent style, and looked more brilliant than the sun. He dared not at first speak to the fair Irolite; but what did not their eyes discourse when occasionally, they ventured to glance at each other. Irolite was in the most beautiful costume in the world. The Fairy had presented her with some marvellous jewels, and as she had only four days to remain in the palace, Danamo had resolved, during that short period, to treat her with all due honour. Her beauty, which had hitherto been unadorned, in such splendour, appeared wonderful to the whole court, and, above all, to the enamoured Parcin Parcinet. He even imagined he could read in some joyous flashes of her bright eyes an acknowledgment that she had received his letter. Prince Ormond addressed Irolite frequently; but he was so ill-looking, notwithstanding the gold and jewels with which he was burthened, that he was not a rival worth the jealousy of the young Prince. The ball was nearly over, when Parcin Parcinet, carried away by his love, wished with intense ardour for an opportunity to speak for one moment to his Princess. “Cruel Queen, and thou, also, hateful Azire!” he mentally exclaimed; “will ye still longer deprive me of the delightful pleasure of repeating a thousand times to the beautiful Irolite that I adore her! Jealous witnesses of my happiness, why do ye not quit this spot? Love can only triumph in your absence.” Scarcely had Parcin Parcinet formed this wish, than the Fairy, feeling rather faint, called to Azire, and passed with her into an adjoining apartment, followed by Ormond. Parcin Parcinet had on his finger the ring which the fairy Favourable had sent him, and which had the power to rescue him four times from the persecutions of

Danamo. He should have reserved such certain help for the most pressing necessity; but when did violent love obey the dictates of prudence?

The young Prince was convinced by the sudden departure of the Fairy and Azire, that the ring had begun to favour his love. He flew to the fair Irolite. He spoke to her of his affection in terms more ardent than eloquent. He felt that he had perhaps invoked the spell of Favourable too thoughtlessly; but could he regret an imprudence which obtained for him the sweet gratification of speaking to his dear Irolite? They agreed as to the place and hour at which, the next day, they would meet, to fly from their painful bondage. The Fairy and Azire, after some time, returned to the ball-room. Parcin Parcinet separated with regret from Irolite. He looked at the fatal ring, and perceived that the iron had mixed with the other metals, and was no longer distinguishable, he therefore saw too clearly that he had only three more wishes to make. He resolved to render them more truly serviceable to the Princess than the first had been. He confided the secret of his flight to no one but his faithful slave, and passed the rest of the night in making all the necessary preparations. The next morning he calmly presented himself to the Queen, and appeared even in better spirits than usual. He jested with Prince Ormond on his marriage, and conducted himself in such a manner as to lull all suspicions, had any existed as to his intentions. Two hours after midnight he repaired to the Fairy's Park; he found there his faithful slave, who, in obedience to his master's orders, had brought thither four of his horses. The Prince was not kept long waiting. The lovely Irolite appeared, walking with faltering steps, and leaning upon Mana. The young Princess felt some pain in taking this course. It had needed all the cruelties of Danamo, and all the bad qualities of Ormond, to induce her to do so. Love alone had not sufficed to persuade her.

It was autumn. The night was beautiful, and the moon, with a host of brilliant stars, illuminated the sky, shedding around a more charming light than that of day. The Prince eagerly advanced to meet his beloved, there was no time for long speeches, Parcin Parcinet tenderly kissed the hand of Irolite and assisted her to mount her horse. Fortunately she rode admirably. It was one of the amusements she had taken pleasure in during her captivity. She had frequently ridden with her attendants in a little wood close to the Château she resided in, and of which the Fairy allowed her the range. Parcin Parcinet, after the interchange of a few words with the Princess, mounted his own horse. The other two were for Mana and the faithful slave. The Prince then drawing the brilliant sabre he had received from the Fairy, swore on it to adore the beautiful Irolite as long as he should live, and to die, if it were necessary, in defending her from her enemies. They then set out, and it seemed as if the Zephyrs were in league with them, or that they mistook Irolite for Flora, for they accompanied them in their flight.

Morning disclosed to Danamo the unexpected event. The ladies in attendance on Irolite were surprised that she slept so much later than usual; but, in obedience to the orders the prudent Mana had given them over-night, they did not venture to enter the Princess's apartment without being summoned by her. Mana slept in Irolite's chamber, and they had quitted it by a small door that opened into a court-yard of the Palace that was very little frequented. This door was in Irolite's cabinet. It had been fastened up, but, with a little trouble, in two or three evenings, they had found means to open it. The Queen at length sent orders for Irolite to come to her. The Fairy's commands were not to be disobeyed by any one. They accordingly knocked at the chamber door of the Princess. They received no answer. Prince Ormond arrived. He came to conduct Irolite to the Queen, and was much surprised to find them knocking loudly at the door. He caused it to be broken open. They entered, and finding the little door of the cabinet had been forced, no longer doubted that the Princess had fled the Palace. They bore these tidings to the Queen, who trembled with rage at hearing them. She ordered a search to be made everywhere for Irolite, but in vain did they endeavour to obtain a clue to her evasion, no one knew anything about it.

Prince Ormond himself set out in pursuit of Irolite. The Fairy’s Guards were despatched in all haste, and in every direction it was thought possible she might have taken. It was observed, however, by Azire, that amidst this general agitation, Parcin Parcinet had not made his appearance. She sent an urgent message to him, and jealousy opening her eyes, she felt certain that the Prince had carried off Irolite, although she had not until that moment suspected he was in love with her. The Fairy could not believe it; but she hastened to consult her books, and discovered that Azire’s suspicion was but too well founded.

In the meanwhile that Princess having learned that Parcin Parcinet was not in his apartments, and could not be found anywhere in the Palace, sent some one to the Château in which Irolite had so long resided, to see if they could find any evidence that would convict or acquit the Prince. The prudent Mana had taken care to leave nothing in it that could betray the understanding that had existed between Irolite and Parcin Parcinet; but they found near the seat on which the Prince had lain so long insensible, the scarf Azire had given to him. It had been unfastened during his swoon, and the Prince and Mana, absorbed in their grief, had neither of them subsequently observed it. What were the feelings of the haughty Azire at the sight of this scarf? Her love and her pride were equally wounded. She was exasperated beyond measure. She flung into the Fairy’s prisons all who had been in the service of Irolite or of the Prince. Parcin Parcinet’s ingratitude to the Queen also goaded her naturally furious temper into madness, and she would have willingly parted with one of her kingdoms to be revenged on the two lovers.

Meanwhile the fugitives were hotly pursued: Ormond and his troop found everywhere fresh horses in readiness for them by the Fairy’s orders. Those of Parcin Parcinet were fatigued, and their speed no longer answered to the impatience of their master. As they issued from a forest, Ormond appeared in sight. The first impulse of the young Prince was to attack his unworthy rival. He was spurring towards him with his hand on the hilt of his sword, when Irolite exclaimed, “Prince! Rush not into useless danger! Obey the orders of Favourable!” These words calmed the anger of Parcin Parcinet, and in obedience to his Princess, and to the Fairy, he wished that the beautiful Irolite was safe from the persecution of the cruel Queen. He had scarcely formed the wish, when the earth opened between him and Ormond, and presented to his sight a little misshapen man in a very magnificent dress, who made a sign to him to follow him. The descent was easy on his side, he rode down it accompanied by the fair Irolite. Mana and the faithful slave followed them, and the earth reclosed above them. Ormond, astonished at so extraordinary an event, returned with all speed to inform Danamo.

Meanwhile our young lovers followed the little man down a very dark road, at the end of which they found a vast Palace, lighted only by a great quantity of lamps and flambeaux. They were desired to dismount, and entered a Hall of prodigious magnitude. The roof was supported by columns of shining earth covered with golden ornaments. The walls were of the same material. A little man all covered with jewels was seated at the end of the Hall on a golden throne surrounded by a great number of persons as misshapen as the one who had conducted the Prince to that spot. As soon as the latter appeared leading the charming Irolite, the little man rose from his throne and said, “Approach, Prince. The great Fairy Favourable, who has long been a friend of mine, has requested me to save you from the cruelties of Danamo. I am the King of the Gnomes. You and the fair Princess who accompanies you are welcome to my Palace.” Parcin Parcinet thanked him for the succour he had afforded them. The King and all his subjects were enchanted with the beauty of Irolite. They looked upon her as a star that had descended to illuminate their abode. A magnificent banquet was served up to the Prince and Princess. The King of the Gnomes did the honours. Music of a very melodious, though somewhat barbaric, character, formed the entertainment of the evening. They sang the charms of Irolite, and the following verses were frequently repeated: —

What lovely star hath left its sphere
This subterranean realm to cheer?
Beware! for in its dazzling light
Is more than danger to the sight.
The while its lustre we admire
It sets the gazer's heart on fire.

After the concert the Prince and Princess were each conducted to magnificent apartments. Mana and the faithful slave attended on them. The next morning they were shown all over the King's Palace. He was master of all the treasures contained in the bosom of the earth. It was impossible to add to his riches. They presented a confused mass of beautiful things; but art was wanting everywhere. The Prince and Princess remained for a week in this subterranean region. Such was the order of Favourable to the King of the Gnomes. During this time entertainments were made for the Princess and her lover, which, though not very tasteful, were exceedingly magnificent. The eve of their departure, the King, to commemorate their sojourn in his empire, caused statues of them to be erected, one on each side of his throne. They were of gold, and the pedestals of white marble. The following inscription, formed with diamonds, was upon the pedestal of the Prince's statue: —

We desire no longer to behold the sun, —
We have seen this Prince;

He is more beautiful and more brilliant.

AND ON THAT of the Princess were these words, formed in a similar manner:—

TO THE IMMORTAL glory
Of the Goddess of Beauty.
She descended to this spot
Under the form and name of Irolite.

THE NINTH DAY they presented the Prince with the most beautiful horses in the world. Their harness was of gold entirely covered with diamonds. He quitted the gloomy abode of the Gnomes with his little troop, after having expressed his gratitude to the King. He found himself again on the very spot where Ormond had confronted him. He looked at his ring, and perceived that only the silver and brazen portions of it were discernible. He resumed his journey with the charming Irolite, and made all speed to reach the abode of Favourable, where at length they might feel themselves in safety, when all on a sudden, as they emerged from a valley, they encountered a troop of Danamo's guards, who had not given up the pursuit. The soldiers prepared to rush upon them, when the Prince wished, and instantly a large piece of water appeared between the party of Parcin Parcinet and that of the Fairy. A beautiful nymph, half naked, in a little boat made of interwoven rushes, was seen in the middle of it. She approached the shore, and requested the Prince and Princess to enter the boat. Mana and the slave followed them. The horses remained in the plain, and the little boat suddenly sinking, the Fairy's Guards believed that the fugitives had perished in their attempt to escape. But at the same moment they found themselves in a Palace, the walls of which were only great sheets of water, which incessantly falling with perfect regularity, formed halls, apartments, cabinets, and surrounded gardens, in which a thousand fountains of the most extraordinary shapes marked out the lines of the parterres. Only the Naiades, in whose empire they were, could inhabit this Palace, as beautiful as it was singular. To offer, therefore, a more substantial dwelling to the Prince and the fair Irolite, the Naiade who was their conductor led them into some grottoes of shell-work, where coral, pearls, and all the treasures of the deep, were seen in dazzling profusion. The beds were of moss. An hundred dolphins guarded the grotto of Irolite, and twenty whales that of Parcin Parcinet. The Naiades admired the beauty of the Princess, and more than one Triton was jealous of the looks and attentions which were bestowed on the young Prince. They served up in the grotto of the Princess a superb collation composed of all sorts of iced fruits. Twelve Syrens endeavoured with their sweet and charming songs to calm the anxiety of the young Prince and the fair Irolite. The concert finished with these verses: —

Wherever with Love for our leader we stray,
To render us happy he knows the sweet way.
Rejoice, Perfect Lovers, who here, in his name
The floods may defy to extinguish your flame.

In the evening there was a banquet, at which nothing was served but fish, but of most extraordinary size and exquisite flavour. After the banquet the Naiades danced a ballet in dresses of fish-scales of various colours, which had the most beautiful effect in the world. The horns of Tritons, and other instruments unknown to mortals, performed the music, which, though strange, was novel and very agreeable.

Parcin Parcinet and the beautiful Irolite remained four days in this empire. Such were the commands of Favourable. The fifth day the Naiades assembled in crowds to escort the Prince and Princess. The two lovers were placed in a little boat made of a single shell, and the Naiades, half out of the water, accompanied them as far as the border of a river, where Parcin Parcinet found his horses waiting for him, and recommenced his journey with the more haste, as he perceived, on examining his ring, that the silver had disappeared, and that nothing remained but the brass; they were, however, but a short distance from the wished-for dwelling of the Fairy Favourable. They travelled unmolested for three more days; but on the fourth morning they saw weapons glitter in the distance in the rays of the rising sun, and as those who bore them advanced, they recognised Prince Ormond and his band. Danamo had sent them back in pursuit with orders not to leave them when seen again, nor to quit the spot where anything extraordinary might occur to them, and, above all things, to endeavour to engage Parcin Parcinet in single combat. Danamo had correctly imagined, from the account of Ormond, that a Fairy protected the Prince and Princess; but her science was so great, that she did not despair of conquering, by spells more potent than her antagonist could cast around them. Ormond, delighted at beholding again the Prince and Irolite, whom he had sought with so much toil and anxiety, galloped, sword in hand, to encounter Parcin Parcinet, according to the commands of the Fairy. The young Prince also drew his sabre with so fierce an air, that Ormond more than once felt inclined to waver in his course; but Parcin Parcinet, observing Irolite bathed in tears, touched at the sight, formed his fourth wish, and instantly a great fire rising almost to the clouds, separated him from his enemy. This fire made Ormond and his troop fall back, while the young Prince and Irolite, closely followed by the faithful slave and the prudent Mana, found themselves in a Palace, the first sight of which greatly alarmed the fair Irolite.

It was entirely of flame; but her alarm subsided as she perceived that she felt no more heat than from the rays of the sun, and that this flame had only the brilliancy and blaze of fire, without its more insupportable qualities. Crowds of young and beautiful personages, in dresses over which light flames appeared to wanton, presented themselves to receive the Princess and her lover. One amongst them, whom they imagined to be the Queen of those regions, by the respect that was paid to her, accosted them, saying, “Come, charming Princess, and you also, handsome Parcin Parcinet; you are in the Kingdom of Salamanders. I am its Queen, and it is with pleasure I have undertaken to conceal you for seven days in my Palace, according to the commands of the Fairy Favourable. I would only that your stay here might be of longer duration.” After these words they were led into a large apartment, all of flames, like the rest of the Palace, and in which a light shone brighter than that of day. The Queen gave that evening a grand supper, composed of every delicacy, and well served.

After the feast they repaired to a terrace, to witness a display of fireworks of marvellous beauty and great singularity of design, which were let off in a large court-yard of the Palace of Salamanders. Twelve Cupids were seen upon as many columns of various coloured marbles. Six of them appeared to be drawing their bows, and the other six bore a large shield, on which these words were written in letters of fire: —

IROLITE, that matchless fair
Conqueror is everywhere.
In vain our flaming arrows fly;
Those that issue from her eye
Burn more fiercely, yet are found

Cherished in the hearts they wound.

THE YOUNG PRINCESS blushed at her own fame, and Parcin Parcinet was enchanted that the Salamanders considered her as beautiful as she appeared to him. Meanwhile, the Cupids shot their flaming arrows, which, crossing each other in the air, formed in a thousand places the initials of the lovely name of Irolite, and rose up to the Heavens.

The seven days she remained in the Palace were passed in similar pleasures. Parcin Parcinet remarked that all the Salamanders were witty and charmingly vivacious, very gallant and affectionate. The Queen herself appeared not to be exempt from the influence of the tender passion, but to be enamoured of a young Salamander of wonderful beauty.

The eighth day they quitted with regret a retreat so congenial to their feelings. They found themselves in a lovely country. Parcin Parcinet looked at his ring, and discovered engraved upon the metals, which were now all four mixed together, the following words: —

YOU HAVE WISHED TOO SOON.

THESE WORDS sadly afflicted the Prince and Princess, but they were now so near the abode of the Fairy Favourable, that they were in hopes of arriving there before evening. This reflection consoled them, and they proceeded, invoking Fortune and Love; but, alas! they are frequently treacherous conductors. Parcin Parcinet was, in short, on the point of entering the dominions of the Fairy Favourable; but Ormond, obeying the commands of Danamo, had not retired far from the spot where the fire had risen between him and his rival. He had encamped, with his party, behind a wood, and his sentinels, who kept incessant watch, brought him word that the Prince and Princess had re-appeared in the plain. He ordered his men to mount, and about sunset encountered the unfortunate Prince and the divine Irolite. Parcin Parcinet was not dismayed at the numbers that fell upon him altogether. He charged them with a courage that daunted them. “I fulfil my promise, beautiful Irolite,” he exclaimed, as he drew his sabre; “I will die for you or deliver you from your enemies!” With these words he made a blow at the foremost, and felled him to the earth. But oh, unexpected misfortune! the wonderful sabre, which was the gift of the Fairy Danamo, flew into a thousand pieces. She had foreseen this result of the combat. Whenever she made a present of weapons, she charmed them in so peculiar a manner, that the instant they were employed against her, the first blow shivered them to pieces.

Parcin Parcinet, then disarmed, could not make any prolonged resistance. He was overwhelmed by numbers, taken, laden with chains, and the young Irolite shared his fate. “Ah, Fairy Favourable,” mournfully ejaculated the Prince, “abandon me to all the severity of Danamo, but save the fair Irolite!” “You have disobeyed the Fairy,” replied a youth of surprising beauty, who appeared in the air. “You must suffer the penalty. Had you not been so prodigal of her favour, we should to-day have saved you for ever from the cruelties of Danamo. All the Empire of the Sylphs laments being deprived of the glory of securing happiness to so charming a Prince and so beautiful a Princess.” So saying, he vanished, and Parcin Parcinet groaned at the recollection of his imprudence: he seemed insensible to his own misfortunes, but how deeply did he feel those of Irolite! His remorse at having been the cause of them would have destroyed him, had not Destiny resolved that he should live to suffer still more cruel agony.

The young Irolite displayed a courage worthy of the illustrious race from which she had descended, and the pitiless Ormond, far from being affected at so touching a spectacle, strove to aggravate the misery he occasioned them. He had the prisoners separated, and so deprived them of the melancholy pleasure of mingling their tears over their departed hopes. Their wretched journey ended, they were taken to the palace of the wicked Fairy. She felt a malignant joy at seeing the young Prince and Princess in a state that would have awakened pity in the heart of any other creature. Even Azire commiserated Parcin Parcinet, but did not dare to evince it before the Fairy. "I shall at length, then," said the cruel Queen, addressing herself to the Prince, "have the pleasure of revenging myself for thy ingratitude. Go! In lieu of ascending the throne my favour had destined thee, enter the prison on the sea, in which thou shalt end thy wretched life in frightful tortures." "I prefer the most horrible dungeon," replied the Prince, looking proudly at her, "to the favours of so unjust a Queen as thou art!" These words increased the irritation of the Fairy. She had expected to see him humble himself at her feet. She sent him instantly to the prison she had fixed upon. Irolite wept as he was dragged away; Azire could not suppress her sighs, and all the Court mourned in secret the merciless sentence. As for the beautiful Irolite, the Queen had her removed to the Château in which she had previously so long resided, placed a strict guard upon her, and treated her with all the inhumanity of which she was capable.

The prison to which they conveyed the Prince was a frightful tower in the midst of the sea, built on a little desert island. They shut him up in it, laden with irons, and treated him with all the severity imaginable. What an abode for a Prince worthy to reign over the universe! To think of Irolite was his sole occupation. He invoked the help of the Fairy Favourable for his dear Princess alone, and wished a thousand times a day, to expiate by death the only injury he had done her. His faithful slave had been consigned to the same prison, but he had not the satisfaction of serving his illustrious master, and Parcin Parcinet had about him none but fierce soldiers, devoted to the Fairy, who nevertheless, while obeying her orders, respected, despite themselves, the unfortunate captive. His youth, his beauty, and, above all, his courage, excited in them an admiration which compelled them to regard him as a man very superior to all others. The prudent Mana had been dragged to the Château in which they had immured Irolite, as the Prince's faithful slave had been to the prison on the sea. Danamo's women alone approached the Princess, and by the Fairy's orders overwhelmed her every moment with new misery, by their accounts of the sufferings of Parcin Parcinet. The distresses of her lover made Irolite forget her own, and everything renewed her tears in that spot where she had so often heard that charming Prince swear to her eternal fidelity. "Alas!" she murmured to herself, "why have you been so faithful, my dear Prince? Your inconstancy would have killed me; but what of that, you would have lived, and been happy!"

After three months' suffering, Danamo, who had employed that period in the preparation of a spell of extraordinary power, sent to Irolite one morning a couple of lamps, one of gold, the other of crystal, commanding her to keep one of the two always burning, but leaving her to choose which she would light. Irolite, with her natural docility, sent word that she would obey the Fairy's orders, without even seeking to comprehend their object.

She carried the two lamps carefully to a cabinet. The golden one was lighted when she received it, and therefore she allowed it to burn throughout that day and night, and the next morning she lighted the other. In this manner she continued to obey the Fairy, lighting the lamps alternately for fifteen days, when her health became seriously affected. She attributed her failing strength to her sorrow, and, to increase her grief, they informed her that Parcin Parcinet was exceedingly ill. What tidings for Irolite! Her deep distress, her utter prostration, affected all her attendants. One evening, when the rest were asleep, one of them softly approached the Princess, and seeing her about to light the crystal lamp, said to her, "Extinguish that fatal light, your existence depends upon it. Save the life of one so lovely from the cruel designs of Danamo.” “Alas!” feebly replied the wretched Irolite, “she has rendered my life so miserable, that it is but kind of the Fairy to afford me such means of ending it; but,” added she, with an emotion which brought back the colour to her pale cheeks, “what life depends upon the golden lamp, which I have been equally careful to light in its turn?” “That of Parcin Parcinet,” answered the confidante of Danamo, for the woman was but obeying her orders in thus speaking to the Princess. The wicked Fairy wished to torment her by this revelation of the cruel task she had imposed upon her. At this intelligence her agony at having unconsciously hastened the termination of her lover’s existence, deprived her for some considerable time of her senses. On recovering them, she at the same time returned to her despair. “Hateful Fairy!” she exclaimed, as soon as she had power to speak, “Barbarous Fairy! will not my death satisfy thy vengeance? Wouldst thou condemn me, inhuman, to destroy with my own hand a Prince so dear to me, and so worthy of the most perfect and tender affection? But death, a thousand times more merciful than thou art, will soon deliver me from all the tortures which thy wrath hath invented, to rack such fond and faithful hearts.”

The young Princess wept incessantly over the fatal lamp, on which depended the life of Parcin Parcinet, and from that moment only lighted the one that wasted her own. That she saw burn with joy, regarding it as a sacrifice to love, and to her lover. In the meanwhile the wretched Prince was a prey to tortures, which surpassed even his powers of endurance. By command of the Fairy, one of his guards, feigning to pity the misfortunes of the illustrious prisoner, informed him that Irolite had consented to marry Prince Ormond, a few days after he (Parcin Parcinet) had been consigned to the frightful dungeon in which he still languished. That the Princess had appeared quite happy since her marriage, that she had been present at all the entertainments given in celebration of it, and had finally quitted the country with her husband. This was the only misfortune the Prince had not anticipated, and it was also the only one too heavy for him to bear. “What!” he exclaimed, despairingly, “Thou art faithless to me, dear Irolite! Thou art the bride of Ormond! Thou hast not even pitied my misfortunes. Thou hast but thought how to end those my love brought upon thyself. Live happy, ungrateful Irolite! Inconstant as thou art, I still adore thee, and desire but to die for love, as thou wouldst not I should have the glory of dying for thee!”

Whilst Parcin Parcinet was plunged in this affliction, and the tender Irolite wasted her own life to prolong that of her lover, Danamo was moved by the despair of Azire, who was dying with sorrow for the sufferings of Parcin Parcinet. The cruel Fairy perceived at length that, to save the life of her child, it was necessary to pardon the Prince, to permit Azire to visit him, and to promise him all the benefits that had previously awaited him, provided he consented to marry her, and the Fairy determined to put Irolite to death, the moment the Prince had accepted that offer.

The hope of again beholding Parcin Parcinet restored Azire to life, and the Fairy allowed her to send to Irolite’s Château for the golden lamp, which she desired to keep in her own custody, that she might be certain it was not lighted. This mandate seemed more cruel than all the others to the afflicted Irolite. What anxiety did she not endure respecting the fate of Parcin Parcinet. “Do not distress yourself so much about the Prince,” said the women in attendance upon her, “he is going to marry the Princess Azire, and it is she who, interested in the preservation of his life, has sent for the lamp on which it depends.”

The torments of jealousy had as yet been wanting, to complete the misery of the unfortunate Irolite. At these words she felt them waking in her heart. In the meanwhile Azire had visited the Prince, and offered him her hand and her kingdoms; then, pretending to be ignorant that he had been told that Irolite had married Ormond, she endeavoured to convince him by citing this example, that he had been more than sufficiently constant. Parcin Parcinet, to whom nothing was valuable without the charming Irolite, preferred his prison and his sufferings to liberty and sovereignty. Azire was distracted at his refusal, and her affliction rendered her almost as unhappy as he was.

During this time the Fairy Favourable, who had hitherto boasted of her insensibility to love, had found it impossible to resist the attractions of a young Prince residing at her Court. He had conceived a passion for her. The Fairy had considerable difficulty in bringing herself to let him know that his attentions had conquered her pride. At length, however, she yielded to the desire of acquainting him with his triumph. The pleasure of conversing with those we love appeared to her then so charming and so desirable, that, excusing the fault she had so severely punished, she repaired, in all haste, to the assistance of Parcin Parcinet and the beautiful Irolite.

A little later, and her aid would have been useless. The fatal lamp of Irolite had but six days longer to burn, and the grief of Parcin Parcinet was rapidly terminating his existence, when the Fairy Favourable arrived at the Palace of Danamo. She was by far the most powerful, and made herself obeyed despite the anger of the wicked Fairy. The Prince was released from prison; but he would not quit it until he was assured by Favourable that the fair Irolite might still be his bride. He appeared, notwithstanding his pallor, more beautiful than the day, the light of which he was once more permitted to behold. He repaired, with the Fairy Favourable, to the Château of his Princess. Her lamp emitted but a feeble light, and the dying Irolite would not allow them to extinguish it until she had been assured of the fidelity of her now happy lover. There are no words capable of expressing the perfect joy experienced by the fond pair at this meeting. The Fairy Favourable restored them in an instant to all their former health and beauty, and endowed them with long life and constant felicity. Their affection she found it impossible to increase. Danamo, furious at beholding her authority thus overthrown, perished by her own hand. The fate of Azire and of Ormond was left by the Prince to the decision of Irolite. The only vengeance she took upon them was uniting them in marriage, and Parcin Parcinet, as generous as he was constant, would only receive his father’s kingdom, leaving Azire to reign over those of Danamo.

The nuptials of the Prince and the divine Irolite were celebrated with infinite magnificence, and after duly expressing their gratitude to the Fairy Favourable, and heaping rewards on the slave and the prudent Mana, they departed for their kingdom, where the Prince and the charming Irolite enjoyed the rare happiness of loving as fondly and truly in prosperity as they had done in adversity.

8

ANGUILLETTE

To whatever greatness Destiny may elevate those it favours, there is no worldly felicity exempt from serious sorrow. One cannot be acquainted with Fairies, and be ignorant that the most skilful amongst them have failed to discover a charm which would secure them from the misfortune of being compelled to change their shape some few days in every month, for that of some animal, terrestrial, celestial, or aquatic.

During that dangerous period, when they are completely at the mercy of mankind, they have frequently great difficulty in saving themselves from the perils to which that stern necessity exposes them.

One amongst them, who had changed herself into an Eel, was unfortunately taken by fishermen, and flung immediately into a small square tank in the midst of a beautiful meadow, wherein they kept the fish that were daily required for the table of the King of that country. Anguillette (so was the Fairy named) found in her new abode a great many fine fish destined, like herself, to live but a few hours. She had heard the fishermen say to one another, that that very evening the King purposed to give a grand banquet, for the which these fine fish had been carefully selected.

What tidings for the unfortunate Fairy! She accused the Fates of cruelty a thousand times! She sighed most sadly; but after hiding herself for some time at the very bottom of the water, in order to bewail her misfortune in solitude, the desire to escape if possible from so urgent a peril, induced her to look about her in every direction to see if she could not by some means get out of the reservoir, and regain the river which ran at no great distance from that spot. But the Fairy looked in vain. The tank was too deep for her to hope to get out of it without help, and her distress was augmented by seeing the fishermen who had taken her again approaching. They began to throw in their nets, and Anguillette, by avoiding them with great cunning, retarded for a few moments the death that awaited her. The youngest of the King's daughters was walking at that time in the meadow. She approached the tank to amuse herself by seeing the men fish.

The sun, about to set, shone brilliantly on the water. The skin of Anguillette, which was very glossy, glittered in its rays as if partly gilt and of all the colours of the rainbow. The young Princess caught sight of her, and thinking her exceedingly beautiful, ordered the fishermen to try and catch that Eel for her. They obeyed, and the unfortunate Fairy was speedily placed in the hands of the person who would decide her fate.

When the Princess had contemplated Anguillette for a few moments, she was touched with compassion, and running to the riverside, put her gently into the water. This unexpected service filled the Fairy's heart with gratitude. She appeared on the surface, and said to the Princess, "I owe you my life, generous Plousine (such was her name), but it is most fortunate for you that I do so. Be not afraid," she continued, observing the young Princess about to run away. "I am a Fairy, and will prove the truth of my words by heaping an infinite number of favours upon you."

As people were accustomed in those days to behold Fairies, Plousine recovered from her first alarm, and listened with great attention to the agreeable promises of Anguillette. She even began to answer her; but the Fairy interrupting her, said, "Wait till you have profited by my favour before you express your acknowledgments. Go, young Princess, and return to this spot to-morrow morning. Think, in the meantime, what you would wish for, and whatever it may be I will grant it. You may, at your choice, possess the most perfect and bewitching beauty, the finest and most charming intellect, or incalculable riches." After these words, Anguillette sank to the bottom of the river, and left Plousine highly gratified with her adventure.

She determined not to tell any one what had befallen her, "For," said she, to herself, "if Anguillette should deceive me, my sisters will believe that I invented this story."

After this little reflection, she hastened to rejoin her suite, which was composed of only a few ladies. She found them looking for her.

The young Plousine was occupied all the succeeding night in thinking what should be her choice. Beauty almost turned the scale; but as she had sufficient sense to desire still more, she finally determined to request that favour of the Fairy.

She rose with the sun, and ran to the meadow under the pretence of gathering flowers to make a garland, as she said, to present to the Queen, her mother, at her levée. Her attendants dispersed themselves about the meadow to cull the freshest and most beautiful of the flowers with which it was everywhere enamelled.

Meanwhile, the young Princess hastened to the riverside, and found upon the spot where she had seen the Fairy, a column of white marble, of the most perfect purity. An instant afterwards, the column opened and the Fairy emerged from it, and appeared to the Princess no longer as a fish, but as a tall and beautiful woman, of majestic demeanour, and whose robes and head-dress were covered with jewels.

"I am Anguillette," said she to the young Princess, who gazed upon her with great attention; "I come to fulfil my promise. You have chosen intellectual perfection, and you shall possess it from this very moment. You shall have so much sense as to be envied by those who till now have flattered themselves they were specially endowed with it.”

The youthful Plousine, at these words, felt a considerable alteration taking place in her mind. She thanked the Fairy with an eloquence that till then she had been a stranger to.

The Fairy smiled at the astonishment the Princess could not conceal at her own powers of expression. “I am so much pleased with you,” said the benignant Anguillette, “for making the choice you have done, in lieu of preferring beauty of person, which has such charms for one of your sex and age, that to reward you, I will add the gift of that loveliness you have so prudently foregone. Return hither to-morrow, at the same hour, — I give you till then to choose the style of beauty you would possess.”

The Fairy disappeared, and left the young Plousine still more impressed with her good fortune. Her choice of superior intellect was dictated by reason, but the promise of surpassing beauty flattered her heart, and that which touches the heart is always felt most deeply.

On quitting the riverside, the Princess took the flowers presented to her by her attendants, and made a very tasteful garland with them, which she carried to the Queen; but what was her Majesty’s astonishment, that of the King, and of all the Court, to hear Plousine speak with an elegance and a fluency which captivated every heart.

The Princesses, her sisters, vainly endeavoured to contest her mental superiority; they were compelled to wonder at and admire it.

Night came. The Princess, occupied with the expectation of becoming beautiful, instead of retiring to rest, passed into a cabinet hung with portraits, in which, under the form of goddesses, were represented several of the Queens and Princesses of her family. All these were beauties, and she indulged a hope that they would assist her in deciding on a style of beauty worthy to be solicited from a Fairy. The first that met her sight was a Juno. She was fair and had a presence such as should distinguish the Queen of the

Gods. Pallas and Venus stood beside her. The subject of the picture was the Judgment of Paris.

The noble haughtiness of Pallas excited the admiration of the young Princess; but the loveliness of Venus almost decided her choice. Nevertheless, she passed on to the next picture, in which was seen Pomona reclining on a couch of turf, beneath trees laden with the finest fruits in the world. She appeared so charming, that the Princess, who since morning had become acquainted with all their stories, was not surprised that a God had taken various forms in order to please her.

Diana next appeared, attired as the poets represent her, the quiver slung behind her, and the bow in her hand. She was pursuing a stag, and followed by a numerous band of Nymphs.

Flora attracted her attention a little further off. She appeared to be walking in a garden, the flowers of which, although exquisite, could not be compared to the bloom of her complexion. Next came the Graces, beautiful and enchanting. This picture was the last in the room.

But the Princess was struck by that which was over the mantel-piece. It was the Goddess of Youth. A heavenly air was shed over her whole person. Her tresses were the fairest in the world; the turn of her head was most graceful, her mouth charming, her figure perfectly beautiful, and her eyes appeared much more likely to intoxicate than the nectar with which she seemed to be filling a cup.

“I will wish,” exclaimed the young Princess, after she had contemplated with delight this lovely portrait, “I will wish to be as beautiful as Hebe, and to remain so as long as possible.”

After this determination she returned to her bed-chamber, where the day she awaited seemed to her impatience as if it would never dawn.

At length it came, and she hastened again to the riverside. The Fairy kept her word. She appeared, and threw a few drops of water in the face of Plousine, who became immediately as beautiful as she had desired to be.

Some sea-gods had accompanied the Fairy. Their applause was the first effect produced by the charms of the fortunate Plousine. She looked at her image in the water, and could not recognise herself. Her silence and her astonishment were for the moment the only indications of her thankfulness.

"I have fulfilled all your wishes," said the generous Fairy. "You ought to be content; but I shall not be so if my favours do not far exceed your desires. In addition to the wit and beauty I have endowed you with, I bestow on you all the treasures at my disposal. They are inexhaustible. You have but to wish whenever you please for infinite wealth, and at the same moment you will acquire it, not only for yourself, but for all those you may deem worthy to possess it."

The Fairy disappeared, and the youthful Plousine, now as lovely as Hebe, returned to the palace. Everybody who met her was enchanted. They announced her arrival to the King, who was himself lost in admiration of her, and it was only by her voice and her talent that they recognised the amiable Princess. She informed the King that a Fairy had bestowed all those precious gifts upon her; and she was no longer called anything but Hebe, in consequence of her perfect resemblance to the portrait of that Goddess. What new causes were here to engender the hatred of her sisters against her! The beauties of her mind had excited their jealousy much less than those of her person.

All the Princes who had been attracted by their charms became faithless to them without the least hesitation. In like manner were all the other Court beauties abandoned by their admirers. No tears or reproaches could stop the flight of those inconstant lovers, and this conduct, which then appeared so singular, has since, it is said, become a common custom.

Hebe inflamed all hearts around her, while her own remained insensible.

Notwithstanding the hatred her sisters evinced towards her, she neglected nothing that she thought might please them. She wished for so much wealth for the eldest — and to wish and to give were the same thing to her, — that the greatest Sovereign in that part of the world requested the hand of that Princess in marriage, and the nuptials were celebrated with incredible magnificence. The King, Hebe’s father, desired to take the field with a great army. The wishes of his beautiful daughter caused him to succeed in all his enterprises, and his kingdom was filled with such immense wealth, that he became the most formidable of all the monarchs in the universe.

The divine Hebe, however, weary of the bustle of the Court, was anxious to pass a few months in a pleasant mansion a short distance from the capital. She had excluded from it all magnificence, but everything about it was elegant, and of a charming simplicity. Nature alone had taken care to embellish the walks, which Art had not been employed to form. A wood, the paths through which had something wild in their scenery, intersected by rivulets and little torrents that formed natural cascades, surrounded this beautiful retreat.

The youthful Hebe often walked in this solitary wood. One day, when her heart felt more than usually oppressed with a tedium and lassitude to which she was now constantly subject, she endeavoured to ascertain the reason of it. She seated herself on the turf, beside a rivulet that with gentle murmur courted meditation.

“What sorrow is it,” she asked herself, “that comes thus to trouble the excess of my happiness? What Princess in all the universe is blest with a lot so perfect as mine? The beneficence of the Fairy has accorded me all I wished for. I can heap treasures upon all who surround me. I am adored by all who behold me, and my heart is a stranger to every painful emotion. No! I cannot imagine whence arises the insupportable weariness which has for some time past detracted from the happiness of my life.”

The young Princess was incessantly occupied by this reflection. At length she determined to go to the bank of Anguilette’s river, and endeavour to obtain an interview with her.

The Fairy, accustomed to indulge her inclinations, appeared on the surface of the water. It happened to be one of the days when she was changed into a fish.

"It always gives me pleasure to see you, young Princess," said she to Hebe. "I know you have been passing some time in a very solitary dwelling, and you appear to me in a languishing state, which does not at all correspond with your good fortune. What hails you, Hebe? Confide in me." "There is nothing the matter," replied the young Princess, with some embarrassment. "You have showered too many benefits upon me for anything to be wanting to a felicity which is your own work." "You would deceive me," rejoined the Fairy; "I see it easily. You are no longer satisfied. Yet what more can you desire? Deserve my favour by a frank confession," added the gracious Fairy, "and I promise you I will again fulfil your wishes." "I know not what I wish," replied the charming Hebe. "But nevertheless," she continued, casting down her beautiful eyes, "I feel a lack of something, and that, whatever it may be, it is that which is absolutely essential to my happiness." "Ah!" exclaimed the Fairy, "it is love that you are sighing for. That passion alone could inspire you with such strange ideas. Dangerous disposition!" continued the prudent Fairy. "You sigh for love — you shall experience it. Hearts are but too naturally disposed to be affected by it. But I warn you that you will vainly invoke me to deliver you from the fatal passion you believe to be so sweet a blessing. My power does not extend so far."

"I care not," quickly replied the Princess, smiling and blushing at the same moment. "Alas! of what value to me are all the gifts you have bestowed upon me, if I cannot in turn make with them the happiness of another?" The Fairy sighed at these words, and sank to the bottom of the river.

Hebe retraced her steps to the wilderness, her heart filled with a hope which already began to dissipate her melancholy. The warnings of the Fairy caused her some anxiety; but her prudent reflections were soon banished by others, as dangerous as they were agreeable.

On reaching home she found a courier awaiting her with a message from the King, commanding her return to the Court that very day, in order that she might be present at an entertainment in preparation for the succeeding one. She took her departure accordingly, a few hours after the receipt of the message, and returned to the Court, where she was received with great pleasure by the King and Queen; who informed her that a foreign Prince, upon his travels, having arrived there a few days previously, they had determined to give him a fête, that he might talk in other countries of the magnificence displayed in their kingdom.

The youthful Hebe, obeying a presentiment of which she was unconscious, first inquired of the Princess, her sister, if the foreigner was handsome. “I never yet saw any one that could be compared to him,” answered the Princess. “Describe, him to me,” said Hebe, with emotion. “He is such as they paint heroes,” replied Ilerie. “His form is graceful; his demeanour noble; his eyes are full of a fire that has already made more than one indifferent beauty at this Court acknowledge their power. He has the finest head in the world; his hair is dark brown; and the moment he appears, he absorbs the attention of all beholders.”

“You draw a most charming portrait of him,” said the youthful Hebe; “is it not a little flattered?” “No, sister,” replied the Princess Ilerie, with a sigh she could not suppress. “Alas! you will find him, perhaps, but too worthy of admiration.”

The Queen retired, and the beautiful Hebe, as soon as she had time to examine her heart, perceived that she had lost that tranquillity of which, till now, she had not known the value.

“Anguillette!” she exclaimed, as soon as she was alone. “Alas! what is this object which you have allowed to present itself to my sight? Your prudent counsels are rendered vain by its presence. Why do you not give me strength enough to resist such attractive charms? It may be, however, that their power surpasses that of any Fairy.”

Hebe slept but little that night. She rose very early, and the thought of how she should dress herself for the fête that evening occupied her the whole day, to a degree she had been previously a stranger to, for it was the first time she had felt an anxiety to please.

The young foreigner, actuated by the same desire, neglected nothing that might make him appear agreeable to the eyes of the charming Hebe. The Princess Ilerie was equally solicitous of conquest. She possessed a thousand attractions, and when Hebe was not beside her, she was considered the most beautiful creature in the world; but Hebe outshone every one. The Queen gave a magnificent ball that evening; it was succeeded by a marvellous banquet. The young foreigner would have been struck by its prodigious splendour, if he could have looked at anything besides Hebe. After the banquet, a novel and brilliant illumination shed another daylight over the palace gardens. It was summer-time; the company descended into the gardens for the pleasure of an evening promenade. The handsome foreigner conducted the Queen; but this honour did not compensate him for being deprived of the company of his Princess, even for a few moments. The trees were decorated with festoons of flowers, and the lamps which formed the illumination were disposed in a manner to represent, in every direction, bows, arrows, and other weapons of Cupid, together, in some places, with inscriptions.

The company entered a little grove, illuminated like the rest of the gardens, and the Queen seated herself beside a pleasant fountain, around which had been arranged seats of turf, ornamented with garlands of pinks and roses. Whilst the Queen was engaged in conversation with the King and a host of courtiers that surrounded them, the Princesses amused themselves by reading the sentences formed by small lamps under the various devices. The handsome foreigner was at that moment close to the beautiful Hebe.

She turned her eyes towards a spot in which appeared a shower of darts, and read aloud these words, which were displayed beneath them: —

Some are inevitable.

“They are those which are shot from the eyes of the divine Hebe,” quickly added the Prince, looking at her tenderly. The Princess heard him, and felt confused; but the Prince drew from her embarrassment a happy augury for his love, as it appeared unmingled with anger. The fête terminated with a thousand delightful novelties. The charms of the stranger had touched too sensibly the heart of Ilerie for her to be long without perceiving that he loved another. The Prince had paid her some attention previous to the arrival of Hebe at Court; but since he had seen the latter, he had been wholly engrossed by his passion.

In the meanwhile the young stranger endeavoured, by every proof of affection, to touch the heart of the beautiful Princess. He was devoted, amiable — her fate compelled her to love, and the Fairy abandoned her to the inclinations of her heart. What excuses for yielding! She could no longer struggle against herself. The charming Stranger had informed her that he was the son of a King, and that his name was Atimir. This name was known to the Princess. The Prince had performed wonders in a war between the two kingdoms; and as they had always been opposed to each other, he had not chosen to appear at the Court of Hebe’s royal father under his real name.

The young Princess, after a conversation during which her heart fully imbibed the sweet and dangerous poison of which the Fairy had warned her, gave permission to Atimir to disclose to the King his rank and his love. The young Prince was transported with delight; he flew to the King’s apartments, and urged his suit with all the eloquence his love could inspire him with.

The King conducted him to the Queen. This proposed marriage, assuring the establishment of a lasting peace between the two kingdoms, the hand of the beautiful Hebe was promised to her happy lover as soon as he had received the consent of the King, his father. The news was soon circulated, and the Princess Ilerie suffered anguish equal to her jealousy. She wept — she groaned; but it was necessary to control her emotion and conceal her vain regrets.

The beautiful Hebe and Atimir now saw each other continually; their affection increased daily, and in those happy days the young Princess could not imagine why the Fairies did not employ all their skill to make mortals fall in love when they wished to insure their felicity.

An ambassador from Atimir’s royal father arrived at Court. He had been awaited with the utmost impatience. He was the bearer of the required consent, and preparations were immediately commenced for the celebration of those grand nuptials. Atimir had therefore no longer any reason for anxiety — a dangerous state for a lover one desires to retain faithful.

As soon as the Prince felt certain of his happiness, he became less ardent. One day that he was on his way to meet the fair Hebe in the palace gardens, he heard the voices of females in conversation in a bower of honeysuckles. He caught the sound of his name, and this awakened his curiosity to know more. He approached the bower softly, and easily recognised the voice of the Princess Ilerie. “I shall die before that fatal day, my dear Cléonice,” said she, to a young person seated beside her. “The gods will not permit me to behold the ungrateful object of my love united to the too fortunate Hebe. My torments are too keen to endure much longer.” “But, madam,” replied her female companion, “Prince Atimir is not faithless; he has never avowed love for you. Destiny alone is to blame for your misfortunes, and amongst all the princes who adore you, you might find, perhaps, one more amiable than he is, did not a fatal prepossession engross your heart.” “More amiable than him!” rejoined Ilerie. “Is there such a being in the universe? Powerful Fairy!” she added, with a sigh, “of all the blessings with which you have laden the fortunate Hebe, I but covet that of Atimir’s devoted attachment to her.” The words of the Princess were interrupted by her tears. Ah! how happy would she have been had she known how much those tears had moved the heart of Atimir!

She rose to leave the bower, and the Prince hid himself behind some trees to escape observation. The tears and the love of Ilerie had affected him deeply, but he imagined they were but the emotions of pity which he felt for a beautiful Princess whom he had unintentionally made so miserable. He proceeded to join Hebe, and the contemplation of her charms banished for the moment all other thoughts from his mind. In passing through the gardens, as he returned with the Princess Hebe to the Palace, he trod upon something which attracted his attention. He picked it up, and found it was a set of magnificent tablets. It was not far from the bower in which he had overheard the conversation of Ilerie and her attendant. He feared if Hebe saw the tablets, she would obtain some knowledge of his adventure. He hid them, therefore, without her having observed them. She happened at that moment to be occupied in re-adjusting some ornament in her head-dress.

That evening Ilerie did not make her appearance in the Queen’s apartments. It was reported that she had felt indisposed on returning from her walk. Atimir perfectly understood that her object was to conceal the agitation to which he had seen her a prey in the bower of honeysuckles. This reflection increased his compassion for her.

As soon as he had retired to his own chamber he opened the tablets he had picked up. On the first leaf he saw a cipher formed of a double A, crowned with a wreath of myrtle, and supported by two little Cupids, one of whom appeared to be wiping the tears from his cheeks with the end of the ribbon that bandaged his eyes, and the other breaking his arrows. The sight of this cipher agitated the young Prince. He knew that Ilerie drew admirably. He turned over the leaf quickly to gain further information, and on the opposite side found the following lines:

HITHER ALL-CONQUERING LOVE thy footsteps led;
At thy first glance sweet peace my bosom fled;
Oh, cruel one, to try on me the dart
With which you meant to wound another's heart!

THE HANDWRITING, which he recognised, but too clearly proved to him that the tablets were those of the Princess Ilerie. He was affected by the great tenderness of these sentiments, which far from being nourished by his love and attentions, were not even encouraged by hope. These verses reminded him that previous to the arrival of Hebe at Court he had thought Ilerie lovely. He began to consider himself unfaithful to that Princess, and he became too seriously so to the charming Hebe.

He struggled, however, against these first emotions; but his heart was accustomed to range, and so dangerous a habit is rarely corrected.

He threw Ilerie's tablets on a table, resolving not to look at them any more; but he took them up again a moment afterwards, despite himself, and found in them a thousand things which completed the triumph of Ilerie over the divine Hebe.

The Prince's heart was occupied all night by conflicting feelings. In the morning he waited on the King, who named the day he had fixed on for his marriage with Hebe. Atimir replied with an embarrassment which the King mistook for a proof of his passion — (how little do we know of the human heart!) It was the effect of his inconstancy! The King desired to visit the Queen; the Prince was obliged to follow him. He had been there but a short time when the Princess Ilerie appeared with an air of melancholy which made her more lovely in the eyes of the inconstant Atimir, who was aware of its cause. He approached her, and talked to her for some time. He gave her to understand that he was no longer ignorant of her affection for him. He spoke with ardour of his feelings for her. It was too much for Ilerie. Ah! how is it possible to receive calmly the assurance of so great so unexpected a happiness.

The charming Hebe entered the Queen's apartments shortly afterwards. Her sight brought the blood into the cheeks both of the Princess Ilerie and of the fickle Atimir. "How beautiful she is!" exclaimed Ilerie, looking at the Prince with an emotion she could not conceal. "Avoid her, sir, or end at once my existence." The Prince had not power to answer her. Hebe approached them with a grace and charm which unconsciously loaded with reproaches the ungrateful Atimir. He could not long endure his position. He quitted the Princess, saying that he was anxious to despatch a courier to his father. She was so prepossessed in his favour that she never noticed some eloquent glances at Ilerie, which he cast on leaving her.

While Ilerie triumphed in secret, the beautiful Hebe learned from the King and Queen that in three days she was to be the bride of Atimir. How unworthy was he of the sensations which this news awakened in the heart of the lovely Hebe.

The faithless Prince, though pre-occupied by his new passion, passed part of the day in Hebe's company. Ilerie was present, and was a thousand times ready to die with jealousy. Her love had redoubled since she had entertained hope.

On returning to his own apartments in the evening, the Prince was presented with a note by an unknown messenger. He opened it hastily, and found in it these words: —

I yield to a passion a thousand times stronger than my reason. Since I can no longer attempt to conceal sentiments which chance has revealed to you, come, Prince, come, and learn the determination to which I am driven by the love you have inspired me with. Oh, how happy will it be for me if it cost me but my life!

The bearer of the note informed the Prince that he was commissioned to conduct him to the spot where the Princess Ilerie awaited him. Atimir did not hesitate a moment to follow him, and after several turnings, he was introduced into a little pavilion at the end of a very dark avenue. The interior of the pavilion was sufficiently lighted. He found in it Ilerie with one of her attendants; the rest were walking in the gardens. When she had retired to this apartment, no one entered it without her orders. Ilerie was seated on a pile of cushions of crimson and gold embroidery. Her dress was rich and elegant, the material being of yellow and silver tissue. Her hair, which was black and exceedingly beautiful, was ornamented with ribbons of the same colour as the dress, and ties of yellow diamonds. At her sight, Atimir could not persuade himself that infidelity was a crime. He knelt at her feet, and Ilerie, gazing upon him with a tenderness sufficiently indicative of the emotion of her heart, said, “Prince, I have not caused you to come hither in order to persuade you to break off your marriage; I know too well it is determined upon, and the expressions with which you have endeavoured to alleviate my misfortune and flatter my affection do not induce me to believe that you would abandon Hebe for me; but,” she continued, with a gush of tears, which completed the conquest of the heart of Atimir, “I will not endure the life which you have rendered so wretched. I will sacrifice it without regret to my love, and this poison,” she added, showing a little box which she had in her hand, “will save me from the fearful torment of seeing you the husband of Hebe.”

“No, beautiful Ilerie!” exclaimed the fickle Prince, “I will never be her husband. I will abandon all for your sake; I love you a thousand times better than I loved Hebe; and despite my duty and my faith so solemnly plighted, I am ready to fly with you to a spot where no obstacle shall exist to our happiness.” “Ah, Prince!” said Ilerie, with a sigh, “can I confide, then, in one so faithless?” “He will never be faithless to you,” rejoined Atimir. “And the King, your father, who gave Hebe to me, will not refuse to sanction my union with the lovely Ilerie, when she is already mine.” “Away, then, Atimir,” said the Princess, after a few minutes’ silence. “Let us hasten whither our destiny leads us. Whatever misery the step entails on me, nothing can weigh against the sweet delights of loving and being beloved.”

After these words, they consulted together respecting their flight. There was no time to lose. They determined to depart the following night. They separated with regret, and, notwithstanding the vows of Atimir, Ilerie still feared the power of Hebe’s attractions. The rest of that night and all the next day she was a prey to that anxiety.

In the meanwhile, the Prince hurriedly gave all the necessary orders for keeping his departure secret, and the next day, as soon as everybody in the palace had retired to their apartments, he hastened to join Ilerie in the pavilion in the garden, where she awaited him, attended only by Cléonice. They set out, and made incredible haste to pass the frontiers of the kingdom.

The following morning the news was made public, by a letter which Ilerie had written to the Queen, and another which Atimir had addressed to the King. They were couched in touching language, and it was easy to perceive that love had dictated them. The King and Queen were extremely enraged; but no words can express the agony of the unfortunate and charming Hebe. What despair! what tears! what petitions to the Fairy Anguillette to terminate torments equal to the most cruel she had predicted! But the Fairy kept her word. In vain did Hebe seek the riverside. Anguillette did not appear, and she abandoned herself to all the horrors of desperation. The Princes who had been discouraged by the success of the ungrateful Atimir now felt their hopes revive; but their attentions and professions only increased the torture of the faithful Hebe.

The King ardently desired that she should select for herself a husband, and had several times urged her to do so; but that duty appeared too cruel to her affectionate heart. She determined to fly from her father's kingdom; but, before her departure, she went once more in search of Anguillette. The Fairy could no longer resist the tears of the beautiful Hebe. She appeared to her, and at her sight the Princess wept still more, and had not the power to speak to her.

"You have now experienced," said the Fairy, "what that fatal pleasure which I would never willingly have accorded to you is; but Atimir has too severely punished you, Hebe, for your neglect of my advice. Go! Fly these scenes, where everything recalls to you the remembrance of your love. You will find a vessel on the coast, which will bear you to the only spot in the world where you can be cured of your unfortunate attachment; but take care," added Anguillette, raising her voice, "when your heart shall have regained its tranquillity, that you never seek to behold again the faithless Atimir, or it will cost you your life!" Hebe wished more than once to see that Prince again at whatever price Love might compel her to pay for that gratification; but a whisper of Reason, and respect for her own honour, induced her to accept the Fairy's offer. She thanked her for this last favour, and departed the next morning for the sea-coast, followed by such of her women as she had most confidence in.

She found the vessel Anguillette had promised her. It was gilt all over. The masts were of marqueterie of the most admirable pattern; the sails, of rose-colour and silver tissue; and in every part of it was inscribed the word "Liberty." The crew were attired in dresses of the same colours as the sails. All appeared to breathe in this atmosphere the sweet air of freedom.

The Princess entered a magnificent cabin. The furniture was admirable, and the paintings perfect. She was as much a prey to sorrow in this new abode as she was in her father’s Court. They strove in vain to amuse her by a thousand pleasures; she was not yet in a state of mind to pay the slightest attention to them.

One day while she was contemplating a painting in her cabin, which represented a landscape, she remarked in it a young shepherd, who, with a smiling countenance, was depicted cutting nets to set at liberty a great number of birds that had been caught in them, and some of these little creatures seemed to be soaring to the skies with marvellous velocity. All the other pictures displayed similar subjects. None suggested an idea of love, and all appeared to boast the charms of Liberty. “Alas!” exclaimed the Princess, sorrowfully, “will my heart never enjoy that sweet happiness which reason prays for so often in vain?”

The unfortunate Hebe thus passed her days, struggling between her love and her desire to forget it. The ship had been a month at sea without touching anywhere, when one morning that the Princess was on deck she saw land at a distance, which appeared to be that of a very lovely country. The trees were of surprising height and beauty, and as the vessel neared them, she perceived they were covered with birds of the most brilliant plumage, whose songs made a charming concert. Their notes were very soft, and it appeared as if they were afraid of making too much noise. They landed on this beautiful shore. The Princess descended from the vessel, followed by her women, and from the moment she breathed the air of this island, some unknown power seemed to set her heart at rest, and she fell into an agreeable slumber, which for a short time sealed up her beautiful eyes.

This pleasant country, to which she was a stranger, was the Peaceful Island. The Fairy Anguillette, a near relation of the Princes who reigned in these parts, had conferred upon it, for two thousand years, the happy power of curing unfortunate attachments. It is confidently asserted that it still possesses that power; but the difficulty is to find the island.

The Prince who reigned in it at that period, was descended in a right line from the celebrated Princess Carpillon and her charming husband, of whom a modern Fairy, wiser and more polished than those of ancient times, has so gracefully recounted the wonderful adventures.

While the fair Hebe enjoyed a repose, the sweetness of which she had not tasted for six months, the Prince of the Peaceful Island was taking an airing in the wood that fringed the shore. He was seated in his car, drawn by four young white elephants, and surrounded by a portion of his Court. The sleeping Princess attracted his attention. Her beauty astonished him. He descended from his car with a haste and vivacity unusual to his nature. He felt at the sight of her all the love which the charms of Hebe were worthy to inspire. The noise awoke her, and on opening her lovely eyes, she was struck by a thousand beauties in the young Prince. He was of the same age as Hebe — just nineteen. He was perfectly handsome, his figure full of grace, his height above the ordinary standard, and his hair, which fell in rich curls down to his waist, was of the same colour as Hebe's. His dress was composed of feathers of a thousand different colours, over which he wore a sort of mantle, with a train all made of swan's-down, and fastened on his shoulders by the finest jewels in the world. His girdle was of diamonds, from which hung by golden chains a small sabre, the hilt and sheath of which were entirely covered with rubies. A sort of helmet, made of feathers like the rest of his attire, crowned his handsome head, and on one side of it, fastened by a diamond of prodigious size, was a plume of heron's feathers, which added greatly to the effect of his appearance.

The Prince was the first object that presented itself to the eyes of the young Princess at her waking. He appeared worthy of her observation, and for the first time in her life she looked upon another than Atimir with some interest.

“Everything assures me,” said the Prince of the Peaceful Island to the Princess, “that you can be no other than the divine Hebe. Alas! who else could possess so many charms?” “Who, my Lord,” replied the young Princess, blushing, as she rose to her feet, “could have so soon informed you of my having landed on this island?” “A powerful Fairy,” answered the young monarch, “who, desirous of making me the happiest Prince in the world, and this country the most fortunate, had promised to lead you hither, and had even permitted me to indulge in the proudest hopes; but I am too well aware,” he added, with a sigh, “that my fate depends much more upon your favour than upon hers.”

After this speech, to which she replied with much propriety, the Prince requested her to enter his car, that she might be conducted to the palace; and out of respect to her, he would have declined taking his place in it, but as she had gathered from his language and his attendants that he was the sovereign of the island, she insisted on his seating himself beside her. Never had two such beautiful persons been seen in the same car. All the Prince’s courtiers at the sight involuntarily burst into a tumult of applause. On the road, the young Prince entered into conversation with Hebe, with great animation and tenderness; and the Princess, happy to find her heart once more at ease, had recovered all her natural vivacity.

They reached the palace; it was not far from the sea-coast. It was approached through long and beautiful avenues, bordered by canals of running water. It was built entirely of ivory and roofed with agate.

The Prince’s guards were drawn up in line in all the courts. In the first, they were clothed with yellow feathers, and carried quivers, bows and arrows of silver. In the second, they were all clothed with flame-coloured feathers, and wore sabres with golden hilts, and sheaths ornamented with turquoises. The royal party entered the third court, in which the guards were dressed in white feathers, and held in their hands demi-lances painted and gilt, and entwined with garlands of flowers. There was never any war in that country, so that they did not carry any formidable weapons.

The Prince, descending from his car, led the lovely Hebe to a magnificent apartment. His Court was numerous, the ladies were beautiful; the men gallant and graceful; and although everybody in the Island was dressed in feathers only, they evinced so much taste in the arrangement of the colours, that the effect was very agreeable.

That evening, the Prince of the Peaceful Island gave a superb banquet to the beautiful Hebe, which was followed by a concert of flutes, lutes, theorbos and harpsichords. In that country they were not fond of any noisy instruments. The music was very charming; when it had lasted some time, a very sweet voice sang the following words: —

Ever to be thy beauty's slave I swear,
Nor can my heart conceive a happier state
Than constant bondage in a chain so fair —
Faithful as fond — on thee depends my fate.

The Prince gazed on Hebe while this tender air was sung, with an expression which persuaded her that the verses but declared his own sentiments.

When the concert was over, the Prince of the Peaceful Island, as it was late, led the Princess to the apartment selected for her. It was the most beautiful room in the palace. She found in it a great many ladies, who had been chosen by the Prince to have the honour of attending upon her.

The Prince quitted the beautiful Hebe the most enamoured of men. The Princess retired to rest, the ladies of the Court withdrew, and no one remained in the bed-chamber except the attendants she had brought with her. “Who could have believed it?” said she to them, as soon as they were left together, “my heart is tranquil. What deity has appeased my sufferings? I no longer love Atimir. I can think that he is the husband of Ilerie without dying of grief. Is not all this a dream which passes around me? No,” she continued, after a moment’s pause; “for even my dreams were never so free from agitation.” She then returned thanks a thousand times to Anguillette, and fell asleep.

When she awoke the next morning the Fairy appeared to her with a gracious smile upon her countenance, which she had not seen her wear since the fatal day she had requested the gift of love. “At length,” said the kind Fairy, “I have fortunately brought you hither. Your heart is free, and therefore it may be happy. I have cured you of a baneful passion; but, Hebe, may I trust that the fearful torments to which you have been exposed will sufficiently induce you to shun for ever those places in which you might chance to meet the ungrateful Atimir.” What promises did not the young Princess make to the Fairy! How repeatedly did she abjure love and her faithless lover! “Remember, at least, your promises,” rejoined the Fairy, with an air that inspired respect. “You will perish with Atimir should you ever seek again to behold him; but everything around you here ought to prevent your entertaining a desire so fatal to your existence. I will no longer conceal from you what I have determined upon in your favour. The Prince of the Peaceful Island is my kinsman. I protect him and his empire. He is young, he is amiable, and no Prince in the world is so worthy of being your husband. Reign, then, fair Hebe, in his heart and over his realm. Your royal father consents to your union. I was in his palace yesterday. I informed him and the Queen of your present position, and they gave me full power to care for your future fortunes.”

The Princess was greatly tempted to ask the Fairy what news had been heard of Atimir and Ilerie since her departure, but she dared not, after so many favours, run the risk of displeasing her. She employed to thank her all the eloquence the Fairy had gifted her with.

Her attendants now entered the chamber, and the Fairy disappeared. As soon as Hebe had arisen, twelve children of the most perfect beauty, dressed as Cupids, brought to her from the Prince twelve crystal baskets, filled with the most brilliant and fragrant flowers in the world. These flowers covered sets of jewels of all colours and of marvellous beauty. In the first basket presented to her, she found a note containing these lines: —

To the Divine Hebe.

That I adored thee yesterday I swore
An hundred times; and broken ne'er can be
The vows I uttered from my fond heart's core;
For Love himself dictated them to me,
And beauty such as thine ensureth constancy.

After what the Fairy had ordained, the Princess comprehended that she ought to receive these attentions from her new admirer as those of a Prince who was shortly to be her husband.

She received the little Cupids very graciously, and they had scarcely taken their departure, when twenty-four dwarfs, fancifully, but magnificently attired, appeared, bearing other presents. They consisted of dresses made entirely of feathers; but the colours, the work, and the jewels with which they were ornamented were so beautiful, that the Princess admitted she had never seen anything so elegant.

She chose a rose-coloured dress to wear that day. Her head-dress was composed of plumes of the same colour. She appeared so charming with these new ornaments, that the Prince of the Peaceful Island, who came to see her as soon as she was dressed, felt his passion for her redoubled. All the Court hastened to admire the Princess. In the evening the Prince proposed to the fair Hebe to descend into the palace gardens, which were admirably laid out.

During the promenade, the Prince informed Hebe that the Fairy had, for the last four years, led him to expect that Princess's arrival in the Peaceful Island; "but shortly after that period," added the Prince, "on my pressing her to fulfil her promise, she appeared distressed, and said to me, 'The Princess Hebe is destined by her father to another; but if my science does not deceive me, she will not marry the Prince who has been chosen for her husband. I will let you know the issue.' Some months afterwards the Fairy returned to the island. 'Fate favours you,' said she to me: 'the Prince who was to have married Hebe will not be her husband, and in a short time you will behold here the most beautiful Princess in the world.'"

"It is true," replied Hebe, blushing, "that I was to have married the son of a King whose dominions were adjacent to those of my father; but, after several events, the love he conceived for the Princess, my sister, induced him to fly with her from my father's kingdom."

The Prince of the Peaceful Island said a thousand tender things to the beautiful Hebe respecting the happy destiny which, in accordance with the Fairy's desire, had brought the Princess into his dominions. She listened to him with greater pleasure, as it interrupted her account of her own adventures, for she feared she could not speak of her faithless lover without the Prince's observing how great had been her affection for him.

The Prince of the Peaceful Island led Hebe into a grotto, highly decorated, and embellished by wonderful fountains. The further end of the grotto was dark; there were a great many niches in it, filled with statues of nymphs and shepherds, but they could scarcely be distinguished in the obscurity. As soon as the Princess had remained a few minutes in the grotto, she heard some agreeable music. A sudden and very brilliant illumination disclosed to her that it was a portion of these statues who were performing this music, whilst the rest advanced, and danced before her a very elegant and well-conceived ballet. It was intermixed with sweet and tender songs.

They had placed all the actors in this divertissement in the depths of the grotto, to surprise the Princess more agreeably.

After the ballet wild men appeared, and served up a superb collation under an arbour of jasmine and orange flowers.

The entertainment had nearly reached its termination, when suddenly the Fairy Anguillette appeared in the air, seated in a car drawn by four monkeys. She descended, and announced to the Prince of the Peaceful Island a delightful piece of good fortune, by apprising him that it was her desire he should become the husband of Hebe, and that that beautiful Princess had promised her consent.

The Prince, transported with joy, was uncertain at the moment whether his first thanks were due to Hebe or to Anguillette; and although joy does not inspire one with such affecting expressions as sorrow, he nevertheless acquitted himself with much talent and grace.

The Fairy determined not to leave the Prince and Princess before the day fixed for their union. It was to be in three days. She made superb presents to the fair Hebe and to the Prince of the Peaceful Island, and at length, on the day she had named, they repaired, followed by their whole Court and an infinite number of the inhabitants of the Island, to the temple of Hymen.

It was constructed simply of branches of olive and palmtrees interlaced, and which, by the power of the Fairy, never withered.

Hymen was therein represented by a statue of white marble, crowned with roses, elevated on an altar, decorated only with flowers, and leaning on a little Cupid of exquisite beauty, who, with a smiling countenance, presented to him a crown of myrtle.

Anguillette, who had erected this temple, resolved that everything in it should be marked by the greatest simplicity, to show that love alone could render Hymen happy. The difficulty is to unite them. As it was a miracle worthy the power of a Fairy, she had joined them indissolubly in the Peaceful Island, and, contrary to the custom in other kingdoms, one could there be married, and remain fond and faithful.

In this temple of Hymen the fair Hebe, led by Anguillette, plighted her troth to the Prince of the Peaceful Island, and received his vows with pleasure. She did not feel for him the same involuntary inclination which she had done for Atimir; but her heart, being at that moment free from passion, she received this husband, by command of the Fairy, as a Prince worthy of her by his personal merit, and still more so by the affection he bore to her.

The marriage was celebrated by a thousand splendid entertainments, and Hebe found herself happy with a Prince who adored her.

In the meanwhile the King, Hebe’s father, had received some ambassadors from Atimir, who sent them to request permission for him to espouse Ilerie. The King, Atimir’s father, was dead, and that Prince was consequently absolute master in his own country. The hand of the Princess he had carried off was accorded to him with joy. After the marriage Queen Ilerie sent other ambassadors to her royal parents to request permission for her to revisit their Court, and to obtain their forgiveness for the fault which love had caused her to commit, and which the merit of Atimir might be pleaded in excuse of. The King consented, and Atimir proceeded to the Palace with his bride. A thousand entertainments marked the day of their arrival. Shortly afterwards the fair Hebe and her charming husband sent ambassadors also to the King and Queen, to announce their marriage to them. Anguillette had already informed them of the event, but they did not on that account receive the ambassadors with less delight or distinction.

Atimir was with the King when they were introduced to their first audience. The lovely form of Hebe could never be effaced from a heart in which she had reigned with such supreme power. Atimir sighed, in spite of himself, at the recital of the happiness of the Prince of the Peaceful Island. He even accused Hebe of being inconstant, forgetting how much reason he had given her for becoming so.

The ambassadors of the Prince of the Peaceful Island returned to their sovereign laden with honours and presents. They related to the Princess how much delight the King and Queen had manifested at the tidings of her happy marriage. But, oh! too faithful chroniclers, they informed her at the same time that the Princess Ilerie and Atimir were at the Court. These names, so dangerous to her peace, renewed her anxiety. She was happy; but can mortals command uninterrupted felicity?

She could not resist her impatience to return to the Court of the King, her father. It was only, she said, to see once more him and her mother. She believed this herself; and how often, when we are in love, do we mistake our own feelings!

Notwithstanding the threats uttered by the Fairy, in order to prevent her from revisiting the spot where she might again behold Atimir, she proposed this voyage to the Prince of the Peaceful Island. At first he refused. Anguillette had forbidden him to let Hebe go out of his dominions. She continued to press him. He adored her, and was ignorant of the passion she had formerly entertained for Atimir. Is it possible to refuse anything to those we love?

He hoped to please Hebe by his blind obedience. He gave orders for their departure, and never was there seen such magnificence as was displayed in his equipage and on board his vessels.

The sage Anguillette, indignant at the little respect paid by Hebe and the Prince of the Peaceful Island to her instructions, abandoned them to their destiny, and did not make her appearance to renew the prudent advice by which they had so little profited.

The Prince and Princess embarked, and after a very prosperous voyage, arrived at the Court of Hebe’s father. The King and Queen were extremely delighted to behold once more that dear Princess. They were charmed with the Prince of the Peaceful Island: they celebrated the arrival of the royal pair by a thousand entertainments throughout the kingdom. Ilerie trembled on hearing of the return of Hebe. It was decided that they should meet, and that no reference whatever should be made to past events.

Atimir requested to be allowed to see Hebe. It appeared to Ilerie, indeed, that he preferred his request with a little too much eagerness.

The Princess Hebe blushed when he entered her apartment, and they both felt an embarrassment out of which all their presence of mind could not extricate them.

The King, who was present, remarked it. He joined in their conversation; and to render the visit shorter, proposed to the Princess to descend into the Palace Gardens.

Atimir dared not offer his hand to Hebe. He bowed to her respectfully, and retired.

But what thoughts and what feelings did he not carry away with him in his heart! All the deep and tender passion he had formerly felt for Hebe was rekindled in a moment. He hated Ilerie; he hated himself. Never was infidelity followed by so much repentance, nor by so much suffering.

In the evening he went to the Queen’s apartments. The Princess Hebe was there. He had no eyes but for her. He sought assiduously for an opportunity of speaking to her. She continued to avoid him; but her glances were too clearly comprehended by him for his peace. He persisted for some time in compelling her to observe that her eyes had regained their former empire over him.

Hebe’s heart was alarmed by it. Atimir appeared to her still too charming. She determined to shun him as carefully as he sought her. She never spoke to him but in presence of the Queen, and then only when she could not possibly avoid it. She resolved also to advise the Prince of the Peaceful Island to return speedily to his own kingdom. But with what difficulty do we endeavour to fly from those we love!

One evening that she was reflecting on this subject, she shut herself up in her cabinet, in order to indulge in her musings without interruption. She found in her pocket a note, which had been slipped into it unperceived by her, and the handwriting of Atimir, which she recognised, threw her into an agitation which cannot be described. She considered she ought not to read it; but her heart triumphed over her reason, and opening it she found these lines: —

No more my love can to your heart appeal —
For me indifference alone you feel.
Your heart, fair Hebe, faithless is in turn,
So soon my fatal falsehood could it learn.
Alas, why can you not, with equal speed,
Back to its early faith the truant lead?

The happy time is past when Hebe fair,
Love’s pains and pleasures deigned with me to share.
Both have their fetters broken, it is true,
But I my bondage hasten to renew.
Alas! for my sad fault must I atone,

By languishing in this sweet chain alone?

“Ah, cruel one!” exclaimed the Princess. “What have I done to you that you seek to rekindle in my soul a passion which has cost me so much agony?” The tears of Hebe interrupted her utterance.

In the meanwhile Ilerie was tortured by a jealousy which was but too well founded. Atimir, carried away by his passion, lost all control over himself. The Prince of the Peaceful Island began to perceive his attachment to Hebe; but he was desirous of examining more narrowly the conduct of Atimir before he spoke to the Princess on the subject. He adored her with unabating constancy, and feared by his remarks to draw her attention to the passion of his rival.

A few days after Hebe had received Atimir’s note, a tournament was proclaimed. The Princes, and all the young noblemen of the Court, were invited to break a lance in honour of the ladies.

The King and Queen honoured the tournament with their presence. The fair Hebe and the Princess Ilerie were to confer the prizes with their own hands. One was a sword, the hilt and sheath of which were entirely covered with jewels of extraordinary beauty. The other, a bracelet of brilliants of the finest water.

All the knights entered for the lists made their appearance with marvellous magnificence, and mounted on the finest horses in the world. Each wore the colours of his mistress, and on their shields were pictured gallant devices, expressive of the sentiments of their hearts.

The Prince of the Peaceful Island was superbly attired, and rode a dun-coloured horse with black mane and tail of incomparable beauty. In all his appointments rose colour was predominant. It was the favourite colour of Hebe. An ample plume of the same hue floated above his light helmet. He drew down the applause of all the spectators, and looked so handsome in his brilliant armour, that Hebe mentally reproached herself a thousand times for entertaining such feelings as the unhappiness of another had inspired her with.

The retinue of the Prince of the Peaceful Island was numerous. They were all attired according to the fashion of their country. Everything around him was elegant and costly. An esquire bore his shield, and all were eager to examine the device.

It was a heart pierced with an arrow; a little Cupid was depicted shooting many others at it to inflict fresh wounds, but all except the first appeared to have been shot in vain. Beneath were these words: —

I FEAR NO OTHERS.

THE COLOUR and the device of the Prince of the Peaceful Island, rendered it obvious that it was as the champion of the fair Hebe he had chosen to enter the lists.

The spectators were still admiring his magnificent array, when Atimir appeared, mounted on a proud and fiery steed, entirely black. The prevailing colour of the dress he had assumed for that day was what is usually termed “dead-leaf,” unadorned with gold, silver, or jewels; but on his helmet he wore a tuft of rose-coloured feathers, and although he affected great negligence in his attire, he was so handsome, and bore himself so proudly, that from the moment he entered the lists no one looked at anything else. On his shield, which he carried himself, was painted a Cupid trampling upon some chains, while at the same time he was loading himself with others that were heavier. Around the figure were these words: —

THESE ALONE ARE worthy of me.

THE TRAIN of Atimir were attired in dead-leaf and silver, and on them he had showered jewels. It was composed of the principal noblemen of his Court, and although they were all fine-looking men, it was easy to see by the air of Atimir that he was born to command them. It is impossible to describe the various emotions which the sight of Atimir awakened in the hearts of Hebe and Ilerie, and the poignant jealousy which the Prince of the Peaceful Island felt when he saw floating over the helmet of Atimir, a plume of the same colour as his own.

The motto of his device kindled his anger into a fury, which he controlled for the moment, only to choose a better time to vent it on his rival.

The King and Queen saw clearly enough the audacity and imprudence of Atimir, and were exceedingly angry with him; but it was not the time to show it.

The tilting was commenced amidst a flourish of trumpets which rent the air. It was exceedingly good. All the young knights made proof of their skill. The Prince of the Peaceful Island, although a prey to his jealousy, signalized himself particularly, and remained conqueror.

Atimir, who was aware that the prize for the first encounter would be given by Ilerie, did not present himself to dispute the victory with the Prince of the Peaceful Island. The judges of the field declared the latter victor; and, amidst the acclamation and applause of all the spectators, he advanced with the greatest possible grace to the spot where the Royal Family were seated, to receive the diamond bracelet.

The Princess Ilerie presented it to him. He received it with due respect, and having saluted the King, Queen, and Princesses, returned to his place in the lists.

The mournful Ilerie had too clearly observed the contempt with which the fickle Atimir had treated the prize destined to be accorded by her hand. She sighed sadly, while the fair Hebe felt a secret joy which reason vainly endeavoured to stifle in her heart. Other courses were run with results similar to those which had preceded them. The Prince of the Peaceful Island, animated by the presence of Hebe, performed wonders, and was a second time conqueror; but Atimir, weary of beholding the glory of his rival, and flattered by the idea of receiving the prize from the hand of Hebe, presented himself at the opposite end of the lists.

The rivals gazed at each other fiercely, and the impending encounter between two such great Princes was distinguished by the fresh agitation which it excited in the two Princesses. The Princes ran their course with equal advantage. Each broke his lance fairly without swerving in his saddle. The acclamations were redoubled, and the Princes, without giving their horses time to breathe, returned to their places, received fresh lances, and ran a second course with the same address as the first. The King, who feared to see Fortune give the victory to either of these rivals, and in order to spare the feelings of both, sent in all haste to them to say that they ought to be satisfied with the glory they had acquired, and to request them to let the tilting terminate for that day with the course they had just run.

The King's messenger having approached them, they listened with impatience to the royal request, particularly Atimir, who, seizing the first opportunity to reply, said, "Go, tell the King that I should be unworthy the honour he does me in taking an interest in my glory, if I could remain satisfied without conquest."

"Let us see," rejoined the Prince of the Peaceful Island, clapping spurs to his horse, "who best deserves the esteem of the King and the favours of Fortune!"

The King's messenger had not retraced his steps to the royal balcony before the two rivals, animated by stronger feelings than the mere desire to carry off the prize of the joust, had met in full career.

Fortune favoured the audacious Atimir: he was the conqueror. The horse of the Prince of the Peaceful Island, fatigued with the many severe courses he had run, fell, and rolled his master in the dust.

What joy for Atimir! and what fury for the unfortunate Prince of the Peaceful Island! Leaping to his feet again instantly, and advancing to his rival before any one could reach to part them, — “Thou hast conquered me in these games, Atimir,” said he, with an air which sufficiently expressed his wrath, “but it is with the sword that our quarrel must be decided.” “Willingly,” replied the haughty Atimir. “I will await thee to-morrow at sunrise in the wood that borders the palace gardens.” The Judges of the Field joined them as these last words were uttered, and the Princes mutually affected unconcern, for fear the King should suspect and frustrate their intentions. The Prince of the Peaceful Island remounted his horse, and rode with all the speed he could urge it to, from the fatal spot where he had been defeated by Atimir. In the meanwhile that Prince proceeded to receive the prize of the joust from the hand of Hebe, who presented it to him with a confusion sufficiently betraying the conflicting emotions in her bosom; while Atimir, in receiving it, displayed all the extravagancies of a passionate lover.

The King and Queen, who kept their eyes upon him, could not fail to observe this, and returned to the Palace much discontented with the termination of the day. Atimir, occupied only by his passion, left the lists, forbidding any of his train to accompany him; and Ilerie, smarting with grief and jealousy, retired to her apartments.

What then were the feelings of Hebe! “I must depart,” she said to herself. “What other remedy is there for the evil I anticipate?”

In the meanwhile, the King and the Queen determined to request Atimir would return to his own dominions, to avoid the painful consequences which his love might entail upon them. They resolved also to make the same proposition to the Prince of the Peaceful Island, in order not to show any preference for either; but ah! too tardy prudence! whilst they were deliberating how best to secure the departure of the two Princes, the rivals were preparing to meet in mortal combat.

Hebe, on returning from the lists, immediately inquired for the Prince of the Peaceful Island. She was answered that he was in the palace gardens; that he had desired he might not be followed, and that he appeared very melancholy. The fair Hebe thought it was her duty to seek and console him for the slight mischances which had happened to him, and therefore, without staying a moment in her own apartment, descended into the gardens, followed only by a few of her women.

In the course of her search for the Prince of the Peaceful Island, she entered a shady alley, and came suddenly on the enamoured Atimir, who, transported by his passion, and listening only to its promptings, threw himself on his knees at a short distance from the Princess, and drawing the sword which he had that day received from her hand, exclaimed, “Hear me, beautiful Hebe! or see me die at your feet!”

Hebe’s attendants, terrified by the actions of the Prince, rushed upon him, and endeavoured to force from his grasp the sword, the point of which he had directed towards himself with desperate resolution. Hebe, the unhappy Hebe, would have flown from the spot; but how many reasons concurred to detain her near him she loved!

The desire to suppress the scandal this adventure might create; the intention to implore Atimir to endeavour to stifle a passion which was so perilous to them; the pity naturally awakened by so affecting an object, — everything, in short, conspired to arrest her flight. She approached the Prince. Her presence suspended his fury. He let fall his sword at the feet of the Princess. Never was so much agitation, so much love, so much anguish, displayed in an interview that lasted but a few minutes. No words can express the feelings of those wretched lovers during that brief period. Hebe, alarmed at finding herself in the company of Atimir, almost, perhaps, in sight of the Prince of the Peaceful Island, made a great effort to depart, and left him with a command never to see her more. What an order for Atimir! But for the recollection of the combat to which he had been challenged by the Prince of the Peaceful Island, he would have turned his sword an hundred times against his own breast; but he trusted to perish in revenging himself on his rival.

In the meanwhile, the fair Hebe shut herself up in her own chamber, to avoid more surely the sight of Atimir. “Relentless Fairy,” she cried, “thou didst only predict my death as the consequence of my again beholding this unhappy Prince; but the tortures I suffer are a much more dreadful penalty.” Hebe sent her attendants to seek for the Prince of the Peaceful Island in the gardens, and throughout the Palace; but he was nowhere to be found, and she became extremely anxious on his account. They hunted for him all night long, but in vain, for he had concealed himself in a little rustic building in the middle of the wood, to be more certain that no one could prevent his proceeding to the spot fixed on for the combat. He was on the ground at sunrise, and Atimir arrived a few minutes afterwards. The two rivals, impatient for revenge and victory, drew their swords. It was the first time the Prince of the Peaceful Island had wielded his in earnest, for war was unknown in his island.

He proved, however, not a less redoubtable antagonist on that account to Atimir. He had little skill, but much bravery, and great love. He fought like a man who set no value on his life, and Atimir worthily sustained in this combat the high reputation he had previously acquired. The Princes were animated by too many vindictive feelings for their encounter not to terminate fatally. After having fought with equal advantage for a considerable period, they dealt each other at the same instant so furious a blow, that both fell to the earth which was speedily red with their blood.

The Prince of the Peaceful Island fainted with the loss of his; and Atimir, mortally wounded, uttered but the name of Hebe as he expired for her sake.

One of the parties in search of the Prince of the Peaceful Island arrived on the spot, and were horror-struck at the sight of this cruel spectacle.

The Princess Hebe, urged by her anxiety, had descended into the gardens. She hastened towards the place from whence she heard the exclamations of her people, who uttered in confusion the names of the two Princes, and beheld these fatal and affecting objects. She believed the Prince of the Peaceful Island was dead as well as Atimir, and at that moment there was little difference to be distinguished between them. “Precious lives,” exclaimed Hebe, despairingly, after gazing for an instant on the unfortunate Princes, — “precious lives, which have been sacrificed for me; I hasten to avenge you by the termination of my own!” With these words she flung herself upon the fatal sword Atimir had received from her hands, and buried the point in her bosom before her people, astonished at this dreadful scene, had power to prevent her.

She expired, and the Fairy Anguillette, moved by so much misery despite of all the obstacles her science had enabled her to raise, appeared on the spot which had witnessed the destruction of these beautiful beings. The Fairy upbraided Fate, and could not restrain her tears. Then hastening to succour the Prince of the Peaceful Island, who she knew was still breathing, she healed his wound, and transported him in an instant to his own island, where, by the miraculous power she had conferred on it, the Prince consoled himself for his loss, and forgot his passion for Hebe.

The King and Queen, who had not the advantage of such assistance, gave themselves up entirely to their sorrow; and time only brought them consolation. As to Ilerie, nothing could exceed her despair. She remained constant to her grief, and to the memory of the ungrateful Atimir.

Meanwhile, Anguillette, having transported the Prince of the Peaceful Island to his dominions, touched with her wand the sad remains of the charming Atimir and the lovely Hebe. At the same instant they were transformed into two trees of the most perfect beauty. The Fairy gave them the name of *Charmes*, to preserve for ever the remembrance of the charms which had been so brilliantly displayed in the persons of these unfortunate lovers.

9

YOUNG AND HANDSOME

Once on a time there was a potent Fairy, who endeavoured to resist the power of Love; but the little god was more potent than the Fairy. He touched her heart without even employing all his power. A handsome Knight arrived at the Court of the Fairy in search of adventures. He was amiable, the son of a king, and had acquired renown by a thousand noble achievements. His worth was known to the Fairy. Fame had wafted the report of it even into her dominions.

The person of the young Prince corresponded so entirely with his high reputation, that the Fairy, moved by so many charms, accepted in a very short time the proposals which the handsome Knight made to her. The Fairy was beautiful, and he was sincerely in love with her. She married him, and by that marriage made him the richest and most powerful King in the world. They lived a long time most happily together after their union.

The Fairy grew old, and the King, her husband, although he kept pace with her in years, ceased to love her as soon as her beauty had departed. He attached himself to some young beauties of his Court, and the Fairy was tormented by a jealousy which proved fatal to several of her rivals. She had had but one daughter by her marriage with the handsome Knight. She was the object of all her tenderness, and was worthy of the affection lavished on her.

The Fairies, who were her relations, had endowed her from her birth with the finest intelligence, the sweetest beauty, and with graces still more charming than beauty. Her dancing surpassed anything that had ever been seen, and her voice subdued all hearts.

Her form was perfect symmetry. Without being too tall, her appearance was noble. Her hair was of the most beautiful black in the world. Her mouth small and exquisitely formed, her teeth of surprising whiteness. Her lovely eyes were black, sparkling, and expressive, and never did glances so piercing and yet so tender awaken love in the bosoms of all beholders.

The Fairy had named her Young and Handsome. She had not as yet endowed her herself. She had postponed that favour in order to judge the better in process of time by what sort of benefit she could ensure the happiness of a child that was so dear to her.

The King’s inconstancies were an eternal source of affliction to the Fairy. The misfortune of ceasing to be loved induced her to believe that the most desirable of blessings was to be always lovely. And this, after a thousand reflections, was the gift she bestowed on Young and Handsome. She was then just sixteen: and the Fairy employed all her science in the formation of a spell which should enable the Princess to remain for ever exactly as she appeared at that moment. What greater benefit could she bestow on Young and Handsome than the happiness of never ceasing to be like herself? The Fairy lost the King, her husband, and although he had been long unfaithful to her, his death caused her such deep sorrow, that she resolved to abandon her empire, and to retire to a castle which she had built in a country quite a desert, and surrounded by so vast a forest that the Fairy alone could find her way through it.

This resolution sadly afflicted Young and Handsome. She wished not to quit her mother; but the Fairy peremptorily commanded her to remain; and before she returned to her wilderness, she assembled in the most beautiful palace in the world all the pleasures and sports she had long banished, and composed from them a Court for Young and Handsome, who in this agreeable company gradually consoled herself for the absence of the Fairy.

All the Kings and Princes who considered themselves worthy of her (and in those days people flattered themselves much less than they do now) came in crowds to the Court of Young and Handsome, and endeavoured by their attentions and their professions to win the heart of so lovely a Princess.

Never had anything equalled the magnificence and amusements of the palace of Young and Handsome. Each day was distinguished by some new entertainment. Everybody composing it was happy, except her lovers, who adored her without hope. She looked with favour upon none; but they saw her daily, and her most indifferent glances were sufficiently attractive to detain them there for ever.

One day Young and Handsome, content with the prosperity and popularity of her reign, wandered into a pleasant wood, followed only by some of her nymphs, the better to enjoy the charm of solitude. Absorbed by agreeable reflections, (what could she think of that would not be agreeable?) she emerged from the wood unconsciously, and walked towards a charming meadow enamelled with thousands of flowers.

Her beautiful eyes were occupied in contemplating a hundred various and pleasing objects, when they lighted in turn on a flock of sheep which was quietly feeding in the meadow on the bank of a little brook that murmured sweetly as it rippled over the pebbles in its path. It was overshadowed by a tuft of trees. A young shepherd, stretched on the grass beside the rivulet, was calmly sleeping; his crook was leaning against a tree, and a pretty dog, which appeared to be more a favourite of its master than the guardian of his flock, lay close to the shepherd.

Young and Handsome approached the brook, and cast her eyes upon the youth. What a beautiful vision! Cupid himself sleeping in the arms of Psyche did not display such charms.

The young Fairy stood gazing, and could not restrain some gestures of admiration, which were quickly succeeded by more tender emotions. The handsome shepherd appeared to be about eighteen, of a commanding form; his brown hair, naturally curling, fell in wavy locks upon his shoulders, and was in perfect harmony with the most charming face in the world. His eyes, closed in slumber, concealed from the Fairy, beneath their lids, new fires reserved by Love to redouble her passion for the shepherd.

Young and Handsome felt her heart agitated by an emotion to which it had hitherto been a stranger, and it was no longer in her power to stir from the spot.

Fairies possess the same privilege as goddesses. They love a shepherd when he is loveable, just as if he were the greatest monarch in the universe. For all classes of mortals are equally beneath them.

Young and Handsome found too much pleasure in her new sensations to endeavour to combat them. She loved fondly, and from that moment only indulged in the happy idea of being loved in return. She did not dare to wake the handsome shepherd, for fear he should remark her agitation; and pleasing herself with the notion of discovering her love for him in a gallant and agreeable manner. She rendered herself invisible to enjoy the astonishment she was about to cause him.

Immediately arose a strain of enchanting music. What an exquisite symphony! It went straight to the heart. The delicious sound awoke Alidor (such was the name of the handsome shepherd), who for some moments imagined he was in an agreeable dream; but what was his surprise when, on rising from the grass on which he had been lying, he found himself attired in the most tasteful and magnificent fashion. The colours of his dress were yellow and grey, laced with silver. His wallet was embroidered all over with the initials of Young and Handsome, and suspended by a band of flowers. His crook was of the most marvellous workmanship, ornamented with precious stones of different colours set in elegant devices. His hat was composed entirely of jonquils and blue hyacinths most ingeniously woven together.

Delighted and astonished at his new attire, he gazed at himself reflected in the neighbouring stream. Young and Handsome, meanwhile, feared an hundred times for him the fate of the beautiful Narcissus.

The wonder of Alidor was still further increased at seeing his sheep covered with silk whiter than snow, in lieu of their ordinary fleeces, and adorned with a thousand knots of ribbons of various colours.

His favourite ewe was more decorated than any of the others. She came skipping over the grass to him, appearing proud of her ornaments.

The shepherd's pretty dog had a golden collar, on which bands of small emeralds formed these four lines: —

Alas! how many fears and doubts alarm
The maiden who on love her hopes would rest;
A look, a word, her youthful heart may charm,
But constancy alone can make it blest.

The handsome shepherd judged by these verses that he was indebted to Love for his agreeable adventure. The sun, by this time, had set. Alidor, absorbed in a delightful reverie, bent his steps towards his cottage. He did not observe any change in its exterior, but he had scarcely crossed the threshold when a delicious fragrance announced to him some agreeable novelty. He found the walls of his little hut hung with a tissue of jasmine and orange flowers. The curtains of his bed were of the same materials, looped up by garlands of pinks and roses. An agreeable atmosphere kept all these flowers perfectly fresh and beautiful.

The floor was of porcelain, on which were represented the stories of all the goddesses who had been in love with shepherds. Alidor observed this; — he was very intelligent. The shepherds of that country were not ordinary shepherds. Some of them were descended from Kings or great Princes, and Alidor could trace his pedigree up to a Sovereign who had long sat on the throne of those realms before they became a portion of the dominions of the Fairies.

Up to this period the handsome shepherd had been insensible to the charms of Love; but he now began to feel, even without having as yet distinguished the particular object, that his young heart burned to surrender itself a prisoner. He was dying with impatience to become acquainted with the Goddess or Fairy who had bestowed upon him such tasteful and beautiful proofs of her affection. He paced his chamber with a sweet anxiety which he had never before experienced. As night fell, an agreeable illumination appeared to shed a new daylight throughout the cottage. The musings of Alidor were interrupted by the sight of a rich and delicate banquet, which was served up to him by invisible hands. “What!” exclaimed the shepherd, smiling; “still new pleasures, and no one to partake them with me?” His little dog attempted to play with him, but he was too much pre-occupied to encourage his gambols.

Alidor seated himself at the table. A little Cupid appeared and presented him with wine in a cup made of one entire diamond. The shepherd made a tolerable supper for the hero of such adventures. He endeavoured to question the little Cupid; but, instead of answering, the boy shot arrows at him, which, the moment they struck, became drops of exquisitely scented water. Alidor comprehended clearly by this sport that the little Cupid was forbidden to explain the mystery. The table disappeared as soon as Alidor had ceased eating, and the little Cupid flew away.

A charming symphony stole upon the ear, awaking a thousand tender sensations in the heart of the young shepherd. His impatience to learn to whom he was indebted for all these pleasures increased every instant, and it was with great joy he heard a voice sing the following words: —

UNDER WHAT FORM, Love, wilt thou cast thy dart
At the young shepherd who enthrals my heart?
Once should he know he is the master there,
Will he my form and face account less fair?
Of my affection he will be too sure,
But that may not his love for me secure.
With greater power to charm, my smiles endue,
I need no aid to make me fond or true.

"APPEAR, THOU CHARMING BEING!" exclaimed the shepherd; "and by your presence crown my happiness. I believe you to be too beautiful to fear that I should ever be faithless."

No answer was returned to this adjuration. The music ceased shortly afterwards; a profound silence reigned in the cottage and invited the shepherd to sweet repose. He threw himself on his bed, but it was some time before he could sleep, agitated as he was by his curiosity and his new-born passion.

The song of the birds awoke him at daybreak. He quitted his cottage and led his pretty flock to the same spot where the preceding day his good fortune had commenced. Scarcely had he seated himself beside the brook, when a canopy, composed of a most brilliant stuff of flame-colour and gold was attached to the branches of the nearest trees to shelter Alidor from the rays of the sun. Some young shepherds and pretty shepherdesses of the neighbourhood arrived at the spot. They were in search of Alidor. His canopy, his flock, and his dress excited in them great astonishment.

They advanced hastily, and eagerly asked him the origin of all these marvels. Alidor smiled at their surprise, and recounted to them what had occurred to him. More than one shepherd felt jealous, and more than one shepherdess reddened with mortification. There were few of the latter in those parts who had not had designs upon the heart of the handsome shepherd, and a goddess or a fairy appeared to them by far too dangerous a rival.

Young and Handsome, who rarely lost sight of her shepherd, endured with considerable impatience the conversation of the shepherdesses. Some amongst them were very charming, and one so lovely that she might be a formidable rival even to a goddess.

The indifference with which Alidor treated them all re-assured the young Fairy. The shepherdesses quitted Alidor reluctantly, and led their flocks further into the meadow.

Shortly after they had departed, leaving only a few shepherds with Alidor, a delicious banquet appeared, set out upon a marble table. Seats of green turf arose around it, and Alidor invited his friends, the shepherds who had come to join him, to share his repast. On seating themselves at the table, they discovered that they were all attired in handsome dresses, though less magnificent than that of Alidor, which at the same moment became dazzling with jewels.

The neighbouring echoes were suddenly awakened by rustic, but graceful, music, and a voice was heard singing the following words: —

Of Alidor, envy the pleasure supreme,
He only could love to this bosom impart;
Ye shepherds, who beauty and worth can esteem,
Do honour to him as the choice of my heart.

THE ASTONISHMENT of the shepherds increased every moment. A troop of young shepherdesses approached the banks of the rivulet. The melody of the music was not so much the attraction which led them to this spot, as the desire to see Alidor. They began to dance beneath the trees, forming an agreeable little *bal-champêtre*.

The young Fairy, who was present all the time, but invisible, assumed in an instant, with six of her nymphs, the prettiest shepherdesses' dresses that had ever been seen. Their only ornaments were garlands of flowers. Their crooks were adorned with them, and Young and Handsome, with a simple wreath of jonquils, which produced a charming effect in her beautiful black hair, appeared the most enchanting person in the world. The arrival of these fair shepherdesses surprised the whole company. All the beauties of the district felt mortified. There was not a shepherd who did not eagerly exert himself to do the honours of the *fête* to the new-comers.

Young and Handsome, though unknown to them as a Fairy, did not receive less respect or attract less attention. The sincerest homage is always paid to beauty. Young and Handsome felt flattered by the effect of her charms unaided by the knowledge of her dignity.

As to Alidor, the instant she appeared amongst them, forgetting that the love which a goddess or a fairy bore to him bound him to avoid anything that might be displeasing to her, he flew towards Young and Handsome, and accosting her with the most graceful air in the world: — "Come, beautiful shepherdess," said he, "come and occupy a place more worthy of you. So exquisite a person is too superior to all other beauties to remain mingled with them." He offered his hand, and Young and Handsome, delighted with the sentiments which the sight of her had begun to awaken in the breast of her shepherd, allowed herself to be led by Alidor beneath the canopy which had been attached to the trees as soon as he had arrived at the spot that morning. A troop of young shepherds brought, by his orders, bundles of flowers and branches, and constructed with them a little throne, on which they seated Young and Handsome. Alidor laid himself at her feet. Her nymphs seated themselves near her, and the rest of the party formed a large circle, in which everybody took their places according to their inclinations.

This spot, adorned with so much beauty, presented the most agreeable spectacle in the world. The murmur of the brook mingled with the music, and it seemed as if all the birds in the neighbourhood had assembled there to take their parts in the concert. A great number of shepherds advanced, in separate groups, to pay their court to Young and Handsome. One amongst them, named Iphis, approaching the young Fairy, said to her, “However distinguished may be the place Alidor has induced you to accept, it is one, perhaps, very dangerous to occupy.” “I believe so,” answered the Fairy, with a smile that had power to captivate all hearts. “The shepherdesses of this village will find it difficult to forgive me the preference which Alidor appears to have accorded to me amongst so many beauties more deserving of it.” “No,” rejoined Iphis; “our shepherdesses will be more just; but Alidor is beloved by a goddess.” And thereupon Iphis related to Young and Handsome the adventure which had befallen the beautiful shepherd. When he had finished his story, the young Fairy, turning towards Alidor with a gracious air, said to him, “I do not desire to provoke so terrible an enemy as the goddess by whom you are beloved. Evidently she did not intend me to occupy this position, and therefore I resign it to her.”

She rose as she said these words, but Alidor, gazing fondly upon her, exclaimed, “Stay, lovely shepherdess; there is no goddess whose love I would not sacrifice for the delight of adoring you; and she of whom Iphis speaks is not over wise, at least in matters of the heart, since she has permitted me to behold you!” Young and Handsome could not make any reply to Alidor. The shepherds at that moment came to request her to dance, and never was more grace displayed than on this occasion. Alidor was her partner, who surpassed himself. Never had the most magnificent *fêtes* at the Court of Young and Handsome afforded her so much pleasure as this rural entertainment. Love embellishes every spot in which we behold the object of our affections. Alidor felt his passion increasing every instant, and made a thousand vows to sacrifice all the goddesses and fairies in the world to the ardent love with which his shepherdess had inspired him. Young and Handsome was delighted with the evident attachment of the beautiful shepherd; but she wished to make a momentary trial of his affection. Iphis was amiable, and, if Alidor had not been present, would no doubt have been much admired. The young Fairy spoke to him twice or thrice very graciously, and danced several times with him.

Alidor burned with a jealousy as intense as his love. Young and Handsome observed it, and feeling more sure of her shepherd’s heart, she ceased paining it, spoke no more to Iphis during the rest of the day, and bestowed on Alidor her most encouraging glances. Heavens! what glances! they would have filled the most insensible hearts with love.

Evening having arrived, the lovely company separated with regret. A thousand sighs followed Young and Handsome, who forbade any of the shepherds to accompany her; but she promised Alidor, in a few brief words, that he should see her again in the meadows the next morning. She departed, followed by her nymphs and watched by the shepherds, who were in hopes that, by following her at a distance, they might discover, without her perceiving them, the village to which these divine beings belonged; but the moment that Young and Handsome had entered a little wood which concealed her from the sight of the shepherds, she rendered herself and her nymphs invisible, and they amused themselves for some time in seeing the shepherds vainly endeavouring to trace the road they had taken. Young and Handsome observed with pleasure that Alidor was amongst the most eager of the party.

Iphis was in despair that he had not followed them closely enough, and several of the shepherds, who had been captivated by the nymphs, passed half of the night in hunting the woods and the neighbourhood. Some authors have asserted that the nymphs, following the example of the young Fairy, thought some of these shepherds more charming than all the kings they had ever seen in their lives.

Young and Handsome returned to her palace, and, although a Fairy, always occupied by a thousand different affairs, might absent herself without causing much surprise, she found all her lovers exceedingly uneasy at not having seen her the whole day, but not one of them ventured to reproach her for it. It was necessary to be a very submissive and respectful suitor in the palace of Young and Handsome, or she would speedily issue an order for him to quit her Court. Her admirers did not even dare to speak to her of their passion. It was only by their attentions, their respect, and their constancy, that they could hope eventually to touch her heart.

Young and Handsome appeared little interested in what was passing around. She ate scarcely any supper, fell into frequent fits of musing, and the princes, her lovers, attentive to all her actions, imagined that they heard her sigh several times. She dismissed all the Court very early, and retired to her apartments.

When one is looking forward to a meeting with those we love, everything that presents itself in the interim appears very poor and very troublesome.

The young Fairy, with the nymphs who had followed her all the day, concealed in a cloud, were transported in an instant to the hut of the handsome shepherd. He had returned to it, very much vexed at not being able to ascertain the road his divine shepherdess had taken. Everything in his cottage was as charming as when he had left it; but as in musing he cast his eyes upon the floor of his little chamber, he perceived a change in it. In lieu of paintings from the stories of goddesses who had been in love with shepherds, he perceived the subjects were composed of terrible examples of unfortunate lovers who had proved unworthy of the affection of those divinities.

"You are right," exclaimed the handsome shepherd, on observing these little pictures; "you are right, Goddess. I deserve your anger; but wherefore did you permit so lovely a shepherdess to present herself to my sight? Alas! what divinity could defend a heart from the effects of such charms!" Young and Handsome had arrived in the cottage when Alidor uttered these words. She felt all the tenderness of them, and her affection was redoubled by them.

As on the previous day, a magnificent repast appeared, but Alidor did not enjoy it as he did the first. He was in love, and even a little jealous; for it often recurred to him that his shepherdess had spoken with some interest to Iphis. The promise, however, that she had made him, that he should see her the next day in the meadow, soothed a little his vexation.

The little Cupid waited on him during his repast, but Alidor, occupied by his new anxiety, spoke not a word to him. The table disappeared, and the child, approaching Alidor, presented him with two magnificent miniature cases, and then flew away.

The handsome shepherd opened one of the cases hastily. It contained the portrait of a young female of such perfect beauty, that imagination can scarcely conceive it. Under this marvellous miniature was written, in letters of gold —

THY HAPPINESS DEPENDS on her affection.

"ONE MUST HAVE SEEN MY SHEPHERDESS," said Alidor, gazing on this beautiful portrait, "not to be enchanted by so lovely a person." He closed the case, and flung it carelessly on a table.

He then opened the other case which the little Cupid had given to him; but what was his astonishment at the sight of the portrait of his shepherdess, resplendent with all the charms that had made so lively an impression on his heart!

She was painted as he had seen her that very day — her hair dressed with flowers, and the little that appeared of her dress was that of a shepherdess. The handsome shepherd was so transported with his love, that he gazed on it for a long time without perceiving that the following words were written beneath the portrait: —

Forget her attractions, or thy love will be fatal to thee.

“Alas!” exclaimed Alidor, “without her could there be any happiness?” This ecstasy delighted Young and Handsome. The beautiful face he had contemplated unmoved was only a fancy portrait. The young Fairy was desirous of ascertaining whether her shepherd would prefer her to so beautiful a person, and who appeared to be a goddess or a fairy.

Convinced of the love of Alidor, she returned to her palace, after having assembled her nymphs by a signal that had been agreed upon. It was the illumination of the sky by some harmless lightning, and since that time such is often to be seen on a summer evening, unaccompanied by thunder. The nymphs rejoined her: they had also desired to hear something more of their lovers. Some of them were sufficiently pleased. They had found their swains occupied with recollections of them, and speaking of them with ardour, but others were less satisfied with the effect of their beauty. They found their shepherds fast asleep. A man may sometimes appear very much in love during the day, who is not sufficiently so for his passion to keep him awake all night.

The young Fairy retired to rest as soon as she arrived at her palace, charmed with the sincere affection of her shepherd. She had no other anxiety than the agreeable one arising from her impatience to see him again. As to Alidor, he slept a little, and without alarming himself at the warnings which he had read beneath the two miniatures. He thought only of returning to the meadow: he hoped to see his shepherdess there during the day. It seemed to him that he could not get there soon enough.

He led his charming flock to the fortunate spot where he had seen Young and Handsome; his pretty dog took good care of it. The comely shepherd could think of nothing but his shepherdess.

Young and Handsome was, much against her will, occupied that morning receiving the ambassadors of several neighbouring monarchs. Never were audiences so short; yet, notwithstanding, a considerable portion of the day passed in the performance of these tiresome ceremonies. The young Fairy suffered as much as her shepherd, whose keen impatience caused him a thousand torments.

The sun had set. Alidor had no longer any hope of seeing his shepherdess that day. How great was his grief!

He deplored his fate. He sighed incessantly. He made verses on her absence, and with the ferrule of his crook engraved them on the trunk of a young elm.

YOU ON WHOM Venus looks with envious eyes,
While round your steps her truant Graces play, —
You on whose glances Cupid so relies
That he has thrown all other darts away;
How wretched in your absence must I be
Who prize you ev’ry earthly bliss above! —
And yet my sorrow has a charm for me,
Its gloom is but the shadow of my love.

As he finished carving these lines, Young and Handsome appeared in the meadow at a distance, with her nymphs all still attired as shepherdesses. Alidor recognised her a long way off. He ran — he flew towards Young and Handsome, who received him with a smile so charming, that it would have increased the felicity of the gods themselves.

He told his love to her with an ardour capable of persuading a heart less tenderly inclined towards him than that of the young Fairy. She desired to see what he had carved on the tree, and was charmed with the talent and affection of her shepherd. He related to her all that happened to him the preceding evening, and offered a thousand times to follow her to the end of the world to fly from the love which a goddess or a fairy had unfortunately conceived for him. “My loss would be too great should you fly from that fairy,” replied Young and Handsome, in her sweetest manner. “It is no longer necessary for me to disguise my sentiments from you, as I am convinced of the sincerity of yours. It is I, Alidor!” continued the charming Fairy — “It is I who have given you these proofs of an affection which, if you continue faithful to me, will ensure your happiness and mine for ever!”

The handsome shepherd, transported with love and joy, flung himself at her feet, his silence appeared more eloquent to the young Fairy than the most finished oration. She bade him rise, and he found himself superbly attired. The Fairy then touching the ground with her crook, there appeared a magnificent car, drawn by twelve white horses of surpassing beauty. They were harnessed four abreast. Young and Handsome stepped into the car, and caused the comely shepherd to take his seat beside her. Her nymphs found room in it also, and as soon as they had all taken their places, the beautiful horses, who had no occasion for a driver to intimate to them the intentions of their mistress, swiftly conveyed the whole party to a favourite château belonging to the young Fairy. She had adorned it with everything that her art could furnish her with in the way of wonders. It was called the Castle of Flowers, and was the most charming residence in the world.

The young Fairy and her happy lover arrived with the attendant nymphs in a spacious court-yard, the walls of which were formed out of thick hedges of jasmines and lemon-trees. They were only breast-high. Beneath them ran a lovely river, which encompassed the court-yard; beyond it a charming grove, and then fields stretching as far as the eye could see, through which the said river made a thousand windings, as unwilling to quit so beautiful a home.

The castle was more to be admired for its architecture than for its size. It contained twelve apartments, each of which had its peculiar beauty. They were very spacious; but there was not room enough in them for the residence of Young and Handsome, and all her Court, which was the most numerous and magnificent in the universe. The young Fairy used this castle but as a place of retreat. She was accompanied thither generally by only her most favourite nymphs and the officers of her household.

She led the shepherd into the Myrtle Room. All the furniture was made of myrtles in continual blossom, interlaced with an art that displayed the power and good taste of the young Fairy, even in the most simple things. All the rooms in the castle were furnished in the same manner, with flowers only. The air breathed in them was always fragrant and pure.

Young and Handsome, by her power, had banished for ever from the spot the rigours of winter, and if the heats of summer were ever permitted to penetrate these agreeable bowers, it was only to render more enjoyable the beautiful baths attached to the building, which were delicious.

The apartment was of white and blue porphyry, exquisitely sculptured; the baths being of the most curious and agreeable forms. That in which Young and Handsome bathed, was made out of a single topaz, and placed on a platform in an alcove of porcelain. Four columns, composed of amethysts of the most perfect beauty, supported a canopy of magnificent yellow and silver brocade, embroidered with pearls. Alidor, absorbed by the happiness of beholding the charming Fairy, and remarking her affection for him, scarcely noticed all these marvels.

A delightful and tender conversation detained these happy lovers for a long time in the Myrtle Room. A splendid supper was served in the Jonquil Saloon. An elegant entertainment followed. The nymphs acted to music the loves of Diana and Endymion.

Young and Handsome forgot to return to her palace, and passed the night in the Narcissus Chamber. Alidor, entranced with love, was long before he tasted the sweets of slumber in the Myrtle Room, to which he was conducted by the nymphs, on the termination of the entertainment. Young and Handsome, who forbore to use her power to calm such agreeable emotions, also laid awake till nearly daybreak.

Alidor, impatient to behold again the charming Fairy, awaited the happy moment for some time in the Jonquil Saloon. He had neglected nothing in his attire which could add a grace to his natural attractions. Young and Handsome appeared a thousand times more lovely than Venus. She passed a part of the day with Alidor and the nymphs in the garden of the castle, the beauties of which surpassed the most marvellous description. There was an agreeable little *fête champêtre* in a delicious grove, wherein Alidor, during a favourable opportunity, had the sweet pleasure of professing his ardent love to Young and Handsome.

She desired, that same evening, to return to her palace; but promised Alidor to come back to him the next day. Never has an absence of a few hours been honoured by so many regrets. The handsome shepherd passionately desired to follow the young Fairy, but she commanded him to remain in the Castle of Flowers. She wished to hide her attachment from the eyes of all her Court. No one entered this castle without her order, and she had no fear that her nymphs would disclose her secret. The secrets of a Fairy are always safe. They are never divulged; the punishment would follow the offence too swiftly.

Young and Handsome asked Alidor for the pretty dog which had always followed him, that she might take it with her. Everything is dear to us that pleases those we love.

After the departure of the young Fairy, the shepherd, to indulge in his anxiety, rather than to dissipate it, plunged deeper into the woods to muse on his adorable mistress. In a little meadow, enamelled with flowers, and watered by an agreeable spring, which arose near the middle of the wood, he perceived his flock gambolling in the grass. It was watched by six young female slaves, with handsome features, dressed in blue and gold, with golden chains and collars. His favourite sheep recognised her master and ran to him. Alidor caressed her, and was deeply touched by the attentions of Young and Handsome to everything which concerned him.

The young slaves showed Alidor their hut. It was not far from the spot, at the end of a beautiful and very shady alley. This little dwelling was built of cedar. The initials of Young and Handsome and Alidor entwined together, appeared in every part of it, formed with the rarest woods. The following inscription was written in letters of gold upon a large turquoise:—

LET the flock of him I love
In these meads for ever rove.
By that Shepherd loved, the lot
Of the Gods I envy not.

THE HANDSOME SHEPHERD returned to the Castle of Flowers, enchanted by the kindness of the young Fairy. He declined any entertainment that evening. When absent from those we love, what care we for amusements!

Young and Handsome returned the next day, as she had promised, to her happy lover. What joy was theirs to behold each other again! All the power of the young Fairy had never procured for her so much felicity.

She passed nearly all her time at the Castle of Flowers, and rarely now appeared at Court. In vain did the princes, her suitors, grieve almost to death at her absence, everything was sacrificed to the fortunate Alidor.

But could so sweet a happiness last long untroubled? Another Fairy, besides Young and Handsome, had seen the beautiful shepherd, and felt her heart also touched by his charms.

One evening that Young and Handsome had gone to show herself for a few moments to her Court, Alidor, engrossed by his passion, sat deeply musing in the Jonquil Saloon, when his attention was awakened by a slight noise at one of the windows, and on looking towards it he perceived a brilliant light, and the next moment he saw on a table, near which he was seated, a little creature about half a yard high, very old, with hair whiter than snow, a standing collar, and an old-fashioned farthingale. “I am the Fairy Mordicante,” said she to the handsome shepherd; “and I come to announce to thee a much greater happiness than that of being beloved by Young and Handsome.” “What can that be?” inquired Alidor, with a contemptuous air. “The gods have none more perfect for themselves!” “It is that of pleasing me,” replied the old Fairy, haughtily. “I love thee, and my power is far greater than that of Young and Handsome, and almost equals that of the Gods. Abandon that young Fairy for me. I will revenge thee on thine enemies, and on all whom thou wouldst injure.”

“Thy favours are useless to me,” answered the young shepherd, with a smile; “I have no enemies, and I would injure no one; I am too well satisfied with my own lot; and if the charming Fairy I adore were but a simple shepherdess, I could be as happy with her in a cottage as I am now in the loveliest palace in the world.” At these words the wicked Fairy became suddenly as tall and as large as she had hitherto been diminutive, and disappeared making a horrible noise.

The next morning, Young and Handsome returned to the Castle of Flowers. Alidor related his adventure. They both knew the Fairy Mordicante. She was very aged, had always been ugly, and exceedingly susceptible. Young and Handsome and her happy lover made a thousand jokes upon her passion, and never for a moment felt the least uneasiness as to the consequences of her fury.

Can one be a happy lover and think of future misfortunes?

A week afterwards, Young and Handsome and the lovely shepherd took an excursion in a fine barge, gilt all over, on the beautiful river which encircled the Castle of Flowers, followed by all their little Court in the prettiest boats in the world. The barge of Young and Handsome was shaded by a canopy formed of a light blue and silver tissue. The dresses of the rowers were of the same material. Other small boats, filled with excellent musicians, accompanied the happy lovers, and performed some agreeable airs. Alidor, more enamoured than ever, could gaze on nothing but Young and Handsome, whose beauty appeared that day more charming than can be described.

In the midst of their enjoyment they saw twelve Syrens rise out of the water, and a moment afterwards twelve Tritons appeared, and joining the Syrens, encircled with them the little barque of Young and Handsome. The Tritons played some extraordinary airs on their shells, and the Syrens sang some graceful melodies, which for a while entertained the young Fairy and the beautiful shepherd. Young and Handsome, who was accustomed to wonders, imagined that it was some pageant which had been prepared by those whose duty it was to contribute to her pleasure by inventing new entertainments; but all on a sudden these perfidious Tritons and Syrens, laying hold of the young Fairy’s boat, dragged it under water.

The only danger which Alidor feared was that which threatened the young Fairy. He attempted to swim to her, but the Tritons carried him off despite his resistance, and Young and Handsome, borne away by the Syrens in the meanwhile, was transported into her palace.

One Fairy having no power over another, the jealous Mordicante was compelled to limit her vengeance to the making Young and Handsome endure all the misery so cruel a bereavement would necessarily occasion. In the meanwhile Alidor was conveyed by the Tritons to a terrible castle guarded by winged dragons. It was there that Mordicante had determined to make herself beloved by the beautiful shepherd, or to be revenged on him for his disdain. He was placed in a very dark chamber. Mordicante, blazing with the most beautiful jewels in the world, appeared to him, and professed her affection for him. The shepherd, exasperated at being torn from Young and Handsome, treated the wicked Fairy with all the contempt she deserved. What could equal the rage of Mordicante? But her love was still too violent to permit her to destroy the object of it. After detaining Alidor several days in this frightful prison, she resolved to endeavour to conquer the faithful shepherd by new artifices. She transported him suddenly to a magnificent palace. He was served with a sumptuousness which had not been exceeded in the Castle of Flowers. Endeavours were made to dissipate his grief by a thousand agreeable entertainments, and the most beautiful nymphs in the universe, who composed his Court, appeared to dispute with each other the honour of pleasing him. Not a word more was said to him respecting the passion of the wicked Fairy; but the faithful shepherd languished in the midst of luxury, and was in no less despair at his separation from Young and Handsome, when witnessing the gayest entertainments, than he had been whilst immured in his dreadful prison.

Mordicante trusted, however, that the absence of Young and Handsome, the continual round of pleasures provided for Alidor’s amusement, and the presence of so many charming women, would at length overcome the fidelity of the shepherd; and her object in surrounding him with so many beautiful nymphs, was but to take herself the figure of the one which might most attract his attention. With this view, she mingled amongst them in disguise, sometimes appearing as the most charming brunette, and at others as the fairest beauty in the universe.

Love, who is all-powerful in human hearts, had subdued for a time her natural cruelty; but desperation at being unable to shake the constancy of Alidor re-awakened her fury so powerfully, that she determined to destroy the charming shepherd, and make him the victim of the faithful love he cherished for Young and Handsome. One day, without being seen, she was watching him in a beautiful gallery, the windows of which opened upon the sea; Alidor, leaning over a balustrade, mused in silence for a considerable time. But, at length, after a heavy sigh, he uttered such tender and touching lamentations, depicting so vividly his passion for the young Fairy, that Mordicante, transported with fury, appeared to him in her natural shape; and, after having loaded him with reproaches, caused him to be carried back to his prison, and announced to him that in three days he should be sacrificed to her hatred, and that the most cruel tortures should avenge her slighted affection.

Alidor regretted not the loss of a life which had become insupportable to him, deprived of Young and Handsome; and satisfied that he had nothing to fear on her account from the wrath of Mordicante, the power of the young Fairy being equal to hers, he calmly awaited the death he had been doomed to.

In the meanwhile, Young and Handsome, as faithful as her shepherd, mourned over his loss. The Syrens who had wafted her back to her palace had disappeared as soon as their task was accomplished, and the young Fairy was convinced that it was the cruel Mordicante who had bereft her of Alidor. The excess of her grief proclaimed at the same time to all her Court, her love for the young shepherd, and her loss of him.

How many monarchs were envious of the misery even into which the wicked Fairy had precipitated Alidor? What vexation for these enamoured princes to learn that they had a beloved rival, and to behold Young and Handsome occupied only in weeping for this fortunate mortal! His loss, however, revived their hopes. They had discovered at last that Young and Handsome could feel as well as inspire affection. They redoubled their attentions. Each flattered himself with the sweet hope to occupy some day the place of that fortunate lover; but Young and Handsome, inconsolable for the absence of Alidor, and worried by the advances of his rivals, abandoned her Court, and retired to the Castle of Flowers. The sight of those charming scenes, where everything recalled to her heart the recollection of the lovely shepherd, increased her melancholy and her affection.

One day, as she was walking in her beautiful gardens, and gazing on the various objects with which they were adorned, she exclaimed aloud, "Alas! ye were formerly my delight; but I am now too much absorbed by my sorrow to take any further interest in your embellishment." As she ceased speaking, she heard the murmur of a gentle breeze that, agitating the flowers of this beautiful garden, arranged them instantaneously in various forms. First, they represented the initials of Young and Handsome; then those of another name, which she was not acquainted with; and a moment afterwards, they formed distinctly entire words, and Young and Handsome, astonished at this novelty, read these verses, written in so singular a fashion:—

Bid fond Zephyr tend thy bowers,
At his breath awake the flowers.
Thus for Flora, every morn,
Doth he mead and grove adorn.
How much more his pride 'twould be,

Fairer Nymph, to sigh for thee!

Young and Handsome was pondering on these verses, when she saw the Deity named in them appear in the air, and hasten to declare his passion to her. He was in a little car of roses, drawn by a hundred white canary birds, harnessed ten and ten, with strings of pearl. The car approached the earth, and Zephyr descended from it close to the young Fairy. He addressed her with all the eloquence of a very charming and very gallant Divinity; but the young Fairy, in lieu of feeling flattered by so brilliant a conquest, replied to him like a faithful lover. Zephyr was not disheartened by the coldness of Young and Handsome. He hoped to soften her by his attentions. He paid his court to her most assiduously, and neglected nothing that he thought could please her.

The glory of Alidor was now complete. He had a God for his rival, and was preferred to him by Young and Handsome.

Nevertheless, this fortunate mortal was on the point of being destroyed by the fury of Mordicante. A year had nearly elapsed since the young Fairy and the beautiful shepherd had been torn from each other, when Zephyr, who had given up all hopes of shaking the constancy of Young and Handsome, and was moved by the tears which he saw her unceasingly shed for the loss of Alidor, exclaimed one day, on finding her more depressed than usual, “Since it is no longer possible for me to flatter myself, charming Fairy, that I shall ever have the good fortune to gain your affections, I am desirous of contributing at least to your felicity. What can I do to make you happy?”

“To make me happy,” replied Young and Handsome, with a look so full of tenderness that it was enough to revive all the love of Zephyr, “you must restore to me my Alidor. I am powerless against another Fairy, but you, Zephyr, you are a God, and can destroy all the spells of my cruel rival!” “I will endeavour,” rejoined Zephyr, “to subdue the tender sentiments you have inspired me with sufficiently to enable me to render you an agreeable service.” So saying, he flew away, leaving Young and Handsome to indulge in a sweet hope. Zephyr did not deceive her. He was not in the habit of loving for any length of time, without the certainty of eventual success; and it was evident to him that the young Fairy was too constant for him to hope that he could ever make her forget Alidor; he therefore flew to the horrible prison where the beautiful shepherd awaited nothing less than death. An impetuous wind, swelled by six northern breezes, that had accompanied Zephyr, blew open in an instant the gates of the dungeon, and the beautiful shepherd, enveloped in a very brilliant cloud, was wafted to the Castle of Flowers.

Zephyr, after he had seen Alidor, was less surprised at the constancy of Young and Handsome; but he did not make himself visible to the shepherd until he had restored him to the charming Fairy.

Who could describe the perfect joy of Alidor and Young and Handsome at seeing each other once more? How lovely each appeared, and how fondly was each beloved! What thanks did not these fortunate lovers render to the Deity who had secured their happiness. He left them shortly afterwards to return to Flora.

Young and Handsome was anxious that all her Court should share in her felicity. They celebrated it by a thousand festivities throughout her empire, despite the vexation of the princes, her less fortunate lovers, who were the spectators of the triumphs of the beautiful shepherd.

In order to have nothing more to fear for Alidor from the wrath of Mordicante, Young and Handsome taught him the Fairy Art, and presented him with the gift of continual youth. Having thus provided for his happiness, she next considered his glory. She gave him the Castle of Flowers, and caused him to be acknowledged king of that beautiful country, over which his ancestors had formerly reigned. Alidor became the greatest monarch in the universe, on the same spot where he had been the most charming shepherd. He loaded all his old friends with favours; and, retaining for ever his charms, as well as Young and Handsome, we are assured that they loved each other eternally, and that Hymen would not disturb a passion which formed the happiness of their existence.

10

THE PALACE OF REVENGE

Once on a time there was a King and Queen of Iceland, who, after twenty years of married life, had a daughter. Her birth gave them the greatest pleasure, as they had so long despaired of having children to succeed to their throne. The young Princess was named Imis; her dawning charms promised from her infancy all the wonderful beauty which shone with so much brilliancy when she arrived at a maturer age.

No one in the universe would have been worthy of her had not Cupid, who thought it a point of honour to subject to his empire, some day, so marvellous a person, taken care to cause a Prince to be born in the same Court equally charming with that lovely Princess. He was called Philax, and was the son of a brother of the King of Iceland. He was two years older than the Princess, and they were brought up together with all the freedom natural to childhood and near relationship. The first sensations of their hearts were mutual admiration and affection. They could see nothing so beautiful as themselves, consequently they found no attraction in the world that could interfere with the passion each felt for the other, even without yet knowing its name.

The King and Queen saw this dawning affection with pleasure. They loved young Philax. He was a Prince of their blood, and no child had ever awakened fairer hopes. Everything seemed to favour the designs of Cupid to render Prince Philax some day the happiest of men. The Princess was about twelve years old when the Queen, who was exceedingly fond of her, desired to have her daughter's fortune told by a Fairy, whose extraordinary science was at that time making a great sensation.

She set out in search of her, taking with her Imis, who, in her distress at parting with Philax, wondered a thousand and a thousand times how anybody could trouble themselves about the future when the present was so agreeable. Philax remained with the King, and all the pleasures of the Court could not console him for the absence of the Princess.

The Queen arrived at the Fairy's castle. She was magnificently received; but the Fairy was not at home. Her usual residence was on the summit of a mountain at some distance from the castle, where she lived all alone and absorbed in that profound study which had rendered her famous throughout the world.

As soon as she heard of the Queen's arrival, she returned to the castle. The Queen presented the Princess to her, told her her name and the hour of her birth, which the Fairy knew as well as she did, though she had not been present at it. The Fairy of the Mountain knew everything. She promised the Queen an answer in two days, and then returned to the summit of the mountain. On the morning of the third day she came back to the castle, bade the Queen descend into the garden, and gave her some tablets of palm leaves closely shut, which she was ordered not to open except in the presence of the King.

The Queen, to satisfy her curiosity in some degree, asked her several questions respecting the fate of her daughter. "Great Queen," replied the Fairy of the Mountain, "I cannot precisely tell you what sort of misfortune threatens the Princess. I perceive only that love will have a large share in the events of her life, and that no beauty ever inspired such violent passions as that of Imis will do." It was not necessary to be a fairy to foresee that the Princess would have admirers. Her eyes already seemed to demand from all hearts the love which the Fairy assured the Queen would be entertained for her. In the meanwhile Imis, much less uneasy about her future destiny than at being separated from Philax, amused herself by gathering flowers; but thinking only of his love, and in her impatience to depart, she forgot the bouquet she had begun to compose, and unconsciously flung away the flowers she had amassed at first with delight. She hastened to rejoin the Queen, who was taking her leave of the Fairy of the Mountain. The Fairy embraced Imis, and gazing on her with the admiration she deserved — "Since it is impossible for me," she exclaimed, after a short silence, which had something mysterious in it — "since it is impossible for me, beautiful Princess, to alter in your favour the decrees of destiny, I will at least endeavour to enable you to escape the misfortunes it prepares for you." So saying, she gathered with her own hands a bunch of lilies of the valley, and addressing the youthful Imis — "Wear always these flowers which I give to you," said she; "they will never fade, and as long as you have them about your person, they will protect you from all the ills with which you are threatened by Fate." She then fastened the bouquet on the head-dress of Imis, and the flowers, obedient to the wishes of the Fairy, were no sooner placed in the hair of the Princess, than they adjusted themselves, and formed a sort of aigrette, the whiteness of which seemed only to prove that nothing could eclipse that of the complexion of the fair Imis.

The Queen took her departure, after having thanked the Fairy a thousand times, and went back to Iceland, where all the Court impatiently awaited the return of the Princess. Never did delight sparkle with more brilliancy and beauty than in the eyes of Imis and of her lover. The mystery involved in the plume of lilies of the valley was revealed to the King alone. It had so agreeable an effect in the beautiful brown hair of the Princess, that everybody took it simply for an ornament which she had herself culled in the gardens of the Fairy.

The Princess said much more to Philax about the grief she felt at her separation from him than about the misfortunes which the Fates had in store for her. Philax was, nevertheless, alarmed at them; but the happiness of being together was present, the evils, as yet, uncertain. They forgot them, and abandoned themselves to the delight of seeing each other again.

In the meanwhile, the Queen recounted to the King the events of her journey, and gave him the Fairy's tablets. The King opened and found in them the following words, written in letters of gold: —

FATE FOR IMIS hides despair
Under hopes that seem most fair;
She will miserable be,
Through too much felicity.

THE KING and Queen were much distressed at this oracle, and vainly sought its explanation. They said nothing about it to the Princess, in order to spare her an unnecessary sorrow. One day that Philax was gone hunting, a pleasure he indulged in frequently, Imis was walking by herself in a labyrinth of myrtles. She was very melancholy because Philax was so long absent, and reproached herself for giving way to an impatience which he did not partake. She was absorbed in her thoughts, when she heard a voice, which said to her, "Why do you distress yourself, beautiful Princess? If Philax is not sensible of the happiness of being beloved by you, I come to offer you a heart a thousand times more grateful — a heart deeply smitten by your charms, and a fortune sufficiently brilliant to be desired by any one except yourself, to whom the whole world is subject." The Princess was much surprised at hearing this voice. She had imagined herself alone in the labyrinth, and, as she had not uttered a word, she was still more astonished that this voice had replied to her thoughts. She looked about her, and saw a little man appear in the air, seated upon a cockchafer. “Fear not, fair Imis,” said he to her; “you have no lover more submissive than I am; and although this is the first time that I have appeared to you, I have long loved you, and daily gazed upon you.” “You astonish me!” replied the Princess. “What! You have daily beheld me, and you know my thoughts? If so, you must be aware that it is useless to love me. Philax, to whom I have given my heart, is too charming ever to cease being its master, and although I am displeased with him, I never loved him so much as I do at this moment. But tell me who you are, and where you first saw me.” “I am Pagan the Enchanter,” replied he, “and have power over everybody but you. I saw you first in the gardens of the Fairy of the Mountain. I was hidden in one of the tulips you gathered. I took for a happy omen the chance which had induced you to choose the flower I was concealed in. I flattered myself that you would carry me away with you; but you were too much occupied with the pleasure of thinking of Philax. You threw away the flowers as soon as you had gathered them, and left me in the garden the most enamoured of beings. From that moment I have felt that nothing could make me happy but the hope of being loved by you. Think favourably of me, fair Imis, if it be possible, and permit me occasionally to remind you of my affection.” With these words he disappeared, and the Princess returned to the palace, where the sight of Philax dissipated the alarm she had felt at this adventure. She was so eager to hear him excuse himself for the length of time he had been hunting, that she had nearly forgotten to inform him of what had occurred to her; but at last she told him what she had seen in the labyrinth of myrtles.

The young Prince, notwithstanding his courage, was alarmed at the idea of a winged rival, with whom he could not dispute the hand of the Princess upon equal terms. But the plume of lilies of the valley guaranteed him against the effect of enchantments, and the affection Imis entertained for him would not permit him to fear any change in her heart.

The day after the adventure in the labyrinth, the Princess, on awaking, saw fly into her chamber twelve tiny nymphs, seated on honey-bees, and bearing in their hands little golden baskets. They approached the bed of Imis, saluted her, and then went and placed their baskets on a table of white marble, which appeared in the centre of the apartment. As soon as the baskets were set upon it, they enlarged to an ordinary size. The nymphs having quitted them, again saluted Imis, and one of them, approaching the bed nearer than the rest, let something fall upon it, and then they all flew away.

The Princess, despite the astonishment which so strange a sight occasioned, took up what the nymph had dropped beside her. It was an emerald of marvellous beauty. It opened the moment the Princess touched it, and she found it contained a rose leaf, on which she read these verses.

Let the world learn, to its surprise,
The wondrous power of thine eyes.
Such is the love I bear to thee,
It makes e’en torture dear to me.

The Princess could not recover from her astonishment. At length she called to her attendants, who were as much surprised as Imis at the sight of the table and the baskets. The King, the Queen, and Philax hastened to the spot on the news of this extraordinary event. The Princess, in her relation of it, suppressed nothing except the letter of her lover. She considered she was not bound to reveal that to any one but Philax. The baskets were carefully examined, and were found to be filled with jewels of extraordinary beauty, and of so great a value as to double the astonishment of the spectators.

The Princess would not touch one of them, and having found an instant when nobody was listening, she drew near to Philax and gave him the emerald and the rose leaf. He read his rival’s letter with much disquietude. Imis, to console him, tore the rose leaf to pieces before his face; but ah! how dearly did they pay for that act!

Some days elapsed without the Princess hearing anything of Pagan. She fancied that her contempt for him would extinguish his passion, and Philax flattered himself by indulging in a like belief. That Prince returned to the chase as usual. He halted alone by the side of a fountain, to refresh himself. He had about him the emerald which the Princess had given him, and recollecting with pleasure the little value she set on it, he drew it from his pocket to look at it. But scarcely had he held it a moment in his hand when it slipped through his fingers, and, as soon as it touched the ground, changed into a chariot. Two winged monsters issued from the fountain and harnessed themselves to it. Philax gazed on them without alarm, for he was incapable of fear, but he could not avoid feeling some emotion when he found himself transported into the chariot by an irresistible power, and at the same moment raised into the air, through which the winged monsters caused the chariot to fly with a prodigious rapidity. In the meanwhile night came, and the huntsmen, after searching throughout the wood in vain for Philax, repaired to the Palace, whither they imagined he might have returned alone; but he was not to be found there, nor had any one seen him since he had set out with them for the chase.

The King commanded them to go back and renew their search for the Prince. All the Court shared in his Majesty’s anxiety. They returned to the wood, they ran in every direction around it, and did not retrace their steps to the Palace before daybreak, but without having obtained the least intelligence of the Prince. Imis had passed the night in despair at her lover’s absence, of which she could not comprehend the cause. She had ascended a terrace of the Palace to watch for the return of the party that had gone in search of Philax, and flattered herself she should see him arrive in their company; but no words can express the excess of her affliction when no Philax appeared, and she was informed that it had been impossible to ascertain what had become of him. She fainted; they carried her into the Palace, and one of her women, in her haste to undress and put her to bed, took out of the hair of the Princess the plume of lilies of the valley which preserved her from the power of enchantments. The instant it was removed a dark cloud filled the apartment, and Imis disappeared. The King and Queen were distracted at this loss, and nothing could ever console them.

The Princess, on recovering from her swoon, found herself in a chamber of various-coloured coral, floored with mother-of-pearl, and surrounded by nymphs, who waited upon her with the most profound respect. They were very beautiful, and magnificently and tastefully attired. Imis first asked them where she was. “You are in a place where you are adored,” said one of the nymphs to her. “Fear nothing, fair Princess, you will find in it everything you can desire.” “Philax is here, then!” exclaimed the Princess, her eyes sparkling with joy. “I desire only the happiness of seeing him again.” “You cherish too long the recollection of an ungrateful lover,” said Pagan, at the same moment rendering himself visible to the Princess, “and as that Prince has deserted you, he is no more worthy your affection. Let resentment and respect for your own pride combine with the passion I entertain for you. Reign for ever in these regions, lovely Princess; you will find in them immense treasures, and all imaginable delights will attend your steps.” Imis replied to Pagan’s address with tears alone. He left her, fearing to embitter her grief. The nymphs remained with her, and used all their endeavours to console her. A magnificent repast was served up to her. She refused to eat; but at length, on the following morning, her desire to behold Philax once more made her resolve to live. She took some food, and the nymphs, to dissipate her sorrow, conducted her through various portions of the Palace. It was built entirely of shining shells, mixed with precious stones of different colours, which produced the finest effect in the world; all the furniture was of gold, and of such wonderful workmanship that you might easily see it could only have come from the hands of Fairies.

After they had shown Imis the Palace, the nymphs led her into the gardens, which were of a beauty not to be described. She found in them a very brilliant car, drawn by six stags, who were driven by a dwarf. She was requested to enter the car. Imis complied; the nymphs seated themselves at her feet. They were driven to the seaside, where a nymph informed the Princess that Pagan, who reigned in this island, had made it by the power of his art the most beautiful in the universe. The sound of instruments interrupted the narration of the nymph. The sea appeared to be entirely covered with little boats, built of flame-coloured coral, and filled with everything that could be required to compose a brilliant aquatic entertainment. In the midst of the small craft, there was a barque of much larger size, on which the initials of Imis were seen in every part, formed with pearls. It was drawn by two dolphins. It approached the shore. The Princess entered it, accompanied by her nymphs. As soon as she was on board, a superb collation appeared before her, and her ears were regaled at the same time by exquisite music which proceeded from the boats around her. Songs were sung, of which her praise alone was the theme. But Imis paid no attention to anything. She remounted her car, and returned to the Palace overwhelmed with sadness. In the evening Pagan again presented himself. He found her more insensible to his love than ever; but he was not discouraged, and trusted to the effect of his constancy. He had yet to learn that in love the most faithful are not always the most happy.

Every day he offered the Princess entertainments worthy of exciting the admiration of all the world, but which were lost upon her for whom they were invented. Imis thought of nothing but the absence of her lover.

That unhappy Prince had been transported in the meanwhile, by the winged monsters, into a forest which belonged to Pagan. It was called the

Dismal Forest. As soon as Philax had arrived in it, the emerald chariot and the monsters disappeared. The Prince, surprised by this adventure, summoned up all his courage to his assistance, and it was the only aid on which he could reckon in that place. He first explored several of the roads through the forest. They were dreadful, and the sun never penetrated their gloom. No human being was to be found in them; not an animal even of any description; it seemed as though the beasts themselves had a horror of this dreary dwelling.

Philax lived upon the wild fruit he found in it. He passed his days in the deepest sorrow. The loss of the Princess distracted him, and sometimes, with his sword, which he had retained, he occupied himself with carving the name of Imis on the trunks of the trees, which were not adapted for so tender a practice; but when we are truly in love we frequently make things serviceable to our passion which appear to be least favourable for the purpose.

The Prince continued daily to travel through the forest, and he had been nearly a year on his journey, when one night he heard some plaintive voices, but could not distinguish any words. Alarming as these wailing sounds were at such an hour and in a place where the Prince had never yet met with mortal soul, the desire to be no longer alone, and to find at least some one as wretched as himself with whom he could weep over the misfortunes that had befallen them, made him wait with impatience for morning, when he might seek out the persons whose voices he had heard. He walked towards that part of the forest whence he fancied the sounds had proceeded, but hunted all day in vain; at length, however, towards evening, he discovered, in a spot which was clear of trees, the ruins of a castle which appeared to have been of great size and magnificence. He entered a court-yard, the walls of which were of green marble, and seemed still tolerably perfect. He found in it nothing but trees of prodigious height, standing irregularly in various parts of the enclosure. He advanced towards a spot where he perceived something elevated upon a pedestal of black marble. It proved to be a confused pile of armour and weapons, heaped one upon the other: helmets, shields, and swords of an ancient form, which composed a sort of ill-arranged trophy. He looked for some inscription which might inform him to whom these arms had formerly appertained. He found one engraved on the pedestal. Time had nearly effaced the characters, and it was with much difficulty that he deciphered these words: —

To the Immortal Recollection of the Glory of the Fairy Ceora.

It was here

That on the same day

She triumphed over Cupid

And punished her faithless lovers.

This inscription did not afford Philax all the information he desired; he therefore would have continued his search through the forest if night had not overtaken him. He seated himself at the foot of a cypress, and scarcely had been there a moment, before he heard the same voices which had attracted his attention the previous evening. He was not so much surprised at this as at perceiving that it was the trees themselves which uttered these complaints, just as if they had been human beings. The Prince arose, drew his sword, and struck with it the cypress which was nearest to him. He was about to repeat the blow, when the tree exclaimed, “Hold! hold! Assault not an unhappy Prince who is no longer in a state to defend himself!” Philax stayed his hand, and becoming accustomed to this supernatural circumstance, inquired of the cypress by what miracle it was thus a man and a tree at the same time. “I am willing to inform you,” replied the cypress; “and as, during two thousand years, this is the first opportunity Fate has afforded me of relating my misfortunes, I will not lose it. All the trees you behold in this court-yard were princes, renowned in their time for the rank they held in the world, and for their valour. The Fairy Ceora reigned in this country. She was beautiful, but her science rendered her more famous than her beauty. She therefore made use of other charms to subject us to her sway. She had become enamoured of the young Oriza, a prince, whose admirable qualities rendered him worthy of a better fate. I should premise to you,” added the cypress, “it is the oak which you see beside me.” Philax looked at the oak, and heard it breathe a heavy sigh, drawn from it, no doubt, by the recollection of its misfortune. “To attract this prince to her Court,” continued the cypress, “the Fairy caused a tournament to be proclaimed. We all hastened to seize this opportunity of acquiring glory. Oriza was one of the princes who disputed the prize. It consisted of fairy armour which would render the wearer invulnerable. Unfortunately, I was the conqueror. Ceora, irritated that Fate had not favoured her inclinations, resolved to avenge herself upon us. She enchanted the looking-glasses, with which a gallery of her castle was entirely lined. Those who saw her reflected but once in these fatal mirrors, could not resist feeling for her the most violent passion. It was in this gallery she received us the day after the tournament. We all saw her in these mirrors, and she appeared to us so beautiful, that those amongst us who had hitherto been indifferent to love, ceased to be so from that instant; and those who were in love with others became as suddenly faithless. We no longer thought of leaving the Fairy’s palace: our only anxiety was to please her. In vain did state affairs demand our presence in our own dominions; nothing seemed of consequence to us save the hope of being beloved by Ceora. Oriza was the only one she favoured, and the passion of the other princes but gave the Fairy opportunities of sacrificing them to this lover who was so dear to her, and caused the fame of her beauty to be spread throughout the world. Love appeared for some time to have softened the cruel nature of Ceora; but at the end of four or five years she displayed her former ferocity. She revenged herself on the kings, her neighbours, for the smallest slight by the most horrible murders, and abusing the power which her enchantments gave her over us, she made us the ministers of her cruelties. Oriza strove in vain to prevent her injustice. She loved him; but she would not obey him. Having returned one day from fighting and subduing a giant whom I had challenged by her orders, I caused the arms of the vanquished to be brought into her presence. She was alone in the Gallery of Looking-glasses. I laid the giant’s spoils at her feet, and pleaded my passion to her with inconceivable ardour, augmented, no doubt, by the power of the enchantment by which I was surrounded. But far from evincing the least gratitude for the success of my combat, or for the love I felt for her, Ceora treated me with the utmost contempt; and, retiring into a boudoir, left me alone in the gallery, in an indescribable state of despair and rage. I remained there some time, not knowing what resolution to take; for the enchantments of the Fairy did not permit us to fight with Oriza. Careful of the life of her lover, the cruel Ceora excited our jealousy, but took from us the natural desire to revenge ourselves on a fortunate rival. At length, after having paced the gallery for some time, I remembered that it was in this place I had first fallen in love with the Fairy, and exclaimed, ‘It is here that I first felt that fatal passion which now fills me with despair; and you, wretched mirrors, who have so often represented the unjust Ceora to me, with a beauty which has enslaved my heart and reason, I will punish you for the crime of offering her to my view with too great attraction.’ At these words, snatching up the giant’s club, which I had brought to present to the Fairy, I dashed the mirrors to pieces. No sooner were they broken than I felt even greater hatred for Ceora than I had formerly felt love for her. The princes, my rivals, felt at the same moment their charms broken, and Oriza himself was ashamed of the love which the Fairy had for him. Ceora in vain attempted to retain her lover by her tears; he was insensible to her grief, and in spite of her cries, we set out all together, determined to fly from the terrible place, but in passing through the court-yard, the sky appeared to be on fire; a frightful clap of thunder was heard, and we found it was impossible for us to move. The Fairy appeared in the air, riding on a great serpent, and addressing us in a tone of voice which betrayed her rage, — ‘Inconstant princes,’ said she, ‘I am about to punish you, by a torture which will never end, for the crime you have committed in breaking my chains, which were too great an honour for you to bear; and as for you, ungrateful Oriza, I triumph after all in the love you have felt for me. Content with this victory, I shall visit you with the same misfortune as your rivals; and I command,’ added she, ‘in memory of this adventure, that when the use of mirrors shall be known to all the world, the breaking of these fatal glasses shall always be a certain sign of the infidelity of a lover.’ The Fairy disappeared in the air after having pronounced these words. We were changed into trees; but the cruel Ceora, no doubt with the idea of increasing our suffering, left us our reason. Time has destroyed the superb castle, which was the victim of our misfortune; and you are the only visitor we have seen during the two thousand years that we have been in this frightful forest.”

Philax was about to reply to this speech of the cypress tree, when he was suddenly transported into a beautiful garden; he there found a lovely nymph, who approached him with a gracious air, saying, “If you wish it, Philax, I will allow you in three days to see the Princess Imis.”

The Prince, transported with joy at so unexpected a proposition, threw himself at her feet to express his gratitude. At that same moment Pagan was in the air, concealed in a cloud with the Princess Imis: he had told her a thousand times that Philax was unfaithful, but she had always refused, on the word of a jealous lover, to believe it. He now conducted her to this spot, he said, to convince her of the fickleness of the Prince she so unjustly preferred to him. The Princess saw Philax throw himself, with an air of extreme delight, at the feet of the nymph; and was in despair that she could no longer deceive herself on a point which she feared to believe more than anything in the world. Pagan had placed her at a distance from the earth, which prevented her hearing what Philax and the nymph said; and it was by his orders that the latter had presented herself to him.

Pagan led Imis back to his island, where after having convinced her of the infidelity of Philax, he found he had only redoubled the grief of that beautiful Princess without rendering her at all more favourable to himself.

In despair at finding this pretended infidelity, from which he had expected so much success, was useless to him, he resolved to be revenged on the constancy of the lovers: he was not cruel, like the Fairy Ceora, his ancestress, so he bethought him of a different punishment to that with which she had visited her unfortunate lovers. He did not wish to destroy either the Princess, whom he had so tenderly loved, nor even Philax, whom he had already made suffer so much; so, confining his revenge to the destruction of a passion which had so opposed his own, he erected in his island a Crystal Palace, and took care to put into it everything that would render life agreeable but the means of leaving it; he shut up in it nymphs and dwarfs to wait on Imis and her lover; and, when everything was prepared for their reception, he transported them both there. They at first thought themselves on the summit of happiness, and blessed Pagan a thousand times for the mildness of his anger. As for Pagan, although at first he could not bear to see them together, he expected that this spectacle would one day be less painful to him. But in the meanwhile, he departed from the Crystal Palace, after having, with a stroke of his wand, engraved on it this inscription: —

ABSENCE, danger, pleasure, pain,
Were all employ’d, and all in vain,
Imis’ and Philax’ hearts to sever.
Pagan, whose power they dared defy,
Condemned them, for their constancy,
To dwell together here for ever!

THEY SAY that at the end of some years, Pagan was as much avenged as he desired to be; and that the beautiful Imis and Philax fulfilled the prediction of the Fairy of the Mountain, by wishing as fervently to recover the aigrette of lilies in order to destroy the agreeable enchantment, as they had formerly desired to preserve it as a safeguard against the evils which had been foretold would befal them.

11

THE PRINCE OF LEAVES

In one of those parts of the world, commonly called Fairyland, on which poets alone have the right to bestow names, there formerly reigned a King so renowned for his rare qualities, that he attracted the esteem and admiration of all the Princes of his time. He had, many years past, lost his wife, the Queen, who had never brought him a son; but he had ceased to desire one since the birth of a daughter of such marvellous beauty, that from the moment she was born he lavished all his affection and tenderness upon her. She was named Ravissante, by a Fairy, a near relative of the Queen, who predicted that the wit and the charms of the young Princess would surpass all that had ever before been known or even could be expected from her present beauty; but she added to this agreeable prediction, that the perfect felicity of the Princess would depend entirely on her heart remaining faithful to its first love. In such a case, who can feel assured of a happy destiny? The King, who desired nothing so much as the happiness of Ravissante, heartily wished that it had been attached to any other condition, — but we cannot command our own fates. He begged the Fairy, a thousand times, to bestow on the young Ravissante the gift of constancy, as he had seen her give to others the gifts of intelligence and of beauty. But the Fairy, who was sufficiently wise not to deceive him respecting the extent of her power, frankly informed the King that it did not extend to the qualities of the heart. She, however, promised to use her utmost endeavour to impress the young Princess with the sentiments that would be likely to ensure her happiness. Upon the faith of this promise, the King confided Ravissante to her care from the time she attained her fifth year, preferring to deprive himself of the pleasure of seeing her rather than run any risk of marring her fortune. The Fairy therefore carried off the little Princess, who was very soon consoled for leaving the Court of her father, by the delight and novelty of passing through the air in a brilliant little car.

On the fourth day after her departure the flying car stopped in the middle of the sea, upon a rock of a prodigious size — it was one entire shining stone, the colour of which was exactly that of the sky. The Fairy remarked with pleasure that the young Ravissante was enchanted with this colour, and she drew from it a happy omen for the future, as it was the colour which signifies fidelity. Shortly after they had landed on it, the Fairy touched the rock with a golden wand which she held in her hand. The rock immediately opened, and Ravissante found herself with the Fairy, in the most beautiful palace in the world; the walls were of the same material as the rock, and the same colour prevailed in all the paintings and furniture, but it was so ingeniously mixed with gold and precious stones, that far from wearying the eye, it equally pleased in all. The young Ravissante dwelt in this agreeable palace, with several beautiful maidens, whom the Fairy had transported from various countries to attend on and amuse the Princess, and she passed her infancy in the enjoyment of every pleasure suited to her age. When she had attained her fourteenth year the Fairy again consulted the stars, in order to learn precisely when the heart of Ravissante would be touched with a passion which pleases even more than it alarms, however formidable it may appear to some; and she read distinctly in the stars that the fatal time approached when the destiny of the young Princess would be fulfilled. The Fairy had a nephew who was indescribably dear to her: he was of the same age as Ravissante, born on the same day and at the same hour. She had found, in consulting the stars also for him, that they promised him the same fate as the Princess — that is to say, perfect happiness, provided he possessed fidelity which nothing could vanquish. In order to make him both loving and faithful she had only to let him behold Ravissante. No one could resist her eyes, and the Fairy hoped that the attentions of the young Prince would one day touch her heart. He was the son of a King, brother of the Fairy; he was amiable; and the young Princess not only had never had a lover, she had not even seen a man since she had lived on the rock. The Fairy consequently flattered herself that the novelty of the pleasure of being tenderly beloved would perhaps inspire the Princess with a feeling of love in return. She therefore transported the Prince, who was named Ariston, to the same rock which served both as palace and prison for the beautiful Ravissante. He there found her amusing herself with the young maidens of her Court, by weaving garlands of flowers in a forest of blue hyacinths, where they were then walking, for the Fairy, in bestowing on the rock the power of producing plants and trees, had limited the colour of them to that of the rock itself. She had already, some time since, apprised the Princess that Prince Ariston would soon visit the island, and she had added, in speaking of the Prince, everything that she thought likely to prejudice her in his favour; but she deceived herself this time; and on the arrival of Ariston, she observed nothing of that emotion or surprise which is the usual presage of a tender passion. As for the Prince, his sentiments were in perfect accordance with the wishes of the Fairy: he became passionately in love from the moment he first set eyes on Ravissante; and it was not possible to see her without adoring her, for never were grace and beauty so perfectly united as in the person of this amiable princess. She had the most exquisite complexion, and her dark brown hair added to its dazzling whiteness; her mouth had infinite charms, her teeth were more purely white than pearls; her eyes, the most beautiful in the world, were deep blue, and they were so brilliant, and at the same time so touching in their expression, that it was hardly possible to sustain their glances without yielding the heart at once to the fatal power which love had bestowed on them. She was not very tall, but perfectly beautiful, and all her movements were peculiarly graceful. Everything she did and said pleased invariably, and often a smile or a single word sufficed to prove that the charms of her mind equalled those of her person.

Such, and a thousand times more amiable than I can paint her, it had indeed been difficult for Ariston not to have become distractedly in love; but the Princess received his attentions with indifference, and did not appear in the least touched by them. The Fairy remarked it, and felt a grief which was only surpassed by that of the Prince. She had remarked in the stars that he who was destined to possess Ravissante would extend his power not only over the earth, but even over the sea. Therefore her ambition made her wish that her nephew should touch the heart of the Princess as much as he desired the same effect from his love. She thought, however, that if the Prince were as learned as she was in the magic art, he might perhaps find some mode of rendering himself more attractive in the eyes of Ravissante; but the Fairy, who had never loved, was ignorant that the art of pleasing is not always to be discovered, although sought for with the utmost ardour and eagerness. She taught the Prince, therefore, in a short time, all those sciences which are known only to the fairies. He had no pleasure in learning them, nor had he any idea of employing them but with regard to his passion for Ravissante. He began to make use of them by giving every day a new fête to the Princess. She admired the wonders produced, she deigned even sometimes to praise what appeared the most gallant in these efforts of the Prince to please her; but after all, she received his devotion and his attentions as the just homage due to her beauty, and she considered them amply repaid by her condescending to receive them without anger.

Ariston began to despair of the success of his passion, but he was too speedily obliged to confess that this very time, which he complained of so justly, and in which he felt so keenly the hopelessness of his love, had, notwithstanding, been the most happy period of his life. A year after his arrival on the island he celebrated the return of that memorable day on which he had first beheld Ravissante. In the evening he gave her a fête in the forest of hyacinths. Marvellous music was heard in every part of the forest without any one being able to discover from whence the sounds proceeded. All that was sung by these invisible musicians tenderly expressed the love of Ariston for the Princess; they concluded their admirable concert by these words, which were repeated several times: —

Nor reason nor relentless Fate
My sufferings can terminate!
Without one ray of hope to cheer,
I feel my heart consuming here.
How great his power Love never knew
Till from those eyes his arrows flew.

After the music, there appeared suddenly an elegant collation under a tent of silver gauze, elegantly looped up with ropes of pearls; it was open on the side towards the sea, which bounded the forest in that direction; and was illuminated by a great number of chandeliers formed of brilliants, which emitted an effulgence nearly equal to that of the sun. It was by this light that the nymphs of the court of Ravissante pointed out to her an inscription at the entrance of the pavilion, written in letters of gold upon a ruby of immense magnitude, supported by twelve little cupids, who flew away as soon as the Princess had heard this inscription read, which consisted of these lines: —

Where'er throughout the world those lovely eyes
May the devoted hearts of men enchain,
For one as true as in this desert sighs
Those lovely eyes may search, sweet maid, in vain.
But through that world your glory to proclaim,
And every mortal to your altar bring,
Princess, we haste to bid the trump of Fame
With praise of beauty so divine to ring.

The fête continued, and Prince Ariston had at least the pleasure of engrossing the leisure of the Princess, if he could not occupy her heart. But he was deprived even of this gratification by a surprising spectacle which appeared far out at sea, and attracted the curiosity and attention of Ravissante and of all the court. The object approached, and they distinguished that it was an arbour formed of interlaced myrtle and laurel branches, closed on all sides, and propelled with great rapidity by an infinite number of winged fish. This sight was the more novel to Ravissante as she had never before seen anything of the colour of this arbour. The Fairy having foreseen that it would cause some misfortune to her nephew, had absolutely banished it from her island. The Princess watched for the approach of the strange object with an impatience which appeared to Ariston a bad omen for his love. She had not long to wait, for the winged fish brought the arbour in a few moments to the foot of the rock, and the attention of the young Princess and of all the Court was redoubled.

The arbour opened, and out of it came a young man of marvellous beauty, who appeared about sixteen or seventeen years of age. He was clothed in branches of myrtle, curiously interlaced, with a scarf composed of various-coloured roses. This handsome stranger experienced as much astonishment as he occasioned. The beauty of Ravissante did not leave him at liberty to amuse himself by observing the rest of the splendid scene, the brilliancy of which had attracted him from a distance. He approached the Princess with a grace which she had never observed but in herself. “I am so surprised,” said he to her, “at all I find on these shores, that I have lost the power of expressing my astonishment. Is it possible,” continued he, “that such a goddess (for a goddess you surely must be) has not temples throughout the universe?” “I am not a goddess,” said Ravissante, colouring; “I am an unfortunate princess banished from the states of the King, my father, to avoid I know not what misfortune, which they assure me has been predicted from the moment of my birth.” “You appear to me much more formidable,” replied the handsome stranger, “than those stars which may have some evil influence on your fate, and over what misfortune could not such perfect beauty triumph! I feel that it can vanquish everything,” he added, sighing, “since it has conquered in a moment a heart which I had always flattered myself should remain insensible; but, Madam,” continued he, without giving her time to reply, “I must, against my will, withdraw from this charming place, where I see you only, and where I have lost my peace of mind; I will return soon, if Cupid prove favourable to me.” After these words, he re-entered the arbour, and in a few moments he was lost to sight.

Prince Ariston was so astounded and distressed by this adventure, that he had not at first the strength to speak; a rival had appeared in a manner as wonderful as unexpected; this rival had seemed to him only too charming, and he thought he had observed in the beautiful eyes of the Princess, whilst the stranger addressed her, a languor which he had often desired to see, but which till then he had never detected. Agonized by a despair which he dared not betray, he conducted Ravissante to the Palace, where she passed part of the night, occupied by the recollection of her agreeable adventure, and made her nymphs relate each circumstance over and over again, as though she had not been herself present. As for Prince Ariston, he went to consult the Fairy, who, he hoped, might possess some charm to allay the violent grief under which he laboured; but she had no antidote for jealousy, and they do say none has ever been discovered to this day. The Prince and the Fairy, however, redoubled their enchantments to defend the entrance to the rock from this formidable stranger, whom they took for a magician. They surrounded the island with frightful monsters, who occupied a great space on the sea, and who, excited by their own natural ferocity, and by the power of the spell, seemed to assure Ariston and the Fairy that it would be an impossibility to take from them the beautiful Princess whom they so jealously guarded. Ravissante seemed to feel more vividly the power of the charms of the handsome stranger by the grief which she experienced at the obstacles opposed to his return to the island; and she resolved, at all events, to be revenged on Prince Ariston. She began to hate him, and that alone was ample vengeance. Ariston was inconsolable at finding he had provoked the hatred of Ravissante by a passion which it appeared to him should have produced just the contrary effect. The Princess mourned in secret the forgetfulness of the stranger: it appeared to her that love should have ere this made him keep his promise to return. Sometimes, also, she ceased to desire it, when she remembered the dangers with which Ariston and the Fairy had surrounded the approach to the island. One day that she was occupied in these various reflections whilst walking alone on the sea-shore — for Ariston dared not, as formerly, follow her, and the Princess refused even to attend the fêtes with which he was accustomed to entertain her, — she arrived at the same spot which the adventure with the unknown visitor had rendered so remarkable, and was struck by the appearance of a tree of extraordinary beauty floating towards the rock. The colour, which was the same as that of the myrtle arbour of the stranger, gave her a sensation of joy. The tree approached the rock, and the monsters attempted to defend the entrance, but a little breeze agitated the leaves of the tree, and having blown off a few, and driven them against the monsters, they yielded to these light and harmless weapons, and even ranged themselves with a show of respect in a circle around the tree, which approached the rock without further impediment, and opened, disclosing to view the stranger seated on a throne of verdure; he rose precipitately at the sight of Ravissante, and spoke to her with so much eloquence and so much love, that after she had in a few words acquainted him with her history, she could not conceal from him that she was touched by his devotion, and rejoiced at his return. “But,” said she, “is it fair that you should know the sentiments with which you have inspired me before I am informed of the name even of him who has called them forth?”

“I had no intention of concealing it from you,” replied the charming unknown; “but when near you, one can speak of nothing but you; however, as you wish to know, I obey you, and beg to acquaint you that I am called the Prince of Leaves: I am the son of Spring and of a sea nymph, a relation of Amphitrite, which is the cause of my power extending over the sea: my empire comprises all parts of the earth which recognise the influence of Spring; but I chiefly inhabit a happy island where the gentle season which my father bestows reigns perpetually. There the air is always pure, the fields ever covered with flowers; the sun never scorches, but only approaches sufficiently near to illuminate it; night is banished, and it is therefore called the Island of Day. It is inhabited by a people as amiable as the climate is agreeable. It is in this place that I offer you an empire, sweet and calm, and where my heart above all things will acknowledge your sovereignty. You must, however, beautiful Princess, consent to be carried off from this rock, where you are retained in veritable bondage: notwithstanding the honours they pay you with a view to disguise the real state of the case.” Ravissante could not, however, make up her mind to follow the Prince of Leaves into his empire, in spite of the fear which she had of the power of the Fairy, and the suggestions of her love; she hoped that her perseverance in rejecting the vows of Ariston, would at length cause him to resolve to conquer his passion, and that the Fairy would then restore her to her father, from whom the Prince of Leaves might demand her hand.

"But I should at least wish," said she to him, "to be able to send you word of what happens in this island, and I know not how that is possible, as everything I do is suspected and watched." "I will leave with you here," said the Prince, "the subjects of a friend of mine, who is also a prince. They will constantly attend on you, and by them you can often send me intelligence; but remember, beautiful Princess, with what impatience I shall wait for it!" After these words, he approached the tree which had conveyed him, and having touched some of the leaves, two butterflies appeared, the one white and flame-colour, the other yellow and light-grey — the most beautiful in the world. As Ravissante gazed on them, the Prince of Leaves said, smiling, "I see you are surprised at the appearance of the confidants I give you; but these butterflies are not merely what they appear to be; it is a mystery which they will explain if you will permit them to talk to you." As he spoke, Ravissante perceived in the distance some of her nymphs, who came to seek her in her solitude, and she begged the Prince of Leaves to re-embark; he obeyed, notwithstanding the infinite regret he felt at quitting her, but he did not depart quickly enough to avoid observation; they informed Ariston and the Fairy of his return to the island, and from that moment, in order to take away from the beautiful Ravissante the means, and even the hope of seeing him again, they erected a tower on the summit of the rock formed of the same stone; and in order to render it more entirely secure, as the guard of living monsters had proved insufficient, they caused the tower and rock to be invisible to all those who should come to seek her, not daring again to trust to ordinary enchantments. Ravissante was in despair at being immured in so cruel and impregnable a prison. Prince Ariston had not concealed from her that he had rendered it invisible; he had even attempted to make her accept this care for her safety as a proof of his tender devotion; but Ravissante felt her hatred and contempt for him increase daily, and he dared no longer enter her presence. The butterflies, however, had not quitted her, and she often regarded them with pleasure as having come from the Prince of Leaves. One day that she was still more sad than usual, and musing, on a terrace at the top of the tower, the flame-coloured butterfly flew on to one of the vases filled with flowers, which ornamented the balustrade. “Why,” said he, all of a sudden to the Princess, “do you not send me to the Prince of Leaves, he will undoubtedly come to your relief?” Ravissante was at first so astonished at hearing the butterfly speak, although her lover had prepared her for the novelty, that she was for some minutes unable to answer; however, the name of the Prince of Leaves assisting to dissipate her surprise, “I was so astonished,” said she at length, “to hear a butterfly speak like ourselves, that I could not sooner reply to you. I can well believe that you could go to apprise the Prince of Leaves of my misfortune, but what can he do? — only distress himself uselessly. He cannot find me in a place which the cruelty of my enemies has taken care to render invisible.”

“It is less so than you think,” replied the yellow butterfly, flying round the Princess in order to join in the conversation: “a little while ago, I surveyed your prison, I flew and even swam round it; it disappears when one is on the water, but when one is elevated in the air it ceases to be invisible. No doubt the Fairy did not consider that road so easy as to require the same defence as that by the sea. I was about to give you this hint,” continued the butterfly, “when my brother broke the silence which we have hitherto preserved.” This agreeable piece of news restored hope to the Princess. “Is it possible,” said she, “that Ariston can have neglected any precaution which could gratify his cruelty and his love? No doubt his power, like that of the Fairy, which is unbounded over earth and sea, does not extend to the air.” This was precisely the reason which had prevented the Prince and the Fairy from rendering the tower and the rock invisible from the sky. “But,” added Ravissante, after some minutes’ reflection, “can the Prince of Leaves have any power in the air?" "No, Madam," replied the flame-coloured butterfly, "he can do nothing, and your prison would be invisible to him though he be a demi-god, as it would be to a mortal; but —" "The Prince will then be as miserable as myself," interrupted the sorrowful Ravissante, bursting into a flood of tears, which added to her beauty, and which affected extremely the two butterflies; "and I feel I shall be more distressed at his sorrows than at my own! What ought I, then, to do?" continued she, sighing. "Send me off at once," replied the flame-coloured butterfly, briskly; "I will go and apprise the Prince of Leaves of your misfortunes, and he will come to the rescue: although his power does not extend to the air, he has a prince amongst his friends who can do anything in it, and of whom he can dispose as of himself — but my brother can inform you of all this during my absence. Adieu, beautiful Princess," continued the butterfly, flying over the balustrade; "cease to weep, and count on my diligence, I will fly as rapidly as your wishes." After these words, the butterfly was lost in the air; and the Princess felt that charming and lively sensation of joy which the hope of soon beholding a beloved one inspires. She returned to her apartment, and the yellow butterfly followed her; she was extremely impatient to know from what prince her lover hoped for assistance; to end her doubts, she begged the yellow butterfly to tell her all that could contribute to augment or flatter her hopes. She placed him on a little basket of flowers, which she carried to a table near her, and the butterfly, who considered it an honour to please her, commenced his recital.

"Near the Island of Day, where the Prince of Leaves reigns, there is another, smaller but equally agreeable; the ground there is always covered with flowers, and they affirm that it is a boon granted to our country by Flora, to immortalize the memory of the happy days when she came there to find Zephyr: for they contend that it was on our island that they used to meet, when their love was still new and secret. It is called the "Island of Butterflies." The inhabitants are not of the form that you see me under.

They are little winged men, very pretty, very gallant, very amorous, and so volatile that they hardly love the same thing for even one day. Whilst the golden age reigned on the earth, Cupid, who at that time flattered himself that the hearts of all mankind would be ever fond and faithful, feared that by the facility with which we flew about the world, we might teach mortals the agreeable art of changing in love, which this god called an error capable of utterly destroying the happiness of his empire. In order to interdict all communication between us and the rest of the universe, he came to our island, touched the ground with one of his arrows, and rising again upon a brilliant cloud which had borne him thither, ‘If again,’ said he, to the inhabitants of the island, ‘you wish to traverse the air, like the gods, I have taken sure means of vengeance; you can no longer, by your dangerous society, trouble the happiness of my empire.’ After these words he disappeared. The threats of Cupid did not, however, take from the Butterflies the desire for change, nor even for flying, if it was only for the pleasure of occasionally quitting the earth. Some of them mounted into the air, and found that they had the same facility as they possessed before Cupid had forbidden them to do so; but as soon as they passed the limits of the Island they were changed into little insects, such as you now behold me, all of different colours, avenging Cupid having intended to mark by this variety how much they were given to inconstancy. Surprised at their metamorphosis, they returned to our island, and as soon as they touched the ground they were restored to their original form. Since that fatal time the vengeance of Cupid has always continued amongst us; when we quit the earth, nothing of our nature, as men, remains, except our mind and the liberty of speaking like them; but we have never made use of it out of our island, not choosing to make this act of vengeance celebrated by publishing it ourselves to the universe, or to alarm those who, like us, are inclined to inconstancy. We have, however, the pleasure of seeing, in our travels through the world, that fate has revenged us on Cupid without our assistance; for Inconstancy reigns with equal power to his own in the whole extent of his empire. Some centuries after this change took place in the realm of the butterflies, the Sun, that seemed to take pleasure in making it bring forth flowers, was so enchanted with his handiwork, that he fell in love with a rose of extraordinary beauty; he was tenderly beloved by her, and she sacrificed to him all the care bestowed on her by the zephyrs. At the end of some time the rose became of a different form to the rest; the Sun immediately caused others to blow, resembling her, in order that she might be less remarked in this quantity of flowers, which then appeared a new kind of plant. It has since been called ‘the rose of a hundred leaves.’ At length, from the Sun and this rose sprung a demi-god, whom the Sun destined to reign for ever in our island. Until then we had had no sovereign, but the son of a god who favoured so constantly our earth was received as our ruler with extreme joy; they called him the Prince of the Butterflies. It is this Prince, beautiful Princess, who can assist you in the air, and whom the adventure I am about to relate has rendered such a fast friend of the Prince of Leaves.

“In a country far removed from that of the butterflies there reigns a Fairy, who dwells in a very dark cavern: they call her the Fairy of the Grotto. She is of an immense size; her complexion is a mixture of blue, green, and yellow. Her face is almost as formidable as her power, and she is so dreaded by mortals that there is not one bold enough to approach the country which she inhabits. One day the Prince of the Butterflies, travelling for his pleasure in the neighbourhood of his empire, perceived the Fairy, and surprised at this rencontre he followed her for some time to see what would become of so fearful a monster. She did not remark that she was observed, for the Prince, although the offspring of the Sun, had not been able to obtain from fate the liberty of travelling under any other form than that which we all took on leaving the kingdom, because he was born since the time when Cupid had made us feel his vengeance. However, he was not inconstant, like all his subjects, and Cupid, by way of showing him a little favour on that account, had permitted him, when he changed his form, to be of one colour only, and that colour should be the one which signifies Fidelity. Under this form he followed the Fairy as far as he pleased, and he saw her enter her dismal abode. Impelled by curiosity, he flew in after her; but what a sight awaited him at the bottom of this cavern! He there saw a young lady, more beautiful and more brilliant than the day, reclining on a bed of turf, and who appeared in extreme grief. From time to time she dried the tears which fell from her lovely eyes; her distress and the languor of her appearance added to her charms. The Prince of the Butterflies remained so entranced by this spectacle, that he forgot the form under which he appeared, and only remembered that he was desperately in love, and that he was burning to say so. He was roused from this sweet reverie by the awful voice of the Fairy, who spoke to the young lady with frightful severity. This filled his heart with sorrow and anger, as well as with despair, at not daring to express either one or the other. The Fairy, who by a natural restlessness could not remain long in the same place, went out of the cavern; the Prince then approached the young person with whom he was so charmed; he flew round her, and wishing to enjoy the only liberty which his form permitted, he alighted on her hair, which was the fairest in the world, and at length upon her cheek. He was dying to tell her how much he was touched with her beauty and her grief, but by what means could he convince her that he was son of the Sun, without being able to appear before her in his own form; and how could he inform her of the vengeance of Cupid, and the inconstancy so natural to the inhabitants of the island, at the very time that he wished to persuade her that he would never cease to love her? He remained several days in the cavern, or in the forest with which it was surrounded; he could not resolve to quit this beauty that he so adored, and although he dared not speak to her, he saw her, and that was enough to make him prefer this hideous abode to the agreeable scenes where he had the pleasure of reigning, and of being acknowledged the most beautiful Prince in the world.

“During the time he remained with this young creature he always saw the Fairy treat her with incredible inhumanity, and he learnt from their conversation that this beautiful person was the Princess of the Linnets, whom the Fairy, being a relative, had carried off at a tender age, in order more easily to usurp her kingdom, which was a little island situated near to that of the Butterflies. He had heard of the Princess having been carried away, and that no one knew what had become of her. This country was called the Land of the Linnets, on account of the great quantity of those little birds that was found there. The Prince of the Butterflies pitied sincerely this unfortunate Princess, and, in the hope of being able to deliver her, he determined at length to tear himself away from her. He flew to the Island of Day without resting for a moment; he there found the Prince of Leaves, with whom he was united in the most tender bond of friendship, and who was about to pass a part of the year in the Island of Butterflies. He related his adventure to the Prince, and after discussing every means by which it would be possible to set the young Princess at liberty, the Prince of Leaves resolved to go himself into the forest of the Fairy, to inform the Princess of the Linnets of the violent love which the Prince of the Butterflies felt for her, and the reason which would always prevent that unfortunate sovereign from appearing before her under his proper form, unless she consented to be transported to the Island of Butterflies. But the Prince of Leaves appeared to his friend too formidable a rival to be entrusted with the commission; for he feared, with reason, that the Princess might be more touched by the charms of so perfect a prince than by the recital of the love entertained for her by another prince whom she had never seen nor even heard speak. He deplored the cruelty of his destiny, and sought some other mode of declaring his love to the Princess, but without success.

"None but a demi-god could approach the dwelling of the Fairy without feeling immediately the direful effect of her fury. He embarked, therefore, with the Prince of Leaves, agitated by a jealous fear. It appeared to him that this Prince could not preserve for a single moment, on beholding the beautiful Princess, the insensibility on which he had always piqued himself.

"Cupid, touched at the sad state to which he was reduced, wished at least to re-assure him on this point, and at the same time triumph over the insensible heart of the Prince of Leaves. It was by you, beautiful Princess," continued the Butterfly, "that the God expected to gain this victory, and you alone are worthy of it.

"It was on the same day that the two princes embarked that they saw from afar, upon this rock, an illumination so brilliant, that the Prince of Leaves, impelled by his destiny more than by curiosity, ordered the winged fish which conducted the arbour of myrtle in which he travelled, to approach the spot from which the bright light emanated. You know the remainder of this adventure. The Prince of Leaves found you in the forest of hyacinths, and left at your feet the liberty which he had held so dear, and which, till that moment, he had always preserved. Hurried away by the impatience of the Prince of the Butterflies, who had suffered nothing but regret at the delay, he tore himself, with infinite pain, from a spot where his heart and his wishes would have made him desire to remain for ever. They continued their voyage, and the Prince of the Butterflies was so delighted to see that the Prince of Leaves was so deeply in love, and so far from being likely to become his rival, that he did not doubt of its being a happy omen, and that he might count on a successful issue to his enterprise.

"They arrived in the forest of the Fairy of the Grotto; they entered her dreary abode, and Cupid, who had resolved to favour them, caused them to find the Princess of the Linnets alone and asleep. There was no time to be lost — the Prince of Leaves carried her off in the myrtle arbour, whilst the Prince of the Butterflies followed.

“The Fairy returned at this moment; she uttered the most horrible shrieks at the sight of this abduction; she thought she could prevent it by her art, and revenge herself on those who had thus dared to rescue the Princess of the Linnets. But her enchantments were powerless over the Prince of Leaves, who soon was far away from the dismal shore. In the meanwhile the Princess awoke, and was agreeably surprised at finding herself where she was, and at the presence of the Prince of Leaves. But it was an agreeable surprise, which increased when that Prince conversed with her, and informed her of the effect of her beauty, and that she would henceforth, being delivered from the tyranny of the Fairy, reign in her own empire, and in one also even finer than her own. The Prince of the Butterflies then spoke of his love with so much vivacity and tenderness, that the Princess felt excessive curiosity to see him in his true form, of which she confessed to have formed a very exalted idea from the time she heard his voice. They continued to float on, and after some days arrived at the Island of Butterflies, when the Prince hastened to land, in order to appear at length in his own person to the Princess. The Princess of Linnets then sent to inform her subjects in her own island of her adventures: they flocked to see her, and it was in their presence that she accepted the heart and empire of the happy Prince of the Butterflies. The Prince of Leaves, however, left her immediately that he had safely conducted her to that island, in order to return hither, beautiful Princess, where his anxiety and his ardent love made him impatient to be.”

Ravissante listened with extreme attention to the Butterfly, when she saw Prince Ariston enter her chamber with such fury in his countenance, that she dreaded its effects. “Fate threatens me,” he cried, on entering; “and as it is with some great misfortune, it must, no doubt, be that of losing you; none other would affect my heart, or be worthy of being so predicted. See, Madam,” he continued, addressing Ravissante, “the colour which the walls of this tower are assuming — it is a certain sign of approaching misfortune!”

As the misfortunes of Ariston were a happiness to Ravissante, she looked without distress at that which he pointed out to her notice, and perceived, indeed, that the blue stones were losing their original colour, and beginning to turn green. She was delighted to see this, as she augured from it the certain approach of the Prince of Leaves. The joy which the unhappy Ariston remarked in her eyes redoubled his despair. What did he not then say to Ravissante? And rendered sincere by the excess of his grief, he told her that his love was so great as not to allow of his ceasing to adore her, although he was sure of being miserable all his life. “I cannot doubt it,” said he to the Princess, “for the Fates foretold to me as to you — that I should always be miserable if I were not always faithful to the first impressions love made on my heart. And by what means could I ever obey this cruel mandate? After one has seen you, however he may have loved before, he must forget everything — even the preservation of his own happiness in loving and seeking to please you. A young princess of the Court of the King, my father, once appeared to me worthy of my regard. I thought fully that I should be sighing to return to her after remaining here for a short time; but the first sight of you subverted all my previous plans. My reason and my heart were equally inclined for the change, and I thought nothing impossible to the tender love with which you inspired me. I flattered myself even that it might overcome fate; but your austerity, which never relaxed, has taught me that I was deceived, and that there remains for me no other hope but that of dying speedily for your sake.”

The Prince Ariston finished speaking these words, which made Ravissante even think him worthy of some pity, when they saw in the air a throne of foliage, supported by an immense number of butterflies. One amongst them, which was entirely blue, and by whose colour Ravissante recognised the son of the Sun, flew to her, and said, “Come, beautiful

Princess, to-day you shall resume your liberty, and make the most amiable Prince in the world happy.”

The butterflies placed the throne near Ravissante; she seated herself on it, and they bore her away. Ariston, distracted at the loss of the Princess, in a paroxysm of despair, flung himself into the sea. The Fairy immediately abandoned the rock which this suicide had rendered so fatal and melancholy; and to mark her fury, she shivered both it and the tower into a thousand pieces by a clap of thunder, and the fragments were carried by the wind and waves to different sea-coasts. It is of this species of stone that they now make rings, which they call turquoise. Those which are still called “de la Vieille Roche” are made of the remains of this shattered rock, and the others are only stones which resemble them. The remembrance of the misfortune predicted to Prince Ariston by the change of colour in the walls of the tower has descended to our time. They say still that these rings become green when any misfortune is about to happen to the wearers, and that these misfortunes are generally connected with love affairs.

Whilst the Fairy gave vent to her grief by the destruction of the island, the Prince of the Butterflies, satisfied at having rendered to the Prince of Leaves a similar service to that he had received from him, conducted the beautiful Ravissante, flying before her, to a boat of rushes, ornamented with garlands of flowers, in which the Prince of Leaves awaited her with all the impatience which the violence of his love inspired. It is impossible to convey an idea of the pleasure he felt at the arrival of the Princess; never were joy and love so apparent as in the heart and language of this Prince. He sailed immediately to the Island of Day. The Prince of the Butterflies flew off to rejoin the amiable Princess of Linnets as speedily as possible. Ravissante sent two butterflies to the King, her father, to inform him of her good fortune; the good King thanked the Fates, and set out as soon as he could for the Island of Day, where the Prince of Leaves and Ravissante reigned with all imaginable felicity, and were always happy, because they never ceased to be fond and faithful.

12

THE FORTUNATE PUNISHMENT

There was once upon a time a King, who fell desperately in love with a Princess of his Court. As soon as he loved her he told her so. Kings are more privileged than common lovers. The Princess was not offended at a love which might place her on the throne, and the King found her as virtuous as she was charming. He married her: the wedding was incredibly magnificent; and what was even more remarkable, he became a husband without ceasing to be a lover. The felicity of this love-match was only disturbed by the fact of their having no children to succeed to their happiness and to their kingdom. The King, in order to obtain at least the comfort of hope on this point, resolved to consult a fairy, whom he believed to be particularly friendly. She was called Formidable, although she had not always been so to the King. It is said even that in the old collections of the time in that country are to be found ballads which tell a great deal about them. So bold have poets been in all ages! For the Fairy was very much respected, and appeared so stern that it was almost impossible to imagine she could ever have felt the power of love; but where are the hearts that escape? The King, who had always been very gallant, and who had a great deal of discernment, was well aware that appearances are often very deceptive. He had first met with Formidable in a wood where he had been hunting; she appeared to his eyes under a form so graceful, and with so charming an air, that the King did not doubt for a moment her desire to please: it is seldom such charms are displayed without that intention. The King fell in love with her; the Fairy felt more pleasure in being loved than in always inspiring terror. This affection lasted several years; but one day when she reckoned on the heart of her lover as on a property it was impossible for her to lose, she let the King see her in her real form: she was no longer young or handsome. She repented immediately when she perceived by the altered expression of the King's face that she had been too confident of her power, and discovered that, however tender hearts may be, they cannot excite or retain love if they are not united with an agreeable person. The King was ashamed at finding he had been in love with only an imaginary beauty; he ceased to love the Fairy, and thenceforth only treated her with attention and respect. Formidable, with a pride that was natural to her, assumed so well the appearance of being contented with the esteem of the King, that she persuaded him she was one of his best friends. She even went to his wedding, in company with all the other fairies of the country, who were invited, in order not to give any one reason to fancy from her refusal that she had any dislike to the marriage.

The King, therefore, counting on the friendship of his old mistress, went to visit her in her residence, which was a palace of flame-coloured marble in the midst of a vast forest. The approach to it was by an avenue of immense length, bordered on both sides by a hundred flame-coloured lions. Formidable liked only this colour, and she had therefore by her magic art caused all the animals born in the forest to be of the same hue. At the end of the avenue was a large square, wherein a troop of Moors, clothed in flame-colour and gold, magnificently armed, kept perpetual guard.

The King traversed the forest alone; he knew the way perfectly well; he even passed through the avenue of lions without danger, for he threw them, as he entered, some ranunculuses, which the Fairy had formerly given him to use when passing those terrible beasts. As soon as the King had thrown them those beautiful flowers, they became gentle and quiet. He at length reached the Moorish guard, who at first bent their bows at him, but the King threw them some pomegranate blossoms, which he had received from the Fairy with the ranunculuses, and the Moors shot their arrows into the air, and drew themselves up in line to allow him to pass. He entered the palace of Formidable: she was in a saloon, seated on a throne of rubies, in the midst of twelve Moorish women, clothed in flame-coloured gauze and gold. The Fairy's dress was of the same fashion and colour, but so covered with precious stones that it shone like the sun; yet it did not make her appear any the more beautiful. The King looked and listened for a few minutes before he entered the saloon. Near the Fairy was a quantity of books on a table of red marble: he saw that she took one and began to instruct the slaves in those secrets which render fairies so powerful; but Formidable taught them none but such as would be inimical to the happiness and comfort of mankind; she took good care to prevent their learning anything that would contribute to human felicity. The King felt he hated the Fairy; and entering the apartment, interrupted the fatal lesson, and surprised Formidable by his appearance; but recovering herself immediately, she dismissed her Moors, and regarding the King with an air of pride and anger, — "What seek you here, inconstant Prince?" she exclaimed. "Wherefore do you come to disturb by your odious presence the repose I endeavour to obtain in this seclusion?" The King was quite surprised by so unexpected a mode of address; and the Fairy, opening one of the books, continued: "I see clearly what you want. Yes, you shall have a daughter by this Princess whom you have so unjustly preferred to me, but do not hope to be happy: it is time for me to be avenged. The daughter that shall be born to you ere long shall be as much hated by all the world as I formerly loved you!" The King did everything in his power to soften the anger of the Fairy; but it was useless; hatred had succeeded to love, and nothing but love could soften the Fairy's heart; for pity and generosity were sentiments quite unknown to her. She haughtily commanded the King to leave the palace, and opening a cage, a flame-coloured parrot flew out. “Follow this bird,” said she to the King, “and bless my clemency for not delivering you to the fury of my lions and guards.”

The bird flew off, and the King followed, and was conducted by a road hitherto unknown to him, and much shorter than the one he had come by, into his own kingdom. The Queen, who on his return remarked his extreme sadness, begged to know the reason so importunately, that the King at length told her of the cruel prediction of the Fairy, but without informing her of all that had occurred between them in former times, in order not to add to the troubles of his beautiful wife. This young Princess knew that one fairy could not positively prevent anything predicted by another of her own class, but that she might mitigate the punishment which that other had inflicted.

“I shall go,” said the Queen, “in search of Lumineuse, Sovereign of the Happy Empire; she is a celebrated fairy who delights in protecting the unfortunate. She is a relation of mine; she has ever favoured me, and she even predicted the good fortune to which love would lead me.” The King quite approved of the expedition of the Queen, and hoped much from it. Her equipage being ready, she set off to seek Lumineuse. The Fairy bore this name because her beauty was so dazzling that it was hardly possible to endure the brilliancy of it, and the grandeur of her soul quite equalled her extreme loveliness. The Queen arrived in a vast plain, and perceived, at a great distance, a large tower; but although it was in sight, it was very long before she could approach it, owing to the many windings in the road. It was built of white marble, and had no doors, but arched windows of crystal; a beautiful river, of which the waves appeared of liquid silver, bathed the foot of the tower, and wound nine times around it. The Queen, with all her Court, arrived on the bank of the river, at the point where it began its first circle round the dwelling of the Fairy. The Queen crossed it on a bridge of white poppies, which the power of Lumineuse had rendered as safe and as durable as if it had been built of brass. But although it was only made of flowers, it was nevertheless to be feared, for it had the power of putting people to sleep for seven years who attempted to pass it contrary to the wish of the Fairy. The Queen perceived on the other side of the bridge, six young men, magnificently attired, sleeping on beds of moss, under tents of foliage. These were princes enamoured of the Fairy: and as she never would hear love spoken of, she had not allowed them to pass any farther. The Queen, after having crossed the bridge, found herself in the first spot which the river left free; it was occupied by a charming labyrinth of laurestinus and jasmine; there were none but white, for that was the colour Lumineuse preferred. After having admired this lovely maze, and easily threaded its paths, which were only difficult for those the Fairy did not wish should enter her agreeable dwelling, the Queen again crossed the river by a bridge of white anemones; it took at this place its second turn, and the space which it left before it made its third circle was occupied by a forest of acacias always in full bloom; the roads through it were charming, and so overshadowed that the rays of the sun never penetrated; a number of white doves whose plumage might have put the snow to shame were seen in all directions, and the trees were covered with countless white canary-birds, that made a delicious concert. Lumineuse, with a touch of her wand, had taught them the most beautiful and charming songs in the world. They left this lovely forest by a bridge of tube-roses, and they then entered a fair plain, wooded with trees laden with such fine and delicious fruit, that the least of them would have put to shame the famous gardens of the Hesperides. Every evening the Queen found the most beautiful tents in the world prepared for her, and a magnificent repast was served as soon as she arrived, without her seeing any of the skilful and active officers who prepared it. The Fairy, who had learnt by her books of the arrival of the Queen, took care that her journey should not be in the least degree fatiguing to her. The Queen, leaving this marvellous spot, passed the river again, by a bridge of white pinks, and entered the park of the Fairy. It was as beautiful as all the rest. The Fairy sometimes came to hunt there; it was filled with an infinite number of white stags and does, with other animals of the same colour; a pack of white greyhounds were scattered over the park, and lying on the turf with the deer and white rabbits, and other animals usually wild, but they were not so in this place, the art of the Fairy had tamed them; and when the dogs chased some beast for the amusement of Lumineuse, it appeared as if they understood it was only in play, for while they hunted it in the best style, they never did the animal any harm. In this place, the river made its fifth circuit round the dwelling of the Fairy. The Queen, in quitting the park, crossed the water on a bridge of white jasmine, and found herself in a charming hamlet. All the little cottages were built of alabaster. The inhabitants of this pleasant place were subjects of the Fairy, and tended her flocks; their garments were of silver gauze; they were crowned with chaplets of flowers; and their crooks were brilliantly studded with precious stones. All the sheep were of surprising whiteness; all the shepherdesses were young and handsome; and Lumineuse loved the colour of white too well to have forgotten to bestow on them a complexion so beautiful that even the sun itself seemed to have only helped to render it more dazzling. All the shepherds were amiable, and the sole fault that could be found with this agreeable country was that there was not a single brunette to be seen there. The shepherdesses came to receive the Queen, and presented her with porcelain vases, filled with the most beautiful flowers in the world. The Queen and all her Court were charmed with their agreeable journey, and drew from it a happy presage of obtaining what she desired of the Fairy.

As she was about to leave the hamlet, a young shepherdess advanced towards the Queen, and presented her with a little white greyhound on a cushion of white velvet, embroidered with silver and pearls: it was hardly possible to distinguish the dog from the cushion, the colour was so exactly the same. “The Fairy Lumineuse, Sovereign of the Happy Empire,” said the young shepherdess to the Queen, “has commanded me to present you, in her name, with ‘Blanc-blanc,’ which is the name of this little greyhound; she has the honour of being beloved by Lumineuse, whose art has made a marvel of her, and who has commanded her to conduct you to the tower. You will have nothing to do, Princess, but to let her go, and follow.”

The Queen received the little dog with much pleasure, and was charmed at the attentions shown her by the Fairy. She caressed Blanc-blanc, who, after having returned her endearments with much intelligence and grace, jumped lightly to the ground, and began to frisk before the Queen, who followed her with all her Court. They arrived at the bank of the river, which there made its sixth turn, and were surprised to find no bridge by which to cross it. The Fairy did not wish to be troubled by the shepherds in her retreat, so there was never a bridge at that point, except when she desired herself to pass or to receive any of her friends. The Queen was pondering on this adventure, when she heard Blanc-blanc bark three times; immediately a light breeze agitated the trees on the banks of the river, and shook from them such a great quantity of orange-flowers into the water, that they formed a bridge of themselves, and the Queen crossed the river by it. She rewarded Blanc-blanc by caresses, and found herself in an avenue of myrtles and orange-trees, which having traversed without any feeling of fatigue, although it was an immense length, she found herself again on the bank of the river, which made its seventh turn at that spot. She saw no bridge, but the adventure of the morning re-assured her. Blanc-blanc struck the ground three times with her little paw, and in a moment there appeared a bridge of white hyacinths. The Queen crossed it, and entered a meadow enamelled with flowers. Her beautiful tents were already pitched in it. She rested a short time, and then resumed her journey, till she again found herself on the bank of the river. There was again no means of crossing it; but Blanc-blanc advanced and drank a little of the beautiful stream, whereupon a bridge of white roses appeared, and the Queen was thereby enabled to enter the garden of the Fairy. It was so filled with wonderful flowers, extraordinary fountains, and statues of superior beauty, that it is impossible to give an exact description of it. If the Queen had not felt the utmost impatience to avert the evils with which the cruel Formidable menaced her, she would have lingered some time in this charming place. All the Court left it with regret; but they were obliged to follow Blanc-blanc, who conducted the Queen to the spot where the river made its last circuit round the dwelling of Lumineuse. The Queen then saw the Palace of the Fairy quite near to her. Nothing but the river divided her from it. She gazed on it with pleasure as the goal of her journey, and read this inscription, written on the tower in letters of gold: —

Of perfect bliss behold the charming seat,
By Lumineuse to pleasure dedicated.
Love only may not enter this retreat,
Although ‘twould seem for Love alone created.

This inscription had been composed in honour of Lumineuse by the most celebrated fairies of her time. They had wished to leave to posterity the expression of their friendship and esteem for her. Whilst the Queen thus amused herself on the banks of the river, Blanc-blanc swam across the stream, and diving brought up a shell of mother-of-pearl, which she again let fall into the water. At this signal six beautiful nymphs, in brilliant attire, opened a large crystal window, and a staircase of pearls issued from it and slowly approached the Queen. Blanc-blanc ran up it quickly, till the arrival at the window of the Fairy, and entered the tower: the Queen followed, but as she ascended, the steps of the pretty staircase which she had mounted disappeared behind her, and prevented any one else from following her. She entered the beautiful tower of Lumineuse, and the window was immediately closed.

All the suite of the Queen were in despair when they lost sight of her, and found they were unable to follow, for they loved her most sincerely; their lamentations were heard even in the place where Lumineuse conversed with the Queen, and in order to re-assure these unfortunates, the Fairy sent one of her nymphs to conduct them to the hamlet, where they could await the return of the Queen. The staircase of pearls re-appeared and revived their hopes; the nymph descended, and the Queen from the window commanded them to follow and obey the messenger. The Queen remained with the Fairy, who entertained her with prodigious magnificence, and with a charm of manner which won all hearts. The Queen stayed with her for three days, which were not sufficient, however, for the inspection of all the marvels of the tower of Lumineuse; it would have taken centuries to see and admire everything which the Fairy had to show. The fourth day Lumineuse, after having laden the Queen with presents as elegant as they were magnificent, said to her, “Beautiful Princess, I am sorry not to be able to repair the misfortune with which Formidable threatens you; but that is the fault of destiny, which allows us to bestow good gifts on those whom we favour, but forbids us to undo or avert the evils inflicted by other fairies. However, to console you for the misfortune that has been predicted for you, I promise that before a year be over, you shall have a daughter so beautiful that all those who behold her shall be enchanted with her, and I will take care,” added the Fairy, “to cause a Prince to be born who shall be worthy of her hand.”

So favourable a prophecy made the Queen forget for a time the hatred of Formidable, and the misfortune she had threatened her with. Lumineuse did not tell the Queen the reason of Formidable being her enemy. Fairies, even when they quarrel amongst themselves, keep jealously secret everything which would render them contemptible in the eyes of mortals, and ‘tis said they are the only women who have the generosity not to speak ill of one another. After a thousand thanks on the part of the Queen, Lumineuse ordered twelve of her nymphs to take charge of the presents, and to conduct the Queen to the hamlet, she herself accompanying her as far as the staircase of pearls, which appeared as soon as they opened the window. When the Queen and nymphs were at the foot of the stairs they saw a silver car drawn by six white hinds: their harness was covered with diamonds; a young child, lovely as the day, drove the car, and the nymphs followed on white horses which might have vied in beauty with those of the sun. In this elegant equipage the Queen arrived at the hamlet; she there found all her Court, who were rejoiced to see her again; the nymphs then took leave of the Queen, and presented her with the twelve beautiful animals enchanted by the Fairy, so that they were never tired, informing her that Lumineuse begged she would offer them in her name to the King. The Queen, overwhelmed by the kindness of the Fairy, returned to her kingdom; the King met and received her at the frontier; he was so charmed at her return, and the agreeable news which she announced on the part of Lumineuse, that he ordered public rejoicings, the renown of which reached the ear of Formidable, and thereby redoubled her hate and anger against the King.

Soon after the return of the Queen she found she was about to become a mother, and felt assured that the beautiful Princess who was to charm all hearts would be ere long presented to the King by her, for Lumineuse had promised her birth should take place before the end of the year, and Formidable had not prescribed the time when her vengeance should be accomplished; but she had no idea of postponing it long. The Queen gave birth to two princesses, and did not doubt for a moment which was the daughter promised to her by Lumineuse, from the eagerness she felt to embrace the one which first saw the light. She found her quite worthy of the praises of the Fairy; nothing in the world could be so beautiful; the King and all who were present hastened to admire the first-born little Princess, and they entirely forgot the other; but the Queen, judging by the general neglect, that the prediction of Formidable was also accomplished, gave orders several times that the same care should be taken of her as of the eldest.

The waiting-women obeyed with a repugnance which they could not overcome, and for which the King and Queen dared scarcely blame them, as they felt the same themselves. Lumineuse arrived with all speed, upon a cloud, and named the beautiful Princess Aimée, significant of the destiny which she had promised her. The King paid Lumineuse all the respect she deserved. She promised the Queen always to protect Aimée, but she bestowed on her no gift, for she had already given her all in her power. As for the other Princess, it was in vain that the King gave her the name of one of his provinces; insensibly every one accustomed themselves to call her Naimée, in cruel contradistinction to her sister Aimée. When the two Princesses had attained the age of twelve years, Formidable desired them to be sent away from the Court, in order, as she said, to diminish the love and the hate which they inspired. Lumineuse let Formidable have her way; she was sure that nothing would prevent the beautiful Aimée from reigning in the kingdom of her father, and in the hearts of his subjects. She had endowed her with such charms that no one could see her and have any doubt about it. The King, in the hope of appeasing the hatred of Formidable, which extended to all his family, resolved to obey her. He therefore sent the two young Princesses, with a youthful and agreeable Court, to a marvellous castle which he possessed in a remote part of his empire: it was called the Castle of Portraits, and was a place worthy of the learned fairy who had built it four thousand years before. The gardens and all the promenades surrounding it were lovely, but the most remarkable thing was the gallery, of immense length, which contained portraits of all the princes and princesses of the blood royal of that and all the neighbouring countries. As soon as they attained their fifteenth year their portraits were placed here, painted with an art which could be but feebly imitated by any but a fairy. This custom was to be observed until the time when the most beautiful princess in all the world should enter the castle.

This gallery was divided into two vast and magnificent apartments: the two Princesses occupied them; they had the same masters, the same education; they taught nothing to the charming Aimée which was not also taught to her sister; but Formidable came and instilled lessons into the latter which spoilt all the rest, while Lumineuse, on her side, rendered Aimée, by her instructions, worthy of the admiration of the whole universe. After the Princesses had been in this castle, excluded from the Court for three years, they heard one day a strange noise, which was followed by the sound of charming music; they looked about everywhere to find from whence the noise and the concert proceeded, when they perceived three portraits occupying three places which a moment before had been vacant. The first represented a lady being crowned by two Cupids with flowers, one of whom regarded the beautiful portrait with all the attention it merited, and seemed to have forgotten to let fly an arrow at it which was fixed in his bent bow; the other held a little streamer, on which were these verses: —

Aimée received from Nature at her birth
Those beauties which immortal are, alone.
The Graces added loveliness to worth,
And Venus yielded up to her her zone.

It was not necessary to announce this as the portrait of the beautiful Aimée; one saw in it all her features depicted with that charming grace which attracted every heart; she had an exquisitely fair complexion, the most beautiful colour in the world, a round face, lovely light hair, blue eyes, which shone with so much brightness that those who had the pleasure of seeing them thought it useless that Lumineuse should have bestowed on Aimée a gift which she was sure of possessing from her own personal beauty: her mouth was charming, her teeth as white as her skin, and Venus seemed to have given her the power of smiling like herself. It was this divine portrait which occupied the end of the gallery. The second was that of Naimée: she was fair, and did not want beauty; but notwithstanding, like the original, the portrait failed to please. These words were inscribed beneath it in letters of gold: —

Naimée, of more than common charms possest,
Can in no mortal heart a dwelling find.
Learn that in vain we are with beauty blest,
Wanting the rarer graces of the mind.

These two portraits occupied all the attention of the two Princesses and of their juvenile Court, when Aimée, who was not proud of her own personal charms, and leaving to the others the task of admiring them, turned her eyes towards the third portrait, which had appeared at the same time with her own. She found it well worth looking at. It was that of a young Prince, a thousand times handsomer than Cupid himself; he had more the air of a god than a mortal; his black hair fell in large curls on his shoulders, and his eyes bespoke as much intelligence as his person displayed manly beauty. These words were written underneath the portrait: — “This is the Prince of the Pleasant Island.” Its beauty surprised everybody, but it affected the lovely Aimée particularly — her young heart experienced an unknown emotion; and Naimée even, at the sight of this handsome portrait, found she was not exempt from a passion which she could not herself inspire. The adventure itself did not so much astonish any one, for they were accustomed to see wonderful things in that country. The King and Queen came to the Castle to visit the Princesses, and had a great many copies made of their portraits, which they sent to all the neighbouring kingdoms. But Aimée, as soon as she was alone, carried away by an involuntary impulse, returned to the gallery of portraits, where that of the Prince of the Pleasant Island engrossed all her attention, and was every way worthy of it.

Naimée, who had nothing in common with her sister, save an equal admiration of the portrait of the Prince, also passed nearly all her time in the gallery. This growing passion so increased the hatred of Naimée for her sister, that not being able herself to injure her, she incessantly implored the fairy Formidable to punish her for possessing superior charms. The cruel Fairy never neglected an opportunity of doing harm; so, following her own inclination, while yielding to the solicitations of Naimée, she went in search of the amiable Princess, who was walking on the bank of the river which flowed at the foot of the Castle of Portraits: "Go!" said Formidable to her, touching her with an ebony wand which she carried in her hand, — "Go! Follow continually the winding of this river, until the day when thou shalt meet a person who hates thee more than I do, and until that hour thou shalt not stop to rest in any place in the world!" The Princess, at this terrible order, began to weep. Such tears! In all the universe no heart but that of Formidable could be found incapable of being softened by them. Lumineuse hastened to the assistance of the beautiful and unhappy Aimée. "Be comforted," said she; "the journey to which Formidable has condemned thee shall terminate in a delightful adventure, and during it thou shalt have nothing but pleasure." Aimée, after this favourable prediction, departed with one single regret, which was that she should see no more the beautiful portrait of the Prince of the Pleasant Island; but she dared not express her sorrow to the Fairy. She therefore set out on her journey, and everything appeared sensible of her charms. None but the gentlest airs breathed in the places through which she passed. Everywhere she found nymphs ready to wait on her with the utmost respect; the meadows were covered with flowers at her approach; and when the sun became too powerful, the trees increased their foliage to protect her from its beams.

While the beautiful Princess made so pleasant a journey, Lumineuse did not merely limit her exertions to neutralizing the evil designs of Formidable; she sought Naimée, and striking her with an ivory wand — “Begone!” said she. “Follow in thy turn the banks of the river, and never shalt thou rest until thou shalt find a person who loves thee as much as thou deservest to be hated!” Naimée departed, and no one regretted her absence.

Even Formidable, who was always well pleased when she caused pain, thought no more of Naimée, and did not condescend to protect her any longer. The two Princesses thus continued their journey, Naimée with all the fatigue possible, the most beautiful flowers changing into thorns in her path; and the lovely Princess, with all the pleasures which Lumineuse had led her to hope for, — indeed, she found them still greater than she had expected.

At the close of a beautiful day, at the hour when the sun sank to rest in the arms of Thetis, Aimée seated herself on the bank of the river. Immediately an infinite number of flowers, springing up around her, formed a sort of couch, the charms of which she would have admired for a much longer time had she not perceived an object on the river which prevented her from thinking of anything else; it was a little boat made of amethyst, ornamented with a thousand streamers of the same colour, inscribed with cyphers and gallant devices. Twelve young men, clothed in light garments of grey and silver, crowned with garlands of amaranths, rowed with so much diligence, that the boat was very soon sufficiently close to the shore to allow Aimée to remark its various beauties. It was with a feeling of agreeable surprise that she perceived in every part of it her name and her initials. A moment after, the Princess recognised her portrait upon a little altar of topaz, raised in the centre of the boat; and beneath the portrait she read these words.

If this be not love, what is it?

After the first emotion of surprise and admiration, she feared to see the stranger land who appeared to be so very gallant. “Everything informs me of the love of an unknown admirer,” said Aimée to herself; “but I feel that the Prince of the Pleasant Island is alone worthy to inspire me with that sentiment which I too plainly perceive is entertained for me by another. Fatal portrait!” she exclaimed; “why did destiny present it to my view at a time when, so far from defending myself from its influence, I was even ignorant that it was possible to love anything more tenderly than flowers.”

This reflection was followed by many sighs, and she would have remained longer buried in her sweet reverie, if the agreeable sound of divers instruments had not roused her from it. She looked towards the boat from whence these pleasing sounds proceeded. A man, whose face she could not see, clothed in a robe of that same magnificent colour which was displayed in his entire equipage, appeared to be entirely occupied in the contemplation of her portrait, whilst six beautiful nymphs formed a charming concert, and accompanied these words, which were sung by him who did not take his eyes off the picture of the Princess. The air was Duboulai’s: —

Let all things witness to my passion bear,
And vaunt the beauties of my matchless fair!
Aimée more charms than Venus' self displays!
Ye Nymphs in turn your tuneful voices raise.
Let all things witness to my passion bear,
And vaunt the beauties of my matchless fair!

The Graces gladly quit the Queen of Love
To follow one whose smile far more they prize.
To see and serve her is a bliss above
All that the gods can offer in the skies.
Aimée more charms, &c.

One glance from her sweet eyes my heart subdued.
All yield to her! all to her empire bow!
And till the moment man her beauty viewed
None could have loved as all the world must now!
Aimée more charms, &c.

The sweetness of the music detained the beautiful Aimée on the bank of the river. When it was finished, the stranger turned his face towards her, and enabled her to recognise, with as much confusion as pleasure, the agreeable features of the Prince of the Pleasant Island. What a surprise, what joy to see this charming Prince, and to find he thought of nothing but her! One must know how to love as they did in the days of the Fairies, to understand all that the young Princess felt.

The Prince of the Pleasant Island was equally astonished. He hastened to land on the fortunate shore which presented to his view the divine Aimée. She had not the heart to fly from so perfect a prince, though she upbraided fate a thousand times for her own weakness. On such occasions fate generally bears the blame.

It is impossible to express what the young lovers said to each other. Often, indeed, they understood each other without speaking. Lumineuse, who had conducted to this place both the pretty boat and the steps of Aimée, appeared all at once to re-assure the timid Princess, who had at length made up her mind to avoid so charming and dangerous a Prince. She told them that they were destined to love each other, and to be for ever united. “But,” added the Fairy, “before this happy time arrives, you must finish the journey commanded by Formidable.”

It is impossible to disobey the Fairies; so the beautiful Aimée and the Prince were satisfied with the pleasure of being together, and felt that anything which did not separate them was only too delightful. They continued, therefore, their route, sometimes in the pretty boat, sometimes wandering on foot through a vast, but beautiful wilderness, which the river fertilized with its waters. It was in this tranquil seclusion that the Prince of the Pleasant Island completely lost his peace of mind. He informed the beautiful Princess of all he had felt for her since the happy day when her divine portrait had been brought to his Court, and that one morning as he was walking on the banks of the river, and dreaming of her, Lumineuse had appeared, and, showing him the amethyst boat, commanded him to embark in it, promising him success in his voyage and a favourable issue to his love. Whilst the Prince and the beautiful Aimée obeyed the orders of Formidable, their affection increased each day. They became so happy, that they dreaded arriving at the end of their journey, for fear of being occupied with anything else but their love. Naimée, meanwhile, also continued her painful progress.

The course of the river which the two Princesses followed conducted them insensibly to the Pleasant Island, and they arrived there exactly at the same moment. Lumineuse did not fail to be present also. She informed Aimée that the revenge of Formidable was accomplished, because, in meeting her sister, she had found the only person in the world who could hate her. “And the journey of Naimée is also finished, then,” said the beautiful Princess, “for nothing has been able to diminish my regard for her.” She then begged the Fairy to mitigate, if possible, the sad fate of her sister; but this favour was useless to Naimée. The moment she saw the Prince of the Pleasant Island, whom she recognised easily as the original of the exquisite portrait which had touched her heart, and heard him tell Lumineuse that the time of his marriage with Aimée approached, she threw herself into that river, the course of which she had followed for twelve months with so much pain, yet without having resorted to self-destruction; but the woes of love affect us more deeply than any other misfortunes.

Lumineuse, who saw the Princess plunge into the water, changed her into a little animal, which evinces still, by its manner of walking, the contrariness of the unhappy Naimée. Her fate followed her even after death, for she was not regretted. It cost Aimée, however, a few tears; but what troubles could not be consoled by the Prince of the Pleasant Island? She was so engrossed by his affection, that she cared but little for the fêtes which they gave to celebrate her arrival in the kingdom, and the Prince himself took but a trifling share in them. When one is really in love, there is no true pleasure but that of being loved in return.

The King and Queen, apprised by Lumineuse of what had occurred, hastened to rejoin their amiable daughter; and in their presence the generous Fairy declared that the lovely Aimée had had the honour of putting an end to the adventure of the Castle of Portraits, because nothing had ever appeared so beautiful as herself in all the world.

The love of the Prince of the Pleasant Island was too violent to endure delay, so he begged the King and Queen to consent to the fulfilment of his happiness. Lumineuse herself honoured with her presence a day so fair and so much desired. The nuptials were celebrated with all the magnificence which might be expected from fairies and kings; but happy as was the day, I will not attempt a description of it, for, however agreeable to the lovers themselves, a wedding is almost always a dull affair to the general company.

13

FAIRER THAN A FAIRY

There was once upon a time, in Europe, a King, who having already several children by a princess whom he had married, took it into his head to travel from one end of his kingdom to the other. He passed his time in visiting one province after another very pleasantly; but while he was staying in a beautiful castle at the extremity of his dominions, the Queen, his wife, was brought to bed there of a daughter, who appeared so exceedingly lovely at the moment of her birth, that the courtiers, either on account of the child's beauty, or to ingratiate themselves with the parents, named her "Fairer than a Fairy;" and it will be seen how well she merited so illustrious a title. The Queen had scarcely recovered, when she was obliged to follow the King, her husband, who had departed in haste to defend a distant province which his enemies had invaded.

Little Fairer than a Fairy was left behind with her governess and the ladies who attended on her; they brought her up with the utmost care, and as her father was involved in a long and cruel war, she had plenty of time during his absence to increase in stature and beauty. That beauty rendered her famous in all the surrounding countries; nothing else was spoken of, and at twelve years old she might more easily be taken for a divinity than for a mortal. One of her brothers came to see her during a truce, and conceived the most perfect affection for her.

Meanwhile, however, the fame of her beauty and the name she bore so irritated the fairies against her, that there was nothing they did not think of to revenge themselves on her, for the presumption implied by such a title, and to destroy a beauty of which they were so jealous.

The Queen of the Fairies was not one of those good fairies who are the protectors of virtue, and who have no pleasure but in doing good. Many centuries having elapsed since she had attained royalty by her profound learning and art, her great age had caused her to dwindle in stature, and she was now only called by the nickname of Nabote. Nabote accordingly summoned a council, and made known to them her resolution to avenge, not only the beauties of her own court, but those of the entire world; that she had determined to go and see for herself, and carry off this paragon whose reputation was so injurious to their charms. It was no sooner said than done. She set out, and, clothed in a very plain garb, transported herself to the castle which contained this marvellous creature. She soon made herself at home in it, and induced by her cunning the ladies of the Princess to receive her amongst them. But Nabote was struck with astonishment when, after having carefully examined the castle, she discovered by means of her art that it had been constructed by a great magician, and that he had endowed it with a virtue by the power of which no one could leave its walls or the surrounding pleasure-grounds but of their own free will, and that it was not possible to use any sort of enchantment against those persons who inhabited it. This secret was not unknown to the governess of Fairer than a Fairy, who, well aware of the invaluable treasure committed to her charge, still felt no alarm on her account, knowing that no one in the world could take from her this young princess, so long as she should not go outside the castle or the gardens. She had expressly forbidden her to do so, and Fairer, who had already a large share of discretion, had never failed in taking this precaution. A thousand lovers had made fruitless efforts to carry her off; but knowing herself secure within those limits, she did not fear their violence.

Nabote did not require much time to insinuate herself into her good graces; she taught her to do beautiful kinds of work, and rendered her lessons agreeable by recounting pleasant stories. She neglected nothing which could divert her, and naturally pleased her so much, that at length one was never seen without the other.

Amidst all her attentions, however, Nabote was not less occupied with her schemes of revenge; she sought for an opportunity of inducing Fairer than a Fairy, by some cunning pretence, only to put her foot over the threshold of one of the castle gates. She was always prepared to pounce on and fly away with her. One day that she had led her into the garden, and the young maidens of her Court, having gathered some flowers, had crowned with them the beautiful head of Fairer than a Fairy, Nabote opened a little door which led into the fields, and passing out at it, played an hundred antics, which caused the Princess and the young folks who surrounded her to laugh heartily. All at once the wicked Nabote pretended to be taken ill, and the next minute she fell down, as if swooning away. Some of the young maidens ran to assist her, and Fairer flew also to her side. But hardly had the unhappy child passed the fatal gate than Nabote sprang up, seized her with a powerful arm, and making a circle with her wand, a thick black fog arose, which dispersing again almost immediately, the ground was seen to open and two moles emerged, with wings formed of rose-leaves, drawing an ebony car, and Nabote placing herself in it with Fairer than a Fairy, it ascended into the air, and cleaving it with incredible velocity, disappeared entirely from the sight of the young maidens, who by their cries and tears soon announced to all the castle the loss they had sustained.

Fairer than a Fairy only recovered from her first astonishment to fall into another still more fearful; the rapidity with which the car passed through the air had so bewildered her that she almost lost consciousness; at length, reviving a little, she cast down her eyes. What was her alarm to find nothing beneath her but the vast extent of the shoreless ocean. She uttered a piercing cry, turned round, and seeing near her her dear Nabote, she embraced her tenderly and held her close in her arms as one naturally would to re-assure oneself. But the Fairy repulsed her rudely: — “Off! audacious child,” said she. “Behold in me your mortal foe. I am the Queen of the Fairies, and you are about to pay to me the penalty of your insolence in assuming the proud name which you bear.”

Fairer, trembling at these words more than if a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet, felt greater alarm at them than at the dreadful road she was travelling. At length, however, the car alighted in the midst of the magnificent court-yard of the most superb palace that ever was seen. The sight of so beautiful a palace somewhat re-assured the timid Princess, especially when she descended from the car, and she saw an hundred young beauties, who came with much deference to pay their respects to the Fairy. So charming a residence did not appear to announce misfortune to her. She had also one consolation which does not fail to flatter one in similar situations: she remarked that all those beautiful persons were struck with admiration on beholding her, and she heard a confused murmur of praise and envy which gratified her marvellously.

But how speedily was this little feeling of vanity extinguished! Nabote imperiously commanded them to strip Fairer of her beautiful clothes, thinking thereby to take from her a portion of her charms. They pulled them off, accordingly, but only to increase the fury of Nabote, for what beauties were then disclosed to view, and to what shame did they put all the fairies in the world! They re-clothed her in old shabby garments. But in this state, one would have said her natural and simple loveliness was determined to show how independent it was of the assistance of the most costly ornaments; never did she appear more charming! Nabote then ordered them to conduct her to the place which she had prepared for her, and to set her her task. Two fairies took her and made her pass through the most beautiful and sumptuous apartments that could possibly be seen. Fairer noticed them, in spite of her misery, and said to herself, “Whatever torments they may prepare for me, my heart tells me I shall not always be miserable in this beautiful palace.”

They made her descend a large staircase of black marble, which had more than a thousand steps: she thought she was going into the bowels of the earth, or rather, that they were conducting her into the infernal regions. At length they entered a small cabinet, wainscoted with ebony, where they told her she would have to sleep on a little straw, and that there was an ounce of bread with a cup of water for her supper. From thence they made her pass into a great gallery, the walls of which were entirely composed of black marble, and which had no light but that afforded by five lamps of jet, which threw a sombre glare over the place, more alarming than cheering. These gloomy walls were hung with cobwebs from top to bottom, and such was their peculiarity, that the more they were swept away the more they multiplied. The two fairies told the Princess that this gallery must be swept clean by break of day, or that she would be made to suffer the most frightful torments, and after placing a ladder, and giving her a broom of rushes, they bade her set to work, and left her.

Fairer than a Fairy sighed, and not knowing the peculiarity of those cobwebs, courageously resolved, notwithstanding the great length of the gallery, to execute the task imposed on her. She took her broom, and mounted the ladder nimbly, but, O Heavens! what was her surprise when, as she endeavoured to sweep the marble and clear off the cobwebs, she found they increased in proportion to her exertions! She fatigued herself by persevering for some time, but perceiving sorrowfully, at length, that it was all in vain, she threw down her broom, descended the ladder, and seating herself on the last step of it, began to weep bitterly, and to foresee the extent of her misfortune. Her sobs came at length so fast that she could no longer support herself, when, raising her head a little, her eyes were dazzled by a brilliant light. The gallery was in an instant illuminated from end to end, and she saw kneeling before her a youth so beautiful and charming, that at the first glance she took him for Cupid, but she remembered that Love is always painted naked, and this handsome youth was dressed in a suit of clothes covered with jewels. She was not sure, also, that all the light she perceived did not proceed from his eyes, so beautiful and brilliant did they appear to her. This young man continued to gaze upon her, still kneeling. She felt inclined to kneel too. “Who art thou?” she exclaimed, in amazement. “Art thou a God? Art thou Love?” “I am not a God,” he replied, “but I have more love in me than is to be found in heaven or earth beside. I am Phratis, son of the Queen of the Fairies, who loves you and will aid you.” Then, taking up the broom which she had thrown down, he touched all the cobwebs, which immediately turned to cloth-of-gold of marvellous workmanship, the lamps becoming bright and shining; Phratis then, giving a golden key to the Princess, said, “In the principal panel of your cell you will find a lock; open it gently. Adieu, I must retire for fear of being suspected: go to rest; you will find all that is necessary for your repose.” Then placing one knee on the ground, he respectfully kissed her hand and disappeared.

Fairer, more surprised at this adventure than at anything else which had happened to her during the day, re-entered her little apartment, and looked about for the lock of which he had spoken, when, on approaching the wainscot, she heard the most gentle voice in the world apparently deploring some misfortune, and she imagined it must proceed from some wretched being persecuted as she was. She listened attentively. “Alas! what shall I do?” said the voice. “They bid me change this bushel of acorns into oriental pearls!” Fairer than a Fairy, less astonished than she would have been two hours before, struck two or three times on the panel, and said pretty loudly, “If they impose hard tasks in this place, miracles are at the same time performed here — therefore, hope! But tell me, I pray, who you are, and I will tell you who I am.” “It is more agreeable to me to satisfy your curiosity than to continue my employment," replied the other person. "I am the daughter of a King; they say I was born charming, but the fairies did not assist at my birth, and you know they are cruel to those whom they have not taken under their protection directly they come into the world." "Ah! I know it too well," replied Fairer; "I am handsome, like yourself, the daughter of a King, and unfortunate, because I am agreeable without the assistance of their gifts." "We are, then, companions in misfortune," returned the other. "But are you in love?" "Not far from it," said Fairer, in a low voice; "but continue your story," said she aloud, "and do not question me more." "I was considered," continued the other, "the most charming creature that had ever existed, and everybody loved me and wished to possess me: they called me Désirs; my will was law, and I was treasured in all hearts. A young prince, the most enthusiastic of my adorers, abandoned everything for me. My encouragement of his hopes transported him with delight. We were about to be united for ever, when the fairies, jealous at beholding me the object of universal admiration, and detesting the sight of attractions which they had not bestowed, carried me off one day in the midst of my triumphs, and consigned me to this horrid place. They have threatened that they will strangle me to-morrow morning if I have not performed a preposterous task which they have imposed upon me. Now, tell me quickly, who are you?" "I have told you all," replied Fairer, "but my name. They call me Fairer than a Fairy." "You must, then, be very beautiful," replied the Princess Désirs; "I should like excessively to see you." "I am quite as anxious to see you," replied Fairer. "Is there a door hereabouts, for I have a little key which perhaps may be of use to you." Looking narrowly round, she discovered one which she was able to open, and pushing it, the two Princesses met face to face, and were equally surprised at the marvellous beauty of each other.

After embracing affectionately, and saying many civil things to one another, Fairer began to laugh at seeing the Princess Désirs continually rubbing her acorns with a little white stone, as she had been ordered to do. She told her of the task which they had imposed upon her, and how miraculously she had been assisted by a charming unknown being! “But who can it be?” said the Princess Désirs. “I think it is a man,” replied Fairer. “A man!” cried Désirs. “You blush — you love him!” “No, not yet,” replied Fairer; “but he has told me he loves me; and if he loves me as he says, he shall assist you.” Hardly had she uttered these words, when the bushel measure began to shake, and agitating the acorns, as the oak on which they had grown might have done, they were instantly changed into the most beautiful pear-shaped pearls of the first water. It was one of these which Cleopatra dissolved in wine at the costly banquet she made for Mark Antony.

The two Princesses were delighted at the exchange, and Fairer than a Fairy, who began to be accustomed to wonders, leading Désirs by the hand, returned into her own chamber, and finding the panel containing the lock of which the stranger had spoken, she opened it with her golden key, and entered an apartment, the magnificence of which both surprised and affected her, as she saw in everything it contained the attention of her lover. It was strewn with the most beautiful flowers, and exhaled a divine perfume. At one end of this charming room there was a table covered with all that could gratify the most refined taste, and two fountains of liqueurs which flowed into basins of porphyry. The young Princesses seated themselves in two ivory chairs, enriched with emeralds; they ate with a good appetite, and when they had supped, the table disappeared, and in its place arose a delicious bath, into which they stepped together. At a few paces from them they observed a superb toilet-table, and large baskets of gold wire full of linen of such exquisite purity that it made them long to make use of it. A bed of singular form and extraordinary richness, occupied the further end of this marvellous chamber, which was lined with orange-trees in golden boxes studded with rubies, while rows of cornelian columns sustained the sumptuous roof, divided only by immense crystal mirrors which reached from the ground to the ceiling. Several consoles, of rare materials, supported vases of precious stones, filled with all sorts of flowers.

The Princess Désirs admired the good fortune of her companion, and, turning to her, observed, “Your lover is indeed gallant; he can do much, and he will do everything for you; your happiness is extraordinary.” A clock striking midnight repeated at each stroke the name of Phratis. Fairer than a Fairy coloured, and threw herself on the couch. She trusted to repose, but her sleep was troubled by the image of Phratis.

The next morning there was great astonishment in the Court of the Fairies at seeing the gallery so richly decorated, and the bushel-measure full of beautiful pearls. They had hoped to punish the young Princesses: their cruelty was disappointed. They found each alone in her little chamber. After consulting together again, in order to devise some tasks which could not possibly be accomplished, they told Désirs to go to the sea-shore and write on the sand, with express orders to take care that what she wrote there could never be effaced. And they commanded Fairer to go to the foot of Mount Adventurous, to fly to the top, and bring them a vase full of the water of immortality. For this purpose they gave her a quantity of feathers and wax, in hopes that, by making wings for herself, she might perish like another Icarus. Désirs and Fairer looked at each other on hearing these dreadful commands, and, embracing tenderly, they separated, as if taking an eternal farewell. The fairies conducted one to the sea-shore and the other to the foot of Mount Adventurous.

When Fairer was left by herself she took the feathers and wax, and made some vain attempts to form wings with them. After having worked for some time most ineffectually, her thoughts reverted to Phratis. “If you loved me,” said she, “you would come to my assistance.” Hardly had she finished the last word when she saw him stand before her, looking a thousand times more beautiful than on the preceding night. The full light of day was an advantage to him. “Do you doubt my affection?” said he. “Is anything difficult to him who loves you?” He then requested her to take off some portion of her dress, and having kissed her hand as a recompense, he transformed himself suddenly to an eagle. She was rather sorry to see so charming a person thus metamorphosed, but, placing himself at her feet, he extended his wings, and made her easily comprehend his design. Reclining upon him, she encircled his proud neck with her beautiful arms, and he rose with her gently into the air. It would be difficult to say which was the most gratified — she, at escaping death in the execution of the order given her, or he, at being permitted to bear such a precious burden.

He carried her gently to the summit of the mountain, where she heard an harmonious concert warbled by a thousand birds that came to render homage to the divine bird which bore her. The top of this mountain was a flowery plain, surrounded by fine cedars, in the midst of which was a little stream, whose silvery waves rolled over golden sands strewn with brilliant diamonds. Fairer than a Fairy knelt down, and first of all took some of this precious water in her hand, and drank it. After this she filled her vase, and, turning towards her eagle, said, “Ah, how I wish that Désirs had some of this water!” Scarcely had she spoken these words than the Eagle flew down, took one of the slippers of Fairer, and returning with it, filled it with water, and carried it to the sea-shore, where the Princess Désirs was occupied in fruitless attempts to write indelibly on the sand.

The Eagle returned to Fairer, and resumed his beautiful burden. “Alas!” said she, “what is Désirs doing? Take me to her.” He obeyed. They found her still writing, and as fast as she wrote, a wave came and effaced what she had written. “What cruelty,” said the Princess to Fairer, “to command what it is impossible to accomplish! I imagine, from the strange mode of your conveyance, that you have succeeded.” Fairer alighted, and, moved by the misfortune of her companion, she turned towards her lover, and thus addressed him, “Give me proof of your omnipotence.” “Or rather of my love,” interrupted the Prince, resuming his proper form. Désirs, observing the beauty and grace of his person, cast on him a look of surprise and delight. Fairer coloured, and by a movement over which she had no control, placed herself before him so as to hide him from her companion. “Do as you are told,” continued she, with a charming air of uneasiness. Phratis knew his happiness, and wishing to terminate as speedily as possible her trouble, “Read,” said he, and disappeared swifter than a flash of lightning.

At the same instant a wave broke at the feet of Fairer, and in retiring left behind a brazen tablet, as firmly fixed in the sand as if it had been there from all eternity, and would remain immovable to the end of the world. As she looked at it, she perceived letters forming on it, deeply engraved, which composed these lines: —

The vows of common love in sand are traced,
And, even ‘graved in brass, may be effaced;
But those which are inspired by your bright eyes,
In starry words are written in the skies.
Nought can destroy those characters divine,
Eternal as the heavens in which they shine.

“I understand,” cried Désirs: “he who loves you, must always love! How well your charming swain expresses his feelings.” She then embraced Fairer than a Fairy, who soon, in her arms, recovered from the confusion occasioned by the little feeling of jealousy she had experienced, and confessed it to her friend, who accused her of it; and both, confirmed in their friendship, abandoned themselves to the pleasure of an agreeable and affectionate conversation.

Queen Nabote sent messengers to the foot of the mountain to find what was become of Fairer than a Fairy. They found the scattered feathers, and a part of her clothes, and consequently believed she had been dashed to pieces, as they desired.

Full of this idea, the fairies ran to the sea-shore; they exclaimed at the sight of the brazen tablet, and were overwhelmed at perceiving the two Princesses calmly seated in conversation on a jutting piece of rock. They called to them. Fairer presented her vase full of the water of immortality, and laughed in secret with Désirs at the fury of the fairies.

The Queen was not to be jested with. She knew that a power as great as her own must have assisted them, and her rage increased to such a pitch, that without hesitating an instant, she determined on effecting their ruin by a final and most cruel trial.

Désirs was condemned to go on the morrow to the Fair of Time, to fetch the Rouge of Youth, and Fairer than a Fairy to proceed to the Wood of Wonders, and capture the Hind with Silver Feet.

The Princess Désirs was conducted to a vast plain, at the end of which was an immense building, divided into galleries full of shops so superb that no comparison could be found for them but in the recollections of the magnificent entertainments at Marly. These shops were kept by young and agreeable fairies, assisted by their favoured lovers.

As soon as Désirs appeared, her charms fascinated everybody. She took possession of all hearts. In the first shops she entered she excited much commiseration by asking for the Rouge of Youth. None would tell her where to find it, because, when it was not a fairy who came in search of it, it was a sure sign of torment to the person who was charged with this dangerous commission. The good fairies told Désirs to return, and to inquire no further for what she sought. She was so beautiful that they ran before her wherever she went, in order to gaze at her. Her ill-luck, however, led her to the shop of a wicked fairy. Hardly had she asked for the Rouge of

Youth, on the part of the Queen of the Fairies, than, darting a terrible glance at her, she told her that she had it, and that she would give it her the next morning, and ordered her to enter a room and wait till it was prepared for her. They led her into a dark and pestilential place, where she could not see her hand before her. She was overcome with terror. “Ah!” she exclaimed, “charming lover of Fairer than a Fairy, haste to my rescue, or I am lost!”

But he was deaf to her appeal, or unable to act as he had done in other places. Désirs tormented herself half the night and slept the remainder, when she was awakened by a good-looking girl, who brought her a little food, telling her that it was sent her by the favourite of the Fairy, her mistress, who was resolved to assist her, and that it would be fortunate for her if such were the case, because the Fairy had sent for an evil spirit, who, by breathing on her face, would make her hideous, and in that frightful state she would be ignominiously sent back to the Queen of the Fairies, who, with all her Court, would triumph in her misfortunes.

The Princess Désirs felt frightened to death at this threat of losing in a moment all her beauty, and wished rather to die outright. Her agony was horrible; she groped about her dark prison in vain hope of discovering some mode of escape, when some one took her by the arm, and she felt in her heart a sensation of pleasure. She was gently led towards a spot where she began to perceive a little light, and when her eyes became accustomed to it, she was struck by the appearance of what was to her the most charming object in the world, for she recognised that dear Prince who loved her so truly, and from whom they had separated her on the eve of her wedding. Her transport, her delight, was extreme. “Is it you?” she exclaimed a hundred times. At length, when fully persuaded of the fact, and forgetting all her own troubles — “But are you the favourite of this wretched Fairy?” she continued. “Is it with this fine title that I again behold you.” “Undoubtedly,” replied he; “and we shall owe to it the end of our troubles, and the certainty of our happiness.”

He then recounted to her how, in despair at her being carried off, he had gone to seek a wise old man, who had informed him where she was, and assured him that he would never recover her but in the Kingdom of the Fairies; that he had furnished him with the means of finding it, but that he had been arrested in his pursuit of her by this cruel Fairy, who had fallen in love with him; that, following the advice of the sage, he had dissembled, and by his docility had obtained such an influence over her, that he had the care of all her treasure, and was the minister of all her power; that she had just departed on a journey of six thousand leagues; that she would not return for twelve days; and that, therefore, they should lose no time in escaping; that he was going into his cabinet to fetch a part of the gem of the ring of Gyges; that she should put it on, and thereby becoming invisible, she could pass anywhere: as for himself, he could show himself as he pleased. “Do not forget,” said she, “the Rouge of Youth; I wish to put some on, and to give some to one of my companions.”

The Prince smiled. “Whither shall we go?” continued she. “To the Queen of the Fairies,” he replied. “No, that will never do,” she exclaimed; “we shall perish there!” “The sage who counselled me,” pursued he, “told me to lead you back to the place from whence you came last, if I wished to be assured of happiness: he has never yet deceived me in anything whatever.” “Well, then, so be it,” said Désirs; “we will go there.”

The Prince brought her a valuable box, in which was the Rouge of Youth; and with the hope of making herself appear more beautiful still in the eyes of her lover, she rubbed some hastily all over her face, forgetting that she was invisible by means of the gem which he had given her. She took him by the arm. They traversed in this manner the whole of the Fair, and were soon close to the palace of the Queen. There the Prince resumed the gem of Gyges. The beautiful Désirs became visible, and he became invisible, to the great regret of the Princess, whom he took by the arm in his turn, and presented her before Nabote and her Court. All the fairies looked at each other in excessive astonishment at seeing Désirs return with the Rouge of Youth, and the Queen, frowning awfully, desired them to guard her strictly. “Our arts are vain,” said she. “We must put her to death, without trying any more experiments.”

The sentence was pronounced. Désirs trembled with fear; her lover reassured her as much as he could.

But we must return to Fairer than a Fairy. They had conducted her to the Wood of Wonders, and here is the reason why they had condemned her to chase the Silver-footed Hind: —

Once upon a time there had been a Queen of the Fairies who had succeeded in due course to that grand title; she was beautiful, good, and wise. She had had several lovers, whose affections and attentions had, however, been lost upon her. Entirely occupied in protecting virtue, she found no amusement in listening to the sighs of her adorers. There was one whom her coldness rendered the most unhappy, because he loved her better than any of the others.

One day, seeing that he could not move her to pity him, he protested, in his despair, that he would kill himself. She was not affected even at this threat, considering it merely as one of those extravagances in which lovers sometimes indulge, but which never have any serious result. However, some time after, he really did throw himself into the sea.

A sage, who had brought up this young man, complained to the supreme authorities, and the insensible Fairy was condemned to do penance for her severity in the form of a hind, for the term of one hundred years, unless an accomplished beauty could be found, who, by venturing to hunt her for ten days in the Wood of Wonders, could take her and restore her to her original shape. Forty years had already elapsed since she had been first transformed.

At the commencement of her penance several beauties had risked the trial of this fine adventure, from which so much honour was to be derived. Each hoped to be the fortunate huntress; but as they lost themselves in the pursuit, and at the end of ten days were no more heard of, this ardour began to cool, and for some time past no beauty had voluntarily offered herself; those who had recently undertaken the task being condemned to it by the Fairies, in order to ensure their destruction. It was, thus, to get rid of Fairer that they led her to the Wood of Wonders. They gave her a small portion of food, for form's sake, and placed in her hand a silken cord, with a running noose to catch the deer. That was all her outfit for the chase. She deposited what they gave her at the foot of a tree, and when she found herself alone she cast a look round this vast forest, in the profound silence and solitude of which she saw nothing but despair.

She was anxious to remain at the skirt of the forest, and not to enter it too far, so in order to know the spot again, she placed a mark at the point from which she started. But, alas! how did she deceive herself! Every one lost themselves in this forest, without being able to issue from it. In one of the paths she caught sight of the Silver-footed Hind walking slowly. She approached it, with her silken cord in her hand, thinking to take it; but the deer, feeling itself pursued, started off at full speed, stopping from time to time, and turning its head towards Fairer. They were in sight of each other all day without being any nearer. At last night separated them.

The poor huntress was very tired and very hungry, but she no longer knew where to find the little provision she had had given her, and there was nothing but the hard ground for her to repose upon. She lay down, therefore, very sadly, under a tree; she could not sleep for a long time — she was frightened; the least thing alarmed her: a leaf shaken by the wind made her tremble. In this miserable state she turned her thoughts on her lover, and called him several times; but finding him fail her in her great distress, she exclaimed, with tears in her eyes, “Phratis! Phratis! you have abandoned me!” She was just dropping asleep, when she felt a movement beneath her, and it seemed to her as though she was in the best bed in the world. She slept soundly for a considerable time, without any interruption.

She was awoke in the morning by the song of a thousand nightingales, and, turning her beautiful eyes around, she found she was raised two feet from the earth, the turf having sprung up under her lovely form, and thus made a delicious couch. A large orange-tree threw its branches over her like a tent, and she was covered with flowers. By her side were two turtle-doves, who announced to her, by their love for each other, what she might hope for with Phratis. The ground was entirely covered with strawberries and all sorts of excellent fruits; she ate of them, and found herself as well satisfied and as much strengthened by them as though they had been the richest and best kind of meats. A stream which flowed close by served to allay her thirst. “Oh, ye tender cares of my lover,” cried she, when she had refreshed herself, “how much I needed you! I murmur no longer. Give me less, dearest, and let me see you!”

She would have continued in this strain had she not perceived, stretched close to her, the Silver-footed Hind, quietly gazing at her. She thought this time she must catch it: with one hand she held out to it a bunch of grass, and with the other grasped the cord; but the deer bounded lightly away, and when it had gone a short distance, it stopped, and looked back at her. It kept up this game all day. Another night came, and passed like the one before it. She awoke under similar circumstances, and four days and nights elapsed in the like manner. At length, on the fifth morning, Fairer than a Fairy, on opening her eyes, thought she saw a light more brilliant than that of day, when she perceived, in those of her lover, seated near her, all the affection with which she had inspired him. He fervently kissed one of her feet; his presence and this respectful action gratified her greatly. “You are there, then,” said she. “If I have not beheld you all these days, I have, at all events, received the proofs of your goodness.” “Say of my love, Fairer than a Fairy,” replied he. “My mother suspects that it is I who assist you: she has placed me in confinement. I have escaped a moment, by means of a fairy of my acquaintance. Adieu! I came only to encourage you. You shall see me this evening, and if fortune smiles, to-morrow we shall be happy.” He departed, and she hunted again all day. When night came, she perceived near her a little light, which sufficed to show her her lover. “Here is my illuminated wand,” said he: “place it before you, and go without fear wherever it will lead you. Where it stops you will perceive a great heap of dry leaves; set fire to it, enter the place; you will see and you will find the skin of a beast; burn it. The stars, our friends, will do the rest. Adieu!”

Fairer than a Fairy would have desired far more ample instructions; but seeing there was no remedy, she placed the wand before her, which showed her the way. She followed it nearly two hours, very much vexed at doing nothing else. It stopped at last, and there, truly enough, she perceived a large heap of dried leaves, to which she did not fail to set fire. The light was soon so great that she could see a very high mountain, in which she observed an opening half hid by brambles. She separated them with her wand, and entered a dark hole; but soon after she found herself in a vast saloon, of admirable architecture, and lighted with numberless lamps. But what struck her with the greatest astonishment was the sight of the skins of several wild and terrible beasts, hung on golden hooks, which at first she mistook for the beasts themselves. She turned away her eyes with horror, and they were arrested in the centre of the saloon by the sight of a beautiful palm-tree, upon one of the branches of which was suspended the skin of the Hind with the silver feet. Fairer than a Fairy was enchanted at seeing it, and taking it down with the aid of her wand, she carried it quickly to the fire which she had lighted at the entrance of the cavern. It was consumed in a moment, and re-entering joyfully the saloon, she penetrated into several magnificent apartments. She stopped in one, where she saw several small couches placed upon Persian carpets, and one more beautiful than the rest under a canopy of cloth-of-gold. But she had not much time to contemplate arrangements which appeared to her singular, for she heard hearty peals of laughter and several persons in loud conversation. Fairer than a Fairy turned her steps in the direction from which the sounds proceeded, and entered a wonderful place, where she found fifteen young ladies of celestial beauty.

She did not surprise them less than she was surprised herself: the extreme loveliness of her appearance took away their breath, and a deep silence succeeded to cries of admiration. But one of these beautiful persons, more beautiful than all the rest, advanced, with a smiling air, towards our charming Princess. “You are my deliverer,” said she, addressing her; “I cannot doubt it; no one can enter here who is not clothed in the skin of one of the beasts which you saw at the entrance of the cavern; that has been the fate of all these beautiful persons whom you see with me. After ten days of useless pursuit of me, they were changed into so many animals during the day; but at night we resume our human forms: and you, charming Princess, if you had not delivered me, would have been changed into a white rabbit.” “A white rabbit!” exclaimed Fairer. “Ah, Madam, it is indeed better that I should preserve my ordinary form, and that so wonderful a person as you should be no longer a deer.” “You have restored us all to liberty,” replied the Fairy; “let us now pass the rest of the night as joyously as may be, and to-morrow we will go to the Palace, and fill all the Court with astonishment.”

It is impossible to express the joy which resounded in this charming spot, and the delight which all these young persons felt at the sweet sensation of finding themselves once more in the land of the living, so to speak — they were all still of the same age as when they commenced their unfortunate chase in the Wood of Wonders, and the eldest was not yet twenty.

The Fairy desired to take three or four hours’ repose. She made Fairer lie down beside her, and relate her adventures. She did so with so touching a voice, her discourse was so unaffected and so full of truth, that she engaged the Fairy without reserve to assist her love and render her happy.

She did not forget to speak to her of Désirs, and the Fairy was immediately interested in her favour.

They went to sleep, after a long conversation, which they had agreeably interrupted, from time to time, by the interchange of affectionate caresses.

The next day they all set out for the Palace, wishing pleasantly to surprise the fairies. They quitted, without regret, the Wood of Wonders, and quickly arrived at the Palace. As they approached the inner court, they heard a thousand melodious sounds, which composed an excellent concert. “Here is a fête going on,” said the Fairy; “we have arrived *à propos;*” and advancing, they found the court filled with an incredible number of people. The Fairy caused the gate to be opened, and entered with her train. The first persons who recognised her, uttered the loudest exclamations of delight, and the cause of this great joy was quickly made known to the multitude. But on advancing, the Fairy was struck by a strange spectacle. She saw a young girl more lovely than the Graces, and with the form of Venus, bound to a stake near a pile of wood, where apparently she was about to be burnt to death.

Fairer than a Fairy uttered a loud cry, as she recognised Désirs; but she was much astonished when, at the same moment, she lost sight of her, and a young man appeared in her place, so handsome and so well made that one might never be tired of looking at him. At this sight Fairer uttered a still louder cry, and running towards him, without any regard to appearances, she flung herself on his neck, exclaiming a thousand times, “It is my brother! it is my brother.” It was her brother, who was also the fortunate lover of Princess Désirs, and who, fearing they would put her to death, had given her the Gem of Gyges to rescue her from the cruelty of Queen Nabote, and by so doing, became himself visible.

The brother and sister lavished a hundred caresses on each other; the invisible Désirs added hers, and her voice was heard, although she was not to be seen, whilst the fairies, in unparalleled astonishment, expressed in every variety of manner their rapture at again beholding their virtuous Queen. The good fairies came and threw themselves at her feet, kissing her hand and her garments. Some wept, some were unable to speak; each testified her joy according to her peculiar character. The bad fairies, the partisans of Nabote, also pretended to be delighted, and policy gave an air of sincerity to their hypocritical demonstrations. Nabote herself, in despair at this return, controlled herself with an art of which she alone was capable. She offered at once to resign her power to the rightful sovereign, who, with a grave and majestic air, demanded of her why the young girl whom she had seen bound to the stake merited such a punishment, and since when they had been accustomed to celebrate a cruel execution by fêtes and sports. Nabote excused herself very lamely, and the Queen listened impatiently when the lover of Désirs spoke thus: “They punish this Princess,” said he, “because she is too amiable; they torment for the same reason the Princess my sister. They were both born as handsome as you now behold them.” He then begged his lady-love to cover up the Gem of Gyges, and she immediately appeared again. Désirs charmed all who saw her. “They are beautiful,” pursued he; “they possess a thousand virtues which they do not derive from the fairies; that is why they are roused up to persecute them. What injustice, to tyrannize over all those whose charms do not emanate from yourselves.” The Prince paused: the Queen turned towards the assembly with an agreeable air. “I demand,” said she, “that these three persons shall be given up to me; they shall enjoy the most happy fate that can fall to the lot of mortals. I owe much to Fairer than a Fairy, and she shall be rewarded for the service she has done me by uninterrupted felicity. You shall continue to reign, Madam,” added she, turning to Nabote: “this empire is sufficiently large for you and me. Go to the Beautiful Islands, which belong to you. Leave me your son; I will share my power with him, and I will marry him to Fairer than a Fairy; this union will reconcile us to one another.”

Nabote was enraged at all these decisions of the Queen, but it was of no use to complain, she was not the strongest. She had but to obey. She was about to do so with a bad grace, when the beautiful Phratis arrived, followed by a gallant train of youths who composed his Court; he came to pay his homage to the Queen, and manifest his joy at her return. But in passing, he cast a look at Fairer than a Fairy, and made her comprehend by his passionate glances that she was the first object of his devotion.

The Queen embraced him, and presented him to Fairer, begging him to accept her at her hands. There is no need to say he obeyed joyfully, exclaiming with transport,

Oh Love! for all my tender care and aid,
By this rich guerdon I am overpaid!

The two marriages were celebrated on the same day. Both couples were so happy, that ‘tis said they are the only pairs who have ever really gained the golden Vine, and that those who have been since named as having done so are purely fabulous personages.

Thus innocence triumphs over the misfortunes with which it is assailed. Envy and jealousy only serve to increase its lustre; and often the justice of Heaven renders its possessors happier for the trials they have undergone. There is a Providence which watches over the conduct of mortals, and delights in rewarding the worthy, even in this world.

14

THE GOOD WOMAN

There was once upon a time a Good Woman, who was kind, candid, and courageous. She had experienced all the vicissitudes which can agitate human existence.

She had resided at Court, and had endured all the storms to which it is so subject: — treasons, perfidies, infidelities, loss of wealth, loss of friends. So that, disgusted with dwelling in a place in which dissimulation and hypocrisy have established their empire, and weary of an intercourse wherein hearts never appear as they really are, she resolved to quit her own country and go to a distance, where she could forget the world, and where the world would hear no more of her.

When she believed herself far enough off, she built a small house in an extremely agreeable situation. All she could then do was to buy a little flock of sheep, which furnished her with food and clothing.

She had hardly made trial of this mode of life before she found herself perfectly happy. “There is, then, some state of existence in which one may enjoy content,” said she; “and the choice I have made leaves me nothing to desire.” She passed each day in plying her distaff and tending her flock. She would sometimes have liked a little society, but she feared the danger of it. She was insensibly becoming accustomed to the life she led, when one day, as she was endeavouring to collect her little flock, it began to scatter itself over the country and fly from her. In fact, it fled so fast that in a very short time she could scarcely see one of her sheep. “Am I a devouring wolf?” cried she: “what means this wonder?” She called to a favourite ewe, but it appeared not to know her voice. She ran after it, exclaiming, “I will not care for losing all the rest of the flock if thou dost but remain to me!” But the ungrateful creature continued its flight, and disappeared with the rest.

The Good Woman was deeply distressed at the loss she had sustained. “I have now nothing left,” cried she; “maybe I shall not find even my garden; or my little cottage will be no longer in its place.” She returned slowly, for she was very tired with the race she had had. She lived upon fruit and vegetables for some time after exhausting a small stock of cheese.

She began to see the end of all this. “Fortune,” said she, “thou hast in vain sought to persecute me even in this remote spot; thou canst not prevent me from being ready to behold the gates of death without alarm, and after so much trouble I shall descend with tranquillity into those peaceful shades.”

She had nothing more to spin, she had nothing more to eat: leaning on her distaff, she bent her steps towards a little wood, and looking round for a place to rest in, she was astonished at seeing run towards her three little children, more beautiful than the fairest day. She was delighted to see such charming company. They loaded her with a hundred caresses, and as she seated herself on the ground, in order to receive them more conveniently, one threw its little arms round her neck, the other encircled her waist from behind, and the third called her “mother.” She waited a long time, to see if some one would not come to fetch them, believing that those who had led them thither would not fail to return for them. All the day passed without her seeing any one.

She resolved to take them to her own home, and thought Heaven had sent her this little flock instead of the one she had lost. It was composed of two girls, who were only two or three years old, and a little boy of five.

Each had a little ribbon round its neck, to which was attached a small jewel. One was a golden cherry enamelled with crimson, and engraved with the name of “Lirette.” She thought that this must be the name of the little girl who wore it, and she resolved to call her by it. The other was a medlar, on which was written “Mirtis;” and the little boy had an almond of green enamel, around which was written “Finfin.” The Good Woman felt perfectly satisfied that these were their names.

The little girls had some jewels in their head-dresses, and more than enough to put the Good Woman in easy circumstances. She had very soon bought another flock, and surrounded herself with everything necessary for the maintenance of her interesting family. She made their winter clothing of the bark of trees, and in the summer they had white cotton dresses of the finest bleaching.

Young as they were, they tended their flock. And this time the flock was faithful, and was more docile and obedient to them than towards the large dogs which guarded them; and these dogs were also gentle, and attached to the children. They grew visibly, and passed their days most innocently; they loved the Good Woman, and were all three excessively fond of each other. They occupied themselves in tending their sheep, fishing with a line, spreading nets to catch birds, working in a little garden of their own, and employed their delicate hands in cultivating flowers.

There was one rose-tree, which the young Lirette was especially fond of; she watered it often, and took the greatest care of it; she thought nothing so beautiful as a rose, and loved it above all other flowers. She had a fancy one day to open a bud, and try to find its heart, when in so doing she pricked her finger with a thorn. The pain was sharp, and she began to cry; the beautiful Finfin, who very seldom left her, approached, and began to cry too, at seeing her suffer. He took her little finger, pressed it, and squeezed the blood gently from it.

The Good Woman, who saw their alarm at this accident, approached, and learning the cause of it, “Why so inquisitive” said she; “why destroy the flower you loved so much?” “I wanted its heart,” replied Lirette. “Such desires are always fatal,” replied the Good Woman. “But, mother,” pursued Lirette, “why has this flower, which is so beautiful, and which pleases me so much, thorns?” “To show you,” said the Good Woman, “that we must distrust the greater part of those things which please our eyes, and that the most agreeable objects hide snares which may be to us most deadly.” “How?” replied Lirette. “Must one not then love everything which is pleasant?” “No, certainly,” said the Good Woman, “and you must take good care not to do so.” “But I love my brother with all my heart,” replied she; “he is so handsome and so charming.” “You may love your brother,” replied her mother; “but if he were not your brother you ought not to love him.”

Lirette shook her head, and thought this rule very hard. Finfin meanwhile was still occupied with her finger; he squeezed on the wound the juice of the rose-leaves, and wrapped it in them. The Good Woman asked him why he did that? “Because I think,” said he, “that the remedy may be found in the same thing which has caused the evil.” The Good Woman smiled at this reason. “My dear child,” replied she, “not in this case.” “I thought it was in all cases,” said he; “for sometimes, when Lirette looks at me, she troubles me greatly; I feel quite agitated; and the moment after those same looks cause me a pleasure which I cannot express to you. When she scolds me sometimes, I am very wretched; but let her speak at length one gentle word to me, I am all joy again.”

The Good Woman wondered what these children would think of next; she did not know their relation to each other, and she dreaded their loving each other too much. She would have given anything to learn if they were brother and sister; her ignorance on this point caused her great anxiety, but their extreme youth re-assured her. Finfin was already full of attention to the little Lirette; he loved her much better than Mirtis. He had at one time given her some young partridges, the prettiest in the world, which he had caught. She reared one, which became a fine bird, with very beautiful plumage; Lirette loved it excessively, and gave it to Finfin. It followed him everywhere, and he taught it a thousand diverting tricks. He had one day taken it with him when going to tend his flock; on returning home he could not find his partridge; he sought for it everywhere, and distressed himself greatly at its loss. Mirtis tried to console him, but without success. “Sister,” he replied, “I am in despair. Lirette will be angry; all you say to me does not diminish my grief.” “Well, brother,” said she, “we will get up very early to-morrow and go in search of another; I cannot bear to see you so miserable.” Lirette arrived as she said this, and having learnt the cause of Finfin’s sorrow, she began to smile. “My dear brother,” said she to him, “we will find another partridge; it is nothing but the state in which I see you that gives me pain.” These words sufficed to restore serenity and calm to the heart and countenance of Finfin.

“Why,” said he to himself, “could Mirtis not restore my spirits, with all her kindness, while Lirette has done it with a single little word? Two is one too many — Lirette is enough for me.” On the other hand, Mirtis saw plainly that her brother made a difference between her and Lirette. “We are not enough here, being three,” said she. “I ought to have another brother, who would love me as much as Finfin does my sister.”

Lirette was now twelve years old, Mirtis thirteen, and Finfin fifteen, when one evening, after supper, they were all seated in front of the cottage with the Good Woman, who instructed them in a hundred agreeable things. The youthful Finfin, seeing Lirette playing with the jewel on her neck, asked his dear mamma what it was for? She replied that she had found one on each of them when they fell into her hands. Lirette then said, “If mine would but do as I tell it, I should be glad.” “And what would you have it do?” asked Finfin. “You will see,” said she; and then taking the end of the ribbon, “Little cherry,” she continued, “I should like to have a beautiful house of roses.”

At the same moment they heard a slight noise behind them. Mirtis turned round first, and uttered a loud cry; she had cause; for instead of the cottage of the Good Woman, there appeared one of the most charming that could possibly be seen. It was not lofty, but the roof was formed of roses that would bloom in winter as well as in summer. They entered it, and found the most agreeable apartments, furnished magnificently. In the midst of each room was a rose-tree in full flower, in a precious vase; and in the first which they entered, they found the partridge Finfin had lost, which flew on to his shoulder and gave him an hundred caresses.

“Is it only to wish?” said Mirtis; and taking the ribbon of her jewel in her hand, “Little medlar,” she continued, “give us a garden more beautiful than our own.” Hardly had she finished speaking, when a garden was presented to their view of extraordinary beauty, and in which everything that could be imagined to delight the senses appeared in the highest perfection.

The young folks began immediately to run through the beautiful alleys, amongst the flower-beds and round about the fountains.

“Do you wish something, brother,” said Lirette. “But I have nothing to wish for,” said he; “except to be loved by you as much as you are loved by me.” “Oh,” replied she, “my heart can satisfy you on that point. That does not depend on your almond.” “Well, then,” said Finfin, “almond, little almond, I wish that a great forest should rise near here, in which the King’s son shall come to hunt, and that he shall fall in love with Mirtis.”

“What have I done to you,” replied the beautiful girl. “I do not wish to leave the innocent life which we lead.” “You are right, my child,” said the Good Woman, “and I admire the wisdom of your sentiments; besides which, they say that this King is a cruel usurper, who has put to death the rightful sovereign and all his family: perhaps the son may be no better than his father.”

The Good Woman, however, was quite astonished at the strange wishes of these wonderful children, and knew not what to think of them. When night was come, she retired into the house of roses, and in the morning she found that there was a large forest close to the house. It formed a fine hunting ground for our young shepherds. Finfin often hunted down in it deer, harts, and roebucks.

He gave a fawn whiter than snow to the lovely Lirette; it followed her as the partridge followed Finfin; and when they were separated for a short period, they wrote to each other, and sent their notes by these messengers. It was the prettiest thing in the world.

The little family lived thus tranquilly, occupied with different employments, according to the seasons. They always attended to their flocks, but in the summer their occupations were most pleasant. They hunted much in the winter; they had bows and arrows, and sometimes went such long distances that they returned, with slow steps and almost frozen, to the house of roses.

The Good Woman would receive them by a large fire; she did not know which to begin to warm first. “Lirette, my daughter Lirette,” she would say, “place your little feet here.” And taking Mirtis in her arms, — “Mirtis, my child,” continued she, “give me your beautiful hands to warm; and you my son, Finfin, come nearer.” Then, placing them all three on a sofa, she would pay them every attention in the most charming and gentle manner.

Thus they passed their days in peace and happiness. The Good Woman wondered at the sympathy between Finfin and Lirette, for Mirtis was as beautiful, and had no less amiable qualities; but certainly Finfin did not love her as fervently as the other. “If they are brother and sister, as I believe,” said the Good Woman, “by their matchless beauty, what shall I do? They are so similar in everything, that they must assuredly be of the same blood.

If it be so, this affection is very dangerous; if not, I might render it legitimate by letting them marry; and they both love me so much, that their union would ensure joy and peace to my declining days."

In her uncertainty, she had forbidden Lirette, who was fast advancing to womanhood, to be ever alone with Finfin, and for better security she had ordered Mirtis to be always with them. Lirette obeyed her with perfect submission, and Mirtis did also as she had commanded her. The Good Woman had heard speak of a clever fairy, and resolved to go in search of her, and endeavour to enlighten herself respecting the fate of these children.

One day, when Lirette was slightly indisposed, and Mirtis and Finfin were out hunting, the Good Woman thought it a convenient opportunity to go in search of Madam Tu-tu, for such was the name of the fairy. She left Lirette, therefore, at the House of Roses; but she had not got far on her way before she met Lirette's fawn, which was going towards the forest, and at the same time she saw Finfin's partridge coming from it. They joined each other close to her. It was not without astonishment that she saw round the neck of each a little ribbon, with a paper attached. She called the partridge, which flew to her, and taking the paper from it, she read these lines: —

To Lirette, dear bird, repair —
Absent from her sight I languish, —
All my love to her declare —
Secret joy and silent anguish.
Much too cold her heart, I fear,
Such a passion e'er to know
Were I to her but half as dear,
No greater bliss I'd crave below.

“What words!” cried the Good Woman, — “what phrases! Simple friendship does not express itself with so much warmth.” Then stopping the fawn, which came to lick her hand, she unfastened the paper from its neck, opened it, and found in it these words: —

The sun is setting, — you are absent yet,
Although you left me by its earliest light!
Return, dear Finfin; surely you forget —
Without you, day to me is endless night!

“Just as they did when I was in the world,” continued the Good Woman; “who could have taught Lirette so much in this desert? What can I do to cut betimes the root of so pernicious an evil?” “Eh, Madam, what are you so anxious about?” said the partridge; “let them alone — those who conduct them know better than you.”

The Good Woman remained speechless: she knew well that the partridge spoke by means of supernatural art. The notes fell from her hands in her fright; the fawn and the partridge picked them up: the one ran and the other flew; and the partridge called so often “Tu-tu,” that the Good Woman thought it must be that powerful fairy who had caused it to speak. She recovered herself a little after this reflection, but not feeling equal to the journey she had undertaken, she retraced her steps to the House of Roses.

Meanwhile Finfin and Mirtis had hunted the livelong day, and, being tired, they had placed their game on the ground, and sat down to rest under a tree, where they fell asleep.

The King’s son also hunted that day in the forest. He missed his suite, and came to the place where our young shepherd and shepherdess were reposing. He contemplated them for some time with wonder. Finfin had made a pillow of his game-bag, and the head of Mirtis reclined on the breast of Finfin.

The Prince thought Mirtis so beautiful, that he precipitately dismounted from his horse to examine her features with more attention. He judged, by their scrips and the simplicity of their apparel, that they were only some shepherd's children. He sighed from grief, having already sighed from love, and this love, even, was followed in an instant by jealousy. The position in which he found these young people made him believe that such familiarity could only result from the affection which united them.

In this uneasy state of mind, not being able to tolerate their prolonged repose, he touched the handsome Finfin with his spear. He started up, and, seeing a man before him, he passed his hand over the face of Mirtis, and awoke her, calling her "sister," a name which dissipated in a moment the alarm of the young Prince.

Mirtis rose up, quite astonished; she had never seen any one but Finfin. The young Prince was the same age as herself. He was superbly attired, and had a face full of charming expression.

He began saying many sweet things to her. She listened to him with a pleasure which she had never before experienced, and she responded to them in a simple manner, full of grace. Finfin saw that it was getting late, and the fawn having arrived with Lirette's letter, he told his sister it was time to go home. "Come, brother," said she to the young Prince, giving him her hand, "come with us into the House of Roses." For as she believed Finfin to be her brother, she thought that every one who was handsome, like him, must be her brother also.

The young Prince did not require much pressing to follow her. Finfin threw on the back of his fawn the game he had shot, and the handsome Prince carried the bow and the game-bag of Mirtis.

In this order they arrived at the House of Roses. Lirette came out to meet them. She gave the Prince a smiling reception, and turning towards

Mirtis, “I am delighted,” said she, “that you have had such good sport.”

They went all together to seek the Good Woman, to whom the Prince made known his high birth. She paid due attention to so illustrious a guest, and gave him a handsome apartment. He remained two or three days with her, and this was long enough to complete his conquest by Mirtis, according to Finfin’s request to his little almond.

Meanwhile, the suite of the Prince had been much surprised at his absence. They had found his horse, and they believed that some frightful accident had befallen him. They sought him everywhere, and the wicked King, who was his father, was in a great fury at their not being able to find him. The Queen, his mother, who was very amiable, and sister of the King whom her husband had cruelly murdered, was in an inconceivable state of grief at the loss of her son.

In her extreme distress, she sent secretly in search of Madam Tu-tu, who was an old friend of hers, but whom she had not seen for some time, because the King hated her, and had done her much injury with a person she dearly loved. Madam Tu-tu arrived, without being perceived, in the cabinet of the Queen. After they had embraced each other affectionately — for there is not much difference between a Queen and a Fairy, they having almost equal power, — the Fairy Tu-tu told her that she would very soon see her son. She begged her not to make herself uneasy, and not to be at all distressed at anything that might happen — that either she was very much deceived, or she could promise her a delight which was quite unexpected by her, and that she would be one day the happiest of creatures.

The King’s people made so many inquiries for the Prince, and sought him with so much care, that at length they found him at the House of Roses.

They led him back to the King, who scolded him brutally, as though he were not the most beautiful youth in the world. He remained very sad at the Court of his father, and thinking of his beautiful Mirtis. At length his grief was so visible on his countenance, that he was obliged to take his mother into his confidence, who consoled him extremely. “If you will mount your beautiful palfrey,” said he, “and come to the House of Roses, you will be charmed with what you will see.” The Queen consented willingly, and took her son with her, who was enchanted at seeing his dear mistress again.

The Queen was astonished at the great beauty of Mirtis, and also at that of Lirette and Finfin. She embraced them with as much tenderness as if they had been all her own children, and conceived an immense friendship from that moment for the Good Woman. She admired the house, the garden, and all the curiosities she saw there. When she returned, the King desired her to give an account of her journey; she did so naturally, and he took a great fancy to go also and see the wonders which she described. His son asked permission to accompany him; he consented with a sullen air, for he never did anything with a good grace. As soon as he saw the House of Roses he coveted it; he paid not the least attention to the charming inhabitants of this beautiful place, and, by way of commencing to take possession of their property, he said that he would sleep there that evening.

The Good Woman was very much vexed at such a resolution. She heard an uproar, and saw a disorder in her household, which frightened her. “What has become,” cried she, “of the happy tranquillity which I once enjoyed here! The least breath of fortune destroys all the calm of life!”

She gave the King an excellent bed, and withdrew into a corner of the dwelling with her little family. The wicked King went to bed, but found it impossible to go to sleep, and opening his eyes, he saw at the foot of his couch a little old woman, who was not half a yard high, and about as broad; she had great spectacles, which covered all her face, and she made frightful grimaces at him. The base are generally cowards. He was in a terrible fright, and felt at the same time a thousand points of needles pricking him all over. In this tormenting state of body and mind, he was kept awake the entire night, and made a great noise about it. The King stormed and swore in language which was not at all consistent with his dignity. “Sleep, sleep, sire," said the partridge, "or let us sleep: if the condition of royalty is so full of anxiety, I prefer being a partridge to being king." The King was more than ever alarmed at these words; he commanded them to seize the partridge, which roosted in a porcelain vase; but she flew away at this order, beating his face with her wings. He still saw the same vision, and felt the same prickings; he was dreadfully frightened, and his anger became more furious. "Ah!" said he, "it is a spell of this sorceress, whom they call the Good Woman. I will rid myself of her and all her race by putting them to death!"

He got up, not being able to rest in bed; and as soon as day broke, he commanded his guards to seize all the innocent little family, and fling them into dungeons. He had them dragged before him, that he might witness their despair. Those charming faces, bedewed with tears, touched him not; on the contrary, he felt a malignant joy at the sight. His son, whose tender heart was rent by so sad a spectacle, could not turn his eyes upon Mirtis without an agony which nothing could exceed. A true lover, on such occasions, suffers more than the person beloved.

They seized these poor innocents, and were leading them away, when the young Finfin, who had no arms with which to oppose these barbarians, took the ribbon on a sudden from his neck. "Little almond," cried he, "I wish that we were out of the power of the King!" "And with his greatest enemies, my dear cherry!" continued Lirette. "And that we might take away with us the handsome Prince, my medlar!" added Mirtis. They had hardly uttered these words when they found themselves with the Prince, the partridge, and the fawn, all together in a car, which rising with them in the air, they soon lost sight of the King and the House of Roses.

Mirtis had no sooner expressed her wish than she repented of it. She knew well that she had inconsiderately allowed herself to be carried away by an impulse of which she was not the mistress; therefore, during all the journey, she kept her eyes cast down, and felt much abashed. The Good

Woman gave her a severe glance. “My daughter,” said she, “you have not done well to separate the Prince from his father; however unjust he may be, he ought not to leave him.” “Ah, Madam,” replied the Prince, “do not complain that I have the happiness of following you. I respect the King, my father; but I should have left him a hundred times had it not been for the virtue, the kindness, and tenderness of the Queen, my mother, which have always detained me.”

As he finished these words, they found themselves in front of a beautiful palace, where they alighted and were received by Madam Tu-tu. She was the most lovely person in the world — young, lively, and gay. She paid them a hundred compliments, and confessed to them that it was she who had given them all the pleasures which they had enjoyed in their lives, and had also bestowed on them the cherry, the almond, and the medlar, the virtues of which were at an end, as they had now arrived in her dominions. Then, addressing the Prince in private, she told him that she had heard speak a thousand times of the annoyance he had met with from his father; but, in order that he should not attribute to her any evil that might hereafter befal the King, she frankly admitted she had played him some tricks, but that was the full extent of her vengeance.

After that, she assured them that they would be all very happy with her; that they should have flocks to keep, crooks, bows, arrows, and fishing-rods, in order that they might amuse themselves in a hundred different ways. She gave them shepherds’ dresses of the most elegant description, including the Prince with the others, — their names and devices being on their crooks; and that very evening the young Prince exchanged crooks with the charming Mirtis.

The next day Madame Tu-tu led them to the most delightful promenade in the world, and showed them the best pasturage for their sheep, and a fine country for the chase.

"You can go," said she, "on this side as far as that beautiful river, but never to the opposite shore; and you may hunt in this wood; but beware," said she, "of passing a great oak, which is in the midst of the forest; it is very remarkable, for it has roots and trunk of iron. If you go beyond it, misfortunes may happen to you, from which I cannot protect you; and, besides that, I should not perhaps be in a position to assist you promptly, for a fairy has plenty of occupation."

The young shepherds assured her that they would do exactly as she prescribed; and all four, leading their flocks into the meadows, left Madam Tu-tu alone with the Good Woman. She remarked some anxiety in her manner. "What is the matter, madam?" said the Fairy; "what cloud has come over your mind?" "I will not deny," said the Good Woman, "that I am uneasy at leaving them all thus together. I have for some time perceived with sorrow that Finfin and Lirette love each other more than is desirable, and here, to add to my trouble, another attachment springs up: the Prince and Mirtis do not dislike each other, and I fear to leave their youth exposed to the wandering of their hearts."

"You have brought up these two young girls so well," replied Madam Tu-tu, "that you need fear nothing: I will answer for their discretion; I will enlighten you as to their destiny."

She then informed her that Finfin was the son of the wicked King, and brother of the young Prince; that Mirtis and Lirette were sisters, and daughters of the deceased King, who had been murdered, and who was the brother of the Queen, whom the cruel usurper had married, — so that these four young persons were near relations; that the wicked King had ascended the throne after having committed a hundred atrocities, which he wished to crown by the murder of the two Princesses; that the Queen did all she could to prevent him, and not being able to succeed, she had called her (the Fairy) to her assistance; that she then told the Queen she would save them, but that she could only do so by taking with them her eldest son; that she undertook to promise she should see them again some day in happiness; that on those conditions, the Queen had consented to a separation, which appeared at first very hard; that she had carried them all three off, and that she had confided them to the care of the Good Woman as the person most worthy of such an office.

After this the Fairy begged her to be at ease, assuring her that the union of these young Princes would restore peace to the kingdom, wherein Finfin would reign with Lirette. The Good Woman listened to this discourse with great interest; but not without letting fall some tears. Madam Tu-tu was surprised at this emotion, and asked the cause. “Alas!” said she, “I fear they will lose their innocence by this grandeur to which they will be elevated, and that so brilliant a fortune will corrupt their virtue.”

“No,” replied the Fairy, “do not fear so great a misfortune; the principles you have instilled into them are too excellent. It is possible to be a king and yet an honest man. You know that there is one in the universe who is the model of perfect monarchs. Therefore set your mind at rest; I shall be with you as much as possible, and I hope you will not be melancholy here.”

The Good Woman believed her, and after a short time felt perfectly satisfied. The young shepherds were so happy also that they desired nothing but the continuance of their agreeable mode of life. Their pleasures, although tranquil, were not without interest: they saw each other every day, and the days only appeared to them too short.

The bad King learnt that they were with Madam Tu-tu, but all his power could not take them away from her. He knew by what magic spells she protected them; he saw clearly that he could only get the better of them by stratagem; he had not been able to inhabit the House of Roses in consequence of the continual tricks played on him by Madam Tu-tu; he hated her more than ever, as well as the Good Woman; and his hatred now extended also to his son.

He employed all kinds of artifice in order to get into his power some one of the four young shepherds, but his art did not extend to the dominions of Madam Tu-tu. One unlucky day (there are some which we cannot avoid), these amiable shepherds had bent their steps in the direction of the fatal oak, when the beautiful Lirette perceived upon a tree, about twenty paces distant, a bird of such rare plumage, that she let fly an arrow at it on the impulse of the moment, and seeing the bird fall dead, ran to pick it up. All this was done instantaneously, and without reflection; but the poor Lirette found, to her cost, that she was caught herself. It was impossible for her to return; she desired, but had no power to do so. She discovered her error, and all she could do was to extend her arms for pity to her brothers and sisters. Mirtis began to cry, and Finfin, without hesitation, ran to her. “I will perish with you,” he cried, and in a moment had joined her.

Mirtis wished to follow them, but the young Prince detained her. “Let us go and apprise Madame Tu-tu of this,” said he; “that is the best assistance we can render them.” At the same moment they saw the people of the wicked King seize them, and all they could do was to cry adieu to each other.

The King had caused this beautiful bird to be placed there by his hunters, to serve as a snare for the shepherds: he fully expected what had come to pass. They led Lirette and Finfin before the cruel monarch, who abused them terribly, and had them confined in a dark and strong prison: it was then they began to lament that their little cherry and almond had lost their virtue. The fawn and the partridge sought for them, but the fawn not being able to see them, shed some tears of grief, and finding the King had given orders that she should be taken and burnt alive, she saved herself by running fast to Mirtis. The partridge was more fortunate, for she saw them every day through the grating of their prison: happily for them, the King had not thought of separating them. When one loves, it is a pleasure to suffer together.

The partridge flew back every day, and came to tell the news to Madame Tu-tu, the Good Woman, and Mirtis. Mirtis was very unhappy, and without the handsome Prince she would have been inconsolable. She resolved to write to these poor captives by the faithful partridge, and hung a little bottle of ink to her neck, with some paper, and put a pen in her beak. The good partridge, thus loaded, presented herself at the bars of the prison, and it was a great delight to our young shepherds to see her again. Finfin put out his hand and took from her all she brought him, after which they began to read as follows:

Mirtis and the Prince to Lirette and Finfin.

Know you how we languish during this cruel separation; that we sigh incessantly, and that perhaps it may kill us. We should already have died, had we not been sustained by hope. That hope has supported us ever since Madam Tu-tu has assured us that you still lived. Believe us, dear Lirette and Finfin, we shall meet again, despite of malice, and be happy.

This letter had a powerful effect on the minds of Lirette and Finfin. They were filled with joy, and wrote immediately this reply: —

Lirette and Finfin to Mirtis and the Prince.

We have received your letter with extreme pleasure. It has rejoiced us more than we could have anticipated. In these regions of horror our *torments would be insupportable, but for the sweet consolation we derive from each other's presence. Near the object of our affections, we are insensible to pain, and love renders everything delightful. Adieu, dear Prince, adieu, Mirtis. Encourage your mutual passion. Be always inspired by a tender fidelity. You hold out a hope to us in which we participate. The greatest blessing which can occur to us will be accompanied by your presence.*

Finfin having attached this note to the neck of the partridge, she flew away with it very quickly. The young shepherds received great consolation from it, but the Good Woman could not be comforted from the moment she had been separated from those so dear to her, and whom she knew to be in so much peril. "How quickly my happiness has vanished," said she to Madame Tu-tu; "I seem to have been born only to be continually agitated. I thought I had taken the only means for ensuring my repose; how purblind are mortals!" "And do you not know," replied the Fairy, "that there is no state of existence in this world in which one can live always happily." "I do," replied the Good Woman, mournfully; "and if one cannot find happiness in one's self, it is seldom found elsewhere. But, Madam, consider the fate of my children, I beg of you!" "They have not remembered the orders I gave them," replied Madame Tu-tu; "but let us think of a remedy."

Madame Tu-tu entered her library with the Good Woman. She read nearly all the night, and having at length taken down and opened a large book, which she had frequently passed over, although its sides were covered with plates of gold, she appeared plunged, on a sudden, into a state of excessive sadness. After some time, and just as day was breaking, the Good Woman observing a few tears fall on the leaves of the book, took the liberty to ask the cause of the Fairy's sorrow. "I grieve," said she, "at the irrevocable decree of Fate, which I have learned from these pages, and which I shudder and tremble to acquaint you with." "Are they dead?" cried the Good Woman. "No," pursued Madame Tu-tu; "but nothing can save them, unless you or I go and present ourselves to the King, and satisfy his vengeance. I confess the truth to you, Madam," continued the Fairy, "that I do not feel sufficient affection for them, nor enough courage, to go thus and expose myself to his fury, and I question, also, if any one could be found capable of such a sacrifice." "Pardon me, Madam," replied the Good Woman, with great firmness; "I will go seek this King; no sacrifice is too great for me that will save my children. I will pour out for them, with all my heart, every drop of blood which I have in my veins."

Madam Tu-tu could not sufficiently admire so grand a resolution; she promised to assist her in every way in her power; but that she found herself limited in this instance, in consequence of the fault which they had committed. The Good Woman took leave of her, and would not acquaint Mirtis or the Prince with her design, for fear of affecting them and weakening her own determination. She set out with the partridge flying by her side; and as they passed the iron oak, the partridge snatched with her beak a little moss from its trunk, and placed it in the hands of the Good Woman. "When you are in the greatest peril which can befall you," said she to her, "throw this moss at the feet of the King." The Good Woman treasured up these words, and hardly had she advanced some steps when she was seized by some of the wicked King's soldiers, whom he always kept in readiness on the outskirts of the domain of Madam Tu-tu. They led her before him. "I have thee at last, wicked creature!" said he; "I will put thee to death by the most cruel torture!" "I came but for that purpose," replied she, "and thou mayst exercise thy cruelty as thou wilt on me, only spare my children, who are so young and incapable of having offended thee. I offer thee my life for theirs." All who heard these words were filled with pity at her magnanimity; the King alone was unmoved. The Queen, who was present, shed a torrent of tears. The King was so indignant with her that he would have killed her, if her attendants had not placed themselves between them. She fled, uttering piercing cries.

The barbarous King caused the Good Woman to be shut up, ordering them to feed her well, in order to render approaching death more frightful to her. He commanded them to fill a pit with snakes, vipers, and serpents, promising himself the pleasure of precipitating the Good Woman into it. What a horrible mode of execution! It makes one shudder to think of it!

The officers of this unjust Prince obeyed him with regret; and when they had fulfilled this frightful order, the King came to the spot. They were about to bind the Good Woman, when she begged them not to do so, assuring them that she had sufficient courage to meet death with her hands free; and, feeling she had no time to lose, she approached the King, and threw the moss at his feet. He was at that moment close to the frightful gulf, and stepping forward to inspect it again with pleasure, his feet slipped on the moss, and he fell in. Hardly had he reached the bottom of the pit, when the sanguinary reptiles darted upon him, and stung him to death, and the Good Woman, at the same instant, found herself in company with her dear partridge in the House of Roses.

Whilst these things were happening, Finfin and Lirette were almost dead with misery in their fearful prison; their innocent affection alone kept them alive. They were saying very sad and very affecting things to each other, when they perceived on a sudden the doors of their dungeon open and admit Mirtis, the handsome Prince, and Madam Tu-tu, who threw themselves on their necks, and who, though speaking all at once, failed not, in the midst of this joyful confusion, to announce the death of the King. “He was your father, Finfin, as well as that of the Prince,” said Madam Tu-tu; “but he was unnatural and tyrannical, and would a hundred times have put the Queen, your dear mother, to death. Let us go to seek her.” They did so. Her amiable nature made her feel some regret at the death of the King, her husband. Finfin and the Prince also paid all decent respect to his memory.

Finfin was acknowledged King, and Mirtis and Lirette Princesses. They went all together to the House of Roses, to see the generous Good Woman, who thought she should die of joy in embracing them. They all acknowledged that they owed their lives to her, and more than their lives, as they were indebted to her for their happiness also.

From that moment they considered themselves perfectly happy. The marriages were celebrated with great pomp. King Finfin espoused the Princess Lirette, and Mirtis the Prince. When these splendid nuptials were over, the Good Woman asked permission to retire to the House of Roses. They were very unwilling to consent to this, but yielded to her sincere wish. The widowed Queen also desired to pass the rest of her life with the Good Woman, and the partridge and the fawn did likewise. They were quite disgusted with the world, and found tranquillity in that charming retreat. Madam Tu-tu often went to visit them, as did the King and Queen, the Prince and Princess.

Happy those who can imitate the actions of the Good Woman. Such grandeur of soul must ever meet due reward. Little do they fear being wrecked on the shoals of Fortune, who can give up all with so much courage. Discretion, Sense, Virtue — what may not mortals owe to you, their truest friends in need.

15

PRINCESS MINUTE AND KING FLORIDOR

There was, once upon a time, a King and Queen who died young, and left a very fine empire to the Princess, their only daughter, who was then but thirteen years of age. She imagined that she knew how to reign, and all her good subjects persuaded themselves into the same idea, without well knowing why: however, it is a profession which is not without its difficulties.

The King and Queen had at least the consolation, when dying, of leaving the Princess, their daughter, under the protection of a friendly fairy. She was called Mirdandenne, and was a very good woman, but she added to the defect of allowing herself to be prejudiced that of obstinacy in continuing so. As for the little Princess, she was so very diminutive, that they called her Minute.

Thus was this fine kingdom governed by prejudice and frivolity; for the Princess had never been corrected in the taste which she showed for trifles; and it was for her that all those little knickknacks were invented, with which we have since been overwhelmed.

This Princess exhibited the grandeur of her ideas by an act which I will select from a thousand such. She would not retain as General of her forces, nay, even exiled from her Court, a veteran distinguished for the services which he had rendered the State. And why? Because he had appeared in her presence with a hat bound with silver when his coat was laced with gold. She thought that a man who could be guilty of such negligence at Court would be also, for the same reason, very capable of allowing himself to be surprised by the enemy. The discernment which she flattered herself as having shown in this instance, and the sound judgment which the Fairy distinguished in her most frivolous ideas, prove the existence of a delusion which would have been enough to turn a stronger head.

There was near this great country a little kingdom, so very small that I hardly know what to compare it to. A Queen Mother had for a long time reigned over it, in the name of Prince Floridor; but this good Queen died. Floridor, who was the most affectionate son possible, felt this loss acutely, and always retained a feeling of gratitude for the obligations he was under to her. One of the greatest was a perfect education — the most perfect, the most rigid, as far as concerned the body, which had rendered him as robust as active; and the mildest with regard to his mind, to which she had given both accomplishments and solidity. This young Prince was handsome and well formed. He governed wisely, without abusing his despotic power. His desires were well regulated — in a word, he would have been an amiable person in private life. His subjects adored him, and the strangers who visited at the Court agreed that he would have conferred happiness on the greatest empire. But one thing they were not aware of was, that he owed to a charming Ant a great number of his advantages. She had been attached to him from his infancy.

At the death of the Queen the good Ant was his sole consolation. He took no single step without going previously to consult this Ant, in a wood in the palace gardens, which she had chosen as her residence. He often abandoned the Court and its pleasures to go and converse with her. No weather prevented his presenting himself to her, and however severe might be the winter, she always came out of her anthill, which was the best regulated for an hundred miles round, and gave him advice full of prudence and wisdom.

You may easily have guessed that the pretty Ant of whom we speak was a fairy. Her history, which dates back seven thousand years, will be found brought down to the twenty-two thousandth year of the world at the four hundred and sixtieth page of the volume for that year. It would therefore have been easy for this Ant to give the King, whom she loved so well, several kingdoms — for Fairies dispose of them at their own pleasure, — but the Ant was prudent, and prudence is always guided by justice. It was not that she did not heartily desire the advancement of Floridor, but she wished him to employ no means to obtain it but those that might increase the true glory with the love of which she had inspired his heart.

The Ant was naturally patient: she waited for an opportunity to bring to light the virtues of her pupil. The conduct of Minute, and the prejudice of Mirdandenne, soon furnished her with one. They were informed that the flame of revolt was kindled in the mighty kingdom of Minute. When this news had been confirmed by all the newspapers, the good fairy Ant desired King Floridor to set out, attended by a simple groom, to assist the Queen, his neighbour. She gave him, at parting, nothing but a common sparrow, a little knife, which is usually called a *jambette*, and a walnut-shell. “My gifts,” said she, “appear mean; but make yourself easy respecting them. They will be of service in your need, and I hope you will be satisfied with them.” He readily assured her of that confidence which her former favours had rendered it but just that he should place in her, and having bidden her tenderly farewell, he set out on his journey; every inhabitant of his little kingdom regretting his departure as much as if he had been a brother, a son, or a bosom friend.

He arrived in the capital of Queen Minute’s dominions; he found it in a state of commotion, as they had heard that a neighbouring king was advancing rapidly, followed by a terrible army. He was coming with the design of seizing the kingdom. Floridor learnt that the Queen had retired to a delightful residence she possessed near the capital, and in which she had collected all sorts of brilliant gewgaws. She had, however, a motive for this retirement: she wished to consider seriously and decide, without being interrupted, whether the troops which the Fairy had ordered to be levied to oppose the usurper should wear blue or white cockades. The Queen was, notwithstanding, at this time twenty years of age. King Floridor having ascertained the road which led to this country-house, proceeded there with all speed. His handsome face prejudiced Mirdandenne in his favour. The compliments which he paid to the Queen and her only increased the good opinion which his first appearance had inspired her with, and the offer of his services was all the better received as the state was in a very embarrassed situation. Minute appeared to Floridor to be charming.

From that moment the King fell desperately in love. The zeal and alacrity always inseparable from that passion were displayed in his words and actions, and shone in his eyes; and it was with extreme care he investigated the existing position of affairs. He wished to have recourse to the powers of Fairyland; but the blind prejudice of Mirdandenne had induced her long before to give her wand to Minute, with the idea of amusing her, and that Princess had made such a prodigal use of it, that it was worn out, and had neither strength nor virtue, particularly for important things. Floridor returned to the capital, but found there neither fortifications nor munitions of war.

Meanwhile the invader advanced nearer and nearer. Floridor saw only a rival in the person of the hostile king; and finding no other resource, he was obliged to propose to the Queen to take flight, offering her with pride an asylum in his dominions. Prudence suggested to him a line of conduct which his courage condemned; but it was necessary to save an unhappy sovereign, and he only made this proposition on condition of his being allowed to return and expose himself to every danger, and use every effort to restore to the Queen a throne which so legitimately belonged to her, the moment he had placed her person in safety in his little kingdom. Mirdandenne, convinced by all the King represented to her, accepted the proposition; but the Queen only consented to depart when they promised her that the horse she was to ride should have a rose-coloured harness, and Floridor had agreed to present her with the sparrow which the fairy Ant had given him on his leaving her. The bird was soon given, but though the departure was urgent, they had to wait till a harness such as the Queen wished for could be procured from the city. It came at length, and Floridor and Minute, with no other suite but Mirdandenne, took the road to the King's dominions. Floridor was enchanted at being allowed to conduct Minute to his own kingdom, and at believing himself to be useful to her he adored. To be in love and a traveller are two things which make people exceedingly talkative. Floridor, in announcing the limited extent of his states, at which he sometimes blushed, could not refrain from speaking of the obligations he owed to the good Ant. When he came, however, to the details of their parting, the walnut, the little knife, and the sparrow appeared to the Queen very singular presents. She was very anxious to see the walnut: the King gave it to her without any scruples. As soon as it was in her hand, she cried, "Heavens, what do I hear!" She put her ear to it with the utmost attention, and then said, with surprise mingled with curiosity, "I hear very distinctly little voices of men, neighing of horses, trumpets, in short, a singular murmur. This is the prettiest thing in the world!" she exclaimed. While the King was himself occupied by that which amused her whom he loved, he perceived the scouts of the revolted army close upon them, and consequently ready to take them prisoners. At this perilous moment, by an involuntary movement, he broke the walnut, and out of it he saw issue thirty thousand effective men, horse, foot, and dragoons, with artillery and all the necessary munitions of war. He placed himself at their head, and showing a bold front to the enemy, he made, without ever striking a blow, the most beautiful retreat in the world; he took possession in this way of the mountains he found on his road, and saved the Queen from the hands of her rebellious subjects. After this fine military manœuvre, which was not accomplished without much fatigue, and alarm at the danger the Queen had incurred, they halted several days on the mountain; but as all the country was up in arms, they perceived, on recommencing their march, another army, much more numerous than that which they had escaped, and which it would have been the height of rashness to give battle to. In this cruel situation, the Queen asked for the little knife which the Ant had given to him, to use for some trifling purpose; but finding that it did not cut to her fancy, she threw it away, saying, "There's a pleasant knife!" The moment it touched the ground it made a considerable hole in it. The King was struck with the talent of his *jambette*, and immediately cut with it deep entrenchments all round the mountain, which rendered their position impregnable.

When this operation was finished, which only occupied him the time necessary to make the circuit, the sparrow he had presented to Minute took wing, and flew to the summit of the mountain; then flapping its wings, it cried, in a terrible voice, "Leave me alone to deal with them; you are about to see a fine game. Let all descend the mountain, march upon the enemy, and fear nothing." He was instantly obeyed, and the sparrow raised the mountain as easily as if it had been a straw, and traversing the air with it, he let it fall upon the army of the enemy, crushing, no doubt, the greater part of them; the rest took flight and left the passage free. The King, who was solely occupied with the desire of seeing the Queen in safety, was anxious to put the horses to their speed; but as the march of an army is necessarily slow, he would have been glad if it had re-entered the walnut-shell. Hardly had he formed the wish when it actually did so. He put it in his pocket, and they arrived in the little kingdom, where the good Ant received them with every mark of sincere friendship.

When Floridor had made every arrangement for the accommodation of Minute, and was satisfied that she could want for nothing in the palace, he began to think of his departure, and he did so more cheerfully as the good Ant assured him of her attention to all that concerned the Queen. During the journey he had lately performed, and the short time he had passed in his own dominions, he had taken the opportunity of declaring his passion to Minute, which she had been kind enough to approve. At length he was obliged to leave her; their adieus were tender, and Floridor set out with no other assistance but that of a letter from Minute, addressed to her good and faithful subjects, in which she required them to obey the commands of King Floridor implicitly.

The good Ant neither gave him the walnut nor the little knife which he had returned to her when he came back: the Queen only begged him to accept from her hand the sparrow which he had given her, praying that he would always carry it about with him, as well as a scarf of *nonpareille* which she had herself made for him. The King followed exactly the same road that he had taken in conducting the Queen, not only because lovers are gratified by seeing again the places which are associated in their memories with those whom they love, but because it was also the shortest cut.

When he was near the transplanted mountain, the sparrow, rising in the air, took it up with the same facility as before, and carried it back to the spot which it had formerly occupied. The sparrow then in that terrible voice which he knew how to assume when he wished, said to those whom he found shut up under the mountain, “Be faithful to Minute, and do what King Floridor shall command you in her name.” This singular sparrow then disappeared.

The mountain, it seems, was hollow, so those who had found themselves enclosed in it were as if under a bell; they had wanted for nothing during the time of their imprisonment; all the soldiers and officers who saw the light of day again with the utmost pleasure, ran in crowds to

Floridor, whose handsome countenance interested them, and looking upon him as a demi-god, they were ready to worship him. The King, moved by their obedience and the new vows of fidelity to the lawful Queen, which they took at his hands, received their respects but not their adoration, after having shown them the letter with which he was charged. He made the army pass in review, and chose from it fifty thousand of the finest men, and of those to whose devotion a general's success is mostly due. He established in his new army a very strict discipline, of which he was both the author and example; and it was with these troops that he became invincible — that he defied the countless forces of the usurper, whom he slew with his own hand in one of the last battles, and whose death restored to Minute a kingdom which she had entirely lost. Floridor marched through all the provinces of this great state, and re-established the authority of Minute, whom he then hastened to rejoin.

But what a change did he find in the character and mind of this lovely Queen? The counsels of the good Ant, and, above all, Love, and the wish to please and be worthy of Floridor, had completely corrected her only fault. She was ashamed of having always done little things with great assistance, whilst her lover had done such great things with so little.

They married, and lived happily ever after.

16

THE IMPOSSIBLE ENCHANTMENT

Once upon a time there was a King who was very much beloved by his subjects, and who was equally fond of them. This Monarch had a great repugnance to marriage, and what was still more astonishing, love had never made the slightest impression on his heart. His subjects, however, pressed so strongly upon him the necessity of providing for the succession to the throne, that the good King finally consented to their request. But as no woman he had as yet seen, had awakened in him the faintest inclination to marry her, he resolved to seek in foreign lands that which his own had failed to present him with, and despite the severe and satirical remarks of all his countrywomen, both handsome and ugly, he set out on his travels, after having duly provided for the maintenance of order and tranquillity in his dominions. He would take no one with him but a single equerry, a very sensible man, but not particularly brilliant. Such companions are not always the worst upon a journey.

The King roamed in vain through several kingdoms, using all his best endeavours to fall in love; but his time not being come, he retraced his road to his own dominions, after two years' absence and fatigue, in the same state of indifference as he left them.

It happened, however, that in traversing a forest he heard a most fearful squalling of cats. The worthy equerry did not know what to think of such a commencement of an adventure. All the stories of sorcerers that he had ever seen came into his head. As to the King, he was unmoved by it. Courage and curiosity combined to induce him to wait and see what would follow this strange and disagreeable interruption. The noise coming nearer and nearer, they at length saw an hundred Spanish cats rush by them through the Forest. You might have covered them all with a cloak, so well did they run together and so perfectly were they on the scent. They were closely followed by two of the largest monkeys that ever were seen. They were dressed in amaranth-coloured coats. Their boots were the prettiest and best made in the world. They were mounted on two superb English bull-dogs, and rode at full speed, blowing little toy-trumpets. The King, surprised at such a sight, gazed at them with great attention, when a score of tiny dwarfs appeared, some mounted on lynxes and leading relays of them, others on foot with cats in couples. They were dressed in amaranth like the huntsmen, which colour seemed to be the livery of the equipage. A moment afterwards he perceived a young female as remarkable for her beauty as for the proud air with which she rode a large tiger, whose paces were admirable.

She passed the King full gallop, without stopping or even saluting him; but though she hardly looked at him, he was enchanted with her, and his heart was gone like a flash of lightning.

All in agitation, he perceived a dwarf who had lagged behind the rest of the company. He addressed him with all that eagerness which the curiosity of love to obtain some information respecting the object of its admiration would naturally occasion. The dwarf informed him that the lady he had just seen was the Princess Mutine, daughter of King Prudent, in whose dominions they were at that moment. He told him, also, that the Princess was exceedingly fond of the chase, and that the pack he had seen pass was what she hunted rabbits with. The King asked nothing further, except the nearest road to the Court of King Prudent. The dwarf pointed it out to him, and spurred on his lynx to rejoin the hunt, and the King, with the impatience of a new-born passion, gave the spurs to his horse, and in less than two hours found himself in the capital of King Prudent's dominions. He was presented to the King and Queen, who received him with open arms, the more graciously on learning his name and that of his empire.

The beautiful Mutine returned from the chase shortly after this presentation. Hearing that the Princess had killed two rabbits, he ventured to compliment her on so fine a day's sport, but the Princess made no reply. He was rather surprised at her silence, but he was still more so when he observed that during supper she was equally taciturn. He noticed only that there were moments when she appeared about to say something, but that either King Prudent or the Queen (who never drank at the same time) immediately commenced speaking. This silence, however, did not prevent the increase of his passion for Mutine. The King retired to the handsome apartment which had been assigned to him, and his worthy Equerry did not appear overjoyed when he found his royal master so deeply in love. He did not even conceal from him that he was sorry for it. "And why are you sorry?" inquired the King. "The Princess is so beautiful; surely she is all I could desire." "She is beautiful, I admit," replied the Equerry. "But to be happy, something is required besides beauty. Pardon me, sire, but there is something harsh in the expression of her features." "It is pride," said the King, "and very becoming in so beautiful a woman." "Pride or ill-nature, whichever you please; but the taste she exhibits in her amusements, and her choice of so many mischievous animals, are to my mind convincing proofs of a cruel disposition. Moreover, the care that is taken to prevent her speaking is to me a very suspicious circumstance. The King, her father, is not called Prudent for nothing. I don't fancy even her own name of Mutine. It appears to me only a softening down or a diminutive of the appellation which would truly be applied to her from the impression she has made on me. For you know better than I do, that it is too common a practice to gloss over the faults of persons of her rank."

The observations of the worthy Equerry were sensible enough, but as objections only increase love in the hearts of all men, and particularly in those of kings, who dislike being contradicted, this monarch the very next morning demanded the hand of the Princess in marriage. As the previous indifference of the King had become notorious, the triumph of the charms of Mutine was complete. Her hand was accorded to him — but on two conditions. The first, that the marriage should take place the very next morning; the second, that he should not speak to the Princess until she was his wife. On this occasion the pretext for her silence was a solemn vow she had taken in consequence of — the first thing that came into their heads: and the enamoured King only saw in this circumstance the proof of a truly religious feeling. Those great precautions formed a new theme for the arguments of the Equerry, but they made no more impression than the former did. The King, after listening to them, closed the conversation by saying, “It has cost me a great deal of trouble to fall in love. I have done so at last. What the deuce wouldst thou have? I mean to remain in love.”

The rest of that day and all the following was passed in dancing and feasting. The Princess was present, and took her part in all the entertainments without uttering a single word, and the first he heard her pronounce was the fatal “Yes,” which bound her to him for life. As soon as she was married she threw off all restraint, and the first day did not pass without her having very liberally distributed a volley of abuse and a host of impertinences amongst her maids of honour. In short, the mildest expressions she made use of in return for the most particular services were characterized by rudeness and ill-temper. Even the King, her husband, was not exempted from this sort of language; but as he was very much in love, and, moreover, a good-natured man, he bore it all patiently.

A few days after their marriage the newly-wedded pair took the road to their own kingdom, and Mutine’s departure was not regretted by any one in her Father’s. The cordial reception King Prudent had always given to foreigners had no other motive than the hope of such a love as his daughter's charms had succeeded in inspiring — a passion which was too strong to pause for a better acquaintance with her mind and character.

The worthy Equerry had had too much reason for his remonstrances, and the King perceived it too late. All the time the new Queen was on the road she filled the hearts of her attendants with grief, anger, and despair. But once arrived in her kingdom, her ill-temper and ill-nature were redoubled. By the time she had been a month on her throne her reputation was perfect. She was acknowledged unanimously as the worst Queen in the world.

One day that she was taking an airing on horseback in a wood near the Palace, she perceived an old woman walking in the high road. She was very simply dressed. This good woman having made her the best curtsey she could, continued her route; but the Queen, who was only waiting for an occasion to give vent to her ill-humour, bade one of her pages run after the old woman, and bring her back. As soon as she was in her presence she said, “Thou art very impertinent to make me no lower a curtsey! Dost thou not know I am the Queen? I am more than half inclined to order my people to give thee an hundred lashes with their stirrup-leathers.” “Madam,” said the old woman, “I never knew exactly what difference there was in curtseys. It is clear I had no intention of being disrespectful.” “How!” exclaimed the Queen; “does she dare to answer me? Tie her instantly to the tail of my horse. I will take her with speed to the best dancing-master in the city, and he shall teach her how to make me a curtsey.”

The old woman begged for mercy whilst they tied her, but in vain. She even boasted of the protection of the Fairies. The Queen heeded the warning as little as the prayer. “I care for them as little as I do for thee,” she exclaimed, “and wert thou even thyself a Fairy, I would serve thee the same way.”

The old woman suffered herself patiently to be fastened to the tail of the horse; but the instant the Queen would have given him the spur, he became motionless. In vain she endeavoured to stick the rowels into his side. He had become a horse of bronze. The cords which fastened the old woman changed at the same moment to garlands of flowers, and the old woman herself suddenly appeared eight feet high. Then fixing on Mutine her fiery and disdainful eyes, she said to her, “Wicked woman! unworthy of the royal title thou bearest, I desired to judge myself if thou didst deserve the bad character they give thee in the world. I am satisfied thou dost, and thou shalt soon see whether the fairies are as little to be feared as thou fanciest.” So saying, the Fairy Paisible (for it was she herself) whistled through her fingers, and a chariot was seen advancing, drawn by six of the most beautiful ostriches in the world, and in this chariot they recognised the Fairy Grave, looking more grave even than her name. She was at that time the Elder of the Fairies, and presided in all cases affecting the Fairy community. Her escort was composed of a dozen other Fairies, mounted on crop-tailed dragons. Notwithstanding her astonishment at the appearance of the Fairies, Queen Mutine retained the proud and malevolent expression which was so natural to her.

When this brilliant company had descended and dismounted, the Fairy Paisible related her adventure to them. The Fairy Grave, who was very severe in the execution of her office, approved of Paisible’s conduct, and then gave it as her opinion that the Queen should be transformed into the same metal as her horse; but the Fairy Paisible objected to this, and with unequalled generosity, exerted herself to moderate all the rigorous measures that were suggested for the punishment of the Queen.

At length, thanks to the kind Fairy, she was condemned only to be her slave until she was confined, for I had forgotten to tell you that she was expecting to become a mother. This sentence, which was pronounced in full court, decreed that, on her recovery, the Queen should be permitted to return to her husband, and that the infant she had given birth to should remain the slave of the Fairy in her place.

They were polite enough to announce to the King the sentence that had been passed on his wife. He was compelled to give his assent to it. What could the worthy Prince have done, supposing he had objected?

After this act of justice, the Fairies returned each one to her own affairs. Paisible waited an instant the arrival of her equipage, which she had sent for. It was a little car made of various coloured bugles, drawn by six hinds, white as snow, with caparisons of green satin, embroidered with gold. One touch of her wand changed the Queen's dress into the habit of a slave. In this attire she was made to mount an obstinate mule, and to follow, at a hard trot, the car of the Fairy.

After an hour's jolting, the Queen arrived at Paisible's mansion. As you may easily believe, she was in great affliction, but her pride prevented her from shedding a single tear. The Fairy sent her to work in the kitchen, after giving her the name of Furieuse, that of Mutine being too gentle for the wickedness she was inclined to.

"Furieuse," said the Fairy Paisible, "I have saved your life, and perhaps conscience may hereafter reproach me for it. I will not give you any heavy work to do, out of compassion for the unborn infant, who you are aware is to become my slave. I will, therefore, remove you from the kitchen, and set you only the task of sweeping my apartment, and combing my little dog Christine." Furieuse knew there was no opposition to be made to these commands. She took, therefore, the sensible course of doing exactly as she was bid as long as she was able.

After some time, she gave birth to a Princess, as lovely as day; and when her health was re-established, the Fairy lectured her severely respecting her past life, exacted from her a promise to behave better in future, and sent her back to the King her husband. One may imagine, from the kindness shown by the Fairy Paisible to so wicked a woman, what affectionate care she would take of the young Princess who was left in her hands. She soon perfectly doated on her, and determined to have her endowed by two fairies besides herself. She was a long time deciding on the two godmothers she should select, for she feared that the resentment they all felt against the mother might be extended to the child. At length, she thought that the Fairies Divertisante and Eveillée were amongst the best natured of them, and invited them accordingly. They arrived in a Berlin, made of Italian flowers, drawn by six grey ponies with beautiful flame-coloured manes. Eveillée's robe was composed of parrots' feathers, and her hair was dressed en chien fou. The Fairy Divertisante had a robe of cameleon's skin, which made her appear alternately in every imaginable colour.

Paisible gave them both a capital reception, and to insure their good offices, I have been confidently informed, that (during the excellent supper they sat down to) she managed to make them just merry enough with wine. Having taken this wise precaution, she had the lovely infant brought to them. It was in a cradle of rock crystal, and swathed in clothes of scarlet embroidered with gold; but its beauty was an hundred times more brilliant than its apparel.

The young Princess smiled at the Fairies, and made little attempts to kiss them, which so pleased them that they determined to place her, as far as it laid in their power, beyond the reach of the anger of their Elders. They began by giving her the name of Galantine.

The Fairy Paisible then said to them, "You know that the punishments we Fairies usually inflict, consist in changing beauty to ugliness, intellect to imbecility, and in many cases resorting to transformation. Now, as it is impossible for us to endow her with more than one gift each, my advice is that one of you should bestow upon her beauty, the other intelligence, and that I, for my part, should render it impossible for any one to change her form."

This advice was adopted, and followed upon the spot. As soon as Galantine was endowed, the two Fairies took their leave, and Paisible gave all her attention to the education of the little Princess. Never was such attention so well rewarded, for at four years of age her grace and beauty had already begun to make a noise in the world. In fact, they made too much noise, for the circumstances of the case having been reported to the Council of Fairies, Paisible, one morning, saw the Fairy Grave enter the court-yard of the Palace, mounted on a lion. She wore a long robe, very full, and consequently very much plaited, of sky-blue colour, and on her head a square cap of gold brocade.

Paisible recognised her with as much anxiety as vexation, for her dress and the animal she rode proved that she came to promulgate some decree: but when she perceived that she was followed by the Fairy Rèveuse, mounted on a unicorn, and dressed in black morocco, faced with changeable taffeta, and wearing also a square cap, she no longer doubted that this visit had some very serious object.

In short, Fairy Grave, opening the business, said to her, “I am much surprised at the conduct you have pursued towards Mutine. It is in the name of the whole body of Fairies, whom she has insulted, that I come to reprimand you. You were at liberty to forgive her offences to yourself, but you had no right to pardon her for those which she had committed against the entire community. Nevertheless, you treated her with mildness and kindness during the time she resided with you. I therefore come to do strict justice, and punish an innocent child for the acts of a guilty mother. You have endowed her with beauty and intelligence, and you have also raised an obstacle against her transformation; but though I cannot deprive her of the gifts you have bestowed upon her, I know how to prevent her deriving any advantage from them as long as she lives. She shall never be able to get out of an enchanted prison which I am about to build for her, until she shall find herself in the arms of a lover who is beloved by her. It is my business to take care that such an event shall never occur.”

The enchantment consisted of a tower of great height and size, built of shells of all colours, in the middle of the sea. On the lowest floor there was a great bath-room, into which the water could be admitted at pleasure. The bath was surrounded by steps and slabs, on which you could walk with dry feet. The first floor was devoted to the apartment of the Princess, and it was really a magnificent affair. The second was divided into several rooms. In one you saw a fine library, in another a wardrobe full of beautiful linen and superb dresses for all ages, each more splendid than the other. A third was appropriated to music, a fourth was entirely filled with the most agreeable wines and liqueurs, and in the last (which was the largest of all), nothing was to be seen but wet and dry sweetmeats, and preserves of every description, and all sorts of pies and patties, which by the power of the enchantment were kept always as warm as they were when first taken out of the oven. The tower was terminated by a platform on which there was a garden laid out full of the finest flowers, which were renewed and succeeded each other unceasingly. In this garden was also seen a fruit tree of each sort, on which as fast as you gathered one fruit another appeared in its place. This lovely spot was ornamented by green arbours, rendered delicious by the shade and fragrance of the flowering shrubs that formed them, and the songs of the thousand birds that frequented them.

When the Fairies had placed Galantine in the tower, with a governess named Bonnette, they remounted the whale that had taken them there, and retiring a certain distance from this grand edifice, Fairy Grave, by a tap of her wand on the water, assembled two thousand of the most ferocious sharks in the ocean, and ordered them to keep strict watch around the tower, and tear in pieces every mortal who should be rash enough to approach it; but as ships are not much afraid of sharks, she also sent for a quantity of remoras, and commanded them to form an advanced guard, and stop, without exception, every vessel that by design or accident shaped its course in that direction.

Fairy Grave felt so fatigued with having done so much in so short a time, that she requested Fairy Rèveuse to fly to the top of the tower and enchant the air about it so powerfully and completely that not even a bird should be able to go near it. The Fairy obeyed; but as she was an exceedingly absent being, she forgot some of the necessary ceremonies, and made some few mistakes. If the enchantment of the water had not been more perfect than that of the air, the safe keeping of Galantine, which they took so much trouble about, would have been greatly endangered by sea.

The good governess occupied every instant of her time in the proper education of Galantine; and although she looked upon all the accomplishments that the Princess acquired as completely thrown away on one who would never have an opportunity of displaying them to the world, she neglected nothing that could tend to the improvement of her mind and the cultivation of her talents, in all imaginable arts and sciences.

When the Princess had attained the age of twelve she appeared to the governess a perfect prodigy. All the fine qualities she discovered in her caused her deeply to deplore the sad fate imposed on so amiable a person. Galantine, who knew nothing about herself, perceiving her one day more melancholy than usual, entreated to know the reason of it so urgently, that Bonnette related to her all her own history and that of the Queen her mother.

Galantine was thunderstruck at this recital. “I had never before,” she exclaimed, “reflected on my position. I fancied that when I was old enough I should leave this retreat: but if I am condemned never to do so, of what value is life to me? Better surely would it be for me to die.” The Princess, after this burst of grief, remained silent for some time, then added, “You say, my dear Bonnette, that the spell which is cast upon me cannot be broken until I shall love some one who loves me. Is this so difficult a matter? I don’t know what it may be, but I would endure anything that could assist to release me from this prison.” Bonnette could not help smiling at the simplicity of Galantine, and then answered, “To love and to be beloved, it is necessary that some young Prince should enter this tower to see and be seen by you, and that he should be one who intends to marry you, otherwise his appearance here would not be correct; now you know that it is not possible for any man to approach these walls. Have I not told you all the precautions that have been taken by sea and by sky. You must, therefore, my dear Galantine, make up your mind to pass your days in this solitude.”

This conversation produced a great change in the Princess. No amusements had charms for her any longer. Her melancholy became excessive. She passed her days in weeping and in devising plans to escape from the tower.

One day that the Princess was sitting in her balcony, she saw an extraordinary figure emerge from the water. She called Bonnette immediately to come and observe it. It had the appearance of a man with a bluish countenance, and ill-curled hair of a sea-green colour. He approached the tower, and the sharks made no opposition to his progress. “In my opinion,” said the Governess, “it is a Mer-man.” “A man do you say,” exclaimed Galantine; “let us go down to the gate of the tower, we shall see him better there.” As soon as they reached the gate, the Mer-man stopped to gaze on the Princess, and at her sight made several signs of admiration. He said something to her in a very hoarse voice; but as he found his language was not understood, he had recourse again to signs. He had in his hand a little rush-basket filled with the rarest shells. He presented it to the Princess, who took it, and in her turn made signs to thank him; but as night was coming on she retired, and the Mer-man plunged under water.

As soon as Galantine had reached her own apartment, she said to her Governess, sorrowfully, “I think that man frightful. Why did the villainous sharks who guard me allow such an ugly man to pass them, in preference to one who was better looking? for I suppose they are not all like him.” “Not any like him, I should say,” replied Bonnette; “and as to the sharks allowing him to pass, I presume that, being inhabitants of the same element, they do not harm each other. They may even be his relations, or at least friends.”

A few days after this first adventure, Bonnette and Galantine were attracted to one of the windows of the tower by what appeared to them a singular sort of music, and which indeed proved to be so. There was the same Mer-man that they had already seen, who, always up to his waist in the water, and his head covered with reeds, blew with all his might a species of conch-shell, the sound of which was something like that of our ancient goat’s horns. The Princess again descended to the gate of the tower, and courteously accepted the coral and other marine curiosities which he presented to her. After this second visit, he came every day under the windows of the Princess, diving and grimacing, or playing on the charming instrument I have described to you. Galantine contented herself with curtseying to him in the balcony; but no longer came down-stairs, notwithstanding the signs by which the Mer-man implored her.

Some days afterwards, the Princess saw him appear in company with another of his species of the other sex. Her hair was dressed with much taste, and her voice was charming.

This addition to the company induced Galantine and Bonnette to descend again to the gate of the tower. They were much surprised when the lady (whom they now saw for the first time) after having tried several languages, spoke to them in their own, and complimented Galantine on her beauty. She perceived that the basement story, or bath-room, of which I have spoken, was open and full of water. “Here,” said she, “is a place made expressly for our reception; for it is impossible for us to live entirely out of our element.” She immediately entered, and reclined as one does in a bath, and her brother (for she was the sister of the Mer-man) placed himself beside her in a similar attitude. The Princess and her governess sat down on the steps which were continued round the apartment.

“I suspect, madam,” said the Syren, “that you have abandoned your residence on the earth in consequence of being beset by crowds of lovers. If that be really the cause of your retirement, you will not obtain your object here; for my brother is already dying for love of you, and when the inhabitants of our great city have perceived you, he will certainly have them all for his rivals.”

The brother, who imagined she was speaking of him, at that moment made signs of assent with his head and his hands, and continued to do so when she was not speaking of him at all.

The Syren expressed to her the regret of her brother at not being able to make himself understood. “I am his interpreter,” she continued, “thanks to the languages which I was taught by a fairy.” “You have fairies, then, also amongst you?” said Galantine, accompanying the question with a heavy sigh. “Yes, madam,” replied the Syren, “we have a few; but, if I am not deceived, you have suffered some injuries from those who inhabit the earth? At least the sigh which escaped you would justify me in so believing.” The Princess, who had not been enjoined secresy on the subject, recounted to the Syren all that Bonnette had told her.

“You are much to be pitied,” said the Syren, when Galantine had finished her story. “Nevertheless your misfortunes may not be without a remedy; but it is time to terminate my first visit.” The Princess, delighted at the hope she held out to her, said a thousand kind things to her, and they separated with a promise to see one another frequently.

The Princess appeared charmed with this adventure. Independently of the hope the Syren had inspired her with, it was much to have found some one with whom it was possible to enjoy a little society. “We shall make the acquaintance,” said she to her governess, “of several of these Mer-men, and they may not all be as hideous as the first we have seen. At any rate we shall not be always alone.” “Good heavens,” said Bonnette; “how easily young people do flatter themselves. I tell you I am afraid of those folks. But what say you,” continued she, “to the handsome lover of whom you have made a conquest?” “I say that I shall never love him,” replied the Princess, “and that he is exceedingly disagreeable to me; but,” pursued she, “I would fain discover if he cannot, by means of his relative the Fairy Marine, contrive to do me some service.” “I repeat to you,” insisted Bonnette, “that those odd-coloured faces and great fish-tails are alarming.” But Galantine being younger, was consequently bolder and less prudent.

The Syren came to see her several times, and always talked to her of her brother’s affection; the Princess, constantly occupied by her ideas of escaping from prison, encouraged the conversation, and at length induced the Syren to promise she would bring the Fairy Marine to pay her an early visit, and that she would instruct her what to do.

The Fairy came with the Syren the very next morning; the Princess received her as her liberator. Some short time after her arrival she requested Galantine to show her over the Tower, and to take a turn with her in the garden, for (with the assistance of two crutches) she could manage to walk about, and as she was a Fairy, she was able to remain out of the water as long as she pleased, only it was necessary for her to moisten her forehead occasionally, for which purpose she always carried a little silver fountain suspended from her girdle.

Galantine acceded to the request of the Fairy, and Bonnette remained in the hall to entertain the rest of the company. When the Fairy and the Princess had entered the garden, the former said, “Let us lose no time. Let us see if there is anything I can do to serve you.” Galantine told her all her history, not omitting the smallest details; and the Fairy then said to her, “I can do nothing for you, my dear Princess, on the land, my power does not extend beyond my own element; but you have a resource, and one in which I can assist you with all the art I possess. If you will do Gluatin the honour to marry him, an honour which he most ardently aspires to, you can come and live with us. I will teach you in a moment to dive and to swim as well as we do. I will harden your skin without blemishing its whiteness, and so prepare it, that the coldness of the water, in lieu of inconveniencing you, shall give you the greatest pleasure. My cousin," added she, "is, as you may suppose, one of the best matches in the ocean, and I will do so much for him in consideration of your alliance that nothing shall have ever equalled your mutual happiness."

The Fairy spoke with so much fervour, that the Princess hesitated to refuse, and requested a few days to consider. As they were about to rejoin the company, they perceived a vessel in the distance. The Princess had never before seen one so distinctly, as none had ever ventured to come so near the Tower. They could easily distinguish on the deck of this ship a young man reclining under a magnificent pavilion, and who appeared to be very attentively surveying the Tower by means of a telescope; but the distance was still too great for them to see anything more.

The vessel beginning to recede, Galantine and the Fairy returned to the company, the latter much pleased at the progress of her negotiation. She told the Princess, on leaving her, that she should shortly come again to know her answer.

As soon as the Fairy was gone, Galantine related to her governess all that had passed between them. She was very sorry to see that her pupil was half inclined to yield to the Fairy's persuasions. She was dreadfully afraid of being compelled in her declining years to become an old Syren herself. To avert all the misfortunes she foresaw, she hit upon the following idea. As she could paint miniatures to perfection, she set to work, and by the next morning produced one of a young man with fair hair, dressed in large curls, the finest complexion in the world, blue eyes, and his nose slightly *retroussé*; in fact, presenting an assemblage of all the features that could compose a charming portrait, and we shall see in the end that some supernatural power must have assisted her in a work which she had undertaken solely to show Galantine the difference between a man of the world and her marine adorer, and so dissuade her from a marriage which was not at all to her taste.

When she presented her work to her, the Princess was struck with admiration, and asked her if it were possible that any man on earth could resemble that portrait. Bonnette assured her that there were many such, and some even handsomer. “I can scarcely believe it,” replied Galantine, “but alas, neither the original of this portrait, nor any one like him, can ever be my husband. They will never see me, nor I them as long as I live. Oh, how miserable is my fate!”

Nevertheless, Galantine passed the whole day in gazing on this miniature. It had the effect Bonnette anticipated. It ruined Gluatin’s affairs, which had previously been put in pretty good train; but the governess almost repented having painted so handsome a face, as the Princess gave up eating and drinking in order to have more time to gaze upon it. If ever a portrait was capable of inspiring a real passion, it was assuredly in this case and under the circumstances here related.

The Fairy Marine returned a few days after the visit we have described, to ascertain what were the intentions of Galantine; but this young creature, engrossed by her new passion (for she was positively in love with the portrait), could not control herself as prudence would have suggested. She not only broke off with the Fairy abruptly, but, what was worse, she exhibited so much contempt and aversion for Gluatin, that the Fairy, indignant at the style of her refusal, left the Princess with a determination to be revenged.

In the meanwhile the Princess had made a conquest she was unconscious of. The vessel she had seen so near her residence had on board the handsomest Prince in the world. He had heard of the Enchanted Tower, and determined to go nearer to it than any one had yet done. He possessed such excellent glasses, that in surveying the Tower, simply from a motive of curiosity, he caught sight of the Princess, and the best proof of the goodness of his glass, and that he must have seen her distinctly is, that he fell desperately in love with her.

Like a young man and a new lover, two conditions in which nothing is thought too hazardous, he was eager to cast anchor near the Tower, lower a boat, and encounter all the dangers that the enchantment could threaten him with; but all his crew upon their knees implored him not to venture. His Equerry, who was more frightened than any, or whose knowledge of the circumstances rendered him more competent to form an opinion, was most eloquent. “You would lead us all to certain death, my Lord,” said he; “deign to return on shore, and I promise you to go in search of the Fairy Commode. She is a relation of mine, and has always been very fond of me. I will answer for her zeal and her skill. I am perfectly sure she will do you good service.” The Prince yielded, but very reluctantly, to so many good arguments. He landed therefore on the nearest point of land, and despatched his Equerry to find his relative, and implore her protection and assistance. In the meanwhile he ordered a tent to be pitched on the sea shore, and, glass in hand, sat incessantly looking either at the Princess or at her prison, and his imagination becoming more and more excited, often presented to him its own creations for realities.

At the end of a few days the Equerry returned with the Fairy Commode. The Prince received her with the greatest demonstrations of affection. The Equerry had informed her during their journey of the state of the case. “In order to lose no time,” said she to the Prince, “I will send a white pigeon, in which I place implicit confidence, to examine the enchantment. If he finds a flaw in it anywhere, he shall enter the garden that crowns the Tower, and I will order him to bring back some flowers as a proof that he succeeded in finding an entrance. If he can get in, I will soon find a way to introduce you.” “But,” said the Prince, “can I not, by means of your pigeon, send a note to the Princess, declaring the passion with which she has inspired me?” “Certainly you can,” said Commode, “and I advise you to do so.” The Prince immediately wrote the following letter: —

Prince Blondin to Princess Galantine.

I adore you, and I am aware of your destiny. If, beautiful Princess, you will deign to accept the homage of my heart, there is nothing I will not undertake to render myself the happiest of men by terminating your misfortunes.

Blondin.

When this note was written, they tied it round the neck of the Pigeon, who only awaited his dispatches, for he had already received his instructions. He rose gracefully into the air, and flew off as fast as his wings would carry him; but when he approached the tower there issued from it a furious wind that repelled him violently. He was not, however, to be disheartened by such an obstacle, and after making many circles round and round about the building, he discovered the weak point which the Fairy Rèveuse had left in the enchantment. He slipped through it instantly, and flew down into the garden to wait for the Princess and to rest himself.

The Princess generally took her walk alone; from inclination, because a passion engrossed her heart; from necessity, because the Governess could no longer ascend to that height without great fatigue. As soon as the Pigeon saw her appear, he flew to her in the most flattering manner. Galantine caressed him, and seeing a rose-coloured ribbon round his neck, she wondered what it was put there for. How great was her surprise when she perceived the note! She read it, and this was the answer she returned by the Pigeon: —

Princess Galantine to Prince Blondin.

You say that you have seen me, and that you love me. I cannot love you, nor promise to love you, without having seen you. Send me your portrait by the same courier. If I return it to you, hope nothing; but if I keep it, be assured that in working for me you work for yourself.

Galantine.

She fastened this letter in the same manner as they had done that which she had just received, and dismissed the Pigeon, who did not forget that he was ordered to bring back a flower from the garden; but as he was well aware of the importance lovers often attach to trifles, he stole one from a bouquet the Princess wore in her bosom, and flew away.

The return of this bird gave the Prince such extreme delight, that, but for the anxiety he was still under, he might perhaps have lost his senses. He wanted to send the Pigeon back instantly with a miniature of himself, which, by the greatest chance in the world, he happened to have amongst his baggage; but the Fairy insisted on an hour's rest for her courier, which the Prince employed in writing verses to send with his portrait.

The Pigeon, duly furnished with miniature and verses, set out once more for the tower. The Princess was not certain he would return so soon, but she was looking out for him, notwithstanding. She was in the garden, and had said nothing of this last adventure to her Governess, for she began to feel that love of mystery and reserve with which a first passion usually inspires one. She eagerly detached the miniature from the Pigeon's neck, and her surprise was infinite when, on opening the case, she discovered that the portrait of Prince Blondin perfectly resembled that which Bonnette had painted from fancy. It was one of those fortunate accidents which it is impossible to account for.

The delight of Galantine was extreme at making this agreeable discovery; and to express in the prettiest possible way her own sentiments, she took the Prince’s miniature out of its case, put in its place the one she thought best of the many which Bonnette had painted of her, and immediately sent the Pigeon back with it, who began to be rather fatigued, and would not long have been able to serve two lovers who kept up a correspondence so uncommonly active.

Prince Blondin had kept his eyes constantly turned in the direction of the tower, awaiting the return of his courier. At length he saw the blessed Pigeon approaching; but what were his feelings as soon as he could discern that the bird had fastened round his neck the same case that he had taken away with him! He was nearly dying with grief. The fairy, who had never left him, consoled him as well as she could, and took herself from the Pigeon’s neck the case, which he even refused to look at. She opened it, and pointed out to him his error. In an instant he went into a transport of joy that could only be compared for its intensity to that he had just endured of affliction. “We will lose no time,” said Commode; “I can only make you happy by changing you into a bird; but I will take care that you shall be re-transformed at the right moment.” The Prince, without hesitation, consented to the transformation, and to anything else which could assist him to approach the person he adored. The good Commode thereupon touched him with her wand, and he became in an instant the prettiest little Humming-bird in the world, joining to the attractions which nature has bestowed on that charming bird that of being able to speak in the most agreeable way possible.

The Pigeon received fresh orders to conduct him to the garden. Galantine was astonished to see a bird she had no knowledge of; but his being accompanied by the Pigeon put her heart in a flutter, and the

Humming-bird, flying to her, said, “Good morning, beautiful Princess.” She had never before heard a bird speak, and this novelty increased the gratification with which she received this one. She took him on her finger, and he immediately said to her “Kiss, kiss Colibri.” She did so with great pleasure, over and over again. I leave you to imagine if the Prince was delighted, and if he was not at the same time very much vexed that he was only a Humming-bird, for lovers are the only persons in the world who are happy and miserable at the same time.

Commode, however, knew by her art that this was exactly the moment to restore the Prince to his natural form, which she did so quickly that the Princess, in the twinkling of an eye, found herself pressed to the heart of a lover whom she loved.

The spell was broken. That instant the tower trembled and rocked to his foundations. Its walls even began to open. Bonnette, who was below-stairs, in the greatest alarm ascended to the terrace, at least to perish with the Princess. The rocking of the tower increased as she mounted the staircase, and when she arrived at the top and saw the whole building lean over and on the verge of falling into the sea, she fainted outright.

At the same moment the two fairies, Commode and Paisible, arrived in a chariot of Venetian glass, drawn by six eagles of the largest size. “Save yourselves quickly,” they cried to the two lovers. “The tower is falling, and you will perish with it.” They leapt into the fairy car, without having had time to say a word to each other; but the Prince managed at the same moment to fling the Governess, still in her swoon, into the bottom of the car. Scarcely had they begun to rise in the air, when the tower toppled over, and, with a horrible noise, fell, a mass of ruins, into the sea. The Fairy Marine, Gluantin, and his friends, in order to be revenged on the Princess, had sapped the foundations.

Marine, perceiving that her designs were foiled by the intervention of the two Fairies, determined to try if she could not by open war obtain possession of Galantine. She suddenly formed an immense chariot out of some exhalations, and, entering it with all her family, filled every available space in it with oysters in their shells, fragments of rock, stones, and other trifles of that description. With this chariot and this ammunition she caused herself to be wafted by a high wind to the sea-shore, to intercept the car of glass. She did even more — she commanded all the wild ducks and sea-fowl of every sort for ten leagues round to come in flocks to darken the air, and oppose the landing of the Fairies. This order was executed with a quacking and squalling that was insupportable.

Our two lovers thought themselves lost; but as they had a taste for the destruction of enchantments, they wished to try what they could do against this. The Fairies, however, did not consider it necessary. Commode produced from the box-seat of the car a great quantity of petards and rockets, which she had provided apparently for the purpose of making a display of fireworks. But whatever might have been her reason for bringing them, she now used them with much effect, for she directed so many against these troublesome fowl, that they were compelled to disperse. The enemy in the chariot then had recourse to their last weapons. Not one of the Marine party doubted that, with the oysters and stones, they should shatter the glass car to fragments in a few moments. It was not a bad idea, and we may even presume that they would have achieved their object if the Fairy Paisible had not taken out of her pocket a burning-glass which she always carried about with her.

It is best to be candid. I frankly admit that I never very clearly understood for what purpose she constantly carried that particular utensil. But she placed it, however, on this occasion, in such a position that it speedily warmed her enemies after a fashion as new as it was disagreeable. They uttered the most fearful shrieks, and the exhalations being dispelled by the power of the sun, all the Marine family, with the Fairy herself, were precipitated pell-mell into the ocean, leaving our two victorious Fairies to continue their journey to the dominions of Queen Mutine.

On arriving in them they found she was dead. She had endeavoured, partly from fear of some new punishment, partly from conviction, to control her temper. In this attempt she had swallowed so many violent expressions, and stifled so many wicked impulses, that these prodigious and continued efforts, after causing her several severe fits of illness, at length terminated fatally.

She had been dead, indeed, some years. The good king who had married her, quietly enjoyed the sweets of his widowhood; and though he had no other children than the daughter whom he never expected to see again, nothing in the world could have induced him to marry a second time. He governed his estates very peacefully, and the good King Prudent, Galantine's grandfather, had just arrived, notwithstanding his great age, to pass the holidays with him.

What joy for these two worthy sovereigns. The whole Court soon participated in it, as the news spread of the arrival of the Fairies with a charming Princess, who was their King's daughter.

The marriage of the two lovers was fixed for the next morning. Couriers were instantly dispatched in all directions, to beg the Fairies generally to honour the nuptials with their presence. You may believe that Fairy Grave was not forgotten. In short, they arrived from all quarters. Festivities, balls, tournaments, grand banquets, succeeded each other for many days. They bantered, and at the same time thanked, Fairy Rèveuse, for the blunder she had made in her enchantments. She defended herself by observing that lovers were always more ingenious than magicians were skilful, and that to prevent their success it would require an enchantment that was impossible.

I forgot to tell you that the Governess recovered from her swoon immediately on her arriving at the Palace. In short, everybody was satisfied, and the Fairies, after sharing in the festivities for several days, departed, each to manage her own affairs, or to enjoy new pleasures. Our lovers were always constant, and became the happiest sovereigns on the face of the earth.

17

BLEUETTE AND COQUELICOT

There was once upon a time a Fairy named Bonnebonne, who became weary of the great offices in Fairy Land to which her character and talents had elevated her. She retired from state affairs, and chose for her retreat an island situated in the midst of a very beautiful lake, bordered by the most rich, smiling, and luxuriant scenery. This charming retreat was called the "Island of Happiness." It is known to have existed; it is even believed by some to be always in the country adjoining their own; but the geographers have not yet laid it down in any map, and I have never read of any traveller fortunate enough to land on it. It is sufficient for us, however, that we have a full account of it in the annals of the Fairies.

Bonnebonne, as we have already stated, weary of the world, and not caring to pay court to it, demanded of the Queen of the Fairies permission to withdraw from it altogether, and went to reside in the Island of Happiness. It was there that, with the finest library and all the knowledge she had acquired in the world, she became the most clever of all the fairies. She made all her neighbours happy, and gratitude was the foundation of her authority. Independently of a natural inclination to oblige, a sentiment which retirement from the great world by no means tends to diminish, there is a great satisfaction in seeing those around us happy.

In order to enjoy this real pleasure, and at the same time to avoid being overwhelmed with foolish petitions, she had placed, at short distances from each other, columns of white marble, to which those addressed themselves who had either requests or complaints to make. These columns were constructed in such a manner that, on speaking in a whisper to them, they repeated every word distinctly, and in the same tone of voice, in a cabinet of the castle. Bonnebonne had lodged in this cabinet a niece whom she had brought up as a fairy, and who gave her an account every evening of all that the columns had reported, and the Fairy then pronounced her decisions.

The principal occupation of Bonnebonne was to educate and make children happy: she gave them for breakfast as well as for luncheon everything they could wish for in sweetmeats and pastry; but when they had been a fortnight in this happy dwelling, they cared no more for sugar-plums, but passed the day in running on the grass, gathering nuts in the woods, or flowers in the gardens. They went on the lake in pretty boats, which they rowed themselves — in short, they did all day just whatever they liked, and happiness consists principally in liberty. It is true that they had nurses and tutors, but they were generally invisible. They informed Bonnebonne of anything their pupils had done that was wrong, and for this she reprimanded the offender, but always with mildness, for she was the most kind-hearted woman in the world.

Sometimes the nurses and preceptors made themselves visible, and on these occasions they might be seen supping all together on the turf, or dancing and singing, or amusing themselves in making toys and dolls; in short, nothing had an air of severity in this happy abode, and no one left it without the greatest regret. But as all must submit to fate, and the Fairies themselves are obliged to obey it, when the young people had attained a certain age — that is to say, twelve or fifteen years, — and when the lessons of the Fairy had made a sort of impression on the minds of her pupils, and she considered them sufficiently well informed to enter into the world, she was obliged to send them home, which she always did laden with caresses and presents, and assurances of a friendship the proof of which she frequently gave them in the after course of their lives.

Amongst the number of children confided to her care by their parents, there was a little girl named Bleuette, so pretty and so good that Bonnebonne preferred her to all the rest, and loved her to distraction. She was affectionate without being troublesome, and lively without being fatiguing; her face expressed the sweetness of her character: her beauty increased with her age, and possessed that peculiar brilliancy which is so dazzling. It is to her rare beauty that we owe the familiar saying, still in use amongst us, when we speak of anything which has dazzled us, “J’ai vu des Bleuettes.”

A boy, about two years older than Bleuette, also inhabited the Island of Happiness; he was called Coquelicot: his face was charming, it was as bright as his mind, and his pretty little graceful ways were equally pleasing to Bonnebonne. That which rendered both more charming was, that in their infancy they became inseparable, and that the vivacity of the one was tempered by the mildness and tenderness of the other. Bonnebonne daily enjoyed observing the impression and progress which true love makes upon innocence and ingenuousness. She was constantly occupied in the study of it, and felt that all other happiness, which she knew so well how to procure, could not be compared to it; indeed, what felicity can be placed in the balance with that of two hearts which love has united by similarity of taste and temper?

Coquelicot, quick as he was, perhaps, indeed, too soon excited, was moderate and even mild in all that regarded Bleuette, who on her part, was only animated and vivacious in matters which concerned Coquelicot. The birth and progress of these sentiments had been their delight; the sweet emotions which they exhibited were the charm of Bonnebonne’s existence, for she said to herself a hundred times, “Good Heavens! how pretty are these poor children! How they love each other! How happy they are; they never think of leaving my Island. Never have more happy subjects inhabited my empire!”

On an evening of one of the most beautiful of summer days, all the lovely children were playing and amusing themselves in different parts of this enchanted residence, when all at once there appeared in the air a car drawn by six flame-coloured griffins: the car was of the same colour, relieved with black ornaments: it bore the Fairy Arganto. Her hair was powdered brown with a slight sprinkle of red.

Her dress was of the same colour as the car. Her griffins alighted at the portico of the castle, whither Bonnebonne and her niece had repaired to do the honours to the Fairy, and assist her to descend. After the first compliments, Arganto confessed to Bonnebonne that not being able to understand the pleasures of retirement, and disgusted by some disagreements at Court, she had wished to judge for herself of the pleasures and cares of a life like hers, and that, in order to be perfectly enlightened on the subject, she had come to the resolution of passing some days with her.

Bonnebonne kindly replied that she would willingly satisfy her, and hide nothing from her. “The beauties of nature,” added she, “are the pictures which I study; its fruits are my treasures; its secrets the object of my researches, and my pleasures are solely dependent on the happiness of others. Infancy is the state of humanity which can be made the most happy; you will find me, therefore, only surrounded by the prettiest children nature has produced.”

So saying, she led Arganto further into the Island, at each step encountering troops of little children of both sexes and all ages, whose natural manners inspired true gaiety; some danced, others played at blindman’s-buff, some amused themselves playing at “ladies and gentlemen,” in short they passed quickly from one fancy to another; their characters were thus developed, and it was easy to imagine what each would become at a more advanced age. Arganto thought this recreation of Bonnebonne very poor; she judged of it as a person of fashion, that is to say, with contempt. She told her companion that she could not conceive the pleasure of such amusements, unless some ingenuity was employed to improve them: it was in vain that Bonnebonne eulogized them. She would not be persuaded; at length, continuing their walk, they met Bleuette and Coquelicot, conversing together, who saw nothing but themselves in nature, and who had no pleasure, no wish, no occupation nor will but in common.

Bonnebonne called them, and they ran towards her with that confidence and affection which her goodness and their gratitude had inspired them with. Arganto was struck with the charms of their countenances, and said as much to them; they blushed, and thanked the Fairy for each other. “I agree,” said she to Bonnebonne, “that nature could not present a more agreeable picture than that of these lovely children; but,” continued she, “are they as intelligent as their features would seem to denote?” “Most assuredly,” replied Bonnebonne, “it may not be perhaps the kind of intelligence to please you, for it is quite natural. Besides this, they love each other more than they choose to acknowledge, especially to a stranger.” The Fairies then embraced them a thousand times, and left them together.

Bonnebonne agreed with Arganto not to trouble herself about her during her stay, but to occupy herself as usual with her studies; but the latter could not help speaking of the impression which Bleuette and Coquelicot had made on her, and she requested they might keep her company.

Arganto was born wicked, and wickedness looks with impatience on the happiness of others, and is always at work to destroy it, even if with no other motive but that of doing mischief. Upon these fearful principles, she employed the time of her visit in pointing out to her young companions the poverty and insipidity of the place they inhabited; they, whom nature had formed for the delight and ornament of the most brilliant Court; and then she gave them a glowing description of the abodes of kings. “You are enchanted," said she, continually, "with the life which you lead; but do you know any other? The splendour of the world, the fêtes which are given to beauty alone, the preference which is at all times accorded to it, are the real triumphs of a pretty girl;" it was thus she spoke to Bleuette. "And you," addressing herself to Coquelicot, "with the spirit you possess, what would you not do at Court? You certainly must be brave; and of what are you not capable?"

This wicked discourse made by degrees the impression which Arganto wished upon the minds of these amiable children. They sought each other's company as usual, but they found each other no longer occupied with themselves alone: they began by self reproaches, and at length made reciprocal confessions, for they could no longer talk of anything else but the opinions of the Fairy. Love, and the hope of not being separated, it is true, were the foundation of their projects; but curiosity, and the novelty of all which Arganto had told them, and above all, self-love, the poison of life, perverted at length their innocent minds; they abandoned themselves to the wicked fairy, who, in order to make them fall more easily into the snare she had laid for them, did not neglect to destroy the respect and gratitude they entertained for Bonnebonne, by telling them, "She is a provincial fairy, whose taste is not at all refined. Her character not suiting the Court, she is too happy to be able to keep you with her; she sacrifices your fortunes to the pleasure and use which you are of to her." It was by such discourse as this that she induced these children to become ungrateful: she promised them not to forsake them, and assured them that, being a more powerful fairy than Bonnebonne, they need not be anxious about anything. She did even more, — she warned them of all that the good fairy would say to them when she should learn the resolution they had taken: in short, they promised to follow her after she had again given them her word that they should not be separated.

When Arganto was well assured of the part they had taken, she said to Bonnebonne that it was time she should cease to trouble her in her retreat, and begged her, at the same time, to allow her to take with her Bleuette and Coquelicot. The good Fairy, who had perceived nothing, and who had no suspicion of the designs of Arganto, as she had herself ordered them to pay court to and obey the Fairy, whilst she was occupied in her cabinet, and above all, because a good heart cannot imagine ingratitude: Bonnebonne, as I said before, consented to Arganto's request, with the understanding, however, that the proposition should please the young couple, feeling quite convinced that they would never wish to leave her. The question was put to them on the spot. What was the astonishment of Bonnebonne when they accepted the proposal to abandon her and follow the Fairy! They set at nought all her reasonings, so full of friendship and good advice; they were too deeply prejudiced against her. Bonnebonne then said to them, with mildness, "It is conviction which makes happiness. You would cease to be happy in this abode, because you imagine greater felicity awaits you in another country: depart, let nothing detain you," said she, with tears in her eyes, "may you be contented."

Bleuette and Coquelicot were moved by this tender discourse, and on the point of falling at the feet of this adorable fairy, and conjuring her to forget that they had ever had the idea of separating from her; but the emotion they felt at the moment made them both faint away, so that the wickedness of Arganto was not required to counteract this return of good feeling. She herself was touched by so tender a scene, and at the moment almost repented having caused so much sorrow to three persons, who were only to blame for placing too much confidence in her. Not knowing exactly what to do, she prepared to set out alone, when Bonnebonne said, "I might complain of the manner in which you have abused the reception I have given you: but the great fruit of study and of solitude is forgiveness of injuries. I am not, therefore, at all affected by it myself, but I feel for the misfortune of these young people — I love them both.” “I will not take them away, then,” replied Arganto; “you see they have refused me, and you cannot doubt the attachment they feel for you.” “No,” replied Bonnebonne, “I feel myself compelled to beg you to take with you those I loved best in my retreat; you have perverted them, their hearts are no longer what they were: they would henceforth only live with me out of compliment. If they had sufficient art to disguise it from me, could I be ignorant of their thoughts? Take them, then, I conjure you, and at least protect them amongst the dangers to which you expose them.” “As you absolutely wish it,” replied Arganto, “I will do so.” She then carried them, fainting as they were, both into her car, and her griffins flying at a rapid pace speedily landed them in the Kingdom of Errors.

The King who governed it at that time thought himself the greatest of princes. Flattery had persuaded him that he was descended from the gods. In consequence of this idea he caused himself to be worshipped by his subjects. His throne of gold and precious stones, upon which he only appeared once a month, was surrounded by tigers and elephants, bound with chains of the same precious materials, and covered with superb embroidery. Without entering into further details of the ceremonies of this court, suffice it to say, the King exhibited upon every occasion all the ostentation with which a crown could inspire him. Arganto was his best friend, the partaker of his pleasures, and it was into the superb palace which she possessed at his court that she conducted Bleuette and Coquelicot.

The moment they recovered from their swoon they had the pleasure of seeing each other. The magnificence of the place in which they found themselves astonished them. Their uncertainty did not last long: Arganto entered to dissipate it. They immediately asked her to give them some news of Bonnebonne. The Fairy informed them that Bonnebonne had consented to their advancement, and had herself conjured her to take them away. Bleuette and Coquelicot were comforted by this account, for they had been afraid of displeasing her. Arganto then said to them, “Here, Bleuette, is the apartment prepared for you; your household shall be formed to-night. Meanwhile, here are your waiting-women: let me present them to you.”

At these words, there appeared a dozen handsome young persons, carrying all the innumerable trifles which have become so necessary to a lady’s toilet. They were followed by an equal number of valets-de-chambre, bearing boxes and caskets, and who in a few moments fitted up and set out a most superb dressing-table. Garments adapted to the season then appeared in such great profusion that they covered all the chairs, beds, and couches in this large apartment. When everything was arranged according to the Fairy’s pleasure, she said to Bleuette, “This all belongs to you, and you have nothing to study but how to avail yourself of it.” She then showed her a basket full of ornaments and a jewel-case crammed with precious stones as perfect in themselves as they were tastefully set, saying to her, “Beautiful Bleuette, this little jewel-box will amuse you, but let us now proceed to the apartment I destine for Coquelicot.” Bleuette followed the Fairy without being able to reply; her surprise and astonishment appeared to her like a beautiful dream. They all three passed into another apartment. It was plain, but neat. Four valets-de-chambre, who were in the second room, stept forward and presented him with clothes as tasteful as they were superb, in order that he might select those in which he wished to appear that day. They then opened the door of a sort of large cabinet, containing all kinds of musical instruments, also a library well stocked with historical works, but more particularly with romances and fairy tales.

“Behold,” said Arganto, “what will amuse you when you are weary of the pleasures of society, or require rest after exercise.” She then commanded the person she had chosen for his equerry to appear. “You may,” said she to Coquelicot, “take his advice; he is a man to be depended on, and a good companion. Show,” continued she to this gentleman, “the things of which you have the charge.” There then appeared servants in livery, who carried the most magnificent and perfect arms for war and the chase. And even this was not all: “Let us,” said Arganto, “look out of the window.” They obeyed her, and perceived fifty saddle-horses, led by five-and-twenty grooms, superbly clothed and well mounted. “There,” said she, “are your horses for hunting and riding.” She then ordered out the carriages: berlins, berlingots, vis-à-vis, calêches of all kinds, defiled under the windows, drawn by the prettiest and best groomed horses in the world, with their manes tastefully plaited. Coquelicot, as much astonished as Bleuette, observed also the same silence. “Learn, both of you,” said Arganto, “to make good use of what I have just given you; you are both charming, but believe me, dress is necessary to beauty.” She then left them in their separate apartments, questioning their new domestics on the particular use of all the novelties that surrounded them, for they dared not yet give any orders. They at length dressed themselves, and Coquelicot proceeding to the apartment of Bleuette, they were mutually astonished at the agreeable effect of their attire, and uttering a hundred praises of the good taste of Arganto, they became more than ever convinced of the truth of what she had told them respecting Bonnebonne, for whose simplicity they began to blush.

All the Court learning the arrival of Bleuette and Coquelicot, either from curiosity or the desire to please the Fairy, came with great eagerness to pay her a visit. The King himself did her this honour. The praises of the men of Bleuette, and those of the women of Coquelicot, gratified both exceedingly. They found that the language spoken in this country had an agreeable style hitherto quite unknown to them; they were struck by it, and thought of nothing but imitating it. Bleuette, from the first day, perceived that Coquelicot was not made for his fine clothes, and that he had a borrowed air which the other young men who surrounded her had not: in short, both were occupied by a thousand new fancies. They saw each other every day, it is true, but they sought each other less; and the tender conversations, in which simplicity, ingenuousness, candour, and truth had formerly so large a share, no longer took place between them; they were only anxious now to place their words and turn their phrases according to the style which they had been so much struck with in their new residence.

The dress, the magnificence, and the brilliancy with which they dazzled the whole court caused every one to give them the titles of prince and princess. They knew well that they did not deserve them from their low birth; but the mistake of others gratified their vanity. They agreed between them to keep their real condition secret, and hoped privately that their beauty and merit would in time really raise them to that dignity.

Coquelicot had perfectly handsome features and a charming figure. He performed all kinds of feats with marvellous success; almost all the ladies were pulling caps for him. Bleuette was not in the least jealous of his conquests, and although in such situations one is not always just, she had at least the generosity not to reproach him in any way. In fact, she deserved reproaching equally herself, for the Court and its grand airs had changed her heart and mind as much as his. Bleuette, on her part, thinking of nothing but how to attract admiration and to outvie all the other beauties of the Court, became a practised coquette. You may easily judge, knowing what I have told you, how long she was in availing herself of all the presents of the Fairy. She very soon invented fashions, which all the other ladies, handsome or ugly, were, in spite of themselves, obliged to follow. During some time this gratification of her vanity only presented to her view jealous rivals, men captivated and admiring, flattered or plunged into despair, by her glances and her deceptive and provoking speeches; but Bleuette was so beautiful, she had so much wit and grace, that, even when making them most miserable, she was the theme of their praises and the object of attraction to all the finest people of the Court. She also conducted herself with so much prudence that no one could cast the least slur on her.

Coquelicot, on his part — “fickle adorer of a thousand different objects” — flattered his vanity without ever satisfying his heart.

Such was the true and unhappy situation in which these two persons, formerly the most loving and amiable possible, found themselves, when this same vanity, the shoal on which so much happiness has been wrecked, was itself violently offended.

It must be remembered that, dazzled by the splendour which surrounded them, they had both received with pleasure the titles of princes; but nothing is unknown to the world, and such vanity would awaken a contempt for falsehood, in those who have no higher motive for despising it. A youth, brought up, as they had been, by Bonnebonne, in the Island of Happiness, having wandered from it, as many others had done, in passing through several countries, had been attracted to the Court inhabited by Bleuette and Coquelicot. He was astonished to hear the grand titles of prince and princess added to their well-known names, he ran, however, to the Fairy's palace to embrace them; but far from receiving him kindly, they did not condescend even to recognise him. He complained to everybody who would listen to him, and all the Court were very soon informed that Princess Bleuette and Prince Coquelicot were the children of, ‘twas true, very honest people, but who were nothing but poor shepherds. The Court is a region in which nothing is forgiven, and where anything ridiculous is sought for with the greatest eagerness; therefore, it profited by this affair. Songs and epigrams were circulated in a moment; and the objects of their attack could not pretend ignorance of them, for, according to the praiseworthy custom of the authors of such works, the first copies were addressed to the persons most interested. Coquelicot was bantered by one of the wits of the Court; but he demanded very prompt satisfaction, and the combat, in which he killed his adversary, brought him honour in a place where truth is so rare, notwithstanding that a falsehood is never pardoned. They rendered justice to his valour, but they no longer paid him the same attentions; for in short, although riches can obtain everything, the ridicule attached to low birth combined with vanity is rarely overlooked at Court. As for Bleuette, whom wounded pride rendered still more haughty than ever, and who hoped by her beauty and accomplishments to stifle the disagreeable reports which had been spread about her former pastoral condition — Bleuette, I must tell you, had, in addition, the mortification to see some letters which she had had the imprudence to write handed round amongst her acquaintances. Her attraction diminished and her reputation tarnished (however unjustly) hurt her deeply, and induced her to reflect seriously. Recalling then the remembrance of her former happiness, the words of Bonnebonne presented themselves to her mind.

Bleuette being thus agitated by all the recollections which led her back to her first sentiments for Coquelicot, looked only with regret upon the conduct she had pursued towards him since she had been at Court. She was ashamed of it, but it was not possible for her to speak to him openly on the subject. “He will consider,” said she, “my most sincere repentance to be caused either by coquetry or jealousy; and I cannot complain, or he will believe that my birth being known and made public in this country, has deranged my projects of advancement, and that I am brought back to him only by a feeling of shame and necessity.” “No,” continued she, “I will not betray to him all the weakness of my heart, or all the pain which the false friendship of Arganto has caused me.”

Similar ideas tormented Coquelicot. He thought all those who treated him, as formerly, like a prince, did so in mockery, and to ridicule him, and felt satisfied that those whose conduct was changed by the reports which had been spread respecting him would give him continual annoyance; this situation, distressing as it really could well be, was not the sole evil which oppressed him. The remembrance of Bleuette, tender, faithful, simple, and innocent; the recollection of the residence of Bonnebonne, and that of the charm and peace that pervaded it, awoke in his soul so great a disgust for all that the world calls pleasure, and which he had himself taken for happiness, that he determined to fly from the Court. They had but to speak to one another, and they would have been convinced and consoled; but still young and inexperienced, they determined on the thing of all others to be avoided in love and friendship — silence: for want of confidence increases and envenoms the wound we have received, as well as that which we have inflicted on others; thus, therefore, not daring to look at each other (so much had the shame of their proceedings made an impression on their hearts), they each separately, and without communicating their intentions to any one, made up their minds to quit the Court. Solitude appeared to offer them the only chance of consolation. They departed the same morning, just as if they had been acting in concert. They chose the plainest dresses they could find, not without regretting those they had brought with them to the Court; they would have felt still nearer approaching their former innocence, in habits so vividly recalling the scenes of their past felicity. They took nothing away with them but the portraits which Arganto had had painted of them in miniature, representing them as they were when they left the Island of Happiness.

They set out by very different roads; but in proportion as they left the Court behind them, nature spoke to their hearts. The song of the birds, the serenity of the air, the view of the country, that sweet freedom which it inspires, — all recalled their former happiness, all softened them, and drew them towards each other. “But how shall we ever find each other again,” said they unceasingly to themselves. “I should have convinced him,” thought Bleuette. “She would have pardoned me,” sighed Coquelicot: “I will return to the Court. But how can I reappear there (for each thought the other had remained in the palace) in this miserable condition?” The remembrance of Bonnebonne again presented itself to their mind. It is friendship we invoke in adversity. They resolved then to have recourse to her kindness. If they had not themselves known the delights of the Island of Happiness, if they had not been anxious to revisit the scenes of their former felicity, it is so natural to desire a similar habitation, that we often set out in search of it on the description of others. Each, therefore, turned their steps in the direction of the Island. It was very easy for them to find the way, they who had once so worthily inhabited it. They intended to address themselves to one of the columns of which I have spoken, and which conveyed to the ears of the Fairy all the requests of her petitioners. What was their surprise, or rather what was their delight, to meet with each other again on a spot and in a dress which explained everything! After the first transports, in which the eye hardly sufficed to satisfy the soul, the first words they uttered were, “Pardon me, I cannot live without you.” The pardon which is mutually sought is soon granted; and it was no longer necessary to implore the aid of the Fairy. The unison of their desires had already transported them into the most beautiful spot in the Island. They were anxious to excuse themselves, and request the forgiveness of Bonnebonne; but she prevented them. “I know all that has happened to you,” said she, “I have shared your troubles, although they were deserved. Enjoy the happiness of my empire, you are now better able to appreciate its delights.”

They lived happily because they never ceased to love each other, and they died at the same moment. Bonnebonne bestowed their names upon two wild flowers in order to immortalize their memory.

18

THE PRINCESS CAMION

There was once upon a time a King and Queen who had but one son, who was their only hope. Fourteen years had elapsed from the time of his birth, and the Queen had had no other children. The Prince was marvellously handsome, and learnt with facility everything they wished him to know. The King and Queen loved him to distraction, and their subjects placed all their affections on him, for he was affable to everybody, and yet he knew well how to distinguish between the people who approached him. His name was Zirphil. As he was an only son, the King and Queen resolved he should marry as early as possible, in order to secure the succession to the crown should they unhappily be deprived of Zirphil.

They therefore sought on foot and on horseback a Princess worthy of the heir-apparent, but none was found suitable. At length, after a most diligent inquiry, the Queen was informed that a veiled lady desired a private audience of her Majesty, on business of importance. The Queen immediately ascended her throne in the audience-chamber, and ordered the lady to be admitted. The lady approached, without removing her white crape veil, which reached to the ground. When she arrived at the foot of the throne, “Queen” said she, “I am astonished that, without consulting me, you have thought of marrying your son. I am the Fairy Marmotte, and my name is sufficiently celebrated to have reached your ears.” “Ah, Madam,” said the Queen, quickly descending from her throne, in order to embrace the Fairy, “you will easily pardon me my fault when you learn that I have only listened to all the wonders which have been told me about you as to a nursery tale; but now that you do me the favour to come to my palace, I no longer doubt your power, and beg you will honour me with your advice.” “That is not a sufficient answer to a Fairy,” replied Marmotte. “Such an excuse might perhaps satisfy a common person, but I am mortally offended; and to begin your punishment, I command you to marry your Zirphil to the person I have brought with me.”

At these words she felt in her pocket, and, drawing out a toothpick case, she opened it, and out of it came a little ivory doll, so pretty and so well made that the Queen, despite her grief, could not help admiring it. “This is my goddaughter,” said the Fairy, “and I have always destined her for Zirphil.” The Queen was bathed in tears. She conjured Marmotte, in the most touching words, not to expose her to the ridicule of her people, who would laugh at her if she announced to them such a marriage. “Laugh, indeed, will they, Madam?” said the Fairy. “Ah, we shall see if they have reason to laugh, Madam. Ah, we shall see if they will laugh at my goddaughter, and if your son ought not to adore her. I can tell you that she deserves to be adored. She is small, it is true; but she has more sense than there is in all your kingdom put together. When you hear her talk, you will be surprised yourself; for she can talk, I promise you. Now, then, little Princess Camion,” said she, to the doll, “speak a little to your mother-in-law, and show her what you can do.” Then the pretty Camion jumped upon the Queen’s *palatine*, and paid her a little compliment so tender and so sensible that her Majesty suspended her tears to give the Princess Camion a hearty kiss.

“Here, Queen,” said the Fairy, “is my toothpick-case; replace your daughter-in-law in it. I wish your son to get well accustomed to her before marrying her. I think it will not be long first. Your obedience may soften my anger; but if you act contrary to my orders, you, your husband, your son, and your kingdom, shall all feel the effect of my wrath. Above all, take care to replace her in her case early in the evening, for it is important that she should not be out late."

At these words she raised her veil, and the Queen fainted with fright when she perceived an actual live Marmot — black, sleek, and as large as a human creature. Her women came to her assistance, and, when she recovered from her swoon, she saw nothing but the case that Marmotte had left with her.

They put her to bed, and went to inform the King of the accident. He arrived in a great fright. The Queen sent every one away, and, with a torrent of tears, she related her adventure to the King, who would not believe it till he saw the doll that the Queen drew from the case. "Just heaven!" cried he, after having meditated a little, "is it possible that kings should be exposed to such great misfortunes? Ah! we are only placed above other men in order to feel more acutely the cares and afflictions attached to our existence." "And in order to give the greater example of fortitude, sire," added the Doll, in a small, sweet, and distinct voice. "My dear Camion," said the Queen, "you speak like an oracle."

At length, after a conversation of an hour between these three persons, it was decided that they should not yet divulge the contemplated marriage, and that they should wait until Zirphil, who was gone hunting for three days, should have returned, and consented to obey the command of the Fairy, which the Queen undertook to communicate to him. In the interim, the Queen, and even the King, shut themselves up, in order to converse with the little Camion. She had a highly-cultivated intellect, she spoke well, and with a singular turn of thought which was very pleasing. But although she was animated, her eyes had a fixed expression which was not agreeable, and the Queen was annoyed by it, as she began to love Camion, and feared that the Prince might take a dislike to her.

More than a month had elapsed since Marmotte had appeared, but the Queen had not yet dared to show Zirphil his intended. One day he entered her room whilst she was in bed. “Madam,” said he, “the most singular thing in the world occurred to me some days since whilst I was hunting. I had wished to conceal it from you, but at length it has become so extraordinary, that I must positively tell you of it.

“I followed a wild boar with great ardour, and had pursued it into the midst of a forest without observing that I was alone, when I saw him throw himself into a hole which opened in the ground. My horse having plunged in after it, I continued falling for half an hour, and at length found myself at the bottom, without any hurt. There, instead of the boar, which I confess I feared to find, I saw a very ugly woman, who begged me to dismount from my horse and follow her. I did not hesitate, and giving her my hand, she opened a little door which had previously been hidden from my view, and I entered with her a saloon of green marble, where there was a golden bath, covered with a curtain of very rich stuff; the curtain rose, and I saw in the bath a person of such marvellous beauty that I thought I should have fallen to the ground. ‘Prince Zirphil,’ said the lady, who was bathing, ‘the Fairy Marmotte has enchanted me, and it is by your assistance alone that I can be released.’ ‘Speak, Madam,’ said I to her: ‘what must I do to help you?’ ‘You must either,’ said she, ‘marry me instantly or skin me alive.’ I was as much surprised at the first proposition as alarmed at the second. She read in my eyes my embarrassment, and said, ‘Do not imagine that I jest, or that I propose to you an act of which you may repent. No, Zirphil, dismiss your fears; I am an unfortunate Princess to whom the Fairy has taken an aversion; she has made me half-woman, half-whale because I would not marry her nephew, the King of the Whiting, who is frightful, and even more wicked than he is hideous. She has condemned me to remain in my present state until a Prince named Zirphil shall fulfil one of the conditions that I have just proposed to you; to expedite this matter, I caused my maid of honour to take the form of a wild boar, and it is she who has led you hither. I must now tell you that you cannot leave this spot until you shall have fulfilled my desire in one manner or the other. I am not mistress here; and Citronette, whom you see with me, will tell you that it cannot be arranged otherwise.'

"Imagine, Madam," said the Prince to the Queen, who listened attentively, "in what a state this discourse left me." Although the face of the Whale-Princess pleased me excessively, and her charms and misfortunes rendered her extremely interesting, her being half a fish horrified me exceedingly; and the idea of skinning her alive threw me into utter despair. 'But, Madam,' said I to her, at length (for my silence became as stupid as insulting), 'is there not a third way?' I had hardly uttered those unlucky works, than the Whale-Princess and her attendant uttered shrieks and lamentations which were enough to pierce the vaulted roof of the saloon. 'Ungrateful wretch! cruel tiger! and everything that is most ferocious and most inhuman!' exclaimed the former. 'Thou wouldst, then, that I should also be condemned to the torture of seeing you expire? For if thou dost not resolve to grant my request, the Fairy has assured me thou wilt perish, and I shall remain a whale all my life!'

"Her reproaches pierced my heart; she raised her beautiful arms out of the water, and joined her charming hands to implore me to decide quickly. Citronette was at my knees, which she embraced, screaming loud enough to deafen me. 'But how can I marry you?' said I; 'what sort of ceremony can be performed?' 'Skin me,' said she tenderly, 'and do not marry me, I prefer that.' 'Skin her!' screamed the other, 'and fear nothing.' I was in a state of perplexity which I cannot describe; and while I considered what I ought to do, their shrieks and tears were redoubled, till I knew not what would become of me. At length, after a thousand and one struggles, I cast my eyes once more on the beautiful Whale, and I confess that I found in her features an inexpressible charm. I threw myself on my knees close to the bath, and taking her hand, ‘No, divine Princess,’ said I to her; ‘I will not skin you, I would rather marry you!’

“At these words joy lighted up the countenance of the Princess, but a modest joy, for she coloured, and casting down her beautiful eyes, ‘I shall never forget,’ said she, ‘the service that you render me; I am so penetrated with gratitude, that you may expect anything of me after this generous resolution.’ ‘Do not lose time,’ cried the insupportable Citronette; ‘tell him quickly all that he must do.’ ‘It is sufficient,’ said the Whale-Princess, blushing again, ‘that you give me your ring, and that you should take mine; there is my hand, receive it as a pledge of my faith.’ I had hardly made this tender exchange, and kissed the beautiful hand which she presented to me, when I found myself again upon my horse in the midst of the forest. Having called my people, they came to me, and I returned home without being able to utter a word, I was so completely astounded. Since then, I am transported every night without knowing how, into the beautiful green saloon, where I pass the night near an invisible person; she speaks to me, and tells me that the time is not yet come for me to know who she is.”

“Ah, my son,” interrupted the Queen, “is it possible, then, that you are really married to her?” “I am, Madam,” replied the Prince; “but although I love my wife infinitely, I would have sacrificed this affection if I could have escaped from the saloon without resorting to that alternative.” At these words, a little voice, proceeding from the Queen’s pocket, said, “Prince Zirphil, you should have flayed her; perhaps your pity may be fatal to you.”

The Prince, surprised at this voice, remained speechless. The Queen in vain tried to conceal from him the cause of his astonishment; he felt quickly in her pocket, which was hanging upon the arm-chair near the bed, and drew from it the toothpick-case, which the Queen took from his hand and opened. The Princess Camion immediately came out of it, and the astonished Prince threw himself on his knees by the bed-side of the Queen to inspect her nearer. “I vow, Madam,” cried he, “that this is my dear Whale in miniature. Is this some pleasantry, and have you only wished to frighten me, by allowing me so long to believe that you would not approve of my marriage?” “No, my son,” at length the Queen replied; “my grief is real, and you have exposed us to the most cruel misfortunes by marrying that Whale, for, in fact, you were promised to the Princess Camion whom you see in my hands.” She then related to him what had passed between her and the Fairy Marmotte, and the Prince allowed her to say all she wished without interruption, so much was he astonished to find that she and his father had agreed to a proposition which was, on the face of it, so ridiculous. “Heaven forbid, Madam,” said he at length, when the Queen had finished, “that I should ever oppose the designs of your Majesty, or that I should act contrary to the wish of the King, my father, even when he commands me to do anything as impossible as this appears to me to be; but had I consented, could I even have fallen in love with this pretty Princess, would your subjects ever have —— “ “Time is a great teacher, Prince Zirphil,” interrupted Camion; “but it is done; you cannot now marry me, and my godmother appears to me a person who will not patiently suffer any one to break their word with her. Diminutive as I am, I feel as acutely as the largest woman would the disagreeable nature of this adventure; but as you are not so much to blame, except perhaps for having been a little too hasty, I may persuade the Fairy to mitigate the punishment.”

After these words Camion was silent, for she was exhausted with having said so much. “My dear darling,” said the Queen, “I implore you to take some repose for fear you should be ill and not in a condition to speak to the Fairy when she comes to afflict us; you are our consolation, and however she may punish us, I shall not feel it so deeply if Marmotte does not take you from us.” The Princess Camion felt her little heart beat at these words of the Queen: but being quite overcome, she could only kiss her hand, and let fall upon it some tiny tears. Zirphil was moved at this incident, and begged Camion to permit him to kiss her hand in his turn: she gave it him with much grace and dignity, and then re-entered her case. After this tender scene the Queen rose, in order to go and tell the King what had passed, and take every rational precaution against the anger of the Fairy.

The following night Zirphil, in spite of the guard which they had doubled in his apartment, was carried off at midnight, and found himself, as usual, in the company of his invisible wife; but instead of hearing any of those sweet and touching things which she was accustomed to say to him, he heard her weep, and found she kept aloof from him. “What have I done?” said he at last, when quite tired of pursuing her. “You weep, dear Princess, when you ought to console me for all the peril I may have incurred, as the effect of my tenderness.” “I know all,” said the Princess, with a voice interrupted by sobs — “I know all the misery that may happen to me; but, ungrateful man! it is of you I have most to complain.” “Oh, heavens!” cried Zirphil, “what have you to reproach me with?” “The love which Camion bears to you,” replied the voice, “and the tenderness with which you have kissed her hand.” “The tenderness,” replied the Prince, quickly; “oh! divine Princess, do you know so little of that I feel for you as to accuse me so lightly. Besides, even if Camion could love me, which is impossible, as she only saw me for a moment, can you be alarmed, knowing my love for you, and after the proofs which I have given you of my attachment? It is you whom I should accuse of injustice: for if I have looked at her with any attention, it is because her features reminded me of yours, and that being deprived of the pleasure of beholding you, anything which resembled you gave me the greatest gratification. Be visible again, my dear Princess, and I will never look on any other woman.”

The invisible lady appeared to be consoled by these words, and approaching the Prince, said, “Pardon me this little movement of jealousy. I have too much reason to fear they will separate me from you, not to feel afflicted by a circumstance which appeared to me to announce the commencement of that misfortune.” “But,” said the Prince, “may I not know why you are no longer permitted to show yourself? For if I have delivered you from the tyranny of Marmotte, how is it possible that you should be again subjected to it?” “Alas!” said the invisible Princess, “if you had decided to flay me we should have been very happy; but you had such a horror of that proposition, that I did not dare press you further on the subject.” “By what chance,” interrupted the Prince, “was Camion informed of this adventure, for she told me nearly the same thing?”

Hardly had he finished these words, when the Princess uttered a frightful shriek. The Prince, in surprise, rose hastily. But what was his alarm when, in the middle of the apartment, he perceived the hideous Marmotte, who held by the hair the beautiful Princess, now no longer either half a whale or invisible! He was about to seize his sword when the Princess, in tears, begged him to moderate his anger, for it would be of no avail against the power of the Fairy; and the horrible Marmotte, grinding her teeth, emitted through them a blue flame which scorched his beard. “Prince Zirphil,” said she to him, “a fairy who protects thee prevents me from exterminating thee, thy father, thy mother, and all that belong to thee: but thou shalt suffer at least in all that is most dear to thee, for having married without having consulted me, and thy torment shall never finish, nor that of thy Princess, until thou shalt have obeyed my commands.”

In finishing these words the Fairy, the Princess, the chamber, and the palace, all disappeared together, and he found himself in his own apartment, in his night-dress, and his sword in his hand. He was so astonished, and so transported with rage, that he did not feel the severity of the cold, though it was in the depth of winter. At the noise which he made his guards entered the room and begged him to go to bed, or to allow them to dress him. He took the latter course, and went to the Queen’s chamber, who, on her part, had passed the night in the most cruel state of anxiety. She had not been able to sleep after going to bed, and in order to induce slumber she had wished to talk over her grief with little Camion; but she sought in vain for her in her case: Camion was no longer there. She feared she might have lost her in the garden: she rose, and having ordered flambeaux to be lighted, went in search of her, but without success — she had entirely disappeared, and the Queen retired to bed again in an alarming state of affliction; she gave fresh vent to it as her son entered. He was so distressed himself that he did not perceive the tears of the Queen. She, on her part, observing his agitation, exclaimed, “Ah! without doubt, you have come to announce to me some dreadful tidings!”

“Yes, Madam,” replied the Prince; “I come to tell you that I shall die if I do not find my Princess.” “How!” said the Queen; “do you already, my dear son, love that unhappy Princess?” “What, your Camion?” said the Prince: “can you suspect me, Madam, of such a thing? I speak of my dear Whale-Princess who has been torn from me; it is for her alone that I live, and it is Marmotte, the cruel Marmotte, who has carried her away!” “Ah, my son,” said the Queen, “I am far more unhappy than you, for if they have taken your Princess away from you, they have robbed me of my Camion. Since last evening, she has disappeared from her case!”

They then related to each other their respective adventures, and wept together over their common misfortunes. The King was informed of the cries and despair of the Queen, and the grief of his son. He entered the apartment in which this tragic scene was passing, and as he was an exceedingly clever man, the thought occurred to him immediately of advertising Camion, with the offer of a large reward to whoever should bring her back. Everybody agreed this was a capital idea, and even the Queen, in spite of her great grief, was obliged to confess that no one of ordinary capacity could have imagined so singular an expedient. The handbills were printed, and distributed, and the Queen became rather calm in the hope of soon hearing some tidings of her little Princess. As for

Zirphil, the loss of Camion interested him no more than her presence; he resolved to seek a fairy of whom he had heard speak. He asked permission of the King and Queen, and departed with a single equerry in attendance on him.

It was a great distance from that country to the one inhabited by the Fairy; but neither time nor obstacles could check the fond impatience of the youthful Zirphil. He passed through states and kingdoms without number: nothing particular happened to him because he did not desire it; for being handsome as Cupid and brave as his own sword, he would have had no lack of adventures had he sought for them.

At length, after a year’s travelling, he arrived at the commencement of the desert wherein the Fairy had fixed her abode; he dismounted from his horse, and left his equerry in a little cottage, with orders to await him there, and not to be impatient. He entered the desert, which was frightful from its solitude; screech-owls alone inhabited it, but their cries did not alarm the valiant spirit of our Prince.

One evening, he perceived at a distance a light which made him think he was approaching the grotto; for who but a fairy could live in such a horrible desert. He walked all night long; at length, at break of day, he discovered the famous grotto; but a lake of fire separated him from it, and all his valour could not protect him from the flames, which spread right and left. He looked about for a long time to see what he could do, and his courage nearly failed him when he found that there was not even a bridge. Despair proved his best friend, for in a frenzy of love and anguish, he resolved to end his days in the lake, if he could not traverse it. No sooner had he taken this strange resolution than he put it in execution, and throwing himself bodily into the flames, he felt a little gentle warmth which did not even inconvenience him, and passed without the least trouble to the other side. Hardly had he landed, when a young and beautiful Salamander emerged from the lake, and said, “Prince Zirphil, if your love be as great as your courage, you may hope for everything from the Fairy Lumineuse; she favours you, but she wishes to prove you."

Zirphil made a profound bow to the Salamander in acknowledgment, for she did not give him time to speak; she plunged again into the flames, and he pursued his way. He arrived at length at the foot of a rock of prodigious height, which from its great brilliancy appeared all on fire. It was a carbuncle, so large that the Fairy was very commodiously lodged in the inside. As soon as the Prince approached, Lumineuse came out of the rock; he prostrated himself before her, she raised him, and made him enter the grotto.

"Prince Zirphil," said she, "a power equal to mine has neutralized the benefits I bestowed on you at your birth; but you may hope for everything from my care. It requires as much patience as courage to foil the wickedness of Marmotte; I can tell you nothing more." "At least, madam," replied the Prince, "do me the favour to inform me if my beautiful Princess is unhappy, and if I may hope to see her again soon?" "She is not unhappy," replied the Fairy: "but you cannot see her till you have pounded her in the mortar of the King of the Whiting." "Oh! heavens!" cried the Prince; "is she in his power; and have I to dread not only the consequences of his passion, but the still greater horror of pounding her with my own hands?" "Summon up your courage," replied the Fairy, "and do not hesitate to obey; upon that depends all your happiness, and that of your wife." "But she will die if I pound her," said the Prince, "and I would rather die myself." "Away," said the Fairy, "and do not argue; each moment that you lose adds to the fury of Marmotte. Go and seek the King of the Whiting; tell him you are the page I promised to send him, and rely on my protection."

She then pointed out to him on a map the road he must take to reach the dominions of the King of the Whiting; and took her leave of him, after having informed him that the ring which the Princess had given him would show him all he had to do whenever the King commanded him to execute a difficult task.

He departed, and after some days' travelling arrived in a meadow which stretched down to the sea, to the shore of which was moored a small sailing-vessel of mother-of-pearl and gold. He looked at his ruby, and saw himself in it going on board the vessel. He therefore stepped into it, and after having cast off, the wind took it out to sea. After some hours' sail, the vessel brought up at the foot of a crystal castle, built upon wooden piles. He jumped ashore, and entered a court-yard which led through a magnificent vestibule to apartments without number, the walls of which were of rock crystal, admirably cut, and which produced the most beautiful effect in the world. The castle appeared to be inhabited only by men with fishes' heads of all species. He felt convinced this was the dwelling of the King of the Whiting, and shuddered with rage; but he restrained himself so far as to inquire of a turbot, who had the air of being a captain of the guard, how he could manage to see the King of the Whiting. The man-turbot very gravely made him a signal to advance, and he entered the guard-chamber, where he saw under arms a thousand men with pikes' heads, who formed in line for him to pass.

At length, after making his way through an infinite crowd of men-fish, he came to the throne-room. There was not much noise, for the courtiers were all dumb, the greater part having whiting's heads. He saw several who appeared of more consequence than the rest, from the crowd which surrounded them, and by the air which they assumed with the others. They arrived at the King's cabinet, out of which he saw the council issue, composed of twelve men who had sharks' heads. The King at length appeared himself. He had a whiting's head, like many of the others; but he had fins on his shoulders, and from his waist downwards he was a veritable whiting. He could speak, and wore only a scarf made of the skin of goldfish, which was very brilliant, and a helmet in the form of a crown, out of which arose a codfish’s tail, which formed the plume. Four whiting carried him in a bowl of Japanese porcelain, as large as a bath, full of sea water. His greatest pride consisted in causing it to be filled twice a day by the dukes and peers of his kingdom. This office was extremely sought after.

The King of the Whiting was very large, and had more the air of a monster than of anything else. When he had spoken to some of those who had presented him with petitions, he perceived the Prince. “Who are you, my friend?” said he to him. “By what chance do I see a man here?” “My lord,” said Zirphil, “I am the page the Fairy Lumineuse has promised you.” “I know what she means,” said the King, laughing, and showing his teeth, like those of a saw. “Lead him into my seraglio, and let him teach my crayfish to talk.” Immediately a troop of whiting surrounded him, and conducted him according to the King’s orders. In returning through the apartments all the fish, even those the highest in favour, professed, by various signs, a great deal of friendship for him. They led him through a delicious garden, at the end of which was a charming pavilion, built entirely of mother-of-pearl, and ornamented with great branches of coral. The favourite Whiting introduced him into an apartment similarly adorned, the windows of which overlooked a magnificent piece of water. They made him understand that that was to be his residence, and after having shown him a little chamber at one corner of the saloon, which he understood was to be his bed-room, they retired, and he remained alone, very much astonished to find himself something very like a prisoner in the palace of his rival.

He was meditating on this position of affairs, when he saw the doors of the chamber open, and ten or twelve thousand crayfish, conducted by one larger than the rest, entered, and placed themselves in straight lines, which nearly filled the apartment. The one which marched at their head mounted upon a table near him, and said, “Prince, I know you, and you owe much to my care; but as it is rare to find gratitude in men, I will not tell you what I have done for you, for fear you should destroy the sentiments with which you have inspired me. I have only, therefore, to inform you that these are the crayfish of the King of the Whiting, that they alone speak in this empire, and that you are chosen to teach them refined language, the customs of the world, and the means of pleasing their sovereign. You will find them intelligent; but you must every morning choose ten to pound in the King's mortar, to make his broth."

The Crayfish having ceased speaking, the Prince replied, "I had no idea, Madam, that you had interested yourself in my concerns. The gratitude I already feel towards you should induce you to abandon the bad opinion you have conceived of men in general, since on the bare assurance which you have given me of your friendship, I feel deeply obliged to you. But what I am very anxious to learn is, the course I should take in reasoning with the persons whose education you would confide to me. If I were sure that they had as much intellect as you, I should have no trouble, and I should feel a pride in the task; but the more difficult I should find them to teach, the less should I have the courage to punish them for faults for which they are not responsible. And having lived with them, how can I have the heart to deliver them to a torture?" "You are obstinate and a great talker," interrupted the Crayfish; "but we know how to subdue you." So saying, she rose from the table, and jumping to the ground, took her real form of Marmotte (for she was that wicked fairy). "Oh, heavens!" cried the Prince; "so this is the person who boasts of the interest she takes in my affairs — she who has done nothing but make me miserable. Ah, Lumineuse," continued he, "you abandon me!" He had hardly finished these words, when Marmotte precipitated herself by the window into the reservoir and disappeared, and he remained alone with the twelve thousand crayfish.

After having meditated a little as to how he should proceed to educate them, during which time they waited in complete silence, it occurred to him that he might very probably find amongst them his beautiful and unfortunate Princess, because the hideous Marmotte had ordered him to pound ten of them every morning. “And why should I be selected to pound them,” said he, “if it be not to drive me distracted? Never mind, let us look for her,” continued he, rising; “let us at least try to recognise her, even if I die of grief before her eyes.” Then he asked the crayfish if they would kindly permit him to search amongst them for one of his acquaintance. “We know nothing about it, my Lord,” said the first who spoke; “but you can make what inquiry you please up to the time of our return to the reservoir, for we must positively pass the night there.” Zirphil commenced his inspection; the more he sought, the less he discovered, but he surmised, from the few words which he drew from those he interrogated, that they were all princesses transformed by the wickedness of Marmotte. This caused him inconsolable grief, for he had to choose ten for the King’s broth.

When evening came, they repeated that they must retire to the reservoir, and it was not without pain that he relinquished the sweet occupation of seeking the Princess. He had only been able in the whole day to interrogate a hundred and fifty; but as he was certain at least that she was not amongst them, he determined to take ten from that number; he had no sooner chosen them than he proceeded to carry them to the King’s offices; but he was arrested by the most astonishing peals of laughter from the victims he was about to immolate; he was so surprised by it, that he was some time without speaking; at length he interrupted them to inquire what it was they found so amusing in their present circumstances? They renewed their shouts of laughter so heartily that he could not help, in spite of his own sorrows, partaking in their mirth. They wanted to speak, but could not for laughing; they could only ejaculate, “Oh, I can say no more!” “Oh, I shall die of it!” “No, there is nothing in the world so amusing!” and then roared again. At length he reached the Palace with them all laughing together, and having shown them to a pike-headed man, who seemed to be the principal cook, a mortar of green porphyry, ornamented with gold, was set before him, into which he put his ten crayfish, and prepared to pound them. At that moment the bottom of the mortar opened, emitted a brilliant flame, which dazzled the Prince, and then closing up again, appeared perfectly empty; even the crayfish had vanished. This astonished, but at the same time gratified him, for he was very reluctant to pound such merry creatures. The man-pike, on the contrary, seemed sadly distressed at this adventure, and wept bitterly. The Prince was as much surprised at this as he was at the laughter of the crayfish, and he could not ascertain the cause, as the pike's-head was dumb.

He returned, much disturbed by his adventure, to his pretty apartment, where he no longer found the crayfish, for they had returned to the reservoir. The following morning, they re-entered without Marmotte; he sought for his Princess, and still not discovering her, he again chose ten of the finest for pounding. The same adventure occurred — they laughed, and the man-pike wept when they disappeared in the flame. For three months this extraordinary scene was daily repeated; he heard nothing of the King of the Whiting, and he was only uneasy at not discovering his beautiful Princess.

One evening, returning from the kitchen to his own apartments, he traversed the King's gardens, and passing near a palisade which surrounded a charming plantation, in the midst of which was a little sparkling fountain, he heard some one speaking; this surprised him, for he believed all the inhabitants of that kingdom to be as dumb as those he had seen. He advanced gently, and heard a voice, which said, — "But Princess, if you do not discover yourself, your husband will never find you." "What can I do?" said the other voice, which he recognised as that he had so often heard. "The cruelty of Marmotte compels me to remain silent, and I cannot discover myself without risking his life as well as my own. The wise Lumineuse, who aids him, conceals my features from him in order to preserve us to each other: he must absolutely pound me, it is an irrevocable sentence." "But why should he pound you?" inquired the other. "You have never yet told me your history; Citronette, your confidante, would have related it to me had she not last week been chosen for the King's broth." "Alas!" replied the Princess, "that unfortunate has already undergone the torture which I await; would that I were in her place, for assuredly by this time she is in her grotto." "But," rejoined the other voice, "as it is such a beautiful night, tell me now why you are subjected to the vengeance of Marmotte. I have already told you who I am, and I burn with impatience to know more about you." "Although it will renew my grief," replied the Princess, "I cannot refuse to satisfy you, especially as I must speak of Zirphil, and I take pleasure in all that relates to him."

One may easily judge of the delight which the Prince felt at this fortunate moment; he glided gently into the plantation, but as it was very dark he saw nothing; he listened, however, with all his ears, and this is word for word what he heard: —

"My father was King of a country near Mount Caucasus; he reigned to the best of his ability over a people of incredible wickedness; there were perpetual revolts, and often the windows of his Palace were broken by the stones which they hurled against them. The Queen, my mother, who was a very accomplished woman, composed speeches for him to make to the disaffected; but if he succeeded in appeasing them one day, the next produced a new trouble. The judges were tired of condemning to death, and the executioners of hanging. At length things arrived at such a pitch that my father, seeing all our provinces were uniting against us, resolved to withdraw from the capital, that he might no longer witness so many disagreeable scenes. He took the Queen with him, and left the kingdom to the government of one of his ministers, who was very wise, and less timid than the King, my father. My mother was expecting my birth, and travelled with some difficulty to the foot of Mount Caucasus, where my father had chosen his habitation. Our wicked subjects fired the guns for joy at their departure, and next day strangled our minister, saying that he wished to carry matters with too high a hand, and that they much preferred their old

Sovereign. My father was not at all flattered by their preference, and remained concealed in his little retreat, where very soon I saw the light.

"They named me Camion, because I was so very diminutive. Moreover, the King and Queen, tired of the honours which had cost them so dear, and wishing to conceal my high birth from me, brought me up as a shepherdess. At the end of ten years (which appeared to them like ten minutes, so happy were they in their retreat), the fairies of the Caucasus, indignant at the wickedness of the people who inhabited our kingdom, resolved to restore order in it. One day that I was tending my sheep in the meadow which adjoined our garden, two old shepherdesses accosted me, and begged me to give them shelter for the night; they had such a sad dejected air that my soul was moved with compassion. 'Follow me,' said I; 'my father, who is a farmer, will receive you willingly.' I ran to the cottage to announce their arrival to him; he came to meet them, and received them with much kindness, as did my mother also. I then brought in my sheep, and set milk before our guests. Meanwhile, my father prepared them a nice little supper, and the Queen, who, as I before told you, was a clever woman, entertained them wonderfully.

"I had a little lamb which I loved excessively; my father called to me to bring it to him that he might kill it and roast it. I was not accustomed to dispute his will, and therefore took it to him; but I was so distressed at having to do so that I went and sat down weeping beside my mother, who was so occupied in talking to these good women that she took no notice of me. 'What is the matter with little Camion?' said one of them, who saw me in tears. 'Alas, Madam!' said I to her, 'my father is roasting my pet lamb for your suppers.' 'How?' said the one who had not yet spoken, 'is it on our account that pretty Camion is thus distressed?' Then rising and striking the ground with her stick, a table rose out of it magnificently covered, and the two old women became two beautiful ladies, in dresses so dazzling with precious stones, that I was struck motionless, so much so, indeed, that I paid no attention when my little lamb bounded into the room, and made a thousand leaps, which much amused the company. I ran at length to him, after having kissed the hands of the beautiful ladies; but I was quite amazed to find his wool all of silver purl, and covered with knots of rose-coloured ribbon.

“My father and mother paid every attention to the Fairies, for such I need not tell you they were both. They raised the King and Queen, who had fallen at their feet. ‘King and Queen,’ said she who was the most majestic, ‘we have known you for a long time past, and your misfortunes have excited our pity. Do not imagine that greatness exempts any one from the ills attached to humanity. You must know by experience that the more elevated the rank the more keenly are they felt. Your patience and virtue have raised you above your misfortunes: it is time to give you your reward. I am the Fairy Lumineuse, and I come to ask what would be most agreeable to your majesties. Speak, and do not fear to put our power to the proof; consult together, your wishes shall be accomplished; but say nothing respecting Camion — her destiny is apart from yours. The Fairy Marmotte, envious of the brilliant fate which has been promised her, has obscured it for a time: but Camion will better know the value of her happiness when she shall have experienced the ills of life; we will protect her by softening them: that is all we are permitted to tell you. Speak; with that exception we can do anything for you.’

“The Fairies, after this harangue, were silent. The Queen turned to the King that he might reply, for she wept to find I was doomed to be unhappy; but my father was no better able than herself to speak: he uttered piteous exclamations, and I, seeing them in tears, left my lamb to come and weep with them. The Fairies waited with much impatience, and in perfect silence, till our tears were ended. At length my mother pushed the King gently to let him know they were expecting his reply. He took his handkerchief from his eyes and said, that as it was decided that I should be miserable, nothing they could offer him could be agreeable to him, and that he refused the happiness which they promised him, as he should always find it embittered by the idea of what I had to dread. The Queen added, seeing that the poor man could say no more, that she begged the Fairies to take their lives on the day when my sad destiny was to be fulfilled, for that her only wish was not to be compelled to witness my misery. The good Fairies, affected by the extreme grief which reigned in the royal family, spoke together in a whisper. At length Lumineuse, who had already addressed us, said to the Queen, ‘Be consoled, Madam; the misfortunes which threaten Camion are not so great but that they may terminate happily; for from the moment that the husband destined for her shall have obeyed the commands of fate, she will be happy with him, and the malignity of our sister can have no further power over either. The Prince we have selected is one worthy of her; and all we can tell you is, that you must absolutely lower your daughter every morning into the well, and that she must bathe in it for half-an-hour. If you strictly observe this rule, perhaps she may escape the evil with which she is threatened. At twelve years old the critical period of her fate will commence; if she reach the age of thirteen in safety, there will be nothing more to fear. That is all which regards her. Now wish for yourselves, and we can gratify your desires.’

“The King and Queen looked at each other, and after a short silence, the King asked to become a statue until after I should have completed my thirteenth year; and the Queen limited her request to the modest one that the temperature of the well in which I was to be dipped should be always according to the season. The fairies, charmed at this excess of parental tenderness, added that the water should be orangeflower water, and that the King, whenever the Queen should throw this water over him, should resume his natural form, and again become a statue when he pleased. At length they took leave of us, after having lauded the King and Queen for their moderation, and promised to assist them whenever they should require it, by burning a bit of the silver purl with which my lamb was covered.

“They vanished, and I felt real anguish for the first time in my life, at seeing my father become a great statue of black marble. The Queen burst into tears, and I also; but at length, as everything has an end, I ceased to cry, and occupied myself in consoling my mother, for I felt a sudden increase both of sense and sensibility.

“The Queen passed her life at the feet of the statue, and I, after having bathed as they had ordered me, went to milk my ewes. Upon that food we lived, for the Queen would not take anything else, and it was only from love to me that she could be prevailed on to preserve an existence, which to her was so full of bitterness. ‘Alas! my daughter,’ said she, sometimes, ‘of what use to us have been our grandeur and our high birth? (for she no longer concealed from me my rank.) ‘Would it not have been better to have been born in a lower sphere, since a crown draws down on us such great misfortunes? Virtue, and my affection for you, my dear Camion, alone enable me to support them; but there are moments when my soul seems impatient to leave me, and I confess I feel pleasure in imagining that I shall soon die. It is not for me you should weep,’ added she, ‘but for your father, whose grief, still greater than mine, has carried him so far as to make him desire a worse fate than ceasing to live. Never forget, my dear, the gratitude you owe him.’ ‘Alas! Madam,’ said I, ‘I am not capable of ever forgetting it, and still less can I forget that you have wished to live in order to assist me.’

“I was bathed regularly every day, and my mother was sadly distressed to see the King always an inanimate statue. She dared not, however, recall him to life, fearing to inflict on him the pain of witnessing the misfortune with which I was threatened. The Fairies not having specified what it was, we were in mortal fear. The Queen especially fancied no end of frightful things, because her imagination had an unlimited field to range over. As for me, I did not trouble myself much about it, so true is it that youth is the only time when we enjoy the present.

“My mother told me repeatedly that she felt a great desire to bring my father to life again, and I had the same inclination. At length, after six months, finding that the Fairies’ bath had greatly embellished both my person and mind, she resolved to gratify this longing, if but to give the King the pleasure of seeing my improvement. She therefore desired me to bring her some water from the well. Accordingly, after my bath, I drew up a vase of this marvellous water, and the statue was no sooner sprinkled with it, than my father became a man again. The Queen threw herself at his feet, to ask pardon for having troubled his repose. He raised her, and embracing her tenderly, forgave her readily, and she presented me to him.

“I am ashamed to tell you that he was both delighted and surprised. For how can you believe me, beautiful Princess?” said the voice, hesitatingly, “me, the most hideous of crayfish?” “Alas! I can well believe you,” replied the one to whom she spoke; “I also might boast of being handsome, but is it possible to appear so in these frightful shells? Pray continue, however, for I am eager to hear the rest of your history.” “Well, then,” said the other voice, “the King was enchanted with me, loaded me with caresses, and asked the Queen if she had any news to tell him. ‘Alas!’ said she, ‘who in this desert should come to tell me any? Besides, being occupied solely in lamenting your transformation, I have taken little interest in the world, which is nothing to me without you.’ ‘Well,’ said the King, ‘I will tell you some news, then; for do not think that I have been always asleep. The Fairies who protect us have disclosed to me the punishment of my subjects. They have made an immense pond of my kingdom, and all the inhabitants are men-fish. A nephew of the Fairy Marmotte, whom they have set up as their king, persecutes them with unequalled cruelty: he devours them for the least fault; and at the end of a certain time a prince will arrive who will dethrone him, and reign in his stead. It is in this kingdom that Camion will be made perfectly happy. This is all that I know; and it was not a bad way of passing my time' said he, laughing, 'to have discovered these things. The Fairies came every night to inform me of what was doing, and I should perhaps have known much more if you had let me remain a statue a little longer; but, however, I am so delighted to see you once more, that I do not think I shall very soon wish to become a statue again.'

"We passed some time in the happiest manner possible. The King and Queen, notwithstanding, were rather anxious when they thought of my approaching the age of thirteen. As the Queen bathed me with great care, she hoped that the prediction would not be fulfilled. But who can boast of escaping their destiny? One morning that the Queen had risen early, and was gathering some flowers to decorate our cottage, because the King was fond of them, she saw come out from beneath a tube-rose an ugly animal, something like a marmot. This beast threw itself on her, and bit her nose. She fainted with the pain which this bite occasioned her, and my father, at the end of an hour, not seeing her return, went to seek her. Judge of his consternation at finding her nearly dead, and covered with blood! He uttered fearful cries. I ran to his assistance, and we together carried the Queen into the house, and placed her in bed, where she was two hours without coming to herself. At length she began to give some signs of life, and we had the pleasure of seeing her very shortly recovered, except from the pain of the bite, which caused her much suffering.

"She asked directly if I had been to bathe: but we had quite forgotten it in our anxiety about her. She was much alarmed at hearing this; however, seeing that as yet no accident had happened to me, she became re-assured, and related to us her adventure, which surprised us immensely.

"The day passed over without any other trouble; the King had taken his gun and sought in every direction for the horrid beast without finding it. The next day at sunrise the Queen awoke and came to fetch me, to repair the fault of the preceding morning; she lowered me into the well as usual, but alas, fatal and unlucky day! at this same instant, although the heavens were quite serene, a dreadful clap of thunder rent the air, the sky seemed suddenly all on fire, and from a burning cloud there issued a flaming dart which flew into the well. My mother in her fright let go the cord which held me, and I sank to the bottom, without hurting myself, it is true, but horrified at discovering that I was partially transformed into an enormous fish which they call a whale. I rose to the surface again, and called the Queen with all my power. She did not reply. I was sadly afflicted and wept bitterly, as much for her loss as at my metamorphosis, when I felt that an invisible power forced me to descend to the bottom of the well. Having reached it, I entered a grotto of crystal, where I found a species of Nymph, ugly enough, for she was like an immensely fat frog. However, she smiled at my approach, and said to me — 'Camion, I am the Nymph of the Bottomless Well; I have orders to receive thee, and to make thee undergo the penance to which thou art sentenced for having failed to bathe; follow me, and do not remonstrate.'

"What, alas, could I do? I was so distressed and so faint at finding myself on dry ground, that I had not the strength to speak. She dragged me, not without pain, into a saloon of green marble which was near the grotto; she there put me into an immense golden tub filled with water, and I then began to recover my senses. The good Nymph appeared delighted at this. 'I am called Citronette,' said she to me; 'I am appointed to wait on thee; thou canst order me to do anything thou wilt — I know perfectly well both the past and the present; as for the future, it is not my province to penetrate it. Command me, and at least I can render the time of thy penance less irksome to thee.'

"I embraced the good Citronette at these words, and related to her the events of my life. I then inquired of her what had become of the King and Queen. She was about to reply, when a hideous marmot, as large as a human being, entered the saloon, and froze me with horror. She walked upon her hind legs, and leant upon a gold wand, which gave her a dignified air. She approached the tub, in which I would willingly have drowned myself, I was so frightened, and raising her wand, with which she touched me — ‘Camion,’ said she, ‘thou art in my power, and nothing can release thee but thy obedience and that of the husband whom my sisters have destined for thee. Listen to me, and cast off this fear, which does not befit a person of your rank. Since thine infancy I wished to take care of thee, and to marry thee to my nephew, the King of the Whiting. Lumineuse, and two or three other of my sisters, combined to deprive me of this right; I was provoked, and not being able to revenge myself on them, I resolved to punish thee for their audacity. I doomed thee, therefore, to be a whale for at least half the term of thy existence. My sisters protested so strongly against what they called my injustice, that I diminished my vengeance by three-quarters and a half; but I reserved to myself the right of marrying thee to my nephew in return for my complaisance. Lumineuse, who is imperious, and unfortunately my superior, would not listen to this arrangement, because she had destined thee, before me, to a Prince whom she protected. I was compelled then to consent to her plan, in spite of my resentment; all that I could obtain was that the first who should deliver you from my claws should be thy husband. Here are their portraits,’ continued she, showing me two gold miniature cases, ‘which will enable thee to recognise them: but if one of them come to deliver thee, he must betroth himself to thee whilst thou art in the tub, and before thou canst leave it, he must tear off the skin of the whale; without that, thou wilt always remain a fish. My nephew would not hesitate a moment to execute that order; but the favourite of Lumineuse will consider it a horrible task, for he has the air of a very delicate little gentleman. Set, then, thy wits to work to make him skin thee, and after that thou shalt be no longer unhappy, if to be a beautiful whale, very fat and well fed, and up to the neck in water, can be called unhappiness.’

“To these words I made no reply, but remained very dejected, as much at my present state as by the thought of scaling to which I must submit.

“Marmotte disappeared, leaving with me the two miniature cases. I wept over my misfortunes and my situation, without dreaming of looking at the portraits, when the good and sympathising Citronette said to me, ‘Come, we must not lament over ills which cannot be remedied. Let us see if I cannot help to console you; but first, try not to weep so much, for I have a tender heart, and I cannot see your tears without feeling inclined to mingle mine with them. Let us chase them away by looking at these portraits.’

“So saying, she opened the first case, and showing it to me, we both uttered shrieks like Melusine’s at seeing a hideous whiting’s head, painted, it is true, with all the advantages which could be given to it; but, in spite of that, never in the memory of man had anything been seen so ugly. ‘Take away that object,’ cried I to her; ‘I cannot bear the sight of it longer. I would rather be a whale all my life than marry that horrible Whiting!’

“She did not give me time to finish my imprecations on this monster, but said, ‘Behold this darling young man! Oh, as for him, would he but skin you I should be delighted.’ I looked hastily to see if what she said was true; I was only too soon convinced. A noble and charming countenance presented itself to my view; fine eyes full of tenderness embellished a face which was both mild and majestic; an air of intellectuality was spread over it, which completed the fascination of this delightful painting; a profusion of black hair, curling naturally, gave an air to it which Citronette mistook for indifference, but which I interpreted, and I think rightly, as conveying a precisely opposite sentiment.

“I contemplated this beautiful face with a pleasure of which I was scarcely conscious. Citronette remarked it first. ‘Without a doubt,’ cried she, ‘that is the one we will choose.’ This bantering roused me from my reverie, and colouring at my own ecstasy, ‘Why should I trouble myself,’ said I; ‘ah, my dear Citronette, this appears to me very like another trick of that cruel Marmotte; she has exhausted her art in endeavouring to make me regret the impossibility of finding a similar object in nature.’ ‘What,’ said Citronette, ‘already such tender reflections on this portrait? Ah! truly, I did not expect that so soon.’ I blushed again at this jest, and became quite embarrassed at finding that I had too innocently betrayed the effect which this beautiful painting had produced on my heart. Citronette again read my thoughts. ‘No, no,’ said she, embracing me, ‘do not repent of this avowal, your frankness charms me; and to console you, I will tell you that Marmotte does not deceive you, and that there is in the world a Prince who is the veritable original of the picture.’

“This assurance filled me with joy at the moment; but the next instant that feeling departed, when I remembered that this Prince would never see me, as I was in the depths of the earth, and that Marmotte, by her power, would sooner enable her monster of a nephew to penetrate my abode than give the least assistance to a prince whom she hated, because they had destined me to him without her consent. I no longer concealed what I thought from Citronette; the attempt, indeed, would have been useless, for she read with surprising facility the utmost secret of my thoughts; I therefore preferred to take the credit of candour; she deserved my confidence for her attachment to me, and I found it a great consolation, for I have felt from that time that when the heart is filled with one object there is much happiness in being able to speak of it. In fact, I loved from that moment, and Citronette dissipated, with much address and clear-sightedness, the confusion and trouble which the commencement of a violent passion produces in the mind. She soothed my grief by allowing me to speak of it; and when I had exhausted words, she gently changed the conversation, which almost always, however, bore upon my troubles or my affection.

“She had informed me that the King, my father, was transported to the abode of the King of the Whiting; and that the Queen, at the moment that she lost me, had become a crayfish. I could not understand this. ‘One cannot become a crayfish,’ said I. ‘Can you better understand how you have become a whale?’ said she.

“She was right; but we are often surprised at things which happen to others, although we have in ourselves still greater subject for astonishment. My small experience was the cause of this. Citronette laughed frequently at my innocence, and was surprised to find me so eloquent in my affection, for truly I was so on that subject; and I found that love throws much light into the mind. I could not sleep; I woke the good-natured Citronette an hundred times in the night to talk to her of my Prince; she had told me his name, and that he hunted almost every day in the forest beneath which I was interred. She proposed to me to try to attract him to our dwelling, but I would not consent, although I was dying to do so. I was afraid that he would die for want of air; we were accustomed to it, that was a different thing; I feared also that it would be too great a freedom; besides, I was in despair at appearing to him in the form of a whale, and I measured his aversion for me by that which the portrait of the King of the Whiting had inspired me with. Citronette re-assured me, telling me that spite of the whale’s body my face was charming. I believed it sometimes, but more often I was uneasy, and after having looked at myself, I could not imagine I was sufficiently handsome to inspire with love one who had made me so well acquainted with it. My self-love came to the support of my prudence. Alas! how rarely it is that our virtues can be traced to purer inspirations.

“I passed my time in forming projects for obtaining a sight of him, and letting him see me, and rejected by turns each that occurred to me. Citronette was a great assistance to me at this time; for it must be confessed that she has plenty of sense, and still more gentleness and amiability. One day that I was even more sad than usual — for love has the peculiarity of infecting gentle souls with melancholy — I saw the frightful Marmotte enter, with two persons whom I did not at first recognise. I took it into my head that it was her wretched nephew whom she brought with her; I uttered frightful shrieks as they approached me hastily. ‘Why, she could not cry louder,’ said the horrid Marmotte, ‘if they were skinning her! Look what terrible harm is done to her!’ ‘Good gracious, sister,’ said one of these persons who accompanied her, and whom I then remembered with joy having formerly seen in our village; ‘a truce to your stories of skinning, and let us tell Camion what we have to tell her.’ ‘Willingly,’ said Marmotte; ‘but on the conditions which you are aware of.’

“‘Camion,’ said the good Fairy, without replying to Marmotte, ‘we are too much distressed at your condition not to think of remedying it, more especially as you have not deserved it. My sisters and I have resolved to ameliorate it as much as lies in our power. This, therefore, is what we have determined on. You are about to be presented at the Court of the Prince to whom I have destined you from your infancy; but, my dear child, you will not appear there as you are, and you are commanded to return three nights a week and plunge again in your tub; for until you are married’ — ‘and skinned!’ interrupted the odious Marmotte, laughing violently. The good Fairy merely turned towards her, shrugging her shoulders, and continued — ‘Until you are married you will be a whale in this place. We can tell you no more; the rest you will be informed of by degrees; but above all keep your secret; for if a word escape you which tends to discover it, neither I nor my sisters can do anything for you, and you will be delivered up to my sister Marmotte.’ ‘That is what I expect,’ said the wicked Fairy; ‘and I already see her in my power; for a secret kept by a girl would be a phenomenon.’ ‘That is her own affair,’ said Lumineuse (for it was she who had already spoken). ‘To proceed, my daughter,’ said she, ‘you will become a little doll made of ivory, but capable of thinking and speaking; we shall preserve all your features, and I give you a week to consider whether what I propose to you will suit you; we will then return, and you shall tell me if you consent to it, or if you would prefer awaiting here the event which must bring you one of the two husbands selected for you.’

“I had not time to reply; the Fairies departed after these words, and left me astounded by what I had just seen and heard. I remained with Citronette, who represented to me that it was a great treat for me to become an ivory doll. I sighed when I thought that my Prince would never take a fancy to such a bauble; but at length the desire to see him and become acquainted with him overcame the anxiety to please him, and I resolved to accept the proposal which was made to me, and the more readily as Zirphil (for they had mentioned his name) might possibly be forestalled by the King of the Whiting, and this idea made me nearly die of grief.

“Citronette told me that Prince Zirphil hunted daily in the forest which was above us; and I made her take every day the form of a stag, a hound, or a wild boar, in order that she might bring me some news, which never failed to be in some way connected with the subject which occupied my heart. She described him to me as an hundred times handsomer than his picture, and my imagination embellished him to such a degree that I resolved to see him or to die. But one more day had to elapse before the expected arrival of the Fairies, and Citronette, in the form of a wild boar, was roaming the forest to find food for my curiosity, when suddenly I saw her return, followed by the too amiable Zirphil. I cannot describe to you my joy and astonishment; there are no terms which can express them to you. But what enchanted me most was, that this charming Prince appeared equally delighted with me; perhaps I desired this too much not to help to deceive myself. However, I thought I saw in his eyes that he felt the impression he had made. Citronette, more anxious for my happiness than mindful of our ecstasy, aroused us from it, by begging him either to skin or to marry me. Then coming to myself, and feeling the danger of my situation, I joined in her entreaties, and by our prayers and tears induced him to plight me his faith. I had hardly accepted it, when he vanished, I know not how, and I found myself in my ordinary form, lying on a good bed; I was no longer a whale, but I was still in the depths of the earth in the green saloon, and Citronette had lost the power of leaving it and of transforming herself.

"I expected the Fairies in a state of the greatest trepidation. My love had redoubled since I had become personally acquainted with its object, and I feared that my charming husband might be included in the vengeance of the Fairies for not having waited till they could witness my marriage. Citronette had enough to do to re-assure me; I could not overcome my grief and fear. Marmotte appeared with the dawn of day, but I neither saw Lumineuse nor her companion; she did not seem more irritable than usual; she touched me with her wand without speaking to me, and I became a charming little doll, which she put in her toothpick-case, and then transported herself into the presence of the Queen-mother of my betrothed. She gave me to her, with orders to marry me to her son, or to expect all the evil which she was capable of inflicting, telling her that I was her goddaughter, and was called the Princess Camion. I took, in fact, a great fancy to my mother-in-law; I considered her charming, as being the mother of Zirphil, whom I adored, and my caresses were returned by her. I was transported every night into the green saloon, and there enjoyed the pleasure of meeting my husband, for the same power acted on him, and transported him likewise into this subterraneous dwelling. I knew not why they forbad me to tell him my secret, as I was married; but I kept it in spite of his impatience to know it. You will see," continued the speaker, with a sigh, "how impossible it is to avoid one's fate. But it begins to get light, and I feel I am quite tired with being so long out of the water; let us return to the reservoir, and to-morrow, at the same hour, if we are not selected for the soup of that worthless King of the Whiting, we will resume the thread of our discourse. — Come, let us go."

Zirphil heard no more, and himself returned to his apartment, much concerned at not having made known to the Princess his being so near her;

but the fear of increasing her misfortunes by this indiscretion, consoled him for not having risked it; the misery of knowing she was likely to perish by his hand made him resolve to continue his diligent search amongst the crayfish.

He retired to bed, but not to sleep, for he did not close his eyes all night. To have found his Princess in the form of a crayfish, ready to be made into soup for the King of the Whiting, appeared to him a still more frightful torment than the death to which he had believed her destined. He was sighing and distressing himself cruelly, when he was disturbed by a great noise in the garden; he at first heard it confusedly, but listening attentively, he distinguished flutes and conch shells. He rose and went to the window, when he saw the King of the Whiting, accompanied by the dozen sharks who composed his council, advancing towards the pavilion; he hastened to open the door, and the train having entered, the King first had his tub filled with sea water by the peers of the realm who bore it, and after a short repose, and making the council take their places, he addressed the young Prince, "Whoever you may be," said he, "you have resolved, apparently, to make me die of hunger, for you send me every day a broth which I cannot swallow; but, young man, I must tell you, that if you are leagued with evil powers to poison me, you have taken a very foolish part. As nephew of the Fairy Marmotte I am beyond all such attempts, and my life is safe."

The Prince, astonished at being suspected of so base an act, was about to reply with haughtiness, but by chance, as he raised his hand, he cast his eyes upon his ring, and saw therein Lumineuse, who placed her finger on her mouth as a sign to him to be silent; he had not before thought of consulting his ring, he had been so engrossed by his grief. He accordingly held his tongue: but he betrayed his indignation in his countenance, which the sharks remarked, for they made signs of approbation, which appeared to say that they did not believe him capable of such a thing. "Ho, ho!" said the King, "as this myrmidon appears so angry, we must make him work before us. Let them go to my kitchen; let them bring the mortar for the crayfish; I shall give my council a treat.” Immediately a pike’s-head went to execute the King’s commands, and during this time the twelve sharks took a large net, which they threw into the reservoir from the window, and drew in three or four thousand crayfish. During the interval that the council was employed in fishing, and the pike’s-head in fetching the King’s mortar, Zirphil reflected, and felt that the most critical moment of his life approached, and that his happiness or misery would depend upon his present conduct. He armed himself with resolution for whatever might come to pass, and placing all his hopes in the Fairy Lumineuse, he implored her to be favourable to him. At the same moment he looked at his ring, and saw in it the beautiful Fairy, who made a sign to him to pound courageously; this revived him, and took from him some of the pain he felt at consenting to this cruelty.

At length the horrid mortar was produced. Zirphil approached it boldly, and prepared to obey the King. The council put in the crayfish with great ceremony, and the Prince tried to pound them; but the same thing happened to them as to the former ones in the kitchen — the bottom of the mortar opened and the flames devoured them. The King and the odious sharks amused themselves for a long time with this spectacle, and were never tired of filling the mortar; at length there was but one left of the four thousand; it was surprisingly large and fine. The King commanded that it might be shelled, in order to see if he should like to eat some of them raw. They gave it to Zirphil to shell; he trembled all over at having to inflict this new torture, but still more when this poor fish joined her two claws, and, with her eyes filled with tears, said, “Alas! Zirphil, what have I done to you that you should wish to do me so much harm?”

The Prince, moved by these words, and his heart pierced with grief, looked at her sadly, and at length took it on himself to beg the King to allow her to be pounded. The King, jealous of his authority, and firm in his resolution, was enraged at this humble request, and threatened to pound Zirphil himself if he did not shell it. The poor Prince took it again from the hands of the shark to whom he had confided it, and with a little knife which they had given him he tremblingly touched the crayfish; he looked at his ring, and saw Lumineuse laughing and talking to a veiled person whom she held by the hand. He could not understand this at all, and the King, who did not give him time to reflect, cried out to him so loudly to finish, that the Prince stuck the knife with such force under the shell of the crayfish that it cried piteously; he turned away his eyes from hers, and could not help shedding tears. At length he resumed his task, but to his great astonishment he had not finished the shelling when he found in his hands the wicked Marmotte, who jumped to the ground, uttering shrieks of laughter so loud and disagreeable in mockery of Zirphil, that it prevented him from fainting, or he would have fallen on the floor.

The King cried in astonishment, “Why, it is my aunt!” “And truly it is she,” said this annoying animal. “But, my dear Whiting, I come to tell you a terrible piece of news.” Whiting grew pale at these words, and the council assumed an air of satisfaction, which increased the ill-humour of the King and his terrible aunt. “The fact is, my darling,” continued Marmotte, “you must return to your watery dominions, for this rash boy whom you see here has chosen to display a constancy that nothing can shake, and has triumphed over all the traps I set for him to prevent him from carrying off the Princess I had destined for you.”

At these words the King of the Whiting fell into such a rage, that he could not contain himself: he committed extravagances which proved he was possessed of the most violent passions. Marmotte tried in vain to calm him; he broke his bowl into a thousand pieces, and, being on dry ground, he fainted. Marmotte, mad with rage, turned to Zirphil, who had remained a quiet spectator of this tragic scene, and said to him, “Thou hast conquered, Zirphil, by the power of a fairy whom I must obey; but thou art not yet at the end of thy troubles. Thou canst not be happy till thou shalt have given into my own hand the case which enclosed the accursed Camion. Even Lumineuse agrees to this, and I have obtained her consent for you to suffer until that time."

At these words she took the King of the Whiting on her shoulders, and threw him into the reservoir, as well as the sharks, the palace, and all its inhabitants. Zirphil found himself alone at the foot of a great mountain, in a country which was as arid as a desert, without being able to perceive the vestige of a habitation, or even of the great reservoir. All had disappeared at the same moment. The Prince was even more distressed than astonished at so extraordinary an event. He was accustomed to wonders — he was only alive to the grief which the persecution of the Fairy Marmotte occasioned him. "I cannot doubt," said he, "that I have pounded my Princess. Yes, I must have pounded her; yet I am none the happier for it. Ah, barbarous Marmotte! And you, Lumineuse, you leave me without help, after having obeyed you at the expense of all which a heart as sensitive as mine could suffer!"

His grief, and the little repose which he had taken since the previous night, threw him into such a state of weakness, that he would have sunk altogether if he had not had the courage to wish to live. "If I could but find something to support me," said he; "but in this horrible desert I shall seek in vain a single fruit which can refresh me." He had not pronounced the word when his ring opened, and a little table covered with excellent viands came out of it. It became in a moment large enough to accommodate the person for whom it was intended. He found on it all that could tempt his eye and his appetite, for the repast was so beautifully arranged, that in fact nothing was wanting, and the wine was delicious. He returned thanks to Lumineuse, for who else could have assisted him so opportunely? He ate, drank, and felt strong again.

When he had finished, the table lost its form, and re-entered the ring. As it was late, he did not make much progress in ascending the mountain, but stretched himself under a wretched tree, which had hardly enough leaves to protect him from the night air. “Alas!” said he, as he laid himself down, “such is the nature of man. He forgets the good that is past, and is only sensible of present evil. I would now willingly exchange my table for a couch a little less hard than this.” A moment after he felt that he was in a comfortable bed; but he could see nothing, for it appeared to him that the darkness was redoubled. He ascertained that this was caused by the ample curtains which surrounded his bed, and protected him from the cold and dew, and having again thanked the good and attentive Lumineuse, he dropped off to sleep. On waking at daybreak, he found himself in an angel-bed, of yellow taffety and silver, which was placed in the middle of a tent of satin of the same colour, embroidered all over with ciphers in bright silver, which formed the name of Zirphil, and all the ciphers were supported by whales formed of rubies. Everything that could possibly be required was to be found also in this beautiful tent. If the Prince had been in a more tranquil state of mind he would have admired this elegant habitation generally; but he only looked at the whales, dressed himself, and went out of the tent, which folded itself up, and re-entered the ring from which it had issued.

He began to ascend the mountain, taking no longer any trouble in seeking food or lodging, for he was certain to have both as soon as he wished for them. His only anxiety was to find Lumineuse; for his ring was mute on that subject, and he found himself in a country so strange to him, and so deserted, that he was necessarily compelled to trust to chance.

After having passed several days in ascending without discovering anything, he arrived at the brink of a well which was cut in the rock. He seated himself near it to rest, and began to exclaim, as usual, “Lumineuse, can I not find you, then?” The last time he pronounced these words, he heard a voice which proceeded from the well say, “Is it Zirphil who speaks to me?” His joy at hearing this voice was increased by recognising her to whom it belonged. He rushed to the brink of the well, and said, “Yes, it is Zirphil. And are you not Citronette?” “Yes,” replied Citronette, emerging from the well, and embracing the Prince.

It is impossible to express the pleasure which this sight gave him. He overwhelmed the nymph with questions about herself and about the Princess. At length, after the excitement of their first meeting had subsided, they spoke more rationally together. “I am about to inform you,” said she, “of all that you are ignorant of; for since the time you pounded us, we have enjoyed a happiness which was only alloyed by your absence, and I awaited your arrival here on the part of the Fairy Lumineuse, to tell you what remains for you to do in order to obtain possession of a Princess who loves you as much as you love her. But as some time must elapse before you can arrive at this happiness, I will relate to you the rest of the marvellous history of your amiable bride.”

Zirphil kissed the hand of Citronette a thousand times, and followed her into her grotto, where he thought he should die of mingled pleasure and grief when he recognised the spot in which he had for the first time seen his divine Princess. At length, after partaking of a repast which came out of the ring, he begged the good Citronette to have the kindness to resume the narrative of the Princess from where she had herself left off in the palace garden.

“As it is here,” said Citronette, “that Lumineuse is to meet you, you shall, whilst waiting for her, learn all that you wish to know, for it is useless for you to run after her. She confides you to my care, and a lover is less impatient when one talks to him about her whom he loves. The fairy Marmotte was not ignorant of your marriage; she had transformed our friend into an ivory doll, believing that you would be disgusted at her. Lumineuse conducted this affair herself, knowing that nothing could deprive you of the Princess if you married her, or if you destroyed her enchantment by skinning her. You chose the former alternative, and you know what followed. By night she resumed her proper form, and lamented at having to pass all her days in your royal mother’s pocket, for Marmotte had been permitted by Lumineuse to torment the Princess until you had fulfilled your destiny, which was, to skin her; so enraged was she at finding that you had married her, and that the King of the Whiting, her nephew, could not become her husband.

“As the Princess was no longer a whale, there was no fish to skin; but Marmotte, fertile in expedients, determined to make you pound her, and had forbidden the Princess to tell you anything about it, under pain of your life, promising her afterwards the greatest felicity. ‘How will he ever resolve to pound me?’ said she when expecting you. ‘Ah, my dear Citronette, if it were only my life that Marmotte threatened, I would give it cheerfully to shield my husband from the torments they prepared for him; but they attack his life — that life which is so dear to me. Ah, Marmotte! barbarous Marmotte! Is it possible that you can take pleasure in making me so miserable when I have never given you any cause for it?’ She knew the period prescribed for your separation from her, but she dared not tell you of it. The last time that you saw her, you know that you found her in tears; you asked her the cause, she pretended it was on account of your attentions to little Camion, and accused you of inconstancy. You appeased her apparent jealousy; and the fatal hour at which Marmotte was to fetch her arrived. You were transported into the palace of the King, your father; the Princess and I were changed into crayfish, and placed in a little cane basket, which the Fairy put under her arm, and ascending a car drawn by two adders, we arrived at the palace of the King of the Whiting. This palace was that of the royal father of the Princess: the city, changed into a lake, formed the reservoir which we have inhabited, and all the men-fish that you have seen were the wicked subjects of that good King.

“I must tell you, my Lord,” said Citronette, interrupting herself, “that that unfortunate Monarch, and the Queen, his wife, being in despair at the moment when the Princess sank to the bottom of the well, the Fairies who had formerly come to their assistance, appeared, to console them for her loss; but the unhappy pair knowing that it was to their kingdom that Camion would be exiled, chose to be there rather than at a distance from her, notwithstanding what they had to fear from the cruelty and ferocity of the King of the Whiting, whom his Aunt had caused to be crowned by these men-fish. The Fairies did not conceal from them the future fate of the Princess; and the King, her father, begged to be the clerk of the kitchen and keeper of the King of the Whiting’s mortar. The Fairy immediately gave him a tap of her wand, and he became the pike-headed man you saw in that situation; and you need no longer be surprised at his having wept bitterly whenever you brought the crayfish to pound, for as he knew that his daughter must undergo this torture, he always thought she was amongst the number; and the miserable Monarch had not a moment’s rest, because his daughter had no means of making herself known to him. The Queen had requested to be changed into a crayfish, in order to be with the Princess, and her wish was also granted.

“As soon as we arrived at the palace of the King of the Whiting, the Fairy presented us to him, and ordered him to have crayfish soup made for his dinner every day. We were then thrown into the reservoir. My first care was to seek the Queen, in order to soothe a little the grief of the Princess, but either by the decree of fate or stupidity on my part, I found it impossible to discover her. We passed our days in this mournful search, and our pleasantest moments were those in which we recalled the circumstances of our unhappy lives. You arrived at length, and they presented us to you; but the Fairy had forbidden us to make ourselves known before you should interrogate us, and we dared not infringe this rule, so continually were we compelled to submit to severities for trifles.

“The Princess told me she thought she should have died of fright at observing you in conversation with the cruel Marmotte; we saw you searching amongst our companions with a mortal impatience, it being obvious that, by the direction you took, you had little chance of arriving at us.

“We knew that we must be pounded; but we had also learnt that immediately after we should be restored to our former condition, and that the wicked Marmotte would have no further power over us. On the eve of the day on which you were to commence the infliction of this torture on us, we were all assembled in a cavity of the reservoir, weeping over our destiny, when Lumineuse appeared. ‘Do not weep, my children,’ said that admirable fairy; ‘I come to inform you that you will escape the punishment they threaten you with, provided you go gaily to the mortar, and do not answer any questions that may be addressed to you. I can say no more at present — I am in haste; but do as I have told you, and you will not repent it. Let her whose fate appears the most cruel not lose hope — she will soon find relief.’ We all thanked the Fairy, and appeared before you perfectly resolved to keep our secret. You spoke to some, who only made vague replies, and when you had chosen ten, we returned to the reservoir, where the assurance of our speedy deliverance inspired us with a natural gaiety which assisted the project of our protectress.

“The last words Lumineuse had spoken gave to the beautiful Camion a lightness of heart which rendered her charming in the eyes of her mother and me; for the Queen had at length recognised her, and we three were inseparable. At length your choice fell on the Queen and me, and we had not time to say adieu to the Princess. An unknown power acted on us at the moment, and inspired us with such gaiety that we thought we should die of laughter at the absurd things we said to each other. You carried us to the kitchen, and we had not touched the bottom of the fatal mortar before Lumineuse herself came to our assistance, and restoring me my natural form, transported me to my customary abode. I had the consolation of seeing the Queen and our companions also resume theirs, but I know not what became of them. The Fairy embraced me, and told me to await you, and relate to you everything when you should come to seek the Princess.

"I awaited this moment with impatience, as you will well believe, my Lord," said Citronette to the Prince, who listened most eagerly to her; "and yesterday I seated myself at the mouth of the well, when Lumineuse appeared. 'Our children are about to be made happy, my dear Citronette,' said she to me; 'Zirphil has only to recover the toothpick-case of Marmotte to finish his labours, for at length he has skinned the Princess.' 'Ah! great Queen,' cried I, 'are we so happy as to be certain of this?' 'Yes,' replied she, 'it is quite true; he thought that he only skinned Marmotte, but it was in reality the Princess. Marmotte was concealed in the handle of the knife he used for that act, and the instant he had finished his task she caused the Princess to vanish, and appeared in her place, for the purpose of again intimidating him!" "What!" cried the Prince, "was it to my charming bride that I did that harm? Have I had the barbarity to inflict on her such a cruel torment! Ah, heavens! she will never pardon me, and I do not deserve she should!" The unhappy Zirphil spoke so impetuously, and distressed himself so greatly, that poor Citronette was sorry she had told him this news.

"How," said she, at last, seeing that he was quite overcome by his reflections, "how, you did not know it?" "No, I did not know that," said he; "what determined me to take the shell off that unhappy and too charming crayfish was, that I saw Lumineuse in my ring speaking to a veiled person who even laughed with her, and who, I flattered myself, was my Princess; and I thought that she had passed through the mortar like the rest. Ah, I shall never forgive myself for this mistake!" "But, my Lord," said Citronette, "the charm depended on your skinning or pounding her, and you had done neither one nor the other; besides, the person to whom Lumineuse spoke was the mother of the Princess; they awaited the end of your adventure in order to seize on your bride and protect her for you; it was quite necessary that it should so happen.” “Nevertheless,” said the Prince, “if I had known it, I would rather have pierced my own heart with that horrid knife!” “But consider,” said Citronette, “that in piercing your heart you would have left the Princess for ever in the power of your enemy and frightful rival, and that it is far better to have shelled her than to have died and left her in misery.”

Apparently this argument, so obviously founded on truth, appeased the grief of the Prince, and he consented to take a little nourishment for his support. They had just finished, when the roof of the saloon opened, and Lumineuse appeared, seated upon a carbuncle drawn by a hundred butterflies; she descended from it, assisted by the Prince, who bathed the hem of her garment with a torrent of tears. The Fairy raised him, and said, “Prince Zirphil, to-day you are about to reap the fruit of your heroic labours. Console yourself, and enjoy at length your happiness. I have vanquished the fury of Marmotte by my prayers, and your courage has disarmed her: come with me to receive your Princess from her hands and mine.” “Ah, Madam,” cried the Prince, throwing himself at her feet, “am I not dreaming? Is it possible that my happiness is real?” “Do not doubt it,” said the Fairy, “come to your kingdom and console the Queen, your mother, for your absence, and for the death of the King, your father: your subjects wait to crown you.”

The Prince in the midst of his joy felt a pang at the tidings of the death of his father; but the Fairy to divert him from his affliction, made him place himself by her side, permitted Citronette to seat herself at their feet, and then the butterflies spread their brilliant wings, and set out for the empire of King Zirphil.

On the road, the Fairy told him to open his ring, and he there found the toothpick-case which he had to return to Marmotte. The King thanked the generous Fairy a thousand times over, and they arrived at the capital of his dominions, where they were expected with the utmost impatience. Zirphil's mother advanced to receive the Fairy as she descended from her car, and all the people becoming aware of the return of Zirphil, uttered acclamations which diverted him a little from his grief; he tenderly embraced his mother, and all ascended to a magnificent apartment which the Queen had prepared for the Fairy.

They had hardly entered, when Marmotte arrived in a car lined with Spanish leather, and drawn by eight winged rats. She brought with her the beautiful Camion, with the King and Queen, her father and mother. Lumineuse and the Queen hastened to embrace Marmotte, Zirphil respectfully kissed her paw, which she extended to him, laughing; and he returned her the toothpick case. She then permitted him to claim his bride, and presented her to the Queen, who embraced her with a thousand expressions of joy.

This numerous and illustrious assemblage began speaking all together. Joy reigned supreme amongst them. Camion and her charming husband were the only persons who could not speak a word. They had so much to say. There was an eloquence in their silence which affected every one present; the good Citronette wept with joy whilst kissing the hands of the divine Princess.

At length, Lumineuse took them both by the hand, and advancing with them towards the Queen, mother of Zirphil: "Behold, Madam," said she, "two young lovers who only wait your consent to be happy: complete their felicity; my sister Marmotte, the King and Queen, here present, and I myself, all request you to do so."

The Queen replied as she ought to this courteous speech, and tenderly embracing the happy pair, said, "Yes, my children, live happily together, and permit me, in relinquishing my crown to you, to participate in that happiness." Zirphil and the Princess threw themselves at her feet, from whence she raised them, and again embracing them, they conjured her not to abandon them, but to aid them by her counsels.

Marmotte then touched the beautiful Camion with her wand, and her clothes, which were already sufficiently magnificent, became silver brocade embroidered with carat diamonds, and her beautiful locks fell down and rearranged themselves so exquisitely that the Kings and Queens declared her appearance was perfectly dazzling: the toothpick-case which the Fairy held was changed into a crown formed entirely of brilliants, so beautiful and so well set that the room and the whole palace became illuminated by it. Marmotte placed it on the head of the Princess. Zirphil, in his turn, appeared in a suit similar to that of Camion; and from the ring which she had given him came forth a crown exactly like hers.

They were married on the spot, and proclaimed King and Queen of that fine country. The Fairies gave the royal wedding-breakfast, at which nothing was wanting. After having spent a week with them, and having overwhelmed them with good things, they departed, and reconducted the King and Queen, father and mother of Camion, into their kingdom, the old inhabitants of which they had punished, and repeopled it by a new race faithful to their master. As for Citronette, the Fairies permitted her to come and pass some time with her beautiful Queen, and consented to allow Camion, by only wishing for her, to see her whenever she pleased.

The Fairies at length departed, and never were people so happy as King Zirphil and Queen Camion. They found their greatest felicity in each other: and days seemed to them like moments. They had children who completed their happiness. They lived to an extreme old age; loving with the same intensity, and striving which should most please the other. On their decease their kingdom was divided, and after various changes it has become, under the dominion of one of their descendants, the flourishing empire of the Great Mogul.

19

PRINCESS LIONETTE AND PRINCE COQUERICO

In the Circassian mountains lived an old man and his wife who had retired from the world, weary of the caprices of fortune. They had found for themselves a convenient retreat in a cavern, which extended far beneath one of the mountains, and the dread of seeing each other expire was the only anxiety that troubled them in their solitude. They had lived at Courts, and knew all the insincerity that prevailed in them; and far from regretting the brilliant positions they had occupied, they pitied those who, from ambition or want of experience, were desirous of them. They lived a happy and quiet life. Their food consisted of fruit and fish, the latter abounding in a large pond, wherein the old man amused himself by taking them; while a flock of sheep which the old woman had the care of, produced the finest wool in the world to make their clothes with. The old man called himself Mulidor, and his wife was named Phila. They incessantly implored the gods to send somebody to console whichever might be left the last upon earth, or to close their eyes, but their prayers had not yet been granted. It must not, however, be supposed that the gods rejected such pure and reasonable desires, but they wished to prove the constancy of these good people, to recompense them afterwards with interest.

The old man had just caught some fish, and after fastening his boat to the bank, he spread his net upon a rock to dry it in the sun, when a lion rushed out from one of the cavities of the rock, and went to drink in the pond. Mulidor was afraid at first, but afterwards finding that the proud beast was roaring because he could not reach the water, which was too far off from the edge at this spot, he re-entered his boat, and filling a bowl offered it to the lion, who came and emptied it several times. After he had quenched his thirst, he raised his head and looked at his benefactor so mildly, that the good man ventured to caress him. The lion appeared pleased at his doing so, and ate some bread and cheese which the old man took from a basket he had slung on his arm. As, however, this was not a very safe companion, Mulidor thought he had better return to his cavern, fearing that his wife, uneasy at his absence, might come in search of him, and that the lion, having less respect for her than for him, would devour her.

This idea was beginning to agitate him, when the lion, after licking his hand, returned to his own home, leaving the old man at liberty to do so likewise. Upon reaching the cavern he found his wife, as he expected, alarmed at his delay; he related his adventure to her, which made her shudder. They continued to talk upon the subject, and drew this inference, that men might learn lessons of kindness and gratitude from animals. “Do not, however, place yourself again at the mercy of this fierce beast,” said she, affectionately, “or let me go with you, for I could not live under the fear I shall henceforth be in concerning you. You have been restored to me this time, but can I flatter myself that the Gods will be always equally gracious to me.” The old man, touched by her affection, promised to avoid the lion in future. This conversation kept them up late, and consequently they did not awake till the golden rays of morning shone full upon them. On opening the door to go out and feed her sheep, Phila was greatly surprised to find at it a lion of prodigious size and strength, and a lioness of equal power and beauty, the latter carrying on her back a little girl of five or six years old, who, as soon as she saw the old woman, alighted, ran to her, and embraced her.

The good woman stood motionless with fear and wonder, and the lions, after kissing the little girl, who returned their caresses, ran off, and disappeared in an instant, leaving her in the good wife’s hands. Recovering from her fright she looked at the child, who never ceased kissing her, took her in her arms, and went into the cavern to show her to her husband. They both of them admired her beauty and gentleness; she was quite naked, her fair hair only falling over her shoulders, and upon her right breast she had a singular mark in the shape of a crown.

The good people thanked the Gods for this gift; they dressed the beautiful little child in a light snow-white robe, with a rose-coloured girdle, and tied up her hair with ribbon of the same colour. She allowed them to do so quietly, and without saying a word. They fondled her, and gave her some ewe’s milk quite fresh. She smiled at the sight of it, and looking at them, uttered a little cry resembling the roar of a lion. She soon became accustomed to them, however; she had no resemblance to a lion but in her voice, and from that circumstance they called her Lionette. She answered to this name, and her natural intelligence soon enabled her to understand what they said to her, and at length to speak and explain herself. She had been a year with these good people, who loved her dearly, and were equally loved by her, when Mulidor, to make her familiar with their way of life, in case she should lose them, took her out to fish with him. He had been there several times alone without meeting the lions, but little Lionette was no sooner at the foot of the rock where the good man dried his fish than she uttered a little roar, which awoke the lion and lioness, who ran out to her immediately, each vying with the other in fondling and caressing her. She embraced the lioness affectionately, who allowed her freely to do so; at length she jumped upon her back, and the lions ran off with her in a moment. The poor old man was in consternation; he threw himself upon the ground and prayed to die, now that he had lost Lionette. After lying there a long time, finding his despair could be of no avail, he dragged himself to his cavern, and created fresh misery there in relating to Phila the accident that had happened to Lionette.

“Lionette! my dear Lionette!” cried the good woman, “is it possible we can have lost you? Alas! why did the Gods present you to us, so cruelly to take you from us? Of all the goods we have lost we but regret you!” Their affliction was inconsolable, and poor Mulidor had scarcely spirit enough to bear up against this misfortune. The night was passed in lamentations and tears. At break of day they went in search of her, fearing neither the lions nor their fury; their great love for Lionette made them wish to be devoured also, if she had undergone that frightful fate. They ran to the rock where the lions had chosen to establish themselves, when suddenly they saw little Lionette riding on the lioness towards them. As soon as the lovely child saw them she jumped down, and ran and threw her arms round their necks; then taking from the back of the lioness a kid that she had killed in the chase, “There,” said she, “see what mother lioness gives you; she took me hunting to get game for you.” These good people were half crazy with delight at seeing her again; they could not help crying, and bathing her pretty face with their tears. “My dear daughter! my dear child!” they exclaimed, “you are restored to us again.” Lionette was affected at this sight. “Do you then,” said she, “forbid me from seeing the lioness, that you can say nothing to her, and that you shed tears in embracing me?” “No, no, my dear child,” they both cried at once, “but we feared that you had abandoned us.” “Mother lioness does not wish it,” said the child, “she wishes me to be your daughter.” She turned round for her to agree to what she said, but she was no longer there, and Lionette returned cheerfully with them to the cavern.

Mulidor and Phila thought this was a very wonderful adventure; they had many private conversations about it, and determined they would not refuse the child to the Lioness, when she chose to come for her; at the same time, Mulidor obtained his wife's consent to consult Tigreline upon Lionette's destiny. She was a very learned Fairy. "I had already thought of doing so," replied Phila, "and it had better be done directly." It was settled he should start the first thing in the morning.

The good woman prepared a present for the Fairy, to induce her to be more gracious — nothing very precious, the Fairies do not desire it — it was a piece of sky-blue ribbon, and a little basket of nuts, which Tigreline was passionately fond of. Mulidor set out on his journey to her dwelling; she had fixed her habitation in the heart of an immense forest which was filled with tigers — it was from that circumstance she took her name. When any one sought her for a good object, the tigers did them no harm, but if they went thither with any evil design, they tore them to pieces, and none such were ever known to reach the Fairy's castle. The old man having nothing to fear upon that subject, did not arm himself with any weapon of defence, and arrived without difficulty at the castle at the moment the Fairy was getting up. He found her occupied in stringing large pearls on a golden thread. She received him very graciously, and taking her spectacles from off her nose, "Approach, wise old man," said she. "I know what has brought you here, and I am very glad to see you." Mulidor bowed profoundly, and kissed Tigreline's robe. He offered his little present, which she received very kindly, then making him sit down, she told him she would consult Destiny in her large book, that she might answer correctly the questions he came to ask her. After reading for some time, she raised her eyes to Heaven, then fixing them upon Mulidor, "Listen," said she, "to what I think of Lionette. She must be warned from loving one who is her direct opposite, otherwise great misfortune may happen to her, even to the loss of life. Should she arrive at twenty without this fate befalling her, I answer for her happiness." She then informed the old man that Lionette was a great Princess, exposed to be eaten by lions almost immediately after she was born, through the wickedness of a certain Queen; but she would not tell him anything more, and exhorted the old man to continue to cultivate in the child all those good feelings which he himself possessed, and left it to him to decide on telling her who she was, trusting to his prudence for securing her happiness.

She then gave him for Lionette the string of pearls she had just finished. “If she do not lose it, or give it away,” said the Fairy, “it will preserve her from many dangers. It may, indeed, insure her happiness if she take special care of it.” The old man thanked the Fairy and returned home, where he arrived before nightfall.

He found his wife and Lionette; the latter embraced him a thousand times, and he tied the Fairy’s pearls round her neck, earnestly entreating her to take great care of them. She was enchanted with this new ornament, and the old man related to Phila, as soon as they were alone, all that the Fairy had told him. They consulted together upon the course they should take, and resolved they would say nothing to Lionette of her birth, to prevent her feeling useless regrets. “We can tell her at any time, should it be necessary to do so,” added the prudent wife; “and we should be sorry for it (not having it in our power to give her more than the education of a simple shepherdess) if her disposition, sweet as it is now, should be changed by the knowledge of her rank. Let us attend to her heart and mind: princesses have not the time to do so. She will learn from her own experience that they are as subject as other mortals are to the caprices of Fortune, and perhaps she may be the happier for it.”

Mulidor quite agreed with the truth of this, and they applied themselves more than ever to the education of this amiable child, whose natural excellence left them nothing to wish for. She was twelve years old, and continued to go hunting with the Lioness, very often carrying on her shoulder a little quiver, and skilfully shooting the wild beasts. One night, returning later than usual, the cavern resounded with the roars of the Lioness. Mulidor and Phila both went out, and found the Lioness at the door, having brought Lionette with her, who was seated on the ground, endeavouring to console the poor animal, that appeared in deep despair. “The Lion is dead,” cried the young child, “and my mother cannot be comforted — a hunter has killed him.” The Lioness rolled upon the ground, and shed torrents of tears. The old man, his wife, and Lionette did their best to soothe her grief; but after passing the whole night in the vain attempt, the Lioness expired herself in the morning. The sobs and grief of Lionette were excessive, she could not leave the body of the poor beast, she embraced it, and shed tears over it. At length they dragged her from this sad scene, and while the old man buried the Lioness, the kind Phila attended to Lionette, who was in the deepest affliction. When Mulidor came in, he was much moved by the child’s grief, and was anxious to comfort her, but finding he only increased her sorrow, he said, “What would you have done, then, my child, if this accident had happened to either of us? It is not possible you could have felt it more keenly.” “Ah! my father,” cried she, holding her arms out to embrace him, fearing that he was offended at the little attention she paid to his consolations, “if the Gods have reserved so much misfortune for me, I implore them to let me die instantly, for I shall not be able to support it.” “The Gods, my child,” replied the old man, “do not always grant such rash petitions. It is offending Providence not to submit humbly to its decrees. Do you suppose you are the only one who suffers from affliction in this life? Is this the courage I thought you capable of?”

Lionette cast down her eyes: the severity of this remonstrance had brought a slight colour into her cheeks, which made her more lovely. Mulidor felt he had said enough; he went out and left his wife to soften anything he might have said too harshly; and Phila, embracing Lionette, said, “Really, my child, you would make us believe you could have no greater grief. No doubt the friendship you show for these poor animals is highly laudable, but you must take comfort, and thank the Gods that they have not inflicted on you greater misfortunes.” “Ah! my mother,” cried

Lionette, embracing her, “how much obliged I am to you for speaking to me thus; do not let my father be angry with me any more — I feel I could not bear it.” Mulidor re-entered; Lionette ran to embrace him; he returned her caresses with a fondness that consoled the charming child. They could not sufficiently admire the goodness of her heart, her sensibility, her gentleness, and frankness; and she also loved them dearly.

Lionette, however, continued to deplore the loss of the Lions: a deep melancholy appeared to have taken possession of her; she dared not give way to it before Mulidor, but she felt less restraint with Phila. The worthy couple often conversed together upon this subject; they became alarmed at Lionette’s condition; they tried to amuse her; they went out more frequently, took walks with her, allowed her to go hunting and fishing, gave her birds, flowers, shells; but she preferred hunting to all other amusements. The part of the country in which they lived was so wild a desert that persons must either have come there on purpose, or have lost their way, to be seen in it, so there was little danger of Lionette meeting with anybody. Still, the fact of the Lion having been killed by a hunter was remembered by Mulidor. He never could understand how a man could get so far without having found out their retreat, or being more astonished at seeing a young girl mounted on a Lioness, and hunting in company with a Lion. They did not dare ask Lionette any questions about it, fearing they should renew her grief; and yet they feared to prohibit her from hunting, feeling, good souls, how cruel it would be to deprive her of her favourite amusement. They only entreated her, therefore, to take care she did not lose herself.

At the end of some months, Lionette regained her spirits a little. The old man and his wife were enchanted at this happy change. They congratulated themselves upon having promoted it by their indulgence, and trusted that she would in time forget the Lions. She grew fast, and began to evince character; she was wonderfully beautiful, even in the most simple of her dresses. Phila had made her garment of the finest tigers’ skins, and a little cap of the same material; and thus attired, one might have taken her for Diana herself, she was so graceful and majestic. Her beautiful black eyes heightened the brilliancy and vivacity of her complexion, which neither the hottest sun nor the most scorching wind had any effect upon, nor could they injure the whiteness of her arms or neck. She was not at all aware of her beauty; her strength of mind and her education made her above priding herself on her personal advantages. She spoke well, and her ideas were even superior to her language. The good people were astonished to see her at so early an age evincing so much talent and judgment. She was then just approaching her fifteenth birthday.

For some days past, Phila perceived that she had taken the trouble to put her hair in curls on going to bed, and that on going out she glanced at herself with a kind of satisfaction in a fountain adjoining the cavern. She mentioned this to Mulidor, who was as much surprised at it as herself; they, however, did not choose to speak to her about it, but determined to watch her closely, that they might discover the motive of this unusual attention to her personal appearance, and they recollected that for some time past she had appeared thoughtful, uneasy, and indifferent to matters which had previously amused her.

Lionette returned to the cavern rather earlier on that day; she brought with her a brace of partridges that she had killed. The good woman asked her if she felt too tired to help her with some spinning she wished to finish. “If you could dispense with my assistance,” said Lionette, “I should be very much obliged to you; I feel so inclined to sleep.”

Phila consented, and let her go into a little nook of the cavern which made a kind of room for her. She had decorated it with all the rarest things that she had found. The hangings were composed of the feathers of singular birds, and an abundance of flowers in shells, which she kept filled with fresh water, ornamented this pretty chamber. Mulidor had taught her to paint; she had finished some charming pictures, and with the wool she had found in the cavern she had embroidered some cushions, which she had arranged as a couch. Upon this she threw herself, looking more like a goddess than a mortal.

The good woman becoming uneasy at the length of time she slept, went to seek her; she found her, as I have just described, reclining on the cushions; her eyes were shut, but a few tears that were struggling to escape through their long lashes, convinced her that the lovely Lionette was in some distress. She stood looking at her for some time, she had never seen her look so beautiful; but at length, alarmed at her condition, she drew nearer, and taking her hands, pressed them affectionately between her own.

This action aroused Lionette, and turning her eyes towards Phila, “Ah, mother!” said she, throwing herself upon her neck, “how ashamed I am to appear thus before you.” “Why, my dear girl,” said Phila, “why do you conceal your troubles from me? Do you not know how interested we both feel for you? What is the matter with you, my child? Do not hide your distress from me; perhaps I could assuage it.”

Lionette was some time before she ventured to answer. She kept her head bent down in the old woman’s hands; she kissed them passionately. At length she regained her courage, and raising herself, her cheeks suffused with blushes, “I am about to tell you something,” said she, “which has tormented me for some time past. Let me hope this avowal at least will serve to obtain your forgiveness.” “Speak, my dear girl,” said Phila, “and fear nothing. I am more uneasy at your grief than angry at your having concealed it from me.”

Lionette encouraged by this, told her that, on her way to the forest, about three months ago, she had seen a young shepherd fast asleep, and that an arrow which she had shot at a bird having missed it, fell and pierced the young man’s hand; that attracted by the cry he uttered, she approached him, and assisted in stanching the blood. “This wound,” she added, “awoke in my heart a strange emotion. I trembled in applying to it the herbs I had gathered, the properties of which you had taught me. He, far from being angry with me, told me he should never complain of that wound, but eternally of the one my eyes had inflicted on him.

“This language, quite new to me, was so fascinating that I wished never to quit him. He wept as he gazed on me; he kissed my hands to detain me. I proposed that he should follow me, that my father might assist in curing him. ‘I cannot do so, beautiful Lionette,’ said he (I had told him my name), ‘a most cruel fate has forced me to fly from the world; but promise me to come sometimes and cheer my solitude, and I shall ask nothing more from the Gods. I shall believe their anger is appeased.’ I did promise him — he asked me too tenderly to be refused. At length I felt you would be uneasy at my stay, and I left him with so much regret that I burst into tears, and hurried away that he might not perceive it, for I was ashamed, I think, of my compassion for him.

“I returned, restless and miserable. Next morning I went in search of him. I cannot tell what prevented me from making you acquainted with it, but I was on the point of telling you a hundred times, and as often I felt it would be impossible to do so — perhaps it was because he had begged me to keep it a secret. I ran to look for him, to ask his permission to tell you. Approaching the spot where we had seen each other the evening before, I stopped suddenly. A feeling of reproach came over me for having hidden this proceeding from you; and besides, I was so agitated, I feared I should be ill. ‘What shall I do by myself here?’ thought I; ‘I am without help, and that which I might find is perhaps dangerous to wait for. Unfortunate Lionette, what hast thou promised to do? Fly, return to thy duty, for it is clear that thou hast wandered from it, since thou art so much disturbed at taking this secret step. The Gods warn thee. This state of mind is not natural.’ I had sat down to reflect. I got up. I retraced my steps, when a grievous thought arrested me. ‘Alas!’ said I, ‘perhaps he is unable to come to meet me, from the wound I inflicted on him; and if so, what will be his despair at not seeing me? There is no one to help him in this desolate place but myself. To refuse him my assistance would be inhuman. Let me find out whether he wants me, and see him but for that.’

“I proceeded, therefore, to the fatal place where I had wounded him the evening before. He was not there. I became alarmed; my limbs failed me; I fell upon the moss which covered the ground. I saw some traces of his blood still remaining on it. I was nearly suffocated by my grief. Happily my tears flowed, and that relieved me; but I felt the keenest affliction when I thought that perhaps I had been the cause of his death. I drew out my arrows, and broke them deliberately as a punishment for my cruelty. I caught sight by chance of the one with which I had wounded him. It was still upon the ground, and stained with his blood. My tears flowed faster at this frightful sight. I gave utterance to my agony in piercing shrieks. They were interrupted by the sight of the young shepherd himself, running quickly towards me. I could not rise. He threw himself on his knees near me, in so much terror that I was alarmed myself at his excessive paleness. He asked me what had happened. At the same time I put the same question to him. We re-assured each other. I told him the reason of my tears. Never was any one thanked so tenderly. His words had a charm in them that went to my heart. I listened with a pleasure I had never felt before; I nearly forgot his wound, so much I feared to interrupt him. I was astonished, however, to hear him say how much he loved me — he, whom I had scarcely ever seen; and I was still more surprised to find how dear he had become to me, for he told me more than I could dare tell him; and I believe he could read my heart, for I thought exactly as he did, only it appeared to me I could not so well have expressed myself.

“At last he told me that he wished to be mine. ‘And are you not so already?’ said I. ‘Can you be more so than you are? That would enchant me.’ He smiled at my words. I thought I had said something wrong, and I blushed at my awkward manner of expressing myself. I know not what he thought, but he said a thousand more affectionate things to me. He informed me he was the son of a great king, and would be my husband. ‘I cannot be your wife,’ said I: ‘they will not let me.’ ‘Ah! who will oppose it,’ exclaimed he, ‘if you consent?’ I then told him that my father and mother had always said a crown would be an obstacle to the happiness of my life, and that they certainly would never consent to such a union. ‘Wait for a few days,’ said he, ‘and I will tell you how to soften their severity. If you love me you will assist me in conquering it; but never refrain from coming to this place. My life depends upon your acquiescence. Fear nothing from me, lovely Lionette; nothing can be purer than my affection, and I call all the divinities of the forest to witness that I shall ever respect as much as I love you.’ He gave me his hand; I gave him mine, and I vowed, as he had done, to love for ever, if you consented to it.

“I examined his hand, and found the wound had healed; I was delighted at this, and left him, promising to return, and not to say anything to you until he desired me. I returned so absorbed by his image that I felt as though I only lived when he was present. I had no pleasure in anything but him: the more I saw him the more I wished to see him. It was the same with him. He is charming, mother! and were you to see him you could not do otherwise than love him.

“Three months have passed in this sweet union, and now comes my misery. This morning he told me that it was necessary that he should be absent for some days upon important business which tended much to our happiness. I had never known what it was to lose sight of him for more than a few hours. I was as wretched as he was. He told me, however, that he should soon return, and that he was even more anxious than myself to complete our happiness. I wept bitterly. At length the hour arrived for us to part, I unfastened my necklace, and tied it round his arm —— “

“Oh, heavens! what have you done, my child?” exclaimed Phila. “We are lost beyond help.”

She threw herself upon the ground, and filled the cavern with her cries, Lionette, alarmed at this sight, arose to assist the good woman. “What is the matter, then, mother?” she cried. “Why should a necklace of such trifling consequence rouse you to so much grief?” “It is for you I weep, my daughter,” said Phila. “Your happiness was linked with the preservation of that unfortunate necklace.”

She then repeated what the Fairy Tigreline had said to Mulidor, and did not conceal from her that she was a princess, but that she knew nothing more. Lionette, who possessed naturally an elevated mind, was not astonished at this news. “Very well, mother,” said she; “the more you convince me of the probability of my high birth, the more courageously I ought to bear up against the sad events which are predicted of me, though, to speak the truth, I do not believe in them; and I see nothing unfortunate here but the absence of the shepherd whom I love, and his unhappy name, which made me fly from him without being able to control myself. These are the only misfortunes I know of.” “What say you, my daughter?” exclaimed the old woman; “his name caused you to fly from him? Explain this riddle — I do not understand it.” “Alas! this is the cause of my despair,” replied Lionette. “I had scarcely tied the necklace round his arm, when he kissed my hand with such transport that I forgot my grief for the moment. ‘Yes, beautiful Lionette,’ he said, ‘it is for life that you have enchained the happy Prince Coquerico.’

“Hardly had he pronounced his name, which he had never told me (he preferred that I should always call him my shepherd), than I felt so horrified, without knowing wherefore, that I fled as swiftly as possible. He followed me; he called me. I had not the power to return. An invisible hand seemed to impel me forward. ‘My dear Lionette,’ he cried, ‘where are you going? It is your shepherd — it is Coquerico who calls you.’ I ran still faster. At last I lost sight of him, either that I had taken paths he knew not of, or that he was afraid of displeasing me by following me any longer. I arrived here in such confusion I had some trouble in hiding it from you. You know the rest, my mother — all that has happened to me, and I beg you a thousand pardons for profiting so little from your good lessons; and although I owe my birth to apparently powerful princes, I shall always submit to your authority."

Mulidor came in as Lionette finished speaking; they made him acquainted with this adventure; he was in great alarm at what might happen from the loss of the necklace, and did not dare go and consult Tigreline, whom they had so decidedly disobeyed. There was nothing to be done but to wait and see what would befal the Princess. They entreated her to forget this young man; they succeeded by degrees in consoling her for his absence, and notwithstanding her melancholy, she took part occasionally in their cheerful conversation.

Two months passed in this manner. One night they were suddenly awakened out of a deep sleep by a clap of thunder which made them think the cavern was crumbling to pieces. They started to their feet, and had not time to recover themselves before a hideous and very richly dressed Fairy touched them with her wand, and they were transformed into two Lionesses and a Lion, she then transported them in an instant to the Forest of Tigers, where she vanished and left them.

Who could express the consternation of the wise old man, or his wife's distress? That of the Princess was still greater, she reproached herself as being the cause of these good peoples' misfortune; and what distressed her still more was, not being able to speak, she had not the power of comforting them. This calamity for the moment made her forget Prince Coquerico; but when she thought she should never see him more, or that if she did, he would fly in terror from her, or at least not recognise her, she uttered such frightful roars that the forest resounded with them, and her poor companions came near her to try to console her. Their grief was redoubled to find they could neither understand nor speak to her. They groaned despairingly. At length it occurred to all three of them to go to the Fairy, but they had no power of communicating the idea to each other. The Lion was the first to start, the two Lionesses followed him, but the Tigers stopped the way, without, however, doing them any harm. Finding their intentions were frustrated, they concluded it was by the Fairy's orders. They buried themselves in the thickest part of the forest, and laid down very sorrowfully upon some beautiful green grass, which served as a bed for them. They passed some considerable time in this place without seeing the Fairy, she took care, however, to send them food by one of the Tigers regularly every day.

It is now time to acquaint the reader who Prince Coquerico was: — That young Prince was the son of a King who had been very powerful, and who had reigned in the Fortunate Islands. This King was dead, and having left his son at a tender age, the Queen became regent. The ambition of reigning, the pride of being Sovereign Mistress, had closed her heart against the feelings of nature. She had her son brought up in a castle upon the edge of the sea, in luxury and idleness unequalled; and her excuse for this sort of education was a prediction of the Fairies at his birth, to the effect that his life would be endangered if he took up arms before he was twenty years old.

Everything was interdicted that could give him any desire for military exercises, and the art of war was depicted in such frightful colours that, however valiant the Prince might have been born, he shuddered at even the picture of a sword. The King, his father, who had died in battle, was represented to him as so sanguinary a sovereign that he vowed he would never imitate him.

They had named this prince, Coquerico, in derision from his having amused himself one day — contrary to the desire of his tutors — with looking at a fight between two game cocks. He spent his life in walking; in hearing sentimental romances read to him, the heroes of which they represented in such a manner that he might not have a desire to become like them; he learned to play upon several instruments, to paint, and to work at tapestry. The Queen went to see him very often, and pictured to him the fate of kings in such distressing colours, that he dreaded the moment when he should ascend the throne.

He was just ten years old, the time appointed for the Queen to resign the throne to him, when, walking on the coast, apart from his followers, he was caught up by a whirlwind, and disappeared in an instant. His tutors, surprised that he was so long a time in returning, went to seek him, but could find him nowhere. The most diligent search proved in vain, and they were compelled to apprise the Queen of this mysterious circumstance. She would easily have been consoled for this accident if the people of the Island, tired of her government, and indignant at the education that had been given to their King, had not risen in rebellion. After having torn her ministers in pieces, they compelled her to fly to a neighbouring Monarch, who granted her an asylum. This King had been a widower for two years, having but one daughter, in giving birth to whom the Queen died.

He married the fugitive Queen; and the people of the Fortunate Islands elected a council to rule the kingdom until they could obtain news of their Prince Coquerico, whom they did not believe to be dead. They were right, the whirlwind had been caused by a Fairy, who, delighted at the sight of so beautiful a Prince, and angry to find him brought up so badly, had resolved to purloin him from a mother who had proved herself unworthy of being blessed with such a son.

To cultivate a fine disposition spoiled by so wicked an education, the Fairy was impelled by another feeling less generous and more natural. The beauty of this Prince had touched her heart, she imagined that gratitude would make some impression upon that of the young Coquerico. The few charms she possessed, however, were not likely to do so. She was old, and had a horn in the middle of her forehead; but she was very susceptible, and was always complaining that she had met with none but ungrateful beings. “By bringing up this young man,” she thought, “he will become accustomed to my appearance, and perhaps my care and affection for him will inspire him with sentiments that may lead in time to that happy union of souls, that perfect mutual love, which I have heard so much of and never experienced.”

Cornue (that was her name) reasoned thus in transporting the handsome Prince to her dwelling, which was in the Desert where the old man and his wife had brought up the young Lionette for the last four years. Cornue had built herself a charming palace upon the summit of one of the mountains, but it was inaccessible to all human beings, in consequence of the clouds with which it was continually surrounded. The charms of life, its amusements, both rational and frivolous, were all united there. This palace was of immense extent, although formed of one single opal, so transparent and so beautiful that through the walls one might see a grain of millet at the end of the garden, which was worthy of so magnificent a palace, from its groves, terraces, parterres, and fountains.

The tasteful Cornue had not spared anything, even in her dress, for when, placing the Prince in the vestibule of her palace, she made herself visible to him, she had enveloped her horn in a green velvet case, covered with diamonds; her hair, which was rather grey, was powdered white, and tied with green *moulinet* bows, in the centre of each of which sparkled a large diamond; and her dress, of flesh-colour and silver, showed her form so truly, that one could perceive the Graces had striven among themselves which should give the finishing touch to it.

The Prince was surprised at this apparition. She kissed his hand, and asked his forgiveness for taking him away from his retirement without his permission. “If I can avoid being your king,” said he, with an air which showed that he was not alarmed at the manner in which he had been conducted thither, “I should be very well contented, for the fear of ascending the throne made me desirous of leaving my kingdom, and you have done me a favour in taking me away from it; — but I should like to know," added he, quickly, "why you wear so pointed a head-dress, and why your dress is of so peculiar a colour?" "We excuse such childish questions at your age," said the Fairy, slightly blushing; "you will be ashamed of them some day; — but let us enter the palace, and you will find something to occupy your attention more agreeably."

She then gave him her hand, and they passed into a saloon in keeping with the beauty of the rest of the palace. A hundred black slaves were arranged in two files, through which the Prince and the Fairy proceeded to the centre. It was sufficiently light to see the rarities which ornamented this beautiful place; statues, sculptured marbles, porcelain, furniture, were all admired with the taste of a connoisseur by the young Prince. The slave opened the door of a magnificent gallery, filled with charts, maps of the world, instruments of geometry, models of the most beautiful cities in Asia, Europe, and Africa; of palaces where the men and women of each nation were dressed in their national costumes, and by the Fairy's skill they moved hither and thither, spoke in their own language, and held conversations according to their position. This amused the Prince for a considerable time. He requested the Fairy to allow him to remain in that gallery a little longer than she seemed inclined to do.

He made the slaves who accompanied him explain what this all meant; he bade them repeat it, and was quite enchanted. He recognised the Fortunate Islands; he saw his tutors seeking for him, and who appeared in despair at not finding him — that touched his heart with pity. The Fairy at length withdrew him from this scene, that he might not witness the catastrophe. She amused him with other objects.

Some islands surrounded by the sea, upon another model, afforded him great entertainment. Vessels filled with passengers executed some wonderful evolutions; then there was a sea-fight, followed by a storm, which dispersed the ships and sank several of them. This terminated the diversions of this day. The Fairy then proposed supper, after which an opera was represented; this was succeeded by a ball, and the Prince danced with the Fairy, and with the nymphs in the Fairy’s train, and at last six slaves conducted him to a handsome apartment, in which he retired to rest.

The next and following days were passed in conversations, sometimes serious, sometimes mirthful; the slaves had orders to cultivate his taste for the arts while amusing him, to which purpose he lent himself readily. He was already accustomed to walk in a second gallery, which formed a superb arsenal; he heard them talk of arms and of war with pleasure; he almost wished to witness a battle, and felt ashamed he had ever thought otherwise. The slaves formed themselves into battalions, he placed himself at their head, he enjoyed his triumph in a sham fight, he invented stratagems, he sought for glory everywhere; he no longer feared to be a king. The gallery of models had displayed to him the pleasures of royalty; he passed three hours each day in it, and took lessons from the ablest politicians. The cabinet secrets of all the Courts in the universe were no secrets to him.

There was a model of the whole globe in that gallery, and what art pervaded that grand work! Not only all the kingdoms and their various provinces, to the smallest habitation, were represented; but every mortal upon the face of the earth was seen in pursuit of his vocation. All spoke their own language, you heard them, you saw them, — the most secret actions were displayed therein: the ocean and its vessels, rivers, lakes, streamlets, deserts, even yet undiscovered countries, — nothing was hidden from the learned Cornue. All was to be found in her model. There was wherewithal to amuse one during the longest life that ever was known.

The Prince was fascinated by this wonderful work of art; he studied it for a long time; he could with difficulty tear himself from it; nor did he consent to do so till the Fairy assured him that this gallery forming a portion of his suite of apartments, he might visit it whenever he wished.

He left it at length to enjoy new pleasures — an opera, a supper, followed by a magnificent ball, in which the fairies of Cornue’s Court distinguished themselves in dancing, notwithstanding they were ugly and old, for their mistress took care not to incur the reproach of being the least handsome person in the Palace; and the designs she had upon the heart of the young Prince would not admit of her neglecting anything that would bring them to bear.

His education was entrusted to six fairies, who led him each morning into the gallery of the globe for three hours; they explained the various interests of Princes, he learned their languages, he heard and saw the effect of their politics, their battles by land and sea, which displayed to him the ability of ministers and of generals. Already he was able to form sound opinions, and to speak of things with the knowledge acquired from experience. His noble mind developed itself, he burned with a desire for glory, he blushed at having been afraid of it. He also appreciated the pleasures of royalty, he began to find a satisfaction in being master, but he did not at all covet the soft and effeminate life which he perceived in the seraglios of the sovereigns of Persia and Constantinople; he preferred those kings who reigned absolutely over their subjects, with a certainty that they would shed their blood to preserve theirs. Insensibly he became the most accomplished Prince living. He was not ignorant upon any point; his fine intellect assisting his slight experience, he evinced in everything the greatest judgment and discernment. “But where can one see this land, and the inhabitants, that I observe in my model?” said he sometimes to Cornue. “I will show you some day,” answered she; “it is not time yet.” That would vex him; he was desirous of appearing of some consequence himself in this fine plan of the universe, he was annoyed at not seeing himself in it. This caused him many reflections, but as they only sprang from his brain, they did not distress him much — those suggested by the heart, more interesting, he knew nothing of yet.

The Fairy did not fear that the beauties whom he saw in the model would awake in him any emotions contrary to her wishes; they were so exceedingly small, that he could but take them for pretty little puppets, the largest figure, of a man even, not being taller than one's thumb. His great amusement was the opera and comedy; he went to them very often: the little figures acted wonderfully well, and as he had a great appreciation of genius, he attended all orations of the Academy, and commented upon them with great sagacity.

Until he was eighteen years old, this gallery continued to be his greatest pleasure; in fact, he knew no other. At that age he began to wish to know the people whose portraits he saw; the Fairy, desirous to please him, dared not oppose him too much; she put him off with promises, but feared he would escape her. "I hunt in your park," he said; "I walk in it; I always see the same things, it tires me; I should like sometimes to see something different." "Ah! truly," said the Fairy, "you have well preserved the faults of human kind. Miserable state of men! Can they be perfectly happy? — they cannot believe themselves to be so, they sigh for what they do not possess, and when they have obtained it they are disgusted with it. Ah! what have you to wish for here? do you not reign here? are you not the master? Do you fear treachery here, false friends, or bad advisers? We live but to please you; you are all-powerful in this Palace — you command; we obey you. What being could be grander and happier than you are?"

The Prince bent his head at the enumeration of all the happiness the Fairy had surrounded him with, and found that he still desired more. He said nothing, but his uneasiness, his agitation, his weariness, appeared in spite of him in all his actions. Cornue increased the magnificence of her dress; the Prince did not notice it; he scarcely ever looked at her. She was disconsolate; for the idea, entertained ever since she had carried him off, the hope of being ardently loved by him, had strengthened with time, and the Prince's increasing beauty had contributed much to her passion. He was just at that happy age in which we please without much trouble, and love with that frankness which is so soon discarded.

Cornue was enraged that he did not think of her. “You ought to love me, were it only to amuse you,” said she to him, one day, when she was very melancholy. “Love you,” replied he, looking very vacantly at her; “do I not love you?” Then, without thinking of it, he added immediately, “I feel certain I shall never love.” “Ah! why?” said the Fairy; “who prevents you?” “Nobody,” he replied; then rose, and took a gun, and went shooting for the rest of the day.

The Fairy, in despair at his indifference, and fearing she should lose him if she still persisted in opposing him, perceiving also that he was thinner, and that his colour had faded, determined to allow him to change the scene, and for this reason one morning she sent for him. “The time has arrived,” said she, “that I can give you your liberty to leave the Palace. You will find the vast universe, of which I am about to open the roads to you, resemble a very stormy ocean, but since you wish to expose yourself to it, I will not detain you; all I advise you to do is to confide in me when in trouble (for you will have much to endure before you become King), and to commence your excursions by going to my sister Tigreline, and asking her, from me, for the wonderful necklace which can alone preserve you from the misfortunes attached to your fate. Take this bottle, pour a drop of the spirit it contains upon the clouds which surround the park; they will open for you to pass, and this dog will guide you on your way back to the palace.”

The Prince, who did not expect so great a favour, displayed such transports of gratitude that the Fairy felt nearly recompensed for her trouble by the caresses she received from him. He promised to follow her advice upon every point, and set out immediately. The boundaries of the park adjoined a forest so wild and frightful that Coquerico found the world was not quite so beautiful as he imagined it to be; notwithstanding, he entered this vast wilderness, accompanied solely by his dog. Guided by his faithful companion, he was pursuing a path which led to the Forest of Tigers, when suddenly he saw a lion of extraordinary size coming straight towards him. At first he was startled at such a meeting, never having seen a lion in Cornue’s park; but recovering himself a little, he shot an arrow with so true an aim that it pierced the lion’s heart, and he fell dead at his feet. He proceeded as fast as possible, but his attention was arrested a moment afterwards by frightful roarings. He looked in the direction from whence they came, and he saw in the distance another lion, running at full speed, with a young child on its back; he was about to pursue it, but his dog pulled him by the coat so hard that he thought the Fairy Cornue had appointed this dog to be his guardian, and so, giving himself up to his guidance, he arrived at Tigreline’s abode without further accident.

As soon as he had told her the reason of his journey, she replied, “Prince Coquerico, you will inform my sister that I have disposed of the necklace that she asks me for; doubtless it was for you she wanted it. I hope, however, that it will not fall into your hands so soon, whatever advantage you might desire from it. But to make up for the loss of this gift, which I am no longer able to bestow, I warn you that if you ever pronounce your name rashly, or without its being absolutely necessary, you will lose, perhaps for ever, that which is most dear to you. I advise you, therefore, to conceal your name from every one, or at least not to mention it lightly. Go, Prince, I can do nothing more for you.”

The Prince thanked the Fairy very much, kissed her hand, retired, and returned to Cornue’s palace, very well satisfied with the little he had seen. He was received most graciously; they asked him many questions; he related all his adventures; he fancied he should never have finished talking about them, everything had seemed of such singular beauty to him. He was in high spirits all the evening. They praised him, they caressed him, but that did not content him. He was resolved to go out again, and the Fairy, perceiving how good-tempered he was, permitted him to do as he wished.

For a whole year he roamed to the furthest extent of the beautiful country in the neighbourhood; sometimes he went on horseback, and often dismounted to sleep under the trees during the heat of the day. This sort of exercise increased his stature and his strength. He was now in the prime of his beauty.

He was very anxious to ask the Fairy to restore him to his subjects; he was tired of this life of privation; his mind, as fine as his person, made him anxious to revisit his kingdom; but he dared not as yet request Cornue's permission, lest he should appear ungrateful. This brought back his former melancholy. Cornue became alarmed; she endeavoured to amuse him in every imaginable way. He scarcely ever went out; he passed his days almost entirely in the gallery of models, and when he saw a battle he could not be got away from it. What was still worse, he one day witnessed the coronation of a young King. At this sight they thought he would go mad. The shouts of joy, the warlike instruments, the pomp of the ceremony, transported him with anger as well as delight. "Why, then," said he, "am I to be imprisoned here during my youth, when I could be at the head of these people, making either war or peace, enjoying really my rights of birth? They would detain me here, a captive, render me as effeminate as Achilles at the Court of Licomedia. Can I not find a Ulysses who will come to my rescue?" He would have given still greater vent to his vexation had they not come to announce to him that the Fairy was waiting for him to order them to begin an opera she had commanded the performance of. "What, always some fête?" said he. "Well," he continued, "I must submit to it."

The opera they were to perform was *Armide*. The Fairy, who had been told what an ill-humour the Prince was in, watched him during the performance. She thought that he seemed amused by it, for he was so attentive to the piece. The fourth and fifth acts he certainly did think wonderful; he spoke of it the whole of the evening; he admired above everything the idea of the shield which restored the hero to glory. "What," said the Fairy; “does not Armida interest you at all? Do you not pity her? So much affection deserves a better recompense.” “By my faith, Madam,” replied the Prince, “your Armida has what she deserves. I should like to know if the heart is to be commanded; I believe it to be perfectly independent of the will, as far as I am concerned.” Cornue felt the cruelty of this answer, but she did not appear to do so, and turned the conversation to another subject.

The Prince retired early, that he might go the next day shooting. This was the day that his hand was wounded by the beautiful Lionette’s arrow. Upon returning to the Fairy’s palace the Prince considered whether he should speak of this adventure; he was astonished at himself for wishing to keep it a secret. A sweet feeling (hitherto unknown to him) stole over his mind, and took such possession of it that he was unable to conceal it. He asked himself what it could mean, and he could find no reason for it. The name of Lionette enchanted him. He repeated it incessantly. The grace, the beauty of this young girl enchanted him, and he found himself within the palace without being aware how he had arrived there. It was then he began to recover himself a little.

Under the effect of this intoxicating feeling, he said a thousand gallant things to the Fairy. She was surprised at it, but flattering herself that her charms had produced this alteration, she did not inquire the reason of such extraordinary joy. His wound made her uneasy, but he took care to tell her that he had hurt himself with one of his own arrows, and the enamoured Cornue, anxious about everything that concerned him, cured it by breathing upon it, without further inquiry. He was in charming spirits for the rest of the day; Cornue thought he had lost his senses; she ordered some music that he thought delightful, although he had heard the same every day without noticing it — so much does love embellish the slightest objects. His passion led him to indulge in delicious meditations, and to discover in his heart the existence of emotions he had never dreamed of. He retired early, and hastened to the gallery, seeking for a representation of her whom he had seen during the day — he was successful in his search; he saw the lovely Lionette seated between the old people in the cavern, and when, on separating for the night, they extinguished the light, and she was in darkness, he still remained gazing in the direction of the cavern, and did not leave the gallery until the following morning was sufficiently advanced for him to go and meet the lovely huntress herself. In traversing the forest he lost himself, and that was the cause of his being so long before he rejoined his beautiful Lionette.

Unfortunately for the Fairy, her skill was now useless to her — from the moment Fairies fall in love, their art cannot protect them; when they recover their reason they regain their power; but in the interim they can neither punish their rivals nor discover them, unless chance assist them, as it might common mortals. Three months elapsed without her having an idea of the cause of the change in Prince Coquerico; she heard no more of his ambitious aspirations; a country life and retirement was all he now desired; he dressed himself as a shepherd; he composed eclogues and madrigals; he engraved them upon the trees in the park, accompanied by gallant and amorous devices that the Fairy could not understand. When she asked him for an explanation, he smiled, and told her it was not for him to instruct so learned a person as she was. “Ask your own heart, Madam,” added he, “that will teach you; it was mine that dictated it all to me.”

The Fairy was quite contented with this answer; she interpreted it according to her own wishes, but she could not reconcile to herself the Prince’s frequent absence, after all he had said to her; for he went out the first thing in the morning, and did not return till the last thing at night. She passed whole days in thinking about new dresses and different entertainments. As she had a lively imagination, she succeeded with the latter, but the former were absolutely useless — her age and her horn entirely defeated all attempts at decoration. It was upon this occasion that she invented the *Bal-Masqués*, which have been ever since so successful. The Prince often indulged in this agreeable delusion, and with his heart full of the beautiful Lionette, he spoke to the Fairy as though he were addressing his love, and the credulous Cornue took it all to herself.

Towards the end of the third month of this intense and secret passion, the Prince at length resolved to ask the Fairy to conduct him to his own kingdom. It was not ambition that induced him to wish it, but a higher and more delicate sentiment. Why conceal it? Love itself made him anxious to ascend the throne, that he might place the beautiful Lionette on it beside him. He had scarcely spoken to the Fairy about it before she consented, flattering herself that he wished to share his crown with her. With what pleasure did she order everything for his departure. The Prince, as we know, took leave of his lovely shepherdess, and set out, with the Fairy and a numerous suite, for the kingdom of the Fortunate Isles. Cornue was seated with him in a car of rock crystal, drawn by a dozen unicorns; their harness was of gold and rubies, as brilliant as the sun. A dozen other chariots, as pompous, followed; and the Prince, as beautiful as Cupid, and magnificently dressed, attracted the attention of every one. He had most carefully concealed the necklace that the lovely Lionette had given him; he wore it on his left arm as a bracelet, and his dress covered it. He was delighted at the thought of appearing before Lionette in such grand apparel, and to read in her looks the joy such proof of his love would give her; but he could not help feeling a secret anxiety, which at times cast a cloud over his mind; he attributed it to the distance between him and his love, and sometimes he thought he had done wrong in going so far away from her. “The happiness I am seeking, is it worth what I lose?” said he. “Lionette loves me as she has seen me; will she love me more for possessing a crown? Ah! Lionette, I know you too well to wrong you so much; your noble and simple heart only estimates that true grandeur which places man above his fellows by the elevation of his mind.”

At length he arrived at the Fortunate Isles, and the people, delighted to see their Prince again, received him with acclamations. He was crowned, and by the attentions of the enamoured Cornue, the ceremony was followed by magnificent fêtes, in which the Prince, from gratitude, insisted on her sharing all the honours. The fêtes ended, and the affairs of this fine kingdom put in order by the Fairy and the ministers she had chosen, she determined to have a complete explanation with the King, and began by adroitly proposing that he should marry. She had gained the ministers over to her wishes, and induced them to join in the proposition she had made to him; but who can tell Cornue's astonishment when the young Prince replied by acknowledging his love for the beautiful Lionette, and entreating her to assist in rendering him happy, by enabling him to share his throne with the object of his affections! "Ah! where have you seen this Lionette?" replied the Fairy, with a look in which astonishment, rage, and vexation were equally visible. "What, then," added she, "is this the return for my care of you?" The Prince, astonished at this sharp reply, and not fearing her reproaches, ended by relating his interview with Lionette, and painted his affection in such glowing colours that she plainly saw the opposition she might make against it would only tend to irritate him and increase his passion; then cleverly making her decision, "I would not speak thus to you," said she, "but to reproach you for your want of confidence, that you did not open your heart to me. I should have served you better, and Lionette would have been to-day Queen of the Fortunate Isles; but you have acted like a young man without experience, and I doubt if I can serve you at present as I could otherwise have done." "Ah! Madam," replied the King, "you can if you will. Give me your chariot, and let me go and seek my beautiful Lionette." "I will do better for you," said she, with a forced smile; "I will go with you as soon as it strikes midnight; hold yourself in readiness; we shall be on our way back before the sun is up, and I know no other means of satisfying your impatience."

The Prince embraced the Fairy’s knees, transported with joy and gratitude, which wounded her much more than his unfortunate confidence; she took leave of him under a pretext of consulting her books, but really because she could not contain herself, and her fury had risen to a most horrible height. Who could describe it? All that an amorous, jealous, and mistaken woman could feel, she, as a Fairy, felt still more; nor could the most forcible language paint but feebly the tortures which racked her heart. She had promised, however, to accompany the Prince; but that would enable her to execute the vengeance she meditated.

She felt the more assured of her revenge as the Prince had let the necklace fall from his arm, and had left her without being aware of his loss. She picked it up, and thanking the stars for so lucky an accident, no longer delayed taking measures for her revenge, which would have been useless without that precious necklace. She closed the doors of her apartment, that her absence might not be perceived, and desired the King might be told she must consult her books in private, and at midnight she would be visible. She mounted a flying dragon, and speedily arrived in the cavern, where everything was in profound repose; the dragon sneezed, which was like a clap of thunder, and enough to rend the cavern. She accomplished, as we have already seen, her wicked intentions, and returned to the Fortunate Isles as the clock struck eleven. She could hardly restrain her delight while waiting for the King; but soon the idea of his being in love, and without doubt loved in return, renewed her fury; she was in a transport of rage when he entered her room with an eagerness which assisted not a little to increase it.

She endeavoured to calm herself, or rather to dissemble her rage; her fury was at such a height that her horn was in a flame, and the enamoured and too credulous Coquerico, thinking it was an attention she was paying him to guide him in the darkness of the night, thanked her a thousand times for this precaution. They mounted a chariot drawn by three owls, set off at full speed, and descended in the forest close to the cavern wherein Lionette had been reared. The Prince only knew it from Lionette's description of it. Love invests with interest the most trifling circumstance connected with its object.

He had often asked her to describe the place she inhabited. He remembered every little detail distinctly. He could not be deceived; besides, he knew her bow and arrow that were in the cabinet in which she slept. His grief was excessive at not finding her; he called her, he went in and out of the cavern a thousand and a thousand times, he entreated the Fairy to throw a light from her horn upon places that were obscure, and seeing some little pictures she had painted — "Ah! this is her work," cried he; "I will preserve them all my life." The Fairy was so irritated at his transports, that she threw out a flame from her horn, which in a moment destroyed everything that was in the cavern.

The Prince had great difficulty to save himself from this conflagration. The Fairy protected him, however, and triumphed within herself at the absence of her rival. She advised the Prince to seek for her elsewhere. "Perhaps," said she, "her parents have married her; or perhaps," she continued, ironically, "grief at your loss has caused her death." "I know not what has happened," said the Prince, in a tone which marked the agitation of his mind, and distracted at not being able to find his mistress; "but I would rather believe her to be dead than unfaithful; and if it be true that she exists no longer, very soon I shall follow her to the grave." "Here is a furious determination of a lover!" cried the Fairy; but considering that under the circumstances it would be better not to irritate the King, she changed her tone. "What I have said," pursued she, "is to prove the interest I take in you. I am sorry you should have conceived an affection for a person of such low extraction, and I cannot sufficiently thank Fate that, in accordance with my own opinion, has removed this shepherdess, and thus assisted your heart to recover from its error." "I know not if Fate has assisted you to drive me mad," replied the Prince, sharply; "but if so, I feel she has been more successful in that attempt than the other. As to Lionette, I will repair the defect, if it be one, to be born of obscure parents, — not that I believe it possible for her to be what she appears. In any case, however, happy are the princesses who are as high-minded as she is."

The Prince now, seeing how uselessly he was seeking for her in this place, entered the chariot again with the Fairy, and returned to the Fortunate Isles, where they arrived at sunrise without having spoken a single word, both of them occupied — the one by her fury, the other by his grief.

The King, upon his return, shut himself up in his palace, and thought of nothing but by what steps he might recover Lionette. It occurred to him he ought to go to Tigreline. This resolution taken, he proceeded to Cornue to tell her his project. "I cannot imagine," said he to her, "why you do not assist me in this affair; is your power so limited? Is Tigreline's more extensive than yours? — for I believe," he added, instantly, "you are so interested in my happiness, that you would exert all the skill you possess to increase it, if it were possible. I could not even doubt it, without being ungrateful. I have had sufficient proofs to be quite sure of it, and I feel that I can never forget them." Cornue blushed at this question, which she did not expect, and becoming acquainted with the extent of her misfortune by the latter part of the King's discourse. "It is in consequence of that very affection I have for you," said she, "as you ought to know, that I will not serve you in fostering a passion that would diminish your glory; and if you are as grateful as you say you are for the care I have taken to make you happy, and for preserving your life, you will discard an infatuation which will be your ruin. What an idea will your people — will the whole universe — have of a king so little master of himself that he runs after a poor shepherdess, to give her a crown which he might share with the first princesses in the world — no matter whom: perhaps even a fairy might not have disdained to partake of one with you." These last words, which escaped her in spite of herself, opened the King’s eyes, and looking at the Fairy with astonishment, he was convinced of the truth of his suspicions when he saw her standing silent, confused, and carefully avoiding his gaze.

It was some time before he could find words to answer, from his excessive astonishment; but unwilling either to irritate the Fairy at the moment he so much wanted her assistance, or to encourage a hope that he felt incapable of sustaining. “The knowledge you have of the human heart, Madam,” said he, at last, “ought to have taught you that a King cannot dispense with the laws of nature more than other men. So pure and intense a passion as I have for Lionette is not of a character to be easily extinguished. Why did you not exert your power to render me insensible? I should not then have felt the grief I have to-day, nor the happiness you speak of. This choice of a great princess or of a fairy who would deign to receive my vows and my crown — this happiness, I say, does not at all affect me. Is it necessary that to be happy I must sacrifice myself for ever to the whims of my people? I must choose for myself. I would willingly make them happy. I feel a pleasure even in desiring and being able to do so — but what can it signify to them who I give them for their Queen? I value my greatness only because it enables me to elevate her whom I love. This sweet pleasure would induce me to support the weight of a crown; without it, what would be every other enjoyment? And am I compelled, because I am their master, to be deprived of the only pleasure I sigh for? No, Madam; in giving them Lionette I consider that I make them as happy as I make myself. Should they refuse to receive her, they will repent their temerity; and whoever ventures to oppose me will find that my love has not made me forget I am a king.”

“Proceed, ungrateful one! Proceed to destroy me!” said the Fairy. “You know too well all the violence of my love for you, and you only pretend not to see it to overwhelm me the more by your severity. It is I — it is I only — who will expose myself to the danger of resisting thy base inclinations.

Dare to punish me, and so complete the measure of your crimes! But how wilt thou do it? Thou art in my power, and the necklace which I hold, and which dropped from thine arm yesterday in my room, will revenge me for thy ingratitude.” In saying this, she arose, and touching the King with her wand as he advanced to recover his mistress’s love-token, she transformed him into a cock; then, opening one of the windows, she threw him down into the court of the palace; after which, assembling the Council, she informed them that the King had absented himself upon urgent business, and she, not being able to remain longer in that kingdom, had determined to appoint a regent. This affair concluded, she ascended her chariot and disappeared from their sight.

The King was dizzy with his fall, but his wings had supported him, in spite of himself, and when he had a little recovered his senses he jumped upon a balustrade of white and rose-coloured marble, which surrounded a piece of magnificent water in the centre of the court-yard, to see himself in it. He was astounded at his appearance — not but that he was the most beautiful bird in the world; his body seemed as though it was covered with emeralds, — his wings were of a bright rose-colour, and on his head was a crest of brilliants, which threw out a most dazzling light, — his tail was a plume of green and rose-colour, — his feet, of the latter hue, with claws blacker than ebony, and his beak was a single ruby.

We will leave this unhappy King reflecting upon the cruelty of this transformation, and return to Lionette, whom we left still more unhappy. This beautiful Princess, after having been six months amongst the tigers of the Fairy Tigreline, deploring her sad fate, was at length withdrawn from them by the Fairy herself, who pitying her situation, came to seek her and carry her to her palace, with both her unfortunate companions. Then, after caressing them and conducting them to a very comfortable den, she said to the Princess, “My dear Lionette, you have been a sufficiently long time punished for your imprudence in having given away your necklace, without my adding further useless remonstrances to the misery you endure in not being able to change your form until you have recovered that talisman; therefore, my dear child, I shall not scold you any more — on the contrary, I will mitigate your penalty as much as I can, and I am going to prove it to you by restoring your good guardians to their natural forms, that they may have the pleasure of talking to you, and consoling you.” Poor Lionette threw herself at the Fairy’s feet, and by the tears she shed, evinced at the same time her joy and her sorrow at not being able to answer her. Tigreline touched the Lion and Lioness with her wand; in an instant they resumed their human form, and after embracing the Fairy’s knees, they embraced Lionette a thousand times, who returned their caresses as well as she could.

After this affecting scene, at which even Tigreline herself could not restrain her tears, she thus addressed the old man and his wife: “Good people, the days of your transformation will not be reckoned in the term of your existence, neither will Lionette’s when she has passed through hers. Live to serve and console her until the time of her severe punishment shall have ended. I will not have her shut up any longer; she can run freely about my gardens and in my forest; as for yourselves, you will remain in my palace, and have charge of her. Let us wait patiently for time to bring about a more happy termination to this adventure than I can dare to hope for, and at least by our fortitude cause Fate to blush for her injustice.” The Fairy ceased speaking, and embraced Lionette with all her heart. Lionette’s was so full that she shed a torrent of tears, and uttered groans which increased the affliction both of the Fairy and the good people.

She spent her days in the forest, hunting game, which the Fairy had ordered to be put there for her. The tigers respected and saluted her whenever she passed. She reclined during the heat of the day in the most secluded and shady places, meditating on her fate, and feeling less distressed at her own situation than at the absence or the loss of Prince Coquerico. She sighed affectionately at the remembrance of him, and her greatest grief was her separation from him. She scrawled with her talons on the barks of the trees rudely formed initials, hearts and arrows, and wept over her lover's and her own misfortune. At night she returned to her den, and to the Fairy, who showed her great kindness. The old man and his wife amused her by relating anecdotes to her.

One day that she was at the Fairy's with her guardians, she seized a sheet of paper and a pen, and wrote a request to the Fairy that she would tell her who she was. She presented it to Tigreline, who, as she was very clever, contrived to read what the Lioness had written. (No one but a Fairy could well have deciphered it.) She sighed, and raised her eyes to Heaven, then looking affectionately at Lionette, she said, "I am going to satisfy you, my dear Lionette. The trials that mortals encounter often serve as lessons to persons of your rank. May it please the just gods that those which you have endured from the commencement of your life be the only trials ordained for you. But do not cease to bear them with resignation and courage. You are a Princess, my dear child; they did not deceive you when they told you so; you are the daughter of the King of the Island of Gold; the Queen, your mother, died in giving birth to you, and the King, your father, resolved not to marry again, that he might preserve the crown for you. You were scarcely four years old when a fugitive Queen, driven from her kingdom, came to implore your father's assistance to regain the throne that her rebellious subjects had made her descend from, for having persisted in reigning to the prejudice of her only son, whom she detained at a distance from the capital, for fear he should claim the sceptre.

"This ambitious Princess, perceiving that the King, your father, would afford his assistance too slowly for her impatience, turned her thoughts in another direction. She cared not where she reigned, provided she did reign. She therefore resolved to marry your father; but knowing he did not wish for an increase of family that might deprive you of the crown, and that consequently as long as you lived he would never marry, she came to consult me. She did not attempt to conceal from me her sanguinary intentions respecting you; and I knew if I were mistress of the necklace that she wore, I should be able to save your life. I listened, therefore, quietly to her, notwithstanding the horror that these propositions gave me of her. ‘Queen,’ said I to her, ‘you will never obtain your object until I have possession of your necklace. Give it to me, and be sure of the success of your undertaking.’ ‘A Fairy who presided at my birth,’ said she, ‘commanded that I should always wear it.’ Those were her only words; but since it has not prevented my falling from the throne to which my birth had entitled me, I part with it willingly, and place it in your hands, relying much more on your assistance than on the pretended charm to make me happy.’ ‘Go,’ said I, ‘return to the Island of Gold, and wait patiently the effect of my power, and above all, do not attempt the life of the young Princess; I will serve you without adopting such cruel means.’

“She returned to the Island, and after some time, married your father. That very day I transported you, with the King and the Queen, into the cavern where the old man found you, and changed them both into Lions. The King because I feared his weakness, and the Queen to punish her for her wickedness. I not only took from her the power of doing you any harm, but obliged her to take care of you. As for the King, I knew I need not inspire him with feelings of humanity; he retained them, notwithstanding the natural ferocity of the animal into which I had transformed him.”

Poor Lionette at these words interrupted the Fairy by a melancholy roar. Tigreline smiled, and caressing the Lioness, “Take courage, my dear girl,” said she; “you mourn the death of a good father; your susceptible heart will feel equal joy in learning that I have saved his life; that he is at present residing in a part of the world to which I transported him after I had cured his wound; and that he is as anxious to see you again as you can possibly desire.” Lionette, who was couched upon a great stone at the feet of the Fairy, licked her hand softly, to show her gratitude, and her eyes sparkled with so much pleasure that the Fairy, delighted at the effect of her good-tidings, kissed her most tenderly. “As for the Lioness, your mother-in-law,” continued Tigreline, “she died, not from grief at losing the Lion, but from rage at finding her projects frustrated by his death, which she really believed; and the tears you have shed for her were far more than she deserved for the unwilling care she took of you.”

The Fairy had arrived at this point in her story, when in at the window flew a cock of singular beauty, and perched upon her shoulder; they were all very much astonished; the Fairy, who was spinning, let fall her spindle, but quickly recovering herself, she held out her finger to the bird, which jumped upon it, and flapping its wings in token of gratitude, crowed out “Coquerico” two or three times. At the first note the Lioness took fright, and ran off as fast as possible, her guardians following her. In the meanwhile, Tigreline examined the bird, and seeing how wonderfully beautiful he was, immediately unravelled the mystery of this adventure. “Prince,” said she, “I believe I know you, and I am much deceived if you have not just told me your name.” The Prince (for it was he) stooped his beak to her feet, as making a low bow to the Fairy. “Oh, Heavens!” cried she, “is it possible there should be such a complicated chain of misfortunes. The barbarous being who has reduced you to this sad state has only allowed you the power of pronouncing a name which is the cause of all kinds of evil to you. It has even now occasioned your Princess to fly from you, and perhaps it may have been the last time in your life that you could have seen her.”

The Cock at these words looked at the Fairy with amazement; he had only perceived in the room a lioness and two old people; he could not comprehend these words of Tigreline; she read his thoughts, for he could not express them. “She was here, I tell you,” replied she, “and I forgive you for not recognising her; but if my sister, the cruel Cornue, has been able to change you into a cock, has she not the power also of turning the Princess into a lion?" The Cock felt as if he should faint at this cruel news. "Oh, Fate! pitiless Fate!" continued the Fairy, "how blind are thy decrees! Why dost thou punish the innocent, and let the guilty live?" Her thoughts would have quite absorbed her if her eyes had not fallen upon the poor bird, who had fallen down, and appeared dying. She took him in her arms, and giving him some wonderful liquid to smell, he recovered his senses, but sighed bitterly at being compelled to see the light again. "Do not distress yourself, my dear Prince," said the Fairy, "I will use all my skill to assist you; but to ensure my success you must second my endeavours. I cannot render you perfectly happy so long as Cornue is in possession of the necklace, and it is only through you that I can recover it. Repose yourself, dear Prince; my books that I am going to consult to-night will enlighten me as to what we shall do to-morrow."

The King could not sufficiently express his gratitude — he pressed his beak on the Fairy's hand, and squeezed her arm gently with his claw — in short, he displayed as much feeling as he possibly could. Tigreline, after giving him something to eat and to drink, which he scarcely touched, placed him upon a shelf in her cabinet, and then saluting him, retired to her chamber to set about the work she had promised to undertake for him.

While this was passing, poor Lionette, overcome with a fear she could not recover from, fled with all her might, and had already gone far beyond the Forest of Tigers, notwithstanding those animals had used all their endeavours to detain her, for they were all fond of her, and several of them were even in love with her; but she had forced her way through every obstacle, and having no guide but terror, still believing the Cock was pursuing her, she ran a hundred leagues at once, and never stopped till her strength failed her. Her poor guardians called to her and sought for her in vain; they returned very much distressed at daybreak to the Fairy, to tell her of Lionette's flight.

The Fairy, who knew that if Lionette went beyond the limits of the forest she had no longer any power over her, and that she would be entirely at Cornue's mercy, left her unwillingly to her fate, and thought only of being of service to King Coquerico. She entered the cabinet wherein he had passed the night, to tell him what he had to do. He flapped his wings at her arrival, and flew to the ground to kiss the hem of her robe. The Fairy took him on her hand, placed him on a little table, and drew it up in front of an arm-chair, in which she seated herself. "Great King," said she, "the destiny that has nursed you since your birth commands me to tell you that you will not regain your natural form but upon very severe conditions. You must be sufficiently fortunate to recover from Cornue the necklace given to you by Lionette. If you fail to do so, you can never become a human being again but by marrying Cornue. In that case, if Lionette, whom my wicked sister insists upon being a witness to this ceremony, can restrain the grief it must cause her, I foresee that you may become happy at last; but if she have not the courage to support the terrible sight of that marriage, I will not be answerable for anything." Coquerico at these words bent his head and shed tears, at which the Fairy was much affected. "A tender heart," said the Fairy, "is pardonable, and even desirable in a King. Your grief, according to this principle, is very excusable, but you must not abandon yourself too much to sorrow. Leave to vulgar minds, my lord, complaints and lamentations, and without wishing to be stronger than humanity demands, courageously resist the blows of fate, and if you only succeed in testing your fortitude, and finding it cannot be shaken, you ought to be content. It is the first of all advantages, and yet one we rarely ask of the gods, because we do not know the value of it. Take this bottle, and endeavour to throw a drop of the liquid that is in it upon Cornue. That will make her swoon away, and you will then obtain your object."

Coquerico, who was in no hurry to depart, looked at the Fairy to ask her to explain herself still further: she understood what he would say. She related in a few words Lionette’s history. He thanked her in the most affectionate manner he could, and he now recollected that the Fairy, in speaking of her previously, had more than once called her the Princess. He was enchanted to learn that this lovely girl was of such high birth, but that did not increase his affection for her. Nothing, indeed, could augment it. It was not so with respect to his indignation against Cornue. Every moment it became stronger, particularly when the Fairy, at the end of her narration, told him that the unhappy Princess had taken flight at his crowing, as well as at his name, from the antipathy that lions had naturally to the crowing of a cock, that the malicious Cornue had increased it in the case of Lionette, that he had so frightened her that she had flown beyond the bounds of the forest, and that she might have fallen already into Cornue’s power, as, having once quitted the Forest of Tigers, she could not possibly re-enter it till she had resumed her own shape.

King Coquerico was instantly anxious to depart, and indicated it as well as he could to Tigreline, who could understand at half a word. After embracing him, and fastening the bottle under his right wing, she opened her window, and he flew away, perfectly resolved that rather than crow to frighten the lions, he would be devoured by them.

To what fearful extent can passions increase in the hearts of those who do not try to conquer them? The implacable Cornue, distracted by turns, or rather at the same moment, by the most violent love and by the most frightful jealousy, spent her days in the Opal Palace, meditating the deepest revenge against her rival and her lover. What more could she desire? Were they not sufficiently wretched? They could not recognise each other, and flew from one another as soon as they met. Could anything more cruel be imagined? Poor Lionette, overcome by fatigue, fell down from faintness and fright upon some beautiful green turf, which answered as a bed for the moment. She had run an hundred leagues without stopping, as we have said before, and with incredible swiftness, for she had quitted the Fairy in the evening, and by sunrise next morning found herself in this strange country. So true it is that fear lends one wings. She looked around her, and saw nothing but that green sward, through which flowed a clear stream, refreshing the grass and the little wild flowers that adorned it. She slept there profoundly after drinking of the beautiful water, which possessed the property not only to quench thirst, but at the same time to appease hunger.

She slept for fifteen hours. When she awoke she felt much refreshed, and continued her journey along the bank, at the end of which she saw a palace, of architecture as simple as it was wonderful. She entered it by a beautiful portico of foliage; in it she saw cabinets, chambers, and galleries, all formed of green hedges, and what charmed her particularly was, that in the middle of each room were large groups of flowers of all sorts, that greeted her with most friendly bows, and said with one accord, as she approached, “Good morning, beautiful Lionette.” This wonderfully astonished her; she stopped at a tube-rose plant that had saluted her still more graciously than the rest. “Lovely flowers,” said she to them, “by what happy chance is it that you have given me the power of speech, that all the skill and friendship of the generous Tigreline could not restore to me? Is it you that have done this? Tell me, that I may return my thanks to you?” “The stream that has quenched your thirst, beautiful Lionette,” replied one of the tube-roses, “has the merit of it; we have no power, and it is only when we are watered by it that we have the faculty of hearing, seeing, and expressing ourselves. We are flowers from the garden of the Fairy Cornue; for some time past she has been very sad; she came to converse with us, but we were unable to comfort her; perhaps that task was reserved for you; you must use your endeavours. She will not return for two days, as she was here yesterday; her palace is some distance from this; wait for her, we will do all we possibly can to amuse you till she returns.”

The Tube-rose then ceased speaking, although she was naturally a little talkative, but she yielded from politeness to Lionette’s desire to ask some questions. “I should like to know, obliging Tube-rose,” said Lionette, “if Cornue, of whom you speak, and to whom you belong, is a beautiful fairy; and then I should be obliged by your telling me how you knew my name and who I was as soon as you saw me.” “A Rose-tree, who is the oracle of this place,” replied the Tube-rose, “at the last sacrifice made to it by the Fairy, our mistress, predicted that a great princess, in the form of a lion, would one day come hither, and that here she would terminate all her distress. The Fairy displayed immoderate joy at this; she redoubled the incense and the bees, they being the only victims that are immolated here. This is an answer to your two questions at once, for by the Fairy’s delight you can easily conceive her good intentions towards you.”

The innocent Lionette thought there was great truth in the tube-rose’s conjectures; she thanked her heartily, and begged she would inform her where the Rose-tree was, that she might consult it as to what conduct she ought to adopt. The Tube-rose directed her, and she soon found the spot; it was not far from the cabinet of tube-roses. This apartment had some appearance of a temple, the hedges forming an arch above the Rose-tree, which preserved it from the heat of the sun; a little balustrade of jasmine and pomegranate trees surrounded this beautiful plant, which was covered with so many roses that it was quite dazzling. The Lioness was obliged to shut her eyes once or twice: she tremblingly approached the balustrade, and prostrating herself, respectfully said, “Divinity of this lovely place, deign to receive my homage, and tell me my destiny.”

The Rose-tree at these words appeared to be much agitated, the leaves and flowers trembled, and became pale. Then a voice interrupted by sobs issued from its branches, and Lionette heard the following words: —

To the severe decree of Fate
In blind submission bend.

A Princess, most unfortunate,
Will here her sorrows end.

The Princess was frightened at the indications of grief the Rose-tree gave way to, and if the first words overwhelmed her, the latter encouraged her a little. “Alas!” said she, “I fear nothing but the prolongation of my existence; if I should end my miserable life here, I should bless the fate that led me to this spot; but wise and generous Rose-tree, before ending my days, may I not know if he to whom I would willingly consecrate them still lives; and if he is happy, wherever he may be? This is my only anxiety. I should die without one regret if I knew that his destiny was decided.” The rose-bush was again strongly agitated, and thus replied: —

For the last time, at thy desire,
I raise my warning voice: —
Thy lover only will expire
Shouldst thou oppose his choice.

“Ah! wise Divinity,” exclaimed the affectionate Lioness, “I will ask you nothing more; if he live, I am too happy. May I alone suffer from the severity of the Fairies! Their persecutions appear as nothing to me if he be exempted from them, and I permitted to see him happy. Ah! why should I fetter his inclinations? Alas! the choice which I should be opposed to, whatever it might be, would never offend me; what can he owe me? and what can I offer him worthy of his merits? The unfortunate Lionette not having it in her power to make him happy, should not prevent him from becoming so, at least I may be permitted the desire of being the cause of it.”

Saying this, she retired to the cabinet of the tube-roses, where she passed the night talking of her shepherd, and telling her love for him to her faithful friend, who in return more fully informed her what she knew of the Fairy Cornue and of her floral companions. “As for the oracular Rose-tree,” said she, “all we know is, it is not of the rose-tree race, it was here when we came, and I believe that the Fairy, to embellish its dwelling-place, transplanted us hither; it speaks without being watered, and appears but little amused by our conversation. It is naturally melancholy, and you have seen for yourself it has a perfect knowledge of the past, the present, and the future. The Fairy passes whole days, when she comes here, in talking to it; rarely does she do us that honour, and I think it is in consequence of the vexatious things she hears from it that she feels no pleasure in talking to us. A pomegranate blossom, a very great friend of mine, often repeated their conversation to me. The Rose-tree conceals from the Fairy what it is — the Fairy cannot discover it; all one can make out is, that it was not always a rose-tree.”

She had spoken thus far, when a pink, a ranunculus, and some other flowers entered, and after paying their compliments to the Lioness, they announced to the Tube-rose that Cornue intended to visit them a day earlier than usual; that they might expect her the following morning, and that she proposed making a pompous sacrifice to the Rose-tree; that they were ignorant of the cause of this grand ceremony, but thought it denoted the approach of some great event. The flowers wondered among themselves what this great event could be, without coming to any definite conclusion.

They then talked about the weather, a conversation in which they shone greatly, and which would have amused Lionette had she been in another frame of mind, but she spoke little, and listened less. At sunset the flowers retired each to their home; and Lionette, after taking a very slight repast of herbs from the mossy ground, and drinking the water from the wonderful rivulet, went to sleep at the feet of her faithful friend the Tube-rose. The first rays of the sun having touched her eyelids, she awoke: the flowers were already on the move. Lionette arose, and repaired to the Rose-tree. She laid herself down in one of the corners of its little temple, and saw all the flowers arrive, and place themselves artistically to do honour to the Fairy, who did not keep them long waiting. The whole of the temple glowed with the beautiful colours of these various flowers; some formed themselves into arbours, others into garlands, crowns, girandoles, in short, into a thousand and a thousand kinds of ornaments, so marvellously arranged that the general effect was dazzling. The sweetness of their perfume was exquisite; and that which drew Lionette from her reflections was, that after this arrangement, and on notice of the Fairy's approach, they commenced so melodious a concert that the most melancholy beings would have forgotten their grief, and have yielded to the sweet enchantment in which this music wrapped the soul. The Tube-rose, above all, was perfection. It charmed Lionette completely. She listened with delight to this wonderful melody, and admired the poetry of the hymn which they sang; when suddenly she saw the redoubtable Cornue enter, blazing with jewels, but more frightfully ugly than can be described. She was seized with a horror at this sight which she could not account for. She reproached herself for it. "Is it possible," said she to herself, "that I can be still affected by the weak prejudice of which my sex is so susceptible? Ought we to decide upon the qualities of the mind by the beauty or ugliness of the countenance? What feelings must I inspire if they judge poor Lionette by her form? Judge thyself before thou judgest others, and conceal not from thyself that if ugliness induces thee to take an aversion to any one, thou must thyself inspire a terrible horror."

While Lionette was constraining herself to vanquish the dreadful feeling that the presence of the Fairy had possessed her with, the latter, to the sound of joyful music which echoed through the temple of the Rose-tree, advanced towards the balustrade and saw the Lioness, who, seated in the corner to which she had retired, crouched in the most humble manner as the Fairy gazed on her. Cornue's countenance brightened with intense joy at this sight. "Oracle, whose words are always those of truth," exclaimed she, "you have promised me that I should one day find that which I have sought for so earnestly, and which doubtless you have reserved as a recompense for the many honours I have paid to you. Come," said she to the fairies who followed her, "chain this wild beast, and fasten it to my chariot, after which let us immolate our victims." Four fairies threw a chain about Lionette, who allowed herself to be dragged out of the temple notwithstanding the grief shown by the flowers, that looked as they do when Aurora sheds her gentle dew upon them, for they all loved Lionette; but their tears did not in the least soften the inflexible heart of the jealous Cornue. The Rose-tree shot from its stem a flame which consumed the offering of bees which the fairies had just placed upon a little golden altar they had drawn towards it. Its roses became amaranth colour. Cornue was quite alarmed at this change. "What prodigy is this?" cried she. "Divinity of these realms, do you protect my rival, or is it the joy of delivering her into my power that has produced this mysterious change?" The Rose-tree shuddered at these words, and with a strong and terrible voice thus answered the Fairy: —

Immolate to my just wrath
The first fowl that shall cross thy path.
Mercy to it dare to show
None thyself shall ever know!

The Rose-tree after this closed its flowers and leaves, and by this action appeared to bid the Fairy depart. She left the temple much discontented, and remounted her chariot, to which they had fastened Lionette, with three other lions who were very handsome. She took the reins that united these animals and drove slowly over the velvet lawn by the side of the rivulet, the gentle murmuring of which favoured her meditations, until one of the fairies, following in another chariot, exclaimed that she saw a fowl in the water, which appeared to be drowning. Cornue stopped her chariot, and ordered them to catch and bring to her the bird that so luckily came to reconcile her with the oracular Rose-tree. The fairies who were the lightest clad threw themselves into the stream, and caught the poor bird, which was already insensible. They carried it to Cornue, who was not at all surprised at its beauty, for she instantly recognised, to her great dismay, the unfortunate King Coquerico. “Oh, Heavens!” exclaimed she to herself; “is it thus, cruel oracle, thou wouldst have me understand thee?” She held the King up by his feet, and having made him eject the water that he had swallowed, he reopened his eyes, already darkened by the approach of death, then quickly touching him with her wand, said to him, “Resume thy proper form, and save me thereby from the horror of taking thy life, upon which mine depends.” At these words the King, safe and sound, appeared more brilliant than the sun, his royal mantle on his shoulders, and his crown of brilliants gracefully encircling his temples. What became of Lionette at this sight? Her lover stood before her — her lover a king, and more beautiful than the day! She would have been speechless with astonishment even had she not resolved beforehand that she would not speak to the Fairy until she had discovered her motive for ill-treating her so cruelly. She remained silent, therefore, but her eyes were so affectionately fixed on the King, that if he had not been pre-occupied by the adventure that had just occurred, he would easily have recognised his unhappy Princess.

“What more do you require of me, Madam?” said he to Cornue. “Is it to make me feel my miseries more keenly that you have restored me to my form of which you so unjustly deprived me? or do you at last repent that you have done me so much mischief?” “Ungrateful ever, and still more ungrateful," replied the Fairy, presenting her hand for him to assist her to descend from her chariot. "Come and justify yourself, and do not accuse me." So saying, she stepped with him upon the mossy bank of the rivulet, and leaving her chariot and her companions at some distance, spoke thus to the King, whom she made to sit down beside her: — "I need scarcely tell you that I have loved you from your infancy; the care that I have taken of you must convince you of it, if you still remember it, for I do not expect gratitude for such poor benefits. I will only slightly touch upon what has hitherto passed, for I experienced but cruel ingratitude, which my affection for you disguised under the name of indifference, arising, perhaps, from my lack of beauty. I believed for some time that by kindness I should overcome this coldness. 'Beauty,' I said, 'is but a poor possession — a sensible man is only caught at first by it. Unlimited power — a fairy who condescends so far as to desire to please a mortal is always sufficiently beautiful.' I discovered but too late the abuse of my confidence, and saw with horror that I had a rival. What did I then do to be revenged, but what every woman would have done? Far from availing myself of my power, I only exercised my discretion. I took Lionette away from you, but I did not kill her — what excess of weakness! — for she was at my mercy — and what a proof of my love do you not recognise in that weakness? Your insults and contemptuous coldness drove me to despair. I deprived you of your form, and I left you. What greater cruelty could you show me than I had inflicted on myself? No, all your hatred did not torture me as much. In what misery did I pass my days after that frightful separation! I accused myself of cruelty, I forgot all your injustice, and when, becoming more calm, I thought of it as it really had been, I reproached myself with having given you cause for it by too much vivacity — in short, your image always present in my mind, the thought of your anger constantly weighing on my heart, I could get no rest. Some of the fairies who attended on me in the Opal Palace advised me to consult the oracular Rose-tree respecting my destiny. This Oracle, without any one knowing the reason, has established itself here, or at least has planted itself in the Sward of Eloquence (the name that is given to that which you behold here, from the rivulet which surrounds it, because it possesses the faculty of making everything speak that is watered by it). Persecuted by my enemies, I came at last to consult this new Oracle. I found at first some relief to my troubles; I took great pleasure in embellishing its abode; by my art I caused all kinds of flowers to grow here; I raised a little temple of verdure, and watering all the flowers from the Rivulet of Eloquence, I enabled them to converse with the Rose-tree and entertain it. The information I gathered respecting my destiny made me grateful to the Oracle, and gave me confidence in its predictions. I came often to question it, and I endeavoured to discover by whom it could possibly be inspired. I ascertained that it was not one of those deities who take pleasure in manifesting themselves to mortals, as at Delphi. It was a man transformed into a rose-tree, and protected by a power unknown to me, and carefully kept a secret. I offered him all my power as a reward for what he had promised me, but he constantly declined it. At last, having predicted an event which has occurred to me this very day, and the commencement of my happiness, he commanded me to sacrifice to him the first fowl that I should see. Judge if all the happiness I could expect from its promises is to be weighed in the balance against your life — for that is what he demands of me. Could I feel, could I know, a comfort, deprived of it? Let the Oracle be angry with me, overwhelm me if it will with the most dreadful calamities, I will not avoid them by the sacrifice of your life. Continue, if you dare, to treat me inhumanly, cruelly — I will submit to it, provided I can still behold you; for I have resolved to suffer everything your hatred can inflict upon me, sooner than consent to immolate you to the strange caprice of the Rose-tree.”

Cornue ceased speaking, and the King, having expressed his acknowledgments, replied, — “What can I do for you, Madam? My heart is mine no longer; I have no wish to deceive you; not only is such perfidy incompatible with my nature, but you too well know what I think for me to attempt to impose on your credulity, and I owe you too much gratitude for saving my life willingly to deceive you, were it in my power. But why have you preserved one who never can make you happy? Far better would it have been for you to have obeyed your Oracle. Certain that you will always oppose my happiness, I should have received my death at your hands with pleasure, since I can never entertain for you a warmer feeling than gratitude. You would have relieved me from the shame of appearing thankless to you, and from being obliged to drag out an existence far from the object of my eternal affection."

The King was silent, and the Fairy greatly agitated; neither spoke for some time. "What did this deceitful Oracle promise you?" at length inquired the King. "If you can be rendered happy by ending my life, why defer the sacrifice? The generosity you have shown in preserving it, excites in my heart a feeling of emulation. Conduct me to the temple, it will not be you that will immolate me, at least; Love will acquit you, for Love will dispose of my life, as it is he who prevents my making you the mistress of it." "Talk no more of sacrifice," said the Fairy, rising; "your life is too precious for me not to struggle to preserve it, at the risk of all that may happen. Come to my palace, and we will see to-morrow what can be done." She then moved towards her chariot, which she stepped into with the Prince, and the Lions went at such speed that they arrived almost immediately at the Opal Palace.

Here it was that Lionette abandoned herself to the bitterest grief when she saw the Fairy descend from her chariot with the Prince, desiring that her lions might be put into a grotto where a thousand other wild animals were lodged that she drove in harness. "Oh, Heavens!" she cried, "to what am I reduced?" She permitted herself to be led away to the grotto, and retiring into a dark corner, stretched herself upon a little straw, and passed the night groaning at her fate. Some days elapsed without any one disturbing her sad repose; at the end of which time two young fairies came to take four lions, some tigers, and two bears to be hunted for the entertainment of the Fairy and in honour of the King.

As the Princess was ignorant of the purpose for which these animals were selected, she did not speak to the Fairies. But what a situation for her! Her lover, whom she could not doubt was in the Palace, and who could not know her — the severity of the Fairy — the horror of passing her days in this strange place — all gave her a disgust to life, which would not yield to the love she possessed for the King, though it had been redoubled by the sight of him. “Ah, why should I continue to love him?” she exclaimed. “Doubtless he no longer loves me. And to render my punishment the greater, I feel he is more lovely than ever. Let me die; and may he never know the extent of the misery he has caused me. Bereft of his love — bereft of him — why should I regret to die?”

She could not suppose him to be enamoured of Cornue; she tried in vain to think why he was at the Opal Palace; she lamented the timidity that induced her to fly from Tigreline at the crowing of the cock. In recalling to her mind the few circumstances she was cognizant of, she felt convinced that the cock that flew in at the window was certainly the same which was brought to Cornue, and re-transformed upon the Sward of Eloquence. “How contrary is my destiny!” said she. “My heart pants for an object which certainly compels me to fly from it. Let me hasten to put an end to this torment. Can the approach of death be a greater punishment? Coquerico, ungrateful Coquerico, has forgotten me. Why should I any longer doubt it? Let me go and expire at the foot of the Rose-tree, and for ever fly from a place that only aggravates and redoubles my grief.”

Fortunately the fairies had not shut the door of the grotto. The wretched Princess stole out, and found herself in Cornue’s forest. She heard a great noise of horns and dogs; she entered a thick part of the wood which appeared likely to conceal her. Anxious to let the chase go by, she had thrust herself under some low branches, when she heard a dear voice she could not be mistaken in. This voice spoke to one whom she soon knew to be the Fairy Cornue. “Yes, Madam, I avow it. I have an invincible repugnance to hunt lions ever since the unfortunate Lionette has been changed into one. I know not what has become of her. You wish me to remain in ignorance about her; you object to my taking any means by which I might obtain knowledge of her present position. You wish to kill me. Ah, why, then, do you hesitate, when your Oracle demands my death? Let me go to consult it, or with my sword will I rid myself of a life which is rendered insupportable by your tyranny.” “How can you imagine,” replied the Fairy, “that I should allow you to seek this Oracle who demands your death? For it is not that he desires a cock as a sacrifice more than any other bird — it is you yourself that the barbarous Oracle would have immolated; and do you think I will consent to that? I love you, and you hate me — that is all my offence in your eyes. And if I were to restore Lionette to you, you would soon forget even the trifling gratitude you might profess to entertain for me.” “I,” exclaimed the King, “forget it? Never! I forget that I was indebted to you for the happiness of my existence? Do not imagine it. Restore her to her natural shape, and I swear to you I will agree to everything that depends upon myself. You will command my obedience, and my friendship will be unbounded. In fact, if I cannot give you my heart, at least there will be so little apparent difference, that you yourself will scarcely perceive it.” “Enough,” said the Fairy; “I trust to your oath, and I will yield to your impatience. To-morrow we will proceed to the temple of the Rose-tree. I will expose myself to its anger. I will try to appease it, and then we shall see if your word is inviolable.”

The King and the Fairy passed on, and the Princess, delighted to find her lover as faithful as she had believed him inconstant, turned her footsteps towards the temple of the Rose-tree, and arrived there late at night.

All the flowers were asleep. She did not disturb any of them; she went and lay at the feet of the Tube-rose — she did not sleep. The beauty of the night filled her soul, already prepared to receive delightful impressions, with the purest joy, unmingled with a shade of sorrow. The amiable Coquerico, faithful and loving, appeared in her idea so worthy of being loved, that she did not regret all she had suffered for him. She never thought about his being a King; she disdained every advantage that was the mere consequence of chance. He was worthy of her affection — that was all she considered. Cornue's reproaches had revealed her jealousy. Lionette in an instant therefore understood why the Fairy had so ill-treated her; and as the happiest love is subject to reverses, she distressed herself at what the King would have to suffer if he resisted the Fairy's passion. She immediately determined to abandon her lover to her rival in order to save his life, which the Oracle had told her he would lose if she opposed his choice. Some mournful reflections upon this situation succeeded to those that had so pleasantly occupied her. She determined to seek the Oracle without delay. She arose very quietly, and entered the temple as the day broke.

King Coquerico was not in a better situation. The horror with which Cornue had inspired him by her new barbarity in wishing his mistress to perish by his hand under the pretence of affording him the entertainment of a lion hunt, was unconquerable: his patience was exhausted, and he only feigned to agree to her wishes in order to gain time to be revenged, by getting the necklace out of her possession.

The Fairy had luckily not noticed the little bottle under his wing the day she restored him to his form; he therefore still possessed it, and trusted it would be of great use to him. He retired early that night, under pretence of being fatigued, and the Fairy begged he would wear the ornaments that she had ordered to be put into his room, that he might make a grander figure in the eyes of the Rose-tree. He was no sooner in his own apartment than the recollection of what Cornue had said, and of what he had promised, threw him into deep distress, as he foresaw that if he could not anticipate the artful Fairy’s intention, he should only obtain from this jealous enemy the pleasure of once more seeing Lionette, in return for which Cornue would undoubtedly insist upon his marrying her.

This cruel thought made him more eager for revenge, and that feeling was increased by his observing a large basket made of pearls and garnets in filigree work, which stood on a table beside him. He made no doubt it contained the presents she had requested him to wear. He raised the white taffeta embroidered in gold which covered this elegant basket, and perceived with astonishment, mingled with rage, the royal robes that are worn at the marriage of the Kings of the Fortunate Islands. As they were the work of the Fairies, it is impossible to describe their magnificence.

A moment afterwards, recollecting that he should appear thus attired before the Princess, he could not divest himself of the idea that occurred to him, that perhaps such magnificence might make an impression on her. However, believing the Fairy to be asleep, he resolved to put his plan in execution without delay, and throwing all the ornaments back into the basket, he ascended a private staircase which led to Cornue’s bed-chamber. He arrived without any obstacle at her bed-side; the curtains were open, and held back by Cupids of mother-of-pearl; these also supported crystal chandeliers filled with wax lights, to illumine the room. When she could not sleep the Cupids sang, or read to her the news of the day, Gazettes, or fresh stories that were written about the Fairies. On that night they must certainly have been reading to her as long a story as this, for she snored terribly. She could not have foreseen the King’s unseasonable visit, for no one could look so ugly in bed as she did. She had neither rouge nor patches; and her livid and unhealthy-looking skin, gave her more the appearance of a corpse than of a living and amorous Fairy. Her horn assisted in making her more hideous. She had the fatal necklace round her neck, which was partly uncovered. The King was not at all enchanted by the sight of her. His desire to free himself from so hideous an object made him hastily draw forth his little bottle, in order to fling some drops of its contents over the Fairy, when all the Cupids suddenly began to cry, “Who goes there? who goes there?” The Fairy opened her eyes, and the King remained more surprised and more distressed than it is possible to say. “What do you here, Prince?” said she, sitting upright; “what has brought you into my room without having sent me word of your intention?” She would have asked him a thousand other questions if she had had the time, for the King, more alarmed at her ugliness than at the menacing tone she gave to her words, allowed her to talk, and did not answer her. “What would you?” she said again. “Explain your object.”

“I am very sorry, Madam, to have disturbed your rest,” at length said the King; “but not knowing your projects, before I definitively pledge my word to you I wish to know what you propose to exact from me.” “Would there not have been time to-morrow,” said the Fairy, “to have asked me this mighty question, and was it necessary to awake me for so silly a purpose? Go to your rest, my Lord, and to-morrow we shall be in a condition for you to propose, and for me to resolve.” The King, truly seeing no other way of getting out of this embarrassment, was very well disposed to return to his room, when the Fairy called him back. “Come here,” cried she, “where are you going? Ought you not to apologize for your imprudence, or do you think you have not committed any?” The King, annoyed by this fresh obstacle, which prevented him from retiring, said, “Ah, Madam, do not make me commit a greater fault, in any longer disturbing your rest; it ought to be precious to me, and the respect I owe you —— “ “No, no,” replied the Fairy, “approach; I do not wish to sleep any more, and I will absolutely know what brought you here; do not fear to offend me, but dread to conceal your feelings from me. I wish for a candid avowal, and,” continued she, looking at him most affectionately, “I expect you will entertain me as a punishment for awaking me.”

The King, at this disagreeable proposition, thought he should lose all patience, but being in the power of this terrible person he suppressed his first movement, and seating himself, out of respect, some distance from the Fairy's bed, said, "Since you wish it, Madam, I will obey you. I came, not thinking you were asleep, to ask you to restore the Princess to her natural form immediately, and to declare, without that, I cannot follow you to the temple of the rose-tree." "Truly," replied the Fairy, much annoyed at this commencement, "this is a beautiful subject to disturb every one about; could not that have been deferred till to-morrow?" "No, Madam," replied the King, "and I am very sorry I did not urge it yesterday, without being under the necessity of waiting another day." "Well," said the Fairy, "what will you do for me in return, and what have I to expect from your gratitude?" "I have told you, Madam, the strongest friendship, and all that an affectionate heart could further give —— " "Friendship," replied the Fairy; "no, no, King Coquerico, it is not at such a price that I dispense my favours — it must be of more value than that. Shall I tell you what it is? It is not worth while to wait till to-morrow to inform you. I cannot ask you for your love, I am convinced of that; you are incapable of feeling it for me; you have made me sufficiently understand that; but I will forgive you upon condition that to-morrow you will solemnly give me your faith."

The King, prepared as he had been for this event by Tigreline, could not quietly listen to her discourse, and find himself so near renouncing for ever a Princess whom he loved, without feeling it most cruelly. "If my heart were free," he replied, in a tone of voice changed by the excessive effort he made to suppress his fury, "I could offer you the one or the other; but, Madam, I have disposed of my heart beyond my own control, and I will not offer you my hand, the possession of which would make you miserable, for at every instant I should make you feel, in spite of myself, that, my heart being separated from it, I was not worthy the honour you conferred on me. The gratitude I owe you, therefore, obliges me absolutely to refuse you, at the peril of my life." "We shall see that to-morrow," replied Cornue. "Go and strengthen or change your noble resolutions; but remember that if you resist mine, it will not be your life that will answer to me for it. I shall know how to find, in spite of you, the sensitive place of a heart you assure me is so indifferent."

The King, maddened by rage and grief, departed, and returned to his own apartments, where he abandoned himself to the deepest despair. Twenty times he was about to plunge his sword in his heart, and sacrifice his life to the Princess; but thinking he might perhaps revenge her, or at least save her from the fury of the Fairy, he abandoned that frightful idea, and resolved upon going to the temple of the Rose-tree.

As soon as the morning appeared, the palace of the Fairy resounded with music and nuptial hymns; she sent to know if the King was ready, giving an order that they should attend to him as her husband. A pompous chariot was in the palace court. All the fairies from far and near were summoned to this ceremony; they arrived from every quarter. Tigreline only announced that she should be at the temple. At length the King appeared; his pale and thin face indicated that he was the victim of the sacrifice, rather than the person to whom it was to be offered. With all that he was as lovely as the day.

Cornue was attired as a Queen; all the skill in the world had been employed about her robes. She seated herself with the King in her chariot, and all the fairies followed according to their rank, riding upon eagles, dragons, tigers, and leopards. A dozen beautiful young fairies of the Court of Cornue, led in couples a dozen lions, upon which, during all the journey, the King had his eyes fixed, seeking to discover if the unfortunate Lionette were not amongst them. They set out amidst a flourish of drums and trumpets, and they arrived at the Sward of Eloquence: the flowers were already on the boundaries, and formed two ranks six feet high, between which the brilliant procession passed, amidst loud acclamations and joyous songs.

The temple was crowded. The most beautiful flowers had formed two thrones of exquisite taste, and the *coup-d'œil* was enchanting, so well was everything arranged. The unfortunate Lionette was already in the temple, and the pleasure of seeing Tigreline there, whom she remembered directly, had relieved in a slight degree the deep grief she was in at being compelled to witness the happiness of her cruel rival. "I shall die, Madam," said she to the Fairy, "but at any rate let the King know, after my decease, that my affection has equalled his own, and that I pardon him a fault which fate has made him commit. I do not condemn him for his inconstancy." She wept so bitterly in finishing these words, and she was so overcome by the violence of her grief, that she did not see the King and the Fairy enter. Cornue first approached the Rose-tree. "I come," said she, "to redeem my word. Divinity of this place, you demanded of me the sacrifice of a fowl. I have too well understood your oracle; behold what you required, and I think I shall interpret your wishes by demanding of him, at the foot of your altar, the hand he is so reluctant to bestow on me; a sacrifice which is to him greater than that of his life." The Rose-tree drooped its leaves and blossoms, as if in approval of the words of the Fairy. Cornue then turning to the King, who had remained a few steps behind her, said, "Approach, my Lord, and fulfil the decree of fate." He was at this moment much more occupied with what he saw than with what was said to him; he had perceived Tigreline, and he no longer doubted that the lioness at her side was his divine Princess; he looked at her tenderly and sorrowfully, not daring, however, to approach her, for fear of displeasing Tigreline, who had made him a severe sign to prevent him.

Cornue, surprised at his silence, turned towards him, and saw him in this pleasant occupation; then placing on the altar the crown which she held in her hand, in order that the King might put it on her head, she approached him. “What are you about,” said she; “is this a time for dreaming?” “I delay my reply, Madam,” said the King, without much emotion, “till you shall render to the Princess of the Golden Island the form which you have so unjustly deprived her of; afterwards I will do what gratitude demands of me, and I will not deceive you.” Cornue perceiving that it was not time to recede, especially as she saw Tigreline present, her superior in power, and that the day which she had chosen for this ceremony was precisely that on which the fairies are subject to death, was very cautious not to let the King know this, for fear that he should take advantage of those four-and-twenty hours to revenge himself for the cruelty which she had exercised on him and the Princess; yet, nevertheless, she was not willing to delay the fulfilment of her happiness; knowing, therefore, that it was impossible to deceive the King any longer, she turned to Tigreline, who led the lioness to the altar. “My Sister,” said Cornue, taking off the necklace and presenting it to Tigreline, “I restore the Princess to you, and you can use your power to make her resume her proper form, but spare her the grief of seeing me crowned by the hand of her lover, and depart with her, as she can never be his.”

Tigreline lost not a moment: in lieu of replying to Cornue, the good Fairy touched the lioness with her wand, and the Princess stood before them more beautiful and more amiable than ever. She was by the care of the Fairy clothed magnificently and in the finest taste: she had a dress of cloth of silver, covered with garlands of everlasting flower of *gris-de-lin* colour; her beautiful light hair, adorned with diamonds and the same sort of flowers as those on her dress, fell in curls on her shoulders, and made her appear more beautiful than the day. The King was transported: he advanced towards her, and falling on one knee — “Will you permit, beautiful Princess,” said he, “that the faith which I have plighted you should be taken from you, and that the unjust Fairy, who has made us so unhappy, should quietly enjoy a crown which should be yours?”

The Princess Lionette, during the time that her lover was speaking, kept her eyes tenderly fixed upon him, and by the tears which gently rolled down her cheeks let him see the effort which she made in giving him up. “I cannot,” said she at length, “oppose fate; yes, my dear Prince, you must submit; I release you from your vows, live happy without me, if it be possible for you to do so; and as I must of necessity lose you, I quit this life without a regret, and am happy in dying at having been able to tell you once more without its being a crime that I love you.” “Yes, you shall die,” cried the furious Cornue; “I have borne enough insults, and that is another happiness which you have not counted amongst those you boast of at this fatal moment!” The King at these words rose from the feet of the Princess, who did not seem alarmed even at seeing her rival advance towards her with a poniard in her hand. He arrested the Fairy with one hand, and with the other drew his sword. “It is I who will perish,” cried he, “and you cannot attempt the life of my Princess, which mine will answer for.” “Oh, heavens!” cried the Fairy and Lionette at the same time. “Hold!” Tigreline then advanced towards Cornue; she had not spoken till that moment; she had allowed everything to proceed, and those to speak who were most anxious to do so. She raised her wand, and touching Cornue, “Receive,” said she, “to-day, the reward of your misdeeds, and witness in your turn the happiness of these two lovers.” At the words Cornue remained motionless, but her eyes shone with such terrible fury, that, not being able to find expression for it, her horn seemed on fire, and she foamed with rage. “And you, wise Rose-tree,” continued Tigreline, “resume your form, and enjoy the pleasure of embracing your amiable daughter.” She had not finished these words when the Rose-tree, bending itself a little, appeared in its true form.

It was that of a man about fifty years of age, nobly made, and magnificently attired; he had a long regal mantle, and a crown of gold, set with precious stones, on his head. Lionette resembled him so extremely that no one in the whole assembly could doubt she was his daughter. That beautiful Princess threw herself into his arms with so much natural delight, that all the company were affected by it. The good King received her with transports of joy, which would have been more prolonged if he had not perceived at his feet the young King of the Fortunate Islands, who embraced his knees. He quitted his daughter a moment to raise the handsome Coquerico. "I give you my daughter," said he to him, embracing him. "Receive her, my Lord, and live as happily as I have seen you miserable. I add my crown to this gift, and though I do not expect it will increase your happiness, judging by the vexations it has brought on me, still, such as it is, I give it to my daughter to present to you."

At this moment the King would have taken off his crown, but the young King cried, "No, sire, you shall not cease to reign: the charming, the tender Lionette fulfils all my wishes, and my crown is at her feet. Permit us to live with you, and let nothing separate us any more." Tigreline applauded this mark of generosity in King Coquerico; and taking Lionette by the hand, she presented her to him. He received her with transports of love more easily imagined than described. Then raising his crown, and placing one knee on the ground, he presented it to Lionette, who accepted it as she plighted her troth to him.

The Temple resounded with the nuptial hymn. It was only interrupted by Cornue, who uttered a piercing cry, and expired, it being her day of doom. Her death caused no extraordinary sensation. The young King and the Princess alone appeared affected by the result of her despair. Tigreline had her carried away, and the ceremony was concluded. King Coquerico then turning towards the King, his father-in-law, asked him if he wished to witness the coronation of the Queen Lionette, or if he would prefer waiting where he was for some days. "And I," said Lionette, "I would entreat a favour of the kind Tigreline, and of my dear husband, if I dare speak at this moment." "My dear Princess," replied the King, tenderly, "what do you fear?” “I would, then,” said the Princess, “that, disembarrassed of the cares of government, we could live here always, and that, content with my happiness, I might be occupied with nothing but the pleasure of enjoying it. It is here that I have regained what is to me most valuable. What signifies to me the rest of the world if I live with these two persons; and if you, Madam,” added she, addressing the Fairy, “deign to come and see me, and restore to me my two unfortunate guardians?” “I consent,” said the two Kings at once. “Yes, my daughter,” said the Fairy in her turn, “I approve of these noble sentiments, and you shall live here as a Queen, but without feeling the inconvenience of it. You shall both also enjoy the gift of fairydom. I bestow it on you.”

Then touching the hedges that formed the walls of the temple, the whole structure was changed into a palace of emeralds so brilliant and so magnificent, that never was anything seen to equal it. The flowers became living and speaking persons, having as the sole mark of their transformation a flower of their name on the head. The greensward became a magnificent garden: on one side appeared a vast forest, at one end of which the Fairy caused to be built a little palace of rose-colour and white marble; and at the other, one of rock crystal, in which she had the kindness to place the fine model of the universe, which had been the delight of the King in his youth. The Princess was enchanted. “It is for me,” said the King, “an inestimable gift — it will recall to me without ceasing the pleasure I have enjoyed in exploring it in search of my dear Princess.” “And I,” said she, “will hold it dear, because it has taught you that I was occupied with your memory.”

The Fairy was charmed to see them so happy, with a degree of love so little known in our time or even in that at which they lived. “Love each other always thus, my children,” said she, embracing them; “I can give you nothing preferable to that blessing; it is the only real happiness.” She then made them observe that each palace had its separate gardens, its cascades, fountains, and charming flower-beds. On the other side of the garden was a large and flowing river, upon which were a thousand superb gondolas, silver and *gris-de-lin*, which wound round towards a castle built entirely of flowers, the marvellous variety of which had an admirable effect, and crowning the summit of a mountain with terraces laid out as gardens, descending to the brink of the river, and which served as a country house to the Palace of Emeralds. “I give you all this,” said Tigreline, embracing Lionette; “live here, my children, millions of years; your subjects will love you, and never betray you. If you wish for more, a touch of this wand,” said she, giving hers to Lionette, “will change all the flowers into speaking and rational beings, and they will become flowers again at your will.”

The King and Lionette threw themselves at the feet of the Fairy, and thanked her heartily. She raised them, and again embraced them. “Wave your wand,” said she to the Princess, “that your guardians may have the pleasure of being recalled by yourself.” The beautiful Lionette quickly made this first trial of her power; the good people appeared immediately. She ran to embrace them, but they feared to receive her caresses; the beautiful Queen, however, pressed them to her heart so affectionately that they at length returned her embraces with a tenderness which drew tears from all beholders. The Queen seeing them so aged and decrepit, turned her beautiful eyes, full of tears, on the Fairy, who comprehended what she suffered. “I like to see so much sensibility, madam,” said Tigreline; “use your power, you cannot employ it better than in the way you at present desire.” She had not finished these words, when the old man and his wife appeared to be, — he a man of twenty years, and the old woman a girl of eighteen. They threw themselves at the feet of the Fairy, and kissed the hands of the Queen, who, delighted to see them so young and amiable, embraced the Fairy to thank her for this great favour.

The good King then addressed his daughter, who turned her eyes affectionately on him, “Do not confer on me the same gift, my dear daughter; I do not wish to possess second youth. I see you happy, that is the only thing which would affect me; I shall never be sensible of greater joy; leave to the gods the disposal of my days.” “It is for me,” said the Fairy, “to render them happy; you shall live, Sire, till you are sufficiently tired of life to wish to lose it. Adieu; my affairs compel me now to leave you, but I shall speedily see you again.”

The Queen conducted the Fairy to her car, the two Kings handed her into it, after which they returned to the Palace, where, charmed with each other’s society, they passed their golden days, more happy than they had ever been miserable. They lived millions of years, and the King and Queen presented the world with fairies and beneficent genii, who are at this moment actually occupied in promoting the happiness of the universe.

20

THE PRINCE DÉSIR AND THE PRINCESS MIGNONE

There was once upon a time a King who passionately loved a Princess, but she could not be married because she was enchanted. He went in search of a Fairy to learn what he should do to be loved by this Princess. The Fairy said to him, “You know that the Princess has a large cat, of which she is very fond. She is destined to marry the man who shall be sufficiently adroit to tread on the tail of her cat.” The King said to himself, “That will not be very difficult.” So he quitted the Fairy, determined to crush the tail of the cat rather than fail to tread on it. He ran to the palace of his mistress, where Minon came towards him, putting up his back, as he was accustomed to do; the King raised his foot, but when he thought he was certain to set it on the cat’s tail, Minon turned round so quickly that his Majesty trod on nothing but the floor. He tried for eight days to step on this fatal tail, but it appeared to be full of quicksilver, so continually was it in motion. At length the King had the good fortune to surprise Minon whilst he was sleeping, and stamped upon his tail with all his force. Minon awoke, squalling horribly. Then suddenly he took the form of a great man, and regarding the Prince with eyes full of anger, he said to him, “Thou shalt wed the Princess, because thou hast destroyed the enchantment which prevented thee from doing so, but I will be avenged. Thou shalt have a son who shall be always unhappy until the moment when he shall discover that he has too long a nose, and if thou darest to divulge the threat I have uttered, thou shalt die immediately.” Although the King was very frightened at the sight of this great man, who was an enchanter, he could not help laughing at this threat. “If my son has too long a nose,” said he to himself, “unless he be either blind or without arms, he can always see it or feel it.”

The Enchanter having disappeared, the King sought the Princess, who consented to marry him; but his happiness was of brief duration, for he died at the end of eight months. A month afterwards the Queen brought into the world a little prince, whom they named Désir. He had large blue eyes, the most beautiful in the world, and a pretty little mouth, but his nose was so big that it covered half his face. The Queen was inconsolable when she saw this great nose; but the ladies who were with her told her that the nose was not so large as it appeared to her: that it was a Roman nose, and that she might learn from history that all heroes had large noses. The Queen, who passionately loved her son, was charmed at this discourse, and from constantly looking at Désir his nose did not appear so large to her as at first. The Prince was brought up with care, and as soon as he could speak they told all sorts of shocking stories before him about people with short noses. They allowed no one to come near him but those whose noses in some degree resembled his own, and the courtiers, to pay their court to the Queen and her son, pulled the noses of their little children several times in the day to make them longer; but it was no use pulling, for they appeared snub-nosed by the side of Prince Désir. As soon as he could understand it they taught him history, and when they spoke of any great prince or beautiful princess they always said they had long noses. All his apartments were full of portraits of persons with large noses, and Désir became so accustomed to regard the length of the nose as a beauty, that he would not for a crown have had his in the least diminished.

When he was twenty years of age, and they thought of marrying him, they presented him with the portraits of several princesses. He was enchanted with that of Mignone. She was the daughter of a great King, and heiress to several kingdoms; but Désir thought nothing of that, so much was he engrossed by her beauty. This Princess, whom he found so charming, had, however, a little turned-up nose, which had the prettiest effect in the world on her face, but which threw the courtiers into the utmost embarrassment. They had acquired the habit of ridiculing little noses, and they could not restrain a smile at that of the Princess, but Désir would allow no raillery on this subject, and he banished from his court two courtiers who had dared to disparage the nose of Mignone. The others, profiting by this example, corrected themselves, and there was one who said to the Prince, that in truth a man could not be handsome without a large nose, but that female beauty was altogether different, and that a scholar who spoke Greek had told him that he had read, in an old Greek manuscript, that the beautiful Cleopatra had the tip of her nose turned up.

The Prince made a magnificent present to the person who told him this good news, and he sent ambassadors to demand Mignone’s hand in marriage. They granted his request, and he went more than three leagues to meet her, so anxious was he to behold her; but when he advanced to kiss her hand, the Enchanter descended, carried off the Princess before his face, and left him inconsolable. Désir resolved not to return to his kingdom till he had recovered Mignone. He would not allow any of his courtiers to follow him, and being mounted on his good horse he put the bridle on his neck and let him take his own road.

The horse entered a large plain, over which he travelled all day without seeing a single house. The master and the horse were both dying of hunger, when at length in the evening the Prince saw a cavern, in which was a light. He entered, and perceived a little woman, who appeared to be more than an hundred years old. She put on her spectacles to look at the Prince, but she was a long time adjusting them, because her nose was too short. The Prince and the Fairy (for she was one) each burst out laughing at seeing the other, and cried out both at once, “Ah, what a droll nose!” “Not so droll as yours,” said Désir to the Fairy; “but, Madam, let us leave our noses as they are, and be so good as to give me something to eat, for I am dying of hunger, and so is my poor horse.” “With all my heart,” said the Fairy; “although your nose is so ridiculous, you are no less the son of my best friend. I loved the King your father like my own brother; he had a very handsome nose, that Prince!” “And what is wanting in mine?” said Désir. “Oh, there is nothing wanting,” replied the Fairy; “on the contrary, there is but too much of it; but never mind, one may be a very good man, even with too long a nose. I have told you that I was the friend of your father; he came to see me very often in those days; and *à propos* of those days, let me tell you I was then very pretty, and he used to say so. I must tell you a conversation we had together the last time that he saw me.”

“Oh, Madam,” said Désir, “I shall listen to you with much pleasure when I have supped; think, I pray you, that I have not eaten all day.” “Poor boy,” said the Fairy, “he is right: I forgot all about that; I will give you your supper directly, and whilst you eat I will tell you my history in few words, for I am not fond of long stories. Too long a tongue is still more insupportable than a long nose, and I remember, when I was young, that I was admired because I was not a great talker; they told the Queen my mother this, for notwithstanding what you now see me, I am the daughter of a great King. My father —— “ “Your father ate when he was hungry,” said the Prince, interrupting her. “Yes, without doubt,” replied the Fairy, “and you shall sup also, presently. I wanted only to tell you that my father —— “ “And I will listen to nothing till I have eaten,” said the Prince, who began to be in a passion. He calmed down, however, for he had need of the Fairy, and he said to her, “I know that the pleasure I should have in listening to you would make me forget my hunger, but my horse, who will not hear you, has need of food."

The Fairy bridled up at this compliment. "You shall not wait any longer," said she, calling her domestics; "you are very polite, and notwithstanding the enormous size of your nose, you are very good looking." "Plague take the old woman with my nose," said the Prince to himself; "one would imagine that my mother had stolen from her the quantity of which her own nose is deficient. If I did not so much want something to eat, I would leave this chatterbox, who thinks she talks so little. One must be a great fool not to know his own defects: this comes of being born a Princess; flatterers have spoiled her, and have persuaded her that she is a little talker." Whilst the Prince was thus thinking, the servants laid the table, and he could not but wonder at the Fairy, who put a thousand questions to them merely for the pleasure of talking; he admired, above all, a waiting-woman, who, whatever the Fairy said, praised her mistress for her discretion. "Well," thought he, whilst eating, "I am charmed at having come here. This example makes me see how wisely I have acted in not listening to flatterers. Such people praise us shamelessly, hide our defects from us, and change them into perfections: as for me, I shall never be their dupe — I know my faults, thank God." The poor Désir believed this thoroughly, and did not feel that those who had praised his nose mocked him as much as the Fairy's waiting-woman mocked her (for the Prince saw that she turned aside from time to time to laugh). As for him, he said not a word, but ate with all his might.

"Prince," said the Fairy, when he began to be satisfied, "turn yourself a little, I beg; your nose throws a shadow which prevents my seeing what is on my plate. Now, come, let us speak of your father: I went to his Court at the time that he was a little boy, but it is forty years since I retired to this solitude. Tell me a little about the way they live at Court at present: the ladies, do they still love running from place to place? In my time, one saw them the same day at the assembly, at the theatres, at the promenades, at the ball — How long your nose is! I cannot get accustomed to the sight of it!" "Indeed," replied Désir, "I wish you would cease to speak of my nose — it is as it is — what does it matter to you? I am content with it, and I would not have it any shorter; every one has his nose as it pleases Providence." "Oh! I see plainly that you are angry, my poor Désir," said the Fairy; "it was not, however, my intention to annoy you, quite the contrary, I am one of your friends, and I wish to render you a service; but, in spite of that, I cannot help being shocked at your nose; I will, however, try not to speak of it, I will force myself even to think you are snub-nosed, although, to tell you the truth, there is enough material in that nose to make three reasonable noses."

Désir, who had supped, became so impatient at the endless talk which the Fairy kept up on the subject of his nose, that he threw himself on his horse and rode off. He continued his journey, and wherever he passed he thought everybody was mad, because every one exclaimed at his nose; but notwithstanding this, he had been so accustomed to hear it said that his nose was handsome, that he could never admit to himself that it was too long. The old Fairy, who wished to render him a service in spite of himself, took it into her head to shut up Mignone in a crystal palace, and placed this palace in the road of the Prince. Désir, transported with joy, strove to break it, but he could not succeed; in despair, he wished to approach so as at least to speak to the Princess, who, on her part also stretched out her hand close to the glass. He wished to kiss this hand, but whichever way he turned he could not get his mouth near it, because his nose prevented him. He perceived, for the first time, its extraordinary length, and putting his hand to it to bend it on one side, "It must be confessed," said he, "that my nose is too long." At that moment the crystal palace fell to pieces, and the old woman, who held Mignone by the hand, said to the Prince, "Confess that you are under a great obligation to me; I might have spoken in vain to you of your nose, you would never have believed in the defect had it not become an obstacle to the attainment of your wishes.”

It is thus that self-love hides from us the deformities of our soul and body. Reason in vain seeks to exhibit them to us, we do not admit them till the moment when this same self-love finds them contrary to its interest. Désir, whose nose had now become an ordinary one, profited by this lesson; he married Mignone, and lived happily with her for a great number of years.

21

PRINCE CHÉRI

There was once upon a time so excellent a monarch that his subjects called him King Good. One day, when he was hunting, a little white rabbit which the dogs were about to kill, jumped into his arms. The King caressed the little rabbit, and said, “As it has put itself under my protection, I will not allow any harm to be done to it.” He carried the little rabbit into his palace and gave it a pretty little house and nice herbs to eat. At night, when he was alone in his chamber, a beautiful lady appeared before him; she was arrayed neither in gold nor in silver, but her robe was white as snow, and her head-dress consisted simply of a crown of white roses. The good King was much surprised to see this lady, as his door was locked, and he knew not how she had entered. She said to him, “I am the Fairy Candid; I passed through the wood as you were hunting, and I wished to ascertain if you were as good as everybody said you were. For that purpose I took the form of a little rabbit, and I saved myself by jumping into your arms; for I know that those who have pity for animals have more still for men; and if you had refused me your assistance I should have thought you wicked. I come to thank you for the kindness you have shown me, and to assure you I shall always be your friend. You have only to ask me for anything you wish, I promise to grant it.”

“Madam,” said the good King, “as you are a Fairy, you ought to know all I wish for. I have but one son, whom I love exceedingly, and on that account they have named him Prince Chéri; if you have any affection for me, become the friend of my son.” “With all my heart,” said the Fairy; “I can make your son the handsomest Prince in the world, or the richest, or the most powerful; choose which you wish him to be.” “I desire none of those things for my son,” said the good King; “but I shall be much obliged if you will make him the best of all Princes. What will it profit him to be handsome, rich, to have all the kingdoms of the world, if he should be wicked? You know well he would be miserable, and that nothing but virtue can make him happy.” “You are quite right,” said Candid; “but it is not in my power to make the Prince Chéri a good man in spite of himself; he must himself endeavour to become virtuous. All I can promise you is to give him good advice, to point out to him his faults, and to punish him if he will not correct them and punish himself.”

The good King was quite content with this promise, and died a short time afterwards. Prince Chéri wept much for his father, for he loved him with all his heart, and he would have given all his kingdoms, his gold, and his silver, to have saved him, if such things had power to change the will of fate. Two years after the death of the good King, Chéri being in bed, Candid appeared to him. “I promised your father,” said she to him, “to be your friend; and, to keep my word, I come to make you a present.” At the same time she placed on the finger of Chéri a little gold ring, and said to him, “Keep this ring carefully — it is more precious than diamonds. Every time you commit a bad action it will prick your finger; but if in spite of this pricking you persist in the evil deed, you will lose my friendship, and I shall become your enemy.”

Candid disappeared as she uttered these words, and left Chéri much astonished. For some time his conduct was so faultless that the ring did not prick him at all, and this gave him so much gratification, that his subjects added to his name Chéri, or Beloved, that of Heureux, or Happy. One day he went out hunting, and caught nothing, which put him in a bad humour. It appeared to him, then, that the ring pressed his finger a little; but as it did not prick him he paid no great attention to it. On entering his apartment, however, his little dog Bibi came jumping about him affectionately, when he said, “Get thee gone, I am not in a humour to receive thy caresses!” The poor little dog, who did not understand him, pulled at his coat, to oblige him at least to look at him. This irritated Chéri, and he gave him a violent kick. In a moment the ring pricked him, as if it had been a pin; he was much astonished, and seated himself, quite ashamed, in a corner of the room. “I think the Fairy mocks me,” said he to himself. “What great evil have I done in kicking an animal which worried me? Of what use is it to be master of a great empire if I may not chastise my own dog?” “I do not mock you,” said a voice which replied to the thoughts of Chéri. “You have committed three faults instead of one. You have been in an ill-humour because you did not like to be disappointed, and because you believe both beasts and men were only made to obey you. You put yourself in a passion, which is very wrong, and, lastly, you have been cruel to a poor animal that did not deserve to be ill-treated. I know you are much superior to a dog; but if it were a reasonable thing, and permissible for the great to ill-treat those who are beneath them, I would at this moment beat you — kill you, for a Fairy is stronger than a man. The advantage of being master of a great empire is not to be able to do all the harm that you may wish, but all the good that you can.” Chéri confessed his fault, and promised to correct it; but he did not keep his word. He had been reared by a foolish nurse, who had spoilt him when he was little. If he wanted anything he had only to cry, pout, and stamp his foot, and this woman gave him all he wished for; and this had made him wilful. She had told him also, from morning to night, that he would be King some day, and that kings were very happy, because everybody must obey them, and treat them with great respect, and that no one could prevent their doing whatever they pleased.

When Chéri grew up, and was capable of reasoning, he soon learnt that there was nothing so odious as to be proud, vain, and obstinate. He made some efforts to correct himself, but he had unfortunately contracted all three defects; and a bad habit is very difficult to eradicate. It was not that he had naturally a bad heart: he wept with annoyance when he had committed a fault, and said, “How unfortunate am I in having to fight thus all my days against my pride and my temper! If they had corrected me when I was young, I should not now have had so much trouble.”

His ring pricked him very often. Sometimes he stopped immediately, at others he persisted in his ill-behaviour; and what was very singular was, that it pricked him very slightly for a light offence, but when he did anything really wicked, it would make the blood spurt from his finger. At length he grew impatient at this, and wishing to sin at his ease, he threw away his ring. He thought himself the happiest of men when he was released from its pricking. He abandoned himself to all the follies which entered his head, till at length he became quite wicked, and nobody could bear him.

One day that Chéri was out walking he saw a young maiden so beautiful, that he determined to marry her. She was called Zélie, and she was as good as she was pretty. Chéri imagined that Zélie would be most happy to become a great Queen; but the girl told him, with much firmness, “Sire, I am only a shepherdess; I have no fortune; but in spite of that, I will not marry you.” “Am I displeasing to you?” asked Chéri, a little offended. “No, Prince,” replied Zélie; “I think you are very handsome; but what would be the advantage to me of your beauty, your riches, the fine clothes and magnificent carriages which you would give me, if the bad actions I should daily see you commit forced me to despise and hate you?”

Chéri became enraged with Zélie, and ordered his officers to carry her by force to his palace. He brooded all day long over the contempt with which this girl had treated him; but as he loved her, he could not make up his mind to harm her. Amongst the favourites of Chéri was his foster-brother, whom he had made his confidant. This man, whose inclinations were as low as his birth, flattered the passions of his master, and gave him very bad advice. When he saw Chéri so sad, he asked the cause of his grief. The Prince having replied that he could not bear the contempt of Zélie, and that he had determined to correct himself of his faults, because he must be virtuous to please her, this wicked man said, "You are very good to give yourself so much trouble for a little girl. If I were in your place, I would force her to obey me. Remember that you are King, and that it would be a shame for you to submit to the will of a shepherdess, who should be only too happy to be amongst your slaves. Make her fast on bread and water; put her in prison; and if she continue to refuse to marry you, let her die by torture, in order to teach others to yield to your wishes. You will be disgraced if it be known that a simple girl resists your pleasure, and all your subjects will forget that they are placed in this world only to serve you." "But," said Chéri, "shall I not be disgraced if I put to death an innocent girl? For in fact Zélie is guilty of no crime." "No one is innocent who refuses to obey your commands," replied the confidant. "But suppose you do commit an injustice, it is better to be accused of that than to let it be known that it is permitted to be wanting in respect for you or to contradict you."

The courtier knew Chéri's weak point; and the fear of seeing his authority diminished made such an impression on the King, that he stifled the good impulse which had given him the wish to correct himself. He resolved to go the same evening into the chamber of the shepherdess, and to ill-treat her if she still refused to marry him.

The foster-brother of Chéri, who feared some good change in him, assembled three young lords as wicked as himself to carouse with the King.

They supped together; and the courtiers took care to cloud the reason of the poor Prince, by making him drink deep. During the repast they excited his anger against Zélie, and made him so ashamed of the tenderness he had shown for her, that he rose like a madman, swearing that he would make her obey him, or sell her the next day as a slave.

Chéri having entered the chamber in which the girl had been shut up, was surprised not to find her there, for he had the key in his pocket. He was in a frightful rage, and swore to be avenged on those whom he should suspect of having aided her to escape. His confidants hearing him speak thus, resolved to profit by his anger to rid themselves of a nobleman who had been Chéri's governor. This worthy man had occasionally taken the liberty of pointing out to the King his faults, for he loved him as though he had been his own son. At first Chéri had thanked him, but at length he grew impatient at being contradicted, and then began to think it was only from a spirit of opposition that his governor found fault with him, whilst every one else praised him. He ordered him, therefore, to retire from Court; but, notwithstanding this order, he admitted now and then that he was an honest man; that he no longer loved him, but that he esteemed him in spite of himself. The favourites were always in dread of the King recalling the governor, and they now imagined they had found a favourable opportunity of getting rid of him altogether. They represented to the King that Suliman (such was the name of the worthy man) had boasted that he would set Zélie at liberty. They bribed three men, who deposed that they had overheard Suliman speak to this effect; and the Prince, transported with anger, commanded his foster-brother to send a guard to bring the governor to him fettered like a criminal.

After having given these orders, Chéri retired to his room; but hardly had he entered it, when the ground trembled, he heard a tremendous clap of thunder, and Candid appeared before him. “I promised your father,” said she to him, in a severe tone, “to give you advice, and to punish you if you refused to follow it. You have scorned that advice; you have retained but the form of a man; your crimes have changed you into a monster, the horror of heaven and earth. It is time I should fulfil my promise by punishing you. I condemn you to become like the beasts whose inclinations you already copy. You have resembled the lion in your rage, the wolf in your gluttony, the serpent by wounding him who has been your second father, and the bull by your brutality. You shall bear in your new form the trace of all these animals."

Hardly had she finished these words before Chéri saw with horror he was the monster she described. He had the head of a lion, the horns of a bull, the feet of a wolf, and the tail of a viper. At the same time he found himself in a great forest, on the brink of a fountain wherein he saw his horrible form reflected, and heard a voice, which said, "Consider attentively the state to which thy crimes have reduced thee. Thy mind is become a thousand times more frightful than thy body." Chéri recognised the voice of Candid, and in his fury he turned to throw himself on her, and, if it had been possible, to devour her; but he saw no one, and the same voice said to him, "I mock thy impotent fury, and will humble thy pride by placing thee under the power of thine own subjects."

Chéri thought that by flying from this fountain he should escape from much of his vexation, as he should no longer have his ugliness and deformity before his eyes: he rushed therefore into the wood; but hardly had he gone a few steps, when he fell into a hole which had been made to catch a bear, and immediately the hunters, who had climbed the trees to watch for their prey, descended, and having secured him with chains, led him towards the capital city of his kingdom.

On the way, instead of perceiving that he had drawn on himself this chastisement by his own fault, he cursed the Fairy, gnawed his chains, and gave himself up to his rage. As he approached the city to which they were conducting him, he observed great rejoicing going on; and the hunters having asked what had happened, were told that Prince Chéri, who had had no pleasure but in tormenting his people, had been destroyed in his chamber by a thunderbolt, for so they imagined. “The gods,” said they, “could no longer support the excess of his wickedness, and have thus ridden the world of him. Four lords, accomplices of his crimes, thought to profit by the event, and to divide his kingdom amongst them; but the people who knew that it was their evil counsel which had corrupted the King, tore them to pieces, and have offered the crown to Suliman, whom the wicked Chéri had wished to put to death. This worthy Lord has just been crowned, and we celebrate this day as that of the deliverance of the kingdom; for Suliman is virtuous, and will restore to us peace and prosperity.”

Chéri groaned with rage at hearing this discourse; but it was far worse when he arrived in the Great Square before the Palace. He saw Suliman on a superb throne, and heard the people wish him a long life, to repair all the evils which his predecessor had committed. Suliman made a sign with his hand to request silence, and said to the crowd: “I have accepted the crown which you offered me, but only to preserve it for Prince Chéri; he is not dead, as you believe. A Fairy has revealed this to me, and perhaps some day you will see him again as virtuous as he was in his youth. Alas!” continued he, shedding tears, “flatterers ruined him. I knew his heart, it was formed for virtue; and but for the poisonous discourse of those who surrounded him, he would have been a father to you. Detest his vices, but pity him, and let us all pray the gods to restore him to us. As for me, I should esteem myself too happy to bathe this throne with my blood, if I could see him ascend it again with those good dispositions which would make him fill it worthily.”

The words of Suliman went to the heart of Chéri. He found then how sincere had been the attachment and fidelity of this excellent man, and for the first time reproached himself for his wickedness. Hardly had he listened to this good impulse than he felt the rage which had animated him subdued, he reflected on the crimes he had committed, and confessed he had not been punished as severely as he had deserved. He ceased to struggle in his iron cage, and became mild as a lamb. They placed him in a large menagerie, where they kept all sorts of monsters and wild beasts, and chained him up with the rest.

Chéri then came to the resolution of beginning to amend of his faults, by showing obedience to the man who kept him. This man was very brutal when he was in an ill-temper. Although the Monster was very docile, he beat him without rhyme or reason. One day that this man was asleep, a tiger that had broken his chain threw himself upon him to devour him; at first Chéri felt an emotion of joy at seeing himself about to be delivered from his persecutor, but immediately after he condemned this feeling and wished himself at liberty. “I would,” said he, “render good for evil by saving the life of this unhappy man.” Hardly had he formed the wish, than he saw his iron cage open, he threw himself before the man, who was now awake and defending himself from the tiger. The Keeper thought himself lost when he saw the Monster; but his fear was soon turned into joy — the benevolent Monster sprang upon the tiger, strangled him, and then laid himself down at the feet of him whom he had saved. The man, penetrated by gratitude, was about to stoop to caress the Monster which had rendered him so great a service, when he heard a voice which said, “A good action never goes without its reward,” and at the same moment he saw only a pretty dog at his feet. Chéri, charmed at this metamorphosis, bestowed a thousand caresses on his Keeper, who took him in his arms and carried him to the King, to whom he related this marvellous story. The Queen desired to have the dog; and Chéri would have been very happy in his new condition had he been able to forget that he was once a man and a monarch. The Queen loaded him with caresses; but fearing that he would grow larger, she consulted her physicians, who told her that she must give him no food but bread, and only a moderate quantity of that. Poor Chéri was dying of hunger half the day, but he was obliged to have patience.

One morning that they brought him his little roll for his breakfast, he had a fancy to go and eat it in the garden of the Palace. He took it in his mouth, and walked towards a canal which he knew was a short distance off; but he could nowhere find it, and in its place he saw a large mansion, the exterior of which blazed with gold and precious stones. He observed in it an immense number of persons of both sexes magnificently dressed: they sang and danced, and fared sumptuously within the building; but all those who came out of it were pale, thin, covered with wounds, and nearly naked, for their clothes were torn into shreds. Some fell dead as they issued from it without having strength to drag themselves a step further; others proceeded with great difficulty; whilst some remained lying on the ground dying of hunger and begging a morsel of bread from those who entered the house, but who did not vouchsafe a look at them. Chéri approached a young girl who was trying to tear up some grass to eat; touched with compassion, the Prince said to himself, “I have a good appetite, but I shall not die of hunger if I wait till dinner-time and sacrifice my breakfast to this poor creature; perhaps I shall save her life.” He resolved to act on this good impulse, and placed his bread in the hand of the girl, who put it to her mouth with avidity. She soon appeared quite restored by it; and Chéri, transported with joy at having so opportunely come to her relief, was about to return to the Palace when he heard loud cries. It was Zélie in the hands of four men, who dragged her towards the mansion, which they forced her to enter. Chéri then regretted his form of a monster, which would have afforded him the means of rescuing Zélie; but a poor little dog as he was, he could only bark at the ravishers and strive to follow them. They drove him away by kicks; but he resolved not to quit the spot, and find out what had become of Zélie. He reproached himself for the misfortunes of this beautiful girl. “Alas!” said he to himself, “I am indignant with those who have carried her off. Have I not committed the same crime myself? and if the justice of the gods had not frustrated my attempt, should I not have treated her with the same barbarity?”

The reflections of Chéri were interrupted by a noise which he heard above his head. He saw a window open; and his joy was extreme when he perceived Zélie, who threw from this window a plateful of meat so well dressed that it made him hungry to see it. The window was shut again immediately; and Chéri, who had not eaten all day, was about to devour the meat, when the young girl to whom he had given the bread uttered a cry, and having taken him in her arms, “Poor little animal,” said she, “do not touch that food; this house is the Palace of Voluptuousness; all who come out of it are poisoned.” At the same moment Chéri heard a voice which said, “Thou seest a good action never remains unrecompensed;” and immediately he was changed into a beautiful little white pigeon. He remembered that this colour was the favourite one of Candid, and began to hope that she might at length restore him to her good graces. He was desirous of rejoining Zélie; and rising in the air, flew all round the palace, and found with joy one window open; but in vain did he traverse all the building — he could not find Zélie. In despair at her loss, he resolved not to rest till he should meet with her. He flew for several days, and having entered a desert, observed a cavern, which he approached. How great was his delight! Zélie was seated there by the side of a venerable hermit, and sharing with him a frugal repast. Chéri, transported with joy, flew on to the shoulder of the lovely shepherdess, and expressed by his caresses the pleasure he felt at seeing her. Zélie, charmed with the gentleness of the little creature, stroked it gently with her hand, and although she thought it could not understand her, she told it that she accepted the gift it made her of itself, and that she would always love it. “What have you done, Zélie?” said the hermit. “You have plighted your faith.” “Yes, charming shepherdess,” said Chéri to her, who resumed at this moment his natural form, “the termination of my metamorphosis was dependent on your consent to our union. You have promised always to love me, confirm my happiness, or I shall hasten and implore the Fairy Candid, my protectress, to restore me to the form under which I have had the happiness of pleasing you.” “You need not fear her inconstancy,” said Candid, who, quitting the form of the hermit under which she had been concealed, appeared before them in her proper person. “Zélie loved you from the first moment she saw you; but your vices compelled her to conceal the passion with which you had inspired her. The change in your heart leaves her at liberty to show her affection for you. You will live happily, because your union will be founded on virtue.”

Chéri and Zélie threw themselves at the feet of Candid. The Prince was never tired of thanking her for her goodness, and Zélie, enchanted to find that the Prince detested his former evil ways, confirmed to him the Fairy’s avowal of her affection. “Rise, my children,” said the Fairy to them, “I will transport you to your Palace, and restore to Chéri a crown of which his vices had rendered him unworthy.” Hardly had she finished speaking when they found themselves in the chamber of Suliman, who, charmed to see his dear master once more become virtuous, abdicated the throne, and remained the most faithful of his subjects. Chéri reigned for a long period with Zélie; and it is said that he applied himself so well to his duties, that the ring, which he again wore, never once pricked his finger severely enough to draw a single drop of blood.

22

THE WIDOW AND HER TWO DAUGHTERS

Once upon a time there was a Widow, a very worthy woman, who had two daughters, both of whom were very amiable; the eldest was named Blanche, the second Vermeille. They had been given these names because the first had the fairest complexion in the world, and the second cheeks and lips as red as vermilion or the finest coral. One day the good Widow, sitting at her door spinning, saw a poor old woman, who could with difficulty walk, even with the aid of a stick. “You seem very tired,” said the good Widow to the old creature; “sit down a moment and rest,” and immediately desired her daughter to place a chair for her. They both rose directly, but Vermeille ran quicker than her sister and brought the chair. “Will you take something to drink?” said the good woman to the old one. “With all my heart,” replied she; “I could even eat something, if you could give me a morsel to refresh me.” “I will give you all in my power,” said the good Widow: “but I am poor, and it will not be much.” At the same time she told her daughters to attend on the old woman, who placed herself at the table; and the good Widow told her eldest daughter to go and gather some plums from a tree which the young girl had planted herself, and of which she was very fond.

Blanche, instead of obeying her mother cheerfully, murmured against this order, and said to herself, “It was not for this old greedy creature that I have taken so much care of my plum-tree.” She dared not refuse, however, to gather some of the plums; but she did so with an ill grace, and unwillingly.

“And you, Vermeille,” said the good woman to her second daughter, “you have no fruit to give this good lady, for your grapes are not yet ripe.” “True,” said Vermeille, “but I hear my hen cluck; she has just laid an egg, and if madame will like to eat it warm I will give it her with all my heart.” At the same time, without awaiting the reply of the old woman, she ran to fetch her egg; but at the same moment that she presented it to the stranger she disappeared, and they saw in her place a beautiful lady, who said to the mother, “I am about to reward your two daughters according to their deserts. The eldest shall become a great Queen, the second a farmer’s wife.” At the same time striking the cottage with her stick, it disappeared, and they saw in its place a pretty farm. “There is your lot,” said she to Vermeille. “I know that I have given to each that which she will like best.”

The Fairy departed as she uttered these words, and the mother, as well as her two daughters, remained struck with astonishment. They entered the farmhouse, and were charmed with the style of the furniture. The chairs were only of wood, but they were so polished that they could see themselves reflected in them as in a mirror. The bed-linen was white as snow. In the farmyard there were twenty rams and as many sheep, four oxen, four cows, and in the poultry-yard all kinds of fowls, hens, ducks, pigeons, &c. There was also a pretty garden, filled with fruits and flowers. Blanche saw without envy the present which had been made to her sister, and revelled in the delightful anticipations of being a Queen. Suddenly she heard hunters passing, and going to the door to see them, she appeared so beautiful in the eyes of the King, who was returning from the chase, that he resolved immediately to marry her.

Blanche having become Queen, said to her sister Vermeille, “I will not have you remain a farmer; come with me, sister, and I will give you in marriage to a great lord.” “I am much obliged, sister,” replied Vermeille, “but I am accustomed to the country, and wish to remain there.” For the first few months Queen Blanche was so much occupied with balls, fine clothes, and plays, that she thought of nothing else. But she soon became accustomed to such things, and they amused her no longer; on the contrary, she became very miserable. All the ladies of the Court paid her great respect in her presence, but she knew that they did not like her, and that they said amongst themselves, “Look at this little peasant, how she assumes the fine lady: the King had a very low taste to choose such a wife.” This kind of conversation made the King reflect. He began to think he had done wrong in marrying Blanche, and as his love for her declined he neglected her, and passed his time with the handsomest ladies of his Court.

When it was perceived that the King no longer loved his wife, the courtiers ceased to pay her any respect. She was very unhappy, for she had not a single real friend to whom she could relate her griefs. She saw that it was the fashion at Court to betray friends for interested motives, to appear to love those whom they hated, and to tell falsehoods every moment. She was obliged to look serious, because they said a Queen ought to have a grave and majestic air. She had several children, and during all this time she had a doctor continually attending her, who examined everything she ate, and took from her everything she liked. They put no salt in her soup; they forbade her to walk when she was inclined to do so; in a word, she was contradicted from morning till night. They gave governesses to her children, who brought them up very improperly, without her having the liberty to find fault. Poor Blanche was near dying of grief, and she became so thin that she excited the commiseration of everybody. She had not seen her sister during the three years that she had been Queen, because she thought that a person of her rank would be degraded by visiting a farmer; but being overcome with melancholy, she resolved at length to go and pass some days in the country to amuse herself a little. She asked permission of the King, who willingly granted it, because he thought it would be a good riddance.

On her road she came to the farm of Vermeille, and at a distance she saw before the door a troop of shepherds and shepherdesses, dancing and amusing themselves with all their hearts. “Alas!” said the Queen, sighing, “when shall I ever divert myself like these poor people, with no one to find fault with me?” As soon as she appeared her sister ran to her to embrace her. She had such a contented air, she was grown so stout, that the Queen could not help crying at seeing her. Vermeille had married a young peasant who had no fortune, but he always remembered that he was indebted to his wife for all that he possessed, and he sought, by his indulgent manner, to mark his gratitude for her. Vermeille had not many servants, but they were as fond of her as if they had been her children, because she treated them as such. All her neighbours also loved her, and all sought to give her proof of it. She had not much money, but she had no need of it, for she obtained from her land corn, wine, and oil in sufficiency. Her flocks furnished her with milk, with which she made butter and cheese. She spun the wool of her sheep to make clothes for herself, as well as for her husband, and for two children which she had. They were in wonderfully good health; and in the evenings, when their work was done, they amused themselves with all kinds of games. “Alas!” cried the Queen, “the Fairy has made me an unlucky present in bestowing on me a crown. Happiness is not to be found in magnificent palaces, but in the innocent occupations of the country.”

Hardly had she uttered these words when the Fairy appeared. “I intended not to reward you but to punish you by making you a Queen,” said the Fairy, “because you begrudged giving me your plums. In order to be happy, you must, like your sister, only possess such things as are necessary, and wish for no more.” “Ah! Madam,” cried Blanche, “you are sufficiently revenged. Terminate my misery.” “It is ended,” replied the Fairy; “the King, who loves you no longer, has just repudiated you to marry another wife, and to-morrow his officers will come to order you, in his name, not to return to the palace.” This occurred as the Fairy had predicted. Blanche passed the rest of her days with her sister Vermeille in peace and happiness, and never thought of the court but to thank the Fairy for having brought her back to the village.

23

PRINCE FATAL AND PRINCE FORTUNÉ

There was once upon a time a Queen who had two little boys, who were perfectly beautiful. A Fairy, who was a great friend of the Queen, had been requested to be godmother to these Princes, and to endow each with some gift. “I endow the eldest,” said she, “with all sorts of misfortunes until he attains the age of twenty-five, and I name him Fatal.” At these words the Queen uttered piercing cries, and conjured the Fairy to change her gift. “You know not what you ask,” said she to the Queen. “If he be not unfortunate, he will be wicked.” The Queen dared say no more, but she begged the Fairy to allow her to choose a gift for her second son.

“Perhaps you will make a bad choice,” replied the Fairy; “but never mind — I will agree to give him all that you shall request of me for him.” “I wish,” said the Queen, “that he may succeed always in everything he may desire to do — that is the way to make him perfect.” “You may be deceived,” said the Fairy; “therefore I grant him this gift only for five-and-twenty years.”

They selected nurses for the two little Princes; but on the third day the nurse of the eldest Prince caught a fever; they gave him another, who fell and broke her leg; a third lost her milk as soon as she was appointed. And the report being spread that the Prince brought misfortune on all his nurses, no one would suckle him or approach him. The poor child, who was famished, cried, and no one pitied him. A fine stout countrywoman, who had a great number of children whom she had much trouble in supporting, said that she would take care of him if they would give her a large sum of money; and as the King and Queen did not like Prince Fatal, they gave the nurse what she asked, and told her to carry him to her village.

The second Prince, whom they had named Fortuné, got on wonderfully. His papa and mamma loved him passionately, and never thought of their eldest-born. The wicked woman to whom they had given him was no sooner in her own house than she took from him the beautiful clothes in which he was enveloped, and gave them to her own son, who was the same age as Fatal; and having wrapped the Prince in an old petticoat, she carried him into a wood where there was an immense number of wild beasts, and put him into a hole with three little lions, in order that he might be devoured. But the mother of these lions did him no harm; on the contrary, she suckled him, which made him so strong, that he ran quite alone at six months. Meanwhile the son of the nurse, whom she made pass for the Prince, died, and the King and Queen were charmed to think they had got rid of him.

Fatal remained in the wood until he was two years old; and a nobleman of the Court, who went to hunt there, was astonished to find him in the midst of the beasts. He took pity on him, carried him to his house, and having learnt that they sought for a child to keep Fortuné company, he presented Fatal to the Queen.

They gave a master to Fortuné to teach him to read, but they forbad the master to make him cry. The young Prince, who had overheard this, cried every time that he took up his book — so that at five years old he did not know his letters, whilst Fatal read perfectly, and already knew how to write. To frighten the Prince, they commanded the master to whip Fatal every time that Fortuné failed in his duties. Thus Fatal, however good he might be, did not escape being beaten; whilst Fortuné was so wilful and so naughty, that he always ill-treated his brother, whom, however, he did not know to be such. If any one gave Fatal an apple or a toy, Fortuné snatched it out of his hands; he made him be silent when he wished to speak; obliged him to speak when he wished to be silent; in a word, he was a little martyr, on whom no one had any pity.

They lived thus till they were ten years old, and the Queen was much surprised at the ignorance of her son. “The Fairy has deceived me,” said she; “I thought that my son would be the wisest of Princes, because I wished he might succeed in all that he should desire to undertake.” She went to consult the Fairy on the subject, who said to her, “Madam, you should have wished your son to have a good disposition rather than talent. He only desires to be wicked, and he succeeds in being so, as you see.” After having said these words to the Queen, she turned her back on her. The poor Princess, much afflicted, returned to the palace. She would have scolded Fortuné to oblige him to do better; but instead of promising to correct his faults, he said that if they vexed him he would starve himself to death. Then the Queen, quite frightened, took him on her knee, kissed him, gave him sugar-plums, and told him that he should not study for a week if he would but eat as usual.

Meanwhile Prince Fatal became a prodigy of learning and of gentleness; he was so accustomed to be contradicted, that he had no will of his own, and devoted himself to forestall the fancies of Fortuné. But that naughty child, who was enraged at seeing him more clever than himself, could not bear him, and the masters, in order to please the young Prince, beat Fatal every minute. At length the wicked boy told the Queen that he would not have Fatal any longer in his sight, and that he would not eat till they had driven him from the Palace. Thus poor Fatal was turned into the street, and as they were afraid of displeasing the Prince, no one would receive him.

He passed the night under a tree dying with cold, for it was winter, and having nothing for his supper but a morsel of bread which some one had given him in charity. The next morning he said to himself, “I will not remain here doing nothing; I will work to gain my livelihood until I shall be big enough to go to the wars. I remember having read in history that common soldiers have become great captains; perhaps I may have the same good fortune if I am an honest man. I have neither father nor mother, but God is the Father of orphans; He has given me a lioness for my foster-mother; He will not forsake me.” After having said this, Fatal rose up and said his prayers — for he never failed to pray to God morning and evening — and when he prayed he cast down his eyes, joined his hands, and did not look about him. A countryman, who was passing, and saw that Fatal was praying with all his heart, said to himself, “I am sure that must be an honest boy; I should like to take him to keep my sheep; God will bless me for his sake.” The countryman waited till Fatal had finished his prayer, and then said, “My little friend, will you come and keep my sheep? — I will feed and take care of you.” “I will, certainly,” replied Fatal; “and I will do all in my power to serve you well.”

This countryman was a large farmer, who had a great number of servants who robbed him very often, and his wife and children robbed him also. When they saw Fatal, they were very well contented. “He is a child,” said they; “he will do all we wish.” One day the wife said to him, “My little friend, my husband is a miser who never gives me any money; let me take a sheep, and you can say the wolf has carried it off.” “Madam,” replied Fatal, “I would render you a service with all my heart, but I would much rather die than tell a story or be a thief.” “You are a little fool,” said the woman; “no one will know what you have done.” “God will know it, Madam,” replied Fatal; “He knows all that we do, and He will punish liars and those who steal.” When the farmer’s wife heard these words, she threw herself on him, beat him, and tore out a handful of his hair. Fatal cried, and the farmer hearing him, asked his wife why she beat the child? “Because,” said she, “he is a glutton; I saw him this morning eat a pot of cream which I was going to take to market.” “Fie! how horrid it is to be greedy,” said the farmer; and immediately called a servant, and bade him whip Fatal.

It was of no use the poor child saying he had not eaten the cream; they believed the mistress rather than him. After this, he went into the fields with his sheep, and the farmer’s wife said to him, “Well! will you now give me a sheep?” “I should be very sorry to do so,” said Fatal; “you can do what you will with me, but you cannot oblige me to tell a lie.” To revenge herself, the wicked creature then set all the other servants to treat Fatal ill. He remained in the fields night and day; and instead of giving the same food to him as to the other servants, she sent him nothing but bread and water, and when he returned she accused him of all the harm that was done in the house.

He passed a year with this farmer, and although he lay on the bare ground and was so ill-fed, he became so strong that he appeared to be fifteen when he was only thirteen; besides, he was become so patient, that he did not mind even when they scolded him unjustly. One day that he was at the farm, he heard say that a neighbouring King was engaged in a great war. He asked his master to discharge him, and went on foot into the kingdom of this Prince to become a soldier. He engaged himself to a Captain who was a great lord, but behaved himself more like a common porter, he was so brutal; he swore, he beat his soldiers, he robbed them of half the money which the King gave for their food and clothing; and under this wicked Captain, Fatal was even more unhappy than with the farmer. He had engaged himself for ten years, and although he saw the greater number of his comrades desert, he would never follow their example, for he said, “I have received the money to serve ten years; I should rob the King if I failed in my word.” Although the Captain was a wicked man, and ill-treated Fatal like the others, he could not help esteeming him because he saw that he always did his duty. He gave him money to do his commissions, and Fatal had the key of his chamber when he went to the country, where he dined with his friends.

This Captain was not fond of reading; but he had a large library, to make believe to those who came to his house that he was a clever man, for in that country they thought that an officer who did not read history could never be anything but a fool and an ignoramus. When Fatal had finished his duties as a soldier, instead of going to drink and gamble with his comrades, he shut himself up in the Captain's chamber and tried to learn his profession by reading the lives of great Generals, and by these means he became capable of commanding an army.

He had already been seven years a soldier when he went to the war. His Captain took six soldiers with him, to make a search in a little wood; and when in this little wood, the soldiers said quite low, "We must kill this wicked man, who beats us and steals our bread." Fatal told them they must not do such a wicked action; but, instead of listening to him, they said they would kill him with the Captain, and all five drew their swords. Fatal placed himself by the side of the Captain, and fought with so much valour that he alone killed four of the soldiers. His Captain, seeing that he owed his life to him, begged his pardon for all the ill he had done him; and having reported his conduct to the King, Fatal was made a Captain, and the King granted him a large pension.

Oh, you may be sure the soldiers did not wish to kill Fatal, for he loved them like his children; and far from robbing them of what belonged to them, he gave them his own money when they were wounded, and never took it away again when in an ill humour. Meanwhile a great battle was fought, and the General commanding the army having been killed, all the officers and soldiers were retreating in disorder, but Fatal cried aloud that he would rather die sword in hand than fly like a coward. His own men answered that they would not abandon him, and their good example having shamed the others, they rallied round Fatal and fought so well that they routed the enemy, and took the hostile King’s son prisoner. The other King was very pleased when he heard that he had gained the battle, and said to Fatal that he would make him General of all the army. He presented him to the Queen and the Princess his daughter, who gave him their hands to kiss.

When Fatal saw the Princess, he remained motionless. She was so beautiful, that he felt madly in love with her, and then he was indeed miserable; for he felt that a man like himself was not fit to marry a great Princess. He resolved, therefore, carefully to conceal his love, and every day he suffered the greatest torment; but it was much worse when he found that Fortuné, having seen a picture of the Princess, who was named Gracieuse, had fallen in love with her, and that he had sent ambassadors to demand her hand in marriage.

Fatal thought he should die of grief; but the Princess Gracieuse, who knew that Fortuné was a wicked, cowardly Prince, begged the King, her father, so hard not to make her marry him, that he replied to the ambassador that the Princess did not wish to marry yet. Fortuné, who had never been contradicted, was in a fury when he heard the reply of the Princess; and his father, who could refuse him nothing, declared war with the father of Gracieuse, who did not distress himself much about it, for he said, “So long as I have Fatal at the head of my army, I do not fear being defeated.”

He sent for his General, and ordered him to prepare for war; but Fatal, throwing himself at his feet, told him that he was born in the kingdom of the father of Fortuné, and that he could not fight against his native Sovereign. The father of Gracieuse was in a great rage, and told Fatal that he would put him to death if he refused to obey him; but that, on the contrary, he would give him his daughter in marriage if he gained the victory over Fortuné. Poor Fatal, who loved Gracieuse passionately, was sorely tempted, but in the end resolved to do his duty.

Without saying anything to the King, he quitted the Court, and abandoned all his wealth. Meanwhile, Fortuné put himself at the head of his troops, and marched to give the King battle; but at the end of four days he fell ill of fatigue, for he was very delicate, never having taken any exercise. The heat, the cold — everything made him ill. However, the ambassador, who wished to make his court to Fortuné, told him that he had seen at the Court of Gracieuse the little boy who had been banished from the Palace, and that they said the father of Gracieuse had promised him his daughter. Fortuné at this news put himself in a great passion, and as soon as he was better, set out again determined to dethrone the father of Gracieuse, and promised a large sum of money to any one who would bring Fatal to him dead or alive.

Fortuné won a great victory, although he did not fight himself, for he was afraid of being killed. At length he besieged the capital city of his enemy, and resolved to take it by assault. The eve of this day they brought Fatal to him, bound in chains, for a great number of people had been tempted by the reward to seek for him. Fortuné, charmed at being able to revenge himself, resolved, before commencing the assault, to have Fatal beheaded in sight of the enemy. That same day he gave a great feast to his officers to celebrate his birthday, being just twenty-five years old. The soldiers in the besieged city having learnt that Fatal was taken, and that in an hour he was to be beheaded, resolved to perish or save him, for they remembered the benefits he had conferred on them whilst he was their General. They asked permission of the King to make a sortie, and this time they were victorious.

The gift of Fortuné had ceased, and he was killed in endeavouring to escape. The victorious soldiers ran to take off the chains of Fatal, and at the same moment they saw two brilliant chariots appear in the air. The Fairy was in one of these chariots, and the father and mother of Fatal were in the other, but asleep. They only awoke as their chariot touched the ground, and they were very much astonished to find themselves in the midst of the army.

The Fairy then addressing the Queen, and presenting Fatal to her, said, “Madam, behold in this hero your eldest son; the misfortunes which he has undergone have corrected the defects of his character, which was violent and passionate. Fortuné, on the contrary, who was born with good inclinations, has been entirely spoilt by flattery, and God has not permitted him to live longer, because he would have become more wicked every day. He has just been killed; but to console you for his death, learn that he was on the point of dethroning his father, because he was tired of waiting to be King.” The King and Queen were very much astonished, and embraced Fatal with all their heart, of whom they had heard speak honourably. The Princess Gracieuse and her father learnt with joy the adventures of Fatal, who married Gracieuse, with whom he lived a long time in perfect happiness, because it was founded in virtue.

24

CINDERELLA

Once on a time there was a gentleman who took for a second wife the haughtiest and proudest woman that had ever been seen. She had two daughters of the same temper, and who resembled her in everything. The husband, on his side, had a daughter, but whose gentleness and goodness were without parallel. She inherited them from her mother, who was the best creature in the world. The wedding was hardly over before the stepmother's ill-humour broke out. She could not abide the young girl, whose good qualities made her own daughters appear more detestable. She employed her in all the meanest work of the house. It was she who cleaned the plate, and the stairs, who scrubbed Madame's chamber, and those of Mesdemoiselles, her daughters. She slept at the top of the house, in a loft, on a wretched straw mattress, while her sisters occupied rooms, beautifully floored, in which were the most fashionable beds, and mirrors wherein they could see themselves from head to foot. The poor girl bore everything with patience, and did not dare complain to her father, who would only have scolded her, as his wife governed him entirely. When she had done her work, she went and placed herself in the chimney-corner, and sat down amongst the cinders, which caused her to be called by the household in general Cindertail. The second daughter, however, who was not so rude as her elder sister, called her Cinderella. Notwithstanding, Cinderella, in her shabby clothes, looked a thousand times handsomer than her sisters, however magnificently attired.

It happened that the King’s son gave a ball, and invited to it all persons of quality. Our two young ladies were included in the invitation, for they cut a great figure in the neighbourhood. Behold them in great delight, and very busy choosing the most becoming gowns and head-dresses. A new mortification for Cinderella, for it was she who ironed her sisters’ linen, and set their ruffles. Nothing was talked of but the style in which they were to be dressed. “I,” said the eldest, “will wear my red velvet dress and my English point-lace trimmings.” “I,” said the youngest, “shall only wear my usual petticoat; but to make up for that, I shall put on my gold-flowered mantua, and my necklace of diamonds, which are none of the poorest.” They sent for a good milliner to make up their double-frilled caps, and bought their patches of the best maker. They called Cinderella to give them her opinion, for she had excellent taste. Cinderella gave them the best advice in the world, and even offered to dress their heads for them, which they were very willing she should do; and whilst she was about it, they said to her, “Cinderella, shouldst thou like to go to the ball?” “Alas! Mesdemoiselles, you make game of me; that would not befit me at all.” “Thou art right, they would laugh immensely to see a Cindertail at a ball!” Any other but Cinderella would have dressed their heads awry, but she was good natured, and dressed them to perfection. They could eat nothing for nearly two days, so transported were they with joy. More than a dozen laces were broken in making their waists as small as possible, and they were always before their looking-glasses. At last the happy day arrived. They set off, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could. When they were out of sight, she began to cry. Her godmother, who saw her all in tears, inquired what ailed her. “I should so like — I should so like — “ she sobbed so much that she could not finish the sentence. “Thou wouldst so like to go to the ball — Is not that it?” “Alas! yes,” said Cinderella, sighing.

“Well, if thou wilt be a good girl, I will take care thou shalt go.” She led her into her chamber, and said to her, “Go into the garden and bring me a pumpkin.” Cinderella went immediately, gathered the finest she could find, and brought it to her godmother, unable to guess how the pumpkin could enable her to go to the ball. Her godmother scooped it out; and, having left nothing but the rind, struck it with her wand, and the pumpkin was immediately changed into a beautiful coach gilt all over. She then went and looked into the mouse-trap, where she found six mice, all alive. She told Cinderella to lift the door of the mouse-trap a little, and to each mouse, as it ran out, she gave a tap with her wand, and the mouse was immediately changed into a fine horse, thereby producing a handsome team of six horses, of a beautiful dappled mouse-grey colour. As she was in some difficulty as to what she should make a coachman of, Cinderella said, “I will go and see if there be not a rat in the rat-trap; we will make a coachman of him.” “Thou art right,” said her godmother. “Go and see.” Cinderella brought her the rat-trap, in which there were three great rats. The Fairy selected one from the three, on account of its ample beard, and having touched it, it was changed into a fat coachman, who had the finest moustaches that ever were seen. She then said, “Go into the garden, thou wilt find there, behind the watering-pot, six lizards, bring them to me.” She had no sooner brought them than the godmother transformed them into six footmen, who immediately jumped up behind the coach, with their liveries all covered with lace, and hung on to it as if they had done nothing else all their lives. The Fairy then said to Cinderella, “Well, there is something to go to the ball in. Art thou not well pleased?” “Yes; but am I to go in these dirty clothes?” Her godmother only touched her with her wand, and in the same instant her dress was changed to cloth of gold and silver, covered with jewels. She then gave her a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the world. When she was thus attired, she got into the coach; but her godmother advised her, above all things, not to stay out past midnight — warning her, that if she remained at the ball one minute longer, her coach would again become a pumpkin; her horses, mice; her footmen, lizards; and her clothes resume their old appearance. She promised her godmother she would not fail to leave the ball before midnight, and departed, out of her senses with joy.

The King's son, who was informed that a grand Princess had arrived whom nobody knew, ran to receive her. He handed her out of the coach and led her into the hall, where the company was assembled. There was immediately a dead silence; they stopped dancing, and the fiddlers ceased to play, so engrossed was every one in the contemplation of the great attractions of the unknown lady. Nothing was heard but a low murmur of "Oh! how lovely she is!" The King himself, old as he was, could not take his eyes from her, and observed to the Queen, that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and so amiable a person. All the ladies were intently occupied in examining her head-dress and her clothes, that they might have some like them the very next day, provided they could find materials as beautiful, and workpeople sufficiently clever to make them up.

The King's son conducted her to the most honourable seat, and then led her out to dance. She danced with so much grace that their admiration of her was increased. A very grand supper was served, of which the Prince ate not a morsel, so absorbed was he in contemplation of her. She seated herself beside her sisters, and showed them a thousand civilities. She shared with them the oranges and citrons which the Prince had given to her; at which they were much surprised, for she appeared a perfect stranger to them. Whilst they were in conversation together, Cinderella heard the clock strike three-quarters past eleven. She immediately made a profound curtsey to the company, and departed as quickly as she could. As soon as she had reached home, she went to find her godmother; and after having thanked her, said she much wished to go to the ball again the next day, because the King's son had invited her. While she was occupied in telling her godmother all that had passed at the ball, the two sisters knocked at the door. Cinderella went and opened it — "How late you are!" said she to them, yawning, rubbing her eyes, and stretching herself as if she had but just awoke. She had not, however, been inclined to sleep since she had left them. "Hadst thou been at the ball," said one of her sisters to her, "thou wouldst not have been weary of it. There came to it the most beautiful Princess — the most beautiful that ever was seen. She paid us a thousand attentions. She gave us oranges and citrons." Cinderella was beside herself with delight. She asked them the name of the Princess; but they replied that nobody knew her; that the King's son was much puzzled about it, and that he would give everything in the world to know who she was. Cinderella smiled and said, "She was very handsome, then? Heavens! how fortunate you are! — Could not I get a sight of her? Alas! Mademoiselle Javotte, lend me the yellow gown you wear every day?" "Truly," said Mademoiselle Javotte, "I like that! Lend one's gown to a dirty Cindertail like you! — I must be very mad indeed!" Cinderella fully expected this refusal, and was delighted at it, for she would have been greatly embarrassed if her sister had lent her her gown.

The next day the two sisters went to the ball, and Cinderella also, but still more splendidly dressed than before. The King's son never left her side, or ceased saying tender things to her. The young lady was much amused, and forgot what her godmother had advised her, so that she heard the clock begin to strike twelve when she did not even think it was eleven. She rose and fled as lightly as a fawn. The Prince followed her, but could not overtake her. She dropped one of her glass slippers, which the Prince carefully picked up. Cinderella reached home almost breathless, without coach or footmen, and in her shabby clothes, nothing having remained of all her finery, except one of her little slippers, the fellow of that she had let fall. The guards at the palace gate were asked if they had not seen a Princess go out; they answered that they had seen no one pass but a poorly-dressed girl, who had more the air of a peasant than of a lady. When the two sisters returned from the ball, Cinderella asked them if they had been as much entertained as before, and if the beautiful lady had been present. They said yes, but that she had fled as soon as it had struck twelve, and so precipitately that she had let fall one of her little glass slippers, the prettiest in the world; that the King's son had picked it up; that he had done nothing but gaze upon it during the remainder of the evening; and that, undoubtedly, he was very much in love with the beautiful person to whom the little slipper belonged. They spoke the truth; for a few days afterwards the King's son caused it to be proclaimed by sound of trumpet that he would marry her whose foot would exactly match with the slipper. They began by trying it on the Princesses, then on the Duchesses, and so on throughout all the Court; but in vain. It was taken to the two sisters, who did their utmost to force one of their feet into the slipper, but they could not manage to do so. Cinderella, who witnessed their efforts and recognised the slipper, said, laughingly, "Let me see if it will not fit me." Her sisters began to laugh and ridicule her. The gentleman who had been entrusted to try the slipper, having attentively looked at Cinderella and found her to be very handsome, said that it was a very proper request, and that he had been ordered to try the slipper on all girls without exception. He made Cinderella sit down, and putting the slipper to her little foot, he saw it go on easily and fit like wax. Great was the astonishment of the two sisters, but it was still greater when Cinderella took the other little slipper out of her pocket and put it on her other foot. At that moment the godmother arrived, who having given a tap with her wand to Cinderella's clothes, they became still more magnificent than all the others she had appeared in. The two sisters then recognised in her the beautiful person they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet to crave her forgiveness for all the ill-treatment she had suffered from them. Cinderella raised and embracing them, said that she forgave them with all her heart, and begged them to love her dearly for the future.

They conducted her to the young Prince, dressed just as she was. He found her handsomer than ever, and a few days afterwards he married her. Cinderella, who was as kind as she was beautiful, gave her sisters apartments in the palace, and married them the very same day to two great lords of the court.

25

LITTLE THUMBLING

Once upon a time there was a Woodcutter and his wife who had seven children, all boys; the eldest was but ten years old, and the youngest only seven. People wondered that the Woodcutter had had so many children in so short a time; but the fact is, that his wife not only had them very fast, but seldom presented him with less than two at a birth. They were very poor, and their seven children troubled them greatly, as not one of them was yet able to gain his livelihood. What grieved them still more was that the youngest was very delicate, and seldom spoke, which they considered a proof of stupidity instead of good sense. He was very diminutive, and, when first born, scarcely bigger than one’s thumb, which caused them to call him Little Thumbling.

This poor child was the scapegoat of the house, and was blamed for everything that happened. Nevertheless he was the shrewdest and most sensible of all his brothers, and if he spoke little, he listened a great deal. There came a very bad harvest, and the famine was so severe that these poor people determined to get rid of their children. One evening, when they were all in bed, and the Woodman was sitting over the fire with his wife, he said to her, with an aching heart, “Thou seest clearly that we can no longer find food for our children. I cannot let them die of hunger before my eyes, and I am resolved to lose them to-morrow in the wood, which will be easily done, for whilst they are occupied in tying up the faggots, we have but to make off unobserved by them.” “Ah!” exclaimed the Woodcutter’s wife, “Canst thou have the heart to lose thine own children?” Her husband in vain represented to her their exceeding poverty; she could not consent to the deed. She was poor, but she was their mother. Having, however, reflected on the misery it would occasion her to see them die of hunger, she at length assented, and went to bed weeping.

Little Thumbling heard everything they had said, for having ascertained, as he lay in his bed, that they were talking of their affairs, he got up quietly, and slipped under his father’s stool to listen, without being seen. He went to bed again, and slept not a wink the rest of the night, thinking what he should do. He rose early and repaired to the banks of a rivulet, where he filled his pockets with small white pebbles, and then returned home. They set out all together, and Little Thumbling said nothing of what he had heard to his brothers. They entered a very thick forest, wherein, at ten paces distant, they could not see one another. The Woodcutter began to cut wood, and his children to pick up sticks to make faggots with. The father and mother, seeing them occupied with their work, stole away gradually, and then fled suddenly by a small winding path. When the children found themselves all alone, they began to scream and cry with all their might. Little Thumbling let them scream, well knowing how he could get home again, for as he came he had dropped all along the road the little white pebbles he had in his pockets. He said to them then, “Fear nothing, brothers, my father and mother have left us here, but I will take you safely home, only follow me.” They followed him, and he led them back to the house by the same road that they had taken into the forest. They feared to enter immediately, but placed themselves close to the door to listen to the conversation of their father and mother.

Just at the moment that the Woodcutter and his wife arrived at home, the lord of the manor sent them ten crowns which he had owed them a long time, and which they had given up all hope of receiving. This was new life to them, for these poor people were actually starving. The Woodcutter sent his wife to the butcher's immediately. As it was many a day since they had tasted meat, she bought three times as much as was necessary for the supper of two persons. When they had satisfied their hunger, the Woodcutter's wife said, "Alas! where now are our poor children; they would fare merrily on what we have left. But it was thou, Guillaume, who wouldst lose them. Truly did I say we should repent it. What are they now doing in the forest! Alas! Heaven help me! the wolves have, perhaps, already devoured them! Inhuman that thou art, thus to have destroyed thy children!" The Woodcutter began to lose his temper, for she repeated more than twenty times that they should repent it, and that she had said they would. He threatened to beat her if she did not hold her tongue. It was not that the Woodcutter was not, perhaps, even more sorry than his wife, but that she made such a noise about it, and that he was like many other men who are very fond of women who can talk well, but are exceedingly annoyed by those whose words always come true. The wife was all in tears. "Alas! where are now my children, my poor children?" She uttered this, at length, so loudly, that the children, who were at the door, heard her, and began to cry altogether, "We are here! we are here!" She ran quickly to open the door to them, and, embracing them, exclaimed, "How happy I am to see you again, my dear children; you are very tired and hungry. And how dirty thou art, Pierrot; come here and let me wash thee." Pierrot was her eldest son, and she loved him better than all the rest because he was rather red-headed, and she was slightly so herself. They sat down to supper, and ate with an appetite that delighted their father and mother, to whom they related how frightened they were in the forest, speaking almost always all together. The good folks were enchanted to see their children once more around them, and their joy lasted as long as the ten crowns; but when the money was spent they relapsed into their former misery, and resolved to lose the children again, and to do so effectually they determined to lead them much further from home than they had done the first time.

They could not talk of this so privately, but that they were overheard by Little Thumbling, who reckoned upon getting out of the scrape by the same means as before; but though he got up very early to collect the little pebbles, he could not succeed in his object, for he found the house door double locked. He knew not what to do, when the Woodcutter’s wife, having given them each a piece of bread for their breakfast, it occurred to him that he might make the bread supply the place of the pebbles by strewing crumbs of it along the path as they went, and so he put his piece in his pocket. The father and mother led them into the thickest and darkest part of the forest; and as soon as they had done so, they gained a by-path, and left them there. Little Thumbling did not trouble himself much, for he believed he should easily find his way back by means of the bread which he had scattered wherever he had passed; but he was greatly surprised at not being able to find a single crumb. The birds had eaten it all up! Behold the poor children then, in great distress, for the further they wandered the deeper they plunged into the forest. Night came on, and a great wind arose, which terrified them horribly. They fancied they heard on every side nothing but the howling of wolves, hastening to devour them. They scarcely dared to speak or look behind them. It then began to rain so heavily that they were soon drenched to the skin; they slipped at every step, tumbling into the mud, out of which they scrambled in a filthy state, not knowing what to do with their hands. Little Thumbling climbed up a tree to try if he could see anything from the top of it. Having looked all about him, he saw a little light like that of a candle, but it was a long way on the other side of the forest. He came down again, and when he had reached the ground he could see the light no longer. This distressed him greatly; but having walked on with his brothers for some time in the direction of the light, he saw it again on emerging from the wood. At length they reached the house where the light was, not without many alarms, for they often lost sight of it, and always when they descended into the valleys. They knocked loudly at the door, and a good woman came to open it. She asked them what they wanted. Little Thumbling told her they were poor children who had lost their way in the forest, and who begged a night's lodging for charity. The woman, seeing they were all so pretty, began to weep, and said to them, "Alas! my poor children, whither have you come? Know that this is the dwelling of an Ogre who eats little boys!" "Alas, Madam!" replied Little Thumbling, who trembled from head to foot, as did all his brothers; "what shall we do? — It is certain that the wolves of the forest will not fail to devour us to-night, if you refuse to receive us under your roof, and that being the case, we had rather be eaten by the gentleman; perhaps he may have pity upon us, if you are kind enough to ask him." The Ogre's wife, who fancied she could contrive to hide them from her husband till the next morning, allowed them to come in, and led them where they could warm themselves by a good fire, for there was a whole sheep on the spit roasting for the Ogre's supper. Just as they were beginning to get warm, they heard two or three loud knocks at the door. It was the Ogre who had come home. His wife immediately made the children hide under the bed, and went to open the door. The Ogre first asked if his supper was ready and if she had drawn the wine, and with that he sat down to his meal. The mutton was all but raw, but he liked it all the better for that. He sniffed right and left, saying that he smelt fresh meat. "It must be the calf I have just skinned that you smell," said his wife. "I smell fresh meat, I tell you once more," replied the Ogre, looking askance at his wife; "there is something here that I don't understand." In saying these words, he rose from the table and went straight to the bed — "Ah!" he exclaimed, "it is thus, then, thou wouldst deceive me, cursed woman! I know not what hinders me from eating thee also! It is well for thee that thou art an old beast! Here is some game, which comes in good time for me to entertain three Ogres of my acquaintance who are coming to see me in a day or two.” He dragged them from under the bed one after the other. The poor children fell on their knees, begging mercy; but they had to deal with the most cruel of all the Ogres, and who, far from feeling pity for them, devoured them already with his eyes, and said to his wife they would be dainty bits, when she had made a good sauce for them. He went to fetch a great knife, and as he returned to the poor children, he whetted it on a long stone that he held in his left hand. He had already seized one, when his wife said to him, “What would you do at this hour of the night? will it not be time enough to-morrow?” “Hold thy peace,” replied the Ogre, “they will be the more tender.” “But you have already so much meat,” returned his wife; “Here is a calf, two sheep, and half a pig.” “Thou art right,” said the Ogre; “give them a good supper, that they may not fall away, and then put them to bed.” The good woman was enchanted, and brought them plenty for supper, but they couldn’t eat, they were so paralysed with fright. As for the Ogre, he seated himself to drink again, delighted to think he had such a treat in store for his friends. He drained a dozen goblets more than usual, which affected his head a little, and obliged him to go to bed.

The Ogre had seven daughters who were still in their infancy. These little Ogresses had the most beautiful complexions, in consequence of their eating raw flesh like their father; but they had very small, round, grey eyes, hooked noses, and very large mouths, with long teeth, exceedingly sharp, and wide apart. They were not very vicious as yet; but they promised fairly to be so, for they already began to bite little children, in order to suck their blood. They had been sent to bed early, and were all seven in a large bed, having each a crown of gold on her head. In the same room was another bed of the same size. It was in this bed that the Ogre’s wife put the seven little boys to sleep, after which she went to sleep with her husband.

Little Thumbling, who had remarked that the Ogre’s daughters had golden crowns on their heads, and who feared that the Ogre might regret that he had not killed him and his brothers that evening, got up in the middle of the night, and, taking off his own nightcap and those of his brothers, went very softly and placed them on the heads of the Ogre's seven daughters, after having taken off their golden crowns, which he put on his brothers and himself, in order that the Ogre might mistake them for his daughters, and his daughters for the boys whose throats he longed to cut.

Matters turned out exactly as he anticipated, for the Ogre awaking at midnight, regretted having deferred till the morning what he might have done the evening before. He therefore jumped suddenly out of bed, and seizing his great knife, "Let us go," said he, "and see how our young rogues are by this time; we won't make two bites at a cherry." Therewith he stole on tiptoes up to his daughters' bed-room, and approached the bed in which lay the little boys, who were all asleep except Thumbling, who was dreadfully frightened when the Ogre placed his hand upon his head to feel it, as he had in turn felt those of all his brothers.

The Ogre, who felt the golden crowns, said, "Truly, I was about to do a pretty job! It's clear I must have drunk too much last night." He then went to the bed where his daughters slept, and having felt the little nightcaps that belonged to the boys. "Aha!" cried he. "Here are our young wags! Let us to work boldly!" So saying, he cut without hesitation the throats of his seven daughters. Well satisfied with this exploit, he returned and stretched himself beside his wife. As soon as Little Thumbling heard the Ogre snoring, he woke his brothers, and bade them dress themselves quickly and follow him. They went down softly into the garden and jumped over the wall. They ran nearly all night long, trembling all the way, and not knowing whither they were going.

The Ogre, awaking in the morning, said to his wife, "Get thee up stairs and dress the little rogues you took in last night." The Ogress was astonished at the kindness of her husband, never suspecting the sort of dressing he meant her to give them, and fancying he ordered her to go and put on their clothes; she went up stairs, where she was greatly surprised to find her daughters murdered and swimming in their blood. The first thing she did was to faint (for it is the first thing that almost all women do in similar circumstances). The Ogre, fearing that his wife would be too long about the job he had given her to do, went upstairs to help her. He was not less surprised than his wife, when he beheld this frightful spectacle. “Hah! what have I done?” he exclaimed. “The wretches shall pay for it, and instantly!” He then threw a jugfull of water in his wife’s face, and having brought her to, said, “Quick! give me my seven-league boots, that I may go and catch them.” He set out, and after running in every direction, came at last upon the track of the poor children, who were not more than a hundred yards from their father’s house. They saw the Ogre striding from hill to hill, and who stepped over rivers as easily as if they were the smallest brooks. Little Thumbling, who perceived a hollow rock close by where they were, hid his brothers in it, and crept in after them, watching all the while the progress of the Ogre. The Ogre, feeling very tired with his long journey to no purpose (for seven-league boots are very fatiguing to the wearer), was inclined to rest, and by chance sat down on the very rock in which the little boys had concealed themselves. As he was quite worn out, he had not rested long before he fell asleep, and began to snore so dreadfully that the poor children were not less frightened than they were when he took up the great knife to cut their throats.

Little Thumbling was not so much alarmed, and told his brothers to run quickly into the house while the Ogre was sound asleep, and not to be uneasy about him. They took his advice and speedily reached home. Little Thumbling having approached the Ogre, gently pulled off his boots, and put them on directly. The boots were very large and very long; but as they were fairy boots, they possessed the quality of increasing or diminishing in size according to the leg of the person who wore them, so that they fitted him as perfectly as if they had been made for him. He went straight to the Ogre’s house, where he found his wife weeping over her murdered daughters. “Your husband,” said Little Thumbling to her, “is in great danger, for he has been seized by a band of robbers, who have sworn to kill him if he does not give them all his gold and silver. At the moment they had their daggers at his throat he perceived me, and entreated me to come and tell you the situation he was in, and bid you give me all his ready cash, without keeping back any of it, as otherwise they will kill him without mercy. As time pressed, he insisted I should take his seven-league boots, which you see I have on, in order that I might make haste, and also that you might be sure I was not imposing upon you.”

The good woman, very much alarmed, immediately gave him all the money she could find, for the Ogre was not a bad husband to her, although he ate little children. Little Thumbling, thus laden with all the wealth of the Ogre, hastened back to his father’s house, where he was received with great joy.

There are many persons who differ in their account of this part of the story, and who pretend that Little Thumbling never committed this robbery, and that he only considered himself justified in taking the Ogre’s seven-league boots, because he used them expressly to run after little children. These people assert that they have heard it from good authority, and that they have even eaten and drunk in the Woodcutter’s house. They assure us that when Little Thumbling had put on the Ogre’s boots, he went to Court, where he knew they were in much trouble about an army which was within two hundred leagues of them, and anxious to learn the success of a battle that had been fought. They say he went to seek the King, and told him that if he desired it, he would bring him back news of the army before the end of the day. The King promised him a large sum of money if he did so. Little Thumbling brought news that very evening, and this first journey having made him known, he got whatever he chose to ask; for the King paid most liberally for taking his orders to the army, and numberless ladies gave him anything he chose for news of their lovers, and they were his best customers. He occasionally met with some wives who entrusted him with letters for their husbands, but they paid him so poorly, and the amount was altogether so trifling, that he did not condescend to put down amongst his receipts what he got for that service. After he had been a courier for some time, and saved a great deal of money, he returned to his father, where it is impossible to imagine the joy of his family at seeing him again. He made them all comfortable. He bought newly-made offices for his father and his brothers, and by these means established them all, making his own way at Court at the same time.

26

LITTLE RED RIDDING HOOD

Once upon a time there was a little village girl, the prettiest that had ever been seen. Her mother doted on her. Her grandmother was even fonder, and made her a little red hood, which became her so well that everywhere she went by the name of Little Red Riding Hood.

One day her mother, who had just made and baked some cakes, said to her:

‘Go and see how your grandmother is, for I have been told that she is ill. Take her a cake and this little pot of butter.’

Little Red Riding Hood set off at once for the house of her grandmother, who lived in another village.

On her way through a wood she met old Father Wolf. He would have very much liked to eat her, but dared not do so on account of some wood-cutters who were in the forest. He asked her where she was going. The poor child, not knowing that it was dangerous to stop and listen to a wolf, said:

‘I am going to see my grandmother, and am taking her a cake and a pot of butter which my mother has sent to her.’

‘Does she live far away?’ asked the Wolf.

‘Oh yes,’ replied Little Red Riding Hood; ‘it is yonder by the mill which you can see right below there, and it is the first house in the village.’

‘Well now,’ said the Wolf, ‘I think I shall go and see her too. I will go by this path, and you by that path, and we will see who gets there first.’

The Wolf set off running with all his might by the shorter road, and the little girl continued on her way by the longer road. As she went she amused herself by gathering nuts, running after the butterflies, and making nosegays of the wild flowers which she found.

The Wolf was not long in reaching the grandmother’s house.

He knocked. *Toc Toc.*

‘Who is there?’

‘It is your little daughter, Red Riding Hood,’ said the Wolf, disguising his voice, ‘and I bring you a cake and a little pot of butter as a present from my mother.’

The worthy grandmother was in bed, not being very well, and cried out to him:

‘Pull out the peg and the latch will fall.’

The Wolf drew out the peg and the door flew open. Then he sprang upon the poor old lady and ate her up in less than no time, for he had been more than three days without food.

After that he shut the door, lay down in the grandmother’s bed, and waited for Little Red Riding Hood.

Presently she came and knocked. *Toc Toc.*

‘Who is there?’

Now Little Red Riding Hood on hearing the Wolf’s gruff voice was at first frightened, but thinking that her grandmother had a bad cold, she replied:

‘It is your little daughter, Red Riding Hood, and I bring you a cake and a little pot of butter from my mother.’

Softening his voice, the Wolf called out to her:

‘Pull out the peg and the latch will fall.’

Little Red Riding Hood drew out the peg and the door flew open.

When he saw her enter, the Wolf hid himself in the bed beneath the counterpane.

‘Put the cake and the little pot of butter on the bin,’ he said, ‘and come up on the bed with me.’

Little Red Riding Hood took off her clothes, but when she climbed up on the bed she was astonished to see how her grandmother looked in her nightgown.

‘Grandmother dear!’ she exclaimed, ‘what big arms you have!’

‘The better to embrace you, my child!’

‘Grandmother dear, what big legs you have!’

‘The better to run with, my child!’

‘Grandmother dear, what big ears you have!’

‘The better to hear with, my child!’

‘Grandmother dear, what big eyes you have!’

‘The better to see with, my child!’

‘Grandmother dear, what big teeth you have!’

‘The better to eat you with!’

With these words the wicked Wolf leapt upon Little Red Riding Hood and gobbled her up.

27

DONKEY SKIN

There was once upon a time a king who was so much beloved by his subjects that he thought himself the happiest monarch in the whole world, and he had everything his heart could desire. His palace was filled with the rarest of curiosities, and his gardens with the sweetest flowers, while in the marble stalls of his stables stood a row of milk-white Arabs, with big brown eyes.

Strangers who had heard of the marvels which the king had collected, and made long journeys to see them, were, however, surprised to find the most splendid stall of all occupied by a donkey, with particularly large and drooping ears. It was a very fine donkey; but still, as far as they could tell, nothing so very remarkable as to account for the care with which it was lodged; and they went away wondering, for they could not know that every night, when it was asleep, bushels of gold pieces tumbled out of its ears, which were picked up each morning by the attendants.

After many years of prosperity a sudden blow fell upon the king in the death of his wife, whom he loved dearly. But before she died, the queen, who had always thought first of his happiness, gathered all her strength, and said to him:

‘Promise me one thing: you must marry again, I know, for the good of your people, as well as of yourself. But do not set about it in a hurry. Wait until you have found a woman more beautiful and better formed than myself.’

‘Oh, do not speak to me of marrying,’ sobbed the king; ‘rather let me die with you!’ But the queen only smiled faintly, and turned over on her pillow and died.

For some months the king’s grief was great; then gradually he began to forget a little, and, besides, his counsellors were always urging him to seek another wife. At first he refused to listen to them, but by-and-by he allowed himself to be persuaded to think of it, only stipulating that the bride should be more beautiful and attractive than the late queen, according to the promise he had made her.

Overjoyed at having obtained what they wanted, the counsellors sent envoys far and wide to get portraits of all the most famous beauties of every country. The artists were very busy and did their best, but, alas! nobody could even pretend that any of the ladies could compare for a moment with the late queen.

At length, one day, when he had turned away discouraged from a fresh collection of pictures, the king’s eyes fell on his adopted daughter, who had lived in the palace since she was a baby, and he saw that, if a woman existed on the whole earth more lovely than the queen, this was she! He at once made known what his wishes were, but the young girl, who was not at all ambitious, and had not the faintest desire to marry him, was filled with dismay, and begged for time to think about it. That night, when everyone was asleep, she started in a little car drawn by a big sheep, and went to consult her fairy godmother.

‘I know what you have come to tell me,’ said the fairy, when the maiden stepped out of the car; ‘and if you don’t wish to marry him, I will show you how to avoid it. Ask him to give you a dress that exactly matches the sky. It will be impossible for him to get one, so you will be quite safe.’ The girl thanked the fairy and returned home again.

The next morning, when her father (as she had always called him) came to see her, she told him that she could give him no answer until he had presented her with a dress the colour of the sky. The king, overjoyed at this answer, sent for all the choicest weavers and dressmakers in the kingdom, and commanded them to make a robe the colour of the sky without an instant's delay, or he would cut off their heads at once. Dreadfully frightened at this threat, they all began to dye and cut and sew, and in two days they brought back the dress, which looked as if it had been cut straight out of the heavens! The poor girl was thunderstruck, and did not know what to do; so in the night she harnessed her sheep again, and went in search of her godmother.

'The king is cleverer than I thought,' said the fairy; 'but tell him you must have a dress of moonbeams.'

And the next day, when the king summoned her into his presence, the girl told him what she wanted.

'Madam, I can refuse you nothing,' said he; and he ordered the dress to be ready in twenty-four hours, or every man should be hanged.

They set to work with all their might, and by dawn next day, the dress of moonbeams was laid across her bed. The girl, though she could not help admiring its beauty, began to cry, till the fairy, who heard her, came to her help.

'Well, I could not have believed it of him!' said she; 'but ask for a dress of sunshine, and I shall be surprised indeed if he manages that! '

The goddaughter did not feel much faith in the fairy after her two previous failures; but not knowing what else to do, she told her father what she was bid.

The king made no difficulties about it, and even gave his finest rubies and diamonds to ornament the dress, which was so dazzling, when finished, that it could not be looked at save through smoked glasses!

When the princess saw it, she pretended that the sight hurt her eyes, and retired to her room, where she found the fairy awaiting her, very much ashamed of herself.

‘There is only one thing to be done now,’ cried she; ‘you must demand the skin of the ass he sets such store by. It is from that donkey he obtains all his vast riches, and I am sure he will never give it to you.’

The princess was not so certain; however, she went to the king, and told him she could never marry him till he had given her the ass’s skin.

The king was both astonished and grieved at this new request, but did not hesitate an instant. The ass was sacrificed, and the skin laid at the feet of the princess.

The poor girl, seeing no escape from the fate she dreaded, wept afresh, and tore her hair; when, suddenly, the fairy stood before her.

‘Take heart,’ she said, ‘ all will now go well! Wrap yourself in this skin, and leave the palace and go as far as you can. I will look after you. Your dresses and your jewels shall follow you underground, and if you strike the earth whenever you need anything, you will have it at once. But go quickly: you have no time to lose.’

So the princess clothed herself in the ass’s skin, and slipped from the palace without being seen by anyone.

Directly she was missed there was a great hue and cry, and every corner, possible and impossible, was searched. Then the king sent out parties along all the roads, but the fairy threw her invisible mantle over the girl when they approached, and none of them could see her.

The princess walked on a long, long way, trying to find some one who would take her in, and let her work for them; but though the cottagers, whose houses she passed, gave her food from charity, the ass’s skin was so dirty they would not allow her to enter their houses. For her flight had been so hurried she had had no time to clean it.

Tired and disheartened at her ill-fortune, she was wandering, one day, past the gate of a farmyard, situated just outside the walls of a large town, when she heard a voice calling to her. She turned and saw the farmer's wife standing among her turkeys, and making signs to her to come in.

'I want a girl to wash the dishes and feed the turkeys, and clean out the pig-sty,' said the w omen, 'and, to judge by your dirty clothes, you would not be too fine for the work.'

The girl accepted her offer with joy, and she was at once set to work in a corner of the kitchen, where all the farm servants came and made fun of her, and the ass's skin in which she was wrapped. But by-and-by they got so used to the sight of it that it ceased to amuse them, and she worked so hard and so well, that her mistress grew quite fond of her. And she was so clever at keeping sheep and herding turkeys that you would have thought she had done nothing else during her whole life!

One day she was sitting on the banks of a stream bewailing her wretched lot, when she suddenly caught sight of herself in the water. Her hair and part of her face was quite concealed by the ass's head, which was drawn right over like a hood, and the filthy matted skin covered her whole body. It was the first time she had seen herself as other people saw her, and she was filled with shame at the spectacle. Then she threw off her disguise and jumped into the water, plunging in again and again, till she shone like ivory. When it was time to go back to the farm, she was forced to put on the skin which disguised her, and now seemed more dirty than ever; but, as she did so, she comforted herself with the thought that to-morrow was a holiday, and that she would be able for a few hours to forget that she was a farm girl, and be a princess once more.

So, at break of day, she stamped on the ground, as the fairy had told her, and instantly the dress like the sky lay across her tiny bed. Her room was so small that there was no place for the train of her dress to spread itself out, but she pinned it up carefully when she combed her beautiful hair and piled it up on the top of her head, as she had always worn it. When she had done, she was so pleased with herself that she determined never to let a chance pass of putting on her splendid clothes, even if she had to wear them in the fields, with no one to admire her but the sheep and turkeys.

Now the farm was a royal farm, and, one holiday, when ‘Donkey Skin’ (as they had nicknamed the princess) had locked the door of her room and clothed herself in her dress of sunshine, the king’s son rode through the gate, and asked if he might come and rest himself a little after hunting. Some food and milk were set before him in the garden, and when he felt rested he got up, and began to explore the house, which was famous throughout the whole kingdom for its age and beauty. He opened one door after the other, admiring the old rooms, when he came to a handle that would not turn. He stooped and peeped through the keyhole to see what was inside, and was greatly astonished at beholding a beautiful girl, clad in a dress so dazzling that he could hardly look at it.

The dark gallery seemed darker than ever as he turned away, but he went back to the kitchen and inquired who slept in the room at the end of the passage. The scullery maid, they told him, whom everybody laughed at, and called ‘ Donkey Skin;’ and though he perceived there was some strange mystery about this, he saw quite clearly there was nothing to be gained by asking any more questions. So he rode back to the palace, his head filled with the vision he had seen through the keyhole.

All night long he tossed about, and awoke the next morning in a high fever. The queen, who had no other child, and lived in a state of perpetual anxiety about this one, at once gave him up for lost, and indeed his sudden illness puzzled the greatest doctors, who tried the usual remedies in vain. At last they told the queen that some secret sorrow must be at the bottom of all this, and she threw herself on her knees beside her son’s bed, and implored him to confide his trouble to her. If it was ambition to be king, his father would gladly resign the cares of the crown, and suffer him to reign in his stead; or, if it was love, everything should be sacrificed to get for him the wife he desired, even if she were daughter of a king with whom the country was at war at present!

‘Madam,’ replied the prince, whose weakness would hardly allow him to speak, ‘do not think me so unnatural as to wish to deprive my father of his crown. As long as he lives I shall remain the most faithful of his subjects! And as to the princesses you speak of, I have seen none that I should care for as a wife, though I would always obey your wishes, whatever it might cost me.’

‘Ah! my son,’ cried she, ‘we will do anything in the world to save your life —— and ours too, for if you die, we shall die also.’

‘Well, then,’ replied the prince, ‘I will tell you the only thing that will cure me —-a cake made by the hand of “Donkey Skin.”‘

‘Donkey Skin?’ exclaimed the queen, who thought her son had gone mad; ‘and who or what is that?’

‘Madam,’ answered one of the attendants present, who had been with the prince at the farm, “‘Donkey Skin” is, next to the wolf, the most disgusting creature on the face of the earth. She is a girl who wears a black, greasy skin, and lives at your farmer’s as hen-wife.’

‘Never mind,’ said the queen; ‘my son seems to have eaten some of her pastry. It is the whim of a sick man, no doubt; but send at once and let her bake a cake.’

The attendant bowed and ordered a page to ride with the message.

Now it is by no means certain that ‘Donkey Skin’ had not caught a glimpse of the prince, either when his eyes looked through the keyhole, or else from her little window, which was over the road. But whether she had actually seen him or only heard him spoken of, directly she received the queen’s command, she flung off the dirty skin, washed herself from head to foot, and put on a skirt and bodice of shining silver. Then, locking herself into her room, she took the richest cream, the finest flour, and the freshest eggs on the farm, and set about making her cake.

As she was stirring the mixture in the saucepan a ring that she sometimes wore in secret slipped from her finger and fell into the dough. Perhaps ‘Donkey Skin’ saw it, or perhaps she did not; but, any way, she went on stirring, and soon the cake was ready to be put in the oven. When it was nice and brown she took off her dress and put on her dirty skin, and gave the cake to the page, asking at the same time for news of the prince. But the page turned his head aside, and would not even condescend to answer.

The page rode like the wind, and as soon as he arrived at the palace he snatched up a silver tray and hastened to present the cake to the prince. The sick man began to eat it so fast that the doctors thought he would choke; and, indeed, he very nearly did, for the ring was in one of the bits which he broke off, though he managed to extract it from his mouth without anyone seeing him.

The moment the prince was left alone he drew the ring from under his pillow and kissed it a thousand times. Then he set his mind to find how he was to see the owner —-for even he did not dare to confess that he had only beheld ‘Donkey Skin’ through a keyhole, lest they should laugh at this sudden passion. All this worry brought back the fever, which the arrival of the cake had diminished for the time; and the doctors, not knowing what else to say, informed the queen that her son was simply dying of love. The queen, stricken with horror, rushed into the king’s presence with the news, and together they hastened to their son’s bedside.

‘My boy, my dear boy!’ cried the king, ‘who is it you want to marry? We will give her to you for a bride; even if she is the humblest of our slaves. What is there in the whole world that we would not do for you?’

The prince, moved to tears at these words, drew the ring, which was an emerald of the purest water, from under his pillow.

‘Ah, dear father and mother, let this be a proof that she whom I love is no peasant girl. The finger which that ring fits has never been thickened by hard work. But be her condition what it may, I will marry no other.’

The king and queen examined the tiny ring very closely, and agreed, with their son, that the wearer could be no mere farm girl. Then the king went out and ordered heralds and trumpeters to go through the town, summoning every maiden to the palace. And she whom the ring fitted would some day be queen.

First came all the princesses, then all the duchesses’ daughters, and so on, in proper order. But not one of them could slip the ring over the tip of her finger, to the great joy of the prince, whom excitement was fast curing. At last, when the high-born damsels had failed, the shopgirls and chambermaids took their turn; but with no better fortune.

‘Call in the scullions and shepherdesses,’ commanded the prince; but the sight of their fat, red fingers satisfied everybody.

‘There is not a woman left, your Highness,’ said the chamberlain; but the prince waved him aside.

‘Have you sent for “Donkey Skin,” who made me the cake?’ asked he, and the courtiers began to laugh, and replied that they would not have dared to introduce so dirty a creature into the palace.

‘Let some one go for her at once,’ ordered the king. ‘ I commanded the presence of every maiden, high or low, and I meant it.’

The princess had heard the trumpets and the proclamations, and knew quite well that her ring was at the bottom of it all. She, too, had fallen in love with the prince in the brief glimpse she had had of him, and trembled with fear lest someone else’s finger might be as small as her own. When, therefore, the messenger from the palace rode up to the gate, she was nearly beside herself with delight. Hoping all the time for such a summons, she had dressed herself with great care, putting on the garment of moonlight, whose skirt was scattered over with emeralds. But when they began calling to her to come down, she hastily covered herself with her donkey-skin and announced she was ready to present herself before his Highness. She was taken straight into the hall, where the prince was awaiting her, but at the sight of the donkey-skin his heart sank. Had he been mistaken after all?

‘Are you the girl,’ he said, turning his eyes away as he spoke, ‘are you the girl who has a room in the furthest corner of the inner court of the farmhouse?’

‘Yes, my lord, I am,’ answered she.

‘Hold out your hand then,’ continued the prince, feeling that he must keep his word, whatever the cost, and, to the astonishment of every one present, a little hand, white and delicate, came from beneath the black and dirty skin. The ring slipped on with the utmost ease, and, as it did so, the skin fell to the ground, disclosing a figure of such beauty that the prince, weak as he was, fell on his knees before her, while the king and queen joined their prayers to his. Indeed, their welcome was so warm, and their caresses so bewildering, that the princess hardly knew how to find words to reply, when the ceiling of the hall opened, and the fairy godmother appeared, seated in a car made entirely of white lilac. In a few words she explained the history of the princess, and how she came to be there, and, without losing a moment, preparations of the most magnificent kind were made for the wedding.

The kings of every country in the earth were invited, including, of course, the princess’s adopted father (who by this time had married a widow), and not one refused.

But what a strange assembly it was! Each monarch travelled in the way he thought most impressive; and some came borne in litters, others had carriages of every shape and kind, while the rest were mounted on elephants, tigers, and even upon eagles. So splendid a wedding had never been seen before; and when it was over the king announced that it was to be followed by a coronation, for he and the queen were tired of reigning, and the young couple must take their place. The rejoicings lasted for three whole months, then the new sovereigns settled down to govern their kingdom, and made themselves so much beloved by their subjects, that when they died, a hundred years later, each man mourned them as his own father and mother.

28

THE RIDICULOUS WISHES

27. The Ridiculous Wishes

In days long past there lived a poor woodcutter who found life very hard. Indeed, it was his lot to toil for little guerdon, and although he was young and happily married there were moments when he wished himself dead and below ground.

One day while at his work he was again lamenting his fate.

“Some men,” he said, “have only to make known their desires, and straightway these are granted, and their every wish fulfilled; but it has availed me little to wish for ought, for the gods are deaf to the prayers of such as I.”

As he spoke these words there was a great noise of thunder, and Jupiter appeared before him wielding his mighty thunderbolts. Our poor man was stricken with fear and threw himself on the ground.

“My lord,” he said, “forget my foolish speech; heed not my wishes, but cease thy thundering!”

“Have no fear,” answered Jupiter; “I have heard thy plaint, and have come hither to show thee how greatly thou dost wrong me. Hark! I, who am sovereign lord of this world, promise to grant in full the first three wishes which it will please thee to utter, whatever these may be. Consider well what things can bring thee joy and prosperity, and as thy happiness is at stake, be not over-hasty, but revolve the matter in thy mind.”

Having thus spoken Jupiter withdrew himself and made his ascent to Olympus. As for our woodcutter, he blithely corded his faggot, and throwing it over his shoulder, made for his home. To one so light of heart the load also seemed light, and his thoughts were merry as he strode along. Many a wish came into his mind, but he was resolved to seek the advice of his wife, who was a young woman of good understanding.

He had soon reached his cottage, and casting down his faggot:

“Behold me, Fanny,” he said. “Make up the fire and spread the board, and let there be no stint. We are wealthy, Fanny, wealthy for evermore; we have only to wish for whatsoever we may desire.”

Thereupon he told her the story of what had befallen that day. Fanny, whose mind was quick and active, immediately conceived many plans for the advancement of their fortune, but she approved her husband’s resolve to act with prudence and circumspection.

“‘Twere a pity,” she said, “to spoil our chances through impatience. We had best take counsel of the night, and wish no wishes until to-morrow.”

“That is well spoken,” answered Harry. “Meanwhile fetch a bottle of our best, and we shall drink to our good fortune.”

Fanny brought a bottle from the store behind the faggots, and our man enjoyed his ease, leaning back in his chair with his toes to the fire and his goblet in his hand.

“What fine glowing embers!” he said, “and what a fine toasting fire! I wish we had a black pudding at hand.”

Hardly had he spoken these words when his wife beheld, to her great astonishment, a long black pudding which, issuing from a corner of the hearth, came winding and wriggling towards her. She uttered a cry of fear, and then again exclaimed in dismay, when she perceived that this strange occurrence was due to the wish which her husband had so rashly and foolishly spoken. Turning upon him, in her anger and disappointment she called the poor man all the abusive names that she could think of.

“What!” she said to him, “when you can call for a kingdom, for gold, pearls, rubies, diamonds, for princely garments and wealth untold, is this the time to set your mind upon black puddings!”

“Nay!” answered the man, “‘twas a thoughtless speech, and a sad mistake; but I shall now be on my guard, and shall do better next time.”

“Who knows that you will?” returned his wife. “Once a witless fool, always a witless fool!” and giving free rein to her vexation and ill-temper she continued to upbraid her husband until his anger also was stirred, and he had wellnigh made a second bid and wished himself a widower.

“Enough! woman,” he cried at last; “put a check upon thy froward tongue! Who ever heard such impertinence as this! A plague on the shrew and on her pudding! Would to heaven it hung at the end of her nose!”

No sooner had the husband given voice to these words than the wish was straightway granted, and the long coil of black pudding appeared grafted to the angry dame’s nose.

Our man paused when he beheld what he had wrought. Fanny was a comely young woman, and blest with good looks, and truth to tell, this new ornament did not set off her beauty. Yet it offered one advantage, that as it hung right before her mouth, it would thus effectively curb her speech.

So, having now but one wish left, he had all but resolved to make good use of it without further delay, and, before any other mischance could befall, to wish himself a kingdom of his own. He was about to speak the word, when he was stayed by a sudden thought.

“It is true,” he said to himself, “that there is none so great as a King, but what of the Queen that must share his dignity? With what grace would she sit beside me on the throne with a yard of black pudding for a nose?”

In this dilemma he resolved to put the case to Fanny, and to leave her to decide whether she would rather be a Queen, with this most horrible appendage marring her good looks, or remain a peasant wife, but with her shapely nose relieved of this untoward addition.

Fanny’s mind was soon made up: although she had dreamt of a crown and sceptre, yet a woman’s first wish is always to please. To this great desire all else must yield, and Fanny would rather be fair in drugget than be a Queen with an ugly face.

Thus our woodcutter did not change his state, did not become a potentate, nor fill his purse with golden crowns. He was thankful enough to use his remaining wish to a more humble purpose, and forthwith relieved his wife of her encumbrance.

20. WILLIAM SHEDDEN RALSTON

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Fiend
2. The Dead Mother
3. The Dead Witch
4. The Treasure
5. The Cross-Surety
6. The Awful Drunkard
7. The Bad Wife
8. The Golovikha
9. The Three Copecks
10. The Miser
11. The Fool and the Birch-Tree
12. The Mizgir
13. The Smith and the Demon
14. Ivan Popyalof
15. The Norka
16. Marya Morevna
17. Koshchei the Deathless
18. The Water Snake
19. The Water King and Vasilissa the Wise
20. The Baba Yaga
21. Vasilissa the Fair
22. The Witch
23. The Witch and the Sun’s Sister
24. One-Eyed Likho
25. Woe
26. Friday

27. Wednesday
28. The Léshy
29. Vazuza and Volga
30. Sozh and Dnieper
31. The Metamorphosis of the Dnieper, the Volga, and the Dvina
32. Frost
33. The Blind Man and the Cripple
34. Princess Helena the Fair
35. Emilian the Fool
36. The Witch Girl
37. The Headless Princess
38. The Soldier’s Midnight Watch
39. The Warlock
40. The Fox-Physician
41. The Fiddler in Hell
42. The Ride on the Gravestone
43. The Two Friends
44. The Shroud
45. The Coffin-Lid
46. The Two Corpses
47. The Dog and the Corpse
48. The Soldier and the Vampire
49. Elijah the Prophet and Nicholas
50. The Priest with the Greedy Eyes
51. The Hasty Word
52. Phúlmati Rání
53. The Pomegranate King
54. The Cat and the Dog
55. The Cat Which Could Not Be Killed
56. The Jackal and the Kite
57. The Voracious Frog
58. The Story of Foolish Sachúlí
59. Barber Hím and the Tigers

60. The Bulbul and the Cotton-Tree
61. The Monkey Prince
62. Brave Hírálálbásá
63. The Man Who Went to Seek His Fate
64. The Upright King
65. Loving Lailí
66. How King Burtal Became a Fakír
67. Some of the Doings of Shekh Faríd
68. The Mouse
69. A Wonderful Story
70. The Fakír Nánaksá Saves the Merchant’s Life
71. The Boy Who Had a Moon on His Forehead and a Star on His Chin
72. The Bél-Princess
73. How the Rájá’s Son Won the Princess Labám
74. The Princess Who Loved Her Father Like Salt
75. The Demon Is at Last Conquered by the King’s Son
76. The Fan Prince
77. The Bed
78. Pánwpattí Rání
79. The Clever Wife
80. Rájá Harichand’s Punishment
81. The King’s Son and the Wazír’s Daughter

PREFACE

RALSTON, WILLIAM RALSTON SHEDDEN

William Ralston Shedden-Ralston (1828-1889), known in his early life as William Ralston Shedden, who later adopted the additional surname of Ralston, was a noted British scholar and translator of Russia and Russian.

Ralson also possessed a gift for narrating stories orally. He devised a novel form of public entertainment, telling stories to large audiences in lecture-halls, making several successful appearances at St. George’s Hall (for the Sunday Lecture Society) and St James’s Halls. He gave story-tellings to the young princes and princesses at Marlborough House, and to other social gatherings; and also, in aid of charities, to audiences in east London and the provinces.

In 1870 he published the book *Russian Fairy Tales* and, ten years later, a new collection of folk tales, *Indian Fairy Tales*.

1

THE FIEND

In a certain country there lived an old couple who had a daughter called Marusia (Mary). In their village it was customary to celebrate the feast of St. Andrew the First-Called (November 30). The girls used to assemble in some cottage, bake *pampushki*, and enjoy themselves for a whole week, or even longer. Well, the girls met together once when this festival arrived, and brewed and baked what was wanted. In the evening came the lads with the music, bringing liquor with them, and dancing and revelry commenced. All the girls danced well, but Marusia the best of all. After a while there came into the cottage such a fine fellow! Marry, come up! regular blood and milk, and smartly and richly dressed.

“Hail, fair maidens!” says he.

“Hail, good youth!” say they.

“You’re merry-making?”

“Be so good as to join us.”

Thereupon he pulled out of his pocket a purse full of gold, ordered liquor, nuts and gingerbread. All was ready in a trice, and he began treating the lads and lasses, giving each a share. Then he took to dancing. Why, it was a treat to look at him! Marusia struck his fancy more than anyone else; so he stuck close to her. The time came for going home.

“Marusia,” says he, “come and see me off.”

She went to see him off.

“Marusia, sweetheart!” says he, “would you like me to marry you?”

“If you like to marry me, I will gladly marry you. But where do you come from?”

“From such and such a place. I’m clerk at a merchant’s.”

Then they bade each other farewell and separated. When Marusia got home, her mother asked her:

“Well, daughter! have you enjoyed yourself?”

“Yes, mother. But I’ve something pleasant to tell you besides. There was a lad there from the neighborhood, good-looking and with lots of money, and he promised to marry me.”

“Harkye Marusia! When you go to where the girls are to-morrow, take a ball of thread with you, make a noose in it, and, when you are going to see him off, throw it over one of his buttons, and quietly unroll the ball; then, by means of the thread, you will be able to find out where he lives.”

Next day Marusia went to the gathering, and took a ball of thread with her. The youth came again.

“Good evening, Marusia!” said he.

“Good evening!” said she.

Games began and dances. Even more than before did he stick to Marusia, not a step would he budge from her. The time came for going home.

“Come and see me off, Marusia!” says the stranger.

She went out into the street, and while she was taking leave of him she quietly dropped the noose over one of his buttons. He went his way, but she remained where she was, unrolling the ball. When she had unrolled the whole of it, she ran after the thread to find out where her betrothed lived. At first the thread followed the road, then it stretched across hedges and ditches, and led Marusia towards the church and right up to the porch. Marusia tried the door; it was locked. She went round the church, found a ladder, set it against a window, and climbed up it to see what was going on inside. Having got into the church, she looked — and saw her betrothed standing beside a grave and devouring a dead body — for a corpse had been left for that night in the church.

She wanted to get down the ladder quietly, but her fright prevented her from taking proper heed, and she made a little noise. Then she ran home — almost beside herself, fancying all the time she was being pursued. She was all but dead before she got in. Next morning her mother asked her:

“Well, Marusia! did you see the youth?”

“I saw him, mother,” she replied. But what else she had seen she did not tell.

In the morning Marusia was sitting, considering whether she would go to the gathering or not.

“Go,” said her mother. “Amuse yourself while you’re young!”

So she went to the gathering; the Fiend was there already. Games, fun, dancing, began anew; the girls knew nothing of what had happened. When they began to separate and go homewards:

“Come, Marusia!” says the Evil One, “see me off.”

She was afraid, and didn’t stir. Then all the other girls opened out upon her.

“What are you thinking about? Have you grown so bashful, forsooth? Go and see the good lad off.”

There was no help for it. Out she went, not knowing what would come of it. As soon as they got into the streets he began questioning her:

“You were in the church last night?”

“No.”

“And saw what I was doing there?”

“No.”

“Very well! To-morrow your father will die!”

Having said this, he disappeared.

Marusia returned home grave and sad. When she woke up in the morning, her father lay dead!

They wept and wailed over him, and laid him in the coffin. In the evening her mother went off to the priest's, but Marusia remained at home. At last she became afraid of being alone in the house. "Suppose I go to my friends," she thought. So she went, and found the Evil One there.

"Good evening, Marusia! why arn't you merry?"

"How can I be merry? My father is dead!"

"Oh! poor thing!"

They all grieved for her. Even the Accursed One himself grieved; just as if it hadn't all been his own doing. By and by they began saying farewell and going home.

"Marusia," says he, "see me off."

She didn't want to.

"What are you thinking of, child?" insist the girls. "What are you afraid of? Go and see him off."

So she went to see him off. They passed out into the street.

"Tell me, Marusia," says he, "were you in the church?"

"No."

"Did you see what I was doing?"

"No."

"Very well! To-morrow your mother will die."

He spoke and disappeared. Marusia returned home sadder than ever. The night went by; next morning, when she awoke, her mother lay dead! She cried all day long; but when the sun set, and it grew dark around, Marusia became afraid of being left alone; so she went to her companions.

"Why, whatever's the matter with you? you're clean out of countenance!" say the girls.

"How am I likely to be cheerful? Yesterday my father died, and to-day my mother."

"Poor thing! Poor unhappy girl!" they all exclaim sympathizingly.

Well, the time came to say good-bye. "See me off, Marusia," says the Fiend. So she went out to see him off.

"Tell me; were you in the church?"

"No."

"And saw what I was doing?"

"No."

"Very well! To-morrow evening you will die yourself!"

Marusia spent the night with her friends; in the morning she got up and considered what she should do. She bethought herself that she had a grandmother — an old, very old woman, who had become blind from length of years. "Suppose I go and ask her advice," she said, and then went off to her grandmother's.

"Good-day, granny!" says she.

"Good-day, granddaughter! What news is there with you? How are your father and mother?"

"They are dead, granny," replied the girl, and then told her all that had happened.

The old woman listened, and said: —

"Oh dear me! my poor unhappy child! Go quickly to the priest, and ask him this favor — that if you die, your body shall not be taken out of the house through the doorway, but that the ground shall be dug away from under the threshold, and that you shall be dragged out through that opening. And also beg that you may be buried at a crossway, at a spot where four roads meet."

Marusia went to the priest, wept bitterly, and made him promise to do everything according to her grandmother's instructions. Then she returned home, bought a coffin, lay down in it, and straightway expired.

Well, they told the priest, and he buried, first her father and mother, and then Marusia herself. Her body was passed underneath the threshold and buried at a crossway.

Soon afterwards a seigneur’s son happened to drive past Marusia’s grave. On that grave he saw growing a wondrous flower, such a one as he had never seen before. Said the young seigneur to his servant: —

“Go and pluck up that flower by the roots. We’ll take it home and put it in a flower-pot. Perhaps it will blossom there.”

Well, they dug up the flower, took it home, put it in a glazed flower-pot, and set it in a window. The flower began to grow larger and more beautiful. One night the servant hadn’t gone to sleep somehow, and he happened to be looking at the window, when he saw a wondrous thing take place. All of a sudden the flower began to tremble, then it fell from its stem to the ground, and turned into a lovely maiden. The flower was beautiful, but the maiden was more beautiful still. She wandered from room to room, got herself various things to eat and drink, ate and drank, then stamped upon the ground and became a flower as before, mounted to the window, and resumed her place upon the stem. Next day the servant told the young seigneur of the wonders which he had seen during the night.

“Ah, brother!” said the youth, “why didn’t you wake me? To-night we’ll both keep watch together.”

The night came; they slept not, but watched. Exactly at twelve o’clock the blossom began to shake, flew from place to place, and then fell to the ground, and the beautiful maiden appeared, got herself things to eat and drink, and sat down to supper. The young seigneur rushed forward and seized her by her white hands. Impossible was it for him sufficiently to look at her, to gaze on her beauty!

Next morning he said to his father and mother, “Please allow me to get married. I’ve found myself a bride.”

His parents gave their consent. As for Marusia, she said:

“Only on this condition will I marry you — that for four years I need not go to church.”

"Very good," said he.

Well, they were married, and they lived together one year, two years, and had a son. But one day they had visitors at their house, who enjoyed themselves, and drank, and began bragging about their wives. This one's wife was handsome; that one's was handsomer still.

"You may say what you like," says the host, "but a handsomer wife than mine does not exist in the whole world!"

"Handsome, yes!" reply the guests, "but a heathen."

"How so?"

"Why, she never goes to church."

Her husband found these observations distasteful. He waited till Sunday, and then told his wife to get dressed for church.

"I don't care what you may say," says he. "Go and get ready directly."

Well, they got ready, and went to church. The husband went in — didn't see anything particular. But when she looked round — there was the Fiend sitting at a window.

"Ha! here you are, at last!" he cried. "Remember old times. Were you in the church that night?"

"No."

"And did you see what I was doing there?"

"No."

"Very well! To-morrow both your husband and your son will die."

Marusia rushed straight out of the church and away to her grandmother. The old woman gave her two phials, the one full of holy water, the other of the water of life, and told her what she was to do. Next day both Marusia's husband and her son died. Then the Fiend came flying to her and asked: —

"Tell me; were you in the church?"

"I was."

"And did you see what I was doing?"

"You were eating a corpse."

She spoke, and splashed the holy water over him; in a moment he turned into mere dust and ashes, which blew to the winds. Afterwards she sprinkled her husband and her boy with the water of life: straightway they revived. And from that time forward they knew neither sorrow nor separation, but they all lived together long and happily.

2

THE DEAD MOTHER

In a certain village there lived a husband and wife — lived happily, lovingly, peaceably. All their neighbors envied them; the sight of them gave pleasure to honest folks. Well, the mistress bore a son, but directly after it was born she died. The poor moujik moaned and wept. Above all he was in despair about the babe. How was he to nourish it now? how to bring it up without its mother? He did what was best, and hired an old woman to look after it. Only here was a wonder! all day long the babe would take no food, and did nothing but cry; there was no soothing it anyhow. But during (a great part of) the night one could fancy it wasn't there at all, so silently and peacefully did it sleep.

"What's the meaning of this?" thinks the old woman; "suppose I keep awake to-night; may be I shall find out."

Well, just at midnight she heard some one quietly open the door and go up to the cradle. The babe became still, just as if it was being suckled.

The next night the same thing took place, and the third night, too. Then she told the moujik about it. He called his kinsfolk together, and held counsel with them. They determined on this; to keep awake on a certain night, and to spy out who it was that came to suckle the babe. So at eventide they all lay down on the floor, and beside them they set a lighted taper hidden in an earthen pot.

At midnight the cottage door opened. Some one stepped up to the cradle. The babe became still. At that moment one of the kinsfolk suddenly brought out the light. They looked, and saw the dead mother, in the very same clothes in which she had been buried, on her knees besides the cradle, over which she bent as she suckled the babe at her dead breast.

The moment the light shone in the cottage she stood up, gazed sadly on her little one, and then went out of the room without a sound, not saying a word to anyone. All those who saw her stood for a time terror-struck; and then they found the babe was dead.

3

THE DEAD WITCH

There was once an old woman who was a terrible witch, and she had a daughter and a granddaughter. The time came for the old crone to die, so she summoned her daughter and gave her these instructions:

"Mind, daughter! when I'm dead, don't you wash my body with lukewarm water; but fill a cauldron, make it boil its very hottest, and then with that boiling water regularly scald me all over."

After saying this, the witch lay ill two or three days, and then died. The daughter ran round to all her neighbors, begging them to come and help her to wash the old woman, and meantime the little granddaughter was left all alone in the cottage. And this is what she saw there. All of a sudden there crept out from beneath the stove two demons — a big one and a tiny one — and they ran up to the dead witch. The old demon seized her by the feet, and tore away at her so that he stripped off all her skin at one pull. Then he said to the little demon:

"Take the flesh for yourself, and lug it under the stove."

So the little demon flung his arms round the carcase, and dragged it under the stove. Nothing was left of the old woman but her skin. Into it the old demon inserted himself, and then he lay down just where the witch had been lying.

Presently the daughter came back, bringing a dozen other women with her, and they all set to work laying out the corpse.

“Mammy,” says the child, “they’ve pulled granny’s skin off while you were away.”

“What do you mean by telling such lies?”

“It’s quite true, Mammy! There was ever such a blackie came from under the stove, and he pulled the skin off, and got into it himself.”

“Hold your tongue, naughty child! you’re talking nonsense!” cried the old crone’s daughter; then she fetched a big cauldron, filled it with cold water, put it on the stove, and heated it till it boiled furiously. Then the women lifted up the old crone, laid her in a trough, took hold of the cauldron, and poured the whole of the boiling water over her at once. The demon couldn’t stand it. He leaped out of the trough, dashed through the doorway, and disappeared, skin and all. The women stared:

“What marvel is this?” they cried. “Here was the dead woman, and now she isn’t here. There’s nobody left to lay out or to bury. The demons have carried her off before our very eyes!”

4

THE TREASURE

In a certain kingdom there lived an old couple in great poverty. Sooner or later the old woman died. It was in winter, in severe and frosty weather. The old man went round to his friends and neighbors, begging them to help him to dig a grave for the old woman; but his friends and neighbors, knowing his great poverty, all flatly refused. The old man went to the pope, (but in that village they had an awfully grasping pope, one without any conscience), and says he: —

“Lend a hand, reverend father, to get my old woman buried.”

“But have you got any money to pay for the funeral? if so, friend, pay up beforehand!”

“It’s no use hiding anything from you. Not a single copeck have I at home. But if you’ll wait a little, I’ll earn some, and then I’ll pay you with interest — on my word I’ll pay you!”

The pope wouldn’t so much as listen to the old man.

“If you haven’t any money, don’t you dare to come here,” says he.

“What’s to be done?” thinks the old man. “I’ll go to the graveyard, dig a grave as I best can, and bury the old woman myself.” So he took an axe and a shovel, and went to the graveyard. When he got there he began to prepare a grave. He chopped away the frozen ground on the top with the axe, and then he took to the shovel. He dug and dug, and at last he dug out a metal pot. Looking into it he saw that it was stuffed full of ducats that shone like fire. The old man was immensely delighted, and cried, “Glory be to Thee, O Lord! I shall have wherewithal both to bury my old woman, and to perform the rites of remembrance.”

He did not go on digging the grave any longer, but took the pot of gold and carried it home. Well, we all know what money will do — everything went as smooth as oil! In a trice there were found good folks to dig the grave and fashion the coffin. The old man sent his daughter-in-law to purchase meat and drink and different kind of relishes — everything there ought to be at memorial feasts — and he himself took a ducat in his hand and hobbled back again to the pope’s. The moment he reached the door, out flew the pope at him.

“You were distinctly told, you old lout, that you were not to come here without money; and now you’ve slunk back again.”

“Don’t be angry, batyushka,” said the old man imploringly. “Here’s gold for you. If you’ll only bury my old woman, I’ll never forget your kindness.”

The pope took the money, and didn’t know how best to receive the old man, where to seat him, with what words to smooth him down. “Well now, old friend! Be of good cheer; everything shall be done,” said he.

The old man made his bow, and went home, and the pope and his wife began talking about him.

“There now, the old hunks!” they say. “So poor, forsooth, so poor! And yet he’s paid a gold piece. Many a defunct person of quality have I buried in my time, but I never got so from anyone before.”

The pope got under weigh with all his retinue, and buried the old crone in proper style. After the funeral the old man invited him to his house, to take part in the feast in memory of the dead. Well, they entered the cottage, and sat down to table — and there appeared from somewhere or other meat and drink and all sorts of snacks, everything in profusion. The (reverend) guest sat down, ate for three people, looked greedily at what was not his.

The (other) guests finished their meal, and separated to go to their homes; then the pope also rose from the table. The old man went to speed him on his way. As soon as they got into the farmyard, and the pope saw they were alone at last, he began questioning the old man: “Listen, friend! confess to me, don’t leave so much as a single sin on your soul — it’s just the same before me as before God! How have you managed to get on at such a pace? You used to be a poor moujik, and now — marry! where did it come from? Confess, friend, whose breath have you stopped? whom have you pillaged?”

“What are you talking about, batyushka? I will tell you the exact truth. I have not robbed, nor plundered, nor killed anyone. A treasure tumbled into my hands of its own accord.”

And he told him how it all happened. When the pope heard these words he actually shook all over with greediness. Going home, he did nothing by night and by day but think, “That such a wretched lout of a moujik should have come in for such a lump of money! Is there any way of tricking him now, and getting this pot of money out of him?” He told his wife about it, and he and she discussed the matter together, and held counsel over it.

“Listen, mother,” says he; “we’ve a goat, haven’t we?”

“Yes.”

“All right, then; we’ll wait until it’s night, and then we’ll do the job properly.”

Late in the evening the pope dragged the goat indoors, killed it, and took off its skin — horns, beard, and all complete. Then he pulled the goat’s skin over himself and said to his wife:

“Bring a needle and thread, mother, and fasten up the skin all round, so that it mayn’t slip off.”

So she took a strong needle, and some tough thread, and sewed him up in the goatskin. Well, at the dead of night, the pope went straight to the old man’s cottage, got under the window, and began knocking and scratching. The old man hearing the noise, jumped up and asked:

“Who’s there?”

“The Devil!”

“Ours is a holy spot!” shrieked the moujik, and began crossing himself and uttering prayers.

“Listen, old man,” says the pope, “From me thou will not escape, although thou may’st pray, although thou may’st cross thyself; much better give me back my pot of money, otherwise I will make thee pay for it. See now, I pitied thee in thy misfortune, and I showed thee the treasure, thinking thou wouldst take a little of it to pay for the funeral, but thou hast pillaged it utterly.”

The old man looked out of window — the goat’s horns and beard caught his eye — it was the Devil himself, no doubt of it.

“Let’s get rid of him, money and all,” thinks the old man; “I’ve lived before now without money, and now I’ll go on living without it.”

So he took the pot of gold, carried it outside, flung it on the ground, and bolted indoors again as quickly as possible.

The pope seized the pot of money, and hastened home. When he got back, “Come,” says he, “the money is in our hands now. Here, mother, put it well out of sight, and take a sharp knife, cut the thread, and pull the goatskin off me before anyone sees it.”

She took a knife, and was beginning to cut the thread at the seam, when forth flowed blood, and the pope began to howl:

“Oh! it hurts, mother, it hurts! don’t cut mother, don’t cut!”

She began ripping the skin open in another place, but with just the same result. The goatskin had united with his body all round. And all that they tried, and all that they did, even to taking the money back to the old man, was of no avail. The goatskin remained clinging tight to the pope all the same. God evidently did it to punish him for his great greediness.

5

THE CROSS-SURETY

Once upon a time two merchants lived in a certain town just on the verge of a stream. One of them was a Russian, the other a Tartar; both were rich. But the Russian got so utterly ruined by some business or other that he hadn’t a single bit of property left. Everything he had was confiscated or stolen. The Russian merchant had nothing to turn to — he was left as poor as a rat. So he went to his friend the Tartar, and besought him to lend him some money.

“Get me a surety,” says the Tartar.

“But whom can I get for you, seeing that I haven’t a soul belonging to me? Stay, though! there’s a surety for you, the life-giving cross on the church!”

“Very good, my friend!” says the Tartar. “I’ll trust your cross. Your faith or ours, it’s all one to me.”

And he gave the Russian merchant fifty thousand roubles. The Russian took the money, bade the Tartar farewell, and went back to trade in divers places.

By the end of two years he had gained a hundred and fifty thousand roubles by the fifty thousand he had borrowed. Now he happened to be sailing one day along the Danube, going with wares from one place to another, when all of a sudden a storm arose, and was on the point of sinking the ship he was in. Then the merchant remembered how he had borrowed money, and given the life-giving cross as a surety, but had not paid his debt. That was doubtless the cause of the storm arising! No sooner had he said this to himself than the storm began to subside. The merchant took a barrel, counted out fifty thousand roubles, wrote the Tartar a note, placed it, together with the money, in the barrel, and then flung the barrel into the water, saying to himself: “As I gave the cross as my surety to the Tartar, the money will be certain to reach him.”

The barrel straightway sank to the bottom; everyone supposed the money was lost. But what happened? In the Tartar’s house there lived a Russian kitchen-maid. One day she happened to go to the river for water, and when she got there she saw a barrel floating along. So she went a little way into the water and began trying to get hold of it. But it wasn’t to be done! When she made at the barrel, it retreated from her: when she turned from the barrel to the shore, it floated after her. She went on trying and trying for some time, then she went home and told her master all that had happened. At first he wouldn’t believe her, but at last he determined to go to the river and see for himself what sort of barrel it was that was floating there. When he got there — sure enough there was the barrel floating, and not far from the shore. The Tartar took off his clothes and went into the water; before he had gone any distance the barrel came floating up to him of its own accord. He laid hold of it, carried it home, opened it, and looked inside. There he saw a quantity of money, and on top of the money a note. He took out the note and read it, and this is what was said in it: —

Dear friend! I return to you the fifty thousand roubles for which, when I borrowed them from you, I gave the life-giving cross as a surety.

THE TARTAR READ these words and was astounded at the power of the life-giving cross. He counted the money over to see whether the full sum was really there. It was there exactly.

Meanwhile, the Russian merchant, after trading some five years, made a tolerable fortune. Well, he returned to his old home, and, thinking that his barrel had been lost, he considered it his first duty to settle with the Tartar. So he went to his house and offered him the money he had borrowed. Then the Tartar told him all that had happened and how he had found the barrel in the river, with the money and the note inside it. Then he showed him the note, saying:

"Is that really your hand?"

"It certainly is," replied the other.

Every one was astounded at this wondrous manifestation, and the Tartar said:

"Then I've no more money to receive from you, brother; take that back again."

The Russian merchant had a service performed as a thank-offering to God, and next day the Tartar was baptized with all his household. The Russian merchant was his godfather, and the kitchen-maid his godmother. After that they both lived long and happily, survived to a great age, and then died peacefully.

6

THE AWFUL DRUNKARD

Once there was an old man who was such an awful drunkard as passes all description. Well, one day he went to a kabak, intoxicated himself with liquor, and then went staggering home blind drunk. Now his way happened to lie across a river. When he came to the river, he didn't stop long to consider, but kicked off his boots, hung them round his neck, and walked into the water. Scarcely had he got half-way across when he tripped over a stone, tumbled into the water — and there was an end of him.

Now, he left a son called Petrusha. When Peter saw that his father had disappeared and left no trace behind, he took the matter greatly to heart for a time, he wept for awhile, he had a service performed for the repose of his father's soul, and he began to act as head of the family. One Sunday he went to church to pray to God. As he passed along the road a woman was pounding away in front of him. She walked and walked, stumbled over a stone, and began swearing at it, saying, "What devil shoved you under my feet?"

Hearing these words, Petrusha said:

"Good day, aunt! whither away?"

"To church, my dear, to pray to God."

"But isn't this sinful conduct of yours? You're going to church, to pray to God, and yet you think about the Evil One; your foot stumbles and you throw the fault on the Devil!"

Well, he went to church and then returned home. He walked and walked, and suddenly, goodness knows whence, there appeared before him a fine-looking man, who saluted him and said:

"Thanks, Petrusha, for your good word!"

"Who are you, and why do you thank me?" asks Petrusha.

"I am the Devil. I thank you because, when that woman stumbled, and scolded me without a cause, you said a good word for me." Then he began to entreat him, saying, "Come and pay me a visit, Petrusha. How I will reward you to be sure! With silver and with gold, with everything will I endow you."

"Very good," says Petrusha, "I'll come."

Having told him all about the road he was to take, the Devil straightway disappeared, and Petrusha returned home.

Next day Petrusha set off on his visit to the Devil. He walked and walked, for three whole days did he walk, and then he reached a great forest, dark and dense — impossible even to see the sky from within it! And in that forest there stood a rich palace. Well, he entered the palace, and a fair maiden caught sight of him. She had been stolen from a certain village by the evil spirit. And when she caught sight of him she cried:

"Whatever have you come here for, good youth? here devils abide, they will tear you to pieces."

Petrusha told her how and why he had made his appearance in that palace.

"Well now, mind this," says the fair maiden; "the Devil will begin giving you silver and gold. Don't take any of it, but ask him to give you the very wretched horse which the evil spirits use for fetching wood and water. That horse is your father. When he came out of the kabak drunk, and fell into the water, the devils immediately seized him and made him their hack, and now they use him for fetching wood and water.”

Presently there appeared the gallant who had invited Petrusha, and began to regale him with all kinds of meat and drink. And when the time came for Petrusha to be going homewards, “Come,” said the Devil, “I will provide you with money and with a capital horse, so that you will speedily get home.”

“I don’t want anything,” replied Petrusha. “Only, if you wish to make me a present, give me that sorry jade which you use for carrying wood and water.”

“What good will that be to you? If you ride it home quickly, I expect it will die!”

“No matter, let me have it. I won’t take any other.”

So the Devil gave him that sorry jade. Petrusha took it by the bridle and led it away. As soon as he reached the gates there appeared the fair maiden, and asked:

“Have you got the horse?”

“I have.”

“Well then, good youth, when you get nigh to your village, take off your cross, trace a circle three times about this horse, and hang the cross round its neck.”

Petrusha took leave of her and went his way. When he came nigh to his village he did everything exactly as the maiden had instructed him. He took off his copper cross, traced a circle three times about the horse, and hung the cross round its neck. And immediately the horse was no longer there, but in its place there stood before Petrusha his own father. The son looked upon the father, burst into tears, and led him to his cottage; and for three days the old man remained without speaking, unable to make use of his tongue. And after that they lived happily and in all prosperity. The old man entirely gave up drinking, and to his very last day never took so much as a single drop of spirits.

7

THE BAD WIFE

A bad wife lived on the worst of terms with her husband, and never paid any attention to what he said. If her husband told her to get up early, she would lie in bed three days at a stretch; if he wanted her to go to sleep, she couldn’t think of sleeping. When her husband asked her to make pancakes, she would say: “You thief, you don’t deserve a pancake!”

If he said:

“Don’t make any pancakes, wife, if I don’t deserve them,” she would cook a two-gallon pot full, and say,

“Eat away, you thief, till they’re all gone!”

“Now then, wife,” perhaps he would say, “I feel quite sorry for you; don’t go toiling and moiling, and don’t go out to the hay cutting.”

“No, no, you thief!” she would reply, “I shall go, and do you follow after me!”

One day, after having had his trouble and bother with her he went into the forest to look for berries and distract his grief, and he came to where there was a currant bush, and in the middle of that bush he saw a bottomless pit. He looked at it for some time and considered, “Why should I live in torment with a bad wife? can’t I put her into that pit? can’t I teach her a good lesson?”

So when he came home, he said:

“Wife, don’t go into the woods for berries.”

“Yes, you bugbear, I shall go!”

“I’ve found a currant bush; don’t pick it.”

“Yes I will; I shall go and pick it clean; but I won’t give you a single currant!”

The husband went out, his wife with him. He came to the currant bush, and his wife jumped into it, crying out at the top her voice:

“Don’t you come into the bush, you thief, or I’ll kill you!”

And so she got into the middle of the bush, and went flop into the bottomless pit.

The husband returned home joyfully, and remained there three days; on the fourth day he went to see how things were going on. Taking a long cord, he let it down into the pit, and out from thence he pulled a little demon. Frightened out of his wits, he was going to throw the imp back again into the pit, but it shrieked aloud, and earnestly entreated him, saying:

“Don’t send me back again, O peasant! let me go out into the world! A bad wife has come, and absolutely devoured us all, pinching us, and biting us — we’re utterly worn out with it. I’ll do you a good turn, if you will.”

So the peasant let him go free — at large in Holy Russia. Then the imp said:

“Now then, peasant, come along with me to the town of Vologda. I’ll take to tormenting people, and you shall cure them.”

Well, the imp went to where there were merchant’s wives and merchant’s daughters; and when they were possessed by him, they fell ill and went crazy. Then the peasant would go to a house where there was illness of this kind, and, as soon as he entered, out would go the enemy; then there would be blessing in the house, and everyone would suppose that the peasant was a doctor indeed, and would give him money, and treat him to pies. And so the peasant gained an incalculable sum of money. At last the demon said:

"You've plenty now, peasant; arn't you content? I'm going now to enter into the Boyar's daughter. Mind you don't go curing her. If you do, I shall eat you."

The Boyar's daughter fell ill, and went so crazy that she wanted to eat people. The Boyar ordered his people to find out the peasant — (that is to say) to look for such and such a physician. The peasant came, entered the house, and told Boyar to make all the townspeople, and the carriages with coachmen, stand in the street outside. Moreover, he gave orders that all the coachmen should crack their whips and cry at the top of their voices: "The Bad Wife has come! the Bad Wife has come!" and then he went into the inner room. As soon as he entered it, the demon rushed at him crying, "What do you mean, Russian? what have you come here for? I'll eat you!"

"What do *you* mean?" said the peasant, "why I didn't come here to turn you out. I came, out of pity to you, to say that the Bad Wife has come here."

The Demon rushed to the window, stared with all his eyes, and heard everyone shouting at the top of his voice the words, "The Bad Wife!"

"Peasant," cries the Demon, "wherever can I take refuge?"

"Run back into the pit. She won't go there any more."

The Demon went back to the pit — and to the Bad Wife too.

In return for his services, the Boyar conferred a rich guerdon on the peasant, giving him his daughter to wife, and presenting him with half his property.

But the Bad Wife sits to this day in the pit — in Tartarus.

8

THE GOLOVIKHA

A certain woman was very bumptious. Her husband came from a village council one day, and she asked him:

"What have you been deciding over there?"

"What have we been deciding? why choosing a Golova."

"Whom have you chosen?"

"No one as yet."

"Choose me," says the woman.

So as soon as her husband went back to the council (she was a bad sort; he wanted to give her a lesson) he told the elders what she had said. They immediately chose her as Golova.

Well the woman got along, settled all questions, took bribes, and drank spirits at the peasant's expense. But the time came to collect the poll-tax. The Golova couldn't do it, wasn't able to collect it in time. There came a Cossack, and asked for the Golova; but the woman had hidden herself. As soon as she learnt that the Cossack had come, off she ran home.

"Where, oh where can I hide myself?" she cries to her husband. "Husband dear! tie me up in a bag, and put me out there where the corn-sacks are."

Now there were five sacks of seed-corn outside, so her husband tied up the Golova, and set her in the midst of them. Up came the Cossack and said:

“Ho! so the Golova’s in hiding.”

Then he took to slashing at the sacks one after another with his whip, and the woman to howling at the pitch of her voice:

“Oh, my father! I won’t be a Golova, I won’t be a Golova.”

At last the Cossack left off beating the sacks, and rode away. But the woman had had enough of Golova-ing; from that time forward she took to obeying her husband.

9

THE THREE COPECKS

There once was a poor little orphan-lad who had nothing at all to live on; so he went to a rich moujik and hired himself out to him, agreeing to work for one copeck a year. And when he had worked for a whole year, and had received his copeck, he went to a well and threw it into the water, saying, “If it don’t sink, I’ll keep it. It will be plain enough I’ve served my master faithfully.”

But the copeck sank. Well, he remained in service a second year, and received a second copeck. Again he flung it into the well, and again it sank to the bottom. He remained a third year; worked and worked, till the time came for payment. Then his master gave him a rouble. “No,” says the orphan, “I don’t want your money; give me my copeck.” He got his copeck and flung it into the well. Lo and behold! there were all three copecks floating on the surface of the water. So he took them and went into the town.

Now as he went along the street, it happened that some small boys had got hold of a kitten and were tormenting it. And he felt sorry for it, and said:

“Let me have that kitten, my boys?”

“Yes, we’ll sell it you.”

“What do you want for it?”

“Three copecks.”

Well the orphan bought the kitten, and afterwards hired himself to a merchant, to sit in his shop.

That merchant’s business began to prosper wonderfully. He couldn’t supply goods fast enough; purchasers carried off everything in a twinkling. The merchant got ready to go to sea, freighted a ship, and said to the orphan:

“Give me your cat; maybe it will catch mice on board, and amuse me.”

“Pray take it, master! only if you lose it, I shan’t let you off cheap.”

The merchant arrived in a far off land, and put up at an inn. The landlord saw that he had a great deal of money, so he gave him a bedroom which was infested by countless swarms of rats and mice, saying to himself, “If they should happen to eat him up, his money will belong to me.” For in that country they knew nothing about cats, and the rats and mice had completely got the upper hand. Well the merchant took the cat with him to his room and went to bed. Next morning the landlord came into the room. There was the merchant alive and well, holding the cat in his arms, and stroking its fur; the cat was purring away, singing its song, and on the floor lay a perfect heap of dead rats and mice!

“Master merchant, sell me that beastie,” says the landlord.

“Certainly.”

“What do you want for it?”

“A mere trifle. I’ll make the beastie stand on his hind legs while I hold him up by his forelegs, and you shall pile gold pieces around him, so as just to hide him — I shall be content with that!”

The landlord agreed to the bargain. The merchant gave him the cat, received a sackful of gold, and as soon as he had settled his affairs, started on his way back. As he sailed across the seas, he thought:

“Why should I give the gold to that orphan? Such a lot of money in return for a mere cat! that would be too much of a good thing. No, much better keep it myself."

The moment he had made up his mind to the sin, all of a sudden there arose a storm — such a tremendous one! the ship was on the point of sinking.

"Ah, accursed one that I am! I've been longing for what doesn't belong to me; O Lord, forgive me a sinner! I won't keep back a single copeck."

The moment the merchant began praying the winds were stilled, the sea became calm, and the ship went sailing on prosperously to the quay.

"Hail, master!" says the orphan. "But where's my cat?"

"I've sold it," answers the merchant; "There's your money, take it in full."

The orphan received the sack of gold, took leave of the merchant, and went to the strand, where the shipmen were. From them he obtained a shipload of incense in exchange for his gold, and he strewed the incense along the strand, and burnt it in honor of God. The sweet savor spread through all that land, and suddenly an old man appeared, and he said to the orphan:

"Which desirest thou — riches, or a good wife?"

"I know not, old man."

"Well then, go afield. Three brothers are ploughing over there. Ask them to tell thee."

The orphan went afield. He looked, and saw peasants tilling the soil.

"God lend you aid!" says he.

"Thanks, good man!" say they. "What dost thou want?"

"An old man has sent me here, and told me to ask you which of the two I shall wish for — riches or a good wife?"

"Ask our elder brother; he's sitting in that cart there."

The orphan went to the cart and saw a little boy — one that seemed about three years old.

"Can this be their elder brother?" thought he — however he asked him:

“Which dost thou tell me to choose — riches, or a good wife?”

“Choose the good wife.”

So the orphan returned to the old man.

“I’m told to ask for the wife,” says he.

“That’s all right!” said the old man, and disappeared from sight. The orphan looked round; by his side stood a beautiful woman.

“Hail, good youth!” says she. “I am thy wife; let us go and seek a place where we may live.”

10

THE MISER

There once was a rich merchant named Marko — a stingier fellow never lived! One day he went out for a stroll. As he went along the road he saw a beggar — an old man, who sat there asking for alms — "Please to give, O ye Orthodox, for Christ's sake!"

Marko the Rich passed by. Just at that time there came up behind him a poor moujik, who felt sorry for the beggar, and gave him a copeck. The rich man seemed to feel ashamed, for he stopped and said to the moujik:

"Harkye, neighbor, lend me a copeck. I want to give that poor man something, but I've no small change."

The moujik gave him one, and asked when he should come for his money. "Come to-morrow," was the reply. Well next day the poor man went to the rich man's to get his copeck. He entered his spacious courtyard and asked:

"Is Marko the Rich at home?"

"Yes. What do you want?" replied Marko.

"I've come for my copeck."

"Ah, brother! come again. Really I've no change just now."

The poor man made his bow and went away.

"I'll come to-morrow," said he.

On the morrow he came again, but it was just the same story as before.

“I haven’t a single copper. If you like to change me a note for a hundred — No? well then come again in a fortnight.”

At the end of the fortnight the poor man came again, but Marko the Rich saw him from the window, and said to his wife:

“Harkye, wife! I’ll strip myself naked and lie down under the holy pictures. Cover me up with a cloth, and sit down and cry, just as you would over a corpse. When the moujik comes for his money, tell him I died this morning.”

Well the wife did everything exactly as her husband directed her. While she was sitting there drowned in bitter tears, the moujik came into the room.

“What do you want?” says she.

“The money Marko the Rich owes me,” answers the poor man.

“Ah, moujik, Marko the Rich has wished us farewell; he’s only just dead.”

“The kingdom of heaven be his! If you’ll allow me, mistress, in return for my copeck I’ll do him a last service — just give his mortal remains a wash.”

So saying he laid hold of a pot full of boiling water and began pouring its scalding contents over Marko the Rich. Marko, his brows knit, his legs contorted, was scarcely able to hold out.

“Writhe away or not as you please,” thought the poor man, “but pay me my copeck!”

When he had washed the body, and laid it out properly, he said:

“Now then, mistress, buy a coffin and have it taken into the church; I’ll go and read psalms over it.”

So Marko the Rich was put in a coffin and taken into the church, and the moujik began reading psalms over him. The darkness of night came on. All of a sudden a window opened, and a party of robbers crept through it into the church. The moujik hid himself behind the altar. As soon as the robbers had come in they began dividing their booty, and after everything else was shared there remained over and above a golden sabre — each one laid hold of it for himself, no one would give up his claim to it. Out jumped the poor man, crying:

“What’s the good of disputing that way? Let the sabre belong to him who will cut this corpse’s head off!”

Up jumped Marko the Rich like a madman. The robbers were frightened out of their wits, flung away their spoil and scampered off.

“Here, Moujik,” says Marko, “let’s divide the money.”

They divided it equally between them: each of the shares was a large one.

“But how about the copeck?” asks the poor man.

“Ah, brother!” replies Marko, “surely you can see I’ve got no change!”

And so Marko the Rich never paid the copeck after all.

11

THE FOOL AND THE BIRCH-TREE

In a certain country there once lived an old man who had three sons. Two of them had their wits about them, but the third was a fool. The old man died and his sons divided his property among themselves by lot. The sharp-witted ones got plenty of all sorts of good things, but nothing fell to the share of the Simpleton but one ox — and that such a skinny one!

Well, fair-time came round, and the clever brothers got ready to go and transact business. The Simpleton saw this, and said:

“I’ll go, too, brothers, and take my ox for sale.”

So he fastened a cord to the horn of the ox and drove it to the town. On his way he happened to pass through a forest, and in the forest there stood an old withered Birch-tree. Whenever the wind blew the Birch-tree creaked.

“What is the Birch creaking about?” thinks the Simpleton. “Surely it must be bargaining for my ox? Well,” says he, “if you want to buy it, why buy it. I’m not against selling it. The price of the ox is twenty roubles. I can’t take less. Out with the money!”

The Birch made no reply, only went on creaking. But the Simpleton fancied that it was asking for the ox on credit. “Very good,” says he, “I’ll wait till to-morrow!” He tied the ox to the Birch, took leave of the tree, and went home. Presently in came the clever brothers, and began questioning him:

“Well, Simpleton! sold your ox?”

“I’ve sold it.”

“For how much?”

“For twenty roubles.”

“Where’s the money?”

“I haven’t received the money yet. It was settled I should go for it to-morrow.”

“There’s simplicity for you!” say they.

Early next morning the Simpleton got up, dressed himself, and went to the Birch-tree for his money. He reached the wood; there stood the Birch, waving in the wind, but the ox was not to be seen. During the night the wolves had eaten it.

“Now, then, neighbor!” he exclaimed, “pay me my money. You promised you’d pay me to-day.”

The wind blew, the Birch creaked, and the Simpleton cried:

“What a liar you are! Yesterday you kept saying, ‘I’ll pay you to-morrow,’ and now you make just the same promise. Well, so be it, I’ll wait one day more, but not a bit longer. I want the money myself.”

When he returned home, his brothers again questioned him closely:

“Have you got your money?”

“No, brothers; I’ve got to wait for my money again.”

“Whom have you sold it to?”

“To the withered Birch-tree in the forest.”

“Oh, what an idiot!”

On the third day the Simpleton took his hatchet and went to the forest. Arriving there, he demanded his money; but the Birch-tree only creaked and creaked. “No, no, neighbor!” says he. “If you’re always going to treat me to promises, there’ll be no getting anything out of you. I don’t like such joking; I’ll pay you out well for it!”

With that he pitched into it with his hatchet, so that its chips flew about in all directions. Now, in that Birch-tree there was a hollow, and in that hollow some robbers had hidden a pot full of gold. The tree split asunder, and the Simpleton caught sight of the gold. He took as much of it as the skirts of his caftan would hold, and toiled home with it. There he showed his brothers what he had brought.

“Where did you get such a lot, Simpleton?” said they.

“A neighbor gave it me for my ox. But this isn’t anything like the whole of it; a good half of it I didn’t bring home with me! Come along, brothers, let’s get the rest!”

Well, they went into the forest, secured the money, and carried it home.

“Now mind, Simpleton,” say the sensible brothers, “don’t tell anyone that we’ve such a lot of gold.”

“Never fear, I won’t tell a soul!”

All of a sudden they run up against a Diachok, and says he: —

“What’s that, brothers, you’re bringing from the forest?”

The sharp ones replied, “Mushrooms.” But the Simpleton contradicted them, saying:

“They’re telling lies! we’re carrying money; here, just take a look at it.”

The Diachok uttered such an “Oh!” — then he flung himself on the gold, and began seizing handfuls of it and stuffing them into his pocket. The Simpleton grew angry, dealt him a blow with his hatchet, and struck him dead.

“Heigh, Simpleton! what have you been and done!” cried his brothers. “You’re a lost man, and you’ll be the cause of our destruction, too! Wherever shall we put the dead body?”

They thought and thought, and at last they dragged it to an empty cellar and flung it in there. But later on in the evening the eldest brother said to the second one: —

"This piece of work is sure to turn out badly. When they begin looking for the Diachok, you'll see that Simpleton will tell them everything. Let's kill a goat and bury it in the cellar, and hide the body of the dead man in some other place."

Well, they waited till the dead of night; then they killed a goat and flung it into the cellar, but they carried the Diachok to another place and there hid him in the ground. Several days passed, and then people began looking everywhere for the Diachok, asking everyone about him.

"What do you want him for?" said the Simpleton, when he was asked. "I killed him some time ago with my hatchet, and my brothers carried him into the cellar."

Straightway they laid hands on the Simpleton, crying, "Take us there and show him to us."

The Simpleton went down into the cellar, got hold of the goat's head, and asked: —

"Was your Diachok dark-haired?"

"He was."

"And had he a beard?"

"Yes, he'd a beard."

"And horns?"

"What horns are you talking about, Simpleton?"

"Well, see for yourselves," said he, tossing up the head to them. They looked, saw it was a goat's, spat in the Simpleton's face, and went their ways home.

12

THE MIZGIR

In the olden years, long long ago, with the spring-tide fair and the summer’s heat there came on the world distress and shame. For gnats and flies began to swarm, biting folks and letting their warm blood flow.

Then the Spider appeared, the hero bold, who, with waving arms, weaved webs around the highways and byways in which the gnats and flies were most to be found.

A ghastly Gadfly, coming that way, stumbled straight into the Spider’s snare. The Spider, tightly squeezing her throat, prepared to put her out of the world. From the Spider the Gadfly mercy sought.

“Good father Spider! please not to kill me. I’ve ever so many little ones. Without me they’ll be orphans left, and from door to door have to beg their bread and squabble with dogs.”

Well, the Spider released her. Away she flew, and everywhere humming and buzzing about, told the flies and gnats of what had occurred.

“Ho, ye gnats and flies! Meet here beneath this ash-tree’s roots. A spider has come, and, with waving of arms and weaving of nets, has set his snares in all the ways to which the flies and gnats resort. He’ll catch them, every single one!”

They flew to the spot; beneath the ash-tree's roots they hid, and lay there as though they were dead. The Spider came, and there he found a cricket, a beetle, and a bug.

"O Cricket!" he cried, "upon this mound sit and take snuff! Beetle, do thou beat a drum. And do thou crawl, O Bug, the bun-like, beneath the ash, and spread abroad this news of me, the Spider, the wrestler, the hero bold — that the Spider, the wrestler, the hero bold, no longer in the world exists; that they have sent him to Kazan; that in Kazan, upon a block, they've chopped his head off, and the block destroyed."

On the mound sat the Cricket and took snuff. The Beetle smote upon the drum. The Bug crawled in among the ash-tree's roots, and cried: —

"Why have ye fallen? Wherefore as in death do ye lie here? Truly no longer lives the Spider, the wrestler, the hero bold. They've sent him to Kazan and in Kazan they've chopped his head off on a block, and afterwards destroyed the block."

The gnats and flies grew blithe and merry. Thrice they crossed themselves, then out they flew — and straight into the Spider's snares. Said he: —

"But seldom do ye come! I would that ye would far more often come to visit me! to quaff my wine and beer, and pay me tribute!"

13

THE SMITH AND THE DEMON

Once upon a time there was a Smith, and he had one son, a sharp, smart, six-year-old boy. One day the old man went to church, and as he stood before a picture of the Last Judgment he saw a Demon painted there — such a terrible one! — black, with horns and a tail.

"O my!" says he to himself. "Suppose I get just such another painted for the smithy." So he hired an artist, and ordered him to paint on the door of the smithy exactly such another demon as he had seen in the church. The artist painted it. Thenceforward the old man, every time he entered the smithy, always looked at the Demon and said, "Good morning, fellow-countryman!" And then he would lay the fire in the furnace and begin his work.

Well, the Smith lived in good accord with the Demon for some ten years. Then he fell ill and died. His son succeeded to his place as head of the household, and took the smithy into his own hands. But he was not disposed to show attention to the Demon as the old man had done. When he went into the smithy in the morning, he never said "Good morrow" to him; instead of offering him a kindly word, he took the biggest hammer he had handy, and thumped the Demon with it three times right on the forehead, and then he would go to his work. And when one of God's holy days came round, he would go to church and offer each saint a taper; but he would go up to the Demon and spit in his face. Thus three years went by, he all the while favoring the Evil One every morning either with a spitting or with a hammering. The Demon endured it and endured it, and at last found it past all endurance. It was too much for him.

“I’ve had quite enough of this insolence from him!” thinks he. “Suppose I make use of a little diplomacy, and play him some sort of a trick!”

So the Demon took the form of a youth, and went to the smithy.

“Good day, uncle!” says he.

“Good day!”

“What should you say, uncle, to taking me as an apprentice? At all events, I could carry fuel for you, and blow the bellows.”

The Smith liked the idea. “Why shouldn’t I?” he replied. “Two are better than one.”

The Demon began to learn his trade; at the end of a month he knew more about smith’s work than his master did himself, was able to do everything that his master couldn’t do. It was a real pleasure to look at him! There’s no describing how satisfied his master was with him, how fond he got of him. Sometimes the master didn’t go into the smithy at all himself, but trusted entirely to his journeyman, who had complete charge of everything.

Well, it happened one day that the master was not at home, and the journeyman was left all by himself in the smithy. Presently he saw an old lady driving along the street in her carriage, whereupon he popped his head out of doors and began shouting: —

“Heigh, sirs! Be so good as to step in here! We’ve opened a new business here; we turn old folks into young ones.”

Out of her carriage jumped the lady in a trice, and ran into the smithy.

“What’s that you’re bragging about? Do you mean to say it’s true? Can you really do it?” she asked the youth.

“We haven’t got to learn our business!” answered the Demon. “If I hadn’t been able to do it, I wouldn’t have invited people to try.”

“And how much does it cost?” asked the lady.

“Five hundred roubles altogether.”

“Well, then, there’s your money; make a young woman of me.”

The Demon took the money; then he sent the lady’s coachman into the village.

“Go,” says he, “and bring me here two buckets full of milk.”

After that he took a pair of tongs, caught hold of the lady by the feet, flung her into the furnace, and burnt her up; nothing was left of her but her bare bones.

When the buckets of milk were brought, he emptied them into a large tub, then he collected all the bones and flung them into the milk. Just fancy! at the end of about three minutes the lady emerged from the milk — alive, and young, and beautiful!

Well, she got into her carriage and drove home. There she went straight to her husband, and he stared hard at her, but didn’t know she was his wife.

“What are you staring at?” says the lady. “I’m young and elegant, you see, and I don’t want to have an old husband! Be off at once to the smithy, and get them to make you young; if you don’t, I won’t so much as acknowledge you!”

There was no help for it; off set the seigneur. But by that time the Smith had returned home, and had gone into the smithy. He looked about; the journeyman wasn’t to be seen. He searched and searched, he enquired and enquired, never a thing came of it; not even a trace of the youth could be found. He took to his work by himself, and was hammering away, when at that moment up drove the seigneur, and walked straight into the smithy.

“Make a young man of me,” says he.

“Are you in your right mind, Barin? How can one make a young man of you?”

“Come, now! you know all about that.”

“I know nothing of the kind.”

“You lie, you scoundrel! Since you made my old woman young, make me young too; otherwise, there will be no living with her for me.”

“Why I haven’t so much as seen your good lady.”

“Your journeyman saw her, and that’s just the same thing. If he knew how to do the job, surely you, an old hand, must have learnt how to do it long ago. Come, now, set to work at once. If you don’t, it will be the worse for you. I’ll have you rubbed down with a birch-tree towel.”

The Smith was compelled to try his hand at transforming the seigneur. He held a private conversation with the coachman as to how his journeyman had set to work with the lady, and what he had done to her, and then he thought: —

“So be it! I’ll do the same. If I fall on my feet, good; if I don’t, well, I must suffer all the same!”

So he set to work at once, stripped the seigneur naked, laid hold of him by the legs with the tongs, popped him into the furnace, and began blowing the bellows. After he had burnt him to a cinder, he collected his remains, flung them into the milk, and then waited to see how soon a youthful seigneur would jump out of it. He waited one hour, two hours. But nothing came of it. He made a search in the tub. There was nothing in it but bones, and those charred ones.

Just then the lady sent messengers to the smithy, to ask whether the seigneur would soon be ready. The poor Smith had to reply that the seigneur was no more.

When the lady heard that the Smith had only turned her husband into a cinder, instead of making him young, she was tremendously angry, and she called together her trusty servants, and ordered them to drag him to the gallows. No sooner said than done. Her servants ran to the Smith’s house, laid hold of him, tied his hands together, and dragged him off to the gallows. All of a sudden there came up with them the youngster who used to live with the Smith as his journeyman, who asked him: —

“Where are they taking you, master?”

“They’re going to hang me,” replied the Smith, and straightway related all that had happened to him.

“Well, uncle!” said the Demon, “swear that you will never strike me with your hammer, but that you will pay me the same respect your father always paid, and the seigneur shall be alive, and young, too, in a trice.”

The Smith began promising and swearing that he would never again lift his hammer against the Demon, but would always pay him every attention. Thereupon the journeyman hastened to the smithy, and shortly afterwards came back again, bringing the seigneur with him, and crying to the servants:

“Hold! hold! Don’t hang him! Here’s your master!”

Then they immediately untied the cords, and let the Smith go free.

From that time forward the Smith gave up spitting at the Demon and striking him with his hammer. The journeyman disappeared, and was never seen again. But the seigneur and his lady entered upon a prosperous course of life, and if they haven’t died, they’re living still.

14

IVAN POPYALOF

Once upon a time there was an old couple, and they had three sons. Two of these had their wits about them, but the third was a simpleton, Ivan by name, surnamed Popyalof.

For twelve whole years Ivan lay among the ashes from the stove; but then he arose, and shook himself, so that six poods of ashes fell off from him.

Now in the land in which Ivan lived there was never any day, but always night. That was a Snake's doing. Well, Ivan undertook to kill that Snake, so he said to his father, "Father, make me a mace five poods in weight." And when he had got the mace, he went out into the fields, and flung it straight up in the air, and then he went home. The next day he went out into the fields to the spot from which he had flung the mace on high, and stood there with his head thrown back. So when the mace fell down again it hit him on the forehead. And the mace broke in two.

Ivan went home and said to his father, "Father, make me another mace, a ten pood one." And when he had got it he went out into the fields, and flung it aloft. And the mace went flying through the air for three days and three nights. On the fourth day Ivan went out to the same spot, and when the mace came tumbling down, he put his knee in the way, and the mace broke over it into three pieces.

Ivan went home and told his father to make him a third mace, one of fifteen poods weight. And when he had got it, he went out into the fields and flung it aloft. And the mace was up in the air six days. On the seventh Ivan went to the same spot as before. Down fell the mace, and when it struck Ivan's forehead, the forehead bowed under it. Thereupon he said, "This mace will do for the Snake!"

So when he had got everything ready, he went forth with his brothers to fight the Snake. He rode and rode, and presently there stood before him a hut on fowl's legs, and in that hut lived the Snake. There all the party came to a standstill. Then Ivan hung up his gloves, and said to his brothers, "Should blood drop from my gloves, make haste to help me." When he had said this he went into the hut and sat down under the boarding.

Presently there rode up a Snake with three heads. His steed stumbled, his hound howled, his falcon clamored. Then cried the Snake:

"Wherefore hast thou stumbled, O Steed! hast thou howled, O Hound! hast thou clamored, O Falcon?"

"How can I but stumble," replied the Steed, "when under the boarding sits Ivan Popyalof?"

Then said the Snake, "Come forth, Ivanushka! Let us try our strength together." Ivan came forth, and they began to fight. And Ivan killed the Snake, and then sat down again beneath the boarding.

Presently there came another Snake, a six-headed one, and him, too, Ivan killed. And then there came a third, which had twelve heads. Well, Ivan began to fight with him, and lopped off nine of his heads. The Snake had no strength left in him. Just then a raven came flying by, and it croaked:

"Krof? Krof!"

Then the Snake cried to the Raven, "Fly, and tell my wife to come and devour Ivan Popyalof."

But Ivan cried: "Fly, and tell my brothers to come, and then we will kill this Snake, and give his flesh to thee."

And the Raven gave ear to what Ivan said, and flew to his brothers and began to croak above their heads. The brothers awoke, and when they heard the cry of the Raven, they hastened to their brother’s aid. And they killed the Snake, and then, having taken his heads, they went into his hut and destroyed them. And immediately there was bright light throughout the whole land.

After killing the Snake, Ivan Popyalof and his brothers set off on their way home. But he had forgotten to take away his gloves, so he went back to fetch them, telling his brothers to wait for him meanwhile. Now when he had reached the hut and was going to take away his gloves, he heard the voices of the Snake’s wife and daughters, who were talking with each other. So he turned himself into a cat, and began to mew outside the door. They let him in, and he listened to everything they said. Then he got his gloves and hastened away.

As soon as he came to where his brothers were, he mounted his horse, and they all started afresh. They rode and rode; presently they saw before them a green meadow, and on that meadow lay silken cushions. Then the elder brothers said, “Let’s turn out our horses to graze here, while we rest ourselves a little.”

But Ivan said, “Wait a minute, brothers!” and he seized his mace, and struck the cushions with it. And out of those cushions there streamed blood.

So they all went on further. They rode and rode; presently there stood before them an apple-tree, and upon it were gold and silver apples. Then the elder brothers said, “Let’s eat an apple apiece.” But Ivan said, “Wait a minute, brothers; I’ll try them first,” and he took his mace, and struck the apple-tree with it. And out of the tree streamed blood.

So they went on further. They rode and rode, and by and by they saw a spring in front of them. And the elder brothers cried, “Let’s have a drink of water.” But Ivan Popyalof cried: “Stop, brothers!” and he raised his mace and struck the spring, and its waters became blood.

For the meadow, the silken cushions, the apple-tree, and the spring, were all of them daughters of the Snake.

After killing the Snake’s daughters, Ivan and his brothers went on homewards. Presently came the Snake’s Wife flying after them, and she opened her jaws from the sky to the earth, and tried to swallow up Ivan. But Ivan and his brothers threw three poods of salt into her mouth. She swallowed the salt, thinking it was Ivan Popyalof, but afterwards — when she had tasted the salt, and found out it was not Ivan — she flew after him again.

Then he perceived that danger was at hand, and so he let his horse go free, and hid himself behind twelve doors in the forge of Kuzma and Demian. The Snake’s Wife came flying up, and said to Kuzma and Demian, “Give me up Ivan Popyalof.” But they replied:

“Send your tongue through the twelve doors and take him.” So the Snake’s Wife began licking the doors. But meanwhile they all heated iron pincers, and as soon as she had sent her tongue through into the smithy, they caught tight hold of her by the tongue, and began thumping her with hammers. And when the Snake’s Wife was dead they consumed her with fire, and scattered her ashes to the winds. And then they went home, and there they lived and enjoyed themselves, feasting and revelling, and drinking mead and wine.

I was there, too, and had liquor to drink; it didn’t go into my mouth, but only ran down my beard.

15

THE NORKA

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen. They had three sons, two of them with their wits about them, but the third a simpleton. Now the King had a deer-park in which were quantities of wild animals of different kinds. Into that park there used to come a huge beast — Norka was its name — and do fearful mischief, devouring some of the animals every night. The King did all he could, but he was unable to destroy it. So at last he called his sons together and said: “Whoever will destroy the Norka, to him will I give the half of my kingdom.”

Well, the eldest son undertook the task. As soon as it was night, he took his weapons and set out. But before he reached the park, he went into a *traktir* (or tavern), and there he spent the whole night in revelry. When he came to his senses it was too late; the day had already dawned. He felt himself disgraced in the eyes of his father, but there was no help for it. The next day the second son went, and did just the same. Their father scolded them both soundly, and there was an end of it.

Well, on the third day the youngest son undertook the task. They all laughed him to scorn, because he was so stupid, feeling sure he wouldn’t do anything. But he took his arms, and went straight into the park, and sat down on the grass in such a position that, the moment he went asleep, his weapons would prick him, and he would awake.

Presently the midnight hour sounded. The earth began to shake, and the Norka came rushing up, and burst right through the fence into the park, so huge was it. The Prince pulled himself together, leapt to his feet, crossed himself, and went straight at the beast. It fled back, and the Prince ran after it. But he soon saw that he couldn’t catch it on foot, so he hastened to the stable, laid his hands on the best horse there, and set off in pursuit. Presently he came up with the beast, and they began a fight. They fought and fought; the Prince gave the beast three wounds. At last they were both utterly exhausted, so they lay down to take a short rest. But the moment the Prince closed his eyes, up jumped the Beast and took to flight. The Prince’s horse awoke him; up he jumped in a moment, and set off again in pursuit, caught up the Beast, and again began fighting with it. Again the Prince gave the Beast three wounds, and then he and the Beast lay down again to rest. Thereupon away fled the Beast as before. The Prince caught it up, and again gave it three wounds. But all of a sudden, just as the Prince began chasing it for the fourth time, the Beast fled to a great white stone, tilted it up, and escaped into the other world, crying out to the Prince: “Then only will you overcome me, when you enter here.”

The Prince went home, told his father all that had happened, and asked him to have a leather rope plaited, long enough to reach to the other world. His father ordered this to be done. When the rope was made, the Prince called for his brothers, and he and they, having taken servants with them, and everything that was needed for a whole year, set out for the place where the Beast had disappeared under the stone. When they got there, they built a palace on the spot, and lived in it for some time. But when everything was ready, the youngest brother said to the others: “Now, brothers, who is going to lift this stone?”

Neither of them could so much as stir it, but as soon as he touched it, away it flew to a distance, though it was ever so big — big as a hill. And when he had flung the stone aside, he spoke a second time to his brothers, saying:

“Who is going into the other world, to overcome the Norka?”

Neither of them offered to do so. Then he laughed at them for being such cowards, and said:

“Well, brothers, farewell! Lower me into the other world, and don’t go away from here, but as soon as the cord is jerked, pull it up.”

His brothers lowered him accordingly, and when he had reached the other world, underneath the earth, he went on his way. He walked and walked. Presently he espied a horse with rich trappings, and it said to him:

“Hail, Prince Ivan! Long have I awaited thee!”

He mounted the horse and rode on — rode and rode, until he saw standing before him, a palace made of copper. He entered the courtyard, tied up his horse, and went indoors. In one of the rooms a dinner was laid out. He sat down and dined, and then went into a bedroom. There he found a bed, on which he lay down to rest. Presently there came in a lady, more beautiful than can be imagined anywhere but in a skazka, who said:

“Thou who art in my house, name thyself! If thou art an old man, thou shall be my father; if a middle-aged man, my brother; but if a young man, thou shalt be my husband dear. And if thou art a woman, and an old one, thou shalt be my grandmother; if middle-aged, my mother; and if a girl, thou shalt be my own sister.”

Thereupon he came forth. And when she saw him, she was delighted with him, and said:

“Wherefore, O Prince Ivan — my husband dear shalt thou be! — wherefore hast thou come hither?”

Then he told her all that had happened, and she said:

"That beast which thou wishest to overcome is my brother. He is staying just now with my second sister, who lives not far from here in a silver palace. I bound up three of the wounds which thou didst give him."

Well, after this they drank, and enjoyed themselves, and held sweet converse together, and then the prince took leave of her, and went on to the second sister, the one who lived in the silver palace, and with her also he stayed awhile. She told him that her brother Norka was then at her youngest sister's. So he went on to the youngest sister, who lived in a golden palace. She told him that her brother was at that time asleep on the blue sea, and she gave him a sword of steel and a draught of the Water of Strength, and she told him to cut off her brother's head at a single stroke. And when he had heard these things, he went his way.

And when the Prince came to the blue sea, he looked — there slept Norka on a stone in the middle of the sea; and when it snored, the water was agitated for seven versts around. The Prince crossed himself, went up to it and smote it on the head with his sword. The head jumped off, saying the while, "Well, I'm done for now!" and rolled far away into the sea.

After killing the Beast, the Prince went back again, picking up all the three sisters by the way, with the intention of taking them out into the upper world: for they all loved him and would not be separated from him. Each of them turned her palace into an egg — for they were all enchantresses — and they taught him how to turn the eggs into palaces, and back again, and they handed over the eggs to him. And then they all went to the place from which they had to be hoisted into the upper world. And when they came to where the rope was, the Prince took hold of it and made the maidens fast to it. Then he jerked away at the rope, and his brothers began to haul it up. And when they had hauled it up, and had set eyes on the wondrous maidens, they went aside and said: "Let's lower the rope, pull our brother part of the way up, and then cut the rope. Perhaps he'll be killed; but then if he isn't, he'll never give us these beauties as wives."

So when they had agreed on this, they lowered the rope. But their brother was no fool; he guessed what they were at, so he fastened the rope to a stone, and then gave it a pull. His brothers hoisted the stone to a great height, and then cut the rope. Down fell the stone and broke in pieces; the Prince poured forth tears and went away. Well, he walked and walked. Presently a storm arose; the lightning flashed, the thunder roared, the rain fell in torrents. He went up to a tree in order to take shelter under it, and on that tree he saw some young birds which were being thoroughly drenched. So he took off his coat and covered them over with it, and he himself sat down under the tree. Presently there came flying a bird — such a big one, that the light was blotted out by it. It had been dark there before, but now it became darker still. Now this was the mother of those small birds which the Prince had covered up. And when the bird had come flying up, she perceived that her little ones were covered over, and she said, “Who has wrapped up my nestlings?” and presently, seeing the Prince, she added: “Didst thou do that? Thanks! In return, ask of me any thing thou desirest. I will do anything for thee.”

“Then carry me into the other world,” he replied.

“Make me a large *zasyek* with a partition in the middle,” she said; “catch all sorts of game, and put them into one half of it, and into the other half pour water; so that there may be meat and drink for me.”

All this the Prince did. Then the bird — having taken the *zasyek* on her back, with the Prince sitting in the middle of it — began to fly. And after flying some distance she brought him to his journey’s end, took leave of him, and flew away back. But he went to the house of a certain tailor, and engaged himself as his servant. So much the worse for wear was he, so thoroughly had he altered in appearance, that nobody would have suspected him of being a Prince.

Having entered into the service of this master, the Prince began to ask what was going on in that country. And his master replied: “Our two princes — for the third one has disappeared — have brought away brides from the other world, and want to marry them, but those brides refuse. For they insist on having all their wedding-clothes made for them first, exactly like those which they used to have in the other world, and that without being measured for them. The King has called all the workmen together, but not one of them will undertake to do it.”

The Prince, having heard all this, said, “Go to the King, master, and tell him that you will provide everything that’s in your line.”

“However can I undertake to make clothes of that sort; I work for quite common folks,” says his master.

“Go along, master! I will answer for everything,” says the Prince.

So the tailor went. The King was delighted that at least one good workman had been found, and gave him as much money as ever he wanted. When the tailor had settled everything, he went home. And the Prince said to him:

“Now then, pray to God, and lie down to sleep; to-morrow all will be ready.” And the tailor followed his lad’s advice, and went to bed.

Midnight sounded. The Prince arose, went out of the city into the fields, took out of his pocket the eggs which the maidens had given him, and, as they had taught him, turned them into three palaces. Into each of these he entered, took the maidens’ robes, went out again, turned the palaces back into eggs, and went home. And when he got there he hung up the robes on the wall, and lay down to sleep.

Early in the morning his master awoke, and behold! there hung such robes as he had never seen before, all shining with gold and silver and precious stones. He was delighted, and he seized them and carried them off to the King. When the princesses saw that the clothes were those which had been theirs in the other world, they guessed that Prince Ivan was in this world, so they exchanged glances with each other, but they held their peace. And the master, having handed over the clothes, went home, but he no longer found his dear journeyman there. For the Prince had gone to a shoemaker’s, and him too he sent to work for the King; and in the same way he went the round of all the artificers, and they all proffered him thanks, inasmuch as through him they were enriched by the King.

By the time the princely workman had gone the round of all the artificers, the princesses had received what they had asked for; all their clothes were just like what they had been in the other world. Then they wept bitterly because the Prince had not come, and it was impossible for them to hold out any longer, it was necessary that they should be married. But when they were ready for the wedding, the youngest bride said to the King:

“Allow me, my father, to go and give alms to the beggars.”

He gave her leave, and she went and began bestowing alms upon them, and examining them closely. And when she had come to one of them, and was going to give him some money, she caught sight of the ring which she had given to the Prince in the other world, and her sisters’ rings too — for it really was he. So she seized him by the hand, and brought him into the hall, and said to the King:

“Here is he who brought us out of the other world. His brothers forbade us to say that he was alive, threatening to slay us if we did.”

Then the King was wroth with those sons, and punished them as he thought best. And afterwards three weddings were celebrated.

16

MARYA MOREVNA

In a certain kingdom there lived a Prince Ivan. He had three sisters. The first was the Princess Marya, the second the Princess Olga, the third the Princess Anna. When their father and mother lay at the point of death, they had thus enjoined their son: — “Give your sisters in marriage to the very first suitors who come to woo them. Don’t go keeping them by you!”

They died and the Prince buried them, and then, to solace his grief, he went with his sisters into the garden green to stroll. Suddenly the sky was covered by a black cloud; a terrible storm arose.

“Let us go home, sisters!” he cried.

Hardly had they got into the palace, when the thunder pealed, the ceiling split open, and into the room where they were, came flying a falcon bright. The Falcon smote upon the ground, became a brave youth, and said:

“Hail, Prince Ivan! Before I came as a guest, but now I have come as a wooer! I wish to propose for your sister, the Princess Marya.”

“If you find favor in the eyes of my sister, I will not interfere with her wishes. Let her marry you in God’s name!”

The Princess Marya gave her consent; the Falcon married her and bore her away into his own realm.

Days follow days, hours chase hours; a whole year goes by. One day Prince Ivan and his two sisters went out to stroll in the garden green. Again there arose a stormcloud with whirlwind and lightning.

“Let us go home, sisters!” cried the Prince. Scarcely had they entered the palace, when the thunder crashed, the roof burst into a blaze, the ceiling split in twain, and in flew an eagle. The Eagle smote upon the ground and became a brave youth.

“Hail, Prince Ivan! Before I came as a guest, but now I have come as a wooer!”

And he asked for the hand of the Princess Olga. Prince Ivan replied:

“If you find favor in the eyes of the Princess Olga, then let her marry you. I will not interfere with her liberty of choice.”

The Princess Olga gave her consent and married the Eagle. The Eagle took her and carried her off to his own kingdom.

Another year went by. Prince Ivan said to his youngest sister:

“Let us go out and stroll in the garden green!”

They strolled about for a time. Again there arose a stormcloud, with whirlwind and lightning.

“Let us return home, sister!” said he.

They returned home, but they hadn’t had time to sit down when the thunder crashed, the ceiling split open, and in flew a raven. The Raven smote upon the floor and became a brave youth. The former youths had been handsome, but this one was handsomer still.

“Well, Prince Ivan! Before I came as a guest, but now I have come as a wooer. Give me the Princess Anna to wife.”

“I won’t interfere with my sister’s freedom. If you gain her affections, let her marry you.”

So the Princess Anna married the Raven, and he bore her away to his own realm. Prince Ivan was left alone. A whole year he lived without his sisters; then he grew weary, and said: —

“I will set out in search of my sisters.”

He got ready for the journey, he rode and rode, and one day he saw a whole army lying dead on the plain. He cried aloud, “If there be a living man there, let him make answer! who has slain this mighty host?”

There replied unto him a living man:

“All this mighty host has been slain by the fair Princess Marya Morevna.”

Prince Ivan rode further on, and came to a white tent, and forth came to meet him the fair Princess Marya Morevna.

“Hail Prince!” says she, “whither does God send you? and is it of your free will or against your will?”

Prince Ivan replied, “Not against their will do brave youths ride!”

“Well, if your business be not pressing, tarry awhile in my tent.”

Thereat was Prince Ivan glad. He spent two nights in the tent, and he found favor in the eyes of Marya Morevna, and she married him. The fair Princess, Marya Morevna, carried him off into her own realm.

They spent some time together, and then the Princess took it into her head to go a warring. So she handed over all the housekeeping affairs to Prince Ivan, and gave him these instructions:

“Go about everywhere, keep watch over everything, only do not venture to look into that closet there.”

He couldn’t help doing so. The moment Marya Morevna had gone he rushed to the closet, pulled open the door, and looked in — there hung Koshchei the Deathless, fettered by twelve chains. Then Koshchei entreated Prince Ivan, saying, —

“Have pity upon me and give me to drink! Ten years long have I been here in torment, neither eating or drinking; my throat is utterly dried up.”

The Prince gave him a bucketful of water; he drank it up and asked for more, saying:

“A single bucket of water will not quench my thirst; give me more!”

The Prince gave him a second bucketful. Koshchei drank it up and asked for a third, and when he had swallowed the third bucketful, he regained his former strength, gave his chains a shake, and broke all twelve at once.

“Thanks, Prince Ivan!” cried Koshchei the deathless, “now you will sooner see your own ears than Marya Morevna!” and out of the window he flew in the shape of a terrible whirlwind. And he came up with the fair Princess Marya Morevna as she was going her way, laid hold of her, and carried her off home with him. But Prince Ivan wept full sore, and he arrayed himself and set out a wandering, saying to himself: “Whatever happens, I will go and look for Marya Morevna!”

One day passed, another day passed: at the dawn of the third day he saw a wondrous palace, and by the side of the palace stood an oak, and on the oak sat a falcon bright. Down flew the Falcon from the oak, smote upon the ground, turned into a brave youth and cried aloud:

“Ha, dear brother-in-law! how deals the Lord with you?”

Out came running the Princess Marya, joyfully greeted her brother Ivan, and began enquiring after his health, and telling him all about herself. The Prince spent three days with them, then he said:

“I cannot abide with you; I must go in search of my wife the fair Princess Marya Morevna.”

“Hard will it be for you to find her,” answered the Falcon. “At all events leave with us your silver spoon. We will look at it and remember you.” So Prince Ivan left his silver spoon at the Falcon’s, and went on his way again.

On he went one day, on he went another day, and by the dawn of the third day he saw a palace still grander than the former one, and hard by the palace stood an oak, and on the oak sat an eagle. Down flew the eagle from the oak, smote upon the ground, turned into a brave youth, and cried aloud:

“Rise up, Princess Olga! Hither comes our brother dear!”

The Princess Olga immediately ran to meet him, and began kissing him and embracing him, asking after his health and telling him all about herself. With them Prince Ivan stopped three days; then he said:

“I cannot stay here any longer. I am going to look for my wife, the fair Princess Marya Morevna.”

“Hard will it be for you to find her,” replied the Eagle, “Leave with us a silver fork. We will look at it and remember you.”

He left a silver fork behind, and went his way. He travelled one day, he travelled two days; at daybreak on the third day he saw a palace grander than the first two, and near the palace stood an oak, and on the oak sat a raven. Down flew the Raven from the oak, smote upon the ground, turned into a brave youth, and cried aloud:

“Princess Anna, come forth quickly! our brother is coming!”

Out ran the Princess Anna, greeted him joyfully, and began kissing and embracing him, asking after his health and telling him all about herself. Prince Ivan stayed with them three days; then he said:

“Farewell! I am going to look for my wife, the fair Princess Marya Morevna.”

“Hard will it be for you to find her,” replied the Raven, “Anyhow, leave your silver snuff-box with us. We will look at it and remember you.”

The Prince handed over his silver snuff-box, took his leave and went his way. One day he went, another day he went, and on the third day he came to where Marya Morevna was. She caught sight of her love, flung her arms around his neck, burst into tears, and exclaimed:

“Oh, Prince Ivan! why did you disobey me, and go looking into the closet and letting out Koshchei the Deathless?”

“Forgive me, Marya Morevna! Remember not the past; much better fly with me while Koshchei the Deathless is out of sight. Perhaps he won’t catch us.”

So they got ready and fled. Now Koshchei was out hunting. Towards evening he was returning home, when his good steed stumbled beneath him.

“Why stumblest thou, sorry jade? scentest thou some ill?”

The steed replied:

“Prince Ivan has come and carried off Marya Morevna.”

“Is it possible to catch them?”

“It is possible to sow wheat, to wait till it grows up, to reap it and thresh it, to grind it to flour, to make five pies of it, to eat those pies, and then to start in pursuit — and even then to be in time.”

Koshchei galloped off and caught up Prince Ivan.

“Now,” says he, “this time I will forgive you, in return for your kindness in giving me water to drink. And a second time I will forgive you; but the third time beware! I will cut you to bits.”

Then he took Marya Morevna from him, and carried her off. But Prince Ivan sat down on a stone and burst into tears. He wept and wept — and then returned back again to Marya Morevna. Now Koshchei the Deathless happened not to be at home.

“Let us fly, Marya Morevna!”

“Ah, Prince Ivan! he will catch us.”

“Suppose he does catch us. At all events we shall have spent an hour or two together.”

So they got ready and fled. As Koshchei the Deathless was returning home, his good steed stumbled beneath him.

“Why stumblest thou, sorry jade? scentest thou some ill?”

“Prince Ivan has come and carried off Marya Morevna.”

“Is it possible to catch them?”

“It is possible to sow barley, to wait till it grows up, to reap it and thresh it, to brew beer, to drink ourselves drunk on it, to sleep our fill, and then to set off in pursuit — and yet to be in time.”

Koshchei galloped off, caught up Prince Ivan:

"Didn't I tell you that you should not see Marya Morevna any more than your own ears?"

And he took her away and carried her off home with him.

Prince Ivan was left there alone. He wept and wept; then he went back again after Marya Morevna. Koshchei happened to be away from home at that moment.

"Let us fly, Marya Morevna."

"Ah, Prince Ivan! He is sure to catch us and hew you in pieces."

"Let him hew away! I cannot live without you."

So they got ready and fled.

Koshchei the Deathless was returning home when his good steed stumbled beneath him.

"Why stumblest thou? scentest thou any ill?"

"Prince Ivan has come and has carried off Marya Morevna."

Koshchei galloped off, caught Prince Ivan, chopped him into little pieces, put them in a barrel, smeared it with pitch and bound it with iron hoops, and flung it into the blue sea. But Marya Morevna he carried off home.

At that very time, the silver turned black which Prince Ivan had left with his brothers-in-law.

"Ah!" said they, "the evil is accomplished sure enough!"

Then the Eagle hurried to the blue sea, caught hold of the barrel, and dragged it ashore; the Falcon flew away for the Water of Life, and the Raven for the Water of Death.

Afterwards they all three met, broke open the barrel, took out the remains of Prince Ivan, washed them, and put them together in fitting order. The Raven sprinkled them with the Water of Death — the pieces joined together, the body became whole. The Falcon sprinkled it with the Water of Life — Prince Ivan shuddered, stood up, and said:

"Ah! what a time I've been sleeping!"

“You’d have gone on sleeping a good deal longer, if it hadn’t been for us,” replied his brothers-in-law. “Now come and pay us a visit.”

“Not so, brothers; I shall go and look for Marya Morevna.”

And when he had found her, he said to her:

“Find out from Koshchei the Deathless whence he got so good a steed.”

So Marya Morevna chose a favorable moment, and began asking Koshchei about it. Koshchei replied:

“Beyond thrice nine lands, in the thirtieth kingdom, on the other side of the fiery river, there lives a Baba Yaga. She has so good a mare that she flies right round the world on it every day. And she has many other splendid mares. I watched her herds for three days without losing a single mare, and in return for that the Baba Yaga gave me a foal.”

“But how did you get across the fiery river?”

“Why, I’ve a handkerchief of this kind — when I wave it thrice on the right hand, there springs up a very lofty bridge and the fire cannot reach it.”

Marya Morevna listened to all this, and repeated it to Prince Ivan, and she carried off the handkerchief and gave it to him. So he managed to get across the fiery river, and then went on to the Baba Yaga’s. Long went he on without getting anything either to eat or to drink. At last he came across an outlandish bird and its young ones. Says Prince Ivan:

“I’ll eat one of these chickens.”

“Don’t eat it, Prince Ivan!” begs the outlandish bird; “some time or other I’ll do you a good turn.”

He went on farther and saw a hive of bees in the forest.

“I’ll get a bit of honeycomb,” says he.

“Don’t disturb my honey, Prince Ivan!” exclaims the queen bee; “some time or other I’ll do you a good turn.”

So he didn’t disturb it, but went on. Presently there met him a lioness with her cub.

“Anyhow I’ll eat this lion cub,” says he; “I’m so hungry, I feel quite unwell!”

“Please let us alone, Prince Ivan” begs the lioness; “some time or other I’ll do you a good turn.”

“Very well; have it your own way,” says he.

Hungry and faint he wandered on, walked farther and farther and at last came to where stood the house of the Baba Yaga. Round the house were set twelve poles in a circle, and on each of eleven of these poles was stuck a human head, the twelfth alone remained unoccupied.

“Hail, granny!”

“Hail, Prince Ivan! wherefore have you come? Is it of your own accord, or on compulsion?”

“I have come to earn from you a heroic steed.”

“So be it, Prince, you won’t have to serve a year with me, but just three days. If you take good care of my mares, I’ll give you a heroic steed. But if you don’t — why then you mustn’t be annoyed at finding your head stuck on top of the last pole up there.”

Prince Ivan agreed to these terms. The Baba Yaga gave him food and drink, and bid him set about his business. But the moment he had driven the mares afield, they cocked up their tails, and away they tore across the meadows in all directions. Before the Prince had time to look round, they were all out of sight. Thereupon he began to weep and to disquiet himself, and then he sat down upon a stone and went to sleep. But when the sun was near its setting, the outlandish bird came flying up to him, and awakened him saying: —

“Arise, Prince Ivan! the mares are at home now.”

The Prince arose and returned home. There the Baba Yaga was storming and raging at her mares, and shrieking: —

“Whatever did ye come home for?”

“How could we help coming home?” said they. “There came flying birds from every part of the world, and all but pecked our eyes out.”

“Well, well! to-morrow don’t go galloping over the meadows, but disperse amid the thick forests.”

Prince Ivan slept all night. In the morning the Baba Yaga says to him: —

“Mind, Prince! if you don’t take good care of the mares, if you lose merely one of them — your bold head will be stuck on that pole!”

He drove the mares afield. Immediately they cocked up their tails and dispersed among the thick forests. Again did the Prince sit down on the stone, weep and weep, and then go to sleep. The sun went down behind the forest. Up came running the lioness.

“Arise, Prince Ivan! The mares are all collected.”

Prince Ivan arose and went home. More than ever did the Baba Yaga storm at her mares and shriek: —

“Whatever did ye come back home for?”

“How could we help coming back? Beasts of prey came running at us from all parts of the world, all but tore us utterly to pieces.”

“Well, to-morrow run off into the blue sea.”

Again did Prince Ivan sleep through the night. Next morning the Baba Yaga sent him forth to watch the mares:

“If you don’t take good care of them,” says she, “your bold head will be stuck on that pole!”

He drove the mares afield. Immediately they cocked up their tails, disappeared from sight, and fled into the blue sea. There they stood, up to their necks in water. Prince Ivan sat down on the stone, wept, and fell asleep. But when the sun had set behind the forest, up came flying a bee and said: —

“Arise, Prince! The mares are all collected. But when you get home, don’t let the Baba Yaga set eyes on you, but go into the stable and hide behind the mangers. There you will find a sorry colt rolling in the muck. Do you steal it, and at the dead of night ride away from the house."

Prince Ivan arose, slipped into the stable, and lay down behind the mangers, while the Baba Yaga was storming away at her mares and shrieking: —

"Why did ye come back?"

"How could we help coming back? There came flying bees in countless numbers from all parts of the world, and began stinging us on all sides till the blood came!"

The Baba Yaga went to sleep. In the dead of the night Prince Ivan stole the sorry colt, saddled it, jumped on its back, and galloped away to the fiery river. When he came to that river he waved the handkerchief three times on the right hand, and suddenly, springing goodness knows whence, there hung across the river, high in the air, a splendid bridge. The Prince rode across the bridge and waved the handkerchief twice only on the left hand; there remained across the river a thin — ever so thin a bridge!

When the Baba Yaga got up in the morning, the sorry colt was not to be seen! Off she set in pursuit. At full speed did she fly in her iron mortar, urging it on with the pestle, sweeping away her traces with the broom. She dashed up to the fiery river, gave a glance, and said, "A capital bridge!" She drove on to the bridge, but had only got half-way when the bridge broke in two, and the Baba Yaga went flop into the river. There truly did she meet with a cruel death!

Prince Ivan fattened up the colt in the green meadows, and it turned into a wondrous steed. Then he rode to where Marya Morevna was. She came running out, and flung herself on his neck, crying: —

"By what means has God brought you back to life?"

"Thus and thus," says he. "Now come along with me."

"I am afraid, Prince Ivan! If Koshchei catches us, you will be cut in pieces again."

“No, he won’t catch us! I have a splendid heroic steed now; it flies just like a bird.” So they got on its back and rode away.

Koshchei the Deathless was returning home when his horse stumbled beneath him.

“What art thou stumbling for, sorry jade? dost thou scent any ill?”

“Prince Ivan has come and carried off Marya Morevna.”

“Can we catch them?”

“God knows! Prince Ivan has a horse now which is better than I.”

“Well, I can’t stand it,” says Koshchei the Deathless. “I will pursue.”

After a time he came up with Prince Ivan, lighted on the ground, and was going to chop him up with his sharp sword. But at that moment Prince Ivan’s horse smote Koshchei the Deathless full swing with its hoof, and cracked his skull, and the Prince made an end of him with a club. Afterwards the Prince heaped up a pile of wood, set fire to it, burnt Koshchei the Deathless on the pyre, and scattered his ashes to the wind. Then Marya Morevna mounted Koshchei’s horse and Prince Ivan got on his own, and they rode away to visit first the Raven, and then the Eagle, and then the Falcon. Wherever they went they met with a joyful greeting.

“Ah, Prince Ivan! why, we never expected to see you again. Well, it wasn’t for nothing that you gave yourself so much trouble. Such a beauty as Marya Morevna one might search for all the world over — and never find one like her!”

And so they visited, and they feasted; and afterwards they went off to their own realm.

17

KOSHCHEI THE DEATHLESS

In a certain country there once lived a king, and he had three sons, all of them grown up. All of a sudden Koshchei the Deathless carried off their mother. Then the eldest son craved his father's blessing, that he might go and look for his mother. His father gave him his blessing, and he went off and disappeared, leaving no trace behind. The second son waited and waited, then he too obtained his father's blessing — and he also disappeared. Then the youngest son, Prince Ivan, said to his father, "Father, give me your blessing, and let me go and look for my mother."

But his father would not let him go, saying, "Your brothers are no more; if you likewise go away, I shall die of grief."

"Not so, father. But if you bless me I shall go; and if you do not bless me I shall go."

So his father gave him his blessing.

Prince Ivan went to choose a steed, but every one that he laid his hand upon gave way under it. He could not find a steed to suit him, so he wandered with drooping brow along the road and about the town. Suddenly there appeared an old woman, who asked:

"Why hangs your brow so low, Prince Ivan?"

"Be off, old crone," he replied. "If I put you on one of my hands, and give it a slap with the other, there'll be a little wet left, that's all."

The old woman ran down a by-street, came to meet him a second time, and said:

“Good day, Prince Ivan! why hangs your brow so low?”

Then he thought:

“Why does this old woman ask me? Mightn’t she be of use to me?” — and he replied:

“Well, mother! because I cannot get myself a good steed.”

“Silly fellow!” she cried, “to suffer, and not to ask the old woman’s help! Come along with me.”

She took him to a hill, showed him a certain spot, and said:

“Dig up that piece of ground.”

Prince Ivan dug it up and saw an iron plate with twelve padlocks on it. He immediately broke off the padlocks, tore open a door, and followed a path leading underground. There, fastened with twelve chains, stood a heroic steed which evidently heard the approaching steps of a rider worthy to mount it, and so began to neigh and to struggle, until it broke all twelve of its chains. Then Prince Ivan put on armor fit for a hero, and bridled the horse, and saddled it with a Circassian saddle. And he gave the old woman money, and said to her:

“Forgive me, mother, and bless me!” then he mounted his steed and rode away.

Long time did he ride; at last he came to a mountain — a tremendously high mountain, and so steep that it was utterly impossible to get up it. Presently his brothers came that way. They all greeted each other, and rode on together, till they came to an iron rock a hundred and fifty poods in weight, and on it was this inscription, “Whosoever will fling this rock against the mountain, to him will a way be opened.” The two elder brothers were unable to lift the rock, but Prince Ivan at the first try flung it against the mountain — and immediately there appeared a ladder leading up the mountain side.

Prince Ivan dismounted, let some drops of blood run from his little finger into a glass, gave it to his brothers, and said:

"If the blood in this glass turns black, tarry here no longer: that will mean that I am about to die." Then he took leave of them and went his way.

He mounted the hill. What did not he see there? All sorts of trees were there, all sorts of fruits, all sorts of birds! Long did Prince Ivan walk on; at last he came to a house, a huge house! In it lived a king's daughter who had been carried off by Koshchei the Deathless. Prince Ivan walked round the enclosure, but could not see any doors. The king's daughter saw there was some one there, came on to the balcony, and called out to him, "See, there is a chink in the enclosure; touch it with your little finger, and it will become a door."

What she said turned out to be true. Prince Ivan went into the house, and the maiden received him kindly, gave him to eat and to drink, and then began to question him. He told her how he had come to rescue his mother from Koshchei the Deathless. Then the maiden said:

"It will be difficult for you to get at your mother, Prince Ivan. You see, Koshchei is not mortal: he will kill you. He often comes here to see me. There is his sword, fifty poods in weight. Can you lift it? If so, you may venture to go."

Not only did Prince Ivan lift the sword, but he tossed it high in the air. So he went on his way again.

By-and-by he came to a second house. He knew now where to look for the door, and he entered in. There was his mother. With tears did they embrace each other.

Here also did he try his strength, heaving aloft a ball which weighed some fifteen hundred poods. The time came for Koshchei the Deathless to arrive. The mother hid away her son. Suddenly Koshchei the Deathless entered the house and cried out, "Phou, Phou! A Russian bone one usen't to hear with one’s ears, or see with one’s eyes, but now a Russian bone has come to the house! Who has been with you? Wasn’t it your son?”

“What are you talking about, God bless you! You’ve been flying through Russia, and got the air up your nostrils, that’s why you fancy it’s here,” answered Prince Ivan’s mother, and then she drew nigh to Koshchei, addressed him in terms of affection, asked him about one thing and another, and at last said:

“Whereabouts is your death, O Koshchei?”

“My death,” he replied, “is in such a place. There stands an oak, and under the oak is a casket, and in the casket is a hare, and in the hare is a duck, and in the duck is an egg, and in the egg is my death.”

Having thus spoken, Koshchei the Deathless tarried there a little longer, and then flew away.

The time came — Prince Ivan received his mother’s blessing, and went to look for Koshchei’s death. He went on his way a long time without eating or drinking; at last he felt mortally hungry, and thought, “If only something would come my way!” Suddenly there appeared a young wolf; he determined to kill it. But out from a hole sprang the she wolf, and said, “Don’t hurt my little one; I’ll do you a good turn.” Very good! Prince Ivan let the young wolf go. On he went and saw a crow. “Stop a bit,” he thought, “here I shall get a mouthful.” He loaded his gun and was going to shoot, but the crow exclaimed, “Don’t hurt me; I’ll do you a good turn.”

Prince Ivan thought the matter over and spared the crow. Then he went farther, and came to a sea and stood still on the shore. At that moment a young pike suddenly jumped out of the water and fell on the strand. He caught hold of it, and thought — for he was half dead with hunger — “Now I shall have something to eat.” All of a sudden appeared a pike and said, “Don’t hurt my little one, Prince Ivan; I’ll do you a good turn.” And so he spared the little pike also.

But how was he to cross the sea? He sat down on the shore and meditated. But the pike knew quite well what he was thinking about, and laid herself right across the sea. Prince Ivan walked along her back, as if he were going over a bridge, and came to the oak where Koshchei's death was. There he found the casket and opened it — out jumped the hare and ran away. How was the hare to be stopped?

Prince Ivan was terribly frightened at having let the hare escape, and gave himself up to gloomy thoughts; but a wolf, the one he had refrained from killing, rushed after the hare, caught it, and brought it to Prince Ivan. With great delight he seized the hare, cut it open — and had such a fright! Out popped the duck and flew away. He fired after it, but shot all on one side, so again he gave himself up to his thoughts. Suddenly there appeared the crow with her little crows, and set off after the duck, and caught it, and brought it to Prince Ivan. The Prince was greatly pleased and got hold of the egg. Then he went on his way. But when he came to the sea, he began washing the egg, and let it drop into the water. However was he to get it out of the water? an immeasurable depth! Again the Prince gave himself up to dejection.

Suddenly the sea became violently agitated, and the pike brought him the egg. Moreover it stretched itself across the sea. Prince Ivan walked along it to the other side, and then he set out again for his mother's. When he got there, they greeted each other lovingly, and then she hid him again as before. Presently in flew Koshchei the Deathless and said:

"Phoo, Phoo! No Russian bone can the ear hear nor the eye see, but there's a smell of Russia here!"

"What are you talking about, Koshchei? There's no one with me," replied Prince Ivan's mother.

A second time spake Koshchei and said, "I feel rather unwell."

Then Prince Ivan began squeezing the egg, and thereupon Koshchei the Deathless bent double. At last Prince Ivan came out from his hiding-place, held up the egg and said, “There is your death, O Koshchei the Deathless!”

Then Koshchei fell on his knees before him, saying, “Don’t kill me, Prince Ivan! Let’s be friends! All the world will lie at our feet.”

But these words had no weight with Prince Ivan. He smashed the egg, and Koshchei the Deathless died.

Ivan and his mother took all they wanted and started homewards. On their way they came to where the King’s daughter was whom Ivan had seen on his way, and they took her with them too. They went further, and came to the hill where Ivan’s brothers were still waiting for him. Then the maiden said, “Prince Ivan! do go back to my house. I have forgotten a marriage robe, a diamond ring, and a pair of seamless shoes.”

He consented to do so, but in the mean time he let his mother go down the ladder, as well as the Princess — whom it had been settled he was to marry when they got home. They were received by his brothers, who then set to work and cut away the ladder, so that he himself would not be able to get down. And they used such threats to his mother and the Princess, that they made them promise not to tell about Prince Ivan when they got home. And after a time they reached their native country. Their father was delighted at seeing his wife and his two sons, but still he was grieved about the other one, Prince Ivan.

But Prince Ivan returned to the home of his betrothed, and got the wedding dress, and the ring, and the seamless shoes. Then he came back to the mountain and tossed the ring from one hand to the other. Immediately there appeared twelve strong youths, who said:

“What are your commands?”

“Carry me down from this hill.”

The youths immediately carried him down. Prince Ivan put the ring on his finger — they disappeared.

Then he went on to his own country, and arrived at the city in which his father and brothers lived.

There he took up his quarters in the house of an old woman, and asked her:

“What news is there, mother, in your country?”

“What news, lad? You see our queen was kept in prison by Koshchei the Deathless. Her three sons went to look for her, and two of them found her and came back, but the third, Prince Ivan, has disappeared, and no one knows where he is. The King is very unhappy about him. And those two Princes and their mother brought a certain Princess back with them; and the eldest son wants to marry her, but she declares he must fetch her her betrothal ring first, or get one made just as she wants it. But although they have made a public proclamation about it, no one has been found to do it yet.”

“Well, mother, go and tell the King that you will make one. I’ll manage it for you,” said Prince Ivan.

So the old woman immediately dressed herself, and hastened to the King, and said:

“Please, your Majesty, I will make the wedding ring.”

“Make it, then, make it, mother! Such people as you are welcome,” said the king. “But if you don’t make it, off goes your head!”

The old woman was dreadfully frightened; she ran home, and told Prince Ivan to set to work at the ring. But Ivan lay down to sleep, troubling himself very little about it. The ring was there all the time. So he only laughed at the old woman, but she was trembling all over, and crying, and scolding him.

“As for you,” she said, “you’re out of the scrape; but you’ve done for me, fool that I was!”

The old woman cried and cried until she fell asleep. Early in the morning Prince Ivan got up and awakened her, saying:

“Get up, mother, and go out! take them the ring, and mind, don’t accept more than one ducat for it. If anyone asks who made the ring, say you made it yourself; don't say a word about me."

The old woman was overjoyed and carried off the ring. The bride was delighted with it.

"Just what I wanted," she said. So they gave the old woman a dish full of gold, but she took only one ducat.

"Why do you take so little?" said the king.

"What good would a lot do me, your Majesty? if I want some more afterwards, you'll give it me."

Having said this the old woman went away.

Time passed, and the news spread abroad that the bride had told her lover to fetch her her wedding-dress or else to get one made, just such a one as she wanted. Well, the old woman, thanks to Prince Ivan's aid, succeeded in this matter too, and took her the wedding-dress. And afterwards she took her the seamless shoes also, and would only accept one ducat each time and always said that she had made the things herself.

Well, the people heard that there would be a wedding at the palace on such-and-such a day. And the day they all anxiously awaited came at last. Then Prince Ivan said to the old woman:

"Look here, mother! when the bride is just going to be married, let me know."

The old woman didn't let the time go by unheeded.

Then Ivan immediately put on his princely raiment, and went out of the house.

"See, mother, this is what I'm really like!" says he.

The old woman fell at his feet.

"Pray forgive me for scolding you," said she.

"God be with you," said he.

So he went into the church and, finding his brothers had not yet arrived, he stood up alongside of the bride and got married to her. Then he and she were escorted back to the palace, and as they went along, the proper bridegroom, his eldest brother, met them. But when he saw that his bride and Prince Ivan were being escorted home together, he turned back again ignominiously.

As to the king, he was delighted to see Prince Ivan again, and when he had learnt all about the treachery of his brothers, after the wedding feast had been solemnized, he banished the two elder princes, but he made Ivan heir to the throne.

18

THE WATER SNAKE

18. The Water Snake

There was once an old woman who had a daughter; and her daughter went down to the pond one day to bathe with the other girls. They all stripped off their shifts, and went into the water. Then there came a snake out of the water, and glided on to the daughter’s shift. After a time the girls all came out, and began to put on their shifts, and the old woman’s daughter wanted to put on hers, but there was the snake lying on it. She tried to drive him away, but there he stuck and would not move. Then the snake said:

“If you’ll marry me, I’ll give you back your shift.”

Now she wasn’t at all inclined to marry him, but the other girls said:

“As if it were possible for you to be married to him! Say you will!” So she said, “Very well, I will.” Then the snake glided off from the shift, and went straight into the water. The girl dressed and went home. And as soon as she got there, she said to her mother,

“Mammie, mammie, thus and thus, a snake got upon my shift, and says he, ‘Marry me or I won’t let you have your shift;’ and I said, ‘I will.’”

“What nonsense are you talking, you little fool! as if one could marry a snake!”

And so they remained just as they were, and forgot all about the matter.

A week passed by, and one day they saw ever so many snakes, a huge troop of them, wriggling up to their cottage. “Ah, mammie, save me, save me!” cried the girl, and her mother slammed the door and barred the entrance as quickly as possible. The snakes would have rushed in at the door, but the door was shut; they would have rushed into the passage, but the passage was closed. Then in a moment they rolled themselves into a ball, flung themselves at the window, smashed it to pieces, and glided in a body into the room. The girl got upon the stove, but they followed her, pulled her down, and bore her out of the room and out of doors. Her mother accompanied her, crying like anything.

They took the girl down to the pond, and dived right into the water with her. And there they all turned into men and women. The mother remained for some time on the dike, wailed a little, and then went home.

Three years went by. The girl lived down there, and had two children, a son and a daughter. Now she often entreated her husband to let her go to see her mother. So at last one day he took her up to the surface of the water, and brought her ashore. But she asked him before leaving him,

“What am I to call out when I want you?”

“Call out to me, ‘Osip, Joseph Osip, come here!’ and I will come,” he replied.

Then he dived under water again, and she went to her mother’s, carrying her little girl on one arm, and leading her boy by the hand. Out came her mother to meet her — was so delighted to see her!

“Good day, mother!” said the daughter.

“Have you been doing well while you were living down there?” asked her mother.

“Very well indeed, mother. My life there is better than yours here.”

They sat down for a bit and chatted. Her mother got dinner ready for her, and she dined.

“What’s your husband’s name?” asked her mother.

“Osip,” she replied.

“And how are you to get home?”

“I shall go to the dike, and call out, ‘Osip, Osip, come here!’ and he’ll come.”

“Lie down, daughter, and rest a bit,” said the mother.

So the daughter lay down and went to sleep. The mother immediately took an axe and sharpened it, and went down to the dike with it. And when she came to the dike, she began calling out,

“Osip, Osip, come here!”

No sooner had Osip shown his head than the old woman lifted her axe and chopped it off. And the water in the pond became dark with blood.

The old woman went home. And when she got home her daughter awoke.

“Ah! mother,” says she, “I’m getting tired of being here; I’ll go home.”

“Do sleep here to-night, daughter; perhaps you won’t have another chance of being with me.”

So the daughter stayed and spent the night there. In the morning she got up and her mother got breakfast ready for her; she breakfasted, and then she said good-bye to her mother and went away, carrying her little girl in her arms, while her boy followed behind her. She came to the dike, and called out:

“Osip, Osip, come here!”

She called and called, but he did not come.

Then she looked into the water, and there she saw a head floating about. Then she guessed what had happened.

“Alas! my mother has killed him!” she cried.

There on the bank she wept and wailed. And then to her girl she cried:

“Fly about as a wren, henceforth and evermore!”

And to her boy she cried:

“Fly about as a nightingale, my boy, henceforth and evermore!”

“But I,” she said, “will fly about as a cuckoo, crying ‘Cuckoo!’ henceforth and evermore!”

19

THE WATER KING AND VASILISSA THE WISE

Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen, and the King was very fond of hunting and shooting. Well one day he went out hunting, and he saw an Eaglet sitting on an oak. But just as he was going to shoot at it the Eaglet began to entreat him, crying: —

"Don't shoot me, my lord King! better take me home with you; some time or other I shall be of service to you."

The King reflected awhile and said, "How can you be of use to me?" and again he was going to shoot.

Then the Eaglet said to him a second time: —

"Don't shoot me, my lord King! better take me home with you; some time or other I shall be of use to you."

The King thought and thought, but couldn't imagine a bit the more what use the Eaglet could be to him, and so he determined to shoot it. Then a third time the Eaglet exclaimed: —

"Don't shoot me, my lord King! better take me home with you and feed me for three years. Some time or other I shall be of service to you!"

The King relented, took the Eaglet home with him, and fed it for a year, for two years. But it ate so much that it devoured all his cattle. The King had neither a cow nor a sheep left. At length the Eagle said: —

"Now let me go free!"

The King set it at liberty; the Eagle began trying its wings. But no, it could not fly yet! So it said: —

“Well, my lord King! you have fed me two years; now, whether you like it or no, feed me for one year more. Even if you have to borrow, at all events feed me; you won’t lose by it!”

Well, this is what the King did. He borrowed cattle from everywhere round about, and he fed the Eagle for the space of a whole year, and afterwards he set it at liberty. The Eagle rose ever so high, flew and flew, then dropt down again to the earth and said: —

“Now then, my lord King! Take a seat on my back! we’ll have a fly together?”

The King got on the Eagle’s back. Away they went flying. Before very long they reached the blue sea. Then the Eagle shook off the King, who fell into the sea, and sank up to his knees. But the Eagle didn’t let him drown! it jerked him on to its wing, and asked: —

“How now, my lord King! were you frightened, perchance?”

“I was,” said the King; “I thought I was going to be drowned outright!”

Again they flew and flew till they reached another sea. The Eagle shook off the King right in the middle of the sea; the King sank up to his girdle. The Eagle jerked him on to its wing again, and asked: —

“Well, my lord King, were you frightened, perchance?”

“I was,” he replied, “but all the time I thought, ‘Perhaps, please God, the creature will pull me out.’”

Away they flew again, flew, and arrived at a third sea. The Eagle dropped the King into a great gulf, so that he sank right up to his neck. And the third time the Eagle jerked him on to its wing, and asked: —

“Well, my lord King! Were you frightened, perchance?”

“I was,” says the King, “but still I said to myself, ‘Perhaps it will pull me out.’”

“Well, my lord King! now you have felt what the fear of death is like! What I have done was in payment of an old score. Do you remember my sitting on an oak, and your wanting to shoot me? Three times you were going to let fly, but I kept on entreating you not to shoot, saying to myself all the time, ‘Perhaps he won’t kill me; perhaps he’ll relent and take me home with him!’”

Afterwards they flew beyond thrice nine lands: long, long did they fly. Says the Eagle, “Look, my lord King! what is above us and what below us?”

The King looked.

“Above us,” he says, “is the sky, below us the earth.”

“Look again; what is on the right hand and on the left?”

“On the right hand is an open plain, on the left stands a house.”

“We will fly thither,” said the Eagle; “my youngest sister lives there.”

They went straight into the courtyard. The sister came out to meet them, received her brother cordially, and seated him at the oaken table. But on the King she would not so much as look, but left him outside, loosed greyhounds, and set them at him. The Eagle was exceedingly wroth, jumped up from table, seized the King, and flew away with him again.

Well, they flew and flew. Presently the Eagle said to the King, “Look round; what is behind us?”

The King turned his head, looked, and said, “Behind us is a red house.”

“That is the house of my youngest sister — on fire, because she did not receive you, but set greyhounds at you.”

They flew and flew. Again the Eagle asked:

“Look again, my lord King; what is above us, and what below us?”

“Above us is the sky, below us the earth.”

“Look and see what is on the right hand and on the left.”

“On the right is the open plain, on the left there stands a house.”

“There lives my second sister; we’ll go and pay her a visit.”

They stopped in a wide courtyard. The second sister received her brother cordially, and seated him at the oaken table; but the King was left outside, and she loosed greyhounds, and set them at him. The Eagle flew into a rage, jumped up from table, caught up the King, and flew away farther with him. They flew and flew. Says the Eagle:

“My lord King! look round! what is behind us?”

The King looked back.

“There stands behind us a red house.”

“That’s my second sister’s house burning!” said the Eagle. “Now we’ll fly to where my mother and my eldest sister live.”

Well, they flew there. The Eagle’s mother and eldest sister were delighted to see them, and received the King with cordiality and respect.

“Now, my lord King,” said the Eagle, “tarry awhile with us, and afterwards I will give you a ship, and will repay you for all I ate in your house, and then — God speed you home again!”

So the Eagle gave the King a ship and two coffers — the one red, the other green — and said:

“Mind now! don’t open the coffers until you get home. Then open the red coffer in the back court, and the green coffer in the front court.”

The King took the coffers, parted with the Eagle, and sailed along the blue sea. Presently he came to a certain island, and there his ship stopped. He landed on the shore, and began thinking about the coffers, and wondering whatever there could be in them, and why the Eagle had told him not to open them. He thought and thought, and at last couldn’t hold out any more — he longed so awfully to know all about it. So he took the red coffer, set it on the ground, and opened it — and out of it came such a quantity of different kinds of cattle that there was no counting them: the island had barely room enough for them.

When the King saw that, he became exceedingly sorrowful, and began to weep and therewithal to say:

“What is there now left for me to do? how shall I get all this cattle back into so little a coffer?”

Lo! there came out of the water a man — came up to him, and asked:

“Wherefore are you weeping so bitterly, O lord King?”

“How can I help weeping!” answers the King. “How shall I be able to get all this great herd into so small a coffer?”

“If you like, I will set your mind at rest. I will pack up all your cattle for you. But on one condition only. You must give me whatever you have at home that you don’t know of.”

The King reflected.

“Whatever is there at home that I don’t know of?” says he. “I fancy I know about everything that’s there.”

He reflected, and consented. “Pack them up,” says he. “I will give you whatever I have at home that I know nothing about.”

So that man packed away all his cattle for him in the coffer. The King went on board ship and sailed away homewards.

When he reached home, then only did he learn that a son had been born to him. And he began kissing the child, caressing it, and at the same time bursting into such floods of tears!

“My lord King!” says the Queen, “tell me wherefore thou droppest bitter tears?”

“For joy!” he replies.

He was afraid to tell her the truth, that the Prince would have to be given up. Afterwards he went into the back court, opened the red coffer, and thence issued oxen and cows, sheep and rams; there were multitudes of all sorts of cattle, so that all the sheds and pastures were crammed full. He went into the front court, opened the green coffer, and there appeared a great and glorious garden. What trees there were in it to be sure! The King was so delighted that he forgot all about giving up his son.

Many years went by. One day the King took it into his head to go for a stroll, and he came to a river. At that moment the same man he had seen before came out of the water, and said:

“You’ve pretty soon become forgetful, lord King! Think a little! surely you’re in my debt!”

The King returned home full of grief, and told all the truth to the Queen and the Prince. They all mourned and wept together, but they decided that there was no help for it, the Prince must be given up. So they took him to the mouth of the river and there they left him alone.

The Prince looked around, saw a footpath, and followed trusting God would lead him somewhere. He walked and walked, and came to a dense forest: in the forest stood a hut, in the hut lived a Baba Yaga.

“Suppose I go in,” thought the Prince, and went in.

“Good day, Prince!” said the Baba Yaga. “Are you seeking work or shunning work?”

“Eh, granny! First give me to eat and to drink, and then ask me questions.”

So she gave him food and drink, and the Prince told her everything as to whither he was going and with what purpose.

Then the Baba Yaga said: “Go, my child, to the sea-shore; there will fly thither twelve spoonbills, which will turn into fair maidens, and begin bathing; do you steal quietly up and lay your hands on the eldest maiden’s shift. When you have come to terms with her, go to the Water King, and there will meet you on the way Obédalo and Opivalo, and also Moroz Treskum — take all of them with you; they will do you good service.”

The Prince bid the Yaga farewell, went to the appointed spot on the sea-shore, and hid behind the bushes. Presently twelve spoonbills came flying thither, struck the moist earth, turned into fair maidens, and began to bathe. The Prince stole the eldest one’s shift, and sat down behind a bush — didn’t budge an inch. The girls finished bathing and came out on the shore: eleven of them put on their shifts, turned into birds, and flew away home. There remained only the eldest, Vasilissa the Wise. She began praying and begging the good youth:

“Do give me my shift!” she says. “You are on your way to the house of my father, the Water King. When you come I will do you good service.”

So the Prince gave her back her shift, and she immediately turned into a spoonbill and flew away after her companions. The Prince went further on; there met him by the way three heroes — Obédalo, Opivalo, and Moroz Treskum; he took them with him and went on to the Water King’s.

The Water King saw him, and said:

“Hail, friend! why have you been so long in coming to me? I have grown weary of waiting for you. Now set to work. Here is your first task. Build me in one night a great crystal bridge, so that it shall be ready for use to-morrow. If you don’t build it — off goes your head!”

The Prince went away from the Water King, and burst into a flood of tears. Vasilissa the Wise opened the window of her upper chamber, and asked:

“What are you crying about, Prince?”

“Ah! Vasilissa the Wise! how can I help crying? Your father has ordered me to build a crystal bridge in a single night, and I don’t even know how to handle an axe.”

“No matter! lie down and sleep; the morning is wiser than the evening.”

She ordered him to sleep, but she herself went out on the steps, and called aloud with a mighty whistling cry. Then from all sides there ran together carpenters and workmen; one levelled the ground, another carried bricks. Soon had they built a crystal bridge, and traced cunning devices on it; and then they dispersed to their homes.

Early next morning Vasilissa the Wise awoke the Prince:

“Get up, Prince! the bridge is ready: my father will be coming to inspect it directly.”

Up jumped the Prince, seized a broom, took his place on the bridge, and began sweeping here, clearing up there.

The Water King bestowed praise upon him:

“Thanks!” says he. “You’ve done me one service: now do another. Here is your task. Plant me by to-morrow a garden green — a big and shady one; and there must be birds singing in the garden, and flowers blossoming on the trees, and ripe apples and pears hanging from the boughs.”

Away went the Prince from the Water King, all dissolved in tears. Vasilissa the Wise opened her window and asked:

“What are you crying for, Prince?”

“How can I help crying? Your father has ordered me to plant a garden in one night!”

“That’s nothing! lie down and sleep: the morning is wiser than the evening.”

She made him go to sleep, but she herself went out on the steps, called and whistled with a mighty whistle. From every side there ran together gardeners of all sorts, and they planted a garden green, and in the garden birds sang, on the trees flowers blossomed, from the boughs hung ripe apples and pears.

Early in the morning Vasilissa the Wise awoke the Prince:

“Get up, Prince! the garden is ready: Papa is coming to see it.”

The Prince immediately snatched up a broom, and was off to the garden. Here he swept a path, there he trained a twig. The Water King praised him and said:

“Thanks, Prince! You’ve done me right trusty service. So choose yourself a bride from among my twelve daughters. They are all exactly alike in face, in hair, and in dress. If you can pick out the same one three times running, she shall be your wife; if you fail to do so, I shall have you put to death.”

Vasilissa the Wise knew all about that, so she found time to say to the Prince:

“The first time I will wave my handkerchief, the second I will be arranging my dress, the third time you will see a fly above my head.”

And so the Prince guessed which was Vasilissa the Wise three times running. And he and she were married, and a wedding feast was got ready.

Now the Water King had prepared much food of all sorts more than a hundred men could get through. And he ordered his son-in-law to see that everything was eaten. “If anything remains over, the worse for you!” says he.

“My Father,” begs the Prince, “there’s an old fellow of mine here; please let him take a snack with us.”

“Let him come!”

Immediately appeared Obédalo — ate up everything, and wasn’t content then! The Water King next set out two score tubs of all kinds of strong drinks, and ordered his son-in-law to see that they were all drained dry.

“My Father!” begs the Prince again, “there’s another old man of mine here, let him, too, drink your health.”

“Let him come!”

Opivalo appeared, emptied all the forty tubs in a twinkling, and then asked for a drop more by way of stirrup-cup.

The Water King saw that there was nothing to be gained that way, so he gave orders to prepare a bath-room for the young couple — an iron bath-room — and to heat it as hot as possible. So the iron bath-room was made hot. Twelve loads of firewood were set alight, and the stove and the walls were made red-hot — impossible to come within five versts of it.

“My Father!” says the Prince; “let an old fellow of ours have a scrub first, just to try the bath-room.”

“Let him do so!”

Moroz Treskum went into the bath room, blew into one corner, blew in another — in a moment icicles were hanging there. After him the young couple also went into the bath-room, were lathered and scrubbed, and then went home.

After a time Vasilissa said to the Prince, “Let us get out of my father’s power. He’s tremendously angry with you; perhaps he’ll be doing you some hurt.”

“Let us go,” says the Prince.

Straightway they saddled their horses and galloped off into the open plain. They rode and rode; many an hour went by.

“Jump down from your horse, Prince, and lay your ear close to the earth,” said Vasilissa. “Cannot you hear a sound as of pursuers?”

The prince bent his ear to the ground, but he could hear nothing. Then Vasilissa herself lighted down from her good steed, laid herself flat on the earth, and said: “Ah Prince! I hear a great noise as of chasing after us.” Then she turned the horses into a well, and herself into a bowl, and the Prince into an old, very old man. Up came the pursuers.

“Heigh, old man!” say they, “haven’t you seen a youth and a maiden pass by?”

“I saw them, my friends! only it was a long while ago. I was a youngster at the time when they rode by.”

The pursuers returned to the Water King.

“There is no trace of them,” they said, “no news: all we saw was an old man beside a well, and a bowl floating on the water.”

“Why did not ye seize them?” cried the Water King, who thereupon put the pursuers to a cruel death, and sent another troop after the Prince and Vasilissa the Wise.

The fugitives in the mean time had ridden far, far away. Vasilissa the Wise heard the noise made by the fresh set of pursuers, so she turned the Prince into an old priest, and she herself became an ancient church.

Scarcely did its walls hold together, covered all over with moss. Presently up came the pursuers.

“Heigh, old man! haven’t you seen a youth and a maiden pass by?”

“I saw them, my own! only it was long, ever so long ago. I was a young man when they rode by. It was just while I was building this church.”

So the second set of pursuers returned to the Water King, saying:

“There is neither trace nor news of them, your Royal Majesty. All that we saw was an old priest and an ancient church.”

“Why did not ye seize them?” cried the Water King louder than before, and having put the pursuers to a cruel death, he galloped off himself in pursuit of the Prince and Vasilissa the Wise. This time Vasilissa turned the horses into a river of honey with *kissel* banks, and changed the Prince into a Drake and herself into a grey duck. The Water King flung himself on the *kissel* and honey-water, and ate and ate, and drank and drank until he burst! And so he gave up the ghost.

The Prince and Vasilissa rode on, and at length they drew nigh to the home of the Prince’s parents. Then said Vasilissa,

“Go on in front, Prince, and report your arrival to your father and mother. But I will wait for you here by the wayside. Only remember these words of mine: kiss everyone else, only don’t kiss your sister; if you do, you will forget me.”

The Prince reached home, began saluting every one, kissed his sister too — and no sooner had he kissed her than from that very moment he forgot all about his wife, just as if she had never entered into his mind.

Three days did Vasilissa the Wise await him. On the fourth day she clad herself like a beggar, went into the capital, and took up her quarters in an old woman’s house. But the Prince was preparing to marry a rich Princess, and orders were given to proclaim throughout the kingdom, that all Christian people were to come to congratulate the bride and bridegroom, each one bringing a wheaten pie as a present. Well, the old woman with whom Vasilissa lodged, prepared, like everyone else, to sift flour and make a pie.

"Why are you making a pie, granny?" asked Vasilissa.

"Is it why? you evidently don't know then. Our King is giving his son in marriage to a rich princess: one must go to the palace to serve up the dinner to the young couple."

"Come now! I, too, will bake a pie and take it to the palace; may be the King will make me some present."

"Bake away in God's name!" said the old woman.

Vasilissa took flour, kneaded dough, and made a pie. And inside it she put some curds and a pair of live doves.

Well, the old woman and Vasilissa the Wise reached the palace just at dinner-time. There a feast was in progress, one fit for all the world to see. Vasilissa's pie was set on the table, but no sooner was it cut in two than out of it flew the two doves. The hen bird seized a piece of curd, and her mate said to her:

"Give me some curds, too, Dovey!"

"No I won't," replied the other dove: "else you'd forget me, as the Prince has forgotten his Vasilissa the Wise."

Then the Prince remembered about his wife. He jumped up from table, caught her by her white hands, and seated her close by his side. From that time forward they lived together in all happiness and prosperity.

20

THE BABA YAGA

Once upon a time there was an old couple. The husband lost his wife and married again. But he had a daughter by the first marriage, a young girl, and she found no favor in the eyes of her evil stepmother, who used to beat her, and consider how she could get her killed outright. One day the father went away somewhere or other, so the stepmother said to the girl, “Go to your aunt, my sister, and ask her for a needle and thread to make you a shift.”

Now that aunt was a Baba Yaga. Well, the girl was no fool, so she went to a real aunt of hers first, and says she:

“Good morning, auntie!”

“Good morning, my dear! what have you come for?”

“Mother has sent me to her sister, to ask for a needle and thread to make me a shift.”

Then her aunt instructed her what to do. “There is a birch-tree there, niece, which would hit you in the eye — you must tie a ribbon round it; there are doors which would creak and bang — you must pour oil on their hinges; there are dogs which would tear you in pieces — you must throw them these rolls; there is a cat which would scratch your eyes out — you must give it a piece of bacon.”

So the girl went away, and walked and walked, till she came to the place. There stood a hut, and in it sat weaving the Baba Yaga, the Bony-shanks.

“Good morning, auntie,” says the girl.

“Good morning, my dear,” replies the Baba Yaga.

“Mother has sent me to ask you for a needle and thread to make me a shift.”

“Very well; sit down and weave a little in the meantime.”

So the girl sat down behind the loom, and the Baba Yaga went outside, and said to her servant-maid:

“Go and heat the bath, and get my niece washed; and mind you look sharp after her. I want to breakfast off her.”

Well, the girl sat there in such a fright that she was as much dead as alive. Presently she spoke imploringly to the servant-maid, saying:

“Kinswoman dear, do please wet the firewood instead of making it burn; and fetch the water for the bath in a sieve.” And she made her a present of a handkerchief.

The Baba Yaga waited awhile; then she came to the window and asked:

“Are you weaving, niece? are you weaving, my dear?”

“Oh yes, dear aunt, I’m weaving.” So the Baba Yaga went away again, and the girl gave the Cat a piece of bacon, and asked:

“Is there no way of escaping from here?”

“Here’s a comb for you and a towel,” said the Cat; “take them, and be off. The Baba Yaga will pursue you, but you must lay your ear on the ground, and when you hear that she is close at hand, first of all throw down the towel. It will become a wide, wide river. And if the Baba Yaga gets across the river, and tries to catch you, then you must lay your ear on the ground again, and when you hear that she is close at hand, throw down the comb. It will become a dense, dense forest; through that she won’t be able to force her way anyhow.”

The girl took the towel and the comb and fled. The dogs would have rent her, but she threw them the rolls, and they let her go by; the doors would have begun to bang, but she poured oil on their hinges, and they let her pass through; the birch-tree would have poked her eyes out, but she tied the ribbon around it, and it let her pass on. And the Cat sat down to the loom, and worked away; muddled everything about, if it didn't do much weaving. Up came the Baba Yaga to the window, and asked:

"Are you weaving, niece? are you weaving, my dear?"

"I'm weaving, dear aunt, I'm weaving," gruffly replied the Cat.

The Baba Yaga rushed into the hut, saw that the girl was gone, and took to beating the Cat, and abusing it for not having scratched the girl's eyes out. "Long as I've served you," said the Cat, "you've never given me so much as a bone; but she gave me bacon." Then the Baba Yaga pounced upon the dogs, on the doors, on the birch-tree, and on the servant-maid, and set to work to abuse them all, and to knock them about. Then the dogs said to her, "Long as we've served you, you've never so much as pitched us a burnt crust; but she gave us rolls to eat." And the doors said, "Long as we've served you, you've never poured even a drop of water on our hinges; but she poured oil on us." The birch-tree said, "Long as I've served you, you've never tied a single thread round me; but she fastened a ribbon around me." And the servant-maid said, "Long as I've served you, you've never given me so much as a rag; but she gave me a handkerchief."

The Baba Yaga, bony of limb, quickly jumped into her mortar, sent it flying along with the pestle, sweeping away the while all traces of its flight with a broom, and set off in pursuit of the girl. Then the girl put her ear to the ground, and when she heard that the Baba Yaga was chasing her, and was now close at hand, she flung down the towel. And it became a wide, such a wide river! Up came the Baba Yaga to the river, and gnashed her teeth with spite; then she went home for her oxen, and drove them to the river. The oxen drank up every drop of the river, and then the Baba Yaga began the pursuit anew. But the girl put her ear to the ground again, and when she heard that the Baba Yaga was near, she flung down the comb, and instantly a forest sprang up, such an awfully thick one! The Baba Yaga began gnawing away at it, but however hard she worked, she couldn’t gnaw her way through it, so she had to go back again.

But by this time the girl’s father had returned home, and he asked:

“Where’s my daughter?”

“She’s gone to her aunt’s,” replied her stepmother.

Soon afterwards the girl herself came running home.

“Where have you been?” asked her father.

“Ah, father!” she said, “mother sent me to aunt’s to ask for a needle and thread to make me a shift. But aunt’s a Baba Yaga, and she wanted to eat me!”

“And how did you get away, daughter?”

“Why like this,” said the girl, and explained the whole matter. As soon as her father had heard all about it, he became wroth with his wife, and shot her. But he and his daughter lived on and flourished, and everything went well with them.

21

VASILISSA THE FAIR

In a certain kingdom there lived a merchant. Twelve years did he live as a married man, but he had only one child, Vasilissa the Fair. When her mother died, the girl was eight years old. And on her deathbed the merchant's wife called her little daughter to her, took out from under the bed-clothes a doll, gave it to her, and said, "Listen, Vasilissa, dear; remember and obey these last words of mine. I am going to die. And now, together with my parental blessing, I bequeath to you this doll. Keep it always by you, and never show it to anybody; and whenever any misfortune comes upon you, give the doll food, and ask its advice. When it has fed, it will tell you a cure for your troubles." Then the mother kissed her child and died.

After his wife's death, the merchant mourned for her a befitting time, and then began to consider about marrying again. He was a man of means. It wasn't a question with him of girls (with dowries); more than all others, a certain widow took his fancy. She was middle-aged, and had a couple of daughters of her own just about the same age as Vasilissa. She must needs be both a good housekeeper and an experienced mother.

Well, the merchant married the widow, but he had deceived himself, for he did not find in her a kind mother for his Vasilissa. Vasilissa was the prettiest girl in all the village; but her stepmother and stepsisters were jealous of her beauty, and tormented her with every possible sort of toil, in order that she might grow thin from over-work, and be tanned by the sun and the wind. Her life was made a burden to her! Vasilissa bore everything with resignation, and every day grew plumper and prettier, while the stepmother and her daughters lost flesh and fell off in appearance from the effects of their own spite, notwithstanding that they always sat with folded hands like fine ladies.

But how did that come about? Why, it was her doll that helped Vasilissa. If it hadn't been for it, however could the girl have got through all her work? And therefore it was that Vasilissa would never eat all her share of a meal, but always kept the most delicate morsel for her doll; and at night, when all were at rest, she would shut herself up in the narrow chamber in which she slept, and feast her doll, saying the while:

"There, dolly, feed; help me in my need! I live in my father's house, but never know what pleasure is; my evil stepmother tries to drive me out of the white world; teach me how to keep alive, and what I ought to do."

Then the doll would eat, and afterwards give her advice, and comfort her in her sorrow, and next day it would do all Vasilissa's work for her. She had only to take her ease in a shady place and pluck flowers, and yet all her work was done in good time; the beds were weeded, and the pails were filled, and the cabbages were watered, and the stove was heated. Moreover, the doll showed Vasilissa herbs which prevented her from getting sunburnt. Happily did she and her doll live together.

Several years went by. Vasilissa grew up and became old enough to be married. All the marriageable young men in the town sent to make an offer to Vasilissa; at her stepmother's daughters not a soul would so much as look. Her stepmother grew even more savage than before, and replied to every suitor —

"We won't let the younger marry before her elders."

And after the suitors had been packed off, she used to beat Vasilissa by way of wreaking her spite.

Well, it happened one day that the merchant had to go away from home on business for a long time. Thereupon the stepmother went to live in another house; and near that house was a dense forest, and in a clearing in that forest there stood a hut, and in the hut there lived a Baba Yaga. She never let any one come near her dwelling, and she ate up people like so many chickens.

Having moved into the new abode, the merchant's wife kept sending her hated Vasilissa into the forest on one pretence or another. But the girl always got home safe and sound; the doll used to show her the way, and never let her go near the Baba Yaga's dwelling.

The autumn season arrived. One evening the stepmother gave out their work to the three girls; one she set to lace-making, another to knitting socks, and the third, Vasilissa, to weaving; and each of them had her allotted amount to do. By-and-by she put out the lights in the house, leaving only one candle alight where the girls were working, and then she went to bed. The girls worked and worked. Presently the candle wanted snuffing; one of the stepdaughters took the snuffers, as if she were going to clear the wick, but instead of doing so, in obedience to her mother's orders, she snuffed the candle out, pretending to do so by accident.

"What shall we do now?" said the girls. "There isn't a spark of fire in the house, and our tasks are not yet done. We must go to the Baba Yaga's for a light!"

"My pins give me light enough," said the one who was making lace. "I shan't go."

"And I shan't go, either," said the one who was knitting socks. "My knitting-needles give me light enough."

"Vasilissa, you must go for the light," they both cried out together; "be off to the Baba Yaga's!"

And they pushed Vasilissa out of the room.

Vasilissa went into her little closet, set before the doll a supper which she had provided beforehand, and said:

“Now, dolly, feed, and listen to my need! I’m sent to the Baba Yaga’s for a light. The Baba Yaga will eat me!”

The doll fed, and its eyes began to glow just like a couple of candles.

“Never fear, Vasilissa dear!” it said. “Go where you’re sent. Only take care to keep me always by you. As long as I’m with you, no harm will come to you at the Baba Yaga’s.”

So Vasilissa got ready, put her doll in her pocket, crossed herself, and went out into the thick forest.

As she walks she trembles. Suddenly a horseman gallops by. He is white, and he is dressed in white, under him is a white horse, and the trappings of the horse are white — and the day begins to break.

She goes a little further, and a second rider gallops by. He is red, dressed in red, and sitting on a red horse — and the sun rises.

Vasilissa went on walking all night and all next day. It was only towards the evening that she reached the clearing on which stood the dwelling of the Baba Yaga. The fence around it was made of dead men’s bones; on the top of the fence were stuck human skulls with eyes in them; instead of uprights at the gates were men’s legs; instead of bolts were arms; instead of a lock was a mouth with sharp teeth.

Vasilissa was frightened out of her wits, and stood still as if rooted to the ground.

Suddenly there rode past another horseman. He was black, dressed all in black, and on a black horse. He galloped up to the Baba Yaga’s gate and disappeared, just as if he had sunk through the ground — and night fell. But the darkness did not last long. The eyes of all the skulls on the fence began to shine and the whole clearing became as bright as if it had been midday.

Vasilissa shuddered with fear, but stopped where she was, not knowing which way to run.

Soon there was heard in the forest a terrible roar. The trees cracked, the dry leaves rustled; out of the forest came the Baba Yaga, riding in a mortar, urging it on with a pestle, sweeping away her traces with a broom. Up she drove to the gate, stopped short, and, snuffing the air around her, cried: —

“Faugh! Faugh! I smell Russian flesh! Who’s there?”

Vasilissa went up to the hag in a terrible fright, bowed low before her, and said: —

“It’s me, granny. My stepsisters have sent me to you for a light.”

“Very good,” said the Baba Yaga; “I know them. If you’ll stop awhile with me first, and do some work for me, I’ll give you a light. But if you won’t, I’ll eat you!”

Then she turned to the gates, and cried: —

“Ho, thou firm fence of mine, be thou divided! And ye, wide gates of mine, do ye fly open!”

The gates opened, and the Baba Yaga drove in, whistling as she went, and after her followed Vasilissa; and then everything shut to again. When they entered the sitting-room, the Baba Yaga stretched herself out at full length, and said to Vasilissa:

“Fetch out what there is in the oven; I’m hungry.”

Vasilissa lighted a splinter at one of the skulls which were on the fence, and began fetching meat from the oven and setting it before the Baba Yaga; and meat enough had been provided for a dozen people. Then she fetched from the cellar kvass, mead, beer, and wine. The hag ate up everything, drank up everything. All she left for Vasilissa was a few scraps — a crust of bread and a morsel of sucking-pig. Then the Baba Yaga lay down to sleep, saying: —

“When I go out to-morrow morning, mind you cleanse the courtyard, sweep the room, cook the dinner, and get the linen ready. Then go to the corn-bin, take out four quarters of wheat, and clear it of other seed. And mind you have it all done — if you don't, I shall eat you!"

After giving these orders the Baba Yaga began to snore. But Vasilissa set the remnants of the hag's supper before her doll, burst into tears, and said: —

"Now, dolly, feed, listen to my need! The Baba Yaga has set me a heavy task, and threatens to eat me if I don't do it all. Do help me!"

The doll replied:

"Never fear, Vasilissa the Fair! Sup, say your prayers, and go to bed. The morning is wiser than the evening!"

Vasilissa awoke very early, but the Baba Yaga was already up. She looked out of the window. The light in the skull's eyes was going out. All of a sudden there appeared the white horseman, and all was light. The Baba Yaga went out into the courtyard and whistled — before her appeared a mortar with a pestle and a broom. The red horseman appeared — the sun rose. The Baba Yaga seated herself in the mortar, and drove out of the courtyard, shooting herself along with the pestle, sweeping away her traces with the broom.

Vasilissa was left alone, so she examined the Baba Yaga's house, wondered at the abundance there was in everything, and remained lost in thought as to which work she ought to take to first. She looked up; all her work was done already. The doll had cleared the wheat to the very last grain.

"Ah, my preserver!" cried Vasilissa, "you've saved me from danger!"

"All you've got to do now is to cook the dinner," answered the doll, slipping into Vasilissa's pocket. "Cook away, in God's name, and then take some rest for your health's sake!"

Towards evening Vasilissa got the table ready, and awaited the Baba Yaga. It began to grow dusky; the black rider appeared for a moment at the gate, and all grew dark. Only the eyes of the skulls sent forth their light.

The trees began to crack, the leaves began to rustle, up drove the Baba Yaga. Vasilissa went out to meet her.

“Is everything done?” asks the Yaga.

“Please to look for yourself, granny!” says Vasilissa.

The Baba Yaga examined everything, was vexed that there was nothing to be angry about, and said:

“Well, well! very good!”

Afterwards she cried:

“My trusty servants, zealous friends, grind this my wheat!”

There appeared three pairs of hands, which gathered up the wheat, and carried it out of sight. The Baba Yaga supped, went to bed, and again gave her orders to Vasilissa:

“Do just the same to-morrow as to-day; only besides that take out of the bin the poppy seed that is there, and clean the earth off it grain by grain. Some one or other, you see, has mixed a lot of earth with it out of spite.” Having said this, the hag turned to the wall and began to snore, and Vasilissa took to feeding her doll. The doll fed, and then said to her what it had said the day before:

“Pray to God, and go to sleep. The morning is wiser than the evening. All shall be done, Vasilissa dear!”

The next morning the Baba Yaga again drove out of the courtyard in her mortar, and Vasilissa and her doll immediately did all the work. The hag returned, looked at everything, and cried, “My trusty servants, zealous friends, press forth oil from the poppy seed!”

Three pairs of hands appeared, gathered up the poppy seed, and bore it out of sight. The Baba Yaga sat down to dinner. She ate, but Vasilissa stood silently by.

“Why don’t you speak to me?” said the Baba Yaga; “there you stand like a dumb creature!”

“I didn’t dare,” answered Vasilissa; “but if you give me leave, I should like to ask you about something.”

“Ask away; only it isn’t every question that brings good. ‘Get much to know, and old soon you’ll grow.’”

“I only want to ask you, granny, about something I saw. As I was coming here, I was passed by one riding on a white horse; he was white himself, and dressed in white. Who was he?”

“That was my bright Day!” answered the Baba Yaga.

“Afterwards there passed me another rider, on a red horse; red himself, and all in red clothes. Who was he?”

“That was my red Sun!” answered the Baba Yaga.

“And who may be the black rider, granny, who passed by me just at your gate?”

“That was my dark Night; they are all trusty servants of mine.”

Vasilissa thought of the three pairs of hands, but held her peace.

“Why don’t you go on asking?” said the Baba Yaga.

“That’s enough for me, granny. You said yourself, ‘Get too much to know, old you’ll grow!’”

“It’s just as well,” said the Baba Yaga, “that you’ve only asked about what you saw out of doors, not indoors! In my house I hate having dirt carried out of doors; and as to over-inquisitive people — well, I eat them. Now I’ll ask you something. How is it you manage to do the work I set you to do?”

“My mother’s blessing assists me,” replied Vasilissa.

“Eh! eh! what’s that? Get along out of my house, you bless’d daughter. I don’t want bless’d people.”

She dragged Vasilissa out of the room, pushed her outside the gates, took one of the skulls with blazing eyes from the fence, stuck it on a stick, gave it to her and said:

“Lay hold of that. It’s a light you can take to your stepsisters. That’s what they sent you here for, I believe.”

Home went Vasilissa at a run, lit by the skull, which went out only at the approach of the dawn; and at last, on the evening of the second day, she reached home. When she came to the gate, she was going to throw away the skull.

“Surely,” thinks she, “they can’t be still in want of a light at home.” But suddenly a hollow voice issued from the skull, saying:

“Throw me not away. Carry me to your stepmother!”

She looked at her stepmother’s house, and not seeing a light in a single window, she determined to take the skull in there with her. For the first time in her life she was cordially received by her stepmother and stepsisters, who told her that from the moment she went away they hadn’t had a spark of fire in the house. They couldn’t strike a light themselves anyhow, and whenever they brought one in from a neighbor’s, it went out as soon as it came into the room.

“Perhaps your light will keep in!” said the stepmother. So they carried the skull into the sitting-room. But the eyes of the skull so glared at the stepmother and her daughters — shot forth such flames! They would fain have hidden themselves, but run where they would, everywhere did the eyes follow after them. By the morning they were utterly burnt to cinders. Only Vasilissa was none the worse.

22

THE WITCH

There once lived an old couple who had one son called Ivashko; no one can tell how fond they were of him!

Well, one day, Ivashko said to his father and mother:

"I'll go out fishing if you'll let me."

"What are you thinking about! you're still very small; suppose you get drowned, what good will there be in that?"

"No, no, I shan't get drowned. I'll catch you some fish; do let me go!"

So his mother put a white shirt on him, tied a red girdle round him, and let him go. Out in a boat he sat and said:

Canoe, canoe, float a little farther,
Canoe, canoe, float a little farther!

Then the canoe floated on farther and farther, and Ivashko began to fish. When some little time had passed by, the old woman hobbled down to the river side and called to her son:

Ivashechko, Ivashechko, my boy,
Float up, float up, unto the waterside;
I bring thee food and drink.

And Ivashko said:

Canoe, canoe, float to the waterside;
That is my mother calling me.

The boat floated to the shore: the woman took the fish, gave her boy food and drink, changed his shirt for him and his girdle, and sent him back to his fishing. Again he sat in his boat and said:

Canoe, canoe, float a little farther,
Canoe, canoe, float a little farther.

Then the canoe floated on farther and farther, and Ivashko began to fish. After a little time had passed by, the old man also hobbled down to the bank and called to his son:

Ivashechko, Ivashechko, my boy,
Float up, float up, unto the waterside;
I bring thee food and drink.

AND IVASHKO REPLIED:

CANOE, canoe, float to the waterside;
That is my father calling me.

THE CANOE FLOATED to the shore. The old man took the fish, gave his boy food and drink, changed his shirt for him and his girdle, and sent him back to his fishing.

Now a certain witch had heard what Ivashko's parents had cried aloud to him, and she longed to get hold of the boy. So she went down to the bank and cried with a hoarse voice:

IVASHECHKO, Ivashechko, my boy,
Float up, float up, unto the waterside;
I bring thee food and drink.

IVASHKO PERCEIVED that the voice was not his mother's, but was that of a witch, and he sang:

CANOE, canoe, float a little farther,
Canoe, canoe, float a little farther;
That is not my mother, but a witch who calls me.

The witch saw that she must call Ivashko with just such a voice as his mother had.

So she hastened to a smith and said to him:

“Smith, smith! make me just such a thin little voice as Ivashko’s mother has: if you don’t, I’ll eat you.” So the smith forged her a little voice just like Ivashko’s mother’s. Then the witch went down by night to the shore and sang:

Ivashechko, Ivashechko, my boy,
Float up, float up, unto the waterside;
I bring thee food and drink.

Ivashko came, and she took the fish, and seized the boy and carried him home with her. When she arrived she said to her daughter Alenka, “Heat the stove as hot as you can, and bake Ivashko well, while I go and collect my friends for the feast.” So Alenka heated the stove hot, ever so hot, and said to Ivashko,

“Come here and sit on this shovel!”

“I’m still very young and foolish,” answered Ivashko: “I haven’t yet quite got my wits about me. Please teach me how one ought to sit on a shovel.”

“Very good,” said Alenka; “it won’t take long to teach you.”

But the moment she sat down on the shovel, Ivashko instantly pitched her into the oven, slammed to the iron plate in front of it, ran out of the hut, shut the door, and hurriedly climbed up ever so high an oak-tree which stood close by.

Presently the witch arrived with her guests and knocked at the door of the hut. But nobody opened it for her.

“Ah! that cursed Alenka!” she cried. “No doubt she’s gone off somewhere to amuse herself.” Then she slipped in through the window, opened the door, and let in her guests. They all sat down to table, and the witch opened the oven, took out Alenka’s baked body, and served it up. They all ate their fill and drank their fill, and then they went out into the courtyard and began rolling about on the grass.

“I turn about, I roll about, having fed on Ivashko’s flesh,” cried the witch. “I turn about, I roll about, having fed on Ivashko’s flesh.”

But Ivashko called out to her from the top of the oak:

“Turn about, roll about, having fed on Alenka’s flesh!”

“Did I hear something?” said the witch. “No it was only the noise of the leaves.” Again the witch began:

“I turn about, I roll about, having fed on Ivashko’s flesh!”

And Ivashko repeated:

“Turn about, roll about, having fed on Alenka’s flesh!”

Then the witch looked up and saw Ivashko, and immediately rushed at the oak on which Ivashko was seated, and began to gnaw away at it. And she gnawed, and gnawed, and gnawed, until at last she smashed two front teeth. Then she ran to a forge, and when she reached it she cried, “Smith, smith! make me some iron teeth; if you don’t I’ll eat you!”

So the smith forged her two iron teeth.

The witch returned and began gnawing the oak again.

She gnawed, and gnawed, and was just on the point of gnawing it through, when Ivashko jumped out of it into another tree which stood beside it. The oak that the witch had gnawed through fell down to the ground; but then she saw that Ivashko was sitting up in another tree, so she gnashed her teeth with spite and set to work afresh, to gnaw that tree also. She gnawed, and gnawed, and gnawed — broke two lower teeth, and ran off to the forge.

“Smith, smith!” she cried when she got there, “make me some iron teeth; if you don’t I’ll eat you!”

The smith forged two more iron teeth for her. She went back again, and once more began to gnaw the oak.

Ivashko didn’t know what he was to do now. He looked out, and saw that swans and geese were flying by, so he called to them imploringly:

Oh, my swans and geese,
Take me on your pinions,
Bear me to my father and my mother,
To the cottage of my father and my mother,
There to eat, and drink, and live in comfort.

“Let those in the centre carry you,” said the birds.

Ivashko waited; a second flock flew past, and he again cried imploringly:

Oh, my swans and geese!
Take me on your pinions,
Bear me to my father and my mother,
To the cottage of my father and my mother,
There to eat, and drink, and live in comfort.

“Let those in the rear carry you!” said the birds.

Again Ivashko waited. A third flock came flying up, and he cried:

Oh, my swans and geese!
Take me on your pinions,
Bear me to my father and my mother,
To the cottage of my father and my mother,
There to eat, and drink, and live in comfort.

And those swans and geese took hold of him and carried him back, flew up to the cottage, and dropped him in the upper room.

Early the next morning his mother set to work to bake pancakes, baked them, and all of a sudden fell to thinking about her boy. “Where is my Ivashko?” she cried; “would that I could see him, were it only in a dream!”

Then his father said, “I dreamed that swans and geese had brought our Ivashko home on their wings.”

And when she had finished baking the pancakes, she said, “Now, then, old man, let’s divide the cakes: there’s for you, father! there’s for me! There’s for you, father! there’s for me.”

“And none for me?” called out Ivashko.

“There’s for you, father!” went on the old woman, “there’s for me.”

“And none for me!” repeated the boy.

“Why, old man,” said the wife, “go and see whatever that is up there.”

The father climbed into the upper room and there he found Ivashko. The old people were delighted, and asked their boy about everything that had happened. And after that he and they lived on happily together.

23

THE WITCH AND THE SUN’S SISTER

In a certain far-off country there once lived a king and queen. And they had an only son, Prince Ivan, who was dumb from his birth. One day, when he was twelve years old, he went into the stable to see a groom who was a great friend of his.

That groom always used to tell him tales, and on this occasion Prince Ivan went to him expecting to hear some stories, but that wasn’t what he heard.

“Prince Ivan!” said the groom, “your mother will soon have a daughter, and you a sister. She will be a terrible witch, and she will eat up her father, and her mother, and all their subjects. So go and ask your father for the best horse he has — as if you wanted a gallop — and then, if you want to be out of harm’s way, ride away whithersoever your eyes guide you.”

Prince Ivan ran off to his father and, for the first time in his life, began speaking to him.

At that the king was so delighted that he never thought of asking what he wanted a good steed for, but immediately ordered the very best horse he had in his stud to be saddled for the prince.

Prince Ivan mounted, and rode off without caring where he went. Long, long did he ride.

At length he came to where two old women were sewing and he begged them to let him live with them. But they said:

“Gladly would we do so, Prince Ivan, only we have now but a short time to live. As soon as we have broken that trunkful of needles, and used up that trunkful of thread, that instant will death arrive!”

Prince Ivan burst into tears and rode on. Long, long did he ride. At length he came to where the giant Vertodub was, and he besought him, saying:

“Take me to live with you.”

“Gladly would I have taken you, Prince Ivan!” replied the giant, “but now I have very little longer to live. As soon as I have pulled up all these trees by the roots, instantly will come my death!”

More bitterly still did the prince weep as he rode farther and farther on. By-and-by he came to where the giant Vertogor was, and made the same request to him, but he replied:

“Gladly would I have taken you, Prince Ivan! but I myself have very little longer to live. I am set here, you know, to level mountains. The moment I have settled matters with these you see remaining, then will my death come!”

Prince Ivan burst into a flood of bitter tears, and rode on still farther. Long, long did he ride. At last he came to the dwelling of the Sun’s Sister. She received him into her house, gave him food and drink, and treated him just as if he had been her own son.

The prince now led an easy life. But it was all no use; he couldn’t help being miserable. He longed so to know what was going on at home.

He often went to the top of a high mountain, and thence gazed at the palace in which he used to live, and he could see that it was all eaten away; nothing but the bare walls remained! Then he would sigh and weep. Once when he returned after he had been thus looking and crying, the Sun’s Sister asked him:

“What makes your eyes so red to-day, Prince Ivan?”

“The wind has been blowing in them,” said he.

The same thing happened a second time. Then the Sun’s Sister ordered the wind to stop blowing. Again a third time did Prince Ivan come back with a blubbered face. This time there was no help for it; he had to confess everything, and then he took to entreating the Sun’s Sister to let him go, that he might satisfy himself about his old home. She would not let him go, but he went on urgently entreating.

So at last he persuaded her, and she let him go away to find out about his home. But first she provided him for the journey with a brush, a comb, and two youth-giving apples. However old any one might be, let him eat one of these apples, he would grow young again in an instant.

Well, Prince Ivan came to where Vertogor was. There was only just one mountain left! He took his brush and cast it down on the open plain. Immediately there rose out of the earth, goodness knows whence, high, ever so high mountains, their peaks touching the sky. And the number of them was such that there were more than the eye could see! Vertogor rejoiced greatly and blithely recommenced his work.

After a time Prince Ivan came to where Vertodub was, and found that there were only three trees remaining there. So he took the comb and flung it on the open plain. Immediately from somewhere or other there came a sound of trees, and forth from the ground arose dense oak forests! each stem more huge than the other! Vertodub was delighted, thanked the Prince, and set to work uprooting the ancient oaks.

By-and-by Prince Ivan reached the old women, and gave each of them an apple. They ate them, and straightway became young again. So they gave him a handkerchief; you only had to wave it, and behind you lay a whole lake! At last Prince Ivan arrived at home. Out came running his sister to meet him, caressed him fondly.

“Sit thee down, my brother!” she said, “play a tune on the lute while I go and get dinner ready.”

The Prince sat down and strummed away on the lute.

Then there crept a mouse out of a hole, and said to him in a human voice:

“Save yourself, Prince. Run away quick! your sister has gone to sharpen her teeth.”

Prince Ivan fled from the room, jumped on his horse, and galloped away back. Meantime the mouse kept running over the strings of the lute. They twanged, and the sister never guessed that her brother was off. When she had sharpened her teeth she burst into the room. Lo and behold! not a soul was there, nothing but the mouse bolting into its hole! The witch waxed wroth, ground her teeth like anything, and set off in pursuit.

Prince Ivan heard a loud noise and looked back. There was his sister chasing him. So he waved his handkerchief, and a deep lake lay behind him. While the witch was swimming across the water, Prince Ivan got a long way ahead. But on she came faster than ever; and now she was close at hand! Vertodub guessed that the Prince was trying to escape from his sister. So he began tearing up oaks and strewing them across the road. A regular mountain did he pile up! there was no passing by for the witch! So she set to work to clear the way. She gnawed, and gnawed, and at length contrived by hard work to bore her way through; but by this time Prince Ivan was far ahead.

On she dashed in pursuit, chased and chased. Just a little more, and it would be impossible for him to escape! But Vertogor spied the witch, laid hold of the very highest of all the mountains, pitched it down all of a heap on the road, and flung another mountain right on top of it. While the witch was climbing and clambering, Prince Ivan rode and rode, and found himself a long way ahead. At last the witch got across the mountain, and once more set off in pursuit of her brother. By-and-by she caught sight of him, and exclaimed:

“You sha’n’t get away from me this time!” And now she is close, now she is just going to catch him!

At that very moment Prince Ivan dashed up to the abode of the Sun’s Sister and cried:

“Sun, Sun! open the window!”

The Sun’s Sister opened the window, and the Prince bounded through it, horse and all.

Then the witch began to ask that her brother might be given up to her for punishment. The Sun’s Sister would not listen to her, nor would she give him up. Then the witch said:

“Let Prince Ivan be weighed against me, to see which is the heavier. If I am, then I will eat him; but if he is, then let him kill me!”

This was done. Prince Ivan was the first to get into one of the scales; then the witch began to get into the other. But no sooner had she set foot in it than up shot Prince Ivan in the air, and that with such force that he flew right up into the sky, and into the chamber of the Sun’s Sister.

But as for the Witch-Snake, she remained down below on earth.

24

ONE-EYED LIKHO

Once upon a time there was a smith. “Well now,” says he, “I’ve never set eyes on any harm. They say there’s evil (*likho*) in the world. I’ll go and seek me out evil.” So he went and had a goodish drink, and then started in search of evil. On the way he met a tailor.

“Good day,” says the Tailor.

“Good day.”

“Where are you going?” asks the Tailor.

“Well, brother, everybody says there is evil on earth. But I’ve never seen any, so I’m going to look for it.”

“Let’s go together. I’m a thriving man, too, and have seen no evil; let’s go and have a hunt for some.”

Well, they walked and walked till they reached a dark, dense forest. In it they found a small path, and along it they went — along the narrow path. They walked and walked along the path, and at last they saw a large cottage standing before them. It was night; there was nowhere else to go to. “Look here,” they say, “let’s go into that cottage.” In they went. There was nobody there. All looked bare and squalid. They sat down, and remained sitting there some time. Presently in came a tall woman, lank, crooked, with only one eye.

“Ah!” says she, “I’ve visitors. Good day to you.”

“Good day, grandmother. We’ve come to pass the night under your roof.”

“Very good: I shall have something to sup on.”

Thereupon they were greatly terrified. As for her, she went and fetched a great heap of firewood. She brought in the heap of firewood, flung it into the stove, and set it alight. Then she went up to the two men, took one of them — the Tailor — cut his throat, trussed him, and put him in the oven.

Meantime the Smith sat there, thinking, “What’s to be done? how’s one to save one’s life?” When she had finished her supper, the Smith looked at the oven and said:

“Granny, I’m a smith.”

“What can you forge?”

“Anything.”

“Make me an eye.”

“Good,” says he; “but have you got any cord? I must tie you up, or you won’t keep still. I shall have to hammer your eye in.”

She went and fetched two cords, one rather thin, the other thicker. Well, he bound her with the one which was thinnest.

“Now then, granny,” says he, “just turn over.” She turned over, and broke the cord.

“That won’t do, granny,” says he; “that cord doesn’t suit.”

He took the thick cord, and tied her up with it famously.

“Now then, turn away, granny!” says he. She turned and twisted, but didn’t break the cord. Then he took an awl, heated it red-hot, and applied it to her eye — her sound one. At the same moment he caught up a hatchet, and hammered away vigorously with the back of it at the awl. She struggled like anything, and broke the cord; then she went and sat down at the threshold.

“Ah, villain!” she cried. “You sha’n’t get away from me now!”

He saw that he was in an evil plight again. There he sat, thinking, “What’s to be done?”

By-and-by the sheep came home from afield, and she drove them into her cottage for the night. Well, the Smith spent the night there, too. In the morning she got up to let the sheep out. He took his sheep-skin pelisse and turned it inside out so that the wool was outside, passed his arms through its sleeves, and pulled it well over him, and crept up to her as he had been a sheep. She let the flock go out one at a time, catching hold of each by the wool on its back, and shoving it out. Well, he came creeping up like the rest. She caught hold of the wool on his back and shoved him out. But as soon as she had shoved him out, he stood up and cried:

“Farewell, Likho! I have suffered much evil (*likha*) at your hands. Now you can do nothing to me.”

“Wait a bit!” she replied; “you shall endure still more. You haven’t escaped yet!”

The Smith went back through the forest along the narrow path. Presently he saw a golden-handled hatchet sticking in a tree, and he felt a strong desire to seize it. Well, he did seize that hatchet, and his hand stuck fast to it. What was to be done? There was no freeing it anyhow. He gave a look behind him. There was Likho coming after him, and crying:

“There you are, villain! you’ve not got off yet!”

The Smith pulled out a small knife which he had in his pocket, and began hacking away at his hand — cut it clean off and ran away. When he reached his village, he immediately began to show his arm as a proof that he had seen Likho at last.

“Look,” says he, “that’s the state of things. Here am I,” says he, “without my hand. And as for my comrade, she’s eaten him up entirely.”

25

WOE

In a certain village there lived two peasants, two brothers: one of them poor, the other rich. The rich one went away to live in a town, built himself a large house, and enrolled himself among the traders. Meanwhile the poor man sometimes had not so much as a morsel of bread, and his children — each one smaller than the other — were crying and begging for food. From morning till night the peasant would struggle, like a fish trying to break through ice, but nothing came of it all. At last one day he said to his wife:

“Suppose I go to town, and ask my brother whether he won’t do something to help us.”

So he went to the rich man and said:

“Ah, brother mine! do help me a bit in my trouble. My wife and children are without bread. They have to go whole days without eating.”

“Work for me this week, then I’ll help you,” said his brother.

What was there to be done! The poor man betook himself to work, swept out the yard, cleaned the horses, fetched water, chopped firewood.

At the end of the week the rich man gave him a loaf of bread, and says:

“There’s for your work!”

“Thank you all the same,” dolefully said the poor man, making his bow and preparing to go home.

“Stop a bit! come and dine with me to-morrow, and bring your wife, too: to-morrow is my name-day, you know.”

“Ah, brother! how can I? you know very well you’ll be having merchants coming to you in boots and pelisses, but I have to go about in bast shoes and a miserable old grey caftan.”

“No matter, come! there will be room even for you.”

“Very well, brother! I’ll come.”

The poor man returned home, gave his wife the loaf, and said:

“Listen, wife! we’re invited to a party to-morrow.”

“What do you mean by a party? who’s invited us?”

“My brother! he keeps his name-day to-morrow.”

“Well, well! let’s go.”

Next day they got up and went to the town, came to the rich man’s house, offered him their congratulations, and sat down on a bench. A number of the name-day guests were already seated at table. All of these the host feasted gloriously, but he forgot even so much as to think of his poor brother and his wife; not a thing did he offer them; they had to sit and merely look on at the others eating and drinking.

The dinner came to an end; the guests rose from table, and expressed their thanks to their host and hostess; and the poor man did likewise, got up from his bench, and bowed down to his girdle before his brother. The guests drove off homewards, full of drink and merriment, shouting, singing songs. But the poor man had to walk back empty.

“Suppose we sing a song, too,” he says to his wife.

“What a fool you are!” says she, “people sing because they’ve made a good meal and had lots to drink; but why ever should you dream of singing?”

“Well, at all events, I’ve been at my brother’s name-day party. I’m ashamed of trudging along without singing. If I sing, everybody will think I’ve been feasted like the rest.”

"Sing away, then, if you like; but I won't!"

The peasant began a song. Presently he heard a voice joining in it. So he stopped, and asked his wife:

"Is it you that's helping me to sing with that thin little voice?"

"What are you thinking about! I never even dreamt of such a thing."

"Who is it, then?"

"I don't know," said the woman. "But now, sing away, and I'll listen."

He began his song again. There was only one person singing, yet two voices could be heard. So he stopped, and asked:

"Woe, is that you that's helping me to sing?"

"Yes, master," answered Woe: "it's I that's helping you."

"Well then, Woe! let's all go on together."

"Very good, master! I'll never depart from you now."

When the peasant got home, Woe bid him to the *kabak* or pot-house.

"I've no money," says the man.

"Out upon you, moujik! What do you want money for? why you've got on a sheep-skin jacket. What's the good of that? It will soon be summer; anyhow you won't be wanting to wear it. Off with the jacket, and to the pot-house we'll go."

So the peasant went with Woe into the pot-house, and they drank the sheep-skin away.

The next day Woe began groaning — its head ached from yesterday's drinking — and again bade the master of the house have a drink.

"I've no money," said the peasant.

"What do we want money for? Take the cart and the sledge; we've plenty without them."

There was nothing to be done; the peasant could not shake himself free from Woe. So he took the cart and the sledge, dragged them to the pot-house, and there he and Woe drank them away. Next morning Woe began groaning more than ever, and invited the master of the house to go and drink off the effects of the debauch. This time the peasant drank away his plough and his harrow.

A month hadn’t passed before he had got rid of everything he possessed. Even his very cottage he pledged to a neighbor, and the money he got that way he took to the pot-house.

Yet another time did Woe come close beside him and say:

“Let us go, let us go to the pot-house!”

“No, no, Woe! it’s all very well, but there’s nothing more to be squeezed out.”

“How can you say that? Your wife has got two petticoats: leave her one, but the other we must turn into drink.”

The peasant took the petticoat, drank it away, and said to himself:

“We’re cleaned out at last, my wife as well as myself. Not a stick nor a stone is left!”

Next morning Woe saw, on waking, that there was nothing more to be got out of the peasant, so it said:

“Master!”

“Well, Woe?”

“Why, look here. Go to your neighbor, and ask him to lend you a cart and a pair of oxen.”

The peasant went to the neighbor’s.

“Be so good as to lend me a cart and a pair of oxen for a short time,” says he. “I’ll do a week’s work for you in return.”

“But what do you want them for?”

“To go to the forest for firewood.”

“Well then, take them; only don’t overburthen them.”

“How could you think of such a thing, kind friend!”

So he brought the pair of oxen, and Woe got into the cart with him, and away he drove into the open plain.

“Master!” asks Woe, “do you know the big stone on this plain?”

“Of course I do.”

“Well then if you know it, drive straight up to it.”

They came to the place where it was, stopped, and got out of the cart. Woe told the peasant to lift the stone; the peasant lifted it, Woe helping him. Well, when they had lifted it there was a pit underneath chock full of gold.

“Now then, what are you staring at!” said Woe to the peasant, “be quick and pitch it into the cart.”

The peasant set to work and filled the cart with gold; cleared the pit to the very last ducat. When he saw there was nothing more left:

“Just give a look, Woe,” he said; “isn’t there some money left in there?”

“Where?” said Woe, bending down; “I can’t see a thing.”

“Why there; something is shining in yon corner!”

“No, I can’t see anything,” said Woe.

“Get into the pit; you’ll see it then.”

Woe jumped in: no sooner had it got there than the peasant closed the mouth of the pit with the stone.

“Things will be much better like that,” said the peasant: “if I were to take you home with me, O Woeful Woe, sooner or later you’d be sure to drink away all this money, too!”

The peasant got home, shovelled the money into his cellar, took the oxen back to his neighbor, and set about considering how he should manage. It ended in his buying a wood, building a large homestead, and becoming twice as rich as his brother.

After a time he went into the town to invite his brother and sister-in-law to spend his name-day with him.

“What an idea!” said his rich brother: “you haven’t a thing to eat, and yet you ask people to spend your name-day with you!”

“Well, there was a time when I had nothing to eat, but now, thank God! I’ve as much as you. If you come, you’ll see for yourself.”

“So be it! I’ll come,” said his brother.

Next day the rich brother and his wife got ready, and went to the name-day party. They could see that the former beggar had got a new house, a lofty one, such as few merchants had! And the moujik treated them hospitably, regaled them with all sorts of dishes, gave them all sorts of meads and spirits to drink. At length the rich man asked his brother:

“Do tell me by what good luck have you grown rich?”

The peasant made a clean breast of everything — how Woe the Woeful had attached itself to him, how he and Woe had drunk away all that he had, to the very last thread, so that the only thing that was left him was the soul in his body. How Woe showed him a treasure in the open field, how he took that treasure, and freed himself from Woe into the bargain. The rich man became envious.

“Suppose I go to the open field,” thinks he, “and lift up the stone and let Woe out. Of a surety it will utterly destroy my brother, and then he will no longer brag of his riches before me!”

So he sent his wife home, but he himself hastened into the plain. When he came to the big stone, he pushed it aside, and knelt down to see what was under it. Before he had managed to get his head down low enough, Woe had already leapt out and seated itself on his shoulders.

“Ha!” it cried, “you wanted to starve me to death in here! No, no! Now will I never on any account depart from you.”

“Only hear me, Woe!” said the merchant: “it wasn’t I at all who put you under the stone.”

“Who was it then, if it wasn’t you?”

“It was my brother put you there, but I came on purpose to let you out.”

“No, no! that’s a lie. You tricked me once; you shan’t trick me a second time!”

Woe gripped the rich merchant tight by the neck; the man had to carry it home, and there everything began to go wrong with him. From the very first day Woe began again to play its usual part, every day it called on the merchant to renew his drinking. Many were the valuables which went in the pot-house.

“Impossible to go on living like this!” says the merchant to himself. “Surely I’ve made sport enough for Woe! It’s time to get rid of it — but how?”

He thought and thought, and hit on an idea. Going into the large yard, he cut two oaken wedges, took a new wheel, and drove a wedge firmly into one end of its axle-box. Then he went to where Woe was:

“Hallo, Woe! why are you always idly sprawling there?”

“Why, what is there left for me to do?”

“What is there to do! let’s go into the yard and play at hide-and-seek.”

Woe liked the idea. Out they went into the yard. First the merchant hid himself; Woe found him immediately. Then it was Woe’s turn to hide.

“Now then,” says Woe, “you won’t find me in a hurry! There isn’t a chink I can’t get into!”

“Get along with you!” answered the merchant. “Why you couldn’t creep into that wheel there, and yet you talk about chinks!”

“I can’t creep into that wheel? See if I don’t go clean out of sight in it!”

Woe slipped into the wheel; the merchant caught up the oaken wedge, and drove it into the axle-box from the other side. Then he seized the wheel and flung it, with Woe in it, into the river. Woe was drowned, and the merchant began to live again as he had been wont to do of old.

26

FRIDAY

There was once a certain woman who did not pay due reverence to Mother Friday, but set to work on a distaff-ful of flax, combing and whirling it. She span away till dinner-time, then suddenly sleep fell upon her — such a deep sleep! And when she had gone to sleep, suddenly the door opened and in came Mother Friday, before the eyes of all who were there, clad in a white dress, and in such a rage! And she went straight up to the woman who had been spinning, scooped up from the floor a handful of the dust that had fallen out of the flax, and began stuffing and stuffing that woman's eyes full of it! And when she had stuffed them full, she went off in a rage — disappeared without saying a word.

When the woman awoke, she began squalling at the top of her voice about her eyes, but couldn't tell what was the matter with them. The other women, who had been terribly frightened, began to cry out:

"Oh, you wretch, you! you've brought a terrible punishment on yourself from Mother Friday."

Then they told her all that had taken place. She listened to it all, and then began imploringly:

"Mother Friday, forgive me! pardon me, the guilty one! I'll offer thee a taper, and I'll never let friend or foe dishonor thee, Mother!"

Well, what do you think? During the night, back came Mother Friday and took the dust out of that woman’s eyes, so that she was able to get about again. It’s a great sin to dishonor Mother Friday — combing and spinning flax, forsooth!

27

WEDNESDAY

A young housewife was spinning late one evening. It was during the night between a Tuesday and a Wednesday. She had been left alone for a long time, and after midnight, when the first cock crew, she began to think about going to bed, only she would have liked to finish spinning what she had in hand. “Well,” thinks she, “I’ll get up a bit earlier in the morning, but just now I want to go to sleep.” So she laid down her hatchel — but without crossing herself — and said:

“Now then, Mother Wednesday, lend me thy aid, that I may get up early in the morning and finish my spinning.” And then she went to sleep.

Well, very early in the morning, long before it was light, she heard someone moving, bustling about the room. She opened her eyes and looked. The room was lighted up. A splinter of fir was burning in the cresset, and the fire was lighted in the stove. A woman, no longer young, wearing a white towel by way of head-dress, was moving about the cottage, going to and fro, supplying the stove with firewood, getting everything ready. Presently she came up to the young woman, and roused her, saying, “Get up!” The young woman got up, full of wonder, saying:

“But who art thou? What hast thou come here for?”

“I am she on whom thou didst call. I have come to thy aid.”

“But who art thou? On whom did I call?”

"I am Wednesday. On Wednesday surely thou didst call. See, I have spun thy linen and woven thy web: now let us bleach it and set it in the oven. The oven is heated and the irons are ready; do thou go down to the brook and draw water."

The woman was frightened, and thought: "What manner of thing is this?" (or, "How can that be?") but Wednesday glared at her angrily; her eyes just did sparkle!

So the woman took a couple of pails and went for water. As soon as she was outside the door she thought: "Mayn't something terrible happen to me? I'd better go to my neighbor's instead of fetching the water." So she set off. The night was dark. In the village all were still asleep. She reached a neighbor's house, and rapped away at the window until at last she made herself heard. An aged woman let her in.

"Why, child!" says the old crone; "whatever hast thou got up so early for? What's the matter?"

"Oh, granny, this is how it was. Wednesday has come to me, and has sent me for water to buck my linen with."

"That doesn't look well," says the old crone. "On that linen she will either strangle thee or scald thee."

The old woman was evidently well acquainted with Wednesday's ways.

"What am I to do?" says the young woman. "How can I escape from this danger?"

"Well, this is what thou must do. Go and beat thy pails together in front of the house, and cry, 'Wednesday's children have been burnt at sea!' She will run out of the house, and do thou be sure to seize the opportunity to get into it before she comes back, and immediately slam the door to, and make the sign of the cross over it. Then don't let her in, however much she may threaten you or implore you, but sign a cross with your hands, and draw one with a piece of chalk, and utter a prayer. The Unclean Spirit will have to disappear."

Well, the young woman ran home, beat the pails together, and cried out beneath the window:

“Wednesday’s children have been burnt at sea!”

Wednesday rushed out of the house and ran to look, and the woman sprang inside, shut the door, and set a cross upon it. Wednesday came running back, and began crying: “Let me in, my dear! I have spun thy linen; now will I bleach it.” But the woman would not listen to her, so Wednesday went on knocking at the door until cock-crow. As soon as the cocks crew, she uttered a shrill cry and disappeared. But the linen remained where it was.

28

THE LÉSHY

A certain priest’s daughter went strolling in the forest one day, without having obtained leave from her father or her mother — and she disappeared utterly. Three years went by. Now in the village in which her parents dwelt there lived a bold hunter, who went daily roaming through the thick woods with his dog and his gun. One day he was going through the forest; all of a sudden his dog began to bark, and the hair of its back bristled up. The sportsman looked, and saw lying in the woodland path before him a log, and on the log there sat a moujik plaiting a bast shoe. And as he plaited the shoe, he kept looking up at the moon, and saying with a menacing gesture: —

“Shine, shine, O bright moon!”

The sportsman was astounded. “How comes it,” thinks he, “that the moujik looks like that? — he is still young; but his hair is grey as a badger’s.”

He only thought these words, but the other replied, as if guessing what he meant: —

“Grey am I, being the devil’s grandfather!”

Then the sportsman guessed that he had before him no mere moujik, but a Léshy. He levelled his gun and — bang! he let him have it right in the paunch. The Léshy groaned, and seemed to be going to fall across the log;

but directly afterwards he got up and dragged himself into the thickets. After him ran the dog in pursuit, and after the dog followed the sportsman. He walked and walked, and came to a hill: in that hill was a fissure, and in the fissure stood a hut. He entered the hut — there on a bench lay the Léshy stone dead, and by his side a damsel, exclaiming, amid bitter tears: —

“Who now will give me to eat and to drink?”

“Hail, fair maiden!” says the hunter. “Tell me whence thou comest, and whose daughter thou art?”

“Ah, good youth! I know not that myself, any more than if I had never seen the free light — never known a father and mother.”

“Well, get ready as soon as you can. I will take you back to Holy Russia.”

So he took her away with him, and brought her out of the forest. And all the way he went along, he cut marks on the trees. Now this damsel had been carried off by the Léshy, and had lived in his hut for three years — her clothes were all worn out, or had got torn off her back, so that she was stark naked but she wasn’t a bit ashamed of that. When they reached the village, the sportsman began asking whether there was any one there who had lost a girl. Up came the priest, and cried, “Why, that’s my daughter.” Up came running the priest’s wife, and cried: —

“O thou dear child! where hast thou been so long? I had no hope of ever seeing thee again.”

But the girl gazed and just blinked with her eyes, understanding nothing. After a time, however, she began slowly to come back to her senses. Then the priest and his wife gave her in marriage to the hunter, and rewarded him with all sorts of good things. And they went in search of the hut in which she had lived while she was with the Léshy. Long did they wander about the forest; but that hut they never found.

29

VAZUZA AND VOLGA

Volga and Vazuza had a long dispute as to which was the wiser, the stronger, and the more worthy of high respect. They wrangled and wrangled, but neither could gain the mastery in the dispute, so they decided upon the following course: —

“Let us lie down together to sleep,” they said, “and whichever of us is the first to rise, and the quickest to reach the Caspian Sea, she shall be held to be the wiser of us two, and the stronger and the worthier of respect.”

So Volga lay down to sleep; down lay Vazuza also. But during the night Vazuza rose silently, fled away from Volga, chose the nearest and the straightest line, and flowed away. When Volga awoke, she set off neither slowly nor hurriedly, but with just befitting speed. At Zubtsof she came up with Vazuza. So threatening was her mien, that Vazuza was frightened, declared herself to be Volga’s younger sister, and besought Volga to take her in her arms and bear her to the Caspian Sea. And so to this day Vazuza is the first to awake in the Spring, and then she arouses Volga from her wintry sleep.

30

SOZH AND DNIEPER

There was once a blind old man called Dvina. He had two sons — the elder called Sozh, and the younger Dnieper. Sozh was of a boisterous turn, and went roving about the forests, the hills, and the plains; but Dnieper was remarkably sweet-tempered, and he spent all his time at home, and was his mother’s favorite. Once, when Sozh was away from home, the old father was deceived by his wife into giving the elder son’s blessing to the younger son. Thus spake Dvina while blessing him: —

“Dissolve, my son, into a wide and deep river. Flow past towns, and bathe villages without number as far as the blue sea. Thy brother shall be thy servant. Be rich and prosperous to the end of time!”

Dnieper turned into a river, and flowed through fertile meadows and dreamy woods. But after three days, Sozh returned home and began to complain.

“If thou dost desire to become superior to thy brother,” said his father, “speed swiftly by hidden ways, through dark untrodden forests, and if thou canst outstrip thy brother, he will have to be thy servant!”

Away sped Sozh on the chase, through untrodden places, washing away swamps, cutting out gullies, tearing up oaks by the roots. The Vulture told Dnieper of this, and he put on extra speed, tearing his way through high hills rather than turn on one side. Meanwhile Sozh persuaded the Raven to fly straight to Dnieper, and, as soon as it had come up with him to croak three times; he himself was to burrow under the earth, intending to leap to the surface at the cry of the Raven, and by that means to get before his brother. But the Vulture fell on the Raven; the Raven began to croak before it had caught up the river Dnieper. Up burst Sozh from underground, and fell straight into the waves of the Dnieper.

31

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE DNIEPER, THE VOLGA, AND THE DVINA

The Dnieper, Volga, and Dvina used once to be living people. The Dnieper was a boy, and the Volga and Dvina his sisters. While they were still in childhood they were left complete orphans, and, as they hadn't a crust to eat, they were obliged to get their living by daily labor beyond their strength. "When was that?" Very long ago, say the old folks; beyond the memory even of our great-grandfathers.

Well, the children grew up, but they never had even the slightest bit of good luck. Every day, from morn till eve, it was always toil and toil, and all merely for the day's subsistence. As for their clothing, it was just what God sent them! They sometimes found rags on the dust-heaps, and with these they managed to cover their bodies. The poor things had to endure cold and hunger. Life became a burden to them.

One day, after toiling hard afield, they sat down under a bush to eat their last morsel of bread. And when they had eaten it, they cried and sorrowed for a while, and considered and held counsel together as to how they might manage to live, and to have food and clothing, and, without toiling, to supply others with meat and drink. Well, this is what they resolved: to set out wandering about the wide world in search of good luck and a kindly welcome, and to look for and find out the best places in which they could turn into great rivers — for that was a possible thing then.

Well, they walked and walked; not one year only, nor two years, but all but three; and they chose the places they wanted, and came to an agreement as to where the flowing of each one should begin. And all three of them stopped to spend the night in a swamp. But the sisters were more cunning than their brother. No sooner was Dnieper asleep than they rose up quietly, chose the best and most sloping places, and began to flow away.

When the brother awoke in the morning, not a trace of his sisters was to be seen. Then he became wroth, and made haste to pursue them. But on the way he bethought himself, and decided that no man can run faster than a river. So he smote the ground, and flowed in pursuit as a stream. Through gullies and ravines he rushed, and the further he went the fiercer did he become. But when he came within a few versts of the sea-shore, his anger calmed down and he disappeared in the sea. And his two sisters, who had continued running from him during his pursuit, separated in different directions and fled to the bottom of the sea. But while the Dnieper was rushing along in anger, he drove his way between steep banks. Therefore is it that his flow is swifter than that of the Volga and the Dvina; therefore also is it that he has many rapids and many mouths.

32

FROST

There was once an old man who had a wife and three daughters. The wife had no love for the eldest of the three, who was her stepdaughter, but was always scolding her. Moreover, she used to make her get up ever so early in the morning, and gave her all the work of the house to do. Before daybreak the girl would feed the cattle and give them to drink, fetch wood and water indoors, light the fire in the stove, give the room a wash, mend the dresses, and set everything in order. Even then her stepmother was never satisfied, but would grumble away at Marfa, exclaiming: —

“What a lazybones! what a slut! Why here’s a brush not in its place, and there’s something put wrong, and she’s left the muck inside the house!”

The girl held her peace, and wept; she tried in every way to accommodate herself to her stepmother, and to be of service to her stepsisters. But they, taking pattern by their mother, were always insulting Marfa, quarrelling with her, and making her cry: that was even a pleasure to them! As for them, they lay in bed late, washed themselves in water got ready for them, dried themselves with a clean towel, and didn’t sit down to work till after dinner.

Well, our girls grew and grew, until they grew up and were old enough to be married. The old man felt sorry for his eldest daughter, whom he loved because she was industrious and obedient, never was obstinate, always did as she was bid, and never uttered a word of contradiction. But he didn’t know how he was to help her in her trouble. He was feeble, his wife was a scold, and her daughters were as obstinate as they were indolent.

Well, the old folks set to work to consider — the husband how he could get his daughters settled, the wife how she could get rid of the eldest one. One day she says to him: —

“I say, old man! let’s get Marfa married.”

“Gladly,” says he, slinking off (to the sleeping-place) above the stove. But his wife called after him: —

“Get up early to-morrow, old man, harness the mare to the sledge, and drive away with Marfa. And, Marfa, get your things together in a basket, and put on a clean shift; you’re going away to-morrow on a visit.”

Poor Marfa was delighted to hear of such a piece of good luck as being invited on a visit, and she slept comfortably all night. Early next morning she got up, washed herself, prayed to God, got all her things together, packed them away in proper order, dressed herself (in her best things), and looked something like a lass! — a bride fit for any place whatsoever!

Now it was winter time, and out of doors was a rattling frost. Early in the morning, between daybreak and sunrise, the old man harnessed the mare to the sledge, and led it up to the steps. Then he went indoors, sat down on the window-sill, and said: —

“Now then! I’ve got everything ready.”

“Sit down to table and swallow your victuals!” replied the old woman.

The old man sat down to table, and made his daughter sit by his side. On the table stood a pannier; he took out a loaf, and cut bread for himself and his daughter. Meantime his wife served up a dish of old cabbage soup, and said: —

“There, my pigeon, eat and be off; I’ve looked at you quite enough! Drive Marfa to her bridegroom, old man. And look here, old greybeard!

drive straight along the road at first, and then turn off from the road to the right, you know, into the forest — right up to the big pine that stands on the hill, and there hand Marfa over to Morozko (Frost).”

The old man opened his eyes wide, also his mouth, and stopped eating, and the girl began lamenting.

“Now then, what are you hanging your chaps and squealing about?” said her stepmother. “Surely your bridegroom is a beauty, and he’s that rich! Why, just see what a lot of things belong to him, the firs, the pine-tops, and the birches, all in their robes of down — ways and means that any one might envy; and he himself a *bogatir*!”

The old man silently placed the things on the sledge, made his daughter put on a warm pelisse, and set off on the journey. After a time, he reached the forest, turned off from the road; and drove across the frozen snow. When he got into the depths of the forest, he stopped, made his daughter get out, laid her basket under the tall pine, and said: —

“Sit here, and await the bridegroom. And mind you receive him as pleasantly as you can.”

Then he turned his horse round and drove off homewards.

The girl sat and shivered. The cold had pierced her through. She would fain have cried aloud, but she had not strength enough; only her teeth chattered. Suddenly she heard a sound. Not far off, Frost was cracking away on a fir. From fir to fir was he leaping, and snapping his fingers. Presently he appeared on that very pine under which the maiden was sitting and from above her head he cried: —

“Art thou warm, maiden?”

“Warm, warm am I, dear Father Frost,” she replied.

Frost began to descend lower, all the more cracking and snapping his fingers. To the maiden said Frost: —

“Art thou warm, maiden? Art thou warm, fair one?”

The girl could scarcely draw her breath, but still she replied:

“Warm am I, Frost dear: warm am I, father dear!”

Frost began cracking more than ever, and more loudly did he snap his fingers, and to the maiden he said: —

“Art thou warm, maiden? Art thou warm, pretty one? Art thou warm, my darling?”

The girl was by this time numb with cold, and she could scarcely make herself heard as she replied: —

“Oh! quite warm, Frost dearest!”

Then Frost took pity on the girl, wrapped her up in furs, and warmed her with blankets.

Next morning the old woman said to her husband: —

“Drive out, old greybeard, and wake the young couple!”

The old man harnessed his horse and drove off. When he came to where his daughter was, he found she was alive and had got a good pelisse, a costly bridal veil, and a pannier with rich gifts. He stowed everything away on the sledge without saying a word, took his seat on it with his daughter, and drove back. They reached home, and the daughter fell at her stepmother’s feet. The old woman was thunderstruck when she saw the girl alive, and the new pelisse and the basket of linen.

“Ah, you wretch!” she cries. “But you shan’t trick me!”

Well, a little later the old woman says to her husband: —

“Take my daughters, too, to their bridegroom. The presents he’s made are nothing to what he’ll give them.”

Well, early next morning the old woman gave her girls their breakfast, dressed them as befitted brides, and sent them off on their journey. In the same way as before the old man left the girls under the pine.

There the girls sat, and kept laughing and saying:

“Whatever is mother thinking of! All of a sudden to marry both of us off! As if there were no lads in our village, forsooth! Some rubbishy fellow may come, and goodness knows who he may be!”

The girls were wrapped up in pelisses, but for all that they felt the cold.

“I say, Prascovia! the frost’s skinning me alive. Well, if our bridegroom doesn’t come quick, we shall be frozen to death here!”

“Don’t go talking nonsense, Mashka; as if suitors generally turned up in the forenoon. Why it’s hardly dinner-time yet!”

“But I say, Prascovia! if only one comes, which of us will he take?”

“Not you, you stupid goose!”

“Then it will be you, I suppose!”

“Of course it will be me!”

“You, indeed! there now, have done talking stuff and treating people like fools!”

Meanwhile, Frost had numbed the girl’s hands, so our damsels folded them under their dress, and then went on quarrelling as before.

“What, you fright! you sleepy-face! you abominable shrew! why, you don’t know so much as how to begin weaving: and as to going on with it, you haven’t an idea!”

“Aha, boaster! and what is it you know? Why, nothing at all except to go out to merry-makings and lick your lips there. We’ll soon see which he’ll take first!”

While the girls went on scolding like that, they began to freeze in downright earnest. Suddenly they both cried out at once:

“Whyever is he so long coming. Do you know, you’ve turned quite blue!”

Now, a good way off, Frost had begun cracking, snapping his fingers, and leaping from fir to fir. To the girls it sounded as if some one was coming.

“Listen, Prascovia! He’s coming at last, and with bells, too!”

“Get along with you! I won’t listen; my skin is peeling with cold.”

“And yet you’re still expecting to get married!”

Then they began blowing on their fingers.

Nearer and nearer came Frost. At length he appeared on the pine, above the heads of the girls, and said to them:

“Are ye warm, maidens? Are ye warm, pretty ones? Are ye warm, my darlings?”

“Oh, Frost, it’s awfully cold! we’re utterly perished! We’re expecting a bridegroom, but the confounded fellow has disappeared.”

Frost slid lower down the tree, cracked away more, snapped his fingers oftener than before.

“Are ye warm, maidens? Are ye warm, pretty ones?”

“Get along with you! Are you blind that you can’t see our hands and feet are quite dead?”

Still lower descended Frost, still more put forth his might, and said:

“Are ye warm, maidens?”

“Into the bottomless pit with you! Out of sight, accursed one!” cried the girls — and became lifeless forms.

Next morning the old woman said to her husband:

“Old man, go and get the sledge harnessed; put an armful of hay in it, and take some sheep-skin wraps. I daresay the girls are half-dead with cold. There’s a terrible frost outside! And, mind you, old greybeard, do it quickly!”

Before the old man could manage to get a bite he was out of doors and on his way. When he came to where his daughters were, he found them dead. So he lifted the girls on to the sledge, wrapped a blanket round them, and covered them up with a bark mat. The old woman saw him from afar, ran out to meet him, and called out ever so loud:

“Where are the girls?”

“In the sledge.”

The old woman lifted the mat, undid the blanket, and found the girls both dead.

Then, like a thunderstorm, she broke out against her husband, abusing him saying:

“What have you done, you old wretch? You have destroyed my daughters, the children of my own flesh and blood, my never-enough-to-be-gazed-on seedlings, my beautiful berries! I will thrash you with the tongs; I will give it you with the stove-rake.”

“That’s enough, you old goose! You flattered yourself you were going to get riches, but your daughters were too stiff-necked. How was I to blame? it was you yourself would have it.”

The old woman was in a rage at first, and used bad language; but afterwards she made it up with her stepdaughter, and they all lived together peaceably, and thrived, and bore no malice. A neighbor made an offer of marriage, the wedding was celebrated, and Marfa is now living happily. The old man frightens his grandchildren with (stories about) Frost, and doesn’t let them have their own way.

33

THE BLIND MAN AND THE CRIPPLE

In a certain kingdom there lived a king and queen; they had a son, Prince Ivan, and to look after that son was appointed a tutor named Katoma. The king and queen lived to a great age, but then they fell ill, and despaired of ever recovering. So they sent for Prince Ivan and strictly enjoined him:

“When we are dead, do you in everything respect and obey Katoma. If you obey him, you will prosper; but if you choose to be disobedient, you will perish like a fly.”

The next day the king and queen died. Prince Ivan buried his parents, and took to living according to their instructions. Whatever he had to do, he always consulted his tutor about it.

Some time passed by. The Prince attained to man’s estate, and began to think about getting married. So one day he went to his tutor and said:

“Katoma, I’m tired of living alone, I want to marry.”

“Well, Prince! what’s to prevent you? you’re of an age at which it’s time to think about a bride. Go into the great hall. There’s a collection there of the portraits of all the princesses in the world; look at them and choose for yourself; whichever pleases you, to her send a proposal of marriage.”

Prince Ivan went into the great hall, and began examining the portraits. And the one that pleased him best was that of the Princess Anna the Fair —

such a beauty! the like of her wasn’t to be found in the whole world! Underneath her portrait were written these words:

“If any one asks her a riddle, and she does not guess it, him shall she marry; but he whose riddle she guesses shall have his head chopped off.”

Prince Ivan read this inscription, became greatly afflicted, and went off to his tutor.

“I’ve been in the great hall,” says he, “and I picked out for my bride Anna the Fair; only I don’t know whether it’s possible to win her.”

“Yes, Prince; she’s hard to get. If you go alone, you won’t win her anyhow. But if you will take me with you, and if you will do what I tell you, perhaps the affair can be managed.”

Prince Ivan begged Katoma to go with him, and gave his word of honor to obey him whether in joy or grief.

Well, they got ready for the journey and set off to sue for the hand of the Princess Anna the Fair. They travelled for one year, two years, three years, and traversed many countries. Says Prince Ivan —

“We’ve been travelling all this time, uncle, and now we’re approaching the country of Princess Anna the Fair; and yet we don’t know what riddle to propound.”

“We shall manage to think of one in good time,” replied Katoma. They went a little farther. Katoma was looking down on the road, and on it lay a purse full of money. He lifted it up directly, poured all the money out of it into his own purse, and said —

“Here’s a riddle for you, Prince Ivan! When you come into the presence of the Princess, propound a riddle to her in these words: ‘As we were coming along, we saw Good lying on the road, and we took up the Good with Good, and placed it in our own Good!’ That riddle she won’t guess in a lifetime; but any other one she would find out directly. She would only have to look into her magic-book, and as soon as she had guessed it, she’d order your head to be cut off.”

Well, at last Prince Ivan and his tutor arrived at the lofty palace in which lived the fair Princess. At that moment she happened to be out on the balcony, and when she saw the newcomers, she sent out to know whence they came and what they wanted. Prince Ivan replied —

“I have come from such-and-such a kingdom, and I wish to sue for the hand of the Princess Anna the Fair.”

When she was informed of this, the Princess gave orders that the Prince should enter the palace, and there in the presence of all the princes and boyars of her council should propound his riddle.

“I’ve made this compact,” she said. “Anyone whose riddle I cannot guess, him I must marry. But anyone whose riddle I can guess, him I may put to death.”

“Listen to my riddle, fair princess!” said Prince Ivan. “As we came along, we saw Good lying on the road, and we took up the Good with Good, and placed it in our own Good.”

Princess Anna the Fair took her magic-book, and began turning over its leaves and examining the answers of riddles. She went right through the book, but she didn’t get at the meaning she wanted. Thereupon the princes and boyars of her council decided that the Princess must marry Prince Ivan. She wasn’t at all pleased, but there was no help for it, and so she began to get ready for the wedding. Meanwhile she considered within herself how she could spin out the time and do away with the bridegroom, and she thought the best way would be to overwhelm him with tremendous tasks.

So she called Prince Ivan and said to him —

“My dear Prince Ivan, my destined husband! It is meet that we should prepare for the wedding; pray do me this small service. On such and such a spot of my kingdom there stands a lofty iron pillar. Carry it into the palace kitchen, and chop it into small chunks by way of fuel for the cook.”

“Excuse me, Princess,” replied the prince. “Was it to chop fuel that I came here? Is that the proper sort of employment for me? I have a servant for that kind of thing, Katoma *dyadka*, of the oaken *shapka*.”

The Prince straightway called for his tutor, and ordered him to drag the iron pillar into the kitchen, and to chop it into small chunks by way of fuel for the cook. Katoma went to the spot indicated by the Princess, seized the pillar in his arms, brought it into the palace kitchen, and broke it into little pieces; but four of the iron chips he put into his pocket, saying —

“They’ll prove useful by-and-by!”

Next day the princess says to Prince Ivan —

“My dear Prince, my destined husband! to-morrow we have to go to the wedding. I will drive in a carriage, but you should ride on a heroic steed, and it is necessary that you should break him in beforehand.”

“I break a horse in myself! I keep a servant for that.”

Prince Ivan called Katoma, and said —

“Go into the stable and tell the grooms to bring forth the heroic steed; sit upon him and break him in; to-morrow I’ve got to ride him to the wedding.”

Katoma fathomed the subtle device of the Princess, but, without stopping long to talk, he went into the stable and told the grooms to bring forth the heroic steed. Twelve grooms were mustered, they unlocked twelve locks, opened twelve doors, and brought forth a magic horse bound in twelve chains of iron. Katoma went up to him. No sooner had he managed to seat himself than the magic horse leaped up from the ground and soared higher than the forest — higher than the standing forest, lower than the flitting cloud. Firm sat Katoma, with one hand grasping the mane; with the other he took from his pocket an iron chunk, and began taming the horse with it between the ears. When he had used up one chunk, he betook himself to another; when two were used up, he took to a third; when three were used up, the fourth came into play. And so grievously did he punish the heroic steed that it could not hold out any longer, but cried aloud with a human voice —

“Batyushka Katoma! don’t utterly deprive me of life in the white world! Whatever you wish, that do you order: all shall be done according to your will!”

“Listen, O meat for dogs!” answered Katoma; “to-morrow Prince Ivan will ride you to the wedding. Now mind! when the grooms bring you out into the wide courtyard, and the Prince goes up to you and lays his hand on you, do you stand quietly, not moving so much as an ear. And when he is seated on your back, do you sink into the earth right up to your fetlocks, and then move under him with a heavy step, just as if an immeasurable weight had been laid upon your back.”

The heroic steed listened to the order and sank to earth scarcely alive. Katoma seized him by the tail, and flung him close to the stable, crying —

“Ho there! coachmen and grooms; carry off this dog’s-meat to its stall!”

The next day arrived; the time drew near for going to the wedding. The carriage was brought round for the Princess, and the heroic steed for Prince Ivan. The people were gathered together from all sides — a countless number. The bride and bridegroom came out from the white stone halls. The Princess got into the carriage and waited to see what would become of Prince Ivan; whether the magic horse would fling his curls to the wind, and scatter his bones across the open plain. Prince Ivan approached the horse, laid his hand upon its back, placed his foot in the stirrup — the horse stood just as if petrified, didn’t so much as wag an ear! The Prince got on its back, the magic horse sank into the earth up to its fetlocks. The twelve chains were taken off the horse, it began to move with an even heavy pace, while the sweat poured off it just like hail.

“What a hero! What immeasurable strength!” cried the people as they gazed upon the Prince.

So the bride and bridegroom were married, and then they began to move out of the church, holding each other by the hand. The Princess took it into her head to make one more trial of Prince Ivan, so she squeezed his hand so hard that he could not bear the pain. His face became suffused with blood, his eyes disappeared beneath his brows.

“A fine sort of hero you are!” thought the Princess. “Your tutor has tricked me splendidly; but you sha’n’t get off for nothing!”

Princess Anna the Fair lived for some time with Prince Ivan as a wife ought to live with a god-given husband, flattered him in every way in words, but in reality never thought of anything except by what means she might get rid of Katoma. With the Prince, without the tutor, there’d be no difficulty in settling matters! she said to herself. But whatever slanders she might invent, Prince Ivan never would allow himself to be influenced by what she said, but always felt sorry for his tutor. At the end of a year he said to his wife one day —

“Beauteous Princess, my beloved spouse! I should like to go with you to my own kingdom.”

“By all means,” replied she, “let us go. I myself have long been wishing to see your kingdom.”

Well they got ready and went off; Katoma was allotted the post of coachman. They drove and drove, and as they drove along Prince Ivan went to sleep. Suddenly the Princess Anna the Fair awoke him, uttering loud complaints —

“Listen, Prince, you’re always sleeping, you hear nothing! But your tutor doesn’t obey me a bit, drives the horses on purpose over hill and dale, just as if he wanted to put an end to us both. I tried speaking him fair, but he jeered at me. I won’t go on living any longer if you don’t punish him!”

Prince Ivan, ’twixt sleeping and waking, waxed very wroth with his tutor, and handed him over entirely to the Princess, saying —

“Deal with him as you please!”

The Princess ordered his feet to be cut off. Katoma submitted patiently to the outrage.

“Very good,” he thinks; “I shall suffer, it’s true; but the Prince also will know what to lead a wretched life is like!”

When both of Katoma’s feet had been cut off, the Princess glanced around, and saw that a tall tree-stump stood on one side; so she called her servants and ordered them to set him on that stump. But as for Prince Ivan, she tied him to the carriage by a cord, turned the horses round, and drove back to her own kingdom. Katoma was left sitting on the stump, weeping bitter tears.

“Farewell, Prince Ivan!” he cries; “you won’t forget me!”

Meanwhile Prince Ivan was running and bounding behind the carriage. He knew well enough by this time what a blunder he had made, but there was no turning back for him. When the Princess Anna the Fair arrived in her kingdom, she set Prince Ivan to take care of the cows. Every day he went afield with the herd at early morn, and in the evening he drove them back to the royal yard. At that hour the Princess was always sitting on the balcony, and looking out to see that the number of the cows were all right.

Katoma remained sitting on the stump one day, two days, three days, without anything to eat or drink. To get down was utterly impossible, it seemed as if he must die of starvation. But not far away from that place there was a dense forest. In that forest was living a mighty hero who was quite blind. The only way by which he could get himself food was this: whenever he perceived by the sense of smell that any animal was running past him, whether a hare, or a fox, or a bear, he immediately started in chase of it, caught it — and dinner was ready for him. The hero was exceedingly swift-footed, and there was not a single wild beast which could run away from him. Well, one day it fell out thus. A fox slunk past; the hero heard it, and was after it directly. It ran up to the tall stump, and turned sharp off on one-side; but the blind hero hurried on, took a spring, and thumped his forehead against the stump so hard that he knocked the stump out by the roots. Katoma fell to the ground, and asked:

“Who are you?”

“I’m a blind hero. I’ve been living in the forest for thirty years. The only way I can get my food is this: to catch some game or other, and cook it at a wood fire. If it had not been for that, I should have been starved to death long ago!”

“You haven’t been blind all your life?”

“No, not all my life; but Princess Anna the Fair put my eyes out!”

“There now, brother!” says Katoma; “and it’s thanks to her, too, that I’m left here without any feet. She cut them both off, the accursed one!”

The two heroes had a talk, and agreed to live together, and join in getting their food. The blind man says to the lame:

“Sit on my back and show me the way; I will serve you with my feet, and you me with your eyes.”

So he took the cripple and carried him home, and Katoma sat on his back, kept a look out all round, and cried out from time to time: “Right! Left! Straight on!” and so forth.

Well, they lived some time in the forest in that way, and caught hares, foxes, and bears for their dinner. One day the cripple says —

“Surely we can never go on living all our lives without a soul to speak to. I have heard that in such and such a town lives a rich merchant who has a daughter; and that merchant’s daughter is exceedingly kind to the poor and crippled. She gives alms to everyone. Suppose we carry her off, brother, and let her live here and keep house for us.”

The blind man took a cart, seated the cripple in it, and rattled it into the town, straight into the rich merchant’s courtyard. The merchant’s daughter saw them out of window, and immediately ran out, and came to give them alms. Approaching the cripple, she said:

“Take this, in Christ’s name, poor fellow!”

He seemed to be going to take the gift, but he seized her by the hand, pulled her into the cart, and called to the blind man, who ran off with it at such a pace that no one could catch him, even on horseback. The merchant sent people in pursuit — but no, they could not come up with him.

The heroes brought the merchant’s daughter into their forest hut, and said to her:

“Be in the place of a sister to us, live here and keep house for us; otherwise we poor sufferers will have no one to cook our meals or wash our shirts. God won’t desert you if you do that!”

The merchant’s daughter remained with them. The heroes respected her, loved her, acknowledged her as a sister. They used to be out hunting all day, but their adopted sister was always at home. She looked after all the housekeeping, prepared the meals, washed the linen.

But after a time a Baba Yaga took to haunting their hut and sucking the breasts of the merchant’s daughter. No sooner have the heroes gone off to the chase, than the Baba Yaga is there in a moment. Before long the fair maiden’s face began to fall away, and she grew weak and thin. The blind man could see nothing, but Katoma remarked that things weren’t going well. He spoke about it to the blind man, and they went together to their adopted sister, and began questioning her. But the Baba Yaga had strictly forbidden her to tell the truth. For a long time she was afraid to acquaint them with her trouble, for a long time she held out, but at last her brothers talked her over and she told them everything without reserve.

“Every time you go away to the chase,” says she, “there immediately appears in the cottage a very old woman with a most evil face, and long grey hair. And she sets me to dress her head, and meanwhile she sucks my breasts.”

“Ah!” says the blind man, “that’s a Baba Yaga. Wait a bit; we must treat her after her own fashion. To-morrow we won’t go to the chase, but we’ll try to entice her and lay hands upon her!”

So next morning the heroes didn’t go out hunting.

“Now then, Uncle Footless!” says the blind man, “you get under the bench, and lie there ever so still, and I’ll go into the yard and stand under the window. And as for you, sister, when the Baba Yaga comes, sit down just here, close by the window; and as you dress her hair, quietly separate the locks and throw them outside through the window. Just let me lay hold of her by those grey hairs of hers!”

What was said was done. The blind man laid hold of the Baba Yaga by her grey hair, and cried —

“Ho there, Uncle Katoma! Come out from under the bench, and lay hold of this viper of a woman, while I go into the hut!”

The Baba Yaga hears the bad news and tries to jump up to get her head free. (*Where are you off to? That’s no go, sure enough!*) She tugs and tugs, but cannot do herself any good!

Just then from under the bench crawled Uncle Katoma, fell upon her like a mountain of stone, took to strangling her until the heaven seemed to her to disappear. Then into the cottage bounded the blind man, crying to the cripple —

“Now we must heap up a great pile of wood, and consume this accursed one with fire, and fling her ashes to the wind!”

The Baba Yaga began imploring them:

“My fathers! my darlings! forgive me. I will do all that is right.”

“Very good, old witch! Then show us the fountain of healing and life-giving water!” said the heroes.

“Only don’t kill me, and I’ll show it you directly!”

Well, Katoma sat on the blind man’s back. The blind man took the Baba Yaga by her back hair, and she led them into the depths of the forest, brought them to a well, and said —

“That is the water that cures and gives life.”

“Look out, Uncle Katoma!” cried the blind man; “don’t make a blunder. If she tricks us now we shan’t get right all our lives!”

Katoma cut a green branch off a tree, and flung it into the well. The bough hadn't so much as reached the water before it all burst into a flame!

"Ha! so you're still up to your tricks," said the heroes, and began to strangle the Baba Yaga, with the intention of flinging her, the accursed one, into the fiery fount. More than ever did the Baba Yaga implore for mercy, swearing a great oath that she would not deceive them this time.

"On my troth I will bring you to good water," says she.

The heroes consented to give her one more trial, and she took them to another fount.

Uncle Katoma cut a dry spray from a tree, and flung it into the fount. The spray had not yet reached the water when it already turned green, budded, and put forth blossoms.

"Come now, that's good water!" said Katoma.

The blind man wetted his eyes with it, and saw directly. He lowered the,cripple into the water, and the lame man's feet grew again. Then they both rejoiced greatly, and said to one another, "Now the time has come for us to get all right! We'll get everything back again we used to have! Only first we must make an end of the Baba Yaga. If we were to pardon her now, we should always be unlucky; she'd be scheming mischief all her life."

Accordingly they went back to the fiery fount, and flung the Baba Yaga into it; didn't it soon make an end of her!

After this Katoma married the merchant's daughter, and the three companions went to the kingdom of Anna the Fair in order to rescue Prince Ivan. When they drew near to the capital, what should they see but Prince Ivan driving a herd of cows!

"Stop, herdsman!" says Katoma; "where are you driving these cows?"

"I'm driving them to the Princess's courtyard," replied the Prince. "The Princess always sees for herself whether all the cows are there."

"Here, herdsman; take my clothes and put them on, and I will put on yours and drive the cows."

“No, brother! that cannot be done. If the Princess found it out, I should suffer harm!”

“Never fear, nothing will happen! Katoma will guarantee you that.”

Prince Ivan sighed, and said —

“Ah, good man! If Katoma had been alive, I should not have been feeding these cows afield!”

Then Katoma disclosed to him who he was. Prince Ivan warmly embraced him and burst into tears.

“I never hoped even to see you again,” said he.

So they exchanged clothes. The tutor drove the cows to the Princess’s courtyard. Anna the Fair went into the balcony, looked to see if all the cows were there, and ordered them to be driven into the sheds. All the cows went into the sheds except the last one, which remained at the gate. Katoma sprang at it, exclaiming —

“What are you waiting for, dog’s-meat?”

Then he seized it by the tail, and pulled it so hard that he pulled the cow’s hide right off! The Princess saw this, and cried with a loud voice:

“What is that brute of a cowherd doing? Seize him and bring him to me!”

Then the servants seized Katoma and dragged him to the palace. He went with them, making no excuses, relying on himself. They brought him to the Princess. She looked at him and asked —

“Who are you? Where do you come from?”

“I am he whose feet you cut off and whom you set on a stump. My name is Katoma *dyadka*, oaken *shapka*.”

“Well,” thinks the Princess, “now that he’s got his feet back again, I must act straight-forwardly with him for the future.”

And she began to beseech him and the Prince to pardon her. She confessed all her sins, and swore an oath always to love Prince Ivan, and to obey him in all things. Prince Ivan forgave her, and began to live with her in peace and concord. The hero who had been blind remained with them, but Katoma and his wife went to the house of her father the rich merchant, and took up their abode under his roof.

34

PRINCESS HELENA THE FAIR

There lived in a certain land an old man of this kind who instructed his three sons in reading and writing and all book learning. Then said he to them:

“Now, my children! When I die, mind you come and read prayers over my grave.”

“Very good, father, very good,” they replied.

The two elder brothers were such fine strapping fellows! so tall and stout! But as for the youngest one, Ivan, he was like a half-grown lad or a half-fledged duckling, terribly inferior to the others. Well, their old father died. At that very time there came tidings from the King, that his daughter, the Princess Helena the Fair, had ordered a shrine to be built for her with twelve columns, with twelve rows of beams. In that shrine she was sitting upon a high throne, and awaiting her bridegroom, the bold youth who, with a single bound of his swift steed, should reach high enough to kiss her on the lips. A stir ran through the whole youth of the nation. They took to licking their lips, and scratching their heads, and wondering to whose share so great an honor would fall.

“Brothers!” said Vanyusha, “our father is dead; which of us is to read prayers over his grave?”

“Whoever feels inclined, let him go!” answered the brothers.

So Vanya went. But as for his elder brothers they did nothing but exercise their horses, and curl their hair, and dye their mustaches.

The second night came.

“Brothers!” said Vanya, “I’ve done my share of reading. It’s your turn now; which of you will go?”

“Whoever likes can go and read. We’ve business to look after; don’t you meddle.”

And they cocked their caps, and shouted, and whooped, and flew this way, and shot that way, and roved about the open country.

So Vanyusha read prayers this time also — and on the third night, too.

Well, his brothers got ready their horses, combed out their mustaches, and prepared to go next morning to test their mettle before the eyes of Helena the Fair.

“Shall we take the youngster?” they thought. “No, no. What would be the good of him? He’d make folks laugh and put us to confusion; let’s go by ourselves.”

So away they went. But Vanyusha wanted very much to have a look at the Princess Helena the Fair. He cried, cried bitterly; and went out to his father’s grave. And his father heard him in his coffin, and came out to him, shook the damp earth off his body, and said:

“Don’t grieve, Vanya. I’ll help you in your trouble.”

And immediately the old man drew himself up and straightened himself, and called aloud and whistled with a ringing voice, with a shrill whistle.

From goodness knows whence appeared a horse, the earth quaking beneath it, a flame rushing from its ears and nostrils. To and fro it flew, and then stood still before the old man, as if rooted in the ground, and cried,

“What are thy commands?”

Vanya crept into one of the horse’s ears and out of the other, and turned into such a hero as no skazka can tell of, no pen describe! He mounted the horse, set his arms akimbo, and flew, just like a falcon, straight to the home of the Princess Helena. With a wave of his hand, with a bound aloft, he only failed by the breadth of two rows of beams. Back again he turned, galloped up, leapt aloft, and got within one beam-row’s breadth. Once more he turned, once more he wheeled, then shot past the eye like a streak of fire, took an accurate aim, and kissed the fair Helena right on the lips!

“Who is he? Who is he? Stop him! Stop him!” was the cry. Not a trace of him was to be found!

Away he galloped to his father’s grave, let the horse go free, prostrated himself on the earth, and besought his father’s counsel. And the old man held counsel with him.

When he got home he behaved as if he hadn’t been anywhere. His brothers talked away, describing where they had been, what they had seen, and he listened to them as of old.

The next day there was a gathering again. In the princely halls there were more boyars and nobles than a single glance could take in. The elder brothers rode there. Their younger brother went there too, but on foot, meekly and modestly, just as if he hadn’t kissed the Princess, and seated himself in a distant corner. The Princess Helena asked for her bridegroom, wanted to show him to the world at large, wanted to give him half her kingdom; but the bridegroom did not put in an appearance! Search was made for him among the boyars, among the generals; everyone was examined in his turn — but with no result! Meanwhile, Vanya looked on, smiling and chuckling, and waiting till the bride should come to him herself.

“I pleased her then,” says he, “when I appeared as a gay gallant; now let her fall in love with me in my plain caftan.”

Then up she rose, looked around with bright eyes that shed a radiance on all who stood there, and saw and knew her bridegroom, and made him take his seat by her side, and speedily was wedded to him. And he — good heavens! how clever he turned out, and how brave, and what a handsome fellow! Only see him mount his flying steed, give his cap a cock, and stick his elbows akimbo! why, you’d say he was a king, a born king! you’d never suspect he once was only Vanyusha.

35

EMILIAN THE FOOL

There were once three brothers, of whom two were sharp-witted, but the third was a fool. The elder brothers set off to sell their goods in the towns down the river, and said to the fool:

“Now mind, fool! obey our wives, and pay them respect as if they were your own mothers. We’ll buy you red boots, and a red caftan, and a red shirt.”

The fool said to them:

“Very good; I will pay them respect.”

They gave the fool their orders and went away to the downstream towns; but the fool stretched himself on top of the stove and remained lying there. His brothers’ wives say to him —

“What are you about, fool! your brothers ordered you to pay us respect, and in return for that each of them was going to bring you a present, but there you lie on the stove and don’t do a bit of work. Go and fetch some water, at all events.”

The fool took a couple of pails and went to fetch the water. As he scooped it up, a pike happened to get into his pail. Says the fool:

“Glory to God! now I will cook this pike, and will eat it all myself; I won’t give a bit of it to my sisters-in-law. I’m savage with them!”

The pike says to him with a human voice:

"Don't eat me, fool! if you'll put me back again into the water you shall have good luck!"

Says the fool, "What sort of good luck shall I get from you?"

"Why, this sort of good luck: whatever you say, that shall be done. Say, for instance, 'By the Pike's command, at my request, go home, ye pails, and be set in your places.'"

As soon as the fool had said this, the pails immediately went home of their own accord and became set in their places. The sisters-in-law looked and wondered.

"What sort of a fool is this!" they say. "Why, he's so knowing, you see, that his pails have come home and gone to their places of their own accord!"

The fool came back and lay down on the stove. Again did his brothers' wives begin saying to him —

"What are you lying on the stove for, fool? there's no wood for the fire; go and fetch some."

The fool took two axes and got into a sledge, but without harnessing a horse to it.

"By the Pike's command," he says, "at my request, drive, into the forest, O sledge!"

Away went the sledge at a rattling pace, as if urged on by some one. The fool had to pass by a town, and the people he met were jammed into corners by his horseless sledge in a way that was perfectly awful. They all began crying out:

"Stop him! Catch him!"

But they couldn't lay hands on him. The fool drove into the forest, got out of the sledge, sat down on a log, and said —

"One of you axes fell the trees, while the other cuts them up into billets."

Well, the firewood was cut up and piled on the sledge. Then says the fool:

"Now then, one of you axes! go and cut me a cudgel, as heavy a one as I can lift."

The axe went and cut him a cudgel, and the cudgel came and lay on top of the load.

The fool took his seat and drove off. He drove by the town, but the townspeople had met together and had been looking out for him for ever so long. So they stopped the fool, laid hands upon him, and began pulling him about. Says the fool —

"By the Pike's command, at my request, go, O cudgel, and bestir thyself."

Out jumped the cudgel, and took to thumping and smashing, and knocked over ever such a lot of people. There they lay on the ground, strewed about like so many sheaves of corn. The fool got clear of them and drove home, heaped up the wood, and then lay down on the stove.

Meanwhile, the townspeople got up a petition against him, and denounced him to the King, saying:

"Folks say there's no getting hold of him the way we tried; we must entice him by cunning, and the best way of all will be to promise him a red shirt, and a red caftan, and red boots."

So the King's runners came for the fool.

"Go to the King," they say, "he will give you red boots, a red caftan, and a red shirt."

Well, the fool said:

"By the Pike's command, at my request, do thou, O stove, go to the King!"

He was seated on the stove at the time. The stove went; the fool arrived at the King's.

The King was going to put him to death, but he had a daughter, and she took a tremendous liking to the fool. So she began begging her father to give her in marriage to the fool. Her father flew into a passion. He had them married, and then ordered them both to be placed in a tub, and the tub to be tarred over and thrown into the water; all which was done.

Long did the tub float about on the sea. His wife began to beseech the fool:

“Do something to get us cast on shore!”

“By the Pike’s command, at my request,” said the fool, “cast this tub ashore and tear it open!”

He and his wife stepped out of the tub. Then she again began imploring him to build some sort of a house. The fool said:

“By the Pike’s command, at my request, let a marble palace be built, and let it stand immediately opposite the King’s palace!”

This was all done in an instant. In the morning the King saw the new palace, and sent to enquire who it was that lived in it. As soon as he learnt that his daughter lived there, that very minute he summoned her and her husband. They came. The King pardoned them, and they all began living together and flourishing.

36

THE WITCH GIRL

Late one evening, a Cossack rode into a village, pulled up at its last cottage, and cried —

“Heigh, master! will you let me spend the night here?”

“Come in, if you don’t fear death!”

“What sort of a reply is that?” thought the Cossack, as he put his horse up in the stable. After he had given it its food he went into the cottage. There he saw its inmates, men and women and little children, all sobbing and crying and praying to God; and when they had done praying, they began putting on clean shirts.

“What are you crying about?” asked the Cossack.

“Why you see,” replied the master of the house, “in our village Death goes about at night. Into whatsoever cottage she looks, there, next morning, one has to put all the people who lived in it into coffins, and carry them off to the graveyard. To-night it’s our turn.”

“Never fear, master! ‘Without God’s will, no pig gets its fill!’”

The people of the house lay down to sleep; but the Cossack was on the look-out and never closed an eye. Exactly at midnight the window opened. At the window appeared a witch all in white. She took a sprinkler, passed her arm into the cottage, and was just on the point of sprinkling — when the Cossack suddenly gave his sabre a sweep, and cut her arm off close to the shoulder. The witch howled, squealed, yelped like a dog, and fled away. But the Cossack picked up the severed arm, hid it under his cloak, washed away the stains of blood, and lay down to sleep.

Next morning the master and mistress awoke, and saw that everyone, without a single exception, was alive and well, and they were delighted beyond expression.

“If you like,” says the Cossack, “I’ll show you Death! Call together all the Sotniks and Desyatniks as quickly as possible, and let’s go through the village and look for her.”

Straightway all the Sotniks and Desyatniks came together and went from house to house. In this one there’s nothing, in that one there’s nothing, until at last they come to the Ponomar’s cottage.

“Is all your family present?” asks the Cossack.

“No, my own! one of my daughters is ill. She’s lying on the stove there.”

The Cossack looked towards the stove — one of the girl’s arms had evidently been cut off. Thereupon he told the whole story of what had taken place, and he brought out and showed the arm which had been cut off. The commune rewarded the Cossack with a sum of money, and ordered that witch to be drowned.

37

THE HEADLESS PRINCESS

In a certain country there lived a King; and this King had a daughter who was an enchantress. Near the royal palace there dwelt a priest, and the priest had a boy of ten years old, who went every day to an old woman to learn reading and writing. Now it happened one day that he came away from his lessons late in the evening, and as he passed by the palace he looked in at one of the windows. At that window the Princess happened to be sitting and dressing herself. She took off her head, lathered it with soap, washed it with clean water, combed its hair, plaited its long back braid, and then put it back again in its proper place. The boy was lost in wonder.

“What a clever creature!” thinks he. “A downright witch!”

And when he got home he began telling every one how he had seen the Princess without her head.

All of a sudden the King’s daughter fell grievously ill, and she sent for her father, and strictly enjoined him, saying —

“If I die, make the priest’s son read the psalter over me three nights running.”

The Princess died; they placed her in a coffin, and carried it to church. Then the king summoned the priest, and said —

“Have you got a son?”

“I have, your majesty.”

“Well then,” said the King, “let him read the psalter over my daughter three nights running.”

The priest returned home, and told his son to get ready. In the morning the priest’s son went to his lessons, and sat over his book looking ever so gloomy.

“What are you unhappy about?” asked the old woman.

“How can I help being unhappy, when I’m utterly done for?”

“Why what’s the matter? Speak out plainly.”

“Well then, granny, I’ve got to read psalms over the princess, and, do you know, she’s a witch!”

“I knew that before you did! But don’t be frightened, there’s a knife for you. When you go into the church, trace a circle round you; then read away from your psalter and don’t look behind you. Whatever happens there, whatever horrors may appear, mind your own business and go on reading, reading. But if you look behind you, it will be all over with you!”

In the evening the boy went to the church, traced a circle round him with the knife, and betook himself to the psalter. Twelve o’clock struck. The lid of the coffin flew up; the Princess arose, leapt out, and cried —

“Now I’ll teach you to go peeping through my windows, and telling people what you saw!”

She began rushing at the priest’s son, but she couldn’t anyhow break into the circle. Then she began to conjure up all sorts of horrors. But in spite of all that she did, he went on reading and reading, and never gave a look round. And at daybreak the Princess rushed at her coffin, and tumbled into it at full length, all of a heap.

The next night everything went on just the same. The priest’s son wasn’t a bit afraid, went on reading without a stop right up to daybreak, and in the morning went to the old woman. She asked him —

“Well! have you seen horrors?”

“Yes, granny!”

“It will be still more horrible this time. Here’s a hammer for you and four nails. Knock them into the four corners of the coffin, and when you begin reading the psalter, stick up the hammer in front of you.”

In the evening the priest’s son went to the church, and did everything just as the old woman had told him. Twelve o’clock struck, the coffin lid fell to the ground, the Princess jumped up and began tearing from side to side, and threatening the youth. Then she conjured up horrors, this time worse than before. It seemed to him as if a fire had broken out in the church; all the walls were wrapped in flames! But he held his ground and went on reading, never once looking behind him. Just before daybreak the Princess rushed to her coffin — then the fire seemed to go out immediately, and all the deviltry vanished!

In the morning the King came to the church, and saw that the coffin was open, and in the coffin lay the princess, face downwards.

“What’s the meaning of all this?” says he.

The lad told him everything that had taken place. Then the king gave orders that an aspen stake should be driven into his daughter’s breast, and that her body should be thrust into a hole in the ground. But he rewarded the priest’s son with a heap of money and various lands.

38

THE SOLDIER’S MIDNIGHT WATCH

Once upon a time there was a Soldier who served God and the great Gosudar for fifteen years, without ever setting eyes on his parents. At the end of that time there came an order from the Tsar to grant leave to the soldiers — to twenty-five of each company at a time — to go and see their families. Together with the rest our Soldier, too, got leave to go, and set off to pay a visit to his home in the government of Kief. After a time he reached Kief, visited the *Lavra*, prayed to God, bowed down before the holy relics, and then started again for his birthplace, a provincial town not far off. Well, he walked and walked. Suddenly there happens to meet him a fair maiden who was the daughter of a merchant in that same town; a most remarkable beauty. Now everyone knows that if a soldier catches sight of a pretty girl, nothing will make him pass her by quietly, but he hooks on to her somehow or other. And so this Soldier gets alongside of the merchant’s daughter, and says to her jokingly —

“How now, fair damsel! not broken in to harness yet?”

“God knows, soldier, who breaks in whom,” replies the girl. “I may do it to you, or you to me.”

So saying she laughed and went her way. Well, the Soldier arrived at home, greeted his family, and rejoiced greatly at finding they were all in good health.

Now he had an old grandfather, as white as a *lun*, who had lived a hundred years and a bit. The Soldier was gossiping with him, and said:

"As I was coming home, grandfather, I happened to meet an uncommonly fine girl, and, sinner that I am, I chaffed her, and she said to me:

"'God knows, soldier, whether you'll break me in to harness, or I'll break you.'"

"Eh, sirs! whatever have you done? Why that's the daughter of our merchant here, an awful witch! She's sent more than one fine young fellow out of the white world."

"Well, well! I'm not one of the timid ones, either! You won't frighten me in a hurry. We'll wait and see what God will send."

"No, no, grandson!" says the grandfather. "If you don't listen to me, you won't be alive to-morrow!"

"Here's a nice fix!" says the Soldier.

"Yes, such a fix that you've never known anything half so awful, even when soldiering."

"What must I do then, grandfather?"

"Why this. Provide yourself with a bridle, and take a thick aspen cudgel, and sit quietly in the izba — don't stir a step anywhere. During the night she will come running in, and if she manages to say before you can 'Stand still, my steed!' you will straightway turn into a horse. Then she will jump upon your back, and will make you gallop about until she has ridden you to death. But if you manage to say before she speaks, 'Tprru! stand still, jade!' she will be turned into a mare. Then you must bridle her and jump on her back. She will run away with you over hill and dale, but do you hold your own; hit her over the head with the aspen cudgel, and go on hitting her until you beat her to death."

The Soldier hadn't expected such a job as this, but there was no help for it. So he followed his grandfather's advice, provided himself with a bridle and an aspen cudgel, took his seat in a corner, and waited to see what would happen. At the midnight hour the passage door creaked and the sound of steps was heard; the witch was coming! The moment the door of the room opened, the Soldier immediately cried out —

“Tprru! stand still, jade!”

The witch turned into a mare, and he bridled her, led her into the yard, and jumped on her back. The mare carried him off over hills and dales and ravines, and did all she could to try and throw her rider. But no! the Soldier stuck on tight, and thumped her over the head like anything with the aspen cudgel, and went on treating her with a taste of the cudgel until he knocked her off her feet, and then pitched into her as she lay on the ground, gave her another half-dozen blows or so, and at last beat her to death.

By daybreak he got home.

“Well, my friend! how have you got on?” asks his grandfather.

“Glory be to God, grandfather! I’ve beaten her to death!”

“All right! now lie down and go to sleep.”

The Soldier lay down and fell into a deep slumber. Towards evening the old man awoke him —

“Get up, grandson.”

He got up.

“What’s to be done now? As the merchant’s daughter is dead, you see, her father will come after you, and will bid you to his house to read psalms over the dead body.”

“Well, grandfather, am I to go, or not?”

“If you go, there’ll be an end of you; and if you don’t go, there’ll be an end of you! Still, it’s best to go.”

“But if anything happens, how shall I get out of it?”

“Listen, grandson! When you go to the merchant’s he will offer you brandy; don’t you drink much — drink only a moderate allowance. Afterwards the merchant will take you into the room in which his daughter is lying in her coffin, and will lock you in there. You will read out from the psalter all the evening, and up to midnight. Exactly at midnight a strong wind will suddenly begin to blow, the coffin will begin to shake, its lid will fall off. Well, as soon as these horrors begin, jump on to the stove as quick as you can, squeeze yourself into a corner, and silently offer up prayers. She won't find you there."

Half an hour later came the merchant, and besought the Soldier, crying:

"Ah, Soldier! there's a daughter of mine dead; come and read the psalter over her."

The Soldier took a psalter and went off to the merchant's house. The merchant was greatly pleased, seated him at his table, and began offering him brandy to drink. The Soldier drank, but only moderately, and declined to drink any more. The merchant took him by the hand and led him to the room in which the corpse lay.

"Now then," he says, "read away at your psalter."

Then he went out and locked the door. There was no help for it, so the Soldier took to his psalter and read and read. Exactly at midnight there was a great blast of wind, the coffin began to rock, its lid flew off. The Soldier jumped quickly on to the stove, hid himself in a corner, guarded himself by a sign of the cross, and began whispering prayers. Meanwhile the witch had leapt out of the coffin, and was rushing about from side to side — now here, now there. Then there came running up to her countless swarms of evil spirits; the room was full of them!

"What are you looking for?" say they.

"A soldier. He was reading here a moment ago, and now he's vanished!"

The devils eagerly set to work to hunt him up. They searched and searched, they rummaged in all the corners. At last they cast their eyes on the stove; at that moment, luckily for the Soldier, the cocks began to crow. In the twinkling of an eye all the devils had vanished, and the witch lay all of a heap on the floor. The Soldier got down from the stove, laid her body in the coffin, covered it up all right with the lid, and betook himself again to his psalter. At daybreak came the master of the house, opened the door, and said —

“Hail, Soldier!”

“I wish you good health, master merchant.”

“Have you spent the night comfortably?”

“Glory be to God! yes.”

“There are fifty roubles for you, but come again, friend, and read another night.”

“Very good, I’ll come.”

The Soldier returned home, lay down on the bench, and slept till evening. Then he awoke and said —

“Grandfather, the merchant bid me go and read the psalter another night. Should I go or not?”

“If you go, you won’t remain alive, and if you don’t go, just the same! But you’d better go. Don’t drink much brandy, drink just what is right; and when the wind blows, and the coffin begins to rock, slip straight into the stove. There no one will find you.”

The Soldier got ready and went to the merchant’s, who seated him at table, and began plying him with brandy. Afterwards he took him to where the corpse was, and locked him into the room.

The Soldier went on reading, reading. Midnight came, the wind blew, the coffin began to rock, the coffin lid fell afar off on the ground. He was into the stove in a moment. Out jumped the witch and began rushing about; round her swarmed devils, the room was full of them!

“What are you looking for?” they cry.

“Why, there he was reading a moment ago, and now he’s vanished out of sight. I can’t find him.”

The devils flung themselves on the stove.

“Here’s the place,” they cried, “where he was last night!”

There was the place, but he wasn’t there! This way and that they rushed. Suddenly the cocks began to crow, the devils vanished, the witch lay stretched on the floor.

The Soldier stayed awhile to recover his breath, crept out of the stove, put the merchant’s daughter back in her coffin, and took to reading the psalter again. Presently he looks round, the day has already dawned. His host arrives:

“Hail, Soldier!” says he.

“I wish you good health, master merchant.”

“Has the night passed comfortably?”

“Glory be to God! yes.”

“Come along here, then.”

The merchant led him out of the room, gave him a hundred roubles, and said —

“Come, please, and read here a third night; I sha’n’t treat you badly.”

“Good, I’ll come.”

The Soldier returned home.

“Well, grandson, what has God sent you?” says his grandfather.

“Nothing much, grandfather! The merchant told me to come again. Should I go or not?”

“If you go, you won’t remain alive, and if you don’t go, you won’t remain alive! But you’d better go.”

“But if anything happens where must I hide?”

“I’ll tell you, grandson. Buy yourself a frying-pan, and hide it so that the merchant sha’n’t see it. When you go to his house he’ll try to force a lot of brandy on you. You look out, don’t drink much, drink just what you can stand. At midnight, as soon as the wind begins to roar, and the coffin to rock, do you that very moment climb on to the stove-pipe, and cover yourself over with the frying-pan. There no one will find you out.”

The Soldier had a good sleep, bought himself a frying-pan, hid it under his cloak, and towards evening went to the merchant's house. The merchant seated him at table and took to plying him with liquor — tried every possible kind of invitation and cajolery on him.

"No," says the Soldier, "that will do. I've had my whack. I won't have any more."

"Well, then, if you won't drink, come along and read your psalter."

The merchant took him to his dead daughter, left him alone with her, and locked the door.

The Soldier read and read. Midnight came, the wind blew, the coffin began to rock, the cover flew afar off. The Soldier jumped up on the stove-pipe, covered himself with the frying-pan, protected himself with a sign of the cross, and awaited what was going to happen. Out jumped the witch and began rushing about. Round her came swarming countless devils, the izba was full of them! They rushed about in search of the Soldier; they looked into the stove —

"Here's the place," they cried, "where he was last night."

"There's the place, but he's not there."

This way and that they rush, — cannot see him anywhere. Presently there stepped across the threshold a very old devil.

"What are you looking for?"

"The Soldier. He was reading here a moment ago, and now he's disappeared."

"Ah! no eyes! And who's that sitting on the stove-pipe there?"

The Soldier's heart thumped like anything; he all but tumbled down on the ground!

"There he is, sure enough!" cried the devils, "but how are we to settle him. Surely it's impossible to reach him there?"

"Impossible, forsooth! Run and lay your hands on a candle-end which has been lighted without a blessing having been uttered over it."

In an instant the devils brought the candle-end, piled up a lot of wood right under the stove-pipe, and set it alight. The flame leapt high into the air, the Soldier began to roast: first one foot, then the other, he drew up under him.

“Now,” thinks he, “my death has come!”

All of a sudden, luckily for him, the cocks began to crow, the devils vanished, the witch fell flat on the floor. The soldier jumped down from the stove-pipe, and began putting out the fire. When he had put it out he set every thing to rights, placed the merchant’s daughter in her coffin, covered it up with the lid, and betook himself to reading the psalter. At daybreak came the merchant, and listened at the door to find out whether the Soldier was alive or not. When he heard his voice he opened the door and said —

“Hail, Soldier!”

“I wish you good health, master merchant.”

“Have you passed the night comfortably?”

“Glory be to God, I’ve seen nothing bad.”

The merchant gave him a hundred and fifty roubles, and said —

“You’ve done a deal of work, Soldier! do a little more. Come here to-night and carry my daughter to the graveyard.”

“Good, I’ll come.”

“Well, friend, what has God given?”

“Glory be to God, grandfather, I’ve got off safe! The merchant has asked me to be at his house to-night, to carry his daughter to the graveyard. Should I go or not?”

“If you go, you won’t be alive, and if you don’t go, you won’t be alive. But you must go; it will be better so.”

“But what must I do? tell me.”

“Well this. When you get to the merchant’s, everything will be ready there. At ten o’clock the relations of the deceased will begin taking leave of her; and afterwards they will fasten three iron hoops round the coffin, and place it on the funeral car; and at eleven o’clock they will tell you to take it to the graveyard. Do you drive off with the coffin, but keep a sharp look-out. One of the hoops will snap. Never fear, keep your seat bravely; a second will snap, keep your seat all the same; but when the third hoop snaps, instantly jump on to the horse’s back and through the *duga* (the wooden arch above its neck), and run away backwards. Do that, and no harm will come to you.”

The Soldier lay down to sleep, slept till the evening, and then went to the merchant’s. At ten o’clock the relations began taking leave of the deceased; then they set to work to fasten iron hoops round the coffin. They fastened the hoops, set the coffin on the funeral car, and cried —

“Now then, Soldier! drive off, and God speed you!”

The Soldier got into the car and set off: at first he drove slowly, but as soon as he was out of sight he let the horse go full split. Away he galloped, but all the while he kept an eye on the coffin. Snap went one hoop — and then another. The witch began gnashing her teeth.

“Stop!” she cried, “you sha’n’t escape! I shall eat you up in another moment.”

“No, dovey! Soldiers are crown property; no one is allowed to eat them.”

Here the last hoop snapped: on to the horse jumped the Soldier, and through the *duga*, and then set off running backwards. The witch leapt out of the coffin and tore away in pursuit. Lighting on the Soldier’s footsteps she followed them back to the horse, ran right round it, saw the soldier wasn’t there, and set off again in pursuit of him. She ran and ran, lighted again on his footsteps, and again came back to the horse. Utterly at her wit’s end, she did the same thing some ten times over. Suddenly the cocks began crowing. There lay the witch stretched out flat on the road! The Soldier picked her up, put her in the coffin, slammed the lid down, and drove her to the graveyard. When he got there he lowered the coffin into the grave, shovelled the earth on top of it, and returned to the merchant’s house.

“I’ve done it all,” says he; “catch hold of your horse.”

When the merchant saw the Soldier he stared at him with wide-open eyes.

“Well, Soldier!” said he, “I know a good deal! and as to my daughter, we needn’t speak of her. She was awfully sharp, she was! But, really, you know more than we do!”

“Come now, master merchant! pay me for my work.”

So the merchant handed him over two hundred roubles. The soldier took them, thanked him, and then went home, and gave his family a feast.

39

THE WARLOCK

There was once a Moujik, and he had three married sons. He lived a long while, and was looked upon by the village as a *Koldun*, or wizard. When he was about to die, he gave orders that his sons' wives should keep watch over him after his death for three nights, taking one night apiece; that his body should be placed in the outer chamber, and that his sons' wives should spin wool to make him a caftan. He ordered, moreover, that no cross should be placed upon him, and that none should be worn by his daughters-in-law.

Well, that same night the eldest daughter-in-law took her seat beside him with some grey wool, and began spinning. Midnight arrives. Says the father-in-law from his coffin:

"Daughter-in-law, art thou there?"

She was terribly frightened, but answered, "I am." "Art thou sitting?" "I sit." "Dost thou spin?" "I spin." "Grey wool?" "Grey." "For a caftan?" "For a caftan."

He made a movement towards her. Then a second time he asked again —

"Daughter-in-law, art thou there?"

"I am." "Art thou sitting?" "I sit." "Dost thou spin?" "I spin." "Grey wool?" "Grey." "For a caftan?" "For a caftan."

She shrank into the corner. He moved again, came a couple of yards nearer her.

A third time he made a movement. She offered up no prayer. He strangled her, and then lay down again in his coffin.

His sons removed her body, and next evening, in obedience to his paternal behest, they sent another of his daughters-in-law to keep watch. To her just the same thing happened: he strangled her as he had done the first one.

But the third was sharper than the other two. She declared she had taken off her cross, but in reality she kept it on. She took her seat and spun, but said prayers to herself all the while.

Midnight arrives. Says her father-in-law from his coffin —

“Daughter-in-law, art thou there?”

“I am,” she replies. “Art thou sitting?” “I sit.” “Dost thou spin?” “I spin.” “Grey wool?” “Grey.” “For a caftan?” “For a caftan.”

Just the same took place a second time. The third time, just as he was going to rush at her, she laid the cross upon him. He fell down and died. She looked into the coffin; there lay ever so much money. The father-in-law wanted to take it away with him, or, at all events, that only some one who could outdo him in cunning should get it.

40

THE FOX-PHYSICIAN

There once was an old couple. The old man planted a cabbage-head in the cellar under the floor of his cottage; the old woman planted one in the ash-hole. The old woman's cabbage, in the ash-hole, withered away entirely; but the old man's grew and grew, grew up to the floor. The old man took his hatchet and cut a hole in the floor above the cabbage. The cabbage went on growing again; grew, grew right up to the ceiling. Again the old man took his hatchet and cut a hole in the ceiling above the cabbage. The cabbage grew and grew, grew right up to the sky. How was the old man to get a look at the head of the cabbage? He began climbing up the cabbage-stalk, climbed and climbed, climbed and climbed, climbed right up to the sky, cut a hole in the sky, and crept through. There he sees a mill standing. The mill gives a turn — out come a pie and a cake with a pot of stewed grain on top.

The old man ate his fill, drank his fill, and then lay down to sleep. When he had slept enough he slid down to earth again, and cried:

"Old woman! why, old woman! how one does live up in heaven! There's a mill there — every time it turns, out come a pie and a cake, with a pot of *kasha* on top!"

"How can I get there, old man?"

"Slip into this sack, old woman. I'll carry you up."

The old woman thought a bit, and then got into the sack. The old man took the sack in his teeth, and began climbing up to heaven. He climbed and climbed, long did he climb. The old woman got tired of waiting and asked:

“Is it much farther, old man?”

“We’ve half the way to go still.”

Again he climbed and climbed, climbed and climbed. A second time the old woman asked:

“Is it much farther, old man?”

The old man was just beginning to say: “Not much farther —” when the sack slipped from between his teeth, and the old woman fell to the ground and was smashed all to pieces. The old man slid down the cabbage-stalk and picked up the sack. But it had nothing in it but bones, and those broken very small. The old man went out of his house and wept bitterly.

Presently a fox met him.

“What are you crying about, old man?”

“How can I help crying? My old woman is smashed to pieces.”

“Hold your noise! I’ll cure her.”

The old man fell at the fox’s feet.

“Only cure her! I’ll pay whatever is wanted.”

“Well, then, heat the bath-room, carry the old woman there along with a bag of oatmeal and a pot of butter, and then stand outside the door; but don’t look inside.”

The old man heated the bath-room, carried in what was wanted, and stood outside at the door. But the fox went into the bath-room, shut the door, and began washing the old woman’s remains; washed and washed, and kept looking about her all the time.

“How’s my old woman getting on?” asked the old man.

“Beginning to stir!” replied the fox, who then ate up the old woman, collected her bones and piled them up in a corner, and set to work to knead a hasty pudding.

The old man waited and waited. Presently he asked;

“How’s my old woman getting on?”

“Resting a bit!” cried the fox, as she gobbled up the hasty pudding.

When she had finished it she cried:

“Old man! open the door wide.”

He opened it, and the fox sprang out of the bath-room and ran off home. The old man went into the bath-room and looked about him. Nothing was to be seen but the old woman’s bones under the bench — and those picked so clean! As for the oatmeal and the butter, they had all been eaten up. So the old man was left alone and in poverty.

41

THE FIDDLER IN HELL

There was a certain moujik who had three sons. His life was a prosperous one, and he laid by money enough to fill two pots. The one he buried in his corn-kiln, the other under the gate of his farmyard. Well, the moujik died, and never said a word about the money to any one. One day there was a festival in the village. A fiddler was on his way to the revel when, all of a sudden, he sank into the earth — sank right through and tumbled into hell, lighting exactly there where the rich moujik was being tormented.

"Hail, friend!" says the Fiddler.

"It's an ill wind that's brought you hither!" answers the moujik; "this is hell, and in hell here I sit."

"What was it brought you here, uncle?"

"It was money! I had much money: I gave none to the poor, two pots of it did I bury underground. See now, they are going to torment me, to beat me with sticks, to tear me with nails."

"Whatever shall I do?" cried the Fiddler. "Perhaps they'll take to torturing me too!"

"If you go and sit on the stove behind the chimney-pipe, and don't eat anything for three years — then you will remain safe."

The Fiddler hid behind the stove-pipe. Then came fiends, and they began to beat the rich moujik, reviling him the while, and saying:

“There’s for thee, O rich man. Pots of money didst thou bury but thou couldst not hide them. There didst thou bury them that we might not be able to keep watch over them. At the gate people are always riding about, the horses crush our heads with their hoofs, and in the corn-kiln we get beaten with flails.”

As soon as the fiends had gone away the moujik said to the Fiddler:

“If you get out of here, tell my children to dig up the money — one pot is buried at the gate, and the other in the corn-kiln — and to distribute it among the poor.”

Afterwards there came a whole roomful of evil ones, and they asked the rich moujik:

“What have you got here that smells so Russian?”

“You have been in Russia and brought away a Russian smell with you,” replied the moujik.

“How could that be?” they said. Then they began looking, they found the Fiddler, and they shouted:

“Ha, ha, ha! Here’s a Fiddler.”

They pulled him off the stove, and set him to work fiddling. He played three years, though it seemed to him only three days. Then he got tired and said:

“Here’s a wonder! After playing a whole evening I used always to find all my fiddle-strings snapped. But now, though I’ve been playing for three whole days, they are all sound. May the Lord grant us his blessing!”

No sooner had he uttered these words than every one of the strings snapped.

“There now, brothers!” says the Fiddler, “you can see for yourselves. The strings are snapped; I’ve nothing to play on!”

“Wait a bit!” said one of the fiends. “I’ve got two hanks of catgut; I’ll fetch them for you.”

He ran off and fetched them. The Fiddler took the strings, screwed them up, and again uttered the words:

“May the Lord grant us his blessing!”

In a moment snap went both hanks.

“No, brothers!” said the Fiddler, “your strings don’t suit me. I’ve got some of my own at home; by your leave I’ll go for them.”

The fiends wouldn’t let him go. “You wouldn’t come back,” they say.

“Well, if you won’t trust me, send some one with me as an escort.”

The fiends chose one of their number, and sent him with the Fiddler. The Fiddler got back to the village. There he could hear that, in the farthest cottage, a wedding was being celebrated.

“Let’s go to the wedding!” he cried.

“Come along!” said the fiend.

They entered the cottage. Everyone there recognized the Fiddler and cried:

“Where have you been hiding these three years?”

“I have been in the other world!” he replied.

They sat there and enjoyed themselves for some time. Then the fiend beckoned to the Fiddler, saying, “It’s time to be off!” But the Fiddler replied: “Wait a little longer! Let me fiddle away a bit and cheer up the young people.” And so they remained sitting there till the cocks began to crow. Then the fiend disappeared.

After that, the Fiddler began to talk to the sons of the rich moujik, and said:

“Your father bids you dig up the money — one potful is buried at the gate and the other in the corn-kiln — and distribute the whole of it among the poor.”

Well, they dug up both the pots, and began to distribute the money among the poor. But the more they gave away the money, the more did it increase. Then they carried out the pots to a crossway. Every one who passed by took out of them as much money as his hand could grasp, and yet the money wouldn’t come to an end. Then they presented a petition to the Emperor, and he ordained as follows. There was a certain town, the road to which was a very roundabout one. It was some fifty versts long, whereas if it had been made in a straight line it would not have been more than five. And so the Emperor ordained that a bridge should be made the whole way. Well, they built a bridge five versts long, and this piece of work cleared out both the pots.

About that time a certain maid bore a son and deserted him in his infancy. The child neither ate nor drank for three years and an angel of God always went about with him. Well, this child came to the bridge, and cried:

“Ah! what a glorious bridge! God grant the kingdom of heaven to him at whose cost it was built!”

The Lord heard this prayer, and ordered his angels to release the rich moujik from the depths of hell.

42

THE RIDE ON THE GRAVESTONE

Late one evening a certain artisan happened to be returning home from a jovial feast in a distant village. There met him on the way an old friend, one who had been dead some ten years.

“Good health to you!” said the dead man.

“I wish you good health!” replied the reveller, and straight way forgot that his acquaintance had ever so long ago bidden the world farewell.

“Let’s go to my house. We’ll quaff a cup or two once more.”

“Come along. On such a happy occasion as this meeting of ours, we may as well have a drink.”

They arrived at a dwelling and there they drank and revelled.

“Now then, good-bye! It’s time for me to go home,” said the artisan.

“Stay a bit. Where do you want to go now? Spend the night here with me.”

“No, brother! don’t ask me; it cannot be. I’ve business to do to-morrow, so I must get home as early as possible.”

“Well, good-bye! but why should you walk? Better get on my horse; it will carry you home quickly.”

“Thanks! let’s have it.”

He got on its back, and was carried off — just as a whirlwind flies! All of a sudden a cock crew. It was awful! All around were graves, and the rider found he had a gravestone under him!

43

THE TWO FRIENDS

In the days of old there lived in a certain village two young men. They were great friends, went to *besyedas* together, in fact, regarded each other as brothers. And they made this mutual agreement. Whichever of the two should marry first was to invite his comrade to his wedding. And it was not to make any difference whether he was alive or dead.

About a year after this one of the young men fell ill and died. A few months later his comrade took it into his head to get married. So he collected all his kinsmen, and set off to fetch his bride. Now it happened that they drove past the graveyard, and the bridegroom recalled his friend to mind, and remembered his old agreement. So he had the horses stopped, saying:

“I’m going to my comrade’s grave. I shall ask him to come and enjoy himself at my wedding. A right trusty friend was he to me.”

So he went to the grave and began to call aloud:

“Comrade dear! I invite thee to my wedding.”

Suddenly the grave yawned, the dead man arose, and said:

“Thanks be to thee, brother, that thou hast fulfilled thy promise. And now, that we may profit by this happy chance, enter my abode. Let us quaff a glass apiece of grateful drink.”

“I’d have gone, only the marriage procession is stopping outside; all the folks are waiting for me.”

“Eh, brother!” replied the dead man, “surely it won’t take long to toss off a glass!”

The bridegroom jumped into the grave. The dead man poured him out a cup of liquor. He drank it off — and a hundred years passed away.

“Quaff another cup, dear friend!” said the dead man.

He drank a second cup — two hundred years passed away.

“Now, comrade dear, quaff a third cup!” said the dead man, “and then go, in God’s name, and celebrate thy marriage!”

He drank the third cup — three hundred years passed away.

The dead man took leave of his comrade. The coffin lid fell; the grave closed.

The bridegroom looked around. Where the graveyard had been, was now a piece of waste ground. No road was to be seen, no kinsmen, no horses. All around grew nettles and tall grass.

He ran to the village — but the village was not what it used to be. The houses were different; the people were all strangers to him. He went to the priest’s — but the priest was not the one who used to be there — and told him about everything that had happened. The priest searched through the church-books, and found that, three hundred years before, this occurrence had taken place: a bridegroom had gone to the graveyard on his wedding-day, and had disappeared. And his bride, after some time had passed by, had married another man.

44

THE SHROUD

In a certain village there was a girl who was lazy and slothful, hated working but would gossip and chatter away like anything. Well, she took it into her head to invite the other girls to a spinning party. For in the villages, as every one knows, it is the lazybones who gives the spinning-feast, and the sweet-toothed are those who go to it.

Well, on the appointed night she got her spinners together. They span for her, and she fed them and feasted them. Among other things they chatted about was this — which of them all was the boldest?

Says the lazybones (*lezhaka*):

"I'm not afraid of anything!"

"Well then," say the spinners, "if you're not afraid, go past the graveyard to the church, take down the holy picture from the door, and bring it here."

"Good, I'll bring it; only each of you must spin me a distaff-ful."

That was just her sort of notion: to do nothing herself, but to get others to do it for her. Well, she went, took down the picture, and brought it home with her. Her friends all saw that sure enough it was the picture from the church. But the picture had to be taken back again, and it was now the midnight hour. Who was to take it? At length the lazybones said:

"You girls go on spinning. I'll take it back myself. I'm not afraid of anything!"

So she went and put the picture back in its place. As she was passing the graveyard on her return, she saw a corpse in a white shroud, seated on a tomb. It was a moonlight night; everything was visible. She went up to the corpse, and drew away its shroud from it. The corpse held its peace, not uttering a word; no doubt the time for it to speak had not come yet. Well, she took the shroud and went home.

"There!" says she, "I've taken back the picture and put it in its place; and, what's more, here's a shroud I took away from a corpse."

Some of the girls were horrified; others didn't believe what she said, and laughed at her.

But after they had supped and lain down to sleep, all of a sudden the corpse tapped at the window and said:

"Give me my shroud! Give me my shroud!"

The girls were so frightened they didn't know whether they were alive or dead. But the lazybones took the shroud, went to the window, opened it, and said:

"There, take it."

"No," replied the corpse, "restore it to the place you took it from."

Just then the cocks suddenly began to crow. The corpse disappeared.

Next night, when the spinners had all gone home to their own houses, at the very same hour as before, the corpse came, tapped at the window, and cried:

"Give me my shroud!"

Well, the girl's father and mother opened the window and offered him his shroud.

"No," says he, "let her take it back to the place she took it from."

"Really now, how could one go to a graveyard with a corpse? What a horrible idea!" she replied.

Just then the cocks crew. The corpse disappeared.

Next day the girl’s father and mother sent for the priest, told him the whole story, and entreated him to help them in their trouble.

“Couldn’t a service be performed?” they said.

The priest reflected awhile; then he replied:

“Please to tell her to come to church to-morrow.”

Next day the lazybones went to church. The service began, numbers of people came to it. But just as they were going to sing the cherubim song, there suddenly arose, goodness knows whence, so terrible a whirlwind that all the congregation fell flat on their faces. And it caught up that girl, and then flung her down on the ground. The girl disappeared from sight; nothing was left of her but her back hair.

45

THE COFFIN-LID

A moujik was driving along one night with a load of pots. His horse grew tired, and all of a sudden it came to a standstill alongside of a graveyard. The moujik unharnessed his horse and set it free to graze; meanwhile he laid himself down on one of the graves. But somehow he didn’t go to sleep.

He remained lying there some time. Suddenly the grave began to open beneath him: he felt the movement and sprang to his feet. The grave opened, and out of it came a corpse — wrapped in a white shroud, and holding a coffin lid — came out and ran to the church, laid the coffin-lid at the door, and then set off for the village.

The moujik was a daring fellow. He picked up the coffin-lid and remained standing beside his cart, waiting to see what would happen. After a short delay the dead man came back, and was going to snatch up his coffin-lid — but it was not to be seen. Then the corpse began to track it out, traced it up to the moujik, and said:

“Give me my lid: if you don’t, I’ll tear you to bits!”

“And my hatchet, how about that?” answers the moujik. “Why, it’s I who’ll be chopping you into small pieces!”

“Do give it back to me, good man!” begs the corpse.

“I’ll give it when you tell me where you’ve been and what you’ve done.”

“Well, I’ve been in the village, and there I’ve killed a couple of youngsters.”

“Well then, now tell me how they can be brought back to life.”

The corpse reluctantly made answer:

“Cut off the left skirt of my shroud, and take it with you. When you come into the house where the youngsters were killed, pour some live coals into a pot and put the piece of the shroud in with them, and then lock the door. The lads will be revived by the smoke immediately.”

The moujik cut off the left skirt of the shroud, and gave up the coffin-lid. The corpse went to its grave — the grave opened. But just as the dead man was descending into it, all of a sudden the cocks began to crow, and he hadn’t time to get properly covered over. One end of the coffin-lid remained sticking out of the ground.

The moujik saw all this and made a note of it. The day began to dawn; he harnessed his horse and drove into the village. In one of the houses he heard cries and wailing. In he went — there lay two dead lads.

“Don’t cry,” says he, “I can bring them to life!”

“Do bring them to life, kinsman,” say their relatives. “We’ll give you half of all we possess.”

The moujik did everything as the corpse had instructed him, and the lads came back to life. Their relatives were delighted, but they immediately seized the moujik and bound him with cords, saying:

“No, no, trickster! We’ll hand you over to the authorities. Since you knew how to bring them back to life, maybe it was you who killed them!”

“What are you thinking about, true believers! Have the fear of God before your eyes!” cried the moujik.

Then he told them everything that had happened to him during the night. Well, they spread the news through the village; the whole population assembled and swarmed into the graveyard. They found out the grave from which the dead man had come out, they tore it open, and they drove an aspen stake right into the heart of the corpse, so that it might no more rise up and slay. But they rewarded the moujik richly, and sent him away home with great honor.

46

THE TWO CORPSES

A soldier had obtained leave to go home on furlough — to pray to the holy images, and to bow down before his parents. And as he was going his way, at a time when the sun had long set, and all was dark around, it chanced that he had to pass by a graveyard. Just then he heard that some one was running after him, and crying:

“Stop! you can’t escape!”

He looked back and there was a corpse running and gnashing its teeth. The Soldier sprang on one side with all his might to get away from it, caught sight of a little chapel, and bolted straight into it.

There wasn’t a soul in the chapel, but stretched out on a table there lay another corpse, with tapers burning in front of it. The Soldier hid himself in a corner, and remained there, hardly knowing whether he was alive or dead, but waiting to see what would happen. Presently up ran the first corpse — the one that had chased the Soldier — and dashed into the chapel. Thereupon the one that was lying on the table jumped up, and cried to it:

“What hast thou come here for?”

“I’ve chased a soldier in here, so I’m going to eat him.”

“Come now, brother! he’s run into my house. I shall eat him myself.”

“No, I shall!”

“No, I shall!”

And they set to work fighting; the dust flew like anything. They'd have gone on fighting ever so much longer, only the cocks began to crow. Then both the corpses fell lifeless to the ground, and the Soldier went on his way homeward in peace, saying:

"Glory be to Thee, O Lord! I am saved from the wizards!"

47

THE DOG AND THE CORPSE

A moujik went out in pursuit of game one day, and took a favorite dog with him. He walked and walked through woods and bogs, but got nothing for his pains. At last the darkness of night surprised him. At an uncanny hour he passed by a graveyard, and there, at a place where two roads met, he saw standing a corpse in a white shroud. The moujik was horrified, and knew not which way to go — whether to keep on or to turn back.

"Well, whatever happens, I'll go on," he thought; and on he went, his dog running at his heels. When the corpse perceived him, it came to meet him; not touching the earth with its feet, but keeping about a foot above it — the shroud fluttering after it. When it had come up with the sportsman, it made a rush at him; but the dog seized hold of it by its bare calves, and began a tussle with it. When the moujik saw his dog and the corpse grappling with each other, he was delighted that things had turned out so well for himself, and he set off running home with all his might. The dog kept up the struggle until cock-crow, when the corpse fell motionless to the ground. Then the dog ran off in pursuit of its master, caught him up just as he reached home, and rushed at him, furiously trying to bite and to rend him. So savage was it, and so persistent, that it was as much as the people of the house could do to beat it off.

“Whatever has come over the dog?” asked the moujik’s old mother. “Why should it hate its master so?”

The moujik told her all that had happened.

“A bad piece of work, my son!” said the old woman. “The dog was disgusted at your not helping it. There it was fighting with the corpse — and you deserted it, and thought only of saving yourself! Now it will owe you a grudge for ever so long.”

Next morning, while the family were going about the farmyard, the dog was perfectly quiet. But the moment its master made his appearance, it began to growl like anything.

They fastened it to a chain; for a whole year they kept it chained up. But in spite of that, it never forgot how its master had offended it. One day it got loose, flew straight at him, and began trying to throttle him.

So they had to kill it.

48

THE SOLDIER AND THE VAMPIRE

A certain soldier was allowed to go home on furlough. Well, he walked and walked, and after a time he began to draw near to his native village. Not far off from that village lived a miller in his mill. In old times the Soldier had been very intimate with him: why shouldn't he go and see his friend? He went. The Miller received him cordially, and at once brought out liquor; and the two began drinking, and chattering about their ways and doings. All this took place towards nightfall, and the Soldier stopped so long at the Miller's that it grew quite dark.

When he proposed to start for his village, his host exclaimed:

"Spend the night here, trooper! It's very late now, and perhaps you might run into mischief."

"How so?"

"God is punishing us! A terrible warlock has died among us, and by night he rises from his grave, wanders through the village, and does such things as bring fear upon the very boldest! How could even you help being afraid of him?"

"Not a bit of it! A soldier is a man who belongs to the crown, and 'crown property cannot be drowned in water nor burnt in fire.' I'll be off: I'm tremendously anxious to see my people as soon as possible."

Off he set. His road lay in front of a graveyard. On one of the graves he saw a great fire blazing. “What’s that?” thinks he. “Let’s have a look.” When he drew near, he saw that the Warlock was sitting by the fire, sewing boots.

“Hail, brother!” calls out the Soldier.

The Warlock looked up and said:

“What have you come here for?”

“Why, I wanted to see what you’re doing.”

The Warlock threw his work aside and invited the Soldier to a wedding.

“Come along, brother,” says he, “let’s enjoy ourselves. There’s a wedding going on in the village.”

“Come along!” says the Soldier.

They came to where the wedding was; there they were given drink, and treated with the utmost hospitality. The Warlock drank and drank, revelled and revelled, and then grew angry. He chased all the guests and relatives out of the house, threw the wedded pair into a slumber, took out two phials and an awl, pierced the hands of the bride and bridegroom with the awl, and began drawing off their blood. Having done this, he said to the Soldier:

“Now let’s be off.”

Well, they went off. On the way the Soldier said:

“Tell me; why did you draw off their blood in those phials?”

“Why, in order that the bride and bridegroom might die. To-morrow morning no one will be able to wake them. I alone know how to bring them back to life.”

“How’s that managed?”

“The bride and bridegroom must have cuts made in their heels, and some of their own blood must then be poured back into those wounds. I’ve got the bridegroom’s blood stowed away in my right-hand pocket, and the bride’s in my left.”

The Soldier listened to this without letting a single word escape him. Then the Warlock began boasting again.

“Whatever I wish,” says he, “that I can do!”

“I suppose it’s quite impossible to get the better of you?” says the Soldier.

“Why impossible? If any one were to make a pyre of aspen boughs, a hundred loads of them, and were to burn me on that pyre, then he’d be able to get the better of me. Only he’d have to look out sharp in burning me; for snakes and worms and different kinds of reptiles would creep out of my inside, and crows and magpies and jackdaws would come flying up. All these must be caught and flung on the pyre. If so much as a single maggot were to escape, then there’d be no help for it; in that maggot I should slip away!”

The Soldier listened to all this and did not forget it. He and the Warlock talked and talked, and at last they arrived at the grave.

“Well, brother,” said the Warlock, “now I’ll tear you to pieces. Otherwise you’d be telling all this.”

“What are you talking about? Don’t you deceive yourself; I serve God and the Emperor.”

The Warlock gnashed his teeth, howled aloud, and sprang at the Soldier — who drew his sword and began laying about him with sweeping blows. They struggled and struggled; the Soldier was all but at the end of his strength. “Ah!” thinks he, “I’m a lost man — and all for nothing!” Suddenly the cocks began to crow. The Warlock fell lifeless to the ground.

The Soldier took the phials of blood out of the Warlock’s pockets, and went on to the house of his own people. When he had got there, and had exchanged greetings with his relatives, they said:

“Did you see any disturbance, Soldier?”

“No, I saw none.”

“There now! Why we’ve a terrible piece of work going on in the village. A Warlock has taken to haunting it!”

After talking awhile, they lay down to sleep. Next morning the Soldier awoke, and began asking:

“I’m told you’ve got a wedding going on somewhere here?”

“There was a wedding in the house of a rich moujik,” replied his relatives, “but the bride and bridegroom have died this very night — what from, nobody knows.”

“Where does this moujik live?”

They showed him the house. Thither he went without speaking a word. When he got there, he found the whole family in tears.

“What are you mourning about?” says he.

“Such and such is the state of things, Soldier,” say they.

“I can bring your young people to life again. What will you give me if I do?”

“Take what you like, even were it half of what we’ve got!”

The Soldier did as the Warlock had instructed him, and brought the young people back to life. Instead of weeping there began to be happiness and rejoicing; the Soldier was hospitably treated and well rewarded. Then — left about, face! off he marched to the Starosta, and told him to call the peasants together and to get ready a hundred loads of aspen wood. Well, they took the wood into the graveyard, dragged the Warlock out of his grave, placed him on the pyre, and set it alight — the people all standing round in a circle with brooms, shovels, and fire-irons. The pyre became wrapped in flames, the Warlock began to burn. His corpse burst, and out of it crept snakes, worms, and all sorts of reptiles, and up came flying crows, magpies, and jackdaws. The peasants knocked them down and flung them into the fire, not allowing so much as a single maggot to creep away! And so the Warlock was thoroughly consumed, and the Soldier collected his ashes and strewed them to the winds. From that time forth there was peace in the village.

The Soldier received the thanks of the whole community. He stayed at home some time, enjoying himself thoroughly. Then he went back to the Tsar’s service with money in his pocket. When he had served his time, he retired from the army, and began to live at his ease.

49

ELIJAH THE PROPHET AND NICHOLAS

A long while ago there lived a Moujik. Nicholas's day he always kept holy, but Elijah's not a bit; he would even work upon it. In honor of St. Nicholas he would have a taper lighted and a service performed, but about Elijah the Prophet he forgot so much as to think.

Well, it happened one day that Elijah and Nicholas were walking over the land belonging to this Moujik; and as they walked they looked — in the cornfields the green blades were growing up so splendidly that it did one's heart good to look at them.

“Here'll be a good harvest, a right good harvest!” says Nicholas, “and the Moujik, too, is a good fellow sure enough, both honest and pious: one who remembers God and thinks about the Saints! It will fall into good hands —”

“We'll see by-and-by whether much will fall to his share!” answered Elijah; “when I've burnt up all his land with lightning, and beaten it all flat with hail, then this Moujik of yours will know what's right, and will learn to keep Elijah's day holy.”

Well, they wrangled and wrangled; then they parted asunder. St. Nicholas went off straight to the Moujik and said:

"Sell all your corn at once, just as it stands, to the Priest of Elijah. If you don't, nothing will be left of it: it will all be beaten flat by hail."

Off rushed the Moujik to the Priest.

"Won't your Reverence buy some standing corn? I'll sell my whole crop. I'm in such pressing need of money just now. It's a case of pay up with me! Buy it, Father! I'll sell it cheap."

They bargained and bargained, and came to an agreement. The Moujik got his money and went home.

Some little time passed by. There gathered together, there came rolling up, a stormcloud; with a terrible raining and hailing did it empty itself over the Moujik's cornfields, cutting down all the crop as if with a knife — not even a single blade did it leave standing.

Next day Elijah and Nicholas walked past. Says Elijah:

"Only see how I've devastated the Moujik's cornfield!"

"The Moujik's! No, brother! Devastated it you have splendidly, only that field belongs to the Elijah Priest, not to the Moujik."

"To the Priest! How's that?"

"Why, this way. The Moujik sold it last week to the Elijah Priest, and got all the money for it. And so, methinks, the Priest may whistle for his money!"

"Stop a bit!" said Elijah. "I'll set the field all right again. It shall be twice as good as it was before."

They finished talking, and went each his own way. St. Nicholas returned to the Moujik, and said:

"Go to the Priest and buy back your crop — you won't lose anything by it."

The Moujik went to the Priest, made his bow, and said:

"I see, your Reverence, God has sent you a misfortune — the hail has beaten the whole field so flat you might roll a ball over it. Since things are so, let’s go halves in the loss. I’ll take my field back, and here’s half of your money for you to relieve your distress.”

The Priest was rejoiced, and they immediately struck hands on the bargain.

Meanwhile — goodness knows how — the Moujik’s ground began to get all right. From the old roots shot forth new tender stems. Rain-clouds came sailing exactly over the cornfield and gave the soil to drink. There sprang up a marvellous crop — tall and thick. As to weeds, there positively was not one to be seen. And the ears grew fuller and fuller, till they were fairly bent right down to the ground.

Then the dear sun glowed, and the rye grew ripe — like so much gold did it stand in the fields. Many a sheaf did the Moujik gather, many a heap of sheaves did he set up; and now he was beginning to carry the crop, and to gather it together into ricks.

At that very time Elijah and Nicholas came walking by again. Joyfully did the Prophet gaze on all the land, and say:

“Only look, Nicholas! what a blessing! Why, I have rewarded the Priest in such wise, that he will never forget it all his life.”

“The Priest? No, brother! the blessing indeed is great, but this land, you see, belongs to the Moujik. The Priest hasn’t got anything whatsoever to do with it.”

“What are you talking about?”

“It’s perfectly true. When the hail beat all the cornfield flat, the Moujik went to the Priest and bought it back again at half price.”

“Stop a bit!” says Elijah. “I’ll take the profit out of the corn. However many sheaves the Moujik may lay on the threshing-floor, he shall never thresh out of them more than a peck at a time.”

“A bad piece of work!” thinks St. Nicholas. Off he went at once to the Moujik.

"Mind," says he, "when you begin threshing your corn, never put more than one sheaf at a time on the threshing-floor."

The Moujik began to thresh: from every sheaf he got a peck of grain. All his bins, all his storehouses, he crammed with rye; but still much remained over. So he built himself new barns, and filled them as full as they could hold.

Well, one day Elijah and Nicholas came walking past his homestead, and the Prophet began looking here and there, and said:

"Do you see what barns he's built? has he got anything to put into them?"

"They're quite full already," answers Nicholas.

"Why, wherever did the Moujik get such a lot of grain?"

"Bless me! Why, every one of his sheaves gave him a peck of grain. When he began to thresh he never put more than one sheaf at a time on the threshing-floor."

"Ah, brother Nicholas!" said Elijah, guessing the truth, "it's you who go and tell the Moujik everything!"

"What an idea! that I should go and tell —"

"As you please; that's your doing! But that Moujik sha'n't forget me in a hurry!"

"Why, what are you going to do to him?"

"What I shall do, that I won't tell you," replies Elijah.

"There's a great danger coming," thinks St. Nicholas, and he goes to the Moujik again, and says:

"Buy two tapers, a big one and a little one, and do thus and thus with them."

Well, next day the Prophet Elijah and St. Nicholas were walking along together in the guise of wayfarers, and they met the Moujik, who was carrying two wax tapers — one, a big rouble one, and the other, a tiny copeck one.

“Where are you going, Moujik?” asked St. Nicholas.

“Well, I’m going to offer a rouble taper to Prophet Elijah; he’s been ever so good to me! When my crops were ruined by the hail, he bestirred himself like anything, and gave me a plentiful harvest, twice as good as the other would have been.”

“And the copeck taper, what’s that for?”

“Why, that’s for Nicholas!” said the peasant and passed on.

“There now, Elijah!” says Nicholas, “you say I go and tell everything to the Moujik — surely you can see for yourself how much truth there is in that!”

Thereupon the matter ended. Elijah was appeased and didn’t threaten to hurt the Moujik any more. And the Moujik led a prosperous life, and from that time forward he held in equal honor Elijah’s Day and Nicholas’s Day.

50

THE PRIEST WITH THE GREEDY EYES

In the parish of St. Nicholas there lived a Pope. This Pope’s eyes were thoroughly pope-like. He served Nicholas several years, and went on serving until such time as there remained to him nothing either for board or lodging. Then our Pope collected all the church keys, looked at the picture of Nicholas, thumped him, out of spite, over the shoulders with the keys, and went forth from his parish as his eyes led him. And as he walked along the road he suddenly lighted upon an unknown man.

“Hail, good man!” said the stranger to the Pope. “Whence do you come and whither are you going? Take me with you as a companion.”

Well, they went on together. They walked and walked for several versts, then they grew tired. It was time to seek repose. Now the Pope had a few biscuits in his cassock, and the companion he had picked up had a couple of small loaves.

“Let’s eat your loaves first,” says the Pope, “and afterwards we’ll take to the biscuits, too.”

“Agreed!” replies the stranger. “We’ll eat my loaves, and keep your biscuits for afterwards.”

Well, they ate away at the loaves; each of them ate his fill, but the loaves got no smaller. The Pope grew envious: “Come,” thinks he, “I’ll steal them from him!” After the meal the old man lay down to take a nap, but the Pope kept scheming how to steal the loaves from him. The old man went to sleep. The Pope drew the loaves out of his pocket and began quietly nibbling them at his seat. The old man awoke and felt for his loaves; they were gone!

“Where are my loaves?” he exclaimed; “who has eaten them? was it you, Pope?”

“No, not I, on my word!” replied the Pope.

“Well, so be it,” said the old man.

They gave themselves a shake, and set out again on their journey. They walked and walked; suddenly the road branched off in two different directions. Well, they both went the same way, and soon reached a certain country. In that country the King’s daughter lay at the point of death, and the King had given notice that to him who should cure his daughter he would give half of his kingdom, and half of his goods and possessions; but if any one undertook to cure her and failed, he should have his head chopped off and hung up on a stake. Well, they arrived, elbowed their way among the people in front of the King’s palace, and gave out that they were doctors. The servant came out from the King’s palace, and began questioning them:

“Who are you? from what cities, of what families? what do you want?”

“We are doctors,” they replied; “we can cure the Princess!”

“Oh! if you are doctors, come into the palace.”

So they went into the palace, saw the Princess, and asked the King to supply them with a private apartment, a tub of water, a sharp sword, and a big table. The King supplied them with all these things. Then they shut themselves up in the private apartment, laid the Princess on the big table, cut her into small pieces with the sharp sword, flung them into the tub of water, washed them, and rinsed them. Afterwards they began putting the pieces together; when the old man breathed on them the different pieces stuck together. When he had put all the pieces together properly, he gave them a final puff of breath: the Princess began to quiver, and then arose alive and well! The King came in person to the door of their room, and cried:

“In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost!”

“Amen!” they replied.

“Have you cured the Princess?” asked the King.

“We’ve cured her,” say the doctors. “Here she is!”

Out went the Princess to the King, alive and well.

Says the King to the doctors: “What sort of valuables will you have? would you like gold or silver? Take whatever you please.”

Well, they began taking gold and silver. The old man used only a thumb and two fingers, but the Pope seized whole handfuls, and kept on stowing them away in his wallet — shovelling them into it, and then lifting it a bit to see if he was strong enough to carry it.

At last they took their leave of the King and went their way. The old man said to the Pope, “We’ll bury this money in the ground, and go and make another cure.” Well, they walked and walked, and at length they reached another country. In that country, also, the King had a daughter at the point of death, and he had given notice that whoever cured his daughter should have half of his kingdom and of his goods and possessions; but if he failed to cure her he should have his head chopped off and hung up on a stake. Then the Evil One afflicted the envious Pope, suggesting to him “Why shouldn’t he go and perform the cure by himself, without saying a word to the old man, and so lay hold of all the gold and silver for himself?” So the Pope walked about in front of the royal gates, forced himself on the notice of the people there, and gave out that he was a doctor. In the same way as before he asked the King for a private room, a tub of water, a large table, and a sharp sword. Shutting himself up in the private room, he laid the Princess on the table, and began chopping her up with the sharp sword; and however much the Princess might scream or squeal, the Pope, without paying any attention to either screaming or squealing, went on chopping and chopping just as if she had been so much beef. And when he had chopped her up into little pieces, he threw them into the tub, washed them, rinsed them, and then put them together bit by bit, exactly as the old man had done, expecting to see all the pieces unite with each other. He breathes on them — but nothing happens! He gives another puff — worse than ever! See, the Pope flings the pieces back again into the water, washes and washes, rinses and rinses, and again puts them together bit by bit. Again he breathes on them — but still nothing comes of it.

"Woe is me," thinks the Pope; "here's a mess!"

Next morning the King arrives and looks — the doctor has had no success at all — he's only messed the dead body all over with muck!

The King ordered the doctor off to the gallows. Then our Pope besought him, crying —

"O King! O free to do thy will! Spare me for a little time! I will run for the old man, he will cure the Princess."

The Pope ran off in search of the old man. He found the old man, and cried:

"Old man! I am guilty, wretch that I am! The Devil got hold of me. I wanted to cure the King's daughter all by myself, but I couldn't. Now they're going to hang me. Do help me!"

The old man returned with the Pope.

The Pope was taken to the gallows. Says the old man to the Pope:

"Pope! who ate my loaves?"

"Not I, on my word! So help me Heaven, not I!"

The Pope was hoisted on to the second step. Says the old man to the Pope:

"Pope! who ate my loaves?"

"Not I, on my word! So help me Heaven, not I!"

He mounted the third step — and again it was “Not I!” And now his head was actually in the noose — but it’s “Not I!” all the same. Well, there was nothing to be done! Says the old man to the King:

“O King! O free to do thy will! Permit me to cure the Princess. And if I do not cure her, order another noose to be got ready. A noose for me, and a noose for the Pope!”

Well, the old man put the pieces of the Princess’s body together, bit by bit, and breathed on them — and the Princess stood up alive and well. The King recompensed them both with silver and gold.

“Let’s go and divide the money, Pope,” said the old man.

So they went. They divided the money into three heaps. The Pope looked at them, and said:

“How’s this? There’s only two of us. For whom is this third share?”

“That,” says the old man, “is for him who ate my loaves.”

“I ate them, old man,” cries the Pope; “I did really, so help me Heaven!”

“Then the money is yours,” says the old man. “Take my share too. And now go and serve in your parish faithfully; don’t be greedy, and don’t go hitting Nicholas over the shoulders with the keys.”

Thus spake the old man, and straightway disappeared.

51

THE HASTY WORD

In a certain village there lived an old couple in great poverty, and they had one son. The son grew up, and the old woman began to say to the old man:

“It’s time for us to get our son married.”

“Well then, go and ask for a wife for him,” said he.

So she went to a neighbor to ask for his daughter for her son: the neighbor refused. She went to a second peasant’s, but the second refused too — to a third, but he showed her the door. She went round the whole village; not a soul would grant her request. So she returned home and cried —

“Well, old man! our lad’s an unlucky fellow!”

“How so?”

“I’ve trudged round to every house, but no one will give him his daughter.”

“That’s a bad business!” says the old man; “the summer will soon be coming, but we have no one to work for us here. Go to another village, old woman, perhaps you will get a bride for him there.”

The old woman went to another village, visited every house from one end to the other, but there wasn’t an atom of good to be got out of it.

Wherever she thrusts herself, they always refuse. With what she left home, with that she returned home.

"No," she says, "no one wants to become related to us poor beggars."

"If that's the case," answers the old man, "there's no use in wearing out your legs. Jump up on to the *polati*."

The son was sorely afflicted, and began to entreat his parents, saying:

"My born father and my born mother! give me your blessing. I will go and seek my fate myself."

"But where will you go?"

"Where my eyes lead me."

So they gave him their blessing, and let him go whithersoever it pleased him.

Well, the youth went out upon the highway, began to weep very bitterly, and said to himself as he walked:

"Was I born into the world worse than all other men, that not a single girl is willing to marry me? Methinks if the devil himself would give me a bride, I'd take even her!"

Suddenly, as if rising from the earth, there appeared before him a very old man.

"Good-day, good youth!"

"Good-day, old man!"

"What was that you were saying just now?"

The youth was frightened and did not know what reply to make.

"Don't be afraid of me! I sha'n't do you any harm, and moreover, perhaps I may get you out of your trouble. Speak boldly!"

The youth told him everything precisely.

"Poor creature that I am! There isn't a single girl who will marry me. Well, as I went along I became exceedingly wretched, and in my misery I said: 'If the devil offered me a bride, I'd take even her!'"

The old man laughed and said:

“Follow me, I’ll let you choose a lovely bride for yourself.”

By-and-by they reached a lake.

“Turn your back to the lake and walk backwards,” said the old man. Scarcely had the youth had time to turn round and take a couple of steps, when he found himself under the water and in a white-stone palace — all its rooms splendidly furnished, cunningly decorated. The old man gave him to eat and to drink. Afterwards he introduced twelve maidens, each one more beautiful than the other.

“Choose whichever you like! whichever you choose, her will I bestow upon you.”

“That’s a puzzling job!” said the youth; “give me till to-morrow morning to think about it, grandfather!”

“Well, think away!” said the old man, and led his guest to a private chamber. The youth lay down to sleep and thought:

“Which one shall I choose?”

Suddenly the door opened; a beautiful maiden entered.

“Are you asleep, or not, good youth?” says she.

“No, fair maiden! I can’t get to sleep, for I’m always thinking which bride to choose.”

“That’s the very reason I have come to give you counsel. You see, good youth, you’ve managed to become the devil’s guest. Now listen. If you want to go on living in the white world, then do what I tell you. But if you don’t follow my instructions, you’ll never get out of here alive!”

“Tell me what to do, fair maiden. I won’t forget it all my life.”

“To-morrow the fiend will bring you twelve maidens, each one exactly like the others. But you take a good look and choose me. A fly will be sitting above my right eye — that will be a certain guide for you.” And then the fair maiden proceeded to tell him about herself, who she was.

“Do you know the priest of such and such a village?” she says. “I’m his daughter, the one who disappeared from home when nine years old. One day my father was angry with me, and in his wrath he said, ‘May devils fly away with you!’ I went out on the steps and began to cry. All of a sudden the fiends seized me and brought me here; and here I am living with them!”

Next morning the old man brought in the twelve fair maidens — one just like another — and ordered the youth to choose his bride. He looked at them and took her above whose right eye sat a fly. The old man was loth to give her up, so he shifted the maidens about, and told him to make a fresh choice. The youth pointed out the same one as before. The fiend obliged him to choose yet a third time. He again guessed his bride aright.

“Well, you’re in luck! take her home with you,” said the fiend.

Immediately the youth and the fair maiden found themselves on the shore of the lake, and until they reached the high road they kept on walking backwards. Presently the devils came rushing after them in hot pursuit:

“Let us recover our maiden!” they cry.

They look: there are no footsteps going away from the lake; all the footsteps lead into the water! They ran to and fro, they searched everywhere, but they had to go back empty handed.

Well, the good youth brought his bride to her village, and stopped opposite the priest’s house. The priest saw him and sent out his laborer, saying:

“Go and ask who those people are.”

“We? we’re travellers; please let us spend the night in your house,” they replied.

“I have merchants paying me a visit,” says the priest, “and even without them there’s but little room in the house.”

“What are you thinking of, father?” says one of the merchants. “It’s always one’s duty to accommodate a traveller, they won’t interfere with us.”

“Very well, let them come in.”

So they came in, exchanged greetings, and sat down on a bench in the back corner.

“Don’t you know me, father?” presently asks the fair maiden. “Of a surety I am your own daughter.”

Then she told him everything that had happened. They began to kiss and embrace each other, to pour forth tears of joy.

“And who is this man?” says the priest.

“That is my betrothed. He brought me back into the white world; if it hadn’t been for him I should have remained down there for ever!”

After this the fair maiden untied her bundle, and in it were gold and silver dishes: she had carried them off from the devils. The merchant looked at them and said:

“Ah! those are my dishes. One day I was feasting with my guests, and when I got drunk I became angry with my wife. ‘To the devil with you!’ I exclaimed, and began flinging from the table, and beyond the threshold, whatever I could lay my hands upon. At that moment my dishes disappeared!”

And in reality so had it happened. When the merchant mentioned the devil’s name, the fiend immediately appeared at the threshold, began seizing the gold and silver wares, and flinging in their place bits of pottery.

Well, by this accident the youth got himself a capital bride. And after he had married her he went back to his parents. They had long ago counted him as lost to them for ever. And indeed it was no subject for jesting; he had been away from home three whole years, and yet it seemed to him that he had not in all spent more than twenty-four hours with the devils.

52

PHÚLMATI RÁNÍ

There were once a Rájá and a Rání who had an only daughter called the Phúlmati Rání, or the Pink-rose Queen. She was so beautiful that if she went into a very dark room it was all lighted up by her beauty. On her head was the sun; on her hands, moons; and her face was covered with stars. She had hair that reached to the ground, and it was made of pure gold.

Every day after she had had her bath, her father and mother used to weigh her in a pair of scales. She only weighed one flower. She ate very, very little food. This made her father most unhappy, and he said, “I cannot let my daughter marry any one who weighs more than one flower.” Now, God loved this girl dearly, so he went down under the ground to see if any of the fairy Rájás was fit to be the Phúlmati Rání’s husband, and he thought none of them good enough. So he went in the form of a Fakír to see the great Indrásan Rájá who ruled over all the other fairy Rájás. This Rájá was exceedingly beautiful. On his head was the sun; and on his hands, moons; and on his face, stars. God made him weigh very little. Then he said to the Rájá, “Come up with me, and we will go to the palace of the Phúlmati Rání.” God had told the Rájá that he was God and not a Fakír, for he loved the Indrásan Rájá. “Very well,” said the Indrásan Rájá. So they travelled on until they came to the Phúlmati Rání’s palace. When they arrived there they pitched a tent in her compound, and they used to walk about, and whenever they saw the Phúlmati Rání they looked at her. One day they saw her having her hair combed, so God said to the Indrásan Rájá, “Get a horse and ride where the Phúlmati Rání can see you, and if any one asks you who you are, say, ‘Oh, it’s only a poor Fakír, and I am his son. We have come to stay here a little while just to see the country. We will go away very soon.’” Well, he got a horse and rode about, and Phúlmati Rání, who was having her hair combed in the verandah, said, “I am sure that must be some Rájá; only see how beautiful he is.” And she sent one of her servants to ask him who he was. So the servant said to the Indrásan Rájá, “Who are you? why are you here? what do you want?” “Oh, it’s only a poor Fakír, and I am his son. We have just come here for a little while to see the country. We will go away very soon.” So the servants returned to the Phúlmati Rání and told her what the Indrásan Rájá had said. The Phúlmati Rání told her father about this. The next day, when the Phúlmati Rání and her father were standing in the verandah, God took a pair of scales and weighed the Indrásan Rájá in them. His weight was only that of one flower! “Oh,” said the Rájá, when he saw that, “here is the husband for the Phúlmati Rání!” The next day, after the Phúlmati Rání had had her bath, her father took her and weighed her, and he also weighed the Indrásan Rájá. And they were each the same weight. Each weighed one flower, although the Indrásan Rájá was fat and the Phúlmati Rání thin. The next day they were married, and there was a grand wedding. God said he was too poor-looking to appear, so he bought a quantity of elephants, and camels, and horses, and cows, and sheep, and goats, and made a procession, and came to the wedding. Then he went back to heaven, but before he went he said to the Indrásan Rájá “You must stay here one whole year; then go back to your father and to your kingdom. As long as you put flowers on your ears no danger will come near you.” (This was in order that the fairies might know that he was a very great Rájá and not hurt him.) “All right,” said the Indrásan Rájá. And God went back to heaven.

So the Indrásan Rájá stayed for a whole year. Then he told the Rájá, the Phúlmati Rání’s father, that he wished to go back to his own kingdom. “All right,” said the Rájá, and he wanted to give him horses, and camels, and elephants. But the Indrásan Rájá and the Phúlmati Rání said they wanted nothing but a tent and a cooly. Well, they set out; but the Indrásan Rájá forgot to put flowers on his ears, and after some days the Indrásan Rájá was very, very tired, so he said, “We will sit down under these big trees and rest awhile. Our baggage will soon be here; it is only a little way behind.” So they sat down, and the Rájá said he felt so tired he must sleep. “Very well,” said the Rání; “lay your head in my lap and sleep.” After a while a shoemaker’s wife came by to get some water from a tank which was close to the spot where the Rájá and Rání were resting. Now, the shoemaker’s wife was very black and ugly, and she had only one eye, and she was exceedingly wicked. The Rání was very thirsty and she said to the woman, “Please give me some water, I am so thirsty.” “If you want any,” said the shoemaker’s wife, “come to the tank and get it yourself.” “But I cannot,” said the Rání, “for the Rájá is sleeping in my lap.” At last the poor Rání got so very, very thirsty, she said she must have some water; so laying the Rájá’s head very gently on the ground she went to the tank. Then the wicked shoemaker’s wife, instead of giving her to drink, gave her a push and sent the beautiful Rání into the water, where she was drowned. The shoemaker’s wife then went back to the Rájá, and, taking his head on her knee, sat still until he woke. When the Rájá woke he was much frightened, and he said, “This is not my wife. My wife was not black, and she had two eyes.” The poor Rájá felt very unhappy. He said, “I am sure something has happened to my wife.” He went to the tank, and he saw flowers floating on the water and he caught them, and as he caught them his own true wife stood before him.

They travelled on till they came to a little house. The shoemaker’s wife went with them. They went into the house and laid themselves down to sleep, and the Rájá laid beside him the flowers he had found floating in the tank. The Rání's life was in the flowers. As soon as the Rájá and Rání were asleep, the shoemaker's wife took the flowers, broke them into little bits, and burnt them. The Rání died immediately, for the second time. Then the poor Rájá, feeling very lonely and unhappy, travelled on to his kingdom, and the shoemaker's wife went after him. God brought the Phúlmati Rání to life a second time, and led her to the Indrásan Rájá's gardener.

One day as the Indrásan Rájá was going out hunting, he passed by the gardener's house, and saw a beautiful girl sitting in it. He thought she looked very like his wife, the Phúlmati Rání. So he went home to his father and said, "Father, I should like to be married to the girl who lives in our gardener's house." "All right," said the father; "you can be married at once." So they were married the next day.

One night the shoemaker's wife took a ram, killed it, and put some of its blood on the Phúlmati Rání's mouth while the Rání slept. The next morning she went to the Indrásan Rájá and said, "Whom have you married? You have married a Rakshas. Just see. She has been eating cows, and sheep, and chickens. Just come and see." The Rájá went, and when he saw the blood on his wife's mouth he was frightened, and he thought she was really a Rakshas. The shoemaker's wife said to him, "If you do not cut this woman in pieces, some harm will happen to you." So the Rájá took a knife and cut his beautiful wife into pieces. He then went away very sorrowful. The Phúlmati Rání's arms and legs grew into four houses; her chest became a tank, and her head a house in the middle of the tank; her eyes turned into two little doves; and these five houses, the tank and the doves, were transported to the jungle. No one knew this. The little doves lived in the house that stood in the middle of the tank. The other four houses stood round the tank.

One day when the Indrásan Rájá was hunting by himself in the jungle he was very tired, and he saw the house in the tank. So he said, "I will go into that house to rest a little while, and to-morrow I will return home to my father.” So, tying his horse outside, he went into the house and lay down to sleep. By and by, the two little birds came and perched on the roof above his head. They began to talk, and the Rájá listened. The little husband-dove said to his wife, “This is the man who cut his wife to pieces.” And then he told her how the Indrásan Rájá had married the beautiful Phúlmati Rání, who weighed only one flower, and how the shoemaker’s wife had drowned her; how God had brought her to life again; how the shoemaker’s wife had burned her; and last of all, how the Rájá himself had cut her to pieces. “And cannot the Rájá find her again?” said the little wife-dove. “Oh, yes, he can,” said her husband, “but he does not know how to do so.” “But do tell me how he can find her,” said the little wife-dove. “Well,” said her husband, “every night, at twelve o’clock, the Rání and her servants come to bathe in the tank. Her servants wear yellow dresses, but she wears a red one. Now, if the Rájá could get all their dresses, every one, when they lay them down and go into the tank to bathe, and throw away all the yellow dresses one by one, keeping only the red one, he would recover his wife.”

The Rájá heard all these things, and at midnight the Rání and her servants came to bathe. The Rájá lay very quiet, and after they all had taken off their dresses and gone into the tank, he jumped up and seized every one of the dresses, — he did not leave one of them, — and ran away as hard as he could. Then each of the servants, who were only fairies, screamed out, “Give me my dress! What are you doing? why do you take it away?” Then the Rájá dropped one by one the yellow dresses and kept the red one. The fairy servants picked up the dresses, and forsook the Phúlmati Rání and ran away. The Rájá came back to her with her dress in his hand, and she said, “Oh, give me back my dress. If you keep it I shall die. Three times has God brought me to life, but he will bring me to life no more.” The Rájá fell at her feet and begged her pardon, and they were reconciled. And he gave her back her dress. Then they went home, and Indrásan Rájá had the shoemaker’s wife cut to pieces, and buried in the jungle. And they lived happily ever after.

53

THE POMEGRANATE KING

There was once a Mahárájá, called the Anárbásá, or Pomegranate King; and a Mahárání called the Gulíanár, or Pomegranate-flower. The Mahárání died leaving two children: a little girl of four or five years old, and a little boy of three. The Mahárájá was very sorry when she died, for he loved her dearly. He was exceedingly fond of his two children, and got for them two servants: a man to cook their dinner, and an ayah to take care of them. He also had them taught to read and write. Soon after his wife's death the neighbouring Rájá's daughter's husband died, and she said if any other Rájá would marry her, she would be quite willing to marry him, and she also said she would like very much to marry the Pomegranate Rájá. So her father went to see the Pomegranate Rájá, and told him that his daughter wished to marry him. "Oh," said the Pomegranate Rájá, "I do not want to marry again, for if I do, the woman I marry will be sure to be unkind to my two children. She will not take care of them. She will not pet them and comfort them when they are unhappy." "Oh," said the other Rájá, "my daughter will be very good to them, I assure you." "Very well," said the Mahárájá, "I will marry her." So they were married.

For two or three months everything went on well, but then the new Rání, who was called the Sunkásí Mahárání, began to beat the poor children, and to scold their servants. One day she gave the boy such a hard blow on his cheek that it swelled. When the Mahárájá came out of his office to get his tiffin, he saw the boy's swollen face, and, calling the two servants, he said, "Who did this? how did my boy get hurt?" They said, "The Rání gave him such a hard blow on his cheek that it swelled, and she gets very angry with us if we say anything about her ill-treatment of the children, or how she scolds us." The Mahárájá was exceedingly angry with his wife for this, and said to her, "I never beat my children. Why should you beat them? If you beat them I will send you away." And he went off to his office in a great rage. The Rání was very angry. So she told the little girl to go with the ayah to the bazar. The ayah and the little girl set off, never suspecting any evil. As soon as they had gone, the Rání took the little boy and told him she would kill him. The boy went down on his knees and begged her to spare his life. But she said, "No; your father is always quarrelling with me, beating me, and scolding me, all through your fault." The boy begged and prayed again, saying he would never be naughty any more. The Rání shook her head, and taking a large knife she cut off his head. She then cut him up and made him into a curry. She then buried his head, and his nails, and his feet in the ground, and she covered them well with earth, and stamped the ground well down so that no one should notice it had been disturbed. When the Pomegranate Rájá came home to his dinner, she put the curry and some rice on the table before him; but the Rájá, seeing his boy was not there, would not eat. He went and looked everywhere for his son, crying very much, and the little girl cried very much too, for she loved her brother dearly. After they had hunted for him for some time, the little boy appeared. His father embraced him. "Where have you been?" said he. "I cannot eat my dinner without you." The little boy said, "Oh, I was in the jungle playing with other boys." They then sat down to dinner, and the curry changed into a kid curry. The Rání was greatly astonished when she saw the boy. She said to herself, "I cut his head off; I cut him into little pieces, and I made him into a curry, and yet he is alive!" She then went into the garden to see if his head, and nails, and feet were in the hole where she had buried them. But they were not there; it was quite empty. She then called a sepoy, and said to him, “If you will take two children into the jungle and kill them, I will give you as much money as you like.” “All right,” said the sepoy. She then brought the children, and told him to take them to the jungle. So he took them away to the jungle, but he had not the heart to kill them, for they were exceedingly beautiful, and he left them in the jungle near their dead mother’s grave. Then he returned to the Rání, saying he had done as she wished, and she gave him as much money as he wanted.

The poor Pomegranate Rájá was very unhappy when he saw his children were not in the palace, and that they could not be found. He asked his Rání where they were, but she said she did not know; they had gone out to play and had never returned. From the day he lost his children the Pomegranate Rájá became melancholy. He did not love the Rání any more; he hated her.

Meanwhile the children lived in a little house built close to their mother’s grave. God had given her life again that she might take care of them. But they did not know she was their mother; they thought she was another woman sent to take care of them. God sent also a man to teach them. Somehow or other the Rání Sunkásí heard they were still alive in the jungle. She did not know how she could kill them. So at last she pretended she was very ill, and she said to the Rájá, “The doctor says that in the jungle there are two children, and he says if you will have them killed, and will bring their livers for me to stand on when I bathe, then I shall get well.” The Rájá sent a second sepoy to kill the children, and this man killed them and brought their livers to the Rání. She stood on them while bathing, and then said she was quite well. She then threw the livers into the garden, and during the night a tree grew up there with two large beautiful flowers on it. Next morning the Rání looked out and said, “I will gather those flowers to-day.” Every day she said she would gather them, and every day she forgot.

At last one day she said, “Every day I forget to gather those flowers, but to-day I really will do so,” and she sent her servant to pluck them. So he went out, and, just as he was going to gather them, the flowers flew up just out of his reach. Then the Rání went down, and when she was going to pick them they flew up so high that they could not be seen. Every day she tried to gather them, and every day they went high up, and came back again to the tree as soon as she had gone. Then the flowers disappeared and two large fruits came in their stead. The Rání looked out of her window: “Oh, what delicious fruits! I’ll eat them all myself. I won’t give a bit to anybody, and I’ll eat them by myself quite quietly.” She went down to the garden, but they flew high up into the sky, and then they came down again. So this went on, day after day, until she got so cross she ordered the tree to be cut down. But it was of no use. The tree was cut down, but the fruits flew high up into the sky, and in the night the tree grew up again and the fruits came back again to it. And so this went on for many days. Every day she cut down the tree, and every night it grew up again, but she could never get the fruits. At last she became very angry, and had the tree hewn into tiny bits and all the bits thrown away, but still the tree grew again in the night, and in the morning the fruits were hanging on it. So she went to the Rájá and told him that in the garden was a tree with two fruits, and every time she tried to get them, the fruits went up into the air. She had had the tree cut down ever so many times, and it always grew up again in the night and the fruits returned to it. “Why cannot you leave the tree alone?” said the Rájá. “But I should like to see if what you say is true.” So the Rájá and the Rání went down to the garden, and the Rání tried to get the fruits, but she could not, for they went right up into the air.

That evening the Rájá went alone to the garden to gather the fruits, and the fruits of themselves fell into his hand. He took them into his room, and putting them on a little table close to his bed, he lay down to sleep. As soon as he was in bed a little voice inside one of the fruits said, “Brother;” and a little voice in the other fruit said, “Sister, speak more gently. To-morrow the Rájá will break open the fruits, and if the Rání finds us she will kill us. Three times has God made us alive again, but if we die a fourth time he will bring us to life no more.” The Rájá listened and said, “I will break them open in a little while.” Then he went to sleep, and after a little he woke and said, “A little while longer,” and went to sleep again. Several times he woke up and said, “I will break the fruits open in a little while,” and went to sleep. At last he took a knife and began cutting the fruits open very fast, and the little boy cried, “Gently, gently, father; you hurt us!” So then the Rájá cut more gently, and he stopped to ask, “Are you hurt?” and they said, “No.” And then he cut again and asked, “Are you hurt?” and they said, “No.” And a third time he asked, “Are you hurt?” and they answered, “No.” Then the fruits broke open and his two children jumped out. They rushed into their father’s arms, and he clasped them tight, and they cried softly, that the Rání might not hear.

He shut his room up close, and fed and dressed his children, and then went out of the room, locking the door behind him. He had a little wooden house built that could easily catch fire, and as soon as it was ready he went to the Rání and said, “Will you go into a little house I have made ready for you while your room is getting repaired?” “All right,” said the Rání; so she went into the little house, and that night a man set it on fire, and the Rání and everything in it was burnt up. Then the Pomegranate Rájá took her bones, put them into a tin box, and sent them as a present to her mother. “Oh,” said the mother, “my daughter has married the Pomegranate Mahárájá, and so she sends me some delicious food.” When she opened the box, to her horror she found only bones! Then she wrote to the Mahárájá, “Of what use are bones?” The Mahárájá wrote back, “They are your bones; they belong to you, for they are your daughter’s bones. She ill-treated and killed my children, and so I had her burnt.”

The Pomegranate Rájá and his children lived very happily for some time, and their dead mother, the Gulíanár Rání, having a wish to see her husband and her children, prayed to God to let her go and visit them. God said she could go, but not in her human shape, so he changed her into a beautiful bird, and put a pin in her head, and said, "As soon as the pin is pulled out you will become a woman again." She flew to the palace where the Mahárájá lived, and there were great trees about the palace. On one of these she perched at night. The doorkeeper was lying near it. She called out, "Doorkeeper! doorkeeper!" and he answered, "What is it? Who is it?" And she asked, "Is the Rájá well?" and the doorkeeper said, "Yes." "Are the children well?" and he said, "Yes." "And all the servants, and camels, and horses?" "Yes." "Are you well?" "Yes." "Have you had plenty of food?" "Yes." "What a great donkey your Mahárájá is!" And then she began to cry very much, and pearls fell from her eyes as she cried. Then she began to laugh very much, and great big rubies fell from her beak as she laughed. The next morning the doorkeeper got up and felt about, and said, "What is all this?" meaning the pearls and the rubies, for he did not know what they were. "I will keep them." So he picked them all up and put them into a corner of his house. Every night the bird came and asked after the Mahárájá and the children and the servants, and left a great many pearls and rubies behind her. At last the doorkeeper had a whole heap of pearls and rubies.

One day a Fakír came and begged, and as the doorkeeper had no pice, or flour, or rice to give, he gave him a handful of pearls and rubies. "Well," said the Fakír to himself, "I am sure these are pearls and rubies." So he tied them up in his cloth. Then he went to the Rájá to beg, and the Rájá gave him a handful of rice. "What!" said the Fakír, "the great Mahárájá only gives me a handful of rice when his doorkeeper gives me pearls and rubies!" and he turned to walk away. But the Mahárájá stopped him. "What did you say?" said he, "that my doorkeeper gave you pearls and rubies?" "Yes," said the Fakír, "your doorkeeper gave me pearls and rubies." So the

Mahárájá went to the doorkeeper’s house, and when he saw all the pearls and rubies that were there, he thought the man had stolen them from his treasury. The Mahárájá had not as many pearls and rubies as his doorkeeper had. Then turning to the doorkeeper he asked him to tell him truly where and how he had got them. “Yes, I will,” said the doorkeeper. “Every night a beautiful bird comes and asks after you, after your children, after all your elephants, horses, and servants; and then it cries, and when it cries pearls drop from its eyes; and then it laughs, and rubies fall from its beak. If you come to-night I dare say you will see it.” “All right,” said the Pomegranate Rájá.

So that night the Mahárájá pulled his bed out under the tree on which the bird always perched. At night the bird came and called out, “Doorkeeper! doorkeeper!” and the doorkeeper answered, “Yes, lord.” And the bird said, “Is your Mahárájá well?” “Yes.” “Are the children well?” “Yes.” “And all his servants, horses, and camels and elephants — are they well?” “Yes.” “Are you well?” “Yes.” “Have you had plenty of food?” “Yes.” “What a fool your Mahárájá is!” And then she cried, and the pearls came tumbling down on the Mahárájá’s eyes, and the Mahárájá opened one eye and saw what a beautiful bird it was. And then it laughed, and rubies fell from its beak on to the Mahárájá.

Next morning the Mahárájá said he would give any one who would catch the bird as much money as he wanted. So he called a fisherman, and asked him to bring his net and catch the bird when it came that night. The fisherman said he would for one thousand rupees. That night the fisherman, the Mahárájá, and the doorkeeper, all waited under the tree. Soon the bird came, and asked after the Mahárájá, after his children, and all his servants and elephants, and camels and horses, and then after the doorkeeper, and then it called the Mahárájá a fool. Then it cried, and then it laughed, and just as it laughed the fisherman threw the net over the bird and caught it. Then they shut it up in an iron cage, and the next morning the Mahárájá took it out and stroked it, and said, “What a sweet little bird! what a lovely little bird!” And the Mahárájá felt something like a pin in its head, and he gave a pull, and out came the pin, and then his own dear wife, the Pomegranate-flower Rání, stood before him. The Rájá was exceedingly glad, and so were his two children. And there were great rejoicings, and they lived happily ever after.

54

THE CAT AND THE DOG

There were once a dog and a cat. It was a very rainy day, and some men were eating their dinner inside their house. The cat sat inside too, eating her dinner, and the dog sat on the door-step. The cat called out to the dog, “I am a high-caste person, and you are a very low-caste person.” “Oh,” said the dog, “not at all. I am the high-caste person and you are of very low caste. You eat all the men’s dinner up, and snatch the food from their hands just as they are putting it into their mouths. And you scratch them, and they beat you; while I sit away from them, and so they don’t beat me. And if they *give* me any dinner I’ll eat it; but if they don’t, I won’t.” “Oh,” says the cat, “not a bit of it. I eat nice clean food; but you eat nasty, dirty food, which the men have thrown away.” “No,” said the dog, “I am high caste and you are very low caste, for if I gave you a slap you would tumble down directly.” “No, no!” said the cat. And they went on disputing and began to fight, till the dog said, “Very well, let us go to the wise jackal and ask him which of us is the better.” “Good,” said the cat. So they went to the jackal and asked him. Said the cat, “I am of the higher caste, and the dog is of the lower caste.” “No,” said the jackal, “the dog is of the higher caste.” The cat said, “No,” and the jackal said, “Yes,” and they began to fight. Then the jackal and the dog proposed to go and ask a great big beast who lived in the jungle and was like a tiger. But the cat said, “I cannot go near a tiger or anything like one.” So then they said, “When we come near the beast, you can remain behind, and we will go on and speak to him.” So they ran into the jungle, where there was a tiger who had been lying on the ground with a great thorn sticking in his foot. When his aunt, the cat, saw him, she scampered off, for she was dreadfully frightened.

The thorn had given the tiger great pain; for a long while he could get no one to take it out, so had lain there for days. At last he had seen a man passing by, to whom he called and said, “Take out this thorn, and I promise I won’t eat you.” But the man refused through fear, saying, “No, I won’t, for you will eat me.” Three times the tiger had promised not to eat him; so at last the man took out the thorn. Then the tiger sprang up and said, “Now I will eat you, for I am very hungry.” “Oh, no, no!” said the man. “What a liar you are! You promised not to eat me if I would take the thorn out of your foot, and now that I have done so you say you will eat me.” And they began to fight, and the man said, “If you won’t eat me, I will bring you a cow and a goat.” But the tiger refused, saying, “No, I won’t eat them; I will eat you.”

At this moment the jackal and the dog came up. And the jackal asked, “What is the matter? why are you fighting?” So then the man told him why they were fighting; and the jackal said to the tiger, “I will tell you a good way of eating the man. Go and fetch a big bag.” So the tiger went and fetched the bag, and brought it to the jackal. Then the jackal said, “Get inside the bag, and leave its mouth open and I’ll throw the man in to you.” So the tiger got inside the bag, and the jackal, the dog and the man quickly tied it up as tight as they could. Then they began to beat the tiger with all their might until at last they killed him. Then the man went home, and the jackal went home, and the dog went home.

55

THE CAT WHICH COULD NOT BE KILLED

There were once a dog and a cat, who were always quarrelling. The dog used to beat the cat, but he never could hurt her. She would only dance about and cry, “You never hurt me, you never hurt me! I *had* a pain in my shoulder, but now it is all gone away.” So the dog went to a *mainá* and said, “What shall I do to hurt this cat? I beat her and I bite her, and yet I can’t hurt her. I am such a big dog and she is rather a big cat, yet if I beat her I don’t hurt her, but if she beats me she hurts me so much.” The *mainá* said, “Bite her mouth very, very hard, and then you’ll hurt her.” “Oh, no,” said the cat, who had just come up, laughing; “you won’t hurt me at all.” The dog bit her mouth as hard as he could. “Oh, you don’t hurt me,” said the cat, dancing about. So the dog went again to the *mainá* and said, “What shall I do?” “Bite her ears,” said the *mainá*. So the dog bit the cat’s ears, but she danced about and said, “Oh, you did not hurt me; now I can put earrings in my ears.” So she put in earrings.

The dog went to the elephant. “Can you kill this cat? she worries me so every day.” “Oh, yes,” said the elephant, “of course I can kill her. She is so little and I am so big.” Then the elephant came and took her up with his trunk, and threw her a long way. Up she jumped at once and danced about, saying, “You did not hurt me one bit. I *had* a pain, but now I am quite well.” Then the elephant got cross and said, “I’ll teach you to dance in another way than that," and he took the cat and laid her on the ground and put his great foot on her. But she was not hurt at all. She danced about and said, "You did not hurt me one bit, not one bit," and she dug her claws into the elephant's trunk. The elephant ran away screaming, and he told the dog, "You had better beware of that cat. She belongs to the tiger tribe." The dog felt very angry with the cat. "What shall I do," said he, "to kill this cat?" And he bit her nose so hard that it bled. But she laughed at him. "Now I can put a ring in my nose," said she. He got furious. "I'll bite her tail in half," said he. So he bit her tail in half, and yet he did not hurt her.

He then went to a leopard. "If you can kill this cat I will give you anything you want." "Very well, I'll kill her," said the leopard. And they went together to the cat. "Stop," said the cat to the leopard; "I want to speak to you first. I'll give you something to eat, and then I'll tell you what I want to say." And then she ran off ever so far, and after she had run a mile she stopped and danced, calling out, "Oh! I'll give you nothing to eat; you could not kill me." The leopard went away very cross, and saying, "What a clever cat that is."

The dog next went to a man, and said, "Can you kill this cat, she worries me so?" "Of course I can," said the man; "I'll stick this knife into her stomach." And he stuck his knife into the cat's stomach, but the cat jumped up, and her stomach closed, and the man went home.

And the dog went to a bear. "Can *you* kill this cat? I can't." "I'll kill her," said the bear; so he stuck all his claws into the cat, but he didn't hurt her; and she stuck her claws into the bear's nose so deep that he died immediately.

Then the poor dog felt very unhappy, and went and threw himself into a hole, and there he died, while the cat went away to her friends.

56

THE JACKAL AND THE KITE

There was once a she-jackal and a she-kite. They lived in the same tree; the jackal at the bottom of the tree, and the kite at the top. Neither had any children. One day the kite said to the jackal, “Let us go and worship God, and fast, and then he will give us children.” So the jackal said, “Very good.” That day the kite ate nothing, nor that night; but the jackal at night brought a dead animal, and was sitting eating it quietly under the tree. By-and-by the kite heard her crunching the bones, instead of fasting. “What have you got there,” said the kite, “that you are making such a noise?” “Nothing,” said the jackal; “it is only my own bones that rattle inside my body whenever I move.” The kite went to sleep again, and took no more notice of the jackal. Next morning the kite ate some food in the name of God. That night again the jackal brought a dead animal. The kite called out, “What are you crunching there? Why are you making that noise? I am sure you have something to eat.” The jackal said, “Oh, no! It is only my own bones rattling in my body.” So the kite went to sleep again.

Some time after, the kite had seven little boys — real little boys — but the jackal had none, because she had not fasted. A year after that the kite went and worshipped God, asking Him to take care of her children. One day — it was their great day — the kite set out seven plates. On one she put cocoa-nuts, on another cucumbers, on a third rice, on a fourth plantains, and so on. Then she gave a plate to each of her seven sons, and told them to take the plates to their aunt the jackal. So they took the seven plates, and carried them to their aunt, crying out, “Aunty, aunty, look here! Mamma has sent you these things.” The jackal took the plates, and cut off the heads of the seven boys, and their hands, and their feet, and their noses, and their ears, and took out their eyes. Then she laid their heads in one plate, and their eyes in another, and their noses in a third, and their ears in a fourth, and their hands in a fifth, and their feet in a sixth, and their trunks in the seventh, and then she covered all the plates over. Then she took the plates to the kite, and called out, “Here! I have brought you something in return. You sent me a present, and I bring you a present.” Now the poor kite thought the jackal had killed all her seven children, so she cried out, “Oh, it’s too dark now to see what you have brought. Put the plates down in my tree.” The jackal put the plates down and went home. Then God made the boys alive again, and they came running to their mother, quite well. And instead of the heads and eyes, and noses and ears, and hands and feet, and trunks, there were again on the plates cocoa-nuts and cucumbers, and plantains and rice, and so on.

Now the jackal got hold of the boys again. And this time she killed them, and cooked them and ate them; and again God brought them to life. Well, the jackal was very much astonished to see the boys alive, and she got angry, and said to the kite, “I will take your seven sons and throw them into the water, and they will be drowned.” “Very well,” said the kite, “take them. I don’t mind. God will take care of them.” The jackal took them and threw them into the water, and left them to die, while the kite looked on without crying. And again God made them alive, and the jackal was so surprised. “Why,” said she, “I put these children into the water, and left them to drown. And here they are alive!” Then God got very angry with the jackal, and said to her, “Go out of this village. And wherever you go, men will try to shoot you, and you shall always be afraid of them.” So the jackal had to go away; and the kite and her children lived very happily ever afterwards.

57

THE VORACIOUS FROG

There were a rat and a frog. And the rat said to the frog, “Go and get me some sticks, while I go and get some flour and milk.” So the frog went out far into the jungle and brought home plenty of sticks, and the rat went out and brought home flour and milk for their dinner. Then she cooked the dinner, and when it was cooked she said to the frog, “Now, you sit here while I go to bathe, and take care of the food so that no one may come and eat it up.” Then the rat went to take her bath, and as soon as she had gone the frog made haste and ate up the dinner quickly, and went away.

When the rat came back she found no dinner, and she could not find the frog. So she went out to look for him, calling to him as loudly as she could, and she saw him in the distance, and overtook him. “Why have you eaten my dinner? Why did you go away?” said the rat. Said the frog, “Oh, dear! it was not I that ate your dinner, but a huge dog that came; and I was only a tiny, tiny thing, and he was a great big dog, and so he frightened me, and I ran away.” “Very well,” said the rat; “go and fetch me more sticks while I go for flour and milk.” So the frog went out far into the jungle and brought back plenty of sticks. And the rat went to fetch flour and milk. Then she lit the fire and cooked the dinner, and told the frog to take care of the dinner while she went to bathe. As soon as she had gone, the frog ate up all the dinner, and went away and hid himself. When the rat came back she saw no frog, no dinner. She went away into the jungle and called to him, and the frog answered from behind a tree, “Here I am, here I am.” The rat went to him and said, “Why did you eat my dinner?” “I didn’t,” said the frog. “It was a great big dog ate the dinner, and he wanted to eat me too, and so I ran away.” The rat said, “Very well. Go and fetch me some more sticks, and I will go for flour and milk.” Then she cooked the dinner again and went to bathe. The frog ate up all the dinner, and went away and hid himself. When the rat returned she saw no dinner, no frog. So she went far into the jungle, found the frog, and told him that it was he that had eaten the dinner. And the frog said, “No,” and the rat said, “Yes.” And the frog said, “If you say that again, I will eat you up.” “All right,” says the rat, “eat me up.” So he ate her up and sat behind a tree, and the baker came past. The frog called out, “Baker, come here! come here! Give me some bread.” The baker looked about everywhere, could not see anybody, could not think who was calling him. At last he saw the frog sitting behind a tree. “Give me some bread,” says the frog. The man said, “No, I won’t give you any bread. I am a great big man, and you are only a little frog, and you have no money.” “Yes, I have money. I will give you some pice, and you will give me some bread.” But the man said, “No, I won’t.” “Well,” said the frog, “if you won’t give me bread, I will eat you up first, and then I will eat up your bread.” So he ate up the man, and then ate up his bread. Presently a man with oranges and lemons passed by. The frog called to him, “Come here! come here!” The man was very much afraid. He didn’t know who had called him. Then he saw the frog, and the frog said, “Give me some lemons.” The man wouldn’t, and said, “No.” “Very well,” says the frog, “if you won’t, I’ll eat you up.” So he ate up the man with his lemons and oranges. Presently a horse and his groom went by. The frog says, “Please give me a ride, and I will give you some money.” “No,” said the horse, “I won’t let you ride on me. You are like a monkey, — very little — I won’t let you ride on my back.” The frog said, “If you won’t, I’ll eat you up.” Then the frog ate him up, and his groom too. Then a barber passed by. “Come and shave me,” says the frog. “Good,” says the barber, “I’ll come and shave you.” So he shaved him, and he thought the frog looked *very* fat, and so as he was shaving him he suddenly made a cut in his stomach. Out jumped the rat with her flour and milk — the baker with his bread — the lemon-seller with his oranges and lemons — the horse and his groom. And the barber ran away home. And the frog died.

58

THE STORY OF FOOLISH SACHÚLÍ

There once lived a poor old widow woman named Hungní, who had a little idiot son called Sachúlí. She used to beg every day. One day when the son had grown up, he said to his mother. “What makes women laugh?” “If you throw a tiny stone at them,” answered she, “they will laugh.” So one day Sachúlí went and sat by a well, and three women came to it to fill their water-jars. “Now,” said Sachúlí “I will make one of these women laugh.” Two of the women filled their water-jars and went away home, and he threw no stones at them; but as the last, who also had on the most jewels, passed him, he threw a great big stone at her, and she fell down dead, with her mouth set as if she were smiling. “Oh, look! look! how she is laughing!” said Sachúlí, and he ran off to call his mother.

“Come, come, mother,” said he, “and see how I have made this woman laugh.”

His mother came, and when she saw the woman lying dead, she was much frightened, for the dead woman belonged to a great and very rich family, and she wore jewels worth a thousand rupees. Hungní took off all her jewels, and threw her body into the well.

After some days the dead woman’s father and mother and all her people sent round a crier with a drum to try and find her. “Whoever brings back a young woman who wears a great many gold necklaces and bracelets and rings shall get a great deal of money," cried the crier. Sachúlí heard him. "I know where she is," said he. "My mother took off all her jewels, and threw her into the well."

The crier said, "Can you go down into the well and bring her up?"

"If you will tie a rope round my waist and let me down the well, I shall be able to bring her up."

So they set off towards the well, which was near Hungní's house; and when she saw them coming, she guessed what they came for, and she ran out and killed a sheep, threw it into the well, and took out the dead woman and hid her.

The crier got some men to come with him, and they let Sachúlí down the well. "Has she got eyes?" said Sachúlí. "Of course, every one has eyes," answered the men. "Has she a nose?" asked Sachúlí. "Yes, she has a nose," said the men. "Has she got a mouth?" asked Sachúlí. "Yes," said the men. "Has she a long face?"

"What does he mean?" said the men, who were getting cross. "No one has a long face; perhaps she has, though. Yes, she has a long face," cried the men.

"Has she a tail?"

"A tail! Why no one has a tail. Perhaps, though, she has long hair. No doubt that is what he calls a tail. Yes, she has a tail."

"Has she ears?"

"Of course, every one has ears."

"Has she four feet?"

"Four feet!" said the men. "Why, no one has four feet. Perhaps you call her hands feet. Yes, she has four feet. Bring her up quickly."

Then Sachúlí brought up the sheep.

The men were very angry when they saw the sheep, and they beat Sachúlí, and called him a very stupid fellow and a great liar, and they went away feeling very cross.

Sachúlí went home to his mother, who, as soon as she saw him coming, ran out and put the woman's body back in the well, and when he got home she beat him. "Mother," said he, "give me some bread, and I will go away and die." His mother cooked him some bread, and he went away.

He walked on, and on, and on, a long way.

Now, some Rájá's ten camels had been travelling along the road on which Sachúlí went, each carrying sacks of gold mohurs and rupees, and one of these camels broke loose from the string and strayed away, and the camel-drivers could not find it again. But Sachúlí met it, and caught it and took it home.

"See, mother! see what a quantity of money I have brought you!" cried Sachúlí. Hungní rushed out, and was delighted to see so much money. She took off the sacks at once and sent the camel away. Then she hid the rupees and the gold with the jewels she had taken from the dead woman. And, as she was a cunning woman, she went and bought a great many comfits and scattered them all about her house, when Sachúlí was out of the way. "Oh, look! look!" cried Sachúlí, "at all these comfits." "God has rained them from heaven," said his mother. Sachúlí began to pick them up and eat them, and he told all the people in the village how God had rained down comfits from heaven on his mother's house. "What nonsense!" cried they. "Yes, he has," said Sachúlí, "and I have been eating them." "No comfits have fallen on our houses," said they. "Yes, yes," cried he, "the day my mother got all those rupees, God rained comfits on our house." "What lies!" cried the people; "as if it ever rained comfits. Why did not the comfits rain down on our houses? Why did they fall only on your house? And what's all this about rupees?" And then they came to see if there were any rupees or comfits in Hungní's house, and they found none at all, for Hungní had hidden the rupees and thrown away the comfits. "There," said they to Sachúlí, "where are your rupees? where are your comfits? What a liar you are! as if it ever rained comfits. How can you tell such stories?" And they beat him. “But it did rain comfits,” said Sachúlí, “for I ate them. It rained comfits the day my mother got the rupees.”

Now the Rájá who had lost his camel sent round the crier with his drum to find his camel and his money-bags. “Whoever has found a camel carrying money-bags and brings it and the money back to the Rájá, will get a great many rupees,” cried the crier. “Oh!” says Sachúlí, “I know where the money is. One day I went out and I found a stray camel, and he had sacks of rupees on his back, and I took him home to my mother, and she took the sacks off his back and sent the camel away.” So the crier went to find the rupees, and the people in the bazar went with him. But Hungní had hidden the rupees so carefully that, though they hunted all over her house, they could find none, and they beat Sachúlí, and told him he was a liar. “I am not telling lies,” said Sachúlí. “My mother took the rupees the day it rained comfits on our house.” So they beat him again, and they went away. Then Hungní beat Sachúlí, and said, “What a bad boy you are! trying to get me beaten and put into prison, telling every one about the rupees. Go away; I don’t want you any more, such a bad boy as you are! go away and die.” He said, “Very well, mother; give me some bread, and I’ll go.”

Sachúlí set off and took an axe with him. “How shall I kill myself?” said he. So he climbed up a tree and sat out on a long branch, and began cutting off the branch between himself and the tree on which he was sitting. “What are you doing up there?” said a man who came by. “You’ll die if you cut that branch off.” “What do you say?” cries Sachúlí, jumping down on the man, and seizing his hand. “When shall I die?” “How can I tell? Let me go.” “I won’t let you go till you tell me when I shall die.” And at last the man said, “When you find a scarlet thread on your jacket, then you will die.”

Sachúlí went off to the bazar, and sat down by some tailors, and one of the tailors, in throwing away their shreds of cloth, threw a scarlet thread on Sachúlí’s coat. “Oh,” said Sachúlí, when he saw the thread, “now I shall die!” “How do you know that?” said the tailors. “A man told me that when I found a scarlet thread on my jacket, I should die,” said Sachúlí; and the tailors all laughed at him and made fun of him, but he went off into the jungle and dug his grave with his axe, and lay down in it. In the night a sepoy came by with a large jar of ghee on his head. “How heavy this jar is,” said the sepoy. “Is there no cooly that will come and carry my ghee home for me? I would give him four pice for his trouble.” Up jumped Sachúlí out of his grave. “I’ll carry it for you,” said he. “Who are you?” said the sepoy, much frightened. “Oh, I am a man who is dead,” said Sachúlí, “and I am tired of lying here. I can’t lie here any more.” “Well,” said the sepoy, very much frightened, “you may carry my ghee.” So Sachúlí put the jar on his head, and he went on, with the sepoy following. “Now,” said Sachúlí, “with these four pice I will buy a hen, and I will sell the hen and her eggs, and with the money I get for them I will buy a goat; and then I will sell the goat and her milk and her hide and buy a cow, and I will sell her milk; and then I will marry a wife, and then I shall have some children, and they will say to me, ‘Father, will you have some rice?’ and I will say, ‘No, I won’t have any rice.’” And as he said, “No, I won’t have any rice,” he shook his head, and down came the jar of ghee, and the jar was smashed, and the ghee spilled. “Oh, dear! what have you done?” cried the sepoy. “Why did you shake your head?” “Because my children asked me to have some rice, and I did not want any, so I shook my head,” said Sachúlí. “Oh,” said the sepoy, “he is an utter idiot.” And the sepoy went home, and Sachúlí went back to his mother. “Why have you come back?” said she. “I have been dead twelve years,” said Sachúlí. “What lies you tell!” said she. “You have only been away a few days. Be off! I don’t want any liars here.”

Sachúlí asked her to give him two flour-cakes, which she did, and he went off to the jungle, and it was night. Five fairies lived in this jungle, and as Sachúlí went along, he broke his flour-cakes into five pieces, and said, “Now I’ll eat one, then the second, then the third, then the fourth, and then the fifth.” And the fairies heard him and were afraid, and said to each other, “What shall we do? Here is this man, and he is going to eat us all up. What shall we do to save ourselves? We will give him something.” So they went out all five, and said to Sachúlí, “If only you won’t eat us, we will give you a present.” Now Sachúlí did not know there were fairies in this jungle. “What will you give me?” said Sachúlí. “We will give you a cooking-pot. When you want anything to eat, all you have to do is to ask the pot for it, and you will get it.” Sachúlí took the pot and went off to the bazar. He stopped at a cook-shop, and asked for some pilau. “Pilau? There’s no pilau here,” said the shopman. “Well,” said Sachúlí, “I have a cooking-pot here, and I have only to ask it for any dish I want, and I get it at once.” “What nonsense!” said the man. “Just see,” said Sachúlí; and he said to the cooking-pot, “I want some pilau,” and immediately the pot was full of pilau, and all the people in the shop set to work to help him to eat it up, it was so good. “Oh,” thought the cook, “I must have that pot,” so he gave Sachúlí a sleepy drink. Then Sachúlí went to sleep, and while he slept the cook stole the fairy cooking-pot, and put a common cooking-pot in its place. Sachúlí went home with the cook’s pot, and said, “Mother, I have brought home a cooking-pot. If you ask it for any food you want, you will get it.” “Nonsense,” said Hungní; “what lies you are telling!” “It is quite true, mother; only see,” and he asked the pot for different dishes, but none came. Hungní was furious. “Go away,” she said. “Why do you come back to me? I want no liars here.” “Give me five flour-cakes and I will go,” said her son. So she baked the bread for him, and he set off for the jungle where he had met the five fairies, and as he went along he said, “I will eat one, and I will eat two, and I will eat three, and I will eat four, and I will eat five.” The five fairies heard him, and were terrified. “Here is this bad man again,” said they, “and he will eat us all five. Oh, what shall we do? Let us give him a present.” So they went to Sachúlí, and said, “Here is a box for you. Whenever you want any clothes you have only to tell this box, and it will give them to you; take it, and don’t eat us.” So he took the box and went to the bazar, and he stopped at the cook-shop again, and asked the cook for a red silk dress, and a pair of long black silk trousers, and a blue silk turban, and a pair of red shoes, and the cook laughed and asked how he should have such beautiful things. “Well,” said Sachúlí, “here is a box; when I ask it for the dress and trousers, and turban and shoes, I shall get them.” So the cook laughed at him. “Just see,” said Sachúlí, and he said, “Box, give me a red silk dress and a pair of long black silk trousers, and a blue silk turban, and red shoes,” and there they were at once. And the cook was delighted, and said to himself, “I will have that box,” and he gave Sachúlí a good dinner and a sleepy drink, and Sachúlí fell fast asleep. While he slept the cook came and stole the fairy box, and put a common box in its place. In the morning Sachúlí went home to his mother and said, “Mother, I’ve brought you a box. You have only to ask it for any clothes you may want, and you will get them.” “Nonsense,” said his mother, “don’t tell me such lies.” “Only see, mother; I am telling you truth,” said he. He asked the box for coats and all sorts of things — no; he got nothing. His mother was very angry, and said, “You liar! you naughty boy! Go away and don’t come back any more.” And she broke the box to pieces, and threw the bits away. “Well, mother, bake me some flour-cakes.” So she baked him the cakes and gave them to him, and sent him away. He went off to the fairies’ jungle, and as he went he said, “Now I’ll eat one, then two, then three, then four, then five.” The five fairies were very frightened. “Here is this man come back to eat us all five. Let us give him a present.” So they went to him and gave him a rope and stick, and said, “Only say to this rope, ‘Bind that man,’ and he will be tied up at once; and to this stick, ‘Beat that man,’ and the stick will beat him.” Sachúlí was very glad to get these things, for he guessed what had happened to his cooking-pot and box. So he went to the bazar, and at the cook-shop he said, “Rope, bind all these men that are here!” and the cook and every one in the shop were tied up instantly. Then Sachúlí said, “Stick, beat these men!” and the stick began to beat them. “Oh, stop, stop beating us, and untie, and I’ll give you your pot and your box!” cried the cook. “No, I won’t stop beating you, and I won’t untie you till I have my pot and my box.” And the cook gave them both to him, and he untied the rope. Then Sachúlí went home, and when his mother saw him, she was very angry, but he showed her the box and the cooking-pot, and she saw he had told her the truth. So she sent for the doctor, and he declared Sachúlí was wise and not silly, and he and Hungní found a wife for Sachúlí, and made a grand wedding for him, and they lived happily ever after.

59

BARBER HÍM AND THE TIGERS

Once there lived a barber called Hím, who was very poor indeed. He had a wife and twelve children, five boys and seven girls: now and then he got a few pice. One day he went away from his home feeling very cross, and left his wife and children to get on as best they could. “What can I do?” said he. “I have not enough money to buy food for my family, and they are crying for it.” And so he walked on till he came to a jungle. It was night when he got there. This jungle was called the “tigers’ jungle,” because only tigers lived in it; no birds, no insects, no other animals, and there were four hundred tigers in it altogether. As soon as Barber Hím reached the jungle he saw a great tiger walking about. “What shall I do?” cried he. “This tiger is sure to eat me.” And he took his razor and his razor-strap, and began to sharpen his razor. Then he went close up to the tiger, still sharpening his razor. The tiger was much frightened. “What shall I do?” said the tiger; “this man will certainly gash me.” “I have come,” said the barber, “to catch twenty tigers by order of Mahárájá Káns. You are one, and I want nineteen more.” The tiger, greatly alarmed, answered, “If you won’t catch us, I will give you as much gold and as many jewels as you can carry.” For these tigers used to go out and carry off the men and women from the villages, and some of these people had rupees, and some had jewels, all of which the tigers used to collect together. “Good,” said Hím, “then I won’t catch you.” The tiger led him to the spot where all the tigers used to eat their dinners, and the barber took as much gold and as many jewels as he could carry, and set off home with them.

Then he built a house, and bought his children pretty clothes and good food, and necklaces, and they all lived very happily for some time. But at last he wanted more rupees, so he set off to the tigers’ jungle. There he met the tiger as he did before, and he told him the Mahárájá Káns had sent him to catch twenty tigers. The tiger was terrified and said, “If you will only not catch us, I will give you more gold and jewels.” To this the barber agreed, and the tiger led him to the old spot, and the barber took as many jewels and rupees as he could carry. Then he returned home.

One day a very poor man, a fakír, said to him, “How did you manage to become so rich? In old days you were so poor you could hardly support your family.”

“I will tell you,” said Hím. And he told him all about his visits to the tigers’ jungle. “But don’t you go there for gold to-night,” continued the barber. “Let me go and listen to the tigers talking. If you like, you can come with me. Only you must not be frightened if the tigers roar.”

“I’ll not be frightened,” said the fakír.

So that evening at eight o’clock they went to the tigers’ jungle. There the barber and the fakír climbed into a tall thick tree, and its leaves came all about them and sheltered them as if they were in a house. The tigers used to hold their councils under this tree. Very soon all the tigers in the jungle assembled together under it, and their Rájá — a great, huge beast, with only one eye — came too. “Brothers,” said the tiger who had given the barber the rupees and jewels, “a man has come here twice to catch twenty of us for the Mahárájá Káns; now we are only four hundred in number, and if twenty of us were taken away we should be only a small number, so I gave him each time as many rupees and jewels as he could carry and he went away again. What shall we do if he returns?” The tigers said they would meet again on the morrow, and then they would settle the matter. Then the tigers went off, and the barber and the fakír came down from the tree. They took a quantity of rupees and jewels and returned to their homes.

"To-morrow," said they, "we will come again and hear what the tigers say."

The next day the barber went alone to the tigers' jungle, and there he met his tiger again. "This time," said he, "I am come to cut off the ears of all the four hundred tigers who live in this jungle; for Mahárájá Káns wants them to make into medicine."

The tiger was greatly frightened, much more so than at the other times. "Don't cut off our ears; pray don't," said he, "for then we could not hear, and it would hurt so horribly. Go and cut off all the dogs' ears instead, and I will give you rupees and jewels as much as two men can carry." "Good," said the barber, and he made two journeys with the rupees and jewels from the jungle to the borders of his village, and there he got a cooly to help him to carry them to his house.

At night he and the fakír went again to the great tree under which the tigers held their councils. Now the tiger who had given the barber so many rupees and jewels had made ready a great quantity of meat, fowls, chickens, geese, men the tigers had killed — everything he had been able to get hold of — and he made them into a heap under the tree, for he said that after the tigers had settled the matter they would dine. Soon the tigers arrived with their Rájá, and the barber's tiger said, "Brothers, what are we to do? This man came again to-day to cut off all our ears to make medicine for Mahárájá Káns. I told him this would be a bad business for us, and that he must go and cut off all the dogs' ears instead; and I gave him as much money and jewels as two men could carry. So he went home. Now what shall we do? We must leave this jungle, and where shall we go?" The other tigers said, "We will not leave the jungle. If this man comes again we will eat him up.” So they dined and went away, saying they would meet again to-morrow.

After the tigers had gone, the barber and fakír came down from the tree and went off to their homes, without taking any rupees or jewels with them. They agreed to return the next evening.

Next evening back they came and climbed into the great tree. The tigers came too, and the barber’s tiger told his story all over again. The tiger Rájá sat up and said, fiercely, “We will not leave this jungle. Should the man come again, I will eat him myself.” When the fakír heard this he was so frightened that he tumbled down out of the tree into the midst of the tigers. The barber instantly cried out with a loud voice, “Now cut off their ears! cut off their ears!” and the tigers, terrified, ran away as fast as they could. Then the barber took the fakír home, but the poor man was so much hurt by his fall that he died.

The barber lived happily ever after, but he took good care never to go to the tigers’ jungle again.

60

THE BULBUL AND THE COTTON-TREE

There was once a bulbul, and one day as he was flying about, he saw a tree on which was a little fruit. The bulbul was much pleased and said, “I will sit here till this fruit is ripe, and then I will eat it.” So he deserted his nest and his wife, and sat there for twelve years without eating anything, and every day he said, “To-morrow I will eat this fruit.” During these twelve years a great many birds tried to sit on the tree, and wished to build their nests in it, but whenever they came the bulbul sent them away, saying, “This fruit is not good. Don’t come here.” One day a cuckoo came and said, “Why do you send us away? Why should we not come and sit here too? All the trees here are not yours.” “Never mind,” said the bulbul, “I am going to sit here, and when this fruit is ripe, I shall eat it.” Now the cuckoo knew that this tree was the cotton-tree, but the bulbul did not. First comes the bud, which the bulbul thought a fruit, then the flower, and the flower becomes a big pod, and the pod bursts and all the cotton flies away. The bulbul was delighted when he saw the beautiful red flower, which he still thought a fruit, and said, “When it is ripe, it will be a delicious fruit.” The flower became a pod, and the pod burst. “What is all this that is flying about?” said the bulbul. “The fruit must be ripe now.” So he looked into the pod, and it was empty; all the cotton had fallen out. Then the cuckoo came and said to the angry bulbul, “You see if you had allowed us to come and sit on the tree, you would have had something good to eat; but as you were selfish, and would not let any one share with you, God is angry and has punished you by giving you a hollow fruit.” Then the cuckoo called all the other birds, and they came and mocked the bulbul. “Ah! you see God has punished you for your selfishness,” they said. The bulbul got very angry and all the birds went away. After they had gone, the bulbul said to the tree, “You are a bad tree. You are of use to no one. You give food to no one.” The tree said, “You are mistaken. God made me what I am. My flower is given to sheep to eat. My cotton makes pillows and mattresses for man.”

Since that day no bulbul goes near a cotton-tree.

61

THE MONKEY PRINCE

Once upon a time there was a Rájá called Jabhú Rájá, and he had a great many wives; at least he had seven wives, but he had no children. Although he had married seven wives, not one of them had given him a child. At this he was greatly vexed and said, “I have married seven wives, and not one of them has given me a child.” And he got very angry with God: he said, “Why does not God give me any children? I will go into the jungle and die by myself.” The Ránís coaxed him to stay, but he wouldn’t; he would go out into the jungle.

So he went out into the jungle very far, and God sent him an old fakír leaning on a stick. The Rájá met him, and the fakír said, “Why do you come into the jungle? If you go far into the jungle you will meet plenty of tigers, and they will eat you. Tell me what you want. Whatever you want I will give you.” “No, I won’t tell you,” said the Rájá. But at last the Rájá told him, “I have seven wives, and none of them has given me any children, and so here I will die by myself.” Then the fakír said, “Take this stick, and a little way off you will find a mango-tree with some mangoes on it. Throw the stick at the mangoes with one hand, and catch them as they fall with the other, and when you have caught them all, take them home and give one to each of your seven wives.” So the Rájá went and knocked the mangoes off the tree and caught them as the fakír had told him. Then he looked about for the fakír, but he could not find him, for he had gone away into another part of the jungle. So he went home and gave the seven mangoes to his wives. But the fruit was so good that six of the wives ate it up, and would not give the youngest wife any. She cried very much, and went into the compound and picked up one of the mango stones which one of the six wives had thrown away, and ate it. By and by each of the six wives had a son; but the one who had eaten the stone had a monkey, who was called in consequence Bandarsábásá, or Prince Monkey. He was really a boy, but no one knew it, for he had a monkey-skin covering him. His six brothers hated him. They went to school every day; and the monkey went under the ground, and was taught by the fairies. His mother did not know this; she thought, as he was a monkey, he went to the jungle and swung in the trees. He was the best and the cleverest of all the boys.

Now, in a kingdom a three months’ journey off by land from Jabhú Rájá’s country, there lived a king called King Jamársá. He had a very beautiful daughter whose name was Princess Jahúran, and as her father wanted a very strong son-in-law, he had a large heavy iron ball made, and he sent letters to all the Rájás and Rájás’ sons far and near to say that whoever wished to marry his daughter, the Princess Jahúran, must be able to throw this heavy ball at her and hit her. So many Rájás went to try, but none of them could even lift the ball. Now, one of these letters had come to Jabhú Rájá, and his six elder sons determined they would go to King Jamársá’s country, for each of them was sure he could throw the ball, and win the princess.

Prince Monkey laughed softly and said to himself, “I will go and try too. I know I shall succeed.”

Off, therefore, the six brothers set on their long journey, and the monkey followed them; but before he did so, he went into the jungle and took off his monkey-skin, and God sent him a beautiful horse and beautiful clothes. Then he followed his brothers and overtook them, and gave them betel-leaf and lovely flowers. “What a beautiful boy!” they said. “Who is it owns such a beautiful boy? He must be some Rájá’s son.” Then he galloped quickly away, took off his grand clothes and put them on his horse, and the horse rose into the air. He put on his monkey-skin and followed his brothers.

When they reached King Jamársá’s palace they pitched their tents in his compound, which was very big. Every evening the princess used to stand in her verandah and let down her long golden hair so that it fell all round her, and then the Rájás who wished to marry her had to try to hit her with the great heavy ball that lay on the ground just in front of where she stood.

King Jamársá’s house had more than one storey, and you had to go upstairs to get to the Princess Jahúran’s rooms which led into the verandah in which she used to stand.

Well, Prince Monkey’s six elder brothers all got ready to go up to the palace and throw the ball. They were quite sure they would throw it without any trouble. Before they went they told their monkey brother to take care of their tents, and to have a good dinner ready for them when they returned. “If the dinner is not ready, we will beat you.”

As soon as they were gone, Prince Monkey took some gold mohurs he had, and he went to a traveller’s resting-house, which was a little way outside King Jamársá’s compound, and gave them to the man who owned it, and bade him give him a grand dinner for his six brothers. Then he took the dinner to the tents, went into the jungle, and took off his monkey-skin. And God sent him a grand horse from heaven, and splendid clothes. These he put on, mounted his horse, and rode to King Jamársá’s compound. There he took no notice of either the king, or his daughter, or of the ball, or of the Rájás who were there to try and lift it. He spoke only to his brothers, and gave them lovely flowers and betel-leaf. Meanwhile, everybody was looking at him and talking about him. “Who can he be? Did you ever see any one so lovely? Where does he come from? Just look at his clothes! In our countries we cannot get any like them!” As for the Princess Jahúran she thought to herself, “That Rájá shall be my husband, whether he lifts the ball or not.” When he had given his brothers the flowers and betel-leaf, Prince Monkey rode straight to the jungle, took off his clothes, laid them on his horse (which instantly went up to heaven), put on his monkey-skin, went back to the tents, and lay down to sleep.

When his brothers came home they were talking eagerly about the unknown beautiful Rájá. All the time they were eating their dinner they could speak of nothing else.

Well, every evening for about ten evenings it was just the same story. Only every evening Prince Monkey appeared in a different dress. The princess always thought, “That is the man I will marry, whether he can throw the ball or not.” Then about the eleventh evening, after he had given his brothers the flowers and betel-leaf, he said to all the Rájás who were standing there, and to King Jamársá and to all the servants, “Now every one of you go and stand far away, for I am going to throw the ball.” “No, no!” they all cried, “we will stand here and see you.” “You must go far away. You can look on at a distance,” said the Monkey Prince; “the ball might fall back among you and hurt you.” So they all went off and stood round him at a distance.

“Now,” said Prince Monkey to himself, “I won’t hit the princess this time; but I will hit the verandah railing.” Then he took up the ball with one hand, just as if it were quite light, and threw it on the verandah railing, and then he rode off fast to the jungle.

The next evening it was the same thing over again, only this time he threw the ball into the Princess Jahúran’s clothes.

The next evening the ball fell on one of her feet, and hurt her little toe-nail. Now, Princess Jahúran was very angry that this unknown beautiful prince should have thrown the ball three times, and hit her twice, and hurt her the third time, and yet had never spoken to her father, or let any one know who he was, and had always, on the contrary, ridden away as hard as he could, no one knew where. She was very much in love with him, and was very anxious to find this Rájá who had hit her twice, so she ordered a bow and arrow to be brought to her, and said she would shoot the Rájá the next time he hit her. She would not kill him; she would only shoot the arrow at him. Well, the next evening Prince Monkey threw the ball, and it fell on her other foot and hurt her great toe-nail. When he saw she was hurt, he was very sorry in his heart, and said, “Did I hurt you?” “Yes,” she said, “very much.” “Oh, I am so sorry,” said the prince. “I would not have thrown the ball so hard had I thought it would hurt you.” Then she shot the arrow, and hit him in the leg, and a great deal of blood came out of the wound; but he rode hard away to the jungle all the same, only this time he did not take off his fine clothes, but he drew the monkey-skin over them, and his horse went up to heaven, and he went back to the tents. Then the princess sent a servant into the town, and said, whoever or whatever he should hear crying with pain, he should bring to her — were it a man, or a jackal, or a dog, or a wild beast. So the servant went round the town. The six brothers had gone to sleep, but the poor monkey brother could not sleep, but sat up crying from pain. He could not help it, do what he would, and the servant, as he went round the town, heard him crying. So he took him and brought him to the princess, and the princess said she would marry him.

“What!” cried her father, “marry that monkey? Never! Who ever heard of any one marrying a monkey, a nasty monkey?” But in spite of all the king said, the princess declared marry that monkey she would. “I like that monkey very, very much,” she said. “I will marry him. It is my pleasure to marry him.” “Well,” said the Rájá at last, “if it is your pleasure to marry him, you must marry him; but who ever heard of any one marrying a nasty monkey?”

So they were married at once; and the Monkey Prince wore his monkey-skin for a wedding garment.

That night when they went to bed, the young prince drew off his skin and lay down by Jahúran, and when she saw her beautiful husband she was so glad, so glad. “Why do you wear a monkey-skin?” she asked. He answered, “I wear it as a protection, because my brothers are naughty, and would kill me if they knew what I really am.”

They lived very happily with King Jamársá for six months, and the six elder brothers went on living there too, and hating him more and more for having such a beautiful wife.

But one night Prince Monkey thought of his mother, and he said to his wife, “My mother perhaps is crying for me. Let us go to my father’s kingdom, and see her.” Princess Jahúran agreed; so next morning they spoke to King Jamársá, who said they might go.

The six brothers at once said, “We will go with you;” and they also said, “Let us get two big boats, one for you and the princess, and one for ourselves, and let us go by water, and not by land.” Now by water it took only six days to get to Jabhú Rájá’s kingdom, by land it took three months. The Monkey Prince agreed to all his brothers said.

Princess Jahúran heard them planning to throw the monkey into the water on the journey, and then to take her home to their father as the wife of one of them; so as she was very wise she went to her father and begged him to have six large beautiful mattresses, well stuffed with cotton, made for her.

“What can you want with six mattresses?” said the king. “I want my bed to be very comfortable on board the boat,” said his daughter. Her father loved her dearly, so he had her mattresses made, beautiful mattresses and well stuffed with cotton. The princess had them all carried to her boat.

When everything was ready they went on board the boats with the monkey’s six brothers. Now, the princess had warned her husband of his brothers’ wicked plans, and she said to him, “Never go near your brothers; never speak to your brothers; for they want to kill you.” The first day the six brothers said to the monkey, “Please bring us a little salt.” But the monkey said, “No; my wife will take you some.” “No,” said the brothers, “your wife cannot bring us any. She is a princess. Do you bring us some.” So they threw a rope from one boat to another, and the monkey went on the rope, and the brothers untied it, and the monkey fell into the water. Then the princess cried out, “My husband will be drowned! My husband will be drowned!” And she threw out one of the mattresses; the monkey sat on it; it floated back to his boat, and the crew drew him up.

The next day the six brothers begged Prince Monkey to bring them water, and they threw a plank from their boat to his for him to cross on. The prince set off with the water, in spite of all his wife’s entreaties, and his brothers tilted the plank into the water. The prince would have been drowned had not the Princess Jahúran thrown him a mattress. And the same thing happened during the next four days. The brothers wanted something to eat or drink, and their monkey-brother brought it them across a rope or plank, which they cut or dropped into the water, and he would have died but for the mattresses which his wife threw to him one by one.

When they reached Jabhú Rájá’s kingdom, the eldest son went on shore up to his father’s palace. Each of the Rájá’s seven wives had a house to herself in his compound. He went to his mother’s house and said, “Give me your palanquin, mother, for I have brought home a most lovely wife, and want to bring her to the palace.”

At this news his mother was delighted, and she told it to the other Ránís, and said, “My son has brought home such a lovely wife! I am so glad! oh, I am so glad!” The youngest Rání began to cry bitterly. “My son,” she said, “is nothing but a monkey; he will never be married; he will never have a wife at all.”

Then the palanquin was got ready, and the seven Ránís and the prince went with it to the boat. The Princess Jahúran came on land with her monkey, and when the Ránís saw her, they all cried, “How lovely she is!

how beautiful!” And the eldest Rání was gladder than ever, and the youngest cried still more. The princess got into the palanquin with her monkey. “What are you doing with that horrid monkey?” said the eldest prince. “Put him out of the palanquin directly.” “Indeed I will not,” said the princess. “He is my husband, and I love him.” “What!” cried all the Ránís, “are you married to that monkey?” “Yes,” said the princess. “Then get out of my palanquin at once,” said the eldest Rání. “You shall not ride in my palanquin with that nasty monkey.” The youngest Rání was very glad her son had such a beautiful wife. So the princess got out, and took her monkey in her arms and walked with him to the youngest Rání’s house, and there they all lived for some time. Now the little Rání did not know her son was really a beautiful man, for the princess never told her, as her husband had forbidden her to tell any one.

One evening Jabhú Rájá’s servants had a grand nautch in the Rájá’s compound, and the Rájá and his sons and the neighbouring Rájás all came to see it. Prince Monkey said to his wife, “I, too, will go and see this nautch.” So he took off his monkey-skin, folded it up and laid it under her pillow. Then he put on the clothes God had sent him from heaven the last time he threw the ball, and which he had not laid on his horse’s back when he put his monkey-skin on again, and when he came among all the Rájás and people who were looking on at the nautch, they all exclaimed, “Who is that? Who can it be?” He was very handsome, and he had beautiful hair all gold. When he had stayed some time, Prince Monkey went quickly back to his wife, and in the morning he put on his monkey-skin again.

Now the little Rání, his mother, though she was very glad her monkey son had such a wife, could never understand how it was that her daughter-in-law was so happy with him. “How could you marry him?” she used to say to her. “Because it pleased me to marry him,” the princess used to answer. “How can you be so happy with him?” said the mother. “I love him,” said the princess; and the poor Rání used to wonder at this more and more.

Well, one day there was another nautch, and Prince Monkey went to it; but he left his skin under his wife’s pillow. As soon as he had gone, she called the little Rání, and said, “See, you think my husband is a monkey; he is no monkey, but a very handsome man. There is no one like him, he is so beautiful.” The Rání did not believe her. Then the princess took the skin from under her pillow. “See,” she said, “when your son puts this on, then he is a monkey; when he takes it off he is a beautiful man. And now, I think I will burn this skin, and then he must always be a man. What do you say?” “Are you sure it won’t hurt him if you burn his skin?” said his mother. “Perhaps he may die if it is burnt.” “Oh, no, he won’t die,” said the princess. “Shall I burn it?” “Burn it,” said the little Rání. Then the princess threw the skin on the fire and burnt it quite up.

Prince Monkey was sitting looking on at the nautch when suddenly his heart told him his wife had burnt his skin. He jumped up directly and went home, and when he found his heart had told him true, he was so angry with his wife, that he would say nothing to her but “Why did you burn my skin?” and he was in such a rage that he went straight to bed and went to sleep.

In the morning, while he slept, the princess went to the little Rání, and said, “Come and see your beautiful son.” “I am ashamed to do so,” said the Rání. “Ashamed to look at your own son? What nonsense! Come directly,” said Princess Jahúran. Then the little Rání went with her, and when she saw her beautiful son she was indeed glad, and the prince opened his eyes and saw her, and then he kissed her, and they were very happy.

The news spread through the compound, and Jabhú Rájá and his sons and everybody came at once to see if it were true. When they saw the beautiful young prince, with his hair all gold, they could not stand, but fell down. Prince Monkey lifted his father and loved him, and put his arms round him, and said, “I am your son, your own son; you must not fall down before me.” “Why did you wear that monkey-skin?” asked his father. “Because,” he said, “my mother ate the mango stone instead of eating the mango, and so I was born with this skin, and God ordered me to wear it till I had found a wife.” His brothers said, “Who could have guessed there was such a beautiful man inside that monkey-skin? God’s decrees are good!” And they left off hating their brother, Prince Monkey.

There were great rejoicings and feasts now, and all were very happy. The six elder brothers lived always with their father and Prince Monkey, but none of them ever married.

62

BRAVE HÍRÁLÁLBÁSÁ

Once there was a Rájá called Mánikbásá Rájá, or the Ruby King, who had seven wives and seven children. One day he told his wives he would go out hunting, and he rode on and on, a long, long way from his palace. A Rakshas was sitting by the wayside, who, seeing the Rájá coming, quickly turned herself into a beautiful Rání, and sat there crying. The Rájá asked her, “Why do you cry?” And the Rakshas answered, “My husband has gone away. He has been away many days, and I think he will never come back again. If some Rájá will take me to his house and marry me, I shall be very glad.” So the Rájá said, “Will you come with me?” And the Rakshas answered, “Very well, I will come.” And then the Rájá took the pretended Rání home with him and married her. He gave her a room to live in. Every night at twelve o’clock the Rakshas got up and devoured an elephant, or a horse, or some other animal. The Rájá said, “What can become of my elephants and horses? Every day either an elephant or a horse disappears. Who can take them away?” The Rakshas-Rání said to him, “Your seven Ránís are Rakshases, and every night at twelve o’clock they devour a horse, or an elephant, or some other creature.”

So the Rájá believed her, and had a great hole dug just outside his kingdom, into which he put the seven Ránís with their children, and then he sent a sepoy to them and bade him take out all the Ránís’ eyes, and bring them to him. This the sepoy did. After a time the poor Ránís grew so hungry that six of them ate their children, but the seventh Rání, who was the youngest of them all, declared she would never eat her child though she might die of hunger, “for,” she said, “I love him a great deal too much.” God was very pleased with the seventh Rání for this, and so every day he sent her a little food, which she divided with the other Ránís. And every day her little boy grew bigger, and bigger, and bigger, until he had become a strong lad, when, as he thought it was very dark in the hole, he climbed out of it and looked all about. Then he came back to his mothers (for he called all the seven Ránís “Mother” now), who told him he was not to clamber up out of the hole any more, for if he did, some one might kill him. “Still, if you will go,” they added, “do not go to your father’s kingdom, but stay near this place.” The boy said, “Very well,” and every day he climbed out of the hole and only went where his seven mothers told him he might go, and he used to beg the people about to give him a little rice, and flour and bread, which they did.

One day he said to his mothers, “If you let me go now to my father’s kingdom, I will go.” “Well, you may go,” they said; “but come back again soon.” This he promised to do, and he went to his father’s kingdom. For some time he stood daily at the door of his father’s palace and then returned to the hole. One day the Rakshas-Rání was standing in the verandah, and she thought, “I am sure that is the Rájá’s son.” The servants every day asked the boy, “Why do you always stand at the door of the palace?” “I want service with the Rájá,” he would reply. “If the Rájá has any place he can give me, I will take it.”

The Rakshas-Rání said to the Rájá, “The boy standing out there wants service. May I take him into mine?” The Rájá answered, “Very well, send for him.” So all the servants ran and fetched the boy. The Rakshas-Rání asked him, “Are you willing to do anything I tell you?” The boy said, “Yes.” “Then you shall be my servant,” she said, and first she told him he must go to the Rakshas country to fetch some rose-water for her. “I will give you a letter,” she said, “so that no harm may happen to you.” The lad answered, “Very well, only you must give me three shields full of money.” She gave him the three shields full of money, and he took them and went home to his mothers. Then he got two servants for them, one to take care of them, and one to go to the bazar. His mothers gave him food for the journey, and he left them the remainder of his money, telling them to take great care of it. He then returned to the Rakshas-Rání for his letter. She told the Rájá she was feeling ill, and would not be quite well until she got some rose-water from the Rakshas country. The Rájá said, “Then you had better send this boy for it.” So she gave him a letter, in which she had written, “When this boy arrives among you, kill him and eat him instantly,” and he set out at once.

He went on and on till he came to a great river in which lived a huge water-snake. When the water-snake saw him it began to weep very much, and cried out to the boy, “If you go to the Rakshas country you will be eaten up.” The lad, whose name was Hírálálbásá, said, “I cannot help it; I am the Rání’s servant, so I must do what she tells me.” “Well,” said the water-snake, “get on my back, and I will take you across this river.” So he got on the water-snake’s back, and it took him over the river. Then Hírálálbásá went on and on until he came to a house in which a Rakshas lived. A Rání lived there too that the Rakshas had carried off from her father and mother when she was a little girl. She was playing in her father the Sondarbásá Rájá’s garden, which was full of delicious fruits, which the Rakshas came to eat, and when he saw Sonahrí Rání he seized her in his mouth and ran off with her. Only she was so beautiful he could never find it in his heart to eat her, but brought her up as his own child. Her name was Sonahrí Rání, that is, the Golden Rání, because her teeth and her hair were made of gold. Now the Rakshas who had carried her off, and whom she called Papa, had a great thick stick, and when he laid this stick at her feet she could not stir, but when he laid it at her head, she could move again.

When the Rájá’s son came up, Sonahrí Rání was lying on her bed with the thick stick at her feet, and as soon as she saw the Rájá’s son she began to cry very much. “Oh, why have you come here? You will surely be killed,” she said. The Rájá’s son answered, “I cannot help that. I am the Rání’s servant, so I must do what she tells me.” “Of course,” said Sonahrí Rání; “but put this stick at my head, and then I shall be able to move.” The Rájá’s son laid the stick at her head, and she got up and gave him some food, and then asked him if he had a letter. “Yes,” he answered. “Let me see it,” said the Sonahrí Rání. So he gave her the letter, and when she had read it she cried, “Oh, this is a very wicked letter. It will bring you no good; for if the Rakshases see it, they will kill you.” “Indeed,” said Hírálálbásá. And the Sonahrí Rání tore up the letter and wrote another in which she said, “Make much of this boy. Send him home quickly, and give him a jug of rose-water to bring back with him, and see that he gets no hurt.” Then the Rájá’s son set out again for the Rakshas-Rání’s mother’s house. He had not gone very far when he met a very big Rakshas, and he cried out to him, “Uncle.” “Who is this boy,” said the Rakshas, “who calls me uncle?” And he was just going to kill him when Hírálálbásá showed his letter, and the Rakshas let him pass on. He went a little further until he met another Rakshas, bigger than the first, and the Rakshas screamed at him and was just going to fall on him and kill him, but the Rájá’s son showed the letter, and the Rakshas let him pass unhurt. When Hírálálbásá came to the Rakshas-Rání’s mother he showed her the letter, and she gave him the rose-water at once and sent him off. All the Rakshases were very good to him, and some carried him part of the way home. When he came to Sonahrí Rání’s house she was lying on her bed with the stick at her feet, and as soon as she saw Hírálálbásá she laughed and said, “Oh, you have come back again? Put this stick at my head.” “Yes,” said the Rájá’s son, “I’ve come back again, but I was dreadfully frightened very often.” Then he put the stick at her head, and she gave him some food to eat. After he had eaten it he went on again, and when he came to the river the water-snake carried him across to the other side, and he travelled to his father’s kingdom. There he went to the Rakshas-Rání and gave her the rose-water. She was very angry at seeing him, and said, “I’m sure my father and my mother, my brothers and my sisters, don’t love me one bit.”

And she said to Hírálálbásá, “You must go to-morrow to the Rakshas kingdom to fetch me flowers.” “I will go,” said Hírálál, “but this time I must have four shields full of rupees.” The Rakshas-Rání gave him the four shields full of rupees; and the Rájá’s son went to his mother’s hole and bought a quantity of food for them, enough to last them all the time he should be away, and he hired two servants for them, and said good-bye to his seven mothers and returned to Mánikbásá’s palace for his letter. This the Rakshas-Rání gave him, and in it she wrote, “Kill him and eat him at once. If you do not, and you send him back to me, I will never see your faces again.” Hírálál took his letters and went on his way. When he reached the river the water-snake took him across to the other side, and he walked on till he came to Sonahrí Rání’s house. She was lying on the bed with the stick at her feet. “Oh, why have you come here again?” she said. “How can I help coming?” said the Rájá’s son. “I must do what my mistress bids me.” “So you must,” said the Sonahrí Rání; “but put this stick at my head.” This he did, and she got up and gave him food, and asked him to let her see his letter, and when she had read it she cried, “This is a very wicked letter. If you take it with you, you will surely die.” Then she tore up the letter and burnt it, and wrote another in which she said, “You must all be very good to this boy. Show him all the gardens and see that he is not hurt in any way.” She gave it to Hírálál, and he begged her to ask the Rakshas, her father, where he kept his soul. Sonahrí Rání promised she would. She then turned Hírálál into a little fly, and put him into a tiny box, and put the box under her pillow. When the Rakshas came home he began sniffing about and said, “Surely there is a man here.” “Oh, no,” said Sonahrí Rání; “no one is here but me.” The Rakshas was satisfied. When Sonahrí Rání and her father were in bed she asked, “Papa, where is your soul?” “Why do you want to know?” said the Rakshas. “I will tell you another day.”

The next day at nine in the morning the Rakshas went away, and Sonahrí Rání took Hírálál and restored him to his human shape, and gave him some food, and he travelled on till he reached the Rakshas-Rání’s mother, whom he called Grannie. She welcomed him very kindly and showed him the garden, which was very large. The Rájá’s son noticed a number of jugs and water-jars. So he said, “Grannie, what is there in all these jars and jugs?” She answered, showing them to him one by one, “In this is such and such a thing,” and so on, telling him the contents of each, till she came to the water-jar in which were his mothers’ eyes. “In this jar,” said the Rakshas, “are your seven mothers’ eyes.” “Oh, grannie dear!” said Hírálál, “give me my mothers’ eyes.” “Very well, dear boy,” said the old Rakshas, “you shall have them.” She gave him, too, some ointment, and told him to rub the eyes with it when he put them into his mothers’ heads, and that then they would see quite well; and he took the eyes and tied them up in a corner of his cloth. His grannie gave him the flowers, and he went back to Sonahrí Rání. She was lying on her bed with the stick at her feet, and when she saw him she laughed and said, “Oh, so you have come back again?” “Yes, I have,” said Hírálál; “and I have got the flowers, and my seven mothers’ eyes too.” “Have you indeed?” said Sonahrí Rání. “Put this stick at my head.” He did so, and she got up and gave him some food, and he told her to ask her father the Rakshas where his soul was. She promised she would, and she changed him into a little fly, and shut him up in a tiny box, and put the tiny box under her pillow. By and by home came the Rakshas, and began to sniff about crying, “A man is here!” “Oh, no,” said Sonahrí Rání; and she gave him some dinner, and when they were in bed she asked him, “Papa, where is your soul?” “I’ll tell you another day,” said the Rakshas. The next day, when he had gone out to find food, Sonahrí Rání took the little fly, Hírálál, and restored him to his human shape, and gave him some food and sent him on his way. When he reached the river, the water-snake took him over to the other side, and he journeyed on till he came to his father’s kingdom. First he went to his mothers’ hole and gave them their fourteen eyes, and he put them into their heads with the ointment which the Rakshas-grannie had given him. Then he went to Mánikbásá Rájá’s palace, and when the Rakshas-Rání saw him she was furious. “I am sure my father and my mother, my sisters and my brothers, do not love me one bit. I will never see their faces again. But I’ll send him to them once more.”

This is what she thought, but she took the flowers and said, “You must go a third time to the Rakshas country.”

“I will,” said the boy: “only I’ll not go till the fourth day from to-day, for I am very tired. And you must give me four shields full of rupees.” “Good,” said the Rakshas-Rání. “This time you must get me a sárí.” And she gave him the four shields full of money. Then he went to his mothers, and bought them a house and got food for them, and stayed with them four days.

At the end of the four days he went to the Rakshas-Rání, who gave him a letter in which she had written, “If you do not kill and eat this boy as soon as he arrives, I will never see your faces again.” The Rájá’s son took the letter and set out on his journey.

When he came to the river, the water-snake took him across; and when he arrived at Sonahrí Rání’s house, there she was lying on her bed with the thick stick at her feet. She said, “Oh, you have come here again, have you?” “Yes,” he said, “I have come for the last time.” “Put the stick at my head,” said she. So he laid the stick at her head. Then she gave him some food, and just before the Rakshas came home, he bade her ask him where he kept his soul. When she saw him coming, Sonahrí Rání turned Hírálálbásá into a little fly, put him in a tiny box, and put the box under her pillow. As soon as she and the Rakshas had gone to bed, she asked him, “Papa, where do you keep your soul?” “Sixteen miles away from this place,” said he, “is a tree. Round the tree are tigers, and bears, and scorpions, and snakes; on the top of the tree is a very great fat snake; on his head is a little cage; in the cage is a bird; and my soul is in that bird.” The little fly listened all the time. The next morning, when the Rakshas had gone, Sonahrí Rání took the fly and gave him back his human form, gave him some food, and then asked to see his letter. When she had read it she screamed and said, “Oh! if you go with this letter you will surely die.” So she tore it up into little bits and threw it into the fire. And she wrote another in which she said, “Make a great deal of this boy; see that he gets no hurt; give him the sárí for me; show him the garden; and be very kind to him.” She then gave Hírálál the letter, and he journeyed on in safety till he reached his Rakshas-grannie’s house.

The Rakshas-grannie was very good to him; showed him the garden, and gave him the sárí; and he then said his mother, the Rakshas-Rání, was in great trouble about her soul, and wanted very much to have it. So the Rakshas-grannie gave him a bird in which was the Rakshas-Rání’s soul, charging him to take the greatest care of it. Then he said, “My mother, the Rakshas-Rání, also wants a stone such that, if you lay it on the ground, or if you put it in your clothes, it will become gold, and also your long heavy gold necklace that hangs down to the waist.” Both these things the Rakshas-grannie gave to Hírálál. Then he returned to Sonahrí Rání’s house, where he found her lying on her bed with the thick stick at her feet. “Oh, there you are,” said Sonahrí Rání, laughing. “Yes,” he said, “I have come.” And he put the stick at her head, and she got up and gave him some food.

He told her he was going to fetch her Rakshas-father’s soul, but that he did not quite know how to pass through the tigers and bears, and scorpions and snakes, that guarded it. So she gave him a feather, and said, “As long as you hold this feather straight, you can come to no harm, for you will be invisible. You will see everything, but nothing will see you.”

He carried the feather straight as she had bidden him and reached the tree in safety. Then he climbed up it, took the little cage, and came down again. Though the Rakshas was far off, he knew at once something had happened to his bird. Hírálál pulled off the bird’s right leg, and the Rakshas’ right leg fell off, but on he hopped on one leg. Then the Rájá’s son pulled off the bird’s left leg, and off fell the Rakshas’ left leg, but still he went on towards his house on his hands. Then Hírálál pulled off the bird’s wings, and the Rakshas’ two arms fell off. And then, just as the Rakshas reached the door of his house, Hírálál wrung the bird’s neck, and the Rakshas fell dead. Sonahrí Rání was greatly frightened when she heard such a heavy thing fall thump on the ground so close to the house, but she could not move, for the thick stick lay at her feet. Hírálál ran as fast as he could to Sonahrí Rání. When he arrived at the door of her house he saw the Rakshas lying dead, and he went in and told Sonahrí Rání that her Rakshas-father was killed. “Nonsense,” she said. “It is true,” said Hírálál; “come and see.” So he put the stick at her head. “I am sure you are telling a lie,” said Sonahrí Rání. “I should be very glad if he were dead, for I do not like living with him, I am so afraid of him.” “Indeed he’s dead. Do come and see,” said Hírálál. Then they went outside, and when Sonahrí Rání saw her Rakshas-father lying there dead, she was exceedingly happy, and said to Hírálál, “I will go home with you, and be your wife.” So they were married, and then they went into Sonahrí Rání’s Rakshas-father’s house and took all the money and jewels they could find. And Hírálál gave the sárí, the stone, and the necklace to Sonahrí Rání, and he took some flowers for the Rakshas-Rání.

When they came to the river, the water-snake carried them across to the other side, and they travelled on till they came to Mánikbásá Rájá’s kingdom. There Hírálál went first of all to his mothers, and when they saw

Sonahrí Rání they wondered who the beautiful woman could be that their son had brought home. He said to them, “This is Sonahrí Rání, my wife. But for her I should have died.” Then he bought a grand house for Sonahrí Rání and his seven mothers to live in, and he got four servants for Sonahrí Rání, two to cook, and two to wait on her. The seven mothers and Sonahrí used all to sit on a beautiful, clean quilted cushion, as big as a carpet, Sonahrí Rání in the middle and the seven mothers round her, while they sewed, or wrote, and talked. Hírálál then went to the Rakshas-Rání and said, “I could not get the sárí you sent me for, so I brought you these flowers instead.” When she saw the flowers she was frantic. She said, “My father, my mother, my sisters, my brothers, don’t care for me, not one bit! not one scrap! I will never see their faces again — never! never! I will send some other messenger to them.”

One day the Rájá’s son came to Mánikbásá and said, “Would you like to see a grand sight?” Mánikbásá Rájá said, “What sight?” Hírálál said, “If you would like to see a really grand sight you must do what I tell you.” “Good,” answered Mánikbásá, “I will do whatever you tell me.” “Well, then,” said his son, “you must build a very strong iron house, and round it you must lay heaps of wood. In that house you must put your present Rání.” So Mánikbásá Rájá had a very strong iron house built, round which he set walls of wood. Then he went to his Rakshas-Rání and said, “Will you go inside that iron house, and see what it is like?” “Yes, I will,” answered she. The Rájá had had great venetians made for the house, and only one door. As soon as the Rakshas-Rání had gone in, he locked the door. Then Hírálál took the little bird, a cockatoo, in which was the Rakshas-Rání’s soul, and showed it to the Rakshas-Rání from afar off. When she saw it she turned herself into a huge Rakshas as big as a house. She could not turn in the iron house because she was so huge. Mánikbásá was dreadfully frightened when he saw his Rání was a horrible Rakshas. Then Hírálál pulled off the bird’s legs, and as the Rakshas was breaking through the iron house to seize

Hírálál, he wrung the cockatoo's neck, and the Rakshas died instantly. They set fire to the walls of wood, and the body of the wicked Rakshas was burnt to fine ashes.

The Rájá's Wazír turned to the Rájá and said, "What a fool you were to marry this Rakshas, and at her bidding to send your seven wives and your seven sons away into the jungle, taking out your seven wives' eyes, and being altogether so cruel to them! You are a great, great fool!" The poor Rájá wept, and then the Wazír, pointing to Hírálál, said, "This is your seventh and youngest Rání's son." The Rájá then embraced Hírálálbásá and asked his forgiveness. And Hírálál told him his story, how he and his mothers had lived a long, long time in the hole; how six of the Ránís had eaten their children; how his mother had not had the heart to eat him; how he had got his seven mothers' eyes from the Rakshas-grannie; and lastly, how he had married Sonahrí Rání. Then the Rájá ordered seven litters for his seven Ránís, and a beautiful litter with rich cloth for Sonahrí Rání. The Rájá and his Wazír and his attendants, and his son, all went with the litters to Hírálál's house; and when the Rájá saw Sonahrí Rání he fell flat on his face, he was so struck by her beauty. For she had a fair, fair skin, rosy cheeks, blue eyes, rosy lips, golden eyelashes, and golden eyebrows, and golden hair. When she combed her hair, she used to put the hair she combed out in paper and to lay the paper on the river, and it floated down to where the poor people caught it, and sold it, and got heaps of money for it. Her sárí was of gold, her shoes were of gold, for God loved her dearly. Then the Rájá rose and embraced all his wives and Sonahrí Rání, and the seven Ránís walked into the seven litters; but Sonahrí Rání was carried to hers, for fear she should soil her feet, or get hurt. Then Mánikbásá Rájá gave Hírálál's house to his Wazír, while his seven Ránís and Hírálál and Sonahrí Rání lived with him in his palace. And they lived happily for ever after.

63

THE MAN WHO WENT TO SEEK HIS FATE

Once there was a very poor man who had a wife and twelve children, and not a single rupee. The poor children used to cry with hunger, and the man and his wife did not know what to do. At last he got furious with God and said, “How wicked God is! He gives me a great many children, but no money.” So he set out to find his fate. In the jungle he met a camel with two heavy sacks of gold on its back. This camel belonged to a Rájá, and once it was travelling with other camels and with the Rájá’s servants to another country, and carrying the sacks of gold. Every night they encamped and started again early in the morning; but one morning the servants forgot to take this camel with them, and the camel forgot the road home, and the sacks were too tightly strapped for it to get rid of them. So it wandered about the jungle with the sacks on its back for twelve years. The camel asked the poor man where he was going. “I am going to seek my fate, to ask it why I am so poor,” he answered. The camel said, “Ask it, too, why for twelve years I have had to carry these two sacks of gold. All this time I have not been able to lie down, or to eat, or to drink.” “Very well,” said the man, and he went on.

Then he came to a river in which he saw an alligator. The alligator took him across, and when he got to the other side it asked him where he was going. The man said, “I am going to seek my fate, to ask it why I am so poor.” “Then,” said the alligator, “ask it also why for twelve years I have a great burning in my stomach.” “I will,” said the man.

Then he went on and on till he came to a tiger, who was lying on the ground with a great thorn sticking in his foot. This tiger had gone out one day to hunt for food, and not looking where he was going, he put his foot on the thorn, and the thorn ran into his foot. And so God grew very angry and said, “Because you are such a careless, stupid fellow, and don’t look where you are going, for twelve years this thorn shall remain in your foot.” “Where are you going?” the tiger asked the man. “I am going to seek my fate, to ask it why I am so poor. Some one told me that my fate was far, far away, a twelve years’ journey from my own country, and that it was lying down, and that I must take a thick stick and beat it with all my might.” “Ask it, too,” said the tiger, “why for twelve years I have had this thorn in my foot and cannot get it out, though I have tried hard to do so.” “Yes, I will,” said the man.

Then he came to the place where every one’s fate lives. The fates are stones, some standing and others lying on the ground. “This must be mine,” he said; “it is lying on the ground, that’s why I am so poor.” So he took the thick stick he had in his hand, and beat it, and beat it, and beat it, but still it would not stir. As night was approaching he left off beating it, and God sent a soul into the poor man’s fate, and it became a man, who stood looking at the poor man and said, “Why have you beaten me so much?” “Because you were lying down, and I am very poor, and at home my wife and my children are starving.” “Oh, things will go well with you now,” said the fate, and the man was satisfied. He said to his fate, “While coming here I met a camel who for twelve years has had to wander about with two heavy sacks of gold on its back, and it wants to know why it must carry them.” “Oh,” said the fate, “just take the sacks off its back and then it will be free.” “I will,” said the poor man. “Then I met an alligator who for twelve years has had a great burning in its stomach.” The fate said, “In its stomach is a very large ruby, as big as your hand. If the alligator will only throw up the ruby, it will be quite well.” “Next I met a tiger who has had for twelve years a great thorn in his foot which he cannot take out.” “Pull it out with your teeth,” said the fate; and then God withdrew the soul, and the fate became a stone again which stood up on the ground.

Then the man set out on his journey home, and he came to the tiger. “What did your fate say?” said the tiger. “Give me your foot and I will take out the thorn,” said the poor man. The tiger stretched out the foot with the thorn in it, and the man pulled out the thorn with his teeth. It was a very large thorn, as big as the man’s hand. The tiger felt grateful to the poor man, and as he was very rich, for he had eaten a great many Rájás and people, and had all their money, he said to the man, “I will give you some gold in return for your kindness.” “You have no money,” said the man. “I have,” said the tiger, and he went into his den, and the poor man followed. “Give me your cloth,” said the tiger. The man laid it on the ground. Then the tiger took quantities of gold and jewels and filled the cloth with them. And the poor man took up his cloth, thanked the tiger, and went his way. Then he met the alligator who took him across the river. The alligator said, “Did you ask your fate why there is such burning in my stomach?” “I did,” said the man. “It is because you have a very large ruby in your stomach. If you will only throw it up, you will be quite well.” Then the alligator threw the ruby up out of its mouth, and that very instant the burning in its stomach ceased. “Ah,” said the alligator, looking at the ruby, “I swallowed that one day when I was drinking.” And he gave the ruby to the man, saying, “In return for your kindness I will give you this ruby. It is a very precious stone.” (In old days every Rájá possessed such a ruby; now very few Rájás, if any, have one.) The poor man thanked the alligator, put the ruby into his cloth, and went on his way till he came to the camel, who said, “Did you ask your fate why I have to carry these two sacks of gold?” “I did,” said the man, and he took the sacks off the camel’s back. How happy and grateful the camel felt! “How kind of you,” he said to the man, “to take the sacks off. Now I can eat, now I can drink, and now I can lie down. Because you have been so kind to me, I give you the two sacks of gold, and I will carry them and your bundle home to your house for you, and then I will come back and live here in the jungle.” Then the poor man put the two sacks of gold and his bundle on the camel, who carried them to his house. When he got there, he took the sacks and his bundle off the camel, who thanked him again for his kindness and went back to his jungle, feeling very glad at having got rid of his heavy burthen.

When the poor man’s wife and children saw the gold and jewels and the ruby, they cried, “Where did you get these?” And the man told them his whole story. And he bought food for his wife and children, and gave them a beautiful house, and got them clothes, for now he was very rich.

Another poor man who was not quite, but nearly, as poor as this man had been, asked him where he had got his riches. “I got them out of a river,” answered the man. “I drew the water with a bucket, and in every bucketful there was gold.” The other man started off to the river and began drawing up water in a bucket. “Stop, stop!” cried an alligator, who was the king of the fishes; “you are taking all the water out of the river and my fishes will die.” “I want money,” said the man, “and I can find none, so I am taking the water out of the river in order to get some.” “You shall have some in a minute,” said the alligator, “only do stop drawing the water.” Then a great wave of water dashed on to the land and dashed back into the river, leaving behind it a great heap of gold, which the man picked up joyfully. The next day he came again, and night and day he drew water out of the river. At last the alligator got very angry, and said, “My fishes will all die for want of water. Once I gave the man a heap of gold, and yet he wants more. I won’t give him any,” and the alligator thrust up his head out of the river, and swallowed the man whole. For four days and four nights the man lived in the alligator’s stomach. At the end of the fourth night the king of the fishes said to him, “I will let you get out of my stomach on condition that you tell no man what has happened to you. If you do, you will die instantly.” The man jumped out of the alligator’s mouth and walked towards his house. On his way he met some men and told them what had happened to him, and as soon as he got home he told his wife and children, and the moment he had done so he became mad and dumb and blood came out of his mouth, and he fell down dead.

64

THE UPRIGHT KING

There was a great Mahárájá whose name was Harchand Rájá, and he had an only son called Mánikchand. He was very rich and had a great deal of money, and he also had a very large garden full of lovely flowers and fruits which he prized greatly. Every morning before he bathed he used to give some poor fakír two pounds and a half of gold. Now Harchand Mahárájá used to pray a great deal to God, and God was very fond of him, so he said one day, “To see if Harchand Mahárájá really loves me, I will make him very poor for twelve years.” And at night God came down in the shape of a great boar, and ate up everything that was in Harchand Mahárájá’s garden. The boar then ran away into the jungle. Next morning the gardener got up and looked out into the garden, and what was his astonishment when he saw it was all spoilt. Nothing was left in it; it was not a garden any more. He went quickly to the Mahárájá and said, “Oh, master! oh, Mahárájá! your garden is quite spoilt. Last night a boar came and ate up everything in it.” “Nonsense,” said the Mahárájá, who would not believe him. “It is quite true,” said the gardener; “you can come and see for yourself.” So the Rájá got up at once and put on his clothes, and went into the garden, and found it all empty. He went back to the house very melancholy. Then as usual he gave a fakír his two pounds and a half of gold. After breakfast he went out hunting. The boar which had run away into the wood changed himself into a very old fakír, who shook from old age. As Harchand Mahárájá passed, the old fakír held out his hand, saying, “Please give me a few pice, I am so poor and hungry.” The Mahárájá said, “Come to my palace and I will give you two pounds and a half of gold.” “Oh, no,” said the fakír, “surely you would never give me so much as that.” “Yes, I will,” said the Mahárájá. “Every morning before I bathe I give a fakír two pounds and a half of gold.” “Nonsense,” said the fakír, “you don’t give away your money in that way.” “Really, I do,” said the Mahárájá, “and I promise to give you two pounds and a half of gold.” So the fakír followed Harchand Mahárájá home, and when they reached the palace, the Mahárájá told his treasurer to give the old fakír two pounds and a half of gold. The treasurer went into the treasury, but all the Mahárájá’s gold and silver and jewels had become charcoal! The treasurer came out again to the Mahárájá saying, “Oh, Mahárájá, all your gold and silver and jewels are turned into charcoal!” “Oh, nonsense,” said the Mahárájá. “Come and see, Mahárájá,” said the treasurer, who was in a great fright. The Mahárájá went into his treasury, and was quite sad at the sight of the charcoal. “Alas!” he said, “God has made me very poor, but still I must give this fakír his money.” So he went to the fakír and said, “All my gold and silver and jewels are turned into charcoal; but I will sell my wife, and my boy, and myself, and then I will give you the money I promised you.” And he went and fetched his wife and son, and left his palace, his houses, servants, and possessions.

He then went to a merchant, who bought from him his Mahárání, who was called Hírálí, that is, the diamond lady, for she was very beautiful, and her face shone like a diamond. Her hands were very small, and so were her feet. The merchant gave the Mahárájá a pound of gold for the Mahárání. Next, Harchand Mahárájá went to a cowherd and sold him his son Mánikchand. The cowherd gave him for the boy half a pound of gold. Then he went to a dom, that is, a man of a very low caste, who kept a tank into which it was his business to throw the bodies of those who died. If it was a dead man or woman, the dom took one rupee, if it was a dead child he was only paid eight annas. To this dom Harchand sold himself for a pound of gold, and he gave the two pounds and a half of gold to the fakír, who then went home. The dom said, “Will you stay by the tank for a few days while I go home and do my other work, which is weaving baskets? If any one brings you a dead body you must throw it into the water. If it is the body of a man or woman, take one rupee in payment; if it is a dead child, take eight annas; and if the bearers have got no money, take a bit of cloth. Don’t forget.” And the dom went away, leaving Harchand sitting by the tank.

Well, Harchand Mahárájá sat for some days by the tank, and when any one brought him dead bodies he threw them into it. For a dead man or woman he took one rupee, for a dead child eight annas, and if the bearers had no money to give him, he took some cloth. Some time had passed, and Mánikchand, the Mahárájá’s son, died; so Hírálí Rání went to the cowherd to ask him for her dead child. The cowherd gave him to her, and she took him to the tank. Harchand Mahárájá was sitting by the tank, and when Hírálí Mahárání saw him she said, “I know that man is my husband, so he will not take any money for throwing his child into the water.” So she went up to him and said, “Will you throw this child into the tank for me?” “Yes, I will,” said Harchand Mahárájá; “only first give me eight annas.” “You surely won’t take any money for throwing your own son into the tank?” said the Mahárání. “You must pay me,” said Harchand Mahárájá, “for I must obey the dom’s orders. If you have no money, give me a piece of cloth.” So the Mahárání tore off a great piece of her sárí and gave it him, and the Mahárájá took his son and threw him into the tank. As he threw him in he cried out to the king of the fishes, who was an alligator, “Take great care of this body.” The king of fishes said, “I will.” Then the Mahárání went back to the merchant.

And the Mahárájá caught a fish, and cooked it, and laid it by the tank, saying, “I will go and bathe and then I will eat it.” So he took off his clothes and went into the tank to bathe, and when he had bathed he put on fresh clothes, and as he took hold of his fish to eat it, it slipped back alive into the water, although it had been dead and cooked. The Mahárájá sat down by the tank again, very sad. He said, “For twelve years I have found it hard to get anything to eat; how long will God keep me without food?” God was very pleased with Harchand for being so patient, for he had never complained.

Some days later God came down to earth in the shape of a man, and with him he took an angel to be his Wazír. The Wazír said to God, “Come this way and let us see who it is sitting by the tank.” “No,” said God, “I am too tired, I can go no further.” “Do come,” said the Wazír; “I want so much to go.” God said, “Well, let us go.” Then they walked on till they came to the place where Harchand Mahárájá was sitting, and God said to him, “Would you like to have your wife, and your son, and your kingdom back again?” “Yes, I should,” said the Mahárájá; “but how can I get them?” “Tell me truly,” said God, “would you like to have your kingdom back again?” “Indeed I should,” said the Mahárájá. Then Mánikchand’s body, which had never sunk to the bottom of the tank like the other bodies, but had always floated on the water, rose up out of the water, and Mánikchand was alive once more. The father and son embraced each other. “Now,” said God, “let us go to the dom.” Harchand Mahárájá agreed, and they went to the dom and asked him how much he would take for Harchand Mahárájá. The dom said, “I gave one pound of gold for him, and I will take two pounds.” So they paid down the two pounds of gold. Then they went to the merchant and said to him, “How much will you take for Hírálí Rání?” The merchant said, “I gave a pound of gold for her; I will take four pounds.” So they paid down the four pounds of gold, took Hírálí Rání, and went to the cowherd. “How much will you take for Mánikchand?” said they to him. “I gave half a pound of gold for him,” answered the cowherd; “I will take one pound.” So they paid down the pound of gold, and Harchand Mahárájá went home to his palace, taking with him Hírálí Rání and Mánikchand, after thanking the strange man for his goodness to them. When they reached the palace, the garden was in splendid beauty; the charcoal was turned back into gold, and silver, and jewels; the servants were in waiting as usual, and they went into the palace and lived happily for evermore.

65

LOVING LAILÍ

Once there was a king called King Dantál, who had a great many rupees and soldiers and horses. He had also an only son called Prince Majnún, who was a handsome boy with white teeth, red lips, blue eyes, red cheeks, red hair, and a white skin. This boy was very fond of playing with the Wazír’s son, Husain Mahámat, in King Dantál’s garden, which was very large and full of delicious fruits, and flowers, and trees. They used to take their little knives there and cut the fruits and eat them. King Dantál had a teacher for them to teach them to read and write.

One day, when they were grown two fine young men, Prince Majnún said to his father, “Husain Mahámat and I should like to go and hunt.” His father said they might go, so they got ready their horses and all else they wanted for their hunting, and went to the Phaláná country, hunting all the way, but they only found jackals and birds.

The Rájá of the Phaláná country was called Múnsúk Rájá, and he had a daughter named Lailí, who was very beautiful; she had brown eyes and black hair.

One night, some time before Prince Majnún came to her father’s kingdom, as she slept, God sent to her an angel in the form of a man who told her that she should marry Prince Majnún and no one else, and that this was God’s command to her. When Lailí woke she told her father of the angel’s visit to her as she slept; but her father paid no attention to her story. From that time she began repeating, “Majnún, Majnún; I want Majnún,” and would say nothing else. Even as she sat and ate her food she kept saying, “Majnún, Majnún; I want Majnún.” Her father used to get quite vexed with her. “Who is this Majnún? who ever heard of this Majnún?” he would say. “He is the man I am to marry,” said Lailí. “God has ordered me to marry no one but Majnún.” And she was half mad. Meanwhile, Majnún and Husain Mahámat came to hunt in the Phaláná country; and as they were riding about, Lailí came out on her horse to eat the air, and rode behind them. All the time she kept saying, “Majnún, Majnún; I want Majnún.” The prince heard her, and turned round. “Who is calling me?” he asked. At this Lailí looked at him, and the moment she saw him she fell deeply in love with him, and she said to herself, “I am sure that is the Prince Majnún that God says I am to marry.” And she went home to her father and said, “Father, I wish to marry the prince who has come to your kingdom; for I know he is the Prince Majnún I am to marry.” “Very well, you shall have him for your husband,” said Múnsúk Rájá. “We will ask him to-morrow.” Lailí consented to wait, although she was very impatient. As it happened, the prince left the Phaláná kingdom that night, and when Lailí heard he was gone, she went quite mad. She would not listen to a word her father, or her mother, or her servants said to her, but went off into the jungle, and wandered from jungle to jungle, till she got farther and farther away from her own country. All the time she kept saying, “Majnún, Majnún; I want Majnún;” and so she wandered about for twelve years.

At the end of the twelve years she met a fakír — he was really an angel, but she did not know this — who asked her, “Why do you always say, ‘Majnún, Majnún; I want Majnún’?” She answered, “I am the daughter of the king of the Phaláná country, and I want to find Prince Majnún; tell me where his kingdom is.” “I think you will never get there,” said the fakír, “for it is very far from hence, and you have to cross many rivers to reach it.” But Lailí said she did not care; she must see Prince Majnún. “Well,” said the fakír, “when you come to the Bhágírathí river you will see a big fish, a Rohú; and you must get him to carry you to Prince Majnún’s country, or you will never reach it.”

She went on and on, and at last she came to the Bhágírathí river. There there was a great big fish called the Rohú fish. It was yawning just as she got up to it, and she instantly jumped down its throat into its stomach. All the time she kept saying, “Majnún, Majnún.” At this the Rohú fish was greatly alarmed and swam down the river as fast as he could. By degrees he got tired and went slower, and a crow came and perched on his back, and said, “Caw, caw.” “Oh, Mr. Crow,” said the poor fish, “do see what is in my stomach that makes such a noise.” “Very well,” said the crow, “open your mouth wide, and I’ll fly down and see.” So the Rohú opened his jaws and the crow flew down, but he came up again very quickly. “You have a Rakshas in your stomach,” said the crow, and he flew away. This news did not comfort the poor Rohú, and he swam on and on till he came to Prince Majnún’s country. There he stopped. And a jackal came down to the river to drink. “Oh, jackal,” said the Rohú, “do tell me what I have inside me.” “How can I tell?” said the jackal. “I cannot see unless I go inside you.” So the Rohú opened his mouth wide, and the jackal jumped down his throat; but he came up very quickly, looking much frightened and saying, “You have a Rakshas in your stomach, and if I don’t run away quickly, I am afraid it will eat me.” So off he ran. After the jackal came an enormous snake. “Oh,” says the fish, “do tell me what I have in my stomach, for it rattles about so, and keeps saying, ‘Majnún, Majnún; I want Majnún.’” The snake said, “Open your mouth wide, and I’ll go down and see what it is.” The snake went down: when he returned he said, “You have a Rakshas in your stomach; but if you will let me cut you open, it will come out of you.” “If you do that, I shall die,” said the Rohú. “Oh, no,” said the snake, “you will not, for I will give you a medicine that will make you quite well again.”

So the fish agreed, and the snake got a knife and cut him open, and out jumped Lailí.

She was now very old. Twelve years she had wandered about the jungle, and for twelve years she had lived inside her Rohú; and she was no longer beautiful, and had lost her teeth. The snake took her on his back and carried her into the country, and there he put her down, and she wandered on and on till she got to Majnún’s court-house, where King Majnún was sitting. There some men heard her crying, “Majnún, Majnún; I want Majnún,” and they asked her what she wanted. “I want King Majnún,” she said. So they went in and said to Prince Majnún, “An old woman outside says she wants you.” “I cannot leave this place,” said he; “send her in here.” They brought her in and the prince asked her what she wanted. “I want to marry you,” she answered. “Twenty-four years ago you came to my father the Phaláná Rájá’s country, and I wanted to marry you then; but you went away without marrying me. Then I went mad, and I have wandered about all these years looking for you.” Prince Majnún said, “Very good.” “Pray to God,” said Lailí, “to make us both young again, and then we shall be married.” So the prince prayed to God, and God said to him, “Touch Lailí’s clothes and they will catch fire, and when they are on fire, she and you will become young again.” When he touched Lailí’s clothes they caught fire, and she and he became young again. And there were great feasts, and they were married, and travelled to the Phaláná country to see her father and mother.

Now Lailí’s father and mother had wept so much for their daughter that they had become quite blind, and her father kept always repeating, “Lailí, Lailí, Lailí.” When Lailí saw their blindness, she prayed to God to restore their sight to them, which he did. As soon as the father and mother saw Lailí, they hugged her and kissed her, and then they had the wedding all over again amid great rejoicings. Prince Majnún and Lailí stayed with Múnsúk Rájá and his wife for three years, and then they returned to King Dantál, and lived happily for some time with him.

They used to go out hunting, and they often went from country to country to eat the air and amuse themselves.

One day Prince Majnún said to Lailí, “Let us go through this jungle.” “No, no,” said Lailí; “if we go through this jungle, some harm will happen to me.” But Prince Majnún laughed, and went into the jungle. And as they were going through it, God thought, “I should like to know how much Prince Majnún loves his wife. Would he be very sorry if she died? And would he marry another wife? I will see.” So he sent one of his angels in the form of a fakír into the jungle; and the angel went up to Lailí, and threw some powder in her face, and instantly she fell to the ground a heap of ashes.

Prince Majnún was in great sorrow and grief when he saw his dear Lailí turn into a little heap of ashes; and he went straight home to his father, and for a long, long time he would not be comforted. After a great many years he grew more cheerful and happy, and began to go again into his father’s beautiful garden with Husain Mahámat. King Dantál wished his son to marry again. “I will only have Lailí for my wife; I will not marry any other woman,” said Prince Majnún. “How can you marry Lailí? Lailí is dead. She will never come back to you,” said the father. “Then I’ll not have any wife at all,” said Prince Majnún.

Meanwhile Lailí was living in the jungle where her husband had left her a little heap of ashes. As soon as Majnún had gone, the fakír had taken her ashes and made them quite clean, and then he had mixed clay and water with the ashes, and made the figure of a woman with them, and so Lailí regained her human form, and God sent life into it. But Lailí had become once more a hideous old woman, with a long, long nose, and teeth like tusks; just such an old woman, excepting her teeth, as she had been when she came out of the Rohú fish; and she lived in the jungle, and neither ate nor drank, and she kept on saying, “Majnún, Majnún; I want Majnún.”

At last the angel who had come as a fakír and thrown the powder at her, said to God, “Of what use is it that this woman should sit in the jungle crying, crying for ever, ‘Majnún, Majnún; I want Majnún,’ and eating and drinking nothing? Let me take her to Prince Majnún.” “Well,” said God, “you may do so; but tell her that she must not speak to Majnún if he is afraid of her when he sees her; and that if he is afraid when he sees her, she will become a little white dog the next day. Then she must go to the palace, and she will only regain her human shape when Prince Majnún loves her, feeds her with his own food, and lets her sleep in his bed.” So the angel came to Lailí again as a fakír and carried her to King Dantál’s garden. “Now,” he said, “it is God’s command that you stay here till Prince Majnún comes to walk in the garden, and then you may show yourself to him. But you must not speak to him, if he is afraid of you; and should he be afraid of you, you will the next day become a little white dog.” He then told her what she must do as a little dog to regain her human form.

Lailí stayed in the garden, hidden in the tall grass, till Prince Majnún and Husain Mahámat came to walk in the garden. King Dantál was now a very old man, and Husain Mahámat, though he was really only as old as Prince Majnún, looked a great deal older than the prince, who had been made quite young again when he married Lailí.

As Prince Majnún and the Wazír’s son walked in the garden, they gathered the fruit as they had done as little children, only they bit the fruit with their teeth; they did not cut it. While Majnún was busy eating a fruit in this way, and was talking to Husain Mahámat, he turned towards him and saw Lailí walking behind the Wazír’s son. “Oh, look, look!” he cried, “see what is following you; it is a Rakshas or a demon, and I am sure it is going to eat us.” Lailí looked at him beseechingly with all her eyes, and trembled with age and eagerness; but this only frightened Majnún the more. “It is a Rakshas, a Rakshas!” he cried, and he ran quickly to the palace with the Wazír’s son; and as they ran away, Lailí disappeared into the jungle. They ran to King Dantál, and Majnún told him there was a Rakshas or a demon in the garden that had come to eat them. “What nonsense,” said his father. “Fancy two grown men being so frightened by an old ayah or a fakír! And if it had been a Rakshas, it would not have eaten you.” Indeed King Dantál did not believe Majnún had seen anything at all, till Husain Mahámat said the prince was speaking the exact truth. They had the garden searched for the terrible old woman, but found nothing, and King Dantál told his son he was very silly to be so much frightened. However, Prince Majnún would not walk in the garden any more.

The next day Lailí turned into a pretty little dog; and in this shape she came into the palace, where Prince Majnún soon became very fond of her. She followed him everywhere, went with him when he was out hunting, and helped him to catch his game, and Prince Majnún fed her with milk, or bread, or anything else he was eating, and at night the little dog slept in his bed.

But one night the little dog disappeared, and in its stead there lay the little old woman who had frightened him so much in the garden; and now Prince Majnún was quite sure she was a Rakshas, or a demon, or some such horrible thing come to eat him; and in his terror he cried out, “What do you want? Oh, do not eat me; do not eat me!” Poor Lailí answered, “Don’t you know me? I am your wife Lailí, and I want to marry you. Don’t you remember how you would go through that jungle, though I begged and begged you not to go, for I told you that harm would happen to me, and then a fakír came and threw powder in my face, and I became a heap of ashes. But God gave me my life again, and brought me here, after I had stayed a long, long while in the jungle crying for you, and now I am obliged to be a little dog; but if you will marry me, I shall not be a little dog any more.” Majnún, however, said “How can I marry an old woman like you? how can you be Lailí? I am sure you are a Rakshas or a demon come to eat me,” and he was in great terror.

In the morning the old woman had turned into the little dog, and the prince went to his father and told him all that had happened. “An old woman! an old woman! always an old woman!” said his father. “You do nothing but think of old women. How can a strong man like you be so easily frightened?” However, when he saw that his son was really in great terror, and that he really believed the old woman would come back at night, he advised him to say to her, “I will marry you if you can make yourself a young girl again. How can I marry such an old woman as you are?”

That night as he lay trembling in bed the little old woman lay there in place of the dog, crying, “Majnún, Majnún, I want to marry you. I have loved you all these long, long years. When I was in my father’s kingdom a young girl, I knew of you, though you knew nothing of me, and we should have been married then if you had not gone away so suddenly, and for long, long years I followed you.” “Well,” said Majnún, “if you can make yourself a young girl again, I will marry you.”

Lailí said, “Oh, that is quite easy. God will make me a young girl again. In two days’ time you must go into the garden, and there you will see a beautiful fruit. You must gather it and bring it into your room and cut it open yourself very gently, and you must not open it when your father or anybody else is with you, but when you are quite alone; for I shall be in the fruit quite naked, without any clothes at all on.” In the morning Lailí took her little dog’s form, and disappeared in the garden.

Prince Majnún told all this to his father, who told him to do all the old woman had bidden him. In two days’ time he and the Wazír’s son walked in the garden, and there they saw a large, lovely red fruit. “Oh!” said the Prince, “I wonder shall I find my wife in that fruit.” Husain Mahámat wanted him to gather it and see, but he would not till he had told his father, who said, “That must be the fruit; go and gather it.” So Majnún went back and broke the fruit off its stalk; and he said to his father, “Come with me to my room while I open it; I am afraid to open it alone, for perhaps I shall find a Rakshas in it that will eat me.” “No,” said King Dantál; “remember, Lailí will be naked; you must go alone, and do not be afraid if, after all, a Rakshas is in the fruit, for I will stay outside the door, and you have only to call me with a loud voice, and I will come to you, so the Rakshas will not be able to eat you.”

Then Majnún took the fruit and began to cut it open tremblingly, for he shook with fear; and when he had cut it, out stepped Lailí, young and far more beautiful than she had ever been. At the sight of her extreme beauty, Majnún fell backwards fainting on the floor.

Lailí took off his turban and wound it all round herself like a sárí (for she had no clothes at all on), and then she called King Dantál, and said to him sadly, “Why has Majnún fallen down like this? Why will he not speak to me? He never used to be afraid of me; and he has seen me so many, many times.” King Dantál answered, “It is because you are so beautiful. You are far, far more beautiful than you ever were. But he will be very happy directly.” Then the King got some water, and they bathed Majnún’s face and gave him some to drink, and he sat up again. Then Lailí said, “Why did you faint? Did you not see I am Lailí?” “Oh!” said Prince Majnún, “I see you are Lailí come back to me, but your eyes have grown so wonderfully beautiful, that I fainted when I saw them.” Then they were all very happy, and King Dantál had all the drums in the place beaten, and had all the musical instruments played on, and they made a grand wedding-feast, and gave presents to the servants, and rice and quantities of rupees to the fakírs.

After some time had passed very happily, Prince Majnún and his wife went out to eat the air. They rode on the same horse, and had only a groom with them. They came to another kingdom, to a beautiful garden. “We must go into that garden and see it,” said Majnún. “No, no,” said Lailí; “it belongs to a bad Rájá, Chumman Básá, a very wicked man.” But Majnún insisted on going in, and in spite of all Lailí could say, he got off the horse to look at the flowers. Now, as he was looking at the flowers, Lailí saw

Chumman Básá coming towards them, and she read in his eyes that he meant to kill her husband and seize her. So she said to Majnún, “Come, come, let us go; do not go near that bad man. I see in his eyes, and I feel in my heart, that he will kill you to seize me.” “What nonsense,” said Majnún. “I believe he is a very good Rájá. Anyhow, I am so near to him that I could not get away.” “Well,” said Lailí, “it is better that you should be killed than I, for if I were to be killed a second time, God would not give me my life again; but I can bring you to life if you are killed.” Now Chumman Básá had come quite near, and seemed very pleasant, so thought Prince Majnún; but when he was speaking to Majnún, he drew his scimitar and cut off the prince’s head at one blow.

Lailí sat quite still on her horse, and as the Rájá came towards her she said, “Why did you kill my husband?” “Because I want to take you,” he answered. “You cannot,” said Lailí. “Yes, I can,” said the Rájá. “Take me, then,” said Lailí to Chumman Básá; so he came quite close and put out his hand to take hers to lift her off her horse. But she put her hand in her pocket and pulled out a tiny knife, only as long as her hand was broad, and this knife unfolded itself in one instant till it was such a length! and then Lailí made a great sweep with her arm and her long, long knife, and off came Chumman Básá’s head at one touch.

Then Lailí slipped down off her horse, and she went to Majnún’s dead body, and she cut her little finger inside her hand straight down from the top of her nail to her palm, and out of this gushed blood like healing medicine. Then she put Majnún’s head on his shoulders, and smeared her healing blood all over the wound, and Majnún woke up and said, “What a delightful sleep I have had! Why, I feel as if I had slept for years!” Then he got up and saw the Rájá’s dead body by Lailí’s horse. “What’s that?” said Majnún. “That is the wicked Rájá who killed you to seize me, just as I said he would.” “Who killed him?” asked Majnún. “I did,” answered Lailí, “and it was I who brought you to life.” “Do bring the poor man to life if you know how to do so," said Majnún. "No," said Lailí, "for he is a wicked man, and will try to do you harm." But Majnún asked her for such a long time, and so earnestly to bring the wicked Rájá to life, that at last she said, "Jump up on the horse, then, and go far away with the groom." "What will you do," said Majnún, "if I leave you? I cannot leave you." "I will take care of myself," said Lailí; "but this man is so wicked, he may kill you again if you are near him." So Majnún got up on the horse, and he and the groom went a long way off and waited for Lailí. Then she set the wicked Rájá's head straight on his shoulders, and she squeezed the wound in her finger till a little blood-medicine came out of it. Then she smeared this over the place where her knife had passed, and just as she saw the Rájá opening his eyes, she began to run, and she ran, and ran so fast, that she outran the Rájá, who tried to catch her; and she sprang up on the horse behind her husband, and they rode so fast, so fast, till they reached King Dantál's palace.

There Prince Majnún told everything to his father, who was horrified and angry. "How lucky for you that you have such a wife," he said. "Why did you not do what she told you? But for her, you would be now dead." Then he made a great feast out of gratitude for his son's safety, and gave many, many rupees to the fakírs. And he made so much of Lailí. He loved her dearly; he could not do enough for her. Then he built a splendid palace for her and his son, with a great deal of ground about it, and lovely gardens, and gave them great wealth, and heaps of servants to wait on them. But he would not allow any but their servants to enter their gardens and palace, and he would not allow Majnún to go out of them, nor Lailí; "for," said King Dantál, "Lailí is so beautiful, that perhaps some one may kill my son to take her away."

66

HOW KING BURTAL BECAME A FAKÍR

Once there was a great king called Burtal, and he had a hundred and sixty wives, but he had no children, which made him sad. One day he said to his wives, “I am going to a very distant jungle which is full of antelopes, to hunt them.” “Very well,” they answered, “go.” So he went. In that jungle lived neither tigers nor men, but only antelopes. When King Burtal reached the jungle, some of the antelopes came to him and said, “Pray don’t kill the black antelope, for he is our Rájá, and we have no other antelope like him among us; but try to kill any of the others — the brown or the yellow antelopes — that you choose.” Now, the king was not a kind man, and he said, “I will kill your black antelope, and no other.” So he shot him dead. When the other antelopes saw this they began to scream and cry with sorrow. But the dead antelope’s wife said to them, “There is a holy man, a fakír, in the jungle. Let us take the dead body to him and ask him to bring our Rájá to life.” And King Burtal laughed at them and said, “How can any man bring a dead antelope to life?” But the antelopes took the body of their dead Rájá on their backs, and the dead antelope’s wife went at their head; and King Burtal went too; and they carried it to the fakír, who was called Goraknáth, and who was resting in the jungle, and they said to him, “Bring our Rájá to life again, for what can we do without a Rájá? and he has left no son to succeed him.” And the queen antelope said, “I have no other husband. I had only this one husband. Do bring him to life for me." King Burtal laughed and mocked them, and said to the fakír, "I never heard of any man being able to bring a dead antelope to life. I don't believe you can do it." At this Goraknáth got angry, and he knelt down and asked God to bring the antelope to life; and God told him to take a wand and beat the dead antelope with it, and then the antelope would be alive again. So Goraknáth took a wand and beat the dead antelope, and it was alive once more, and then it instantly sprang up into heaven. The antelopes were delighted to see their Rájá alive again, and they said, "We do not mind his going up to heaven, for he will come down again to us."

King Burtal had stood by all the time, and he said to Goraknáth, "Make me a fakír like yourself," for he thought it would be fine to do such wonderful things. But Goraknáth would not, and King Burtal stayed in the jungle with Goraknáth for twelve years, and all that time he never ceased begging and praying to be made a fakír, till at last Goraknáth said, "I cannot make you a fakír unless you go home and address your wives as 'Mamma,' and ask them to give you money and food." Now, it is a very shameful thing to call one's wife 'Mamma,' for if a wife is called 'Mamma' she has to leave her husband. Then Goraknáth took off the king's clothes, and dressed him only in a cloth and a tiger's skin; and the king went to his palace and began begging for rice and food, and he would not take any from the palace servants: he said he must and would see the Ránís, and that they themselves should give him food. The servants told the Ránís about this fakír who said he must and would see them himself, and that they should give him food and rice with their own hands, and one of their ayahs, who had recognized King Burtal, told them the fakír was their husband who had been away twelve years. The Ránís cried out, "Do not talk nonsense. That fakír can never be our husband." "Go and see for yourselves," answered the ayah. They went, and the fakír said to them, "Mamma, give me rice." "Why do you call us 'Mamma'?" they said. "We have no sons. You are not our son."

But at last they saw he was indeed their husband, and they wrung their hands and wept bitterly, and threw themselves on the ground before him and said, “Why have you called us ‘Mamma’? Why do you ask for bread? We must now leave you.” “Don’t go away,” said the king. “Take my kingdom, my money, my houses, and stay here till I return. I am going to be a fakír.” His wives gave him some rice and some money, and he went back to Goraknáth.

In old days men who intended to become fakírs had to do three tasks set them by one who was already a fakír; so Goraknáth said to the king, “Now you must go to a jungle that I will show you, and stay there for twelve years.” Then King Burtal took the flat pan and the rolling-pin which he used in making his flour cakes, and was quite ready to start for the jungle, but the fakír stopped him. “You must leave your pan and your rolling-pin behind,” he said; “and all these twelve years you must neither eat nor drink, or you can never be a fakír. You must sit quite still on the same spot and never move.” “I shall die if I don’t eat,” said the king; “but I don’t care if I do die, so I will do all you tell me.” Then the fakír took him to a jungle, and made him sit down on the grass, and instantly all the grass round him grew up so tall and thick that King Burtal was quite hidden by it, and no one could see him. Here he lived for twelve years, and never moved, and he ate nothing, and drank nothing, and nobody knew he was there.

At the end of that time Goraknáth came and took him away and said, “Now go home to your wives.” “Why should I go to my wives? I do not wish to see my wives, for they have given me no children,” said King Burtal. But Goraknáth said, “Go and see them.” So King Burtal went; and he begged for rice from them; and they entreated him to stay with them, but he would not. “I will return to the fakír Goraknáth,” he said. “Why should I stay with you? You have never given me a child. What use is all my wealth to me? I have no son to take it when I am dead. I will become a fakír.” And they threw themselves on the ground and wrung their hands, and said, “Oh, why will you leave us?" He answered, "Because it pleases me to do so." And he called them all "Mamma," and told them to stay in his palace and take all he possessed for their own use. Then he returned to Goraknáth.

"Now," said Goraknáth, "you must learn to be sweeper to all the beasts of the jungle, and you must serve them for twelve years." So for twelve years King Burtal cleared the grass and kept the jungle clean for all the creatures in it — cows, sheep, goats, tigers, cats, bears. Sometimes he stayed in one part of the jungle, and sometimes in another.

When the twelve years were over he went to Goraknáth, who said to him, "Good; you have learnt to serve the wild beasts; now you must learn to serve men." Then the fakír took the king to a village, and bade him sweep it and keep it clean for twelve years. Here King Burtal stayed for another twelve years, and all that time he was the village-sweeper and kept the village clean, and he swept all the dust and dirt into a great heap till the heap was as high and as big as a hut.

When the twelve years were over he returned to Goraknáth and stood before him, and as he stood there came a man who was an angel sent by God, and he threw some dirt on King Burtal's head; but the king never moved nor spoke. "Now," cried Goraknáth, "I see you are a true fakír: go and cleanse yourself by bathing in the river."

The river in which he was sent to bathe was the Jamná. In this river lived water-nymphs, and the nymph Gangá was playing in it when her sister Jamná came to her and said, "Come quickly; our father is dying and wants to see you;" and off Jamná went to her father. Gangá was hurrying after her when King Burtal saw her, and stopped her, and asked her where she was going so fast. "To my father, who is very ill and dying," said Gangá; "let me go." "I will not let you go," said King Burtal. Then Gangá began to run, and said, "You cannot keep me, you cannot catch me; no man can catch me, no man can keep me." This provoked King Burtal, and he said, "I can catch you, and I can keep you." "No, no," she answered; "no one can catch me, no one can hold me.” Then King Burtal got quite vexed, and he ran till he caught her, and then he said, “Now, I will not let you go; I will keep you.” Then he held her in his hands and rubbed her between his palms, and when he opened his hands she had turned into a little round ball. He tried to hide the ball in his hair, but could not, for his hair was too short, and he found he could not hold Gangá, as she was too strong for him; so he thought he would take her to Mahádeo, who had long thick hair, and make him keep her, for King Burtal was dreadfully frightened and did not dare let the ball go, for fear Gangá, who he knew was very angry, should take her own form and bring a great flood to drown him. So he went quickly to Mahádeo, and gave the ball to him. Mahádeo said, “Why not keep her yourself?” “I cannot,” said King Burtal, “for my hair is too short to tie her into; and I cannot hold her, for she is too strong for me; but your hair is long, and so you can hide her in it.” Then Mahádeo had a round box made of bamboo, and in this box was a hole into which he dropped the ball. And he let down his long hair, and it reached to the ground, and was thick — so thick; he put the box in his hair on the top of his head, and rolled his long hair all round his head and over the box just like a turban.

Jamná finding her sister did not follow her, came up from the bottom of the river to look for her, and she asked whether any one had seen her, and at last some one said, “King Burtal has taken her away.” Jamná set off to King Burtal and said, “Give me my sister Gangá, for our father is dying and wants to see her.” “It is true that I took her away,” said King Burtal, “but I have not got her now; she is with Mahádeo.” So Jamná went to Mahádeo, — “Give me my sister quickly, for our father is dying and wants to see her.” (Now Gangá was in a great passion inside her box.) “I cannot give you Gangá,” said Mahádeo, “for she is so angry that if I let her loose she will flood the country with water.” “No, she will not; indeed, she will not,” said Jamná. “If I give her to you, you will not be able to keep her,” said Mahádeo. “Yes, yes, I shall,” said Jamná. “I do not think you will,” said

Mahádeo; “but here is the box in which said is. Hold it tight, and be careful that neither you nor any one else mentions her name on the journey.” Jamná said she would be very careful, and took the box; but she had to pass through a jungle in which were a number of cowherds and holy men, one of whom was called Gangá. Just as Jamná passed by, one of these men called to this man by his name, Gangá, and instantly Gangá burst the box and flooded the country with water. The holy men and the cowherd called to her to have pity on them, and so did Jamná; but Gangá was too angry to listen to them or speak to them, so she drowned all the holy men and the cowherds, and when she got to her father’s house and found he was dead, she was in such a rage that she declared she would send a still greater flood to ruin the country; and so she did.

After this, King Burtal went to Goraknáth and stayed with him some years, till Goraknáth said, “Now go to your own kingdom.” But King Burtal refused, saying, “I wish to stay with you; my wives have never given me a child. I have no son. I do not care to return to my kingdom.” However, Goraknáth would not allow him to stay. “Go to your own kingdom,” he said again; “but first tell me how many wives you have.” “A hundred and sixty,” answered the King. “Here are a hundred and sixty líchí fruits for you,” said the fakír. “Give one to each of your wives to eat, and they will each have a son, and I will go with you.” So King Burtal obeyed, and Goraknáth went with him.

Seventy years had passed since King Burtal had left his kingdom. When he and Goraknáth reached it, they went to an open plain and made a fire and sat down beside it. Everybody who passed them said, “Who are these fakírs?” Some servants of King Burtal’s Ránís passed too, and when they got home they told the Ránís that their husband had returned to his kingdom. But the Ránís said, “What nonsense you talk! King Burtal went away with the fakír Goraknáth.” The servants answered, “We are quite sure that King Burtal is here, for Goraknáth is here, and with him is another man, and we are sure this man is King Burtal.” So all the Ránís went to see for themselves, and when they saw the fakír that was with Goraknáth they knew he was their husband. Then the first Rání, who was very angry with him for having left them, said a spell over him: “God is very angry with you for leaving us, and he will send you a bad illness.” But King Burtal answered, “Do not be angry with me. I am your husband, and have come back to you after an absence of seventy years.” At this the youngest Rání was very glad, and she ordered drums to be beaten and she beat a drum herself, and they sang songs, and all went to the palace together, and Goraknáth with them.

Then Goraknáth said he must now go away, but first he asked King Burtal to show him a grand feat as a proof of his skill. So King Burtal sent to the smith for a great iron chain. Then he lit a big fire. This alarmed the palace servants, who wondered if he were going to burn his palace and his wives. King Burtal next sent for some ghee. “What is he going to do with the ghee?” said the palace servants. Then he drove a nail into the wall, rubbed his hands with the ghee, put the iron chain into the fire and drew it out red-hot; flames came from the iron. Then King Burtal hung it on the nail and pulled and pulled at the chain till he drew it off the nail, and his hands were not in the least burnt. The Ránís and palace servants were greatly astonished and Goraknáth much pleased. “You know how to do your work well,” said he to the king. Then Goraknáth bade him good bye, telling him to look after his kingdom and his wives; but they all said he must not leave them, and they built him a grand house in the compound, and gave him a great many servants to wait on him, and plenty of money; so Goraknáth agreed to live in this house; only, as he was a fakír, he often went away by himself to spend some time in his jungle, always returning to his house in King Burtal’s compound. Meanwhile King Burtal gave each of his wives a líchí to eat, and after a little while each wife had a little son. They were all such beautiful children; but the biggest and handsomest of all was the eldest Rání’s little son. His name was Sazádá, and his father and mother loved him dearly.

When Prince Sazádá was about six or seven years old, the fakír Goraknáth came to King Burtal and said, “Now you must give me your son Sazádá, for I want to take him away with me for some years.” The Rání, his mother, refused to let him go, but at last she had to do so, and then she became mad and very sick for grief.

Goraknáth took the little prince to Indrásan to be taught by the fairies, and on arriving he married him to Jahúr Rání, who was the daughter of the greatest of the fairy queens. Goraknáth made a grand wedding for the little prince, and all the fairies were delighted that he should be the little Jahúr Rání’s husband, for he was such a beautiful child they all fell in love with him the moment they saw him, and they taught him to play on all kinds of instruments, and to sing beautifully, and to read and write, and he grew handsomer and handsomer every day in the fairy kingdom. Goraknáth came often to see him, and the fairies took great care of him.

When Prince Sazádá had grown a fine strong young man, Goraknáth took him and his wife, the Jahúr Rání, and brought them in great state to King Burtal’s kingdom. First he took the young prince and presented him to his father and said, “See, here is your son. Now he can read and write, sing and play on all kinds of instruments, for I have had him taught all these things.” But they, when they saw him, fell on their faces, for they could not look at him on account of his great beauty. He had grown so handsome in Indrásan, and his cheeks were red. “How can this beautiful boy be our son?” they said, and they did not recognize him. “Stand up,” said Goraknáth. “This is your son Sazádá; do not fall down before your son.” So they stood up, and the fakír said, “I have married your son to the fairy princess Jahúr Rání, and I will bring her to you.” So then he brought the little Rání, and when they saw her they fell down again, for they could not look at her beauty. Her hair was like red gold, her eyes were dark, and her eyelashes black. But Goraknáth made them stand up; and when they really understood it was their son and his wife that he had brought them, they took Prince Sazádá into their arms, and kissed him and loved him, and his Rání too. Goraknáth made a grand wedding-feast for them all, and they were all very happy.

67

SOME OF THE DOINGS OF SHEKH FARÍD

Once there was a Rájá called Hámánsá Rájá. He had a son, named Gursan Rájá, who married Khelápari Ráni, the daughter of Gulábsá Rájá. After the wedding Gursan Rájá brought her home to his father's house.

One day Gursan Rájá came home from hunting, very very tired and thirsty. It was about twelve or one o'clock in the day. He asked Khelápari Ráni to fetch him some water, and while she went for it he fell asleep. When she came back she found him still sleeping, and because he was so tired he slept all the afternoon and all night, and never woke till the next morning. His wife stood by him all the time holding the water in a brass cup. When he woke and found she had stood there all the afternoon and all night he was very sorry, and asked God to forgive him, and to give his wife whatever she wished for, no matter what it might be. So Khelápari wished that whatever happened in any country, she might know of it at once of herself without any one telling her, no matter how far away the country might be.

One day Khelápari Ráni went to draw water from the tank, and by the tank sat an old man, the fakír Shekh Faríd. He said to the Ráni, “Give me a little water to drink.” “I will,” she said, “only drink it quickly, for my father's house is on fire, and I am going to put it out.” “How far off is your father’s country?” asked Shekh Faríd. “About twenty miles,” answered Khelápарí. “Then how can you know his house is on fire!” said Shekh Faríd; “I have been a fakír for twelve years, and for twelve years neither ate nor drank, and yet I do not know what happens twenty miles away.” “But I know,” she answered. “Leave your water-jar here,” he said, “and go and see if the house really is on fire, and I will not drink till you return to me.”

So off went Khelápарí Rání to her father’s country, and when she got there his house was burning, and she stayed till the fire was put out, and then returned to the tank where she left the fakír. “Is it true,” he asked, “that your father’s house was on fire?” “Quite true,” she answered. The fakír wondered. “How could she know it when the fire was twenty miles off?” he said to himself, and he determined to go to Gulábsá Rájá’s country to see if the Rání had told him the truth.

He went by a roundabout road, as he did not know the way, so it took him three or four days to get there. When he did, he asked some villagers if there had been a fire at their Rájá’s house. “Yes, a few days ago there was,” they answered. So the fakír, still more astonished, decided he would go back to Hámánsá Rájá’s palace and ask Khelápарí Rání how it came to pass that she was wiser than Shekh Faríd.

As he was returning, he met a bullock-cart laden with bags of sugar, and he asked the driver what the bags contained. The driver was put out because his bullocks would not go on quickly, and he was tired with beating and goading them, so he said crossly, “It’s ashes.” “Good,” said Shekh Faríd, “let it be ashes.” When the cartman got to the bazar, and went to make over the sugar to the merchant who had sent him for it, he found all his bags full of ashes, nothing but ashes. He was in a great state of mind, for a good deal of money had been paid for the sugar, and he was a poor man. So he went back to Shekh Faríd and fell down at his feet, saying, “I am a poor, poor man. My sugar is turned to ashes. Do make the ashes sugar again.” “Good,” said the fakír; “go home, and you will find sugar, and next time you are asked what you have in your cart, tell the truth and not lies.” The cartman went home, and when he saw his sugar was sugar once more, and no longer ashes, he was very, very glad.

One of his brother-villagers thought, “How pleasant it would be to become a fakír and do such things myself! I will go to this fakír and learn from him to be a fakír too.” So he went after Shekh Faríd and found him walking along the road, and he followed him. Now Shekh Faríd knew at once what this man wanted, so as they passed a heap of clay bricks, he said, “O God, let it be thy pleasure to give me power to turn these clay bricks into gold.” Instantly they became gold, and Shekh Faríd walked on; but the villager took up two of the bricks and put one under each arm, and then followed the fakír. Suddenly Shekh Faríd turned round, and said to him, “You have two clay bricks under your arms.” The man looked, saw it was true, and threw them away. Then Shekh Faríd said to him, “You steal bricks, and yet wish to be a fakír?” The man was ashamed, and went back to his village.

Shekh Faríd continued his journey and got to Hámánsá Rájá’s country; but when he got there he found Khelápárí had gone to another country for a little while, so he never saw her, nor found out how it was that she knew what happened twenty miles off.

In a jungle in Hámánsá Rájá’s country he met a man, called Fakír-achand, and his wife, who were very poor. They were going to bury their only son, and were crying bitterly. Shekh Faríd asked them, “Would you like your son to be alive again?” “Yes,” they said. “Will you give him to me, and I will bring him to life, and then he shall return to you?” said Shekh Faríd. “Yes,” they answered, and gave him their dead son, and went to their home.

The fakír carried the dead boy, who was called Mohandás, a little further on, and then laid him on the ground, and struck him with a long thin bamboo wand he carried in his hand. The boy stood up. Shekh Faríd asked him, “Would you like to go home to your father and mother, or to stay with me?” “To stay with you,” said Mohandás. (Had he wished to go home, the fakír would have been very angry.) “Then,” said Shekh Faríd, “I will call your mother here.” He did so, and when she came, he said to her, “See, here is your son alive. Will you give him to me for twelve years?” The woman said, “Yes,” and went home. The fakír gave her and her husband a quantity of rupees and built them a beautiful house. Then he and Mohandás set out on their travels, and wandered about the jungles for one whole year, till they came to a country full of large splendid gardens belonging to a very rich Rájá, called Dumkás Rájá.

This Rájá had a beautiful daughter, Champákálí Rání. She had lovely golden hair, golden eyebrows, golden eyelashes, blue eyes, and her skin was transparent. In Dumkás Rájá’s country they had never seen a fakír, so when Shekh Faríd and Mohandás arrived, the Rájá sent to them, and asked Shekh Faríd to come to talk to him. “No,” said the fakír, “I will not go to the Rájá: if the Rájá wants me, he must come to me.”

Dumkás Rájá was very angry when his messengers returned with this answer, and he ordered Shekh Faríd to leave his country immediately; but the fakír said he would not go until he had married his adopted son, Mohandás, to Champákálí Rání. The people all laughed at him for saying this, and declared such a marriage would never take place. However, the fakír and Mohandás walked about and saw the town, and looked at everything, and everybody stared at them. Then they went to live on the border of Dumkás Rájá’s country, and lived there for some time.

One day Shekh Faríd bought Mohandás a beautiful horse and fine clothes such as Rájás wear, and told the boy to ride about the fields and high roads. He also told him not to speak to any one unless they spoke to him. Mohandás promised to do as he was bid. As he was riding along, he met the Princess Champákálí, who was also riding. She asked him who he was. “A Rájá’s son,” he said. “What Rájá?” asked Champákálí. “Never mind what Rájá,” said Mohandás. The princess then went home, and so did Mohandás; but every day after this they met and talked together, and the princess fell very much in love with Mohandás.

At last she said to her father, “I wish to marry a young man who rides about on the border-land every day, and is very handsome.” The Rájá consented, for it was time his daughter was married, and now no Rájá from another country would come to marry her, as the demons who guarded the princess swallowed all her suitors at one gulp, and had already swallowed many Rájás who had come on this errand.

Shekh Faríd said to Mohandás, “Now go up to the palace, and claim the princess for your wife.” “If I do,” said Mohandás, “the demons will swallow me.” “I will not let them swallow you,” said Shekh Faríd. So Mohandás consented and set off for the palace, Shekh Faríd following him. When Mohandás came to the demons, they were going to swallow him; but the fakír, who had his sword in his hand, killed them all, and as he did so, the Rájás and princes who had come as suitors to the Princess Champákálí, and had therefore been swallowed by the demons, all came jumping out of the demons’ stomachs and ran off in all directions as hard as they could, from fear not knowing where they went.

Mohandás was greatly frightened at all this; but Shekh Faríd explained everything to him, so he went on to the palace, and the fakír went too. There Mohandás asked Dumkás Rájá to give him his daughter as his wife, and the Rájá consented. So he was married to Champákálí Rání, and her father gave them a great many elephants, and horses, and camels, and a great deal of money and many jewels. And Mohandás and his wife set off with the fakír to his father Fakír-achand’s house, and they took all the elephants, camels, horses, money and jewels with them. On the way Mohandás told Champákálí Rání that he was not a great Rájá’s son, but the son of poor people. Champákálí’s heart was very sad at this; however, she was not angry, only sorry.

When they reached Hámánsá Rájá’s country, and had come to Fakírachand’s house, the fakír said to Mohandás’s mother, “See, you lent me one child, and I have brought you back two children. Does this please you?” “Indeed it does please me,” she answered; “I am very happy.”

They built a beautiful palace and all lived in it together. The mother begged Shekh Faríd to stay with them, saying, “Only stay with us; I will give you a bungalow, and you shall have everything you want.” But Shekh Faríd said, “I am a fakír, and so cannot stay with you, as I may never stay in one place, and must, instead, wander from country to country and from jungle to jungle.” So he said good-bye to them and went on his wanderings, and never returned to them.

Mohandás, his wife, and his father and mother, all lived happily together.

68

THE MOUSE

There was a mouse who wanted something to eat; so he went to a garden, where many kinds of grain, and fruit, and cabbages, and other vegetables were growing. All round the garden the people to whom it belonged had planted a hedge of thorns, that nothing might get in. The mouse scrambled through the hedge, but great thorns pierced his tail, and he began to cry. He came out of the garden again through the hedge, and on his way home he met a barber.

“You must take out these thorns,” said he to the barber.

“I cannot,” said the barber, “without cutting off your tail with my razor.”

“Never mind cutting off my tail,” said the mouse.

The barber cut off the mouse’s tail. But the mouse was in a rage. He seized the razor and ran away with it. At this the poor barber was very unhappy and began to cry, for he had no pice wherewith to buy another.

The mouse ran on and on until at last he came to another country, in which there were no knives or sickles to cut the grass with. There the mouse saw a man pulling the grass out of the ground with his hands.

“You will cut your hands,” said the mouse.

“There are no knives here,” said the man, “so I must pull up the grass in this way.”

“You must take my razor then,” said the mouse.

“Suppose your razor should break? I could not buy you another,” said the man.

“Never mind if it does break,” said the mouse, “I give it to you as a present.”

So the man took the razor and began cutting the grass, and as he was cutting, the razor broke.

“Oh, why have you broken my razor?” exclaimed the mouse.

“Did not I tell you it would break?” answered the man.

The mouse snatched up the man’s blanket and ran off with it. The grass-cutter began to cry. “What shall I do?” said he. “The mouse has carried away my blanket, and I have not money wherewith to buy another.” And he went home very sad.

Meanwhile the mouse ran on and on until he arrived at another country, where he saw a grain merchant chopping up sugar-canes; only as he had no blanket or cloth to lay the canes on, he chopped them up on the ground, and so they got dirty.

“Why do you chop up your canes on the ground?” said the mouse; “they all get dirty.”

“What can I do?” answered the man. “I have no pice wherewith to buy a blanket to chop them on.”

“Then why don’t you take mine?” said the mouse.

“If I took yours it would get cut, and I have no money to buy you another,” said the grain merchant.

“Never mind; I don’t want another,” said the mouse.

So the man took the blanket, and of course he cut it. When he had finished chopping up his sugar-canes, he gave it back to the mouse.

When the mouse saw the blanket was full of holes, he was very angry indeed with the man, and seizing all the sugar-canes he ran away with them as fast as he could. The grain merchant began to cry. “What shall I do?” said he; “I have no more sugar-canes.” And he went home very sorrowful.

Then the mouse ran on and on till he came to another country, where he stopped at a sweetmeat-seller’s shop. Now in this country there was no salt and no sugar. And the sweetmeat-seller made his sweetmeats of flour and ghee without either sugar or salt, so that they were very nasty.

“Will you give me some sweetmeats for a pice?” said the mouse to the sweetmeat-seller. “Yes,” answered the man, and he gave one. The mouse began to eat it and thought it very nasty indeed.

“Why, there is no sugar in it!” exclaimed the mouse.

“No,” said the man; “we have no sugar in this country. The few sugar-canes we have are so dear, that poor people like myself cannot buy them.”

“Then take my sugar-canes,” cried the mouse.

“No,” said the man. “Where should I find the money to pay you for them? They would be all used in making sweetmeats.”

“Take them,” said the mouse; “I give them to you.”

The sweetmeat-seller took them and began making sweetmeats of all kinds, so that he used all the sugar-canes.

“Why have you used all my sugar-canes?” cried the mouse.

“Did not I tell you I should do so?” said the man.

“You are a thief!” cried the mouse, and he knocked down the sweetmeat-seller, seized all his sweetmeats, and ran off with them.

“What shall I do now?” cried the sweetmeat-seller. “I have no money to buy flour and ghee to make more sweetmeats with; and if I quarrel with the mouse, he will doubtless kill me.”

Meanwhile the mouse ran on and on till he reached a country, the Rájá of which had a great many cows — hundreds of cows. The mouse stopped at the pasture-ground of these cows. Now, the cowherds were so poor they could not buy bread every day, and sometimes they ate bread which was twelve days old. When the mouse arrived, the cowherds were eating their bread, and it was very stale and mouldy.

“Why do you eat that stale bread?” said the mouse.

"Because we have no money to buy any other with," answered the cowherds.

"Look at all these sweetmeats," said the mouse. "Take them and eat them instead of that stale bread."

"But if we eat them, we must pay you for them, and where shall we get the money?" said the cowherds.

"Oh, never mind the money," said the mouse.

So the cowherds took the sweetmeats and ate them all up. At this the mouse was furious. He stuck a pole into the ground, and ran and fetched ropes, and tied the cowherds hand and foot to the pole. Then he took all the cows and ran off with them.

He ran on and on till he got to a country where there were no fowls, no cows, no buffaloes, no meat of any kind; and the people in it did not even know what milk and meat were. The day the mouse arrived was the day the Rájá's daughter was to be married, and a great many people were assembled together. The Rájá's cooks were cooking, but they had neither meat nor ghee.

"Why are all these people assembled together?" said the mouse.

"To-day is our Rájá's daughter's wedding-day, and we are cooking the dinner," answered the cooks.

"But you have no meat," said the mouse.

"No," said the cooks. "There is no meat of any kind in our country."

"Take my cows," said the mouse.

"No," said the cooks; "our Rájá could not pay for them; he is too poor." (He was only a petty Rájá.)

"It does not matter," said the mouse. "I don't want money."

So the cooks took the cows and the sheep and killed them, and dressed their flesh in different ways; made pilaus and curries; they roasted some and boiled some, and gave it to the people to eat. In this way they made an end of all the cows.

“Why have you made an end of all my cows?” cried the mouse.

“Did not we tell you we should make use of them all?” said the cooks.

“Give me my cows,” said the mouse.

“We can’t. The people have eaten them all up,” said the cooks.

The mouse was in a great rage. He ran off to the bridegroom, who was walking near the kitchen, saying to himself, “Now I will go and fetch my bride.”

“Give me the money for my cows,” cried the mouse to him. “Your people have eaten them all up, and your cooks won’t pay me, so you must.”

“What have I to do with your cows?” said the bridegroom. “I won’t pay you for them.”

“Then if you won’t pay me, your wife’s father must,” said the mouse.

“Oh, *he* is too poor to pay for your cows,” said the bridegroom, “and I won’t.”

“Then if I am not paid, I will take away your bride,” said the mouse; and he ran off and carried away the bride.

The Rájá was very angry at this; but the mouse ran on and on with his wife (so he called the Rájá’s daughter) till he came to another country.

Now, on the day he arrived in it there were going to be grand sights and fun to please its Rájá. Some jugglers and rope-dancers were going to perform.

“Take my wife and let her walk on the rope; she is young, and your wives are old,” said the mouse to the rope-dancers.

“No,” they answered, “for she does not know how to walk on a rope and carry at the same time a wooden plate on her head. She would fall and break her neck.”

“But you must take my wife,” said the mouse. “She won’t fall; she is young, and your wives are old. You really must take her.”

So the rope-dancers took her, much against their will, and when she began to walk on the rope with the wooden plate on her head, she fell and died.

“Oh, why have you killed my wife?” cried the mouse.

“Did we not tell you she would fall and kill herself?” answered the rope-dancers.

The mouse seized all the jugglers’ and rope-dancers’ wives, and the things they used in dancing and juggling, and ran off with them. Then the rope-dancers and jugglers began to cry, and said, “What shall we do? Our wives and our property are all gone!”

Meanwhile the mouse ran on and on until he came to another country, where he got a house to live in. And he ate a great deal, and grew so fat that he could not get through the door of his house.

“Send for a carpenter,” said he to the rope-dancers’ and jugglers’ wives, “and tell him to cut off some of my flesh. Then I shall be able to get into my house.”

The women sent for a carpenter, and when he came the mouse said to him, “cut off some of my flesh, then I shall be able to go into my house.”

“If I do,” said the carpenter, “you will die.”

“No, I shan’t die,” said the mouse. “Do as I bid you.”

So the carpenter took his knife, and cut off some of the mouse’s flesh.

“Oh, dear! oh, dear!” cried the mouse; “how it does hurt! What can I do to make it stop paining me?”

“You must go to a certain place, where a particular kind of grain grows, and rub the grain on your wounds. Then they will get quite well,” said the carpenter.

So the mouse ran off to the place to which the carpenter had told him to go, and rubbed his wounds with the grain. This gave him such pain that he fell down and died.

The rope-dancers’ and jugglers’ wives went home to their husbands with all the things the mouse had carried away, and they all lived happily ever after.

69

A WONDERFUL STORY

Once there lived two wrestlers, who were both very very strong. The stronger of the two had a daughter called Ajít; the other had no daughter at all. These wrestlers did not live in the same country, but their two villages were not far apart.

One day the wrestler that had no daughter heard of the wrestler that had a daughter, and he determined to go and find him and wrestle with him, to see who was the stronger. He went therefore to Ajít's father's country, and when he arrived at his house, he knocked at the door and said, "Is any one here?" Ajít answered, "Yes, I am here;" and she came out. "Where is the wrestler who lives in this house?" he asked. "My father," answered Ajít, "has taken three hundred carts to the jungle, and he is drawing them himself, as he could not get enough bullocks and horses to pull them along. He is gone to get wood." This astonished the wrestler very much. "Your father must indeed be very strong," he said.

Then he set off to the jungle, and in the jungle he found two dead elephants. He tied them to the two ends of a pole, took the pole on his shoulder, and returned to Ajít's house. There he knocked at the door, crying, "Is any one here?" "Yes, I am here," said Ajít. "Has your father come back?" asked the wrestler. "Not yet," said Ajít, who was busy sweeping the room. Now, her father had twelve elephants. Eleven were in the stables, but one was lying dead in the room Ajít was sweeping; and as she swept, she swept the dead elephant without any trouble out of the door. This frightened the wrestler. “What a strong girl this is!” he said to himself. When Ajít had swept all the dust out of the room, she came and gathered it and the dead elephant up, and threw dust and elephant away. The wrestler was more and more astonished.

He set off again to find Ajít’s father, and met him pulling the three hundred carts along. At this he was still more alarmed, but he said to him, “Will you wrestle with me now?” “No,” said Ajít’s father, “I won’t; for here there is no one to see us.” The other again begged him to wrestle at once, and at that moment an old woman bent with age came by. She was carrying bread to her son, who had taken his mother’s three or four thousand camels to browse.

The first wrestler called to her at once, “Come and see us wrestle.” “No,” said the old woman, “for I must take my son his dinner. He is very hungry.” “No, no; you must stay and see us wrestle,” cried both the wrestlers. “I cannot stay,” she said; “but do one of you stand on one of my hands, and the other on the other, and then you can wrestle as we go along.” “You carry us!” cried the men. “You are so old, you will never be able to carry us.” “Indeed I shall,” said the old woman. So they got up on her hands, and she rested her hands, with the wrestlers standing on them, on her shoulders; and her son’s flour-cakes she put on her head. Thus they went on their way, and the men wrestled as they went.

Now the old woman had told her son that if he did not do his work well, she would bring men to kill him; so he was dreadfully frightened when he saw his mother coming with the wrestlers. “Here is my mother coming to kill me,” he said: and he tied up the three or four thousand camels in his cloth, put them all on his head, and ran off with them as fast as he could. “Stop, stop!” cried his mother, when she saw him running away. But he only ran on still faster, and the old woman and the wrestlers ran after him.

Just then a kite was flying about, and the kite said to itself, “There must be some meat in that man’s cloth,” so it swept down and carried off the bundle of camels. The old woman’s son at this sat down and cried.

The wrestlers soon came up to him and said, “What are you crying for?” “Oh,” answered the boy, “my mother said that if I did not do my work, she would bring men to kill me. So, when I saw you coming with her, I tied all the camels up in my cloth, put them on my head, and ran off. A kite came down and carried them all away. That is why I am crying.” The wrestlers were much astonished at the boy’s strength and at the kite’s strength, and they all three set off in the direction in which the kite had flown.

Meanwhile the kite had flown on and on till it had reached another country, and the daughter of the Rájá of this country was sitting on the roof of the palace, combing her long black hair. The princess looked up at the kite and the bundle, and said, “There must be meat in that bundle.” At that moment the kite let the bundle of camels fall, and it fell into the princess’s eye, and went deep into it; but her eye was so large that it did not hurt her much. “Oh, mother! mother!” she cried, “something has fallen into my eye! come and take it out.” Her mother rushed up, took the bundle of camels out of the princess’s eye, and shoved the bundle into her pocket.

The wrestlers and the old woman’s son now came up, having seen all that had happened. “Where is the bundle of camels?” said they, “and why do you cry?” they asked the princess. “Oh,” said her mother, “she is crying because something fell into her eye.” “It was the bundle of camels that fell into her eye, and the bundle is in your pocket,” said the old woman’s son to the Rání: and he put his hand into her pocket and pulled out the bundle. Then he and the wrestlers went back to Ajít’s father’s house, and on the way they met his old mother, who went with them.

They invited a great many people to dinner, and Ajít took a large quantity of flour and made it into flat cakes. Then she handed a cake to the wrestler who had come to see her father, and gave one to everybody else. “I can’t eat such a big cake as this,” said the wrestler. “Can’t you?” said Ajít. “I can’t indeed,” he answered; “it is much too big.” “Then I will eat it myself,” said Ajít, and taking it and all the other cakes she popped them into her mouth together. “That is not half enough for me,” she said. Then she offered him a can of water. “I cannot drink all that water,” he said. “Can’t you?” said Ajít; “I can drink much more than that.” So she filled a large tub with water, lifted it to her mouth, and drank it all up at a draught.

The wrestler was very much astonished, and said to her, “Will you come to my house? I will give you a dinner.” “You will never be able to give me enough to eat and drink,” said Ajít. “Yes, I shall,” he said. “You will not be able to give me enough, I am sure,” said Ajít; “I cannot come.” “Do come,” he said. “Very well,” she answered, “I will come; but I know you will never be able to give me enough food.”

So they set off to his house. But when they had gone a little way, she said, “I must have my house with me.” “I cannot carry your house,” said the wrestler. “You must,” said Ajít, “if you don’t, I cannot go with you.” “But I cannot carry your house,” said the wrestler. “Well, then,” said Ajít, “I will carry it myself.” So she went back, dug up her house, and hoisted it on her head. This frightened the wrestler. “What a strong woman she must be!” he thought. “I will not wrestle with her father; for if I do, he will kill me.”

Then they all went on till they came to his house. When they got to it, Ajít set her house down on the ground, and the wrestler went to get the dinner he had promised her. He brought quantities of things — all sorts of things — everything he could think of. Three kinds of flour, milk, dhall, rice, curries, and meat. Then he showed them all to Ajít. “That is not enough for my dinner,” she said. “Why, that would be hardly enough for my mice!”

The wrestler wondered very much at this, and asked, “Are your mice so very big?” “Yes, they are very big,” she answered; “come and see.” So he took up all the food he had brought, and laid it on the floor of Ajít’s house.

Then at once all the mice came and ate it up every bit. The wrestler was greatly surprised; and Ajít said, “Did I not tell you true? and did I not tell you, you would never be able to get me enough to eat?” “Come to the Nabha Rájá’s country,” said the wrestler. “There you will surely get enough to eat.”

To this she agreed; so she, her father, and the wrestler went off to the Nabha Rájá’s country. “I have brought a very strong girl,” said the wrestler to the Nabha Rájá. “I will try her strength,” said the Rájá. “Give me three elephants,” said Ajít, “and I will carry them for you.” Then the Rájá sent for three elephants, and said to her, “Now, carry these.” “Give me a rope,” said Ajít. So they gave her a rope, and she tied the three elephants together, and flung them over her shoulder. “Now, where shall I throw them?” she said to the astonished Rájá. “Shall I throw them on to the roof of your palace? or on to the ground? or away out there?” “I don’t know,” said the Rájá. “Throw them upon my roof.” She threw the elephants up on to the roof with such force that it broke, and the elephants fell through into the palace.

“What have you done?” cried the Rájá. “It is not my fault,” answered Ajít. “You told me to throw the elephants on to your roof, and so I did.” Then the Rájá sent for a great many men and bullocks and horses to pull the elephants out of his palace. But they could not the first time they pulled; then they tried a second time and succeeded, and they threw the elephants away.

Then Ajít went home. “What shall I do with this dreadful woman?” said the Nabha Rájá. “She is sure to kill me, and take all my country. I will try to kill her.” So he got his sepoys and guns into order, and went out to kill Ajít. She was looking out of her window, and saw them coming. “Oh,” she said, “here is the Nabha Rájá coming to kill me.” Then she went out of her house and asked him why he had come. “To kill you,” said the Rájá. “Is that what you want to do?” she said; and with one hand she took up the Rájá, his guns, and his sepoys, and put them all under her arm: and she carried them all off to the Nabha Rájá’s country. There she put the Rájá into prison, and made herself Rání of his kingdom. She was very much pleased at being Rání of the Nabha country; for it was a rich country, and there were quantities of fruits and of corn in it. And she lived happily for a long, long time.

70

THE FAKÍR NÁNAKSÁ SAVES THE MERCHANT’S LIFE

In a country there was a grain merchant who was a very good man. Now a fakír named Nánaksá, who was also a very good man, came constantly to talk with him.

One day he came as usual, and the merchant and his wife were very glad to see him. As they were all sitting together, they saw a goat led away to be killed. The goat escaped from the man who was leading him and hid behind the merchant, but he was caught and marched off to death.

At this the merchant said nothing, but the fakír laughed.

A little later they saw an old woman who had done something wrong, and, therefore, the king had ordered her to be taken to the jungle and there put to death. The old woman escaped from the men who were leading her and took refuge behind the merchant, but she was seized and led away to die.

The merchant said nothing; the fakír laughed, and the merchant’s wife saw him laugh.

At this moment the merchant’s little daughter woke and began to scream. Her mother took her in her arms; the child was cross and pulled her mother’s clothes all awry.

The fakír laughed.

The mother put her dress straight and held her child in her arms and stopped her crying. She then took a knife and went up to the fakír, saying, “Why did you laugh three times? Tell me the truth. What made you laugh three times?” Nánaksá answered, “What does it signify whether I cry or laugh? Ask me no questions, for I am a fakír, and it does not matter in the least whether I laugh or cry.” However, the merchant’s wife insisted on knowing why he laughed, and she said, “If you do not tell me, I will kill you with my knife.” “Good,” said Nánaksá; “if you really do wish to know, I will tell you.” “I really do wish to know,” she answered.

“Well,” said Nánaksá, “you remember the goat took refuge behind your husband? That goat in his former life was your husband’s father, and your husband would have saved him from death had he given the man who was taking him to be killed four rupees, for the man would then have gone away contentedly without the goat.”

“Good,” said the woman. “Why did you laugh the second time?”

“Well,” said Nánaksá, “that old woman who hid herself behind your husband was his grandmother in her former life. Had your husband given the men who were taking her to the jungle twenty rupees, they would have given her up to him, and he would have saved her from death. Should a wild beast or a man ever take refuge behind us, it is our duty to save his life.”

“Well,” said the merchant’s wife, “you have told me why you laughed the first two times. Now tell me why you laughed the third time.”

“Listen,” said Nánaksá. “You remember your husband’s sister whom you tormented so much? She died, but then God caused her to be born again as your daughter, that she might torment you and punish you for having been so unkind to her in her former life when she was your sister-in-law.”

“Is that true?” said the woman.

“Quite true,” answered the fakír, “and that is why I laughed the third time. But now would you like to hear something I wish to tell you? If you promise not to cry, I will tell it you.”

“I promise not to cry, so tell me,” she said.

“Then listen,” said Nánaksá. “God has decreed that your husband shall die to-morrow morning at ten o’clock. He will send four angels to fetch him.”

At this the poor woman began to cry bitterly.

“Do not cry,” said the fakír. “I will tell you something more. Listen to me. To-morrow morning at four o’clock you must get up, and make your house quite clean and neat. Then buy new dishes and make all the nicest and most delicious sweetmeats you can.”

“I will do so,” she answered.

When it was yet night she rose, and did all the fakír had bidden her. Then she went to him and said, “The sweetmeats are ready.” “Now,” said Nánaksá, “go and get a fine, clean cloth; take it and the sweetmeats with you, and set out and walk on and on till you come to a plain which is a long way from this. But you must go on till you reach it, and on it you will see a tank and a tree. By the tank and the tree you must spread your cloth and lay out your sweetmeats on it. At nine o’clock you will see four men, who will come and bathe in the tank. When they have bathed they will come towards you, and you must say to them, ‘See! you are four angels, therefore you must eat some of my sweetmeats.’”

The woman set out for the plain and did all Nánaksá had told her to do; and everything happened as he had foretold. When the four men had bathed, they came towards the woman, and she said to them, “See! you are four angels, and therefore you must eat some of my sweetmeats.” The chief of the four angels, who was called Jabrá’íl, and the three other angels answered, “We have no money, wherewith to buy your sweetmeats, so how can we eat any of them?” “Never mind the money,” said the woman; “you can pay me another day. Come now and eat some.” So the four angels sat down and ate a great many of her sweetmeats.

When they had finished they stood up and said to each other, “Now we must go to the village and fetch the merchant.” Then the woman made them a great many salaams and said, “That merchant is my husband. Still, if it is your pleasure to take him away, take him away.”

At this the angels were sad, and said to her, “How can we take your husband’s life now that we have eaten your food? But stay under this tree till we return, and then we will pay you for your sweetmeats.”

So the angels left her, and the wife waited under the tree. She was very sad; and after some time she thought, “Now I will go home: perhaps these angels are gone to take his life;” and then she cried bitterly and remained under the tree.

Meanwhile the four angels had gone back to God, who asked them, “Have you brought the merchant?” They were sorry not to have brought him, and told God all that had happened. And God was very angry; but he said to them. “Never mind. I know the fakír Nánaksá is with the merchant and his wife just now, and it is he who has played you this trick.”

Then God wrote a letter in which he promised the merchant twenty years more life, only at the end of the twenty years he was really to die and not to be allowed to live any longer. This letter he gave to the angels, and bade them take it to the merchant’s wife and tell her to have a silver box made, into which she was to put the letter, and then hang it round her husband’s neck, so that he should live for twenty years more.

The four angels came down to earth again, and went to the tree under which they had left the woman. They found her waiting for them, and gave her the letter saying, “You must get a silver box made and put this letter in it; then hang it round your husband’s neck, so that he may live for twenty years more.”

The woman thanked them, and was very happy. She took the letter and went home. There she found her husband quite well, and with him was Nánaksá. She gave Nánaksá the letter and told him what the angels had bidden her do with it. Nánaksá read the letter, and was very much pleased. Then he said to her, “Call a silversmith here, and let him make you the silver box. Then you must get a great dinner ready, and ask all your friends, rich and poor, to come and eat it.”

All this she did, and when the dinner was ready and all their friends had come, the fakír said, “None who are here, men, women, or children, must eat, till they have put their hands before their faces and worshipped God.” Everybody hid his face in his hands at once and worshipped God: while they did this the fakír stole away from them, so when they uncovered their faces he was nowhere to be seen. No one knew where he had gone, and no one had seen him go. Some of the men went to look for him, but they could not find him, and none of them ever saw him again.

But the merchant and his wife lived happily together.

71

THE BOY WHO HAD A MOON ON HIS FOREHEAD AND A STAR ON HIS CHIN

In a country were seven daughters of poor parents, who used to come daily to play under the shady trees in the King's garden with the gardener's daughter; and daily she used to say to them, "When I am married I shall have a son. Such a beautiful boy as he will be has never been seen. He will have a moon on his forehead, and a star on his chin." Then her playfellows used to laugh at her and mock her.

But one day the King heard her telling them about the beautiful boy she would have when she was married, and he said to himself he should like very much to have such a son; the more so that though he had already four wives he had no child. He went, therefore, to the gardener and told him he wished to marry his daughter. This delighted the gardener and his wife, who thought it would indeed be grand for their daughter to become a princess. So they said "Yes" to the King, and invited all their friends to the wedding. The King invited all his, and he gave the gardener as much money as he wanted. Then the wedding was held with great feasting and rejoicing.

A year later the day drew near on which the gardener's daughter was to have her son; and the King's four other wives came constantly to see her. One day they said to her, "The King hunts every day; and the time is soon coming when you will have your child. Suppose you fell ill whilst he was out hunting and could therefore know nothing of your illness, what would you do then?”

When the King came home that evening, the gardener’s daughter said to him, “Every day you go out hunting. Should I ever be in trouble or sick while you are away, how could I send for you?” The King gave her a kettle-drum which he placed near the door for her, and he said to her, “Whenever you want me, beat this kettle-drum. No matter how far away I may be, I shall hear it, and will come at once to you.”

Next morning, when the King had gone out to hunt, his four other wives came to see the gardener’s daughter. She told them all about her kettle-drum. “Oh,” they said, “do drum on it just to see if the King really will come to you.” “No, I will not,” she said; “for why should I call him from his hunting when I do not want him?” “Don’t mind interrupting his hunting,” they answered. “Do try if he really will come to you when you beat your kettle-drum.” So at last, just to please them, she beat it, and the King stood before her.

“Why have you called me?” he said. “See, I have left my hunting to come to you.” “I want nothing,” she answered; “I only wished to know if you really would come to me when I beat my drum.” “Very well,” answered the King; “but do not call me again unless you really need me.” Then he returned to his hunting.

The next day, when the King had gone out hunting as usual, the four wives again came to see the gardener’s daughter. They begged and begged her to beat her drum once more, “just to see if the King will really come to see you this time.” At first she refused, but at last she consented. So she beat her drum, and the King came to her. But when he found she was neither ill nor in trouble, he was angry, and said to her, “Twice I have left my hunting and lost my game to come to you when you did not need me. Now you may call me as much as you like, but I will not come to you,” and then he went away in a rage.

The third day the gardener’s daughter fell ill, and she beat and beat her kettle-drum; but the King never came. He heard her kettle-drum, but he thought, “She does not really want me; she is only trying to see if I will go to her.”

Meanwhile the four other wives came to her, and they said, “Here it is the custom before a child is born to bind its mother’s eyes with a handkerchief that she may not see it just at first. So let us bind your eyes.” She answered, “Very well, bind my eyes.” The four wives then tied a handkerchief over them.

Soon after, the gardener’s daughter had a beautiful little son, with a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin; and before the poor mother had seen him, the four wicked wives took the boy to the nurse and said to her, “Now you must not let this child make the least sound for fear his mother should hear him; and in the night you must either kill him, or else take him away, so that his mother may never see him. If you obey our orders, we will give you a great many rupees.” All this they did out of spite. The nurse took the little child and put him into a box, and the four wives went back to the gardener’s daughter.

First they put a stone into her boy’s little bed, and then they took the handkerchief off her eyes and showed it her, saying, “Look! this is your son!” The poor girl cried bitterly, and thought, “What will the King say when he finds no child?” But she could do nothing.

When the King came home, he was furious at hearing his youngest wife, the gardener’s daughter, had given him a stone instead of the beautiful little son she had promised him. He made her one of the palace servants, and never spoke to her.

In the middle of the night the nurse took the box in which was the beautiful little prince, and went out to a broad plain in the jungle. There she dug a hole, made the fastenings of the box sure, and put the box into the hole, although the child in it was still alive. The King’s dog, whose name was Shankar, had followed her to see what she did with the box. As soon as she had gone back to the four wives (who gave her a great many rupees), the dog went to the hole in which she had put the box, took the box out, and opened it. When he saw the beautiful little boy, he was very much delighted and said, “If it pleases God that this child should live, I will not hurt him; I will not eat him, but I will swallow him whole and hide him in my stomach.” This he did.

After six months had passed, the dog went by night to the jungle, and thought, “I wonder whether the boy is alive or dead.” Then he brought the child out of his stomach and rejoiced over his beauty. The boy was now six months old. When Shankar had caressed and loved him, he swallowed him again for another six months. At the end of that time he went once more by night to the broad jungle-plain. There he brought up the child out of his stomach (the child was now a year old), and caressed and petted him a great deal, and was made very happy by his great beauty.

But this time the dog’s keeper had followed and watched the dog; and he saw all that Shankar did, and the beautiful little child, so he ran to the four wives and said to them, “Inside the King’s dog there is a child! the loveliest child! He has a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin. Such a child has never been seen!” At this the four wives were very much frightened, and as soon as the King came home from hunting they said to him, “While you were away your dog came to our rooms, and tore our clothes and knocked about all our things. We are afraid he will kill us.” “Do not be afraid,” said the King. “Eat your dinner and be happy. I will have the dog shot to-morrow morning.”

Then he ordered his servants to shoot the dog at dawn, but the dog heard him, and said to himself, “What shall I do? The King intends to kill me. I don’t care about that, but what will become of the child if I am killed? He will die. But I will see if I cannot save him.”

So when it was night, the dog ran to the King’s cow, who was called Surí, and said to her, “Surí, I want to give you something, for the King has ordered me to be shot to-morrow. Will you take great care of whatever I give you?” “Let me see what it is,” said Surí; “I will take care of it if I can.” Then they both went together to the wide plain, and there the dog brought up the boy. Surí was enchanted with him. “I never saw such a beautiful child in this country,” she said. “See, he has a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin. I will take the greatest care of him.” So saying she swallowed the little prince. The dog made her a great many salaams, and said, “To-morrow I shall die;” and the cow then went back to her stable.

Next morning at dawn the dog was taken to the jungle and shot.

The child now lived in Surí’s stomach; and when one whole year had passed, and he was two years old, the cow went out to the plain, and said to herself, “I do not know whether the child is alive or dead. But I have never hurt it, so I will see.” Then she brought up the boy; and he played about, and Surí was delighted; she loved him and caressed him, and talked to him. Then she swallowed him, and returned to her stable.

At the end of another year she went again to the plain and brought up the child. He played and ran about for an hour to her great delight, and she talked to him and caressed him. His great beauty made her very happy. Then she swallowed him once more and returned to her stable. The child was now three years old.

But this time the cowherd had followed Surí, and had seen the wonderful child and all she did to it. So he ran and told the four wives, “The King’s cow has a beautiful boy inside her. He has a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin. Such a child has never been seen before!”

At this the wives were terrified. They tore their clothes and their hair and cried. When the King came home at evening, he asked them why they were so agitated. “Oh,” they said, “your cow came and tried to kill us; but we ran away. She tore our hair and our clothes.” “Never mind,” said the

King. “Eat your dinner and be happy. The cow shall be killed to-morrow morning.”

Now Surí heard the King give this order to the servants, so she said to herself, “What shall I do to save the child?” When it was midnight, she went to the King’s horse called Katar, who was very wicked, and quite untameable. No one had ever been able to ride him; indeed no one could go near him with safety, he was so savage. Surí said to this horse, “Katar, will you take care of something that I want to give you, because the King has ordered me to be killed to-morrow?” “Good,” said Katar; “show me what it is.” Then Surí brought up the child, and the horse was delighted with him. “Yes,” he said, “I will take the greatest care of him. Till now no one has been able to ride me, but this child shall ride me.” Then he swallowed the boy, and when he had done so, the cow made him many salaams, saying, “It is for this boy’s sake that I am to die.” The next morning she was taken to the jungle and there killed.

The beautiful boy now lived in the horse’s stomach, and he stayed in it for one whole year. At the end of that time the horse thought, “I will see if this child is alive or dead.” So he brought him up; and then he loved him, and petted him, and the little prince played all about the stable, out of which the horse was never allowed to go. Katar was very glad to see the child, who was now four years old. After he had played for some time, the horse swallowed him again. At the end of another year, when the boy was five years old, Katar brought him up again, caressed him, loved him, and let him play about the stable as he had done a year before. Then the horse swallowed him again.

But this time the groom had seen all that happened, and when it was morning, and the King had gone away to his hunting, he went to the four wicked wives, and told them all he had seen, and all about the wonderful, beautiful child that lived inside the King’s horse Katar. On hearing the groom’s story the four wives cried, and tore their hair and clothes, and refused to eat. When the King returned at evening and asked them why they were so miserable, they said, “Your horse Katar came and tore our clothes, and upset all our things, and we ran away for fear he should kill us.” “Never mind,” said the King. “Only eat your dinner and be happy. I will have Katar shot to-morrow.” Then he thought that two men unaided could not kill such a wicked horse, so he ordered his servants to bid his troop of sepoys shoot him.

So the next day the King placed his sepoys all round the stable, and he took up his stand with them; and he said he would himself shoot any one who let his horse escape.

Meanwhile the horse had overheard all these orders. So he brought up the child and said to him, “Go into that little room that leads out of the stable, and you will find in it a saddle and bridle which you must put on me. Then you will find in the room some beautiful clothes such as princes wear; these you must put on yourself; and you must take the sword and gun you will find there too. Then you must mount on my back.” Now Katar was a fairy-horse, and came from the fairies’ country, so he could get anything he wanted; but neither the King nor any of his people knew this. When all was ready, Katar burst out of his stable, with the prince on his back, rushed past the King himself before the King had time to shoot him, galloped away to the great jungle-plain, and galloped about all over it. The King saw his horse had a boy on his back, though he could not see the boy distinctly. The sepoys tried in vain to shoot the horse; he galloped much too fast; and at last they were all scattered over the plain. Then the King had to give it up and go home; and his sepoys went to their homes. The King could not shoot any of his sepoys for letting his horse escape, for he himself had let him do so.

Then Katar galloped away, on, and on, and on; and when night came they stayed under a tree, he and the King’s son. The horse ate grass, and the boy wild fruits which he found in the jungle. Next morning they started afresh, and went far, and far, till they came to a jungle in another country, which did not belong to the little prince's father, but to another king. Here Katar said to the boy, "Now get off my back." Off jumped the prince. "Unsaddle me and take off my bridle; take off your beautiful clothes and tie them all up in a bundle with your sword and gun." This the boy did. Then the horse gave him some poor, common clothes, which he told him to put on. As soon as he was dressed in them the horse said, "Hide your bundle in this grass, and I will take care of it for you. I will always stay in this jungle-plain, so that when you want me you will always find me. You must now go away and find service with some one in this country." This made the boy very sad. "I know nothing about anything," he said. "What shall I do all alone in this country?" "Do not be afraid," answered Katar. "You will find service, and I will always stay here to help you when you want me. So go, only before you go, twist my right ear." The boy did so, and his horse instantly became a donkey. "Now twist your right ear," said Katar. And when the boy had twisted it, he was no longer a handsome prince, but a poor, common-looking, ugly man; and his moon and star were hidden.

Then he went away further into the country, until he came to a grain merchant of the country, who asked him who he was. "I am a poor man," answered the boy, "and I want service." "Good," said the grain merchant, "you shall be my servant."

Now the grain merchant lived near the King's palace, and one night at twelve o'clock the boy was very hot; so he went out into the King's cool garden, and began to sing a lovely song. The seventh and youngest daughter of the King heard him, and she wondered who it was who could sing so deliciously. Then she put on her clothes, rolled up her hair, and came down to where the seemingly poor common man was lying singing. "Who are you? where do you come from?" she asked. But he answered nothing. "Who is this man who does not answer when I speak to him?" thought the little princess, and she went away. On the second night the same thing happened, and on the third night too. But on the third night, when she found she could not make him answer her, she said to him, “What a strange man you are not to answer me when I speak to you.” But still he remained silent, so she went away.

The next day when he had finished his work, the young prince went to the jungle to see his horse, who asked him, “Are you quite well and happy?” “Yes, I am,” answered the boy. “I am servant to a grain merchant. The last three nights I have gone into the King’s garden and sung a song. And each night the youngest princess has come to me and asked me who I am, and whence I came, and I have answered nothing. What shall I do now?” The horse said, “Next time she asks you who you are, tell her you are a very poor man, and came from your own country to find service here.”

The boy then went home to the grain merchant, and at night, when every one had gone to bed, he went to the King’s garden and sang his sweet song again. The youngest princess heard him, got up, dressed, and came to him. “Who are you? Whence do you come?” she asked. “I am a very poor man,” he answered. “I came from my own country to seek service here, and I am now one of the grain merchant’s servants.” Then she went away. For three more nights the boy sang in the King’s garden, and each night the princess came and asked him the same questions as before, and the boy gave her the same answers.

Then she went to her father, and said to him, “Father, I wish to be married; but I must choose my husband myself.” Her father consented to this, and he wrote and invited all the Kings and Rájás in the land, saying, “My youngest daughter wishes to be married, but she insists on choosing her husband herself. As I do not know who it is she wishes to marry, I beg you will all come on a certain day, for her to see you and make her choice.”

A great many Kings, Rájás, and their sons accepted this invitation and came. When they had all arrived, the little princess’s father said to them, “To-morrow morning you must all sit together in my garden” (the King’s garden was very large), “for then my youngest daughter will come and see you all, and choose her husband. I do not know whom she will choose.”

The youngest princess ordered a grand elephant to be ready for her the next morning, and when the morning came, and all was ready, she dressed herself in the most lovely clothes, and put on her beautiful jewels; then she mounted her elephant, which was painted blue. In her hand she took a gold necklace.

Then she went into the garden where the Kings, Rájás, and their sons were seated. The boy, the grain merchant’s servant, was also in the garden: not as a suitor, but looking on with the other servants.

The princess rode all round the garden, and looked at all the Kings and Rájás and princes, and then she hung the gold necklace round the neck of the boy, the grain merchant’s servant. At this everybody laughed, and the Kings were greatly astonished. But then they and the Rájás said, “What fooling is this?” and they pushed the pretended poor man away, and took the necklace off his neck, and said to him, “Get out of the way, you poor, dirty man. Your clothes are far too dirty for you to come near us!” The boy went far away from them, and stood a long way off to see what would happen.

Then the King’s youngest daughter went all round the garden again, holding her gold necklace in her hand, and once more she hung it round the boy’s neck. Every one laughed at her and said, “How can the King’s daughter think of marrying this poor, common man!” and the Kings and the Rájás, who had come as suitors, all wanted to turn him out of the garden. But the princess said, “Take care! take care! You must not turn him out. Leave him alone.” Then she put him on her elephant, and took him to the palace.

The Kings and Rájás and their sons were very much astonished, and said, “What does this mean? The princess does not care to marry one of us, but chooses that very poor man!” Her father then stood up, and said to them all, “I promised my daughter she should marry any one she pleased, and as she has twice chosen that poor, common man, she shall marry him.” And so the princess and the boy were married with great pomp and splendour: her father and mother were quite content with her choice; and the Kings, the Rájás and their sons, all returned to their homes.

Now the princess’s six sisters had all married rich princes — and they laughed at her for choosing such a poor ugly husband as hers seemed to be, and said to each other, mockingly, “See! our sister has married this poor, common man!” Their six husbands used to go out hunting every day, and every evening they brought home quantities of all kinds of game to their wives, and the game was cooked for their dinner and for the King’s; but the husband of the youngest princess always stayed at home in the palace, and never went out hunting at all. This made her very sad, and she said to herself, “My sisters’ husbands hunt every day, but my husband never hunts at all.”

At last she said to him, “Why do you never go out hunting as my sisters’ husbands do every day, and every day they bring home quantities of all kinds of game? Why do you always stay at home, instead of doing as they do?”

One day he said to her, “I am going out to-day to eat the air.” “Very good,” she answered; “go, and take one of the horses.” “No,” said the young prince, “I will not ride, I will walk.” Then he went to the jungle-plain where he had left Katar, who all this time had seemed to be a donkey, and he told Katar everything. “Listen,” he said; “I have married the youngest princess; and when we were married everybody laughed at her for choosing me, and said, ‘What a very poor, common man our princess has chosen for her husband!’ Besides, my wife is very sad, for her six sisters’ husbands all hunt every day, and bring home quantities of game, and their wives therefore are very proud of them. But I stay at home all day, and never hunt. To-day I should like to hunt very much.”

“Well,” said Katar, “then twist my left ear;” and as soon as the boy had twisted it, Katar was a horse again, and not a donkey any longer. “Now,” said Katar, “twist your left ear, and you will see what a beautiful young prince you will become.” So the boy twisted his own left ear, and there he stood no longer a poor, common, ugly man, but a grand young prince with a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin. Then he put on his splendid clothes, saddled and bridled Katar, got on his back with his sword and gun, and rode off to hunt.

He rode very far, and shot a great many birds and a quantity of deer. That day his six brothers-in-law could find no game, for the beautiful young prince had shot it all. Nearly all the day long these six princes wandered about looking in vain for game; till at last they grew hungry and thirsty, and could find no water, and they had no food with them. Meanwhile the beautiful young prince had sat down under a tree, to dine and rest, and there his six brothers-in-law found him. By his side was some delicious water, and also some roast meat.

When they saw him the six princes said to each other, “Look at that handsome prince. He has a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin. We have never seen such a prince in this jungle before; he must come from another country.” Then they came up to him, and made him many salaams, and begged him to give them some food and water. “Who are you?” said the young prince. “We are the husbands of the six elder daughters of the King of this country,” they answered; “and we have hunted all day, and are very hungry and thirsty.” They did not recognize their brother-in-law in the least.

“Well,” said the young prince, “I will give you something to eat and drink if you will do as I bid you.” “We will do all you tell us to do,” they answered, “for if we do not get water to drink, we shall die.” “Very good,” said the young prince. “Now you must let me put a red-hot pice on the back of each of you, and then I will give you food and water. Do you agree to this?” The six princes consented, for they thought, “No one will ever see the mark of the pice, as it will be covered by our clothes; and we shall die if we have no water to drink.” Then the young prince took six pice, and made them red-hot in the fire; he laid one on the back of each of the six princes, and gave them good food and water. They ate and drank; and when they had finished they made him many salaams and went home.

The young prince stayed under the tree till it was evening; then he mounted his horse and rode off to the King’s palace. All the people looked at him as he came riding along, saying, “What a splendid young prince that is! He has a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin.” But no one recognized him. When he came near the King’s palace, all the King’s servants asked him who he was; and as none of them knew him, the gatekeepers would not let him pass in. They all wondered who he could be, and all thought him the most beautiful prince that had ever been seen.

At last they asked him who he was. “I am the husband of your youngest princess,” he answered. “No, no, indeed you are not,” they said; “for he is a poor, common-looking, and ugly man.” “But I am he,” answered the prince; only no one would believe him. “Tell us the truth,” said the servants; “who are you?” “Perhaps you cannot recognize me,” said the young prince, “but call the youngest princess here. I wish to speak to her.” The servants called her, and she came. “That man is not my husband,” she said at once. “My husband is not nearly as handsome as that man. This must be a prince from another country.”

Then she said to him, “Who are you? Why do you say you are my husband?” “Because I am your husband. I am telling you the truth,” answered the young prince. “No you are not, you are not telling me the truth,” said the little princess. “My husband is not a handsome man like you. I married a very poor, common-looking man.” “That is true,” he answered, “but nevertheless I am your husband. I was the grain merchant’s servant; and one hot night I went into your father’s garden and sang, and you heard me, and came and asked me who I was and where I came from, and I would not answer you. And the same thing happened the next night, and the next, and on the fourth I told you I was a very poor man, and had come from my country to seek service in yours, and that I was the grain merchant's servant. Then you told your father you wished to marry, but must choose your own husband; and when all the Kings and Rájás were seated in your father's garden, you sat on an elephant and went round and looked at them all; and then twice hung your gold necklace round my neck, and chose me. See, here is your necklace, and here are the ring and the handkerchief you gave me on our wedding day."

Then she believed him, and was very glad that her husband was such a beautiful young prince. "What a strange man you are!" she said to him. "Till now you have been poor, and ugly, and common-looking. Now you are beautiful and look like a prince; I never saw such a handsome man as you are before; and yet I know you must be my husband." Then she worshipped God and thanked him for letting her have such a husband. "I have," she said, "a beautiful husband. There is no one like him in this country. He has a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin." Then she took him into the palace, and showed him to her father and mother and to every one. They all said they had never seen any one like him, and were all very happy. And the young prince lived as before in the King's palace with his wife, and Katar lived in the King's stables.

One day, when the King and his seven sons-in-law were in his court-house, and it was full of people, the young prince said to him, "There are six thieves here in your court-house." "Six thieves!" said the King. "Where are they? Show them to me." "There they are," said the young prince, pointing to his six brothers-in-law. The King and every one else in the court-house were very much astonished, and would not believe the young prince. "Take off their coats," he said, "and then you will see for yourselves that each of them has the mark of a thief on his back." So their coats were taken off the six princes, and the King and everybody in the court-house saw the marks of the red-hot pice. The six princes were very much ashamed, but the young prince was very glad. He had not forgotten how his brothers-in-law had laughed at him and mocked him when he seemed a poor, common man.

Now when Katar was still in the jungle, before the prince was married, he had told the boy the whole story of his birth, and all that had happened to him and his mother. “When you are married,” he said to him, “I will take you back to your father’s country.” So two months after the young prince had revenged himself on his brothers-in-law, Katar said to him, “It is time for you to return to your father. Get the King to let you go to your own country, and I will tell you what to do when we get there.”

The prince always did what his horse told him to do; so he went to his wife and said to her, “I wish very much to go to my own country to see my father and mother.” “Very well,” said his wife; “I will tell my father and mother, and ask them to let us go.” Then she went to them, and told them, and they consented to let her and her husband leave them. The King gave his daughter and the young prince a great many horses, and elephants, and all sorts of presents, and also a great many sepoys to guard them. In this grand state they travelled to the prince’s country, which was not a great many miles off. When they reached it they pitched their tents on the same plain in which the prince had been left in his box by the nurse, where Shankar and Surí had swallowed him so often.

When the King, his father, the gardener’s daughter’s husband, saw the prince’s camp, he was very much alarmed, and thought a great King had come to make war on him. He sent one of his servants, therefore, to ask whose camp it was. The young prince then wrote him a letter, in which he said, “You are a great King. Do not fear me. I am not come to make war on you. I am as if I were your son. I am a prince who has come to see your country and to speak with you. I wish to give you a grand feast, to which everyone in your country must come — men and women, old and young, rich and poor, of all castes; all the children, fakírs, and sepoys. You must bring them all here to me for a week, and I will feast them all.”

The King was delighted with this letter, and ordered all the men, women, and children of all castes, fakírs and sepoys, in his country to go to the prince’s camp to a grand feast the prince would give them. So they all came, and the King brought his four wives too. All came, at least all but the gardener’s daughter. No one had told her to go to the feast, for no one had thought of her.

When all the people were assembled, the prince saw his mother was not there, and he asked the King, “Has every one in your country come to my feast?” “Yes, everyone,” said the King. “Are you sure of that?” asked the prince.

“Quite sure,” answered the King. “I am sure one woman has not come,” said the prince. “She is your gardener’s daughter, who was once your wife and is now a servant in your palace.” “True,” said the King, “I had forgotten her.” Then the prince told his servants to take his finest palanquin and to fetch the gardener’s daughter. They were to bathe her, dress her in beautiful clothes and handsome jewels, and then bring her to him in the palanquin.

While the servants were bringing the gardener’s daughter, the King thought how handsome the young prince was; and he noticed particularly the moon on his forehead and the star on his chin, and he wondered in what country the young prince was born.

And now the palanquin arrived bringing the gardener’s daughter, and the young prince went himself and took her out of it, and brought her into the tent. He made her a great many salaams. The four wicked wives looked on and were very much surprised and very angry. They remembered that, when they arrived, the prince had made them no salaams, and since then had not taken the least notice of them; whereas he could not do enough for the gardener’s daughter, and seemed very glad to see her.

When they were all at dinner, the prince again made the gardener’s daughter a great many salaams, and gave her food from all the nicest dishes. She wondered at his kindness to her, and thought, “Who is this handsome prince, with a moon on his forehead and a star on his chin? I never saw any one so beautiful. What country does he come from?”

Two or three days were thus passed in feasting, and all that time the King and his people were talking about the prince’s beauty, and wondering who he was.

One day the prince asked the King if he had any children. “None,” he answered. “Do you know who I am?” asked the prince. “No,” said the King. “Tell me who you are.” “I am your son,” answered the prince, “and the gardener’s daughter is my mother.” The King shook his head sadly. “How can you be my son,” he said, “when I have never had any children?” “But I am your son,” answered the prince. “Your four wicked wives told you the gardener’s daughter had given you a stone and not a son; but it was they who put the stone in my little bed, and then they tried to kill me.” The King did not believe him. “I wish you were my son,” he said; “but as I never had a child, you cannot be my son.” “Do you remember your dog Shankar, and how you had him killed? And do you remember your cow Surí, and how you had her killed too? Your wives made you kill them because of me. And,” he said, taking the King to Katar, “do you know whose horse that is?”

The King looked at Katar, and then said, “That is my horse Katar.” “Yes,” said the Prince. “Do you not remember how he rushed past you out of his stable with me on his back?” Then Katar told the King the prince was really his son, and told him all the story of his birth, and of his life up to that moment; and when the King found the beautiful prince was indeed his son, he was so glad, so glad. He put his arms round him and kissed him and cried for joy.

“Now,” said the King, “you must come with me to my palace, and live with me always.” “No,” said the prince, “that I cannot do. I cannot go to your palace. I only came here to fetch my mother; and now that I have found her, I will take her with me to my father-in-law’s palace. I have married a King’s daughter, and we live with her father.” “But now that I have found you, I cannot let you go,” said his father. “You and your wife must come and live with your mother and me in my palace.” “That we will never do,” said the prince, “unless you will kill your four wicked wives with your own hand. If you will do that, we will come and live with you.”

So the King killed his wives, and then he and his wife, the gardener’s daughter, and the prince and his wife, all went to live in the King’s palace, and lived there happily together for ever after; and the King thanked God for giving him such a beautiful son, and for ridding him of his four wicked wives.

Katar did not return to the fairies’ country, but stayed always with the young prince, and never left him.

72

THE BÉL-PRINCESS

In a country lived a King who had seven sons. Six of these sons married, but the seventh and youngest son would not marry; and, moreover, he disliked his six sisters-in-law, and could not bear to take food from their hands. One day, they got very angry with him for disliking them, and they said to him, taunting him, "We think that you will marry a Bél-Princess."

"A Bél-Princess," said the young prince to himself. "What is a Bél-Princess? and where is one to be found? I will go and look for one." But the next day he thought, "How can I find a Bél-Princess? I don't know where to seek for her."

At last one day he saddled and bridled one of his father's beautiful horses. Then he put on his grand clothes, took his sword and gun, and said good-bye to his father and mother, and set out on his search. They cried very much at parting with him.

He rode from his father's country for a long, long way. At length, when he had journeyed for six months, he found himself in a great jungle, through which he went for many nights and days, until he at last came to where a fakír lay sleeping. The young prince thought, "I will watch by this fakír till he wakes. Perhaps he can help me." So he stayed with the fakír for one whole month; and all that time he took care of him and watched by him, and kept his hut clean.

This fakír used to sleep for six whole months at a time, and then he would remain awake for six months.

When the prince had watched over him for one month the fakír woke, for his six months' sleep had come to an end; and when he saw what care the young prince had taken of him, and how clean his hut was, he was very much pleased with the King's son, and said to him, "How have you been able to reach this jungle, to which no man can come? and who are you? and whence do you come?"

"I am a King's son," answered the prince. "My father's country is a six months' journey away from this; and I am come to look for a Bél-Princess. I hear there is a Bél-Princess, and I want to find her. Can you tell me where she is?"

"It is true that there is one," answered the fakír, "and I know where she is. She is in the fairies' country, whither no man can go."

This made the young prince very sad. "What shall I do?" he said. "I have left my father and mother, and have travelled a long, long way to find the Bél-Princess. And now you tell me I cannot go where she lives."

"I will help you," said the fakír, "and if you do exactly what I tell you, you will find her. But, first, stay here with me for a little while."

So the King's son stayed for another month with the fakír, and took care of him, and did everything for him, as he did for his own father.

At the end of the month, the fakír gave him his stick, and said to him, "Now you must go to the fairies' country. It is one week's journey distant from this jungle. When you get there, you will see a number of demons and fairies who live in it." Then the fakír took a little earth from the ground, and put it in the prince's hand. "When you have come to the fairies' country, in order that they and the demons may not see you, you must blow all this earth away from the palm of your hand, and then you will be invisible. You must ride on till you come to a great plain in the middle of their garden, and on this plain you will see a large bél-tree and on it one big bél-fruit. In this fruit is the Bél-Princess. You must throw my stick at it, and it will fall; but you must take care to catch the fruit in your shawl, and not let it fall to the ground. Then ride quickly back to me, for as soon as the fruit falls you will cease to be invisible, and the fairies and demons who guard the fruit will all come running after you, and they will all call to you. But take care, take care not to look behind you when they call you. Ride straight on to me with the fruit, and do not look behind you. If you do, you will become stone, and your horse too, and they will take the bél-fruit back to its tree."

The prince promised to do all the fakír bade him. He rode for a week, and then he came to the fairies' country. He blew the earth the fakír had given him away from his palm all along his fingers, just as he had been told, and then he became invisible. He rode through the great garden to the plain. There he saw the bél-tree, and the one fruit hanging all alone. He threw the fakír's stick at it, and caught it in a corner of his shawl as it fell, but then he was no longer invisible. All the fairies and demons could see him, and they came running after him as he rode quickly away, and called to him. He looked behind at them, and instantly he and his horse became stone; and the bél-fruit went back to its tree and hung itself up.

For one week the fakír sat in his jungle, waiting for the King's son. But the moment he was turned into stone, the fakír knew of it, and he set off at once for the fairies' country. He walked all through it, but neither the fairies nor demons could touch him. He went straight to the great plain, and there he saw the King's son sitting on his horse, and both he and the horse were stone.

This made the fakír very sad; and he said to God, "What will the father and mother do, now that their son is changed into a stone?" And he prayed to God and said, "If it be God's pleasure, may this King's son be alive once more." Then he cut his little finger on the inside from the tip to the palm, and smeared the prince’s forehead with the blood that came from it. He rubbed some blood on the horse too, all the time praying to God to give the prince his life again. The King’s son and his horse were alive once more. The fakír took the prince back to his jungle, and said to him, “Listen. I told you not to look behind you, and you disobeyed me and so were turned to stone. Had I not come to save you, you would always have remained stone.”

The fakír kept the prince with him in the jungle for one whole week. Then he gave him his stick and some earth he picked up from the ground on which they were standing, and said, “Now you must go to the fairies’ country again, and throw my stick at the bél-fruit, and catch it in a corner of your shawl as you did before. But mind, mind you do not look behind you this time. If you do you will be turned to stone, and you will for ever remain stone. Ride straight back to me with the fruit, and take care never to look behind you once till you get to me.”

So the King’s son went again to the fairies’ country, and all happened as before, till he had caught the fruit in his shawl. But then he rode straight back to the fakír without looking behind him, although the fairies and demons ran after him and called to him the whole way.

He rode so fast they could not catch him, and when he came to the fakír, the fakír turned him into a fly and thus hid him. Up came all the fairies and demons and said to the fakír, “There is a thief in your hut.” “A thief! Where is the thief?” said the fakír. “Look everywhere for him, and take him away if you can find him.” Then they searched and searched everywhere, but could not find the prince; so at last they went away.

When they had all gone, the fakír took the little fly and turned it back into a King’s son. A few days afterwards he said to the prince, “Now you have found what you wanted; you have the Bél-Princess you came to seek. So go back to your father and mother.” “Very well,” said the prince. Then he got his horse all ready for the journey, took the bél-fruit, and made many salaams to the fakír, who said to him, “Now, listen. Take care not to open the fruit on the road. Wait till you are in your father’s house with your father and mother, and then open it. If you do not do exactly as I tell you, evil will happen to you; so mind you only open the fruit in your father’s house. Out of it will come the Bél-Princess.”

The prince set out on his journey, and rode on and on for six months till he came to his father’s country, and then to his father’s garden. There he sat down to rest by a well under a clump of great trees. He said to himself, “Now that I am in my father’s country, and in my father’s garden, I will sit and rest in this cool shade; and when I am rested I will go up to the palace.” He bathed his face and his hands in the well, and drank some of its water. Then he thought, “Surely, now that I am in my father’s country and in his garden, I need not wait till I get to his palace to open my bél-fruit. What harm can happen if I do open it here?”

So he broke it open, in spite of all the fakír had told him, and out of it came such a beautiful girl. She was more beautiful than any princess that ever was seen — so beautiful that the King’s son fainted when he saw her. The princess fanned him, and poured water on his face, and presently he recovered, and said to her, “Princess, I should like to sleep for a little while, for I have travelled for six months, and am very tired. After I have slept we will go together to my father’s palace.” So he went to sleep, and the princess sat by him.

Presently a woman came to the well for water, and she said to herself, “See, here is the King’s youngest son. What a lovely princess that is sitting by him! What fine clothes and jewels she has on!” And the wicked woman determined to kill the princess and to take her place. Then she came up to the beautiful girl, and sat down beside her, and talked to her. “Listen to me, princess,” she said at last. “Let us change clothes with each other. Give me yours, and I will give you mine.” The princess, thinking no harm, did as the woman suggested. “And now,” said the woman, “let me put on your beautiful jewels.” The princess gave them to her, and then the wicked, wicked woman, said to her, “Let us walk about this pretty garden, and look at the flowers, and amuse ourselves.” By and by she said, “Princess, let us go and look at ourselves in the well, and see what we look like, you in my clothes, and I in yours.” The young girl consented, and they went to the well. As they bent over the side to look in, the wicked woman gave the princess a push, and pushed her straight over the edge into the water.

Then she went and sat down by the sleeping prince, just as the princess had done. When he awoke and saw this ugly, wicked woman, instead of his Bél-Princess, he was very much surprised, and said to himself, “A little while ago I had a beautiful girl by me, and now there is such an ugly woman. It is true she has on the clothes and jewels my Bél-Princess wore; but she is so ugly, and there is something wrong with one of her eyes. What has happened to her?” Then he said to this wicked woman, whom he took for his Bél-Princess, “What is the matter with you? Has anything happened to you? Why have you become so ugly?” She answered, “Till now I have always lived in a bél-fruit. It is the bad air of your country that has made me ugly, and hurt one of my eyes.”

The prince was ashamed of her, and very, very sorry. “How shall I take her to my father’s palace now?” he thought. “My mother and all my brothers’ wives will see her, and what will they say? However, never mind; I must take her to my house, and marry her. I cannot think what can have happened to her.” Then he got a palanquin, and took her up to the palace.

His father and mother were very glad that their youngest son had come back to them; but when they saw the wicked woman, and heard she was his Bél-Princess, they, and every one else in the palace, said, “Can she be a Bél-Princess? She is not at all pretty, and she is not at all pleasant.” “She was lovely when she came out of the fruit,” said the prince. “No one ever saw such a beautiful girl before. I cannot think what has happened to her. It must be the bad air of this country that has made her so ugly.” Then he told them all about his journey to the jungle where he had met the fakír, and how, with the fakír's help, he had found his Bél-Princess, and how he had opened the fruit in his father's garden, and then fallen asleep.

The King made a great wedding-feast for his son, and he and the wicked woman were married, and all the time the King's youngest son thought he was marrying the Bél-Princess.

Meanwhile, the beautiful girl had not been drowned in the well, but had changed into a most lovely pink lotus-flower. This flower was first seen by a man from the village who came to the well for water. "What a lovely lotus-flower!" said the man; "I must gather it." But when he tried to reach it the flower floated away from him. Then he went and told all the people in the village of the beautiful flower, and then the palace servants heard of it. They all tried to gather it, but could not, for the flower always went just out of their reach. Then the King and his six elder sons heard of it, and they came to the well; but the King tried in vain to gather it, and his six sons too. The lotus-flower always floated away from them.

Last of all, the youngest prince heard of the lotus, and he grew very curious to see it, and said, "I will try if I cannot gather this wonderful flower that no one can touch." So he, too, came to the well, and stooped, and stretched out his hand, and the minute he did so the flower floated of itself into his hand.

Then he was very happy and proud, and he took the flower up to his wife and showed it to her. "Just see," he said, "every one in the village and the palace were talking of this lotus-flower; and every one tried to gather it; and no one could, for the flower would not let any one touch it. My father tried, and my brothers all tried, and they, too, could not gather it; but as soon as I stretched out my hand the flower floated into it of itself."

When his wicked wife saw the flower, she said nothing; but her heart told her it was the beautiful girl she had pushed into the well. The prince laid the flower on his pillow, and was very glad and happy. As soon as he had gone out, his wife seized the lotus-flower, tore it to bits, and threw them far away into the garden.

In a few days a bél-tree was growing on the spot where she had thrown the pieces of the lotus-flower. On it grew one big bél-fruit, and it was so fine and large that every one in the village and the palace tried to gather it; but no one could touch it, for the fruit always went just out of reach. The King and his six elder sons also tried, but they could not touch it. The youngest prince heard of this fruit, so he said to his wife, “I will go and see if I can gather this bél-fruit that no one can even touch.” The wicked woman’s heart said to her, “In the bél-fruit is the Bél-Princess;” but she said nothing.

The prince went to the bél-tree; the bél-fruit came into his hand, and he broke it off the tree, and brought it home to his wife. “See,” he said, “here is the bél-fruit; it let me gather it at once.” And he was very proud and happy. Then he laid the fruit on a table in his room.

When he had gone out the wicked wife came, and took the fruit, and flung it away in the garden. In the night the fruit burst in two, and in it lay a lovely, tiny girl baby. The gardener, as he went round the garden early in the morning, found the little baby; and he wondered who had thrown away the beautiful fruit, and who the lovely baby girl could be. She was so tiny and so pretty, and the gardener was delighted when he saw her, for he had no children, and thought God had sent him a little child at last.

He took her in his arms and carried her to his wife.

“See,” he said, “we have never had any children, and now God has sent us this beautiful little girl.” His wife looked at the child, and she was as delighted with her as her husband was. “Yes,” she said, “God has sent us this child, and she is certainly most beautiful. I am very happy. But I have no milk for her; if only I had milk for her, I could nurse her and she would live.” And the gardener’s wife was very sad to think she had no milk in her breasts for the little child.

Then her husband said, “Let us ask God to send you milk for her.” So they prayed to God and worshipped him. And God was pleased with them both, and sent the gardener’s wife a great deal of milk.

The little girl now lived in the gardener’s house, and he and his wife took the greatest care of her, and were very happy to think they had now a child. She grew very fast, and became lovelier every day. She was more beautiful than any girl that had ever been seen, and all the people in the King’s country used to say, “How lovely the gardener’s daughter is! She is more beautiful than any princess.”

The King’s youngest son’s wicked wife heard of the child, and her heart told her, “She is the Bél-Princess.” She said nothing, but she often thought of how she could contrive to have her killed.

One day, when the gardener’s daughter was seven years old, she was out in her father’s garden, making a little garden of her own near the house-door. While she was busy over her flowers, the wicked woman’s cow strayed into the garden and began eating the plants in it. The little girl would not let it make its dinner off her father’s flowers and grass, but pushed it out of the garden.

The wicked woman was told how the gardener’s daughter had treated her cow; so she cried all day long, and pretended to be ill. When her husband asked her what was the matter, she answered, “I am sick because the gardener’s daughter has ill-treated my cow. She beat it, and turned it out of her father’s garden, and said many wicked things. If you will have the girl killed, I shall live; but if you do not kill her, I shall die.” The prince at once ordered his servants to take the gardener’s daughter the next morning to the jungle, and there kill her.

So the next morning early the servants went to the gardener’s house to take away his daughter. He and his wife cried bitterly, and begged the servants to leave the girl with them. They offered them a great many rupees, saying, “Take these rupees, and leave us our daughter.” “How can we leave you your daughter," said the servants, "when the King's youngest son has ordered us to take her to the jungle and kill her, that his wife may get well?"

So they led the girl away; and as they went to the jungle, they said to each other, "How beautiful this girl is!" They found her so beautiful that they grew very sorrowful at the thought of killing her.

They took the girl to a great plain, which was about ten miles distant from the King's country; but when they got there they said they could not kill her. She was so beautiful that they really could not kill her. She said to them, "You were ordered to kill me, so kill me." "No," they answered, "we cannot kill you, we cannot kill you."

Then the girl took the knife in her own hand and cut out her two eyes; and one eye became a parrot, and the other a *mainá*. Then she cut out her heart and it became a great tank. Her body became a splendid palace and garden — a far grander palace than was the King's palace; her arms and legs became the pillars that supported the verandah roof; and her head the dome on the top of the palace.

The prince's servants looked on all the time these changes were taking place, and they were so frightened by them, that when they got home they would not tell the prince or any one else what they had seen. No one lived in this wonderful house. It stood empty in its garden by its tank, and the parrot and *mainá* lived in the garden trees.

Some time afterwards the youngest prince went out hunting, and towards evening he found himself on the great plain where stood the wonderful palace. He rode up to it and said to himself, "I never saw any house here before. I wonder who lives here?" He went through the great gate into the garden, and then he saw the large tank, and how beautiful the garden was. He went all through the garden and was delighted with it, and he saw that it was beautifully kept, and was in perfect order. Then he went into the palace, and went through all the rooms, and wondered more and more to whom this beautiful house could belong. He was very much surprised, too, at finding no one in the palace, though the rooms were all splendidly furnished, and very clean and neat.

“My father is a great king,” he said to himself, “and yet he has not got a palace like this.” It was now deep night, so the prince knew he could not go home till the next day. “Never mind,” he said, “I will sleep in the verandah. I am not afraid, though I shall be quite alone.”

So he lay down to sleep in the verandah, and while he lay there, the parrot and *mainá* flew in, and they perched near him, for they knew he was there, and they wanted him to hear what they said to each other. Then they began chattering together; and the parrot told the *mainá* how the prince’s father was king of the neighbouring country, and how he had seven sons, and how six of the sons had married six princesses, “but this prince, who was the youngest son, would not marry; and what is more, he did not like his brother’s wives at all.” Then the birds stopped talking and did not chatter any more that night. The prince was very much surprised at the birds knowing who he was, and all about his dislike to his brothers’ wives.

The next morning he rode home; and there he stayed all day, and would not talk. His wife asked him, “What is the matter with you? Why are you so silent?” “My head aches,” he answered: “I am ill.” But towards evening he felt he must go back to the empty palace on the great plain, so he said to his wife, “I am going out to eat the air for a little while.” Then he got on his horse and rode off to the palace.

As soon as he had laid himself down in the verandah, the parrot and the *mainá* perched near him; and the parrot told the *mainá* how the prince had heard of the Bél-Princess; and all about his long journey in search of her, and how he found the bél-fruit, and how he was turned to stone. Then he stopped chattering, and the birds said nothing more to each other that night.

In the morning the King’s son rode home, and was as silent and grave as he had been before. He told his wife his head ached when she asked him whether he was ill.

That night he again slept in the verandah of the strange palace, and heard a little more of his story from the birds.

The next day he was still silent and grave, and his wife was very uneasy. “I am sure the Bél-Princess is alive,” she said to herself, “and that he goes every night to see her.” Then she asked him, “Why do you go out every evening? Why do you not stay at home?” “I am not well,” he answered, “so I go to my mother’s house” (the prince had a little house of his own in his father’s compound). “I will not sleep at home again till I am well.”

That night he lay down to sleep again in the verandah of the great empty palace, and heard the parrot tell the *mainá* all that happened to the prince up to the time that he fell asleep in his father’s garden with the beautiful Bél-Princess sitting beside him.

On the fifth night the prince lay down to sleep again in the verandah of the palace on the great plain, and watched eagerly for the little birds to begin their talk. This night the parrot told how the wicked woman had come and taken the Bél-Princess’s clothes, and thrown her down the well; how the princess became a lotus-flower which the wicked wife broke to bits; how the bits of the lotus-flower turned into a bél-fruit which she threw away; how out of the fruit came a tiny girl-baby that the gardener adopted; how the wicked woman persuaded the prince to have this girl killed when she was seven years old; how he and the *mainá* had once been this girl’s eyes; how the tank was once her heart, and how her body had changed into this palace and garden, while her head became the dome on the top of the palace.

Then the *mainá* asked the parrot where the Bél-Princess was. “Cannot she be found?” said the *mainá*. “Yes,” said the parrot, “she can be found; but the King’s youngest son alone can find her, and he is so foolish! He believes that his ugly, wicked wife is the beautiful Bél-Princess!” “And where is the princess?” asked the *mainá*. “She is here,” said the parrot. “If the prince would come one day and go through all the rooms of this palace till he came to the centre room, he would see a trap-door in the middle of that room. If he lifted the trap-door he would see a staircase which leads to an underground palace, and in this palace is the Bél-princess.” “And can no one but the prince lift the trap-door?” asked the *mainá*. “No one,” answered the parrot. “It is God’s order that only the King’s youngest son can lift the trap-door and find the Bél-Princess.”

The next day the young prince went through all the rooms of the palace, instead of going home. When he came to the centre room, he looked for the trap-door, and when he had lifted it he saw the staircase. He went down it, and found himself in the under-ground palace, which was far more beautiful than the one above-ground. It was full of servants; and in one room a grand dinner was standing ready. In another room he saw a gold bed, all covered with pearls and diamonds, and on the bed lay the Bél-Princess.

Day and night she prayed to God and read a holy book. She did nothing else.

When the prince went into her room and she saw him, she was very sad, not happy, for she thought, “He is so foolish; he knows nothing of what has happened to me.” Then she said to him, “Why did you come here? Go home again to your father’s palace.”

The prince burst out crying. “See, princess,” he said, “I knew nothing of your palace. I only found it by chance five nights ago. I have slept here in the verandah for the last five nights, and only last night did I learn what had happened to you, and how to find you.” “I know it is true,” she said, “that you knew nothing of what happened to me. But now that you have found me, what will you do?”

“I will go home to my father’s palace,” he answered, “and make everything ready for you, and then I will come and marry you and take you home.”

So it was all settled, and he ate some food, and returned to his father. He told his father and mother all that had happened to the Bél-Princess, and how her body had turned into the beautiful garden and palace that stood on the big plain; and of the little birds; and of the underground palace in which she now lived. So his father said that he and the prince’s mother, and his six brothers and their wives, would all take him in great state to the palace and marry him to the beautiful Bél-Princess; and that then they would all return to their own palace, and all live together. “But first the wicked woman must be killed,” said the King.

So he ordered his servants to take her to the jungle and kill her, and throw her body away. So they took her away at four o’clock in the afternoon and killed her.

One morning two or three days later, the prince and his father and mother, and brothers and sisters-in-law, went to the great palace on the wide plain; and there, in the evening, the king’s youngest son was married to the Bél-Princess. And when his father and mother and brothers, and his brothers’ wives, saw her, they all said, “It is quite true. She is indeed a Bél-Princess!”

After the wedding they all returned to the King’s palace, and there they lived together. But the King and his sons used often to go to the palace on the great plain to eat the air; and they used to lend it sometimes to other rájás and kings.

73

HOW THE RÁJÁ’S SON WON THE PRINCESS LABÁM

In a country there was a Rájá who had an only son who every day went out to hunt. One day the Rání, his mother, said to him, “You can hunt wherever you like on these three sides; but you must never go to the fourth side.” This she said because she knew if he went on the fourth side he would hear of the beautiful Princess Labám, and that then he would leave his father and mother and seek for the princess.

The young prince listened to his mother, and obeyed her for some time; but one day, when he was hunting on the three sides where he was allowed to go, he remembered what she had said to him about the fourth side, and he determined to go and see why she had forbidden him to hunt on that side. When he got there, he found himself in a jungle, and nothing in the jungle but a quantity of parrots, who lived in it. The young Rájá shot at some of them, and at once they all flew away up to the sky. All, that is, but one, and this was their Rájá, who was called Híráman parrot.

When Híráman parrot found himself left alone, he called out to the other parrots, “Don’t fly away and leave me alone when the Rájá’s son shoots. If you desert me like this, I will tell the Princess Labám.”

Then the parrots all flew back to their Rájá, chattering. The prince was greatly surprised, and said, “Why, these birds can talk!” Then he said to the parrots, “Who is the Princess Labám? Where does she live?” But the parrots would not tell him where she lived. “You can never get to the Princess Labám’s country.” That is all they would say.

The prince grew very sad when they would not tell him anything more; and he threw his gun away, and went home. When he got home, he would not speak or eat, but lay on his bed for four or five days, and seemed very ill.

At last he told his father and mother that he wanted to go and see the Princess Labám. “I must go,” he said; “I must see what she is like. Tell me where her country is.” “We do not know where it is,” answered his father and mother. “Then I must go and look for it,” said the prince. “No, no,” they said, “you must not leave us. You are our only son. Stay with us. You will never find the Princess Labám.” “I must try and find her,” said the prince. “Perhaps God will show me the way. If I live and I find her, I will come back to you; but perhaps I shall die, and then I shall never see you again. Still I must go.”

So they had to let him go, though they cried very much at parting with him. His father gave him fine clothes to wear, and a fine horse. And he took his gun, and his bow and arrows, and a great many other weapons, “for,” he said, “I may want them.” His father, too, gave him plenty of rupees.

Then he himself got his horse all ready for the journey, and he said good-bye to his father and mother; and his mother took her handkerchief and wrapped some sweetmeats in it, and gave it to her son. “My child,” she said to him, “when you are hungry eat some of these sweetmeats.”

He then set out on his journey, and rode on and on till he came to a jungle in which were a tank and shady trees. He bathed himself and his horse in the tank, and then sat down under a tree. “Now,” he said to himself, “I will eat some of the sweetmeats my mother gave me, and I will drink some water, and then I will continue my journey.” He opened his handkerchief, and took out a sweetmeat. He found an ant in it. He took out another. There was an ant in that one too. So he laid the two sweetmeats on the ground, and he took out another, and another, and another, until he had taken them all out; but in each he found an ant. “Never mind,” he said, “I won’t eat the sweetmeats; the ants shall eat them.” Then the Ant-Rájá came and stood before him and said, “You have been good to us. If ever you are in trouble, think of me and we will come to you.”

The Rájá’s son thanked him, mounted his horse and continued his journey. He rode on and on till he came to another jungle, and there he saw a tiger who had a thorn in his foot, and was roaring loudly from the pain.

“Why do you roar like that?” said the young Rájá. “What is the matter with you?” “I have had a thorn in my foot for twelve years,” answered the tiger, “and it hurts me so; that is why I roar.” “Well,” said the Rájá’s son, “I will take it out for you. But, perhaps, as you are a tiger, when I have made you well, you will eat me?” “Oh, no,” said the tiger, “I won’t eat you. Do make me well.”

Then the prince took a little knife from his pocket, and cut the thorn out of the tiger’s foot; but when he cut, the tiger roared louder than ever, so loud that his wife heard him in the next jungle, and came bounding along to see what was the matter. The tiger saw her coming, and hid the prince in the jungle, so that she should not see him.

“What man hurt you that you roared so loud?” said the wife. “No one hurt me,” answered her husband; “but a Rájá’s son came and took the thorn out of my foot.” “Where is he? Show him to me,” said his wife. “If you promise not to kill him, I will call him,” said the tiger. “I won’t kill him; only let me see him,” answered his wife.

Then the tiger called the Rájá’s son, and when he came the tiger and his wife made him a great many salaams. Then they gave him a good dinner, and he stayed with them for three days. Every day he looked at the tiger’s foot, and the third day it was quite healed. Then he said good-bye to the tigers, and the tiger said to him, “If ever you are in trouble, think of me, and we will come to you.”

The Rájá’s son rode on and on till he came to a third jungle. Here he found four fakírs whose teacher and master had died, and had left four things, — a bed, which carried whoever sat on it whithersoever he wished to go; a bag, that gave its owner whatever he wanted, jewels, food, or clothes; a stone bowl that gave its owner as much water as he wanted, no matter how far he might be from a tank; and a stick and rope, to which its owner had only to say, if any one came to make war on him, “Stick, beat as many men and soldiers as are here,” and the stick would beat them and the rope would tie them up.

The four fakírs were quarrelling over these four things. One said, “I want this;” another said, “You cannot have it, for I want it;” and so on.

The Rájá’s son said to them, “Do not quarrel for these things. I will shoot four arrows in four different directions. Whichever of you gets to my first arrow, shall have the first thing — the bed. Whosoever gets to the second arrow, shall have the second thing — the bag. He who gets to the third arrow, shall have the third thing — the bowl. And he who gets to the fourth arrow, shall have the last things — the stick and rope.” To this they agreed, and the prince shot off his first arrow. Away raced the fakírs to get it. When they brought it back to him he shot off the second, and when they had found and brought it to him he shot off his third, and when they had brought him the third he shot off the fourth.

While they were away looking for the fourth arrow, the Rájá’s son let his horse loose in the jungle, and sat on the bed, taking the bowl, the stick and rope, and the bag with him. Then he said, “Bed, I wish to go to the Princess Labám’s country.” The little bed instantly rose up into the air and began to fly, and it flew and flew till it came to the Princess Labám’s country, where it settled on the ground. The Rájá’s son asked some men he saw, “Whose country is this?” “The Princess Labám’s country,” they answered. Then the prince went on till he came to a house where he saw an old woman. “Who are you?” she said. “Where do you come from?” “I come from a far country," he said; "do let me stay with you to-night." "No," she answered, "I cannot let you stay with me; for our king has ordered that men from other countries may not stay in his country. You cannot stay in my house." "You are my aunty," said the prince; "let me remain with you for this one night. You see it is evening, and if I go into the jungle, then the wild beasts will eat me." "Well," said the old woman, "you may stay here to-night; but to-morrow morning you must go away, for if the king hears you have passed the night in my house, he will have me seized and put into prison."

Then she took him into her house, and the Rájá's son was very glad. The old woman began preparing dinner, but he stopped her. "Aunty," he said, "I will give you food." He put his hand into his bag, saying, "Bag, I want some dinner," and the bag gave him instantly a delicious dinner, served upon two gold plates. The old woman and the Rájá's son then dined together.

When they had finished eating, the old woman said, "Now I will fetch some water." "Don't go," said the prince. "You shall have plenty of water directly." So he took his bowl and said to it, "Bowl, I want some water," and then it filled with water. When it was full, the prince cried out, "Stop, bowl," and the bowl stopped filling. "See, aunty," he said, "with this bowl I can always get as much water as I want."

By this time night had come. "Aunty," said the Rájá's son, "why don't you light a lamp?" "There is no need," she said. "Our king has forbidden the people in his country to light any lamps; for, as soon as it is dark, his daughter, the Princess Labám, comes and sits on her roof, and she shines so, that she lights up all the country and our houses, and we can see to do our work as if it were day."

When it was quite black night, the princess got up. She dressed herself in her rich clothes and jewels, and rolled up her hair, and across her head she put a band of diamonds and pearls. Then she shone like the moon, and her beauty made night day. She came out of her room, and sat on the roof of her palace. In the daytime she never came out of her house; she only came out at night. All the people in her father’s country then went about their work and finished it.

The Rájá’s son watched the princess quietly, and was very happy. He said to himself, “How lovely she is!”

At midnight, when everybody had gone to bed, the princess came down from her roof, and went to her room; and when she was in bed and asleep, the Rájá’s son got up softly, and sat on his bed. “Bed,” he said to it, “I want to go to the Princess Labám’s bed-room.” So the little bed carried him to the room where she lay fast asleep.

The young Rájá took his bag and said, “I want a great deal of betel-leaf,” and it at once gave him quantities of betel-leaf. This he laid near the princess’s bed, and then his little bed carried him back to the old woman’s house.

Next morning all the princess’s servants found the betel-leaf, and began to eat it. “Where did you get all that betel-leaf?” asked the princess. “We found it near your bed,” answered the servants. Nobody knew the prince had come in the night and put it all there.

In the morning the old woman came to the Rájá’s son. “Now it is morning,” she said, “and you must go; for if the king finds out all I have done for you, he will seize me.” “I am ill to-day, dear aunty,” said the prince; “do let me stay till to-morrow morning.” “Good,” said the old woman. So he stayed, and they took their dinner out of the bag, and the bowl gave them water.

When night came the princess got up and sat on her roof, and at twelve o’clock, when every one was in bed, she went to her bed-room, and was soon fast asleep. Then the Rájá’s son sat on his bed, and it carried him to the princess. He took his bag and said, “Bag, I want a most lovely shawl.” It gave him a splendid shawl, and he spread it over the princess as she lay asleep. Then he went back to the old woman’s house and slept till morning.

In the morning, when the princess saw the shawl, she was delighted. “See, mother,” she said; “God must have given me this shawl, it is so beautiful.” Her mother was very glad too. “Yes, my child,” she said; “God must have given you this splendid shawl.”

When it was morning the old woman said to the Rájá’s son, “Now you must really go.” “Aunty,” he answered, “I am not well enough yet. Let me stay a few days longer. I will remain hidden in your house, so that no one may see me.” So the old woman let him stay.

When it was black night, the princess put on her lovely clothes and jewels, and sat on her roof. At midnight she went to her room and went to sleep. Then the Rájá’s son sat on his bed and flew to her bed-room. There he said to his bag, “Bag, I want a very, very beautiful ring.” The bag gave him a glorious ring. Then he took the Princess Labám’s hand gently to put on the ring, and she started up very much frightened.

“Who are you?” she said to the prince. “Where do you come from? Why do you come to my room?” “Do not be afraid, princess,” he said; “I am no thief. I am a great Rájá’s son. Híráman parrot, who lives in the jungle where I went to hunt, told me your name, and then I left my father and mother, and came to see you.”

“Well,” said the princess, “as you are the son of such a great Rájá, I will not have you killed, and I will tell my father and mother that I wish to marry you.”

The prince then returned to the old woman’s house; and when morning came, the princess said to her mother, “The son of a great Rájá has come to this country, and I wish to marry him.” Her mother told this to the king. “Good,” said the king; “but if this Rájá’s son wishes to marry my daughter, he must first do whatever I bid him. If he fails I will kill him. I will give him eighty pounds weight of mustard seed, and out of this he must crush the oil in one day. If he cannot do this he shall die."

In the morning the Rájá's son told the old woman that he intended to marry the princess. "Oh," said the old woman, "go away from this country, and do not think of marrying her. A great many Rájás and Rájás' sons have come here to marry her, and her father has had them all killed. He says whoever wishes to marry his daughter must first do whatever he bids him. If he can, then he shall marry the princess; if he cannot, the king will have him killed. But no one can do the things the king tells him to do; so all the Rájás and Rájás' sons who have tried have been put to death. You will be killed too, if you try. Do go away." But the prince would not listen to anything she said.

The king sent for the prince to the old woman's house, and his servants brought the Rájá's son to the king's court-house to the king. There the king gave him eighty pounds of mustard seed, and told him to crush all the oil out of it that day, and bring it next morning to him to the court-house. "Whoever wishes to marry my daughter," he said to the prince, "must first do all I tell him. If he cannot, then I have him killed. So if you cannot crush all the oil out of this mustard seed, you will die."

The prince was very sorry when he heard this. "How can I crush the oil out of all this mustard seed in one day?" he said to himself; "and if I do not, the king will kill me." He took the mustard seed to the old woman's house, and did not know what to do. At last he remembered the Ant-Rájá, and the moment he did so, the Ant-Rájá and his ants came to him. "Why do you look so sad?" said the Ant-Rájá. The prince showed him the mustard seed, and said to him, "How can I crush the oil out of all this mustard seed in one day? And if I do not take the oil to the king to-morrow morning, he will kill me." "Be happy," said the Ant-Rájá; "lie down and sleep: we will crush all the oil out for you during the day, and to-morrow morning you shall take it to the king.” The Rájá’s son lay down and slept, and the ants crushed out the oil for him. The prince was very glad when he saw the oil.

The next morning he took it to the court-house to the king. But the king said, “You cannot yet marry my daughter. If you wish to do so, you must first fight with my two demons and kill them.” The king a long time ago had caught two demons, and then, as he did not know what to do with them, he had shut them up in a cage. He was afraid to let them loose for fear they would eat up all the people in his country; and he did not know how to kill them. So all the kings and kings’ sons who wanted to marry the Princess Labám had to fight with these demons; “for,” said the king to himself, “perhaps the demons may be killed, and then I shall be rid of them.”

When he heard of the demons the Rájá’s son was very sad. “What can I do?” he said to himself. “How can I fight with these two demons?” Then he thought of his tiger: and the tiger and his wife came to him and said, “Why are you so sad?” The Rájá’s son answered, “The king has ordered me to fight with his two demons and kill them. How can I do this?” “Do not be frightened,” said the tiger. “Be happy. I and my wife will fight with them for you.”

Then the Rájá’s son took out of his bag two splendid coats. They were all gold and silver, and covered with pearls and diamonds. These he put on the tigers to make them beautiful, and he took them to the king, and said to him, “May these tigers fight your demons for me?” “Yes,” said the king, who did not care in the least who killed his demons, provided they were killed. “Then call your demons,” said the Rájá’s son, “and these tigers will fight them.” The king did so, and the tigers and the demons fought and fought until the tigers had killed the demons.

“That is good,” said the king. “But you must do something else before I give you my daughter. Up in the sky I have a kettle-drum. You must go and beat it. If you cannot do this, I will kill you.”

The Rájá’s son thought of his little bed; so he went to the old woman’s house and sat on his bed. “Little bed,” he said, “up in the sky is the king’s kettle-drum. I want to go to it.” The bed flew up with him, and the Rájá’s son beat the drum, and the king heard him. Still, when he came down, the king would not give him his daughter. “You have,” he said to the prince, “done the three things I told you to do; but you must do one thing more.” “If I can, I will,” said the Rájá’s son.

Then the king showed him the trunk of a tree that was lying near his court-house. It was a very, very thick trunk. He gave the prince a wax hatchet, and said, “To-morrow morning you must cut this trunk in two with this wax hatchet.”

The Rájá’s son went back to the old woman’s house. He was very sad, and thought that now the Rájá would certainly kill him. “I had his oil crushed out by the ants,” he said to himself. “I had his demons killed by the tigers. My bed helped me to beat his kettle-drum. But now what can I do? How can I cut that thick tree trunk in two with a wax hatchet?”

At night he went on his bed to see the princess. “To-morrow,” he said to her, “your father will kill me.” “Why?” asked the princess.

“He has told me to cut a thick tree-trunk in two with a wax hatchet. How can I ever do that?” said the Rájá’s son. “Do not be afraid,” said the princess; “do as I bid you, and you will cut it in two quite easily.”

Then she pulled out a hair from her head, and gave it to the prince. “To-morrow,” she said, “when no one is near you, you must say to the tree-trunk, ‘The Princess Labám commands you to let yourself be cut in two by this hair.’ Then stretch the hair down the edge of the wax hatchet’s blade.”

The prince next day did exactly as the princess had told him; and the minute the hair that was stretched down the edge of the hatchet-blade touched the tree-trunk, it split into two pieces.

The king said, “Now you can marry my daughter.” Then the wedding took place. All the Rájás and kings of the countries round were asked to come to it, and there were great rejoicings. After a few days the prince’s son said to his wife, “Let us go to my father’s country.” The Princess Labám’s father gave them a quantity of camels and horses and rupees and servants; and they travelled in great state to the prince’s country, where they lived happily.

The prince always kept his bag, bowl, bed, and stick; only as no one ever came to make war on him, he never needed to use the stick.

74

THE PRINCESS WHO LOVED HER FATHER LIKE SALT

In a country there lived a king who had seven daughters. One day he called them all to him and said to them, “My daughters, how much do you love me?” The six eldest answered, “Father, we love you as much as sweetmeats and sugar;” but the seventh and youngest daughter said, “Father, I love you as much as salt.” The king was much pleased with his six eldest daughters, but very angry with his youngest daughter. “What is this?” he said; “my daughter only loves me as much as she does salt!” Then he called some of his servants, and said to them, “Get a palanquin ready, and carry my youngest daughter away to the jungle.”

The servants did as they were bid; and when they got to the jungle, they put the palanquin down under a tree and went away. The princess called to them, “Where are you going? Stay here; my father did not tell you to leave me alone in the jungle.” “We will come back,” said the servants; “we are only going to drink some water.” But they returned to her father’s palace.

The princess waited in the palanquin under the tree, and it was now evening, and the servants had not come back. She was very much frightened and cried bitterly. “The tigers and wild beasts will eat me,” she said to herself. At last she went to sleep, and slept for a little while. When she awoke she found in her palanquin some food on a plate, and a little water, that God had sent her while she slept. She ate the food and drank the water, and then she felt happier, for she thought, “God must have sent me this food and water.” She decided that as it was now night she had better stay in her palanquin, and go to sleep. “Perhaps the tigers and wild beasts will come and eat me,” she thought; “but if they don’t, I will try to-morrow to get out of this jungle, and go to another country.”

The next morning she left her palanquin and set out. She walked on, till, deep in the jungle, she came to a beautiful palace, which did not belong to her father, but to another king. The gate was shut, but she opened it, and went in. She looked all about, and thought, “What a beautiful house this is, and what a pretty garden and tank!”

Everything was beautiful, only there were no servants nor anybody else to be seen. She went into the house, and through all the rooms. In one room she saw a dinner ready to be eaten, but there was no one to eat it. At last she came to a room in which was a splendid bed, and on it lay a king’s son covered with a shawl. She took the shawl off, and then she saw he was very beautiful, and that he was dead. His body was stuck full of needles.

She sat down on the bed, and there she sat for one week, without eating, or drinking, or sleeping, pulling out the needles. Then a man came by who said to her, “I have here a girl I wish to sell.” “I have no rupees,” said the princess; “but if you will sell her to me for my gold bangles, I will buy her.” The man took the bangles, and left the girl with the princess, who was very glad to have her. “Now,” she thought, “I shall be no longer alone.”

All day and all night long the princess sat and pulled out the needles, while the girl went about the palace doing other work. At the end of other two weeks the princess had pulled out all the needles from the king’s body, except those in his eyes.

Then the king’s daughter said to her servant-girl, “For three weeks I have not bathed. Get a bath ready for me, and while I am bathing sit by the king, but do not take the needles out of his eyes. I will pull them out myself.” The servant-girl promised not to pull out the needles. Then she got the bath ready; but when the king’s daughter had gone to bathe, she sat down on the bed, and pulled the needles out of the king’s eyes.

As soon as she had done so, he opened his eyes, and sat up. He thanked God for bringing him to life again. Then he looked about, and saw the servant-girl, and said to her, “Who has made me well and pulled all the needles out of my body?” “I have,” she answered. Then he thanked her and said she should be his wife.

When the princess came from her bath, she found the king alive, and sitting on his bed talking to her servant. When she saw this she was very sad, but she said nothing. The king said to the servant-maid, “Who is this girl?” She answered, “She is one of my servants.” And from that moment the princess became a servant-girl, and her servant-girl married the king. Every day the king said, “Can this lovely girl be really a servant? She is far more beautiful than my wife.”

One day the king thought, “I will go to another country to eat the air.” So he called the pretended princess, his wife, and told her he was going to eat the air in another country. “What would you like me to bring you when I come back?” She answered, “I should like beautiful sárís and clothes, and gold and silver jewels.” Then the king said, “Call the servant-girl, and ask her what she would like me to bring her.” The real princess came, and the king said to her, “See, I am going to another country to eat the air. What would you like me to bring for you when I return?”

“King,” she answered, “if you can bring me what I want I will tell you what it is; but if you cannot get it, I will not tell you.” “Tell me what it is,” said the king. “Whatever it may be I will bring it you.” “Good,” said the princess. “I want a sun-jewel box.” Now the princess knew all about the sun-jewel boxes, and that only fairies had such boxes. And she knew, too, what would be in hers if the king could get one for her, although these boxes contain sometimes one thing and sometimes another.

The king had never heard of such a box, and did not know what it was like; so he went to every country asking all the people he met what sort of box was a sun-jewel box, and where he could get it. At last one day, after a fruitless search, he was very sad, for he thought, “I have promised the servant to bring her a sun-jewel box, and now I cannot get one for her; what shall I do?”

Then he went to sleep, and had a dream. In it he saw a jungle, and in the jungle a fakír who, when he slept, slept for twelve years, and then was awake for twelve years. The king felt sure this man could give him what he wanted, so when he woke he said to his sepoys and servants, “Stay here in this spot till I return to you; then we will go back to my country.”

He mounted his horse and set out for the jungle he had seen in his dream. He went on and on till he came to it, and there he saw the fakír lying asleep. He had been asleep for twelve years all but two weeks: over him were a quantity of leaves, and grass, and a great deal of mud. The king began taking off all the grass, and leaves, and mud, and every day for a fortnight when he got up he cleared them all away from off the fakír. When the fakír awoke at the end of the two weeks, and saw that no mud, or grass, or leaves were upon him, but that he was quite clean, he was very much pleased, and said to the king, “I have slept for twelve years, and yet I am as clean as I was when I went to sleep. When I awoke after my last sleep, I was all covered with dirt and mud, grass and leaves; but this time I am quite clean.”

The king stayed with the fakír for a week, and waited on him and did everything for him. The fakír was very much pleased with the king, and he told this to him: “You are a very good man.” He added, “Why did you come to this jungle? You are such a great king, what can you want from me?” “I want a sun-jewel box,” answered the king. “You are such a good man,” said the fakír, “that I will give you one.”

Then the fakír went to a beautiful well, down which he went right to the bottom. There, there was a house in which lived the red fairy. She was called the red fairy not because her skin was red, for it was quite white, but because everything about her was red — her house, her clothes, and her country. She was very glad to see the fakír, and asked him why he had come to see her. “I want you to give me a sun-jewel box,” he answered. “Very good,” said the fairy, and she brought him one in which were seven small dolls and a little flute. “No one but she who wants this box must open it,” said the fairy to the fakír. “She must open it when she is quite alone and at night.” Then she told him what was in the box.

The fakír thanked her, and took the box to the king, who was delighted and made many salaams to the fakír. The fakír told him none but the person who wished for the box was to open it; but he did not tell him what more the fairy had said.

The king set off on his journey now, and when he came to his servants and sepoys, he said to them he would now return to his country, as he had found the box he wanted. When he reached his palace he called the false princess, his wife, and gave her her silks and shawls, and sárís, and gold and silver jewels. Then he called the servant-girl — the true princess — and gave her her sun-jewel box. She took it, and was delighted to have it. She made him many salaams and went away with her box, but did not open it then, for she knew what was in it, and that she must open it at night and alone.

That night she took her box and went out all by herself to a wide plain in the jungle, and there opened it. She took the little flute, put it to her lips, and began to play, and instantly out flew the seven little dolls, who were all little fairies, and they took chairs and carpets from the box, and arranged them all in a large tent which appeared at that moment. Then the fairies bathed her, combed and rolled up her hair, put on her grand clothes and lovely slippers. But all the time the princess did nothing but cry. They brought a chair and placed it before the tent, and made her sit in it. One of them took the flute and played on it, and all the others danced before the princess, and they sang songs for her. Still she cried and cried. At last, at four o'clock in the morning, one of the fairies said, "Princess, why do you cry?" "I took all the needles out of the king, all but those in his eyes," said the princess, "and while I was bathing, my servant-girl, whom I had bought with my gold bangles, pulled these out. She told the king it was she who had pulled out all the other needles and brought him to life, and that I was her servant, and she has taken my place and is treated as the princess, and the king has married her, while I am made to do a servant's work and treated as the servant." "Do not cry," said the fairies. "Everything will be well for you by and by."

When it was close on morning, the princess played on the flute, and all the chairs, sofas, and fairies became quite tiny, and went into the box, and the tent disappeared. She shut it up, and took it back to the king's palace. The next night she again went out to the jungle-plain, and all happened as on the night before.

A wood-cutter was coming home late from his work, and had to pass by the plain. He wondered when he saw the tent. "I went by some time ago," he said to himself, "and I saw no tent here." He climbed up a big tree to see what was going on, and saw the fairies dancing before the princess, who sat outside the tent, and he saw how she cried though the fairies did all they could to amuse her. Then he heard the fairies say, "Princess, why do you cry?" And he heard her tell them how she had cured the king, and how her servant-girl had taken her place and made her a servant. "Never mind, don't cry," said the fairies. "All will be well by and by." Near morning the princess played on her flute, and the fairies went into the box, and the tent disappeared, and the princess went back to the palace.

The third night passed as the other two had done. The wood-cutter came to look on, and climbed into the tree to see the fairies and the princess.

Again the fairies asked her why she cried, and she gave the same answer.

The next day the wood-cutter went to the king. “Last night and the night before,” he said, “as I came home from work, I saw a large tent in the jungle, and before the tent there sat a princess who did nothing but cry, while seven fairies danced before her, or played on different instruments, and sang songs to her.” The king was very much astonished, and said to the wood-cutter, “To-night I will go with you, and see the tent, and the princess, and the fairies.”

When it was night the princess went out softly and opened her box on the plain. The wood-cutter fetched the king, and the two men climbed into a tree, and watched the fairies as they danced and sang. The king saw that the princess who sat and cried was his own servant-girl. He heard her tell the fairies all she had done for him, and all that had happened to her; so he came suddenly down from the tree, and went up to her, and took her hand. “I always thought you were a princess, and no servant-girl,” he said. “Will you marry me?”

She left off crying, and said, “Yes, I will marry you.” She played on her flute, and the tent disappeared, and all the fairies, and sofas, and chairs went into the box. She put her flute in it, as she always did before shutting down the lid, and went home with the king.

The servant-girl was very vexed and angry when she found the king knew all that had happened. However, the princess was most good to her, and never treated her unkindly.

The princess then sent a letter to her mother, in which she wrote, “I am going to be married to a great king. You and my father must come to my wedding, and must bring my sisters with you.”

They all came, and her father and mother liked the king very much, and were glad their daughter should marry him. The wedding took place, and they stayed with her for some time. For a whole week she gave their servants and sepoys nice food cooked with salt, but to her father and mother and sisters she only gave food cooked with sugar. At last they got so tired of this sweet food that they could eat it no longer. At the end of the week she gave them a dinner cooked with salt. Then her father said, “My daughter is wise though she is so young, and is the youngest of my daughters. I know now how much she loved me when she said she loved me like salt. People cannot eat their food without salt. If their food is cooked with sugar one day, it must be cooked with salt the next, or they cannot eat it.”

After this her father and mother and sisters went home, but they often came to see their little daughter and her husband.

The princess, the king, and the servant-maid all lived happily together.

75

THE DEMON IS AT LAST CONQUERED BY THE KING’S SON

In a country there were seven men, no two of whom belonged to the same family, or were of the same trade. One was a grain merchant’s son, one a baker’s, and so on; each had a different trade.

These seven men determined they would go to seek for service in another country. They said good-bye to their fathers and mothers, and set off.

They travelled every day, and walked through many jungles. At last, a long way from their homes, they came to a wide plain in the midst of a jungle, and on it they saw a goat which seemed to be a very good milch-goat. The seven men said to each other, “If this goat belonged to any one, it would not be left all alone in the jungle. Let us take it with us.” They did so, and no one they met asked them any questions about the goat.

In the evening they arrived at a village where they stayed for the night. They cooked and ate their dinners, and gave the goat grass and grain. At midnight, when they were all asleep, the goat became a great she-demon, with a great mouth, and swallowed one of the seven men. Then she became a goat again, and went back to the place where she had been stabled.

The men got up in the morning, and were very much surprised to find they were only six, not seven. “Where is the seventh gone?” they said. “Well, when he returns we will all go on together.” They sat waiting and waiting for him, till, as it was getting late and he had not come, they all thought they had better start without him. So they continued their journey, taking the goat with them. Before they went they said to the villagers, “If our seventh man comes back to you, send him after us.”

At evening they came to another village, where they stayed for the night. They cooked and ate their dinners, and gave grain and grass to the goat. At midnight, when they were fast asleep, the goat became a demon and swallowed another man, and then took her goat’s shape again.

In this way she ate five men. The two that were left were very sad at finding themselves alone. “We were seven men,” they said, “now we are but two.” The grain merchant’s son was one of the two, and he was very quick and sharp. He determined he would not say anything to his companion, but that he would watch by him that night, and find out, if he could, what had happened to his other friends. To keep himself awake he cut a piece out of his finger, and rubbed a little salt into the wound, so that when his companion went to sleep, he should not be able to sleep because of the pain. At midnight the goat came and turned into a huge demon. She went quickly up to the sleeping man to swallow him; but the merchant’s son rushed at her, beat her, and snatched his companion from her mouth. The demon turned instantly into a goat, and went back to the place where it had been stabled.

The two men next morning set out from the village where they had passed the night. They would have killed the goat had they been able. As they could not do so, they took it with them till they came to a plain in the jungle, where they tied it up to a tree, and left it. Then they continued their journey, and were very sorry they had not known how wicked the goat was before it had swallowed their five companions.

The goat meanwhile turned itself into a most beautiful young girl, dressed in grand clothes and rich jewels, and she sat down in the jungle and began to cry. Just then the king of another country was hunting in this jungle; and when he heard the noise of the crying, he called his servants and told them to go and see who was crying. The servants looked about until they saw the beautiful girl. They asked her a great many questions, but she only cried, and would not answer. The servants returned to the king, and told him it was a most beautiful young girl who was crying; but she would do nothing but cry, and would not speak.

The king left his hunting and went himself to the girl, and asked her why she cried. “My husband married me,” she said, “and was taking me to his home. He went to get some water to drink, and left me here. He has never come back, and I don’t know where he is; perhaps some tiger has killed him, and now I am all alone, and do not know where to go. This is why I cry.” The king was so delighted with her beauty, that he asked her to go with him. He sent his servants for a fine palanquin, and when it came he put the girl into it, and took her to his palace, and there she stayed.

At midnight she turned into a demon, and went to the place where the king’s sheep and goats were kept. She tore open all their stomachs, and ate all their hearts. Then she dipped seven knives in their blood, and laid the knives on the beds of the seven queens.

Next morning the king heard that all his sheep and goats were lying dead; and when his seven wives woke, they saw that their clothes were all bloody, and that bloody knives lay on their beds. They wondered who had done this wicked thing to them.

The next night at twelve o’clock the beautiful girl turned into a demon again, and went to the cow-house. There she tore open the cows and ate their hearts. Then she smeared the queens’ clothes, and laid knives dipped in blood on their beds; but she washed her own hands and clothes, so that no blood should show on them. For a long time the same thing happened every night, till she had eaten all the elephants, horses, camels, — every animal, indeed, belonging to the king. The king wondered very much at his animals all being killed in this way, and he could not understand either why every morning his wives' clothes were bloody, and bloody knives found on their beds.

When she had eaten all the animals, the demon said to the king, "I am afraid your wives are very wicked women. They must have killed all your cows and sheep, goats, horses, elephants, and camels. I am afraid one day they will eat me up." "I have been married to them for many years," answered the king, "and anything like this has never happened before." "I am very much afraid of them," said the demon, who all this time looked a most beautiful girl. "I am very much afraid; but if you cut out their eyes, then they cannot kill me."

The king called his servants and said to them, "Get ready seven palanquins, and carry my seven wives into the jungle. There you must leave them; only first take out their eyes, which you must bring to me." The servants took the queens to a jungle a long way from the king's country. There they took out their eyes, and left them, and brought the eyes to the king, who gave them into the demon's hands. She pounded them to bits with a stone, and threw the bits away.

The seven queens in the jungle did not know which way to go; so they walked straight on, and fell into a dry well which lay just before them. In this well they stayed; and the day when they thought they must die of hunger and thirst was drawing near. But before it came the eldest queen had a little son. She and the five next wives were so hungry, that they agreed to kill the child, and divide it into seven pieces. They each ate a piece, and gave one to the seventh and youngest wife. She said nothing, and hid the piece. These five wives each had a son one after the other, and they killed and divided their children as the eldest wife had done with hers. But the youngest wife hid all the six pieces that were given her, and would eat none. Her son was born last of all. Then the six eldest wives said, "Let us kill and divide your child." "No," she said, "I will never kill or divide my boy; I would rather die of hunger. Here are the six pieces you gave me. I would not eat them. Take them and eat them, but you must not touch my son." God was so pleased with her for not killing her child, that he made the boy grow bigger and bigger every day; and the little queen was very happy.

They all lived in the dry well without any food till the little prince was five years old. By that time he was very quick and clever. One day he said to his mother, "Why have we lived all this while in the well?" His mother and all the other wives told him about the wicked demon who lived in his father's palace, and how the king believed her to be a beautiful girl and had married her, and of all the evil things that she had done to them, and how she had made the king send them to the jungle and have their eyes cut out and given to her, and how from not being able to see they had fallen into this well, and how they had eaten all his brothers, because they were so very hungry they thought they should die — all but his mother at least, for she would not eat the other wives' children and would not kill her own little son. "Let me climb out of this well," said the boy, who determined in his heart that he would kill this wicked demon one day. His mother said, "No, stay here; you are too young to leave the well."

The boy did not listen to her, but scrambled out. Then he saw they were in a wide plain in the jungle. He ran after a few birds, caught and killed them. Then he roasted the birds and brought them with some water to his seven mothers in the well. When they had eaten them and drunk the water, they were happy and worshipped God. The six mothers who had eaten their children were full of sorrow, and said, "If our six sons were now living, how good it would be for us: how happy we should be." The young prince went out hunting for little birds every day, and in the evening he cooked those he caught and brought them, with water, to his mothers.

Now the demon, because she was a demon and was therefore wiser than men and women, knew that the seven queens lived in the well, and that the son of the youngest queen was still alive. She determined to kill him; so she pretended her eyes hurt her, and began crying, and making a great to-do.

The king asked her, “What is the matter?” “See, king, see my eyes,” she said. “They ache and hurt me so much.” “What medicine will make them well again?” said the king. “If I could only bathe them with a tigress’s milk, they would be well,” she answered.

The king called two of his servants and said to them, “Can either of you get me a tigress’s milk? Here are two thousand rupees for whichever of you brings me the milk.” Then he gave them the rupees, and told them to get it at once.

The servants took the rupees, and said nothing to the king, but they said to each other, “How can we get a tigress’s milk?” And they were very sad. They left the king’s country, and wandered on till they came to the jungle-plain, where lived the young prince and his mothers. There they saw him sitting by a dry well and roasting birds. “Do you live in this jungle?” they said to him. “Yes,” answered the boy. Then the servants talked together. “See,” they said, “this boy lives in the jungle, so he will surely be able to get us the milk. Let us tell him to get it, and give him the two thousand rupees.”

So they came back to the boy, who asked them where they were going. “Our queen is very ill with pain in her eyes, and our king has sent us for some tigress’s milk for her to bathe them with, that they may get well. He has given us two thousand rupees, for whichever of us to keep who gets the milk. But we do not know where or how to get it.”

“Good,” said the boy; “give me the two thousand rupees and I will get it for you. Come here for it in a week’s time.”

The king’s servants were very much pleased at not having to try and get it themselves, so they gave him the rupees and went home. The demon knew quite well when she asked for the milk that none of the king’s servants would dare to go for it, but that his son would be brave enough to go. This is why she asked for it, for she meant the tigers to kill him.

The little prince now took his seven mothers out of the well, and they all went together to his father’s country. There he got a small house for them, and good clothes and food. He got a servant, too, for them, to cook their dinner and take care of them. “Be very tender to them,” he said to the servant, “for they cannot see.” For himself he bought a little horse, and good clothes, and a gun, and a sword. Then he made his mothers many salaams, and told them he was going to get a tigress’s milk. They all cried and begged him not to go.

But he set off and rode for three or four days through the jungles. Then he came to a large jungle which was in a great blaze, and two tiger-cubs were running about in the jungle trying to get out of the fire. He jumped off his horse, and took them in his hands; then he mounted his horse again and rode out of the jungle. He rode on till he came to another which was not on fire. He let the cubs loose in it that they might run away; but they placed themselves in front of his horse, and said, “We will not let you go till you have seen our father and mother.”

Meanwhile the tiger and tigress saw the boy coming with their cubs, and they came running to meet them. Till then they had thought their cubs were burned in the jungle-fire. Now they knew at once this boy had saved them. The cubs said to their father and mother, “We should have died had it not been for this boy. Give him food; and when he has eaten some food, we will drink milk.” The tigers were very happy at having their children safe. They went to a garden and got food and good water for the boy, who ate and drank. Then the little cubs drank their mother’s milk.

The tiger said to the prince, “You are such a little child, how is it your mother let you come alone to this jungle?”

“My mother’s eyes are sore and pain her; and the doctor says that if she bathes them in a tigress’s milk they will get well. So I came to see if I could get a little for her.”

“I will give you some,” said the tigress, and she gave him a little jar full of her milk. The cubs said, “One of us will go with you, and the other will stay with our father and mother.” “No,” said the little prince, “do you both stay with your father and mother. I will not take either of you away. What should I do with you?” “No,” said one of the cubs; “I will go with you. I will do all you tell me. Wherever you bid me stay, there I will stay; and I will eat any food you give me.” “Take him with you,” said the old tiger; “one day you will find him of use.” So the boy took the cub and the milk, and made his salaam to the old tigers and went home. His mothers were delighted at his return, though, as they had no eyes, they could not see him.

He tied up the tiger’s cub and fed him. Then he took a little of the milk, and went to the dry well in the jungle and sat down by it. The king’s servants came when the week had passed, and the boy gave them the milk. The servants took it to the king, who gave it to the demon. She was very angry when she found the tigers had not eaten the boy; but she bathed her eyes with the milk, and said nothing.

At the end of another week she would not eat or drink, and did nothing but cry. “What is the matter?” said the king. “See how my eyes pain me,” she answered. “If I could only get an eagle’s feather to lay on them they would be well. Oh, how they hurt me!”

The king called his servants and gave them four thousand rupees. “Go and get me an eagle’s feather,” he said, “and he who gets it is to take the four thousand rupees.” “Let us go to the jungle well,” they said, “and find the boy who got us the tigress’s milk. We could never get an eagle’s feather, but this child certainly can get one for us.”

So they went to the well where they found the boy. The little prince was very wise, though he was such a little child; and he knew the demon would try to send him on some other errand that she might get rid of him. He was quite willing to go on her errands, for he thought he might thus learn how to kill her. He was not a bit afraid of being killed himself, for he knew that God loved him, and that no one but God could kill him.

He at once asked the king’s servants, “What do you want now?” “Our king has sent us for an eagle’s feather to lay on the queen’s eyes, which pain her again. Here are four thousand rupees for you if you will get it for us.” “Give me the rupees,” said the king’s son. “Come here in two weeks, and I will give you the feather.”

He took the rupees to his mothers, and told them he was going to fetch an eagle’s feather. “Where will you find one?” they said. “I don’t know,” he answered, “but I am going to look for one.” He hired some more servants, and told them to take care of his mothers and the tiger-cub.

He rode straight on for two or three days, and at last came to a very dense jungle, through which he rode for another three or four days. When he got out of it he found himself on a beautiful smooth plain in which was a tank. There, too, was a large fig-tree, and under the tree cool shade, and cool, thick grass. He was very much pleased when he saw the tank and the tree. He got off his horse, bathed in the tank, and sat down under the fig-tree, thinking, “Here I will sleep a little while before I go further.”

While he lay asleep in the grass, a great snake crawled up the tree, at the top of which were two young eagles. They began screaming very loud. Their cries awakened the little prince. He looked about and saw the great snake in the tree. Then he took his gun and fired at it, and the snake fell dead to the ground. He cut it into five pieces, and hid them in the long grass. Then he lay down again and went to sleep.

The baby eagles were alone in the tree, as their father and mother had gone to another country. But now the old birds came home, and found the king’s son sleeping in the grass. “See,” they said, “here is the thief who every year robs us of our children! But now he cannot get away. We will kill him.” However, they thought it better to go and look first at their children, to see if they were safe or not. They flew up to the top of the tree, and when they found their children safe, they wished to give them food. All the time they kept saying, “Eat; then we will kill the thief who steals away our children every year.” The young eagles thought, “Oh, if God would only give us the power to speak, then we would tell our father and mother that this boy is no thief.” Then God gave them the power to speak, and they said to the old eagles, “Listen; if that boy had not been here, we should have died, for he killed a huge snake that was going to swallow us: only go and look, and you will see it dead and cut into pieces.” And the eaglets refused to eat till the boy had been fed.

The big eagles flew down and found the bits of the snake: so they flew away to a beautiful garden, where they got delicious fruits and water. These they brought to the boy, and awoke him and fed him. Then they said to him, “It is indeed good to find our children alive. Hitherto our children have always been eaten by that snake. How are your father and mother? Why did they let you come to this jungle? What have you come here for?” The little prince said, “My mother’s eyes are very sore; but they would be cured if she could have an eagle’s feather to lay on them. So I came to look for one.” Then the mother gave him one of her feathers.

When the boy was going home, the eaglets said they would go with him. “No,” he said, “I will not take you with me.” But the old birds said, “Take one of them, it will help you one day.” The little prince made his salaam to the big eagles, and took one of their young ones, mounted his horse, and rode off. The eaglet flew over his head to shade him from the sun.

When he got home to his seven mothers, he took the feather and went and sat by the dry well. The king’s servants came there to him, and he gave them the feather, and said, “Take it to your king.” This they did, and the king gave it to the demon, who flew into a great rage. She said to herself, “The tigers did not kill him, and now the eagles have not killed him.”

At the end of two weeks she began to cry and would not eat. The king asked her, “What is the matter with you? what has happened to you?” “My eyes pain me so much,” she said. “What will cure them?” said the king. “If I had only some night-growing rice,” she said, “I would boil it, and make rice-water, which I would drink. Then I should get well.” Now this night-growing rice was a wonderful rice that no men, and only one demon, possessed. This was the demon-queen’s brother. He used to put a grain of this rice into his huge cavern of a mouth at night when he went to sleep, and when he woke in the morning this grain would have become a tree. Then the demon used to take the rice-tree out of his mouth.

The demon, who seemed such a lovely girl, now wrote a letter to her brother, in which she said, “The bearer of this letter goes to you for some night-growing rice. You must kill him at once; you must not let him live.” The king gave this letter to his servants, with six thousand rupees. “Take this letter,” he said, “and fetch some of the night-growing rice. Here are six thousand rupees for whichever of you finds it.” The king had no idea that it was not these men who had gone for the tigress’s milk and the eagle’s feather.

The servants said, “Let us go to the well, to the boy who has helped us before. We don’t know where to get this night-growing rice, but that boy is sure to know.”

The boy was sitting by the well, and asked what they wanted. They answered, “See, the king has given us six thousand rupees and a letter, and told us to fetch him some night-growing rice.” “Very good,” said the king’s son. “Come here in three weeks’ time, and I will give you some.” The servants gave him the rupees and returned home.

He took the rupees to his mothers, and told them he was going on a fresh errand, and they were to keep the money. Then he made them salaams, took his letter, and rode off. The eaglet went too, and flew above his head. The tiger’s cub he left at home.

He rode on and on through a very large jungle, and he rode a long, long way: at last in a jungle he saw a fakír, who was living in it. He made him salaams, and the fakír was delighted to see him, “because,” he said, “for many years I have been in this country, and all that time have never seen any man.” The prince sat down by the fakír, and the fakír was very much pleased. He asked the boy who had sent him to the jungle, and why he had come to it. “My mother has sore eyes,” he answered, “and wants some night-growing rice. She has given me a letter to the man who owns it.”

The fakír took and read the letter, and was very sorry. He tore it up and threw it away. Then he wrote another, in which he said, “Your sister is very ill, and her son has come for some night-growing rice for her.” This he gave to the boy, and told him to continue his journey. He also told him that the man who had the rice was a huge demon, and that he lived in the country by the great sea. Then he told him the way.

The boy rode on and on, and after a week’s journeying he came to the demon’s country. There he saw the huge demon sitting on the ground, with his great, big mouth, that was just like a cavern. As soon as the demon saw him he stood up and said, “It is many days since a man came here. Now I will eat this one.” He went towards the prince to seize him, and a great rushing wind came blowing from the demon, as it always did when he was angry. But the boy, who had begun to walk towards him when he stood up, threw the letter to him with all his might, so that it fell on him; at the same time he made many salaams. The demon read the letter, and found his sister was very ill, and this was her son; so he stopped the wind, and came up to the boy, who he thought was his sister’s son. “You have come for the rice for my sister who is ill,” he said to him; “you shall have it.”

The demon had a splendid house full of beautiful things, and a great many servants. He took the little prince home with him, and told his servants to get water ready and gave the child a bath. They were also to cook a good dinner for him. Then the demon showed the boy all his gardens, and all his beautiful things, and took him through all the rooms of his house. One room he did not show to the prince. He told him he was never to go into it, though he might go everywhere else that he liked. In this room lived the demon's daughter, who was very beautiful, just like a fairy. She was ten years old. Every day before her father went out, he used to make the girl lie on her bed, and cover her with a sheet, and he placed a thick stick at her head, and another at her feet; then she died till he came home in the evening and changed the sticks, putting the one at her head at her feet, and the one at her feet at her head. This brought her to life again.

The next day, when the demon had gone out, the boy went to this room, and opened the door, for he wanted to see what was in it. He went in, and saw the beautiful girl lying on the bed. "How lovely she is!" he said; "but she is dead." Then he saw the sticks, and, to amuse himself, he put the one at her head at her feet, and the one at her feet at her head, just as the demon did every evening. The girl at once came to life, and opened her eyes and got up. "Who is this?" she said to herself, when she saw the king's son. "This is not my father." She asked him, "Who are you? Why do you come here? If my father sees you he will eat you." "No, he won't," said the prince, "for I am your aunt's son, and your father himself brought me to his house. But why is it that you are dead all day, and alive all night?" The girl had told him that her father brought her to life every evening, and made her dead every morning. "Such is my father's pleasure," she answered.

So they talked together all day, and he said to her, "Suppose one day your father made you dead as usual, and that he was killed before he had brought you to life, what would you do? You would always be dead then." "Listen," she said; "no one can kill my father." "Why not?" said the boy. "Listen," she answered; "on the other side of the sea there is a great tree, in that tree is a nest, in the nest is a *mainá*. If any one kills that *mainá*, then only will my father die. And if, when the *mainá* is killed, its blood falls to the ground, a hundred demons would be born from the blood. This is why my father cannot be killed."

At evening, before the demon came home, the prince made the girl dead. Then he went softly into another room.

The fakír had said to the boy, when they were in the jungle together, "If ever you are in trouble, come to me and I will help you. It will take you now one week to ride to the demon's country; but if ever you need me, you shall be able to come to me here in this jungle, and to return to the demon's house in one day." The fakír was such a holy man that everything he said should happen did happen. So now the prince determined he would go to the fakír and ask him what he should do to kill this *mainá*. In the morning, therefore, as soon as the demon had gone out, he set off for the fakír's jungle, and, thanks to the holy man's power, he got there very quickly. He told him everything, and the fakír made a paper boat which he gave him. "This boat will take you over the sea," he said to the prince. "This paper boat!" said the boy. "How can a paper boat go over the sea? It will get soaked and sink." "No, it will not," said the fakír. "Launch it on the sea, and get into it. The boat will of itself carry you to the tree where the *mainá's* nest is."

The prince took the boat, and went back to the demon's house. He got there before the demon came home, so that he did not know the boy had been to the fakír. When the demon returned that evening, the king's son said, "To-morrow I will go home, as my mother is very ill. Will you give me the rice?" "Good," said the demon, "you shall have it to-morrow." Next morning he gave the rice, and went off to the jungle.

Then the boy took his paper boat down to the sea, launched it, and got into it; and of itself the boat went straight over the sea to the opposite shore. The eaglet flew above his head; but he left his horse on land. When he got to the other side, he saw the great tree, with the nest and the *mainá*. He climbed the tree, and took down the nest, and the demon, who was far away, knew it at once, and said to himself, “Some one has come to catch and kill me.” He set out at once for the tree. The prince saw him coming, so he wrapped the *mainá* up in his handkerchief, that no blood should fall to the ground. Then he broke off one of its legs, and one of the demon’s legs fell off. Still the demon came on. Then he broke off the other leg, but the demon walked on his hands. The boy saw him coming nearer and nearer, so he wrung the bird’s head off, and the demon fell dead.

The prince jumped into his paper boat, and of itself the boat went straight back to the other shore, to the demon’s country. Then he went up to the demon’s house, and made his daughter alive.

She was frightened, and said to him, “Oh, take care. If my father comes back, and finds us together, he will eat us both.” “He will not come back,” said the prince. “I have killed him.”

Then he dressed her in boy’s clothes, that no one might know she was a girl, and he found a horse, and had it made ready for her. Her father had collected a quantity of rupees. Some of these the prince gave to the servants as a present, and said to them, “Stay here and be happy; do not be afraid, for there is no demon now to come and eat you.”

Then he took the rice and mounted his horse, and made the girl mount also, and went off to the fakír. The paper boat he left, as he did not want it any more. He and the demon’s daughter made the fakír many salaams, and they stayed with him for a day before they rode to the prince’s country. Here they went to his seven mothers, who were very, very glad to see them, and thanked God that their son had come back safe.

He took a little of the rice, and went and sat by the well till the king’s two servants came. Then he gave them the rice for their king, and the king gave it to the demon. She said nothing while the king was with her; but when she was alone she cried, for she knew the boy must have killed her brother, as he had brought her the rice.

She waited a week, and then she began to cry again, and would not eat. The king was very sorry, and thought, “What can I do to make her well and happy?” Then he said, “What will cure your eyes?” “See, king,” she answered, “if I could only bathe my eyes with water from the Glittering Well, they would not pain me any more.” This well was in the fairies’ country, and was guarded by the demon’s sister, whose name was Jangkatar. She lived in the well; and when any one came to draw water from it, she used to drag him down and eat him.

The king called his servants, gave them eight thousand rupees, and said, “Go and fetch me water from the Glittering Well.” The servants went at once to the dry well in the jungle. There they found the prince, who asked them what they wanted. “Here are eight thousand rupees,” they said; “and the king has ordered us to bring him water from the Glittering Well.” “Come in three weeks, and I will give it to you,” said the king’s son. He took to his mothers the eight thousand rupees which the servants had given him, and said to them, “Take care of these rupees, for I am going away for a little while.” Then he got his horse ready and mounted it, and made many salaams to his mothers. The tiger-cub said to him, “Take me with you this time. Last time you only took the eagle. Now we will both go with you.”

So he rode off; and the eaglet flew above his head and the young tiger ran by his side. It took him a week to get to the fairies’ country, and then he came to a beautiful smooth plain, in which was a garden, but no house. In the middle of this garden was the Glittering Well. It was a deep well, and the water sprang up out of it like a fountain, and then fell back into the well, and the water shone and sparkled as if it were gold, and silver, and diamonds. This is why it was called the Glittering Well.

The prince dipped his jar in the well, and Jangkatar put up her hand and caught him. She dragged him into the water and swallowed him whole. Then the young eagle flew down into the well, seized Jangkatar in his talons, and took her out and threw her on the ground. The tiger-cub rushed at her instantly, tore her open, and pulled the king's son out of her. But he was half dead. The cub and the eaglet lay down on him to warm him, and when they had warmed him, he was better.

"We have saved you," they said to him. "But for us you would have died." The young prince thanked them and caressed them. "It is quite true," he said; "without you I should have died." Then he filled his jar with water, and mounted his horse and rode home. He made salaams to his seven mothers, with whom all this time the demon's daughter had stayed. He bathed his mothers' eyes with the water from the Glittering Well, and then they saw perfectly once more.

He took a little of the water, and went to wait for the king's servants by the dry jungle well, and he was very happy thinking that now his mothers could see. He gave the water to the king's servants, who took it to the king, and the king gave it to his demon-wife, and she was very sad and angry, for she knew the boy must have killed her sister, the guardian of the Glittering Well.

When a whole month had passed, and he had not been sent on any more errands, the king's son said to himself, "Good; now nothing more is going to happen to me. I am not to be sent anywhere else." So he bought a fine horse and grand clothes, and rode to the king's court-house. He went in, and seated himself at the king's right hand; but he made no salaam to the king, and spoke to no one. This he did every day for three days. Everybody was wondering who this boy was, and why he never made any salaam to the king.

On the fourth day, as he sat at the king's right hand, the king asked him, "Whose child are you? Where do you come from? Where are you going?" The young prince answered, "See, king, I am a merchant's son; my ship has been wrecked, and I want to find service with some one." "What can you do?" asked the king. "I don't know any trade," said his son; "but I can tell you a story." "What wages do you want?" said the king. "One thousand rupees a day," answered the boy. "I shall only stay a short time in your country." "Good," said the king; "I will give you one thousand rupees a day, and a servant to wait on you besides. So come every day to my court-house, and tell me your story."

The prince told the king his own story. He began from where the king found the beautiful demon-girl crying in the jungle, and ended it where his demon-wife cried and cried for her sister Jangkatar. It took him three weeks to tell the story; and when he had finished it, the king knew that he himself was the king in the story, and that this boy was his own son. "How can I find my seven queens again?" he said. "If you will kill this wicked demon-woman they will come back to you," said his son. The king was very sad, and thought, "My seven wives and my boy must have suffered very much." Then he loved his son, and was very happy that he had found him. He ordered his servants to dig a deep pit in the jungle, so deep that should his demon-wife take her demon form when put into it, only her head would be above it. He thought that if her body were buried in the ground she would not be able to do them much harm while they were shooting her. Then he, and his son, and his servants took their guns and bows and arrows, and took the demon with them to the deep pit. She went quite quietly, though she knew they were going to kill her. Since Jangkatar's death she had been very quiet and sad. And now she thought, "That boy will most certainly kill me as he has killed my sister and brother. He is stronger than I am. I have no one else to send him to; and if I had, he could not be killed. What is the use of my trying to save myself?" So she went along quite quietly, looking like a beautiful girl. She let them put her into the pit, and shoot her to death with their guns and bows and arrows. Then they filled the pit up with earth.

The king went to his seven wives, and begged them to forgive him. He brought them, his son, and the demon's daughter home to his palace. Later the king married his son to the demon's daughter, and every one was glad.

But the king grieved that his six other sons were dead.

76

THE FAN PRINCE

In a country there lived a king who had a wife and seven daughters. One day he called all his daughters to him, and said to them, “My children, who gives you food? and by whose permission do you eat it?” Six of them answered, “Father, you give us food; and by your permission we eat it.” But the seventh and youngest said, “Father, God gives me my food; and by my own permission I eat it.” This answer made her father and mother very angry with their youngest daughter. They said, “We will not let our youngest child stay with us any longer.” And her father called some servants and said to them, “Get a palanquin ready, and put my youngest daughter into it; then carry her away to the jungle, and there leave her.”

The servants got the palanquin ready, put the youngest princess into it, and carried her into the jungle. There they put the palanquin down and said to her, “We are going to drink some water.” “Go home now,” said the girl, “as my father ordered you to do.” They left her, therefore, in the jungle alone, and went back to the king’s palace.

The girl prayed to God and worshipped him; then she went to sleep for a little while in her palanquin. When she awoke, it was evening, and she found in her palanquin a jar of water and some food on a plate which God had sent her while she slept. She knew that God had sent her this nice dinner, and thanked him and worshipped him. Then she bathed her face and hands in a little of the water, and ate and drank, and went to sleep quietly in her palanquin as night had come.

This little princess had always been a very gentle girl, and had always done what was right, and been very good, so God loved her dearly. While she slept, therefore, he made a beautiful palace for her on the jungle-plain where she was lying in her palanquin. God made a garden and tank for her, too. When the princess woke in the morning, and got out of her palanquin, she saw the palace standing by its tank in a beautiful garden. “I never saw that palace before,” she said. “It was not here last night.” She went into the garden, and servants met her and made her salaams. The palace was far finer than her father’s; and when she went into it she found it full of servants. “To whom does this palace belong?” she asked. “To you,” they answered. “God made all this for you last night, and he sent us to wait on you and be your servants.” (Now, they were all men, not angels, that God had sent to take care of her.) The princess thanked God, and worshipped him.

A few days later, her father heard that in the jungle to which he had sent her a beautiful palace and garden and tank had suddenly appeared, and that in this palace she was living; and he said, “Yes; my daughter told me the truth: it is God who gives us everything. I know it is he who gave her this beautiful house.” So some time passed, and the princess lived in her palace in the jungle; but her father did not go to see her.

One day he said to himself, “To-day I will go and eat the air in another country, and I will go by water.” So he ordered a boat to be got ready, and he went to his six daughters, and told them he was going away for a little while. “What would you like me to bring you from this other country?” he said. “I will bring you anything you would like to have.” Some of them wanted jewels, a necklace, a pair of earrings, and so on; and some wanted silk stuffs for sárís and other clothes. Then the king remembered his youngest child, and thought, “I must send to her, and see what she would like.” He called one of his servants, and told him to go to the jungle to his youngest daughter and say, “Your father is going to eat the air of another country. He wishes to know what you would like him to bring back for you.”

The servant found the little princess reading her prayer-book. He gave her the king’s message. She said, “Sabr” (that is *wait*), for she meant him to wait for her answer till she had finished reading her prayers. The servant, however, did not understand, but went away at once to the king and told him, “Your daughter wants you to bring her Sabr.” “Sabr?” said the king; “what is Sabr? Never, mind, I will see if I can find any Sabr; and if I do, I will bring it for her.”

The king then went in his boat to another country. There he stayed for a little while and bought the jewels and silks for his six elder daughters. When he thought he should like to go home again, he went down to his boat and got into it. But the boat would not move, because he had forgotten one thing; the thing his youngest daughter had asked for.

Suddenly he remembered he had not got any Sabr. So he gave one of his servants four thousand rupees, and told him to go on shore, and go through the bazar, and try and find the Sabr, and he was to give the four thousand rupees for it.

The man went to the bazar and asked every one if they had Sabr to sell. Then he asked if they could tell him what it was. “No,” they said, “but our king’s son is called Sabr; you had better speak to him.”

The servant went to Prince Sabr. “Our king’s youngest daughter,” he said, “has asked her father to bring her Sabr, and the king has given me four thousand rupees to buy it for her; but I cannot get any, and no one knows what it is.” The prince said, “Very good. Give this little box to your king, and tell him to give it to his youngest daughter. But it is only the princess who has asked for Sabr who is to open the box.” Then he told the man to keep the four thousand rupees as a present from him.

The servant went back to the boat to the king and gave him the box, saying, “In this is the Sabr,” and he told him Prince Sabr said no one but the youngest princess was to open it. And now the boat moved quite easily, and the king journeyed home safely.

He gave his six eldest daughters the presents he had brought for them, and sent the little box to his youngest daughter. She said, “My father has sent me this. I will look at it by and by.” Then she put it away and forgot it. At the end of a month she found the little box, and thought, “I will see what my father has sent me,” and opened the box. In it was a most lovely little fan. She was very much pleased, and fanned herself with it, and at once a beautiful prince stood before her.

The princess was delighted. “Who are you? Where did you come from?” she said. “My name is Prince Sabr,” he answered. “Your father came to my father’s country, and he said you had asked him to bring you Sabr, so I gave him this little fan for you. I am obliged to come to whoever uses this little fan with the right side turned outwards. And when you want me to go away, you must turn the right side of the fan towards you and then fan yourself with it.” The little princess said, “Very good. And so your name is Prince Sabr?” They talked together for some time. Then she turned her fan, so that the wrong side was outside, and fanned herself with it, and the prince disappeared.

This went on for a month. The princess used to fan herself with the right side turned outwards, and then Prince Sabr came to her. When she turned her fan wrong side outwards and fanned herself, then he vanished.

One day the prince said to her, “I should like to marry you. Will you marry me?” “Yes,” she answered. Then she wrote a letter to her father and mother and six sisters, in which she said, “Come to my wedding. I am going to marry Prince Sabr.” They all came. Her father was very glad that she married Prince Sabr, and said, “I see it is true that God loves my youngest daughter.”

The day of the wedding her six sisters said to her, “To-day we will not let the servants make your bed. We will make it ourselves for you.” “I have plenty of servants to make it,” she said; “but you can do so if you like.” Her sisters went to make the bed. They took a glass bottle and ground it into a powder, and they spread the powder all over the side where Prince Sabr was to lie. This they did because they were angry at their youngest sister being married, while they, who were older, were not married, and they thought, being her elders, they should have married first, especially as they had lived in their father’s palace, and been cared for, while she was cast out in the jungle.

When the wedding was over, and Prince Sabr and his wife had gone to bed, the prince became very ill, from the glass powder going into his flesh. “Turn your fan the wrong way and fan yourself quickly, that I may go home to my father’s country,” he said to her, “for I am very ill, and dare not remain here.” So she fanned herself at once with the fan turned the wrong way. Then he went home to his father, and was very ill for a long while. The poor princess knew nothing of the glass powder.

Her father and mother and sisters went home after the wedding, and left the princess alone in her palace. Every day she turned her fan the right side outwards and fanned and fanned herself; but Prince Sabr never came. He was far too ill. One day she cried a great deal, and was very, very sad. “Why does my prince not come to me?” she said. “I don’t know where he is, or what has become of him.” That night she had a dream, and in her dream she saw Prince Sabr lying very ill on his bed.

When she got up in the morning she thought she must go and try to find her prince. So she took off all her beautiful clothes and jewels, and put on a yogí’s dress. Then she mounted a horse and set out in the jungle. No one knew she was a woman, or that she was a king’s daughter; every one thought she was a man.

She rode on till night, and then she had come to another jungle. Here she got off her horse, and took it under a tree. She lay down under the tree and went to sleep. At midnight she was awakened by the chattering of a parrot and a *mainá*, who came and sat on the tree knowing she was lying underneath.

The *mainá* said to the parrot, “Parrot, tell me something.” The parrot said, “Prince Sabr is very, very ill in his own country. The day he was married, the bride’s six sisters took a glass bottle and ground it to powder. Then they spread the powder all over the prince’s bed, so that when he lay down it got into his flesh. The glass powder has made him very ill.” “What will make him well?” said the *mainá*; “what will cure him?” “No doctors can cure him,” said the parrot; “no medicine will do him any good: but if any one slept under this tree, and took some of the earth from under it, and mixed it with cold water, and rubbed it all over Prince Sabr, he would get well.”

All this the princess heard. She got up and longed for morning to come. When it was day she took some of the earth, mounted her horse, and rode off. She went on till she came to Prince Sabr’s country. Then she asked to whom the country belonged; she was told it was Prince Sabr’s father’s country, “but Prince Sabr is very ill.”

“I am a yogí,” said the princess, “and I can cure him.” This was told to the king, Prince Sabr’s father. “That is very good,” he said. “Send the yogí to me.” So the little princess went to the king, who said to her, “My son is very, very ill; make him well.” “Yes,” she said, “I will make him well. Bring me some cold water.”

They brought her the cold water, and she mixed it with the earth she had got from under the tree. This she rubbed all over the prince. For three days and nights she rubbed him with it. After that he got better, and in a week he was quite well. He was able to talk, and could walk about as usual.

Then the yogí said, “Now I will go back to my own country.” But the king said to her, “First you must let me give you a present. You shall have anything that you like. As many horses, or sepoys, or rupees as you want you shall have; for you have made my son well.” “I want nothing at all,” said the princess, “but Prince Sabr’s ring, and the handkerchief he has with his name worked on it.” She had given him both these things on their wedding day. Prince Sabr’s father and mother went to their son and begged him to give the handkerchief and ring to the yogí; and he did so quite willingly. “For,” he thought, “were it not for that yogí, I should never see my dear princess again.”

The yogí took the ring and handkerchief and went home. When she got there, she took off her yogí’s dress and put on her own beautiful clothes. Then she turned her fan right side outwards, and fanned herself with it, and immediately her Prince Sabr stood by her. “Why did you not come to me before?” she said. “I have been fanning and fanning myself.” “I was very ill, and could not come,” said Prince Sabr. “At last a yogí came and made me well, and as a reward I gave him my ring and handkerchief.” “It was no yogí,” said the princess. “It was I who came to you and made you well.” “You!” said the prince. “Oh, no; it was a yogí. You were sitting here in your palace while the yogí came and cured me.” “No, indeed,” she said; “I was the yogí. See, is not this your ring? is not this your handkerchief with your name worked on it?” Then he believed her, and she told him of her dream, and her journey in the yogí’s dress, and the birds’ talk, and all that had happened.

And Prince Sabr was very happy that his wife had done so much for him, and they lived happily together.

77

THE BED

In a country there was a grain merchant’s son, whose father and mother loved him so dearly that they did not let him do anything but play and amuse himself while they worked for him. They never taught him any trade, or anything at all; for they never reflected that they might die, and that then he would have to work for himself. When he was old enough to be married, they found a wife for him, and married him to her. Then they all lived happily together for some years till the father and mother both died.

Their son and his wife lived for a while on the pice his father and mother had left him. But the wife grew sadder and sadder every day, for the pice grew fewer and fewer. She thought, “What shall we do when they are all gone? My husband knows no trade, and can do no work.” One day when she was looking very sorrowful, her husband asked her, “What is the matter? Why are you so unhappy?” “We have hardly any pice left,” she answered, “and what shall we do when we have eaten the few we have? You know no trade, and can do no work.” “Never mind,” said her husband, “I can do some work.”

So one day when there were hardly any pice left, he took an axe, and said to his wife, “I am going out to-day to work. Give me my dinner to take with me, and I will eat it out of doors." She gave him some food, wondering what work he had; but she did not ask him.

He went to a jungle, where he stayed all day, and where he ate his dinner. All day long he wandered from tree to tree, saying to each, "May I cut you down?" But not a tree in the jungle gave him any answer: so he cut none down, and went home in the evening. His wife did not ask where he had been, or what he had done, and he said nothing to her.

The next day he again asked her for food to take with him to eat out of doors, "for," he said, "I am going to work all day." She did not like to ask him any questions, but gave him the food. And he took his axe, and went out to a jungle which was on a different side to the one he had been to yesterday. In this jungle also he went to every tree, and said to it, "May I cut you down?" No tree answered him; so he ate his dinner and came home.

The next day he went to a third jungle on the third side. There, too, he asked each tree, "May I cut you down?" But none gave him any answer. He came home therefore very sorrowful.

On the fourth day he went to a jungle on the fourth side. All day long he went from tree to tree, asking each, "May I cut you down?" None answered. At last, towards evening, he went and stood under a mango-tree. "May I cut you down?" he said to it. "Yes, cut me down," answered the tree. God loved the merchant's son and wished him to grow a great man, so he ordered the mango-tree to let itself be cut down.

Now the grain merchant's son was happy, for he was quite sure he could make a bed, if he only had some wood; so he hewed down the mango-tree, put it on his head, and carried it home. His wife saw him coming, and said to herself, "He is bringing home a tree! What can he be going to do with a tree?"

Next morning he took the tree into one of the rooms of his house. He told his wife to put food and water to last him for a week in this room, and to make a fire in it. Then he went up to the room, and said to her, "You are not to come in here for a whole week. You are not to come near me till I call you." Then he went into the room and shut the door. The whole week long his wife wondered what he could be doing all alone in that room. "I cannot see into it," she said to herself, "and I dare not open the door. I wonder what he is about."

By the end of the week the grain merchant's son had carved a most beautiful bed out of the mango-tree. Such a beautiful bed had never been seen. Then he called his wife, and when she came he told her to open the door, and when she opened it he said, "See what a beautiful bed I have made." "Did *you* make that bed?" she said. "Oh, what a beautiful bed it is! I never saw such a lovely bed!"

He rested that day, and on the day following he took the bed to the king's palace, and sat down with it before the palace gate. The king's servants all came to look at the bed. "What a bed it is!" they said. "Did any one ever see such a bed! It is a beautiful bed. Is it yours?" they asked the merchant's son. "Is it for sale? Who made it? Did you make it?" But he said, "I will not answer any of your questions. I will not speak to any of you. I will only speak to the king." So the servants went to the king and said to him, "There is a man at your gate with a most beautiful bed. But he will not speak to any of us, and says he will only speak to you." "Very good," said the king; "bring him to me."

When the grain merchant's son came before the king with his bed, the king asked him, "Is your bed for sale?" "Yes," he said. "What a beautiful bed it is!" said the king. "Who made it?" "I did," he said. "I made it myself." "How much do you want for it?" said the king. "One thousand rupees," answered the merchant's son. "That is a great deal for the bed," said the king. "I will not take less," said the merchant's son. "Good," said the king, "I will give you the thousand rupees." So he took the bed, and the merchant's son said to him, "The first night you pass on it, do not go to sleep. Take care to keep awake, and you will hear and see something." Then he took the rupees home to his wife, who was frightened when she saw them. “Are those your rupees?” she said. “Where did you find such a quantity of rupees?” “The king gave them to me for my bed,” he said. “I am not a thief; I did not steal them.” Then she was happy.

That night the king lay down on his bed, and at ten o’clock he heard one of the bed’s legs say to the other legs, “Listen, you three. I am going out to see the king’s country. Do you all stand firm while I am away, and take care not to let the king fall.” “Good,” the three legs answered; “go and eat the air, and we will all stand fast, so that the king does not fall while you are away.”

Then the king saw the leg leave the bed, and go out of his room door. The leg went out to a great plain, and there it saw two snakes quarrelling together. One snake said, “I will bite the king.” The other said, “I will bite him.” The first said, “No, you won’t; I will climb on to his bed and bite him.” “That you will never do,” said the second. “You cannot climb on to his bed; but I will get into his shoe, and then when he puts it on to-morrow morning, I will bite his foot.”

The bed-leg came back and told the other legs what it had seen and heard. “If the king will shake his shoe before he puts it on to-morrow morning,” it said, “he will see a snake drop out of it.” The king heard all that was said.

“Now,” said the second bed-leg, “I will go out and eat the air of the king’s country. Do you all stand firm while I am away.” “Go,” the others answered; “we will take care the king does not fall.” The second bed-leg then went out, and went to another plain on which stood a very old palace belonging to the king, and the wind told it the palace was so ruinous that it would fall and kill the king the first time he went into it: the king had never once had it repaired. So it came back and told the three other legs all about the palace and what the wind had said. “If I were the king,” said the second bed-leg, “I would have that palace pulled down. It is quite ready to fall; and the first time the king goes into it, it will fall on him and kill him.” The king lay, and listened to everything. As it happened, he had forgotten all about his old palace, and had not gone near it for a long time.

Then the third bed-leg said, “Now I will go out and see all the fun I can. Stand firm, you three, while I am away.” He went to a jungle-plain on which lived a yogí. Now there was a sarai not far off in which lived a woman, the wife of a sepoy, whose husband had gone a year ago to another country, leaving her in the sarai. She was so fond of the yogí, that she used to come and talk to him every night. That very day her husband came back to her, and therefore it was later than usual when she got to the yogí; so he was very vexed with her. “How late you are to-night,” he said. “It is not my fault,” she answered. “My husband came home to-day after having been away a year, and he kept me.” “Which of us do you love best?” asked the yogí; “your husband or me?” “I love you best,” said the woman. “Then,” said the yogí, “go home and cut off your husband’s head, and bring it here for me to see.” The sepoy’s wife went straight to the sarai, cut off her husband’s head, and brought it to the yogí. “What a wicked woman you are to do such a thing at my bidding!” he said. “Go away at once. You are a wicked woman, and I do not want to see you.” She took the head home, set it again on the body and began to cry. All the people in the sarai came to see what was the matter. “Thieves have been here,” she said, “and have killed my husband, and cut off his head,” and then she cried again. The third bed-leg now went back to the palace, and told the others all it had seen and heard. The king lay still and listened.

The fourth bed-leg next went out to see all it could, and it came to a plain on which were seven thieves, who had just been into the king’s palace, and had carried off his daughter on her bed fast asleep; and there she lay still sleeping. They had, too, been into the king’s treasury and had taken all his rupees. The fourth bed-leg came quickly back to the palace, and said to the other three legs, “Now, if the king were wise he would get up instantly and go to the plain. For some thieves are there with his daughter and all his rupees which they have just stolen out of his palace. If he only made haste and went at once, he would get them again.”

The king got up that minute, and called his servants and some sepoys, and set off to the plain. He shook his shoe before he put it on, and out tumbled the snake (the other had quietly gone into the jungle, and not come to the palace); so he saw that the first bed-leg had spoken the truth.

When he reached the plain he found his daughter and his rupees, and brought them back to his palace. The princess slept all the time, and did not know what had happened to her. The king saw the fourth leg had told the truth. The thieves he could not catch, for they all ran away when they saw him coming with his sepoys.

The king sent men to the old palace to pull it down. They found it was just going to fall, and would have fallen on any one who had entered it, and crushed him. So the second bed-leg had told the truth.

When the king was sitting in his court-house he heard how during the night thieves had gone into the sarai and killed a sepoy there and cut off his head. Then he sent for the sepoy’s wife, and asked her who had killed her husband. “Thieves,” she said. The king was very angry, for he was sure the third bed-leg had told the truth as the other three legs had done. So he ordered the man to be buried; and bade his servants make a great wooden pile on the plain, and take the woman and burn her on it. They were not to leave her as long as she was alive, but to wait till she was dead.

He next sent for the grain merchant’s son, and said to him, “Had it not been for your bed, I should this morning have been bitten by a snake; and, perhaps, killed by my old palace falling on me, as I did not know it was ready to fall, and so might have gone into it. My daughter would certainly have been stolen from me; and a wicked woman been still alive. So now, to-morrow, bring as many carts as you like, and I will give you as a present as many rupees as you can take away on them in half a day.”

Early the next morning the merchant’s son brought his cart and took away on them as many rupees as he could in half a day. His wife was delighted when she saw the money, and said, “My husband only worked for one week, and yet he earned all these rupees!” And they lived always happily.

78

PÁNWPATTÍ RÁNÍ

In a country a big fair was held, to which came a great many people and Rájás from all the countries round. Among them was a Rájá who brought his daughter with him. Opposite their tent another tent was pitched, in which lived a Rájá's son. He was very beautiful; so was the little Rání, the other Rájá's daughter.

Now, the Rájá's son and the Rájá's daughter did not even know each other's names, but they looked at each other a great deal, and each thought the other very beautiful. “How lovely the Rájá's daughter is!” thought the prince. “How beautiful the Rájá's son is!” thought the princess.

They lived opposite each other for a whole month, and all that time they never spoke to each other nor did they speak of each other to any one. But they thought of each other a great deal.

When the month was over, the little Rání's father said he would go back to his own country. The Rájá's son sat in his tent and watched the servants getting ready the little Rání's palanquin. As soon as the princess herself was dressed and ready for the journey, she came out of her tent, and took a rose in her hand. She first put the rose to her teeth; then she stuck it behind her ear; and lastly, she laid it at her feet. All this time the Rájá's son sat in his tent and looked at her. Then she got into her palanquin and was carried away.

The Rájá’s son was now very sad. “How lovely the princess is!” he thought. “And I do not know her name, or her father’s name, or the name of her country. So how can I ever find her? I shall never see her again.” He was very sorrowful, and determined he would go home to his country. When he got home he laid himself down on his bed, and night and day he lay there. He would not eat, or drink, or bathe, or change his clothes. This made his father and mother very unhappy. They went to him often, and asked him, “What is the matter with you? Are you ill?” “I want nothing,” he would answer. “I don’t want any doctor, or any medicine.” Not one word did he say to them, or to any one else, about the lovely little Rání.

The son of the Rájá’s kotwál was the prince’s great friend. The two had always gone to school together, and had there read in the same book; they had always bathed, eaten, and played together. So when the prince had been at home for two days, and yet had not been to school or seen his friend, the kotwál’s son grew very anxious. “Why does the prince not come to school?” he said to himself. “He has been here for two days, and yet I have not seen him. I will go and find out if anything is the matter. Perhaps he is ill.”

He went, therefore, to see the prince, who was lying very miserable on his bed. “Why do you not come to school? Are you ill?” asked his friend. “Oh, it is nothing,” said the prince. “Tell me what is the matter,” said the kotwál’s son; but the Rájá’s son would not answer. “Have you told any one what is the matter with you?” said the kotwál’s son. “No,” answered the prince. “Then tell me,” said his friend; “tell me the truth: what is it that troubles you?”

“Well,” said the prince, “at the fair there was a Rájá who had a most beautiful daughter. They lived in a tent opposite mine, and I used to see her every day. She is so beautiful! But I do not know her name, or her father’s name, or her country’s name; so how can I ever find her?” “I will take you to her,” said his friend; “only get up and bathe, and eat.” “How can you take me to her?” said the prince. “You do not even know where she is; so how can you take me to her?” “Did she never speak to you?” said the kotwál’s son. “Never,” said the prince. “But when she was going away, just before she got into her palanquin, she took a rose in her hand; and first she put this rose to her teeth; then she stuck it behind her ear; and then she laid it at her feet.” “Now I know all about her,” said his friend. “When she put the rose to her teeth, she meant to tell you her father’s name was Rájá Dánt; when she put it behind her ear she meant you to know her country’s name was Karnátak; and when she laid the rose at her feet, she meant that her name was Pánwpattí. Get up; bathe and dress, eat and drink, and we will go and find her.”

The prince got up directly, and told his father and mother he was going for a few days to eat the air of another country. At first they forbad his going; but then they reflected that he had been very ill, and that perhaps the air of another country might make him well; so at last they consented. The prince and his friend had two horses saddled and bridled, and set off together.

At the end of a month they arrived in a country where they asked (as they had asked in every other country through which they had ridden), “What is the name of this country?” “Karnátak”. “What is your Rájá’s name?” “Rájá Dánt.” Then the two friends were glad. They stopped at an old woman’s house, and said to her, “Let us stay with you for a few days. We are men from another country and do not know where to go in this place.” The old woman said, “You may stay with me if you like. I live all alone, and there is plenty of room for you.”

After two or three days the kotwál’s son said to the old woman, “Has your Rájá a daughter?” “Yes,” she answered; “he has a daughter; her name is Pánwpattí Rání.” “Can you go to see her?” asked the kotwál’s son. “Yes,” she said, “I can go to see her. I was her nurse, and she drank my milk. It is the Rájá who gives me my house, and my food, and clothes — everything that I have.” “Then go and see her,” said the kotwál’s son, “and tell her that the prince whom she called to her at the fair has come.”

The old woman went up to the palace, and saw the princess. After they had talked together for some time, she said to the little Rání, “The prince you called to you at the fair is come.” “Good,” she said; “tell him to come to see me to-night at twelve o’clock. He is not to come in through the door, but through the window.” (This she said because she did not want her father to know that the prince had come, until she had made up her mind whether she would marry him.)

The old woman went home and told the kotwál’s son what the Princess Pánwpattí said. That night the prince went to see her, and every night for three or four nights he went to talk with her for an hour. Then she told her mother she wished to be married, and her mother told her father. Her father asked whom she wished to marry, and she said, “The Rájá’s son who lives in my nurse’s house.” Her father said she might marry him if she liked; so the wedding was held. The kotwál’s son went to the wedding, and then returned to the old woman’s house; but the prince lived in the Rájá’s palace.

Here he stayed for a month, and all that time he never saw his friend. At last he began to fret for him, and was very unhappy. “What makes you so sad?” said Pánwpattí Rání. “I am sad because I have not seen my friend for a whole month,” answered her husband. “I must go and see him.” “Yes, go and see him,” said his wife. The Rájá’s son went to the old woman’s house, and there he stayed a week, for he was so glad to see the kotwál’s son. Then he returned to his wife. Now she thought he would only have been away a day, and was very angry at his having stayed so long from her. “How could you leave me for a whole week?” she said to him. “I had not seen my friend for a month,” he answered. Pánwpattí Rání did not let her husband see how angry she was; but in her heart she thought, “I am sure he loves his friend best.”

The prince remained with her for a month. Then he said, “I must go and see my friend.” This made her very angry indeed. However, she said, “Good; go and see your friend, and I will make you some delicious sweetmeats to take him from me.” She set to work, and made the most tempting sweetmeats she could; only in each she put a strong poison. Then she wrapped them in a beautiful handkerchief, and her husband took them to the kotwál’s son. “My Rání has made you these herself,” he said to his friend, “and she sends you a great many salaams.” The Rájá’s son knew nothing of the poison.

The kotwál’s son put the sweetmeats on one side, and said, “Let us talk, and I will eat them by and by.” So they sat and talked for a long time. Then the kotwál’s son said, “Your Rání herself made these sweetmeats for me?” “Yes,” said the Rájá’s son. His friend was very wise, and he thought, “Pánwpattí Rání does not like me. Of that I am sure.” So he took some of the sweetmeats, and broke them into bits and threw them to the crows. The crows came flying down, and all the crows who ate the sweetmeats died instantly. Then the kotwál’s son threw a sweetmeat to a dog that was passing. The dog devoured it and fell dead. This put the Rájá’s son into great rage. “I will never see my Rání again!” he exclaimed. “What a wicked woman she is to try and poison my friend — my friend whom I love so dearly; but for whom I should never have married her!” He would not go back to his wife, and stayed in the old woman’s house. The kotwál’s son often told him he ought to return to his wife, but the prince would not do so. “No,” he said, “she is a wicked woman. You never did her any evil or hurt; yet she has tried to poison you. I will never see her again.”

When a month had passed, the kotwál’s son said to the prince, “You really must go back to Pánwpattí Rání; she is your wife, and you must go to her, and take her away to your own country.” Still the Rájá’s son declared he would never see her again. “If you would like to see something that will please you,” said his friend, “go back to your wife for one day; and to-night ‘when she is asleep’ you must take off all her jewels, and tie them up in a handkerchief, and bring them to me. But before you leave her you must wound her in the leg with this trident.” So saying, he gave him a small iron trident.

The prince went back to the palace. His wife was very angry with him, though she did not show her anger. At night ‘when she was fast asleep’ he took off all her jewels and tied them in a handkerchief, and he gave her a thrust in the leg with his trident. Then he went quickly back to his friend. The princess awoke and found herself badly hurt and alone; and she saw that her jewels were all gone. In the morning she told her father and mother that her jewels had been stolen; but she said nothing about the wound in her leg. The king called his servants, and told them a thief had come in the night and stolen his daughter’s jewels, and he sent them to look for the thief and seize him.

That morning the kotwál’s son got up and dressed himself like a yogí. He made the prince put on common clothes such as every one wears, so that he could not be recognized, and sent him to the bazar to sell his wife’s jewels. He told him, too, all he was to say. The pretended yogí went to the river and sat down by it, and the Rájá’s son went through the bazar and tried to sell the jewels. The Rájá’s servants seized him immediately. “You thief!” they said to him, “what made you steal our Rájá’s daughter’s jewels?” “I know nothing about the jewels,” said the prince. “I am no thief; I did not steal them. The holy man, who is my teacher, gave them to me to sell in the bazar for him. If you want to know anything more about them, you must ask him.” “Where is this holy man?” said the servants. “He is sitting by the river,” said the Rájá’s son. “Let us go to him. I will show you where he is.”

They all went down to the river, and there sat the yogí. “What is all this?” said the servants to him. “Are you a yogí, and yet a thief? Why did you steal the little Rání’s jewels?” “Are those the little Rání’s jewels?” said the yogí. “I did not steal them; I did not know to whom they belonged.

Listen, and I will tell you. Last night at twelve o’clock I was sitting by this river when a woman came down to it — a woman I did not know. She took a dead body out of the river, and began to eat it. This made me so angry, that I took all her jewels from her, and she ran away. I ran after her and wounded her in the leg with my trident. I don’t know if she were your Rájá’s daughter, or who she was; but whoever she may be, she has the mark of the trident’s teeth in her leg.”

The servants took the jewels up to the palace, and told the Rájá all the yogí had said. The Rájá asked his wife whether the Princess Pánwpattí had any hurt in her leg, and told her all the yogí’s story. The Rání went to see her daughter, and found her lying on her bed and unable to get up from the pain she was in, and when she looked at her leg she saw the wound. She returned to the Rájá and said to him, “Our daughter has the mark of the trident’s teeth in her leg.”

The Rájá got very angry, and called his servants and said to them, “Bring a palanquin, and take my daughter at once to the jungle, and there leave her. She is a wicked woman, who goes to the river at night to eat dead people. I will not have her in my house any more. Cast her out in the jungle.” The servants did as they were bid, and left Pánwpattí Rání, crying and sobbing in the jungle, partly from the pain in her leg, and partly because she did not know where to go, and had no food or water.

Meanwhile her husband and the kotwál’s son heard of her being sent into the jungle, so they returned to the old woman’s house and put on their own clothes. Then they went to the jungle to find her. She was still crying, and her husband asked her why she cried. She told him, and he said, “Why did you try to poison my friend? You were very wicked to do so.” “Yes,” said the kotwál’s son; “Why did you try to kill me? I have never done you any wrong or hurt you. It was I who told your husband what you meant by putting the rose to your teeth, behind your ear, and at your feet. Without me he would never have found you, never have married you.” Then she knew at once who had brought all this trouble to her, and she was very sorry she had tried to kill her husband’s friend.

They all three now went home to her husband’s country; and his father and mother were very glad indeed that their son had married a Rájá’s daughter, and the Rájá gave the kotwál’s son a very grand present.

The young Rájá and his wife lived with his father and mother, and were always very happy together.

79

THE CLEVER WIFE

In a country there was a merchant who traded in all kinds of merchandise, and used to make journeys from country to country in his boat to buy and sell his goods. He one day said to his wife, “I cannot stay at home any more, for I must go on a year’s journey to carry on my business.” And he added, laughing, “When I return I expect to find you have built me a grand well; and also, as you are such a clever wife, to see a little son.” Then he got into his boat and went away.

When he was gone his wife set to work, and she spun four hanks of beautiful thread with her own hands. Then she dressed herself in her prettiest clothes, and put on her finest jewels. “I am going to the bazar,” she said to her ayahs, “to sell this thread.” “That is not right,” said one of the ayahs. “You must not sell your thread yourself, but let me sell it for you. What will your husband say if he hears you have been selling thread in the bazar?” “I will sell my thread myself,” answered the merchant’s wife. “You could never sell it for me.”

So off she set to the bazar, and every one in it said, “What a beautiful woman that is!” At last the kotwál saw her, and came to her at once.

“What beautiful thread!” he said. “Is it for sale?” “Yes,” she said. “How much a hank?” said the kotwál. “Fifty rupees,” she answered. “Fifty rupees! Who will ever give you fifty rupees for it?” “I will not sell it for less,” said the woman. “I shall get fifty rupees for it.” “Well,” said the kotwál, “I will give you the fifty rupees. Can I dine with you at your house?” “Yes,” she answered, “to-night at ten o’clock.” Then he took the thread and gave her fifty rupees.

Then she went away to another bazar, and there the king’s wazír saw her trying to sell her thread. “What lovely thread! Is it for sale?” he said. “Yes, at one hundred rupees the hank,” she answered. “Well, I will give you one hundred rupees. Can I dine with you at your house?” said the wazír. “Yes,” she answered, “to-night at eleven o’clock.” “Good,” said the wazír; “here are the hundred rupees.” And he took the thread and went away.

The merchant’s wife now went to a third bazar, and there the king’s kází saw her. “Is that beautiful thread for sale?” he asked. “Yes,” she answered, “for one hundred and fifty rupees.” “I will give you the hundred and fifty rupees. Can I dine with you at your house?” “Yes,” she said, “to-night at twelve o’clock.” “I will come,” said the kází. “Here are one hundred and fifty rupees.” So she took the rupees and gave him the thread.

She set off with the fourth hank to the fourth bazar, and in this bazar was the king’s palace. The king saw her, and asked if the thread was for sale. “Yes,” she said, “for five hundred rupees.” “Give me the thread,” said the king; “here are your five hundred rupees. Can I dine with you at your house?” “Yes,” she said, “to-night at two o’clock.”

Then she went home and sent one of her servants to the bazar to buy her four large chests; and she told her other servants that they were to get ready four very good dinners for her. Each dinner was to be served in a different room; and one was to be ready at ten o’clock that night, one at eleven, one at twelve, and one at two in the morning. The servant brought her four large chests, and she had them placed in four different rooms.

At ten o’clock the kotwál arrived. The merchant’s wife greeted him graciously, and they sat down and dined. After dinner she said to him, “Can you play at cards?” “Yes,” he answered. She brought some cards, and they sat and played till the clock struck eleven, when the doorkeeper came in to say, “The wazír is here, and wishes to see you.” The kotwál was in a dreadful fright. “Do hide me somewhere,” he said to her. “I have no place where you can hide in this room,” she answered; “but in another room I have a big chest. I will shut you up in that if you like, and when the wazír is gone, I will let you out of it.” So she took him into the next room, and he got into one of the four big chests, and she shut down the lid and locked it.

Then she bade the doorkeeper bring in the wazír, and they dined together. After dinner she said, “Can you play at cards?” “Yes,” said the wazír. She took out the cards, and they played till twelve o’clock, when the doorkeeper came to say the kází had come to see her. “Oh, hide me! hide me!” cried the wazír in a great fright. “If you come to another room,” she said, “I will hide you in a big chest I have. I can let you out when he is gone.” So she locked the wazír up in the second chest.

She and the kází now dined. Then she said, “Can you play at cards?” “Yes,” said the kází. So they sat playing at cards till two o’clock, when the doorkeeper said the king had come to see her. “Oh, what shall I do?” said the kází, terribly frightened. “Do hide me. Do not let me be seen by the king.” “You can hide in a big chest I have in another room, if you like,” she answered, “till he is gone.” And she locked up the kází in her third chest.

The king now came in, and they dined. “Will you play a little game at cards?” she asked. “Yes,” said the king. So they played till three o’clock, when the doorkeeper came running in (just as she had told him to do) to say, “My master’s boat has arrived, and he is coming up to the house. He will be here directly.” “Now what shall I do?” said the king, who was as frightened as the others had been. “Here is your husband. He must not see me. You must hide me somewhere.” “I have no place to hide you in,” she said, “but a big chest. You can get into that if you like, and I will let you out to-morrow morning.” So she shut the lid of the fourth chest down on the king and locked him up. Then she went to bed, and to sleep, and slept till morning.

The next day, after she had bathed and dressed, and eaten her breakfast, and done all her household work, she said to her servants, “I want four coolies.” So the servants went for the coolies; and when they came she showed them the four chests, and said, “Each of you must take one of these chests on your head and come with me.” Then they set out with her, each carrying a chest.

Meanwhile the kotwál’s son, the wazír’s son, the kází’s son, and the king’s son, had been roaming about looking everywhere for their fathers, and asking every one if they had seen them, but no one knew anything about them.

The merchant’s wife went first to the kotwál’s house, and there she saw the kotwál’s son. She had the kotwál’s chest set down on the ground before his door. “Will you buy this chest?” she said to his son. “What is in it?” he asked. “A most precious thing,” she answered. “How much do you want for it?” said his son. “One thousand rupees,” she said; “and when you open the chest, you will see the contents are worth two thousand. But you must not open it till you are in your father’s house.” “Well,” said the kotwál’s son, “here are a thousand rupees.” The woman and the other three chests went on their way, while he took his into the house. “What a heavy chest!” he said. “What can be inside?” Then he lifted the lid. “Why, there’s my father!” he cried. “Father, how came you to be in this chest?” The kotwál was very much ashamed of himself. “I never thought she was the woman to play me such a trick,” he said; and then he had to tell his son the whole story.

The merchant’s wife next stopped at the wazír’s house, and there she saw the wazír’s son. The wazír’s chest was put down before his door, and she said to his son, “Will you buy this chest?” “What is inside of it?” he asked. “A most precious thing,” she answered. “Will you buy it?” “How much do you want for it?” asked the son. “Only two thousand rupees, and it is worth three thousand.” So the wazír’s son bought his father, without knowing it, for two thousand rupees. “You must not open the chest till you are in the house,” said the merchant’s wife. The wazír’s son opened the chest in the house at once, wondering what could be in it; and the wazír’s wife stood by all the time. When they saw the wazír himself, looking very much ashamed, they were greatly astonished. “How came you there?” they cried. “Where have you been?” said his wife. “Oh,” said the wazír, “I never thought she was a woman to treat me like this;” and he, too, had to tell all his story.

Now the merchant’s wife stopped at the kází’s door, and there stood the kází’s son. “Will you buy this chest?” she said to him, and had the kází’s chest put on the ground. “What is in it?” said the kází’s son. “Silver and gold,” she answered. “You shall have it for three thousand rupees. The contents are worth four.” “Well, I will take it,” said the son. “Don’t open it till you are in your house,” she said, and took her three thousand rupees and went away. Great was the excitement when the kází stepped out of the chest. “Oh!” he groaned, “I never thought she could behave like this to me.”

The merchant’s wife now went to the palace, and set the king’s chest down at the palace gates. There she saw the king’s son. “Will you buy this chest?” she said. “What is in it?” asked the prince. “Diamonds, pearls, and all kinds of precious stones,” said the merchant’s wife. “You shall have the chest for five thousand rupees, but its contents are worth a great deal more.” “Well,” said the king’s son, “here are your five thousand rupees; give me the chest.” “Don’t open it out here,” she said. “Take it into the palace and open it there.” And away she went home.

The king’s son opened the chest, and there was his father. “What’s all this?” cried the prince. “How came *you* to be in the chest?” The king was very much ashamed, and did not tell much about his adventure; but when he was sitting in his court-house, he had the merchant’s wife brought to him, and gave her a quantity of rupees, saying, “You are a wise and clever woman.”

Now the kotwál knew the wazír had gone to see the merchant’s wife; and the wazír knew the kází had gone; and the kází, that the king had gone; but this was all that any of them knew.

The merchant’s wife had now plenty of rupees, so she had a most beautiful well built and roofed over. Then she locked the door of the well, and told the servants no one was to drink any of its water, or bathe in it, till her husband came home: he was to be the first to drink its water, and bathe in the well.

Then she sent her ayah to the bazar to buy her clothes and ornaments such as cowherd’s wives and daughter’s wear; and when the ayah had brought her these, she packed them up in a box. Then she dressed herself in men’s clothes, so that no one could tell she was a woman, and ordered a horse to be got ready for her. “I am going to eat the air of another country for a little while,” she said. “You must all take great care of the house while I am away.” The servants did not like her going away at all; they were afraid her husband might return during her absence, and that he would be angry with them for having let her go. “Don’t be afraid,” she said. “There is nothing to be frightened about. I shall come back all right.”

So she set out, taking the key of the well, the box with the clothes her ayah had bought for her in the bazar, and plenty of rupees. She also took two of her servants. She travelled a long, long way, asking everywhere for her husband’s boat. At last at the end of a month she came to where it was. Here she hired a little house, and dressed herself like a cowherd’s daughter. Then she got some very good milk, and went down to the banks of the river to sell it. Everybody said, “Do look what a beautiful woman that is selling milk!” She sold her milk very quickly, it was so good. This she did for several days, till her husband, the merchant, saw her. He thought her so beautiful, that he asked her to bring him some milk to his boat. So every day for a little while she sold him milk. One day he said to her, “Will you marry me?” “How can I marry you?” she said. “You are a merchant, and I am a cowherd’s daughter. Soon you will be leaving this country, and will travel to another in your boat; you will want me to go with you. Then I shall have to leave my father and mother, and who will take care of them?” “Let us be married,” said the merchant. “I am going to stay here for three months. When I go, you shall return to your father and mother, and later I will come back to you.” To this she agreed, and they were married, and she went to live in the boat. At the end of three months, the merchant said to her, “My business here is done, and I must go to another country. Would you like to go home to your father and mother while I am away?” “Yes,” she said. “Here are some rupees for you to live on in my absence,” he said. “I do not want any rupees,” said his wife. “I only want you to give me two things: your old cap, and your picture.” These he gave her, and then he went to his boat, and she went back to her own home.

Some time afterwards she had a little son. The servants were greatly frightened, for they thought their master would not be pleased when he came home; and he was not pleased when he did come two months later. He was so cross that he would not look at the baby-boy, and he would hardly look at his beautiful well.

One night he lay awake thinking, and he thought he would kill his wife and her little son. But the next day she came to him: “Tell me the truth,” she said; “you are angry with me? Don’t be angry, for I want to show you a picture I like very much — the picture of my boy’s father.” Then she showed him his own picture, and the old cap he had given her on board his boat; and she told him how she had been the cowherd’s daughter; and also how she had gained the money to build his well. “You see,” she said, “I have done all you bade me. Here is your well, and here is your son.” Then the merchant was very happy. He kissed and loved his little son, and thought his well was beautiful; and he said to his wife, “What a clever woman you are!”

80

RÁJÁ HARICHAND’S PUNISHMENT

There was once a great Rájá, Rájá Harichand, who every morning before he bathed and breakfasted used to give away one hundred pounds weight of gold to the fakírs, his poor ryots, and other poor people. This he did in the name of God, “For,” he said, “God loves me and gives me everything that I have; so daily I will give him this gold.”

Now God heard what a good man Rájá Harichand was, and how much the Rájá loved him, and he thought he would go and see for himself if all that was said of the Rájá were true. He therefore went as a fakír to Rájá Harichand’s palace and stood at his gate. The Rájá had already given away his hundred pounds’ weight of gold, and gone into his palace and bathed and breakfasted; so when his servants came to tell him that another fakír stood at his gate, the Rájá said, “Bid him come to-morrow, for I have bathed, and have eaten my breakfast, and therefore cannot attend to him now.” The servants returned to the fakír, and told him, “The Rájá says you must come to-morrow, for he cannot see you now, as he has bathed and breakfasted.” God went away, and the next day he again came, after all the fakírs and poor people had received their gold and the Rájá had gone into his palace. So the Rájá told his servants, “Bid the fakír come to-morrow. He has again come too late for me to see him now.”

On the third day God was once more too late, for the Rájá had gone into his palace. The Rájá was vexed with him for being a third time too late, and said to his servants, “What sort of a fakír is this that he always comes too late? Go and ask him what he wants.” So the servants went to the fakír and said, “Rájá Harichand says, ‘What do you want from him?’” “I want no rupees,” answered God, “nor anything else; but I want him to give me his wife.” The servants told this to the Rájá, and it made him very angry. He went to his wife, the Rání Báhan, and said to her, “There is a fakír at the gate who asks me to give you to him! As if I should ever do such a thing! Fancy my giving him my wife!”

The Rání was very wise and clever, for she had a book, which she read continually, called the kop shástra; and this book told her everything. So she knew that the fakír at the gate was no fakír, but God himself. (In old days about two people in a thousand, though not more, could read this book; now-a-days hardly any one can read it, for it is far too difficult.) So the Rání said to the Rájá, “Go to this fakír, and say to him, ‘You shall have my wife.’ You need not really give me to him; only give me to him in your thoughts.” “I will do no such thing,” said the Rájá in a rage; and in spite of all her entreaties, he would not say to the fakír, “I will give you my wife.” He ordered his servants to beat the fakír, and send him away; and so they did.

God returned to his place, and called to him two angels. “Take the form of men,” he said to them, “and go to Rájá Harichand. Say to him, ‘God has sent us to you. He says, Which will you have — a twelve years’ famine throughout your land during which no rain will fall? or a great rain for twelve hours?’”

The angels came to the Rájá and said as God had bidden them. The Rájá thought for a long while which he should choose. “If a great rain pours down for twelve hours,” he said to himself, “my whole country will be washed away. But I have a great quantity of gold. I have enough to send to other countries and buy food for myself and my ryots during the twelve years’ famine.” So he said to the angels, “I will choose the famine.” Then the angels came into his palace; and the moment they entered it, all the Rájá’s servants that were in the palace, and all his cows, horses, elephants, and other animals became stone. So did every single thing in the palace, excepting his gold and silver, and these turned to charcoal. The Rájá and Rání did not become stone.

The angels said to them, “For three weeks you will not be able to eat anything; you will not be able to eat any food you may find or may have given you. But you will not die, you will live.” Then the angels went away.

The Rájá was very sad when he looked round his palace and saw everything in it, and all the people in it, stone, and saw all his gold and silver turned to charcoal. He said to his wife, “I cannot stay here. I must go to some other country. I was a great Rájá; how can I ask my ryots to give me food? We will dress ourselves like fakírs, and go to another country.”

They put on fakírs’ clothes and went out of their palace. They wandered in the jungle till they saw a plum-tree covered with fruit. “Do gather some of those plums for me,” said the Rání, who was very hungry. The Rájá went to the tree and put out his hand to gather the plums; but when he did this, they at once all left the tree and went a little way up into the air. When he drew back his hand, the plums returned to the tree. The Rájá tried three times to gather the plums, but never could do so.

He and the Rání then went on till they came to a plain in another country, where was a large tank in which men were fishing. The Rání said to her husband, “Go and ask those men to give us a little of their fish, for I am very hungry.” The Rájá went to the men and said, “I am a fakír, and have no pice. Will you give me some of your fish, for I have not eaten for four days and am hungry?” The men gave him some fish, and he and his wife carried it to a tank on another plain. The Rání cleaned and prepared the fish for cooking, and said to her husband, “I have nothing in which to cook this fish. Go up to the town (there was a town close by) and ask some one to give you an earthen pot with a lid, and some salt."

The Rájá went up to the town, and some one in the bazar gave him the earthen pot, and a grain merchant put a little salt into it. Then he returned to the Rání, and they made a fire under a tree, put the fish into the pot, and set the pot on the fire. "I have not bathed for some days," said the Rájá. "I will go and bathe while you cook the fish, and when I come back we will eat it." So he went to bathe, and the Rání sat watching the fish. Presently she thought, "If I leave the lid on the pot, the fish will dry up and burn." Then she took off the lid, and the fish instantly jumped out of the pot into the tank and swam away. This made the Rání sad; but she sat there quiet and silent. When the Rájá had bathed, he returned to his wife, and said, "Now we will eat our fish." The Rání answered, "I had not eaten for four days, and was very hungry, so I ate all the fish." "Never mind," said the Rájá, "it does not matter."

They wandered on, and the next day came to another jungle where they saw two pigeons. The Rájá took some grass and sticks, and made a bow and arrow. He shot the pigeons with these, and the Rání plucked and cleaned them. Her husband and she made a little fire, put the pigeons in their pot, and set them on it. There was a tank near. "Now I will go and bathe," said the Rání; "I have not bathed for some days. When I come back, we will eat the pigeons." So she went to bathe, and the Rájá sat down to watch the pigeons. Presently he thought, "If I leave the pot shut, the birds will dry up and burn." So he took off the lid, and instantly away flew the pigeons out of the pot. He guessed at once what the fish had done yesterday, and sat still and silent till the Rání came back. "I have eaten the pigeons in the same way that you ate the fish yesterday," he said to her. The Rání understood what had happened, and saw the Rájá knew how the fish had escaped.

So they wandered on; and as they went the Rání remembered an oil merchant, called Gangá Télí, a friend of theirs, and a great man, just like a

Rájá. “Let us go to Gangá Télí, if we can walk as far as his house,” she said. “He will be good to us.” He lived a long way off. When they got to him, Gangá Télí knew them at once. “What has happened?” he said. “You were a great Rájá; why are you and the Rání so poor and dressed like fakírs?” “It is God’s will,” they answered. Gangá Télí did not think it worth while to notice them much now they were poor; so, though he did not send them away, he gave them a wretched room to live in, a wretched bed to lie on, and such bad food to eat that, hungry as they were, they could not touch it. “When we were rich,” they said to each other, “and came to stay with Gangá Télí, he received us like friends; he gave us beautiful rooms to live in, beautiful beds to lie on, and delicious food to eat. We cannot stay here.”

So they went away very sorrowful, and wandered for a whole week, and all the time they had no food, till they came to another country whose Rájá, Rájá Bhoj, was one of their friends. Rájá Bhoj received them very kindly. “What has brought you to this state? How is it you are so poor?” he said. “What has happened to you?” “It is God’s will,” they answered. Rájá Bhoj gave them a beautiful room to live in, and told his servants to cook for them the very nicest dinner they could. This the servants did, and they brought the dinner into Rájá Harichand’s room, and set it before him and left him. Then he and the Rání put some of the food on their plates; but before they could eat anything, the food both in the dishes and on their plates became full of maggots. So they could not eat it. They felt greatly humbled. However, they said nothing, but worshipped God; and they buried all the food in a hole they dug in the floor of their room.

Now the daughter of Rájá Bhoj had left her gold necklace hanging on the wall of the room in which were Rájá Harichand and the Rání Báhan. At night when Rájá Harichand was asleep, the Rání saw a crack come in the wall and the necklace go of itself into the crack; then the wall joined together as before. She at once woke her husband, and told him what she had seen. “We had better go away quickly,” she said. “The necklace will not be found to-morrow, and Rájá Bhoj will think we are thieves. It will be useless breaking the wall open to find it.” The Rájá got up at once, and they set out again. Rájá Bhoj, when the necklace was not found, thought Rájá Harichand and the Rání Báhan had stolen it.

They wandered on till they came to a country belonging to another friend, called Rájá Nal, but they were ashamed to go to his palace. The three weeks were now nearly over, only two more days were left. So the Rání said, “In two days we shall be able to eat. Go into the jungle and cut grass, and sell it in the bazar. We shall thus get a few pice and be able to buy a little food.” The Rájá went out to the jungle, but he had to break and pull up the grass with his hands. He worked half the day, and then sold the grass in the bazar for a few pice. They were able to buy food, and worshipped God and cooked it; and as the three weeks were now over they were allowed to eat it.

They stayed in Rájá Nal’s country, and lived in a little house they hired in the bazar. Rájá Harichand went out every day to the jungle for grass, which he pulled up or broke off with his hands, and then sold in the bazar for a few pice. The Rání saved a pice or two whenever she could, and at the end of two years they were rich enough to buy a hook such as grass-cutters use. The Rájá could now cut more grass, and soon the Rání was able to buy some pretty-coloured silks in the bazar.

Her husband went daily to cut grass, and she sat at home making head-collars with the silks for horses. Four years after they had bought the hook, she had four of these head-collars ready, and she took them up to Rájá Nal’s palace to sell. It was the first time she had gone there, for she and her husband were ashamed to see Rájá Nal. Their fakírs’ dresses had become rags, and they had only been able to get wretched common clothes in their place, for they were miserably poor.

“What beautiful head-collars these are!” said Rájá Nal’s coachmen and grooms; and they took them to show to their Rájá. As soon as he saw them he said, “Where did you get these head-collars? Who is it that wishes to sell them?” for he knew that only one woman could make such head-collars, and that woman was the Ránî Báhan. “A very poor woman brought them here just now,” they answered. “Bring her to me,” said Rájá Nal. So the servants brought him Ránî Báhan, and when she saw the Rájá she burst into tears. “What has brought you to this state? Why are you so poor?” said Rájá Nal. “It is God’s will,” she answered. “Where is your husband?” he asked. “He is cutting grass in the jungle,” she said. Rájá Nal called his servants and said, “Go into the jungle, and there you will see a man cutting grass. Bring him to me.” When Rájá Harichand saw Rájá Nal’s servants coming to him, he was very much frightened; but the servants took him and brought him to the palace. As soon as Rájá Nal saw his old friend, he seized his hands, and burst out crying. “Rájá,” he said, “what has brought you to this state?” “It is God’s will,” said Rájá Harichand.

Rájá Nal was very good to them. He gave them a palace to live in, and servants to wait on them; beautiful clothes to wear, and good food to eat. He went with them to the palace to see that everything was as it should be for them. “To-day,” he said to the Ránî, “I shall dine with your husband, and you must give me a dinner cooked just as you used to cook one for me when I went to see you in your own country.” “Good, I will give it you,” said the Ránî; but she was quite frightened, for she thought, “The Rájá is so kind, and everything is so comfortable for us, that I am sure something dreadful will happen.” However, she prepared the dinner, and told the servants how to cook it and serve it; but first she worshipped God, and entreated him to have mercy on her and her husband. The dinner was very good, and nothing evil happened to any one. They lived in the palace Rájá Nal gave them for four and a half years.

Meanwhile the farmers in Rájá Harichand’s country had all these years gone on ploughing and turning up the land, although not a drop of rain had fallen all that time, and the earth was hard and dry. Now just when the Rájá and Rání had lived in Rájá Nal’s palace for four and a half years Mahádeo was walking through Rájá Harichand’s country. He saw the farmers digging up the ground, and said, “What is the good of your digging and turning up the ground? Not a drop of rain is going to fall.” “No,” said the farmers, “but if we did not go on ploughing and digging, we should forget how to do our work.” They did not know they were talking to Mahádeo, for he looked like a man. “That is true,” said Mahádeo, and he thought, “The farmers speak the truth; and if I go on neglecting to blow on my horn, I shall forget how to blow on it at all.” So he took his deer’s horn, which was just like those some yogís use, and blew on it. Now when Rájá Harichand had chosen the twelve years’ famine, God had said, “Rain shall not fall on Rájá Harichand’s country till Mahádeo blows his horn in it.” Mahádeo had quite forgotten this decree; so he blew on his horn, although only ten and a half years’ famine had gone by. The moment he blew, down came the rain, and the whole country at once became as it had been before the famine began; and moreover, the moment it rained, everything in Rájá Harichand’s palace became what it was before the angels entered it. All the men and women came to life again; so did all the animals; and the gold and silver were no longer charcoal, but once more gold and silver. God was not angry with Mahádeo for forgetting that he said the famine should last for twelve years, and that the rain should fall when Mahádeo blew on his horn in Rájá Harichand’s country. “If it pleased Mahádeo to blow on his horn,” said God, “it does not matter that eighteen months of famine were still to last.” As soon as they heard the rain had fallen, all the ryots who had gone to other countries on account of the famine returned to Rájá Harichand’s country.

Among the Rájá’s servants was the kotwál, and very anxious he was, when he came to life again, to find the Rájá and Rání; only he did not know how to do so, and wondered where he had best seek for them.

Meanwhile the Rání Báhan had a dream that God sent her, in which an angel said to her, “It is good that you and your husband should return to your country.” She told this dream to her husband; and Rájá Nal gave them horses, elephants, and camels, that they might travel like Rájás to their home, and he went with them. They found everything in order in their own palace and all through their country, and after this lived very happily in it. But the Rání said to Rájá Harichand, “If you had only done what I told you, and said you would give me to the fakír, all this misery would not have come on us.”

Later they went to stay again with Rájá Bhoj, and slept in the same room as they had had when they came to him poor and wretched. In the night they saw the wall open, and the necklace came out of the crack and hung itself up as before, and the wall closed again. The next day they showed the necklace to Rájá Bhoj, saying, “It was on account of this necklace that we ran away from you the last time we were here,” and they told him all that had happened to it.

As for Gangá Télí, they never went near him again.

81

THE KING’S SON AND THE WAZÍR’S DAUGHTER

In a country there was a great king who had a wazír. One day he thought he should like to play at cards with this wazír, and he told him to go and get some for him, and then play a game with him. So the wazír brought the cards, and he and the king sat down to play. Now neither the king nor the wazír had any children; and as they were playing, the king said, “Wazír, if I have a son and you have a daughter, or if I have a daughter and you have a son, let us marry our children to each other.” To this the wazír agreed. A year after the king had a son; and when the boy was two years old, the wazír had a daughter. Some years passed, and the king’s son was twelve years old, and the wazír’s daughter ten. Then the king said to the wazír, “Do you remember how one day, when we were playing at cards, we agreed to marry our children to each other?” “I remember,” said the wazír. “Let us marry them now,” said the king. So they held the wedding feast; but the wazír’s little daughter remained in her father’s house because she was still so young.

As the king’s son grew older he became very wicked, and took to gambling and drinking till his father and mother died of grief. After their death he went on in the same way, gambling and drinking, until he had no money left, and had to leave the palace, and live anywhere he could in the town, wandering from house to house in a fakír’s dress, begging his bread, and sleeping wherever he found a spot on which to lie down.

Meanwhile the wazír’s daughter was living alone, for her husband had never come to fetch her as he should have done when she was old enough. Her father and mother were dead too. She had given half of the money they left her to the poor, and she lived on the other half. She spent her days in praying to God, and in reading in a holy book; and though she was so young, she was very wise and good.

One day, as the prince was roaming about in his fakír’s rags, not knowing where to find food or shelter, he remembered his wife, and thought he would go and see her. She ordered her servants to give him good food, a bath, and good clothes; “for,” she said, “we were married when we were children, though he never fetched me to his palace.” The servants did as she bade them. The prince bathed and dressed, and ate food, and he wished to stay with his wife. But she said, “No; before you stay with me you must see four sights. Go out in the jungle and walk for a whole week. Then you will come to a plain where you will see them.” So the next day he set out for the plain, and reached it in one week.

There he saw a large tank. At one corner of the tank he saw a man and a woman who had good clothes, good food, good beds, and servants to wait on them, and seemed very happy. At the second corner he saw a wretchedly poor man and his wife, who did nothing but cry and sob because they had no food to eat, no water to drink, no bed to lie on, no one to take care of them. At the third corner he saw two little fishes that were always going up and down in the air. They would shoot down close to the water, but they could not go into it or stay in it; then they would make a salaam to God, and would shoot up again into the air, but before they got very high, they had to drop down again. At the fourth corner he saw a huge demon who was heating sand in an enormous iron pot, under which he kept up a big fire.

The prince returned to his wife, and told her all he had seen. “Do you know who the happy man and woman are?” she said. “No,” he answered. “They are my father and mother,” she said. “When they were alive, I was good to them, and since their death I gave half their money to the poor; and on the other half I have lived quietly, and tried to be good. So God is pleased with them, and makes them happy.” “Is that true?” said her husband. “Quite true,” she said. “And the miserable man and woman who did nothing but cry, do you know who they are?” “No,” said the prince. “They are your father and mother. When they were alive, you gambled and drank; and they died of grief. Then you went on gambling and drinking till you had spent all their money. So now God is angry with them, and will not make them happy.” “Is that true?” said the prince. “Quite true,” she said. “And the fishes you saw were the two little children we should have had if you had taken me to your home as your wife. Now they cannot be born, for they can find no bodies in which to be born; so God has ordered them to rise and sink in the air in these fishes’ forms.” “Is that true?” asked the prince. “Quite true,” she answered. “And by God’s order the demon you saw is heating that sand in the big iron pot for you, because you are such a wicked man.”

The moment she had told all this to her husband, she died. But he did not get any better. He gambled and drank all her money away, and lived a wretched life, wandering about like a fakír till his death.

21. KLARA AGNES STROEBE

CONTENTS

Preface

1. Knös
2. Lasse, My Thrall!
3. Finn, the Giant, and the Minster of Lund
4. The Skalunda Giant
5. Yuletide Specters
6. Silverwhite and Lillwacker
7. tompe Pilt
8. The Girl and the Snake
9. Faithful and Unfaithful
10. Starkad and Bale
11. The Werewolf
12. First Born, First Wed
13. The Lame Dog
14. The Mount of the Golden Queen
15. Old Hopgiant
16. The Princess and the Glass Mountain
17. Queen Crane
18. Tales of the Trolls
19. Charcoal Nils and the Troll-Woman
20. The Three Dogs
21. The Poor Devil
22. How Smaland and Schonen Came to Be
23. The Evil One and Kitta Grau
24. The Lady of Pintorp
25. The Spectre in Fjelkinge
26. The Rooster, the Hand-Mill and the Swarm of Hornets

27. Torre Jeppe
28. The Man Who Died on Holy Innocents’ Day
29. Per Gynt
30. The Isle of Udröst
31. The Three Lemons
32. The Neighbor Underground
33. The Secret Church
34. The Comrade
35. Aspenclog
36. The Troll Wedding
37. The Hat of the Huldres
38. The Child of Mary
39. Storm Magic
40. The Four-Shilling Piece
41. The Magic Apples
42. Self Did It
43. The Master Girl
44. Anent the Giant Who Did Not Have His Heart About Him
45. The Three Princesses in Whiteland
46. Trouble and Care
47. Kari Woodencoat
48. Ola Storbaekkjen
49. The Cat Who Could Eat So Much
50. East of the Sun and West of the Moon
51. Murmur Goose-Egg
52. The Troll-Wife
53. The King’s Hares
54. Helge-Hal in the Blue Hill
55. The Lord of the Hill and John Blessom
56. The Young Fellow and the Devil
57. Farther South Than South, and Farther North Than North, and in the Great Hill of Gol
58. Lucky Andrew
59. The Pastor and the Sexton

60. The Skipper and Sir Urian
61. The Youth Who Was to Serve Three Years Without Pay
62. The Youth Who Wanted to Win the Daughter of the Mother in the Corner
63. The Chronicle of the Pancake
64. Soria-Moria Castle
65. The Player on the Jew’s-Harp

PREFACE

STROEBE, KLARA

Klara Stroebe was a editor of several fairy tale books. These stories for children include *The Swedish Fairy Tale Book*, *The Norwegian Fairy Book*, and *The Danish Fairy Book*. These books are part of “The Fairy Book” series released by Frederick A. Stokes Company. Little is known about her life; however, she is believed to have been born in the 1800’s, and be of German heritage.

1

KNÖS

Once upon a time there was a poor widow, who found an egg under a pile of brush as she was gathering kindlings in the forest. She took it and placed it under a goose, and when the goose had hatched it, a little boy slipped out of the shell. The widow had him baptized Knös, and such a lad was a rarity; for when no more than five years old he was grown, and taller than the tallest man. And he ate in proportion, for he would swallow a whole batch of bread at a single sitting, and at last the poor widow had to go to the commissioners for the relief of the poor in order to get food for him. But the town authorities said she must apprentice the boy at a trade, for he was big enough and strong enough to earn his own keep.

So Knös was apprenticed to a smith for three years. For his pay he asked a suit of clothes and a sword each year: a sword of five hundredweights the first year, one of ten hundredweights the second year, and one of fifteen hundredweights the third year. But after he had been in the smithy only a few days, the smith was glad to give him all three suits and all three swords at once; for he smashed all his iron and steel to bits.

Knös received his suits and swords, went to a knight’s estate, and hired himself out as a serving-man. Once he was told to go to the forest to gather firewood with the rest of the men, but sat at the table eating long after the others had driven off and when he had at last satisfied his hunger and was ready to start, he saw the two young oxen he was to drive waiting for him. But he let them stand and went into the forest, seized the two largest trees growing there, tore them out by the roots, took one tree under each arm, and carried them back to the estate. And he got there long before the rest, for they had to chop down the trees, saw them up and load them on the carts.

On the following day Knös had to thresh. First he hunted up the largest stone he could find, and rolled it around on the grain, so that all the corn was loosened from the ears. Then he had to separate the grain from the chaff. So he made a hole in each side of the roof of the barn, and stood outside the barn and blew, and the chaff and straw flew out into the yard, and the corn remained lying in a heap on the floor. His master happened to come along, laid a ladder against the barn, climbed up and looked down into one of the holes. But Knös was still blowing, and the wind caught his master, and he fell down and was nearly killed on the stone pavement of the court.

"He's a dangerous fellow," thought his master. It would be a good thing to be rid of him, otherwise he might do away with all of them; and besides, he ate so that it was all one could do to keep him fed. So he called Knös in, and paid him his wages for the full year, on condition that he leave. Knös agreed, but said he must first be decently provisioned for his journey.

So he was allowed to go into the store-house himself, and there he hoisted a flitch of bacon on each shoulder, slid a batch of bread under each arm, and took leave. But his master loosed the vicious bull on him. Knös, however, grasped him by the horns, and flung him over his shoulder, and thus he went off. Then he came to a thicket where he slaughtered the bull, roasted him and ate him together with a batch of bread. And when he had done this he had about taken the edge off his hunger.

Then he came to the king's court, where great sorrow reigned because, once upon a time, when the king was sailing out at sea, a sea troll had called up a terrible tempest, so that the ship was about to sink. In order to escape with his life, the king had to promise the sea troll to give him whatever first came his way when he reached shore. The king thought his hunting dog would be the first to come running to meet him, as usual; but instead his three young daughters came rowing out to meet him in a boat. This filled the king with grief, and he vowed that whoever delivered his daughters should have one of them for a bride, whichever one he might choose. But the only man who seemed to want to earn the reward was a tailor, named Red Peter.

Knös was given a place at the king's court, and his duty was to help the cook. But he asked to be let off on the day the troll was to come and carry away the oldest princess, and they were glad to let him go; for when he had to rinse the dishes he broke the king's vessels of gold and silver; and when he was told to bring firewood, he brought in a whole wagon-load at once, so that the doors flew from their hinges.

The princess stood on the sea-shore and wept and wrung her hands; for she could see what she had to expect. Nor did she have much confidence in Red Peter, who sat on a willow-stump, with a rusty old sabre in his hand. Then Knös came and tried to comfort the princess as well as he knew how, and asked her whether she would comb his hair. Yes, he might lay his head in her lap, and she combed his hair. Suddenly there was a dreadful roaring out at sea. It was the troll who was coming along, and he had five heads. Red Peter was so frightened that he rolled off his willow-stump. "Knös, is that you?" cried the troll. "Yes," said Knös. "Haul me up on the shore!" said the troll. "Pay out the cable!" said Knös. Then he hauled the troll ashore; but he had his sword of five hundredweights at his side, and with it he chopped off all five of the troll's heads, and the princess was free. But when Knös had gone off, Red Peter put his sabre to the breast of the princess, and told her he would kill her unless she said he was her deliverer.

Then came the turn of the second princess. Once more Red Peter sat on the willow-stump with his rusty sabre, and Knös asking to be let off for the day, went to the sea-shore and begged the princess to comb his hair, which she did. Then along came the troll, and this time he had ten heads. “Knös, is that you?” asked the troll. “Yes,” said Knös. “Haul me ashore!” said the troll. “Pay out the cable!” said Knös. And this time Knös had his sword of ten hundredweights at his side, and he cut off all ten of the troll’s heads. And so the second princess was freed. But Red Peter held his sabre at the princess’ breast, and forced her to say that he had delivered her.

Now it was the turn of the youngest princess. When it was time for the troll to come, Red Peter was sitting on his willow-stump, and Knös came and begged the princess to comb his hair, and she did so. This time the troll had fifteen heads.

“Knös, is that you?” asked the troll. “Yes,” said Knös. “Haul me ashore!” said the troll. “Pay out the cable,” said Knös. Knös had his sword of fifteen hundredweights at his side, and with it he cut off all the troll’s heads. But the fifteen hundredweights were half-an-ounce short, and the heads grew on again, and the troll took the princess, and carried her off with him.

One day as Knös was going along, he met a man carrying a church on his back. “You are a strong man, you are!” said Knös. “No, I am not strong,” said he, “but Knös at the king’s court, he is strong; for he can take steel and iron, and weld them together with his hands as though they were clay.” “Well, I’m the man of whom you are speaking,” said Knös, “come, let us travel together.” And so they wandered on.

Then they met a man who carried a mountain of stone on his back. “You are strong, you are!” said Knös. “No, I’m not strong,” said the man with the mountain of stone, “but Knös at the king’s court, he is strong; for he can weld together steel and iron with his hands as though they were clay.”

“Well, I am that Knös, come let us travel together,” said Knös. So all three of them traveled along together. Knös took them for a sea-trip; but I think they had to leave the church and the hill of stone ashore. While they were sailing they grew thirsty, and lay alongside an island, and there on the island stood a castle, to which they decided to go and ask for a drink. Now this was the very castle in which the troll lived.

First the man with the church went, and when he entered the castle, there sat the troll with the princess on his lap, and she was very sad. He asked for something to drink. “Help yourself, the goblet is on the table!” said the troll. But he got nothing to drink, for though he could move the goblet from its place, he could not raise it.

Then the man with the hill of stone went into the castle and asked for a drink. “Help yourself, the goblet is on the table!” said the troll. And he got nothing to drink either, for though he could move the goblet from its place, he could not raise it.

Then Knös himself went into the castle, and the princess was full of joy and leaped down from the troll’s lap when she saw it was he. Knös asked for a drink. “Help yourself,” said the troll, “the goblet is on the table!” And Knös took the goblet and emptied it at a single draught. Then he hit the troll across the head with the goblet, so that he rolled from the chair and died.

Knös took the princess back to the royal palace, and O, how happy every one was! The other princesses recognized Knös again, for they had woven silk ribbons into his hair when they had combed it; but he could only marry one of the princesses, whichever one he preferred, so he chose the youngest. And when the king died, Knös inherited the kingdom.

As for Red Peter, he had to go into the nail-barrel.

And now you know all that I know.

2

LASSE, MY THRALL!

Once upon a time there was a prince or a duke or whatever you choose to call him, but at any rate a noble tremendously high-born, who did not want to stay at home. And so he traveled about the world, and wherever he went he was well received, and hobnobbed with the very finest people; for he had an unheard of amount of money. He at once found friends and acquaintances, no matter where he came; for whoever has a full trough can always find pigs to thrust their snouts into it. But since he handled his money as he did, it grew less and less, and at last he was left high and dry, without a red cent. And there was an end to all his many friends; for they did just as the pigs do. When he had been well fleeced, they began to snivel and grunt, and soon scattered, each about his own business. And there he stood, after having been led about by the nose, abandoned by all. All had been glad to help him get rid of his money; but none were willing to help him regain it, so there was nothing left for him to do but to wander back home again like a journeyman apprentice, and beg his way as he went.

Late one evening he found himself in a big forest, without any idea as to where he might spend the night. And as he was looking around, his glance happened to fall on an old hut, peeping out from among the bushes. Of course an old hut was no lodging for such a fine gentleman; but when we cannot have what we want, we must take what we can get, and since there was no help for it, he went into the hut. There was not even a cat in it, not even a stool to sit on. But against one wall there was a great chest. What might there be in the chest? Suppose there were a few moldy crusts of bread in it? They would taste good to him, for he had not been given a single thing all day long, and he was so hungry that his inwards stuck to his ribs. He opened the chest. But within the chest was another chest, and in that chest still another chest, and so it went, one always smaller than the other, until they were nothing but little boxes. And the more there were of them the more trouble he took to open them; for whatever was hidden away so carefully must be something exceptionally beautiful, thought he.

At last he came to a tiny box, and in the tiny box was a slip of paper — and that was all he had for his pains! At first he was much depressed. But all at once, he saw that something was written on the piece of paper, and on closer examination he was even able to spell out the words, though they had a strange appearance. And he read:

“Lasse, my thrall!”

No sooner had he spoken these words than something answered, close to his ear:

“What does my master command?”

He looked around, but saw no one. That’s strange, thought he, and once more read aloud:

“Lasse, my thrall!”

And just as before came the answer:

“What does my master command?”

“If there be some one about who hears what I say, he might be kind enough to get me a little something to eat,” said he; and at that very moment a table, covered with all the good things to eat that one could imagine, was standing in the hut. He at once began to eat and drink and did well by himself. I have never had a better meal in my life, thought he. And when his hunger was completely satisfied, he grew sleepy and took up his scrap of paper again.

"Lasse, my thrall!"

"What does my master command?"

"Now that you have brought me food and drink, you must also bring me a bed in which to sleep. But it must be a very fine bed," said he; for as you may well imagine, his ideas were more top-lofty now that he had eaten well. His command was at once obeyed; and a bed so fine and handsome stood in the hut, that a king might have been glad to have found such sleeping accommodations. Now this was all very well and good; but the good can always be bettered, and when he had lain down, he decided that, after all, the hut was far too wretched for such a fine bed. He took up the scrap of paper:

"Lasse, my thrall!"

"What does my master command?"

"If you can produce such a meal, and such a bed here in the wild wood, you must surely be able to give me a better room; for you know I am one of those who are used to sleeping in a castle, with golden mirrors and rugs of gold brocade and luxuries and conveniences of every kind," said he. And no sooner had he spoken the words, than he was lying in the most magnificent room he had ever seen.

Now matters were arranged to suit him, and he was quite content as he turned his face to the wall and closed his eyes.

But the room he had slept in was not the end of his magnificence. When he woke the following morning and looked around, he saw that he had been sleeping in a great castle. There was one room after another, and wherever he went walls and ceilings were covered with ornaments and decorations of every kind, all glittering so splendidly when the rays of the sun fell on them that he had to put his hand to his eyes; for wherever he looked everything sparkled with gold and silver. Then he glanced out of the window and first began to realize how really beautiful everything was. Gone were the fir-trees and juniper bushes, and in their place showed the loveliest garden one might wish to see, filled with beautiful trees and roses of every variety, in bush and tree form. But there was not a human being in sight, not even a cat. Yet he found it quite natural that everything should be so fine, and that he should once more have become a great lord.

He took up the scrap of paper:

"Lasse, my thrall!"

"What does my master command?"

"Now that you have provided me with food and a castle in which to dwell, I am going to stay here, because it suits me," said he, "but I cannot live here all alone in this fashion. I must have serving-men and serving-maids, at my command." And so it was. Servants and lackeys and maids and serving-women of every description arrived, and some of them bowed and others courtseyed, and now the duke really began to feel content.

Now it happened that another great castle lay on the opposite side of the forest, in which dwelt a king who owned the forest, and many broad acres of field and meadow round about. And when the king came and happened to look out of his window, he saw the new castle, on whose roof the golden weathercocks were swinging to and fro, from time to time, shining in his eyes.

"This is very strange," thought he, and sent for his courtiers. They came without delay, bowing and scraping.

"Do you see the castle yonder?" said the king.

Their eyes grew as large as saucers and they looked.

Yes, indeed, they saw the castle.

"Who has dared to build such a castle on my ground?"

The courtiers bowed and scraped, but did not know. So the king sent for his soldiers. They came tramping in and presented arms.

“Send out all my soldiers and horsemen,” said the king, “tear down the castle instantly, hang whoever built it, and see to this at once.”

The soldiers assembled in the greatest haste and set forth. The drummers beat their drums and the trumpeters blew their trumpets, and the other musicians practiced their art, each in his own way; so that the duke heard them long before they came in sight. But this was not the first time he had heard music of this sort, and he knew what it meant, so once more he took up the scrap of paper:

“Lasse, my thrall!”

“What does my master command?”

“There are soldiers coming,” said he, “and now you must provide me with soldiers and horsemen until I have twice as many as the folk on the other side of the forest. And sabers and pistols and muskets and cannon, and all that goes with them — but you must be quick about it!”

Quick it was, and when the duke looked out there was a countless host of soldiers drawn up around the castle.

When the king’s people arrived, they stopped and did not dare advance. But the duke was by no means shy. He went at once to the king’s captain and asked him what he wanted.

The captain repeated his instructions.

“They will not gain you anything,” said the duke. “You can see how many soldiers I have, and if the king chooses to listen to me, we can agree to become friends, I will aid him against all his enemies, and what we undertake will succeed.” The captain was pleased with this proposal, so the duke invited him to the castle, together with all his officers, and his soldiers were given a swallow or two of something wet and plenty to eat along with it. But while the duke and the officers were eating and drinking, there was more or less talk, and the duke learned that the king had a daughter, as yet unmarried and so lovely that her like had never been seen. And the more they brought the king’s officers to eat, the stronger they inclined to the opinion that the king’s daughter would make a good wife for the duke. And as they talked about it, the duke himself began to think it over. The worst of it was, said the officers, that she was very haughty, and never even deigned to look at a man. But the duke only laughed. “If it be no worse than that,” he said, “it is a trouble that may be cured.”

When at last the soldiers had stowed away as much as they could hold, they shouted hurrah until they woke the echoes in the hills, and marched away. One may imagine what a fine parade march it was, for some of them had grown a little loose-jointed in the knees. The duke charged them to carry his greetings to the king, and say that he would soon pay him a visit.

When the duke was alone once more, he began to think of the princess again, and whether she were really as beautiful as the soldiers had said. He decided he would like to find out for himself. Since so many strange things had happened that day, it was quite possible, thought he.

“Lasse, my thrall!”

“What does my master command?”

“Only that you bring the king’s daughter here, as soon as she has fallen asleep,” said he. “But mind that she does not wake up, either on her way here, or on her way back.” And before long there lay the princess on the bed. She was sleeping soundly, and looked charming as she lay there asleep. One had to admit that she was as sweet as sugar. The duke walked all around her; but she appeared just as beautiful from one side as from the other, and the more the duke looked at her, the better she pleased him.

“Lasse, my thrall!”

“What does my master command?”

“Now you must take the princess home again,” said he, “because now I know what she looks like and to-morrow I shall sue for her hand.”

The following morning the king stepped to the window. “Now I shall not have to see that castle across the way,” he thought to himself. But the evil one must have had a hand in the matter — there stood the castle just as before, and the sun was shining brightly on its roof, and the weather-vanes were sending beams into his eyes.

The king once more fell into a rage, and shouted for all his people, who hurried to him with more than usual rapidity. The courtiers bowed and scraped and the soldiers marched in parade step and presented arms.

“Do you see that castle there?” roared the king.

They stretched their necks, their eyes grew large as saucers and they looked.

Yes, indeed, they saw it.

“Did I not order you to tear down that castle and hang its builder?” he said.

This they could not deny; but now the captain himself stepped forward and told what had occurred, and what an alarming number of soldiers the duke had, and how magnificent his castle was.

Then he also repeated what the duke had said, and that he had sent his greetings to the king.

All this made the king somewhat dizzy, and he had to set his crown on the table and scratch his head. It was beyond his comprehension — for all that he was a king; since he could have sworn that it had all come to pass in the course of a single night, and if the duke were not the devil himself, he was at least a magician.

And as he sat there and thought, the princess came in.

“God greet you, father,” she said, “I had a most strange and lovely dream last night.”

“And what did you dream, my girl?” said the king.

“O, I dreamt that I was in the new castle over yonder, and there was a duke, handsome and so splendid beyond anything I could have imagined, and now I want a husband.”

“What, you want a husband, and you have never even deigned to look at a man; that is very strange!” said the king.

“Be that as it may,” said the princess, “but that is how I feel now; and I want a husband, and the duke is the husband I want,” she concluded.

The king simply could not get over the astonishment the duke had caused him.

Suddenly he heard an extraordinary beating of drums, and sounding of trumpets and other instruments of every kind. And a message came that the duke had arrived with a great retinue, all so magnificently attired that every seam of their dresses was sparkling with gold and silver. The king, in his crown and finest robe of state, stood looking down the stairway, and the princess was all the more in favor of carrying out her idea as quickly as possible.

The duke greeted the king pleasantly, and the king returned his greeting in the same way, and discussing their affairs together they became good friends. There was a great banquet, and the duke sat beside the princess at the table. What they said to each other I do not know, but the duke knew so well how to talk that, no matter what he said, the princess could not say no, and so he went to the king and begged for her hand. The king could not exactly refuse it, for the duke was the kind of a man whom it was better to have for a friend than for an enemy; but he could not give his answer out of hand, either. First he wished to see the duke’s castle, and know how matters stood with regard to this, that and the other — which was natural.

So it was agreed that they should pay the duke a visit and bring the princess with them, in order that she might examine his possessions, and with that they parted.

When the duke reached home, Lasse had a lively time of it, for he was given any number of commissions. But he rushed about, carrying them out, and everything was arranged so satisfactorily that when the king arrived with his daughter, a thousand pens could not have described it. They went through all the rooms and looked around, and everything was as it should be, and even better thought the king, who was very happy. Then the wedding was celebrated and when it was over, and the duke returned home with his young wife, he, too, gave a splendid banquet, and that is how it went.

After some time had passed, the duke one evening heard the words:

"Is my master content now?" It was Lasse, though the duke could not see him.

"I am well content," answered the duke, "for you have brought me all that I have."

"But what did I get for it?" said Lasse.

"Nothing," replied the duke, "but, heaven above, what was I to give you, who are not flesh and blood, and whom I cannot even see," said he. "Yet if there be anything I can do for you, why let me know what it is, and I will do it."

"I would very much like to have the little scrap of paper that you keep in the box," said Lasse.

"If that is all you want, and if such a trifle is of any service to you, your wish shall be granted, for I believe I know the words by heart now," said the duke.

Lasse thanked him, and said all the duke need do, would be to lay the paper on the chair beside his bed, when he went to sleep, and that he would fetch it during the night.

This the duke did, and then he went to bed and fell asleep.

But toward morning the duke woke up, freezing so that his teeth chattered, and when he had fully opened his eyes, he saw that he had been stripped of everything, and had scarcely a shirt to his name. And instead of lying in the handsome bed in the handsome bed-room in the magnificent castle, he lay on the big chest in the old hut. He at once called out:

"Lasse, my thrall!" But there was no answer.

Then he cried again:

"Lasse, my thrall!" Again there was no answer. So he called out as loudly as he could:

"Lasse, my thrall!" But this third call was also in vain.

Now he began to realize what had happened, and that Lasse, when he obtained the scrap of paper, no longer had to serve him, and that he himself had made this possible. But now things were as they were, and there stood the duke in the old hut, with scarcely a shirt to his name. The princess herself was not much better off, though she had kept her clothes; for they had been given her by her father, and Lasse had no power over them.

Now the duke had to explain everything to the princess, and beg her to leave him, since it would be best if he tried to get along as well as he could himself, said he. But this the princess would not do. She had a better memory for what the pastor had said when he married them, she told him, and that she was never, never to leave him.

At length the king awoke in his castle, and when he looked out of the window, he saw not a single stone of the other castle in which his son-in-law and his daughter lived. He grew uneasy and sent for his courtiers.

They came in, bowing and scraping.

"Do you see the castle there, on the other side of the forest?" he asked. They stretched their necks and opened their eyes. But they could see nothing.

"What has become of it?" said the king. But this question they were unable to answer.

In a short time the king and his entire court set out, passed through the forest, and when they came to the place where the castle, with its great gardens, should have been standing, they saw nothing but juniper-bushes and scrub-pines. And then they happened to see the little hut amid the brush. He went in and — O the poor king! — what did he see?

There stood his son-in-law, with scarcely a shirt to his name, and his daughter, and she had none too much to wear, and was crying and sniveling at a fearful rate. “For heaven’s sake, what is the trouble here?” said the king. But he received no answer; for the duke would rather have died than have told him the whole story.

The king urged and pressed him, first amiably, then in anger; but the duke remained obstinate and would have nothing to say. Then the king fell into a rage, which is not very surprising, for now he realized that this fine duke was not what he purported to be, and he therefore ordered him to be hung, and hung on the spot. It is true that the princess pleaded earnestly for him, but tears and prayers were useless now, for he was a rascal and should die a rascal’s death — thus spake the king.

And so it was. The king’s people set up a gallows and put a rope around the duke’s neck. But as they were leading him to the gallows, the princess got hold of the hangman and gave him a gratuity, for which they were to arrange matters in such wise that the duke need not die. And toward evening they were to cut him down, and he and the princess would disappear. So the bargain was made. In the meantime they strung him up and then the king, together with his court and all the people, went away.

Now the duke was at the end of his rope. Yet he had time enough to reflect about his mistake in not contenting himself with an inch instead of reaching out at once for an ell; and that he had so foolishly given back the scrap of paper to Lasse annoyed him most of all. If I only had it again, I would show every one that adversity has made me wise, he thought to himself. But when the horse is stolen we close the stable door. And that is the way of the world.

And then he dangled his legs, since for the time being there was nothing else for him to do.

It had been a long, hard day for him, and he was not sorry when he saw the sun sinking behind the forest. But just as the sun was setting he suddenly heard a most tremendous Yo ho! and when he looked down there were seven carts of worn-out shoes coming along the road, and a-top the last cart was a little old man in gray, with a night-cap on his head. He had the face of some horrible specter, and was not much better to look at in other respects.

He drove straight up to the gallows, and stopped when he was directly beneath them, looked up at the duke and laughed — the horrible old creature!

“And is this the measure of your stupidity?” he said, “but then what is a fellow of your sort to do with his stupidity, if he does not put it to some use?” — and then he laughed again. “Yes, there you hang, and here I am carting off all the shoes I wore out going about on your silly errands. I wonder, sometimes, whether you can actually read what is written on that scrap of paper, and whether you recognize it,” said he, laughing again, indulging in all sorts of horse-play, and waving the scrap of paper under the duke’s nose.

But all who are hanging on the gallows are not dead, and this time Lasse was the greater fool of the two.

The duke snatched — and tore the scrap of paper from his hand!

“Lasse, my thrall!”

“What does my master command?”

“Cut me down from the gallows at once, and restore the castle and everything else just as it was before, then when it is dark, bring the princess back to it.”

Everything was attended to with alarming rapidity, and soon all was exactly as it had been before Lasse had decamped.

When the king awoke the following morning, he looked out of the window as usual, and there the castle was standing as before, with its weathercocks gleaming handsomely in the sunlight. He sent for his courtiers, and they came in bowing and scraping.

“Do you see the castle over yonder?” asked the king.

They stretched their necks, and gazed and stared. Yes, indeed, they could see the castle.

Then the king sent for the princess; but she was not there. Thereupon the king set off to see whether his son-in-law was hanging in the appointed spot; but no, there was not a sign of either son-in-law or gallows.

Then he had to take off his crown and scratch his head. Yet that did not change matters, and he could not for the life of him understand why things should be as they were. Finally he set out with his entire court, and when they reached the spot where the castle should have been standing, there it stood.

The gardens and the roses were just as they had been, and the duke's servitors were to be seen in swarms beneath the trees. His son-in-law in person, together with his daughter, dressed in the finest clothes, came down the stairs to meet him.

The devil has a hand in it, thought the king; and so strange did all seem to him that he did not trust the evidence of his own eyes.

"God greet you and welcome, father!" said the duke. The king could only stare at him. "Are you, are you my son-in-law?" he asked.

"Why, of course," said the duke, "who else am I supposed to be?"

"Did I not have you strung up yesterday as a thief and a vagabond?" inquired the king.

"I really believe father has gone out of his mind on the way over to us," said the duke and laughed.

"Does father think that I would allow myself to be hanged so easily? Or is there any one present who dare suppose such a thing?" he said, and looked them straight in the eye, so that they knew he was looking at them. They bent their backs and bowed and scraped.

"And who can imagine any such thing? How could it be possible? Or should there be any one present who dare say that the king wishes me ill, let him speak out," said the duke, and gazed at them with even greater keenness than before. All bent their backs and bowed and scraped.

How should any of them come to any such conclusion? No, none of them were foolish to such a degree, they said.

Now the king was really at a loss to know what to think. When he looked at the duke he felt sure that he could never have wished to harm him, and yet — he was not quite sure.

"Was I not here yesterday, and was not the whole castle gone, and had not an old hut taken its place, and did I not enter the hut and see you standing there with scarcely a shirt to your name?" he asked.

"How father talks," said the duke. "I am afraid, very much afraid, that trolls have blinded you, and led you astray in the forest. What do you think?" he said and turned to the courtiers.

They at once bowed and cringed fifty times in succession, and took the duke's side, as stands to reason.

The king rubbed his eyes and looked around.

"It must be as you say," he told the duke, "and I believe that I have recovered my reason, and have found my eyes again. And it would have been a sin and shame had I had you hung," said he. Then he grew joyful and no one gave the matter further thought.

But adversity teaches one to be wise, so people say, and the duke now began to attend to most things himself, and to see to it that Lasse did not have to wear out so many pairs of shoes. The king at once bestowed half the kingdom upon him, which gave him plenty to do, and people said that one would have to look far in order to find a better ruler.

Then Lasse came to the duke one day, and though he did not look much better than before, he was more civil and did not venture to grin and carry on.

"You no longer need my help," said he, "for though formerly I used to wear out all my shoes, I now cannot even wear out a single pair, and I almost believe my legs are moss-grown. Will you not discharge me?”

The duke thought he could. “I have taken great pains to spare you, and I really believe that I can get along without you,” he replied. “But the castle here and all the other things I could not well dispense with, since I never again could find an architect like yourself, and you may take for granted that I have no wish to ornament the gallows-tree a second time. Therefore I will not, of my own free will, give you back the scrap of paper,” said he.

“While it is in your possession I have nothing to fear,” answered Lasse.

“But should the paper fall into other hands, then I should have to begin to run and work all over again and that, just that, is what I would like to prevent. When a fellow has been working a thousand years, as I have, he is bound to grow weary at last.”

So they came to the conclusion that the duke should put the scrap of paper in its little box and bury it seven ells underground, beneath a stone that had grown there and would remain there as well. Then they thanked each other for pleasant comradeship and separated. The duke did as he had agreed to do, and no one saw him hide the box. He lived happily with his princess, and was blessed with sons and daughters. When the king died, he inherited the whole kingdom and, as you may imagine, he was none the worse off thereby, and no doubt he is still living and ruling there, unless he has died.

As to the little box containing the scrap of paper, many are still digging and searching for it.

3

FINN, THE GIANT, AND THE MINSTER OF LUND

There stands in the university town of Schonen, the town of Lund, the seat of the first archbishopric in all Scandinavia, a stately Romanic minster, with a large, handsome crypt beneath the choir. The opinion is universal that the minster will never be altogether finished, but that something will always be lacking about the structure. The reason is said to be as follows:

When St. Lawrence came to Lund to preach the Gospel, he wanted to build a church; but did not know how he was to obtain the means to do so.

While he was cudgelling his brains about it, a giant came to him and offered to build the church on condition that St. Lawrence tell him his name before the church was completed. But should St. Lawrence be unable to do so, the giant was to receive either the sun, the moon or St. Lawrence’s eyes. The saint agreed to his proposal.

The building of the church made rapid progress, and ere long it was nearly finished. St. Lawrence thought ruefully about his prospects, for he did not know the giant’s name; yet at the same time he did not relish losing his eyes. And it happened that while he was walking without the town, much concerned about the outcome of the affair, he grew weary, and sat down on a hill to rest. As he sat there he heard a child crying within the hill, and a woman’s voice began to sing:

Sleep, sleep, my baby dear,
To-morrow your father, Finn, will be here;
Then sun and moon you shall have from the skies
To play with, or else St. Lawrence's eyes.

When St. Lawrence heard that he was happy; for now he knew the giant's name. He ran back quickly to town, and went to the church. There sat the giant on the roof, just about to set the last stone in place, when at that very moment the saint called out:

Finn, Finn,
Take care how you put the stone in!

Then the giant flung the stone from him, full of rage, said that the church should never be finished, and with that he disappeared. Since then something has always been missing from the church.

Others say that the giant and his wife rushed down into the crypt in their rage, and each seizing a column were about to tear down the church, when they were turned into stone, and may be seen to this day standing beside the columns they had grasped.

4

THE SKALUNDA GIANT

In the Skalunda mountain, near the church, there once lived a giant in the early days, who no longer felt comfortable after the church had been built there. At length he decided that he could no longer stand the ringing of the church bells; so he emigrated and settled down on an island far out in the North Sea. Once upon a time a ship was wrecked on this island, and among those saved were several people from Skalunda.

“Whence do you hail?” asked the giant, who by now had grown old and blind, and sat warming himself before a log fire.

“We are from Skalunda, if you wish to know,” said one of the men saved.

“Give me your hand, so that I may feel whether there is still warm blood to be found in the Swedish land,” said the giant.

The man, who feared to shake hands with the giant, drew a red-hot bar of iron from the fire and handed it to him. He seized it firmly, and pressed it so hard that the molten iron ran down between his fingers.

“Yes, there is still warm blood to be found in Sweden,” said he. “And tell me,” he continued, “is Skalunda mountain still standing?”

“No, the hens have scratched it away,” the man answered.

“How could it last?” said the giant. “My wife and daughter piled it up in the course of a single Sunday morning. But surely the Hallenberg and the

Hunneberg are still standing, for those I built myself.”

When the man had confirmed this, the giant wanted to know whether Karin was still living in Stommen. And when they told him that she was, he gave them a girdle, and with it the message that Karin was to wear it in remembrance of him.

The men took the girdle and gave it to Karin upon their return home; but before Karin put it on, she clasped it around the oak-tree that grew in the court. No sooner had she done so than the oak tore itself out of the ground, and flew to the North, borne away by the storm-wind. In the place where it had stood was a deep pit, and the roots of the tree were so enormous that one of the best springs in Stommen flows from one of the root-holes to this very day.

5

YULETIDE SPECTERS

Once upon a time there lived two peasants on a homestead called Vaderas, just as there are two peasants living on it now. In those days the roads were good, and the women were in the habit of riding when they wanted to go to church.

One Christmas the two women agreed that they would ride to Christmas night mass, and whichever one of them woke up at the right time was to call the other, for in those days there was no such thing as a watch. It was about midnight when one of the women thought she heard a voice from the window, calling: “I am going to set out now.” She got up hurriedly and dressed herself, so that she might be able to ride with the other woman; but since there was no time to eat, she took a piece of bread from the table along with her. In those times it was customary to bake the bread in the shape of a cross. It was a piece of this kind that the woman took and put in her pocket, in order to eat it underway. She rode as fast as she could, to catch up with her friend, but could not overtake her. The way led over a little stream which flows into Vidostern Lake, and across the stream was a bridge, known as the Earth Bridge, and on the bridge stood two witch trolls, busy washing. As the woman came riding across the bridge, one of the witch trolls called out to the other, “Hurry, and tear her head from her shoulders!”

“That I cannot do” returned the other, “because she has a bit of bread in the form of a cross in her pocket.”

The woman, who had been unable to catch up with her neighbor, reached the church at Hanger alone.

The church was full of lights, as was always the case when the Christmas mass was said. As quickly as ever she could the woman tied up her horse, and hurriedly entered the church. It seemed to her that the church was crowded with people; but all of them were headless, and at the altar stood the priest, in full canonicals but without a head. In her haste she did not at once see how things were; but sat down in her accustomed place. As she sat down it seemed to her that some one said: “If I had not stood godfather to you when you were christened, I would do away with you as you sit there, and now hurry and make yourself scarce, or it will be the worse for you!” Then she realized that things were not as they should be, and ran out hastily.

When she came into the church-yard, it seemed to her as though she were surrounded by a great crowd of people. In those days people wore broad mantles of unbleached wool, woven at home, and white in color. She was wearing one of these mantles and the specters seized it. But she flung it away from her and managed to escape from the church-yard, and run to the poor-house and wake the people there. It is said it was then one o’clock at night.

So she sat and waited for the early mass at four o’clock in the morning. And when day finally dawned, they found a little piece of her mantle on every grave in the church-yard.

A similar experience befell a man and his wife who lived in a hut known as Ingas, below Mosled.

They were no more than an hour ahead of time; but when they reached the church at Hanger, they thought the service had already begun, and wanted to enter at once; but the church was barred and bolted, and the phantom service of the dead was nearing its end. And when the actual mass began, there was found lying at every place some of the earth from the graves of those who shortly before had been worshiping. The man and his wife thereupon fell grievously ill, because they had disturbed the dead.

6

SILVERWHITE AND LILLWACKER

Once upon a time there was a king, who had a queen whom he loved with a great love. But after a time the queen died, and all he had left was an only daughter. And now that the king was a widower, his whole heart went out to the little princess, whom he cherished as the apple of his eye. And the king's young daughter grew up into the most lovely maiden ever known.

When the princess had seen the snows of fifteen winters, it happened that a great war broke out, and that her father had to march against the foe.

But there was no one to whom the king could entrust his daughter while he was away at war; so he had a great tower built out in the forest, provided it with a plenteous store of supplies, and in it shut up his daughter and a maid. And he had it proclaimed that every man, no matter who he might be, was forbidden to approach the tower in which he had placed his daughter and the maid, under pain of death.

Now the king thought he had taken every precaution to protect his daughter, and went off to war. In the meantime the princess and her maid sat in the tower. But in the city there were a number of brave young sons of kings, as well as other young men, who would have liked to have talked to the beautiful maiden. And when they found that this was forbidden them, they conceived a great hatred for the king. At length they took counsel with an old woman who was wiser than most folk, and told her to arrange matters in such wise that the king’s daughter and her maid might come into disrepute, without their having anything to do with it. The old hag promised to help them, enchanted some apples, laid them in a basket, and went to the lonely tower in which the maidens lived.

When the king’s daughter and her maid saw the old woman, who was sitting beneath the window, they felt a great longing to try the beautiful apples.

So they called out and asked how much she wanted for her precious apples; but the old woman said they were not for sale. Yet as the girls kept on pleading with her, the old woman said she would make each of them a present of an apple; they only need let down a little basket from the tower. The princess and her maid, in all innocence, did as the troll-woman told them, and each received an apple. But the enchanted fruit had a strange effect, for in due course of time heaven sent them each a child. The king’s daughter called her son Silverwhite, and the son of her maid received the name of Lillwacker.

The two boys grew up larger and stronger than other children, and were very handsome as well. They looked as much alike as one cherry-pit does to another, and one could easily see that they were related.

Seven years had passed, and the king was expected home from the war. Then both girls were terrified, and they took counsel together as to how they might hide their children. When at length they could find no other way out of the difficulty, they very sorrowfully bade their children farewell, and let them down from the tower at night, to seek their fortune in the wide, wide world. At parting the king’s daughter gave Silverwhite a costly knife; but the maid had nothing to give her son.

The two foster-brethren now wandered out into the world. After they had gone a while, they came to a dark forest. And in this forest they met a man, strange-looking and very tall. He wore two swords at his side, and was accompanied by six great dogs. He gave them a friendly greeting:

“Good-day, little fellows, whence do you come and whither do you go?” The boys told him they came from a high tower, and were going out into the world to seek their fortune. The man replied:

“If such be the case, I know more about your origin than any one else. And that you may have something by which to remember your father, I will give each of you a sword and three dogs. But you must promise me one thing, that you will never part from your dogs; but take them with you wherever you go.” The boys thanked the man for his kind gifts, and promised to do as he had told them. Then they bade him farewell and went their way.

When they had traveled for some time they reached a cross-road. Then Silverwhite said:

“It seems to me that it would be the best for us to try our luck singly, so let us part.” Lillwacker answered: “Your advice is good; but how am I to know whether or not you are doing well out in the world?”

“I will give you a token by which you may tell,” said Silverwhite, “so long as the water runs clear in this spring you will know that I am alive; but if it turns red and roiled, it will mean that I am dead.” Silverwhite then drew runes in the water of the spring, said farewell to his brother, and each of them went on alone. Lillwacker soon came to a king’s court, and took service there; but every morning he would go to the spring to see how his brother fared.

Silverwhite continued to wander over hill and dale, until he reached a great city. But the whole city was in mourning, the houses were hung in black, and all the inhabitants went about full of grief and care, as though some great misfortune had occurred.

Silverwhite went though the city and inquired as to the cause of all the unhappiness he saw. They answered: “You must have come from far away, since you do not know that the king and queen were in danger of being drowned at sea, and he had to promise to give up their three daughters in order to escape. To-morrow morning the sea-troll is coming to carry off the oldest princess.” This news pleased Silverwhite; for he saw a fine opportunity to wealth and fame, should fortune favor him.

The next morning Silverwhite hung his sword at his side, called his dogs to him, and wandered down to the sea-shore alone. And as he sat on the strand he saw the king’s daughter led out of the city, and with her went a courtier, who had promised to rescue her. But the princess was very sad and cried bitterly. Then Silverwhite stepped up to her with a polite greeting. When the king’s daughter and her escort saw the fearless youth, they were much frightened, because they thought he was the sea-troll. The courtier was so alarmed that he ran away and took refuge in a tree. When Silverwhite saw how frightened the princess was, he said: “Lovely maiden, do not fear me, for I will do you no harm.” The king’s daughter answered:

“Are you the troll who is coming to carry me away?” “No,” said Silverwhite, “I have come to rescue you.” Then the princess was glad to think that such a brave hero was going to defend her, and they had a long, friendly talk. At the same time Silverwhite begged the king’s daughter to comb his hair. She complied with his request, and Silverwhite laid his head in her lap; but when he did so the princess drew a golden ring from her finger and, unbeknown to him, wound it into his locks.

Suddenly the sea-troll rose from the deeps, setting the waves whirling and foaming far and near. When the troll saw Silverwhite, he grew angry and said: “Why do you sit there beside my princess?” The youth replied: “It seems to me that she is my princess, not yours.” The sea-troll answered: “Time enough to see which of us is right; but first our dogs shall fight.” Silverwhite was nothing loath, and set his dogs at the dogs of the troll, and there was a fierce struggle. But at last the youth’s dogs got the upper hand and bit the dogs of the sea-troll to death. Then Silverwhite drew his sword with a great sweep, rushed upon the sea-troll, and gave him such a tremendous blow that the monster’s head rolled on the sand. The troll gave a fearsome cry, and flung himself back into the sea, so that the water spurted to the very skies. Thereupon the youth drew out his silver-mounted knife, cut out the troll’s eyes and put them in his pocket. Then he saluted the lovely princess and went away.

Now when the battle was over and the youth had disappeared, the courtier crawled down from his tree, and threatened to kill the princess if she did not say before all the people that he, and none other, had rescued her. The king’s daughter did not dare refuse, since she feared for her life. So she returned to her father’s castle with the courtier, where they were received with great distinction.

And joy reigned throughout the land when the news spread that the oldest princess had been rescued from the troll.

On the following day everything repeated itself. Silverwhite went down to the strand and met the second princess, just as she was to be delivered to the troll.

And when the king’s daughter and her escort saw him, they were very much frightened, thinking he was the sea-troll. And the courtier climbed a tree, just as he had before; but the princess granted the youth’s petition, combed his hair as her sister had done, and also wound her gold ring into his long curls.

After a time there was a great tumult out at sea, and a sea-troll rose from the waves. He had three heads and three dogs. But Silverwhite’s dogs overcame those of the troll, and the youth killed the troll himself with his sword. Thereupon he took out his silver-mounted knife, cut out the troll’s eyes, and went his way. But the courtier lost no time. He climbed down from his tree and forced the princess to promise to say that he, and none other, had rescued her. Then they returned to the castle, where the courtier was acclaimed as the greatest of heroes.

On the third day Silverwhite hung his sword at his side, called his three dogs to him, and again wandered down to the sea-shore. As he was sitting by the strand, he saw the youngest princess led out of the city, and with her the daring courtier who claimed to have rescued her sisters. But the princess was very sad and cried bitterly. Then Silverwhite stepped up and greeted the lovely maiden politely. Now when the king's daughter and her escort saw the handsome youth, they were very much frightened, for they believed him to be the sea-troll, and the courtier ran away and hid in a high tree that grew near the strand. When Silverwhite noticed the maiden's terror, he said:

"Lovely maiden, do not fear me, for I will do you no harm." The king's daughter answered: "Are you the troll who is coming to carry me away?" "No," said Silverwhite, "I have come to rescue you." Then the princess was very glad to have such a brave hero fight for her, and they had a long, friendly talk with each other. At the same time Silverwhite begged the lovely maiden to do him a favor and comb his hair. This the king's daughter was most willing to do, and Silverwhite laid his head in her lap. But when the princess saw the gold rings her sisters had wound in his locks, she was much surprised, and added her own to the others.

Suddenly the sea-troll came shooting up out of the deep with a terrific noise, so that waves and foam spurted to the very skies. This time the monster had six heads and nine dogs. When the troll saw Silverwhite sitting with the king's daughter, he fell into a rage and cried: "What are you doing with my princess?" The youth answered: "It seems to me that she is my princess rather than yours." Thereupon the troll said: "Time enough to see which of us is right; but first our dogs shall fight each other." Silverwhite did not delay, but set his dogs at the sea-dogs, and they had a battle royal. But in the end the youth's dogs got the upper hand and bit all nine of the sea-dogs to death. Finally Silverwhite drew out his bare sword, flung himself upon the sea-troll, and stretched all six of his heads on the sand with a single blow. The monster uttered a terrible cry, and rushed back into the sea so that the water spurted to the heavens. Then the youth drew his silver-mounted knife, cut out all twelve of the troll's eyes, saluted the king's young daughter, and hastily went away.

Now that the battle was over, and the youth had disappeared, the courtier climbed down from his tree, drew his sword and threatened to kill the princess unless she promised to say that he had rescued her from the troll, as he had her sisters.

The king's daughter did not dare refuse, since she feared for her life. So they went back to the castle together, and when the king saw that they had returned in safety, without so much as a scratch, he and the whole court were full of joy, and they were accorded great honors. And at court the courtier was quite another fellow from the one who had hid away in the tree. The king had a splendid banquet prepared, with amusements and games, and the sound of string music and dancing, and bestowed the hand of his youngest daughter on the courtier in reward for his bravey.

In the midst of the wedding festivities, when the king and his whole court were seated at table, the door opened, and in came Silverwhite with his dogs.

The youth stepped boldly into the hall of state and greeted the king. And when the three princesses saw who it was, they were full of joy, leaped up from their places, and ran over to him, much to the king's surprise, who asked what it all meant. Then the youngest princess told him all that had happened, from beginning to end, and that Silverwhite had rescued them, while the courtier sat in a tree. To prove it beyond any chance of doubt, each of the king's daughters showed her father the ring she had wound in Silverwhite's locks. But the king still did not know quite what to think of it all, until Silverwhite said: "My lord king! In order that you need not doubt what your daughters have told you, I will show you the eyes of the sea-trolls whom I slew." Then the king and all the rest saw that the princesses had told the truth. The traitorous courtier received his just punishment; but

Silverwhite was paid every honor, and was given the youngest daughter and half of the kingdom with her.

After the wedding Silverwhite established himself with his young bride in a large castle belonging to the king, and there they lived quietly and happily.

One night, when all were sleeping, it chanced that he heard a knocking at the window, and a voice which said: “Come, Silverwhite, I have to talk to you!” The king, who did not want to wake his young wife, rose hastily, girded on his sword, called his dogs and went out. When he reached the open air, there stood a huge and savage-looking troll. The troll said: “Silverwhite, you have slain my three brothers, and I have come to bid you go down to the sea-shore with me, that we may fight with one another.” This proposal suited the youth, and he followed the troll without protest. When they reached the sea-shore, there lay three great dogs belonging to the troll. Silverwhite at once set his dogs at the troll-dogs, and after a hard struggle the latter had to give in. The young king drew his sword, bravely attacked the troll and dealt him many a mighty blow. It was a tremendous battle. But when the troll noticed he was getting the worst of it, he grew frightened, quickly ran to a high tree, and clambered into it. Silverwhite and the dogs ran after him, the dogs barking as loudly as they could. Then the troll begged for his life and said: “Dear Silverwhite, I will take wergild for my brothers, only bid your dogs be still, so that we may talk.” The king bade his dogs be still, but in vain, they only barked the more loudly. Then the troll tore three hairs from his head, handed them to Silverwhite and said: “Lay a hair on each of the dogs, and then they will be as quiet as can be.” The king did so and at once the dogs fell silent, and lay motionless as though they had grown fast to the ground. Now Silverwhite realized that he had been deceived; but it was too late. The troll was already descending from the tree, and he drew his sword and again began to fight. But they had exchanged no more than a few blows, before Silverwhite received a mortal wound, and lay on the earth in a pool of blood.

But now we must tell about Lillwacker. The next morning he went to the spring by the cross-road and found it red with blood. Then he knew that Silverwhite was dead. He called his dogs, hung his sword at his side, and went on until he came to a great city. And the city was in festal array, the streets were crowded with people, and the houses were hung with scarlet cloths and splendid rugs. Lillwacker asked why everybody was so happy, and they said: “You must hail from distant parts, since you do not know that a famous hero has come here by the name of Silverwhite, who has rescued our three princesses, and is now the king’s son-in-law.” Lillwacker then inquired how it had all come about, and then went his way, reaching the royal castle in which Silverwhite dwelt with his beautiful queen in the evening.

When Lillwacker entered the castle gate, all greeted him as though he had been the king. For he resembled his foster-brother so closely that none could tell one from the other. When the youth came to the queen’s room, she also took him for Silverwhite. She went up to him and said: “My lord king, where have you been so long? I have been awaiting you with great anxiety.” Lillwacker said little, and was very taciturn. Then he lay down on a couch in a corner of the queen’s room.

The young woman did not know what to think of his actions; for her husband did not act queerly at other times. But she thought: “One should not try to discover the secrets of others,” and said nothing.

In the night, when all were sleeping, there was a knocking at the window, and a voice cried: “Come, Lillwacker, I have to talk to you!” The youth rose hastily, took his good sword, called his dogs and went. When he reached the open air, there stood the same troll who had slain Silverwhite. He said: “Come with me, Lillwacker, and then you shall see your foster-brother!” To this Lillwacker at once agreed, and the troll led the way. When they came to the sea-shore, there lay the three great dogs whom the troll had brought with him. Somewhat further away, where they had fought, lay Silverwhite in a pool of blood, and beside him his dogs were stretched out on the ground as though they had taken root in it. Then Lillwacker saw how everything had happened, and thought that he would gladly venture his life, if he might in some way call his brother back from the dead. He at once set his dogs at the troll-dogs, and they had a hard struggle, in which Lillwacker's dogs won the victory. Then the youth drew his sword, and attacked the troll with mighty blows. But when the troll saw that he was getting the worst of it, he took refuge in a lofty tree. Lillwacker and his dogs ran after him and the dogs barked loudly.

Then the troll humbly begged for his life, and said: "Dear Lillwacker, I will give you wergild for your brother, only bid your dogs be still, so that we may talk." At the same time the troll handed him three hairs from his head and added: "Lay one of these hairs on each of your dogs, and then they will soon be quiet." But Lillwacker saw through his cunning scheme, took the three hairs and laid them on the troll-dogs, which at once fell on the ground and lay like dead.

When the troll saw that his attempt had failed, he was much alarmed and said: "Dearest Lillwacker, I will give you wergild for your brother, if you will only leave me alone." But the youth answered:

"What is there you can give me that will compensate for my brother's life?" The troll replied: "Here are two flasks. In one is a liquid which, if you anoint a dead man with it, it will restore him to life; but as to the liquid in the other flask, if you moisten anything with it, and some one touches the place you have moistened, he will be unable to move from the spot. I think it would be hard to find anything more precious than the liquid in these flasks." Lillwacker said: "Your proposal suits me, and I will accept it. But there is something else you must promise to do: that you will release my brother's dogs." The troll agreed, climbed down from the tree, breathed on the dogs and thus freed them. Then Lillwacker took the two flasks and went away from the sea-shore with the troll. After they had gone a while they came to a great flat stone, lying near the highway. Lillwacker hastened on in advance and moistened it with liquid from the second flask. Then, as he was going by, Lillwacker suddenly set all six of his dogs at the troll, who stepped back and touched the stone. There he stuck, and could move neither forward nor backward. After a time the sun rose and shone on the stone. And when the troll saw the sun he burst — and was as dead as a doornail!

Lillwacker now ran back to his brother and sprinkled him with the liquid in the other flask, so that he came to life again, and they were both very happy, as may well be imagined. The two foster-brothers then returned to the castle, recounting the story of their experiences and adventures on the way. Lillwacker told how he had been taken for his brother. He even mentioned that he had lain down on a couch in a corner of the queen's room, and that she had never suspected that he was not her rightful husband. But when Silverwhite heard that, he thought that Lillwacker had offended against the queen's dignity, and he grew angry and fell into such a rage that he drew his sword, and thrust it into his brother's breast. Lillwacker fell to earth dead, and Silverwhite went home to the castle alone. But Lillwacker's dogs would not leave their master, and lay around him, whining and licking his wound.

In the evening, when the young king and his wife retired, the queen asked him why he had been so taciturn and serious the evening before. Then the queen said: "I am very curious to know what has befallen you during the last few days, but what I would like to know most of all, is why you lay down on a couch in a corner of my room the other night?" Now it was clear to Silverwhite that the brother he had slain was innocent of all offense, and he felt bitter regret at having repaid his faithfulness so badly. So King Silverwhite at once rose and went to the place where his brother was lying. He poured the water of life from his flask and anointed his brother’s wound, and in a moment Lillwacker was alive again, and the two brother’s went joyfully back to the castle.

When they got there, Silverwhite told his queen how Lillwacker had rescued him from death, and all the rest of their adventures, and all were happy at the royal court, and they paid the youth the greatest honors and compliments. After he had stayed there a time he sued for the hand of the second princess and obtained it. Thereupon the wedding was celebrated with great pomp, and Silverwhite divided his half of the kingdom with his foster-brother. The two brothers continued to live together in peace and unity, and if they have not died, they are living still.

7

TOMPE PILT

Not far from Baalsberg, near Filkestad in the Willandsharad, there is a hill in which a giant named Stompe Pilt once used to live.

It happened one day that a goat-herd was driving his flock up the hill in which Stompe Pilt dwelt.

“Who is there?” cried the giant, and rushed out of his hill with a hunk of flint-rock in his fist.

“I am, if that’s what you want to know!” shouted the shepherd-lad and continued driving his goats up the hill.

“If you come here, I will squash you as I squash this stone!” cried the giant and he crushed it into fine sand between his fingers.

“And I will squash you till the water runs out, just as I squash this stone!” answered the shepherd-lad, drawing a fresh cheese from his pocket, and pressing it hard, so that the water ran from his fingers.

“Are you not frightened?” asked the giant.

“Of you? Certainly not!” was the youth’s reply.

“Then we will fight with one another!” proposed the giant.

“As you choose,” replied the shepherd, “but first we must abuse each other so that we can get into a proper rage, because as we abuse each other we will grow angry, and when we are angry we will fight!”

“But I shall begin by abusing you,” said the giant.

“As you choose,” said the youth, “but then it will be my turn.”

“May a troll with a crooked nose take you!” yelled the giant.

“May a flying devil carry you off!” answered the shepherd and he shot a sharp arrow against the giant’s body with his bow.

“What was that?” asked the giant, and tried to pull the arrow out of his body.

“That was a word of abuse,” said the shepherd.

“How does it come to have feathers?” asked the giant.

“The better to fly with,” answered the shepherd.

“Why does it stick so tight?” the giant continued.

“Because it has taken root in your body,” was the shepherd’s answer.

“Have you any other abusive words of the same sort?” asked the giant. “Here is another one,” replied the youth, and shot another arrow into the giant.

“Ouch, ouch!” cried Stompe Pilt, “are you still not angry enough for us to come to blows?”

“No, I have not abused you enough as yet,” said the shepherd and aimed another arrow.

“Lead your goats wherever you choose! If I cannot stand your abusive words, I surely will not be able to bear up against your blows,” cried Stompe Pilt, and jumped back into his hill.

And that is how the shepherd gained the victory, because he was brave and did not let the stupid giant frighten him.

8

THE GIRL AND THE SNAKE

Once upon a time there was a girl who was to go to the wood and drive the cattle home; but she did not find the herd, and losing her way instead, came to a great hill. It had gates and doors and she went in. There stood a table covered with all sorts of good things to eat. And there stood a bed as well, and in the bed lay a great snake. The snake said to the girl: "Sit down, if you choose! Eat, if you choose! Come and lie down in the bed, if you choose! But if you do not choose, then do not do so." So the girl did nothing at all. At last the snake said: "Some people are coming now who want you to dance with them. But do not go along with them." Straightway people arrived who wanted to dance with the girl; but she would hear nothing of it. Then they began to eat and drink; but the girl left the hill and went home. The following day she again went to the wood to look for the cattle, did not find them, lost her way again, and came to the same hill. This time she also entered, and found everything as it had been the first time, the well-spread table and the bed with the snake in it. And the snake said to her, as before: "Sit down, if you choose! Eat, if you choose! Come, and lie down in the bed if you choose! But if you do not choose, then do not do so! Now a great many more people are coming who will want to dance with you, but do not go with them." The snake had scarcely concluded before a great many people arrived, who began to dance, eat and drink; but the girl did not keep them company, instead she left the hill and went home.

On the third day when she once more went to the wood, everything happened exactly as on the first and second day. The snake invited her to eat and drink, and this time she did so, with a hearty appetite. Then the snake told her to lie down beside him and the girl obeyed. Then the snake said: “Put your arm about me!” She did so. “And now kiss me,” said the snake, “but if you are afraid, put your apron between us.” The girl did so, and in a moment the snake was turned into a marvellously handsome youth, who was really a prince, bewitched in the form of a snake by magic spells, and now delivered by the girl’s courage. Then both of them went away and there was nothing further heard of them.

9

FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL

Once upon a time there was a couple of humble cottagers who had no children until, at last, the man’s wife was blessed with a boy, which made both of them very happy. They named him Faithful and when he was christened a *huldra* came to the hut, seated herself beside the child’s cradle, and foretold that he would meet with good fortune. “What is more,” she said, “when he is fifteen years of age, I will make him a present of a horse with many rare qualities, a horse that has the gift of speech!” And with that the *huldra* turned and went away.

The boy grew up and became strong and powerful. And when he had passed his fifteenth year, a strange old man came up to their hut one day, knocked, and said that the horse he was leading had been sent by his queen, and that henceforward it was to belong to Faithful, as she had promised. Then the ancient man departed; but the beautiful horse was admired by all, and Faithful learned to love it more with every passing day.

At length he grew weary of home. “I must away and try my fortune in the world,” said he, and his parents did not like to object; for there was not much to wish for at home. So he led his dear horse from the stable, swung himself into the saddle, and rode hurriedly into the wood. He rode on and on, and had already covered a good bit of ground, when he saw two lions engaged in a struggle with a tiger, and they were well-nigh overcome.

“Make haste to take your bow,” said the horse, “shoot the tiger and deliver the two lions!” “Yes, that’s what I will do,” said the youth, fitted an arrow to the bow-string, and in a moment the tiger lay prone on the ground. The two lions drew nearer, nuzzled their preserver in a friendly and grateful manner, and then hastened back to their cave.

Faithful now rode along for a long time among the great trees until he suddenly spied two terrified white doves fleeing from a hawk who was on the point of catching them. “Make haste to take your bow,” said the horse, “shoot the hawk and save the two doves!” “Yes, that’s what I’ll do,” said the youth. He fitted an arrow to the bow-string, and in a moment the hawk lay prone on the ground. But the two doves flew nearer, fluttered about their deliverer in a tame and grateful manner, and then hurried back to their nest.

The youth pressed on through the wood and by now was far, far from home. But his horse did not tire easily, and ran on with him until they came to a great lake. There he saw a gull rise up from the water, holding a pike in its claws. “Make haste to take your bow,” said the horse, “shoot the gull and save the pike!” “Yes, that’s what I’ll do,” answered the youth, fitted an arrow to his bow-string, and in a moment the gull was threshing the ground with its wings, mortally wounded. But the pike who had been saved swam nearer, gave his deliverer a friendly, grateful glance, and then dove down to join his fellows beneath the waves.

Faithful rode on again, and before evening came to a great castle. He at once had himself announced to the king, and begged that the latter would take him into his service. “What kind of a place do you want?” asked the king, who was inclined to look with favor on the bold horseman.

“I should like to be a groom,” was Faithful’s answer, “but first of all I must have stable-room and fodder for my horse.” “That you shall have,” said the king, and the youth was taken on as a groom, and served so long and so well, that every one in the castle liked him, and the king in particular praised him highly.

But among the other servitors was one named Unfaithful who was jealous of Faithful, and did what he could to harm him; for he thought to himself:

“Then I would be rid of him, and need not see him continue to rise in my lord’s favor.” Now it happened that the king was very sad, for he had lost his queen, whom a troll had stolen from the castle. It is true that the queen had not taken pleasure in the king’s society, and that she did not love him. Still the king longed for her greatly, and often spoke of it to Unfaithful his servant. So one day Unfaithful said: “My lord need distress himself no longer, for Faithful has been boasting to me that he could rescue your beautiful queen from the hands of the troll.” “If he has done so,” replied the king, “then he must keep his word.”

He straightway ordered Faithful to be brought before him, and threatened him with death if he did not at once hurry into the hill and bring back the wife of whom he had been robbed. If he were successful great honor should be his reward. In vain Faithful denied what Unfaithful had said of him, the king stuck to his demand, and the youth withdrew, convinced that he had not long to live. Then he went to the stable to bid farewell to his beautiful horse, and stood beside him and wept. “What grieves you so?” asked the horse. Then the youth told him of all that had happened, and said that this was probably the last time he would be able to visit him. “If it be no more than that,” said the horse, “there is a way to help you. Up in the garret of the castle there is an old fiddle, take it with you and play it when you come to the place where the queen is kept. And fashion for yourself armor of steel wire, and set knives into it everywhere, and then, when you see the troll open his jaws, descend into his maw, and thus slay him. But you must have no fear, and must trust me to show you the way.” These words filled the youth with fresh courage, he went to the king and received permission to leave, secretly fashioned his steel armor, took the old fiddle from the garret of the castle, led his dear horse out of the stable, and without delay set forth for the troll’s hill.

Before long he saw it, and rode directly to the troll’s abode. When he came near, he saw the troll, who had crept out of his castle, lying stretched out at the entrance to his cave, fast asleep, and snoring so powerfully that the whole hill shook. But his mouth was wide open, and his maw was so tremendous that it was easy for the youth to crawl into it. He did so, for he was not afraid, and made his way into the troll’s inwards where he was so active that the troll was soon killed. Then Faithful crept out again, laid aside his armor, and entered the troll’s castle. Within the great golden hall sat the captive queen, fettered with seven strong chains of gold. Faithful could not break the strong chains; but he took up his fiddle and played such tender music on it, that the golden chains were moved, and one after another, fell from the queen, until she was able to rise and was free once more. She looked at the courageous youth with joy and gratitude, and felt very kindly toward him, because he was so handsome and courteous. And the queen was perfectly willing to return with him to the king’s castle.

The return of the queen gave rise to great joy, and Faithful received the promised reward from the king. But now the queen treated her husband with even less consideration than before. She would not exchange a word with him, she did not laugh, and locked herself up in her room with her gloomy thoughts. This greatly vexed the king, and one day he asked the queen why she was so sad: “Well,” said she, “I cannot be happy unless I have the beautiful golden hall which I had in the hill at the troll’s; for a hall like that is to be found nowhere else.”

“It will be no easy matter to obtain it for you,” said the king, “and I cannot promise you that anyone will be able to do it.” But when he complained of his difficulty to his servant Unfaithful, the latter answered: “The chances of success are not so bad, for Faithful said he could easily bring the troll’s golden hall to the castle.” Faithful was at once sent for, and the king commanded him, as he loved his life, to make good his word and bring the golden hall from the troll’s hill. It was in vain that Faithful denied Unfaithful’s assertions: go he must, and bring back the golden hall.

Inconsolable, he went to his beautiful horse, wept and wanted to say farewell to him forever. “What troubles you?” asked the horse. And the youth replied: “Unfaithful has again been telling lies about me, and if I do not bring the troll’s golden hall to the queen, my life will be forfeited.” “Is it nothing more serious than that?” said the horse. “See that you obtain a great ship, take your fiddle with you and play the golden hall out of the hill, then hitch the troll’s horses before it, and you will be able to bring the glistening hall here without trouble.”

Then Faithful felt somewhat better, did as the horse had told him, and was successful in reaching the great hill. And as he stood there playing the fiddle, the golden hall heard him, and was drawn to the sounding music, and it moved slowly, slowly, until it stood outside the hill. It was built of virgin gold, like a house by itself, and under it were many wheels. Then the youth took the troll’s horses, put them to the golden hall, and thus brought it aboard his ship. Soon he had crossed the lake, and brought it along safely so that it reached the castle without damage, to the great joy of the queen. Yet despite the fact, she was as weary of everything as she had been before, never spoke to her husband, the king, and no one ever saw her laugh.

Now the king grew even more vexed than he had been, and again asked her why she seemed so sad. “Ah, how can I be happy unless I have the two colts that used to belong to me, when I stayed at the troll’s! Such handsome steeds are to be seen nowhere else!” “It will be anything but easy to obtain for you what you want,” declared the king, “for they were untamed, and long ago must have run far away into the wild-wood.” Then he left her, sadly, and did not know what to do. But Unfaithful said: “Let my lord give himself no concern, for Faithful has declared he could easily secure both of the troll’s colts.” Faithful was at once sent for, and the king threatened him with death, if he did not show his powers in the matter of the colts. But should he succeed in catching them, then he would be rewarded.

Now Faithful knew quite well that he could not hope to catch the troll's wild colts, and he once more turned to the stable in order to bid farewell to the *huldra's* gift. "Why do you weep over such a trifle?" said the horse. "Hurry to the wood, play your fiddle, and all will be well!" Faithful did as he was told, and after a while the two lions whom he had rescued came leaping toward him, listened to his playing and asked him whether he was in distress. "Yes, indeed," said Faithful, and told them what he had to do. They at once ran back into the wood, one to one side and the other to the other, and returned quickly, driving the two colts before them. Then Faithful played his fiddle and the colts followed him, so that he soon reached the king's castle in safety, and could deliver the steeds to the queen.

The king now expected that his wife would be gay and happy. But she did not change, never addressed a word to him, and only seemed a little less sad when she happened to speak to the daring youth.

Then the king asked her to tell him what she lacked, and why she was so discontented. She answered: "I have secured the colts of the troll, and I often sit in the glittering hall of gold; but I can open none of the handsome chests that are filled to the brim with my valuables, because I have no keys. And if I do not get the keys again, how can I be happy?" "And where may the keys be?" asked the king. "In the lake by the troll's hill," said the queen, "for that is where I threw them when Faithful brought me here." "This is a ticklish affair, this business of those keys you want!" said the king. "And I can scarcely promise that you will ever see them again." In spite of this, however, he was willing to make an attempt, and talked it over with his servant Unfaithful. "Why, that is easily done," said the latter, "for Faithful boasted to me that he could get the queen's keys without any difficulty if he wished." "Then I shall compel him to keep his word," said the king. And he at once ordered Faithful, on pain of death, to get the queen's keys out of the lake by the troll's hill without delay.

This time the youth was not so depressed, for he thought to himself: "My wise horse will be able to help me." And so he was, for he advised him to go along playing his fiddle, and to wait for what might happen. After the youth had played for a while, the pike he had saved thrust his head out of the water, recognized him, and asked whether he could be of any service to him. "Yes, indeed!" said the youth, and told him what it was he wanted. The pike at once dived, quickly rose to the surface of the water with the golden keys in his mouth, and gave them to his deliverer. The latter hastened back with them, and now the queen could open the great chests in the golden hall to her heart's content.

Notwithstanding, the king's wife was as sorrowful as ever, and when the king complained about it to Unfaithful, the latter said: "No doubt it is because she loves Faithful. I would therefore advise that my lord have him beheaded. Then there will be a change." This advice suited the king well, and he determined to carry it out shortly. But one day Faithful's horse said to him: "The king is going to have your head chopped off. So hurry to the wood, play your fiddle, and beg the two doves to bring you a bottle of the water of life. Then go to the queen and ask her to set your head on your body and to sprinkle you with the water when you have been beheaded." Faithful did so. He went to the wood that very day with his fiddle, and before long the two doves were fluttering around him, and shortly after brought back the bottle filled with the water of life. He took it back home with him and gave it to the queen, so that she might sprinkle him with it after he had been beheaded. She did so, and at once Faithful rose again, as full of life as ever; but far better looking. The king was astonished at what he had seen, and told the queen to cut off his own head and then sprinkle him with the water. She at once seized the sword, and in a moment the king's head rolled to the ground. But she sprinkled none of the water of life upon it, and the king’s body was quickly carried out and buried. Then the queen and Faithful celebrated their wedding with great pomp; but Unfaithful was banished from the land and went away in disgrace. The wise horse dwelt contentedly in a wonderful chamber, and the king and queen kept the magic fiddle, the golden hall, and the troll’s other valuables, and lived in peace and happiness day after day.

10

STARKAD AND BALE

Starkad, the hero of the legends, the bravest warrior in the army of the North, had fallen into disgrace with the king because of a certain princess, so he wandered up into Norland, and settled down at Rude in Tuna, where he was known as the Thrall of the Alders or the Red Fellow.

In Balbo, nine miles from Rude, dwelt another hero, Bale, a good friend and companion-at-arms of Starkad.

One morning Starkad climbed the Klefberg in Tuna, and called over to Bale: “Bale in Balbo, are you awake?”

“Red Fellow!” answered Bale, nine miles away, “the sun and I wake together! But how goes it with you?”

“None too well. I eat salmon morning, noon and night. Come over with a bit of meat!”

“I’ll come!” Bale called back, and in a few hours time he was down in Tuna with an elk under each arm.

The following morning Bale in Balbo stood on a hill in Borgsjo and called: “Red Fellow! Are you awake?”

“The sun and I wake together!” answered Starkad. “And how goes it with you?”

“Alas, I have nothing to eat but meat! Elk in the morning, elk at noon and elk at night. Come over and bring a fish-tail along with you!”

“I’m coming!” called out Starkad, and in a short time he had joined his friend with a barrel of salmon under each arm.

In this fashion the two friends provided themselves with all the game to be found in the woods and in the water, and spread terror and destruction throughout the countryside. But one evening, when they were just returning to the sea from an excursion, a black cloud came up, and a tempest broke. They hurried along as fast as they could; but got no further than Vattjom, where a flash of lightning struck Starkad and flung him to the ground. His friend and companion-at-arms buried him beneath a stone cairn, about which he set five rocks: two at his feet, two at his shoulders, and one at his head; and that grave, measuring twenty ells in length, may still be seen near the river.

11

THE WEREWOLF

Once upon a time there was a king, who reigned over a great kingdom. He had a queen, but only a single daughter, a girl. In consequence the little girl was the apple of her parents’ eyes; they loved her above everything else in the world, and their dearest thought was the pleasure they would take in her when she was older. But the unexpected often happens; for before the king’s daughter began to grow up, the queen her mother fell ill and died. It is not hard to imagine the grief that reigned, not alone in the royal castle, but throughout the land; for the queen had been beloved of all. The king grieved so that he would not marry again, and his one joy was the little princess.

A long time passed, and with each succeeding day the king’s daughter grew taller and more beautiful, and her father granted her every wish. Now there were a number of women who had nothing to do but wait on the princess and carry out her commands. Among them was a woman who had formerly married and had two daughters. She had an engaging appearance, a smooth tongue and a winning way of talking, and she was as soft and pliable as silk; but at heart she was full of machinations and falseness. Now when the queen died, she at once began to plan how she might marry the king, so that her daughters might be kept like royal princesses. With this end in view, she drew the young princess to her, paid her the most fulsome compliments on everything she said and did, and was forever bringing the conversation around to how happy she would be were the king to take another wife. There was much said on this head, early and late, and before very long the princess came to believe that the woman knew all there was to know about everything. So she asked her what sort of a woman the king ought to choose for a wife. The woman answered as sweet as honey: “It is not my affair to give advice in this matter; yet he should choose for queen some one who is kind to the little princess. For one thing I know, and that is, were I fortunate enough to be chosen, my one thought would be to do all I could for the little princess, and if she wished to wash her hands, one of my daughters would have to hold the wash-bowl and the other hand her the towel.” This and much more she told the king’s daughter, and the princess believed it, as children will.

From that day forward the princess gave her father no peace, and begged him again and again to marry the good court lady. Yet he did not want to marry her. But the king’s daughter gave him no rest; but urged him again and again, as the false court lady had persuaded her to do. Finally, one day, when she again brought up the matter, the king cried: “I can see you will end by having your own way about this, even though it be entirely against my will. But I will do so only on one condition.” “What is the condition?” asked the princess. “If I marry again,” said the king, “it is only because of your ceaseless pleading. Therefore you must promise that, if in the future you are not satisfied with your step-mother or your step-sisters, not a single lament or complaint on your part reaches my ears.” This she promised the king, and it was agreed that he should marry the court lady and make her queen of the whole country.

As time passed on, the king’s daughter had grown to be the most beautiful maiden to be found far and wide; the queen’s daughters, on the other hand, were homely, evil of disposition, and no one knew any good of them. Hence it was not surprising that many youths came from East and

West to sue for the princess’s hand; but that none of them took any interest in the queen’s daughters. This made the step-mother very angry; but she concealed her rage, and was as sweet and friendly as ever. Among the wooers was a king’s son from another country. He was young and brave, and since he loved the princess dearly, she accepted his proposal and they plighted their troth. The queen observed this with an angry eye, for it would have pleased her had the prince chosen one of her own daughters. She therefor made up her mind that the young pair should never be happy together, and from that time on thought only of how she might part them from each other.

An opportunity soon offered itself. News came that the enemy had entered the land, and the king was compelled to go to war. Now the princess began to find out the kind of step-mother she had. For no sooner had the king departed than the queen showed her true nature, and was just as harsh and unkind as she formerly had pretended to be friendly and obliging. Not a day went by without her scolding and threatening the princess; and the queen’s daughters were every bit as malicious as their mother. But the king’s son, the lover of the princess, found himself in even worse position. He had gone hunting one day, had lost his way, and could not find his people. Then the queen used her black arts and turned him into a werewolf, to wander through the forest for the remainder of his life in that shape. When evening came and there was no sign of the prince, his people returned home, and one can imagine what sorrow they caused when the princess learned how the hunt had ended. She grieved, wept day and night, and was not to be consoled. But the queen laughed at her grief, and her heart was filled with joy to think that all had turned out exactly as she wished.

Now it chanced one day, as the king’s daughter was sitting alone in her room, that she thought she would go herself into the forest where the prince had disappeared. She went to her step-mother and begged permission to go out into the forest, in order to forget her surpassing grief. The queen did not want to grant her request, for she always preferred saying no to yes. But the princess begged her so winningly that at last she was unable to say no, and she ordered one of her daughters to go along with her and watch her. That caused a great deal of discussion, for neither of the step-daughters wanted to go with her; each made all sorts of excuses, and asked what pleasures were there in going with the king's daughter, who did nothing but cry. But the queen had the last word in the end, and ordered that one of her daughters must accompany the princess, even though it be against her will. So the girls wandered out of the castle into the forest. The king's daughter walked among the trees, and listened to the song of the birds, and thought of her lover, for whom she longed, and who was now no longer there. And the queen's daughter followed her, vexed, in her malice, with the king's daughter and her sorrow.

After they had walked a while, they came to a little hut, lying deep in the dark forest. By then the king's daughter was very thirsty, and wanted to go into the little hut with her step-sister, in order to get a drink of water. But the queen's daughter was much annoyed and said: "Is it not enough for me to be running around here in the wilderness with you? Now you even want me, who am a princess, to enter that wretched little hut. No, I will not step a foot over the threshold! If you want to go in, why go in alone!" The king's daughter lost no time; but did as her step-sister advised, and stepped into the little hut. When she entered she saw an old woman sitting there on a bench, so enfeebled by age that her head shook. The princess spoke to her in her usual friendly way: "Good evening, motherkin. May I ask you for a drink of water?" "You are heartily welcome to it," said the old woman. "Who may you be, that step beneath my lowly roof and greet me in so winning a way?" The king's daughter told her who she was, and that she had gone out to relieve her heart, in order to forget her great grief. "And what may your great grief be?" asked the old woman. "No doubt it is my fate to grieve," said the princess, "and I can never be happy again. I have lost my only love, and God alone knows whether I shall ever see him again." And she also told her why it was, and the tears ran down her cheeks in streams, so that any one would have felt sorry for her. When she had ended the old woman said: "You did well in confiding your sorrow to me. I have lived long and may be able to give you a bit of good advice. When you leave here you will see a lily growing from the ground. This lily is not like other lilies, however, but has many strange virtues. Run quickly over to it, and pick it. If you can do that then you need not worry, for then one will appear who will tell you what to do." Then they parted and the king's daughter thanked her and went her way; while the old woman sat on the bench and wagged her head. But the queen's daughter had been standing without the hut the entire time, vexing herself, and grumbling because the king's daughter had taken so long.

So when the latter stepped out, she had to listen to all sorts of abuse from her step-sister, as was to be expected. Yet she paid no attention to her, and thought only of how she might find the flower of which the old woman had spoken. They went through the forest, and suddenly she saw a beautiful white lily growing in their very path. She was much pleased and ran up at once to pick it; but that very moment it disappeared and reappeared somewhat further away.

The king's daughter was now filled with eagerness, no longer listened to her step-sister's calls, and kept right on running; yet each time when she stooped to pick the lily, it suddenly disappeared and reappeared somewhat further away. Thus it went for some time, and the princess was drawn further and further into the deep forest. But the lily continued to stand, and disappear and move further away, and each time the flower seemed larger and more beautiful than before. At length the princess came to a high hill, and as she looked toward its summit, there stood the lily high on the naked rock, glittering as white and radiant as the brightest star. The king's daughter now began to climb the hill, and in her eagerness she paid no attention to stones nor steepness. And when at last she reached the summit of the hill, lo and behold! the lily no longer evaded her grasp; but remained where it was, and the princess stooped and picked it and hid it in her bosom, and so heartfelt was her happiness that she forgot her step-sisters and everything else in the world.

For a long time she did not tire of looking at the beautiful flower. Then she suddenly began to wonder what her step-mother would say when she came home after having remained out so long. And she looked around, in order to find the way back to the castle. But as she looked around, behold, the sun had set and no more than a little strip of daylight rested on the summit of the hill. Below her lay the forest, so dark and shadowed that she had no faith in her ability to find the homeward path. And now she grew very sad, for she could think of nothing better to do than to spend the night on the hill-top. She seated herself on the rock, put her hand to her cheek, cried, and thought of her unkind step-mother and step-sisters, and of all the harsh words she would have to endure when she returned. And she thought of her father, the king, who was away at war, and of the love of her heart, whom she would never see again; and she grieved so bitterly that she did not even know she wept. Night came and darkness, and the stars rose, and still the princess sat in the same spot and wept. And while she sat there, lost in her thoughts, she heard a voice say: “Good evening, lovely maiden! Why do you sit here so sad and lonely?” She stood up hastily, and felt much embarrassed, which was not surprising. When she looked around there was nothing to be seen but a tiny old man, who nodded to her and seemed to be very humble. She answered: “Yes, it is no doubt my fate to grieve, and never be happy again. I have lost my dearest love, and now I have lost my way in the forest, and am afraid of being devoured by wild beasts.” “As to that,” said the old man, “you need have no fear. If you will do exactly as I say, I will help you.” This made the princess happy; for she felt that all the rest of the world had abandoned her. Then the old man drew out flint and steel and said: “Lovely maiden, you must first build a fire.” She did as he told her, gathered moss, brush and dry sticks, struck sparks and lit such a fire on the hill-top that the flame blazed up to the skies. That done the old man said: “Go on a bit and you will find a kettle of tar, and bring the kettle to me.” This the king’s daughter did. The old man continued: “Now put the kettle on the fire.” And the princess did that as well. When the tar began to boil, the old man said: “Now throw your white lily into the kettle.” The princess thought this a harsh command, and earnestly begged to be allowed to keep the lily. But the old man said: “Did you not promise to obey my every command? Do as I tell you or you will regret it.” The king’s daughter turned away her eyes, and threw the lily into the boiling tar; but it was altogether against her will, so fond had she grown of the beautiful flower.

The moment she did so a hollow roar, like that of some wild beast, sounded from the forest. It came nearer, and turned into such a terrible howling that all the surrounding hills reëchoed it. Finally there was a cracking and breaking among the trees, the bushes were thrust aside, and the princess saw a great grey wolf come running out of the forest and straight up the hill. She was much frightened and would gladly have run away, had she been able. But the old man said: “Make haste, run to the edge of the hill and the moment the wolf comes along, upset the kettle on him!” The princess was terrified, and hardly knew what she was about; yet she did as the old man said, took the kettle, ran to the edge of the hill, and poured its contents over the wolf just as he was about to run up. And then a strange thing happened: no sooner had she done so, than the wolf was transformed, cast off his thick grey pelt, and in place of the horrible wild beast, there stood a handsome young man, looking up to the hill. And when the king’s daughter collected herself and looked at him, she saw that it was really and truly her lover, who had been turned into a werewolf.

It is easy to imagine how the princess felt. She opened her arms, and could neither ask questions nor reply to them, so moved and delighted was she. But the prince ran hastily up the hill, embraced her tenderly, and thanked her for delivering him. Nor did he forget the little old man, but thanked him with many civil expressions for his powerful aid. Then they sat down together on the hill-top, and had a pleasant talk. The prince told how he had been turned into a wolf, and of all he had suffered while running about in the forest; and the princess told of her grief, and the many tears she had shed while he had been gone. So they sat the whole night through, and never noticed it until the stars grew pale and it was light enough to see. When the sun rose, they saw that a broad path led from the hill-top straight to the royal castle; for they had a view of the whole surrounding country from the hill-top. Then the old man said: “Lovely maiden, turn around! Do you see anything out yonder?” “Yes,” said the princess, “I see a horseman on a foaming horse, riding as fast as he can.” Then the old man said: “He is a messenger sent on ahead by the king your father. And your father with all his army is following him.” That pleased the princess above all things, and she wanted to descend the hill at once to meet her father. But the old man detained her and said: “Wait a while, it is too early yet. Let us wait and see how everything turns out.”

Time passed and the sun was shining brightly, and its rays fell straight on the royal castle down below. Then the old man said: “Lovely maiden, turn around! Do you see anything down below?” “Yes,” replied the princess, “I see a number of people coming out of my father’s castle, and some are going along the road, and others into the forest.” The old man said: “Those are your step-mother’s servants. She has sent some to meet the king and welcome him; but she has sent others to the forest to look for you.” At these words the princess grew uneasy, and wished to go down to the queen’s servants. But the old man withheld her and said: “Wait a while, and let us first see how everything turns out.”

More time passed, and the king’s daughter was still looking down the road from which the king would appear, when the old man said: “Lovely maiden, turn around! Do you see anything down below?” “Yes,” answered the princess, “there is a great commotion in my father’s castle, and they are hanging it with black.” The old man said: “That is your step-mother and her people. They will assure your father that you are dead.” Then the king’s daughter felt bitter anguish, and she implored from the depths of her heart: “Let me go, let me go, so that I may spare my father this anguish!” But the old man detained her and said: “No, wait, it is still too early. Let us first see how everything turns out.”

Again time passed, the sun lay high above the fields, and the warm air blew over meadow and forest. The royal maid and youth still sat on the hill-top with the old man, where we had left them. Then they saw a little cloud rise against the horizon, far away in the distance, and the little cloud grew larger and larger, and came nearer and nearer along the road, and as it moved one could see it was agleam with weapons, and nodding helmets, and waving flags, one could hear the rattle of swords, and the neighing of horses, and finally recognize the banner of the king. It is not hard to imagine how pleased the king’s daughter was, and how she insisted on going down and greeting her father. But the old man held her back and said: “Lovely maiden, turn around! Do you see anything happening at the castle?” “Yes,” answered the princess, “I can see my step-mother and step-sisters coming out, dressed in mourning, holding white kerchiefs to their faces, and weeping bitterly.” The old man answered: “Now they are pretending to weep because of your death. Wait just a little while longer. We have not yet seen how everything will turn out.”

After a time the old man said again: “Lovely maiden, turn around! Do you see anything down below?” “Yes,” said the princess, “I see people bringing a black coffin — now my father is having it opened. Look, the queen and her daughters are down on their knees, and my father is threatening them with his sword!” Then the old man said: “Your father wished to see your body, and so your evil step-mother had to confess the truth.” When the princess heard that she said earnestly: “Let me go, let me go, so that I may comfort my father in his great sorrow!” But the old man held her back and said: “Take my advice and stay here a little while longer. We have not yet seen how everything will turn out.”

Again time went by, and the king’s daughter and the prince and the old man were still sitting on the hill-top. Then the old man said: “Lovely maiden, turn around! Do you see anything down below?” “Yes,” answered the princess, “I see my father and my step-sisters and my step-mother with all their following moving this way.” The old man said: “Now they have started out to look for you. Go down and bring up the wolf’s pelt in the gorge.” The king’s daughter did as he told her. The old man continued: “Now stand at the edge of the hill.” And the princess did that, too. Now one could see the queen and her daughters coming along the way, and stopping just below the hill. Then the old man said: “Now throw down the wolf’s pelt!” The princess obeyed him, and threw down the wolf’s pelt according to his command. It fell directly on the evil queen and her daughters. And then a most wonderful thing happened: no sooner had the pelt touched the three evil women than they immediately changed shape, and turning into three horrible werewolves, they ran away as fast as they could into the forest, howling dreadfully.

No more had this happened than the king himself arrived at the foot of the hill with his whole retinue. When he looked up and recognized the princess, he could not at first believe his eyes; but stood motionless, thinking her a vision. Then the old man cried: “Lovely maiden, now hasten, run down and make your father happy!” There was no need to tell the princess twice. She took her lover by the hand and they ran down the hill. When they came to the king, the princess ran on ahead, fell on her father’s neck, and wept with joy. And the young prince wept as well, and the king himself wept; and their meeting was a pleasant sight for every one. There was great joy and many embraces, and the princess told of her evil step-mother and step-sisters and of her lover, and all that she had suffered, and of the old man who had helped them in such a wonderful way. But when the king turned around to thank the old man he had completely vanished, and from that day on no one could say who he had been or what had become of him.

The king and his whole retinue now returned to the castle, where the king had a splendid banquet prepared, to which he invited all the able and distinguished people throughout the kingdom, and bestowed his daughter on the young prince. And the wedding was celebrated with gladness and music and amusements of every kind for many days. I was there, too, and when I rode through the forest I met a wolf with two young wolves, and they showed me their teeth and seemed very angry. And I was told they were none other than the evil step-mother and her two daughters.

12

FIRST BORN, FIRST WED

Once upon a time there was a king who had a three-year old son, and was obliged to go to war against another king. Then, when his ships sailed home again after he had gained a splendid victory, a storm broke out and his whole fleet was near sinking. But the king vowed he would sacrifice to the sea-queen the first male creature that came to meet him when he reached land and entered his capital. Thereby the whole fleet reached the harbor in safety. But the five-year old prince, who had not seen his father for the past two years, and who was delighted with the thunder of the cannon as the ships came in, secretly slipped away from his attendants, and ran to the landing; and when the king came ashore he was the first to cast himself into his arms, weeping with joy. The king was frightened when he thought of the sea-queen; but he thought that, after all, the prince was only a child, and at any rate he could sacrifice the next person to step up to him after the prince. But from that time on no one could make a successful sea-trip, and the people began to murmur because the king had not kept the promise he had made the sea-queen. But the king and queen never allowed the prince out without a great escort, and he was never permitted to enter a ship, for all his desire to do so. After a few years they gradually forgot the sea-queen, and when the prince was ten years old, a little brother came to join him. Not long after the older of the princes was out walking with his tutor and several other gentlemen. And when they reached the end of the royal gardens by the sea-shore — it was a summer’s day, unusually clear — they were suddenly enveloped by a thick cloud, which disappeared as swiftly as it had come. And when it vanished, the prince was no longer there; nor did he return, to the great sorrow of the king, the queen and the whole country. In the meantime the young prince who was now the sole heir to the crown and kingdom grew up; and when he was sixteen, they began to think of finding a wife for him. For the old king and queen wished to see him marry the daughter of some powerful monarch to whom they were allied, before they died. With this in view, letters were written and embassies sent out to the most distant countries.

While these negotiations were being conducted, it began to be said that the sea-shore was haunted; various people had heard cries, and several who had walked by the sea-shore late in the evening had fallen ill. At length no one ventured to go there after eleven at night, because a voice kept crying from out at sea: “First born, first wed!” And when some one did venture nearer he did so at the risk of his life. At last these complaints came to the king’s ear; he called together his council, and it was decided to question a wise woman, who had already foretold many mysterious happenings, which had all taken place exactly as she had said they would. When the wise woman was brought before the king she said it was the prince who had been taken into the sea who was calling, and that they would have to find him a bride, young, beautiful, and belonging to one of the noblest families of the land, and she must be no less than fifteen and no more than seventeen years old. That seemed a serious difficulty; for no one wished to give their daughter to a sea-king.

Yet, when there was no end to the cries and the commotion, the wise woman said, that first it might be well to build a little house by the sea, perhaps then the turmoil might die away. At any rate, she said, no phantoms would haunt the place while the building was in progress. Hence no more than four workmen need be employed, and they might first prepare a site, then lay the stone foundation, and finally erect the small house, comprising no more than two pleasant, handsome rooms, one behind the other, and a good floor. The house was carefully erected, and the royal architect himself had to superintend the work, so that everything might be done as well as possible. And while the building was going on, there were no mysterious noises, and every one could travel peacefully along the sea-shore. For that reason the four workmen did not hurry with their work; yet not one of them could stay away for a day, because when they did the tumult along the shore would begin again, and one could hear the cries: “First born, first wed!” When the little house was finally completed, the best carpenters came and worked in it, then painters and other craftsmen, and at last it was furnished, because when the work stopped for no more than a single day the cries were heard again by night. The rooms were fitted out as sumptuously as possible, and a great mirror was hung in the drawing-room. According to the instructions of the wise woman, it was hung in such wise that from the bed in the bed-room, even though one’s face were turned to the wall, one could still see who stepped over the threshold into the drawing-room; for the door between each room was always to stand open.

When all was finished, and the little house had been arranged with regal splendor, the cries of “First born, first wed!” again began to sound from the shore. And it was found necessary, though all were unwilling, to follow the wise woman’s counsel, and choose three of the loveliest maidens between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, belonging to the first families of the land. They were to be taken to the castle, said the wise woman, and to be treated like ladies of the blood royal, and one after another they were to be sent to the little house by the sea-shore; for should one of them find favor in the eyes of the sea-prince, then the commotion and turmoil would surely cease. In the meantime the negotiations for the marriage of the younger prince were continued, and the bride selected for him was soon expected to arrive.

So the girls were also chosen for the sea-prince. The three chosen, as well as their parents, were quite inconsolable over their fate; even the fact that they were to be treated like princesses did not console them; yet had they not yielded it would have been all the worse for them and for the whole land. The first girl destined to sleep in the sea-palace was the oldest, and when she sought out the wise woman, and asked her advice, the latter said she should lie down in the handsome bed; but should turn her face to the wall, and under no circumstances turn around curiously, and try and see what was going on. She had only the right to behold what she saw reflected in the mirror in the drawing-room as she lay with her face to the wall. At ten o’clock that night the royal sea-bride was led with great pomp to the little house.

Her relatives and the court said farewell to her with many tears, left her before eleven, locked the door on the outside, and took the keys with them to the castle. The wise woman was also there, consoled the people, and assured them that if the maiden only forbore to speak, and did not turn around, she would come out in the morning fresh and blooming. The poor girl prayed and wept until she grew sleepy; but toward twelve o’clock the outer door suddenly opened, and then the door of the drawing-room. She was startled and filled with fear when, her face turned toward the wall, she saw in the great mirror, how a tall, well-built youth entered, from whose garments the water ran in streams to the floor. He shook himself as though freezing, and said “Uh hu!” Then he went to the window, and there laid down an unusually large and handsome apple, and hung a bottle in the casement. Next he stepped to the bed, bent over the sleeping girl and looked at her, strode up and down a few times, shaking the water from his clothes and saying “Uh hu!” Then he went back to the bed, undressed hurriedly, lay down and fell asleep. The poor girl, had not been sleeping; but had only closed her eyes when the prince bent over her. Now she was glad to think he was fast asleep, and forgot the wise woman’s warning not to turn around.

Her curiosity got the better of her, and she wanted to find out if this were a real human being. She turned around softly, lest she wake him; but just as she sat up quietly in bed, in order to take a good look at her neighbor, he swiftly seized her right hand, hewed it off, and flung it under the bed. Then he at once lay down and fell asleep again. As soon as it was day, he rose, dressed without casting even a glance at the bed, took the bottle and the apple from the window, went hastily out and locked the door after him. One can imagine how the poor girl suffered in the meantime, and when her friends and relatives came to fetch her they found her weeping and robbed of her hand. She was brought to the castle and the wise woman sent for, and overwhelmed with bitter reproaches. But she said that if the maiden had not turned around, and had overcome her curiosity, she would not have lost her hand. They were to treat her as though she were really and truly a princess; but that it would be as much as her life were worth to allow her to return to the neighborhood of the little house.

The two girls were all the more discouraged by this mishap, and thought themselves condemned to death, though the wise woman consoled them as well as she knew how. The second promised her faithfully not to turn around; yet it happened with her as it had with the first. The prince came in at twelve o’clock dripping, shook himself so that the water flew about, said “Uh hu!” went to the window, laid down the beautiful apple, hung up the bottle, came into the bed-room, bent over the bed, strode up and down a few times, said “Uh hu!” hastily undressed, and at once fell asleep. Her curiosity gained the upper hand, and when she made sure that he was sleeping soundly, she carefully turned around in order to look at him. But he seized her right hand, hewed it off and cast it under the bed, and then laid down again and slept on. At dawn he rose, dressed without casting a glance at the bed, took the apple and the bottle, went out and locked the door after him. When her friends and relatives came to fetch the girl in the morning, they found her weeping and without a right hand. She was taken to the castle, where she found herself just as little welcome as her predecessor, and the wise woman insisted that the girl must have turned around, though at first she denied it absolutely.

Then the youngest, sweetest and loveliest of the three maidens had to go to the sea-castle amid the mourning of the entire court. The wise woman accompanied her, and implored her not to turn around; since there was no other means of protection against the spell.

The maiden promised to heed her warning, and said that she would pray God to help her if she were plagued with curiosity. All happened as before: the prince came on the stroke of twelve, dripping wet, said "Uh hu!" shook himself, laid the apple on the window, hung up the bottle, went into the bedroom, bent over the bed, strode up and down for a few times, said "Uh hu!" undressed, and at once fell asleep. The poor girl was half-dead with fear and terror, and prayed and struggled against her curiosity till at length she fell asleep, and did not awake until the prince rose and dressed. He stepped up to the bed, bent over it for a moment, went out, turned at the door and took the bottle and the apple, and then locked the door after him. In the morning the entire court, the girl's parents and the wise woman came to fetch her. She came to meet them weeping with joy, and was conducted to the castle in triumph and with joy indescribable. The king and queen embraced her, and she was paid the same honors destined for the princess who was to arrive in the course of the next few days to marry the heir to the throne. Now the maiden had to sleep every night in the little house by the strand, and every evening the prince came in with his apple and his bottle, and every morning went away at dawn. But it seemed to her that each succeeding evening and morning he looked at her a little longer; though she, always silent, timid, and turned toward the wall, did not dare see more than her mirror showed her of his coming and going. But the two other girls, who had lost their hands, and who now no longer lived in the castle, were jealous of the honor shown the youngest, and threatened to have her done away with if she did not restore their hands. The maiden went weeping to the wise woman; and the latter said that when the prince had lain down as usual she should say — keeping her face turned toward the wall:

The maidens twain will see me slain,
Or else have back their hands again!

But she was to offer no further information nor say another word. With a beating heart the poor girl waited until the prince came, and when he had bent over the bed longer than usual, sighed, then hastily undressed and lain down, the maiden said, quivering and trembling:

The maidens twain will see me slain,
Or else have back their hands again!

The prince at once replied: “Take the hands — they are lying under the bed — and the bottle hanging in the window, and pour some of the contents of the bottle on their arms and hands, join them together, bind them up, take away the bandages in three days’ time and the hands will have been healed!” The maiden made no reply and fell asleep. In the morning the prince rose as usual, stepped over to the bed several times and looked at her from its foot; but she did not dare look up, and closed her eyes. He sighed, took his apple; but left the bottle, and went. When the maiden rose she did as he had told her, and in three days’ time removed the bandages, and the girls’ hands were well and whole.

Now the foreign princess arrived and the wedding was to be celebrated as soon as possible. Yet she was not fitted out with any more magnificence than the bride of the sea-prince, and both were equally honored by the king and court. This annoyed the two other girls, and they again threatened to have the youngest done away with if she did not let them taste the apple which the prince always brought with him. Again the maiden sought the advice of the wise woman, in whom she had confidence. And that night, when the prince had lain down, she said:

The maidens twain will see me slain,
Or else your apple they would gain!

Then the prince said: “Take the apple lying in the window, and when you go out, lay it on the ground and follow wherever it may roll. And when it stops, pick as many apples as you wish, and return the same way you came.” The maiden made no reply, and fell asleep. On the following morning it seemed harder than ever for the prince to resolve to go away. He appeared excited and restless, sighed often, bent over the maiden several times, went into the living room, then turned around and looked at her once more. Finally, when the sun rose, he hurried out and locked the door after him. When the maiden rose, she could not help weeping, for she had really begun to love the prince.

Then she took the apple, and when she was outside the door, laid it on the ground, and it rolled and rolled, and she followed it, a long, long way, to a region unknown to her. There she came to a high garden wall, over which hung the branches of trees, loaded with beautiful fruit. Finally she reached a great portal, adorned with gold and splendid ornaments, which opened of its own accord as the apple rolled up to it. And the apple rolled through the portal and the maiden followed it into the garden, which was the most beautiful she ever had seen. The apple rolled over to a low-growing tree weighed with the most magnificent apples, and there it stopped. The maiden picked all that her silken apron would hold, and turned to see from which direction she had come, and where the portal stood through which she would have to pass on her way back. But the garden was so lovely that she felt like enjoying its charms a while longer, and without thinking of the prince's words, she touched the apple with her foot, and it began to roll again. Suddenly the portal closed with a great crash. Then the maiden was much frightened, and regretted having done what had been forbidden her; yet now she could not get out, and was compelled to follow the apple once more. It rolled far into the beautiful garden and stopped at a little fire-place, where stood two kettles of water, one small, the other large. There was a great fire burning under the large kettle; but only a weak fire beneath the smaller one. Now when the apple stopped there the maiden did not know what to do. Then it occurred to her to scrape away the fire beneath the large kettle and thrust it under the little one; and soon the kettle over the small fire began to boil and the kettle over the large one simmered down. But she could not stay there. And since she had already disobeyed the order given her, she expected to die, nothing less, and was quite resigned to do so, because she had lost all hope of winning the prince.

So she gave the apple another push, and it rolled into a meadow in the middle of the garden, and there lay two little children, asleep, with the hot sun beating straight down upon them. The maiden felt sorry for the children, and she took her apron and laid it over them to protect them from the sun, and only kept the apples she could put in her little basket. But she could not stay here either, so again she touched the apple, and it rolled on and before she knew it the girl found herself by the sea-shore. There, under a shady tree lay the prince asleep; while beside him sat the sea-queen. Both rose when the maiden drew near, and the prince looked at her with alarm and tenderness in his flashing eyes. Then he leaped into the sea, and the white foam closed over him. But the sea-queen was enraged and seized the girl, who thought that her last moment had struck, and begged for a merciful death. The sea-queen looked at her, and asked her who had given her permission to pass beyond the apple-tree. The maiden confessed her disobedience, and said that she had done so without meaning any harm, whereupon the sea-queen said she would see how she had conducted herself and punish her accordingly. Thereupon the sea-queen gave the apple a push, and it rolled back through the portal to the apple-tree. The sea-queen saw that the apple-tree was uninjured, again pushed the apple and it rolled on to the little fire-place. But when the sea-queen saw the small kettle boiling furiously, while the large one was growing cold, she became very angry, seized the girl's arm savagely and rising to her full height, asked: "What have you dared do here? How dared you take the fire from under my kettle and put it under your own?" The maiden did not know that she had done anything wrong, and said that she did not know why. Then the sea-queen replied: "The large kettle signified the love between the prince and myself; the small one the love between the prince and you. Since you have taken the fire from under my kettle and laid it under your own, the prince is now violently in love with you, while his love for me is well-nigh extinguished. "Look," she cried, angrily, "now my kettle has stopped boiling altogether, and yours is boiling over! But I will see what other harm you have done and punish you accordingly." And the sea-queen again pushed the apple with her foot, and it rolled to the sleeping children, who had been covered with the apron. Then the sea-queen said: "Did you do that?" "Yes," replied the maiden, weeping, "but I meant no harm. I covered the little ones with my apron so that the sun might not burn down on them so fiercely, and I left with them the apples I could not put in my basket." The sea-queen said: "This deed and your truthfulness are your salvation. I see that you have a kind heart. These children belong to me and to the prince; but since he now loves you more than he does me, I will resign him to you. Go back to the castle and there say what I tell you: that your wedding with my prince is to be celebrated at the same time as that of his younger brother. And all your jewels, your ornaments, your wedding-dress and your bridal chair, are to be exactly like those of the other princess. From the moment on that the priest blesses the prince and yourself I have no further power over him. But since I have seen to it that he has all the qualities which adorn a ruler, I demand that he be made the heir to his father’s kingdom; for he is the oldest son. The younger prince may rule over the kingdom which his bride brings him. All this you must tell them, for only under these conditions will I release the prince. And when you are arrayed in your bridal finery, come to me here, without anyone’s knowledge, so that I may see how they have adorned you. Here is the apple which will show you the way without any one being able to tell where you go.” With that the sea-queen parted from her, and gave the apple a push. It rolled out of the garden and to the castle, where the maiden, with mingled joy and terror, delivered the sea-queen’s message to the king, and told him what she demanded for the prince. The king gladly promised all that was desired, and great preparations were at once made for the double wedding. Two bridal chairs were set up side by side, two wedding gowns, and two sets of jewels exactly similar were made ready. When the maiden had been dressed in her bridal finery she pretended to have forgotten something, which she had to fetch from a lower floor, went downstairs with her apple, and laid it on the ground. It at once rolled to the spot by the sea-shore where she had found the sea-queen and the prince, and where the sea-queen was now awaiting her. “It is well that you have come,” said the sea-queen, “for the slightest disobedience would have meant misfortune for you! But how do you look? Are you dressed just as the princess is? And has the princess no better clothes or jewels?” The maiden answered timidly, that they were dressed exactly alike. Then the sea-queen tore her gown from her body, unclasped the jewels from her hair and flinging them on the ground cried: “Is that the way the bride of my prince should look! Since I have given him to you I will give you my bridal outfit as well.” And with that she raised up a sod beneath the great tree, and a shrine adorned with gold and precious stones appeared, from which she drew out her bridal outfit, which fitted the maiden as though made for her. And it was so costly and so covered with gems that the maiden was almost blinded by its radiance. The crown, too, glowed with light, and was set with the most wonderful emeralds, and all was magnificent beyond what any princess had ever worn. “Now,” said the sea-queen, when she had finished adorning the maiden, “now go back to the castle, and show them how I was dressed when I wedded the prince. All this I give as a free gift to you and your descendants; but you must always conduct yourself so that the prince will be content with you, and you must make his happiness your first thought all your life long.”

This the maiden promised, with honest tears, and the sea-queen bade her go. When she was again in the castle, all were astonished at the beauty and costliness of her dress and jewels, in comparison to which those of the other princess were as nothing. The treasures of the whole kingdom would not have sufficed to pay for such a bridal outfit. And none any longer dared envy the lovely maiden, for never had a princess brought a richer bridal dower into the country. Now all went in solemn procession to the church, and the priests stood before the bridal chairs with their books open, and waited for the prince who, according to the sea-queen’s word, would not come until the blessing was to be spoken. They waited impatiently, and the king finally told one of the greatest nobles to seat himself in the bridal chair in the prince’s place, which he did. But the very moment the priest began to pray, the two wings of the church portal quickly flew open, and a tall, strong, handsome man with flashing eyes, royally clad, came in, stepped up to the bridal chair, thrust his proxy out so hastily that he nearly fell, and cried: “This is my place! Now, priest, speak the blessing!” While the blessing was spoken the prince became quiet again, and then greeted his parents and the whole court with joy, and before all embraced his wife, who now for the first time ventured to take a good look at him. Thenceforward the prince was like any other human being, and in the end he inherited his father's kingdom, and became a great and world-renowned ruler, beloved by his subjects, and adored by his wife. They lived long and happily, and their descendants are still the rulers of the land over which he reigned.

13

THE LAME DOG

Once upon a time there lived a king, like many others. He had three daughters, who were young and beautiful to such a degree that it would have been difficult to have found handsomer maidens. Yet there was a great difference among them; for the two older sisters were haughty in their thoughts and manners; while the youngest was sweet and friendly, and everyone liked her. Besides, she was fair as the day and delicate as the snow, and far more beautiful than either of her sisters.

One day the king's daughters were sitting together in their room, and their talk happened to turn on their husbands-to-be. The oldest said: "If I ever marry, my husband must have golden hair and a a golden beard!" And the second exclaimed: "And mine must have silver hair and a silver beard!" But the youngest princess held her tongue and said nothing. Then her sisters asked her whether she did not want to wish for a husband. "No," she answered, "but if fate should give me a husband, I will be content to take him as he is, and were he no more than a lame dog." Then the two other princesses laughed and joked about it, and told her the day might easily come when she would change her mind.

But many speak truth and do not know it! Thus it chanced with the king's daughters; since before the year had come to an end, each had the suitor for whom she had wished. A man with golden hair and golden beard sued for the oldest princess and won her consent to his suit. And a man with silver hair and a silver beard sued for the second and she became his bride; but the youngest princess had no other suitor than a lame dog. Then she recalled her talk with her sisters in their room, and thought to herself: “May God aid me in the marriage into which I must enter!” Yet she would not break the word she had once passed; but followed her sisters’ example and accepted the dog. The wedding lasted a number of days and was celebrated with great pomp and splendor. But while the guests danced and amused themselves, the youngest princess sat apart and wept, and when the others were laughing, her tears flowed till it made one sad to see them.

After the wedding the newly married pairs were each to drive off to their castle. And the two older princesses each drove off in a splendidly decorated coach, with a large retinue, and all sorts of honors. But the youngest had to go afoot, since her husband, the dog, had neither coach nor driver. When they had wandered long and far, they came to a great forest, so great that it seemed endless; but the dog limped along in advance, and the king’s daughter followed after, weeping. And as they went along she suddenly saw a magnificent castle lying before them, and round about it were beautiful meadows and green woods, all of them most enjoyable to see. The princess stopped and asked to whom the great mansion might belong. “That,” said the dog, “is our home. We will live here, and you shall rule it as you see fit.” Then the maiden laughed amid her tears, and could not overcome her surprise at all she saw. The dog added: “I have but a single request to make to you, and that you must not refuse to grant.” “What is your request?” asked the princess. “You must promise me,” said the dog, “that you will never look at me while I am asleep: otherwise you are free to do whatever you wish.” The princess gladly promised to grant his request, and so they went to the great castle. And if the castle was magnificent from without, it was still more magnificent within. It was so full of gold and silver that the precious metals gleamed from every corner; and there was such abundance of supplies of every kind, and of so many other things, that everything in the world one might have wished to have was already there. The princess spent the live-long day running from one room to another, and each was handsomer than the one she had just entered. But when evening came and she went to bed, the dog crept into his own, and then she noticed that he was not a dog; but a human being. Yet she said not a word, because she remembered her promise, and did not wish to cross her husband's will.

Thus some time passed. The princess dwelt in the beautiful castle, and had everything her heart might desire. But every day the dog ran off, and did not reappear until it was evening and the sun had set. Then he returned home, and was always so kind and friendly that it would have been a fine thing had other men done half as well. The princess now began to feel a great affection for him, and quite forgot he was only a lame dog; for the proverb says: "Love is blind." Yet time passed slowly because she was so much alone, and she often thought of visiting her sisters and seeing how they were. She spoke of it to her husband, and begged his permission to make the journey. No sooner had the dog heard her wish than he at once granted it, and even accompanied her some distance, in order to show her the way out of the wood.

When the king's daughters were once reunited, they were naturally very happy, and there were a great many questions asked about matters old and new. And marriage was also discussed. The oldest princess said: "It was silly of me to wish for a husband with golden hair and golden beard; for mine is worse than the veriest troll, and I have not known a happy day since we married." And the second went on: "Yes, and I am no better off; for although I have a husband with silver hair and a silver beard, he dislikes me so heartily that he begrudges me a single hour of happiness." Then her sisters turned to the youngest princess and asked how she fared. "Well," was her answer, "I really cannot complain; for though I only got a lame dog, he is such a dear good fellow and so kind to me that it would be hard to find a better husband.” The other princesses were much surprised to hear this, and did not stop prying and questioning, and their sister answered all their questions faithfully. When they heard how splendidly she lived in the great castle, they grew jealous because she was so much better off than they were. And they insisted on knowing whether there was not some one little thing of which she could complain. “No,” said the king’s daughter, “I can only praise my husband for his kindness and amiability, and there is but one thing lacking to make me perfectly happy.” “What is it?” “What is it?” cried both sisters with a single voice. “Every night, when he comes home,” said the princess, “he turns into a human being, and I am sorry that I can never see what he really looks like.” Then both sisters again with one voice, began to scold the dog loudly; because he had a secret which he kept from his wife. And since her sisters now continually spoke about it, her own curiosity awoke once more, she forgot her husband’s command, and asked how she might manage to see him without his knowing it. “O,” said the oldest princess, “nothing easier! Here is a little lamp, which you must hide carefully. Then you need only get up at night when he is asleep, and light the lamp in order to see him in his true shape.” This advice seemed good to the king’s daughter; she took the lamp, hid it in her breast, and promised to do all that her sisters had counseled.

When the time came for them to part, the youngest princess went back to her beautiful castle. The day passed like every other day. When evening came at last and the dog had gone to bed, the princess was so driven by curiosity that she could hardly wait until he had fallen asleep. Then she rose, softly, lit her lamp, and drew near the bed to look at him while he slept. But no one can describe her astonishment when throwing the light on the bed, she saw no lame dog lying there; but the handsomest youth her eyes had ever beheld. She could not stop looking at him; but sat up all night bending over his pillow, and the more she looked at him the handsomer he seemed to grow, until she forgot everything else in the world. At last the morning came. And as the first star began to pale in the dawn, the youth began to grow restless and awaken. The princess much frightened, blew out her lamp and lay down in her bed. The youth thought she was sleeping and did not wish to wake her, so he rose quietly, assumed his other shape, went away and did not appear again all day long.

And when evening came and it grew late, everything happened as before. The dog came home from the forest and was very tired. But no sooner had he fallen asleep than the princess rose carefully, lit her lamp and came over to look at him. And when she cast the light on his bed it seemed to her as though the youth had grown even handsomer than the day before, and the longer she looked the more handsome he became; until she had to laugh and weep from sheer love and longing. She could not take her eyes from him, and sat all night long bent over his pillow, forgetful of her promise and all else, only to be able to look at him. With the first ray of dawn the youth began to stir and awake. Then the princess was again frightened, quickly blew out her lamp and lay down in her bed. The youth thought she was sleeping, and not wishing to waken her, rose softly, assumed his other shape, went away and was gone for the entire day.

At length it grew late again, evening came and the dog returned home from the forest as usual. But again the princess could not control her curiosity; no sooner was her husband sleeping than she rose quietly, lit her lamp, and drew near carefully in order to look at him while he slept. And when the light fell on the youth, he appeared to be handsomer than ever before, and the longer she looked the more handsome he grew, until her heart burned in her breast, and she forgot all else in the world looking at him. She could not take her eyes from him, and sat up all night bending over his pillow. And when morning came and the sun rose, the youth began to move and awaken. Then the princess was much frightened, because she had paid no heed to the passing of time, and she tried to put out her lamp quickly. But her hand trembled, and a warm drop of oil fell on the youth and he awoke. When he saw what she had done, he leaped up, terrified, instantly turned into a lame dog, and limped out into the forest. But the princess felt so remorseful that she nearly lost her senses, and she ran after him, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly, and begging him to return. But he did not come back.

The king's daughter now wandered over hill and dale, along many a road new to her, in order to find her husband, and her tears flowed the while till it would have moved a stone. But the dog was gone and stayed gone, though she looked for him North and South. When she saw that she could not find him, she thought she would return to her handsome castle. But there she was just as unfortunate. The castle was nowhere to be seen, and wherever she went she was surrounded by a forest black as coal. Then she came to the conclusion that the whole world had abandoned her, sat down on a stone, wept bitterly, and thought how much rather she would die than live without her husband. At that a little toad hopped out from under the stone, and said: "Lovely maiden, why do you sit here and weep?" And the princess answered: "It is my hard fate to weep and never be happy again. First of all I have lost the love of my heart, and now I can no longer find my way back to the castle. So I must perish of hunger here, or else be devoured by wild beasts." "O," said the toad, "if that is all that troubles you, I can help you! If you will promise to be my dearest friend, I will show you the way." But that the princess did not want to do. She replied: "Ask of me what you will, save that alone. I have never loved any one more than my lame dog, and so long as I live will never love any one else better." With that she rose, wept bitterly, and continued her way. But the toad looked after her in a friendly manner, laughed to himself, and once more crept under his stone.

After the king's daughter had wandered on for a long, long way, and still saw nothing but forest and wilderness, she grew very tired. She once more sat down on a stone, rested her chin on her hand, and prayed for death, since it was no longer possible for her to live with her husband. Suddenly there was a rustling in the bushes, and she saw a big gray wolf coming directly toward her. She was much frightened, since her one thought was that the wolf intended to devour her. But the wolf stopped, wagged his tail, and said: “Proud maiden, why do you sit here and weep so bitterly?” The princess answered: “It is my hard fate to weep and never be happy again. First of all I have lost my heart’s dearest, and now I cannot find my way back to the castle and must perish of hunger, or be devoured by wild beasts.” “O,” said the wolf, “if that is all that troubles you, I can help you! Let me be your best friend and I will show you the way.” But that did not suit the princess, and she replied: “Ask of me what you will, save that alone. I have never loved any one more than my lame dog, and so long as I live I will never love any one else better.” With that she rose, weeping bitterly, and continued on her way. But the wolf looked after her in a friendly manner, laughed to himself and ran off hastily.

After the princess had once more wandered for a long time in the wilderness, she was again so wearied and exhausted that she could not go on. She sat down on a stone, wrung her hands, and wished for death, since she could no longer live with her husband. At that moment she heard a hollow roaring that made the earth tremble, and a monstrous big lion appeared and came directly toward her. Now she was much frightened; for what else could she think but that the lion would tear her to pieces? But the beast was so weighed down with heavy iron chains that he could scarcely drag himself along, and the chains clashed at either side when he moved. When the lion finally reached the princess he stopped, wagged his tail, and asked: “Beautiful maiden, why do you sit here and weep so bitterly?” The princess answered: “It is my hard fate to weep and never be happy again. First of all I have lost my heart’s dearest, and now I cannot find my way to the castle, and must perish of hunger, or be devoured by wild beasts.” “O,” said the lion, “if that is all that troubles you, I can help you! If you will loose my chains and make me your best friend, I will show you the way.” But the princess was so terrified that she could not answer the lion, far less venture to draw near him. Then she heard a clear voice sounding from the forest: it was a little nightingale, who sat among the branches and sang:

Maiden, maiden, loose his chains!

Then she felt sorry for the lion, grew braver, went up to him, unloosed his chains and said: “Your chains I can loose for you; but I can never be your best friend. For I have never loved any one more than my lame dog and will never love any one else better.” And then a wondrous thing took place: at the very moment the last chain fell from him, the lion turned into a handsome young prince, and when the princess looked at him more closely, it was none other than her heart’s dearest, who before had been a dog. She sank to the ground, clasped his knees, and begged him not to leave her again. But the prince raised her with deep affection, took her in his arms and said: “No, now we shall never more be parted, for I am released from my enchantment, and have proved your faith toward me in every way.”

Then there was joy indescribable. And the prince took his young wife home to the beautiful castle, and there he became king and she was his queen. And if they have not died they are living there to this very day.

14

THE MOUNT OF THE GOLDEN QUEEN

Once upon a time a lad who tended the cattle in the wood was eating his noon-tide meal in a clearing in the forest. As he was sitting there he saw a rat run into a juniper-bush. His curiosity led him to look for it; but as he bent over, down he went, head over heels, and fell asleep. And he dreamed that he was going to find the princess on the Mount of the Golden Queen; but that he did not know the way.

The following day he once more pastured his cattle in the wood, when he came to the same clearing, and again ate his dinner there. And again he saw the rat and went to look for it, and again when he bent down he went head over heels, and fell fast asleep. And again he dreamed of the princess on the Mount of the Golden Queen, and that in order to get her he would need seventy pounds of iron and a pair of iron shoes. He awoke and it was all a dream; but by now he had made up his mind to find the Mount of the Golden Queen, and he went home with his herd. On the third day, when he led out his cattle, he could not reach the clearing of his happy dream too soon. Again the rat showed itself and when he went to look for it, he fell asleep as he had done each preceding day. And again he dreamed of the princess on the Mount of the Golden Queen, and that she came to him, and laid a letter and a band of gold in his pocket. Then he awoke and to his indescribable surprise, he found in his pocket both of the things of which he had dreamed, the letter and the band. Now he had no time to attend to the cattle any longer, but drove them straight home. Then he went into the stable, led out a horse, sold it, and bought seventy pounds of iron and a pair of iron shoes with the money. He made the thole-pins out of the iron, put on his iron shoes, and set forth. For a time he traveled by land; but at last he came to the lake which he had to cross. He saw naught but water before and behind him, and rowing so long and steadily that he wore out one thole-pin after another, he at length reached land, and a green meadow, where no trees grew. He walked all around the meadow, and at last found a mound of earth from which smoke was rising. When he looked more closely, out came a woman who was nine yards long. He asked her to tell him the way to the Mount of the Golden Queen. But she replied: “That I do not know. Go ask my sister, who is nine yards taller than I am, and who lives in an earth-mound which you can find without any trouble.” So he left her and came to a mound of earth that looked just like the first, and from which smoke was also rising. A woman at once came out who was tremendously tall, and of her he asked the way to the Mount of the Golden Queen. “That I do not know,” said she. “Go ask my brother, who is nine yards taller than I am, and who lives in a hill a little further away.” So he came to the hill, from which smoke was also rising, and knocked. A man at once came out who was a veritable giant, for he was twenty-seven yards in length, and of him he asked the way to the Mount of the Golden Queen. Then the giant took a whistle and whistled in every direction, to call together all the animals to be found on the earth. And all the animals came from the woods, foremost among them a bear. The giant asked him about the Mount of the Golden Queen, but he knew nothing of it. Again the giant blew his whistle in every direction to call together all the fishes to be found in the waters. They came at once, and he asked them about the Mount of the Golden Queen; but they knew nothing of it. Once more the giant blew his whistle in every direction, and called together all the birds of the air. They came, and he asked the eagle about the Mount of the Golden Queen, and whether he knew where it might be. The eagle said: "Yes!" "Well then, take this lad there," said the giant "but do not treat him unkindly!" This the eagle promised, allowed the youth to seat himself on his back, and then off they were through the air, over fields and forests, hill and dale, and before long they were above the ocean, and could see nothing but sky and water. Then the eagle dipped the youth in the ocean up to his ankles and asked: "Are you afraid?" "No," said the youth. Then the eagle flew on a while, and again dipped the youth into the water, up to his knees and said: "Are you afraid?" "Yes," answered the youth, "but the giant said you were not to treat me unkindly." "Are you really afraid?" asked the eagle once more. "Yes," answered the youth. Then the eagle said: "The fear you now feel is the very same fear I felt when the princess thrust the letter and the golden band into your pocket." And with that they had reached a large, high mountain in one side of which was a great iron door. They knocked, and a serving-maid appeared to open the door and admit them. The youth remained and was well received; but the eagle said farewell and flew back to his native land. The youth asked for a drink, and he was at once handed a beaker containing a refreshing draught. When he had emptied it and returned the beaker, he let the golden band drop into it. And when the maid brought back the beaker to her mistress — who was the princess of the Mount of the Golden Queen — the latter looked into the beaker, and behold, there lay a golden band which she recognized as her own. So she asked: "Is there some one here?" and when the maid answered in the affirmative, the princess said: "Bid him come in!" And as soon as the youth entered she asked him if he chanced to have a letter. The youth drew out the letter he had received in so strange a manner, and gave it to the princess. And when she had read it she cried, full of joy: "Now I am delivered!" And at that very moment the mountain turned into a most handsome castle, with all sorts of precious things, servants, and every sort of convenience, each for its own purpose. (Whether the princess and the youth married the story does not say; yet we must take for granted that a wedding is the proper end for the fairy-tale).

15

OLD HOPGIANT

Once upon a time there were two neighbors: one of them rich and the other poor. They owned a great meadow in common, which they were supposed to mow together and then divide the hay.

But the rich neighbor wanted the meadow for himself alone, and told the poor one that he would drive him out of house and home if he did not come to an agreement with him that whichever one of them mowed the largest stretch of the meadowland in a single day, should receive the entire meadow.

Now the rich neighbor got together as many mowers as ever he could; but the poor one could not hire a single man. At last he despaired altogether and wept, because he did not know how he could manage to get so much as a bit of hay for the cow.

Then it was that a large man stepped up to him and said: “Do not grieve so. I can tell you what you ought to do. When the mowing begins, just call out ‘Old Hopgiant!’ three times in succession, and you’ll not be at a loss, as you shall see for yourself.” And with that he disappeared.

Then the poor man’s heart grew less heavy, and he gave over worrying. So one fine day his rich neighbor came along with no fewer than twenty farmhands, and they mowed down one swath after another. But the poor neighbor did not even take the trouble to begin when he saw how the others took hold, and that he himself would not be able to do anything alone.

Then the big man occurred to him, and he called out: “Old Hopgiant!” But no one came, and the mowers all laughed at him and mocked him, thinking he had gone out of his mind. Then he called again: “Old Hopgiant!” And, just as before, there was no hopgiant to be seen. And the mowers could scarcely swing their scythes; for they were laughing fit to split.

And then he cried for the third time: “Old Hopgiant!” And there appeared a fellow of truly horrible size, with a scythe as large as a ship’s mast.

And now the merriment of the rich peasant’s mowers came to an end. For when the giant began to mow and fling about his scythe, they were frightened at the strength he put into his work. And before they knew it he had mown half the meadow.

Then the rich neighbor fell into a rage, rushed up and gave the giant a good kick. But that did not help him, for his foot stuck to the giant, while the latter no more felt the kick than if it had been a flea-bite, and kept right on working.

Then the rich neighbor thought of a scheme to get free, and gave the giant a kick with his other foot; but this foot also stuck fast, and there he hung like a tick. Old Hopgiant mowed the whole meadow, and then flew up into the air, and the rich man had to go along hanging to him like a hawser. And thus the poor neighbor was left sole master of the place.

16

THE PRINCESS AND THE GLASS MOUNTAIN

Once upon a time there was a king who took such a joy in the chase, that he knew no greater pleasure than hunting wild beasts. Early and late he camped in the forest with hawk and hound, and good fortune always followed his hunting. But it chanced one day that he could rouse no game, although he had tried in every direction since morning. And then, when evening was coming on, and he was about to ride home, he saw a dwarf or wild man running through the forest before him. The king at once spurred on his horse, rode after the dwarf, seized him and he was surprised at his strange appearance; for he was small and ugly, like a troll, and his hair was as stiff as bean-straw. But no matter what the king said to him, he would return no answer, nor say a single word one way or another. This angered the king, who was already out of sorts because of his ill-success at the hunt, and he ordered his people to seize the wild man and guard him carefully lest he escape. Then the king rode home.

Now his people said to him: “You should keep the wild man a captive here at your court, in order that the whole country may talk of what a mighty huntsman you are. Only you should guard him so that he does not escape; because he is of a sly and treacherous disposition.” When the king had listened to them he said nothing for a long time. Then he replied: “I will do as you say, and if the wild man escape, it shall be no fault of mine. But I vow that whoever lets him go shall die without mercy, and though he were my own son!”

The following morning, as soon as the king awoke, he remembered his vow.

He at once sent for wood and beams, and had a small house or cage built quite close to the castle. The small house was built of great timbers, and protected by strong locks and bolts, so that none could break in; and a peephole was left in the middle of the wall through which food might be thrust.

When everything was completed the king had the wild man led up, placed in the small house, and he himself took and kept the key. There the dwarf had to sit a prisoner, day and night, and the people came afoot and a-horseback to gaze at him. Yet no one ever heard him complain, or so much as utter a single word.

Thus matters went for some time. Then a war broke out in the land, and the king had to take the field. At parting he said to the queen: “You must rule the kingdom now in my stead, and I leave land and people in your care. But there is one thing you must promise me you will do: that you will guard the wild man securely so that he does not escape while I am away.” The queen promised to do her best in all respects, and the king gave her the key to the cage. Thereupon he had his long galleys, his “sea-wolves,” push out from the shore, hoisted sail, and took his course far, far away to the other country.

The king and queen had only one child, a prince who was still small; yet great in promise. Now when the king had gone, it chanced one day that the little fellow was wandering about the royal courtyard, and came to the wild man’s cage. And he began to play with an apple of gold he had. And while he was playing with it, it happened that suddenly the apple fell through the window in the wall of the cage. The wild man at once appeared and threw back the apple. This seemed a merry game to the little fellow: he threw the apple in again, and the wild man threw it out again, and thus they played for a long time. Yet for all the game had been so pleasant, it turned to sorrow in the end: for the wild man kept the apple of gold, and would not give it back again. And when all was of no avail, neither threats nor prayers, the little fellow at last began to weep. Then the wild man said: “Your father did ill to capture me, and you will never get your apple of gold again, unless you let me out.” The little fellow answered: “And how can I let you out? Just you give me back my apple again, my apple of gold!” Then the wild man said: “You must do what I now tell you. Go up to your mother, the queen, and beg her to comb your hair. Then see to it that you take the key from her girdle, and come down and unlock the door. After that you can return the key in the same way, without any one knowing anything about it.”

After the wild man had talked to the boy in this way, he finally did as he said, went up to his mother, begged her to comb his hair, and took the key from her girdle. Then he ran down to the cage and opened the door. And when they parted, the dwarf said: “Here is your apple of gold, that I promised to give back to you, and I thank you for setting me free. And another time when you have need of me, I will help you in turn.” And with that he ran off on his own way. But the prince went back to his mother, and returned the key in the same way he had taken it.

When they learned at the king’s court that the wild man had broken out, there was great commotion, and the queen sent people over hill and dale to look for him. But he was gone and he stayed gone. Thus matters went for a while and the queen grew more and more unhappy; for she expected her husband to return every day. And when he did reach shore his first question was whether the wild man had been well guarded. Then the queen had to confess how matters stood, and told him how everything had happened. But the king was enraged beyond measure, and said he would punish the malefactor, no matter who he might be. And he ordered a great investigation at his court, and every human being in it had to testify. But no one knew anything. At last the little prince also had to come forward. And as he stood before the king he said: “I know that I have deserved my father’s anger; yet I cannot hide the truth; for I let out the wild man.” Then the queen turned white, and the others as well, for there was not one who was not fond of the prince. At last the king spoke: “Never shall it be said of me that I was false to my vow, even for the sake of my own flesh and blood! No, you must die the death you have deserved.” And with that he gave the order to take the prince to the forest and kill him. And they were to bring back the boy’s heart as a sign that his command had been obeyed.

Now sorrow unheard of reigned among the people, and all pleaded for the little prince. But the king’s word could not be recalled. His serving-men did not dare disobey, took the boy in their midst, and set forth. And when they had gone a long way into the forest, they saw a swine-herd tending his pigs. Then one said to another: “It does not seem right to me to lay hand on the king’s son; let us buy a pig instead and take its heart, then all will believe it is the heart of the prince.” The other serving-men thought that he spoke wisely, so they bought a pig from the swine-herd, led it into the wood, butchered it and took its heart. Then they told the prince to go his way and never return. They themselves went back to the king’s castle, and it is easy to imagine what grief they caused when they told of the prince’s death.

The king’s son did what the serving-men had told him. He kept on wandering as far as he could, and never had any other food than the nuts and wild berries that grow in the forest. And when he had wandered far and long, he came to a mountain upon whose very top stood a fir-tree. Said he to himself: “After all, I might as well climb the fir-tree and see whether I can find a path anywhere.” No sooner said than done: he climbed the tree. And as he sat in the very top of its crown, and looked about on every side, he saw a large and splendid royal castle rising in the distance, and gleaming in the sun. Then he grew very happy and at once set forth in that direction.

On the way he met a farm-hand who was ploughing, and begged him to change clothes with him, which he did. Thus fitted out he at last reached the king's castle, went in, asked for a place, and was taken on as a herdsman, to tend the king's cattle. Now he went to the forest early and late, and in the course of time forgot his grief, grew up, and became so tall and brave that his equal could not be found.

And now our story turns to the king who was reigning at the splendid castle. He had been married, and he had an only daughter. She was lovelier by far than other maidens, and had so kind and cheerful a disposition that whoever could some day take her to his home might well consider himself fortunate. Now when the princess had completed her fifteenth year, a quite unheard of swarm of suitors made their appearance, as may well be imagined; and for all that she said no to all of them, they only increased in number. At last the princess said: "None other shall win me save he who can ride up the high Glass Mountain in full armor!" The king thought this a good suggestion. He approved of his daughter's wish, and had proclaimed throughout the kingdom that none other should have the princess save he who could ride up the Glass Mountain.

And when the day set by the king had arrived, the princess was led up the Glass Mountain. There she sat on its highest peak, with a golden crown on her head, and a golden apple in her hand, and she looked so immeasurably lovely that there was no one who would not have liked to risk his life for her. Just below the foot of the hill all the suitors assembled with splendid horses and glittering armor, that shone like fire in the sun, and from round about the people flocked together in great crowds to watch their tilting. And when everything was ready, the signal was given by horns and trumpets, and then the suitors, one after another, raced up the mountain with all their might. But the mountain was high, as slippery as ice, and besides it was steep beyond all measure. Not one of the suitors rode up more than a little way, before he tumbled down again, head over heels, and it might well happen that arms and legs were broken in the process. This made so great a noise, together with the neighing of the horses, the shouting of the people, and the clash of arms, that the tumult and the shouting could be heard far away.

And while all this was going on, the king’s son was rambling about with his oxen, deep in the wood. But when he heard the tumult and the clashing of arms, he sat down on a stone, leaned his cheek on his hand, and became lost in thought. For it had occurred to him how gladly he would have fared forth with the rest. Suddenly he heard footsteps and when he looked up, the wild man was standing before him. “Thank you for the last time!” said he, “and why do you sit here so lonely and full of sorrow?” “Well,” said the prince, “I have no choice but to be sad and joyless. Because of you I am a fugitive from the land of my father, and now I have not even a horse and armor to ride up the Glass Mountain and fight for the princess.” “Ah,” said the wild man, “if that be all you want, then I can help you! You helped me once before and now I will help you in turn.” Then he took the prince by the hand, led him deep down into the earth into his cave, and behold, there hung a suit of armor forged out of the hardest steel, and so bright that a blue gleam played all around it. Right beside it stood a splendid steed, saddled and bridled, pawing the earth with his steel hoofs, and champing his bit till the white foam dropped to the ground. The wild man said: “Now get quickly into your armor, ride out and try your luck! In the meantime I will tend your oxen.” The prince did not wait to be told a second time; but put on helmet and armor, buckled on his spurs, hung his sword at his side, and felt as light in his steel armor as a bird in the air. Then he leaped into the saddle so that every clasp and buckle rang, laid his reins on the neck of his steed, and rode hastily toward the mountain.

The princess’s suitors were about to give up the contest, for none of them had won the prize, though each had done his best. And while they stood there thinking it over, and saying that perhaps fortune would favor them another time, they suddenly saw a youth ride out of the wood straight toward the mountain. He was clad in steel from head to foot, with helmet on head, sword in belt and shield on arm, and he sat his horse with such knightly grace that it was a pleasure to look at him. At once all eyes were turned to the strange knight, and all asked who he might be; for none had ever seen him before. Yet they had had but little time to talk and question, for no sooner had he cleared the wood, than he rose in his stirrups, gave his horse the spurs, and shot forward like an arrow straight up the Glass Mountain. Yet he did not ride up all the way; but when he had reached the middle of the steep ascent, he suddenly flung around his steed and rode down again, so that the sparks flew from his horse's hoofs. Then he disappeared in the wood like a bird in flight. One may imagine the excitement which now seized upon all the people, and there was not one who did not admire the strange knight. All agreed they had never seen a braver knight.

Time passed, and the princess's suitors decided to try their luck a second time. The king's daughter was once more led up the Glass Mountain, with great pomp and richly gowned, and was seated on its topmost peak, with the golden crown on her head, and a golden apple in her hand. At the foot of the hill gathered all the suitors with handsome horses and splendid armor, and round about stood all the people to watch the contest. When all was ready the signal was given by horns and trumpets, and at the same moment the suitors, one after another, darted up the mountain with all their might. But all took place as at the first time. The mountain was high, and as slippery as ice, and besides, it was steep beyond all measure; not one rode up more than a little way before tumbling down again head over heels. Meanwhile there was much noise, and the horses neighed, and the people shouted, and the armor clashed, so that the tumult and the shouting sounded far into the deep wood.

And while all this was going on, the young prince was tending his oxen, which was his duty. But when he heard the tumult and the clashing of arms, he sat down on a stone, leaned his cheek on his hand, and wept; for he thought of the king's beautiful daughter, and it occurred to him how much he would like to take part and ride with the rest. That very moment he heard footsteps and when he looked up, the wild man was standing before him. "Good-day!" said the wild man, "and why do you sit here so lonely and full of sorrow?" Thereupon the prince replied: "I have no choice but to be sad and joyless. Because of you I am a fugitive from the land of my father, and now I have not even a horse and armor to ride up the mountain and fight for the princess!" "Ah," said the wild man, "if that be all you want, then I can help you! You helped me once before, and now I will help you in turn." Then he took the prince by the hand, led him deep down in the earth into his cave, and there on the wall hung a suit of armor altogether forged of the clearest silver, and so bright that it shone afar. Right beside it stood a snow-white steed, saddled and bridled, pawing the earth with his silver hoofs, and champing his bit till the foam dropped to the ground. The wild man said: "Now get quickly into your armor, ride out and try your luck! In the meantime I will tend your oxen." The prince did not wait to be told a second time; but put on his helmet and armor in all haste, securely buckled on his spurs, hung his sword at his side, and felt as light in his silver armor as a bird in the air. Then he leaped into the saddle so that every clasp and buckle rang, laid his reins on the neck of his steed, and rode hastily toward the Glass Mountain.

The princess's suitors were about to give over the contest, for none of them had won the prize, though each had played a man's part. And while they stood there thinking it over, and saying that perhaps fortune would favor them the next time, they suddenly saw a youth ride out of the wood, straight toward the mountain. He was clad in silver from head to foot, with helmet on head, shield on arm, and sword at side, and he sat his horse with such knightly grace that a braver-looking youth had probably never been seen. At once all eyes were turned toward him, and the people noticed that he was the same knight who had appeared before. But the prince did not leave them much time for wonderment; for no sooner had he reached the plain, than he rose in his stirrups, spurred on his horse, and rode like fire straight up the steep mountain. Yet he did not ride quite up to the top; but when he had come to its crest, he greeted the princess with great courtesy, flung about his steed, and rode down the mountain again till the sparks flew about his horse's hoofs. Then he disappeared into the wood as the storm flies. As one may imagine, the people's excitement was even greater than the first time, and there was not one who did not admire the strange knight. And all were agreed that a more splendid steed or a handsomer youth were nowhere to be found.

Time passed, and the king set a day when his daughter's suitors were to make a third trial. The princess was now once more led to the Glass Mountain, and seated herself on its highest peak, with the golden crown and the golden apple, as she had before. At the foot of the mountain gathered the whole swarm of suitors, with splendid horses and polished armor, handsome beyond anything seen thus far, and round about the people flocked together to watch the contest. When all was ready the suitors, one after another, darted up the mountain with all their might. The mountain was as smooth as ice, and besides, it was steep beyond all measure; so that not one rode up more than a little way, before tumbling down again, head over heels. This made a great noise, the horses neighed, the people shouted, and the armor clashed, till the tumult and the shouting echoed far into the wood.

While this was all taking place the king's son was busy tending his oxen as usual. And when he once more heard the noise and the clash of arms, he sat down on a stone, leaned his cheek on his hand, and wept bitterly. Then he thought of the lovely princess, and would gladly have ventured his life to win her. That very moment the wild man was standing before him: “Good-day!” said the wild man, “And why do you sit here so lonely and full of sorrow?” “I have no choice but to be sad and joyless,” said the prince. “Because of you I am a fugitive from the land of my father, and now I have not even a sword and armor to ride up the mountain and fight for the princess!” “Ah,” said the wild man, “if that be all that troubles you I can help you! You helped me once before, and now I will help you in turn.” With that he took the prince by the hand, led him into his cave deep down under the earth, and showed him a suit of armor all forged of the purest gold, and gleaming so brightly that its golden glow shone far and wide. Beside it stood a magnificent steed, saddled and bridled, pawing the earth with its golden hoofs, and champing its bit until the foam fell to the ground. The wild man said: “Now get quickly into your armor, ride out and try your luck! In the meantime I will tend your oxen.” And to tell the truth, the prince was not lazy; but put on his helmet and armor, buckled on his golden spurs, hung his sword at his side, and felt as light in his golden armor as a bird in the air. Then he leaped into the saddle, so that every clasp and buckle rang, laid his reins on the neck of his steed, and rode hastily toward the mountain.

The princess’s suitors were about to give up the contest; for none of them had won the prize, though each had done his best. And while they stood there thinking over what was to be done, they suddenly saw a youth come riding out of the wood, straight toward the mountain. He was clad in gold from head to foot, with the golden helmet on his head, the golden shield on his arm, and the golden sword at his side, and so knightly was his bearing that a bolder warrior could not have been met with in all the wide world. At once all eyes were turned toward him, and one could see that he was the same youth who had already appeared at different times. But the prince gave them but little time to question and wonder; for no sooner had he reached the plain than he gave his horse the spurs, and shot up the steep mountain like a flash of lightning. When he had reached its highest peak, he greeted the beautiful princess with great courtesy, kneeled before her, and received the golden apple from her hand. Then he flung about his steed, and rode down the Glass Mountain again, so that the sparks flew about the golden hoofs of his horse, and a long ribbon of golden light gleamed behind him. At last he disappeared in the wood like a star. What a commotion now reigned about the mountain! The people broke forth into cheers that could be heard far away, horns sounded, trumpets called, horses neighed, arms clashed, and the king had proclaimed far and near that the unknown golden knight had won the prize.

Now all that was wanting was some information about the golden knight; for no one knew him; and all the people expected that he would at once make his appearance at the castle. But he did not come. This caused great surprise, and the princess grew pale and ill. But the king was put out, and the suitors murmured and found fault day by day. And at length, when they were all at their wits’ end, the king had a great meeting announced at his castle, which every man, high and low, was to attend; so that the princess might choose among them herself. There was no one who was not glad to go for the princess’s sake, and also because it was a royal command, and a countless number of people gathered together. And when they had all assembled, the princess came out of the castle with great pomp, and followed by her maids, passed through the entire multitude. But no matter how much she looked about her on every side, she did not find the one for whom she was looking. When she reached the last row she saw a man who stood quite hidden by the crowd. He had a flat cap and a wide gray mantle such as shepherds wear; but its hood was drawn up so that his face could not be seen. At once the princess ran up to him, drew down his hood, fell upon his neck and cried: “Here he is! Here he is!” Then all the people laughed; for they saw that it was the king’s herdsman, and the king himself called out: “May God console me for the son-in-law who is to be my portion!” The man, however, was not at all abashed, but replied: “O, you need not worry about that at all! I am just as much a king’s son as you are a king!”

With that he flung aside his wide mantle. And there were none left to laugh; for instead of the grey herdsman, there stood a handsome prince, clad in gold from head to foot, and holding the princess’s golden apple in his hand. And all could see that it was the same youth who had ridden up the Glass Mountain.

Then they prepared a feast whose like had never before been seen, and the prince received the king’s daughter, and with her half of the kingdom. Thenceforward they lived happily in their kingdom, and if they have not died they are living there still. But nothing more was ever heard of the wild man. And that is the end.

17

QUEEN CRANE

Once upon a time there was a poor, poor boy. He went to the king and begged to be taken into service as a shepherd, and all called him “Sheep-Peter.” While he was herding his sheep, he used to amuse himself with his crossbow. One day he saw a crane sitting in an oak-tree, and wanted to shoot her. The crane, however, hopped down further and further, and at last settled in the lowest branches. Then she said: “If you promise not to shoot me, I will help you whenever you are in trouble. You need only to call out: ‘God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!’” With that the bird flew away.

At length war broke out and the king had to take the field. Then Sheep-Peter came to the king and asked whether he might not be allowed to go along to war. They gave him an old nag to ride, and he rode into a swamp along the highway, and there the horse died. So he sat down and clicked with his tongue; but the horse would not move. And the people who rode by had their sport with him; while the youth pretended to feel sad.

When the people had all passed by, the youth went to the oak in which the Queen Crane dwelt. Here he was given a black steed, a suit of brazen armor, and a silver sword. Thus he rode to battle and got there as quickly as he could wish. Then he said: “God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!” With that he killed all the enemy and rode away again.

But the king thought that an angel had come to help him, and wanted to hold him back. The youth, however, rode quickly back to the oak, took off his armor, went down to the swamp, and once more began to click to his horse. When the people rode by they laughed and said: “You were not along to-day, so you missed seeing how an angel came and killed all the enemy.” And the youth pretended to feel sad, so sad.

The following day the king once more had to take the field. And Sheep-Peter came to him and said he wanted to go along. So they gave him an old nag to ride, and he rode into a swamp beside the highway. Then he sat down and clicked with his tongue; but the horse would not move. When the people rode by they had their sport with him; but the youth pretended to feel sad, so sad. When the people had gone by, he went to the oak in which the Queen Crane dwelt, and was given a white steed, a suit of silver armor, and a golden sword. Thus equipped he rode to battle. When he arrived he said: “God aid me, and Queen Crane... and I will succeed!” But he had forgotten to say “stay by me,” and so he was shot in the leg. But the king took out his handkerchief, and tied up his leg. Then the youth said once more: “God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!” And he slew all of the enemy. Then the king thought he was an angel from heaven, and wanted to hold him. But the youth rode quickly to the oak, took off his armor, and then went down to his nag in the swamp and tried to get it to move, while the soldiers were passing. They laughed and said: “You were not along to-day, and did not see how an angel came from heaven and killed all of the enemy.” The youth pretended to be very sad.

On the third day all happened as before. The king took the field. The youth was given a wretched nag and rode it into a swamp beside the highway. Then he began to click with his tongue but the nag would not go on, and the people who rode past laughed at him. He pretended to feel very sad; but when the people had passed, he went to the oak in which Queen Crane dwelt, and she gave him a red steed, a golden sword, and a golden suit of armor. Thus equipped he rode to war, and all happened as before. He said: “God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!” and slew all the enemy. The king thought he was an angel from heaven and wanted to hold him back by all means; but the youth rode quickly to the oak, took off his armor, and rode down to the swamp where he had his three nags. He hid the king’s handkerchief, and when the people passed by he was clicking with his tongue as usual.

Now the king had three princesses, and they were to be carried off by three meer-women. So the king had it proclaimed that whoever could rescue them should receive one of them for a wife. When the day came on which the oldest princess was to be carried away, Sheep-Peter received a steed, a suit of armor and a sword from Queen Crane. With them he rode to the castle, fetched the princess, took her before him on his steed, and then lay down on the sea-shore to sleep. He had a dog with him as well. And while he slept the princess wove her hair-ribbon into his hair. Suddenly the meer-woman appeared, and she awakened him and bade him mount his steed. Many people had been standing there; but when the meer-woman appeared they all took fright, and climbed into tall trees. But the youth said: “God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!” And then he slew the meer-woman. Thereupon he rode quickly back to Queen Crane, took off his armor, and herded his sheep again. But among the on-lookers had been a nobleman, who threatened the princess, and forced her to say that he had rescued her. And from Sheep-Peter no one heard a word.

On the following day the second princess was to be carried off. So Sheep-Peter went to Queen Crane, who gave him a steed, a suit of armor and a sword, and with them he rode to the castle, and fetched the second princess. When they reached the sea-shore the meer-woman had not yet appeared. So the youth lay down to sleep and said to the princess: “Wake me when the meer-woman comes, and if you cannot wake me, then tell my horse.” With that he fell asleep, and meanwhile the princess wove a string of pearls into his hair. When the meer-woman came, the princess tried to wake him; but he would not wake up at all, and so she told the horse to waken him. And the horse did wake him. The great lords, however, who were standing about, climbed into the trees out of pure fright when the meer-woman appeared. The youth took the princess on his steed, cried: “God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!” and with that he slew the meer-woman. Then he rode quickly back to Queen Crane, took off his armor, and led his flock out to pasture. But among the onlookers had been a count, who threatened the princess, and said he would thrust her through with his sword if she did not swear he had rescued her. The princess did so out of fear; but from Sheep-Peter no one heard a word.

On the third day the same thing happened. Sheep-Peter was given a suit of armor, a sword and a steed by Queen Crane, and fetched the youngest princess. When he lay down on the sea-shore to sleep, he said to her: “When the meer-woman comes, wake me, and if you cannot wake me, then tell the horse to wake me, and if the horse cannot wake me, then ask the dog to wake me.” When the meer-woman came, neither the princess nor the horse was able to wake him, and they had to call the dog to help them. At last he woke up, took the princess on his horse, cried: “God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!” and slew the meer-woman. Then he rode back again to Queen Crane, took off his armor and let his flock out to pasture.

Not long after, the deliverers of the princesses were to come to the castle and be married. But first the king asked his daughters which of the three each wanted to have. So the oldest said: “The gentleman from court,” and the second said: “the count,” but the third said “Sheep-Peter.” Then the king was very angry with his youngest daughter; for he did not believe for a moment that Sheep-Peter had delivered her. But she insisted and said she would take no one else. The king then presented an apple of pure gold to the count and the court gentleman; but Sheep-Peter got nothing.

Now all three of them were to hold a three-days’ shooting-match, in order to see which was the best shot; for the king hoped that Sheep-Peter would make a proper laughing-stock of himself, and drop far behind the others without any effort on their part. But Sheep-Peter was so good a marksman that he hit everything at which he aimed. And the very first day he shot a great deal, while the others shot but little. Then they bought the game he had shot from him, and gave him a golden apple for it. The same thing happened the second day, and thus he got the other gold apple. But when Peter came home on the evening of the first and second day, he had only a crow dangling from his blunderbuss. And when he met the king, he threw the crow to the ground and cried: “There is my whole bag!”

On the third day all went as before. Sheep-Peter hit everything at which he aimed; but the others scored no hits. Then Sheep-Peter promised them all he had bagged, if they would let him write what he chose on their necks. They agreed to the bargain, and he wrote on the neck of each: “A thief and a rascal.” Then all three went home, and again Peter had no more than a crow to show.

At night all three of them slept together in one room. When they woke in the morning, the king came in to them, said good-morning, and asked how they were. But he was much surprised to see that Sheep-Peter was keeping them company. Then the youth said: “I was in the war, and slew all of the enemy!” “Ah!” said the king, “you did not do that, it was an angel from heaven; for you were sitting in the swamp.” Then Sheep-Peter drew out the king’s handkerchief, and then the king recognized him. Then the herdsman said: “I also delivered the princesses!” But the king would not believe that, and laughed at him. And then the youngest princess came along and told how it all had happened.

And the youth took out the ribands of the other princesses, and the king had to believe that this, too, was true. Then, Peter continued: “I also shot all the game!” And again the king would not believe him and said: “Nonsense, why you never brought home anything of an evening but a wretched crow!” Then Peter produced the golden apples: “I was given this one for the first day, and the other for the second.” “And what did you get for the third?” asked the king. Then the shepherd showed him what he had written on the necks of the other suitors. And when the king saw that, he had to believe him. And so he really got the youngest princess, and with her half of the kingdom, and after the king’s death, all of it. But the two sham heroes got nothing at all, and had only their trouble for their pains.

18

TALES OF THE TROLLS

A peasant from Jursagard in the parish of Hanger had gone to the forest the day before Christmas, and started out for home late in the evening. He had just about reached the Klintaberg when he heard some one call out: “Tell the malt-swine to come home, for her child has fallen into the fire!” When the peasant reached home, there stood his wife, who had been brewing the Yuletide ale, and she was complaining that though she brewed and brewed, it did not have the right flavor. Then he told her what had been shouted at him from the hill, and that very moment a troll-witch, whom they had not noticed before, darted down from the stove and made off in a great hurry. And when they looked closer, they found that she had left behind a great kettle full of the best malt, which she had gathered during the brewing. And that was the reason the poor woman had not been able to give her brew the right flavor. The kettle was large, made of ornamented metal, and was long preserved in Hanger. It was at length sold at auction in 1838, and melted down.

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IN FORMER DAYS, when a child came into the world, his mother was known as a “heathen,” until she could take him to church to be christened. And it was not safe for her to leave the house unless she carried steel about her in some shape or form. Now once there was one of these “heathen” women in Norra Ryd, in the parish of Hanger, who prepared lunch for the mowers, and went out and called them in to eat. Then one of the mowers said to her: “I cannot come, for my sheaf is not yet bound.” “I will bind it for you,” said the woman. The mowers went in and ate, but saw no more of her. They went back into the field, and were about to take up their work again, but still neither saw nor heard her. They began to search, and hunted for a number of days; but all in vain. Time passed, till it was late in the fall. One day the weather was clear and sunny. To this very day there is a cotter’s hut, called Kusabo, that stands on a hill named Kusas, and the cotter who lived there went to look for a horse. And there on the hillside he saw the woman sitting who had disappeared, and she was sewing. It was not far from Kusabo to Norra Ryd, so he recognized her at once. He said “O, you poor thing, and here you sit!” “Yes,” said she, “but you must never mention it to Lars” — that was her husband — “for I shall never return from this place. Even now I am only allowed to sit outside for a little while.”

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Once upon a time a girl was hunting for berries on Kusabo mountain, and was taken into the hill. But she wept, night and day, which disgruntled the trolls, and they let her out again. But just as they were letting her out, one of the trolls hit her such a blow on the back that she was hump-backed for the rest of her life. She herself used to tell how she had been kept in the hill.

19

CHARCOAL NILS AND THE TROLL-WOMAN

In the old days there lived on a headland that juts out into the northwestern corner of Lake Rasval, in the neighborhood of the Linde mining-district, a charcoal-burner named Nils, generally known as Charcoal Nils. He let a farm-hand attend to his little plot of land, and he himself made his home in the forest, where he chopped wood in the summer and burned it to charcoal in the winter. Yet no matter how hard he struggled, his work was unblessed with reward, and no one ever spoke of him save as poor Charcoal Nils.

One day, when he was on the opposite shore of the lake, near the gloomy Harsberg, a strange woman came up to him, and asked whether he needed some one to help him with his charcoal burning.

“Yes, indeed,” said he, “help would be welcome.” So she began to gather blocks of wood and tree-trunks, more than Charcoal Nils could have dragged together with his horse, and by noon there was enough wood for a new kiln. When evening came, she asked the charcoal-burner whether he were satisfied with the day’s work she had done, and if she were to come back the next day.

That suited the charcoal-burner perfectly, and she came back the next day and all the following ones. And when the kiln had been burned out she helped Nils clear it, and never before had he had such a quantity of charcoal, nor charcoal of so fine a quality.

So she became his wife and lived with him in the wood for three years. They had three children, yet this worried Nils but little, seeing that she looked after them, and they gave him no trouble.

But when the fourth year came, she grew more exacting, and insisted on going back to his home with him, and living with him there. Nils wished to hear nothing about this; yet since she was so useful to him in his charcoal-burning, he did not betray his feelings, and said he would think it over.

It happened one Sunday that he went to church — where he had not been for many years, and what he heard there brought up thoughts he had not known since the innocent days of his childhood. He began to wonder whether there were not some hocus-pocus about the charcoal-burning, and whether it were not due to the forest woman, who aided him so willingly.

Preoccupied with this and other thoughts, he forgot while returning to his kiln, that he had promised the strange woman at the very beginning, when she had first helped him, that, whenever he had been home and was returning to the kiln, he would rap three times with his ax against an old pine-tree not far from it. On this occasion, as we have said, he forgot the sign, and as a result he saw something that nearly robbed him of his wits.

As he drew near the kiln, he saw it all aflame, and around it stood the three children and their mother, and they were clearing out the kiln. They were pulling down and putting out so that flames, smoke and ashes whirled sky-high, but instead of the spruce-branches that were generally used to put out the fire, *they had bushy tails which they dipped in the snow*!

When Charcoal Nils had looked on for a while, he slunk back to the old pine-tree, and made its trunk echo to the sound of his three ax-strokes till one could hear them on the Harsberg. Then he went to the kiln, as though he had seen nothing, and all went on as before. The kiln was glowing with a handsome, even glow, and the tall woman was about and working as usual.

As soon as she saw Charcoal Nils, she came back with her pressing demand that he take her home to his little house, and that they live there.

“Yes, that shall come about,” said Nils to console her, and turned back home to fetch a horse. But instead he went out on the headline of Kallernäs, on the eastern shore of Lake Rasval, where a wise man lived, and asked the latter what he should do.

The old man advised him to go home and hitch his horse to his charcoal-wagon, but to hitch the horse in such wise that there would be not a single loop either in the harness or traces. Then he was to mount the horse and ride back to the kiln without stopping, have the troll-woman and her children get into the wagon, and at once drive out on the ice with them.

The charcoal-burner did as the old man told him, saddled his horse, paying strict attention that there were no loops in saddle or bridle, rode across the ice through the wood to his kiln, and told the troll-woman and her children to get in. Then he quickly turned back through the wood, out on the ice, and there let his horse run as fast as he could. When he reached the middle of the lake, he saw a pack of wolves running along in the direction of Aboda-land, at the northern end of the lake, and heading for the ice. Then he tore the saddle-harness from the traces, so that the wagon with the troll-folk was left standing on the bare ice, and rode as fast as his horse could carry him for the opposite shore. When the trolls saw the wolves they began to scream.

“Turn back, turn back!” cried the mother. “And if you will not for my sake, then at least do so for the sake of Vipa (Peewee), your youngest daughter!” But Charcoal Nils rode for the shore without looking back. Then he heard the troll-woman calling on others for aid.

Brother in the Harsberg,
Sister in Stripa,

Cousin in Ringfels;
Take the loop and pull!

“There is no loop to pull!” came the answer from deep within the Harsberg. “Then catch him at Harkallarn.” “He is not riding in that direction.” The reply came from Ringfels.

And indeed Charcoal Nils did not ride in that direction; but over stick and stone straight to his own home. Yet when he reached his own courtyard, the horse fell, and a shot from the trolls tore away a corner of the stable. Nils shortly after fell sick, and had to lie a-bed for a number of weeks. When he was well again he sold his forest land, and worked the little farm by the cottage until his death. So that was one occasion when the troll-folk came off second best.

20

THE THREE DOGS

Once upon a time there was a king who went forth into the world and fetched back a beautiful queen. And after they had been married a while God gave them a little daughter. Then there was great rejoicing in the city and throughout the country, for the people wished their king all that was good, since he was kind and just. While the child lay in its cradle, a strange-looking old woman entered the room, and no one knew who she was nor whence she came. The old woman spoke a verse over the child, and said that she must not be allowed out under the open sky until she were full fifteen years of age, since otherwise the mountain troll would fetch her. When the king heard this he took her words to heart, and posted guards to watch over the little princess so that she would not get out under the open sky.

Some time afterward God gave the royal pair another little daughter, and again the whole kingdom rejoiced. But the wise old woman once more put in an appearance, and warned the king not to let the princess out under the open sky until she were full fifteen years of age. And then, after a time, God gave the royal pair a third daughter. This time, too, the old woman appeared, and repeated what she had already twice said. Then the king was much grieved; for he loved his children above everything in the world. Therefore he gave strict orders that the three princesses were always to be kept beneath the roof of the castle, and that none were to dare transgress against this command.

Now a long time passed, and the king’s daughters grew up and became the most beautiful maidens of whom one has ever heard tell. Then war broke out and the king, their father, had to leave them. One day, while he was away at war, the three princesses were sitting in the window and looking out, watching the sun shine on the little flowers in the garden. And they felt a great desire to play with the lovely flowers, and begged their guards to let them go into the garden for a little while. But this their guards would not allow, for they feared the king’s anger. Yet the king’s daughters pleaded so very sweetly that they could not deny their pleas and they let them have their way. But the princesses did not have long to walk about, for no sooner were they beneath the open sky, than a cloud came suddenly down, and bore them off, and all attempts to regain possession of them were fruitless; though search was made in every direction.

Then the whole kingdom mourned and grieved, and one may imagine that the king was anything but happy when he returned home and learned all that had happened. Yet what is done cannot be undone, and in the end they had to resign themselves to it. And since the king knew of no other way to help himself, he had proclaimed throughout the kingdom that whoever would deliver his three daughters out of the power of the mountain troll should have one of them for his bride, and with her half of the kingdom. When this became known in foreign lands, many youths set forth with horses and followers to seek the princesses. At the king’s court were two princes who also went forth to see whether fortune would be kind to them. They armed themselves in the best possible way with coats of mail and costly weapons, and bragged and boasted that they would not return without having done what they set out to do.

And now we will let the king’s sons ride out over the world on their quest, while we turn to other people. Far, far out in the wild wood there lived a poor widow, who had an only son who drove his mother’s pigs to pasture every day. And as he crossed the fields, he whittled himself a flute, and amused himself playing it. And he played so sweetly that he warmed the cockles of the hearts of all those who heard him.

Now it chanced that the young swine-herd once sat in the wood blowing his flute, while his three pigs were digging under the pine-roots. And an old, old man came along, with a beard so long and so broad that it hung far below his girdle. The old man had a large, powerful dog with him. When the youth saw the great dog, he thought to himself: “If a fellow had a dog like that to keep him company here in the wilderness, he might consider himself lucky.” And when the old man noticed this, he began: “That is why I have come, for I want to exchange my dog for one of your pigs.” The youth was at once willing, and closed the bargain. He received the great dog, and gave up the gray pig in place of it. Then the old man went his way. But as he left he said: “You have reason to be satisfied with our exchange, for that dog is not like other dogs. His name is ‘Take Hold!’ and whatever you tell him to take hold of he will seize, even though it were the grimmest of trolls.” Thereupon they parted, and the youth thought that fortune had indeed favored him.

In the evening he called his dog and drove his pigs home. But when his old mother heard that he had given away the gray pig for a dog, she was angry beyond measure, and gave her son a good drubbing. The youth told her to calm herself; but all in vain, the longer it lasted the more furious she became. Then, since he did not know what else to do, he called out to his dog: “Take hold!” At once the dog ran up, seized the old mother and held her so tightly that she could not move. But otherwise he did her no harm. And now she had to promise her son to make the best of the matter, and then they were friends once more.

The following day the youth went to the wood again, with his dog and the two pigs. After a time he sat down and played his flute as usual, and the dog danced to his playing with such skill, that it was nothing short of a miracle. And as he was sitting there, the old man with the gray beard came out of the wood again, and with him another dog, no smaller than the first. When the youth saw the handsome beast he thought to himself: “If a fellow had that dog to keep him company here where it is so lonely, he need have no fear.” When the old man noticed this, he began: “That is why I have come, for I want to exchange my dog for one of your pigs.” The youth did not lose any time, but agreed to close the bargain. He received the great dog, and gave up one of his pigs in place of it. Then the old man went his way. Yet before he left he added: “You have reason to be well satisfied with your purchase, for this dog is not like the other dogs. His name is ‘Tear!’ and if you give him something to tear, he will tear it to pieces, even though it were the grimmest of trolls.” Then they parted. But the youth was happy in the idea that he had made a capital exchange; although he knew that his old mother would not be content with it. And when evening came, and the youth went home, his old mother was no less angry than she had been before. But this time she did not venture to beat her son, because she was afraid of the great dogs. Yet, as is usual, when women have scolded long enough, they stop of their own accord — and that is what happened in this case. The youth and his mother made peace with each other; though the mother thought to herself that the damage done could not well be repaired.

On the third day the youth went into the wood again with his pig and two dogs. He felt very happy, seated himself on a tree-stump and played his flute as usual. And the dogs danced to his playing with such skill that it was a pleasure to watch them. As the youth was sitting there in peace and quiet, the old gray-beard once more came out of the wood. This time he had a third dog with him, who was as large as both the others together. When the youth saw the handsome animal he could not help but think: “If a fellow had this dog to keep him company in the wilderness, he would have no cause for complaint.” The old man at once began: “That is why I have come, in order to sell my dog, for I can see you would like to have him." The youth was at once willing and agreed to close the bargain. So he received the great dog and gave up his last pig in place of it. Then the old man went his way. Yet before he went he said: "You will be satisfied with your exchange, for this dog is not like other dogs. His name is 'Hark!' and his hearing is so keen that he hears everything that happens, though it be happening many miles away. He even hears the grass and the trees grow." Then they parted in the friendliest spirit. But the youth was happy in the thought that now he need fear nothing in the world. And then, when evening came on, and the swine-herd went home, his mother was very sad to think that her son had sold all they possessed. But the youth told her to be of good courage, since he would see to it that they did not suffer want. And when he spoke to her in such a cheerful manner, she grew content again, and decided that he had spoken in wise and manly fashion. Then when day dawned the youth went hunting with his dogs, and came back at evening with as much game as he could possibly carry. And he continued to go hunting in this way for a time until his old mother's store-room was well provided with meat and all sorts of good things. Then he bade his mother a fond farewell, called his dogs, and said he was going to wander out into the world and try his fortune.

And he fared forth over mountains and tangled ways, and came into the heart of a sombre forest. There he met the gray-beard of whom I have already told you. And when he met him the youth was much pleased, and said: "Good-day, grandfather, and thanks for the last time!" And the old man replied: "Good-day to you, and whither away?" The youth answered: "I am wandering out into the world to see what fortune has in store for me." Then the old man said: "Keep right on going till you come to the royal castle, and there your fortune will take a turn." And with that they parted. The youth followed the old man's advice and for a time wandered on straight ahead. When he came to a tavern he played his flute and let his dogs dance, and was never at a lack for bed and board, and whatever else he might want.

After he had wandered long and far, he at length came to a great city, whose streets were filled with people. The youth wondered what it all meant, and at last reached the spot where, to the sound of bell, the king’s proclamation was being cried — that whoever should deliver the three princesses out of the power of the troll, would receive one of them, and half the kingdom as well. Now he understood what the old man had meant. He called his dogs, and went to the king’s castle. But there all had been grief and mourning since the day the king’s daughters had disappeared. And of them all the king and queen were the most sorrowful. Then the youth went to the keeper of the door, and asked him whether he might play and show his dogs before the king. The courtiers were willing, for they hoped it might make him feel more cheerful. So he was admitted and allowed to show his tricks. And when the king had heard him play, and had seen the skillful dancing of his dogs, he grew quite merry, and none had seen him as happy during all the seven long years that had passed since he had lost his daughters.

When the dance was over, the king asked the youth what he asked as a reward for having given him such a pleasure. The youth answered: “My lord king, I did not come to you to win gold and gear. But I have another request to make: that you allow me to set out and search for your three daughters, carried away by a mountain troll.” When the king heard this his thoughts once more grew gloomy, and he replied: “You need not even think of delivering my daughters. It is no child’s play, and your betters have already attempted it in vain. Yet should it really come to pass that you deliver one of the princesses, you may be sure that I will not break my word.” So he took leave of the king and set forth. And he decided to take no rest until he had found what he sought.

Now he passed through many broad kingdoms without meeting with any special adventures. And wherever he went his dogs followed him. “Hark!” ran along and listened for anything worth hearing to be heard around them; “Take Hold!” carried his master’s knapsack and “Tear!” who was the strongest, carried his master when the latter was weary. One day “Hark!” came running up hastily, and told his master that he had gone to a high mountain, and had heard the king’s daughter, who sat within it and span, and that the troll was not at home. This greatly pleased the youth, and he hurried toward the mountain together with his three dogs. When they got there “Hark!” said: “There is no time to lose. The troll is only ten miles away, and I can already hear the golden horse-shoes of his steed ringing on the stones.” The youth now ordered his dogs to break down the door into the mountain, and they did. And as he stepped into the mountain he saw a lovely maiden, sitting in the mountain-hall, winding a golden thread on a golden spindle. The youth went up and greeted the lovely girl. Then the king’s daughter was much surprised and said: “Who are you that dare to venture into the giant’s hall? During all the seven long years I have been sitting here in the mountain I have never yet seen a human being.” And she added: “For heaven’s sake hasten away before the troll returns home, or else your life will be forfeit!” But the youth was unafraid, and said that he would await the giant’s return without fear.

While they were talking together, the giant came riding along on his colt shod with gold. When he saw the gate standing open he grew furiously angry and shouted till the whole mountain shook: “Who has broken my mountain door?” The youth boldly answered: “I did, and now I shall break you as well! ‘Take Hold!’ seize him! ‘Tear!’ and ‘Hark!’ tear him into a thousand pieces.” No sooner had he spoken than the dogs rushed up, fell upon the giant and tore him into countless pieces. Then the princess was happy beyond measure and said: “God be praised, now I am freed!” And she fell upon the youth’s neck and gave him a kiss. But he did not wish to stay there any longer, saddled the giant's colt, loaded it with all the gold and gear he found in the mountain, and hastily went away with the king's beautiful daughter.

They passed on together a long distance. Then, one day, "Hark!" who always ran ahead scouting, came quickly back to his master, and told him he had been near a high mountain, and had heard the king's second daughter sitting within it winding golden yarn, and that the troll himself was not at home. This was very welcome news for the youth, and he hurried toward the mountain with his faithful dogs. Now when they drew near "Hark!" said: "There is no time to lose. The giant is only eight miles away, and I can already hear the golden horse-shoes of his steed ringing on the stones." The youth at once ordered his dogs to break down the door into the mountain, no matter which way. And when he stepped into the interior of the mountain he saw a lovely maiden sitting in the mountain hall, winding golden yarn on a golden windle. The youth went up and greeted the lovely girl. The king's daughter was much surprised and said: "Who are you that dare to venture into the giant's hall? During all the seven years I have been sitting here in the mountain I have never yet seen a human being." And she added: "For heaven's sake, hasten away, for if the troll comes your life will be forfeit!" But the youth told her why he had come, and said that he would await the troll's return quite undisturbed.

While they were still talking together, the giant came riding on his steed shod with gold, and drew up outside the mountain. When he noticed that the great door was open, he grew furiously angry, and shouted till the mountain trembled to its very roots. He said: "Who has broken my mountain door?" The youth boldly answered: "I have, and now I shall break you as well! 'Take Hold,' seize him! 'Tear!' and 'Hark!' tear him into a thousand pieces!" The dogs at once rushed up, threw themselves upon the giant, and tore him into as many pieces as leaves fall in the autumn. Then the king's daughter was happy beyond measure and cried: "God be praised, now I am freed!” and she fell upon the youth’s neck and gave him a kiss. But he led the princess to her sister, and one can imagine-how glad they were to see each other again. Then the youth packed up all the treasures he found in the mountain hall, loaded them on the giant’s steed, and went his way with the king’s two daughters. And they wandered along for a long time. Then, one day, “Hark!” who always ran ahead scouting, came hastily to his master and told him that he had been near a high mountain, and had heard the king’s third daughter sitting within and weaving a web of gold, and that the troll was not at home. This was very welcome news for the youth, and he hastened toward the mountain, followed by his three dogs. When he drew near “Hark!” said: “There is no time to lose, for the giant is only five miles away. I can already hear the golden horse-shoes of his steed ringing on the stones.” Then the youth at once ordered his dogs to break down the door into the mountain, by hook or by crook. And when he stepped into the mountain, he saw a girl sitting in the mountain hall, weaving a web of gold. But this maiden was lovely beyond all measure, with a loveliness exceeding all the youth had ever thought to find on earth. He now went up and greeted the lovely maiden. Then the king’s daughter was much surprised and said: “Who are you that dare to venture into the giant’s hall? During all the seven long years I have been sitting here in the mountain I have never yet seen a human being.” And she added: “For heaven’s sake, hasten away before the troll comes, or else your life will be forfeit!” But the youth was full of confidence, and said he would gladly venture his life for the king’s lovely daughter.

While they were still talking the giant came riding along on his colt shod with gold, and drew up at the foot of the mountain. When he went in he saw that uninvited guests had arrived, and was much frightened; for well he knew of the fate that had befallen his brothers. He therefore thought it advisable to fall back upon cunning and treachery, for he had not dared to venture on open battle. For that reason he made many fine speeches, and was very friendly and smooth with the youth. Then he told the king’s daughter to prepare a meal in order to show his guest all hospitality.

And since the troll knew so well how to talk, the youth allowed himself to be beguiled by his smooth words, and forgot to be on his guard. He sat down to the table with the giant; but the king’s daughter wept secretly, and the dogs were very restless; though no one paid them any attention.

When the giant and his guest had finished their meal, the youth said: “Now that I have satisfied my hunger, give me something to quench my thirst!” The giant replied: “On the mountain-top is a spring in which bubbles the clearest wine; but I have no one to fetch it.” The youth answered: “If that be all that is lacking, one of my dogs can go up.” Then the giant laughed in his false heart, for nothing suited him better than to have the youth send away his dogs. The youth ordered “Take Hold!” to go to the spring, and the giant handed him a great tankard. The dog went; yet it was easy to see that he did not go willingly; and the time passed and passed and he did not return.

After a while the giant said: “I wonder why your dog stays away so long? Perhaps you would let another of your dogs go and help him; for the way is long and the tankard is heavy.” The youth did not suspect any trickery and agreed. He told “Tear!” to go and see why “Take Hold!” had not yet come. The dog wagged his tail, and did not want to leave his master. But the youth did not notice it and drove him off himself. Then the giant laughed heartily, and the king’s daughter wept, yet the youth paid no attention; but was merry and at his ease, played with his sword, and dreamed of no danger.

Thus a long time passed; but nothing was heard of the wine nor of the dogs. Then the giant said: “I can see that your dogs do not do as you bid them, otherwise we should not have to sit here and thirst. I think it would be well if you let ‘Hark!’ go up and see why they do not come back.” The youth agreed, and told his third dog to hurry to the spring. But “Hark!” did not want to, and instead crept whining to his master’s feet. Then the youth grew angry and drove him off by force. And when he reached the top of the mountain he shared the fate of the others, a high wall rose round about him, and he was made a prisoner by the giant’s magic power.

Now that all three dogs were gone, the giant rose, and suddenly looked altogether different. He took down a long sword from the wall, and said: “Now I will do what my brothers did not do, and you must die at once, for you are in my power!” Then the youth was frightened, and he regretted he had allowed his dogs to leave him. He said: “I do not ask for my life, since in any event the time will come when I must die. But I would like to repeat the Lord’s prayer, and play a psalm on my flute, for such is the custom in my country.” The giant granted his prayer, but said that he would not wait long. So the youth kneeled and began to blow his flute till it sounded over hill and dale. And that very moment the magic wall was broken and the dogs were freed. They came rushing on like the storm-wind, and fell upon the mountain troll. The youth at once rose and said: “‘Take Hold!’, seize him! ‘Tear!’ and ‘Hark!’ tear him into a thousand pieces!” Then the dogs flung themselves on the giant and tore him into countless pieces. Then the youth took all the treasures that lay in the mountain, hitched the giant’s horses to a gilded wagon, and drove off as fast as he could.

Now when the king’s daughters met again there was great joy, as may well be imagined, and all thanked the youth for delivering them out of the power of the mountain trolls. But the youth fell deeply in love with the youngest princess, and they promised to be true to each other. So the king’s daughters passed on their way with music and merriment of every kind, and the youth served them with all the honor and courtesy due maidens of gentle birth. And while they were underway the princesses toyed with the youth’s hair, and each tied her golden ring in his locks for remembrance.

One day while they were still underway, they met two wanderers, who were traveling the same road. The clothes of the two strangers were torn and their feet were sore, and their whole appearance showed that they had a long journey behind them. The youth stopped his wagon, and asked them who they were and whence they came. The strangers answered that they were two princes, and had gone forth to search for the three maidens in the mountain. But fortune had not favored them; and now they had to return home more like journeymen than kings' sons. When the youth heard this he felt sorry for the two wanderers, and asked whether they would like to ride with him in his handsome wagon. The princes thanked him profusely for his offer. They drove on together, and came to the kingdom over which the father of the princesses reigned.

Now when the princes learned that the youth had delivered the king's three daughters, a great jealousy took possession of them, and they thought of how badly they had fared in their own venture. And they took counsel together as to how they might get the better of the youth, and win power and glory for themselves. But they hid their evil plot till a favorable opportunity offered for carrying it out. Then they suddenly threw themselves on their comrade, seized him by the throat and strangled him. And then they threatened to kill the princesses if they did not swear to keep silence. And since the king's daughters were in the power of the princes, they did not dare say no. But they felt very sorry for the youth who had given up his life for them, and the youngest princess mourned with all her heart, and all her happiness was at an end.

After this great wrong the princes drove to the royal castle, and one may well imagine how happy the king was to get back his three daughters. In the meantime the poor youth lay like dead off in a gorge in the forest. Yet he was not quite dead, and his faithful dogs lay about him, kept him warm, and licked his wounds. And they did not stop until their master came back to life again. When he was once more well and strong he set out, and after many difficulties came to the royal castle in which the princesses dwelt.

When he came in the whole court was full of joy and merriment, and from the king’s hall came the sound of dancing and string music. That surprised him greatly, and he asked what it all meant. The serving-man answered: “You must come from far away, since you do not know that the king has regained his daughters who were in the power of the mountain troll. This is the oldest princess’s wedding-day.”

The youth then asked after the youngest princess, and when she was to marry. But the serving-man said that she did not want a husband, and wept the live-long day, though no one knew why. Then the youth felt happy once more; for now he knew that she loved him, and had kept faith with him.

The youth now went to the keeper of the door, and bade him tell the king that a guest had arrived who would add to the merriment of the wedding festivities by showing his dogs. This was to the king’s liking, and he ordered that the stranger receive the best possible treatment. And when the youth stepped into the hall, the whole wedding company were astounded by his skill and his manly bearing, and all agreed that so handsome a youth was rarely seen. But no sooner had the king’s three daughters recognized him, than they jumped up from the table, and flung themselves on his neck. And then the princes thought it best to make themselves scarce. But the king’s daughters told how the youth had freed them, and the rest of their adventures; and to make quite certain they looked for their rings among his locks.

Now when the king heard of the trickery and treachery the two strange princes had used, he grew very angry and had them driven ignominiously forth from the castle. But he received the brave youth with great honor, as he had deserved, and he was married to the king’s youngest daughter that selfsame day. After the king’s death the youth was chosen king of all the land, and a gallant king he was. And there he lives with his beautiful queen, and is reigning there happily to this very day. And that is all I have to do with it.

21

THE POOR DEVIL

Once upon a time there was a peasant, who led his cow to pasture in the spring, and prayed God to have her in His care.

The evil one was sitting in a bush, heard him, and said to himself: “When things turn out well, they thank God for it; but if anything goes wrong, then I am always to blame!”

A few days later the cow strayed into a swamp. And when the peasant came and saw her he said: “Look at that! The devil has had his finger in the pie again!”

“Just what I might have expected,” thought the devil in his bush. Then the peasant went off to fetch people to help drag the cow out. But in the meantime the devil slipped from his bush and helped out the cow, for he thought:

“Now he will have something to thank me for, too.”

But when the peasant came back and saw the cow on dry land, he said: “Thank God, she’s out again!”

22

HOW SMALAND AND SCHONEN CAME TO BE

The Smalanders declare:

At the time when our Lord created the earth, he made a level and fruitful stretch of land, and that was Schonen. But the devil had been busy in the meantime, and had created Smaland, a barren region consisting mainly of hills and swamps. When our Lord saw it, it looked very hopeless to him, and he strewed the bits of earth that remained in his apron out over it, and created the Smalanders. They turned out to be a fine race of men, handsome and strong and able to take care of themselves in any situation. It is said to this very day, that if you take a Smalander and set him down on a rock in the sea, he will still manage to save himself. But in the meantime the devil had been down in Schonen, and had created the people who live there, and that is why they are so slow, boastful and servile. But the people of Schonen say:

Once as our Lord and St. Peter were walking together, they heard a terrible commotion in a forest. “Go see what is happening there,” said our Lord. St. Peter went. And there was the devil and a Smalander, who were pummeling each other with might and main. St. Peter tried to separate them; but they paid no attention to him. So he took his sword and chopped off both their heads. And he told our Lord what he had seen and done: “No, that was not well done,” the latter replied, “go and put back their heads where they were, and touch the wounds with your sword, and both will come to life again.” St. Peter did so, but he exchanged heads. Since that time the Smalanders all have a bit of the devil about them, and those who know the devil, will tell you that he is more or less like the Smalanders.

23

THE EVIL ONE AND KITTA GRAU

One day the devil met Kitta Grau:

“Where have you been, old man?” asked Kitta Grau, for she recognized him.

“Well,” said the evil one, “I have been out on the farmstead where the newly wedded couple live. This is the third time I have tried to sow dissension between them; but they think so much of each other that it is a sheer impossibility.”

“You talk like a real stupid. That is something I could bring about the very first time I went there,” said Kitta Grau.

“If you can do that, you shall have a splendid pair of shoes,” was the evil one’s reply.

“Mind you keep your word!” said Kitta, and turned toward the farmstead.

There the woman was home alone; for her husband had gone to the forest. Kitta said to the young wife:

“You really have a splendid husband.”

“And that is the truth,” the woman replied, “for he grants my every wish before it is spoken.”

“But take my word for it,” said Kitta, “there is still a bit of deceit in him. He has a pair of long hairs under his chin — if you could get at them with a razor, and cut them off while he is asleep, then he would be altogether without malice."

"Well," said the woman, "if that will help, I will be sure to keep an eye open after dinner and attend to it, for then he always takes a little noon-day nap."

Then Kitta Grau went out into the forest to the husband and bade him good-day.

"You really have a very good wife," said Kitta.

"She could not be bettered," replied the husband.

"Well you might be mistaken for all that," said Kitta. "When you come home, be on your guard, for when you go to take your noon-day nap, she has in mind to cut your throat. So be sure not to go to sleep."

The husband did not think much of the matter; but still he thanked Kitta Grau for her trouble.

Then he went home and ate his dinner, laid down and pretended to fall asleep at once.

Thereupon his wife went to his shaving-kit, took out his razor, went softly up to him and took hold of his chin with her hand.

Up flew the man.

"Do you want to murder me?" he cried, and gave his wife such a thump that she measured her full length on the floor.

And from that day forward there was no peace in the house. Now Kitta Grau was to receive her reward from the evil one. But he was so afraid of her that he did not venture to give her the shoes until he stood on one side of a stream, while she stood on the other, and then he passed them over to her on a long pole.

"You are ever so much worse than I am," he told Kitta Grau.

The black man had made a bargain with a merchant. He had promised him that all goods which he might buy he should sell again within three weeks' time at a handsome profit. But, if he had prospered, after seven years had passed he was to be the devil’s own. And he did prosper; for no matter what manner of old trash the merchant bought, and if it were no more than an old worn-out fur coat, he was always able to sell it again, and always at a profit.

Kitta Grau came into his shop and showed him the handsome shoes the evil one had given her.

So the merchant said:

“May heaven keep me from him! He will surely fetch me when the time comes; for I have made a pact with him; and I have been unable to buy anything without selling it again in three weeks’ time.”

Then Kitta Grau said: “Buy me, for I am sure no one will buy me from you!” And that is what the merchant did. He bought Kitta, had her disrobe and cover herself with tar, and roll in a pile of feathers. Then he put her in a glass cage as though she were a bird.

Now the first week went by, and the second week went by, and the third week went by, and no one appeared who wanted to buy the curious bird. And then, in due time, came the evil one, and wanted to fetch his merchant.

“Have patience,” said the merchant, “I still have something I have bought, but have not been able to sell again in three weeks’ time.”

“That is something I’d like to see,” said the black man. Then the merchant showed him Kitta Grau, sitting in her glass cage. But no sooner had the evil one seen the handsome bird than he cried:

“Oh, I see! It is you Kitta Grau! No one who knows you would buy you!”

And with that he hurried on his way.

Thus Kitta Grau could help do evil, and help do good.

24

THE LADY OF PINTORP

Where to-day a castellate building towers between spreading parks and gardens on the noble estate of Eriksberg, there lay in ancient times a holding known as Pintorp; with which legend has associated the gruesome tale of the lady of Pintorp.

In Pintorp — so the legend says — there dwelt a nobleman who, dying in his youth, left all his goods and gear to his widow. Yet instead of being a kind mistress to her many dependents, she exploited them in every way, and ill-treated them shamefully. Beneath her castle she had deep subterranean dungeons, in which languished many innocent people. She set vicious dogs at children and beggars, and if any one did not come to work at the right time, he was sure to go home in the evening with weals on his back.

Once, early in the morning, when the men came to work, the Lady of Pintorp was standing on the castle steps, and saw a poor farm-hand belonging to the estate come too late. Foaming with rage, she overwhelmed him with abuse and reproaches, and ordered him to chop down the largest oak on the whole estate, and bring it, crown foremost, to the castle court before evening. And if he did not carry out her command to the very letter — so she said — she would drive him from his hut without mercy, and all that he had should fall to the estate.

With heavy thoughts of the severe judgment passed upon him, the farm-hand went to the wood; and there he met an old man who asked him why he was so unhappy.

“Because it is all up with me, if our Lord in His mercy do not help me,” sighed the unfortunate man, and told of the task his mistress had imposed on him.

“Do not worry,” said the unknown, “Chop down this oak, seat yourself on the trunk, and Erik Gyllenstjerna and Svante Banér will take it to the castle.”

The farm hand did as the old man told him, began to hew to the line, and sure enough, at the third stroke the tree fell with a tremendous crash. Then he seated himself on the trunk, facing the crown, and at once the tree began to move, as though drawn by horses. Soon it rushed along so swiftly that posts and garden-palings flew out of the way like splinters, and soon they had reached the castle. At the moment the tree-top struck the castle-gate, one of the invisible bearers stumbled, and a voice was heard saying: “What, are you falling on your knees, Svante?”

The Lady of Pintorp, who was standing on the steps, knew well who was helping the man; yet instead of feeling regret, she began to curse and scold, and finally threatened to imprison the farm-hand.

Then the earth quaked so that the walls of the castle shook, and a black coach, drawn by two black horses, stopped before the castle. A fine gentleman, clad in black, descended from the coach, bowed to the lady and bade her make ready and follow him. Trembling — for she knew well who the stranger must be — she begged for a three years’ respite; but the black gentleman would not grant her request. Then she asked for three months, and that he refused as well. Finally she begged for three weeks, and then for three days; but only three minutes were allowed her to put her house in order.

When she saw there was no help for it, she begged that at least her chaplain, her chamber-maid, and her valet be allowed to accompany her. This request was granted, and they entered the carriage. The horses at once started off, and the carriage drove away so swiftly, that the people at the castle saw no more than a black streak.

When the woman and her companions had thus driven a while, they came to a splendid castle, and the gentleman in black led them up the steps. Above, in the great hall, the woman laid off her costly garments and put on a coarse coat and wooden shoes. Then he combed her hair three times, till she could no longer bear it, and danced with her three times until she was exhausted.

After the first dance the Lady begged to be allowed to give her golden ring to her valet, and it burned his finger like fire. After the second dance she gave her chamber-maid her bunch of keys, and that seared the girl’s hand like red-hot iron. But after the third dance, a trap-door opened in the floor, and the Lady disappeared in a cloud of smoke and flame.

The chaplain, who was standing nearest her, looked down curiously into the opening into which his mistress had sunk; and a spark shot up from the depths, and flew into his eye, so that he was blind in one eye for the rest of his life.

When it was all over, the black gentleman allowed the servitors to drive home again; but expressly forbade them to look around. They hastily entered the coach, the road was broad and even, and the horses ran rapidly. But when they had gone a while, the chamber-maid could no longer control her curiosity, and looked around. That very minute horses, coach and the road itself were gone, the travellers found themselves in a wild forest, and it cost them three years to get out again, and make their way back to Pintorp.

25

THE SPECTRE IN FJELKINGE

During the first half of the eighteenth century, several large estates in Schonen were the property of the family of Barnekow, or rather, of its most distinguished representative at that time, Margaret Barnekow, daughter of the famous captain and governor-general Count Rutger of Aschenberg, and the wife of Colonel Kjell Kristofer Barnekow. A widow at twenty-nine, she herself took over the management of her large properties, and gave therein evidence of invincible courage, an inexhaustible capacity for work, and a tireless solicitude for all her many dependents and servitors.

While traveling about her estates, Madame Margaret one evening came to the tavern in Fjelkinge, and was quartered for the night in a room that had the name of being haunted. Some years before a traveler had lain in the same room and presumably had been murdered: at any rate the man himself and all his belongings had disappeared without leaving a trace, and the mystery had never been explained. Since that time the room had been haunted, and those who knew about it preferred to travel a post-station further in the dark, rather than pass the night in the room in question. But Margaret Barnekow did not do so. She had already shown greater courage in greater contingencies, and chose this particular room to sleep in without any fear.

She let the lamp burn and fell asleep, after she had said her evening prayer. On the stroke of twelve she awoke, just as some planks were raised in the floor; and up rose a bleeding phantom whose head, split wide open, hung down on his shoulder.

“Noble lady,” whispered the specter, “prepare a grave in consecrated earth for a murdered man, and deliver his murderer to the judgment which is his due!”

God-fearing and unafraid, Madame Margaret beckoned the phantom nearer, and he told her he had already addressed the same prayer to various other people; but that none had had the courage to grant it. Then Madame Margaret drew a gold ring from her finger, laid it on the gaping wound, and tied up the head of the murdered man with her kerchief. With a glance of unspeakable gratitude he told her the murderer’s name, and disappeared beneath the floor without a sound.

The following morning Madame Margaret sent for the sheriff of the district to come to the tavern with some of his people, informed him of what had happened to her during the night, and ordered those present to tear up the floor. And there they found, buried in the earth, the remains of a body and, in a wound in its head, the Countess’s ring, and tied about its head, her kerchief. One of the bystanders grew pale at the sight, and fell senseless to the ground. When he came to his senses, he confessed that he had murdered the traveler and robbed him of his belongings. He was condemned to death for his crime, and the body of the murdered man was buried in the village church-yard.

The ring, of peculiar shape, and its setting bearing a large gray stone, is still preserved in the Barnekow family, and magic virtues in cases of sickness, fire and other misfortunes are ascribed to it. And when one of the Barnekows dies, it is said that a red spot, like a drop of blood, appears on the stone.

26

THE ROOSTER, THE HAND-MILL AND THE SWARM OF HORNETS

Once upon a time there was a peasant who wanted to go to sell a pig. After he had gone a while, he met a man who asked him where he was going with his pig. “I want to sell it,” answered the peasant, “but I do not know what to do to get rid of it.” “Go to the devil,” said the man, “he will be the first to rid you of it.” So the peasant kept on along the broad highway.

When he came to the devil’s place, there stood a man out by the wood-pile making wood. The peasant went to him and asked whether he could tell him if they wanted to buy a pig in the devil’s place. “I’ll go in and ask,” said the man, “if you will make wood in my stead while I am gone.” “Yes, I will do that gladly,” said the peasant, took the ax, stood at the wood-pile and began to make wood. And he worked and worked until evening came; but the man did not return to tell him whether they would or would not buy a pig in the devil’s place.

At length another man came that way, and the peasant asked him whether he would make wood in his stead, for it was impossible to lay down the ax unless another took it up and went on working. So the man took the ax and stood there making wood, and the peasant went into the devil’s place himself, and asked whether any one wanted to buy a pig.

A crowd as large as that at a fair at once gathered, and all wanted to buy the pig. Then the peasant thought: “Whoever pays the most, gets it.” And one would overbid another, offering far more than a whole herd of pigs were worth. But at last a gentleman came along who whispered something to the peasant, and told him to come along with him; and he could have all the money he wanted.

So when they had reached the gentleman’s house, and the peasant had given him the pig, he received in payment a rooster who would lay silver coins as often as he was told to do so. Then the peasant went his way, well content with his bargain. But on the way home he stayed overnight at a tavern kept by an old woman. And he was so exceedingly happy about his splendid rooster, that he had to boast about him to the old woman, and show her how he went about laying silver coins. And at night, when the peasant was fast asleep, the old woman came and took away his rooster, and put another in its place. No sooner did the peasant awake in the morning than he wanted to set his rooster to work. “Lay quickly, rooster of mine! Lay big silver coins, my rooster!” But the rooster could lay no silver coins at all, and only answered “Kikeriki! Kikeriki! Kikeriki!” Then the peasant fell into a rage, wandered back to the devil’s place, complained about the rooster, and told how absolutely worthless he was. He was kindly received, and the same gentleman gave him a hand-mill. When he called out “Mill grind!” to it, it would grind as much meal as he wanted it to, and would not stop until he said: “Mill, stop grinding!” And the mill would grind out every kind of meal for which he asked.

When the peasant set out for home, he reached the same tavern at which he had already put up in the evening, so he turned in and decided to stay over night. He was so pleased with the mill that it was impossible for him to hold his tongue; so he told the old woman what a valuable mill he had, and showed her how it worked. But during the night, while he was asleep, the old woman came and stole his mill and put another in its place.

When the peasant awoke in the morning, he was in a great hurry to test his mill; but he could not make it obey. “Mill grind!” he cried. But the mill stood still. Then he said: “Dear mill, grind wheat meal!” but it had no effect. “Then grind rye meal!” he shouted; but that did not help, either. “Well, then, grind peas!” But the mill did not seem to hear; but stood as still as though it had never turned a single time in all its life. Then the peasant took the road back to the devil’s place again, and at once hunted up the gentleman who had purchased his pig, and told him the mill would grind no more meal.

“Do not grieve about that,” said the gentleman, and gave him a large, large hornets’ nest, full of hornets, who flew out in swarms and stung any one whom they were told to sting, until one said “stop!” to them. Now when the peasant again came to the old woman, he told her he had a swarm of hornets who obeyed his commands. “Heavens above!” cried the woman, “that’s something worth while seeing!” “You may see it without any trouble,” replied the peasant, and at once called: “Out, out, my hornets and sting the old woman!” And at once the entire swarm fell upon the old woman, who began to scream pitifully. She begged the peasant to please call back his hornets, and said she was only too willing to give back the rooster and the mill she had taken.

The peasant did not object to this; but ordered his hornets to leave the old woman alone, and fly back into their house. Then he went home with his rooster, his mill and his hornets, became a rich man and lived happily until he died. And he was in the habit of saying: “They have a big fair in the devil’s place, and you find real decent people there, and above all, a liberal gentleman, with whom it is a pleasure to do business.”

27

TORRE JEPPE

In a church-nave a specter sat night by night, and the specter’s name was Torre Jeppe. He was a dried-up corpse that could not decay. One night three tailors were working at a farmstead in the neighborhood. They were laughing and joking, and among other things they asked the girl in the house, who was known to be brave, what they would have to give her to go to church and fetch back Torre Jeppe. She could trust herself to do it, was her answer; but they must give her a dress of home-spun wool for her trouble. That she should surely have, said the tailors, for they did not believe the girl would dare such a venture. Yet she took the tailors at their word and really went.

When she reached the church, she took Torre Jeppe on her back, carried him home and sat him down on the bench beside the tailors. They timidly moved away; but Torre Jeppe moved after them, and looked at them with his big eyes until they nearly lost their reason. In their terror they begged the girl in the name of God to deliver them from the specter. They would gladly give her another dress if she would only carry the dead man away again. They had no need to tell her twice, for she took Torre Jeppe on her back, and dragged him away again.

But when she tried to set him down in the place where she had found him, he did not want to let her go; but clasped his arms firmly about her neck. In vain she said to him several times: “Torre Jeppe, let me go!” At last he said: “I will not let you go until you promise me that you will go this very night to the brook and ask three times: ‘Anna Perstochter, do you forgive Torre Jeppe?’” The girl promised to do as he said, and he at once released her. The brook was a good mile off; but she went there and asked three times in a loud voice, as she had promised: “Anna Perstochter, do you forgive Torre Jeppe?” And when she had called the third time a woman’s voice replied from out of the water: “If God has forgiven him, then I, too, forgive him!”

When the girl came back to the church Torre Jeppe asked eagerly: “What did she say?” “Well, if God has forgiven you, then she, too, will forgive you!” Then Torre Jeppe thanked her and said: “Come back again before sunrise, and you shall receive your reward for the service you have done me.” The girl went back at sunrise, and in the place where the phantom had been sitting she found a bushel of silver coin. In addition she received the two dresses promised her by the tailors. But Torre Jeppe was never seen again.

28

THE MAN WHO DIED ON HOLY INNOCENTS’ DAY

Once upon a time there was a man named Kalle Kula. He was a wild fellow, and had committed many a grievous crime during his life. When he came to die, and his wife took up the Bible to pray for him as he was lying there, he said, “No, this is Holy Innocents’ Day, and it is not worth while reading from the Bible for me. You had better go into the kitchen instead, and bake waffles. I shall die this very day, and then you must lay a bundle of waffles in my coffin.” The woman went into the kitchen and baked the waffles; but when she came back to him again he was dead. So Kalle Kula was laid in the coffin with a bundle of waffles beside him.

Then he came to the gates of Paradise with his little bundle of waffles under his arm and knocked. But St. Peter said to him: “You have no business here, with all the crimes you have committed.” “Yes, that may well be so, but I died on Holy Innocents’ Day,” said Kalle Kula, “so at least I may look in and see the innocent children?” St. Peter could not refuse him, and opened the door a little way. Kalle Kula took advantage of the moment and cried: “Come, you little holy innocents, you shall have waffles!” And as they had not been given any waffles in Paradise, they all came rushing up, so that the door flew wide open, and then Kalle Kula crept in.

But St. Peter went to our Lord, told him what had happened, and asked what was to be done. “The best thing is to let your lawyer attend to it,” said our Lord, “because lawyers usually know all about evicting people.” St. Peter searched everywhere, but could not find a lawyer. Then he went back to our Lord and reported to him that it was impossible to find a single lawyer in all Paradise, and Kalle Kula was allowed to remain where he was.

If you tie a thief and a miller and a lawyer together and roll the whole bundle down a hill — no matter how you roll it — you can always be sure that whoever is on top is a thief.

29

PER GYNT

In the old days there lived in Kvam a marksman by the name of Per Gynt. He was continually in the mountains, where he shot bear and elk, for at that time there were more forests on the Fjäll, and all sorts of beasts dwelt in them. Once, late in the fall, when the cattle had long since been driven down from the mountain pastures, Per Gynt decided to go up on the Fjäll again. With the exception of three dairy-maids, all the herd-folk had already left the mountains. But when Per Gynt reached Hövringalm, where he intended to stay over-night in a herdsman's hut, it already was so dark that he could not see his hand before his eyes. Then the dogs began to bark so violently that he felt quite uneasy. And suddenly his foot struck something, and when he took hold of it, it was cold, and large and slippery. Since he felt certain he had not left the path, he could not imagine what it might be; but he sensed that all was not in order.

"And who are you?" asked Per Gynt, for he noticed that it moved.

"O, I am the crooked one," was the answer. And now Per Gynt knew as much as he had before. So he went along its length, "for sooner or later I will come to the end of it," thought he.

As he went along he again struck against something, and when he felt it, it was again something cold, and large and slippery.

"And who are you?" asked Per Gynt.

“I am the crooked one,” was again the answer.

“Well, whether you be crooked or straight, you will have to let me pass,” said Per Gynt; for he noticed that he was going around in a circle, and that the crooked one had coiled himself about the herdsman’s cottage. At these words the crooked one moved a little to one side, so that Per Gynt could get into the cottage. When he entered he found it as dark inside as it was out; and he stumbled and felt his way along the walls; for he wanted to lay aside his firelock and his hunting-bag. But while he was feeling his way about, he once more noticed the something large, and cold and slippery.

“And who are you now?” cried Per Gynt.

“O, I am the big crooked one,” was the answer. And no matter where he took hold or where he set his foot, he could feel the coils of the crooked one laid around him.

“This is a poor place to be in,” thought Per Gynt, “for this crooked one is outside and inside; but I will soon put what is wrong to rights.” He took his firelock, went out again, and felt his way along the crooked one until he came to his head.

“And who are you really and truly?” he asked.

“O, I am the big crooked one of Etnedal,” said the monster troll. Then Per Gynt did not waste any time, but shot three bullets right through the middle of his head.

“Shoot again!” cried the crooked one. But Per Gynt knew better, for had he shot another time, the bullet would have rebounded and hit him. When this had been done, Per Gynt and his dogs took hold of the great troll, and dragged him out of the hut, so that they might make themselves comfortable there. And meanwhile the hills about rang with laughter and jeers. “Per Gynt pulled hard, but the dogs pulled harder!” rang in his ears.

In the morning Per Gynt went out hunting. When he had made his way far into the Fjäll, he saw a girl driving sheep and goats across a mountain-top. But when he reached the top of the mountain, the girl had vanished, as well as her flock, and all he saw was a great pack of bears.

“Never yet have I seen bears run together in packs,” thought Per Gynt. But when he came nearer, they all disappeared save one alone. Then a voice called from a nearby hill:

GUARD YOUR BOAR, for understand,
Per Gynt is without,
With his firelock in his hand!

“O, then it is the worse for Per Gynt; but not for my boar, because Per Gynt did not wash to-day,” sounded back from the hill. But Per Gynt spat on his hands, and washed them thus, and then shot the bear.

The hills rang with echoing laughter:

“You should have guarded your boar better,” called one voice.

“I did not think he carried the wash-bowl in his mouth,” answered the other.

Per Gynt skinned the bear, and buried his body among the bowlders; but the head and skin he took with him. On the way back he met a mountain fox.

“See, my little lamb, how fat you are!” rang out from one hill. “Just see how high Per Gynt carries his firelock!” sounded from another, as Per Gynt shouldered his firelock and shot the fox. Him he also skinned, and took the skin with him, and when he reached the herdsman’s hut, he nailed the heads, with jaws wide open, against the outer wall. Then he made a fire and hung a soup kettle over it; but it smoked so terribly he could hardly keep his eyes open, and therefore had to make a loop-hole. Suddenly up came a troll, and thrust his nose through the loop-hole; but his nose was so long that it reached the fireplace.

“Here is my smeller, so take a good look!” said he.

“Here is a taste of the soup that I cook!” said Per Gynt, and he poured the whole kettleful of soup over his nose. The troll rushed off lamenting loudly; but from all the heights around came laughter and derision and calls of:

“Gyri Soupsmeller, Gyri Soupsmeller!”

Thereupon all was quiet for a time; yet before very long the noise and tumult outside began again. Per Gynt looked out, and saw a wagon drawn by bears, the great troll was loaded upon it, and off they went with him up the Fjäll. Suddenly a pail of water was poured down through the chimney, smothering the fire, and Per Gynt sat in the dark. Then laughter and jibes came from every corner, and one voice said: “Now Per Gynt will be no better off than the dairy-maids in the hut at Val!”

Per Gynt once more lit the fire, called his dogs, locked the herdsman’s hut, and went on North, toward the hut at Val, in which there were three dairy-maids. After he had covered some distance he saw a fire, as though the whole hut were ablaze, and at the same moment he came across a whole pack of wolves, of whom he shot some and clubbed the others to death. When he reached the hut at Val, he found it pitch dark there, and there was no fire to be seen, far or near. But there were four strangers in the hut, who were frightening the dairy-maids. They were four mountain trolls, and their names were: Gust i Väre, Tron Valfjeldet, Kjöstöl Aabakken, and Rolf Eldförkungen. Gust i Väre stood at the door, on guard, and Per Gynt shot at him, but missed, so he ran away. When Per Gynt entered the room the dairy-maids were well-nigh frightened to death; but when the trolls saw who had come they began to wail, and told Eldförkungen to make a fire. At the same moment the dogs sprang upon Kjöstöl Aabakken, and threw him head over heels into the hearth, so that the ashes and sparks flew about.

“Have you seen my snakes, Per Gynt?” asked Tron Valfjeldet — for that was what he called the wolves.

“Yes, and now you shall travel the same road your snakes have gone!” cried Per Gynt, and shot him. Then he made an end of Aabakken with the butt-end of his firelock; but Eldförkungen had fled through the chimney. After Per Gynt had done this, he accompanied the dairy-maids back to their village, for they did not venture to stay in the hut any longer.

When Christmas came, Per Gynt once more got under way. He had heard of a farmstead at Dovre, where so many trolls were accustomed to congregate on Christmas Eve, that the people who lived there had to flee, and find places to stay at other farms. This farmstead Per Gynt decided to hunt up; for he thought he would like to see these trolls. He put on torn clothing, and took with him a tame bear which belonged to him, together with an awl, some pitch and some wire. When he had reached the farmstead, he went into the house and asked for shelter.

“May God aid us!” cried the man. “We cannot shelter you, and have to leave the house ourselves, because the place is alive with trolls every Christmas Eve!”

But Per Gynt thought he could manage to clear the house of the trolls. So they told him to stay, and gave him a pig’s skin into the bargain. Then the bear lay down behind the hearth, Per took out his awl, his pitch and his wire, and set out to make a single large shoe out of the pig’s skin. And he drew a thick rope through it for a lace, so that he could lace the whole shoe together, and besides he had two wagon-spokes for wedges at hand. Suddenly the trolls came along with fiddles and fiddlers, and some of them danced, and others ate of the Christmas dinner that stood on the table, and some fried bacon, and others fried frogs and toads and disgusting things of that kind — the Christmas dinner they had brought along themselves. In the meantime some of them noticed the shoe Per Gynt had made. Since it was evidently intended for a large foot, all the trolls wanted to try it on. When every one of them had thrust in his foot, Per Gynt laced it, forced in a wedge, and then drew the lace so taut that every last one of them was caught and held in the shoe. But now the bear thrust forth his nose, and sniffed the roast.

“Would you like to have some cake, little white cat?” said one of the trolls, and threw a burning hot, roasted frog into the bear’s jaws.

“Thump them, Master Bruin!” cried Per Gynt. And the bear grew so angry that he rushed on the trolls, raining blows on every side and scratching them. And Per Gynt hewed into the crowd with his other wagon-spoke as though he meant to break their skulls. Then the trolls had to make themselves scarce, but Per Gynt remained, and feasted on the Christmas fare all of Christmas week, while for many a long year no more was heard of the trolls.

30

THE ISLE OF UDRÖST

Once upon a time there lived at Vaerö, not far from Röst, a poor fisherman, named Isaac. He had nothing but a boat and a couple of goats, which his wife fed as well as she could with fish leavings, and with the grass she was able to gather on the surrounding hills; but his whole hut was full of hungry children. Yet he was always satisfied with what God sent him. The only thing that worried him was his inability to live at peace with his neighbor. The latter was a rich man, thought himself entitled to far more than such a beggarly fellow as Isaac, and wanted to get him out of the way, in order to take for himself the anchorage before Isaac's hut.

One day Isaac had put out a few miles to sea to fish, when suddenly a dark fog fell, and in a flash such a tremendous storm broke, that he had to throw all his fish overboard in order to lighten ship and save his life. Even then it was very hard to keep the boat afloat; but he steered a careful course between and across the mountainous waves, which seemed ready to swallow him from moment to moment. After he had kept on for five or six hours in this manner, he thought that he ought to touch land somewhere. But time went by, and the storm and fog grew worse and worse. Then he began to realize that either he was steering out to sea, or that the wind had veered, and at last he made sure the latter was the case; for he sailed on and on without a sight of land. Suddenly he heard a hideous cry from the stern of the boat, and felt certain that it was the *drang*, who was singing his death-song. Then he prayed God to guard his wife and children, for he thought his last hour had come. As he sat there and prayed, he made out something black; but when his boat drew nearer, he noticed that it was only three cormorants, sitting on a piece of drift-wood and — swish! he had passed them. Thus he sailed for a long time, and grew so hungry, so thirsty and so weary that he did not know what to do; for the most part he sat with the rudder in his hand and slept. But all of a sudden the boat ran up on a beach and stopped. Then Isaac opened his eyes. The sun broke through the fog, and shone on a beautiful land. Its hills and mountains were green to their very tops, fields and meadows lay among their slopes, and he seemed to breathe a fragrance of flowers and grass sweeter than any he had ever known before.

“God be praised, now I am safe, for this is Udröst!” said Isaac to himself. Directly ahead of him lay a field of barley, with ears so large and heavy that he had never seen their like, and through the barley-field a narrow path led to a green turf-roofed cottage of clay, that rose above the field, and on the roof of the cottage grazed a white goat with gilded horns, and an udder as large as that of the largest cow. Before the door sat a little man clad in blue, puffing away at a little pipe. He had a beard so long and so large that it hung far down upon his breast.

“Welcome to Udröst, Isaac!” said the man.

“Good day to you, father,” said Isaac, “and do you know me?”

“It might be that I do,” said the man. “I suppose you want to stay here overnight?”

“That would suit me very well, father,” was Isaac’s reply.

“The trouble is with my sons, for they cannot bear the smell of a Christian,” answered the man. “Did you meet them?”

“No, I only met three cormorants, who were sitting on a piece of driftwood and croaking,” was Isaac’s reply.

“Well, those were my sons,” said the man, and emptied his pipe, “and now come into the house, for I think you must be hungry and thirsty.”

“I’ll take that liberty, father,” said Isaac.

When the man opened the door, everything within was so beautiful that Isaac could not get over his admiration. He had never seen anything like it. The table was covered with the finest dishes, bowls of cream, and salmon and game, and liver dumplings with syrup, and cheese as well, and there were whole piles of doughnuts, and there was mead, and everything else that is good. Isaac ate and drank bravely, and yet his plate was never empty; and no matter how much he drank, his glass was always full. The man neither ate much nor said much; but suddenly they heard a noise and clamor before the house, and the man went out. After a time he returned with his three sons, and Isaac trembled inwardly when they came through the door; but their father must have quieted them, for they were very friendly and amiable, and told Isaac he must use his guest-right, and sit down and drink with them; for Isaac had risen to leave the table, saying he had satisfied his hunger. But he gave in to them, and they drank mead together, and became good friends. And they said that Isaac must go fishing with them, so that he would have something to take with him when he went home.

The first time they put out a great storm was raging. One of the sons sat at the rudder, the second at the bow, and the third in the middle; and Isaac had to work with the bailing-can until he dripped perspiration. They sailed as though they were mad. They never reefed a sail, and when the boat was full of water, they danced on the crests of the waves, and slid down them so that the water in the stern spurted up like a fountain. After a time the storm subsided, and they began to fish. And the sea was so full of fish that they could not even put out an anchor, since mountains of fish were piled up beneath them. The sons of Udröst drew up one fish after another. Isaac knew his business; but he had taken along his own fishing-tackle, and as soon as a fish bit he let go again, and at last he had caught not a single one. When the boat was filled, they sailed home again to Udröst, and the sons cleaned the fish, and laid them on the stands. Meanwhile Isaac had complained to their father of his poor luck. The man promised that he should do better next time, and gave him a couple of hooks; and the next time they went out to fish, Isaac caught just as many as the others, and when they reached home, he was given three stands of fish as his share.

At length Isaac began to get homesick, and when he was about to leave, the man made him a present of a new fishing-boat, full of meal, and tackle and other useful things. Isaac thanked him repeatedly, and the man invited him to come back when the season opened again, since he himself was going to take a cargo to Bergen, in the second *stevne,* and Isaac could go along and sell his fish there himself. Isaac was more than willing, and asked him what course he should set when he again wanted to reach Udröst. “All you need do is to follow the cormorant when he heads for the open sea, then you will be on the right course,” said the man. “Good luck on your way!”

But when Isaac got underway, and looked around, there was no Udröst in sight; far and wide, all around him, he saw no more than the ocean.

When the time came, Isaac sailed to join the man of Udröst’s fishing-craft. But such a craft he had never seen before. It was two hails long, so that when the steersman, who was on look-out in the stern, wanted to call out something to the rower, the latter could not hear him. So they had stationed another man in the middle of the ship, close by the mast, who had to relay the steersman’s call to the rower, and even he had to shout as loudly as he could in order to make himself heard.

Isaac’s share was laid down in the forepart of the boat; and he himself took down the fish from the stands; yet he could not understand how it was that the stands were continually filled with fresh fish, no matter how many he took away, and when he sailed away they were still as full as ever. When he reached Bergen, he sold his fish, and got so much money for them that he was able to buy a new schooner, completely fitted out, and with a cargo to boot, as the man of Udröst had advised him. Late in the evening, when he was about to sail for home, the man came aboard and told him never to forget those who survived his neighbor, for his neighbor himself had died; and then he wished Isaac all possible success and good fortune for his schooner, in advance. “All is well, and all stands firm that towers in the air,” said he, and what he meant was that there was one aboard whom none could see, but who would support the mast on his back, if need be.

Since that time fortune was Isaac’s friend. And well he knew why this was so, and never forgot to prepare something good for whoever held the winter watch, when the schooner was drawn up on land in the fall. And every Christmas night there was the glow and shimmer of light, the sound of fiddles and music, of laughter and merriment, and of dancing on the deserted schooner.

31

THE THREE LEMONS

Once upon a time there were three brothers who had lost their parents, and since the latter had left their sons nothing upon which to live, they had to wander out into the world, and seek their fortune. The two older brothers prepared for the journey as well as they were able; but the youngest, whom they called "Mike by the Stove," because he was always sitting behind the stove whittling, they did not want to take with them. So they set out at early dawn; yet for all their hurrying Mike by the Stove reached the king's court as soon as they did. When they got there, they asked to be taken into the king's service. Well, said the king, he really had no work for them to do; but since they were so poor, he would see that they were kept busy; there was always something or other to do in such a big establishment: they could drive nails into the wall, and when they were through, they could pull them out again. And when that was done, they could carry wood and water into the kitchen. Mike by the Stove was quickest at driving his nails into the wall, and pulling them out again, and he had been quick, too, about carrying his wood and water. Therefore his brothers grew jealous, and said he had declared he could obtain the most beautiful princess in twelve kingdoms for the king — for the king's wife had died and he was a widower. When the king heard this, he told Mike by the Stove he had better do as he had said, else he would have him brought to the block, and his head chopped off.

Mike by the Stove replied that he had neither said nor thought anything of the kind; but that seeing the king was so severe, he would try it. So he took a knapsack full of food and set out. But he had only pushed a little way into the wood before he grew hungry, and thought he would sample the provisions they had given him at the king’s castle. When he had sat down in all peace and comfort under a pine-tree by the side of the road, an old woman came limping along, and asked him what he had in his knapsack. “Meat and bacon, granny,” said the youth. “If you are hungry, come and share with me!” She thanked him, satisfied her hunger, and then telling him she would do him a favor in turn, limped off into the wood. When Mike by the Stove had eaten his fill, he slung his knapsack across his shoulder once more, and went his way; but he had only gone a short distance before he found a whistle. That would be fine, thought he, to have a whistle, and be able to whistle himself a tune while he traveled, and before long he really succeeded in making it sound. That very moment the wood was alive with dwarfs, all of them asking with one voice: “What are my lord’s commands? What are my lord’s commands?” Mike by the Stove said he did not know he was their lord; but if he had any command to give, he would ask them to bring him the fairest princess in twelve kingdoms. That would be easy enough, said the dwarfs; they knew exactly who she was, and they could show him the way; then he himself could go and fetch her, since the dwarfs were powerless to touch her. They showed him the way, and he reached his goal quickly and without trouble, for no one interfered with him. It was a troll’s castle, and in it were three beautiful princesses; but when Mike by the Stove stepped in, they acted as though they had lost their wits, ran around like frightened lambs, and finally turned into three lemons that lay on the window-ledge. Mike by the Stove was in despair, and very unhappy because he did not know what to do. But after he had reflected a while, he took the three lemons, and put them in his pocket; because, thought he, he might be glad he had done so should he grow thirsty during his journey, for he had heard that lemons were sour.

After he had traveled a way, he grew very warm and thirsty. There was no water to be found, and he did not know how he was to refresh himself. Then the lemons occurred to him, and he took one and bit into it. But in it sat a princess, visible up to her arms, and cried: “Water, water!” If she could not have some water, said she, she must die. The youth ran about everywhere like mad, looking for water; but there was no water there, and none to be found, and when he returned she was dead.

After he had gone on again a while, he grew still more thirsty, and since he found nothing with which to refresh himself, he took another lemon and bit into it. And another princess looked out, up to her shoulders, and she was even more beautiful than the first. She cried for water, and said that if she could not have some water she must die on the spot. Mike by the Stove ran about and looked under stones and moss; but he found no water, so this princess also died.

Mike by the Stove thought that things were going from bad to worse, and this was the truth, since the further he went the warmer it grew. The part of the country in which he was traveling was so parched and dried that not a drop of water was to be found, and he was half-dead with thirst. For a long time he hesitated before biting into the last lemon; but at last there was nothing else left to do. When he had bitten into it, a princess looked out: she was the most beautiful in twelve kingdoms, and she cried that if she could have no water, she must die on the spot. Mike by the Stove ran about and looked for water, and this time he met the king’s miller, who showed him the way to the mill-pond. When he had come with her to the mill-pond, and had given her water, she came completely out of the lemon. But she had nothing to wear, and Mike by the Stove had to give her his smock. She put it on, and hid in a tree; while he was to go to the castle and bring her clothes, and tell the king he had found her, and how it had all happened.

Meanwhile the cook had come down to the pond to fetch water. When she saw the lovely face that was reflected in the pond, she thought it was her own, and was so pleased that she began to dance and jump around, because she had grown so beautiful.

“Let the devil fetch the water, I’m far too handsome to bother with it!” said she, and threw away the water-pail. And then she suddenly noticed that the face in the water was that of the princess who sat in the tree. This made her so angry that she pulled her down from the tree, and threw her into the pond. Then she herself put on Mike by the Stove’s smock, and climbed into the tree. When the king arrived, and saw the swart, homely kitchen-maid, he grew red and white in turn; but when he heard the people say she was the greatest beauty in twelve kingdoms, he had to believe, willy-nilly, that there was something in it, and he did not want to be unjust to Mike by the Stove, who had taken so much trouble to find her. She might grow more beautiful in time, thought he, if she were adorned with jewels, and dressed in fine clothes, and so he took her home with him. Then they sent for wig-makers and seamstresses, and she was adorned and dressed like a princess; but for all their washing and bedizening, she remained swart and homely. After a while, when the kitchen-maid had to go to the pond to fetch water, she caught a great silver fish in her pail. She carried it up and showed it to the king, who thought it was a beauty; but the homely princess declared it to be the work of witches, and that they were to burn it, for she had noticed at once what it was. So the following morning the fish was burned, and they found a lump of silver in the ashes. Then the cook went up and told the king, and he thought it very strange; but the princess said it was witchcraft pure and simple, and that they were to bury the silver under the manure-pile. The king did not want to, but she gave him no peace until he consented, and finally said they were to do so. But on the following day a beautiful linden-tree stood where they had buried the lump of silver, and the leaves of the linden-tree glistened like silver, too. When they told the king he thought it remarkable; but the princess said it was no more nor less than witchcraft, and that the linden-tree must be cut down. This the king did not wish done at all; but the princess tormented him so that finally he yielded in this as well. When the maids went out and brought wood for the fire from the linden-tree, it was pure silver. “We need not tell the king and the princess anything about it,” said one of them, “for they would only burn it up and melt it down. Let us keep it in the wardrobe instead. It might be very useful to us some day, if some one comes along, and we want to marry.” They were all of the same mind, but when they had carried the wood a while, it grew terribly heavy. And when they looked to see why this was, the sticks of wood had turned into a little child, and before long she had become the most beautiful princess imaginable. The maids saw that there was some hocus-pocus about it, gave her clothes, ran off to fetch the youth who had been sent to find the most beautiful princess in twelve kingdoms, and told him their story. And when Mike by the Stove arrived, the princess explained to him how everything had happened, that the cook had thrown her into the pond, and that she had been the silver fish, the lump of silver, and the linden-tree, and the sticks of wood, and that she was the true princess. It was hard to get at the king, for the swart, homely cook was with him early and late; but at last they decided to tell him that a declaration of war had come from a neighboring monarch, and so they got him out. When he saw the beautiful princess, he fell so deeply in love with her that he wanted to marry her out of hand, and when he heard how badly the swart, homely cook had treated her, the latter was promptly punished. Then they held a wedding that was heard of and talked about in twelve kingdoms.

32

THE NEIGHBOR UNDERGROUND

Once upon a time there was a peasant who lived in Telemarken, and had a big farm; yet he had nothing but bad luck with his cattle, and at last lost his house and holding. He had scarcely anything left, and with the little he had, he bought a bit of land that lay off to one side, far away from the city, in the wildwood and the wilderness. One day, as he was passing through his farm-yard, he met a man.

“Good-day, neighbor!” said the man.

“Good-day,” said the peasant, “I thought I was all alone here. Are you a neighbor of mine?”

“You can see my homestead over yonder,” said the man. “It is not far from your own.” And there lay a farm-holding such as he had never before seen, handsome and prosperous, and in fine condition. Then he knew very well that this must be one of the underground people; yet he had no fear, but invited his neighbor in to drink a glass with him, and the neighbor seemed to enjoy it.

“Listen,” said the neighbor, “there is one thing you must do for me as a favor.”

“First let me know what it is,” said the peasant.

“You must shift your cow-stable, because it is in my way,” was the answer he gave the peasant.

“No, I’ll not do that,” said the peasant. “I put it up only this summer, and the winter is coming on. What am I to do with my cattle then?”

“Well, do as you choose; but if you do not tear it down, you will live to regret it,” said his neighbor. And with that he went his way.

The peasant was surprised at this, and did not know what to do. It seemed quite foolish to him to start in to tear down his stable when the long winter night was approaching, and besides, he could not count on help.

One day as he was standing in his stable, he sank through the ground. Down below, in the place to which he had come, everything was unspeakably handsome. There was nothing which was not of gold or of silver. Then the man who had called himself his neighbor came along, and bade him sit down. After a time food was brought in on a silver platter, and mead in a silver jug, and the neighbor invited him to draw up to the table and eat. The peasant did not dare refuse, and sat down at the table; but just as he was about to dip his spoon into the dish, something fell down into his food from above, so that he lost his appetite. “Yes, yes,” said the man, “now you can see why we don’t like your stable. We can never eat in peace, for as soon as we sit down to a meal, dirt and straw fall down, and no matter how hungry we may be, we lose our appetites and cannot eat. But if you will do me the favor to set up your stable elsewhere, you shall never go short of pasture nor good crops, no matter how old you may grow to be. But if you won’t, you shall know naught but lean years all your life long.”

When the peasant heard that, he went right to work pulling down his stable, to put it up again in another place. Yet he could not have worked alone, for at night, when all slept, the building of the new stable went forward just as it did by day, and well he knew his neighbor was helping him.

Nor did he regret it later, for he had enough of feed and corn, and his cattle waxed fat. Once there was a year of scarcity, and feed was so short that he was thinking of selling or slaughtering half his herd. But one morning, when the milk-maid went into the stable, the dog was gone, and with him all the cows and the calves. She began to cry and told the peasant. But he thought to himself, that it was probably his neighbor’s doings, who had taken the cattle to pasture. And sure enough, so it was; for toward spring, when the woods grew green, he saw the dog come along, barking and leaping, by the edge of the forest, and after him followed all the cows and calves, and the whole herd was so fat it was a pleasure to look at it.

33

THE SECRET CHURCH

Once the schoolmaster of Etnedal was staying in the mountains to fish. He was very fond of reading, and so he always carried one book or another along with him, with which he could lie down, and which he read on holidays, or when the weather forced him to stay in the little fishing-hut. One Sunday morning, as he was lying there reading, it seemed as though he could hear church bells; sometimes they sounded faintly, as though from a great distance; at other times the sound was clear, as though carried by the wind. He listened long and with surprise; and did not trust his ears — for he knew that it was impossible to hear the bells of the parish church so far out among the hills — yet suddenly they sounded quite clearly on his ear. So he laid aside his book, stood up and went out. The sun was shining, the weather was fine, and one group of churchgoers after another passed him in their Sunday clothes, their hymn-books in their hands. A little further on in the forest, where he had never before seen anything but trees and brush, stood an old wooden church. After a time the priest came by, and he was so old and decrepit that his wife and daughter led him. And when they came to the spot where the schoolmaster was standing, they stopped and invited him to come to church and hear mass. The schoolmaster thought for a moment; but since it occurred to him that it might be amusing to see how these people worshiped God, he said he would go along, if he did not thereby suffer harm. No, no harm should come to him, said they, but rather a blessing. In the church all went forward in a quiet and orderly manner, there were neither dogs nor crying children to disturb the service, and the singing was good — but he could not make out the words. When the priest had been led to the pulpit he delivered what seemed to the listening schoolmaster a really fine and edifying sermon — but one, it appeared to him, of quite a peculiar trend of thought, which he was not always able to follow. Nor did the "Our Father in heaven..." sound just right, and the "Deliver us from evil..." he did not hear at all. Nor was the name of Jesus uttered; and at the close no blessing was spoken.

When mass had been said, the schoolmaster was invited to the parsonage. He gave the same answer he had already returned, that he would be glad to go if he suffered no harm thereby. And as before, they assured him he would not lose; but rather gain thereby. So he went with them to the parsonage, just such an attractive and well-built parsonage like most in the neighborhood. It had a garden with flowers and apple-trees, with a neat lattice fence around it. They invited him to dinner, and the dinner was well cooked and carefully prepared. As before, he said that he would gladly accept their invitation, if he came to no harm thereby, and was given the same reply. So he ate with them, and said later that he had noticed no difference between this food and the Christian dinner he had received when, once or twice, he had been asked to dinner by the priest of the village church. When he had drunk his coffee, the wife and daughter drew him aside into another room, and the wife complained that her husband had grown so old and decrepit that he could not keep up much longer. Then she began to say that the schoolmaster was such a strong and able man, and finally, that she and her daughter would like to have him for priest, and whether he would not stay and succeed the old father. The schoolmaster objected that he was no scholar. But they insisted that he had more learning than was needed in their case, for they never had any visits from the bishop, nor did the dean ever hold a chapter, for of all such things they knew nothing. When the schoolmaster heard that, he said that even though he had the necessary scholarship, he doubted very much that he had the right vocation, and since this was a most important matter for him and for them, it would be unwise to act too hurriedly, so he would ask for a year to think it over. When he had said that, he found himself standing by a pond in the wood, and could see neither church nor parsonage. So he thought the matter was at an end. But a year later, just as the term he had set was up, he was working on a house, for during the school vacation he busied himself either with fishing or carpentering. He was just straddling a wall when he saw the pastor’s daughter, the one whom he had seen in the mountains, coming straight toward him. She asked him if he had thought over the matter. “Yes,” said he, “I have thought it over, but I cannot; since I cannot answer for it before God and my own conscience.” That very moment the pastor’s daughter from underground vanished; but immediately after he cut himself in the knee with the ax in such wise that he remained a cripple for life.

34

THE COMRADE

Once upon a time there was a peasant boy, who dreamed that he would get a princess, from far, far away, and that she was as white as milk, and as red as blood, and so rich that her riches had no end. When he woke, it seemed to him as though she were still standing before him, and she was so beautiful and winning that he could not go on living without her. So he sold all that he had, and went forth to look for her. He wandered far, and at last, in the winter-time, came into a land where the roads all ran in straight lines, and made no turns. After he had wandered straight ahead for full three months, he came to a city. And there a great block of ice lay before the church door, and in the middle of it was a corpse, and the whole congregation spat at it as the people passed by. This surprised the youth, and when the pastor came out of the church, he asked him what it meant. “He was a great evil-doer,” replied the pastor, “who has been executed because of his misdeeds, and has been exposed here in shame and derision.” “But what did he do?” asked the youth.

“During his mortal life he was a wine-dealer,” answered the pastor, “and he watered the wine he sold.”

This did not strike the youth as being such a terrible crime. “Even if he had to pay for it with his life,” said he, “one might now grant him a Christian burial, and let him rest in peace.” But the pastor said that this could not be done at all; for people would be needed to break him out of the ice; and money would be needed to buy a grave for him from the church; and the gravedigger would want to be paid for his trouble; and the sexton for tolling the bells; and the cantor for singing; and the pastor himself for the funeral sermon.

“Do you think there is any one who would pay all that money for such an arrant sinner’s sake?” inquired the pastor.

“Yes,” said the youth. If he could manage to have him buried, he would be willing to pay for the wake out of his own slender purse.

At first the pastor would hear nothing of it; but when the youth returned with two men, and asked him in their presence whether he refused the dead man Christian burial, he ventured no further objections.

So they released the wine-dealer from his block of ice, and laid him in consecrated ground. The bells tolled, and there was singing, and the pastor threw earth on the coffin, and they had a wake at which tears and laughter alternated. But when the youth had paid for the wake, he had but a few shillings left in his pocket. Then he once more set out on his way; but had not gone far before a man came up behind him, and asked him whether he did not find it tiresome to wander along all alone.

“No,” said the youth, he always had something to think about. The man asked whether he did not need a servant.

“No,” said the youth, “I am used to serving myself, so I have no need of a servant; and no matter how much I might wish for one, I still would have to do without, since I have no money for his keep and pay.”

“Yet you need a servant, as I know better than you do,” said the man, “and you need one upon whom you can rely in life and death. But if you do not want me for a servant, then let me be your comrade. I promise that you will not lose thereby, and I will not cost you a shilling. I travel at my own expense, nor need you be put to trouble as regards my food and clothing.”

Under these circumstances the youth was glad to have him for a comrade, and they resumed their journey, the man as a rule going in advance and pointing out the way.

After they had wandered long through various lands, over hills and over heaths, they suddenly stood before a wall of rock. The comrade knocked, and begged to be let in. Then the rock opened before them, and after they had gone quite a way into the interior of the hill, a witch came to meet them and offered them a chair. “Be so good as to sit down, for you must be weary!” said she.

“Sit down yourself!” answered the man. Then she had to sit down and remain seated, for the chair had power to hold fast all that approached it. In the meantime they wandered about in the hill, and the comrade kept looking around until he saw a sword that hung above the door. This he wanted to have, and he promised the witch that he would release her from her chair if she would let him have the sword.

“No,” she cried, “ask what you will. You can have anything else, but not that, for that is my Three-Sisters Sword!” (There were three sisters to whom the sword belonged in common.) “Then you may sit where you are till the world’s end!” said the man. And when she heard that she promised to let him have the sword, if he would release her.

So he took the sword, and went away with it; but he left her sitting there, after all. When they had wandered far, over stony wastes and desolate heaths, they again came to a wall of rock. There the comrade again knocked, and begged to be let in. Just as before, the rock opened, and when they had gone far into the hill, a witch came to meet them with a chair and bade them be seated, “for you must be tired,” said she.

“Sit down yourself!” said the comrade. And what had happened to her sister happened to her, she had to seat herself, and could not get up again. In the meantime the youth and his comrade went about in the hill, and the latter opened all the closets and drawers, until he found what he had been searching for, a ball of golden twine. This he wished to have, and promised he would release her from the chair if she would give it to him. She told him he might have all she possessed; but that she could not give him the ball, since it was her Three-Sisters Ball. But when she heard that she would have to sit in the chair till the Day of Judgment, she changed her mind. Then the comrade took the ball, and in spite of it left her sitting where she was. Then they wandered for many a day through wood and heath, until they came to a wall of rock. All happened as it had twice before, the comrade knocked, the hill opened, and inside a witch came to meet them with a chair, and bade them sit down. The two had gone through many rooms before the comrade spied an old hat hanging on a hook behind the door. The hat he must have, but the old witch would not part with it, since it was her Three-Sisters Hat, and if she gave it away she would be thoroughly unhappy. But when she heard that she would have to sit there until the Day of Judgment if she did not give up the hat, she at last agreed to do so. The comrade took the hat, and then told her to keep on sitting where she sat, like her sisters.

At length they came to a river. There the comrade took the ball of golden twine and flung it against the hill on the other side of the river with such force that it bounded back. And when it had flown back and forth several times, there stood a bridge, and when they had reached the other side, the comrade told the youth to wind up the golden twine again as swiftly as possible, "for if we do not take it away quickly, the three witches will cross and tear us to pieces." The youth wound as quickly as he could, and just as he was at the last thread, the witches rushed up, hissing, flung themselves into the water so that the foam splashed high, and snatched at the end of the thread. But they could not grasp it, and drowned in the river.

After they had again wandered on for a few days, the comrade said: "Now we will soon reach the castle in which she lives, the princess of whom you dreamed, and when we reach it, you must go to the castle and tell the king what you dreamed, and your journey's aim." When they got there, the youth did as he was told, and was very well received. He was given a room for himself, and one for his servant, and when it was time to eat, he was invited to the king's own table. When he saw the princess, he recognized her at once as the vision of his dream. He told her, too, why he was there, and she replied that she liked him quite well, and would gladly take him, but first he must undergo three tests. When they had eaten, she gave him a pair of gold shears and said: "The first test is that you take these shears and keep them, and give them back to me to-morrow noon. That is not a very severe test," she said, and smiled, "but, if you cannot stand it, you must die, as the law demands, and you will be in the same case as the suitors whose bones you may see lying without the castle gate."

"That is no great feat," thought the youth to himself. But the princess was so merry and active, and so full of fun and nonsense, that he thought neither of the shears nor of himself, and while they were laughing and joking, she secretly robbed him of the shears without his noticing it. When he came to his room in the evening, and told what had occurred, and what the princess had said to him, and about the shears which she had given him to guard, his comrade asked: "And have you still the shears?"

The youth looked through all his pockets; but his shears were not there, and he was more than unhappy when he realized that he had lost them.

"Well, well, never mind. I will see whether I can get them back for you," said his comrade, and went down into the stable. There stood an enormous goat which belonged to the princess, and could fly through the air more swiftly than he could walk on level ground. The comrade took the Three-Sisters Sword, gave him a blow between the horns, and asked: "At what time does the princess ride to meet her lover to-night?" The goat bleated, and said he did not dare tell; but when the comrade had given him another thump, he did say that the princess would come at eleven o'clock sharp. Then the comrade put on the Three-Sisters Hat, which made him invisible, and waited for the princess. When she came, she anointed the goat with a salve she carried in a great horn, and cried out: “Up, up! over gable and roof, over land and sea, over hill and dale, to my dearest, who waits for me in the hill!”

As the goat flew upward, the comrade swung himself up in back, and then they were off like the wind through the clouds: it was not a long journey. Suddenly they stood before a wall of rock, she knocked, and then they took their way into the interior of the hill, to the troll who was her dearest. “And now a new suitor has come who wants to win me, sweetheart,” said she. “He is young and handsome, but I will have none but you,” she went on, and made a great time over the troll. “I have set him a test, and here are the shears that he was to keep and guard. You shall keep them now!” Then both of them laughed as though the youth had already lost his head. “Yes, I will keep them, and take good care of them, and a kiss from you shall pledge the truth, when crows are cawing around the youth!” said the troll; and he laid the shears in an iron chest with three locks. But at the moment he was dropping the shears into the chest, the comrade caught them up. None could see him, for he was wearing the Three-Sisters Hat. So the troll carefully locked the empty chest, and put the key into a hollow double-tooth, where he kept other magic things. “The suitor could hardly find it there,” said he.

After midnight the princess set out for home. The comrade swung himself up in back again, and the trip home did not take long.

The following noon the youth was invited to dine at the king’s table. But this time the princess kept her nose in the air, and was so haughty and snappish that she hardly condescended to glance in the youth’s direction. But after they had eaten, she looked very solemn, and asked in the sweetest manner: “You probably still have the shears I gave you to take care of yesterday?”

“Yes, here they are,” said the youth; and he flung them on the table so that they rang. The princess could not have been more frightened had he thrown the shears in her face. But she tried to make the best of a bad bargain, and said in a sweet voice: “Since you have taken such good care of the shears, you will not find it hard to keep my ball of gold twine for me. I should like to have it back by to-morrow noon; but if you cannot give it to me then, you must die, according to the law.” The youth thought it would not be so very hard, and put the ball of gold twine in his pocket. Yet the princess once more began to toy and joke with him, so that he thought neither of himself nor of the ball of gold twine, and while they were in the midst of their merry play she stole the golden ball from him, and then dismissed him.

When he came up into his room, and told what she had said and done, his comrade asked: “And have you still the ball of gold twine?”

“Yes, indeed,” said the youth, and thrust his hand into the pocket in which he had placed it. But there was no ball in it, and he fell into such despair that he did not know what to do.

“Do not worry,” said his comrade. “I will see whether I cannot get it back for you.” He took his sword and his hat, and went to a smith and had him weld twelve extra pounds of iron to his sword. Then, when he entered the stable, he gave the goat such a blow between the horns with it that he staggered, and asked: “At what time does the princess ride to her dearest to-night?”

“At twelve o’clock sharp,” said the goat.

The comrade once more put on his Three-Sisters Hat, and waited until the princess came with the horn of ointment and anointed the goat. Then she repeated what she had already said: “Up, up! over gable and tower, over land and sea, over hill and dale, to my dearest who waits for me in the hill!” And when the goat arose, the comrade swung himself up in back, and off they were like lightning through the air. Soon they had reached the troll-hill, and when she had knocked thrice they passed through the interior of the hill till they met the troll who was her dearest.

"What manner of care did you take of the golden shears I gave you yesterday, my friend?" asked the princess. "The suitor had them, and he gave them back to me."

That was quite impossible, said the troll, for he had locked them up in a chest with three locks, and had thrust the key into his hollow tooth. But when they had unlocked the chest and looked, there were no shears there. Then the princess told him that she had now given him her ball of golden twine.

"Here it is," said she. "I took it away from him again without his having noticed it; but what are we to do if he is a master of such arts?"

The troll could not think of anything to suggest; but after they had reflected a while they hit on the idea of lighting a great fire, and burning the ball of gold twine, for then the suitor could surely not regain it. Yet when she threw it into the flames, the comrade leaped forward and caught it, without being seen, for he was wearing the Three-Sisters Hat. After the princess had stayed a little while she returned home, and again the comrade sat up behind, and the trip home was swiftly and safely made. When the youth was asked to the king's table, the comrade gave him the ball. The princess was still more sharp and disdainful in her remarks than before, and after they had eaten she pinched her lips, and said: "Would it not be possible for me to get my ball of gold twine again, which I gave you yesterday?"

"Yes," said the youth, "you can have it; there it is!" and he flung it on the table with such a thud that the king leaped up in the air with fright.

The princess grew as pale as a corpse; but she made the best of a bad bargain, and said that he had done well. Now there was only one more little test for him to undergo. "If you can bring me what I am thinking about by to-morrow noon, then you may have me and keep me."

The youth felt as though he had been condemned to death; for it seemed altogether impossible for him to know of what the princess was thinking, and still more impossible to bring her the thing in question. And when he came to his room his comrade could scarcely quiet him. He said he would take the matter in hand, as he had done on the other occasions, and at last the youth grew calmer, and lay down to sleep. In the meantime the comrade went to the smith, and had him weld an additional twenty-four pounds of iron on his sword. When this had been done, he went to the stable, and gave the goat such a smashing blow between the horns that he flew to the other side of the wall.

“At what time does the princess ride to her dearest to-night?” said he.

“At one o’clock sharp,” bleated the goat.

When the time came, the comrade was standing in the stable, wearing his Three-Sisters Hat, and after the princess had anointed the goat and spoken her formula, off they went through the air as before, with the comrade sitting in back. But this time he was anything but gentle, and kept giving the princess a cuff here, and a cuff there, until she had received a terrible drubbing. When she reached the wall of rock, she knocked three times, the hill opened, and they flew through it to her dearest.

She complained bitterly to him, and said she would never have thought it possible that the weather could affect one so; it had seemed to her as though some one were flying along with them, beating her and the goat, and her whole body must be covered with black and blue spots, so badly had she been thrashed. And then she told how the suitor had again had the ball of twine. How he had managed to get it, neither she nor the troll could guess.

“But do you know the thought that came to me?” said she. Of course the troll did not.

“Well,” said she, “I have told him he is to bring me the thing I am thinking of by to-morrow noon, and that thing is your head. Do you think, dear friend, that he will be able to bring it to me?" and she made a great time over the troll.

"I do not think he can," said the troll, who felt quite sure of himself, and laughed and chortled with pleasure in the most malicious way. For he and the princess were firmly convinced that the youth would be more apt to lose his own head, and be left to the ravens, than that he would be able to bring the princess the head of the troll.

Toward morning the princess wanted to fly home again, but she did not venture to ride alone; the troll must accompany her. He was quite ready to do so, took his goat from the stable — he had one just like that of the princess — and anointed him between the horns. When the troll had mounted, the comrade swung up in back of him, and off they were through the air in the direction of the king's castle. But on the way the comrade beat away lustily at the troll and his goat, and gave him thump after thump, and blow after blow with his sword, until they were flying lower and lower, and at last nearly fell into the sea across which their journey led them. When the troll noticed how stormy the weather was, he accompanied the princess to the castle, and waited outside to make sure that she really came home safely. But the moment when the door closed on the princess, the comrade hewed off his head, and went up with it to the youth's room.

"Here is the thing of which the princess was thinking," said he. Then everything was in apple-pie order, and when the youth was invited to the king's table and they had eaten, the princess grew as merry as a lark. "Have you, perhaps, the thing of which I was thinking?" "To be sure," said the youth, and he drew forth the head from beneath his coat, and flung it on the table so that the table and all that was on it fell over. The princess looked as though she had come from the grave; yet she could not deny that this was the thing of which she had thought, and now she had to take the youth, as she had promised. So the wedding was celebrated, and there was great joy throughout the kingdom.

But the comrade took the youth aside, and said that on their wedding-night he might close his eyes and pretend to sleep, but that, if he loved his life, and followed his advice, he would not sleep a wink until the princess was freed from her troll-skin. He must whip it off with nine new switches of birch-wood, and strip it off with three milk-baths beside; first he must scrub it off in a tub of year-old whey, then he must rub it off in a tub of sour milk, and finally, he must sponge it off in a tub of sweet milk. He had laid the birch switches beneath the bed, and had stood the tubs of milk in the corner; all was prepared. The youth promised to follow his advice, and do as he had told him. When night came, and he lay in his bed, the princess raised herself on her elbows, to see if he were really asleep, and she tickled him under the nose; but he was sleeping quite soundly. Then she pulled his hair and his beard. But it seemed to her that he slept like a log. Then she drew a great butcher's knife out from beneath her pillow, and wanted to cut off his head. But the youth leaped up, struck the knife from her hand, seized her by the hair, whipped her with the switches, and did not stop until not one was left. Thereupon he threw her into the tub of whey, and then he saw what sort of creature she really was, for her whole body was coal-black. But when he had scrubbed her in the whey, and rubbed her in the sour milk, and sponged her in the sweet milk, the troll-skin had altogether disappeared, and she was lovelier than she had ever been before.

On the following day the comrade said that now they must get on their way. The youth was ready to set forth, and the princess, too, for her dower had long since been made ready. During the night the comrade had brought all the gold and silver, and all the valuables which the troll had left in the hill to the castle, and when they wanted to start in the morning, the castle court-yard was so full they could scarcely get through. The dower supplied by the troll was worth more than the king's whole country, and they did not know how they were to take it home. But the comrade found a way out of the difficulty. The troll had also left six goats who could fly through the air.

These he loaded so heavily with gold and silver that they had to walk on the ground, and were not strong enough to rise into the air; and what the goats could not carry, had to be left at the castle. Thus they traveled for a long time, but at last the goats grew so weary and wretched that they could go no further. The youth and the princess did not know what to do; but when the comrade saw that they could not move from the spot, he took the whole treasure on his back, topped it with the goats, and carried it all until they were no more than half a mile from the youth's home. Then the comrade said: "Now I must part from you, for I can stay with you no longer." But the youth would not hear of parting, and would not let him go at any price.

So he went along another half mile, but further than that he could not go, and when the youth pressed him, and insisted that he come home with him, and stay there; or that he at least celebrate their home-coming, he merely said no, he could not do so. Then the youth asked him what he wished in the way of payment for his company and aid. "If I am to wish for something, then I would like to have half of all that you may gain in the course of the next five years," said his comrade. And this was promised him.

Now when the comrade had gone, the youth hid all his treasure, and went straight home. And there they celebrated a home-coming feast that was talked about in seven kingdoms; and when that was over they spent the whole winter going back and forth with the goats, and his father's twelve horses, bringing all the gold and silver home.

After five years the comrade came again and asked for his share. Then the man divided all his possessions into two equal parts.

"Yet there is one thing you have not divided," said the comrade.

"What could that be?" asked the man. "I thought I had divided everything."

"You have been blessed with a child," said the comrade, "and that you must also divide into two equal parts."

Yes, such was really the case. Then he took up his sword, but when he raised it and was about to divide the child, his comrade seized the point of the sword so that he could not strike.

“Are you not happy, since you need not strike?” said he.

“Yes, indeed, I never was happier,” said the man.

“That is how happy I was when you delivered me out of the block of ice,” said the comrade. “Keep all you have: I need nothing, for I am a disembodied spirit.” And he told him he was the wine-dealer who had lain in the block of ice before the church door, spat upon by all; and that he had become his comrade, and had aided him, because the youth had sacrificed all he had in order that he might have peace, and a burial in consecrated ground. He had been permitted to accompany him for the space of a year, and the time had run out when he had first parted with him. Now he had once more been allowed to visit him; yet on this occasion he would have to part for all time, for the bells of heaven were calling him.

35

ASPENCLOG

Aspenclog’s mother was an aspen-tree. He slew the man who had chopped her down. Then he went to the king and asked whether he could give him work. He wanted no other pay than the right to give the king three good thumps on the back when there was no more work for him to do. The king agreed to this condition, for he thought he would always have enough work for him to do. Then he sent him to the forest to gather wood. But Aspenclog piled up such a tremendous load that two horses could not pull the wagon. So he took two polar bears, harnessed them to the wagon, drove it home, and left the bears in the stable, where they ate up all the king’s cattle.

Then he was told to keep a mill grinding which the evil one often brought to a stop. No sooner had Aspenclog commenced to grind than, sure enough, the mill stopped. Aspenclog took a candle and made a search. No doubt of it, the evil one had wedged his leg between the mill-stones. No sooner had Aspenclog seen the leg, than he chopped it off with his club. Then the evil one came hobbling up on one leg, and begged fearfully and tearfully for the leg he had lost. No, he could not have it, said the youth, unless he gave him a bushel of money for it. But when the evil one had to pay Aspenclog the money, he thought to cheat him, and said that they would wager bushel against bushel, as to which of them could throw the highest. They argued a while about which was to throw first. At last Aspenclog had to begin. Now the evil one had a ball with which they were to throw. Aspenclog stood a long time looking at the moon. “Why do you do that?” asked the evil one. “Well, I would like to see whether I cannot throw the ball into the moon,” said Aspenclog. “Do you see those black spots? Those are the balls I have already thrown up into the moon.” Then the evil one was afraid of losing his ball, and he did not dare to let Aspenclog throw.

So they wagered bushel against bushel as to which one of them could blow the highest note. “You may blow first,” said Aspenclog. “No, you!” Finally it was decided that Aspenclog should blow first. Then he went to a hill, took an enormous fir-tree and wound it around his horn like a reed. “Why do you do that?” asked the evil one. “Well, if I don’t, the horn will burst when I blow it,” was Aspenclog’s answer. Now the evil one began to get frightened, and Aspenclog came home with half a ton of money.

But soon the king had no corn left to grind. And war broke out in the land. “Now he will have work enough to last him a lifetime,” thought the king. And he told Aspenclog to go out against the enemy. Aspenclog was quite ready to do so; but wanted to have plenty of provisions to take with him. Then he set forth, and when he saw the enemy he sat down to eat. The enemy shot at him as hard as they could, but their bullets did not touch him. When Aspenclog had satisfied his hunger, he stood up, tore out an enormous oak by the roots, and lay about him with it. Before very long he had hewn down all of the enemy. Then he went back home to the king.

“Have you any more work for me?” he asked. “No, now I have no work left,” said the king. “Then I will give you three good thumps on the back,” said Aspenclog. The king begged permission to bolster himself up with pillows. “Yes, take as many as you want,” said Aspenclog. Then he thumped, and at his first thump the king burst into pieces.

36

THE TROLL WEDDING

One summer, a long, long time ago, the folk of Melbustad went up to the hill pastures with their herd. But they had been there only a short time when the cattle began to grow so restless that it was impossible to keep them in order. A number of different maidens tried to manage them, but without avail; until one came who was betrothed, and whose betrothal had but recently been celebrated. Then the cattle suddenly quieted down, and were easy to handle. So the maiden remained alone in the hills with no other company than a dog. And one afternoon as she sat in the hut, it seemed to her that her sweetheart came, sat down beside her, and began to talk about their getting married at once. But she sat still and made no reply, for she noticed a strangeness about him. By and by, more and more people came in, and they began to cover the table with silverware, and bring on dishes, and the bridesmaids brought the bridal crown, and the ornaments, and a handsome bridal gown, and they dressed her, and put the crown on her head, as was the custom in those days, and they put rings on her hands.

And it seemed to her as though she knew all the people who were there; they were the women of the village, and the girls of her own age. But the dog was well aware that there was something uncanny about it all. He made his way down to Melbustad in flying leaps, and howled and barked in the most lamentable manner, and gave the people no rest until they followed him. The young fellow who was to marry the girl took his gun, and climbed the hills; and when he drew near, there stood a number of horses around the hut, saddled and bridled. He crept up to the hut, looked through a loop-hole in the wall, and saw a whole company sitting together inside. It was quite evident that they were trolls, the people from underground, and therefore he discharged his gun over the roof. At that moment the doors flew open, and a number of balls of gray yarn, one larger than the other, came shooting out about his legs. When he went in, there sat the maiden in her bridal finery, and nothing was missing but the ring on her little finger, then all would have been complete.

“In heaven’s name, what has happened here?” he asked, as he looked around. All the silverware was still on the table, but all the tasty dishes had turned to moss and toadstools, and frogs and toads and the like.

“What does it all mean?” said he. “You are sitting here in all your glory, just like a bride?”

“How can you ask me?” answered the maiden. “You have been sitting here yourself, and talking about our wedding the whole afternoon!”

“No, I have just come,” said he. “It must have been some one else who had taken my shape!”

Then she gradually came to her senses; but not until long afterward was she altogether herself, and she told how she had firmly believed that her sweetheart himself, and all their friends and relatives had been there. He took her straight back to the village with him, and so that they need fear no such deviltry in the future, they celebrated their wedding while she was still clad in the bridal outfit of the underground folk. The crown and all the ornaments were hung up in Melbustad and it is said that they hang there to this very day.

37

THE HAT OF THE HULDRES

Once upon a time there was a big wedding at a certain farmstead, and a certain cottager was on his way to the wedding-feast. As he chanced to cross a field, he found a milk-strainer, such as are usually made of cows’ tails, and looking just like an old brown rag. He picked it up, for he thought it could be washed, and then he would give it to his wife for a dish-rag. But when he came to the house where they were celebrating the wedding, it seemed as though no one saw him. The bride and groom nodded to the rest of the guests, they spoke to them and poured for them; but he got neither greeting nor drink. Then the chief cook came and asked the other folk to sit down to the table; but he was not asked, nor did he get anything to eat. For he did not care to sit down of his own accord when no one had asked him. At last he grew angry and thought: “I might as well go home, for not a soul pays a bit of attention to me here.” When he reached home, he said: “Good evening, here I am back again.”

“For heaven’s sake, are you back again?” asked his wife.

“Yes, there was no one there who paid any attention to me, or even so much as looked at me,” said the man, “and when people show me so little consideration, it seems as though I have nothing to look for there.”

“But where are you? I can hear you, but I cannot see you!” cried his wife.

The man was invisible, for what he had found was a *huldre* hat.

“What are you talking about? Can’t you see me? Have you lost your wits?” asked the man. “There is an old hair strainer for you. I found it outside on the ground,” said he, and he threw it on the bench. And then his wife saw him; but at the same moment the hat of the *huldres* disappeared, for he should only have loaned it, not given it away. Now the man saw how everything had come about, and went back to the wedding-feast. And this time he was received in right friendly fashion, and was asked to drink, and to seat himself at the table.

38

THE CHILD OF MARY

Far, far from here, in a great forest, there once lived a poor couple. Heaven blessed them with a charming little daughter; but they were so poor they did not know how they were going to get her christened. So her father had to go forth to see whether he could not find a god-father to pay for the child's christening. All day long he went from one to another; but no one wanted to be the god-father. Toward evening, as he was going home, he met a very lovely lady, who wore the most splendid clothes, and seemed most kind and friendly, and she offered to see that the child was christened, if she might be allowed to keep it afterward. The man replied that first he must ask his wife. But when he reached home and asked her she gave him a flat "no." The following day the man set out again; but no one wanted to be the god-father if he had to pay for the christening himself, and no matter how hard the man begged, it was all of no avail. When he went home that evening, he again met the lovely lady, who looked so gentle, and she made him the same offer as before. The man again told his wife what had happened to him, and added that if he could not find a god-father for his child the following day, they would probably have to let the lady take her, since she seemed to be so kind and friendly. The man then went out for the third time, and found no god-father that day. And so, when he once more met the friendly lady in the evening, he promised to let her have the child, if she would see that it was baptized. The following morning the lady came to the man's hut, and with her two other men. She then took the child and went to church with it, and it was baptized. Then she took it with her, and the little girl remained with her for several years, and her foster-mother was always good and kind to her.

Now when the girl had grown old enough to make distinctions, and had acquired some sense, it chanced that her foster-mother once wished to take a journey. "You may go into any room you wish," she said to the girl, "only you are not to go into these three rooms," and then she set out on her journey. But the girl could not resist opening the door to the one room a little way — and swish! out flew a star. When her foster-mother came home, she was much grieved to find that the star had flown out, and was so annoyed with her foster-child that she threatened to send her away. But the girl pleaded and cried, until at last she was allowed to remain.

After a time the foster-mother wanted to take another journey, and she forbade the girl, above all, to go into the two rooms which, as yet, she had not entered. And the girl promised her that this time she would obey her. But when she had been alone for some time, and had had all sorts of thoughts as to what there might be in the second room, she could no longer resist opening the second door a little way — and swish! out flew the moon. When the foster-mother returned, and saw the moon had slipped out, she again grieved greatly, and told the girl she could keep her no longer, and that now she must go. But when the girl again began to cry bitterly, and pleaded with such grace that it was impossible to deny her, she was once more allowed to remain.

After this the foster-mother wished to take another journey, and she told the girl, who was now more than half-grown, that she must take her request not to go, or even so much as peep into the third room, seriously to heart. But when the foster-mother had been away for some time, and the girl was all alone and bored, she could at last resist no longer. "O," thought she, "how pleasant it would be to take a peep into that third room!" It is true, that at first she thought she would not do it, because of her foster-mother; yet when the thought returned to her, she could not hold back, after all; but decided that she should and must by all means take a peep. So she opened the door the least little bit — and swish! out flew the sun. When the foster-mother then returned, and saw that the sun had flown out, she grieved greatly, and told the girl that now she could positively stay with her no longer. The foster-daughter cried and pleaded even more touchingly than before; but all to no avail. "No, I must now punish you," said the foster-mother. "But you shall have your choice of either becoming the most beautiful of all maidens, without the power of speech, or the most homely, yet able to talk. But you must leave this place." The girl said: "Then I would rather be the most beautiful of maidens without the power of speech" — and such she became, but from that time on she was dumb.

Now when the girl had left her foster-mother, and had wandered for a time, she came to a large, large wood, and no matter how far she went she could not reach its end. When evening came, she climbed into a high tree that stood over a spring, and sat down in its branches to sleep. Not far from it stood a king's castle, and early the next morning a serving-maid came from it, to get water from the spring for the prince's tea. And when the serving-maid saw the lovely face in the spring, she thought it was her own. At once she threw down her pail and ran back home holding her head high, and saying: "If I am as beautiful as all that, I am too good to carry water in a pail!" Then another was sent to fetch water, but the same thing happened with her; she, too, came back and said she was far too handsome and too good to go to the spring and fetch water for the prince. Then the prince went himself, for he wanted to see what it all meant. And when he came to the spring, he also saw the picture, and at once looked up into the tree. And so he saw the lovely maiden who was seated among its branches. He coaxed her down, took her back home with him, and nothing would do but that she must be his bride, because she was so beautiful. But his mother, who was still living, objected: “She cannot speak,” said she, “and, maybe, she belongs to the troll-folk.” But the prince would not be satisfied until he had won her. When, after a time, heaven bestowed a child upon the queen, the prince set a strong guard about her. But suddenly they all fell asleep, and her foster-mother came, cut the child’s little finger, rubbed some of the blood over the mouth and hands of the queen, and said: “Now you shall grieve just as I did when you let the star slip out!” And with that she disappeared with the child. When those whom the prince had set to keep guard opened their eyes again, they thought that the queen had devoured her child, and the old queen wanted to have her burned; but the prince loved her so very tenderly, that after much pleading he succeeded in having her saved from punishment, though only with the greatest difficulty.

When heaven gave her a second child, a guard of twice as many men as had first stood watch was again set about her; yet everything happened as before, only that this time the foster-mother said to her: “Now you shall grieve as I did when you let the moon slip out!” The queen wept and pleaded — for when the foster-mother was there she could speak — but without avail. Now the old queen insisted that she be burned. But the prince once more succeeded in begging her free. When heaven gave her a third child, a three-fold guard was set about her. The foster-mother came while the guard slept, took the child, cut its little finger, and rubbed some of the blood on the queen’s mouth. “Now,” said she, “you shall grieve just as I did when you let the sun slip out!” And now the prince could in no way save her, she was to be and should be burned. But at the very moment when they were leading her to the stake, the foster-mother appeared with all three children; the two older ones she led by the hand, the youngest she carried on her arm. She stepped up to the young queen and said: “Here are your children, for now I give them back to you. I am the Virgin Mary, and the grief that you have felt is the same grief that I felt aforetimes, when you had let the star, the moon and the sun slip out. Now you have been punished for that which you did, and from now on the power of speech is restored to you!”

The happiness which then filled the prince and princess may be imagined, but cannot be described. They lived happily together ever after, and from that time forward even the prince’s mother was very fond of the young queen.

39

STORM MAGIC

The cabin-boy had been traveling around all summer long with his captain; but when they began to prepare to set sail in the fall, he grew restless and did not want to go along. The captain liked him, for though he was no more than a boy, he was quite at home on deck, was a big, tall lad, and did not mind lending a hand when need arose; then, too, he did as much work as an able seaman, and was so full of fun that he kept the whole crew in good humor. And so the captain did not like to lose him. But the youth said out and out that he was not minded to take to the blue pond in the fall; though he was willing to stay on board till the ship was loaded and ready to sail. One Sunday, while the crew was ashore, and the captain had gone to a farm-holding near the forest, in order to bargain for small timber and log wood — presumably on his own account — for a deck load, the youth had been left to guard the ship. But you must know that he was a Sunday child, and had found a four-leaf clover; and that was the reason he had the second sight. He could see those who are invisible, but they could not see him.

And as he was sitting there in the forward cabin, he heard voices within the ship. He peered through a crack, and there were three coal-black crows sitting inside the deck-beams, and they were talking about their husbands.

All three were tired of them, and were planning their death. One could see at once that they were witches, who had assumed another form.

"But is it certain that there is no one here who can overhear us?" said one of the crows. And by the way she spoke the cabin-boy knew her for the captain's wife.

"No, you can see there's not," said the others, the wives of the first and second quartermasters. "There is not a soul aboard."

"Well, then I do not mind saying that I know of a good way to get rid of them," said the captain's wife once more, and hopped closer to the two others. "We will turn ourselves into breakers, wash them into the sea, and sink the ship with every man on board."

That pleased the others, and they sat there a long time discussing the day and the fairway. "But is it certain that no one can overhear us?" once more asked the captain's wife.

"You know that such is the case," said the two others.

"Well, there is a counter-spell for what we wish to do, and if it is used, it will go hard with us, for it will cost us nothing less than our lives!"

"What is the counter-spell, sister," asked the wife of the one quartermaster.

"Is it certain that no one is listening to us? It seemed to me as though some one were smoking in the forward cabin."

"But you know we looked in every corner. They just forgot to let the fire go out in the caboose, and that is why there's smoke," said the quartermaster's wife, "so tell away."

"If they buy three cords of birch-wood," said the witch, — "but it must be full measure, and they must not bargain for it — and throw the first cord into the water, billet by billet, when the first breaker strikes, and the second cord, billet by billet, when the second breaker strikes, and the third cord, billet by billet, when the third breaker strikes, then it is all up with us!"

“Yes, that’s true, sister, then it is all up with us! Then it is all up with us!” said the wives of the quartermasters; “but there is no one who knows it,” they cried, and laughed loudly, and with that they flew out of the hatchway, screaming and croaking like ravens.

When it came time to sail, the cabin-boy would not go along for anything in the world; and all the captain’s coaxing, and all his promises were useless, nothing would tempt him to go. At last they asked him whether he were afraid, because fall was at hand, and said he would rather hide behind the stove, hanging to mother’s apron strings. No, said the youth, he was not afraid, and they could not say that they had ever seen him show a sign of so land-lubberly a thing as fear; and he was willing to prove it to them, for now he was going along with them, but he made it a condition that three cords of birch-wood were to be bought, full measure, and that on a certain day he was to have command, just as though he himself were the captain. The captain asked what sort of nonsense this might be, and whether he had ever heard of a cabin-boy’s being entrusted with the command of a ship. But the boy answered that was all one to him; if they did not care to buy the three cords of birch-wood, and obey him, as though he were captain, for the space of a single day — the captain and crew should know which day it was to be in advance — then he would set foot on the ship no more, and far less would he ever dirty his hands with pitch and tar on her again. The whole thing seemed strange to the captain, yet he finally gave in, because he wanted to have the boy along with him and, no doubt, he also thought that he would come to his senses again when they were once under way. The quartermaster was of the same opinion. “Just let him command all he likes, and if things go wrong with him, we’ll help him out,” said he. So the birch-wood was bought, full-measure and without haggling, and they set sail.

When the day came on which the cabin-boy was to take command, the weather was fair and quiet; but he drummed up the whole ship’s crew, and with the exception of a tiny bit of canvas, had all sails reefed. The captain and crew laughed at him, and said: “That shows the sort of a captain we have now. Don’t you want us to reef that last bit of sail this very minute?” “Not yet,” answered the cabin-boy, “but before long.”

Suddenly a squall struck them, struck them so heavily that they thought they would capsize, and had they not reefed the sails they would undoubtedly have foundered when the first breaker roared down upon the ship.

The boy ordered them to throw the first cord of birch-wood overboard, billet by billet, one at a time and never two, and he did not let them touch the other two cords. Now they obeyed him to the letter, and did not laugh; but cast out the birch-wood billet by billet. When the last billet fell they heard a groaning, as though some one were wrestling with death, and then the squall had passed.

“Heaven be praised!” said the crew — and the captain added: “I am going to let the company know that you saved ship and cargo.”

“That’s all very well, but we are not through yet,” said the boy, “there is worse to come,” and he told them to reef every last rag, as well as what had been left of the topsails. The second squall hit them with even greater force than the first, and was so vicious and violent that the whole crew was frightened. While it was at its worst, the boy told them to throw overboard the second cord; and they threw it over billet by billet, and took care not to take any from the third cord. When the last billet fell, they again heard a deep groan, and then all was still. “Now there will be one more squall, and that will be the worst,” said the boy, and sent every one to his station. There was not a hawser loose on the whole ship.

The last squall hit them with far more force than either of the preceding ones, the ship laid over on her side so that they thought she would not right herself again, and the breaker swept over the deck.

But the boy told them to throw the last cord of wood overboard, billet by billet, and no two billets at once. And when the last billet of wood fell, they heard a deep groaning, as though some one were dying hard, and when all was quiet once more, the whole sea was the color of blood, as far as eye could reach.

When they reached land, the captain and the quartermasters spoke of writing to their wives. “That is something you might just as well let be,” said the cabin-boy, “seeing that you no longer have any wives.”

“What silly talk is this, young know-it-all! We have no wives?” said the captain. “Or do you happen to have done away with them?” asked the quartermasters.

“No, all of us together did away with them,” answered the boy, and told them what he had heard and seen that Sunday afternoon when he was on watch on the ship; while the crew was ashore, and the captain was buying his deckload of wood.

And when they sailed home they learned that their wives had disappeared the day of the storm, and that since that time no one had seen or heard anything more of them.

40

THE FOUR-SHILLING PIECE

Once upon a time there was a poor woman, who lived in a wretched hut far away from the village. She had but little to bite and less to burn, so she sent her little boy to the forest to gather wood. He skipped and leaped, and leaped and skipped, in order to keep warm, for it was a cold, gray autumn day, and whenever he had gathered a root or a branch to add to his bundle, he had to slap his arms against his shoulders, for the cold made his hands as red as the whortleberry bushes over which he walked. When he had filled his barrow, and was wandering homeward, he crossed a field of stubble. There he saw lying a jagged white stone. “O, you poor old stone, how white and pale you are! You must be freezing terribly!” said the boy; took off his jacket, and laid it over the stone. And when he came back home with his wood, his mother asked him how it was that he was going around in the autumn cold in his shirt-sleeves. He told her that he had seen a jagged old stone, quite white and pale with the frost, and that he had given it his jacket. “You fool,” said the woman, “do you think a stone can freeze? And even if it had chattered with frost, still, charity begins at home. Your clothes cost enough as it is, even when you don’t hang them on the stones out in the field!” — and with that she drove the boy out again to fetch his jacket. When he came to the stone, the stone had turned around, and had raised itself from the ground on one side.

“Yes, and I’m sure it is because you have the jacket, poor fellow!” said the boy. But when he looked more closely, there was a chest full of bright silver coins under the stone. “That must be stolen money,” thought the boy, “for no one lays money honestly earned under stones in the wood.” And he took the chest, and carried it down to the pond nearby, and threw in the whole pile of money. But a four-shilling piece was left swimming on the top of the water. “Well, this one is honest, for whatever is honest will float,” said the boy. And he took the four-shilling piece and the jacket home with him. He told his mother what had happened to him, that the stone had turned around, and that he had found a chest full of silver coins, and had thrown it into the pond because it was stolen money. “But a four-shilling piece floated, and that I took along, because it was honest,” said the boy. “You are a fool,” said the woman — for she was as angry as could be — “if nothing were honest save what floats on the water, there would be but little honesty left in the world. And if the money had been stolen ten times over, still you had found it, and charity begins at home. If you had kept the money, we might have passed the rest of our lives in peace and comfort. But you are a dunderhead and will stay a dunderhead, and I won’t be tormented and burdened with you any longer. Now you must get out and earn your own living.”

So the boy had to go out into the wide world, and wandered about far and near looking for service. But wherever he went people found him too small or too weak, and said that they could make no use of him. At last he came to a merchant. There they kept him to work in the kitchen, and he had to fetch wood and water for the cook. When he had been there for some time, the merchant decided to journey to far countries, and asked all his servants what he should buy and bring back home for them. After all had told him what they wanted, came the turn of the little fellow who carried wood and water for the kitchen. He handed him his four-shilling piece. “Well, and what am I to buy for it?” asked the merchant. “It will not be a large purchase.” “Buy whatever it will bring, it is honest money, that I know,” said the boy. His master promised to do so, and sailed away.

Now when the merchant had discharged his cargo in foreign parts and had reloaded, and had bought what his servants had desired, he went back to his ship, and was about to shove off. Not until then did he remember that the scullion had given him a four-shilling piece, with which to buy him something. “Must I go up to the city again because of this four-shilling piece? One only has one’s troubles when one bothers with such truck,” thought the merchant. Then along came a woman with a bag on her back. “What have you in your bag, granny?” asked the merchant. “O, it is only a cat! I can feed her no longer, and so I want to throw her into the sea in order to get rid of her,” said the old woman. “The boy told me to buy whatever I could get for the four-shilling piece,” said the merchant to himself, and asked the woman whether he could have her cat for four shillings. The woman agreed without delay, and the bargain was closed.

Now when the merchant had sailed on for a while, a terrible storm broke loose, a thunderstorm without an equal, and he drifted and drifted, and did not know where or whither. At last he came to a land where he had never yet been, and went up into the city.

In the tavern which he entered the table was set, and at every place lay a switch, one for each guest. This seemed strange to the merchant, for he could not understand what was to be done with all the switches. Yet he sat down and thought: “I will watch carefully, and see just what the rest do with them, and then I can imitate them.” Yes, and when the food came on the table, then he knew why the switches were there: the place was alive with thousands of mice, and all who were sitting at the table had to work and fight and beat about them with their switches, and nothing could be heard but the slapping of the switches, one worse than the other. Sometimes people hit each other in the face, and then they had to take time to say, “Excuse me!”

“Eating is hard work in this country,” said the merchant. “How is it the folk here have no cats?” “Cats?” said the people: they did not know what they were. Then the merchant had the cat that he had bought for the scullion brought, and when the cat went over the table, the mice had to hurry into their holes, and not in the memory of man had the people been able to eat in such comfort. Then they begged and implored the merchant to sell them his cat. At last he said he would let them have her; but he wanted a hundred dollars for her, and this they paid, and thanked him kindly into the bargain.

Then the merchant sailed on, but no sooner had he reached the high seas than he saw the cat sitting at the top of the main-mast. And immediately after another storm and tempest arose, far worse than the first one, and he drifted and drifted, till he came to a land where he had never yet been. Again the merchant went to a tavern, and here, too, the table was covered with switches; but they were much larger and longer than at the place where he had first been. And they were much needed; for there were a good many more mice, and they were twice the size of those he had first seen.

Here he again sold his cat, and this time he received two hundred dollars for her, and that without any haggling. But when he had sailed off and was out at sea a way, there sat the cat up in the mast. And the storm at once began again, and finally he was again driven to a land in which he had never been. Again he turned in at a tavern, and there the table was also covered with switches; but every switch was a yard and a half long, and as thick as a small broom, and the people told him that they knew of nothing more disagreeable than to sit down to eat, for there were great, ugly rats by the thousand. Only with toil and trouble could one manage to shove a bite of something into one’s mouth once in a while, so hard was it to defend oneself against the rats. Then the cat was again brought from the ship, and now the people could eat in peace. They begged and pleaded that the merchant sell them his cat; and for a long time he refused; but at last he promised that they should have her for three hundred dollars. And they paid him, and thanked him, and blessed him into the bargain.

Now when the merchant was out at sea again, he considered how much the boy had gained with the four-shilling piece he had given him. “Well, he shall have some of the money,” said the merchant to himself, “but not all of it. For he has to thank me for the cat, which I bought for him, and charity begins at home.”

But while the merchant was thinking these thoughts, such a storm and tempest arose that all thought the ship would sink. Then the merchant realized that there was nothing left for him to do but to promise that the boy should have all the money. No sooner had he made his vow, than the weather turned fair, and he had a favoring wind for his journey home. And when he landed, he gave the youth the six hundred dollars and his daughter to boot. For now the scullion was as rich as the merchant himself and richer, and thereafter he lived in splendor and happiness. And he took in his mother and treated her kindly. “For I do not believe that charity begins at home,” said the youth.

41

THE MAGIC APPLES

Once upon a time there was a lad who was better off than all the others. He was never short of money, for he had a purse which was never empty. He never was short of food, for he had a tablecloth on which, as soon as he spread it, he found all he wanted to eat and drink. And, besides, he had a magic wishing cap. When he put it on he could wish himself wherever he wanted, and there he would be that very moment.

There was only one thing that he lacked: he had no wife, and he was gradually coming into the years when it would be necessary for him to make haste.

As he was walking sadly along one fine day, it occurred to him to wish himself where he would find the most beautiful princess in the world. No sooner had he thought of it than he was there. And it was a land which he had never yet seen, and a city in which he had never yet been. And the king had a daughter, so handsome that he had never yet beheld her like, and he wanted to have her on the spot. But she would have nothing to do with him, and was very haughty.

Finally he despaired altogether, and was so beside himself that he could no longer be where she was not. So he took his magic cap and wished himself into the castle. He wanted to say good-by, so he said. And she laid her hand in his. “I wish we were far beyond the end of the world!” said the youth, and there they were. But the king’s daughter wept, and begged to be allowed to go home again. He could have all the gold and silver in the castle in return. “I have money enough for myself,” said the youth, and he shook his purse so that money just rolled about. He could sit down at the royal table and eat the finest food, and drink the finest wines, said she. “I have enough to eat and drink myself,” said the youth. “See, you can sit down at the table,” said he, and at once he spread his table-cloth. And there stood a table covered with the best one might wish; and the king himself ate no better.

After they had eaten, the king’s daughter said: “O, do look at the handsome apples up there on the tree! If you were really kind, you would fetch me down a couple of them!” The youth was not lazy, and climbed up. But he had forgotten his table-cloth and his purse, and these she took. And while he was shaking down the apples his cap fell off. She at once put it on and wished herself back in her own room, and there she was that minute.

“You might have known it,” said the youth to himself, and hurried down the tree. He began to cry and did not know what to do. And as he was sitting there, he sampled the apples which he had thrown down. No sooner had he tried one than he had a strange feeling in his head, and when he looked more closely, he had a pair of horns. “Well, now it can do me no more harm,” said he, and calmly went on eating the apples. But suddenly the horns had disappeared, and he was as before. “Good enough!” said the youth. And with that he put the apples in his pocket, and set out to search for the king’s daughter.

He went from city to city, and sailed from country to country; but it was a long journey, and lasted a year and a day, and even longer.

But one day he got there after all. It was a Sunday, and he found out that the king’s daughter was at church. Then he sat himself down with his apples before the church door, and pretended to be a peddler. “Apples of

Damascus! Apples of Damascus!" he cried. And sure enough, the king's daughter came, and told her maidens to go and see what desirable things the peddler from abroad might have to offer. Yes, he had apples of Damascus. "What do the apples give one?" asked the maiden. "Wisdom and beauty!" said the peddler, and the maiden bought.

When the king's daughter had eaten of the apples, she had a pair of horns. And then there was such a wailing in the castle that it was pitiful to hear. And the castle was hung with black, and in the whole kingdom proclamation was made from all pulpits that whoever could help the king's daughter should get her, and half the kingdom besides. Then Tom, Dick and Harry, and the best physicians in the country came along. But none of them could help the princess.

But one day a foreign doctor from afar came to court. He was not from their country, he said, and had made the journey purposely just to try his luck here. But he must see the king's daughter alone, said he, and permission was granted him.

The king's daughter recognized him, and grew red and pale in turn. "If I help you now, will you marry me?" asked the youth. Yes, indeed she would. Then he gave her one of the magic apples, and her horns were only half as large as before. "But I cannot do more until I have my cap, and my table-cloth, and my purse back again," said he. So she went and brought him the things. Then he gave her still another magic apple, and now the horns were no more than tiny hornlets. "But now I cannot go on until you have sworn that you will be true to me," said he. And she swore that she would. And after she had eaten the third apple, her forehead was quite smooth again, and she was even more beautiful than in days gone by.

Then there was great joy in the castle. They prepared for the wedding with baking and brewing, and invited people from East and West to come to it. And they ate and drank, and were merry and of good cheer, and if they have not stopped, they are merry and of good cheer to this very day!

42

SELF DID IT

Once upon a time there was a mill, in which it was impossible to grind flour, because such strange things kept happening there. But there was a poor woman who was in urgent need of a little meal one evening, and she asked whether they would not allow her to grind a little flour during the night. “For heaven’s sake,” said the mill-owner, “that is quite impossible! There are ghosts enough in the mill as it is.” But the woman said that she must grind a little; for she did not have a pinch of flour in the house with which to make mush, and there was nothing for her children to eat. So at last he allowed her to go to the mill at night and grind some flour. When she came, she lit a fire under a big tar-barrel that was standing there; got the mill going, sat down by the fire, and began to knit. After a time a girl came in and nodded to her. “Good evening!” said she to the woman. “Good evening!” said the woman; kept her seat, and went on knitting. But then the girl who had come in began to pull apart the fire on the hearth. The woman built it up again.

“What is your name?” asked the girl from underground.

“Self is my name,” said the woman.

That seemed a curious name to the girl, and she once more began to pull the fire apart. Then the woman grew angry and began to scold, and built it all up again. Thus they went on for a good while; but at last, while they were in the midst of their pulling apart and building up of the fire, the woman upset the tar-barrel on the girl from underground. Then the latter screamed and ran away, crying:

“Father, father! Self burned me!”

“Nonsense, if self did it, then self must suffer for it!” came the answer from below the hill.

43

THE MASTER GIRL

Once upon a time there was a king who had several sons; I do not just know how many there were, but the youngest was not content at home, and insisted on going out into the world to seek his fortune. And in the end the king had to give him permission to do so. After he had wandered for a few days, he came to a giant's castle, and took service with the giant. In the morning the giant wanted to go off to herd his goats, and when he started he told the king's son he was to clean the stable in the meantime. "And when you are through with that, you need do nothing more for to-day, for you might as well know that you have come to a kind master," said he. "But you must do what you are told to do conscientiously and, besides, you must not go into any of the rooms that lie behind the one in which you slept last night, else your life will pay the forfeit."

"He surely is a kind master," said the king's son to himself, walked up and down the room, and whistled and sang; for, thought he, there would be plenty of time to clean the stable. "But it would be nice to take a look at the other room, there surely must be something in it that he is alarmed about, since I am not so much as to take a look," thought he, and went into the first room. There hung a kettle, and it was boiling, but the king's son could find no fire beneath it. "What can there be in it?" thought he, and dipped in a lock of his hair, and at once the hair grew just like copper. “That’s a fine soup, and whoever tastes it will burn his mouth,” said the youth, and went into the next room. There hung another kettle that bubbled and boiled; but there was no fire beneath it, either. “I must try this one, too,” said the king’s son, and again he dipped in a lock of his hair and it grew just like silver. “We have no such expensive soup at home,” said the king’s son, “but the main thing is, how does it taste?” and with that he went into the third room. And there hung still another kettle, a-boiling just like those in the two other rooms, and the king’s son wanted to try this one, too. He dipped in a lock of his hair, and it came out like pure gold, and fairly shimmered.

Then the king’s son said: “Better and better! But if he cooks gold here, I wonder what he cooks inside, there?” And he wanted to see, so he went into the fourth room. Here there was no kettle to be seen; but a maiden sat on a bench who must have been a king’s daughter; yet whatever she might be, the king’s son had never seen any one so beautiful in all his days. “Now in heaven’s name, what are you doing here?” asked the maiden. “I hired myself out here yesterday,” said the king’s son. “May God be your aid, for it is a fine service you have chosen!” said she. “O, the master is very friendly,” said the king’s son. “He has given me no hard work to do to-day. When I have cleaned out the stable, I need do nothing more.” “Yes, but how are you going to manage it?” she went on. “If you do as the others have done, then for every shovelful you pitch out, ten fresh shovelfuls will fly in. But I’ll tell you how to go about it. You must turn around the shovel, and work with the handle, then everything will fly out by itself.”

This he would do, said the king’s son; and he sat there with her all day long, for they had soon agreed that they would marry, he and the king’s daughter, and in this way his first day in the giant’s service did not weary him at all. When evening came on, she told him that now he must clean out the stable before the giant came, and when he got there he thought he would try out her advice, and began to use the shovel as he had seen his father’s grooms use it. And sure enough, he had to stop quickly, for after he had worked a little while, he hardly had room in which to stand. Then he did as the king’s daughter had told him, turned the shovel around and used the handle. And in a wink the stable was as clean as though it had been scrubbed. When he had finished he went to the room that the giant had assigned him, and walked up and down, whistling and singing. Then the giant came home with his goats. “Have you cleaned out the stable?” he asked. “Yes, indeed, master, it is spick and span,” said the king’s son. “I’ll have to see that,” said the giant, and went into the stable; but it was just as the king’s son had said. “You surely have been talking to the Master Girl, for you could not have done that alone,” said the giant. “Master Girl? What is a Master Girl?” said the king’s son, and pretended to be very stupid. “I’d like to see her, too.” “You will see her in plenty of time,” said the giant.

The next morning the giant went off again with his goats. And he told the king’s son he was to fetch his horse from the pasture, and when he had done this, he might rest: “For you have come to a kind master,” said he. “But if you enter one of the rooms which I forbade you entering yesterday, I will tear off your head,” he said, and went away with his herd. “Indeed, you are a kind master,” said the king’s son, “but in spite of it I’d like to have another little talk with the Master Girl, for she is just as much mine as yours,” and with that he went in to her. She asked him what work he had to do that day. “O, it is not so bad to-day,” said the king’s son. “I am only to fetch his horse from the pasture.” “And how are you going to manage that?” asked the Master Girl. “Surely it is no great feat to fetch a horse from pasture,” said the king’s son, “and I have ridden swift horses before.” “Yet it is not an easy matter to ride this horse home,” said the Master Girl, “but I will tell you how to set about it: When you see the horse, he will come running up, breathing fire and flame, just as though he were a burning pine-torch. Then you must take the bit that is hanging here on the door, and throw it into his mouth, for then he will grow so tame that you can do what you will with him." He would take good note of it, said the king's son, and he sat there with the Master Girl the whole day long, and they chatted and talked about this and that, but mainly about how delightful it would be, and what a pleasant time they could have, if they could only marry and get away from the giant. And the king's son would have forgotten the pasture and the horse altogether, had not the Master Girl reminded him of them toward evening. He took the bit that hung in the corner, hurried out to the pasture, and the horse at once ran up, breathing fire and flame; but he seized the moment when he came running up to him with his jaws wide open, and threw the bit into his mouth. Then he stood still, as gentle as a young lamb, and he had no trouble bringing him to the stable. Then he went to his room again, and began to whistle and sing. In the evening the giant came home with his goats. "Did you fetch the horse?" he asked. "Yes, master," said the king's son. "It would make a fine saddle-horse, but I just took it straight to the stable." "I'll have to see that," said the giant, and went into the stable. But there stood the horse, just as the king's son had said. "You surely must have spoken to my Master Girl, for you could not have done that alone," said the giant. "Yesterday the master chattered about the Master Girl, and to-day he is talking about her again. I wish master would show me the creature, for I surely would like to see her," said the king's son, and pretended to be very simple and stupid. "You will get to see her in plenty of time," said the giant.

On the third morning the giant went off again with his goats. "To-day you must go to the devil, and fetch me his tribute," said he to the king's son. "When you have done that, you may rest for the remainder of the time, for you have come to a kind master, and you might as well know it," and with that he went off. "You may be a kind master," said the king's son; "yet you hand over some pretty mean jobs to me in spite of it, but I think I'll look after your Master Girl a bit. You claim that she belongs to you, but perhaps, in spite of it, she may tell me what to do," and with that he went in to her.

And when the Master Girl asked him what the giant had given him to do that day, he told her he must go to the devil and fetch a tribute. “But how will you go about it?” asked the Master Girl. “You will have to tell me that,” said the king’s son, “for I have never been to the devil’s place, and even though I knew the way there, I still would not know how much to ask for.” “I will tell you what you must do,” said the Master Girl. “You must go to the rock behind the pasture, and take the club that is lying there, and strike the rock with it. Then one will come out whose eyes flash fire, and you must tell him your business. And if he asks how much you want, you must tell him as much as you can carry.” He would take good note of it, said the king’s son, and he sat there with the Master Girl all day long until evening, and he might be sitting there yet, if the Master Girl had not reminded him that he must still go to the devil about the tribute before the giant came home. So he set out, and did exactly as the Master Girl had told him: he went to the rock, took the club and beat against it. Then one came out from whose eyes and nose the sparks flew. “What do you want?” he asked. “The giant has sent me to fetch his tribute,” said the king’s son. “How much do you want?” the other again inquired. “I never ask for more than I can carry,” was the reply of the king’s son. “It is lucky for you that you did not ask for a whole ton at once,” said the one on the hill. “But come in with me, and wait a while.” This the king’s son did, and saw a great deal of gold and silver lying in the hill like dead rock in an ore-pile. Then as much as he could carry was packed up, and with it he went his way. When the giant came home in the evening with his goats, the king’s son was running about the room, whistling and singing as on the two preceding evenings. “Did you go to the devil for the tribute?” asked the giant. “Yes, indeed, master,” said the king’s son. “Where did you put it?” asked the giant again. “I stood the sack of gold outside on the bench,” was the reply. “I must see that at once,” said the giant, and went over to the bench. But the sack was really standing there, and it was so full that the gold and silver rolled right out when the giant loosened the string. “You surely must have spoken to my Master Girl,” said the giant. “If that is the case I will tear your head off.” “With your Master Girl?” said the king’s son. “Yesterday master talked about that Master Girl, and to-day he is talking about her again, and the day before yesterday he talked about her, too! I only wish that I might get the chance to see her sometime!” said he. “Well, just wait until to-morrow,” said the giant, “and then I will lead you to her myself,” he said. “A thousand thanks, master,” said the king’s son, “but I think you are only joking!” The following day the giant took him to the Master Girl.

“Now you must slaughter him, and cook him in the big kettle, you know which one I mean. And when the soup is ready, you can call me,” said the giant, and he lay down on the bench to sleep, and at once began to snore so that the hills shook. Then the Master Girl took a knife, and cut the youth’s little finger, and let three drops of blood fall on the bench. Then she took all the old rags, and old shoes and other rubbish she could find, and threw them all into the kettle. And then she took a chest of gold-dust, and a lick-stone, and a bottle of water that hung over the door, and a golden apple, and two golden hens, and left the giant’s castle together with the king’s son as quickly as possible. After a time they came to the sea, and they sailed across; though where they got the ship I do not exactly know.

Now when the giant had been sleeping quite a while, he began to stretch himself on his bench. “Is dinner ready yet?” he asked. “Just begun!” said the first drop of blood on the bench. Then the giant turned around, went to sleep again, and went on sleeping for quite some time. Then he again turned around a little. “Is dinner not ready yet?” he said, but did not open his eyes — nor had he done so the first time — for he was still half asleep. “It is half ready!” called out the second drop of blood, and then the giant thought it was the Master Girl. He turned around on the bench and took another nap. After he had slept a couple of hours longer, he once more began to move about and stretch: “Is dinner still not ready?” said he. “Ready!” answered the third drop of blood. The giant sat up and rubbed his eyes. But he could not see who had called him, and so he called out to the Master Girl. But no one answered him. “O, I suppose she has gone out for a little,” thought the giant, and he dipped his spoon in the kettle to try the dinner; but there was nothing but leather soles and rags and like rubbish cooked together, and he did not know whether it were mush or porridge. When he noticed this he began to see a light, and realize how matters had come to pass, and he grew so angry that he hardly knew what to do, and made after the king’s son and the Master Girl in flying haste. In a short time he came to the sea, and could not cross. “But I know how to help myself,” said he. “I will fetch my sea-sucker.” So the sea-sucker came, and lay down and took two or three swallows, and thus lowered the water so that the giant could see the king’s son and the Master Girl out on the ship. “Now you must throw the lick-stone overboard,” said the Master Girl, and the king’s son did so. It turned into a tremendous large rock square across the sea, and the giant could not get over, and the sea-sucker could drink up no more of the sea. “I know quite well what I must do,” said the giant. “I must now fetch my hill-borer.” So the hill-borer came, and bored a hole through the rock, so the sea-sucker could get through and keep on sucking. But no sooner were they thus far than the Master Girl told the king’s son to pour a drop or so of the bottle overboard, and the sea grew so full that they had landed before the sea-sucker could so much as take a single swallow.

Now they wanted to go home to the father of the king’s son; but he would not hear of the Master Girl’s going afoot, since he did not think this fitting for either of them. “Wait here a little while, until I fetch the seven horses that stand in my father’s stable,” said the king’s son. “It is not far, and I will soon be back; for I will not have my bride come marching home afoot.” “No, do not do so, for when you get home to the castle you will forget me, I know that positively,” said the Master Girl. “How could I forget you?” said the king’s son. “We have passed through so many hardships together, and we love each other so dearly,” said he. He wanted to fetch the coach and seven horses at all costs, and she was to wait by the seashore. So at last the Master Girl had to give in.

“But when you get there, you must not take time to greet a single person. You must at once go to the stable, harness the horses, and drive back as swiftly as you can. They will all come to meet you, but you must act as though you did not see them, and must not take a single bite to eat. If you do not do that, you will make both of us unhappy,” said she. And he promised to do as she had said.

But when he got home to the castle, one of his brothers was just getting married, and the bride and all the guests were already there. They all crowded around him and asked him this, and asked him that, and wanted to lead him in. But he acted as though he saw none of them, led out the horses, and began to put them to the coach. And since they could by no manner of means induce him to come into the castle, they came out with food and drink, and offered him the best of all that had been prepared for the wedding feast.

But the king’s son would taste nothing, and only made haste in order to get away. Yet, finally, the bride’s sister rolled an apple over to him across the court-yard: “And if you will touch nothing else, then at least you might take a bite of the apple, for you must be hungry and thirsty after your long journey,” said she, and he took the apple and bit into it. But no sooner did he have the bit of apple in his mouth than he had forgotten the Master Girl, and that he was to fetch her. “I think I must be going mad! What am I doing with the horses and the coach?” he said, and he led back the horses into the stable, and went back to the castle, and wanted to marry the bride’s sister, the one who had thrown him the apple.

In the meantime the Master Girl sat by the seashore, and waited and waited; but no king’s son came. Then she went on, and after she had gone a while, she came to a little hut that lay all by itself in the forest, near the king’s castle. She went in and asked whether she might not stay there. Now the little hut belonged to an old woman, and she was an arrant and evil witch; at first she did not want to take in the Master Girl at all; but at last she agreed to do so for love of money. But the whole hut was as dark and dirty as a pig-sty; therefore the Master Girl said she would clean up a bit, so that things would look as they did in other, decent people’s houses. The old woman would have none of it, and was very disagreeable and angry; but the Master Girl paid no attention to her. She took the chest of gold dust, and threw a handful into the fire, so that a ray of gold shone over the whole hut, and it was gilded outside and in. But when the gold flamed up, the old woman was so terribly frightened that she ran out as though the evil one were after her, and from pure rage she forgot to duck at the threshold, and ran her head against the door-post. And that was the end of her.

The following morning the bailiff came by. He was much surprised to see the little golden hut, glittering and sparkling there in the forest, and was still more surprised at the girl within the hut. He fell in love with her at once, and asked her whether she would not become the bailiff’s lady. “Yes, but have you plenty of money?” said the Master Girl. Yes, he had quite a little, said the bailiff. Then he went home to fetch his money, and came back again at evening dragging along an enormous sack of it, which he stood on a bench before the door. The Master Girl said that, seeing he had so much money, she would accept him. And then she asked him to rake the fire, which she said she had forgotten to do. But as soon as he had the poker in his hand, the Master Girl cried: “May God grant that you hold the poker, and the poker hold you, and that sparks and ashes fly around you until morning!” And there the bailiff stood the whole night through, and sparks and ashes flew about him, nor were the sparks the less hot for all his complaining and begging. And when morning came, and he could let go the poker, he did not stay long; but ran off as though the evil one were at his heels. And those who saw him stared and laughed, for he ran like a madman, and looked as though he had been thrashed and tanned. And all would have liked to have known where he had come from, but he said not a word, for he was ashamed.

On the following day the clerk passed by the Master Girl’s little house. He saw it glistening and shining in the woods, and went in to find out who lived there. When he saw the beautiful girl he fell even more deeply in love with her than the bailiff had, and lost no time in suing for her hand. The Master Girl asked him, as she had asked the bailiff, whether he had plenty of money. Money he had to spare, answered the clerk, and ran right home to fetch it. By evening he was back again with a great sack — it must have been as much again as the bailiff had brought — and stood it on the bench. And so she promised to take him. Then she asked him to shut the house-door, which she said she had forgotten to do. But when he had the door-knob in his hand, she cried: “May God grant that you hold the door-knob and that the door-knob hold you, and that you move back and forth with it all night long until morning!” And the clerk had to dance the whole night through, such a waltz as he had never tripped before, and he had no wish to repeat the experience. Sometimes he was ahead, and sometimes the door was, and so they went back and forth all night, from wall to post and post to wall, and he was nearly bruised to death. First he cursed, then he wailed and pleaded; but the door paid no attention to him, and flung open and shut until it dawned. When it at last released him, he hurried away as quickly as though he had stolen something, forgot his sackful of money, and his wish to marry, and was glad that the door did not come threshing along after him. All grinned and stared at the clerk, for he ran like a madman, and looked worse than if a ram had been butting him all night long.

On the third day the magistrate came by, and also saw the little golden house in the forest. And he, too, went in to see who lived in it. And when he saw the Master Girl, he fell so deeply in love with her that he sued for her hand as soon as he bade her good-day. But she told him just what she had told the others, that if he had plenty of money she would take him. He had money enough, said the magistrate, and he went straight home to fetch it. When he came back in the evening, he had a much bigger sack of money with him than the clerk had had, and he stood it on the bench. Then the Master Girl said she would take him. But first she asked him to go fetch the calf, which she had forgotten to bring to the stable. And when he had the calf by the tail she cried: “May God grant that you hold the calf’s tail, and the calf’s tail hold you, and that you fly about the world together until morning!” And with that the race began, over stick and stone, over hill and dale, and the more the magistrate cursed and yelled, the more madly the calf ran away. When it dawned there was hardly a whole bone in the magistrate’s body, and he was so happy to be able to let go the calf’s tail that he forgot his bag of money, and the whole occurrence. It is true that he went home more slowly than the bailiff and the clerk; but the slower he went the more time the people had to stare and grin at him, so ragged and badly beaten did he appear after his dance with the calf.

On the following day there was to be a wedding at the castle, and not only was the older prince to marry, but the one who had stayed with the giant as well, and he was to get the other bride’s sister.

But when they entered the coach and were about to drive to church, one of the axles broke. They took another, and then a third, but all of them broke, no matter what kind of wood they used. It took a great deal of time, and they did not move from the spot, and got all out of sorts. Then the bailiff said, for he had also been invited to the wedding at the castle, that a maiden lived out in the forest, and “if they could only get the loan of her poker, it would be sure to hold.” So they sent to the little house in the forest, and asked most politely whether the maiden would not loan them the poker of which the bailiff had spoken. And they got it, too, and then they had an axle that would not break.

But when they wanted to drive on, the bottom of the coach broke. They made a new bottom as well as they were able, but no matter how they put it together, nor what kind of wood they used, it kept on breaking again as soon as they had left the court-yard. And they were worse off than they had been with the axle. Then the clerk said — for if the bailiff was one of the company, you may be sure they had not forgotten to invite the clerk — “Out in the forest lives a maiden, and if you will get the loan of her house-door, I am sure it would not break.” So they sent to the little house in the forest, and asked most politely whether the maiden would not loan them the golden house-door, of which the clerk had told them. And they got it, too, and were about to drive on, when suddenly the horses could not draw the coach. There were six, so they put to eight, and then ten and twelve, but though they put as many as they liked to the coach and helped along with the whip, still the coach would not budge. The day was already far advanced, and they simply had to get to church, and actually began to despair. But then the magistrate said that out in the golden house in the forest lived a maiden, “and if one could only get the loan of her calf, it would be sure to pull the coach, and though it were as heavy as a bowlder.” They did not think it quite the thing to drive to church with a calf; but still there was nothing to do but to send to the maiden, and to ask her most politely, with a kind greeting from the king, if she would loan them the calf of which the magistrate had spoken. Nor did the Master Girl refuse them this time. And then, when they had put the calf to the coach, it moved from the spot quickly enough. It flew over stick and stone, hill and dale, so that the people inside could hardly catch their breath. First it was on the ground, and next it was in the air, and when they reached the church, it spun around it like a top, and they had the greatest difficulty in getting out and into the church. And going home they went still faster, and were nearly out of their wits by the time they reached the castle.

When they sat down to the table the king’s son — the same who had been at the giant’s — said it would be no more than right to invite the maiden, too, who had lent them the poker, and the door and the calf: “for if we had not had these things, we should not have moved from the spot.” This seemed right to the king, so he sent five of his most distinguished courtiers to the little golden house. They were to carry the king’s kindest greetings, and ask that the maiden come up to the castle and take dinner with them. “A kind greeting to the king, and if he is too good to come to me, then I am too good to go to him,” said the Master Girl. So the king had to go to her himself, and then she went along with him at once, and the king saw very well that she was more than she appeared to be, and gave her a place at the head of the table, next to the young bridegroom. After they had been at dinner for a while, the Master Girl produced the rooster and the hen and the golden apple — they were the three things she had taken along from the giant’s castle — and placed them on the table before her. At once the rooster and the hen began to fight for the golden apple. “Why, just see how the two fight for the golden apple!” said the king’s son. “Yes, that is how we had to fight the time we wanted to get out of the rock!” said the Master Girl. And then the king’s son recognized her, and was very happy. The witch who had rolled the apple over to him was duly punished, and then the wedding really began, and the bailiff, and the clerk and the magistrate held out to the very end, for all that their wings had been so thoroughly singed.

44

ANENT THE GIANT WHO DID NOT HAVE HIS HEART ABOUT HIM

Once upon a time there was a king who had seven sons, and he was so fond of them that he never could bear to have them all away from him at once, and one of them always had to stay with him. When they had grown up, six of them were to go forth and look for wives; but the youngest the king wanted to keep at home, and the others were to bring along a bride for him. The king gave the six the handsomest clothes that had ever been seen, clothes that glittered from afar, and each received a horse that had cost many hundred dollars, and so they set forth. And after they had been at the courts of many kings, and had seen many princesses, they at last came to a king who had six daughters. Such beautiful princesses they had not as yet met with, and so each of them paid court to one of them, and when each had won his sweetheart, they rode back home again. But they were so deeply in love with their brides that they altogether forgot they were also to bring back a princess for their young brother who had stayed at home.

Now when they had already covered a good bit of the homeward road, they passed close to a steep cliff-side where the giants dwelt. And a giant came out, looked at them, and turned them all to stone, princes and princesses. The king waited and waited for his six sons; but though he waited and yearned, they did not come. Then he grew very sad, and said that he would never really be happy again. “If I did not have you,” he told his youngest, “I would not keep on living, so sad am I at having lost your brothers.” “But I had already been thinking of asking your permission to set out and find my brothers again,” said the youngest. “No, that I will not allow under any circumstances,” answered the father, “otherwise you will be lost to me into the bargain.” But the youth’s mind was set on going, and he pleaded so long that finally the king had to let him have his way. Now the king had only a wretched old nag for him, since the six other princes and their suite had been given all the good horses; but that did not worry the youngest. He mounted the shabby old nag, and “Farewell, father!” he said to the king. “I will surely return, and perhaps I will bring my six brothers back with me.” And with that he rode off.

Now when he had ridden a while he met a raven, who was lying in the road beating his wings, and unable to move from the spot because he was so starved. “O, dear friend, if you will give me a bite to eat, then I’ll help you in your hour of direst need!” cried the raven. “I have not much food, nor are you likely to be able to help me much,” said the king’s son, “but still I can give you a little, for it is easy to see you need it.” And with that he gave the raven some of the provisions he had with him. And when he had ridden a while longer, he came to a brook, and there lay a great salmon who had gotten on dry land, and was threshing about, and could not get back into the water. “O, dear friend, help me back into the water,” said the salmon to the king’s son, “and I will help you, too, in your hour of greatest need!” “The help you will be able to give me will probably not amount to much,” said the prince, “but it would be a pity if you had to lie there and pine away.” And with that he pushed the fish back into the water. Then he rode on a long, long way, and met a wolf; and the wolf was so starved that he lay in the middle of the road, and writhed with hunger. “Dear friend, let me eat your horse,” said the wolf. “My hunger is so great that my very inwards rattle, because I have had nothing to eat for the past two years!” “No,” said the prince, “I cannot do that: first I met a raven, and had to give him my provisions; then I met a salmon and had to help him back into the water; and now you want my horse. That will not do, for what shall I ride on then?” “Well, my dear friend, you must help me,” was the wolf’s reply. “You can ride on me. I will help you in turn in your hour of greatest need.” “The help you might give me would probably not amount to much; but I will let you eat the horse, since you are in such sorry case,” returned the prince. And when the wolf had eaten the horse, the prince took the bit and put it in the wolf’s mouth, and fastened the saddle on his back, and his meal had made the wolf so strong that he trotted off with the king’s son as fast as he could. He had never ridden so swiftly before. “When we have gone a little further I will show you the place where the giants live,” said the wolf; and in a short time they were there. “Well, this is where the giants live,” said the wolf. “There you see your six brothers, whom the giant turned into stone, and yonder are their six brides; and up there is the door through which you must pass.” “No, I would not dare do that,” said the king’s son. “He would murder me.” “O no,” was the wolf’s reply, “when you go in you will find a princess, and she will tell you how to set about getting rid of the giant. You need only do as she says.” And the prince went in, though he was afraid. When he entered the house the giant was not there; but in one of the rooms sat a princess, just as the wolf had said, and such a beautiful maiden the youth had never seen. “Now may God help you, how did you get in here?” cried the princess, when she saw him. “It is certain death for you. No one can kill the giant who lives here, for he hasn’t his heart about him.”

“Well, since I do happen to be here, I will at least make the attempt,” said the prince. “And I want to try to deliver my brothers, who stand outside, turned to stone, and I would like to save you as well.” “Well, if you insist upon it, we must see what we can do,” replied the princess. “Now you must crawl under the bed here, and must listen carefully when I talk to the giant. But you must not make a sound.” The prince slipped under the bed, and no sooner was he there than the giant came home. “Hu, it smells like the flesh of a Christian here!” he cried. “Yes,” said the princess, “a jackdaw flew by with a human bone, and let it fall down the chimney. I threw it out again at once, but the odor does not disappear so quickly.” Then the giant said no more about it. Toward evening he went to bed, but after he had lain there a while, the princess, who sat looking out of the window, said: “There is something I would have asked you about long ago, if only I had dared.” “And what may that be?” inquired the giant. “I would like to know where you keep your heart, since you do not have it about you?” said the princess. “O, that is something you need not ask about; at any rate, it lies under the threshold of the door,” was the giant’s reply. “Aha,” thought the prince under the bed, “that is where we will find it!”

The next morning the giant got up very early, and went into the forest, and no sooner had he gone than the prince and the king’s daughter set about looking for the heart under the threshold of the door. Yet no matter how much they dug and searched — they found nothing. “This time he has fooled us,” said the princess. “We’ll have to try again.” And she picked the loveliest flowers she could find and strewed them over the threshold — which they had put to rights again — and when the time drew near for the giant’s return, the king’s son crept under the bed once more. When he was beneath it, the giant came. “Hu hu, I smell human flesh!” he cried. “Yes,” said the princess. “A jackdaw flew by with a human bone in her beak, and she let it fall down the chimney. I threw it out at once, but I suppose one can still smell it.” Then the giant held his tongue, and said no more about it. After a time he asked who had strewn the flowers over the threshold. “O, I did that,” said the princess. “What does it mean?” the giant then asked. “O, I am so fond of you that I had to do it, because I know that is where your heart lies.” “Yes, of course,” said the giant, “but it does not happen to lie there at all.”

When he had gone to bed, the princess sat looking out of the window, and again asked the giant where he kept his heart, for she was so fond of him, said she, that she wanted to know above all things. “O, it is in the wardrobe there by the wall,” said the giant. “Aha,” thought the king’s son under the bed, “that is where we will find it!”

The next morning the giant got up early, and went into the forest, and no sooner had he gone than the prince and the king’s daughter set about looking for his heart in the wardrobe. Yet no matter how much they looked, they did not find it. “Well, well,” said the princess, “we will have to try once more.” Then she adorned the wardrobe with flowers and wreaths, and toward evening the king’s youngest son again crawled under the bed. Then the giant came: “Hu hu, it smells of human flesh here!” he cried. “Yes,” said the princess. “A jackdaw just this moment flew by with a human bone in her beak, and she let it fall down the chimney. I threw it out again at once, but it may be that you can still smell it.” When the giant heard this, he had nothing further to say about it. But not long afterward he noticed that the wardrobe was adorned with flowers and wreaths, and asked who had done it. “I,” said the princess. “What do you mean by such tomfoolery?” asked the giant. “O, I am so fond of you that I had to do it, since I know that is where your heart lies,” was the reply of the princess. “Are you really so stupid as to believe that?” cried the giant. “Yes, surely, I must believe it,” said the princess, “when you tell me so.” “How silly you are,” said the giant, “you could never reach the place where I keep my heart.” “But still I would like to know where it is,” answered the princess. Then the giant could no longer resist, and at last had to tell her the truth. “Far, far away, in a lake there lies an island,” said he, “and on the island stands a church, and in the church there is a well, and in the well floats a duck, and in the duck there is an egg, and in the egg — is my heart!”

The next morning, before dawn, the giant went to the forest again. “Well, now I must get under way,” said the prince, “and it is a way I wish I could find.” So he said farewell to the princess for the time being, and when he stepped out of the door, the wolf was standing there waiting for him. He told him what had happened at the giant’s, and said that now he would go to the well in the church, if only he knew the way. The wolf told him to climb on his back. He would manage to find the way, said he. And then they were off as though they had wings, over rock and wood, over hill and dale. After they had been underway for many, many days, they at last reached the lake. Then the king’s son did not know how they were to get across. But the wolf told him not to worry, and swam across with the prince to the island. Then they came to the church. But the church-key hung high up in the tower, and at first the king’s son did not at all know how they were to get it down. “You must call the raven,” said the wolf, and that is what the king’s son did. And the raven came at once, and flew right down with the key, and now the prince could enter the church. Then, when he came to the well, there was the duck, sure enough, swimming about as the giant had said. He stood by the well and called the duck, and at last he lured her near him, and seized her. But at the moment he grasped her and lifted her out of the water, she let the egg fall into the well, and now the prince again did not know how he was to get hold of it. “Well, you must call the salmon,” said the wolf. That is what the king’s son did, and the salmon came at once, and brought up the egg from the bottom of the well. Then the wolf told him to squeeze the egg a little. And when the prince squeezed, the giant cried out. “Squeeze it again!” said the wolf, and when the prince did so, the giant cried out far more dolefully, and fearfully and tearfully begged for his life. He would do all the king’s son asked him to, said he, if only he would not squeeze his heart in two. “Tell him to give back their original form to your six brothers, whom he turned to stone, and to their brides, as well; and that then you will spare his life,” said the wolf, and the prince did so. The troll at once agreed, and changed the six brothers into princes, and their brides into kings’ daughters. “Now squash the egg!” cried the wolf. Then the prince squeezed the egg in two, and the giant burst into pieces.

When the king’s youngest son had put an end to the giant in this way, he rode back on his wolf to the giant’s home; and there stood his six brothers as much alive as ever they had been, together with, their brides. Then the prince went into the hill to get his own bride, and they all rode home together. And great was the joy of the old king when his seven sons all returned, each with his bride. “But the bride of my youngest is the most beautiful, after all, and he shall sit with her at the head of the table!” said the king. And then they had a feast that lasted for weeks, and if they have not stopped, they are feasting to this very day.

45

THE THREE PRINCESSES IN WHITELAND

Once upon a time there was a fisherman, who lived near the king’s castle, and caught fish for the king’s table. One day when he had gone fishing, he could not catch a thing. Try as he might, no matter how he baited or flung, not the tiniest fish would bite; but when this had gone on for a while, a head rose from the water and said: “If you will give me the first new thing that has come into your house, you shall catch fish a-plenty!” Then the man agreed quickly, for he could think of no new thing that might have come into the house. So he caught fish all day long, and as many as he could wish for, as may well be imagined. But when he got home, he found that heaven had sent him a little son, the first new thing to come into the house since he had made his promise. And when he told his wife about it, she began to weep and wail, and pray to God because of the vow her husband had made. And the woman’s grief was reported at the castle, and when it came to the king’s ears, and he learned the reason, he promised to take the boy and see if he could not save him. And so the king took him and brought him up as though he were his own son, until he was grown. Then one day the boy asked whether he might not go out fishing with his father, he wanted to so very much, said he. The king would not hear of it; but at last he was given permission, so he went to his father, and everything went well all day long, until they came home in the evening.

Then the son found he had forgotten his handkerchief, and went down to the boat to get it. But no sooner was he in the boat than it moved off with a rush, and no matter how hard the youth worked against it with the oars, it was all in vain. The boat drove on and on, all night long, and at last he came to a white strand, far, far away. He stepped ashore, and after he had gone a while he met an old man with a great, white beard. “What is this country called?” asked the youth. “Whiteland,” was the man’s answer, and he asked the youth where he came from, and what he wanted, and the latter told him. “If you keep right on along the shore,” said the man, “you will come to three princesses, buried in the earth so that only their heads show. Then the first will call you — and she is the oldest — and beg you very hard to come to her and help her; and the next will do the same; but you must go to neither of them; walk quickly past them, and act as though you neither saw nor heard them. But go up to the third, and do what she asks of you, for then you will make your fortune.”

When the youth came to the first princess, she called out to him, and begged him most earnestly to come to her; but he went on as though he had not seen her. And he passed the next one in the same manner; but went over to the third. “If you will do what I tell you to, you shall have whichever one of us you want,” said she. Yes, he would do what she wanted. So she told him that three trolls had wished them into the earth where they were; but that formerly they had dwelt in the castle he saw on the edge of the forest.

“Now you must go to the castle, and let the trolls whip you one night through for each one of us,” said she, “and if you can hold out, you will have delivered us.” “Yes,” said the youth, he could manage that. “When you go in,” added the princess, “you will find two lions standing by the door; but if you pass directly between them, they will do you no harm. Go on into a dark little room and lie down, and then the troll will come and beat you; but after that you must take the bottle that hangs on the wall, and anoint yourself where he has beaten you, and you will be whole again. And take the sword that hangs beside the bottle, and kill the troll with it.” He did as the princess had told him, passed between the lions as though he did not see them, and right into the little room, where he lay down. The first night a troll with three heads and three whips came, and beat the youth badly; but he held out, and when the troll had finished, he took the bottle and anointed himself, grasped the sword and killed the troll. When he came out in the morning the princesses were out of the ground up to their waists. The next night it was the same; but the troll who came this time had six heads and six whips, and beat him worse than the first one. But when he came out in the morning, the princesses were out of the ground up to their ankles. The third night came a troll who had nine heads and nine whips, and he beat and whipped the youth so severely that at last he fainted. Then the troll took him and flung him against the wall, and as he did so the bottle fell down, and its whole contents poured over the youth, and he was at once sound and whole again. Then he did not delay, but grasped the sword, killed the troll, and when he came out in the morning, the princesses were entirely out of the ground. So he chose the youngest of them to be his queen, and lived long with her in peace and happiness.

But at last he was minded to travel home, and see how his parents fared. This did not suit his queen; but since he wanted to go so badly, and finally was on the point of departure, she said to him: “One thing you must promise me, that you will only do what your father tells you to do, but not what your mother tells you to do.” And this he promised. Then she gave him a ring which had the power of granting two wishes to the one who wore it. So he wished himself home, and his parents could not get over their surprise at seeing how fine and handsome he had become.

When he had been home a few days, his mother wanted him to go up to the castle and show the king what a man he had grown to be. His father said: “No, he had better not do that, for we will have to do without him in the meantime.” But there was no help for it, the mother begged and pleaded until he went. When he got there he was more splendidly dressed and fitted out than the other king. This did not suit the latter, and he said: “You can see what my queen looks like, but I cannot see yours; and I do not believe yours is as beautiful as mine.” “God grant she were standing here, then you would see soon enough!” said the young king, and there she stood that very minute. But she was very sad, and said to him: “Why did you not follow my advice and listen to your father? Now I must go straight home, and you have used up both of your wishes.” With that she bound a ring with her name on it in his hair, and wished herself home.

Then the young king grew very sad, and went about day in, day out, with no other thought than getting back to his queen. “I must try and see whether I cannot find out where Whiteland is,” thought he, and wandered forth into the wide world. After he had gone a while he came to a hill; and there he met one who was the lord of all the beasts of the forest — for they came when he blew his horn — and him the king asked where Whiteland was. “That I do not know,” said he, “but I will ask my beasts.” Then he called them up with his horn, and asked whether any of them knew where Whiteland might be; but none of them knew anything about it.

Then the man gave him a pair of snowshoes. “If you stand in them,” said he, “you will come to my brother, who lives a hundred miles further on. He is the lord of the birds of the air. Ask him. When you have found him, turn the snowshoes around so that they point this way, and they will come back home of their own accord.” When the king got there, he turned the snowshoes around, as the lord of the beasts had told him, and they ran home again. He asked about Whiteland, and the man called up all the birds with his horn, and asked whether any of them knew where Whiteland might be. But none of them knew. Long after the rest an old eagle came along; and he had been out for some ten years, but did not know either.

“Well,” said the man, “I will lend you a pair of snowshoes. When you stand in them you will come to my brother, who lives a hundred miles further on. He is the lord of all the fishes in the sea. Ask him. But do not forget to turn the snowshoes around again.” The king thanked him, stepped into the snowshoes, and when he came to the one who was lord of all the fishes in the sea, he turned them around, and they ran back like the others. There he once more asked about Whiteland.

The man called up his fishes with his horn, but none of them knew anything about it. At last there came an old, old carp, whom he had called with his horn only at the cost of much trouble. When he asked him, he said: “Yes, I know it well, for I was cook there for fully ten years. To-morrow I have to go back again, because our queen, whose king has not come home again, is going to marry some one else.” “If such be the case,” said the man, “I’ll give you a bit of advice. Out there by the wall three brothers have been standing for the last hundred years, fighting with each other about a hat, a cloak and a pair of boots. Any one who has these three things can make himself invisible, and wish himself away as far as ever he will. You might say that you would test their possessions, and then decide their quarrel for them.” Then the king thanked him, and did as he said. “Why do you stand there fighting till the end of time?” said he to the brothers. “Let me test your possessions if I am to decide your quarrel.” That suited them; but when he had hat, cloak and boots, he told them: “I will give you my decision the next time we meet!” and with that he wished himself far away. While he was flying through the air he happened to meet the North Wind. “And where are you going?” asked the North Wind. “To Whiteland,” said the king, and then he told him what had happened to him. “Well,” said the North Wind, “you are traveling a little quicker than I am; for I must sweep and blow out every corner. But when you come to your journey’s end, stand on the steps beside the door, and then I’ll come roaring up as though I were going to tear down the whole castle. And when the prince who is to have the queen comes and looks out to see what it all means, I’ll just take him along with me.”

The king did as the North Wind told him. He stationed himself on the steps; and when the North Wind came roaring and rushing up, and laid hold of the castle walls till they fairly shook, the prince came out to see what it was all about. But that very moment the king seized him by the collar, and threw him out, and the North Wind took him and carried him off. When he had borne him away, the king went into the castle. At first the queen did not recognize him, for he had grown thin and pale because he had wandered so long in his great distress; but when he showed her the ring, she grew glad at heart, and then they had a wedding which was such a wedding that the news of it spread far and wide.

46

TROUBLE AND CARE

Far, far from here there once lived a king, who had three beautiful daughters. But he had no sons, and therefore he grew so fond of the three princesses that he granted their every wish. But in time the enemy invaded the country, and the king had to go to war. When he set out, the oldest princess begged him to buy her a ring that would prevent her dying as long as she wore it. The second princess asked him for a wreath that would make her happy whenever she looked at it, no matter how sad and troubled her heart might be. “Buy me trouble and care!” said the youngest. And the king promised everything.

When he had driven the enemy out of his own land, and out of the neighboring land as well, and was about to set out for home, he remembered what he had promised the three princesses. The ring and the wreath were easy enough to obtain; but trouble and care were to be had neither in one place nor in another, for all the people were so happy that the enemy had been driven out, that there was no sorrow nor care to be found in the entire kingdom. And since he could not buy it, it was not to be had at all, and he had to travel home without it, loathe as he was to do so.

When he was not far from the castle, his way took him through a thick forest. And there sat a squirrel in a tree by the road. “Buy me! buy me! My name is trouble and care!” it said. Thought the king to himself, It is better to have a squirrel than two empty hands, so he brought it along for his youngest daughter. And she was quite as well pleased with her present as her two sisters were with the ring and the wreath. The squirrel played about in her room, sometimes it balanced itself on the bed-posts, at others it would sit on the top of the wardrobe, and it always had a great deal to chatter about.

But as soon as it grew dark, it turned into a man. And he told her how an evil and malicious giantess dwelt in the golden forest, who had turned him into a squirrel because he would not marry her. During the night she had no power over him; but every morning at daybreak he had to slip back into his squirrel form.

And in the course of time the princess actually wanted to marry Trouble and Care; but when they were betrothed, he begged her earnestly, and as best he knew how, never to light a light at night, and try to look at him, “for then both of us would be unhappy,” said he. No, said she, she would be quite sure not to do so.

And every evening, when the princess had lain down and blown out the light, she would hear a man go into Trouble and Care’s room; but when morning dawned, the squirrel sat on her bed-post and greeted her, and chattered and babbled about all sorts of things.

Once, when she thought Trouble and Care had gone to sleep, she could not help herself; but stood up quietly, lit a light and crept softly into his room and to his bed, and when the ray of light fell on him, she saw that he was far, far handsomer than the most handsome prince. He was so surpassingly handsome that she bent over him in order to see more clearly, and finally she could not help herself, but had to kiss him. And then, three drops of wax from the candle fell on his chest, and he awoke.

“But how could you have done this!” he cried, and was quite unhappy. “Had you only waited three days longer, I should have been free!” said he. “But now I must return to the evil giantess and marry her, and all is over between us.” “Can I not follow you there?” asked the princess. “No, that is something you could not do in all your days, for if you rest or even so much as bend your knees to sit down, you will go back during the night as far as you came forward during the day,” said he; leaped to the door, and disappeared.

Then the princess wept and wailed, and waited for him to return; but she heard and saw nothing more of him. After a few days she grew so restless and wretched that she could no longer remain at home, and implored her maid to go along with her to search for the golden forest. The girl finally allowed herself to be moved; but she would not agree to set out until she had gotten together a yard of drilling, a yard of ticking, and a yard of fine linen; and she got them at once, as you may imagine, for there was no shortage of such things in the castle.

So they set out and wandered far, and ever farther, until their feet ached, and their spirits fell. Toward evening they came into the middle of a thick, dark forest; and climbed up into a high tree. The princess was so tired that the maid had to hold her in her arms while she slept a little. But during the night the ground about the tree grew alive with wolves, in the most sinister fashion, and they howled and cried, so that the princess did not venture to close her eyes another moment. But when daylight appeared in the skies, it seemed as though the wolves had suddenly all been blown away.

The following day they wandered far and ever farther, until their feet ached more, and their spirits sank lower. Toward evening they again came to the middle of a thick, dark forest. And they once more climbed into a high, high tree; but the princess was so tired that the maid had to hold her in her arms while she slept a little. When it grew darker, a most alarming number of bears flocked together under the tree, and began to dance and turn in a circle, with alarming speed, and all at once they tried to climb the tree. So the princess and her maid had to stand up in the tree-top the whole night through, and could not close an eye; but when day came, it seemed as though the bears sank into the earth in a single moment.

The third day they wandered far and ever farther, and then a bit more. Toward evening they again came to a thick, dark forest. There they again climbed into a high, high tree; but no sooner were they up in the tree than the ground beneath the tree and the whole forest were alive with lions, and they all roared and howled together in such a gruesome way that the echoes came back from rock and woodland. Suddenly they began to dance and whirl around in such a terrible fashion that the earth trembled, and in between they would clutch the tree again, and try to shake and loosen it, as though they would pull it out root and branch. The princess and her maid had to stand up in the very tree-top, and though they were so tired they could have fallen down from time to time, neither of them dared think of sleeping. But the moment day dawned, the lions all suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth, where they were, walking and standing.

Then they stumbled along, this way and that, the whole day long, until their feet ached harder than hard, and their spirits sank lower than low. They lost path and direction, and though they hunted north and south and east and west, they could not find the way out of the great, dark forest.

At last the princess grew tired and sad beyond all measure, and wanted to sit down every moment, in order to rest a little; but the maid held her and dragged her forward, and never let her bend her knees for a moment to sit down, because then they would have gone back just as far as they had come that day; for you must know that the giantess in the golden forest had so arranged matters.

In the evening they came to an enormous, horrible rock. “I will knock here,” said the maid, and tapped and knocked. “O no,” said the princess, “please don’t knock here, you can see how ugly everything is here!” “Who is knocking there at my door?” cried the giantess in the rock, in a loud, harsh manner, opened the door, and stuck her nose — it was all of a yard long — out through the crack.

“The youngest princess and her maid, they want to get to a prince in the golden forest, whose name is Trouble and Care,” was the maid’s reply.

“O, faugh!” cried the giantess, “that is so far to the north that one can neither sail nor row there. But what do you want of Trouble and Care? Is this, perhaps, the princess who wanted to marry him?” asked the giantess. Yes, this was the princess. “Well, she will never get him as long as she lives,” said the giantess, “for now he must marry the great giantess in the golden forest. You might just as well go back home now as later,” said she. No, they would not turn back for anything, and the maid asked whether it would not be possible for her to take them in for the darkest part of the night. “I can take you in easily enough,” said the giantess, “but when my husband comes home he will tear off your heads, and eat you up!” But there was no help for it, they could not go on in the middle of the night. Then the maid pulled out the yard of ticking, and gave it to the giantess for linen. “It can’t be true! It can’t be true!” cried she. “Here I have been married all of a hundred years, and have never yet had any ticking!” And she was so pleased that she invited the wanderers in, received them kindly, and took the best care of them. After a while, when they had strengthened themselves with food and drink, the giantess said to them: “Yes, he is a ferocious fellow, is my husband, and I will have to hide you in the anteroom. Perhaps he will not find you then.” And she prepared a bed for them, as soft and comfortable as a bed can be; but they did not care to lie down in it, nor sit in it; no, they could not even close their eyes, for they had to watch to see that their knees did not bend. So they stood the whole night through, and took turns holding each other up, for by now the maid was so weary and wretched that she was ready to give in.

Toward midnight it began to thunder and rumble in a terrible manner. This was the troll coming home; and no sooner had he thrust his first head in at the door than he cried out loudly and harshly: “Faugh! faugh! I smell Christian bodies!” and he rushed about in so wild and furious a manner that the sparks flew. “Yes,” said the giantess, “a bird flew past with a bone from a Christian, and he let it drop down the chimney. I threw it out again as quickly as I could, but perhaps one can smell it still,” said the giantess, and soothed him again. And he was satisfied with her explanation. But the next morning the giantess told him that the youngest princess and her maid had come in search of a prince named Trouble and Care, in the golden forest. “O faugh! that is so far to the north that one can neither sail nor row there!” the troll at once cried. “It is the princess who wanted to marry him, I know, but she will never get him as long as she lives, for he has to marry the great giantess in three days’ time. But the maidens shall not get away from me! Where are they, where are they?” he cried, and sniffed and snuffed about in every corner. “O no, you must not touch them,” said the giantess. “They have given me a yard of ticking, and here I have been married now for more than a hundred years, and have never owned any ticking. Therefore you must lend them your seven-mile waistcoat to the nearest neighbor,” said the giantess, and pleaded for the girls. And the troll was willing when he heard how kind they had been to his wife.

When they had eaten and were ready to travel, he put his seven-mile waistcoat on them: “And now you must repeat: ‘Forward over willow bush and pine-tree, over hill and dale, to the nearest neighbor,’” said he. “And when you get there you must say: ‘You are to be hung up this evening where you were put on this morning!’” The maidens did as he said, and were carried for miles, over hill and dale. In the evening, at dusk, they again came to a great, ugly rock. There they pulled off the seven-mile waistcoat and said: “You are to be hung up this evening where you were put on this morning,” and then the waistcoat ran home by itself.

“I will knock here,” said the maid, and knocked and thumped on the rock. “O no,” said the princess, “please do not knock here. You can see how sinister everything is here!” “Who is thumping at my door?” cried the giantess inside the rock, more loudly and harshly than the first one, and she opened the door and thrust her nose, that was all of two yards long, right through the crack. “Here stand the youngest princess and her maid, and they are looking for a prince named Trouble and Care, who lives in the golden forest,” answered the maid. And then this giantess also said it was so far north that one could neither sail nor row there, and wanted them to turn back by all means. “You might just as well turn back now as later,” said she. But this the maidens did not want to do at all, and the maid asked whether she would not, perhaps, take them in for the night, and if it were only the darkest part of the night. “Yes, I can take you in easily enough,” said the giantess, “but when my husband comes home to-night, he will tear off your heads and eat you up!” Then the maid pulled out a yard of drilling, and gave it to the giantess for linen. “It can’t be true! It can’t be true! here I have been married now for over two hundred years, and I have never yet had any drilling in the house,” cried the giantess, and she was so pleased that she invited them in, and received them kindly, and saw that they wanted for nothing. After a while, when they had strengthened themselves with food and drink, the giantess said: “Yes, he is a ferocious fellow, is my husband, and he eats up every Christian who comes here, root and branch. I’ll have to put you in the anteroom, perhaps he will not find you there,” and she prepared a bed for the maidens. But they did not dare either to lie down nor sit on it, not for a single moment, for they had to watch to see that they did not bend their knees. So they stood there the whole night through, and took turns holding each other up, while each snatched a little sleep.

Toward midnight it began to rumble and thunder in such a terrible manner that they could feel the earth tremble beneath them. Then the troll came rushing in. “Faugh! faugh! I smell Christian bodies!” he cried out loudly and harshly, and thrashed about in such a furious way that the sparks flew from him as from a fire. “Yes,” said the giantess, “a bird flew by, and let a bone from a Christian fall through the chimney. I threw it out again as quickly as I could, but it may well be the case that the smell still lingers," said she, and quieted her husband. And he was satisfied with her explanation. But when he got up in the morning, she told him that the youngest princess and her maid had come in search of a prince named Trouble and Care, in the golden forest. When the troll heard that, he also said that it was so far north that one could neither sail nor row there. "That is the princess who wanted to marry him. Yes, I know; but she will never get him as long as she lives, for he must marry the great giantess herself in two days' time," said the troll. "And where are they, these maidens? They shall not escape from me with their lives!" he shouted, and sniffed and snuffed about everywhere. "O no, you must not harm them!" said the giantess, and told him that they had given her a yard of drilling for linen. "Therefore you must lend them your seven-mile waistcoat to the nearest neighbor," said she. And he was willing at once, when he heard how kind they had been to his giantess. When they had eaten in the morning, he put his seven-mile waistcoat on them. "When you reach your goal, you need only say: 'Where you were put on this morning, there you are to hang again to-night!' and then the seven-mile waistcoat will travel home by itself," said the troll. Then they were carried for miles, over hill and dale, on and on. In the evening, at dusk, they again came to a great, ugly rock.

"I will knock here!" said the maid, and knocked and thumped on the rock. "O no," said the princess, "please do not knock here, you can see how sinister everything looks here!" "Who is thumping at my door?" the giantess cried inside the rock, in a ruder and harsher manner than the other two giantesses, and she opened the door just far enough so that she could thrust her nose, which was all of three yards long, through the crack. "Here stand the youngest princess and her maid, in search of a prince named Trouble and Care, who lives in the golden forest," was the maid's reply. "O faugh!" cried the giantess, "that is so far to the north that one can neither sail nor row there. But what do you want of Trouble and Care? Is this, perhaps, the princess who wanted to marry him?" asked the giantess. Yes, this was the princess, was the maid's reply. Then this giantess said in turn: "He must marry the great giantess in the golden forest, so you might just as well turn back home now as later!" But this the maidens did not want to do at all, and the maid asked whether, perhaps, she would not take them in for the night, and if it were only for the very darkest part of the night.

"Yes, I can take you in easily enough," said the giantess, "but when my husband comes home to-night he will tear off your heads and eat you up!" But there was nothing else to do; they could not travel on through the wood and wilderness, in the very darkest part of the night. Then the maid pulled out the yard of linen and made the giantess a present of it. "It can't be true! It can't be true!" cried she. "Here I have been married now for more than three hundred years, and have never yet had a bit of linen!" And she was so pleased that she invited the maidens in, and received them kindly, and let them want for nothing. "He is a ferocious fellow, is my husband, and he does away with every Christian soul that strays here," she said, when her guests had eaten. "But I will hide you in the anteroom. Perhaps he will not find you there." Then she carefully made up a soft bed for them, as fine as the finest in the world. But now the princess was weary and wretched and sleepy beyond all measure. She could no longer stand up at all, and finally had to lie down and sleep a little, and even though it were but a tiny little while. The maid was also so weary and wretched that she fell asleep standing, and fell over from time to time. Yet she still managed to keep her wits about her to the extent of seizing the princess, and holding her up, so that she did not bend her knees. Toward midnight it began to rumble and thunder so that the whole house shook, and it seemed as though the roof and walls would fall in. This was the great troll, who was coming home. When he thrust his first nose in at the door, he at once cried out in a manner so wild and harsh that the like had never been heard before: "Faugh! faugh! I smell Christian bodies!" and he fell into a white rage, so that sparks and flame flew from him. "Yes, a bird flew by, and let a bone from a Christian fall through the chimney. I threw it out as quickly as ever I could; but it may be that the smell still persists!" said the giantess, and tried to pacify her troll. And he was satisfied with her explanation. But when he awoke in the morning, she told him that the youngest princess and her maid had come in search of a prince named Trouble and Care, who lived in the golden forest. "O faugh! That is so far north that one can neither sail nor row there!" cried the great troll, just as the smaller trolls had. "But she will never get him as long as she lives, for to-morrow he must marry the great giantess. Where are they, these maidens? Hm, hm, hm, they will make tasty eating!" he cried, and danced around everywhere, and sniffed and snuffed with all his nine noses at once. "O no, you must not harm them!" cried the giantess. "They have given me a yard of linen, and here I have been married for more than three hundred years, and have never had a bit of linen yet. Therefore you must lend them your seven-mile waistcoat to the nearest neighbor." And when the super-troll heard that the maidens had been so kind, he was agreeable.

When they had strengthened themselves in the morning, he put his seven-mile waistcoat on them. "And now you must repeat: 'On, on! Over willow brush and pine tree, over hill and dale, to the nearest neighbor.' And when you reach your goal, you need only say: 'You must hang again to-night on the nail from which you were taken down this morning!'" said the great troll. They did as he had told them, and were carried farther and farther along, over hills and deep valleys.

At dusk they came to a large, large forest, where all the trees were black as coal. If one only so much as touched them, they made one look like a chimney-sweep. And in the middle of the forest was a clearing, and there stood a wretched hut, ready to fall apart; it was only held together by two beams, and looked more forlorn than the most wretched herdsman's hut.

And in front of the door lay a rubbish heap of old shoes, dirty rags and other ugly stuff. Here the maid took off the seven-mile waistcoat, and said: “You must hang again to-night from the nail from which you were taken down this morning!” and the waistcoat wandered home all by itself.

“I will knock here!” said the maid. “O no, O no,” wailed the princess, “please do not knock here, you can see how ugly everything is!” “If you do not do as I do, then it will be the worse for both of us!” said the maid; trampled through the rubbish-pile and knocked. An old, old troll-woman with a nose all of three yards long, looked out through the crack in the door. “If you girls want to come in, then come in, and if you do not want to, you can stay out!” said she, and made as though to close the door in their faces. “Yes, indeed, we want to come in,” replied the maid, and drew the princess in with her. “If you girls want to come through the door, then come through, but if you do not want to, you can stay out,” the woman said once more. “Yes, thanks, we want to come in,” said the maid, and tramped over the threshold through the dirt and rags. “Alas, alas!” wailed the princess, and tramped after her. All was black and ugly inside, and as grimy and dirty as a corn-loft. After a while the giantess went out, and fetched them some milk to drink. “If you girls want to drink, why, drink, and if you do not, why, do without!” said she, and was about to carry it out again. “Yes, thanks, we want to drink,” said the maid, and drank. “Alas, alas!” wailed the princess, when it came her turn, for the milk was in a pig-trough, and dirt and clots of hair were swimming in it. Then the giantess gave them something to eat. “If you girls want to eat, why, eat, and if you do not, why, do without,” said the giantess. “Yes, indeed, we will be glad to,” said the maid, before the ugly nosey could take the food away again. The bread was moldly, mice had been nibbling at the cheese, the meat was so old that one could smell it at a distance, and two dirty calves’ tails were draped about the butter. “Alas, alas!” wailed the princess, and was ready to cry; but she had to do what her maid did, and taste the horrible dishes. Then they had to say they were much obliged. An old man, whom thus far they had not seen, lay on a bed covered with a few old odds and ends of fur and other rags. When they went up to him to thank him, he stood up, and when the princess gave him her hand he kissed it; and at that very moment he turned into a prince handsome beyond all measure, and the princess saw that he was Trouble and Care, for whom she had so greatly longed. “Now you have delivered me!” he said. “Woe to whoever has delivered you!” cried the giantess, and rushed out of the door; but on the door-step she stood like a stone, for the forest was no longer black, and all the trees looked as though they had been gilded from root to crest, and glittered and sparkled more brightly than the sun at noon-day. The wretched, dirty hut had changed into a royal castle, immensely large and handsome. One might have thought that the roof and walls were made of the purest gold and silver, and so they were. “Now you may bend your knee again,” said the prince, “and if you have hitherto known nothing but sorrow and care, you shall henceforth know all the more happiness.”

The old giantess had brewed and baked, and prepared the whole wedding dinner. And when the next day dawned, the prince and the princess, and all the people in the castle, and in the whole country over which he was king, celebrated the wedding. And it lasted for four times fourteen days, so that the news spread through seven kingdoms, and reached the bride’s father and her two sisters. And they would have celebrated it with them, had they not been so far away. I was invited to the feast myself, and the bridegroom made me chief cook, and I had to speak the toast for the bride and groom. But on the last day of the feast, I had to draw mead from a large, large cask that lay at the farthest end of the cellar. Before I sent off the filled jug, I took a taste myself, and the mead was so strong that it suddenly went to my head, and I flew through the air like a bird, and there I was, floating between heaven and earth for full nine years, and then I fell down here in the village, in front of the house up there on the hill. And out came Bertha Friendly, with a letter for me from the prince, who had become king in the meantime, and the letter said that he and the young queen were doing well, and that they sent me their greetings, and that I was to greet you for them, and that you and your sisters were invited to the castle Sunday after Michaelmas, and then you should see a pair of dear little princes, the golden forest, and the old stone giantess, who stands before the door with her nose three yards long.

47

KARI WOODENCOAT

Once upon a time there was a king whose wife had died, but he had a daughter who was so good and so beautiful that no one could have been kinder or lovelier than she. The king mourned a long time for the queen, because he had loved her greatly; but in the course of time he grew weary of his lonely life, and married again with the widow of another king, who also had a daughter; but one who was just as ugly and evil as the other was handsome and kind. The step-mother and daughter were jealous of the king's daughter, because she was so handsome; yet so long as the king was at home, they did not dare harm her, for he was very fond of her. But after a time, the king began to war against another king, and went out to battle. Then the queen thought she now could do as she wished, and she let the king's daughter starve, and beat and pushed her about everywhere. At last everything else was too good for her, and she had to herd the cows. So she went out with the cows, and pastured them in the forest or on the hill. Food she had little or none, and she grew pale and thin, and was sad most of the time, and wept. In the herd there was also a great blue bull, who always kept himself neat and clean, and often came to the queen's daughter and let her scratch him. Once, as she sat there and cried and was sad, he came to her again, and asked why she was so unhappy. She did not answer him but kept on weeping. "Well, I know what your trouble is," said the bull, "even though you will not tell me. You are weeping because the queen is so unkind to you, and would gladly starve you to death. But you need not worry about food, for in my left ear is a cloth and, if you will take it out and spread it, you can have as much as you want to eat." She did so, took out the cloth, laid it on the grass, and it was at once covered with the finest dishes one might desire: bread and mead and honey-cake. Then she soon regained her strength, and grew so plump, and so rose and white complexioned that the queen and her daughter, who was as thin as a rail, turned green and yellow with envy. The queen could not understand how it was that her step-daughter came to look so well in spite of such poor fare. So she told a maid to follow her to the forest, and watch and see how it came about; for she thought some of the servants secretly gave her food. The maid followed her into the forest, and watched carefully, and saw how the step-daughter drew the cloth out of the blue bull's left ear, and spread it out, and how it covered itself with the finest dishes, and also how the king's daughter ate heartily. And the maid told the queen at home about it.

Now the king came home, and he had defeated the other king, against whom he had warred; and the whole castle was overjoyed, and none was more joyful than the king's daughter. But the queen pretended to be ill, and gave the physician a great deal of money so that he should say that she could not recover unless she had some of the blue bull's flesh to eat. The king's daughter and others as well asked the physician whether nothing else would do, and pleaded for the bull; for all liked him, and said that there was not such another in the whole kingdom. But no, he must be slaughtered, and he should be slaughtered, and there was no help for it. When the king's daughter heard this, she felt sad, and went into the stable to the bull. He stood and hung his head, and looked so mournful that she could not keep from weeping. "Why do you weep?" asked the bull. Then she told him that the king had come home, and that the queen had pretended to be ill, and had forced the physician to say that she could not recover unless she had some of the blue bull’s flesh to eat, and that now he was to be slaughtered. “Once she has done away with me, it will not be long before she does away with you,” said the bull. “But if it suits you, we will run away from here to-night.” The king’s daughter did say that it would be bad enough to leave her father, but that at the same time it would be worse to remain under the same roof with the queen, and so she promised the bull to go with him.

In the evening, while the rest were asleep, the king’s daughter crept down to the bull in the stable. He took her on his back, and ran off as quickly as ever he could. And when the people rose the following morning, and wanted to slaughter the bull, he was gone; and when the king rose and asked for his daughter, she was gone as well. The king sent out messengers on all sides, and had the church-bells rung for her, but no one had seen anything of her.

In the meantime the bull trotted through many lands with the king’s daughter, and they came to a great copper forest, whose trees, leaves and flowers were all of copper. But before they entered it, the bull said to the king’s daughter: “Now when we get into the forest you must be very careful not to touch so much as a single leaf, or else it is all up with you and with me; for a troll with three heads lives here, and the forest belongs to him.” Yes, indeed, she would be careful, and not touch anything. And she was very careful, and leaned to one side, and thrust aside the branches; but the forest was so thick that it was almost impossible to win through, and for all that she was so careful, she did tear off a leaf, and it remained in her hand.

“Alas, alas!” cried the bull. “What have you done! Now I must fight for my very life. But see that you keep the leaf carefully!” Straightway they reached the end of the forest, and at once a troll with three heads came rushing up. “Who has touched my forest?” cried he. “The forest is as much mine as yours!” was the bull’s reply. “We’ll see if it is!” shouted the troll. “That suits me!” cried the bull. Then they rushed at each other, and the bull gored and butted with might and main. But the troll was just as strong, and it took all day before the bull gained the upper hand. And then he had so many wounds, and was so weak that he could scarcely walk. So they had to halt for a whole day; but the bull told the queen's daughter to take the horn of ointment that hung at the troll's girdle, and anoint him with the salve. Thereupon he grew strong and well again, and they went on the next day. Now they wandered for many, many days, and at last came to a silver forest, whose trees, branches, leaves, buds and all were of silver.

Before the bull entered the forest he said to the king's daughter: "Now when we get into this forest, in heaven's name be careful! You must touch nothing, and not even tear off so much as a single leaf, or else it is all up with you and me. A troll with six heads lives here, and the forest belongs to him, and I will hardly be able to hold my own against him!"

"Yes," said the king's daughter, "indeed I will be careful, and not touch the least thing, just as you have told me." But when they entered the forest, it was so thick that it was almost impossible to win through. She was as careful as she could be, and avoided the branches, and thrust them aside with her hands; but the branches struck her in the face each moment, and in spite of all her care a leaf did remain in her hand.

"Alas, alas!" cried the bull. "What have you done! Now I must fight for my very life, for the troll with six heads is twice as strong as the first one; but see that you take care of the leaf and keep it carefully!"

At once the troll came rushing up. "Who has touched my forest?" cried he. "The forest is as much mine as yours!" cried the bull. "Oho, we'll see if it is!" cried the troll. "That suits me!" said the bull, and rushed on the troll, gored him, and thrust his horns right through him. But the troll was just as strong, and it took three whole days before the bull got the better of him. After that he was so weak and feeble that he could scarcely move, and so full of wounds that his blood ran in streams. Then he told the king's daughter to take the horn of ointment that hung at the troll's girdle, and anoint him with the salve. She did so, and he recovered again: yet they had to remain a time on the spot, until he was once more able to go on.

At last they set out again; but the bull was still weak, and at first they went slowly. The king's daughter wanted to spare him, and said she was young and quick on her feet, and could walk very well; but this he would not allow, and she had to sit on his back. Thus they wandered for a long time, and through many lands, and the king's daughter had no idea where they might be going; but at length they came to a golden forest. It was very beautiful, and the gold dripped down from it, for the trees, and branches and leaves and buds were all of purest gold. And here all went as it had in the copper and silver forests. The bull told the king's daughter that in no case was she to touch anything, since a troll with nine heads lived here, to whom the forest belonged. And he was much larger and stronger than the two others together, and he did not believe he could hold his own against him. Yes, said she, she would be sure to pay attention and positively would not touch a thing. But when they entered the forest, it was even thicker than the silver forest, and the further they went the worse it became. The forest grew thicker and denser, and at last it seemed as though it would be impossible to push on at all. She was much afraid of tearing off anything, and wound and twisted and bent herself in every direction, in order to avoid the branches, and thrust them aside with her hands. But each moment they struck her in the face, so that she could not see where she was reaching, and before she had a chance to think, she held a golden apple in her hand. Then she was terribly frightened, and began to cry, and wanted to throw it away. But the bull told her to keep it, and hide it carefully, and consoled her as best he could. Yet he thought that the battle would be a hard one, and was in doubt as to whether it would end well.

But now the troll with the nine heads came rushing up, and he was so frightful that the king's daughter could scarcely bear to look at him. "Who has touched my forest?" he shouted. "The forest is as much mine as yours!"

cried the bull. “We’ll see if it is!” cried the troll. “That suits me!” said the bull, and with this they rushed on each other, so that it was a fearsome sight, and the king’s daughter nearly fainted. The bull gored the troll through and through with his horns; but the troll was as strong as he, and as soon as the bull killed one of his heads, the others breathed fresh life into it, and it took a full week before the bull got the better of him. But then he was so wretched and so weak that he could not move a bit. His whole body was covered with wounds; and he could not even tell the king’s daughter to take the horn of ointment from the troll’s girdle and anoint him with the salve. But she did so of her own accord, and then he recovered again. Yet they had to stay where they were for three whole weeks, until he was able to go on again.

At last they once more went slowly on their way; for the bull said they still had a little further to go, and they went over many great hills and through thick forests. After a time they came to a rock. “Do you see anything?” asked the bull. “No, I see only the sky and the rock,” said the king’s daughter. But when they went on up the hills were more level, so that they had a broader outlook. “Do you see something now?” asked the bull. “Yes, I see a small castle, far, far in the distance,” said the princess. “And yet it is not so small,” said the bull. At length they came to a great mountain with a steep, rocky face. “Do you see something now?” asked the bull. “Yes, now I see the castle close by, and it is much, much larger,” said the king’s daughter. “That is where you must go!” said the bull. “Just below the castle is a pig-sty, and if you go into it you will find a wooden coat. You must put it on, and go with it into the castle, and say your name is Kari Woodencoat, and ask for a place. But now take your little knife and cut off my head; then draw off my skin, roll it up and lay it at the foot of the rock. But in it you must place the copper leaf, and the silver leaf, and the golden apple. Outside, against the hill, is a stick, and if you want anything of me, all you need do is to knock at the mountain-side.” At first the princess could not at all make up her mind to do this; but when the bull told her that this was the only reward he wanted for all the good he had done her, she could not refuse. It made her heart ache, yet in spite of it, she took her knife and cut until she had cut off the head of the great beast, and had drawn off his skin, and then she laid the latter at the foot of the rock, and in it she placed the copper leaf, and the silver leaf, and the golden apple.

When she had done this she went to the pig-sty, but she wept a great deal and felt sad. Then she put on the wooden coat, and went to the king’s castle in it. She asked for a place in the kitchen, and said her name was Kari Woodencoat. Yes, said the cook, she might have a place if she cared to wash up, for the girl who had formerly attended to it had run away. “And after you have been here a while, no doubt you will have enough of it, and run away from us, too,” said he. No, indeed, she would not do so.

She was most industrious at her washing up. On Sunday they expected company at the king’s castle; and Kari asked permission to take up water to wash in to the prince. But the others laughed at her and cried; “What do you want to do there? Do you think the prince will have anything to do with you, homely as you are?” But she kept on asking, and at length received permission.

And then, as she ran up the stairs, her wooden coat clattered so loudly that the prince came out and asked: “And who are you?” “I came to bring you water to wash in,” said Kari. “Do you think I want the water you are bringing me?” cried the prince, and poured the water out over her head. So she had to go off; but she asked permission to go to church. And she received permission, for the church was close by. But first she went to the rock and knocked at it with a stick, as the bull had told her. And a man came out at once and asked what she wanted. The king’s daughter said that she had permission to go to church and hear the sermon, but that she had no dress to wear. Then the man gave her a dress that shone like the copper forest, and a horse and a saddle as well. When she came to church she looked so beautiful that all the people wondered who she might be, and none of them listened to the sermon, because they were all looking at her. She even pleased the prince so much that he could not keep from looking at her.

When she left the church, the prince came after her, and closed the church door behind her, and kept one of the gloves she wore in his hand. And then when she wanted to mount her horse, the prince came again, and asked her where she came from. “From Washwaterland!” said Kari, and while the prince pulled out the glove and wanted to give it to her, she said:

Be there light before me, and darkness behind,
That the place I ride to the prince may not find!

The prince had never yet seen such a handsome glove, and he traveled far, looking for the native land of the noble lady who had abandoned her glove, but no one could tell him where it might be.

The following Sunday some one had to go up to the prince, and bring him a towel. “Cannot I go up?” begged Kari. “Is that all you want?” said the rest in the kitchen. “You saw yourself what happened to you the last time!” But Kari kept on asking, and finally she received permission, after all, and ran up the stairs so that her wooden coat fairly clattered. The prince at once thrust his head out of the door, and when he saw that it was Kari, he tore the towel out of her hand and flung it at her head. “Off with you, you horrid creature!” cried he. “Do you think I want a towel that you have touched with your dirty fingers?”

After that the prince went to church, and Kari also begged permission to go. The people asked her why she wanted to go to church, since she had nothing to wear but her ugly, black wooden coat. But Kari said the pastor preached so beautifully that she loved to listen to him, and finally they allowed her to go. She went to the wall of rock and knocked, and the man came out and gave her a dress that was far handsomer than the first; it was embroidered all over with silver, and gleamed like the silver forest; and she also received a splendid horse, with housings embroidered with silver, and a silver bridle. When the king's daughter came to the church, the people were still standing before the church door. In their astonishment they all asked each other who she might be, and the prince came running up at once, and wanted to hold her horse while she dismounted. But she jumped right down, and said it would not be necessary, since the horse was so tame that it would stand still when she commanded, and come to her if she wished. Then every one went into the church. But hardly any one paid any attention to the sermon; for they were all looking at Kari, and the prince fell deeper in love with her than he had the first time. When the sermon was over, and she left the church and was about to mount her horse, the prince again came, and asked where she came from. "From Towelland!" said she, and let fall her riding-whip. And when the prince stooped to pick it up, she said:

Be there light before me, and darkness behind,
That the place I ride to the prince may not find!

Off she was, and the prince did not know what had become of her. He wandered about in the world, far and wide, looking for her native land. But no one could tell him where it might be, and with that the prince finally had to content himself.

The following Sunday some one was to go up to the prince, and bring him a comb. Kari begged that they would let her go, but the others reminded her of what had happened the last time, and scolded her for showing herself to the prince, ugly and black as she was, and in her wooden coat. But she kept on asking, and finally they let her go with the comb. When she once more came clattering up the stairs, the prince thrust his head out of the door, tore the comb from her hand, and shouted at her to be off. Then the prince went to church, and Kari wanted to go as well. The rest again asked her why she wanted to go to church, black and ugly as she was, since she did not even have clothes fit to appear in before other people. The prince, or some one else might happen to see her, and that would mean unhappiness for herself and others. But Kari said that the people would have other things to look at besides herself, and finally they let her go.

Then everything happened exactly as on the other two occasions. She went to the wall of rock, and knocked with the stick, and then the man came out, and gave her a dress that was far more beautiful than both of the others. It was all pure gold and diamonds, and she also received a beautiful horse, with housings embroidered with gold, and a golden bridle.

When the king's daughter came to the church, the pastor and all the congregation were still standing before the church door, waiting for her. The prince came running up at once, and wanted to hold her horse, but she jumped down and said: "No, thanks, it is not necessary, for my horse is so tame that he will remain standing when I tell him to do so." So they all went into the church, and the pastor mounted the pulpit. But not a soul listened to the sermon, because all the people were looking at the princess, and wondering where she came from, and the prince fell still more deeply in love than he had on the two other occasions. He paid no attention to anything, and looked only at her.

When the sermon was over, and the king's daughter left the church, the prince had poured tar on the floor of the vestibule, so that he might have a chance to help the king's daughter across. But she paid no attention to it, stepped right into the middle of the tar, and leaped over. But one of her golden shoes stuck fast, and when she had mounted her horse, the prince came running out of the church and asked her whence she came. “From Combland!” she answered. But when the prince wanted to hand her the golden shoe, she said:

Be there light before me, and darkness behind,
That the place I ride to the prince may not find!

And again the prince did not know where she had gone, and he wandered about the world a long time, looking for Combland; but since no one could tell him where it might be, he let it be known that he would marry the girl whose foot the golden shoe fitted. Then the handsome and the homely came scurrying up from the ends of the earth; but none of them had a foot so small that they could put on the golden shoe. At last Kari’s evil stepmother and her daughter also came, and the shoe fitted the latter. But she was very homely, and looked so unsatisfactory that the prince kept his promise most unwillingly. Notwithstanding, preparations were made for the wedding, and she was adorned with her bridal finery, but when they rode to church, a little bird sat in a tree and sang:

A bit of the heel,
And a bit of the toe,
Kari Woodencoat’s shoe
Is filled with blood, I know!

And when they looked, the bird had told the truth, for blood was dripping from the shoe. Then all the maids and all the women who were at the castle had to try on the shoe, but it would fit none of them. “But where is Kari Woodencoat?” asked the prince, for he had understood the song of the bird, and remembered it well. “O she!” said the others. “It is not worth while having her come, for she has feet like a horse.” “Be that as it may,” said the prince. “But all the rest have tried it on, so she shall try it on as well. Kari!” he called out through the door, and Kari came clattering up the stairs so that everything shook, just as though a whole regiment of dragoons had arrived. “Now you shall try on the golden shoe, and be a princess!” said the others, and made fun of her. But Kari took the shoe, put her foot into it without a bit of trouble, cast off her wooden coat, and stood there in her golden dress, so that she was all a-sparkle, and on her other foot she had the golden shoe’s mate. The prince recognized her at once, put his arm around her, and kissed her. And she told him that she was a king’s daughter, which made him still more happy, and then they celebrated their wedding.

48

OLA STORBAEKKJEN

Once upon a time there lived a man in the forest of Dovre whose name was Ola Storbaekkjen. He was of giant build, powerful and fearless. During the winter he did not work, but traveled from one fair to another, hunting up quarrels and brawls. From Christiansmarkt he went to Branaes and Konigsberg, and thence to Grundsaet, and wherever he came squabbles and brawls broke out, and in every brawl he was the victor. In the summer he dealt in cattle at Valders and the fjords, and fought with the fjord-folk and the hill people of Halling and Valders, and always had the best of it. But sometimes they scratched him a bit with the knife, did those folk.

Now once, at the time of the hay harvest, he was home at Baekkjen, and had lain down to take a little after-dinner nap under the penthouse. And he was taken into the hill, which happened in the following way: A man with a pair of gilded goat’s horns came along and butted Ola, but Ola fell upon him so that the man had to duck back, again and again. But the stranger stood up once more, and began to butt again, and finally he took Ola under his arm like a glove, and then both of them flew straight off into the hill.

In the place to which they came all was adorned with silver plates and dishes, and with ornaments of silver, and Ola thought that the king himself had nothing finer. They offered him mead, which he drank; but eat he would not, for the food did not seem to him to be appetizing. Suddenly the man with the gilded goat's horns came in, and gave Ola a shove before he knew it; but Ola came back at him as before, and so they beat and pulled each other through all the rooms, and along all the walls. Ola was of the opinion that they had been at it all night long; but by that time the scuffle had lasted over fourteen days, and they had already tolled the church bells for him on three successive Thursday evenings. On the third Thursday evening he was in ill ease, for the people in the hill had in mind to thrust him forth. When the bells stopped ringing, he sat at a crack in the hill, with his head looking out. Had not a man come by and happened to spy him, and told the people to keep on ringing the church-bells, the hill would have closed over him again, and he would probably still be inside. But when he came out he had been so badly beaten, and was so miserable, that it passed all measure. The lumps on his head were each bigger than the other, his whole body was black and blue, and he was quite out of his mind. And from time to time he would leap up, run off and try to get back into the hill to take up his quarrel again, and fight for the gilded goat's horns. For those he wanted to break from the giant's forehead.

49

THE CAT WHO COULD EAT SO MUCH

Once upon a time there was a man who had a cat, and she ate so very much that he did not want to keep her any longer. So he decided to tie a stone around her neck, and throw her into the river; but before he did so she was to have something to eat just once more. The woman offered her a dish of mush and a little potful of fat. These she swallowed, and then jumped out of the window. There stood the man on the threshing-floor.

“Good-day, man in the house,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat,” said the man. “Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?”

“O, only a little, but my fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat, and I am thinking over whether I ought not to eat you as well,” said she, and she seized the man and ate him up. Then she went into the stable. There sat the woman, milking.

“Good-day, woman in the stable,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat, is that you?” said the woman. “Have you eaten your food?” she asked.

“O, only a little to-day. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house, and I’m thinking over whether I ought not to eat you as well,” said she, and she seized the woman and ate her up.

“Good-day, cow at the manger,” said the cat to the bell-cow.

“Good-day, cat,” said the bell-cow. “Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?” “O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable, and I’m thinking over whether I ought not to eat you as well,” said the cat, and seized the bell-cow and ate her up. Then she went up to the orchard, and there stood a man who was sweeping up leaves.

“Good-day, leaf-sweeper in the orchard,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat,” said the man. “Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?”

“O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger, and I’m thinking over whether I ought not to eat you up as well,” said she, and seized the leaf-sweeper and ate him up.

Then she came to a stone-pile. There stood the weasel, looking about him.

“Good-day, weasel on the stone-pile,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat,” said the weasel. “Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?”

“O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard, and I’m thinking over whether I ought not to eat you as well,” said the cat, and seized the weasel and ate him up.

After she had gone a while, she came to a hazel-bush. There sat the squirrel, gathering nuts.

“Good-day, squirrel in the bush,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat! Have you already had anything to eat yet to-day?” said the squirrel.

“O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile, and I’m thinking over whether I ought not to eat you up as well,” said she, and seized the squirrel and ate him up.

After she had gone a little while longer, she met Reynard the fox, who was peeping out of the edge of the forest.

“Good-day, fox, you sly-boots,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?” said the fox.

“O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush, and I’m thinking over whether I ought not to eat you as well,” said she, and seized the fox and ate him up too.

When she had gone a little further, she met a hare.

“Good-day, you hopping hare,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?” said the hare.

“O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and I’m thinking over whether I ought not to eat you up as well,” said she, and seized the hare and ate him up.

When she had gone a little further, she met a wolf.

“Good-day, you wild wolf,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?” said the wolf.

“O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the hopping hare, and I’m thinking over whether I ought not to eat you up as well,” said she, and seized the wolf and ate him up, too.

Then she went into the wood, and when she had gone far and farther than far, over hill and dale, she met a young bear.

“Good-day, little bear brown-coat,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?” said the bear.

“O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little pot of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the hopping hare and the wild wolf, and I’m thinking over whether I ought not to eat you up as well,” said she, and seized the little bear and ate him up.

When the cat had gone a bit further, she met the mother bear, who was clawing at the tree-stems so that the bark flew, so angry was she to have lost her little one.

“Good-day, you biting mother bear,” said the cat.

“Good-day, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?” said the mother bear.

“O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken,” said the cat. “I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the hopping hare and the wild wolf and the little bear brown-coat, and I'm thinking over whether I ought not to eat you as well," said she, and seized the mother bear and ate her, too.

When the cat had gone on a little further, she met the bear himself.

"Good-day, Bruin Good-fellow," said she.

"Good-day, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?" asked the bear.

"O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken," said the cat. "I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel in the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the hopping hare and the wild wolf and the little bear brown-coat and the biting mother bear, and now I'm thinking over whether I ought not to eat you as well," said she, and she seized the bear and ate him up, too.

Then the cat went far and farther than far, until she came into the parish. And there she met a bridal party on the road.

"Good-day, bridal party on the road," said the cat.

"Good-day, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?"

"O, only a little. My fast is hardly broken," said the cat. "I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the hopping hare and the wild wolf and the little bear brown-coat and the biting mother bear and bruin good-fellow and now I'm thinking whether I ought not to eat you up as well," said she, and she pounced on the whole bridal party, and ate it up, with the cook, the musicians, the horses and all.

When she had gone a bit farther, she came to the church. And there she met a funeral procession.

"Good-day, funeral procession at the church," said the cat.

"Good-day, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?" said the funeral procession.

"O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken," said the cat. "I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the hopping hare and the wild wolf and little bear brown-coat and the biting mother bear and bruin good-fellow and the bridal party on the road, and now I'm thinking over whether I ought not to eat you up as well," said she, and pounced on the funeral procession, and ate up corpse and procession.

When the cat had swallowed it all, she went straight on up to the sky, and when she had gone far and farther than far, she met the moon in a cloud.

"Good-day, moon in a cloud," said the cat.

"Good-day, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?" said the moon.

"O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken," said the cat. "I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the wild wolf and little bear brown-coat and the biting mother bear and bruin good-fellow and the bridal party on the road and the funeral procession at the church, and now I'm thinking over whether I ought not to eat you up as well," said she, and pounced on the moon and ate him up, half and full.

Then the cat went far and farther than far, and met the sun.

"Good morning, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?" said the sun.

"O, only a little," said the cat. "I have had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the hopping hare and the wild wolf and little bear brown-coat and the biting mother bear and bruin good-fellow and the bridal party on the road and the funeral procession at the church and the moon in a cloud, and now I'm thinking over whether I ought not to eat you up as well," said she, and pounced on the sun in the sky and ate him up.

Then the cat went far and farther than far, until she came to a bridge, and there she met a large billy-goat.

"Good morning, billy-goat on the broad bridge," said the cat.

"Good morning, cat! Have you had anything to eat yet to-day?" said the goat.

"O, only a little. My fast has hardly been broken," said the cat. "I had no more than a dish of mush and a little potful of fat and the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the hopping hare and the wild wolf and little bear brown-coat and the biting mother bear and bruin good-fellow and the bridal party on the road and the funeral procession at the church and the moon in a cloud and the sun in the sky, and now I'm thinking over whether I ought not to eat you up as well," said she.

"We'll fight about that first of all," said the goat, and butted the cat with his horns so that she rolled off the bridge, and fell into the water, and there she burst.

Then they all crawled out, and each went to his own place, all whom the cat had eaten up, and were every one of them as lively as before, the man in the house and the woman in the stable and the bell-cow at the manger and the leaf-sweeper in the orchard and the weasel on the stone-pile and the squirrel in the hazel-bush and the fox, the sly-boots, and the hopping hare and the wild wolf and little bear brown-coat and the biting mother bear and bruin good-fellow and the bridal party on the road and the funeral procession at the church and the moon in a cloud and the sun in the sky.

50

EAST OF THE SUN AND WEST OF THE MOON

Once upon a time there was a poor tenant farmer who had a number of children whom he could feed but poorly, and had to clothe in the scantiest way. They were all handsome; but the most beautiful, after all, was the youngest daughter, for she was beautiful beyond all telling.

Now it happened that one Thursday evening late in the fall there was a terrible storm raging outside. It was pitch dark, and it rained and stormed so that the house shook in every joint. The whole family sat around the hearth, and each was busy with some work or other. Suddenly there were three loud knocks on the window-pane. The man went out to see who was there, and when he stepped outside, there stood a great white bear.

"Good evening," said the white bear.

"Good evening," returned the man.

"If you'll give me your youngest daughter, I will make you just as rich as now you are poor," said the bear.

The man was not ill-pleased that he was to become so rich; yet he did think that first he ought to speak to his daughter about it. So he went in again, and said that there was a white bear outside, who had promised to make him just as rich as he was poor now, if he could only have the youngest daughter for his bride. But the girl said no, and would not hear of it. Then the man went back to the bear again, and they both agreed that the white bear should return again the following Thursday and get his answer. In the meantime, however, the parents worked upon their daughter, and talked at length about all the riches they would gain, and how well she herself would fare. So at last she agreed, washed and mended the few poor clothes she had, adorned herself as well as she could, and made ready to travel. And what she was given to take along with her is not worth mentioning, either.

The following Thursday the white bear came to fetch his bride. The girl seated herself on his back with her bundle, and then he trotted off. After they had gone a good way, the white bear asked: “Are you afraid?”

“No, not at all,” she answered.

“Just keep a tight hold on my fur, and then you will be in no danger,” said the bear. So she rode on the bear’s back, far, far away, until at last they came to a great rock. There the bear knocked, and at once a door opened through which they entered a great castle, with many brilliantly lighted rooms, where everything gleamed with gold and silver. Then they came into a great hall, and there stood a table completely covered with the most splendid dishes. Here the white bear gave the maiden a silver bell, and said that if there were anything she wanted, she need only ring the bell, and she should have it at once. And after the maiden had eaten, and evening came on, she felt like lying down and going to sleep. So she rang her bell; and at its very first peal she found herself transported to a room in which stood the most beautiful bed one might wish to have, with silken cushions and curtains with golden tassels; and all that was in the room was of gold and silver. Yet when she had lain down and put out the light, she saw a man come in and cast himself down in a corner. It was the white bear, who was allowed to throw off his fur at night; yet the maiden never actually saw him, for he never came until she had put out the light, and before dawn brightened he had disappeared again.

For a time all went well; but gradually the maiden grew sad and silent; for she had not a soul to keep her company the live-long day, and she felt very homesick for her parents and sisters. When the white bear asked her what troubled her, she told him she was always alone, and that she wanted so very much to see her parents and sisters again, and felt very sad because she could not do so. “O that can be managed,” said the white bear. “But first you must promise me that you will never speak to your mother alone; but only when others are present. Very likely she will take you by the hand, and want to lead you into her room, so that she can speak to you alone. But this you must not allow, otherwise you will make us both unhappy.”

And then, one Sunday, the white bear actually came and told her that now she might make the trip to her parents. So she seated herself on the bear’s back, and the bear set out. After they had gone a very long distance, they at length came to a fine, large, white house, before which her brothers and sisters were running about and playing, and all was so rich and splendid that it was a real pleasure merely to look at it.

“This is where your parents live,” said the white bear. “Only do not forget what I told you, or you will make us both unhappy.” Heaven forbid that she should forget it, said the maiden; and when she had come to the house, she got down, and the bear turned back.

When the daughter entered her parents’ home, they were more than happy; they told her that they could not thank her enough for what she had done, and that now all of them were doing splendidly. Then they asked her how she herself fared. The maiden answered that all was well with her, also, and that she had all that heart could desire. I do not know exactly all the other things she told them; but I do not believe she told them every last thing there was to tell. So in the afternoon, when the family had eaten dinner, it happened as the white bear had foretold; the mother wanted to talk to her daughter alone, in her room; but she thought of what the white bear had told her, and did not want to go with her mother, but said:

"All we have to say to each other can just as well be said here." Yet — she herself did not know exactly how it happened — her mother finally did persuade her, and then she had to tell just how things were. So she informed her that as soon as she put out the light at night, a man came and cast himself down in the corner of the room. She had never yet seen him, for he always went away before the dawn brightened. And this grieved her, for she did want to see him so very much, and she was alone through the day, and it was very dreary and lonely.

"Alas, perhaps he is a troll, after all," said the mother. "But I can give you some good advice as to how you can see him. Here is a candle-end, which you must hide under your wimple. When the troll is sleeping, light the light and look at him. But be careful not to let a drop of tallow fall on him."

The daughter took the candle-end and hid it in her wimple, and in the evening the white bear came to fetch her.

After they had gone a way the white bear asked whether everything had not happened just as he had said. Yes, such had been the case, and the maiden could not deny it.

"If you have listened to your mother's advice, then you will make us both unhappy, and all will be over between us," said the bear. "O, no, she had not done so," replied the maiden, indeed she had not.

When they reached home, and the maiden had gone to bed, all went as usual: a man came in and cast himself down in a corner of the room. But in the night, when she heard him sleeping soundly, she stood up and lighted the candle. She threw the light on him, and saw the handsomest prince one might wish to see. And she liked him so exceedingly well that she thought she would be unable to keep on living if she could not kiss him that very minute. She did so, but by mistake she let three hot drops of tallow fall on him, and he awoke.

“Alas, what have you done!” cried he. “Now you have made both of us unhappy. If you had only held out until the end of the year, I would have been delivered. I have a step-mother who has cast a spell on me, so that by day I am a bear, and at night a human being. But now all is over between us, and I must return to my step-mother. She lives in a castle that is east of the sun and west of the moon, where there is a princess with a nose three yards long, whom I must now marry.”

The maiden wept and wailed; but to no avail, for the prince said he must journey away. Then she asked him whether she might not go with him. No, said he, that could not be.

“But can you not at least tell me the road, so that I can search for you. For surely that will be permitted me?”

“Yes, that you may do,” said he. “But there is no road that leads there. The castle lies east of the sun and west of the moon, and neither now nor at any other time will you find the road to it!”

When the maiden awoke the next morning, the prince as well as the castle had disappeared. She lay in a green opening in the midst of a thick, dark wood, and beside her lay the bundle of poor belongings she had brought from home. And when she had rubbed the sleep out of her eyes, and had cried her fill, she set out and wandered many, many days, until at last she came to a great hill. And before the hill sat an old woman who was playing with a golden apple. The maiden asked the woman whether she did not know which road led to the prince who lived in the castle that was east of the sun and west of the moon, and who was to marry a princess with a nose three yards long.

“How do you come to know him?” asked the woman. “Are you, perhaps, the maiden he wanted to marry?”

“Yes, I am that maiden,” she replied.

“So you are that girl,” said the woman. “Well, my child, I am sorry to say that all I know of him is that he lives in the castle that is east of the sun and west of the moon, and that you will probably never get there. But I will loan you my horse, on which you may ride to my neighbor, and perhaps she can tell you. And when you get there just give the horse a blow back of his left ear, and order him to go home. And here, take this golden apple along!"

The maiden mounted the horse, and rode a long, long time. At length she again came to a hill, before which sat an old woman with a golden reel. The maiden asked whether she could not tell her the road which led to the castle that lay east of the sun and west of the moon. This woman said just what the other had, no, she knew no more of the castle than that it lay east of the sun and west of the moon. "And," said she, "you will probably never get there. But I will loan you my horse to ride to the nearest neighbor; perhaps she can tell you. And when you have reached her just give the horse a blow back of his left ear, and order him to go home again." And finally she gave the maiden the golden reel, for, said the old woman, it might be useful to her.

The maiden then mounted the horse, and again rode a long, long time. At length she once more came to a great hill, before which sat an old woman spinning at a golden spindle. Then the maiden once more asked after the prince, and the castle that lay east of the sun and west of the moon. And everything happened exactly as on the two previous occasions.

"Do you happen to be the maiden the prince wanted to marry?" asked the old woman.

"Yes, I am that maiden," answered the maiden.

But this old woman knew no more about the road than the two others. "Yes, the castle lies east of the sun and west of the moon, that I know," said she. "And you will probably never get there. But I will loan you my horse, and you may ride on it to the East Wind and ask him. Perhaps he is acquainted there, and can blow you thither. And when you reach him, just give my horse a blow back of the left ear, and then he will return here of his own accord.” Finally the old woman gave her her golden spindle. “Perhaps it may be useful to you,” said she.

The maiden now rode for many days and weeks, and it took a long, long time before she came to the East Wind. But at last she did find him, and then she asked the East Wind whether he could show her the road that led to the prince who lived in the castle that was east of the sun and west of the moon.

O, yes, he had heard tell of the prince, and of the castle as well, said the East Wind, but he did not know the road that led to it, for he had never blown so far. “But if you wish, I will take you to my brother, the West Wind, and perhaps he can tell you, for he is much stronger than I am. Just sit down on my back, and I will carry you to him.”

The maiden did as he told her, and then they moved swiftly away. When they came to the West Wind, the East Wind said that here he was bringing the maiden whom the prince who lived in the castle that lay east of the sun and west of the moon had wanted to marry, that she was journeying on her way to him, and looking for him everywhere, and that he had accompanied her in order to find out whether the West Wind knew where this castle might be.

“No,” said the West Wind to the maiden, “I have never blown so far, but if you wish I will take you to the South Wind, who is much stronger than both of us, and has traveled far and wide, and perhaps he can tell you. Seat yourself on my back, and I will carry you to him.”

The maiden did so, and then they flew quickly off to the South Wind. When they found him, the West Wind asked whether the South Wind could show them the road that led to the castle that lay east of the sun and west of the moon; and that this was the maiden who was to have the prince.

“Well, well, so this is the girl?” cried the South Wind. “Yes, it is true that I have gone about a good deal during my life,” said he, “yet I have never blown so far. But if you wish, I will take you to my brother, the North

Wind. He is the oldest and strongest of us all. If he does not know where the castle lies, then no one in the whole world can tell you. Seat yourself on my back, and I will carry you to him."

The maiden seated herself on the back of the South Wind, and he flew away with a roar and a rush. The journey did not take long.

When they had reached the dwelling of the North Wind, the latter was so wild and unmannerly that he blew a cold blast at them while they were still a good way off. "What do you want?" cried he, as soon as he caught sight of them, so that a cold shiver ran down their backs.

"You should not greet us so rudely," said the South Wind. "It is I, the South Wind. And this is the maiden who wanted to marry the prince who lives in the castle that lies east of the sun and west of the moon. She wishes to ask you whether you have ever been there, and if you can show her the road that leads to it; for she would like to find the prince again."

"O, yes, I know very well where the castle lies," said the North Wind. "I blew an aspen leaf there just once, and then I was so weary that I could not blow at all for many a long day. But if you want to get there above all things, and are not afraid of me, I will take you on my back, and see whether I can blow you there."

The maiden said that she must and would get to the castle, if it were by any means possible, and that she was not afraid, no matter how hard the journey might be. "Very well, then you must stay here over night," said the North Wind. "For if we are to get there to-morrow, we must have the whole day before us."

Early the next morning the North Wind awakened the maiden. Then he blew himself up, and made himself so large and thick that he was quite horrible to look at, and thereupon they rushed along through the air as though they meant to reach the end of the world at once. And everywhere beneath them raged such a storm that forests were pulled out by the roots, and houses torn down, and as they rushed across the sea, ships foundered by the hundreds. Further and further they went, so far that no one could even imagine it, and still they were flying across the sea; but gradually the North Wind grew weary, and became weaker and weaker. Finally he could hardly keep going, and sank lower and lower, and at last he flew so low that the waves washed his ankles.

“Are you afraid?” asked the North Wind.

“No, not at all,” answered the maiden. By now they were not far distant from the land, and the North Wind had just enough strength left to be able to set down the maiden on the strand, beneath the windows of the castle that lay east of the sun and west of the moon. And then he was so wearied and wretched that he had to rest many a long day before he could set out for home again.

The next morning the maiden seated herself beneath the windows of the castle and played with the golden apple, and the first person who showed herself was the monster with the nose, whom the prince was to marry.

“What do you want for your golden apple?” asked the princess with the nose, as she opened the window.

“I will not sell it at all, either for gold or for money,” answered the maiden.

“Well, what do you want for it, if you will not sell it either for gold or for money?” asked the princess. “Ask what you will!”

“I only want to speak to-night to the prince who lives here, then I will give you the apple,” said the maiden who had come with the North Wind.

The princess replied that this could be arranged, and then she received the golden apple. But when the maiden came into the prince’s room in the evening, he was sleeping soundly. She called and shook him, wept and wailed; but she could not wake him, and in the morning, as soon as it dawned, the princess with the long nose came and drove her out.

That day the maiden again sat beneath the windows of the castle, and wound her golden reel. And all went as on the preceding day. The princess asked what she wanted for the reel, and the maiden answered that she would sell it neither for gold nor for money; but if she might speak that night to the prince, then she would give the reel to the princess. Yet when the maiden came to the prince, he was again fast asleep, and no matter how much she wept and wailed, and cried and shook, she could not wake him. But as soon as day dawned, and it grew bright, the princess with the long nose came and drove her out. And that day the maiden again seated herself beneath the windows of the castle, and spun with her golden spindle; and, of course, the princess with the long nose wanted to have that, too. She opened the window, and asked what she wanted for the golden spindle. The maiden replied, as she had twice before, that she would sell the spindle neither for gold nor money; but that the princess could have it if she might speak to the prince again that night. Yes, that she was welcome to do, said the princess, and took the golden spindle. Now it happened that some Christians, who were captives in the castle, and quartered in a room beside that of the prince, had heard a woman weeping and wailing pitifully in the prince’s room for the past two nights. So they told the prince. And that evening when the princess came to him with his night-cap, the prince pretended to drink it; but instead poured it out behind his back, for he could well imagine that she had put a sleeping-powder into the cup. Then, when the maiden came in, the prince was awake, and she had to tell him just how she had found the castle.

“You have come just in the nick of time,” said he, “for to-morrow I am to marry the princess; but I do not want the monster with the nose at all, and you are the only person who can save me. I will say that first I wish to see whether my bride is a capable housewife, and demand that she wash the three drops of tallow from my shirt. She will naturally agree to this, for she does not know that you made the spots, for only Christian hands can wash them out again, but not the hands of this pack of trolls. Then I will say I will marry none other than the maiden who can wash out the spots, and ask you to do so,” said the prince. And then both rejoiced and were happy beyond measure.

But on the following day, when the wedding was to take place, the prince said: “First I would like to see what my bride can do!” Yes, that was no more than right, said his mother-in-law. “I have a very handsome shirt,” continued the prince, “which I would like to wear at the wedding. But there are three tallow-spots on it, and they must first be washed out. And I have made a vow to marry none other than the woman who can do this. So if my bride cannot manage to do it, then she is worthless.”

Well, that would not be much of a task, said the women, and agreed to the proposal. And the princess with the long nose at once began to wash. She washed with all her might and main, and took the greatest pains, but the longer she washed and rubbed, the larger grew the spots.

“O, you don’t know how to wash!” said her mother, the old troll-wife. “Just give it to me!” But no sooner had she taken the shirt in her hand, than it began to look worse, and the more she washed and rubbed, the larger and blacker grew the spots. Then the other troll-women had to come and wash; but the longer they washed the shirt the uglier it grew, and finally it looked as though it had been hanging in the smokestack.

“Why, all of you are worthless!” said the prince. “Outside the window sits a beggar-girl. I’m sure she is a better washer-woman than all of you put together. You, girl, come in here!” he cried out of the window; and when the maiden came in he said: “Do you think you can wash this shirt clean for me?”

“I do not know,” answered the maiden, “but I will try.” And no more had she dipped the shirt in the water than it turned as white as newly fallen snow, yes, even whiter.

“Indeed, and you are the one I want!” said the prince.

Then the old troll-woman grew so angry that she burst in two, and the princess with the long nose and the rest of the troll-pack probably burst in two as well, for I never heard anything more of them. The prince and his bride then freed all the Christians who had been kept captive in the castle, and packed up as much gold and silver as they could possibly take with them, and went far away from the castle that lies East of the sun and West of the moon.

51

MURMUR GOOSE-EGG

Once upon a time there were five women who were standing in a field, mowing. Heaven had not given a single one of them a child, and each of them wanted to have one. And suddenly they saw a goose-egg of quite unheard-of size, well-nigh as large as a man's head. "I saw it first," said the one. "I saw it at the same time that you did," insisted another. "But I want it, for I saw it first of all," maintained a third. And thus they went on, and fought so about the egg that they nearly came to blows. Finally they agreed that it should belong to all five of them, and that all of them should sit on it, as a goose would do, and hatch out the little gosling. The first remained sitting on the egg for eight days, and hatched, and did not move or do a thing; and during this time the rest had to feed her and themselves as well. One of them grew angry because of this and scolded.

"You did not crawl out of the egg either before you could cry peep!" said the one who was sitting on the egg and hatching. "Yet I almost believe that a human child is going to slip out of the egg, for something is murmuring inside it without ever stopping: 'Herring and mush, porridge and milk,'" said she. "And now you can sit on it for eight days, while we bring you food."

When the fifth day of the eight had passed, it was plain to her that there was a child in the egg, which kept on calling: “Herring and mush, porridge and milk,” and so she punched a hole in the egg, and instead of a gosling out came a child, and it was quite disgustingly homely, with a big head and a small body, and no sooner had it crawled out than it began to cry: “Herring and mush, porridge and milk!” So they named the child Murmur Goose-Egg.

In spite of the child’s homeliness, the women at first took a great deal of pleasure in him; but before long he grew so greedy that he devoured everything they had. When they cooked a dish of mush or a potful of porridge that was to do for all six of them, the child swallowed it all by himself. So they did not want to keep him any longer. “I have not had a single full meal since the changling crawled out,” said one of them; and when Murmur Goose-Egg heard that, and the rest agreed, he said that he would gladly go his own gait, for “if they had no need of him, then he had no need of them,” and with that he went off. Finally he came to a farmstead that lay in a rocky section, and asked for work. Yes, they needed a workman, and the master told him to gather up the stones in the field. Then Murmur Goose-Egg gathered up the stones in the field; he picked up some that were so large that a number of horses could not have dragged them, and large and small, one and all, he put them in his pocket. Before long he had finished his work, and wanted to know what he was to do next.

“You have picked up the stones in the field?” said his master. “You cannot possibly have finished before you have really begun!”

But Murmur Goose-Egg emptied his pockets, and threw the stones on a pile. Then his master saw that he had finished his work, and that one would have to handle such a strong fellow with kid gloves. So he told him to come in and eat. That suited Murmur Goose-Egg, and he ate up everything that was to have supplied the master and his family, and the help, and then he was only half satisfied.

He was really a splendid worker; but a dangerous eater, like a bottomless cask, said the peasant. “Such a serving-man could eat up a poor peasant, house and ground, before he noticed it,” said he. He had no more work for him, and the best thing to do would be to go to the king’s castle.

So Murmur Goose-Egg went to the king, and was at once given a place, and there was enough to eat and drink in the castle. He was to be the errand-boy, and help the maids fetch wood and water, and do other odd jobs. So he asked what he was to do first.

For the time being he could chop fire-wood, said they. So Murmur Goose-Egg began to chop fire-wood, and hewed to the line in such fashion that the chips fairly flew. Before long he had chopped up all that there was, kindling wood and building wood, beams and boards, and when he was through with it, he came and asked what he was to do now.

“You can finish chopping the fire-wood,” said they.

“There is none left,” said Murmur Goose-Egg.

That could not be possible, said the superintendent, and looked into the wood-bin. Yes, indeed, Murmur Goose-Egg had chopped up everything, large and small, beams and boards. That was very bad, and therefore the superintendent said that Murmur Goose-Egg should have nothing to eat until he had chopped down just as much wood in the forest as he had just chopped up for fire-wood.

Then Murmur Goose-Egg went into the smithy, and had the smith make an iron ax of five hundred-weights. With that he went into the forest and began to chop. He chopped down big pine and fir trees, as thick as masts, and all that he found on the king’s ground, as well as what he found on that of his neighbors. But he cut off neither the branches nor the tree-tops, so that all lay there as though felled by the storm. Then he loaded a sizable stack on the sled, and put to the horses. But they could not move the load from the spot, and when he took them by the heads, in order to pull them forward, he tore off their heads. So he unharnessed them, and left them lying in the field, and put himself to the sled, and went off alone with the load. When he came to the king's castle, there stood the king with the master carpenter in the entrance, and they were ready to give him a warm reception, because of the destruction he had wrought in the forest. For the master carpenter had been there and seen the havoc he had made. But when Murmur Goose-Egg came along with half the forest, the king grew frightened as well as angry, and he thought that if Murmur was so strong, it would be best to handle him with care.

"Why, you are a splendid workman," said the king, "but tell me, how much do you really eat at once," he continued, "for I am sure you are hungry?"

If he were to have enough porridge, they would have to take twelve tons of meal to make it; but after he had eaten that, then he could wait a while, said Murmur Goose-Egg.

It took some time before so much porridge could be prepared, and in the meantime Murmur was to carry wood into the kitchen. So he piled the whole load of wood on a sled, but when he drove it through the door, he did not go to work about it very gently. The house nearly broke from its joints, and he well-nigh tore down the entire castle. When at last dinner was ready, they sent him out into the field, to call the help. He called so loudly that hill and vale reëchoed the sound. But still the people did not come quick enough to suit him. So he picked a quarrel with them, and killed twelve.

"You kill twelve of my people, and you eat for twelve times twelve of them, but how many men's work can you do?" asked the king.

"I do the work of twelve times twelve, too," said Murmur. When he had eaten, he was to go to the barn and thresh. So he pulled the beam out of the roof-tree, and made a flail out of it, and when the roof threatened to fall in, he took a pine-tree with all its boughs and branches, and set it up in place of the roof-beam. Then he threshed corn and hay and straw, all together, and it seemed as though a cloud hung over the royal castle.

When Murmur Goose-Egg had nearly finished threshing, the enemy broke into the land, and war began. Then the king told him to gather people about him, and go to meet the foe, and do battle with him, for he thought the enemy would probably kill him.

No, said Murmur Goose-Egg, he did not want to have the king's people killed, he would see that he dealt with the enemy himself.

All the better, thought the king, then I am sure to get rid of him. But he would need a proper club, said Murmur.

So they sent to the smith, and he forged a club of two hundred-weights. That would only do for a nut-cracker, said Murmur Goose-Egg. So he forged another that weighed six hundred-weights, and that would do to hammer shoes with, said Murmur Goose-Egg. But the smith told him that he and all his workmen together could not forge a larger one.

Then Murmur Goose-Egg went into the smithy himself, and forged himself a club of thirty hundred-weights, and it would have taken a hundred men just to turn it around on the anvil. This might do at a pinch, said Murmur. Then he wanted a knapsack with provisions. It was sewn together out of fifteen ox-skins, and stuffed full of provisions, and then Murmur wandered down the hill with the knapsack on his back, and the club over his shoulder.

When he came near enough for the soldiers to see him, they sent to ask whether he had a mind to attack them.

"Just wait until I have eaten," said Murmur, and sat him down behind his knapsack to eat. But the enemy would not wait, and began to fire at him. And it fairly rained and hailed musket-balls all around Murmur.

"I don't care a fig for these blueberries," said Murmur Goose-Egg, and feasted on quite at ease. Neither lead nor iron could wound him, and his knapsack stood before him, and caught the bullets like a wall.

Then the enemy began to throw bombs at him, and shoot at him with cannon. He hardly moved when he was struck. "O, that's of no account!"

said he.

But then a bomb flew into his wind-pipe. “Faugh!” said he, and spat it out again, and then came a chain-bullet and fell into his butter-plate, and another tore away the bit of bread from between his fingers.

Then he grew angry, stood up, took his club, pounded the ground with it, and asked whether they wanted to take the food from his mouth with the blueberries they were blowing out at him from their clumsy blow-pipes. Then he struck a few more blows, so that the hills and valleys round about trembled, and all the enemy flew up into the air like chaff, and that was the end of the war.

When Murmur came back and asked for more work, the king was at a loss, for he had felt sure that now he was rid of him. So he knew of nothing better to do than to send him to the devil’s place.

“Now you can go to the devil, and fetch the tribute from him,” said the king. Murmur Goose-Egg went off with his knapsack on his back, and his club over his shoulder. He had soon reached the right spot; but when he got there the devil was away at a trial. There was no one home but his grandmother, and she said she had never yet heard anything about a tribute, and that he was to come back some other time.

“Yes, indeed, come again to-morrow,” said he. “I know that old excuse!” But since he was there, he would stay there, for he had to take home the tribute, and he had plenty of time to wait. But when he had eaten all his provisions, he grew weary, and again demanded the tribute from the grandmother.

“You will get nothing from me, and that’s as flat as the old fir-tree outside is fast,” said the devil’s grandmother. The fir-tree stood in front of the gate to the devil’s place, and was so large that fifteen men could hardly girdle it with their arms. But Murmur climbed up into its top and bent and shook it to and fro as though it were a willow wand, and then asked the devil’s grandmother once more whether she would now pay him the tribute.

So she did not dare to refuse any longer, and brought out as much money as he could possibly carry in his knapsack. Then he set out for home with the tribute, and now no sooner had he gone than the devil came home, and when he learned that Murmur had taken along a big bag of money, he first beat his grandmother, and then hurried after Murmur. And he soon caught up to him, for he ran over sticks and stones, and sometimes flew in between; while Murmur had to stick to the highway with his heavy knapsack. But with the devil at his heels, he began to run as fast as he could, and stretched out the club behind him, to keep the devil from coming to close quarters. And thus they ran along, one behind the other; while Murmur held the shaft and the devil the end of the club, until they reached a deep valley. There Murmur jumped from one mountain-top to another, and the devil followed him so hotly that he ran into the club, fell down into the valley and broke his foot — and there he lay.

“There’s your tribute!” said Murmur Goose-Egg, when he had reached the royal castle, and he flung down the knapsack full of money before the king, so that the whole castle tottered. The king thanked him kindly, and promised him a good reward, and a good character, if he wanted it; but Murmur only wanted more work to do.

“What shall I do now?” he asked. The king reflected for a while, and then he said Murmur should travel to the hill-troll, who had robbed him of the sword of his ancestors. He lived in a castle by the sea, where no one ventured to go.

Murmur was given a few cart-loads of provisions in his big knapsack, and once more set out. Long he wandered, though, over field and wood, over hills and deep valleys, till he came to a great mountain where the troll lived who had robbed the king of the sword.

But the troll was not out in the open, and the mountain was closed, so Murmur could not get it. So he joined a party of stone-breakers, who were working at a mountainside, and worked along with them. They had never had such a helper, for Murmur hewed away at the rocks till they burst, and stone bowlders as large as houses came rolling down. But when he was about to rest and eat up the first cart-load of his provisions, it had already been eaten up. “I have a good appetite myself,” said Murmur, “but whoever got hold of it has an even better one, for he has eaten up the bones as well!”

Thus it went the first day, and the second was no better. On the third day he went to work again, and took along the third cart-load, lay down behind it, and pretended to be sleeping.

Then a troll with seven heads came out of the hill, began to smack his lips, and eat of his provisions.

“Now the table is set, so now I am going to eat,” said he.

“First we’ll see about that,” said Murmur, and hewed away at the troll so that the heads flew from his body.

Then he went into the hill out of which the troll had come, and inside stood a horse eating out of a barrel of glowing ashes, while behind him stood a barrel filled with oats.

“Why don’t you eat out of the barrel of oats?” asked Murmur Goose-Egg.

“Because I cannot turn around,” said the horse.

“I will turn you around,” said Murmur Goose-Egg.

“Tear my head off instead,” pleaded the horse.

Murmur did so, and then the horse turned into a fine-looking man. He said that he had been enchanted, and turned into a horse by the troll. Then he helped Murmur look for the sword, which the troll had hidden under the bed. But in the bed lay the troll’s grandmother, and she was snoring.

They went home by water, and just as they sailed off the old troll grandmother came after them; but she could not get at them, hence she commenced to drink, so that the water went down and grew lower. But at last she could not drink up the whole sea, and so she burst.

When they came ashore, Murmur sent to the king, and had him told to have the sword fetched; but though the king sent four horses, they could not move it from the spot. He sent eight, he sent twelve, but the sword remained where it was, and could not be moved from the spot by any means. Then Murmur Goose-Egg took it up, and carried it alone.

The king could not believe his eyes when he saw Murmur once more; but he was very friendly and promised him gold and green forests. But when Murmur asked for more work, he told him to travel to his troll's castle, where no one dared go, and to remain there until he had built a bridge across the sound, so that people could cross. If he could do that, he would reward him well, yes, he would even give him his daughter, said the king. He would attend to it, said Murmur.

Yet no human being had ever returned thence alive; all who had gotten so far, lay on the ground dead, and crushed to a jelly, and the king thought, when sending him there, that he would never see him again.

But Murmur set out. He took with him his knapsack full of provisions, and a properly turned and twisted block of pine-wood, as well as an ax, a wedge and some wooden chips.

When he reached the sound, the river was full of drifting ice, and it roared like a waterfall. But he planted his legs firmly on the ground, and waded along until he got across. When he had warmed himself and satisfied his hunger, he wanted to sleep; but a tumult and rumbling started, as though the whole castle were to be turned upside down. The gate flew wide open, and Murmur saw nothing but a pair of yawning jaws that reached from the threshold to the top of the door.

"Let's see who you may be? Perhaps you are an old friend of mine," said Murmur. And sure enough, it was Master Devil. Then they played cards together. The devil would gladly have won back some of the tribute Murmur had forced from his grandmother for the king. Yet, no matter how he played, Murmur always won; for he made a cross on the cards. And after he had won all the devil had with him, the latter had to give him some of the gold and silver that was in the castle.

In the midst of their game the fire went out, so that they could no longer tell the cards apart.

“Now we must split wood,” said Murmur. He hewed into the block of pine-wood with his ax, and drove in the wedge, but the tree-stump was tough, and would not split at once, though Murmur gave himself all manner of pains.

“You are supposed to be strong,” he said to the devil. “Spit on your hands, slap in your claws here, and pull the block apart, so that I can see what you can do!”

The devil obediently thrust both hands into the split, and tore and clawed with all his might; but suddenly Murmur Goose-Egg knocked out the wedge, and there the devil was caught in a vice, while Murmur belabored his back with the ax. The devil wailed, and begged Murmur to let him go; but Murmur would hear nothing of it until he had promised never to come back and make a nuisance of himself again. Besides that, he had to promise to build a bridge over the sound, on which one could go back and forth at all seasons of the year. And the bridge was to be completed immediately after the breaking up of the ice-drift.

“Alas!” said the devil, but there was nothing for it but to promise if he wished to go free. Yet he made one condition, that he was to have the first soul that crossed the bridge as sound-toll.

He could have it, said Murmur. Then he let the devil out, and he ran straight home. But Murmur lay down and slept until far into the following day.

Then the king came to see whether Murmur Goose-Egg were lying crushed on the ground, or had merely been badly beaten. He had to wade through piles of money before he could reach the bed. The money was stacked up high along the walls in heaps and in bags, and Murmur lay in the bed and snored.

“May heaven help me and my daughter!” cried the king, when he saw that Murmur Goose-Egg was in the best of health. Yes, and no one could deny that everything had been well and thoroughly done, said the king; but there could be no talk of marriage as long as the bridge had not been built.

Then one day the bridge was finished; and on it stood the devil, ready to collect the toll promised him.

Murmur Goose-Egg wanted the king to be the first to try the bridge with him; but the king had no mind to do so, therefore Murmur himself mounted a horse, and swung up the fat dairy-maid from the castle before him on the saddle-bow — she looked almost like a gigantic block of wood — and dashed across the bridge with her so that the planks fairly thundered.

“Where is my sound-toll? Where is the soul?” cried the devil. “Sitting in this block of wood! If you want her, you must spit on your hands and catch hold of her,” said Murmur Goose-Egg. “No, thank you! If she does not catch hold of me, then I’ll certainly not catch hold of her,” said the devil. “You caught me in a vice once, but you can’t fool me a second time,” said he, and flew straight home to his grandmother, and since then nothing more has been heard or seen of him.

But Murmur Goose-Egg hurried back to the castle and asked for the reward the king had promised him. And when the king hesitated and began to make all sorts of excuses, in order not to have to keep his promise, Murmur said it would be best to have a substantial knapsackful of provisions made ready, since now he, Murmur, was going to take his reward himself. This the king did, and when the knapsack was ready, Murmur took the king along with him in front of the castle, and gave him a proper shove, so that he flew high up into the air. And he threw the knapsack up after him, so that he would not be left altogether without provisions; and if he has not come down yet, then he, together with the knapsack, is floating between heaven and earth to this very day.

52

THE TROLL-WIFE

Once upon a time, long, long years ago, there lived a well-to-do old couple on a homestead up in Hadeland. They had a son, who was a dragoon, a big, handsome fellow. They had a pasture in the hills, and the hut was not like most of the herdsmen's huts; but was well and solidly built, and even had a chimney, a roof and a window. And there they spent the summer; but when they came back home in the fall, the wood-cutters and huntsmen and fishermen, and whoever else had business in the woods at that time, noticed that the mountain folk had carried on its tricks with their herd. And among the mountain folk was a maiden who was so beautiful that her like had never been seen.

The son had often heard tell of her, and one fall, when his parents had already come home from the mountain pasture, he put on his full uniform, saddled his service horse, thrust his pistols in the holsters, and thus rode up into the hills. When he rode toward the pasture, such a fire burned in the herdsman's hut that it lit up every road, and then he knew that the mountain folk were inside. So he tied his horse to a pine-tree, took a pistol from its holster, crept up to the hut, and peeped through the window. And there sat an old man and a woman who were quite crooked and shriveled up with age, and so unspeakably ugly that he had never seen anything like it in his life; but with them was a maiden, and she was so surpassingly beautiful that he fell in love with her at once, and felt that he could not live without her. All had cow's tails, and the lovely maiden, too. And he could see that they had only just arrived, for everything was in disorder. The maiden was busy washing the ugly old man, and the woman was building a fire under the great cheese-kettle on the hearth.

At that moment the dragoon flung open the door, and shot off his pistol right above the maiden's head, so that she tottered and fell to the ground. And then she grew every bit as ugly as she had been beautiful before, and she had a nose as long as a pistol-case.

"Now you may take her, for now she belongs to you!" said the old man. But the dragoon stood as though rooted to the spot; stood where he stood, and could not take a single step, either forward or backward. Then the old man began to wash the girl; and she looked a little better; her nose was only half its original size, and her ugly cow's tail was tied back; but she was not as handsome, and any one who said so would not have been telling the truth.

"Now she is yours, my proud dragoon! Take her up before you on your horse, and ride into town and marry her. And you need only set the table for us in the little room in the bake-house; for we do not want to be with the other wedding-guests," said the old monster, her father, "but when the dishes make the round, you can stop in where we are."

He did not dare do anything else, and took her up before him on his horse, and made ready to marry her. But before she went to church, the bride begged one of the bridesmaids to stand close behind her, so that no one could see her tail fall off when the priest joined their hands.

So the wedding was celebrated, and when the dishes made the round, the bridegroom went out into the room where the table had been set for the old folk from the mountain. And at that time there was nothing to be seen there; but after the wedding-guests had gone, there was so much gold and silver, and such a pile of money lying there, as he had never seen together before.

For a long time all went well. Whenever guests came, his wife laid the table for the old folk in the bake-house, and on each occasion so much money was left lying there, that before long they did not know what to do with it all. But ugly she was, and ugly she remained, and he was heartily weary of her. So it was bound to happen that he sometimes flew into a rage, and threatened her with cuffs and blows. Once he wanted to go to town, and since it was fall, and the ground already frozen, the horse had first to be shod. So he went into the smithy — for he himself was a notable farrier — but, no matter what lie did, the horse-shoe was either too large or too small, and would not fit at all. He had no other horse at home, and he toiled away until noon and on into the afternoon. “Will you never make an end of your shoeing?” asked his wife. “You are not a very good husband; but you are a far worse farrier. I see there is nothing left for me but to go into the smithy myself and shoe the horse. This shoe is too large, you should have made it smaller, and that one is too small, you should have made it larger.”

She went into the smithy, and the first thing she did was to take the horse-shoe in both hands and bend it straight.

“There, look at it,” said she, “that is how you must do it.” And with that she bent it together again as though it were made of lead. “Now hold up the horse’s leg,” said she, and the horse-shoe fitted to a hair, so that the best farrier could not have bettered it.

“You have a great deal of strength in your fingers,” said her husband, and he looked at her.

“Do you think so?” was her reply. “What would have happened to me had you been as strong? But I love you far too dearly ever to use my strength against you,” said she.

And from that day on he was the best of husbands.

53

THE KING’S HARES

Once upon a time there was a man who lived in the little back room. He had given up his estate to the heir; but in addition he had three sons, who were named Peter, Paul and Esben, who was the youngest. All three hung around at home and would not work, for they had it too easy, and they thought themselves too good for anything like work, and nothing was good enough for them. Finally Peter once heard that the king wanted a shepherd for his hares, and he told his father he would apply for the position, as it would just suit him, seeing that he wished to serve no one lower in rank than the king. His father, it is true, was of the opinion that there might be other work that would suit him better, for whoever was to herd hares would have to be quick and spry, and not a sleepy-head, and when the hares took to their heels in all directions, it was a dance of another kind than when one skipped about a room. But it was of no use. Peter insisted, and would have his own way, took his knapsack, and shambled down hill. After he had gone a while, he saw an old woman who had got her nose wedged in a tree-stump while chopping wood, and when Peter saw her jerking and pulling away, trying to get out, he burst into loud laughter.

“Don’t stand there and laugh in such a stupid way,” said the woman, “but come and help a poor, feeble old woman. I wanted to split up some fire-wood, and caught my nose here, and here I have been standing for more than a hundred years, pulling and jerking, without a bit of bread to chew in all that time," said she.

Then Peter had to laugh all the harder. He found it all very amusing, and said that if she had already been standing there a hundred years, then she could probably hold out for another hundred years or more.

When he came to court they at once took him on as a herdsman. The place was not bad, there was good food, and good wages, and the chance of winning the princess besides; yet if no more than a single one of the king's hares were to be lost, they would cut three red strips from his back, and throw him into the snake-pit.

As long as Peter was on the common or in the enclosure, he kept his hares together nicely, but later, when they reached the forest, they ran away from him across the hills. Peter ran after them with tremendous leaps, as long as he thought he could catch even a single hare, but when the very last one had vanished, his breath was gone, and he saw no more of them. Toward noon he went home, taking his time about it, and when he reached the enclosure, he looked around for them on all sides, but no hares came. And then, when he came to the castle, there stood the king with the knife in his hand. He cut three red strips from his back, and cast him into the snake-pit.

After a while Paul decided to go to the castle and herd the king's hares. His father told him what he had told Peter, and more besides; but he insisted on going, and would not listen, and he fared neither better nor worse than Peter had. The old woman stood and pulled and jerked at her nose in the tree-trunk, and he laughed, found it very amusing, and let her stand there and torment herself. He was at once taken into service, but the hares all ran away across the hills, though he pursued them, and worked away like a shepherd dog in the sun, and when he came back to the castle in the evening minus his hares, there stood the king with the knife in his hand, cut three broad strips from his back, rubbed in pepper and salt, and flung him into the snake-pit.

Then, after some time had passed, the youngest decided to set out to herd the king’s hares, and told his father of his intention. He thought that would be just the work for him, to loaf about in forest and field, look for strawberry patches, herd a flock of hares, and lie down and sleep in the sun between times. His father thought that there was other work that would suit him better, and that even if he fared no worse than his brothers, it was quite certain that he would fare no better. Whoever herded the king’s hares must not drag along as though he had lead in his soles, or like a fly on a limerod; and that when the hares took to their heels, it was a horse of another color from catching flees with gloved hands; whoever wanted to escape with a whole back, would have to be more than quick and nimble, and swifter than a bird. But there was nothing he could do. Esben merely kept on saying that he wanted to go to court and serve the king, for he would not take service with any lesser master, said he; and he would see to the hares, they could not be much worse than a herd of goats or of calves. And with that he took his knapsack and strolled comfortably down the hill.

After he had wandered a while, and began to feel a proper hunger, he came to the old woman who was wedged by the nose in the tree-trunk and who was pulling and jerking away, in order to get loose.

“Good day, mother,” said Esben, “and why are you worrying yourself so with your nose, you poor thing?” “No one has called me mother for the last hundred years,” said the old woman, “but come and help me out, and give me a bite to eat; for I have not had a bit to eat in all that time. And I will do something for your sake as well,” said she.

Yes, no doubt she would need something to eat and drink badly, said Esben.

Then he hewed the tree-trunk apart, so that she got her nose out of the cleft, sat down to eat, and shared with her. The old woman had a good appetite, and she received a good half of his provisions.

When they were through she gave Esben a whistle which had the power that if he blew into one end, whatever he wished scattered was scattered to all the winds, and when he blew into the other, all came together again. And if the whistle passed from his possession, it would return as soon as he wished it back.

“That is a wonderful whistle!” thought Esben.

When he came to the castle, they at once took him on as a shepherd; the place was not bad, he was to have food and wages, and should he manage to herd the king’s hares without losing one of them, he might possibly win the princess; but if he lost so much as a single hare, and no matter how small it might be, then they would cut three red strips from his back, and the king was so sure of his case that he went right off to whet his knife. It would be a simple matter to herd the hares, thought Esben; for when they went off they were as obedient as a herd of sheep, and so long as they were on the common, and in the enclosure, they even marched in rank and file. But when they reached the forest, and noon-time came, and the sun burned down on hill and dale, they all took to their heels and ran away across the hills.

“Hallo, there! So you want to run away!” called Esben, and blew into one end of his whistle, and then they scattered the more quickly to all the ends of the earth. But when he had reached an old charcoal-pit, he blew into the other end of his whistle, and before he knew it the hares were back again, and standing in rank and file so he could review them, just like a regiment of soldiers on the drill-ground.

“That is a splendid whistle!” thought Esben; lay down on a sunny hillock, and fell asleep. The hares were left to their own devices, and played until evening; then he once more whistled them together, and took them along to the castle like a herd of sheep.

The king and queen and the princess, too, stood in the hall-way, and wondered what sort of a fellow this was, who could herd hares without losing a single one. The king reckoned and added them up, and counted with his fingers, and then added them up again; but not even the teeny-weeniest hare was missing. “He is quite a chap, he is,” said the princess.

The following day he again went to the forest, and herded his hares; but while he lay in all comfort beside a strawberry patch, they sent out the chamber-maid from the castle to him, and she was to find out how he managed to herd the king’s hares.

He showed her his whistle, and blew into one end, and all the hares darted away across the hills in all directions, and then he blew into the other, and they came trotting up from all sides, and once more stood in rank and file. “That is a wonderful whistle,” said the chamber-maid. She would gladly give him a hundred dollars, if he cared to sell it.

“Yes, it is a splendid whistle,” said Esben, “and I will not sell it for money. But if you give me a hundred dollars, and a kiss with every dollar to boot, then I might let you have it.”

Yes, indeed, that would suit her right down to the ground; she would gladly give him two kisses with every dollar, and feel grateful, besides.

So she got the whistle, but when she reached the castle, the whistle disappeared all of a sudden. Esben had wished it back again, and toward evening he came along, driving his hares like a herd of sheep. The king reckoned and counted and added, but all to no purpose, for not the least little hare was missing.

When Esben was herding his hares the third day, they sent the princess to him to get away his pipe from him. She was tickled to death, and finally offered him two hundred dollars if he would let her have the whistle, and would also tell her what she had to do in order to fetch it safely home with her.

“Yes, it is a very valuable whistle,” said Esben, “and I will not sell it,” but at last, as a favor to her, he said he would let her have it if she gave him two hundred dollars, and a kiss for every dollar to boot. But if she wanted to keep it, why, she must take good care of it, for that was her affair.

“That is a very high price for a hare-whistle,” said the princess, and she really shrank from kissing him, “but since we are here in the middle of the forest, where no one can see or hear us, I’ll let it pass, for I positively must have the whistle,” said she. And when Esben had pocketed the price agreed upon, she received the whistle, and held it tightly clutched in her hand all the way home; yet when she reached the castle, and wanted to show it, it disappeared out of her hands. On the following day the queen herself set out, and she felt quite sure that she would succeed in coaxing the whistle away from him.

She was stingier, and only offered fifty dollars; but she had to raise her bid until she reached three hundred. Esben said it was a magnificent whistle, and that the price was a beggarly one; but seeing that she was the queen, he would let it pass. She was to pay him three hundred dollars, and for every dollar she was to give him a buss to boot, then she should have the whistle. And he was paid in full as agreed, since as regards the busses the queen was not so stingy.

When she had the whistle in her hands, she tied it fast, and hid it well, but she fared not a whit better than either of the others; when she wanted to show the whistle it was gone, and in the evening Esben came home, driving his hares as though they were a well-trained flock of sheep.

“You are stupid women!” said the king. “I suppose I will have to go to him myself if we really are to obtain this trumpery whistle. There seems to be nothing else left to do!” And the following day, when Esben was once more herding his hares, the king followed him, and found him at the same place where the women had bargained with him.

They soon became good friends, and Esben showed him the whistle, and blew into one end and the other, and the king thought the whistle very pretty, and finally insisted on buying it, even though it cost him a thousand dollars.

“Yes, it is a magnificent whistle,” said Esben, “and I would not sell it for money. But do you see that white mare over yonder?” said he, and pointed into the forest.

“Yes, she belongs to me, that is my Snow Witch!” cried the king, for he knew her very well.

“Well, if you will give me a thousand dollars, and kiss the white mare that is grazing on the moor by the big pine, to boot, then you can have my whistle!” said Esben.

“Is that the only price at which you will sell?” asked the king.

“Yes,” said Esben.

“But at least may I not put a silken handkerchief between?” asked the king.

This was conceded him, and thus he obtained the whistle. He put it in the purse in his pocket, and carefully buttoned up the pocket. Yet when he reached the castle, and wanted to take it out, he was in the same case as the women, for he no longer had the whistle. And in the evening Esben came home with his herd of hares, and not the least little hare was missing.

The king was angry, and furious because he had made a fool of them all, and had swindled the king’s self out of the whistle into the bargain, and now he wanted to do away with Esben. The queen was of the same opinion, and said it was best to behead such a knave when he was caught in the act.

Esben thought this neither fair nor just; for he had only done what he had been asked to do, and had defended himself as best he knew how.

But the king said that this made no difference to him; yet if Esben could manage to fill the big brewing-cauldron till it ran over, he would spare his life.

The job would be neither long nor hard, said Esben, he thought he could warrant that, and he began to tell about the old woman with her nose in the tree-trunk, and in between he said, “I must make up plenty of stories, to fill the cauldron,” — and then he told of the whistle, and the chamber-maid who came to him and wanted to buy the whistle for a hundred dollars, and about all the kisses that she had had to give him to boot, up on the hillock by the forest; and then he told about the princess, how she had come and kissed him so sweetly for the whistle’s sake, because no one could see or hear it in the forest — “I must make up plenty of stories, in order to fill the cauldron,” said Esben. Then he told of the queen, and of how stingy she had been with her money, and how liberal with her busses — “for I must make up plenty of stories in order to fill the cauldron,” said Esben.

“But I think it must be full now!” said the queen.

“O, not a sign of it!” said the king.

Then Esben began to tell how the king had come to him, and about the white mare who was grazing on the moor, “and since he insisted on having the whistle he had to — he had to — well, with all due respect, I have to make up plenty of stories in order to fill the cauldron,” said Esben.

“Stop, stop! It is full, fellow!” cried the king. “Can’t you see that it is running over?”

The king and the queen were of the opinion that it would be best for Esben to receive the princess and half the kingdom; there did not seem anything else to do.

“Yes, it was a magnificent whistle!” said Esben.

54

HELGE-HAL IN THE BLUE HILL

Once upon a time there was a sinister old couple, who lived out under the open sky. All that they had were three sons, an old cook-pot, an old frying-pan, and an old cat. Then the man died, and after a time his wife died, too. Now their estate was to be divided. So the oldest took the old cook-pot, and the second took the old frying-pan, and Ebe Ashpeter had no choice. He had to take the old cat, and they did not ask him whether he wanted to or not.

"Brother Peter can scrape out the cook-pot after he has loaned it out," said Ebe. "Brother Paul gets a crust of bread when he lends out his frying-pan; but what am I to do with this wretched cat?" And he was angry and envious. Yet he scratched the cat and stroked it, and this pleased the cat so that she began to purr, and raised her tail in the air.

"Wait, wait, I'll help you yet," said the cat, "wait, wait, I'll help you yet!"

There was nothing to bite or break in the hut. Brother Peter and Brother Paul had each of them gone off in a different direction. So Ebe set out, too, with the cat in the lead, himself following; but after a time he turned and went home again, to see whether the floor had been swept, and the cat tripped on alone. After she had gone her way, tipp, tapp, tipp, tapp, for a while, she came to a great rock, and there she met an enormous herd of reindeer. The cat crept softly around the herd, and then with one leap sprang between the horns of the finest buck.

“If you do not go where I want you to, I’ll scratch out your eyes, and drive you over rock and precipice!” said she. So the buck did not dare do anything save what the cat wished, and off they went over stick and stone, from cliff to cliff, close by Ebe, who was just polishing the door-sill of his house, and with one bound right into the castle.

“I am to deliver a kind greeting from Ebe, and ask whether my lord king might care to have this buck reindeer to drive,” said the cat. Yes, he could make good use of such a young, handsome animal, some time, when he had occasion to drive out to visit a neighboring king.

“This Ebe must be a proud and powerful lord,” said the king, “if he can make me such presents.”

“Yes, he is the greatest lord in all your land and kingdom,” said the cat, but no matter how many questions the king asked, he learned nothing more.

“Tell him that I am much obliged,” said the king, and he sent him a whole cart-load of handsome presents. But Ebe looked past them and paid no attention to them.

“Brother Peter can scrape out his cook-pot when he has loaned it out, and Brother Paul gets a crust of bread when he lends out his frying-pan; but what am I to do with this wretched cat!” said he, and felt angry and envious; but still he scratched the cat, and stroked her, and this pleased her so much that she began to purr, and raised her tail in the air.

“Wait, wait, I will help you yet,” said the cat, “wait, wait, I will help you yet!”

The next day they both set out again, the cat in the lead, and Ebe following. After a while he turned back to see whether the folding-table at home had been scoured. And the cat tripped on alone. After she had gone her way, tipp, tapp, tipp, tapp, for a while, she came to a dense forest slope. There she found an enormous herd of elk. The cat crept softly up, and suddenly there she sat between the horns of one of the stateliest of the bull elks.

“If you do not go where I want you to, I will scratch out your eyes, and drive you over rock and precipice!” said the cat. The elk did not dare do anything save what the cat wished, and so off they went, like lightning, over stick and stone, from cliff to cliff, right past Ebe, who stood before the house scouring the shutters, and with one bound into the king’s castle.

“I am to deliver a kind greeting from Ebe, and ask whether my lord king might not care to have this bull elk for courier service.” It was quite clear that should the king want a swift messenger, some time, he could not find a swifter in all his kingdom.

“This Ebe must be a most distinguished lord, since he finds such presents for me,” said the king.

“Yes, indeed, one might call him a distinguished lord,” said the cat, “his wealth is without end or limit.” But no matter how many other questions the king asked, he received no more explicit information.

“Tell him that I am much obliged, and to do me the honor to call when he is passing here some time,” said the king, and sent him a robe as handsome as the one he himself was wearing, and three cartloads of handsome presents. But Ebe did not even want to put on the royal robe, and hardly looked at the other presents.

“Brother Peter can scrape out his cook-pot when he has loaned it out, Brother Paul gets a crust of bread when he lends out his frying-pan; but of what use is this wretched cat to me!” he said, in spite of all. Yet he stroked the cat, and pressed her to his cheek, and scratched her, and this pleased the cat so very much that she purred more than on the other occasions, and stuck her tail up into the air as straight as a rod.

“Wait, wait, I will help you yet,” said the cat, “wait, wait, I will help you yet!”

On the third day they set out again, the cat in the lead, and Ebe following. After a time it occurred to him to go back and let the mice out of the house, so that they would not be altogether starved in the old hut; and the cat tripped on alone. After she had gone her way, tipp, tapp, tipp, tapp, for a while, she came to a dense pine forest, and there she met a father bear, a mother bear and a baby bear. The cat crept softly up to them, and all at once she was hanging by her claws to the father bear's head.

"If you do not go where I want you to, I will scratch out your eyes, and drive you over rock and precipice!" said the cat, and spit and arched her back. Then the father bear did not dare do anything save what the cat wished, and now they dashed past Ebe, who had just carried all the young mice over the threshold, like a storm, over stick and stone, from cliff to cliff, so that the earth trembled and shook. The king was just standing in the hallway, and was not a little surprised to see such guests arriving.

"I am to deliver a kind greeting from Ebe, and ask whether my lord king might not care to have this bear for a general or royal counselor," said the cat. The king was more than pleased to secure such a creature for his nearest adviser, who could doubt it.

"Tell him that I am much obliged, but that I do not at all know how to show my appreciation," said the king.

"Well, he would like to marry your youngest daughter!" said the cat.

"Yes, but that is asking a good deal," said the king. "He really ought to pay me a visit."

"Ebe does not enter such plain houses," said the cat.

"Has he a handsomer castle than this?" asked the king.

"Handsomer? Why, your castle seems like the shabbiest hut in comparison with his!" was the cat's reply.

"You dare come into my presence, and tell me that there is some one living in my kingdom who is more handsomely housed than I, the king!"

shouted the king, beside himself with rage. He came near wringing the cat's neck.

"You might wait until you see it," said the cat. And the king said yes, he would wait. "But if you have told me a falsehood, you shall die, and though you had seven lives," said he.

In the morning the king and the whole court set out to travel to Ebe Ashpeter's castle. The cat was in the little hut, and called for Ebe, thinking it would be best if both of them got underway an hour earlier. After they had gone a while, they met some folk who were herding sheep; and the sheep were bleating and grazing over the whole plain. They were as large as full-grown calves, and their wool was so long that it dragged along the ground after them. "To whom do the sheep belong?" asked the cat. "To Helge-Hal in the Blue Hill," said the shepherds.

"The court is coming past in a moment," said the cat, "and if then you do not at once say that they belong to Ebe, I will scratch out your eyes, and drive you over rock and precipice!" said the cat, and spat and arched her back, and showed her teeth. Then the shepherds were so frightened that they at once promised to do as the cat had ordered.

"But to whom do all these sheep belong?" asked the king, when he came by with the court somewhat later. "They are every bit as handsome as my own!"

"They belong to Ebe," said the shepherds.

Then the cat and Ebe wandered on for a while, and came to a dense forest slope. There they met folk who were tending goats. The goats skipped and leaped about everywhere, and gave such fine milk that better could no where be found.

"To whom do the goats belong?" asked the cat.

"To Helge-Hal in the Blue Hill," said the herdsmen. Then the cat again went through her ferocious preparations, and the herdsmen were so frightened that they did not dare oppose her wishes.

“Now who in the world can be the owner of so many goats?” asked the king. “I myself have none finer!”

“They belong to Ebe,” said the herdsmen.

Then they wandered on for a while, and met folk who were tending cows: wherever one looked the cows lowed and glistened, and each yielded milk enough for three. When the cat heard that these herdsmen were also in the service of Helge-Hal of the Blue Hill, she spat once more, and arched her back, and then all the herdsmen were ready that moment to say what she wished.

“But in heaven’s name, to whom do all these beautiful cattle belong?” asked the king. “There are no such cattle in my whole kingdom!”

“They belong to Lord Ebe,” said the herdsmen.

Then they wandered on for a long, long time. At last they came to a great plain, and there they met horse-herders; and horses whinnied and disported themselves over the whole plain, and their coats were so fine that they glistened as though gilded, and each horse was worth a whole castle.

“For whom do you herd these horses?” asked the cat.

“For Helge-Hal in the Blue Hill,” the herders replied.

“Well, the court will come by here in a little while,” said the cat, “and if you do not say you are herding them for Ebe, I will scratch out your eyes, and drive you over rock and precipice!” said the cat, and she spat, and showed her teeth and claws, and grew so angry her hair stood up all along her back. Then the herders were terribly frightened, and did not dare do anything but what the cat wished.

“But in the name of heaven, to whom do all these horses belong?” asked the king, when he came by with his court.

“They belong to Ebe,” said the herders.

“I never have seen or heard anything like it in all my life!” cried the king. “This Ebe is such a distinguished lord that it is past my understanding!”

The cat and Ebe had long since gone on their way, and had wandered far and ever farther over hill and rock. In the evening, at dusk, they came to a royal castle that glittered and shimmered as though it were of the purest silver and gold — which it was. Yet it was gloomy and depressing, and lonely and barren there, and nowhere was there a sign of life.

Here they went in, and the cat stood with a cake of rye meal just below the door. Suddenly there came a thundering and a thumping so that the earth trembled, and the whole castle shook, and that was the troll who was coming home. And suddenly all was quiet again, and before they knew it, Helge-Hal in the Blue Hill had thrust his three great horrible heads in at the door.

“Let me in! Let me in!” he cried, so that every one shivered. “Wait, wait a bit while I tell you what the rye had to go through before he was made into this cake,” said the cat, and spoke to him in the sweetest way. “First he was threshed, and then he was beaten, and then he was pounded, and then he was thumped, and then he was thrown from one wall to another, and then he was sifted through a sieve....”

“Let me in! Let me in, you chatterbox!” cried the troll, and he was so furious that the sparks flew from him.

“Wait a bit, wait a bit. I will tell you what the rye had to go through before he was made into this cake!” said the cat, and he spoke to him still more sweetly.

“First he was threshed, and then he was beaten, and then he was pounded, and then he was thumped, and then he was thrown from one wall to another, and then he was sifted through a sieve, and shaken here and there, and then he was put on the drying-board, and then in the stove, until it grew so hot that he puffed up more and more, and wanted to get out, but could not,” said the cat, and took her time.

“Get out of the way and let me in!” cried the troll once more, and nearly burst with rage; but the cat acted as though she did not hear him, and talked down the blue from the sky, and went up and down the while, and whenever the troll tried to come in, she met him beneath the door with the cake.

"O, but do take a look at the shining maiden coming up there behind the mountain!" said the cat, after she had talked at length about the sufferings of the rye. And Helge-Hal in the Blue Hill turned his three heads around in order to see the beautiful maiden, too. Then the sun rose, and the troll stiffened into stone. Now Ebe obtained all the riches that the troll had possessed, the sheep and goats, the cows and all the spirited horses, and the handsome golden castle, and some big bags of money besides.

"Here come the king and all his court," said the cat. "Just go out before the door and receive them!" So Ebe got up and went to meet them.

"You are indeed a very distinguished lord!" said the king to him. "So far as I am concerned you may have the youngest princess!"

Then they started brewing and baking on a large scale in the greatest haste, and everything was made ready for the wedding. On the first day of the feast the cat came and begged the bridegroom to cut off her head. This he did not at all want to do; but the cat spat and showed her teeth, and then Ebe did not dare disobey her. But when the head fell to the ground, the cat turned into a most handsome prince. He married the second princess, and as the wedding procession was on its way to church, they met a third prince who was looking for a wife, and he took the oldest princess. Then they all three celebrated their weddings so that the story went the rounds in twelve kingdoms.

55

THE LORD OF THE HILL AND JOHN BLESSOM

John Blessom once upon a time had gone down to Copenhagen to carry on a suit at law, for in those days one could not get justice in the land of Norroway; and if a man wanted his rights, there was nothing left for him to do but to travel to Copenhagen. This is what Blessom had done, and what his son did after him, for he, too, carried on a law-suit. Now it chanced that on Christmas Eve John had had speech with the gentleman in authority, and had attended to his business, and was going along the street in a low-spirited manner, for he was homesick. And as he went along, a man from Vaage, in a white blouse, with a knapsack, and buttons as big as silver dollars, passed him. He was a large, heavily-built man. It seemed to Blessom that he must know him; but he was walking very fast.

“You are walking very fast,” said John.

“Yes, but then I’m in a hurry,” answered the man. “I have to get back to Vaage this very evening.”

“I only wish that I could get there!” sighed John.

“You can stand on the runner of my sledge,” said the man, “for I have a horse that covers a mile in twelve steps.”

So they set out, and Blessom had all that he could do to hold fast to the runner of the sledge; for they went through weather and wind, and he could see neither heaven nor earth.

Once they stopped and rested. He could not tell exactly where it was, but when they began to hurry on again, he thought that he spied a skull on a pole. After they had gone on a while, John Blessom began to freeze.

“Alas, I forgot one of my gloves where we stopped, and now my hand is freezing!” said he.

“Well, Blessom, you’ll have to make the best of it,” said the man. “We are not far from Vaage now. When we stopped to rest we had covered half the way.”

When they crossed the Finnebridge, the man stopped and set John down.

“Now you are not far from home,” said he, “but you must promise me that you will not look around, when you hear a roaring and notice a flare of light.”

John promised, and thanked him for the quick journey. The man drove off on his way, and John crossed the hill to his home. As he went he heard a roaring in the Jutulsberg, and the path before him suddenly grew so bright that one could have picked a needle from the ground. And he forgot what he had promised, and turned his head to see what was happening. There stood the giant gate of the Jutulsberg wide open, and out of it streamed a light and radiance as of thousands of candles. In the midst of it all stood the giant, and he was the man with whom he had driven. But from that time forward John’s head was twisted, and so it remained as long as he lived.

56

THE YOUNG FELLOW AND THE DEVIL

Once upon a time there was a young fellow, who was going along cracking nuts. He found a wormy one, and at the selfsame moment he met the devil. “Is it true,” said the young fellow, “that the devil can make himself as small as he likes, and can slip through the eye of a needle, as the people say?” “Yes,” answered the devil. “Well, I should certainly like to see you crawl into that nut!” said the young fellow. The devil did so. But when he had crawled through the hole, the young fellow stopped it up with a bit of wood. “Now I’ve got you!” said he, and put the nut in his pocket. After he had gone a while, he came to a smithy, and went in and asked the smith to break the nut for him. “Why, that is a mere trifle!” said the smith, took his smallest hammer, laid the nut on the anvil, and struck it; but the nut would not break. Then he took a somewhat larger hammer; but that was not heavy enough either. Then he took a still larger one, but could do nothing with it at all, and thereupon he grew angry, and took his heaviest hammer. “I’ll break you yet!” said he, and struck it with all his might. And then the nut cracked, so that half the smithy roof was carried away, and there was a crash as though the whole hut were falling in. “I believe the devil was in that nut!” said the smith. “And so he was!” answered the young fellow.

57

FARTHER SOUTH THAN SOUTH, AND FARTHER NORTH THAN NORTH, AND IN THE GREAT HILL OF GOL

Once upon a time there was a peasant who had a wheat-field, which was trampled down every Saturday night. Now the peasant had three sons, and he told each one of them to spend a Saturday night in the field, and to watch and see who trampled it down. The oldest was to make the first trial. So he lay down by the upper ridge of the field, and after he had lain there a while he fell asleep. The following morning the whole field had been trampled down, and the young fellow was unable to tell how it had happened.

Now the second son was to make the attempt; but he had the same experience. After he had lain a while he fell asleep, and in the morning he was unable to tell how the field had come to be trampled down.

Now it was the turn of John by the Ashes. He did not lie down by the upper ridge of the field; but lower down, and stayed awake. After he had lain there a while, three doves came flying along. They settled in the field, and that very moment shook off all their feathers, and turned into the most beautiful maidens one might wish to see. They danced with each other over the whole field; and while they did so, the young fellow gathered up all their feathers. Toward morning they wanted to put on their feathers again, but could not find them anywhere. Then they were frightened, and wept and searched and searched and wept. Finally, they discovered the young fellow, and begged him to give them back their feathers. “But why do you dance in our wheat-field?” said the young fellow. “Alas, it is not our fault,” said the maidens. “The troll who has enchanted us sends us here every Saturday night to trample the field. But now give us our feathers, for morning is near.” And they begged for them in the sweetest way. “I do not know about that,” said the young fellow, “you have trampled down the field so very badly; perhaps — if I might choose and have one of you?” “That would please us,” returned the maidens, “but it would not be possible; for three trolls guard us, one with three, one with six and one with nine heads, and they kill all who come to the mountain.” But the young fellow said that one of them pleased him so very much that he would make the attempt, in spite of what they had told him. So he chose the middle one, for she seemed the most beautiful to him, and she gave him a ring and put it on his finger. And then the maidens at once put on their garments of dove feathers, and flew back across forest and hill.

When the young fellow returned home, he told what he had seen. “And now I must set out and try my luck,” said he. “I do not know whether I will return, but I must make the venture.” “O John, John by the Ashes!” said his brothers, and laughed at him. “Well, it makes no difference, even though I am worthless,” said John by the Ashes. “I must try my luck.” So the young fellow set out to wander to the place where the maidens lived. They had told him it was farther south than south, and farther north than north, in the great hill of gold. After he had gone a while, he met two poor lads who were quarreling with each other about a pair of old shoes and a bamboo cane, which their mother had left them. The young fellow said it was not worth quarreling about such things, and that he had better shoes and better canes at home. “You cannot say that,” returned the brothers, “for whoever has these shoes on can cover a thousand miles in a single step, and whatever is touched with this cane must die at once.” The young fellow went on to ask whether they would sell the things. They said that they ought to get a great deal for them. “But what you say of them is not true at all,” the young fellow replied. “Yes, indeed, it is absolutely true,” they answered. “Just let me see whether the boots will fit me,” said the young fellow. So they let him try them on. But no sooner did the young fellow have the boots on his feet, and the cane in his hand, than he took a step and off he was, a thousand miles away.

A little later he met two young fellows who were quarreling over an old fiddle, which had been left them. “Now is that worth while doing?” said the young fellow. “I have a brand-new fiddle at home.” “But I doubt if it has such a tone as ours,” said one of the youths, “for if some one is dead, and you play this fiddle, he will come to life again.” “That really is a good deal,” said the young fellow. “May I draw the bow across the strings?” They told him he might, but no sooner did he have the fiddle in his hand than he took a step, and suddenly he was a thousand miles away.

A little later he met an old man, and him he asked whether he knew where the place might be that was “farther south than south, and farther north than north, and in the great hill of gold.” The man said yes, he knew well enough, but it would not do the young fellow much good to get there, for the troll who lived there killed every one. “O, I have to make the attempt, whether it lead to life or death,” said the young fellow, for he was fonder than fond of the middle one of the three maidens. So he learned the way from the old man, and finally reached the hill. There he had to pass through three rooms, before he came into the hall to the maidens. And there were locks on every door, and at each stood a watchman. “Where do you want to go?” asked the first watchman. “In to the maidens,” said the young fellow. “In you may go, but you’ll not get out again,” said the watchman, “for now the troll will be along before long.” But the young fellow said that, at any rate, he would make the attempt, and went on. So he came to the second watchman. “Where do you want to go?” asked the latter. “In to the maidens,” said the young fellow. “In you may go, but you’ll not get out again," said the watchman, "for the troll will be here any minute." "And yet I will make the attempt," said the young fellow, and the watchman let him pass. So he came to the third watchman. "Where do you want to go?" the latter asked him. "In to the maidens," said the young fellow. "In you may go, but you'll never get out again, for the troll will be here in three shakes of a lamb's tail," said the watchman. "And yet I will make the attempt," said the young fellow, and this watchman also let him pass. Then he reached the inner chamber where the maidens sat. They were so beautiful and distinguished, and the room was so full of gold and silver, that the young fellow never could have imagined anything like it. Then he showed the ring, and asked whether the maidens recognized it. Indeed they did recognize him and the ring. "But you poor unfortunate, this is the end of us and of you!" said they. "The troll with three heads will be along before long, and you had better hide behind the door!" "O, I'm so frightened, I'm so frightened!" wailed the maiden whom the young fellow had chosen. "Just you stop crying," said the young fellow. "I think fortune will favor us!"

The troll came that very moment and thrust his three heads into the door. "Uff, it smells like Christian blood here!" said he. The young fellow struck at the heads with his bamboo cane, and the troll was dead in a minute. So they carried out the body and hid it. A little later the troll with six heads came home. "Uff, it smells like Christian blood here!" said he. "Some one must have crept into the place! But what has become of the other troll?" said he, when he did not see the troll with three heads. "He has not yet come home," said the maidens. "He must have come home," said the troll. "Perhaps he has gone to look for the fellow who crept in here." At that moment the young fellow struck all six of his heads with his bamboo cane, and the troll at once fell dead to the ground. Then they dragged out the corpse.

A while later came the troll with nine heads. “Uff, it smells like Christian blood here!” said he, and grew very angry. “But where are the two others?” said he. “They have not yet come home,” said the maidens. “Indeed they have come,” said the troll, “but they are probably looking for the Christian who has crept in here!” At that moment, the young fellow sprang from behind the door, and struck one head after another with his bamboo cane. But he had no more than reached the eighth than it seemed to him that the troll was getting the upper hand, and he ran out of the door. The troll was so furious that he came near bursting. He seized all the maidens and killed them, and then out he flew after the young fellow. The latter had hidden behind a big rock, and when the troll came darting up, showering sparks in his rage, he struck at his ninth head, too, and the troll fell on his back, dead. Then the young fellow ran in again, took his fiddle and played, and all the maidens came back to life. Now they wanted to go home; but did not know how to find the long road back. “I know what we must do,” said the young fellow, “I will take you on my back, one by one, and then the journey will not be long for us.” And this he did. He carried home all the gold and silver he found in the hill, and then celebrated his wedding with the middle one of the maidens, and if they have not died, they are living this very day.

58

LUCKY ANDREW

There was once a rich peasant who had two sons, named John Nicholas and Lucky Andrew. The oldest was one of those fellows of whom one never can quite make head or tail. He was a most unpleasant customer to deal with, and he was more grasping and greedy than the folk of the Northland are, as a rule, though it is only too rare to find them unblessed with these attractive qualities. The other, Lucky Andrew, was wild and high spirited, but always good natured, and no matter how badly off he might be, he would always insist that he had been born under a lucky star. When the eagle, in order to defend his nest, belabored his head and face till the blood ran, he would still maintain that he was born under a lucky star, if only he managed to bring home a single eaglet. Did his boat capsize, which occasionally happened, and did they discover him hanging to it, quite overcome with the water, cold and exertion, and asked him how he felt, he would reply: “O, quite well. I have been saved. I surely am in luck!”

When their father died, both of them were of age, and not long after they both had to go out to the sand-banks to fetch some fishing-nets, which had been left there since the summer fishing. It was late in the fall, after the time when most fishermen are busy with the summer fishing. Andrew had his gun along, which he carried with him wherever he went. John Nicholas did not say much while they were underway; but he thought all the harder. They were not ready to set out for home again until near evening.

"Hark, Lucky Andrew, do you know there will be a storm to-night?" said John Nicholas, and looked out across the sea. "I think it would be best if we stayed here until morning!"

"There'll be no storm," said Andrew. "The Seven Sisters have not put on their fog-caps, so you may be quite at rest."

But his brother complained of being weary, and at length they decided to remain there for the night. When Andrew awoke he found himself alone; and he saw neither brother nor boat, until he came to the highest point of the island. Then he discovered him far out, darting for land like a sea-gull. Andrew did not understand the whole affair. There were still provisions there, as well as a dish of curd, his gun and various other things. So Andrew wasted but little time in thought. "He will come back this evening," said he. "Only a fool loses heart so long as he can eat." But in the evening there was no brother to be seen, and Andrew waited day by day, and week by week; until at last, he realized that his brother had marooned him on this barren island in order to be able to keep their inheritance for himself, and not have to divide it. And such was the case, for when John Nicholas came in sight of land on his homeward trip, he had capsized the boat, and declared that Lucky Andrew had been drowned.

But the latter did not lose heart. He gathered drift-wood along the strand, shot sea-birds, and looked for mussels and roots. He built himself a raft of drift-timber, and fished with a pole that had also been left behind. One day, while he was at work, he happened to notice a depression or hollow in the sand, as though made by the keel of a large Northland schooner, and he could plainly trace the braidings of the hawsers from the strand up to the top of the island. Then he thought to himself that he was in no danger, for he saw there was truth in the report he had often heard, that the meer-folk made the island their abode, and did much business with their ships.

“God be praised for good company! That was just what I needed. Yes, it is true, as I have always said, that I was born under a lucky star,” thought Andrew to himself; perhaps he said so too, for occasionally he really had to talk a little. So he lived through the fall. Once he saw a boat, and hung a rag on a pole and waved with it; but that very moment the sail dropped, and the crew took to the oars and rowed away at top speed, for they thought the meer-trolls were making signs and waving.

On Christmas Eve Andrew heard fiddles and music far out at sea; and when he came out, he saw a glow of light that came from a great Northland schooner, which was gliding toward the land — yet such a ship he had never yet seen. It has a main-sail of uncommon size, which looked to him to be of silk, and the most delicate tackling, as thin as though woven of steel wire, and everything else was in proportion, as fine and handsome as any Northlander might wish to have. The whole schooner was filled with little people dressed in blue, but the girl who stood at the helm was adorned like a bride, and looked as splendid as a queen, for she wore a crown and costly garments. Yet any one could see that she was a human being, for she was tall, and handsomer than the meer-folk. In fact, Lucky Andrew thought that she was handsomer than any girl he ever had seen. The schooner headed for the land where Andrew stood; but with his usual presence of mind, he hurried to the fisherman’s hut, pulled down his gun from the wall, and crept up into the large loft and hid himself, so that he could see all that passed in the hut. He soon noticed that the whole room was alive with people. They filled it completely and more, and still more of them came in. Then the walls began to crack, and the little hut spread out at all corners, and grew so splendid and magnificent that the wealthiest merchant could not have had its equal; it was almost like being in a royal castle. Tables were covered with the most exquisite silver and gold. When they had eaten they began to dance. Under cover of the noise, Andrew crept to the look-out at the side of the roof, and climbed down. Then he ran to the schooner, threw his flint-stone over it, and in order to make certain, cut a cross into it with his sharp-cutting knife. When he came back again, the dance was in full swing. The tables were dancing and the benches and chairs — everything else in the room was dancing, too. The only one who did not dance was the bride; she only sat there and looked on, and when the bridegroom came to fetch her, she sent him away. For the moment there was no thought of stopping. The fiddler knew neither rest nor repose, and did not pass his cap, but played merrily on with his left hand, and beat time with his foot, until he was dripping with sweat, and the fiddle was hidden by the dust and smoke. When Andrew noticed that his own feet began to twitch where he was standing, he thought to himself: “Now I had better shoot away, or else he will play me right off the ground!” So he turned his gun, thrust it through the window, and shot it off over the bride’s head; but upside down, otherwise the bullet would have hit him. The moment the shot crashed, all the troll-folk tumbled out of the door together; but when they saw that the schooner was banned on the shore, they wailed and crept into a hole in the hill. But all the gold and silver dishes were left behind, and the bride, too, was still sitting there. She told Lucky Andrew that she had been carried into the hill when she was only a small child. Once, when her mother had gone to the pen to attend to the milking, she had taken her along; but when she had to go home for a moment, she left the child sitting under a juniper-bush, and told her that she might eat the berries if she only repeated three times:

I EAT JUNIPER-BERRIES BLUE,
Wherein Jesu’s cross I view.
I eat whortle-berries red,
Since ‘twas for my sake He bled!

But after her mother had gone, she found so many berries that she forgot to say her verse, and so she was enchanted and taken into the hill. And there no harm had been done her, save that she had lost the top joint of the little finger of her left hand, and the goblins had been kind to her; yet it had always seemed to her as though something were not as it should be, she felt as though something weighed upon her, and she had suffered greatly from the advances of the dwarf who had been chosen for her husband. When Andrew learned who her mother and her people were, he saw that they were related to him, and they became very good friends. So Andrew could truly say he had been born under a lucky star. Then they sailed home, and took along the schooner, and all the gold and silver, and all the treasure which had been left in the hut, and then Andrew was far wealthier than his brother.

But the latter, who suspected where all this wealth had come from, did not wish to be any poorer than Andrew. He knew that trolls and goblins walk mainly on Christmas Eve, and for that reason he sailed out to the sand banks at that time. And on Christmas Eve he did see a light or fire, but it seemed to be like will-o’-the-wisps fluttering about. When he came nearer he heard splashes, horrible howls, and cold, piercing cries, and there was a smell of slime and sea-weed, as at ebb-tide. Terrified, he ran up into the hut, from whence he could see the trolls on the shore. They were short and thick like hay-ricks, completely covered with fur, with kirtles of skins, fishing boots, and enormous fist-gloves. In place of head and hair they had bundles of sea-weed. When they crawled up from the strand there was a gleam behind them like that of rotting wood, and when they shook themselves they showered sparks about them. When they drew nearer, John Nicholas crawled up into the loft as his brother had done. The goblins dragged a great stone into the hut, and began to beat their gloves dry against it, and meanwhile they screamed so that John Nicholas’s blood turned to ice in his hiding-place. Then one of them sneezed into the ashes on the hearth in order to make the fire burn again; while the others carried in heather-grass and drift-wood, as coarse and heavy as lead. The smoke and the heat nearly killed the eavesdropper in the loft, and in order to catch his breath and get some fresh air, he tried to crawl out of the look-out in the roof; yet he was of much heavier build than his brother, stuck fast and could move neither in nor out. Then he grew frightened and began to scream; but the goblins screamed much louder, and roared and howled, and thumped and clamored inside and outside the hut. But when the cock crowed they disappeared, and John Nicholas freed himself, too. Yet when he returned home from his trip, he had lost his reason, and after that the same cold, sinister screams which are the mark of the troll in the Northland, might often be heard sounding from store-rooms and lofts where he happened to be. Before his death, however, his reason returned, and he was buried in consecrated ground, as they say. But after that time no human foot ever trod the sand-banks again. They sank, and the meer-folk, it is believed, went to the Lekang Islands. Andrew’s luck held good; no ship made more successful trips than his own; but whenever he came to the Lekang Islands he lay becalmed — the goblins went aboard or ashore with their goods — but after a time he had fair winds, whether he happened to want to go to Bergen, or sail home. He had many children, and all of them were bright and vigorous, yet every one of them lacked the upper joint of the little finger of his left hand.

59

THE PASTOR AND THE SEXTON

Once upon a time there was a pastor who was such a boor that when any one was driving toward him along the highway, he would shout to them, while still some distance off: “Get out of the way! Get out of the pastor’s way!” One day, while he was doing this, along came the king. “Get out of the way! Get out of the way!” shouted the pastor. But the king drove as he had a mind to, and he drove so fast that this time it was the pastor who had to get out of the way, and when the king passed him, he called out: “See that you come to me at the castle to-morrow, and if you cannot answer three questions I put to you, then you will have to take off your pastor’s gown as a punishment for your arrogance!”

This sounded different from what the pastor was used to hearing. Shout and bluster, and completely forget himself in his arrogance, that he knew how to do; but returning a plain answer to a plain question was not his strong point. So he went to the sexton, who was supposed to have more in his upper story than the pastor. He told him he did not venture to go to the castle, because “a fool can ask more than ten wise men can answer,” said he, and he induced the sexton to go in his stead.

The sexton set forth, and came to the castle dressed in the pastor’s gown and ruff. The king received him out in the entrance with crown and scepter, and was so splendidly dressed that he fairly gleamed and shone.

“Well, are you here?” Yes, indeed, there he was. “First tell me,” said the king, “the distance from East to West.” “It is one day’s journey,” said the sexton.

“And how is that?” asked the king. “Well, the sun rises in the East and goes down in the West, and manages to do so nicely in the course of a single day,” said the sexton.

“Good,” said the king, “but now tell me how much I am worth, just as I stand.”

“Well, if our Lord Christ himself was valued at thirty pieces of silver, then I can hardly value you at more than twenty-nine,” said the sexton.

“Well and good,” said the king, “but since you are so wondrous wise, tell me what I am thinking now.”

“Ah, my lord king, you are probably thinking that this is the pastor who is standing before you, but there you are greatly mistaken, for I am the sexton.”

“Then drive straight home, and be the pastor, and the pastor shall be the sexton,” said the king, and that is what happened, too.

60

THE SKIPPER AND SIR URIAN

Once upon a time there was a master mariner who had the most unheard of good fortune in all that he undertook; none had such splendid cargoes, and none earned so much money as he did, for everything seemed to come to him. And it is quite certain that there were none who could risk taking the trips he did, for wherever he sailed he had fair winds, yes, it was even said that when he turned around his cap, the wind turned with it, to suit his wish.

Thus he sailed for many years with cargoes of lumber, and even went as far as China, and earned money like hay. But once he sailed the North Sea with all sails set, as though he had stolen ship and cargo. But the one who was after him sailed even more swiftly. And that was Sir Urian, the devil! With him the master mariner, as you may imagine, had made a bargain, and that very day and hour the contract expired, and the mariner had to be prepared, from moment to moment, to see him arrive to fetch him.

So he came up on deck, out of the cabin, and took a look at the weather. Then he called the ship’s carpenter and several others, and told them to go down at once into the ship’s hold, and bore two holes in the ship’s bottom. Then they were to take the pumps from out their frames, and set them closely over the holes, so that the water would rise quite high in the pipes.

The men were surprised, and thought his orders passing strange, yet they did as he told them. They bored the holes, and set up the pumps closely over them, so that not even a drop of water could get at the cargo; yet the North Sea stood seven feet high in the pumps.

No more had they cast overboard their chips and litter than Sir Urian came along in a squall, and grabbed the master mariner by the collar. “Wait, old boy, the matter is not so terribly urgent!” said he, and began to defend himself, and pry loose the claws that held him with an awl. “Did you not bind yourself in your contract always to keep my ship tight and dry?” said the master mariner. “You are a nice article! Just take a look at the pumps! The water stands seven feet high in the pipes! Pump, devil, pump my ship dry, then you may take me to have and to hold as long as ever you wish!”

The devil was fool enough, and allowed himself to be hoaxed. He worked and sweat, and the perspiration ran down his cheeks in such streams that one might have run a mill with them, but he merely kept on pumping out of the North Sea into the North Sea. At last he had enough of it, and when he could pump no longer, he flew home to his grandmother to rest. He let the master mariner stay master mariner as long as he might choose, and if he has not died he is still sailing the seas at his own sweet will, and letting the wind blow according to how he turns his cap.

61

THE YOUTH WHO WAS TO SERVE THREE YEARS WITHOUT PAY

Once upon a time there was a poor man, who had only one son; but one who was so lazy and clumsy that he did not want to do a stroke of work. “If I am not to feed this bean-pole for the rest of my life, I’ll have to send him far away, where not a soul knows him,” thought the father. “Once he is knocking about in the world, he will not be so likely to come home again.” So he took his son and led him about in the world, far and wide, and tried to get him taken on as a serving man; but no one would have him. Finally, after wandering a long time, they came to a rich man, of whom it was said that he turned every shilling around seven times before he could make up his mind to part with it. He was willing to take the youth for a servant, and he was to work three years without pay. But at the end of the three years, his master was to go into town, two days in succession, and buy the first thing he saw, and on the third morning the youth himself was to go to town and also buy the first thing he met. And all this he was to receive in lieu of his wage.

So the youth served out his three years, and did better than they had expected him to do. He was by no means a model serving-man; but then his master was none of the best, either, for he let him go all that time in the same clothes he had worn when he entered his service, until, finally, one patch elbowed the other.

Now when his master was to go to do his buying, he set out as early as possible in the morning. “Costly wares are only to be seen by day,” said he, “they are not drifting about the street so early. It will probably cost me enough as it is, for what I find is a matter of purest chance.” The first thing he saw on the street was an old woman, who was carrying a covered basket. “Good-day, granny,” said the man. “And good-day to you, daddy,” said the old woman.

“What have you in your basket?” asked the man. “Would you like to know?” said the woman. “Yes,” said the man, “for I have to buy the first thing that comes my way.” “Well, if you want to know, buy it!” said the old woman. “What does it cost?” asked the man. She must have four shillings for it, declared the woman. This did not seem such a tremendous price to him, he would let it go at that, said he, and raised the cover. And there lay a pup in the basket. When the man got home from his journey to town, there stood the youth full of impatience and curiosity, wondering what his wage for the first year might be. “Are you back already, master?” asked the youth. “Yes, indeed,” said his master. “And what have you bought?” asked the youth. “What I have bought is nothing so very rare,” said the man. “I don’t even know whether I ought to show it to you; but I bought the first thing to be had, and that was a pup,” said he. “And I thank you most kindly for it,” said the youth. “I have always been fond of dogs.”

The following morning it was no better. The man set out as early as possible, and had not as yet reached town before he met the old woman with the basket. “Good-day, granny,” said the man. “And good-day to you, daddy,” said the old woman. “What have you in your basket to-day?” asked the man. “If you want to know, then buy it!” was again the answer. “What does it cost?” asked the man. She wanted four shillings for it, she had only the one price. The man said he would buy it, for he thought that this time he would make a better purchase. He raised the cover, and this time a kitten lay in the basket. When he reached home, there stood the youth, waiting to see what he was to get in lieu of his second year's wages. "Are you back again, master!" said he. "Yes, indeed," said the master. "What did you buy to-day?" asked the youth. "Alas, nothing better than I did yesterday," said the man, "but I did as we agreed, and bought the first thing I came across, and that was this kitten." "You could not have hit on anything better," said the youth, "for all my life long I have been fond of cats as well as of dogs." "I do not fare so badly this way," thought the man, "but when he sets out for himself, then the matter will probably turn out differently."

So the third morning the youth set out for himself, and when he entered town, he came across the same old woman with her basket on her arm. "Good morning, granny," said he. "And good morning to you, my boy," said the old woman. "What have you in your basket?" asked the youth. "If you want to know, then buy it!" answered the old woman. "Do you want to sell it?" asked the youth. Yes, indeed, and it would cost four shillings, said the old woman. That is a bargain, thought the youth, and wanted to take it, for he had to buy the first thing that came his way. "Well, you can take the whole blessed lot," said the old woman, "the basket and all that's in it. But do not look into it before you get home, do you hear!" No, indeed, he would be sure not to look in the basket, said he. But on the way, he kept wondering as to what might be in the basket, and willy-nilly — he could not keep from raising the cover a little, and looking through the crack. But that very minute a little lizard popped out of the crack, and ran across the road so quickly that it fairly hummed — and aside from the lizard there was nothing in the basket. "Stop, wait a minute, and don't run away! I just bought you," said the youth. "Stab me in the neck! Stab me in the neck!" cried the lizard. The youth did not have to be told twice. He ran after the lizard and stabbed it in the neck just as it was slipping into a hole in a wall. And that very moment it turned into a man, as handsome and splendid as the handsomest prince, and a prince he was, if truth be told.

“Now you have delivered me,” said he, “for the old woman, with whom you and your master have been dealing, is a witch, and she turned me into a lizard, and my brother and sister into a dog and cat.” The youth thought this a remarkable tale. “Yes, indeed,” said the prince. “She was actually on the way to throw us into the sea and drown us; but if any one were to appear and want to buy us, she had to sell us for four shillings apiece, that had been agreed upon. And now you shall go home with me to my father, and be rewarded for your good deed.” “Your home must be a good way off,” said the youth. “O, it is not so far,” declared the prince, “there it is!” And he pointed to a high hill in the distance.

They marched along as fast as they could, but still it was farther away than it seemed. So it was late at night before they reached their goal. The prince knocked. “Who is knocking at my door, and disturbing my sleep?” came a voice within the hill. And the voice was so powerful that the earth trembled. “Open, father, your son has come home!” cried the prince. Then the father was glad to open the door quickly. “I thought you were already lying at the bottom of the sea,” said the old man. “But you are not alone?” “This is the chap who delivered me,” said the prince, “and I asked him to come with me so that you could reward him.” That he would attend to, said the old man. “Now you must come right in,” said he, “for here you may rest in safety.” They went in and sat down, and the old man laid an armful of wood and a couple of big logs on the fire, until every corner was as bright as day, and wherever they looked everything was indescribably splendid. The youth had never seen anything like it, and such fine things to eat and drink as the old man served up to him, he had never yet tasted. And the bowls and dishes, and goblets and plates, were all of pure silver and shining gold.

There was no need to urge the young folk. They ate and drank and enjoyed themselves, and then slept far into the next day. The youth was still asleep when the old man came and offered him a morning draft in a golden goblet. And when he had put on his rags and breakfasted, he was allowed to pick out what he wanted, as a reward for delivering the prince. There was much to see and still more to take, as you may believe. “Well, what do you want?” asked the king. “You may take what you will; for as you see there is enough from which to choose.” The youth said he would have to think it over a bit, and speak to the prince. And that he was allowed to do. “Well, I suppose you have seen all sorts of beautiful things?” asked the prince. “That is a fact,” said the youth. “But tell me, what ought I to choose among all these magnificent things? Your father said I might pick out whatever I wished.” “You must choose none among all the things you have seen,” answered the prince, “but my father wears a ring on his little finger, and you must ask him for that.” This the youth did, and begged the king for the ring on his finger. “It is dearer to me than anything else I have,” said the king, “but my son is just as dear to me, and therefore I will give you the ring. Do you know what powers it has?” No, that the youth did not know. “While you wear it on your finger, you can get everything that you want to have,” said the king. The youth thanked him most kindly, and the king and the prince wished him all manner of luck on his journey, and charged him to take the best care of the ring.

He had not been long underway before it occurred to him to test what the ring could do. So he wished to be dressed in new clothes from head to toe, and no more had he uttered the wish than there he was in them. And he looked as handsome and bright as a new nickel. Then he thought to himself it would be pleasant to play a trick on his father. “He was none too friendly to me while I was still at home.” And so the youth wished he were standing before his father’s door, just as ragged as he had been before. And that very minute there he stood.

“Good-day, father, and many thanks for the last time!” said the youth. But when his father saw he had come home far more tattered and torn than when he had gone away, he grew angry and began to scold: “There is nothing to be made of you, if during all the long years of your service you have not even been able to earn a suit of clothes to your back.”

“Now do not be so angry, father,” said the youth. “You need not take for granted that a fellow is a vagabond because he goes about in rags. Now I want you to go to the king as my proxy, and ask his daughter’s hand for me.” “Come, come, why, that is utter folly and nonsense!” cried his father. But the youth insisted that it was gospel truth, and took a birch bough, and drove his father to the king’s castle-gate. And the latter came stumbling right in to the king, and wept so that the tears just tumbled out.

“Well, what has happened to you, my dear fellow?” asked the king. “If a wrong has been done you, I will see that you get your rights.” No, no wrong had been done him, said the man, but he had a son who gave him a great deal of trouble: it was impossible to make a man of him, and now he had evidently lost what few senses he did possess. “Because he has just chased me to the castle-gate with a birch bough, and threatened me, if I do not get him the king’s daughter for a bride,” said the man. “Set your mind at rest, my good fellow,” said the king, “and send your son to me. Then we will see whether we can come to an understanding.”

The youth came rushing in to the king, so that his rags fairly fluttered. “Do I get your daughter?” he cried. “Well, that is just what we are going to discuss,” said the king, “perhaps she would not answer for you, and perhaps you would not answer for her,” said he. That might be the case, said the youth.

Now a great ship from abroad had shortly before come into port, and one could see it from the castle window. “Now we’ll see,” said the king. “If you can build a ship that is the exact counterpart of the one outside, and just as handsome, in the space of an hour or two, then, perhaps, you may get my daughter,” said the king.

“If it be no more than that...” said the youth. Then he went down to the shore and sat on a sand-pile, and when he had sat there long enough, he wished that a ship might lie out in the fjord, completely equipped with masts and sails and all that goes with them, and that it might resemble the ship already lying there in every particular. And that very minute there lay the ship, and when the king saw that there were two ships at anchor instead of one, he came down to the shore himself to look more closely into the matter. And then he saw the youth. He was standing in a boat, with a broom in one hand, as though he meant to give the ship a final cleaning; but when he saw the king coming, he threw away the broom and cried: "Now the ship is finished. Do I get your daughter now?"

"That is all very fine," said the king, "but you must stand yet another test. If you can build a castle that is just like mine in every particular within an hour or so, then we will go further into the matter."

"No more than that?" cried the youth. After he had strolled around for a long while, and the time set was nearly over, he wished that a castle might stand there that resembled the king's castle in every particular. And before long there it stood, as you may believe. And it did not take long, either, before the king, together with the queen and the princess, came to look at the new castle. The youth stood there with his broom again, and swept and cleaned. "Now the castle is in apple-pie order. Do I get her now?" he cried.

"That's all very fine," declared the king, "just come in and we'll talk it over," said he, for he had noticed that the youth knew a thing or two, and he was thinking over how he might get rid of him. The king went on ahead, and after him the queen, and then went the princess, just in advance of the youth. Then he at once wished to be the handsomest man in the world, and so he was, that very minute. When the princess saw what a splendid figure he suddenly cut, she nudged the queen, who in turn nudged the king, and after they had stared at him long enough, they at last realized that the youth was more than he had at first appeared to be, in his rags. So they decided that the princess was to treat him nicely, in order to find out how matters really stood, and the princess was as sweet and amiable as sugar-bread, and flattered the youth, and said that she could not do without him, night or day. And when it came toward the end of the first evening, she said: “Since you and I are to be married in any case, I am sure you will have no secrets from me, and you will not want to hide from me how you managed to do all these fine things.”

“O, yes,” said the youth. “You shall know about it, but first of all let us be married; before that nothing counts!”

The following evening the princess pretended to be quite unhappy. She was well aware, said she, that he did not attach much importance to her love, when he would not even tell her what she wanted so much to know. If he could not even oblige her in such a small matter, his love could not amount to a great deal. Then the youth fell into despair, and to make up with her again, he told her everything. She lost no time, and let the king and queen know all about it. Thereupon they agreed as to how they would go about getting the youth’s ring away from him, and then, thought they, it would not really be hard to get rid of him.

In the evening the princess came with a sleeping potion, and said she wanted to give her lover a drink that would increase his love for her, since it was plain he did not love her enough. The youth suspected nothing, and drank, and at once fell so fast asleep that they could have pulled down the house over his head. Then the princess drew the ring from his finger, put it on herself, and wished the youth might be lying on the garbage-pile in the street, just as tattered and torn as he had come to them, and in his place she wanted the handsomest prince in the world. And that very minute everything happened just as she wished. After a time the youth woke up, out on the garbage-pile, and at first thought he was dreaming: but when he saw the ring was gone, he understood how it all had happened, and fell into such despair that he got up and wanted to jump right into the sea.

But then he met the cat his master had bought for him. “Where are you going?” she asked. “To throw myself into the sea and drown,” was the youth’s reply.

“Do not do so on any account,” said the cat. “You will get your ring again.”

“Yes, if that were so, then...” said the youth.

The cat ran away. Suddenly a rat crossed her path. “Now I will pounce on you!” said the cat. “O do not do that,” said the rat, “you shall have the ring again!”

“Well, if that is so, then...” said the cat.

When the folk at the castle had gone to bed, the rat crept around, and sniffed and spied out the room of the prince and princess; and at last he found a little hole through which he crawled. Then he heard the prince and princess talking to each other, and saw that the prince was wearing the ring on his finger. Before she went, the princess said: “Good night. And see that you take good care of the ring, my dearest!”

“Pooh! no one will come in through the walls for the sake of a ring,” said the prince, “but if you think it is not safe enough on my hand, why, I can put it in my mouth.”

After a time he lay down on his back, and prepared to go to sleep. But just then the ring slipped down his throat, and he had to cough, so that the ring flew out and rolled along the ground. Swish! — the rat had caught it, and crept out with it to the cat, who was waiting at the rat-hole. But in the meantime the king had caught the youth, and had had him put in a great tower and condemned to death, because he had made a mock of his daughter — so the king said. And the youth was to sit in the tower until he was beheaded. But the cat kept prowling around the tower all the time, trying to sneak in with the ring. And then an eagle came along, caught her up in his claws and flew across the sea with her. And suddenly a hawk appeared, and flung himself on the eagle, and the eagle let the cat fall into the sea. When she felt the water, she grew afraid, let the ring fall, and swam to land. No sooner had she shaken the water from her fur than she met the dog whom the youth’s master had bought for him.

“Well, what am I to do now?” said the cat, and wept and lamented. “The ring is gone, and they want to murder the youth.” “That I do not know,” said the dog, “but what I do know is that I have the very worst kind of an ache in my stomach,” said he.

“There you have it. You have surely over-eaten,” said the cat.

“I never eat more than I need,” said the dog, “and just now I have eaten nothing at all, save a dead fish that was left here by the ebb-tide.”

“Could the fish have swallowed the ring?” asked the cat. “And must you, also, lose your life, because you cannot digest gold?”

“That may well be the case,” said the dog. “But then it would be best if I died at once, for then the youth might still be saved.”

“O, that is not necessary!” said the rat — who was there, too — “I do not need a very large opening through which to crawl, and if the ring is really there, I am sure I can find it.” So the rat slipped down into the dog, and before very long he came out again with the ring. And then the cat made her way to the tower, and clawed her way up till she found a hole through which she could thrust her paw, and thus brought back the ring to the youth.

No sooner was it on his finger than he wished that the tower might break down, and that very moment he was standing just before the tower-gate, and reviling the king and the queen and the king’s daughter as though they were the lowest of the low. The king hastily called together his army, and told it to surround the tower, and take the youth prisoner, dead or alive. But the youth only wished the whole army might be sticking up to their necks in the big swamp in the hills, and there they had trouble enough getting out — those among them who did not stick fast. Then he went right on reviling where he had stopped, and finally, when he had told them all just what he thought of them, he wished that the king, the queen and the king’s daughter might sit for the rest of their lives in the tower into which they had thrust him. And when they were sitting there, he took possession of the king’s land and country on his own account. Then the dog changed into a prince, and the cat into a princess, and he made the latter his wife, and they were married and celebrated their wedding long and profusely.

62

THE YOUTH WHO WANTED TO WIN THE DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER IN THE CORNER

Once upon a time there was a woman who had a son, and he was so lazy and slow that there was not a single blessed useful thing he would do. But he liked to sing and to dance, and that is what he did all day long, and far into the night as well. The longer this went on, the worse off his mother was. The youth was growing, and he wanted so much to eat that it was barely possible to find it, and more and more went for his clothes the older he grew, since his clothes did not last long, as you may imagine, because the youth skipped and dance about without stopping, through forest and field.

At length it was too much for his mother, so one day she told the young fellow that he ought at last to get to work, and really do something, or both of them would have to starve to death. But the youth had no mind to do so, he said, and would rather try to win the daughter of the mother in the corner, for if he got her, then he would live happily ever after, and could sing and dance, and would not have to plague himself with work.

When the mother heard that she thought it might not be such a bad idea after all, and she dressed up the youth as well as she could, so that he would make a good showing when he came to the mother in the corner, and then he set forth.

When he stepped out the sun was shining bright and warm; but it had rained during the night, and the ground was soft and full of water puddles. The youth took the shortest path to the mother in the corner, and sang and danced, as he always did. But suddenly, as he was hopping and skipping along, he came to a swamp, and there were only some logs laid down to cross it; and from the one log he had to jump over a puddle to a clump of grass, unless he wanted to dirty his shoes. And then he went kerflop! The very moment he set foot on the clump of grass, he went down and down until he was standing in a dark, ugly hole. At first he could see nothing at all, but when he had been there a little while, he saw that there was a rat, who was wiggling and waggling around, and had a bunch of keys hanging from her tail.

“Have you come, my boy?” said the rat. “I must thank you for coming to visit me: I have been expecting you for a long time. I am sure you have come to win me, and I can well imagine that you are in a great hurry. But you must have a little patience. I am to receive a large dower, and am not yet ready for the wedding; but I will do my best to see that we are married soon.”

When she had said this, she produced a couple of egg-shells, with all sorts of eatables such as rats eat, and set them down before the youth, and said: “Now you must sit down and help yourself, for I am sure you are tired and hungry.”

The youth had no great appetite for this food. “If I were only away and up above again,” thought he, but he said nothing.

“Now I think you must surely want to get home again,” said the rat. “I am well aware that you are waiting impatiently for the wedding, and I will hurry all I can. Take this linen thread along, and when you get up above, you must not turn around, but must go straight home, and as you go you must keep repeating: ‘Short before and long behind!’” and with that she laid a linen thread in his hand.

“Heaven be praised!” said the youth when he was up above once more. “I’ll not go down there again in a hurry.” But he held the thread in his hand, and danced and sang as usual. And although he no longer had the rat-hole in mind, he began to hum:

Short before and long behind!
Short before and long behind!

When he stood before the door at home, he turned around; and there lay many, many hundred yards of the finest linen, finer than the most skillful weaver could have spun.

“Mother, come out, come out!” called and cried the youth. His mother came darting out, and asked what was the matter. And when she saw the linen, stretching as far as she could see, and then a bit, she could not believe her eyes, until the youth told her how it all happened. But when she had heard that, and had tested the linen between her fingers, she was so pleased that she, too, began to sing and dance.

Then she took the linen, cut it, and sewed shirts from it for her son and herself, and the remainder she took to town and sold for a good price. Then for a time they lived in all joy and comfort. But when that was over the woman had not a bite to eat in the house, and so she told her son that it was the highest time for him to take service, and really do something, or else both of them would have to starve to death.

But the youth preferred to go to the mother in the corner, and try to win her daughter. His mother did not think this such a bad idea, for now the youth was handsomely dressed, and made a good showing.

So she brushed him, and furbished him up as well as she could, and he himself took a pair of new shoes, and polished them till they shone like a mirror, and when he had done so, off he went. Everything happened as before. When he stepped out, the sun was shining bright and warm; but it had rained during the night, and the road was soft and muddy, and every puddle was full of water. The youth took the shortest way to the mother in the corner, and sang and danced and danced and sang, as he always did. He followed another road, not the one he had taken before; but as he was hopping and skipping along, he suddenly came to the log across the swamp, and from the log he had to jump over a puddle to a clump of grass, unless he wanted to dirty his shoes. And then he went kerflop. And he sank down and could not stop, until he reached a horrible, dark, ugly hole. At first he could see nothing; but after he had stood there a while, he discovered a rat with a bunch of keys at the end of her tail, which she was wiggling and waggling in front of him.

"Have you come, my boy?" said the rat. "You are welcome among us! It was kind of you to come and visit me again so soon; no doubt you are very impatient, I can well imagine it. But you must really be patient a little while longer; for my trousseau is not quite complete, but by the time you come again all shall be ready." When she had said this she offered him egg-shells containing all sorts of food such as rats like. But it looked to the youth like food that had been eaten, and he said that he had no appetite. "If I were only safely away, and up above again," thought he, but he said nothing. After a time the rat said: "Now I think you must surely want to get up above again. I will hurry on the wedding as quickly as I can. And now take this woolen thread along, and when you get up above, you must not turn around, but go straight home, and underway you must keep on repeating: 'Short before and long behind!'" and with that she laid the woolen thread in his hand.

"Thank heaven, I have escaped!" said the youth to himself. "I am sure I'll never go there again," and then he sang and danced again as usual. He thought no more of the rat-hole, but fell to humming, and sang without stopping:

Short before and long behind!
Short before and long behind!

When he stood at the door of the house, he happened to look around; and there lay the finest woolen goods, many hundred yards of it, stretching for half a mile, and so fine that no city counselor wore a coat of finer cloth.

"Mother, mother, come out, come out!" cried the youth. His mother came to the door, clasped her hands together over her head, and nearly fainted with joy when she saw all the fine goods. And then the youth had to tell her how it had come to him, and all that had taken place, from beginning to end. This brought them a small fortune, as you may imagine. The youth had new clothes, and his mother went to town and sold the goods, yard by yard, and was handsomely paid for them. And then she decorated her room, and she herself, in her old days, went about in such style that she might have been taken for some lady of distinction. So they lived splendidly and happily, but finally this money, too, came to an end; and one day the woman had not a bite to eat left in the house, and told her son that now he had better look for work, and really do something, or both of them would starve to death.

But the youth thought it would be much better to go to the mother in the corner and try to win her daughter. This time his mother again agreed with him, and did not contradict the youth; for now he had fine new clothes, and looked so distinguished that it seemed out of the question to her that such a good-looking fellow would be refused. So she furbished him up and tricked him out in the handsomest way, and he himself took out his new shoes and polished them so brightly that you could see yourself in them, and when he had done so he set forth.

This time he did not choose the shortest road; but took a roundabout way, the longest he could find, for he did not want to go down to the rat again because he was sick of her eternal wiggling and waggling, and the talk about marriage. The weather and the road were exactly the same as when he had gone before. The sun shone, the swamp and the puddles gleamed, and the youth sang and danced as usual. And in the midst of his skipping and jumping, before he knew it, there he stood at the same crossing which led across the swamp. There he had to jump over a puddle to a clump of grass, unless he wanted to dirty his brightly polished shoes. “Kerflop!” and down he went, and did not stop until he stood once more in the same dark, ugly, dirty hole. At first he was pleased because he could see nothing. But after he had stood there a while, he once more discovered the ugly rat who was so repulsive to him, with the bunch of keys hanging from her tail.

“Good-day, my boy,” said the rat. “You are welcome! I see that you can no longer live without me, and I thank you. And now everything is in readiness for our wedding, and we will go straight to church.” Nothing will come of that, thought the youth, but he did not say a word. Then the rat whistled, and at once every corner was alive with swarms of mice and small rats, and six large rats came dragging along a frying-pan. Two mice sat up behind as grooms, and two sprang up in front to drive the coach. Several seated themselves within, and the rat with the bunch of keys took her place in their midst. To the youth she said: “The road is a little narrow here, so you will have to walk beside the coach, sweetheart, until the road is broader. And then you may sit beside me in the coach.”

“How fine that will be!” thought the youth. “If I were only safely up above once more, I would run away from the whole pack of them,” thought he, but he said nothing. He went along with the procession as well as he could; at times he had to crawl, at others he had to stoop, for the way was very narrow. But when it grew better, he walked in advance, and looked about to see how he might most easily steal away and make off. And then he suddenly heard a clear, beautiful voice behind him say: “Now the road is good! Come, sweetheart, and get into the coach!”

The youth turned around quickly, and was so astonished that his nose and ears nearly fell off. There stood a magnificent coach with six white horses, and in the coach sat a maiden as fair and beautiful as the sun, and about her were sitting others, as bright and kindly as the stars. It was a princess and her playmates, who had all been enchanted together. But now they were delivered, because he had come down to them, and had never contradicted.

“Come along now!” said the princess. Then the youth got into the coach, and drove to church with her. And when they drove away from the church, the princess said: “Now we will first drive to my home, and then we will send for your mother.”

“That’s all very fine,” thought the youth — he said nothing, but he thought it would be better, after all, to drive to his home, instead of down into the hideous rat-hole. But suddenly they came to a beautiful castle, and there they turned in, for there it was they were to live. And at once a fine coach with six horses was sent for the youth’s mother, and when she came the wedding festivities began. They celebrated for fourteen days, and perhaps they are celebrating yet. We must hurry, and perhaps we may still get there in time, and can drink the groom’s health and dance with the bride!

63

THE CHRONICLE OF THE PANCAKE

Once upon a time there was a woman who had seven hungry children, and she was baking pancakes for them. There was dough made with new milk, and it lay in the pan, and was rising so plumply and comfortably, that it was a pleasure to watch it. The children stood around it, and their grandfather sat and looked on.

“Give me a little bit of pancake, mother, I’m so hungry!” said one of the children.

“Dear mother!” said the second.

“Dear, sweet mother!” said the third.

“Dear, sweet, good mother!” said the fourth.

“Dear, best, sweet, good mother!” said the fifth.

“Dear, best, sweet, good, dearest mother!” said the sixth.

“Dear, best, sweet, good, dearest, sweetest mother!” said the seventh, and so they all begged around the pancake, one more sweetly than the other, for they were all so hungry and so well-behaved.

“Yes, children, wait until it turns around,” said she — until I have turned it around, she should have said — “then you shall all have a pancake, a lovely best-milk pancake. Just see how fat and comfortable it is lying there!”

When the pancake heard that it was frightened, turned itself around suddenly, and wanted to get out of the pan; but it only fell on its other side, and when this had baked a little, so that it took shape and grew firmer, it leaped out on the floor, and rolled off like a wheel, out of the door, and down the street.

Hey there! The woman was after it with the pan in one hand, and the spoon in the other, as fast as she could, and after her came the children, and last of all, their grandfather came hobbling along.

“Will you wait! Halt! Catch it! Hold it!” they all cried together, and wanted to catch up with it and grab it on the run; but the pancake rolled and rolled, and sure enough, it got so far ahead of them that they could no longer see it, for it had nimbler legs than all of them. After it had rolled a while it met a man.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the man.

“Good-day, Man Tan,” said the pancake.

“Dear, good pancake, don’t roll so fast; but wait a little and let me eat you!” said the man.

“Mother Gray and grandpa I’ve left behind, and the seven squallers, too, you’ll find, so I think I can leave you as well, Man Tan!” said the pancake, and rolled and rolled until it met a hen.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the hen.

“Good-day, Hen Glen,” said the pancake.

“Dear, good pancake, don’t roll so fast, wait a little and I will eat you up!” said the hen.

“Mother Gray and grandpa I’ve left behind, and the seven squallers, too, you’ll find, and Man Tan, so I think I can leave you as well, Hen Glen!” said the pancake, and rolled along the road like a wheel. Then it met a rooster.

“Good-day, pancake,” said the rooster.

“Good-day, Rooster Booster,” said the pancake.

"Dear, good pancake, don't roll so fast. Wait a little and I will eat you up!" said the rooster.

"Mother Gray and grandpa I've left behind, and the seven squallers, too, you'll find, and Man Tan and Hen Glen, and so I think I can leave you as well, Rooster Booster," said the pancake, and rolled and rolled as fast as ever it could. And after it had rolled a long time it met a duck.

"Good-day, pancake," said the duck.

"Good-day, Duck Tuck," said the pancake.

"Dear, good pancake, don't roll so fast. Wait a little and I will eat you up!" said the duck.

"Mother Gray and grandpa I've left behind, and the seven squallers, too, you'll find, and Man Tan, and Hen Glen and Rooster Booster, so I think I can leave you as well," said the pancake, and rolled on as fast as ever it could. After it had rolled a long, long time, it met a goose.

"Good-day, pancake," said the goose.

"Good-day, Goose Loose," said the pancake.

"Dear, good pancake, don't roll so fast. Wait a little and I will eat you up!" said the goose.

"Mother Gray and grandpa I've left behind, and the seven squallers, too, you'll find, and Man Tan and Hen Glen and Rooster Booster and Duck Tuck, and I think I can leave you as well, Goose Loose," said the pancake, and rolled away.

After it had again rolled for a long, long time, it met a gander.

"Good-day, pancake," said the gander.

"Good-day, Gander Meander," said the pancake.

"Dear, good pancake, don't roll so fast. Wait a little and I will eat you up!" said the gander.

"Mother Gray and grandpa I've left behind, and the seven squallers, too, you'll find, and Man Tan and Hen Glen and Rooster Booster and Duck

Tuck and Goose Loose, and I think I can leave you as well, Gander Meander," said the pancake, and began to roll as fast as ever it could.

After it had rolled a long, long time, it met a pig.

"Good-day, pancake," said the pig.

"Good-day, Pig Snig," said the pancake, and began to roll as fast as ever it could.

"Now wait a little," said the pig. "You need not hurry so, for we can keep each other company going through the forest and take our time, for it is said to be haunted." The pancake thought that such was quite apt to be the case, and so they started off; but after they had gone a while they came to a brook.

The pig swam across on his own bacon, which was easy enough; but the pancake could not get across.

"Sit down on my snout," said the pig, "and I will carry you over that way." The pancake did so.

"Uff, uff!" said the pig, and swallowed the pancake in one mouthful.

64

SORIA-MORIA CASTLE

Once upon a time there was a couple who had an only son named Halvor. While he was still but a little lad, he would do nothing at all; but was always sitting at the hearth, digging in the ashes. His parents apprenticed him here and apprenticed him there, to be taught something, but Halvor never stayed. When he had been anywhere for a few days, he ran away again, went back home, sat down at the hearth, and dug in the ashes. But once a master mariner came along and asked whether Halvor would not like to go with him, and sail the seas, and see foreign lands. Indeed, Halvor would like to do so very much, and it did not take him long to make up his mind.

How long they sailed the seas I do not know, but suddenly a powerful storm arose, and when it had passed, and all had grown quiet once more, they did not know where they were. They had been driven off their course to a foreign shore, which none among them recognized.

And then, since not a breeze was stirring, they lay there, and Halvor begged the master mariner for permission to go ashore, and look around, for he would rather do that than lie down and sleep. “Do you think you are fit to appear before people?” asked the master mariner. “The only clothes you have are the rags in which you stand and walk!” Yet Halvor insisted, and finally he was given permission. But he was to come back when the wind blew up. Halvor went, and it was a fair land. No matter where he came, there were great plains, with fields and pastures; but he saw no people at all. The wind blew up again, but Halvor decided that he had not yet seen enough, and wanted to go a little further, and see whether there were no people to be found at all. After a time he came to a great highway, which was so even one could have rolled an egg along it with ease. Halvor went on along this highway, and as evening drew near, he saw a great castle in the distance, that shone afar. Since he had been wandering all day long, without much in the way of food, he had a fine appetite; but the nearer he came to the castle, the more frightened he grew.

In the castle there was a fire on the hearth, and Halvor went into the kitchen, which was beautiful. The kitchenware was all of silver and gold; but there were no human beings to be seen. After Halvor had waited a while, and no one came out, he went and opened a door. There he saw a princess sitting and spinning. “Alas, no!” cried she. “Has a Christian soul really come here! But it would be best for you to go again, if you do not want the troll to swallow you; for a troll with three heads lives here.”

“And though he had four, I should like to see him,” said the youth. “And I am not going away, for I have done no wrong. But you must give me something to eat, for I am terribly hungry.” When Halvor had eaten his fill, the princess told him to try and see whether he could swing the sword that hung on the wall. But he could not swing it, nor even raise it. “Well,” said the princess, “you must take a swallow from the bottle that hangs beside it, for that is what the troll does when he wants to use the sword.” Halvor took the swallow, and then could swing the sword at once as though it were nothing at all. Now, thought he, the troll could just come along any time. And sure enough, he did come along, roaring. Halvor placed himself behind the door. “Hu! it smells like Christian blood here!” said the troll, and poked his head in through the door. “Yes, you shall find out it is here and at once,” cried Halvor, and hewed off all his heads. The princess was filled with joy at her deliverance, and danced and sang. But then she happened to think of her sisters, and said: “If only my sisters could also be delivered!” “Where are they?” asked Halvor. So she told him that one of them had been carried off by a troll to a castle six miles further away, and the other to a castle that lay nine miles away from the other.

“But now,” said she, “you must first help me get this body out.” Halvor was very strong, so he quickly cleared everything out, cleaned up, and put all in order. Then they ate, and the following morning he started off at dawn. He did not rest for a moment, but wandered all day long. When he spied the castle, he once more felt a little afraid; it was even handsomer than the other one; but here, too, there was not a human being to be seen. Then Halvor went into the kitchen, yet did not stop at all, but stepped right into the next room. “No, it cannot be possible that a Christian should venture here!” cried the princess. “I do not know how long I have been here; but during all that time I have not seen a single Christian soul. It would probably be best if you went away quickly; for a troll with six heads lives here.” “No, I am not going,” said Halvor, “not even if he had six heads more.” “He will seize you and swallow you alive!” said the princess. But that made no difference, Halvor would not go, and he did not fear the troll. But he would have to eat and drink, for he was hungry and thirsty after his long tramp. He had as much as he wanted; and then the princess wanted to send him away again. “No,” cried Halvor, “I am not going. I have done no wrong, and need not fear any one.”

“That will not worry the troll,” said the princess. “He will seize you without any questions asked. Yet, if you positively will not go, why, try and see whether you can swing the sword that the troll uses in war.” He could not swing it; but then the princess told him to take a swallow from the bottle that hung beside it, and when he had done so he could swing the sword. Suddenly the troll came, and he was so large and so fat that he had to move sideways in order to get through the door. When he had thrust in his first head, he cried: “Huhu! I smell the blood of a Christian!” And that very moment Halvor hewed off his first head, and then all the rest. The princess was pleased beyond measure; but then she happened to think of her sisters, and she wished that they also might be delivered. Halvor thought this might be done, and wanted to start out at once. But first he had to help the princess get the dead troll out of the way and then, the following morning, he set out. It was a long way to the castle, and he hurried and ran in order to get there in good time. Toward evening he spied the castle, and it was much handsomer than both the others. This time he felt hardly any fear at all; but went through the kitchen and right on in. There sat a princess who was extraordinarily beautiful. Like the others, she said that no Christian soul had ever come to the castle since she had been there, and told him to go away again, as otherwise the troll would swallow him alive, for he had nine heads. “And though he had nine more, and nine on top of those, I will not go,” said Halvor, and stood by the stove. The princess earnestly begged him to go, so that the troll would not devour him, but Halvor said: “Let him come whenever he wishes!” Then she gave him the troll sword, and told him to take a swallow from the bottle, so that he could swing it.

Suddenly the troll came roaring along. He was even larger and more powerful than both the others, and he also had to squeeze himself in at the door sideways. “Hu! I smell the blood of a Christian!” That very moment Halvor hewed off his first head, and then all of the others; but the last clung to life most toughly, and it cost Halvor a good deal of trouble to cut it off, though he found himself so very strong.

Now all the princesses met at the castle, and were happy as they never had been before, in all their lives, and they fell in love with Halvor and he with them, and he was to choose the one whom he loved best; but it was the youngest who loved him the most of all. Yet Halvor acted strangely, and grew quite silent and uncommunicative; so the princess asked him what he was longing for, and whether he did not enjoy being with them. Yes, he enjoyed it very much, for they had enough to live on, and he was well enough off, but yet he was homesick, for his parents were still living, and he would like to see them again. That could easily be arranged, said the princess. “You shall go and return without harm, if you will follow our advice.” Indeed, and he would surely do nothing against their wishes, said Halvor. Then they dressed him up until he looked as handsome as a king’s son, and put a ring on his finger that made it possible for the one wearing it to wish himself away, and back again. But he must not throw the ring away, and he must not mention their names, said the princesses, otherwise its power would be gone, all their joy would come to an end, and he would never see them again.

“I wish I might be back at the house at home!” said Halvor, and his wish was at once realized, and he was standing in front of his parents’ house before he knew it. It was dusk, and when the old folk saw such a handsome, well-dressed stranger coming, it embarrassed them so that it seemed as though their bowing and scraping would never end. Halvor now asked them whether they could not give him a night’s lodging. “No, they really could not do so, for they were quite unprepared for it,” said they, “and we are lacking one thing, and another, which such a distinguished gentleman would wish to have. It would be best if the gentleman went up to the castle, whose chimney he can see from here, where the folk are well prepared.” “No,” said Halvor, “I’ll not go there until to-morrow morning. And now let me stay here overnight. I will be content to sit by the hearth.” The old folk could make no objection to this, and so Halvor sat down by the hearth, and began to dig in the ashes, as he used to when he was the lazybones at home. Then they chatted about all sorts of matters, and told Halvor about one thing and another, and finally he asked them whether they had no children. Yes, they had a son; but did not know whither he had wandered, or even whether he were still alive, or already dead.

“Could I not be this Halvor?” said Halvor.

"No, I am quite sure you could not," said the woman, starting up. "Halvor was so slow and lazy, and never wanted to do anything, and beside, he was so tattered that one rag got in the way of the other. He could never have turned into so fine a looking gentleman as yourself."

After a time the woman had to go to the hearth, and rake the fire, and as the firelight fell on Halvor, just as it used to when he dug in the ashes, she recognized him.

"No, can it really be you, Halvor?" she cried, and then the two old folk were happy beyond all power of words, and Halvor had to tell all that had happened to him, while his mother was so pleased with him, that she wanted to take him up to the castle at once, and show him to the girls who had always been so proud, and had turned up their noses at her son. So she went first and Halvor followed. When they came up, she told how Halvor had come back, and that they ought to see how fine he looked, just like a prince, said she. "We can imagine that," said the girls, and tossed their heads. "He is probably the same ragged fellow that he used to be." At that moment Halvor stepped in, and then the girls were so embarrassed that they ran out of the house without their caps. And when they came in again, they were so ashamed that they did not venture to look at Halvor, whom they had always treated with such scorn and contempt. "Well, you always acted as though you were so fine and handsome that no one on earth could compare with you. But you ought to see the oldest princess, whom I delivered," said Halvor. "Compared to her you look like dairy-maids, and the middle princess is still handsomer; while the youngest princess, who is my sweetheart, is more beautiful than the sun and moon. Would to God she were here, so that you might see her!" said Halvor.

No sooner had he finished speaking than there they stood; but then he was very much upset, for now he remembered what they had told him.

At the castle they gave a great feast in honor of the princesses, and made a great deal of them. But they would not stay. "We want to go to your parents,” they said to Halvor, “and then we want to go out and look around.” He went with them, and they came to a big sheet of water beyond the court-yard. Close beside it was a fair green hill, and there the princesses decided to sit and rest a while, “for it was so pleasant to look out over the water,” said they. They sat down, and after they had rested a while, the youngest princess said: “Let me stroke your hair a little, Halvor!” Halvor laid his head in her lap, and she stroked his hair, and before very long Halvor fell asleep. Then she drew the ring from his finger, and gave him another in place of it, and said: “All hold on to me — I wish we were in Soria-Moria Castle!”

When Halvor woke up he saw very well that he had lost the princesses, and began to weep and wail, and was so beside himself with despair that no one could comfort him. And no matter how hard his parents begged him, he would not stay at home, but bade them farewell, and said that he would probably never see them again, for if he did not find his princesses, then it would not be worth his while to go on living.

He still had three hundred dollars, and these he put in his pocket and started out. After he had gone a while he met a man with a nice-looking horse. He decided to buy it, and began to talk with the man. “It is true I did not intend to sell the horse,” said the man, “but perhaps we can come to an understanding.” Halvor asked him what he wanted for it. “I did not pay much for it, nor is it worth very much: it is a good saddle horse, but as a draft horse it does not amount to much. Yet it could carry you and your knapsack without difficulty, if you were to walk a bit from time to time,” said the man. At last they agreed on the price, and Halvor slung his knapsack across the horse, and from time to time he walked, and then he rode again. Toward evening he came to a green hill on which stood a large tree, beneath which he seated himself. He turned the horse loose, yet did not lie down to sleep, but took out his knapsack instead. When day came he wandered on again, for it seemed to him as though there were no place in which he could rest. He walked and rode all day long through a great forest, in which were many green clearings, that shimmered cheerfully among the trees. He did not know where he was, nor did he know whither he was going; but he allowed himself no more time to rest than his horse needed to feed in one of the green clearings, and himself to eat from his knapsack. He walked and rode, on and on, and thought the forest would never end.

But on the evening of the following day he saw something gleaming among the trees. “If the people there are still up, I could warm myself a little, and get something to eat!” thought Halvor. When he got there it was a wretched little hut, and through the window he saw an old couple sitting in it, as ancient and gray-headed as doves, and the woman had so long a nose that she used it at the hearth for a poker. “Good evening! Good evening!” said the old woman. “But what are you doing here? No Christian soul has come this way for the past hundred years.” Halvor told her he was looking for Soria-Moria Castle, and asked whether she knew the way to it. “No,” was the woman’s answer, “I do not know, but here comes the moon, I will ask him. He ought to know, for he shines on everything.” And then, when the moon rose bright and clear above the tree-tops, the woman went out. “You moon, you moon,” she cried, “can you tell me the way to Soria-Moria Castle?” “No,” said the moon, “I cannot do that, because when I was shining there, a cloud lay in my way.”

“Just wait a little while,” said the old woman to Halvor. “The West Wind will be right along, and he is sure to know, for he sweeps and blows about in every corner. Well, I declare, you have a horse, too!” said the old woman when she came in again. “Now don’t let the poor beast stand by the door there and starve to death; but take it out to the pasture instead. Or would you like to change with me? We have a pair of old boots, that carry you twelve miles further with every step. I will give them to you in exchange for the horse, and then you will reach Soria-Moria Castle more quickly.” Halvor at once agreed, and the old woman was so pleased with the horse, that she almost started dancing then and there. “For now I can ride to church, too,” said she.

Halvor was very restless, and wanted to go right on again, but the woman said there was no need to hurry. “Lie down on the bench by the stove, and take a nap, for we have no bed for you,” said she. “I will watch for the West Wind’s coming.”

All of a sudden the West Wind came rushing along so that the walls creaked. The woman ran out: “You West Wind! You West Wind! Can you tell me the way to Soria-Moria Castle? There is a fellow here who wants to know.” “Yes, indeed,” said the West Wind, “I have to go to that very place, and dry the wash for the wedding soon to be held. If he is quick afoot, he may come along with me.” Halvor ran out. “You must hurry if you are going with me,” said the West Wind; and at once he was up and off over hill and dale, land and sea, so that Halvor could hardly keep up with him. “Now I have no more time to keep you company,” said the West Wind, “because I have first to tear down a stretch of pine forest, before I come to the bleaching-field and dry the wash. But if you keep going along the hills, you will meet some girls standing there and washing, and then you will not be far from Soria-Moria Castle.”

After a time Halvor came to the girls who were washing, and they asked him whether he had seen anything of the West Wind, who was to come and dry the clothes for the wedding. “Yes,” said Halvor. “He is only tearing down a stretch of pine forest, and will soon be here,” and then he asked the way to Soria-Moria Castle. They showed it to him, and when he reached the castle it was fairly alive with men and horses. But Halvor was so tattered and torn because he had followed the West Wind over stick and stone, and through thick and thin, that he kept to one side, and could not come forward until the last day of the feast. Then all the folk, as was the custom, had to drink the health of the bride and groom, and the cupbearer had to pledge all of them in turn, knights and serving-men. So at length they came to Halvor.

Halvor drank the health, and then let the ring which the princess had put on his finger when he lay by the water fall into the glass, and told the cupbearer to greet the bride, and bring her the ring. And the princess at once rose from the table. “Who do you think has first claim to the hand of one of us,” she asked, “the man who delivered us, or the one who now sits here in the bridegroom’s place?” There was only one opinion as to that, and when Halvor heard it, he did not delay, but cast off his rags and dressed himself as a bridegroom. “Yes, he is the right one!” cried the youngest princess when she caught sight of him, and she drove the other one away, and celebrated her wedding with Halvor.

65

THE PLAYER ON THE JEW’S-HARP

Some two or three generations ago, a three-year-old ox, belonging to some people who lived in an alpine meadow in Westfjall, disappeared. And look for him as they would, they could not find him, and in the fall they moved down into the valley again. But while the grandmother was skimming the cream from the milk-pans in the lean-to the day before their departure, and the oldest maid in the hut was scooping the cheese out of the big kettle, a little shepherd girl came running up, and called out that the big ox was standing at the salt-lick, and licking the salt. When the mother stepped out for a moment, she saw nothing that looked at all like an ox. So she thought the little girl had probably been mistaken; but the little one insisted that the big ox had been there.

“I saw the white spot he had on his forehead, and he had broken off one of his horns,” said she. The man himself and his two sons were each out searching in a different direction, and they searched and searched; but all three came back at evening, and none of them had found anything. When they heard the little girl’s story, one of the sons flung himself on his horse, and rode home at full gallop, in order to fetch his gun; loaded it with small splinters from a steel arrow, hurried back posthaste, and shot it off cross-wise over the salt-lick. “If the ox is bewitched, he ought to appear now,” said he. But it was of no use, the ox was gone and he stayed gone.

The oldest son was to go up on the hill once more, and take a good look all around. And he searched in every direction, far and near, until he thought he could smell the ox; yet in spite of this, he could see no sign of a living being anywhere, all day long. Finally he grew angry, and swore that for his part, the bewitched beast might go to the end of the world; if he did not want to join the rest of the herd, he could please himself. With that he turned around, and went to the herdsman’s hut as fast as he could, meaning to take home with him the bear he had shot.

And there, at the fence of the herdsman’s hut, stood the great ox licking salt. And one of his horns had been broken off. Where he had been knocking about so long he himself probably knew, the young fellow did not.

But now day was so nearly over that he could just about reach home if he went as he was, and hurried as fast as he could. But if he had to lead and pull along the ox besides, it would have been pitch-dark before he had fairly started. And let me tell you, the fall nights are really dark, and cold besides, and it is not wise to camp under the open sky in the mountains. For this reason he decided to wait until morning, though a night at the herdsman’s hut would be bleak and lonely. So he chopped a good armful of birch-boughs, laid them on the hearth, and soon the hut grew warm and comfortable, and as bright as a room lit with Christmas candles. When he had eaten his supper, he threw himself down on the bed of planks, pulled his jew’s-harp out of his waistcoat pocket, and began to play the “Bells of St. Thomas” round. But he had not been playing long before he fell asleep, with the instrument in his mouth. Suddenly he woke again, and it seemed to him that he could hear something rustling softly at the other end of the hut. He turned his head slightly, and saw a beautiful young girl standing by the table, braiding her hair. It was so long that it fell down over her hips, and as lovely and shiny as though it had been gilded. At first the young fellow could not see her face, but once, when she happened to turn in his direction, it seemed to him that she was the fairest and finest-looking maiden he had ever laid eyes on. Her like could not have been found far or near, and he knew every girl in the parish, well-to-do or otherwise. The young fellow did not dare address her, for she thought herself alone, and looked so dear and trustful that he dreaded frightening her away. So he lay there as still as a mouse, and did not venture to move so much as a foot.

Suddenly in came another girl; but she appeared to be coarser, and had a large mouth and dark complexion, not as clear and fresh as that of the first girl; and she did not please him as well. Both were dressed alike, in green jackets and bodices of red satin, blue stockings, and with bright silver buckles on their shoes. The younger maiden had white sleeves, that were so fresh and clean they fairly shone. Her bodice was cut low, and showed a handsome round clasp, which tinkled delicately whenever the maiden made the slightest move. And now the young fellow realized what sort of maidens these were, and could not get over his astonishment that there were such beautiful women among the underground folk. It was Saturday evening, and this was probably the reason they were dressing and adorning themselves so busily: no doubt they were expecting company or suitors. The young fellow could not make out what they said to each other, for they whispered so softly that he only caught a word now and then. Once they spoke of a little white lamb that had gone lame that day.

“Yes, it is the fault of that young fellow who has been rushing around in all the empty huts among the hills, looking for his fire-red ox. I saw him throw a stone at the little lamb,” said the older girl, the one with the large mouth and dark skin. “He really should be punished for that!” said she.

“Yes, but he never knew it was a lamb,” replied the younger one, the beauty with the red cheeks. “And it was not right of grandmother to hide his ox, and make him hunt for it far and near.”

“He might have taken his ox, for it was standing just beside the hut, and he ran right past it,” said the other girl.

“Yes, but you know he took it to be a rat,” the younger one answered.

“O, how stupid those people are,” said the older one again, and laughed until she shook. “They pretend to be wiser than wise, and cannot even tell a fire-red ox from a rat! Ha, ha, ha!” and she laughed so heartily that her sister was also carried away, and the young fellow himself could not help but smile a bit.

After a time he began to play a boisterous dance-tune. And what a fright it gave the girls! They screamed, ran off helter-skelter in their terror, and were gone in a flash. But the young fellow kept on playing. After a little while one of them thrust in her head at the door, and when they saw what had frightened them so, they began to whisper and giggle outside, in front of the hut. And after a time they ventured in again, and began to dance to the music. And those girls could really swing around and use their legs. They almost flew over the uneven floor, and were so sure of the time that every step they took was in place.

When they had danced a while, and the young fellow had made their acquaintance — or thought that he had — he unclasped his belt, and passing it around the handsomer of the two, drew her to him. And she allowed him to do so. This angered the young fellow, for he would not have believed that so dainty and lovely a girl would have allowed him to act so familiarly on such short acquaintance. And as though by chance, he let go one end of his belt and swish! — off she was. Her sister ran after her, and slammed the door behind her.

Now the young fellow was angry with himself because he had been angry with her. But he thought he was probably not worthy of obtaining the hand of so fair and loveable a maiden, for there is an old saw to the effect that none may escape their fate. Finally he thought that perhaps he could coax her back again with his music, and he played one tune after another, the most beautiful ones he knew. But the *huldra* maidens did not appear again. At last his hands and mouth grew so tired that he had to stop. And then he happened to think of “The Blue Melody,” which a minstrel from his part of the country had learned in ancient times from the underground folk. No sooner had he commenced it than both girls came sweeping in once more.

“You play beautifully, you do!” said the younger.

“One has to play beautifully when one has such beautiful listeners,” returned the young fellow.

“Yes, that’s what the cat said when she caught a mouse,” laughed the maiden.

“Come here, and I will teach you ‘The Blue Melody’!” said he. So they came to him, and watched while he played. After a time the younger one put her hand in his waistcoat pocket.

“And what is that, is it liquorice?” she asked, as she pulled out a roll of tobacco.

“Yes, try it!” the young fellow answered. She bit off a little piece, but spat it right out on the floor again.

“Yes, it is liquorice that bites,” said she, and she wiped her tongue on her sleeve.

“Is it really so biting?” asked the other one, and also wanted to try it. So the young fellow gave her some as well, and she had the same experience. They never wanted to taste such liquorice again in their lives, so they assured him.

“Well, I can tell you how to get good liquorice,” said the one. “You must boil the root of a plant called merilian, and you must pour the water into juniper-berry juice, and then you will have a liquorice that is so sweet and good that it will even cure a toothache.” The young fellow said he would try it, some time, when he had found the plant.

Toward evening the girls wanted to leave. Yet that drove him to despair, and he begged them to stay for a little while. But the girls simply would not. Their mother would not allow it, said they. When the young fellow saw that they were really going, he went quite out of his mind. He had grown so very fond of the younger *huldra* maiden, and now he was never to see her again. Without knowing what he did, he threw the jew’s-harp at her, and hit her on the head, just as she was passing through the door. And with that she came in again.

“Mother, mother! A Christian has won sister Sireld!” cried the other, out in front of the hut. Soon after a very ancient woman came hobbling and shuffling into the hut. Her face was so wrinkled and dark that her yellow teeth shone out from it, for teeth she had, in spite of her age. “Now you may keep her, since you have won her, for now she is no longer bewitched,” said the old woman to the young fellow. “And if you are kind to her, you shall never lack food or clothing, and you shall have all that you need, both Sundays and workdays. But if you treat her unkindly, you shall pay for it!” said the old woman, and raised her cane as though she were about to use it on the young fellow. Then she hobbled out again.

It seemed to him that he had won a wife very quickly, after all, in this manner, and he asked her how it all came to be.

“The jew’s-harp struck my head with such force, that a drop of blood flowed,” said the girl, “and it was the best thing you could have done, for I would much rather live with Christians than with the underground folk,” said she.

He still thought the world and all of her, and yet it seemed to him as though he could have done nothing worse: all had happened so quickly, and he had nothing on which to marry; but after all, what was done was done. The following morning she went home with him. His family were much surprised to see him come back in such company, and were angry with him, and looked for excuses to find fault with the girl: but there was nothing to object to about her, except that she had yellow teeth, and after all, this was no such great matter. In her dealings with others she was uncommonly amiable, and there was not a girl that went to church who could equal her in beauty.

But after the wedding he gradually began to ill-treat her. For you must know that he could never forget she was not a Christian. He sulked, and was always angry and ill-natured, and never gave her a kind word. And he refused to grant her least request. Though it might be the merest trifle, he never had more than a short “No” for anything she asked. And in spite of this she was kind and friendly, and acted as though she did not hear his angry words, and was always helpful and amiable. But it made no difference, he grew worse from day to day. And they began to go downhill, for strife in the home drives luck away. At last it seemed as though they would have to take the beggar’s bowl and staff, and wander from one farm-stead to another like any other beggars.

One day she did not know what to give the people to eat, for there was not even a crust of bread in the house. And then she grew sad, for all might have been different for them had he but treated her better. He was standing in the smithy at the moment, about to shoe a horse, and she went out to him.

“Won’t you build me the pen now, the one I have so often, often asked you for?” she begged. “Do it now, and I will shoe the horse!” And she tore the red-hot horse-shoe from the anvil, and bent it in shape with her bare hands. When he saw that she was mistress of such arts, he grew frightened, and actually built her a fine, big pen back of the stable, set in a post, and drove a hook into it, just as she had said. The following morning the pen filled with fire-red cattle, big, fat, handsome beasts, that gave a great deal of milk. Such fine cows had never been seen anywhere. And on the hook hung a copper milk-pail, and a pair of horns of salt, with a silver ring from which to hang them. And now it was not long, as you may imagine, before they were more than prosperous at the farm-stead again.

For a time everything went well. He let her work and command in the house, and she had unfailing luck in all she undertook, so that wealth flowed in to them from every side. But at length he once more began to ill-treat her. Wherever he went he remembered that she was no Christian, no matter how kind, and amiable and obedient she might be, and just like any one else, save that she was far, far handsomer. Once he reached down the poker from the wall, and was about to beat her. She jumped up and begged him insistently not to touch her: “For else both of us will be unhappy!” But he would not listen to her, and beat her about the head, until the blood ran over the poker and fell on his hand. And then she suddenly disappeared from his sight. It seemed as though she had floated through the wall, or sunk into the ground. He saw nothing, but he heard a woman sob and weep, very quietly and softly, and painfully, and with a deadly sadness. After a little while all was silent — and then he heard no more. He searched day in, day out, here and there, hither and yon, and his neighbors, too, went along and helped him search; but to no avail, for he did not find her, and could not even discover a trace of her. When he was in the hill pastures during the summer, and the rest of the folk were up there as well, and even after they had gone, he would sit night after night, and play “The Blue Melody”; yet he never saw her again, nor any of her folk.

In the summer his little girl was old enough to begin going to school. And one day she said to her father, when he came up to the hills: “I am to bring you a kind greeting from mother!”

“Ah, no, my little girl, is that really the truth? Where did you speak to her?” he asked.

“She and two others came here the day that Guro fetched the sheep, and since then she often comes here,” answered the little one, “and they gave me their clasps, too,” said she, and showed him three handsome round clasps.

“Won’t she come back home to us?” he asked, as well you may imagine.

“She said that she really could not do that, and that she had to protect you continually against folk who wanted to harm you!” said the little one.

Sadness had been his portion before this, and now it did not grow any less. And it was a blessing that before many years had passed the earth closed over him.

22. OSCAR WILDE

CONTENTS

Preface

1. The Young King
2. The Birthday of the Infanta
3. The Fisherman and His Soul
4. The Star-Child
5. The Happy Prince
6. The Nightingale and the Rose
7. The Selfish Giant
8. The Devoted Friend
9. The Remarkable Rocket

PREFACE

WILDE, OSCAR

Born October 16, 1854 in Dublin, Oscar Wilde was a renowned Irish playwright, essayist and novelist. Wilde was the author of *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, a collection of children's fairy tales published in May 1888. The story collection includes the titular story, as well as four other tales. All of the stories contained the same wit, enchantment and folly that filled Wilde's other work. However, the stories for children are also social critiques, with examinations of class and poverty. Before the tales were put in print, they were first told by Wilde at dinner parties, with adults as their first audience. Wilde himself described the tales as "not for children, but for childlike people from eighteen to eighty." Another fairy tale collection, *A House of Pomegranates*, was published by Wilde in 1891.

1

THE YOUNG KING

It was the night before the day fixed for his coronation, and the young King was sitting alone in his beautiful chamber. His courtiers had all taken their leave of him, bowing their heads to the ground, according to the ceremonious usage of the day, and had retired to the Great Hall of the Palace, to receive a few last lessons from the Professor of Etiquette; there being some of them who had still quite natural manners, which in a courtier is, I need hardly say, a very grave offence.

The lad — for he was only a lad, being but sixteen years of age — was not sorry at their departure, and had flung himself back with a deep sigh of relief on the soft cushions of his embroidered couch, lying there, wild-eyed and open-mouthed, like a brown woodland Faun, or some young animal of the forest newly snared by the hunters.

And, indeed, it was the hunters who had found him, coming upon him almost by chance as, bare-limbed and pipe in hand, he was following the flock of the poor goatherd who had brought him up, and whose son he had always fancied himself to be. The child of the old King's only daughter by a secret marriage with one much beneath her in station — a stranger, some said, who, by the wonderful magic of his lute-playing, had made the young Princess love him; while others spoke of an artist from Rimini, to whom the Princess had shown much, perhaps too much honour, and who had suddenly disappeared from the city, leaving his work in the Cathedral unfinished — he had been, when but a week old, stolen away from his mother’s side, as she slept, and given into the charge of a common peasant and his wife, who were without children of their own, and lived in a remote part of the forest, more than a day’s ride from the town. Grief, or the plague, as the court physician stated, or, as some suggested, a swift Italian poison administered in a cup of spiced wine, slew, within an hour of her wakening, the white girl who had given him birth, and as the trusty messenger who bare the child across his saddle-bow stooped from his weary horse and knocked at the rude door of the goatherd’s hut, the body of the Princess was being lowered into an open grave that had been dug in a deserted churchyard, beyond the city gates, a grave where it was said that another body was also lying, that of a young man of marvellous and foreign beauty, whose hands were tied behind him with a knotted cord, and whose breast was stabbed with many red wounds.

Such, at least, was the story that men whispered to each other. Certain it was that the old King, when on his deathbed, whether moved by remorse for his great sin, or merely desiring that the kingdom should not pass away from his line, had had the lad sent for, and, in the presence of the Council, had acknowledged him as his heir.

And it seems that from the very first moment of his recognition he had shown signs of that strange passion for beauty that was destined to have so great an influence over his life. Those who accompanied him to the suite of rooms set apart for his service, often spoke of the cry of pleasure that broke from his lips when he saw the delicate raiment and rich jewels that had been prepared for him, and of the almost fierce joy with which he flung aside his rough leathern tunic and coarse sheepskin cloak. He missed, indeed, at times the fine freedom of his forest life, and was always apt to chafe at the tedious Court ceremonies that occupied so much of each day, but the wonderful palace - *Joyeuse*, as they called it — of which he now found himself lord, seemed to him to be a new world fresh-fashioned for his delight; and as soon as he could escape from the council-board or audience-chamber, he would run down the great staircase, with its lions of gilt bronze and its steps of bright porphyry, and wander from room to room, and from corridor to corridor, like one who was seeking to find in beauty an anodyne from pain, a sort of restoration from sickness.

Upon these journeys of discovery, as he would call them — and, indeed, they were to him real voyages through a marvellous land, he would sometimes be accompanied by the slim, fair-haired Court pages, with their floating mantles, and gay fluttering ribands; but more often he would be alone, feeling through a certain quick instinct, which was almost a divination, that the secrets of art are best learned in secret, and that Beauty, like Wisdom, loves the lonely worshipper.

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MANY CURIOUS STORIES were related about him at this period. It was said that a stout Burgo-master, who had come to deliver a florid oratorical address on behalf of the citizens of the town, had caught sight of him kneeling in real adoration before a great picture that had just been brought from Venice, and that seemed to herald the worship of some new gods. On another occasion he had been missed for several hours, and after a lengthened search had been discovered in a little chamber in one of the northern turrets of the palace gazing, as one in a trance, at a Greek gem carved with the figure of Adonis. He had been seen, so the tale ran, pressing his warm lips to the marble brow of an antique statue that had been discovered in the bed of the river on the occasion of the building of the stone bridge, and was inscribed with the name of the Bithynian slave of

Hadrian. He had passed a whole night in noting the effect of the moonlight on a silver image of Endymion.

All rare and costly materials had certainly a great fascination for him, and in his eagerness to procure them he had sent away many merchants, some to traffic for amber with the rough fisher-folk of the north seas, some to Egypt to look for that curious green turquoise which is found only in the tombs of kings, and is said to possess magical properties, some to Persia for silken carpets and painted pottery, and others to India to buy gauze and stained ivory, moonstones and bracelets of jade, sandal-wood and blue enamel and shawls of fine wool.

But what had occupied him most was the robe he was to wear at his coronation, the robe of tissued gold, and the ruby-studded crown, and the sceptre with its rows and rings of pearls. Indeed, it was of this that he was thinking to-night, as he lay back on his luxurious couch, watching the great pinewood log that was burning itself out on the open hearth. The designs, which were from the hands of the most famous artists of the time, had been submitted to him many months before, and he had given orders that the artificers were to toil night and day to carry them out, and that the whole world was to be searched for jewels that would be worthy of their work. He saw himself in fancy standing at the high altar of the cathedral in the fair raiment of a King, and a smile played and lingered about his boyish lips, and lit up with a bright lustre his dark woodland eyes.

After some time he rose from his seat, and leaning against the carved penthouse of the chimney, looked round at the dimly-lit room. The walls were hung with rich tapestries representing the Triumph of Beauty. A large press, inlaid with agate and lapis-lazuli, filled one corner, and facing the window stood a curiously wrought cabinet with lacquer panels of powdered and mosaiced gold, on which were placed some delicate goblets of Venetian glass, and a cup of dark-veined onyx. Pale poppies were broidered on the silk coverlet of the bed, as though they had fallen from the tired hands of sleep, and tall reeds of fluted ivory bare up the velvet canopy, from which great tufts of ostrich plumes sprang, like white foam, to the pallid silver of the fretted ceiling. A laughing Narcissus in green bronze held a polished mirror above its head. On the table stood a flat bowl of amethyst.

Outside he could see the huge dome of the cathedral, looming like a bubble over the shadowy houses, and the weary sentinels pacing up and down on the misty terrace by the river. Far away, in an orchard, a nightingale was singing. A faint perfume of jasmine came through the open window. He brushed his brown curls back from his forehead, and taking up a lute, let his fingers stray across the cords. His heavy eyelids drooped, and a strange languor came over him. Never before had he felt so keenly, or with such exquisite joy, the magic and the mystery of beautiful things.

When midnight sounded from the clock-tower he touched a bell, and his pages entered and disrobed him with much ceremony, pouring rose-water over his hands, and strewing flowers on his pillow. A few moments after that they had left the room, he fell asleep.

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And as he slept he dreamed a dream, and this was his dream.

He thought that he was standing in a long, low attic, amidst the whir and clatter of many looms. The meagre daylight peered in through the grated windows, and showed him the gaunt figures of the weavers bending over their cases. Pale, sickly-looking children were crouched on the huge crossbeams. As the shuttles dashed through the warp they lifted up the heavy battens, and when the shuttles stopped they let the battens fall and pressed the threads together. Their faces were pinched with famine, and their thin hands shook and trembled. Some haggard women were seated at a table sewing. A horrible odour filled the place. The air was foul and heavy, and the walls dripped and streamed with damp.

The young King went over to one of the weavers, and stood by him and watched him.

And the weaver looked at him angrily, and said, ‘Why art thou watching me? Art thou a spy set on us by our master?’

‘Who is thy master?’ asked the young King.

‘Our master!’ cried the weaver, bitterly. ‘He is a man like myself. Indeed, there is but this difference between us - that he wears fine clothes while I go in rags, and that while I am weak from hunger he suffers not a little from overfeeding.’

‘The land is free,’ said the young King, ‘and thou art no man’s slave.’

‘In war,’ answered the weaver, ‘the strong make slaves of the weak, and in peace the rich make slaves of the poor. We must work to live, and they give us such mean wages that we die. We toil for them all day long, and they heap up gold in their coffers, and our children fade away before their time, and the faces of those we love become hard and evil. We tread out the grapes, and another drinks the wine. We sow the corn, and our own board is empty. We have chains, though no eye beholds them; and are slaves, though men call us free.’

‘Is it so with all?’ he asked,

‘It is so with all,’ answered the weaver, ‘with the young as well as with the old, with the women as well as with the men, with the little children as well as with those who are stricken in years. The merchants grind us down, and we must needs do their bidding. The priest rides by and tells his beads, and no man has care of us. Through our sunless lanes creeps Poverty with her hungry eyes, and Sin with his sodden face follows close behind her. Misery wakes us in the morning, and Shame sits with us at night. But what are these things to thee? Thou art not one of us. Thy face is too happy.’ And he turned away scowling, and threw the shuttle across the loom, and the young King saw that it was threaded with a thread of gold.

And a great terror seized upon him, and he said to the weaver, ‘What robe is this that thou art weaving?’

‘It is the robe for the coronation of the young King,’ he answered; ‘what is that to thee?’

And the young King gave a loud cry and woke, and lo! he was in his own chamber, and through the window he saw the great honey-coloured moon hanging in the dusky air.

* * *

AND HE FELL ASLEEP AGAIN and dreamed, and this was his dream.

He thought that he was lying on the deck of a huge galley that was being rowed by a hundred slaves. On a carpet by his side the master of the galley was seated. He was black as ebony, and his turban was of crimson silk. Great earrings of silver dragged down the thick lobes of his ears, and in his hands he had a pair of ivory scales.

The slaves were naked, but for a ragged loin-cloth, and each man was chained to his neighbour. The hot sun beat brightly upon them, and the negroes ran up and down the gangway and lashed them with whips of hide. They stretched out their lean arms and pulled the heavy oars through the water. The salt spray flew from the blades.

At last they reached a little bay, and began to take soundings. A light wind blew from the shore, and covered the deck and the great lateen sail with a fine red dust. Three Arabs mounted on wild asses rode out and threw spears at them. The master of the galley took a painted bow in his hand and shot one of them in the throat. He fell heavily into the surf, and his companions galloped away. A woman wrapped in a yellow veil followed slowly on a camel, looking back now and then at the dead body.

As soon as they had cast anchor and hauled down the sail, the negroes went into the hold and brought up a long rope-ladder, heavily weighted with lead. The master of the galley threw it over the side, making the ends fast to two iron stanchions. Then the negroes seized the youngest of the slaves and knocked his gyves off, and filled his nostrils and his ears with wax, and tied a big stone round his waist. He crept wearily down the ladder, and disappeared into the sea. A few bubbles rose where he sank. Some of the other slaves peered curiously over the side. At the prow of the galley sat a shark-charmer, beating monotonously upon a drum.

After some time the diver rose up out of the water, and clung panting to the ladder with a pearl in his right hand. The negroes seized it from him, and thrust him back. The slaves fell asleep over their oars.

Again and again he came up, and each time that he did so he brought with him a beautiful pearl. The master of the galley weighed them, and put them into a little bag of green leather.

The young King tried to speak, but his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and his lips refused to move. The negroes chattered to each other, and began to quarrel over a string of bright beads. Two cranes flew round and round the vessel.

Then the diver came up for the last time, and the pearl that he brought with him was fairer than all the pearls of Ormuz, for it was shaped like the full moon, and whiter than the morning star. But his face was strangely pale, and as he fell upon the deck the blood gushed from his ears and nostrils. He quivered for a little, and then he was still. The negroes shrugged their shoulders, and threw the body overboard.

And the master of the galley laughed, and, reaching out, he took the pearl, and when he saw it he pressed it to his forehead and bowed. ‘It shall be,’ he said, ‘for the sceptre of the young King,’ and he made a sign to the negroes to draw up the anchor.

And when the young King heard this he gave a great cry, and woke, and through the window he saw the long grey fingers of the dawn clutching at the fading stars.

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And he fell asleep again, and dreamed, and this was his dream.

He thought that he was wandering through a dim wood, hung with strange fruits and with beautiful poisonous flowers. The adders hissed at him as he went by, and the bright parrots flew screaming from branch to branch. Huge tortoises lay asleep upon the hot mud. The trees were full of apes and peacocks.

On and on he went, till he reached the outskirts of the wood, and there he saw an immense multitude of men toiling in the bed of a dried-up river. They swarmed up the crag like ants. They dug deep pits in the ground and went down into them. Some of them cleft the rocks with great axes; others grabbled in the sand.

They tore up the cactus by its roots, and trampled on the scarlet blossoms. They hurried about, calling to each other, and no man was idle.

From the darkness of a cavern Death and Avarice watched them, and Death said, ‘I am weary; give me a third of them and let me go.’ But Avarice shook her head. ‘They are my servants,’ she answered.

And Death said to her, ‘What hast thou in thy hand?’

‘I have three grains of corn,’ she answered; ‘what is that to thee?’

‘Give me one of them,’ cried Death, ‘to plant in my garden; only one of them, and I will go away.’

‘I will not give thee anything,’ said Avarice, and she hid her hand in the fold of her raiment.

And Death laughed, and took a cup, and dipped it into a pool of water, and out of the cup rose Ague. She passed through the great multitude, and a third of them lay dead. A cold mist followed her, and the water-snakes ran by her side.

And when Avarice saw that a third of the multitude was dead she beat her breast and wept. She beat her barren bosom, and cried aloud. ‘Thou hast slain a third of my servants,’ she cried, ‘get thee gone. There is war in the mountains of Tartary, and the kings of each side are calling to thee. The Afghans have slain the black ox, and are marching to battle. They have beaten upon their shields with their spears, and have put on their helmets of iron. What is my valley to thee, that thou shouldst tarry in it? Get thee gone, and come here no more.’

‘Nay,’ answered Death, ‘but till thou hast given me a grain of corn I will not go.’

But Avarice shut her hand, and clenched her teeth. ‘I will not give thee anything,’ she muttered.

And Death laughed, and took up a black stone, and threw it into the forest, and out of a thicket of wild hemlock came Fever in a robe of flame. She passed through the multitude, and touched them, and each man that she touched died. The grass withered beneath her feet as she walked.

And Avarice shuddered, and put ashes on her head. ‘Thou art cruel,’ she cried; ‘thou art cruel. There is famine in the walled cities of India, and the cisterns of Samarcand have run dry. There is famine in the walled cities of Egypt, and the locusts have come up from the desert. The Nile has not overflowed its banks, and the priests have cursed Isis and Osiris. Get thee gone to those who need thee, and leave me my servants.’

‘Nay,’ answered Death, ‘but till thou hast given me a grain of corn I will not go.’

‘I will not give thee anything,’ said Avarice.

And Death laughed again, and he whistled through his fingers, and a woman came flying through the air. Plague was written upon her forehead, and a crowd of lean vultures wheeled round her. She covered the valley with her wings, and no man was left alive.

And Avarice fled shrieking through the forest, and Death leaped upon his red horse and galloped away, and his galloping was faster than the wind.

And out of the slime at the bottom of the valley crept dragons and horrible things with scales, and the jackals came trotting along the sand, sniffing up the air with their nostrils.

And the young King wept, and said: ‘Who were these men, and for what were they seeking?’

‘For rubies for a king’s crown,’ answered one who stood behind him.

And the young King started, and, turning round, he saw a man habited as a pilgrim and holding in his hand a mirror of silver.

And he grew pale, and said: ‘For what king?’

And the pilgrim answered: ‘Look in this mirror, and thou shalt see him.’

And he looked in the mirror, and, seeing his own face, he gave a great cry and woke, and the bright sunlight was streaming into the room, and from the trees of the garden and pleasaunce the birds were singing.

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AND THE CHAMBERLAIN and the high officers of State came in and made obeisance to him, and the pages brought him the robe of tissued gold, and set the crown and the sceptre before him.

And the young King looked at them, and they were beautiful. More beautiful were they than aught that he had ever seen. But he remembered his dreams, and he said to his lords: ‘Take these things away, for I will not wear them.’

And the courtiers were amazed, and some of them laughed, for they thought that he was jesting.

But he spake sternly to them again, and said: ‘Take these things away, and hide them from me. Though it be the day of my coronation, I will not wear them. For on the loom of Sorrow, and by the white hands of Pain, has this my robe been woven. There is Blood in the heart of the ruby, and Death in the heart of the pearl.’ And he told them his three dreams.

And when the courtiers heard them they looked at each other and whispered, saying: ‘Surely he is mad; for what is a dream but a dream, and a vision but a vision? They are not real things that one should heed them. And what have we to do with the lives of those who toil for us? Shall a man not eat bread till he has seen the sower, nor drink wine till he has talked with the vinedresser?’

And the Chamberlain spake to the young King, and said, ‘My lord, I pray thee set aside these black thoughts of thine, and put on this fair robe, and set this crown upon thy head. For how shall the people know that thou art a king, if thou hast not a king’s raiment?’

And the young King looked at him. ‘Is it so, indeed?’ he questioned. ‘Will they not know me for a king if I have not a king’s raiment?’

‘They will not know thee, my lord,’ cried the Chamberlain.

‘I had thought that there had been men who were kinglike,’ he answered, ‘but it may be as thou sayest. And yet I will not wear this robe, nor will I be crowned with this crown, but even as I came to the palace so will I go forth from it.’

And he bade them all leave him, save one page whom he kept as his companion, a lad a year younger than himself. Him he kept for his service, and when he had bathed himself in clear water, he opened a great painted chest, and from it he took the leathern tunic and rough sheepskin cloak that he had worn when he had watched on the hillside the shaggy goats of the goatherd. These he put on, and in his hand he took his rude shepherd’s staff.

And the little page opened his big blue eyes in wonder, and said smiling to him, ‘My lord, I see thy robe and thy sceptre, but where is thy crown?’

And the young King plucked a spray of wild briar that was climbing over the balcony, and bent it, and made a circlet of it, and set it on his own head.

‘This shall he my crown,’ he answered.

And thus attired he passed out of his chamber into the Great Hall, where the nobles were waiting for him.

And the nobles made merry, and some of them cried out to him, ‘My lord, the people wait for their king, and thou showest them a beggar,’ and others were wroth and said, ‘He brings shame upon our state, and is unworthy to be our master.’ But he answered them not a word, but passed on, and went down the bright porphyry staircase, and out through the gates of bronze, and mounted upon his horse, and rode towards the cathedral, the little page running beside him.

And the people laughed and said, ‘It is the King’s fool who is riding by,’ and they mocked him.

And he drew rein and said, ‘Nay, but I am the King.’ And he told them his three dreams.

And a man came out of the crowd and spake bitterly to him, and said, ‘Sir, knowest thou not that out of the luxury of the rich cometh the life of the poor? By your pomp we are nurtured, and your vices give us bread. To toil for a hard master is bitter, but to have no master to toil for is more bitter still. Thinkest thou that the ravens will feed us? And what cure hast thou for these things? Wilt thou say to the buyer, “Thou shalt buy for so much,” and to the seller, “Thou shalt sell at this price”? I trow not. Therefore go back to thy Palace and put on thy purple and fine linen. What hast thou to do with us, and what we suffer?’

‘Are not the rich and the poor brothers?’ asked the young King.

‘Ay,’ answered the man, ‘and the name of the rich brother is Cain.’

And the young King’s eyes filled with tears, and he rode on through the murmurs of the people, and the little page grew afraid and left him.

And when he reached the great portal of the cathedral, the soldiers thrust their halberts out and said, ‘What dost thou seek here? None enters by this door but the King.’

And his face flushed with anger, and he said to them, ‘I am the King,’ and waved their halberts aside and passed in.

And when the old Bishop saw him coming in his goatherd’s dress, he rose up in wonder from his throne, and went to meet him, and said to him, ‘My son, is this a king’s apparel? And with what crown shall I crown thee, and what sceptre shall I place in thy hand? Surely this should be to thee a day of joy, and not a day of abasement.’

‘Shall Joy wear what Grief has fashioned?’ said the young King. And he told him his three dreams.

And when the Bishop had heard them he knit his brows, and said, ‘My son, I am an old man, and in the winter of my days, and I know that many evil things are done in the wide world. The fierce robbers come down from the mountains, and carry off the little children, and sell them to the Moors. The lions lie in wait for the caravans, and leap upon the camels. The wild boar roots up the corn in the valley, and the foxes gnaw the vines upon the hill. The pirates lay waste the sea-coast and burn the ships of the fishermen, and take their nets from them. In the salt-marshes live the lepers; they have houses of wattled reeds, and none may come nigh them. The beggars wander through the cities, and eat their food with the dogs. Canst thou make these things not to be? Wilt thou take the leper for thy bedfellow, and set the beggar at thy board? Shall the lion do thy bidding, and the wild boar obey thee? Is not He who made misery wiser than thou art? Wherefore I praise thee not for this that thou hast done, but I bid thee ride back to the Palace and make thy face glad, and put on the raiment that beseemeth a king, and with the crown of gold I will crown thee, and the sceptre of pearl will I place in thy hand. And as for thy dreams, think no more of them. The burden of this world is too great for one man to bear, and the world's sorrow too heavy for one heart to suffer.'

'Sayest thou that in this house?' said the young King, and he strode past the Bishop, and climbed up the steps of the altar, and stood before the image of Christ.

He stood before the image of Christ, and on his right hand and on his left were the marvellous vessels of gold, the chalice with the yellow wine, and the vial with the holy oil. He knelt before the image of Christ, and the great candles burned brightly by the jewelled shrine, and the smoke of the incense curled in thin blue wreaths through the dome. He bowed his head in prayer, and the priests in their stiff copes crept away from the altar.

And suddenly a wild tumult came from the street outside, and in entered the nobles with drawn swords and nodding plumes, and shields of polished steel. 'Where is this dreamer of dreams?' they cried. 'Where is this King who is apparelled like a beggar — this boy who brings shame upon our state? Surely we will slay him, for he is unworthy to rule over us.'

And the young King bowed his head again, and prayed, and when he had finished his prayer he rose up, and turning round he looked at them sadly.

And lo! through the painted windows came the sunlight streaming upon him, and the sun-beams wove round him a tissued robe that was fairer than the robe that had been fashioned for his pleasure. The dead staff blossomed, and bare lilies that were whiter than pearls. The dry thorn blossomed, and bare roses that were redder than rubies. Whiter than fine pearls were the lilies, and their stems were of bright silver. Redder than male rubies were the roses, and their leaves were of beaten gold.

He stood there in the raiment of a king, and the gates of the jewelled shrine flew open, and from the crystal of the many-rayed monstrance shone a marvellous and mystical light. He stood there in a king's raiment, and the Glory of God filled the place, and the saints in their carven niches seemed to move. In the fair raiment of a king he stood before them, and the organ pealed out its music, and the trumpeters blew upon their trumpets, and the singing boys sang.

And the people fell upon their knees in awe, and the nobles sheathed their swords and did homage, and the Bishop's face grew pale, and his hands trembled. 'A greater than I hath crowned thee,' he cried, and he knelt before him.

And the young King came down from the high altar, and passed home through the midst of the people. But no man dared look upon his face, for it was like the face of an angel.

2

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

It was the birthday of the Infanta. She was just twelve years of age, and the sun was shining brightly in the gardens of the palace.

Although she was a real Princess and the Infanta of Spain, she had only one birthday every year, just like the children of quite poor people, so it was naturally a matter of great importance to the whole country that she should have a really fine day for the occasion. And a really fine day it certainly was. The tall striped tulips stood straight up upon their stalks, like long rows of soldiers, and looked defiantly across the grass at the roses, and said: ‘We are quite as splendid as you are now.’ The purple butterflies fluttered about with gold dust on their wings, visiting each flower in turn; the little lizards crept out of the crevices of the wall, and lay basking in the white glare; and the pomegranates split and cracked with the heat, and showed their bleeding red hearts. Even the pale yellow lemons, that hung in such profusion from the mouldering trellis and along the dim arcades, seemed to have caught a richer colour from the wonderful sunlight, and the magnolia trees opened their great globe-like blossoms of folded ivory, and filled the air with a sweet heavy perfume.

The little Princess herself walked up and down the terrace with her companions, and played at hide and seek round the stone vases and the old moss-grown statues. On ordinary days she was only allowed to play with children of her own rank, so she had always to play alone, but her birthday was an exception, and the King had given orders that she was to invite any of her young friends whom she liked to come and amuse themselves with her. There was a stately grace about these slim Spanish children as they glided about, the boys with their large-plumed hats and short fluttering cloaks, the girls holding up the trains of their long brocaded gowns, and shielding the sun from their eyes with huge fans of black and silver. But the Infanta was the most graceful of all, and the most tastefully attired, after the somewhat cumbrous fashion of the day. Her robe was of grey satin, the skirt and the wide puffed sleeves heavily embroidered with silver, and the stiff corset studded with rows of fine pearls. Two tiny slippers with big pink rosettes peeped out beneath her dress as she walked. Pink and pearl was her great gauze fan, and in her hair, which like an aureole of faded gold stood out stiffly round her pale little face, she had a beautiful white rose.

From a window in the palace the sad melancholy King watched them. Behind him stood his brother, Don Pedro of Aragon, whom he hated, and his confessor, the Grand Inquisitor of Granada, sat by his side. Sadder even than usual was the King, for as he looked at the Infanta bowing with childish gravity to the assembling counters, or laughing behind her fan at the grim Duchess of Albuquerque who always accompanied her, he thought of the young Queen, her mother, who but a short time before — so it seemed to him — had come from the gay country of France, and had withered away in the sombre splendour of the Spanish court, dying just six months after the birth of her child, and before she had seen the almonds blossom twice in the orchard, or plucked the second year’s fruit from the old gnarled fig-tree that stood in the centre of the now grass-grown courtyard. So great had been his love for her that he had not suffered even the grave to hide her from him. She had been embalmed by a Moorish physician, who in return for this service had been granted his life, which for heresy and suspicion of magical practices had been already forfeited, men said, to the Holy Office, and her body was still lying on its tapestried bier in the black marble chapel of the Palace, just as the monks had borne her in on that windy March day nearly twelve years before. Once every month the King, wrapped in a dark cloak and with a muffled lantern in his hand, went in and knelt by her side calling out, '*Mi reina*! *Mi reina*!' and sometimes breaking through the formal etiquette that in Spain governs every separate action of life, and sets limits even to the sorrow of a King, he would clutch at the pale jewelled hands in a wild agony of grief, and try to wake by his mad kisses the cold painted face.

To-day he seemed to see her again, as he had seen her first at the Castle of Fontainebleau, when he was but fifteen years of age, and she still younger. They had been formally betrothed on that occasion by the Papal Nuncio in the presence of the French King and all the Court, and he had returned to the Escurial bearing with him a little ringlet of yellow hair, and the memory of two childish lips bending down to kiss his hand as he stepped into his carriage. Later on had followed the marriage, hastily performed at Burgos, a small town on the frontier between the two countries, and the grand public entry into Madrid with the customary celebration of high mass at the Church of La Atocha, and a more than usually solemn *auto-da-fé*, in which nearly three hundred heretics, amongst whom were many Englishmen, had been delivered over to the secular arm to be burned.

Certainly he had loved her madly, and to the ruin, many thought, of his country, then at war with England for the possession of the empire of the New World. He had hardly ever permitted her to be out of his sight; for her, he had forgotten, or seemed to have forgotten, all grave affairs of State; and, with that terrible blindness that passion brings upon its servants, he had failed to notice that the elaborate ceremonies by which he sought to please her did but aggravate the strange malady from which she suffered. When she died he was, for a time, like one bereft of reason. Indeed, there is no doubt but that he would have formally abdicated and retired to the great Trappist monastery at Granada, of which he was already titular Prior, had he not been afraid to leave the little Infanta at the mercy of his brother, whose cruelty, even in Spain, was notorious, and who was suspected by many of having caused the Queen’s death by means of a pair of poisoned gloves that he had presented to her on the occasion of her visiting his castle in Aragon. Even after the expiration of the three years of public mourning that he had ordained throughout his whole dominions by royal edict, he would never suffer his ministers to speak about any new alliance, and when the Emperor himself sent to him, and offered him the hand of the lovely Archduchess of Bohemia, his niece, in marriage, he bade the ambassadors tell their master that the King of Spain was already wedded to Sorrow, and that though she was but a barren bride he loved her better than Beauty; an answer that cost his crown the rich provinces of the Netherlands, which soon after, at the Emperor’s instigation, revolted against him under the leadership of some fanatics of the Reformed Church.

His whole married life, with its fierce, fiery-coloured joys and the terrible agony of its sudden ending, seemed to come back to him to-day as he watched the Infanta playing on the terrace. She had all the Queen’s pretty petulance of manner, the same wilful way of tossing her head, the same proud curved beautiful mouth, the same wonderful smile - *vrai sourire de France* indeed — as she glanced up now and then at the window, or stretched out her little hand for the stately Spanish gentlemen to kiss. But the shrill laughter of the children grated on his ears, and the bright pitiless sunlight mocked his sorrow, and a dull odour of strange spices, spices such as embalmers use, seemed to taint - or was it fancy? — the clear morning air. He buried his face in his hands, and when the Infanta looked up again the curtains had been drawn, and the King had retired.

She made a little *moue* of disappointment, and shrugged her shoulders. Surely he might have stayed with her on her birthday. What did the stupid

State-affairs matter? Or had he gone to that gloomy chapel, where the candles were always burning, and where she was never allowed to enter? How silly of him, when the sun was shining so brightly, and everybody was so happy! Besides, he would miss the sham bull-fight for which the trumpet was already sounding, to say nothing of the puppet-show and the other wonderful things. Her uncle and the Grand Inquisitor were much more sensible. They had come out on the terrace, and paid her nice compliments. So she tossed her pretty head, and taking Don Pedro by the hand, she walked slowly down the steps towards a long pavilion of purple silk that had been erected at the end of the garden, the other children following in strict order of precedence, those who had the longest names going first.

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A PROCESSION OF NOBLE BOYS, fantastically dressed as *toreadors*, came out to meet her, and the young Count of Tierra-Nueva, a wonderfully handsome lad of about fourteen years of age, uncovering his head with all the grace of a born hidalgo and grandee of Spain, led her solemnly in to a little gilt and ivory chair that was placed on a raised dais above the arena. The children grouped themselves all round, fluttering their big fans and whispering to each other, and Don Pedro and the Grand Inquisitor stood laughing at the entrance. Even the Duchess — the Camerera-Mayor as she was called — a thin, hard-featured woman with a yellow ruff, did not look quite so bad-tempered as usual, and something like a chill smile flitted across her wrinkled face and twitched her thin bloodless lips.

It certainly was a marvellous bull-fight, and much nicer, the Infanta thought, than the real bull-fight that she had been brought to see at Seville, on the occasion of the visit of the Duke of Parma to her father. Some of the boys pranced about on richly-caparisoned hobby-horses brandishing long javelins with gay streamers of bright ribands attached to them; others went on foot waving their scarlet cloaks before the bull, and vaulting lightly over the barrier when he charged them; and as for the bull himself, he was just like a live bull, though he was only made of wicker-work and stretched hide, and sometimes insisted on running round the arena on his hind legs, which no live bull ever dreams of doing. He made a splendid fight of it too, and the children got so excited that they stood up upon the benches, and waved their lace handkerchiefs and cried out: *Bravo toro! Bravo toro*! just as sensibly as if they had been grown-up people. At last, however, after a prolonged combat, during which several of the hobby-horses were gored through and through, and, their riders dismounted, the young Count of Tierra-Nueva brought the bull to his knees, and having obtained permission from the Infanta to give the *coup de grâce*, he plunged his wooden sword into the neck of the animal with such violence that the head came right off, and disclosed the laughing face of little Monsieur de Lorraine, the son of the French Ambassador at Madrid.

The arena was then cleared amidst much applause, and the dead hobbyhorses dragged solemnly away by two Moorish pages in yellow and black liveries, and after a short interlude, during which a French posture-master performed upon the tightrope, some Italian puppets appeared in the semi-classical tragedy of *Sophonisba* on the stage of a small theatre that had been built up for the purpose. They acted so well, and their gestures were so extremely natural, that at the close of the play the eyes of the Infanta were quite dim with tears. Indeed some of the children really cried, and had to be comforted with sweetmeats, and the Grand Inquisitor himself was so affected that he could not help saying to Don Pedro that it seemed to him intolerable that things made simply out of wood and coloured wax, and worked mechanically by wires, should be so unhappy and meet with such terrible misfortunes.

An African juggler followed, who brought in a large flat basket covered with a red cloth, and having placed it in the centre of the arena, he took from his turban a curious reed pipe, and blew through it. In a few moments the cloth began to move, and as the pipe grew shriller and shriller two green and gold snakes put out their strange wedge-shaped heads and rose slowly up, swaying to and fro with the music as a plant sways in the water. The children, however, were rather frightened at their spotted hoods and quick darting tongues, and were much more pleased when the juggler made a tiny orange-tree grow out of the sand and bear pretty white blossoms and clusters of real fruit; and when he took the fan of the little daughter of the Marquess de Las-Torres, and changed it into a blue bird that flew all round the pavilion and sang, their delight and amazement knew no bounds. The solemn minuet, too, performed by the dancing boys from the church of Nuestra Senora Del Pilar, was charming. The Infanta had never before seen this wonderful ceremony which takes place every year at Maytime in front of the high altar of the Virgin, and in her honour; and indeed none of the royal family of Spain had entered the great cathedral of Saragossa since a mad priest, supposed by many to have been in the pay of Elizabeth of England, had tried to administer a poisoned wafer to the Prince of the Asturias. So she had known only by hearsay of ‘Our Lady’s Dance,’ as it was called, and it certainly was a beautiful sight. The boys wore old-fashioned court dresses of white velvet, and their curious three-cornered hats were fringed with silver and surmounted with huge plumes of ostrich feathers, the dazzling whiteness of their costumes, as they moved about in the sunlight, being still more accentuated by their swarthy faces and long black hair. Everybody was fascinated by the grave dignity with which they moved through the intricate figures of the dance, and by the elaborate grace of their slow gestures, and stately bows, and when they had finished their performance and doffed their great plumed hats to the Infanta, she acknowledged their reverence with much courtesy, and made a vow that she would send a large wax candle to the shrine of Our Lady of Pilar in return for the pleasure that she had given her.

A troop of handsome Egyptians — as the gipsies were termed in those days — then advanced into the arena, and sitting down cross-legs, in a circle, began to play softly upon their zithers, moving their bodies to the tune, and humming, almost below their breath, a low dreamy air. When they caught sight of Don Pedro they scowled at him, and some of them looked terrified, for only a few weeks before he had had two of their tribe hanged for sorcery in the market-place at Seville, but the pretty Infanta charmed them as she leaned back peeping over her fan with her great blue eyes, and they felt sure that one so lovely as she was could never be cruel to anybody. So they played on very gently and just touching the cords of the zithers with their long pointed nails, and their heads began to nod as though they were falling asleep. Suddenly, with a cry so shrill that all the children were startled and Don Pedro’s hand clutched at the agate pommel of his dagger, they leapt to their feet and whirled madly round the enclosure beating their tambourines, and chaunting some wild love-song in their strange guttural language. Then at another signal they all flung themselves again to the ground and lay there quite still, the dull strumming of the zithers being the only sound that broke the silence. After that they had done this several times, they disappeared for a moment and came back leading a brown shaggy bear by a chain, and carrying on their shoulders some little Barbary apes. The bear stood upon his head with the utmost gravity, and the wizened apes played all kinds of amusing tricks with two gipsy boys who seemed to be their masters, and fought with tiny swords, and fired off guns, and went through a regular soldier’s drill just like the King’s own bodyguard. In fact the gipsies were a great success.

But the funniest part of the whole morning’s entertainment, was undoubtedly the dancing of the little Dwarf. When he stumbled into the arena, waddling on his crooked legs and wagging his huge misshapen head from side to side, the children went off into a loud shout of delight, and the Infanta herself laughed so much that the Camerera was obliged to remind her that although there were many precedents in Spain for a King’s daughter weeping before her equals, there were none for a Princess of the blood royal making so merry before those who were her inferiors in birth. The Dwarf, however, was really quite irresistible, and even at the Spanish Court, always noted for its cultivated passion for the horrible, so fantastic a little monster had never been seen. It was his first appearance, too. He had been discovered only the day before, running wild through the forest, by two of the nobles who happened to have been hunting in a remote part of the great cork-wood that surrounded the town, and had been carried off by them to the Palace as a surprise for the Infanta; his father, who was a poor charcoal-burner, being but too well pleased to get rid of so ugly and useless a child. Perhaps the most amusing thing about him was his complete unconsciousness of his own grotesque appearance. Indeed he seemed quite happy and full of the highest spirits. When the children laughed, he laughed as freely and as joyously as any of them, and at the close of each dance he made them each the funniest of bows, smiling and nodding at them just as if he was really one of themselves, and not a little misshapen thing that Nature, in some humourous mood, had fashioned for others to mock at. As for the Infanta, she absolutely fascinated him. He could not keep his eyes off her, and seemed to dance for her alone, and when at the close of the performance, remembering how she had seen the great ladies of the Court throw bouquets to Caffarelli, the famous Italian treble, whom the Pope had sent from his own chapel to Madrid that he might cure the King’s melancholy by the sweetness of his voice, she took out of her hair the beautiful white rose, and partly for a jest and partly to tease the Camerera, threw it to him across the arena with her sweetest smile, he took the whole matter quite seriously, and pressing the flower to his rough coarse lips he put his hand upon his heart, and sank on one knee before her, grinning from ear to ear, and with his little bright eyes sparkling with pleasure.

This so upset the gravity of the Infanta that she kept on laughing long after the little Dwarf had ran out of the arena, and expressed a desire to her uncle that the dance should be immediately repeated. The Camerera, however, on the plea that the sun was too hot, decided that it would be better that her Highness should return without delay to the Palace, where a wonderful feast had been already prepared for her, including a real birthday cake with her own initials worked all over it in painted sugar and a lovely silver flag waving from the top. The Infanta accordingly rose up with much dignity, and having given orders that the little dwarf was to dance again for her after the hour of siesta, and conveyed her thanks to the young Count of Tierra-Nueva for his charming reception, she went back to her apartments, the children following in the same order in which they had entered.

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NOW WHEN THE little Dwarf heard that he was to dance a second time before the Infanta, and by her own express command, he was so proud that he ran out into the garden, kissing the white rose in an absurd ecstasy of pleasure, and making the most uncouth and clumsy gestures of delight.

The Flowers were quite indignant at his daring to intrude into their beautiful home, and when they saw him capering up and down the walks, and waving his arms above his head in such a ridiculous manner, they could not restrain their feelings any longer.

‘He is really far too ugly to be allowed to play in any place where we are,’ cried the Tulips.

‘He should drink poppy-juice, and go to sleep for a thousand years,’ said the great scarlet Lilies, and they grew quite hot and angry.

‘He is a perfect horror!’ screamed the Cactus. ‘Why, he is twisted and stumpy, and his head is completely out of proportion with his legs. Really he makes me feel prickly all over, and if he comes near me I will sting him with my thorns.’

‘And he has actually got one of my best blooms,’ exclaimed the White Rose-Tree. ‘I gave it to the Infanta this morning myself, as a birthday present, and he has stolen it from her.’ And she called out: ‘Thief, thief, thief!’ at the top of her voice.

Even the red Geraniums, who did not usually give themselves airs, and were known to have a great many poor relations themselves, curled up in disgust when they saw him, and when the Violets meekly remarked that though he was certainly extremely plain, still he could not help it, they retorted with a good deal of justice that that was his chief defect, and that there was no reason why one should admire a person because he was incurable; and, indeed, some of the Violets themselves felt that the ugliness of the little Dwarf was almost ostentatious, and that he would have shown much better taste if he had looked sad, or at least pensive, instead of jumping about merrily, and throwing himself into such grotesque and silly attitudes.

As for the old Sundial, who was an extremely remarkable individual, and had once told the time of day to no less a person than the Emperor Charles V. himself, he was so taken aback by the little Dwarf’s appearance, that he almost forgot to mark two whole minutes with his long shadowy finger, and could not help saying to the great milk-white Peacock, who was sunning herself on the balustrade, that every one knew that the children of Kings were Kings, and that the children of charcoal-burners were charcoal-burners, and that it was absurd to pretend that it wasn’t so; a statement with which the Peacock entirely agreed, and indeed screamed out, ‘Certainly, certainly,’ in such a loud, harsh voice, that the gold-fish who lived in the basin of the cool splashing fountain put their heads out of the water, and asked the huge stone Tritons what on earth was the matter.

But somehow the Birds liked him. They had seen him often in the forest, dancing about like an elf after the eddying leaves, or crouched up in the hollow of some old oak-tree, sharing his nuts with the squirrels. They did not mind his being ugly, a bit. Why, even the nightingale herself, who sang so sweetly in the orange groves at night that sometimes the Moon leaned down to listen, was not much to look at after all; and, besides, he had been kind to them, and during that terribly bitter winter, when there were no berries on the trees, and the ground was as hard as iron, and the wolves had come down to the very gates of the city to look for food, he had never once forgotten them, but had always given them crumbs out of his little hunch of black bread, and divided with them whatever poor breakfast he had.

So they flew round and round him, just touching his cheek with their wings as they passed, and chattered to each other, and the little Dwarf was so pleased that he could not help showing them the beautiful white rose, and telling them that the Infanta herself had given it to him because she loved him.

They did not understand a single word of what he was saying, but that made no matter, for they put their heads on one side, and looked wise, which is quite as good as understanding a thing, and very much easier.

The Lizards also took an immense fancy to him, and when he grew tired of running about and flung himself down on the grass to rest, they played and romped all over him, and tried to amuse him in the best way they could. ‘Every one cannot be as beautiful as a lizard,’ they cried; ‘that would be too much to expect. And, though it sounds absurd to say so, he is really not so ugly after all, provided, of course, that one shuts one’s eyes, and does not look at him.’ The Lizards were extremely philosophical by nature, and often sat thinking for hours and hours together, when there was nothing else to do, or when the weather was too rainy for them to go out.

The Flowers, however, were excessively annoyed at their behaviour, and at the behaviour of the birds. ‘It only shows,’ they said, ‘what a vulgarising effect this incessant rushing and flying about has. Well-bred people always stay exactly in the same place, as we do. No one ever saw us hopping up and down the walks, or galloping madly through the grass after dragon-flies. When we do want change of air, we send for the gardener, and he carries us to another bed. This is dignified, and as it should be. But birds and lizards have no sense of repose, and indeed birds have not even a permanent address. They are mere vagrants like the gipsies, and should be treated in exactly the same manner.’ So they put their noses in the air, and looked very haughty, and were quite delighted when after some time they saw the little Dwarf scramble up from the grass, and make his way across the terrace to the palace.

‘He should certainly be kept indoors for the rest of his natural life,’ they said. ‘Look at his hunched back, and his crooked legs,’ and they began to titter.

But the little Dwarf knew nothing of all this. He liked the birds and the lizards immensely, and thought that the flowers were the most marvellous things in the whole world, except of course the Infanta, but then she had given him the beautiful white rose, and she loved him, and that made a great difference. How he wished that he had gone back with her! She would have put him on her right hand, and smiled at him, and he would have never left her side, but would have made her his playmate, and taught her all kinds of delightful tricks. For though he had never been in a palace before, he knew a great many wonderful things. He could make little cages out of rushes for the grasshoppers to sing in, and fashion the long jointed bamboo into the pipe that Pan loves to hear. He knew the cry of every bird, and could call the starlings from the tree-top, or the heron from the mere. He knew the trail of every animal, and could track the hare by its delicate footprints, and the boar by the trampled leaves. All the wild-dances he knew, the mad dance in red raiment with the autumn, the light dance in blue sandals over the corn, the dance with white snow-wreaths in winter, and the blossom-dance through the orchards in spring. He knew where the wood-pigeons built their nests, and once when a fowler had snared the parent birds, he had brought up the young ones himself, and had built a little dovecot for them in the cleft of a pollard elm. They were quite tame, and used to feed out of his hands every morning. She would like them, and the rabbits that scurried about in the long fern, and the jays with their steely feathers and black bills, and the hedgehogs that could curl themselves up into prickly balls, and the great wise tortoises that crawled slowly about, shaking their heads and nibbling at the young leaves. Yes, she must certainly come to the forest and play with him. He would give her his own little bed, and would watch outside the window till dawn, to see that the wild horned cattle did not harm her, nor the gaunt wolves creep too near the hut. And at dawn he would tap at the shutters and wake her, and they would go out and dance together all the day long. It was really not a bit lonely in the forest. Sometimes a Bishop rode through on his white mule, reading out of a painted book. Sometimes in their green velvet caps, and their jerkins of tanned deerskin, the falconers passed by, with hooded hawks on their wrists. At vintage-time came the grape-treaders, with purple hands and feet, wreathed with glossy ivy and carrying dripping skins of wine; and the charcoal-burners sat round their huge braziers at night, watching the dry logs charring slowly in the fire, and roasting chestnuts in the ashes, and the robbers came out of their caves and made merry with them. Once, too, he had seen a beautiful procession winding up the long dusty road to Toledo. The monks went in front singing sweetly, and carrying bright banners and crosses of gold, and then, in silver armour, with matchlocks and pikes, came the soldiers, and in their midst walked three barefooted men, in strange yellow dresses painted all over with wonderful figures, and carrying lighted candles in their hands. Certainly there was a great deal to look at in the forest, and when she was tired he would find a soft bank of moss for her, or carry her in his arms, for he was very strong, though he knew that he was not tall. He would make her a necklace of red bryony berries, that would be quite as pretty as the white berries that she wore on her dress, and when she was tired of them, she could throw them away, and he would find her others. He would bring her acorn-cups and dew-drenched anemones, and tiny glow-worms to be stars in the pale gold of her hair.

But where was she? He asked the white rose, and it made him no answer. The whole palace seemed asleep, and even where the shutters had not been closed, heavy curtains had been drawn across the windows to keep out the glare. He wandered all round looking for some place through which he might gain an entrance, and at last he caught sight of a little private door that was lying open. He slipped through, and found himself in a splendid hall, far more splendid, he feared, than the forest, there was so much more gilding everywhere, and even the floor was made of great coloured stones, fitted together into a sort of geometrical pattern. But the little Infanta was not there, only some wonderful white statues that looked down on him from their jasper pedestals, with sad blank eyes and strangely smiling lips.

At the end of the hall hung a richly embroidered curtain of black velvet, powdered with suns and stars, the King’s favourite devices, and broidered on the colour he loved best. Perhaps she was hiding behind that? He would try at any rate.

So he stole quietly across, and drew it aside. No; there was only another room, though a prettier room, he thought, than the one he had just left. The walls were hung with a many-figured green arras of needle-wrought tapestry representing a hunt, the work of some Flemish artists who had spent more than seven years in its composition. It had once been the chamber of *Jean le Fou*, as he was called, that mad King who was so enamoured of the chase, that he had often tried in his delirium to mount the huge rearing horses, and to drag down the stag on which the great hounds were leaping, sounding his hunting horn, and stabbing with his dagger at the pale flying deer. It was now used as the council-room, and on the centre table were lying the red portfolios of the ministers, stamped with the gold tulips of Spain, and with the arms and emblems of the house of Hapsburg.

The little Dwarf looked in wonder all round him, and was half-afraid to go on. The strange silent horsemen that galloped so swiftly through the long glades without making any noise, seemed to him like those terrible phantoms of whom he had heard the charcoal-burners speaking — the Comprachos, who hunt only at night, and if they meet a man, turn him into a hind, and chase him. But he thought of the pretty Infanta, and took courage. He wanted to find her alone, and to tell her that he too loved her. Perhaps she was in the room beyond.

He ran across the soft Moorish carpets, and opened the door. No! She was not here either. The room was quite empty.

It was a throne-room, used for the reception of foreign ambassadors, when the King, which of late had not been often, consented to give them a personal audience; the same room in which, many years before, envoys had appeared from England to make arrangements for the marriage of their Queen, then one of the Catholic sovereigns of Europe, with the Emperor’s eldest son. The hangings were of gilt Cordovan leather, and a heavy gilt chandelier with branches for three hundred wax lights hung down from the black and white ceiling. Underneath a great canopy of gold cloth, on which the lions and towers of Castile were broidered in seed pearls, stood the throne itself, covered with a rich pall of black velvet studded with silver tulips and elaborately fringed with silver and pearls. On the second step of the throne was placed the kneeling-stool of the Infanta, with its cushion of cloth of silver tissue, and below that again, and beyond the limit of the canopy, stood the chair for the Papal Nuncio, who alone had the right to be seated in the King’s presence on the occasion of any public ceremonial, and whose Cardinal’s hat, with its tangled scarlet tassels, lay on a purple *tabouret* in front. On the wall, facing the throne, hung a life-sized portrait of Charles V. in hunting dress, with a great mastiff by his side, and a picture of Philip II. receiving the homage of the Netherlands occupied the centre of the other wall. Between the windows stood a black ebony cabinet, inlaid with plates of ivory, on which the figures from Holbein's Dance of Death had been graved — by the hand, some said, of that famous master himself.

But the little Dwarf cared nothing for all this magnificence. He would not have given his rose for all the pearls on the canopy, nor one white petal of his rose for the throne itself. What he wanted was to see the Infanta before she went down to the pavilion, and to ask her to come away with him when he had finished his dance. Here, in the Palace, the air was close and heavy, but in the forest the wind blew free, and the sunlight with wandering hands of gold moved the tremulous leaves aside. There were flowers, too, in the forest, not so splendid, perhaps, as the flowers in the garden, but more sweetly scented for all that; hyacinths in early spring that flooded with waving purple the cool glens, and grassy knolls; yellow primroses that nestled in little clumps round the gnarled roots of the oak-trees; bright celandine, and blue speedwell, and irises lilac and gold. There were grey catkins on the hazels, and the foxgloves drooped with the weight of their dappled bee-haunted cells. The chestnut had its spires of white stars, and the hawthorn its pallid moons of beauty. Yes: surely she would come if he could only find her! She would come with him to the fair forest, and all day long he would dance for her delight. A smile lit up his eyes at the thought, and he passed into the next room.

Of all the rooms this was the brightest and the most beautiful. The walls were covered with a pink-flowered Lucca damask, patterned with birds and dotted with dainty blossoms of silver; the furniture was of massive silver, festooned with florid wreaths, and swinging Cupids; in front of the two large fire-places stood great screens broidered with parrots and peacocks, and the floor, which was of sea-green onyx, seemed to stretch far away into the distance. Nor was he alone. Standing under the shadow of the doorway, at the extreme end of the room, he saw a little figure watching him. His heart trembled, a cry of joy broke from his lips, and he moved out into the sunlight. As he did so, the figure moved out also, and he saw it plainly.

The Infanta! It was a monster, the most grotesque monster he had ever beheld. Not properly shaped, as all other people were, but hunchbacked, and crooked-limbed, with huge lolling head and mane of black hair. The little Dwarf frowned, and the monster frowned also. He laughed, and it laughed with him, and held its hands to its sides, just as he himself was doing. He made it a mocking bow, and it returned him a low reverence. He went towards it, and it came to meet him, copying each step that he made, and stopping when he stopped himself. He shouted with amusement, and ran forward, and reached out his hand, and the hand of the monster touched his, and it was as cold as ice. He grew afraid, and moved his hand across, and the monster's hand followed it quickly. He tried to press on, but something smooth and hard stopped him. The face of the monster was now close to his own, and seemed full of terror. He brushed his hair off his eyes. It imitated him. He struck at it, and it returned blow for blow. He loathed it, and it made hideous faces at him. He drew back, and it retreated.

What is it? He thought for a moment, and looked round at the rest of the room. It was strange, but everything seemed to have its double in this invisible wall of clear water. Yes, picture for picture was repeated, and couch for couch. The sleeping Faun that lay in the alcove by the doorway had its twin brother that slumbered, and the silver Venus that stood in the sunlight held out her arms to a Venus as lovely as herself.

Was it Echo? He had called to her once in the valley, and she had answered him word for word. Could she mock the eye, as she mocked the voice? Could she make a mimic world just like the real world? Could the shadows of things have colour and life and movement? Could it be that -?

He started, and taking from his breast the beautiful white rose, he turned round, and kissed it. The monster had a rose of its own, petal for petal the same! It kissed it with like kisses, and pressed it to its heart with horrible gestures.

When the truth dawned upon him, he gave a wild cry of despair, and fell sobbing to the ground. So it was he who was misshapen and hunchbacked, foul to look at and grotesque. He himself was the monster, and it was at him that all the children had been laughing, and the little Princess who he had thought loved him — she too had been merely mocking at his ugliness, and making merry over his twisted limbs. Why had they not left him in the forest, where there was no mirror to tell him how loathsome he was? Why had his father not killed him, rather than sell him to his shame? The hot tears poured down his cheeks, and he tore the white rose to pieces. The sprawling monster did the same, and scattered the faint petals in the air. It grovelled on the ground, and, when he looked at it, it watched him with a face drawn with pain. He crept away, lest he should see it, and covered his eyes with his hands. He crawled, like some wounded thing, into the shadow, and lay there moaning.

And at that moment the Infanta herself came in with her companions through the open window, and when they saw the ugly little dwarf lying on the ground and beating the floor with his clenched hands, in the most fantastic and exaggerated manner, they went off into shouts of happy laughter, and stood all round him and watched him.

‘His dancing was funny,’ said the Infanta; ‘but his acting is funnier still. Indeed he is almost as good as the puppets, only of course not quite so natural.’ And she fluttered her big fan, and applauded.

But the little Dwarf never looked up, and his sobs grew fainter and fainter, and suddenly he gave a curious gasp, and clutched his side. And then he fell back again, and lay quite still.

‘That is capital,’ said the Infanta, after a pause; ‘but now you must dance for me.’

‘Yes,’ cried all the children, ‘you must get up and dance, for you are as clever as the Barbary apes, and much more ridiculous.’ But the little Dwarf made no answer.

And the Infanta stamped her foot, and called out to her uncle, who was walking on the terrace with the Chamberlain, reading some despatches that had just arrived from Mexico, where the Holy Office had recently been established. ‘My funny little dwarf is sulking,’ she cried, ‘you must wake him up, and tell him to dance for me.’

They smiled at each other, and sauntered in, and Don Pedro stooped down, and slapped the Dwarf on the cheek with his embroidered glove. ‘You must dance,’ he said, *‘petit monsire*. You must dance. The Infanta of Spain and the Indies wishes to be amused.’

But the little Dwarf never moved.

‘A whipping master should be sent for,’ said Don Pedro wearily, and he went back to the terrace. But the Chamberlain looked grave, and he knelt beside the little dwarf, and put his hand upon his heart. And after a few moments he shrugged his shoulders, and rose up, and having made a low bow to the Infanta, he said -

‘Mi bella Princesa, your funny little dwarf will never dance again. It is a pity, for he is so ugly that he might have made the King smile.’

‘But why will he not dance again?’ asked the Infanta, laughing.

‘Because his heart is broken,’ answered the Chamberlain.

And the Infanta frowned, and her dainty rose-leaf lips curled in pretty disdain. ‘For the future let those who come to play with me have no hearts,’ she cried, and she ran out into the garden.

3

THE FISHERMAN AND HIS SOUL

Every evening the young Fisherman went out upon the sea, and threw his nets into the water.

When the wind blew from the land he caught nothing, or but little at best, for it was a bitter and black-winged wind, and rough waves rose up to meet it. But when the wind blew to the shore, the fish came in from the deep, and swam into the meshes of his nets, and he took them to the market-place and sold them.

Every evening he went out upon the sea, and one evening the net was so heavy that hardly could he draw it into the boat. And he laughed, and said to himself, ‘Surely I have caught all the fish that swim, or snared some dull monster that will be a marvel to men, or some thing of horror that the great Queen will desire,’ and putting forth all his strength, he tugged at the coarse ropes till, like lines of blue enamel round a vase of bronze, the long veins rose up on his arms. He tugged at the thin ropes, and nearer and nearer came the circle of flat corks, and the net rose at last to the top of the water.

But no fish at all was in it, nor any monster or thing of horror, but only a little Mermaid lying fast asleep.

Her hair was as a wet fleece of gold, and each separate hair as a thread of fine gold in a cup of glass. Her body was as white ivory, and her tail was of silver and pearl. Silver and pearl was her tail, and the green weeds of the sea coiled round it; and like sea-shells were her ears, and her lips were like sea-coral. The cold waves dashed over her cold breasts, and the salt glistened upon her eyelids.

So beautiful was she that when the young Fisherman saw her he was filled with wonder, and he put out his hand and drew the net close to him, and leaning over the side he clasped her in his arms. And when he touched her, she gave a cry like a startled sea-gull, and woke, and looked at him in terror with her mauve-amethyst eyes, and struggled that she might escape. But he held her tightly to him, and would not suffer her to depart.

And when she saw that she could in no way escape from him, she began to weep, and said, ‘I pray thee let me go, for I am the only daughter of a King, and my father is aged and alone.’

But the young Fisherman answered, ‘I will not let thee go save thou makest me a promise that whenever I call thee, thou wilt come and sing to me, for the fish delight to listen to the song of the Sea-folk, and so shall my nets be full.’

‘Wilt thou in very truth let me go, if I promise thee this?’ cried the Mermaid.

‘In very truth I will let thee go,’ said the young Fisherman.

So she made him the promise he desired, and sware it by the oath of the Sea-folk. And he loosened his arms from about her, and she sank down into the water, trembling with a strange fear.

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EVERY EVENING the young Fisherman went out upon the sea, and called to the Mermaid, and she rose out of the water and sang to him. Round and round her swam the dolphins, and the wild gulls wheeled above her head.

And she sang a marvellous song. For she sang of the Sea-folk who drive their flocks from cave to cave, and carry the little calves on their shoulders; of the Tritons who have long green beards, and hairy breasts, and blow through twisted conchs when the King passes by; of the palace of the King which is all of amber, with a roof of clear emerald, and a pavement of bright pearl; and of the gardens of the sea where the great filigrane fans of coral wave all day long, and the fish dart about like silver birds, and the anemones cling to the rocks, and the pinks bourgeon in the ribbed yellow sand. She sang of the big whales that come down from the north seas and have sharp icicles hanging to their fins; of the Sirens who tell of such wonderful things that the merchants have to stop their ears with wax lest they should hear them, and leap into the water and be drowned; of the sunken galleys with their tall masts, and the frozen sailors clinging to the rigging, and the mackerel swimming in and out of the open portholes; of the little barnacles who are great travellers, and cling to the keels of the ships and go round and round the world; and of the cuttlefish who live in the sides of the cliffs and stretch out their long black arms, and can make night come when they will it. She sang of the nautilus who has a boat of her own that is carved out of an opal and steered with a silken sail; of the happy Mermen who play upon harps and can charm the great Kraken to sleep; of the little children who catch hold of the slippery porpoises and ride laughing upon their backs; of the Mermaids who lie in the white foam and hold out their arms to the mariners; and of the sea-lions with their curved tusks, and the sea-horses with their floating manes.

And as she sang, all the tunny-fish came in from the deep to listen to her, and the young Fisherman threw his nets round them and caught them, and others he took with a spear. And when his boat was well-laden, the Mermaid would sink down into the sea, smiling at him.

Yet would she never come near him that he might touch her. Oftentimes he called to her and prayed of her, but she would not; and when he sought to seize her she dived into the water as a seal might dive, nor did he see her again that day. And each day the sound of her voice became sweeter to his ears. So sweet was her voice that he forgot his nets and his cunning, and had no care of his craft. Vermilion-finned and with eyes of bossy gold, the tunnies went by in shoals, but he heeded them not. His spear lay by his side unused, and his baskets of plaited osier were empty. With lips parted, and eyes dim with wonder, he sat idle in his boat and listened, listening till the sea-mists crept round him, and the wandering moon stained his brown limbs with silver.

And one evening he called to her, and said: ‘Little Mermaid, little Mermaid, I love thee. Take me for thy bridegroom, for I love thee.’

But the Mermaid shook her head. ‘Thou hast a human soul,’ she answered. ‘If only thou wouldst send away thy soul, then could I love thee.’

And the young Fisherman said to himself, ‘Of what use is my soul to me? I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I do not know it. Surely I will send it away from me, and much gladness shall be mine.’ And a cry of joy broke from his lips, and standing up in the painted boat, he held out his arms to the Mermaid. ‘I will send my soul away,’ he cried, ‘and you shall be my bride, and I will be thy bridegroom, and in the depth of the sea we will dwell together, and all that thou hast sung of thou shalt show me, and all that thou desirest I will do, nor shall our lives be divided.’

And the little Mermaid laughed for pleasure and hid her face in her hands.

‘But how shall I send my soul from me?’ cried the young Fisherman. ‘Tell me how I may do it, and lo! it shall be done.’

‘Alas! I know not,’ said the little Mermaid: ‘the Sea-folk have no souls.’ And she sank down into the deep, looking wistfully at him.

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Now early on the next morning, before the sun was the span of a man’s hand above the hill, the young Fisherman went to the house of the Priest and knocked three times at the door.

The novice looked out through the wicket, and when he saw who it was, he drew back the latch and said to him, ‘Enter.’

And the young Fisherman passed in, and knelt down on the sweet-smelling rushes of the floor, and cried to the Priest who was reading out of the Holy Book and said to him, ‘Father, I am in love with one of the Sea-folk, and my soul hindereth me from having my desire. Tell me how I can send my soul away from me, for in truth I have no need of it. Of what value is my soul to me? I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I do not know it.’

And the Priest beat his breast, and answered, ‘Alack, alack, thou art mad, or hast eaten of some poisonous herb, for the soul is the noblest part of man, and was given to us by God that we should nobly use it. There is no thing more precious than a human soul, nor any earthly thing that can be weighed with it. It is worth all the gold that is in the world, and is more precious than the rubies of the kings. Therefore, my son, think not any more of this matter, for it is a sin that may not be forgiven. And as for the Sea-folk, they are lost, and they who would traffic with them are lost also. They are as the beasts of the field that know not good from evil, and for them the Lord has not died.’

The young Fisherman’s eyes filled with tears when he heard the bitter words of the Priest, and he rose up from his knees and said to him, ‘Father, the Fauns live in the forest and are glad, and on the rocks sit the Mermen with their harps of red gold. Let me be as they are, I beseech thee, for their days are as the days of flowers. And as for my soul, what doth my soul profit me, if it stand between me and the thing that I love?’

‘The love of the body is vile,’ cried the Priest, knitting his brows, ‘and vile and evil are the pagan things God suffers to wander through His world. Accursed be the Fauns of the woodland, and accursed be the singers of the sea! I have heard them at night-time, and they have sought to lure me from my beads. They tap at the window, and laugh. They whisper into my ears the tale of their perilous joys. They tempt me with temptations, and when I would pray they make mouths at me. They are lost, I tell thee, they are lost. For them there is no heaven nor hell, and in neither shall they praise God's name.'

'Father,' cried the young Fisherman, 'thou knowest not what thou sayest. Once in my net I snared the daughter of a King. She is fairer than the morning star, and whiter than the moon. For her body I would give my soul, and for her love I would surrender heaven. Tell me what I ask of thee, and let me go in peace.'

'Away! Away!' cried the Priest: 'thy leman is lost, and thou shalt be lost with her.'

And he gave him no blessing, but drove him from his door.

And the young Fisherman went down into the market-place, and he walked slowly, and with bowed head, as one who is in sorrow.

And when the merchants saw him coming, they began to whisper to each other, and one of them came forth to meet him, and called him by name, and said to him, 'What hast thou to sell?'

'I will sell thee my soul,' he answered. 'I pray thee buy it of me, for I am weary of it. Of what use is my soul to me? I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I do not know it.'

But the merchants mocked at him, and said, 'Of what use is a man's soul to us? It is not worth a clipped piece of silver. Sell us thy body for a slave, and we will clothe thee in sea-purple, and put a ring upon thy finger, and make thee the minion of the great Queen. But talk not of the soul, for to us it is nought, nor has it any value for our service.'

And the young Fisherman said to himself: 'How strange a thing this is! The Priest telleth me that the soul is worth all the gold in the world, and the merchants say that it is not worth a clipped piece of silver.' And he passed out of the market-place, and went down to the shore of the sea, and began to ponder on what he should do.

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And at noon he remembered how one of his companions, who was a gatherer of samphire, had told him of a certain young Witch who dwelt in a cave at the head of the bay and was very cunning in her witcheries. And he set to and ran, so eager was he to get rid of his soul, and a cloud of dust followed him as he sped round the sand of the shore. By the itching of her palm the young Witch knew his coming, and she laughed and let down her red hair. With her red hair falling around her, she stood at the opening of the cave, and in her hand she had a spray of wild hemlock that was blossoming.

‘What d’ye lack? What d’ye lack?’ she cried, as he came panting up the steep, and bent down before her. ‘Fish for thy net, when the wind is foul? I have a little reed-pipe, and when I blow on it the mullet come sailing into the bay. But it has a price, pretty boy, it has a price. What d’ye lack? What d’ye lack? A storm to wreck the ships, and wash the chests of rich treasure ashore? I have more storms than the wind has, for I serve one who is stronger than the wind, and with a sieve and a pail of water I can send the great galleys to the bottom of the sea. But I have a price, pretty boy, I have a price. What d’ye lack? What d’ye lack? I know a flower that grows in the valley, none knows it but I. It has purple leaves, and a star in its heart, and its juice is as white as milk. Shouldst thou touch with this flower the hard lips of the Queen, she would follow thee all over the world. Out of the bed of the King she would rise, and over the whole world she would follow thee. And it has a price, pretty boy, it has a price. What d’ye lack? What d’ye lack? I can pound a toad in a mortar, and make broth of it, and stir the broth with a dead man’s hand. Sprinkle it on thine enemy while he sleeps, and he will turn into a black viper, and his own mother will slay him. With a wheel I can draw the Moon from heaven, and in a crystal I can show thee Death. What d’ye lack? What d’ye lack? Tell me thy desire, and I will give it thee, and thou shalt pay me a price, pretty boy, thou shalt pay me a price.’

‘My desire is but for a little thing,’ said the young Fisherman, ‘yet hath the Priest been wroth with me, and driven me forth. It is but for a little thing, and the merchants have mocked at me, and denied me. Therefore am I come to thee, though men call thee evil, and whatever be thy price I shall pay it.’

‘What wouldst thou?’ asked the Witch, coming near to him.

‘I would send my soul away from me,’ answered the young Fisherman.

The Witch grew pale, and shuddered, and hid her face in her blue mantle. ‘Pretty boy, pretty boy,’ she muttered, ‘that is a terrible thing to do.’

He tossed his brown curls and laughed. ‘My soul is nought to me,’ he answered. ‘I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I do not know it.’

‘What wilt thou give me if I tell thee?’ asked the Witch, looking down at him with her beautiful eyes.

‘Five pieces of gold,’ he said, ‘and my nets, and the wattled house where I live, and the painted boat in which I sail. Only tell me how to get rid of my soul, and I will give thee all that I possess.’

She laughed mockingly at him, and struck him with the spray of hemlock. ‘I can turn the autumn leaves into gold,’ she answered, ‘and I can weave the pale moonbeams into silver if I will it. He whom I serve is richer than all the kings of this world, and has their dominions.’

‘What then shall I give thee,’ he cried, ‘if thy price be neither gold nor silver?’

The Witch stroked his hair with her thin white hand. ‘Thou must dance with me, pretty boy,’ she murmured, and she smiled at him as she spoke.

‘Nought but that?’ cried the young Fisherman in wonder and he rose to his feet.

‘Nought but that,’ she answered, and she smiled at him again.

‘Then at sunset in some secret place we shall dance together,’ he said, ‘and after that we have danced thou shalt tell me the thing which I desire to know.’

She shook her head. ‘When the moon is full, when the moon is full,’ she muttered. Then she peered all round, and listened. A blue bird rose screaming from its nest and circled over the dunes, and three spotted birds rustled through the coarse grey grass and whistled to each other. There was no other sound save the sound of a wave fretting the smooth pebbles below. So she reached out her hand, and drew him near to her and put her dry lips close to his ear.

‘To-night thou must come to the top of the mountain,’ she whispered. ‘It is a Sabbath, and He will be there.’

The young Fisherman started and looked at her, and she showed her white teeth and laughed. ‘Who is He of whom thou speakest?’ he asked.

‘It matters not,’ she answered. ‘Go thou to-night, and stand under the branches of the hornbeam, and wait for my coming. If a black dog run towards thee, strike it with a rod of willow, and it will go away. If an owl speak to thee, make it no answer. When the moon is full I shall be with thee, and we will dance together on the grass.’

‘But wilt thou swear to me to tell me how I may send my soul from me?’ he made question.

She moved out into the sunlight, and through her red hair rippled the wind. ‘By the hoofs of the goat I swear it,’ she made answer.

‘Thou art the best of the witches,’ cried the young Fisherman, ‘and I will surely dance with thee to-night on the top of the mountain. I would indeed that thou hadst asked of me either gold or silver. But such as thy price is thou shalt have it, for it is but a little thing.’ And he doffed his cap to her, and bent his head low, and ran back to the town filled with a great joy.

And the Witch watched him as he went, and when he had passed from her sight she entered her cave, and having taken a mirror from a box of carved cedarwood, she set it up on a frame, and burned vervain on lighted charcoal before it, and peered through the coils of the smoke. And after a time she clenched her hands in anger. ‘He should have been mine,’ she muttered, ‘I am as fair as she is.’

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And that evening, when the moon had risen, the young Fisherman climbed up to the top of the mountain, and stood under the branches of the hornbeam. Like a targe of polished metal the round sea lay at his feet, and the shadows of the fishing-boats moved in the little bay. A great owl, with yellow sulphurous eyes, called to him by his name, but he made it no answer. A black dog ran towards him and snarled. He struck it with a rod of willow, and it went away whining.

At midnight the witches came flying through the air like bats. ‘Phew!’ they cried, as they lit upon the ground, ‘there is some one here we know not!’ and they sniffed about, and chattered to each other, and made signs. Last of all came the young Witch, with her red hair streaming in the wind. She wore a dress of gold tissue embroidered with peacocks’ eyes, and a little cap of green velvet was on her head.

‘Where is he, where is he?’ shrieked the witches when they saw her, but she only laughed, and ran to the hornbeam, and taking the Fisherman by the hand she led him out into the moonlight and began to dance.

Round and round they whirled, and the young Witch jumped so high that he could see the scarlet heels of her shoes. Then right across the dancers came the sound of the galloping of a horse, but no horse was to be seen, and he felt afraid.

‘Faster,’ cried the Witch, and she threw her arms about his neck, and her breath was hot upon his face. ‘Faster, faster!’ she cried, and the earth seemed to spin beneath his feet, and his brain grew troubled, and a great terror fell on him, as of some evil thing that was watching him, and at last he became aware that under the shadow of a rock there was a figure that had not been there before.

It was a man dressed in a suit of black velvet, cut in the Spanish fashion. His face was strangely pale, but his lips were like a proud red flower. He seemed weary, and was leaning back toying in a listless manner with the pommel of his dagger. On the grass beside him lay a plumed hat, and a pair of riding-gloves gauntleted with gilt lace, and sewn with seed-pearls wrought into a curious device. A short cloak lined with sables hang from his shoulder, and his delicate white hands were gemmed with rings. Heavy eyelids drooped over his eyes.

The young Fisherman watched him, as one snared in a spell. At last their eyes met, and wherever he danced it seemed to him that the eyes of the man were upon him. He heard the Witch laugh, and caught her by the waist, and whirled her madly round and round.

Suddenly a dog bayed in the wood, and the dancers stopped, and going up two by two, knelt down, and kissed the man’s hands. As they did so, a little smile touched his proud lips, as a bird’s wing touches the water and makes it laugh. But there was disdain in it. He kept looking at the young Fisherman.

‘Come! let us worship,’ whispered the Witch, and she led him up, and a great desire to do as she besought him seized on him, and he followed her. But when he came close, and without knowing why he did it, he made on his breast the sign of the Cross, and called upon the holy name.

No sooner had he done so than the witches screamed like hawks and flew away, and the pallid face that had been watching him twitched with a spasm of pain. The man went over to a little wood, and whistled. A jennet with silver trappings came running to meet him. As he leapt upon the saddle he turned round, and looked at the young Fisherman sadly.

And the Witch with the red hair tried to fly away also, but the Fisherman caught her by her wrists, and held her fast.

‘Loose me,’ she cried, ‘and let me go. For thou hast named what should not be named, and shown the sign that may not be looked at.’

‘Nay,’ he answered, ‘but I will not let thee go till thou hast told me the secret.’

‘What secret?’ said the Witch, wrestling with him like a wild cat, and biting her foam-flecked lips.

‘Thou knowest,’ he made answer.

Her grass-green eyes grew dim with tears, and she said to the Fisherman, ‘Ask me anything but that!’

He laughed, and held her all the more tightly.

And when she saw that she could not free herself, she whispered to him, ‘Surely I am as fair as the daughters of the sea, and as comely as those that dwell in the blue waters,’ and she fawned on him and put her face close to his.

But he thrust her back frowning, and said to her, ‘If thou keepest not the promise that thou madest to me I will slay thee for a false witch.’

She grew grey as a blossom of the Judas tree, and shuddered. ‘Be it so,’ she muttered. ‘It is thy soul and not mine. Do with it as thou wilt.’ And she took from her girdle a little knife that had a handle of green viper’s skin, and gave it to him.

‘What shall this serve me?’ he asked of her, wondering.

She was silent for a few moments, and a look of terror came over her face. Then she brushed her hair back from her forehead, and smiling strangely she said to him, ‘What men call the shadow of the body is not the shadow of the body, but is the body of the soul. Stand on the sea-shore with thy back to the moon, and cut away from around thy feet thy shadow, which is thy soul’s body, and bid thy soul leave thee, and it will do so.’

The young Fisherman trembled. ‘Is this true?’ he murmured.

‘It is true, and I would that I had not told thee of it,’ she cried, and she clung to his knees weeping.

He put her from him and left her in the rank grass, and going to the edge of the mountain he placed the knife in his belt and began to climb down.

And his Soul that was within him called out to him and said, ‘Lo! I have dwelt with thee for all these years, and have been thy servant. Send me not away from thee now, for what evil have I done thee?’

And the young Fisherman laughed. ‘Thou hast done me no evil, but I have no need of thee,’ he answered. ‘The world is wide, and there is Heaven also, and Hell, and that dim twilight house that lies between. Go wherever thou wilt, but trouble me not, for my love is calling to me.’

And his Soul besought him piteously, but he heeded it not, but leapt from crag to crag, being sure-footed as a wild goat, and at last he reached the level ground and the yellow shore of the sea.

Bronze-limbed and well-knit, like a statue wrought by a Grecian, he stood on the sand with his back to the moon, and out of the foam came white arms that beckoned to him, and out of the waves rose dim forms that did him homage. Before him lay his shadow, which was the body of his soul, and behind him hung the moon in the honey-coloured air.

And his Soul said to him, ‘If indeed thou must drive me from thee, send me not forth without a heart. The world is cruel, give me thy heart to take with me.’

He tossed his head and smiled. ‘With what should I love my love if I gave thee my heart?’ he cried.

‘Nay, but be merciful,’ said his Soul: ‘give me thy heart, for the world is very cruel, and I am afraid.’

‘My heart is my love’s,’ he answered, ‘therefore tarry not, but get thee gone.’

‘Should I not love also?’ asked his Soul.

‘Get thee gone, for I have no need of thee,’ cried the young Fisherman, and he took the little knife with its handle of green viper’s skin, and cut away his shadow from around his feet, and it rose up and stood before him, and looked at him, and it was even as himself.

He crept back, and thrust the knife into his belt, and a feeling of awe came over him. ‘Get thee gone,’ he murmured, ‘and let me see thy face no more.’

‘Nay, but we must meet again,’ said the Soul. Its voice was low and flute-like, and its lips hardly moved while it spake.

‘How shall we meet?’ cried the young Fisherman. ‘Thou wilt not follow me into the depths of the sea?’

‘Once every year I will come to this place, and call to thee,’ said the Soul. ‘It may be that thou wilt have need of me.’

‘What need should I have of thee?’ cried the young Fisherman, ‘but be it as thou wilt,’ and he plunged into the waters and the Tritons blew their horns and the little Mermaid rose up to meet him, and put her arms around his neck and kissed him on the mouth.

And the Soul stood on the lonely beach and watched them. And when they had sunk down into the sea, it went weeping away over the marshes.

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And after a year was over the Soul came down to the shore of the sea and called to the young Fisherman, and he rose out of the deep, and said, ‘Why dost thou call to me?’

And the Soul answered, ‘Come nearer, that I may speak with thee, for I have seen marvellous things.’

So he came nearer, and couched in the shallow water, and leaned his head upon his hand and listened.

And the Soul said to him, ‘When I left thee I turned my face to the East and journeyed. From the East cometh everything that is wise. Six days I journeyed, and on the morning of the seventh day I came to a hill that is in the country of the Tartars. I sat down under the shade of a tamarisk tree to shelter myself from the sun. The land was dry and burnt up with the heat. The people went to and fro over the plain like flies crawling upon a disk of polished copper.

‘When it was noon a cloud of red dust rose up from the flat rim of the land. When the Tartars saw it, they strung their painted bows, and having leapt upon their little horses they galloped to meet it. The women fled screaming to the waggons, and hid themselves behind the felt curtains.

‘At twilight the Tartars returned, but five of them were missing, and of those that came back not a few had been wounded. They harnessed their horses to the waggons and drove hastily away. Three jackals came out of a cave and peered after them. Then they sniffed up the air with their nostrils, and trotted off in the opposite direction.

‘When the moon rose I saw a camp-fire burning on the plain, and went towards it. A company of merchants were seated round it on carpets. Their camels were picketed behind them, and the negroes who were their servants were pitching tents of tanned skin upon the sand, and making a high wall of the prickly pear.

‘As I came near them, the chief of the merchants rose up and drew his sword, and asked me my business.

‘I answered that I was a Prince in my own land, and that I had escaped from the Tartars, who had sought to make me their slave. The chief smiled, and showed me five heads fixed upon long reeds of bamboo.

‘Then he asked me who was the prophet of God, and I answered him Mohammed.

‘When he heard the name of the false prophet, he bowed and took me by the hand, and placed me by his side. A negro brought me some mare’s milk in a wooden dish, and a piece of lamb’s flesh roasted.

‘At daybreak we started on our journey. I rode on a red-haired camel by the side of the chief, and a runner ran before us carrying a spear. The men of war were on either hand, and the mules followed with the merchandise. There were forty camels in the caravan, and the mules were twice forty in number.

‘We went from the country of the Tartars into the country of those who curse the Moon. We saw the Gryphons guarding their gold on the white rocks, and the scaled Dragons sleeping in their caves. As we passed over the mountains we held our breath lest the snows might fall on us, and each man tied a veil of gauze before his eyes. As we passed through the valleys the Pygmies shot arrows at us from the hollows of the trees, and at night-time we heard the wild men beating on their drums. When we came to the Tower of Apes we set fruits before them, and they did not harm us. When we came to the Tower of Serpents we gave them warm milk in howls of brass, and they let us go by. Three times in our journey we came to the banks of the Oxus. We crossed it on rafts of wood with great bladders of blown hide. The river-horses raged against us and sought to slay us. When the camels saw them they trembled.

‘The kings of each city levied tolls on us, but would not suffer us to enter their gates. They threw us bread over the walls, little maize-cakes baked in honey and cakes of fine flour filled with dates. For every hundred baskets we gave them a bead of amber.

‘When the dwellers in the villages saw us coming, they poisoned the wells and fled to the hill-summits. We fought with the Magadae who are born old, and grow younger and younger every year, and die when they are little children; and with the Laktroi who say that they are the sons of tigers, and paint themselves yellow and black; and with the Aurantes who bury their dead on the tops of trees, and themselves live in dark caverns lest the Sun, who is their god, should slay them; and with the Krimnians who worship a crocodile, and give it earrings of green glass, and feed it with butter and fresh fowls; and with the Agazonbae, who are dog-faced; and with the Sibans, who have horses' feet, and run more swiftly than horses. A third of our company died in battle, and a third died of want. The rest murmured against me, and said that I had brought them an evil fortune. I took a horned adder from beneath a stone and let it sting me. When they saw that I did not sicken they grew afraid.

'In the fourth month we reached the city of Illel. It was night-time when we came to the grove that is outside the walls, and the air was sultry, for the Moon was travelling in Scorpion. We took the ripe pomegranates from the trees, and brake them, and drank their sweet juices. Then we lay down on our carpets, and waited for the dawn.

'And at dawn we rose and knocked at the gate of the city. It was wrought out of red bronze, and carved with sea-dragons and dragons that have wings. The guards looked down from the battlements and asked us our business. The interpreter of the caravan answered that we had come from the island of Syria with much merchandise. They took hostages, and told us that they would open the gate to us at noon, and bade us tarry till then.

'When it was noon they opened the gate, and as we entered in the people came crowding out of the houses to look at us, and a crier went round the city crying through a shell. We stood in the market-place, and the negroes uncorded the bales of figured cloths and opened the carved chests of sycamore. And when they had ended their task, the merchants set forth their strange wares, the waxed linen from Egypt and the painted linen from the country of the Ethiops, the purple sponges from Tyre and the blue hangings from Sidon, the cups of cold amber and the fine vessels of glass and the curious vessels of burnt clay. From the roof of a house a company of women watched us. One of them wore a mask of gilded leather.

‘And on the first day the priests came and bartered with us, and on the second day came the nobles, and on the third day came the craftsmen and the slaves. And this is their custom with all merchants as long as they tarry in the city.

‘And we tarried for a moon, and when the moon was waning, I wearied and wandered away through the streets of the city and came to the garden of its god. The priests in their yellow robes moved silently through the green trees, and on a pavement of black marble stood the rose-red house in which the god had his dwelling. Its doors were of powdered lacquer, and bulls and peacocks were wrought on them in raised and polished gold. The tilted roof was of sea-green porcelain, and the jutting eaves were festooned with little bells. When the white doves flew past, they struck the bells with their wings and made them tinkle.

‘In front of the temple was a pool of clear water paved with veined onyx. I lay down beside it, and with my pale fingers I touched the broad leaves. One of the priests came towards me and stood behind me. He had sandals on his feet, one of soft serpent-skin and the other of birds’ plumage. On his head was a mitre of black felt decorated with silver crescents. Seven yellows were woven into his robe, and his frizzed hair was stained with antimony.

‘After a little while he spake to me, and asked me my desire.

‘I told him that my desire was to see the god.

‘“The god is hunting,” said the priest, looking strangely at me with his small slanting eyes.

‘“Tell me in what forest, and I will ride with him,” I answered.

‘He combed out the soft fringes of his tunic with his long pointed nails. “The god is asleep,” he murmured.

‘“Tell me on what couch, and I will watch by him,” I answered.

'"The god is at the feast," he cried.

'"If the wine be sweet I will drink it with him, and if it be bitter I will drink it with him also," was my answer.

'He bowed his head in wonder, and, taking me by the hand, he raised me up, and led me into the temple.

'And in the first chamber I saw an idol seated on a throne of jasper bordered with great orient pearls. It was carved out of ebony, and in stature was of the stature of a man. On its forehead was a ruby, and thick oil dripped from its hair on to its thighs. Its feet were red with the blood of a newly-slain kid, and its loins girt with a copper belt that was studded with seven beryls.

'And I said to the priest, "Is this the god?" And he answered me, "This is the god."

'"Show me the god," I cried, "or I will surely slay thee." And I touched his hand, and it became withered.

'And the priest besought me, saying, "Let my lord heal his servant, and I will show him the god."

'So I breathed with my breath upon his hand, and it became whole again, and he trembled and led me into the second chamber, and I saw an idol standing on a lotus of jade hung with great emeralds. It was carved out of ivory, and in stature was twice the stature of a man. On its forehead was a chrysolite, and its breasts were smeared with myrrh and cinnamon. In one hand it held a crooked sceptre of jade, and in the other a round crystal. It ware buskins of brass, and its thick neck was circled with a circle of selenites.

'And I said to the priest, "Is this the god?"

'And he answered me, "This is the god."

'"Show me the god," I cried, "or I will surely slay thee." And I touched his eyes, and they became blind.

‘And the priest besought me, saying, “Let my lord heal his servant, and I will show him the god.”

‘So I breathed with my breath upon his eyes, and the sight came back to them, and he trembled again, and led me into the third chamber, and lo! there was no idol in it, nor image of any kind, but only a mirror of round metal set on an altar of stone.

‘And I said to the priest, “Where is the god?”

‘And he answered me: “There is no god but this mirror that thou seest, for this is the Mirror of Wisdom. And it reflecteth all things that are in heaven and on earth, save only the face of him who looketh into it. This it reflecteth not, so that he who looketh into it may be wise. Many other mirrors are there, but they are mirrors of Opinion. This only is the Mirror of Wisdom. And they who possess this mirror know everything, nor is there anything hidden from them. And they who possess it not have not Wisdom. Therefore is it the god, and we worship it.” And I looked into the mirror, and it was even as he had said to me.

‘And I did a strange thing, but what I did matters not, for in a valley that is but a day’s journey from this place have I hidden the Mirror of Wisdom. Do but suffer me to enter into thee again and be thy servant, and thou shalt be wiser than all the wise men, and Wisdom shall be thine. Suffer me to enter into thee, and none will be as wise as thou.’

But the young Fisherman laughed. ‘Love is better than Wisdom,’ he cried, ‘and the little Mermaid loves me.’

‘Nay, but there is nothing better than Wisdom,’ said the Soul.

‘Love is better,’ answered the young Fisherman, and he plunged into the deep, and the Soul went weeping away over the marshes.

* * *

AND AFTER THE second year was over, the Soul came down to the shore of the sea, and called to the young Fisherman, and he rose out of the deep and said, ‘Why dost thou call to me?’

And the Soul answered, ‘Come nearer, that I may speak with thee, for I have seen marvellous things.’

So he came nearer, and couched in the shallow water, and leaned his head upon his hand and listened.

And the Soul said to him, ‘When I left thee, I turned my face to the South and journeyed. From the South cometh everything that is precious. Six days I journeyed along the highways that lead to the city of Ashter, along the dusty red-dyed highways by which the pilgrims are wont to go did I journey, and on the morning of the seventh day I lifted up my eyes, and lo! the city lay at my feet, for it is in a valley.

‘There are nine gates to this city, and in front of each gate stands a bronze horse that neighs when the Bedouins come down from the mountains. The walls are cased with copper, and the watch-towers on the walls are roofed with brass. In every tower stands an archer with a bow in his hand. At sunrise he strikes with an arrow on a gong, and at sunset he blows through a horn of horn.

‘When I sought to enter, the guards stopped me and asked of me who I was. I made answer that I was a Dervish and on my way to the city of Mecca, where there was a green veil on which the Koran was embroidered in silver letters by the hands of the angels. They were filled with wonder, and entreated me to pass in.

‘Inside it is even as a bazaar. Surely thou shouldst have been with me. Across the narrow streets the gay lanterns of paper flutter like large butterflies. When the wind blows over the roofs they rise and fall as painted bubbles do. In front of their booths sit the merchants on silken carpets. They have straight black beards, and their turbans are covered with golden sequins, and long strings of amber and carved peach-stones glide through their cool fingers. Some of them sell galbanum and nard, and curious perfumes from the islands of the Indian Sea, and the thick oil of red roses, and myrrh and little nail-shaped cloves. When one stops to speak to them, they throw pinches of frankincense upon a charcoal brazier and make the air sweet. I saw a Syrian who held in his hands a thin rod like a reed. Grey threads of smoke came from it, and its odour as it burned was as the odour of the pink almond in spring. Others sell silver bracelets embossed all over with creamy blue turquoise stones, and anklets of brass wire fringed with little pearls, and tigers' claws set in gold, and the claws of that gilt cat, the leopard, set in gold also, and earrings of pierced emerald, and finger-rings of hollowed jade. From the tea-houses comes the sound of the guitar, and the opium-smokers with their white smiling faces look out at the passers-by.

'Of a truth thou shouldst have been with me. The wine-sellers elbow their way through the crowd with great black skins on their shoulders. Most of them sell the wine of Schiraz, which is as sweet as honey. They serve it in little metal cups and strew rose leaves upon it. In the market-place stand the fruitsellers, who sell all kinds of fruit: ripe figs, with their bruised purple flesh, melons, smelling of musk and yellow as topazes, citrons and rose-apples and clusters of white grapes, round red-gold oranges, and oval lemons of green gold. Once I saw an elephant go by. Its trunk was painted with vermilion and turmeric, and over its ears it had a net of crimson silk cord. It stopped opposite one of the booths and began eating the oranges, and the man only laughed. Thou canst not think how strange a people they are. When they are glad they go to the bird-sellers and buy of them a caged bird, and set it free that their joy may be greater, and when they are sad they scourge themselves with thorns that their sorrow may not grow less.

'One evening I met some negroes carrying a heavy palanquin through the bazaar. It was made of gilded bamboo, and the poles were of vermilion lacquer studded with brass peacocks. Across the windows hung thin curtains of muslin embroidered with beetles' wings and with tiny seed-pearls, and as it passed by a pale-faced Circassian looked out and smiled at me. I followed behind, and the negroes hurried their steps and scowled. But I did not care. I felt a great curiosity come over me.

‘At last they stopped at a square white house. There were no windows to it, only a little door like the door of a tomb. They set down the palanquin and knocked three times with a copper hammer. An Armenian in a caftan of green leather peered through the wicket, and when he saw them he opened, and spread a carpet on the ground, and the woman stepped out. As she went in, she turned round and smiled at me again. I had never seen any one so pale.

‘When the moon rose I returned to the same place and sought for the house, but it was no longer there. When I saw that, I knew who the woman was, and wherefore she had smiled at me.

‘Certainly thou shouldst have been with me. On the feast of the New Moon the young Emperor came forth from his palace and went into the mosque to pray. His hair and beard were dyed with rose-leaves, and his cheeks were powdered with a fine gold dust. The palms of his feet and hands were yellow with saffron.

‘At sunrise he went forth from his palace in a robe of silver, and at sunset he returned to it again in a robe of gold. The people flung themselves on the ground and hid their faces, but I would not do so. I stood by the stall of a seller of dates and waited. When the Emperor saw me, he raised his painted eyebrows and stopped. I stood quite still, and made him no obeisance. The people marvelled at my boldness, and counselled me to flee from the city. I paid no heed to them, but went and sat with the sellers of strange gods, who by reason of their craft are abominated. When I told them what I had done, each of them gave me a god and prayed me to leave them.

‘That night, as I lay on a cushion in the tea-house that is in the Street of Pomegranates, the guards of the Emperor entered and led me to the palace. As I went in they closed each door behind me, and put a chain across it.

Inside was a great court with an arcade running all round. The walls were of white alabaster, set here and there with blue and green tiles. The pillars were of green marble, and the pavement of a kind of peach-blossom marble. I had never seen anything like it before.

‘As I passed across the court two veiled women looked down from a balcony and cursed me. The guards hastened on, and the butts of the lances rang upon the polished floor. They opened a gate of wrought ivory, and I found myself in a watered garden of seven terraces. It was planted with tulip-cups and moonflowers, and silver-studded aloes. Like a slim reed of crystal a fountain hung in the dusky air. The cypress-trees were like burnt-out torches. From one of them a nightingale was singing.

‘At the end of the garden stood a little pavilion. As we approached it two eunuchs came out to meet us. Their fat bodies swayed as they walked, and they glanced curiously at me with their yellow-lidded eyes. One of them drew aside the captain of the guard, and in a low voice whispered to him. The other kept munching scented pastilles, which he took with an affected gesture out of an oval box of lilac enamel.

‘After a few moments the captain of the guard dismissed the soldiers. They went back to the palace, the eunuchs following slowly behind and plucking the sweet mulberries from the trees as they passed. Once the elder of the two turned round, and smiled at me with an evil smile.

‘Then the captain of the guard motioned me towards the entrance of the pavilion. I walked on without trembling, and drawing the heavy curtain aside I entered in.

‘The young Emperor was stretched on a couch of dyed lion skins, and a gerfalcon perched upon his wrist. Behind him stood a brass-turbaned Nubian, naked down to the waist, and with heavy earrings in his split ears. On a table by the side of the couch lay a mighty scimitar of steel.

‘When the Emperor saw me he frowned, and said to me, “What is thy name? Knowest thou not that I am Emperor of this city?” But I made him no answer.

‘He pointed with his finger at the scimitar, and the Nubian seized it, and rushing forward struck at me with great violence. The blade whizzed through me, and did me no hurt. The man fell sprawling on the floor, and when he rose up his teeth chattered with terror and he hid himself behind the couch.

‘The Emperor leapt to his feet, and taking a lance from a stand of arms, he threw it at me. I caught it in its flight, and brake the shaft into two pieces. He shot at me with an arrow, but I held up my hands and it stopped in mid-air. Then he drew a dagger from a belt of white leather, and stabbed the Nubian in the throat lest the slave should tell of his dishonour. The man writhed like a trampled snake, and a red foam bubbled from his lips.

‘As soon as he was dead the Emperor turned to me, and when he had wiped away the bright sweat from his brow with a little napkin of purfled and purple silk, he said to me, “Art thou a prophet, that I may not harm thee, or the son of a prophet, that I can do thee no hurt? I pray thee leave my city to-night, for while thou art in it I am no longer its lord.”

‘And I answered him, “I will go for half of thy treasure. Give me half of thy treasure, and I will go away.”

‘He took me by the hand, and led me out into the garden. When the captain of the guard saw me, he wondered. When the eunuchs saw me, their knees shook and they fell upon the ground in fear.

‘There is a chamber in the palace that has eight walls of red porphyry, and a brass-sealed ceiling hung with lamps. The Emperor touched one of the walls and it opened, and we passed down a corridor that was lit with many torches. In niches upon each side stood great wine-jars filled to the brim with silver pieces. When we reached the centre of the corridor the Emperor spake the word that may not be spoken, and a granite door swung back on a secret spring, and he put his hands before his face lest his eyes should be dazzled.

‘Thou couldst not believe how marvellous a place it was. There were huge tortoise-shells full of pearls, and hollowed moonstones of great size piled up with red rubies. The gold was stored in coffers of elephant-hide, and the gold-dust in leather bottles. There were opals and sapphires, the former in cups of crystal, and the latter in cups of jade. Round green emeralds were ranged in order upon thin plates of ivory, and in one corner were silk bags filled, some with turquoise-stones, and others with beryls. The ivory horns were heaped with purple amethysts, and the horns of brass with chalcedonies and sards. The pillars, which were of cedar, were hung with strings of yellow lynx-stones. In the flat oval shields there were carbuncles, both wine-coloured and coloured like grass. And yet I have told thee but a tithe of what was there.

‘And when the Emperor had taken away his hands from before his face he said to me: “This is my house of treasure, and half that is in it is thine, even as I promised to thee. And I will give thee camels and camel drivers, and they shall do thy bidding and take thy share of the treasure to whatever part of the world thou desirest to go. And the thing shall be done to-night, for I would not that the Sun, who is my father, should see that there is in my city a man whom I cannot slay.”

‘But I answered him, “The gold that is here is thine, and the silver also is thine, and thine are the precious jewels and the things of price. As for me, I have no need of these. Nor shall I take aught from thee but that little ring that thou wearest on the finger of thy hand.”

‘And the Emperor frowned. “It is but a ring of lead,” he cried, “nor has it any value. Therefore take thy half of the treasure and go from my city.”

‘“Nay,” I answered, “but I will take nought but that leaden ring, for I know what is written within it, and for what purpose.”

‘And the Emperor trembled, and besought me and said, “Take all the treasure and go from my city. The half that is mine shall be thine also.”

‘And I did a strange thing, but what I did matters not, for in a cave that is but a day’s journey from this place have, I hidden the Ring of Riches. It is but a day’s journey from this place, and it waits for thy coming. He who has this Ring is richer than all the kings of the world. Come therefore and take it, and the world’s riches shall be thine.’

But the young Fisherman laughed. ‘Love is better than Riches,’ he cried, ‘and the little Mermaid loves me.’

‘Nay, but there is nothing better than Riches,’ said the Soul.

‘Love is better,’ answered the young Fisherman, and he plunged into the deep, and the Soul went weeping away over the marshes.

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AND AFTER THE third year was over, the Soul came down to the shore of the sea, and called to the young Fisherman, and he rose out of the deep and said, ‘Why dost thou call to me?’

And the Soul answered, ‘Come nearer, that I may speak with thee, for I have seen marvellous things.’

So he came nearer, and couched in the shallow water, and leaned his head upon his hand and listened.

And the Soul said to him, ‘In a city that I know of there is an inn that standeth by a river. I sat there with sailors who drank of two different-coloured wines, and ate bread made of barley, and little salt fish served in bay leaves with vinegar. And as we sat and made merry, there entered to us an old man bearing a leathern carpet and a lute that had two horns of amber. And when he had laid out the carpet on the floor, he struck with a quill on the wire strings of his lute, and a girl whose face was veiled ran in and began to dance before us. Her face was veiled with a veil of gauze, but her feet were naked. Naked were her feet, and they moved over the carpet like little white pigeons. Never have I seen anything so marvellous; and the city in which she dances is but a day’s journey from this place.’

Now when the young Fisherman heard the words of his Soul, he remembered that the little Mermaid had no feet and could not dance. And a great desire came over him, and he said to himself, ‘It is but a day’s journey, and I can return to my love,’ and he laughed, and stood up in the shallow water, and strode towards the shore.

And when he had reached the dry shore he laughed again, and held out his arms to his Soul. And his Soul gave a great cry of joy and ran to meet him, and entered into him, and the young Fisherman saw stretched before him upon the sand that shadow of the body that is the body of the Soul.

And his Soul said to him, ‘Let us not tarry, but get hence at once, for the Sea-gods are jealous, and have monsters that do their bidding.’

So they made haste, and all that night they journeyed beneath the moon, and all the next day they journeyed beneath the sun, and on the evening of the day they came to a city.

And the young Fisherman said to his Soul, ‘Is this the city in which she dances of whom thou didst speak to me?’

And his Soul answered him, ‘It is not this city, but another. Nevertheless let us enter in.’ So they entered in and passed through the streets, and as they passed through the Street of the Jewellers the young Fisherman saw a fair silver cup set forth in a booth. And his Soul said to him, ‘Take that silver cup and hide it.’

So he took the cup and hid it in the fold of his tunic, and they went hurriedly out of the city.

And after that they had gone a league from the city, the young Fisherman frowned, and flung the cup away, and said to his Soul, ‘Why didst thou tell me to take this cup and hide it, for it was an evil thing to do?’

But his Soul answered him, ‘Be at peace, be at peace.’

And on the evening of the second day they came to a city, and the young Fisherman said to his Soul, ‘Is this the city in which she dances of whom thou didst speak to me?’

And his Soul answered him, ‘It is not this city, but another. Nevertheless let us enter in.’ So they entered in and passed through the streets, and as they passed through the Street of the Sellers of Sandals, the young Fisherman saw a child standing by a jar of water. And his Soul said to him, ‘Smite that child.’ So he smote the child till it wept, and when he had done this they went hurriedly out of the city.

And after that they had gone a league from the city the young Fisherman grew wroth, and said to his Soul, ‘Why didst thou tell me to smite the child, for it was an evil thing to do?’

But his Soul answered him, ‘Be at peace, be at peace.’

And on the evening of the third day they came to a city, and the young Fisherman said to his Soul, ‘Is this the city in which she dances of whom thou didst speak to me?’

And his Soul answered him, ‘It may be that it is in this city, therefore let us enter in.’

So they entered in and passed through the streets, but nowhere could the young Fisherman find the river or the inn that stood by its side. And the people of the city looked curiously at him, and he grew afraid and said to his Soul, ‘Let us go hence, for she who dances with white feet is not here.’

But his Soul answered, ‘Nay, but let us tarry, for the night is dark and there will be robbers on the way.’

So he sat him down in the market-place and rested, and after a time there went by a hooded merchant who had a cloak of cloth of Tartary, and bare a lantern of pierced horn at the end of a jointed reed. And the merchant said to him, ‘Why dost thou sit in the market-place, seeing that the booths are closed and the bales corded?’

And the young Fisherman answered him, ‘I can find no inn in this city, nor have I any kinsman who might give me shelter.’

‘Are we not all kinsmen?’ said the merchant. ‘And did not one God make us? Therefore come with me, for I have a guest-chamber.’

So the young Fisherman rose up and followed the merchant to his house. And when he had passed through a garden of pomegranates and entered into the house, the merchant brought him rose-water in a copper dish that he might wash his hands, and ripe melons that he might quench his thirst, and set a bowl of rice and a piece of roasted kid before him.

And after that he had finished, the merchant led him to the guest-chamber, and bade him sleep and be at rest. And the young Fisherman gave him thanks, and kissed the ring that was on his hand, and flung himself down on the carpets of dyed goat’s-hair. And when he had covered himself with a covering of black lamb’s-wool he fell asleep.

And three hours before dawn, and while it was still night, his Soul waked him and said to him, ‘Rise up and go to the room of the merchant, even to the room in which he sleepeth, and slay him, and take from him his gold, for we have need of it.’

And the young Fisherman rose up and crept towards the room of the merchant, and over the feet of the merchant there was lying a curved sword, and the tray by the side of the merchant held nine purses of gold. And he reached out his hand and touched the sword, and when he touched it the merchant started and awoke, and leaping up seized himself the sword and cried to the young Fisherman, ‘Dost thou return evil for good, and pay with the shedding of blood for the kindness that I have shown thee?’

And his Soul said to the young Fisherman, ‘Strike him,’ and he struck him so that he swooned and he seized then the nine purses of gold, and fled hastily through the garden of pomegranates, and set his face to the star that is the star of morning.

And when they had gone a league from the city, the young Fisherman beat his breast, and said to his Soul, ‘Why didst thou bid me slay the merchant and take his gold? Surely thou art evil.’

But his Soul answered him, ‘Be at peace, be at peace.’

‘Nay,’ cried the young Fisherman, ‘I may not be at peace, for all that thou hast made me to do I hate. Thee also I hate, and I bid thee tell me wherefore thou hast wrought with me in this wise.’

And his Soul answered him, ‘When thou didst send me forth into the world thou gavest me no heart, so I learned to do all these things and love them.’

‘What sayest thou?’ murmured the young Fisherman.

‘Thou knowest,’ answered his Soul, ‘thou knowest it well. Hast thou forgotten that thou gavest me no heart? I trow not. And so trouble not thyself nor me, but be at peace, for there is no pain that thou shalt not give away, nor any pleasure that thou shalt not receive.’

And when the young Fisherman heard these words he trembled and said to his Soul, ‘Nay, but thou art evil, and hast made me forget my love, and hast tempted me with temptations, and hast set my feet in the ways of sin.’

And his Soul answered him, ‘Thou hast not forgotten that when thou didst send me forth into the world thou gavest me no heart. Come, let us go to another city, and make merry, for we have nine purses of gold.’

But the young Fisherman took the nine purses of gold, and flung them down, and trampled on them.

‘Nay,’ he cried, ‘but I will have nought to do with thee, nor will I journey with thee anywhere, but even as I sent thee away before, so will I send thee away now, for thou hast wrought me no good.’ And he turned his back to the moon, and with the little knife that had the handle of green viper’s skin he strove to cut from his feet that shadow of the body which is the body of the Soul.

Yet his Soul stirred not from him, nor paid heed to his command, but said to him, ‘The spell that the Witch told thee avails thee no more, for I may not leave thee, nor mayest thou drive me forth. Once in his life may a man send his Soul away, but he who receiveth back his Soul must keep it with him for ever, and this is his punishment and his reward.’

And the young Fisherman grew pale and clenched his hands and cried, ‘She was a false Witch in that she told me not that.’

‘Nay,’ answered his Soul, ‘but she was true to Him she worships, and whose servant she will be ever.’

And when the young Fisherman knew that he could no longer get rid of his Soul, and that it was an evil Soul and would abide with him always, he fell upon the ground weeping bitterly.

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And when it was day the young Fisherman rose up and said to his Soul, ‘I will bind my hands that I may not do thy bidding, and close my lips that I may not speak thy words, and I will return to the place where she whom I love has her dwelling. Even to the sea will I return, and to the little bay where she is wont to sing, and I will call to her and tell her the evil I have done and the evil thou hast wrought on me.’

And his Soul tempted him and said, ‘Who is thy love, that thou shouldst return to her? The world has many fairer than she is. There are the dancing-girls of Samaris who dance in the manner of all kinds of birds and beasts. Their feet are painted with henna, and in their hands they have little copper bells. They laugh while they dance, and their laughter is as clear as the laughter of water. Come with me and I will show them to thee. For what is this trouble of thine about the things of sin? Is that which is pleasant to eat not made for the eater? Is there poison in that which is sweet to drink?

Trouble not thyself, but come with me to another city. There is a little city hard by in which there is a garden of tulip-trees. And there dwell in this comely garden white peacocks and peacocks that have blue breasts. Their tails when they spread them to the sun are like disks of ivory and like gilt disks. And she who feeds them dances for their pleasure, and sometimes she dances on her hands and at other times she dances with her feet. Her eyes are coloured with stibium, and her nostrils are shaped like the wings of a swallow. From a hook in one of her nostrils hangs a flower that is carved out of a pearl. She laughs while she dances, and the silver rings that are about her ankles tinkle like bells of silver. And so trouble not thyself any more, but come with me to this city.'

But the young Fisherman answered not his Soul, but closed his lips with the seal of silence and with a tight cord bound his hands, and journeyed back to the place from which he had come, even to the little bay where his love had been wont to sing. And ever did his Soul tempt him by the way, but he made it no answer, nor would he do any of the wickedness that it sought to make him to do, so great was the power of the love that was within him.

And when he had reached the shore of the sea, he loosed the cord from his hands, and took the seal of silence from his lips, and called to the little Mermaid. But she came not to his call, though he called to her all day long and besought her.

And his Soul mocked him and said, 'Surely thou hast but little joy out of thy love. Thou art as one who in time of death pours water into a broken vessel. Thou givest away what thou hast, and nought is given to thee in return. It were better for thee to come with me, for I know where the Valley of Pleasure lies, and what things are wrought there.'

But the young Fisherman answered not his Soul, but in a cleft of the rock he built himself a house of wattles, and abode there for the space of a year. And every morning he called to the Mermaid, and every noon he called to her again, and at night-time he spake her name. Yet never did she rise out of the sea to meet him, nor in any place of the sea could he find her though he sought for her in the caves and in the green water, in the pools of the tide and in the wells that are at the bottom of the deep.

And ever did his Soul tempt him with evil, and whisper of terrible things. Yet did it not prevail against him, so great was the power of his love.

And after the year was over, the Soul thought within himself, ‘I have tempted my master with evil, and his love is stronger than I am. I will tempt him now with good, and it may be that he will come with me.’

So he spake to the young Fisherman and said, ‘I have told thee of the joy of the world, and thou hast turned a deaf ear to me. Suffer me now to tell thee of the world’s pain, and it may be that thou wilt hearken. For of a truth pain is the Lord of this world, nor is there any one who escapes from its net. There be some who lack raiment, and others who lack bread. There be widows who sit in purple, and widows who sit in rags. To and fro over the fens go the lepers, and they are cruel to each other. The beggars go up and down on the highways, and their wallets are empty. Through the streets of the cities walks Famine, and the Plague sits at their gates. Come, let us go forth and mend these things, and make them not to be. Wherefore shouldst thou tarry here calling to thy love, seeing she comes not to thy call? And what is love, that thou shouldst set this high store upon it?’

But the young Fisherman answered it nought, so great was the power of his love. And every morning he called to the Mermaid, and every noon he called to her again, and at night-time he spake her name. Yet never did she rise out of the sea to meet him, nor in any place of the sea could he find her, though he sought for her in the rivers of the sea, and in the valleys that are under the waves, in the sea that the night makes purple, and in the sea that the dawn leaves grey.

And after the second year was over, the Soul said to the young Fisherman at night-time, and as he sat in the wattled house alone, ‘Lo! now

I have tempted thee with evil, and I have tempted thee with good, and thy love is stronger than I am. Wherefore will I tempt thee no longer, but I pray thee to suffer me to enter thy heart, that I may be one with thee even as before.'

'Surely thou mayest enter,' said the young Fisherman, 'for in the days when with no heart thou didst go through the world thou must have much suffered.'

'Alas!' cried his Soul, 'I can find no place of entrance, so compassed about with love is this heart of thine.'

'Yet I would that I could help thee,' said the young Fisherman.

And as he spake there came a great cry of mourning from the sea, even the cry that men hear when one of the Sea-folk is dead. And the young Fisherman leapt up, and left his wattled house, and ran down to the shore. And the black waves came hurrying to the shore, bearing with them a burden that was whiter than silver. White as the surf it was, and like a flower it tossed on the waves. And the surf took it from the waves, and the foam took it from the surf, and the shore received it, and lying at his feet the young Fisherman saw the body of the little Mermaid. Dead at his feet it was lying.

Weeping as one smitten with pain he flung himself down beside it, and he kissed the cold red of the mouth, and toyed with the wet amber of the hair. He flung himself down beside it on the sand, weeping as one trembling with joy, and in his brown arms he held it to his breast. Cold were the lips, yet he kissed them. Salt was the honey of the hair, yet he tasted it with a bitter joy. He kissed the closed eyelids, and the wild spray that lay upon their cups was less salt than his tears.

And to the dead thing he made confession. Into the shells of its ears he poured the harsh wine of his tale. He put the little hands round his neck, and with his fingers he touched the thin reed of the throat. Bitter, bitter was his joy, and full of strange gladness was his pain.

The black sea came nearer, and the white foam moaned like a leper. With white claws of foam the sea grabbled at the shore. From the palace of the Sea-King came the cry of mourning again, and far out upon the sea the great Tritons blew hoarsely upon their horns.

‘Flee away,’ said his Soul, ‘for ever doth the sea come nigher, and if thou tarriest it will slay thee. Flee away, for I am afraid, seeing that thy heart is closed against me by reason of the greatness of thy love. Flee away to a place of safety. Surely thou wilt not send me without a heart into another world?’

But the young Fisherman listened not to his Soul, but called on the little Mermaid and said, ‘Love is better than wisdom, and more precious than riches, and fairer than the feet of the daughters of men. The fires cannot destroy it, nor can the waters quench it. I called on thee at dawn, and thou didst not come to my call. The moon heard thy name, yet hadst thou no heed of me. For evilly had I left thee, and to my own hurt had I wandered away. Yet ever did thy love abide with me, and ever was it strong, nor did aught prevail against it, though I have looked upon evil and looked upon good. And now that thou art dead, surely I will die with thee also.’

And his Soul besought him to depart, but he would not, so great was his love. And the sea came nearer, and sought to cover him with its waves, and when he knew that the end was at hand he kissed with mad lips the cold lips of the Mermaid, and the heart that was within him brake. And as through the fulness of his love his heart did break, the Soul found an entrance and entered in, and was one with him even as before. And the sea covered the young Fisherman with its waves.

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AND IN THE morning the Priest went forth to bless the sea, for it had been troubled. And with him went the monks and the musicians, and the candle-bearers, and the swingers of censers, and a great company.

And when the Priest reached the shore he saw the young Fisherman lying drowned in the surf, and clasped in his arms was the body of the little Mermaid. And he drew back frowning, and having made the sign of the cross, he cried aloud and said, ‘I will not bless the sea nor anything that is in it. Accursed be the Sea-folk, and accursed be all they who traffic with them. And as for him who for love’s sake forsook God, and so lieth here with his leman slain by God’s judgment, take up his body and the body of his leman, and bury them in the corner of the Field of the Fullers, and set no mark above them, nor sign of any kind, that none may know the place of their resting. For accursed were they in their lives, and accursed shall they be in their deaths also.’

And the people did as he commanded them, and in the corner of the Field of the Fullers, where no sweet herbs grew, they dug a deep pit, and laid the dead things within it.

And when the third year was over, and on a day that was a holy day, the Priest went up to the chapel, that he might show to the people the wounds of the Lord, and speak to them about the wrath of God.

And when he had robed himself with his robes, and entered in and bowed himself before the altar, he saw that the altar was covered with strange flowers that never had been seen before. Strange were they to look at, and of curious beauty, and their beauty troubled him, and their odour was sweet in his nostrils. And he felt glad, and understood not why he was glad.

And after that he had opened the tabernacle, and incensed the monstrance that was in it, and shown the fair wafer to the people, and hid it again behind the veil of veils, he began to speak to the people, desiring to speak to them of the wrath of God. But the beauty of the white flowers troubled him, and their odour was sweet in his nostrils, and there came another word into his lips, and he spake not of the wrath of God, but of the God whose name is Love. And why he so spake, he knew not.

And when he had finished his word the people wept, and the Priest went back to the sacristy, and his eyes were full of tears. And the deacons came in and began to unrobe him, and took from him the alb and the girdle, the maniple and the stole. And he stood as one in a dream.

And after that they had unrobed him, he looked at them and said, ‘What are the flowers that stand on the altar, and whence do they come?’

And they answered him, ‘What flowers they are we cannot tell, but they come from the corner of the Fullers’ Field.’ And the Priest trembled, and returned to his own house and prayed.

And in the morning, while it was still dawn, he went forth with the monks and the musicians, and the candle-bearers and the swingers of censers, and a great company, and came to the shore of the sea, and blessed the sea, and all the wild things that are in it. The Fauns also he blessed, and the little things that dance in the woodland, and the bright-eyed things that peer through the leaves. All the things in God’s world he blessed, and the people were filled with joy and wonder. Yet never again in the corner of the Fullers’ Field grew flowers of any kind, but the field remained barren even as before. Nor came the Sea-folk into the bay as they had been wont to do, for they went to another part of the sea.

4

THE STAR-CHILD

Once upon a time two poor Woodcutters were making their way home through a great pine-forest. It was winter, and a night of bitter cold. The snow lay thick upon the ground, and upon the branches of the trees: the frost kept snapping the little twigs on either side of them, as they passed: and when they came to the Mountain-Torrent she was hanging motionless in air, for the Ice-King had kissed her.

So cold was it that even the animals and the birds did not know what to make of it.

‘Ugh!’ snarled the Wolf, as he limped through the brushwood with his tail between his legs, ‘this is perfectly monstrous weather. Why doesn’t the Government look to it?’

‘Weet! weet! weet!’ twittered the green Linnets, ‘the old Earth is dead and they have laid her out in her white shroud.’

‘The Earth is going to be married, and this is her bridal dress,’ whispered the Turtle-doves to each other. Their little pink feet were quite frost-bitten, but they felt that it was their duty to take a romantic view of the situation.

‘Nonsense!’ growled the Wolf. ‘I tell you that it is all the fault of the Government, and if you don’t believe me I shall eat you.’ The Wolf had a thoroughly practical mind, and was never at a loss for a good argument.

‘Well, for my own part,’ said the Woodpecker, who was a born philosopher, ‘I don’t care an atomic theory for explanations. If a thing is so, it is so, and at present it is terribly cold.’

Terribly cold it certainly was. The little Squirrels, who lived inside the tall fir-tree, kept rubbing each other’s noses to keep themselves warm, and the Rabbits curled themselves up in their holes, and did not venture even to look out of doors. The only people who seemed to enjoy it were the great horned Owls. Their feathers were quite stiff with rime, but they did not mind, and they rolled their large yellow eyes, and called out to each other across the forest, ‘Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! what delightful weather we are having!’

On and on went the two Woodcutters, blowing lustily upon their fingers, and stamping with their huge iron-shod boots upon the caked snow. Once they sank into a deep drift, and came out as white as millers are, when the stones are grinding; and once they slipped on the hard smooth ice where the marsh-water was frozen, and their faggots fell out of their bundles, and they had to pick them up and bind them together again; and once they thought that they had lost their way, and a great terror seized on them, for they knew that the Snow is cruel to those who sleep in her arms. But they put their trust in the good Saint Martin, who watches over all travellers, and retraced their steps, and went warily, and at last they reached the outskirts of the forest, and saw, far down in the valley beneath them, the lights of the village in which they dwelt.

So overjoyed were they at their deliverance that they laughed aloud, and the Earth seemed to them like a flower of silver, and the Moon like a flower of gold.

Yet, after that they had laughed they became sad, for they remembered their poverty, and one of them said to the other, ‘Why did we make merry, seeing that life is for the rich, and not for such as we are? Better that we had died of cold in the forest, or that some wild beast had fallen upon us and slain us.'

'Truly,' answered his companion, 'much is given to some, and little is given to others. Injustice has parcelled out the world, nor is there equal division of aught save of sorrow.'

But as they were bewailing their misery to each other this strange thing happened. There fell from heaven a very bright and beautiful star. It slipped down the side of the sky, passing by the other stars in its course, and, as they watched it wondering, it seemed to them to sink behind a clump of willow-trees that stood hard by a little sheepfold no more than a stone's-throw away.

'Why! there is a crook of gold for whoever finds it,' they cried, and they set to and ran, so eager were they for the gold.

And one of them ran faster than his mate, and outstripped him, and forced his way through the willows, and came out on the other side, and lo! there was indeed a thing of gold lying on the white snow. So he hastened towards it, and stooping down placed his hands upon it, and it was a cloak of golden tissue, curiously wrought with stars, and wrapped in many folds. And he cried out to his comrade that he had found the treasure that had fallen from the sky, and when his comrade had come up, they sat them down in the snow, and loosened the folds of the cloak that they might divide the pieces of gold. But, alas! no gold was in it, nor silver, nor, indeed, treasure of any kind, but only a little child who was asleep.

And one of them said to the other: 'This is a bitter ending to our hope, nor have we any good fortune, for what doth a child profit to a man? Let us leave it here, and go our way, seeing that we are poor men, and have children of our own whose bread we may not give to another.'

But his companion answered him: 'Nay, but it were an evil thing to leave the child to perish here in the snow, and though I am as poor as thou art, and have many mouths to feed, and but little in the pot, yet will I bring it home with me, and my wife shall have care of it.’

So very tenderly he took up the child, and wrapped the cloak around it to shield it from the harsh cold, and made his way down the hill to the village, his comrade marvelling much at his foolishness and softness of heart.

And when they came to the village, his comrade said to him, ‘Thou hast the child, therefore give me the cloak, for it is meet that we should share.’

But he answered him: ‘Nay, for the cloak is neither mine nor thine, but the child’s only,’ and he bade him Godspeed, and went to his own house and knocked.

And when his wife opened the door and saw that her husband had returned safe to her, she put her arms round his neck and kissed him, and took from his back the bundle of faggots, and brushed the snow off his boots, and bade him come in.

But he said to her, ‘I have found something in the forest, and I have brought it to thee to have care of it,’ and he stirred not from the threshold.

‘What is it?’ she cried. ‘Show it to me, for the house is bare, and we have need of many things.’ And he drew the cloak back, and showed her the sleeping child.

‘Alack, goodman!’ she murmured, ‘have we not children of our own, that thou must needs bring a changeling to sit by the hearth? And who knows if it will not bring us bad fortune? And how shall we tend it?’ And she was wroth against him.

‘Nay, but it is a Star-Child,’ he answered; and he told her the strange manner of the finding of it.

But she would not be appeased, but mocked at him, and spoke angrily, and cried: ‘Our children lack bread, and shall we feed the child of another? Who is there who careth for us? And who giveth us food?’

‘Nay, but God careth for the sparrows even, and feedeth them,’ he answered.

‘Do not the sparrows die of hunger in the winter?’ she asked. ‘And is it not winter now?’

And the man answered nothing, but stirred not from the threshold.

And a bitter wind from the forest came in through the open door, and made her tremble, and she shivered, and said to him: ‘Wilt thou not close the door? There cometh a bitter wind into the house, and I am cold.’

‘Into a house where a heart is hard cometh there not always a bitter wind?’ he asked. And the woman answered him nothing, but crept closer to the fire.

And after a time she turned round and looked at him, and her eyes were full of tears. And he came in swiftly, and placed the child in her arms, and she kissed it, and laid it in a little bed where the youngest of their own children was lying. And on the morrow the Woodcutter took the curious cloak of gold and placed it in a great chest, and a chain of amber that was round the child’s neck his wife took and set it in the chest also.

* * *

So the Star-Child was brought up with the children of the Woodcutter, and sat at the same board with them, and was their playmate. And every year he became more beautiful to look at, so that all those who dwelt in the village were filled with wonder, for, while they were swarthy and black-haired, he was white and delicate as sawn ivory, and his curls were like the rings of the daffodil. His lips, also, were like the petals of a red flower, and his eyes were like violets by a river of pure water, and his body like the narcissus of a field where the mower comes not.

Yet did his beauty work him evil. For he grew proud, and cruel, and selfish. The children of the Woodcutter, and the other children of the village, he despised, saying that they were of mean parentage, while he was noble, being sprang from a Star, and he made himself master over them, and called them his servants. No pity had he for the poor, or for those who were blind or maimed or in any way afflicted, but would cast stones at them and drive them forth on to the highway, and bid them beg their bread elsewhere, so that none save the outlaws came twice to that village to ask for alms. Indeed, he was as one enamoured of beauty, and would mock at the weakly and ill-favoured, and make jest of them; and himself he loved, and in summer, when the winds were still, he would lie by the well in the priest's orchard and look down at the marvel of his own face, and laugh for the pleasure he had in his fairness.

Often did the Woodcutter and his wife chide him, and say: 'We did not deal with thee as thou dealest with those who are left desolate, and have none to succour them. Wherefore art thou so cruel to all who need pity?'

Often did the old priest send for him, and seek to teach him the love of living things, saying to him: 'The fly is thy brother. Do it no harm. The wild birds that roam through the forest have their freedom. Snare them not for thy pleasure. God made the blind-worm and the mole, and each has its place. Who art thou to bring pain into God's world? Even the cattle of the field praise Him.'

But the Star-Child heeded not their words, but would frown and flout, and go back to his companions, and lead them. And his companions followed him, for he was fair, and fleet of foot, and could dance, and pipe, and make music. And wherever the Star-Child led them they followed, and whatever the Star-Child bade them do, that did they. And when he pierced with a sharp reed the dim eyes of the mole, they laughed, and when he cast stones at the leper they laughed also. And in all things he ruled them, and they became hard of heart even as he was.

* * *

Now there passed one day through the village a poor beggar-woman. Her garments were torn and ragged, and her feet were bleeding from the rough road on which she had travelled, and she was in very evil plight. And being weary she sat her down under a chestnut-tree to rest.

But when the Star-Child saw her, he said to his companions, ‘See! There sitteth a foul beggar-woman under that fair and green-leaved tree. Come, let us drive her hence, for she is ugly and ill-favoured.’

So he came near and threw stones at her, and mocked her, and she looked at him with terror in her eyes, nor did she move her gaze from him. And when the Woodcutter, who was cleaving logs in a haggard hard by, saw what the Star-Child was doing, he ran up and rebuked him, and said to him: ‘Surely thou art hard of heart and knowest not mercy, for what evil has this poor woman done to thee that thou shouldst treat her in this wise?’

And the Star-Child grew red with anger, and stamped his foot upon the ground, and said, ‘Who art thou to question me what I do? I am no son of thine to do thy bidding.’

‘Thou speakest truly,’ answered the Woodcutter, ‘yet did I show thee pity when I found thee in the forest.’

And when the woman heard these words she gave a loud cry, and fell into a swoon. And the Woodcutter carried her to his own house, and his wife had care of her, and when she rose up from the swoon into which she had fallen, they set meat and drink before her, and bade her have comfort.

But she would neither eat nor drink, but said to the Woodcutter, ‘Didst thou not say that the child was found in the forest? And was it not ten years from this day?’

And the Woodcutter answered, ‘Yea, it was in the forest that I found him, and it is ten years from this day.’

‘And what signs didst thou find with him?’ she cried. ‘Bare he not upon his neck a chain of amber? Was not round him a cloak of gold tissue broidered with stars?’

‘Truly,’ answered the Woodcutter, ‘it was even as thou sayest.’ And he took the cloak and the amber chain from the chest where they lay, and showed them to her.

And when she saw them she wept for joy, and said, ‘He is my little son whom I lost in the forest. I pray thee send for him quickly, for in search of him have I wandered over the whole world.’

So the Woodcutter and his wife went out and called to the Star-Child, and said to him, ‘Go into the house, and there shalt thou find thy mother, who is waiting for thee.’

So he ran in, filled with wonder and great gladness. But when he saw her who was waiting there, he laughed scornfully and said, ‘Why, where is my mother? For I see none here but this vile beggar-woman.’

And the woman answered him, ‘I am thy mother.’

‘Thou art mad to say so,’ cried the Star-Child angrily. ‘I am no son of thine, for thou art a beggar, and ugly, and in rags. Therefore get thee hence, and let me see thy foul face no more.’

‘Nay, but thou art indeed my little son, whom I bare in the forest,’ she cried, and she fell on her knees, and held out her arms to him. ‘The robbers stole thee from me, and left thee to die,’ she murmured, ‘but I recognised thee when I saw thee, and the signs also have I recognised, the cloak of golden tissue and the amber chain. Therefore I pray thee come with me, for over the whole world have I wandered in search of thee. Come with me, my son, for I have need of thy love.’

But the Star-Child stirred not from his place, but shut the doors of his heart against her, nor was there any sound heard save the sound of the woman weeping for pain.

And at last he spoke to her, and his voice was hard and bitter. ‘If in very truth thou art my mother,’ he said, ‘it had been better hadst thou stayed away, and not come here to bring me to shame, seeing that I thought I was the child of some Star, and not a beggar’s child, as thou tellest me that I am. Therefore get thee hence, and let me see thee no more.’

‘Alas! my son,’ she cried, ‘wilt thou not kiss me before I go? For I have suffered much to find thee.’

‘Nay,’ said the Star-Child, ‘but thou art too foul to look at, and rather would I kiss the adder or the toad than thee.’

So the woman rose up, and went away into the forest weeping bitterly, and when the Star-Child saw that she had gone, he was glad, and ran back to his playmates that he might play with them.

But when they beheld him coming, they mocked him and said, ‘Why, thou art as foul as the toad, and as loathsome as the adder. Get thee hence, for we will not suffer thee to play with us,’ and they drave him out of the garden.

And the Star-Child frowned and said to himself, ‘What is this that they say to me? I will go to the well of water and look into it, and it shall tell me of my beauty.’

So he went to the well of water and looked into it, and lo! his face was as the face of a toad, and his body was sealed like an adder. And he flung himself down on the grass and wept, and said to himself, ‘Surely this has come upon me by reason of my sin. For I have denied my mother, and driven her away, and been proud, and cruel to her. Wherefore I will go and seek her through the whole world, nor will I rest till I have found her.’

And there came to him the little daughter of the Woodcutter, and she put her hand upon his shoulder and said, ‘What doth it matter if thou hast lost thy comeliness? Stay with us, and I will not mock at thee.’

And he said to her, ‘Nay, but I have been cruel to my mother, and as a punishment has this evil been sent to me. Wherefore I must go hence, and wander through the world till I find her, and she give me her forgiveness.’

So he ran away into the forest and called out to his mother to come to him, but there was no answer. All day long he called to her, and, when the sun set he lay down to sleep on a bed of leaves, and the birds and the animals fled from him, for they remembered his cruelty, and he was alone save for the toad that watched him, and the slow adder that crawled past.

And in the morning he rose up, and plucked some bitter berries from the trees and ate them, and took his way through the great wood, weeping sorely. And of everything that he met he made inquiry if perchance they had seen his mother.

He said to the Mole, ‘Thou canst go beneath the earth. Tell me, is my mother there?’

And the Mole answered, ‘Thou hast blinded mine eyes. How should I know?’

He said to the Linnet, ‘Thou canst fly over the tops of the tall trees, and canst see the whole world. Tell me, canst thou see my mother?’

And the Linnet answered, ‘Thou hast clipt my wings for thy pleasure. How should I fly?’

And to the little Squirrel who lived in the fir-tree, and was lonely, he said, ‘Where is my mother?’

And the Squirrel answered, ‘Thou hast slain mine. Dost thou seek to slay thine also?’

And the Star-Child wept and bowed his head, and prayed forgiveness of God’s things, and went on through the forest, seeking for the beggar-woman. And on the third day he came to the other side of the forest and went down into the plain.

And when he passed through the villages the children mocked him, and threw stones at him, and the carlots would not suffer him even to sleep in the byres lest he might bring mildew on the stored corn, so foul was he to look at, and their hired men drave him away, and there was none who had pity on him. Nor could he hear anywhere of the beggar-woman who was his mother, though for the space of three years he wandered over the world, and often seemed to see her on the road in front of him, and would call to her, and run after her till the sharp flints made his feet to bleed. But overtake her he could not, and those who dwelt by the way did ever deny that they had seen her, or any like to her, and they made sport of his sorrow.

For the space of three years he wandered over the world, and in the world there was neither love nor loving-kindness nor charity for him, but it was even such a world as he had made for himself in the days of his great pride.

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AND ONE EVENING he came to the gate of a strong-walled city that stood by a river, and, weary and footsore though he was, he made to enter in. But the soldiers who stood on guard dropped their halberts across the entrance, and said roughly to him, ‘What is thy business in the city?’

‘I am seeking for my mother,’ he answered, ‘and I pray ye to suffer me to pass, for it may be that she is in this city.’

But they mocked at him, and one of them wagged a black beard, and set down his shield and cried, ‘Of a truth, thy mother will not be merry when she sees thee, for thou art more ill-favoured than the toad of the marsh, or the adder that crawls in the fen. Get thee gone. Get thee gone. Thy mother dwells not in this city.’

And another, who held a yellow banner in his hand, said to him, ‘Who is thy mother, and wherefore art thou seeking for her?’

And he answered, ‘My mother is a beggar even as I am, and I have treated her evilly, and I pray ye to suffer me to pass that she may give me her forgiveness, if it be that she tarrieth in this city.’ But they would not, and pricked him with their spears.

And, as he turned away weeping, one whose armour was inlaid with gilt flowers, and on whose helmet couched a lion that had wings, came up and made inquiry of the soldiers who it was who had sought entrance. And they said to him, ‘It is a beggar and the child of a beggar, and we have driven him away.’

‘Nay,’ he cried, laughing, ‘but we will sell the foul thing for a slave, and his price shall be the price of a bowl of sweet wine.’

And an old and evil-visaged man who was passing by called out, and said, ‘I will buy him for that price,’ and, when he had paid the price, he took the Star-Child by the hand and led him into the city.

And after that they had gone through many streets they came to a little door that was set in a wall that was covered with a pomegranate tree. And the old man touched the door with a ring of graved jasper and it opened, and they went down five steps of brass into a garden filled with black poppies and green jars of burnt clay. And the old man took then from his turban a scarf of figured silk, and bound with it the eyes of the Star-Child, and drave him in front of him. And when the scarf was taken off his eyes, the Star-Child found himself in a dungeon, that was lit by a lantern of horn.

And the old man set before him some mouldy bread on a trencher and said, ‘Eat,’ and some brackish water in a cup and said, ‘Drink,’ and when he had eaten and drunk, the old man went out, locking the door behind him and fastening it with an iron chain.

And on the morrow the old man, who was indeed the subtlest of the magicians of Libya and had learned his art from one who dwelt in the tombs of the Nile, came in to him and frowned at him, and said, ‘In a wood that is nigh to the gate of this city of Giaours there are three pieces of gold. One is of white gold, and another is of yellow gold, and the gold of the third one is red. To-day thou shalt bring me the piece of white gold, and if thou bringest it not back, I will beat thee with a hundred stripes. Get thee away quickly, and at sunset I will be waiting for thee at the door of the garden. See that thou bringest the white gold, or it shall go ill with thee, for thou art my slave, and I have bought thee for the price of a bowl of sweet wine.' And he bound the eyes of the Star-Child with the scarf of figured silk, and led him through the house, and through the garden of poppies, and up the five steps of brass. And having opened the little door with his ring he set him in the street.

And the Star-Child went out of the gate of the city, and came to the wood of which the Magician had spoken to him.

Now this wood was very fair to look at from without, and seemed full of singing birds and of sweet-scented flowers, and the Star-Child entered it gladly. Yet did its beauty profit him little, for wherever he went harsh briars and thorns shot up from the ground and encompassed him, and evil nettles stung him, and the thistle pierced him with her daggers, so that he was in sore distress. Nor could he anywhere find the piece of white gold of which the Magician had spoken, though he sought for it from morn to noon, and from noon to sunset. And at sunset he set his face towards home, weeping bitterly, for he knew what fate was in store for him.

But when he had reached the outskirts of the wood, he heard from a thicket a cry as of some one in pain. And forgetting his own sorrow he ran back to the place, and saw there a little Hare caught in a trap that some hunter had set for it.

And the Star-Child had pity on it, and released it, and said to it, 'I am myself but a slave, yet may I give thee thy freedom.'

And the Hare answered him, and said: 'Surely thou hast given me freedom, and what shall I give thee in return?'

And the Star-Child said to it, 'I am seeking for a piece of white gold, nor can I anywhere find it, and if I bring it not to my master he will beat me.'

‘Come thou with me,’ said the Hare, ‘and I will lead thee to it, for I know where it is hidden, and for what purpose.’

So the Star-Child went with the Hare, and lo! in the cleft of a great oak-tree he saw the piece of white gold that he was seeking. And he was filled with joy, and seized it, and said to the Hare, ‘The service that I did to thee thou hast rendered back again many times over, and the kindness that I showed thee thou hast repaid a hundred-fold.’

‘Nay,’ answered the Hare, ‘but as thou dealt with me, so I did deal with thee,’ and it ran away swiftly, and the Star-Child went towards the city.

Now at the gate of the city there was seated one who was a leper. Over his face hung a cowl of grey linen, and through the eyelets his eyes gleamed like red coals. And when he saw the Star-Child coming, he struck upon a wooden bowl, and clattered his bell, and called out to him, and said, ‘Give me a piece of money, or I must die of hunger. For they have thrust me out of the city, and there is no one who has pity on me.’

‘Alas!’ cried the Star-Child, ‘I have but one piece of money in my wallet, and if I bring it not to my master he will beat me, for I am his slave.’

But the leper entreated him, and prayed of him, till the Star-Child had pity, and gave him the piece of white gold.

And when he came to the Magician’s house, the Magician opened to him, and brought him in, and said to him, ‘Hast thou the piece of white gold?’ And the Star-Child answered, ‘I have it not.’ So the Magician fell upon him, and beat him, and set before him an empty trencher, and said, ‘Eat,’ and an empty cup, and said, ‘Drink,’ and flung him again into the dungeon.

And on the morrow the Magician came to him, and said, ‘If to-day thou bringest me not the piece of yellow gold, I will surely keep thee as my slave, and give thee three hundred stripes.’

So the Star-Child went to the wood, and all day long he searched for the piece of yellow gold, but nowhere could he find it. And at sunset he sat him down and began to weep, and as he was weeping there came to him the little Hare that he had rescued from the trap,

And the Hare said to him, ‘Why art thou weeping? And what dost thou seek in the wood?’

And the Star-Child answered, ‘I am seeking for a piece of yellow gold that is hidden here, and if I find it not my master will beat me, and keep me as a slave.’

‘Follow me,’ cried the Hare, and it ran through the wood till it came to a pool of water. And at the bottom of the pool the piece of yellow gold was lying.

‘How shall I thank thee?’ said the Star-Child, ‘for lo! this is the second time that you have succoured me.’

‘Nay, but thou hadst pity on me first,’ said the Hare, and it ran away swiftly.

And the Star-Child took the piece of yellow gold, and put it in his wallet, and hurried to the city. But the leper saw him coming, and ran to meet him, and knelt down and cried, ‘Give me a piece of money or I shall die of hunger.’

And the Star-Child said to him, ‘I have in my wallet but one piece of yellow gold, and if I bring it not to my master he will beat me and keep me as his slave.’

But the leper entreated him sore, so that the Star-Child had pity on him, and gave him the piece of yellow gold.

And when he came to the Magician’s house, the Magician opened to him, and brought him in, and said to him, ‘Hast thou the piece of yellow gold?’ And the Star-Child said to him, ‘I have it not.’ So the Magician fell upon him, and beat him, and loaded him with chains, and cast him again into the dungeon.

And on the morrow the Magician came to him, and said, ‘If to-day thou bringest me the piece of red gold I will set thee free, but if thou bringest it not I will surely slay thee.'

So the Star-Child went to the wood, and all day long he searched for the piece of red gold, but nowhere could he find it. And at evening he sat him down and wept, and as he was weeping there came to him the little Hare.

And the Hare said to him, 'The piece of red gold that thou seekest is in the cavern that is behind thee. Therefore weep no more but be glad.'

'How shall I reward thee?' cried the Star-Child, 'for lo! this is the third time thou hast succoured me.'

'Nay, but thou hadst pity on me first,' said the Hare, and it ran away swiftly.

And the Star-Child entered the cavern, and in its farthest corner he found the piece of red gold. So he put it in his wallet, and hurried to the city. And the leper seeing him coming, stood in the centre of the road, and cried out, and said to him, 'Give me the piece of red money, or I must die,' and the Star-Child had pity on him again, and gave him the piece of red gold, saying, 'Thy need is greater than mine.' Yet was his heart heavy, for he knew what evil fate awaited him.

But lo! as he passed through the gate of the city, the guards bowed down and made obeisance to him, saying, 'How beautiful is our lord!' and a crowd of citizens followed him, and cried out, 'Surely there is none so beautiful in the whole world!' so that the Star-Child wept, and said to himself, 'They are mocking me, and making light of my misery.' And so large was the concourse of the people, that he lost the threads of his way, and found himself at last in a great square, in which there was a palace of a King.

And the gate of the palace opened, and the priests and the high officers of the city ran forth to meet him, and they abased themselves before him, and said, 'Thou art our lord for whom we have been waiting, and the son of our King.'

And the Star-Child answered them and said, ‘I am no king’s son, but the child of a poor beggar-woman. And how say ye that I am beautiful, for I know that I am evil to look at?’

Then he, whose armour was inlaid with gilt flowers, and on whose helmet crouched a lion that had wings, held up a shield, and cried, ‘How saith my lord that he is not beautiful?’

And the Star-Child looked, and lo! his face was even as it had been, and his comeliness had come back to him, and he saw that in his eyes which he had not seen there before.

And the priests and the high officers knelt down and said to him, ‘It was prophesied of old that on this day should come he who was to rule over us. Therefore, let our lord take this crown and this sceptre, and be in his justice and mercy our King over us.’

But he said to them, ‘I am not worthy, for I have denied the mother who bare me, nor may I rest till I have found her, and known her forgiveness. Therefore, let me go, for I must wander again over the world, and may not tarry here, though ye bring me the crown and the sceptre.’ And as he spake he turned his face from them towards the street that led to the gate of the city, and lo! amongst the crowd that pressed round the soldiers, he saw the beggar-woman who was his mother, and at her side stood the leper, who had sat by the road.

And a cry of joy broke from his lips, and he ran over, and kneeling down he kissed the wounds on his mother’s feet, and wet them with his tears. He bowed his head in the dust, and sobbing, as one whose heart might break, he said to her: ‘Mother, I denied thee in the hour of my pride. Accept me in the hour of my humility. Mother, I gave thee hatred. Do thou give me love. Mother, I rejected thee. Receive thy child now.’ But the beggar-woman answered him not a word.

And he reached out his hands, and clasped the white feet of the leper, and said to him: ‘Thrice did I give thee of my mercy. Bid my mother speak to me once.’ But the leper answered him not a word.

And he sobbed again and said: ‘Mother, my suffering is greater than I can bear. Give me thy forgiveness, and let me go back to the forest.’ And the beggar-woman put her hand on his head, and said to him, ‘Rise,’ and the leper put his hand on his head, and said to him, ‘Rise,’ also.

And he rose up from his feet, and looked at them, and lo! they were a King and a Queen.

And the Queen said to him, ‘This is thy father whom thou hast succoured.’

And the King said, ‘This is thy mother whose feet thou hast washed with thy tears.’ And they fell on his neck and kissed him, and brought him into the palace and clothed him in fair raiment, and set the crown upon his head, and the sceptre in his hand, and over the city that stood by the river he ruled, and was its lord. Much justice and mercy did he show to all, and the evil Magician he banished, and to the Woodcutter and his wife he sent many rich gifts, and to their children he gave high honour. Nor would he suffer any to be cruel to bird or beast, but taught love and loving-kindness and charity, and to the poor he gave bread, and to the naked he gave raiment, and there was peace and plenty in the land.

Yet ruled he not long, so great had been his suffering, and so bitter the fire of his testing, for after the space of three years he died. And he who came after him ruled evilly.

5

THE HAPPY PRINCE

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt.

He was very much admired indeed. “He is as beautiful as a weathercock,” remarked one of the Town Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic tastes; “only not quite so useful,” he added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical, which he really was not.

“Why can’t you be like the Happy Prince?” asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was crying for the moon. “The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything.”

“I am glad there is some one in the world who is quite happy,” muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

“He looks just like an angel,” said the Charity Children as they came out of the cathedral in their bright scarlet cloaks and their clean white pinafores.

“How do you know?” said the Mathematical Master, “you have never seen one.”

“Ah! but we have, in our dreams,” answered the children; and the Mathematical Master frowned and looked very severe, for he did not approve of children dreaming.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

“Shall I love you?” said the Swallow, who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

“It is a ridiculous attachment,” twittered the other Swallows; “she has no money, and far too many relations;” and indeed the river was quite full of Reeds. Then, when the autumn came they all flew away.

After they had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his lady-love. “She has no conversation,” he said, “and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind.” And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtseys. “I admit that she is domestic,” he continued, “but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love travelling also.”

“Will you come away with me?” he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home.

“You have been trifling with me,” he cried. “I am off to the Pyramids. Good-bye!” and he flew away.

All day long he flew, and at night-time he arrived at the city. “Where shall I put up?” he said; “I hope the town has made preparations.”

Then he saw the statue on the tall column.

“I will put up there,” he cried; “it is a fine position, with plenty of fresh air.” So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince.

“I have a golden bedroom,” he said softly to himself as he looked round, and he prepared to go to sleep; but just as he was putting his head under his wing a large drop of water fell on him. “What a curious thing!” he cried; “there is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet it is raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful. The Reed used to like the rain, but that was merely her selfishness.”

Then another drop fell.

“What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?” he said; “I must look for a good chimney-pot,” and he determined to fly away.

But before he had opened his wings, a third drop fell, and he looked up, and saw — Ah! what did he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks. His face was so beautiful in the moonlight that the little Swallow was filled with pity.

“Who are you?” he said.

“I am the Happy Prince.”

“Why are you weeping then?” asked the Swallow; “you have quite drenched me.”

“When I was alive and had a human heart,” answered the statue, “I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans-Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the daytime I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot choose but weep.”

“What! is he not solid gold?” said the Swallow to himself. He was too polite to make any personal remarks out loud.

“Far away,” continued the statue in a low musical voice, “far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion-flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen’s maids-of-honour to wear at the next Court-ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move.”

“I am waited for in Egypt,” said the Swallow. “My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus-flowers. Soon they will go to sleep in the tomb of the great King. The King is there himself in his painted coffin. He is wrapped in yellow linen, and embalmed with spices. Round his neck is a chain of pale green jade, and his hands are like withered leaves.”

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “will you not stay with me for one night, and be my messenger? The boy is so thirsty, and the mother so sad.”

“I don’t think I like boys,” answered the Swallow. “Last summer, when I was staying on the river, there were two rude boys, the miller’s sons, who were always throwing stones at me. They never hit me, of course; we swallows fly far too well for that, and besides, I come of a family famous for its agility; but still, it was a mark of disrespect.”

But the Happy Prince looked so sad that the little Swallow was sorry. “It is very cold here,” he said; “but I will stay with you for one night, and be your messenger.”

“Thank you, little Swallow,” said the Prince.

So the Swallow picked out the great ruby from the Prince’s sword, and flew away with it in his beak over the roofs of the town.

He passed by the cathedral tower, where the white marble angels were sculptured. He passed by the palace and heard the sound of dancing. A beautiful girl came out on the balcony with her lover. “How wonderful the stars are,” he said to her, “and how wonderful is the power of love!”

“I hope my dress will be ready in time for the State-ball,” she answered; “I have ordered passion-flowers to be embroidered on it; but the seamstresses are so lazy.”

He passed over the river, and saw the lanterns hanging to the masts of the ships. He passed over the Ghetto, and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales. At last he came to the poor house and looked in. The boy was tossing feverishly on his bed, and the mother had fallen asleep, she was so tired. In he hopped, and laid the great ruby on the table beside the woman’s thimble. Then he flew gently round the bed, fanning the boy’s forehead with his wings. “How cool I feel!” said the boy, “I must be getting better;” and he sank into a delicious slumber.

Then the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince, and told him what he had done. “It is curious,” he remarked, “but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold.”

“That is because you have done a good action,” said the Prince. And the little Swallow began to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy.

When day broke he flew down to the river and had a bath. “What a remarkable phenomenon, said the Professor of Ornithology as he was passing over the bridge. “A swallow in winter!” And he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Every one quoted it, it was full of so many words that they could not understand.

“To-night I go to Egypt,” said the Swallow, and he was in high spirits at the prospect. He visited all the public monuments, and sat a long time on top of the church steeple. Wherever he went the Sparrows chirruped, and said to each other, “What a distinguished stranger!” so he enjoyed himself very much.

When the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince. “Have you any commissions for Egypt?” he cried; “I am just starting.”

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “will you not stay with me one night longer?”

“I am waited for in Egypt,” answered the Swallow. “To-morrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on a great granite throne sits the God Memnon. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he utters one cry of joy, and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions come down to the water’s edge to drink. They have eyes like green beryls, and their roar is louder than the roar of the cataract.”

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “far away across the city I see a young man in a garret. He is leaning over a desk covered with papers, and in a tumbler by his side there is a bunch of withered violets. His hair is brown and crisp, and his lips are red as a pomegranate, and he has large and dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theatre, but he is too cold to write any more. There is no fire in the grate, and hunger has made him faint.”

“I will wait with you one night longer,” said the Swallow, who really had a good heart. “Shall I take him another ruby?”

“Alas! I have no ruby now,” said the Prince; “my eyes are all that I have left. They are made of rare sapphires, which were brought out of India a thousand years ago. Pluck out one of them and take it to him. He will sell it to the jeweller, and buy food and firewood, and finish his play.”

“Dear Prince,” said the Swallow, “I cannot do that”; and he began to weep.

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “do as I command you.”

So the Swallow plucked out the Prince’s eye, and flew away to the student’s garret. It was easy enough to get in, as there was a hole in the roof.

Through this he darted, and came into the room. The young man had his head buried in his hands, so he did not hear the flutter of the bird’s wings, and when he looked up he found the beautiful sapphire lying on the withered violets.

“I am beginning to be appreciated,” he cried; “this is from some great admirer. Now I can finish my play,” and he looked quite happy.

The next day the Swallow flew down to the harbour. He sat on the mast of a large vessel and watched the sailors hauling big chests out of the hold with ropes. “Heave a-hoy!” they shouted as each chest came up. “I am going to Egypt!” cried the Swallow, but nobody minded, and when the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince.

“I am come to bid you good-bye,” he cried.

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “will you not stay with me one night longer?”

“It is winter,” answered the Swallow, “and the chill snow will soon be here. In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm-trees, and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them. My companions are building a nest in the Temple of Baalbec, and the pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other. Dear Prince, I must leave you, but I will never forget you, and next spring I will bring you back two beautiful jewels in place of those you have given away. The ruby shall be redder than a red rose, and the sapphire shall be as blue as the great sea.”

“In the square below,” said the Happy Prince, “there stands a little match-girl. She has let her matches fall in the gutter, and they are all spoiled. Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money, and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. Pluck out my other eye and give it to her, and her father will not beat her.”

“I will stay with you one night longer,” said the Swallow, “but I cannot pluck out your eye. You would be quite blind then.”

“Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “do as I command you.”

So he plucked out the Prince’s other eye, and darted down with it. He swooped past the match-girl, and slipped the jewel into the palm of her hand. “What a lovely bit of glass!” cried the little girl; and she ran home, laughing.

Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. “You are blind now,” he said, “so I will stay with you always.”

“No, little Swallow,” said the poor Prince, “you must go away to Egypt.”

“I will stay with you always,” said the Swallow, and he slept at the Prince’s feet.

All the next day he sat on the Prince’s shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold-fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.

“Dear little Swallow,” said the Prince, “you tell me of marvellous things, but more marvellous than anything is the suffering of men and of women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery. Fly over my city, little Swallow, and tell me what you see there.”

So the Swallow flew over the great city, and saw the rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates. He flew into dark lanes, and saw the white faces of starving children looking out listlessly at the black streets. Under the archway of a bridge two little boys were lying in one another’s arms to try and keep themselves warm. “How hungry we are!” they said. “You must not lie here,” shouted the Watchman, and they wandered out into the rain.

Then he flew back and told the Prince what he had seen.

“I am covered with fine gold,” said the Prince, “you must take it off, leaf by leaf, and give it to my poor; the living always think that gold can make them happy.”

Leaf after leaf of the fine gold the Swallow picked off, till the Happy Prince looked quite dull and grey. Leaf after leaf of the fine gold he brought to the poor, and the children’s faces grew rosier, and they laughed and played games in the street. “We have bread now!” they cried.

Then the snow came, and after the snow came the frost. The streets looked as if they were made of silver, they were so bright and glistening; long icicles like crystal daggers hung down from the eaves of the houses, everybody went about in furs, and the little boys wore scarlet caps and skated on the ice.

The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince, he loved him too well. He picked up crumbs outside the baker’s door when the baker was not looking, and tried to keep himself warm by flapping his wings.

But at last he knew that he was going to die. He had just strength to fly up to the Prince’s shoulder once more. “Good-bye, dear Prince!” he murmured, “will you let me kiss your hand?”

“I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow,” said the Prince, “you have stayed too long here; but you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you.”

“It is not to Egypt that I am going,” said the Swallow. “I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?”

And he kissed the Happy Prince on the lips, and fell down dead at his feet.

At that moment a curious crack sounded inside the statue, as if something had broken. The fact is that the leaden heart had snapped right in two. It certainly was a dreadfully hard frost.

Early the next morning the Mayor was walking in the square below in company with the Town Councillors. As they passed the column he looked up at the statue: “Dear me! how shabby the Happy Prince looks!” he said.

“How shabby, indeed!” cried the Town Councillors, who always agreed with the Mayor; and they went up to look at it.

“The ruby has fallen out of his sword, his eyes are gone, and he is golden no longer,” said the Mayor; “in fact, he is little better than a beggar!”

“Little better than a beggar,” said the Town Councillors.

“And here is actually a dead bird at his feet!” continued the Mayor. “We must really issue a proclamation that birds are not to be allowed to die here.” And the Town Clerk made a note of the suggestion.

So they pulled down the statue of the Happy Prince. “As he is no longer beautiful he is no longer useful,” said the Art Professor at the University.

Then they melted the statue in a furnace, and the Mayor held a meeting of the Corporation to decide what was to be done with the metal. “We must have another statue, of course,” he said, “and it shall be a statue of myself.”

“Of myself,” said each of the Town Councillors, and they quarrelled. When I last heard of them they were quarrelling still.

“What a strange thing!” said the overseer of the workmen at the foundry. “This broken lead heart will not melt in the furnace. We must throw it away.” So they threw it on a dust-heap where the dead Swallow was also lying.

“Bring me the two most precious things in the city,” said God to one of His Angels; and the Angel brought Him the leaden heart and the dead bird.

“You have rightly chosen,” said God, “for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me.”

6

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE

"She said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses," cried the young Student; "but in all my garden there is no red rose."

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves, and wondered.

"No red rose in all my garden!" he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. "Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched."

"Here at last is a true lover," said the Nightingale. "Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow."

"The Prince gives a ball to-morrow night," murmured the young Student, "and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break.”

“Here indeed is the true lover,” said the Nightingale. “What I sing of, he suffers: what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely Love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the market-place. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.”

“The musicians will sit in their gallery,” said the young Student, “and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her;” and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept.

Why is he weeping?” asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

“Why, indeed?” said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam.

“Why, indeed?” whispered a Daisy to his neighbour, in a soft, low voice.

“He is weeping for a red rose,” said the Nightingale.

“For a red rose?” they cried; “how very ridiculous!” and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student’s sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of Love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the centre of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray.

“Give me a red rose,” she cried, “and I will sing you my sweetest song.”

But the Tree shook its head.

“My roses are white,” it answered; “as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sun-dial, and perhaps he will give you what you want.”

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing round the old sun-dial.

“Give me a red rose,” she cried, “and I will sing you my sweetest song.”

But the Tree shook its head.

“My roses are yellow,” it answered; “as yellow as the hair of the mermaiden who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student’s window, and perhaps he will give you what you want.”

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing beneath the Student’s window.

“Give me a red rose,” she cried, “and I will sing you my sweetest song.”

But the Tree shook its head.

“My roses are red,” it answered, “as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean-cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year.”

“One red rose is all I want,” cried the Nightingale, “only one red rose! Is there no way by which I can get it?”

“There is a way,” answered the Tree; “but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you.”

“Tell it to me,” said the Nightingale, “I am not afraid.”

“If you want a red rose,” said the Tree, “you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own heart’s-blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life-blood must flow into my veins, and become mine.”

“Death is a great price to pay for a red rose,” cried the Nightingale, “and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the Moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?”

So she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

The young Student was still lying on the grass, where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

“Be happy,” cried the Nightingale, “be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart’s-blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though he is wise, and mightier than Power, though he is mighty. Flame-coloured are his wings, and coloured like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frankincense.”

The Student looked up from the grass, and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale who had built her nest in his branches.

“Sing me one last song,” he whispered; “I shall feel very lonely when you are gone.”

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak-tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song, the Student got up, and pulled a note-book and a lead-pencil out of his pocket.

“She has form,” he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove —“that cannot be denied to her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good!” And he went into his room, and lay down on his little pallet-bed, and began to think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the top-most spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvellous rose, petal following petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river — pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. “Press closer, little Nightingale,” cried the Tree, “or the Day will come before the rose is finished.”

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose's heart remained white, for only a Nightingale's heart's-blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvellous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

"Look, look!" cried the Tree, "the rose is finished now;" but the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

"Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!" he cried; "here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name;" and he leaned down and plucked it.

Then he put on his hat, and ran up to the Professor's house with the rose in his hand.

The daughter of the Professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

"You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose," cried the Student. "Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you."

But the girl frowned. "I am afraid it will not go with my dress," she answered; "and, besides, the Chamberlain's nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers."

"Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful," said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cart-wheel went over it.

"Ungrateful!" said the girl. "I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don't believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain's nephew has;" and she got up from her chair and went into the house.

"What a silly thing Love is!" said the Student as he walked away. "It is not half as useful as Logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of things that are not going to happen, and making one believe things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics."

So he returned to his room and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read.

7

THE SELFISH GIANT

Every afternoon, as they were coming from school, the children used to go and play in the Giant's garden.

It was a large lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach-trees that in the spring-time broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit. The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games in order to listen to them. "How happy we are here!" they cried to each other.

One day the Giant came back. He had been to visit his friend the Cornish ogre, and had stayed with him for seven years. After the seven years were over he had said all that he had to say, for his conversation was limited, and he determined to return to his own castle. When he arrived he saw the children playing in the garden.

"What are you doing here?" he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away.

"My own garden is my own garden," said the Giant; "any one can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself." So he built a high wall all round it, and put up a notice-board.

TRESPASSERS

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HE WAS A VERY SELFISH GIANT.

The poor children had now nowhere to play. They tried to play on the road, but the road was very dusty and full of hard stones, and they did not like it. They used to wander round the high wall when their lessons were over, and talk about the beautiful garden inside. “How happy we were there!” they said to each other.

Then the Spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds. Only in the garden of the Selfish Giant it was still winter. The birds did not care to sing in it as there were no children, and the trees forgot to blossom. Once a beautiful flower put its head out from the grass, but when it saw the notice-board it was so sorry for the children that it slipped back into the ground again, and went off to sleep. The only people who were pleased were the Snow and the Frost. “Spring has forgotten this garden,” they cried, “so we will live here all the year round.” The Snow covered up the grass with her great white cloak, and the Frost painted all the trees silver. Then they invited the North Wind to stay with them, and he came. He was wrapped in furs, and he roared all day about the garden, and blew the chimney-pots down. “This is a delightful spot,” he said, “we must ask the Hail on a visit.” So the Hail came. Every day for three hours he rattled on the roof of the castle till he broke most of the slates, and then he ran round and round the garden as fast as he could go. He was dressed in grey, and his breath was like ice.

“I cannot understand why the Spring is so late in coming,” said the Selfish Giant, as he sat at the window and looked out at his cold white garden; “I hope there will be a change in the weather.”

But the Spring never came, nor the Summer. The Autumn gave golden fruit to every garden, but to the Giant’s garden she gave none. “He is too selfish,” she said. So it was always Winter there, and the North Wind and the Hail, and the Frost, and the Snow danced about through the trees.

One morning the Giant was lying awake in bed when he heard some lovely music. It sounded so sweet to his ears that he thought it must be the King’s musicians passing by. It was really only a little linnet singing outside his window, but it was so long since he had heard a bird sing in his garden that it seemed to him to be the most beautiful music in the world. Then the Hail stopped dancing over his head, and the North Wind ceased roaring, and a delicious perfume came to him through the open casement. “I believe the Spring has come at last,” said the Giant; and he jumped out of bed and looked out.

What did he see?

He saw a most wonderful sight. Through a little hole in the wall the children had crept in, and they were sitting in the branches of the trees. In every tree that he could see there was a little child. And the trees were so glad to have the children back again that they had covered themselves with blossoms, and were waving their arms gently above the children’s heads. The birds were flying about and twittering with delight, and the flowers were looking up through the green grass and laughing. It was a lovely scene, only in one corner it was still winter. It was the farthest corner of the garden, and in it was standing a little boy.

He was so small that he could not reach up to the branches of the tree, and he was wandering all round it, crying bitterly. The poor tree was still quite covered with frost and snow, and the North Wind was blowing and roaring above it. “Climb up! little boy,” said the Tree, and it bent its branches down as low as it could; but the boy was too tiny.

And the Giant’s heart melted as he looked out. “How selfish I have been!” he said; “now I know why the Spring would not come here. I will put that poor little boy on the top of the tree, and then I will knock down the wall, and my garden shall be the children’s playground for ever and ever.” He was really very sorry for what he had done.

So he crept downstairs and opened the front door quite softly, and went out into the garden. But when the children saw him they were so frightened that they all ran away, and the garden became winter again. Only the little boy did not run, for his eyes were so full of tears that he did not see the Giant coming. And the Giant stole up behind him and took him gently in his hand, and put him up into the tree. And the tree broke at once into blossom, and the birds came and sang on it, and the little boy stretched out his two arms and flung them round the Giant’s neck, and kissed him. And the other children, when they saw that the Giant was not wicked any longer, came running back, and with them came the Spring. “It is your garden now, little children,” said the Giant, and he took a great axe and knocked down the wall. And when the people were going to market at twelve o’clock they found the Giant playing with the children in the most beautiful garden they had ever seen.

All day long they played, and in the evening they came to the Giant to bid him good-bye.

“But where is your little companion?” he said: “the boy I put into the tree.” The Giant loved him the best because he had kissed him.

“We don’t know,” answered the children; “he has gone away.”

“You must tell him to be sure and come here to-morrow,” said the Giant. But the children said that they did not know where he lived, and had never seen him before; and the Giant felt very sad.

Every afternoon, when school was over, the children came and played with the Giant. But the little boy whom the Giant loved was never seen again. The Giant was very kind to all the children, yet he longed for his first little friend, and often spoke of him. “How I would like to see him!” he used to say.

Years went over, and the Giant grew very old and feeble. He could not play about any more, so he sat in a huge armchair, and watched the children at their games, and admired his garden. “I have many beautiful flowers,” he said; “but the children are the most beautiful flowers of all.”

One winter morning he looked out of his window as he was dressing. He did not hate the winter now, for he knew that it was merely the Spring asleep, and that the flowers were resting.

Suddenly he rubbed his eyes in wonder and looked and looked. It certainly was a marvellous sight. In the farthest corner of the garden was a tree quite covered with lovely white blossoms. Its branches were all golden, and silver fruit hung down from them, and underneath it stood the little boy he had loved.

Downstairs ran the Giant in great joy, and out into the garden. He hastened across the grass, and came near to the child. And when he came quite close his face grew red with anger, and he said, “Who hath dared to wound thee?” For on the palms of the child’s hands were the prints of two nails, and the prints of two nails were on the little feet.

“Who hath dared to wound thee?” cried the Giant; “tell me, that I might take my big sword and slay him.”

“Nay!” answered the child; “but these are the wounds of Love.”

“Who art thou?” said the Giant, and a strange awe fell on him, and he knelt before the little child.

And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him, “You let me play once in your garden, to-day you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise.”

And when the children ran in that afternoon, they found the Giant lying dead under the tree, all covered with white blossoms.

8

THE DEVOTED FRIEND

One morning the old Water-rat put his head out of his hole. He had bright beady eyes and stiff grey whiskers and his tail was like a long bit of black india-rubber. The little ducks were swimming about in the pond, looking just like a lot of yellow canaries, and their mother, who was pure white with real red legs, was trying to teach them how to stand on their heads in the water.

“You will never be in the best society unless you can stand on your heads,” she kept saying to them; and every now and then she showed them how it was done. But the little ducks paid no attention to her. They were so young that they did not know what an advantage it is to be in society at all.

“What disobedient children!” cried the old Water-rat; “they really deserve to be drowned.”

“Nothing of the kind,” answered the Duck, “every one must make a beginning, and parents cannot be too patient.”

“Ah! I know nothing about the feelings of parents,” said the Water-rat; “I am not a family man. In fact, I have never been married, and I never intend to be. Love is all very well in its way, but friendship is much higher. Indeed, I know of nothing in the world that is either nobler or rarer than a devoted friendship.”

“And what, pray, is your idea of the duties of a devoted friend?” asked a green Linnet, who was sitting in a willow-tree hard by, and had overheard the conversation.

“Yes, that is just what I want to know,” said the Duck; and she swam away to the end of the pond, and stood upon her head, in order to give her children a good example.

“What a silly question!” cried the Water-rat. “I should expect my devoted friend to be devoted to me, of course.”

“And what would you do in return?” said the little bird, swinging upon a silver spray, and flapping his tiny wings.

“I don’t understand you,” answered the Water-rat.

“Let me tell you a story on the subject,” said the Linnet.

“Is the story about me?” asked the Water-rat. “If so, I will listen to it, for I am extremely fond of fiction.”

“It is applicable to you,” answered the Linnet; and he flew down, and alighting upon the bank, he told the story of The Devoted Friend.

“Once upon a time,” said the Linnet, “there was an honest little fellow named Hans.”

“Was he very distinguished?” asked the Water-rat.

“No,” answered the Linnet, “I don’t think he was distinguished at all, except for his kind heart, and his funny round good-humoured face. He lived in a tiny cottage all by himself, and every day he worked in his garden. In all the country-side there was no garden so lovely as his. Sweet-william grew there, and Gilly-flowers, and Shepherds’-purses, and Fair-maids of France. There were damask Roses, and yellow Roses, lilac Crocuses and gold, purple Violets and white. Columbine and Ladysmock, Marjoram and Wild Basil, the Cowslip and the Flower-de-luce, the Daffodil and the Clove-Pink bloomed or blossomed in their proper order as the months went by, one flower taking another flower’s place, so that there were always beautiful things to look at, and pleasant odours to smell.

“Little Hans had a great many friends, but the most devoted friend of all was big Hugh the Miller. Indeed, so devoted was the rich Miller to little Hans, that he would never go by his garden without leaning over the wall and plucking a large nosegay, or a handful of sweet herbs, or filling his pockets with plums and cherries if it was the fruit season.

“‘Real friends should have everything in common,’ the Miller used to say, and little Hans nodded and smiled, and felt very proud of having a friend with such noble ideas.

“Sometimes, indeed, the neighbours thought it strange that the rich Miller never gave little Hans anything in return, though he had a hundred sacks of flour stored away in his mill, and six milch cows, and a large flock of woolly sheep; but Hans never troubled his head about these things, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to listen to all the wonderful things the Miller used to say about the unselfishness of true friendship.

“So little Hans worked away in his garden. During the spring, the summer, and the autumn he was very happy, but when the winter came, and he had no fruit or flowers to bring to the market, he suffered a good deal from cold and hunger, and often had to go to bed without any supper but a few dried pears or some hard nuts. In the winter, also, he was extremely lonely, as the Miller never came to see him then.

“‘There is no good in my going to see little Hans as long as the snow lasts,’ the Miller used to say to his wife, ‘for when people are in trouble they should be left alone and not be bothered by visitors. That at least is my idea about friendship, and I am sure I am right. So I shall wait till the spring comes, and then I shall pay him a visit, and he will be able to give me a large basket of primroses, and that will make him so happy.’

“‘You are certainly very thoughtful about others,’ answered the Wife, as she sat in her comfortable armchair by the big pinewood fire; ‘very thoughtful indeed. It is quite a treat to hear you talk about friendship. I am sure the clergyman himself could not say such beautiful things as you do, though he does live in a three-storied house, and wear a gold ring on his little finger.’

“‘But could we not ask little Hans up here?’ said the Miller’s youngest son. ‘If poor Hans is in trouble I will give him half my porridge, and show him my white rabbits.’

“‘What a silly boy you are!’ cried the Miller; ‘I really don’t know what is the use of sending you to school. You seem not to learn anything. Why, if little Hans came up here, and saw our warm fire, and our good supper, and our great cask of red wine, he might get envious, and envy is a most terrible thing, and would spoil anybody’s nature. I certainly will not allow Hans’ nature to be spoiled. I am his best friend, and I will always watch over him, and see that he is not led into any temptations. Besides, if Hans came here, he might ask me to let him have some flour on credit, and that I could not do. Flour is one thing and friendship is another, and they should not be confused. Why, the words are spelt differently, and mean quite different things. Everybody can see that.’

“‘How well you talk!’ said the Miller’s Wife, pouring herself out a large glass of warm ale; ‘really I feel quite drowsy. It is just like being in church.’

“‘Lots of people act well,’ answered the Miller; ‘but very few people talk well, which shows that talking is much the more difficult thing of the two, and much the finer thing also’; and he looked sternly across the table at his little son, who felt so ashamed of himself that he hung his head down, and grew quite scarlet, and began to cry into his tea. However, he was so young that you must excuse him.”

“Is that the end of the story?” asked the Water-rat.

“Certainly not,” answered the Linnet, “that is the beginning.”

“Then you are quite behind the age,” said the Water-rat. “Every good story-teller nowadays starts with the end, and then goes on to the beginning, and concludes with the middle. That is the new method. I heard all about it the other day from a critic who was walking round the pond with a young man. He spoke of the matter at great length, and I am sure he must have been right, for he had blue spectacles and a bald head, and whenever the young man made any remark, he always answered ‘Pooh!’ But pray go on with your story. I like the Miller immensely. I have all kinds of beautiful sentiments myself, so there is a great sympathy between us.”

“Well,” said the Linnet, hopping now on one leg and now on the other, “as soon as the winter was over, and the primroses began to open their pale yellow stars, the Miller said to his wife that he would go down and see little Hans.

“‘Why, what a good heart you have!’ cried his Wife; ‘you are always thinking of others. And mind you take the big basket with you for the flowers.’

“So the Miller tied the sails of the windmill together with a strong iron chain, and went down the hill with the basket on his arm.

“‘Good morning, little Hans,’ said the Miller.

“‘Good morning,’ said Hans, leaning on his spade, and smiling from ear to ear.

“‘And how have you been all the winter?’ said the Miller.

“‘Well, really,’ cried Hans, ‘it is very good of you to ask, very good indeed. I am afraid I had rather a hard time of it, but now the spring has come, and I am quite happy, and all my flowers are doing well.’

“‘We often talked of you during the winter, Hans,’ said the Miller, ‘and wondered how you were getting on.’

“‘That was kind of you,’ said Hans; ‘I was half afraid you had forgotten me.’

“‘Hans, I am surprised at you,’ said the Miller; ‘friendship never forgets. That is the wonderful thing about it, but I am afraid you don’t understand the poetry of life. How lovely your primroses are looking, by-the-bye!’

"'They are certainly very lovely,' said Hans, 'and it is a most lucky thing for me that I have so many. I am going to bring them into the market and sell them to the Burgomaster's daughter, and buy back my wheelbarrow with the money.'

"'Buy back your wheelbarrow? You don't mean to say you have sold it? What a very stupid thing to do!'

"'Well, the fact is,' said Hans, 'that I was obliged to. You see the winter was a very bad time for me, and I really had no money at all to buy bread with. So I first sold the silver buttons off my Sunday coat, and then I sold my silver chain, and then I sold my big pipe, and at last I sold my wheelbarrow. But I am going to buy them all back again now.'

"'Hans,' said the Miller, 'I will give you my wheelbarrow. It is not in very good repair; indeed, one side is gone, and there is something wrong with the wheel-spokes; but in spite of that I will give it to you. I know it is very generous of me, and a great many people would think me extremely foolish for parting with it, but I am not like the rest of the world. I think that generosity is the essence of friendship, and, besides, I have got a new wheelbarrow for myself. Yes, you may set your mind at ease, I will give you my wheelbarrow.'

"'Well, really, that is generous of you,' said little Hans, and his funny round face glowed all over with pleasure. 'I can easily put it in repair, as I have a plank of wood in the house.'

"'A plank of wood!' said the Miller; 'why, that is just what I want for the roof of my barn. There is a very large hole in it, and the corn will all get damp if I don't stop it up. How lucky you mentioned it! It is quite remarkable how one good action always breeds another. I have given you my wheelbarrow, and now you are going to give me your plank. Of course, the wheelbarrow is worth far more than the plank, but true friendship never notices things like that. Pray get it at once, and I will set to work at my barn this very day.'

"'Certainly,' cried little Hans, and he ran into the shed and dragged the plank out.

"'It is not a very big plank,' said the Miller, looking at it, 'and I am afraid that after I have mended my barn-roof there won't be any left for you to mend the wheelbarrow with; but, of course, that is not my fault. And now, as I have given you my wheelbarrow, I am sure you would like to give me some flowers in return. Here is the basket, and mind you fill it quite full.'

"'Quite full?' said little Hans, rather sorrowfully, for it was really a very big basket, and he knew that if he filled it he would have no flowers left for the market, and he was very anxious to get his silver buttons back.

"'Well, really,' answered the Miller, 'as I have given you my wheelbarrow, I don't think that it is much to ask you for a few flowers. I may be wrong, but I should have thought that friendship, true friendship, was quite free from selfishness of any kind.'

"'My dear friend, my best friend,' cried little Hans, 'you are welcome to all the flowers in my garden. I would much sooner have your good opinion than my silver buttons, any day;' and he ran and plucked all his pretty primroses, and filled the Miller's basket.

"'Good-bye, little Hans,' said the Miller, as he went up the hill with the plank on his shoulder, and the big basket in his hand.

"'Good-bye,' said little Hans, and he began to dig away quite merrily, he was so pleased about the wheelbarrow.

"The next day he was nailing up some honeysuckle against the porch, when he heard the Miller's voice calling to him from the road. So he jumped off the ladder, and ran down the garden, and looked over the wall.

"There was the Miller with a large sack of flour on his back.

"'Dear little Hans,' said the Miller, 'would you mind carrying this sack of flour for me to market?'

"'Oh, I am so sorry,' said Hans, 'but I am really very busy to-day. I have got all my creepers to nail up, and all my flowers to water, and all my grass to roll.'

"'Well, really,' said the Miller, 'I think that, considering that I am going to give you my wheelbarrow, it is rather unfriendly of you to refuse.'

"'Oh, don't say that,' cried little Hans, 'I wouldn't be unfriendly for the whole world;' and he ran in for his cap, and trudged off with the big sack on his shoulders.

"It was a very hot day, and the road was terribly dusty, and before Hans had reached the sixth milestone he was so tired that he had to sit down and rest. However, he went on bravely, and at last he reached the market. After he had waited there some time, he sold the sack of flour for a very good price, and then he returned home at once, for he was afraid that if he stopped too late he might meet some robbers on the way.

"'It has certainly been a hard day,' said little Hans to himself as he was going to bed, 'but I am glad I did not refuse the Miller, for he is my best friend, and, besides, he is going to give me his wheelbarrow.'

"Early the next morning the Miller came down to get the money for his sack of flour, but little Hans was so tired that he was still in bed.

"'Upon my word,' said the Miller, 'you are very lazy. Really, considering that I am going to give you my wheelbarrow, I think you might work harder. Idleness is a great sin, and I certainly don't like any of my friends to be idle or sluggish. You must not mind my speaking quite plainly to you. Of course I should not dream of doing so if I were not your friend. But what is the good of friendship if one cannot say exactly what one means? Anybody can say charming things and try to please and to flatter, but a true friend always says unpleasant things, and does not mind giving pain. Indeed, if he is a really true friend he prefers it, for he knows that then he is doing good.'

“‘I am very sorry,’ said little Hans, rubbing his eyes and pulling off his night-cap, ‘but I was so tired that I thought I would lie in bed for a little time, and listen to the birds singing. Do you know that I always work better after hearing the birds sing?’

“‘Well, I am glad of that,’ said the Miller, clapping little Hans on the back, ‘for I want you to come up to the mill as soon as you are dressed and mend my barn-roof for me.’

“Poor little Hans was very anxious to go and work in his garden, for his flowers had not been watered for two days, but he did not like to refuse the Miller as he was such a good friend to him.

“‘Do you think it would be unfriendly of me if I said I was busy?’ he inquired in a shy and timid voice.

“‘Well, really,’ answered the Miller, ‘I do not think it is much to ask of you, considering that I am going to give you my wheelbarrow; but of course if you refuse I will go and do it myself.’

“‘Oh! on no account,’ cried little Hans; and he jumped out of bed, and dressed himself, and went up to the barn.

“He worked there all day long, till sunset, and at sunset the Miller came to see how he was getting on.

“‘Have you mended the hole in the roof yet, little Hans?’ cried the Miller in a cheery voice.

“‘It is quite mended,’ answered little Hans, coming down the ladder.

“‘Ah!’ said the Miller, ‘there is no work so delightful as the work one does for others.’

“‘It is certainly a great privilege to hear you talk,’ answered little Hans, sitting down and wiping his forehead, ‘a very great privilege. But I am afraid I shall never have such beautiful ideas as you have.’

“‘Oh! they will come to you,’ said the Miller, ‘but you must take more pains. At present you have only the practice of friendship; some day you will have the theory also.’

"'Do you really think I shall?' asked little Hans.

"'I have no doubt of it,' answered the Miller, 'but now that you have mended the roof, you had better go home and rest, for I want you to drive my sheep to the mountain to-morrow.'

"Poor little Hans was afraid to say anything to this, and early the next morning the Miller brought his sheep round to the cottage, and Hans started off with them to the mountain. It took him the whole day to get there and back; and when he returned he was so tired that he went off to sleep in his chair, and did not wake up till it was broad daylight.

"'What a delightful time I shall have in my garden!' he said, and he went to work at once.

"But somehow he was never able to look after his flowers at all, for his friend the Miller was always coming round and sending him off on long errands, or getting him to help at the mill. Little Hans was very much distressed at times, as he was afraid his flowers would think he had forgotten them, but he consoled himself by the reflection that the Miller was his best friend. 'Besides,' he used to say, 'he is going to give me his wheelbarrow, and that is an act of pure generosity.'

"So little Hans worked away for the Miller, and the Miller said all kinds of beautiful things about friendship, which Hans took down in a notebook, and used to read over at night, for he was a very good scholar.

"Now it happened that one evening little Hans was sitting by his fireside when a loud rap came at the door. It was a very wild night, and the wind was blowing and roaring round the house so terribly that at first he thought it was merely the storm. But a second rap came, and then a third, louder than any of the others.

"'It is some poor traveller,' said little Hans to himself, and he ran to the door.

"There stood the Miller with a lantern in one hand and a big stick in the other.

"'Dear little Hans,' cried the Miller, 'I am in great trouble. My little boy has fallen off a ladder and hurt himself, and I am going for the Doctor. But he lives so far away, and it is such a bad night, that it has just occurred to me that it would be much better if you went instead of me. You know I am going to give you my wheelbarrow, and so it is only fair that you should do something for me in return.'

"'Certainly,' cried little Hans, 'I take it quite as a compliment your coming to me, and I will start off at once. But you must lend me your lantern, as the night is so dark that I am afraid I might fall into the ditch.'

"'I am very sorry,' answered the Miller, 'but it is my new lantern and it would be a great loss to me if anything happened to it.'

"'Well, never mind, I will do without it,' cried little Hans, and he took down his great fur coat, and his warm scarlet cap, and tied a muffler round his throat, and started off.

"What a dreadful storm it was! The night was so black that little Hans could hardly see, and the wind was so strong that he could scarcely stand. However, he was very courageous, and after he had been walking about three hours, he arrived at the Doctor's house, and knocked at the door.

"'Who is there?' cried the Doctor, putting his head out of his bedroom window.

"'Little Hans, Doctor.'

"'What do you want, little Hans?'

"'The Miller's son has fallen from a ladder, and has hurt himself, and the Miller wants you to come at once.'

"'All right!' said the Doctor; and he ordered his horse, and his big boots, and his lantern, and came downstairs, and rode off in the direction of the Miller's house, little Hans trudging behind him.

"But the storm grew worse and worse, and the rain fell in torrents, and little Hans could not see where he was going, or keep up with the horse. At last he lost his way, and wandered off on the moor, which was a very dangerous place, as it was full of deep holes, and there poor little Hans was drowned. His body was found the next day by some goatherds, floating in a great pool of water, and was brought back by them to the cottage.

"Everybody went to little Hans' funeral, as he was so popular, and the Miller was the chief mourner.

"'As I was his best friend,' said the Miller, 'it is only fair that I should have the best place;' so he walked at the head of the procession in a long black cloak, and every now and then he wiped his eyes with a big pocket-handkerchief.

"'Little Hans is certainly a great loss to every one,' said the Blacksmith, when the funeral was over, and they were all seated comfortably in the inn, drinking spiced wine and eating sweet cakes.

"'A great loss to me at any rate,' answered the Miller, 'why, I had as good as given him my wheelbarrow, and now I really don't know what to do with it. It is very much in my way at home, and it is in such bad repair that I could not get anything for it if I sold it. I will certainly take care not to give away anything again. One always suffers for being generous.'"

"Well?" said the Water-rat, after a long pause.

"Well, that is the end," said the Linnet.

"But what became of the Miller?" asked the Water-rat.

"Oh! I really don't know," replied the Linnet; "and I am sure that I don't care."

"It is quite evident then that you have no sympathy in your nature," said the Water-rat.

"I am afraid you don't quite see the moral of the story," remarked the Linnet.

"The what?" screamed the Water-rat.

"The moral."

"Do you mean to say that the story has a moral?"

"Certainly," said the Linnet.

“Well, really,” said the Water-rat, in a very angry manner, “I think you should have told me that before you began. If you had done so, I certainly would not have listened to you; in fact, I should have said ‘Pooh,’ like the critic. However, I can say it now;” so he shouted out “Pooh” at the top of his voice, gave a whisk with his tail, and went back into his hole.

“And how do you like the Water-rat?” asked the Duck, who came paddling up some minutes afterwards. “He has a great many good points, but for my own part I have a mother’s feelings, and I can never look at a confirmed bachelor without the tears coming into my eyes.”

“I am rather afraid that I have annoyed him,” answered the Linnet. “The fact is, that I told him a story with a moral.”

“Ah! that is always a very dangerous thing to do,” said the Duck.

And I quite agree with her.

9

THE REMARKABLE ROCKET

The King's son was going to be married, so there were general rejoicings. He had waited a whole year for his bride, and at last she had arrived. She was a Russian Princess, and had driven all the way from Finland in a sledge drawn by six reindeer. The sledge was shaped like a great golden swan, and between the swan's wings lay the little Princess herself. Her long ermine cloak reached right down to her feet, on her head was a tiny cap of silver tissue, and she was as pale as the Snow Palace in which she had always lived. So pale was she that as she drove through the streets all the people wondered. "She is like a white rose!" they cried, and they threw down flowers on her from the balconies.

At the gate of the Castle the Prince was waiting to receive her. He had dreamy violet eyes, and his hair was like fine gold. When he saw her he sank upon one knee, and kissed her hand.

"Your picture was beautiful," he murmured, "but you are more beautiful than your picture;" and the little Princess blushed.

"She was like a white rose before," said a young page to his neighbour, "but she is like a red rose now;" and the whole Court was delighted.

For the next three days everybody went about saying, "White rose, Red rose, Red rose, White rose;" and the King gave orders that the Page's salary was to be doubled. As he received no salary at all this was not of much use to him, but it was considered a great honour, and was duly published in the Court Gazette.

When the three days were over the marriage was celebrated. It was a magnificent ceremony, and the bride and bridegroom walked hand in hand under a canopy of purple velvet embroidered with little pearls. Then there was a State Banquet, which lasted for five hours. The Prince and Princess sat at the top of the Great Hall and drank out of a cup of clear crystal. Only true lovers could drink out of this cup, for if false lips touched it, it grew grey and dull and cloudy.

“It is quite clear that they love each other,” said the little Page, “as clear as crystal!” and the King doubled his salary a second time.

“What an honour!” cried all the courtiers.

After the banquet there was to be a Ball. The bride and bridegroom were to dance the Rose-dance together, and the King had promised to play the flute. He played very badly, but no one had ever dared to tell him so, because he was the King. Indeed, he knew only two airs, and was never quite certain which one he was playing; but it made no matter, for, whatever he did, everybody cried out, “Charming! charming!”

The last item on the programme was a grand display of fireworks, to be let off exactly at midnight. The little Princess had never seen a firework in her life, so the King had given orders that the Royal Pyrotechnist should be in attendance on the day of her marriage.

“What are fireworks like?” she had asked the Prince, one morning, as she was walking on the terrace.

“They are like the Aurora Borealis,” said the King, who always answered questions that were addressed to other people, “only much more natural. I prefer them to stars myself, as you always know when they are going to appear, and they are as delightful as my own flute-playing. You must certainly see them.”

So at the end of the King’s garden a great stand had been set up, and as soon as the Royal Pyrotechnist had put everything in its proper place, the fireworks began to talk to each other.

“The world is certainly very beautiful,” cried a little Squib. “Just look at those yellow tulips. Why! if they were real Crackers they could not be lovelier. I am very glad I have travelled. Travel improves the mind wonderfully, and does away with all one’s prejudices.”

“The King’s garden is not the world, you foolish Squib,” said a big Roman Candle; “the world is an enormous place, and it would take you three days to see it thoroughly.”

“Any place you love is the world to you,” exclaimed the pensive Catherine Wheel, who had been attached to an old deal box in early life, and prided herself on her broken heart; “but love is not fashionable any more, the poets have killed it. They wrote so much about it that nobody believed them, and I am not surprised. True love suffers, and is silent. I remember myself once —— But it is no matter now. Romance is a thing of the past.”

“Nonsense!” said the Roman Candle, “Romance never dies. It is like the moon, and lives for ever. The bride and bridegroom, for instance, love each other very dearly. I heard all about them this morning from a brown-paper cartridge, who happened to be staying in the same drawer as myself, and he knew the latest Court news.”

But the Catherine Wheel shook her head. “Romance is dead, Romance is dead, Romance is dead,” she murmured. She was one of those people who think that, if you say the same thing over and over a great many times, it becomes true in the end.

Suddenly, a sharp, dry cough was heard, and they all looked round.

It came from a tall, supercilious-looking Rocket, who was tied to the end of a long stick. He always coughed before he made any observation, so as to attract attention.

“Ahem! ahem!” he said, and everybody listened except the poor Catherine Wheel, who was still shaking her head, and murmuring, “Romance is dead.”

“Order! order!” cried out a Cracker. He was something of a politician, and had always taken a prominent part in the local elections, so he knew the proper Parliamentary expressions to use.

“Quite dead,” whispered the Catherine Wheel, and she went off to sleep.

As soon as there was perfect silence, the Rocket coughed a third time and began. He spoke with a very slow, distinct voice, as if he was dictating his memoirs, and always looked over the shoulder of the person to whom he was talking. In fact, he had a most distinguished manner.

“How fortunate it is for the King’s son,” he remarked, “that he is to be married on the very day on which I am to be let off! Really, if it had been arranged beforehand, it could not have turned out better for him; but Princes are always lucky.”

“Dear me!” said the little Squib, “I thought it was quite the other way, and that we were to be let off in the Prince’s honour.”

“It may be so with you,” he answered; “indeed, I have no doubt that it is, but with me it is different. I am a very remarkable Rocket, and come of remarkable parents. My mother was the most celebrated Catherine Wheel of her day, and was renowned for her graceful dancing. When she made her great public appearance she spun round nineteen times before she went out, and each time that she did so she threw into the air seven pink stars. She was three feet and a half in diameter, and made of the very best gunpowder. My father was a Rocket like myself, and of French extraction. He flew so high that the people were afraid that he would never come down again. He did, though, for he was of a kindly disposition, and he made a most brilliant descent in a shower of golden rain. The newspapers wrote about his performance in very flattering terms. Indeed, the Court Gazette called him a triumph of Pylotechnic art.”

“Pyrotechnic, Pyrotechnic, you mean,” said a Bengal Light; “I know it is Pyrotechnic, for I saw it written on my own canister.”

“Well, I said Pylotechnic,” answered the Rocket, in a severe tone of voice, and the Bengal Light felt so crushed that he began at once to bully the little squibs, in order to show that he was still a person of some importance.

“I was saying,” continued the Rocket, “I was saying —— What was I saying?”

“You were talking about yourself,” replied the Roman Candle.

“Of course; I knew I was discussing some interesting subject when I was so rudely interrupted. I hate rudeness and bad manners of every kind, for I am extremely sensitive. No one in the whole world is so sensitive as I am, I am quite sure of that.”

“What is a sensitive person?” said the Cracker to the Roman Candle.

“A person who, because he has corns himself, always treads on other people’s toes,” answered the Roman Candle in a low whisper; and the Cracker nearly exploded with laughter.

“Pray, what are you laughing at?” inquired the Rocket; “I am not laughing.”

“I am laughing because I am happy,” replied the Cracker.

“That is a very selfish reason,” said the Rocket angrily. “What right have you to be happy? You should be thinking about others. In fact, you should be thinking about me. I am always thinking about myself, and I expect everybody else to do the same. That is what is called sympathy. It is a beautiful virtue, and I possess it in a high degree. Suppose, for instance, anything happened to me to-night, what a misfortune that would be for every one! The Prince and Princess would never be happy again, their whole married life would be spoiled; and as for the King, I know he would not get over it. Really, when I begin to reflect on the importance of my position, I am almost moved to tears.”

“If you want to give pleasure to others,” cried the Roman Candle, “you had better keep yourself dry.”

“Certainly,” exclaimed the Bengal Light, who was now in better spirits; “that is only common sense.”

“Common sense, indeed!” said the Rocket indignantly; “you forget that I am very uncommon, and very remarkable. Why, anybody can have common sense, provided that they have no imagination. But I have imagination, for I never think of things as they really are; I always think of them as being quite different. As for keeping myself dry, there is evidently no one here who can at all appreciate an emotional nature. Fortunately for myself, I don’t care. The only thing that sustains one through life is the consciousness of the immense inferiority of everybody else, and this is a feeling I have always cultivated. But none of you have any hearts. Here you are laughing and making merry just as if the Prince and Princess had not just been married.”

“Well, really,” exclaimed a small Fire-balloon, “why not? It is a most joyful occasion, and when I soar up into the air I intend to tell the stars all about it. You will see them twinkle when I talk to them about the pretty bride.”

“Ah! what a trivial view of life!” said the Rocket; “but it is only what I expected. There is nothing in you; you are hollow and empty. Why, perhaps the Prince and Princess may go to live in a country where there is a deep river, and perhaps they may have one only son, a little fair-haired boy with violet eyes like the Prince himself; and perhaps some day he may go out to walk with his nurse; and perhaps the nurse may go to sleep under a great elder-tree; and perhaps the little boy may fall into the deep river and be drowned. What a terrible misfortune! Poor people, to lose their only son! It is really too dreadful! I shall never get over it.”

“But they have not lost their only son,” said the Roman Candle; “no misfortune has happened to them at all.”

“I never said that they had,” replied the Rocket; “I said that they might. If they had lost their only son there would be no use in saying anything more about the matter. I hate people who cry over spilt milk. But when I think that they might lose their only son, I certainly am much affected.”

“You certainly are!” cried the Bengal Light. “In fact, you are the most affected person I ever met.”

“You are the rudest person I ever met,” said the Rocket, “and you cannot understand my friendship for the Prince.”

“Why, you don’t even know him,” growled the Roman Candle.

“I never said I knew him,” answered the Rocket. “I dare say that if I knew him I should not be his friend at all. It is a very dangerous thing to know one’s friends.”

“You had really better keep yourself dry,” said the Fire-balloon. “That is the important thing.”

“Very important for you, I have no doubt,” answered the Rocket, “but I shall weep if I choose;” and he actually burst into real tears, which flowed down his stick like rain-drops, and nearly drowned two little beetles, who were just thinking of setting up house together, and were looking for a nice dry spot to live in.

“He must have a truly romantic nature,” said the Catherine Wheel, “for he weeps when there is nothing at all to weep about;” and she heaved a deep sigh and thought about the deal box.

But the Roman Candle and the Bengal Light were quite indignant, and kept saying, “Humbug! humbug!” at the top of their voices. They were extremely practical, and whenever they objected to anything they called it humbug.

Then the moon rose like a wonderful silver shield; and the stars began to shine, and a sound of music came from the palace.

The Prince and Princess were leading the dance. They danced so beautifully that the tall white lilies peeped in at the window and watched them, and the great red poppies nodded their heads and beat time.

Then ten o’clock struck, and then eleven, and then twelve, and at the last stroke of midnight every one came out on the terrace, and the King sent for the Royal Pyrotechnist.

“Let the fireworks begin,” said the King; and the Royal Pyrotechnist made a low bow, and marched down to the end of the garden. He had six attendants with him, each of whom carried a lighted torch at the end of a long pole.

It was certainly a magnificent display.

Whizz! Whizz! went the Catherine Wheel, as she spun round and round. Boom! Boom! went the Roman Candle. Then the Squibs danced all over the place, and the Bengal Lights made everything look scarlet. “Good-bye,” cried the Fire-balloon as he soared away, dropping tiny blue sparks. Bang! Bang! answered the Crackers, who were enjoying themselves immensely. Every one was a great success except the Remarkable Rocket. He was so damp with crying that he could not go off at all. The best thing in him was the gunpowder, and that was so wet with tears that it was of no use. All his poor relations, to whom he would never speak, except with a sneer, shot up into the sky like wonderful golden flowers with blossoms of fire. Huzza! Huzza! cried the Court; and the little Princess laughed with pleasure.

“I suppose they are reserving me for some grand occasion,” said the Rocket; “no doubt that is what it means,” and he looked more supercilious than ever.

The next day the workmen came to put everything tidy. “This is evidently a deputation,” said the Rocket; “I will receive them with becoming dignity”: so he put his nose in the air, and began to frown severely as if he were thinking about some very important subject. But they took no notice of him at all till they were just going away. Then one of them caught sight of him. “Hallo!” he cried, “what a bad rocket!” and he threw him over the wall into the ditch.

"*Bad* Rocket? *Bad* Rocket?" he said, as he whirled through the air; "impossible! *Grand* Rocket, that is what the man said. *Bad* and *Grand* sound very much the same, indeed they often are the same;" and he fell into the mud.

"It is not comfortable here," he remarked, "but no doubt it is some fashionable watering-place, and they have sent me away to recruit my health. My nerves are certainly very much shattered, and I require rest."

Then a little Frog, with bright jewelled eyes, and a green mottled coat, swam up to him.

"A new arrival, I see!" said the Frog. "Well, after all there is nothing like mud. Give me rainy weather and a ditch, and I am quite happy. Do you think it will be a wet afternoon? I am sure I hope so, but the sky is quite blue and cloudless. What a pity!"

"Ahem! ahem!" said the Rocket, and he began to cough.

"What a delightful voice you have!" cried the Frog. "Really it is quite like a croak, and croaking is of course the most musical sound in the world. You will hear our glee-club this evening. We sit in the old duck pond close by the farmer's house, and as soon as the moon rises we begin. It is so entrancing that everybody lies awake to listen to us. In fact, it was only yesterday that I heard the farmer's wife say to her mother that she could not get a wink of sleep at night on account of us. It is most gratifying to find oneself so popular."

"Ahem! ahem!" said the Rocket angrily. He was very much annoyed that he could not get a word in.

"A delightful voice, certainly," continued the Frog; "I hope you will come over to the duck-pond. I am off to look for my daughters. I have six beautiful daughters, and I am so afraid the Pike may meet them. He is a perfect monster, and would have no hesitation in breakfasting off them. Well, good-bye: I have enjoyed our conversation very much, I assure you."

"Conversation, indeed!" said the Rocket. "You have talked the whole time yourself. That is not conversation."

"Somebody must listen," answered the Frog, "and I like to do all the talking myself. It saves time, and prevents arguments."

"But I like arguments," said the Rocket.

"I hope not," said the Frog complacently. "Arguments are extremely vulgar, for everybody in good society holds exactly the same opinions. Good-bye a second time; I see my daughters in the distance;" and the little Frog swam away.

"You are a very irritating person," said the Rocket, "and very ill-bred. I hate people who talk about themselves, as you do, when one wants to talk about oneself, as I do. It is what I call selfishness, and selfishness is a most detestable thing, especially to any one of my temperament, for I am well known for my sympathetic nature. In fact, you should take example by me; you could not possibly have a better model. Now that you have the chance you had better avail yourself of it, for I am going back to Court almost immediately. I am a great favourite at Court; in fact, the Prince and Princess were married yesterday in my honour. Of course you know nothing of these matters, for you are a provincial."

"There is no good talking to him," said a dragon-fly, who was sitting on the top of a large brown bulrush; "no good at all, for he has gone away."

"Well, that is his loss, not mine," answered the Rocket. "I am not going to stop talking to him merely because he pays no attention. I like hearing myself talk. It is one of my greatest pleasures. I often have long conversations all by myself, and I am so clever that sometimes I don't understand a single word of what I am saying."

"Then you should certainly lecture on Philosophy," said the Dragon-fly, and he spread a pair of lovely gauze wings and soared away into the sky.

"How very silly of him not to stay here!" said the Rocket. "I am sure that he has not often got such a chance of improving his mind. However, I don’t care a bit. Genius like mine is sure to be appreciated some day;” and he sank down a little deeper into the mud.

After some time a large White Duck swam up to him. She had yellow legs, and webbed feet, and was considered a great beauty on account of her waddle.

“Quack, quack, quack,” she said. “What a curious shape you are! May I ask were you born like that, or is it the result of an accident?”

“It is quite evident that you have always lived in the country,” answered the Rocket, “otherwise you would know who I am. However, I excuse your ignorance. It would be unfair to expect other people to be as remarkable as oneself. You will no doubt be surprised to hear that I can fly up into the sky, and come down in a shower of golden rain.”

“I don’t think much of that,” said the Duck, “as I cannot see what use it is to any one. Now, if you could plough the fields like the ox, or draw a cart like the horse, or look after the sheep like the collie-dog, that would be something.”

“My good creature,” cried the Rocket in a very haughty tone of voice, “I see that you belong to the lower orders. A person of my position is never useful. We have certain accomplishments, and that is more than sufficient. I have no sympathy myself with industry of any kind, least of all with such industries as you seem to recommend. Indeed, I have always been of opinion that hard work is simply the refuge of people who have nothing whatever to do.”

“Well, well,” said the Duck, who was of a very peaceable disposition, and never quarrelled with any one, “everybody has different tastes. I hope, at any rate, that you are going to take up your residence here.”

“Oh! dear no,” cried the Rocket. “I am merely a visitor, a distinguished visitor. The fact is that I find this place rather tedious. There is neither society here, nor solitude. In fact, it is essentially suburban. I shall probably go back to Court, for I know that I am destined to make a sensation in the world.”

“I had thoughts of entering public life once myself,” remarked the Duck; “there are so many things that need reforming. Indeed, I took the chair at a meeting some time ago, and we passed resolutions condemning everything that we did not like. However, they did not seem to have much effect. Now I go in for domesticity, and look after my family.”

“I am made for public life,” said the Rocket, “and so are all my relations, even the humblest of them. Whenever we appear we excite great attention. I have not actually appeared myself, but when I do so it will be a magnificent sight. As for domesticity, it ages one rapidly, and distracts one’s mind from higher things.”

“Ah! the higher things of life, how fine they are!” said the Duck; “and that reminds me how hungry I feel:” and she swam away down the stream, saying, “Quack, quack, quack.”

“Come back! come back!” screamed the Rocket, “I have a great deal to say to you;” but the Duck paid no attention to him. “I am glad that she has gone,” he said to himself, “she has a decidedly middle-class mind;” and he sank a little deeper still into the mud, and began to think about the loneliness of genius, when suddenly two little boys in white smocks came running down the bank, with a kettle and some faggots.

“This must be the deputation,” said the Rocket, and he tried to look very dignified.

“Hallo!” cried one of the boys, “look at this old stick! I wonder how it came here;” and he picked the Rocket out of the ditch.

“*Old* Stick!” said the Rocket, “impossible! *Gold* Stick, that is what he said. Gold Stick is very complimentary. In fact, he mistakes me for one of the Court dignitaries!”

“Let us put it into the fire!” said the other boy, “it will help to boil the kettle.”

So they piled the faggots together, and put the Rocket on top, and lit the fire.

"This is magnificent," cried the Rocket, "they are going to let me off in broad daylight, so that everyone can see me."

"We will go to sleep now," they said, "and when we wake up the kettle will be boiled;" and they lay down on the grass, and shut their eyes.

The Rocket was very damp, so he took a long time to burn. At last, however, the fire caught him.

"Now I am going off!" he cried, and he made himself very stiff and straight. "I know I shall go much higher than the stars, much higher than the moon, much higher than the sun. In fact, I shall go so high that ——"

Fizz! Fizz! Fizz! and he went straight up into the air.

"Delightful," he cried, "I shall go on like this for ever. What a success I am!"

But nobody saw him.

Then he began to feel a curious tingling sensation all over him.

"Now I am going to explode," he cried. "I shall set the whole world on fire, and make such a noise that nobody will talk about anything else for a whole year." And he certainly did explode. Bang! Bang! Bang! went the gunpowder. There was no doubt about it.

But nobody heard him, not even the two little boys, for they were sound asleep.

Then all that was left of him was the stick, and this fell down on the back of a Goose who was taking a walk by the side of the ditch.

"Good heavens!" cried the Goose. "It is going to rain sticks;" and she rushed into the water.

"I knew I should create a great sensation," gasped the Rocket, and he went out.